

## PEMBURY'S OWN VICTORIA CROSS HOLDER

### Part 2

**I**N HIS REMINISCENCES, Major General Dixon writes: "we purchased a little property near Tunbridge Wells at Pembury, recommended to me by a brother officer Major Sempriere."

The "little" house was Woodsgate, which stood on the edge of Pembury, where the Texaco Garage is now. The house had been an Inn in 1785 on the road from London to Rye and Hastings. General and Mrs Dixon lived there with their nephews and nieces, the Bosanquets, and they all took a very active part in village life. Village fetes were held at Woodsgate and an archery club practised in the grounds.

Charles Gower was his gardener for many years and described the Dixons as ideal employers. They were sincere and devout Christians, caring for all who worked for them. On Sunday Mrs Dixon ran a bible class for the local lads - some of them of a very young age. She seems to have been a kindly lady.

The General became frail and dodderly. Each day Charles would walk with him around his small domain. The old man would ask: "Chickens laying well, Gower?", "Cow milking well, Gower?", "Pigs well, Gower?" To each question Charles would answer resoundingly "Yes, General" regardless of what the situation really was.

Charles and his family occupied accommodation over the stable block at Woodsgate. After his first wife died and he remarried, Mrs Dixon promised him and Emily a new cottage to be built in the grounds for his growing family of five sons.

The 1901 census showed Amelia Bosanquet, 65, sister-in-law and Charles Bosanquet, 35, nephew living with the Dixons.



Major General Dixon died on 7 January 1905, aged 84, at home. Cause of death was listed as "senile decay, valvular heart disease and influenza". As a mark of respect to the many friends he had made in the village, the first part of the funeral service was held in St. Peter's Church in the morning of 12 January. The service was taken by his nephews and the Rev H. S. Brooke, Vicar of Pembury. Afterwards the remains were conveyed to Kensal Green Cemetery, London, for burial in the family grave at 2pm.

His obituary in the *Kent and Sussex Courier* stated: "Profound regret is felt in Pembury at the passing away of the gallant soldier, who had been an esteemed resident of the village for upwards of 30 years. The village will miss a valued and honoured resident, whose sympathies were ever practical, although of late years increasing infirmity had impaired his once splendid mental and physical powers."

Mrs Dixon stayed at Woodsgate until 1922 when she moved to 8 Calverley Terrace, Tunbridge Wells with Charles Bosanquet. She remained here until her death, aged 93, on 3 September 1926. She was buried alongside her husband.

Woodsgate became a country club and restaurant in the 1940s and 1950s before being demolished in March 1960. This made way for the Woodsgate Way housing estate, and an extension to the Woodsgate Garage.

Dixon's medals are still in the possession of a distant relative. He is remembered on a brass plaque in St. Peter's Church and with the other nine V.C. Holders of the Borough at the Victoria Cross Grove, Dunorlan Park, Tunbridge Wells.

**Richard Snow**