

**Major Humphrey Willis Chetwode Lloyd DSO MC and Bar
Croix de Guerre and Order of St Vladimir
(1892-1965)**

Rob Forsyth



In full dress uniform of 1st Battalion, Wiltshire Regiment

Major Lloyd's gravestone stands just to the left of a holly tree that overhangs the path leading from the Church to the New (Lower) Churchyard. It is clear for all to see and yet the name and story of this remarkable man evaded my research. Bill Drake knew of him because he was in the same regiment as Bill's brother and Bill had even written an article about him for the November 1978 issue of The Deddington News and he also places a Remembrance Day Cross on his grave each year. Of course, until the book was published, Bill did not know that I did not know and, remarkably, no one else recalled him either at the time; but now that I have read Bill's article and spoken to three people who knew him personally and talked to his old school and regimental museum I know a lot more. His exploits deserve to be recorded if only because he lived in our parish for nearly 20 years and he does not seem to have anyone else to remember him.

The early years

Humphrey, and his twin brother Hugh Clifford Chetwode, were the younger sons of Lt Col William Chetwode Lloyd and Catherine Dalton Lloyd, of Kiltrasna, Bideford in Devon. They had an older brother Thomas Mewburne Chetwode (b1891). All three boys went to school at Blundells in Tiverton. School records show that they were all very good at rugby football but that Humphrey was particularly noted for his cross-country running prowess which was to be a significant factor in later circumstances.

Lieutenant Hugh Lloyd, who had joined 1st Battalion, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, died of meningitis in France in February 1916. Captain Thomas Lloyd, who served with the 2nd Battalion, Hampshire Regiment in India and then Gallipoli, died while on leave in April 1916 and is buried in Hampstead Cemetery.

Humphrey went to Cambridge University for 2 years where he won the Freshman's Hare & Hounds cross-country race in 1910. He was commissioned into the Wiltshire Regiment as a Lieutenant in January 1912 on leaving university.

The First World War

Between August and October 1914 the Wiltshires were almost continuously in action at Mons, Marne, Aisne (Lloyd was slightly wounded and Mentioned in Despatches), 1st Battle of Ypres, Le Cateau and Neuve Chapelle. It was here, on 19 October 1914, that "Captain Lloyd led an attack and effected an important lodgment in enemy lines..." for which he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO). He might have received notice of this via the Red Cross because on the 27 October he was captured and made a Prisoner of War at Crefeld [now spelt Krefeld] near Dusseldorf.



Blundellian prisoners at Krefeld
Captain Lloyd is on the right - in carpet slippers?

His escape from this camp was given a lot of column inches by The Times Newspaper of 9 February 1917. It is such an interesting story - including just how differently PoWs were treated in WWI from WWII - that it is reproduced in full.

ESCAPE FROM GERMAN PRISON - BRITISH OFFICER'S STORY

"Captain H.W.C. Lloyd, D.S.O., of the Wiltshire Regiment, who was taken prisoner in autumn of 1914, has just returned to England after two years in the officers' prison camp at Crefeld, from which he escaped last month.

Last June Captain Lloyd, with a Russian officer, made an unsuccessful attempt to escape from Crefeld. They were court-martialled at Dusseldorf and sentenced to three months' imprisonment, not for attempting to escape, but for having cut their way through a cellar. The officers appealed against the sentence, and were ordered to go before a District Court-martial at Munster. They engaged a German barrister to defend them, but he did not put in an appearance. At Munster, they were charged with mutiny, and the sentence was upheld. On the ground that they had been unable to defend themselves, their barrister not having put in an appearance, they again appealed, and on January 25, they were sent to Munster, where the appeal was to be heard, arranging on this occasion to take their barrister with them.

For safety, the officers were sent to Munster during the day and imprisoned for the night in a cell. At the Court-martial on the following day the sentence of imprisonment was quashed, and a fine of 30 marks substituted. The same night the officers, with a guard of three soldiers, left Munster by train, for Crefeld. On the journey they met a Russian officer from Hanover, who was escorted by two soldiers, so that the guard was increased to five. When the train halted at a junction, Captain Lloyd escaped. He had worked out the details of his scheme previously, and they were based on experience gained on the occasion of his first visit to Munster. He proceeded to make his way across country in a north-westerly direction. He ran and walked all night (Captain Lloyd represented Cambridge in cross-country running in 1910-11-12), and at dawn reached a village which he recognized on the map. He hid all day in a big pine forest, and started again at night, travelling in a westerly direction.

MISLED BY A BAND

At 1 o'clock the next morning he arrived at a village close to which was a fairly wide river, and as he passed through the streets, he heard a band playing. This was the Kaiser's birthday, and he took it that the band was playing in honour of that event. Concluding that he was still in Germany, he retraced his steps, although the weather was bitterly cold, and on his way met two men who flashed electric torches in his face and asked him if he was a Russian soldier. He replied that he was not, and they ordered him to go with them. They spoke in German, and he imagined that he was still in Germany until one of the men said "You know you are in Holland, don't you?" Suspecting this to be a trap, he replied that he did not know where he was, but the men got out their electric torches again and shone them on their uniforms, which he immediately recognized as Dutch. He spent that night in the guard room and on the next day went to hospital, as his feet were frost-bitten. To the bitterly cold weather which prevailed throughout his escape Captain Lloyd largely attributed his salvation. The frost was intense throughout, so much so, that the trousers of his uniform froze stiff from the knee and he had to cut them off with a knife.

BAD FOOD AT CREFELD

Captain Lloyd states that while of late the food supplied at Crefeld has gradually gone from bad to worse, the treatment of the prisoners has improved to a corresponding degree. For the last year, the prisoners, all officers, have had no butter or milk. There are just over 200 English officers in this camp, including two Brigadier-Generals; 400 French officers, and 600 Russian officers. They have one good meal a day, which generally consists of soup and fish. On one day a week, however, they are given a small slice of meat, and on Sundays they occasionally have pork. Captain Lloyd

emphasizes the fact that the British officers depend entirely on the parcels which come from England.

English people with friends at Crefeld will be relieved to know that the parcels arrive regularly. He believes that every parcel sent to him reached its destination. The parcels are opened in the presence of the prisoners, and they arrive intact. They generally take about a month in transmission. Originally the officers were allowed to order parcels from English firms, but this has now been stopped, and the only parcels allowed are those received from relatives. The camp is overcrowded. In some cases there are nine officers in one room, but the conditions are not harsh, and apart from the food, there is little cause for complaint. A cinematograph has now been installed in the camp.”

Two months later - one presumes he was given some leave to recover from his remarkable exploits - he embarked in the *SS Kingstonia* at Marseilles bound for Salonika. From his arrival in April until July 1917, he was involved in military engagements at Lake Doiran, located in the hills above Nov Dorjan, a small town in southern Macedonia on the borders with Greece. Lake Doiran was the focus of a number of battles between Allied and Bulgarian forces from 1916-1918 in the Macedonian campaign. In the same way that the 8th army was ‘the forgotten army’ of WWII, the 22nd Division, who lost 7000 men alone in the final Battle of Lake Doiran in September 1918, fought on the ‘forgotten front’ of WWI.

Inter war years

May 1918 sees Captain Lloyd join the North Russian Expeditionary Force which was part of the Allied intervention in Russia to support White Russian forces after the October Revolution. Fortunately he was a photographer and from these and his service records we know that he was variously at Archangel, Beresnek and the Northern Dvina River until he returned to the UK in September 1919. Clearly it was not just military matters that occupied him because several of his photographs involve duck shooting or fishing! Nonetheless he must have seen a lot of action because in 1919 he was awarded a bar to his MC, the French Croix de Guerre and the Russian Order of St Vladimir. He undoubtedly was firmly in the mould of a ‘ripping yarns’ type of military hero.

**Photographs from Captain
Lloyd’s personal collection**

Duck shoot



Fishing

Additional information supplied by Major JH Peters MBE, Wiltshire Regimental Museum in Salisbury.

‘ ..He had the nickname of “Ladov”, after his experience in the campaign in North Russia in 1919 and friendship with a ‘white’ Russian of similar name. This Russian, so the story goes, found his way to Hong Kong after the campaign foundered, where the 2nd Battalion of the Wiltshires had recently arrived. The friendship continued and the Russian then set himself up in the restaurant business opening an establishment under the name of ‘Jimmy’s Kitchen’. In 1992 whilst visiting the Regiment - which, by then had become the Duke of Edinburgh’s Royal Regiment (Berkshire and Wiltshire) - I had the pleasure of dining in Jimmy’s Kitchen [and so did I while visiting Hong Kong in 1969 with my submarine - Ed!].

There is no record of his service from 1920 to 1924 but this may be because they were militarily relatively quiet inter-war years. However, the connection with Northern Europe remained because he was Military Attaché in Riga, capital of Latvia, from 1924 to 1926. This was an interesting time as Latvia had gained its independence from Germany and was looking to increase its links with Western Europe but was under the shadow of the emerging Soviet Union. As a major sea port on the Baltic, Riga was bound to be of considerable strategic interest to east and west and the Military Attaché would be operating in a sensitive international political environment involving working closely with the Army Intelligence Department i.e. as a spymaster.



**With a Lithuanian Officer in
1924**

The Regiment had a tour of duty in Shanghai from 1929 to 1930 where he can be seen in several regimental group photographs. Russian émigrés formed the second largest community in the European sectors of the city so Captain Lloyd, with his fluent Russian and long association with former Tsarist Russians, would have been very much at home and of considerable use to his regiment on local liaison duties and with intelligence gathering. He would also have played a lot of polo, spent much time at the famous race course and no doubt done some shooting and fishing in the Chinese hinterland in what were to be the last years of Colonial hedonism before they were abruptly terminated by the Japanese invasion in January 1932. On return to UK he was promoted to Major in 1935 and therein lies a small mystery; he was 42 years old and the oldest serving Captain in his regiment. 24 years service was very late for promotion to Major. With his distinguished record of service, linguistic and social skills one would have thought that he would have been promoted earlier. This might have been because the inter war years were not good for promotion but it is equally possible that his detachments to Russia and Finland, well away from Regimental HQ, and his almost certain involvement in intelligence matters had restricted his chances of elevation to more senior ranks.

The Second World War

Major Lloyd can be seen in a museum regimental photograph taken in Crieff in 1940 where the 2nd Battalion re-grouped having fought in the retreat to Dunkirk. Lloyd would have been 48 and so too old to have been part of the British Expeditionary Force. At some time after the photograph, he was sent to Tehran, then in Persia, as British Military Attaché at the Embassy. It was in Tehran in 1943 that the first conference between Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt was held preceding the later Yalta conference. Only recently has the story of how a Soviet spy foiled a German plot to kill all three men been de-restricted. Major Lloyd would have been directly involved through his Russian language skills and his Embassy duties which were, once again, largely concerned with intelligence gathering. The Russian spy who exposed the plot died in January 2012. His obituary in the Daily Telegraph makes good reading. An edited version is reproduced below.

Gevork Vartanyan

“The three Allied leaders convened at Tehran in November [1943] to discuss strategy, the principal item on the agenda being the opening of a second front in Western Europe. The Abwehr, Germany’s military intelligence service, had learnt of the time and place of the conference the previous month, having deciphered the American naval code, and the operation to assassinate the Allied leaders, code-named *Long Jump*, was put in the hands of one of their most trusted agents, Otto Skorzeny.

The operation was betrayed, however, when a Soviet intelligence officer, Nikolai Kuznetsov, posing as a German Oberleutnant forged a friendship with an SS Sturmbannführer, Ulrich von Ortel. One evening von Ortel got drunk with Kuznetsov and boasted about *Long Jump*, revealing that special teams were being trained for the task in Copenhagen.

Security at the conference was principally the responsibility of the Soviets. The conference itself (code-named *Eureka*) was held in the Soviet Embassy. One of the buildings in the compound was converted for use as a residence for President Roosevelt. A tunnel was constructed between the Soviet embassy and the British embassy across the street. The area was heavily guarded.

Vartanyan later recalled: “There were about 20,000 Germans in Iran, and Nazi agents were hiding among them. The German field station in Persia, headed by Franz Meyer, was very powerful.”

In 1940-41 Vartanyan’s team of seven intelligence officers (who called themselves “the light cavalry” because they travelled about the city mainly by bicycle) had identified more than 400 Nazi agents, all of whom had been arrested by Soviet troops. Meyer was eventually discovered working as a gravedigger at an Armenian cemetery and arrested by the British.

Vartanyan’s group located six Nazi radio operators shortly before the conference opened on November 28 1943. The German assassins had been dropped by parachute near the town of Qom, 40 miles from Tehran: “We followed them to

Tehran, where the Nazi field station had readied a villa for their stay. They were travelling by camel, and were loaded with weapons. While we were watching the group, we established that they had contacted Berlin by radio, and recorded their communication. When we decrypted these radio messages, we learnt that the Germans were preparing to land a second group of subversives for a terrorist act — the assassination or abduction of the ‘Big Three’. The second group was supposed to be led by Skorzeny himself.”

All the members of the first group were arrested and forced to contact their handlers under Soviet supervision. “We deliberately gave a radio operator an opportunity to report the failure of the mission,” said Vartanyan, “and the Germans decided against sending the main group under Skorzeny to Tehran. In this way, the success of our group in locating the Nazi advance party and our subsequent actions thwarted an attempt to assassinate the “Big Three””

Major Lloyd would have been party to all of this and his continuing involvement in the world of intelligence and spying may account for his later in life reticence to talk much about his experiences.

Living in Deddington

In 1946, following his retirement from the army, Major Lloyd chose to live in Deddington. This was almost certainly because it was centrally located for a number of well known hunts - the Bicester & Warden Hill, Heythrop, Pytchely and Warwickshire, to name just four. He first lodged at The Volunteer Public House (now Russell House) but then took rooms at Holcombe House which was a Guest House belonging to Charles and Gertrude West.

He placed two hunters in livery with Mr John Bletsoe at Park Farm which, from 1961, was taken on by John’s niece, Peggy Pacey, who lives there still. John Bletsoe was a well known horseman and trainer who had some famous clients - Topper Davis recalls that John Profumo was one - so it may have been his reputation that had drawn Major Lloyd to Deddington.

Topper Davis occasionally worked in John Bletsoe’s yard and remembers the Major as a very authoritative man in his dealings with stable staff (“you definitely knew he was a Major!”) and not a great talker about any other matters than his horses. He owned one of the very first Land Rovers which was somewhat temperamental and Topper remembers seeing him give it the odd kick to keep it in line!

He clearly had a large private income because his only interests were, depending on the season, to hunt the UK and Irish shires, fly fish in Wales, the West Country and Ireland or go shooting in Scotland. He would also ride at local Point to Point races.

Peggy Pacey recalls that he was a fearless and hard rider to hounds and liable to take the odd fall; she recalls having to pull him out of a brook on one occasion. On another occasion the village policeman went to give him a hand when he came off on a road but his offer was not welcomed! He seems to have been someone who kept himself to himself, dropping only the occasional hint about his military exploits; one example being that he recounted to Peggy that, during his escape from Crefeld, he had hidden in a marsh for three days and used a reed underwater to breathe through to avoid capture. There was no immediate family that anyone was aware of but there was talk of a Russian girl friend, another female

acquaintance in the West Country and a cousin and/or god-son who lived in London.

When Charles and Gertrude West sold Holcombe House in 1950 and moved to Sycamores on the Hempton Road, Major Lloyd remained on at the Holcombe but did not like this at all. After Charles died in 1952 Gertrude built and moved into a bungalow (Stonefield) in the grounds of Sycamores and José and husband Bob (Stevens) remained at Sycamores. Major Lloyd asked if Gertrude would consider having him as a lodger in his own furnished rooms. The agreed rent was 4 Guineas (4 Pounds and 4 Shillings) a week. He lived there until he died. José recalls that he enjoyed a bottle of sherry a day and the odd whiskey in the evening, was an avid reader and that he was a very easy and pleasant house guest.

In February 1965 he suffered a stroke or heart attack while exercising his horse near Park Farm. He managed to stay on with both arms round his horse's neck. The horse, sensing there was a problem with its rider, walked slowly and carefully back down the hill in the field 'as if walking on egg shells' and delivered its rider safely to Peggy in the yard. He was taken to the Horton Hospital where he died on 27 February 1965. He was buried in Deddington Churchyard.

His godson came down from London to make arrangements for the funeral and was clearly hopeful that he would inherit. The will, obtainable through public records, shows that he left a net estate of some £87,000 pounds which is equivalent to over £2M in today money; he was indeed a wealthy man. To his godson's very evident disappointment, he left all but £6000 to a Miss Catherine Wait of Urchfont near Devizes who was reportedly most surprised to receive the bequest. Public records also show that she died in 1986 aged 85 - still a wealthy spinster.

Of the £6000, £5000 went to another cousin, Lady Ferguson, of Rye in Sussex and £1000 to a Mr Paddy Boland of Bicester. The latter must have been quite a close acquaintance or friend and is one of the few names of acquaintances that I have been able to find. Another friend was Everit Butlin with whom he hunted. The disappointed godson received only his old hunting outfits with the exception of his hunting whip which José Stevens has to this day.

Acknowledgements

Blundell's School Old Boy's Association.

The Wiltshire Regimental Museum (The Wardrobe) in Salisbury which has provided much of the information about Major Lloyd's military exploits - 'career' seems too tame a word! - and for the photographs which they have kindly provided free of charge. More photographs can be viewed at:

www.deddington.org.uk/gallery/v/FirstWorldWar/MajorLloyd

Peggy Pacey, José Stevens, Topper Davis and Don Walker for their personal memories.