

## Sir Harry Holdsworth Rawson

(27 May 1902 – 27 May 1909)

*Martha Rutledge*

### Naval hero

Descended from a long line of Rawsons settled in Yorkshire since Saxon times, Harry Holdsworth was born on Guy Fawkes Day, 5 November 1843, at Upper Islington, Liverpool, England, second son and third of seven children<sup>1</sup> of Christopher Rawson, merchant of Rock Ferry, Cheshire, and his wife Ellen Frances, née Wright. His father later became a Magistrate in Surrey<sup>2</sup> and sent Harry to a dame's school at Reading. Educated at Marlborough College (from February 1854 to December 1855) and Eastman's Naval Academy at Southsea, Harry joined the Royal Navy as a cadet on 9 April 1857 and in June sailed for Hong Kong in HMS *Princess Charlotte*.

On arrival Rawson transferred to the flagship HMS *Calcutta* and saw active service during the second China War (1857–60). He was present in *Calcutta*'s launch at the capture (1858) of the Taku forts at the mouth of the Peiho River by the British and French fleets. While his ship was refitting in Hong Kong the officers amused themselves with amateur theatricals. Rawson was a born actor and “made a wonderfully good girl”.<sup>3</sup> According to the *China Mail* the “half-coaxing, half-threatening manner of this ‘Little Treasure’ was excellently rendered by Mr Rawson, naval cadet, who took the part”.<sup>4</sup> In March 1859 *Calcutta* sailed for England; during the voyage Rawson was promoted to Midshipman. When he reached England he did not see his parents, as his father was Captain and District Paymaster in Lower Canada.

Transferred to the *Encounter*, an old and leaky ship, Harry Rawson returned to the China Station. As ADC to Captain Dew he accompanied the Army that marched on Peking (Beijing) and burned the Summer Palace. The Chinese Government surrendered and the Treaty of Tientsin was signed on 24 October 1860. On a brief visit to Shanghai he jumped

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relatives placed a stained glass window depicting Christ's Entry into Jerusalem in the chapel at the Royal Naval College at Greenwich; the window was damaged in World War II and the plaque transferred to the Memorial Chapel upstairs.<sup>108</sup> The words of William Wordsworth sum up Rawson's life:

This is the happy warrior – this is he  
Whom every man in arms should wish to be.<sup>109</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Deduced from Rawson's will and Rawson, G, *Life of Admiral Sir Harry Rawson*, London, 1914.
- 2 *The Times*, 4.11.1910, p 12.
- 3 Rawson, G, p 14.
- 4 Rawson, p 5.
- 5 Rawson, G, p 24.
- 6 Rawson, G, p 28.
- 7 Rawson, G, p 30.
- 8 *The Times*, 4.11.1910.
- 9 Rawson, G, p 33.
- 10 Rawson, G, p 36.
- 11 Rawson, G, p 35.
- 12 Rawson, G, p 38.
- 13 Rawson, G, p 43.
- 14 Rawson, G, p 73.
- 15 Rawson, G, p 76.
- 16 Rawson, G, p 76.
- 17 Rawson, G, p 79.
- 18 Rawson, G, p 106.
- 19 *Sydney Mail*, 8.2.1902, p 345.
- 20 Rawson, G, p 111.
- 21 Rawson, G, p 113.
- 22 Rawson's despatch, 27.2.1897.
- 23 Rawson, G, p 162.
- 24 Rawson's despatch, 27.2.1897.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Rawson, G, p 163.
- 27 Rawson, G, p 169.
- 28 Rawson, G, p 173.
- 29 Rawson, G, p 209.
- 30 Rawson, G, p 210.
- 31 Rawson, G, p 210.
- 32 Rawson, G, p 212.
- 33 Hasluck, A (ed), *Audrey Tennyson's Viceregal Days*, National Library, Canberra, 1978 (August 1902), p 237.
- 34 *British Australasian*, 6.2.1902, p 238.
- 35 *British Australasian*, 6.2.1902, p 239.

- 36 Lady Poore, *Recollections of an Admiral's Wife*, London, 1916, p 105. Admiral Sir Richard Poore commanded the Australia Station.
- 37 Rawson, G, p 228.
- 38 Sir John See, Letters received while in office, 1885-1904 (ML).
- 39 Rawson, G, p 226.
- 40 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 7.6.1904, CO 418/32, f 189. During Rawson's time as Governor the Colonial Secretaries were Joseph Chamberlain, Alfred Lyttleton (from September 1903), the Earl of Elgin (from December 1905) and the Earl of Crewe (from April 1908).
- 41 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 7.6.1904, CO 418/32, f 190.
- 41 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 7.6.1904, CO 418/32, f 190.
- 42 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 4.10.1902, CO 418/20, f 463.
- 43 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 13.10.1902 CO 418/20, f 467.
- 44 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies 13.10.1902, CO 418/20, f 466.
- 45 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies 13.10.1902, CO 418/20, f 466.
- 46 Minute from Governor to Premier, 7.10.1902, CO 418/20, f 469.
- 47 Minute from Governor to Premier, 7.10.1902, CO 418/20, f 470.
- 48 Minute from Governor to Premier, 7.10.1902, CO 418/20, f 469.
- 49 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 13.10.1902, CO 418/20, f 467.
- 50 CO comment, 13.10.1902, CO 418/20, f 465.
- 51 *Arrow* (Sydney), 14.4.1908, p 1.
- 52 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19.1.1903, CO 418/27, f 145.
- 53 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 8.4.1903, CO 418/27, f 171.
- 54 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 2.4.1903, CO 418/27, f 160.
- 55 Rawson, G, p 226.
- 56 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 7.6.1904, CO 418/32, f 181.
- 57 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 7.6.1904, CO 418/32, f 181.
- 58 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 23.9.1904, CO 418/32, f 220.
- 59 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 23.9.1904, CO 418/32, f 221.
- 60 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 23.9.1904, CO 418/32, f 222.
- 61 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 23.9.1904, CO 418/32, f 221.
- 62 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 23.9.1904, CO 418/32, f 222.
- 63 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 23.9.1904, CO 418/32, f 223.
- 64 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 23.9.1904, CO 418/32, f 226.
- 65 Alfred Lyttleton's comment on Rawson's despatch, 23.9.1904, CO 418/32, f 216.
- 66 Sir Joseph Carruthers, *Autobiography*, p 5 (typescript NL, ML).
- 67 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 12.12.1904, CO 418/32, f 277.
- 68 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 12.12.1904, CO 418/32, f 278.
- 69 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 12.12.1904, CO 418/32, f 278.
- 70 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 12.12.1904, CO 418/32, f 278.
- 71 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 10.1.1903, CO 418/27, f 107.
- 72 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 21.1.1908, CO 418/62, f 31.
- 73 Rawson, G, p 229.
- 74 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 21.1.1908, CO 418/62, f 31.
- 75 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 21.1.1908, CO 418/62, f 31.
- 76 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 21.1.1908, CO 418/62, f 31.
- 77 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 28.7.1906, CO 418/46, f 272.
- 78 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 28.7.1906, CO 418/46, f 272.
- 79 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 28.1.1908, CO 418/62, f 67.

- 80 Rawson, G, p 229.
- 81 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 14.4.1903, CO 418/26, f 331.
- 82 Minute from Rawson to Lord Elgin, 29.5.1906, Deakin MSS 1540/1154 (NL).
- 83 Rawson to Lord Northcote, 29.5.1905, Deakin MSS 1540/15/1327 (NL).
- 84 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30.6.1908, CO 418/62, f 328.
- 85 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30.6.1908, CO 418/62, f 327.
- 86 Carruthers, JH, *A Lifetime in Conservative Politics*, Hogan, M (ed), UNSW Press, Sydney, 2005, p 194.
- 87 Weigall was the son of AB Weigall, headmaster of Sydney Grammar School.
- 88 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26.6.1906, CO 418/46, f 207.
- 89 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 15.1.1907, CO 418/53, f 96.
- 90 Hasluck, p 237.
- 91 Hasluck, p 237.
- 92 *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 20.12.1905, p 44.
- 93 *The Cyclopaedia of NSW*, Sydney, 1907.
- 94 Rawson, G, p 226.
- 95 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13.9.1902, p 2.
- 96 Orchard, WA, *Music in Australia*, Georgian House, Melbourne, 1952, p xvi.
- 97 Later Sir Leslie Orme Wilson, a distinguished soldier and Governor of Queensland.
- 98 Orchard, p xvi.
- 99 The Armidale School, School Directory; he was School Captain and a Prefect.
- 100 Rawson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 14.3.1905, CO 418/38, f 120-1.
- 101 Rawson, G, p 224.
- 102 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27.8.1908, p 8.
- 103 James Alexander Hogue, papers, 1889-1920 ML MSS 113 (ML).
- 104 Thomas Waddell, Papers, ML MSS 3234 (ML).
- 105 *The Times*, 9.11.1910, p 13.
- 106 Rawson, G, p 256.
- 107 Alice Evelyn, born 22.7.1872; Harry Hugh, born and died 1875; Henry Christopher Shaw, born 21.2.1878; Hubert Wyatt Hay, born 11.9.1887, killed in action January 1917, one infant deceased.
- 108 Information from Sioban Clark, Greenwich Foundation, London.
- 109 William Wordsworth, "Character of the Happy Warrior", 1806.