



Lieutenant Commander N S PIXLEY CMG, MBE, VD, RANR

[1898 – 1989]



Commander Pixley was President of the Club in 1937-38
Commander Pixley was a Trustee of the Club from 1964 to 1988
Commander Pixley was elected to Life membership of the Club in 1977

Norman Stewart Pixley was born in Brisbane on 3 May 1898. His father, Lieutenant Arthur Pixley, and his mother Florence (nee McDonnell) emigrated from England in 1888. They had 3 other children – Neville, Margaret and Arthur.

Pixley went to school at Brisbane Grammar.

We thank the History Interest Group and other volunteers who have researched and prepared these Notes. The series will be progressively expanded and developed. They are intended as casual reading for the benefit of Members, who are encouraged to advise of any inaccuracies in the material.

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Norman married Grace Josephine (nee Spencer) in 1931, and they had three children: Elizabeth Jane (McDonald), Anthony, and Timothy. They variously lived at 4 Martin Street, Tennyson, and after the Second World War at "Greylands" Dennis Street, Indooroopilly.

Lieutenant Pixley joined the Club in 1924. He served on the committee in 1935-36 and was Vice-President in 1936-37. Elected president in 1938 he served until he was obliged to stand down in 1939 on volunteering for active service with the RAN. He was a Club Trustee from 1964 to 1988; and in 1977 was elected to Life Membership.

The *Pixley Room* in the Club's Greenhouse was named in commemoration of Norman Pixley's service and association with the Club.

He donated a trophy for the Club's annual golf competition in 1936 and the Norman Pixley Cup Day continues as a fixture in the Club Calendar to the present. He also had a lifelong interest in tennis and was still playing when over eighty years of age.

He joined the Royal Australian Naval Reserve as a junior member in its establishment year (1911) and was commissioned as a Sub-Lieutenant in the RAN in September 1917.

His naval promotions and principal appointments included:

- February 1922 Lieutenant
- February 1931 Lieutenant Commander
- Sep 1939 Mobilised
- 1939 Darwin
- Mar 1942 – Jan 1943 NOIC Cairns Platypus CSO Maintenance duties
- May 1943 Transferred to Retired List
- Apr 1944 Re-activated as Port Director Langemark Area (Headquarters at Finschaven, New Guinea) and granted War Service Rank of Commander
- Oct 1944 – Jan 1946 Administering Command HMAS *Moreton* (Brisbane) with rank of Acting Commander
- March 1946 Demobilised
- 1937 - 1941 Honorary ADC to the Governor of Queensland
- Apr 1951 – Apr 1952 Honorary ADC to HM the King
- Apr 1952 – Apr 1954 Honorary ADC to HM the Queen



LTCDR Pixley – Commander HMAS Bundaberg

Military service and connection with the Club ran deeply in his family:

- His maternal grandfather, Lieutenant Colonel John McDonnell commanded the Queensland Volunteer Force, 1877-79.
- His uncle, Commander Walter Drake RN, was acting Commandant of the Queensland Naval Force 1891-1900. Drake is believed to have been a Founding Member of the Club and was President in 1893, 1895, 1897 and 1899.
- Norman's father, Lieutenant (Army) Arthur Pixley, was an early (and possibly a Founding) member of the Club.
- His uncle, Commander Sir Neville (Drake) Pixley MBE, VRD, who lived in Sydney, was a member of the Club from 1925 until (at least 1979).
- His son, Sub Lieutenant Anthony Pixley, was also a member of the Club.

Pixley was honoured for his service to the Community by his appointment as a Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George (CMG) in 1970 New Year's Honours (presented by HM the Queen in Brisbane on the Royal Tour of 1970); and as a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in 7th July, 1941.

His qualities were demonstrated in the many community activities he undertook during his lifetime.

He founded the **Sea Cadet** Movement, RANR cadets 1950-1973.

He founded the Queensland Division of the **Navy League** in about 1950 and was its President until 1969.

He had a deep involvement in the **Royal Queensland Historical Society**. A keen historian, he wrote and delivered more than twenty major historical papers to the society. He had a powerful influence on the society's administration and served as its President for many years, succeeding Sir Raphael Cilento in 1968. In addition to his presidential duties, his initiatives included the founding of the Norman Pixley Maritime Museum at Brisbane in 1954 and arranging the State celebration of the James Cook Bicentenary with a ceremony at Possession Island, Torres Strait, in 1970. For his work in the cause of history the society elected him a Fellow and made him an Honorary Life Member.

He also played a signal part in the formation of the **National Trust of Queensland**, of which he was a Life Member. He was active in the restoration of the Kangaroo Point Naval Stores buildings in 1988.

Through his business activities he rose to be President of the **Brisbane Chamber of Commerce** and was leader of the Australian Delegation to a conference of Commonwealth Chambers of Commerce in London in 1951.

As **Honorary Consul for the Netherlands** from 1948 to 1972 he became Dean of the Consular Corps in Brisbane, and in recognition of his services was made a Knight of the Order of Orange-Nassau by the Queen of the Netherlands in 1964.



Norman Pixley died in Brisbane on 4 January 1989.

Sources included:

- Various web pages
- *United Service Club, Queensland: The First Century, 1892-1992* by Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton
- Club Meeting Minutes, Annual Reports and sundry documents
- National Archives
- State library, QLD