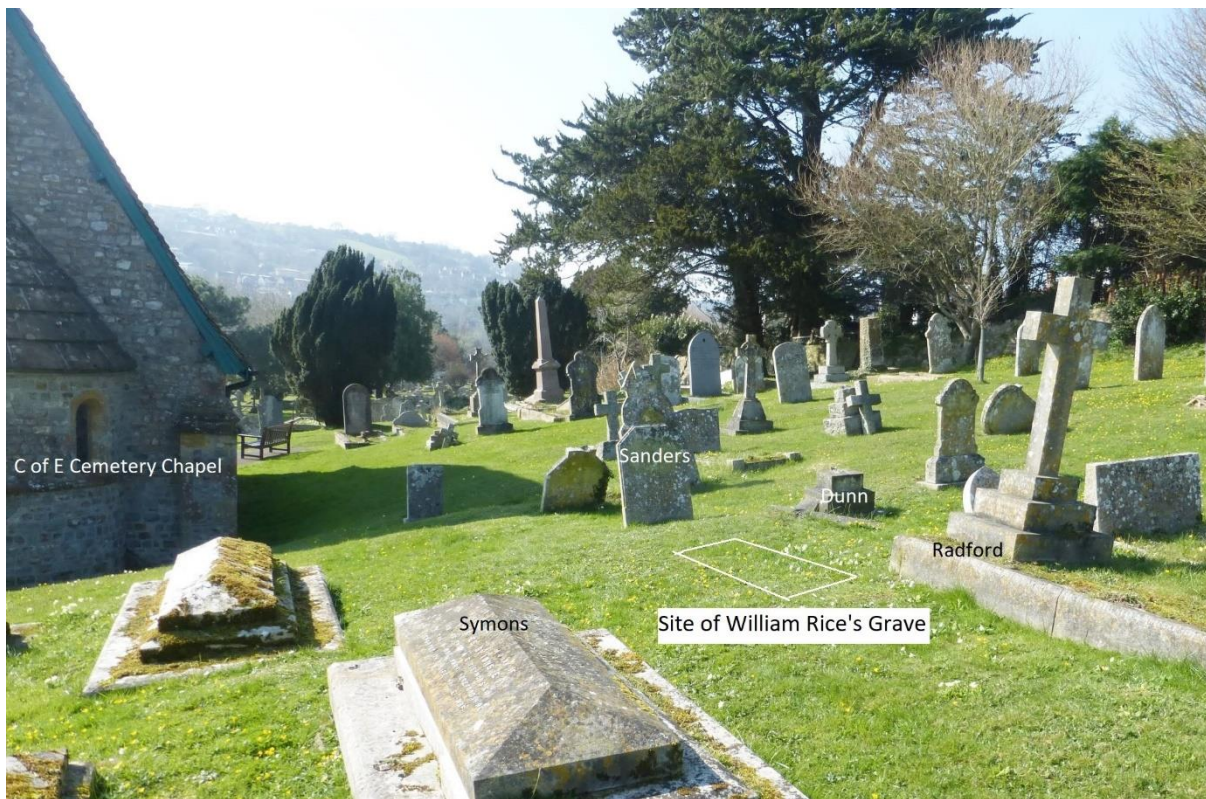


William Bellet Rice RN Lyme Regis Cemetery

Graham Davies, April 2022

AN AGED TAR – On the 11th there died at Sherborne Lane, Lyme Regis, William Bellet Rice, aged 89. Deceased had served under Nelson and Sir John T Duckworth, and was in the battle of St Domingo, for which he received a medal and a small pension, and subsequently the Greenwich Hospital pension was added. (Western Times, 21 November 1873)

William Bellet Rice (1784-1873) was buried at Lyme Regis cemetery on 17th November 1873 with assistant curate Rev J Curgenvin officiating. Today his grave is a grass site, with no commemorative markings, which was probably identified by a wooden cross after his burial.

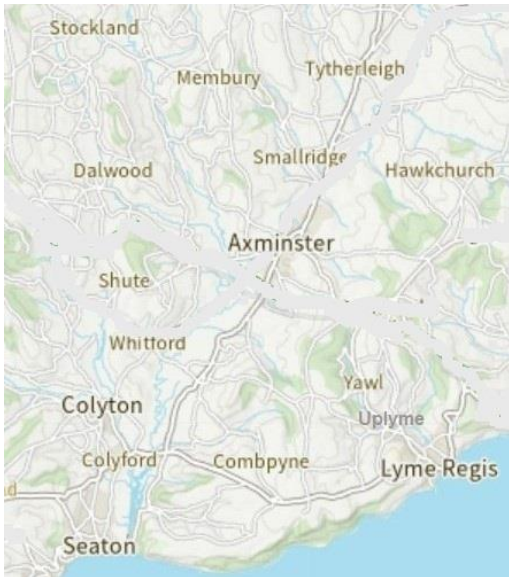


Lyme Regis Cemetery – Grave site of William Bellet Rice (B355).*
In the burial records William was described as a Pensioner RN.

* Research Team's 'Cemetery Project' (2012-2016).

William Bellet Rice was born in Membury, a village in East Devon four miles north west of Axminster. He was baptised at Membury's parish church, St John the Baptist, on May 30th 1784.
'May 30 William Bellet Rice son of Samuel & Sarah Rice'.

His time in the Royal Navy, the battle of St Domingo, his medal and pension, will be discussed later in this article.



Parishes in East Devon and Dorset

William Bellet Rice married Sarah Spurway (1788-1869) on 26th November 1817 at St Peter's Church, Dalwood. Their five children were baptised at St Peter's Church: Samuel (1819), Elizabeth (1822), Julia Anna (1822), William (1824) and Thomas Spurway (1828).

Timeline - This timeline refers to known dates that William B Rice (1784-1873) lived at several parishes in East Devon and Dorset. His occupation may well extend beyond the known dates.

Membury	1784
Dalwood	1817-1824
Stockland	1828-1841
Uplyme	1851-1861
Lyme Regis	1869-1873

Sarah Rice died in 1869 and is buried in Lyme Regis cemetery. The 1871 census records William B Rice living with his son Thomas in Sherborne Lane, Lyme Regis.

Until the Counties (Detached Parts) Act 1844, the parishes of Dalwood and Stockland were exclaves of Dorset.

Apart from the newspaper cutting, the author has not yet found further details of William B Rice's time in the Royal Navy including what ships he sailed in.

The battle of St (San) Domingo was an engagement of British and French Squadrons on 6th February 1806 in the Caribbean, off the French-occupied Spanish colony of St Domingo. The small British fleet, commanded by Rear Admiral John Thomas Duckworth, won the battle which was memorable for its severe fighting at close range. Losses: British, 340 dead or wounded; French, 1,500 dead or wounded, 5 ships captured or destroyed.



*Duckworth's Action off San Domingo, 6 February 1806
painted by Nicholas Pocock (1740-1821)*



Naval General Service Medal,
with bar for St Domingo 1848

The Lester Watson Collection
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

The newspaper cutting reports that William Rice received a pension from the Greenwich Hospital but with no information on the length of his service with the Navy or whether he was wounded. On retiring from the Navy, William was allowed to work to supplement his pension. He received his Naval General Service Medal with bar for St Domingo in 1848, following a decision in that year that those serving in the Navy in the pre-Victorian era were recognised and given a General Service Medal.

This article was developed from an enquiry to the Museum by Mr Doug King, four times grandson of William Bellet Rice.