

Reporting
Trooper Potts in
1915



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The Berkshire Chronicle December 10th 1915 page 5

The Address is presented

READING HONOURS YEOMAN VC

The Address

TROOPER FREDERICK WILLIAM OWEN

POTTS VC

OF THE BERKSHIRE YEOMANRY

WE The MAYOR ALDERMEN and BURGESSES of the BOROUGH of READING in the COUNTY of BERKS, acting by the Council of the Borough, extend to you a cordial welcome on your return to this your native town.

We heartily congratulate you upon your recovery from the wounds which you received in fighting for your KING and COUNTRY and upon HIS MAJESTY'S gracious pleasure to award you the VICTORIA CROSS for most conspicuous bravery and devotion to a wounded comrade in the GALLIPOLI PENINSULA

It is a profound gratification to us that a fellow townsman should be the recipient of this coveted distinction, but the heroism for which it has been awarded affords us even greater satisfaction.

We trust that you may long be spared to enjoy the distinction and we desire to convey to you our earnest wishes for your happiness and welfare.

Given under our Common Seal

this Sixth day of December

1915

Mayor

Town Clerk

The handsome address to Trooper Potts VC presented by the Mayor and Corporation of Reading on Monday. The introduction of the golden spades has special reference to the deed for which Trooper Potts received his VC. The borough arms and the crest of the Royal Berks Yeomanry were featured.

[The page also featured the three pictures of Potts, Andrews and Potts with his family that appeared in the edition of 8th October 1915]

TROOPER POTTS VC
CIVIC RECOGNITION
PROUD MOMENTS IN HIS LIFE

Trooper Potts VC of EDgehill Street reading, received emphatic assurances of the admiration of his fellow townsmen on Monday evening, when an address was presented to him by the Corporation of Reading.

Following upon a resolution of the Corporation of the Borough - duly recorded at the time - steps were taken to accord special local honours to our brave townsman: and the arrangements culminated on Monday evening last in a function which will live long in the memory of all who were privileged to attend a ceremony unique in the history of the Borough.

THE CIVIC PRESENTATION

The presentation was made in the Council Chamber. The members of the corporation roben in the committee room and proceeded to the chamber "in state" There were present: the Mayor (Mr Leonard Sutton), the Deputy Mayor (Alderman C G Field), the Town Clerk (Mr W S Clutterbuck), Aldermen J W Martin, F B Parfitt, W Poulton, G R Jackson, F A Cox, A H Bull, W J J Brian, T Mason, H C Dryland and S Hayward, Councillors Major Dr G Stewart Abram, (Miss) E M Sutton, F A Sargeant, W E Butler, E Jackson, W R Howell, J Rabson, W J D Venner, J H Walters, O Farrer, J Eighteen, H Childs, A J Maker, G J Lewis, A W A Webb, W Rudland, W E Collier, T Norris, T Morley, H Childs, F E Moring, F W Dormer, F W Allwright, T H Turner, F Winter, W Sparks, R P Gibbons and F Coston. Those in the chamber were also Mr J Herbert Benyon (Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire and president of the County Territorial Association) and Mrs Benyon, Mrs C G Field (Mayoress), the Rev Fitzwilliam J C Gilmour (chaplain to the Forces in Reading), Mr and Mrs Potts (father and mother of Trooper Potts) and two sisters of the hero, Mr and Mrs Arthur Cummings (uncle and aunt of Trooper Potts) and their two daughters etc. Tha gallery was filled with friends who had been invited to attend. Trooper Andrews whom Trooper Potts rescued is still in hospital at Malta. The escort was provided by wounded comrades of Trooper Potts who were in the action in Gallipoli.

His Worship having taken his seat

The Town Clerk submitted the address

Thereupon Alderman Martin rose and said that as senior alderman of the borough he had to move that the address to Trooper Potts VC be approved and adopted and that the common seal be affixed thereto. It had he said, been the invariable custom of the people of this country to do honour to whom honour was due, whether the recipient were a statesman, a sailor, a soldier or a humble citizen. Not only the corporation but also the great counties of our kingdom, had invariably recognised that those who had shown loyalty and devotion to the cause of their country should be recognised in some form or other. It was therefore very fitting that that evening the Mayor and Corporation of the loyal County Borough of Reading should be receiving Trooper Potts of the Berkshire Yeomanry, and presenting him with an address and a casket containing that address. The Royal Berkshire Yeomanry was a distinguished regiment - a regiment which went through the South African campaign under the command of their good friend Colonel G C Ricardo and it had been in the thick of the fighting in the Peninsula of Gallipoli, where the Berksgire Yeomanry were certainly in a very tight corner, nut came out of it very well displaying great valour and devotion to their country. Details had been published in the newspapers of Trooper Potts' prowess so it would

be unnecessary to speak of his gallant deeds in detail. It was pleasing to know that that gallant young soldier was a native of Reading (applause). He (Alderman Martin) believed he was the only citizen of Reading who had had the honour of winning the Victoria Cross. The late Queen Victoria, who instituted the Order at the close of the Crimean War, bestowed the honour on two Berkshire soldiers out of 63 gallant men on whose breasts she pinned them. One of those Crimean heroes to receive the Cross was the late Sir Charles Russell, Bart of Swallowfield Park who was a major in the Grenadier Guards and the other, who won his laurels at Inkerman, the late Robert James Loyd Lindsay, then a lieutenant, and subsequently Lord Wantage and Lord Lieutenant of the county who carried the colours of the Scots Fusiliers and recovered them again after they were taken by the enemy (Applause) They were, Alderman Martin proceeded, all glad to welcome that day the third Berkshire VC man, Trooper Potts, to whom all Reading was delighted to do honour as the first Reading man who had ever won that great honour. As a municipality they were very proud indeed to welcome him. They were only doing their duty in presenting him with that address and they trusted that he might be spared many years to enjoy the honour which had been bestowed upon him by his Sovereign. (applause) It was said that "None but the brave deserve the fair" and it might be that in years to come Trooper Potts' gallantry might get him a good wife (Loud Laughter) The Corporation of Reading had the greatest pleasure in welcoming him as a citizen of Reading, and as senior alderman he (Mr Martin) had the greatest pleasure in moving the resolution (Applause)

Major Dr Abram as the senior councillor said he considered it a privilege and an honour to second the resolution, the more so because he (the speaker) had the honour of serving in the same force, under the same flag as Trooper Potts. That was, as Alderman Martin had said, a unique occasion. Never in history had there been such a bloody war as that now going on - never so many men engaged and never had we had so many examples of personal bravery among our troops. He would like all present to realise what exactly the meaning of that presentation was. They wanted to bring out the fact that the Mayor of that town was the direct representative of his Majesty the King and that as the elected representative of the Burgesses the Mayor also represented every citizen (Hear hear) A great Book said that "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend" Trooper Potts would have been willing to do this, they were sure, but he was saved from it and had come back to them, wounded but restored to health. (applause) They wanted him to feel that every man and every woman in the town would like to shake his hand and to give him their personal congratulations, did opportunity offer (Cheers)

The resolution having been carried unanimously.

Sergeant-at-mace Cook ushered in Trooper Potts who was conducted and presented to the Mayor by Lieutenant Colonel Harold Henderson MP for North Berks of the Berkshire Yeomanry and Captain M L Porter of the Kings Royal Rifle Corps, secretary of the Territorial Force Association for the county. He was received with cheers, all present standing.

The Town Clerk having read the address, it and the casket were presented by the Mayor to Trooper Potts. His Worship said:-

You have heard the address read by the Town Clerk. I wish you could also have heard the speeches of Alderman Martin and Coun. Major Abram who proposed and seconded the resolution adopting this address, as I am confident both the speeches and the address express the unanimous feeling, not only of the Mayor, aldermen and councillors, but of every one of your townsmen and townswomen (Applause) You have had many presentations and addresses from your friends in Reading already and you deserved them all but we wish tonight, in this little ceremony to put the civic seal on all that has gone before so that your name may go down to posterity in the annals of our town (Applause) We are indeed proud of having a Reading man who has won the highest distinction a soldier can win and one who has not only faced the most deadly enemy fire, but when that was over and he might have retreated in safety with others, endured fresh danger and privation for two whole

days, ignoring his own suffering in order that he might endeavour to save a wounded comrade. (Loud applause) We congratulate you on that sustained effort and on its ultimate success. We trust that your example will be a stimulus to the young manhood of our town and to many a soldier on the battlefield. I am particularly glad to think you are a member of our Berkshire Territorial Force and one who has not hesitated to give his leisure in time of peace to fit himself for military service in time of war. You now have fresh responsibilities as well as a great honour to carry through life as great deeds bring great responsibilities to live up to. Life will not be the same thing as before that 21st day of August 1915 as I doubt not that you feel already. You are one in ten thousand British soldiers, a marked man; honourably marked. You will be an example to others and an influence you never dreamt of a year ago. You will be numbered with great men such as Lord Roberts and Lord Wantage, both of whom we have been proud to look upon as Berkshire men and who, when their days of active soldiering were over, still served their country with the best powers of mind and body. I trust you will do the same. (Applause) You have been through great difficulties and trying moments and you will doubtless have others in the life that lies before you, but the success that attended you then will, I am certain, attend you again if you rely on the same help as you sought then. I cannot help quoting from the letter you used in your letter home which found its way into the papers, though I daresay you little wished it: "I prayed for help, strength and guidance, and I felt confident" If you always remember the source of your success in those memorable days I am sure you will succeed in whatever the future holds for you. It is an honour for me to hand you this address and its silver casket, which I trust will be an heirloom in an honourable family for many generations to come (Loud applause)

Trooper Potts VC in a brief and characteristically modest reply said : "I beg to thank you, Sir, most sincerely and from the bottom of my heart, for this very handsome gift and for the the very kind address and also for the most beautiful casket for which I am most grateful. I also thank all the ladies and gentlemen present for the most cordial welcome which they have given me. I feel very proud that I am a citizen of Reading and that I joined the Berkshire Yeomanry (Cheers)

Trooper Potts, again conducted by Colonel Henderson and Captain Porter, then left the Council Chamber amid hearty cheering from all assembled.

THE ADDRESS AND CASKET

The corporation's address, filling two pages of vellum, was designed and illuminated in a highly artistic style by Mr R B Poynder ARCA Lond and the work of binding etc done in Minster Street, Reading by the firm of which that gentleman is a member. The following is the text of the address [see above for text]

Like all his work in this manner the artist (Mr R B Poynder) has carried out a scheme appropriate to his subject. The motive running through this address is the symbolising of honour and victory, the decorative borders rendering the laurel and the olive respectively. Trooper Potts' achievement in dragging a helpless comrade out of danger, under heavy fire, on a trenching shovel is indicated by golden spades into the borders. The official side is brought in by the borough arms and corporate seal, whilst the military aspect is supplied by the arms and the two crests of the Berkshire Yeomanry, in heraldic colours. The Victoria Cross heads the second page. The work has been richly bound in red "Royal Nigerian goatskin" very handsomely tooled, with ribbons running through as ties, with bows at the front.

The casket manufactured by Messrs Bracher and Sydenham, jewellers and silversmiths of Reading, was of hand wrought silver mounted on four claws and ball feet. The borough arms were beautifully modelled and applied to the centre of the top, and models of the Victoria Cross, the Star and Crescent and the White Horse badges of the Berkshire Yeomanry, together with a very fine model of the shovel (which the hero used in his glorious deed), surrounded by a wreath, were applied to

each corner.

The Mayor sent his carriage to convey Trooper Potts to the Municipal Buildings and he was accompanied in the carriage by Lieutenant-Colonel Henderson MP and Captain Porter.

CONCERT AND PRESENTATION

The Berkshire Territorial Force Association did honour to Trooper Potts VC by a concert held in the Large Town Hall, Reading, following the presentation of the address. There was a large and influential attendance, including the the heads of military forces in the district, members of the corporation etc. Members of the Third Line of the Berkshire Yeomanry were in the orchestra and gave their colleague a cordial welcome. A number of nurses from the VAD hospitals were present and the Berkshire Women's Volunteers sold programmes. The programme was of an interesting character. Songs were sung in excellent style by Miss Fidler, Mr H J Collier and Miss Shea, while the humorous element was supplied by Mr Harry Luck. One of tyhe features of the programme wa the clever character songs by Mrs Bartlett (wife of Major Bartlett of the 8th Battlaion Royal Berkshire Regiment) who, as the domestic servant in "Grumbles" and "I've come down from the North" (Paul A Rubens), showed much talent and aptitude for humorous presentations. She was enthusiastically encored on both occasions.

Mr H Harvey played a charming galop, which Captain Slaughter mentioned had been composed by Mrs Dear, the widow of Colonel Dear. It would shortly be on sale at the leading music houses in Reading and the profits would be entirely devoted for the benefit of the 8th Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment. The dances "Dance Russe" and "Gavotte" by Miss Spottiswoode who came down with Mrs Bartlett, were charmingly done and elicited hearty applause.

The Glenmore Ladies Orchestra, Reading, rendered excellent assistance with their selections which were greatly appreciated and congratulations are due to them on the high degree of efficiency they have attained. The orchestra consisted of Miss Okey Taylor (piano) Miss Lockhart, Miss Ashby, Miss Boyle, Miss Bird, Miss Moxhay, Miss C Hubbard, Miss Lindars, Miss Laurie, Mrs Holt-Beever and Mrs Fielding Clarke.

Lady Watson, Mr Aldridge and Sergeant Church, who had promised to take part in the programme, were unable to do so,

At an interval members of the association and others mounted the platform, when Trooper Potts was publicly congratulated by the Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire, president of the association. Amidst loud cheers Trooper Potts VC was chaired into the room, the orchestra meanwhile playing "See the conquering hero comes" The Lord Lieutenant was accompanied by Colonel Chase, Colonel Ellison MVO, Colonel Ewen, Colonel Ricardo, Major Wheble, Major Richards, Captain E M Slaughter, the Mayor, Alderman J W Martin and Captain Porter.

GIFTS FOR TROOPER POTTS

The Lord Lieutenant said: "It gives me great pleasure to have this opportunity of congratulating you publicly, first of all on behalf of the Berkshire Territorial Association and also, I might add, on behalf of the county of Berkshire (Cheers) on having won the greatest prize that an English soldier can obtain at the hands of his Majesty the King - the Victoria Cross " (cheers)

Mr Benyon proceeded to read the official descriptions of the deed and added "In the name also of the Territorial Association I hope you will accept the present which has been sent to your home recently in the shape of a roll top writing desk. In addition to that I have very much pleasure in handing you £25 War Loan scrip which has been presented by Mr William Keep of Newbury (cheers) to the Berkshire Yeoman who first won the Victoria Cross (cheers) I am very glad to see that your father and mother are here this evening (Cheers). I had an opportunity of talking to them just now in the Council Chamber and I congratulated them, and I am quite certain that they are very

proud of you as their son." Mr Benyon then shook hands with the hero and added "I wish you good luck and long life to enjoy the distinction which you have won" (Loud cheers)

Trooper Potts VC, who was vigorously cheered said "I am sure I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the very kind words and flattering expressions you have used this evening. This is the most trying time of my life. It is one thing to lie wounded and another thing to stand up here and face the people belonging to the town in which I was brought up. I cannot express all I feel. This is more an ordeal than the actual accomplishment of the deed which won the most coveted honour a soldier can win, viz, The Victoria Cross (Cheers) My act in helping a wounded comrade just happened to obtain notice and recognition. There were many another trooper who did the same, but his name, unfortunately, will never be known in this world. (Cheers) I am sure your kindness to me this evening will enable me to go on as Yeoman and as a Berkshire man still to do my duty. I hope that what God enabled me to do will encourage other men to do the same. I shall always keep and value the handsome gifts which have been given me and they will afford me pleasant recollections Reading and of the Berkshire Yeomanry (cheers) Thank you over and over again; thank you very much. (Loud cheers)

At the conclusion of the concert many of the influential visitors shook hands with the hero.

The concert was arranged by Captain M L Porter and Mrs Henderson.

Trooper Potts, it may be mentioned expects to return to the front soon after Christmas.