

SWORD CARRIED BY NELSON TO BE OFFERED AT SOTHEBY'S



A SWORD with a wonderful provenance - that belonged to the ancestors of the great Horatio Nelson - and has remained in the same family since, is to be offered in a sale of Fine Arms and Armour on Thursday, December 4, 2003 at Sotheby's, Olympia, Hammersmith Road, London, W14. Believed to have been carried by Captain (later Admiral Lord) Horatio Nelson, early in his historic career, it is estimated at £6,000-8,000.



Known as The Galfridus Walpole - Suckling Sword, the sword originally belonged to Captain Galfridus Walpole (1683-1726), it was subsequently passed to his great nephew Maurice Suckling (1726-88) and it was his sister, Catherine Suckling (1725-67), who was Horatio Nelson's mother.

On March 26, 1711, Captain Walpole fought in action with four French 60-gun ships in Vado Bay, in the Mediterranean, where he lost his right arm, an injury that would happen to Nelson 86 years later. Captain Walpole died three weeks after the birth of Maurice Suckling, the grandson of his sister, Mary. Maurice joined the Royal Navy, was in command of Dreadnought 60, in action off Cape François on October 21, 1757. It was Suckling that was responsible for Nelson's early training.

According to Commander W.E. May, R.N. and P.G.W. Annis, who wrote extensively on the swords of Nelson and other historic figures of the period, Galfridus wore the silver-hilted hanger by Nixon, Strand, London, with silver hallmarks for London 1752 and an earlier 60cm curved blade at Vado. He then gave it to Maurice Suckling, who was both his godson and married to his niece, Mary. Maurice, in turn gave it to his younger brother, William, and he gave it to his friend Captain Nelson. Nelson is said to have constantly worn his uncle's valued present during his early career and used it in the failed attack on Santa Cruz, Tenerife in July 1797 (when he lost his right arm). It is thought that the sword was returned to the Suckling family via Lieutenant Maurice William Suckling (1761-1820), when Nelson and the Hamiltons landed at Yarmouth, Norfolk to a hero's welcome on November 6, 1800.

Thomas Del Mar, Deputy Director and Head of Sotheby's Arms and Armour department, said: "The Galfridus Walpole - Suckling Sword presents collectors with a rare opportunity to acquire an object with a close association to arguably one of the greatest figures in British history. In light of the record prices achieved by Sotheby's in last year's 'Nelson: The Alexander Davison Collection' we are all looking forward to the auction with great anticipation."

NOTES TO EDITORS:

On Monday, October 21, 2002 (Trafalgar Day), Sotheby's sold The Alexander Davison Collection - the last historic collection directly associated with Nelson - for £2,130,029. The collection included two important swords. A historic French First Empire Officer's sword bequeathed to Davison by Nelson fetched £336,650 (est: £60,000-80,000), while a ceremonial sword for a member of The Egyptian Club, circa 1798 realised £270,650 (est: £40,000-60,000).

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