



THE MARQUESS AND MARCHIONESS OF EXETER

LORD EXETER

William Thomas Brownlow Cecil, 5th Marquess of Exeter (1876 – 1956)

A former Territorial Army Officer before the war, the 5th Marquess of Exeter held the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the 54th (East Anglian) Artillery Division. Whilst on their summer camp at Burghley emergency orders recalled his Regiment to base. They were mobilised for "Full Time War Service" on 5th August, the day after Britain declared war on Germany. After providing coastal defences in Norfolk and Suffolk the Division left England on 17th November 1915, for Northern France. A few months later they were sent to Egypt where they were to be based at Mena Camp.

In 1917 they were involved in Battles in Gaza, Jaffa and the Battle of Sharon (1918). The Division was ordered to Beirut where they concentrated their forces. In January 1919 they returned to England. Lord Exeter was twice mentioned in dispatches; in 1916 by Field Marshall Murray and in 1919 by Field Marshall Haig.

Whilst away Lord Exeter enjoyed some of the comforts of home sent by his wife. 'Treats' included: Game Pâté, Lobster, Plain Chocolate Cake, Turtle Soup Tablets, Mince Pies, Tins of Dutch Cheese, Cambridge Sausages, Finest Butter, Cherry Jam and lots and lots of bars of Wright's Carbolic Soap!



Lord Exeter and Major Bailey inspecting a water hole in the desert



East Anglian Royal Field Artillery, Theford 1915



Egypt 1916



LADY EXETER

Myra Rowena Sibell Cecil, Marchioness of Exeter (1879 – 1973)

While her husband was away, Lady Exeter took over the management of the Estate. On the 22nd March 1915, the Marchioness gave birth to her daughter Romayne; it was to be a busy four years.

EXTRACTS FROM LADY EXETER'S DIARY 1916

February 4th
Zeppelins circled over Burghley and dropped a bomb between Blackstones and Newstead.

March 5th
We heard 13 "Zepp" bombs at 11.30 pm up the North Road; On March 7th I motored 3 of the soldiers to see the bomb holes, found them in a ploughed field near Market Overton.

March 9th
Parker brought a "troupe" up in the afternoon and they sang and danced for the soldiers in the Great Hall; the Waterbury Hospital soldiers came too, and my working party and the household; they much enjoyed it; the performers had tea before leaving.

March 28th
A tremendous hurricane the whole day until 6.00pm, a gale of hurricane force and blinding snow drifts 6' deep in places, quantities of trees down. More than a hundred trees fell in less than 5 minutes in Burghley Park. I motored to Stamford with difficulty to the Town Hall but there was no one to attend the Red Cross Meeting.

June 2nd
Heard of the terrible naval battle on May 31st - Queen Mary, Black Prince etc. sunk. (Battle of Jutland - 14 ships sunk 6097 killed, 510 wounded)

June 6th
In the afternoon we heard the incredible news of Lt. Kitchener's horrible tragedy - "H.M.S. Hampshire with Lt. Kitchener and his staff on board was sunk by a mine or torpedo last night west of Orkney, only some bodies and a capsized boat found at present. The C.I.C. greatly fears little hope of survivors.

July 13th
Arranged rooms for more soldiers etc; in the afternoon I opened the Farmer's Sale in my garden and my bouquet was then auctioned for £100; one of my yearling Shetland ponies fetched 8 1/2 guineas; Martin had a great success singing a song (aged 7 years) in the Great Hall.

November 22nd
In the afternoon the "Maids and Middies" troupe came up and gave us an entertainment for the soldiers and the working party in the Great Hall; 15 soldiers also came up from the infirmary and stayed for tea.

December 6th
Asquith resigned at last!

December 10th
I motored 3 of our wounded soldiers to St. George's Church for a Memorial Service in the afternoon.

December 24th
... at midnight the soldiers came round outside with bugles and penny whistles etc. and sang carols and "A Merry Christmas".

December 25th
Terence and the boys played football with 2 or 3 of the soldiers, then they sang some duets etc. and the soldiers and household joined, then Parker gave some "sketches", later they danced and were all very happy.

December 27th
The lake was frozen and David and some of the soldiers skated and played hockey.



From left to right: Mildred Cathcart, Partridge (Orderly), Myra (Lady Exeter), Nurse Mungrove and Nurse Jones