

Edward Johnston – Lovett Bay

Seventh and youngest son of Captain Robert Johnston, R.N.

FUNERAL OF CAPTAIN JOHNSTON.





The funeral of the late Captain Robert Johnston, R.N., took place at Annandale yesterday (Sunday) afternoon, the body being placed in the family vault, which is in the grounds attached to the late residence of the deceased, and not far from the Camperdown and Petersham road. The friends of the family assembled to the number of about 150, and besides these there were present, to accord the honours due to a deceased officer of the Royal Navy, a party of bluejackets, under the command of a lieutenant from H.M.S. Nelson, a portion of the men being told off to carry the coffin to the grave and the re-mainder forming a firing party to pay the last tribute of respect accorded at naval and military funerals. The coffin was wrapped in the Union Jack and bore upon the lid some beautiful floral emblems ; and as it was borne from the house preparatory to its being carried to the grave the firing party received it by presenting arms. The procession was then formed. First walked the firing party with arms reversed ; then came the coffin carried on the shoulders of four seamen ; and then followed the relatives and the friends of the deceased. The pall bearers were Sir George Wigram Allen (Speaker of the Legislative Assembly), Mr. John Williams (Crown Solicitor) ; Hon. Richard Hill, M.L.C. ; Captain Arguimbau, M.L.C. ; Captain Dean, R.N. ; and the Hon. C. Campbell, M.L.C. ; and among the others present, in addition to the relatives, were Mr. J. Brennan, Mr. J. Dawson, Mr. A. Ramsay, Mr. G. M. Pitt, Mr. J. S. Adams, Mr. W. Fraser Martin, M.L.A. ; **Mr. A. H. McCulloch, M.L.A.** ; Dr. Fischer, Mr. S. Pearson, Mr. Burton Bradley, Mr. Lester, J.P. ; Mr. W. Pritchard, Mr. J. Jones and Captain Shadforth. Around the vault was assembled a large gathering of people from the surrounding neighbourhood who watched the proceedings with respectful interest. Near the place of burial the procession was met by the Rev. S. Savage, of the Congregational Church, Petersham, and the Rev. Jacob Olly, of the Congregational Church, Manly Beach, and when the vault was reached the coffin was placed by the entrance until the service for the dead was concluded. Part of the service was a short address by the Rev. S. Savage, upon the lessons which were taught by the life of him who had passed away. The early life of the deceased, he said had been spent among scenes of great activity and excitement, and he had been not the least active in the troublous times in which his lot had been cast. During all the time he had been engaged in the service of his country he had showed unflinching loyalty and courage which nothing could daunt, and in that regard his life stood out as a prominent example to both officers and men of the Navy. The same unflinching energy and courage had been shown in his career as a colonist, and in that respect he was an example to all young men here. He had possessed those qualities which would have ensured success in any walk of life, but he had spent his days in unceasing activity, bending his active mind to the prosecution of every duty which fell to his lot. He had lived a long life, for one reason because of the strong constitution he had inherited from his fathers, but also because he never had given way to the lusts of the flesh, nor in any way

injured his constitution by excess, and he had lived a life of temperance to the last. The solemn ceremony closed by the naval firing party firing three volleys over the grave.
FUNERAL OF CAPTAIN JOHNSTON. (1882, September 11). *The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW : 1842 - 1954)*, p. 5. Retrieved from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13524854>

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Captain Robert Johnston, R.N.

Captain Robert Johnston, R.N., whose death is announced in another column, was one of those men, so few in number now and so rapidly disappearing, whose lives are links between the old world and the new. Being born in Sydney in the year 1790, Captain Johnston's infant days were passed in New South Wales during one of the most interesting periods of its history, and entering at an early age the British Navy, to which he remained attached until the opportunities for active service had passed away, he was a participant in some of the most conspicuous events that

followed the close of the eighteenth century. He was the second son of Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Johnston, of the New South Wales Corps, or 102nd Regiment, who was the chief actor in the deposition of Governor Bligh, and he inherited from his father the resolute spirit which distinguished that officer during his official career in the colony. At seven years of age young Johnston accompanied his father to England, and was placed at school at Newington Butts, Surrey, where he remained until he was 13 years old, and then he entered the navy as a volunteer of the first-class—the first native of New South Wales who had joined the service—onboard the Malabar, a 50-gun ship. In this vessel he shared in the

proceedings of the British North Sea fleet in their blockade of the Dutch and French fleets in the Texel, but without remaining any length of time in that employment the Malabar was recalled home for the purpose of conveying troops from England to Monte Video, where a British force had failed in an attack upon the city. Returning to England after having performed this duty the Malabar was paid off, and young Johnston joined the Namure, receiving ship, as midshipman, and shortly afterwards was appointed to the Semiramis, a 36-gun frigate, commissioned for active service off the coasts of Spain and Portugal. In this position he remained from October, 1808, to January, 1810, and during that period he was present at the memorable battle of Corunna. Leaving the Semiramis he went on board the Norge, 74, as master's mate ; and being again stationed off the coast of Portugal he was present at the storming of Cadiz by the French under Marshal Soult, and took part in the attack on St. Mary's, where he was in command of a rocket boat, and narrowly escaped death through the boat being sunk by a round shot, and those who were not killed left struggling in the water until a rescue could be effected. Mr. Johnston and another officer were subsequently placed with a crew of 150 men on board a captured French 80-gun ship, the Neptune—one of the vessels that escaped from Nelson's fleet after the battle of Trafalgar—and ordered to proceed with her to Majorca, where she was to be laid up ; and this service having been accomplished, he returned to the Norge, which shortly afterwards sailed to England for the purpose of joining the Scheldt fleet under the command of Admiral Sir William Young. Later on, Mr. Johnston joined the Asia, 74 guns, carrying the flag of Vice-Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane, Commander-in-Chief on the American station. At this period Great Britain was at war with the United States, and the Asia sailed for Bermuda, where Mr. Johnston received his

commission as lieutenant, and was appointed to the command of an advice vessel, or what at the present day would be called a despatch boat. In this little vessel he saw some fighting, and was present when a British fleet ascended Chesapeake Bay and captured the city of Washington. Rejoining Sir Alexander Cochrane, on board the Asia, at Port Royal, Jamaica, Lieutenant Johnston was directed to place himself under the orders of Sir Peter Parker, Bart., commanding the frigate

THE LATE CAPTAIN ROBERT JOHNSTON, R.N.

Menelaus, then engaged in blockading the approaches to the city of Baltimore. This he did, and he was present with Sir Peter Parker in the night attack on Moorefields, where Sir Peter Parker was killed. The death of his commander caused Lieutenant Johnson to be sent with despatches announcing the sad event to Admiral Cochrane, and then returning to the Menelaus, he remained on board that vessel until after the unsuccessful

OLD GOVERNMENT HOUSE, SYDNEY.

attack by the British forces on Baltimore, when he was directed to proceed to Jamaica, and again place himself under the orders of the Commander-in-Chief. This led to his being

engaged in the service of landing troops for an attack on New Orleans, against which place and Mobile a large expedition was sent, and, after the repulse of the British, in bringing the wounded from the front. Peace was shortly afterwards proclaimed, and Lieutenant Johnston receiving promotion, was appointed

second-lieutenant of his old ship the *Asia*, which was then under the command of Captain Alexander Skeene, and was employed cruising off the coast of West Florida. On returning home the ship was paid off, and Lieutenant Johnston found himself ashore with no immediate prospect of further active employment. The idea then occurred to him that the opportunity was a good one for paying a visit to his family in Sydney, and obtaining leave of absence, he sailed for

New South Wales, and arrived in Sydney in October, 1816. Here he received a cordial welcome, and had not been in Sydney long before his services were secured by Governor Macquarie for a voyage of discovery in the Government cutter *Schnapper*. While engaged in this duty he discovered and named the river Clyde, and, on returning to Sydney, accompanied the Governor on a visit of inspection to Newcastle and Port Macquarie. During

the time they were at the latter place Lieutenant Johnston was instrumental in saving a vessel the *Lady Nelson* from being a total wreck. Subsequently he formed one of an exploring party under Sir John Jamieson, whose object it was to ascertain the source of the Warragamba River, and when his companions decided to return in consequence of the difficulty of travelling over the broken country of the mountains, Lieutenant Johnston pressed on, and himself accomplished the object of the expedition. Just at this time, and when he contemplated returning to England, the death of his eldest brother—Mr. George Johnston—occurred, through a fall from a horse, and this being followed not long afterwards by the death of his father, Lieutenant Johnston, was induced to abandon his intention of returning to England to resume his duties as an officer in the navy—a decision he arrived at with the greatest reluctance. The affairs of his family, however, required attention, and remaining in Sydney he entered into pastoral and agricultural pursuits in conjunction with his brother, Mr. David Johnston. In this occupation he became very successful, for his active and vigorous nature was such as to make success a certainty in almost anything he took in hand, and he has left behind him large and valuable station and other properties. In the year 1831 he married the eldest daughter of the late Mr. Joseph Weller, of Hammershaw County, Bucks, England, and had a family of seven sons and two daughters. The elder daughter is the wife of Mr. Samuel Dickinson, a member of the firm of Learmonth, Dickinson, and Co., and the second married Mr. S. A. Murray, of P. N. Russell and Co. In 1865 Lieutenant Johnston was promoted to the rank of Commander in the Royal Navy. So full of health and vigour was he in his later years that about four years ago he took a trip to New Zealand, and a rough yachting cruise along some part of the coast of New South Wales. He was in good health and driving about last Thursday week, and, though 92 years of age, was

making arrangements to pay a visit to England next March. The funeral took place at Annandale on Sunday afternoon, the body being placed in the family vault, which is in the grounds attached to the late residence of the deceased, and not far from the Camperdown and Petersham road. The friends of the family assembled to the number of about 150, and besides these there were present, to accord the honours due to a deceased officer of the Royal Navy, a party of bluejackets, under the command of a lieutenant from H.M.S. Nelson, a portion of the men being told off to carry the coffin to the grave, and the remainder forming a firing party to pay the last tribute of respect accorded at naval and military funerals. The pallbearers were Sir George Wigram Allen (Speaker of the Legislative Assembly), Mr. John Williams (Crown Solicitor) ; Hon. Richard Hill, M.L.C. ; Captain Arguimbau, R.N. ; Captain Dean, R.N. ; and the Hon. C. Campbell, M.L.C. ; and among the others present, in addition to the relatives, were Mr. J. Brennan, Mr. J. Dawson, Mr. D. Ramsay, Mr. G. M. Pitt, Mr. J. S. Adams, Mr. W. Fraser Martin, M.L.A. ; Mr. A. H. M'Culloch, M.L.A. ; Dr. Fischer, Mr. S. Pearson, Mr. Burton Bradley, Mr. Lester, J.P. ; Mr. W. Pritchard, Mr. J. Jones, and Captain Shadforth. Around the vault was assembled a large gathering of people from the surrounding neighbourhood, who watched the proceedings with

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Captain Robert Johnston, R.N. (1882, September 16). *The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser (NSW : 1871 - 1912)*, p. 457. Retrieved September 13, 2025, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article161926261>