# **CODDINGTON**

# Remembering the Fallen of the First World War

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# Brigadier General Roger Henry Massie CB CMG

**Royal Garrison Artillery** 

Died 23 February 1927

# Major John Hamon Massie DSO RGA

**Royal Garrison Artillery** 

Died 15 November 1914

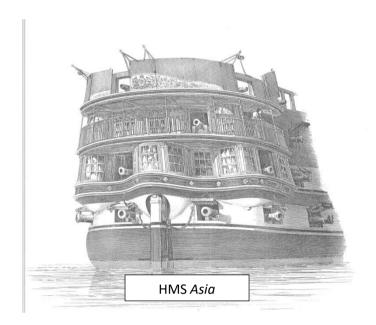
The Massies of Coddington can trace their family line back to the 14th century and have been closely associated with the military since Edward (the fifth child of eighteen children to John Massie and Anne Grosvenor) fought as an officer in the Civil War. Supporting the king initially, then fighting long and hard for the parliamentary cause, he gained a seat in parliament, but was later imprisoned for siding against Cromwell. He escaped to Holland where he re-aligned himself with the Royalist cause. On his return to England he fought at the Battle of Worcester receiving severe wounds. He was captured but again, making his escape this time to Ireland, where he died and was buried at AbbeyLeix. The record of subsequent generations is large and complicated and this article concerns itself only with Roger Henry Massie, John Hamon Massie and members of the Massie family having a direct influence on the brothers.





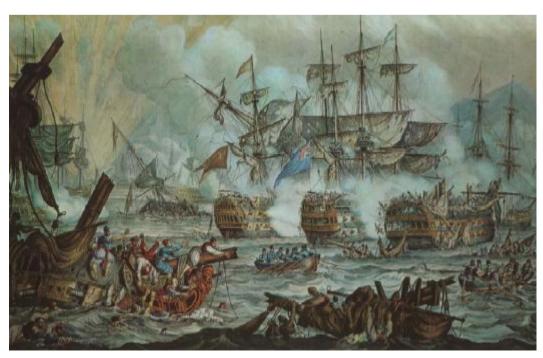
Sir Edward Massey

Roger and John's grandfather was Admiral Thomas Leche Massie, the sixth child of twenty-one children to Richard and Hester Massie. He was born on the 21 October 1802. He entered the Navy in October 1818 on board HMS *Rochford*, flagship of Sir Thomas Francis Fremantle, serving mainly in the Mediterranean. She was a 74-gun 3rd rate ship of the line, launched in 1809 and broken up in 1826. He continued to serve in the Mediterranean in different ships. It was while serving in HMS *Columbine* that during the night of the 24 January 1824 he was shipwrecked on Sapientz, an island off mainland Greece. The whole crew were taken off the island by HMS *Alacrity*.



He was on board HMS *Asia* during the Battle of Navarino 20 October 1827. The Ottoman Armada was destroyed by an allied force of British French and Russian ships. This was the last naval battle to be fought entirely by sailing ships. HMS *Asia* was an eighty-four-gun second rate ship of the line, launched 19 January 1824 and sold 1904. After the battle he was rewarded with promotion to lieutenant on the 11 November 1827.

HMS Asia (centre) fighting against two Ottoman ships



As a lieutenant he served mainly in the North Sea, the Channel, Lisbon Station and at the South American Station under Captain Robert Smart on board HMS *Satellite*. He was back in the Mediterranean for two years as first lieutenant in HMS *Craysfort* a sixth-rate sailing frigate carrying 26 guns. She was launched on 12 August 1836 and sold in 1861. On the 3 November 1840, the vessel bombarded Acre with other French and Austrian Squadrons aiding its capture.

On the 28 June 1838, he was made Commander, and in 1839 posted to Constantinople to help organise the Ottoman Navy. Only twelve years earlier he had helped to destroy it.

In March 1840, he was appointed second captain to HMS *Thunderer*. She was a two deck 84-gun second rate ship of the line having been launched on 22 September 1831 and later sold to be broken up 1901. She acted as flag ship during the bombardment and capture of the fortress at St. Jean d'Acre, for which Thomas Massie was promoted to Captain in March 1841.

In April 1849, he was appointed to HMS *Cleopatra* a 26 gun sixth rate Frigate, launched 1835, later sold for breaking in 1862. Under Captain Massie she was sent to the East Indies and China Station, arriving at Singapore from Devonport, on 14 September 1849. While on station, the ship was involved in a number of skirmishes and sank several pirate ships. She was ordered with other ships to sail along the coast of Borneo to the Kinabatangan River and rout the Sulu Pirates that had taken the *Dolphin*, killed Robert Burns, the Scottish explorer and ethnologist, and her crew members, and harassed shipping in the area, Captain Massie was in command of the operation. It was here while attacking the pirate base camp that three members of the crew died and three were wounded.



She was then stationed at Hong Kong where early in 1853 Captain Massie and crew commissioned and paid for an obelisk to be erected in Hong Kong cemetery to commemorate the crew lost in the Tanku River expedition.

The inscription reads:- Erected by the Captain officers and crew of HMS *Cleopatra* to their deceased shipmates Hong Kong 1853.

Cleopatra was ordered to Burma, participating in the second Anglo-Burmese War. Captain Massie relinquished command of HMS *Cleopatra* at Chatham on the 3 September 1853 where she remained until sold in 1861.

Captain Massie had no further service but became Rear Admiral on the 7 November 1860, Vice-Admiral on the 2 April 1866 and was made Admiral on 20 October 1872.

Admiral Thomas Leche Massie married his first cousin Charlotte Townsend in 1844. They settled at 3 Stanley Place, Chester, and had three children.

Edward Richard was born in 1845, followed by Richard Crosbie (1847) and Maud Cleopatra (1849). Admiral Massie was in command of HMS *Cleopatra* at the time his daughter was born hence her name.

Edward Richard was later to become father to Roger Henry Massie and John Hamon Massie.

Richard Crosbie joined the Navy, but died of Yellow Fever in the Fiji Islands March 1870.

Maud lived with Admiral Massie at 3 Stanley Place, and in later years cared for her nephews, Roger and John, after the death of their mother.

Admiral Massie died at Chester on 20 July 1898 and was buried at Coddington church.





## **Edward Richard Massie**

Edward, born 21 September 1845 and privately educated, was commissioned into the 78th Highlanders, then the Ross-shire Buffs and later the 2nd Seaforth Highlanders.



The Regiment was involved in the first relief of the besieged British garrison at Lucknow India. The 78th arrived, and although battle weary, burst through and led a furious push into the residency. The 78th fiercely defended the residency for six weeks, until it was finally relieved by Sir Colin Campbell's forces. The 78th Highlanders lost 256 men in the siege.

For their defence of Lucknow and gallantry in the Indian Mutiny, eight men of the 78th Highland Regiment were awarded the Victoria Cross (VC), with a further VC awarded to the regiment as a whole.



78<sup>th</sup> Highlanders memorial

**Lucknow India** 



78<sup>th</sup> Highlanders Memorial

Edinburgh

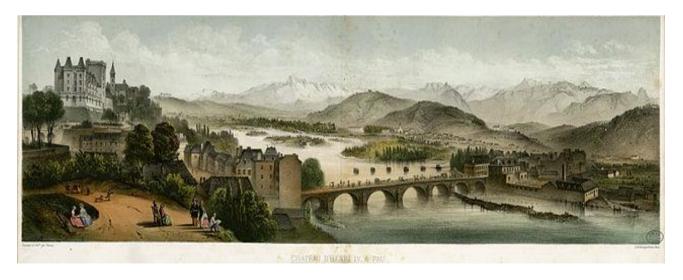
On the 28 July 1866, while the regiment was stationed in Gibraltar, Edward, not yet twenty-one, married Olga Maria, Baroness von Wessenberg-Ampringen, grand-daughter of the former Austrian ambassador to the Court of St James.





Olga Maria had a son Peter (Pello) at the time, aged about six, and said she was a widow. Recent research however, shows her to have been the mistress of the French Prime Minister Monsieur Verbier. Soon after the marriage, the Regiment was ordered to India, and as she refused to travel, Edward sent in his papers.

Resigning from the military would not be taken lightly by senior members of the family. Edward and Olga moved to the South of France, mostly at Pau, and had three children; Roger Henry (born 1869), Edward Philip (1870, died 1871) and John Hamon (1872).



Pau France Around 1870.

Pau was a resort town where European nobility spent the winter. Good English, American, Russian, Spanish or Prussian society met in the Béarnaise city. Olga Maria, Baroness von Wessenberg-Ampringen was part of European nobility, and she would have felt at ease in Pau.

On 12 July 1878, Olga was killed in an accident near Rennes, and the two surviving sons, Roger and John, were sent to live with Edward's sister Maud and their grandfather Admiral Massie at 3 Stanley Place, Chester.

Edward Massie remained a widower for twenty-six years after the death of his first wife Olga. He does not appear on the 1881 census, and may have still been living in France. He is on the 1891 census, staying with his father (Admiral Massie) and sister Maud at 3 Stanley place Chester.

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Edward appears in the 1901 census as a visitor to Frederick W Hayes of Ashton Hayes Cheshire. A wealthy family, having fourteen servants including a butler, footman, page, nursery maid and governess.

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On 9 August 1904 he married Margaret Maxwell-Lyte, daughter of Sir Henry Maxwell-Lyte, Deputy Keeper of the Rolls,

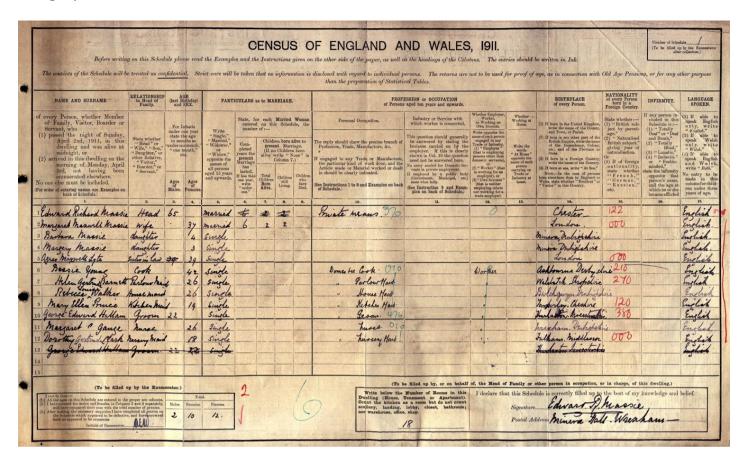
They met when Margaret was thirty, she was traveling to South Africa to stay with her brother on his fruit farm. Edward was on the same ship, going out to stay with his son Roger, who married a South-African after the Boer War. Edward and Margaret enjoyed each other's company so much that by the time they reached Cape Town they announced their engagement.

Margaret's parents were furious and sent a cable ordering her to return home, and this she did. Edward was 59, three years older than his prospective father-in-law. Her parents were afraid he would die soon and leave all his money to his sons from his first marriage, Roger and John. In fact, they had nearly thirty years of happy married life, and Edward survived his sons.

Edward and Margaret had two children; Barbara, born 29 April 1906 and Margery, born 11 July 1907 and by 1911, Edward and his family were living at Minera Hall Wrexham.



The 1911 census shows them having seven servants including a nursery maid for Barbara and Margery;



Edward died on 14 April 1935 at Frensham, Farnham, in Surrey aged ninety.



The document left is a copy of a 1935 probate report;

MASSIE Edward Richard of the Barn Frensham Farnham Surrey died 14 April 1935 Probate Chester 29 October to Dudley Frederick Oliphant Dangar gentleman and William James Lewes Richardson solicitor. Effects £24084 16s. 10d.

Dudley Frederick Oliphant Danger married Edward's daughter Barbara 27<sup>th</sup>. November 1932.

These pages clearly show the depth of military history and high social status that Rodger Henry and John Hamon Massie were born into and expected to maintain.

## **Brigadier General Roger Henry Massie CB CMG**

Roger was born in France in the year 1869, to Edward and Olga Massie. He lived in France until shortly after his mother died in 1878. He was sent to England to stay with his grandfather Admiral Thomas Lecce Massie and Maude, his aunt. The 1881 census shows him at Stubbington House School, Fareham, aged eleven.

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Stubbinton House School was an elite school, and entry into the Navy or Army as an officer was almost guaranteed. This shows the influence Admiral Massie had on his grandsons.

The school was founded in 1841 by the Reverend William Foster, who was born around 1802 and became an alumnus of Trinity College, Cambridge. He had married Laura, a daughter of Rear-Admiral John Hayes, and it is probable that this accounts for the close ties between the school and the Navy. Further ties are reflected in the introduction in 1838 of an entrance examination for the Royal Navy. In addition, Hampshire has a historically close connection to the Navy, and the closure of the Royal Naval College at Portsmouth in 1837, together with the deployment of HMS *Britannia* as a cadet training ship proved to be timely.



From Stubbinton School Roger gained admission to the Royal Military Academy Woolwich as a gentleman cadet.

The Royal Military Academy Woolwich was founded in 1741: it was intended to provide an education and produce "good officers of Artillery and perfect Engineers". RMA Woolwich was commonly known as "The Shop" because its first building was a converted workshop of the Woolwich Arsenal. A larger building was specially designed for the Royal Military Academy by James Wyatt, built between 1796 and 1805, and opened for use the following year. The Royal Military Academy Woolwich closed in 1939 and in 1947 the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst was formed on the site of the former Royal Military College Sandhurst.



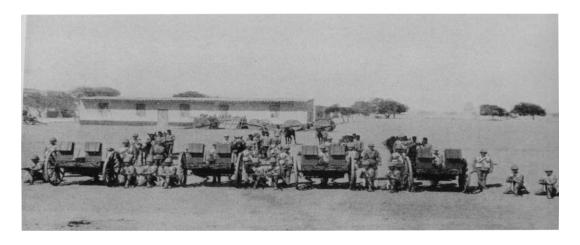
The Royal Military Academy Woolwich



Roger Massie was commissioned into the Royal Artillery, served in the Sudan Campaign in 1896. He then served on the North West Frontier 1897 to 1898, the Boer War from 1899 to 1902, followed by service in India in 1911, and World War One from 1914 to 1918.

#### The Sudan Campaign 1896, Expedition to Dongola

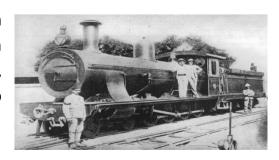
When Italy suffered a heavy defeat at the hands of the Ethiopians at Adwa, the Italian position in East Africa was seriously weakened. The Mahdists threatened to re-take Kassala, which they had lost to the Italians in 1894. The British government judged it politic to assist the Italians by making a military demonstration in northern Sudan. This coincided with the increased threat of French encroachment on the Upper Nile regions.



A section of Maxim Machine Guns Sudan 1896

Horatio Herbert Kitchener's forces entered Sudan numbering at first 11,000 men, Kitchener's force was armed with the most modern military equipment of the time, including Maxim machine-guns and modern artillery, and was supported by a flotilla of gunboats on the Nile. Their advance was slow and methodical, while fortified camps were built

A railway was constructed from a station at Wadi Halfa: south along the east bank of the Nile to supply the 1896 Dongola Expedition. Although the campaign waged on until mid-1898, ending with the Death of Khalifa Abdullah, Roger was moved to the North West Frontier in 1897.



#### The North-West Frontier 1897 to 1898

This was the most difficult area to conquer in South Asia, strategically and militarily. It remains the western frontier of present-day Pakistan, extending from the Pamir Knot in the north to the Koh-i-Malik Siah in the west, and separating the present-day Pakistani frontier regions of North-West Frontier Province (renamed as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Balochistan to the east from neighbouring Afghanistan in the west. The borderline between is officially known as the Durand Line and divides Pashtun inhabitants of these provinces from Pashtuns in eastern Afghanistan.

The two main gateways on the North West Frontier are the Khyber and Bolan Passes. The Indian subcontinent had been repeatedly invaded through these north western routes. With the expansion of the Russian Empire into Central Asia, stability of the Frontier and control of Afghanistan became cornerstones of defensive strategy for British India.

The Tirah Expedition was organised as a response to this threat to British Imperial prestige and the approaches to British India. The frontier post of Kohat was selected as the base for the campaign and Fort Jamrud the area headquarters for some time. The commanding officer was to be Lt-General Sir William Lockhart.



Lt-General Sir William Lockhart



Fort Jamrud Kyber Pass

Roger Massie saw action at Dargai, Saran Sar, the capture of the Sampagha and Arhanga Passes, Chagru Kotal, operations in Waran Valley, Bara Valley action at and around Dwatoi and the Shin Kamar affair.

#### Dargai

Operations commenced, fighting ensuing immediately. The Dargai heights, which commanded the line of advance, were captured without difficulty, but abandoned owing to the want of water. Shortly afterwards, the Afridis moved back on to the Heights in large numbers and held the British advance. The



progress of the expedition, along a difficult track through the mountains, was obstinately contested with a loss 199 of the British force killed and wounded. After a concentrated artillery barrage, the Gordon Highlanders advanced up the slope and took back the Dargai Heights. The situation had been saved, but at considerable cost to all the units involved.



No.10 Mountain Battery

#### Saran Sar

A force about 3,200 strong, commanded by Brigadier-General Westmacott, was first employed to attack Saran Sar, which was easily carried, but during the retirement the troops were hard-pressed by the enemy and the casualties numbered sixty-four. Saran Sar was again attacked by the brigade of Brigadier-General Gaselee. Experience enabled better dispositions to be made and Saran Sar was taken with only three casualties.



Arhanga Pass during the Tirah Campaign

#### **Bara Valley**

The thirty-four-mile march down the Bara valley involved four days of the hardest fighting and marching of the campaign. The road crossed and re-crossed the icy stream, while snow, sleet and rain fell constantly. About fifty casualties were recorded among the troops, but many followers were killed or died of exposure, and quantities of stores were lost. The column halted for rest and resumed in improved weather, though the cold was still severe. The rear guard was heavily engaged, and the casualties numbered about sixty. After further fighting, a junction with the Peshawar column was affected. The first division, aided by the Peshawar column, now took possession of the Khyber forts without opposition.



No.10 Mountain Battery Signal Hill

#### Boer War 1899-1902

The Second Anglo-Boer War, was fought from 11 October 1899 until 31 May 1902 between the British and the South African Republic (Transvaal Republic) and the Orange Free State. The British war effort was supported by troops from several regions of the British Empire, including Southern Africa, the Australian colonies, Canada, Newfoundland, British India, and New Zealand. The war ended in victory for the British and the annexation of both republics. Both would eventually be incorporated into the Union of South Africa in 1910.

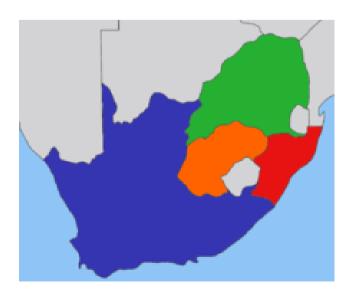
Roger Massie was at the Orange River Colony Campaign but was mainly serving as Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General in British

Army Headquarters, Pretoria, South Africa.

The Quartermaster-General to the Forces (QMG) is one of the most senior generals in the British Army. Historically, each formation had a Deputy Quartermaster-General (DQMG), Assistant Quartermaster-General (AQMG) or Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General (DAQMG), depending on its size.



Under the orders of the General Officer Commanding in Chief, South Africa. Bt. Major R H Massie D.A.Q.M.G. compiled a report titled "Native Tribes of the Transvaal" published 1905. This comprehensive report is still considered to hold valuable reference material today.



#### Political Geography of the region pre-1900

- South African Republic/Transvaal (green)
- Orange Free State (orange),
- British Cape Colony (blue),
- The Natal (red)

The Boer war came to an end on 31 May 1902, and on the 10 July 1902 Roger married Cecil Hall, daughter of Maurice James Hall of Middleberg, South Africa. They had three children; Thomas Anthony (1906), Anne Clementina (1911) and Joan Dorothea (1916).

In 1908 he was made Supernumerary - a military term for being in the army but having no permanent position.

Seconded to the Indian Mountain Artillery on 10 February 1911, he was made commandant of "Indian Mountain Batteries" and to include the newly formed 31st Battery. During his period of service, the Batteries were placed into Brigades for the first time.

#### First World War (1914-1918)

By early 1915, the British Army had suffered great losses and was particularly short of Officers. An article in the *London Gazette* 1915 bears this out:- 'The under mentioned supernumerary Majors are restored to the establishment 16 July 1915 - R H Massie. Roger was recalled to active service.

Roger was in India at that time, and must have been given prior notice of the recall. He is recorded as arriving at Plymouth from Bombay on board P&O *Caledonia* with his daughters Anne and Dorothia on the 18 August 1915, just four weeks after the official notification.

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Early in the war he was stationed near the village of Thelus, holding the German advance.

Later he was involved in defending and retaking Bailleul. It remained in British and French territory until 15 April 1918, when the German advance took the town during its spring offensive. A few months later, the British 29th Division retook the ruined town.



Between 1917 and 1918 he was Brigadier-General of the BEF's Heavy Artillery attached to the Canadian Corps.

#### 1917 Vimy Ridge

The Battle of Vimy Ridge was a military engagement fought as part of the Battle of Arras, in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region of France. The main combatants were the Canadian Corps against three divisions of the German Sixth Army. The battle was part of the opening phase of the Battle of Arras and part Nivelle Offensive and took place from 9–12 April 1917. The objective of the Canadian Corps was to take control of the German-held high ground, along an escarpment (Vimy Ridge) at the northernmost end of the Arras Offensive. This would ensure that the southern flank could advance without suffering German enfilade fire. The taking of Vimy Ridge enabled Canadian forces to advance all the way to Mons and here they fired the last few shots of the war.

The Canadian Heavy Artillery was under the command of Brigadier R.H. Massie. The following was written shortly after the battle.

'It was a triumph for Canadian gunnery. Five days only were available for preparation, and great credit is due the G.O.C., Major-General E. W. B. Morrison, his Staff and Divisional Brigade and Battery Commanders, with their rank and file. Great credit is also due the Imperial and Canadian Heavy Artillery, Brig.-General R. H. Massie, whose counter-battery work was so magnificent that the enemy artillery was smothered, we over ran many German defences during the battle.





Royal Garrison Artillery firing over Canadian lines

On 1 January 1918, he was retired from the command of the Artillery, but still on active service with the rank of colonel. Surviving the war, he was Commander Royal Artillery at Portsmouth between 1919-20.



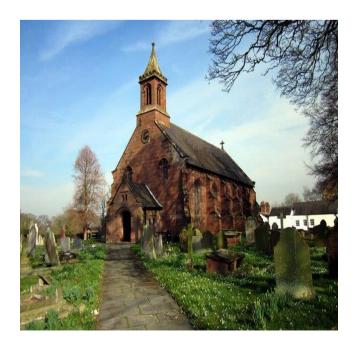
The following year he was able to return home, taking up Command of the Royal Garrison Artillery, Western Command at Chester.

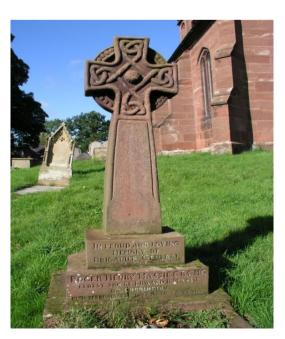
Roger died on the 23 February 1927. He is buried at Coddington Church a few feet away from his grandfather Admiral Thomas Leche Massie.

The steamship *Rembrandt's* manifest below shows the arrival at Southampton on the 12 March 1927 of Roger's father Edward, his step mother Margaret and step-sisters Barbara and Margery. They had returned from Indonesia cutting short their travels on hearing the news of Roger's death.

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#### **CODDINGTON CHURCH**





## **Medals and awards**









The Most Honourable Order of the Bath (CB) Queen's Sudan Medal 1896

The Order of St. Michael and St. George (CMG)







Queens South Africa Medal with 4 clasps 1899 Victory Medal Set 1914- 1918

Kings South Africa Medal two clasps 1902

## **Mentioned in Despatches**

#### London Gazette (issue 27353) 10 September 1901

Mentioned in Despatches by Earl Roberts K.G, G.C.B. To the Secretary of State for War.

For distinguished service.

Duty Location: SOUTH AFRICA.

#### London Gazette (issue 29890) 1 February 1917

**Mentioned in Despatches** by General Sir Douglas Haig, G.C.B., and Commander-in-Chief of the British Armies in France. To the Secretary of State for War.

For distinguished and gallant services and devotion to duty.

**Duty Location: FRANCE** 

#### London Gazette (issue 30421) 7 December 1917

**Mentioned in Despatches**. To the Secretary of State for War.

This Officer has been mentioned in despatches for his distinguished and gallant services and devotion to duty during the period 26th February 1917 to midnight of 20th/21st September 1917.

**Duty Location: France** 

#### London Gazette (issue 31077) 17 December 1918

**Mentioned in Despatches**. D. Haig has the honour to submit a list of names of the mentioned officers, ladies, non-commissioned officers and men serving, or who have served, under his command during the period 25th February, 1918, to midnight 16/17th September, 1918, whose distinguished and gallant services and devotion to duty deserve a special mention.

**Duty Location: France** 

#### London Gazette (issue 31435) 4 July 1919

**Mentioned in Despatches.** Despatch received from Field-Marshall Sir Douglas Haig, K.T., G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., K.C.I.E., Commander-in-Chief, British Armies in France. I have the honour to submit the name of this person, who served under my command during the period 16th September, 1918, to 15th March, 1919, who's distinguished and gallant services and devotion to duty I consider deserving of special mention.

**Duty Location: France** 

Regiment: Royal Garrison Artillery

# Major John Hamon Massie DSO RGA

John was born Eaux-Chaudes France 1872. He lived in France until shortly after his mother Olga Maria Baroness von Wessenberg-Apringen was killed in an accident on the 12 July 1878.





John and his elder brother Roger were sent to Chester, England into the care of their grandfather Admiral Thomas Leche Massie and their father's sister Maude, where they resided at 3 Stanley Place, near Watergate, only 100 yards from Western Command Headquarters where Roger Massie was later Commander.

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The 1881 Census has John at 3 Stanley Place, Chester aged nine

John's army career closely followed Roger's, firstly into Stubbinton House School, and then to the Military Academy Woolwich. At the age of twenty, he again followed Roger receiving a commission into the Royal Artillery as a Gentleman Cadet.



On the 1<sup>st</sup> May 1892 John was promoted to Second Lieutenant. The London Gazette Reads "To be Second Lieutenant, Gentleman Cadet John Hamon Massie from the Royal Military Academy, in succession to Lieutenant R H Massie."

Roger is also on the same page of the Gazette being "seconded for service to a Bombay Mountain Battery.

John became a Lieutenant in 1895 and served in The North West Frontier, being in command of a mountain battery.

## The Chitral Relief Campaign 1895 North West Frontier

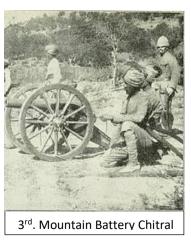
The entire region that now forms the Chitral District was an independent monarchical state until 1895, when the British negotiated a treaty with its hereditary ruler, the Mehtar, under which Chitral became a semi-autonomous princely state within the Indian Empire. Chitral retained this status even after its accession to Pakistan in 1947, only being made an administrative district of Pakistan in 1969.

Early in 1895, the local tribes, being unhappy at British interference in their affairs, joined forces with Umra Khan, a tribal leader from Bajour to the south, and marched north with 3,000 Pathans. George Scott Robertson, the senior British officer at Gilgit, gathered 400 troops and marched west to Chitral, and threatened Umra Khan with an invasion from Peshawar if he did

not turn back. Umra Khan continued his advance, forcing Robertson to move into the fortress at Chitral for protection. The fort was 80 yards square and built of mud, stone and timber. The walls were 25 feet high and eight feet thick. There was a short, covered way to the river, the only water source. The fort held 543 people of whom 343 were combatants, including five British officers. The units were the 14th Sikhs and a larger detachment of Kashmiri Infantry. Artillery support was 2 seven-pounders

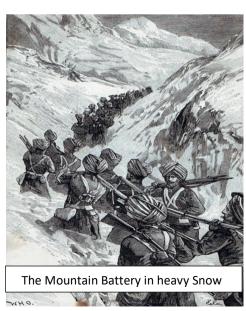


without sights and 80 rounds of ammunition. There were only 300 cartridges per man and enough food for a month. Umra Khan besieged the fort and messengers were sent out to Peshawar requesting help.



When the British heard of Robertson's situation they began assembling troops around Peshawar, but they were not in a hurry, since they assumed that Umra Khan would back down. When reports became more serious, they quickly gathered a relief force of 15,000 men at Peshawar under Major-General Sir Robert Low. All along the 150-mile mountainous route there were significant engagements and on 17 April

1895, Umra Khan's men prepared to defend his palace at Munda. Finding themselves greatly outnumbered, they slipped away. Inside the fortress at Munda the British found a letter from a Scottish firm



offering Maxim guns at 3,700 rupees and revolvers at 34 rupees each. The firm was ordered to leave India. The Mountain Battery attached to the relief force found it heavy going in the deep mountain snow.

Captain Stewart, the mountain battery section commander, took his men into the river in an attempt to find a less arduous route but the result was severe freezing for the men and animals. The gun mules were left in a village and the guns and equipment carried and dragged on



makeshift sledges, the gunners being assisted by other soldiers. Eventually the guns and equipment were left in the snow in marked positions; the detachment marched on reaching Langar at 11pm. The troops returned the next day and brought the guns into Langar. The relief force entered Chitral on April 20. The siege had lasted a month and a half and cost the defenders 41 lives.

This photograph is of the captured Amir-ul-Mulk. Mehtar of Chitral.

Returning to England, John was awarded the Chitral medal and clasp. He studied at Shoeburyness and passed the Artillery Long Course in 1898 with first class honours. He was promoted to Captain on 19 January 1900. Shortly afterwards, he was posted to South Africa.

## The South Africa Campaign. The Boer War 1900-1902

John landed at Capetown late January 1900; he acted as Transport Officer with the 30th Remount Company Army Service Corps, being up graded to Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General. John quickly came to know about Christiaan De Wet and was involved in battles against him and pursued him across South Africa.



## Christiaan Rudolf de Wet (7 October 1854 – 3 February 1922)

A South African Boer general, rebel leader and politician, he was born on the Leeuwkop farm, in the district of Smithfield in the Boer Republic of the Orange Free State. He later resided at **Dewetsdorp**. Dewetsdorp was a small town in the Free State province of South Africa. The town was set up, without approval from the government by Jacobus De Wet, father of Christiaan De Wet. Christiaan served in the first Anglo-Boer War 1880–81 taking part in the Battle of Majuba Mountain, in which the Boers achieved a victory over the British. He took part in the early battles of the 2nd. Boer War of 1899-1902 in Natal as a

commandant, later serving as a general.

He came to be regarded as the most formidable leader of the Boers in their guerrilla warfare. De Wet continued his successful career to the end of the war, striking heavily where he could and evading every attempt to capture him.

**John Massie's** actions at **Dewetsdorp** included, the march to Pretoria, Diamond Hill, Heidelberg, **The pursuit of De Wet – From Bethlehem to the Transvaal**, Vredefort, Schwartz Kopje, Wittebergen, Zand River and Hekpoort Valley.

#### The Battle for Dewetsdorp

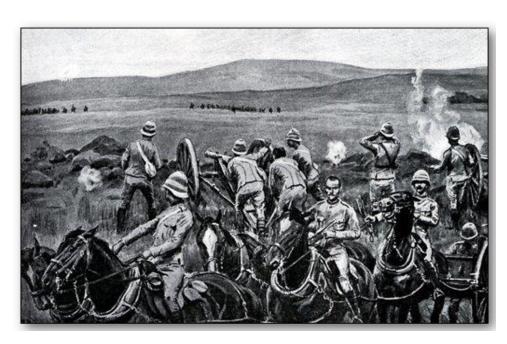
In consequence of the Boers appearing on the borders of Cape Colony in some strength, the British force was split up when Dewetsdorp was attacked by the Boers capturing the Garrison on the 18 to 23 November 1900. The Garrison consisted of three companies; 2nd Gloucester's, some Royal Irish Rifles, and two guns of 68th Battery. Three men of the battalion were killed, Lieutenant Milne Home and 18 men were wounded, and the remainder included in the surrender. Bearing in mind that the British had made strong defensive works at Dewetsdorp, the taking of the place was a brilliant exploit on the part of Christiaan De Wet,

#### The march to Pretoria.

On 3 May 1900, the main force was assembled at Karee. Two hundred and twenty miles separated them from Pretoria, but in little more than a month from the day of starting, in spite of a broken railway, a succession of rivers, and the opposition of the enemy, this army was marching into the main street of the Transvaal capital. Had there been no enemy there at all, it would still have been a fine performance, the more so when one remembers that the army was moving upon a front of twenty miles or more, each part of which had to be coordinated with the rest. The fort at Pretoria was to become the HQ for the British forces, and later John's brother Roger was D.A.Q.M.G (Deputy Assistant Quarter Master General) at Pretoria.

#### **Diamond Hill**

The cavalry were caught in a valley and shot at from three sides in the closest thing to a reverse the British had to face. A squadron of New South Wales Mounted Rifles escorted some guns to new positions from which they pounded into the Boer line, allowing the regular infantry to go forward safely and take Diamond Hill. The Boers



counter-attacked and hit the infantry with rifle fire from the hill to the south. The artillerymen with the corps set up two light, rapid-firing guns, called pom-poms. The Boers counter attack was halted and they fell back.

#### Zand River 10 May 1900

By 6 May 1900, the British advance northwards from Bloemfontein to the Transvaal capital of Pretoria was well underway. They encountered a Boer defensive position based on a line of kopjes (small hills) north of the Zand River, about 130 kilometres north of Bloemfontein.

The Battalion marched to Bloemplaats, camping near the village. The Royal Canadian Regiment, having been detailed to Zand River. Reached the crest of rising ground about half a mile from the river, they were checked by heavy fire.

Lieut.-Col Buchan sought Major-General Smith-Dorrien and, explaining the situation, asked that guns be sent to shell the river bank on the Battalion's front. Arriving about 2 p.m. in answer to this request, a section of guns opened a fire, which in conjunction with the Battalion's rifle fire and the success of operations elsewhere, soon cleared the river bank of the enemy



Relieved from the heavy fire of the 800 Boers who had held the river frontage, the British brought up their heavy Artillery. At 6.10 the next morning the first discharge of the fifty pounders shook the earth, and the Zand River engagement had begun. Soon the field batteries opened fire also, and the blue-white smoke of the shrapnel, and the dull, dusty yellow of the explosives, burst all along the Boers'

occupied hills. Whenever the Boers opened fire, whether from rifles or guns, the Royal Artillery replied in a decisive way.

For his service in these, and the other campaigns listed above, John was mentioned in despatches January 1902 and was promoted to Special Service Officer on Staff.

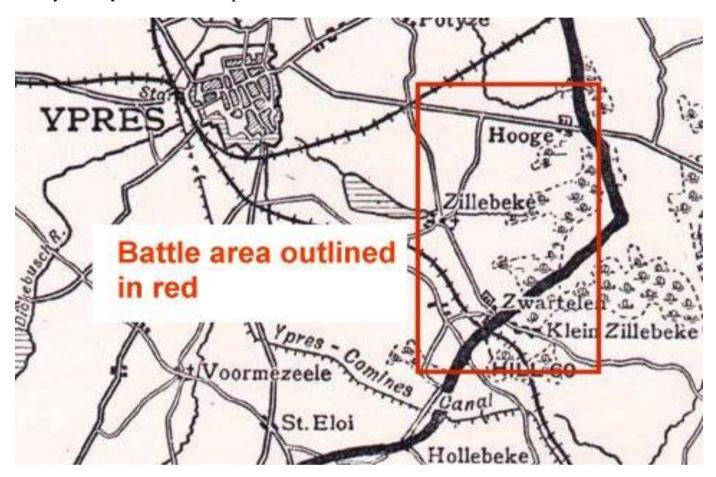
He was awarded The Queens South Africa Medal with four clasps; Cape Colony, Johannesburg, Wittebergen and Diamond Hill; The Kings South Africa Medal, with two clasps; and was created a Companion of the Distinguished Service Order, being invested on the 18 December 1902 by King Edward VII.

John returned to Britain in mid-1902 and on the 3 September 1903, marrying Maria Margaret Berger (1858-1957), elder daughter of Major General Ernest Archibald Berger. There were no children.

John became an instructor at the Royal Military Academy until 11 September 1904. He was then put in command of a company of Gentleman Cadets until December 1908. He was Staff Captain School of Gunnery, Shoeburyness to August 1914, being promoted to Major on 15 February 1913.

#### **First World War (1914-1918)**

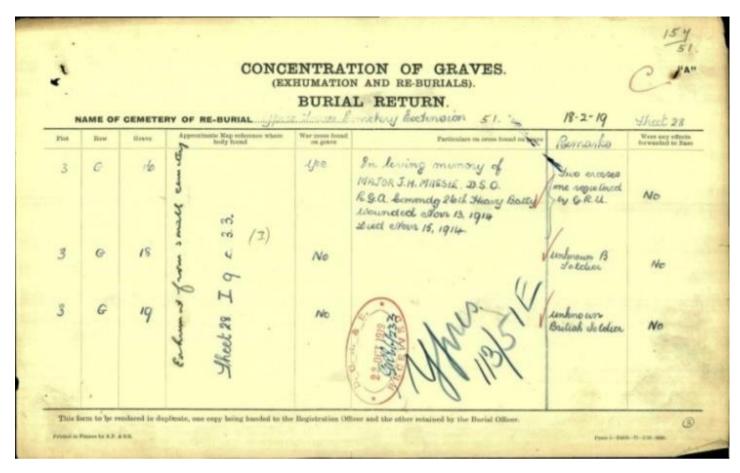
On the 24 August 1914, John proceeded to France, joining Brigadier General Nicolls RA, as Staff Officer. On the 1 September, he was gazetted as Staff Captain Administrative Staff and joined the Heavy Artillery at St Nazaire. On 1 November he left to take command of the 26th Heavy Battery at Zillebeke, Ypres.



On the 13 November 1914, he was mortally wounded by a fragment of high explosive shell, while in command of the 26th Battery, and died in the Field Hospital on the 15 November 1914. He was buried in a temporary grave, then exhumed after the war and reburied in Ypres Town Cemetery Extension in 1919.

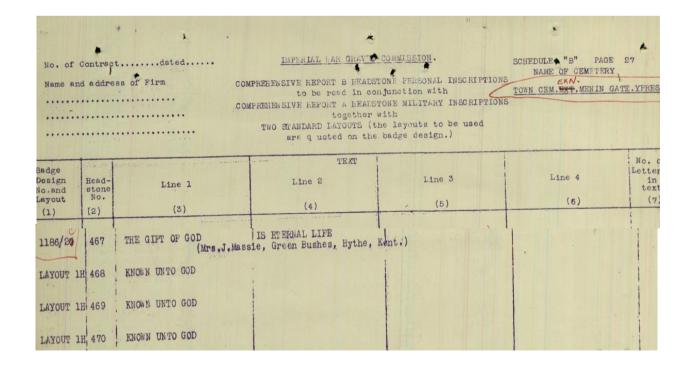


Ypres Town Cemetery Extension



Burial Return February 1919 showing the requested headstone message

The order for John's head stone showing the inscription from his wife Maria,





# Major John Hamon Massie DSO RGA.

1872-1914

## **AWARDS and MEDALS**



The Relief of Chitral Campaign 1895



The Queens South Africa Medal 1899-1902

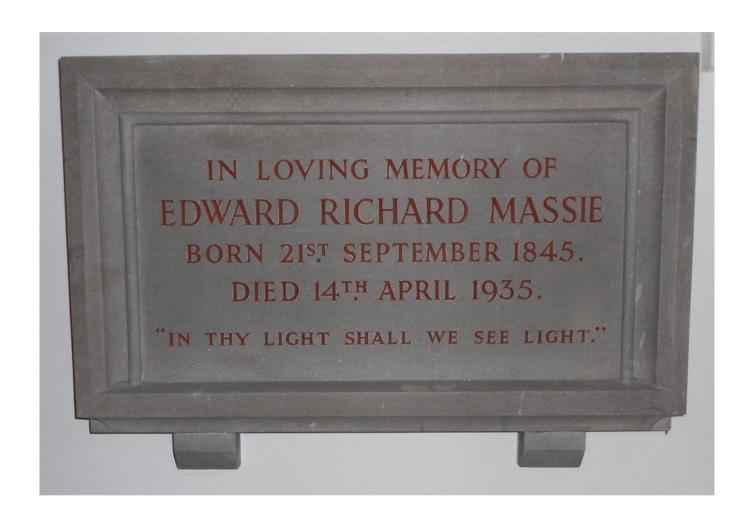


The Kings South Africa Medal 1902



**Distinguished Service Order 1902** 

# **Coddington Memorials**



# A GALLANT LOCAL MAJOR

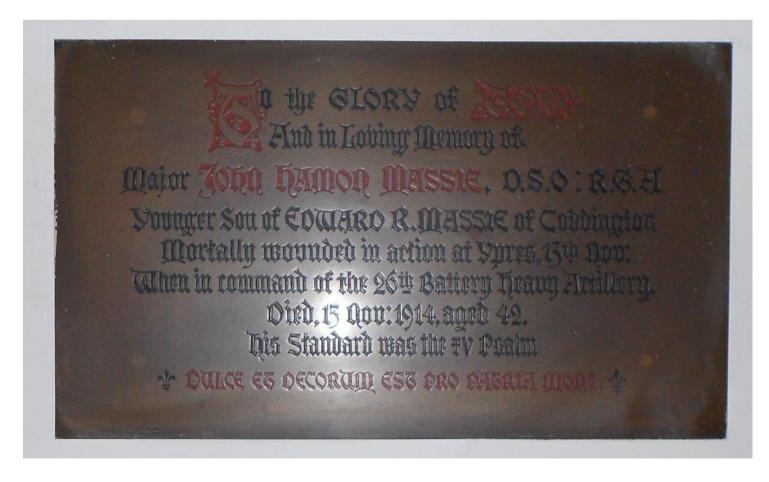
# KILLED IN ACTION. GRANDSON OF ADMIRAL MASSIE.

As we briefly announced last week, Major John Hamon Massie, D.S.O., Royal Garrison Artillery, was killed in action on Nov. 13. Major Massie is the youngest son of Mr. Edward R. Massie, of Coddington, Cheshire, and St. Annefield, Gresford, and belonged to a family well-known and highly esteemed in this neighbourhood, and which family for generations has resided at Coddington.

The gallant major was a grandson of the late Admiral Massie, for many years a prominent figure in Chester, and had had a distinguished career. He was in his 43rd year, and was the youngest son of Mr. E. R. Massie, by his first wife, Olga Marie Baroness von Wessenberg-Ampringen (grand-daughter of Baron Henry von Wessenberg-Ampringen, formerly Austrian Ambassador at St. James's). Major Massie obtained his commission in the Royal Artillery in 1892, his captaincy in 1900, and his majority in 1913. Three years after joining he was present with the relief ferce during the operations in Chitral and received the medal with clasp. He also took part in the South African campaign. and was present at the actions near Johannesburg, Diamond Hill, and Wittebergen. Subsaquently he was employed as a special service officer and afterwards on the Staff. He was mentioned in dispatches and received both medals with six clasps and the D.S.O. At Shoeburyness, he was one of the most popular officers who had served at that important gunnery centre, where he was we'l known to the many north country Territorials who attended the courses of instruction there. Major Massie was married in 1903 to Maria Margaret, elder daughter of Major-General E. A. Berger, late 10th Regiment.

Early in September the major was appointed to the staff of the general of artillery, who was sent on a special mission to France. A little over a week before he was killed, Major Massie was appointed to the command of the 25th Battery of Heavy Artillery, which is armed with four 60-pounder guns. He was struck on the head by a high explosive shell, which also knowled over his captain and arregame major.







Massie memorials inside Coddington Chapel, including the original grave marker of John Massie before its replacement by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.







# Researched and written

# by

# **Allen Croft**

# **Acknowledgments:**

Kenrick Armitstead - "Massie of Coddington" family history.

Mike Royden - For his guidance and help compiling this article.

Helen Sadler - For her original idea to commemorate the fallen of Coddington