

BULLETIN ISSUE NO. 10 – MARCH 2024



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The image on the lead page is Colonel Sir Edward Rossiter, who was the Commander of the Roundhead Garrison stationed here in Melton Mowbray during the English Civil War.

When the First English Civil War began in August 1642, Rossiter joined the Parliamentary army as Captain in a Regiment of Cavalry raised by the Earl of Lincoln. The unit was restricted to service in Lincolnshire until April 1643, when Rossiter was promoted Colonel and it became part of the Eastern Association army, commanded by Lord Willoughby.

At the beginning of 1643, Royalists based in Newark captured Gainsborough, which was retaken on 16th July by the Eastern Association. On 28th July, Rossiter was with a detachment led by Oliver Cromwell which repulsed a Royalist relief force outside Gainsborough, although the Parliamentary garrison surrendered a few days later.

Newark was a key strategic position linking the Royalist capital of Oxford with their armies in the north, and Rossiter spent the next two years based in Melton Mowbray as part of the Parliamentary blockade. In March 1644, he was part of a force commanded by Sir John Meldrum defeated outside Newark by Prince Rupert. While this ensured Royalists held the town until the end of the war, the capture of Lincoln in May meant Parliament controlled the surrounding areas.



Extract from the OS 25 inch Leicestershire XX.9, Revised: 1902, Published: 1904

On the outskirts of Melton Mowbray on 25th February 1645, Rossiter intercepted Royalist cavalry of approximately 1,500 men under Sir Marmaduke Langdale, on their way to lift the siege of Pontefract Castle.

Some 300 men were said to have been killed in this battle. A Royalist report at the time says:

“On approaching the town we discovered some gorses and dragoons in a fair meadow about half a mile from the town. Their main strength, being near 2000 in all, were drawn up at the river crossing. By the time we were drawn up in order on

the brow of the hill on the south side of Melton, the enemy in a gallant fury, gave us a bold charge. The encounter continued hot and sharp for a good while, with success going one way then another. But at length, they were wholly routed, many of their commanders slain, many hurt, and others scattered into their garrisons. We slew near 100 and took almost as many prisoners. We lost Sir John Gurlington and Captain Gascoign, two gallant gentlemen, and some few wounded.”

This battle became known as the Battle of Melton Mowbray or following a local myth/legend, the Battle of Ankle Hill. The legend has it that the hillside where the battle was fought was ankle deep in blood, hence the name Ankle Hill. However, the name appears in documents from before the Civil War and the names of Dalby Road and Ankle Hill have been switched, so confusing the true site of the battle.

No bodies have ever been recovered, some reports say they were stripped by locals and buried in the watermeadows. Could this possibly be in the area of Waterfield swimming baths?

The action on the 25th February 1645 was the second engagement in the Melton area.

The 1st engagement took place just over a year earlier on 28th November 1643 when Sir Richard

Byron, the Royalist Governor of Newark became aware that Melton was to be visited by the "Worshipful Committee of Parliamentarians" from Leicester.

Sir Richard sent a Company of 300 horse and dragoons under the Command of Sir Gervais Lucas to surprise and if possible, capture his 'prattle of parliamentarians' as he called them.

The Royalists caught the Roundhead garrison unaware and despatches at the time reported the engagement as follows: *"Presently he (Lucas) entered the town and surprised the rebels, who were more in number than himself, not a man escaping but one, who was Coronet to Sir Edward Hartopp, nor any killed save one who was stubborn and refused to submit himself to the conqueror. The business was done as handsomely as anyone since the rebellion, for first they took all the commanders, viz 4 Captains of Horse, 4 Lieutenants, 4 Captains of Dragoons, 3 Lieutenants and Coronets, beside one Captain of Foot, with all the Officers and NCOs of the Horse and Foot and 300 common soldiers along with all their colours, baggage and ammunition, almost 400 good armes, and 300 horses. Above all they took prisoner the Worshipful Committee consisting of Mr Staveley, Mr Haselrigg and the notorious Captain Hacker."*

The third engagement took place on 25th February 1645, the same day as Rossiter and Langdale clashed. Following the battle in Melton, there was a skirmish fought just down the road at Kirby Hall at Kirby Bellars, the home of Royalist Sir Erasmus de la Fontaine.

At the time, his house had been garrisoned by the Roundheads and Captain Hacker. As a Royalist supporter, de la Fontaine had been temporarily dispossessed. In this skirmish, part of the house that was being used as an arsenal was blown up and set on fire with some troops slain.

2nd Lieutenant Charles William North Garstin



Charles William North Garstin was born on 24th April 1894 in Cairo, Egypt. His parents were Sir Edmund William Garstin G.C.M.G., G.B.E. and Mary Isabella North.

Sir William was a British civil engineer responsible for a number of important hydrological and public works in Egypt whilst he was Under Secretary of State for Public Works in Egypt. Mary was the grand-daughter of the painter, Sir Francis Grant who we looked at in Issue 8 of the HistoryFare Bulletin.

Charles was educated at Eton College, leaving there in 1911. After leaving Eton, he was gazetted as a 2nd Lieutenant into the 9th (Queens) Royal Lancers on the 5th February 1913 and qualified as a Second Class Interpreter in German.

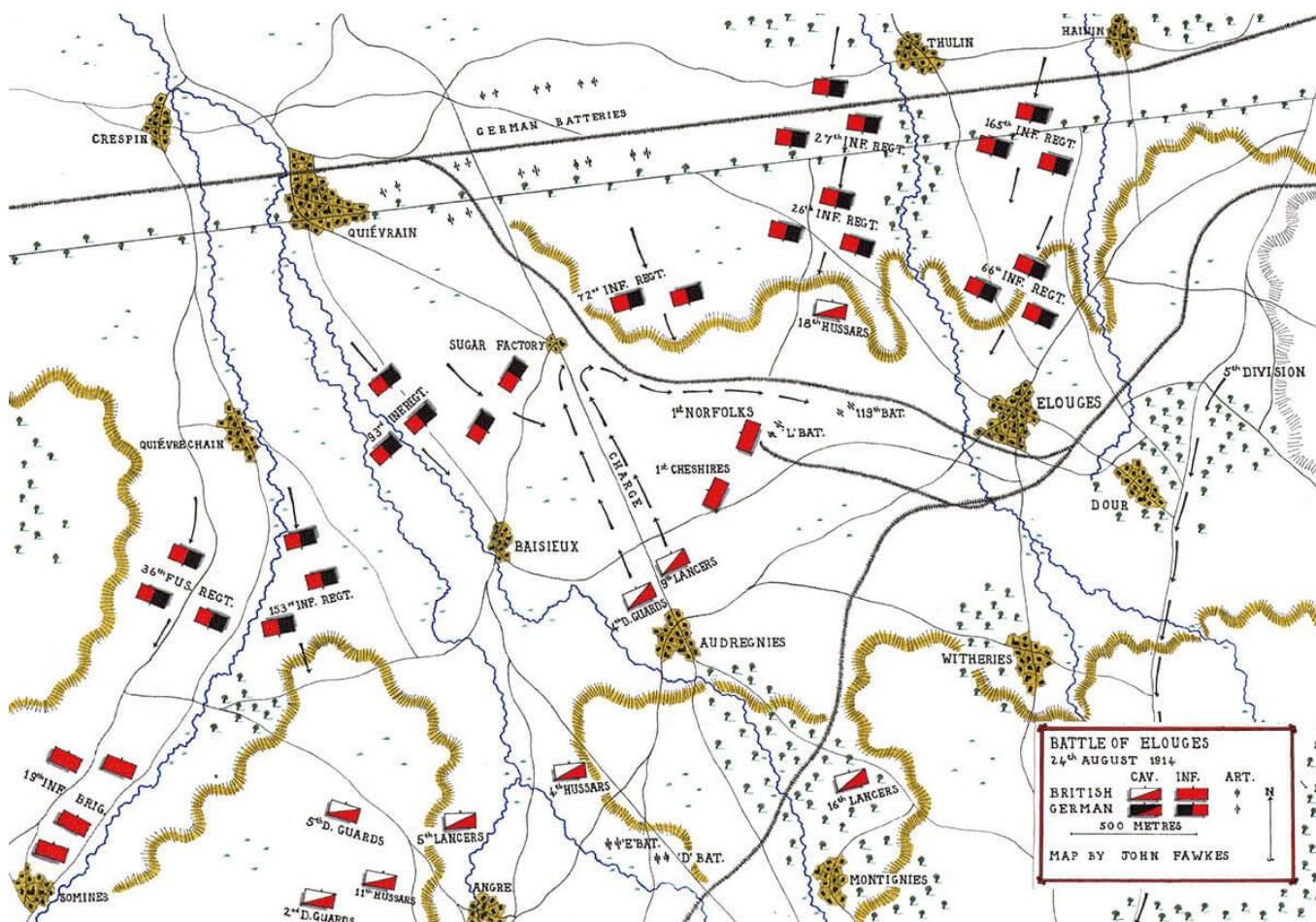
Following the outbreak of war against Germany on 4th August 1914, the 9th (Queen's) Royal Lancers left their camp at Tidworth on the 15th when they marched to Amesbury where they entrained for Southampton where they arrived at 3pm and embarked upon HMT Welshman and HMT Armenian.

They set sail at 5am on the 16th and arrived at Boulogne about 4pm, where after disembarking they marched to No 3 Base Camp at Pont de Breques. On the 17th, they entrained at Boulogne and the train left at 5am on the 18th, arriving at Jeumont at 18:15Hrs where they de-trained and set up their bivouacs in a field in the town.

On the 19th, the Regiment route marched to Obréchies where they went into billets. The next day saw them take part in a Brigade exercise. At 06:00Hrs on the 21st, they marched to Harmignies where they received news that a force of enemy, unknown strength were present in the direction of Binche. Lt Smith and 1 troop were in contact with the enemy at a bridge 1½ miles North of Mons. This troop was relieved by the 11th Hussars and the Regiment went into billets at Harmignies.

At Harmignies on the 22nd, the Regiment was stood to, ready to move all day till 21:30Hrs and then they marched to Thulin. Around 20:00Hrs on the 23rd, the Regiment as part of the 2nd Cavalry Brigade undertook a reconnaissance around the town, returning around 22:00Hrs. At about midnight, the regiment marched out of Thulin, and 'B' Squadron took up position at the railway crossing South of Thulin whilst 'A', 'C' and the Machine Gun section were in support ¼ mile North of Elouges.

At daybreak on the 24th, 'B' Squadron reconnoitered Thulin with orders to patrol North of the canal and found it occupied by the enemy. The 2nd Cavalry Brigade fought rearguard action, retiring through Elouges. At mid-day, the Brigade halted and watered near Audregnies. After watering, the Brigade formed up en-masse and at once came under enemy fire.



The 9th Lancers charged the enemy, supported by the 4th Dragoons and 11th Hussars. During the charge, the 119th Battery fired on the advancing German infantry until they were around 900 yards away. The German artillery fire was inflicting heavy losses on the gunners of 119th. When the order to retire was received the German fire was so heavy that the horse teams could not be brought up to the guns. Major Alexander, the battery commander, directed his men to push the guns into cover, but found that there were insufficient unwounded gunners left to perform this

task. After the charge, Captain Grenfell, with a party of Officers, NCO's and men of the Regiment man-handled the guns of the 119th Battery RFA to a position in which they could be removed by the teams as all the gunners had been disabled by the enemy's fire.



The 9th Lancers charge German infantry and guns during the action at Elouges on the on 24th August 1914 during the First Day of the Retreat from Mons and the Battle around Elouges and Audregnies.

The painting opposite by artist Richard Caton Woodville depicts the charge by the 9th Lancers was later compared to the Charge of the Light Brigade since it demonstrated great bravery but accomplished little.

According to the CWGC data base, the casualties for the 9th (Queens) Royal Lancers that died on the 24th August was 14. There was 1 x Lieutenant, 1 x Lance Corporal, 1 x Corporal Sadler, 1 x Serjeant and 10 x Privates.

The Lieutenant that was killed that day was Charles Garstin and his name can be seen on the war memorials at Egerton Lodge including the interpretation boards in the memorial gardens, the memorial outside the RBL and also the WW1 memorial in the South Transept of St Mary's Church.

He is also commemorated on other memorials across the country, such as Eton College, Canterbury Cathedral and on a brass plaque and flag that is in the collection of the Derby Museum and Art Gallery.



However, closer to home, there is actually another memorial for Charles here in Melton Mowbray, see photo on left.

According to both the War Memorials Register and War Memorials Online databases, the memorial is in St Mary's Church, but for many years, I have not been able to find it!

Thankfully, with the support of the St Mary's staff and volunteers, the memorial has now been located and I can confirm that it is not lost. Sadly though, it is not on public display as it is hidden by the building of the café and screen walls etc in the North Transept. The memorial is affixed to the wall below the Sir Francis Grant memorial window.

[Melton Mowbray History Tours](#)

The next Melton Mowbray history tour will be on Saturday 16th March at 10:00Hrs. Tours are £5 per person and last approximately 2 hours. To book a place on one, just email meltonhistoryfare@gmail.com

To keep up to date with future tour dates, keep an eye out on social media and my web page <https://historyfare.co.uk/historyfare-tours/>

Bosworth Battlefield Tour

On Saturday 10th August 2024, I have arranged a guided tour of the Battle of Bosworth battlefield with historian and battlefield guide Ben Mayne. For those of you that do not know Ben, he is the Director of Liberation Route United Kingdom (LRUK) and a battlefield guide with Leger.

LRUK is part of Liberation Route Europe which is a certified Cultural Route of the Council of Europe that connects people, places, and events to mark Europe's liberation from occupation during World War II and to reflect on the long-lasting consequences and history of the war through a multi-national, multi-perspective approach. With hundreds of sites and stories in nine European countries, the route links the main regions along the advance of the Allied Forces in 1939-1945. For more information about LRUK, see <https://www.lre-uk.org/our-projects/>

When Ben is not focusing on WW2 with LRUK or his guiding role with Leger Battlefield Tours, his other passion is the Battle of Bosworth. Ben will take us on a tour of the key sites connected to the battle involving an approximate 8-mile walk and take about 5 hours. At the end of the tour, there would be an opportunity to visit the Bosworth Battlefield museum/visitor centre if people wish.

This would be a great day out to gain a better understanding of a 'local' battlefield within Leicestershire and as you are no doubt aware, Bosworth was the last significant battle of the Wars of the Roses and the last one where an English monarch was killed in battle.

The cost will be £10 per person.

Due to safety restrictions, walking on country roads etc, the tour would be limited to a maximum of 25 people, spaces would be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. To reserve your place on this tour, then please confirm via email meltonhistoryfare@gmail.com

Museum Exhibitions

For those of you that follow HistoryFare on social media, you might have seen a post a few days ago about a new exhibition that has just started in Melton Carnegie Museum about the Royal Observer Corps. This has been created by our friend Jed Jaggard of Up An' At 'Em! History and focuses on the ROCs work during the Cold War. This exhibition will be on display until the end of May.

Over the next few months, I will be working on the next exhibition that will go on display after the ROC one, and this will be focusing on the 3rd, 10th, 11th & 156 Battalions of the Parachute Regiment that was based in Melton and the surrounding area during 1944/45.

This display will be split into 2, the first will focus on the Paras arrival in town and training for both D-Day and Market Garden then in September, the display will change to focus on Arnhem and the return of the survivors back to Melton and the disbandment of the 4th Brigade and the arrival of the 3rd Battalion. **Please support your local museum.**

Melton Airmen killed in Mediterranean bomber crash

Eighty years ago, on the 6th March 1944, a crew of 5 from No 1 Ferry Crew Pool at RAF Melton Mowbray were tasked with delivering a Wellington bomber to an overseas unit when they experienced difficulties and crashed into the sea just two miles off Gibraltar.



All 5 crew members lost their lives in the crash and tragically their bodies were never recovered and are now commemorated by the CWGC on the RAF Memorial at Runnymede.

The full story can be read in y blog <https://historyfare.co.uk/military-history/30-melton-airmen-killed-in-mediterranean-bomber-crash/>

Major-General James Scarlett, 1855

Melton is known for the Earl of Cardigan of the Charge of the Light Brigade fame having a home on Burton Street, but what about connections to the Charge of the Heavy Brigade which also took part during the Crimean War.

Major-General the Honourable (later General Sir) James Yorke Scarlett (1799-1871) was first commissioned in 1818. Having served with the 5th (Princess Charlotte of Wales's) Dragoon Guards since 1830 and commanded them since 1840, by 1854 he was on the point of retiring when he was given command of the Army of the East's Brigade of Heavy Cavalry in the Crimea.



Stipple engraving by Francis Grant after F Bromley, published by S W Fores, 1858.

At the Battle of Balaclava on 25th October 1854 he led his 800 men of the Heavy Brigade against 3,000 Russian cavalry and forced them to withdraw. In 1855 he succeeded Lord Lucan in command of the Cavalry Division. See Issue 8 for the article about Hartopp Road and William Wrey Hartopp who was wounded during the Charge of the Heavy Brigade.

Sir Francis Grant produced the above engraving in 1855 whilst living at The Lodge here in Melton Mowbray.

Till next time!

Please feel free to share this bulletin with whoever you think may be interested.

For any enquiries or to submit articles, please email Brian at meltonhistoryfare@gmail.com