



Redcoats Review

137th Anniversary of the Battle of Maiwand

Editorial : We felt that for this issue it would be better served if we used this space to reproduce the abridged minutes of the AGM meeting. So with no further ado...

Annual General Meeting - The Wardrobe 17th May 2017

The Chairman of Redcoats, Nigel Walker opened the meeting by welcoming all those present and thanked them for making the effort to attend, particularly those that had travelled some distance to be at the AGM. There were 22 members seated and their support was much appreciated. He welcomed one new member attending, and mentioned a few members' names who had submitted apologies. He stated that the President of the Society, Brigadier Patrick Davidson-Houston, had decided to retire from his duties, and that he had offered his best wishes for a successful meeting and continued success. He had held the appointment for just over ten years and felt that he regretted having only attended very few events and owing to a busy work schedule and family commitments he had not given the Society as much attention as he would have liked. The Chairman publicly thanked him for his loyalty and commitment over the past ten year period. The Society was now looking to replace him and if anyone had some suggestions, then they should make suggestions.

The Chairman made a few points regarding activity over the past year including a mention of the Newsletter team, Michael Cornwell, Martin McIntyre and Richard Joyner, who wrote and sourced the material and put it together in a very readable and digestible format. The Newsletter, published three times a year was a very good way of keeping in touch with what the Society and the Museum were doing. A mention was also given to a number of other Society members who made significant contributions to the Museum as volunteers on a regular basis, and he thanked them all.



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FUTURE EVENTS

- 20 September 2017 Gaza Presentation by Gareth Davies

On the 9th of June 2017, Geoff Young passed away having gone into hospital as a result of a fall at home.

As a young man, too young initially to be called up at the outbreak of World War Two, he joined the Territorial Army in 1939 and trained in the UK until his battalion (4th Battalion the Wiltshire Regiment) disembarked in Normandy in July 1944 as part of the 43rd Wessex Division and were involved in some the major battles once the allies broke out from Normandy. During the fight around Nijmegen Geoff was shot in the neck and blown up. The bullet remained in his neck for the duration of the war.

Geoff wrote an account of his time in the Battalion which became a popular sale item in the museum shop, so much so that as we have sold the last of his original edition Simon Cook is in the throes of re-publishing it.

Prior to moving to Evesham Geoff was one of the museum's first volunteers and for him the Wardrobe came to represent his Regimental home. Having moved north he always maintained contact and was a regular attendee of the annual association reunion. It is poignant to recall his last visit to the Museum was to be invested with the order of Chevalier Legion d' Honneur, in 2016.

AGM 2017 MINUTES CONTINUED

It was announced that recently the Society had received a donation of approximately £600 from Jim Waterfall who administered the funeral fund in the name of the 'Farmers Boys'. It was decided, in conjunction with the Museum curator, to purchase new signs to go on the Wardrobe car park wall and on the entrance wall, with all costs for this being covered by the Society.

The meeting continued along the agenda items. John Venus submitted his Treasurer and Secretary's report and announced that the Society funds were in good health. The Society running costs were now down to a bare minimum and it was reassuring that at least 95% of the income was now banked and available for supporting the museum activities.

The date for the Battle of Gaza [1st WW - Palestine] lecture has now been rescheduled for Wednesday 20th September and Gareth Davies has kindly agreed to give this lecture on that date. Due notice will go out to members inviting them to attend. As usual the curator Simon Cook then gave a very good update on all museum matters and related what had taken place over the year and an insight into the busy year ahead. He also mentioned that for the first time the museum now employed a professional assistant curator and the incumbent, Carina Taylor, was doing an excellent job.

A proposal for the Society to hold a battlefield tour next year for those interested was announced. This would be organized and run by a professional tour company and would concentrate on the Western Front involving the Royal Berkshire Regiment and Wiltshire Regiment actions.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Director of the Army Museums Ogilby Trust (AMOT) Andrew Lloyd, gave a fascinating and informative talk on the background, role and work of the Trust and how it benefits military museums around the country. The Trust had recently expanded and been given a financial boost, and it was convenient that they now had increased office space at the Wardrobe site. Their support and advice was extremely valuable.

The Chairman, aided by the Chairman of the Rifles Wardrobe Museum Trust Terry Daly, gave a quick update on the future of the Museum and assured all those present that the Trust was in good hands and expected a good future. Plans were in play to develop the site further.

The meeting was followed by an extremely good cream tea delivered by Bernières Restaurant.



Ray Golding (left) with General O'Donoghue and Geoff Young (right) after the presentation.

WILFRED OF THE WILTSHIRES

I am reasonably sure that the majority of the Society's Friends know of the exploits of Bobby of the Berkshire's or at least have an idea of his part in our regimental history. However I am less certain people will have heard of Wilfred, a sporting motif/award of the Wiltshire Regiment.

Within the myriad of Regimental Photograph Albums is one entitled "The Wilfred Book Volume 1" and is attributed to the Officers Mess, The Depot, the Wiltshire Regiment and has a sub title of "A Record of Happy Days" It is primarily a photographic record of the Regimental Cricket Tours around the county from 1906.

Wilfred's Date of Birth is recorded as 6th September 1923, when he was presented to the Regimental Cricket Team who happened to be on tour within the county. His owner, responsible for introducing Wilfred to the Regiment, was Lt Col R. M. T. Gillson DSO a keen cricketer who seems to have made the wicket keeping position his berth when the Regiment was fielding.



Wilfred's sole object in life was to Brighten Cricket and on the day of his introduction to the Regiment it was decreed that Wilfred "would be held for One Year by the Misser of the greatest numbers of catches" on the Regimental Cricket Tour. One point would be deducted from any individual's score for each catch held.

We know from a newspaper cutting that it was reported at the end of the 1929 season that as no-one was worthy of the trophy that after 7 year's service with the Colours Wilfred was relegated to the Reserves with the honorary rank of Brigadier General .

1st/4th Kings African Rifles and the Royal Berkshire Regiment

Though many of us are aware of the major actions of World War 1 little is known of those detached to other units such as the Kings African Rifles. This is a summary of two such soldiers.

In May 1917 the 1st Battalion of the Uganda-based 4th Regiment of the King's African Rifles (1/4 KAR) was in Fort Johnstone, Nyasaland (now Malawi). The battalion had marched down through German East Africa (GEA - now Tanzania) from Mwanza on Lake Victoria via Iringa to Old Langenburg, now named Lumbira, on Lake Nyasa. 1/4 KAR had fought and skirmished against the withdrawing Schutztruppe (German army) as it marched. The battalion had then travelled by steamer down Lake Nyasa to Fort Johnston.

On the 12 November 1917, Sergeant 8700 Alfred George E Shepard (3rd Royal Berkshire Regiment,) and recorded in the 1/4 KAR War Diary as being a Temporary Lieutenant in No 1 Company who was killed by an elephant when on patrol on Rondo Mountain. He is buried in Dar Es Salaam War Cemetery.

The advance guard commander for this unit was Lieutenant G E Hawkins (Royal Berkshire Regiment) of No 2 Company with No 8 Platoon and two Lewis guns. Geoffrey Eden Hawkins was soon involved in a fight for which he was awarded the **Military Cross**:

His citation reads.....

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. Owing to his courageous example he rendered invaluable assistance in beating off a charge made by greatly superior forces of the enemy, upon whom heavy casualties were inflicted. Having withdrawn his men in good order, he finally carried a wounded officer back to safety under very heavy fire. His cool bearing and utter fearlessness were most praiseworthy



Ruga Ruga Tribesmen used by the Germans against 1st/4th KAR

PETER SHORTEN
Arms volunteer

Peter Shorten is the Museum's armourer and whilst you may not see many weapons on display the museum does possess a fine collection of firearms which need regular maintenance. All of which Peter carries out in an assiduous manner yet without the facilities usually accorded to a REME armourer.

Peter has been fascinated by weapons from an early age, possibly inspired by his father who had served in the 28th/61st of Foot (yes, the Glosters). Peter himself joined the Royal Air Force and worked as a Traffic Controller. On leaving the RAF he settled in Amesbury and became a volunteer in the Boscombe Down museum and was in a team who made a working model of a WW1 aircraft. Model making is another of his attributes because when we paid tribute to Captain J. W. Dunne, Wiltshire Regiment, the first Army Aviator, Peter made a model of his machine for the display.



Peter with one he made earlier, yes it is a wooden mock up which you would not know until you picked it up

The Winners Roll of Honour read as follows:

- 1923 The Date of Birth 1924 Charles (Major C. A. Barker)
 1925 Our CO (Lt Col F H Dansey) 1926 Tom (Capt R F J Hayward VC)
 1927 Three veterans



- 1928 Tom (second barrel) 1929 No One Worthy
 1930 Age Lt Col R. M. T Gillson
 Maturity Major A. S. Hooper
 Youth Lt D Dogrell



- 1931 Rosie (Capt H. B. Rose)
 Grove
 Bond

- 1932 Bond (second barrel) 1933 Dick Ashley
 1934 Percy (Pte Percival) 1935 Hey Presto (Capt C. A Prest)

Initially we could not work out why Captain Reginald Frederick Johnson Hayward was called Tom until Richard Joyner discovered an England 1890's player of that name who was an opening bat and we know from the scorebook RFJ Hayward scored a couple of centuries for the Regiment. Just look how tall Hayward is in comparison to his fellow officers.



Tom Hayward 1890

THE VOLUNTEERS TRAINING DAY

During the winter months Julia Franklin, who is a key Front of House volunteer, had investigated the feasibility of playing proper croquet on the lawn closet to the rear door. Imagine our surprise when she was informed that the lawn was not large enough for a full course but we would be able to lay out a shorter course and play a variation of the proper game. Inspired by the advice provided by the Croquet Association House the equipment was procured and the lawn prepared to enable "Golf Croquet" to be played. A Croquet ladder was set up so that volunteers could challenge each other to lunch time matches. The day of the Fire Training arrived and we even had a trophy generously provided by John Simmons. It almost goes without saying the Alistair, who prepares the playing surface, and his partner Allison Symonds won the trophy. So now the Volunteers are offering challenges to any of the Friends to for a pairs team take on our Champions.



Our Curator, Simon Cook, presenting Allison and Alistair with their trophy

What happened to Wilfred from 1935 onwards remains a bit of a mystery as the photograph album Volume 1 closes that year.

We have found a Volume 2 with loose photographs and can record Brigadier General Wilfred must have been mobilised because in 1953 he is recorded as being awarded to Major H. N. Hoare. The more observant amongst you will note that Wilfred had obviously changed his Regimental Tailor as his sartorial elegance seems to fit with the era of that cricket tour.



Sadly there are no other references or images of Wilfred. One could surmise that Major Hoare won it three seasons in a row and was therefore entitled to keep Wilfred in perpetuity or that Wilfred was kidnapped by an opposition team not abiding by the "Spirit of the Game". Whatever the cause with the recent passing of Major R. T. Welsh I suspect our chances of trying to locate the whereabouts of Wilfred Mark ii has been radically reduced. For those not in the know a young looking Donald Welsh appears on the left of the above photograph as we look at it. However if there is anyone who can shed light on to Wilfred's eventual retirement we would be delighted to hear the details.

FAMILY CONNECTIONS— THE ROBINS BROTHERS

We are all probably familiar with Father being followed by son into the Regiment, examples being the Fosters and Drapers. As well as generations serving in a regiment—the Minty family had seven generations serve with the 62, Wiltshire's and DERR. And of course five brother serving in one battalion, the McIntyre's. But here is the brief story of four Robin brothers from Goosey, Faringdon at the time of World War 1 on the Wiltshire Berkshire borders but now in Oxfordshire

BATTLE OF GAZA LECTURE

There were many who were disappointed that the March talk by Gareth Davies had to be postponed, particularly as some of the Society of Friends had fathers who had taken part in this particular campaign.

As Nigel Walker, our Chairman announced at the AGM, the talk will now be held Wednesday 20th September.

What will be of interest to many of the volunteers is to discover more of the campaign that involved the 1st/4th Battalion of the Wiltshire Regiment in which Sgt's and to see how it ties in with the Museum's current temporary exhibition, created by our new Assistant Curator, Carina Taylor. The Museum holds two personal diaries which give graphic accounts of the actions on Gaza and particularly follows the events of three main characters, Captain C. K. Merewether, Sgt Mundy and Sgt Couldrey, the latter two winning the DCM in the same platoon action.

Within the Salisbury Cathedral Cloisters is a collection of Wooden Crosses that marked the grave of the those men who name the cross bears. It is reputed to be the largest single collection in any church/cathedral and Captain C. K. Merewether's cross is one of those. This providing another link between the Regiment and the Cathedral.



Captain C. K. Merewether, pipe in mouth,, this photograph is believed to be taken on the same day as he was wounded.



Alfred Robins was a regular soldier serving with the 1st Bn the Wiltshire Regiment before World War 1 broke out. Our records show that he was 7725 Drummer A Robins. He was Killed in Action on 27 October 1914 in the heavy fighting around Neuve Chapelle in which the war diary records 23/27th October 1914 it is estimated that the casualties were:- Officers Killed 2 Wounded 5 Missing 7 Rank & File Killed 45 Wounded 153 Missing 150 Alfred was awarded the 1914 Star, The British War Medal and the Victory Medal. Alfred has no known grave and is

commemorated on the Neuve Chapelle memorial. Interestingly the Wiltshire Regiment have recorded where he was initially buried, but subsequent heavy fighting across that area over a further four years has made it impossible to find his remains to date.



Edgar Robins served in the 1st Bn The Royal Berkshire Regiment but with a number of 15996 would have been enlisted after war had been declared. His Medal Index card has a qualifying date for his 1914/15 Star as 7 April 1915, that being the date he disembarked in France. He too was awarded the British War Medal, the Victory Medal. We also know Edgar was wounded as he was in receipt of the Silver War Badge, however the Medal Card for his Silver War Badge has been erroneously entered as Edward Robins but with all other details correct.



William Robins had a service number of 10288 and he initially was a Pte in the 5th Bn The Royal Berkshire Regiment in the Machine Gun Section, landing in France on 30 April 1915; some 23 days after his brother Edgar. With a change in the British Army's deployment of MG's he became 54866 LCpl Robins of the Machine Gun Corps. He too won the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. William was also wounded but after convalescing continued to serve until the end of the war.



Walter as 19260 Pte Robins became a member of 5th Bn the Wiltshire Regiment and landed at Gallipoli on 4 September 1915 and survived that hell hole only to then take part in the Mesopotamia campaign where he was wounded during the Battle of Falahiyeh 5 April 1916 and died of his wounds 2 days later. He has no known grave and is remembered on the Basra Memorial. He was awarded the 1914/15 Star, The British War Medal and the Victory Medal

BUDDING SUBSCRIBERS?

Anyone who has a particular topic that they would like to have included or a story that they wish to recount please get in touch with either Mac or me.

Mac's email address is

Researcher2@the wardrobe.org.uk

My email address is

Researcher3@the wardrobe.org.uk

Museum's Facebook :

See the foot of this main page.

The Society of Friends of
The Rifles, Berkshire &
Wiltshire Museum,

The Wardrobe

58 The Close

Salisbury

SP1 2EX



STOP PRESS

As a result of an enquiry into the archive section at the Wardrobe regarding the 62nd [Wiltshire] Regiment at the Battle of Ferozeshah, 1845, it prompted us to make further investigations in an attempt to establish 'Who did what' on the field of battle that day. As a result we have established that a very small slip of one of the colours is at present in a county house in Dorset. The colours carried at the Battle were later heavily damaged by fire and lost in the Ganges. Several officers and men attempted to recover them. The portion of colour recovered was retained by an officer and passed down the family generations. Enquiries are continuing and a full report will be given in the December Newsletter

Watch this Space.

CAN YOU RECRUIT ANOTHER MEMBER?

We are always looking to recruit new members, and a good method of advertising is by each of us spreading the good word ourselves . So please think about passing this Newsletter one to friends relations etc. Application forms to become members can be found on :

www.thewardrobe.org.uk

VOLUNTEERS

Nigel Walker, our Chairman has been a member of the Front of House for some 9 months now and recommends the chance to interact with customers and to show off our marvellous museum to them. So why not follow his lead and become a Museum Volunteer. If you live within commuting distance of Salisbury, have a skill or interest in militaria or archive or conservation try contacting Carina Taylor our Assistant Curator on 01722 419419.

Your web page on the Museum web site is:

<http://www.thewardrobe.org.uk/museum/contact-us/support-us/friends-events-and-publications>

If you want to join us on Facebook the link is:

<https://www.facebook.com/The-Rifles-Berkshire-and-Wiltshire-Museum-500832510060892/>