

WASC 1984

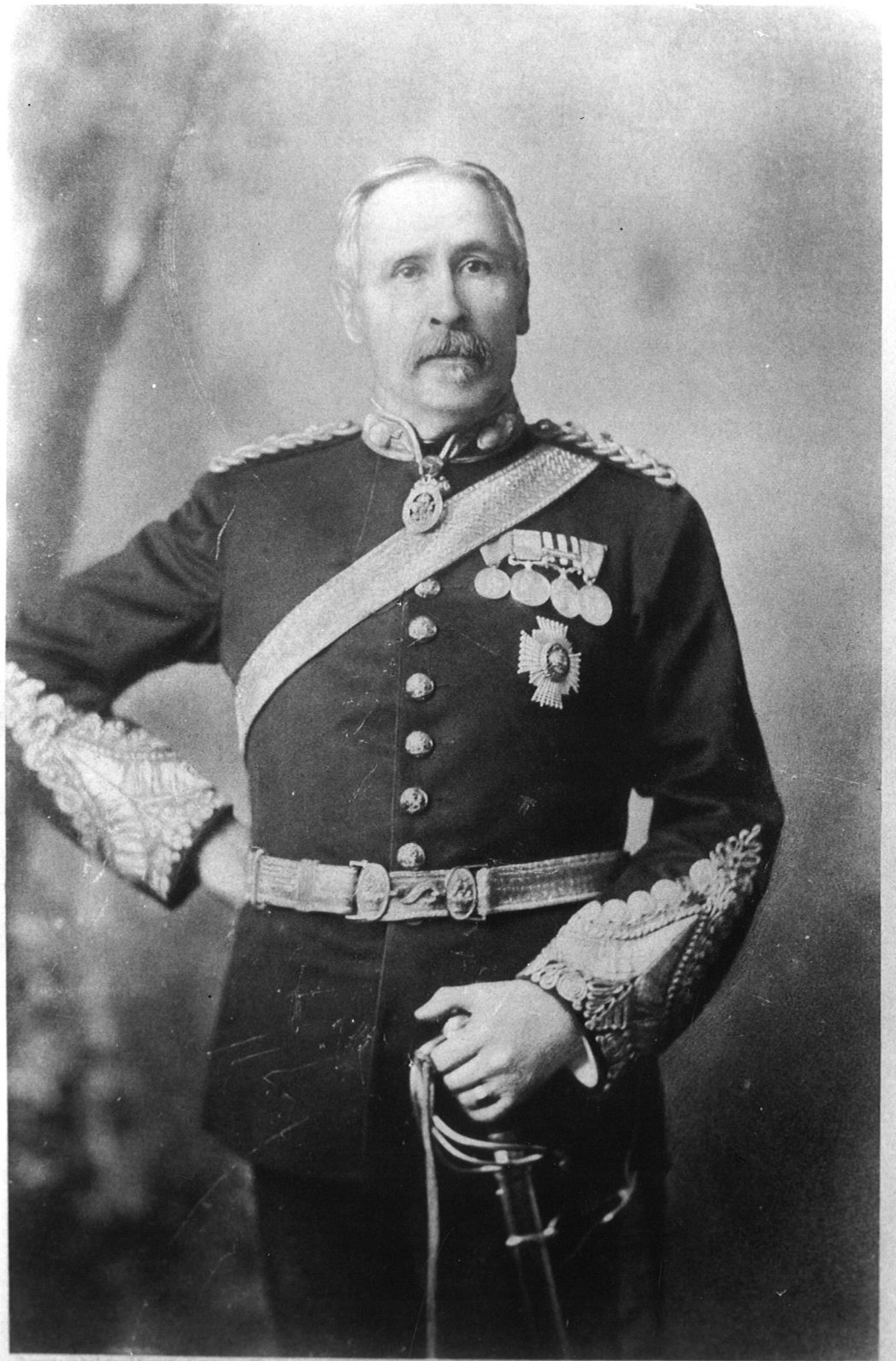
WAI 492 ●

Sir V. D. Majendie

Portrait 4

Obituary

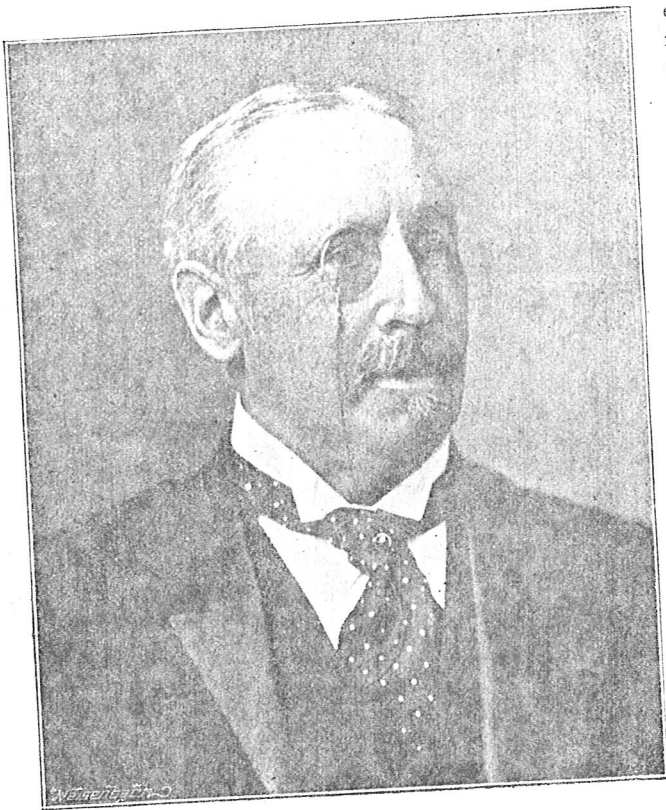
May 1998



*Vicente Dery Mayruder*

## THE LATE SIR VIVIAN MAJENDIE.

It came as a shock to the entire industry of explosives to read of the sudden death, at Oxford, on the 24th ult., of Colonel Sir Vivian D. Majendie, R.A., K.C.B. In the newspaper accounts which have referred to the late Chief Inspector of Explosives we read that he was born in 1836, that he entered the Royal Artillery in 1854, and that he was appointed Chief Inspector of Explosives in 1871, and further, that he saw a good deal of active service in the earlier part of his military career; but the daily newspapers say nothing of the single-minded thoroughness with which he carried on the daily routine of his work at the Home Office, dealing only, as they do, with the more sensational incidents of his career, when, for instance, at considerable risk to himself, he opened



THE LATE SIR VIVIAN MAJENDIE, K.C.B.  
From a photograph by Elliott & Fry, Baker Street, London, W.

an infernal machine which, for all he knew, might go off at any moment.

To those in the explosive trade, however, his ceaseless activity in the duties of inspection, the courtesy and fair-mindedness with which he carried out the stringent provisions of a highly complicated Act, will always remain among the keenest recollections of the past. Sir Vivian Majendie was the very best type of Government official, for he at all times recognised that trade interests must be considered even when departmental authority gave him the best excuse for disregarding such requirements. In no case, however, was the efficiency of his work allowed to suffer, whatever personal sympathies might suggest. He became Chief Inspector of Explosives when the Act first came into existence, and he has

continued in office ever since, and year by year his annual reports have shown a steady improvement in the conditions of what was originally a dangerous industry. The precautions which have been elaborated under his care are now such that the death-rate by accident in the entire trade is little more than eight a year, a proportion which will compare most favourably with the ordinary mechanical industries of the country. To judge by experience, one would say that Sir Vivian Majendie was never happier than when carrying on his work, for the indefatigable industry with which he replied to all correspondence, and held himself personally available wherever his presence would be advantageous, was a lesson such as many younger men could with advantage take to heart. Whenever he was approached with a view to the modification of such rules and regulations as seemed to bear with unnecessary hardness upon some section of the trade, he was always ready to receive representations upon the subject, and, wherever possible, he promptly introduced an Order in Council for remedying the ills which had grown up under changing conditions of trade.

Although so keen on all connected with his work, he by no means excluded the lighter interests of social enjoyment. Above all things, he took the greatest interest in the doings of a large circle of young friends. At the juvenile fancy dress balls at the Mansion House he was always the centre of a gay throng of children, whose playful intercourse with him showed that they were on the best of terms. An especial source of enjoyment to him was the personal interest he took in the choir boys of St. Paul's Cathedral, who collectively and individually looked upon him as their best friend. In photography he took the keenest delight, and the large amount of travelling which his work required gave him excellent opportunities for gratifying this taste.

However, as we said above, his loss in the trade will be felt on account of the enlightened manner in which he carried out a difficult task. His colleagues, Colonel Ford and Captain Thompson, will regret for a long time to come that his valuable experience and guiding knowledge is lost to the Explosives Department of the Home Office; but with such an example before them, we have no doubt that Colonel Ford, as Chief Inspector, and Captain Thompson, as second in command, will carry on the best traditions of the department which has grown up under the fostering care of their late Chief. They will be assisted in their work by Captain Cooper-Key, whose work at Woolwich in connection with the testing operations carried out under the provisions of the Coal Mines Regulation Act, will fit him for this increase in the scope of his work.

The portrait we give is an excellent likeness of the late Sir Vivian Majendie. It fully expresses, as so few portraits do, the alert and ever-ready look which was the most prominent characteristic of the original.

MR. H. J. HARRISS.—We understand that Mr. H. J. Harriss has recently severed his connection with the firm of Messrs. Joseph Lang & Son, and that he shortly intends to open premises where he will trade in his own name. Mr. Harriss has our very heartiest wishes for his success in the new venture. We are pleased to note that the members of the Surrey County Gun Club have elected to appoint Mr. Harriss as their armourer in the future, and arrangements are rapidly proceeding for equipping a new ground at Wimbledon Park.