

NEWSLETTER

THE FRIENDS OF

THE SOLDIERS OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE MUSEUM



*The return of Lieutenant Colonel Carne and some of the former Imjin River POWs,
Southampton, 14 October 1953*

AUTUMN 2023

'GLOSTER P.O.W.s RETURN'

So ran The Times headline on 15 October 1953, reporting the return to the UK of Colonel Carne and 76 officers and men, from Korea. They had returned home on the *Empire Orwell*, like the *Empire Windrush*, which had taken the battalion to Korea, it was a former German passenger ship, converted for war use and then requisitioned by the British after the war for use as a troop ship. It was a welcome return, but it had taken over two years from the start of the armistice talks to bring the boys home.

The release and return of the POWs had been, to say the least, a protracted affair, subject to the whys and wherefores of high-level international politics. The belligerents, the Chinese and North Koreans on the one hand, the American-led UN coalition on the other, began negotiations for a ceasefire on 10 July 1951, not quite three months since the Battle of the Imjin River. The Glosters had played its crucial part in halting the Chinese Spring Offensive, but having achieved this the UN abandoned all intention of re-invading the North, instead opting for a restoration of the front along 'Line Kansas', roughly the 38th Parallel, the original dividing line between North and South Korea. After the losses of the Spring Offensive, the Chinese were in no mood either to renew hostilities to push further south. Both sides were, however, prepared to engage in limited operations to consolidate their positions and gain leverage in any peace talks.

In June the major powers began signalling that a ceasefire might be possible. UN Secretary General Trygve Lie declared a ceasefire along the 38th Parallel was possible. US Secretary of State Dean Acheson made a speech hinting that a ceasefire was possible if there were sufficient guarantees to prevent further aggression from the North. Then the Soviets, freed from the brooding influence of Stalin, who had died in March, proposed a ceasefire. Talks started at Kaesong but moved to Panmunjom in August.

Any expectation that the war might end quickly, and the POWs return home within weeks, were soon dashed, however, as the Communists displayed a willingness to 'fight and talk'. There were numerous petty issues of protocol, but the big issue was the repatriation of POWs. By the spring of 1951 there were over 7,000 US and almost 2,000 Commonwealth POWs, plus over 40,000 South Koreans. Estimates for Chinese and North Korean POWs held by the UN vary from 90,000 to 170,000. Both sides wanted them all back. The problem was that not all the POWs wanted to go back. The numbers of US and Commonwealth soldiers who wanted to remain were minuscule (just one Royal Marine wanted to stay behind) but several thousand North Koreans wanted to stay in the South. Stalemate ensued. The UN prisoners endured variously months of hardship, hunger, isolation, solitary confinement, indoctrination and outright cruelty. Chinese and North Korean prisoners in the south might have escaped the political indoctrination, but they too endured harsh conditions.

In the end it was intensification of American bombing in the north and a belated recognition by the Chinese and North Koreans that the UN was prepared to hold fast to the 38th Parallel, that finally broke the logjam. Agreement was reached that POWs who wished to return home could do so immediately, those that did not would spend 90 days with a theoretically neutral Repatriation Commission. The armistice was signed on 27 July 1953. The formal exchange of prisoners began on 5 August, but it was September before the Glosters were released and began their journey home.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



Welcome to our autumn newsletter.

It seems but a short time ago that we gathered at Highnam for our summer reception, and a chance to visit that histrionic Gloucestershire house and gardens, courtesy of Roger Head, to whom we are most grateful. Our gratitude also to Mike Bennett for acting as guide and host for the evening.

We are now looking ahead to our autumn programme and our annual Chavenage Lecture. This year our presenter will be the distinguished broadcaster and military historian Jonathan Dimbleby. His subject will be the contribution of the Eastern Front to victory in the Second World War, drawing on his magnificent study of the subject Barbarossa. In a slight change to the usual lecture format, this year will be an 'in conversation' with questions being posed by me. If there is a question that you would like to ask, please let me know (timothy.brain@btinternet.com) and I will ensure it is addressed in the course of the conversation.

Our autumn lecture event will again take place in the beautiful setting of Chavenage House, where we will be hosted by the Lowsley-Williams family. This will be the first year without David Lowsley-Williams, whom we lost in the summer. David was a lovely person, and warm and generous host. He contributed to the life of the county in so many ways and was a great supporter of the Friends and the Museum. Over £900 of the collection at his memorial service was devoted to the Friends, another example of the support of David and his family to our work, for which we are most grateful. He will be missed.

Looking a little further ahead, our AGM will be held on Tuesday 7th November 2023, 7.00pm The Highwayman, Elkstone. I very much encourage you to join us. It is an important occasion in the governance of our charity. Also, if you are interested in becoming a trustee or getting more involved in the work of The Friends please get in contact and I will be very pleased to explain what is involved.

In this edition of the newsletter we have contrasting articles by Martin Lee-Browne recalling his national service days and by Stephen Whitbourn giving us his personal reflections on his role as county employer representative of the Wessex Reserve Forces and Cadets' Association. September is the 380th anniversary of the raising of the Siege of Gloucester, so it is timely to include an article reminding us of the crucial part the city played in the Civil War. We also have contributions from our Museum Director and on the latest developments and news, and from Chris Ryland, Museum chairman on the recent visit to South Korea.

Dr Tim Brain OBE QPM

MUSEUM DIRECTOR'S REPORT

So far this year the museum has experienced a 30 per cent increase in visitor numbers from the previous year. This is a combination of several factors. Firstly, we have had family events on almost every day of each school holiday. The number of children and families attending the museum has increased dramatically. This is a good sign, as it was my initial goal upon being employed at the museum. Secondly, the 'post-covid hangover' that cultural and heritage establishments have been experiencing seems to be coming to an end. Finally, we have really pushed Gift Aid this year. If you Gift Aid your entrance, then you get free re-entry to the museum for 12 months.

I have very much set my stall out to make us into a child and family venue, so it is worth exploring the school holiday figures further:

February half term: a 40 per cent increase in visitors from the previous year.

Easter holidays: a 12 per cent increase in visitors from the previous year.

May half term: a 40 per cent increase in visitors from the previous year.

Summer Holidays: We are currently 562 visitors up on last year with a week remaining as I am writing. Even if this last week is poor, that will represent close to a 50 per cent rise in visitors.

We have a very exciting prospect coming up in October. Jack Russell, ex-England wicketkeeper and prolific artist, has undertaken a mission to paint all the surviving Imjin veterans. This project has now been completed and the launch night of the exhibition will be 14th October at 7.00pm. This is to coincide with the 70th Anniversary of the Gloster POW's returning home. Alongside this there has also been a book published, which shows Jack's work and contains some very revealing interviews with the veterans. This will be available from the museum shop and online soon. We hope to see you all at the opening night, but if not then at some point over the following months.

The Friends have supported the publication of the above-mentioned book with a very generous £1000 donation. So, thank you very much for that. It was great to catch up with many of you at the Highnam Court event.

We are also looking to expand the horizons of the museum through 'Project 360'. Our Gloucestershire regiments have served all over the world for centuries. This gives us a great opportunity to examine all the different cultures and peoples they met. This project is now starting to pick up steam. Throughout the summer, we had an exhibition about Stroud Scarlet and its links to slavery. We have an upcoming exhibition, produced by Gloucestershire University, which examines the 28th and 61st Regiments in the West Indies. Finally, although this is a little off in the distance, we are working with the Arts Council on a project to bring children from low-income areas to the museum. They will be transported to the museum free of charge and then given a free teaching session on Project 360.

As always if anyone has any questions or concerns (or praise!) for what is happening at the museum, please do not hesitate to get in contact with me. My email address is matthew.holden@sogm.co.uk.

Mathew Holden

RENEWING THE LINK WITH SOUTH KOREA, APRIL 2023

Chris Ryland

In April 2020 a large delegation organised jointly by the museum and the Honourable Company of Gloucestershire were to visit South Korea on the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of the Imjin River. Sadly, despite months of planning this had to be postponed due to the COVID 19 pandemic. However, this was too good a good-will venture for it not to happen and finally some three years later in late April a slightly smaller delegation from Gloucestershire flew to Seoul.

With the party went Mr David Owen, CEO of Gloucestershire First, to promote Gloucestershire business and Mr Mark McShane, Head Teacher of Stroud High School which already has strong links with a school in the area. Trustee Ms Ellie King, Museum Director Mr Matthew Holden and I were the museum's representatives.

Although the trip's rationale was broader than just our museum's interests, I will concentrate on these here for the sake of brevity. First, we took the train south to Busan to meet representatives of the United Nations Peace Memorial Hall. Busan is the second city of South Korea and was the principal port of entry for UN soldiers defending South Korea. The UNPMH is a large Government funded museum in the grounds of which is located the UN Cemetery for the dead from the many different countries who made up the UN Forces. This cemetery is beautifully laid out and maintained, every bit to the standard of the CWG cemeteries but with a far-eastern slant. For example, all the trees are 'cloud pruned' and a chrysanthemum symbolising eternal life is placed on the grave of each soldier on the anniversary of his death. During our visit we paid our respects to the graves of our own soldiers including that of Lt Philip Curtis VC.

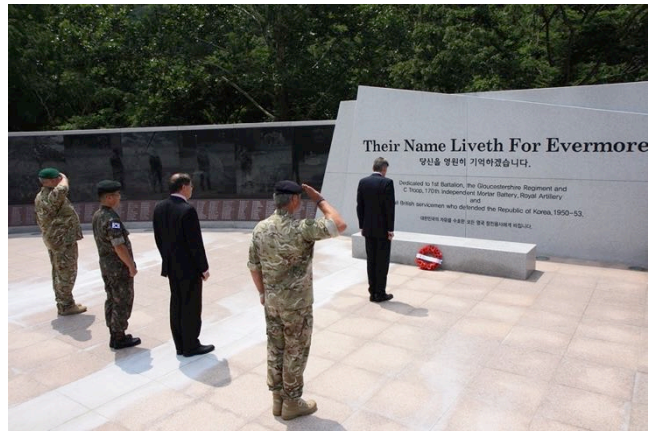


Figure 1: Wreath laying at the Gloster Hill Memorial



Figure 2: Welcome banner on Paju City Hall

In addition to covering the Korean War, the UNPMH has displays covering UN peace keeping around the World. The South Korean military are currently serving as peacekeepers in Somali and they are very proud of their distinction of being the only country to move from being a recipient of UN aid to a significant donor. Their displays also cover post-conflict issues such as land mines, the rehabilitation of child soldiers and reconstruction. Our meetings covered a number of ideas for joint projects, some of which I hope will come to fruition in the near future.

On our return the whole delegation moved to Paju where we visited the DMZ, the Gloster Hill Memorial Park and attended

the annual ceremony at the Memorial, there laying a wreath to the fallen. As a museum 'bonus' we also visited the Korean Folk Museum (their equivalent of our V & A), which is now largely located in Paju – and probably, according to Ellie and Matthew, one of the most technologically advanced museums in the World. We are in the process of building a link to them, as they have a huge number of photographs taken during the War.

Our hosts, and especially Mayor Kim and Ms Moon, were outstanding in their support and hospitality. It is our fervent hope that they will visit us next year to continue the development of our relationship with Paju and with South Korea, and we will then be able to repay their simply superb hospitality.

ANOTHER NATIONAL SERVICEMAN AT KNOOK CAMP, WARMINSTER

Colonel Martin Lee-Browne, CBE, TD, MA

The very interesting article by Christopher Bayne in the Autumn 2022 issue of the Newsletter about National Service in the 1950s has spurred me, as another, slightly earlier, National Serviceman with the Glosters, into setting down some of my own memories. Quite coincidentally, I also did my basic training as a Potential Officer (PO) in the 60th Rifles (King's Royal Rifle Corps) between August 1951 and March 1952, at the huge Peninsula Barracks in Winchester - then the Regimental Depot of the Green Jackets, and originally designed by Sir Christopher Wren, but now sold off by the Ministry of Defence and 'developed' into high quality apartments.

The POs lived at one end of a huge barrack block, half-way down the steep hillside to the Royal Hampshire's Depot - approached from the left of the Officers' Mess (in the centre of the accompanying picture) - with the non-PO recruits at the other, in equally spartan conditions - our only hot water was 25 yards across a yard, with a single tap at the bottom of a long unlagged pipe coming down a wall, from which you filled your Bowls, Officer, Washing, Aluminium. We learned for the first time the 'f...' - laden language of the East End of London (from where most of the non-PO riflemen came), how to bash potatoes in the Officers' Mess, how to keep awake at 3 in the morning as a member of the guard patrolling the vast expanse of the Barracks - actually a quite romantic time! - and to shoot with the .303 rifle and Bren machine gun. That was done on the very 'cosy' little Chilcomb Range, three or four miles out of the city, and - without any previous experience of weapons, as I had been at a Quaker school - I found it most satisfying.



*Figure 1: Peninsula Barracks
c 1920 – unchanged in
1951.*

When my time there was coming to an end and I had to think about which regiment or arm I would like to be commissioned into, a very good and wise friend of my father, who had been a Gloucester Territorial during the War, had come to the conclusion that I would be happier as a young officer in the Gloucesters rather than the Green Jackets, so I opted for that – and not for one moment have I regretted it! I was commissioned into 1 Gloucesters on 8 March 1952, just under a year after the Battle of the Imjin River, at which the Battalion so comprehensively distinguished itself – and was initially posted to the Regimental Depot, the hatted Robinswood Barracks on the outskirts of Gloucester.

The Battalion had returned from Korea in December 1951, and went to the also-hatted Knook Camp, at Heytesbury, near Warminster, to serve as the Demonstration Battalion for the School of Infantry. Its task was to provide, whatever the weather, demonstrations for the students (and numerous visitors) of the many aspects of infantry tactics – the main ones being section patrolling, fighting in built-up areas, and platoon, company and battalion attacks – the last in co-operation with the tanks of the Cavalry Squadron which was also attached to the School. One unusual demonstration was intended to show the superiority of the then new 0.762 mm Self Loading Rifle (SLR) over the old .303 Lee-Enfield No 4. It was given by the Rapid Fire Team, half of whom fired the SLR and the other the No 4, shooting at ‘falling plates’ (foot-square steel plates which toppled over when hit) – and by dint of much practice, and to the embarrassment of the senior officers tasked to show that superiority, (admittedly in practice, not on the actual demonstrations), the latter regularly managed to outshoot the former.

The first elements of the Battalion who returned from Korea in December 1951 included many Reservists who had been drafted out there after the Battle, and so had never fired a shot in anger, but were nevertheless overweeningly proud of themselves. Going into a pub, they would aggressively demand ‘a pint for a Glorious Gloucester’, and they did not take particularly kindly to the requirements of their ‘new, out-of-the-egg’ Platoon Commander and his NCOs. When those who had been prisoners of war finally came home in October 1953, meeting them was a quite extraordinary and totally humbling experience for a still very naive 21-year-old.



Figure 2: The funeral procession of King George VI

In February 1952, 500 men of the Battalion lined a small section of the route for the funeral of King George VI, and I remember the frantic efforts of the Quartermaster’s staff to equip them

with greatcoats of approximately matching lengths. Interestingly, there is a fascinating Pathé News film of the funeral procession available on Google (The Last Journey: The Funeral of King George VI) which at point 3.54 mentions the 'Glorious Glosters'.

As Christopher Bayne said, the Officers' Mess was a happy place, and the National Service officers were never looked down on but made to feel thoroughly part of the Battalion. The Mess Sergeant was expert in his secondary role of 'Keeper of the Subalterns' and gave much sensible advice as to how we should behave! (The adjoining photograph of the Officers is the same as the one in the earlier article, but with their names as added to another print at the time).

I was not a sportsman, but – thanks to my training on the range at Winchester – I managed to make a modest mark as a 'shooter', and, with a Regular subaltern who joined the Battalion at much the same time as I did, David Matson, was taken under the wing of the very friendly and supportive Captain Bill Reeve-Tucker who was responsible for the 'classifying' (ie testing) of the majority of the members of the Battalion in their shooting skills, and training the Battalion team for Bisley. The three of us, and some experienced NCOs, decamped from Knook to the range at Mere, some twelve miles away and with a marvellous setting in a natural bowl in the western escarpment of Mere Down. A tented camp was set up, and each of the Companies came over to be put through their paces – while the Battalion shooting team was trained for Bisley. The team that went there was indeed reasonably successful, and I have a photograph to prove it.

One's memory says that the sun shone out of cloudless skies, day after day, and the classification results were good enough to allow us to continue an idyllic, indeed luxurious, life for at least a couple of months – we officers arranged to take baths and dinner every evening at the now apparently sadly closed Ship Inn.

A great occasion towards the end of my time in the Battalion was Queen Elizabeth II's Coronation in June 1953. I recollect that The Battalion Band was selected, with (curiously, as they marched at a faster pace) the Band of the 1st Bn The Durham Light Infantry, to lead the procession back from Westminster Abbey to Buckingham Palace, and, in addition to the Colour Party, the Battalion and the 5th Battalion (TA) provided a total of some 400 officers and men for the procession, street lining and various support jobs, all in the new blue No 1 dress. At 7.55 on the morning of 2 June, I was leading the merry band of chaps who made up No 1 Platoon of A Company up Park Lane to the Green Jackets' TA Centre in nearby Davies Street, from where we would act as trouble-shooters for any emergencies. All the way along Park Lane, gantries had been erected to carry loudspeakers for relaying appropriate, cheerful and patriotic music and, later in the morning, the Service from Westminster Abbey. Although it was not on the route for the Coronation procession, there were hundreds of people along both sides of the street. With a spring in our step, we were hoping to impress everyone, so that they would go home in the evening saying 'Gosh/golly/gaw! D'yer remember the way them Glorious Glosters marched early in the day?'

The minutes ticked by, the crowd cheered us – because there was nothing else to cheer – and then over the loudspeakers came the sound of Big Ben striking eight o'clock. 'Lef, Lef-ri-', Lef-ri-', Lef-ri'- Lef.' We probably swung our arms even more rhythmically – and all was fine. Suddenly a long, crescendo drumroll led into the National Anthem. Now, in musical terms,

marching is always two-in-a-bar, but in what time was 'The Queen'? Well, three-in a-bar. Instant panic, or worse, on the part of the Platoon Commander – how do you go 'Lef- ri'- Lef-ri" to 'One-two-three?', let alone get all thirty or so lovely, but non-musical, lads from Gloucestershire and Bristol to do that precisely together? Luckily, my Platoon Sergeant, who had been in Korea, knew exactly what to do. From the back of the three files of marching men came his stentorian voice, cutting through the music and the cheering: 'Lef, Lef-ri', Lef-ri', Lef-ri', Lef-ri', Lef-ri', Lef-ri'— Keep to it— Don't listen to the b****y music, keep going —Lef, Lef-ri', Lef-ri', Lef-ri', Lef-ri', Lef-ri'." Suddenly the music stopped, and we were all still in step. My gratitude was indescribable, but I couldn't tell him that for another ten minutes marching! Then, over the loudspeakers, "This is the BBC Home Service, with the eight-o'clock News" (perhaps 'read by Alvar Liddell'). 'Everest is conquered: Sir John Hilary and Sherpa Tensing...' Our swagger became even more swaggering, and our faces were wreathed in smiles of pleasure – and mine of relief!



Figure 3: Olympia as it was in 1953

We spent the rest of the day in the Green Jackets Officers' Mess watching the ceremony in the Abbey and the subsequent events on an early television. The day was unfortunately wet, and during the afternoon it rained heavily - and my most enduring memory of the day was in the evening, going to Olympia (or it could have been Earls Court) where all the Colour

Parties were accommodated, and the astonishing and unique sight of the Queen's and Regimental Colours of almost all the infantry regiments of the British Army in sodden piles on the floor, waiting to be put into drying-rooms – an absolute riot of colour, gold braid and wooden 'pikes' with their golden finials.

Other memories of life at Knook include: when acting as the Orderly Officer – responsible for the administration and security of the Camp for 24 hours at a time – going down to the front gate to inspect the guard in the middle of the night, still in pyjamas covered by one's long greatcoat, and hoping that nothing would happen that needed the latter to come off; passing my civilian driving test in a Land Rover, in ten minutes flat, under the rather bored eye of a Corporal in the MT Platoon; and the weekly inspections of the A Company 'lines" (ie huts), by the CO, who was well experienced in looking for dust, and, to the embarrassment of the Company Commander, invariably finding it. The list goes on: Lieutenant Tony Streather, who had previously served with the Gurkhas and gained their Good Conduct medal (or something similar) insisted on wearing the ribbon before his Korean ones, until the weekly Battalion drill parade, when, time after time, the Adjutant, Henry Radice, ordered him in no uncertain terms to put it at the far end of the row – only for it to turn-up again in the middle the following day; and, finally, almost a year living at the School of Infantry itself, because I had graduated to commanding the Machine Gun Platoon (which was based there, not at Knook), when I had a wonderful view from my bedroom window of the enormous Battlesbury Hill – and becoming imbued with a love of the whole sweep of Salisbury Plain, which I have to this day. I also grew very fond of, and still remember, many of my soldiers, some from 'Bristol' and pretty

‘streetwise’, but most of them from Gloucester and its surrounding villages (as they were then) like Kent's Green, Littledean in the Forest, and Stonehouse.

Those 18 months with the Glosters turned me from a schoolboy into a young man – I am most grateful.

Martin Lee-Browne

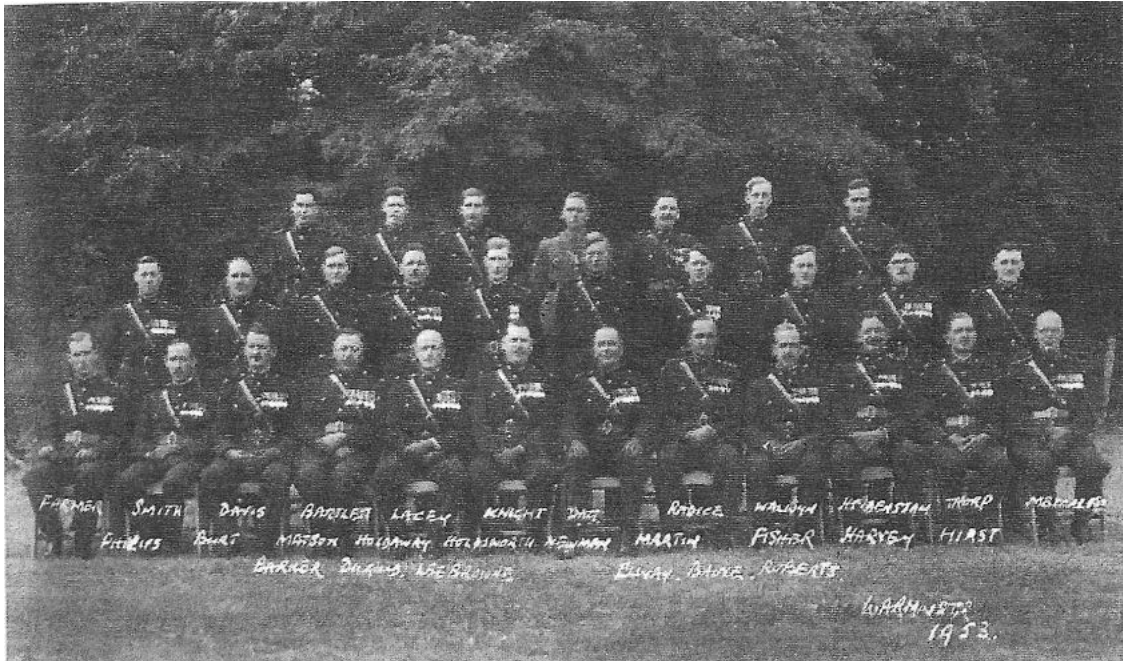


Figure 4: Officers of 1 Glosters in 1952 after their return from Korea. The author is third from the left, back row.

THE SIEGE OF GLOUCESTER 1643

Dr Timothy Brain OBE QPM

The Battle of Highnam constituted an important prelude to the subsequent Siege of Gloucester, which itself turned out to be the turning point in the first year of the Civil War. Had Puritan Gloucester surrendered to King Charles in September 1643 then the Parliamentary cause may well have collapsed and the course of British history turned out very differently.

Lieutenant Colonel Edward Massie's victory at Highnam in March 1643 constituted a rare success for the Parliamentary cause in the first half of 1643. The king might not have risked marching on Roundhead London, but in the periphery of the north and west a series of minor successes produced a noticeable Royalist momentum. Parliamentary forces abandoned the West Riding of Yorkshire, retreating to Hull, where they were bottled up by the Royalist opening the sluices and flooding the flatlands around the port. Queen Henrietta Maria, comfortably situated in York, kept a steady stream of munitions imported from the continent flowing south to the king's base at Oxford. After Parliament's defeat at Hull, the queen moved without let or hinderance to join her husband in Oxford. Wales and the South West were solidly for the king. Parliament, on the other hand, saw its main army reduced by

desertions, the end of enlistments and disease. Its commander, the Earl of Essex, skulked back to London, his force at one point reduced to no more than 6,000 strong.

Failure in the field produced dissension in Parliament. There already existed a peace party that sought an end to hostilities, albeit based on key concessions by the king on religion, taxation and parliamentary privilege. To that were now added a growing number of doubters who thought a compromise peace might be the best that could be hoped for, and Essex was one of them. It was still two years before the Earl of Manchester, commander of the Eastern Association army, would express his famous admonition 'If we beat the King ninety and nine times yet he is king still, and so will his posterity be after him; but if the King beat us once, we shall be all hanged, and our posterity be made slaves', but its underlying sentiment caught the mood of a significant number of parliamentary supporters in the spring and early summer of 1643.

In the South West Parliament's recent victorious hero Sir William Waller, 'William the Conqueror', had (in company with Massie) been defeated at Ripple Field (near Tewkesbury), forced out of Taunton by enthusiastic but inexperienced Cornish levies under Sir Ralph Hopton and Sir Bevil Grenville. Meanwhile Prince Rupert won a morale boosting victory at Chalgrove.

It got worse. Waller fell back on Bath, where he spent his time appealing to Parliament for men and money, but little of either came his way. Even so, given his track record, he probably felt that he could see off the Hopton's raw westcountrymen when they appeared north of Bath in the village of Marshfield on 4 July. He took what should have been an unassailable position of the high ridge at Lansdown (near today's Bath Racecourse) and dared the Royalists to attack him, which they duly did, scaling Lansdown's steep slope in the face of withering fire. Hopton's men gained the ridge, albeit losing the charismatic Grenville at the moment of victory. Waller's men slipped back into Bath during the night. Hopton was in no condition to immediately pursue, so Waller took the opportunity to besiege the supposedly lightly defended Devizes. However, within a few days Hopton's force had recovered sufficiently for him to send his cavalry against Waller, who, taken by surprise, was soundly defeated at Roundway Down. Waller followed the example of his commander in chief and retreated to London, blaming everyone but himself for his losses. The arrival of his defeated and dispirited army in London compounded the already prevailing defeatism amongst the parliamentary elite.

The double Royalist victories at Lansdown and Roundway suddenly gave the king options. Option one, he could make a dash for London, but that seemed unnecessarily risky. Option two seemed much more appealing. He could capture Bristol, then the second port of the kingdom. The sentiment of its population was neutral, preferring trade over conflict, but Parliament had placed a garrison there and held it. The city-port was now isolated, however, and here was an opportunity to consolidate the South West and gain a major port in the bargain. A large detachment of the king's army under Prince Rupert, joining forces with Hopton's, was duly detached to finish the job. On arrival Rupert assessed that a lengthy siege was as unnecessary as it was undesirable, and he duly stormed the city. Despite the defeatist attitude of the city's commander, Nathaniel Fiennes, resistance was stronger than anticipated and Royalist casualties high. Nevertheless, Fiennes, aware the city's population was not with him, capitulated.

Success at Bristol produced more options for the king and his commanders. Option one remained the same - a march on London, an even more attractive option now that Bristol was securely in the king's hands, but option two merited serious consideration, and that was to march north and finish off the impudent Puritan outpost of Gloucester. The king's civilian counsellors, including the queen, favoured London, his military Gloucester. It seems that the king thought he could have both London and

Gloucester, for he and his military advisers believed that Gloucester would soon surrender before such a host as the king brought in person, leaving plenty of time to march on demoralised and divided London.¹ So, it was to be Gloucester first then London. It would prove a serious miscalculation.

After his victory at Highnam, Lieutenant Colonel Edward Massie and the Gloucester corporation had been far from inactive.² The city walls were repaired, the grain stores stocked, his troops paid, gunpowder stockpiled in church crypts. He brought in an outlying garrison from Berkely Castle and engaged in aggressive patrolling. He would pull down upmarket houses in the minor suburb of Gaudy Green (modern Brunswick Square), depriving any attacker of cover in the south eastern approach to the wall.

Accounts of the siege often focus on Massie and his proactive leadership, but in reality the governorship of Gloucester was a corporate affair with the city council and, significantly, the Puritan clergy (the cathedral canons long expelled) of the city's parishes. Massie was the military governor, in charge of the parliamentary garrison, but management of the city and its civilians remained with the city council. In practice joint command was exercised through a Committee of Defence and thence to the Council of War comprising the mayor, councillors and Massie and his officers. Harmonious relationships between the military and civil authorities were an essential component in the successful defence of the city whose peacetime population of 4,500 had been swollen by the presence of the 1,500 garrison.



Figure 1: Lt Col Edward Massie (c1604-1674).

Although smaller than Bristol, Gloucester was in some respects better prepared for a siege than Bristol. The city had been active in its own defence, collecting local taxes to conduct works and pay troops, repairing the city walls, building earthworks, filling the old moat. Although the medieval city walls extended to cover only approximately half the circumference of the city (from old Northgate in an eastern arc to Southgate), the Severn and the narrow causeway secured at Over secured the western approach, while marshy ground to the north prevented assault from that side, and the ancient castle plugged the gap between Southgate and the river. Furthermore, the resolution of the citizens was high, with most of them solidly for the 'godly' cause. Gloucester would prove a tough nut.

Even so, the opposed forces were wildly disproportionate. After the concentration of his Oxford and Western armies the king had at his disposal initially a force of around 10,000. It was not unreasonable, therefore, that Massie chose to negotiate, corresponding with an old friend in the king's army, Colonel William Legge. He suggested that if the king would come in person, rather than Prince Rupert who had demanded the surrender in March, then the city would capitulate on reasonable terms.

Massie made his offer without the knowledge of the council or his officers. Various motives have been imputed for Massie's decision. Normally historians give him the benefit of the doubt and suggest he was simply buying time before a relief force arrived. The problem with that interpretation is that at this stage there was no prospect of a relief force. Massie's most recent biographer infers treachery, for

¹ The Earl of Clarendon, *History of the Great Rebellion and Civil Wars in England* (Oxford, 1826), 175. Clarendon (1609-1674), then Sir Edward Hyde, was Charles I's Chancellor of the Exchequer, was a witness to these events.

² Although often appearing as 'Massey', he signed himself 'Massie'.

delivering the recalcitrant city would be well rewarded by the king.³ The simplest explanation, that he was just exploring his options to save the city from death and destruction, does not seem to get much of a look in. Whatever his motive, Massie found that his options were closed down by the city's leading citizens, the council, the clergy, and, most importantly, his own junior officers remaining firm for the godly cause. It was to be 'no surrender'.

Personal doubts cast aside, Massie prepared for the Royalist approach. Those who wished were allowed to leave the city; best they did not infest those remaining with defeatism.



Figure 2: King Charles receives Gloucester's response to his summons.

The king's army approached from the Cotswold ridge, and somewhere around Uley he sent heralds to the city to demand its surrender. Two local citizens were chosen to send Gloucester's reply. It was in essence the same as the one that had greeted Prince Rupert when he had earlier demanded the city's surrender before the action at Highnam.

We the inhabitants, magistrates, officers, and soldiers, within this garrison of Gloucester, and to his Majesty's gracious message return this humble answer. That we do keep the city, according to our oath and allegiance, to, and for the use of his Majesty, and his royal posterity, and do accordingly conceive ourselves wholly bound to obey the commands of his Majesty signified by both houses of Parliament; and are resolved by God's help to keep this city, accordingly.⁴

The statement summarised the key issue at stake in the Civil War. The city would only obey the king's command if sanctioned by Parliament.

Charles seems to have been flabbergasted by such defiance. From where, he said, could the city expect relief, as 'Waller is extinct, and Essex cannot come.'⁵ For Charles it had now become a matter of honour: 'he could not do less than sit down before the town and force it'. He thought the siege would last no more than ten days.⁶ He would be disabused.

The siege began in earnest on 10 August. Perhaps because he had been shaken by the cost of storming Bristol, or perhaps hopeful that Massie might yet surrender, or for reasons of simple complacency, the king settled for a siege rather than direct assault. Had he let Rupert loose, as he had at Bristol, it is

³ David Evans, *The Civil War career of Major-General Edward Massey (1642-1647)* (Thesis, King's College London, 1995), 74.

⁴ Quoted in Roy Sherwood, *The Civil War in the Midlands 1642-1651* (Stroud, Alan Sutton, 1992), 54.

⁵ Sherwood, 55.

⁶ Clarendon, 180 and 225.

doubtful if Massie's garrison could have withstood simultaneous mass direct assaults from several directions.

The king took up residence at Matson Court with his two eldest sons, Charles and James, who were to amuse themselves carving their names in the house's oak panels. Rupert grabbed Prinknash Court, the subordinate commanders, like Astley, had to make do with humbler dwellings.

The king might have determined upon a siege, but his overall commander Prince Rupert soon instituted a series of positive measures to induce the city's surrender. First, he surrounded the city, with detachments led by his subordinate commanders Astley and Ruthven to the east and south, and with Sir William Vavasour occupying the west bank of the Severn, including the old Wineyard which Massie had held the previous spring before the battle of Highnam. Massie's chaplain, John Corbett, recorded that it had been 'deserted for want of men'.⁷ Vavasour was later able to link up with a contingent from Worcester, via a pontoon bridge just north of Olney Island. With that the ring around the city snapped shut.

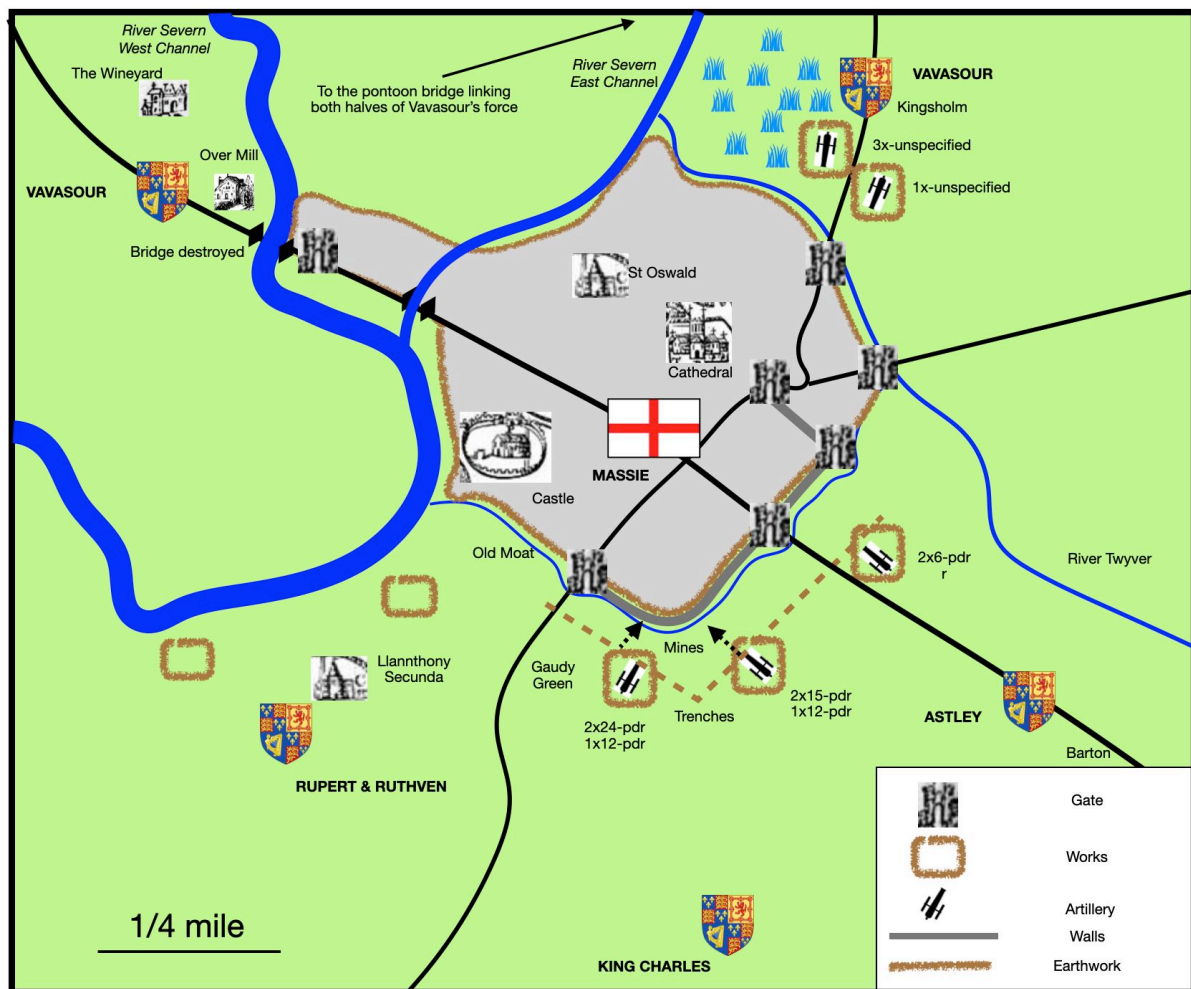


Figure 3: The principal dispositions at the Siege of Gloucester.

Rupert then had his engineers divert the stream from Upton St Leonards which supplied not only the city's fresh water but also the power for its mills. Cannon to the north, east and west bombarded the

⁷ John Corbett, 'An Historicall Relation of the Military Government of Gloucester' (in *Biblioteca Gloucesterensis*, ed John Washbourn, 1825), 45.

city, causing damage, casualties, and disconcertion, although his pieces were too small to make significant breaches in the walls and earth embankments.⁸ Prince Rupert brought miners from the Forest of Dean to commence digging under the walls, although the crossings of ditches and streams made progress slow. Finally, the king engaged in propaganda. Messages were propelled over the walls warning the inhabitants, 'your God, Waller, hath forsaken you... Essex is beaten like a dog, yield to the king's mercy in time, otherwise and if we enter performe, no quarter for such obstinate, traitorly rogues.'⁹

In response, Massie was not disposed to stay idle. He rigged a pump to extract drinking water from the Severn. Citizens manned treadmills to grind the grain. He organised sallies at key points around the walls that both disrupted the Royalists ('many officers of name, besides common soldiers, were slain in the trenches and approaches') and kept momentum amongst his own men.¹⁰ Above all, he was a constant motivating presence for both soldiers and citizens. Even so, his men were exhausted by constantly manning the perimeter walls and fending off Royalist raids. Furthermore, his stocks of grain and powder we're running low. The simple fact was that unless relief came the city would fall.

By early September the king's forces had grown to 30,000 and Rupert was ready to collapse his mines. He was, however, frustrated at the last by a downpour which flooded them. There was at that point no time to regroup. On 5 September a single cannon shot was heard from the direction of the small market town of Cheltenham. The Earl of Essex (1591-1646) had arrived with a relief army.



Figure 4: *The Trained Bands march to the relief of Gloucester.*

The plight of the small Puritan outpost in the west had galvanised popular opinion in London. Why was the Parliamentary leadership dithering when the godly citizens of Gloucester stood in mortal peril? Demand grew to send a relief army, but from where could it come given the dilapidated state of Essex and Waller's commands? The answer came from London's own citizen soldiers, the Trained Bands. The Lord Mayor gave sanction for their use outside the capital, and they were placed under Essex. To the cheers of the people and the exhortation of Puritan preachers, they marched west.

Essex marched in a wide loop north, avoiding the king's main base at Oxford, and approached Gloucester via Stow, where he saw off an attempted interception by Rupert's cavalry, before descending the escarpment to Cheltenham, where he fired the warning shot which he hoped would be heard in beleaguered Gloucester. However, it was the king's army that heard it. Realising that he could not risk being caught between Essex's army and the city, Charles withdrew northwards to Sudeley Castle. Essex entered the city to much rejoicing, before he fainted towards Tewkesbury, and thence withdrew along

⁸ Despite the popular legend, the king's artillery train did not include a large mortar nick named 'Humpty Dumpty'. There is also an association with siege of Colchester in 1645, equally without historical authority. The nursery rhyme first appeared in the late 1700s.

⁹ Sherwood, 56.

¹⁰ Clarendon, 225.

his interior lines of communications, towards the Thames Valley, worsting a Royalist detachment at Cirencester on the way. All was not yet lost for the king, however, as his pursuit of Essex was successful, overtaking him at Newbury. With the Royalists between him and London Essex had no option but to fight it out. The battle that followed, the largest engagement in the war so far, resulted in high casualties on both sides and amounted to a tactical draw, but it was the king who blinked first, withdrawing northwards to Oxford for the winter, leaving Essex free to return to London and a hero's welcome, something inconceivable just a few weeks previously. Gone now was all talk of a negotiated peace. Gloucester had demonstrated the righteousness of the Godly cause.

The reason behind the king's defeat at Gloucester is readily identifiable – complacency. First, he thought the city would not resist, then that it would quickly surrender, and finally that Essex's relief force (of which he had ample warning) would not risk a battle. He was wrong on every count.

The significance of the relief of Gloucester was almost entirely political rather than military. Had the king captured Gloucester then he would have consolidated a swath of territory from Cornwall to the Scottish border, but he would still have been excluded from London, which one way or another he would have to regain to win the war. For Parliament, however, the loss of Gloucester would have ensured the political ascendancy of the peace party, who would have sought terms. In the negotiations that would have followed the king would have had to compromise but not to the extent that he would have had to a year earlier. As it was, the war party under John Pym remained in power and was able to negotiate the intervention of the Scots, which in turn led to the decisive Royalist defeat at Marston Moor less than a year later which set Parliament on its final course for victory.

Timothy Brain



Figure 5: Robert Devereux, 3rd Earl of Essex (1591-1646)

THE COUNTY EMPLOYER REPRESENTATIVE OF THE WESSEX RESERVE FORCES AND CADETS' ASSOCIATION

A personal reflection on how the role has changed in the last 23 years

Stephen Whitbourn

Back in 1990, when we were called TAVRA (Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve Association) is when it all started for me. Brigadier Bruce Jackman was in his transition period from the Regular Army to taking up his appointment as Chief Executive of Wessex TAVRA (later RFCA – Reserve Forces and Cadets Association). He was taking over from Brigadier Joe Starling who was something of a legend.

At the time, the Ministry of Defence was undergoing another Defence Review, this time called 'Options for Change'. Many will recall that the Communist threat of the Warsaw Pact had supposedly diminished, so it was a chance to streamline or cut our defence forces. I was employed by the Regular Army as an external consultant providing employment training in recruitment interviewing techniques and the completion of Curricula Vitae for senior Army Officers (Captains to Brigadiers). This was in preparation for them leaving the Army and competing for civilian appointments. Most of my work was at the then School of Infantry at Warminster (and The School of Artillery at Larkhill). Before starting I had to complete some swift military training and was promptly assigned to the Platoon Commanders Course. This is where fresh Infantry Officer Graduates of The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst are put through their paces to command and lead a platoon of up to 30 men. On passing this course they went to their allocated regiments to take command.

Following a steep learning curve, I was then assigned to the Directing Staff (DS – the instructing staff) who monitor and assess these young subalterns. It was at Warminster that via various contacts, I was introduced to Brigadier Bruce Jackman and where I started with the TAVR (now RFCA) Association. That was when I became a volunteer and have remained ever since.

Brigadier Bruce knew that he wanted an Employer Representative in Gloucestershire and decided that I needed to hone my military skills but as a Reservist. I was passed over to The Royal Gloucestershire Hussars, Cirencester. Here I met Oliver Chamberlain (later to be the Wessex Reserve Forces and Cadets' Association Chairman), and his Training Major, Alexander Bathurst. A full weekend in the field on a training exercise on Salisbury Plain was the result. Here I fully appreciated the commitment of the Reservist in that with little sleep from Friday night to Sunday lunchtime and a full-on exercise to undergo, yet these same men and women would be back at their civilian jobs first thing Monday morning. This was the start of a long and fruitful relationship with the Regiment and many more exercises.

It was around this time that the idea of having a group of selected employers in each county was formed so that from regular meetings, ideas and thoughts could be channelled to Wessex TAVR HQ in Bristol (now Taunton). One of the members of my Gloucestershire group was John Hazelwood, and such the interest and enthusiasm he demonstrated that he was quickly spotted by Brigadier Bruce and made Chairman of Wessex TAVRA.

The period from the early 1990s to mid-2000s was a whirlwind of activities. My Training and Consultancy Company was based at Prestbury House on the out skirts of Cheltenham, which also had grounds which I utilised for out- door training.

I was now assigned to 1 Wessex (later 2 RGBW), and in particular the Reconnaissance Platoon in Cheltenham, who used Prestbury House grounds for Observation Post training, field craft and the management centre's outdoor command and leadership exercise structures. These leadership command exercises (very similar to The Army Board Westbury and RMA Sandhurst) became very popular with a number of different regiments in the Wessex Region over the years. These included The Wessex Yeomanry, 2 RGBW, RAF 4626 Squadron and 21 SAS. My contribution was to supply the venue, equipment and conduct assessments alongside other DS staff.

During this time, I also went on several exercises with 1 Wessex/2RGBW, one being a major exercise with the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment again on Salisbury Plain. All the time these experiences equipped me to talk with authority to employers of the merits of the Reserve Forces.

Following the first Iraq War, things in the Reservists were changing. I had a large training commitment with RAF 4626 Aero Medical Evacuation Squadron which started at Prestbury House, then RAF Lyneham cumulating in a major exercise involving the parachuting of a complete field hospital onto Bodmin Moor.

My long affair with Executive Stretch also started in the early 1990s and has taken me to Salisbury Plain (on several occasions), Senny Bridge, Dartmoor, the Bathurst Estate and even Porton Down. Executive Stretch was to take many civilian executives and for a weekend show them what Reservists did by way of a number of challenging management training tasks ranging from crossing rivers, sleeping out, to managing a major casualty incident. This was seen as an educational programme so that these executives might see the value and skills that were transferable from a military environment to the civilian workplace.

In 1995 I was presented with my Supportive Employers Certificate by the then Chief of Defence Staff, General Sir John Wilsey.

In July 1996 we staged at Prestbury House 'A Dinner with a Difference'. An invited audience of leading local senior business people were invited to a dinner with local units of 2 RGBW and The Royal Gloucestershire Hussars complete with the Regimental Colours and Military Band on the lawns.

First though Prestbury House was 'attacked' by the full force of both Regiments complete with Army Air Corps (TA) helicopters landing to evacuate 'casualties'. The amount of blank ammunition and pyrotechnics expended during that 'battle" must have exceeded a year's training allowance, but the village and the press loved it (as well as the participants), and we also greatly impressed the local county employers and dignitaries.

I was also now working with the late Commander Mike Burnett RN (RFCA) delivering recruitment training to TA Centres all over the South West. We needed at the time more new

recruits and decided to help and support Reservist units in the actual recruitment procedure with training sessions.

Whenever I could I supported Alec Dunn (then SaBRE) when he organised employer visits to military establishments, exercises and live firing events, the highlight of which was going to Cyprus for a major exercise with 2 RGBW. I was constantly ensuring that the joint message would be heard that the employers support was needed and appreciated.

Another project in 2005 was Reservist Officer Recruitment and Training. This was a Brigade initiative to recruit and train officers centrally in preparation for RMA Sandhurst rather than individually unit by unit.

We used Prestbury House again as the base and the surrounding Cleeve Hill, over several weekends putting these recruits through command tests, orienteering and, to spice up the thrill of exercises, helicopters (Prestbury House now had the approved status as a Military Helicopter Landing Site).

With the establishment of the concept of 'One Army' and the conflict in Afghanistan, the role of County Employer Representative started to change rapidly. Rather than assisting Reserve units on a localised basis the role became more strategic and run centrally. Working closely with my RFCA County Chairman in the education of employers about how reservists were to be used, the consequences of regular mobilisation and being the eyes and ears for feeding information through to the Wessex RFCA.

I am often asked why I have been a volunteer for in excess of 30 years. My answer is that I see it as an honour and a privilege to have worked alongside so many reservists of all the military services and of all ranks, who give so much of their time to serve their country and maintain a civilian life as well. It has not been without its benefits for me; good friends and military experiences, and visits to military establishments that civilians would never have the opportunity to experience.

I have learnt much from the Reservists and used those skills in my own civilian career. Transferable skills have never been so necessary as in the 21st Century. True, being a volunteer under the 'One Army Model' has meant less time being at the front end with the Reserves as it was in the 1990s and early 2000s, but now the role is different and I am sure before I finish, the role will change yet again.

Stephen Whitbourn.

FRIENDS OF THE SOLDIERS OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE MUSEUM

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Chavenage Lecture

Friday 27th October 2023, 6.45 pm
Chavenage House, Tetbury
'The Eastern Front in World War Two'

Jonathan Dimbleby

in conversation with Dr Tim Brain

Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 7th November 2023, 7.00pm
The Highwayman, Elkstone, GL53 9PH

Summer Reception 2024

Tuesday 25th June 2024, 6.30-8.30 pm
Cirencester Park, by kind permission of Earl and Countess Bathurst

MUSEUM FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Jack Russell (former England wicket keeper and artist) book signing
'The Final Roll Call'

Korean veterans immortalised in art
Tuesday 14th October 2023, 7.00pm
All Friends invited (admission free)

Please advise Matthew (matthew.holden@sogm.co.uk) if you wish to attend.

For more information on all our events stay tuned to our Facebook page
(@soldiersofgloucestershire) and our website (www.soldiersofglos.com)

Calling all budding authors...

We welcome contributions 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.