

## Memorial Unveiled.

The Late Lieut. A. P. Wernher.

### Story of a Desperate Fight.

The memorial which has been placed in the Wenlock Chapel of the Luton Parish Church to the memory of the late Second Lieutenant Alexander Pigott Wernher, Welsh Guards, was unveiled on Saturday afternoon by Colonel Murray Thriepland, D.S.O., Commanding Officer, and dedicated in the presence of a large congregation.

The deceased officer was the youngest son of Lady Wernher, of Luton Hoo, and the late Sir Julius Wernher, Bart., and fell in action in the battle of the Somme on Sept. 10th, 1916, in a gallant and successful attempt to hold the village of Ginchy. This, after being twice captured from the enemy and lost again, was taken a third time, and handed over to the Welsh Guards for consolidation, was held securely through five stubborn counter-attacks in a few hours, delivered so violently on their flank that of the officers of the company with which Lieut. Wernher was serving, only one lived through the day, while nearly all the men of the company were casualties. Only men of great courage could have maintained the position under such conditions, and after unveiling the memorial on Saturday, Col. Thriepland paid a very fine tribute to Lieut. Wernher, who, although he had been with the regiment but a short time, had proved in that short time "an addition that was going to count."

There were present at the unveiling ceremony Lady Wernher, the Lady Zia Wernher, Lieut. Colonel S. H. Pollen, C.M.G., the Hon. Sir Charles Russell, Bart., Lord Queenborough, Mr. W. H. Romaine-Walker, Miss Pryce, Colonel Murray Thriepland, D.S.O., Capt. Hugh Allen, Capt. Arthur Gibbs, and Lieut. Athelstan E. Price (all of the Welsh Guards), Mr. and Mrs. J. Ramsey Drake, of St. Albans, the Mayor of Luton (Councillor H. Impey), the Town Clerk of Luton (Mr. William Smith), and the officers and N.C.O.'s of the 2nd V.B. Bedfordshire Regiment. The employees of the Luton Hoo Estate were present in very large numbers, and the general congregation included many of the principal residents of Luton.

After removing the Union Jack, which had veiled the memorial, Colonel Murray Thriepland said:—

"I unveil this tablet, which is about to be dedicated to the memory of Lieut. Alexander Pigott Wernher, Welsh Guards, who was killed in action when fighting with the 1st Battalion of the regiment at Ginchy on Sept. 10th, 1916."

"I need not enter into the early career of this boy—he was only a boy in years, although a man in his capacity and knowledge. His early life is better known to many here than to me. The letters of his friends and tutors speak of his career at Eton, which he left to try and help his country in her dire need. It was here he showed his manhood, and here he gave an example to many. Unable to pass medically fit to join his older brother and countrymen in the trenches of France and Belgium, he went to East Africa on the staff. Returning from there, in spite of his disabilities, he was able to obtain a commission in the Welsh Guards, and to do what his heart was set upon—face the discomforts of the trenches. From that time I can speak with personal knowledge, though, sadly enough, it was only for a few weeks."

"He joined the 1st Battalion of the Regiment, which I then had the honour to command, and joined us in what we as soldiers all know as 'The' Salient, that salient round the devastated town of Ypres, and shortly afterwards the battalion left for the Somme. It was there, in the trenches in front of Beaumont Hamel, where he impressed me as a gallant and fine soldier. It was there that it was intended the Guards Division should attack, and it was there I realised his worth. It was my province to watch all these newcomers. I was impressed with his ability and commonsense, and I had occasion, after a very few days in the trenches, to realise that the regiment had an addition to it that was going to count. That attack, however, did not come off. We left our billets on the River Ancre, marched south, and were told to occupy Ginchy at night. I was still in the hands of the enemy, but the Irish Brigade was to attack that afternoon, and, when taken, the village was to be occupied and held by the Welsh Guards. We accordingly got there about tea at night having marched through our own guns. After the Irish Brigade left, we were very heavily counter-attacked."