

Cyprian Arthur Bridge

13 March 1839 – 16 August 1924

By Samuel Stephenson

(Edited by Douglas Fix)

Cyprian Arthur Bridge was born in St. John's, Newfoundland, the eldest son of Thomas Finch Hobday Bridge, rector (afterwards archdeacon) of St. John's, by his wife Sarah Christiana, daughter of John Dunscomb, an aide-de-camp to the governor of Newfoundland. Two of Bridge's grandfather's brothers served in the navy. His grandfather was a midshipman in the East India Company's and the Admiralty's packet services. His father was prevented by poor eyesight from serving in the navy but became chaplain to Admiral Sir Thomas John Cochrane, then governor of Newfoundland.(1)

Bridge first went to England in 1851 with a nomination for the navy given to him by Admiral Cochrane. He was sent to school at Walthamstow House, passed the entrance examination for the navy in January 1853, and was appointed to the sloop "Medea" and later to the flagship "Cumberland" stationed in North America. In early 1854, Bridge was then transferred to a corvette that sailed into northern waters at the outbreak of war with Russia, and he participated in the operations carried out in the White Sea.

After serving two years as cadet, Bridge passed for midshipman in 1855. He was then appointed to the "Pelorus" for service in the East Indies and took part in a number of military operations over the following three years. He was promoted to mate in 1858 and lieutenant in 1859. He then joined the "Algiers" and saw service in the Mediterranean. Bridge subsequently served on board the "Hawke" on the Irish station, and the "Fawn" (1864-1867) in the West Indies.(2) Bridge then transferred to the "Excellent" in order to qualify in gunnery. He did not, however, serve as a gunnery specialist, as he was invited by Sir Alfred Ryder to act as his flag-lieutenant in the Channel fleet.(3)

In April 1869, at the age of thirty, Bridge was promoted to commander and appointed to the "Caledonia" in the Mediterranean. After two years service on that ship, he served for one year aboard the gunnery ship "Cambridge," one year on the "Implacable," and two and a half years on the "Audacious," the flagship of Admiral Ryder in China.

In September 1877 he was further promoted to captain. Bridge was also married in the same year to Eleanor Thornhill, daughter of George Thornhill, of the Indian civil service. There were no children from their marriage. During the following four years Bridge took half pay and spent time studying and writing about the beginnings of the German navy, publishing two papers in the *Journal of the Royal United States Institution*. During 1878 and 1879 Bridge also served on the Admiralty and War Office committees on heavy guns, armor plates and projectiles, and explosives; for six months in 1881 he was also a member of the ordnance committee.

He was then appointed to command the "Espiegle" in Australia, also concurrently becoming the deputy commissioner for the Western Pacific. Bridge returned from Australia in September 1885, took half pay for six months, and was then appointed to command the "Colossus," the newest type of battleship.(4) He left this command in 1888 and was made director of the recently established Intelligence Department at the Admiralty in 1889. Bridge was further promoted to flag captain in 1892 and left his post as director in the Admiralty in August of 1894.

In November of the same year, Bridge assumed the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Australian squadron, a position which he held aboard the "Orlando" until 1898. He was then promoted to vice-admiral in 1898, but had no further command until April 1901, when he was appointed Commander-in-Chief in China. Bridge was further promoted to admiral in 1903, and remained in command in China until the spring of 1904, when he returned to England. He retired, having reached the requisite age limit, in March 1904.

Bridge served as an assessor on the North Sea Enquiry Commission that investigated the Dogger Bank incident (October 1904), and as a member of the Mesopotamia Commission of Inquiry appointed in August 1916.(5) He was also an Admiralty Representative on the Royal Patriotic Fund Corporation from 1906 to 1912.(6) He died at Coombe Pines (a house that he had built for himself in Kingston Hill, Surrey) on 16 August 1924.

Bridge was a proficient reader of Latin, French, German, and Swedish, and was acquainted with Italian and Spanish. He was a student of war and military history throughout his life, having written many works on various relevant subjects in the course of his life.(7)

Selected Publications:

Editor of: *History of the Russian fleet during the reign of Peter the Great by a contemporary Englishman, 1724*. Navy Records Society, Vol. 15. London: Navy Records Society, 1899.

British port defence policy. Admiralty paper. 1901.

Sea songs and ballads. Christopher Stone and Cyprian Bridge, eds. London: Spottiswoode and Company, 1905.

Nelson: The century of Trafalgar. London: Spottiswoode and Company, 1905.

William Lionel William, R. A., Member of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers. London: Virtue and Company, 1907.

The art of naval warfare: Introductory observations. London: Smith, Elder and Company, 1907.

Sea power and other studies. Christopher Stone, ed. Introduction by Cyprian Bridge. London: Smith, Elder and Company, 1910.

Some recollections. London: J. Murray, 1918.(8)

Numerous articles in daily presses, covering a broad range of topics from public opinion to tactics, strategy, and naval policy, from 1872-1923.

Notes:

1. *The dictionary of national biography*, J. R. H. Weaver, ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 110; *Who was who, 1916-1928* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1947), p. 124; *The concise dictionary of national biography, from earliest times to 1985* (Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 333.

2. *The dictionary of national biography*, 1937, pp. 110-111; *Who was who, 1916-1928*, 1947, p. 124; *The concise dictionary of national biography*, 1992, p. 333.

3. *The dictionary of national biography*, 1937, p. 111.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 111; *Who was who, 1916-1928*, 1947, p. 124; *The Concise Dictionary of National Biography* 1992, p. 333.

5. *The dictionary of national biography*, 1937, pp. 111-112; *Who was who, 1916-1928*, 1947, p. 124; *The concise dictionary of national biography*, 1992, p. 333.

6. *Who was who, 1916-1928*, 1947, p. 124.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 124; *The dictionary of national biography*, 1937, p. 112; *The concise dictionary of national biography*, 1992, p. 333.

8. *The dictionary of national biography*, 1937, p. 113.