

ALANBROOKE on COBBOLD

February 2019

By common consent Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke is the greatest Chief of the Imperial General Staff in the history of the British army. As Winston Churchill's principal military adviser (and, as is well known, Churchill was not easy to work for) he must share some of the glory for victory in 1945.

His diaries reveal his close friendship with **John Murray (Ivan) Cobbold (1897-1944)** #448 on the web family tree. Ivan (a nickname coined by his nanny who declared him 'terrible') was injured in WWI and found himself at the War Office in WWII, a member of **Bernard Montgomery's** team planning the D Day invasion of Europe with **Dwight D Eisenhower's** staff.

Back in August 1941 they had much enjoyed 3 days together on Ivan's shoot at Milden in Scotland and on several occasions over the next 3 years Alanbrooke's name appears in the visitors' book at Glemham. In April 1943 he was booked for a week's fishing



Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke

with Ivan on the River Dee but it was cancelled at the last minute. Not so, however, the following year when he wrote: *On the 22nd of April I flew up to Dundee in the morning, early, taking **Ronnie Weeks** with me. We spent the day visiting the 52nd Division (mountain warfare) and finally finished up at Cairnton where I found Ivan Cobbold. I had a heavenly week there fishing all day, leaving the house at 9.30 in the morning and not returning till after 11pm except for about an hour at lunch and at dinner. I caught 12 salmon, but lost 9 and was fishing badly. I feel infinitely better.*

On 30th he flew back from Dyce to Hendon and lunched with Ivan at White's. Less than 2 months later Ivan was dead. He had gone to the Guards Chapel for Sunday morning service just 12 days after the Normandy landings; a doodle-bug had hit the chapel and 120 were killed. It was the chapel where Ivan had married **Lady Blanche Cavendish (1898-1987)** #449 some 25 years previously and where they had celebrated their Silver Wedding just a few days earlier.

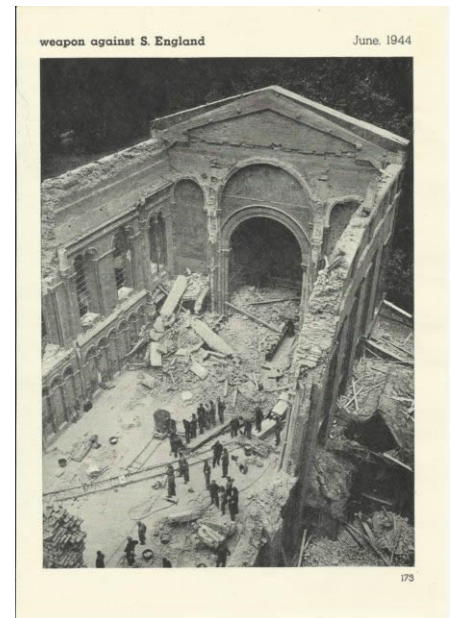
Alanbrooke wrote: *The death of Ivan Cobbold was a ghastly blow to me. I had grown to know him very well in those weeks alone with him at Cairnton, and I had grown very fond of him. Both he and Blanche had been kindness itself to me. The blow was, I think, made all the worse by the fact that when **Brian Boyle** was telling me of his death, I was actually picking up Ivan's letter off my blotting pad. His invitation to lunch with him that week made a very large lump rise in my throat.*



John Murray (Ivan) Cobbold



The Cairnton beat, the home of Salmon fishing on the River Dee in Aberdeenshire, Scotland.



The Guards Chapel, 18th June 1944