

NEWSLETTER

THE FRIENDS OF

THE SOLDIERS OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE MUSEUM



SPRING 2020

Operation 'ANGER' April 1945



It is seventy-five years ago in April that the 2nd Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment, spearheaded 'Operation ANGER', the thrust to capture Arnhem and finally liberate what remained of the German occupied Netherlands.

This dramatic photograph above captures the moment the Glosters stormed across the River Isjeel, a canalised river link between the Neder Rhine at Arnhem and Lake Isjeel to the north.

The operation differed from the heroic if flawed attempt by British airborne forces to capture and hold the great road bridge at Arnhem the previous September. Then the airborne forces landed several miles to the west of the city and, in depleted numbers, captured the bridge, awaiting ground forces in the form of XXX Corps that ultimately fell short of their objective. That defeat presaged the 'Hunger Winter' in Holland, when German occupied Holland came close to starvation. Operation ANGER, intended to alleviate that suffering more than attain military objectives, used infantry with armour support and amphibious assault vehicles ('Buffalos'). The Glosters captured a bridgehead in the eastern Arnhem suburbs, overcoming localised opposition, allowing the other units of the 56th Infantry Brigade, the 2nd South Wales Borderers and 2nd Essex to follow up and progress towards the city centre. Although stiff fighting followed there were no Gloster casualties.

It was the last serious fighting for the Battalion that had been in the line from D-Day, 6th June 1944, to Unconditional Surrender, 7th May 1945, one of the few Allied units to have done so.

A full account of this action and the story of the 2nd Battalion's progress from D-Day to VE day is in **Gilbert Brain, 'The Gloucestershire Regiment in Europe 1944-45'**, published by the Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum, £12.99. Copies are on sale in the Museum shop or online, enquiries@sogm.co.uk, proceeds to the Museum.



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

This is my first report as Chairman of the Friends in succession to Ralph Stephenson. It is also one which is being published in the most unusual of circumstances, with the country in 'lockdown' as a result of the Coronavirus. As a consequence, we have been unable to post hardcopies to each Friend, as is our usual practice, in the early spring. Instead, this year will be sending to as many of you as possible an electronic version. We hope to be able to send a hard copy out as soon as restrictions are lifted, which, as it was printed a matter of days before government restrictions were imposed, will differ very slightly in content from this, more up to date, electronic version.

My first and most pleasant duty is to pay to record my thanks to Ralph Stephenson who has stepped down after fifteen years of outstanding service as Chairman. His has always been a constant and welcome face at all Museum and Friends events, and I am therefore delighted to report that he will continue to serve on the Friends' Committee, being a welcome source of experience and advice.

This has been a busy few months for both the Museum and the Friends. The autumn saw the extremely well attend Chavenage Lecture, where our celebrity lecturer was Jeremy Paxman, who gave us his robust take on The Great War. In the run up to Christmas the Museum maintained a distinctive and welcoming presence at The Gloucester Docks Victorian Market. In this edition of the Newsletter our Museum Chairman Chris Ryland and Director Vicki Hopson will update us on recent activities and developments at the Museum. Both articles were written before the closure of the Museum because of Government restrictions. We look forward to its reopening.

Our late spring and early summer plans have been necessarily disturbed by the Coronavirus and therefore, with great regret, there will be neither a Summer Reception nor our usual presence at the Badminton Horse Trials. We, nevertheless, look forward to our Chavenage Lecture to be held on Friday 30th October, when Sinclair McKay will lecture on 'X and Y: Bletchley Park and its listening stations.' His book *The Secret Life of Bletchley Park*, a vivid account of the code breaking and the people behind it, was published in 2010.

It is with sadness that we record the passing on 1st January of Anne Cadbury at the age of 94. She was a great supporter of the Museum, both in terms of her generosity and attendance at Friends events. She will be greatly missed.

The connecting theme of this edition is 'lessons from the past'. The lead article is by Lt General Sir John Kiszley, our 2018 Chavenage lecturer, who casts an expert eye on the disastrous Norway Campaign of 1940. Then we have a major contribution from our own Rob Dixon, presenting a similarly expert overview of the Battle of Alexandria, 1801, a battle which for the Glosters and their supporters has attained iconic status. Here he not only retells the famous 'back badge' episode but illustrates the battle's wider political and military significance. We are indeed fortunate to have contributions of such quality.

Dr Tim Brain OBE QPM

BITTER LESSONS: NORWAY, 1940

John Kiszely

It is almost exactly eighty years since one of the most disastrous but least well-known military campaigns in British history – the short campaign in Norway in 1940. Campaigns that end in ignominious failure tend to be quickly forgotten. Yet there is often far more to be learned from such operations than from those that were successful.

In the spring of 1940, the British, with French support, dispatched an expeditionary force to oust the Germans immediately following Berlin's *coup-de-main* seizure of the country on 9th April. In just eight weeks of fighting, the Allies committed a series of catastrophic blunders and suffered a string of defeats. Humiliated, the British and French promptly evacuated, leaving Norway to four years of Nazi tyranny. The ill-fated mission was almost immediately overshadowed by another crisis: Hitler's invasion of France, Belgium and Holland in May 1940. Today, few people outside Norway know much about the campaign. Yet it contains lessons that resonate strongly with more recent campaigns such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Much of the failure in Norway occurred at the tactical level. In almost every battle and engagement on land, British troops, many of whom were semi-trained Territorials, retreated or were utterly routed. Hundreds of soldiers were taken prisoner during these engagements. Amazingly, most of the British infantry units sent into action lacked artillery, mortars, air defences, effective anti-tank weapons and even maps. Engineers and logistic support were also in short supply or non-existent. Administration was utterly chaotic. Soldiers were inadequately clothed and equipped, given the wrong ammunition, were often separated from their own equipment and transport, and went for days without hot food or shelter. As one observer commented, such chaos 'was unpleasantly reminiscent of the Crimean War.'

But, as so often, the underlying reasons for these tactical failures can be traced to the upper echelons of command. At the grand strategic level, the campaign, as planned from the earliest days in December 1939, was deeply flawed. British prime minister Neville Chamberlain was entirely unsuited to the role of wartime leader and presided over a divided war cabinet, dominated by one of its members, Winston Churchill, at that time First Lord of the Admiralty. The War Cabinet argued, dithered and procrastinated. Too often it failed to engage in the process of strategy – balancing the ends it sought to achieve against the ways and means available. Instead, it fell prey to wishful thinking and frequently indulged in its fascination with tactics – caricatured by an observer as 'playing with tin soldiers on a map'. As chairman of the Military Coordinating Committee at the outset of the campaign, Churchill made a number of serious errors of judgement and pressurised the chiefs of staff, often during acrimonious, late-night, alcohol-fuelled meetings, into decisions.

On the military side, the chiefs of staff had a shallow understanding of strategy and an over-simplified view of its place. Many believed that their constitutional role was to give advice to ministers and then implement their wishes. Such a view did not take into account the need for strategy to be dynamic, continuous and iterative. They also failed to grasp the need for discourse and, if necessary, robust debate, while still accepting the principle of civilian primacy, which held that formal political direction must ultimately be followed. The chiefs also balked

at pointing out the huge risks in their military plans. Likewise, they rarely challenged the war cabinet's wishful thinking, appearing unwilling to speak truth unto power. Ironically, the chiefs were receiving generally excellent advice from their subordinates, the joint planners, whose advice they too often ignored or summarily dismissed, believing that because they were more senior, they knew better. Such hubris would have grave consequences.

The chiefs also bore much responsibility for two critical failures. First, they failed to recognize the many intelligence indicators that pointed to a German invasion of Norway, thus gifting Berlin complete strategic surprise. Second, unlike their opposite numbers in the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW), they and their predecessors failed to study the evolution of warfare with open minds and thus missed the emerging potential of air power. Instead, they allowed single-service agendas to skew perceptions. As a result, the dominance of German air superiority hit the chiefs of staff as what would now be called a revolution in military affairs.



On fire and sinking: HMS Bittern at Namsos

At the next level down, the operational level – the link between strategy and tactics – the contrast between the German and British structures and performance was even more stark. For while Hitler appointed a lieutenant general and his corps headquarters to design and plan the campaign and then command and control it, there was no equivalent on the British side. Indeed, there was a complete vacuum. Thus, higher planning was the responsibility of each service ministry – the War Office, the Admiralty and the Air Ministry – with some very broad-brush coordination from a small and inadequate joint planning staff. For the army, this meant that, in practice, planning was carried out by the various branches in the War Office who dealt

direct with the tactical commander, a major general with a small divisional staff based 200 miles away in York. Inevitably, there were large gaps in planning and preparation, which led to a dangerous reliance placed on improvisation. Although the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Edmund Ironside, was directly responsible for the training standards of the formations to be deployed, and knew from personal experience the testing conditions that awaited them inside the Arctic Circle, he did not find the time to provide the necessary supervision in their training.

When the forces deployed, the absence of an intervening level of command between strategy and tactics became even more critical. In a fast-moving campaign and with poor radio communications, the decision-makers in London became increasingly out of touch with the situation in theatre. Their frequent and sudden changes of plan were overtaken by events. Furthermore, without a joint-service, deployed headquarters, coordination between services in theatre - for example, for air support - had to be referred back to London where messages were passed from one ministry to another. In addition, campaign coordination with the French and Norwegians was poor, exacerbated by a reluctance to place any trust in the local forces or fight a joint campaign with them. As a result, the efforts of the British and Norwegian militaries were rarely more than the sum of their parts.

Such incompetence at higher levels would have mattered less had the British been fighting a colonial war or conducting the sort of imperial policing that had occupied much of the country's attention in the inter-war period. Unfortunately for them, in Norway they faced comparatively far better-trained, better-equipped and better-led German troops operating with air superiority. As a French officer in Norway observed at the time, 'the British have planned this campaign on the lines of a punitive expedition against the Zulus, but unhappily we and the British are in the position of the Zulus...'



British soldiers searching the ruins of Namsos

One commander who emerges from the campaign with honour was Lieutenant General Adrian Carton de Wiart, VC - a charismatic former Gloster. He was flown out to Namsos in central Norway to command the Anglo-French force there but - in keeping with the campaign's chaotic administration - without being given a headquarters or any communications or transport. His aircraft was machine gunned as it came into land and his



Carlton de Wiart

only staff officer severely wounded. In the next few days the general got to know his troops, British and French, and proved an inspiring figure, standing out in the open, nonchalantly smoking his pipe as bombs burst around him. He did what he could to bring order out of the chaos but his initial instinct proved correct: 'I felt in my bones that the campaign was unlikely to be either long or successful.' Within a fortnight his small force had been routed and were evacuated through the ruins of the port of Namsos which had been utterly wrecked by the Luftwaffe.

Not every aspect of the Norway expedition was a disaster. The Royal Navy's action at Narvik was inspiring; some RAF and Army units were justifiably proud of their achievements. But, overall, the campaign in Norway was a textbook example of how not to plan and conduct a military campaign. The Allies received no end of lessons at the hands of the Germans. And these continue to be relevant today. Indeed, a study of this campaign offers a better understanding of campaigns in general and of some of the likely pitfalls that await the unwary. The British fiasco in Norway in 1940 may have been a sorry tale, but it is also a cautionary one.

Lt Gen Sir John Kiszely gave the 2018 Chavenage Lecture. In a career that spanned forty years he held a series of operational and strategic commands, being awarded the MC for his role in the battle for Mt Tumbledown in the Falklands Campaign. His book, *Anatomy of a Campaign: The British Fiasco in Norway 1940* was published in 2017 by Cambridge University Press.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Autumn Lecture

Friday 30th October 2020, 6.45pm

Chavenage House, Tetbury

Lecturer: Sinclair McKay

'X and Y: Bletchley and its Listening Stations'

Invitations to follow

(All details correct at time of going to print)



LESSONS FROM ALEXANDRIA

21st March 1801

Rob Dixon

A recent request from 4 Rifles to talk to them about Alexandria and the winning of the Back Badge encouraged an approach to look at that campaign in the context of the political and strategic climate of the day. Europe was in chaos and in Britain the Army was the lowest priority for defence spending: *Plus ca change!*

Regimental histories quite naturally focus on the role of their own regiment. They tend to be confined to tactical accounts of the battles they were involved in and gloss over the political environment in which they were fought. In some cases you could be forgiven for thinking that no other regiment took part in the battle! Individual acts of heroism are quite rightly given prominence but there is always much more to be learnt particularly about leadership, teamwork, communication and how to overcome the particular testing conditions.

The Egyptian Campaign itself is a much-overlooked part of our military history and yet it was a real turning point in the Napoleonic war. In a way it was the El Alamein of its day, a battle fought not that far away. It gave the British Army renewed confidence and it was the building block from which Sir John Moore expanded his ideas for developing the infantry. Prior to this the Army had been the Cinderella service. It had been stigmatised by the loss of the American Colonies and had failed in the early days of the Napoleonic War to make any impact on the continent of Europe. The expedition into the Low Countries led by the Duke of York had ended in complete failure apart from its successful withdrawal and successful evacuation. Various raids onto the coast of France had not been well organised, were poorly led, and further added to the already low reputation of our Army. As usual it was not all the Army's fault. Political leadership and therefore proper direction were either divided or absent at the crucial moment. Coalitions were cobbled together to form a government and soon fell apart. The Royal Navy was the dominant service and received the lion's share of defence spending. Admiral Lord St Vincent openly campaigned for the Army to be disbanded. His view was that the Guards and Artillery should be retained for home defence and the rest of the army should be subsumed by the Royal Marines under the Navy.

Britain had declared war on Revolutionary France in 1793. A coalition was formed with Russia and Austria against France. Flanders was taken over by the French, and Prussia wanted to keep out of the war at this stage. Similarly, the Ottoman Empire was hedging its bets. Napoleon Bonaparte had risen rapidly to command an army that swept through Northern Italy, then held by the Austrians, and occupied it as far East as Venice and as far South as Rome. In doing so he gained increasing political influence and although not yet in complete control was able to dictate France's future military strategy. Napoleon's Army of Italy was very much under his personal control.

He won the argument that France needed to have more influence in the Orient and reclaim its interest in India. The sea route round the Cape was not safe due to the dominance of the Royal Navy but there were old established trade routes across the Middle East via Egypt.

Caravan trails ran through Persia to India, while an alternative route was by sea to Alexandria then overland to the Red Sea and thence by sea again to India.

In 1797 Napoleon sailed the bulk of his battle-hardened Army of Italy (around 34,000 men) from Toulon to Aboukir Bay and led a lightning campaign to take over Egypt. This campaign did not go down well in Britain and led to Nelson's first great audacious victory at Aboukir Bay (subsequently called the Battle of the Nile) when he destroyed the bulk of the French fleet and therefore prevented any major reinforcements reaching Egypt. Napoleon decided he needed to get back to France to consolidate his position there and abandoned his army, escaping across the Med in a single frigate carefully avoiding the Royal Navy. Command was handed over to the capable General Kleber. Napoleon assumed complete political control in France and compelled Austria to sue for peace after his victory at Marengo.

After considerable political dithering England eventually decided that the priority was to secure Egypt and safeguard that route to India. A force had been assembled under General Sir Ralph Abercromby to attack the French west coast and was already embarked.

Abercromby was 67 years old. He was a veteran of the 7 Years War, several forays into the West Indies, the disastrous expedition to Holland and had a mixed reputation. In modern terms he was a bit of a 'leftie': his sympathies with the American Colonists led him to take a furlough on half pay in order not to be involved in the War of Independence. He was also somewhat sympathetic to the French revolutionaries. As an enlightened Scottish landowner from the Lowlands he looked after the tenants on his estates. He was well connected politically being particularly close to Sir Henry Dundas, Minister of War, another Scot. The two of them had no time for further expeditions against France. They no longer believed in one of the prevailing views held by a faction of the cabinet that French Royalists would rise up to support a British expeditionary force on the mainland of France.

Despite his age and appalling eyesight, Abercromby had saving graces: he had learnt the hard way from experience and knew the state of his army. He knew that many of his officers were not trained for war: many had joined the Army for the uniform and social cachet. As a result, their men were badly trained and poorly administered. He himself cared deeply for the welfare of all men under his command and he knew the importance of detailed logistic support. He had a determination to prove that the Army he had admired and been proud of in the Seven Years war should rise again. Above all he believed that there could be no substitute for detailed planning and training. He chose his direct subordinates carefully and was particularly impressed by one Major General Moore who had been with him in Holland. It is not surprising that many of his subordinates and the men he trained in the Egyptian Campaign rose to prominence in the remaining years of the Napoleonic Wars through Maida, The Peninsula and Waterloo.

Dundas had refused to support the calls to send an expeditionary force into Brittany but compromised by agreeing to send a force to Cadiz to destroy the Spanish Navy there. It was this force of around 13,000 that had been embarked on a fleet commanded by the doddering and vacillating Admiral Keith, who despised the Army. He paid no attention to the detailed staff work needed to transfer the army from the men of war into landing boats and so the attempt to do so when they arrived off Cadiz caused the landing to be abandoned amidst considerable confusion. Luckily there were no serious casualties and Abercromby persuaded

him to call off the expedition and repair to Gibraltar. The fleet was split up by gales and some ships had to take shelter off the African coast. It was an unhappy few weeks as Gibraltar did not have enough reserves of fresh water in that era for the force, so parties had to be sent to the sometimes hostile African coast for resupply. Several ships were damaged during this period and needed urgent repairs.

At last fresh orders were received from London. Dundas had won his battle to wrest control of Egypt back from the French. Russia and the Austrians were suing for peace. If a truce should materialise, Napoleon would seize the opportunity to station a fleet based in Mauritius to assist a passage to India via the Red Sea and reinforce his Army of the Orient in Egypt direct from France. The Royal Navy was powerless to intervene.



From left to right – Henry Dundas, Admiral Keith and Sir Ralph Abercromby

On 24th October 1800 Keith and Abercromby received orders to proceed to Egypt and thwart French interests there by defeating its army. This was a prime example of Mission Control or Auftragstactic! Abercromby's orders were succinct and direct leaving him with the operational control. There could be no more political interference from London due to the distance involved: a month at least by the Navy's fastest despatch ship. It was a brave gamble on the part of Dundas, but its execution was in the hands of the right man.

In Gibraltar two of the garrison battalions, the 28th (North Gloucestershire Regiment) and the 42nd (Black Watch), were added to the force. Both were to play the major part in the victory at Alexandria. Being garrison battalions, they had the advantage of being well fed, well administered and most importantly because of the continuing threat from French invasion they were alert, well trained and up to strength. Edward Paget was commanding the 28th. He would become a general himself and Wellington's second in command at Waterloo: his regiment was in good fettle.

Abercromby was also to go via Minorca and Malta and pick up further seasoned garrison troops on the way. Abercromby did not tarry in Malta. He left on 13th December 1800. There were emotional scenes there for the Gibraltar battalions, as due to lack of accommodation on the ships they had to reduce the normal complement of nine wives per company down to three, putting the surplus ashore in Malta. His intention was to open liaison with the Ottoman Empire, who were concerned by the French expedition from Egypt into Syria, and at least gain their logistic support. He desperately needed horses for his cavalry and artillery, and his logistic resupply once ashore. The fleet put into Marmaris Bay in Turkey on 27th December and, while

negotiations went on with the Turks, the Navy and Army trained hard at amphibious operations.

The emphasis on training was paramount but it also got the troops off the cramped ships to carry out training and fitness marches. The training in battle drills was relentless. Forming line from the march, changing from three lines to two and vice versa, forming squares to receive cavalry, light company skirmishing and musketry: particularly rapid reloading. These changes of formation in battle had to be rehearsed thoroughly with particular emphasis on the rapid passing of the word of command. Bugle or drum calls could not be relied upon to be heard by all in the heat of battle. The emergency drill of turning the rear rank about in case of surprise must surely have been practised here by thinking commanding officers of which Paget was certainly in the lead. The regiments became fit and, most importantly, properly fed on fresh rations away from naval salt pork, weevil biscuits and fetid water. Abercromby paid particular attention to watching this training, insisting that young officers became proper warriors. Morale amongst all ranks rose to new levels under his care and leadership.

On 23rd February 1801 the force set off for Egypt: 30 Battalions and 3 cavalry regiments strong, although there was still a serious lack of quality mounts. When they reached Aboukir Bay they had to wait for four days for the weather to die down sufficiently. At 0200 on 8th March the force transferred to the rowing boats manned by the navy and set off for the 4 mile pull to shore. The 28th were part of Moore's division: The Reserve. In those days The Reserve had a different connotation to modern times. It was comprised of the most experienced troops and thus deployed to the most vital sector. For the landing The Reserve were on the right-hand side in order to scale a large sand dune behind which the main French force was thought to be. The assault force landed in very good order due to the detailed planning and rehearsals carried out at Marmaris. They skirmished ashore and into the dunes above the beach to root out the French force there. There had been no surprise and the landing had been opposed with cannon and musket fire. Casualties were taken but steadiness under fire was evident and the sand dunes were struggled up and taken. The Army took about 625 casualties, the Navy 100, but the landing was accomplished. The French drew back in the direction of Alexandria 12 miles to the West.

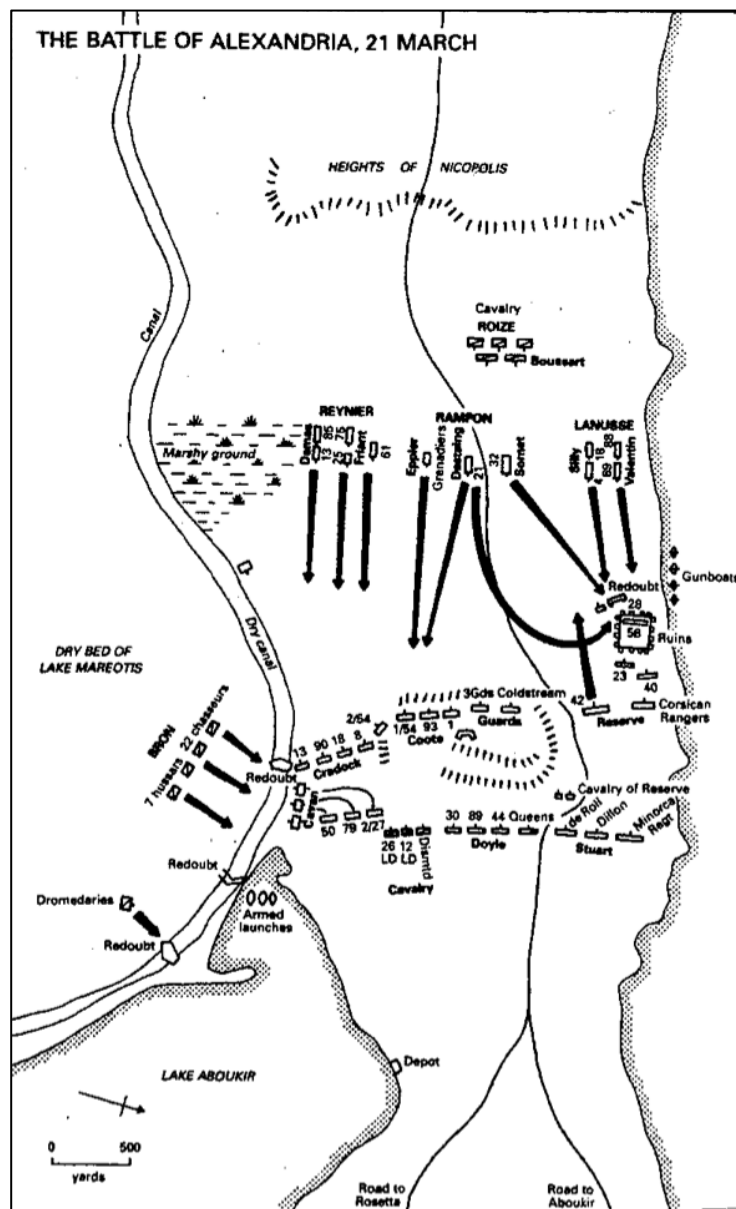
Why was the French reaction so poor?

The French occupation had been bitterly resented by the Arabs. Their troops behaviour was appalling, amounting to rape, pillage and looting and a total lack of respect for the dignified and ancient Arab culture. This had already worked against them and was to get worse as the Arabs saw the British as better behaved and more sympathetic to their plight. The efficient General Kleber had been murdered by an Arab in 1800 and command passed to General Menou who was no soldier. He had gone the opposite way to his troops, taken a Muslim wife converted to Islam and was happy indulging himself. He took no interest in his troops and considered the British Army to be a complete joke.

Unfortunately for Menou the British Army was no longer a joke. They advanced on Alexandria, fought through a French holding position at Mandara on the way which further unsettled the French. All this despite having to haul all guns and provisions by hand. They established themselves then pushed on to a feature just East of Alexandria which comprised an area covering the isthmus between the Lake of Mareotis on the left, a long low sandy hill in the

centre, then a shallow valley and the a more significant hilly feature on the right by the sea which was topped by a ruined Roman Palace. In front, facing Alexandria, a redoubt was thrown up to house one of four 24-pounder cannons. The sea front was covered by gunboats. The vital ground were the Roman ruins on the hill to the right by the sea. If the French could take this feature, they could use the shallow valley for their excellent cavalry and get behind the rest of the British lines. Moore's Reserve was therefore posted on this feature.

On 21st March, as the British were consolidating their lines, bringing up further supplies and the remaining artillery in preparation for the final attack on Alexandria, Menou decided to attack them before they were ready. His divisional commanders were not convinced that this was the right option, as those that had been in contact with the British had been suitably impressed. Nevertheless, just before dawn Menou started his attack which consisted of a feint on the British left across the dried-up part of the lake, and then a main effort against the redoubt and ruins which he rightly saw as the key position. The total British front was about a mile and a half wide, which was quite a stretch for the troops available.



The French had mustered quietly at 0200 and started their advance silently at 0400 in total darkness. The outlying British pickets did their jobs, sending runners back to alert the main position and withdrawing in good order back to their own lines in front of the French. The 28th and the whole British line were ready for them and fully stood to. The French troops surged into the ditch in front of the 28th and were met by withering volley after volley. They surged round the left flank of the 28th to attack the side of the ruins where they met a similar fate from the 42nd (Black Watch) and 58th (Northhamptons, later Royal Anglian). During these early attacks the French General Lanusse rode into the battle to try to bring order to chaos. He was shot in the knee, carried back to the rear and died having his leg amputated.

Moore was the duty Major General touring the lines at stand to when the attack started. He quickly assessed that the initial attack was a feint and hurried to the right flank which was already starting to erupt and stationed himself there for the remainder of the battle. He was soon joined there by Abercromby.

For four hours wave after wave of French were sent against the redoubt and the ruins. The 28th, were in the redoubt in front of the ruins with a 24lb cannon from the artillery. The 42nd Black Watch and 58th were manning the ruins behind and covering the valley. All held firm. In the ruins there was hand to hand fighting and eventually a French Cavalry squadron infiltrated up the shallow valley and whilst the 42nd were fully engaged they saw their opportunity to swing round and charge the 28th from the rear. If they could break the 28th and take the redoubt the rest of the hill feature could be isolated and bypassed.

The charge of the cavalry was initially stalled as they came across the sleeping trenches¹ of the 28th but they reformed and charged again. Lieutenant Colonel Chambers the Second in Command, who had taken over from the wounded Paget, gave the immortal order 'Rear Rank 28th Right About Face'. When the cavalry were around 25 yards away the rear rank released its volley. The effect was devastating, and the cavalry became a morass of screaming men and wounded horses, those that survived ran onto the bayonets of the rear rank and were despatched. The front rank unleashed another volley into the French infantry, who seeing the total confusion all around them went into full retreat. General Menou tried to organise a final charge by infantry and cavalry but his officers had had enough, and it was virtually the end of the battle.

It was in fact a very close-run thing as the 28th were now virtually out of ammunition and some had already resorted to throwing stones after the retreating French. There could be no pursuit until the remainder of the artillery support arrived. (The artillery train being responsible for resupplying the infantry with ammunition.)

The remainder of the French force attacking the British centre had run into each other in the advance in darkness, lost their bearings and some key leaders, so were unable to make a serious contribution. Many had ended up crossing the front of the valley but came to grief in front of the 42nd and flank of the 28th. Menou had lost control and retired within the walls of Alexandria,

¹ The 28th had dug holes in lieu of tents in which about six soldiers could sleep. The tents did not arrive until 20th March, the day before the battle.



The ferocity of the fighting is brilliantly displayed in this picture in the Museum's collection, but the decorated shakos are anachronistic; in 1801 the 28th wore top hats with cockades.

So, what were the lessons?

Training Training Training: Abercromby, who was wounded whilst watching the 28th at work, died several days later but his contribution was over riding. Through thorough training at Marmaris he had instilled confidence in his army who felt they were ready for anything.

Fire Discipline: The musket was accurate up to 25 yards. This was the British standard range for unleashing the volley. It required incredible battlefield discipline as the French tended to pepper off at random from much longer ranges which did cause gaps in the line which had to be closed up and was carried out automatically. But the effect of a close-range volley fired in unison and quickly repeated by the rank behind was devastating.

Teamwork: There was reliance on each other. Although line regiments had been allocated counties to recruit from, the 28th were by no means all from Gloucestershire. A substantial number were Irish, and a proportion were from all over Britain and even some foreigners. The rigours of army life, campaigning, living together, training and leadership welded them all together. They fought to support each other. Officers had to carry their own equipment and accoutrements and live alongside their platoons and companies. Abercromby's motto was 'We will all fare alike'. This forged the bond between officers and men.

Leadership: Abercromby was fully aware of the deficiencies in officer training as was Moore. It was up to field commanders to put this right and the good ones did. Feeble officers were weeded out and just could not be carried in these conditions. They learnt the hard way. Commanders at all levels had to understudy their immediate superior so they could take over in the heat of battle as casualties occurred. Chambers was an experienced officer, already a lieutenant colonel, and was quite properly more than ready for his opportunity. This takes

nothing away from Paget who was in the John Moore meld: a forward thinking respected officer.

Initiative: There obviously was plenty of room for initiative. Communication was slow and difficult. All ranks were encouraged to use their initiative at all stages of the campaign. The German Army did not invent Auftragstactic, but somewhere down the line the British lost this principle of war.

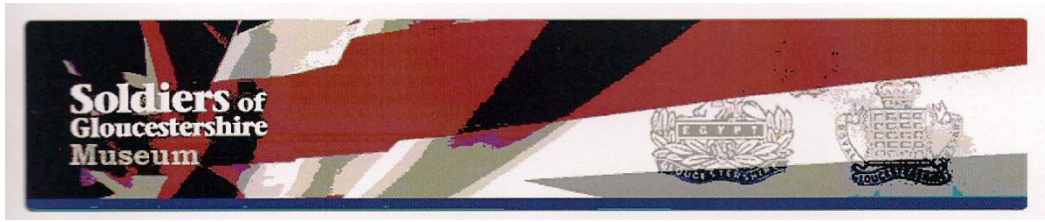
Alexandria was a resounding victory. The French were holed up in that city and enabled the British force to pursue the advance up the Nile to drive the remaining enemy out of Cairo. Sadly, Abercromby died from his wound received in the Battle. Moore was also wounded and took no further part in the campaign, but he had compounded his reputation and was able to see through the changes that needed to be made to the infantry.

The Back Badge: The official recognition that the 28th were allowed to wear a badge on the back of their headdress was not given until 1830. Yet there is evidence that the 28th badge was being worn on the back of the headdress fairly soon after the battle. It would appear that this was totally unofficial and implemented by the soldiers and their officers on their own initiative. The official award by the Duke of Wellington reads very much like a recognition of the status quo! He would have had no objection as he would have personally witnessed their prowess in the Peninsula, Quatre Bras and Waterloo.

Rob Dixon



*The Battle of Alexandria by James de Loutherbourg.
The scene depicts a wounded Abercromby. Note the top hats worn by many of the officers in attendance*



REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF MUSEUM TRUSTEES

As always there is a good deal to report to you regarding progress at 'our' museum.

Financial Performance

Overall, we are continuing to follow the 5-year Business Plan launched in November 2018 with the objective of becoming self-sufficient on trading income alone by the end of the period. Great strides have been made in the first year raising our revenues to new heights, due to the highly committed efforts of Vicki Hopson and her team. However, some of the new initiatives planned have taken longer to bring to fruition, such as the Corporate Membership Scheme and Room Hires. This is due largely to our limited management bandwidth and probably also to a lack of understanding about how much work was actually involved. We still think that the original 5-year Business plan is valid, but for the reasons given, we are running several months behind initial forecasts.

In part due to this (but we should have been doing it anyway), in November 2019 I initiated a review of all our costs. As a result, we have cut out or reduced operational costs by about £13,000 per annum. These costs reductions will pay significant dividends in future years.

Strategic Developments

Our architects have now produced their plans to expand the Museum's facilities. The Business Plan is not predicted on these changes, but if we can expand, our drive for self-sufficiency will become much easier. Their plans involve pulling down the current 'glasshouse' fronting the docks and replacing it with a much wider L shape covering the area to the side. This much larger enclosed area will house a new expanded café with a proper kitchen and a separate large multi-use area for temporary exhibitions, lectures and for hire. In addition, we will reconfigure the inside of the Custom House to make more space for museum galleries, in part through moving our internal offices and the Archives into the current roof space. The price tag for these changes is around £2.5million.

Our main strategic initiative this year is to submit a Lottery bid for £2million, raising £500,000 ourselves. A huge task indeed, but one we all believe to be fully achievable. We have already opened discussions with the Korean Government via Ambassador Her Excellency Ms Enna Park, and also with the US via His Excellency Mr Robert Johnson, the US Ambassador. With the support of two foreign governments and hopefully many other donors, we believe that our bid to the Lottery will be viewed as a strongly international one, but obviously there are no guarantees. Please wish us luck and support us as and when you can.

I end by thanking the Friends for their support throughout 2019 and express the hope that this will continue in the same way throughout 2020.

Chris Ryland

REPORT FROM THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR

It has certainly been a busy autumn and winter at the Museum! There has never been a dull moment, which we all very much enjoy (the majority of the time!).

The museum team and I have been working extremely hard to increase both revenue and footfall, and I'm happy to say that both are steadily on the rise.

Last November we had our busiest 11 days in the annual calendar, as the Victorian Christmas Market came to Gloucester Docks. This event gives a fantastic opportunity to generate extra income, and this year was no exception. We broke the record for the most amount of income generated in a month, with over £23,000 being taken in November alone. We also found (happily) that there is a great demand for Mulled Gin! Which needless to say went down extremely well.

Museum Memberships are on the increase; we currently have 86 active members, but we do need to increase this number as much as possible this year. If you haven't yet 'upgraded' your Friends membership to full SOGM membership then please consider doing so, as you will receive various additional benefits, such as complimentary tickets to talks and unlimited hot drinks in the museum café throughout the year. On the theme of talks, I'm pleased to say that we have our first confirmed talk that will take place on Saturday 18th July, at 2pm. The talk is entitled 'Quatre Bras: The Battle and The Painting', and will be taken by Chris Ryland, SOGM Chairman. A limited number of tickets are now available to book at £8 each (or free to museum members), by telephoning the museum, or online via our website - www.soldiersofglos.com.

We now host a museum raffle every three months, with some fantastic prizes available. We have just given away four club enclosure tickets to the Cheltenham Festival, and a helicopter flight for two, amongst many others. Our second raffle, the Spring 2020 Raffle, is now open, so please do pick up your tickets, either online or from the Museum in person. If you are a member of a group or if you think you may be able to sell some tickets on our behalf, please do pick up a pack from the Museum, and sell away. Tickets are £1 each (5 tickets to a book).

The Regimental Boardroom and the whole Museum venue are now available for hire at extremely competitive rates. If you are thinking about hosting a celebration and would like to enquire about prices and availability, please get in touch.

A new temporary exhibition entitled 'Dunkirk: Those Left Behind' will open at the Museum at the end of April this year. The exhibition tells the story of those who served with the 2nd and 5th Bn Glosters and looks at what happened to those who held defensive positions throughout the evacuation of Dunkirk, and ultimately enabled so many people to escape back to Blighty.

I would like to end by passing on our deepest thanks to the Friends, who are always a constant support. Many thanks to each and every one of you.

Vicki Hopson vicki.hopson@sogm.co.uk

REPORT FROM THE TREASURER

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.

I was able to bank £2,724 in November 2019 following the Autumn lecture at Chavenage including donations from those unable to attend on the night.

Subscriptions

For those of you who pay for your membership annually may I remind you that membership will be 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.glost.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, 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.

Direct to the Friends bank account - Lloyds Bank Eastgate Street Gloucester, Sort code - 309348. Account Number - 01371982, Account Name - Friends of the Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum. Please remember to add your name and or membership number in the reference box.

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

Patrick Smart

THE JCCC ARE JOINING US – REVISITED...

In the Friends Newsletter of Autumn 2019 the Editorial & Display Committee posted their intentions of inviting the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), from Imjin Barracks, Innsworth, to have space in the museum to display their unique role in identifying the dead of the two World Wars. Invariably these remains are from the WWI Western Front where many thousands of dead are still unaccounted for, but occasionally bodies are discovered in other countries; an entire crew of a World War II Boston bomber were discovered near Ferrara, in Italy in 2011 and, after identification, were buried in Padua War Cemetery in 2013 after the families of the deceased had been contacted. The JCCC are also, in cooperation with

a similar department of the American armed forces, and are examining DNA from bones recovered from North Korea.

Approximately sixty bodies of World War One British soldiers are discovered every year in France or Flanders. All discovered bodies are carefully excavated, and badges, buttons and personal possessions are preserved. If a regiment is identified the Battalion's War Diaries are consulted to narrow down the possible names of the remains to as few individuals as possible. Samples are taken from the bones for DNA analysis and this profile is then compared with that of possible descendants identified by a genealogy search by the JCCC. A formal military burial then follows when the remains are interred under a named headstone in a Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery with current family members present.

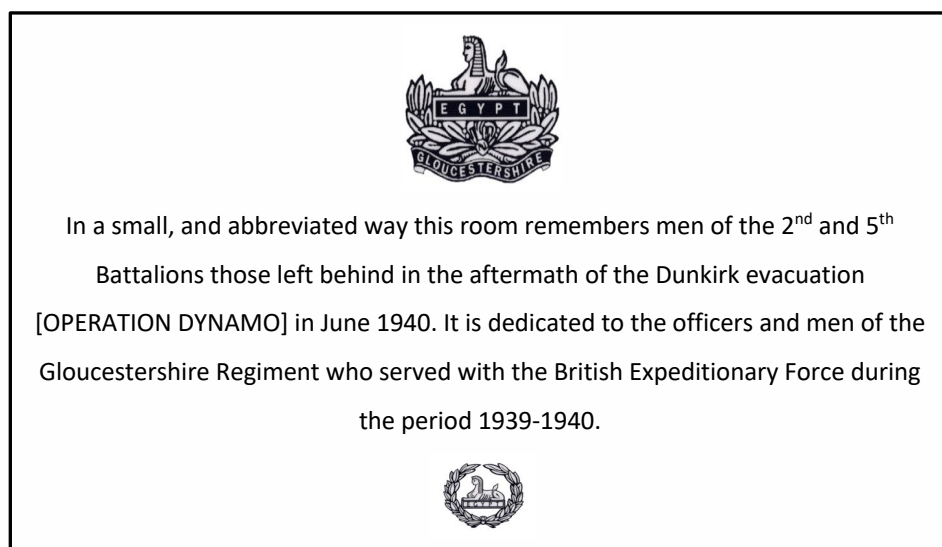
The JCCC have recently been working on the case of seven bodies of the Northumberland Fusiliers, including two officers, who all appear to have been covered over and smothered in their trench or dugout, probably by the blast of a shell. They have laid undisturbed for around a hundred years and many personal possessions were found with them. DNA profiles are being compiled and the names of these men are being revealed. The families, many still in Northumberland, are being contacted and the 'Long Lost Families' programme, shown on ITV, are filming the entire procedure. This will be broadcast in 2021 when the military burials have taken place. We hope the Museum will get a mention as having the only display of the work of the JCCC available to the public.



The SOGM display illustrated, currently in a temporary case, shows some emotive objects each group representing all that remains of a lost soldier whose burial place was never known or recorded. Wall boards describe the process undertaken from excavation to burial and, with the existing museum medal collection, create a display of "Sacrifice and Courage". The museum is grateful to the Defence Business Services (MOD), the Summerfield Trust and the Provincial Grand Lodge of the Mark Master Masons of Gloucestershire and Herefordshire for their grants to fund this exhibit. The temporary case will be replaced by a permanent three drawer unit, similar in design and manufacture to those of the current medal display cases. The case will be installed in April.

... AND THE NEW TEMPORARY EXHIBITION

The new display in the temporary exhibits vault is a remarkable memorial to the men of the 2nd and 5th Battalions who gave their lives or spent the remainder of the war, five years out of their young lives, in captivity in Germany. Under the title board:



The exhibit has been created by a small group of volunteers who have searched for the names of all those of both battalions who were killed in the withdrawal to Dunkirk and the defence of Cassel and have created a Roll of Honour. They have also produced a board of all those, again from both battalions, who were captured by the rapidly advancing German army. Many of these names, both killed and captured, have photographs displayed on boards after a huge amount of work to find them. The withdrawal is described by text and maps entitled 'The German Road to Dunkirk' and details of the action by both battalions is displayed in detail. There are virtually no artefacts from this period except the compass that the adjutant of the 5th Bn used to guide his party to Dunkirk and the binoculars taken from a captured German officer on the way.

The current temporary display of the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars Sinai and Palestine (1916-1919) will be removed and this Gloster's exhibit mounted in time to mark the 80th anniversary of the 'Deliverance of Dunkirk' in May/June 2020.

Lt Col Ralph Stephenson TD
Editorial and Display Committee

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.