

Autumn/Winter 2022 Issue  
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# DESPATCHES

the magazine of the International Guild of Battlefield Guides



## IN THIS ISSUE:

Tunisian Battlefields

Tewkesbury Guides

## PLUS

The Panther Returns

Going Commando

## AND

Brazen Battlefield

## ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Field Guides

Events in 2022/23

Book Reviews

# FIELDguides

Cover image: In the mists of the Argonne looking for 'Cornwilly Quarry' a location mentioned in the memoir of American Pvt John Lewis Barkley. Barkley was awarded the Medal of Honor for an extraordinary single handed action near this spot. (Photo: Mike Sheil)



Carvings created by French 'poilus' in a hidden quarry in the valley of the Aisne. (Photo: Mike Sheil)

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Material for publication in the Spring/Summer the Editor no later than 15 March 2023. 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

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## EDITOR'Sguidelines:

Hello fellow Guild Members, and welcome to the Autumn & Winter 2022 issue of 'Despatches'. It has taken a while, but I do think that we have managed to pull together another interesting edition of our own IGBG magazine. A big thank you to all of you that have worked so hard to create and share your own contributions. That is really what the Guild and this magazine is all about, sharing our collective knowledge with each other, and in many cases, anybody else who will listen.

I hope that you like our front cover, another striking, high-quality image selflessly contributed by Mike Sheil – Thank you Mike! We also have a real variety of articles, pieces ranging from the Tunisian desert to the black powder battlefield of Minden, where Infantry faced Cavalry and won. We even manage to get back to blood soaked the medieval field of Tewkesbury...not a Christmas Truce football or Trench to be seen! We also have a report on the Guild weekend where members were absolutely encouraged to go Commando! I am grateful to everyone who has

taken the time to write or send something in, especially our regulars like Tony Smith who continues to enlighten us all on the essential back story behind the medals that we are all frequently asked to identify and explain.

I hope that you all enjoy this issue, I am working hard to produce a special printed edition of 'Despatches' for the Annual Conference Weekend – which must be complete before Christmas. So, please, if you are loitering with intent and you have an article or a great tour picture from this year, I need your submissions now! Please submit your feature via Tim Stoneman as soon as you can, and you will find yourself in print for the Guild Annual Conference.

I will close now and let you all get writing. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to 'Despatches' this year, and a Merry Christmas to you all.

Mike Peters  
Editor



# OPENINGshot:

## A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Dear fellow members and Guild Partners, welcome to the Autumn/Winter 2022 issue of 'Despatches'.

It seems like only yesterday that I took over the Chair from Mike and it's hard to believe that six months have passed; doesn't time fly?

The post-pandemic landscape of battlefield touring seems to be very different from that which existed before the pandemic struck. Many tourists are approaching the way in which they book their holidays and excursions differently and the way in which some countries trade with one another is also changing.

After a slow start, customers are now returning to the battlefields. Those wanting to visit the battlefields of the Second World War appear to be getting back to pre-pandemic levels, while those wishing to visit the First World War battlefields appear to be returning at a slower rate. This may be the result of the poor performance of the pound against the dollar, making it more attractive to customers from the USA to visit. This may also relate to a slower return by customers from Australia and New Zealand. Both would reflect on the trend towards the Second World War rather than the First. Other battlefields are beginning to recover and there seems an increase in customers wishing to visit battlefields in the United Kingdom presenting an opportunity to offer new destinations.

For those members located in the United Kingdom, BREXIT has compounded that already changing environment and there seems to be a minefield of barriers, challenges and obstacles laid before us. There has been an increase in checks at borders, as we are stamped in and out at Border Control, and the need to monitor the time spent in Europe is just one of the many side effects of BREXIT. Some members have experienced document checks relating to the use of their vehicle, others have experienced checks of their guiding status. The need to be able to demonstrate your compliance with the rules governing your guiding activities and demonstrate your professional competency has never been greater.

Where the Management Board deems it appropriate, it is issuing guidelines to members to help them comply with the rules that govern their guiding activities. In response to the latter, the Management Board is currently considering changes to the Guild's Logbook and the way in which it can be used. The Board is in the process of introducing new name badges that clearly show you are a member of the Guild, which will be available for you to collect at the Annual Conference weekend in January 2023. It has also made ID-cards available to its Accredited Members to help demonstrate their professional competence.

The number of members undergoing validation seems to have slowed and I would encourage those who are considering this to do it sooner rather than later. Getting Accredited is becoming even more valuable with the need to demonstrate professional competence.

Opportunities to validate are available at the Annual Conference weekend and you should apply to the Validation Secretary should you wish to take one of the slots. Remember, whilst the goal is to pass, the referred club has some distinguished members, including myself.

The Guild Partners scheme is now in place, and we have seen organisations that support and employ Guild members receiving gold status. I would encourage any member who is a supporter of the Guild to apply for bronze status and those who do that little bit more to apply for silver or gold. Our partners are important to enhancing the Guild's standing within the industry and their support and contribution to the Guild's activities adds value to your membership.

So far, however, we have only just scratched the surface and there is still so much to do.

We aim to make the Guild more inclusive; an organisation that welcomes members irrespective of their age, gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, disability, background, etc. We also intend to cement the Guild's international standing by encouraging those who live outside of the UK to become members. We want all to know and recognise 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.

We want to increase the value you get from your membership. The use of this magazine as a vehicle by which members can enhance the value of their fellow members by submitting and publishing battlefield related articles is something we want to encourage. The revamping of the Guild's website to include a repository for resources that members can share is another goal. Recent Guild events have been well supported and the feedback received has been positive. Virtual events are another avenue of enhancing your membership that we are looking to introduce. All these activities, however, require time and effort to make possible and the Management Board cannot do this alone. We are looking for volunteers from amongst the membership to get involved and help make these aspirations a reality.

So yes, barriers, challenges, and obstacles exist – but as John Adam once said, "Every problem is an opportunity in disguise", and that is why the Management Board and I have chosen the theme for our 2023 Annual Conference to be:

**Battlefield Guiding Today**  
**Barriers, Challenges, and Obstacles**  
**(Every problem is an opportunity in disguise)**

**Ian Gumm**  
**Chairman**



# THE RACE FOR TUNIS – 2022

John Greenacre (Accredited Guide 44)

In July 2021, just as the chains of the pandemic were being slackened, I was contacted by an old Army colleague. Lieutenant Colonel Jim Hill RA and I had worked together on several battlefield studies and staff rides over the years since a tour to the 1945 Rhine crossing sites way back in 2005. Jim was now posted as the only British officer in the US Army's HQ Africa Command (AFRICOM) based in Stuttgart (where else would you establish your African command centre). He had volunteered to plan a staff ride and suggested getting the band back together but time for preparation was limited.



HQ AFRICOM staff officers discuss the first US/German tank engagement of the Second World War in the Tine Valley, west of the Chouigui Pass.

We had worked together on the Battle of the Bulge when he was posted to NATO's HQ Allied Rapid Reaction Command so, we brushed off the paperwork and a couple of weeks later we were in the Ardennes on a confirmatory recce. The main event for forty US military officers up to and including two-star generals, NCOs and civilians took place that September. Evidently, they considered the Brit tour guide's performance at least adequate and asked if I would return the following year. "Perhaps an event in Africa?" suggested Major General Ekman in a passing comment as I departed.

Jim took the quip literally and there followed a long distance conversation on the art of the possible. I wracked my brains for what I could cover in Africa and that could be made relevant for a current US Army HQ. Meanwhile, Jim went round the desks in

his HQ to consult on the practicalities of deploying to various African nations. Eventually, Tunisia was selected and the General gave it his endorsement. After some struggles it also crossed the American government legal and financial hurdles, and it was all systems go. I embarked on a concentrated period of research, drew up a potential itinerary and embarked on the small matter of a staff reader which eventually grew to a 140 page epic.

## Time Spent in Recce...

As we got down to the serious business of planning the restrictions in putting together an itinerary became clear. Jim was working closely with the US Embassy in Tunisia. Due to the security situation in certain areas of the country some districts were restricted or out of bounds for visiting US officials,

including US AFRICOM. This included sites that would have been at the top of the list for a Second World War tour including Kasserine and Sidi Bou Zid, Maknassy and Gafsa. The Embassy also strongly recommended we base ourselves in Tunis, where HQ AFRICOM could interact with the Tunisian ministry of defence and the US Embassy. Next came the issues with logistics. While the infrastructure in northern Tunisia is much improved since 1942 it still imposes restrictions to movement. So, we decided on trying to run three days' worth of tours with each day beginning and ending in Tunis. This meant we could cover the opening moves of the Tunisian campaign in November and December 1942 and its conclusion in April and May 1943 but it left a big gap in the middle. Under the circumstances however, it was the best we could do and in March 2022 I flew out to Tunis to meet Jim and the rest of the recce team. The recce was facilitated by the US Embassy who provided a US Army major with a four-wheel drive vehicle to transport us. We were accommodated in the US Embassy recommended hotel which just happened to be the five-star, beach front Four Seasons in Gammarth just north of Carthage.

The countryside in Tunisia is spectacular and in March the rolling hills were still green and covered with growing barley, artichokes, broad beans and cherries. It was clear why the land was considered the bread basket of the Roman Empire. The weather was grey but pleasantly warm with stiff winds and some rain. We ran the recce in real time and proved our three-day plan. We also took the opportunity to include a little bit of site seeing and took in the spectacular Roman sites at Uthina and Dougga. This was not entirely self-indulgent as HQ AFRICOM's Brigadier Hovatter, who was sponsoring the staff ride and a keen military historian, had instructed us back in Stuttgart to try to include 'something Roman' during the event. We intended to include a CWGC cemetery on the tour and managed to visit Medjez-el-Bab, Massicault and Oued Zarga, the latter of which was a remarkable, gravel covered cemetery beside a large reservoir. We planned to end the staff ride at the ABMC North Africa American Cemetery in Carthage. The superintendent, Dan Hicks, was extremely helpful and generous and joined us for part of the recce and even took us for dinner. The final detail to organise was a visit to the Tunisian military museum. The US Embassy had arranged a meeting and on arrival in our rather shabby recce clothing we were treated to a VIP reception complete with photographers, coffee, cake and a splendid guided tour. Content with our plan, the recce team departed and withdrew to Lowestoft and Stuttgart respectively.

## The Main Event

On a Thursday in May I flew to Stuttgart and the following day assisted in delivering the pre-tour brief to the staff ride participants including explaining the historical background. After a pleasant weekend hosted by Jim, on Monday we caught Stuttgart's efficient public transport to the airport and flew out to Tunis via Paris. On arrival at Tunis we were met by US Embassy representatives and 'expedited' through Tunisian immigration. Then onto the coach which was escorted by Tunisian military police vehicles deploying the full array of flashing lights and sirens as we shoved our way through the evening traffic. The weather had moved on since the recce, the temperature was in the thirties and the green landscape had transitioned to brown. On arrival at the Four Seasons the participants were immediately on the side of the organisers.

## Day 1

We departed the hotel bright and early and with the military police doing their thing, we fought our way through the rush hour traffic heading for the first stand. We were joined by a small group of Tunisian officers and SNCOs as participants on the staff ride. We drove up through the Chouigui Pass (pronounced by US servicemen in 1942 as 'Chewy-Gooney') into the Tine Valley. Close to the site of Coxen's Farm I described the first clash of the Second World War between American and German armour on 26 November 1942. Lieutenant Colonel John Waters' 1st Battalion, 1st Armoured Regiment defeated elements of 190th Panzer Battalion through superior tactics despite a technological disadvantage. The ground and Waters' deployment of his troops could be described and understood clearly from our stand.

A short hop back through the Chouigui Pass took us to our second stand at Djedeida. On a low ridge west of the town one of the unique aspects of this tour became more obvious. The Tunisian military police allocated to us were not just easing our transit. Once at the stand, the eight well-armed soldiers took up all-round defence at a discrete distance from the participants although the worst they had to deal with was an errant flock of sheep. The ridge we were stood on was significant as it was the point from which Major Rudolph Barlow's light armoured company (part of Waters' command) rampaged across Djedeida airfield on 25 November 1942 destroying more than twenty Axis aircraft on the ground while suffering minimal losses.

A longer drive south then took us to the Roman site at Uthina. Stood on the platform of the ruins of the capitolium I briefly drew parallels between the Punic Wars and the 1942/43 Tunisian campaign before I then returned to far safer ground. We



*HQ AFRICOM staff officers consider Major Rudolph Barlow's armoured charge across Djedeida airfield. Note the Tunisian military police keeping the sheep at bay.*

discussed British 2nd Parachute Battalion's action on 30 November 1942 at Oudna which was laid out on the plain below us. Having found little of significance at the airfield they were sent to attack, the battalion CO, Lieutenant Colonel John Frost, decided to extract to Medjez el Bab. The battalion was forced to withdraw in contact over several days on foot and in foul weather, losing half the battalion in the process. During our stand however, it was fiercely hot in the ruins but the group had time to explore the extensive site before we moved on. Our final stop was at the Tunisian military museum where the warmth and extravagance of our welcome matched that which we experienced during the recce. The group had a guided tour delivered by an excellent Tunisian air force NCO. If you are ever in Tunis I recommend a visit. While the history is a little one sided (there is no mention of Hannibal's final defeat for example) the display of weapons is impressive.

## Day 2

On the second day of the staff ride we headed west from Tunis into the Medjerda valley. First stop was on a hillside overlooking the Tebourba Gap. This choke point guarded the exit of the Medjerda onto the coastal plain and was the direct route to Tunis for British and American troops at the end of 1942.



*John Greenacre describing Major Rudolph Barlow's armoured charge across Djedeida airfield.*

From 1-4 December that year four German kampfguppen from Generalleutnant Wolfgang Fischer's 10th Panzer Division fought against poorly coordinated units from Major General Vyvyan Eveleigh's British 78th Infantry Division for possession of the Gap. The Axis forces secured the high ground on both banks of the Medjerda, trapping Allied formations in the valley to the south-west. A short drive then took us to Bordj Toum where one of the few bridges spanned the Medjerda. Standing on the banks of the river next to the modern bridge it was easy to appreciate the obstacle it presented, particularly in the winter when it would have been swollen by winter rain. The only issue we had was the beating sun and the group sheltered in



*HQ AFRICOM staff officers on the Roman ruins at Uthina overlooking the site of 2nd Parachute Battalion's operation at Oudna airfield*

the shade of the bridge while I described the chaotic Allied attempts to withdraw down the valley on 6 December 1942 as German and Italian troops pushed down both banks of the river.

Another short drive took us to one of the most well known sites of the Tunisian campaign, Longstop Hill. Djebel el Ahmera as it was known before the battle sits on the north-west bank of the Medjerda and dominates the approach to Medjez el Bab. It was critical that the Allies held the town, called by Hannibal 'the key to the door and to mastery of all Tunisia'. Longstop was the lynchpin of the defence. There was not time for us to climb to the summit but we took up a good vantage point on the slopes to discuss the fierce fighting that took place on the hill from 22 December 1942 and resulted in German infantry securing the feature on Christmas Day. Finally, a visit to Medjez el Bab War Cemetery which is everything you would expect from the CWGC. After a brief explanation of the Commission's ethos

from me a wreath was laid by Major General Ekman. We returned to the hotel where the group had to endure a presentation from me to cover the time gap between the end of December 1942 and April 1943. Those that survived the ordeal then had dinner with the US Embassy staff.

### Day 3

An early start on the third day allowed us to push further north-west from Tunis. The first stand was at the Djefna Position where the north coastal route to Bizerte and Tunis passed through a broad defile. From our vantage point under some olive trees on the slopes above the road it was easy to see how Djebel el Azzag to the north (known to Allied troops as Green Hill) and Djebel Adjred (Bald Hill) to the south dominated the key route. The Djefna position had been one of the first to be attacked by British troops on 17 November 1942 and repeated attempts



*John Greenacre stood on the Roman ruins at Uthina describing 2nd Parachute Battalion's operations around Oudna airfield.*



*HQ AFRICOM staff officers discuss British and American attempts to force the Djefna position. Green Hill on the left and Bald Hill on the right of the pass.*

were made to force the route, all to no avail. In early January the Djefna Position was attacked yet again by British units including British 3rd Parachute Battalion. Jim revealed that his grandfather had fought with the battalion on Green Hill, was wounded by mortar fire and subsequently met Jim's grandmother while recuperating in hospital. The battalion had spent the night before the attack in a railway tunnel which was immediately adjacent to our stand. Our main discussion however, focussed on the breaking of the position on 1 May 1943 by Major General Manton Eddy's US 9th Infantry Division (supported by the Corps Franc D'Afrique), using concentration of force and manoeuvre to great success where head-on attacks had previously failed.

We then drove further south to a stand that overlooked Djebel Tahent, better known to US forces as Hill 609. During the recce the area had been doing a fair impression of Brecon on a bad day with driving rain and low cloud that obscured our view of the hill tops. On this occasion however, and much to my relief it was fairly simple to identify and point out the complex of high ground including Hills 490, 435, 531, 461 and Hill 609 itself. When Major General Charles Ryder's US 34th Infantry Division eventually secured the key terrain on 1 May 1943 it unlocked the ground to the south allowing Allied troops to advance up the Tine and Medjerda valleys and signalling the beginning of the end for the Axis in North Africa. It was also nearly the end of our staff ride and, after a long haul in the coach we reached the ABMC North Africa American Cemetery in

Carthage. I used the mosaic maps which are a feature of most ABMC sites to describe the final moves of the Tunisian campaign and the surrender of Generaloberst von Arnim and Maresciallo d'Italia Messe along with approximately 275,000 Axis troops. I finished with General Alexander's brief message to Churchill in London. "Sir, it is my duty to report that the Tunisian campaign is over. All enemy resistance has ceased. We are masters of the North African shores". Dan Hicks then took over and gave the group a guided tour of the cemetery before the padre said a few words and Major General Ekman laid a wreath. We then adjourned to the nearby Phoenix Club, adjacent to Carthage's ancient Roman cisterns for an immediate 'wash-up' and some all-round, congratulatory back slapping. That evening most of the group headed for the tourist magnet of Sidi Bou Said and the following morning many were carrying over-priced rugs onto the plane for the flight back to Stuttgart.

### In Retrospect

It was a great privilege to work with HQ AFRICOM and to have the opportunity to visit and guide in Tunisia. While we could not go to Kasserine and other significant sites those we did visit for stands were spectacular and generally unspoilt by the intervening seventy-nine years. Chouigui, Oudna, Medjez el Bab, Longstop, Djefna and Hill 609 were all memorable and I am unlikely to have the pleasure of visiting them again. There had been a good deal of prior research on my part but it was interesting



*Staff officers from HQ Africom discuss 10th Panzer Division's counter attack in the Tebourba Pass.*



*John Greenacre describing 10th Panzer Division's counter attack in the Tebourba Pass.*



Staff officers from HQ AFRICOM discuss US 36 Infantry Division's battle to secure Hill 609, the flat topped hill in the distance..



John Greenacre describes the culmination of the Tunisian campaign at the North Africa American Cemetery at Carthage.

John Greenacre preparing to describe US 36 Infantry Division's battle to secure Hill 609, the flat topped hill in the distance.

piecing together the detail and, as with recce, time spent on research is seldom wasted. The accommodation was amongst the best I have ever stayed in and a bargain at US government rates. The staff ride itself ran without a hitch which was largely down to the thorough preparation by Jim and his team. It had also run pretty much exactly to time which, given the vagaries of the Tunisian roads might be considered a minor miracle. It was however, also very much down to having a major from the US Embassy driving ahead of the coach at all times to clear the stands and Tunisian military police outriders pushing us through the worst of the traffic. I recommend both on all future tours. At the 'wash-up' in the Phoenix Club over a beer Major General Ekman leaned over and asked Jim and me, "So, what about next year?"

Morocco? Sierra Leone? The wheels are already turning – watch this space.

## FIELDguides



The Bridge at Nimy, a British military Staff Ride group discuss Courage Under Fire at the Nimy Bridge (Pic Battle Honours - Mike Peters)



In-Pensioners from Royal Hospital Chelsea on tour with Battle Honours - Battle Honours



Resplendent in the Dardanelles sunshine - the recently inaugurated memorial to the Newfoundland Regiment at Suvla - Battle Honours



'Have folder will guide' - Susie Rotherforth in Classic Storytelling Mode - Anglia Travel



With Sophie's Great War Tours - the start of our day in the Ypres Salient looking at where we had been and at our plans for the day ahead - Paul Colbourne

# GUILDevent

## Tewkesbury Core Weekend 2nd - 3rd July 2022

Ian Doyle

The Guild organises Core Weekends every year, aimed at times scheduled to avoid the main guiding season. One of these is the Annual Conference weekend, sadly cancelled this year. The Tewkesbury weekend was the first of the core weekends of 2022.

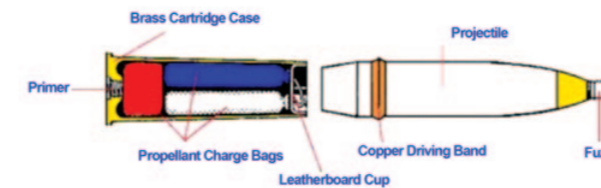


Core weekends allow the Guild to schedule regular get togethers where members can unwind and relax in the company of like-minded colleagues; meet and greet new members investigating the route to accreditation; review some of those already working towards accreditation re: validation of Assignments; and participate in organised themed events to increase their own knowledge and, not to put too fine a point on it, enjoy ourselves.

The Tewkesbury Core Weekend “*was viewed, pretty much consistently, by attendees as a very enjoyable event*”. I am sure I speak for all who attended in thanking the Accreditation Director and

the Events Director for organising a fantastic, informative and thoroughly enjoyable weekend and to Bob Brunsdon for facilitating our visit to Greensleeves Shooting Club.

The original programme was planned to commence with two Assignment 1s, which for my part, I was very much looking forward to. I was one of those participants investigating the route to accreditation and was particularly keen in watching an Assignment 1 to gain knowledge of the military actions in question, to view how a successful Assignment 1 is prepared and presented and to gain a better insight into the standards required for



Handout in support of QF 25-pounder gun technical ranging and targeting controls

Accreditation. Sadly, for reasons beyond anyone’s control, those due to present were unable to attend. The vestiges of Covid still impact upon our ability to socialise and interact with each in face-to-face settings! I do hope that we will get the opportunity of receiving these presentations at the next Core Weekend, or Annual Conference and that those presenting Assignment 1 are aware of how much us less experienced ‘Newbie Guides’ gain from just watching them learn their craft.

As a result, some last-minute changes to the programme were introduced. In lieu of the two Assignment 1s, we received an outstanding in-depth presentation on the actions of “*the Gunners at the Battle of the Imjin River*” by Christopher Finn. No



45 Field Regiment Royal Artillery, fought in support of the British 29th Infantry Brigade and the Luxembourg Detachment of the Belgian Volunteer Corps during the Korean War over the period from 22 – 25 April in this engagement during the Chinese Spring Offensive of 1951. In addition, to the chronological sequence of events relating to the Battle, we also received some technical information on the ammunition, drills and use of the Quick Firing (QF) 25-pounder guns used by the Regiment, much to the amusement of one of the participants – a former officer

from the Royal Artillery, who commended the former officer from the Royal Air Force on the accuracy of his presentation.

The themed element of the programme relating to the Battle of Tewkesbury 1471 started after the mid-morning break with an in-depth demonstration from one of the armourers on the armour of the period used by the knights on the battlefield from the Plantagenet Medieval Society.

David Harvey, Events Director, who specialises in Medieval Warfare, then led us on a merry dance with each of us taking on the role of one of the main characters in the complex story of familial strife between the Houses of York and Lancaster leading up to the battle.

For my part, I played the role of King Henry VI of the House of Lancaster. Sadly, I spent a lot of my time in prison, or in a lunatic asylum, only occasionally ruling the country, seemingly only when my wife, Margaret of Anjou let me!

After lunch, David and Ian Gumm, the Chairman of the Guild, another specialist on the battle, led us on a walking tour of the battlefield. We followed the Heritage Tewkesbury Battlefield Trail *Tewkesbury Medieval Battle Trail war roses Henry VI* ([visittewkesbury.info](http://visittewkesbury.info)) deviating from the path on occasion to investigate further discrepancies between the primary texts and the information made available to the general public on the



Demonstration of the armour of the period from the Plantagenet Medieval Society

information boards dotted along the trail. Reference was made during the walk to *'The Historie of the Arrivall of King Edward IV'* (in short *'The Arrivall'*) and extracts were read out. This account was written shortly after the battle by one of the servants in the baggage train of King Edward IV of the House of York and provides us with one of the most contemporaneous accounts of the battle.

The importance of the battle on British history was emphasised when one came to realise the enormity of its consequences.

Edward IV of York had been a fugitive and an exile.

*"The imbecility of Henry VI was amply compensated by the vigour of the Earl of Warwick ... The inhabitants of the east coast, from the Thames to the borders of Scotland were raised and arrayed to oppose any holding landing; the Duke of Clarence, (Edward IV's brother), was bound to [the House of Lancaster] ... having married the Earl of Warwick's elder daughter, and by a parliamentary entailment of the crown upon him, which excluded Edward IV from the line of succession, in case the line of Henry VI should fail. ... [nor was there wanting of support amongst the populace for the House of Lancaster]. The simplicity and meek piety of Henry VI, the generous hospitality of Warwick; the hard fortunes of the youthful Prince of Wales; the licentiousness of Edward IV's life and his undignified marriage to Elizabeth Woodville ... produced a wide-spread feeling in favour of the cause of the [House of Lancaster]. (The Arrival of King Edward IV | The History Jar)*

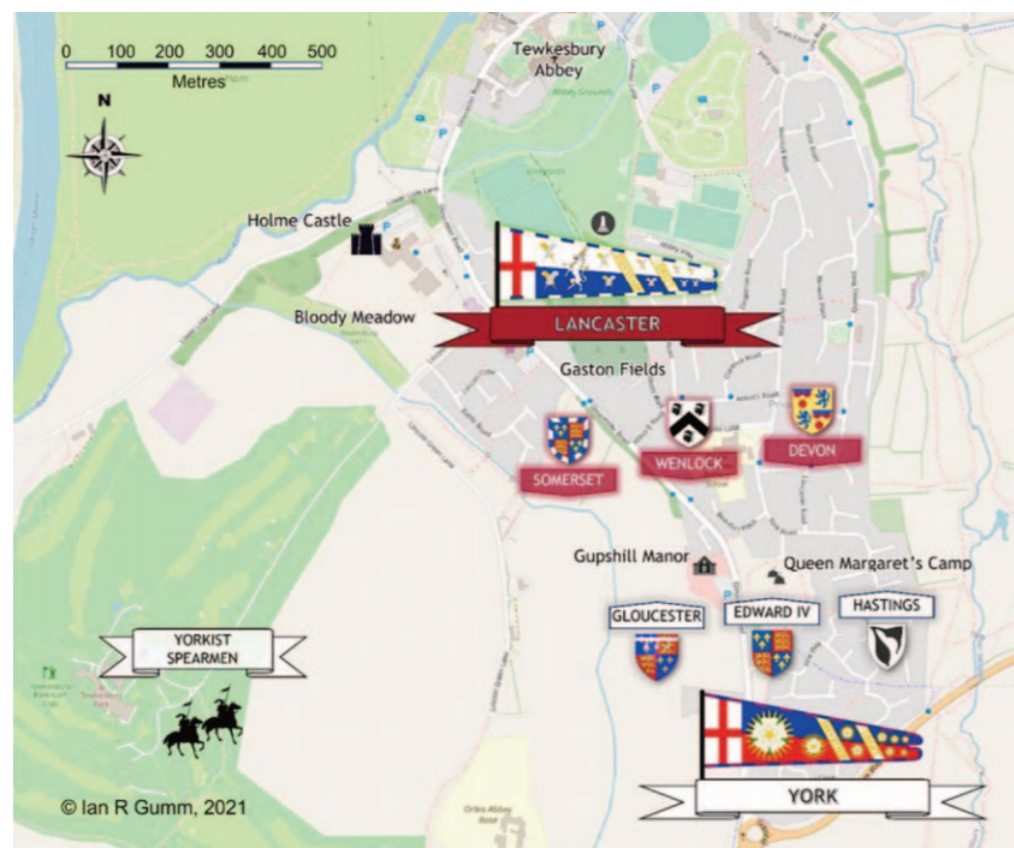
And yet, within two months of landing at Ravenspur in Yorkshire, the Earl of Warwick lay dead on the field of Barnet which battle had been fought two weeks previously; the Prince of Wales, the heir to the House of Lancaster, lay dead on the field of battle at Tewkesbury; his father, the King, Henry VI conveniently died of melancholia in prison shortly after being visited



Ian Gumm and David Harvey lead a discussion on aspects of the battle close to the starting positions of the Lancastrian right wing led by the Duke of Somerset.

by the Duke of Gloucester (the future, King Richard III), and Queen Margaret of Anjou had been taken captive and held prisoner, until she was ransomed to her cousin, the King of France, where she was exiled and remained for the rest of her life as one of the King's poor relations.

Starting at Gupshill Manor, the walking tour took us to the feature marked on Ian Gumm's map as 'Queen Margaret's Camp' – actually the remains of an Iron Age hill fort – nothing to do with Queen Margaret at all – south past the Yorkist lines of



Edward IV's Battle (as a Division of the Army would then have been called) then left, passing to the rear of the Duke of Gloucester's Battle, and then left again following a path between the western flank of the battle and the area marked as the location of some mounted Yorkist spearmen. We then walked up to the point on the map marked as the location of the Duke of Somerset's position and then followed the Tewkesbury Battle Trail north west to the area known as Bloody Meadow and the hill marked on Ian's map as Holme Castle. From there we made our way to Tewkesbury Abbey via the memorial pillar on which a plaque has been placed which reads:

*"These fields known as the Vineyards are part of the historic battleground over which was fought the decisive battle of the Wars of the Rose on 4th May 1471 when Edward, Prince of Wales, was slain. They were purchased by the Corporation of Tewkesbury in 1929."*

Alas, our interest in the field of battle and discussions during stands meant that we did not arrive back at the Abbey in time to go inside and complete the tour by visiting the graves of those killed in the battle who are buried there – such as that of the 17-year old Prince Edward, the only Prince of Wales ever to have died in battle. Other nobles and Lancastrian commanders are also buried here who were executed as traitors to the cause of King Edward IV of the House of York, such as the Duke of Somerset and the Earl of Devon.

Accounts seem to vary as to what happened in the Abbey. The author of the Arrival states that King Edward entered the Abbey to give thanks for his victory. Lancastrian soldiers were seeking shelter under the Church's protection, even though the Abbey had no right to give sanctuary.

The Chronicle of Tewkesbury states that Edward entered the Abbey with drawn sword and that the spilling of blood within meant that the Abbey had to be re-consecrated.

Whatever the truth of the matter, there are certainly several graves of Lancastrian knights in the Abbey, including that of the Prince of Wales, resting under the unyielding gaze of the Yorkist Sun in Splendour.<sup>7</sup>

The first two stands of the Sunday morning were delivered by Chris Finn. For the first we visited four Commonwealth War Graves in the cemetery of St James the Great Church of England. The lives and deaths of these four men encapsulated the history of the nearby airfield at RAF Stoke Orchard.



Above: Vault of Tewkesbury Abbey with Yorkist Rose and Sun in Splendour looking down upon the grave of the Edward, Prince of Wales and the other Lancastrian lords

Below: Grave of Edward, Prince of Wales



No 10 Elementary Flying Training School was established here in September 1941. Equipped with Tiger Moths, all Elementary Flying Training pilots learned the basics of flight up to the point where they could fly solo.

Whilst waiting to take off at the end of the runway with a student pilot, Flight Lieutenant Henry Hollindrake was killed in May 1942 when a student pilot under instruction in another plane landed on top of him. Fortunately, the student pilot survived.

In July 1942, RAF Stoke Orchard specialised in the training of Glider Pilots for the Glider Pilot Regiment. Corporal William Charles Palmer of the Glider Pilot Regiment, Army Air Corps was killed in September 1942 when he stalled his Hotspur glider.

Sergeant Charles Petre, RAF VR was killed in a flying accident in August 1943. He was a pilot for one of the tugs that pulled the gliders up and had been assigned to this task to give him more



Four CWGC graves in the cemetery of St James the Great Churchyard, Stoke Orchard

experience. During an air test of a Master II he stalled the aircraft whilst indulging in unauthorised low level aerobatics.



Royal Observer Corps (ROC) Bunker, RAF Stoke Orchard

Lieutenant Colonel Charles Fryer, King's Royal Rifle Corps, was killed in a glider accident in July 1944. At 54 years old he had been appointed as the Officer Commanding No 2 Wing of the Glider Pilot Regiment and wished to gain his Glider Pilot Wings. He mishandled a solo circuit and crashed into the railway line as he was coming into land.

We then visited the remains of a Royal Ordnance Corps (ROC) Nuclear Monitoring Bunker which had been constructed into an earth embankment on the edge of the airfield and the railway line. Here we learned about the role of the United Kingdom Warning and monitoring Organisation (UKWMO) during the early Cold War. At Stoke Orchard,

and at a thousand other bunkers in the UK, 3 members of the ROC were assigned to their duties in this cramped station whilst they monitored any radioactivity in the area over the course of a week after a nuclear attack. The diagram below shows that there was adequate space for two of the team members to rest in their bunks whilst one member was on watch. The psychological strain placed upon those assigned this duty during the event of a nuclear attack was an interesting topic of discussion whilst some members of the group descended into the depths of the bunker.

And finally, the pièce de la resistance; a display and demonstration of historic small arms ranging from an English Civil War matchlock musket through to a German World War 2 tripod mounted MG42 machine gun.

For this aspect of the weekend, we were hosted by Greensleeves Shooting Club. The club host a limited number of Open Days for guests and they very kindly devoted one of these to support this Core Weekend, which event was very kindly facilitated by Guild Member, Bob Brunsdon. For this aspect of the weekend, we were joined by some members of the Western Front Association. Included in the programme was the firing of an SMLE (Short, Magazine, Lee Enfield) or 'Smelly' as it was known to the troops on the Western Front,) amongst many other weapons. We also had the chance to beat the world record set by Sergeant Major Jesse Wallingford in 1908 of scoring 36 hits on a 48-inch target at 300 yards.



A presentation on a wide range of historic weapons before participants familiarise themselves with them and fire some of them (thankfully with reduced-level gunpowder charges). Chris Finn managed 15 rounds, but then jammed one !

Reference was made to a complete novice at a previous Open Day who had managed to fire 14 rounds in one minute. Unfortunately, time constraints meant I had to leave mid-afternoon. I suspect no one managed to beat Sergeant Major Wallingford's record on this occasion.



## EVENTguide 2023

- 27-29 Jan - IGBG Annual Conference and AGM 2023
- 2-9 Mar - 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)
- 19-21 May Guild Event – Jersey Weekend - For further information see Guild website or contact Marc Yates on: [governance@gbg-international.com](mailto:governance@gbg-international.com)
- 11 Aug Guild Golf Championships - For further information please e-mail Graeme Cooper: [graeme@corporatebattlefields.com](mailto:graeme@corporatebattlefields.com)
- 18 Aug Badged Guides Dinner - For further information please e-mail Graeme Cooper: [graeme@corporatebattlefields.com](mailto:graeme@corporatebattlefields.com)
- 3-5 Nov Normandy Recce - For further information please contact Simon Burgess: [sfb22@hotmail.com](mailto:sfb22@hotmail.com)

Whilst there is a full programme of events planned for next year, we are still encouraging members to organise localised events. Help in planning any event is available from David Harvey [events@gbg-international.com](mailto:events@gbg-international.com)

# SOME THINGS ARE MEANT TO BE ... BUT PERHAPS NOT YET

Paul Oldfield

Eugenie Brooks' uplifting article in the last edition of *'Despatches'*, about returning an inscribed shell case to the granddaughter of the original owner, reminded me of a named battlefield artifact buried in a drawer. It is a US WW2 dog tag, found in the mid-1980s in the Hürtgenwald near Aachen, Germany, an area heavily fought over in late 1944 and early 1945.



Coincidentally this was one of the war locations (Cold War that is) for an element of the signal regiment with which I was serving at the time. Forty years ago I had a metal detector and there was a surprising amount of WW2 battlefield debris lying around in some of the more remote forest locations. Lots of 'stuff' was found and some of it was reburied quickly. There was enough unexploded ordnance for an entire bomb doctors' conference, but that's another story.

Other members of the unit also had detectors and, during quiet periods on exercise, we would send everyone else Deolali Tap with the constant pings of finds. Most were the usual suspects, such as cartridge cases, spent bullets, grenade fly-off levers, shrapnel, copper driving bands, shell and mortar fuses etc. Occasionally something unusual would turn up, such as a gold signet ring (London hallmark 1943 but sadly unengraved) and forty-five Chinese cash coins, from which the term cash originates. What they were doing in a dripping wet and mosquito infested German wood remains a mystery. I suspect a soldier 'liberated' and then lost them. An American mess tin and other personal articles were found nearby, but I digress.

From the dog tag it is known that the owner, Kenneth C Kness, was a WW2 draftee. The number 33 indicates that he enlisted in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia or Washington DC. T43 is the year that he was inoculated for tetanus and O is his blood group. The 'P' bottom right indicates that he was Protestant. I found the dog tag on a bitterly cold and unpleasant Hürtgenwald day, similar to the conditions that the soldiers who fought there had to endure. It was found at the site of a medical aid post on the Kall Trail, near Vossenack, a location that will be known to guides who operate in that area. More information and photographs of the aid station can be found at - <http://home.scarlet.be/~sh446368/pics-kall-trail.html>

but such details were not available in the 1980s of course.

Subsequent research revealed that Kenneth Charles Kness was born on 12th April 1912 at Westmoreland, Pennsylvania to parents Rudolf Michael Kness (1885-1967) and Bertha Mae Sanders (1886-1931). Kenneth enlisted on 1st December 1942 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and served until 27th October 1945, when he was discharged at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. His intended address was 4637 Plummer Street, Lawrenceville, Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, I have been unable to identify his unit or any details of his wounds. Kenneth was living in Detroit, Michigan in June 1950. He never married or had any children and died on 11th March 1977 at Minneapolis, Minnesota, about eight years before I found his dog tag.

The US 28th Infantry Division was in the area of the aid post and two attempts to contact the divisional association in 2017 elicited no response. All of Kenneth's siblings (there were at least three) are dead. So far only a distant relative has been traced - Kenneth was, she believes, her maternal grandmother's uncle but please don't ask me what that relationship might be!

A Scott Wesley Kness, born in 1964, has been identified but his relationship to Kenneth is unknown. He appears to be a pianist and in 2011 was living at Verno, Pennsylvania. In 2017 he was traced to Borger, Texas but websites that might allow contact to be established are blocked to anyone outside the USA.

To say the least, this has been frustrating. I would be delighted to return the dog tag to a close relative, as Eugenie did with her shell case. But so far, despite the reach of modern communications etc, this has not proved possible. In the meantime, the dog tag sits in the desk drawer, out of sight but never out of mind.

## GUILDmerchandise

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 RETURN OF THE MARK V THE SYMBOLIC WW2 PANTHER TANK IS BACK IN TOWN

Phillipe Maree 



Mark V Panther tank in its place in Houffalize

I thought I would share my pictures with my fellow GBG Members and take the opportunity to remind the members we are here to help/support you if you are working/guiding in Southern Belgium (From Plugstreet to Eben-Emael, and from Waterloo to Bastogne).

So, back to my trip to the Houffalize, you may remember that tank was scheduled for some serious TLC in 2017. Finally, five years down the line and it is back. Meticulously restored, but not yet due for completion until spring 2023. The Houffalize Panther remains one of the most tangible symbols of the fierce and ultimately decisive fighting that took place in the Ardennes at the end of 1944.

The Panther also stands as a witness and reminder to the locals, of the dramatic events that took place in and around their town during the bitter winter of 1944-45. It has been an important part in the region's history ever since and indeed may have been part of the tour itineraries that some of you have guided in the past.

The Panther Ausf G tank, turret number 111, was built in 1942. It originally started its life with Panzer Regt I./24 and was later with Panzer.Regt I./16

Driving recently in the Ardennes for a group educational recce with a coach company from Hertfordshire, I visited Houffalize. The hotel we inspected is designed like a cruise ship in the middle of the forest, but of course I had to stop by (rude not to) to picture another (smaller) beast that had recently returned to lurk in the town.

(nicknamed Windhund or Greyhound) when it was finally knocked out. If tanks could talk then this 44-ton monster with its 75mm gun and two machine guns of 7.92 mm would certainly have some eye watering stories to tell. It took part in battles in France after D-Day. It retreated through Belgium and also took part in the Battle of Hürtgen Forest in September 44 before making its final foray in December '44... back in the Ardennes.

It first arrived into Houffalize on the 19th December and was tasked to defend a bridge. According to eyewitness accounts by veterans of the 116th Panzer Division and local residents, the tank fell over in the Ourthe River due to detonation pressure by dropped bombs and landed on its turret. The crew died because of the impact or wiretapped and drowned. It was finally recovered out of the river a few years later and the remains of the crew were discovered. I don't know (yet) where they are laid to rest.

During the German offensive, this strategic crossroads town situated north of Bastogne and south of Liège, right in the heart of the Ardennes, was indeed taken by the 'Boches'. After heavy shelling and allied bombing, the town was nearly reduced to

rubble. Out of 346 buildings existing, 268 were destroyed and 78 badly damaged. 190 civilians lost their lives and in total, 1440 victims were recorded as being directly affected by this encounter.

On 16th January, Patton's Third Army and Montgomery's forces were able to link up in the town. This made the Bulge smaller and the Germans were forced to retreat to the east.

As you can see on the pictures, the tank is now back in Place Roi Albert but it is still an ongoing project as the tracks need to be fitted, body-work properly painted and more...

- The first objective was to ensure its meticulous restoration. For that, the town has worked with several partners including the Bastogne Barracks and... a German specialist company called Krings in Waldsolms.
- The second was to ensure its rightful place as the centrepiece of an improved site. Installing a roof and surrounding structures to ensure its security. A new wooden barrack with information panels will be erected, just like the buildings that were once situated there in 1945 when bombardments destroyed 99% of the town.

Mayor of Houffalize Marc Caprasse explains: *"This is an opportunity to emphasize the way the city was first rebuilt in wood before the final constructions that can be seen today. This new memorial space will recount the story of a German Panther tank and its part in the battle, it will also improve the experience on site for tourists passionate about the Battle of the Bulge".*

Visitors will also be able to see a film shot after the bombardments showing Houffalize before, during and after the battle. Information panels will recount the events as they passed and personal artefacts recovered from the tank cockpit will also be displayed including a wallet, cigarette case and other artefacts". The site will open in the course of spring 2023.



Don't hesitate to email us ([info@walloniabelgiumtourism.co.uk](mailto:info@walloniabelgiumtourism.co.uk)) to order our free brochures on the subject. You can also read or download them free on <https://visitwallonia.be/memorial>

# GUILDevent

## Commando & Ranger Event 16-19th September 2022



The group at the Commando Memorial just outside the village of Spean Bridge on the road to Achnacarry the WW2 Commando Training Centre (CTC). Missing are Ian Mitchel (who gave a presentation on the 5th Rangers) and Andy Johnson's wife, Jo who scared us all by being voted best at silent killing with a Fairburn Sykes fighting knife. There's nothing to say this was due to being married to Andy and for the record-we have spoken to him since, so he is still alive! Despite the veterans' accounts of rain, more rain and infamous midges, the group were blessed with fine weather-it almost made you want to do the welcome run from Spean Bridge to Achnacarry in full kit (but there weren't enough ambulances). Some of the group stayed in local hotels in Spean Bridge which were used during the war (and looked like it) and some stayed on the Achnacarry estate itself which has accommodation along with a museum to the Cameron clan and its role as CTC during WW2.

Tim gave a presentation on the connection between the WW2 Army Commando units and the Guards division through the famous 'Jock Lewes' one of the 'apostles' of the wartime SAS. As way of thanks, he was used as a practice 'Rupert' demonstrating one of the many battle skills taught to the Commando's at Achnacarry-that of silent killing by Captains Fairburn and Sykes. Note the keen note taking by Jo Johnson and smile on her face! Other skills discussed at the estate training stands were survival (with all participants learning to light a fire using a spark and not matches), demolitions (with the group learning to make up a basic explosive charge) and the Tarzan arial confidence course along the river. Sue King kindly gave a presentation on the history of Scotland, the Clan and Scottish Culture which included famous Scottish dishes. This was fortunate and well timed as we were in the old station restaurant in Spean Bridge and were then able to understand what on earth we had just ordered to eat.



Participants also learnt (with the help of Terry Webb) what camouflage techniques the Commando's were taught using burnt cork and the issue face veil (some of you will remember these from the Cold War and yes, they are still issued). Terry has subsequently been offered a part in a 'Lord of the rings' movie! Other topics taught at CTC and discussed were cliff climbing, the 2nd Rangers and their mission to the Pointe du Hoc on D Day, the Royal Marine (RM) conversion to the Commando role, the development of Combined Operations, the uniforms, equipment and weapons of the Commando's and their final exercise of the opposed landing done under live fire. One veteran said the instructors were such good shots to get the rounds so close and yet just miss. However, Commando trainees did die during the course most of these either through drowning or being killed by the live fire during the opposed landing of the amphibious warfare phase.

The Clan and CTC museum on the Achnacarry estate. The stands used for the training during WW2 are clearly marked out across the estate and shown on a map which can be obtained from the museum. There is also a small shop selling Commando related items, books and DVD's. Other topics included on the event were the Commando raids carried out in Norway, on the coast of France, the channel islands and the Middle East and the leading personalities throughout Combined Operations and the Special Service Brigade.





*The group were given the opportunity to handle one of the Commando weapon systems, the Sten Gun. Alongside the weapons, they also learnt about the tactical shooting methods designed and taught by Fairburn and Sykes and that the Commando's were taught to be proficient on foreign weapon systems including the MG42, the MP40 and the P38 and Allied weapons such as the Thompson Sub Machine Gun, the Browning Automatic Rifle, the Colt 1911 Pistol and the Garand M1 Rifle.*



*In addition to the Commando related subjects, the group visited Glencoe where Tim gave a presentation on the Massacre there. There is a modern visitor centre at the site, with amazing views of the valley, mountains and their passes along with a memorial to the Clan in the local town (where the photo was taken). At this point the Group are still happy and more importantly-alive. Other Commando skills discussed were fieldcraft, tactical movement, physical training, land navigation and the future role of the RM Commandos and US Rangers. There was also the usual quiz night combined with dinner and prizes and a visit to a local waterfall called 'Wives Pool' or was it 'Witches Pool'?*

## GUILDawards

The International Guild of Battlefield Guides makes a number of awards which recognise the contributions made by members of the Guild to both the Guild and the craft of Battlefield Guiding. They are awarded at the Annual Dinner each year; owing to the pandemic, they had to be awarded virtually for the last two years, but we will revert to 'in-person' awards at the Dinner on January 28 next year.

Please send any last-minute nominations for the Old Bill Award and the Will Townend Award to the Secretary ([secretary@gbg-international](mailto:secretary@gbg-international)) as soon as possible.



### The Old Bill Award

Award Ethos The Old Bill Award goes to the Guild Member who habitually displays, to the benefit of the Guild, Old Bill's qualities of steadfastness and good humour, both in adversity and in times of good fortune. The trophy was donated by Tonie and Valmai Holt; the Award winner is chosen by the membership.

### The Nathaniel Wade Award

The Nathaniel Wade Award allows the Guild to publicly recognise the contribution of an individual, group or organisation associated with the Guild, who through their efforts has made a significant contribution to the craft of battlefield guiding and the wider Military History community. The Award winner is chosen by the Management Board.



### The Richard Holmes Award

The Award is given to Guild members who deserve recognition for their personal contribution to the improvement and further development of the Guild. The Award winner is chosen by the Chair of the Guild.

### The Will Townend Award

The award honours the memory of the late Will Townend, in particular his willingness to share his extensive technical knowledge of Artillery and his wider knowledge of battlefields in general with his fellow Battlefield Guides. Those nominated for the award are recognised as selfless members of the Guild who freely and unselfishly share their knowledge with their peers. The Award winner is chosen by the members of the Guild.



### The David Chandler Award

The award honours the memory of the late David Chandler the historian – in particular his research into military history and his academic contribution to a wider understanding of Napoleonic warfare. The Award winner is chosen by the Accreditation Director.

### The Last Stand

This is not a trophy, but forms part of the Guild's traditions: at the Annual Dinner, we remember, in silence those former members who are no longer with us, and are gathered 'at the Last Stand;' the tablepiece reflects this.



### Honorary Membership

The award of Honorary membership of the Guild entitles the recipient to life-long membership of the Guild at no cost to the individual. This level of membership is recognised in the Guild's Constitution.



*Dr Scott's Decanter*

## Save Talbot House

### Fundraising to keep historic WW1 soldier's club open

#### The Every Man's Club

In December 1915, British army chaplains founded a club in Poperinge, Flanders. Their goal was to create a home from home for over half a million weary and homesick troops that were in the area. Here, they could meet up with friends regardless of rank, have a cup of tea, write a letter home, enjoy a well-kept garden or play the piano. In the attic, a chapel offered some comfort and provided hope for the men who had to return to the trenches. The club was so successful that soon after the war, some 500 ToC.H. clubs sprang up throughout the Commonwealth.

Since the reopening of the club in 1931, it has served as a living museum where one can also stay the night. Every year, thousands of pilgrims and tourists find a warm home from home and a cup of tea, like the soldiers back then. It's an authentic British pearl from the war years. Last winter, work on a new permanent exhibition commenced.

In 'A House of People' countless new tales of our rich history are told linked to some 500 artefacts from our collection, most of these never having been shown to the public before.



#### Shut Up!

Since 1930, Talbot House has been owned by a small non-profit charity and run mostly by volunteers. The major investment in our new permanent exhibition, paid out of our own pocket, and the forced closure due to the corona outbreak, has left us without an income, which is no less than a financial nightmare. With cancellations till the autumn, we see our income fade away. A historic House of more than 250 years old requires almost constant maintenance and renovation. As things stand at the moment, it is going to be a struggle to make it till the end of the year.

When in the spring of 1918, our founding father Rev. Tubby Clayton was about to be evicted due to the advancing German forces, he didn't give in without a fight. Several eviction orders followed, to which he invariably replied "Shut up!", before he was eventually forced to set up a new club in a few huts in a meadow amongst the cows; incidentally, the hut he lived in is part of the new exhibition. Talbot House doesn't close quietly...

We certainly have no intention to throw in the towel easily these days. A new campaign has been launched to save the House. In the first few hours, some 6 000 EUR has been donated. The funds will help us to survive while we have to remain closed, keep the House in good shape and help us to bridge the gap till we have sufficient income from visitors and guests again. In exchange for a donation, we offer all sorts of rewards ranging from free overnights stays and story tours to free breakfasts and membership of our Talbotousian family.

#### The future

Just like after the liberation in 1944, we hope to welcome everyone once again after a period of forced closure, this time with a brunch guests can sign in on. Obviously no date can be set for now, but together

we can overcome this crisis. Talbot House has a lot of plans for the future still. Our new permanent exhibition needs to be officially opened, new story tours for groups and schools launched and a new virtual guided tour for individual visitors is in the pipeline.

In the meantime, we try to keep the club open 'virtually' with lots of films and stories of the House on our social media. That way, everyone around the world can enjoy the club.



We hope you too can help us convince people to support our appeal so that we can preserve this precious piece of heritage for future generations. We remain available for questions, photos and interviews. The crowdfund campaign can be found on GoFundMe.

Simon Louagie, Talbot House Manager  
simon@talbothouse.be 0032 496 38 54 50

## SOS FROM TOC.H.

### TALBOT HOUSE

EVERYMAN'S CLUB  
POPERINGHE & YPRES 1915-18.

€ 100,000 IS URGENTLY NEEDED

TO KEEP THIS HOME FROM HOME OPEN

MEMORIES

#StandwithTalbotHouse on [gofundme.com/f/save-talbot-house](https://gofundme.com/f/save-talbot-house)  
Further info on [info@talbothouse.be](mailto:info@talbothouse.be) or [www.talbothouse.be](http://www.talbothouse.be)

# MEDALguide

## The Distinguished Service Medal and A Local Hero

Instituted in 1914 the Distinguished Service Medal (DSM) was awarded to Petty Officers and ratings of the Royal Navy, NCOs and other ranks of the Royal Marines and all others holding corresponding ranks or positions in the naval forces. It was awarded for acts of bravery in the face of the enemy not sufficiently meritorious to make them eligible for the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal which had been instituted in 1855.

It was later extended to cover the Merchant Navy and the Army, WRNS and RAF personnel serving aboard ships in the Second World War. In 1993 following a review of gallantry awards it was replaced by the Distinguished Service Cross.

The Distinguished Service Cross was initially known as the Conspicuous Service Cross when it was instituted in 1901. This was initially awarded only to Warrant and subordinate officers of the Royal Navy. However, in 1914 it was renamed the Distinguished Service Cross and became open to all naval officers below the rank of Lt. Commander.



*Distinguished Service Cross*



*Distinguished Service Medal*

One of the most prolific winners of the DSM lived in my hometown of Looe. Alfred Mallet won the DSM three times during the Second World War. Here is his story:

Born at Klymiarven Cottage, Barbican Hill Looe in 1912, CPO. A Mallett was the son of a gardener and had a keen interest in horticulture himself. He went to school in Looe and at the age of twelve took extra work as a butcher in the Looe area of Shutta. But at fourteen he joined the Navy, saying he was a year older.

In 1937 he volunteered for the submarine service, and at the outbreak of war was serving on HMS Ursula as second coxswain. On 14th December 1939 Ursula was on patrol off the Elbe estuary and sighted the German cruisers Leipzig and Nürnberg, escorted by six destroyers. Both ships were returning to Kiel to undergo repairs, having been torpedoed and damaged by the submarine HMS Salmon on the 13th December.

Despite being in shallow waters, Ursula dived deep enough to remain undetected and closed on the cruisers. Upon surfacing, Ursula launched a close-range attack firing a spread of torpedoes, intending on sinking Nürnberg, but striking and sinking one of the escorts F9 instead before diving again to escape. It was for this attack that Mallett received his first DSM. It was a good day for Ursula's crew – the London Gazette of the 1st January 1940 records seven DSMs being awarded and Ursula's Commanding Officer Lt. Commander.

G.C. Phillips, being awarded the Distinguished Service Order and promoted.

From Ursula, Mallett went to HMS Una, a U Class submarine which came into service in September 1941 and spent most of her career operating in the Mediterranean from early 1942. In that year she sank the Italian

tanker Luciana, the Italian fishing vessel Maria Immacolata, and the Italian merchants Ninetto G. and Petrarca. She also damaged two sailing vessels and the Italian merchant Cosala. On the night of 11/12 August 1942 Una also disembarked a commando group on the shores of Catania, Sicily. Their objective was to attack an airfield in support of operation Pedestal, but after blowing up the electrical power lines between Syracuse and Catania, the group was taken prisoner.

For these actions, the London Gazette of 22nd December 1942 records that, as coxswain of Una, he received a bar to his medal.

In 1943 he transferred to HMS Tuna when Una's CO (Lt Desmond Samuel Royce Martin) took command of the submarine. It wasn't unusual for a CO to be able to take some of his best previous ship's company to a new command - and Mallett would certainly be one likely to be in that category.

Mallett was mentioned in dispatches after Una, on four war patrols in home waters, sank three German U-boats in fourteen days during November 1943.

During 1945, CPO Mallett, now coxswain of the new submarine HMS Terrapin saw action off Batavia in the Far East, and it was then that he perhaps had his finest hour. On the 19th May 1945 while attacking an escorted tanker, Terrapin was depth charged by escort vessels. Despite depth charges being discharged at ten-minute intervals for seven hours in some sixty feet of water, Mallett managed to manoeuvre the submarine clear of the enemy under the cover of darkness. However, Terrapin was extensively damaged during the action.

With the assistance of the American submarine



*Alfred Mallett, CPO*

USS Cavalla, Terrapin was escorted and returned to Fremantle, Australia where the damage was such that she had to be written off. As a result of his actions Mallett received a second bar to his DSM. In total, he made three visits to Buckingham Palace where he collected his honours from King George VI. He was one of only three men to win the DSM three times during the Second War.

After the war he became a submarine escape instructor, and later the coxswain of the Plymouth

Chief of Staff's barge – the official launch used to take the Chief to the ships and the dockyard (and shore establishments if they had a jetty) on official business. In 1960 he was awarded a clasp to his long service and good conduct medal previously awarded in 1945. This was presented to him by Admiral Sir John Moore. Sir John gave the medal to CPO Mallett saying he was the 'only man he knew worthy of giving it to'.

Alfred died in 1985 and is buried in Truro. Alfred Mallett is also commemorated at Clyde submarine base where an accommodation block is named after him.

**Tony Smith**

# LIKE A BRAZEN WALL: THE 12th REGIMENT OF FOOT AT THE BATTLE OF MINDEN

Ewan B Carmichael

**Minden is rightly celebrated by the British Army regiments that fought in the battle, but it has sadly faded within national memory. Why is this battle from more than 250 years ago such an important part of the identity and heritage of those regiments that fought, and why does it deserve to be more widely studied?**



*“When we got about a hundred yards from the enemy, a large body of French cavalry galloped boldly down upon us: these our men, by reserving their fire until they came within thirty yards, immediately ruined.” Lieutenant Montgomery, 12th Regiment of Foot. Illustration by Patrice Courcelle (C) Helion and Company*

## BACKGROUND TO THE CAMPAIGN AND BATTLE

The Battle of Minden was fought on 1 August 1759, in the middle of the Seven Years War. So, think of red coats, three-cornered hats and the flintlock, ‘Brown Bess’, Long Land Pattern Musket. During this war, Britain was allied with Hanover, Prussia and

a few other North German States. Opposing them were just about everyone else: France, Austria, Russia, Saxony, Sweden.

From a British point of view, the war was successfully fought in many colonies which were to become vital parts of the British Empire (North America, India, parts of the Caribbean) around the

globe, at sea, and in North-West Europe. Minden was part of the latter. At stake were the security of those colonies, the freedom of the seas and to trade, and the protection of Hanover. The reader is reminded that the British King, George II, was also the Elector of Hanover.

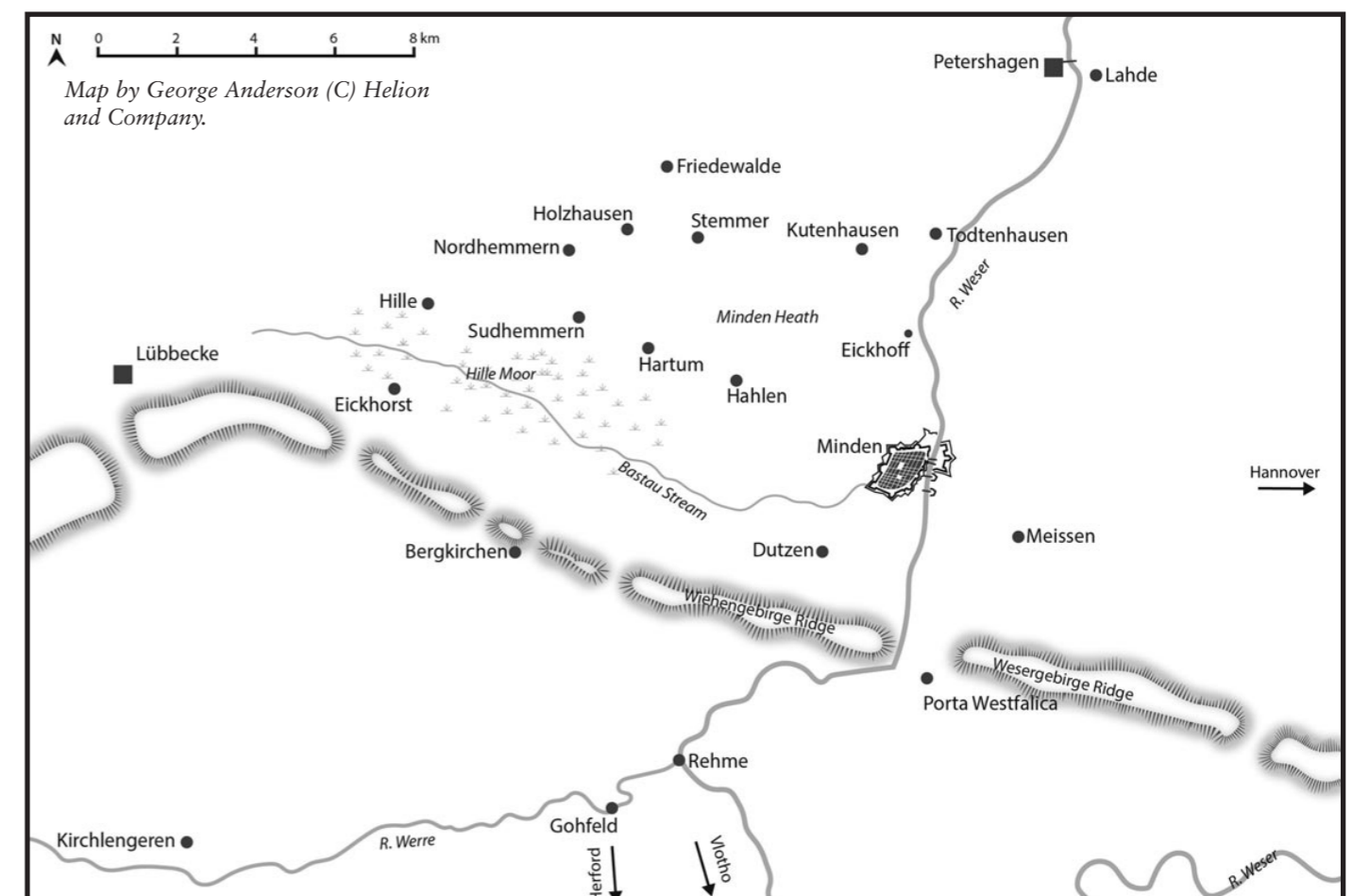
An allied force of British and Germans had been put together in north Germany in 1757 with the main aim of protecting Hanover from the French, but also with the additional benefit of protecting King Frederick II of Prussia's back as he concentrated in dealing with the Austrians and Russians. This ‘Army of Observation’, under the King's son, the Duke of Cumberland, which was intended principally as a deterrent, had all of the challenges of modern day peace-keepers when the other parties are determined not to observe the peace.

The French were intent on transiting German territory to attack Frederick, and suggested that Cumberland could permit that, but Cumberland refused. He attempted to defend Hastenbeck, near Hameln, and despite having the potential to win (he inflicted greater casualties on the French), he withdrew from the field. Hastenbeck was one of those odd engagements where both sides ought to have performed better, but victory went to the side with stronger morale and which refused to be beaten. Ultimately, Cumberland was obliged to surrender

near Hamburg. Under the Treaty of Kloster Zeven, his Army was dissolved and he returned home to face his father's anger.

George, as King of Britain, overturned his son's treaty and resumed hostilities. A fresh commander was found: Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, Frederick's brother-in-law. He reassembled and reinvigorated the allied army, and conducted a bold campaign of manoeuvre, which ranged across north Germany. Encouraged by his success in 1758, the British agreed to reinforce him, and also to begin amphibious raiding of the north French coast. In August 1758, a British contingent of six regiments of cavalry, six battalions of infantry (including the 12th Regiment of Foot, with its dark yellow facings) and supporting artillery disembarked at Emden and made its way south to join Ferdinand at Coesfeld, overwintering at Münster.

Ferdinand had the gift of spotting opportunities where other commanders might see only hostile threats. However, when the scales tipped the other way, those threats could become real. He was now opposed by two French armies, which outnumbered him, working in concert and they were able to get in behind him, capturing Minden in a bold raid in which parties of French hussars swam the River Weser and gained entry into the rear of the fortress.



THE FRENCH IN POSSESSION OF MINDEN

The significance of Minden was that it was a fortified town and supply depot at a key point on the Weser, only 60 kilometres from Hanover. It was able to dominate the main route east towards Hanover, but also control river traffic. It occupied a strongly defensible position, with a ridge to the south. The Bastau stream drained a marsh from the west of the town into the Weser. To the north-west of the town was Minden Heath, with a network of small farming villages, and it was here that the Battle of Minden would be fought.

The two French armies consolidated their position, garrisoning the fortress. The larger of the two French armies, under de Contades, occupied rising slopes to the south of Minden, around Dutzen, protected to its rear by the ridge and to its front by the Bastau stream. The other French army, under de Broglie, became absorbed into Contades’ army as a subordinate Corps. It occupied ground to the east of the Weser but was able to communicate or reinforce the main army across the Weser via the main town bridge, but also by several pontoons which the French now threw across.

For Prince Ferdinand, the dilemma was that he was outnumbered, that the French were now between him and the capital which he was meant to protect, and that the French were in a very strong position.

He was unlikely to successfully attack the French in such strong positions and yet he could not allow them to threaten Hanover at their leisure. So, he recognised that he had to simultaneously entice and threaten them. To do the former, he planned to provide them with a target which they would be unable to resist. For the latter, he decided to attack their lines of communication, which ran southwards, through the gap in the ridge through which the River Weser flows. In doing so, he hoped to draw off, and defeat, some of the French forces.

He detached a force under the Hereditary Prince of Brunswick, confusingly another Ferdinand, which made its way through to the south of the ridge, driving in French patrols. This had the desired effect, causing Contades to despatch a force under the Duke de Brissac, towards Gohfeld, to protect their lines of communication. The Hereditary Prince successfully attacked de Brissac at exactly the same time as the Battle of Minden took place to the north of the ridge.

Returning now to the events on Minden Heath, in the days of July, Ferdinand began to spread his forces deliberately thinly in the hope that the French would spot this vulnerability. He brought his army down from the north and began to deploy it onto Minden Heath. In particular, he left a detached corps under General von Wangenheim, seemingly slightly isolated at Todtenhausen. He then encamped his main body

between Nordhemmern and Friedewalde, roughly five kilometres distant.

He anticipated that this obvious dislocation of his own force would tempt Contades to leave the security of his own positions but, to attack, Contades would be obliged to cross the obstacle of the Bastau stream. If Ferdinand could catch the French with only a portion of their army across and astride the Bastau, he would have a significant advantage. His dispersed forces effectively occupied a quadrant to the North-West of Minden. If they were to march forwards towards Minden, they would converge on the heath, concentrating their force. However, such a gamble required precise timing and early warning. To achieve this, he posted picquets in many of the villages on the heath. His own Headquarters was established at Hille and elements of the 12th of Foot were posted there to provide security.

By 29 July, the trap was set. In all there were about 76,000 troops within a 10 kilometre radius.

MINDEN - FORCES INVOLVED			
TOTAL: ~76,000 (Compares with capacity of Old Trafford)			
	Squadrons	Battalions	Guns
French	79	79	162
Contades	63	55	
Broglie 16	24		
Allies	62	43	106+
Ferdinand	43	27	
Wangenheim	19	16	

PLANS AND ORDERS

Both commanders issued their orders. Contades’ plan was to bring de Broglie’s Corps across the Weser after dark to pass through the town, to reinforce it, and to use it as his ‘main effort’ to strike at von Wangenheim’s isolated Corps at Todtenhausen in order to dominate the allies’ left flank. The attack was to be rapid and intense, to drive Wangenheim backwards, cutting him off from the rest of the allies. As a distraction from the main attack by Broglie, a small diversionary attack by four battalions across a causeway towards Ferdinand’s headquarters at Hille was planned. At the same time, and in concert with these, Contades’ main body would cross the Bastau stream on portable wooden bridges under darkness, and manoeuvre onto Minden Heath to Broglie’s left. Further left still, and effectively holding the ring along the line of villages just to the north of the Bastau marsh, would be four brigades of infantry, supported by a further 13 battalions of Saxon infantry which had transferred their allegiance to France.

Ferdinand’s plan was for his main force to advance from its spread-out encampments which were on the

circumference of an arc around Minden. Having enticed the French out of their own defensive positions, and by advancing as the French were emerging, he would converge and concentrate his force. On orders, his main force would move out of its bivouacs and march rapidly in eight converging columns. His third column from the right, under the Hanoverian, von Spörcken was made up of the six battalions of British Foot, with two of Hanoverian Guards. When it shook out into battle lines, it would deploy with Major General Waldegrave’s Brigade in the first line, with the 12th on the extreme right. In the second line was Major General Kingsley’s Brigade and then the two battalions of Hanoverians.

The first column, from the right was a large body of Horse, 24 Squadrons, both British and German, under Sackville, the overall commander of the British contingent. The second column included British heavy artillery. The remaining five columns were principally German.

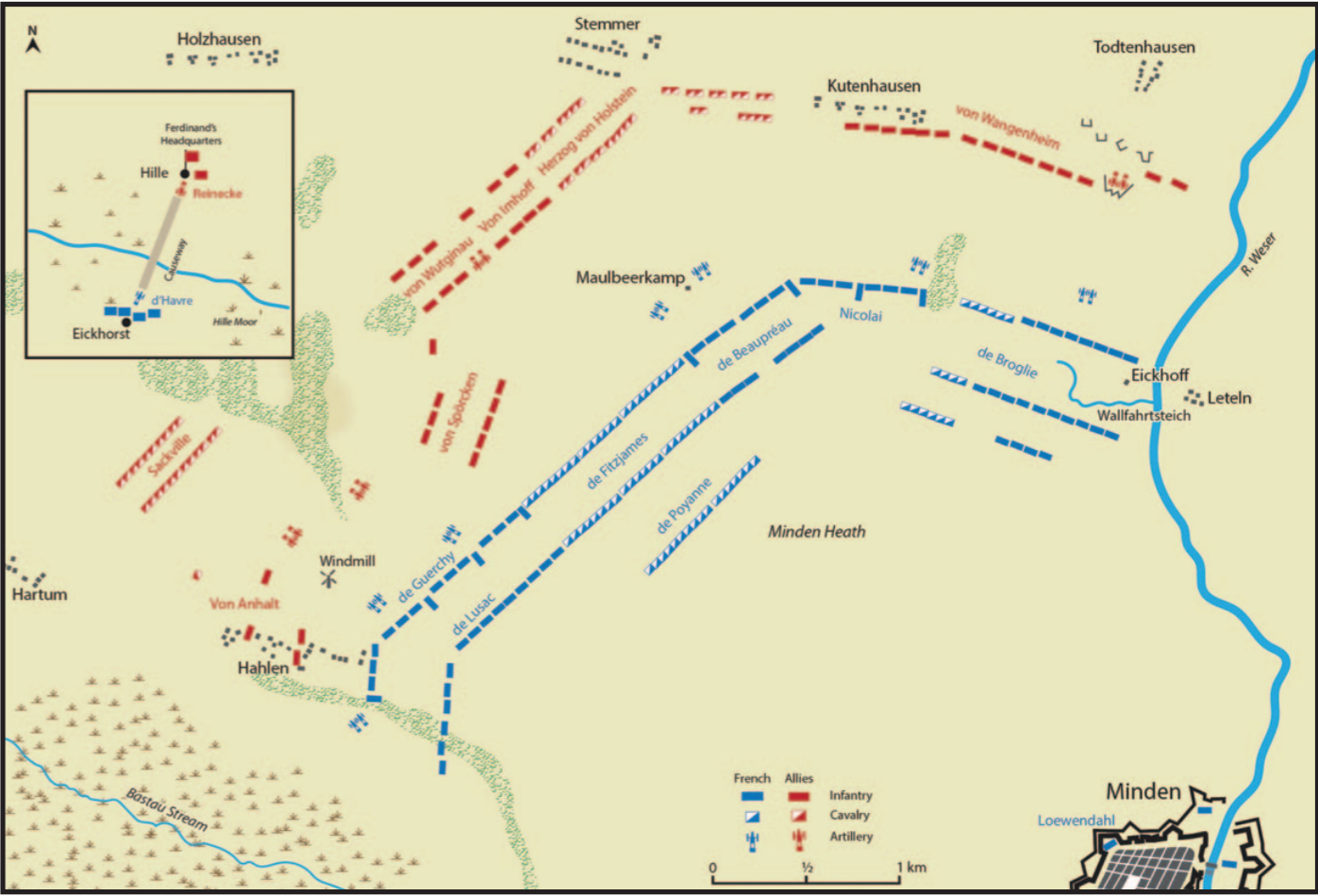
Ferdinand directed that his officers were to familiarise themselves with the ground, ensuring that they knew the routes to be followed, so that his whole army, currently rather dispersed, could concentrate its force quickly. They were to focus on the area between Hahlen and Stemmer, and remove obstacles and cut openings in hedges to facilitate their advance.

Ferdinand’s plan must have been clear in his own mind, but we have no record of the effects he wanted from his troops. As far as we can tell, he omitted to mention that he believed that he had provided sufficient temptation for the French main effort to be directed against Wangenheim’s Corps at Todtenhausen.

For Ferdinand’s plan to succeed, it was vital that prompt warning of French movement should trigger the rapid concentration on Minden Heath. Accordingly, he urged all of his forces, and especially his picquets in the villages on the heath, to be on the alert. He received intelligence that the French were likely to break out on the night of 31 July, and issued orders that his army was to be under arms and ready to move from 1:00am.

As the allies waited, the French began to move after last light. However, a sudden gale blew up, masking the noise of French movement. That the French were able to get up to 48,000 men, horses and guns out of their bivouacs, across their obstacles in the dark and formed up on their start lines on Minden Heath must be a tribute to French staffwork, preparation and organisation.

At about 1:00am, two French deserters were captured by the British 37th Foot near Hartum and bundled off to the allied General Officer of the Day, the Prince of Anhalt. However, for some inexplicable reason, two valuable hours were lost before Ferdinand was informed that the entire French Army was



Map by George Anderson (C) Helion and Company

manoeuvring. As soon as he received the information, Ferdinand ordered his army to ‘turn out accoutred’ and to march forward along its pre-identified routes. The British 20th Foot was reported to have formed up and marched off in under eight minutes, leaving its camp and baggage in situ.

## THE BATTLE OF MINDEN

Shortly after 3:00am, the French began the planned diversionary attack and bombardment towards Ferdinand’s headquarters at Hille, but Ferdinand had stationed a battalion of Brunswickers with some guns to block the causeway over the marsh.

Ferdinand’s immediate concern was the security of the village of Hahlen, where he intended to anchor his right flank. To his horror, he learned that the French Brigade Champagne (*and how is that for a splendid formation title!!*) had beaten him to it and was already infiltrating the village. He ordered the Prince of Anhalt to bring forward the allied picquet from Hartum and drive them out at all costs. After a hesitant start, this attack was put in in the nick of time, forcing the leading French infantry to withdraw, but firing some of the farm buildings and leaving behind some dead and wounded.

As dawn broke at about 4.30am, it would have been possible to see smoke rising to the East, around Todtenhausen. So Ferdinand’s Army was engaged simultaneously at 3 points; at Hille, at Hahlen and at Todtenhausen.

Broglie, reinforced as the French Main Effort, had 16 sqns and 24 bns. He opposed Wangenheim’s Corps of 18 Sqn, 15 bns and an arty brigade.

The leading troops of Broglie’s Corps bounced Wangenheim’s sentries about 30 minutes before dawn. After an initial exchange of fire, Wangenheim’s picquets withdrew. For some inexplicable reason, rather than exploit their initial success, the French settled down to bombard Wangenheim’s forward posts rather than press home. Perhaps this was because it wasn’t yet fully light. On the German side, after a slightly dilatory start, Wangenheim made up for lost time and marched his force forward to his allocated deployment positions.

By the time it was fully light, Broglie could now see an enemy Corps advancing towards him. Having paused to allow the supporting brigade to arrive on his left, Broglie assumed that the forward movement of Wangenheim’s Corps was a full-blown counter-attack, rather than simply a move to occupy positions. Broglie halted his force

in order to repel what he assumed to be an attack in strength. The French main effort had faltered.

Back towards the allied right, after 5:00am, the action to clear the French from Hahlen had its effect, allowing two British artillery batteries, under Captains Drummond and Foy to go into action about 300 metres north-west of Hahlen, suppressing French batteries beyond the village.

Much is made of the French having cavalry in their centre but, in truth, both armies had Horse in their centre, expecting to sweep east in support of the engagement at Todtenhausen.

Between 6.30 and 7:00am, Spörcken’s column had shaken out into two lines, each of three ranks, passing through a line of fir trees and onto the heath. Seeing that it was getting ahead of the remainder of the allied army, Ferdinand sent a message which was received by the 2nd line, that, when the time came, they were to ‘advance with drums beating and attack whatever they might encounter’. For whatever reason, this was interpreted by Spörcken’s Division as an instruction to carry on, so the advance was resumed, ahead of the allied army.

As the British and Hanoverians emerged from the strip wood, a large body of enemy Horse could be seen about 1,000 metres away. This was the first line of French Horse under FitzJames. From the French perspective, Spörcken’s redcoats must have looked exposed, especially as no formed body had yet appeared between them and Hahlen.

The recommencement of the advance must have surprised Ferdinand, who again attempted to halt it, to no avail. However, at this point, on the French side, Contades sent word over to Broglie to halt his advance on the French right wing, while FitzJames dealt with the bizarre manoeuvre by the allies in the centre.



*Photograph of Minden Heath, looking south-south-east towards the ridge. The gap in the ridge, towards the left of the picture, is the ‘Minden Gap’, through which the River Weser flows. Minden town lies just below the gap, but cannot be properly seen in this image. The road stretching away from the viewer gives a fair approximation of the line of Spörcken’s column, while the road running to the left provides a good impression of the axis of advance. (Author’s collection).*

## THE 12th FOOT IN THE HEART OF THE BATTLE

The lines of Spörcken’s Division came under fire from 60 French artillery pieces in the vicinity of Hahlen. The two flank battalions, the 12th and 20th Foot, suffered the most, but the advance continued. Lieutenant Thompson of the 20th Foot wrote from hospital afterwards, *“I saw heads, legs and arms taken off every minute”*.

Lieutenant Montgomery of the 12th, described the effect of the fire in a letter written just days after the battle:

*“It was the most disagreeable march I ever had in my life, for we advanced through a most furious fire from an infernal battery of eighteen pounders, which was at first upon our front, but as we proceeded, bore upon our flank, and last upon our rear... At the beginning of the action I was almost knocked off my legs by my three right hand men, who were killed and drove against me by a cannon ball, the same also killed two men close to Ward, whose post was in the rear of my platoon and in this place I will assure you that he behaved with the greatest bravery.... I had almost forgot to tell you that my spontoon was shot through a little below my hand: this disabled it, but a French one now does duty in its room”*.

Montgomery was actually struck by three musket balls, but they must have been at the limit of their range, or were fired with poor charges of powder, because he only suffered bruising and swelling.

The order was given to 12 French cavalry squadrons under the Marquis de Castries to attack – over 1,000 horsemen. The charge was built up from the trot, galloping at the last moment.

It was vital for the infantry to hold its nerve. The order was given to halt, the first rank knelt and the other two closed up, locked like a phalanx. The order was given to fire at about 40m range; crashing out and bringing down horses and riders. The effect must have been awful with dead and dying horses and riders. The charge was ruined, but still with the capacity to kill, by the momentum of tumbling horseflesh. Within the infantry, the order was given to reload. Sergeants would order men forward to plug holes in the ranks,

FitzJames ordered his second line to attack, 22 squadrons under du Mesnil. Despite the obstacles caused by the destruction of the first attack to their front, they nevertheless managed to raise a charge.

Another tremendous volley crashed out, bringing down men and horses. Before the French could organise another charge, the drums beat out and the lines of redcoats stepped off again.

The advance rendered Spörcken’s column even more vulnerable, this time to Guerchy’s infantry on

the French left wing. He ordered 8 battalions forward to engage. This was a vulnerable moment, but Waldegrave could see the risk and ordered the 12th and 37th Foot to refuse their right flank, presenting a greater number of musket barrels towards the enemy.

A musketry battle ensued and, despite the inaccuracy of the individual weapon, at close range and against a massed target, it was murderous. Gradually though, the superiority of British musketry told, and Guerchy’s Foot melted away, leaving dead and dying.

However, rather like the curtains opening onto a stage, this revealed a greater threat, thirteen battalions of Saxon infantry, including a regiment of Grenadiers. Montgomery calls them, *‘as fine and terrible-looking fellows as I ever saw’*. He also describes them as having ‘rifles’, with superior range, which the British had to advance through in order to be able to engage<sup>1</sup>. The British drove them off, but they reformed just out of normal musket range, so the 12th and 37th had to repeat the performance again, with success.

By this stage, Spörcken’s second line had come forward, so his Division was now effectively one long line. At about this point, we meet Lieutenant Thompson of the 20th again who, having been lightly wounded three times, was now seriously hurt by a ball which burned ‘like a red hot iron’. At the limit of endurance and, with no other officer available to stand in for him, he was permitted to fall out and seek treatment. The Brigade Commander Kingsley’s horse had been fatally wounded in four places and collapsed, trapping him to be twice advanced over by the enemy.

As an indication of the intensity of this phase, the roll call of the 12th Foot shows that the battalion could later muster only 4 officers and 13 files of unwounded men.

At this point, the French launched their cavalry reserve: eighteen squadrons of the elite Gendarmes de France and Carabiniers, under de Poyanne.

Ferdinand saw the vulnerability of his line and ordered forward Hanoverian formations and 30 heavy guns to support ‘the six English regiments who had behaved like a brazen wall’, from the left.

## SUPPORT FROM THE GERMANS

The two thousand horsemen of the French reserve couldn’t achieve a frontal charge, so they worked around towards the left of Spörcken’s Division and, just as they were about to crash into the tattered regiments, the Hanoverian artillery opened up on them. In places the line was pierced briefly, but those cavalrymen who had achieved that and wheeled to attack from the rear, found themselves trapped

<sup>1</sup> The account of a portion of the enemy having rifles is controversial. Some modern authorities do not believe that the French used rifles. However, France’s Saxon allies had conducted a trial of rifles amongst its dragoons, and Saxon dragoons could be employed as grenadiers when dismounted. From the author’s perspective it is important to remember that the source, Lt Montgomery, was actually there, unlike any modern authority!!

between the rear rank which turned about to engage and the oncoming Hanoverians and Hessians.

The line had wavered, but it had held – just. The moral effect of having repelled the French cavalry now left the French vulnerable to rout. This would have been the ideal time for Sackville’s cavalry to strike, but there was no sign of them.

Contade’s Centre still had eight battalions of infantry of Beaupreau’s Corps to the south of Maulbeerkamp. Contades sent a rapid order for them to attack the allied foot, but this took place, exactly as Imhoff’s column was also coming forward, and the momentum was very much in the Allies’ favour. Four battalions of Imhoff’s Hessians came forward at the double and put in a spirited charge before Beaupreau’s Brigades could deploy fully, forcing them back at bayonet point.

At this moment, the Duke of Holstein’s 8th column of nineteen cavalry squadrons arrived from Stemmer, swirling around and driving the French Foot back onto the remnants of their own cavalry. A further eight French battalions remained uncommitted under St Germain, but they were to face a fresh threat from Wangenheim who had now come forward from Todtenhausen. Just as St Germain’s two brigades began to move forward, they were met by the battalions on Wangenheim’s Right.

The French Centre was dissolving and panic now communicated itself through the French remnants. The army began to lose confidence and stream rearwards. Contades ordered a general withdrawal, but it was already happening without orders. Broglie directed his Corps to act as rearguard, which it did, retiring back under the safety of Minden’s garrison guns by about 10:00am.

## SACKVILLE’S CAVALRY

There had been several opportunities for Lord George Sackville’s twenty-four squadrons of British and German cavalry to intervene from the allied right. Ferdinand’s aim had been for Sackville’s column to move in concert with the rest of the army.

The cavalry had received an order to move out at 4.45am. At 5.30am, the cavalry was formed up and mounted, but waiting for Lord George. His Second-in-Command, the Marquis of Granby supervised the turning out and preparation, and then went to Sackville’s headquarters to fetch him. On his arrival, Sackville had ordered the force to move off at a walk. He was met by a guide and, despite his relatively tardy start, reached his Forming Up Point before Sporcken’s column passed through the strip wood. The Cavalry then deployed into 2 lines.

One of Ferdinand’s ADCs arrived with orders to move through some trees to the left, and to form behind Kingsley’s Brigade to support the advance,

but Sackville seems to have assumed it was just a preparatory order. Then another messenger arrived, who emphasised that the order was to be obeyed immediately, and by all the cavalry.

Sackville ordered the Horse to draw swords, and then led them off to the right rather than the left. As he was doing this, another messenger, Lieutenant Colonel Fitzroy, arrived and attempted to instil yet more urgency, but said that it was only the British, of a mixed force of British and Hanoverians, who were to move.

Sackville insisted that the three messengers repeat and clarify their orders. Fitzroy, who outranked the other messengers, insisted that the French were in disarray and that the ‘English’ cavalry could earn distinction. The key was that the infantry needed support, and urgently. Even fourteen squadrons would have had an effect.

Ferdinand was deeply anxious, having sent two gallopers to hasten Sackville, stating, “*When is the cavalry coming? Good God! Is there no way of getting the cavalry to advance?*” Instead, Sackville rode forward through the belt of trees to seek clarification from Ferdinand himself. Fitzroy led at the gallop, while Sackville approached at a more controlled pace.

For Ferdinand, this was the last straw. He directed Fitzroy to seek out Sackville’s second-in-command, the Marquis of Granby and bring on the 2nd Echelon, bursting out in exasperation, “*At least he’ll obey me!*”. Granby rapidly grasped the situation and quickly set the 2nd line in motion, but he had to manoeuvre round the stationary 1st line.

Sackville trotted up to Ferdinand and asked what his orders meant. Ferdinand’s response was controlled and restrained, “*My Lord, the opportunity is now passed*”. Turning back, Sackville saw Granby’s line coming forward but ordered him to halt, to restore the original order of march. After a long, unnecessary delay, the twenty four squadrons were formed into one long line at the start point of Spörcken’s advance but, by now, the infantry was long gone and their backs could be seen in the distance. Rather than turn a victory into a rout, Sackville’s Cavalry had been kept pristine, to the immense frustration of its regimental commanders.

By 11:00am, the bulk of the French were back across the Bastau and one Allied artilleryman saw them make their escape up the hills, ‘like a flock of sheep’, and expressed amazement at not seeing the Cavalry pursue them.

## THE AFTERMATH OF BATTLE

Contades called a Council of War. Rather than withdrawing down through the Minden Gap, because of the disaster at Gohfeld, Contades opted to

escape to the opposite bank of the Weser, destroying two pontoon bridges behind him, so there was no rapid pursuit.

The French were forced to retreat southwards to Kassel and then westwards towards Frankfurt, before falling into a passive lull for the rest of the year, and they were not successful in venturing back to Hanover for the remainder of the war.

For the Allies, in the immediate aftermath of the battle, they advanced towards fortress Minden, stooping just short of artillery range. An officer and a trumpeter were sent to demand the fortress’s surrender, which was declined until the following day, when the garrison left along with the main French Army.

There was the imperative to reorganise and to collect the wounded. With as many as one thousand live casualties, the Regimental Surgeons would have had their hands full. A main Field Hospital was set up in Minden itself. The spot at Wallfahrtsteich where Broglie had been repelled by Wangenheim’s Corps was thick with dead and wounded. The dead were collected and buried in mass graves, with as many as two thousand local peasants being pressed for the task.

Orders were issued for a service of thanksgiving on the 2nd, followed by a ‘Feu de Joie’.

French losses are hard to quantify but the best figures seem 7,086 killed and wounded on the field, and 1,533 possibly found when the allies entered Minden. Many were drowned fleeing through the Bastau. What is certain is that the French lost six Generals and four hundred and thirty eight other officers killed and wounded. The French Cavalry lost 28% of its strength. Of the Infantry, the Regiment de Touraine lost 909 killed, wounded and prisoners from an effective strength of 1,230. The Saxons also suffered heavily, losing 33% of their strength, with their commander, the Comte de Lusace, being wounded.

For the Allies, there were almost 2,800 casualties. The British furnished half that figure, with 1,400.

Both British right flank battalions of the two brigades suffered the most. The 12th Foot experienced the highest casualty rate at 56% of its strength (202 casualties (98 killed and 104 wounded)). This figure includes the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel William Robinson, who was wounded. The 20th had a higher actual number at 321 casualties, but it had fielded more men on the day.

In the Order of the Day following the battle, the 20th Foot was actually taken out of the line, ‘that, because of its severe losses, it should cease to do duty’, a measure to which the Regiment refused to submit, resuming at its own request its place in the line.

It would be appropriate to consider the fate of Sackville. There was puzzlement in the allied ranks

about the non-appearance of Sackville’s cavalry. Ferdinand had kept the worst of his anger with Sackville under control during the battle but, when he occupied Minden, he issued a Special Order of the Day, in which he publically thanked most, but not all, of his subordinates. He praised Granby, stating that if he’d had him at the head of the cavalry on the right wing, the decision of the day would have been more complete and brilliant.

Sackville was mortified by his omission and canvassed Ferdinand to alter his order, to no avail, but Ferdinand formally asked George II for Sackville’s removal. News of the victory had reached London on 8 August and it was reported that every street had two bonfires.

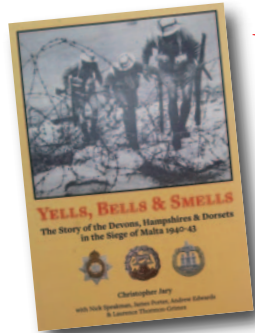
Meanwhile, the King issued an order for Sackville’s recall. Sackville applied for Court-Martial before he could be dismissed from the Army. A warrant was issued on 26 January 1760, that Sackville had disobeyed Ferdinand, a capital offence. The trial lasted 6 weeks and conflicting views of Sackville’s conduct emerged. He was pronounced guilty and, whilst not executed, adjudged unfit to serve His Majesty in any capacity whatsoever. Sackville’s name was erased from the Privy Council and his disgrace was published in the Order Book of every Regiment of the British Army.

## REASONS TO VISIT MINDEN AND TO CELEBRATE MINDEN DAY

Minden is a great battle to examine for so many reasons: leadership, command and control, communications, understanding terrain, manoeuvre, deception, concentration of force, mutual support, discipline and so on. Apart from all of the lessons about clarity of intent and of orders, and operating multinationally, there is so much to be inspired by in terms of fighting spirit: the 12th of Foot refused to be beaten!! The effectiveness of British musketry was to become famous and feared. Additionally, it makes for a very good battlefield study because the earlier battle of Hastenbeck and the important parallel battle of Gohfeld are also within easy reach. The Royal Anglians were stationed in Minden during the Cold War, so perhaps a battlefield study also offers a good excuse to revisit old haunts.

Ewan B Carmichael. Author of *‘Like a Brazen Wall: The Battle of Minden, 1759, and its Place in the Seven Years War’* (Helion & Company), ISBN 978-1-913336-58-5.

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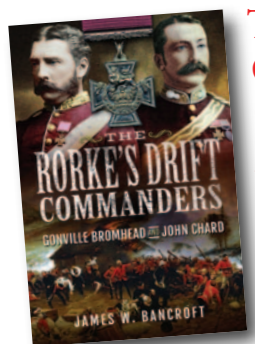
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The final 100 days of fighting on the Western Front are often glossed over, or at best distilled into a few pages of most WW2 histories. This habitual oversight has done great disservice to those combatants and civilians that were embroiled in some of the most bitter battles during the twilight weeks of the war. Peter Caddick-Adam's new history has completely rectified this shortfall in our understanding of this dark period of history. Compelling, definitive, and completely absorbing – immerse yourself in this latest tome!

Review by Mike Peters

Published by Hutchinson & Heinemann  
RRP £30.00  
hardback, pp652



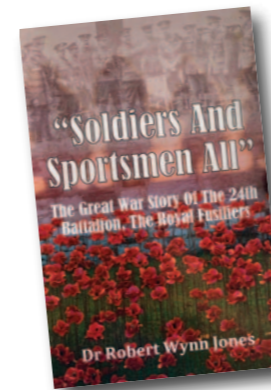
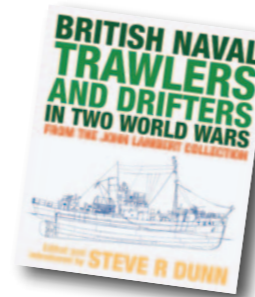
## BRITISH NAVAL TRAWLERS AND DRIFTERS IN TWO WORLD WARS

By Steve R Dunn

This superbly presented volume comes under the heading 'niche' and there are probably few guides who would have recourse to the information it contains. It is however, difficult to ignore such a richly illustrated and carefully researched book that illuminates a relatively obscure subject, the role the fishing fleet and fishermen in naval service during both world wars. Steve Dunn is credited as the editor of the volume but he has done far more in concisely telling the story of the auxiliary fleets of fishing vessels and the men who served in them. The book has primarily been published as a show case for the late High Lambert's outstanding technical diagrams of converted trawlers, drifters and the equipment they utilised during their fight against submarines and mines of all types. It probably is not on everyone's 'to read' list but you will not be disappointed if you invest in this book.

Review by John Greenacre

Published by Seaforth Publishing  
RRP £35.00  
hardback, pp208



## "SOLDIERS AND SPORTSMEN ALL" The Great War story of the 24th Battalion, The Royal Fusiliers

By Dr Robert Wynn Jones

Bob Jones is a retired professional geologist and palaeontologist, as well as being a keen amateur historian specialising in all things connected with the history of the City of London. He runs an excellent website and blog [www.lostcityoflondon.co.uk/](http://www.lostcityoflondon.co.uk/) and so this interesting account of the 24th (2nd Sportsmen's) Battalion, The Royal Fusiliers is a definite step in a new direction for this author.

Dr Jones explains in his dedication that he had a family interest in writing this book; his maternal grandfather, Private Charles Reuben Clements served in the battalion until he suffered serious wounds at the Battle of Havrincourt on 12 September 1918 and spent the remainder of the war in hospitals in the United Kingdom, before returning to civilian life in 1919.

The Sportsmen's Battalions were an extension of the idea of the various 'Pals' Battalions of Kitchener's 'New Army', except that these men were not work or professional colleagues but instead were bound together by their love and proficiency at the chosen sports. These Sportsmen's Battalions were the brainchild of Emma Pauline Cunliffe-Owen, a remarkable woman of mixed Anglo-German parentage, who reputedly met two big-game hunters in London shortly after the outbreak of war and jokingly asked them why they had not enlisted. When they asked her in reply why she had not raised her own battalion, the idea stuck!

The 23rd (1st Sportsmen's) Battalion had been raised in September 1914 and had quickly become over-subscribed, leading to the formation of the 24th (2nd Sportsmen's) Battalion during the following November. As the Battalion's title suggests, the vast majority of the recruits came from a sporting background, or could at least shoot or ride.

The author explains that there were three professional footballers amongst the recruits – Sergeant Adams of Southend United and Fulham, Serjeant Arthur Evans of Manchester City, Blackpool and Exeter City and Private Henry George Purver of Brentford – the latter two of whom were killed at Delville Wood on 31st July 1916. Another of the recruits was Charles Percy 'Charlie' McGahey, one of Wisden's 'Cricketers of the Year' in 1901, who played for Essex as well as representing MCC in two test matches in Australia in 1901-02. In common with many of his contemporaries, McGahey was also an excellent footballer who appeared for Millwall, Woolwich Arsenal and Spurs.

We hear of the Battalion's training regime and later of their involvement during the various battles and campaigns of the war on a year-by-year basis and learn of the casualties inflicted upon the Battalion at each of the battles they were involved in. The author has managed to glean many photographs of the personnel involved in the narrative and finishes the book with some useful appendices in which we can read many

biographical sketches of the various men who served with the Battalion, as well as a separate appendix that tells us something of the life of Charles Reuben 'Charlie' Clements, the author's maternal grandfather, another accomplished footballer – this time at club level – for Ealing Wednesday, a team formed largely of shopworkers, who preferred to play on their early closing day rather than on Saturday, so as not to lose their best day's takings.

As one would expect when considering the author's background, this is a meticulously researched and nicely written book that manages to combine the wider history of the Battalion with some family history and I have no hesitation in commending it to you. The book is available to buy direct via the author's website as detailed above.

Review by Steve Hunnisett

Published by [www.publishnation.co.uk](http://www.publishnation.co.uk)  
RRP £8.99  
paperback, pp296

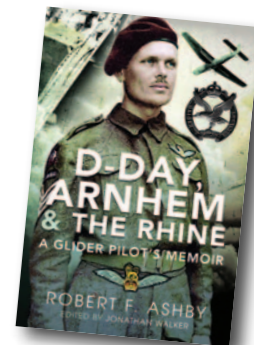
## D-DAY, ARNHEM & THE RHINE A Glider Pilot's Memoir

By Robert F Ashby, Edited by Jonathan Walker

Robert Ashby compiled this memoir in the early nineties, it is a remarkable read. Before the outbreak of WW2, the author was a librarian, a seemingly unlikely soldier, let alone a candidate for service in the Glider Pilot Regiment. He was by virtue of his education and his employment, an intelligent and articulate man with a keen eye for detail. These attributes combine to produce what is a candid, and sometimes uncomfortable testimony of a citizen soldier. I enjoyed the entire book, the chapters on initial training and service in the RASC were particularly interesting - an insight into just how disorganised the Army was after Dunkirk. The challenges of integrating recruits from so many different social backgrounds, and trying to grow an Army are evident throughout an often humorous narrative. What I found challenging, and at times disconcerting (therefore fascinating) were the descriptions of the preparation, conduct and aftermath of Operation Market Garden. There are many incidents that contradict the accepted mainstream history of the Arnhem battle to list, for me they were a difficult read - although I have heard similar fragments from other veterans over the years. I noticed a few forgivable flaws in this book, the majority attributable to the sources available to Robert Ashby when he researched the operational backdrop to his wartime experience.

Review by Mike Peters

Published by Pen & Sword Ltd  
RRP £20.00  
hardback, pp177



# 10 Questions:

Name: Sophie Shrubsole

Age: 32

Nationality: British

Home Location: Rugby

Tour Company: Sophie's Great War Tours

Validating: No



In each edition of 'Despatches', we will be introducing a member of the Guild. In this edition, it is Sophie Shrubsole.

- 1. How long have you been interested in battlefields and what was it that initially attracted your interest?** It's all my Dad's fault! He took me to the Somme when I was 5 months old and when I was finally old enough to start understanding, we would travel to the Western Front 2-3 times a year. I have a good imagination so being able to stand on a spot and see a battle unfold before me is what captured me.
- 2. Have any experiences stood out?** I specialise in taking families on the journeys their ancestors would have made 100+ years ago. One guest gave me a photo of her Grandfather's unit marching down a road in 1918. She wanted to find that road and visit. After lots of research and recce's, we found the spot the photo was taken and walked the route, exactly 100 years later. That was special.
- 3. What do you enjoy the most about battlefield guiding?** My guests. They are always lovely and fascinating individuals and the fun we have together is what makes all the hard work worthwhile
- 4. What is your favourite stand, location or battlefield and why?** Beaumont Hamel. It's

such a visual spot that guests can follow your commentary and imagine those waves of men going over the top. I'd like to get to Pearl Harbour, to conjure the images of shock, awe and devastation. It was a moment that changed the course of history.

- 6. What have you enjoyed the most about being a member of the Guild?** Regular updates from members about their experiences out on the battlefields is always useful..
- 7. If there was a fire and you could only save one battlefield-related book or prop, what would you save and why?** My Great-Grandfather's suitcase stamped Border Regiment. It's packed full of his webbing, photographs and original documents. That might be cheating but I'd grab and run!
- 8. What type of group do you think is the most challenging to lead on a tour?** Anyone that isn't open minded to learn new things or ways of looking at a subject matter.
- 9. What's the best tip, story or nugget of information you have been given by a fellow battlefield guide?** Ask Paul Colbourne for his fun fact on how much poo a Division creates in a day!
- 10. What is the funniest or most dramatic thing you have seen on tour?** I don't recall seeing anything funny but I have lots of fantastic memories of laughing til I cry with guests.



## NEWmembers:

New members who have been welcomed to the Guild between Spring 2022 and the date of publication.

Paul Bowen  
Adrian Evans  
Marcus Evans  
Lee Goldsmith

Roger Grafton  
Sharon Hill-Boulton  
Robert Laplander  
Desmond Latham

Graham Roberts  
Colin Ross  
Tom Smith  
Damien Stewart

David Stohs  
Alexander Summer  
Paul Tynan