



Friends
of the
Herefordshire Light
Infantry Museum



Newsletter

Number 2: February 2008

Welcome: Your committee welcomes you to this second Friends' newsletter - we hope you find it of interest.

2007 was a busy year for The Friends, The Museum, The Rifles (and The Light Infantry!) and The Army. Soldiers from the County continue to make history and soldiers from Herefordshire have been on operations in Iraq - their last operation wearing a Light Infantry bugle.

We wish all of those on operations a speedy and safe return.

The Museum Trustees have agreed a 'Development Plan' for the Museum and are now busy putting that in place - more of that later!

Finally The Friends (and Museum Trustees) have opened the Museum on several occasions, acquired new items and refurbished some of the old items - hopefully there will be (a lot (!)) more of the same in 2008

Museum Acquisitions: Accessions to the Museum continue at a steady trickle; we are particularly keen to acquire an example of a Territorial Efficiency Medal named to The Herefordshire Light Infantry.

The Museum purchased a lovely group of World War One medals to *8217 Pte Henry EVANS*. This comprised the British War Medal, The Victory Medal, The Territorial Force War Medal (TFWM) and The Territorial Force Efficiency Medal (TFEM) - a 'real' territorial group. Prior to 1914 the TF has no obligation to serve overseas, individuals did volunteer to do so and wore an identifying metal badge (Imperial Service) above their right breast pocket. Soldiers who thus volunteered but did not serve overseas in 1914 or 15 (and therefore did not qualify for the 1914 or 1914/15 Star medals), but did serve overseas after 1915 were awarded the TFWM; it is the scarcest of the First World War medals with just over 30,000 being issued; The Herefords received *about* 100. The TFEM was awarded for 12 years service with the TF (with war service counting double); this TFEM was awarded in 1919. This combination of medals to The Herefords is rare; there are only 6 known examples. Little is known of Pte Evans, his regimental number (4 digits beginning with an 8) would indicate he is probably from Radnorshire - but definitely a subject for further research

Your Committee: This remains unchanged with all eligible officers offering their services to the Friends for a further period and being duly elected at the AGM.

<i>Patron</i>	Sir Thomas Dunne
<i>President:</i>	Gen Sir Peter de la Billiere
<i>Chairman:</i>	Lt Col Tom Hill
<i>Vice-Chairman:</i>	Maj Dave Seeney
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<i>Members:</i>	Mr Bill Jackson
	Mr Martin Jolly
	Maj Nigel Jones
	Capt Terry Marsh
	Lt Col John Marsham
	Sqn Ldr John Scott
	Lt Col Andy Taylor
	Mr John Williams

Herefordshire or Hertfordshire: I am sure you all know of occasions when the 2 have been confused! You will hardly be surprised to hear that Military administration is no exception! There are examples of medals being incorrectly named. One 'mystery' is that of a group of 12 Military Medals awarded in January 1919. In the London Gazette they are correctly attributed to The Herefords, on the medal cards a (slightly spidery) copperplate hand seems to attribute them to the Hertfordshire Regiment. No one can recall ever having seen one of these medals so we do not know what Regiment actually appears on them, but at the open day in September a WW1 MM group was presented - on examination it was named to The Herefords but was not recorded anywhere. Later research indicated it had been wrongly attributed to The Hertfords in The London Gazette - it was not one of the 1919 batch so the original mystery remains - but the Regiment has claimed one more MM for WW1.

Soldiers Of The Regiment: Attached to this Newsletter is an account written by Andy Taylor and published in The Journal of The Orders and Medals Research Society (OMRS), of the life and career of Lt Col Wilkins Fitzwilliam Chipp, who served in The Herefords during WW1.

Accreditation: Progress on the road to Accreditation continues despite some 'sleeping policeman' slowing progress. Restricting MOD procedures and changes to Charity Law have slowed progress, but the Museum still aspires to achieve Accreditation and will formally embark on the process in 2008. Accreditation reflects best practice and the Museum remains totally committed to the principles of Accreditation.

TA 100: 2008 marks the centenary of the formation of the Territorial Force, the final event which completed the reorganization of the military forces of Britain, and prepared them (unknowingly) for WW1 and set the structures which have endured for 100 years. There are to be a series of national events and it is planned too hold a local event. This will be in June and it will take the form of: Museum display, a presentation on the formation of the TF and The Herefordshire Regiment, displays by The Herefordshire Army Cadets followed by The Herefordshire Army Cadet League annual summer BBQ; it is also hoped that the Yeomanry from Hereford will take part as well. Planning is at an early stage and more details as the event firms up.



Royal Mail are to produce a commemorative stamp issue for TA100, although no Herefordshire soldiers will feature on the stamps, this photograph of Pte Ward will be used in a supporting information pack. The photograph was taken in ~~Sonsbeck~~ on 6 March 1945, and is captioned 'just prior to leave' - perhaps that's why he is smiling. Little is known about Pte Ward but a research campaign is under way.

John ~~Skiros~~, a TA Rifles Officer is producing a book about 100 years of TA Rifles, he has been in contact with the Curator and several regimental photographs will appear in the book - wait out for full details

Dates For The Diary:

- Mar 8 - Herefordshire LI (Rifles) Officers' Dinner
- May 6 (1930hrs) - "The ~~Dinedor~~ Patrol of the 202Bn Auxiliary Home Guard" (~~Dinedor~~ Village Hall)
- Jun 13/15 - LI Weekend (Shrewsbury)
- Jun 15 - Laying up 5 LI Colours (St Chadds, Shrewsbury)
- Jun tbc - Open Day/TA 100 Event & Cadet League BBQ
- Jul 19 - Laying up of 3 LI Colours/Grant of Freedom to the Rifles, and Sounding of Retreat (Castle Green & City)
- Sep 13 - Heritage Open Day (HOD Museum Open Day)
- Oct ~~thr~~ - AGM & Lunch

Museum Development: The Museum Development Plan has been accepted by The Trustees, it looks ahead 20 years and where the Museum should be by then and how to get there. It is envisaged that in 20 years time the Museum will be collocated with the County Museum; this intent has been declared to the County Museum authorities. In the meantime work continues to improve the current state and range of displays, and plans are in hand to purchase two new purpose built display cases; these will be mobile. The acquisition of these cases is dependent on the successful award of grants to assist with the purchase. Grant applications have been submitted and we are awaiting decisions.

The Home Guard: This is a massive area which has without doubt been overlooked. There were 5 Battalions in Herefordshire, as well as auxiliary patrols (see Mike Wilkes book - The Mercian Maquis). They probably numbered over 5000 and had detachments in every town and most villages. The Museum has several photographs and even some film of the HG Beroni Metals Hereford factory detachment. At least 3 pubs in Herefordshire still have photographs on display of 'their' HG detachment! This is an often forgotten aspect of WW2 and an area which deserves further research.



The Hereford City GWR Section of The HG



The Sergeants' Mess, 3rd (Hereford City) Battalion Herefordshire Regiment Home Guard

THE MAN BEHIND THE MEDAL(S)
LT COL W F CHIPP, THE HEREFORDSHIRE REGIMENT

A S Taylor

I have for some 25 years been collecting medals to and researching The Herefordshire Regiment, particularly their exploits during World War One. One name has cropped up time and time again, and I promised myself that I would research the individual and his story; this is it, the story of Lt Col Wilkins Fitzwilliam Chipp DSO and Bar, OBE, MC, ED, Croix De Guerre France and Belgium.

In September 1899, on a wave of militarism and patriotism caused by the impending war in South Africa, young Chipp, aged 17, enlisted at his home town of Kington, Herefordshire in the local company of the Herefordshire Rifle Volunteer Corps. Chipp was the son of the Deputy Chief Constable and attended Lady Hawking's Grammar School in Kington and this was to be the start of a 50 year acquaintance with a military uniform.

Chipp's military career progressed, he was promoted corporal in 1900, sergeant in 1902 and colour sergeant in 1907. He was the sergeant in charge of the Colour Party when Edward VII opened the Rhayader Dam and water works. On the formation of the Territorial Force in 1908 Chipp enlisted into the 1st Battalion of the newly formed Herefordshire Regiment. He received the King's Colour on behalf of the Regiment at Windsor from King Edward VII in June 1909. He was also noted as a fine rifle shot.

At the outbreak of war in August 1914, he was colour sergeant (effectively sergeant major) of the Kington Company. He was well respected and remembered by one veteran I spoke to some years ago, as a very fair man, who always had the interests of the men, especially the new young recruits at heart.

Chipp remained as sergeant major during late 1914 and early 1915 when the Battalion was billeted mainly in the Newmarket area, undergoing training and working on the East of England defences. In August 1915, Chipp landed with the Battalion on C Beach Suvla Bay Gallipoli. The trials of the campaign are well documented and The Herefordshire Regiment's experiences were no different. Chipp wrote home of his comrades who were killed or wounded, of the cunning of 'Johny Turk', the shortages of water and the heat, flies and general misery. He took command of A Company, when all the officers became casualties over a period which included it being cut off for 5 days. He was not to be spared, and an Army Form (AF) B 104-80A dated 19 September 1915 {1}, addressed to Chipp's father - Capt T F Chipp, Denmark Road, Gloucester, reports that '277 CSgt W F Chipp is in hospital in Malta suffering from a bullet wound to the arm and bruising to the side'.

He recovered and rejoined the Battalion at Suvla, and was on the peninsula when he was informed that he had been Commissioned into The Herefordshire Regiment on 9 October 1915. He was later evacuated to England suffering from dysentery, and joined the 3rd Battalion (raised for the war period only) in March 1916. He soon rejoined the 1st Battalion in the Middle East, and a letter signed by second lieutenant Chipp at Park Hall Camp Oswestry on 7 April 1916 says ' Sir, I have filled out the form as requested, I am at present under orders to take a draft of Lancashire Fusiliers to the MEF next week. I enclose a photograph for your use - if you should ever need one' {1}. There is no indication of the addressee, so the nature of the 'form' and potential use of the photograph remain unknown.

Chipp then served with the Battalion throughout its time in the Middle East; garrisoning outposts in Western Egypt and the Suez Canal, the battles of Romani, Gaza and Khuweilfeh, and the eventual relief of Jerusalem. He at various times was the adjutant, company commander and for a time a staff officer on the staff of HQ 158 Brigade. He was promoted captain and major, attended various staff courses and had a hill named after him in the high area of Tel Asur in Judea during the actions of Spring 1918. He was awarded the Military Cross for 'conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty; he carried out a valuable recce and cleared up an obscure situation. He readjusted parts of the line with great skill and showed complete disregard of danger', at Khuweilfeh in November 1917.

On reorganisation of the Army in 1918, the Herefordshire Regiment was the 'fourth battalion' which was lost from 158 Bde and gained by 102 Bde, 34 Div in France. The Battalion sailed for France on 17 June 1918, ironically (as will be seen later) the convoy was escorted by Japanese destroyers. The great German offensive of the Spring was still not beaten. 34 Div moved to the Chateau Thierry area in support of the French, and had their first experience of the gas and slaughter of the Western Front. By September the Battalion was in the Kemmel area and joined the great advance via Menin and Moen, being in reserve in the Wevelghem area on 11 Nov. During this period Chipp found himself as Company commander, Regimental Second in Command and for several periods Commanding Officer of the Battalion.

He was always in the thick of the action and he was awarded:

The DSO for action in the Menin area in Oct 1918 when he ... 'commanded his Battalion with great skill and gallantry, with only part of his command he was ordered to take over the whole front and push on, an extremely difficult operation which he carried out at once under heavy shelling and machine gun and minenwerfer fire. It was entirely due to his own personal recce under fire and perfect control that enabled his men to overcome every obstacle'.

A bar to the DSO gazetted on 1 January 1919.

Mention in Despatches gazetted on 30 December 1918 and 10 July 1919.

The French and Belgium Croix de Guerre both gazetted 19 June 1919.

He was one of only two who received 'triple honours' (DSO and bar and MC) from King George V at Buckingham Palace in 1919.

Although the war in Europe was over, Chipp according to a confidential report form {1} dated 21 May 1919 had 'an above average line record and was anxious to continue soldiering as a regular, strongly recommended; a fine rifle shot, an excellent trainer. Posted to 2nd Cameronians'.

The details of his inter war activities are not known in full, but his military service continued while he worked in the forestry service in India and Malaysia where he served in the Malay States Volunteer Regiment. He was made OBE in 1940.

Various papers {1} show him as a Wing Commander in the Admin and Special Duties Branch of the RAFVR at the time of the fall of Singapore in 1942. He was captured and endured over 3 years as a prisoner in Changi prison where he was appointed chief librarian. He was released and returned to England in 1946 aged 64. The papers include a detailed handwritten report on 'The Observer Corps, events leading up to the surrender of Singapore' and concludes 'despite the Jap searches the Observer Corps nominal roll was kept hidden and is still in the possession of the writer' signed W F Chipp Commanding.

Chipp obviously had a penchant for hiding things. As illustrated by an account which he wrote and which was published in the KSLI and Herefordshire Regimental Journal, in brief:

'Having had some slight experience of the Japanese, and hearing first hand accounts of their behaviour since the invasion began, it was evident that any valuables in possession of prisoners, or abandoned would be quickly annexed I had in my possession my decorations and medals (twelve) and was determined if possible to hide them from our captors.....

For a secure hiding place I consulted ... the director of museums who himself had a valuable camera and some films he did not want to lose. He suggested a safe hiding place could probably be found in the Raffles Museum On the evening of the capitulation, 15 February 1942, we went to the museum.....

The problem of finding a hiding place for my small case was solved by my friend who took me to the reptile room on the first floor. The larger models were mounted on hollow plaster casts, and in one of these I concealed my case. The camera would not fit and was hidden behind a corner cupboard

Then 3 years and 7 months after the British surrender, came the capitulation of the Japanese on 3 September 1945 the Japanese guards were replaced by Ghurkas and no one was allowed to leave except by special permission On 6 September my old friend Colonel JP Read CBE (RA) came to the camp to enquire of his old acquaintances. I told him of the hidden case and a few days later received special permission to accompany him into Singapore, the Director of Museums was unfortunately too ill to the museum was locked, but we found an assistant, the same one that had admitted us 4 years previously, and entered the museum the reptile room was found to be locked and all exhibits covered by sheeting. The assistant explained that the Japanese disliked reptiles and had kept the room locked during their occupation ... lifting up the hamadryad I quickly found my case with contents intact....

The search for the camera was not successful. On return to the camp I told my friend of my good fortune and his misfortune. He was very ill and said he would probably not need them in any case; he died a few days later shortly after his evacuation to India.

A fascinating account, and perhaps one would think that Chipp had had enough of military service, but on return to UK he joined the

reformed Home Guard as Lieutenant Colonel, commanding the 11 County Of London Battalion. His probable last appearance in uniform was on Armistice day 1956 when he commanded the Home Guard, Guard of Honour at the Grave on the Unknown Soldier in Westminster Abbey.

Chipp died in 1970 and there were many fond words in various obituaries that were published 'a truly great man who served others consistently throughout his life', 'as good a soldier that could be found', 'a truly great man has passed on'.

But what of his medals? These were sold by Spinks in 1994 and consisted of:

- Distinguished Service Order and second award bar.
- Officer of the Order of The British Empire
- Military Cross
- 1914/15 Star
- British War Medal
- Victory Medal with MID
- 1939/45 Star
- Pacific Star
- Defence Medal
- War Medal
- Efficiency Decoration (MALAYA)
- TFEM (AO 288 of October 1912)
- Croix De Guerre (France)
- Croix De Guerre (Belgium)

This raises one question - Chipp in his account of hiding his medals describes them as '... medals (twelve) ...', my assumption is that this meant a total of 12 medals, if this is the case then what were the 12?

Various documents of his have found their way to the Liddle Collection (1) and the Herefordshire Regimental Museum (2), and included amongst these is a letter from Chipp's nephew who deposited the items in the Liddle collection which says, ' my uncle headed the Observer Corps in Malaya and spent 4 years in Changi prison after surrender' and that the documents were deposited on the death of Mrs Chipp (presumably Chipp's wife) after her death aged 102, it goes on 'lots of other papers and his medals went to pay for my Aunt's upkeep'.

Thus concludes the story of a great son of Herefordshire, a great man and a great soldier, who enjoyed a truly remarkable military association which lasted for more than 50 years.

References

1. The Liddle Collection, The Bretherton Library, Leed University.
2. The Herefordshire Regimental Museum, The Drill Hall, Harold St, Hereford.

Photographs

1. Capt W F Chipp, seated third from right as viewed, 'A group of officers from 158 Bde attending a study day, Jerusalem Apr 1918'.
2. Lt Col W F Chipp, 11 County of London Home Guard 1952.

