



Commander W. DRAKE RN

[1850 – 1940]



Commander Drake was President of the Club in 1893, 1895, 1897, and 1899 ¹

Commander Drake was a Foundation Member of the Club in 1892.

Walton Drake was born on 16 May 1850 at Exeter, England.

His father was Augustus Drake [1821-1912] who was born in Norwich and died Exmouth – a graduate in medicine from Cambridge, and sometime Magistrate for the City of Exeter. His mother was Lydia Jackson (née Drake) [1824-1910]. She was born in Yorkshire and died Exmouth. It is not known if she was related to Augustus Drake.²

¹ *Commander Drake's multiple terms of office as President are explained by the following. Under the Club's original 1892 "Rules" or "Constitution", the Presidency of the Club alternated "as of right" between the senior Army and Naval Commanders in the Colony (and later the State) of Queensland. A separate elected position of "Chairman of Committee" also existed who, as implied by its name, actively managed the Club through its volunteer Committee Members – including Honorary Secretary and Treasurer. In 1910 the Rules were amended to reflect a governance model, which has essentially existed ever since, where the elected President chaired the Club Committee*

² It has been reported that Captain Drake claimed a lineage to the Elizabethan mariner Sir Walter Drake.

We thank the History Interest Group and other volunteers who have researched and prepared these Notes. The series will be progressively expanded and developed. They are intended as casual reading for the benefit of Members, who are encouraged to advise of any inaccuracies in the material.

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Walton had five siblings:

- Augustus Fitt [1848-1916] Born in Scotland and died at Hove, Sussex. A solicitor who married Agnes Katherine (née Andrewes) [1847-1917] in Suffolk in 1881. They had two sons.
- Lydia [1849-1951] Born and died in Exeter. She did not marry.
- Isabel [1852-1934] Born and died Exeter. Married Charles Charretie Turner [1828-1885], a clergyman, in 1879 in Exeter. No known children
- Herbert [1854-1890] Born in Exeter and died in Jerusalem. An MA from Cambridge and a clergyman who did not marry. He was with General Gordon in Syria in 1883.
- Mabel [1859-1879] Born and died in Exeter.

Walton Drake married Isabel Maude (née Pixley) [1862-1921] on 1 January 1889 in Sydney. She was born in Bengal and died in Sydney.³ They had no children.

He enlisted in the Royal Navy as a Cadet on HMS *Britannia* in 1864. He became a Midshipman on HMS *Endymion* in 1866; a Sub-Lieutenant in 1870 - serving on HM Ships *Excellent*, *Aurora* and *Devastation*⁴; and a Lieutenant in 1875 - serving on HM Ships *Lily*, and the hospital ship *Victor Emanuel* in Hong Kong. His seagoing postings in the Home and Far East Fleets were interspersed with shore training and administrative postings including Hong Kong.

He was promoted Lieutenant Commander in 1882. He retired from Royal Navy and went on half-pay in 1890, when he joined the Queensland Naval Defence Force.

Drake had travelled to Australia in 1871 as a Sub-Lieutenant RN, and again privately in 1879 on SS *Lusitania*.⁵

He served as First Lieutenant on *Wolverine* in NSW, then he came to Brisbane in 1885 and was appointed training officer of the Queensland Naval Brigade – seconded from the Royal Navy.

Drake was acting and then permanent Commandant of the Queensland Naval Defence Force from 1891 until relieved in 1900 by Captain (afterwards Rear Admiral Sir William) Creswell – also the Club President in 1901.

At that time the Queensland fleet consisted of the gun boats HMQS *Paluma* and HMQS *Gayundah*⁶ (which was commanded by Drake in 1889), together with two small torpedo boats, the *Midge* and the *Mosquito*, supported by various auxiliary craft.

He was for a time Administrator, Norfolk Island (1903-07). While there in 1905 he (together with his brother-in-law Arthur Pixley) organised the location and recovery of the anchor of first fleet vessel HMS *Sirius* which had been lost off the island in 1792 - and its transport and display in Macquarie Place, Sydney. After this posting he retired and journeyed back to England. He returned later in the year on SS *Runic*.

He was promoted Captain in 1911 and appointed the District Naval Officer, Hobart until he went to the Retired List in January 1914. During this period, he oversaw the construction of the shore establishment HMAS *Huon*. On the outbreak of War in August 1914 he was reactivated to his previous role until November 1919. To this day the *Captain Walton Drake Cup* match is traditionally

³ Her parents were Arthur Watt Pixley [1829-1869] and Jane (née Haggard) [1833-1878]. They also had a son – Arthur (junior) [1860-1936] who was the father of Club President (1937-38) and Life Member (1977) Lieutenant Commander Norman S. Pixley CMG, MBE, VD, KtON, ADC, RANR. Thus, Isabel and Walton Drake were Norman's aunt and uncle.

⁴ HMS *Devastation* was the first of a class of Royal Navy ocean-going capital ships that did not carry sails.

⁵ Not to be confused with RMS *Lusitania* [1907-1915]

⁶ These had been purchased from England by the McIlwraith Government and delivered in 1885.

played between Royal Hobart Golf Club and the ship's company of the in-port ship or Navy personnel during the Hobart Regatta.

Commander Walton Drake was President of the Club for four years while Commandant of the Queensland Naval Defence Force 1892-1900.

In retirement he lived in Hobart, and then in Sydney from about 1930.

Captain Drake died in September 1940 in Sydney.⁷

Sources included:

- Various web pages
- *United Service Club, Queensland: The First Century, 1892-1992* by Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton
- Club Meeting Minutes, Annual Reports, and sundry documents
- Trove
- AWM, NAA and DVA archives
- UK National Archives
- Government gazettes

⁷ Following custom of the day, Drake retained his “RN” post nominal in recognition of its “seniority” over the Queensland Naval Defence Force (QNF), Commonwealth Naval Forces (CNF), and Royal Australian Navy (RAN) postnominals to which he was successively entitled.