

Hertfordshire Soldier Honoured on 200th Anniversary of Battle



George Arnold of the 16th Light Dragoons who was born in Shillington, fought in every major campaign of the Napoleonic Wars alongside Lord Wellington. After his many years of military service he retired to the village of Pirton in Hertfordshire and is buried in the parish churchyard.

Following the discovery of a letter that was published in the Times in 1868, George's story was to become public again. The letter read;

A WATERLOO VETERAN.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Crowded as are your columns at this time with election news, I yet venture to crave a small space for an appeal to your numerous readers on behalf of an old parishioner, whose case is one deserving of sympathy.

George Arnold, who will complete his 90th year in January next, enlisted early in life in the then 16th Light Dragoons, and after a brief sojourn in Ireland embarked for the Peninsula in 1809, and, with the exception of about six months, was abroad until he entered Paris with his regiment in 1815. He was at the taking of Madajoz, and in the thick of Salamanca, Talavera, Fuentes d'Onore, Vittoria, and at the crowning fight of Waterloo. He left the army soon after the peace with a pension of a shilling a day, which is his sole remaining means of subsistence, and when from this is deducted the amount paid for rent and firing, there is not much left for food and clothing.

The old man is in fair health considering his age, and still shows a soldierly bearing, with some sparks of the ancient fire when fighting his battles over again. I have known him for several years and never heard him complain, but always express himself in terms of thankfulness for any little act of kindness. I am very anxious to add to the old man's comfort during his few remaining days, and should be thankful to any of your readers who would aid me in doing so, if you will kindly permit this appeal to appear in your columns.

I am, Sir, your faithful servant,
R. LINDSAY LOUGHBOROUGH,
Vicar of Pirton.

Pirton, near Hitchin, Nov. 19.



The generous response to Reverend Loughborough's request led to a flood of funds being sent to George, highlighting the esteem which Waterloo Veterans were held in the 1860's.

Sadly George was only able to enjoy his new-found comfort for a few months, as he died in 1869 at the age of 90. After his death the majority of the funds sent to George went to pay for a headstone.

The stone was erected but was inscribed with the wrong regiment. Now, after a campaign by Stevenage-based military historians, Battle Honours, the memorial has been renovated and the error corrected.

Neville Memorials were asked to carry out the work and in an effort to preserve the history of the stone suggested that the reverse of the memorial be used to carry the amended inscription. Today the memorial has an amended inscription that future generations will be able to read, as well as being able to see the original lettering.

A service was held in the churchyard on Thursday 18th June 2015, the 200th anniversary of battle of Waterloo. A military honour guard was present, Mr Dan Hill, a local historian from Battle Honours told us of George's life, the stone was unveiled, and after a two minute silence the headstone was rededicated by the minister of Pirton, Rev'd James Robertson.

