

NEWSLETTER

THE FRIENDS OF

THE SOLDIERS OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE MUSEUM



AUTUMN 2020

Glosters Sail for Korea ***2nd October 1950***



Seventy years ago, on 2nd October 1950 the 1st Battalion the Gloucestershire Regiment embarked from the quayside at Southampton for its historic date with destiny on the Imjin River some seven months later. Few would have foreseen such a role for the regiment when it sailed, for, after an initial series of disasters, United Nations forces were by then pushing the North Koreans back beyond the 38th Parallel. The battalion was a component of the 29th Independent Infantry Brigade based at Colchester, which constituted, along with the 1st battalions of the Royal Ulster Rifles and the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, the Imperial Strategic Reserve. The Attlee government had determined in June that it needed to demonstrate support for its American ally with boots on the ground, and that set the wheels in motion to mobilise the 29th Brigade. It would, however, be several weeks before the brigade was ready, having to call up reservists and be augmented by an armoured component, the 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars, and an artillery component, the 45th Field Regiment Royal Artillery and 170th Independent Mortar Battery.

The brigade's destination was kept secret until just a few days before sailing. Once the decision was made public, however, families were permitted to turn up to see the battalion off. On the quayside the regimental band, whose bandsmen were being demobbed and did not sail, was showered with pennies from Glosters lining the rail of the ship, while the band responded by playing 'Far away places'. One bandsman, Bandsman Wagstaff, was actually on the ship when he received his discharge papers. The journey to Pusan, Korea, took five weeks.

The ship the Glosters sailed in is itself of interest. It was the *Empire Windrush*.



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Since my foreword to our last Newsletter we have certainly lived through some interesting times. Thankfully the national lockdown eased sufficiently for the Spring Newsletter to be sent in a hard copy format, and more recently the Museum has reopened. This is an opportunity to thank Chris Ryland and his Committee together with Vicki Hopson and her small staff and volunteers for first of all keeping the Museum flag flying throughout the lockdown with a superb range of online activities, and then moving swiftly behind the scenes to ensure a timely reopening. Congratulations to them all. The recent flood damage is therefore all the more frustrating, but Chris and Vicki will explain their response later in this edition.

As for the Friends this has been a difficult time. With the lockdown in full force in the early summer we had no option but to cancel the Summer Reception which we were looking forward to at Frampton Court. We are grateful for Rollo Clifford's understanding of our predicament and we look forward to a brighter national scene next year and a reinstatement of this popular event. Similarly, we will be keeping the national sporting scene under review in the hope that we will be able to once again hold the lunch at the Badminton Horse Trials.

This brings us to the current situation and the Chavenage Lecture. The Friends' Committee has reviewed what would be possible at Chavenage. Even with the recent relaxations of social distancing requirements there would be many restrictions remaining which would substantially reduce the number of Friends and guests which could attend and the quality of the experience available. **After careful consideration, we have decided to cancel this year's lecture. We have reserved Friday 29th October 2021 as the date for next year's lecture and Sinclair McKay has agreed to deliver his talk on 'X and Y: Bletchley and its Listening Stations'.**

In our three main articles in this edition of the Newsletter we have new insights into familiar historical events and personalities. Ralph Stephenson has combined his medical and historical expertise to give us an account of the 'Spanish 'Flu' pandemic and its impact on the military. Lt Col Stephen Keoghane, author the definitive history of the Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry, gives an account of that regiment's part in the Syrian, Iraq and Iran campaigns of 1941. Finally, we have a personal memoir from Rob Dixon which links two Gloucestershire poets, a folksinger, an Imjin veteran and a Golden Retriever in an itinerary of Rob's early career.

The Friends' Committee has also had to consider how to adapt our administrative requirements to Covid-19, and we have this year decided to hold the AGM digitally. This will ensure the safety of everyone involved. The details of how to join the meeting from your own home, using a desktop computer, Mac, laptop, iPad, tablet or smartphone, will be circulated shortly. We are sorry that this has proved necessary this year and hope to be back to normal next year.

I look forward to meeting you in better times ahead.

Dr Tim Brain OBE QPM

THE MILITARY AND THE INFLUENZA PANDEMIC OF 1918

Lt Col Ralph Stephenson TD

There was a little girl and she had a little bird,
And she called it by the pretty name of Enza;
But one day it flew away, but it didn't go to stay,
For when she raised the window, in-flu-Enza.

U.S. Skipping Song – Massachusetts Reformatory, 1894

The 'Spanish influenza' pandemic of 1918-19 did not originate in Spain. As Spain was a neutral country during the 'Great War', there was no restriction of reporting the widespread illness and deaths in the country in the Spanish press; the grave illness of King Alfonso XIII and the outbreak of flu in Madrid in May 1918 were both reported in the *Daily Express*. The British outbreaks, however, were not reported in the daily papers for fear of affecting national morale.

It almost certainly began 'emerging' amongst troops in 1916, or even 1915. There are reports of what was considered a 'minor infection' amongst military personnel in France and England in 1916 and it may not have been recognised as caused by the influenza virus immediately.

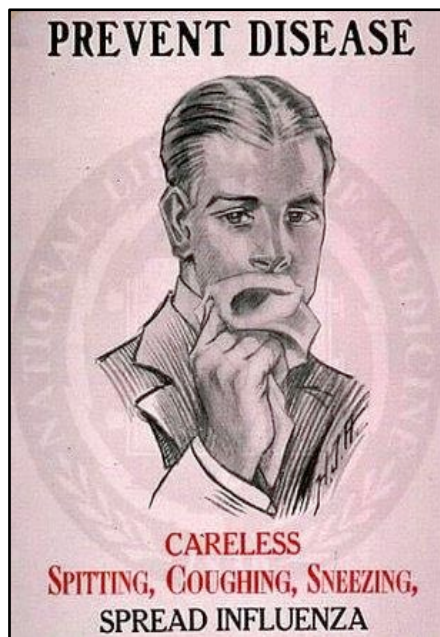


Figure 1: US disease prevention poster

From 1915 and 1916 probably as many as 30,000 soldiers were admitted annually to British Army hospitals in the United Kingdom and France with typical symptoms of influenza. By early 1917, however, army physicians in both Aldershot and Étaples were observing that the disease appeared to have become an 'unusually fatal disease', displaying severe respiratory complications and a high mortality rate for the age group of those admitted.

The Aldershot Garrison had developed following the successful Chobham Autumn Manoeuvres of 1853, when over 8,000 men, 24 guns and 1,500 horses carried out 'drill and field operations' on the Surrey heathland. Initially in wooded huts, a permanent red brick camp was gradually established during the 1870s and the Cambridge Military Hospital (named after Prince George, Duke of Cambridge and Commander-in-chief of the British Army from 1856 to 1895) opened in 1879.

In 1914 the two infantry divisions and a cavalry brigade, with their supporting services, based in Aldershot, were the nucleus of the 1st Corps of the British Expeditionary Force that went to France. By the next year, with tens of thousands of eager volunteers of Kitchener's Army, training, camping or billeted in local buildings, the influenza virus spread rapidly through the closely accommodated troops and were admitted to the Cambridge Military Hospital. Likewise, the hospitals in the British Army base of Étaples, established on the northern French coast in 1914, was filling with influenza cases. This Administrative District, catering for supplies,

detained prisoners, new recruits, rehabilitated wounded retraining and the sick in nearly twenty hospitals, could accommodate over 100,000 troops. The over-crowded, temporary camps of Northern France, with the debilitated wounded from the Somme offensive arriving daily by rail in the late summer of 1916, were the ideal conditions for the spread of a respiratory infection.

Physicians in both military hospitals, and those in other centres of England who were publishing their observations in *The Lancet* in 1917, began to note a fatality rate of 50 per cent with the disease 'characterised by a "dusky" cyanosis, a rapid progression from quite minor symptoms to death', with a death often resulting from a bacterial secondary infection, notably pneumonia. Treatment was only symptomatic and supportive; keeping the individual well hydrated, treating any pain and attempting to control the fever with acetylsalicylic acid. Oxygen to combat the cyanosis was given by mask and even injected under the skin.

Those who died in the hospitals of Étaples lie in the large CWGC cemetery close to the sea, sixty-two of them from the Gloucestershire Regiment, but it is unrecorded whether all of the 'Gloucesters' died of the influenza virus.



Figure 2: Cigarette card of 1919

Capt George Moor VC, MC and bar, of the 2nd Hampshire Regt, an old Cheltonian, certainly did. Having been awarded the VC at Gallipoli in June 1915 ('...this young officer as being one of the bravest men I have met in this war...' - Lt Gen Sir Beauvoir de Lisle), a MC in Flanders in October 1918 and a Bar to his MC, gazetted after his death in November 1918 following a typical influenzal illness. He was nursed in No 2 Canadian Clearing Station in Mouveaux and is buried in Y Farm Military Cemetery, Bois-Grenier. Lt Col John McCrae, the Canadian doctor/poet who wrote the now famous poem of poppies and remembrance, 'In Flanders Fields', died of pneumonia, almost certainly as a result of influenza, whilst commanding No 3 Canadian General Hospital, at Wimereux, near Boulogne, in January 1918.

The pandemic created severe illness amongst the thousands of troops training in the United States of America after the country declared war against the German and Austro-Hungarian axis in April 1917.

With a US Standing Army of just 378,000 soldiers, a draft was established in June 1917 and thousands of recruits were trained in thirty-two large camps, each accommodating between 25,000 to 55,000 soldiers. The first mention of influenza appears in a public health report in Kansas in April 1918 reporting '18 severe cases and three deaths'. By May 1918, with an army now of 4.7 million, influenza killed almost 30,000 men in training camps before they could even embark. Then thousands of more troops were transported across the Atlantic to France for deployment, spreading the virus. By the time American personnel were being repatriated in 1919, 20 per cent to 40 per cent of US Army and Navy personnel were infected with influenza and pneumonia, killing more American servicemen than did enemy action.

The French Army were also recording high sickness rate in 1918, between 1,500 to 2,000 being evacuated per day to medical facilities. The forces of the Central Powers reported being intermittently affected by the virus from 1915 onwards, in fact the poor performance of the Habsburg Army against the victorious Russian army during the Brusilov's Offensive of 1916 was partly attributed to the fact that the Hungarian commander, Gen Karl von Pflanzer-Baltin, was 'bedridden with influenza'. Assessment of the numbers of the German Army who suffered is limited by the destruction of much of the WWI military records by the bombing of Berlin by the Allies during WWII, but the German Army appears to have recorded over 700,000 cases. The first influenza cases began to appear in April 1918 amongst front line troops in the trenches, possibly spread by Allied prisoners taken captive during the German Spring Offensive. It is also likely that the numbers of sick were under-reported as a consequence of limited treatment. A German soldier from Alsace wrote in July 1918:

Always more soldiers fell ill and shuffled around half dead. Although they reported ill, hardly anyone came to the Hospital because there was no treatment, it was easier for the wounded and the dead. Because of undernourishment, our bodies could not resist the disease: half our team fell ill in a few days. Good care was out of the question. We had to make do with the miserable field kitchen.

Dominik Richert: *Beste Gelegenheit zum Sterben. Meine Erlebnisse im Kriege 1914–1918*



Figure 3: *The emergency hospital at Camp Funston, a US Army training camp in Kansas, where the first outbreak of influenza is considered to have occurred in the US army.*

General Erich Ludendorff noted the problems in the German Army:

Influenza was rampant.... It was a grievous business having to listen every morning to the chiefs of staffs' recital of the number of influenza cases, and their complaints about the weakness of their troops if the English attacked again.

Ludendorff's Own Story (1919)

A 1934 German 'War Medical Report' suggested that of the 700,000 men who suffered 510,000 were on the Western Front but only 25,000 were on the Eastern, the remainder being

the home troops; the pandemic thus appearing to have spread from the Allied Armies eastwards across Germany. As the toll of the dead killed in action and from the virus accumulated the German higher command found greater difficulties in planning, as the fighting troop numbers declined, and the logistical burden increased:

Numerous changes in their use were necessary because their Fighting power was considerably reduced. Nevertheless, only in the 7th Army was a replacement necessary. Finally, the attack date on the 15th July was postponed. The only reason for this is the logistical problems already mentioned. It is quite possible that these logistical problems were caused by the flu.... In the 6th Army the flu increased again, 15,000 men are currently in medical care for treatment In the other armies too the number of diseases are very high.

Rupprecht von Bavaria: Mein Kriegstagebuch, München (1929)

Whilst the British Expeditionary Forces listed 313,000 cases in 1918 in France, the virus rapidly spread through both the military and civilians of all of Europe, populations worn down by four years of war and limited nutrition. The loss of British merchant ships from the German unrestricted submarine offensive, the Royal Navy's blockade of German imports and the loss of the Austro-Hungarian 'breadbasket' of Galicia (which now straddles the border areas of Poland and Ukraine) to Tsarist forces in 1914, all contributed to food shortages and weakened the populations of both antagonists.



Figure 4: Sterbebild or Death Card of Private August Brodschelm, who died on November 8, 1918 at the age of 22 from 'Grippe'.

Worldwide it is estimated that some 500 million (or one third of the world's population) were infected, leading to a mortality estimated to have been between 20 to 40 million. The death toll in the United Kingdom reached 228,000 and over 400,000 in Germany.

The symptoms were basically a familiar triad of fever, headache and fatigue which could develop exceedingly quickly; a patient could be well in the morning and within a day be suffering the effects pneumonia and die by the evening. An unusual feature of this disease was the spike of cases occurring in the younger age groups, the very age of the fighting forces.

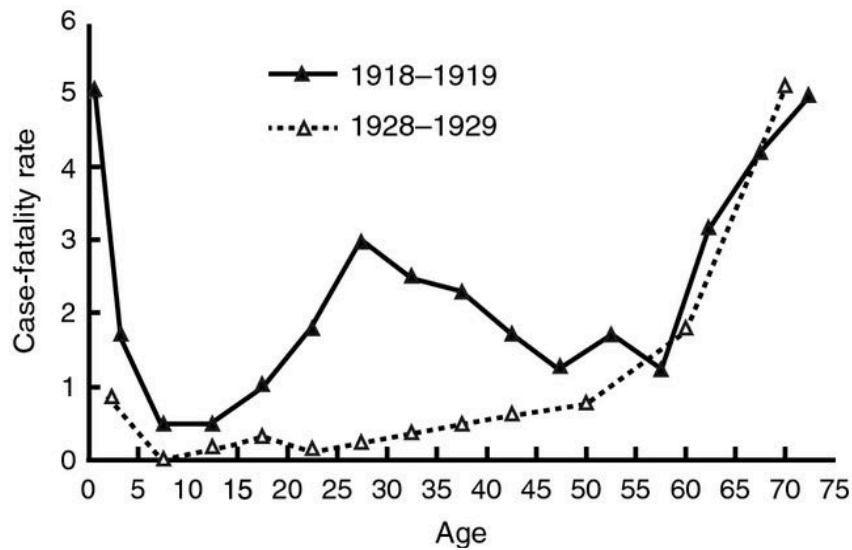


Figure 5: Case-fatality per 100 persons with influenza/pneumonia per age group 1918 compared with later 1928-29 outbreak. (US Public Health Surveys) 1918 & 1929)

The sequence of the virus that caused the 1918 pandemic was published in 2005 after it was identified from preserved human tissue:

In a mass grave in a remote Inuit village near the town of Brevig Mission ... (where 72 of the small village's 80 adult inhabitants died) ... a large Inuit woman lay buried under more than six feet of ice and dirt for more than 75 years. The permafrost plus the woman's ample fat stores kept the virus in her lungs so well preserved that when a team of scientists exhumed her body in the late 1990s, they could recover enough viral RNA to sequence the 1918 strain in its entirety.

United States National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases 2007

The influenza virus A (H1N1) sequence obtained from this body confirmed the initial results of a 1933 study which identified the viral RNA from 1918 samples of 'fixed' lung tissue taken at postmortem examinations. In addition, neutralizing antibodies were recovered from the blood samples of elderly survivors of the pandemic 90 years after their exposure to the 1918 illness, a significant immunity. Of the previous five influenzal pandemics since 1890, only the 1918 pandemic killed more than 3 million people, whilst those of the 'Asian flu' (H2N2) of 1957 and the 'Hong Kong flu' (H3N2) of 1968 were tackled with a more sophisticated medical armamentarium.

The current Covid-19 pandemic, affecting globalised trade and with travel and communication consequences, will be remembered as much for the global economic damage as for the medical intervention and mortality rate in affected countries.



Figure 6: Troops recovering from influenza in a Swiss military hospital 1918.

References:

- F Bauer und J Vögele, *Die 'Spanische Grippe' in der deutschen Armee 1918*: 2014
Erich von Ludendorff, *Ludendorff's Own Story. August 1914–November 1918*: 1919.
J K Taubenberger, D Baltimore et al, *Reconstruction of the 1918 influenza virus*: 2012.
PC Wever, *Death from the 1918 influenza pandemic during the First World War*: 2014.

Lt Col Ralph Stephenson TD

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

(subject to Covid-19 restrictions permitting)

Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 10th November 2020, 7.00pm
To be held digitally - details to be circulated

Badminton Lunch

Thursday 6th May 2021
(to be confirmed)

Summer Reception

Friday 18th June 2021, from 6.30pm
Frampton Court

Chavenage Lecture

Friday 29th October 2021, 6.45pm
Chavenage House, Tetbury
Lecturer: Sinclair McKay
'X and Y: Bletchley and its Listening Stations'

ROYAL WILTSHIRE YEOMANRY IN THE MIDDLE EAST 1941

Lt Col Stephen Keoghane



The Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry (RWY) together with The Royal Devon Yeomanry joined the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars in 1970 as part of a new regiment, the Wessex Yeomanry and 44 years later, the second serving RWY squadron, a constituent of the Royal Yeomanry was incorporated into the RWxY. In 2016, having finished 22 years of regimental duty at Old Sarum with B Squadron, The Royal Wessex Yeomanry, I started writing a new illustrated history of the RWY, modelled on Rollo Clifford's similar and successful book on the RGH that I can still remember purchasing from the museum in 1994.

The deployment to Palestine January 1941

The RWY were mobilised as a mounted regiment in 1939 and were posted to Palestine in 1940 as part of the 1st Cavalry Division. Motorisation of the RWY and the gradual loss of horses started in January 1941 following a move to a hutted camp at Jenin in Palestine situated on the disused Baghdad railway. This was a sad day following 150 years as horsed cavalry but over the next three months the challenge of fighting from the 15 cwt Morris truck was accepted with enthusiasm by the yeomen. Fifty kilometres south of Haifa, Jenin had in the late 1930s become a centre for the rebellion against the British presence in Palestine and the Cavalry Division's role was primarily to protect northern Palestine against the perceived threat from Vichy occupied Syria but also as a deterrent to drug smugglers.



Figure 1: An impeccably turned out RSM Frost, still dressed for the saddle, with two senior NCOs at Jenin, Palestine

Captain The Earl Cadogan had a view on the accommodation in Jenin and recorded: 'the filthy state of the entire area caused by the carelessness of the previous units.'

C Squadron was the first to start mechanisation, and de-horsing started at the end of February. By early March only thirty horses remained with a further thirty-eight destined for the Greek Army. In an interview with a relative, the author was told of the great sadness when it became apparent that these horses would probably be slaughtered for meat.

In 1941, as now, the situation in Iraq was unstable; the Arabs were convinced that Britain had no future in the Middle East and the political situation worsened in March 1941 as a new pro-German Prime Minister took control of the country and possibly more importantly the oil reserves. By 1 April, the Regiment less B Squadron who were present at the siege of Tobruk, was established in the hill town of Nablus, albeit rather scattered between an excellent fort just outside on the Jerusalem road and billets in the town itself. The usual round of brigade and divisional staff officers visited and on 8 May orders were received to move to Irbid in Transjordan.

The 1st Cavalry Division commanded by Major-General John Clark was now called to help and the regiment together with the Household Cavalry Regiment and the Warwickshire Yeomanry formed the mounted element to the newly created HABFORCE.¹ The formation acquired the name KINGCOL, after Brigadier Joe Kingstone, a cavalryman who served with The Queen's Bays (2nd Dragoon Guards) and later commanded the 9th Queen's Royal Lancers, and in 1941 was rumoured to be the best fighting brigadier in the British Army.

The RWY started on their somewhat chaotic and uncomfortable journey on 12 May spending a very unpleasant two weeks in the desert guarding the oil pipeline. The route to the besieged Allied garrison at Habbaniya in Iraq (sixty years later Major Richard Morgan, B (RWY) Squadron RWxY also served here), involved a series of landmarks H1-4, interspersed at intervals of between seventy and one hundred miles, which were well equipped pumping stations along the vital pipeline from Kirkuk to Haifa.



Figure 2: The Royal Exodus Hunt, Habbaniya. Lt The Marquess of Lansdowne's troop was the first to arrive in Habbaniya on 27 May. The RAF station was one of the most impressive in the Empire and the yeomanry officers above are clearly engrossed by the lineage of The Royal Exodus Hunt pack, an unusual organisation in the hunting world as it was run by the RAF. The original image is labelled left to right: Capt. The Earl Cadogan, Lt Jimmy James, Nigel (unidentified officer), Lt Peter Lawson, an Iraqi Levee officer and Lt The Hon. A. Herbert.

As the spring turned to early summer and the temperature climbed, news arrived from Tobruk of the first death of a Wiltshire Yeoman in action. The patrols in the Iraqi desert continued

¹ So named because its initial purpose was the relief of RAF Habbaniya.

interspersed by occasional air raids from Vichy French planes until 20 June when the regiment was moved four miles from the Syrian frontier.

The campaign in Syria – Operation Exporter

The next Middle Eastern country on the undesirable list was Syria which, like Iraq and Persia, was under the influence of Germany and garrisoned by the hated Vichy French. The strategic concern was that Syria could be utilised by the Axis forces to mount attacks on Egypt. The RWY less one squadron was part of the 4th Cavalry Brigade and again with the Household Cavalry and the Warwickshire Yeomanry were given the objective of the ancient and ruined city of Palmyra, one hundred miles from the Iraq border. On 21 June 1941 the CO Lt Colonel Williams led the advance which was joined by a company of the Arab Legion, reaching Juffa fifty miles inside Syria where a lone French aircraft escaped to warn the main Vichy garrisons at Homs and Palmyra. Arriving at the outskirts of Palmyra at 11.00 the CO briefed his squadrons overlooking the ruined city and the objective of Yellow Ridge, the most prominent landmark occupied by dug-in French machine guns. With no air support or artillery, numerous foot patrols were sent forward, but progress was painfully slow against such a well-prepared enemy.



Figure 3: The Syrian Campaign June-July 1941

Sheltering in slit trenches and suffering in the intense heat for twelve days, the regiment's vehicles were systematically destroyed. These relentless Vichy bombing attacks that followed from the air were difficult to counter with rifles and old Hotchkiss machine guns.

Lt MStJV Gibbs distinguished himself assaulting the hills but had to withdraw due to a combination of exhaustion and overwhelming opposition.

Trooper Ken Batt in an interview with the author in 2018 recalled his orders from Sergeant Bannister: 'get up that hill and if you see anyone in front of you, shoot them.'

Lieutenant Kenneth McIlwraith, the Canadian born liaison officer, was tasked to take a French prisoner back to Brigade HQ but his car was attacked and he and his batman were taken prisoner on 2 June by a French patrol. He was handed over to a French Foreign Legion officer and flown 145km to Homs in an ancient biplane whose Gallic pilot was far more concerned with the cases of wine he was transferring than the welfare of his prisoners. From Homs he was flown to Greece and then onwards to Salonika. The conditions in which he and other British prisoners were held in a dockside warehouse were appalling but after five days he was moved to a passenger ship.

Following the armistice between the British and Vichy forces on 14 July, McIlwraith was transported through Germany to Toulon in southern France, again in horrific conditions and finally by sea to Beirut and Cairo. He rejoined the Regiment but missed the battle of El Alamein due to jaundice and desert sores, the crewman who replaced him was killed in the battle. McIlwraith was clearly traumatised by these experiences because he rarely spoke about them after the war.

Returning to the battle unfolding in Syria, by 26 June the daily bombing and strafing had reduced as the RAF stepped up activity against the French airfields. Water was now rationed to a gallon a day but thankfully artillery support had arrived to turn the tide.

Further attacks by RWY patrols and soldiers from the Essex Regiment were made on the prominent ridge overlooking the town and repeatedly repulsed but on 3 July the enemy garrison finally surrendered.



Figure 4: Trooper Bath

Trooper Bath was badly wounded on 23 June 1941. Two weeks later, the QM Riddiford wrote to Bath's family:

'Our small convoy of vehicles was attacked by fighters and the driver of the lorry in which your son was riding was killed instantly and all the others were wounded. After the fighter had gone and left us, I saw that your son's vehicle was still travelling and assumed it was all right. Instead, I found that your son, although badly wounded had climbed into the driver's seat and driven the vehicle for nearly a mile. Before we could get the wounded away, we were again attacked.

'He had to take himself thirty miles to the nearest dressing station where the doctors who attended him were full of admiration of his courage.'

Bath died three days after this action but when Riddiford wrote to the family he was clearly unaware of his death. He was posthumously awarded the Military Medal and now lies in Habbaniya War Cemetery in Iraq, 65km west of Baghdad.

By 29 June 1941, both A and C Squadrons could only muster seventy-eight fit men. Somerset de Chair in his book *The Golden Carpet* described the air bombardment of the RWY:

‘South of Palmyra bluff John Morrison of the Wilts, who was to join me in Parliament a year later, told me he had seventeen vehicles under his command on the first morning and only four left including the water wagon, the next day; the rest were destroyed by air attack.’

The regimental war diary records the whole of A Echelon destroyed by machine gunfire from the air.

Following the fall of Palmyra, the regiment prepared for an attack on Homs but the Syrian armistice intervened and the yeomen trekked northwards to Aleppo where the 4th Cavalry Brigade was concentrating.

They bivouacked in olive groves north east of the town, where shade following the incessant heat and glare of the desert sun was most welcome, as was the abundance of fresh fruit after a diet made up of bully beef and biscuits for two months. The yeomen were allowed into Aleppo in the evening which was full of French soldiers, an odd sight as the French Foreign Legion had previously been the despised enemy at Palmyra.

A particularly distasteful incident took place in June 1941 when a patrol from the Warwickshire Yeomanry was approached by vehicles sent from a French fort under the protection of a white flag. Under the command of an Arab officer the Warwickshires were raked with machine gun fire from trucks and armoured cars. The identity of the Arab Vichy officer is unclear as he is referred to by three different names in first-hand accounts and the published regimental history, but one possibility is the infamous ‘Arab Nazi’ Fawzi-al-Qawukji.



Figure 5: A group of haggard officers after the battle for Palmyra. John Morrison is seen wearing a pith helmet. He became MP for Salisbury in 1942 and later Lord Margdale. He was chairman of the powerful 1922 Committee and thought to be responsible for Edward Heath coming to power. He was later honorary colonel to the RWY.

What is clear to the author from interviewing families is that little quarter was given to the Vichy forces during the final mopping up operations in Palmyra.

It was at Aleppo, on 4 August that B Squadron rejoined and the Regiment which was once more united.

Operations in Persia – Operation Countenance

The importance of the transport routes to Russia and the obvious oil pipeline led to this rather overlooked and brief campaign. Persia was another Middle Eastern country that enjoyed a good relationship with Germany and, following a failure of diplomacy, a plan was devised for the British to join hands with the Russian Army via Persia.

On 9 August the RWY moved sixty-five miles by road south to Baghdad, where the men were surprisingly allowed a night in the town, and thereafter to the town of Kirkuk where the temperature was seldom below 120 degrees. Bathing in the river was arranged but this was a seventeen-mile trip through the desert. Sickness was now commonplace and at least thirty men were hospitalised with the ever-present threat of sand fly fever.

The Allied advance into Persia on 26 August was initially led by the Warwickshire Yeomanry with a detachment of the 14th/20th Hussars through treacherous countryside and the RWY took the lead a few days later. This was not to be a prolonged campaign and two days later the RWY was awakened by shellfire but by 12.30 that day the Persians had surrendered.



Figure 6: The Iraq/Iran Campaign August 1941

For the first few days of September, reconnaissance patrols were sent out from the area surrounding Kermamshah, midway between Baghdad and Tehran. Of interest to the modern reader is the turbulence and fighting between Persian and Iraqi Kurds and the general inclination of deserters from the Persian Army and local rebels to loot whenever possible. Malaria, smallpox and typhus were a constant threat and the troops avoided entering the local towns.

On 15 September, the move towards Tehran over dreadfully potholed and corrugated roads started. The strategic plan was for a simultaneous entry to Tehran by Allied and Soviet forces on 17 September, but the Russians chose to ignore this and led by General Novikov, entered the capital much earlier at 06.00.



Figure 7: Russian Generals, Tehran, September 1941



Figure 8: 23 September 1941, joint British, Gurkha and Russian parade before General Novikov (Russian) and Brigadier Tiarks (Australian), on the square facing the former German armaments factory, Tehran. Following an inspection by Novikov and Tiarks, the contingents marched past, three cheers were proposed for both armies and for some the party began helped by an excellent Russian band with songs, dances and, of course, copious amounts of the ubiquitous vodka.

The RWY are finally converted to an armoured regiment

The Persian adventure had achieved its aim, stabilising the country and establishing a supply route to Russia for the remainder of the war.

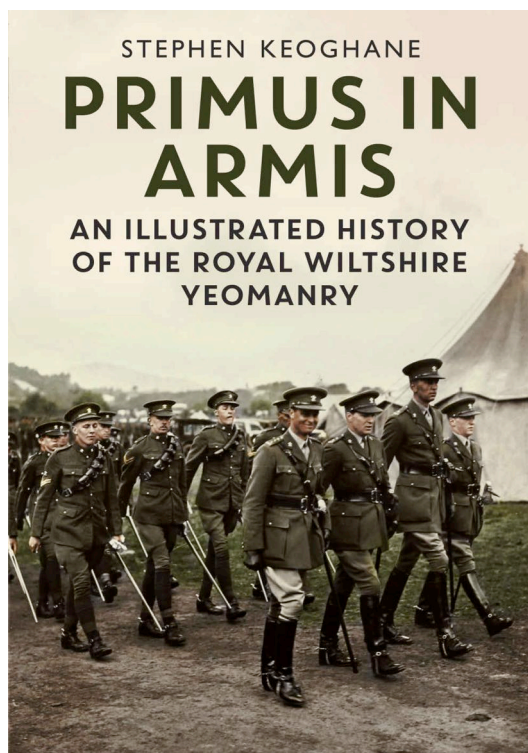
On 8 October, having left Tehran twelve days prior, the regiment travelled over 1,375 miles arriving at Gadera near Tel Aviv where a week of much needed leave was awarded to all ranks.

The RWY had now taken part in three separate campaigns fighting from their Peugeot and Morris trucks and, more importantly for what was to come, the soldiers had learned to survive in the harsh desert conditions during this 8,000-mile excursion since leaving Palestine.

Gadera was where the transition to an armoured regiment took place but life in this overcrowded camp was not particularly comfortable and by Christmas, relentless rain had turned the ground into a quagmire of mud with a river running through the camp.

Stephen Keoghane

Stephen Keoghane joined the Royal Wessex Yeomanry in 1994, recruited by his predecessor Lt Col Ralph Stephenson over a varicose vein operation in Stroud General Hospital. He served in HQ Squadron in Cirencester, later C Squadron and completed regimental duty with B Squadron in Old Sarum finishing in 2016 when he relocated to Suffolk. In 2011 he served in Afghanistan as a trauma surgeon and skied competitively and played polo for the RWxY.



Primus in Armis, the gloriously illustrated history of the Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry covering 200 years was published in hardback by Fonthill Media in May 2020 and Stephen is currently working on his next book, focussing on the RWY during WW2.

IVOR GURNEY TO THE BELGIAN BATTALION ON THE IMJIN

(Via Laurie Lee, Johnnie Coppin, Patrick Kavanagh
and the story of 'The Song of The Glorious Glosters')

Rob Dixon

What is the link between all these diverse people I hear you ask? Well pretty tenuous frankly, and they are not the only people involved in this plot; but let me explain.

It all started in 1971 when I, as a young subaltern towards the end of my first posting away from the Battalion at the Infantry Junior Leaders Battalion, as an instructor on the External Leadership Wing (Adventure Training in plain English) received my next posting order. Instead of going back to 1 Glosters I was to take over 25 Army Youth Team (AYT) based at RAF Innsworth in Gloucester. I was furious. Having spent two years happily running round the mountains while at Oswestry I wanted to get back to soldiering again. I protested but of course to no avail. As far as I could make out the battalion I had left was now being run by Royal Hampshire officers who did not know me. But I had to make the most of it and decided to spend my spare time training for something more exciting.

I joined the AYT to take over from Nigel Richardson during their support to Gloucestershire Youth Services summer camp on the Gower Peninsula; naturally I was accompanied by my first faithful Labrador, Winston, who I had acquired at Oswestry. At the end of camp, I reported to my new accommodation at RAF Innsworth. Having booked in, Winston and I walked into the Officers' Mess for refreshment. The first RAF Officer, a squadron leader, I met pointed at Winston and said, 'What's that'. I explained that it was a dog, a Labrador to be precise, that they came in two colours, yellow and black, and this one was a yellow one. I was told to take him out immediately as dogs were not allowed in an RAF Mess. I muttered something along the lines that things must have changed since Guy Gibson's day.



*Maj PW 'Sam' Weller returning
from Korea 1953*

We stayed the night without unpacking and next day reported to the Army Careers Office in Gloucester to meet my new boss Major 'Sam' Weller. Life changed immediately from darkest gloom to sunny uplands. Sam was a proper Gloster, a wonderful man, Imjin veteran and we immediately got on like a house on fire. He arranged for immediate accommodation at the little RAOC mess at Ashchurch and advised me to look for private accommodation in the area as he could arrange the necessary non accommodation allowance (it would not happen these days!).

I duly found a cottage in Paradise, just outside Painswick, rented by Keith Biggar, same age as me, working for Bruton Knowles. He wanted someone to share the rent and we became firm friends. Over the hill at Slad lived Dennis Harding, the Regimental Secretary in those days, another fabulous old Gloster and Imjin veteran. He invited me to the Woolpack to meet the locals, and what a crowd of locals they were; prominent were Laurie Lee and Frank Mansell, another great Gloucestershire poet. We did not have lockdowns

in those days; we had 'lock-ins'. The doors were closed by the landlord: this time a proper ex-RAF officer who had been a Battle of Britain pilot, and his lovely Irish wife Nolie. They all made a great fuss of Winston who soon booked himself prime position in front of the winter fireplace, staying there until his fur started to singe. During the lock-ins Laurie Lee and Frank Mansell had poetry jousts reciting their own and other poetry and rubbishing the poetry of each other. I was introduced to the poetry of Ivor Gurney by Laurie Lee. Laurie was of course a great Gloucestershire nationalist and claimed that Gurney was the greatest of the war poets. Who was I to argue! In any case that was my introduction to Gurney, and I think I have now read everything he ever wrote.



Ivor Gurney and Laurie Lee

His was not the take of an angry disillusioned young officer like Sassoon or Owen but the voice of a private soldier who despite the ravages all round him found solace in the enduring comradeship of his companions. He contrasted the devastated landscape surrounding him with the solace of The Forest, the Severn and the High Blue Cotswold Hills where he longed to be back.

Fast forward about 14 years and I found myself for the third time of my career, and not the last, under command of John Waters. He was Commandant of The Staff College and I arrived as one of his Directing Staff. By this time Jilly and I had bought a cottage in Sheepscombe (to be pronounced Shepscum if you are proper Gloucester). It is just over the hill from my old stamping ground of Slad, and we escaped there whenever we could away from the rat race of Camberley. One weekend we watched a beautifully produced BBC Bristol Programme about our local valleys, with poetry by Lee and Gurney, some of it set to music by a local folk singer called Johnny Coppin. One of those eureka moments hit me. I had always outwardly disdained, but secretly was jealous of the Welsh and Irish Regiments breaking into song at the end of a good party. It was about time the Gloucesters had something to sing.

I wrote to Johnny with my suggestion, half expecting no reply, and was amazed when he rang me up a couple of days later. He was enthused by the suggestion because he knew so much about Gurney and Harvey: we agreed to meet up at The Museum in Gloucester. I showed him

round, highlighted the significant historical milestones, gave him a copy of Cap of Honour and he promised to get back to me in a couple of months. He is a delightful man, no previous military connections at all, but was genuinely enthused by the project. He got it straight away: the lifeblood of the County running through our Regiment.



Johnny Coppin

A few months later by which time I had taken over the 1st Battalion in Berlin he got in touch sending a copy of the words. I could not fault it. We arranged for him to come out with Henry Radice who wanted to carry out a silver check before we went to Ireland. You cannot imagine too more unlikely travelling companions, but they hit it off famously! It was just before Christmas. The preview of the song was in the Officers' Mess after dinner before the day of the Battalion Christmas Concert. Johnny sang it playing his guitar, even the subalterns quietened down and listened, we all loved it, Henry was ecstatic, and we all soon picked up the chorus. It was a good night.

The next day Johnny rehearsed with our Band. Bandmaster Bennett was the concert maestro and Johnny's spot was to be the finale. I think I was the most nervous person in the audience, how would the boys react? They were well lubricated, and the normal Gloster Shedhead banter was flying around the Dining Hall. At last the time came; he warmed the audience up with a few well-known rock numbers, which were enjoyed, and then introduced his song. Amazingly there was dead silence whilst he sang it. He finished: there was silence for a few seconds, and then the hall erupted with stamping of feet, cheering, everyone stood up and there were shouts of 'more, more'. He had to sing it at least three times, each chorus more deafening than the last: we had our song.

Leaping forward a couple of decades, the Editorial Committee of SOGM were planning a series of special exhibitions to mark the centenary of the end of The Great War. One idea was to celebrate both Regiments' war poets and musicians. During research for the Glosters part I decided to write to Patrick (PJ) Kavanagh who had edited *The Collected Poems of Ivor Gurney* and was now President of The Ivor Gurney Society. He had played a major role in bringing Gurney into the public recognition that he so richly deserved. I had never met Patrick Kavanagh but thought he might be able to get The Society to help with the project. I was amazed to find that his address was only half a mile away from where I lived in Elkstone. At Elkstone I had converted the garage, which was right by the road, into my office. It also made a guard room for watching the to's and fro's in and out of the village. Dave the Post always stopped for a natter and I gave him my letter to drop into PJK on his round. It cost me a cup of tea, cheaper than a first-class stamp.

Two hours later Patrick Kavanagh drew up outside in his battered old car wearing his battered old hat which I came to know well. He introduced himself and asked me to join him at 6pm in The Highwayman that Saturday for a discussion. Thus started an all too brief friendship. Over two years we met just about every Saturday evening promptly at 6pm for 2 pints of beer and shared a packet of peanuts. This Patrick Kavanagh should not be confused with a famous Irish poet of the same name. Our Patrick was also a poet in his own right having written 14 volumes of poetry, four books, hosted the TV programme with David Frost and William Rushton, 'Not so much a Programme More a Way of Life', acted in Father Ted, been the poetry editor of *The Spectator* and contributed a weekly column to that journal and *The Times Literary Supplement*. He

was one of the most amusing people I have ever met, interested in literally everything. A real conversationalist.

Of particular relevance to this story, Patrick had served as a National Service Officer with The Royal Ulster Rifles and was wounded at The Battle of the Imjin River as part of a patrol that went across the river early on to see what the Chinese were up to. There is an account of this in his book *The Perfect Stranger* which recalls his early life. It is an amusing and beautifully written book. He had vast admiration for The Glosters and also the Belgian Battalion. He found out later that they played a huge part in his escape back across the river when wounded and felt guilty that he had not recorded this in his book. He described them as wild looking bearded men with many ex pats from the Belgian Congo, a sort of Belgian Foreign Legion.

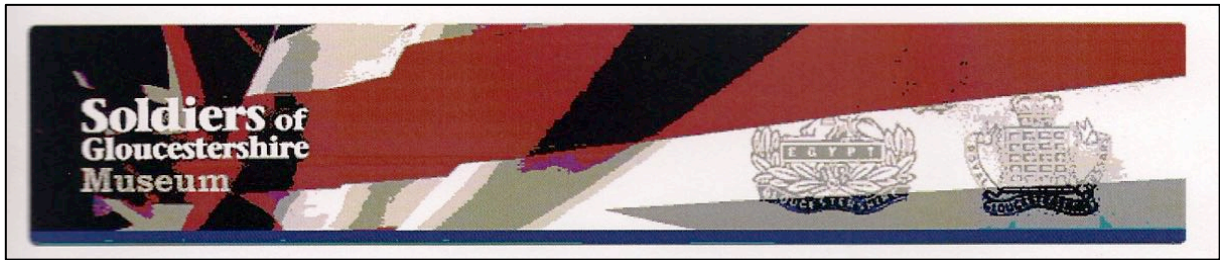


Patrick (PJ) Kavanagh

Patrick died in 2015 aged 84. What a wonderful man and what a life. His hat still has pride of place in The Highwayman. Then out of the blue earlier this year SOGM received a request from a Belgian who wanted to know more about Private Neame of the Glosters, as he had found his Korean Medal in an auction. The enquirer is putting together a history of this Belgian Battalion and is most interested in our plans to eventually expand the Korea display to include the other 29 Brigade Units. I have invited him to come over and visit once the Covid War is over. He has accepted.

This concludes From Gurney to The Imjin via a few diversions! Hopefully our plans for expansion will come to fruition if we all help.

Rob Dixon



REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF MUSEUM TRUSTEES

Dear Friends

Before I say anything else can I express my hope that you and your families are all continuing to be well in this time of Covid. I can report that the museum staff and the trustees all seem to have come through so far despite some having family members who have been infected. All to the best of my belief have now recovered. It seems apt at this moment to quote our former Curator George Stretfeild's rejoinder to a cheery, 'Good Morning George, how are you?'. He always replied with the one word, 'Surviving'.

Now sadly I have a problem to report. Vicki Hopson and her team had worked tirelessly to reopen the museum. Then, within days of our re-opening, an area of ceiling in the Peninsula Gallery fell in during the recent storms due to water ingress. We are obviously in conversation with our insurers, the conservation officer and a local building firm and will be reopening the museum again as soon as we can. We are also asking surveyors Bruton Knowles to revisit the Condition Survey of the building that they did last year to ensure that this is an isolated incident and that all our visitors and staff are safe. Nonetheless the café and shop remain open with two talks scheduled for September, in the Long Room and via Zoom, by Tim Brain and me as part of the Gloucester History Festival.

Can I say to you all, it is at times like these that we really need our Friends more than ever. Please do support our activities whenever and however you can.

Turning now to other matters, the museum trustees have been working behind the scenes to reorganise and modernise our corporate structure. Under Charity Commission rules, a charity can only have a maximum of 25 per cent of its turnover from trading activities up to a maximum of £50,000 per annum. However, in order to fulfil our own survival plans we do need to boost our trading revenues well beyond this limit. The way round this, which most other significant charities follow, is to have a separate wholly owned trading subsidiary whose profits are then donated to the parent charity. This has taken a lot of work to organise and I am very grateful to all members of the SOGM Executive Committee and others for their contributions. In addition I am very grateful that Martin Vine who, as a senior ex-Gloster, will be well known to many of you, has agreed to join the board of the trading company as an independent director, that is one who is not also a current member of the museum board. This is just one example where we are striving to demonstrate good governance.

Finally, can I repeat as ever that our survival as an institution, committed to the education of the public about our role in the history of Great Britain for over three hundred years, depends

upon our supporters. The Friends have been outstanding over the years and despite the problems that 2020 has brought us all, I am sure this will continue into the future.

With best wishes to you all

Chris Ryland
Chair, SOGM

REPORT FROM THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR

I hope all Museum Friends are well and adjusting to the new 'normal' (whatever that is!).

As Chris has mentioned in his Chair's Report, we have recently suffered some internal damage to the Peninsular Gallery ceiling, as a result of water ingress. We are working to complete the repairs as soon as is possible, and in the meantime we are focusing our energies on the café, the online shop, our education offer, and boardroom (and building) hires, amongst many other things. We are also re-visiting our education offer for Primary Schools, and will be adapting the sessions to better suit the needs of teachers, who need to embrace technology in the new 'virtual' world.

We submitted an application for a Heritage Emergency Fund grant through the National Lottery Heritage Fund back in July this year, and were soon after very pleased to hear that our application had been successful and that we would receive just under £25,000 to help us cover operational costs for a period of four months. This grant (plus the £25,000 Local Authority Leisure Grant received in May) has meant that the museum has as much cash in the bank at this point in the year as our Business Plan Targets had hoped. That being said, the months (and years) ahead are uncertain, and as most of our income streams (including new lines of business such as corporate memberships) came to an abrupt halt in March, it will take some time to build momentum again.

A huge thank you again to all museum Friends for your support, and let's hope that in 12 months' time Covid-19 is a distant memory.

Vicki Hopson, Museum Director vicki.hopson@sogm.co.uk

Calling all budding authors...

We welcome articles from members and our associates on subjects related to the Museum, the military life of Gloucestershire, and more general aspects of military history. Please contact the Editor, Dr Tim Brain on timothy.brain@btinternet.com who will be very pleased to offer advice.

TOM'S SWAGGER STICK



Viewers of the BBC programme 'The Repair Shop' will have seen Veteran Gloster, Thomas Hassall who brought his swagger stick for repair.

Thomas is a resident of Hankelow, Cheshire.

An article in the local Audlem Online news says residents will remember Tom Hassall, when he received the Légion d'Honneur last year at the French Embassy, from the Ambassador for his contribution in liberating France at the D- Day landings in WW2. Thomas went ashore on Juno Beach with the West Yorkshire Regiment. He was later transferred to the Glosters.

After WW2 in early 1947, Tom was stationed at the Spandau Barracks in Germany, as part of the Gloucestershire Regiment British occupying forces, for a short period before being moved to Jamaica.

Whilst there, Tom was selected for guard duty and as one of the smartest on parade was awarded a cane 'Swagger Stick' with silver coloured knob and given the job of accompanying the commanding officer as guard.

Over the years, the stick became somewhat worse for wear and a friend Terry Foden got in touch with the BBC Repair Shop to see if it could be repaired. Last October, together with his daughter Jane Burnham and Terry, Tom was invited to Chichester near where the 'Repair Shop' is located. They stayed overnight at a B&B as guests of the BBC and next day took the Swagger Stick for repair.

Returning that evening Tom was delighted to see the Swagger Stick restored to its former glory and says Jay and the team had done a fantastic job, for which he was very grateful and somewhat emotional.

You can see the recent episode featuring Tom on BBC iPlayer

Phil 'Dusty' Miller