

# NEWSLETTER

## THE FRIENDS OF THE SOLDIERS OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE MUSEUM



AUTUMN 2012

## THE 'MODERN ARMY' GALLERY

The new 'Modern Army Exhibition' is being prepared this autumn and will replace the Burma display, which is to be transferred to another area of the Museum. The newly refurbished room will feature the British Army as it is equipped for its current role on Afghanistan. The display will contain a mannequin fully dressed and kitted out in the current personal equipment used by the British regiments serving in Afghanistan, standing in front of a wrap-around background on a typical Afghan scene, illustrated below:



There will also be interactive items of kit, including a fully laden Bergen, body armour, a combat helmet, the personal weapon, the SA 80 and an IED will also be described. Graphic panels on the walls will describe facts about soldiers of the Rifles and the Royal Wessex Yeomanry and 'flip books' will give a brief introduction to the Rifles, to combat kit and to the treatment of battle casualties, some sample pictures are shown on pages 5 and 6. A multi-media display will show footage taken of soldiers of the Rifles in action in the British areas of responsibility. The Friends will be informed when this new room in the Museum will be opened.



*The Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum have set up a Facebook page in order to reach out to the wider world and hopefully encourage them to come to the Museum. With regular updates several times a week we will focus on specific items in the Museum collection and sometimes go further afield, looking at items or anniversaries of dates that are of significance. We welcome any comments on the page and hope that all who visit it will come back for more. The page can be found at*

*<https://www.facebook.com/#!/SoldiersOfGloucestershire>*

*You must be registered with Facebook in order to view the page.*

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

This has been a busy year for the Curator, Trustees and Executive Committee of the Museum; a new gallery is being created to display the 'Modern Army' and much work is being done on 'Renewing the Vision', a new of the displays, as most were created when the Museum was opened some twenty years ago. Our first step towards the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid has been accepted and there is much work to be done before we go through to the second stage. Col. Rob Dixon's appreciation of the work that has been done, and is still to do, explains it all.

Col. Rob Dixon took over the Chair of the Museum Executive Committee this summer and I wish to thank Col. Stephen Oxlade for his many years as Chairman of the Executive. Under his Chairmanship the Curator has been active in producing a series of special exhibits and, of course, the recent refurbishment of the Korean gallery. The first contacts and early bid to the HLF and the proposed 'Modern Army' gallery have also been initiated during this time and he has always been a staunch supporter of the Friends. The Exec. Committee presented him with a fishing rod for use in his retirement from the Executive. We wish him well and look forward to seeing him back in some capacity or another at the Museum when he retires for his current post.

This spring the Museum hosted a book launch for 'A Tommy's Sketchbook', a wonderful collection of watercolour paintings done by Cpl. Buckle of the 1/5<sup>th</sup> Bn. during 1915-16, donated to the Museum by his nephew, Mr Brian Rollings. The book was published by The History Press and, on the strength of this cooperation, the Trustees have been delighted to ask the Head of Publishing of The History Press to join the Museum Executive. The Museum has so much material in store that we can foresee future joint ventures with this publishing house, especially as we move towards the centenary of the First World War.

Sadly our summer lunch in the Royal Wessex Yeomanry marquee at the Badminton Three Day Event was washed out due to the weather, but we will try again next year.

The Friend's Autumn Lecture for 2012, at Chavenage, takes place on Friday October 26<sup>th</sup> when the speaker will be Maj. Paul Skelton-Stroud, who, as a veterinary surgeon moved into pharmaceutical research and toxicology. He was also a TA RAVC veterinary surgeon and is an entertaining speaker. I look forward to seeing you there.

**Lt Col. Ralph Stephenson TD.**

### AUTUMN LECTURE 2012

### 'ANIMALS AT WAR'

*will be presented by*

**Dr. Paul Skelton-Stroud BVSc. PhD. MVSc. MPhil.**

**At Chavenage House, Tetbury**

**On Friday October 26<sup>th</sup> 2012 at 6. 45 for 7. 30pm.**

*For more information contact the Hon Sec. Maj. Simon Colbeck on: 01285 720146 or  
simoncolbeck@msn.com*

## FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE TRUSTEES



As you may already know I have recently taken over as Chairman of The Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum and one of the first things I want to do is to write to all 'The Friends' who have supported the Museum, some for many years and say a huge thank you. At the same time I thought I should make you aware of the plans we have to 'refresh' the Museum itself.

As you would expect, the recession has not helped visitor attractions and our visitor numbers have been well down for a couple of years, making it very difficult to make ends meet. The various works to the public space in The Docks has not helped but these are complete and the result is most attractive. We are taking steps to increase group visits and there are some signs that these are beginning to have an impact. Despite these difficulties we have managed to continue to introduce new displays and special exhibitions, most recently 'Imjin 60' and we are in the process of setting up a 'Modern Army Exhibition' based largely on The Rifles and Royal Wessex Yeomanry in Afghanistan. Both these and other developments have only been possible due to help from The Friends and the Development Fund, which simply emphasises your importance.

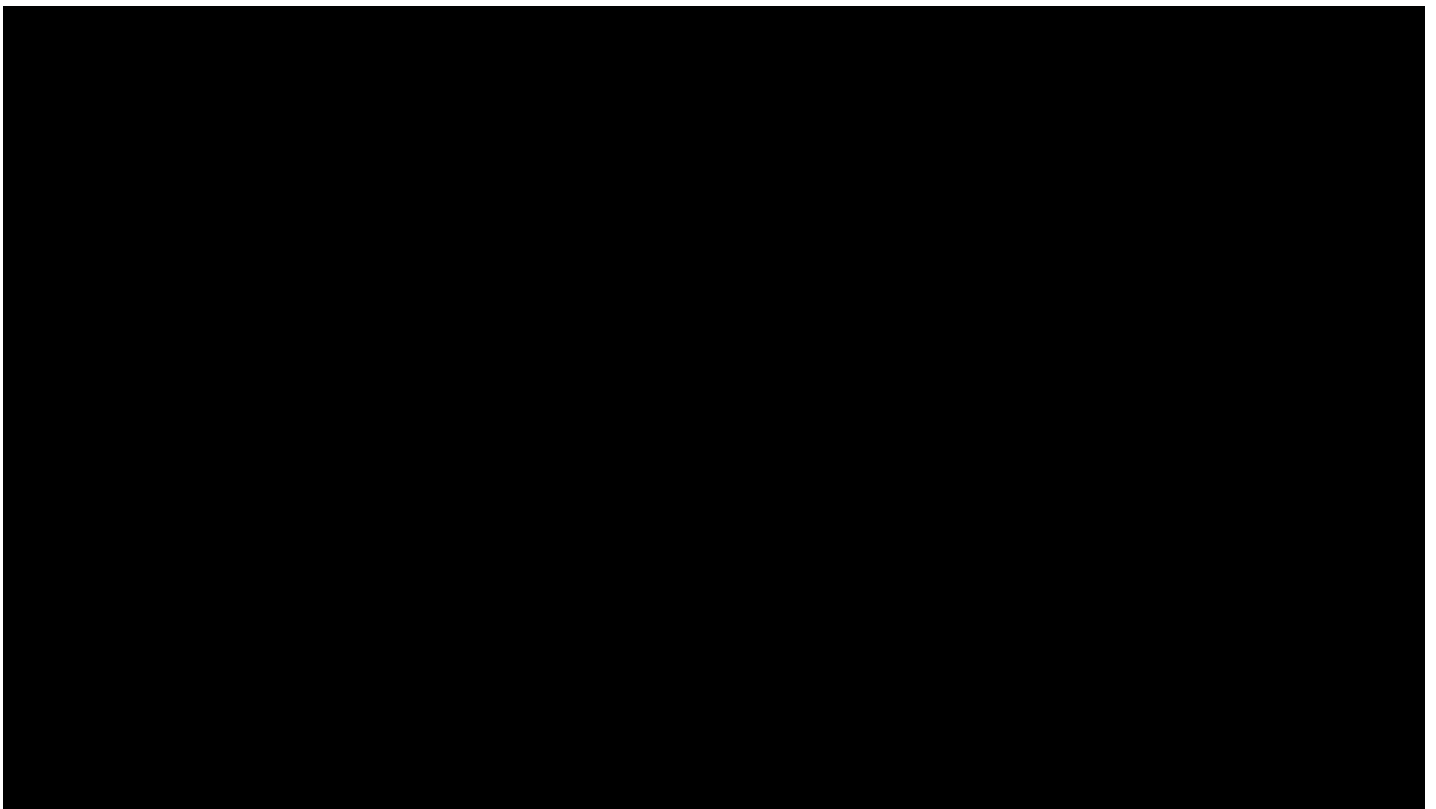
In 2010 the Trustees commissioned RWDP to advise on enhancing the current displays. In their recommendations they stated that "the more we looked at and analysed the displays, the more convinced we became that the Museum and the National Army Museum Design Department had got things so nearly right that, despite the passage of time, the quality of the displays, both the collections and the manner of their presentation is hard to fault". An advisor from the Heritage Lottery Fund commented recently that 'the current displays punched much above their weight'. At the same time the introduction of new display technology, including both IT and hands on interactive features are now vital if we are to keep our museum in the forefront of military museums. We aim to 'refresh' what is there, adjust displays a little to overcome shortcomings, such as the lack of enough coverage of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War and emphasise the local connection. The RGH displays will be better integrated into the chronological sequence and by using technology we shall be able to offer visitors the opportunity to go into much greater depth, if they wish to. We intend to have certain 'themes' available to visitors on flat screens in each room. This is, I believe, an exciting prospect and we applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant. We have passed Stage 1, which led to a small grant for research and a more detailed submission for Stage 2, which we plan to submit in November. If we are successful then we shall probably have to close the Museum for two or three months over the winter of 2013/14 to do the work.

As if this was not enough we are in negotiation with Gloucester City to get permission to extend the current shop and introduce a café, which we feel could be popular with visitors to The Docks as well as to the Museum. More ambitiously we are investigating the roof space and the possibility of moving the offices and archives up there and adding more space for museum exhibits. This would, of course, be extremely expensive so it is certainly not an immediate objective but a long term goal.

I hope you find what is going on interesting and will feel that your support over many years has been worthwhile and that you will be willing to continue. Please continue to visit the Museum and encourage your own friends and local groups to do so. We have some attractive packages available for group visits which can include some simple catering.



***THE MODERN ARMY GALLERY** - Two examples from the flip-book 'Who are the Rifles?'  
The 1<sup>st</sup> Rifles in Gloucester Docks and 2<sup>nd</sup> Rifles in Sangin.*





***THE MODERN ARMY GALLERY***

*Example of pictures in the flip-book:  
'Combat Casualty Care'*





## CURATOR'S REPORT

It has been the most frustrating year for the Museum. The first six months have been marred by the worst weather in Gloucestershire that I can remember. This has inevitably taken its toll with our visitor numbers which are well down and at this stage in the year, they are unlikely to recover. The situation has not been helped by the recession which has had a direct effect on our shop sales and our internet transactions, and the Olympics which rubbed salt into the wound. On a more optimistic note, we have just finished the History Festival, which improved the footfall and the income. Also the Docks are getting busier as we enter the autumn and we expect a busy run up to Christmas, with the Victorian market between 22<sup>nd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> November. Last year there were over 50 coach parties over the three days and this year we expect over a hundred. Some of this activity will no doubt spill over into our end of the Docks and we should benefit.

Looking forward to next year, we are fortunate to have another Tall Ships Festival. This is to be held earlier than usual on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> May and should give us a decent start to the season. Normally these events are held in August when the Docks are already busy, so we don't benefit as much as we might. Having said that, we did get over 2000 visitors over the last Tall Ships Festival, so we were busy!

We are also just about to put up the new Modern Army display, replacing the Burma exhibition which will be resited. We have been scrounging modern kit from the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, The Rifles in Chepstow and we are most grateful for their help. Also we must thank the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps at Imjin Barracks, Innsworth who have also been very helpful in providing us with spare kit. What is amazing is the magnificent quality and design of the modern uniforms. A great deal of hard work has gone into it and the results are outstanding. Gone are the days when we had to put up with those instruments of torture "Shirts hairy" and "Draws cellular". We expect the new display to be ready at the end of October, when we will have an official opening launch and we look forward to seeing you then.

Meanwhile, we are very grateful for all the kindness shown by our many Friends without which we would struggle to display the wonderful collections that we are lucky enough to have in our care.

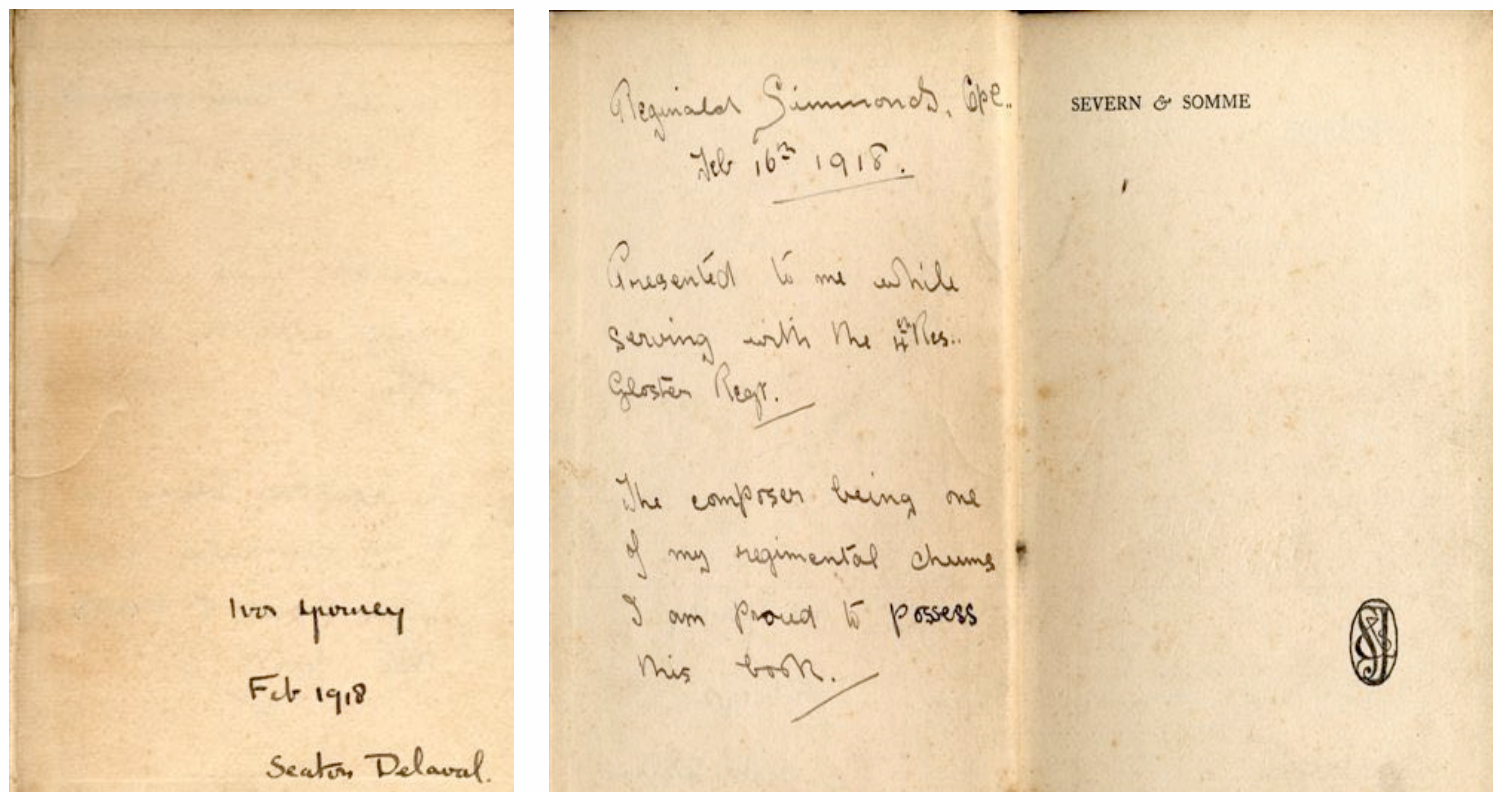
**Mr. George Streatfeild**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**of The Friends will take place in the Long Room of the  
Custom House on Thursday November 22<sup>nd</sup> 2012 at 18.30hrs.  
All are welcome.**

## PRIVATE GURNEY OF THE GLOUCESTERSHIRE REGT.

Recent visitors to the Museum showed the staff a family copy of Ivor Gurney's book 'Severn to Somme', signed by Gurney to his colleague Cpl. Reginald Simmonds, whilst they were both attending a signals course in February 1918 at Seaton Delaval, Northumberland. This year, seventy five years since the death of Gurney, he is remembered as the 'poet and composer of Gloucestershire' who served in the Gloucestershire Regt. during the First World War.



*The front pages of 'Severn to Somme' given by Ivor Gurney to his colleague Cpl. Reginald Simmonds of the 4<sup>th</sup> Gloster's and marked by Simmonds – 'the composer being one of my regimental chums, I am proud to possess this book'.*

Ivor Gurney, the second of four children of David Gurney, a tailor from Maisemore and Florence, a seamstress from Bisley, was born on 28th August 1890 at 3 Queen Street, Gloucester. He was baptised at All Saints Church in Gloucester, where the curate, Rev. Alfred Cheesman was asked to be his Godfather and it was Cheesman who saw in him an early aptitude to music; he gave him an introduction to literature and encouraged him, in 1900, to enter and gain a choral scholarship at Gloucester Cathedral and The King's School, whilst he was a pupil at the National School in Gloucester. In 1906 he became a pupil of Dr Herbert Brewer (1865-1928), the organist at the cathedral for more than thirty years. Here he met fellow composer Herbert Howells, who became a lifelong friend and he also enjoyed the company of the poet, F. W. Harvey, also a pupil at King's School. In addition to Cheesman, the two sisters Emily and Margaret Hunt nurtured Gurney's interests, he had started composing at the age of 14, and it was they who showed him the beauty of the Cotswold Hills and Chosen Hill in particular.



In 1911 he won a scholarship to study under Charles Villiers Stanford at the Royal College of Music, London. Stanford, who also taught Ralph Vaughan Williams, John Ireland, Frank Bridge, Arthur Bliss, Herbert Howells and many others, later told Howells that Gurney was potentially "the biggest of them all", but he was "unteachable". Gurney at this time started showing a worsening of 'mood swings' that had troubled his teenage years. He was labeled as having a dynamic personality and this was, perhaps the early manifestation of a bipolar disorder which was to trouble him again in later life. He returned to Gloucestershire, in 1913 and after a break staying in Framilode, he seemed to recover and returned to London. His further education was disrupted however by the declaration of war against Germany in August 1914. He and Harvey endeavored to enlist together in the 1/5<sup>th</sup> Glosters, the local Territorial Force Battalion, but Gurney was rejected at his medical examination because of poor eyesight.



*Private 3895 Gurney, Ivor. 2/5<sup>th</sup> Bn.  
in uniform. 1915*

In the early months of 1915 it is said that he enlisted in the Yeomanry but, as the men 'gave him a difficult time'\*, he was transferred to the second line battalion of the local Territorial Bn., the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Glosters, being sent to Chelmsford for basic training, and here they were inspected by Lord Kitchener in August 1915. In February 1916 the Bn. moved to Tidworth, on Salisbury Plain, where the troops found there were no beds or heating and lighting; they slept on bare floor boards in bitter weather.

The 2/5<sup>th</sup> Bn. became part of the 61<sup>st</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> South Midland Div.) and moved to France on the 26<sup>th</sup> May 1916, landing at Le Havre and marching to the Bethune area before having trench warfare instruction from the London Welsh Regiment. The 61<sup>st</sup> Division's first major action was at Fromelle, attacking the Aubers Ridge in a hastily prepared plan on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1916. The intention of the disaster which unfolded was to draw German reserves away from the bigger battle on the Somme further south.

The Germans had watched the attack forming up all morning from their higher ground and were well prepared to defend the ridge. Although the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Bn. were held in reserve, the 2/4<sup>th</sup> and 2/6<sup>th</sup> Gloster Bn's were badly cut about by machine gun fire as they attempted to climb out of their trenches. The Australian 5<sup>th</sup> Division, also used in the attack suffered as badly, but some of their troops reached the German wire, which was barely cut, preventing further movement. The Division suffered very heavy casualties for no significant gain and no enemy reserves were diverted from the Somme. The 2/5<sup>th</sup> Bn. was brought up after dark to help retrieve casualties, but many out beyond the trenches could not be helped. Such was the damage to the Division and its reputation that it was not used again other than for holding trench lines and repairing roads, until 1917. As the Bn. left Laventie for the Fromelle battle Gurney wrote to Herbert Howells and Howells, on hearing of this departure, dedicated his Piano Quartet in A minor: *To the hill at Chosen and Ivor Gurney who knows it.*

\* written by Marion Scott in 'Music & Letters' vol. XIX no.1 January 1938; has since been denied by other authorities and, as there appears to be no record, should probably be dismissed. If he did attend the Yeomanry on one or more occasions he was not enlisted by them.

During his sixteen months without leave to England, he was classed as a signaller and spent many hours composing songs and writing poems (he wrote some 1,500 between 1913 and 1926). A collection of poems were sent to Messrs. Sidgwick and Jackson for publishing and they were accepted at once and printed in October 1917 as 'Severn to Somme'.



*2/5<sup>th</sup> Battalion Gloucestershire Regimental Band - August 1915.  
Ivor Gurney is seen fourth from the right in the back row, wearing glasses*

Howells (whose memory of events may not always be reliable) reports:

*'To celebrate this I telegraphed the news to Gurney. The wire found him in billets somewhere about Arras. No such thing as a telegram having reached him before, everyone leapt to the conclusion it contained bad news! When the truth came out, everyone – himself included – were thunderstruck'.*

There followed months of occupying trenches and working parties, in December he was given a temporary job with the regimental water carts after 'a cold in the stomach' and Christmas 1916 was spent at Crucifix Corner, near Albert. After the Germans withdrew to the Hindenburg line in early 1917, the battalion was involved in a night attack on April 7<sup>th</sup>, near Vermond, east of Peronne, where he was shot in the upper arm. He was evacuated from the line and spent six weeks at a military hospital in Rouen.

On returning to the battalion the Division took part in the Third Battle of Ypres in August/September 1917 and by this time Gurley was a machine gunner (always a good shot, he was a marksman in the battalion) and given a new number. (It is said by some biographies that he was transferred to the Machine Gun Corps – his discharge papers were handled by the Gloster's Depot and both his Pension Record and his Medal Record Card are missing so

it is difficult to confirm this). Gurney was seriously gassed at St Juliaan, between Ypres and Passchendale on 17<sup>th</sup> September. Invalided back to Britain, he was admitted to the Bangour War Hospital, Edinburgh where 'clean sheets, good food, comfort and care must have come as a blissful relief'. He, like many returned soldiers, fell in love with his pretty VAD Nurse, Annie Nelson Drummond. In a letter to Howells he wrote:

*'Erbert, O Erbert.... I forgot my body walking with her; a thing that has not happened since ... when? I really don't know'.*



*Ivor Gurney (centre in glasses) at bayonet practice 1916*

By November 1917, barely recovered, considerably thinner so that his 'uniform hung on him', he was posted to Northumberland for the signaling course, where his depression caught up with him again. In February 1918 he was in hospital in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and then to a convalescent hospital at Brancepeth Castle Hospital, County Durham. In May 1918 he was moved, as his mental condition deteriorated, to Lord Derby's War Hospital at Warrington, where Annie Drummond discontinued her letter writing and depression turned 'to black despair'. In the summer of 1918 he wrote suicide letters to Sir Hubert Parry,

Principal of the Royal College of Music and his friend and supporter Marion Scott: 'I know you would rather know me dead than mad'. On 4th July he was transferred to the Middlesex War Hospital at Napsbury and there he remained, until in October 1918 he was discharged from the Army.

It is often assumed that the horrors of the Great War with its bitter trench fighting, terrifying artillery bombardments, ever present winter mud and huge loss of life was responsible for the mental illness that Gurney suffered in the 1920's, but the earliest episodes of his fluctuating illness had started before the war. Despite his loathing of the fighting, the comradeship, the discipline with its marked boundaries and support of the ordinary men around him was probably a stabilising influence on his bipolar condition. Back in civilian life, on a pension of twelve shillings a week, his personal life became disorganized and unstable and his future looked bleak:

*But Gloucesters of sterner frame and spirit  
Kept him in place without reproach, (sweet blood inherit  
From hills and nature) said no word and kept him there.  
- from 'Portrait of a Coward'*

Gradually, after a walking holiday in the Black Mountains and another on the Cornish Coast, his poetry composition began to return and 1920 and 1921 were two of the most productive years of his life. Giving up his studies in London 1922 and walking to Gloucester, he came to live with an aunt in Longford and took a variety of jobs: church organist (he was, for a while before the War, organist at the Mariner's Church in the Docks, close to the Museum), cinema pianist, farm labourer, tax clerk, but all eventually failed. In September 1922 he was certified insane and admitted to Barnwood House mental hospital in Gloucester.

After two attempts to escape from there, he was transferred, later in the year, to the City of London Mental Hospital at Dartford, in Kent, well away from Gloucestershire. Fifteen years later he died in this hospital, on Boxing Day 1937, of tuberculosis; he was 47 years old. His body was brought back to Gloucestershire to be buried at Twigworth, on the last day of 1937, his Godfather, Alfred Cheesman officiating and Herbert Howells playing the organ.



*Barnwood House, a 19th century building, became a private mental hospital in 1860 for the more affluent members of Gloucester.*

*The original tombstone of Ivor Gurney in Twigworth churchyard has been replaced by a more modern version.*



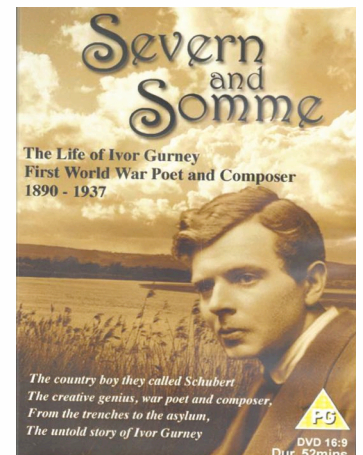
References: Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum  
[www.ivorgurney.org.uk](http://www.ivorgurney.org.uk)

## ***SEVERN AND SOMME***

**The Life of Ivor Gurney 1890 - 1937**

*The country boy they called Schubert  
The creative genius, war poet and composer,  
From the trenches to the asylum,  
The untold story of Ivor Gurney.*

*The DVD by Diana Taylor and Anthea Page of Redcliffe Films, Bristol  
is available at the Museum Bookshop for £12.99*



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

As at 6 September 2012 the Friends have 353 members: 243 Life and 110 Annual including 25 overseas. New members are joining at the rate of about one a month mainly through the Friends page on the Museum internet site '[www.glostesters.org.uk](http://www.glostesters.org.uk)'.

Friends who are annual members and have not paid yet for June 2012 - May 2013 are reminded that the new Annual rates are **£10 for junior, £20 for single and £30 for couples**. Conversion to **Life membership is a one off charge of £200**. Payment can be made:

**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.glostesters.org.uk](http://www.glostesters.org.uk)' – 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 and remember that you need to renew your subscription annually, why not complete a Banker's Standing Order Mandate? Receipt of your payment direct into the Friends' bank account will trigger action to issue your new membership card and you can of course cancel a standing order with your bank at any stage if you need to. If you would like a Standing Order form please contact me at the Museum.

**Some annual members who renew their membership by Standing Order on 1 June or later may still need to amend their Standing Order amount payable with their Bank to reflect the new membership rates mentioned above. Members using internet banking should be able to do this on line and those using telephone banking should be able to contact their bank direct to make the change. If any member needs to amend their Standing Order in writing please contact me at the Museum and I will dispatch a Standing Order form to you for action with your Bank.**

**Wng. Cdr. Chris Campbell**

*The Editor is always happy to receive contributions for the Newsletter  
and correspondence on any subject is welcome : via The Museum.*

## New acquisitions

The Museum has recently been donated several wooded boxes, either made or carved by Boer prisoners from the Second Anglo-Boer War on the Island of St. Helena, where they were guarded by the 4<sup>th</sup> (Militia) Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment. They belonged to Cyril Herbert-Smith, of the 4<sup>th</sup> Bn. and have been generously given by his daughter from Bath.

During the South African War of 1899 to 1902 the British took as many of 20,000 Boer prisoners, most being held in overcrowded camps in the Cape Colony, where supplies of food and water were scarce and where the camps were vulnerable to attack, and therefore release, by Boer forces. The decision was made to ship these prisoners to Bermuda, India, Ceylon and some 5000 to St Helena. The first group of 514, including the Boer general Piet Cronjé accompanied by his wife, arrived on the 11<sup>th</sup> April 1900, on the troopship 'Milwaukee' and were marched to the prepared camp, Camp Deadwood. Accommodation was in tents surrounded by three separate barbed wire fences and guarded by patrols of soldiers. Tents were shared, but some prisoners adapted scrap wood and metal from flattened paraffin tins soldered together to 'improve' their accommodation or create individual facilities.



*Views of the POW camp on Deadwood Plain, St Helena*

There were attempts to escape, despite the isolation of the island, but most prisoners passed the boredom of captivity with other entertainments. Wood carving was popular and the Museum has several other box examples of this art and an 1896 Mauser rifle with the butt and stock carved with scenes of the military campaign in South Africa. On 10<sup>th</sup> May 1900, an exhibition was held over five days and model carts, carved boxes, pipes, walking sticks and other items, all made using makeshift tools - table knives serving as saws, umbrella wire as fret saws, a stone for a hammer - were displayed.

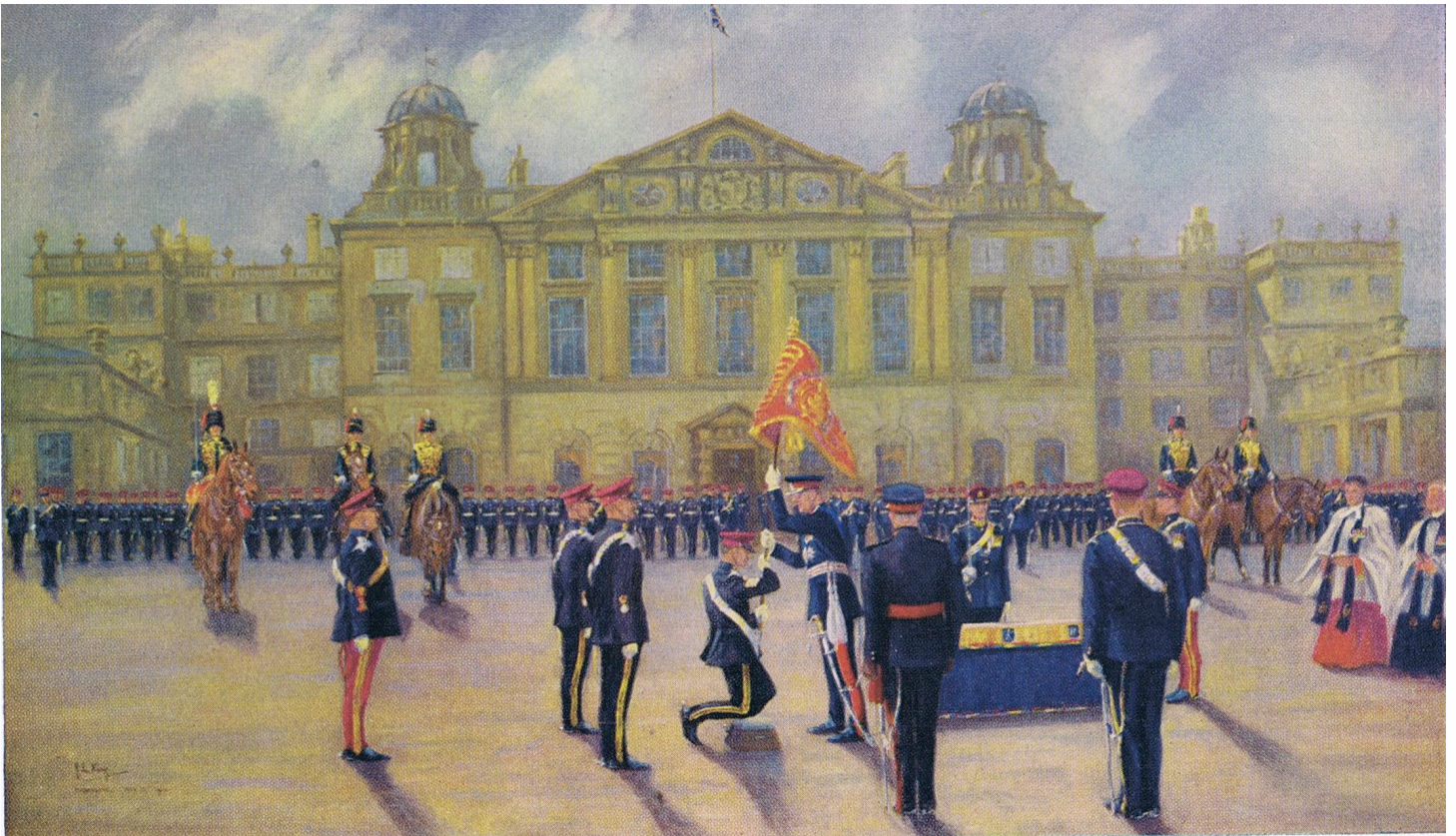
Whilst the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn's. of the Gloucestershire Regt. were serving in South Africa, the 4<sup>th</sup> Bn., the old North Gloucestershire Militia, commanded by the Earl Bathurst, were called from their Cirencester barracks on Cecily Hill to guard duties on St Helena, thereby releasing a regular line regiment to serve in the war. Along with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn. The Duke of Edinburgh's (Wiltshire Regt.)(Royal Wiltshire Regt. of Militia), the 4<sup>th</sup> Bn. The Gloucestershire Regt. (Royal North Gloucestershire Militia) were awarded the battle honour of 'St Helena' for war time service on the island. The 4<sup>th</sup> Bn. was disbanded under the Haldane reforms of the Army in 1908 and their colours laid up in Cirencester church.



The 'snake in a box' children's toy and a carved playing card box with South African Republic Coat of Arms - motto - 'Eendragt maakt magt' (Unity makes strength) and the Gloucestershire Regiment badge

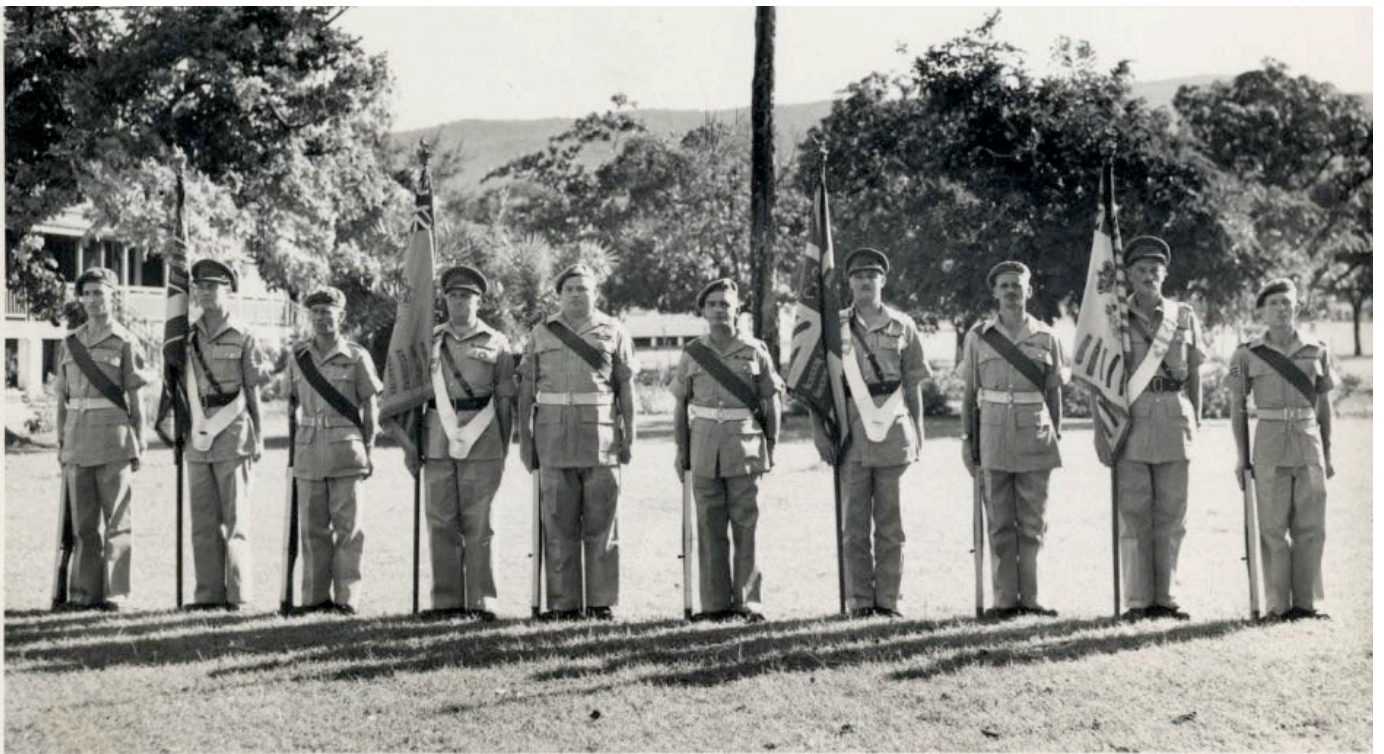


## Anniversary - Fifty years ago



*'Presentation of the Guidon' by the Hon. Col. The Duke of Beaufort on behalf of the Queen – Badminton 27<sup>th</sup> May 1962. Oil painting by John King hangs in the Cirencester mess of C (RGH) Sqn. Royal Wessex Yeomanry*

## Anniversary - Sixty five years ago.



*The amalgamation of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions The Gloucestershire Regt. was announced in 1947. The above photograph shows the colour parties of the two battalions at the Amalgamation Parade, held in Jamaica, to create the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion The Gloucestershire Regiment (28<sup>th</sup>/61<sup>st</sup>).*