

PUGH, LEWIS HENRY OWAIN (1907-1981), soldier

Name: Lewis Henry Owain Pugh
Date of birth: 1907
Date of death: 1981
Gender: Male
Occupation: soldier
Area of activity: Military
Author: Brynley Francis Roberts

Major-General Lewis Pugh, son of Major H.O. Pugh (1874-1954) and his wife Edith Mary née Smith, was born at the family home, Cymerau, Glandyfi, Ceredigion, 18 May 1907. He was educated at Wellington College and Woolwich Royal Military Academy and was commissioned into the Royal Artillery in 1927. After a period with the Army of Occupation on the Rhine he was posted to India where he fulfilled a number of different offices. He was seconded to the Indian Police in 1936 and returned to the army in 1940. He led Indian brigades and Gurkha regiments serving on the North-west Frontier and in Burma during World War 2, and afterwards in the Dutch East Indies and with the Gurkhas in Malaya. He was awarded the Indian Police medal in 1940, a rare honour for an army officer.

His most famous exploit was to plan and lead an attack in 1941 on four German merchant ships in Goa harbour which were sending information to German U-boats. When restrictions on secret information were lifted, the expedition was made the subject of a book by James Leasor, *Boarding Party* (1978) and in 1980 this was made into a film, *Sea Wolves*, with Gregory Peck (who played Lewis Pugh), David Niven and Roger Moore. Leasor's book was published again in 1980 under the title *Sea Wolves*. The year 1945-46 was a notable one for Lewis Pugh as he won three DSO's, two as leader of the advance in Burma and the third in Java. After a period in the War Office in 1953 he became Chief of Staff GHQ Far East in 1956-57 and GOC 53rd Welsh Infantry Division (TA) 1958-61. He was colonel King Edward VII's Own Goorkas from 1956 to 1961 and Representative Colonel of the Brigade of Gurkhas. These were difficult and critical years and Pugh was unceasing in his efforts to safeguard the welfare of the Gurkhas. He was created CBE in 1952 and CB in 1957.

He retired from the army in 1961. After his retirement he was High Sheriff of Cardiganshire in 1964 and Deputy Lieutenant from 1961 to 1972. He also served as chairman of the county Conservative Association and during these years he made efforts to learn Welsh. He was, among a number of other appointments, General Secretary of the Council for the Protection of Rural Wales, a member of the Courts of the National Library of Wales and the National Museum of Wales, and a JP. Lewis Pugh was a pleasant man with a quiet disposition and a keen sense of humour.

He married Wanda Kendzior, of Kington Langley, Wiltshire in 1941 and they had 2 daughters. In 1978 the family moved to Wonastow House, Wonastow, Monmouthshire. Lewis Pugh died, aged 73, 10 March 1981. The funeral was in St Thomas, Overmonnow, Monmouth 16 March followed by cremation.

Author

Dr Brynley Francis Roberts

Sources

Who was who?, 1981-90

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The Daily Telegraph, 17 March 1981

The Cambrian News and Merionethshire Standard, 20 March 1981

Western Mail, 15 March 1981

Annual Report of the National Library of Wales, 1962

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