



**Abingdon Area
Archaeological and Historical Society**
www.AAAHS.org.uk

NEWSLETTER - SPRING 2004

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT SPRING 2004

Welcome to the Spring newsletter and to a busy time of year for our Society. The longer evenings mean more time for fieldwork and for outings. Plus, of course, choosing what to present at our annual "Member's Evening" in June.

Meanwhile we've had an exceptionally exciting programme of lectures this year (!!!) with two speakers pulling out at the very last moment in the space of just three months. Fortunately you didn't have to endure a presentation on: "Bringing up twins the Archaeological Way" and instead we are very grateful to Nigel Hammond and Dr Rowena Archer for stepping in at extremely short notice and giving us two excellent lectures. Hopefully this kind of thing will not become a habit! All our meetings continue to be well-attended, with, in some cases, people having to stand at the back of the hall.

What's been happening since I last wrote? Well, the History Group continues to flourish, with regular meetings held at 35 Ock Street. The Digging Group broke with tradition during the autumn, however, helping the Wallingford Historical and Archaeological Society with their excavation at Crowmarsh Gifford. The site was supposedly a Stephen and Matilda period siege castle but we found an awful lot of Iron Age pottery! (Maybe next year's lecture on "King Stephen in the Thames Valley" will clarify matters!) Post-excavation work continues on the Bayworth site and on the Thrupp Cottages dig.

The committee have also been busy behind the scenes, particularly since we are now up to full strength with the addition of Mrs Jenny Devanney, who had taken on the job of Outings Secretary. The exhibition boards have been out publicising us at the Vale of White Horse Family History Day in November and more recently at the town's biennial "Clubs and Societies Day". Thanks to David Rayner our website (www.AAAHS.org.uk) has never been better and should now be a first port of call if you are unsure about the date of the next meeting or indeed about the title of the next lecture!

Finally I must, as always, thank the unsung heroes of the society who although they have no formal role on the committee continue to work behind the scenes for us. Diana Carne continues to represent us on the Northcourt Centre Committee, Dick Barnes to prepare the newsletter and Sally Ainslie to organise tea and coffee after each meeting. Dick Barnes and Judy White continue to make the views of the society known in the long process towards having an improved museum in the Old Goal buildings. Thank you to them all.

Rachel Everett, Chairman.

SUMMER VISITS 2004

(A) Steventon Tuesday 26th August.

Travel by car. Meet and park at the village hall at 7pm.

Mrs C Petts will be talking about the Causeway, Brunel's railway and The Priory

(B) Frilford/Marcham Excavation Wednesday 28th July.

Travel by car. Meet and park at Manor Farm at Marcham at 7pm.

A guided tour around the site

(C) Bletchley Park Sunday 26th September

Travel by car. Park at Bletchley railway station as it is free - then take the footpath to the main gate of Bletchley Park. Meet outside the Naafi Cafe and bar at 11am.

Adults £10; Senior Citizens £8

Free guided tour. Experience the Enigma

BOOKINGS Please send the appropriate Booking Slip well in advance (sorry, but the short notice makes this difficult for the Steventon visit), so that the Visits Organiser can deal with travel offers/requests, and can contact you in the event of any late changes.

Booking slips and queries to: Mrs Jenny Devanny, 77 Sherwood Avenue, Abingdon. OX14 3NA. Telephone 01235 203 212



(A) Steventon Tuesday 26th August.

Please reserve _____ places for me/us* (delete as necessary)

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

I/we* can offer/ need* _____ seats for the journey



(B) Frilford/Marcham Excavation Wednesday 28th July.

Please reserve _____ places for me/us* (delete as necessary).

Name _____

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Phone _____

I/we* can offer/need* _____ seats for the journey.



(C) Bletchley Park Sunday 26th September

Please reserve _____ places for me/us* (delete as necessary).

Name _____

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Phone _____

I/we* can offer/need* _____ seats for the journey.

EDWARD JOHN MOTT VC. DCM

'For Valour' is the inscription on the Victoria Cross, Britain's highest military award for gallantry, irrespective of rank, and instituted by Queen Victoria after the carnage of the Crimean War. In its nearly one hundred and fifty year history fewer than 1400 have been awarded.

One of the recipients was Edward John Mott who was born in Drayton, Berkshire on the 4 July 1893. Edward's father, John, was born in Sunningwell in 1867. He married a Drayton girl, Jane Harris. They had ten children but sadly Jane died in 1889. Two years later John married Mrs Lydia Woodley (nee Bradfield) a widow with five children. John and Lydia had three sons; Edward (known to family and friends as Jack), Bert and Frank. According to the census of 1891 the family were living at 20 Church Street. (The home was demolished several years ago and the street is now called Church Lane) They had moved from Abingdon Road a few years earlier. Edward attended the local school in High Street before going on to the Council School in Abingdon. At fourteen Edward left school and worked with his father for Mrs Oldwinkle at Shippon Manor Farm.

At that time North Berkshire was a recruiting area for the Border Regiment. On 31 December 1910 at the age of 17 ½ he enlisted in the army at the Border Regiment Depot, Carlisle. After completing his training he was sent abroad to the 1st Battalion.

Meanwhile storm clouds were gathering in Europe. By December 1912 the German leaders accepted that war was inevitable. It was just a matter of when and where. The answer came on 28 June 1914 when Bosnian student Gavrilo Princip shot dead Arch Duke Frank Ferdinand and his wife at Sarajevo. This single act plunged the world into a war involving 30,000,000 men under arms from twenty nations. On the 4 August 1914 Germany violated Belgium's neutrality and as a consequence Britain declared war on the aggressor.

The outbreak of war found the battalion in Upper Burma. Having been abroad for eight years, they confidently awaited a home posting. Instead they were placed on a war footing in preparation for active service. In December they sailed for home by way of Aden Suez and Gibraltar, arriving in England on 10 January 1915. They joined the 87th Brigade and were stationed in billets in Rugby awaiting orders for an overseas posting. On 17 March the 29th Division to which they belonged embarked at Avonmouth for an unknown destination.

In early 1915 Russia appealed to Britain for help. Turkey had closed the Dardanelles, a stretch of water 40 miles long and up to 4 miles wide, which separates Europe from Asia Minor. British and French battleships and cruisers were sent but after six allied ships were sunk by mines it became obvious that naval action unsupported by military action would not succeed.

On 25 April 1915 the British Expeditionary force landed at five points around the southern tip of the Gallipoli peninsular. The 1st Battalion Border Regiment, with Edward now a corporal, landed at X beach. Here there was no serious opposition at first but soon fierce machine-gun fire swept down from the cliffs. There was a brave charge that pushed the enemy back. The Borderers then dug in. For the next two days the Borderers consolidated their position, losing a few men to sniper fire. On the 28 the brigade was ordered to advance and it was in this action that Edward was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. His award in the London Gazette, 3 June 1915 read: -

No. 9887 Sergeant Edward Mott, 1st Bn Border Regiment. On 28th April, 1915, during operations South of Krithia for gallant conuct in leading his company to successive fire positions, and again for conspicuous bravery and good service in attacking over difficult country.'

Edward was promoted to Sergeant after his D.C.M award and was sent to a hospital in Manchester to recover from his wounds. Here he was visited by the widow of his Commanding Officer whom he had rescued under heavy fire. She thanked him for his efforts to save her husband, who was mortally wounded. On his recovery Edward went out again to Gallipoli with a draft of recruits and was wounded again in the face. In hospital at Alexandria an operation was necessary for the removal of a bullet.

The campaign in Gallipoli, involving 60,000 British, Anzac, French and Indian troops had become a stalemate. Lord Kitchener, secretary of war, visited the peninsula and ordered a complete evacuation. The departures in January 1916 were the best-organised features of the ill-fated campaign. It had lasted just thirty-seven weeks.

From Gallipoli the Borderers sailed to Egypt where they undertook rigorous military exercises in preparation for fighting on the Western front. On the 10th March 1916 they sailed from Alexandria to Marseilles and then proceeded overland to Billets at Gorenflos. The battalion was now part of the Fourth Army, which held a line from Albert to the Somme, and for the remainder of the war it saw almost continuous trench warfare.

On 21 January. 1917 the Battalion in company with the 1st Royal Enniskillen Fusiliers had orders to attack a section of the enemy position south of Le Transloy, known as Landwehr Trench. An artillery barrage of 96 eighteen-pounder guns, with support from 30 Australian howitzers preceded the attack which began at 5:30 a.m. along a 750-yard front. By 7:00 a.m. 117 prisoners had been taken and the first and second objectives had been captured with light casualties. But consolidation on the flank proved difficult because of the frozen ground, enemy shelling and pernicious sniping. It was here that Edward became the Border Regiment's first V C of the war. The London Gazette 9 March 1917 read,

No. 9887 Sergeant Edward Mott, 1st Bn Border Regiment For most conspicuous gallantry and initiative when in attack, the company to which he belonged was held up at a strong point by machine gun fire. Although wounded in the eye Sergeant Mott made a rush for the gun and after a fierce struggle seized the gunner and took him prisoner, capturing the gun. It was due to the dash of the non-commissioned officer that the left flank succeeded.'

Trench warfare on the western front dragged on for a further 18 months until the collapse of the Central Powers and the fall of their governments. Peace was declared at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month 1918.

On leave from France on 2 September 1918, Edward married Evelyn Maud Hopgood who was born at Fareham, Hants. They had eight children.

When the 'Great War' ended Edward was posted to Black Morris in Ireland with the 2nd Battalion Border Regiment, where he stayed until his retirement from the army in 1919. After he left the army Edward became a commissionaire at Selfridges in London. In 1926 he returned to his native Berkshire and was employed on security duties at 3 M.U. an R.A.F. supply depot. The family home was in Milton Heights.

The blackest day in Edwards's life occurred on the 21st September 1940 when he was dismissed from his post as a warder at the R.A.F depot. The following extract is from the North Berks Herald dated 4th October 1940.

V.C. DISMISSED AT MILTON. PROTEST TO M.P. EX-SERGEANT'S ALLEGED GRIEVANCE

Major Sir Ralph Glyn, M.P. for North Berks has been approached respecting the dismissal from his post as warder at Milton R.A.F Depot of ex-Sergt. Edward John Mott V.C

Mr Mott, who lives at 15 Duke of York Avenue, Milton Hill, served 11 years with the Border Regiment, being discharged in 1919. He saw service in Gallipoli, where he was awarded the D.C.M., and in 1917 won the Victoria Cross in France. The official record of his action states: "Although severely wounded in the eye, he captured a gunner and a gun after a severe struggle, and it was due to his plucky action that the left flank succeeded"

On his discharge from the army Mr. Mott was a commissionaire at Selfridges until 1926, when he went to Milton as a warder. Mr. Mott told a reporter: "I was ordered to do a special duty at the Depot on 21 September, and it was to stop all personnel, especially officers, and ask for their identification cards. "I tried to stop a new officer I had never seen before, but he ignored my signal. He was also smoking which is an offence, and this I pointed out to him. "My inspector then relieved me off the gates took me to his office, and the officer told him to tell all warders to salute and 'sir' officers, and turning to me said, "You are suspended from duty." I asked why, but he told me to get out of the office. I told him I had not committed any offence and had only tried to do my duty.

"Asked to Resign"

"On the following Monday I saw the C.O. who suggested to me that I should resign. Nothing had been read out to me, and I had not been charged with anything, and my reply to his suggestion was that I should do nothing of the sort. On the Tuesday I was sent a letter indicating that they had no further use for my services at the Depot. "I was suspended on 24 September, had to take leave from 25 September to 1 October, when I finally finished. I have written to the Under-Secretary of the state for Air, Major Sir Ralph Glyn M.P., and the British Legion. " He said. Mr Mott added that his dismissal under existing circumstances would mean the forfeiture of his gratuity, and as he has not been charged with any specific offence he felt that he had a grievance, which should be investigated.

His dismissal not only cost him his job but also his home. The family moved to a house in Heather Road Milton. He was later employed by Esso Petroleum at Milton Hill and employed on the ground staff until his retirement in 1958. One of the proudest events in Edwards's life began Monday 25 June 1956 when he and his wife attended the Centenary of the Institution of the Victoria Cross in London. The following is an extract from the Milton page of the Deanery of Abingdon Church News.

VICTORIA CROSS CENTENARY

Milton may be justly proud of having one of the five V.C.'s in Berkshire; all of whom attended the Centenary of the Institution of the Victoria Cross, Mr Mott of Heather Road, together with his wife, went to London for the occasion. The ceremonies arranged to do honour to winners of the Victoria Cross began with a very impressive Service of thanksgiving in Westminster Abbey on Monday, 25th June.

The Archbishop of Canterbury spoke to the vast congregation. After the Service the 300 V.C.'s, with their relations, went to Westminster Hall. The Prime Minister was there, and he gave Mrs. Mott his autograph. The V.C.'s and their relatives had tea as guests of the Government in the House of Commons and signed their names. They were made to feel very welcome.

On Tuesday morning, the 26th, the V.C.'s assembled at Wellington Barracks and from there drove to Hyde Park to be reviewed by the Queen. The weather was perfect. The Queen, with the Duke of Edinburgh, drove in an open landau drawn by four Windsor Greys to the dais where they joined other members of the Royal Family. After the playing of the National Anthem the Queen inspected the ranks, and frequently stopped to talk to individuals. She did Mr. Mott the great honour of stopping and chatting to him. When the Queen had addressed the parade, the V.C.'s marched past and off the ground to the playing of the R.A.F. Central Band. Everyone sitting in the stands stood up and all present joined in hand-clapping. So ended a wonderful and glorious parade.

In the afternoon the V.C. holders and their relatives were entertained to a Garden Party at Marlborough House. Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother and Princess Royal were present. The V.C. Centenary Exhibition in the house was open to the guests.

On Wednesday the 27th the Corporation of London held a reception from 8 o'clock to 11 at Guildhall. As each V.C. arrived, he and his wife and shook hands with the Lord Mayor.

On Thursday, Mr. and Mrs. Mott went to the Lyceum where film stars acted as hostesses and entertained the V.C.'s and their relatives to tea and a Cabaret Show.

So ended a truly marvellous week.

On 20 October 1967 Edward John Mott VC. D.C.M died aged 74. His gallantry and campaign medals are now proudly displayed in the Regimental Museum of the Border Regiment and the Kings Own Royal Border Regiment, Carlisle. With them is the machine gun he captured. The V.C. awarded for gallantry regardless of rank, is intrinsically almost worthless. It is a small bronze cross made from guns captured in the Crimean War and weighs a little over three ounces. If it is cast in a rather solid Victorian Style with no pretentious to elegance. Its value is its rarity. The award which King Edward VIII once called, 'the most democratic and at the same time the most exclusive of all orders of chivalry - the most enviable order of the Victoria Cross'.

Brian Bray

Acknowledgements: Mr. Andrew Mott; Mrs. Norah Cook; Mr. George Mott; Colonel (Retd) R.K May FMA Curator Regimental Museum, Carlisle (now retired)

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HISTORY OF CALDECOTT HOUSE

Caldecott House was built in 1738 and demolished in 1972. It had replaced the Manor of St Helens, which was possibly built on the site known today as the Wilderness. The original Manor goes back to Saxon and Norman Times. First mention is made of land being held by Lewin a Goldsmith and Alwead a priest at the time of Edward the Confessor. The land was later owned by the Abbey, and was granted to Reinald (Reginald) a knight who owed Knight-service to the Abbey before 1100, and he adopted the name St Helens, so the estate was known as St Helens Manor.

The Caldecott estate originated in the division of the lands of John of St Helen being split between his two daughters and their husbands. In 1242, Matilda married her cousin Phillip of St Helens and received the half of the manor which retained that old name of St Helens together with the manor house. Meliora who had married John de Turbeville acquired the remainder of the old manor consisting of lands lying to the South of the Ock and West of the Thames near Abingdon which came to be called Caldecott. Their manor house was probably situated near Ock Bridge on Drayton Road. Caldecott is derived from the old English ceald and cote, meaning cold cottage, it was in the parish of Sutton Courtney, later in the parish of Sutton Wick. Later owners included the 3rd Baron Walter de St Amand and his son Lord Almaric; a very powerful family.

In 1442 Sir John Golafre of Fyfield Manor presented the Manor of St Helens to the Fraternity of the Holy Cross, the predecessor of Christ's Hospital. In 1479 it was recorded that the original site of the manor was lost.

In 1738 Caldecott House was built (a stone in the wall of Caldecott House bore that date), probably by Edward Saxton who was Mayor of the Borough in 1729. Dr Thomas Carte (Jacobite historian) lived in Caldecott House until his death there on 2nd April 1754.

William Birch and his wife lived in the house for 2-3 years around 1757. Mrs Birch looked after 16 orphans from Thomas Coram's Foundling Hospital in London, and found them wet nurses in the area. Subsequently various Saxtons lived here until the Lintall family become owners.

The Lintalls must have added the large drawing room in 1820 and probably enlarged the kitchens. Their tomb was recently uncovered during the renovation of the under floor heating of St Helens. In 1840 the last Lintall died, and their reputed butler Thomas Musson then became owner. In 1854 he died and Caldecott House was auctioned.

In 1869 Thomas Hyde bought the greater part of the agricultural estate from Christ's Hospital and built the stables and lodge which bore his initials. Thomas Hyde's widow Margaret died in 1880.

In the 1880's General (then Colonel) Bailie came to Abingdon from Oxford, first renting and afterwards purchasing the Caldecott House estate, on which he had carried out extensive improvements, the gardens and grounds being among the most picturesque in the neighbourhood.

In 1934 the Bailies inherited an even bigger estate, and sold Caldecott House. However the General's widow Amy Bailie moved to Wharf House with her daughter Hope, a spinster who will be remembered by many older residents. She died in 1969. Caldecott House was then purchased by a Mrs Boyd and became the short-lived Caldecott Hotel. During the war it was requisitioned by Bomber Command Accounts.

Immediately after the war Caldecott House became a Dr Barnado's Home with Walter Brampton as superintendent. The Dr Barnardo's summer fete was one of highlights of Abingdon's year. Many celebrities officiated including Princess Margaret, Jack Hawkins, Bert Weedon and Sir Edmund Hillary, conqueror of Mt. Everest. Caldecott House was still in vast grounds and had every kind of sports field, kitchen gardens, horse riding and even a boathouse.

In 1972 Caldecott House was demolished and replaced by today's St Amands housing estate (rarely known as Grestun's Estate)

For at least a hundred years prior to this Caldecott House had hosted flower shows and fetes. Many in Abingdon would have known Dr Barnardo's children as classmates and friends.

This partial history is derived from many sources who will all be later credited, but I must mention Mrs Julie Gray who researched much of this information. I have also recently made some exciting progress recently - more of that later. Many of the names in this short history are commemorated by streets, and many well known local families were at one time in service at Caldecott house, the Wiblins and Juggins for instance.

The main purpose, however, of putting this article in AAHS news is to request any anecdotes or photos relating to Caldecott House. In particular I'd like to receive photos of the kitchen gardens, the house from the Ock side, the boathouse, the 18 (prefab) bungalows, MG Sports Club, good quality interior shots, anything relating to Caldecott Hotel, Caldecott Farm, The RAF years, photos of the demolition, but really anything. I'd also obviously like to hear of any corrections/additions to this history, some of which is anecdotal. Please send the information to David Rayner, 12 Godfrey Close, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 5RA or to david@rayninfo.co.uk or telephone 01235 537860 or contact AAHS.

David Rayner (david@rayninfo.co.uk) and Julie Gray