THE LIMNER COMPANY



JOHN BOGLE (1746? - 1803)

Portrait miniature of a Naval Captain, possibly Sir Edward Hughes (c.1716-1794), holding a telescope, his right arm resting on a cannon

Circa: 1785

1785

Watercolour on ivory (licence D14387J8)

Oval, 58 mm (2 ¼ in) high

Signed and dated ‘J.Bogle/1785’ (on the cannon)

Gold frame with a lock of hair in the reverse

This portrait of an unknown Naval Captain sits comfortably within a wider trend of John Bogle’s miniature painting- capturing sitters with props and in unusual compositions to demonstrate their livelihoods. A particularly compelling comparison is Bogle’s portraits of Commodore George Johnstone, said to have been painted around the same period[1]. The present work is, however, smaller in size, and closer in that aspect to the portrait of John Yenn RA (1750-1821), previously sold by the Limner Company.

In the above examples, Bogle has depicted his sitters in unconventional positions, rather than the usual face-on or side profile used by many artists in the period. Here, the Captain is surrounded by the tools of his trade- a telescope and a cannon. In case his uniform does not already make his occupation clear, Bogle has made a choice or has been asked to include further indicators.

Despite his particularly distinctive squint, the captain, wearing full dress of Captains of less than three years’ seniority, remains unidentified. Other portraits of the same sitter may exist, as is the case with the portraits of Johnstone, though these remain unknown. He may have been involved in the American Revolutionary War, which was ended by the Treaty of Paris in the year this miniature was painted. One

possible identification is Sir Edward Hughes, who became Admiral of the Blue in 1793. A portrait of him from circa 1786, in the Museum of New Zealand (The Papa Tongarewa, registration number 2006-008-1[2]), shows him with remarkably similar eyes to the Captain in the present work. However, the uniform worn here does not correspond to that of the Vice Admiral of the Blue, the position he held when Bogle painted the present work.

John Bogle was born in Edinburgh in 1746 and trained in Glasgow. He built his career in London, producing portraits for a wide range of clients, though many of his works depict naval and army officers. He exhibited at the RA frequently between 1772 and 1794, including a self-portrait in his first year as an exhibitor.

[1] One of these in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery (PG 2353). The other was sold by Philip Mould.

[2] See https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/object/706807.

Exhibitions

Possibly Royal Academy, London, 1785, no. 315, as ‘Portrait of a Navy Officer’.