

## Imjin70 Information Sheet

### What is the battle of Imjin River?

The battle of Imjin River was fought between the 22 – 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1951. The battle was part of a Chinese counter-offensive, after United Nations forces had recaptured Seoul in March 1951. The assault on 'Gloster Hill' was led by General Peng Dehuai who commanded a force of 300,000 troops attacking over a 40-mile sector. The 29<sup>th</sup> Independent Infantry Brigade group, under the command of Brigadier Tom Brodie, comprised of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment, led by Lieutenant-Colonel J.P 'Fred' Carne, the 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Ulster Rifles, 8<sup>th</sup> King's Royal Irish Hussars, C Squadron 7<sup>th</sup> Royal Tank Regiment, 45<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment Royal Artillery, 11<sup>th</sup> Light Anti-Aircraft Battery Royal Artillery, and 170<sup>th</sup> Battery Royal Artillery. The brigade was responsible for defending a 15-kilometre section of the front, over which General Peng Dehuai sent three divisions of his force. What resulted was the bloodiest battle that involved British troops in modern history since the Second World War.

In the three-day battle, the Gloucestershire Regiment took the heaviest fire on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1951. In the early hours of the day, the 'Glosters' were forced to regroup and defend Hill 235, now known as 'Gloster Hill.' That day an attempt was made to reinforce the Gloster position, but the Chinese military had now surrounded their position, and attempts to reinforce them were impossible. The 29<sup>th</sup> Independent Brigade's mission became withdrawal. The other battalions retreated while the Glosters, Irish Fusiliers, and Ulster Riflemen repelled attack after attack. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, the Glosters were given permission to withdraw. They were the only regiment that remained, and were now completely surrounded by the Chinese army. At 10:30, they made their escape. Sadly only 39 men from the Gloucestershire Regiment made it back to UN/ROK (Republic of Korea) lines, and many were taken prisoner in their attempt, including their regiment leader Lieutenant-Colonel J.P. Carne. Over the three days of the battle, the 29<sup>th</sup> Independent Brigade lost a quarter of its strength suffering 1,091 casualties including 622 of the Gloucestershire Regiment. The Chinese army was significantly depleted, losing around 40% of its fighting force – approximately 70,000 casualties.

### Why is the battle important in the Korean War?

Although the battle of Imjin River resulted in a defeat for the UN forces, the actions of the Gloucestershire Regiment and the 29<sup>th</sup> Independent Brigade ensured that General Peng Dehuai's force was significantly delayed. By the end of the three-day engagement, Peng's plans were already 24 hours behind schedule and his army sapped of its strength. The Glosters' stand allowed the UN forces to regroup and block the Chinese advance to Seoul. Had the Chinese force achieved a breakthrough in the early stages of their assault, Peng would have been able to outflank both the South Korean division to the west and the American division to the east. This would have threatened the strength of the UN line and compromised the defence of Seoul. The disastrous failure of the Chinese offensive, which

began with the battle of Imjin River; 'led Chinese leaders to change their goal from driving the UNF (United Nations Forces) out of Korea to merely defending China's security and ending the war through negotiations.'<sup>1</sup> General Peng Dehuai would later admit that the offensive was one of only four mistakes he made in his military career.

The battle along the Imjin River (both at Gloster hill and also at the battle of Kapyong) marked the beginning of the end of the mobile phase of the war. From July 1951, stalemate ensued, with an armistice agreement reached in 1953. Both North and South Korea never reached a former peace agreement, and, in theory, both nations still remain at war.

### **Why is the Battle of Imjin River important to Gloucestershire?**

The battle of Imjin River is important to Gloucestershire because of the number of men from the county that fought in the battle and the pivotal role that they played in its outcome. 622 men from Gloucestershire were killed, wounded or missing and 522 were taken prisoner in China. The bravery of the Glosters was recognised both in Britain and internationally. The Victoria Cross was awarded to both Lieutenant-Colonel Carne and Lieutenant Curtis for acts of valour and bravery. The George Cross was awarded to Lieutenant Terrance Waters for his sacrifice while detained in a North Korean prison camp. Three units that were involved in the battle, including the Gloucestershire Regiment, were awarded the US Presidential Unit Citation for their part in the battle. This award was presented to the Gloucestershire Regiment in May 1951 by General James Van Fleet, and authorised President Harry Truman. In Korea, the hill that the Glosters made their final stand on was renamed to 'Gloster hill' and the corresponding valley renamed Gloster Valley.

### **What relevant information is held at Gloucestershire Archives?**

Although the Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum (see below) hold the main collection of military records for the Gloucestershire Regiment, we do have some relevant records relating the Battle of Imjin River and the Korean War at Gloucestershire Archives.

#### **Published material:**

B341/48279GS, One road to Imjin: a national service experience 1949-1951, D.E. Whatmore

J5.72GS, Remembered with advantage: a personal account of the Korean campaign, august 1950 – December 1951, (1976?), Barton Press

B341/39395GS, In spite of dungeons: the experiences as a prisoner-of-war in North Korea of the Chaplain to the First Battalion, the Gloucestershire Regiment, Davies, S.J, compiled Carne J.P. Colonel, Alan Sutton, Dursley.

B341/37691GS\*J5.78GS, Imjin roll, E.D. Harding, Barton Press, Gloucester, 1976, An account of the Imjin Battle and some of the events which followed. Include: Rolls of all men of the Gloucestershire Regiment engaged in the Imjin Battle, Korea

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<sup>1</sup> Xiaobing, Li (2009). *A History of the Modern Chinese Army*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky), p.103

GAL/E3/51791GS Now Thrive the Armourers: a story of action with the Gloucesters in Korea (November 1950 – April 1951), Holles, Robert O, George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd, 1952

B341/36621GS, Cap of honour, The story of the Gloucestershire Regiment (the 28<sup>th</sup>/61<sup>st</sup> Foot) 1694-1950), Includes brief details of Korea 1951 p.328-329, Daniell, David Scott, George H. Harrap & Co. Ltd, 1951

B421/49467GS, War in Korea: the battle decides all, Harvey; M. G., Raby Books, 2002

B303/32400GS, Wooden Boxes, Kinne, Derek, Frederick Muller, 1955

B662/49253GS, Soldier against the odds: from infantry to SAS, Large, Lofty, Mainstream, 1999

B314/54456GS, To the Last round: the epic British stand on the Imjin river, Korea, 1951, Salmon, Andrew, Aurum Press, 2010

B341/45580GS, One man's war in Korea, Large, Lofty, William Kimber, 1988

B303/31096GS, Edge of the sword, Farrar-Hockley, Anthony, 1954

#### **Newspaper cuttings/photographs:**

SR514/29004GS, Gloucestershire Regiment - collection of newspaper cuttings (Battle of the Imjin River, Korea, April 1951), (1951-1954)

(Microfilm) Angier, Patrick (Major): Memorial to Korean war victim in Old hills woods, Chalford (1987), Citizen 22 April, p12 / Newspaper cuttings vol.33 p83

J5.52GS\* SR514/29004GS, A reporter in Korea: No one but the Glosters, Kahn, EJ, New Yorker, May 26th, 1951

Citizen microfilm, Hawkins, Albert, former Korean prisoner of war visits former regiment, Citizen 4 Oct. p9 / newspaper scrapbook vol. 43 p.229, 1997

SRPort/CarneGS, Lt.-Col. J.P. Carne J.P.: the man who led the to Glory – In our thoughts to-day, Gloucester journal, 26th April, 1952, photograph

Newspaper cuttings volume 39 p491, Brodie, Tom, Brigade commander of Glosters in South Korea, Gloucestershire Echo 11th September p2, 1993

Cotswold Life, July 2001, Glorious Glosters return to Korea, Dineen, Michael

Gloucestershire and Avon life, December 1976, Axe and the knife-edge, Dineen, Michael

#### **Records:**

J5.56GS\* SR514/29004GS, Special army order no. 65, (Citation, 1st Gloucestershire Regiment, April 1951), War Office, 22nd June, 1951

J5.57GS\* SR514/29004GS, Service of Commemoration and Intercession - 1st Battalion The Gloucestershire Regiment in Gloucester Cathedral on Sunday June 17th, 1951 at 2p.m, 1951 John Jennings (Gloucester) Limited (printers), 1951

GBR/L6/23/B4857, Gloucestershire Regiment 1st Battalion: home coming from Korea; civic reception, luncheon and service, 1952

**Other:**

J5.73GS, Thanksgiving Service, for the return of the Gloucestershire Regiment from Korea, 1953

NQ12.28(1-3) GS, Civic reception to Lieut. Col. James Power Carne, V.C., D.S.O., and officers and men of the 1st battalion the Gloucestershire Regiment on their return from Korea and the presentation of the honorary freedom of the city of Gloucester to Lieut. Col. Carne as commanding officer of the battalion at the time of the battle of the Imjin river, Korea in April 1951

J5.60GS, Remembrance and Resolve, Davies; S. J., 1954

N4.213GS\* J5.55GS, Order of service on the occasion of the unveiling of the County War Memorial, by H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester, K.G., Colonel-in-Chief of the Gloucestershire Regiment, together with the laying up of the old colours of the First Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment and Thanksgiving for the return of the regiment from Korea, Sunday April 27th, 1952

J5.70GS, Order of service for the laying up of the old colours, 1st Battalion the Gloucestershire Regiment (28th/61st) and the commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Battle of the Imjin River, Korea ... Gloucester Cathedral, Sunday, 25th April, 1976

**Held at Cheltenham Local Studies Centre:**

CE/G951/904, Captured at the Imjin River: The Korean War memoirs of a Gloucester, David Green, 2011, Pen & Sword Books Ltd., (This book recounts one man's memories of his experience of the Korean War. David Green was born in Arle, Cheltenham in 1931. Brief mention of Christchurch Junior School, Cheltenham and Padcroft Boys' Home, Middlesex. He was conscripted into the Gloucestershire Regiment at the age of 18 and saw service in Korea. He was captured at the battle of the Imjin River and spent two and a half years in a North Korean Prisoner of War camp. After his return to Cheltenham he married and emigrated to Australia in 1970, where he lived until his death in 2007. This is a reprint of a book that was first published in Great Britain in 2003 by Leo Cooper. The book is dedicated to the Memory of Private Peter D. Hone who was killed in Action in April 1951.)

CE/G356.109CHA, Soldiers of Gloucestershire in 100 objects: In association with the Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum, Chris Chatterton, 2017, Amberley Publishing, Stroud

CE/G355NEW, Gloucesters: an illustrated history of a county regiment, Newbould Christopher, Alan Sutton, 1992

CE/G052 Gloucestershire Life, April 1971, 20 years after: Gloucestershire regiment marks the 20 year anniversary of the battle of Imjin river, David Foot, p.22-23, 25

CE/G052 Gloucestershire Life, December 1971, Grist, Digby, Happy Christmas, Washy-Washy: Digby Grist recalls a rather unusual but heart warming Christmas with the Gloucestershire Regiment in Korea Twenty One Years Ago, Gloucestershire Life, January – December 1971, (p.22-23)

Cotswold Life, November 1987, Colonel Carne of Korea, Mole, Chris

Find these, and more through: <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/libraries/library-locations-and-opening-hours/cheltenham-including-childrens-library-local-studies/>

### **Korea and Gloucestershire:**

Since the battle, Korea and Gloucestershire have continued to have strong links. For example, in April 2020 South Korea donated 1,000 sets of PPE to help Gloucestershire's efforts with the pandemic. Within Cheltenham local Studies centre, there is also a 2012 article from Cotswold Life about the Korea friendship trail to Stinchcombe Hill (CE/G052)

The links between South Korea and Gloucestershire are also shown in our business records. There are a number of records at the archive showing the links between South Korea and the Dowty group. For instance, we hold a record detailing Dowty Group services accounts for the International Engineering Exhibition at Seoul between 1979-1980.

[D8347/DGS/4/6/46] There are also a number of other records detailing various deals between Dowty and South Korean colleagues. [D8347/DGL/7/3/56, D8347/DGL/7/3/116, D8347/DGL/7/3/118]

Outside of the business world, there are a few press cuttings from the Gloucestershire Echo microfilm collection for the 1988 Olympics held in Seoul, South Korea. James Parrack, from Cheltenham competed in swimming at the Olympics. [Gloucestershire Echo microfilm: Glos Echo 14<sup>th</sup> Sept p.12]. We also hold a magazine extract from Harper's magazine on 'Korea and her Emperor' by Alfred Stead, from 1902. [D10423/Box 46/20].

### **How can I access records held at Gloucestershire Archives?**

Items from our collections can be viewed in our research room, as and when we are open. You will need to order them first by using our online catalogue and will also need to have an Archives ARA card. Our website will give you all the information you need about how to do this, our normal opening hours, and the latest lockdown information.

[www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives](http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives)

## What information is held at the Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum?

The Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum holds the main archive of the Gloucestershire Regiment and has a rich collection on the subject. Visit their website to find out more about their holdings <https://soldiersofglos.com/>. Their resources include a database of soldiers that served in the Regiment.

The Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum is also putting on a number of events to commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle. Information for these events can be found both through their newsletter (<https://soldiersofglos.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Imjin70-Letter-Jan-21.pdf>) and also on their website (<https://soldiersofglos.com/imjin-70/>)

## War memorials:

- **Gloucestershire Regiment. Korean Memorial:**

There are a number of war memorials dedicated to the soldiers that lost their lives in the battle of Imjin river. The most significant memorial in Gloucestershire can be found at Gloucester Cathedral. Within the cathedral, there is a stained-glass window that is dedicated to the 'Glorious Glosters.' The window has badges and symbols associated with the Gloucestershire regiment, and references their involvement at the Battle of Imjin River. The window commemorates Major Patrick Angier, who lost his life during the battle.



*Full memorial - Taken by War Memorials Trust 04 Mar 2015*

- **Imjin River Memorial, Donegal Square, Belfast City Hall.**

Located in Northern Ireland, the memorial here commemorates the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of The Royal Ulster Rifles, who fought alongside the Gloucestershire Regiment at the Battle of Imjin River. Located in the centre of Belfast, the memorial originally stood in Chaegunghyon, Korea to commemorate the Northern Irish troops that fell in the battle. It was first placed on the site of the battlefield in 1951, and then transported back to Northern Ireland in 1952. The memorial was situated to Belfast City Hall in 2010.



*Korean War Memorial to the Royal Ulster Rifles – Taken by Ray Spence 16 Sep 2013*



- **Battle of Imjin River memorial in Paju, South Korea.**

The most significant war memorial to the battle of Imjin River is in South Korea. Here, in Paju, in what is now known as 'Gloucester valley.' The site was the initial location of the Gloucestershire Regiment's headquarters during the battle. It was built by members of the British and South Korean armed forces and first opened in 1957 and expanded in 2014. 1.7 kilometres away from the memorial park is a rope bridge known as The Gloucester Heroes Bridge. The site includes statues to the soldiers of Gloucestershire and a sculpture of the beret worn by soldiers that fought in the



*Statues of soldiers from the Gloucestershire Regiment – Taken from koreanwarmemorials.com*



*Gloucestershire beret sculpture and main memorial – Taken from koreanwarmemorials.com*



*Gloucester heroes bridge – Taken from Gloucestershire Live*

battle.

## Where can I get more information?

There are a number of sources that are available online if you want to find out more about the battle and the role of the 'Glorious Glosters.'

- The National Army Museum, in Chelsea London, has an online resource that gives context to the battle, along with a detailed narrative of the battle itself: <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/battle-imjin>
- Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum <https://soldiersofglos.com/announcement/the-battle-of-imjin-river/#:~:text=The%20Battle%20of%20Imjin%20River%20-%20Soldiers%20Of,Carne%2C%20set%20sail%20from%20Southampton%20bound%20for%20Korea.>
- National Archives website has an excellent narrative of events with the Korean War and the Battle of Imjin River. It is comprehensive while also remaining digestible. <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/battles/korea/battle.htm>
- Imperial War Museum oral history collections: accounts from the conflict: (<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/voices-of-the-korean-war>) and Private Anthony

Paul Eagles of the Gloucestershire regiment :

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80012515>

- Imperial War Museum photographs: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/25-photographs-of-the-korean-war>

### **And finally....**

If you think we have missed out something important or misrepresented anything, please let us know via [archives@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:archives@gloucestershire.gov.uk)