



# DESPATCHES

the magazine of the International Guild of Battlefield Guides



## IN THIS ISSUE:

Poetry and Trench Humour  
with Major & Mrs Holt

Big Screens on the Battlefield  
Accreditation Live - A Guide

## PLUS

Trench Art Fate - Meant to Be

## AND

Guides and Reasonable  
Assumptions

# FIELDguides

Cover image: View from the Devil's Eye towards the British positions and Northern Greece. (Photo: R. Ileski)



Back to the Battlefields, GBG Member, Susie Rotherforth talking to a group of young soldiers from the Army Foundation College in Normandy (Photo John Greenacre)



Never one to miss a sideshow, Clive Harris toasts being back on the battlefields atop the Devil's Eye in Salonika (Photo: Battle Honours)



Great to be back on the battlefields! Five GBG Members make it off the Landing Zone and into Nijmegen. Terry Webb, Andy Johnson, Julian Whippy, Jo Hook and Ed Popken enjoy talking battlefields again.

## FIRSTcontact:

Guild Chairman Ian Gumm	Guild Secretary Tim Stoneman	Guild Membership Secretary - Tony Smith
chairman@gbg- international.com	secretary@gbg- international.com	mbr.sec@gbg- international.com

 [www.facebook.com/battleguide](https://www.facebook.com/battleguide)  
 [twitter.com/GuildofBG](https://twitter.com/GuildofBG)  
 [www.instagram.com/guild\\_bg](https://www.instagram.com/guild_bg)

Material for publication in the Spring edition of 'Dispatches' must be with the Editor no later than 1 October 2022. This is a deadline and submissions should be sent as far in advance as possible.

All material should be sent via Guild Secretary Tim Stoneman at: [secretary@gbg-international.com](mailto:secretary@gbg-international.com)

# Contents



- |        |  |  |
|--------|--|--|
| P2     | FIELDguides  |  |
| P5-7   | HOLIDAYING IN HISTORY<br><i>A Battlefield near you</i> | P28-30 DEDUCTION<br><i>Using Evidence to make Reasonable Assumptions</i> |
| P8-9   | FIELDguides  | P31 MEDALguide<br><i>The Military Cross</i>                              |
| P10-11 | MOBILE CINEMA  | P32- GUILDmerchandise  |
| P12-13 | MEDICALguide   | P33-36 THE GOKTIEK RAILWAY VIADUCT<br><i>and 'Mad' Mike Calvert</i>      |
| P13    | EVENTguide   | P37 MEDALguide<br><i>The Military Medal</i>                              |
| P14-15 | SOME THINGS ARE MEANT TO BE                            | P38-39 GUIDEbooks  |
| P16-17 | ACCREDITATION UPDATE<br><i>the Live Assignments</i>    |  |
| P18-27 | KIPLING & BAIRNSFATHER<br><i>Career Coincidences</i>   |  |

## EDITOR'Sguidelines:

Welcome to the latest 'Dispatches', and a big thank you to everybody that has contributed to another packed issue. Our newly elected Chair sets a positive tone for the Guild's direction of travel, more and more members are making their return to the battlefields. This positive upturn has yet to be reflected in a corresponding flow of tour related articles into 'Dispatches'...hint, hint!

We have managed a good balance of historical research and technical input. Notably, a wonderful and insightful feature on the synergy between Bairnsfather and Kipling penned by two of our own titans of the Western Front, Tonie & Valmai Holt. The selfless sharing of such in-depth knowledge is exactly what Ian Gumm talks about in his opening view from the Chair. There is more of the same from other members, Tim Stoneman's piece on the Scillies really does take us 'off the beaten track', as does Piers Storey-Pugh with an interesting article on Mad Mike Calvert and the Chindits in Burma. For those on the validation trail, we have an update on the programme's Live Assignments from our Director of Accreditation, Chris Finn. A useful thinkpiece from Chris Scott on the process of using historical evidence to formulate deductions,

something guides are often required to do. If you have wrestled with the challenges of deploying IT on tour, Joris Nieuwint has really tackled the issue. He explains how through a combination of innovation, trial and error, he has developed his own battlefield deployable Audio-Visual facility to complement the delivery of his tour narrative.

We have some great Field Guide pictures from Glenn Stennes, our man in the Republic of North Macedonia. I am also grateful to Tony Smith for his Medal Guides - an associated subject that we all need to know something about as we go about our business. In addition, we carry our usual spread of book reviews, thanks again to Steve Hunnisett who has sent in an informative review on a new Blitz related title. Finally, we have had a letter from Peter Caddick-Adams written as he recovers after a cardiac arrest whilst on tour in France. Peter takes time to comment on the current realities of medical cover for UK Passport holders in France. All of this adds up to what I hope you will find to be an interesting issue.

Mike Peters  
Editor



# OPENINGshot:

## A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Dear fellow members and Guild Partners, welcome to the Spring 2022 issue of 'Dispatches'.

I would like to open by thanking Mike for his eleven years leading the Guild as our Chairman. Eleven years that have seen the Guild travel along a path of change into an organisation that has set out its long-term vision to be the most relevant and diverse organisation representing its membership within the battlefield guiding industry.

Two-years of COVID restrictions have been extremely challenging for the industry and while some have adapted quite successfully, others have not survived but, at last, we seem to be emerging into an era of recovery and regeneration.

I have taken part in my first tours since 2019, guiding on some and tour managing for others. It is fantastic to be back on the battlefield doing what I love. Yes, things are certainly more complicated than they were pre-pandemic and pre-BREXIT, but nevertheless, so long as one keeps abreast of the current regulations, it is not that onerous. Enquiries are coming in and orders being placed, so the road to recovery is visible; that era of renewed growth and opportunity exists.

It is not only an era of opportunity for the industry *but also for us as a Guild, and in this, my first 'View from the Chair'*, I want to set out the stall for the Management Board under my leadership – the direction in which we want to lead the Guild over the next five years. It is a direction that we believe supports the Guild's long-term vision, and a direction that we hope you will all support.

That direction is defined by our strategy:

**To elevate the standard and practice of battlefield guiding.**

**To promote the education of battlefield guides and visitors ...**

**by encouraging the sharing of knowledge, experience, and values.**

*"Elevate, Educate and Encourage"*

The Management Board believe that 'Adding Value' must underpin all that we do, and we must never lose sight of the fact that we are a members' organisation that exists for the benefit of its membership.

One of our medium-term goals is to support members' guiding activities. We currently do this by promoting the Guild Accredited Badge and Guild membership as key selling points for clients when engaging a battlefield guide. We also provide opportunities to network within the broader guiding industry and offer an affordable value-for-money package of benefits to members.

We have a full programme of events planned for the coming year, indeed 2023 is already beginning to fill up.

We have recently made changes to the validation process to allow Assignments 1, 5 and 6 to be conducted on-line for all, and we are in the process of making it possible for more members to begin the validation process by widening the ways in which they can attain the necessary experience to start along the road to accreditation.

We want to explore new avenues by which we can support members' guiding activities through new initiatives.

Our revamped Guild Partners scheme is one such initiative and is aimed at adding value to the membership rather than being perceived as a revenue stream.

Another idea is a repository into which members can place resources for their fellow members to share. This is an idea that we have yet to explore and would look at facilitating if it was something that members would support by providing material as well as using it.

These new avenues, opportunities, are boundless and can take many forms, and we welcome any suggestions you may have to add value to your membership.

Another of our medium-term goals is to be more inclusive; an organisation that welcomes members irrespective of their age, gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, disability, background, etc.

The Management Board believes that there is more we can do to reflect the global multi-cultural and diverse society in which we operate. It believes that the Guild must continue to build upon the success already achieved and ensure that membership is open to all who have the same shared interests. This includes not only those working within the battlefield guiding industry but also those who do not necessarily considered that there are opportunities within that industry for them.

We are also an international organisation, and the Management Board hopes to encourage more of those who both live and guide around the continental battlefields with which we are all so familiar to become members.

We must make it known that the International Guild of Battlefield Guides is an organisation to which anyone interested in battlefield guiding, its industry and our historical focus can belong. They must feel that the International Guild of Battlefield Guides is an organisation to which they will all be welcomed with open arms.

**Ian Gumm**  
Chairman



# HOLIDAYING IN HISTORY - A BATTLEFIELD NEAR YOU

Tim Stoneman

**How many of us have found ourselves on holiday near a battlefield site - and (family pressures allowing) felt the need to explore it? Better still, how about spending the holiday living in one of the buildings on the site which played a key role in that site's history?**

*Painting of Felixstowe flying boat by James Dodds, courtesy of Tresco Estate*



Recently I had the pleasure of spending a week on the island of Tresco. Today, it's an idyllic holiday destination – but 104 years ago, it was a hive of activity in one of the longest-fought campaigns of the Great War, one which threatened to lose Britain the war. The island's Royal Naval Air Station Tresco hosted naval flying boats from January 1917 until All Fool's Day 1918 when, on the formation of the Royal Air Force, it became RAF Tresco, with four flights of aircraft; the flights later amalgamated to form 234 Squadron RAF. As a further battlefield interest, the beaches half a mile to the east were the site of an amphibious assault by Commonwealth forces in 1651 – but that's a story for another time!

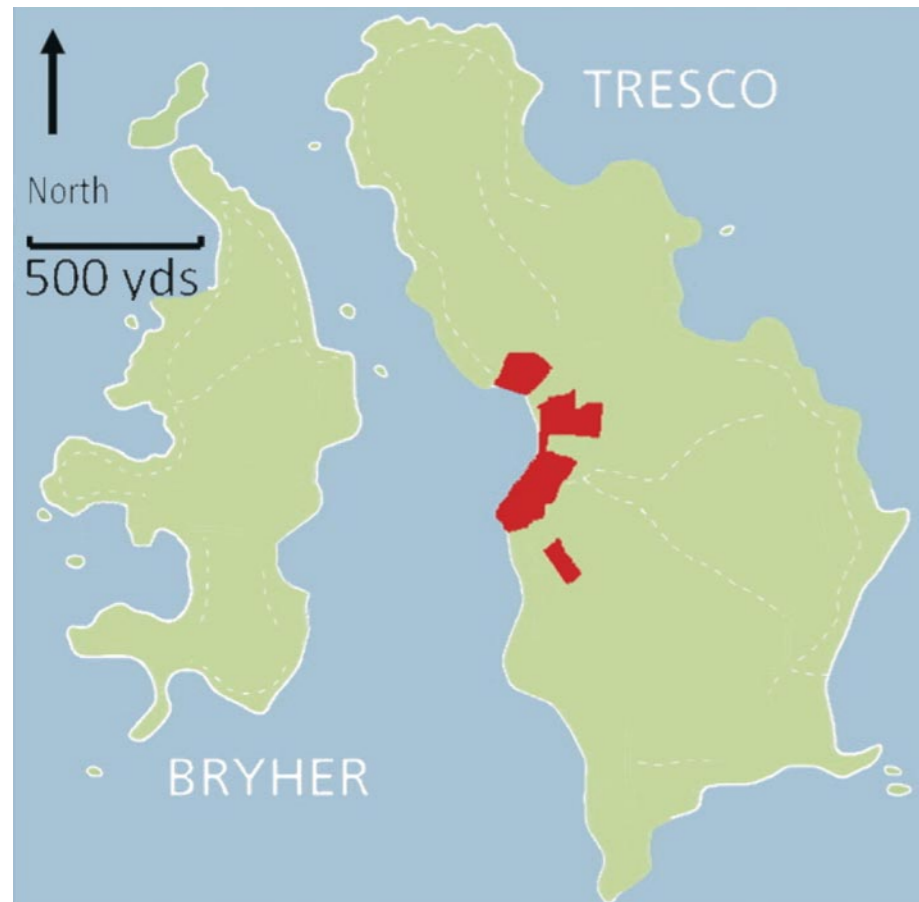
"So what?", you may say. What has this got to do with battlefield guiding? Well, whilst much of the site is unrecognisable as a former air station, the sea, the rocks and the channels are unchanging (well, the sandbars shift, so some of the channels have altered). The keen-eyed battlefield explorer can locate and identify many features of the landscape which would have been familiar to those maritime aviators and ground crew from a century ago, and, whilst 'smelling the cordite' would be a challenge, one can (metaphorically) 'smell the aviation fuel' or (actually) 'smell the salt air'.

## The History

The pressures of the Great War saw aviation develop in leaps and bounds in many contexts, and

by 1917, flying boats had become a vital part of the battle against the German U-Boats which threatened Britain's very survival. Admiral Jellicoe said in 1916 that there was "... a serious danger that our losses in merchant ships, combined with the losses in neutral merchant ships, may, by the early summer of 1917, have such a serious effect upon the import of food and other necessities into the Allied countries as to force us into accepting peace terms ..." As the battle developed, sinkings in the western approaches to the English Channel took a greater and greater toll of merchant shipping, vital for supplying the war effort and the civilian population. To counter this, fixed-wing aircraft, airships and surface ships were deployed from coastal bases – the further west, the better. The Isles of Scilly, thirty miles out into the Atlantic from Land's End, seemed a useful place to set up a base for flying boats – by now huge machines (for the time), with a wingspan of over 100 feet (and they used feet and inches, pounds and ounces etc, not metric measurements, in those days!). However, the first attempt to do so on one of the islands was defeated by the weather – exposed to Atlantic gales, the site chosen was quickly found to be unsuitable – and so another of the islands, Tresco, and the sheltered waters off its western shore, were chosen instead.

A farmstead, formerly (and subsequently) the Abbey Farm, was requisitioned. Initially, the sailors lived in tents whilst permanent accommodation was



Tresco and Bryher in the Scillies, showing the air station

built for both men and machines. Some of the farm buildings were used as living spaces, or other base facilities – the potato store became the bomb store (and is now a row of three holiday cottages, one of which I stayed in!).

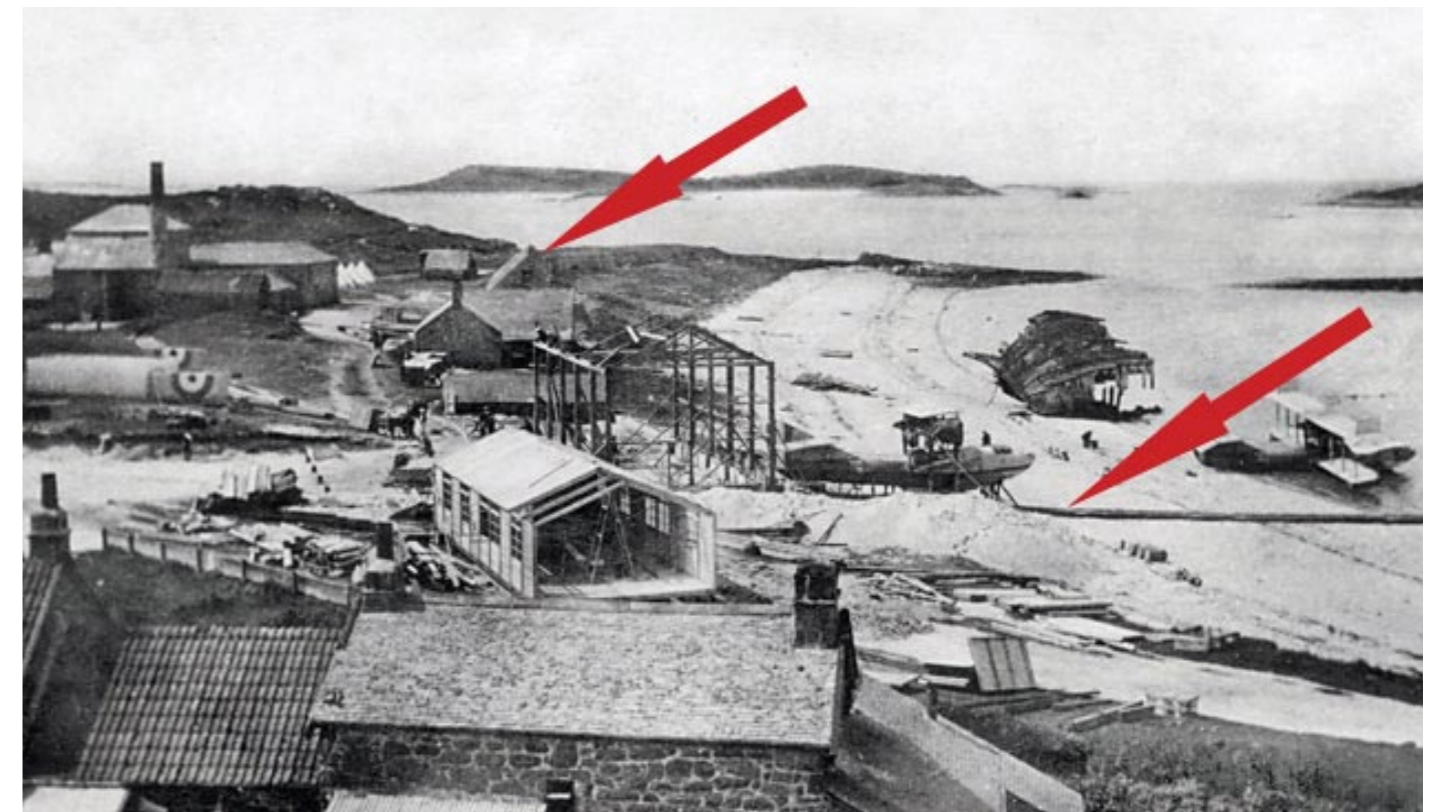
Two ‘seaplane sheds’ (hangars) were built to house some of the seaplanes and flying boats, and a ramp or slipway built to move them down to the seashore for launching. There wasn’t space for all the aircraft, so many were left at mooring buoys in Tresco Channel between flights. There they were, of course, vulnerable to rough weather – despite the shelter of neighbouring islands, some were wrecked when the wind direction was up or down this stretch of water. Others were lost due to navigational issues in fog, or the unreliability of their engines or structure.



Air station site then and now, from the south

The base became operational in February 1917, and the first patrol was flown on 28 February. Much of the flying may have seemed unproductive, in that few actual attacks on U-Boats occurred. However, a prime benefit of aircraft in antisubmarine warfare, in the days when a submarine needed to be on the surface to find and attack its targets, was that the submarine would not stay surfaced in the presence of an aircraft, whether fixed-wing or airship, and thus would be denied the ability to locate or engage shipping. That said, a Tresco-based aircraft is recorded as having dropped two 100lb bombs which sank a U-Boat (UC66) fifteen miles north of the islands in May 1917 (the first ever confirmed sinking of a submarine at sea by an aircraft, and the only confirmed sinking of a U-boat by the RNAS and the RAF during First World War), and another U-Boat was attacked in September 1918. UC66’s wreck was not located until 2018.

One tragic event, in early June 1917, resulted in the deaths of two sailors, who now lie together in the island’s churchyard. They were arming bombs by the bomb store when there was an explosion; one died at the scene, whilst the second died of wounds later. By the following January, the bomb store had been rebuilt; modified several times since, its outline is still recognisable when seen alongside period photographs.



View of air station, still incomplete, from the north (arrows show bomb store and slipway)

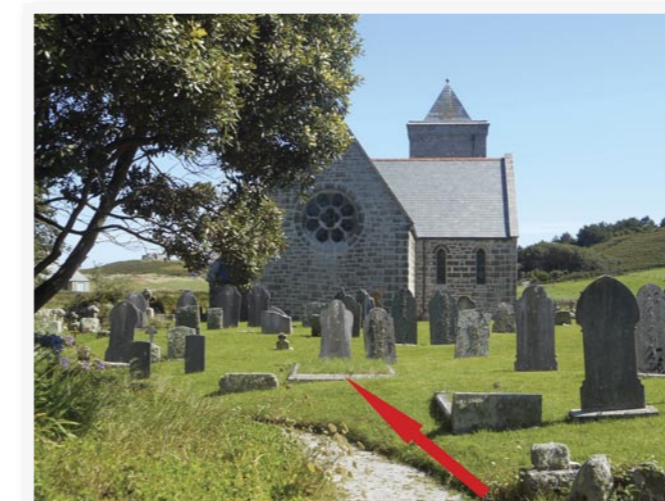
### What is Visible Today?

A number of the buildings (including the bomb store), or in some cases just their foundations, are still identifiable. The casual observer could be forgiven for thinking that the current slipway is the original one – after all, it has rails for part of its length, fit to take a flying boat’s launching trolley. Not so! Whilst the rails are original, the concrete in which they are embedded is not – the wooden slipway was replaced as part of a rebuilding project many years ago!

As the actual battlespace (not ‘battlefield’) was the featureless ocean, the next best thing to being on it is to walk amongst the remaining structures and



Bomb store building then (after the explosion) and now



St Nicholas Churchyard, Tresco (arrow points to the grave of Aircraftsmen Creasy and Ellingworth)

artefacts of the time, and to relax in the Flying Boat Club afterwards – a refreshment stop for holidaymakers, named in honour of the site’s history. In its memory, the Club has a large painting of a flying boat in the entrance lobby – the title picture for this article.

# FIELDguides



Glenn Stennes, providing a ground orientation on the battlefield in Dojran, to members of the British Armed Forces presently in North Macedonia for an exercise.

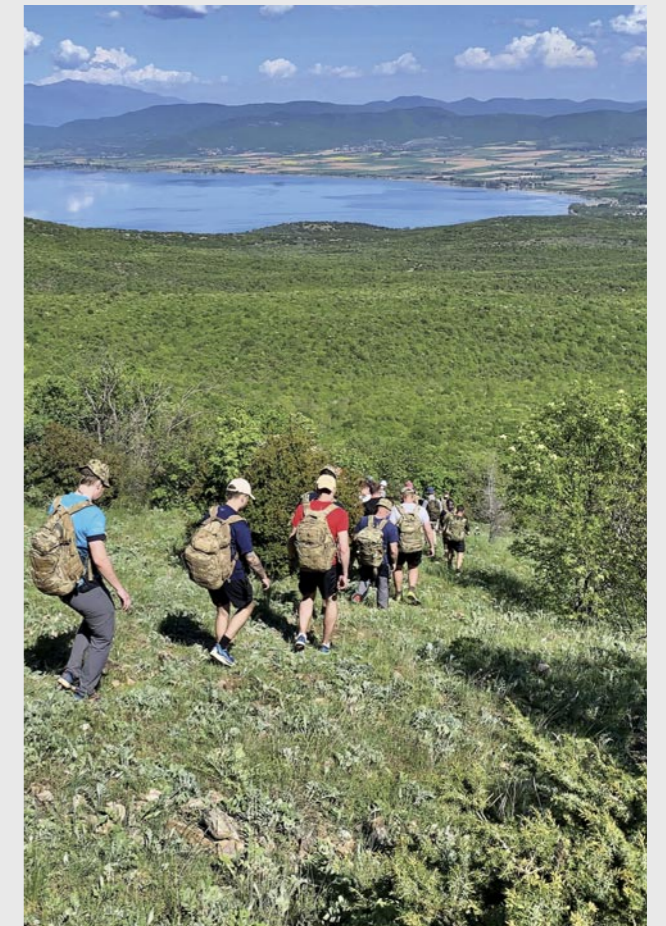
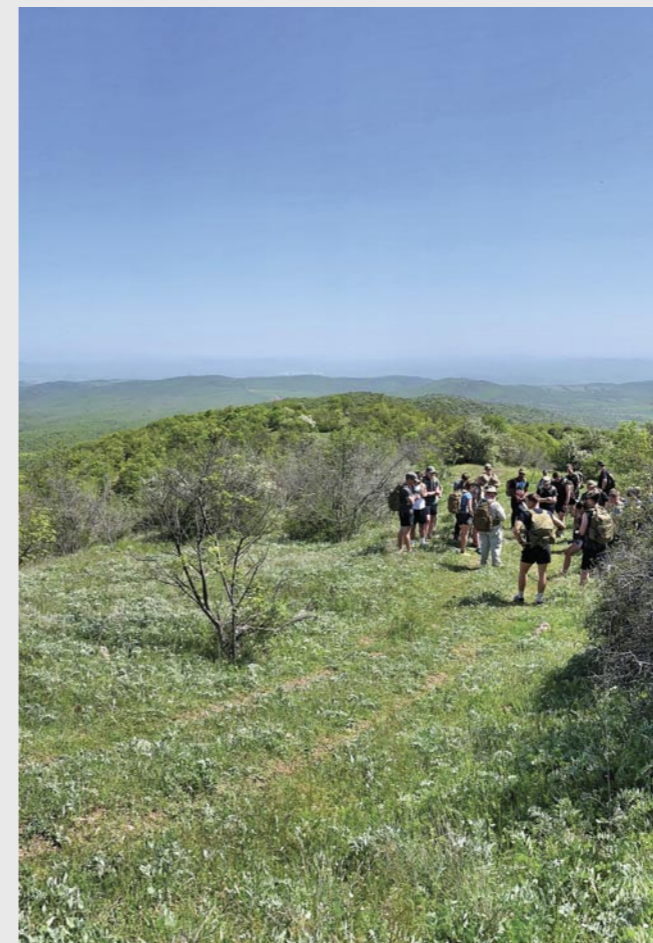
Glenn Stennes, sharing the history of the British 22nd Infantry Division Memorial in Dojran, North Macedonia, with members of the British Armed Forces presently in the country for an exercise.



Glenn Stennes, and soldiers from the UK's 16 Brigade discuss artillery in front of a Bulgarian concrete reinforced gun position. Dojran, North Macedonia.



Glenn Stennes, sharing the events of 18 September 1918 which saw the British 66th Infantry Brigade suffer 76% casualties during the assault of Pip Ridge in Dojran, North Macedonia, with members of the British Forces presently in the country for an exercise.



Left: Following in the footsteps of the British 66th Infantry Brigade assault of Pip Ridge, 18 September 1918. Right: Descending the steep slopes of Pip Ridge, Dojran, North Macedonia. (Photo: R. Ilieski)

# MOBILE CINEMA

Joris Nieuwint 

**When doing my accreditation, I was challenged to think outside the “I speak, you listen” type of guiding with which, I have to say, I was very comfortable.**

My first venture out of this box was when I found a sound clip of General McAuliffe in which he talked about the NUTS reply in Bastogne. A couple of test runs on the coach I found out that it the guests really enjoyed this. So, I started looking for more sound clips that can be used on tour, Alan Wood at Arnhem describing the resupply drop was an easy find and with a small Bluetooth speaker I was able to use that even with large groups outside a coach.

When you are outside in Oosterbeek on the Hartenstein Museum grounds and listen to a recording made it that general area during the battle, when you hear the ‘Ack Ack’ and the explosions, that is truly remarkable.

That got me thinking about what else I could use, there is a lot that can be found on the internet but when it comes to sound clips it can be daunting to find the one you need. However, if you search on YouTube, you can find tons and tons of combat footage and most of that is from public domain sources. For instance, the American Combat Bulletins are all in the public domain and they cover virtually all aspects of the war.

When going through YouTube I had the thought, “what if I could show the footage itself?” It took me a while to figure out how to put this in practice, there were several obstacles to overcome. In the meantime, I started to download material I could potentially use and began editing the footage into 2-minute clips.

The most important thing was, of course, how to show the material on tour. A tablet would work great for small groups, but what about larger groups? This was a tough nut to crack but my mind kept coming back to using a projector in the back of my minivan. The minivan I use is a 6-seater with a windowless cargo compartment which gives me a nice area to play with. However, the projector needs a 220v power source and my minivan does not have that. So



trusted Google came out to help me again and while searching I found out there are projectors on the market already that work from a battery. The tricky part was that for a good clear picture in daylight you need a strong lamp in the projector and those consume a lot of power so that limited the options. On top of that I could not spend an indecent amount of money on it. Choices, choices, choices. In the end there was nothing for it but to buy one and evaluate it.

The projector I chose was the Anker Nebula Mars II Pro, it ticked all the boxes, and it has a good set of speakers. Then there was the issue of the screen, for which I tried a number of cloth ones which turned out to be utter rubbish, and they are now stored on the attic. In the end I found a portable screen that is not unlike a roll-up banner and has a good reflective surface. The videos I use are all stored on an USB stick and can be played directly from this stick by the projector. Thus, I created my mobile cinema!

This setup works well but I must be careful not to park with the rear of the van towards the sun. An alternative to using a projector could be a 12v TV, these are normally used in Campers or trucks and come in assorted sizes. However, I have not tried this yet, mostly because a projector is easier to hide than a TV.

The reception of the Mobile Cinema by my guests has been unanimously positive, they simply do not expect this and to watch footage on the very location where it was filmed during WWII is truly adding something special to the tour.



## MEDICALguide

### M\*A\*S\*H

Peter Caddick-Adams

Can I just thank all the many IGBG members who have sent me best wishes? Those of you with a uniformed services background will be particularly aware how important words of encouragement, even from strangers, are when one is grubbing around at the bottom of the well of despair. They have helped lift me to the surface again. I had not expected my plight to become so public, but with a major new book launch scheduled at the National Army Museum (sales are healthy, thanks for asking), we had to go public with a reason for the cancellation.

For those of you unaware, when passing through Paris on 3 May, I suffered a heart attack.

Fortunately, my great friend known to many of you, James Holland, chose that moment to call and was able to alert paramedics. For the rest, the crazy rush-hour ambulance drive across Paris, the surgical procedures, I was out of it. When I came to, it was explained that Part 2 would take place on 10 May, a quadruple coronary bypass. I was unprepared for the walls of pain and nausea this has involved. So far successful, the hospital will discharge me after 5 weeks into a 3-week residential stay in a sanatorium for rehabilitation. Think Headley Court. All major French hospitals run networks of such places, which are a compulsory part of the treatment programme. I couldn't very well ask for a former German WW2 headquarters, but I understand this is what many are.

Stupidly, passing through Paris for a mere few hours, I neglected to beef up my health insurance. I added unnecessary stress to myself whilst the hospital worked out who would foot the bill. On the expiry of my European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), I equipped myself with the new Global Health Card (GHC). So far so good. Yet, it appeared to mystify French bureaucracy. It is not the same beast as an EHIC, is vaguer in what it will cover and appears to come very much with 'L' plates. My advice is never to rely on the GHC alone, and always take out appropriate private health insurance. If your EHIC is in date you can still use it, with the same effect as an American



Express Gold Card. In my case, the current estimate of my health bill will be between E100,000-200,000. Twelve hours in Intensive Care costs E3,000 alone. Additional health insurance is peace of mind that someone else will take care of this.

Friends phoned the British Embassy, which put me on their radar. They have been wonderful with reassuring phone calls and e-mails, but also to the hospital management. It means you are not forgotten. The French spend more on their healthcare than the NHS – and it shows. More hospitals, more doctors, shedloads more support staff and more wards and beds. No sense of beds in corridors, waiting times or needing to decant you before you feel ready. Though my French is more than adequate, it is rare to find a doctor who does not speak some (enough) English. Being used to travel, I rarely venture out without my laptop, Kindle, phones, spare batteries, charging cables, spare cables, adaptors and spare adaptors. This has allowed me to stay fully connected throughout my stay, which will have morphed from four hours in Paris to eight weeks. Ex-military folk are aware of how quickly circumstances can change, and pack accordingly, those with a civilian background, perhaps less so.

I offer this, because I could have been one of your tour group. The embassy/consular approach costs nothing, but also suggests you are in control. Your group member and their distraught

partner will need maximum reassurance. Alas, my heart is a fickle organ, and has provided dramas leading to hospitals in Dusseldorf (all clipboards and gauleiters), on Sicily (excellent surgery, but families are expected to provide everything from clothing to meals, so support can be basic). I was fine because my roommate appeared to belong to the mafia. I've also had a cardiac run-in in Ypres. Belgium has just delivered a nationwide building programme of new hospitals. The Ypres version was faultless. The entire cardio staff were out at a dinner together and turned out to assess me still wearing black tie. The only drawback was the cheery view from my window – of several Commonwealth War Graves cemeteries. On the catering front, I'd assess the daily menu of my Parisian hospital as equivalent to that of a good officers' mess, without the wine (but – curiously – with the cheese). Of course, as they say, other hospitals are available.

Medical emergencies can and will happen. For many, the experience of being taken ill in a foreign country, with no language skills, will be frightening. More so for their families. This is because we build our experience on the queues and waiting times of our splendid but challenged NHS. You should be aware that in most countries where you will guide and tour, medical facilities are more modern and often far superior to our own. The younger generations of medical staff everywhere all speak English, which most are taught at school or learn via the internet. Make sure those with medical conditions have a list of their medications with them; it helps speed things up. Above all, stay calm. Call the embassy, call the hospital daily – the rest of the group will want to know the status of their colleague. Provide reassurance and you will prove to your group you are a good head in a crisis, which can only enhance your reputation.

## EVENTguide 2022/23

- 1-3 Jul '22 - **Tewkesbury & Range Weekend** - For further information, please contact Chris Finn: [accreditation@gbg-international.com](mailto:accreditation@gbg-international.com)
- 12 Aug '22 - **Guild Annual Golf Championships** - Members wishing to attend please e-mail Graeme Cooper: [graeme@corporatebattlefields.com](mailto:graeme@corporatebattlefields.com)
- 19 Aug '22 - **Queen's Jubilee 20th Anniversary Badged Guides Dinner** - This Black Tie Dinner in London for 'Badged Members' of the Guild will celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Guild in this year of The Queen's Jubilee. Members wishing to attend please e-mail Graeme Cooper: [graeme@corporatebattlefields.com](mailto:graeme@corporatebattlefields.com)
- 16-19 Sep '22 - **Commando and Ranger Event** - For further information see the Events Calendar on the Guild website or contact Robert Shaw: [rtshaw@hotmail.com](mailto:rtshaw@hotmail.com)
- 28 Oct '22 - **Visit to the Tower of London** - For further information see the Events Calendar on the Guild website or contact Andy Merry: [beefeater398@hotmail.com](mailto:beefeater398@hotmail.com)
- 2 Dec '22 - **Guild Christmas Lunch** - Members wishing to attend please e-mail Andy Thompson: [andy.ewt@gmail.com](mailto:andy.ewt@gmail.com)
- 27-29 Jan '23 - **IGBG Annual Conference and AGM 2023**
- 2 Mar '23 - **Wellington in Spain** - 2nd March 2023 for 5 or 7 days. Members wishing to attend please e-mail Graeme Cooper: [graeme@corporatebattlefields.com](mailto:graeme@corporatebattlefields.com)

This full programme of events has been planned for this year, in the expectation of a more positive social atmosphere as the Covid-19 vaccines roll out and government's restrictions ease. However, the continuing influence of COVID-19 restrictions upon plans cannot be predicted.

# SOME THINGS ARE MEANT TO BE ...

Eugenie Brooks

Last Thursday one of my rescue kittens was playing with a cat toy and threw it into the fireplace where I keep my collection of 1st WW shell cases. She knocked them over so I decided it was a good idea to clean them. On one of them I noticed a name inscribed on the bottom so I decided to Google that name.

The inscription was "Pte H Poberevsky 557847". I found the soldier's medal card on line and nothing else except a link to a very recent news article on a charity webpage called 'Spare Room Sorted' and about the lady who had created it, Juliet Landau-Pope. This charity is helping Ukrainian refugees to find homes in the UK as they escape from the Russian invasion of their county. I couldn't work out why this article had come up in my search until I read into it. The article mentioned Juliet's grandfather, Hyman Povereovsky and I started to wonder if it was the same man. I had



no idea if the name was a popular one – a bit like a John Smith or similar – but decided to send Juliet a carefully worded email – ensuring I didn't sound too much like a stalker! I asked if her Granddad had served in the Great War and included the pictures of the shell.

Almost immediately I received a reply to my email confirming it WAS her Granddad and his service number!! A flurry of emails followed by an emotional phone call the next morning and the next

day Juliet came over from her home in NW London to mine in Surrey.

She brought with her a bound book containing her family history including pictures of her Granddad Hyman. He came from Kyiv in 1907 escaping Russian persecution as he was of the Jewish faith. He worked hard and within two years could afford to bring his parents and four siblings over to Whitechapel where he had a barrow loaning company. He served in the Labour Corps June 1918 to December 1919 and during that time must have bought or made the shell. Perhaps a German POW working with the Labour Corps made it? Who knows?

His British War Medal and Victory Medal are proudly in the possession of the family. During the 2nd World War, he assisted with the Kinder Transport finding sponsors and homes for Jewish children escaping Nazi persecution. He had married in 1921 and had three children including adopting in 1938 a little 10-year-old girl from Danzig. In 1934 he changed his name to Pope and lived a full life, passing away in 1958 aged 69. His name is in the 'British Jewry Book of Honour' and is remembered with great pride by his family.

And so, 103 years after he had made or bought the shell, I handed it back to his granddaughter. I'd bought it years ago from a junk shop but it's finally gone home. I asked nothing for it but Juliet wanted to give me something so I asked her to donate to a Ukrainian charity to assist present day refugees. I think Private Hyman Poberevsky would have liked that.



Eugenie (right) with Juliet and the shell case



# ACCREDITATION UPDATE – THE LIVE ASSIGNMENTS

Christopher Finn, MPhil, FRAeS, Accreditation Director

**As we approach the AGM I thought it would be worthwhile sharing my thoughts with the readership on where we are with the Accreditation Programme in a more informal way than through my Annual Report.**

In 2020 and the first half of 2021 fourteen members took advantage of the spare time granted by the Lockdown, and the opportunity to attempt the three live assignments ‘on-line’ and gained their Badges.

The average is 5 Badges per year so we got through three years-worth of validations in just 18 months. The corollary is that we have now gone from ‘feast to famine’. So, I do not anticipate the validation numbers picking up to pre-Pandemic levels until the latter part of this year, as new candidates come forward.

One of the problems this causes is that there are currently very few Assignment 1s, at events or on-line, for potential candidates to watch and get an idea of what is required to pass Assignment 1. Consequently, I am going to use this article to highlight the three most common feedback points from the 29 Assignment 1s attempted over the last two years.

In third place, many candidates simply failed to ‘communicate in an engaging and entertaining manner’, ie the validators (and the audience) didn’t ‘smell the cordite’, or the salt spray, aviation fuel or horse dung for that matter. Some candidates were over-concentrating on the technical and tactical aspects, to the exclusion of the human ones. Used selectively, and sparingly, first-hand anecdotes can bring things to life. Photos, artefacts and combat reports can do the same, if properly used.

However, to allow candidates to focus more on the communication and presentation aspects of Assignment 1 we have revised the Knowledge standards to place less emphasis on them – but they still have to be met in order to pass the assignment.

In second place some candidates are *not getting the balance right between providing too little and too much factual information* – they are not ‘selecting the relevant knowledge’. A lot of this is linked to the type and size/duration of the battle, or part of a battle, selected. Covering all four battles of Monte Cassino, an army level campaign of some months, just doesn’t deliver on the detail and the actuality of battle – it is a



Eugenie Brooks demonstrating her ability to cross age gaps at Pegasus Bridge, linking a group of WW2 Veterans to a group of curious UK Students.

broad history talk which doesn’t meet the requirements of Assignment 1. Equally, small unit actions and individual VC actions rarely have enough breadth to demonstrate all the Skills to the required level. One regularly repeated piece of advice to Referred candidates is to not necessarily select their favourite battle or stand, but to select one that ensures they meet all the requirements of the assignment; this is equally true for Assignment 6 and the battle-related written assignments.

To give an example, it would be very difficult to cover the air battles over England on the 18th of August 1940, purely in terms of the complexity and amount of content, in the 25 minutes allowed – and that was only over an afternoon. Better to cover either the first wave against the Kentish airfields (including the unique Kenley raid) or the south coast wave of the later afternoon. Either has enough content to meet all the requirements of the assignment whilst providing plenty of opportunities to bring the action ‘to life’. With 11 Group augmented by squadrons from 10 Gp these are the equivalent of ‘Division plus’ army battles.

But the clear winner is P2 – *telling a story which gives listeners a broad understanding of what happened*. The standard for P2, in Assignment 1, is:

*Sets the scene with a short but comprehensive introduction. The body of the talk focuses on the action itself. The conclusion is succinct and relevant.*

And the sentence in bold is in bold in the Assignment specification for a reason. On so many occasions the candidate is still contextualising, explaining the terrain and covering the participants in excruciating detail thirteen or fourteen minutes into the talk. This invariably leads to a rushed conclusion, or even none at all. And this is what the validator is referring to when they talk in the Feedback Session about the structure being wrong. If you look at the Standard above you will see that the structure is fairly rigid, and just has to be followed. For the body of a 25-minute talk to focus on the action itself it has to be at least 13, preferably 14 or 15 minutes long. With a crisp conclusion of a couple of minutes it’s not difficult to work out how long you have for the introduction. As has been said in many feedback sessions, the validators are looking for when the candidate ‘crosses the start line’. If you haven’t got into the action proper by 10 minutes from starting you are on the edge of the minefield of Referral, at 12 minutes you are dancing around in it!

Of course, structure and content go hand-in-hand, they are two sides of the same coin. **The trick is to get the structure right, and then fit the content to it – and not the other way round.**



Eddie Smallwood with a presentation of a Roman Legionary's armour and weapons at Mancetter.

Assignments 5 & 6 are held ‘in camera’ but, as there has been a change to Assignment 6, I will give some general feedback here about those two assignments as well.

Assignment 5 is a conversation between the validators and the candidate about how they would deal with various ‘problems on tour’. Experienced guides generally have no problem with the assignment, as the consistently high first-time pass rate demonstrates.

Turning lastly to Assignment 6. The primary reason for most Assignment 6 referrals has been candidates not selecting sufficiently different TYPES of sources and/or sufficiently different examples within each type of source. This is particularly relevant to Skills K2 and K6. Candidates need to select sources which enable them to ‘explain the pros and cons of the selected types both within and between types’. All too often we see candidates going through a single source giving example after example of how they would use it on tour but not addressing its relative merits as a source. My article in the Summer 2020 edition of Despatches, ‘Investigating the Loss of Lancaster PB812’, covers these issues in some depth and is useful reading for a candidate preparing for Assignment 6.

When doing Assignment 6 on-line candidates can use powerpoint to present their source materials. However, candidates should resist the temptation to turn this into a slick powerpoint presentation about sources in general, where the presentation becomes the focus to the exclusion of the analysis of the selected sources.

Finally, to address the reduction in the level of knowledge required in Assignment 1 (described above) the following K1 Standard has been added to Assignment 6 in order to maintain the final ‘Badge’ standard:

A sound working knowledge of the historical information available for the chosen battle and period is evident in the presentation and when answering questions.

It is also there to emphasise the need for candidates to consider a broad range of sources, which is also required in K2.

Since the first Assignment 1 at RAF Marham in 2002, there have been 183 successful Assignment 1s and 110 Badges have been awarded. I would therefore encourage potential candidates to (re)engage with the Accreditation Programme and have a go at Assignment 1 either on-line or at a live event. The next one of these will be at Tewkesbury on the morning of Saturday the 2nd of July.

Please, as always, contact the Validation Secretary, Andy Johnson – [valsec@gbg-international.com](mailto:valsec@gbg-international.com) – in the first instance.

# COINCIDENCES IN THE CAREERS OF RUDYARD KIPLING AND BRUCE BAIRNSFATHER

Tonie and Valmai Holt

As readers may know, we have written the biographies of two interesting subjects who both had a significant role in the First World War.



Rudyard and Carrie Kipling in Dud Corner CWGC Cemetery, where their son John is still listed on the Memorial Wall to the Missing.

One is about Rudyard Kipling's son, John, although the major part of the book concerns Rudyard himself. It is entitled 'My Boy Jack?', the important question mark referring to our doubt that the Commonwealth War Graves' announcement of 1992 that they had identified John Kipling's grave, was valid. The use of the name 'Jack' refers to Rudyard's yearning poem, 'My Boy Jack', the first line of which is 'Have you news of my boy Jack?' John was, as far as we can establish, never known to the family as 'Jack' (in fact the family had a

dog named 'Jack') but there is no doubt that the poem referred to Rudyard's desperate search for the body of his son, who was declared missing in the Battle of Loos on 27 September 1915.

The other book, about WW1's most famous cartoonist, Bruce Bairnsfather, is entitled 'In Search of the Better 'Ole'. This refers to his most famous image, 'Well if you knows of a better 'ole, go to it', still used by many of today's cartoonists, often with current politicians in difficult situations in the 'Ole'.

In this article we examine the many coincidences that occurred in their personal lives and in their careers. Firstly we explain what triggered this comparison.

Bairnsfather's most famous cartoon, 'The Better 'Ole.'



## Rudyard Kipling and Bruce Bairnsfather at the Italian Front, 1917

During the September 2020 Kipling Society's international Zoom, member Howard Jackson's reading was from 'The War in the Mountains'. This is a collection of articles Kipling wrote at the invitation of British Ambassador Sir Rennell Rodd, who wished to draw British attention to the real effort of the Italians during WW1. The six articles were written during Kipling's visit, with his South African journalist friend Percival Landon, to the Italian front in May 1917 and five were published between 6 and 20 June in *The Daily Telegraph* and *The New York Tribune*. The first one, which described Rome in Wartime, was censored by the War Office and was not published. In Rome Kipling and Landon had been treated like VIPs, attending a Beatification at the Vatican, lunching with Cardinal Gasquet, meeting eminent politicians and military officers. During his following tour Kipling visited Udine, Gradisca, the Isonzo River, Gorizia, the Dolomites and the Trentino Fronts. The Italian tour and the ensuing articles and several collections in book form, receive scant mentions in most, or are totally ignored by others, of the many Kipling biographies. The first book was published in 1917 by Doubleday in 5 parts. An Italian translation appeared in the same year. Most recently a '150th Anniversary of Kipling's Birth' edition was produced in April 2015 which seems to have re-awakened interest. On the final page of the last (Trentino Army) article, Kipling shows his admiration for the Italian forces fighting in such harsh conditions. 'Their difficulties, general and particular, are many. But Italy accepts these burdens and others in just the same spirit as she accepts the cave-riddled plateaux, the mountains, the unstable snows and rocks and the inconceivable toil that they impose upon her arms. They are hard, but she is harder.'

Howard's reading vividly reminded us that, coincidentally, Bairnsfather (who by this time had attained international fame) was also asked by the Italian Army to tour their front near Udine close to the Austro-Hungarian border and to make some drawings. He arrived a couple of weeks after Rudyard

in June 1917, was billeted at the British Military Mission and his guide for the tour was the Duke of Milan.

The Italian objective in fighting the Austrians was the port of Trieste and the opposing armies faced each other along a line that ran due north from the Gulf of Trieste, following the line of the River Isonzo through the Alps to Caporetto. Bruce was struck by the differences between the Western and Italian Fronts. 'What a different landscape to fight in from our front', he wrote. 'Instead of the mass of sloppy sandbags along the edge of a narrow canal, which constitute the normal trench on the western front, these men had nothing but rocks and sand to deal with'. The first part of his tour was made in the Duke's car around the hairpin bends on narrow roads with the horrific drops to one side that so impressed Kipling on his tour. 'Now and again,' continued



A Visit to the Alpini

"The chauffeur says a car fell over here last week"  
"Oh!"

Bruce, *'we would nearly collide with an Italian staff car which was doing its usual ninety miles an hour around impossible corners'*. Eventually they were forced to continue the journey by mule to reach the forward position of the Alpini.

The result of the trip was a series of cartoons, published in 1918 in *Fragments From All the Fronts. Number Six*, by *The Bystander* and "Fragments from France Part Six" published by Putnams in the USA. The order of the cartoons differs slightly in the two editions.

The images were approved by General Cadorna, the Italian Chief of Staff.

## Kipling and Bairnsfather on the Western Front

The Italian Front was only one of many battlefields officially visited by these two popular characters during WW1.

In October 1914 Kipling, who always wished to participate in the war in some fashion, was already visiting local hospitals full of the wounded of Mons, Le Cateau and the Marne, gathering information for his booklet *The British Army in Training*.

In March 1915, his home, Batemans, was full of officers of the 10th Bn the Loyal North Lancs who were billeted nearby, practising digging trenches etc, but on 12 August Rudyard finally got his wish. He was sent to the front as a war correspondent. From Verdun he wrote to his son, John, lately arrived in Loos with the Irish Guards, that he was *'having rather a good time'*. He had visited Soissons, Verdun, the Argonne, Rheims and Paris. He was close enough to the front to see 'the Boche in their trenches' and wrote to John with advice from his experiences of spending time in the trenches himself. Rudyard returned to Batemans in time to receive several letters from John before the devastating news that John was missing, when his life changed completely.

Kipling was appointed a Commissioner of the newly formed Imperial War Graves Commission by its founder, Fabian Ware, in September 1917. He was responsible for many of the inscriptions that one sees in the beautifully maintained cemeteries of what is today the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, such as *'Their Name Liveth For Evermore'*, *'Their Glory Shall Not Be Blotted Out'* and *'A Soldier/Sailor/Airman of the Great War. Known Unto God'*. Always with John's death in mind, he then dutifully motored hundreds of miles in his beloved chauffeur-driven Rolls Royce (known as 'The Duchess') visiting the cemeteries. Perhaps the apogée of his dedicated work came in May 1922 when he accompanied King George V on *'The King's Pilgrimage'*, the title of the booklet for which



Kipling with King George V during 'The King's Pilgrimage'.

Rudyard wrote the foreword and a poem. It contains very personally-felt lines – he and Carrie had no grave to mourn,

*'All that they had they gave – they gave;  
And they shall not return.  
For these are those that have no grave  
Where any heart may mourn'.*

The King visited many cemeteries in France and Belgium, some of them in the process of being built.

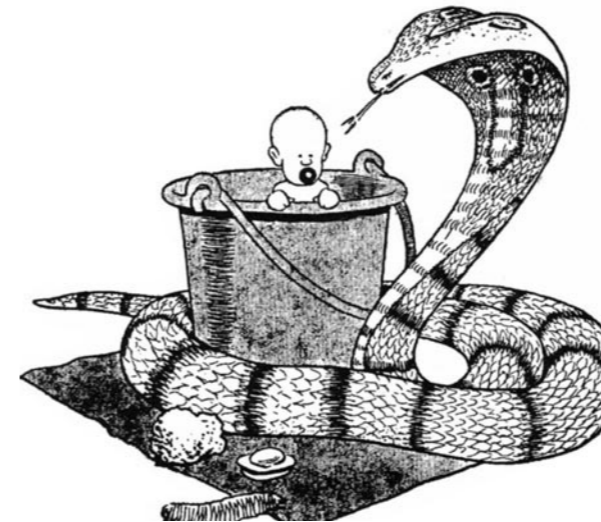
Meanwhile Bruce Bairnsfather, now universally recognised as a morale-booster and an appointed Officer Cartoonist in the Intelligence Department, was asked by the French Intelligence Department to go to Coxyde-les-Bains, near Ostende to cover the activity of their Poilus in the region. He then proceeded, as had Kipling, to visit the front at Verdun, where he was accompanied by General Mangin. His resulting cartoons were published in the *Bulletin des Armees* and several British publications. The Italian Front (qv) was next, followed by a request by the American Propaganda Department to visit the newly-arrived American troops in Neufchateau. Bruce was very impressed by the Yanks – *'I knew Germany hadn't a chance'*, he reported. By the time the Armistice had been declared in November 1918 Bruce had also visited Australia and the USA, where he was to become a frequent visitor after the War.

## "Give me the first six years of a child's life and you can have the rest"

This quotation is generally attributed to the Jesuits, reinforced in principal by Diderot, Montaigne and Bernard Shaw, and quoted by Kipling as the heading to Chapter 1 of his less than revealing autobiography, *'Something of Myself.'*

The first things Rudyard Kipling and Bruce Bairnsfather had in common were that both were born, and spent the first six years of their lives, in India and both were from distinguished and talented families.

Rudyard was born on 30 December 1865 in Bombay to John Lockwood Kipling, a pleasant, intelligent craftsman and artist, and his wife Alice, one of the brilliant and talented Macdonald family. All her sisters were married to outstanding achievers in their field: Georgiana to the pre-Raphaelite painter Edward Burne-Jones, Agnes to the artist Edward Poynter and Louisa to the MP Alfred Baldwin, father of future Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin.



'Early days in India'

Bruce was born in 1887 in Murree on the borders of Kashmir. There, his father, Thomas Bairnsfather, who originally served with the Cheshire Regiment, was stationed with the Staff Corps of the Bengal Infantry. Thomas had a colourful brother, Lt Col Peter Robert Bairnsfather, 1850-1919, who also served with the Bengal Lancers, retiring in 1904. His 1914 book, *'Sport & Nature in the Himalayas'* is now highly regarded. Bruce's mother, Amelia Jane Eliza Every (known as 'Janie'), was a talented artist, daughter of Colonel Edward Every Clayton, one-time Deputy Lieutenant of Derbyshire, and a skilled artist. Thomas and Janie shared the same grandfather, Sir Edward Every, whose descendent, Sir John Every, was extraordinarily helpful in filling in family details for us when we were working

on our Bairnsfather biography.

Like Rudyard, Bruce grew up steeped in the colourful, noisy, dry and wet, jungle and plain, hot and cold, odourful, mysterious Indian environment, with its lazy brown rivers, temples, butterflies and snakes. He spoke Hindi with his beloved Aya and loved her colourful tales. The family travelled each year to Simla and other hill stations in the hot season.

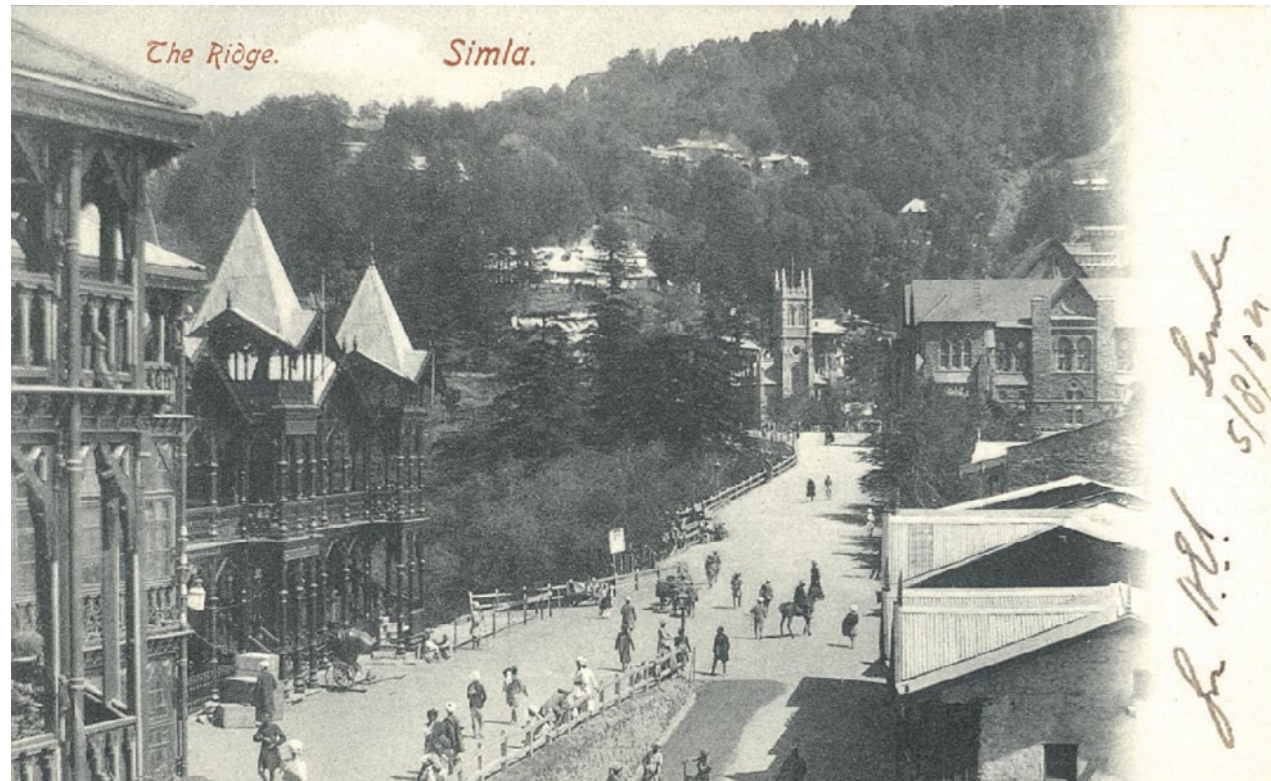
## The Hot Season in Simla

Simla was another link between Rudyard and Bruce. Clinging on to the sides of the lower Himalayas, 7,000 feet above sea level, it offered relief from the searing heat of the Plains, and Central Government and Military HQ decamped there, by elephant, camel and bullock cart, for several months each year. Simla had all the facilities and activities of a middle to upper class English town. It had the (still thriving) C of E Christ Church, built in 1857, whose stained glass chancel window was designed by Lockwood Kipling and which contains several interesting memorials to British congregants. Guy Gibson of Dambusters fame was christened in the church on 11 September 1918.

There were also riding, shooting, hunting, dancing and other sporting facilities. Shopping was done in 'The Mall', known as 'Scandal Point' for the many illicit relationships that blossomed there. It boasted a theatre, much like a small London one, and on one of our battlefield tours of 'The Golden Triangle and Simla' we were privileged to put on a show on its historic stage before a distinguished audience, with, in the front row, a tall, turbaned Sikh General with his Staff and his Lieutenant son. We had an outgoing group and many of them volunteered to perform monologues, songs, tunes on the piano, comic pieces etc. Our contribution was a rendition of Kipling's admiring and affectionate poem 'Bobs', the universal nickname given to Lord Roberts.

It was in Simla that Rudyard first met General Roberts, who stayed at his house, Snowdon, during each season. He had recently been awarded the title 'Lord Roberts of Kandahar' after his famous relief of the Afghan town of that name in 1880. In the Queen's Jubilee year he added a ballroom to his house, Snowdon, in which Lady Roberts held a play in aid of 'The Homes in the Hills for Indian Nurses Fund'. Major Neville Chamberlain rewrote *'Lucia di Lammermoor'* in 'Indian context' for the event and a Prologue was performed 'By a young Lahore journalist, Mr Rudyard Kipling, which attracted some attention, a reviewer going so far as to suggest that *"of his literary talent India will one day be very proud..."* [Lord Roberts by David James.]

It was the beginning of an ongoing friendship,



Above: The Ridge, Simla, with the Protestant Church in the rear, at the turn of the Century. Below: Christ Church, Simla

renewed during the Boer War. Rudyard had written his popular poem, *The Absent-Minded Beggar*, which he promoted as a fund-raiser to support the families of soldiers fighting in South Africa. It was set to music by Sir Arthur Sullivan, was illustrated by the famous war artist, Caton Woodville, and reproduced on all manner of souvenirs – from hankies to tobacco jars, much as Bairnsfather's *Fragments From France* cartoons were to be reproduced in WW1.

On 20 January 1900, the entire Kipling family sailed for the Cape. There Rudyard was gratified to be asked by Roberts to write for the new army newspaper, *The Friend*. They met again when both families holidayed in Vernettes-Bains some 10 years later. Elsie Bainbridge (née Kipling) remembers her father acting as translator between the aging Field-Marshal, the commander of the area garrison and the local Archbishop.

In early 1914 Kipling again helped Roberts by supporting his interest in the Irish Home Rule Bill, pledging allegiance to the Ulster Covenant which prevented the Catholic South from taking control of the Protestant North. He made a substantial financial contribution to the funds and made passionate, rabble-rousing speeches.

These services for Roberts, who felt obligated to Rudyard, took on what was to become a significant part in John's short life



when the lad was unable to enlist because of his poor eyesight when applying to join the army as The Great War broke out. Roberts managed to get John accepted by his old Regiment, the Irish Guards, in September 1914. Three years later John, who would not have been allowed to join up had it not been for Lord Roberts' intervention, was declared missing in the Battle of Loos.

This sad news Roberts never knew as, on 11 November 1914, the Field Marshal travelled to France to visit his beloved Indian Forces (of which he had recently been appointed Colonel-in-Chief of Overseas Services) newly arrived at St Omer. The weather was bitterly cold and the 82 year old Field Marshal contracted a fever and died on 14th November. His impressive funeral was held in London on 17 November and on 19 November Kipling's tribute poem, *Lord Roberts*, was printed in the *Daily Telegraph*.

The Bairnsfather link with Simla was that it was there that they, too, were posted for several hot seasons where Bruce's artistic parents took an active role in the many social activities. Bruce's father, Thomas, produced several musical comedies (for several of which he actually wrote the music) which were performed at the Simla theatre and his mother, Janie, painted many of her attractive birds on silk.

### The Loss of a Child

Another sad coincidence is that both the Kipling and Bairnsfather families lost a child at an early age. Rudyard lost his darling first-born, Josephine, in 1899. At the time the family were in New York when his wife Carrie was struck with a fever. As she improved, Rudyard too succumbed to the fever and inflammation of a lung. Then Josephine showed the same symptoms and Carrie, who was improving,



Rudyard and Carrie's three children, Elsie, John and Josephine, in 1898.

moved her to the house of their de Forest friends. Carrie was then left to care for the seriously ill Rudyard, three year old Elsie, and eighteen month old John, both of whom had whooping cough. Meanwhile Josephine developed pneumonia and died on 6 March. Carrie decided that Rudyard was too weak to be told the news and, with incredible bravery, kept it to herself until, on 30 March, she decided he was strong enough to take it.

The effect on Rudyard was devastating. His cousin, Angela Thirkell, wrote, "*Much of the beloved Cousin Ruddy of our childhood died with Josephine and I feel I have never seen him as a real person since that year*". Rudyard's work was certainly affected and he wrote several tributes to his lost favourite child, notably in the *Just So* story, *How the First Letter was Written and How the Alphabet was Made*, in which the principal character was a little girl called Taffimai (Taffy for short). The accompanying poem, *Morrow Down*, ends with the line, '*The daughter that was all to him*'.

We know less about the Bairnsfathers' loss, but in 1890, when the family were in the hill station Dalhousie, a brother to Bruce, Malcolm Harvey, was born on 2 April. An epidemic case of typhoid broke out and, although Malcolm survived the typhoid, he developed meningitis and died on 16 May 1891, one month after his first birthday. Like Rudyard and Carrie, Thomas and Janie were devoted parents and took an active part in their children's upbringing. Their loss would have been as deeply felt as the Kiplings'.

### United Services College, Westward Ho!

Both Rudyard's and Bruce's parents followed the same tradition of expatriate families of sending their sons back to England for their education. Rudyard, aged only five and a half, with his little sister, 'Trixy' aged three, was somewhat abruptly left in what he would later describe as '*The House of Desolation*' (Lorne Lodge, Southsea) where they were cruelly treated by the owners, Mr & Mrs Holloway. His worsening eyesight was ignored until his Aunt 'Georgie' Burne-Jones sent for a doctor who realised that the boy was nearly blind, and she removed him from the dreadful house.

Another coincidence is that both our subjects attended the same school where they both suffered periods of unhappiness. Rudyard, able at last to read with his new spectacles and after a period of recuperation, attended the United Services College at Westward Ho! in 1878. The school, opened in 1874, was designed to produce officers for the British Army or the upper echelons of the Civil Service – neither of which suited Rudyard. The USC had been chosen because his parents knew the headmaster Cornell Price. Price soon recognised Rudyard's literary potential and non-conformism and encouraged this



‘fish out of water’. His fellow pupils regarded him as a ‘swot’; ridiculed his spectacles, giving him the nickname ‘Gigger’ (for gig, meaning carriage lamps); thought he was hopeless at sport in a society where sporting achievement was revered; and found him rather weird-looking, being short and hirsute with thick eyebrows. Much later he wrote to his son, John, who was also unhappy at his school, ‘*Westward Ho! was brutal enough... my first term ... was horrible ... My first year and a half was not pleasant*’. Yet he managed to establish a lasting friendship with a group of his peers who formed the main characters of his Stalky saga – Lionel Charles Dunster (Stalky) and George C. Beresford (M’Turk).

Bruce, too, was far from happy in his first English home in 1895. It was with Janie’s brother, the Vicar of Thornbury near Bromyard. He found it cold and quiet, dark and dull, so remote from the clear skies and wide-open spaces of the Himalayas and the warmth and bustle of Indian city life. Eventually his parents decided he should go to a suitable school and he entered Westward Ho! Junior School in 1898, with the College No of 1,105, and progressed to the senior school in 1900. His time there was not always

happy either - mainly because he was more interested in making sketches of soldiers and of his teachers in the margins of his exercise books, than in any of the traditional subjects. The Junior School headmaster, R.T. Leakey, decided that the antidote to this was ‘to beat it out of him’. This treatment continued but had little effect and reports recorded results such as ‘*Mathematics – bad; Chemistry – very bad, makes no attempt; French – poor*’. Eventually, according to Bruce his teachers ‘more or less gave up’ and secretly started to admire his drawings. Bruce never made a friendship “bubble” as Kipling had with ‘*Stalky and Co*’ and one finds no mention of particular friends. When, in 1904, Westward Ho! decided to amalgamate with Haileybury and to move, Bruce was placed in a crammer - Trinity College, Stratford-upon-Avon.

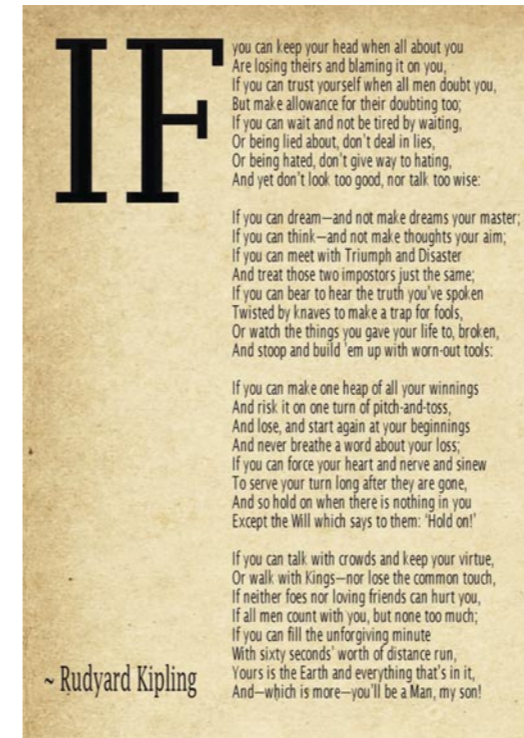
### Conclusion

Finally, there is another powerful similarity. It is that Rudyard Kipling and Bruce Bairnsfather were both deeply loved and admired *and* disdained and dismissed.

**Of Rudyard Kipling** there are too many appreciations and vilifications to quote here but, typical of the former, H.G. Wells wrote in 1911 (during the period of his continuing popularity in the Boer War and before the outbreak of the Great War) that ‘*He got hold of us wonderfully, he filled us with tinkling and quotations... he coloured the very idiom of our conversations.*’ After Rudyard’s death in 1936 Winston Churchill wrote, ‘*There has never been anyone like him. No-one has ever written like Kipling before, and his work has been successfully imitated by none. He was unique and irreplaceable.*’ At the same time a vituperative attack was launched on Kipling by his nephew, Oliver Baldwin, in *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Mail* and *The Mirror*. It virtually blamed Rudyard for his cousin John’s death: ‘*After all didn’t you want this war? Didn’t you urge it on? Didn’t you want people to go and wave flags and beat drums? And have you not paid for it?*’

In 1941, in the difficult early days of the Second World War, T.S. Eliot dismissed his work as ‘verse’ and George Orwell claimed that ‘During five literary generations every enlightened person has despised him ... Kipling is a jingo imperialist, he is orally insensitive and aesthetically disgusting’.

Opinions fluctuated over the years until, in 1987, Marghanita Laski wrote a sympathetic biography, ‘*From Palm to Pine*’, followed by her complimentary series of BBC broadcasts extolling Kipling’s verse.



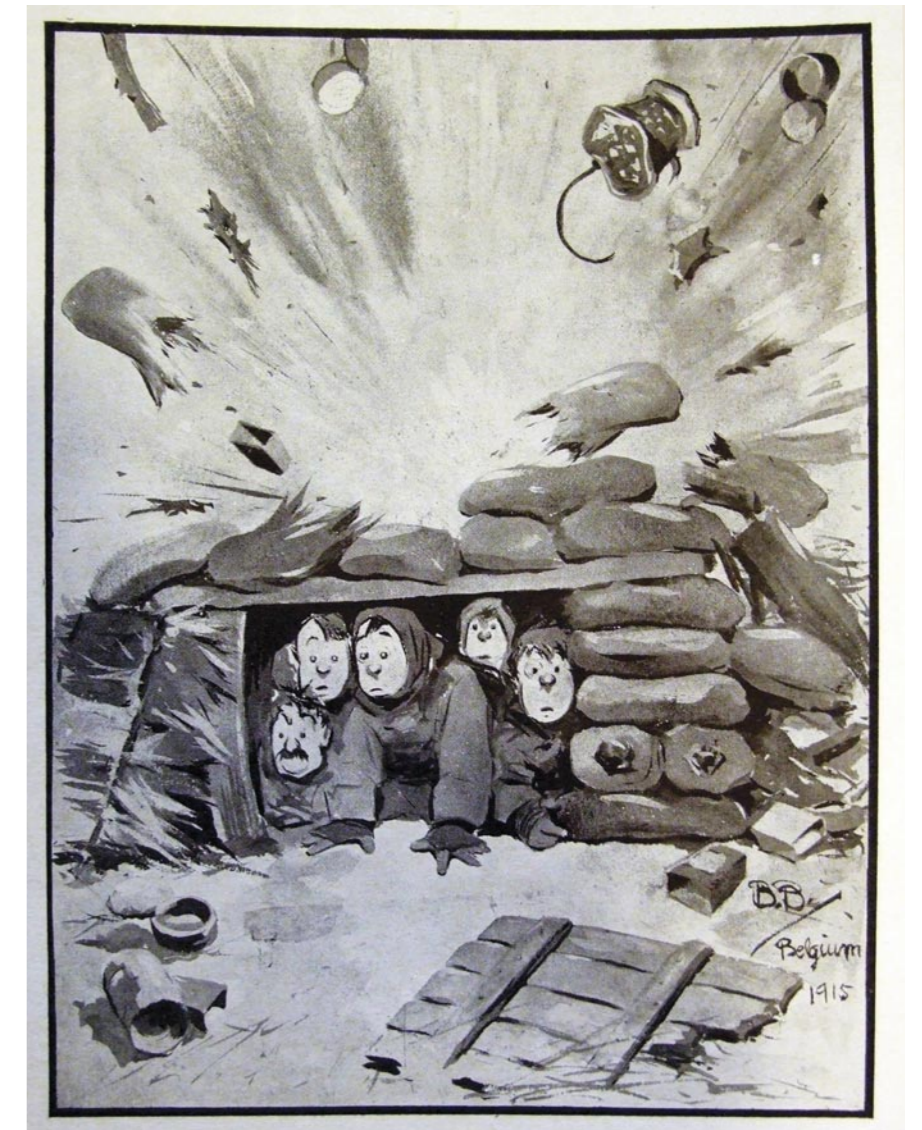
In 1996, ‘*If*’ was voted the Nation’s favourite poem in a poll conducted by the BBC and Kipling was once more in general favour and popularity for the various film versions of ‘*The Jungle Book*’.

Today, in the powerful wave of ‘Black Lives Matter’ following the death of George Floyd in May 2020 and the destruction of the Edward Colston statue in Bristol in June 2020, Kipling is once again being reviled as a racist and imperialist. On 15 August the BBC cancelled the singing of *The Road to Mandalay* - one of Kipling’s most popular poems set to music - in the VJ Day commemorations. It was at the behest of opera singer Sir Willard Wright who complained about its ‘cultural superiority’.

Preceding the current anti-slavery and imperialism mood, students have been actively protesting about characters who they deemed to represent such views. For instance, there have been frequent attempts to remove the Cecil Rhodes statue at Oriel College, Oxford where the well-educated Rhodes matriculated in 1874. The desire to take the statue down is strong, despite Rhodes’s financial support of the College, notably by the initiation of the

coveted Rhodes Scholarships to enable non-British students to attend the University. It started after Rhodes received a Doctorate in 1899, and he left the University £100,000 in his will. It now seems that, after several years of discussion, the statue may well be removed. Rhodes’s generosity, of course, also extended to the Kipling family and for several years from 1900 they stayed in ‘The Woolsack’, the Dutch colonial house which Rhodes had built for them on his estate. When Rhodes, who had long suffered ill health, died on 26 March 1902, aged only 48, Kipling was devastated and wrote a fulsome elegy entitled ‘*The Burial*.’

In July 2018 Manchester University students defaced the country’s favourite Kipling poem ‘*If*’ inscribed on a new building, as he was now regarded as ‘a racist and imperialist’. They wished to replace it with a poem by Maya Angelou, the American civil rights poet and pacifist – ‘*Still I Rise*’. Professor Emeritus of literature at Kent University, Jan Montefiore, the Kipling Society Chairman, was approached by the media to comment about the defacement of ‘*If*’. She said it was “... *terribly crude and simplistic to dismiss Kipling as a racist...*”



Bairnsfather’s first published war cartoon, ‘Where did that one go to?’

Certainly his politics were imperialist but that's only half of the story. He wrote some wonderful stuff and was a magical story-teller, but he wasn't always writing uplifting poems." She also commented, "Kipling wrote 'The White Man's Burden' in 1899, urging America to administer imperial practices in the Philippines and its sentiment was "completely unacceptable now and fairly unacceptable then".

Bruce Bairnsfather's fame and admiration came from his World War One cartoons, drawn for the magazine *The Bystander*. As soon as his fingers could hold a pencil Bruce had drawn, and he continued to do so after he arrived in England from India. After his six years at Westward Ho! it seemed that his future career should be in the Army and he was enrolled in an Army crammer, Trinity College at Stratford-upon-Avon. There he also attended an evening art class where his artistic talent was finally noticed. Bruce was now torn between becoming an artist or a soldier. He passed his final exam at Trinity College at the second attempt and decided to join the Third Militia Battalion of the Warwicks. There he discovered that the army life, as he said, 'bored me to tears' and 'if there were a Fieldmarshal's baton in my knapsack it was way down at the bottom, buried under a pile of sketches and notes' and so he resigned. The next step was to attend the John Hassall School of Art in Earls Court. His efforts to make a living as an artist on leaving the School failed, so he returned to Stratford. When friends sympathised with his parents that they 'couldn't do something with Bruce' and '... he draws; it's such a pity', he took a job as an electrical apprentice for a company called Spencer's in Stratford-on-Avon. At the same time he continued to draw with some success, although the family joke was that, if he wished to continue a career as an artist, 'he would have to marry for money'. Spencer's sent him to Newfoundland in 1914 to sort out a malfunctioning machine and during his journey back to Liverpool the Great War broke out.

Arriving back to the UK, Bruce went to his old Regimental HQ at Warwick and on 12 September 1914 he was commissioned into the 3rd (Reserve) Battalion of the Royal Warwicks. In November, now with the 1st Bn of the Warwicks, he arrived at St Yvon, near Ploegsteert in Belgium. Horrified by life in the trenches, and the devastation of the landscape, but feeling a strong affinity with the soldiers underneath his command, he started drawing again to take his mind from the horror around him - almost as a tonic. He drew on walls, on scraps of paper, on ration boxes and soon his cartoons were amusing his fellow officers and his men. They caught the atmosphere, the feelings, the reality and the stoic



Bruce Bairnsfather c 1917.

humour of life in the trenches. A fellow officer suggested he send a drawing to a magazine. A copy of *The Bystander* happened to be lying around and Bruce duly sent off the cartoon *Where did that one go to?* to its editor. Little did he know that it was the beginning of his incredible career.

On 27 April 1915 Bairnsfather suffered severe shell shock during a gas attack near Ypres and he was sent back to Blighty. Whilst in hospital his relationship with *The Bystander* was sealed. He produced weekly cartoons for the magazine, the powerful figure of 'Old Bill', the indomitable old soldier who became world famous, was born and early in 1916 a special collection of his weekly drawings was published under the title *Fragments From France*. It was an amazing success, both in the trenches at the Front and in the Home Front, selling 300,000 copies. Soon more editions of *Fragments* followed, the cartoons were reproduced as postcards, on all manner of china pieces, he wrote for theatrical reviews, featuring Old Bill and his fame spread throughout the Dominions and the United States. Yet questions were raised in the House about his "degraded" images of the British soldier. The public, however, loved Bruce's cartoons and the honest

rascals of soldiers he depicted.

In November 1916 Bruce wrote a book entitled *Bullets and Billets* describing his life at the Front, which received great acclaim - except in *The Literary Supplement of the Times*, which grumbled, 'We regret unfeignedly that when the Empire laughs we must remain dumb... we know a battalion where a soldier such as Captain Bairnsfather takes as his type would most summarily dealt with. Nothing so quickly lowers morale as slovenliness and nothing is more difficult to check than the gradual degeneration due to trench life.' Nevertheless, his theatrical (and film) work increased into 1917 and it was at this stage of his fame that, as described above, he was sent to the Italian Front. By now he was an international celebrity and almost overcome by his work.

On 29 January 1919, General Sir Ian Hamilton presided at one of Bruce's lectures which would visit 20 major towns. He described Bairnsfather as 'a great asset ... the man who had relieved the strain of war, who had drawn a smile from sadness itself by his skill in poking fun at tragedy. We might still need him to cheer us.' He added that Bruce was 'the man who made the Empire life in its darkest hour.'

**One of the highlights of his life was to meet, at another of his lectures at Bath, his great hero, Rudyard Kipling, who had asked to meet Bruce after the show. He was delighted at the great man's comment, 'Bloody good'.**

His acclaim and popularity, which grew until well after the war was over, continued in the inter-war years with films, lectures, articles, books and other international events. It was renewed by the outbreak of WW2 when the War Office asked him to draw a recruiting poster and it seemed that Old Bill had made a comeback, with many magazine and newspaper articles, books, including his autobiography *'Wide Canvas'* (which, like Rudyard's, was not very self-revelatory) and films like *'Old Bill & Son'* with John Mills, directed by Alexander Korda.

Interest in the UK died down, however, but early in 1942 Bruce was appointed 'Official Cartoonist to the American Forces in Europe'. He was greatly appreciated by the Yanks, with whom he worked in Northern Ireland (where Eleanor Roosevelt 'got the biggest laugh of her visit' at one of Bruce's cartoons) and then at 305th Bomber Group of the 8th Air Force at Chelveston where Colonel - later General - Curtis Le May, was a great admirer and where he painted bombers' noses and drew large murals on the wall of the Officers' Mess. He drew for *Stars and Stripes*, *Life and Colliers* and was popular in the States where, after the War, he did many lecture tours. Gradually, however, Bruce's international career waned, and he returned to his first love - painting watercolour landscapes and making ever

rarer contributions to newspapers and magazines until his death on 29th September 1959.

Yet, despite all his accomplishments, his major contribution to world-wide morale mainly during WW1 but also during WW2, and the undying love of the common man in the UK, Bruce never received any official recognition by the British Government. Ignoring the universal love of his humorous, stoical, scruffy, realistic WW1 characters drawn in the trenches, he was not appreciated by the Establishment. This was demonstrated in 1981 by the Keeper of the Art Department of the Imperial War Museum when we proposed a major exhibition of his work - 'I do not feel that Bairnsfather's work merits an exhibition on the scale you are suggesting. If, as *The Guardian* states, "Critics have ... honoured him with faint praise", the reason is, in my view, because his work is of sentimental interest but dubious artistic value.' No comment...

There is little doubt that, in his final rather sad and lonely years, Bairnsfather, who in earlier days was known as 'the man who won the war' and 'the world's most famous cartoonist', was hurt by the lack of official recognition. We made many, many attempts over the years to rectify this omission, with some success, e.g. the Blue Plaque that we had erected in 1980 on his old studio in No 1 Stirling Street, unveiled by his daughter Mrs Barbara Littlejohn and attended by 16 year old Mark Warby who also continues actively to publicise Bairnsfather (see <https://www.brucebairnsfather.org.uk/>). Exhibitions and lectures continued to keep Bruce in the lime light, and in 2003 we erected a plaque on the rebuilt cottage in St Yvon where Bairnsfather drew his first cartoon. In 2014 we mounted a petition to get national recognition and finally, in 2015 we received partial success. Thanks to the stoic efforts of Lord Faulkner of Worcester, Lord Astor of Hever (the Representative of the MOD in the House of Lords) wrote, 'I have no doubt about the contributions Bruce Bairnsfather's work made to the war effort a hundred years ago ... I am pleased to offer my own recognition to the contribution that Bruce Bairnsfather made by his work.'

So, just as Kipling is regarded as the epitome of Jingoism and an 'Imperialist' and his work is now often shunned, so Bairnsfather was branded as a 'Cartoonist', rather than an 'Artist' and his work was underestimated.

Despite this criticism and denigration, those of us who have grown up with, and/or have thoroughly researched, these two giants in their field, will continue to enjoy and admire their work.

*A serialised version of this article appeared in the Kipling Society's On-line Newsletter.*

# DEDUCTION – USING EVIDENCE TO MAKE REASONABLE ASSUMPTIONS

Dr. Christopher L Scott

**Historical documents give information, which can be simple facts, such as costs or outcomes, but a lot of what is written is reportage and that is often based on opinion. Historians have to decide what is likely to be true, especially as various forms of bias often influence content. However thinking about what caused something to be written can also lead to a better appreciation of what happened.**

When I first became interested in the Civil Wars a friend told me of a military camp near his old college at Culham in Oxfordshire. I knew nothing of it, so during this recent self-isolation I investigated a little. I discovered that it was a royalist camp near Abingdon, possibly established to reduce tensions between the soldiery and the people of Oxford and to lessen the chance of a plague epidemic in that city. Constructed in 1643, just after the loss of Reading, it accommodated many of that town's former garrison as well as some of those hitherto billeted in Oxford. It was huge. With a grid system of roads and streets, consisting of wood and turf huts as well as over 500 large tents, the camp was home to some 15 regiments, both Foot and Horse. It was strategically well placed, protected by a bend in the River Thames on almost three sides, but it was not a happy place. It suffered from low morale, shortages, frequent outbreaks of 'camp fever' and accidental fires, plus desertion was rife. These are all recorded as happening and can be read as 'facts', but life in the camp and perhaps the state of the royalist army can only be based upon reasonable deduction.

Things had got to such a state in Spring 1643 that several colonels of the regiments encamped at Culham drafted a petition to the king. Just how bad were things that these senior regimental officers thought to bypass their general officers and appeal directly to the king? They possibly could not have had much faith in those set in authority over them? Then there is the question of how bad things were that they dared approach 'God's anointed' and he whose word was deemed His will? What had upset them so much appears in the 'Humble Desires' that they listed and presented, and which I slightly paraphrase below:

1. That every regiment should have waggons to carry ammunition, sick men and their arms.

2. That the sutlers of every regiment should have £15 to procure a sutler's cart and a stock of provision proportionable to the strength of the regiment.
3. That all musketeers be supplied with bandoliers or bags to carry their charges.
4. That a physician or apothecary may continually attend the Leaguer and that some village near the Leaguer may be appointed in regards that the soldiers which have gone to Oxford are neglected, and seldom or never return to their colours.
5. That the soldiers may be furnished with shoes and stockings.
6. That the officers be prevented from leaving their regiments and obtaining commands in other units, and that those guilty of this be punished.
7. That the quartermasters and baggage-masters of every regiment be paid part of their arrears, in regards that they have had no pay since they came from Nottingham.
8. That cavalry not be allowed to recruit men from infantry units.
9. That His Majesty would be pleased to remember the officers who have long subsisted without pay.
10. That existing regiments be brought up to strength before new units were formed.

Overall their major concern appears to be a lack of pay, especially for officers, and this tells us something about the men writing the petition; however a lot more can possibly be learnt by thinking about what caused them to include things in their list. There is no proof for these assumptions but it is reasonable to suggest they are plausible.

1. That every regiment should have waggons to carry ammunition, sick men and their arms.  
*There is not enough transport, leading to ammunition not being available or distributed, the sick are usually*

*being left in whatever situation they are discovered and the men's armament left where it is – that is if the sick got themselves to Oxford, their weapons and armour (if pikemen) remained at Culham, or that a lot of kit would be left behind if ordered on campaign.*

2. That the sutlers of every regiment should have £15 to procure a sutler's cart and a stock of provision proportionable to the strength of the regiment.

*This lack of transport extends to the sutlery, meaning food supplies are not brought into the camp even when they have enough money to purchase them, which they apparently don't. The men go hungry and no efficient attempts are made to alleviate this. It could be argued that what semblance of a system there was allocated food unfairly on a per regiment basis regardless of the numbers of men it had to feed. Being in a big regiment might be desirable on the battlefield but it was a distinct disadvantage when part of the royal army at Culham.*

3. That all musketeers be supplied with bandoliers or bags to carry their charges.

*Musketeers have to carry loose gunpowder in their pockets, so measured charges and drill according to the manual are both impossible. Consequently musketeers cannot reload effectively and this seriously impedes their firing capability, as well as incurring high levels of spillage and waste. The men are not likely to have lost their bandoliers (the Reading troops marched out with arms) but appear to have been poorly equipped since their raising. The high command expected them to operate without the basic tools of the trade as well as being exposed to the danger of accidental explosions.*

4. That a physician or apothecary may continually attend the Leaguer and that some village near the Leaguer may be appointed in regards that the soldiers which have gone to Oxford are neglected, and seldom or never return to their colours.

*The camp had no resident medical expertise, hospital or even basic care provision. The sick were somehow expected to walk to Oxford (there being no transport – see 1.) from where they seldom, if ever, returned. As the colonels would 'settle' for one man of either profession it can be assumed there were no doctors or any form of pharmacists in the camp or nearby and no provision for treating either serious or minor ailments or injuries - presumably care of the sick was left to ignorant comrades or, if they were lucky, to local wise women.*

5. That the soldiers may be furnished with shoes and stockings.

*The army at Culham was not supplied with the basics of uniform when those items first issued or brought from home wore out. This particular point may indicate that many of the men went bare-foot or wrapped rags around their feet. It demonstrates that looking after the men was*

*a low priority with those who ran the army and that they had little understanding that in order to march anywhere on a campaign soldiers at the very least needed shoes.*

6. That the officers be prevented from leaving their regiments and obtaining commands in other units, and that those guilty of this be punished.

*Regimental loyalty among those supposedly setting an example to the men was frequently non-existent which might mean that inferior officers were little respected or even held in contempt as self-serving individuals, focussed upon their own preferment rather than the good of their unit. Leadership thus also appears to be in short supply. It further suggests that even a colonel did not have sufficient authority to curb or punish this practice and that those in higher authority were ignorant of what was happening at best, and indifferent at worst.*

7. That the quartermasters and baggage-masters of every regiment be paid part of their arrears, in regards that they have had no pay since they came from Nottingham.

*The army was being held together by men who had little or no reward for what they did, let alone their basic entitlement. Many of these men must have been almost destitute as it would appear they had never been paid since their enlistment the previous year? One is forced to wonder how they did their jobs or whether they had any motivation to work at all.*

8. That cavalry not be allowed to recruit men from infantry units.

*Horse units poaching men from infantry regiments was commonplace, indicating what was held dear by both men and inferior officers. Cavalry troopers were entitled to better pay and supposedly received better equipment and had higher priority during any issue, moreover an officer's status was enhanced by the number of men under his command. This reflected a value system that put self first, the unit second, the army third and the cause as counting for little beyond a means of persuading men to remain with the army.*

9. That His Majesty would be pleased to remember the officers who have long subsisted without pay.

*The senior field officers too were ill supplied and without pay, and must have been funding their own existence and even perhaps supplementing those of their companies or troops from their own pockets. There is also a suggestion that despite the polite phrasing of the request these men believe the king is kept ignorant of their plight and that they are forgotten - being out of the king's sight in Culham they are also out of his mind.*

10. That existing regiments be brought up to strength before new units were formed.

*This may suggest that promotion, status and self-serving was a key element in the army. Paper units*

*were fine in theory and for appearing in reports and propaganda but they did little to enhance an army's effectiveness or performance in the field. In fact they detracted from it. They presented a false picture in any appraisal by inflating the numbers the army could actually field. To create so many understrength regiments merely to give some sort of status reward to self-serving men displays little comprehension of how an army functions.*

If these colonels are to be believed, and there does not seem to be much evidence to contradict them, then the royal army at Culham was in dire straits, and this is borne out by the 'facts' we have about life at Culham Camp gleaned from a variety of sources. It also presents a very depressing picture of the abilities, understanding and values of those on the Army Council and all the others supposedly controlling or governing the royal army, including the king. As historians however, it is also tempting to push this speculation into a wider context to draw some deeper meaning from our deductions, always bearing in mind our own witting and unwitting bias! If this was the state of the Army of Oxford in Spring 1643 (the southern and main royal army of the time) is there any wonder that they lost the war?

Further investigation shows that the royalist Army Council did indeed respond to this list and passed resolutions designed to address the issues raised, but there is little to show that these decisions were ever acted upon, if indeed the Council members had the financial means, administrative structures or even the political and social will to do so. The Army of Parliament had these problems too: the Earl of Essex

frequently had to plead his case for cash, supplies and support, and many parliamentarians also believed that God was on their side. However, in the final analysis those in power in Parliament had the political and defiant will to defend themselves as well as the methodology and infrastructure to set, raise and collect taxes and, more importantly, they had the backing of the City to finance them.

So to use these reasonable deductions to make a plausible argument, it might be argued that even in 1643, a time often labelled as the 'royalist highwater mark', that due to its governing personalities, attitudes and values coupled with their belief in Divine Right rather than sympathetic appreciation and practical application, the king's cause was destined to fail from the start. The Culham 'Humble Desires' might perhaps be a very important document as it shows that those in power in Oxford could neither understand the needs of an army nor had the knowledge, experience or administrative systems nor perhaps even the desire to meet them. They could play the propaganda game and issue glib statements and promises but could achieve nothing. From the king down it was nothing short of a betrayal, a failing which eventually, despite the courage and fortitude of its field officers and its soldiery, led within three years to the royal army's utter ruin and ultimate defeat.

Would a Culham scenario for a Living History event be an interesting challenge to show the public an authentic slice of 17thC military life?

# MEDALguide

## The Military Cross

At the outbreak of the First War there were no gallantry awards for junior Army Officers and Warrant Officers other than the Victoria Cross and the Distinguished Service Order. So, for acts of bravery which did not reach the criteria for the award of these two medals the Military Cross was instituted on the 31st December 1914 with the first Crosses being gazetted on the 1st January 1915.

The medal was initially awarded to Captains, a commissioned officer of a lower rank or a Warrant Officer in the Army and including the Royal Flying Corps. Later the award was extended to include equivalent ranks of the Royal Air Force when performing acts of bravery on the ground.

Most awards carry citations which were recorded in the London Gazette. However, some awards were for acts of gallantry over a period of time – normally around six months, and these often appear in special Gazettes such as the Royal Birthday and the New Year's Honours list.

Military Crosses were awarded for successful escapers and their names were listed in the London Gazette of 30th January 1920. RAF officers that made successful escapes appear in the London Gazette of the 16th December 1919.

A bar was sanctioned for each subsequent act of gallantry, and this was announced in the London Gazette on the 26th August 1916.

The medal was always issued unnamed. However, from 1937 onwards the reverse was officially dated with the year of issue. In 1993, following a review of gallantry awards the Cross is now awarded to all ranks with the Military Medal being discontinued.

During the First War some 37,000 crosses were awarded in total, there were 3000 with a single bar, 170 with two and 4 with three bars. During the interwar period there were 350 Crosses awarded, 31 with one bar and during the Second War some 11,000 with 500 having one bar. The ribbon is three equal stripes two in white and one in purple.





## GUILD *merchandise*

With the winter guiding season fast approaching now is the time to get your orders in for your Guild clothing! All items are available with either the GBG logo or Accredited member badges. The range includes:



*Polo shirts:*



*Sweatshirts:*



*Soft Shell Jackets:*



The easiest way to order is online via the Guild website – go to:  
[www.gbg-international.com/shop/](http://www.gbg-international.com/shop/)  
 and pick what you want in the sizes you want.

If you don't want to pay online you can still send a cheque for the required amount to the Secretary at: 8, Pidsley Crescent, Exeter, Devon EX2 7NQ

## THE GOKTEIK RAILWAY VIADUCT, BURMA AND 'MAD' MIKE CALVERT DSO AND BAR

Piers Storie-Pugh OBE TD DL FRGS

Mike Calvert was commissioned into The Royal Engineers before the Second World War and as an explosive expert, he cut his teeth in Norway in 1940 before being sent to Burma.

In 1943 (then Major) Calvert took part in the Chindit Operation Longcloth for which he was awarded his first DSO; and in 1944 upon promotion to Brigadier he took command of the 77th Long Range Penetration Brigade (better known as The Chindits) for Operation Thursday. Flown by glider into the fortress Blackpool the Brigade fought its first major action at the Battle of Pagoda Hill, for which Calvert was awarded a bar to his DSO. With his military engineering and explosives background Calvert set about building the heavily fortified and booby trapped fortress called White City, deep in the jungles of Northern Burma. Three Victoria Crosses were awarded to members of Calvert's Brigade in 1944. 77 Brigade then moved north to capture Mogaung in a battle described as a mini Passchendaele, before being flown out to India. Brigadier Michael Calvert was personally awarded the American Silver Star by General 'Vinegar' Joe Stilwell for his leadership and bravery at Mogaung. He also received awards for bravery from Norway, France, Belgium and Russia.

Although Burma has serious problems at the moment, there will come a day when tourists and pilgrims return. Maymyo is on the tourist route and it is on this basis that I submit this story.

Just over 40 miles northeast of Maymyo, now called Pyin Oo Lwin the ground plunges suddenly and unexpectedly deep into the Gokteik (Goteik) Gorge; a heavily forested and dark valley that, from the top, appears almost bottomless. Crossing this gorge had always provided a challenge for travel between Mandalay, Maymyo and Lashio. Dropping steeply into the River Gohtwin valley is a rather dicey track, with a dozen switchbacks and numerous blind



*Captain Michael Calvert 1939 (courtesy Calvert papers)*

corners, built to keep the highly congested traffic moving should the bridge ever be sabotaged!

Maymyo, at three and a half thousand feet above sea level, was the summer capital of the British Colonial administrators of Burma and Lashio was the principal town of the Northern Shan States. At the end of the Victorian era a solution was found to the challenge of joining the railway line Maymyo to Lashio, which was necessary if Great Britain was going to extend administration and control of its most easterly province in Burma; sitting on the border with China.

The result was the internationally famous trestle bridge, constructed right across the Gokteik Gorge making it then the second highest railway bridge in the world; and the longest bridge in Burma. It was constructed in 1899 by the Pennsylvania and

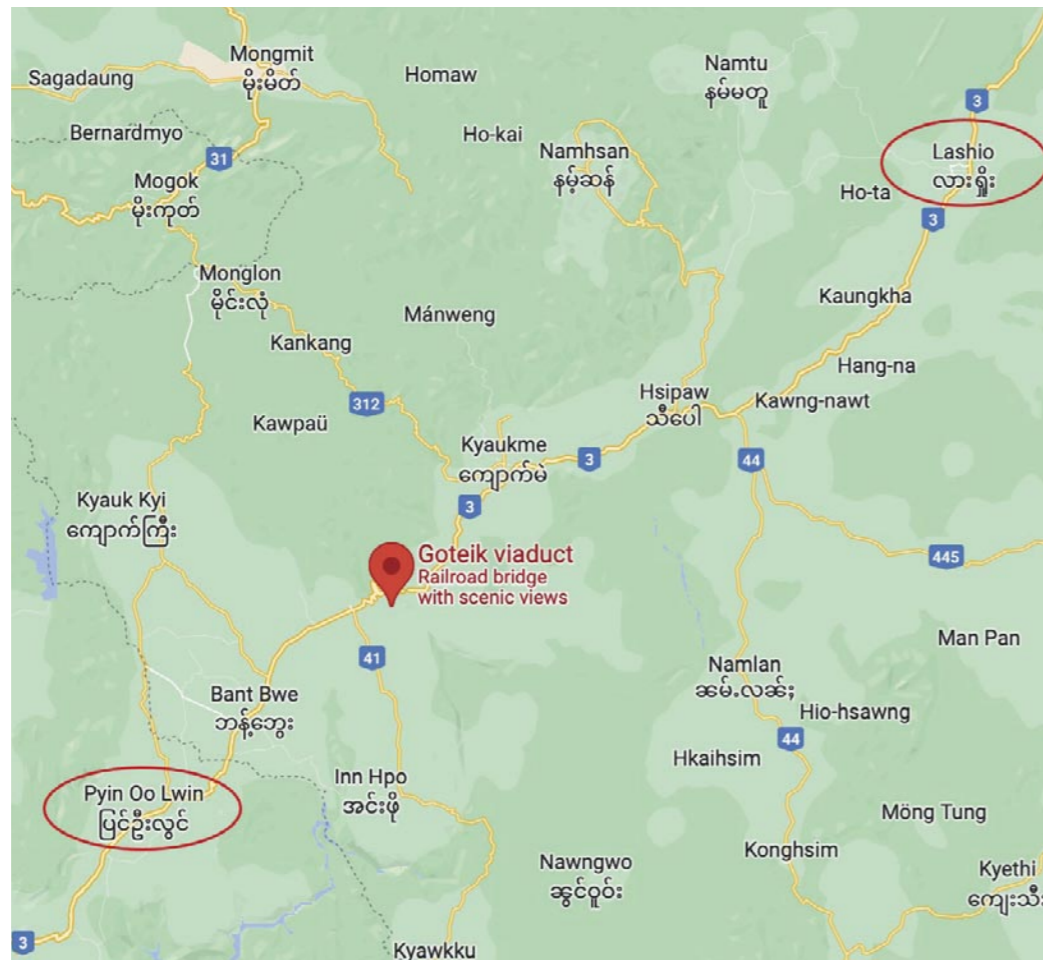
Maryland Steel Bridge Construction Company with work starting on 28 April 1899. It was opened in January 1900, work was swift, with the construction being overseen by Sir Arthur Rendel, the officially appointed engineer to the Burma Railway Company. The component parts were constructed in America, shipped across and installed at a cost of c £111,000.

The viaduct bridge measures 2,260 ft across, includes 15 towers and the height is thought to be 820 ft from the underside of the bridge to the riverbed in the valley below. Due to its technical construction and natural location, it is still considered a

world standard masterpiece of construction; and four trains a day use the single-track bridge, two from Mandalay to Lashio and two in reverse. The bridge even gets a mention in American Paul Theroux's Asian travelogue *'The Great Railway Bazaar.'* Theroux describes it thus: 'a monster of silver geometry in all the ragged rock and jungle'.

Today tourists are advised to get off at Nawngkhio Station and spend about 5 minutes photographing this remarkable site, before crossing over. Trains crawl slowly, so as not to place undue stress as they cross over this very wide, very deep and, yes, very picturesque natural feature. It is quite extraordinary that this bridge, built one hundred and twenty years ago, is still standing and still used regularly. It received major maintenance work in the 1990s and tourists are banned from walking across.

I went to the Gokteik Bridge in 1996 in the company of Brigadier Michael Calvert DSO\* under arrangements made by Tour Mandalay. This was an unrivalled opportunity because Calvert had had a direct connection with the bridge, dating from 1942, which he kindly shared with me. In 1942, then, Major Mike Calvert was commander of the Bush Warfare School, based at Maymyo, where Orde



Map of Northern Shan States (courtesy Google Earth/Laura Hayworth)



Brigadier Michael Calvert in Burma (courtesy Calvert papers) in 1944



Gokteik Bridge c 1900



Gokteik Trestle Bridge today (courtesy Tour Mandalay)

Wingate first met Calvert as he explained his vision of long-range operations behind Japanese lines.

During the retreat to India in 1942, Calvert had spent a week guarding the Gokteik Bridge against the Japanese advance, waiting for formal orders to destroy it, but the orders never came! When Calvert arrived back in India he reported to General Harold Alexander. The first thing the General said to him was: "Calvert, did you blow the Gokteik Viaduct Bridge?" When Calvert replied that he had asked half a dozen times for permission to blow it, but each time was told to leave

it alone, the General looked a bit put out. He explained that the order could not be given for political reasons, but that Calvert had been sent there as the person most likely to disobey an order!

The next year Mike Calvert had the chance to do the job properly. On 7th February 1943 Field Marshal Wavell saluted the 77th Indian Infantry Brigade as 3,000 men and hundreds of mules set out on Operation Longcloth; Major General Orde Wingate's first long range penetration expedition right into Japanese occupied territory. This was the only Allied operation to take place in Burma in 1943, all the others being stood down because it was deemed that the Allies were not

yet ready. When Wingate's advance columns reached the western bank of the great Irrawaddy River, Mike Calvert and his fellow column commander Bernard Ferguson requested permission to make the thousand-yard crossing; which was given. Wingate decided to follow on, take the rest of his Brigade across and ordered Calvert to take



*Piers Storie-Pugh pushes Mike Calvert through Maymyo Station (PS-P collection)*

his Number 3 column and Ferguson's Number 5 column straight to the Gokteik Bridge to blow it and thus deny a vital access route to the Japanese.

Wingate's Brigade was now at the extreme range of air supply, with difficult communications with India and was therefore ordered by Army Headquarters at Imphal to return immediately. As a consequence Mike Calvert never had the second opportunity of blowing the Gokteik Bridge.

I mentioned that in 1996 I had taken Calvert back to Burma, for the only return he ever made, with a group of veterans and relatives. We flew from Rangoon to Mandalay and then by coach to Maymyo where we caught the

Lashio train, which crossed over the Gokteik Bridge.

I asked Mike Calvert for his thoughts: "I really never expected to see this bridge again where I had spent a week in 1942 with a bunch of deadbeats, criminals, one hangman and escaped prisoners. Any one of them could have blown the bridge! I headed here again in 1943 with Bernard Ferguson on Operation Longcloth and we had precise orders from Wingate to blow the Gokteik Bridge. We never had the chance, receiving orders instead to withdraw immediately to India. I suppose if I had some explosive now I could blow it - third time lucky."

In recent years there has been violence, mainly between the RCSS and the TNIA, such as a bomb thrown at a police station another at a bank, all with casualties, which has forced villagers to leave certain parts of the Northern Shan States. As a consequence, the general advice is to avoid travel from Pyin Oo Lwin to Lashio and Hsipaw which of course would involve crossing the Gokteik Viaduct. I wonder what Mike Calvert and his Chindits would make of this!



*Gokteik Bridge seen from the Maymyo-Lashio road (PS-P collection)*

*Copyright @ Piers Storie-Pugh January 2021*

Piers Storie-Pugh is a qualified guide (see Guild of Battlefield Guides No 12) and has been taking groups all over the world, including Burma, since 1985. He gives regular talks (Covid 19 allowing) to support charities in their fundraising. see [wartalks.co](http://wartalks.co)

## MEDALguide

### The Military Medal

The Military Medal was created by Royal Warrant on the 25th March 1916 and was awarded to NCOs and men of the Army, the RFC/RAF and the Royal Marines. As with the Military Cross, it was designed as a lesser award to the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

In June 1916 the award of the medal was extended to women and two of the earliest awards were to civilian women for courage during the 1916 Easter Rising in Ireland. One, Louisa Nolan was only eighteen years old and was working as a chorus girl in Dublin's Gaiety Theatre. It was her courage and compassion helping those wounded led to her being awarded the medal.

The medal rarely appears with a citation but the acts for which they were awarded can sometimes be found in regimental histories. All awards are however listed in the London Gazette. The medals are named with the individuals

name, rank, number and regiment/corps. Bars were issued for subsequent acts of bravery.

In 1993, following a review of gallantry awards the Military Cross is now awarded to all ranks with the Military Medal being discontinued.

In total some 115,600 Military Medals were awarded during the First war with 5796 first bars, 180 second bars and 1 third bar. During the Second War just over 15,000 medals were awarded with 177 first bars and 1 second bar. Between the wars some 300 medals were awarded with 4 first bars. Since 1947 some 932 medals and 8 first bars were awarded until the discontinuation in 1993. The ribbon is two dark blue stripes on each edge with equal white and red stripes in the middle.



# GUIDEbooks:



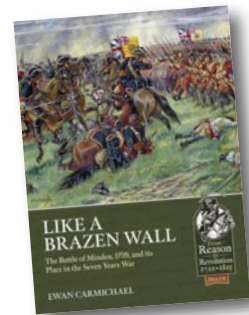
## SALAMANCA CAMPAIGN 1812

By Tim Saunders

It has been some time since anything new was written on the subject of Salamanca, a battle of some interest to many in the guiding community. This new title is a well-worked composite on the campaign. The author is our own Tim Saunders, who is clearly familiar with the ground, and the tactics of the day. While not an exhaustive history of Salamanca, this is accessible in style, the narrative is easy to follow, and has a clear chronology. Maps are plentiful, as are pictures illustrating the uniforms, tactics, and weapons employed by both sides. All of which make this an ideal entry point for the Salamanca novice, or a good source for planning your recce of this notable napoleonic battlefield.

Review by Mike Peters

Published by Pen & Sword Ltd  
RRP £25.00  
hardback, pp262



## LIKE A BRAZEN WALL The Battle of Minden, 1759, and its Place in the Seven Years War

By Ewan Carmichael

The battle of Minden features prominently in several British regimental histories, and rightly so, it was a significant chapter in the Seven Years War. Although much has been written about the battle, this new history by one of our Accredited Members is both refreshing, and timely. It is a little over the price that might be anticipated for a paperback, however, the quality of the work is outstanding. The campaign narrative, maps, photographs, and conclusions are all to the highest standard. This really is an exceptional piece of work, that gives the reader an informed insight into the strategic context of the battle, the conduct of the campaign at operational level, and the tactical reality of warfighting in 1759. In addition, our author provides detailed stand notes for a tour of the battlefield – What's not to like?

Published by Helion & Company  
RRP £35.00  
paperback, pp265

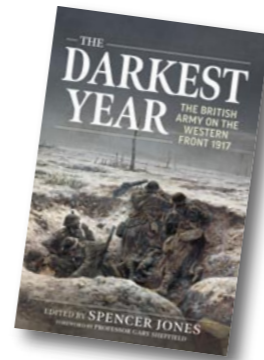
## THE DARKEST YEAR The British Army on the Western Front 1917

Edited by Spencer Jones, Foreword by Professor Gary Sheffield

The latest in a series of comprehensive volumes on the Great War. These compilations are exceptionally useful, packed with academic research from the Wolverhampton courses. This particular volume edited by our President, with a foreword from his predecessor is I think the best so far. Excellent maps, diagrams and pictures add to the high quality content. Notable contributions from Simon Shepard, and Andy Lock make for an informative read - certainly worth investing in if you are one of those Trenchie Types!

Review by Mike Peters

Published by Helion  
RRP £35.00  
hardback, pp510



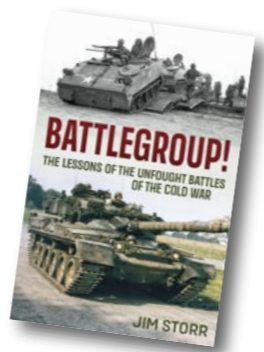
## BATTLEGROUP! The Lessons of the Unfought Battles of the Cold War

By Jim Storr

If ever there was a timely release... Even before the current war in Ukraine erupted, there was an increasing level of interest in the Cold War. This book is primarily focused on the 1980s, and examines the battles that would have been fought had Warsaw Pact forces crossed the Inner German Border. Much of what is written about the strengths and weaknesses of both Soviet, and NATO forces is extremely relevant today. It may make for uncomfortable reading for those that remember their years in West Germany with fondness. This is however a useful examination of high intensity, conventional warfare at operational, and tactical level. Academic in tone, certainly useful if you are involved in a Cold War Staff Ride or Battlefield Study.

Review by Mike Peters

Published by Helion Ltd  
RRP £25.00  
paperback, pp312



## ZEPPELIN INFERNO The Forgotten Blitz 1916

By Ian Castle

This is the second book in a planned trilogy by author Ian Castle and is a detailed study of the German air offensive against Great Britain during 1916. As with the previous volume which covered the years 1914-1915, the author deals with each individual raid in some detail, whether it was carried out by conventional aircraft, or as was more often the case, by airships either the lesser-known wooden-framed Schütte-Lanz type, or those constructed by the Zeppelin Company, which give the book its title. The descriptions of these raids are enlivened by eyewitness personal accounts by those on the ground and in the air, as well as reports from contemporary newspapers.

As well as describing each raid, the author also deals with the countermeasures introduced by the British such as the improvement of the anti-aircraft defences on the ground and the work done to bolster the squadrons devoted to home defence. We also learn about the work done to develop and introduce into service incendiary ammunition for the fighter aircraft that was capable of bringing down the hydrogen-filled airships.

We also read about the personalities on the German side, vilified by the British press as 'Baby Killers', such as Joachim Breihaupt, Heinrich Mathy and Peter Strasser, the commander of the Imperial German Navy's Airship Division. We also learn about the development and introduction into service of the 'R' Class Zeppelins, known to the British as the 'Super Zeppelins', impressive machines that were 198 metres long, with a diameter of 24 metres, capable of carrying a bomb load of up to four tons. Although the British had brought down their first Zeppelin on 31 March 1916, it had crashed into the sea off the Kent coast. The British public had to wait until 3 September before an airship was shot down over British soil, when the SL-11 was brought down by the guns of a B.E.2c aircraft piloted by Lieut. William Leefe Robinson, who was awarded a VC for his work. The fact that this was a Schütte-Lanz airship rather than a Zeppelin was kept from the public as this stage of the war, as it was felt that this might detract from the achievement! This was a portent for the future and during the remainder of 1916, the German side lost a further five Zeppelins and although the British weren't to know it at this stage, 1916 marked the peak of the Zeppelin offensive against the United Kingdom; the majority of future air attacks against this country would be made by conventional aircraft.

The book is well illustrated and also contains many useful maps charting the location of German airship bases in 1916, Air Raid Warning Districts, the penetration of the various Zeppelin raids during the year, location of RFC Home Defence squadrons, and tracks of the final flights of many of the destroyed airships. There are also several useful appendices, which explain the airship numbering systems used by both the German Navy and Army, lists of airship and conventional aircraft raids in 1916, which give the numbers of casualties and the values of material damage caused. The final appendix follows the pattern introduced by the author in the first book, by providing a list of the names of those killed in Britain by enemy air attacks during the year in question. Unlike the later Blitz, there is no central register as such and Mr Castle has done a considerable amount of detective work to identify all but six of the 300 British deaths on the ground in 1916.

As one would expect from this author, this is a superbly-researched and well-written work that will interest anyone who wishes to discover more about this sometimes overlooked aspect of the air war in 1914-1918 and I have no hesitation in recommending it to you.

Review by Steve Hunnisett

Published by Frontline Books  
RRP £25.00  
hardback, pp382

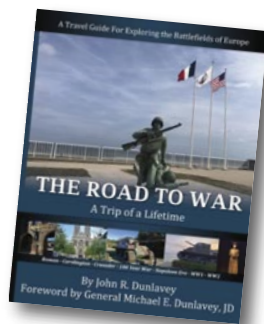
## THE ROAD TO WAR A Trip of a Lifetime

By John R Dunlavy

As the title of this bumper book suggests, it is essentially a comprehensive travel guide for the would-be US Battlefield Tourist heading for Europe. That said, the level of detail makes it equally useful as a planning reference for a battlefield guide. The contents encompass the major conflicts in Western Europe, the narrative and maps cover Roman, Carolingian, Crusader, 100 Years War, Napoleonic, and both World Wars. Historical information, maps, and photographs are well presented, pitched at the curious novice, the interested hanger-on, and/or the serious War Nerd. The supporting information on hotels, restaurants and museums is useful, as are the detailed tips on mobile phones, insurance, European fuel grades and a plethora of other potential pitfalls for the American tourist to avoid. Particularly useful are the reference notes on uniforms, weapons, campaign maps and battle schematics in the appendix. This Travel Guide for the Battlefields is ideal for the first time tourist, and the old Guide heading for a new battlefield.

Review by Mike Peters

Published by Amazon  
RRP £49.99  
paperback, pp462



# 10 Questions:

Name: Matthew Menneke

Age: 35

Nationality: Australian

Home Location: Berlin

Tour Company: On the Front  
Tours

Validating: In progress



In each edition of *'Despatches'*, we will be introducing a member of the Guild. In this edition, it is Matthew Menneke.

- 1. How long have you been interested in battlefields and what was it that initially attracted your interest?** This is a question I have only been able to answer recently. Last year, my son's birth prompted my parents to send me a photo album of when I was a baby, and my wife found a photo of my father reading me a WWII history book, so you can say it was inevitable.
  - 2. Have any experiences stood out?** Those who have been to Australia or know an Australian will know the sport AFL. I was extremely fortunate to represent Australia at the AFL Europe remembrance match commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Villers-Bretonneux. It was a moving experience to be a part of such an event and will be something I will never forget.
  - 3. What do you enjoy the most about battlefield guiding?** I enjoy the nuances that are had in discussing military history. History is not black and white, only different shades of grey, and each person I speak with brings a new perspective making each tour different.
  - 4. What is your favourite stand, location or battlefield and why?** This is a very tough question! I would have to say the Küstrin Altstadt. It can be challenging to paint a picture in words for tour guests of how a battlefield once looked. The Küstrin Altstadt is described as the Pompeii on the Oder, a name it certainly lives up to. It is fascinating to see guests' reactions as I take them down the ruined streets as they recognize the signs of a once-bustling city. The traces of the battle are ever-present, with
- staircases that lead to nowhere and the bullet-riddled walls of what is left standing.
- 5. Which battlefield would you like to visit in the future?** Gallipoli. I have not yet had the opportunity to get there, but it is number one, two and three of my must-visit battlefields.
  - 6. What have you enjoyed the most about being a member of the Guild?** There is a lot I enjoy about the Guild. It has been great to meet like-minded people, and the friendly and welcoming attitude of everyone I spoke with has been fantastic! I have especially appreciated the passion and professionalism each member brings to the table.
  - 7. If there was a fire and you could only save one battlefield-related book or prop, what would you save and why?** It would have to be the book *'Bloody Streets'* by Aaron Hamilton. This is far beyond the most detailed book I have ever read regarding the Battle of Berlin. I would highly recommend it to anyone looking for a street by street telling of the battle.
  - 8. What type of group do you think is the most challenging to lead on a tour?** All groups are different, but the most challenging person I ever had during a tour was a mother who insisted that I tell the tour through the lens of superheroes and villains to keep her young children engaged. Her children were well behaved, but she kept interrupting, and I think she wanted the tour explained in such a way so that she could understand and not the children.
  - 9. What's the best tip, story or nugget of information you have been given by a fellow battlefield guide?** This advice wasn't from another battlefield guide but from my former platoon sergeant. He told me the worst words a leader can say is "I don't know"; there are many ways to skirt that response but find out the answer and get back to the person who asked. This piece of advice I have brought with me to battlefield guiding.
  - 10. What is the funniest or most dramatic thing you have seen on tour?** Berlin is a city renowned for its liberal attitude towards sexual liberation. During a tour I was on years ago in Berlin, this topic came up, and one of the guests asked a question in such a way that it came across as if they were asking where they could procure these services. Our guide had a field day embarrassing them, and the whole audience had a good laugh at this poor individual's expense.

## NEWmembers:

Stephen Badsey  
Allan Costley  
Neale Dewar  
Martin Hayes

Andrew Lawless  
Andy Milton  
Kees Nederpelt  
Gary Powell

Michael Rainsbury  
Sue Robinson  
Sophie Shrubsole  
Diane Trice

Simon Walker  
Kim Wright

New members who have been welcomed to the Guild between Autumn/Winter 2021 and the date of publication.