

Surprise Research Discoveries in the Wells Museum Library

A box that had been undisturbed on an upper shelf for decades has revealed a treasure trove of historic documents, a selection of which is now on display in the museum library.

One of the items has a link to a local person, which is a commission, dated 1781, appointing a John Knight to the command of the sloop "Jane". The commission was given by Sir George Brydges Rodney, who was to become the future Admiral Lord Rodney. George Rodney was born in London, although the family seat was in Rodney Stoke.

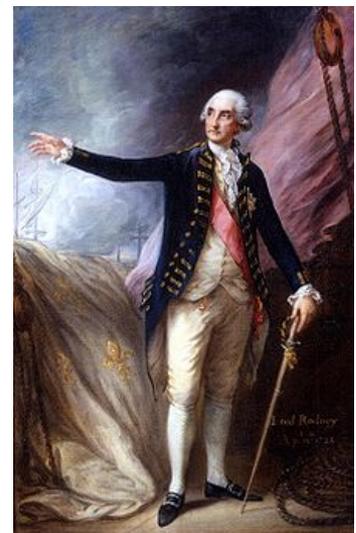
This commission was awarded the

same year in which the British Army surrendered to George Washington at Yorktown, because the French fleet was in Chesapeake Bay, while the British navy was still stuck at New York.

The commission was also only a fortnight before Rodney's famous defeat of the French at Les Saintes in the West Indies on 12 April. This victory secured British dominance of the West Indies – for which Rodney received the thanks of Parliament and a peerage as the first Baron Rodney of Rodney Stoke.

The confirmation of the commission is also signed by John Montagu, the fourth Earl of Sandwich who served as First Lord of the Admiralty no fewer than three times, but who is more famous for giving his name to the humble sandwich.

Sir George Brydges Rodney



A second document on display, dated 1836 carries the seal of King Louis Philippe who was the last king of France (1830-1848). The document is a grant of land in Lorraine to a Francis Joseph Charles Marie, Comte de Mercy-Argenteau, who claimed it by inheritance from his 18th-century predecessor.



King Louis Philippe

The exhibition, aptly entitled A World away from Wells, will be open throughout 2015