

# Ronald Ogier Ward, urologist, hero & first president of BAUS

Ronald Ogier Ward was born in London on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1886. His father, Allan Ogier Ward (1853–1933) and grandfather, Thomas Ogier Ward (1803–1879) were both doctors. The name Ogier is Huguenot; the family fled religious persecution in France in the early Eighteenth Century.

Thomas (his grandfather) qualified from Oxford and was a founder member of the Metropolitan Counties branch of the British Medical Association. During the 1870–1871 Franco Prussian war he was living with his wife in St Germain near Paris. Their son Allan (Ronald's father) rushed to France as soon as an armistice was declared to the aid of his family and was said to have had quite an adventurous journey. His adventures however were nothing compared to those that his son, Ronald Ogier Ward was to experience in his life.

Ronald Ogier Ward was educated at Magdalen College School and then Queen's College, Oxford. He went up to London from Oxford in 1908 to study medicine at St Bartholomew's Hospital. In December 1908 Ward joined the Honourable Artillery Company, part of the Territorial Army. He claimed his inspiration to join this regiment came from seeing a picture of them toasting the King at a dinner in a magazine; he thought "they looked so nice in their full dress tunics", Figure 1.

He qualified from St Bartholomew's Hospital in 1912 but was unable to secure a job. However, he was promised a position the following year working for Sir D'Arcy Power (1855–1941) and Professor George Gask (1875–1951) at Bart's.

In the autumn of 1912 Ward passed the conjoint examination (MRCS and LRCP). That same year the Serbo-Turkish or First Balkan War (1912–1913) broke out. The British Red Cross arranged to send ambulances to help on both sides. Ogier Ward, now qualified but jobless, volunteered to serve with a British Ambulance Unit attached to the Turkish army. He arrived in Constantinople in November 1912. The senior surgeon in command of his unit was Max Page, later to become Major-General Sir Charles Max Page KBE CB DSO (1882–1963) and the military commander was Colonel Charles Doughty-Wylie (1868–1915) who was later awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross at Gallipoli. This was Ward's first experience of war surgery. Lecturing in 1946 and reflecting on this experience he merely said the surgery was of the usual type met with in war[1]. Conditions were poor for the Turks and the

**Fig. 1** Miniature of Ronald Ogier Ward in the uniform of an officer of the Honourable Artillery Company. Reproduced with permission of the Honourable Artillery Company.

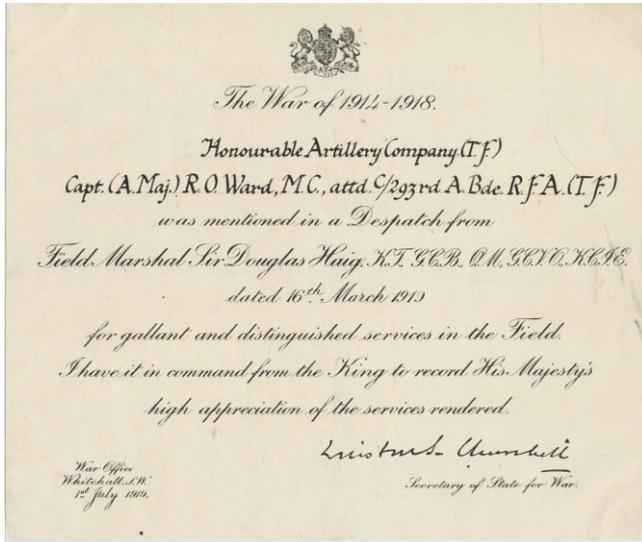


fighting was fierce, it must have been a fast learning curve for the newly qualified, inexperienced Ward.

In October 1913 he became house surgeon at Bart's working for Professor George Gask a slow deliberate and careful surgeon. Gask and Ward were both passionate about mountaineering and had met before in August 1906 in Zermatt in the Swiss Alps. They subsequently became good friends. Ward's mountaineering led to his first scientific publication. In 1908, whilst still at Oxford he wrote a paper on alveolar oxygen levels at altitude. This was the oxygen in his own lungs measured at various altitudes in the Alps. The following year he became senior house surgeon to D'Arcy Power. A different man from Gask, he was quick in both speech and surgery and excelled at emergency operating.

At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, Ogier Ward was mobilised, not as a surgeon but as an artillery officer in the Honourable Artillery Company. This was unusual, army

**Fig. 2** Notification of Ronald Ogier Ward being mentioned in dispatches, note it is signed by Winston Churchill, at that time Secretary of State for War. Reproduced with permission of the Honourable Artillery Company.



surgeons were a precious resource. He was promoted to Captain and then acting Major in command of C Battery, 293<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, Royal Field Artillery. In March 1918 C Battery played a major part in preventing a major German advance. C Battery was stationed near the village of Doignies, between Bapaume and Cambrai. At this point in the war the German army had been released from the Russian front and the Americans had not yet brought their full forces over to Europe. A massive German advance was inevitable. Ward and his men found themselves, unprotected by infantry, right on the front line. They continued to fire their guns until only one gun was still functioning and only four shells were left. At this point Ward led his men to safety. That night, distraught at having to abandon his guns, under the cover of thick fog and as quietly as it is possible to move guns with five teams of horses, he rescued four of the five surviving guns[2]. Ogier Ward had already been mentioned in dispatches (Figure 2) and been awarded the Military Cross; for his ingenuity bravery during the 1918 retreat he won the Distinguished Service Order.

After the War Ogier Ward took his FRCS and M.Ch.Oxon and worked at the surgical professorial unit at St Bartholomew's, as chief assistant to Professor George Gask along with Geoffrey Keynes. His interest however was in Urology and he joined the London urology hospital, St Peters. He successfully built up a private practice and was also Consulting Urologist to the Miller and the Royal Masonic Hospitals.

Ward published on several areas including bladder diverticula, bladder tumours, prostatic disease and bilharzia. He wrote the urology chapter of Grey Turner's classic surgical textbook.

At this time urologists fell into two separate camps regarding the endoscopic treatment of prostatic obstruction; diathermy resection (TURP) or the prostatic punch. Ward favoured TURP over the punch. He redesigned the McCarthy resectoscope to prevent over-resection of the trigone [3].

By 1935 Ward had become president of the urology section of the Royal Society of Medicine. Established in 1921, this preceded BAUS as a British society for surgeons with an interest in urology.

On the outbreak of the Second World War Ward was mobilised as part of the Emergency Medical Service and posted to a hospital in Mill Hill School. When it quickly became apparent that this was never going to become a surgical unit he volunteered for the Royal Army Medical Corps.

In November 1939 Ward was gazetted as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant and on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of that month sailed from Newhaven to Dieppe. Within a few days his old rank of Major was restored and by December he was a Lieutenant Colonel. He was initially a draft conducting officer and then was posted to No. 3 General Hospital in Offranville, seven miles South East of Dieppe, which was the major medical centre for the British army in France. He spent a busy but relatively uneventful six months treating minor accidents and medical conditions and fly fishing for trout.

On 10<sup>th</sup> May 1940 the Germans invaded Belgium and by 21<sup>st</sup> the General Hospitals were ordered to evacuate. Ward was now in command of a Casualty Clearing Station (CCS) in Offranville and his work now consisted of treating battle wounds.

The British army was evacuated from the beaches of Dunkirk by 4<sup>th</sup> June 1940, on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Ward was ordered to take his CCS south to Rouen which he did in a convoy of five ambulances, eight 3-ton trucks and an 8HP Simca which Ward had bought from a local garage for 100 francs. They set up their CCS in a school in Couches (35 miles South of Rouen). By 16<sup>th</sup> June they had made their way down to St Malo and embarked on the S.S. St Briare.

Ward was awarded the OBE for gallantry (a rare award) for his services during the evacuation of France. The citation emphasises his exceptional coolness and control and his courageous energy which secured the best possible treatment for a large number of wounded men. However, Ward's memory of boarding the ship was that the battleworn soldiers already aboard who watched him walk

up the gangplank saw not that he had carefully saved a box of valuable and delicate cystoscopes but that under his other arm was a fly fishing rod [4].

After a month at home Ward was shipped out to Egypt to serve in General Hospitals in Cairo which he described as “places of relative comfort”. In June 1942 he was transferred to Tobruk during the battle of Gazala. Following the fall of Tobruk he became consulting surgeon to the Army in East Africa.

Ward was said to have a close and unrelenting attention to detail. Nothing was allowed to be imperfect; any defect meant work had to be done again until it was right. This close attention to minutiae characterised his open and endoscopic work. The box of cystoscopes he took to France in the Second World War was still in use at St Peter’s Hospital after the war. During all that time Ward had used only three of the notoriously delicate bulbs and had one wire soldered because of the minute care with which he handled the instruments and also the way he taught his theatre staff [5].

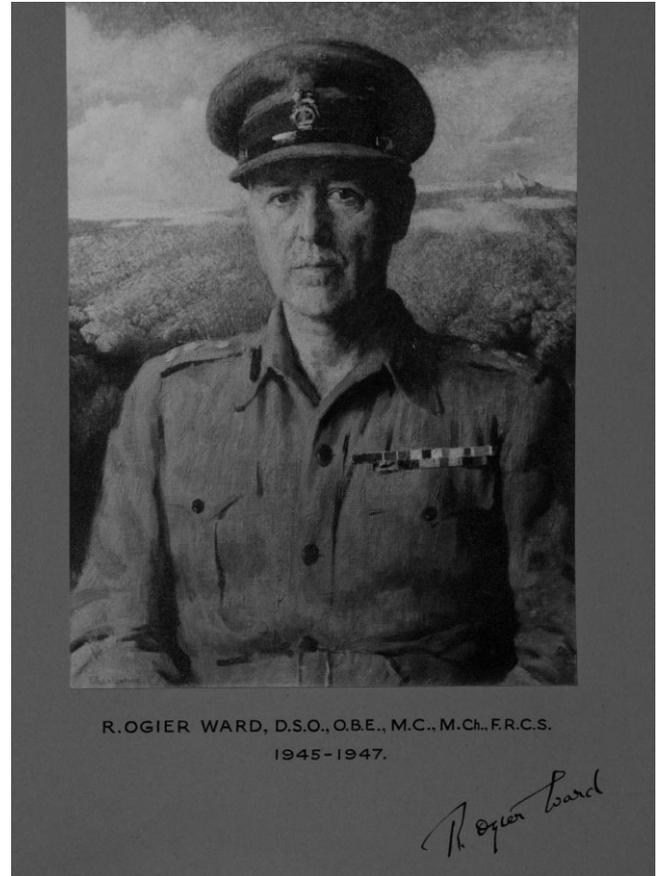
While serving overseas during the War, Ogier Ward had taken part in discussions on the Government White Paper on a National Health Service and became concerned that there was no organisation in Britain to speak for urology [6]. On December 11<sup>th</sup> 1944 seven urologists met at Eric Riches’ house, 22 Weymouth Street, London. They were F Loughnane, Terence Millin, Clifford Morson, Eric Riches, R H O B Robinson, Ogier Ward and Winsbury White. They composed and sent a letter to 29 consultant surgeons known to be doing urology almost exclusively suggesting an Association of British Urologists be formed. Of the 27 who replied, all but two were in favour and even these were open to persuasion. There was a second meeting on 22nd January 1945 and a larger meeting was planned.

This inaugural meeting was held in the Royal College of Surgeons of England on March 17th 1945, 37 members were present. Sir Alfred Webb-Johnson, President of the College, was asked to take the Chair. Ogier Ward was elected President (Figure 3) and Webb-Johnson handed over the chair. Eric Riches was made the first Honorary Secretary and BAUS was born.

According to Leslie Pyrah, the famous Leeds urologist and BAUS president, it was probably Ogier Ward who initiated the idea that a British Association of Urologists should be formed[6]. In 1966, Willie Mack from Glasgow (also a BAUS president) wrote a personal letter to Ward calling him the “Father of BAUS”.

Ward worked hard to rebuild his practice after the war but in 1950 he suffered a massive heart attack. He survived and continued to work for some years but health prevented him from pursuing his favourite hobbies of shooting and fly fishing.

**Fig. 3** Photograph of a portrait of Ronald Ogier Ward from the BAUS photograph album of past presidents. Reproduced with permission of BAUS.



In 1951 Ronald Ogier Ward was awarded the St Peter’s Medal by BAUS. This was the second year the medal had been awarded, with Sir Terence Millin also receiving one that year. In the citation, Walter Galbraith, the president, spoke of his distinguished and consistent record in urology. He also noted that it was largely due to Ward that the British Association of Urological Surgeons came into being. In 1953 he was awarded an honorary doctorate from Leeds University along with Charles Huggins.

In retirement Ward took up painting which he pursued with his usual enthusiasm and attention to detail. But his health deteriorated and after a long illness Ronald Ogier Ward MC, DSO, OBE, TD, MB, BCh, MCh, MRCS, LRCP, FRCS, Hon DSc and first president of BAUS died on Palm Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1971.

The life and achievements of Ronald Ogier Ward spanned the Old World and the Modern Age. As an Edwardian horse artilleryman, a highly decorated officer of the Great War and a cool organised senior surgeon of the Second World War Ogier Ward was a hero of the British Empire. As a urologist he was at the forefront of medical technology, a

leader in the new NHS and founder of the national association of the newly emerging specialty of urology; pushing forward into the future.

## Conflict of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest to declare.

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