

BULLETBROO

By *Sanners Gow*

It wiz a grey dreich mornin fin the bairn wiz born at Crichie. It hid been a fair chauve for the lassie, nearly thirty oors in labour and she wiz foonert. The doctor and the mid-wife hid been glentin at eenanither wi panic in their een. In the hinnereyn though the olive ile hid deen the trick and the bairn cam intae the world. A skelp on the doup and it startit tae skirl oot o it so that bit wiz aaricht. The lassie lay pechin wi the swyte fleein fae her. The doctor gave the wee laddie a quick gyan ower then turned awa fae the mither and fuspert tae the mid-wife "Big heed and imbecile- pit it in a pail!"

The mid-wife grabbit the bairn and said "Gweed saiks min ye canna dee that!" The doctor grumphed at her sayin, "It's better pittin it oot o its misery noo! Imagine gyan throwe life wi a broo like that lassie!"

Waikly the mither speired tae see her bairn and the mid-wife gave the bairn a wash an wupped it in a cosy shawl and handit him tae his mither. It wiz love at first sight. She bosied him and fuspert "Douglas!" for that wiz tae be his name, Douglas MacGregor aifter his faither.

The years passed and Douglas wint tae the skweel. A shy laddie wiz he and ayee tried tae hide his big broo eether aneth a bonnet or by swypin his hair doon ower his broo. He wiz really conscious aboot it and his fowks hid an affa job gettin him tae play wi ither bairns because they'd caa him names like "Big Heed, Neep, Brooie and sometimes "Look at the boy's broo!"

That usually garred Douglas pit his heed doon and charge. His first day at skweel wiz nae different. At play-time the bairns githered roon aboot him powkin at his broo and makkin fun o him. Douglas hid jist hid eneuch and gid for the geets like a rhino and in nae time there wiz nithing but bleed, snotters an eebroos aawye. His education lasted tae aboot the age o twal fin the skweel tellt his fowks they widna tak him ony langer and gave them a pass tae let him leave early.

Douglas wiz fair kinichtit at this. Forbyes he wiz seeck tae daith o bleachin fowk at the skweel for makkin fun o ees broo. He got a job fae his father in the ragstore he echt at Crichie so he vrocht awa getting bigger and stronger wi aa the wechts he'd tae lift ilka day. He ayee wore a big bunnet tae hide his broo so fair an by he got on weel as a rule. Ae day his father tellt him tae tak a cairt load o bales o rags tae the train at Mintlaw. The cairt wiz weel loadit so Douglas teen it canny throwe Aal Deer. It wiz the middle o summer so he strippet doon tae his sark and threw the bonnet on the seat aside him.

A puckle lads were makkin their wye hame fae Mintlaw. They'd been at the Market and hid a twa'r three drams and were in richt fine fettle. Fin they saw Douglas and the cairt comin along the narra road they steed tae ae side tae let him

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pass an that's fin the trouble startit. Ae lad pointed at Douglas an shouted, "For the love o God wid ye look at the size o that napper!"

The rest o the lads startit roarin wi laachter at this an makkin rale naisty comments about Douglas. Canny like Douglas stoppit the horse an pulled on the brake. He lookit roon at the lads and this garred them laach aa the louder. Ae lad shouted, "Come on then Big Heed!" and made a show o shadda boxin.

They thocht they were safe in numbers but that wiz a big mistak and some o them must've realised jist how big a mistak they'd made in the seconds afore Douglas's broo connected wi their mooths.

The years rolled on and by the age o twinty Douglas hid growed tae be weel ower sax fit wi a fine pair o shooders on him but of coorse his broo grew ana..

The Great War hid started about this time an Douglas like mony ither chiels answered the cry tae jine up. At the medical the doctor couldna believe the size o his broo an speired dizzens o questions aboot it. He even fessed ither doctors inaboot tae see it. This wiz beginnin tae pish Douglas aff big style but he kept his wheesht. Onyweye aifter aa the powkin an gyan, he wiz passed as A1 and jined the ranks o the Gordon Highlanders. There wiz that mony new recruits that a training camp hid been set up oot at the Black Dog firing range.

Kitted oot wi his uniform and big TOS bonnet (Tam o Shanter) he really lookit the pairt. At ower sax fit and braid at the shooders he lookit ivvery bit as a Scottish sodjer should. The Tam o Shanter on his heed and Douglas, bein a gweed lookin cheil if it wisna for the big broo, gid doon a treat amongst the weemin fowk at dances in Aiberdeen. Douglas teen tae this army cairry on like a jook tae water. Three gweed meals a day and the very best o rigg suited him doon tae the grun.

Aifter a fyowe fechts wi some o the ither recruits aboot his heed he wiz pretty much left alane. Naebody wiz sikkin tae eyn up in the sick bay nursin a burst mooth. That wiz until Sergeant Redress came. He wiz a complete shite-hoose o a man and gave them hell. He teen a richt dislike at Douglas and wid, at ivvery opportunity pick at him aboot his broo. It teen Douglas ivvery bit o self control nae tae stick the object o his jibes fair squarr in his big raik mooth for it wid mean sax months in the glaiss hoose if he mashed him.

Redress wiz a bully o the worst kine but Douglas bein, quick o wit renamed him Sergeant Reederse because he wint aboot in a bad mood like a sharny bull wi a reed erse hole. In nae time that's fit aa the recruits caad the bully bastard.

It wiz weel intae 1915 by the time Douglas and his mates arrived at the trenches and some sotter o gutters they proved tae be. It wiz a quate bit o the line though and apairt fae a fyowe shells lobbed ower fae the Germans ilka mornin it wisna ower dangerous. Ivvery nicht there'd be patrols sent oot tae spy oot the laan an mebbe tak back a prisoner or twa.

Ae nicht Douglas wiz in een o the patrols fin they waakit intae a squad o Jerries at work sortin some trench works. The fechtin started but there wisna time nor room tae use their rifles so it wiz haan tae haan, rifle butts or using entrenchin tools in a vicious bloody fecht. Douglas used his broo tae gweed effect and the Jerries didna

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staan a chance. Flares gid up fae the German lines followed by the rat tat tat o machine guns jist lettin rip at onything.

Sergeant Reederse gaed gyte and teen a dose o the screamin abbdabbs. Tae save him fae rinnin intae the enemy machine guns he'd tae be held doon and Douglas got the chunce tae land a weel overdue blatt tae his face tae quaiten him. Returning tae the British lines they handed ower the unconscious Sergeant Reederse tae the medics tellin them he must've teen shell-shock.

Things were gan nae ower bad for Douglas until the army startit tae phase in the soup plate steel helmet. Ye could only weer the TOS bunnet at the rear; in the trenches ye'd tae wear the soup plate. Douglas got the biggest yin that ye could get but wi his big broo he lookit like a bamstick w't cockit on tap o ees napper. His big broo wiz tae the Jerries like claiggs tae horse shite and shoosers o bullets came at him finivver he showed his heed abeen the parapet. It got that bad his comrades avoided him like the plague.

The German even named him 'Grossa Brow' and promised the man that got him an Iron Cross 1st class and a months leave in the flesh pots o Berlin. This drew officers and men fae aa pairs o the front tae try their luck. The fine quate bit o the line became like Aiberdeen's Union Street on a Saiturday nicht.

Douglas' comrades near gid tae mutiny so Douglas wiz teen oot o the front line an wiz given vrocht deein orra jobs like clearin latrines or takkin up rations tae the trenches. Slowly the quate bit o front returned tae normal. The Prussian officers packed up their pre-war hunting rifles and the ither troops wint back tae their ain sectors.

Douglas wiz sortin throwe timmer sticks ae day fin he lookit up and saa a Jerry sodjer standin aboot twinty feet fae him. The Jerry wiz a wee runt o a man but he managed tae shout oot "GROSSA BROW!" and fired his rifle. The bullet hut Douglas richt on the broo and he gid doon. The wee Jerrie ran up tae him and teen his pey-book as proof o daith and ran aboot shoutin, "Whoopee whoopee Berlin hooers for me!"

His name wiz Vulltums Croint fae Hamburg and he'd been on his wye tae surrender tae the British because he wiz seeck o war fin he'd spotted Douglas. Noo he Vulltums Croint wid be a hero wi an Iron Cross 1st class on his breest and the whores in the 'Vinkle Strassa' in Berlin wid be hingin aff him.

A file aifter Douglas waakened wi a splittin heedache in a casualty clearing station. The doctor says, "Yer waakened?" Douglas managed a painful nod.

"Yer a lucky man. If that bullet hidna been a spent round then it wid've been tatties ower the side for you!"

Douglas mined on the doctor back hame bein affa interested in his broo so he replied, "Aye doctor I'm lucky richt eneuch!"

He didna ken fit he'd say if he tellt him the bullet hid been fired feet awa. But on that he keepit his gob shut.

Meanwhile Vulltums Croint wiz hooerin in Berlin, his shiny new Iron Cross 1st class on his breest. As for Douglas he wiz kept at the casualty clearin station for a

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couple o weeks, nae because he needed it- he wiz as fit as a flea. It wiz because o the doctor. He'd teen an affa interest in Douglas' broo and invited ither doctors tae come and see it.

In the hinner eyn Douglas got seek o the cairry on and returned tae duty. This startit aff a richt chyne o events. First Douglas wiz spotted by a German officer and this led tae a signal tae Berlin sayin that 'Grossa Brow' was still alive. Next Vulltums Croint wiz trailed awa fae his whores skirlin an yowlin. A week later at dawn Vulltums Croint wiz sent tae his maker. His last word wiz "FOOKERS!"

Aroon this time the German army started tae gie their troops the coal skuttle steel helmet and Douglas wiz guardin a puckle prisoners fin he noticed een o the Jerries weerin een. An idea came tae him and aifter a fair bit o hagglin he managed tae get the helmet fae the Jerry for a packet o fags and a tin o bullybeef.

Oot o sicht o abody he tried it on back tae front. The lang scoop bit at the back covered his broo as bonny as ye like. He'd get back tae the front wi this!

A fyowe weeks later Douglas got separated fae his squad while on a nicht patrol. He'd nae a clue faar he wiz and daylight wiz comin up by the time he reached fit he thocht wiz his ain bit o the line. He stood up an startit tae rin towards his ain trenches wavin his airms aboot tae let them ken he wiz British. An officer jist happened tae be lookin throwe a trench periscope viewer fin he saw fit lookit a German rinnin backwards towards the British lines an wavin his airms aboot so he ordered "Stand to!" and abody started shootin.

The Jerries meanwhile saa fae their perspective fit lookit like a German rinnin backwards towards the British lines wavin his airms in surrender so they startit shootin ana. Wi the amount o lead fleein at him it wiz only a maitter o time afore he got hit and that's exactly fit happened. A bullet clipped the underside o the helmet and tracked roon the inside piercin baith his lugs and makin a track across his broo as it spun roon an roon afore the reed hett bullet stopped and drapped doon the back o his neck.

He wiz brocht hame tae Crichie as an invalid because he couldna hear a thing for the ringin in his lugs. Aabody thocht he'd become dumpish because the only sounds he could mak wiz "blaaaah or Ooooo!"

This laisted till 1927 until he got hut on the heed wi a tattie fin a fairm cheil threw it shoutin "Look at that lad's broo an twa half luggies!"

Fae that day on he wiz as richt as rain and aifter blooterin the tattie thrower he gaed hame a happy man. Douglas wiz kent for the rest o his days as 'Bullet Broo' but nae tae his face ye understaan!