

= Hesketh Hesketh @-@ Prichard =

Major Hesketh Vernon Prichard , later Hesketh @-@ Prichard , DSO , MC , FRGS , FZS ( 17 November 1876 ? 14 June 1922 ) was an explorer , adventurer , big @-@ game hunter and marksman who made a significant contribution to sniping practice within the British Army during the First World War . Concerned not only with improving the quality of marksmanship , the measures he introduced to counter the threat of German snipers were credited by a contemporary with saving the lives of over 3 @,@ 500 Allied soldiers .

During his lifetime , he also explored territory never seen before by white man , played cricket at first @-@ class level , including on overseas tours , wrote short stories and novels ( one of which was turned into a Douglas Fairbanks film ) and was a successful newspaper correspondent and travel writer . His many activities brought him into the highest social and professional circles . Like other turn of the century hunters such as Teddy Roosevelt , he was an active campaigner for animal welfare and succeeded in seeing legal measures introduced for their protection .

= = Early life = =

Hesketh @-@ Prichard was born an only child on 17 November 1876 in Jhansi , in the state of Uttar Pradesh , India . His father Hesketh Brodrick Prichard , an officer in the King 's Own Scottish Borderers , died from typhoid six weeks before he was born , leading him to be raised alone by his mother , Kate O 'Brien Ryall Prichard . She herself had come from a military family , her father being Major @-@ General Browne William Ryall .

Hesketh @-@ Prichard and his mother returned to Great Britain soon after , and lived for a while at her parents ' house , before moving to St Helier on Jersey for several years . His nickname was " Hex " , which he would bear throughout his life . They returned to the mainland that the boy might be educated at a prep school in Rugby . In 1887 he won a scholarship to Fettes College , Edinburgh ; his entrance paper was an essay on " Summer Sports " . He excelled at sports there , particularly cricket , at which the school magazine described him as " the best bowler we have had for a long time " . He was invited to play for Scotland against South Africa , but declined as he would have been unable to play against Fette 's rival Loretto School . After school , he studied law privately in Horsham , West Sussex . He passed the preliminary exam , though he would never practice as a solicitor .

= = Writing and exploration = =

= = = First publications = = =

He wrote his first story " Tammer 's Duel " in the summer of 1896 , which his mother helped him refine , and was sold soon after to Pall Mall Magazine for a guinea . That year he abandoned a career in law and spent the summer travelling around southern Europe and North Africa . He spent the sea @-@ time on the trip writing or planning plots . When back in London , he and his mother wrote together under the pseudonyms " H. Heron " and " E. Heron " , and saw publication in several journals , including Cornhill Magazine . Hesketh @-@ Prichard 's circle of literary friends widened and he became acquainted with the likes of Arthur Conan Doyle and J. M. Barrie . In 1897 Barrie introduced him to the press baron Cyril Arthur Pearson , who suggested he write a series of ghost stories for his monthly Pearson 's Magazine . Hesketh @-@ Prichard and his mother created a series of stories around the character " Flaxman Low " , the first psychic detective of fiction , though they were disconcerted to find the tales promoted by Pearson as " real " . The collected work was published as The Experiences of Flaxman Low in 1899 .

In 1897 , he and his mother worked on the plot of A Modern Mercenary , the stories of Captain Rallywood , a dashing diplomat in Germany . It was published by Smith and Elder the following year . He travelled to South America in February 1898 , seeing the construction work for the Panama

Canal , but returned after developing malaria while in the Caribbean .

= = = Commissioned trips = = =

In 1899 Pearson chose Hesketh @-@ Prichard to explore and report on the relatively unknown republic of Haiti , wanting something dramatic with which to launch his forthcoming Daily Express . His mother accompanied him as far as Jamaica ; in later years she would often travel with him to remote destinations in a time when it was uncommon for a woman of her age to do so . Hesketh @-@ Prichard travelled extensively into the uncharted interior of Haiti , narrowly avoiding death on one occasion when someone tried to poison him . No white man was believed to have crossed the island since 1803 , and his trip provided the first written description of some of the secret practices of " vaudoux " ( voodoo ) . He later wrote a vivid account of his travels in the popular book *Where Black Rules White : A Journey Across and About Hayti* .

Pearson welcomed his reports , and on his return immediately commissioned him to travel to Patagonia to investigate dramatic rumours of a hairy beast roaming the land . The animal was conjectured by Natural History Museum director Ray Lankester to be a living example of the long @-@ extinct giant ground sloth . Hesketh @-@ Prichard 's talent for descriptive narration enthralled the readers of the Daily Express . He explored the area surrounding Lake Argentino , finding one of its feeder lakes , naming it Lake Pearson after his patron , and their connecting river Caterina after his mother . Lake Pearson was subsequently renamed Lake Anita , but the Río Caterina , known for its salmon , retains the name Hesketh @-@ Prichard gave it . The surrounding area is now part of Los Glaciares National Park .

Although he found no traces of the creature after a year overseas and 10 @,@ 000 miles ( 16 @,@ 000 km ) of travel , he did provide compelling descriptions of unknown areas of the country , its fauna and inhabitants . He acquired the pelt of an unknown subspecies of puma , naming it *Felis concolor pearsoni* . ( The puma is now considered to be a variety of the southern South American cougar *Puma concolor concolor* . ) The grass species *Poa prichardii* was named after Hesketh @-@ Prichard after he brought back a specimen . He compiled the story of his travels in the well @-@ received *Through the Heart of Patagonia* .

In 2000 , on the hundredth anniversary of both Hesketh @-@ Prichard 's trip and the newspaper 's founding , the Daily Express despatched his great @-@ grandson Charlie Jacoby to retrace his footsteps .

= = = Labrador = = =

Hesketh @-@ Prichard first visited Atlantic Canada in August 1903 , travelling up the coasts of Labrador and Newfoundland , and donating the heads of stags he had shot to the Newfoundland Exhibition then in London . He returned in October 1904 , this time with his mother , and the cricketer Teddy Wynyard .

His most ambitious trip to the region was however in July 1910 , when he undertook to explore the interior of Labrador , saying " it seemed to us a pity that such a terra incognita should continue to exist under the British flag " . This same territory had claimed the life of writer Leonidas Hubbard a few years earlier . He described his journey up the Fraser River to access Indian House Lake on George River in the popular *Through Trackless Labrador* in 1911 .

His reputation was such that former president Theodore Roosevelt , a fellow writer , explorer and hunter , wrote to him , commending him on his latest book , which he described as the best that season , and asking to meet him .

= = = Further writing = = =

In 1904 , the mother @-@ and @-@ son writing team produced *The Chronicles of Don Q.* , a collection of short stories featuring the fictional rogue Don Quebranta Huesos , a Spanish Robin Hood @-@ like figure who was fierce to the evil rich but kind @-@ hearted to the virtuous poor . A

second collection , The New Chronicles of Don Q. followed in 1906 . The pair produced a full @-@ length novel , Don Q. ' s Love Story , in 1909 . Don Q. was brought to the stage in 1921 when it was performed at the Apollo Theatre , London . In 1925 , the book was reworked as a Zorro vehicle by screenwriters Jack Cunningham and Lotta Woods ; the United Artists silent film Don Q , Son of Zorro was produced by Douglas Fairbanks , who also starred as its lead character . The New York Times rated the film one of its top ten movies of the year .

In 1913 , writing on his own , Hesketh @-@ Prichard created the crime @-@ fighting figure November Joe , a hunter and backwoodsman from the Canadian wilderness . It was broadcast as a radio play by the BBC on 23 September 1970 .

Despite his reputation as a hunter , he campaigned to end the clubbing of grey seals around the coast . Aided by his friend Charles Lyell MP , he was successful in seeing the Grey Seals ( Protection ) Act passed unopposed in 1914 , Britain 's first legal protection for non @-@ game mammals . His article " Slaughtered for Fashion " in the March 1914 Pearson 's Magazine argued to protect birds from slaughter for their feathers for hats , the so @-@ called plume hunting .

= = Cricket = =

Hesketh @-@ Prichard was a talented cricketer , and played for a number of teams , including Hampshire , London County , and Marylebone Cricket Club . A right @-@ arm fast bowler , he made his début in the first class game when he played for Hampshire against Somerset in the 1900 County Championship . He was not however a strong batsman , and would typically play in the tail of the batting order . He joined the short @-@ lived London County in 1902 , where he was a teammate of W. G. Grace . In 1903 he played his first of several games for The Gentlemen v The Players at Lords . He would be selected for The Gentleman three years in succession . In 1904 , he joined the MCC , and took part in Lord Brackley 's XI 's tour of the West Indies in the 1904 / 5 season . In 1907 , he toured the United States with the MCC .

A tall man , he was able to use his height and reach to his advantage when bowling . In a first @-@ class career that lasted from 1900 to 1913 , he took 339 wickets for a total of 7 @,@ 586 runs . A career best was 8 / 32 for Hampshire against Derbyshire in July 1905 .

= = Military service = =

At the outbreak of the First World War , Hesketh @-@ Prichard tried for a commission in the Black Watch and Guards , but both turned him down because of his age , then 37 . He was eventually successful obtaining a post as Assistant Press Officer at the War Office , and first sent to the front lines in France in February 1915 as an " eyewitness officer " in charge of war correspondents . By this time , open warfare on the front had ceased , and had stagnated into the trench warfare that characterised much of the conflict . He witnessed there the victims of gas attack .

Hesketh @-@ Prichard was shocked to learn of the high attrition rate due to well @-@ trained German snipers . It was common for British regiments to lose five men a day to snipers ; he learned that one battalion lost eighteen in a single day . The German snipers could not be located , leaving them free to continue shooting from their place of concealment . He was also dismayed by the poor quality of marksmanship amongst the British troops .

He set about improving the quality of marksmanship , calibrating and correcting the few telescopic sights that the army already possessed . He borrowed more sights and hunting rifles from friends and famous hunters back home , and funded the acquisition of others from his own pocket , or donations he solicited . To investigate the quality of German armour plate , he retrieved a sample from a German trench . He discovered that their armour could only be penetrated by a heavy cartridge such as Jeffery 333 , while British plate could be easily defeated by a much smaller gun such as a Mauser .

= = = Innovations = = =

He recognised German skill in constructing trench parapets : by making use of an irregular top and face to the parapet , and constructing it from material of varying composition , the presence of a sniper or an observer poking his head up became much less conspicuous . In contrast , British trench practice had been to give a military @-@ straight neat edge to the parapet top , making any movement or protrusion immediately obvious .

An observer was vulnerable to an enemy sniper firing a bullet through his loophole , but Hesketh @-@ Prichard devised a metal @-@ armoured double loophole that would protect him . The front loophole was fixed , but the rear was housed in a metal shutter sliding in grooves . Only when the two loopholes were lined up ? a one @-@ to @-@ twenty chance ? could an enemy shoot between them .

Another innovation was the use of a dummy head to find the location of an enemy sniper . The tempting target of a realistic papier @-@ mâché head was raised above the parapet on a stick running in a groove on a fixed board . To increase the realism , a lit cigarette could be inserted into the dummy 's mouth and be smoked by a soldier via a rubber tube . If the head was shot , it was dropped rapidly , simulating a casualty . The sniper 's bullet would have made a hole in the front and back of the dummy 's head . The head was then raised in the groove again , but lower than before by the vertical distance between the glasses of a trench periscope . If the lower glass of a periscope was placed before the front bullet hole , its upper glass would be at exactly the same height as the bullet had been . By looking through the rear hole in the head , through the front hole and up through the periscope , the soldier would be looking exactly along the line the bullet had taken , and so would be looking directly at the sniper , revealing his position .

= = = Training snipers = = =

Hesketh @-@ Prichard was eventually successful in gaining official support for his campaign , and in August 1915 was given permission to proceed with formalised sniper training . By November of that year , his reputation was such that he was in high demand from many units . In December he was ordered on General Allenby 's request to the Third Army School of Instruction and was made a general staff officer with the rank of captain . He was Mentioned in Despatches on 1 January 1916 .

In August 1916 , he founded the First Army School of Sniping in the village of Lingham , Pas @-@ de @-@ Calais . Starting with a first class of only six , in time he was able to lecture to large numbers of soldiers from different Allied nations , proudly proclaiming in a letter that his school was turning out snipers at three times the rate of any such other school in the world . In October of that year he was awarded the Military Cross , the citation of which read : " For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty . He has instructed snipers in the trenches on many occasions , and in most dangerous Circumstances , with great skill and determination . He has , directly and indirectly , inflicted enormous casualties on the enemy . " His friend George Gray , himself a champion shooter , told him that he had reduced sniping casualties from five a week per battalion to forty @-@ four in three months in sixty battalions ; by his reckoning , this meant that Hesketh @-@ Prichard had saved over 3 @-@ 500 lives . He was promoted to major in November 1916 . By this time in the war , his contributions to sniping had been such that the former German superiority in the practice had now been reversed .

= = = Later war years = = =

Hesketh @-@ Prichard was taken ill with an undetermined infection in late 1917 and was granted leave . His health remained poor for the rest of his life , and he spent much of it convalescing . It was during this period of leave that he learned that he had been awarded the Distinguished Service Order , for his work with the First Army School of Sniping , Observation , and Scouting . For his wartime work with the Portuguese Expeditionary Corps , he was appointed a Commander of the Military Order of Avis .

He continued to write and hunt when his health permitted him . In 1920 , he wrote his account of his war time activities in the critically acclaimed Sniping in France ( full @-@ text available on

Wikisource and as a PDF document ) , which is still referenced by modern authors on the subject . The following year he wrote Sport in Wildest Britain , in which he shared his experiences of bird shooting , particularly in the Outer Hebrides .

= = Family life = =

In 1908 , Hesketh Hesketh @-@ Prichard married Lady Elizabeth Grimston , the daughter of James Grimston , 3rd Earl of Verulam , whom he had met through friends . They had three children : Michael ( 19 February 1909 ? September 1988 ) , Diana ( 26 March 1912 ? 1970 ) , and Alfred Cecil Giles ( 1916 ? 1944 ) , known as " Alfgar " . Alfgar was recruited to the Special Operations Executive during the Second World War , where he became the first head of its Czech Section , training agents to conduct the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich . Alfgar Hesketh @-@ Prichard died on service in Austria on 3 December 1944 , for which he was posthumously awarded the MC .

= = = Later years = = =

In July 1919 , Hesketh @-@ Prichard was elected Chairman of the Society of Authors , of which he had been a member for many years . Poor health forced him to resign in the following January .

Hesketh @-@ Prichard died from sepsis on 14 June 1922 , at the ancestral home of his wife at Gorhambury , Hertfordshire , England . His obituarists ascribed this to an obscure form of blood poisoning brought on by gassing in the trenches during his war service . However , his ailments , including fatigue , heart ? digestive ? neurological disorders , appendicitis , cognitive problems , depression , anxiety ? are today recognised as differential symptoms of malaria . Left untreated they sometimes lead to organ failure and death .

His body was cremated and the ashes interred in the family vault at St Michael 's Church , St Albans . His mother survived him for some years , dying in 1935 .

His wife Elizabeth , later becoming Woman of the Bedchamber to Queen Mary , lived until 1975 .

Hesketh @-@ Prichard 's biography was written two years after his death by his friend Eric Parker , who encapsulated his many accomplishments within its title : Hesketh Prichard D.S.O. , M.C. : Explorer , Naturalist , Cricketer , Author , Soldier .