



62880 Captain
**Richard John Watson
McAllen**

14th/20th King's Hussars RAC
1914 – 1941



Richard was the son of Dr Thomas John McAllen M.B. B.Ch. B.A.O. Physician & Surgeon who was the Medical officer of Heath and Public Vaccinator for the Pontypool Urban District Council and his wife Florence May McAllen. They lived at Hanbury Road Pontypool and The Thatch Cottage Llanwern.

The Thatch Cottage, which is located in Langstone Lane half a mile north of Llanwern village, was built in 1907 in vernacular style said to be by Lutyens and his assistant Oswald Milne. The house was commissioned by Lord Rhondda owner of nearby Pencoed Castle for his niece, Charlotte Haig, suffragette and horticulturalist and daughter of Earl Haig. It was designed for “a maiden lady with one servant”. At the time it was a two storey cottage having a reed thatched roof with a decorative blocked ridge. There is a crest on the chimney stack adjacent to the front door presumably that of the Haig family. The gardens are said to have been laid out by Gertrude Jekyll. Charlotte Haig was living in the cottage in April 1911 when she refused to complete the census marking the document “No Vote No Census”.

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911											
<i>Richard John Watson 62880 Captain RAC</i>											
<i>No Vote No Census</i>											

The cottage is noted on the Cadw listed buildings database.

When Richard's father died on 31st May 1949 he left £70,070 8s 7d in his will to Florence his widow. That would have the equivalent purchasing power of £1.7 Million in 2017.

Richard was educated at Radley College Berkshire (Wilson-Green's-Boyd's, G) arriving in 1928. His record on the Radleian Leaver's summary shows how involved he was with the College activities.



House Prefect 1931-2
School Certificate
Sixth Form
Secretary of the Debating Society
Secretary of the Shop
Trial Vills 1932
Rugby 3rd XV 1931
Fencing v. Bradfield 1932
PT Instructor
Cert. A. Sergeant in the Officer Training Corps

He is remembered at Radley College as one who possessed all the qualities necessary to make a fine officer.

He was admitted to Trinity College, Cambridge in 1932 to read medicine but his Radley Leaver's Form says 'try to get a University Commission in the Army.' Whilst studying he rowed for his college also playing polo and, when at home, he hunted with the Tredegar Hounds. He graduated with a B.A.

Though at first destined for the medical profession, his enthusiasm for the Army asserted itself. He was gazetted on the General List T.A. on 20th July 1934 as a Second Lieutenant (University candidate). He was gazetted to join the 14th/20th Hussars on 30th August 1935. He was promoted to Captain in 1940 and during 1941 he became Adjutant of his Regiment.

Richard married Joan Mary Moore Gillson on 21st May 1941 at All Saints Church, Bombay, whilst his Regiment was serving in India. His wife was the daughter of the late Lieutenant Colonel Robert Moore Thacker Gillson DSO, a retired officer from Duke of Edinburgh's (Wiltshire) Regiment who had also been at Radley College. Joan had travelled to India in October 1936.

Military Career



In the years after the First World War it was clear that future warfare would involve a lesser role for cavalry. In 1928 the 11th (Prince Albert's Own) Hussars became the first cavalry regiment to mechanise, receiving Rolls-Royce and Lanchester armoured cars. The other British cavalry regiments followed their lead and all were eventually mechanised by 1941. Richard's Regiment had been mechanised in 1938 with light tanks, while still in India.

The Vickers Light Tank Mark VI entered production in 1936, and was the most numerous tank available in the run-up to

the Second World War. It was small and cheap to produce, but armed only with machine guns. Light tanks were seen to have an important reconnaissance task, and were useful in the colonial policing role, but were not suitable for the main armoured force. Tank versus tank actions required something more deadly than a machine gun and armour thick enough to resist more than a rifle bullet.

In May 1941 the Regiment received their mobilisation orders for active service in Iraq and Persia. German forces were becoming more influential in the area at the time and the Regiment was tasked to counter those heavy influences. The 14th/20th saw its first action of the Second World War in Iraq and Persia (now Iran). It remained in the Middle East for three years to guard the oil fields and supply routes and while there switched to Sherman tanks.

The Regiment formed the main element of the second Indian Light Armoured Brigade and provided the only tanks available to the area commander Major General William 'Bill' Slim and his 10th Indian Division to support his Persian campaign. On 1 April 1941, when the Iraqi coup d'état took place, the British and Commonwealth forces available within Iraq were very limited. Air Vice-Marshal Smart commanded the Royal Air Force-led inter-service command, "British Forces in Iraq."



Ground forces available to Smart included Number 1 Armoured Car Company and six companies of Assyrian Levies. The armoured car company comprised 18 ancient Rolls Royce armoured cars of World War I vintage. The Assyrian Levies totalled almost 2,000 locally raised officers and other ranks under the command of about 20 British officers.

After the Anglo-Iraq War, elements of Iraqforce (known as Iraq Command from 21 June) were used to attack the Vichy French-held Mandate of Syria during the Syria-Lebanon campaign, which started 8 June and ended 14 July.

The Vichy French made a vigorous defence of Syria but on 10 July, as the 21st Australian Brigade was on the verge of entering Beirut, the French sought an armistice. At one minute past midnight on 12 July, a ceasefire came into effect and ended the campaign. The Armistice of Saint Jean d'Acre was signed on 14 July at the Sidney Smith Barracks on the outskirts of the city.

Little is known about the campaign, even in the countries that took part. It has been reported that there is evidence that the British censored reportage of the fighting, because politicians believed that hostilities against French forces could have a negative effect on public opinion in British countries. One clear fact is that the despatch to the War Office from General Sir Archibald Wavell Commander-in-Chief, India on 18th October 1942 entitled "Despatch of troops to Iraq" was not published in the London Gazette until 13th August 1946.

On 15th July 1941 Captain Richard John Watson McAllen died whilst on active service in Iraq. He had been only a fortnight in the Middle East when he met his death and is buried at [Baghdad \(North Gate\) War Cemetery](#), Iraq Plot: 23. E. 4.

Most of the 296 Commonwealth servicemen of the Second World War buried in the cemetery died of illness or by accident when serving with Iraq Command, a number of the graves were brought in from other burial grounds. Within the cemetery is a Memorial, commemorating 104 Commonwealth servicemen, 437 Polish soldiers and 3 Arab Legionnaires of the Second World War buried in Khanaqin War Cemetery which, owing to difficulty of access, could not be properly maintained. The Cemetery also contains 127 war graves of other nationalities from both wars, 100 of them Turkish, and 41 non-war graves.

Baghdad (North Gate) War Cemetery is located in a very sensitive area in the Waziriah Area of the Al-Russafa district of Baghdad. With the current climate of political instability it is extremely challenging for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to manage or maintain its cemeteries and memorials located within Iraq. A two volume Roll of Honour listing all casualties buried and commemorated in Iraq has been produced. These volumes are on display at the Commission's Head Office in Maidenhead and are available for the public to view.

Whilst we have taken photographs of the headstones of the fallen men when we visited the cemeteries where they are buried the Commonwealth War Graves Commission advised against visiting the Baghdad (North Gate) War Cemetery.

Upon receiving a letter of condolence from Radley Richard's mother Florence McAllen wrote this letter to Mr Hope at the college.

R. J. W. McAllen

Thatch Cottage
Llanwrn
Nr Newport
Tel. 91.

Sept 1st 1941

Dear Mr. Hope.

We deeply appreciate your kind letter of sympathy with us in the passing of our beloved son.

It is indeed a heavy blow, he meant so much to us.

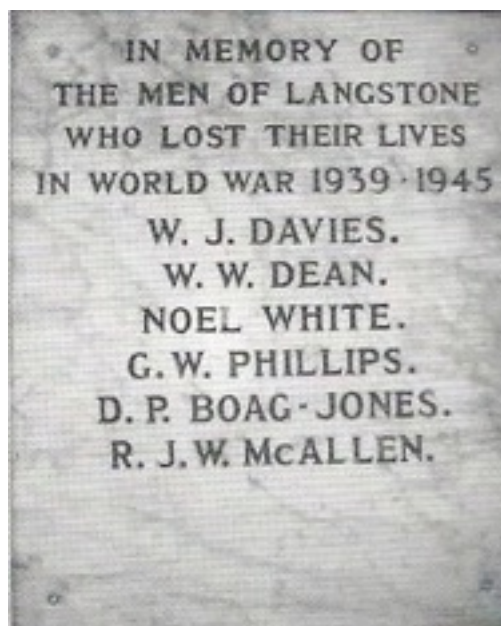
He had been married just a month when his Regiment went overseas from India. Then in a fortnight his dear life was taken. We have heard few details as yet, just that he died from the effects of heat-exhaustion in India.

He was Adjutant of his Regiment & had worked so hard for the war so proud to think that at

last they were to be allowed to do their part!
He would have been proud to know that you had remembered him. Radley & all it meant was very dear to him

Yours very sincerely
Mrs J. M. McAllen.

P.S. We were wondering whether Mr. Wilson Green had heard the sad news; he has always kept in touch with my boy.



Richard is also remembered on the War memorial at Radley College, Trinity College Chapel Memorial, the Pontypool War Memorial and a plaque in Langstone Village Hall.

The Newport cenotaph was unveiled by Lord Tredegar in June 1923, to commemorate the local people who died in active service in the First World War. It now also commemorates people who died in subsequent wars. There are no names on the memorial but Captain Richard John Watson McAllen's name appears on the listing.

Richard's widow remarried Captain Edward Thomas Richard Jenyns at Quetta Balochistan Pakistan on 5th July 1942. He was killed in action in Normandy on 15th June 1944.