

WORCESTER'S WENT TO WAR

World War ONE

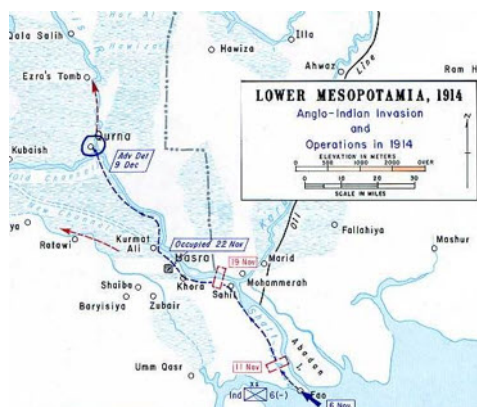
By
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Old Worcester's have been involved in some of the more spectacular "Stuff Ups" over the years, as well as a number of glorious days too. The British wars on land at least always had a disaster along the way even if at the end they were victors. Examples would be Indian Mutiny, Boer War, Gallipoli, Somme and Ypres and nearer to date Dunkirk.

In looking at World War I, there were Old Worcester's going across the channel in the Royal Naval Division (RND) to defend Antwerp from the Kaiser's invasion, but they arrived too late and had to go back home and that was only the start of World War II! Holland was neutral in World War I. Another fiasco was the Dardenelles in 1915 where a whole range of ex-cadets were part of that failed invasion, from Cape Helles, Gallipoli and Suvla Bay and on the ships in and around the Aegean. In Mesopotamia the 'Ship' was well represented in quality if not quantity, but again the land forces were temporarily unsuccessful as we shall see.

The Dogger Bank action had a couple of OW's involved but nothing spectacular, it was on the 30/ 31st May 1916 at Jutland that a number of OW's lost their lives on the British ships that were destroyed. While ashore in Belgium and France a fair number lost their lives at the long drawn out battles of Ypres (in Belgium) and the Somme (in France).

At sea, ex-cadets served in all types of warships, submarines, aircraft and Q ships apart from Merchant ships that is; culminating in raids on Zeebrugge and Ostend, and well after the Armistice, the confrontation with the Bolsheviks at Kronstaadt, who had seized power in Russia in 1917. The RND came about, when volunteers to join the Navy wanting to join up in September 1914, became more than there were positions in the existing fleets to absorb them. The overflow was turned into a Naval land based Division, with a number of Battalions, named after famous Admirals, such as – of course – Nelson, Anson Howe etc., all battalions using Naval ranks and ratings and wearing Naval uniforms. There were 16 OW's ranging from Able Seaman (AB) to Lieutenant Commander (LCDR), fighting in Flanders, France and the Dardenelles, until towards the end of the war when the RND became the 63rd Division of the British Army.



There was a subsection of this group, which became deployed by the Royal Engineers, and these were known as "Submarine Miners" their task was to infiltrate beneath the enemy trenches and redoubts, pack the tunnel they had created with high explosive and blast everything to kingdom come!, one of these valiant men were Major William Henry Carter (1893) MC*, DSO who had arrived in France as a Sergeant. This dangerous activity was carried out against Germans in France and Belgium and the Turks at Gallipoli. The Ottoman Empire ranged over the area which today is considered to be the Middle East, but then, was called Mesopotamia. There were British troops fighting the Turkish Army, trying to capture Baghdad,

one of the only ways to keep the British army supplied was by water up the Tigris or Euphrates. A supply of desperately needed stores was arranged to go to the besieged General Townsend at a place called Kut in April 1916. A paddle steamer called the Julnar was modified to take these stores up stream, on which LCDR Charles Henry Cowley (1888) VC RNVR was to act as the river pilot. The Turks knew all about this activity long before the ship sailed, and they had put in place wires across the river and lined up their artillery and machineguns for when the Julnar was stopped at this barrier. Into this maelstrom of shells and bullets went the Julnar. LCDR Cowley, although wounded survived only to be taken ashore where he was segregated from the other survivors, and executed as a spy. (He had been born in Mesopotamia, and apart from his time on the Worcester had lived and worked on those rivers, and the Turks considered he was a traitor!) LCDR Cowley was awarded a Victoria Cross (VC) posthumously, our first. *More History [Here](#)*

The tales of [Gallipoli](#) and the [Anzacs](#) have tended to overshadow the events further south on the peninsular at [Cape Helles](#) and the sea of [Marmara](#), here the OW's both on the water, under the water and even above the water get a mention, either on warships, troopships, hospital ships, store ships, submarines, the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS). One such was Lieutenant (LEUT) Reginald William Lawrence (1907) RN who gained a Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) when he was the Executive Officer (XO) of the submarine E14, which had managed to enter the sea of Marmara, sinking two gunboats. He swam from his submarine (no RIB's in those days) to a Turkish Barquentine carrying stores to the Turkish Army at Gallipoli, he set fire to the vessel and quietly swam back to his submarine!

Ashore was Noel Robert Charles Cosby (1907) of the Indian Army, the allegedly sole survivor of the 1st [Gurkha](#) regiment at Gallipoli, who was awarded a Military Cross (MC) and later the Companion to the most eminent order of the Indian Empire (CIE), the Brigadier ended his career as the Inspector General of the North West Frontier Forces.

At Cape Helles – the greatest number ever of RN VC's given for one location, was Midshipman (MIDN) Frederick Ernest Garner DSC, MID* for his actions at the beach landing sites which were under constant small arms fire by the defending Turks.

By 1914, approximately 4,465 cadets had passed through HMS Worcester I and HMS Worcester II, and it is estimated of that number 920 joined the armed services at some stage of their careers. The majority of course went into the Royal Navy (RN) or its brethren groupings of the Royal Naval Reserve (RNR), Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR), the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS), the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN) and the Royal Marines (RM); roughly 80% of these ex-cadets being accounted for by the above; 11% going into the Army (infantry, Engineering and Artillery and one single entry into the Cavalry!) a further 3.4% went into the airforces under the RNAS, RFC or RAF. ((RFC) Royal Flying Corps, offshoot of the Army). About 3.6% of cadets that joined the "Ship" over the 52 years to the outbreak of WWI either died of accidents or did not continue a seagoing or service career, which has the percentage of ex-cadets up to 20% of the leaving cadets joining the armed services at some stage of their lives. The largest group of leaving cadets in any particular year as a percentage of the total leavers was 68% in 1915, and in 1917 60% of the leavers went into the armed forces, but by 1918 this had dropped to only 30 cadets of the 100 who left that year. (In the early years there were only two terms per year)



In terms of professional seafarers out of the total 920 cadets involved in the hostilities or under arms, 541 were to join the RNR (59%) ranging from Midshipmen to Commodores, while the RN had 12%, this time though they achieved the very highest Naval rank, though not during the WWI. Surprisingly 4% or 37 cadets went into the Royal Indian Marine Later to become the Royal Indian Navy); - one of the early 20th century brochures put out by the Thames Nautical Training College HMS Worcester off Greenhithe Kent, specifically mentions the Royal Indian Marine and the Bengal Pilot Service. 4% became RNVR volunteers and only a tiny percentage 1% or 15 went to the RND and 1.5% into the RNAS, mind

you the smallest group being 6 ex-cadets became Royal Marines, there it was quality not quantity, with 2 Lieutenant Colonels (LEUT COL) a Major, a Captain and 2 Lieutenants.

Most ex-cadets who joined the Army were in various Infantry Regiments, a few with the Engineers (Ex Bengal Pilot Service officers were most likely to join the Royal Engineers!) a number joined the Artillery in its various groupings, Royal Artillery, Royal Field Artillery, Royal Guernsey Artillery etc. And one OW drove one of the first tanks used in the war.

World War I had two and at one time conflicting aircraft operators, the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) and the Royal Flying Service (RFC) these eventually became the Royal Airforce (RAF). However the RNAS used a RN rank structure then Army and finally RAF, so some of the OW's had three changes of uniform. Air Vice Marshall (AVM) Sir Thomas Ince Webb-Bowen (1894) KCB, CB, CMG RAF was at one time a Major General RAF!. SO we had ex-cadets joining both the RNAS and the RFC, some 25 in all.

Although the Armistice was signed on the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918, the armed forces of Great Britain continued to fight in the Baltic, this time the Bolsheviks, the "wash up" after WWI, concerning honours and awards continued right up to 1921.

In that period from 1914 to 1921, ex Worcester cadets were granted many gallantry awards, starting with two Victoria Crosses to Charles Henry Cowley, and Gordon Charles Steele, who many of us remember. Captain George Parker Bevan (1894) Albert Medal (AM), DSO, CMG. Our one and only Albert Medal (quite rare). It was for the action that Captain Bevan took to save the life of a Chief Officer trapped on a burning ship alongside the wharf at Murmansk, instituted by Queen Victoria's consort Prince Albert for saving life at sea and not often awarded.

There were 51 Distinguished Service Orders (DSO) and 52 Distinguished Service Crosses (DSC); 9 Distinguished Flying Crosses (DFC), 46 Military Crosses (MC); 3 Air Force Crosses (AFC); 5 Distinguished Service Medals (DSM); one Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) and 1 Military Medal (MM); the last three awards were for the other ranks, as well as 86 Mentioned in Despatches (MiD); and 87 Foreign awards, many of these were multiple awards to a single person.

Eventually 5 of these OW's were knighted, 3 Admirals, and two Air Chief Marshals, one of those twice!; at the other end of the spectrum a LEUT Joseph Mair (1888) won a DSM as a sailor then a DSC as an officer. Two other DSM's were awarded to LDGSMN William Albert Bennett (1866) at the age of 68, while serving on a minesweeping trawler, the other to LDGSMN Charles Henry Holmes (1866) also 68 and under similar circumstances.

Flight Captain John William George Price (1915) DSC*, DFC* Croix de Guerre RFC deserves a mention for receiving two DSC's and two DFC's and the Order of Leopold, he was very active in flying over France and Belgium, being shot down on a number of times, on one occasion, landing in the Furness-Ypres canal, by the end of the war, the medical records showed he had had 32 bullets in his body over the war.

There were a number of honours – as opposed to awards for gallantry – given to OW's in the course of WWI. These were given to men whose efforts were away from the immediate battlefield or face to face action with the enemy.

There were 8 Companion of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath (CB); 9 Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George (CMG); 17 Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE) – both Military and Civilian - 4 Commander of the Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire (CIE) – given to Indian Army and Royal Indian Marine Officers. 35 Officers of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE); and 9 Members of the Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE). All that does not take into account of the Foreign decorations given by a raft of countries, France, Belgium, Italy, Russia (pre Bolshevik), Norway, Greece, Portugal, Spain, the USA and Japan. As previously mentioned these amounted to 87, mainly gazetted after Armistice Day.

Here is a random selection of OW's who were awarded recognition during World War 1, the ages ranging from 68 (The earliest entries to the Worcester) to 16 years as Midshipmen (MIDN). The most valorous men being in the age range of 20 to 25, meaning that they had left the "Ship" in 1906 to 1911, the next group surprisingly was the 50+ year bracket from 1865 to 1881.

The most decorated Naval Officer in WWI was then Captain E.R.G.R. Evans (1896) DSO***, CB*(one Military and one Civil), plus the only one ever, Lloyds Gold Medal, a Board of Trade (BOT) silver medal for saving life at sea, 2 French, 2 Belgium, 1 Italian, 1 Portuguese, 2 Norwegian, 1 USA a Silver Polar Medal, and later a Knighthood (KCB) and then a Baronetcy; not bad for a hyperactive Worcester Cadet!. Colonel (COL) William Robert Stewart (1879) in the Royal Engineers (RE) was the Director of Fortification and Works at the War Office and received a CBE.

LCDR Reginald Salmon (1885) DSO RNR who was in command of the HM Trawler Manx King which had a German mine fouling her sweep and it had floated down on to the trawler, when he personally made safe the mine and his ship.

Lieutenant Colonel (LEUT COL) Maxwell Barcham Sayer (1890) CBE RD ADC Royal Engineers (RE) as Assistant Director of Inland Waterways and Docks, he became Captain Superintendent of HMS Worcester in 1919 to 1928.

Commodore (CMDRE) Henry Stockwell (1890) DSO, CB, RNR in charge of artillery in the RND at Gallipoli, then in command of HMS Helgoland on North Sea Patrols.

Captain (Army) Harold William Metcalfe (1891) MBE, assistant Superintendent Chemical Warfare, Ministry of Munitions.

Lieutenant (Leut Army) Gerald Harwood (1891) AFC, joined the Essex Regiment at the outbreak of war but then transferred to the RFC at the age of 40.

Lieutenant Commander (LCDR) George Herbert Pierce (1894) Legion of Honour (France) had a varied experience during the war, firstly as a private (PVTE) in the Fusiliers, then as a SBLT RNVR in the RND, following this in the RNR in command of a small "Q" ship and finally as the British Naval Resident (BNR) at the port of St. Jeane de Luz.

Air Commodore (A/CMDRE) Wellesley Bigsworth (1902) DSO*, AFC, CMG RAF who was initially a RN Officer, but one of the first ten officers selected for flying duties in the RNAS in 1912. He bombed or destroyed a Zeppelin whilst in flight and was credited with single handed sinking of an enemy submarine on the surface,

Lieutenant (LEUT) Archibald Dayrell-Reed (1903) DSO* RN, early in the war was a LEUT RNR, but changed over to the RN, received his awards for attacks in Coastal Motor Boats (CMB) at Zbrugge and Ostend. He was killed at Kronstadt when in command of CMB 88, when Gordon Steele won his VC.

Lieutenant (LEUT) Peter Ridley (1903) RNR a senior Pilot in the Bengal Pilot Service was in command of a paddle steamer minesweeper and despatch boat around the British coast, he was Mentioned in Despatches (MiD) and a silver medal for Valour by the King of Italy!.

Flight Lieutenant (FLTLEUT) Wilstan Joseph Tempest (1907) DSO, MC, RFC, he started the war as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (KOYLI), was wounded in a gas attack at Ypres and invalid out. He joined up again this time in the RFC and he was credited with shooting down a zeppelin.

Commander (CMDR) Clement James Charlewood (1905) DSC* RNR who gained his first DSC as a SBLT at Dar es Salem.

Captain (Army) Ernest Errington King (1907) MC while in the 16th Battalion of the Welsh Regiment, was awarded his MC while maintaining forward ammunition dumps with convoys of mules, he later became a Bengal Pilot.

Midshipman (MIDN) Arthur William Douglas Cluff (1916) MiD RNR who rendered valuable service at the "Great Explosion" at Halifax Nova Scotia when the city was flattened after two ships collided.

There are two books that have been published about the Worcester from the opening in 1862 to the end of WWI and into the 1920's, both published in 1929, one by the then Secretary Mr. Frederick H. Stafford OBE AINA entitled "The History of the "Worcester" and the other by Captain (Army) W.A. Morgan entitled "Thames Nautical Training College HMS Worcester". Both these books cover the same period, but there are omissions from both authors. For instance Stafford does not mention LEUT Dayrell-Reed (or Reed as he was known on the "Ship". Neither author mention Leut (Army) Howard Leopold Davis (1912), who died of wounds received at the Somme in 1916, and whose father founded the General Botha Nautical College with the old HMS Thames in South Africa.

The Kronstadt affair in 1919 had OW's on four of the Coastal Motor Boats that attacked the Bolshevik fleet, CMB7 a DSC, CMB36 a DSO, CMB 72 a DSO, and CMB88 a VC not bad for an evening's work.

I have attached 3 Appendix explaining some of the abbreviations.

Appendix 1 Ranks and Ratings

RADM = Rear Admiral
CAPT = Captain Royal Navy, Royal Naval Reserve, Merchant Navy.
Capt = Army
CMDRE = Commodore RN or RNR
A/CMDRE = Air Commodore
LT COL = Lieutenant Colonel
CMDR = Commander RN, RNR, RNVR, RND
LCDR = Lieutenant Commander RN, RNR, RNVR, RND
LEUT = Lieutenant RN, RNR, RNVR, RND
Leut = Lieutenant Army.
SBLT = Sublieutenant RN, RNR, RNVR, RND.
2nd Leut = Second Lieutenant Army
LDGSMN = Leading Seaman
PVTE = Private.

** Some of the higher ranks and their honours came to ex-cadets at a later stage of their careers than during the actual war. I have shown individuals at their most senior rank that has been recorded and the honours that went with that rank, except for the very highest, ie Admiral and Air Chief Marshal.

Appendix 2 Honours and Awards.

GBE = Knight Grand Cross of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.
KCB = Knight Commander of the Honourable Order of the Bath.
CB = Companion of the Honourable Order of the Bath.

Why the "Order of the Bath", back in the 11th Century the ceremony of conferring a knighthood included taking of a bath to symbolize the cleansing of the mind as well as the body.

KCMG = Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George.
CMG = Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George.
KBE = Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.
CBE = Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.
OBE = Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.
MBE = Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.

BEM = British Empire Medal.

Appendix 3. Gallantry Medals

VC = Victoria Cross, founded in 1856, 633 awarded in WWI, only 107 to the Navy.

DSO = An Order of distinction founded in 1866 to reward officers for meritorious and distinguished service in war. (restricted to officers of field rank and above, ie Major or equivalent) made of Silver gilt.

DSC = Founded in 1901 as the Conspicuous Service Cross for Naval Officers, name changed in 1914 for those below the rank of LCDR. Made of Silver.

DFC = Instituted in June 1918 for Officers and Warrant Officers for action of valour, courage or devotion to duty, performed whilst flying on active operations against the enemy. Made of Silver.

AFC = as above but worded as "whilst flying though not in active operations against the enemy. Made of Silver.

MC = Founded in 1914 the equivalent to the DSC or DFC for officers below the rank of Major, extended to include the RFC Royal Marines (RM) and RND when fighting on the ground. Made of Silver.

AM = Instituted in 1866 by Prince Albert for gallantry in saving life at sea later for saving life on land as well. Made of Gold and Bronze.

DCM = Founded in the Crimean War in 1854 for awarding other ranks. Made of Silver.

DSM = Instituted in October 1914, awarded to Petty Officers and ratings of the Royal Navy and NCO's and other ranks of the Royal Marines. Made of Silver.

MM = Founded in March 1916 for NCO's and men of the Army for individual or associated acts of bravery, but not of sufficient heroism to merit a DCM. Made of Silver.

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