

PiXZ People - Little Books of Great Lives

# LAWRENCE OF ARABIA

Rodney Legg

Immortalised in film and his own literary masterpiece, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, Colonel Thomas Edward Lawrence remains the most enigmatic hero of the 20th century. Shunning the Prince of Mecca legend he had created, he constantly reinvented himself, by re-entering the ranks in the RAF, then the Tank Corps, and for a third stint developing high-speed launches.

His cover was soon blown, inevitably, as he continued to attract headlines. His talent for 'backing into the limelight' continued to his death, which has left its own mystery with contradictory inquest evidence of the accident in which he was thrown from his motorcycle.

Rodney Legg relates anecdotes and incidents that portray a colourful life through a kaleidoscope of places in which he lived. From Wales to Oxford and Dorset, from 1923, he was always on the move, both mentally and physically. Interludes range from the New Forest and Epping Forest to Plymouth Sound and Southampton Water.

Illustrations draw from a remarkable contemporary archive as well as photographs of the key places across England forever associated with him. Clouds Hill on heathland at Bovington Camp is the shrine to the public Lawrence but a private Lawrence can be found in a mixture of far-flung locations.

This handy, pocket-sized, hardback biography provides the ideal introduction in words and pictures to Lawrence, his life and the places where his remarkable spirit can be felt even today.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rodney Legg is a prolific author and historian who has published hundreds of country walks. Nationally he is active in the environmental movement having been chairman of the Open Spaces Society since 1989 and a member of the ruling council of the National Trust from 1990 until 2009.

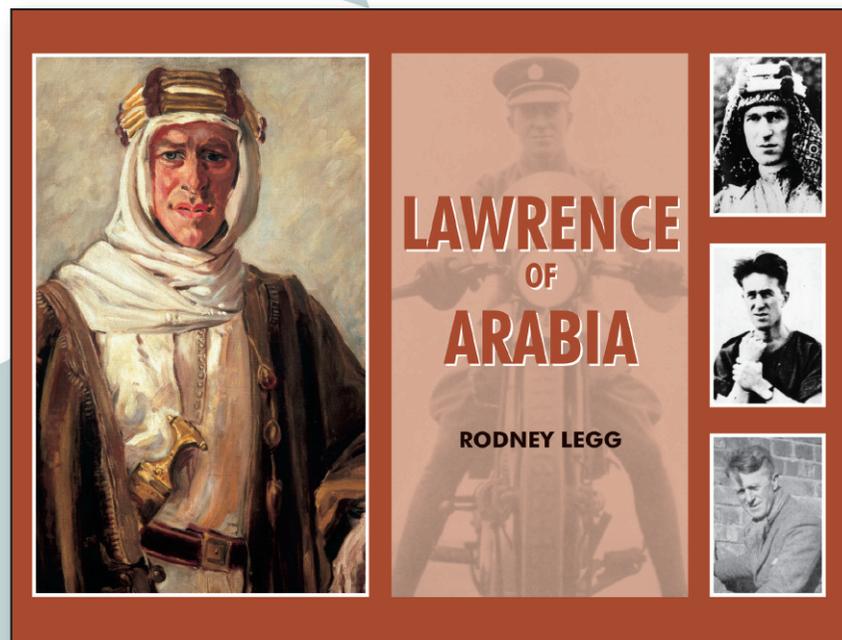
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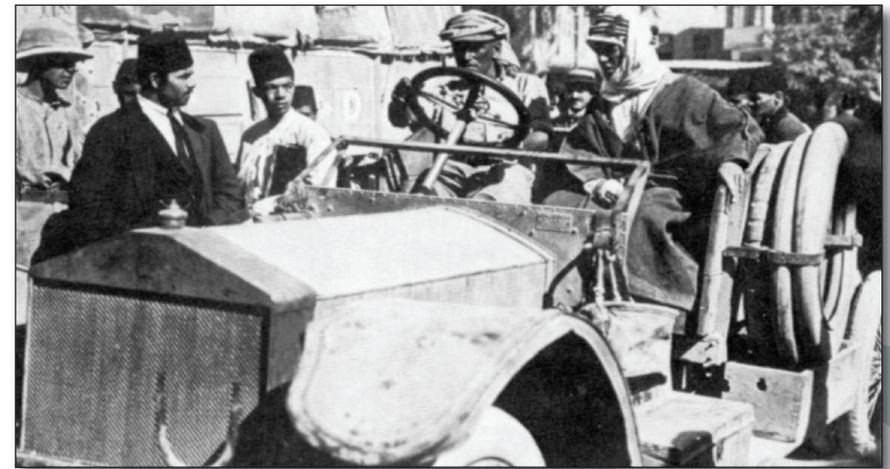
# LAWRENCE OF ARABIA



Lawrence's gravestone in Moreton Cemetery.



Winston Churchill and wife Clementine walking up the drive to St. Nicholas Church, Moreton, for Lawrence's funeral.



Lawrence at the front of a Rolls-Royce tender, at the head of the Arab Army, entering Damascus on 1 October 1918.



Right: Lawrence on GW 2275, his final motor-cycle, beside the rhododendrons at Clouds Hill.



Clouds Hill cottage from the hillside.

The best reliable account of Lawrence's life is usually his own. He claimed to have created enemy territory in Damascus — listing hundreds of places in a "Skeleton diary" — in the fortnight after 4 June, but those he "met" had no recollection of the encounter and others meeting Arab forces insisted he was with them in Auda abu Tayi's oasis at Mekk. The classic action of the Arab Revolt followed in July 1917, with the capture of the strategic town of Aqaba, at the inland end of the arm of the Red Sea jutting into the Holy Land. Lawrence was in harness as the action started, at Abu'l Lissan on the ridge above Aqaba, and took part wearing a revolver as Auda led the crucial charge, but managed to shoot his camel through the head and was found lying face-down on the ground after the Arabs had "normally" won the day. The Turks had been expecting an attack from the sea. Instead the Arabs rushed

"As public sympathy is desirable, we must try and enlist on our side a favourable press." Lawrence, writing home, after the capture of Aqaba.

Lawrence on camelback at Aqaba.

Lawrence at a Beduin camp during the Arab Revolt.

"He still looks absurdly boyish for twenty-nine," David Hogarth of Gaza in November 1917 when the French awarded Lawrence the Croix de Guerre.

their outposts from the north and swept down to the beach. Lawrence took the credit, in descriptions worthy of the Victoria Cross, if another British officer had witnessed events.

On one key date when he was in Aqaba, on 21 November 1917, to accompany Lieutenant-Colonel Pierce Joyce up Wadi Forns, Lawrence claimed to have been on an espionage mission behind enemy lines, when he was captured and flogged by soldiers in Deraa in the command of Hajim, the Turkish Bey.

The final contributions of the Arab Army began on 8 August 1918 when they turned inland and took Hodehara on the Hama Railway, with the capture of 120 trucks, two field guns and three machine guns. On 16 September they destroyed a

Example of a double-page spread.



Left: Lawrence in the guard-room at Miranshah, beside a rack of rifles, in 1928.