

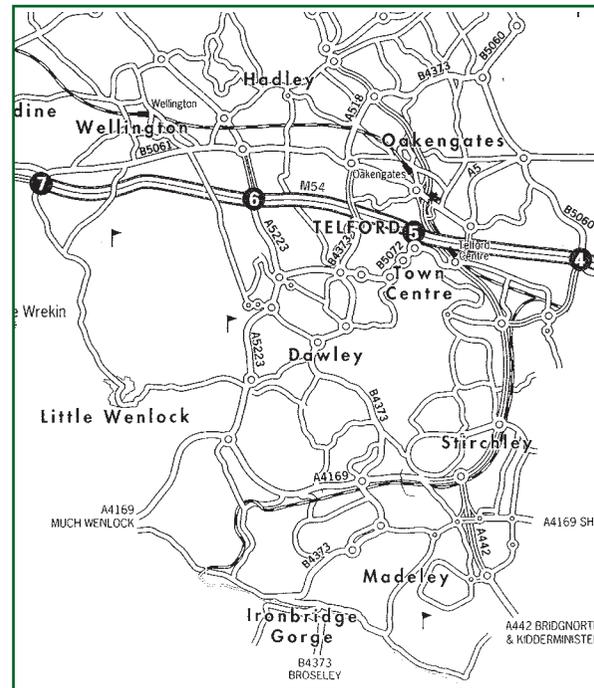
With the help of his comrades, and disguised as a civilian, he was able to slip out of the camp on the night of 19th September. The following morning, because of his unusual appearance, he was stopped by factory workers, who demanded to see inside his haversack. At this point Major Yate cut his throat with a razor realising that the contents of his haversack would betray him as an Englishman and, at worst (given his fluency in German), he might be taken for a spy. It is possible that he had anticipated such an incident as, the night before his escape, he had apparently swapped his own safety razor for an open razor belonging to one of his fellow prisoners.

Major Yate was clearly a brave officer well-liked and respected by fellow prisoners and those who served with him. He was an all-round sportsman and an accomplished linguist who spoke five languages. Events in his life showed him to be a brave officer, leading from the front. He was awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously on 2nd August 1919. He is buried in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery at Stahnsdorf in the former GDR and is commemorated on the War Memorial on Madeley Green. In November 2004, during a State Visit to Germany, the Queen laid a wreath on the grave of Major Yate. His medals are on display at the KOYLI Regimental Museum in Pontefract, Yorkshire.

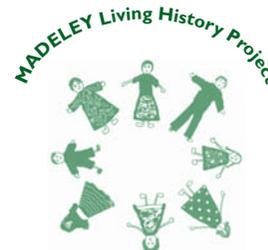
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How to get to Madeley



Recently there has been considerable, but completely unsubstantiated, speculation, about the death of Major Yate. This account is based on all available contemporary records and has been prepared by the Madeley History Group using research undertaken by Clive Blakeway, Janet Doody and Shelagh Lewis.



Parish People No.1



Major C A L Yate VC

1872 - 1914

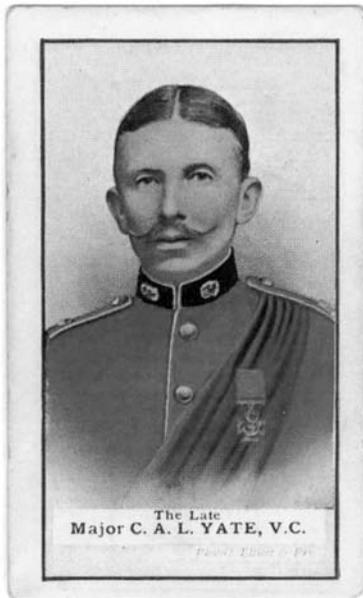
May 2009

Major C A L Yate VC

1872 – 1914

A branch of the Yate family moved to Madeley Hall from Berkshire in the 18th century.

Charles Yate was born in 1872. His father, George, was vicar of St. Michael's Church, Madeley; his mother, Louise Caroline who was George Yate's second wife, was of German origin which may explain why Charles was born in Germany and became a fluent German speaker. He was the only son of his father's five children and was christened Charles Allix Lavington Yate (Allix and Lavington being family names) so was known as 'Cal' throughout his life.



Charles was educated at Weymouth College until 1890. In 1891 he entered the Royal Military College at Sandhurst for two years. He must have been an exemplary cadet as he passed out in 9th position out of 1,100 candidates.

He was commissioned in 1892 and joined the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (KOYLI) and was stationed in Bombay.

Charles first saw action on the North West Frontier, for which he was later awarded the India Service Medal. At this time (1899) he was made up to Captain and joined the Staff College in Mauritius. With the outbreak of the Boer War the KOYLI were transferred to South Africa. At the Battle of Graspan he was badly wounded and returned to England to convalesce. A contemporary account in the *Shropshire Star* tells how the local miners met Captain Yate's train at Madeley Market Station and pulled his carriage through the streets of Madeley to his home as an act of recognition for his bravery.

In 1903 he married Florence Burroughs but there were no children of the marriage.

Soon after the wedding, Captain Yate was sent to Japan as a member of the British Army mission to report on military tactics used by the Japanese in their war against Russia. At the end of this war, in 1904, Captain Yate was awarded two medals (Russo-Japanese War Medal and the Japanese Order of the Sacred Treasure) by the Japanese Emperor. During this time he must have absorbed some elements of Japanese culture as later events suggest that Captain Yate felt, very strongly, that a soldier should not be taken alive on the field of battle.

On his return from Japan, Captain Yate served on the General Staff in South Africa and in London at the War Office. In 1912 he was promoted to Major. In 1914 he rejoined the KOYLI preferring to take an active role on the outbreak of the Great War rather than serve on the General Staff.

It was at the battle of Le Cateau that Major Yate earned his Victoria Cross. His citation in the London Gazette of November 1915 read: "Major Charles Lavington Yate...remained to the end in the trenches at Le Cateau on August 26th and, when all other officers were killed or wounded and ammunition exhausted, led his 19 survivors against the enemy in a charge in which he was severely wounded".



Maj. C A L Yate as a prisoner-of-war

Major Yate was captured at Le Cateau and taken to a prisoner of war camp at Torgau in Germany. By all accounts he felt deeply humiliated by his capture and there are accounts of several escape attempts. Plans for a fresh breakout by several officers including CAL Yate were already under way when, on 18th September 1914, two German officers visited the camp and asked to see Major Yate alone. After this visit he apparently became visibly agitated and it was agreed that the escape plans should be brought forward and all resources concentrated on his effort.