

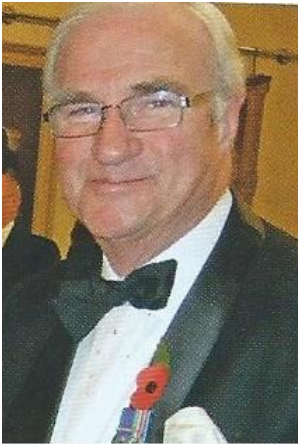


Newsletter

No. 8 September 2015

Update from the Chairman of the Museum Trustees, Mark Jackson

'Tempus Fugit'...Time does indeed fly by and I would like to take advantage of the Editor's offer for me to make some comments in your Newsletter.



Major Robert Prophet



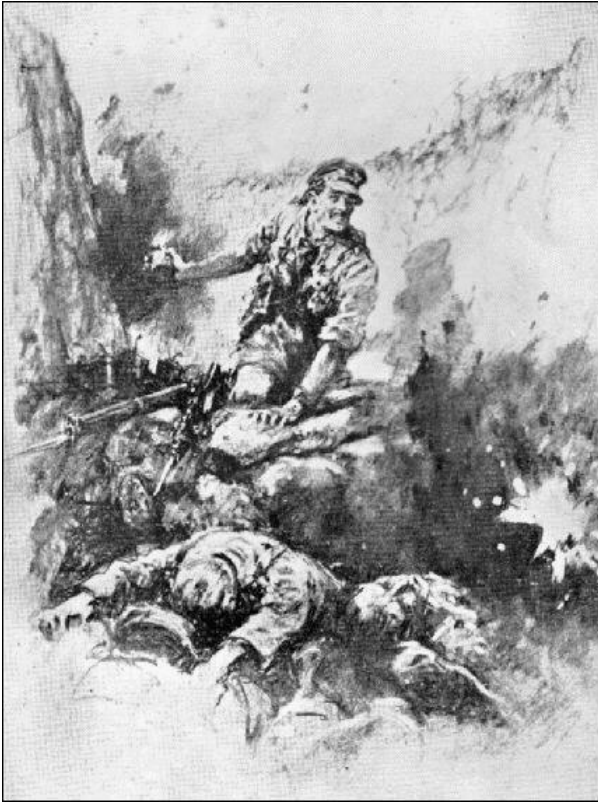
Dr Andrew Oddy OBE FSA

First, it is with great sadness that we have to report that both Andrew Oddy and Bob Prophet have stepped down from volunteering both from the Museum and the Friends. We all owe Andrew a great debt of thanks for deciding to grab the Friends by the scruff of the neck and to re-vitalise them both with good lectures and the introduction of these fascinating newsletters. The two are mutually supporting and are part of the need to increase general awareness of, and support for, our Museum. Sadly, with Andrew's retirement we have also lost Pat who has been a tower of strength as we have

continued to sort out the archives and update our accessions. Andrew and Pat are a superb team and we will miss them. In his capacity as the last Assistant Regimental Secretary at the Norton Barracks Out-station Bob was the Museum's Curator until the Ministry of Defence decided to terminate that post, however Bob continued voluntary as Secretary both to the Board of Trustees and also the Friends. Meticulous in his notes and prompt minutes, Bob has also been a great source of corporate knowledge as the Museum adapted to its new circumstances and location in Dancox House under its Mercian Regiment parentage. On behalf of us all, I would like to say ***'Thank you very much indeed'*** to Andrew, Pat and Bob.

Secondly, it behoves all of us to maintain and increase the momentum achieved so far. The Friends must not stand still. As more senior Friends retire, I would like ask all members of the Friends to try to recruit at least one new member this year, and every subsequent year, in order that our support base grows traditionally we may have been focused upon ex-Regimental and ex-military members. I am very pleasantly surprised how many people I talk to, who in the past may not have heard of our Museum, express a genuine interest in history and military history when appraised of its existence. Therefore I would ask you all to cast your net wider. We need new members from across the local community of all ages, and we need more volunteers. We shall also seek institutional members. So, as time flies by I ask you all to get recruiting with some urgency so that our Museum grows. Remember, the target is a least one new member per member, each year. Happy hunting!

Bravery and Tragedy on the Gallipoli Peninsula



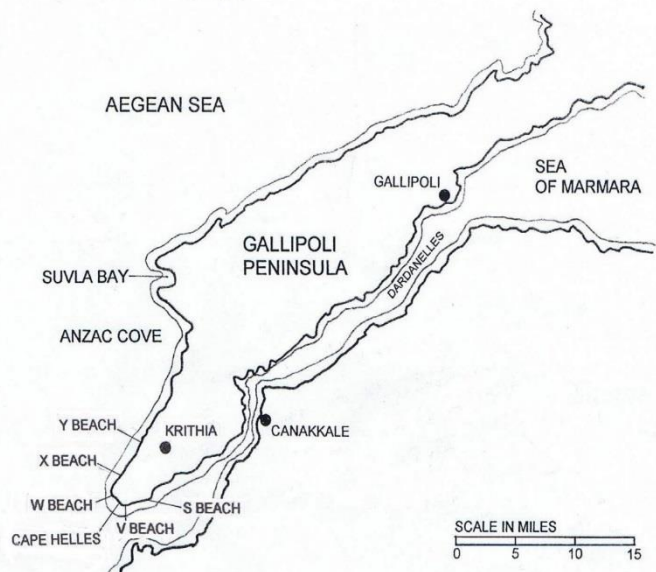
Lieutenant H. James at Krithia, 3rd July 1915. From the picture by Gilbert Holiday presented to the Regiment by the late Lieut. J. M. P. Baird.

100 years ago the Worcestershire Regiment suffered some of its worst losses of the First World War, during the Gallipoli Campaign. The 4th Battalion had landed at Cape Helles with the Allied troops on 25th April 1915 and taken part in the first courageous efforts to secure the Peninsula. Attempts to move inland were thwarted by the Turks with heavy casualties on both sides, and trench warfare ensued. The action for the 4th Battalion had centred on the village of Krithia, where on 3rd July Lt. Herbert James had won the Regiment's first VC by single-handedly holding a trench against enemy attack in the Gully Ravine. At the beginning of August while plans were being made for a major offensive further north, the 4th Battalion joined the 88th Brigade in a final push for Krithia, with the immediate objective of the enemy defences around the Krithia Vineyard. The Battalion went forward in four waves in full view of the enemy, and in a hail of machine-gun fire. The survivors were able to charge the trenches, fighting hand-to-hand until overpowered by numbers. At one point about thirty of the Worcesters forced their way into the trench and found themselves isolated in the

midst of the enemy. Swiftly erecting barricades on both flanks, they organised a little stronghold for defence. They held their ground for 3 hours. By nightfall under command of Sergeant Stevens the surviving party of twelve were able to retreat. The virtual destruction of the Battalion was a stunning blow after the high hopes before the battle.

The British high command proposed a new operation to reinvigorate the campaign by capturing the Sari Bair ridge, the high ground that dominated the middle of the peninsula above the Anzac landing. The 9th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment, had been sent to reinforce troops, arriving in July. On the 6th August they took part in a major attack on the Sari Bair feature which rose up some 1000 feet from the sea, but the broken nature of the ground slowed down the initial night advance and gave the Turks time to bring up reinforcements and counter attack. The attempt was abandoned after four exhausting and confused days of fighting during which the battalion was reduced in strength to one officer and 200 soldiers.

GALLIPOLI



Recent Acquisitions

Return of a native – Lt. Colonel William Kennedy

On the 12th May this year, by kind invitation of the Commanding Officer, Lt. Colonel Gilby OBE, the Curator and the Chairman of the Mercian Regiment Museum (Worcestershire) visited 2 Mercian at the Dale in Chester. The purpose of our visit was to inspect the loan from the Museum to the Battalion and to recover items no longer required. After a very pleasant day and lunch, we returned to Worcester laden with a number of superfluous items, included amongst which was an impressive painting of Lt. Colonel William Kennedy (Museum No. WOSWR 2004-307).

Kennedy commanded what was to become the 29th (Worcestershire) Regiment, under four successive Regimental Colonels, from 1718 to his death in 1743. His family, the Kennedy's of Kirkhill, Dunure and Dalquharran, were descended from a junior branch of the earls of Cassilis. William Kennedy's father, Sir Thomas Kennedy was Provost of Edinburgh between 1685 and 1686. William was the 5th son of Sir Thomas and his wife Agnes.

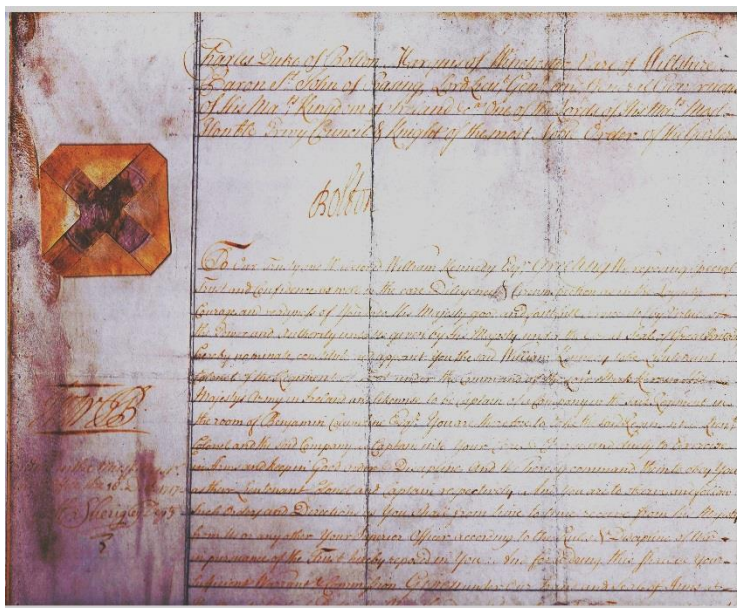


The painting in question (0.75 m x 0.96 m) is by an unknown but talented artist and depicts Kennedy as Deputy Governor of Inverness. We know from an extant letter to his brother Thomas, written from Turin on the 6th of February 1731, that William had had two portraits painted of him in Venice the previous year and this is perhaps one of them.

Kennedy's first recorded commission is said to date to 6th March 1707, as Captain Lieutenant in Lord Mark Kerr's Regiment of Foot. However it is likely he had previously held the ranks of ensign and Lieutenant. On the 28th January 1709 he was appointed First Captain-Lieutenant and the following January on the 10th he was commissioned Captain. Later that year he went with his regiment to Lisbon and thence to Barcelona in 1712. When regiment disbanded in November 1712 he was put on

half pay as a Captain until 22nd July 1715. On the outbreak of the Rising of 1715, he was posted to Brigadier Alexander Grant's Regiment of Foot and he went with this regiment to Scotland. After the Battle of Sheriffmuir and the subsequent retreat and dispersal of the Jacobite army the regiment shared in the march northward as far as Elgin and then returned to Edinburgh.

Two years later, on 28th January 1717, he was posted Major and Captain to Lord Mark Kerr's regiment. His appointment to Lieutenant Colonel followed on the 9th December 1718 and the regiment was posted to Ireland and continued there for ten years. (The latter two commissions are held in the Museum collection, along with a bond signed on his behalf by his brother Thomas to repay Lord Mark Kerr for the purchase of the Lieutenant Colonelcy in 1717.) Later William saw a good deal of service with his regiment in Spain, where his health suffered and he also served on board the HMS Union which formed part of Sir John Jennings's squadron threatening the coast of Spain between June and September 1726. In 1736 William was made Deputy Governor of Inverness by the influence of Argyll's brother, Lord Ilay.



The Commission of William Kennedy as Lt. Colonel dated 9th December 1718, now in the museum collection (M797).

At first sight William's career appears quite unremarkable. His lack of progress to higher rank was possibly consequent upon a lack influence at Court and an insufficiency of funds to make the necessary purchases, but was clearly compounded by recurring bouts of ill health, from the 1720's onwards, particularly the gout. However, there may have also been deeper political reasons for his lack of progression. There was more than a whiff of the "Jacobite" about the family. On the accession of George I, David Kennedy followed his patron the Duke of Ormonde into exile at the Jacobite Court, where he died in 1723. William's eldest brother Thomas had been made lord

advocate by the Tory Government in 1714, after acting unofficially in this capacity. Commenting on this appointment, one Jacobite M.P. observed: '*Though not perhaps so tight a Tory as could have been wished, [he] was much preferable to any of his predecessors, and there was little reason to doubt his concurring with the Queen's measures*'. He lost his post on George I's accession. At the same time, he also sought arrears of salary for himself and one of his brothers, promotion for two more brothers, and a pardon for Francis, who had also been employed at the Jacobite court!

What makes William so fascinating is the copious correspondence he left behind him, much of it, in all 51 letters, now in the Mercian Regiment Museum collection. This correspondence is mostly dated between 1726 and 1740 and is between himself, his agent Captain Alexander Wilson, his brothers, and his Colonel, Lt. General George Reade. It mostly concerns regimental business, but there is an ever present undercurrent of financial stringency and disappointment and a desperate ambition to achieve the coveted promotion to Colonel of a Regiment. These circumstances came to a head in 1739 when, Kennedy was once more disappointed and, Reade was succeeded by Major General Francis Fuller. Kennedy's health collapsed and he died a broken man four years later on the 9th May 1743 and is buried in the Greyfriars Churchyard.

From the Curator

Museums acquire objects in two ways – by gift (or bequest) from interested members of the public or by purchase from dealers or private owners. Gifts and bequests are sometimes the result of serendipity and sometimes the result of campaigns to ‘woo’ owners who are known to have items relevant to the collections. Purchases are usually the result of regular searching the web sites of militaria dealers and the catalogues of auction houses by the curator or volunteers. Even if the museum cannot afford to buy everything that is relevant, it is useful to know what is out there.



The two most unusual recent acquisitions were a pair of “naïve” watercolours depicting: “A corner of a trench “somewhere in France” Xmas Morning 1914”. What makes these both so interesting is not only the subject matter, a private soldier’s view of the prevailing conditions, but that they consist of the original painting done in the field by J Taylor and the copy he did for Private Boulton. What is perhaps more remarkable is that both paintings survived in different locations in Gloucestershire, not more than 6 miles apart, for a hundred years and yet found their way here to Worcester and are now reunited in the collections of the Museum.

Other acquisitions include:

Collection relating to 2nd Lt. J.G. Player and Pte. Albert Symonds; a white green and gold place setting bearing the WFR regimental crest consisting of a coffee cup, saucer, side plate, soup bowl, dinner plate and desert plate (Donated by the Mercian Regiment); and an engraving of the ‘View of the camp on Bagshot Heath, 23rd July 1792’.

We will remember...

The Hurricane Memorial

We are grateful to two Friends of the Museum, Roger Christian and Richard Davenhill, for sending in this photograph and inscription on a Regimental Memorial in Barbados.



The inscription reads:

*Near This Spot Rest the Remains of Fourteen Soldiers
And one Married Woman
Of the 36th Regiment who were killed
By the Destruction of the Barracks and the Hospital during
The awful devastation of the hurricane
August 11th 1831
This Monument is erected by the Non Commissioned Officers
And Privates of the same Corps
As a tribute of respect
To the Memory of Their Departed Comrades

Peace to their Remains*

The Regiment's Digest of Service records "*The night was dark until 11 pm when heavy squalls with rain commenced, continued gradually to increase till about 2 am: when the wind blew a fearful gale, which finally settled in a hurricane at about 3 am so dreadful that memory shudders to dwell on its fearful remembrance....The lightning was terrific and incessant.....The howling of the tempest scarcely permitted the thunder to be heard... and the earth was shaken by a convulsion....*" It confirms the death toll as fourteen soldiers

and one woman, states that the hospital and the barracks were destroyed and lists extensive damage to regimental property.

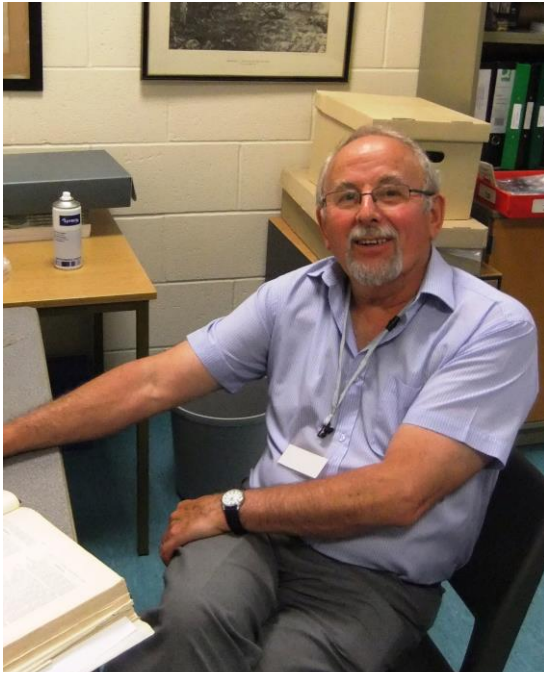
Cannon's history of the 36th states eleven men died as a result of the hurricane but the muster roll (NA.WO.12/5046) only names six soldiers as having been killed on that day.

Malvernians Remembered at Ypres Roger Berkley, 1st Battalion, 1955-1958

In 1915 Malvern College should have been celebrating 50 years of existence but instead it was mourning the slaughter of its sons in the Great War. A hundred years later Malvern College organised a number of events to celebrate 150 years of existence and one of these was a visit by students, staff and Old Malvernians to Ypres and, among other places, to Gheluvelt. It was decided to include Gheluvelt as the Worcestershire Regiment sponsored the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) at Malvern for many years.

At the request of the College, a current student, Hannah Michell, and I jointly laid a wreath at the Gheluvelt Memorial. It was a moving moment and I was greatly honoured to be asked to lay the wreath.

Volunteer Gallery



Norman Day's interest in matters military was first aroused, at an early age, by family accounts of enemy attacks on his home town in WW1. Hartlepool was attacked by three German battle cruisers in December 1914 when the first enemy shells landed on British soil killing 119 people, one of them being the first soldier to be killed on home soil since the Civil War. The town subsequently suffered three Zeppelin raids, one of which resulted in the airship coming down in flames over the town, a graphic description of which was provided by his father. On a personal note Norman's maternal grandfather served in the Royal garrison artillery, having enlisted in September 1914 at the age of 41, being discharged three years later with a Silver War Badge. Norman still has a sepia-toned photograph of him in his uniform. His mother would recount the tale of her brother who, at the

age of fifteen and terminally ill, was handed white feathers by ladies of the 'Order of the White Feather'. It was these, and other personal memories that led to Norman's abiding interest in WW1 and the Western Front in particular.

Interest was put in abeyance for a while as, in addition to bringing up his family, he pursued a career in chemistry. This involved time in the steel and food industries before moving into education; first as a teacher in East Yorkshire and then as a lecturer at Bromsgrove College of Further Education. His industrial and teaching experience was then put to good use as an advisor with the D.T.I. developing links between business/industry and the world of education.

It was during his time in teaching in that Norman's interest, in military matters, was rekindled and when he discovered the WW1 poets, particularly Wilfred Owen. With their two children having flown the nest Norman, and his wife Sylvia, were able to indulge in some travelling and, needless to say, the Western Front was high on the list. Over a number of years Norman has travelled the length of the Front and has walked the battlefields of Passchendaele, the Somme and Verdun. Indeed, wherever he has travelled Norman has always tried to visit cemeteries/memorials in order to pay his respects. These have included Monte Cassino, Kanchanaburi and on the 'Death Railway', the USS Arizona in Pearl harbor and the Australian national Memorial in Canberra and others. Over this time Norman has read widely and has amassed a sizeable library on virtually all aspects of the Western front.

In retirement, Norman likes to keep fit and has done voluntary work for many years, with a local multiple sclerosis support group in Droitwich. He responded to an appeal for volunteers in the local paper about eighteen months ago and has been with us ever since. He is happy to work with John, and his team, in any way he can and hopes that his experience/enthusiasm can be put to good use during the WW1 centenary years.

Following on from previous Newsletters...

Major EM Dodd

We may have inadvertently maligned him in the last issue, particularly by stating that he "seems to have left little mark on the annals of the regiment" and implying that the miniature of Colonel Lake which he presented was painted at his instigation.

A reader of the newsletter has commented:

"I knew 'Bishop' Dodd well. I saw him in 1939 when, after being recalled from retirement, he was on his way to the 2nd Battalion and was not much looking forward to it. He had very high standards and did not take kindly to those who fell short of them. I think it unlikely he would have attempted to pass off a picture as something it was not. I think his regimental career would best be remembered for him being a 45 year old World War One veteran commanding a company in 1942 in action, and subsequently suffering privations while escaping to Switzerland from a OOW camp in Italy in the winter of 1943. Not many like that I suggest".

Captain Roger Eustace Cleverley

In previous Newsletters we detailed the career of Roger Cleverley from his commission into the Worcestershire Regiment in 1937 to his survival in the infamous Wormhoudt Massacre, subsequent capture and first years as a POW. Read below to continue his incredible story...

Late in 1941, Cleverley and about 20 other officers were moved to Warburg (VIB) in central Germany. The camp consisted of wooden huts in flat desolate area miles from anywhere. Surrounded by high fences and guarded by soldiers in watch-towers, it contained some 2,500 officers from RN, Army, RAF and Merchant Navy. Escaping was the main occupation and it was not long before a number of tunnels had been started in the huts nearest the wire perimeter despite the German microphones which tried to pick up the sound of digging. Disposing of earth and sand from the tunnels became a problem so they filled bags inside their trouser legs and emptied them whilst walking the perimeter. Conditions in the camp deteriorated with the onset of winter so Cleverley and six others decided to write their monthly postcard to any influential person in UK to tell them. As the letters were censored, the Commandant was annoyed so he ordered their court martial for insulting Hitler and the Third Reich. A month later, they were told that they would be tried in a civilian court which was not good as they would probably "disappear" in the process. Cleverley managed to find from a Canadian officer the name of a top Swiss lawyer who agreed to represent them. One of his fellow prisoners was Douglas Bader. Soon after this, Cleverley was moved to another camp but, in the meantime, an escape attempt took place on a dark night when the lights were fused and ladders were placed against the wire. Some forty three escaped and three were confirmed as home runs. The Germans went berserk.

In mid-1942, the prisoners in Warburg were separated into the different services and sent to single-service camps; Cleverley was sent to Eichstatt (Oflag VIIB) in southern Germany near Stuttgart. This camp had been a barracks, was brick-built and well fitted with all modern facilities. However, the threat of a court martial was resurrected and the six miscreants were paraded in front of the Commandant who ranted and raved for some time before announcing that the court martial had been cancelled and that he had been given the power to punish them. He put them in solitary confinement for 21 days. Cleverley never served his 21 days as "the cooler" was always full and his name never reached the top of the list! After a winter and spring of digging a tunnel, 65 prisoners including Cleverley escaped overnight on 3rd June 1943 and some 50,000 Germans were turned out to look for them. All were captured and returned although one was shot.

Towards the end of 1943, they were moved to Rotenberg (IX A2), just east of Kassel. Thoughts turned – as always – to escape but they knew that the tide was turning against the Germans and the

Intelligence services told them to put escape plans on hold: they had a secret radio (which was moved with them in a bass drum) on which they received coded messages in or after the six o'clock news (preceded by the first few bars of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony). In mid-May, a number of trouble-makers (including Cleverley) were warned for another move and then they heard about the D-Day Landings. When they moved, no transport was available so they marched some 80 miles in fine weather east from Kassel (which was being bombed heavily by the Americans) until they reached Colditz, south of Leipzig. Whilst trudging over the Harz Mountains, they passed the secret Nordhausen labour (concentration) camp built into the mountain where the V1 and V2 rockets were made.



After five days on the move, they reached Colditz (Oflag IVC) where they were subjected to a surprisingly perfunctory search and allowed to join the other prisoners, many of whom were old friends. Colditz had its own secret radio so they knew what was happening and were making no attempt to escape. One day, after the Commandant had tried to move the prisoners further east and the SBO had refused to move, an American Sherman tank appeared at the gates. The German Commandant surrendered and a number of the guards disappeared into the distance. The SBO told all the former PoWs to remain in Colditz as marauding Germans were still about but Cleverley and two others walked out one day and wandered into the countryside. They came across a Dakota unloading fuel for the American tanks and discovered that the aircraft had come from Brussels. They asked the pilot for a lift, he agreed, they nipped back to Colditz to collect some valuable personal possessions and, without telling anyone, they made it back to the field. The flight to Brussels was at hedge height but they made it safely. They were put in a hotel by the Americans and fed properly and given a bottle of whisky. After three days, they were

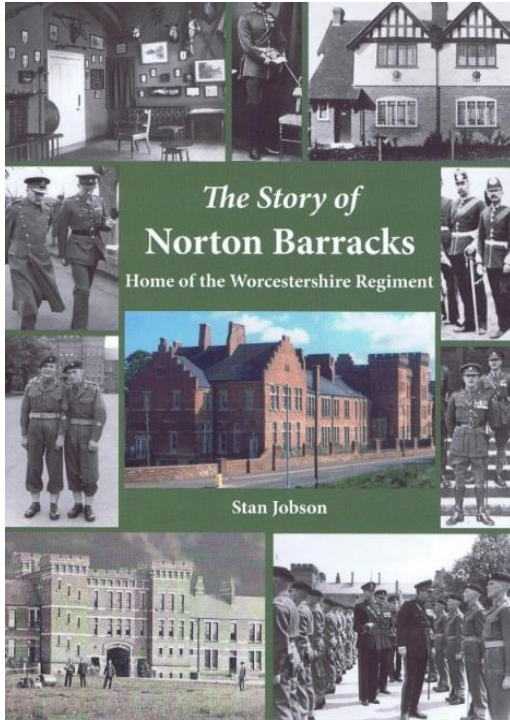
handed over to the British who sent them back to an airfield near Great Missenden in a Halifax bomber. From there, they were whisked away to a country house (which they discovered later was Bletchley Park). They had a bath, were given clean battledress, an excellent dinner and beds with white sheets. The next day, they were questioned about their captivity, details of their German captors, troop movements and any other information which might help the war effort.

Why is Captain Roger Eustace Cleverley so noteworthy?

Aside from his various escape attempts Roger Cleverley undertook whilst a POW, he was also a key figure in many stage productions at the camps in which he was held. His skill as a wardrobe master was put to good use by these productions (not to mention by the escape committees of the various camps to make uniforms and civilian clothing for escape attempts) and he trod the boards on a number of occasions; playing a variety of musical instruments. Fortunately for us, Cleverley managed to keep all of the notes he compiled during this period (from which he later compiled his war-time diary) and all of the theatre programmes in which he was involved (they were printed by local German printers) and the Rotenberg Christmas menu which he wrote and coloured in meticulous detail. All of this fascinating war-time memorabilia are kept in the Museum Archives, having been presented by his daughters after his death.

Museum launches an exciting new book

'The Story of Norton Barracks: Home of the Worcestershire Regiment'
by Stan Jobson



This is the story of both the buildings that formed Norton Barracks and of the soldiers and other personnel who were based there as members of staff or who passed through as they underwent training. Stan Jobson has spent much time in the Regimental Archives unearthing both photographs and personal recollections of time spent at the barracks. The result is a tale of British Military history in microcosm, but often seen from a personal viewpoint of hard training, military structures, playful pranks, sporting achievements, patriotic surges, post D-Day traumas and both keen and reluctant National Servicemen. There is also an appendix which gives the background to the names of the streets which now criss-cross much of the site of the barracks, names which are largely associated with the battle honours of the Worcestershire Regiment.

"The book is a cracking read and has revealed aspects of the Regiment of which I was totally unaware. Stan [the author] has done a grand job."

**The book is available in the Worcestershire Soldier Galleries at the Worcester City Museum in Foregate Street, Worcester at £7.50 or at £9.50 (including p&p) from the Mercian Regiment Museum (Worcestershire)
Dancox House, Pheasant Street, Worcester WR1 2EE**

Friends AGM – 20th May 2015

34 Friends attended the meeting, at which the following were elected to serve as the Committee for 2015/16 – Chairman, Keith Jeavons; Secretary, Bob Prophet (subsequently resigned); Treasurer, Mary Weager; Meetings Organiser, Brian Clarke; Newsletter Editor, Andrew Oddy (subsequently resigned); John Paddock, Curator of Museum; Media and Communications Officer, Pamela Langford.

The minutes will be circulated before the next AGM.

After the AGM, members of the Friends and volunteers from the Museum exhibited items from their own collections which they discussed with members.



Events Programme 2015/16

Evening Lectures

Wednesday 7th October 2015

Dr Bruce Roscoe, 'Bows and arrows against the Lightning: from Crécy (26 Aug 1346) to Agincourt (25 Oct 1415).'

7.00pm @ Dancox House, Pheasant Street, Worcester WR1 2EE. £5 to non-members.

To be confirmed in 2016...

16th March 2016, Colonel Stafford Cartwright MBE

18th May 2016, AGM & lecture by Mr. Roy Peacock

A visit to the Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum...stay tuned for details!

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 the Worcestershire 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 Brian Clarke** at Dancox House or by email brianclarke4@btinternet.com