

THE DIXIES AT WAR – TALK GIVEN BY P.M. LOSEBY

Sir Wolstan Dixie, Lord Mayor of London. In 1588 there were rumours that the Spanish



were assembling an armada. As part of the preparation for war Sir Wolstan accompanied Queen Elizabeth I to Blackheath to inspect four or five thousand of the City Militia. Although not recorded I think it possible that he could have donated to the Queen's war chest at that time. What is known is that on the 7th of August 1588, just a week after the defeat of the Armada, and following an appeal by the Queen to raise a six-month loan of £51,000 Sir Wolstan donated £1,000.

Wolstan Dixie great nephew of Sir Wolstan Dixie. Wolstan's great uncle had bequeathed

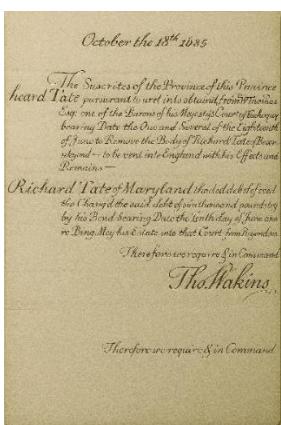


the Bosworth Estate to him with a further bequest to the Skinners Company of £500 which would enable the building of the Grammar School. Wolstan was concerned that building of the school was being delayed because of the Skinners Company's reluctance to release funds, so he decided to take the case to the Chancery Court where he won the day, and the Skinners were

ordered to release Sir Wolstan's bequest to his great nephew who then went ahead and built the school.

He was knighted by James I at Whitehall in 1604. There are two schools (forgive the pun) of thought as to the reason why he was knighted. One is that it was in recognition of his services to education by building the school, but I think it more likely that it was donation to James I to assist his efforts in bringing the 30-year Anglo-Spanish war to a conclusion.

Wolstan Dixie 1st Baronet. At the time of the Civil War Wolstan Dixie was a staunch royalist along with many other members of the county gentry. Of the £25,642 raised in support of Charles I Wolstan Dixie donated £1,825. This donation did not go unnoticed by Cromwell and was investigated by the Committee for Compounding with Delinquents and found guilty. The Bosworth Estate was seized and was not recovered by the Baronet until he paid a fee of £1825 which was the same amount as his donation to King Charles.



Wolstan Dixie also gave further assistance to the King when he paid £1,095 to the King. In return for the payment, he was honoured with the title of a Baronet. The fee was to pay the wages of a troop of 30 soldiers serving in

Ulster over 3 years (Ulster troops shown above right). It also allowed the Dixies to incorporate the red hand of Ulster in their coat of arms.

Wolstan Dixie 3rd Baronet. On his fifth birthday his great uncle and godfather, Thomas Dixie, had given him an enamelled gun whether this was the spark that was needed to create an interest in the military only time would tell.



Dixie had the reputation of being very military minded and dedicated soldier. In 1683 he was the Lieutenant Colonel of the Leicestershire Militia and was probably the Captain Wolstan Dixie who in 1688 had a company in the Earl of Huntingdon's regiment of foot. Probably a painful time for Wolstan belonging to a foot regiment when it is known that he was a long-time sufferer of gout.

In any event there is no record of him having seen any action.

SIR BEAUMONT JOSEPH DIXIE 6TH BARONET 1769 – 1814

Who was he and what was he? Was he a naval officer? A spy working for the government or was he unfortunately caught in the wrong place at the wrong time.

What we do know is that he was a first cousin once removed of the previous holder of the title and was born at Newton Blossomville on 6th July 1769. Burke, Nichols and the Complete Baronetcy all state that he was in the Navy, but no confirmation of this has been found. He is not in the Navy Lists nor in 'Commissioned Officers of the Royal Navy 1660-1815' and both the Admiralty index of Passing Certificates for Lieutenants and the Pay Register of Sub-Lieutenants have been searched without results. He may, of course have been a Warrant Officer or a lower-deck seaman but not knowing the name of any ship he served on, we cannot refer to the appropriate muster book in which particulars of the whole crew of the vessel would be given. There remain the possibilities that he was employed by the Admiralty in some civilian capacity or that his sea service was not with the Royal Navy but in a merchantman.

In all events, it is a fact that Beaumont Dixie was in captivity in France from about 1803 until 1814. The GEC Complete Baronetage says that he was an officer in the RN and was "taken prisoner in France in 1802" but Professor Michael Lewis in 'Napoleon and his British Captives' makes it abundantly clear that Beaumont was a civilian detainee, and not a prisoner of war.

It seems then, that whatever Dixie's previous occupation may have been, he left it either before 1802 or when the Treaty of Amiens was signed in March of that year. We could perhaps suggest that he was visiting France as a private individual during those few months of peace and was trapped there on the resumption of hostilities. Miss Carola Oman in 'Ayot Rectory' tells us that when Britain reopened the war in May 1803 Napoleon in a rage decreed that all Englishmen in France between the ages of 16 and 60 should

instantly be arrested and flung into captivity. From this point we may rely on Professor Lewis's narrative. Initially, Beaumont was confined at Verdun, and it was from there that he made an ingenious attempt to escape. He went down to the River Mense, ostensibly to bathe, and left his clothes on the bank having previously hidden a second outfit somewhat downstream. He hoped then to slip quietly away while the authorities, noting his failure to return and finding the discarded clothing, would assume that he had drowned – as indeed they did at first. Unfortunately, however, his plan failed because, in the eyes of his fellow captives, he had violated the code that the prisoners made when captured that they would never attempt to escape so as to fight the French again and as a result were rewarded their parole and were not kept under lock and key. A British naval officer chanced to witness Dixie's actions and reported them to the senior officer among the prisoners, named Brenton, who in turn informed the Commandant. Consequently, Dixie was recaptured before he had gone very far.

This begs the question as to why he attempted to escape from a comfortable existence of reporting to the authorities in the morning then returning to his lodgings in the town and go about his business unhindered? Had he something to hide or did he feel it his duty to return to England?

It certainly appears to have been accepted by the British prisoners at Verdun that Beaumont Dixie had been in the Navy, for Professor Lewis tells us that the attempted escape caused considerable controversy among them and was complicated by the fact that Dixie, although a civilian "had once been a Naval Officer". Some thought that being a civilian illegally detained should not be expected to conform to the strict officer convention. Brenton, however, maintained that a gentlemen's word was, or should be, his bond even among civilians and that since Dixie had once been an officer, he was all the more culpable; the very fact that he could go out and bathe in the river showed that he was not under lock and key at the time and therefore, by virtue of his parole, was not entitled to try to escape.

As a consequence of this offence Beaumont was moved to Bitche, a prison of evil reputation. He appears, however, to have been a grade one prisoner there; that is to say, he was treated reasonably well, and his rooms were above ground-level. Only two others were equally lucky: Colonel Edward Stack, who was probably a political prisoner, and a wild but influential Irish Colonel named Whalley.

Although Bitche was described as having an evil reputation which one would have thought included strict discipline Sir Beaumont and Colonel Whalley were still able to conduct financial deals which led to a court case. As you can see on this slide, they found themselves in a case of fraud.

I have transcribed the article, but I am not sure in which paper it appeared. The article reads: -

An affair of great interest, that lately came before the Special Criminal Tribunal at Metz, attracted a vast number of spectators.—M. le Chevalier BEAUMONT DIXIE, an English prisoner, accused M. De BALBY of forgery, and Col. WHALEY, a prisoner also, as an accomplice. The complainant sought payment of a bill of exchange for 60,000 francs, accepted by him, and payable at the house of M. PERREGAULT, Paris. He admitted his signature, but insisted that the bill, when signed by him, was only for 1000 francs, which had been since altered to 60,000 francs. A person acquainted with the hand-writing gave evidence against the accused. The Judges did not conceive the proofs sufficient to substantiate the charge: in consequence the Court dismissed the complaint of the Chevalier BEAUMONT DIXIE against Messrs. BALBY and WHALEY, and ordered the parties to pay their own costs; but the Court sent the parties before a Civil Tribunal.

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him was only for 1,000 francs which had since been altered to 60,000 francs. A person acquainted with handwriting gave evidence against the accused. The Judges did not conceive the proofs sufficient to substantiate the charge; in consequence the Court dismissed the complaint of the Chevalier Beaumont Dixie against Monsieur's Balby and Whalley and ordered the parties to pay their own costs, but the Court sent the parties before a Civil Tribunal.

I have not been able to discover what the outcome was of the Civil Tribunal.

From Bitche Sir Beaumont was sent to Sare Libre and eventually was privileged to return to Verdun where he spent the rest of the war. He had apparently become reconciled to his fate and was not again tempted to break his parole, for he is heard of in the summer of 1812 making the best he can of the town amenities and even running a couple of horses in the races. He was liberated in July 1814 and returned to England where, unfortunately, he died only six days after his homecoming and was buried at Bosworth on the 26th of July.

Neither his will nor a grant of administration has been found.

I have included him in this list because although it is not thought that he saw action he was impacted by the Napoleonic War.

My thoughts are that there is no other evidence to support his reason for being in France in 1803 other than he was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

I will bypass the 9th Baronet and move on to the 12th Baronet

SIR GEORGE DOUGLAS DIXIE 12TH BARONET.

Douglas's naval career could be said to have started on April 25th, 1887, aged just eleven years he joined the training ship 'Worcester' at Greenhithe. The Worcester was part of the Thames Nautical Training College. Unfortunately, in December 1887 he contracted scarlet fever and once he had recovered he rejoined his family and never returned to the 'Worcester'.

On January 22nd of 1891 he joined the Royal Navy as a cadet and commenced his training on HMS Britannia.



HMS Britannia along with HMS Hindostan (left) provided training for the sons of affluent families over a period of two years. If the cadets achieved a high mark at the end of their training, they were promoted to midshipman otherwise they joined the fleet as cadets and continued their training before becoming midshipmen.

With some 230 cadets onboard, HMS Britannia's living quarters were tight. Cadets slept in

hammocks which they would have stowed every day. Questions were asked in Parliament about living conditions and incidents of bullying. Douglas never gave a hint of any bullying of him or to other cadets. However, living so close together any contagious diseases such as measles or chicken pox spread rapidly through the ship's company.

Just eleven days after joining Britannia Douglas fell ill and was admitted to the sick bay where he remained until the 27th of February. He does not record what was wrong with him.

On March 20th Douglas reports that the cadets clothing and hammocks were fumigated. No reason given but it must be assumed that the problem was lice.

Further hospitalisation was required on May 15th when he contracted chickenpox. He was to remain in hospital until June 2nd, he records that his treatment was to take carbolic baths.

On October 13th of 1892 he joined HMS Tamar at Portsmouth for Malta where he was to join the Mediterranean Fleet as a cadet having not achieved the necessary mark at HMS Britannia to pass out as a Midshipman. He eventually joined HMS Undaunted along with other cadets. They were billeted in separate living quarters rather than being with the Officers in the Wardroom. He enjoyed this period of training which was both formal classes and developing his leadership skills as a Cadet Officer. The fleet visited various ports in the Eastern Mediterranean where he took the opportunity to go ashore with his fellow cadets.

Douglas appears to have settled in as a cadet onboard. He became skipper of the number 2 whaler which, when on duty, ran a shuttle service to other ships in the harbour as well as ashore. His whaler was entered into various regattas, and he achieved very good results. This success along with him playing cricket for the ship seems to have established him amongst his fellow cadets and senior officers.

On the 25th of March 1893, the Undaunted hit the sand bar outside of Alexandria harbour damaging her keel. Dry docking would be required to carry out repairs, so they sailed to Malta where they stayed until the 27th of May before sailing back to the UK. Whilst in Gibraltar Douglas was picked for the Navy versus Army cricket match.

On 21st June 1893 he travelled to Portsmouth to join HMS Hood. He sailed for Malta on the following day. After attending the funeral of the Governor of Gibraltar on the 28th of June they continued their voyage to Malta.

In his diary he records that between the 30th of June and August 11th he suffered from 'Maltese Fever'. He explains that he was so ill he was given brandy every hour. He does not remember being transferred from HMS Hood to the Royal Naval Hospital at Bighi Villa in Malta. It is assumed that HMS Hood made all haste to Malta to enable the transfer of Douglas to take place. He mentions other patients but not if they were also suffering from the same fever which is known to be highly contagious.

Maltese fever is the name given to brucellosis which is caused by the ingestion of unpasteurised milk or undercooked meat from infected animals or close contact with their secretions.

He returned home to convalesce at his parents' home in Par, his father complained that he spent most of his time at the local billiard hall.

He travelled to Plymouth twice to be examined by a doctor and on November 11th he was pronounced fit for service and was appointed to HMS Resolution part of the Channel Fleet which he joined on December 13th, 1893.

Douglas continued to serve on HMS Resolution and is no longer classed as a Cadet but has been confirmed as a Midshipman. When on leave he stayed with his parents first at their rented accommodation of Rosehill, Par and then at Lyme Regis where his parents had rented 'The Grove'.

On August 17th, 1894, Douglas came home on leave to Lyme Regis.

September 19th Sir Alexander records that "went down to Lyme Regis to see a certain person in connection with a most extraordinary affair. Douglas has been playing of late with a servant girl. We, being justly furious at his goings on and a right royal scolding he has had from us both. All is satisfactorily settled now".

On September 29th Douglas was banished to the Roman Catholic college called Stoneyhurst, near Clitheroe Lancashire. According to Douglas's service record Lady Florence informed the Royal Navy that her son would not be returning to service. Her decision was simply accepted! Just think about that for a moment a note from Lady Florence stating that her son was not returning which was tantamount to resigning his commission was simply accepted bypassing the normal paperwork involved in a resignation. I can only assume that Lady Florence's reputation was such that the Admiralty were not prepared to challenge it.

Lady Florence's action curtailed what was becoming a successful career in the Royal Navy, a career that Douglas recorded that he was enjoying immensely.

Douglas then turned to the army to forge a new career, but he did not pass his physical to gain entrance to the regular army. He weighed 81/2 stones, was 5 feet 41/2 inches tall and could not expand his chest by the requisite 2 inches.

He then decided to join the militia, which he did on September 16th when he joined the 3rd Battalion of the Kings Own Scottish Borderers as a Second- Lieutenant and was based at their



barracks in Dumfries.

On September 30th, 1895, Douglas went to Cedar Court Roehampton. Cedar Court is a 17th century house which existed until 1900. It was occupied by two army tutors William John Bosworth and Alfred Henry Stern. Douglas was sent for what Sir Alexander describes as an 'army crammer'. It is not clear whether the army paid for this course or his

parents.

In May 1896 Douglas returned home to attend the annual militia training camp which was held outside of Dumfries. This enabled Douglas to still visit either his parents or his friends at Comlongon on a regular basis.

On completion of the training camp Douglas returned to Cedar Court on the 5th of September.

Other than a short stay at Glen Stewart for Christmas he continued at Cedar Court until May 1897 when he again attended the annual militia training camp. On August 7th he went back to Cedar Court to sit exams before returning home on September 17th having left Cedar Court for the final time.

On October the 12th he was informed that he had failed his army examination.

In March 1898 he sat his army entrance exam again. This time he passed but failed his medical examination.

Shortly afterwards he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant in the 3rd Battalion of the Kings Own Scottish Borderers.

The turn of the century opened with reports of the 2nd Boer War breaking out and the need for regular army units to be sent to reinforce the forces already in South Africa.

For Douglas, the year opened with news that his militia would be moving to the Belfast garrison to replace regular soldiers who were departing for Cape Town. On the 25th of January, the battalion sailed but, on his arrival, he found the garrison not to his liking so resigned his commission and returned to Dumfries. His official explanation was that his allowance of £100 would not allow him to maintain the lifestyle expected of an officer.

So, this was the first opportunity to see some action against the Sinn Fein or IRA but instead of relishing the thought that he might take part in some form of action he instead declared that the billet he had been allocated was not to his satisfaction resigned his commission and returned home.

However, on the 23rd of March 1906 he rejoined the 3rd Battalion of the Kings Own Scottish Borderers with the rank of Lieutenant but on May 25th, 1910, he resigned his commission once more. This time he gave as his reason "Resigned my commission yesterday as I feel my position under this new scheme absolutely hopeless no chance at all of promotion. It is perfectly sickening the way in which retired line captains are being brought in over one's head".

On August 4th, 1914, war was declared with Germany. Douglas volunteered his services and he joined the 5th Battalion of the Kings Own Scottish Borderers as an acting Captain. His duties included overseeing the recruitment of volunteers in the Dumfries area.

That should have been the end of the 12th Baronet's military career, but fate dealt him another opportunity to see active service.

In 1916 the number of volunteers signing up to fight in the first world war was dwindling so the government introduced the Military Service Act to enable men between the ages of 18 to 41 to be conscripted. In May the conscription was extended to include married men. Who

should fit the criteria none other than the 12th Baronet. He would not be 41 until January 18th, 1917, so when he was conscripted into the army on the 14th of December 1916 his age was 40 years 316 days, he joined the 4th Battalion of the Cameron Highlanders as a Private.

I can imagine his indignation at such a turn of events, but all was not lost because he was discharged on the 11th of April 1917 on

Name	Corps	Reg. No.	Rank	Date of Discharge	Cause of Discharge
Dixie	Cameron Highlanders	20	1/2	11.4.17	Para 39 & XVI
9. D.	4 th Batt.	8	1/2	Enlistment	12.2.
		7	1/2	30.11.16	Sickness

Date of application (a) Badge (b) Medal

No. of File " "

Address of applicant:—

Action taken Discharge T. 9. 226

W5653—8733 60,000 8/16 HWV(P913) G16/1292
9189—1123 8 200,000 11/16

the grounds of being no longer physically fit. At that time his medical records recorded that he was 5feet 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches and his chest was 37 inches.

So ends the military career of the 12th Baronet.

Whilst I am recording the Dixie Baronets contributions to the war effort which as you have heard did not amount to a great deal, I have taken the liberty of including the 12th Baronet's brother Albert Edward Dixie

ALBERT EDWARD DIXIE



Lieutenant Albert Dixie, R.N., also as A.D.C. to the Lord Commissioner.

In September 1893 Albert followed in his brother's footsteps by joining the Royal Navy as a cadet and being sent to the training ship HMS Britannia.

Albert achieved sufficiently high marks not only to pass out as a Midshipman but was awarded nine months seniority which meant that he would be promoted to Sub Lieutenant nine months earlier than those men who had



not achieved such a mark.

On the 14th of September 1895, just prior to his 17th birthday he joined the second-class battleship HMS Nile, part of the Mediterranean Fleet, on which he served until June 1896 when he became ill with 'remittent fever'.

This is a condition where the patient suffers from a type of respiratory infection resulting in a continuous high temperature. He was sent home to convalesce with his family who were now living at Glen Stewart the home of the Dowager Marchioness of Queensbury. He was declared fit for service again and was appointed to HMS Repulse in the Channel Squadron on the 2nd of September 1896. He served on the Repulse until 1898 when he joined HMS Champion which was a training ship. It is not clear what his duties were, but he was promoted to Sub-Lieutenant on the 28th of May 1899.

On the 21st of June 1900 he was appointed to HMS Leda a torpedo gunboat in the Coast Guard Squadron. This was Albert's first experience of a small craft, and it appears, according to an entry in his brother's diary, that he did not enjoy the experience. Before leaving HMS Leda, he was promoted to Lieutenant on the 28th of November 1900.

On the 6th of December 1901 he was appointed as the Navigating Officer to the newly launched HMS Fantome, but it appears that he was only onboard for her trials before he joined the Far East Fleet as the Navigating Officer, of HMS Fearless on the 20th of March 1902'.

In 1904, he was responsible for re-surveying Port Swettenham. The port had originally been surveyed in 1893 but the Approaches comprising of the Straits of North and South Klang had not.

Following his survey ships of a much larger tonnage were able to safely navigate the channel.

Albert was thanked by the Colonial Office of the Federated Malaya States for his survey.

He was also nominated and won the coveted Shadwell Testimonial which is awarded annually to the Navigating Officer whose work is considered exemplary. He was presented with a pocket sextant.

He returned to England in March 1905 onboard his old ship HMS Nile.

On returning to England, he joined the training officer staff of HMS Mercury which at the time was the shore-based navigation school.

On the 12th of March 1907 he was appointed as Navigating Officer to HMS Achilles, an armoured cruiser. Whilst onboard he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-Commander.

In the early part of 1909 Albert was appointed to HMS Bedford (left) as Navigating and First Officer, the appointment as First Officer indicates that he was second in command of HMS Bedford.



Unfortunately, the Bedford, whilst carrying out speed trials off the coast of Korea, ran onto rocks. As Navigating Officer Albert along with the captain were court martialed.

The report of the hearing was as follows: -

On 20th August 1910, four armed cruisers of the China Station, under the command of Vice Admiral Alfred Winsloe aboard HMS Minotaur departed Wei-Hai-Wei, bound for Nagasaki Japan. Winsloe ordered his ships to carry out full power trials. After the ships rounded Shandong Peninsula and entered the Yellow Sea heading southeast, Bedford was leading the cruisers by at least five nautical miles, and each ship was navigating independently. The weather was misty and rainy with Force 3-5 head winds and there was a full moon with spring tide. One of the other cruisers, HMS Kent, checked her navigation when she spotted Ross Island at 05:00 the following morning and found that she was eleven nautical miles north and one nautical mile east of her estimated position. Heavy cloud cover had prevented all four ships from using celestial navigation to fix their position with any certainty, Kent was the only one that spotted a landmark clearly enough to determine her position.

Bedford got a partial star observation at 04:15 but the bridge crew was distracted by spotting land off the port side just seven minutes later and did not make calculations until later.

The navigator was called to the bridge, and he assumed it was Loney Bluff on the southwest side of Quelpart Island in the East China Sea. There was nothing else visible eastwards and the position was within three nautical miles of the ship's estimated position. The stellar observation was finally worked out at 04:35 and it gave a position some thirty nautical miles north of the dead reckoning position although it could not be confirmed.

At 04:40 land was sighted ahead of the ship, and the navigator ordered a turn to starboard to reverse course at 04.46. About ten seconds after starting the turn a rock was spotted off the starboard bow and he attempted to reverse his turn, but Bedford ran aground on Samarang Reef some 24.7 nautical miles north and 8 nautical miles west of her estimated position.

The impact sprung seams between plates on the starboard side of the bow, ripped a hole some thirty feet by twenty feet that flooded the forward boiler room, killing

eighteen of the nineteen crewmen on duty there and tore another six feet by four feet hole in the side of the boiler room.

Lieutenant- Commander Albert Dixie had accounted for the head sea and wind in his dead reckoning, but he failed to account for the currents or tides, expecting them to cancel out.

Captain Edward Fitzherbert and Albert were both found guilty of 'suffering the ship to be stranded'. Albert was found not guilty of negligence. Both were sentenced to be 'dismissed their ship' and severely reprimanded.

HMS Bedford was eventually salvaged and after her armament had been removed was sold for scrap. The Navy received less than £5,000 for the hulk.

On December 3rd Albert was appointed as Navigating Officer on HMS Magnificent a battleship which was part of the Home Fleet. The appointment would suggest that despite the loss of HMS Bedford the Navy still had confidence in his abilities. His Commanding Officer's rating of Albert's conduct was recorded on his service record as being 'very good' which would seem to confirm their confidence

However, Albert must have felt very depressed following the death of 18 of the crew and loss of Bedford. On the 15th of December 1910 he requested to be placed on the retired list. Over Christmas he obviously reconsidered his position and requested that his earlier request be cancelled. This was granted but he was sent on six months leave at half pay presumably for him to regain his confidence.

On August 1st 1911 Albert was appointed as Navigating Officer on HMS Majestic part of the 7th Battle Squadron in the Third Fleet. On the 14th of July 1912 she collided with her sister ship Victorious during manoeuvres. Only slight damage was caused. Although Albert could well have been on the bridge during manoeuvres, he would not have been responsible for the ships conn.

October the 1st 1912 Albert was appointed to HMS Wildfire the name given to the Sheerness Dockyard. His appointment was in the Navigation School, but it is not clear what his duties were.

On June 3rd, 1914, Albert married Margaret Hunter Watson at the Church of the Sacred Heart, Edinburgh.

At the outbreak of war on August 4th Albert was given his first command. He became commanding officer of the Torpedo Boat 6. There is no record of his deployment or what action, if any, he was involved in.



Albert Edward Dixie
Air Navigation for
Flight Officers

On May 6th, 1915, he transferred to HMS Victory, the Portsmouth Dockyard, where he became an instructor at the Navigation School, and in the course of his duties he became adept as an ariel observer. He authored the book Air Navigation for Flight Officers which is still available to purchase.

Albert's only child was born on July 15th, 1916, he was named Edward Archibald Wolstan Beaumont Dixie. He joined the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry

attaining the rank of Captain. Unfortunately, Edward was killed in action on the 26th of May 1940 at Dunkirk aged 23.

It is worth considering that if Edward had outlived his cousin Sir Wolstan, who died in 1975, he would have inherited the title to become the 14th Bart and furthermore if he had fathered a son that child would have become the present-day 15th, Bart.!

On June 6th, 1918, Albert transferred to HMS Crescent, the navigation school in the Rosyth Dockyard. where he remained until he requested to go on the retirement list in 1920. Tragically he died on the 16th of May 1920. The only cause of death was given as gastroenteritis, but most records give cause of death as 'unknown'. His wife received a gratuity of £500 but no indication on his service records that she was entitled to any other support from the Navy.

SIR ALEXANDER DIXIE 9TH BARONET



Sir Alexander was born in 1780 and joined the Royal Navy on the 31st of October 1795 as a first-class cadet.

The first ship he served on was HMS Amazon and what a baptism of fire he encountered. Amazon was a newly built frigate; she was part of the Inshore Squadron blockading the port of Brest. On the 20th of April 1796 she, along with the Indefatigable gave chase after the French ship Virginie which was eventually captured. This was followed on the 13th of June

when she assisted in the capture of Les Trois Coleures off Brest.

On the 11th of December 1796 the French fleet broke through the blockade and headed for Bantry Bay Ireland, but storms broke up the fleet which returned to Brest.

On the 13th of January 1797 in the company of the Indefatigable the Amazon encountered the French ship Droits de L'Homme, a 74-gun ship of the line. Frigates rarely attacked such ships as they were heavily outgunned but due to heavy seas the French could not deploy their full gun power. The two frigates valiantly engaged the French ship, the gallant action continuing until 4:20am on the 14th of January when land was sighted ahead forcing the frigates to break off the action. Amazon was severely damaged and was driven onto a lee shore at Audierne Bay Isle Bas. Despite the pounding of the sea the surviving crew including Sir Alexander scrambled ashore and were taken prisoner.

Sir Alexander had only been in the Navy for fourteen months but had seen action, shipwrecked and taken prisoner!

After ten months of painful captivity, he was released and on the 24th of March 1798 rejoined his old commanding officer Captain Reynolds on the frigate La Pomone which was a captured French vessel that had been incorporated into the British Navy. In 1799 he took part in the Anglo-Russian expedition to Holland with the objective of the restoration of the House of Orange. Following this La Pomone sailed for the Mediterranean but whilst

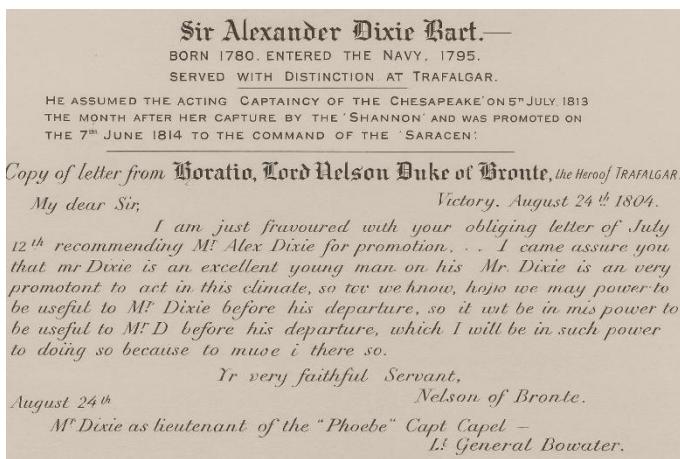
on passage Alexander narrowly avoided capture for the second time when they encountered a powerful French squadron.

In 1801 Sir Alexander accompanied Captain Reynolds to join the Orion and sail for the West Indies. However, according to the log of Orion she did not sail for the West Indies until the 7th of February 1802 and was under the command of Captain Cuthbert not Reynolds.

In the early part of 1803 hostilities with the French reopened and Sir Alexander returned from the West Indies to the Mediterranean onboard HMS Canopus which was a former French vessel that had been captured at the Battle of the Nile.

He joined HMS Victory with the rank of Acting Lieutenant under the command of Captain Hardy whilst on the Victory he was promoted to Lieutenant.

On August 24, 1804, Alexander left HMS Victory for HMS Phoebe. Nelson wrote the following in response to a letter he had received from Lieutenant-General Bowater.



“I am just favoured with your obliging letter of July 12th recommending Mr. Alex Dixie for promotion. I can assure you that independent of my wish to oblige you that Mr Dixie is a very excellent young man and that his not having been long ago promoted by me, has arose from the healthiness of this climate, where nobody falls sick, much less die, and from our not being able to get at Monsieur La Gouche, but I hope it will be

in my power to be useful to Mr. D. before departure, which will, I do assure you will give real pleasure to my dear General”.

He joined HMS Phoebe in September 1803 under the command of Captain Thomas Bladen Capel.

In March 1804 the Hindostan and Phoebe sailed from Gibraltar to join Nelson off Toulon, but the vessels became separated during a gale in the Gulf of Lyon. Shortly thereafter Hindostan caught fire and was totally destroyed.

On the 13th of June Phoebe and Amazon made ready to engage two French frigates anchored under the guns of the north most fort at Toulon. The fort fired at Phoebe, but she was out of range. When the French fleet left harbour the British vessels re-joined their squadron, however the French fleet returned to port without engaging.

August 24th, 1804, Phoebe and Childers captured the French vessel Venscab.

I want to take a timeout at this point as some of you might not appreciate the significance

of recording the capture of ships otherwise known as prizes.

Capture of these vessels was quite a lucrative sideline for the ship's company whose pay was poor by any standards. The prizes were taken to a port in this case Malta where the cargo could be sold off at auction and the money passed to the Admiralty who in turn shared it with the officers and crew of the ships involved in the capture.

London, December 5, 1807.
NOTICE is hereby given to the Officers and
Ships' Companies of His Majesty's Ships Phoebe
and Childers, who were on board at the Capture
of the Venscab, on the 24th August 1804, that
the Account of Sales will be delivered into the
Registry of the Admiralty Court, pursuant to Act
of Parliament.

Wilson and M'Ierheney, for Wm. Pemberton,
of Malta, Agent.

The transaction was recorded in the London Gazette.

It reads: - "London December 5th, 1807

Notice is hereby given to the Officers and Ship's Company of His Majesty's Ships Phoebe and Childers who were onboard at the capture of the Venscab on the 24th of August 1804 that the Account of Sales will be delivered into the Registry of the Admiralty Court pursuant to the Act of Parliament."

You will see that it was a notice to the ship's crew which was to ensure that the Admiralty didn't pocket the money. I have not been able to discover if prize money was paid to the families of those who had been subsequently killed in battle.

On the 10th of November Phoebe captured the Cacciatore. Then Phoebe and Hydra shared the prize of the capture between the 9th and 15th November of the vessels Paulina and Sesostris.

4th April 1805 HMS Victory was passing the island of Toro off Mallorca when Phoebe brought news that the French fleet under Admiral Pierre-Charles Villeneuve had escaped from Toulon. Whilst Nelson made for Sicily to see if the French were heading for Egypt, Villeneuve entered Cadiz to link up with the Spanish fleet.

Captain Capel, in Phoebe was put in charge of a small squadron of five frigates and two bomb vessels with the mission of covering Sicily, Sardinia and the route to Egypt should the French and Spanish decide to sail in that direction. Later in the summer Phoebe joined the blockade of Cadiz.

The arrival of Phoebe, Naiad, Sirius, Juno and Niger off Cadiz allowed Nelson to detach them to disrupt local shipping supplying provisions for the Franco-Spanish combined fleet in Cadiz.

In October, the frigate squadron was acting as the eyes of the British fleet. When the combined fleet put to sea on the 19th of October Phoebe was first in line, followed by Naiad and the third-rate ship, Defence. Captain Capel spotted the combined fleet's exit and notified Nelson. As the combined fleet approached the British over the next couple of days, the frigates shadowed it, reporting on its movements.

During the subsequent Battle of Trafalgar Phoebe relayed Nelson's signals to the rest of the fleet and remained close to the action although she did not actually engage the enemy.

Four days after the Battle of Trafalgar intelligence reported that Spanish line-of-battle ships El Rago and Neptuno had run on shore at the entrance of the river San Luca.

Alexander volunteered, for what many thought was a suicide mission, to destroy the ships. He along with twelve men successfully carried out the mission. Why did he volunteer for such a mission? I am of the opinion he did so because his peers had been involved in the Battle of Trafalgar and Alexander was disappointed that he had not been part of the action.

Alexander would have entered the estuary under darkness as there was a storm brewing in the Atlantic. Beached his boat as close to the vessels as he dared then made his way along the shore to blow up the two vessels.

You will see from this slide a drawing of the two vessels on fire.

The narrative reads as follows: -

Spanish ships El Rago of 100 guns and Neptuno of 84 guns at the entrance of the river



Spanish Ships El Rago of 100 Guns and Neptuno of 84 at the entrance of the River S² Luca protected by numerous Cavalry, Infantry, two Strong Towers, and about 50 Gun boats Burnt by Lieut⁴ Dix of H.M Ship Phoebe, on the 25th Oct: 1805, 4 days after the Battle of Trafalgar those ships had drove on shore after after the Battle, they had all their Guns and

San Luca protected by numerous cavalries, infantry two strong towers and about fifty gunboats. Burnt by Lieutenant Dixie of HMS Phoebe on the 25th of October 1805 four days after the Battle of Trafalgar these ships had drove ashore after the battle. They had all of their guns and stores on board which were destroyed.

It is worth noting that British individual military gallantry medals were not introduced until 1854 when Queen Victoria awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal had either that or the DSO been around then Alexander would surely have been awarded one of these medals for leading the raiding party.

In the gale that followed a few days later Donegal and Phoebe assisted two of the captured ships, Swiftsure and Bahama with the result that they were saved.

Sir Alexander's next appointment was on the 19th of December 1806 to the Colossus commanded by Captain Jas Nicoll Morris, but he left that ship in November 1807 and

returned home where he remained on half pay until February 1811 when he joined HMS Minerva which sailed to Newfoundland on the 6th May to take up convoy duties from North America to the West Indies.

Over the next two years Sir Alexander served on HMS Armide and Plantagenet. It is possible that whilst serving on HMS Plantagenet it came under attack whilst moored near Norfolk Virginia with torpedoes designed by Robert Fulton, no damage was sustained.

There now appears a great deal of confusion as to the part played by Sir Alexander Dixie in the epic battle between HMS Shannon and the American ship Chesapeake.

John Sayer in his account says that “It appears that he was transferred to the ‘Shannon’ frigate under Captain Philip Broke (left below) before she fought her famous single ship action with the ‘Chesapeake’ on the 1st of June 1813 for he was made acting Captain of the captured American ship on the 5th of July and sailed her to Halifax”.

Whereas O’Byrne in his ‘Naval Biographical Dictionary’ states that Sir Alexander was on HMS Plantagenet at the time of the battle and was not appointed as Acting Captain of Chesapeake until 5th of July 1813.

However, even if Alexander did not take part in the battle, it played a part in his career, so



I feel it still worthwhile to examine the action that took place. This battle, though only involving two ships, proved to be pivotal in what is known as the 1812 War with America and this particular battle as the Battle of Boston Harbour. It was a much-needed boost to the morale of the Royal Navy who had suffered a string of defeats and for the Americans used to victories this was a hard pill to swallow especially with the loss of one of their naval heroes Captain James Lawrence (left below).

The battle itself only lasted 10 to 15 minutes but in that time 71 men were killed and 155 wounded some mortally. 332 Americans were captured.

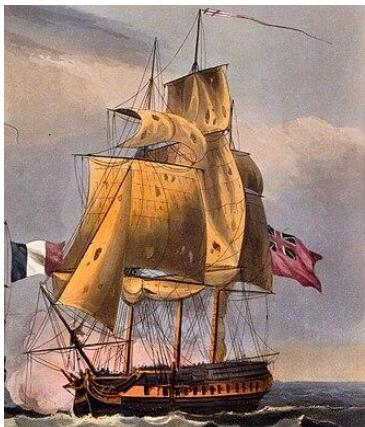
Probably one of the shortest battles in the Royal Navy’s history but has attracted so many accounts many of which differ.

I think it fair to take a little time to look at what I believe actually took place on June 1st, 1813. HMS Shannon under the Captaincy of Philip Broke had been on patrol for 56 days. Broke was an astute tactician who had refined various modifications to the ship’s cannons to ensure that they could be fired accurately irrespective of sea conditions and the stability of his vessel. He took advantage of his time on patrol to exercise his gun crews to ensure they fired accurately and the time it took to reload was minimal. He also created hypothetical scenarios for the crew to either defend their ship if boarded or alternatively being part of a boarding party. The method he used to improve their swordsmanship was called ‘singlestick’ which used wooden sticks with



wicker handguards. To be whacked with one of these sticks during a duel certainly concentrated their minds.

Captain Lawrence on the other hand had only been in command since the 20th of May. The majority of his experienced crew had not signed on because of a dispute over prize



money which meant that the Chesapeake crew had only had two occasions to do gun practice or to gel as a team.

On the 1st of June Shannon patrolled up and down the entrance of Boston harbour in clear view of Captain Lawrence and citizens of Boston. Captain Broke in exasperation stopped a passing boat and ordered them to deliver a note to Captain Lawrence which basically said: - "Sir as a gentleman I ask you to come out and let us do battle. I have been at sea for 56 days and I am running out of provisions so can't remain here for more than 24 hours"

Captain Lawrence buoyed by his recent defeat of HMS Peacock in which he had observed that Royal Navy gun crews were abysmal, viewed the Shannon which had been at sea for such a long time, and he saw a bedraggled ship with an ensign that had seen



better times. He severely underestimated the abilities of HMS Shannon as a fighting unit and probably thought that this would be a quick victory before dinner.

Chesapeake was in spanking condition after its refit and had run up three new flags, the one at the main mast read 'free trade and sailors rights', this

probably referred to the fair distribution of prize money and the effects of the British blockade. Late in the afternoon when the tide had turned and a breeze had set up; he left harbour followed by many small boats packed with Bostonians anticipating witnessing yet another victory for their navy.

Captain Broke addressed his crew prior to the battle exhorting his men to show courage and that England expected them to be victorious; He also ordered his gun crews to fire on the gun deck of Chesapeake not to try and dismast her.

The Chesapeake closed on Shannon at speed before letting her sails fly in an effort to reduce her speed. He was still travelling at two or three knots faster than Shannon when he had closed to 100 feet. The order was given to fire a broadside as they passed but owing to the roll of the ship most of the cannon balls were fired into the sea. A second broadside did some damage to Shannons fo'c'sle unlike the Chesapeake's gun crew the British were able to reload

and fire a second broadside before the badly damaged Chesapeake had overtaken Shannon thus exposing her stern to the highly trained quarter deck cannon gun crew who



fired a single shot that destroyed her steering gear. She started to drift back towards Shannon and as they passed her rigging caught in the Shannon's anchor fluke. Chesapeake's spanker boom swung over the deck of the Shannon where Mr Stevens, Shannon's boatswain lashed the boom inboard but in doing so his arm was crushed and required amputation. His action ensured that the ships could not drift any further apart. Before the boarding party moved onto the deck of Chesapeake, they were ordered to rake the upper deck with musket fire which forced the undisciplined American crew to seek shelter on the lower deck. One of the casualties of the initial fusillade was Captain Lawrence who was hit by a musket ball in the stomach. As he was carried to the lower deck he cried to his retreating crew "Don't give up the ship" a cry that has been echoed by crews of American ships down the ages.

Lieutenant Charles Leslie Falkiner along with Captain Broke led the boarding party from the Shannon onto the Chesapeake and with the Americans below deck any counterattack from them was stopped by their escape route being blocked by the boarding party and the ship was captured.



It is believed that five of Chesapeake's crew were British deserters who knew that if captured they would be executed and it was they who sought out Captain Broke and attacked him. Captain Broke

injured the first assailant but a second struck a blow to his head which cut his scalp open to the bone. Captain Broke fell to his knees but before his attacker could strike the fatal blow he and his colleagues were overwhelmed by members of the Shannon's crew. Captain Broke survived but he was subsequently invalided out of the Navy.

Lieutenant Falkiner was given the responsibility of guarding the 332 American prisoners. The prisoners were rebellious and Falkiner had ordered that holes be cut into the deck above the stockade so that cannons armed with grapeshot could be discharged if the prisoners continued to show dissent. Not sure if he had considered whether the firing of the cannons would blow the bottom out of Chesapeake, but it certainly calmed the prisoners down.

As we have heard Captain Broke was severely wounded, his First Officer was killed by friendly fire whilst attempting to hoist the white ensign on Chesapeake's main mast, his third officer was also killed. This left Lieutenant Falkiner to take command of Chesapeake and escorted by Shannon, now under the temporary command of Lieutenant Wallis, made their way to Halifax where they arrived on the 6th of June to receive a tumultuous reception from the citizens. Accounts simply report that they sailed from Boston to Halifax, but it must have taken a great deal of skill and seamanship to sail the damaged vessels some 600 miles.

The Chesapeake was made ready for a voyage across the Atlantic and as we have heard Sir Alexander was appointed as acting Captain of the Chesapeake to sail her home. It is



not recorded how long Alexander served as Captain or what the duties of Chesapeake were once, she had been incorporated into the Royal Navy. What is known is that Chesapeake was sold in



1819 for £500, some of the timbers were used to build the 'Chesapeake Mill' at Wickham. It was a watermill which was operational until the 1970s.

The owner continued to live there until 2002 when he died. The building is now used as an antique shop, the exposed timbers from Chesapeake can still be viewed.

Returning to the naval career of Sir Alexander we now enter the last chapter when he joined HMS Saracen. He was promoted on the 7th of June 1814 to Acting Commander, Captain of HMS Saracen.

Between the 21st of October and the 6th of November, and the 29th of November through to the 19th of December 1814, HMS Saracen was in the Chesapeake Bay with a squadron and so shared in the proceeds of several captures. During the first period the squadron captured the schooners Franklin and Saucy Jack. During the second period the squadron captured goods from the transports Lloyd and Abeona, and the schooner Mary.

On the 30th of October 1814 Saracen was at St Mary's River Maryland. A raiding party from Saracen landed at St. Inogoes and proceeded to plunder the Jesuit mission, known as St. Inogoes Manor, including St Ignotius Church, which was a part of the manor at the time. When the raiding party returned, Dixie sent one of his Lieutenants under a flag of truce to return what had been taken and to convey a letter of apology to the priest and residents of the settlement there.

During the winter of 1814/15, Saracen was still in the Chesapeake area. One night, she slipped from her anchorage and destroyed sixteen American vessels, a truly remarkable piece of action.

Saracen then sailed for the coast of France to participate in the effort to intercept Napoleon after his defeat at the Battle of Waterloo. Saracen landed arms at Dieppe, where Dixie succeeded in establishing the white flag of the Bourbons.

Dixie was still in command on the 7th of July 1815 at the capture of the French vessels Amiable, and Antoinette and Marie. HMS Saracen, Harrier, Towey and Euryalus all shared in the prize money. Dixie finally paid the Saracen off on the 9th of September 1815.

Commander Dixie was then placed on half pay until he retired with the rank of Captain in 1851.

In reviewing the services of this officer, we may observe that he has assisted at the capture and destruction of 23 sail of the line, besides a number of frigates, sloops of war and privateers; and that he has been once shipwrecked, once imprisoned, and twice wounded in battle. Sir Alexander's resting place is in the churchyard of St. Peter's Parish

Church Market Bosworth. Not far from his ancestral home, Bosworth Hall. Sadly, the weather has gradually reduced the anchor and chain which can be seen in the image below.

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