

Captain Walcott

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By Carl Whiteley



Capt. C. C. Walcott pictured before his retirement from active service in the last war.

AFTER nearly a century, Christchurch has once again a member of the distinguished Walcott family living in the town.

He is 80-year-old Captain Colpoys Cleland Walcott, C.B.E., R.N. (retired), of 21d, High Street.

Captain Walcott, who is a close relative of Admiral John Edward Walcott, former MP. for Christchurch and Bournemouth, of Winkton House, finally retired from active service in 1945 after a distinguished career in the Royal Navy.

He was to have spent his retirement at Plymouth where his house and garden overlook the Hoe. But because of ill-health he was told he could have the choice of living near two hospitals where he could be given special treatment for his illness.

The two hospitals were Boscombe and Bristol. He chose Boscombe and decided to make his home in Christchurch because of his family connections with the town.

FAMILY'S HISTORY

He has been bed-ridden since 1953, but with a very active mind he is able to devote a good deal of time to the study of his family's history. He chose High Street for his home to be near the Priory where the old Walcott family had close associations.

The Captain's relative, Admiral Walcott, was born at Winkton House in 1790 and entered the Navy at the age of 12. At 14 he was midshipman in H.M.S. "Lively" and was present at the capture of three Spanish frigates and the destruction of a fourth off Cape St. Mary in 1804, and took part in an action with the Spanish 74-gun ship "Gloriosa" off Cadiz in 1805.

The Admiral's father was Col. Walcott, who was in command of the Loyal Christchurch Volunteer Artillery at Christchurch Barracks where he was engaged in the putting down of smuggling.

PICTURE IN COUNCIL CHAMBER

Admiral Walcott's picture is to be seen in Christchurch Council Chamber for he was M.P. for the division for 16 years and is believed to have been the first Conservative member in the area. The Admiral's first cousin was Admiral Lord Edmund Lyons, born at Whitehays, Burton, in 1790, who was in charge of the Black Sea Fleet during the Crimean War.

In January 1856, he was honoured by the citizens of Christchurch for his part in the Crimea and he made a triumphant ride through the town in a carriage drawn by bluejackets. With him was his cousin and also in the party was Flag Lieut. Bickerton Lyons, Sir Edmund's son who, 35 years later, nominated Captain Walcott for naval service.

The Walcott family tree goes back to time immemorial and mentioned on the pedigree are three Kings. Their present coat-of-arms was given to the family by Henry V.

Born at Maidenhead on July 31, 1878, Capt. Walcott was educated at Eastman's, Southsea, from where he passed into "Britannia" at Dartmouth at the age of 12½.

Two years later he joined H.M.S. "Achilles" for passage to the Mediterranean to join H.M.S. "Trafalgar", flagship of Rear Admiral Domville.

And so started a naval career for yet another member of the Walcott family. Capt. Walcott's father was an architect, but a naval life had always been planned for Colpoys. The sea was in his blood.

In 1895 he caught scarlet fever at Salonika and was sent down to Beirut and taken to a

German hospital. After his illness he was given the nickname "Trilby" because he was not allowed to have his hair cut, only trimmed at the back, for a month. And on one occasion he got into trouble with the doctor because he played football while still on the sick list. It was discovered that his heart was weak and he was relieved of all duties except study.

Three months passed before he was eventually exonerated and sent back to sea in H.M.S. "Blenheim". A year later he was appointed to H.M.S. "Calypso" and sailed across the Atlantic via Canary Isles and Madeira and visited all the West Indian islands, eventually arriving at Bermuda. Most of the voyages were under sail.

COLLIDED WITH SCHOONER

While sailing into harbour at Bermuda H.M.S. "Calypso" collided with the fishing schooner "Colpoys" and it was discovered that the captain and most of the crew of the schooner were West Indians and named Colpoys, being descendants of the slaves of Admiral Sir John Colpoys, an ancestor of Capt. Walcott, who was for some years in the West Indies at the end of the 18th century, eventually as Admiral in charge of the fleet. It was usual in those days for slaves to take the name of their master.

Another memorable occasion while completing his time as midshipman was a cocktail party on board the German ship "Hohenzollern" at which the German Emperor was present. "I got my behind kicked by the German Emperor for looking at pictures instead of singing at the sing-song," recalled the Captain.

After completing all his examinations, Capt. Walcott was appointed to H.M.S. "Shark" at Devonport, and in Oct. 1919 was appointed to H.M.S. "Centurion", flagship of Sir Edward Seymour, C. in C. China Fleet. During a stay in the waters of Borneo he visited Brunei and Sarawak and had some wonderful picnics in the unknown jungle of Borneo.

He was sent to Hong Kong, then Wei Hai Wei and finally Taku where he took part in the Boxer rising.

Capt. Walcott went to Peking with despatches and was officially the last officer to leave the town. On returning, he took on duties as pilot of the Taku Bar and then took part in the taking of Taku forts and was later with Cmdr. Beatty at the taking of Hsiku arsenal.

BOXER RISING

The Boxer rising provided him with some of the most exciting experiences of his naval career, many of which he is still able to recall in detail.

He was in India for 13 years and during a spell out of the Navy was a representative for a tool company on the North West frontier, and in 1937-38 was a naval observer in the Spanish war. He was the first physical training officer in the Navy and after completing his term of active service in 1919 was awarded the C.B.E. For a time after this he was the naval adviser to a film company which built Elstree studios.

Capt. Walcott was recalled on several occasions, the last of which was for service during the last war.

REFEREED BOXING

An original member of the Imperial Service Boxing Association, he was chairman of the Running Committee responsible for the international boxing tournament at the Albert Hall after the first world war. He refereed boxing in the public schools championships on two occasions and in the Navy and Army championships. He also refereed rugby and belonged to the London Society of Referees.

Capt. Walcott came to Christchurch earlier this year. He had visited the town on only one occasion when a small boy. He now intends making the town his home.