

Information sheet no 018

John Pasco

John Pasco was born on 20 December 1774. Pasco joined the navy in 1784 as Captain's servant in HMS *Druid*. In 1786 he transferred to HMS *Pegasus*. He later served on the Halifax station in HMS *Penelope* and from 1790-1795 he served in a number of ships in the Channel. In 1795 he returned to the West Indies and was promoted to Lieutenant in HMS *Beaulieu* on the 15 June. From 1796 to 1799 he served in HMS *Raisonnable* in the Channel and at the Cape of Good Hope. From December 1799 to October 1802 he served in HMS *Immortalite* off the coast of France.

Pasco was appointed to HMS *Victory* in April 1803. From May 1803 he served in the Mediterranean under Nelson, contributing to the capture of the French frigate *Embuscade*. He was on board during the blockade of Toulon and the chase of the French fleet to the West Indies. During leave in England before returning to the Mediterranean, Pasco married Rebecca Penfold on 1 September 1805. They later had two daughters and three sons. Soon after HMS *Victory* returned to the Mediterranean, Pasco was serving as signal officer during the Battle of Trafalgar in October 1805. According to Pasco, the signal that Nelson ordered him to make before the battle was 'England *confides* that every man will do his duty'. Pasco had pointed out that '*confides*' was not in the signal code vocabulary and would need to be spelt out by the individual letters. Time would be saved by if '*expects*' was substituted. Nelson accepted this suggestion. Early on in the battle Pasco was severely wounded in the right arm and was carried below. In consequence of his wound, Pasco received a grant from the Patriotic Fund, and was given a pension of £250 a year.

He was promoted Commander on 24 December 1805 but was unemployed for nearly three years. He was then appointed to HMS *Hindustan*, a store-ship that he took to New South Wales. He next commanded HMS *Tartarus* on the North American station. He was promoted Captain and appointed to HMS *Rota* on 3 April 1811 and served on the Lisbon station until 1815. After the end of the Napoleonic War in 1815, Pasco was given command of HMS *Lee*, a small frigate employed in the Channel for the suppression of smuggling. He remained with the frigate until 1818 when it paid off. After this he was unemployed for thirty years. His second marriage to Elizabeth Weaver took place in 1843. In 1846, he was appointed to command HMS *Victory*, now the flagship of the Port Admiral at Portsmouth and on 22 September 1847 was promoted to Rear Admiral.

Pasco died at East Stonehouse, Plymouth on 16 November 1853.

Note: The use of the abbreviations HMS in this information sheet is to clearly define the ships of Royal Navy. The abbreviation did not come into common use until c.1790s