

Edmund Gilling Hallewell: adjutant and artist



CHRISTOPHER GRECH

Many British servicemen took to their watercolours while stationed in Malta, but few were fortunate enough to have a champion and influential supporter within the family. The following is an account of an artist-officer who left a considerable body of paintings depicting Maltese scenes.

Edmund Gilling Hallewell was born in Stroud, Gloucestershire, in April 1822. As the eldest son, and first of 12 siblings, he was named after his father, a Member of the UK Parliament. In 1836, he entered Rugby School and three years later purchased his commission as an ensign in the 20th (East Devonshire) Regiment of Foot, aged 17.

Towards the end of 1841 Hallewell was posted to Bermuda where, in addition to his military duties, he acted as the Governor's private secretary. There he had the good fortune and the better sense to marry Sophia Lonsdale, one of the five daughters of the Governor, Lieutenant-Colonel William Reid, RE. They were married in Bermuda on May 11, 1843, by the Bishop of Newfoundland.

Bermuda was Reid's first gubernatorial posting; he would end his career as Governor of Malta (1851-1858). Reid was an energetic and enterprising man; as a military engineer he possessed a trained scientific mind. While stationed in the West Indies he experienced the destructive power of storms and started researching these phenomena. He was able to gather local data and send it to William Redfield, one of the principal researchers in this field.

In 1839, Reid published his *Attempt to Develop the Law of Storms by Means of Facts* and followed this up 10 years later with *Progress of the Development of the Law of Storms*. In the same year he was also elected vice-president of the Royal Society.

In 1850-51, Reid chaired the executive committee of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, or as it was more popularly known, The Great Exhibition, held in Hyde Park, London. The exhibition ignited the 19th century's interest in such exhibitions and provided a significant milestone in the popularisation of the arts and industry.

The first record we have of Hallewell's artwork dates to his time in Bermuda where the Governor encouraged and promoted his son-in-law's artistic endeavours. In 1842, Reid forwarded an album of Hallewell's watercolour panoramas of Bermuda's most commanding views to the Colonial Office in London to "convey to persons interested an idea of the nature of this singular group of islands and harbours".

From 1847 to 1850, Hallewell served in Canada, and here too he was active as an artist. One of his

views of the Niagara Falls is illustrated here. His paintings varied from quick sketches to more polished renderings. Some of his more accomplished works were exhibited at the Royal Academy in London in 1853 and also in 1865; others were also exhibited at The British Institution and at The Society of British Artists.

When Reid was appointed Governor of Malta in 1851, Hallewell was again selected as his private secretary and aide-de-camp. The family, comprising Lieutenant-Colonel and Mrs Reid, two Reid daughters (presumably those still unmarried), Captain and Mrs Hallewell with infant, as well as a governess and five servants, all arrived in Malta in October 1851. The infant mentioned in contemporary newspapers was most likely their first-born, also named Edmund, who was born in 1849.

"Hallewell saw a great deal of action in the Crimean War; he was engaged in the battles of the Alma, Balaklava and Inkerman, having his horse shot in three places at the Alma; however, he escaped unhurt"

In 1850, Hallewell transferred from the 20th to the 28th (North Gloucestershire) Regiment of Foot, and when the Crimean War broke out and the 28th Regiment was dispatched to the scene of war Hallewell resigned his staff appointment in Malta in March 1854 and joined his regiment. There he served as deputy acting Quarter Master General of the Light Division at the Alma, Inkerman and Sebastopol.

The Quarter Master General's department was responsible for the supply of equipment, provisions and munitions. Hallewell's



Niagara Falls, Canada by Edmund Gilling Hallewell. PHOTO: PETER BARTOLO PARNIS

qualifications to serve in this department are something of a mystery since he is not recorded as having attended the Royal Military College Sandhurst as a gentleman cadet. Yet he seems to have passed the tests that the Quarter Master General in the Crimea, Colonel Richard Airey, set to select the staff to join his department. These tests included exercises in military surveying and report writing.

Hallewell's skills as a draughtsman were most likely acquired as part of the artistic instruction he received as a gentleman's son; however, his familiarity with military surveying must have been gained from fellow officers in his regiment who provided him with sufficient knowledge to get him through Airey's tests.

In fact, Hallewell demonstrated admirable skills in military

surveying, especially in the construction of accurately set out panoramic views of the Crimean landscape. Two such panoramas are held at the National Archives at Kew; however, more significant is the 360° panorama now in the Royal Collection.

Queen Victoria took a keen interest in the progress of the war in the Crimea, and somewhat surprisingly demonstrated a thorough understanding of the topography of the various battlefields. Hallewell sent his panorama of Sevastopol to the Queen in May 1855, and in her response to Lord Raglan later that month she requested that he "convey her best thanks to Capt. Hallewell [sic]".

We are fortunate that the British photographer Roger Fenton, who travelled to the Crimea to photograph the war, took no fewer than five photographs in which

Hallewell is included. The fact that Fenton and Hallewell were distantly related may explain why we have a relatively large number of photographs of Hallewell. The photograph reproduced here shows Sir George Brown, commander of the Light Division (seated), and his staff: Hallewell (far left) stands next to Colonel Richard Airey, Quarter Master General.

Hallewell saw a great deal of action in the battles of the Alma, Balaklava and Inkerman, having his horse shot in three places at the Alma; however, he escaped unhurt. He was engaged in the assault on Sebastopol on June 18, 1855, when he commanded the storming party of the Light Division.

Hallewell returned to Malta in November 1856 and assumed the post of Assistant Adjutant General. In this capacity Hallewell was

responsible for issuing the General Orders in Malta. These were issued daily, and for the most part consisted of mundane logistical matters; however, one order in particular must have seemed poignant to him. In April 1858, Reid's tenure as Governor came to an end. On April 30, no doubt with feelings of sadness and pride, Hallewell signed his name to the following order:

"His Excellency Sir Gaspard Le Marchant, having arrived and assumed the Government, the troops will continue to pay every compliment as long as he may be pleased to remain in Malta, to His Excellency Sir William Reid, as if he was still Governor."

In December 1858, the Hallewells presented the former Governor and his wife with a granddaughter, Sophia Lonsdale Martha, known as Martina, to distinguish her from her mother. Another daughter

followed at the end of 1860; however, this baby, christened Beatrice Maud, died just eight months later. The Hallewells were rather unfortunate in that only three of their eight children were to survive to adulthood.

In February 1859, Hallewell was appointed Deputy Quarter Master General in Malta, and in November 1860 he was promoted to Colonel.

On his appointment as Commandant of the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, in April 1864, Hallewell and his family left Malta. He departed having completed a large number of watercolours of Malta, Gozo and Comino, three of which are reproduced here.

The view of St Paul's Bay is dated 1862 and shows an undeveloped landscape stretching over Salina Bay and on to Marfa and Gozo beyond.

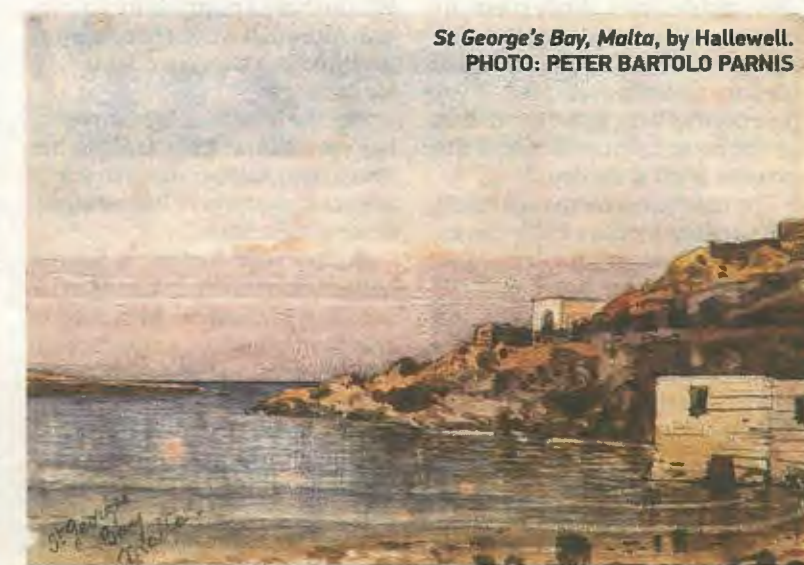
Another view is of St Mary Magdalene chapel atop Dingli Cliffs, dated 1864, in which the island of Filfla is shown in the background.

A small but nevertheless charming watercolour of St George's Bay, which in Hallewell's day was used intensively by the troops, shows a small, unassuming building by the water's edge. In the days when St George's Bay was considered a secluded and forgotten locality many religious orders of both genders occupied holiday or retreat houses in the area.

The building in question, with an aperture at sea level, was built to preserve the modesty of the nuns who bathed in the bay; thanks to this thoughtfully designed building bathers could enter clothed in their habits on the landward side, change into their bathing costumes and descend to sea level in the privacy of



Sir George Brown (seated) and his staff. Hallewell is seen on the far left. PHOTO: ROGER FENTON. COURTESY OF ROYAL COLLECTION TRUST/ © HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II 2018



St George's Bay, Malta, by Hallewell. PHOTO: PETER BARTOLO PARNIS

the building, after which they could exit, floating oceanwards buoyed by the billowing fabric of their voluminous outfits. Few buildings in this area of Malta can today boast such innocent or even modest intentions.

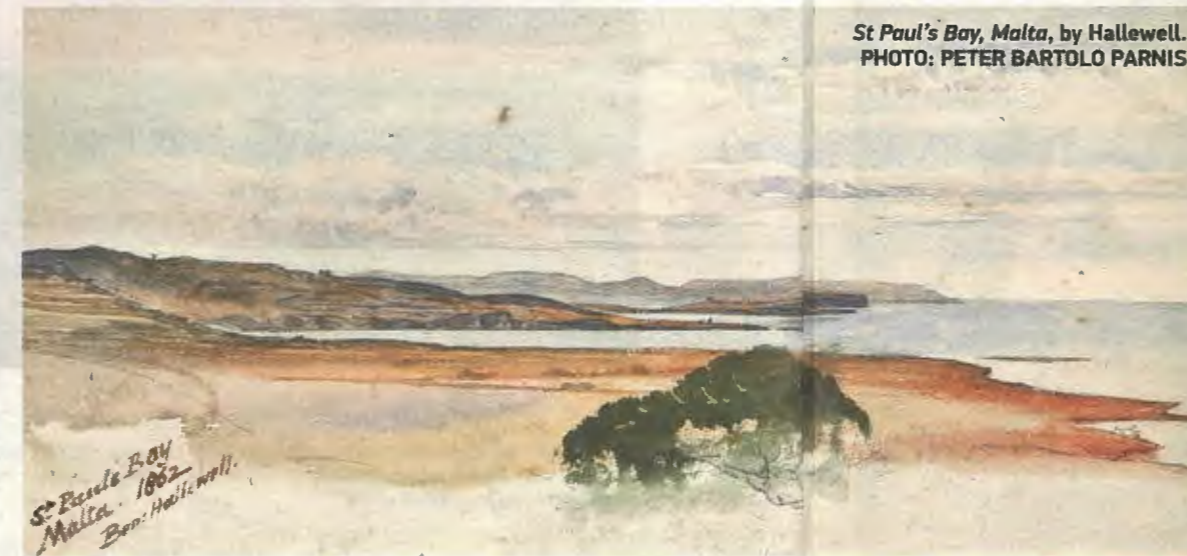
Hallewell was to serve as Commandant at Sandhurst for just five years. He suffered periodically from a debilitating illness and died at the relatively young age of 47. In the accompanying photograph, which was probably taken shortly before his death on November 27, 1869, his features belie his age: his moustache has gone white and he holds a walking stick in his arthritic hands.

Acknowledgements

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St Mary Magdalene chapel, Malta, by Hallewell. PHOTO: PETER BARTOLO PARNIS



St Paul's Bay, Malta, by Hallewell. PHOTO: PETER BARTOLO PARNIS



Edmund Gilling Hallewell, by an unknown photographer.