

Lt-Col Sir John Baynes, Bt

Lt-Col Sir John Baynes, 7th Bt, who has died aged 76, was a professional soldier, a successful hotel proprietor and a distinguished military historian. His first book, *Morale - A Study of Men and Courage* (1967), published when he was 39, is regarded as a classic of modern military history. In an attempt to discover how the British infantry in the First World War was able to retain its fighting morale in the face of terrible slaughter, he analysed the experience of a single battalion, the 2nd Cameronians (the Scottish Rifles) at the battle of Neuve Chapelle in 1915, the first serious British offensive of the war.

Baynes - who himself served with the Cameronians - judged the most important ingredient of high morale to be regimental spirit. Field Marshal Viscount Slim called the book "thorough, thoughtful and painstaking"; to the military historian Sir Basil Liddell it was "a really important contribution".

In 1968-69 Baynes held a defence fellowship at Edinburgh University, and wrote *The Soldier in Modern Society* (1971), which for many years was used as a textbook at Sandhurst; this work examined the character of the British soldier and his place in contemporary life. From 1969 to 1972 he commanded the 1st Battalion 52 Lowland Volunteers, but still managed, in 1970, to publish *The Jacobite Rising of 1715*.

John Christopher Malcolm Baynes was born in Bath on April 24 1928. His father, Sir Rory, was an Army officer; his mother, Audrey (née Giles), wrote short stories and published articles in *Blackwoods* magazine and *Country Life*. John went to Sedbergh, and although he secured a place at Trinity College, Oxford, to read Modern Languages, he opted instead for Sandhurst, following in his father's footsteps by being commissioned into the Cameronians (Scottish Rifles). Among his postings overseas, he particularly enjoyed his time in Malaya (1950-53); he was mentioned in dispatches.

Baynes commanded the Queen's Guard at Balmoral in 1964, and was second-in-command of the Cameronians when they were disbanded in 1968; he subsequently had more time to concentrate on his writing. He served with the Queen's Own Highlanders (Seaforth and Camerons) and commanded the 52nd Lowland Volunteers before leaving the Army in 1972.

In that year he became the joint proprietor, with Ruth Moir, of Lake Vyrnwy Hotel in mid-Wales, which he had first visited on a fishing holiday with his father just after the war. The dedication of the proprietors and staff of the hotel, as well as its stunning setting, were recognised by a Good Hotel Guide Cesar Award for Country House Hotel of the Year in 1986, just before the partners sold the property. Baynes and his wife, Shirley, continued to enjoy a close association with the hotel, helping to make the Lake Vyrnwy shoot one of the best on the Welsh Marches; they seldom missed a day's shooting there.

With George Westropp, Baynes wrote *Lake Vyrnwy - The Story of a Sporting Hotel* (1992), a history and a guide to the fishing and shooting offered by the estate.

In 1995 Baynes took issue with the actors Hugh Grant and Tara Fitzgerald after they had stayed at the hotel and invented rude names for the staff ("Fatty Breather" and "Serial Killer" were examples) and christened one the chef's dishes "Father Crusty's Underpants". "Perhaps Grant and Miss Fitzgerald have allowed their recent propulsion to a degree of fame to go to their heads and have forgotten their manners," Baynes thundered.

In retirement, Baynes -who had succeeded in the baronetcy on his father's death in 1979 - published a number of books, mainly of military history. Among them were the fourth and final volume of the Cameronians' regimental history; *Soldiers of Scotland* (1988); *The Forgotten Victor* (1989), a biography

of General Sir Richard O'Connor, who defeated the Italians in the Libyan desert in 1940 and 1941; No Reward but Honour? (1991); Urquhart of Arnhem (1993); Far From a Donkey: Gen Sir Ivor Maxse (1995); and For Love of Justice (1997), a biography of Major Derek Cooper, MC, who served with distinction in the Irish Guards and who advocated the rights of the Palestinians at a time when their plight was almost never questioned in the West.

Baynes also had a great love of poetry, particularly Kipling, Robert Burns and RS Thomas, and could quote at length from these and other poets from memory.

He served as county chairman for the Countryside Alliance in Montgomeryshire and was involved in a wide range of local organisations and charities.

John Baynes, who died on January 22, married, in 1955, Shirley Maxwell. She survives him, together with with their four sons, of whom the eldest, Christopher, born in 1956, succeeds in the baronetcy.