

NOW AND THEN

Portrait found of 'enigmatic officer', close friend of Nelson

An unexpected find has been made and reveals a portrait of one of Admiral Nelson's closest friends, who is buried in the Garden of Rest in Deal – in two graves.

According to Deal author Gregory Holyoake in his book *Deal Sad Smuggling Town*, Capt Edward Thornbridge Parker was wounded in the daring midnight raid on Napoleon's flotilla off Boulogne.

He writes: "After prolonged suffering resulting from a horrendous operation involving the amputation of his leg (buried separately in a common grave) Parker expired and was laid to rest on September 27, 1801."

Martyn Downer, a former director at Sotheby's London and leading Nelson specialist, identified the portrait of the tragic young naval captain after it was discovered in Capt Parker's family collection.

He said: "It is the only known image of this enigmatic young officer who was tragically killed under Nelson's command aged just 23.

"Seeing Parker's face for the first time is a very exciting moment for scholars and enthusiasts of Nelson.

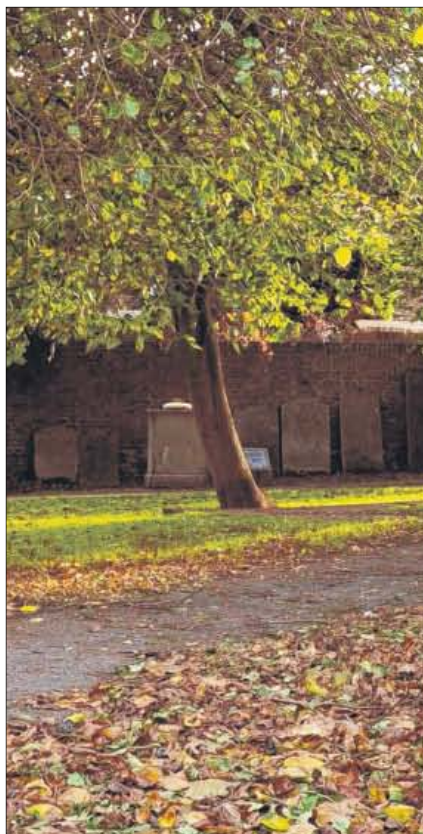
"His intimate friendship with junior officer Parker has intrigued and frustrated generations of biographers.

"One Victorian writer even wildly suggested that Parker was father to the child of Nelson's mistress Emma Hamilton.

'Seeing Parker's face for the first time is a very exciting moment for scholars and enthusiasts of Nelson'



A miniature painting of Capt Edward Parker
Picture: Martyn Downer Works of Art



Right, looking across the Garden of Rest to the tomb of Capt Parker

"Discovery of this touching portrait finally completes a gallery of images of the most important people in Nelson's life."

Mr Downer said Parker was from a naval family background and entered the service as midshipman in 1790.

Nelson probably first encountered him in 1798 when the admiral took charge of Parker.

He added: "Under Nelson's patronage 'little Parker' was rapidly promoted to commander accompanying the admiral in negotiations following the battle of Copenhagen in 1801.

"By now, Parker was not only acting as Nelson's unofficial aide-de-camp and amanuensis but also as informal go-between between the admiral and his mistress Emma, Lady Hamilton.

"During the 1801 mission against the French forces at Boulogne, Parker's thigh was shattered by shot.

"He was taken to lodgings in Deal where after suffering terribly and enduring the amputation of his leg, he died on September 27.

"Nelson and Emma were stricken with grief, arranging and paying for a funeral in the town with full military honours before erecting a monument to Parker's memory.

"At Nelson's request, some of Parker's hair was preserved for eventual burial with the admiral, a token of an extraordinary and intimate friendship."

■ The miniature was a highlight of a loan exhibition of naval miniatures organised by Claudia Hill of Ellison Fine Art at the Royal Thames Yacht Club, London, on Monday.



The tomb of Capt Parker in the Garden of Rest behind St George's Church, Deal; right, the history plaque beside the tomb

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