

# CURATOR'S NOTES

Captain Mick Holtby - curator@rlnymuseum.co.uk



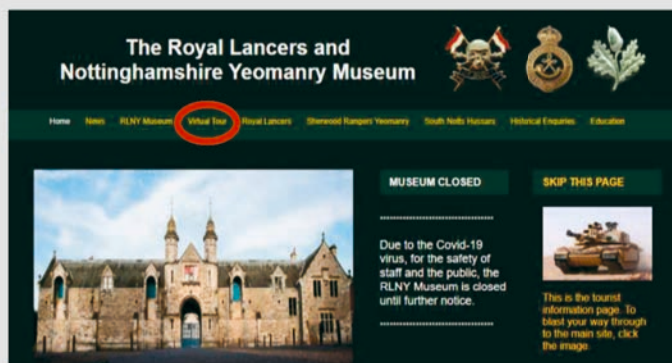
For Friends of The Royal Lancers and Nottinghamshire Yeomanry Museum

The Museum opened its doors for the start of the 2020 season to coincide with the schools' half term in mid-February.

As we welcomed back our visitors, particularly the families and those staying at the hotel who joined the regular Wednesday guided tour, all promised well for the coming season, but sadly this was not to be when the government announced a lockdown.

As a result, the Museum had to close to the public and our plans for the season put on hold. Our main event was to have been a joint VE day exhibition with Thoresby Courtyard. There is a remote possibility that if restrictions are lifted then an exhibition could go ahead in the Courtyard on VJ Day in August, but this would be for one day only.

Although the Museum has been closed, we are still doing our best to publicise our stories via Facebook and the website with a virtual tour. Thanks to Wayne Birch and his regular posts we now have over 1,840 followers.



To take the virtual tour, please visit the Museum website:

[www.rlnymuseum.co.uk](http://www.rlnymuseum.co.uk)

Congratulations also to our assistant curator, Robert Osborn, who in March competed in the Scottish National Target shooting championships in Edinburgh.

He won a gold medal in the overall category, silver and bronze medals in the disabled category and also won a gold medal and a memorial trophy in the Scottish disabled championship.



Cannon Master Robert Osborn, late Scots Guards, fires a salute to the NHS from the terrace at Belvoir Castle.

And as if that wasn't enough, as Cannon Master at Belvoir Castle he has been firing a seven gun salute each Thursday evening as a salute to the NHS. Well done Robert!

Finally, please note our revised email and web site addresses:

[curator@rlnymuseum.co.uk](mailto:curator@rlnymuseum.co.uk)

[www.rlnymuseum.co.uk](http://www.rlnymuseum.co.uk)

Keep well, and we hope to be able to welcome you back to the Museum in the near future.

JMH



## FOREWORD

Colonel A M Smith, TD JP

Clearly, we are living in strange and difficult times but we look forward to the Museum reopening as soon as Government guidelines permit. In the meantime, you might like to take a virtual tour of the Museum via the website: [www.rlnymuseum.co.uk](http://www.rlnymuseum.co.uk).

Our planned VE Day Exhibition did not happen, which was most disappointing given the great efforts made by the Museum Management Committee in preparation. We had hoped to entertain all those Friends who could visit over the weekend but when the world returns to some normality, we shall try to organise a Friends event later in the year, possibly to commemorate VJ Day.

Cavalry Memorial service at Hyde Park was also cancelled and a virtual service on YouTube held instead. 'Cav Mem' is always an opportunity to meet up with friends past and present across all regiments and we hope we will be able to get together again next year.

The Sherwood Rangers Association missed out on a visit to Borne in Holland in early April to attend a ceremony to name two streets after the Sherwood Rangers and The Royal Horse Guards.

The annual Normandy commemorations in early June were also abandoned but a virtual service was held on YouTube. It has attracted over 300 hits to date and can be viewed via <https://youtu.be/QPOiLXNN4EU>

The South Notts Hussars Association also cancelled their VE Day celebrations planned in place of the Knightsbridge and Normandy Landings Dinner.

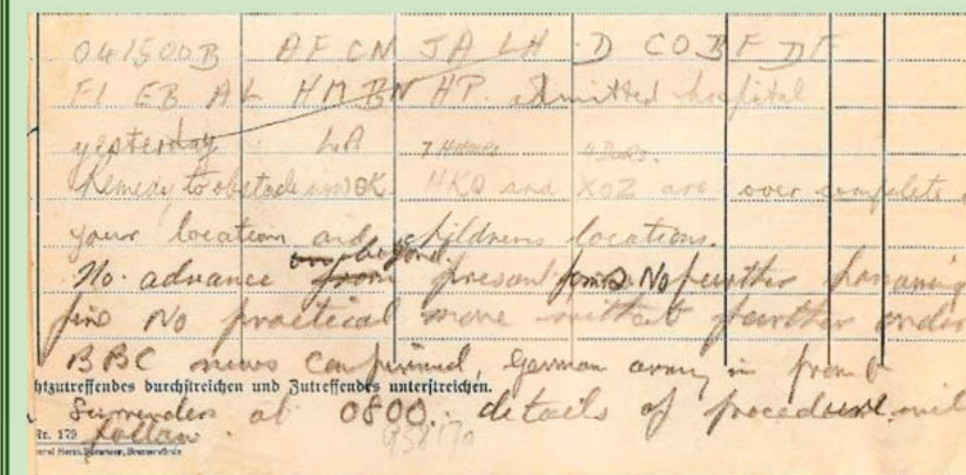
Construction of the British Normandy Memorial at Ver-sur-Mer (overlooking Gold Beach) has resumed but completion has been delayed until next year. The fallen of the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry, South Notts Hussars and the 24<sup>th</sup> Lancers will be recorded. Details are available at [info@normandymemorialtrust.org](mailto:info@normandymemorialtrust.org).

Finally, Friends of the Museum may be interested to know that members of A (SRY) Sqn Royal Yeomanry will deploy to Poland on Op CABRIT this autumn as part of the NATO enhanced forward presence. We wish them a successful tour.

### VE DAY – 5th May 1945

On 4<sup>th</sup> May Lt Col Stanley Christopherson, CO SRY, received an unexpected visit from General 'von Thoma' Thomas, commanding 43<sup>rd</sup> (Wessex) Division, who gave him details of the next operation, the capture of Bremerhaven.

He wrote in his diary 'That evening I was summoned to Robin Hood, my tank, where I was told that an important message from Brigade awaited me... NO ADVANCE BEYOND PRESENT POSITIONS STOP NO FURTHER HARASSING FIRE STOP NO TACTICAL MOVES UNLESS ORDERED STOP BBC NEWS FLASH CONFIRMED STOP GERMAN ARMY ON 21 ARMY GROUP FRONT SURRENDERS WEF 0800 HRS 5 MAY 1945 STOP DETAILS AS TO PROCEDURE LATER STOP'



An extract from the scrap book of Lt. Col. Christopherson DSO MC TD, showing his rear-link wireless operator's rough note on a page torn from a German exercise book recording the cease fire order issued by Brigade Headquarters on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1945. (Interestingly, 'no tactical move' was logged as 'no practical move').



## VE DAY – 5th MAY 1945



**Above:** A Sherman tank of the 16<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Queens Royal Lancers in Italy.

**Below:** The Sherman Rangers tanks on parade in Einbeck, October 1945.



By VE day the 9<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> Lancers had reached northern Italy. The Sherwood Rangers and South Notts Hussars had advanced from Normandy, through the Low Countries and into Germany.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Lancers led the 8<sup>th</sup> Army advance to the River Po, while the 12<sup>th</sup> Lancers led the 2nd New Zealand Division; one 12<sup>th</sup> Lancers squadron occupied Venice while the rest of the Regiment reached Trieste in early May. Both 16<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> Lancers fought in the final battle of the Po Valley.

The German army in Italy surrendered on 2<sup>nd</sup> May; the unconditional surrender of all enemy forces came three days later, with 16<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Lancers near Vigarano and 17<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> Lancers in the area of Fontana.

The Sherwood Rangers, who had been the first British troops to enter Germany, ended the war on the outskirts of Bremerhaven and later moved to Einbeck.

In April 1945 the South Notts Hussars supported the Canadians in the relief of Arnhem and were then deployed to Ramsdorf in readiness for the occupation of Germany.



**Above:** Officers of the 12<sup>th</sup> Royal Lancers in Trieste, July 1945.

**Below:** The South Notts Hussars returned to England in 1946.



## INTERESTING ARTEFACTS

The Brodie is a steel combat helmet designed and patented in London in 1915 by John Leopold Brodie. The first delivery of the Brodie to British Army troops took place in September 1915, at the rate of 50 per battalion. By the summer of 1916 the first million helmets had been produced and they were issued to all troops, one of whom was Captain Francis Purchas of the 5<sup>th</sup> Lancers.

Purchas was born on 24<sup>th</sup> December 1885, and served eight years in the ranks prior to being commissioned. He arrived in France with his regiment on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1914 as a Sergeant and was commissioned in October 1914.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Lancers formed part of 3rd Cavalry Brigade together with the 16<sup>th</sup> Lancers. The Brigade was commanded by Brigadier Hubert Gough, late 16<sup>th</sup> Lancers, and saw extensive service on the Western Front, from the Retreat from Mons in 1914 to the Re-entry into Mons in November 1918.

As a Captain, Purchas was Mentioned in Despatches and was recommended for a further award for good work in the field whilst acting as bomb officer in the trenches during January 1916, where he organised the whole system of bomb posts and made many personal reconnaissances to the most advance sap heads, often under heavy shell fire.

In June 1916 he left regimental duty and was posted to Egypt as an instructor.

He was posted to India in 1919 and left the Army in 1920 when he moved to live in the Sutton Coldfield area.



**Brodie helmet worn by Captain Francis Purchas, 5<sup>th</sup> Royal Irish Lancers, during WWI.**

His son was also christened Francis (and later became Sir Francis) but was forever known as Bob after spending his first year in India (Bob being the diminutive of Hindi for baby). He was educated at Summerfields, Marlborough and Trinity College, Cambridge. He was commissioned into the Royal Engineers at the outbreak of WW2 and served on Eisenhower's staff in North Africa, where he too was Mentioned in Despatches.

After the war Purchas returned to Cambridge to read law and rose through the profession to become Lord Justice of Appeal.



## RECENT ACQUISITIONS

In February this year the Honorary Colonel and members of the SRY Association visited Lieutenant Commander David Evison RD at Cherwood House, Bicester, to accept his generous donation of a silver loving cup bearing the inscription 'Presented to Trooper J.S. Evison, 10th Batt. Imperial Yeomanry (Sherwood Rangers) in recognition of his Loyal and Distinguished Services in the South African War 1900 – 1901'.

Tpr Jabez Sidney Evison is mentioned in the following extract from the war diary kept by Tpr John Wilkinson SRIY, which describes the action which took place on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1901 at Lichtenburg: 'Capt. Wilson and a few men occupied a house which was at once surrounded by the enemy. He succeeded in holding it until darkness set in, and then he and his brave men made a dash for liberty, and got away. Capt. Wilson's pluck in holding the house against such big odds secured for him the coveted DSO. Sergt. Park, Trooper Everson [sic], and myself were unable to enter the house with the others, nor were we able to find much cover in the bush, so we lay down and, awaited events. We were repeatedly fired at, but not hit, and as the day wore on an opportunity presented itself which we took advantage of, to fall back to a better position'.

A copy of the Diary is obtainable from the Museum.



**Above:** Lieutenant Commander Evison and Cherwood House staff with Councillor Diana Edwards (Chairman Cherwell DC), Maj Adrian Charman (Chairman SRYA), Col Mark Smith (SRY Hon Col), Lt Col Lyndon Robinson RLC (Commanding Bicester Garrison), Tony Higton (SRYA Midlands Branch), and Mr & Mrs Steve Cox (RLNY Museum).

Sidney Evison later won the Military Medal in the First World War in which he served in both The Army Service Corps and in The Lancashire Fusiliers.



## ACTS OF VALOUR – Lieutenant David Peirson Newbury MC, 17/21L

David Peirson Newbury joined the 17<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> Lancers on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1943 and, as a Troop Leader in 'A' Squadron, was awarded the MC at the Battle of Cassino.

On 13<sup>th</sup> May 1944, after a successful crossing of "Amazon Bridge" over the River Gari (see Curator's Notes in the previous issue of Museum News), they tried to link to up with 2/4<sup>th</sup> Hampshires.

The Squadron had already lost three tanks and now faced the River Pioppetta, a small marshy stream, yet big enough to stop a tank. The accompanying scissors-bridge tank was damaged by shell fire and the squadron had to



find an alternative means of crossing. Engineer assistance failed as their lorries had been hit before crossing Amazon Bridge.

Newbury and his troop pulled down some trees with towropes and managed to make a bridge over which the whole squadron was able to pass.

Newbury led on through mines and booby traps and eventually reached the Hampshires at dusk. He was awarded the Military Cross for this action.

Sadly, a month later, on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1944, Lieutenant Newbury was killed by a sniper during the advance to Perugia.

He is buried in Assisi War Cemetery.

