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PEMBURY'S OWN VICTORIA CROSS HOLDER

DID YOU know that Pembury boasts a former resident who won the Victoria Cross, our highest award for gallantry?

Matthew Charles Dixon was born on 5 February 1821 in Avranches, north-west France. His ancestors, including his father, had all served in the forces. His father, also Matthew Charles Dixon, served in the Royal Engineers and his second wife, Emma Dalton, gave birth to our hero.



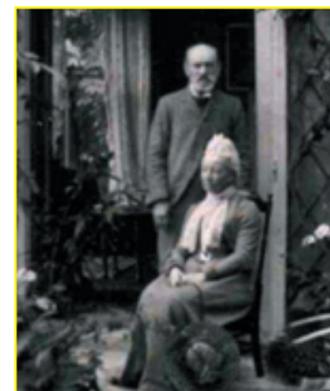
Matthew Charles Dixon, VC

After passing through the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, young Matthew received his commission into the Royal Artillery on 19 March 1839 as a second lieutenant. He then served nine years in Ceylon, and six years in Jamaica.

The end of 1853 saw Russia and Turkey at war and France and Great Britain as allies. The latter decided that Russian power in the Black Sea needed to be broken by crippling the great naval base at Sevastopol. Thus on 28 March 1854 war was declared against Russia by France and Great Britain, and a month later embarkation for the Crimea commenced.

Captain Dixon arrived with reinforcements in March 1855, and was placed in command of four officers and one hundred and thirty-one men posted to No.5 Company, 9th Battalion. This followed the Battles of the Alma (Sept. 1854), Balaclava (Oct. 1854), Inkerman (Nov. 1854) and Eupatoria (Feb. 1855).

On 17 April the magazine of No.9 Battery (under Capt. Dixon) blew up when a shell fell on it, wounding ten men, and disabling five guns. A large crater was formed, the parapet knocked down, and all the guns but one were buried in debris.



The Russians manned the parapets and cheered and opened a concentrated fire on No.9 Battery. However the remaining gun was at once turned round on the enemy. They continued firing until sunset (some seven hours), despite the heavy concentration of fire from the Russians. This action was to earn Captain Dixon the Victoria Cross.

Sevastopol did not fall until several bombardments had taken place. The allies finally entered and occupied the fortress on 9 September after a 322 day siege. In all, the allies lost more than 10,000 men in the final assault, the Russians 13,000.

In January 1856 Captain Dixon and the Royal Artillery returned home from the Crimea, and on arrival they were reviewed by Queen Victoria. On

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PEMBURY'S OWN VICTORIA CROSS HOLDER

– continued

30 March the Treaty of Paris brought peace to the Crimea, making the Black Sea neutral territory.

In June 1856 Lt. Colonel Dixon proceeded to the Channel Islands. He received the Victoria Cross (announced 24 February 1857) on 2 August 1857 on Southsea Common, Portsmouth. This was presented by Queen Victoria. Further acts of bravery in the Crimea brought Lt. Colonel Dixon the Campaign Medal, Knight of the Legion of Honour, 5th Class of the Medjidie (Turkey) and the Turkish Crimea Medal.



On May 13 1862 he married Henrietta Letitia Eliza Bosanquet, daughter of an Admiral at Enfield Parish Church. From 1862-1866 he served again in Jamaica.

On 28 August 1868 he was appointed Regimental Colonel, and on 19 March 1869 he retired from the army aged 48 on full pay with the honorary rank of Major General RA.

Richard Snow

Major-General Dixon's retirement and life in Pembury will be continued in the next issue of the Pembury Village News.

PEMBURY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

A BUSY YEAR for the Pembury School Association culminated in a highly successful Christmas Fair at Pembury School. While the main attraction was no doubt Santa in his grotto as usual, there were plenty of other stalls and entertainment to keep everyone happy. Children could buy a secret gift for their parents; make Christmas decorations, enter various tombolas and raffles, including the phenomenally popular Chocoholics tombola, and try their luck at a new game involving knocking Santa off his chimney! Parents could enjoy a glass of mulled wine while browsing the many craft and gift stalls. An amazing £3000 was raised for school funds.



Plans afoot for the first half of 2010 include a disco and magic show, a kids' catwalk fashion show, a film night and, of course, the summer fair. This will be held on Saturday 3 July in the school grounds and promises to be a rather different format this year. Details will be released soon!

The PSA would like to extend a warm thank you to everyone in the village who has supported PSA events. With your help, over the last 18 months we have bought new tables and benches for the dinner hall, chairs for the ICT suite, playground markings, a storage shed and many more items to benefit the whole school for many years to come.

Julie Phillipson

OUT & ABOUT CLUB

THE OUT & About Club have organised a number of trips for 2010. If you would like to receive details of these outings, together with booking forms, please contact Sue Giles on 823318 or pick up a copy from the Upper Church porch.

On Tuesday 23 March, you can join the **Sinister Side Guide** as they seek out ghosts, gangsters and the mystery of Jack the Ripper. The tour is coach-based, so you can be entertained while keeping warm and there is no walking involved, except to the bar and back! Tickets are £15.

On Wednesday 12 May, you can visit **Blenheim Palace**. This beautiful baroque palace, home of the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, with fabulous landscaped grounds designed by Capability Brown ensures a wonderful day out. Tickets are £21.

On Thursday 23 September, the club are visiting one of England's most beautiful cities, **Winchester**. This city boasts a tempting array of independent shops and award-winning pubs and restaurants. There are also many historic buildings, museums and tranquil green spaces which are just waiting to be explored. Tickets are priced at £12.

On Thursday 2 December, you can enjoy a trip through the lovely Kent and East Sussex countryside to the ancient town of Lewes. A two-course carvery **Christmas Lunch** has been booked at the White Hart Hotel for 12.15pm, with arrival back in Pembury expected around 5pm. There will be plenty of time to visit the castle, browse the Christmas shops and more. This trip will cost £22.

Pauline Hawker

YOUNG LADY REQUIRED . . .

“YOUNG LADY required to help in Kitchen of Sanatorium”, were the opening lines of an advert in The Lady that launched Pembury resident, Denise Barnes, on the adventure that she would eventually turn into a witty and entertaining book. “From Bad to Wurst” is a book about the young Denise's experiences as a kitchen assistant at the Tannenhof Sanatorium, a family owned health clinic in the Bavarian countryside.

On Wednesday 27 January, Denise gave a talk at Pembury Library about her book and the experiences behind it. It was an interesting and engaging look at her life as a girl in her twenties exploring life in another country – where she couldn't speak a word of the language and had no cooking experience to speak of. In the pleasant, informal atmosphere of the library 'after hours' the audience listened to extracts from the book and stories of the background to Denise's Bavarian experience.



If you want to read more about “From Bad to Wurst”, and read an extract from the book for yourself, you can do so at <http://denisebarneswriter.com> – and if you want to know what else is happening at the village library give them a call on 822278 or, better still, drop in. Perhaps you'll be inspired to be Pembury's next resident writer.

Rick Bayles