

# The Honorable Henry Keppel

[www.friendsofdroxfordchurch.org.uk](http://www.friendsofdroxfordchurch.org.uk)



**The Honorable Henry Keppel** born 14<sup>th</sup> June 1809  
4<sup>th</sup> son of the Earl of Albemarle by Hon. Elizabeth Southwell  
4<sup>th</sup> daughter of Edward, Lord de Clifford

Entered navy Feb 1822      passed exam 1828

1829 first commission

1830 joined The Galatae/Galatal 42      on 11 02 1830 and again

1831      on 20 07 1831

1833 Promoted to Commodore and served from May 1834 to Spring of 1838 in  
the Childers 16      in the Med. & at the Cape of Good Hope

1839 present rank from 5<sup>th</sup> Dec 1839

1841 From Aug 1841 to 1845 commanded Dido... served in the latter vessel at  
capture of Woosung and Shanghai and in the operations on the Yang-tse-  
Kiang in 1842

(see Gazette 1842 pp3400-3404)

1844 ... and in Aug. 1844 with only the Dido and Hon. East Indies Co. steamer,  
Phlegethon under his orders, he attacked a large piratical settlement on the  
Island of Borneo; where while the loss of the British amounted to 32 men  
killed and 30 wounded, the enemy had five of their towns destroyed, 250 men

killed, some thousands of houses and 200 or 300 proas of various descriptions  
burnt and 70 brass guns and 13 flags taken.

Since he was paid off Capt. Keppel has been unemployed

1839 he married 25<sup>th</sup> Feb. Katherine Louisa, daughter of the late General Sir John  
Crosbie, G.C.H. of Watergate, Co. Sussex.      Agent Joseph Woodhead

see 'The Honorable Henry Keppel - A Captain in the Royal Navy'

see 'A Sailor's Life Under Four Sovereigns' Vol. II p 57  
available Portsmouth Central Lib.

Jan. 27<sup>th</sup> 1844 "Just arrived at Spithead called at Cashers wine merchants to know  
whereabouts of his wife. He informed Keppel she had come from Boulogne and  
only two days ago he had sent parcels to my place at Droxford where she had  
joined her father who with his family had taken possession

Aug 1847 Rookesbury Sept 7<sup>th</sup> Shooting, bagged 22 brace.

"No house in England so enjoyable as this Rookesbury: no people so kind and  
generous" Drizzly rain.

Took leave of friends at Rookesbury. At Southwick



## DEATH OF

SIR HARRY KEPPEL, O.M.

### FATHER OF THE NAVY.

We regret to announce that Admiral the Hon. Sir Harry Keppel died yesterday at his residence in the Albany, Piccadilly.

Although in his ninety-fifth year, the gallant admiral enjoyed fair health until last week, when he suffered a breakdown, due chiefly to age, and rapidly became worse. Several members of his family were present when he passed away yesterday afternoon.

Sir Harry Keppel was the "father of the Navy," and so youthful was he in his old age that the rule that admirals shall retire at the age of seventy was in his case relaxed. His career was full of exciting episodes. He obtained post-rank in the year the late Queen Victoria came to the throne.

He fought in the Crimea, and all over the China Seas. He was a dashing, almost reckless leader, beloved of officers and men, and when he finally left his command in the East, it was the late Duke of Edinburgh, and the officers of his ship, who manned the barge which took him to the mail steamer.

#### "MY DEAR LITTLE ADMIRAL"

With the Royal Family Sir Harry was a favourite from boyhood, and to his Majesty and the Queen was known as "Daddy." The Queen not long ago sent a greeting to "My dear little Admiral." Sir Harry was indeed a "little" admiral, for he was barely five feet in height.

Although he lived to so great an age, Sir Harry Keppel had a narrow escape of being buried as soon as he was born, for it was at first thought there was no life in the infant which came into the family of the Earl of Albemarle in July 1808. At the last moment the nurse declared, "There's life in the small thing," and the baby was saved.

When the young Keppel was eleven years old, Lord Albemarle decided that it was time he and his brother Tom selected a profession. This is the admiral's version of it: "We both decided for the Navy. My father thought that we should have separate professions. As we disagreed, I hit Tom on the eye. He was the bigger, and returned it with interest. When we had had enough my father decided we should both be sailors."

So in 1822 young Harry Keppel joined the Naval College at Gosport, and there spent two years. His final examination was almost a fiasco, as it was discovered during the geography paper that he had in his pocket a handkerchief with the map of England printed on it. Nevertheless he was appointed to the Tweed, and began life at sea.

"I've been to most places in the world, and known most of the interesting people of my time," he said not long ago. "Hardy Nelson's favourite captain, I remember well."

#### "KEPPEL'S FOLLY"

In 1823 Keppel was at the Cape, distinguishing himself chiefly as a devil-may-care sportsman. The steep and almost precipitous cliff down which he drove a tandem is still known as "Keppel's Folly."

Wherever he sailed he always managed to secure a fair share of the sport that was going. He told thrilling tales of being chased by a rogue elephant, of fighting a duel, of escaping from arrest to dance at a "dignity" ball, and of being tossed by an Indian buffalo. "I've been at the bottom of most ditches in most parts of the world," he would say.

It was in the "thirties" that Keppel's serious work began. The Chinese and Malay pirates infested the Eastern seas, and perpetually imperilled our merchant ships. His first job was to blockade sixty miles of coast with boats, and thus he did so well that the Rajah offered him his daughter in marriage.

Soon after he was made commander, and returned home to look for a ship. This he got, but he was so young and so small that his friend, Admiral George Dundas, advised him not to appear in person at the Admiralty. He did not.

In 1833 he attended the Coronation of Queen Victoria. In the winter he was again in the China Seas suppressing piracy. With the brief interlude of the Crimea, and a temporary command elsewhere, he spent thirty years in Eastern seas.

#### BOAT FIGHTS WITH PIRATES

"I have seen it not much, and then I was the commander of a schooner which 100 miles over what was laid down as land and even mountains. People used to say that my ship's keel was as jagged as a saw—well, I don't know, but I went anywhere and took risks. Still, we really always fought the pirates from our boats, and many a time have I captured a pirate with fifty or sixty dead and wounded on board, and some three feet of blood and water in the boat."

"People weren't so particular in those days."

"When I was at Woosung, with Sir Hugh Gough, I heard him direct an Irish orderly to ascertain if a fallen Chinaman were dead or alive. The man thrust his bayonet through the body, turned it over, and said, 'Did you honour?'"

Probably the hardest piece of boat-work ever done was Keppel's attack with seven boats on thirty-five large Chinese junks in Fatsien Creek in 1857, when his galley was sunk beneath him, and five out of six of the men in it were killed or wounded. At the first attack the Chinese fire was so hot that the boats were obliged to fall back. Then Keppel called out, "Let's try once more with the row-boat, boys," and the men gave such a cheer, and made such an onslaught, that the Chinamen gave way, and a number of the junks were captured and several sunk, while Keppel laid siege to Fatsien city, with a population of about 200,000.

After his final return from the East years later Sir Harry became Commander-in-Chief at Devonport. At the age of ninety he was sent to Singapore, where the new honour was bestowed on his honour.



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On his final return from the East years ago Sir Harry became Commander-in-Chief at Devonport. At the age of ninety he was named in his honour.