

VICE-ADMIRAL SIR WILLIAM JOHNSTONE HOPE GCB

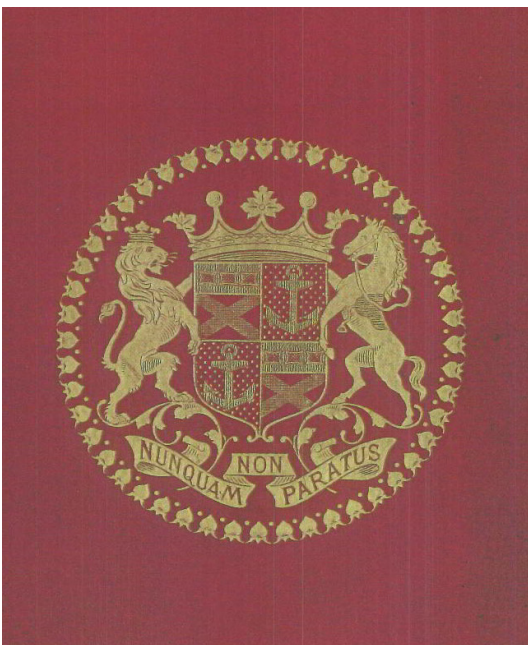
16th August 1766 – 2nd May 1831

Introductory Note

Following up an idea that was suggested to me, I thought it would be nice to try and write a brief history of the life of one of my ancestors, whom we affectionately refer to as "The Admiral". There are, of course, many articles on the internet about him, but what I have tried to do is to add in a little bit about the family, his pictures and his awards. No doubt this article will not give the complete picture, but I write it in the knowledge that it may be possible to amend it or add to it as our own archives are further researched.

The Earl of Annandale & Hartfell

25th June 2009.



The surname **Hope** is of great antiquity in Scotland, **William Johnstone Hope** being a member of the Hope Wier (or Vere) family of Blackwood, Lanarkshire and Craigiehall, Edinburgh. He was the third and youngest son of **John Hope** of London, merchant, and **Mary Breton** of Enfield, Middlesex. He was born at Finchley on 16th August 1766 and received his early education at Edinburgh High School.

In 1776, at the age of ten, he entered the Navy under the patronage of his uncle, **Commissioner Hope**, the Commissioner of Chatham Dockyard. Joining the Navy at such a tender age was in those days not uncommon, the Navy being entrusted with the task of continuing and finishing off the young lad's education.

It was while he was serving with the Duke of Clarence (the future King William IV) as a young midshipman that the two seem to have had some sort of disagreement, ending with the Duke of Clarence sporting a black eye! However, it did not affect their relationship, for they remained firm friends thereafter, as we shall see.

William Johnstone Hope began his active naval career in the *Weazle* (14 guns), accompanying his uncle, Commissioner Hope, successively onto the *Hind*, the *Crescent*, the *Impligenia* and the *Leocadia*. While serving on these ships he found himself in the West Indies. (*It is interesting to note that, on the island of Grenada, near to the village of Constantine, there are the Annandale Falls, ten metres high, which does seem to suggest some connection with the family.*)

Then he served on the coast of Guinea; in the North Sea; and the waters off Newfoundland. From the *Leocadia*, in 1782, Mr. Hope, as he was then called in accordance with naval tradition, was moved into the *Portland*, a ship of 50 guns, then bearing the flag of **Vice-Admiral Campbell**, at Newfoundland and in October of the same year, he was promoted to the rank of **Lieutenant**, in the *Daedalus*, a ship of 32 guns, where he remained until 1784, when she was ordered to be paid off at Chatham.

In those days, promotion in the Navy was normally due to retirements, or “dead men’s shoes”, in regard to the officers above you. However, if your star shone during action, then accelerated promotion could follow. Lieutenant Hope, it should be observed, had been re-commissioned to the *Daedalus* after the peace of 1783, and sent to the Leith station, where he continued to serve, Hopetoun House and Craigiehall being fairly close by. He was soon afterwards appointed flag Lieutenant to **Admiral Milbanke**, who was then serving in the *Sampson*, a ship of 64 guns, as Commander in Chief at Plymouth. It was in the month of February preceding, that his Royal Highness Prince William Henry, now the Duke of Clarence, had been appointed first Lieutenant of the *Pegasus*, in Hamoaze, in preparation for his assumption of post rank. On the 10th April his Royal Highness received his commission as captain of the *Pegasus*, having in the interim been pleased to request Lieutenant Hope to sail with him in that ship. The Prince had actually applied for a third officer for the express purpose of having Lieutenant Hope accompany him.

In April 1786 William Hope, in the borough of Plymouth was made an apprentice mason to be followed by his appointment as a Master mason in lodge number 186 in November of the same year.



*The Masonic Certificates
for William Hope*



Lieutenant Hope accordingly proceeded with the Prince to Newfoundland, Halifax, and the West Indies, where an unfortunate difference happening to take place between his Royal Highness and the officers of the *Pegasus*, it became a matter of prudence, on the part of Lieutenant Hope, to solicit a removal into the *Boreas*, at that time commanded by the heroic **Nelson**.

In the winter of 1787, Lieutenant Hope was nominated as one of the lieutenants of the *Victory*, then fitting for the flag of Earl Howe, the First Lord of the Admiralty; but as the disturbances in the United Provinces of Holland were speedily suppressed by the vigorous measures of both this country and Prussia, he was soon afterwards paid off, and for a short time he remained on half pay.



Lieutenant Hope was next appointed to the *Adamant*, a vessel of 50 guns, which was flying the flag of Sir Charles Douglas. That officer died, without assuming his intended command. However, Lieutenant Hope remained in the *Adamant*, which received the flag of Rear-Admiral Sir Richard Hughes, who had been selected as Commander-in-Chief on the North American station, in lieu of Sir Charles Douglas. In June 1788, the *Adamant* sailed for Halifax, where Lieutenant Hope remained until 1790, when he was appointed to command the sloop *Rattle*.

In June of that year, Captain Knox, of the *Adamant*, was under the necessity of resigning his command due to ill health, in consequence of which Lieutenant Hope was chosen to act as captain of that ship, which still bore Sir Richard Hughes's flag.

In almost similar circumstances, Captain Hope shortly afterwards obtained another appointment. In the month of November following, Captain Lindsay of the *Penelope* resigned his commission as captain in His Majesty's Navy. Captain Hope was nominated to succeed him. He accordingly took command of the *Penelope*, *pro forma*, and then returned to the *Adamant*. The Board of the Admiralty, however, did not think it proper to confirm his commission for the *Penelope*; the *Adamant* having been ordered home in the spring of 1791, Lieutenant Hope paid that ship off at Plymouth in June of the same year. It was during this period that he married on 8th July 1792 his second cousin, **Lady Anne Hope Johnstone**, to whom he had been long engaged. She was the eldest daughter of **James, 3rd Earl of Hopetoun and also *de iure* 5th Earl of Annandale and Hartfell**.

This marriage produced two daughters and four sons, three of whom also served in the Navy: one as an Admiral, the other two as Captains.

Captain Hope, we believe, was not further employed until January 1793, when he received the command of the Incendiary Fire-ship. He remained there until January 1794, when he obtained post rank in the *Bellerophon*, at that time bearing the broad pendant, and afterwards the flag, of Commodore (later Rear Admiral) **Sir Thomas Paisley**. He was consequently in Lord Howe's famous engagement of the French in the ever-memorable **Battle of the "Glorious First of June," 1794**.

The French fleet of Admiral L. T. Villaret-Joyeuse had put to sea to cover the return of a large convoy of merchant ships laden with food-stuff from America. The British fleet of **Admiral Lord Richard Howe** intercepted Villaret and clashed several times in a running fight (28 – 31 May). On 1st June came the major battle, ending in a notable British victory. Of the twenty-six French ships-of-the-line in action, one was sunk and six captured.

Earl Howe having made the signal for the British ships to pass through the enemy's line, the *Bellerophon* immediately obeyed, and passed through in close action accompanied by the *Royal Charlotte* and the *Leviathan*.



HMS Bellerophon passing through the French line, May 29th 1794

By sailing through the line of enemy ships, the *Queen Charlotte* and the *Bellerophon* exposed themselves to the full broadsides of the enemy before they were able to bring their own guns to bear. Captain Hope noted that, 'passing the line we had our sails and rigging cut to pieces'. However, they had succeeded in cutting off three French ships and isolating them from the rest of the French Fleet. These French ships received such a pounding from the British guns that one of them was totally disabled. Admiral Villaret-Joyeuse acted promptly. The French admiral seeing this ship must be taken if he stood on, wore his fleet in succession from the van and rallied in a very gallant manner and in good order towards the British fleet. In the ensuing mêlée the French managed to rescue their damaged ships and tow them clear.

While Admiral Paisley, who was seriously wounded, was on the surgeon's make-shift operating table (*He lost his leg.*), Captain Hope continued to give orders from the quarterdeck and the *Bellerophon's* gun crew continued to thunder away at the enemy ships on either side. The bombardment was so effective that the captain of the French 74 gun ship *L'Eole* decided that his ship had taken enough punishment and withdrew from the line of battle. By this time the *Bellerophon* had lost all three of her top masts, most of her lower shrouds were shot away, and her mainsail was shot to pieces. Since he was unable to manoeuvre the ship any more, Captain Hope had to signal to the frigate *Latona* to come to her assistance and tow her clear. As they emerged from the pall of gunsmoke, Captain Hope counted eleven ships without a mast standing, one of them being the *Defence*, a seventy-four designed by Slade and a sister ship of the *Bellerophon*.

This second day of action, like the first, ended inconclusively. The French had fought valiantly but several of their ships were so badly damaged that they had to retire from the scene. Some of Howe's ships, notably the Leviathan and the Queen, had sustained heavy casualties and were badly damaged but they could be repaired by their crews on the spot. From a tactical point of view the British were now in a much stronger position. By tacking through the enemy line Howe had successfully manoeuvred his ships to windward of the French and now he had the weather gauge.



That night the sea mist, which had been lurking on the horizon, spread across the ocean and enveloped the two fleets in a damp haze. Howe's main concern was to prevent the French fleet from escaping. The French admiral's concern was to protect his crippled warships and to keep the grain convoy at a safe distance from the British. On the *Bellerophon* the crew used the interlude of night to carry out urgent repairs and were employed splicing lengths of rope and repairing sails and rigging. The gun crews remained at their battle stations.

For his part in the engagement, Captain Hope received the thanks of Parliament, and was presented with the captain's gold medal (then first instituted by His Majesty), as a mark of honorable distinction for naval services.



OBVERSE: A small figure of winged Victory standing on the prow of a galley is crowning Britannia with a wreath of laurel. Britannia is holding a spear in her left hand. Slightly behind her and to the right is an oval shield bearing the Union Jack.

REVERSE: Engraved with the name and rank of the recipient and the event for which the medal was awarded, but lacking the wreath found on larger medals.



Captain Hope continued to command the *Bellerophon* until January 1795, when he was superseded by Lord Cranston; but, in the month of March following, in consequence of Captain Bentinck being taken suddenly ill, and the French fleet being at sea, he was again called upon by Lord Howe, to take the command of the *Tremendous*. He remained in that ship until May, when, at the request of Admiral Duncan, he was appointed captain of that officer's flag ship, the *Venerable*, and was for some time employed in the Northern seas. Unfortunately, he received a violent contusion on the head, on board a Russian ship of the line, and owing to this he was obliged to quit the *Venerable*, and Sir William Fairfax was appointed to act for him.

This accident was the source of much despair to Captain Hope, chiefly as it deprived him of the honour of taking part in the glorious victory over the Dutch fleet off **Camperdown** in October 1797.

Pictured (right) is the Camperdown Chair, made from oak wood from captured Dutch ships at Camperdown.



In the month of February 1798, Captain Hope was appointed to the *Kent*, a new ship of 74 guns, then fitting for the flag of Admiral Lord Duncan, and was again employed in the North Seas.

The attack upon Holland, by the combined forces of Great Britain and Russia, in the summer of 1799, is well remembered. On that occasion, Captain Hope, while retaining the command of the *Kent*, participated in the honour of capturing the Dutch fleet in the Texel, and was afterwards charged with making the official dispatches announcing this important event to the Admiralty.



For these services, His Majesty was graciously pleased to return him thanks, and to direct that a purse of five hundred pounds be presented to him, for the purpose of purchasing a sword.

After a short period, the Emperor of Russia was also pleased to send him the ribbon and cross of a **Commander of the Order of Malta.**

In the month of June, 1800, after Lord Duncan's resignation of the command in the North Seas, Captain Hope was ordered to the Mediterranean, in the *Kent*, to reinforce Lord Keith. It was determined, in the course of the summer, that a grand attack should be made upon **Cadiz**. As a result of that decision, Lord Keith, about the middle of September, "collected his fleet at Gibraltar, accompanied by several transports, having on board upwards of 10,000 troops, commanded by General Sir Ralph Abercrombie. At Gibraltar this armament was joined by other transports with troops, under Sir James Pulteney, the whole amounting to between 18,000 and 20,000 men. The fleet and transports having sailed from Gibraltar, anchored between **Tetuan** and **Ceuta**; and on the 3rd of October got under sail and passed the straits. On the 4th they entered the bay of Cadiz, and anchored between it and **St. Pietri**." The *Kent* was in this fleet. "Arrangements were immediately made for the landing of the troops, in order to proceed to the attack of the town of Cadiz, and the forts in its vicinity," and Captain Hope was nominated to the command of a battalion of seamen, to be landed with the army. However, in consequence of representations which were made by the Spanish governor concerning the miserable situation of the inhabitants, who were then suffering beneath a violent epidemic disease, the enterprise was abandoned. The troops, who were already in the boats, were ordered back to their respective transports, and the whole flotilla returned to Gibraltar.



The Landing of the Army at Aboukir Bay

At that port, in the month of December, Captain Hope received General Sir Ralph Abercrombie, with his staff on board the *Kent*. He was with that officer at Malta, and in Egypt, had the honour of landing him in the Bay of Aboukir. He was subsequently employed in the blockade of Alexandria, and remained upon that station, till **Cairo** surrendered to the British arms. As the service then required the *Kent* to be appropriated to the flag of Sir Richard Bickerton, and, as Captain Hope was not disposed to serve any longer under a flag officer, he was allowed to return to Europe. Previous to his departure, Lord Keith, the commander-in-chief, was pleased, in compliment to his professional merit, to offer him the situation of First Captain of the Fleet. Particular circumstances, however, with which we are unacquainted, induced him to decline the offer. Captain Hope was awarded the Sultan's medal for his part in the operation.



This medal is also referred to as *The Order of the Crescent*, which is incorrect, as this Order was founded by Sultan Selim III in 1799 as a special reward to Lord Nelson for his victory in the Bay of Aboukir in 1798. The Order consists of two classes, and was only given to foreigners. The badges of this Order were jewel-studded and enameled being worn from a crimson ribbon. The Order was extended to officers who took part in the Nile Expedition in 1801 and they were also given gold or silver medals.



A general peace soon afterwards took place, in consequence of which Captain Hope remained upon half-pay till May 1804, when he was appointed to command the *Atlas*. However, in the month of August following, he was obliged, from ill health, to resign the command of that ship, off the Texel.

We have thus traced the naval career of this officer to a pause. In our outline of his professional services, we have studiously avoided all ostentatious comment, conscious that a simplicity of narrative accords best with the actions of unassuming merit.

In June, 1800, whilst absent in the service of his country, Captain Hope was elected M.P. for the Dumfries Burgh district, and, from the period of his return to England in 1801 to that of his appointment to the *Atlas* in 1804, he regularly attended to his duty in parliament.

In October, 1804 the county of Dumfries having lost its representative, by the death of General Sir Robert Lawrie of Maxwellton House, Captain Hope was unanimously returned as the knight of that shire, for which he sat until the dissolution of parliament in October, 1806. At the succeeding general election, he was again chosen for the same place. He encountered violent opposition, raised against him under the influence of the late ministry, in which scarcely any means were left untried to thwart his views.

On the change of administration in April 1807, his Majesty was most graciously pleased to nominate Captain Hope to the situation of one of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, and, at the subsequent general election, he had the honour of being returned, for the third time, as member of parliament for Dumfries.

We do know that Sir William was a frequent visitor to Hopetoun House, made easier when he was stationed at Leith (Edinburgh), at a guess about 2 hours by carriage. Following the death of Lady Anne's father in 1816, they would have been living at Raehills — if not before 1816, certainly after — until Lady Anne's death in 1818, when her eldest son **John James Hope Johnstone**, 7th Earl of Annandale and Hartfell, inherited. (The only son not to join the Navy!)

Sir William was knighted in 1815 as Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath, appointed rear admiral and vice admiral of the Red by 1819 and advanced to Knight Grand Cross of the Bath. In 1820 he became a Lord of the Admiralty.



Insignia of Knight Grand Cross of the Bath

Sir William was presented with an unusual Naval sword, in that it had a sharp leading edge on the bottom third of its blade, by the Duke of Clarence in 1828. (King William IV)



Presentation sword 1828 from the Duke of Clarence

This ends a very active Naval career which took him world wide, fitting into that career, as he did, his time as an MP and attending to his duty as a Lord of the Admiralty.

Lady Anne Hope Johnstone, by now the 6th Countess of Annandale and Hartfell, died in 1818. They had four sons and two daughters. Three of his sons became naval officers, one of whom rose to the post of full Admiral. Sir William married, secondly, the Dowager Countess of Athlone, daughter of Sir John Eden, *Bt*, of Co. Durham.

Sir William Johnstone Hope died on the 2nd May 1831 and was buried alongside his first wife, Lady Anne, in the family vault at Johnstone church. Their grave was newly identified in 2006.
