

ST HELENA DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR*

By Ian Bruce

My father's earliest memory was as a four-year-old toddler standing between his parents on the wharf. Before them lay the stupendous sight of three huge German battleships anchored in James Bay. The ships had arrived at St Helena on 2 February 1914 en-route to Brazil. The view was both awesome and sobering. An impression of what was seen is conveyed by Alexander Kircher's painting of the ships when they called at Rio de Janeiro a little over a week later.¹



Battleship *SMS Kaiser* (centre), cruiser *Strassburg* (background right) and battleship *König Albert* (background left)

For several years leading up to the First World War the island had been undefended. This was a consequence of a decision in 1906 by the new Secretary of War Richard Haldane to include the miniscule £20,000 cost of defending St Helena onto a general policy of reducing War Office expenditure. Haldane was impervious to appeals and seems to have had little regard to the headache it created for the Colonial Office who had for too long ignored the island's dwindling economy which had wound down so far that the garrison was the island's last remaining source of income. Nothing was in place to replace it. Haldane's decision led directly to the launch next year of the flax industry. Governor Gallwey opened the island's first flax mill at Longwood in December 1907 with the words: "[...] may the throb of the engine and the song of the stripping machine be long heard in the land"²

Not only had Haldane's action created acute economic problems for the island but it also made no military sense. St Helena was an important Admiralty coaling point and its telegraphic cable station was key to London's communication with large parts of its Empire. Within a few years, concern was being voiced in Parliament at the island's vulnerability to attack in an increasingly dangerous world. With the appointment of Winston Churchill as First Lord in October 1911, the Admiralty took over responsibility for the defence of all the Atlantic islands.

* This is an edited version of an article that appeared in Wirebird, Issue No 48, 2019.

A small detachment of Royal Marines Artillery (Captain G. Mathew and 15 other ranks) sailed from Portsmouth, arriving 27 December.



Elswick Gun being hauled up to Munden's³

Two modern guns had already been brought to the island in 1904. These were Elswick Mark VII wire breech loading gun with a six-inch calibre. They had a maximum range with full charge and 30° elevation of 25,000 yards (14 miles). Installed at Ladder Hill Fort, investigations suggest that one of the two guns was regularly stripped down, the components taken to Munden's Fort and then reassembled (see above image). The gunners practised firing from gun placements at Ladder Hill and Munden's at targets out at sea or blind to Prosperous Bay Plain on the other side of the island. After firing a test round, the gun was broken down yet again and transported back to Ladder Hill for reassembly. The Ladder Hill complex included a command centre midway between these two points. Underground magazines were sited next to each gun, complete with mechanical shell hoists. The number of Marines varied over the years, rising to 49 in 1912 and 56 in 1913. A contingent of least several marines remained on the island until 1938 and these were quickly returned with the outbreak of another World war.⁴

Looking out at the three huge battleships in early 1914, both gunners and islander must have asked themselves the same question– what would be the consequence of firing their two guns at ships like these? Governor Henry Guy Pilling faced the same dilemma in the early days of WW2 when the German pocket battleship *Admiral Graf Spee* passed near the island. He wisely ordered the gun crews to stand down for fear of a devastating return fire hitting Jamestown.

St Helena's governor throughout the war was Harry Edward Spiller Cordeaux. He was born in India in 1870 under tragic circumstances, his mother dying shortly after his birth. He was educated at Cambridge University and then joined the Indian Army. Appointed to the Indian Staff Corps in 1896, he was trained as a civil and political administrator. Initially holding the rank as a Lieutenant and promoted to a Captain in 1906, he first worked as a career diplomatist

in Aden and then Somali – see endnote 5 for his full biography. Maybe Cordeaux’s health was broken by some of these postings. For example, he was too ill to accept his appointment as governor of Uganda in early 1910. He had to wait nearly another two years before being offered the governorship of St Helena in December 1911. Delaying his arrival, he was sworn in at Jamestown on 21 February 1912. Apart from his marriage on the island six months later, his main preoccupation before the war seems to have been to sort out the debacle inherited from his predecessor. In setting up the new flax industry, Governor Gallwey had recklessly processed the island’s entire crop of flax in the first two years ignoring the fact that plants took at least three years to regrow or reach maturity. In consequence, milling operations were disrupted for several years despite efforts by Gallwey and Cordeaux to encourage new flax plantings. These were widespread and indiscriminate with little regard to either the island’s already limited capacity to produce its own food or to the destruction of endemic species.



Elswick Gun Restored by Edward Baldwin, 2015

The sudden ratcheting up in political tension between European nations following the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in June 1914 came as much as a surprise at St Helena as elsewhere. In July, Cordeaux asked the Colonial Office what added steps should be taken to protect the island if war was declared. The Admiralty and War Office suggested the formation of a local volunteer force to defend the island until a regular garrison could be restored with troops sent from Britain and South Africa. News that Britain had declared war against Germany on 4 August 1914 arrived by cable at St Helena in the early hours of the following day. Martial law was at once declared and an island militia volunteers, the St Helena Volunteer Rifles, was formed within a few days under the command of Captain Mathew. This local force initially included three officers and 100 men. Local militias were nothing new at St Helena being a feature of East India Company control from 1659. The local militia force was renamed Volunteers from 1802 onward and an ordinance giving governors the power to form a force of Volunteers in times of emergency was first enacted in 1854, being updated several times thereafter.⁶

Many St Helenians recruited into the new Volunteers had previously been members of the Volunteer Sharpshooters during the Boer War. In a report to the Colonial Office at the time,

the Sharpshooters trained “a number of the inhabitants of the Island to the use of the rifle so that their services in time of war may be available for the defence of the Island”.⁷

The Volunteers were never required to fire their rifles in anger during the First World War, and were mainly employed as lookouts. By 1915, the locally recruited force included 140 full-time Volunteers and a Supernumerary Section of 150 men held in reserve who, in addition to their usual jobs, also received training.



Governor Cordeaux

Based on a comparison of populations, St Helena’s contribution to the war and the scale of its losses was greater than that suffered by South Africa. The St Helenian war dead are commemorated by the Bridge memorial clock, erected by public subscription, and their names are listed in two places. A display in the porch of St Paul’s Cathedral lists some 46 St Helenians who volunteered to travel abroad at their own expense to fight abroad. An asterisk has been placed against the names of four men who were killed. Confusingly, the Cenotaph on the wharf quotes six names, four of which are different from the list at St Paul’s. The Cenotaph includes a Volunteer who died whilst serving at St Helena and another who died in the Royal Navy several years after the war. The full list of names is as follows:⁸

Percy John Broadway, died 19 July 1915, Gallipoli (St Paul).
James Basset Graham, died 20 November 1916, Colincamp (cenotaph).
Cavalla Isaac Grey, died 12 August 1916, Somme (St Paul/cenotaph).
James Edwin Nathaniel Joshua, died 27 November 1917, SS Camellia (cenotaph).
James Robert Moyce, died 4 May 1915, St Helena Volunteer Rifles (cenotaph).
John Joseph Riley, death details not found (St Paul).
George Edward Scipio, MM, died 20 August 1917, Ypres (St Paul/cenotaph).
Henry Seale, died 6 February 1921, HMS Birmingham (cenotaph).

Considerable pressure was put on young men throughout the empire to join one of the overseas battles and fight for King and Country. Coincident with an appeal to the Empire in 1915 by George V for “men of all classes, to come forward voluntarily and take your share in the fight” the St Helena Guardian published the following appeal.⁹

YOUNG MEN of St. Helena - all ye who are budding into manhood - your King appeals to you to come forward and join your brothers who are fighting for Freedom and Justice; then make up your minds and show not only to your King and Country but to the civilized world that you are true sons of the Empire by readily responding to the Call to Arms. The Mother Country has protected your hearths and homes for very many years, and made you a free people; therefore it is to your future wellbeing that you should give all the help you possibly can to bring this terrible war to a speedy termination. Rouse, then, brothers, rouse! Quit yourselves like men, and go forth to battle with the common enemy, and do that which is your bounden duty to do - fight for the Empire who has done so much for you and thus show your gratitude and loyalty, which even the West Coast Africans have done. Surely you will not be a whit behind them!

Think, too, that with your freedom you are a free agent, and that implies possession of enough manhood to know that this is your job to see through. In Germany men are not asked to go, not expected to go, they are ordered. Will the men of our great Empire by failing to voluntarily go forth, put our Government to the extremity of making service compulsory? It is the only alternative and put us down the scale on the level of the Huns. We are not many here, but those who are fit can show the way by wholesale volunteering.

Service in the armed forces was voluntary throughout the war at St Helena. However, a vigorous campaign to persuade more islanders to join the worldwide battle continued throughout the period. For example, in 1916, flags and window cards were sent to St Helena by the British Red Cross with instructions that they should be hung outside the house of every man who had joined the King's Forces. In total, some 33 million flags were distributed throughout the Empire.¹⁰

In December 1917, a leaflet was circulated around the island that asked men what they had done in the Great War. Possibly, it was the poster above. The island newspaper protested arguing that a number of St Helenian men were already fighting abroad and many others were serving as Volunteers on the island, stating it was “an insult for such a question to be placed under the nose of such men.” It went on to suggest its creator had done not “an iota more than any of the rest of us here on St Helena.”



Recruitment Material¹¹

In Britain, the introduction of conscription from the Summer of 1916 triggered an outcry against conscientious objectors, Viscount Knutsford arguing they should all be exiled at St Helena:

If men live in this country, accept the protection for property and person of the laws of the country, and yet will not obey those laws, I think this country should export them [...] there are places like St Helena which are complaining of a shortage of population to which they might be sent.¹²

No evidence has been found to show Knutsford himself ever had to face hostile fire, but this hypocrisy seems to have been overlooked by newspapers. Also, there was nothing new in Knutsford's suggestion. St Helena was being suggested as the ideal locale for all manner of other non-conformists. In the run-up to the war and at the height of the suffragette movement, several politicians suggested that convicted members of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) would be far less troublesome if exiled to St Helena. The mood of the times was well caught by a cartoon based on Orchardson's portrait of the Bellerophon, Napoleon and his companions dressing as suffragettes.¹³

OFF TO ST. HELENA.



Shortly before the war, St Helena was likewise suggested also as the ideal place to send Irish militants. Reports of German atrocities during the occupation of Belgium prompted the first of many calls for the Kaiser to be exiled to the island. However, by 1918 it was reported that many French regarded the possibility of the Kaiser's presence at St Helena an insult to Napoleon's memory.¹⁴ In 1915, the Colonial Office drew up plans to deport "undesirable persons" from Egypt to the island. This progressed to the point of shipping a Royal Marine officer from Britain as Camp Adjutant and the installation of wooden huts for the prisoners. However, these plans came to nothing and the island government was eventually instructed to clear the camp and sell off the huts. This camp would have proved useful when in 1917 a large contingent of exiles arrived with the self-proclaimed Sultan of Zanzibar to the island.

Returning to the subject of the defence of the island, the records make it clear that it was the regular British troops rather than Volunteers who were regarded as the island's main defensive force. At the start of the war, the restoration of a full garrison suffered several delays. A company of infantry from South Africa ordered to sail for St Helena was at the last minute redirected to an attack in German South-West Africa. Difficulties in finding a warship also delayed the despatch of Royal Garrison Artillery troops (RGA) from Britain. They eventually sailed on *Dover Castle* and dropped off two Captains and forty men at Ascension on 22 August 1914. This effectively doubled Ascension's garrison, which was only withdrawn in October 1916 when the threat to the island was judged to have passed. A further ten officers and 185 rank and file under the command of Colonel W. R. W. James arrived at St Helena on 26 August.

Six months of supplies were transported to Ladder Hill Fort. Contracts were at once agreed locally for the supply of fresh meat and bread to the garrison.¹⁵ An important part of the island's old economy was back in place.

The partial war diary of Sydney Gaitskell, who arrived in 1915, is kept at the Bodleian Library and offers an insight into the defence of St Helena. The absence of the South African infantry troops fundamentally affected how the island was to be defended. Colonel James initially tried to release some of his regular troops to infantry duties by recruiting 50 men from the St Helena Volunteers to undertake "electric light duties", i.e. to operate the searchlights.¹⁶ Two searchlights located at Munden's and were regularly used until a passing ship, HMS *Indefatigable*, warned that the lights could be spotted by hostile ships at a distance of 40 miles. The lights were used only intermittently thereafter. It was later reported that the Volunteers recruited to operate the searchlights had been unsatisfactory, and they were re-amalgamated back into the St Helena Sharpshooters.

In the absence of trained infantry, it was considered impossible to defend every landing place. It has been estimated that St Helena has 43 places where landings could be made, of which 24 are thought "practical" by allowing access to the interior. A policy of defensive strongholds was therefore adopted. This approach was akin, albeit on a microscopic scale, to General Ironside's strategy for the defence of Britain during the months that followed Dunkirk where much military equipment had been lost. The number of marines operating St Helena's 6-inch guns was minimised, the surplus being reassigned as infantry to defend the most critical locations. These were the Eastern Telegraph Company facilities at Briars and the cable landing ground at Rupert's Bay. The latter was defended by a section of marines. In the event of invasion the St Helena Volunteers were simply instructed to proceed as a body to High Knoll and secure it. The likelihood of an invasion must have seemed all the greater following German naval attacks at the key telegraphic cable landing places of Fanning Island in the Pacific Ocean and Cocos-Keeling Island in the Indian Ocean, respectively in September and November 1914.¹⁷

Within weeks of their arrival at St Helena, the War Office realised that the RGA men, highly trained in the use of artillery, would be more gainfully employed on the western front.¹⁸ A request to the Admiralty for their withdrawal was initially refused because of the invasion threat posed by armed German ships operating in the South Atlantic. However, the threat diminished following the destruction of several German capital ships at the Battle of the Falkland Islands in December 1914 and with the sinking or capture of most commerce raiders the following year. With the main menace in the South Atlantic coming from submarines to merchant shipping, a compromise was reached whereby the RGA troops were replaced by Royal Marine Artillery under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Sydney Gaitskell. By 1915, this regular British force formed 11 officers and 149 troops.

Before the war, to counter the vulnerability of Britain's worldwide network of telegraphic cables, the Colonial Office contracted Marconi to erect an alternative communications system based on a chain of powerful wireless stations, including one at St Helena. Parliamentary approval for this was given in August 1912. Ordinance No 7 was therefore passed at St Helena the following October. This banned wireless transmissions in the harbour or, if in territorial waters, of a nature likely to cause interference with signals from the island. In the event, this network of Imperial wireless stations was not created until after the war, the project not being helped by accusations of insider trading when politicians such as Lloyd George bought Marconi shares before the contract was agreed. All international communications passing through St Helena continued to be channelled through the telegraphic cable. Radio messages were limited to a small Morse code station run by the Royal Marines from Ladder Hill Fort, presumably to signal passing ships. These transmissions were probably rather weak, ever more stringent regulations being imposed to minimise radio interference from incoming ships. Restrictions

imposed in May 1917 were extreme to the point of being neurotic and required ships in harbour to unplug aerial wires from their radios and to hang the plug-ends onto the main rigging. Additionally, physical access to the equipment was denied to the crew, the harbour master being given the authority to seal the doors of radio rooms of all ships in harbour. The military radio station was dismantled in 1920, the island government seemingly taking no action to argue that it had any civil use or value. The St Helena Guardian protested:¹⁹

It is a great pity that the Wireless Station in use here during the war has been dismantled. Situated as we are in the midst of the South Atlantic, it is a matter of surprise to visitors that we have no wireless installation for the purpose of communicating with ships.²⁰

The closure of the island's garrison in 1906 had helped the island in one small way because it allowed the garrison's telephone lines to be integrated into the civil system. By 1914, it was estimated that a total of 574 messages had been made in the year between 14 private and three official phones using 40 miles of cable. The garrison initially shared this civil system when it was re-established in 1914 but after "a certain amount of friction having occurred with the Civil Authorities" it was decided to separate the civil and military systems once more. The army at once laid 4 miles of extra telephone cabling during November 1914 and ordered an added 20 miles of cable from South Africa.²¹

Like Cordeaux, many of the officials brought in to lead the St Helena government before and during the First World War came from a military background. There was clearly some friction between them. Cordeaux's health remained fragile and in 1916, the Colonial Office instructed him to take leave, but he refused to do so since the commanding officer Sydney Gaitskell would take over as acting governor. Cordeaux accused Gaitskell of having a "harsh and overbearing manner" and "a noticeable want of tact and ordinary courtesy". Ultimately, the Admiralty replaced Gaitskell with Lieutenant Colonel William Dixon. Cordeaux finally left St Helena on sick leave in March 1917, travelling back to the UK via South Africa. Dixon functioned as acting governor for a full 31 months, so the war had long finished before Cordeaux came back.²²

Dixon oversaw a revived flax industry. By 1917, some 900 acres had been planted, sufficient to support the Government's mill at Longwood, two private mills by Solomon and one by the Deason brothers. Considerable profits were being made by the mills and from the plantations, London prices for St Helena's fibre rising from £24-28 per ton to over £81 because of increased wartime demand. Reporting in 1918 that indigenous plants had been cleared from areas of the ridge and replaced with flax, Dixon merely expressed concern that this might reduce rainfall levels and lead to water shortages. His biggest problem was a lack of ships to bring in food and take away bundles of flax fibre. He claimed there was no space to ship out the island's far more valuable lace and embroidery – in truth, the island government seems to have regarded lacemaking as irrelevant to wartime conditions, did not bother to appoint an agent to market it and so allowed the island industry to wither and die. Cordeaux had agreed to accommodate the Sultan of Zanzibar's entourage but did not inform Dixon who claimed it was a complete surprise when the party arrived on 4 August 1917. He placed them in military custody under guard in the lower block of the Officers' Quarters (today Pilling School) subjecting them to a stringent eleven-point set of rules, for example, immediately obey instructions by the officer in charge, confine themselves strictly to their grounds and maintain all rooms, passages in a scrupulously clean condition, which were subject to regular inspections, refrain from any communications outside their own party and strictly limit their food consumption. Additionally, Dixon directed that the St Helena Guardian newspaper should be censored with effect from the 25 October 1917 edition.



Bruce's Band leading march on 4 August 1918, marking fourth year since outbreak of war

As far as islanders were concerned, Dixon was most heavily criticised because of a sustained period of food shortages. This was largely caused by fewer ship arrivals, but the problem was undoubtedly made worse by the island's reduced ability to feed itself following the extensive flax plantings. Dixon's tight controls on the rationing and supply of food (he required retailers to buy food six months ahead at their own risks, also expecting them to find the space to store it) led to claims that some islanders were in a state of starvation. Eventually, a public meeting on 27 June 1918 voted to petition London that Dixon be recalled with an appeal that Cordeaux should return to the island (800 signatures). In the event, it took another year and several pointed Parliamentary questions at Westminster about his long absence and whether he was still being paid a full salary before Cordeaux returned to his duties in early October 1919.²³

On his return the following year, Cordeaux heaped all blame for the island's inability to grow enough food for itself onto the shoulders of landowners. Having encouraged and overseen the uncontrolled planting of flax, Cordeaux complained:

“The high prices obtained for fibre have, not unnaturally, stimulated the planting of flax to an almost reckless degree, to the neglect of other forms of agriculture, with the result that the greater portion of the money brought into the Island by the flax industry goes out again to pay for costly imported foodstuffs, many of which or their substitutes could be produced locally”.²⁴

This deflection of blame was further promoted in the 1930s when Gosse came to write his history of the island and railed against the partial destruction of the island's rain forests, “[..] what little of it has been spared by the greedy goats and more recently by the even greedier

growers of New Zealand flax”.²⁵ Gosse also implied the war was a period of prosperity for the islanders:

Meanwhile, stimulated by the fantastic prices paid for it, the St Helenians grew reckless over their planting of flax, and gave up growing anything else. They made a lot of money, but most of it had to be spent buying, at fancy prices, things to eat which before the flax boom they had grown for themselves.²⁶

In truth, wages for men rose 2s in 1914, changing relatively little thereafter. Females were only paid 3d a day. At the same time, the cost of living grew at such a rate that in 1919 Cordeaux was forced to report that “the cost of essential foodstuffs greatly increased during the year under review, and as there was no increase in the rate of wages it is difficult to understand how the labouring classes exist.” Again, the 1920 Report commented “The cost of clothing during the year was also abnormal, many people went barefoot who had never done so before”. The image of prosperity presented in the Gosse history is entirely misplaced.

Britain and much of the Empire celebrated Peace Day for 3-4 days in July 1919. At St Helena, peace was marked on France’s Plain on 22 July. Reuters reported that the flag was saluted by almost the entire population, and medals were presented to 3,000 people.²⁷ The report claimed, “Such a gathering has never before been seen”. A project to issue a range of Peace Day stamps designed by the postmaster was started but early abandoned by the government. At the end of the war, most of the garrison returned to Portsmouth with their families on the *Chepstow Castle* on or near to Christmas Day 1919. A newspaper report reported that on War Office instructions the marines were each given a pint of beer and a Christmas pudding when they arrived.²⁸

In his history of St Helena, Philip Gosse sarcastically commented: “Few, if any, parts of the British Empire were less shaken by the World’s upheaval than St Helena”. Doubtless, several countries suffered greater misery than St Helena, but the island suffered a proportionate loss of life, increased poverty (apart from a few flax mill owners), severe food shortages and the threat of invasion. It is hoped the foregoing text describes the period more accurately.

Thanks are due to Colin Fox for accessing documents at the Bodleian Library, to Karen Henry at St Helena Archives and Edward Baldwin for photographs and information on the gun defences. All internet references were accessed in March 2017. URLs are given below in condensed tinyurl format.

¹ Detachierte Division in the port of Rio de Janeiro 1914 painting by Alexander Kircher (1857-1939). All three battleships survived the war, *SMS Strassburg* taking part in the December 1914 bombardment of Scarborough, Hartlepool, and Whitby with the loss of nearly 600 English lives. It ended its life as one of Mussolini’s ships, being sunk by bombing in 1944. *SMS Kaiser* took part in the Battle of Jutland and with *SMS König Albert* was scuttled by the Germans at Scapa Flow in 1919.

² *St Helena Guardian*, 12 December 1907.

³ Photographed by the author’s grandfather, Thomas R. Bruce.

⁴ **Garrison Withdrawal:** Ian Bruce, ‘The First Dozen Years’, *Wirebird: The Journal of the Friends of St Helena* 45 (2016). **Undefended Island:** ‘St Helena (Coaling Station)’ (Hansard, House of Commons, 25 May 1911). **Royal Marines:** ‘Military and Naval’, *Diss Express*, 15 November 1911, 2; Ken Denholm, *South Atlantic Haven: A Maritime History for the Island of South Helena* (Jamestown: Education Department of the Government of St Helena, 1994), 40. **St Helena Guns:** These were Elswick Mark VII wire breech loading 6-inch guns. A paper has suggested there were four 6-inch guns and were still in place in 1938 when a decision was taken to return them to the UK, but the equipment needed to take them apart did not arrive before war broke out in 1939. [Bill Clements, ‘St Helena: South Atlantic Fortress’, *Fort* 35 (2007): 75–90. URL: <http://tinyurl.com/znskb4f>]. The paper provided no source for this claim which is doubted because only basic tools (e.g. large spanners) were needed to dismantle the guns. It also seems unlikely there were four guns, first because no photographs have ever been seen of guns mounted at Mundens and second because in conversations with Edward Baldwin, Captain Driver RA insisted that the same guns used in WW1 were also in place during his period of service in WW2. The two gun beds and shields are dated 1901. The East barrel is

dated 1903 and the West 1915, the latter obviously being a replacement because it lies on a bed and forward armour that are dated 1901. [‘The Restoration of St Helena’s Big Guns’, *St Helena Connection*, no. 18 (June 2015): 14; ‘Restoration of Guns at Ladder Hill’, *The Sentinel*, 16 April 2015, 9.] **Gun Equipment:** ‘Letter: Ladder Hill Gun Site’, *The Sentinel*, 23 April 2015, 22.

⁵ **Cordeax Biography:** Harry Edward Spiller Cordeaux was born at Tanna, Bombay on 15 November 1870 under tragic circumstances. His parents (Edward Cordeaux, an assistant judge in the employ of the Indian Civil Service, and Harriett Catherine Spiller Jopp) had married only a year earlier at Rutnagherry, Maharashtra in December 1869, but Harriett died 15 days after the birth. [‘Marriages’, *Morning Advertiser*, 28 January 1870, 8; ‘Deaths’, *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 19 December 1870, 4]. Cordeaux was first educated in India at Tanna and then at Brighton College and Cheltenham College. He graduated in Classics at St John’s College, Cambridge in 1892 and joined the army two years later. He was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant on 2 June 1894 and Lieutenant on 2 Sept 1896. [‘Major Sir Harry Cordeaux’, *The Times*, 3 July 1943, 7; J. A Venn and John Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses: A Biographical List of All Known Students, Graduates and Holders of Office at the University of Cambridge, from the Earliest Times to 1900* (Cambridge: University Press, 1922); H. G. Hart, *Hart’s Annual Army List* (London: John Murray, 1908), 439]. The same year, he was appointed to the Indian Staff Corps, which provided training either to command native regiments or, as was the case for Cordeaux, to fill civil and political appointments. Over the next three years, he learnt three languages (Hindustani, Persian and Somali). His life as a career diplomatist began with his appointment as an assistant political resident at Aden in 1898. Later that year, he was appointed assistant resident and vice-consul at the British Protectorate of Berbera on the Somali coast where he was directly involved politically and militarily with the uprising led by the “Mad Mullah”, Hajji Hafiz Sayyid Muhammad `Abd Allāh al-Hasan. He was awarded the Order of Saint Michael and Saint George (CMG) on 22 July 1902, appointed Consul in 1902, promoted to the rank of Captain on 2 June 1903 and Commander-in-Chief at Berbera in 1906. [*The London Gazette*, no. 27456 (22 July 1902): 4669]. His health deteriorated and he was unable to take up his next promotion in 1910 as Governor of Uganda. He was eventually appointed Governor and Commander-in-Chief of St Helena in December 1911. [‘Downing St, 9 December 1911’, *The London Gazette*, no. 12416 (15 December 1911): 1325].

⁶ **German Ships Visit:** ‘1914 Annual Colonial Report’, 13; Jürgen Prommersberger, *Seeschlachten des 1. Weltkriegs - Unternehmen Albion* (Jürgen Prommersberger, 2016), 34. **Island Defence:** ‘The National Archive of the UK CO ADM 137/8/2; CO 247/181 (Despatches)’ 1914, The National Archives, Kew. **Volunteers:** ‘1914 Annual Colonial Report’. G. C. Kitching, *A Handbook and Gazetteer of the Island of St Helena Including a Short History of the Island under the Crown 1834-1902* (St. Helena: GC Kitching, 1937), 26.

⁷ ‘1902 Annual Colonial Report: St Helena, No 392’ (London: Colonial Office, 1903).

⁸ **War Dead:** Tick Tock, Tick Tock...’, *St Helena Herald*, 18 September 2009, 8). ‘World War I Centenary’, *The St Helena Independent*, 8 August 2014, 5. ‘George Edward Scipio a True St Helenian Hero’, *The Sentinel*, 25 August 2016, 21. Full names found in St Helena ecclesiastical records, University of Witwatersrand, URL:

<http://tinyurl.com/jzczlq9>; Commonwealth War Graves Commission, URL: <http://tinyurl.com/95d97xa>.

⁹ ‘The King’s Appeal’, *The Spectator*, 30 October 1915, 12; ‘St Helena Floreat’, *St Helena Guardian*, 28 October 1915.

¹⁰ ‘Our Day - World Wide Appeal for the Red Cross’, *The Times*, 20 September 1916, 11.

¹¹ Published by Parliamentary Recruiting Committee. Copyright: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London 2016.

¹² ‘Conscientious Objectors’ (Hansard, House of Lords Debate, Vol 26, Col 1008-9, 11 November 1917);

‘Treatment of Conscientious Objectors’, *The Times*, 15 November 1917, 12.

¹³ **Suffragette exile:** ‘Suffragists in Prison (Forcible Feeding)’ (Hansard, House of Commons Debate, Vol 47, Col 2197, 5 February 1913). **Napoleon cartoon:** ‘Off to St Helena’, *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 9 May 1913, 3. Originally published by the Daily Express.

¹⁴ **Irish Militant Exile:** ‘In Aid of Ulster, Practical Suggestions’, *Ballymena Observer*, 27 February 1914, 7. **Kaiser Exile:** ‘French Views on the Kaiser’, *The Times*, 11 November 1918, 7.

¹⁵ **Diversion of Infantry:** ‘The National Archive of the UK ADM 137/9/13 (Page 633. Admiralty Cape Telegrams)’ 1914, The National Archives, Kew. **Arrival of RGA:** ‘The National Archive of the UK, Admiralty, Ascension Island Various ADM 50/370’ 1916 1905, The National Archives, Kew. URL: <http://tinyurl.com/zkqgn3n>

¹⁶ Gaitskell, ‘War Diary’.

¹⁷ **Defence Strategy:** G. C. Kitching, *Handbook of St Helena*, 12. Leo McKinstry, *Operation Sealion* (John Murray, 2014), 118–23. **Attacks at cable stations:** Geoff Bennett, *The Pepper Trader: True Tales of the German East Asia Squadron and the Man Who Cast Them in Stone* (Equinox Publishing, 2006), 173; Lawrence Sondhaus, *World War One: The Global Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 103; Daniel R. Headrick, *The Invisible Weapon: Telecommunications and International Politics, 1851-1945* (Oxford University Press, 2012). URL: <http://tinyurl.com/jllg2ze>.

¹⁸ ‘The National Archive of the UK CO ADM 137/8/2; CO 247/181 (Despatches)’.

¹⁹ **Marconi:** ‘The Marconi Contact’, *The Times*, 7 August 1912, 5. **Island Radio:** Ken Denholm, *From Signal Gun to Satellite: A History of Communications on the Island of St Helena* (St Helena, 2001), 47.

²⁰ *St Helena Guardian*, 27 September 1920.

²¹ **Telephones:** ‘1914 Annual Colonial Report: St Helena, No 847’ (London: Colonial Office, 1915). Sydney Gaitskell, ‘Bodleian Library, Shelfmark: MSS. Atl. S. 23 / 56: War Diary’, 1914.

²² **Sydney Gaitskell:** ‘The National Archive of the UK CO 247/184 (Despatches 1916)’ 1916, The National Archives, Kew. **Cordeaux Departure:** ‘Imperial and Foreign News Items’, *The Times*, 23 March 1917, 5.

²³ **Petition:** ‘The National Archive of the UK CO 247/184 (Despatches 1918)’ 1918, The National Archives, Kew.

Food Shortage: ‘1917 Annual Colonial Report: St Helena, No 974’ (London: Colonial Office, 1918), 11; ‘World War I Centenary’, 5. **Cordeaux Absence:** ‘St Helena (Governor)’ (Hansard, House of Commons, 24 July 1919); ‘St Helena’ (Hansard, House of Commons, 4 August 1914); ‘Imperial and Foreign News Items’, *The Times*, 7 October 1918, 7.

²⁴ ‘1919 Annual Colonial Report: St Helena, No 1039’ (London: Colonial Office, 1920), 10.

²⁵ Gosse, *St Helena 1502-1938*, 379.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 349.

²⁷ ‘Peace Day at St Helena’, *The Times*, 23 July 1919, 12.

²⁸ *The Times*, 27 December 1919, 7.