

## PHILIPPS, Sir IVOR (1861-1940), soldier, politician and businessman

**Name:** Ivor Philipps  
**Date of birth:** 1861  
**Date of death:** 1940  
**Spouse:** Marian Isobel Philipps (née Mirrlees)  
**Parent:** Mary Margaret Philipps (née Best)  
**Parent:** James Erasmus Philipps  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** soldier, politician and businessman  
**Area of activity:** Business and Industry; Military; Politics, Government and Political Movements  
**Author:** David Lewis Jones

Ivor Philipps was born at Warminster Vicarage, Wiltshire, on 9 September 1861, the second son of Sir James Erasmus Philipps and his wife, Mary Margaret Best. A more detailed account of the family will be found in the entry on his eldest brother, [John Philipps, 1st Viscount St. Davids](#); two other brothers are noticed separately: [Owen Cosby Philipps, Baron Kysant](#) and [Laurence Richard Philipps, 1st Baron Milford](#).

Ivor Philipps entered Felstead College at the same time as his eldest brother, [John](#), but he left two years before him and joined the Wiltshire militia as a second lieutenant in April 1881. Two years later, on 12 May 1883, he obtained a commission as a lieutenant in the Manchester Regiment, which was based, at that time, in India. He joined the Indian Army in 1884 and transferred to the 1st Battalion, 5th Gurkha Regiment. Philipps participated in the Burmese Expedition 1887-89, and in a number of campaigns against the tribes on the northwest frontier of India; these campaigns included Miranzai (1891), Chitral (1895), and Tirah (1897). He was decorated for his services in each of these campaigns.

Like his brothers, Philipps had considerable administrative gifts and he was appointed Deputy Assistant Adjutant and Quarter Master General to the British force sent to relieve the legations besieged at Beijing in 1900. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his services during the China Expedition. Philipps had been promoted to the rank of captain in 1894 and he was granted a further promotion to major in 1901. He retired from the Indian Army on 20 July 1903 and was promptly given a commission as major with the Pembroke Yeomanry; he was colonel in command of the yeomanry from 1908-1912.

Through the influence of his brother, [John Philipps](#), Ivor Philipps began a new career as company director. [John Philipps](#) nominated his brother as a director of the Baku Russian Petroleum Company in 1905 and, within a year, Ivor Philipps succeeded his brother as chairman of the company. By 1912, he was chairman of seven of the fourteen companies in which he held directorships. A number of these companies were involved in running rubber plantations while others, such as the King Line, were controlled by his brothers.

At the outbreak of the First World War, Philipps was appointed a general staff officer, second grade at the War Office. He had been promoted to Lieutenant Colonel with the Pembroke Yeomanry in April 1908. A few days after his appointment at the War Office, he was promoted to Brigadier General commanding the 115th Brigade. Early in 1915, Philipps was raised to the rank of Major General and placed in command of the 38th Welsh Division. Since 1906, Philipps had been one of the two Liberal Members of Parliament for Southampton and it is likely that the influence of [David Lloyd George](#) obtained the promotion to the 38th Welsh Division, which was part of [Lloyd George's](#) ambitious plan for a Welsh 'army'. Before he saw active service, Philipps was summoned to assist [Lloyd George](#) at the Ministry of Munitions. He was appointed Parliamentary Secretary (Military) to the Ministry on 18 June 1915 and, following [Lloyd George's](#) abrupt dismissal of Sir Percy Girouard, Director General of Munitions Supply, he was briefly Acting Director General.

Philipps was recalled to the command of the 38th Division in September 1915, and left, accompanied by [Gwilym Lloyd George](#) as his aide-de-camp, for France in December. During the Battle of the Somme, the 17th and the 38th Divisions were ordered to attack Mametz Wood. The attack began on 7 July 1916. At 11 a.m. on 9 July, Philipps was dismissed from his command for want, according to General Haig, of 'push'. The commander of the 17th Division was sacked at the same time. In fact, Philipps had no freedom of action as commander of the 38th Division because he had been instructed to follow closely the orders of the XV Corps headquarters and any deviation would have been noticed quickly. There was considerable resentment among senior army officers of Philipps as a man with political connections who had retired from the Indian Army a major but was now a major general. Unfortunately, the unjust slurs which army gossip laid on Philipps became attached to the conduct of the Welsh troops under his command. The battle of Mametz Wood lasted from 7-12 July and the division suffered very heavy casualties, while forcing, in hard and difficult circumstances, highly experienced German soldiers to retreat for a mile. Philipps was appointed Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath for his services during wartime.

Although he remained a Member of Parliament until 1922, Philipps devoted the rest of his life to his career in business. Two firms, in particular, benefited from his considerable administrative skills. In February 1914, he had been appointed a director of Schweppes, the mineral water company, which was in poor condition because of a lack of capital and of dissension between the directors. During the war, Philipps left the board while the company continued to languish. Eventually, in early 1919, Philipps was invited back as chairman of the board and over the next two decades revived the fortunes of the company. His approach was conservative in that he built up reserves and diverted resources into new developments rather than paying out cash in dividends. Philipps remained chairman of the company until his death.

The other company that Philipps revived was Ilford, manufacturer of photographic equipment. Ilford was in competition with Kodak, an American firm, at the beginning of the twentieth century but, unlike Kodak, Ilford had not adopted the new technology of roll films. Although Philipps became chairman of Ilford in 1905, little was achieved before the First World War. He returned to the company in 1921 and began a programme of amalgamating a number of small manufacturers of photographic equipment with Ilford and, at the same time, developing the manufacture of roll film. Like Schweppes, Ilford became, under the guidance of Philipps, an efficient and profitable company.

After he retired from the Indian Army, Philipps lived at Cosheston Hall, not far from the town of Pembroke. He was an alderman on Pembrokeshire County Council and held the offices of Chairman of the County Council and Chairman of the Main Roads Committee. He was also a Justice of the Peace. In 1928, Philipps purchased Pembroke Castle then in a state of considerable neglect. With characteristic vigour, he began a programme of careful and extensive restoration, and to an extent rebuilding, which has been both praised and criticised. The people of Pembroke were pleased and made him a freeman of the town.

Like his brothers, Ivor Philipps was a tall man and of a striking appearance. He married Marian Isobel 'Mabel' Mirrlees, the daughter of James Buchanan Mirrlees, a prominent Glasgow businessman, at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Glasgow, on 9 September 1891. They had one daughter. Ivor Philipps died at the Empire Nursing Home, Vincent Square, London, on 15 August 1940. Following a private funeral, memorial services were held at 2.15 p.m. on 21 August in both St. Mary's Church, Pembroke, and St. Michael's Church, Cornhill, London. Mabel Philipps died on 3 July 1945 and was buried at Cosheston Church on 7 July.

## Author

David Lewis Jones

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## Further Reading

NLW Archives: [General Election 1906 Wales and Monmouthshire](#). A Souvenir containing photographs, biographical sketches etc., of all the Welsh MPs: Colonel Ivor Philipps

Wikipedia Article: [Ivor Philipps](#)

## Additional Links

Wikidata: [Q6099477](#)

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