

**NEWSLETTER**  
**THE FRIENDS OF**  
**THE SOLDIERS OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE**  
**MUSEUM**



**SPRING 2016**

## SUMMER RECEPTION AT THE MEDAL OFFICE



**Imjin Barracks, Innsworth, Gloucester. GL3 1HW**

**Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2016**

**18.45 for 1930 hrs**

The Friends of SoGM have been invited to a reception at the MoD Medal Office, Innsworth, for a 'Fizz Greeting', followed by a chance to see the medal issuing procedure and then a special viewing of the medal display cases which contain every medal issued by the Office.

As the Friends of SoGM have been so generous over the last few years there will be no charge for this Summer Event, although we may seek donations during the evening.

Please find the invitation for this evenings event with this edition of the Newsletter. As the Medal Office is within 'the wire' of Imjin Barracks we will require names of guests with hopefully potential new members, and car registration numbers; you may also need photographic identity (drivers license or passport). Please use the lower part of the invitation form, tear off and return the slip to the Hon Secretary.



### **VETERANS BADGE**

During the evening we will present those who have served in the Regular, Territorial or Reserve Forces and would like to have this service recognised, with their Veterans Lapel Badge. The Medal Office would like to process these applications as soon as possible so please apply to the Hon Sec. [simoncolbeck@msn.com](mailto:simoncolbeck@msn.com) with your name and address. An application form will be sent to you for rapid return to the MOD Medal Office.

*'Apply now to avoid disappointment'*

## Other Forthcoming Events

### Friends of Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum Badminton Lunch

**Thursday 5 May 2016 - 1200 until 1400 hrs.**

As in previous years, the FoSoGM will be holding a Lunch in the Marquee of the Royal Wessex Yeomanry during the Badminton Three Day Event.

A two course meal and coffee will be available for £18 (profits to the Museum) and the bar will be open.

Please book your places to the Hon Sec. [simoncolbeck@msn.com](mailto:simoncolbeck@msn.com)

*Come and have a break from your shopping and bring your friends.*



### **Imjin Music Festival – Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2016.**

Celebrating HM The Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday at Imjin Barracks, Innsworth, Gloucester.

A Free Concert, Beating the Retreat and Spitfire Flypast.

Tickets available at [www.imjinmusicfestival.com](http://www.imjinmusicfestival.com)

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Time passes rapidly; a short while ago we were marking the onset of the Great War and now this Newsletter reports on some of the events of early 1916.

The war in the Middle East, where the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars were facing the Turkish Army in northern Sinai having been withdrawn from the Gallipoli Peninsular, seemed very distant to those who had sons or husbands training in the UK or waiting in the trenches on the Western Front, but the loss of a squadron of the RGH in April 1916 at Qatia, was a tragic incident for Gloucestershire families. To mark this event there is now a small exhibit in the Museum of medals of those who were at Qatia, including recently donated possessions of Trooper Parsons, who was killed in the fighting; his story is told in this edition.

Worse news was yet to come after the start of the great Somme offensive on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916, when almost every town and village in Great Britain would be affected by the loss of so many local young men, volunteers of 'Kitchener's Army'. It is often forgotten that this battle continued until November 1916, so the events of the Somme will be discussed in the Autumn Newsletter; but the Museum's Somme Exhibition starts in this month, 100 years after the planning of that battle was well underway. Do call in and see this new exhibit. The Museum are extremely grateful to the National Army Museum (NAM) for the temporary loan of the WW1 medals, including the VC, of Carton De Wiart, who served with both Gloucestershire Regiments, which are the centre piece of this exhibition (see back page). It must also be said that this loan was partly facilitated by the Friends of the Museum, as the security alarms and environmental monitors had to be upgraded to satisfy the NAM's conditions of loan. These have been funded by a generous grant from the Friends and will also make the Museum Accreditation, due later this year, an easier exercise.

Please also note two forthcoming events for the Friends. First, on Thursday 5 May, we will be inviting Friends and guests to Lunch in the Yeomanry Marquee at Badminton, during the Horse Trials. This is now becoming a popular event for all those who do a little shopping on 'the Thursday' and can enjoy a drink and a meal in good company.

May I also recommend the 'Summer Reception' on Thursday 2 June, 2016, courtesy of a kind invitation from the MOD Medal Office, in Imjin Barracks, Innsworth. We will commence with drinks before being shown the business of the medal office and then visit the magnificent display panels that show every medal issued since the Peninsular War - you may have seen media coverage of the Queen's visit to the office in November last year. The Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre, co-located with the Medal Office, will also show a little of their work.

The Autumn Lecture last October, given by Peter Snow on the subject of Waterloo, was a great success and, with the sale of his books, helped our funds enormously, but we do need to increase the number of the Friends, so please bring prospective members to FoSoGM events and also show them around our great Museum. Recent evening visits by clubs, associations and business leaders have shown how highly the Museum is regarded in Gloucestershire; we must build our fund-raising mechanisms to support the work of the Museum and the Archive.

**Lt Col Ralph Stephenson. TD**

## GLOUCESTERSHIRE WORLD WAR 1 POW CAMPS

When war was declared in early August 1914, most male civilians of military age with Germanic-sounding names living in Britain and its overseas territories were arrested and questioned to discover if they were “friendly aliens” or “enemy aliens”. Several novels had been published a few years earlier featuring foreign spies, thus many Britons were nervous about potential “enemies in our midst”. Any aliens, after questioning, considered to be a threat to British security, even if having lived in Britain for years, or having a British-born wife or son in the British army, were interned - many for the remainder of the war. The majority (around 23,000) of these civilian internees in Britain were eventually held on the Isle of Man guarded by some 5,000 British soldiers.

As hostilities proceeded, combatant soldiers, sailors, U-boat and zeppelin crews and airmen fighting for the Fatherland (Germany and its allies) were captured. Large numbers were brought to Britain thereby thwarting attempts to escape and re-join their units. Civilians and combatants alike, because imprisoned as a consequence of the war, were termed Prisoners of War. Places where many prisoners were concentrated together were termed concentration camps. Such terminology used during WW1 had none of the sinister associations applied later to WW2 concentration camps.

To manage increasing numbers of combatant POWs shipped across the English Channel, the War Office followed the British Army Command structure, establishing a major camp in each Command area. The old county of Gloucestershire fell within Southern Command, for which Dorchester was designated as the parent camp. Southern Command also embraced Berkshire, Bristol, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, Wiltshire and Worcestershire. Gradually, as further combatants were captured, parent camps became crowded.



*German POWs at Beachley Camp, March 1919*

A major problem for all POWs was boredom: being confined in a limited space with little to do or think about created potential discipline problems and caused mental disorientation, leading typically to neurasthenia (termed “barbed wire disease”). Accordingly, POWs were encouraged to participate in sports, theatricals, model making and gardening. Photographs taken at this time, some produced as official postcards, illustrate POWs engaged in these pursuits. The prisoners formed committees to organise their various activities usually nominating an NCO at their camp to act as their leader.

As the war continued, less labour became available throughout Britain to maintain the infrastructure on the Home Front: e.g., to plough and sow fields, fell much-needed timber, dredge rivers, build roads and engage in construction. After overcoming resistance from trades unions, a solution to the national demand for labour was to employ POWs. Accordingly, Satellite Working Camps were opened in all Command areas from which small teams under armed escort could daily meet local needs. This notion simultaneously solved the other pressing problems of boredom and increasing parent camp populations. The British and German authorities agreed in 1915 that all POW camps could be inspected by a “neutral” power (America until 1917 and Switzerland and Sweden thereafter) to ensure that international conventions regarding POWs were being followed. Inspection reports were sent to both governments and surviving reports, with many other related documents, have been scoured by the author of this article.

From 1917 Gloucestershire “hosted” at least 18 working camps holding altogether around 5,800 Germans and Austrians, with a few Bulgarians and Turks. The camps were located at Beachley, Blaisdon, Broad Marston, Charlton Kings, Churchdown, Cirencester, Frampton on Severn, Henbury, Leighterton, Newark House (Hempsted), Newnham, Northleach, Shirehampton, Thornbury, Toddington, Tytherington, Winchcombe (Ford) and Yate. Only Newnham and Tytherington, and Yate for a couple of months in early 1917, were civilian camps. From Henbury, Charlton Kings, Leighterton, Shirehampton and Yate, the POWs undertook building and road construction; from Blaisdon, Churchdown, Cirencester, Newark House, Newnham, Northleach, Thornbury and Winchcombe they worked on local farms, while at Frampton they quarried gravel, and stone at Tytherington. Uniquely at Toddington POWs replaced British fruit pickers who had joined compatriots on the Western Front and elsewhere. Essential supplies to these satellite camps came through the parent camp at Dorchester, as did unlimited amounts of incoming correspondence from home, and all outgoing mail; POWs were permitted to write two letters a week and send photographs and postcards – although most mail was censored in Dorchester or London until mid-1919 to ensure that nothing of military significance was transmitted.

Beachley Camp, although in Gloucestershire, was exceptionally not a satellite of Dorchester but of Shrewsbury in Western Command and so was serviced from there. Furthermore, it was unique in the county by holding vast numbers of POWs: nearly 3,500 POWs worked at the unsuccessful shipyards on Beachley peninsular between the Severn and Wye rivers in 1918 and 1919.

Camp is perhaps a somewhat misleading term; in Gloucestershire only, and briefly, at Newnham, Northleach and Shirehampton were the POWs under canvas. At other camps purpose-built, but standard design, wooden huts were erected or existing buildings requisitioned by the authorities: a farmhouse at Blaisdon, country homes at Broad Marston, Charlton Kings, Churchdown and Thornbury, cottages at Winchcombe, an empty school at

Hempsted and the workhouses in Cirencester and Northleach, when tents proved too cold in winter 1918.



*The Camp Bakery at Yate POW Camp, 1918*

The numbers of military, combatant, POWs held in Gloucestershire working camps varied from 18 at Churchdown, 35 at Blaisdon and 42 at Thornbury, to 247 at Leighterton, 400 at Henbury, and 350 and then 500 in Yate, 500 at Frampton on Severn, and the few thousand already mentioned at Beachley. The camps at Newnham and Tytherington held civilian internees, 100 Germans at the former, 50 Austrians at the latter

Few POWs escaped from Gloucestershire camps and the 15 who did, all between 17 March 1917 and 28 March 1919 from just four camps, were recaptured, mostly by the local constabulary or vigilant civilians, within 24 hours of getting away. On being questioned, often in a local magistrates' court, it appears that in general the POW had escaped following an argument with a fellow prisoner, rather than aspiring to return home. Other occasions when local justices dealt with POW issues included illegal sale of bread to prisoners by a local baker, theft of provisions by a British Guard, and throwing, by a sympathetic bystander, a few pence to a POW being marched with companions between their camp and temporary workplace.

A number of POWs died while in captivity and were buried in local churchyards or cemeteries. Being military personnel such men were entitled to a ceremony with full military honours. Fellow prisoners walked behind the cortège to the graveside where the burial service was conducted by the local clergyman; a bugle was sounded and shots fired over the grave by the British guards from the prisoner's camp. In Gloucestershire, 17 POWs died while in captivity, though only one, who had been transferred from Yate to Beaufort War Hospital in Bristol, died as a result of war wounds. Another POW was killed when a crane collapsed at Beachley in March 1919. The other 15 died from pneumonia resulting from the

wave of Spanish Influenza that swept across Europe, including Britain, in the latter half of 1918. In fact, of those 15 in Gloucestershire 11 died after the signing of the Armistice on 11 November 1918. The Camp that experienced the worst effects of 'flu' was Toddington where it was reported on 15 November 1918 that 80 of the 117 POWs had so far suffered, five had been transferred to hospital in Bristol, three to Winchcombe hospital and one was too ill to be moved. Three had just died and another died three days later. Even the British Commandant had succumbed to the 'flu' and had been replaced.

In February 1963 all the POWs who had died while in Gloucestershire were exhumed from local graves. With over 2,000 other civilian and combatant POWs from around Britain, they were reburied at Cannock Chase in Staffordshire.

**Dr. Colin R Chapman**

### **MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY AND TREASURER'S REPORT**

As at 1<sup>st</sup> March 2016 the Friends have 385 members in all categories: 283 Life and 102 annual members, including 13 overseas.

Our finances remain healthy and we are well placed to continue our support to the Museum. We continue to receive one off donations from members and would like to say 'Many Thanks', all donations are most welcome. So far this year you have paid for environmental monitors for each room and individual show case alarms.

I would like to say thank you to Mr. Richard Mullings and the partners of Sewell Mullings Logie Solicitors, for their continued support in allowing us to use their franking services in order to keep down our postage costs.

For those of you who pay for your membership annually may I remind you that membership is due in June and can be paid as follows:

- By cheque made payable to 'The Friends of the Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum' forwarded to the Friends at the Museum address 'Custom House, 31, Commercial Road, Gloucester, GL1 2HE'.
- Over the internet through the Museum website at [www.soldiersofglos.com](http://www.soldiersofglos.com) and follow the link to the Friends' page on the Museum's Home page.
- By Banker's Standing Order. To save having to write cheques, pay for postage, or remember that you need to renew your subscription annually, why not complete a Banker's Standing Order Mandate? Please contact me should you require a blank mandate.

Annual rates are £20 single, £30 couples and £10 for juniors. Conversion to Life membership is for a single payment of £200.

In order to increase membership and attract donations we will have a 'Friends Stand' at Badminton Horse Trials in May and Frampton Country Fair in September. Should any members wish to help then please contact the Hon. Sec.

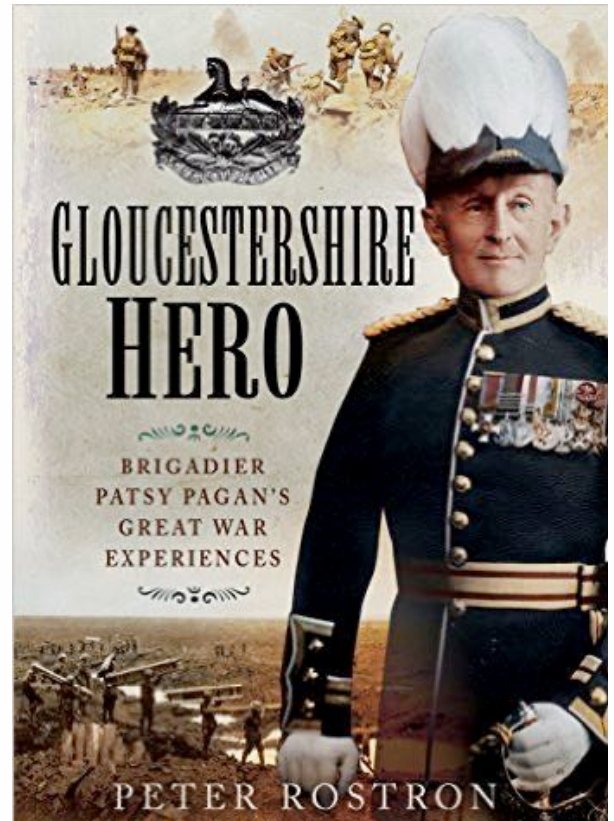
**Mr. Patrick Smart**

## Book Review

# 'A Gloucestershire Hero – Brigadier Patsy Pagan's Great War Experiences'

by Peter Rostron

The question that is often asked is 'how did those soldiers and that generation put up with the awful conditions of the Western Front in the First World War?' The answers are several and include the fact that for many the conditions of civilian life they left behind were not that comfortable. Whether they came from the countryside or the cities life could be tough, brutal, hungry and often short-lived. Many like Ivor Gurney found comradeship in the army that they had not known before. Food was generally better than they got at home and, of course, they never spent more than a very few days at one time in the front line trenches. However conditions were often appalling and the sights and dangers they were exposed to devastating at times. A factor that held men together was low level leadership, at company and battalion level, and that they were serving alongside comrades recruited, by and large, from the same area of the United Kingdom.



Alexander Pagan, affectionately nicknamed 'Patsy' by all ranks, had experience of the three types of battalions that made up The Gloucestershire Regiment in WW1: Regular, TA and Service. Service meaning those raised just for the duration of the war and recruited from those with no previous military experience. Of course after the horrendous casualties in the early years all types of battalions were brought up to strength by inexperienced recruits. The qualities thus demanded of their leaders were extraordinary and this book shows how men of Pagan's experience, across the Army, played a vital part in maintaining morale and standards in a benign but firm manner. He understood what made men tick in such circumstances.

Peter Rostron tells the story through short extracts from the Battalion's war diaries, personal letters and fills in the gaps with a narrative. He links events going on in the wider world to give context and chronology to the situation and this method widens the interest for the general reader. The story starts with Pagan's part as a junior officer in the Boer War which was a formative experience for so many of his generation. As a result he never forgot the importance of low level training and insisted on continuing at all opportunities when out of the line in The Great War. His annoyance at the way liberal politicians at home, with no direct experience of the war, misrepresented the treatment of Boer prisoners and their families are revealed in his letters home. Indeed much of his early war experience is very far from the doom and gloom with which that war is associated. The considerable distances that a battalion was expected to march in a day, and for days on end with full kit, are impressive. The British infantry was certainly fit and these lessons of fitness and marksmanship enabled the tiny British expeditionary force to punch above its weight in 1914.



In 1914 Pagan was Adjutant of 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion The Gloucestershire Regiment, a special service battalion. As such he was responsible for their organisation and training before being posted back to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion in the Western Front at Givenchy. He rapidly rose to company commander fighting at Neuve Chapelle and Aubers Ridge. He took over as Commanding Officer just in time for the battle of Loos and commanded through the Somme offensive being wounded towards the end. He stood in as Brigade Commander of 3 Brigade replacing the wounded commander.

Despite being a valiant fighting soldier being wounded a total of 3 times and always getting into a position where he could read the battle, he understood the value of detailed Brigade staff work and was on the whole very complimentary about it. However he was not always so complimentary about Divisional level operational preparedness. Despite the tempo of operations considerable attention was paid to post operational analysis: contrary to myth the British Army did not just blunder on regardless.

There is a fascinating account of the planning and training of the amphibious raid by 1 Division on the submarine pens at Zeebrugge. Pagan revelled in this unusual role and the unusual training required. It was cancelled due to 5<sup>th</sup> Army not advancing far enough to make it viable. 1<sup>st</sup> Gloucesters went back to the maelstrom of 3<sup>rd</sup> Ypres. He understood the much reviled point that Passchendaele was as much about relieving our allies by tying in German forces as a master stroke to win the war and was promoted to take over command of 184 Brigade as the final German offensive got under way. He was delighted to have 2<sup>nd</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Glosters a TF special service battalion under command. He stayed with his Brigade through the withdrawal to the Amiens area and then commanded them almost to the end of the war as the counter-offensive drove on towards Germany.

As the Western Front was ending Patsy Pagan was whisked out and sent to Ireland as a Brigade Commander being pitched into a political situation that was turning really nasty due to the incompetence of politicians on all sides. Nevertheless he displayed his hard won experience of questioning how good was the intelligence he was being asked to act upon. Again there are some fascinating insights into this bitter campaign.

His last years in the Army as a regular soldier were not particularly rewarding after his active service and he was not suited to the mores of the Indian Army when posted there as a Brigade Commander; although he respected the Indian soldiers he was not comfortable in the cantonment environment as an unmarried officer. He resigned both position and commission after 2 months, returned to England and took over as Colonel of The Gloucestershire Regiment from 1931 to 1947. A position he threw himself into with great relish, gathering speeding fines around the country in pursuit of his duties!

In summary Patsy Pagan was a fine example of a generation of regular soldiers throughout the Army who made a significant contribution to holding it together throughout the turbulence of that Great War. They had been bloodied in South Africa and knew the value of training, fitness, discipline and, above all, regimental comradeship which could maintain morale in the most testing of circumstances. Of all the major combatants the British Army was the one that never broke.

**Lt. Col. Robert Dixon OBE.**

## “THE AFFAIR OF QATIA”

On St. George’s Day, Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1916, the nation’s attention became focused on the dramatic events of the Easter Rising in Dublin. Further from home another drama was unfolding in the Sinai Desert, which, as a British Protectorate, was the buffer which defended the Suez Canal (the vital Allied lifeline to India, East Africa, the Gulf and the Far East) from the Ottoman Empire. Already the year before, an abortive but bold attempt on the Canal had been made by the German led Turks who crossed the Sinai Peninsula, with pontoon boats from Germany, as part of their first Suez Offensive.

Lt General Sir Archibald Murray (‘Old Archie’) had recently become commander-in-chief of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) and decided on a forward defence of the Canal. He had to achieve this task with a steadily reducing number of troops as, one after the other; his best divisions were sent to France. His defensive plan first needed a railway and water pipeline to be built across the Sinai Peninsula and he expected that this would reach Qatia (30 miles eastwards) by the end of April 1916. This would allow him to station both an infantry and mounted division there, but he assessed that a Turkish attack would not be launched before the winter of 1916, based on intelligence that later was found to be faulty. Meanwhile the Turkish high command authorised Colonel Kress von Kressenstein (an aristocratic Bavarian military engineer) to launch a spoiling raid against the advancing British railway in April 1916.

The defensive front was divided into three sectors and the 5<sup>th</sup> (Yeomanry) Mounted Brigade was part of the northern sector, 1/1 RGH, Worcester and Warwick Yeomanry were the three mounted regiments of this Bde, which was commanded Brig General Edgar Wiggin. Then by an unfortunate co-incidence, the two opposing commanders moved against each other at the same time; Brig. Wiggin took a raiding party to attack a Turkish camp at Mageibra, which he found empty, whilst Colonel Kress von Kressenstein moved against Oghratina and Dueidar.



*Capt Michael Lloyd-Baker of Hardwicke*



*Viscount Michael Quenington, Adjutant RGH  
only son of Earl St Aldwyn and MP for Tewkesbury.*

Lt Col Ralph Yorke (of Forthampton), who had recently taken over command of 1/1 RGH, deployed 'A' Squadron, under Capt Michael Lloyd-Baker, to protect the water drilling sappers at the Qatia oasis, with 40 dismounted Worcester Yeomen and some medical and veterinary elements in support. He kept 'B' (under Maj Henry Clifford of Frampton) and 'D' (under Capt Charles Turner of Old Down) Squadrons with his RHQ at Romani.



*The camp at Qatia*

*All stores and water come by rail to Dueidar, and then by convoy of camels, on which we entirely depend. Communication is by telephone from Dueidar to Romani and Qatia, by signal and helio to other places. Every day we had outposts out about 8 miles where they can see a long way and watch. We also had recon patrols out every day, being withdrawn at night. There is water to be found for horses, but you have to dig 5 feet and make a proper well before it is of any use. It has been obvious to us that our position was one right out in the blue. So long as there was no enemy we were safe. The distance was too far for support from Dueidar and communication very bad indeed. We never had more than one day's supply of water in hand, which also made it impossible to do much. We relied entirely on intelligence which failed signally'.*

RGH War Diary - 17<sup>th</sup> April 1916

In the early hours of Easter Day a thick fog caused by moisture rolling in from the sea during the night and evaporating as dawn broke, had covered the oases of Oghratina and Qatia. As a result communication by heliograph and semaphore was impossible until 8 o'clock. 'A' Squadron had slept fully dressed that night and on hearing firing from Oghratina. Capt. Lloyd-Baker had the Sqn stood-to and saddled up at 3.30 am and small patrols from each side exchanged fire in the fog.

Colonel Kress von Kressenstein's divisional strength attack soon overwhelmed the two Worcester squadrons at Oghratina, after a desperate hand to hand struggle, and by 8am the telephone wire had been cut and communications with the rest of the Brigade completely lost. With Oghratina overrun, the bulk of the Ottoman force moved on and at 9am, began to attack 'A' Squadron at Qatia. With air superiority, German aircraft had plotted the positions of the defences and the horse lines and, as the enemy infantry deployed, the Austrian 12 pounder artillery at Bir el Rabah, began to shell those lines to prevent a break out.

Capt Lloyd-Baker had already moved many of his horses in preparation to relieve Oghratina, but those left in the lines became casualties. This presented the squadron leader with the

same dilemma as had faced Maj Frank Williams-Thomas, who commanded the two Worcester squadrons at Oghratina; the mounted men could withdraw, but there was now a body of dismounted men who would not stand a chance, trying to withdraw on foot. His decision, like Williams-Thomas', was to stand by his men and form a defensive perimeter. The telephone wire to Hamisah was still intact at 10.15am and, on reporting the desperate situation, he was ordered "to hold on as reinforcements were on their way". As the visibility improved during the morning and with very limited communications, commanders within the Brigade started using their own initiative, seeing the Qatia camp under fire and on fire.

The commanding officer of the Worcesters, Lt Col The Hon Charles Coventry and his remaining squadron rode to 'A' Squadron's support. Almost simultaneously, Lt Col Yorke switched his move from Romani towards Duiedar, with 'B' and 'D' Squadrons, to attack the Ottoman right flank, north of Qatia. After initial success, they started to take serious casualties, including the Adjut, Capt Viscount Micky Quenington, who died of wounds across Cpl George Castle's saddle during his five mile ride back to safety at Romani. This plucky NCO, a Beaufort Hunt servant at home, earned his MM for this gallant but forlorn feat.

Meanwhile back at Qatia, Capt Lloyd-Baker's beleaguered squadron was holding out bravely but starting to take casualties under constant artillery and infantry assaults. Cpl Hugh Walwyn's Maxim machine-gun was their main means of defence and the yeomen's marksmanship, well documented up to the outbreak of war, fooled the enemy into overestimating their strength. From about 9am until 11 o'clock, the Turks made several advances against 'A' Squadron's crescent shaped position. During this time, C Sqn of the Worcesters reinforced the position, while Cpl

Welwyn, assisted by Sgt Harry Colburn, kept up a remarkable rate of fire with the Maxim gun.

From noon onwards, the 3000 strong Turkish force, using fire and movement, slowly encircled 'A' Squadron's position, under cover of their field artillery. In the fog of the battle the Sqn Ldr and his 2 I/C, Lt Lord Elcho, had both been killed. 2/Lt Wyndham Smith was seriously wounded, as was Sgt Lovell. Ammunition started to run low and the Maxim gun finally overheated after shrapnel damaged the water jacket and it became impossible to prevent the coolant from boiling dry.



*Sgt Colburn and Cpl Welwyn*

Colonel Coventry's "Every man for himself!" was lost in the din of battle but about nine of 'A' Squadron's number escaped, when the position was finally rushed at about 3 o'clock. Cpl Bob Eaton had two horses shot from under him as he made his escape. The Turkish infantry were largely disciplined by their German officers in the taking of prisoners, who were moved off hurriedly to start their long march north to Turkey. The badly wounded were left on the battlefield and were not rescued for two days, after lying in the blazing sun and surviving the ravages of the scavenging Bedouin. They were discovered by the Australian Light Horse who had, very belatedly, been sent to their assistance. Meanwhile 2/Lt Smith had died of his wounds, but Sgt Charles Lovell had held on despite his appalling injuries.

The Brigade had been completely surprised, Brigade HQ and its important reserve force had been out of position at a critical time, following false intelligence about Mageibra, and could not support its regiments.

*It should, however, be noted that Captain Lloyd Baker was in telephonic communication with Br.-General Wiggin after 9am, that he informed the latter of the advance of 600 men in open order with a formed body behind them and that he was not ordered to retire. He was told that both General Wiggin and Colonel Yorke were moving to his assistance.*

*The details of the capture of these two posts were not known till after the Armistice, when information became available from officers who had been prisoners of war. This information tends to relieve the Yeomanry of the charge of having been completely surprised. It may be said that patrols from Oghratina were not apparently far enough out and that a mounted outpost of this type should have had standing patrols far ahead in the direction of the enemy. But at Qatiya there was not any suggestion of surprise and it is difficult to see in what respect Captain Lloyd Baker (who was killed) could have acted differently. In both cases the defence was gallant in the extreme.*

From 'History of The Great War' 1928

The bare facts of the action at Qatia on Easter Day reveal little of the heroism and self-sacrifice of the young yeomen who stood and fought. Many died there and more were to endure a harsh captivity at the hands of the Turks. Twenty yeomen, including four officers, were killed, fifteen injured and over sixty taken into captivity.

As all of 'A' Squadron's officers had been killed, wounded or taken prisoner and the Brigade had been badly compromised, there no first-hand accounts of the action. As time passed there was little news of the fate of the individuals, particularly whether they had been killed or captured and their families at home had to endure the uncertainty for several months. Lord Quenington's death, himself an MP and whose father had been Chancellor of the Exchequer, caused 'questions in the House' about the truth of the affair.

Most yeomen were buried on the field of battle, but Lord Quenington's body was taken back to Cairo for a formal service to be buried alongside his wife (née Dent-Brocklehurst of Sudeley), who had died of typhus whilst working as a nurse in Alexandria, less than two months before her husband.

The Commanding Officer wrote to his brother, Vincent Yorke:-

*"The Commander-in-Chief is absolutely furious with us for having sent ten officers to poor Micky's funeral, the reason being that we were able to tell people there the truth and put an end to the wild rumours that were going round".*

Sadly this was not achieved until years later. Having already commanded the RGH, Lt Col Cecil Elwes wrote from England to a member of the Hicks-Beach family:-

*.....that the Regiment were very poorly equipped and the desert ambulances and camel/mule litters, which he had heard doctors saying they needed when he left, never materialised. He seemed to think that senior officers had covered up the Army's failings at the expense of the men who were actually at Qatia, as the British had no idea that such a large number of enemy troops were anywhere near them and were taken entirely by surprise.*

**Lt. Col. Rollo Clifford TD**

***Edited from an article in the 'Donkey Walloper' – the Journal of 'C' (RGH) Sqn. Royal Wessex Yeomanry***

## New Acquisition

### POSSESSIONS OF TROOPER PARSONS W.F. 2838

Whilst the Archivist was planning the Qatia (or Katia) display, the great-niece of Tpr. Parsons contacted the Museum and offered to donate the family's memorabilia of Tpr William Frederick Parsons 2838, who was killed at Katia. These items include his medals, a Royal Gloucestershire Hussars Imperial Yeomanry gilt cap badge (this cap badge should not have been issued after 1908 but perhaps the demand of newly enlisted men caused a shortage of the newer RGH badge, without the 'IY' of the Imperial Yeomanry), his bronze Death Medallion, his riding crop, his Bible, a small leather purse containing an assortment of German, Egyptian and Indian coins and an assortment of paperwork, including a framed Honour Scroll from the Territorial Forces Association for Gloucestershire.



*William Frederick Parsons, as a young boy with parents and sister Violet. c. 1900.*



*2838 Trooper William Frederick Parsons in service dress. Royal Gloucestershire Hussars c.1914-15.*

Most of these items, which have now been placed in the Katia exhibit, are the only artefacts that the Museum possess from a fatality of that 'Affair'\* and we are very grateful to the family for their gift.

William F. Parsons was born in the parish of Ashchurch, near Tewksbury, on the 26 July 1896, the family living in Pamington, a hamlet close to Ashchurch, where his father was a railway labourer. He attended Ashchurch junior school where he was known as Fred. The school records show that he was an adventurous boy; for 'whist climbing on the school

railings he fell onto the spikes, resulting in a nasty gash on the back of the thigh'. Aged 15 he was helping in his father's new business venture, as an assistant coal agent.

In 1915 he joined the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars, being posted to the 3/1 RGH, part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Reserve Cavalry Regiment. He was stationed, as his Bible donated by his sister notes, at Assaye Barracks, Tidworth, for his basic training. After completing his training he was sent, with other reinforcements in December 1915, to Egypt, to make good the regiment's losses after their withdrawal from Gallipoli and was posted to 'A' (Gloucester) Squadron.



The medals, Death Plaque medallion or 'death penny' and Bible, inscribed, "To my dear Brother from his loving Sister & all at home. Violet Parsons, Pamington, Nr. Tewkesbury Glos." and "To Trooper W.H. Parsons 3/1st R.G.H.Y. C Squadron. Attached 4th R.R. of Cavalry, Assaye Barracks, Tidworth. 1914-1916", and below, his riding crop.

Sixteen yeomen were killed at Katia and the story of most individuals is not recorded, but it can be assumed that Tpr. Parsons was killed either by the shelling of the Turkish artillery or in the close quarter battle that followed the rapid advance of the Turkish infantry onto the positions of the RGH. Only nine members of the squadron escaped to tell the immediate story, the full account of the affair had to wait until the sixty or so prisoners were repatriated after the war, in 1919.

Some of his belongings, including the tiny purse and the bible shown here, were returned to his family by an unknown Australian soldier, probably of the 7<sup>th</sup> Light Horse, who arrived on the scene after the battle. William Parsons, who has no known grave, is commemorated on the Jerusalem Memorial, on the Mount of Olives.

*\*In 1920 the Army Council standardised the terminology for official histories and for battle honours. An engagement of less than a full division was an 'Affair', if it involved one or more complete divisions it was an 'Action' and when one or more complete army corps were fighting it was upgraded to a 'Battle'.*

Editor





## THE MEDALS OF GEN. SIR ADRIAN CARTON DE WIART VC.

The National Army Museum have generously loaned the World War One medals of this extraordinary soldier to display in the next special Museum Exhibition, which marks the centenary of the Battle of the Somme. He has a strong link to the Regiments of Gloucestershire; he had served as adjutant with the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars before the Great War and during that war he won the VC whilst commanding a battalion of the Glosters.

But there is more than that in the history of this remarkable soldier. Leaving Balliol College, Oxford before he sat his degree, he saw action in the Boer War, where he was wounded for the first time and was commissioned into the 4<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards. After service with the RGH, where he appears to have carried out his duties, mainly by mail whilst on shooting parties on the Continent, he spent the early part of the First World War with the Somali Camel Corps, being shot twice in the face, losing his eye and also a portion of his ear, - he was wounded eight times in his career, losing a hand as well as his eye.

By February 1915 he was on the Western Front and, by the start of the Battle of the Somme was commanding the 8<sup>th</sup> Bn. Gloucestershire Regiment. He was awarded the VC for his actions on the 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> July 1916 at La Boisselle. His citation reads,



Capt. (temp. Lt. - Col.) Adrian Carton de Wiart, D.S.O., Dn. Gds. For most conspicuous bravery, coolness and determination during severe operations of a prolonged nature. It was owing in a great measure to his dauntless courage and inspiring example that a serious reverse was averted. He displayed the utmost energy and courage in forcing our attack home. After three other battalion Commanders had become casualties, he controlled their commands, and ensured that the ground won was maintained at all costs. He frequently exposed himself in the organisation of positions and of supplies, passing unflinchingly through fire barrage of the most intense nature. His gallantry was inspiring to all.  
*– London Gazette 9 September 1916.*

Between the wars he commanded the British-Poland Military Mission and was given the use of a large estate in the Pripet Marshes were "I think I shot every day of those 15 years I spent in the marshes and the pleasure never palled". During World War 2 he first commanded an Anglo-French force in the ill-fated Norwegian Campaign before being appointed as head of the British-Yugoslavian Military Mission, in April 1941. However, his plane crashed off the coast of Libya and he was captured by the Italians. In captivity until 1943, he was then sent to Lisbon by the Italians to meet Allied contacts to attempt a surrender of their forces. Within a month of arriving in London, Churchill sent him to China 'as his personal representative'. He retired in 1947 to live in Killinardish, County Cork, "taking up a life pursuing salmon and snipe". He died at the age of 83 on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1963.

*Quotes from his autobiography 'Happy Odyssey', (available in the Museum Shop)  
 Painting by Sir William Orpen, 1919 (National Portrait Gallery, London)*

**The Somme Exhibition, featuring Gen Sir Adrian Carton de Wiart's medals on loan from the National Army Museum, will run until November 2016.**