

For Immediate Release

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TRAFALGAR'S GOLDEN LINING – HARDY'S MEDAL TO BE OFFERED AT CHRISTIE'S

Trafalgar Bicentenary

The Age of Nelson, Wellington and Napoleon

19 October 2005, Christie's King Street

London – On October 19th 2005, Christie's will hold an auction to celebrate the Bicentenary of the Battle of Trafalgar. The sale will be led by arguably the most important medal from British Military history ever to be offered at auction – the gold medal awarded to Captain Hardy after the battle of Trafalgar (estimate: £80,000-120,000). This medal is part of the Hardy Collection, a selection of medals and decorations presented to Hardy which have passed by descent to the present owner. Also included in the sale are the secret battle orders for the Battle of Trafalgar, signed by Nelson and sent to the captain of the *Temeraire* (estimate: £60,000-90,000). This sale further extends the relationship between Nelson, his contemporaries and Christie's – Nelson himself was a client and acquaintance of James Christie, the founder of the famous auction house, and the catalogue for the sale of Nelson's estate, organised by Emma Hamilton after the hero's death, is still held in the archives at Christie's King Street headquarters.



Leading the sale is the small naval gold medal for Trafalgar, awarded to Captain Hardy (estimate: £80,000-120,000). This battle was one of the most decisive triumphs in British naval history, re-establishing Britain's naval superiority for another 100 years. The victory over the French and Spanish fleets was largely due to the tactics and planning of Admiral Nelson, who died aboard his ship, the HMS *Victory*, after being shot by a French sniper. The Captain of the fleet at Trafalgar, and right hand man to Nelson, was Captain Thomas Masterman Hardy. Born in 1769 in Dorset, Hardy first entered the navy when he was just 12 years old. In 1793, he was promoted to Lieutenant on the frigate *Mileager*, which was attached to Nelson's squadron, and by 1798 he was commanding his own ship, the *Mutine*, as Nelson's navy defeated the French in the Battle of the Nile. Included in the sale at Christie's and part of the Hardy Collection is Hardy's medal for the Battle of the Nile (estimate: £60,000-80,000). This is one of only 25 gold medals awarded by Alexander Davison, Nelson's prize agent, as 'a tribute of regard', primarily to Nelson and his Captains, for the bravuara victory over the French at Aboukir Bay on 1 August 1798. Hardy's command of the *Mutine* did not make him eligible for one of these medals, as he was only promoted to post captain by Nelson after the battle. A letter from Nelson to Davison (Palermo, 15 August 1799), written the day after Nelson received the Nile medals, explains how Hardy came to receive his gold medal; *'I have presented the other gold one to Captain Hardy in your name, as I am confident it was not your intention to exclude Captain Hardy, who was a Captain at the Battle of the Nile. I assure you, my dear friend, it hurt me to part with your kind and invaluable present, but I considered you before myself.'* Another letter from Nelson to Davison (24 August 1799) reveals that Nelson kept Captain Miller's gold medal for himself, following Miller's death at the Siege of Acre in May 1799, asking Davison to send Miller's family another.

By the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, Hardy was Captain of the Fleet and it was here that his name was immortalised – as Nelson lay dying after being shot by a Frenchman, he turned to his trusted friend and uttered the immortal words *'Kiss me Hardy'*. Also included as part of the Hardy Collection is a George III silver oval meat dish, engraved

'The bequest of my very sincere and much lamented friend Vice Admiral Lord Nelson, 1805' (estimate: £30,000-50,000). This dish offers a very poignant reminder of the friendship between Nelson and Hardy, and the loss felt by Hardy at the death of this great British hero. In 1806, Hardy was created Baronet and he went on to become First Sea Lord of the Admiralty in 1830. The Admiral Sir Thomas Masterman Hardy B.T, G.C.B. died on 20 September 1839, 34 years after the battle of Trafalgar. He was buried at Greenwich Hospital.

The "secret" orders for the Battle of Trafalgar are also included in the sale (estimate: £60,000-90,000). Signed by Admiral Lord Nelson and dated 9 October 1805, this manuscript was sent to Eliab Harvey, the captain of the legendary ship, the *Temeraire*. The battle orders comprise instructions, drawings and explanations of Admiral Nelson's master plan to defeat the French and Spanish fleets in the Battle of Trafalgar off the coast of Cadiz. The document shows Nelson's strategy to ensure an emphatic victory, with plans to pursue the French should they "make off" after any initial skirmishes. Nelson was confident in winning the Battle of Trafalgar with no provision in his orders for anything but victory. The orders commence with the order of sailing of the 40 ships in his fleet, *"...the order of battle; placing the fleet in two lines of 16 ships each, with an advance squadron of eight of the fastest sailing two-decked ships..."*. In addition to creating a "whole impression" of the British fleet's ability to over-power, emphasis is placed on the capture of the French Commander-in Chief.

The Trafalgar Bicentenary auction continues a long association between the Admiral, his contemporaries and Christie's. In 1801, Nelson famously secured a portrait of Emma Hamilton by French artist, Elizabeth Vigee Le Brun, for the sum of 300 guineas at Christie's, in order to prevent the picture from falling into someone else's hands. At the time, Nelson said *"if it had cost me 300 drops of blood I would have given it with pleasure"*. Nelson's correspondence relating to the sale remains in Christie's archive. The picture was being sold by Emma's husband, Sir William Hamilton, 30 years her senior, and ambassador to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. It was at the Court of Naples that the legendary affair between Nelson and Emma Hamilton began.

Further information outlining the relationship between Lord Nelson and Christie's:

- In 1809, at the instigation of Emma Hamilton who found herself in straightened circumstances, Christie's sold property belonging to Admiral Lord Nelson following the hero's death.
- In 1845, Christie's sold the contents of The Napoleon Museum, also known as The Egyptian Hall. The sale comprised pictures, drawings, prints, miniatures, enamels, bronzes, marbles and medals.
- On 12 July 1895, Christie's held an auction that was to include the medals worn by Lord Nelson at the time of his death at Trafalgar, as well as his Gold Medal for the battle. Before the sale, Christie's were involved in selling the medals to the nation, and they were exhibited to the public in 1900. The medals were stolen from the exhibition and were never recovered.
- In the Trafalgar Centenary Year in 1905, Christie's sold the relics of Emperor Napoleon I.
- In 1932-33, the sale of the relics of Admiral Lord Nelson which had passed into the hands of the family of Nelson's beloved Captain Thomas Hardy, were also sold by Christie's.
- In 1985, Christie's sold the collection of Calvin Bullock, a New Yorker who had amassed one of the most renowned collections of Napoleon and Nelson relics in North America, including manuscripts, books, jewellery, objects of virtue, furniture and pictures.
- In 1989 and 1990, Christie's sold the The Edwin Wolf 2nd Collection of Nelson and Hamilton and in 2003, the Nelson and Lady Hamilton section of The Spry Family Collection (Part I: English Historical Documents and Letters) totalled £545,233.

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