



Newsletter

No. 9 February 2016

Recent Acquisitions -

In 2015 the Museum made over 166 new accessions. Amongst these, perhaps the most significant, are a compass from the First World War (Accession No.: WOSWR 2015-149) and a DCM medal group from the Second (Accession No.: WOSWR 2015-150):



Westmacott Compass

In September the Trustees purchased a brass cased, privately purchased, compass, from Sunset Antiques, Hereford. On the lid is engraved C. B. Westmacott. Later Brig.-General Claude Berners Westmacott, C.B.E.

Adjutant to 4th (Militia) Battalion (which later became 6th Battalion on formation of 3rd and 4th Regular Battalions in February, 1900). He held this appointment for five years, during which time he proceeded to South Africa on service with the 6th Battalion. He was mentioned in Despatches July, 1902. He then re-joined the 1st Battalion in Templemore and was promoted Major on 14th February 1904, remaining with 1st Battalion until appointed to Command the Regimental Depot in 1906. In 1909 he became 2nd-in-Command 1st Battalion and remained as such until March 1911, when he was promoted Lieutenant-Colonel to command the 2nd Battalion at Jhansi in succession to Lieut.-Colonel H. de B. Hovell, D.S.O. In March 1913, he brought the 2nd Battalion home to Aldershot. After a strenuous eighteen months at that hot-bed of Military Training, we found ourselves at war with Germany, and in August, 1914, he took the 2nd Battalion to France, and was in command until September, when he took over the 5th Infantry Brigade—leaving the Battalion on the Aisne under Major E. B. Hankey. He was appointed Brigadier-General 2nd November 1914, and A.D.C. to the King in February 1915. He was twice Mentioned in Despatches, in October 1914, and February 1915. He had a breakdown in health and was invalided home from France and was later appointed to Command No. 6 District, U.K., in August 1918. He was awarded the C.B.E. in June 1919, and retired in 1920.



Brigadier Westmacott

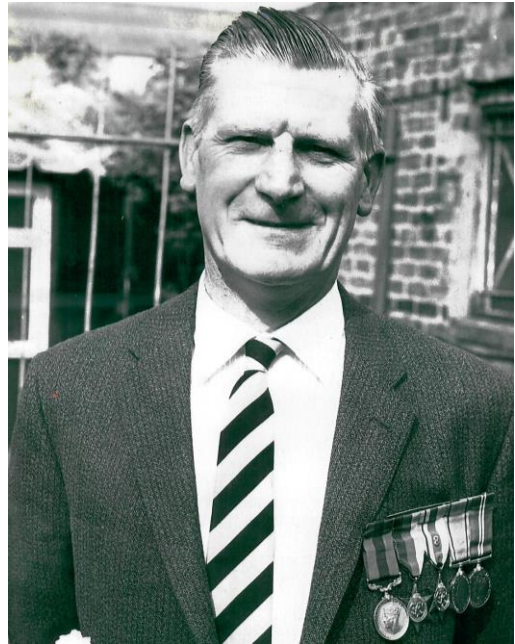
Dumolo Medals

The trustees are very grateful to the family of Sergeant Major Jack Dumolo for bequeathing his diary and medals to the museum. The group comprises his DCM G.VI, 1939-45 Star, Africa Star, Defence Medal and the War Medal 1939-45. The donation also includes his diary for 1930-32, a photograph of him in later life, his Wessex Brigade tie and his DCM citation. His DCM, was the only one awarded to the 1st Battalion in Eritrea.

He enlisted in 1930 and after training at Norton Barracks joined the 2nd Battalion in Plymouth. After three years there he moved to Shanghai where he was promoted to L/Cpl, and in 1934 he moved again to Tientsin. He returned to England in 1936 and was discharged after seven years' service in 1937.

He was recalled with the Battalion on the outbreak of the war in 1939 and joined the 1st Battalion in North Africa where he received exceptionally rapid promotion as he was commanding a platoon as a sergeant major by early 1941. The citation for his DCM records that he showed great coolness as a platoon commander under fire at Barentu, exceptional gallantry as a company sergeant major in evacuating wounded men under heavy fire at Keren and was again prominent under heavy shell fire at both Teclesan and Amba Alagi.

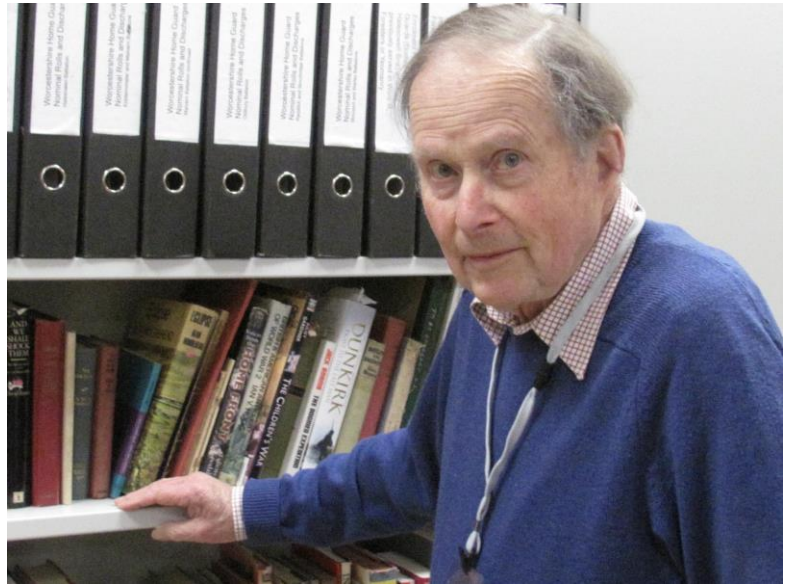
Following the move to Egypt he was taken prisoner with the Battalion at Tobruk in June 1942 and spent the rest of the war in POW camps in Italy and Germany. He was discharged in January 1946.



DCM G.VI, 1939-45 Star, Africa Star, Defence Medal and the War Medal 1939-45.

Volunteer Gallery

Major (Retd.) Roger Richards has both a long association with the Worcestershire Regiment and the Museum. Born in 1930, Roger is the son of Brigadier Hugh Upton Richards CBE DSO, who served with the Worcestershire Regiment and famously was Commander of the Garrison at the Battle of Kohima.



Roger himself joined the Army as a Regular, after schooling at Eton, and he joined the Brigade Squad for potential officers at the Guards Depot. He was commissioned into the Worcestershire Regiment in July 1950 and went on the Platoon Weapons Course of the School of Infantry. He embarked with the 1st

Battalion for Malaya a short time after and was posted to D Company, accommodated on a rubber estate in Johore State. He explains that the policy was to keep two platoons in each company area on patrol, while the third were resting or training. In May 1952 Roger was wounded whilst leading 11 Platoon southwards towards Company base. Having bedded down in a rubber estate near the jungle fringe, some bandits approached and the sentry opened fire. *"A lot of random firing ensued and I was unlucky enough to be hit in the left thigh"*, he modestly recalls. He spent the next five months in hospital and a further six months convalescing before returning to active duty. As a form of 'light duty' he was taken on by the Colonel of the Regiment, General Sir Richard Gale, as a second ADC.

He returned to the 1st Battalion in 1955, then stationed at Iserlohn in Germany. He took part in the Trooping of the Colour that year and was appointed Assistant Adjutant. When the Battalion moved to the Caribbean in February 1957 he went to C Company in British Guiana and later to A Company in Jamaica. From there he took part in the emergency deployment to the Bahamas in response to a threatened police strike. On returning to Jamaica he briefly commanded HQ Company before moving to the UK in January 1959, when he married Margaret Chapman, whose father had been on the staff of HQ Caribbean Area. He was then posted to the Depot and moved to Lichfield when it was absorbed into the Mercian Brigade Depot. He rejoined the 1st Battalion in 1960 in Worcester and commanded the 3 inch Mortar Platoon, living in married quarters in Malvern.

He was posted to HQ BAOR in 1965 in an intelligence appointment which took him to Berlin where he transferred to Intelligence Corps in 1972. He was posted to HQ AFNORTH in Norway in 1975 where he was responsible for briefing the British Commander-in-Chief on UK intelligence matters. He returned to the UK in 1979 and joined the military unit attached to GCHQ Cheltenham. He continued in this work as a retired officer after leaving the active list in 1984. He finally retired in 1996 and shortly afterwards began part-time voluntary work at RHQ Norton Barracks, dealing with enquiries from the public.

Roger has been working as a Volunteer for the museum for many years and has achieved a great deal – including cataloguing parts of the collection, conducting research enquiries for members of the public and helping us to research objects and regimental history. He is a very-much valued member of our team of volunteers and staff and we hope he will continue to be with us for some time yet.

Mesopotamia 1914-17: Mission creep in another pointless sideshow? By Alan Cowpe

Wars are easy to start, difficult to stop, impossible to control, and invariably have unintended consequences. So it was in the Middle East in 1914-18, where great issues were at stake. It began with an obscure port at the head of the Persian Gulf called Abadan. From this port was exported a product of the Persian hinterland which had become a vital British national interest. Oil-fired engines in warships delivered a 25% improvement in performance compared even with best Welsh coal, giving a war-winning edge; and the Admiralty (and specifically Winston Churchill, the Admiralty's First Lord) had in 1912 therefore taken a strategic decision to use oil instead of coal as the main propulsion fuel for the Royal Navy. Delivery of the oil fell to the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, in which the Admiralty was the major shareholder; and the major source was the output from Abadan. Oil had

become essential for the Navy; the Navy was vital to maintain the Empire and Great Britain's world position as a great power; and the security of the oil supply therefore become in turn vital.



9th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment, Blakedown 1915

which would infect the Muslim inhabitants of the Raj. After the Indian Mutiny, the British were acutely aware of the power of religious sensitivities among their subject peoples. To avert this danger, maintenance of British prestige became a pre-occupation of British policy-makers. The empire survived because its inhabitants mainly accepted British rule; and they did so because they accepted the myths of British racial and military superiority which their rulers cultivated assiduously. Military defeat, especially against a non-European enemy, would undermine these myths, for which prestige became a shorthand term.

The government of India therefore despatched the 6th (Indian) Division to secure Abadan, which it managed easily enough. To establish a cordon sanitaire between Turkey and the oil, the Division then also occupied the southern province of Turkish Mesopotamia and its capital, Basra, easily defeating local Turkish forces. Early wins however encouraged mission creep, and British forces advanced further against stiffening resistance, reaching Kut al-Amara by September 1915, some two thirds of the way to Baghdad. India, London and the theatre C-in-C in Basra (Sir George Nixon) then debated the options in a lengthy exchange of telegrams. Baghdad offered itself as a glittering prize; the seizure of this fabled city would provide a demonstration of power which would boost British prestige and thereby discourage any would-be jihadis. Moreover, the Gallipoli operation had miscarried badly, and success somewhere was needed to offset the effects of likely defeat there at the hands of an Asiatic opponent. But the advance to Kut had constrained the options. Both a failure to advance further and an advance which went wrong would, it was believed, be seriously damaging. An advance looked the best option, but neither London nor India offered the extra troops needed to deliver success, and 6th Division at Kut was already overstretched; its logistics were Crimean in their inadequacy, its sickness rate was already serious, and the divisional commander

(General Townsend) was not optimistic about the prospects for success unless he could be reinforced. An advance on Baghdad was ordered. Did the imperial policy-makers deceive themselves with their own assumptions and their own myths about British capabilities? Might an earlier advance – rather than a debate - have actually succeeded while the Turks were in retreat? In any event the advance was halted in a bloody encounter just outside the city, and 6th Division withdrew to Kut with its many wounded. In December 1915 it was surrounded and invested; rescue was urgently required. It was in March that the Worcestershire Regiment's 9th battalion arrived from Gallipoli, together with other troops which had suddenly become available. They were however too late to secure victory, and if they were to save the force in Kut, they were now committed to attacking Turkish forces in neither a time nor place of their own choosing. Conditions were extremely challenging, with fierce heat by day and freezing temperatures by night. It was impossible to stray too far from the river which was the only supply route, and this was subject to flooding which made movement difficult. Moreover, there was no time to prepare sufficiently to ensure success. There followed a month of hard fighting, which failed to achieve a break through and resulted in heavy casualties. 9th Worcestershire lost about 450 men, and gained a VC, awarded to Lieutenant E K Myles; other units suffered similarly. British forces lost all told more casualties (23,000) than the force in Kut (13,000) which they were trying to rescue, and it was all in vain. The garrison was starved into surrender on April 29, 1916, the first British army to surrender since Yorktown. Many of the prisoners died in captivity as a result of the appalling brutality with which they were treated.



It was the concern for prestige which had discouraged an earlier decision to abandon Gallipoli; Kut had been a consequence of the search for prestige. Now Kut was an undoubted disaster. Curiously, however, neither Gallipoli nor Kut caused a perceptible ripple in the empire. But a properly managed campaign in Mesopotamia to recover the position and sustain the empire's prestige was now considered unavoidable, at least by the British government. In General Sir Stanley Maude there was now a new theatre C-in-C capable of making this happen. The key to success or failure was logistics, and the record of the Indian government on this had so far been a disaster. The Persian Gulf ports were a shambles, there was virtually no shallow draft shipping to move supplies up-river to the soldiers (essential given the absence of roads), and the medical facilities were wholly inadequate. Mesopotamia was a seriously unhealthy place in which to campaign at the best of times, and casualties from disease far exceeded those from battle; but 6 Division had been suffering from beriberi even as they reached Baghdad, an entirely avoidable problem given suitable adequate food. Maude took over control from India and appointed civilian port and railway managers to get a grip. And he was reinforced with sufficient forces to do the job, much to the chagrin of the CIGS who believed that any distraction from the main theatre of war in France was mistaken. A minor operation in a sideshow had now become a major theatre of war, with imperial conquest as its objective. Apart from the substantial fighting forces now involved, numbering several times the Turkish forces, a huge logistical effort was necessary to ensure success. By December 1916 the army was ready to attempt to expel the Turks from their positions around Kut. Four divisions were now engaged on the task originally undertaken by one in 1915. Once again the fighting was fierce. The Ottoman Empire may have been on its last legs, and its forces in Mesopotamia now seriously outnumbered, but the Turkish soldiers around Kut fought with their customary determination and courage, and the flat open country offered long fields of fire to the defence. 9th Worcestershire suffered about 50% casualties, as did other units. But by February 1917, the defences were broken, and in March 1917 Baghdad fell. The map of the Middle East was being redrawn to give us the Arab world we have today; and it was all an unintended consequence of a campaign which had initially had entirely different and more modest objectives.

Lieutenant Edgar Kinghorn Myles carrying a wounded man to safety at Sannaiyat. His medals, including Victoria Cross, are on display in the Worcestershire Soldier Gallery. On 11 April 2016 a commemorative paving stone honouring Edgar Myles will be laid in the Cenotaph area of Central Park, East Ham.

Book Review

'Chronicles of the Worcestershire Home Guard' by Mick Wilks

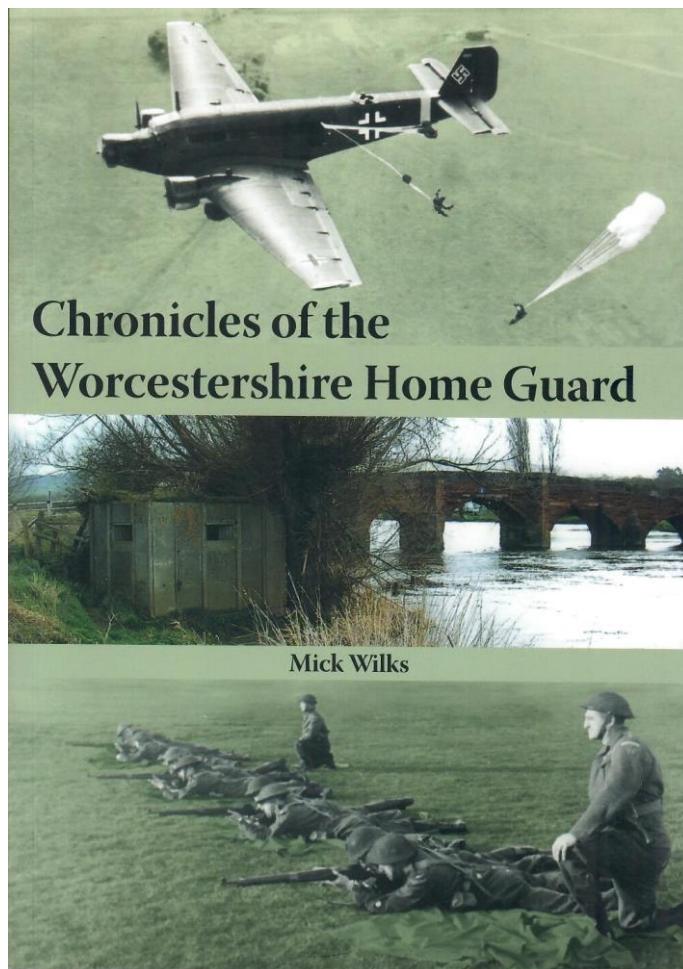
Concerned that the real story of the Home Guard was being lost in the myth and legend that has grown up around the force in recent years - not helped by the TV comedy 'Dad's Army!' - Our volunteer researcher Mick Wilks, has produced a veritable tome of a book, tracing the story of the force from the dark days of 1940 to its disbandment at the end of World War 2, and its resurrection in the 1950s to defend Britain against the 'Red Menace'.

Told through the perspective of the Worcestershire Home Guard, a wartime defence force of 12 battalions and, at its peak, more than 19,000 men, the book chronicles its origins as the Local Defence Volunteers, its initial and subsequent roles in defending Britain against a Nazi invasion, its increasing professionalism as it moved from an ethos of volunteering to one of compulsory service, with its fines or worse for non-attendance at training or for duty.

The book benefits from many years of research including a unique opportunity, no longer available, to study the Home Guard archive formerly held by the Army Medal Office at Droitwich, and interviews with over 150 ex-Worcestershire Home Guards or their families. It includes biographical notes of some of the key officers and men of the Home Guard, describes the role of women in the force, and the recruitment of the secret Auxiliary Units for covert operations, as well as describing armaments and training. No less than nine appendices cover detailed aspects of the force, including a roll of honour (11 Worcestershire men died during their Home Guard service and many more were injured), an Order of Battle, and a comprehensive assessment of the battalion structure and officers serving in 1944.

Published by Logaston Press, of Herefordshire, this is a large book with 352 pages, over a hundred photographs and numerous maps and diagrams, but modestly priced at £12.95. Please contact the museum for a copy (Tel. 01905 721982).

Mick Wilks is a research volunteer at the Museum and is already the author (or joint author) of three books published by Logaston Press, '*Herefordshire: The Mercian Maquis*' (jointly with Bernard Lowry), 2002, '*The Defence of Worcestershire*', 2007 and '*20th Century Defences in Britain: The West Midlands*' (jointly with Colin Jones and Bernard Lowry), 2008.



The last remaining copies of '*The Story of Norton Barracks: Home of the Worcestershire Regiment*', by Stan Jobson, are available from the Museum Shop. Contact quickly to secure a copy!

Friends' 2016 Programme



On Wednesday 7th October Dr. Bruce Roscoe presented the Friends with a fascinating insight into the battles of Crecy, Agincourt and Edward III's strategy of no horses on the battlefield. It was an intriguing account of the careful use of the land by Edward and the role of the English / Welsh archers and the devastating effect they had on the French. He compared the situation with Henry V's problems of not being able to choose his battlefield or his timing at Agincourt. He explained how, with luck, courage and inspired leadership Henry was able to triumph. It would appear that the debate to where the battles took place continues! The evening was presided over by Brian Clarke [left]; and a vote of thanks was given by Mr. Alec Mackie [right].

Wednesday March 16th, Lecture by Colonel Stamford Cartwright MBE

'The Worcestershire Yeomanry': The Queen's Own Worcestershire Yeomanry 1794-1956

Colonel Cartwright will give an illustrated talk, with slides and early photographs illustrating the formation and history of the Regiment in 1794 to the amalgamation with The Warwickshire Yeomanry in 1956 to become Queen's Own Warwickshire and Worcestershire Yeomanry.

To be held at St. Richards Hospice Lecture Theatre.

Please note change of venue -

St Richard's Hospice Foundation
Wildwood Drive
Worcester
WR5 2QT

(Please note to put the Wildwood Drive, Worcester, address into a Sat Nav device rather than the postcode as you may be taken to nearby County Hall which does not have through access to St Richards).



Wednesday 13th April, Visit to the Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum

The Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum, is located in Gloucester's Historic Docks and reopened in April 2014 after a Heritage Lottery funded refurbishment. The museum covers from 1694 through the Napoleonic, World Wars, Korea through to modern day conflicts. £2.75 discounted entry fee. Those interested please contact Pam at the Museum (01905 721982) for extra details.

Wednesday 18th May, AGM & Lecture by Roy Peacock, 'The Worcesters & other local Regiments in the Great War – Lottery Funded Project in Cooperation with the Black Country Society'

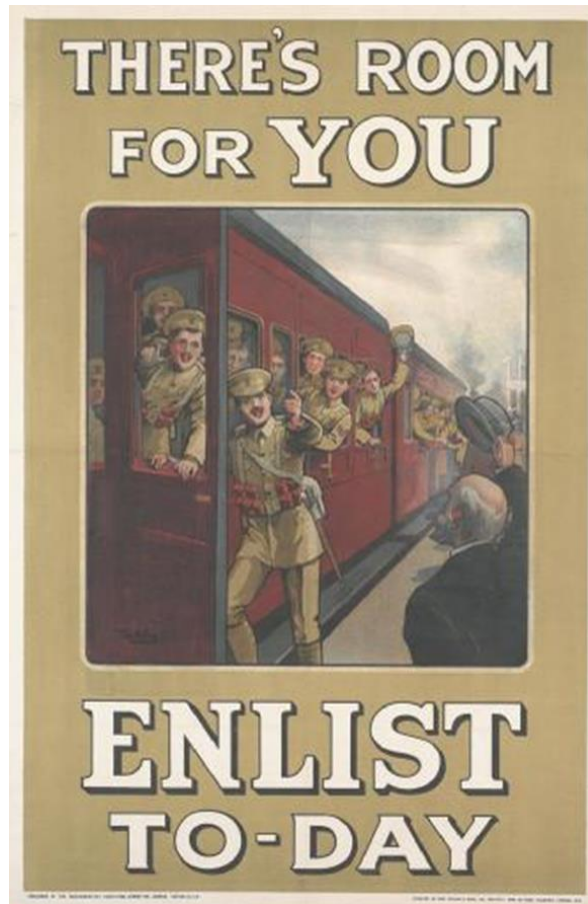
3rd-7th September, Worcester Severn Rotary Club, Normandy Battlefield Tour (See attached sheet).

Wednesday 5th October, Lecture by Peter Gwillam on the Battle of the Somme (TBC)

A Message from your Chairman, Keith Jeavons

2015 has been quite an eventful year with the loss of valuable members of the Committee. Recently we have said 'goodbye' to Mary and John Weager who have given valuable service as volunteers to the Museum over recent years. I would like to say 'thank you' to them for their contributions to the Friends and the Museum.

I have been Chairman for two years and at the outset I said I would take the position to give the Friends time to recruit and develop. The main aim for 2016 is to recruit new members to the Friends and to encourage members to volunteer to serve on the Committee. I would like to thank members of the committee for their support during the year. I would ask members to continue to invite new friends to join us.



Your support is appreciated!

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'The Worcestershire Soldier', The Mercian Regiment Museum (Worcestershire)

Worcester City Art Gallery and Museum, 40 Foregate St, Worcester, WR1 1DT.

Tel. 01905 25381. 10.30am – 4.30pm Mon-Sat (closed Sun and Bank Holidays)

"The Friends exists to help the museum to record, preserve and display the history and traditions of The Worcestershire Regiment, its predecessors and successors from 1694 to the present day including the deeds and sacrifices of those who have and are serving in it", to join, or for further information please email museummercian@btconnect.com or 01905 721982.