



Newsletter

No. 7

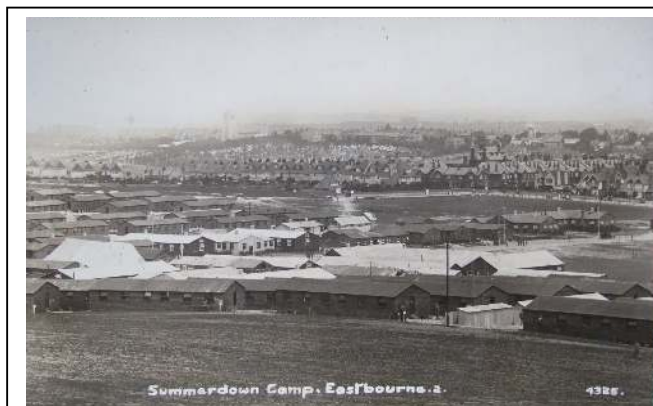
May 2015

- ***New Acquisitions***

In March this year, the Museum registered a collection of postcards, letters, albums and other archival items relating to the service of Private George Alexander Keen (no. 11621) who enlisted in September 1909 and was discharged in January 1921 after ‘ten years and 111 days’ with a certificate recording that ‘his character during this period has been very good. [He] Is a reliable hard-working man & is trustworthy, willing and intelligent. [He] Is well educated & qualified in supply duties’. Besides the character reference (WOSWR: 2014-316-3), there are a third class certificate of education awarded in June 1910 (316-11), a service sheet from the coronation durbar at Delhi in December 1911 (316-4), a certificate of competence in supply duties awarded at Rhaniket, India, in September 1912 (3216-12), and a form accompanying the 1915 Star awarded to ‘Pte G A Keen 11621’ which was dated May 1920. From captions to some of the photographs we know that George Keen was at Southampton in May 1915 when he was already a corporal (316) and that he arrived at Summerdown Camp, Eastbourne, from Southampton, on 22nd June 1915 and that he was still there in July. Sadly, however, several of the photographs are



Cpl. George Alexander Keen, Southampton, 30th May 1915



Summerdown Camp, Eastbourne, 1915



15th July 1915 (presumed to be at Summerdown Camp)

not dated. The Victory Medal Roll indicates that George A Keen served in the 4th Battalion, then the 3rd Battalion and finally the 4th Battalion again. But his WW1 Medal Roll index card tells us that he served at Gallipoli and that he went there on 25th April 1915 which is the date of the start of the battle when the 4th Battalion went into action. This conflicts with the dates on the postcards written by George and must remain a mystery. By the end of the war, George Keen had been promoted to sergeant.

George Keen had a sweetheart called Olive and from the marriage registration records on the www we know that he married Olive Caldicott at (or in the district of) Evesham in the summer of 1919. Whether they raised a family will emerge when the 1921 (and later) census records are made available.

Also in March, Mrs Elma Shaw and Mrs Marguerite Clarke of Kidderminster presented the Museum with a small archive belonging to their late father, Bandsman Alfred John Turner, consisting of his attestation certificate, photographs, postcards, ephemera, and his army spoon stamped with his unit and number 1WR 10171. Items like the spoon are so important to a Museum to illustrate the daily life of the soldiers which is too often overlooked in official histories.



Alfred Turner was born in Blackfriars, London, in January 1891 (traditionally on the 8th although the family later suspected it was really the 12th). He was brought up in an orphanage in London and



enlisted in the Worcestershire Regiment as a musician for 12 years on 17th September 1906 when he was 15 years and 8 months old. Photographs show Alfred Turner as a boy, presumably in 1906, and then some years later complete with moustache and having reached the rank of Lance Corporal. This photograph shows him with a topee and probably dates from the end of the Great War when he returned from Egypt. As Alfred Turner was a bandsman, playing the trombone, his family has always assumed that he was a stretcher bearer when on active service. The WWI Medal Rolls index card, however, shows that Alfred Turner received the

1915 Star and the Victory medal and that he served in a unit called the MFP. This was the Military Foot Police who were men of exemplary character drawn from other regiments.

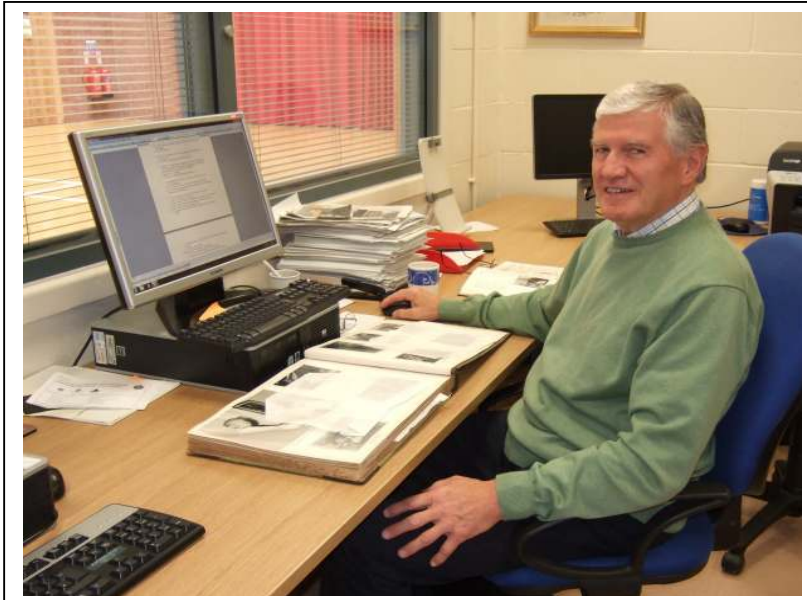
The photo of the band of the 1st Battalion the Worcestershire Regiment, presumably taken before the war, has two trombonists on the back row.



Alfred Turner married Gladys Pearce in Birmingham in the summer of 1918 and they had a daughter, Elma, a son, Denis, and an adopted daughter, Marguerite. After leaving the army, Alfred Turner worked for Lucas' (motor parts manufacturers) for many years, and subsequently for Cadbury's. He remained a keen trombonist all his life playing in the bands at Lucas' and Cadbury's and also for the Langley Silver Prize band. He had several different uniforms and sometimes had to rush home to change for a second engagement in the same day. He was still playing in Cadbury's orchestra in his 70s. Alfred John Turner died in 1975 aged 84.

• **Volunteer Gallery**

Peter Lockyer joined the Royal Electrical Mechanical Engineers in 1960, aged 15, to undertake a mechanical engineering apprenticeship. He became a regular in 1963 and went on to artificer training. In 1969-70 he undertook a 'fast-track' engineering course. Among other places, he served as an NCO in Germany, Aden and Northern Ireland. Peter was commissioned in 1978, and again



served around the world in many engineering appointments. He retired as a Lt. Col. in 2000.

He then tried two or three jobs in 'civvy street' before joining the Civil Service to head up the Army Medal Office. Here he supervised the merger of the formerly separate Army, Navy and Air Force Medal Offices to create one organisation, the tri-service MOD Medal Office. He found this to be one of the most interesting and rewarding appointments of his career with the responsibility of upholding the integrity of the United Kingdom medal system. He was at the centre of all issues dealing with

the award criteria and, in particular, he was engaged in the design, development, production, and distribution of the Elizabeth Cross and Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal. The latter required the delivery of some 500,000 medals across the whole Government in 3 months, something never before achieved. Peter finally retired in October 2011.

As is the wont with busy people, it was not long before a series of coincidences brought Peter into Dancox house at the end of 2013 as a volunteer where his knowledge of IT was put to good work on rationalising the office computer systems. Hitherto, the availability to the volunteers of several computers shared by all meant that the hard drive filing was in a mess with more than one version of the same document frequently being stored in different places on the system. Peter spent a year reconciling five stand-alone computers and creating order out of chaos. Now we need a 'policy documentation process chart' to avoid the same thing happening again.

Peter's current project is to make electronic indexes of the mountain of photograph albums in the store. Anyone who has tried to find photographs as part of their research will know how long the process can take, and how often one is unrewarded. This project will not be finished in a year!

• **TO ALL EBAY USERS – PLEASE HELP THE MUSEUM WHEN YOU SELL ON EBAY**

The Museum is now registered on Ebay as a charity so if you are an Ebay seller you can chose to donate between 10% and 100% of your selling price to the Museum. This means the Museum gets a donation and you get a percentage of your selling fees returned.

To add the Museum as your chosen charity is very easy. When creating your listing, under the section 'Choose a Format' and 'Price' there is a part entitled 'Raise Money for your Favourite Charity'. Click the 'Select another Charity' and chose Mercian Regiment Museum (Worcestershire) and you are away.

- **A Man and his Medals: Lt Col Allen Whitty, DSO, Worcestershire Regiment 1884-1932, soldier and marksman**



Winning team for the Queen Victoria Cup in 1904. Back row: Cpl. Jewsbury, Col.Sgt. Sleet, Sgt. Bills, Lance Cpl. Bowcott, Seated: Col. Sgt. Stone, Lt. Whitty, Sgt. Payton, Col. Sgt. Booth

The Daily Telegraph wrote of Colonel Whitty shortly before his death on 22 July 1949 under the heading 'Oldest Marksman': "There is general regret at Bisley that Lt Col Allen Whitty, formerly of the Worcestershire Regiment is absent through illness from this year's meeting of the Army Rifle Association, which he has attended regularly for nearly half a century. At 82 he is probably the oldest active marksman in the country, and competed last year at the National Rifle Association's meeting. He won his first prize for shooting in Jersey in 1884. His last success was at the running man target at Bisley last year. In 1891 Col Whitty was awarded the BPRC Championship Gold Medal. He repeated his success two years later. Col Whitty had captained the Army Eight for several years. He was said to be **The Finest Rifle Shooting Coach The Service has Produced.**" (Extract from the Obituary in *Firm*, Vol 16, No 3, October 1949).

We are fortunate at the Museum to have Lt Col Whitty's service decorations and medals and his shooting awards. Amongst the latter is his Army Rifle Association Eights Jewel with an incredible 32 dated bars spanning 1898 to 1946, illustrated below; 16 occasions a team member between 1897-1920; Captain 1924-1928; Coach 1929 to 1946! What a fantastic record. He was a revolver marksman too; a second Army Rifle Association Jewel we hold is the Whitehead Revolver Challenge Cup Jewel with 20 dated bars awarded to him between 1902 and 1946, again as team member, Captain or Coach. And a further 26 shooting awards are held, including for the 3rd Battalion's award-winning years.

Allen Whitty was a Martley lad, an orphan and a blacksmith's apprentice at Bransford before enlisting at Norton Barracks in 1884, not yet 17. When he retired from Army Service on 4 May 1932, aged 65, he had completed 48 years; 37 with the Regular Battalions followed by 11 as the Recruiting Officer of

the Regiment. A Colour Sergeant at age 23 and RSM of 1 WORC in 1896, he was clearly material for 'Promotion from the Ranks' and was duly commissioned as Hon Lieutenant and Quartermaster in 1900 on the formation of the 3rd Battalion. Whitty then served with the 3rd Battalion at its various stations until the outbreak of WW1. In this period the Battalion had a splendid shooting record.

With 3 WORC, as Hon Capt and QM, he joined the BEF in France in August 1914 and, with only one short break in 1915, served with them until March 1918. By this stage of the war he had been twice promoted for service in the field, thus Hon Lt Col and QM, he had been three times mentioned in despatches and awarded his DSO. The Museum holds a typed copy of his WW1 diary which has been turned into a book: ***A Quartermaster at the Front: the diary of Lt Col Allen Whitty, Worcestershire Regiment 1914-1919***, edited with notes and maps by Edwin Astill, Reville Press, Eastbourne, 2011 (see review below). Subsequently he served in a staff appointment which took him into post-war Germany before, in January 1920, he rejoined the Regiment, being posted to the 4th Battalion.

Left and below: Allen Whitty's Army Rifle Association Eights Jewel with 32 dated bars spanning 1898 to 1946





From May 1921 he was the Recruiting Officer at Worcester for the 29th Recruiting Area and, later, Chief Recruiting Officer of the South Midland Recruiting Zone additional to his Worcestershire Recruiting work. He held these latter posts until May 1932 when, age 65, he finally retired.

What a grand example he must have been to young recruits. Perhaps he would say 'No matter your starting point, work hard and keep your nose clean and you will get your due desserts. And it will help if you can shoot better than the next man'!

*Lt.Col. Allen Whitty in 1932 (from **FIRM 4** (July 1932) p.149)*

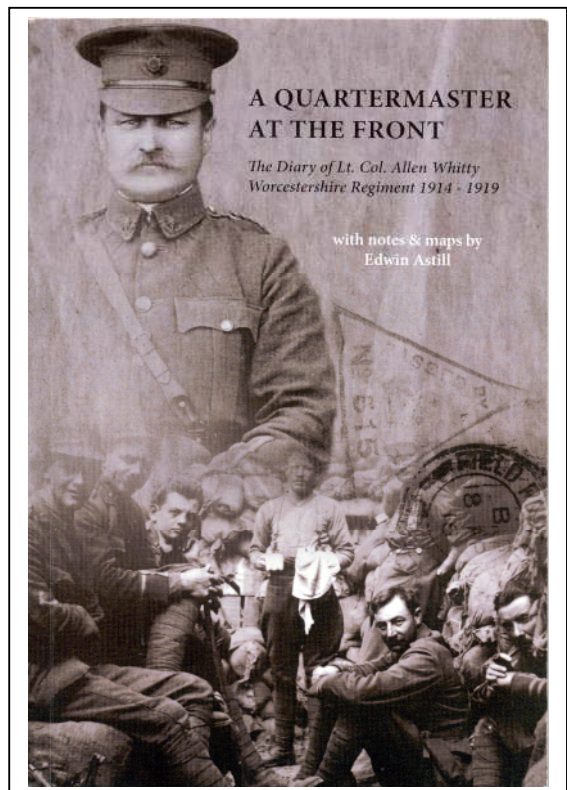
- ***Book Review: A Quartermaster at the Front: The Diaries of Lt. Col. Allen Whitty, Worcestershire Regiment 1914-1919,*** with notes and maps by Edwin Astill, Reveille Press, Eastbourne, 2011, ISBN 978-1-908336-21-7

This diary was approached with some concern in case it turned out to be a daily commentary of the more mundane interspersed with episodes of high drama. Whilst this *is* true, it turned out to be so much more as you become engrossed both with routine and excitement and then as relieved as the soldiers themselves when life took a quieter turn away from the front line.

As Allen Whitty was a Quartermaster, his recounting of events has a certain detachment; as if he were an embedded reporter with the Regiment, and his diary includes what he has personally witnessed, heard about, believes might be going on and why, plus his thoughts and opinions. The notes added by Edwin Astill provide a useful insight that time has given to events. The end notes aid understanding and are recommended reading as they often include details of individuals referred to by Allen Whitty; many relate to those who died or were wounded so they are properly recognised individuals.

Right from the start the confusion and disarray of war is well conveyed, including the hit and miss of provisioning the Regiment when everyone was on the move and communications were difficult. He speaks of the beauty of the French countryside consciously destroyed to create defensive lines. These early entries are fuller, and notably gripping, reflecting the fluid nature of the war until November 1914. Sadly throughout this period listings of officers killed or wounded seem endless.

Any obsession with weather is as nothing compared to its impact within the diary. The episodes of freezing cold, snow, and continuous heavy rain created truly grim conditions in which to survive and impossible conditions over which to move supplies and men. The value of recognition and praise is often referred to and the difference it makes to soldiers, including comments by Sir John French and a passing visit by the King.





*Ammunition supply in deep mud in 1916 (Official photograph in **The Great War**, vol 10, by H W Wilson and J A Hammerton, London, 1918, p340*

Periods of leave are taken throughout the war and, in the circumstances, you have to wonder how anyone came back.

By July 1915 these periods of leave became more frequent because high casualties amongst officers meant that the turn of those left “had come round more quickly than usual”.

Battles are described and reflected upon, such as Spanbroek Molen, the Somme, and Messines. You are very aware as the diary goes on, of increasing use of air power and bombing and the never-ending routines/rotation of trench warfare plus problems faced by the civilian population escaping from, or caught up in, battle areas.

Allen Whitty was 51 years old by the time of the armistice and he had remained active throughout the war. It is thus a particular sadness that he lost his wife at this time; he returned home on 10th November 1918 only to find she had died the previous night. This is a book from which to learn and appreciate with never an urge to skip pages.

• ***From the Curator***

A new and exciting display to mark the centenary of the Gallipoli Campaign is now open in the Worcestershire Soldier galleries at Worcester City Museum and Art Gallery. In it you will discover stories of sacrifice and fortitude in appalling conditions and see some unique relics from the battle.

At dawn on 25 April 1915, Allied troops landed on the Gallipoli peninsula in Turkey. The campaign was part of a strategy intended to allow Allied ships to pass through the Dardanelles, capture Constantinople (now Istanbul) and thereby knock Ottoman Turkey out of the war. Trench warfare quickly took hold and casualties mounted steadily. In the summer heat, conditions became intolerable. Sickness was rife, food quickly became inedible, water was in short supply and there were vast swarms of black corpse flies. In the winter it was equally unbearable, but this time caused by snowstorms and flooded trenches resulting in numerous casualties from cold and frost-bite. The Worcestershire Regiment supplied two battalions for the campaign:

The 4th Worcesters, having taken part in the initial landings at Cape Helles on 25th April, advanced up the peninsula towards the village of Krithia. Several attempts were made to take the village in April, May and June, and in fighting on 3 July, Lt. Herbert James won the Regiment's first VC.

The 9th Battalion landed at Cape Helles on 13th July, as part of 13 Division to reinforce Allied forces in Gallipoli, with strength of 29 officers and 970 soldiers. On the 6 August they took part in a major attack on the Sari Bair. After four exhausting and confused days of fighting the battalion was reduced to one officer and 200 soldiers.

The battle became a stalemate and the Allies finally withdrew in January 1916 with the campaign being regarded as a disaster.

See the exhibition for a more complete and illustrated account. It is open until 30th September 2015.

- ***One of our swans is a goose***

On 1st August 1808, 8,740 troops of a British expeditionary force under the temporary command of General Sir Arthur Wellesley began to disembark at the mouth of the Mondego River, west of Coimbra. By 10th August, a combined British and Portuguese army of 13,500 men was marching on Lisbon. Wellesley reached Alcobaça on the 14th, by which time he was fully aware that a French army under General Henri François, Comte Delaborde, stood in his path one day's march away at Obidos. On the 16th August 1808, Delaborde redeployed his force of some 4,350 men along a low ridge east of Roliça, 6km south of Obidos. At dawn on the 17th, Wellesley advanced from Obidos in a crescent-shaped formation, with the two forward thrusting wings under Lt Col Nicholas Trant and Lt Col James Fergusson. Just as his forces were in danger of being enveloped, Delaborde fell back to a much stronger position on the heights above the village of Columbeira.



After taking time to re-group, Wellesley again pushed forward, intending his centre to assault the heights only after Trant and Fergusson were in a position to provide support on both flanks. In practice, the 29th Regiment led by Lt Col George Lake forged on ahead through a gully in the hillside and, despite coming under fire from three sides, was able to reach the brow of the hill before being broken by a French charge. The gallant - if foolhardy - Lake was killed while 6 officers and 30 other ranks were captured.

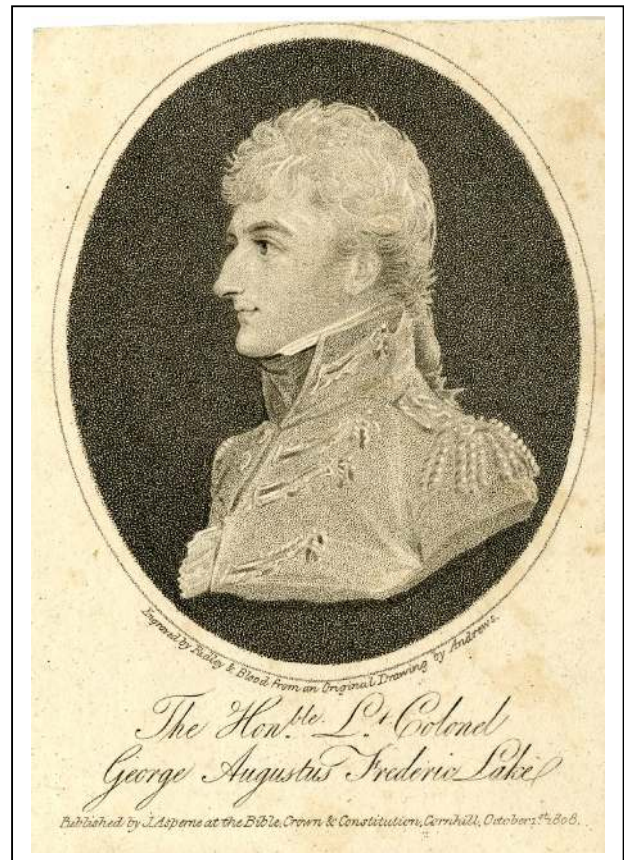
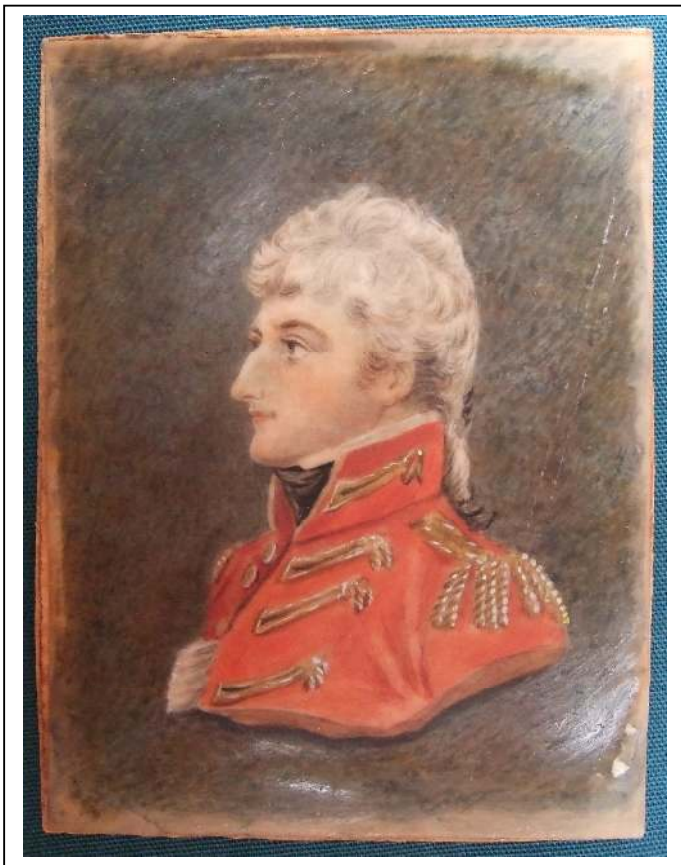
The survivors of the 29th fell back down the hillside into the ranks of the supporting 9th Regiment. By now, Wellesley had ordered the 5th, 9th, 82nd and 45th Regiments into a frontal attack against the heights. After two hours of bitter fighting during which the French threw back three assaults, the British finally gained firm footholds along the crest. With his right flank now under threat from Ferguson, Delaborde disengaged from the battle as best he could and with no little skill. French losses amounted to 600 men killed or wounded and three guns; of the 474 British and Portuguese killed, wounded or taken prisoner, nearly half were from the 29th Regiment.

Not surprisingly, the battle of Roliça looms large in the tradition of the 29th and Col Lake is remembered as a hero, if a rather headstrong one. There is a memorial to him on the battlefield (see Newsletter no.1). The Museum possesses a miniature portrait of Lake (Ac.1662) in a heavy gilt frame (see above). This was presented to the officers of the 1st Battalion, the Worcestershire Regiment, by Captain Edward Montague Dodd on his retirement in 1935.

As can be seen, the frame is in need of restoration, but when it was turned over a fragmentary print of George Augustus Frederick Lake was found to have been pasted on the back. This had been badly damaged in the past when the miniature had been removed from the frame, perhaps for photography. When the print is compared with the miniature it is obvious that one is a copy of the other, but which is the original? Below the portrait on the print is the inscription 'Engraved by Padley and Blood from an original drawing by Andrews'. The print would not have been described as a 'drawing' and so the presumption is that the miniature is a copy of the print. Now, an examination of the actual miniature strongly suggests that it is a copy and it must be concluded that it was painted in 1935 at the instigation of Captain Dodd.



An investigation of the British Museum on-line database has revealed another copy of the print (see below) described as 'a Portrait of George Augustus Frederic Lake, bust-length, in profile to the left, his hair fashionably curled and powdered and drawn into a queue, in gold-laced military uniform with frogging and epaulettes upon his shoulders, a black stock about his neck, illustration to the European Magazine (1808)'. (Stipple engraving British Museum number K,67.263). The similarity is obvious.



Miniature of George Lake now thought to be c.1935

Original stipple engraving of George Lake dated 1808

Captain Dodd seems to have left little mark in the annals of the Regiment. His retirement was accompanied by a couple of paragraphs in **Firm** 7 (1) (1935) pp.39-40 where it is recorded that he joined the Regiment from Sandhurst in August 1916 and went to France with the 3rd Battalion where

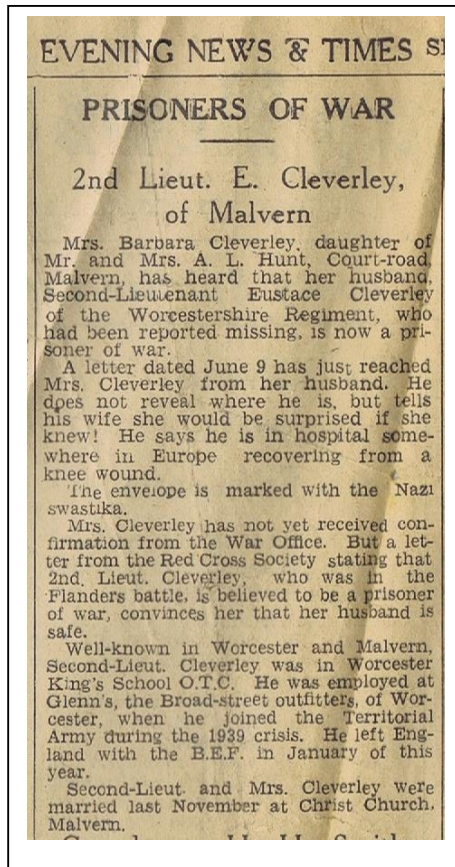


he was wounded in July 1917. His wounds kept him out of the latter stages of the war but in 1920 he went to India and served with the 3rd Battalion until it was disbanded in 1922. He was then posted to the 1st Battalion and served in India and China. By his promotion, according to Firm, he 'managed to avoid by the margin of a few days those who attained the doubtful privilege of being a subaltern for fifteen years or more'. His main reason for remembrance was that he 'took a very great interest in everything connected with the history and name of the Regiment' and that 'the Mess has lost a friend and most staunch supporter'. Second Lt. Dodd is not mentioned in Stacke. Captain Dodd retired to fruit farming in Hampshire, but was recalled in 1939 and saw service in India and the Western desert. He was captured at Tobruk and sent to Italy as a POW. From here he escaped to Switzerland where he was interned for the duration. He died in August 1953 and there is an obit. in **Firm** 20 (3) (1953) pp.141-2.

Captain Edward M Dodd from a group photograph taken in Malta in 1933.

• **Captain Roger Eustace Cleverley... continued from Newsletter 6**

In Newsletter 6 the career of Roger Cleverley was recorded from his commission into the Worcestershire Regiment in 1937 until his survival of the infamous Wormhoudt Massacre and his subsequent capture. To learn about his life as a POW, please read on ...



Cutting from the Evening News & Times announcing that Roger Cleverley, who had originally been reported missing in action was, in fact, a POW.

Roger Cleverley was operated on by two Harley Street surgeons who cleaned the gangrene from his leg but decided not to remove the bullet in the bone near the bottom of his spine as it was too dangerous. That bullet remained there for the rest of his life. The hospital staff were all British but a German doctor was in charge. He rarely interfered. 2nd Lt Cleverley spent 3 months recuperating before being discharged as a 'walking wounded', having to use a crutch. He and some others were taken by truck to the Belgian/Dutch border where they boarded a barge with a Company of Senegalese troops. They sailed down the River Waal until they joined the Rhine, passing Nijmegen, and on to Wesel, a journey of about 2 days. At Wesel, they were marched to the railway station where they were given some bread, cheese and acorn coffee before being taken in a cattle truck to Hemer [where 1st Battalion The Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment was to be stationed some 39 years later]. They were transferred to a passenger train and set off across Germany via Kassel, Wurzburg and Nuremburg until they reached Laufen in Austria.

The 300 mile journey had taken two and a half days with numerous stops. They marched the short distance from the station to Oflag VII CH, a 14th Century castle built on a hill overlooking the village.

Oflag VII CH

Each prisoner was searched and relieved of his possessions, in Cleverley's case, his wristwatch, penknife and money, none of which he ever saw again. However, he wrote to the Managing Director of Rolex Watches, Switzerland, and asked him to send him a wristwatch and take the money from his account in England. This he did and Roger Cleverley kept that Rolex Oyster for the rest of his life! Depression set in when he realised that he had lost his freedom but life improved after a few days as he met up with friends from his own regiment and others whom he had met in France. The camp



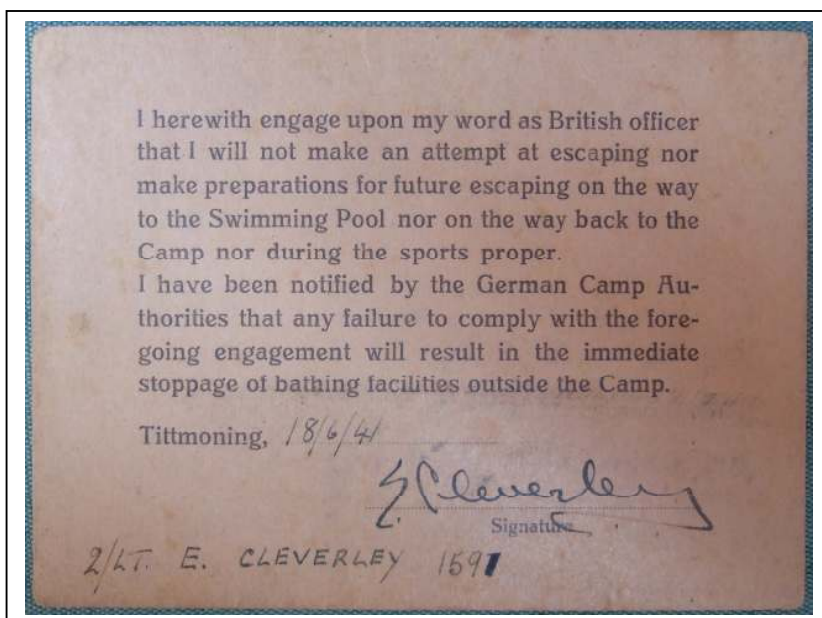
held about 1500 officers from 2Lt to Maj Gen. They slept in rooms of about 20, had roll-call (Appel) twice a day which the Commandant attended. Food was scarce and all the prisoners were starting to become weak, often finding it tiring and difficult to climb the stairs. However, the first batch of Red Cross food parcels started to arrive just before Christmas. Mail started to appear although, as he had been reported missing, Cleverley received none for some time. Each PoW was allowed to write one letter and two postcards home per month: these were heavily censored. As Christmas approached a Pantomime was put on by a fellow-prisoner, Bobby Loder, who wrote and produced it himself complete with orchestra. They had a festival of nine lessons and carols organised by the four Padres: one of them, Reg Bamber, came from Malvern and became Curate of Cleverley's local church (Holy Trinity) after the war. Winter 1940/41 was very cold but the food parcels did a lot to boost morale and warm them up.

A Christmas Card depicting the castle at Laufen – Oflag VII CH – sent by Roger Cleverley to his family at Christmas 1940.

Tittmoning VII CZ

In Spring 1941, Cleverley was moved with several others to another camp at Tittmoning, about 20 miles away. A castle, just like Laufen, it had a spectacular view of the Alps, particularly of the Jungfrau. Being so close to Switzerland, some escape attempts were made (hiding in the dustcart or dressing up as Germans) but Cleverley was not yet fit enough to join in. However, he started to do his bit by making civilian clothes for the escape committee.

Here the bathing facilities were outside the camp and the officers had to pledge their word of honour not to try to escape when out for ablutions.



Document signed by Roger Cleverley giving his word that he would not attempt to escape when out of the camp for ablutions. All the items illustrating this article are preserved in the museum.

To be continued

● **Friends' Programme**



On 18th March the Friends were treated to a lecture by one of our own members, Mark Rogers, who spoke on ***My Grandparents, The Worcesters, and the Great War.*** Well illustrated on PowerPoint, the lecture also included audio clips of one of Mark's grandfathers recalling the conflict. This tape is a rare survival of an informal interview with one of those who fought.

The evening was presided over by our chairman, Keith Jeavons (on the left), and a vote of thanks was delivered by Vaughan Wiltshire (on the right).

● **The 2015 Programme**

PLEASE SUPPORT THE LECTURES AND BRING YOUR FRIENDS BUT PLEASE BE AWARE THAT IN FUTURE ENTRY FOR NON-MEMBERS WILL BE £5 (to include a drink)

Wednesday 20th May 2015

6.30 pm AGM of the Friends (See separate sheet.)

7.00 pm 'Show and Tell' when half a dozen members will display and discuss items from their own collections: regimental badges, Victorian period muskets and musketry, ex-Regimental silver, medals relating to the Worcestershire Regiment, Home Guard militaria and archives, and historic swords

Wednesday 7th October 2015 at 7.00pm. (Doors and bar open at 6.30)

Dr Bruce Roscoe will give a lecture entitled *Bows and arrows against the Lightning: from Crécy – (26 August 1346) to Agincourt (25 October 1415 Saint Crispin's Day)*

Bruce Roscoe will start with Crécy and a discussion on Edward III's strategy (no horses on the battlefield, careful choice of the site of the battle and heavy dependence on archers) and compare the situation with Henry V's problems of not being able to choose his battlefield or his timing at Agincourt. He will then explain how, with luck, courage and inspired leadership Henry was able to triumph.

Future Events

Have you any suggestions for speakers for future programmes – either by yourself or somebody who you have heard elsewhere? Any subject relevant to the history and tradition of the Mercian Regiment and its forebears, or to the museum and its collections, or to the military history of the British Army will be welcome. Please contact Andrew Oddy at Dancox House or by email waoddy@googlemail.com

Contributors to this Newsletter: John Barker, Alan Cowpe, Ian Higgins, Andrew Oddy, John Paddock, Bob Prophet and Mary Weager

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