

SEDBERGH SCHOOL
MILITARY TIMELINE

While Sedbergh is not seen as a ‘military school’, there is a distinguished history of military service by Old Sedberghians, a source of great pride to the School. Perhaps that sense of service stems from the values and standards embedded in a Sedbergh education and encapsulated in our motto, *Dura Virum Nutrix* – ‘Stern Nurse of Men’. It is brought most starkly into focus by the bravery exhibited by Old Sedberghians – especially by the four individuals awarded the Victoria Cross but by many others too, and by their sacrifice, particularly the 448 old boys and 4 masters who died in the service of this Nation and are recorded on the Memorial Cloisters.

- Pre 1900

1900s

1910s

1920s
- 1930s

1940s

1950s

1960s
- 1970s

1980s

1990s

2000s

Air Vice Marshall Peter Furniss OBE
School House 1933-37
Commanded a Spitfire squadron in Italian and Balkan campaign in WW2.

Major-General Ronald McAlister OBE
Sedgwick House 1936-41
3rd, 10th Brigade of Gurkha Rifles. Bursar, Wellesley House Prep School. Retired editor 10th Gurkhas Regimental Journal.

1940:
Junior Training Corps (J.T.C.) founded. The Sedberghian Magazine stated ‘The J.T.C., by weekly uniform parades and a revision and highlighting of syllabus have made us feel our military obligations’.

SEDBERGH LOSES A GALLANT SON
Flt. Sgt. Betty Dies on 37th Raid
Flt. Sgt. Betty Williams, a native of Sedbergh, was a member of the 1st Bomber Squadron, 1st Bomber Group, Royal Air Force, and was killed in action on 37th raid on 19th May 1941.

Admiral Sir Jock Slater
GCB, LVO, DL, RN (SH 1951-56)
Served in the Royal Navy from 1956-1998 retiring as First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff. Former Chairman of the Imperial War Museum and of the RNLI.



William Gemmell Alexander MBE
Lupton House 1932-36
After reading law at Oxford he served as a 2nd Lieutenant in the 51st Infantry Division. He served in France until the Dunkirk evacuation where he had to escape in full uniform. He escaped unscathed after the attempted bombing of a ship he was asleep on. On his return from WW2 he was posted to Africa with the Eighth Army. He was involved in desert fighting and took part in beach landings in Sicily and Italy. He was present at the capture of the Belen concentration camp. In 1946, he began several years of travelling the world with the Colonial Service.

Major-General Michael Walsh CB, CBE, DSO, DL
School House 1941-44
Joined the King's Royal Rifle Corps (60th Rifles) as a rifleman straight after leaving Sedbergh School. He rose in rank to become a divisional commander as a Major-General. Following retirement from the Army he became Chief Scout of the United Kingdom, a vice-president of the R.N.L.I and Director Overseas of St John Ambulance.

March 1951:
Victoria Cross Memorial unveiled above Cloisters. Three Old Sedberghians were awarded the Victoria Cross in WW2, two of them posthumously. Four newly inscribed panels in the Cloisters also unveiled, bearing the names of the 198 former members of the School who fell in the Second World War, dedicated by the Archbishop of York, Dr Cyril Garbett.

CCF Band 1951-52

Rear Admiral Robin Shiffner
School House 1955-59
Shiffner served with the Royal Navy for 35 years, spending a great deal of time in his early years at sea. He became Captain of the Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth.

Brigadier General C. Hotham
c.1679
Colonel of Royal Regiment Dragoons. MP for Beverley.

General Sir John Shea
GCB, KCMG, DSO
Sedgwick House 1880-83
Shea served in World War I. After the War he went on to be Adjutant-General, India in 1924 and General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command, India in 1928 before retiring in 1932. He was very involved with Sedbergh School serving on the board of Governors from 1935 until his death in May 1966 regularly attending speech day and supporting other school events.



Lieutenant General Sir Matthew Fell KCB, CMG, FRCS
Lupton House 1885-91
First Head of House. First Director of Medical Services R.A.F. mentioned in despatches eight times. A barracks in Blackpool has been named after him in honour of his services to the armed forces.



Lieutenant Robert Digby Jones VC
Sedgwick House 1890-93
On 6 January 1900 during the attack on Wagon Hill (Ladysmith), South Africa, Lieutenant Digby Jones and a trooper of the Imperial Light Horse led the force which re-occupied the top of the hill at a critical moment, just as the three foremost attacking Boers reached it. The leader was shot by Lieutenant Digby Jones. He was awarded the VC for his actions.

Brigadier Alastair Pearson CB, OBE, MC, DSO
Winder House 1930-33
Pearson took command of 1st Parachute Battalion and 8th (Midlands) Parachute Battalion fighting in Battle of France, Tunisian Campaign, Invasion of Sicily and Normandy landings.



Kenneth Campbell VC
Sedgwick House 1931-35
Flying Officer, 22 Squadron Coastal Command. Killed in action in Brest flying a Beaufort Torpedo Bomber in a successful attack on Battleship *Gneisenau*. Buried at Brest.



Flying Officer John Stower
Hart House 1930-31
He took part in the famous ‘Great Escape’. Stower succeeded in getting from Sagan into Switzerland, and after four days, unknowingly, walked back through the frontier into German territory, and was seized by a German patrol. He was amongst the 50 prisoners who were shot by the Germans on 31st March 1944.



Brigadier David Biggart OBE
Powell House 1959-63
Regimental Colonel in the Royal Fusiliers 1996-2001. Became OS Club President in 2019.

Major-General Christopher Wilson CB, CBE
Lupton House 1967-72
Wilson was commissioned into the Royal Artillery in 1973. He was appointed the Senior Army Representative at the Royal College of Defence Studies in 2005. He was deployed as Deputy Commander, Combined Forces Command in Afghanistan in 2006 and became Director of Battlefield Manoeuvre and Master-General of the Ordnance in 2006 before retiring in May 2010.



Lieutenant Colonel Mathew Straker
Winder House 1968-73
Commissioned into The 15th/19th The King's Royal Hussars in 1974. Service with the Regular Army until 1999 before re-joining as Territorial Army Reservist in the rank of Colonel in 2003, which ended in 2014.



Edward (Ted) Ruffman, DSC
Winder House 1929-34
In 1938 Ted joined the TA, was commissioned and sent to Norway. He was then sent to the Middle East and when he tried to rescue a colleague in Tubruk his carrier was blown up and he was invalided out of the army with many serious injuries. He then joined the SOE and took part in Operation Bridford crossing the North Sea to Sweden, evading the German blockade of the Skagerrak, to bring back supplies and transport arms for the Danish underground. After a collision in thick fog he had to blow up his ship and jump into the sea. For this he was awarded the DSC and mentioned several times in despatches and in the book *The Blockade Busters*.



Flying Officer Laurence Reavell-Carter
Lupton House 1928-31
Reavell-Carter was an Olympic Athlete for Great Britain. He took part in the famous ‘Great Escape’. He was caught at the exit from the tunnel and put back inside the camp when he tried to save others by distracting the guard who was about to shoot them. Perhaps this helped save his life, for had he been re-taken at large, he would most probably have been one of the 50 who were shot by the Germans after being recaptured.



Lieutenant-General Sir Andrew Gregory KBE, CB
Sedgwick House 1970-75
Gregory was commissioned into the Royal Artillery in 1981 and served in Iraq. Promoted to Major-General in 2007 then became Director General, Personnel in 2008, Military Secretary in 2011 and Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Personnel and Training) with promotion to Lieutenant-General in 2013. He retired from the Army in 2016 and became CEO of SSAEA, The Armed Forces charity. He was appointed Master Gunner, St James's Park from 2017. In 2019 he became an Ambassador for the charity Room to Reward. He is also a Governor of Sedbergh School.

Frederick Spencer Chapman DSO (Bar)
Lupton House 1926
Chapman was commissioned into the Seaford Highlanders in 1939 and due to his exploration experience was chosen to train Australian, New Zealand and Singaporean forces in guerrilla warfare. During a mission behind Japanese lines in Malay the entire party except Chapman succumbed to starvation, disease and attack by Japanese forces. Chapman spent 18 months in hiding in the jungle sabotaging Japanese military efforts. In 1946 he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order backdated to 31 March 1944. A Bar to D. S. O followed in 1946.



Brigadier Ian Mortimer CBE
Winder House 1980-87
Commander of 20 Brigade 2014-16. Staff officer at the UK Ministry of Defence 2016-18. Head Senior Faculty at Defence Academy of the United Kingdom 2019.

Major-General Jonathan Shaw CB, CBE
Sedgwick House 1971-75
Joined the Parachute Regiment in 1980 and served as platoon commander in 3 PARA during the Falklands War. He has commanded every level up to 2*. He has been Chief of Staff at HQ Land Forces, Assistant Chief of Defence Staff (International Security Policy) and Assistant Chief of Defence Staff (Global Issues). He retired from the Army in 2012. He is now Chairman of Optima, leaders in explosive threat mitigation.



Second Lieutenant Edward Hamilton MM
Lupton House 1893-97
West Yorkshire Regiment; France 1915-1918.

Private Harold Thorp MM
Sedgwick House 1895-99
Joined the Royal Medical Corps in 1915. During operations in France in 1916 he received the MM for ‘bravery in the field’. In September 1917 he received a penetrating wound to the chest and leg and died in the Casualty Clearing Station from which it had been impossible to move him.



Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Duncan DSO (2nd Bar)
Hart House 1896-1903
France 1915-1919. Mentioned in Despatches 5 times. Wounded 1915.



Second Lieutenant George Gunn VC, MC
Sedgwick House 1926-30
Royal Horse Artillery. Killed in action. Buried in Knightbridge Cemetery, Lybia. Won VC: Sidi Rezegh 21/11/41, Gunn held off an attack on Sidi Rezegh with single unarmoured gun when rest of battery had been destroyed or disabled.



Corporal William Shaw MM
School House 1898-1900
North Auckland Regt., N.Z.E.F. Wounded 1915, 1917.

Lieutenant Colonel Alfred Irwin DSO (2nd Bar)
School House 1901-06
East Surrey Regt. Wounded 1916, 1918. Mentioned in despatches 4 times.

September 1901:
Sedbergh Rifle Corps founded.



Major-General Harold Hodges CBE
Lupton House 1924-28
Brigadier Royal Artillery



Alan Lewis
CCF Band 1990-2013
In the 1960s Lewis was the principal cornet with the Royal Welsh Fusiliers and then the principal trumpet at the Royal Marine School of Music at Kneller Hall. He arrived at Sedbergh School in 1990 and founded the internationally renowned Sedbergh School CCF (Combined Cadet Force) Band. In 2002 he was awarded the Lord Lieutenant's Certificate in recognition of his ‘excellent contributions to CCF marching band and ACF Military Brass Music’ and in the citation he referred to Sedbergh School's band being one of the best of its type in the country.

Captain Thomas Bailey
Sedgwick House 1992-97
(Coldstream Guards) He was given a headcam to record a video diary in Afghanistan for ITN in 2008. This was the lead item for two nights as Bailey has to deal with the death of one of the soldiers in his patrol.



Vice Admiral George Creswell CB, DSO, DSC, RN
School House 1902-02
Staff, Mediterranean Station. Mentioned in Despatches.

Cadet corps 1903

1904:
School branch of Navy League founded.



Major-General Jock Campbell VC, DSO, MC
Evans House 1907-12
Royal Horse Artillery. Perhaps the most famous of all ‘Desert Rats’, his name being a byword for courage through the division. He was awarded the Victoria Cross at Sidi Rezegh in November 1941, whilst commanding the Support Group. Accidentally killed on active service. Buried in Cairo War Cemetery.



May 1917
King George V and Queen Mary visited Sedbergh School to inspect Officer Training Corps.



Second Lieutenant Toby Foster
Winder House 1998-2006
Head of School. Awarded Sword of Honour at Sandhurst. Joined the Rifles in 2011. Has been a Platoon Commander, ADC to Deputy Commander and Company Second in Command, 4 Rifles. Currently an Adjutant in 4 Rifles and in Operational Commitments at the Air Defence Operations Centre.



Lieutenant Miles Thursby MM
Evans House 1907-12
Canadian Machine Gun Corps.



Private Edward Herd MM (Bar)
Day Boy 1908-10
Liverpool Scottish; France 1915-1917; Taken prisoner 1917-1918 but survived.

Captain Percy Bentley MC (3rd Bar)
Hart House 1908-10
Yorks. Light Infantry. Wounded 1915, 1917; Mentioned in Despatches.

Lieutenant Wilfred Turner MM
Hart House 1910-12
Tank Corps; France, 1915-1918



Corporal Fred Flatow MM
Evans House 1914-16
East Yorks. Regt.



2018
The Pilgrimage of Remembrance was completed after visits to Gallipoli (2015), The Somme (2016), Passchendaele (2017), Mons (2018) and Ypres (2018). 259 graves of OS who fell in WW1 were visited in 14 different countries, with a cross and soil from Winder placed at each one.

