

*Friends of the*  
**Mercian Regiment Museum (Worcestershire)**  
**Newsletter No. 4** **May 2014**



**Mercian Regiment**



**Worcestershire and  
Sherwood Foresters  
Regiment**



**Worcestershire  
Regiment**

● ***From the Curator***

With the fast approaching centenary of the outbreak of the Great War our thoughts and efforts are increasingly directed to marking this important anniversary. The museum is a partner in a Heritage Lottery funded project called **Worcester World War 100** which is a country wide initiative to mark the centenary of the War and to record its impact on the county of Worcestershire. Our contribution will be small exhibitions focussing on the major battles in which the regiment was involved commencing with Gheluvelt in 1914.

It is not surprising that such a significant anniversary has awakened the public's interest, and the museum is now receiving numerous donations of material relating to the War. Of these I would like to highlight two groups of material relating to individual private soldiers who both served with the regiment and survived the war.

The first of these is Private 8297 John Hayes also known as "Sapper Hayes". In November 2013, Mrs Lynne Hall, his granddaughter, presented to the museum a photograph of John Hayes, together with a group of four medals including a DCM and an Imperial Service medal, the latter being accompanied by the letter of award from Brigadier Ivan de la Bere of the Imperial Service Order. Also in the accession is a Princess Mary's gift box, distributed at Christmas 1914, John Hayes' demob certificate, dated 6<sup>th</sup> March 1919, and a number of newspaper cuttings. One of these records that Sapper Hayes was awarded the Russian Order of St George for saving the life of a Russian Officer in 1915, but, sadly, the Russian decoration is not present in the deposit. These items have the accession numbers 2014-1(1-12) and are a welcome addition to our collection.



*Private John Hayes*

The second is Private 52324 Percy Godwin who served with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion. His medals and other memorabilia were given to the Museum by his grandson, Howard Seaman of Great Dunmow in



*Private Percy Godwin and his POW biscuit (opposite)*

Essex. Once again there is a Princess Mary brass Christmas gift box, but this time it is accompanied by the Christmas card from, and photograph of, Princess Mary. There are two medals, a Worcestershire Regiment cap-badge and two pieces of 'trench art': a cigarette lighter made from a large calibre bullet and a skittle stand made from a 12 pound shell case. Although these items are important additions to the growing museum collection, perhaps the *pièces de résistance* are the sniper's bullet which wounded Percy Godwin in the leg, leading to his capture in no-mans-land and to him spending the



rest of the war as a POW, and his last issue of POW bread/biscuit which he kept as a souvenir of his incarceration. After the war Percy Godwin had the bullet

which had been removed from his leg mounted as a tie-pin. His items have the accession numbers 2014-67(1-12).



*Percy Godwin's memorabilia including the 'trench art' cigarette lighter and the bullet tiepin.*

Finally, the Museum has been presented with the medals, three photographs, two booklets and a short typescript of 'memories' belonging to WO 2 Albert Grice who died in Kidderminster on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2014, aged 89; his son, Mr John Grice, brought the objects to the museum. One of the

medals is a long service and good conduct medal which was presented to Albert Grice at Minden, Germany, in October 1963, by Colonel J D Miller.

Albert Grice signed up on 29th June 1940 when he was *just short of his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday*. No one questioned his youthful looks and he was sent for training and allotted to the 70<sup>th</sup> (Young Soldiers) Battalion of the Dorsetshire Regiment. It was not until he was 'officially' 20 (in reality only just 18) that he joined an active battalion and transferred to the 8<sup>th</sup> Worcestershires. His success in weapons training led to his appointment as a sergeant instructor in June 1943.

In 1947 he entered the Reserve, but rejoined 1st Worcestershires, serving with C Company in Germany, British Guyana and Jamaica. Albert Grice left the Army in 1966 and was then employed in the steel industry.

Albert Grice was a regular member of the Regimental shooting team, who were joint winners of the Prince of Wales Cup in 1954 (see photograph below). In 1955 he won the individual sub-machine gun championship at Bisley.



*Left: Medals of WO 2 Albert Grice Right: Depot Shooting Team, Winners of the Prince of Wales Cup in 1954. Back row: Cpl Symondson, LCpl Shepherd, LCpl Shields. Seated: [unknown], Capt P G Dunn, Major A H Nott, Sgt Bell, Sgt Grice*

## ● **Exhibition Review**



If you are in London between now and the 15<sup>th</sup> June, seize the opportunity to visit an exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery entitled **The Great War in Portraits**. It is not too big to give you cultural indigestion, but you will have a feast of both iconic and little known images that will leave a lasting impression. And if you want to prolong the experience the fully illustrated exhibition handbook costs only £18.95.

The exhibition is divided into five sections entitled: Royalty and the Assassin; Leaders and Followers; Fact and Fiction; The Valiant and the Damned; Tradition and the Avant-Garde; and in the handbook the catalogue is preceded by sixty pages of illustrated foreword and introductory discussion. You will (I hope) be repulsed and shocked by the hideousness of war, as well as uplifted by the images of heroism and the heroic. It is an opportunity not to be missed.

A number of the paintings and drawings are by the official War Artist William Orpen (1878-1931) (seen here) who was an established portrait artist before the war. He was knighted in 1918.

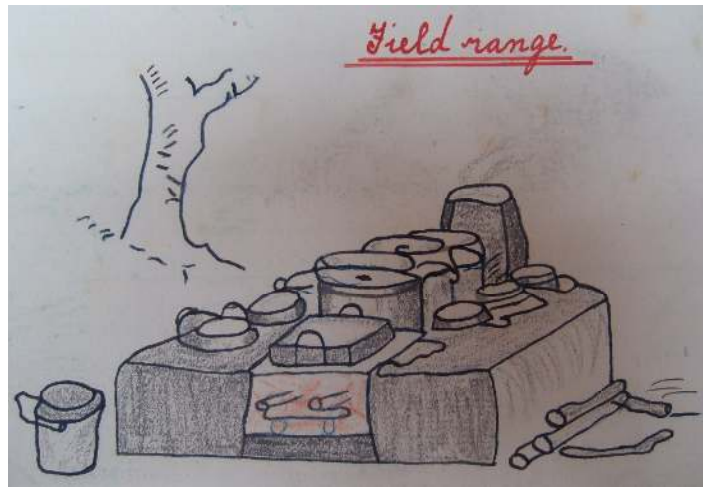
## • From the Archives

Among the fascinating items in the archives is a manuscript cookery book written at Poona, India, in October 1917 by Private H Beard 34176 of the 9<sup>th</sup> Worcestershire Regiment. The whole book is written in beautiful copper plate script with headings and marginal lines in red ink and the recipes and instructions in black. The book covers every detail possible to do with general kitchen management, including carefully executed drawings of boilers and stoves, and the setting up of field kitchens.

Detailed diet sheets indicate the wide variety of food on offer three times a day to satisfy 60 hungry soldiers. Recipes include the making of jams and chutneys, as well as delicious sounding cakes and a variety of scones and breads.

Good hygiene was obviously vital, especially in the field, and the 170 pages are full of interesting detail, all a far cry from the culinary delights of those in the front line of the Western Front where the supply of rations was often erratic and the menu basic in the extreme.

When did Private Beard find time to write this piece of fascinating military history and cook three meals a day for a hungry company? We will never know, but for the sake of nostalgia, and to remember Private Beard 34176, how about trying one of his recipes for supper tonight. On offer is Stuffed *Brinjals*, or is it *Bringals*? But first you will have to catch your Brinjal. Perhaps one of the S E Asian food shops in the Wylde Lane area of the city will be able to help. And for the first person to identify a Brinjal, the prize is a vegetarian samosa.



31/ A company diet sheet from the 5<sup>th</sup> to

Detail	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	
Breakfast	No 1 Section	Buttlets	Porridge	bold meat
	No 2. "	Butter + B eggs	butlets	Porridge
	No 3 "	bold meat	Butter + B eggs	butlets
	No 4 "	Porridge	bold meat	Butter + B eggs
Dinner	No 1 Section	Pea soup baked meat + Pot Rice Pudding	Dish stew Bread + butter Pudding	meat Pie vegetables
	No 2 Section	Sea pies	Pea soup Baked meat + Potatoes Rice Pudding	Dish stew Bread + butter Pudding
	No 3 Section	meat Pie + Vegetables	Sea pies	Pea soup Baked meat + Potatoes Rice Pudding
	No 4 Section	Dish stew Bread + butter Pudding	meat Pie and vegetable	Sea pies
	Sea	Butter	bold meat	dripping

131 Brinjals, stuffed  
 Wash, dry, and cut the brinjals into halves length ways, remove the insides and mince with the meat and onions, season with pepper and salt, place the mixture in the brinjals, brush over with egg bread crumbs. place in the oven for 1 hour.  
 Serve with brown gravy.

Henry Beard was born in Taynton (Gloucs) in 1887. He married Bertha Lane in 1913 at Longhope (Gloucs) and signed up for the army in 1915. He was initially posted to the 1<sup>st</sup> Garrison Battalion of the Worcesters in 1916, and in the same year was transferred to the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion. In November 1916 he was posted to the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion in Mesopotamia and then sent to India. He was discharged as sergeant on 28<sup>th</sup> December 1919 being described as "of very good character."

## • ***From the Archives***

During the Great War, the Amalgamated Press Ltd published a weekly magazine called ***The Great War*** which was copiously illustrated with black and white or sepia photographs, portraits, maps and artists' illustrations. The Museum Library and Archives hold a broken run of this magazine, although it is possible that the missing issues will turn up in some of the boxes as yet unpacked since the move from Norton Barracks.



In an article in 1915 (Part 57, p.241) on the French advance towards Lens and the Battle of *The Labyrinth* (between Vimy and Arras), the author questioned the use of red for uniforms. While the British troops wore khaki and the Germans field-grey, one 'old French artillery general' insisted on their infantry wearing bright red trousers. The author discusses the risk of death from your own guns when advancing to attack the German lines. "But if the charging infantry had a bright uniform, as the French troops had, their artillery-men, working light field guns fairly close to the line of combat, could see with their own eyes the position of their own infantry and then place the shells twenty yards or so in front of them..." The red trousers, however, were excellent targets for enemy snipers.

A relatively recent book, ***Forgotten Voices of the Great War***, by Max Arthur, published by the Imperial War Museum in 2003, has contemporary evidence for this; Private Frank Dolbau of the French Army tells how "At our first battle at Morhange on 19<sup>th</sup> of August [1914], unsupported by artillery, against heavily fortified positions, we had attacked. We were shot down like rabbits because you know for them we were a real target, as we had red trousers on. When we were fired at we were like sitting ducks in the field, you see."

Another witness at the Battle of Le Cateau on 25<sup>th</sup> August, Sergeant Thomas Painting of the King's Royal Rifle Corps, wrote "During the day we saw our first

French troops. I was surprised to see them and what they were wearing. Their cavalry went into action with their cuirasses and plumed helmets; the infantry wore red trousers, a long blue overcoat and were wearing their war medals from the African campaign. They were going into action at Guise with no camouflage. But they suffered badly and had to retire."

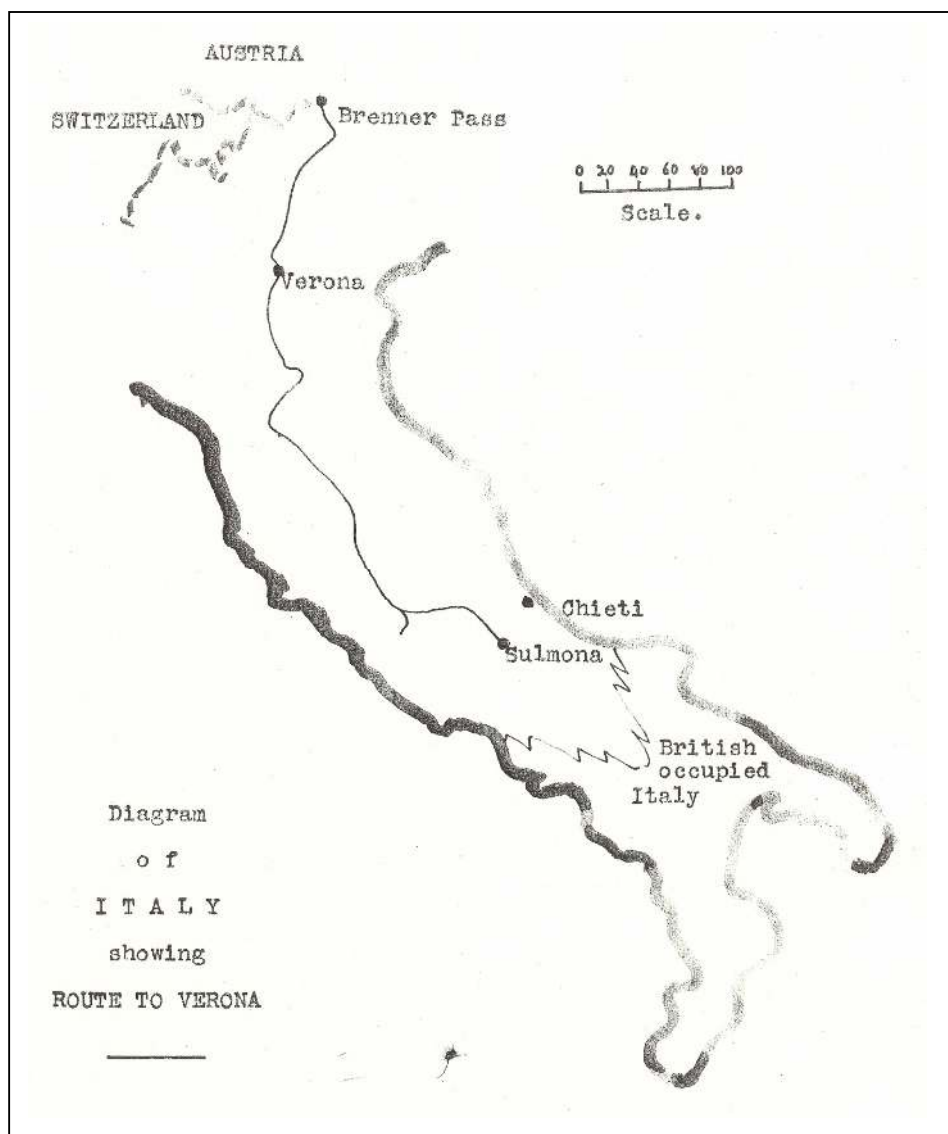
*NB From 1914 to 1919, John Alexander Hammerton and Herbert Wrigley Wilson were joint editors of the periodical ***The Great War: The Standard History of the All-Europe Conflict***, published by the Amalgamated Press. The first volume was largely concerned with justifying Britain's entry into the war, and with encouraging the British people to sign up and fight. It ran to 13 volumes altogether. In 1933, John Alexander Hammerton published ***A Popular History of the Great War*** (in 6 volumes). In his introduction to volume 1, he concedes that ***The Great War***, as the set of thirteen massive volumes was known, now requires to be largely re-written in light of later knowledge and so the Popular History was written "embodying the gist of post-war revelations and official documents" Each of the volumes covers a specific period: (1) *The First Phase: 1914*; (2) *Extension of the Struggle: 1915*; (3) *The Allies at Bay: 1916*; (4) *A Year of Attrition: 1917*; (5) *The Year of Victory: 1918*; (6) *The Armistice and After*. The complete work comprises 3,840 pages of text, along with over 100 maps and diagrams and some 800 photographic illustrations.*

## • **Recollections**

### A daring escape continued

Capt Bill Bowen and Lieut Richard Weeks were members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion The Worcestershire Regiment who were taken prisoner at Tobruk in 1942 and sent to a POW camp in Italy. An article in the last Newsletter described their escape from a train taking them to Germany in October 1943. They were on the run for five months and Richard Weeks later wrote an account of this time, a copy of which is now in the Museum archives.<sup>1</sup>

Following their escape from the train they found themselves near Verona. They decided to head south in the hope of meeting up with Allied Forces who had already landed in Southern Italy. A sympathetic farmer gave them some civilian clothes, food and a map and within a couple of days they met up with some other British soldiers who took them to a large farm where they were sheltering. On arrival the Signora insisted that they should stay for dinner. Richard Weeks describes this event thus:



*Richard Weeks' map of their train journey from Sulmona until they escaped near Verona*

*Now this dinner was a very memorable occasion. There was in the village an enormous stable the height of a three-storey house built to stable about three dozen horses. On one end of it was a great barn where the hay was stacked right up to the roof. When the time for dinner arrived a large bale of straw with two smaller ones were set out for a table and chairs. To right and left enormous cart-horses stamped and champed at their fodder. The Signora explained that it was not safe to have us in the mansion where there were so many people whose politics were uncertain.*

*She then disappeared and returned with a snowy tablecloth, plates, cutlery and wine-glasses; then she vanished again to fetch the meal. When we fell to (it was excellent) there was a small crowd of villagers standing closely about us to watch us eat, for they were all keenly interested in the new arrivals. We had never*

<sup>1</sup> Major A R Weeks TD, *Five Months At Large*, typescript, Museum Inventory No. 2005-183

*felt so like mediaeval kings, for our uneven table would not allow us to stand our wine-glasses on it, so we had to hand them to the nearest child to hold for us until we had occasion for them again, and all this in a huge, mediaeval building by lamplight amid a strong savour of horses.*

*The rays of the candle that illuminated our table nobly defied the shadows, which seemed to be stealthily gathering to overwhelm it. The dim walls and ponderous rafters over our heads retreated to a remote distance until the stable assumed the dimensions of a cathedral, echoing with the eerie sounds of the great animals that shuffled and snorted in their stalls. No scene of the banquets of savage chieftains in their sombre palaces that is described in the dark pages of the *Mabinogion*<sup>2</sup> does justice to that which surrounded us as we sat in the centre of the tiny throng and accepted our goblets from the hands of the nearest bystander, like princes of the middle age. Yet the gloom added glamour and an air of romantic adventure to our circumstances. Triumph and gaiety were enthroned in our hearts; liberty, good wine and the company of finely bred ladies were ours; the humiliation and abject misery of a certain railway journey was a cloudy recollection belonging to a distant period of our lives. Here was a moment that would make our grandchildren wonder to see our eyes suddenly brighten, when we become mumbling, remembering old men.*

Following this uplifting occasion, Weeks and Bowen continued on their way south keeping to mountains, living off the land and relying for food and shelter on the generosity of Italian peasants who faced severe reprisals from the Germans for helping Allied POWs.

## • ***The Home Front in WW1***

The effect of The Great War on families at home was significant. In Part 60 (p.318) of ***The Great War: The Standard History of the All-Europe Conflict*** (see above) is an article entitled ***The War and the Worker***. This describes problems created by the war for those at home, such as the use of trainee soldiers on the land, wages, the regulation of coal prices, and 'the lure of drink'. It also reports on the rise in food prices since the start of the war. During one year



*Queuing for food*

there were substantial price rises: tea rose by 20% and milk by 11%, flour was 45% dearer than in the previous year and sugar 68% dearer, beef and mutton rose by 40% and fish by 60%. On average, retail prices for food had risen by 34% in one year. The author writes "Ample employment, good wages, but on the other hand high prices for food and other necessities describe the condition of the worker during the first year of The Great War." It was not all bad, however; one woman is reported as saying "Thirty bob a week and my husband away, why it's paradise!"

*'Twas ever thus: the editor's great great grandmother is remembered for having reminisced that "the rise in the price of flour caused by the Crimean War was ruinous for poor families."*

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<sup>2</sup> The ***Mabinogion*** is the title given to a collection of eleven prose stories collated from medieval Welsh manuscripts. The tales draw on pre-Christian Celtic mythology, international folktale motifs, and early medieval historical traditions. While some details may hark back to older Iron Age traditions, each of these tales is the product of a highly developed medieval Welsh narrative tradition, both oral and written. They tell of a 'heroic age' and hence the allusion by Richard Weeks.

- **The 2014 AGM** took place on Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> March and was attended by 16 Friends who were welcomed by the chairman, Lt Col Keith Jeavons, who explained that a committee had been formed and would be put to a ballot at the 2015 AGM. The acting treasurer, Major Bob Prophet, gave a brief overview of the accounts and the curator, Dr John Paddock, informed the meeting about an important, and possibly unique, early 19C belt plate for the 36<sup>th</sup> that has been offered to the museum. Following a short discussion, a motion to purchase the belt plate from the Friends' funds was approved. This purchase will be described in the next *Newsletter*.



L to R: Lt Col Brian Clarke, speaker, with Lt Col Keith Jeavons, chairman, and Major Dick Fox, who proposed a vote of thanks to the lecturer. The lecture room was packed with Friends and their guests and with a number of visitors who had seen the event advertised.

Following the AGM, Lt Col Brian Clarke, delivered an illustrated lecture on ***The 29<sup>th</sup> Foot in the Penninsular War: the 1808 campaign from First Blood to Battle Honours***. In August 1808 Britain landed an expeditionary force under the command of Lt.-Gen. Sir Arthur Wellesley at the mouth of the Mondego river in Portugal. Moving south towards Lisbon, Wellesley defeated Delaborde at Roliça on 17th August before turning to the mouth of the Maceira river to protect the landing of reinforcements. On 21st August, Wellesley's position around Vimeiro Hill was attacked from the east by Junot. The Battle of Vimeiro was the first occasion on which Napoleonic offensive tactics combining skirmishers, columns and supporting artillery fire failed against the British infantry line and Wellesley's defensive skills.

- **The 2014 Programme**

**PLEASE SUPPORT THE LECTURES AND BRING YOUR FRIENDS**

**Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014 7.00pm Dancox House**

Dr John Paddock and members of the team of volunteers will talk about items in the stored collections on which they are working. Actual objects will be available for inspection, including the recently purchased Brown Bess musket from the Napoleonic Wars. This is an opportunity to learn what it is that the team of volunteers do, and perhaps think about joining them.

**Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014 7.00pm Dancox House**

Major John Cotterill will deliver a lecture entitled ***Advance at the Double; the Counter Attack of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion The Worcestershire Regiment at Gheluvelt seen from a century on***.

It is October 31st 1914 and the German advance across Belgium towards France has reached the village of Gheluvelt on the outskirts of Ypres. The Battle here is significant as it marks the nearest that the German army came to breaking through Allied lines at Ypres until 1918. At Gheluvelt, the retreat was stopped by a brave counter-attack by 354 men of the Worcestershire Regiment who charged the advancing German troops (more than three times their number) by running across open ground with bayonets fixed while under machine gun fire. A third of the Worcesters died in the counter-attack, but they repelled the German push and closed the gap in the line.

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