

# CHARLES DIXON

## *And the Golden Age of Marine Painting*

Stuart Boyd

Charles Dixon (1872-1934) is recognised as one of the world's most gifted maritime artists covering almost every conceivable type of maritime subject. His work is highly sought after today and can be found in many national museums, galleries, and private and corporate collections in the UK, North America and Australia. Many of Dixon's paintings hang in offices in the City of London. This is the first book ever to feature significant a number of Dixon's works.

This lavishly illustrated book contains over 100 of Dixon's best works along with many sketches and drawings related to his principal paintings. It refers and contains many examples of the work of his illustrious contemporaries including Sir Muirhead Bone, Montague Dawson, Sir John Lavery, Frank H. Mason, Arthur Briscoe, Charles Pears, Jack Spurling, Norman Wilkinson, Frank Watson Wood and William Lionel Wyllie among many others.

Apart from striking yachting subjects, Dixon also painted dramatic naval battles, liners, sail and steamships, and the working boats and sailing ships on the River Thames. In addition he benefited from commissions from the leading shipping companies of the day notably P & O, and he was a friend of Sir Thomas Lipton and went out with all five *Shamrocks* to record the America's Cup races off Sandy Hook, New York. This also gave him the opportunity to paint American naval subjects. He exhibited at the New Watercolour Society and the Royal Academy of Arts from 1889, and had works shown there in most years until his death.

Superbly illustrated, with paintings drawn from national and international sources, both private and public, this is one of the most important studies of maritime paintings yet produced, setting as it does the life and work of one of Britain's greatest maritime artists alongside those who inspired him and were, in turn, inspired. It is a book that collectors and those with a passion for maritime art will find of great interest. Appendices to the work include a list of public collections holding works by Charles Dixon, works exhibited at the Royal Academy, works exhibited at the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolours, and works exhibited at the Walker Gallery.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stuart Boyd was born in 1943 in Newport, Monmouthshire, where, as a boy, he lived close to the docks in this once thriving South Wales port. After retirement from a career in local government and the Civil Service he has been able to devote a long held passion for British marine watercolours, particularly those by Charles Dixon, and has contributed to a number of antique and heritage magazines on the subject of marine art. He lives near Christchurch, Dorset and describes himself as a fair-weather sailor.

### HALSGROVE CATALOGUE

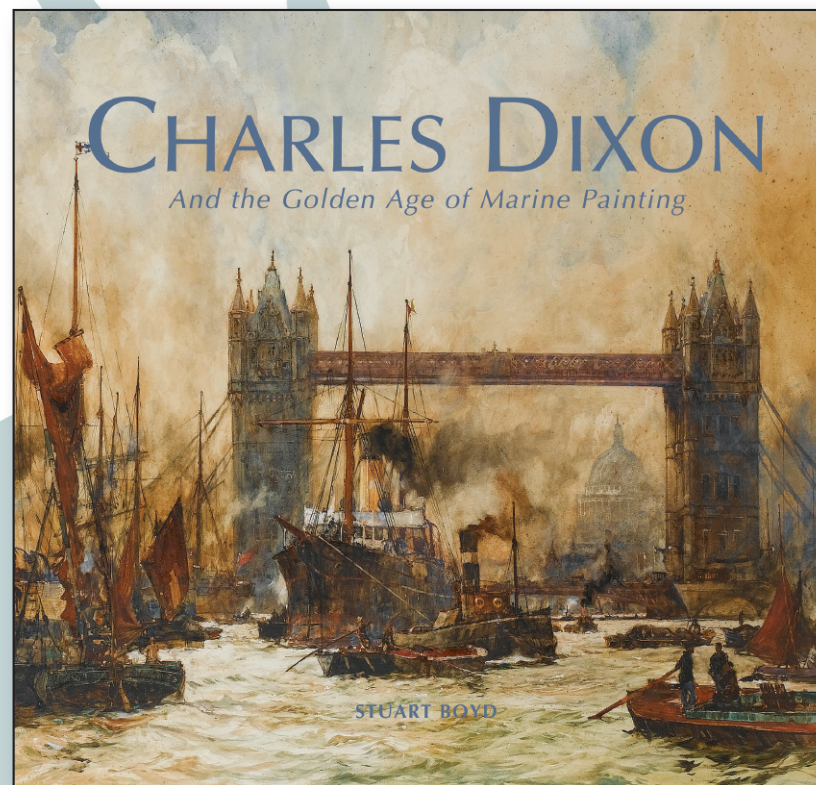
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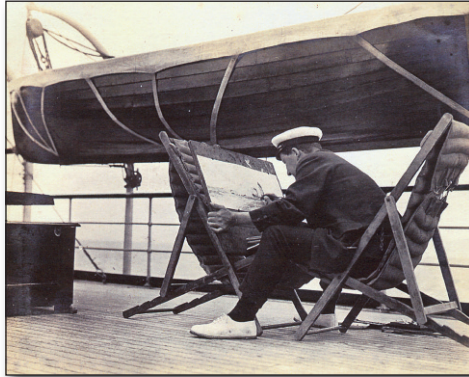


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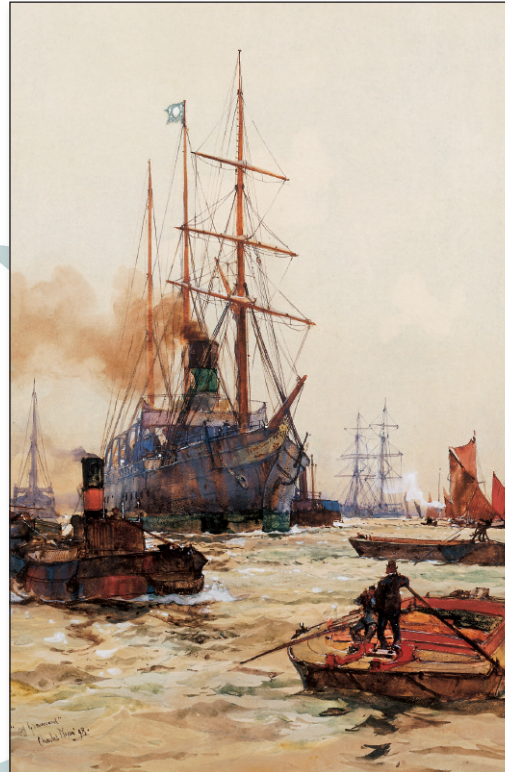




Photograph of Charles Dixon painting on board steam yacht St Serf, 1916.



Britannic, Oil on Canvas, 40x60"



Off Gravesend, Watercolour, 25½x13"



The Houses of Parliament - Looking West from Cherry Garden Pier  
Charles Dixon, Watercolour, 1889  
British Museum



The Anchor Line Steamship  
City of Rome Shipping Co. Middlesbrough  
United Kingdom, 1889  
Signed and dated '89  
British Museum



Rodney's Formidable breaking the line, 1782.



The Houses of Parliament, Watercolour, 14x20¼"

Example of a double-page spread.

as 3 St John's Wood Studio, the same given for Wyllie and apparently the only one he ever rented in London. St John's Wood was at that time a fashionable artists' colony.

In piecing together Dixon's early career, it seems unlikely that the remarkable adolescent talent which had found its way through the portals of the Royal Academy would not have come to the attention of prospective employers keen to harness the skills of the young tyro and the years up to the end of the nineteenth century saw his career develop and flourish. This was particularly evident around 1880 when marine painting, as practised by Dixon, W. L. Wyllie and their followers, inclined increasingly towards illustration, a tendency confirmed by the requirements of the Great War. It seems, therefore, that Dixon, along with many of his contemporaries in the field of marine art who wished to turn their hand to illustration, was working simultaneously for many of the various weekly papers of the day, such as *The Graphic*, *The Sphere* and *The Illustrated London News*. The latter was founded in 1842 and became the first journal to present news and pictures together as a regular policy. Cutting expenses, it was first published on 14 May 1842 and appeared every Saturday. Its 16 pages included pictures of the war in Afghanistan, a train crash in France, a steam boat explosion in Canada, and a fancy dress ball at Buckingham Palace. Thus typical news of a pictorial nature became its forte, its staff of artists roaming the world looking for exciting material and in turn sending back a stream of sketches of battles, natural wonders and catastrophes. The *Illustrated London News* was unchanged in England until 1861 when saw the arrival of *The Graphic*, a new illustrated weekly and in 1893 *The Sphere*. The work of an illustrator engaged by these publications required a sharp eye for detail, a delicate sense of dramatic composition and, above all, a sense of occasion, and it seems that on all counts Dixon fully met the criteria. Unfortunately the offices of the *ILN* were bombed during the Second World War, when all staff records and editorial notes were destroyed and, although impossible to pinpoint Dixon's employment dates with that magazine.