



# Redcoats Review

## 132nd Anniversary of the Battle of Tofrek

### Editorial

Dear Friends,

We hope that you found the last edition of the Friends newsletter to your liking. Those of you who have had to carry out “Red Ink Corrections” on my written work in the past will be familiar with the expression “More Cornwell Slidex” used by Terry Daly to describe most of the Staff Duty errors. However with the last issue I can genuinely state that “it wasn’t my fault Guv”. Draft copies had been forwarded to the proof reading team and amendments duly done so the final copy was to all intents and purposes error free. Sadly the unnamed person who forwarded the copy to be posted on the web site forwarded one of the drafts with quite a few of the “Slidex” errors. We are hoping that this publication will remove that weak link.

Turning to a change of future events, for reasons beyond our control the planned talk by former DERR officer Ray Kane on the Coup D'état in Oman has had to be postponed. It been intended to replace that talk with one that would be given Gareth Davies, albeit on 29th March, entitled “Gaza to Jerusalem”. Sadly positives return to our Chairman have been such that it was felt better to postpone the talk. It is hoped to be able to have Gareth give his talk later in the year as it would tie in very nicely with the museum’s temporary museum for this year. Gareth left the Army in 2015 having served in the Royal Tank Regiment for over 25 years. He now concentrates of Battlefield tours and while he spends most of his time focused on the Western Front his heart is firmly with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force and their campaigns in Palestine in 1917 and 1918. Gareth worked in Jerusalem in 2008 – 2009, which is where his passion for the Palestine campaign stems from .

Michael Cornwell    Martin McIntyre    Richard Joyner



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Editorial.....	1
Christmas Hildesheim 194...2-4	
Bob Hambling .....	2
Simon Thornton .....	3
One of The Twelve Apostles.....	4
Who Are they & Where Are they Now?.....	5
The Christmas Truce 1914...5& 6	
Refurbishment.....	7
Request for Articles .....	7

### FUTURE EVENTS

- 17 May 2017 Redcoats AGM. at 1430 at The Wardrobe.

## BOB HAMBLING

If you take a look at the Museum's web site you will appreciate that every item that has an image will have to have been photographed and the resultant images stored on the Museum's Database, known as Modes. That we have such a good digital image collection is due to the diligent work carried out by Bob Hambling.

The first member of the Hambling family to work in the Museum was his wife Margaret, who with others undertook the transcribing of the Regimental War Diaries in preparation of turning the transcriptions into properly published books.

In 2004 rising water levels in the 5 rivers flowing into Salisbury, threatened the Collection and Bob offered his services to David Chilton, who was already beavering away on site moving items on the ground floor to higher levels. On taking full retirement Bob was persuaded by DGC to become a volunteer, starting with photographing every medal within the collection and once that was done he started on the rest of the collection. You may notice that many of the archives do not appear on the website that is to prevent the material being plagiarised but rest assured Bob has photographed it all, and for that we are very much in his debt.



## TOFREK BARRACKS HILDESHEIM-RESEARCH ON BARRACKS AND CHRISTMAS 1946

For some time Lt Col (Retd) Karl-Heinz Heineke (late German Army) has been researching post WWII Hildesheim and the surrounding area and in particular the British Army Garrison of Hildesheim which was established in 1946. Through his visit



The Town Square in Hildesheim

to Salisbury in August of last year (2016) he was able to clarify when the former German WWII Luftwaffe base was transferred to the British Army by the Royal Air Force, who had initially taken it over,

and when the base was actually named Tofrek Barracks, which at that stage no one seemed to know, as it was not recorded in any documents of the units latterly stationed in Hildesheim and until its closure as a British garrison in 1993 at the end of the Cold War.

Through the archival material in the Museum Col Heineke was able to establish that the 1st Battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment took over the ex-Luftwaffe base from the Royal Air Force on 18 August 1946 and on the same day renamed it "Reading Barracks" and subsequently, on 14 October 1946, renamed it again to be called "Tofrek Barracks".

During his August 2016 visit Col Heineke mentioned a Christmas party which had been organised in December 1946 in Tofrek Barracks, Hildesheim, by the 1st Battalion the Royal Berkshire Regt for the children of their German employees in the barracks.

Through his research Col Heineke was even able to name one of the German children taking part. His name was Karl (Kalli) Scheide. (seen on the right). Kalli was able to, fondly, recall this and other Christmas parties organised by British Soldiers for the children of Hildesheim.



Karl Scheide

Karl Scheide vividly recalls taking part in two Christmas parties. All the parties were organised by the H.Q. of the 117<sup>th</sup> Military Government Detachment in the Hildesheim area for Christmas in December 1946. All units of the Hildesheim Garrison contributed and participated. Among them the 1st Bn R. Berks and 62 Company RASC.

The biggest party took place at the guesthouse Berghoelzchen. Kalli initially heard about it from a classmate.

A bus came to the main station in Hildesheim to take the children to the party venue. On arrival and much to their surprise the children were delighted to be given a cup of hot cocoa, chocolate and plenty of sweets all of which many of the children had never known through the deprivations of

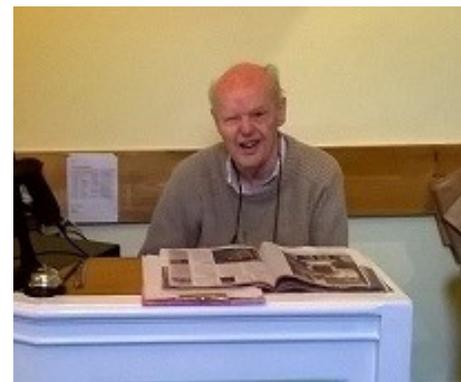


Berghoelzchen Guesthouse as it is today

the war. The 1st Royal Berks battalion carpenter's shop had made wooden toys for both the children of members of the battalion and those of their German employees. Many of the British infantrymen voluntarily contributed funds and put aside part of their rations issues in order to make the children happy at a difficult time. Beside the children of the German civilian employees many others were from the local orphanage, refugee centers and the homeless in Hildesheim. A Christmas atmosphere was very quickly generated at the various events. The local paper, the Hannoversche Neueste Nachrichten, reported the events thus:

“ We had previously reported on the Christmas Parties given for German children. However the warmth and generosity of the reception the children received warrants a further mention. No 62 Coy RASC, a unit of the local Military Government, have for some been saving items from their own rations and collecting funds to purchase chocolates and other sweets for these parties. On the Saturday evening before Christmas 360 children of the German employees and children from the local orphanage were entertained. On the Sunday 580 children nominated by local charitable organizations were entertained and on the Monday the Bernwardshof orphanage was visited and some 150 refugee children were royally entertained.”

Subsequently The Berkshire Chronicle also reported on the Christmas party in their 10 January 1947 edition as follows:



### SIMON THORNTON

The Front of House team are key players in creating the first impression with the visitors to the Museum.

In Simon Thornton, pictured above, we have a true volunteer. He started with us in 2003, having retired from working in local government and until 2015 he did Monday mornings and all day Wednesday. To allow another volunteer chance to join the team he stood down from the Monday morning shift.

You may also see Simon if you were to go to the Kings House in the Close as he volunteers for the Salisbury Museum, or you could come across him in Salisbury Cathedral, especially in the Chapter House or if you should go to the Salisbury Playhouse for a night at the theatre you could find Simon on house duty there.

So in Simon we have a welcoming volunteer who has the added ability to recommend the museum to tourists when they are in the other tourist attractions within the Close or in the City.

A seasoned traveller he has been to Brazil to visit family, and later this year he will be off to visit family in Vancouver

## ONE OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

Every year between 1997 and 2012 I was fortunate enough to be asked to tutor on the Army Cricket Umpires Course, held for one week in October and March. Every Day of those courses as I signed in for my meal I was confronted with an image of the first course of Physical Training Instructors.

The background to the course and the photograph is as follows:

It was clear during the Indian Mutiny and the Crimean war that the British soldiers were unfit. In 1860, Major Frederick Hammersley took 12 Sergeants from different regiments to Oxford University to train for six months under Mr. Archibald McLaren. They became known as the twelve apostles. This group were the forming soldiers of the Army Gymnastic Corps (Later Army Physical Training Corps). The 49th Regiment [Later 1st Royal Berkshires] provided a Sergeant Jackson as one of these 12. We do not know what became of Sergeant Jackson.



*“The First Battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment, who are stationed in the badly-battered German town of Hildesheim, entertained 100 German children to a Christmas party. Men voluntarily put aside part of their rations each week, and when the big day came, the kiddies had sweets, chocolates and a big feed. This party has done much to improve the relationship between soldier and civilian – in fact, more than any politician could have done. It was a practical gesture, and the Germans appreciated that.”*

When Kalli discovered that there was a further Christmas party the next day at the Sternhaus pub in Neuuhof, just outside of Hildesheim, he went to the main station to line up one more time in order to have the opportunity to get another cup of the tasty cocoa. However this time he was a little disappointed as he got something resembling hot lemon tea. In spite of this experience he has happy memories of a wonderful Christmas party.



Sternhaus Pub

Theo Ohlendorf, who lived opposite the Sternhaus, saw the Christmas party from outside as he was not sure if he was allowed to take part. Suddenly one of the windows was opened and, to his surprise, he was called in to participate. For all the children it was amazing to have such a Christmas party. Such a warm welcome and happiness was a wonderful experience for them all.

**Editorial Comment:** Thanks to Karl–Heinz Heineke for this article and to Karl Scheide for his recollections.



Tofrek Bks entrance with regimental sign



## THE 2<sup>ND</sup> BATTALION THE WILTSHIRE REGIMENT'S EXPERIENCE OF THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE 1914

The Christmas of 1914 was rather unique for such a war, and is specially worthy of description. What makes it poignant for us is that the account was written in 1914 by the then 2nd Lieutenant W S Shepherd who went on to become Lt Col Walter Scott Shepherd OBE MC. To set the scene for you, remember the 2nd Battalion, at the outbreak of The Great War were stationed in Gibraltar. They eventually landed in Belgium on 7th October and by 28 October 450 were POW and only 250 of the 1,000 strong battalion were fit to stay in the line.

On Christmas Eve it was the Battalion's turn to go into the line. The relief of the Royal Scots Fusiliers went smoothly, and was much the same as others had been. But, as the night wore on, those on duty in the forward trenches were surprised to see that the Germans were fixing lighted Christmas trees at intervals along their parapet. This was followed by the distinct sound of carols which wafted across from the enemy lines. Their singing in harmony was remarkably good, although when it was clear enough to detect the guttural it was very distasteful to the Britisher. In fact, so much so, that some of our men amused themselves by seeing how many candles they could shoot off the Christmas trees. At dawn there was a thick mist which totally obscured the German Lines. Men were able to move about on top quite freely without fear of being spotted. As a result, as soon as "Stand To" was over, quite a number of men were out in front throwing up earth on to the parapet, which was badly in need of attention owing to the severe weather. About eight o'clock the fog suddenly lifted. So suddenly, in fact, that many men were still digging after they had come within full view of the enemy. The Germans however were equally surprised. For when our men looked round and discovered they were so exposed, they could clearly see Bosches doing much the same work to their trenches, and apparently unconcerned as to the fog having lifted. It was an extraordinary position, and one might have expected the next move to be a mad rush by both sides for their respective trenches and some wild shooting at the last men in. But there was Christmas spirit in the air, and in those early days of the war there was a little more sporting element about the whole thing. British and Germans, a few at a time, unarmed, moved across No Man's Land towards each other. In a very short time an unofficial truce established itself, and No Man's Land became a sort of promenade.

## WHO ARE THEY AND WHERE ARE THEY NOW

### The Maze October 1974

This image shows Major Mike Draper is a rather "determined mood". Having retired and been a front of house volunteer for the museum for some years Mike has moved into Shakespeare country, living in Stratford. The person we would seek help identifying is the helmeted soldier no doubt receiving "words of encouragement" from his O.C.



### Londonderry 1979

The image below shows a young Lieutenant Patrick Tomlinson dealing with his head injury whilst talking with Lieutenant Graham Barlow. Patrick went on to be Commanding Officer of 1 RGBW and is now a Trustee of the Museum. Graham Barlow sadly passed away whilst still serving as a Major.



## REFURBISHED ENTRANCE, GALLERY AND STAIRCASE

Those members of the Friends who have been regular visitors to the Wardrobe will have perhaps noticed the moldings on the walls and ceiling in the Entrance and the stairway leading to the first floor have been looking tired of late. What some of you may not have appreciated is that the moldings are not plaster but Papier Mache and one or two areas of the moldings have taken knocks over the years.



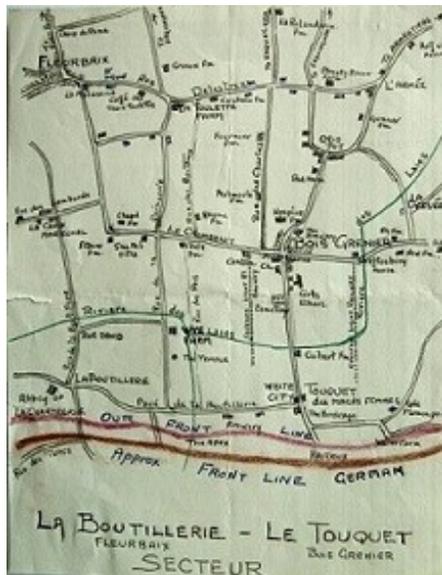
A decision was taken by the Trustees to have the Gallery, Entrance, Stairway and approach to the Regimental Room renovated, For the months of December and January those areas were screened and cordoned off whilst specialist decorators from the firm of Mouldings set about the task. By having a slightly lighter colour on the walls and a white ceiling the overall effect is a great enhancement.



Cigarettes and souvenirs were exchanged, and a few of the Germans, who proved to be Saxons, could speak English. They were very free in expressing their hate of the Prussians. A good many of our dead had remained in the open since December 18<sup>th</sup>, and, as the truce made it possible, most of the day was spent in giving these a decent burial.

There was not much more moving about in the open after Christmas Day, but there was no firing or hostility on either side until New Year's Eve.

In the BBC interview Major Shepherd made in 1968 he alludes to the fact that Higher Command, apparently on both sides, becoming frustrated by the lack of military activities had directed that the unofficial truce was to be ended at midnight 31<sup>st</sup> December or individuals will be executed "pour encourage les autre"



A sketch map produced by a Mr Robinson (who lived in France) and sent to Lieutenant Colonel W S Shepherd OBE, MC after his broadcast on the BBC on the 22nd December 1968 about the Christmas Truce. The map relates to that area. Mr Robinson's French wife remembered the young Lieutenant Shepherd who was present in 1914. A large portion of the Battalion were based at one point at La Toulette Farm and on the night of the truce were in the area of La Bouillierie. (Both marked on the map)

Lieutenant Colonel W S Shepherd, OBE, MC (left) and Ex RSM H J Wilkins revisiting the Fleurbaix sector in December 1968 for the BBC documentary. If anyone wishes to listen to the original BBC Interview with Lt Col Shepherd the link is shown in the text box under the image on the right.



<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes.p029yhtq>

## 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.

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The Rifles, Berkshire &  
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## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The Guest speaker for the Society of Friends AGM, will be Andrew Lloyd MBE, the Director of the Army Museum Ogilvy Trust. We can think of no-one else better qualified to brief us all into the Future of Military museums and how they can link into the overarching museum fraternity.

So please spread the word and encourage fellow Friends and acquaintances who might become "Friends" to attend these two highly recommended talks.

**VC Memorial.** On 29th April 2017 a memorial stone will be laid in Stratfield Saye, the village where Lance Corporal James Welch VC, Royal Berkshire Regiment was born . The memorials are part of a [national project organised by the Department for Communities and Local Government](#) to give councils across the country special paving stones for the areas where the Victoria Cross recipients were born to mark the centenary commemoration of the Great War. These are laid in the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the Victoria Cross hero's death. Details may be found at <http://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/rte.aspx?id=1645>

## 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](http://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/>