

AN OUTSTANDING AND NO DOUBT UNIQUE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR RELATED, ROYAL NAVY ADMIRAL'S C.B. GROUP. AFTER SERVICE IN THE BALTIC, COMMANDED THE *LYNX* GUNBOAT DURING THE CRIMEAN WAR, SEEING A GOOD DEAL OF ACTION IN THE SEA OF AZOFF, PROMOTED COMMANDER FOR HIS SERVICES, HE TOOK LEAVE TO AMERICA IN 1862, WHERE HE WAS TO BECOME A WELL-KNOWN CONFEDERATE BLOCKADE RUNNER. CAPTAINING THE *VENUS* STEAMER RUNNING THE BLOCKADE INTO WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA UNTIL OCTOBER 1863 WHEN HE WAS CAPTURED AFTER A RUNNING CHASE BY UNION SHIPS, DURING WHICH *VENUS* WAS RUN AGROUND HAVING BEEN RIDDLED WITH SHELLS. RELEASED SHORTLY AFTER, HE COMMANDED THE *HANSA*, 1864-65



THE MOST HONOURABLE ORDER OF THE BATH, C.B. (MILITARY) COMPANION'S BREAST BADGE IN 22 CARAT GOLD AND ENAMELS, HALLMARKED LONDON 1875, MAKER'S MARK R.G., COMPLETE WITH NARROW GOLD SWIVEL-RING SUSPENSION AND GOLD RIBBON BUCKLE; BALTIC 1854-55 'LIEUT CHAS MURRAY AYNLEY H.M.S. HOGUE.' CRIMEA 1854-56, 2 CLASP, AZOFF, SEBASTOPOL, 'LIEUT & COMMANDER CHAS MURRAY AYNLEY. H.M.S. LYNX.', ORDER OF THE MEDJIDIE, 5TH CLASS NECK BADGE, SILVER, GOLD AND ENAMEL, FRANCE, SECOND EMPIRE, LEGION OF HONOUR, CHEVALIER'S BREAST BADGE, SILVER, GOLD, AND ENAMEL, ENAMEL BADLY CHIPPED, TURKISH CRIMEA, BRITISH ISSUE, UNNAMED AS ISSUED. CONTAINED IN FITTED CASE

Charles Murray Aynley was born on 21 September 1821, in Olveston, Gloucestershire and entered the Royal Navy as a 1st Class Volunteer aboard *Barham* (50) in 1835. In August 1837, *Barham* was reported to be at Valencia, where it is reported there had been some skirmishes with the forces fighting against the Queen of Spain during the Carlist War. Next serving as Midshipman in *Rodney* (92) in the Mediterranean, he was appointed to *Curacoa* (26), as Mate, serving on the South American Station and passing his examination in July 1841. From March 1843, he served with *Scout* 18, commanded by his cousin, Hon. J. R. Drummond on the Mediterranean station until paid off in August 1845. Promoted

Lieutenant on 6 December 1845, his next appointments were to *Terrible* Steam Frigate, on the home and Mediterranean stations, December 1845 to September 1849 and of 1st Lieutenant of *Alarm* (26), March 1851 to June 1852, attached to the force in South America and the West Indies. In September 1852, Aynsley was appointed to *Hogue* (60), which was then employed as a guardship at Devonport, Portsmouth and Cork,

BALTIC AND CRIMEA

In March 1854, *Hogue* set sail for the Baltic with the British fleet, being present at the siege and fall of Bomarsund, July and August 1854, where Aynsley “*designed the sledges for dragging up the [naval] guns*” for the siege of the forts. Succeeding to the post of 1st Lieutenant on 23 November 1854, he was appointed to the command of recently launched H.M.S. *Lynx*, a dispatch gunboat armed with 2 guns. Serving in the Black Sea, in this vessel he accompanied the expedition to Kertch in May 1855. Afterwards, while the force under Captain Lyons anchored off Yenikale, he was sent round by the Taman Lake to take up a position so as to command the rear of the Russian forts, a service which he ably performed. On 28 of the same month we find him engaged and deserving every credit for the skillful manner in which he manouvered his vessel in an attack, which lasted an hour and a half on the fort of Arabat in the Sea of Azoff, mounting 30 guns. In the following September the *Lynx* formed part of the combined naval and military expedition sent to act against the enemy at Taman and Fanagoria. On that occasion, with the *Arrow* and *Snake* and two French gunboats, she covered the landing of the troops and forced the enemy to retire without offering opposition. Later in the day, the 24th, she and the *Arrow* succeeded by means of Lancaster shells, beautifully thrown, in dispersing at least 600 cavalry drawn up in front of Fanagoria. Captain Robert Hall of *Miranda*, the senior naval officer, having landed with troops, Lieut Aynsley had been left to superintend the duties afloat: the zeal and activity his displayed gained him special praise. He subsequently assisted at the capture of Kinburn.



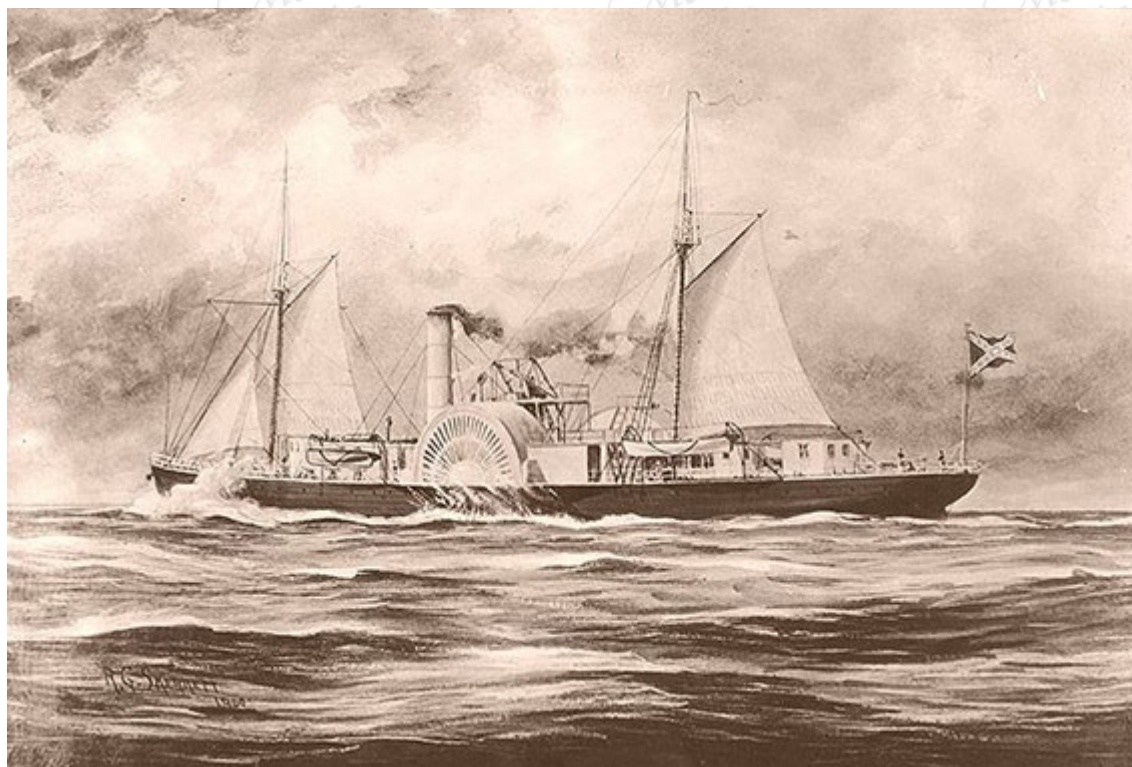
For his services Aynsley was promoted Commander on 10 May 1856 and in the addition to the Crimea and Baltic medals, was awarded the French *Knight of the Legion of Honour* and Turkish *Order of the Medjidieh*, 5th Class. Aynsley also received the following special mentions and gazettes:

"8 June 1855, his proceedings in the Straits of Kertch highly approved of by the board; See letters from Rear Admiral Sir Edmund Lyons of 26 & 30 May 1855. 13 June 1855, gazetted with praise for operations in the Sea of Azoff; 1 Nov. 1855, gazetted for further operations in the Sea of Azoff, with praise for his zeal and activity; 26 April 1856, Rear Admiral Sir H Stewart enclosing a memorial from him with strong recommendations, of which Sir H Berkeley expresses full confidence as to his merits."

Continuing in command of *Lynx* until 11 July 1856, after a period of unemployment, he was appointed to the command of the gun vessel *Assurance*, on 17 July 1857. Initially serving on the Pacific and China stations, on 26 September 1859 "*Assurance was reported to be in very creditable state*" and that Commander Aynsley was mentioned as being "*a very valuable officer*". In 1860 *Assurance* served in Straits of Messina during Garibaldi's attack on Sicily and in 1861 *Assurance* helped the transport of antiquities (statues etc.) from the ruins of Cyrene during the excavations by R. Murdoch Smith RE and Edward Porcher RN (see *The Four Seasons of Cyrene* by D.M. Thorn which quotes correspondence to/from Aynsley as Captain of *Assurance*.) Aynsley remained in command of *Assurance*, until paid off on 2 November 1861.

AMERICAN CIVIL WAR 1862 – 1865

During the American Civil War, the Confederate war effort relied on the bravery of the blockade runners, a small group of sailors who sailed goods in and out of Southern seaports under the guns of Northern ships. Many of these blockade runner captains were British naval officers 'temporarily retired from service', usually operating under assumed names. One of these British officers was Captain Charles Murray Aynsley, who took his leave from the Royal Navy in 1862 and would become "*one of the foremost blockade runners during the American Civil War, 1863-65, captaining the Nashville, Venus from Bermuda and later the Hansa from Nassau. He used the pseudonym 'Captain Murray' or 'The Captain'..*"



From The Inter Ocean, Chicago, May 1898:

“Captain Murray-Aynsley who commanded the Venus, afterward became an Admiral in the Royal Navy and had a long and honorable career. In the Venus he proved to be one of the most intrepid and elusive blockade runners with whom the union cruisers had to deal. On one occasion he ran the gauntlet of the Northern fleet into Wilmington in broad daylight. One of his companions, describing their hairbreadth escape, says: “The Venus, hotly pursued by several blockaders and pounded at by others straight through whom she steamed, had old Murray on the bridge with his coat sleeves hitched up almost to his armpits, a trick he had when greatly excited, otherwise as cool as possible. It was a sight never to be forgotten.”

The blockade-runner *Venus*

The blockade-runner *Venus*, under the command of Captain Murray (Aynsley) was a Newley built side-wheel steamer of 700 tons, with a draft of just 9 feet when fully laden. Departing for Nassau on 14 June 1863, she arrived at Wilmington with the first cargo shipped by Crenshaw and Collie four days later. Between then and October, the *Venus* maintained service between Wilmington and Bermuda until 31 October 1863 when:

“the Venus, one of the finest and fastest of the vessels in the Nassau-Wilmington trade, made the blockading fleet off New Inlet. She was first discovered by the Nansemond, commanded by Lieutenant Lamson. Lamson was always on the alert, and his work was always done quickly and thoroughly. After a short chase, he overhauled the Venus. When abeam he opened fire on her. Four well-directed shells played havoc with the blockade-runner. The first struck her foremast; the second exploded in the cabin; the third passed through forward, killing a man on the way; and the fourth, striking near the water-line, knocked in an iron plate, causing the vessel to make water fast. This was good practice, at night, with both vessels making nearly fourteen knots. The blockade-runner headed straight for the shore, and she was no sooner lard and fast, than the boarders had taken possession, and captured her officers and crew. As it was impossible to move her, she was riddled with shells and finally burnt where she lay.”



https://www.carolana.com/NC/Civil_War/1863_10_21_blockade_runner_venus.html

It is not clear how long Captain Murray remained in Union Captivity; normally due to their Nationality, foreign blockade runners would only be imprisoned for a short time but some of the most notorious would be kept longer. However in 1864 and into 1865, he is known to have been in command of another Collie owned ship, the *Hansa*, a side-wheel steamer but smaller than *Venus* at 257 tons. Again running the blockade into Wilmington, an engraving in the Illustrated London News, 23 January 1864, depicts the *Hansa* running the blockade.

Some sources state Murray commanded other blockade runners but none of these have as yet been identified, though it is unlikely any other commands would have been for many cruises.

Thomas E. Taylor's description of the famous Englishmen from his 1896 book 'Running the Blockade' is worth repeating:

*"As my memory takes me back to those jovial but hard-working days of camaraderie, it is melancholy to think how many of those friends have gone before; Mrs. Murray-Aynsley, Mrs. Hobart and her husband, Hobart Pasha; Hugh Burgoyne, one of the Navy's brightest ornaments, who was drowned while commanding the ill-fated Captain; Hewett, who lately gave up command of the Channel Fleet only to die; old Steele, the king of blockade-running captains; Maurice Portman, an ex-diplomatist; Frank Vizetelly, whose bones lie alongside those of Hicks Pasha in the Soudan; Lewis Grant Watson, my brother agent; Arthur Doering, one of my loyal lieutenants, and a host of old Confederate friends, are all gone, and I could count on my fingers those remaining of a circle of chums who did not know what care or fear was, and who would have stood by each other through thick and thin in any emergency. In fact, my old friends Admiral Murray-Aynsley and Frank Hurst are almost the only two living of that companionship.... "Murray-Aynsley, I rejoice to say, is still alive. * Who that knows 'old Murray' does not love him? Gentle as a child, brave as a lion, a man without guile, he was perhaps the most successful of all the naval blockade runners. In the Venus he had many hairbreadth escapes, notably on one occasion when he ran the gauntlet of the Northern fleet in daylight into Wilmington. The Venus, hotly pursued by several blockaders and pounded at by others, while she steamed straight through them, old Murray on the bridge, with his coat sleeves hitched up almost to his arm-pits—a trick he had when greatly excited—otherwise as cool as possible, was, as Lamb afterwards told me, 'a sight never to be forgotten.' .."*

A great deal can be found online and in books on the blockade runners and also the part that Murray's played. However a most interesting article on the blockade runners, including the participation of Royal Navy officers can be found here:

<https://historycollection.com/the-blockade-runners-of-the-american-civil-war/>

POST CIVIL WAR

Having been promoted Captain in the Royal Navy on 23 June 1862, After his return from America, Aynsley's next appointment was to command of *Jason* (21) on 4 May 1866. Serving on the North American and West Indies stations until April 1870, he was given command of the turret ship, *Monarch*, on the channel station on 15 October of that year, serving until 29 November 1871 when paid off. His final appointment was to Pembroke on 20 December 1871, serving as Captain of Steam Reserve until 31 December 1874 and was he was made Companion of the Order of Bath (C.B.) the same year. Finally retiring from the navy on 22 September 1876, he was promoted Rear Admiral on 9 March 1878, to Vice Admiral on 8 July 1884 and to Rear Admiral on 19 June 1888. Rear Admiral Murray Aynsley died on 1 April 1901 at Botley, having served as JP for many years and was buried there 5 days later.

THE MEDALS

The Crimea and Baltic medals are both finely and undoubtedly contemporary engraved, each in different hand, which is to be expected from medals issued at different times. When comparing to known officially engraved examples by Hunt and Roskell, it is almost certainly these are the work of these engravers, who as private jewelers, engraved many a medal of that period. Both medals show some light contact wear, especially around 3 and 9 o'clock, the Crimea with a small EK above the surname.



Condition generally VF, couple of small EK's, Legion D'honneur less so, with chips to enamel, this poorly repaired. Medals contained in a fitted case, no doubt made top fit by a previous collector. Sold with an extremely fine file detailed of research put together by the vendor

A superb and no doubt unique group to Royal Navy Officer who saw a good deal of service during the Russian War and went on to become a well-known Confederate blockade runner during the American Civil War