

Military Connections in Gloucester Cathedral

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Toilets via the main
Cathedral or The
Monk's Kitchen



The Monk's Kitchen
12 - 4pm

GLOUCESTER
CATHEDRAL



1. Information about Ivor Gurney, composer and war poet, can be found here.

2. Further information about Ivor Gurney can be found here.

3. Visit the Cloisters to see the holes drilled in the fan vaulting (ceiling) to let water out in case of fire caused by incendiary bombs during World War II.

4. Edward II, Morely, and Blackleech's monuments and glass from Prinknash Abbey were all protected by sandbags during WWII.

5. Two Royal Navy White Ensigns laid up in the North Transept, from previous ships bearing the name HMS Gloucester.

6. Carne Cross, carved by Colonel J.P. Carne (Commanding officer of the 1st Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment). Carne was taken prisoner along with 700 of his men and kept in solitary confinement. He used a nail to carve a cross, which is on display in the treasury.

7. The war memorial on Lower College Green was originally dedicated to those who had died in WWI, but was later altered to include WWII.

8. Holes in the wall of the Cathedral as a result of muskett balls. During the English Civil War, soldiers used the Cathedral for target practice and stabled their horses in the Cloister. Find out more on the Gloucester Cathedral app!

9. The Duke of Beaufort. Find out more on other side of this leaflet!

10. Gloucester Colours. Find out more on other side of this leaflet!

Gloucester Colours (See 10)

Before portable radios and mobile phones in the chaos of battle the only way of knowing where your regiment was; and where you were supposed to be, was to look for your Regimental Flag known as the colours. This is why, when you see the Trooping of the Colours on television, you see “The Colours” being slow marched in front of every soldier. It is ceremonial now but was vitally important then.

The flag is also known as an Ensign and the officer designated to carry the flag in battle was also known as an Ensign. This was his rank and it was a great honour but also often a death sentence because he immediately became a target.

Duke of Beaufort (See 9)

This Memorial to the 10th Duke of Beaufort, who was Colonel of The Royal Gloucestershire Hussars for 59 years, was unveiled by Her Majesty the Queen in the presence of members of the Royal Family, on 14th April 1986.

The Royal Gloucestershire Hussars were created in 1795 when volunteer groups were formed in response to the threat of invasion from France. In 1835 these separate groups were amalgamated into the RGH and The Dukes of Beaufort have been Colonels of the Regiment ever since. The Hussars fought with distinction at Gallipoli and in both World Wars.

The names of the Hussars who died at Gallipoli are recorded on a War memorial located within the Cathedral precinct and those who died in the two World wars are recorded in books of remembrance in the nearby memorial chapel.

Battalions

The Gloucestershire Regiment was formed in 1694 and existed for 300 years before being amalgamated with other regiments in 1994 to form The Rifles. It has more Battle Honours on its colours than any other regiment in the British Army. These colours are displayed above your head and in the corridor outside this chapel. There is also a display stand giving details of the battles these colours represent.

In the First World War the Gloucestershire Regiment raised twenty four battalions. Sixteen of these fought in places such as France, Flanders, Italy, Gallipoli and Egypt, winning seventy two new battle honours. A total of 409 officers and 7691 other ranks from these regiments were killed in action.

During the 2nd World War the now 9 Battalions served in India, Burma, France, Belgium, Western Europe, North Africa and Sicily as well as defending Britain. The “Glosters” landed in France on October 2nd 1939 and they fought the rear-guard action at Dunkirk, where they delayed the Germans whilst many thousands of troops were evacuated. The “Glosters” also took part in the D Day Landings on 6th June 1944 and fought throughout the entire Normandy campaign and across Europe throughout the war. A total of 56 Officers and 958 other ranks were killed in action.

The names of all the men killed in action in both World Wars are recorded in these books of remembrance the pages of which are turned every day.

HMS Gloucester (See 7)

On 22 May 1941 HMS Gloucester was hit by three bombs, which caused internal explosions and major flooding. The ship was abandoned and after 90 minutes it sank with her Captain and probably the majority her crew. Most of those who survived were machine gunned by German aircraft or drowned during the night and in total 723 sailors died. The survivors were picked up by enemy ships the following day and taken to prison camps on the mainland. Only 83 men from the original crew of 807 survived the war.

The navy has been criticised for not sending a rescue ship to search for survivors; but that is to misunderstand the situation. The British Fleet was at the far end of the Mediterranean and surrounded by enemy airfields a short flying distance away. As shown by the sinking of HMS Gloucester any ship on its own would be sunk so the British fleet had no choice but to stick together.

World Wars

The Cathedral was not much involved with either of the two world wars. There is very little in the records. They even deprived one of the Canons of his stipend because he had the cheek to join the army and “the fellow didn’t deserve it after treating the Chapter with so little respect and consideration”; and at the end of the war, when there was a proposal to put a war memorial in the Cathedral, it was suggested it might perhaps go into the porch; but after discussion by the Dean and Chapter the proposal was dropped.