

**18th April, 1968 DEATH OF RETIRED WAR-TIME CHIEF
'Tiger' Major-General Ronald Walton Urquhart CB DSO DL**

Aged 62, he died at his home, Meredith House, Tibberton and is buried with a headstone grave in Tibberton Churchyard.

Born 26th March, 1906 at Leighton Buzzard, he was educated at Bedford, studied at Pembroke College, Cambridge and then in 1925 he attended Royal Military Academy, Woolwich earning the rank of Senior Under Officer. He was awarded the Sword of Honour and was commissioned into the Royal Engineers and finished his young officer coursework at Chatham and at Pembroke College.

The years 1931 to 1934 were spent in Africa on a geodetic survey, during which time he spent six months big game hunting and travelled through Tanganyika and Northern Rhodesia.

On his return he joined the staff at Woolwich as an Instructor. In 1938 he saw service in Palestine during the disturbances there and later the western desert.

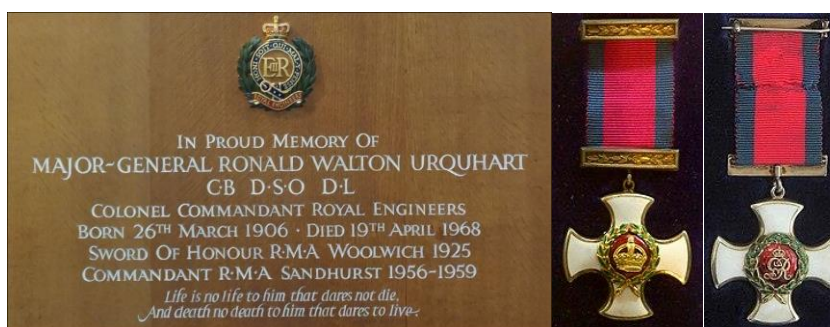
During the Second World War he served in Norway and Northwest Europe, being awarded the DSO for his services in Normandy. He was director of combined operations 1944-1945 and was wounded in Normandy during D-day attacks. After the war he became Director of Combined Operations and the Commander of the 35th Infantry brigade from 1953 to 1954. He went on to be Chief of Staff, Western Command in 1956. He was made Major-General in 1957 and Commandant of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst until his retirement in 1960.

Among his many decorations were the DSO awarded in 1944 and the CB awarded in 1957.

General Urquhart was a deputy lieutenant of Gloucestershire, county chairman of S.A.A.F.A. and chairman of the West Forest Lay Council taking an interest in church affairs.

Since his retirement he had taken up fruit farming enjoyed such country pastimes as shooting and fishing. General Urquhart was married in 1942 to Miss Margaret Moir and they had three sons and a daughter.

The funeral took place at Tibberton Parish Church on a Tuesday morning. The service was conducted Canon J. B. Horrocks, the hymns were 'Praise the Lord the Almighty' and 'The strife is o'er' and the 15th Psalm 'Lord, who shall dwell in they tabernacle' was said. Mrs G Smith was at the organ.



Sources include: 'Tibberton – A further look at our village' 2012 Lawrence W Davis MBE and the following extract from the Royal Engineers Journal September 1968.



Major General RW Urquhart CB DSO DL
Colonel Commandant RE

He was selected for the Imperial Defence College in 1955 and on graduating from there he was made Chief of Staff Western Command with the rank of Major-General. From November 1956, until his retirement in February 1960, he was Commandant the RMA Sandhurst. He was created CB in 1957.

General Sir Charles Jones, Chief Royal Engineer, writes:

"Tiger" Urquhart and I joined the "Shop" on the same day; we were commissioned with the Sappers in the same batch; we shared rooms at Pembroke College, Cambridge; he was my best man and the closest of friends.

From the start he inspired me and all around him. He set a standard in work and play, with a gay, devil-may-care flourish, which roused us and forced us to try to follow suit. He was a leader born; we loved and followed him.

Naturally and properly he became Senior Under Officer of our term at the Shop, winning the Sword of Honour; after being commissioned he was picked for the plum job—a vacancy in the 1st Field Squadron at Aldershot; and was later appointed instructor at the "Shop". He was the gay, efficient, dashing mounted sapper in those years between the wars; he filled the part to perfection and enjoyed it to the full.

The highlight of his 1939–45 war was his tour of duty as CRE of the 3rd Division under the Command of General "Bolo" Whistler. He trained his sappers to a peak of efficiency in the months before D-Day and then led them—and literally led them—with selfless gallantry in the assault on the Normandy beaches on that memorable 6th of June 1944. He continued to lead them in the hard fighting which followed and was badly shaken, suffering lasting damage to his back, when his scout car was blown up on a mine. This didn't keep him out of the battle; he was in it to the end, spending the last months of the war as GSO1 of 43rd (Wessex) Division, which was always in the thick of the fighting.

In 1942 he made the most important and wisest decision of his life. After a hurricane courtship he won and married Jean Moir and there couldn't have been a better match—in quality, in gaiety, in joy of life. Children arrived and Tiger, turning his thoughts to the future, invested—after careful study of the problem—in the home and fruit farm in Gloucestershire which became the main interest of his life in later years.

He soldiered on after the war, doing much good in a variety of appointments, including Chief of Staff to General Bolo Whistler in Western Command and Commander of 35th Infantry Brigade in Hong Kong in the mid-1950s, but the climax of his military career came in 1957 when he was appointed Commandant of the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst—the first Sapper to hold the appointment. This was a task after his own heart, giving full scope to his great qualities of sturdy independent uprightness, gaiety, efficiency and powers of inspiration. He was greatly admired and loved by the Staff, Military and Civilian, and by the Cadets. None will forget him.

After a most distinguished three years at Sandhurst, he retired in 1960 to his beloved "Mereditih" in the village of Tibberton, where he farmed his fruit trees with success, made a wonderful home for his family, did endless and important work for the Church in Gloucestershire, supported the Army, Regular and Volunteer, and took a great and valuable interest in local and county affairs, becoming a Deputy Lieutenant for Gloucestershire in 1965.

He became a Colonel Commandant of the Royal Engineers in 1964 and was Representative Colonel Commandant of the Corps in 1965.

Tiger did much good in his all too short life and left the world a richer and a gayer place. He will be desperately missed by his widow; by his eldest son John, a Captain in the Gordon Highlanders and at present seconded to the Gurkhas in the Far East; by Peter, a subaltern in the Sappers; by Jane, a painter of great promise; by David, still at Sherborne.

The Army and the Corps of Royal Engineers mourn his death. They will never again feel quite the same without him.

C.A.S. writes:

Tiger Urquhart entered the Shop from Bedford in January 1924. His attractive personality and all-round ability made him a natural leader of his term. Success on the Rugby field, in the boxing ring and in the saddle were preliminaries to the award of the Sword of Honour as Senior Under Officer.

He joined the SME in February 1926 as one of 14 YO (C. P. Jones's) Batch. His many activities included rugger, rowing in a successful batch four, and in the last inter-war Sapper Eight at Henley, and playing the bagpipes in his quarters—a deafening performance!

At Cambridge he was paired with Splosh Jones at Pembroke. And this talented combination were the leading spirits in a batch which later produced four generals amongst the dozen who survived VE Day. 14 YO's last joint exercise was a riding course at the RE Mounted Depot, Aldershot. Tiger was then posted to the 1st Field Squadron at Aldershot, the only fully mounted first-line unit in the Corps.

For the next three years he was one of that bevy of able horsemen who, in the show-jumping ring and driving the Regimental Coach during the summer and in the hunting field and on point-to-point courses in the winter, contributed to the hey-day of Sapper equitation. Batten, Coxwell-Rogers, Cleeve, Vachell, Foster, Lacey, Claussen and Myers were all distinguished performers during this final flowering before mechanization and war so drastically curtailed the opportunities for riding available to the average Sapper officer. Tiger used to drive the Coach as one of Vachell's assistants and he was a good man to hounds and between the flags of a point-to-point course.

For the invasion of Normandy Tiger had been selected as CRE 3 Division, one of the two British spearheads. Attached to him for the landing was 629 (formerly 9th) Field Squadron, a wartime unit composed nearly entirely of hostilities-only soldiers which had fought the Afrika Korps from El Alamein to Tunis. 629 Squadron had been specially trained to remove underwater obstacles to enable landing craft to reach the beaches.

On approaching the beaches, 629 Squadron's landing craft came under heavy fire from an emplaced 88-mm gun, and suffered heavy casualties. Tiger Urquhart and Major Carson (OC Squadron) led the Sappers of 3 Troop into shoulder-deep water to start hours of arduous and dangerous work under most unpleasant conditions. 629 (9th) Field Squadron, who continue to gather annually, still recall Tiger with great respect and affection.

M.C.A.H. writes:

The Staff at the "Shop" cannot have had much difficulty at the end of the summer of 1925 in choosing the Senior Under Officer for the next term; for Tiger was the obvious choice. Looking now at the old photographs brings back something of those days gone by.

A boy was not made SUO for his promise of future distinction—though with Tiger it was, in fact, fulfilled. They made him SUO because they believed he had in him, there and then, the qualities he would need from the day of his appointment. Tiger certainly had the right qualities. In today's idiom "He had what it takes". In a term to which the most charitable epithet that could be applied was "unruly", no SUO could succeed unless he commanded universal respect. And respect was what we all accorded Tiger.

Why did he command respect? He was not the foremost games player, which is (or was) important amongst boys. He was above average only. He was not in the Saddle Ride, which was the ambition of us all. He was not the star academic, for I see from *The Times* cutting of 24 December 1923 that he only passed into the "Shop" eleventh. Nor was he a blue-eyed boy who never got into trouble, for he was in the thick of many escapades. Yet, looking at the photographs, I see developing in him an unmistakable presence, a presence that sets him above the rest of us, and which went with him all the days of his life.

Presence is a great gift, but he had a greater—Integrity. It positively shone in his genial face. It was instinctive in his every act. Integrity is a gift without which all others are illusory; it acts like a catalyst and makes the others work. If you find it in the cadet you will find it in the grown man. They saw it in Tiger. It was the secret of his influence on everyone he met. Total and complete integrity was the hallmark of his nature.

After our YO Course our ways parted. The next time we met he was driving the RE Coach to Ascot. The horses were restive and a policeman, not knowing the form, held us up at a cross-roads.

"Put your hand down, officer," ordered Tiger. "We are going on".

It was a subaltern speaking, but the policeman obeyed as though it were the Chief Constable. I overheard one of the girls on the coach remark: "This chap seems to know what to do." How right she was! Tiger had presence of mind, too, which is a useful gift for a soldier.

The next time we met was in Holland in 1944, when he came to 43rd Division as GSO1. He came from being the almost legendary CRE of the famous 3rd Division. What would he think of us? Would he always be standing in my place, telling the General what I, as CRE, should do? Would I find him always proffering engineer opinions without consulting me, a councillor without responsibility? The temptation must have been considerable, for we had many shortcomings; but he never succumbed. He was the best GSO1 I've ever known. His loyalty to his Commander and to the troops, and his common sense were an example to all the staff.

He was immensely calm. I remember a conference—"Morning Prayers" at Divisional HQ—at which Tiger presided. It was in a schoolroom in Holland or Belgium. You could see the snow glistening in the sunshine on the roofs near by. The Luftwaffe was having a last fling. There was a sudden, deafening roar of aircraft flying low, rent by the bark of guns. A flaming trace of cannon shells cut past the schoolroom window. There was a general, but futile, dive for cover. Tiger never moved. Everyone looked rather sheepish as they emerged from beneath the desks. What would Tiger say? Would he be scornful, or reproachful, or would he be shaken himself? He was none of these things. He never even altered the tone of his voice. God knows what he thought!

The scene changes to the last day of hostilities in Europe. A low-lying stretch of marsh land with low hills beyond. The enemy is in those hills. Everyone knows that the Cease Fire has sounded, but nobody fancies actually walking forward, without fire support, to see what will happen. In the end three lieutenant-colonels led the way, 200 yards ahead of the leading troops; and it is Tiger who leads the three. Quite simple in the after light; but impossible without Tiger at the time.

Then came Demobilization in Europe. Literally dozens of Sappers of Tiger's old 3 Division RE came over to our HQ in Celle to say good-bye to him before they returned to civil life. Few officers are privileged to be so loved and respected as he was.

A last scene. We are both retired. My wife and I called unexpectedly at his home on our way through Gloucester. Tiger is loading baskets of apples into an old motor car to take them to market. The hour is late, and as we trundle into Gloucester he tells me that the place will probably be closed and the Supervisor gone. As we arrived that worthy had just locked the last padlock on the sliding doors.

"Oh Hell!" exclaimed Tiger. "We've missed it."

"No you haven't, General" replied the Supervisor. "I can easily open up again for you." . . . But I have a strong feeling that that wouldn't have happened for everyone.

Everyone saw in Tiger the figure of a Man; a man who was great in heart. A man who would never forsake a friend; who would never be petty; who would never nurse a grievance. One's sympathy goes out to his courageous wife and to his children.

Let us pray that the Almighty, in whom Tiger put his absolute trust, will help to sustain them in their loss.

It will not be easy for those of us who remain to carry on the torch.

A Memorial Service was held in Gloucester Cathedral on 20 May 1968. The service was conducted by the Dean of Gloucester. The blessing was pronounced by the Bishop of Gloucester and an address was given by the Bishop of Sherborne, the Rt Rev. V. J. Pike, formerly Chaplain-General to the Forces and the last Chaplain of the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich. General Sir Charles Jones, Chief Royal Engineer, read the Lesson. Among those present were:

Mrs R. W. Urquhart (widow), David Urquhart (son), Jane Urquhart (daughter), Mrs. D. Moir (mother-in-law).

Sir Tom Hood (representing the Lord Lieutenant of Gloucester) and Lady Hood, the Duchess of Beaufort, General Lord and Lady Robertson of Oakridge, the Bishop of Tewkesbury and Mrs Horan, Brigadier Sir Mark Henniker, Lieut-General Sir Francis Nosworthy, General Sir Charles Richardson, Major-General T. H. F. Foulkes, President of the Institution of Royal Engineers, General Sir Hugh Stockwell, Admiral Sir William and Lady Elizabeth Davis, Sir Alexander Grantham, Mrs Victor Pike, Mrs B. T. Guy, Major-General J. C. Walkey, Major-General and Mrs G. N. Tuck, Major-General A. J. H. Dove, Major-General J. R. C. Hamilton, Major-General St Clair Ford, Major-General and Mrs G. A. Rickards, Brigadier W. M. Inglis, Brigadier R. W. C. Smales, Brigadier C. Scott-Bowden, Brigadier and Mrs E. C. W. Myers, Major Peter Birchall (chairman, Gloucester County Council), Lieut-Colonel C. A. Swettenham, Lieut-Colonel J. C. Smith, Mrs. H. Chesshyre, representatives of the Corps of Royal Engineers, the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, the British Legion, the Royal Engineers Association, the Royal Engineers' Benevolent Fund, S.S.A.F.A., and the deanery lay council.

~~BRIGADIER L. F. S. DAWES, MBE, TD~~

~~LESLIE FRASER SPEARMAN DAWES was born on 14 February 1897. He was educated at Bedford School and passed into the RMA Woolwich as a Prize Cadet in 1915. He was commissioned into the Corps on 27 October 1915 (Keane's Batch). He served mostly in France during the 1914-18 War and was gassed. He used to boast of having been up at Oxford, at Somerville the Women's College near Radcliffe Hospital then in use as an annexe for gas casualties.~~

~~From 1919 to 1921 he served in Mesopotamia with No 2 Bridging Train, 1st KGO Bengal Sappers and Miners, and was involved in the "Arab Rebellion". A bridge over the Euphrates, much in use during the campaign, was commonly known as "Dawes" Bridge. He was awarded the MBE for his services during the campaign. Then followed a Supplementary Course at Chatham and a year at Selwyn College, Cambridge University. Cambridge was fun for Young Officers back from foreign service, and not much work was done by the majority. It was here, at an RE Dance, that Dawes met his future wife.~~

~~Now married, he and his wife spent the next seven years abroad, first in Indian Railways, an interesting period which included a survey for a link line through Bihar, and the management for a year of the Aden Railway. After a period in Military Works in Quetta he passed into the Staff College there and duly received his psc. Then followed home service, including staff appointments in the War Office.~~

~~In 1935 he was faced with another tour of foreign service. At the same time it was confirmed that his wife had multiple sclerosis. He therefore retired (as a Major) and became Secretary to the Southern Railway. He maintained his connexions with~~