

NEWSLETTER

THE FRIENDS OF
THE SOLDIERS OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE
MUSEUM



AUTUMN 2019

MUSEUM EVENTS THROUGH THE SUMMER

The University of Gloucester has funded two interns for the summer to provide 'front of house' assistance – Julian & Richard have been a great success with the public.



Counsellor Oh from the Korean Embassy is introduced to the Mayor of Gloucester in the city Civic Suit



Publicising the summer Museum Sphinx Trail for children at the Cross, in the centre of Gloucester



Staff and volunteers prepare for Tall Ships Festival.

The Museum gazebo moves further up the quay at the Food Festival selling shop stock.



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The most welcome news I wish to pass on to the Friends this summer is that, thanks to arrangements made by the Museum Chairman, Mr. Chris Ryland, the SOGM has purchased the Custom House from the MOD. The Trustees have embraced this as a sign of a secure future and the Museum Director and her staff are working on implementing the business plan to increase the Museum monthly income. Events in the Docks, as diverse as the Victorian Christmas Market, the Tall Ships Festival, Armed Forces Day and Gloucester Day, are all opportunities for the Museum to show that it is alive and flourishing, as well as providing a chance to raise funds. Museum staff and volunteers have been very active at these events, using the Museum gazebo as a portable shop and selling books, children's toys, games and children's military styled clothing. The outside bar at the Armed Services Day had a permanent queue for beer! Throughout the summer holidays the Museum has also organised a 'Sphinx Trail', giving children a hidden trail of clues through the galleries to win a prize.

This year the Nation has marked two significant dates; a hundred years since the signing of the Versailles Peace Treaty which, with its humiliating conditions on Germany, perhaps laid the foundations of the next World War, just twenty years later, and it is seventy-five years since the most ambitious amphibious assault in history, when a flotilla of seven thousand ships enabled one hundred and fifty thousand men to land in Normandy on the first day of the invasion of Nazi held Europe on June 6th, 1944. These events have, to some extent, been reflected in the short articles in this Newsletter, together with a warning about the pernicious evil of duelling.

This year the Summer Reception was held at Chavenage, with grateful thanks to Col. David, Rona and Caroline Lowsley-Williams. Many of the Friends see the house at the Autumn Lecture when it is dark outside. To see it on a summers evening is a treat. We were able to link the Civil War history of Chavenage with the Siege of Gloucester and had a couple of period re-enactors to bring the uniformed troops to life. I am grateful to Jonathan Eeles for briefing us on the Gloucester problems and to Caroline Lowsley-Williams for conducting the tour of the rooms where Oliver Cromwell stayed during his visit to Chavenage.

This year's Autumn Lecture at Chavenage will be given by Jeremy Paxman and it might be a case of 'book early to avoid disappointment'. Your invitation should be with this Newsletter.

Finally, I would like to give notice that I shall be standing down as Chairman of the Friends at the AGM in November, after some thirteen years or so. I thought it appropriate to retire having achieved a run of excellent speakers for the Autumn Lecture, culminating in Jeremy Paxman! I thank them all. I am also grateful for the encouragement I have received from the Secretary, Treasurer and all of the Committee. I would also like to thank the Museum Director, Vicki Hopson, who is a great supporter of the Friends. Over the last decade the Friends have given regular grants to support the Museum. Thanks to your generosity, as my notes on the next page show, we have recently been able to provide the Museum with funds to equip the shop, the café and the Long Room and its new bar, with the equipment they need to be the income generators of the trading company. Please note that these venues are now available for corporate and individual hire.

Lt. Col. Ralph Stephenson TD.

RECENT GRANTS TO THE MUSEUM

I thought it might be informative to list the items that SOGM has purchased with the Friends grants over the last couple of years when it became probable that the Museum would need a competent business plan to survive the loss of MoD support. Having purchased the building, the emphasis is now on developing income streams from both the café and use of the Long Room for educational and social events.

Sometime ago the Museum Director requested funding to lay a wooded floor in the café and remove the rather worn and disheveled carpet. Rather than upset our landlord it was decided to delay this until the Trustees owned the building. When the purchase was imminent the floor went down and the effect on improving the café area was immediate. The cost, from the Friends, was £800 and the labour was donated by the Museum handyman.

In January this year the plan to use the Long Room for educational and social events required a 60in. Smart TV and stand. Cost £1040. This will be used at the Autumn Lecture this year.



Ken Cleal completes the flooring in the café area of the shop.



The SOGM has a greater visual impact from anywhere in the Dock Basin now that the Ferret has been moved in front of the shop and a 'feather flag' flies above it, leaving a larger area for the café, with new tables, inside and out, and refrigerated counter equipment.

With planning for the summer season and the Tall Ships Festival over the May Bank Holiday weekend, the Ferret was moved to the other side of the terrace so that four picnic tables, complete with parasols, could occupy the space, a real suntrap on a hot day; cost £720. A counter-chiller to preserve cakes was also purchased for £420.

Another grant was made in May for a shop fridge to store saleable cakes, a tall freezer for frozen storage of ice-creams etc. (they sell very well) and lockable fridge for the bar, next to the Long Room. Another purchase for the café has been a wall-mounted TV screen which will advertise the Museum galleries and news. This is to both inform and encourage visitors into the Museum whilst using the café and gift shop. Four 4.5m tall 'feather flags' were bought to be permanently fixed to the front of the museum, above the main reception area, to make the museum much more noticeable from the other side of the Victoria Dock. These items have cost £1900. More recently £500 was donated to replace some of the expensive track spot-lights used in the galleries and £700 for outdoor card machines and till points for the café & outside bar.

So, over the last eighteen months or so, your generosity to the Friends has allowed the committee to give grants totalling some £6000. This has given the Director and her team a great start to realising the income required to maintain the 'award winning' Museum.

The Chairman of the Friends

**2019 AUTUMN LECTURE
Chavenage House – Friday October 25 2019.**

This year's Annual Lecturer will be given by

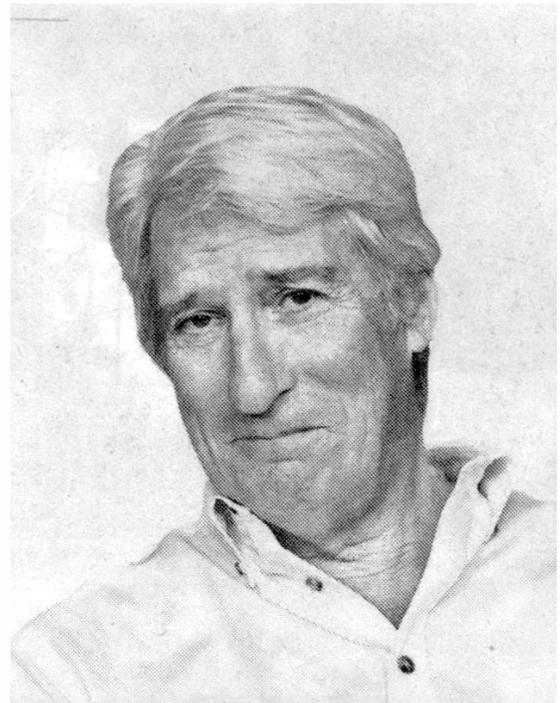
Mr. Jeremy Paxman.

on

'Great Britain's Great War'.

This award-winning journalist really needs no introduction. After attending Malvern College, he read English at St Catharine's College, Cambridge and joined the BBC's graduate trainee programme in 1972. He started in local radio before moving to television in 1979.

He first appeared on Newsnight in 1989, a post he held for 25 years. He has been the host of University Challenge since 1994 and has appeared on numerous documentaries and television series, including on the history and legacy of the British Empire. He has written some ten books, mainly on British and Empire history and has been awarded several honorary doctorates.



‘THE LAST PISTOL DUEL IN ENGLAND’

I’ve known about ‘England’s last pistol duel’ for some 45 years of living in the Stroud Valleys but, on returning to my Fisher’s History of Stroud* recently, I had not recalled that one of the three officers involved was from the 61st Regt of Foot, so the story’s worth putting in the museum archive.

Maintaining a standing army and militia forces during the many years of distrust of the French, from the French Revolutionary War to the end of the Napoleonic War (1792 to 1815), required a constant replacement of young men to follow the Colours, so recruiting parties were active in the areas of unemployment and poverty in the British Isles. When Napoleon returned from Egypt having lost his campaign there in 1801 (the 28th Foot had assisted in this failure at the Battle of Alexandria, receiving the unique honour of wearing the Back Badge for their valour) he took control of the French government and overcame an alliance made up of the Holy Roman Empire, Britain, Austria and Russia. After the French defeated the Austrians, the British were obliged to sign The Treaty of Amiens in 1802, creating a transient peace, the first time in ten years that Europe was at peace. The consequential drop in requirement for military uniforms caused a minor economic recession in the cloth-producing areas of this country, especially the Stroud Valleys, where many weavers had to depend on parish relief for survival.

In August 1807 amongst the recruiting officers lodging in King Street or the Old George Inn in Stroud were; Lieut. Joseph Delmont of the 82nd Regt. of Foot, Lieut. Benjamin Heazle of the 3rd Regt. of Foot and Lieut. John Sargeant of the 61st Regt. of Foot.



Land at Grange Fields, recently saved from development, where the duel took place in August 1807.

On the afternoon of the Friday 14th August Delmont and Heazle, who appeared to be well acquainted, took a walk together following lunch, when a remark from Delmont caused immediate offence to Heazle, who demanded an apology. Delmont refused, insisting it was unbecoming of an officer to apologize. Heazle demanded ‘satisfaction’ and the two agreed to settle the matter with a duel that evening in the fields below The Grange, the residence of Mr. George Wathen, where Lieut. Sargeant was dining. Sargeant was sent for and, after a failed attempt at reconciliation, he and Heazle went into Stroud to acquire pistols, powder and ball

*“Notes and Recollections of Stroud, Gloucestershire” by Paul Hawkins Fisher, published 1871.

from various traders in the town, settling on large, old 'horse pistols', one having been used by the volunteer cavalry. The weapons were duly borrowed, one from a blacksmith and the other from a confectioner and with these in their possession, the two officers returned to the fields below the Grange where Delmont was waiting, Sargeant in his 'regimentals', the other two in plain clothes. A short time later, a local labourer, mowing barley in an adjacent field, heard a single shot and observed Heazle and Sargeant running from the scene. Heazle ran towards Stroud where he met the local surgeon, Sweeting and told him he "had shot poor Delmont". He was later seen running into the yard of the White Heart Inn, where his sergeant was billeted. From there he took to the towpath alongside the Severn & Thames Canal and walked towards Cirencester and London.

ON DUELLING.

A
SERMON
PREACHED
In the Parish Church of Stroud,
GLOUCESTERSHIRE,
On SUNDAY, AUGUST 23, 1807;
CONTAINING
SOME OBSERVATIONS
ON THE MUCH-LAMENTED
Death of Lieut. Joseph Francis Delmont,
(Late of his Majesty's 82d Regiment of Foot,)
WHO, ON THE PRECEDING TUESDAY,
Fell a Victim to its baneful Influence.

BY THE
REV. JOHN WILLIAMS, B. A.
CURATE OF STROUD.

Proiecere animas.—VIRGIL.
Αλλ' ἔδ', ὁ περὶ πάντα ἀφροσύς, ἀνδρείος.—ARISTOTLE.

STROUD:
PRINTED AND SOLD BY S. JENNER;
SOLD ALSO BY LONGMAN, HURST, REES, AND ORME, LONDON,
AND ALL OTHER BOOKSELLERS.

Price One Shilling.

1807.

The sermon on 'the pernicious vice of duelling', given by the Rev. Williams the following Sunday, was published as a pamphlet. Such was its popularity a second edition was required a few days later

Sargeant meanwhile ran to tell Mr. Wathen, at the Grange, of the affair and, on returning to the scene, found Sweeting supporting Delmont and inspecting a bleeding wound in his left side where the ball had entered before exiting from his chest. Delmont was carried back to his lodgings in the town on a hand-barrow whilst Sargeant returned to the Grange, changed out of his 'regimentals' and, undercover of darkness, left the town on horseback, also making for Cirencester and the London Road.

Delmont asked for the parish minister, the Rev. John Williams, to attend him and give him Holy Communion. The priest stayed beside him throughout the night as Delmont's pain and suffering increased. His condition gradually deteriorated until he died, with the Rev. Williams present, on Tuesday 18th August.

A Coroner's Inquest was held the next day and, after hearing the evidence and the medical reports, the jury gave the verdict of willful murder against both Heazle and Sargeant.

Lieut. Delmont was buried in the churchyard of Stroud parish church on Friday 21 August 1807, the coffin bearing his accoutrements being carried by six military officers; a great crowd of townspeople gathering to witness the funeral.

Before leaving for America, Lieut. Sargeant visited Delmont's father in London and explained the circumstances of the duel and his personal distress. He died in exile several years later as his friends were trying to obtain a pardon.

Lieut. Heazle, who also fled, is said to have died in the West Indies soon after his arrival there.

Lt. Col. Ralph Stephenson TD.

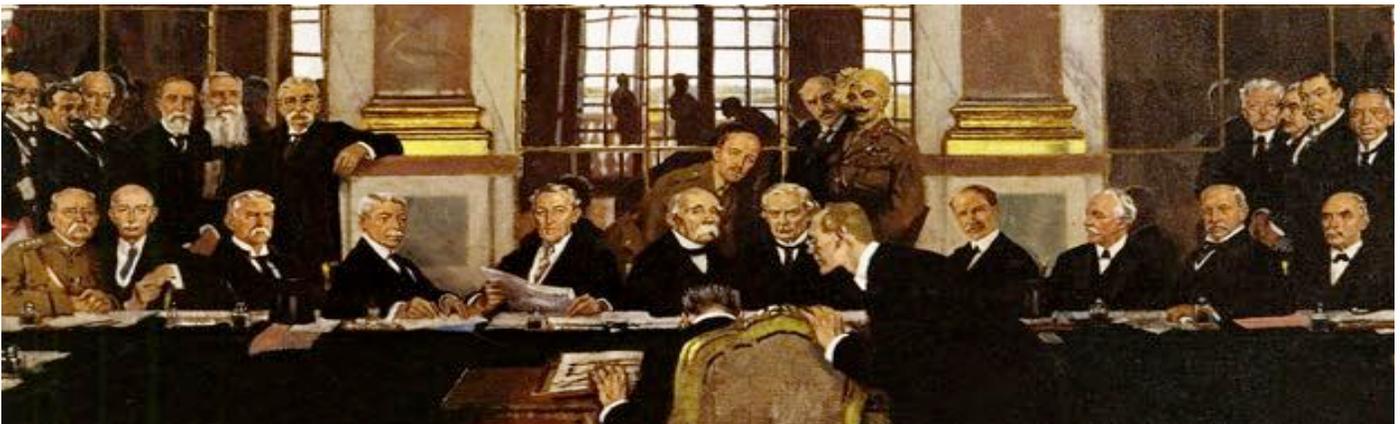
VERSAILLES 1919 – A FLAWED ATTEMPT TO BRING PEACE

This year saw the centenary of one of the defining events of the twentieth century - the Paris Peace Conference.

The First World War had come to a shuddering halt in November 1918 with the signing on the Armistice, when the British and the French imposed strict constraints upon Germany, but the intense work of creating a permanent peace was still to do. French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau insisted that the ensuing conference be held in Paris. Delegates from over 30 allied countries duly assembled in January 1918 but it would be the 'Big Four' allied leaders, Clemenceau of France, Lloyd George of Britain, Orlando of Italy and Wilson of America who would be determining the fate of the world. The defeated Central Powers, Germany, Austro-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire would come only when summoned to receive their terms, a fact the new democratic regimes which had replaced or were replacing the old discredited empires found hard to swallow.

The Big Four had, however, competing aims. Clemenceau wanted above all security from a future German attack and massive material compensation; Lloyd George wanted to reduce the German navy to virtually zero and take the pick of its overseas colonies; Orlando wanted territory in the Alps and along the eastern Adriatic; Wilson wanted his dream, an international peace keeping body, The League of Nations. Lesser allies wanted something too: the Arabs who had fought alongside the British wanted independence from the Ottomans; the Jews wanted their national home in Palestine; the Japanese wanted the German concession on mainland China. Simultaneously, emerging nation states, principally Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia wanted recognition. Then the question of what to do with Bolshevik Russia, in the turmoil of civil war, and the wreck of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The Allies haggled, teams of lawyers and cartographers beavered away in committees and working groups. Wilson got his way on the League, but he was already out of step with opinion in Congress which would shortly reject it, leaving the materially exhausted British and the French to shoulder the principal burden of making the League work. The British, French and Americans favoured Yugoslavian claims to Adriatic territory, leaving Orlando angry and disengaged. He stormed out but when he saw that no concessions were forthcoming was forced to return and accept meagre territory in the Tyrol from Austria.



The Signing of Peace in the Hall of Mirrors, Versailles, 28 June 1919 is an oil-on-canvas painting by Irish artist William Orpen, completed in 1919 and is held by the Imperial War Museum

That left the British and the French. Put simply, Clemenceau would never trust the Germans and had little faith in the collective security promised by the League. Instead he wanted to reduce the German army to an internal security force, take territory in the Rhineland and secure massive compensation. Here he was at odds with the British and the Americans who wanted a newly democratic Germany as a bulwark against the Russian Bolshevism.

The priority of Britain and her Dominions lay elsewhere. They wanted the former German colonies which they had captured but, thanks to Wilson's doctrine of 'national self-determination', imperialism had become a bad word. A formula was worked out - protectorates under mandates from the League of Nations. By these Britain gained the likes of the oilfields of Iraq and the holy sites of Palestine and South Africa the diamond mines of South West Africa. The mandates would prove a mixed blessing. As for the German fleet, so much a prewar threat, the forthcoming treaty would reduce it in size to a coastal force. In the end it did not matter as the interned fleet obligingly scuttled itself in Scapa Flow.

Clemenceau, however, pushed hard on territory and reparations. A compromise was agreed on both. The Allies would occupy the Rhineland for fifteen years, while the sum to be agreed for reparations was put to a committee that would take two more years to come up with a sum of £13 billion to be spread over decades.

It was enough to summon the Germans to receive the terms. When presented the delegation was aghast. The Germans had somehow convinced themselves that the war had been a draw and they could treat with the allies as equals. There were demonstrations in Berlin; briefly the government contemplated renewing the war until C-in-C Hindenburg told them the army would not fight. They capitulated and signed on 28 June 1919, five years to the day Gavrilo Princip had assassinated Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo. The signing ceremony took place in the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles, from whence the treaty took its name.

Treaties with the lesser Central Powers duly followed. That with the Ottomans, the Treaty of Sèvres, proved almost a dead letter from the start as Kamel Atatürk led a nationalist revival.

It was done, but it was not over. Despite the skill of the cartographers, the lines of the new states of central and eastern Europe could not avoid leaving islands of ethnic minorities, which in the short term led to border wars and in the longer term to treaty revisionism. Some of the new states, like the tiny republic of Austria, were inherently unstable and would descend into dictatorships. A new round of negotiations, concluding with the Treaty of Locarno in 1925, did manage to paper over many of the outstanding problems but not eliminate them. Above all disgruntled German nationalists, of whom Hitler emerged as the preeminent example, nursed deep grievances over the Treaty and were determined to not simply undo it but to embark upon policies of expansion and ethnic cleansing on a massive scale to ensue such national humiliation could not happen again.

Versailles shaped the interwar world, and while it is too simple to say it caused the Second World War nevertheless many of those causes can be traced ultimately back to it. Later historians should, however, be wary of over judging the 1919 peacemakers. True, a more stable peace was created after 1945 but only on the ruins of a continent.

Extracts from the Daily Telegraph – July 30 1919.

‘Mr. Churchill, Secretary of State for War, made a statement in the House of Commons with regard to Russia, especially North Russia where the British Government is preparing to withdraw our troops, our Allies already having withdrawn their forces. This withdrawal will take place before the winter settles down on Archangel and Murmansk, the best arrangements possible in the circumstances are to be made for the some 20,000 loyal Russian troops in the area, but he spoke with no confidence as to the ability of the anti-Bolsheviks there to keep their end up when the Britisher rearguard departs. There was manifestly much uneasiness as to whether we are not badly letting down our Russian friends.’

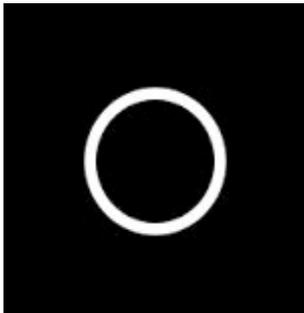
Some interesting figures relating to demobilization and growth of the New Army where also given by Mr. Churchill:

*3,000,000 officers and men already demobilised.
Demobilisation proceeding at the rate of 5,000 to 6,000 a day.
The new Army now consists of 225,000 men.
From 4,000 to 5,000 recruits are joining every week.*

‘He added that there would be no substantial increase in the numbers of the new Regular Army over those of the old, though it would be vastly better equipped and paid.’

*

Extracts from the Daily Telegraph – August 1 2019.



6th Division Insignia

‘Lt. Gen. Ivan Jones, the Commander of the Field Army, has announced that he has launched a new Division, dedicated to fighting cyber threats. This Division, the 6th Div., will operate “above and below the threshold of conventional conflict” to counter malign Russian activity and threats from digitally sophisticated terror groups. Lt Gen Jones added that the “6th Division focuses on Cyber, Electronic Warfare, Intelligence, Information Operations and unconventional warfare through niche capabilities, such as the Specialised Infantry Battalions.”

With its Headquartered at Upavon, Wiltshire, the 6th (UK) Division comprises ten brigades, six of these being:

- 1st Signal Bde. is under the Operational Command of both 6 (UK) Division and the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC).
- 11th Signal Brigades which has six Regular Army signal regiments and three Army Reserve.
- 77th Information Operation Brigade, described as “an agent of change” in support of Commanders.
- 7th Air Defence Brigade is responsible for detecting, identifying and tracking aircraft.
- 1st Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance Brigade.
- Specialised Infantry Group, formed in October 2017, initially comprising 4 RIFLES and 1 SCOTS

Unit details from ‘www.Warfare.Today’ and from the webpage of the 6th (United Kingdom) Division, British Army (Crown Copyright, 2019)

Lt. Gen. Jones said “The world is changing at a remarkable pace and is only going to get faster and more complex. State and non-state actors are continually seeking to gain advantage in the grey zone that exists below the threshold of conventional conflict. We must create a campaign mindset – a move from planning periodic activity to managing constant operations.”

*

The 6th Division has a long and distinguished history, having been raised by Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington, for service in the Peninsular War; the 61st Regt of Foot were placed in the 1st Brigade of the Division. During the Great War, as part of the British Expeditionary Force, it arrived in France on the 9th September 1914 and fought throughout the war on the Western Front. In World War II the Division was reformed in Egypt and fought in the Middle East, but under a different insignia; a red four-pointed star on a white background.

In 2007 the HQ 6th Div. was raised for service in Afghanistan and disbanded in 2011. From 1 August this year the 6th Div. joined the 1st and 3rd Divisions of the UK Field Army.

The symbol of the 6th Div. is very similar, albeit with a smaller circle, to that used during the Korean War as the insignia of the 29th Independent Infantry Brigade (1st Bn. Gloucestershire Regiment, 1st Bn. Northumberland Fusiliers, 1st Bn. Royal Ulster Rifles, C Sqn King’s Royal Irish Hussars and elements of the RA, including 170 Mortar Bty. RA). The Brigade saw action during the Third Battle of Seoul in December 1950 and the Battle of the Imjin River in April 1951. In July 1951 it was absorbed into the 1st Commonwealth Division and finished its tour of duty in November 1951.



Soldiers of the 1st Bn. The Gloucestershire Regt. in Korea 1951 clearly showing the 29th Brigade insignia on the right arm and the Back Badge.

The Editor

FRIENDS OF SOGM AGM - 2019

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the SOGM will take place in the Meeting Room of The Highwayman, Elkstone, on the A417 between Cirencester and Cheltenham. GL53 9PH at 1900 hrs on Tuesday 12 November 2019.

All Friends are welcome to attend at 1900hrs and stay on for supper afterwards at The Highwayman.

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS ON: TILLY- SUR-SEULLES REAPPRAISED

It is seventy-five years since the 2nd Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment returned to North West Europe on D-Day, 6 June 1944. Within days it was engaged in a hard-fought battle for the small but strategically important Normandy market town of Tilly-sur-Seulles, some 14 miles south of where they came ashore.

Assessments of the battle have tended to range from, on the one hand, it being a relatively minor action (in the words of Captain HH Holgate, ‘no more than an encounter battle’) in which the untried citizen soldiers of the 2nd Battalion did a good, if unsuccessful job, against well tried, elite German units, and on the other hand, to simply being one of the numerous examples of underperformance by the British Army in World War II, as assessed by revisionist historian Max Hastings. Neither interpretation does the Battalion justice nor presents the action’s wider strategic significance.

The 2nd Battalion was a relatively late addition to the D-Day line up. The Battalion was added to the invasion force after Montgomery and Eisenhower expanded the plan from the original three to five divisions. The 56th Infantry Brigade was created as a flexible unit, intended to support divisions where and when needed. Under Brigadier EC Pepper it comprised the 2nd Battalions of the Gloucestershire, Essex and South Wales Borders (SWB) Regiments. Lt Col DW Biddle, a pre-war Gloster regular, commanded the Glosters.

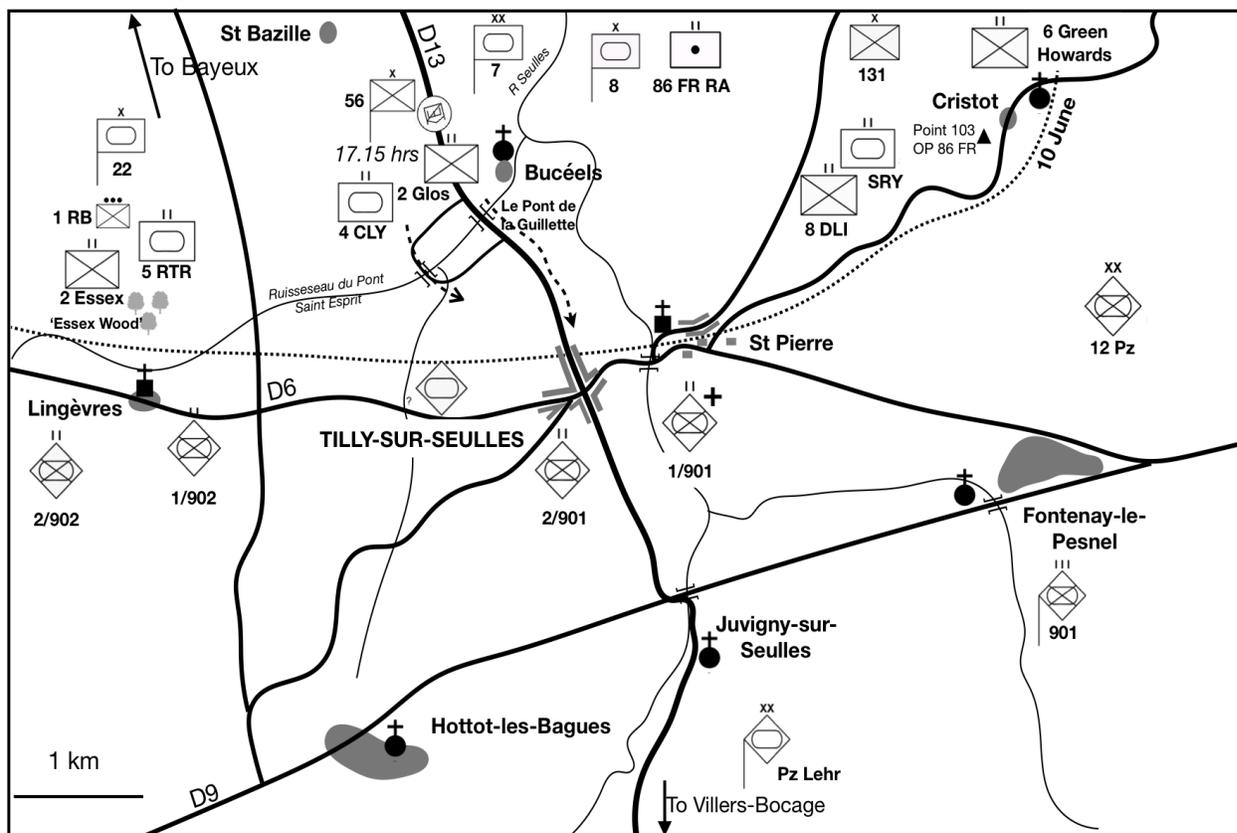


The Glosters landed on D-Day as part of the second wave at approximately midday, near Le-Hable-de-Heurtaut on the east of GOLD Beach. Then followed slow progress inland, not liberating Bayeux, a D-Day objective, until around midday the next day.

Sergeant Gilbert Brain's No 2 Section Carrier Platoon then reconnoitered the road south as far as the hamlet of Jerusalem, just 4 miles short of Tilly-sur-Seulles, but was then ordered back to consolidate at Bayeux. Tilly might therefore have been captured on D+1, but whether it could have been held in the face of an inevitable German counter attack is another matter.

The determination of the British commanders to consolidate across the whole of their sector might have been prudent but gave the Germans the opportunity to bring their reserve Panzer Divisions to Normandy. Despite Allied air interdiction the Panzer Lehr Division, an elite unit, painstakingly made its way from Le Mans to deploy along a line from Fontenay-le-Pesnel in the east to Lingèvres in the west, with its line centred on Tilly. The Panzer Lehr was not there, however, simply to hold a line; it was there to counter attack and drive the Allies back into the sea. Simultaneously, the British were preparing to launch their own offensive, Operation Perch, across a nine-mile front from Cristot in the east to Lingèvres in the west, with Tilly at its centre. The tactical effort was split between 50th Division to the east of the River Seulles, and the recently ashore 7th Armoured Division ('The Desert Rats') under Maj Gen George Erskine to the west.

The 56th Brigade was placed under command of the 7th Armoured, with the Glosters assigned Tilly as its objective and Lingèvres that of the Essex. The SWB were in reserve, with artillery support fire from 86 Field Regiment RA and the sixteen-inch guns of HMS Rodney operating off GOLD Beach.



Tilly Front 10-11 June 1944. from Gilbert Brain, 'The Gloucestershire Regiment in Europe 1944-45'

The attack on Cristot was assigned to the Green Howards under the 50th Northumbrian Division. Erskine paired his infantry battalions with two of his armoured regiments, the 4th City of London Yeo. (CLY) with the Glosters, and the 5th Royal Tank Regiment with the Essex.

It was in theory a sound plan, but there were practical difficulties. The infantry and armoured units were unknown to each other and had not exercised in consort; the pairing meant splitting brigade command, so immediately before battle the Essex found themselves under Brigadier WRN 'Loony' Hinde of the 22nd Brigade, while the CLY found themselves under Brigadier Pepper of the 56th. This was not just a matter of personalities; radio communications were similarly split, to the ultimate confusion of the assault units on the ground. Further, the armoured units were equipped with Cromwell Tanks, light pursuit vehicles, unsuited to the thick hedgerows and orchards around Tilly. Finally, while the armoured and infantry units were paired they were not integrated but operated on parallel axis of advance.

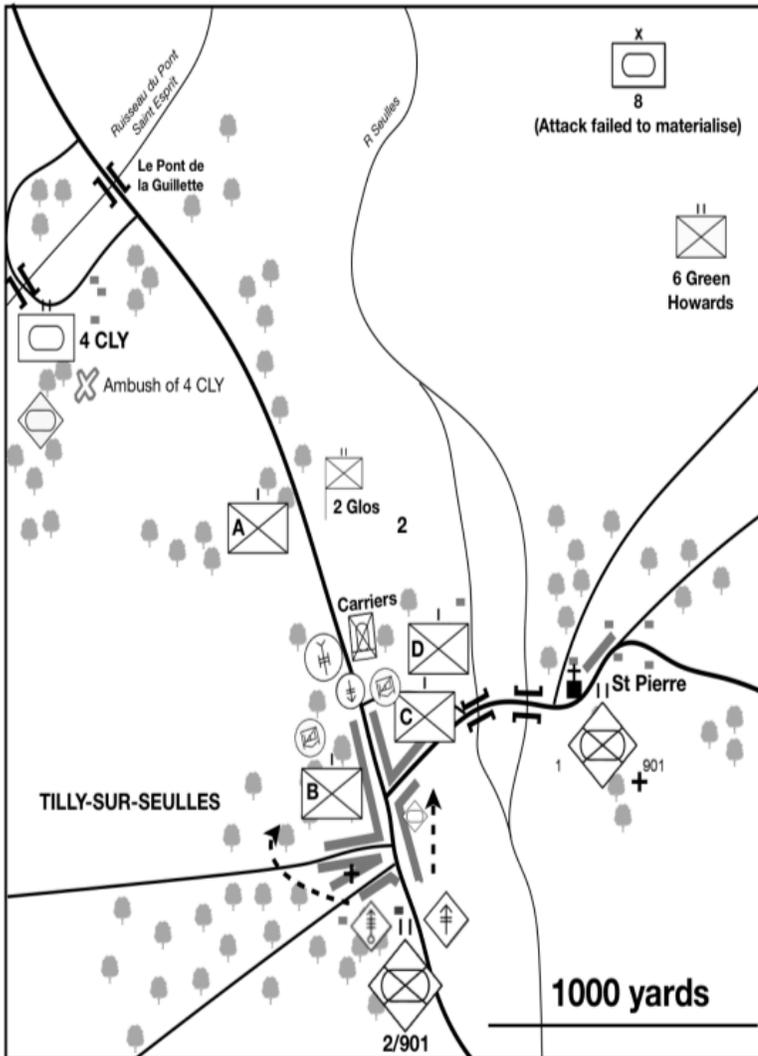
The intention of the operation was to capture Tilly to enable a breakthrough behind the enemy lines in the open tank country around Hottot-les-Bagues to the south. The means would be for the Glosters to advance down the main road towards Tilly, then for two companies each to deploy to the east and west of the main street, Rue Bayeux, into the town centre. The CLY would work its way through the fields and orchards to the west.

Getting everything in place meant that the attack did not commence until 5.15 pm on 11 June 1944, although there would be several hours of daylight left. The CLY almost immediately came under attack and four tanks were disabled close to their start line at La-Pont-de-la-Giuellette. Whether this set back necessitated the CLY coming to a complete halt is a debatable point but that it was what happened. The Glosters, however, pressed on, with Sergeant Ernie Partridge's No 3 Carrier Section leading the way, supported by a ferocious artillery bombardment.



The town of Tilly-sur-Seulles during Operation Perch June 1944.

At least one German tank was disabled in the advance, temporarily blocking the road and not before loosing off a shell previously jammed in the breach. With the tank removed, No 2 Section Carrier Platoon and the Battalion anti-tank gun positioned themselves on the slight rise that led to the ridge that then gently descended along the Rue Bayeux, to the town centre. 'A' Company covered the approach, while 'B' Coy deployed to the right and 'C' and 'D' Companies deployed to the left. German units were deployed in the houses aligning the road as well as in the adjacent orchards, with a tank concealed near to the town centre.



*The Gloucesters Action. Tilly-sur-Seulles 11 June 1944
from: Gilbert Brain, 'The Gloucestershire Regiment in Europe'.*

Further to the west the Essex attacked a copse to the north of Lingèvres but suffered casualties and made no further progress. The Green Howards, across the river to the east at Cristot, similarly made no significant progress. The Glosters came under intense mortar and Nebelwerfer fire from across the River Seulles, but two platoons from B Company fought their way to the town centre. There they came under fire from the concealed tank, although L/Cpl Rhodes, under fire, took out a halftrack at close range with a PIAT, winning the MM.

The leading companies slogged it out in the centre of the town for four and a half hours when, in the laconic words of the Battalion War Diary, the situation became 'confused'. Probably Biddle, who had come forward from his command post on the reverse slope of the rise above Tilly, came to the conclusion that his units were making no further progress and were in grave danger of being cut off. He ordered rapid withdrawal, with Sergeant Brain's No 2 Carrier Section to remain on the ridge and cover the retreat.

From Sergeant Brain's description it appears that the rifle companies were in a bad state after their several hours of battle: 'Many had lost their helmets, rifles; even tunics were missing; trousers ripped and torn, and they were in a hell of a mess.' Alone now on the ridge Sergeant Brain's section came under sustained mortar and machinegun fire and only avoided being wiped out thanks to dense hedgerow cover. On his own initiative Sergeant Brain ordered his Section to withdraw but he stayed behind to draw enemy fire. Having successfully done so for some minutes he then made his own way back, but not before he stopped to pick up and carry a wounded comrade. For his bravery in the field he was awarded the MM, the second of the day. The Glosters then consolidated in the valley near to where they had started that afternoon.

A tense night of exhaustion followed. The next day they covered another assault by the Queen's Regiment, who similarly were unable to take the town.

The Glosters sustained one officer and three other ranks killed and one officer and twenty-one other ranks wounded with five missing. In return they inflicted an unknown number of enemy casualties and took twenty-three prisoners.

So, the Glosters' first significant action after D-Day had ended in an apparent defeat, but appearances can be deceptive. The Glosters had withdrawn, but under orders. The rearguard action was a model of its kind. Morale and good discipline had been maintained, with conspicuous bravery shown by some. Furthermore, none of the other British units in action across the front had attained their objectives. The Normandy campaign would be characterised by hard battles in which opposing German units had to be either prized out with overwhelming air and artillery support, or simply whittled away by attrition. One day's setback would be neither here nor there. The 56th Brigade would return to the Tilly front a few days later and, in reversed roles, the Glosters would complete the capture of Lingèvres, after an initial costly assault by the 6 Durham Light Infantry, while the Essex would capture Tilly, by then reduced almost to total rubble, on 19 June.

The Glosters had done well at Tilly. It is not sure that the same can be said of others involved. Erskine would be later criticised for his split brigade arrangements, summed up as 'an unholy mess', while the CLY gave up very early in the assault, leaving the Glosters exposed on their right. This may be an early example of the poor performance of the 6th Armoured Division in Normandy. Various reasons have been assigned for this, including battle weariness (its units had been in near constant action for two years in North Africa and Italy), the wrong type of tank (Cromwells rather than Shermans), and poor leadership at divisional and brigade level (both Erskine and Hinde would lose their commands in mid-August). Performance improved later in the campaign but that was of no help to the 56th Brigade at Tilly.

Far from suffering after Tilly the reputation of the 2nd Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment, seems to have been enhanced. Not only were two MMs awarded for conduct during the action, but also Biddle was awarded the DSO for his handling of the battalion. This was in contrast to 2nd Essex C/O Lt Col JF Higson who was replaced on the day after the action at Lingèvres.

It would be easy to downgrade the strategic significance of Tilly as a well handled difficult but ultimately minor action at the start of an arduous campaign. That, however, would be to miss the impact it had on the Germans. The Panzer Lehr had not been planning to sit idly at Tilly and defend a line. Rather it was gearing itself up for a counter offensive intended to drive the British back into the sea. Instead it was the British that attacked first. Along with the other units engaged in Operation Perch, the Glosters at Tilly forestalled the German offensive. Weeks of hard fighting might lie ahead but the British seized the initiative around Tilly and did not let it slip thereafter. As for the Glosters they, with the other battalions of the 56th Brigade, would increasingly be recognised as an effective and reliable unit that would remain in action until Unconditional Surrender on 8 May 1945.

Dr. Tim Brain OBE

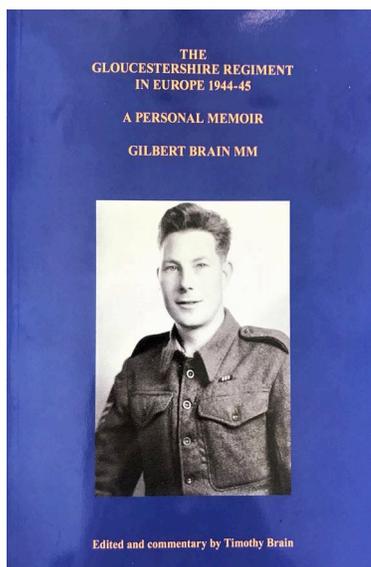
For references and further reading see Book Review of 'The Gloucestershire Regiment in Europe 1944-45'.

Book Review

THE GLOUCESTERSHIRE REGIMENT IN EUROPE 1944-45. A Personal Memoir by Gilbert Brain MM. Edited by Timothy Brain (published by Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum 2019)

For many people the success of D Day in 1944 marked the end of the fighting in North West Europe for the Allies. This, of course, is wrong, the war against the Nazis lasted a further eleven months and involved some decisive and vicious battles, not least the failed attempt to take Arnhem by Airborne Forces. Indeed, had the Nazis reacted differently to D Day they might well have driven the Allies back into the sea.

The British Forces consisted of some units who had been withdrawn from fighting in the North Africa and Sicily but the majority were newly formed and were often those who had been part of the BEF in 1940 forced to Retreat from Dunkirk. 2nd Gloucesters was one of these; the Battalion had been virtually wiped out at Cassel protecting the evacuation from Dunkirk in 1940 and had been reconstituted in the UK. Gilbert Brain MM joined the Gloucesters in 1940 and was posted to the Carrier Platoon in 2nd Gloucesters. By the time he landed with the Battalion on D Day he was a Sergeant commanding one of the sections of the platoon. His section consisted of three Universal Carriers, commonly known as Bren Gun Carriers, a couple of trucks and a dispatch rider, 15 men in all.



This is not a diary but a memoir written sometime after the War. As such it is a narrow account, often of great courage, which captures brilliantly the intensity of the fighting. What sets it apart is the editing by Dr Tim Brain, who is Gilbert's nephew and was Chief Constable of Gloucestershire from 2001-2010. He has put each of Gilbert's recollections into the wider context of what the Battalion and the Brigade were doing and so produces a coherent picture of the fighting. Furthermore, Tim Brain had added a mass of footnotes, which add clarity and references so that those who wish can easily find out more. It is an outstanding contribution the book supported by a number of Appendices.

Three things are striking. First how much was expected and delivered by such a small unit of fifteen men with their carriers;

this often required a remarkable level of courage and self-belief. Gilbert Brain was awarded the MM, but reading this account he could well have won a Bar to it. Secondly how fiercely the Nazis fought, almost to the end, not because they thought they could win the war but that they could win this individual battle. Thirdly one often hears about the difficulty of fighting in the bocage country of Normandy. This memoir illustrates how incredibly difficult it was and how quickly men who had not been in battle before needed to adapt.

By the time the war ended in 1944 2nd Gloucesters had been involved in the liberation of three cities of political and strategic significance, Bayeux, Le Havre and Arnhem.

This book, published by the SOGM (Price £12.99 plus £3.99 p&p), is strongly recommended to any student of WW2. It is available at the Museum Shop.

Maj. Gen. Robin Grist OBE

THE JCCC ARE JOINING US.

The Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC) is a MoD department located adjacent to the ARRC, behind the wire, in the Imjin Barracks complex, Innsworth. It is responsible for the handling of information about Service casualties and keeping the next of kin informed. But it also has another function which it will be displaying in the Museum.

As the dead are still discovered on the battle-fields of Flanders and France and to a lesser extent in other regions, for example Italy, the JCCC excavate the burial site and try to identify the individual from regimental badges, buttons and personal effects. They study the War Diaries of the location and take DNA samples from both the dead and the possible descendants until a hoped-for match is made. This is followed by a military funeral, with the nearest of kin present, which allows the soldier's remains to lie in a named grave to be cared for by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. This work is almost unknown by the general public, so SOGM is giving the JCCC the opportunity to show these aspects of its important function.



Watch and cap badge of a Lancashire Fusilier. Buried as an Unknown soldier who died in October 1914 during an attack on Le Touquet in Belgium.



'Christmas Tin' lid, Essex Regiment shoulder titles, pipe and toothbrush head from casualties found in Belgium. Burial is planned for November at New Irish Farm Cemetery.

Wall boards will describe the role of the JCCC and emotive items similar to the above will be displayed in a bespoke three-drawer display case and a wall mounted case, next to the SOGM medal display, in a combined exhibit named 'Sacrifice & Courage'. For the time being the buried artefacts will be displayed in a case borrowed from the National Army Museum, until funding is secured for the unit we prefer and which is ready to be ordered.

A 90-minute special programme by the producers of 'Long Lost Families' about the work of the JCCC will be shown in ITV on 4 November (subject to ITV planning etc.)

TREASURER'S REPORT

Our finances remain healthy and we are well placed to continue our support to the Museum. We continue to receive one off donations from members and would like to say many thanks, all donations are most welcome. I was able to bank £1,402 in August 2019 following the summer event at Chavenage, including donations from those unable to attend on the evening.

For those of you who pay for your membership annually may I remind you that membership was due in June and can be paid as follows:

- By cheque made payable to 'The Friends of the Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum' forwarded to the Friends at the Museum address 'Custom House, 31, Commercial Road, Gloucester, GL1 2HE'.
- Over the internet through the Museum website at www.soldiersofglos.com follow the link to the Friends' page on the Museum's Home page.
- By Banker's Standing Order. To save having to remember the need to renew your subscription why not complete a Banker's Standing Order Mandate? Please contact: enquiries@sogm.co.uk
- Direct to the Friends bank account – Lloyds Bank Eastgate Street Gloucester. Sort code – 309348. Account Number - 01371982 Account Name - Friends of the Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum. Please remember to add your name and or membership number in the reference box.

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

Patrick Smart

MUSEUM DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Summer 2019 has been a successful period for the Museum, with income still increasing month on month, and visitor numbers significantly improved compared to the last year.

'The Sphinx Trail: SPY Challenge' ran throughout the summer holidays, and including three different hands-on trails through the museum galleries, which many visitors enjoyed. We had 27% more visitors this August compared to last, and overall income was up by 72%! The museum front of house team was supported by two extra members of staff for 8 weeks over the summer, courtesy of two summer internship placements from the University of Gloucestershire. The interns were paid the National Living Wage by the University throughout their placement and the museum benefitted from some much-needed extra hands. We are hoping to repeat this next summer as it proved extremely useful.

Our two new structured Primary Education sessions have launched at the museum and we've welcomed our first classes of primary children to the museum. These two sessions focus on WWI and WWII and are being taught by two freelance members of staff – both of whom have past teaching experience and have a thorough understanding of the National Curriculum. We are hopeful that we'll add additional sessions over the next 6 months and offer these out to Secondary Schools.

The last weekend of August saw us play host to hundreds of Gloucestershire Regiment Veterans, as Gloucester Day was celebrated throughout the city. This is a historic day that marks the end of the Siege of Gloucester and is also the one day a year that's been adopted by

many Glosters as the Annual Reunion. We operated an outdoor bar all day and, with the help of Gloucester Brewery, we were able to serve cask 'Back Badge' ale on site. A group of Gloster Veterans held a raffle at their evening event the same day and have donated £211 to the museum as a result. A big thank you to everyone who was involved with the organisation of the raffle. We are also about to receive a grant from the Friends to cover the cost of the new outdoor card machines and till points, which we operated throughout Gloucester Day. Now we have these, we will now be able to take card payments in a much more efficient way when running outdoor events for the museum. So, a very big thank you to all the Friends for their continued support.

Vicki Hopson

The Long Room is for Hire

Need a location for a corporate lunch or dinner?

Need to present a seminar or lecture?



Hire of Regimental Boardroom

Capacity - 20 for boardroom & dining layout, 25 for lecture layout & 30 for 'club' layout. The Regimental Boardroom can be hired between the hours of 9am and 5pm, 7 days a week, for a minimum of three hours per booking. Catering options are available.

It is a unique space with an atmosphere like none you'll find elsewhere in the City. It is also available between the hours of 5pm and 11pm, but, as the whole venue needs to be opened to facilitate a hire during these hours, the Museum venue hire fee applies.

Hire of Museum Venue

Capacity - 100. The entire Museum venue is available for hire from 6pm until late each evening. This will give you and your party exclusive access to all museum galleries for the duration of your hire. Why not hire the Museum to host a birthday party or anniversary?



For prices and booking form please contact: enquiries@sogm.co.uk