Secret Chinese army that helped us win Great War

By **Danny Buckland**

RETIRED property manager John de Lucy was going through the contents of a cupboard that he inherited 40 years ago when he came across a treasure trove of First World War memorabilia. Stuffed at the back were boxes of glass slides – the early 20th-century equivalent of photographic negatives.

The rare collection of images had been taken by John's grandfather, Lieutenant William James Hawkings. They turned out to be a fascinating visual record of the daily lives of a conveyor belt of Chinese workers who were transported from farming communities in their homeland to maintain the British Army's supply lines in northern France under thundering skies and incessant danger.

About 5,000 miles from home they were set to work digging trenches, unloading freight and ferrying munitions to the front. Freeing up British troops from such tasks meant more men could be released to fight on the frontline in Flanders.

The unique slides show the Chinese at work – and occasionally play – as they spent years as an indentured labour force working 12 hours a day, six days a week. Many remained in France until 1921 clearing unexploded bombs from the battlefields.

"I knew there were some boxes from his time in China but had no idea that they were such an important part of history," says de Lucy. "I read the title 'Chinese Labour Corps' on the box but it meant nothing to me. Yet these men were involved in a crucial part of the war effort. Many of them paid with their lives and their story has seldom been told."

Lieutenant Hawkings came from a family of British traders and property developers who were in China when the First World War broke out. China was neutral at first but allowed the Allies to hire almost 100,000 workers who endured a three-month journey from Shandong province in cramped conditions on merchant ships. After arriving in Liverpool and Plymouth they were dispatched to the front.

Pictures: ROGER ALLEN /NORTH DOWNS PICTURE AGENCY / WJ HAWKINGS COLLECTION

HONOURABLE: The efforts of the Chinese Labour Corps, above, were recorded by officer William Hawkings, below left, and his grandson John de Lucy

Thousands of labourers came from China to the Western Front to work for the British forces. Many perished and now there are calls for their bravery to be honoured

THE workers signed on for a small weekly allowance, says de Lucy. "Because of the difficulty with their names, they were given a number on a brass disc that was fixed to their wrists. Their fingerprints were taken to help identity them and Scotland Yard even sent out one of its officers to oversee the task as it was quite a new technique back then."

Somerset-born Hawkings, 34, whose third daughter was born while he was at the front, was a fluent Mandarin speaker and was adored by the workers of the No 12 Labour Corps. Other officers, however, treated their Chinese workers so badly that they mutinied and 27 of their number were then shot in the streets of Boulogne.

The majority worked tirelessly and bravely for the war effort but also observed Chinese holidays and held kite-flying competitions. Some cultivated vegetable gardens to provide extra food and proved to be so skilled that they won several competitions at agricultural shows in Abbeville in 1918.

They gradually faded out of history but a century after the first ship set sail from China the photographs were discovered and a national campaign to establish a memorial in the UK in their honour is gathering pace.

The photographs have been displayed in an exhibition entitled A Good Reputation Endures Forever at Durham University's Oriental Museum and they feature in a new book, The Chinese Labour Corps, detailing their part in British history.

De Lucy's great-grandfather took his family to China as a missionary in 1886 and then became an influential businessman.

Three of his family – his younger brother Owen, son Edward junior and William Hawkings, who had married his daughter Gladys – were commissioned in the Chinese Labour Corps and subsequently served in France. "There were large British settlements in China and as there was a shortage of fighting men following the Battle of the Somme, it made sense to bring in foreign labourers," comments de Lucy, who lives in Tunbridge Wells in Kent.

"British people in China would have enlisted and my grandfather would have wanted to play his part. He was almost 35 and too old for a frontline role so this was a way he could join the war effort.

"He was very involved in the recruitment and even travelled back to China to do a lecture tour to drum up more recruits as the war dragged on."

The Chinese, who were part of a 200,000-strong labouring force employed throughout the war, lived in sectioned-off huts but would decorate them with traditional lanterns. They were told that they would serve no closer than 10 miles from the fighting but that distance decreased to a mile and many workers were killed by German shelling and attacks.

"Like most people I had no idea about this part of First World War history and it was certainly not mentioned in the family despite grandpa's involvement," explains de Lucy, who is married with four children.

BUT thankfully, he says, we have these incredible photographs which can tell the story. "They are a remarkable legacy and they show that he dealt with them with humanity because in many of the pictures they are smiling and relaxed – they are not formally posed.

"It is time to recognise their efforts and you wonder what we would have done without them. They helped enormously."

Hawkings returned to China in 1920 and became choirmaster at Shanghai Cathedral and managing director of a trading company. He and his wife were interned by the Japanese in the Second World War and he was awarded the OBE for supporting the British community during that terrible period. He died in Darjeeling, India, in 1965 aged 82.

A campaign to establish a permanent memorial to the Chinese Labour Corps – an ornate 30-foot marble column – and spread the story across the British Chinese community is gathering momentum.

"There are around 40,000 First World War memorials in the UK but none to the Chinese, who clearly made a significant contribution," says Steve Lau, chair of the Ensuring We Remember campaign.

"The Chinese community has given huge support for a memorial. We want to rectify the injustice of the Chinese Labour Corps being forgotten. I don't think you can find any other group of 96,000 men who do not have a memorial."

About 2,000 Chinese labourers are recorded as having lost their lives in France – many during the 1918 flu epidemic – but unofficial estimates put the number at nearer 20,000.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission tends to 842 burial plots at a cemetery at Noyelles-sur-Mer, a former base and hospital for the corps near the Somme, which has a pagoda-style entrance.

Other graves are situated across France and in Liverpool and Folkestone, which were staging posts for the Chinese on their long journey to the front.

"Their efforts should be remembered and recognised," adds Lau. "A memorial to them is as much a British story as it is a Chinese one."

Telegrams — Telephones —

Folkestone 505
Hythe 64

MALTBY'S

Telegrams — Telephones —

Sandgate 31
Canterbury 454

Motor Works & Garage Ltd.

(ESTABLISHED 1897)

SHOWROOMS:

135—137, Sandgate Rd.,
Folkestone.

5, St. Peter's Street,
Canterbury.

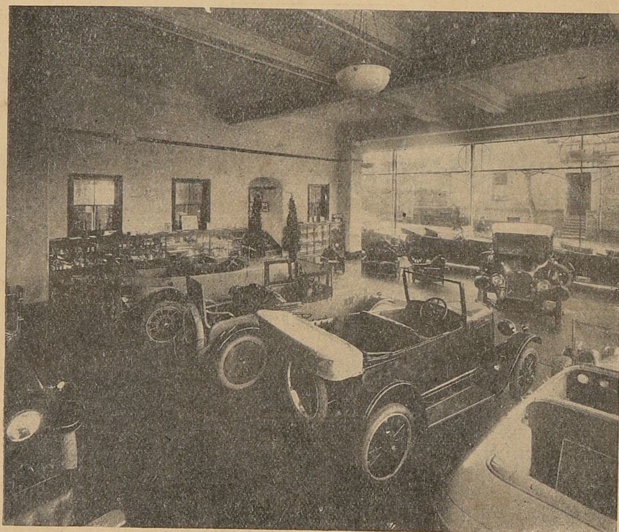
WORKS:

77, High Street,
Sandgate.

2, East Street,
Hythe.

Sole Agents and Distributors for East Kent for

Morris Oxford, Morris Cowley, Armstrong Siddeley, Bianchi, Minerva, Darracq.



FOLKESTONE SHOW ROOMS.

Also Agents for Buick, Oakland and Chevrolet Cars.

All Models kept in stock for immediate delivery.

The most completely equipped Works for High-class Coachwork and all classes of Repairs.

If you want a Reliable Car come to

MALTBY'S

and obtain the advantage of their unrivalled "Free Service System."

Lesley Leage

From: Roger Joyce
Sent: 22 December 2008 09:48
To: Lesley Leage
Subject: FW: Sir John Event - Commemoration Ceremony

for the John Moore (Corunna) Sandgate Society File.....

and a hard copy for me please

Roger

From: Chris Shaw [mailto:chris.shaw@shorncliffe redoubt.com]
Sent: 21 December 2008 23:24
To: 'Jan Holben'; 'Michael George'; 'Secretary@shorncliffe redoubt.com'; Roger Joyce
Subject: RE: Sir John Event - Commemoration Ceremony

Hi all,

Here is the adaptation from my Waterloo service. I would like each verse of “Not a drum was heard” to be taken by a different member of the SRPS/95th/Sandgate Society.
I will find out on numbers of re-enactors and firers ASAP.

The prayers are traditional versions, but can be tailored to Rev Robertson’s style.

Let me know what you think.

C

Shorncliffe Redoubt, Sandgate, Kent — The birthplace of the British Light Infantry

Christopher Shaw
Chairman
Shorncliffe Redoubt Preservation Society

chris.shaw@shorncliffe redoubt.com

From: Jan Holben [mailto:janet.holben@ntlworld.com]
Sent: 21 December 2008 21:33
To: Michael George; Chris Shaw
Subject: Re: Sir John Event - schedule

Hi both again,
and this is a suggestion for the Commemoration Ceremony - what do you think - is everything included - it is in the right order?

Sat 17/01/09 Commemoration Ceremony		
10.30	PC Chairman – Welcome and Intro	Cllr Geoffrey Boot
10.40	Sir John Story	Michael George
	Laying wreaths	Military/PC/all

	Blessing	Rev Jo Robertson
	Poem	Michael George
	Bugle	Bugler
11.15	Close	Cllr G Boot

Regards
Jan
From: Jan Holben
Sent: Sunday, December 21, 2008 8:52 PM
To: Michael George ; Chris Shaw
Subject: Re: Sir John Event - schedule

Hi Michael and Chris,
I would like to firm up the details for our Sir John Moore event - and this is my understanding so far - can you confirm.
Plus of course we need to firm up details for the Commemoration Ceremony at the Memorial on 17/1/09.

Date	Start	Finish	Event	Where	Wh
14/1 Wed	19.30	21.00	Sit John Moore and the Sandgate Connection	Chichester Hall	Mic Chr
17/1 Sat	10.30	11.15	Commemoration Ceremony	Sir John Moore memorial	Rev Chr Gec
17/1 Sat	11.15	12.15	Teas/Coffees for community	Gate28	All
17/1 Sat	12.30	13.30	Tour of Redoubt	Meet at Military Cemetery	Mic Chr
18/1 Sun	10.30	11.30	Church Service	St Pauls Church	Rev

Regards
Jan
From: Michael George
Sent: Tuesday, December 16, 2008 8:37 PM
To: Jan Holben
Cc: Chris Shaw
Subject: Re: Sir John Event

Hello Jan, Chris,

Never mind, we'll still make it a memorable week. I'm sorry to think that local schoolchildren, particularly from Sandgate Primary, may not be involved. I wonder if there is anything we can do about that. If Chris and Tony are down on the 14th, 15th or 16th, I would be hapy to contact the head and see if she would like a 'show and tell' session. (Chris, let me know when you would be available)

I also have a number of rare books and interesting pictures about Sir John which could perhaps go up in Sandgate Library for a couple of weeks, provided there is a secure cabinet for them. If you know

the librarian Jan, could you sound this out?

Best wishes,
Michael

On Mon, Dec 15, 2008 at 4:53 PM, Jan Holben <janet.holben@ntlworld.com> wrote:
Dear Chris and Michael,
I have just received a call from Brig Trevor Minter (De Haan Charitable Trust) to tell me that the charity trustees do not meet until Feb 09 and given the timescales for our proposed event it would obviously be too late.

So - much of what we proposed cannot go ahead (fireworks, community 'taste of spain' events, etc).

In terms of what we can still do - it looks like this:

14/1 Society Talk 'Sir John Moore and the Sandgate Connection' - already arranged between Sandgate Society and Michael George.
17/1 Laying wreaths, Readings, Blessings at the Sir John Moore memorial
18/1 Service for Soldiers followed by Tour of the Redoubt

Nov 95th Rifles Play at the old Garrison Church (The Tower Theatre)

I will contact you again soon so discuss details of the public event on 17/1.

Regards
Jan
From: Jan Holben
Sent: Monday, December 15, 2008 3:06 PM
To: Chris Shaw
Subject: Sir John Event - FIREWORKS - PERMISSIONS

Dear Chris,
I am still waiting on news of the funding bid - and will let you know as soon as I hear.

But on the assumption that we will be going ahead with our plans I am having to submit paperwork to SDC now to get the appropriate permissions for us to hold our **fireworks event** on land belonging to the Radnor Estates, plus Police, etc.

Please see list below which shows the documentation I must have quickly from the 95th Rifles - can you provide this to me and I will forward it to SDC. This documentation is urgently required.

I am busy putting the **fireworks event** plan together - and am working on the premise that the fireworks will start at 7.30pm (approx 15-20 mins) from the area adjacent to Sir John Moore memorial. On January 16th the tides are as follows: low water is at 9.57am in the morning and high water is at 14.47pm in the afternoon.

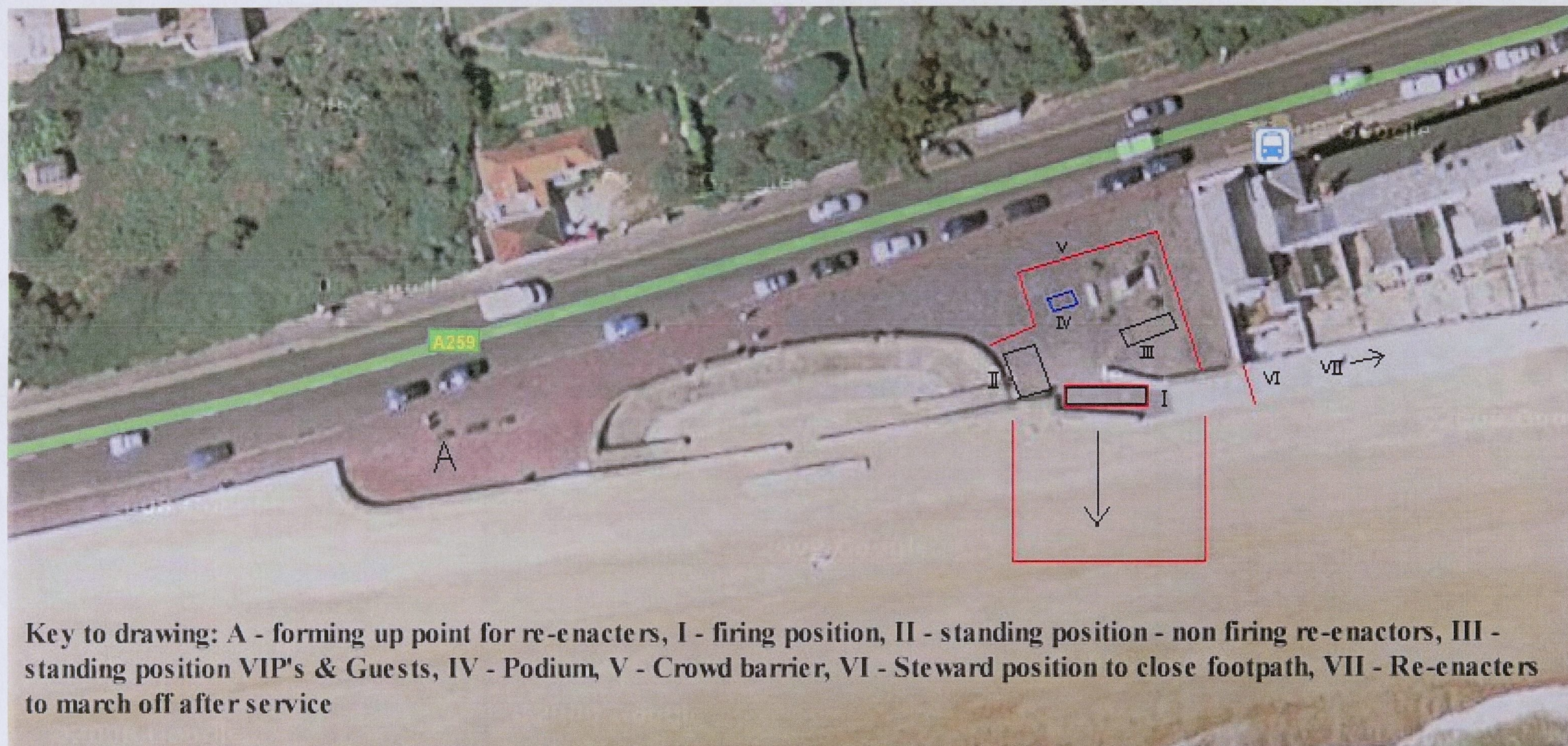
Regarding the temp events license - I can arrange this - and it is dependant on whether I advertise the fact that you will be there or not.

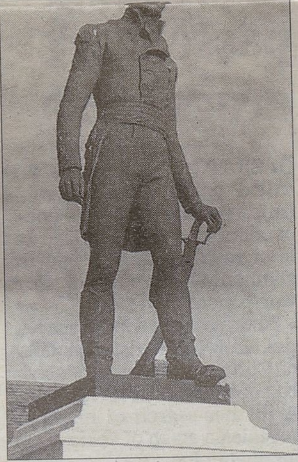
Details of 95th Rifles display - how many re-enactors and timings
Black Powder Cert
RA

PL
Written evidence of firearms cert
A 'temp events' license

Warmest regards

Jan


A259
A
V
IV
III
II
I
VI
VII
Key to drawing: A - forming up point for re-enacters, I - firing position, II - standing position - non firing re-enactors, III - standing position VIP's & Guests, IV - Podium, V - Crowd barrier, VI - Steward position to close footpath, VII - Re-enacters to march off after service



Statue of Sir John Moore, in Shorncliffe PD971078

Salute to famous general

ONE of Folkestone's most famous adopted sons, if not the most famous, Sir John Moore, will be commemorated this year on the anniversary of his death.

This month sees the 200th anniversary of the death of Lt Gen Sir John Moore, who was killed during the retreat to Corunna in 1809.

He is the man the barracks are named after, as he built Shorncliffe Camp and turned it into one of the most revolutionary training schools the Army had ever known.

At the time of his death, Sir John had been fighting Napoleon through Spain, but was forced to retreat after the French Emperor brought his greater numbers to bear.

Sandgate still features the remains of the old Redoubt earthworks, a memorial to Sir John.

Sandgate Parish Council will hold its own public commemorative service to coincide with Corunna's events on Saturday, January 17, starting at 10.30am followed by refreshments. Shortly after the service there will be a tour of the redoubt led by author and historian Michael George, starting at about 12.30pm at Shorncliffe Military Cemetery.

A website has been created which tells more about Sir John Moore at: http://www.sandgate-kent.org.uk/sirjohn/index.html

There will also be a talk on Sir John Moore by Michael George on Wednesday, January 14, at Chichester Hall at 7.30pm – arranged by the Sandgate Society. £2 entrance for non society members. There will also be a display of Napoleonic artifacts and rare books which tell the Sir John Moore Story on display at Sandgate Library throughout the week until the end of January.

**Order of Service to
Commemorate 200 Years
since the Death of
Sir John Moore
at Corunna in 1809**

Sandgate - Corunna 200

Corunna 200 Service
Sandgate, 17th January 2009

Introduction – Shepway Leader, KCC Rep & Sandgate Dist Cllr Robert Bliss

The Light Infantry prayer - by Father Edmund Hartley

Almighty God, creator and preserver of all mankind,
We beseech thee in thy wisdom to guide and guard all members of our armed forces.
Make them worthy of the great traditions bound up in their Regiments,
And as thy servants of old were chosen to obey with speed may they be bold to seek thy grace in every time of need,
And so be patient and persevering in running the race that is set before them,
This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord - Amen.

Sir John Moore, the Battle of Corunna and Shorncliffe Today – By Michael George

Prayer - by Rev Jo Robertson

Teach us, good Lord, to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to seek for rest; to labour and not to ask for any reward, save that of knowing that we do your will. - Amen.

1st Reading - Officer 95th Rifle

The Lord is my Shepherd - A Psalm of David

1. The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want.
2. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
he leadeth me beside the still waters.
3. He restoreth my soul:
he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
4. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me;
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
5. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
thou anointest my head with oil;
my cup runneth over.
6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Prayer - by Father Edmund Hartley

God our creator and redeemer, by your power Christ conquered death and entered into glory. Confident of his victory and claiming his promises, we entrust the members of our armed forces to your mercy in the name of Jesus our Lord, who died and is alive and reigns with you, now and for ever. Amen.

2nd Reading by Member of SRPS, Sandgate PC V.Chairman and Sandgate Society Chairman

Not a drum was heard
The Burial of Sir John Moore after Corunna

Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,
As his corpse to the rampart we hurried;
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot
O'er the grave where our hero we buried.

We buried him darkly at dead of night,
The sods with our bayonets turning,
By the struggling moonbeam's misty light
And the lantern dimly burning.

No useless coffin enclosed his breast,
Not in sheet or in shroud we wound him;
But he lay like a warrior taking his rest
With his martial cloak around him.

Few and short were the prayers we said,
And we spoke not a word of sorrow;
But we steadfastly gazed on the face that was dead,
And we bitterly thought of the morrow.

We thought, as we hollow'd his narrow bed
And smooth'd down his lonely pillow,
That the foe and the stranger would tread o'er his head,
And we far away on the billow!

Lightly they'll talk of the spirit that 's gone,
And o'er his cold ashes upbraid him—
But little he'll reck, if they let him sleep on
In the grave where a Briton has laid him.

But half of our heavy task was done
When the clock struck the hour for retiring;
And we heard the distant and random gun
That the foe was sullenly firing.

Slowly and sadly we laid him down,
From the field of his fame fresh and gory;
We carved not a line, and we raised not a stone,
But we left him alone with his glory.

Wreath Laying

Firing Party Fire Volley and General Salute.

Last Post followed by ~~~ Minutes Silence ~~~ and then Reveille.

Prayer - by Rev Jo Robertson

I am the resurrection and the life,' says the Lord. 'Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.' Amen John 11.25,26

The Lord's Prayer - by Rev Jo Robertson - ALL

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Final Prayer, Blessing and Dismissal - by Rev Jo Robertson

May God in his infinite love and mercy bring the Members of our Armed Services, living and departed into the arms of Lord Jesus, to a joyful resurrection and the fulfilment of his eternal kingdom, Amen.

And may God help each one of us to hold onto the memories of those who have walked this life before us and treasure the good they leave behind. Amen

May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back,
May the sun shine upon your face,
May the rains fall softly upon your fields.
Until we meet again,
May God hold you in the hollow of his hand.
Amen.

Roger Joyce

From: Roger Joyce [roger@rogerjoyceassociates.co.uk]
Sent: 06 January 2009 17:19
To: Jan Holben
Cc: roger@jointon.co.uk; Liz Joyce
Subject: RE: Sir John Moore - 200th Anniversary service and other activities

Excellent, Jan

is this going to the Press, too? Excuse my SOH, but we'd love you to rejoin the SS!

Roger

From: Jan Holben [mailto:janet.holben@ntlworld.com]
Sent: 06 January 2009 17:09
To: Sandgate News
Subject: Sir John Moore - 200th Anniversary service and other activities

200th Anniversary of the Death of Sir John Moore At Corunna

http://www.sandgate-kent.org.uk/sirjohn/index.html

January 2009 is particularly significant as it is the 200th anniversary of the death of Sir John Moore who was killed in Corunna in 1809. This extract from history paints the picture:

> When Napoleon arrived in Spain with 200,000 men, Moore drew the French northwards while retreating to his

embarkation ports of La Coruna and Vigo. Moore established a defensive position on hills outside the town, while being guarded by the 15th Hussars was fatally wounded at the Battle of Corunna, being "struck in his left breast and shoulder by a cannon shot, which broke his ribs, his arm, lacerated his shoulder and the whole of his left side and lungs"

In Corunna a number of events will take place to commemorate the death of Sir John Moore who is something of a national hero there - including laying of wreaths and public events.

Sir John Moore is also a significant figure here in Sandgate, Kent – his training methods were the basis of the tactics by means of which Wellington was able to succeed in Spain and at Waterloo. In fact John Moore's greatest contribution to the British Army lay in his carefully designed plan for building and training the Light Division in the years 1803 and 1806 at Shorncliffe Camp here in Sandgate.

On the escarpment we still have the remains of the old Redoubt earthworks where these men were trained and there is a Memorial to Sir John Moore – with Sir John looking towards Shorncliffe Camp, on the Sandgate Esplanade in Sandgate.

Sandgate Parish Council are holding a public commemorative service to coincide with Corunna's events on **Saturday 17th January** starting at 1030 hrs and finishing at approximately 11.45 hrs followed by refreshments – ALL ARE INVITED. Shortly after the service there will be a Tour of Sir Johns Redoubt at Shorncliffe led by author and historian Michael George which starts at 1230 hrs at Shorncliffe Military Cemetery. Details of Sir John Moore events and activities are shown below.

Talk: 'Sir John Moore and the Sandgate Connection' – a talk given by well known author of 'Coast of Conflict' and historian Michael George will take place on Wednesday 14th January at Chichester Hall at 7.30pm – arranged by the Sandgate Society. £2 entrance for non society members.

Service: A public service to be held on Saturday 17th January at 10.30am at the Sir John Moore memorial (west end of Sandgate). All are invited to join us for this service. Introduction by Leader of Shepway and Sandgate District Councillor Robert Bliss – with readings and prayers by Rev Jo Robertson and other local people. Representatives from re-enactors groups 95th Rifles and 1st Footguards will also be present in full period military uniform. There will be a bugler present and the re-enactors will fire a volley. The service will be followed by refreshments at a local bar.

Tour of Sir Johns Redoubt: At 12.30pm on Saturday 17th January, following the Service, there will be a Tour of Sir

Johns Redoubt – led by well known 'Coast of Conflict' author and historian Michael George assisted by Re-enactors from the 95th Rifles. Starting at Shorncliffe Military Cemetery - West Road. Please wear appropriate clothing and footwear for weather.

Library Display: There will be a display of Napoleonic artifacts and rare books which tell the Sir John Moore Story on display at Sandgate Library throughout the week until the end of January.

Lesley Leage

From: Jan Holben [janet.holben@ntlworld.com]

Sent: 12 January 2009 13:29

To: Glenis; Geoffrey Boot; Robert Bliss; Chris Shaw; Mel & Barbara Witham; Mark PCSO; Jo Sandgate; Roger Joyce; Roger Joyce; Mark Pullen; Father Edmund Hartley; Michael; JillPartridge31; jillpartridge

Cc: stephen.noddings@kent.pnn.police.uk; Beverley Saunders; Matt Curtis - Kent PA / Communications

Subject: Sir John event - order of service V7

Dear All,
Thank you for attending our meeting on Saturday to go over the fine detail of Saturdays service. Here is the latest draft of the Sir John order of service (when you view this doc you will note that the order of pages is out of sync - this is so that the document can be printed out as an A5 booklet. However the pages are numbered). This order of service doc (attached) will be handed out to members of the public so that they can follow the service.

Event details to note are as follows:

- Father Edmund Hartley will take the 1st and 3rd prayer. Rev Jo Robertson will take all others.
- Not a Drum was Heard ...will be read by Chris Shaw first two verses, Jan Holben verses 3 to 5 and Roger Joyce verses 6 to 8
- 1st Reading - Psalm 23 will be by Hon Ronald Brighouse
- Wreaths to be laid in groups of 3 or 4 at a time - order as follows: Civic first, British Legion, Military (if any present) and Napoleonic Regiments - *please let me know if I have this order wrong.*
- Music: If Sea Cadets are present will request to play Over the Hills and Far Away and/or The British Grenadier
- Music: If Sea Cadets not present (this is more likely) - 1st Footguards will provide pipers and drums at the start and end of service whilst people are getting into place.
- Last Post and Revaley: Musician will play Last Post on Cornet. Revaley will be played by Bugler from Gurkhas if present, if not by Musician on Cornet.
- Firing the Volley: Napoleonic Regiments will line up behind Sir John Moore memorial close to the Sea Wall and will fire out to sea - 1 volley only.
- Firing the Volley: Napoleonic Regiments will **load** and fire. The **loading** will give extra time for folk to be excluded from firing area.
- Event Stewards wearing Yellow Jackets will ensure folk do not wander into the Road and are excluded from the Firing area when the Volley takes place. Two policemen will also be in attendance in the general area throughout the service. I will prepare briefing for Stewards.
- Domestics including Safety warnings will be read out immediately before the service starts by Jan Holben.
- PA system is being provided by Kent PA - 1 mike and speakers. A small van will be parked close by with this equipment.
- No parking cones will be placed alongside the Sir John Moore area to exclude cars until after the service.
- Napoleonic Regiments will be assembled around 10am at their designated meeting place.
- Other key people (RB, Rev Jo, Father Edmund, JH, RJ, MG) should be in place around 10.15am.
- Plan of Sir John area attached which indicates where everybody is standing.

- British Legion Standard Bearers and any other Military Personnel to stand to the road side of the Non Firing Napoleonic re-enactors facing the podium.
- People laying wreaths will approach the Sir John Moore Memorial from the front - lining up in front of the two planters and walking between the two planters to lay the wreaths at the foot of the Sir John Memorial.

Warmest regards

Jan

History Today January 19

The Western Squadron and the Blockade of Brest

In the wars with France from 1745 to 1815 the French naval base was blockaded from English Channel ports miles to its leeward

Richard C. Saxby

THE CREDIT FOR BEING the first man to suggest the creation of what Lord Barham in 1805 called 'the mainspring from which all offensive operations must proceed' is usually given to Admiral Vernon who, writing to the Admiralty on September 6th, 1745, said, 'A western squadron, formed as strong as we can make it . . . and got speedily out into the Soundings, might face their united force, cover both Great Britain and Ireland and be in condition to pursue them wherever they went, and be at hand to secure the safe return of our homeward bound trade from the East and West Indies'. The general idea was not entirely new, but it had never been set forth before in such clear terms. Not that putting it into practice was so simple as Vernon made it sound. Indeed, the complexities were so great that they were never fully mastered, and so fascinating that historians have been arguing about them ever since. Most of the underlying problems were geographical, and so, before discussing Vernon's proposal, it is advisable to survey the area concerned – the English Channel and its western approaches.

The most important thing to remember is tha the prevailing winds blew from the south-west. The major French base was at Brest on the extreme north-west corner of France and, though there were a few alternative ports on the Biscay coast, there were none of any importance in the Channel. Hence the reluctance with which French fleets ventured to the east of Brest unless, as in 1779, they were accompanied by Spanish forces and confident of overwhelming superiority. There was too great a danger of their getting into the position of the Armada and being forced to return home around the north of Scotland. The British bases, by contrast, were all in the Channel and hence to leeward of Brest. The most westerly of them was at Falmouth, 100 miles due north of Ushant, so small as to be of use only to frigates. Next came Plymouth, which was a useful dock-yard, but dangerous in south-westerly gales. Torbay was safe under these conditions, but hazardous when the wind came strongly from the south-east. Finally, Spithead was safe under all weather conditions, but 210 miles from Ushant. Moreover, leaving it involved sailing away from Brest to the anchorage at St Helens, three miles south-east, which meant that on occasion ships could be wind-bound for days or even weeks. To take one example of many, at the end of 1796 Lord Bridport failed to interfere with the French operations around Bantry Bay because he was unable to sail from Spithead to St Helens and then, when he could do this, the wind stopped him getting down Channel. The Solent, which has sometimes been suggested by modern historians as an alternative route, was always considered impossible for anything like a fleet. During the eighteenth century the general practice was to think of Torbay as an advanced anchorage and Spithead as a base.

So much for the map. We may now return to Vernon and to September 1745. At that time, the French were threatening to launch an invasion from Dunkirk in support of the Young Pretender and the Admiralty had sent heavy ships to Vernon off that place and drawn their main force back into the mouth of the Channel east of Brest. Vernon was trying to point out that this left the French entirely free to cruise in the Atlantic, to attack convoys and to reinforce their squadrons in

faster rate. Girls formerly had tended one loom, two at the most, while now four was normal. Paid by the piece, girls were forced to compete under a new system of premiums whereby the overseer received a bonus for production above and beyond the normal quota. This affected the relations of the girls with their superiors, with whom they had previously been on pleasant terms, almost as fathers and daughters. New men took advantage of their positions to threaten the girls with lower pay and dismissal if production rates were not kept high.

In the light of increasingly restrictive and unpleasant circumstances, it was small wonder that the girls, educated and independent as they were, became involved in striking for higher wages and in the movement for a ten-hour day.[1] Under the able leadership of Sarah Bagley, the Lowell Female Labour Reform Association was formed. Miss Bagley, the vociferous opponent of the *Lowell Offering*, wrote stirring appeals for the *Voice of Industry* and *Factory Tracts*, the paper of the Lowell Female Labour Reform league, for the operatives to join forces against the 'driveling cotton lords'. She spoke in many of the corporation towns and assisted in the formation of branches of the Female Labour Reform Association. Her Lowell group was the leader and encouraged the support of the ten-hour movement, initiated by the English-born male operatives of the Fall River-New Bedford area, which had not developed along the lines of Lowell's female operative system.

Ironically, as Hannah Josephson notes in *The Golden Threads* (1949), the oft-maligned English system, by 1845, had four to six fewer hours in the working week, two more holidays per year, and most British operatives were required to tend but two looms. In 1847, the ten-hour day became law in Great Britain, even though the Acts of 1850 and 1853 were necessary to establish and further define actual protection under the law.

The inequities that existed in what had been the most widely-praised manufacturing town of its day had permeated the corporate structure. Management no longer took a benevolent attitude toward the welfare of the operative. What had been the showplace of the industry was in ferment, the labourers speaking out against the owners, clamouring for shorter hours and higher piece rates.

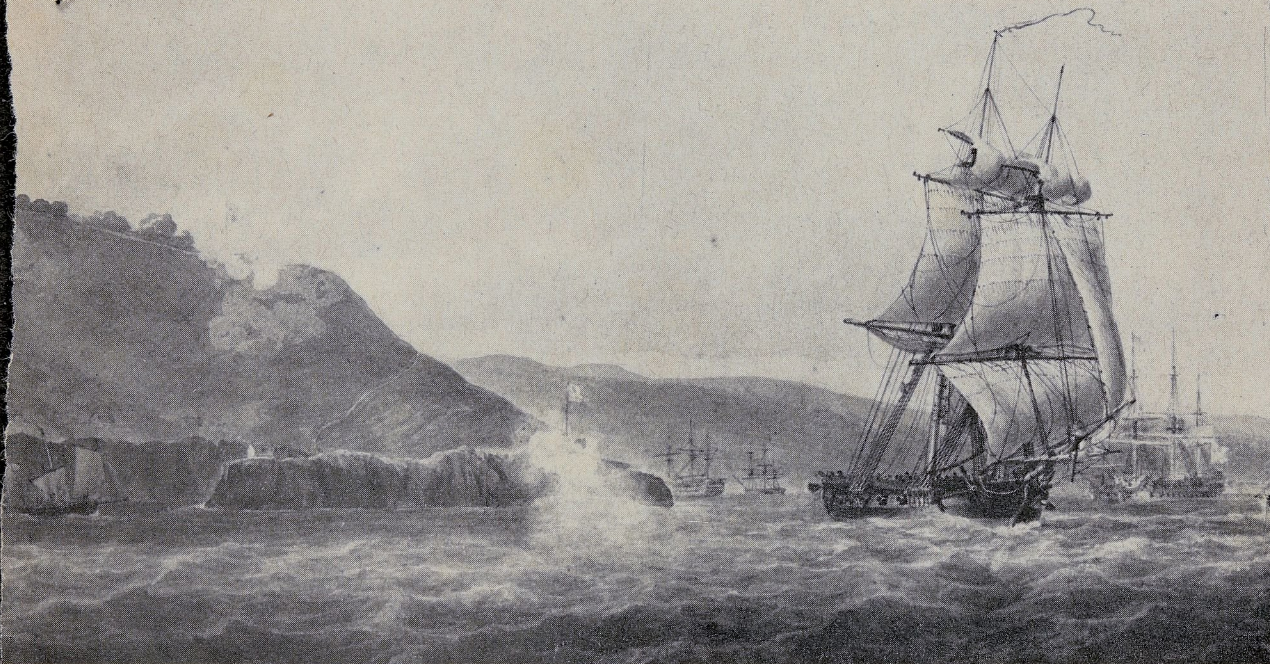
The development and spread of the corporation system, and its attendant push for profit and production, spelled the end of the experiment begun at Waltham in 1813. The original investors were perhaps more sincerely moral than their successors, but the fact remains that as the philosophy of manufacturing was altered, when the operatives felt the pinch and began to rebel, Lowell lost the place it had held in the public eye, and the system as originally envisaged was finished. The newer investors wanted fast and large returns with no trouble from the workers. By chance, the agitation for better working conditions coincided with great famine in Ireland, which brought to the United States large numbers of immigrants more willing to work under worsening conditions than were the militant Yankees.

A rather rapid transformation took place in Lowell, as later in many other corporation towns. By 1850, fifty per cent of the working population of Lowell was of Irish birth. The boarding-house residency requirements were generally ignored, and by the 1870s the boarding-houses were sold to private landlords. And, as the Irish and those who followed them began to chafe and strike under the management's dictum, there were always successive waves of new immigrants from other lands to fill their places.

The concept that had been put into practice with such promise at the Boston Manufacturing Company in 1813, that had enjoyed such success at Lowell in the 1820s and 30s, had been put to the test and failed. As a long-term achievement, the Waltham experiment and its flowering at Lowell did not make a permanent, positive contribution to labour practices in the textile industry in America. The operatives, however, the literary ladies who were the paragons of their day, made history for themselves on their own merits.

---

[1] Not until 1874 did a ten-hour day become law for women and children in Massachusetts. Men, who had the vote and could influence politicians and legal procedure, had received ten-hour benefits since the eighteen-fifties, the dates varying with individual trades.



By courtesy of the Trustees of the National Maritime Museum

The brig Childers *under fire from the Brest forts, January 2nd, 1793; the first naval engagement of the French Revolutionary War; water colour by Nicholas Pocock*

the Indies. He argued that, by moving the ships forward to blockade Brest, the Admiralty could make all secure at one stroke and need no longer use valuable ships of the line to cover each individual theatre. Furthermore, he drew attention to what had been the prevailing habit of tying the movements of the British fleet to the protection of convoys rather than to the activities of the French. Too often the ships of the line were held at Spithead, waiting for the trade, while their proper enemy sailed unimpeded.

It should be noted that throughout the century the British, by a combination of close reconnaissance and straightforward espionage, were often able to anticipate the preparation of French squadrons. If these could not be intercepted in force, they could be shadowed; and it was routine to send out fast frigates or the like ahead of them with warnings for foreign stations.

Vernon's remarks were taken to heart at least by Anson, a member of the Board of Admiralty, and twice in 1747 French convoys were caught and attacked off Cape Finisterre. These successes were gained as a result of periodic cruises rather than permanent close blockade, but Anson was so impressed as to write, 'The best defence for our colonies, as well as our coasts, is to have a squadron always to the westward as may in all probability either keep the French in port, or give them battle with advantage if they come out'. During the Seven Years War, 1756-63, when he was First Lord of the Admiralty, Anson was able to see his ideas put into practice. Especially when the danger of invasion was at its height in 1759, Hawke kept up a blockade of Brest so close that it was hardly equalled again until 1803, declaring, 'Except I shall be drove off by winds and weather I shall keep them constantly in view so as either to prevent their coming out or doing my utmost in case they should to take and destroy them'. His tactics were to remain off Ushant unless the south-westerlies blew so strongly that the French could not possibly come out. Then, leaving a number of frigates behind, he would run for Torbay, reckoning to be able to return on the first favour-

By courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery

Admiral VERNON, *1684-1757, who first suggested the Western Squadron; portrait by Gainsborough*

able wind before the enemy could take advantage of his absence.

During fine weather Hawke's ships dominated the area, surveying the coast and helping themselves to fresh meat by a little cattle-raiding. Not only did they disrupt the French plans for invasion, but they also provided the shield behind which British armies conquered Canada and entrenched themselves in India and the West Indies. Nothing could more conclusively have proved the wisdom of Vernon's and Anson's theories. It was almost a bonus when in November, after Hawke had been driven into Torbay, Admiral Conflans, taking advantage of his temporary absence to escape, was pursued and routed in Quiberon Bay.

Hawke's blockade has been held up as an example of how things could be managed, and British strategists in the American War of Independence have been severely criticized for their failure to emulate it. This criticism may well be sound and reasonable; but in order to judge, it is necessary to look more closely at a number of factors.

The first thing that stands out is that in the Seven Years War the Royal Navy was for once able to deal with the Bourbon powers separately. Spain did not become a belligerent until 1762, by which time the French navy had long since been defeated. In the previous war, that of the Austrian Succession, hostilities began with Spain in 1739 and with France, to all intents and purposes, in 1740. In the following war, the French intervened against us in 1778 and the Spaniards joined them in 1779. Thus, it was unusual that in 1759 we were able to concentrate on only one enemy. This made a vast difference.

The mounting of a close blockade of Brest was an expensive operation in terms of the number of ships required to keep up a constant watch. This was before coppering of ships' hulls had helped to protect them against barnacles and long before the Admiralty had been persuaded to take effective measures against scurvy. Sickness and routine wear-and-tear were bound to necessitate visits to port within three months or so, quite apart from the inevitability of more serious damage on such a coast.

In fact, extraordinary efforts were made to keep the ships at sea during the summer of 1759 by sending out supplies of all kinds and, however unscientific the dietary arrangements, great success was achieved. One must doubt, nonetheless, if such efforts could have been sustained over a longer period. Certainly they were out of the question during the winter. This was, after all, the eighteenth century, not an age famed for its administrative efficiency. The events of 1795 were to show what could happen in similar circumstances.

It has been argued that since Hawke was in Torbay when the French sailed that November and, with the aid of his scouts, still caught them, he might just as well have waited there all the time. This is sound only on the assumption that the sole object was the prevention of invasion and the destruction of the French fleet, which clearly it was not. The best summing-up, perhaps, is that on this occasion close blockade was found to be possible and that it unreservedly worked. The alternative strategy pursued in the American

War of Independence definitely did not work. That contest was a very different story, not least, as has been suggested, because the calls on the Navy's resources were much greater. Not only did it have to cope with both France and Spain, and later Holland, but, before they entered the war, operations were already in progress against the rebellious colonies. These may have had no significant fleet, but they were capable with their cruisers and privateers of doing much damage on the Atlantic supply routes unless convoys were properly escorted.

That the Navy was also handicapped by the way in which it was neglected after the Peace of Paris in 1763 has long been a commonplace. For many years the name of Lord Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty from 1771 to 1782, was vilified and he was held up as the principal author of his country's misfortunes by historians who turned from him only to belabour Lord George Germain, the Secretary for the Colonies and the man who actually directed the war. But more recently the climate of opinion has changed and an exercise in rehabilitation has been under way. Nowadays both Sandwich and Germain are well on the way to becoming national heroes, the victims of other men's failings. The truth remains a little obscure.

One thing, however, may be observed. Readers of Sir Herbert Richmond on the war of 1739-48, and Mr Piers Mackesey on that of 1775-83, will find many similarities and may easily conclude that the failings of the naval administration in the latter conflict were by no means so glaring. The stories of the two wars show the normal eighteenth-century process of a navy, run down during the peace, manned by the press-gang and other inducements, refurbished by slack and inefficient dockyards and, with painful slowness, being turned into a highly capable fighting machine. Indeed, the Seven Years War tells much the same tale, except that here the preceding peace had been shorter and less ground had been lost.

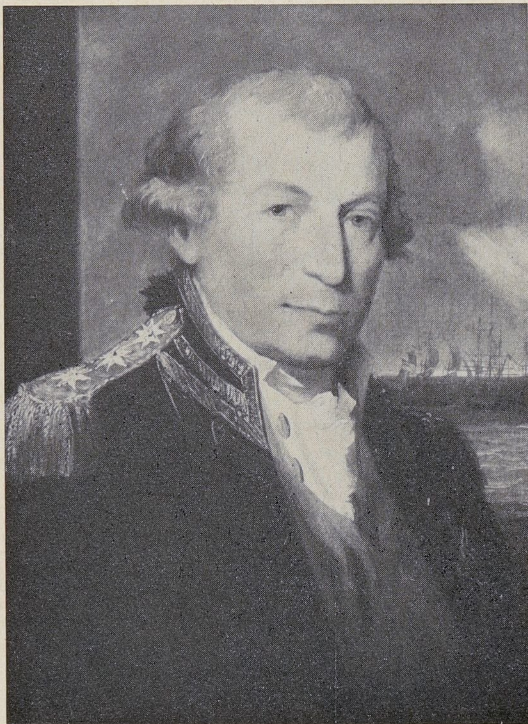
There is no need to assume that the Royal Navy was materially in any worse case when France entered the War of American Independence than it had been when she entered the War of Jenkins's Ear. One factor that was unique to

By courtesy of the Trustees of the National Maritime Museum

Admiral LORD HAWKE, *1705-86, who kept a close blockade on Brest; portrait by F. Cotes*

the American War was that, for political reasons, many Admirals refused to take the commands that should have been theirs, so that from 1779 onwards the Channel Fleet in particular was led by inferior men. Officers like Sir Charles Hardy, Geary and Darby were the scrapings of the barrel and, though on the whole they did better than might have been expected, they are hardly to be mentioned in the same breath as Anson or Hawke.

Even when the Channel Fleet was not thrown completely on to the defensive by the ineffective but overwhelming incursions of the combined French and Spanish fleets, it exerted no firm and lasting control of the western approaches. As in the worst days of the Austrian Succession War, it regulated its movements by the sailing times of convoys rather than by the sailing times of its enemies and made very little attempt to block the exits from Brest. The French squadrons sailed unimpeded to the West Indies and the Indian Ocean, whither British squadrons had in turn to



By courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery

JOHN JERVIS, EARL OF ST VINCENT, *1735-1823; portrait by Abbott*

be sent after them. One cannot help suggesting that, at a time when every ship was precious, a strong concentration in the Soundings might again have proved to be the most economical way of running the naval war. Admittedly, there could have been no fleet train of supply ships, for every vessel was already employed in supporting the army in America and attention was distracted as it had not been previously by the Spanish siege of Gibraltar. Three times full-scale operations had to be mounted to relieve the fortress, which meant that ships could not be re-fitted and overhauled as they should have been. The Government even considered abandoning the place. The feeling remains that more ought to have been done to maintain a strong, active western squadron, and consideration of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars does nothing to weaken it.

The story of the French Revolutionary War is, in fact, of a steady move from the methods of the American War back to those of 1759. In 1793 the commander was Howe, who had led Hawke's fleet through the storm into Quiberon Bay and had been one of those who refused to serve under Sandwich. He was strongly opposed to any attempt to keep heavy ships off Brest, writing, 'the enemy can always be in readiness to escape after a gale of wind by which the blockading squadron has been driven off and dispersed, the ships much damaged in their masts, sails and rigging and their crews disheartened and disgusted'. He believed that the best arrangement was to have frigates off Brest, keeping watch, the main fleet sheltered and ready in Torbay and a few ships at St Helens to protect the Channel. This policy was pursued throughout 1793, apart from a few cruises, leaving Howe open to most of the criticisms levelled fifty years earlier by Vernon. These were backed up by Dundas, then Home Secretary, but soon to be Secretary of War, who on October 12th, 1793, wrote that 'unless the great fleet of Brest is kept in its proper subjection by the great fleet of England, all subordinate operations must be nugatory'.

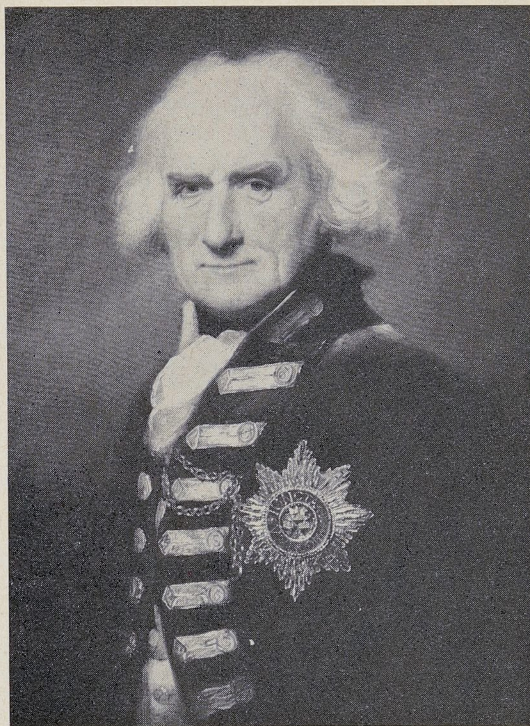
In 1794, when the war might have been brought to an end by the interception of a French grain convoy, Howe missed his opportunity in the old way by waiting to escort an outgoing convoy of his own. That he subsequently defeated the French fleet at the Glorious First of June was poor compensation, though he had by his arrangement of priorities satisfied the merchants who constantly pressed the Admiralty to concentrate on commerce protection. And, if he showed little enthusiasm for aggressive warfare in the summer, he withdrew entirely from the scene in the winter. Then the fleet went back to Spithead, apart from two ships kept at St Helens for observation purposes.

Meanwhile, Pitt and Dundas were engaged in sweeping up French colonies, and destroying the British army, in the fever-ridden Caribbean. Sir Charles Middleton, later Lord Barham, commented in July 1795, 'It is this system of unlimited conquest that cripples us everywhere and diverts the fleet from its natural use . . . and but for this system half the number of ships now employed in the West Indies and in army convoys would

have been sufficient and the French been prevented from sending a single ship to sea'. It is certainly a point of view and one, as has been shown, not irrelevant to a discussion of the previous war, when the French fleet was a great deal more formidable. Middleton may well have had in mind the French winter cruise of 1794-95, when seventy merchantmen were taken before Howe ever got to sea. Even if they did lose five ships to the elements, Howe's attitude that the French might be left to cruise in the winter gales by themselves seems unduly complacent. After all, they had in addition reinforced Guadeloupe and sent six vital ships to Toulon.

As it happened, Howe was not to fly his flag again after February 1795, though remaining nominally in command of the Channel Fleet for another two years. His place was taken by Alexander Hood, Lord Bridport, an Admiral who has had a very bad press among historians, but who merits more study than he has received. His picture in the National Portrait Gallery shows an enigmatic face that commands attention. It is difficult to believe that it is of one normally regarded as something of a nonentity. Bridport was the son of a Dorset clergyman, younger brother of the more famous Samuel Hood, by now rising seventy. One or two single-ship actions during the Seven Years War had been to his credit; but he was chiefly remembered for having been caught out changing his log in highly suspicious circumstances before the court martial on Admiral Keppel in 1779. He had really had very little active service for the commander of Britain's principal fleet. Yet, though often neglected, his period of command between 1795 and 1800 is pivotal, covering the transition from the almost casually open blockade of Howe to the scientifically tight blockade of 1803-05.

The campaign of 1795 was dominated by the landing of an army of émigrés at Quiberon, a landing that soon ended in total disaster for the émigrés at the hands of General Hoche. The fleet was sent out to support this attempt and remained to back up the small-scale military operations that followed. It had barely subdued an attack of scurvy the previous year, and a hard winter revived that threat as well as bringing on catarrh and influenza. Dr Trotter, the physician,



By courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery

ALEXANDER HOOD, VISCOUNT BRIDPORT, *commander of the Channel Fleet, 1797-1800; portrait by Abbott*

tried to restore matters by scouring the West Country for fresh vegetables, but he was unable to obtain adequate quantities of molasses and lemons or to stop the Commissioners of Victualling reducing the allowance of fresh beef. Thus, a prolonged cruise could hardly fail to cause trouble unless supplies and relief ships were to be sent out at frequent intervals.

As it happened, the authorities had not yet re-learned that much and, after three months, about a thousand men were sick. But something they did re-learn; and that was the overall strategic advantage of having a fleet out in the Soundings. On July 14th, 1795, Earl Spencer, the First Lord of the Admiralty, wrote to Bridport, 'As it is now a principal object to keep up the command . . . of the seas in that quarter, the plan adopted by Government is to keep by successive reliefs a squadron constantly cruising off the ports of Brest and L'Orient'. It was a plan

to which the Government held for the next year-and-a-half, sending out a number of Admirals in rotation with small squadrons. Bridport was not one of these, and by October 1796 was asking to be employed. Such neglect seems strange, but it may well be that the Admiralty's reluctance to use him again as a stand-in for the still absent Howe was caused by his having given them a good deal of trouble early in 1795 when he objected to being in that situation. The heart of the matter, though nobody cared to say so, was that a commander-in-chief was entitled to one-eighth of all prize money awarded to ships under his command. All Admirals paid attention to that particular bonus and none more so than Bridport who, even among his peers, was a by-word for avarice.

At any rate, when he asked to be sent out he was promised his turn. But before it came round, the French had despatched an expedition from Brest to Bantry Bay to stir up the troubled Irish situation. That it got away shows how lax the blockade could still be, Admiral Colpoys having ended up forty miles out in the Atlantic where he had lost all contact with his small inshore squadron. The position was to some extent saved by Captain Sir Edward Pellew, who got among the expedition with his frigates, firing off confusing signal rockets, and causing it to separate from its commanders. There followed the strange pantomime of the leaderless French trying, in face of bad weather, to get into Bantry Bay to land their troops and the British trying, in face of contrary winds, to get out of Spithead to stop them. Neither side succeeded in its object. The French returned to Brest and the British arrived too late to intercept them. The otherwise insignificant episode shows how much still remained to be learned.

Formally taking over from Howe in the spring of 1797, just in time for the Mutinies, Bridport did much to apply the lessons of this Bantry Bay affair, to the point where by 1799 a writer in the *Naval Chronicle* could claim that the French were blocked-up 'much closer than they ever were before'. In a letter to the Admiralty, Bridport described the Channel Fleet's station as being as near Brest as wind and weather would permit; and this station he usually managed to occupy when reconnaissance showed that the French state of preparedness required it.

At first the Admiralty, who had been attacked in Parliament, were in favour of making the blockade even closer, and in January 1797 Spencer was considering the use of Douarnenez Bay as an anchorage. When, with an eye on prize money, the frigate-commander Pellew wrote that Brest no longer needed watching, and that he would be better employed cruising at large, the First Lord brusquely replied that his information suggested Brest needed watching more than ever; and the news that Bridport, driven by westerly winds, was in Torbay brought a sharp command to get back on station. The only regret was that he rarely had anything like enough ships of the line or frigates to do his job properly.

By the autumn it was a great relief to learn that the French, short of seamen as ever, were dismantling their battle fleet. In September, Spencer, reverting to form, was writing that the season of the year seemed to be rather advanced for the use of Torbay and, by the end of November, all ships of the line were withdrawn to Spithead as usual.

The almost inevitable result was a panic early in 1798 when a frigate brought news that the French were now making ready for sea. Once again the British fleet, this time under the temporary command of Sir Charles Thompson, spent several weeks trying to get from Spithead to St Helens and thence down Channel against perversely unco-operative winds. It was as well that this time the alarm proved to be a false one. But the Admiralty's reactions were indecisive. That summer they were holding ships back from Brest to help with coastal defence, or so that there might be a reserve safe in port if anything went wrong at sea. Spencer argued that there were enough ships in the blockade to cope with such French ships as seemed to be available for action.

He may well have been right, but it was hardly an aggressive policy, nor one calculated to gain complete command of the western approaches. It comes as no surprise that early in September their Lordships were warning Bridport not to take risks with the equinoctial gales. This warning may have been in his mind when a week later the wind came from the NNW with

By courtesy of the Guildhall Library

The Board of Admiralty in session; a print by Rowlandson and Pugin, 1808

great violence. Bridport, in the approved manner, made for Torbay to ride out the storm. He stayed there no longer than the wind compelled but, even so, an enemy squadron was out of Brest before he could get back and on its way to Ireland. As usual, the frigates had not run for Torbay and they were able to shadow the French Admiral Bompard till he could be rounded-up and his force dealt with off the Irish coast. This was, in fact, all fairly routine and not unlike the Quiberon action of 1759. The only criticism that can be made of Bridport is that he should have told his inshore frigates he was leaving them. As before, when winter came the Admiralty ordered all the ships of the line to retire to Torbay, summarily overruling Bridport's plea that a few might stay on guard.

That year all passed off well enough, but only because the French were planning a major venture for the spring. Their preparations soon became obvious to the British; and it seems astonishing that this did not prevent a failure that has been held against Bridport. On April 26th, 1799, under his very eyes, Admiral Bruix took the entire Brest fleet to sea and departed for the Mediterranean, where for several months he spread alarm and confusion. Admittedly it was a foggy morning, Bridport had far too few ships for the job and his one inshore frigate let him down badly. But he could have had two other scouts beside her, and they were not there because he had sent them off to investigate odd sails on the distant horizon. And it may be added that had he spent the previous four years training his captains they

would not have failed him so disastrously at the moment of crisis.

From that moment, certainly, even what credit he had at the Admiralty was quite gone, and they were only waiting for him to retire. Following Bruix's return to base in August, Lord Spencer himself visited Torbay to sound out opinion on the spot. That he was unable to find a suitable successor there is the only reason for Bridport's staying in command until April 1800, when St Vincent was brought back from the Mediterranean. Fortunately it was a quiet winter, chiefly marked by more urgent Admiralty insistence that frigates should be used to watch Brest and cut off coastal convoys rather than be dispersed in search of prize money.

So, on April 24th, 1800, to the alarm of those who knew his reputation as a martinet, St Vincent took over the command of the Channel Fleet. Historians have not ceased to hail the day as that on which the blockade of Brest really began. They have lauded St Vincent as whole-heartedly as they have condemned Bridport. This, as has been shown, is far too simple. Bridport unquestionably made many errors and too often put personal gain before the national interest, but he blockaded the French far more closely than anyone but Hawke and far longer even than he. It may be doubted if St Vincent during the ten months of his command did a great deal better, though he made a lot more fuss about it. The First Lord learnt of the inshore squadron almost as if it had not existed before, and he was told much of previous inefficiencies. St Vincent kept up a tighter watch during the winter, despite the usual timidity of Whitehall, briskly overriding Spencer's fears by the firm statement that frigates unsupported by ships of the line were useless off Brest. He also reminded the rather assertive First Lord that in the last resort orders were given by the Board. But in the end another French squadron, this time under Admiral Ganteaume, got away, again to the Mediterranean, in January 1801 after giving a week's notice of its intentions. It was done as Bompard had done it in 1798, by waiting until the British were driven off to Torbay and then hurrying out on the first favourable wind before they could get back. One cannot blame St Vincent, but one can perhaps point out that, for all his talk, he had done no better than Bridport.

He left shortly afterwards to take over at the Admiralty and was succeeded by Cornwallis, who was to hold the command through the vital period to come. The new Commander-in-Chief had joined the Navy in 1755, had fought at Quiberon and had played a distinguished part in the wars since. He was popular enough with his men to acquire a variety of nicknames, one of them, 'Billy Blue', being earned by the way he insisted on keeping the Blue Peter flying whenever driven by gales into Torbay; and they had to be very bad gales indeed. Under him the whole command was re-vitalized. Ships of the line and frigates were kept well inshore off Brest, other forces watched L'Orient and Rochefort and there were still frigates enough to the west protecting trade. A more aggressive attitude was adopted in the way of raids and cutting-out operations against the French and their convoys.

Much of this increased efficiency was due to the gain in experience from years of war and the fact that the Navy had more ships and fewer opponents. But all credit must be given to Cornwallis and his subordinates, who with untiring energy organized supplies and reliefs, moved their ships from place to place in response to French challenges and frustrated Napoleon's every attempt to mount an invasion. Now the western squadron came into its own, the king-pin of British naval strategy, dominating the vital theatre of operations so that Nelson could safely pursue the Toulon fleet to the West Indies with no fear of uncovering the British Isles.

Winter storms no longer made any difference to the closeness of the watch, though naturally and unavoidably much damage was sustained by the blockaders. Several ships were lost, but Cornwallis, freed from the old fears of scurvy, found it possible to stay at sea for as much as seven months at a time, something unthinkable only a few years before. Thus, in an unspectacular but effective way, the western squadron was proved to be capable of all and more than Vernon and Anson had foreseen.

After Trafalgar had been fought, its job became, of course, even less spectacular. Cornwallis departed in February 1806 and was followed by St Vincent, now over seventy, who resumed his

command until relieved by Lord Gardner in 1807. He was succeeded in 1808 by Lord Gambier, 'Preaching Jemmy', an unpopular officer of strong religious views, principally remembered for his failure to support Lord Cochrane's attack on a French fleet sheltering in the Aix Roads in 1809. This French force had come from Brest, which suggests that the tension of the blockade had, not unnaturally, slackened a little.

But the Channel Fleet retained its importance and soon found itself fully engaged in supporting the British armies in the Peninsula, not only by protecting convoys and attacking French supplies, but by enabling Wellington during the campaign of 1813 to shift his base from Lisbon to the Biscay ports even as he marched across Spain.

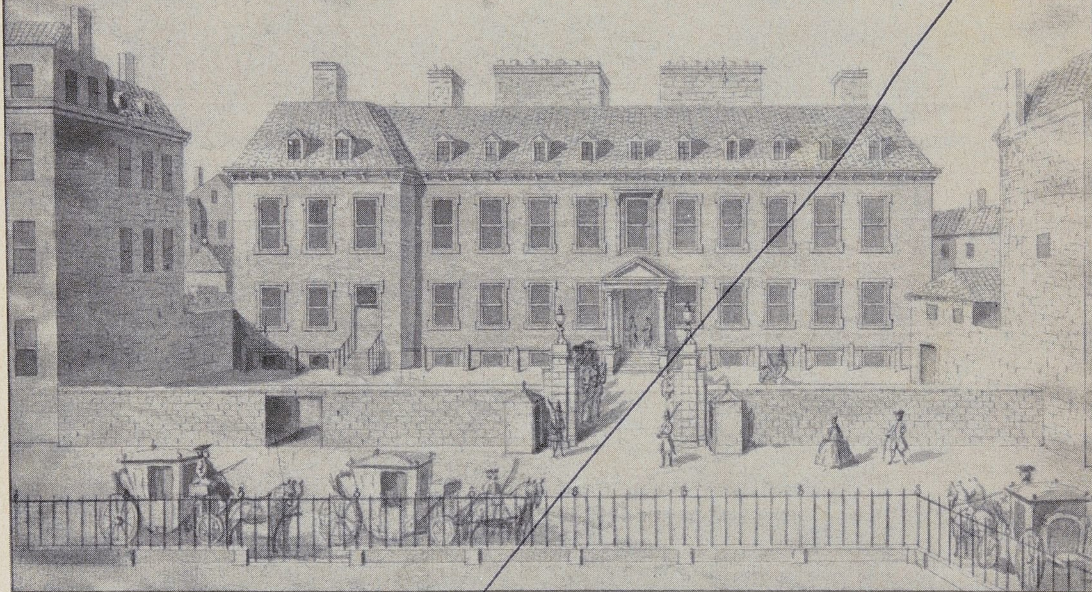
There was little excitement during those years as Lord Keith at last took over a command for which Spencer had considered him in 1799, but much hard labour. Rifleman Simmons, atop the Pyrenees in October 1813, saw something of it. 'One morning', he wrote, 'one of our ships was observed to be chasing a brig of war and got between her and the shore. As the boats from the English went to board her the Frenchmen got into theirs and made for the shore. A short time after she was one mass of fire and blew up. It was a beautiful morning and some thousands of veteran Englishmen, having a bird's-eye view of the whole affair, took a lively interest in the manner our brave tars performed their duty'. They were, after all, only where they were because of the brave tars.

It was fitting that at the last in the summer of 1815 Napoleon should have surrendered himself to one of those storm-beaten ships, the *Bellerophon*, that had all along, as Mahan said, stood between him and the dominion of the world. Not even Vernon, 'Old Grog', could have foreseen that, but he would certainly have approved.

By courtesy of the Bibliothèque Nationale

The Bellerophon *at Torbay, with Napoleon a prisoner on board; an engraving of July 1815*

Leicester House



By courtesy of Westminster City Library

Leicester House in 1748; a wash drawing by George Vertue

First built in the 1630s, Leicester House became the London home of three eighteenth-century Princes of Wales

Leonard W. Cowie

The building of Leicester House in the seventeenth century heralded the expansion of London north-westwards beyond Charing Cross. The pictorial map made about 1570, attributed to Ralph Agas, shows all the land between the churches of St Martin-in-the-Fields and St Giles-in-the-Fields as open pasture, on which animals are grazing and a woman is laying out washing to dry. The only buildings are the King's Mews, erected as early as 1377 and clustering at the back of Charing Cross. Later, the land belonged to the Crown, having been acquired about 1536 by Henry VIII, mainly from Westminster Abbey, probably with the aim of getting control of the springs that supplied his new palace of Whitehall with its water supply.

Much of this area was lammas land – enclosed land that was private property until Lammas Day (August 1st) when it reverted to common pasturage until Lady Day (March 25th); and from the early seventeenth century onwards, as the fields were built over, the householders had to pay 'Lammas' to the parish as compensation for loss of grazing rights. One of these was Robert Sydney, second Earl of Leicester, father of the ill-fated Algernon Sydney and of Dorothy, afterwards the beautiful Countess of Sunderland, who was painted by Van Dyck and was Waller's Sacharissa. In 1630 the Earl sought a licence from the Crown to build a London residence on

FORGED IN BATTLE: NATIONAL IDENTITY AND THE GREAT WAR

Army base where Canadians trained in the Great War faces wrecking ball

Mark MacKinnon
FOLKESTONE, ENGLAND — The Globe and Mail
Published Friday, Apr. 17 2015, 4:26 PM EDT
Last updated Saturday, Apr. 18 2015, 8:56 AM EDT

The latest series in the Globe and Mail's coverage of the First World War's legacy at 100

Before they reached the Western Front, most of Canada's fighters in the Great War got their first true taste of what was to come at a historic military base here on the windswept southeastern tip of Britain.

But now a sign that reads "Danger – Keep out" hangs from the padlocked iron gates, and trees grow out of derelict buildings that were once barracks housing soldiers anxious to get to the war before it ended.

One hundred years ago on Saturday, rail cars carrying members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force's second great wave of recruits arrived at Folkestone, a sleepy seaside town not far from the famed white cliffs of Dover. They were bound for nearby Shorncliffe, a red-brick compound on a rocky redoubt overlooking the English Channel and within earshot of the thunderous conflict they were soon to join.

Although the CEF's first division was already in the trenches – and about to make Canada known as a warrior nation, by facing the horror of poison gas at Ypres – the awful pointlessness of the war of attrition had yet to sink in. Newspapers of the time say the Canadians who arrived here on April 18, 1915, were a cheerful bunch, naively hoping for a taste of battle before the quick victory they still expected.

Many who trained at Shorncliffe came back on stretchers, and not all of them survived. Of the 471 First World War graves in the local military cemetery, more than 300 contain Canadians. Even more, of course, didn't come back at all. The nervous camaraderie they experienced at Shorncliffe was likely the last real happiness they knew.

Now, the scene of those warm memories is under threat. Many of the squat buildings that housed the Canadians en route to Belgium and France are seeing their last days. The British Ministry of Defence (MOD) is poised to hand much of Shorncliffe, which is less than 90 minutes from London, to one of Britain's leading home builders.

Last month, local councillors endorsed a plan that calls for demolishing several barracks as well as the stable that once housed Canada's herd of war horses. Much of the former training area will also be paved over to make way for 1,200 new houses and a sports complex.

"This heritage will be gone. This is what saddens me," says Chris Shaw, who has spent a decade battling to preserve the site. As the 52-year-old amateur historian describes how important he feels Shorncliffe is, or should be, both to Canada and to Britain, tears well up in his eyes.

He is an unlikely defender of Canadian military history – his true passion is the Napoleonic era, and his day job involves installing high-end entertainment systems for England's rich and famous.

Originally from Bromley, near London, he says his passion for battle re-enactments led him to Shorncliffe. He wondered what had become of the place the Duke of Wellington's revolutionary Light Division had trained in before locking horns with Napoleon – and was shocked by what he saw: a venerable institution overgrown with trees and weeds; with spent bullets, fired in training long ago, and now green with age, scattered among beer bottles and other rubbish. "I had this realization," he recalls, "that it was the birthplace of the modern British Army, and it was in a terrible state – and it was down to me to fight for it."

So the heritage trust he now leads is trying to raise millions of pounds to create a museum and education centre – a campaign given a boost last Christmas when a bevy of British pop stars released a charity recording in aid of the Shorncliffe Trust and the Red Cross.

On guard since 1794

The museum would celebrate a base that is more than two centuries old and now houses one of the British Army's few remaining Nepalese Gurkha units.

The army began to buy up land in the area in 1794, after French revolutionaries executed their monarchs and declared war on Britain. Although the invasion never came, the fear remained, and when Napoleon made the same threat a decade later, smoke from his army's fires could be seen across the channel. Now, Mr. Shaw says, the vast majority of the facility is to be lost forever, a victim of what he calls "the perfect storm of neglect, ignorance, complacency and lack of vision." The principle "Lest we forget" is being subsumed by the public's waning interest in military history and by the modern realities of its financing.

Not that Shorncliffe is alone. The MOD is unloading real estate across Britain as it grapples with a shrinking budget. The tactic is one way to forestall, at least temporarily, even deeper cuts as the army reduces its active troop strength by 20 per cent, from 102,000 to 82,000 (the Gurkhas at Shorncliffe also face the axe).

With British warplanes carrying out air strikes against Islamic State positions in Iraq, the defence brass is trying to find budget-conscious ways to also deal with Moscow's increased presence on its doorstep: Russian warships and aircraft have made ever more frequent appearances in the English Channel lately. There has also been renewed Argentine sabre-rattling over the Falkland Islands.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the fate of Shorncliffe falls well down the MOD's list of priorities – despite its storied past and a deep, abiding connection with Canada.

Locals spoke Canadian

The first Canadian troops sent to Britain late in 1914 camped about 250 kilometres west of Shorncliffe on the Salisbury Plain, not far from Stonehenge. But officers complained of harsh conditions during an especially wet winter when many soldiers fell sick and dozens died, both in training accidents and from an outbreak of spinal meningitis.

In the spring, after the Canadians had crossed the channel, Shorncliffe was made available for the second wave. "And so," reads The Globe's report on the July 1 festivities of 1915, "the fields and plains, the lanes and roads are filled with Canadian soldiers, celebrating their Dominion Day drilling, bayonet fighting, route marching, while overhead soars thrumming the watchful airship, Britain's Eye. For Britain has a business on hand."

In all, more than 600,000 Canadians enlisted during the war, and "a very large proportion of those raw recruits who were coming through to the Western Front would have been trained at Shorncliffe ... in particular, Vimy

Ridge," says Kent Fedorowich, a transplanted Manitoban who teaches imperial history at the University of the West of England in Bristol.

"You could argue," adds Dr. Fedorowich (who has a "special fascination" for Britain's relations with its dominions) "that a very well-established Canadian colony developed." Throughout the war, Folkestone was a major debarkation point for troops headed for the fighting. But it's also where many were billeted with local families, and where almost everyone liked to spend their free time.

Shorncliffe and Folkestone became so Canadianized that there are reports of locals picking up Canadian expressions and accents. Historians have noted that local residents started saying "Sure" instead of "Yes." A baseball league was formed, and a Maple Leaf Club was opened.

Shorncliffe was also the hub of efforts by a group of Canadian women, the Canadian Field Comforts Commission, who sought to provide a touch of home – everything from socks and underwear to familiar-brand cigarettes – to the soldiers stationed here. Locals jokingly referred to the Folkestone area as a suburb of Toronto.

According to a waterfront plaque, the Canadians "became part of Folkestone life" – so much so that people picked up Canadian expressions and accents. Researchers have found that, when asked something, they began to say "Sure" instead of "Yes."

So, by the time Folkestone and Shorncliffe had a baseball league, a Maple Leaf Club and the Canadian Field Comforts Commission, which offered a touch of home, from Canadian-made socks and underwear to familiar brands of cigarettes, locals jokingly referring to their town as a suburb of Toronto.

There was occasional trouble – petty theft was a problem, bigamy not unknown, and religious leaders criticized soldiers for playing sports on Sundays – but, Dr. Fedorowich says, "the locals really embraced the Canadians."

A century later, the feeling lives on.

"When I was a schoolboy – so, 60 years ago – we used to go up to the cemetery and put flowers on the Canadian graves, and they still do it today," says Mark Hatton, warden of nearby St. Martin's Church. "It became a tradition somewhere down the line, and British people like tradition."

In fact, schoolchildren have lain flowers on the military cemetery's 300-plus Canadian graves almost every July 1 since 1917. (More recently, someone placed a Canadian penny on the top of each of those graves.) The tribute began shortly after soldiers helped dig out the town's casualties after a surprise attack by German bombers left 79 dead, many of them women and children. Seventeen Canadian soldiers also died.

The raid brought home reality, and as the conflict dragged on, the mood at Shorncliffe became more grim. Stories emerged about how gruesome the carnage really was, and, because the base also housed a large medical complex, fresh arrivals from home could see the risks even as they prepared for the trenches.

The beat of cannon fire across the channel contributed to the increasingly downbeat mood. "We can distinctly hear the rumble of the big guns," Lt. Stuart Cameron Kirkland wrote in 1916 to family back in Dutton, Ont. "I thought at first the noise I heard was thunder but, as I was hearing it every morning, I made inquiries and was told it was the noise of battle."

The following year, he was wounded at Vimy Ridge.

Housing trumps history

Although a century has passed, the area's connection to Canada remains readily apparent. Even the altar at St. Martin's, more than two centuries old, has a gold Bible stand inscribed "in memory of the Canadian boys who worshipped here and have since."

But Mr. Hatton, the warden, says local people object to the big housing development less because of what it will do to Shorncliffe than because of the traffic problems it's expected to cause around the station where the first Canadians stepped off the train. Chris Shaw of the Shorncliffe Trust is resigned to the fact that the project will go ahead. His fight now is to preserve more of the barracks and training facilities (such as practice trenches that prepared the Canadians for underground life at the front) and to build a museum and tourist facilities.

But he says that neither the MOD nor the local council seem interested in anything beyond the anticipated budget boost. And Shorncliffe is a major project even for a builder as big as Taylor Wimpey, which put up 12,454 houses in Britain last year alone and had pretax profits of more than $660-million. The company did not respond to several requests for comment on its plans, but an MoD spokeswoman wrote in an e-mail to The Globe and Mail that "preserving heritage ... has been taken into consideration."

Canadian military specialist Jack Granatstein, whose many books include *Who Killed Canadian History?*, says that "it's always sad when historic sites are developed," but he acknowledges that it's "largely an unstoppable process in an ahistoric age."

He says that selling military land may make sense to a cost-cutting government, "but there are ramifications," such as the loss of jobs, often in areas where work is hard to find, and that the tactic is shortsighted: "If you get rid of bases and training areas, you won't have them the next time you need them – and nations always do."

He argues that the importance of Shorncliffe – to Britain's past, even more than Canada's – justifies "a suitable memorial" to keep its memory alive.

The campaign turns to Canada

Taylor Wimpey's project will leave Shorncliffe a vastly reduced garrison, but will affect neither the cemetery – kept in immaculate condition by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission – nor the main gate to the barracks and the base library, both deemed to be historically significant.

Also, the MOD spokeswoman notes, the Shorncliffe Trust has been given the opportunity to purchase the redoubt where the practice trenches were located. As a result, Mr. Shaw and his associates are trying to raise £3-million (about $5.5-million) "to regenerate the old training grounds and set up a dedicated heritage park and education centre." To that end, they have received some high-profile help, with Julian Lennon and Engelbert Humperdinck joining members of the Proclaimers and Massive Attack to record the fundraising single.

But as he walks along the old trench works the Canadians once used, Mr. Shaw battles to keep his composure while describing the sacrifices of those now in the cemetery. He says he has given up hope that his government will act, and is looking across the Atlantic. "We want Canadian businesses, and Canadians, to support us," he says.

Dr. Granatstein, whose most recent book is *The Greatest Victory: Canada's One Hundred Days, 1918,* warns this may prove difficult with "so much centenary fundraising on here now."

But Mr. Shaw is undaunted, saying he hopes to enlist rocker Bryan Adams, whose father served in Canada's army.

"We'll look after your boys forever," he tells Canadians, "but we need to fight against the ways of the world, the councillors and the property developers. We've got to convince them to do the right thing."

More Related to this Story

- First World War: How do we remember it meaningfully, a century later?
- Personal accounts Canadian diaries offer vivid views of First World War
- New Canadians First World War changed the lives of families around the world
- First World War First black officer in British Army blazed trail but dreams were thwarted
- the great war Shell shock: How much has changed in 100 years?

Topics:

- First World War

MOORE OF CORUNNA

Ceremony in honour of military great

Guards of Honour: Vince Law and James Hinton at the Sir John Moore memorial Picture: Gary Browne FM2993165

A ceremony commemorating the death of one of Britain's greatest military leaders 205 years ago was held in Sandgate on Saturday.

Lieutenant-General Sir John Moore, who was based at the Shorncliffe garrison in Folkestone during the Napoleonic wars, died at the Battle of Corunna in Spain while fighting the French on January 16, 1809.

He was put in command of the stretch between Dover and Dungeness in 1803 and under his command the Martello Tower network and Royal Military Canal were built to defend the Kent coast from the threat of a French invasion.

Members of heritage group the Shorncliffe Trust and dignitaries gathered at his Sandgate memorial to honour Moore of Corunna, as he became known.

He was in command of the British forces in Spain, fighting the French. But when Napoleon moved 200,000 troops under the notorious Marshal Soult, Moore was forced to retreat to the port town of Corunna.

During the battle outside the town, the British fought off the French so they could board their ships bound for England.

Moore was fatally wounded by cannon fire but lived long enough to see his forces board their ships.

Buy pictures
www.kentonline.co.uk

The commemoration of the 205th anniversary of the Battle of Corunna FM2993159

Lieutenant-General Sir John Moore

The ceremony was in Sandgate on Saturday

Honour at last for British hero who checked Napoleon

Spain salutes Sir John Moore's last stand at Battle of Corunna, reports **David Sharrock**

EPA

MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

EPA

A re-enactor presents arms as Stephen Wright, centre, the British Ambassador, unveils a bust of Sir John Moore, killed during a rearguard action in 1809

ALMOST two centuries after one of Britain's finest soldiers was killed defending this Spanish port city from Napoleon's army, Spaniards paid lavish tribute to General Sir John Moore yesterday when they dedicated a monument to him.

The event marks a process of rehabilitation, after centuries of enmity, of the image of British soldiery in the Peninsular War. Long maligned for the rape and pillage which accompanied the Expeditionary Force, a new Spanish interest is being channelled into historical re-enactments of what is taught in British schools as the bloody Battle of Corunna.

The revival is largely thanks to the enthusiasm of the socialist Mayor of La Coruña, Francisco Vásquez, who yesterday invited Stephen Wright, the British Ambassador, to unveil a bronze bust of Sir John in the garden where his remains are buried.

A band played and rifle volleys were fired as French and Spanish military units listened to the Ambassador's reading of the the poem celebrating Sir John's valiant rearguard defence of the British evacuation.

Señor Vásquez told the packed ceremony: "This commemoration contributes to the unity of the European nations." But another motivation, albeit unstated, is the tourism spin-off which the canny mayor realises goes with popularising history.

Later this year the city will play host to one of the largest historical re-enactments undertaken of a Napoleonic battle. More than 1,000 enthusiasts from countries including Russia and Canada will converge on La Coruña and recreate the climax of Sir John's savage retreat from the vastly superior Napoleonic forces.

The Battle of Corunna was the "Dunkirk" of the Peninsular War and from the moment General Moore was killed by a cannonball at the village of Elviña, historians have argued over its importance.

General Sir John Moore marched into Spain from Portugal in October 1808 at the head of 20,000 men to help to thwart Napoleon's intention to place his brother, Joseph, on the Spanish throne. He was told to expect 10,000 reinforcements under Sir David Baird to arrive at La Coruña.

But approaching Madrid, he became aware that Spanish resistance had collapsed under the weight of Napoleon's 300,000-strong army.

Sir John, pursued by the French corps of Marshal Soult and Marshal Ney, began a bitter three-week retreat through winter snow and sleet across rugged and treacherous terrain, causing a disintegration of morale and discipline.

More than 5,000 British troops were lost in the retreat, many of whom were drunk on looted stores. While strategically this was a British defeat, the evacuation was a complete success and led to about 27,000 men being saved. Three months later the British Army would return and begin its long, victorious campaign under the command of Sir Arthur Wellesley, later the Duke of Wellington.

Of Sir John Moore's role in the campaign, the Iron Duke remarked years later: "You know, FitzRoy, we'd not have won, I think, without him."

It was at Elviña that the most bitter fighting took place, with a prominent part being played by the 4th Regiment, the 50th Regiment, and the 42nd Highlanders. The French attacks were beaten back with great loss, but at the moment of triumph Sir John was hit by a cannonball and suffered a terrible wound to his left side. He was carried to the rear by his grieving highlanders, where he died a few hours later.

That night, Sir John was buried and the army was able to board the transports unhampered by their pursuers. Marshal Soult was so impressed that he would later erect a fine monument in memory of his fallen adversary.

Mañuel Arenas, president of the city's Royal Green Jackets historical association, said: "It's important that we remember our history and Moore especially. He's practically a Corunnan, he's been with us 195 years now."

Mark Dennis, president of the Corunna Society of Great Britain who was with a large group of suitably attired re-enactors, said: "The response to our putting on battle scenes has been amazing.

"History is still very raw around here; in the city of Vigo they still burn effigies of the French every year. The people were very shocked when they saw us for the first time walking through their streets dressed in the military uniforms of the period."

HYMN TO BRAVERY

THE exploits of Sir John Moore at La Coruña might have been forgotten had it not been for the verse written by a young Irish curate from Castlecaulfield in Co Tyrone.

Inspired by reports, the Rev Charles Wolfe penned an ode to the fallen general and sent it to the *Newry Telegraph*. Published anonymously to fill space, it became a word-of-mouth hit.

In 1822 Lord Byron declared *The Burial of Sir John Moore after the Battle of Corunna* the finest ode in the English language. But the Rev Wolfe did not live to enjoy his success, dying of consumption the next year.

The Burial of Sir John Moore after Corunna

Not a drum was heard, nor a funeral note,
As his corse to the rampart we hurried;
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot
O'er the grave where our hero we buried.

We buried him darkly at dead of night,
The sods with our bayonets turning;
By the struggling moonbeam's misty light
And the lanthorn dimly burning.

No useless coffin enclosed his breast,
Nor in sheet nor in shroud we wound him;
But he lay like a warrior taking his rest
With his martial cloak around him.

Few and short were the prayers we said,
And we spoke not a word of sorrow;
But we steadfastly gazed on the face that was dead,
And we bitterly thought of the morrow.

We thought, as we hollowed his narrow bed
And smoothed down his lonely pillow,
That the foe and the stranger would tread o'er his head,
And we far away on the billow!

Lightly they'll talk of the spirit that's gone
And o'er his cold ashes upbraid him —
But little he'll reck, if they let him sleep on
In the grave where a Briton has laid him.

But half of our heavy task was done
When the clock struck the hour for retiring:
And we heard the distant and random gun
That the foe was sullenly firing.

Slowly and sadly we laid him down,
From the field of his fame fresh and gory;
We carved not a line, and we raised not a stone,
But left him alone with his glory.

— Charles Wolfe

BATTLE OF CORUNNA 1809 (Peninsular War 1807-1814)

Plan of the Battle of Coruna, fought on the 16th January 1809, between the French under the command of Marshal Soult, and the British under Lt General Sir J Moore K.B. (Drawn by) HB Harris. Scale 1:19,495 approx. Pencil, pen, ink and water-colour on paper. Watermark: J WHATMAN (date mostly cropped, 1809?) 387 x 293mm.

The Battle of Corunna was fought between a retreating British force of 15,000 destitute men who had just marched, in the depths of winter, through freezing blizzards over the high mountains of northern Spain, and a French army 20,000 strong. The French were defeated; the cost to each side was about 1000 lives, including that of the British Commander, Sir John Moore, whose death is commemorated in the couplet penned below the scale-bar on the map:

Let you insanguin'd plain their triumph tell
Too dearly purchas'd - for their Leader fell!

Moore was buried near the ramparts of Corunna, where his opponent, Marshal Soult erected a monument to his memory.

Drawn soon after the event, this map (oriented with south-east to top) shows the camps of the opposing forces on the ridges east of Corunna, and their routes down to the valley of Almeira where the battle took place. The British ships wait at anchor, ready to evacuate the troops. The use of red to denote the British army, and blue for French troops, was a well established military cartographic convention; it is the opposite of today's war-gaming practice of using blue for the home force and red for the enemy. This map is an early example, in British military cartography, of the depiction of relief by horizontal hachures, and relative command - the technique of numbering hills according to their relative height; the highest point, 13, is in the top right corner. These methods were taught at the Royal Military College at High Wycombe where the draughtsman of this map was presumably trained.

Plans of the Battle of Corunna were among the earliest to be printed by the new process of lithography, first used for map printing in 1808 by the Quarter Master General's Office at the Horseguards. The first printed map of Corunna was made in London on 26th January 1809 and only ten days after the battle; the second, revised version, was printed on March 27th, and appears to incorporate information from this manuscript. The orange stamp, bottom left, is that of the Depot of Military Knowledge - an organisation formed in the Quarter Master General's Department in 1803 to collect maps and military information from all parts of the world.

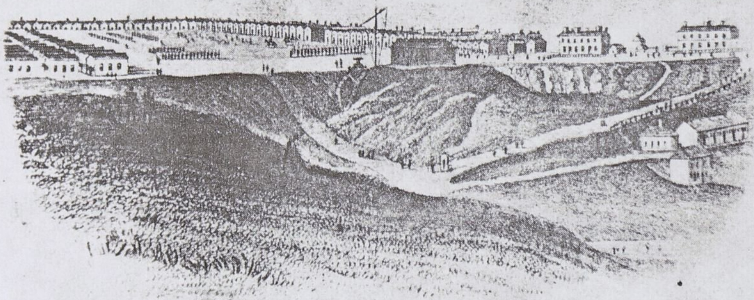
This manuscript has an unbroken record of provenance within the War Office/Ministry of Defence from its creation in 1809 to the present day. The number written in ink and ringed in green, bottom left, appears to have been marked on the map in 1950, when a list was compiled of Peninsular War map material in the collections of the Geographical Section, General Staff.

Copy of original held at Directorate of Geographic Information Map Library.

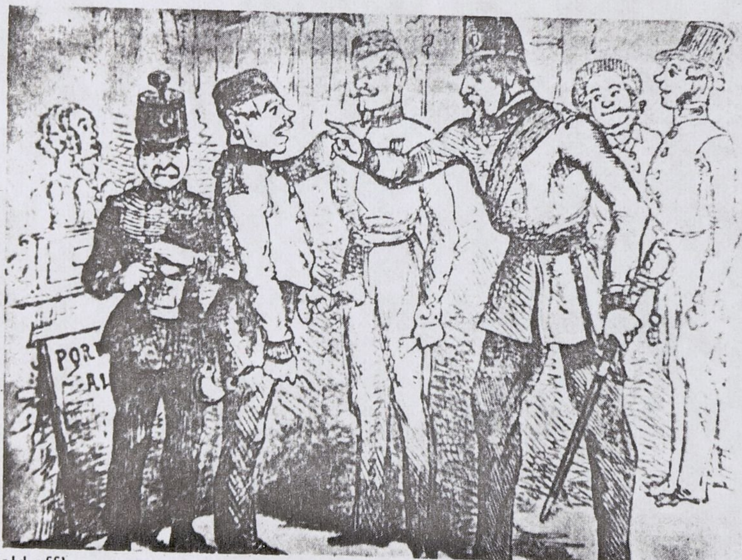
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Reproduction by the Royal School of Military Survey.

Military Survey is most grateful to the following:
Arjo Wiggins Fine Papers Ltd., for supplying the paper
Agfa, for supplying film and proofing materials



Camp of the Foreign Legion, Shorncliffe



'Told off'

(Illustrated London News)

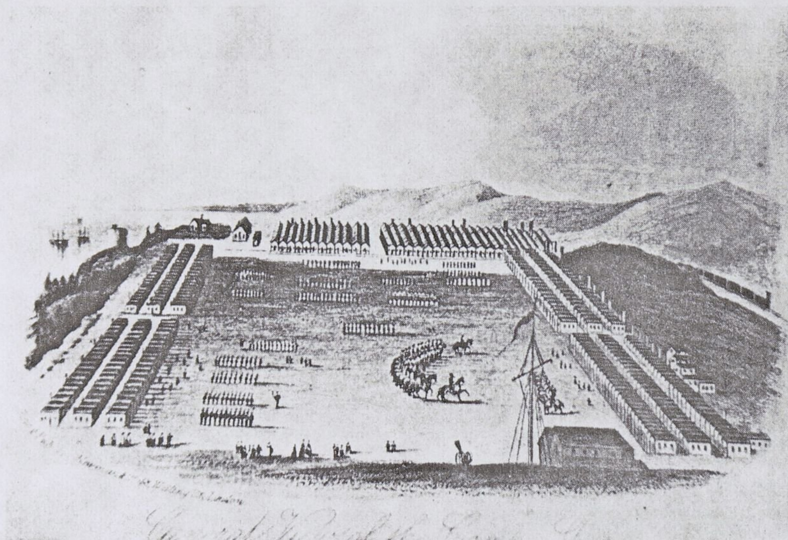
THE BRITISH GERMAN LEGION AT SHORNCLIFFE

By Ann and Ralph Nevill

German soldiers in British uniform, German officers barking commands on an English parade-ground, these unlikely scenes happened during the Crimean War. At the outset, the British Army was 40,000 men short of the establishment voted by Parliament due to poor pay and living conditions. Foreign levies had been raised successfully during the Napoleonic War and Lord Palmerston was eager to use the same resources. "Let us get as many Germans and Swiss as we can, we must override all obstacles. War cannot be carried on without troops." Recruiting depots were formed and 9,000 foreigners were to serve under the British flag. They were distributed over various camps, such as Shorncliffe, Colchester and Aldershot, for training before being sent on active service.

Shorncliffe Camp is situated two miles from Folkestone on the hills overlooking the sea. The famous Light Brigade had been trained there by Sir John Moore during the Napoleonic War; lightly armed and mobile bodies of troops taught to make lightning attacks and swift retreats, a revolution in military tactics. But for some time now the Camp had been almost empty and much of the land handed back to local farmers for grazing. In 1855 it was recalled to its former bustling activity, and rows of new wooden huts were erected to house the new recruits. The first detachment of 1,500 men arrived, mainly Germans and Belgians, to be commanded by a mixture of German and British officers under the name of the British German Legion. Pay was the same as in the British army, plus £6 bounty money, £3 of which was kept back to pay for uniforms. The raw peasants were quickly trained, being taken out three times a day on parade and put through their exercises. Mock battles were enacted in the countryside, not without some damage to crops, and the troops marched back to camp at the end of the day, singing their national songs. The Folkestone Chronicle noted approvingly, "Most Legionaries equal, if they do not surpass, our best militia levies". The officers patronised the shops and took some part in local activities. The Jaegers gave a concert in Hythe Town Hall and dedicated a march to the local ladies. Captain Blauer's wife was delivered at the Ship Hotel, Sandgate, of a son.

It was considered politically expedient that official efforts also should be made to make our friends and allies welcome. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert paid a visit to the Camp in April 1855. Folkestone was agog, and lines of cheering citizens lined the streets. The Queen, simply dressed in a blue and white dress with a white bonnet, the Prince and a small party arrived by train and drove in an open carriage along the Lower Road and up Military Hill, to be welcomed by the Duke of Cambridge, the Commander-in-Chief and Lord Panmure, Secretary



The new huts at Shorncliffe

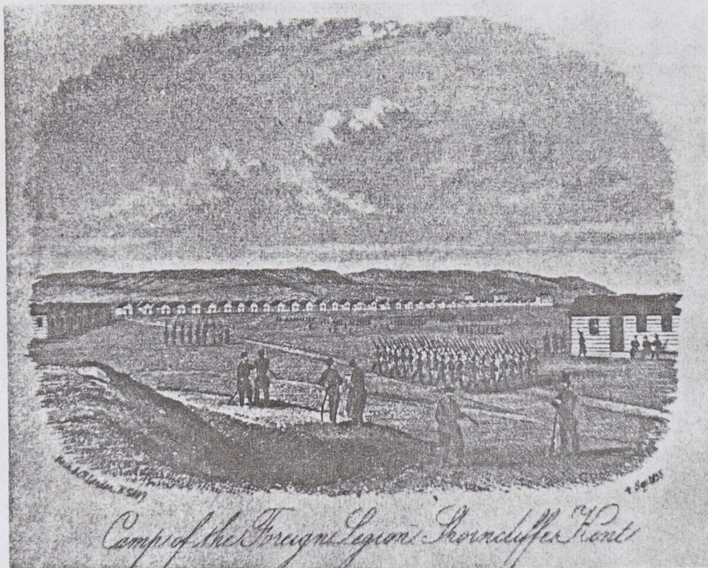
An argument with a Folkestone Cabby (Illustrated London News)

of State for War, whom Miss Nightingale called 'The Bison'. The Royal party conversed with the officers in German, a reminder of home for Prince Albert. The troops marched past them in companies with the band playing a popular German march. They lunched in the officers' mess and, some doubt existing as to the military cooks' capacity for rising to the occasion, the food was provided by Mr Breach of the Pavilion Hotel. The weather was splendid.

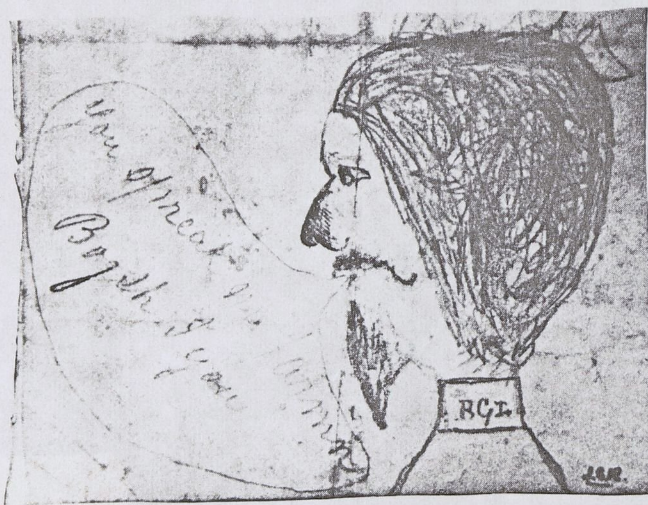
The Government was trying to make the troops feel part of the joint war effort and to encourage them to face with fortitude the hard and dangerous conditions in the Crimea whither they were soon to be sent. But the welcome of the townspeople who had to live with foreign soldiers on their doorstep, freed from the restraints of home, soon began to wear thin. Cases of drunkenness, several a week, started to appear in the records of quarter sessions. Better guards and more rigorous punishments were needed; the Folkestone police force consisted of five policemen and an inspector but, according to local opinion, five hundred and twenty would scarcely be enough to deal with the disorders. Desertions became more and more numerous from boredom and homesickness – a hundred men vanishing in ten days in October. The deserters spread over the country, three were in Dover Gaol, nine in Canterbury and some in London and Sevenoaks. It was alleged that Alfred Willis, an Englishman, had tried to persuade John Frank to desert. In his defence the prisoner averred that, so far from this being the case, he had been approached by the said John Frank in a public house in Sandgate. Frank, being in British uniform, pointed to his buttons and said "Victoria no good," and asked him to obtain a passage to Hamburg. Alfred Willis was acquitted. Three officers were taken in London, one with £60 of the men's pay. In a ceremony at Shorncliffe they were degraded and dismissed the service, their swords being broken. Two soldiers stole a fishing boat and were caught at the harbour. These were comparatively small-scale crimes and easy for the local constabulary to deal with. Worse was to come in the shape of a riot.

According to the soldiers, ill-fitting boots issued by mistake could be considered as 'perks' and disposed of privately. The authorities thought otherwise and arrested two men in February 1856 charged with stealing and selling Army boots. By this time, a special guardhouse had been established in the old Folkestone Gaol and a portion of the Town Hall warmed and the gas lighted for a military picket. Help was therefore at hand when fifty Legionaries, enraged by their comrades' imprisonment, tried to rescue them by force. The picket was noted to be slow in turning out, but at length succeeded in dispersing the crowd. The men returned in even greater numbers and attacked doors and neighbouring shop windows with fists, boots and brickbats. The cavalry had to be sent for this time, and afterwards stayed on watch to prevent a recurrence. A question was asked in Parliament, but Peel replied that statements were wholly unfounded that men were drunken or disobedient to their officers – it was a small misunderstanding between the police and troops with one arrest made.

The disturbances were a trifle compared to the main object of the Legion's formation which was that its members should be sent to defeat the Russians. In



The Camp at Shorncliffe



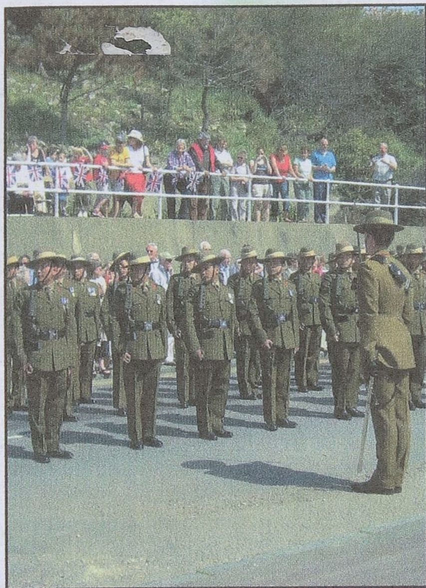
Drawing of a Legionary. 'You speak no Jarmn. Bogsh I you.'

October 1855 the first draft of 900 men marched, amidst great public enthusiasm, to Junction Station en route for Malta and the Crimea. A servant girl was in such a hurry to see them leave, perhaps to wave goodbye to a sweetheart, that she fell over the Lees and was killed. The men were followed by a steady stream of recruits, many of whom died from cholera on arrival at Scutari. (Some cases of cholera in Sandgate were thought to be caused by the women who washed the linen of those who had returned.) There was not very much opportunity for them to see action, as the armistice was declared in March, 1856, and soldiers from the two sides began to meet and fraternise, exchanging gifts. By April, England was officially at peace. What was to be done with the rest of the Legion?

In May a thousand men left Shorncliffe for Aldershot, and it was rumoured that more would follow. In the same month, too late to be stopped, 400 recruits arrived from Heligoland. In June the final decision was made and an order telegraphed that virtually the whole of the Legion should transfer to Aldershot, preparatory to disbandment. Though every available van was pressed into service, there was a muddle over the luggage due to the hasty departure and the men had to wait hours at the station in the pouring rain. The Camp appeared deserted. At Aldershot they were reviewed for the last time by General von Stutterheim and given a year's pay. The services of such useful mercenaries were sought by other sovereigns and offers of employment came from Naples, Holland and Spain. But the British Government felt a responsibility for the men they had enrolled and trained for two years and who had not been given any opportunity to prove their military prowess. They were offered a chance to go to the Cape as colonists. Some accepted, but others were suspicious of a Government which had found it necessary to make deductions from their hard-earned pay for the ordinary wear and tear of barrack life.

Meanwhile their places in the empty Camp were to be filled by five thousand real live British heroes from the Crimea commanded by Sir Colin Campbell. The town planned a grand dinner of welcome for the veterans which cost it £300. Seven hundred soldiers were entertained on the lawn in front of the Pavilion Hotel which was decorated with evergreens for the occasion. They marched from the Lees down the slope giving the numerous bystanders an opportunity to see their bronzed features and honourable medals. Over a thousand pounds' weight of beef, and much else, was consumed, the remnants being given to the poor. The speeches were many, a private giving the toast, "I drink to Miss Nightingale, but not to Mis-management," a sally considered worthy of Punch. And for many years to come till memories grew dim and old soldiers had passed away, the main battles of the war were celebrated by officers and men alike.

Freedom of the Gurkhas



At last! May Bank Holiday the sun shone and what a spectacle for Sandgate.

The Gurkhas in full finery with piped band marched the length of the High Street to the Sir John Moore Memorial, where our Mayor Geoffrey Boot accompanied by The Queen's representative Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Kent Lord Astor presented the 2nd Rifles Gurkha Regiment with the Freedom of Sandgate.

A large crowd gathered along the route and round the memorial, well over 500 people according to the local press, and this was an uplifting experience for all Sandgate residents. The Gurkhas have formed part of our community for many years and served our country well.

It was not easy to arrange the ceremony and our thanks to those residents who cooperated in clearing the High Street for security reasons prior to the event.

Further best wishes to the Gurkhas, who are being posted to Afghanistan later this year. We wish them a safe tour of duty and look forward to welcoming them back in due course.