

Eyre Lloyd's Boer War Diary

Captain Thomas Henry Eyre Lloyd, of Beechmount, Rathkeale, Co. Limerick, was killed in action in the Boer War on 30 October 1901. The last entry in his diary was made on the day before he died, and reported ominously that two men had been wounded. The diary, together with some letters, was published 'for private circulation amongst the family'. The cover of the book is delightfully presented in the colours of Eyre Lloyd's regiment, the 2nd Coldstream Guards.

The Diary

A detailed diary chronicling army movements and day to day happenings was kept by Eyre Lloyd from Sunday, 12 November 1899, when he arrived in Capetown, to 29 October 1901, the day before he died.

He had little time to spare on his arrival, as he was greeted with the news that he was wanted at once at the front, and he was only allowed to carry 35 lbs. of luggage. Despite the harrowing conditions, he found time to buy toothbrushes on 14 November. On 16 November, he had begun his learning exercise, when all officers were instructed to remove stars, as it made it easier for the Boers to pick off their men.

The harsh reality of war came to Lloyd when on 25 November a man was shot on each side of him, and his friend Burton died of wounds on 30 November. Conditions did not improve and he was horrified to find 60 dead Boers floating in a river from which he had been drinking. One wonders if he included a picture of this gory scene when he sent two dozen Kodaks home to be developed the same day.

On New Year's Day 1900, he won a four furlong race on a little grey pony. His lonely plight was eased by letters received from his mother, Lady Alston Florence, Geraldine Crosbie and Lady Limerick.

The reports of losses on both sides were huge. On 21 February 1900, he mentioned that Kitchener lost 1000 men. Two days later he visited their camp and stayed overnight. Kitchener grew up in Glin, not far from where Lloyd lived, but being older may not have known him prior to the war.

On 15 April 1900, Lloyd is confined to hospital and he mentions fellow-patients Massy, who had jaundice, and Brazier Creagh, who had fever. On 2 July 1900, his father writes to say that he is trying to get horses, which are scarce due to the war.

by Tony Brown



Captain T.H. Eyre Lloyd.
(Limerick Museum).

By 2 August he had overcome that difficulty, as he wrote to his son that he had bought him two horses, "nut brown", four years old, 16' 1 (which won first prize at Limerick Show) for £65 and a five year old "brown", 15' 2 for £35 (£10 more when fully trained).

Despite the horrors of war and the boredom in between, Lloyd got light relief by playing hockey, cricket, billiards, football, horse riding and wild stag hunting. On 9 October 1900, he visited Pretoria zoo, which he described as a poor show. On 31 December 1900, he tried out his riding skills when he rode a buck jumper of the New Zealanders and got grazed on his head. In March 1901, he became Hon. Secretary of a newly formed Polo Club.

The sporting pursuits declined with the increase in conflict with the Boers. By 21 August 1901, the first hint of frustration began to creep in, when he wrote: "They think they know far more sitting in

Pretoria than we do on the spot." He seemed to derive some satisfaction from wiping General Walter Kitchener's eye, as he did less well in action on 17 September despite being closer to the Boers. On 22 September, he mentioned that Colonel Benson had sent his name in a list of recommendations to Sir Bindon Blood. He derived great pleasure at being invited to dine with General Reeves, who had just taken command, on 13 October. The General joined the 98th in the West Indies when Lloyd's father commanded. He also mentions that he knew the family well when they were in Malta.

On 25 October 1901, the skirmishes with the Boers intensified and he comments that the Boers were scared by the fight. On 29 October, the day before he was killed, he mentions that two men of the 3rd M.I. were wounded.

The poignant final entry shows no premonition of any ensuing danger to the writer. On the following day both he and General Benson were killed in action.

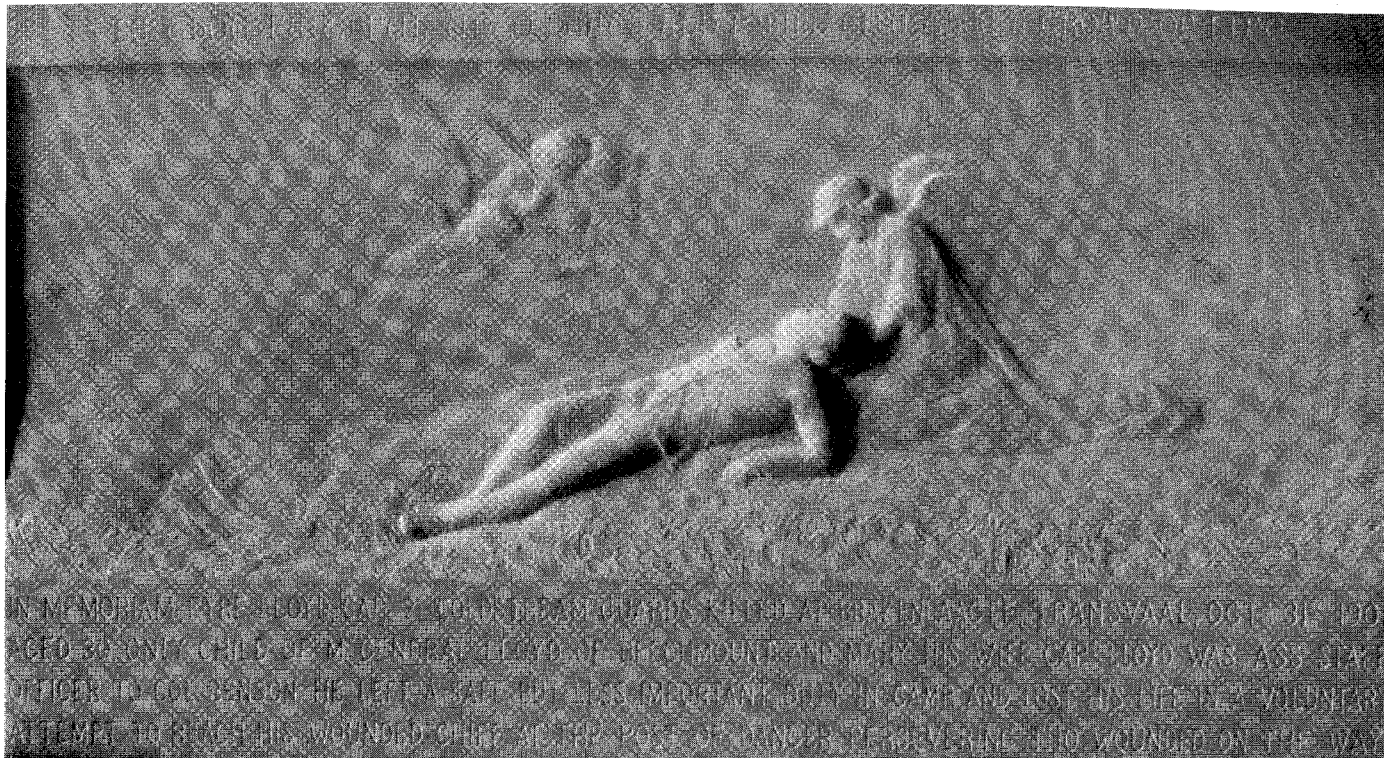
The circumstances of Eyre Lloyd's death proved to be controversial. There is little doubt about his bravery, but his loyalty to his superior officer led to accusations of he having disobeyed orders. It was for this reason that his name is not mentioned in dispatches. However, his father, General Thomas Lloyd of Beechmount, made every effort to clear the name of his only child. There are several letters, both written and received, on the subject and are added as an addendum to the published diary. The "in-memoriam" tribute and the letter written by Field Marshall Roberts, while not redressing the omission of his name in dispatches, certainly restored his honour among his comrades and his friends.

"In Memoriam.

EYRE LLOYD,

Captain 2nd Coldstream Guards, Assistant Staff-Officer Col. Benson's Column, Died of Wounds received at Brakenlaagte, OCTOBER 30th. 1901.

Colonel Sir A. Wools-Samson, K.C.B., told a friend of his in South Africa last March, that his reason for not mentioning Captain Eyre Lloyd in despatches for gallantry at Brackenlaagte was that he had disobeyed orders when he left the camp to go to Colonel Benson on hearing he was wounded and that heavy firing was going on. Captain Lloyd had been sent on to lay out the camp previous to the attack of the Boers, and the circumstance being changed, no doubt felt it to be his duty to



Memorial to Eyre Lloyd in St. Mary's Cathedral.

(Limerick Museum).

leave a comparatively unimportant task and to put himself at the disposal of his Chief.

The facts have been placed before many Generals, Colonels and experienced Officers of other ranks (few only mentioned here), and they have all expressed admiration at his conduct and viewed the matter as "justifiable disobedience" from the Field Marshal, Lord Roberts, Commander-in-Chief of the Army, and Lord Kitchener, Commanding the Forces in South Africa, downwards.

Beechmount,
Co. Limerick,
5th July, 1903."

"Copy of a Letter from the Field Marshall Earl Roberts, K.G., Commander-in-Chief. War Office, London, S.W. 29th June, 1903.

Dear General Lloyd,
My Private Secretary has given me the little pamphlet which has been compiled in memory of your late Son, Captain Eyre Lloyd, Coldstream Guards, and I need scarcely say that I have read it with a great deal of interest. The testimony of your Son's bravery is convincing, and I quite agree with the opinions which have been expressed by Lord Kitchener and other Officers in authority during the war in South Africa, that Captain Lloyd's disobedience of orders in leaving Camp at Brakenlaagte, if such a term can be applied in his case, was quite justifiable. I think his place as Staff Officer to Colonel Benson was undoubtedly with his Chief. It is too late to amend the omission of his name in despatches, but it may be some consolation to you to know my opinion. I

most deeply deplore the loss of your Son, who was a most promising young officer, and I offer you and your family my sincere sympathy in your bereavement. Believe me, Yours very truly, ROBERTS."

There is little doubt that it was the loyalty of Captain Eyre Lloyd, as Staff Officer to Col. Benson, that led to his death on that fateful day. The bravery of the young

officer is evidenced by the following two accounts received shortly after his death:

Extract from Vol. II of *The Military History of Perthshire*, edited by the Marchioness of Tullibardine.

"I continue the story in the words of a non-commissioned officer of the Scottish Horse, who at this moment was lying beside an ant-heap near the guns."

"Even as Colonel Benson looked, his



Graves of Colonel Benson and Captain Lloyd at Primrose Cemetery, Johannesburg.

(Limerick Museum).

Assistant Staff Officer, Captain Eyre Lloyd (Coldstream Guards)* appeared and dismounted on the farther edge of the rise, about 100 yards away, throwing the reins of his horse to a trooper. In almost the same second – as it seemed – man and horse fell dead. Captain Lloyd saw this happen, but walked on towards Colonel Benson with a characteristic smile, and in a manner which can only be described as leisurely. He was not even carrying a revolver, and his right hand was casually skilled into his breast † as he sauntered defiantly and quite upright across the open space, shot at by half a thousand rifles at not more than 30 or 40 yards range. All who saw him wondered at his glorious bravado – a precious example to every soldier and one for which he paid the price – for he was severely wounded while only a few paces from his Chief and never succeeded in reaching him. ‡ Of Captain Lloyd the above mentioned N.C.O. said, “He was the bravest young officer I ever saw.”

*Captain Lloyd had been sent on by Colonel Benson earlier in the day to lay out the camp, but when he heard of the severe fighting and of the Column Commander being wounded he felt his place was by Colonel Benson’s side, and he accordingly galloped out to the ridge. – (Ed.)

†This must have been in order to hide a wound in the right wrist which he had received a few minutes before. – (Ed.)

‡Captain Lloyd was mortally wounded a few minutes later whilst being tended by Captain Sloan, R.A.M.C. (attached Scottish Horse) and died next morning. – (Ed.)”

“Extract of a letter to a mutual friend from Captain Lloyd, D.S.O., Staff Officer to Colonel Benson, no relation or acquaintance to Gen. or Mrs. Lloyd.

Queenstown, Cape Colony,
January 7th, 1902.

I was not near when Captain Eyre Lloyd was shot, but from what I hear the facts are as follows: Colonel Benson had sent him on to lay out the camp, and he was not actually present when the Boers charged up the ridge on which the stand was made to defend the camp. The news that Colonel Benson had been hit got into the camp, and when Captain Lloyd heard it, he jumped on his horse and galloped off in the direction of where Colonel Benson was, no doubt hoping and thinking that he would be able to assist him. He left his horse in the low ground between the camp and the ridge, and crawled up towards where Colonel Benson was, but was shot in the leg before he could reach him. The Doctor was close by and at once proceeded to dress the wound, and while this was being done Captain Lloyd was shot in the head, and never recovered consciousness again.

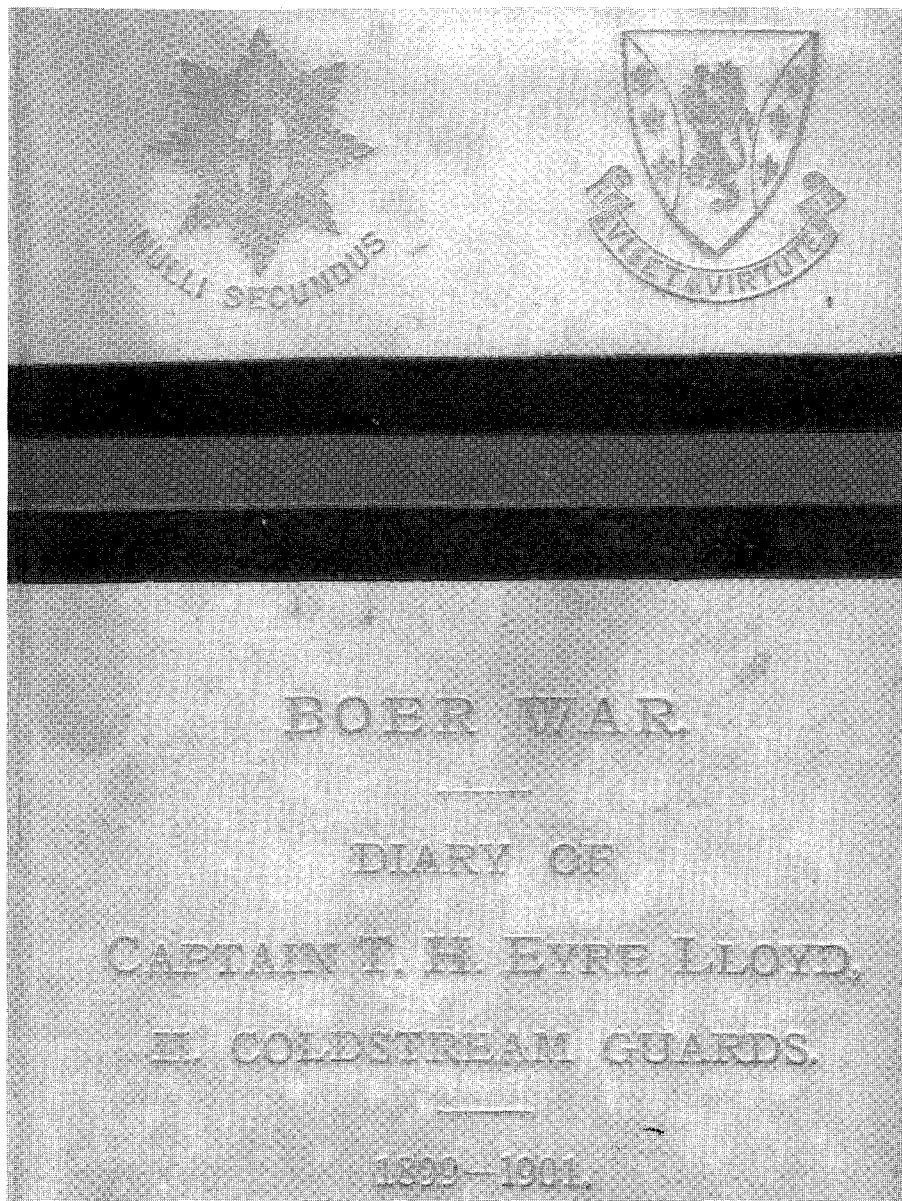
Colonel Benson was very much attached

to Captain Eyre Lloyd, and thought very highly of him, and I am sure that all who knew him deeply regret his loss. I fear it is a great grief to his people, as I understand he was an only child, but it will be a satisfaction to them to know that he met his death while doing his duty nobly and trying to help his Chief. I never saw him after Colonel Benson had sent him to lay out the camp, and I was unable to see him after he was brought in on account of being myself confined to my tent by a wound.”

Once the news of Captain Eyre Lloyd’s death reached home, a memorial service was held on 11 November 1901, in the Church of Ireland in his native Rathkeale. The Bishop of Limerick and Canon O’Brien, Rector of Adare, officiated. Music was provided by the Yorkshire Light Infantry, who were stationed in Limerick at that time. The chief mourners were Major General and Mrs. Lloyd of Beechmount, parents of the young officer, their only child. The church was crowded with a large congregation of relatives, neighbours and friends. There is a

memorial to Eyre Lloyd in that church, and also in the Roman Catholic church at Rathkeale. A third memorial mural tablet in St. Mary’s Cathedral, Limerick, is on a pillar in the South aisle (East side).

The Lloyd family is of ancient Welsh descent. They first settled at Tower Hill, near Cappamore, Co. Limerick, as early as 1652, and the Beechmount branch began when Col. Thomas Lloyd, who married Ellen Lloyd of Dromsallo, purchased the Rathkeale estate in 1805. Their eldest son, William, drowned at sea while serving in the Royal Navy. Thomas, MP for Co. Limerick 1826-1830, then succeeded and he married Catherine Evans, daughter of Eyre Evans of Miltown Castle, Charleville, Co. Cork. Their son, Thomas, married Anne Bourke, daughter of Edward Bourke of Ballyvoreen, Co. Limerick. Another Thomas married Julia Palmer and his son, Thomas, was Major General, J.P., D.L., and father of the diarist. He married Mary Henrietta Althusen, Stoke Court, Bucks, England. Their only child, Thomas Henry Eyre Lloyd, was born on 2 May 1871 and died in far off Transvaal on the last day of October 1901.



The cover of the diary.

(Limerick Museum).