



Battle of Trafalgar

Heytesbury

Death of a Trafalgar Veteran

On the 19th inst., at Heytesbury, in his 80th year, Mr. Stephen Sainsbury, shoemaker. He served as a Marine on board the Spartiate at the battle of Trafalgar, and enjoyed a pension from 1815, when he obtained his discharge.

Salisbury and Winchester Journal – Saturday, 23 June 1860

Stephen Sainsbury, the son of William and Betty Sainsbury, was baptized in Heytesbury on 18 February 1781.

On the 1851 census, Stephen (aged 70) is recorded as living in High Street, Heytesbury in the household of his son William Sainsbury (aged 34). Stephen is simply recorded as a Retired Boot Maker, there being no clues to his military past.

However, The National Archives Trafalgar database records an S Sainsbury, a Marine Private, as having served on HMS Spartiate - Ship's pay book number ML56 (16 June 1804).

Stephen must have returned to Heytesbury shortly after his discharge in 1815 as, on 12 February 1816, he is recorded as marrying Diana Farly at Heytesbury. Both are recorded as living in High Street, Heytesbury on the 1841 census, but Stephen was a widower by 1851.

HMS Spartiate was a 74 gun third rate ship of the line that was captured from the French at the Battle of the Nile. Together with HMS Minator, she forced the surrender of the 80 gun Spanish ship Neptuno at the Battle of Trafalgar. Casualties on HMS Spartiate were three dead and twenty wounded, including one wounded Marine (William Parsons).

The First Lieutenant on board Spartiate at the Battle of Trafalgar (James Clephan) was presented with the ship's Union Jack following the battle by the men on board. It is regarded as the only surviving Union Jack from the battle and still bears the marks of battle. It was sold at auction in London for £384,000 in October 2009.