

## **EDWARD OWEN ST CYRES GODOLPHIN QUICKE (1887 - 1914)**

**Squire of Newton St Cyres 1908 - 1914**

**Family motto 'Petit ardua virtus' (strength seeks challenges)**

**Captain Edward Quicke died at Givenchy on October 25<sup>th</sup> 1914**

**Edward Owen St Cyres Godolphin Quicke was born in New Zealand on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1887.**

His father Ernest Henry Godolphin Quicke had been sent to New Zealand (by his uncle Squire John) for twice incurring debts he could not pay as a young cavalry officer. There he married his New Zealand born wife Adelaide Collyns, whose family had property at Nelson and they had 3 children in successive years, Gwladys, Edward and Noel.

The family story implies that they were brought back to Britain by an aunt, when the estate succession was in doubt, as Squire John aged without naming a successor. The boys were educated at Clifton College where Edward is said to have excelled at sport, he later won a cup as a public schools lightweight boxing champion. In the 1901 census (at the age of 13yrs), he is listed among the boys at the Royal Naval Academy Portsmouth. His family settled in Sidmouth.

Squire John died in 1901 aged 86yrs and Edward inherited the estate although it was held by trustees until his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday in 1908. In September 1906, when the family were in residence, Newton House was devastated by fire. Edward was not home, but his brother Noel with the help of estate tenants, was able to save a good part of the house contents. The insurance did not cover rebuilding costs. 1908 descriptions of Edward's coming of age party find the family living at Tidcombe House, Tiverton. Further celebrations were held in Newton House grounds in October 1909 to celebrate the marriage of sister Gladwys to Col. Acland Troyte and to remember Edward's coming of age. In the 1911 census Edward and his parents are listed as boarders at the Victoria Hotel Sidmouth. Lady Audrey Buller resided at the rebuilt Newton House during WW1.

According to a newspaper article in May 1908 Edward was a lieutenant in the 4<sup>th</sup> Devons. He is said to have successfully passed his examinations for the regular service but failed the eyesight test. He was treasurer of the Rougement Habitation of the Primrose League (a patriotic Conservative Association). Edward was a popular young man who hunted and rode in Point to Points and performed the duties of a young Squire, such as entertaining the tenants to tea on occasion. However his chief love was winter sports and we know that he visited St Moritz during the Januarys of 1913 and 1914. (a postcard written to a Prussian Countess he admired has survived from 1913 and he is said to have won the Cresta Run in 1914). Winning the Cresta Run entailed giving a dinner party where the chief guest was the Crown Prince of Germany, 'Little Willie' as he became known.

Captain Edward Owen St Cyres Godolphin Quicke of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Devonshire Regiment was killed in action 25<sup>th</sup> October 1914 at Givenchy. It was thought imperative to hold Givenchy as the land behind was swampy and there was nowhere to withdraw to. There had been no time to dig trenches and messages had to be sent between

companies even under fire. According to family history 'Edward from the 3<sup>rd</sup> (Militia) Battalion Devon Regiment went to France with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion and was the first officer killed in the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion at Ypres. With no radio the Colonel wanted to tell one company they were shooting in the wrong direction. Edward offered to be the runner after two privates were killed and was himself killed.'

When the 1sts were withdrawn from the Front the next day they had lost 250 All Ranks and only 12 of 27 Officers remained on duty.

A memorial service was held for Edward Quicke on Nov 9<sup>th</sup> 1914 in Newton St Cyres Church. It was attended by several notable military gentlemen including Colonel Boles (commanding officer of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Devons) and all the village tenantry. The band of the 1<sup>st</sup> Devons played Chopin's funeral march and buglers sounded the 'last post'. In his address the Vicar, Canon Boles, spoke movingly of Edward's words to him before leaving 'you know I don't like it but it is my duty and when I am there I will be glad' He had previously said 'I ought to do it. I will.'

Writing in an Exeter newspaper a few months later, Canon Boles told the story of how he had been entertaining wounded soldiers in Newton St Cyres when one expressed surprise that he was standing on Edward Quicke's land and proceeded to tell the story of how Captain Quicke had saved his life. Edward Quicke was especially mentioned at the first annual dinner of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion (in 1919) for his gallantry and heroism.

A Memorial Window in Newton St Cyres Church to commemorate Captain Quicke and the other men from Newton St Cyres who died in WW1 was unveiled and dedicated in October 1920. The names of all the men shown on the memorial tablet are also shown in the window.

Captain Noel Quicke, his younger brother, inherited the estate and succeeded Edward as village squire. He too, served in WW1 and was injured but recovered and continued to serve being mentioned in despatches.

*Researched by Jean Wilkins*

