

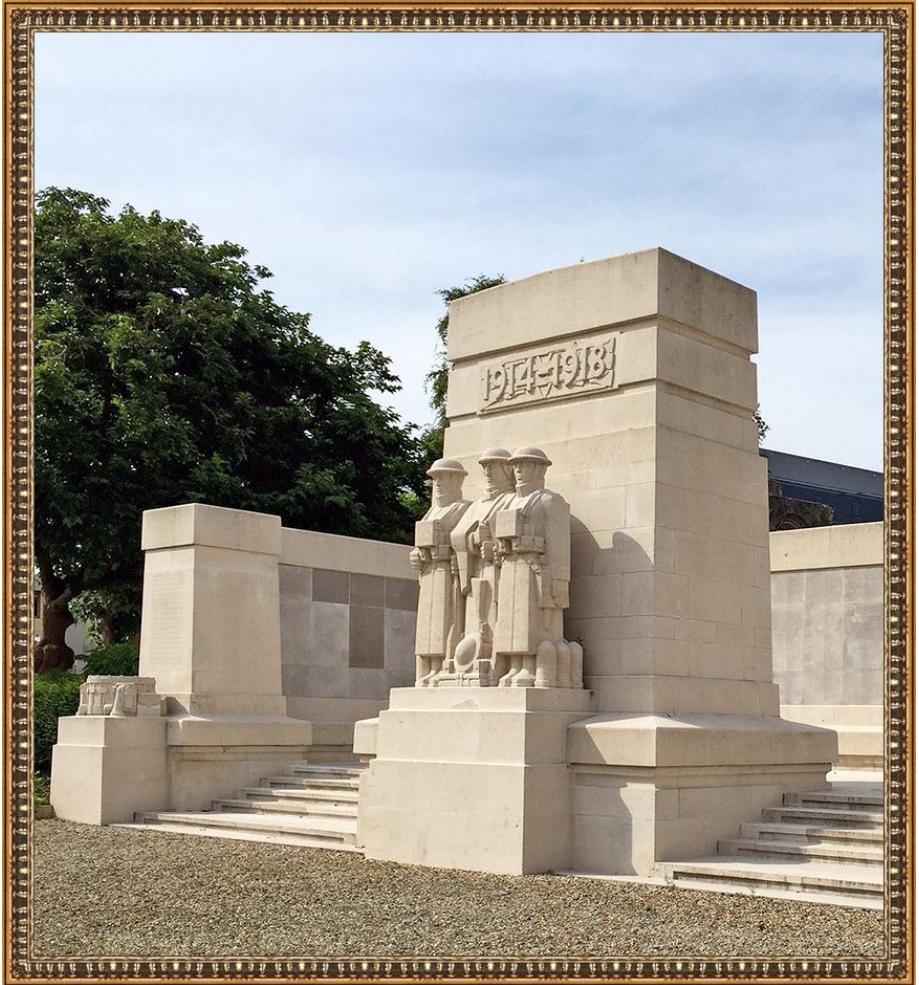


THE WESTERN FRONT
ASSOCIATION

Lancashire North Branch

Despatch

Issue 21: May 2018



The Soissons Memorial (above & page 19) commemorates the missing of the United Kingdom in the Battles of the Aisne and Marne in 1918 and on Page 2 is the story of the 2nd Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment that fought there helping the French regain land they had lost to the Germans. Also read inside about a “Non-Ducker” who was wounded multiple times and gained the VC; another Kentish tale describing an incident in the Advance to Victory; the Distinguished Service Cross; the South Lancashire’s experiences fighting in Salonika; learned Professors and Doctors telling how the war was won in 1918 and more.

Editor's Musing

"The tide turns" was the phrase that occurred to me describing the combined effect of articles in this Despatch. The articles do not appear in the correct sequence but 55th Division's efforts in holding the German attack on 9th April (Linesman, Page 23); 2nd Loyal's helping to turn the Germans in the Marne salient (across); actions described in the 100 days (Page 21) and 9th South Lancs' contribution to the Bulgarian's capitulation described on Page 18 fits the phrase. The "Timeline" at Page 14 lists all the events as they occurred.

Over the past few months my efforts in digitising all Numbers of *Stand To!* as searchable PDFs have been made available to all WFA members via the Association's website. In the May 2015 Despatch (page 27) I mentioned how this would improve the utility of our prestigious publication. I hope Despatch readers take advantage of the ability to download STs for research purposes or to carry them on your tablet for browsing/reading.

Finally I need to remind readers of Despatch who attend meetings of the North Lancashire Branch that this is the penultimate Issue of Despatch which I will produce and hopefully a replacement Editor will emerge to take-over from me after next November's Issue. I am very grateful to those who have submitted articles to me since the first Despatch in May 2008, especially the regular contributors and hope I will have no shortage of material for a special November 2018 Issue.

(+P) or (+S) after article title indicates more photos in Photo Gallery or Supplementary Report on our website www.wfanlancs.co.uk

Articles are by Editor unless stated otherwise.

TO SEE DESPATCH WITH LARGER TYPE AND PHOTOS IN COLOUR VIEW ON OUR WEBSITE

SECOND BATTLE OF THE MARNE 1918: Lieutenant Colonel Charles Edward Arthur Jourdain and Private William Cowell 2nd Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment



In the May 2013 Despatch was an article about the WW1 photograph album of **Captain William Parker** of the 2nd Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment (2LNL). The album

contains originals and copies of photographs that depict the experiences of the Battalion in WW1. 2LNL were in India when the war started then served in East Africa for over two years before moving to Egypt at the end of December 1916 to recover from their East African experiences.

At the beginning of 1918 2LNL was pronounced medically fit for active service and moved to Palestine. The Battalion organised concert parties and other entertainment

when photos of the "Old Bill" impersonation were taken, one of which formed the frontispiece for Issue 11. However, following the German's 21



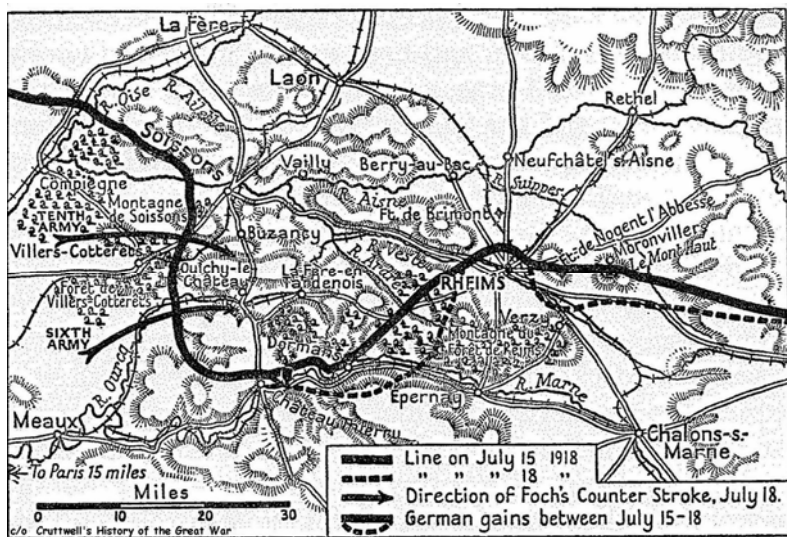
March offensive in France, 23 British infantry battalions were withdrawn from Palestine and 2LNL sailed from Port Said in the hired transport "Huntspill" reaching Marseilles on 26th May 1918. 2LNL was initially in 31st Division but in late June was transferred to 101st Brigade in 34th Division. The Division had undergone a major reorganisation and on 2nd July marched from Herzeele to Proven

where training was carried out and its organisation was completed.

On 15th July the Germans commenced their attacks in what became known as the Second Battle of the Marne. Ludendorff was convinced the war could best be won by an attack in Flanders and his objective in launching the second Marne offensive was to lure Allied forces from Belgium in a huge diversionary attack preparatory to a renewed offensive to capture the Channel ports. However the French had knowledge of the impending attack and adjusted their defensive tactics. The German's attack pushed back the French east and south-west

from Villers Cotterets was the road south from Soissons to Chateau Thierry via Oulchy-le-Chateau thereby cutting off German supplies in the salient. Mangin's attack commenced on 18th July.

2LNL reached Senlis by the 18th July where the Division concentrated then marched to Puisieux (5 km. north of Villers Cotterets) arriving early morning on the 21st July. The following extract from the 34th Division History sets the scene for a summary of three major actions undertaken by 2LNL in the next 11 days based on the Regimental History and a report in 2LNL's War Diary:



“On the 21st orders were received to relieve the 38th French Division in the line opposite Hartennes (see map overleaf) the next day, and before this was commenced came orders to take part in an attack early on the following day, 23rd July.

of Rheims but could not break through.

On 16th July, 34th Division was one of four British divisions sent to aid the French (the others being 15th, 51st and 62nd divisions) who were also supported by 85,000 American troops.

Foch decided his response to the German attack should be to launch his planned offensives to remove the German salient between Soissons and Rheims which extended south to the Marne at Chateau Thierry. A particular objective for General Mangin's Tenth Army attacking eastward

Under the most favourable circumstances this would have been difficult for any troops, but for a newly-constituted division, composed, as regards infantry, of troops which had not yet been in action in France, and which had just completed a trying movement by rail, bus and route march, it was a very severe test. There was no time for reconnaissance; the country was entirely new; there were no organized trench systems on either side. The enemy positions were never actually known till they had been captured. To all these difficulties there were

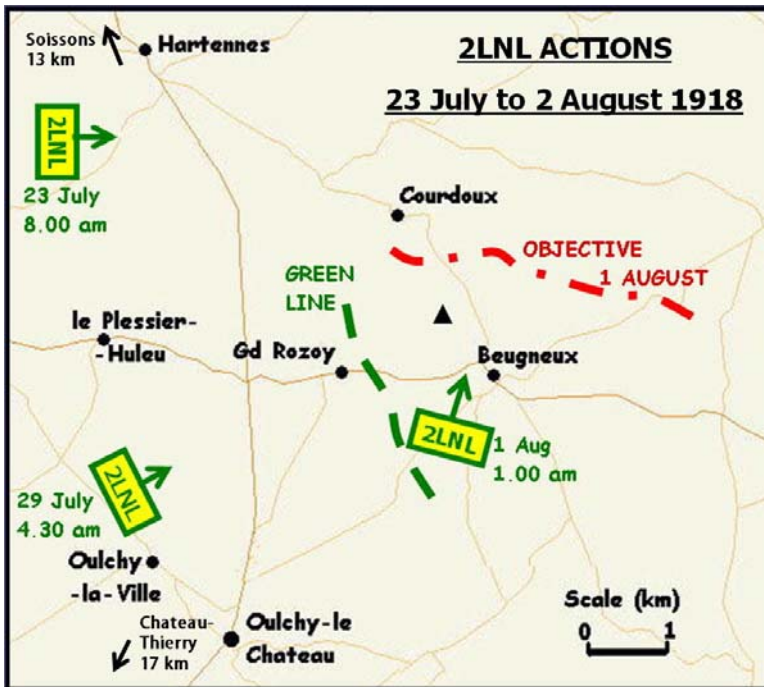
added those inseparable from acting for the first time with foreign troops."

On the night of 22/23rd July 34th Division completed the relief of the French opposite Hartennes at 1.00 am on 23rd. 101st Brigade held the right half sector, 102nd Brigade held the left with 103rd Brigade held in divisional reserve. In the 101st Brigade 2LNL was on the right, the 2/4th Queen's on the left. In 2LNL "C" and "D" Companies were on the right and left of the front line respectively, with "A" in support of "C" and "B" in support of "D".

one minute of the advance commencing. In the meantime "D" Company went forward on the left of 2LNL and covered the right of the Queen's to within 600 yards of the Hartennes-Chateau Thierry road; the company drove in the enemy's advanced machine guns, but the Germans, counter-attacking at about 9.30, forced back the Queen's on to "D" Company's left, obliging that company to retire also, having suffered some sixty casualties.

For the rest of the morning the enemy maintained very heavy gun and trench mortar fire on 2LNL causing some seventy casualties. In the afternoon the two front-line companies were ordered back to battalion reserve and replaced with "A" and "B" companies.

On the night of 27th/28th July 34th Division including 2LNL were relieved in the front line and immediately set to work preparing for an attack next day in the Oulchy le Chateau area some 5 miles to the south. At 4.30 am on 29th July the



The direction of the advance was to be due east; the artillery preparation was to last for ten minutes, the attack commencing on the barrage lifting.

At eight o'clock "C" Company's first wave advanced, but after going forward for some fifty yards it was practically wiped out, the survivors falling back under heavy enemy machine-gun fire and an artillery barrage which came down on the front trench within

Division advanced in a north-easterly direction from its start position north of Oulchy-le Chateau behind a heavy rolling barrage. The objective was Grand Rozoy ridge to the north-west beyond Grand-Rozoy and Beugneux. 34th Division was disposed with 103 Brigade on the right and 101 Brigade on the left. In 101 Brigade the 4th Sussex was on the right, 2/4th Queen's on the left and 2LNL were in brigade reserve.

The "Green Line" was taken with little difficulty but moving beyond the Beugneux-Grand Rozoy road heavy machine gun fire was encountered. "B" and "D" companies and Battalion HQ of 2LNL apparently went to the left to support the Queens, encountered considerable opposition and Lieut Col Jourdain was killed about 7.40 am. Meanwhile by this time Captain G. P. Atkinson with "A" and "C" Companies though in support of the Royal Sussex had, in the stress of battle, seized the crest of the hill north-west of Beugneux. By 10.20 am the French 25th Division had occupied Grand Rozoy but efforts to capture Beugneux failed. When a German counter-attack was mounted the final outcome of the day's action was the French were pushed out of Grand Rozoy and the British pushed back to the west of the Grand Rozoy to Beugneux road.

On 30th July the French re-occupied Grand Rozoy at 6.00 am and 2LNL was temporarily placed in divisional reserve. 2LNL's strength was no more than six officers and 230 other ranks but stragglers gradually rejoined and on 31st Captain Taylor joined with eighty men from the Divisional Reinforcement Camp

At 1.00 a.m. on 1st August 2LNL moved into action again with 101 Brigade overcoming considerable opposition in the woods north of the Grand Rozoy-Beugneux road. Following fierce fighting with bayonets the crest of the ridge near the objective was seized by 6.00 a.m. and at 7 p.m. under a creeping barrage the line was pushed forward a further 300-400 yards to gain complete command of ground.

During the night that followed the enemy fell back quietly under cover of a thick fog, and on the 2nd August the 25th French Division passed through the depleted ranks of the 34th and pursued the Germans, now in full retreat. The 34th Division was then withdrawn to the rear, and by the night of the

4th, the Battalion was disposed in billets in Ormoy Villiers.

The Division had been in the line since the night of the 22nd-23rd July, and had in that time fought three general actions losing 153 officers and 3,617 other ranks killed, wounded and missing. To this total the Battalion had contributed its full share, having lost from the 22nd July to the 3rd August three officers and 76 other ranks, killed or died of wounds, wounded fourteen officers and 318 men, and thirty-two men missing - a total casualty list of 443.

A search of Commonwealth War Grave records for 22 July to 3 August 1918 gives 100 reports for 2nd Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment of which 2 are officers. One of the three officers in the previous paragraph is Captain R V Taylor of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. 22 are remembered on the Soissons Memorial to the missing (see page 19)

In addition to a short piece about Lieutenant Colonel Jourdain I thought it appropriate to remember a Private and my selection criteria were that he should be from Preston and his service record is available. Private William Cowell is the first Prestonian on my date ordered spreadsheet, his service record is on Ancestry and his photograph resides in the Harris library newspaper archive.

**Lieutenant
Colonel Charles
Edward Arthur
Jourdain:**

Was born 7 May 1869, son of Rev F Jourdain and Mrs E Jourdain. He was educated at Sandhurst and



entered service on 22nd August 1888, joining the 1st Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regt at Mhow, India. On the outbreak of the South

African War, he went with the battalion to Cape Town and took part in the Battles of Belmont, Enslin, Modder River and Magersfontein. He then commanded the Mounted Infantry Company of his regiment and took part in the relief of Kimberley, The battles of Paareberg, Dreifontein, Zand River, Johannesburg, capture of Pretoria and Diamond Hill. He served throughout the whole war from start to finish, and was only absent for one short period of ten days through malaria in 1901.

He went home with his battalion in 1902 serving at Devonport and the Curragh, and later was Adjutant of his battalion and also commanded the Depot at Preston. From there he moved to the 2nd Battalion at Mauritius and with them served at Poona and Bangalore.

He was promoted to command the 2nd Battalion in December 1913 and on outbreak of WW1 took the battalion to East Africa. In the action of Tanga he displayed great resource and bravery, and it was mainly through the fine stand made by his battalion that the force was able to re-embark and make good its retirement. He remained in East Africa for over three years and then proceeded to Egypt and Palestine still in command of his battalion. Although his four years' command of the battalion terminated in December 1917 he preferred to remain with his battalion and at the time of his death had nearly completed 30 years service.

A few words written about him in "The Lancashire Lad" by those who served with him:-

"Jourdain's testament consisted of five

words: Common sense, originality and brains. No conversation or lecture of his was complete without the remark; we must have brains not eyewash.

The bravest officer I ever met in peace and war, who taught me that guts, initiative and resource are just as important in peace as in war."



Private 40369 William Cowell: Was born May 1895, youngest son of Edward Cowell of Stourton Street, Preston. Prior to attestation on 27 October 1914 he worked in a cotton mill as a weaver.

Initially in the Army Service Corps (T/35988) as a driver he sailed from Avonmouth to Alexandria in early March 1915 and was posted to Base H.T. (Horse Transport) Depot. On 22 May 1915 he transferred to the Adv. (Advanced) H.T. Depot Cape Helles. On 7 July 1915 he was at No 11 Casualty Clearing Station and on 9 September he arrived in England.

On 10 November 1916 he embarked Southampton and via le Havre arrived Salonika on 12 December 1916. He was posted to 520 Company 60th Division Train (wheeled transport). In June 1917 the Division was reorganised prior to a move to Egypt and Pte. Cowell joined 864 Company (pack animals). He disembarked Alexandria on 25 June and on 19 July joined the 3rd Yeomanry Mounted Divisional Train. From October to the end of 1917 he had periods in hospital for foot problems and in early 1918 was compulsorily transferred to the 2LNL.



Men of 2nd Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regt – Somewhere in France 1918

GALLANT, GRACEFUL. GENTLE, TALL.
FAIREST, NOBLEST, BEST OF ALL
- 2nd Lieut A Copley Manchester Regt

SIR ADRIAN CARTON DE WIART V.C.,
K.B.E., C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O. (+S)



Last October Maggie Izzard, a portrait painter and wife of my friend who has narrated in all my WW1 presentations, drew my attention to the portrait of the Sir Adrian Carton

De Wiart (CdW) by Sir William Orpen. Having viewed it at the National Portrait Gallery she mentioned the extensive military history behind the gentleman and suggested I might be interested in writing about him.

My preliminary searches revealed many 'hits' for him on Google whilst "Stand To!" contained just 3 minor mentions to him as a V.C. holder (STs 33, 48 and 82), with a fourth in Trevor Harvey's study of Brigadiers in 1917 (ST 109) reporting CdW replaced a Brigadier 15 years his elder who had been promoted beyond his capabilities and experience. His entry in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography by E T Williams, revised by Gary Sheffield indicated his "career in the First World War was legendary. Severely wounded eight times."

From these searches, battalion war diaries, unit histories and reading his memoirs/autobiography "*Happy Odyssey*" I have been able to identify more detail of his WW1 activities relating to Lancashire regiments and particular individuals. What follows is my WW1 focussed story of him.

Also and significant, Trevor Harvey's study referred to above led me to an essay

by E D R Harrison entitled "An Absolute Non-Ducker": Carton de Wiart in the Great War" in the Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research 91 (2013). Harrison points out his article draws on public and private papers to show that de Wiart played down or omitted from his autobiography much that was to his credit, a stark example is that he does not mention being awarded the VC. Some points from the essay are after the "World War 1" part of this article.

Early Years

CdW was born in Brussels on 5th May 1880. He was educated at the Oratory School Edgbaston from 1891 and in January 1899 went to Balliol College, Oxford but ran away later that year. He enlisted in Paget's Horse giving a false name and age and 'Trooper Carton' was severely wounded fighting the Boers. His real identity was revealed and he returned to Balliol in 1900, but he did not complete his studies there. He went back to South Africa with the Imperial Light Horse where he got to know Tom Bridges, and in 1901 he obtained a regular commission in the 4th Dragoon Guards (4DG).

After service in India (1902-4), he was aide-de-camp to **Sir Henry Hildyard**, Commander-in-Chief, South Africa (1904-8) and from 1910 to 1914 he was adjutant of a yeomanry unit, the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars.



In the summer of 1914 he was attached to the camel corps in Somaliland, in operations against Mohammed bin Abdullah. In November he was wounded in an eye, which had to be removed in January 1915 on his return to England; thereafter his black eyepatch was a distinguishing feature. For his service in Somaliland he was appointed to the DSO.

World War 1

He crossed to France in February 1915 to join 4DG commanded by Major Arthur Solly Flood who became Colonel of the South Lancashire Regiment in 1921 (see November 2013 Despatch, Issue 12). The first entry for him in 4DG's War Diary is for 9th May 1915. That day at 2.30 am 4DG moved from the billets at Meteren, left their horses near Ypres and by 1.00 pm were in dugouts at Potijze where they were shelled for the remainder of the day. At 6.30 pm they got orders to relieve infantry at 11.00 pm in front line trenches along the Zonnebeke Road. CdW, Major Sewell and Capt Gallaher were told by an Infantry Staff Captain to walk up the Zonnebeke Road until they met him and according to 4DG's Diary *"through disgraceful staff work ...ran into a German outpost at 20 yards range and were heavily fired upon. Capt de Wiart wounded and very narrow escape for all".*

CdW had very serious injuries to his left hand and when a doctor refused to remove his fingers he says *"I pulled them off myself"*.



His hand was eventually removed in December 1915 and shortly after he was visited in hospital by **Tom Bridges**, an ex-comrade in 4DG. Bridges had gained fame by

"mobilizing" with tin whistles and drums two infantry battalions prepared to surrender at St Quentin in the retreat from Mons and was to be the new Commander of 19 Division. According to CdW he was offered a job in 19 Division by Bridges which spurred his recovery sufficient to pass a Medical Board and rejoined 4DG near Boulogne but soon after was posted as second in command of 7 Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment

(7LNL) in 56 Brigade of Tom Bridges' 19 Division.

7LNL, commanded by Lieut Col Monty Hill, were in reserve positions west of Neuve Chapelle when he joined them on 26th March 1916 and over the coming weeks he gained



Capt W H F Maule, GSO2

To CdW in Poland

experience of life in the infantry learning from Monty Hill and **Captain Maule**. In

mid April 7LNL moved towards the Somme training as they went and on 16th June CdW left

them to take command of 8

Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment (8Glos) in Bridges' 57 Brigade.

The attacks launched on 1st July failed to capture la Boiselle and in the early hours of 3rd July 19 Division joined the action. Early evening on 3rd with very confusing reports Tom Bridges went forward to view the situation and reports in his book "Alarms and Excursions - The Reminiscences of a Soldier" *'had a talk with Carton de Wiart. Two commanding officers had been killed and two wounded so I placed the whole of troops in the village under his command...By eight next morning the place was reported clear of the enemy but soon began a series of counter-attacks...at 12.30 pm the situation was desperate..... Had the line given it is probable that the enemy would have recaptured the whole of the village. That he did not do so was, according to eye-witnesses, due to the gallantry of Carton de Wiart who led his men from one danger point to another, himself bombing the enemy with gusto out of their positions. By the late afternoon the whole village was again in our hands. I recommended him for the V.C.'* This was posted in the London Gazette on 12th September 1916. David Scott Daniel's "Story of the Gloucestershire Regiment tells of de

Wiat *'tearing out the safety-pins of bombs with his teeth, and hurling the bombs at the enemy with his one hand'* and the men called him "Nelson" because of his black eye patch.

On 6th July 8Glos were in billets in Albert having incurred over 300 casualties and on 22nd July CdW led them on an unsuccessful attack at High Wood when they incurred a further 200 casualties including CdW who was shot through the head. He was evacuated to London where it was established a bullet had gone through the back of his head without touching a vital part and on 12th September he rejoined 8Glos in trenches at Messines. Shortly after 8Glos moved south towards the Somme and on 27th September Gen Plumer presented CdW with his VC ribbon. On 26th October when 8Glos were in trenches near Stuff Redoubt (NE of Thiepval) they were heavily shelled and CdW was hit in the ankle by a shell fragment which again required his evacuation to London.

After recovery he briefly commanded 8 Battalion North Staffordshire Regiment (in 57 Brigade) before being promoted Brigadier-General on 11th January 1917 to command 12 Brigade in 4 Division. Under his command he had two Lancashire battalions the 1/King's Own Royal Lancaster (1KORL) and 2/Lancashire Fusiliers (2LF) as well as 2/Duke of Wellington's (2DoW) and 2/Essex (2Ess). When appointed, his Brigade was in reserve near Bray and their first major action was in the Battle of Arras which commenced on 9th April 1917 when they successfully attacked capturing Fampoux. The Brigade then spent a period in trenches at Monchy-le-Preux before fighting in the Battle of Poelcappelle in October after which they returned to the Arras sector. On 23rd November he was seriously wounded in the hip on returning to his HQ after visiting the trenches and was hospitalised for 3 months.

On 7th April 1918 CdW was appointed to command 105 Brigade in 35 Division who were in the line near Aveluy Wood north of

Albert. The Division has figured in three of my presentations and this caused me to ponder how he was viewed by Brigadier General Sandilands ('Sandy' as I have come to know him) who commanded 104 Brigade in the Division from April 1916 until the War's end. However his stay was short with 105 Brigade since on 19th April he nearly lost a leg when wounded again whilst walking along the road near Martinsart. He returned to France just before the war ended and on 19 November took command of 113th Brigade in 38 Division.

'An Absolute Non-Ducker': Carton de Wiat in the Great War by E.D.R. Harrison

De Wiat was a thoughtful and innovative commander who placed an emphasis on physical training (PT). He always tried to keep himself extremely fit and made this a priority for any troops under his command. When with 8Glos most mornings, after PT or running, would follow a route march, bayonet practice or a tactical exercise. He took a very lively interest in every company and platoon. The morale of the battalion by the end of June 1916 had reached a new peak and de Wiat had won such influence over his battalion they would follow him anywhere; his exemplary bravery inspired his battalion.

He could not abide what he called "bumpf war". When commanding a brigade at Arras, if long and voluminous orders for the next attack were received he read them through, questioned the gunners or other specialists then deliberately tore up the orders and sent for his battalion commanders; a ten minute conference; a few clear verbal orders from him; and it was all over. Imminent battle called for terse clarity, not self-justifying paper records.

Commanding a brigade marked a watershed in de Wiat's military style. Although he continued to lead by example, he now supplemented this with a determination to secure the interests of his

men by pointing out errors in command and tactics and suggesting improvements.

Post WW1

Subsequently he went to Poland as second-in-command of the British military mission, succeeding to command in 1919 after the death of Louis Botha in 1919. The Military Mission ended on 31 March 1923 and CdW resigned his commission in 1924 and spent the inter-war years shooting duck in the Pripet Marshes from a house lent to him by Prince Charles Radziwill, his last Polish aide-de-camp.

He resumed his old mission in Poland in July 1939 but on defeat of the Polish forces by the invading Germans he returned to England via Romania. In April 1940 he commanded the central Norwegian Expeditionary Force and extracted his force when the Germans successfully invaded. In April 1941 he was captured by the Italians when the aircraft transporting him to Yugoslavia to set up a mission there was shot down. He then busied himself attempting to escape and on one occasion eluded capture for eight days. In April 1943 the Italians dispatched him to Lisbon to aid negotiations that led to Italy's withdrawal from the war.

In October 1943 Churchill sent him to China as his personal representative and he

eventually retired to England in 1946 having broken his back in Rangoon en route home. He was appointed KBE in 1945 and died at his home in Ireland on 5 June 1963.

A copy of his Obituary in the Times on 6 June 1963 is a Supplement to this Despatch on our website.

**HE SLEEPS WITH ENGLAND'S HEROES
IN THE WATCHFUL CARE OF GOD
- Corporal J Dutton East Yorkshire
Regiment**

BRIGADIER GENERAL REGINALD JOHN KENTISH (RJK) & HIS 8th TALE - "FOUR UP AND EIGHT TO PLAY"!



R J Kentish

In November 2013's Despatch I told of my visit to the Imperial War Museum to view the papers of RJK and my discovery of stories (tales) he had drafted around

1940. They described amusing incidents he experienced in WW1 and this is the eight tale.

"FOUR UP AND EIGHT TO PLAY"!
(An incident in the Great War 1914-18, and not without its interest in these days of the 'delayed action' bomb in World War 2)

SCENE: TIME: PLACE: The Brigade Headquarters in a small house, the only one standing, in the village of Cysoing, a mile or two west of the River Dendre, only just evacuated by the Germans, every other building having been laid in ruins before evacuation.

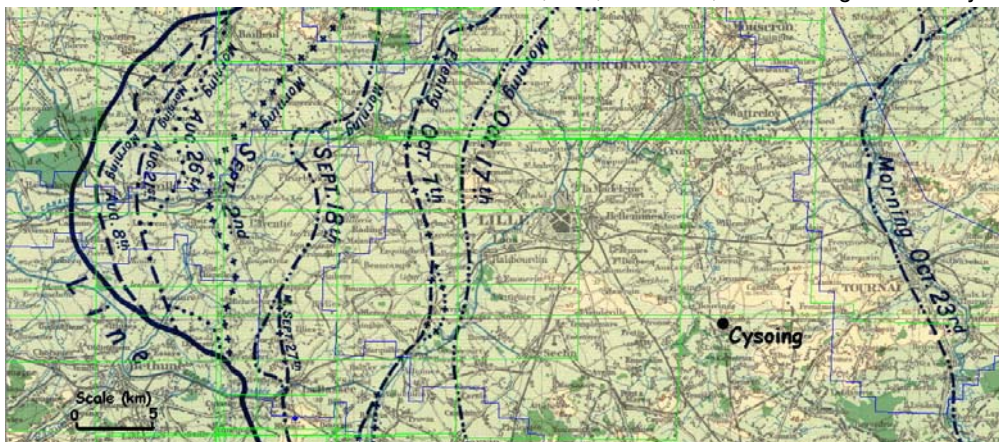
DRAMATIS PERSONAE: Major General (later Lieut. General Sir) H. S. Jeudwine, commanding the 55th (West Lancashire) Division, and Major Harry Milner D.S.O., his A.D.C.; the Headquarter Staff of the 166th Infantry Brigade, including Captain Jones, my



Nov. 1943 Cairo Conference with DeWiaart, right spent the rest of the war in Chungking except when attending conferences elsewhere. He

Staff Captain and myself, commanding the Brigade.

It was the beginning of the end, sometime in October 1918, when the 'Huns' were going back beaten - literally beaten - to the wide, wide world, and the 166th Infantry Brigade, which I was commanding at the time, had reached the line of the River Dendre, and having established my outpost line along the West bank, joining up with the 165th Brigade of the same (55th West Lancashire) Division, on my right and a Brigade of the 74th Division then commanded Major General Eric S. Girdwood, an old friend, on my left, I returned to my ruined village and when I say 'ruined' I mean it, for the 'Huns' had systematically destroyed every single building except one small house standing all by itself, which was completely untouched, in which my Staff Captain had put Brigade Headquarters.



As I came into the house, Jones told me that the Divisional Commander had only just left, having looked in to see me on his way back, and had told him to tell me that he thought I was most unwise to put my H.Q. in the small house, as it was quite obvious that the 'Huns' had mined it, hoping that an Officer of high rank would 'take the bait'.

As a matter of fact Jones told me that, 'Judy', as he was known throughout the Division, walked away, and before he was

out of earshot, he heard him say to Harry Milner, his devoted A.D.C., who accompanied him on every one of his visits to the line, no matter what the time of the day or night, or how heavy the shelling: "Well, I think Kentish is a _____ fool, to put his H.Q. in that house. It's 100 to 1 that the 'Huns' have mined it!"

However, Jones told me that the Special Detachment - at that time every Brigade, in touch with the retreating enemy, had a party of R.E's, whose special job it was to search for and dispose of mines, and every kind of 'Hunnish' device the 'Huns' had left behind them as they retired - had made a thorough search of the house, and, beyond establishing the fact that it had been occupied by a 'Hun' General, they had found no trace of mines or anything of the kind, and, as Jones had got everybody all settled in, and, moreover, our evening meal was just

ready and also as, at the end of a long day, I was pretty tired, and had no desire to start looking for new H.Q., I decided to risk it, and so after a 'wash and brush up' we all sat down to an excellent meal, and were soon feeling at peace with all men except the 'Hun'.

But we were not allowed to sit in peace for long, for suddenly and without a word of warning, over came a high velocity shell and burst with the very devil of a bang, just the

other side of our house, and then another, and then another!

Up we jumped and out of the house we ran into the garden where the 'Hun' General had had a deep shelter trench dug for himself for protection against our own guns; and into this we all got and there we crouched waiting for the 'Huns' to stop, which they did after ten minutes or so!

Luckily they never hit the house, and after waiting another ten minutes to see if they'd start again - and they didn't - we returned and continued our meal, the 'Huns', strangely enough, leaving us in peace for the rest of the evening, and, as the next day no shells came over, I decided definitely not to move.

On the 4th day of our occupation - and in view of the message I received later on that day and my reply I particularly dwell on the fact that it was the 4th - whilst, in the middle of dinner and, as usual, in the best of good spirits - everyone of my staff had to be in 'good spirits', for no other kind of spirits, except of course those of an alcoholic nature were permitted - a Divisional motor cyclist arrived with a letter addressed to me marked 'confidential and urgent'. I opened it and this is what I read:-

166th Infantry Brigade.

55th Division No G.S. 1530

*In some areas outside the Divisional Area, houses and 'dug-outs' have been blown up by means of delay action fuses as long as 12 days after the German retirement!!!**

The Major General Commanding wishes you to have a very careful examination made of the house in which your Brigade Headquarters is established. It is understood that a preliminary investigation has already been made, but the Major General Commanding wishes the floors and foundations to be dug up and searched for mines as a test case.

(Sd.) R. T. Lee

Lieut. Colonel

General Staff, 55th Div H.Q.

My reading this out to my Staff caused much merriment!

(* The marks of exclamation are mine R.J.K.)

"A cheery kind of message," I said, "for 'Judy' to send us in the middle of dinner - and this after we've already been four days in the house!

"Give me a message form," I said to my Signal Officer, and having been handed a form, I wrote the following reply:-

To: General Staff 55th Division

Your G.S.1530 received in the middle of dinner stop seems to me to be a case of 4 'up' 8 to play, and a prayer to the Almighty that even if we don't win, at any rate we may be 'all square' at the end of the 12th stop however please thank the Divisional Commander for very cheery message and inform him that all of us about to have one more glass of port and then commence systematic search for 'Hun' mines stop

(Sd) R. J. Kentish

Brig. General

Comdg. 166th Inf. Brigade.

"Send that off," I said, "and now let's have another glass of port all round and drink to 'Judy'"

We filled our glasses, drank a toast to 'Judy' and to h-ll with their 'Hunnish' devices!! and then, in high spirits, we commenced another search, but we found nothing and we never had chance to finish the 'match', because, with the score board showing 'Four up and eight to play' in our favour, the following day we received orders to continue the advance and the great 'time-bomb' match was left unfinished!

THESE ARE THE SOULS TO WHOM
HIGH VALOUR GAVE GLORY UNDYING
- Lance Serjt A E Lennox 1st Regt
South African Inf

The design of the DSC is plain silver cross with rounded edges and a central royal cypher. Its ribbon has three equal stripes of dark blue, white and dark blue.

A total of 1,983 DSC awards were made for service in the First World War.

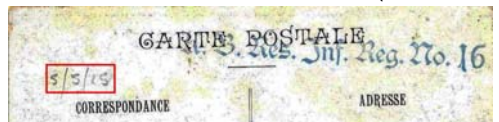
They were issued unnamed and a single example is currently worth around £800 to £1,000.

A FAVOURITE POSTCARD: Andrew Brooks

One of the few postcards remaining in my collection relating to the Western Front is the card of '*Rue d'Ypres, Messines*'. It is a very ordinary, black and white, card, drawn by someone who probably had had some artistic training (Can you see where I am coming from?).



The reverse of the card is where the real interest lies; the cachet '*K.B. Res. Inf. Reg. No. 16.*' is of course the regiment Hitler served in during his time on the Western Front. There is nothing else written on the reverse apart from a pencil date of '*5/5/15*' (If only it had the initials '*AH!*'). By this stage of the war Hitler had been awarded his first Iron Cross (December



1914) and in May 1915 he was with the K.Bavarian Reserve Regiment No.16 (known as the List Regiment) at Fromelles.

GREAT WAR MEDALS - THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS: Bill Myers (+S)



The naval gallantry award, the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC), started life as the Conspicuous Service Cross. This had been introduced by King Edward VII on 28th June 1901 and was renamed as the Distinguished

Service Cross in 1914.

Bars were approved for repeat awards from 1916. Norman Eyre Morley is the only man to win the DSC four times - one medal and three bars - while serving in the Royal Naval Reserve in both world wars.

The original wording for the DSC award is: "For meritorious or distinguished services before the enemy performed by warrant officers or acting warrant officers, or by subordinate officers of Your Majesty's Fleet: and that no person shall be nominated thereto unless his services shall have been marked by the especial mention of his name in despatches by the admiral or senior naval or military officer commanding the squadron or detached force."

The renamed 1914 award was open to all naval officers below the rank of lieutenant commander. In 1931, the award was extended to the Merchant Navy and as part of a major review in 1993 is now a gallantry award open to all ranks serving at sea.

WESTERN FRONT AND OTHER EVENTS TIMELINE - 27th MAY 1918 TO 4th NOVEMBER 1918 (largely based on www.greatwar.co.uk)

Some of the centenary events to the next Despatch are in the table below:-

May-18			Last German attack on Britain by aeroplanes unsuccessful.
27	Battle of Aisne 1918 (German Operation Blucher-Yorck) begins	21	Chateau Thierry retaken by Allied forces.
	Craonne again taken by German forces	23	French (with British and American help) begin Battle of Soissons
29	Soissons again taken by Germans	28	Fere-en-Tardenois retaken by Allied forces
30	Germans take Fere-en-Tardenois	Aug-18	
	German forces reach the Marne. Chateau Thierry & Dormans captured. American Third Division stops German advance at Chateau Thierry.	2	Soissons retaken by Allied forces
31		3	British ambulance transport "Warilda" sunk by submarine
Jun-18		5	Last attempt to attack England with airships unsuccessful
3	British, French & Italian Govts support national aspirations of Poles, Czechs & Yugo-Slavs	6	British Govt issue Declaration to Russian "they have no intention of interfering in Russian politics"
4	American Second Division stops German advance on Vaux to Belleau Wood sector		Gen Foch created Marshal of France
	British Marines land at Pechenga (North Russia)	7	Second Battle of the Marne ends
6	Battle of Aisne 1918 ends	8	Battle of Amiens begins (beginning of "Hundred Days Offensive")
7	British Force lands Kem (N Russia)		French begin Battle of Montdidier
8	Germans launch Noyon - Montdidier (Matz) Offensive	10	Montdidier taken by French forces
11	French & American divisions mount counter-attack to Matz	11	Battle of Amiens ends
14	Germans halt Matz offensive		Czecho-Slovaks declare War on Germany
15	Battle of the Piave begins	13	
	Russian battleship "Svobodnaya Rossiya" destroyed to avoid surrender to Germans	17	Second Battle of Noyon begins
18		18	British Advance in Flanders begins (at Outtersteene Ridge)
24	Battle of Piave ends	22	Albert recaptured by British forces
	German submarine sinks British hospital ship "Llandoverly Castle" off Irish coast (See below table)	26	Second Battles of Arras 1918 begin with Battle of Scarpe 1918
27		29	Bapaume retaken by British
30	United States troops arrive in Italy		Noyon retaken by French
Jul-18		30	Battle of Scarpe 1918 ends
4	"Combined Arms" Australian/USA attack success against Le Hamel		Bailleul retaken by British forces
15	Germans commence Second Battle of the Marne	31	Germans evacuate Mont Kemmel
16	Ex-Tsar Nicholas II & family murdered at Ekaterinburg	Sep-18	
20	Germans retreat across Marne	1	Peronne retaken by British
		3	Lens occupied by British forces
		12	Battle of St Mihiel begins by American Forces
		15	Austrian Govt suggest "unofficial" peace conference to President Wilson

15	German Govt make peace offer to Belgium
16	Battle of St Mihiel ends
	Pres. Wilson rejects Austrian offer of peace conference
	H.M.S. Glatton sunk by explosion in Dover Harbour
18	Battle of Doiran (Salonika) begins
22	Doiran occupied by British forces
26	Allied Meuse-Argonne Offensive begins
27	Battle of Canal du Nord begins
	Bulgarian Govt. seek armistice
28	Fifth Battle of Ypres 1918 begins. British forces retake Messines
29	Battle of St Quentin Canal begins. Riqueval bridge captured.
	Passchendaele retaken by Allied forces
30	Armistice signed with Bulgarians
Oct-18	
1	Battle of Canal du Nord ends
	Damascus taken British & Arabs
2	Battle of Ypres 1918 ends
3	Battle of Beaurevoir line begins
	Armentieres retaken by British
4	German & Austro-Hungarian Govts send notes to Pres. Wilson proposing armistice
5	Battle of Beaurevoir line ends
6	Merchant Cruiser HMS Otranto sinks of Isle of Islay after collision
8	Second Battle of Cambrai begins
	Pres. Wilson demands evacuation of occupied territories as first condition of armistice
9	Cambrai captured by British.
10	Irish mail boat "Leinster" sunk by submarine
12	German Govt. accept Pres. Wilson's conditions for armistice
13	Laon & La Fere retaken by French forces
14	Battle of Courtrai begins
	Pres. Wilson attaches further conditions to armistice & warns against breaches of laws of war
	Turkish Govt. Note to Pres. Wilson proposing armistice
15	Menin captured by Allied forces

17	Ostend, Lille & Douai retaken by Allied forces
	Battle of Selle begins
19	Battle of Courtrai ends
	Zeebrugge & Bruges reoccupied by Belgian forces
20	German Govt. accept Pres. Wilson's further conditions
23	British advance on Mosul
	Pres. Wilson agrees to refer armistice terms to Allied Govts.
24	Battle of Vittorio Veneto begins
25	Battle of Selle ends
26	Aleppo taken by British forces
27	Austro-Hungary Govt. ask Pres. Wilson for immediate armistice prior to negotiations
	Gen. von Ludendorff resigns
30	Armistice between Turkey & Entente Powers signed
Nov-18	
1	Battle of Valenciennes begins
2	Battle of Valenciennes ends
3	S.S. "Surada" & "Murcia" sunk by submarine in Mediterranean
	Allied Govts agree peace terms (see 23 Oct)
	Armistice between Austro-Hungary & Entente signed
	Mutiny in German Fleet at Kiel
4	Battle of Sambre begins

LLANDOVERY CASTLE: 27 June 1918

The sinking was the deadliest Canadian naval disaster of the war and the incident became infamous internationally as one of the war's worst atrocities. Apparently Brigadier George Tuxford, commanding 3rd Infantry Brigade, 1st Canadian Division gave instructions that the battle cry on 8th August 1918 (Battle of Amiens) should be "*Llandovery Castle*," and that "that cry should be the last to ring in the ears of the Hun as the bayonet was driven home."

WE SHALL MEET AGAIN DEAR WILL
- Pte W J Dunn Suffolk Regiment

MUSEUM REPORTS

Liverpool Scottish Regimental Museum

Trust: Ian Riley

The Somme VC that Never Was: Private John Bell Buckingham

John Bell Buckingham, in civilian life working for a cotton broking firm, transferred into the Liverpool Scottish from the RAMC, probably in 1915 and probably underage - his year of birth apparently being circa 1899. The Liverpool Scottish seem to have been quite good at sending home underage soldiers but he managed to be drafted to France and Flanders from the reserve battalion, 3/10th (Scottish) Bn. of the King's (Liverpool Regiment), to the 1/10th KLR - or at least that was the plan. On landing and after a few days in France, almost 130 Liverpool Scots were sent forward to other battalions, principally the 1/9th King's, quite a common occurrence at that stage of the Somme campaign but nonetheless an unwelcome surprise especially to those in a unit with an identity as individual as the kilted Liverpool Scottish within the otherwise trousered 55th (West Lancashire) Division. Less than a month later on 12 August 1916, he found himself tending the wounded of 1/9 KLR as a stretcher bearer in the battle for Guillemont. [Research by Dennis Reeves]

The Regimental Historian, Colonel A.M. McGilchrist, takes up the story:

'The 165th Brigade had made an attack south of Guillemont earlier in the day, in conjunction with the French, and had captured their objectives, but owing to the failure of the attack on their right they were withdrawn to their original positions. A number of the Liverpool Scottish were attached to the 1/9th King's Liverpools in the attack, for stretcher-bearer duties. When the 9th were ordered to withdraw to their original

line many wounded men were perforce left lying out between the trenches. One of the Liverpool Scottish, Pte John Bell Buckingham, carried out his duties with extraordinary bravery and with absolute disregard for his own safety. He went from man to man in the open and under continuous heavy fire, dressing their wounds and doing what he could for their comfort, until he was killed. He was recommended, posthumously, for the Victoria Cross. The honour was denied him but it is a privilege to pay a tribute in these pages to his gallantry and devotion to duty.'

There was then no provision for the posthumous award of decorations other than the VC so there could be no claim for a Distinguished Conduct Medal. He is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial

A Chapel in the Front Line Trenches

A snippet of interest from the Regimental History relating to the spring of 1918, courtesy of Captain Mike Gavin TD, a fellow museum trustee:

'There was one curious feature in the Cambrin sector which the Liverpool Scottish had not met with elsewhere. One of the dugouts in the support line was fitted up as a chapel and here on Easter Sunday, 31 March, a number of men attended divine service and received communion. On weekdays it served as a reading and writing-room.'

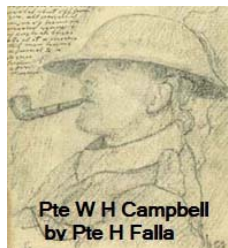
The battalion's medical officer, Captain Noel Chavasse, before his death in August 1917, had been known to hold informal services in his dressing station near the front line in the absence of a padre, some of whom (but certainly not all) were reluctant or were instructed not to come that far forward.

Exhibition of Crayon Sketches of a Front Line Soldier-Artist [c/o Mrs Brenda Giblin]

We are planning an exhibition of crayon



drawings from the sketchbook cum diary of Private William Henry Campbell who went to France in the same draft as Private John Buckingham (see earlier) and was also temporarily posted to 1/9 KLR before



returning to the Liverpool Scottish in late August 1916. He was killed on the first day of the Battle of Pilckem Ridge, 31st July, 1917. They are simple but skilfully executed

sketches showing life in and behind the trenches. The plan is to have a selection of 20/25 of these on display at a venue in Liverpool City Centre between 20 September and 20 November. (for more information contact lriley@liverpoolscottish.org.uk)

ABSENT FROM THE BODY PRESENT
WITH THE LORD
- Pte W A Purnell Kings Liverpool Regt

Lancashire Infantry Museum - Captain Leslie Fullerton Davidson MC, 9th Battalion, South Lancashire Regiment: Jane Davies, Curator

Recently the Lancashire Infantry Museum has been involved in a project called 'Away From the Western Front' working with local schools looking at the 'lesser known' WW1

campaign in Mesopotamia. Often an area which is overlooked, in favour of the Western Front, it was an opportunity for the museum to showcase our marvellous archive of photographs, diaries and letters. This 'bias' towards the Western Front is not surprising though as the majority of 'our' Battalions fought in France and Flanders and our archive reflects this. However, we do also have material relating to the 'other' campaigns that our Battalion served in. These are East Africa, Gallipoli, Jerusalem and Salonika.

Recently we acquired the archive of **Captain Leslie Fullerton Davidson** who served with the 9th Battalion, South Lancashire Regiment during WW1. The



archive contains, photographs, maps, diaries and letters all pertaining to his service. What makes this archive remarkable is that it concentrates on Davidson's time serving with the Battalion in Salonika. Until this archive came into our possession we had next to nothing relating to this Battalion and to this campaign.

So why did the 9th Battalion end up in Salonika? In 1915 the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean had taken a turn for the worse. It was decided that the 22nd Division should be sent to Macedonia to help the Serbs. Although the Serbs had resisted Austrian attempts of invasion with bravery, their troops had gradually been driven back by superior numbers and by the Autumn of 1915 were in danger of being overrun. According to 'Ich Dien' (the South Lancashire Regimental History) 'Politically it was considered desirable for the Allies to maintain touch with Serbia, and militarily, if the line of advance through Macedonia and Serbian territory could be kept open, the southern flank of the Central Powers could perhaps be

threatened at some future date.' There was a 'history of strife in the area going back to the old Empires of Greece and Rome and one of the great contributory causes of the present war was the rivalry of the Great Powers for spheres of influence in this area.' This was

further complicated by Bulgaria throwing in their lot with the Central Powers with a view to regaining lost territory and the King of Greece who was alleged to have pro-German tendencies (he later helped the British and French)



Six Divisions eventually took part in the Macedonia campaign which was described as a 'state of virtual stalemate for three years'. The 9th Battalion was formed in Preston in 1914, went to France in September 1915 and two months later sailed for Salonika and took



Digging slit trenches against air attack

part in the withdrawal from Lake Doiran to the Salonika Defences (Bird Cage). Throughout 1917 the Battalion faced the impregnable high rocky 'Pip' Ridge which it attacked in the final successful offensive of 1918. Eventually Bulgaria sued for peace on the 26th September and on the 30th September 1918 hostilities with Bulgaria ceased. The Battalion had suffered with the weather conditions, boredom, disease and fighting and was eventually disbanded in September 1919.

Captain Leslie Davidson MC joined the 9th Battalion early in the war and served with it in France and Salonika. He gained his Military Cross for gallantry during the offensive against the Bulgarians on September 18th, 1918, when the 9th Battalion

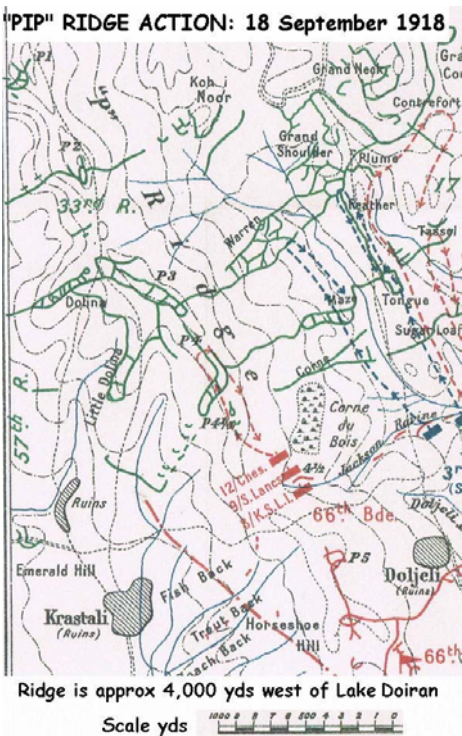
took part in the attack on the formidable 'Pip' Ridge. He was prominent in leading the attack against overwhelming fire. Again and again he rallied the men and led them

The Battalion were awarded 2 MCs, 2 DCMs and 8 MMs for this action. However, the Bulgarians fared worse in overall terms on 18th September.

Due to heavy casualties and loss of morale since commencement of the Allied attacks on 14 September Armistice talks started and hostilities ceased between the Bulgarians and the Allies at noon on 30th September.

Davidson survived the war. As well as the MC he was also awarded the French Croix de Guerre. Born in 1895 Davidson died on 21st August 1936 after a short illness.

If you would like to view the Davidson archive or any archival material in the Lancashire Infantry Museum, we are open every Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday from 10.00 to 16.00. Please email enquiries@lancashireinfantrymuseum.org.uk to make an appointment and bring with you some photographic ID.



HE LEFT SO SWEET A MEMORY
 THAT STILL HE SEEMS TO LIVE
 - Pte J W Watkins King's
 Shropshire L I

forward. Due to substantial losses, he was the last Officer to leave the Ridge. He returned to Jackson Ravine and reorganised the remnants of the Battalion. In this heroic attempt to capture the Ridge, the Battalion lost 14 Officers and 240 Other Ranks, killed, wounded or missing (65% of its strength).

SOISSONS MEMORIAL

Preparing the report (page 2) about the involvement of 2nd Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment (2LNL) in the Second Battle of the Marne 1918 caused me to visit the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's (CWGC) website to compare the Battalion's statement of losses in their War Diary with CWGC's records. This provided my first view of the Soissons Memorial (see next page) and led to me viewing other photographs including those taken by John Stokes on the Rutland Remembers website, one of which provides the frontispiece for this Issue.



Only officers left after the battle, Davidson 2nd from right.

I was not impressed by the “stiff” nature of the soldier figures and my subsequent reading about the memorial in the WFA’s 2018 calendar and elsewhere confirm I am not alone in my feeling about the “Soissons Trinity”.

In his “*Aisne 1918*” David Blanchard reports that some critics saw the soldiers as “resembling soulless mechanical puppets, or even worse a group of Aztec tribesmen waiting at the foot of a sacrificial altar.

However, French observers were far more positive. The three soldiers were seen as looking typically English in “*their stockiness, bluntness, emotional restraint and disciplined passivity*”



Photo of Memorial on CWGC web site

According to the CWGC, the Memorial commemorates almost 4,000 officers and men of the United Kingdom forces who died during the Battles of the Aisne and the Marne in 1918 and who have no known grave. The memorial was designed by G.H. Holt and V.O. Rees, with sculpture by Eric Kennington. It was unveiled by **Lieut. Gen. Sir Alexander Hamilton-Gordon** on 22 July 1928.



On 22nd March 2018 a casualty search for the Memorial produced 3,895 records all except 3 being casualties in 1918. Examination of the three records indicates the year of death to be incorrectly recorded:

Pte. 65592 Tom Marshall 14 Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers date of death (DoD) should be 27/05/1918 not 27/05/1916.

Pte. 3694 Edward O'Brien 9 Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regt. DoD should be 27/05/1918 not 27/05/1915.

Pte. 242542 Albert Ernest Wharton 11 Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers DoD should be 28/05/1918 not 28/05/1916



254 of the casualties are from Lancashire Regiments as follows:

King's Own Royal Lancaster- 2 officers.

Lieut. Col. Edward Cadman Cadman killed by low-flying aircraft fire whilst serving 10th Battalion, Cheshire Regt and 2nd Lieut. Charles Howard Crofts MC killed whilst serving with 5th



KOYLI or 2/4 KOYLI.

King's Liverpool - 1 officer. 2nd Lieut. John Smith killed whilst serving with W Yorks or York & Lancaster Regts.

Lancashire Fusiliers - 58.

East Lancashire - 62.

South Lancashire - 51.

Loyal North Lancashire - 76.

Manchester - 4 officers. Lieuts. Paul Wrey Gardiner, Edward Henry Horncastle, Herbert Godbert Senior and 2nd Lieut. Donovan Richard McCallum Smith all serving with the Worcester Regiment.

We anticipate visiting France again in September/October and I will endeavour to fit a visit to the Memorial into our itinerary to see if viewing the aged Soissons Trinity in the flesh causes me to change my opinion.

SOON, SOON TO FAITHFUL WARRIORS
COMES THEIR REST
- Corporal A Wood Lincolnshire Regiment



(Left to Right: Dr Derek Clayton, Prof Peter Simkins, Prof John Bourne, Dr Peter Hodgkinson)

Making the opening remarks for the conference in a snow-covered Wolverhampton, Professor Stephen Badsey indicated the WFA's Honorary President, Professor Peter Simkins, had been invited to decide the theme and appropriately he was the first speaker.

The Canadian Corps crossing of the Canal du Nord, September 1918

Peter indicated that Foch met Haig on 4 September 1918 and directed that the BEF should mount an offensive towards St Quentin - Cambrai. He explained how plans for the attack were developed over the following weeks and a key element of the plan was that Currie's Canadian Corps would cross the dry bed of Canal du Nord on a narrow corridor of 2,500 yards before fanning out north and east to expand the front to 9,000 yards. General Horne (First Army) was concerned about the Canadian's ability to undertake the plan but was told that "*If Currie says they can do it, they will.*"

Peter explained how the attack on 28 September was a hard-won success and for the Germans breaking through their defences hastened the end.

The BEF's Generals on the Cusp of Victory, September 1918 - Prof John Bourne

This was a fascinating picture of the sheer numbers of generals needed to run an army

of the size of the BEF in 1918. The estimated number was 500 active generals in September 1918 with 34% in non-combatant roles e.g. Paymaster.

The changing nature of the army during the war was presented highlighting the stressful nature of command which exhausted a huge number of men. Only 7 generals went through the war in the same role and these were all non-combatant.

By September 1918 the army had square pegs in square holes and operated well.

He identified three different types of generals; Exotics, Warriors and Grizzled veterans. He gave several interesting example of each category which showed the massive difference between them.

'Fourth Army's Way of War' at the Selle, 17-18 October'

When the audience convened after lunch, fortified by further helpings of Phylomena Badsey's excellent trench cake since attendee numbers had been decimated by bad weather, Dr Peter Hodgkinson's outlined '*Fourth Army's "Way of War" at the Selle, 17-18 October*'; the title of his latest book. Fourth Army's task was to breach the 2 lines of German defences (HWL I and HWL II) to the east of the Selle. 66 (2nd East Lancashire) Division was one of the participating divisions to the north of le Cateau. He described how the battle was planned quickly in 4 days and

the inventive nature of the operations indicated an army near the top of its game.

Battle of the Sambre, Crossing the Canal 4th November 1918, Dr Derek Clayton

This was the last large set-piece battle of the war with 13 Divisions involved, albeit under strength, 1000 guns and 40 armoured vehicles.

The Germany army had not collapsed and continued to provide stiff resistance based around the use of machine guns and field artillery similar to the Battle of the Selle.

A detailed account of the battle followed highlighting the attempts to cross the canal which met with mixed results and much improvisation in the heat of battle. At one crossing point 4 VC's were won in the failed attempt to bridge the canal and Wilfred Owen fell close to this place. Apparently it's obligatory to mention him at this point although not the 4 VC's.

Commanding Officers saved the operation with only the crossing at Catillon going according to plan. Once German defences were broken there was little further German resistance, no counter-attacks were mounted. The operation was a success and Germany history states "4 November Germany's fate was sealed." The last week was a full retreat to the Meuse rather than a fighting retreat.

TO SAVE MANKIND A WIDOWED
MOTHER'S ONLY SON
- Gunner W J Daniels Royal
Garrison Artillery

A WALK IN ATTENBOROUGH: Peter Denby

Readers may recall my article in the May 2015 Despatch when I reported on a commemorative WW1 themed walk, run by a local rambling club, which I had joined when visiting Nottingham in 2014. On that occasion the walk, in the Lenton area of the

city, featured the ace pilot Capt Albert Ball VC.

Subsequently I was able to join another of these monthly walks, this time to the Attenborough area where there is a nature reserve run by Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust. Our walk took us around the reserve with its nature trails and complex of artificial lakes (flooded gravel pits) - in itself a lovely way to spend a few hours (see www.attenboroughnaturecentre.co.uk).

This walk's WW1 connection related to an explosion at the nearby Chilwell National Shell Filling Factory, which brought to my mind the 1917 explosion at the White Lund factory in Lancaster. The Chilwell explosion was, however, much worse and the 100th anniversary of the tragic event will occur in July.

The factory was working round the clock producing thousands of shells a day, when at 6.10pm on 1st July 1918 an enormous explosion tore through its Mixing House and TNT Mill, killing 139 and injuring a further 250, many seriously.

Among the carnage the remaining workforce,

emergency services and local people helped the injured and searched for survivors. The next day almost all of the 7,000 workforce returned to work and began rebuilding the destroyed buildings, and shifts were increased to maintain production.

The then Minister for Munitions Winston Churchill wrote *"The courage and spirit shown by all concerned, both men and women, command our admiration, and the*



decision to which you have all come to carry on without a break is worthy of the spirit which animates our soldiers in the field”.

The factory is long gone - the site is now occupied by a housing development and the MoD's Chetwynd Barracks. There is a memorial to the explosion, but this is within the grounds of the MoD property. Unfortunately we could not visit the memorial; for security reasons the MoD required names of all participants to be given in advance, whereas our walk was an unbooked turn-up-on-the-day event. Of course I understand the need for security, but it does disappoint me when memorials - and this is one of several examples I have come across - are sited in places off limits to the public.



Of the 139 dead, only 32 were identified. The unidentified were buried in three mass graves in the grounds of St Mary's church Attenborough, which is just a short stroll from the nature reserve. The plots of these burials are identified by a blue plaque in the churchyard, the plots being marked out by wooden posts, chains, flagstones and a

granite memorial inscribed *“To the Glory of God and in Memory of the Men and Women who lost their lives in the Service of their Country in the Chilwell Explosion July 1st 1918”.*

Note: Since the article was submitted, plans have been made to erect a new memorial at the site of the mass graves in the churchyard, which will be in place in time for a series of events this summer commemorating the centenary of the disaster, culminating in a service of remembrance at the church on Sunday 1st July at the exact time the explosion occurred.

LINESMAN GOES TO FRANCE (GIVENCHY) (+S)

Since first visiting Givenchy over 20 years ago when locating the grave of Emmie's uncle, Pte James Oddie, in the nearby Vieille Chapelle New Military Cemetery it has been prominent in my WFA activities. Consequently it was a priority for us to be there on 9th April for the 100th anniversary of James' death on first day of German offensive, which Peter Hart thought should have been the German's priority in 1918.

When the Germans attacked they broke through the defences of the Portuguese Corps on the left flank of British 55th Division causing a severe threat to the Allied front

In addition to a wreath for Pte Oddie's grave we also had wreaths to lay on behalf the North Lancashire WFA for two Lancashire VC holders who are buried the same cemetery as Emmie's uncle - Lieut. Collin of the King's Own Royal Lancaster's and Lieut. Schofield of the Lancashire Fusiliers

As the date approached I gleaned sketchy information from contacts here and in France about events on the 9th, including the possible involvement of the French President. Nothing was definite but I judged we should be at Givenchy before 11.00 am

and on approaching the 55th Division memorial small groups of people were gathering. It was evident from the police presence as we approached Givenchy that President Macron was expected nearby.

The first lady Emmie spoke to was there with her husband to remember her paternal grandfather who was badly wounded on 9th April whilst serving with the Lancashire Fusiliers. The lady was wearing her grandfather's medals and left a poignant note on the memorial.

Next, we spoke to two couples who told us they lived near us in Preston. The coincidence continued when we were told how the grandfather of one of the ladies served with the Lancashire Fusiliers and won the Military Cross on 9th April alongside Lieut. Schofield. I told them we would later be laying a wreath on the grave of Lieut Schofield VC at Vieille Chapelle and they expressed their wish to accompany us. We spoke with others but conversation was curtailed as the procession approached the memorial (see back page).

After enjoying drinks and nibbles in the church hall a "convoy" of 2 cars headed northwards to the Vieille Chapelle. We passed police checkpoints in Festubert, l'Épinette and le Touret which were

"screening" the **Portuguese cemetery at Richbourg where President Macron and Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa** were marking the centennial of the



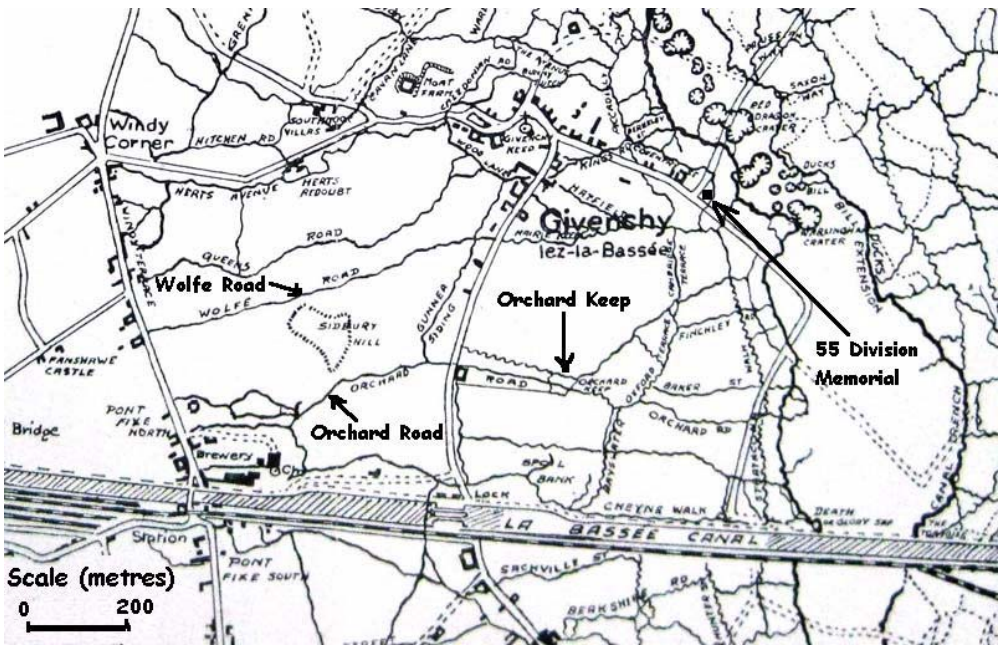
World War I battle. However we had to find an alternative route round the road closure at La Couture where the Portuguese Memorial is located.

On arrival at Vieille Chapelle Military Cemetery we discussed with our new found friends the respective roles of 2nd Lieut. John Schofield VC and 2nd Lieut. William Ewart Rider MC and the History of the Lancashire Fusiliers is the definitive account:

The two remaining platoons of "B" Company were sent up Wolfe Road and Orchard Road communication trenches. In command of one of them was Second-Lieutenant John Schofield. He first led a party of nine men against a strong-point which was reported to be strongly held by the enemy and where he was indeed attacked by about a hundred Germans with bombs. So skilfully did he dispose his small body and such good use did he make of his rifles and Lewis gun that he drove the enemy to take cover in dug-outs. Next he held up and himself captured a party of twenty Germans and, with the help of other parties, cleared the position which these Germans had been holding and killed or captured the remainder of its garrison. He then collected the survivors of his men, made his party up to ten and, having sent a message back to Lieutenant-Colonel Brighten explaining the situation and stating that he was proceeding to retake the front line, advanced towards the latter. He soon met large numbers of the enemy in a communication trench in front of him and in a drain on his right and left. His party opened rapid rifle fire, while he climbed out on to the parapet of the trench under point-blank machine-gun fire and forced the enemy to surrender, to the number of several officers and about 120 men. A few minutes later, as he pressed on towards the front line, this very gallant young officer was killed.

*Fine work during the advance of these two platoons of " B" Company was also done by **Second-Lieutenant W. E. Rider** and Lance-Corporal C. Old. The former*





moved about amongst his men with great coolness and encouraged them under violent fire. Three bullets from snipers tore holes in his clothes, though he was not actually wounded. Farther forward, he led his platoon in an encircling movement and succeeded in getting behind a large number of the enemy, helping to capture several hundred of them.

The King's Own History records the following for the award of the VC to 2nd Lieut Joseph Henry Collin:

Orchard Keep, a key position, was held by Lieutenant J. H. Collin and sixteen other ranks who stuck to their post until only five of them remained. Then Collin withdrew slowly, contesting every inch of the way, while the enemy pressed him hard with vastly superior numbers, bombs and machine-gun fire at close range. Single-handed, Collin attacked the machine gun and team. After firing his revolver into the enemy he seized a Mills grenade and put the gun out of action, killed four of the team and wounded two others. Seeing another enemy machine gun, Collin

placed a Lewis gun at a high point of vantage on the parapet and unaided kept the enemy at bay until he fell mortally wounded.



Next day en route to Zeebrugge we visited la Couture to see the exhibition in the church and the Portuguese memorial. A copy of the brochure prepared by the Bethune/Bruiay tourist office to commemorate the 100th

anniversary of the Battle of the Lys and more photographs of our visit are supplements to this Despatch on our website.

Since returning home I have reflected on our visit and feel privileged to have been one of the few British individuals to witness the manner in which the local commune of Givenchy, the region of Bethune/Bruay and France commemorated the Battle of Lys. Perhaps British authorities and organisations have become battle weary? Nine antecedent battalions of the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment and one of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers together with supporting arms defeated the hordes of attacking Germans. The scale of the 55th West Lancashire Division's achievement is acknowledged on the memorial at Givenchy as follows:

AROUND THIS SITE FROM 9TH TO 16TH APRIL 1918 THE DIVISION, CONTINUOUSLY ATTACKED FROM THE CANAL TO FESTUBERT BY THREE GERMAN DIVISIONS AND WITH ITS FLANK TURNED, HELD ITS GROUND AND INFLICTED SEVERE LOSS UPON THE ENEMY.

.... *"THIS MOST GALLANT DEFENCE, THE IMPORTANCE OF WHICH IT WOULD BE HARD TO OVERESTIMATE"*

SIR DOUGLAS HAIG'S DESPATCH DATED 20-7-18

BRANCH CHAIRMAN'S CONFERENCE, 17 FEBRUARY 2018: Paul Conlon

This was a well attended meeting held at The Union Jack Club, Waterloo with over 40 branch delegates and 11 Executive Committee (EC) Members. Richard Preston represented the Cumbria branch. It was a well run meeting with a mostly positive atmosphere. The one delegate at loggerheads with the EC had, of course, to choose to sit next to me.

It was a pretty intense 4 sessions spread over the two days and covered some banal topics through to some exciting projects undertaken by the more pro-active branches.

Rather than try to report on every single speaker and topic I have picked out some of the key points. I did make notes on every speaker and should anyone want more detail then I am happy to talk through the subjects covered with them.

Key Points

- The WFA is a registered charity and each branch has to be largely self-sufficient; a point to bear in mind when organising events.
- A number of the members appear to strongly resist entering the digital age which hampers the WFA in making more use of electronic tools such as electronic voting.
- The EC is working on a children and vulnerable adult policy for use when branches are organising events involving these groups.
- With one aim of the WFA being to educate the public about the Great War some branches are putting serious efforts into furthering this aim.
- A new DVD entitled "Battle of the Ancre and the Advance of the Tanks" is now available from the IWM and I have ordered a copy.
- The WFA theme for 2019 might be "young people". 2020 theme is likely to be "The Unknown Warrior".
- The WFA membership is increasing and there are several new initiatives to help in furthering the growth.

MY HERO LIES AT REST -
Private A R Dunn MM 5th Bn
Canadian Inf

BRANCH AFFAIRS



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MEETING REPORTS

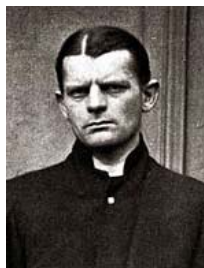
Forgotten Germans of the Great War: November 2017 (24 attended)

Advance publicity for this talk proclaimed: “*The fascinating story of a little known aspect of the Great War. Barry*

Kitchener will tell the story of the German Spies executed in the Tower of London: their activities, their capture, their imprisonment and their execution” and those who attended were not disappointed with Barry’s exposition. He started by telling he was currently the station manager at Waterloo station but had become a leading expert on a small patch of the Tower of London whilst a young boy. He then spoke about the memorial in the East London cemetery at Plaistow remembering the executed German spies in WW1 which had captured his interest.



Carl Hans Lody, alias Charles Inglis, a German Naval Reserve officer was the first to be executed in the Great War. He started his spying in Edinburgh writing invisible messages on handkerchiefs about naval movements and coastal defences using pure lemon juice. The message could be revealed by careful application of heat and Barry told how male reproductive fluid had similar properties. On leaving Edinburgh Lody carried out his spying activities around the country including within recruitment offices but the British MI5 had identified him and in early October 1914 he was arrested. Initially held in Brixton jail he was transferred to the Tower of London after being tried and found guilty. The night before his execution Lody shook hands with the



Assistant Provost Marshall and displayed no fear when he was strapped to a chair and executed by firing squad at dawn on 6 November 1914. Barry then demonstrated how the process of a prisoner’s movement from cell to place and manner of execution was undertaken.

He then briefly described the activities of others on the memorial and how they faced their executions in 1915 and early 1916. These included **Fernando**



Buschman who calmly



played the violin before his execution then gave his instrument to the firing party whilst the youngest, **Albert Meyer** age 22, resisted execution.

As Barry made a swift exit from the meeting to catch his train back to London he was asked why his talk just covered the execution of the spies in 1915 and 1916. “Later in the war the Germans got better at spying” was his reply.

AGM: December 2017

At a very lightly attended meeting, thankfully attended by the officers who moved into positions after the longstanding Chairman, Stan Wilkinson, stepped down earlier in the year, no changes were made for the coming year with Graham Kemp (Chairman), Paul Conlon (Secretary) and Fiona Bishop (Treasurer) continuing in role for 2018.

The Battle of Cambrai: January 2018

Inclement weather did not permit the scheduled meeting to proceed. The speaker **Niall Cherry** braved the conditions to reach Lancaster but very few others. The important

officer responsible for presentation equipment also could not attend and the meeting was cancelled.

Austro-Hungarian War 1914-18 - The Great Debacle: February 2018 (19 attended)



Graham Kemp presented this informative new talk with his customary enthusiasm, his account being delivered in ten sections, beginning in 1914:

1 Road to War. Graham outlined the dual monarchy structure of the Austro-Hungarian ('A-H') Empire. It was principally the Austrians who escalated the crisis and pushed for war with Serbia, culminating in Franz Joseph, Emperor of Austria (and King of Hungary and Monarch of the other states in the A-H Empire), declaring war on Serbia on 26th July. This of course set off the chain of events which led to most of Europe soon being drawn into war.

2 Graham then outlined the structure of the **Austro-Hungarian Army** as at the outbreak of war.

Language skills were a great asset for the professional officers - who were mainly ethnic Germans - in this mixed race army. High commands were issued in German, but at regimental level several languages could be used according to the ethnic make-up of each regiment.

Conscription and National Service were in place, but were not always taken seriously and often avoided, leading to a deficit of good NCOs. Unlike the Serb army which was battle hardened from the recent Balkan conflicts, the A-H army had no recent experience of warfare. Moreover its guns were generally inferior in terms of quality and / or numbers to those of its opponents the

Serbs and Russians, and it had a low stockpile of ammunition.

But the real weakness of the A-H army was its High Command, and in particular the arrogance, incompetence, inflexibility, and outdated thinking of its Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshall Conrad von Hotzendorf. German observers were already fearing that the A-H army would be 'cannon fodder'.

3 Serbia 1914. The overconfident General Oskar Potiorek (who Graham likened to *Blackadder's* General Melchett) commanded the 1914 A-H attacks on Serbia, which were repulsed by the Serbs who were led by the experienced commander Field Marshall Radomir Putnik. As was to be the usual story, A-H losses were enormous (at one point their losses averaged 3,000 men daily - killed, wounded or taken prisoner), and the professional officers were hard hit.

The incompetent Potiorek was sacked.

4 Galician Front 1914. Attacks against the Russians began on 22nd August, but the rapidly mobilising Russian army soon outnumbered the A-H forces and the inevitable Russian counter attack led to A-H collapse, again with immense losses of officers, men and guns, the situation being further compounded by an outbreak of cholera.

"Conrad's scheme was ill conceived and failure virtually guaranteed" wrote an observer.

Only draconian discipline prevented a total collapse of the army.

5 Everyone is your enemy. The regime became increasingly oppressive, demanding unconditional obedience from its constituent peoples. Regional officials were arrested on the merest of suspicion or for some imagined disloyalty.

Worse still - and this was an aspect which most of us in the audience hadn't hitherto appreciated - the A-H campaigns were

associated with atrocities. Thus up to 5,000 Serb civilians were killed, but A-H also turned on its own civilians (Conrad - *"We fight on our own territory as in hostile land"*); as many as 30,000 Ruthenes perished at the hands of their own army, and the Jewish population of Galicia also suffered at the hands of both the A-Hs and the Russians.

Graham contrasted the scale of these Eastern atrocities with those in Belgium.

6 'Stalingrad of WW1' - Carpathian Front 1914-1915. By the end of September 1914 the A-H army had thus sustained massive losses and destruction of its officer corps. And so in his wisdom Conrad decided...to attack again, deploying ill equipped and poorly provisioned armies to the inhospitable Carpathian mountains against a strong Russian defender.

This attack was launched initially in an attempt to relieve a besieged 120,000 A-H force at Przemysl in Galicia, and to secure strategic Carpathian mountain passes. Repeated attacks were unsuccessful, at a cost of another 800,000 A-H casualties.

Conrad never visited the front, and had no sense of the reality of the situation or the suffering and hardships of his men, who became apathetic and indifferent. In addition to battle casualties, deaths from frostbite and suicide took their toll.

Poorly trained new recruits were no match for the Russian counter attack when it came.

The already low German opinion of the A-H army became lower still.

7 A little help from our friends, 1915. The Germans could not allow this situation to continue, and in May 1915 another attack was launched against the Russians, but this time the A-Hs were supported by German forces and led by the renowned German general August von Mackensen, who used massed artillery to support his infantry. Russian troops were driven out of Galicia and Poland.

In September 1915 Bulgaria joined the war and in October its forces joined with those of A-H and Germany in a renewed, and this time successful, campaign against Serbia whose army was overwhelmed (but not destroyed).

Bulgaria now committed atrocities, against Serb civilians.

Italy joined the war on the side of the Allies in May 1915, declaring war on A-H and launching offensives along their common border. However this Italian involvement served to bolster the eroding unity of the A-H Empire, in that Italy was seen as a mutual enemy of the A-H Empire's constituent parts.

8 1916 - Russians launch an offensive. By now Conrad was assuring the Germans that A-H would be defensively minded. A move of A-H troops to the Italian front gave the innovative and thorough Russian general Brusilov the opportunity to launch, in June, a surprise offensive on a broad front against the stretched A-H troops who were pushed back.

After this the A-H army was a broken, demoralised, disappearing and surrendering force, and A-H was very close to losing the war.

Germany sent reinforcements and assumed effective command.

9 1917 Germany takes over. Conrad was now subservient to the Germans.

But the Russian High Command had lost the initiative and the Brusilov Offensive had been allowed to peter out. Increasing political and social turmoil in Russia and incompetent government meant Russia dragged defeat from the jaws of victory; once more A-H was saved from capitulation.

10 Last chance to shine, 1918. The last chance to redeem themselves was against the Italians in the 1918 battles of the Piave River, but repeated attacks failed and were countered by the successful Italian / Allied

attacks which culminated in the Battle of Vittorio Veneto 24 October to 3 November. These further heavy losses, along with increasing shortages and rioting on the home front, brought an end the A-H war effort.

Total A-H losses were: 1.1 million soldiers killed; over 3 million wounded; 1.8 million prisoners of war in Russia. Spanish flu and atrocities against civilians added to the death tolls. (Peter Denby)

REST WELL BRAVE HEART YE WHO
FOR US YOUR LIFE LAID DOWN
- Pte G R Skinner 41st Bn Australian Inf

Comparing the Somme 1916 and Arras 1917: March 2018 (21 attended)

This was a very interesting and well-prepared talk by **Mike Coyle** who had a personal interest; his grandfather's elder brother ('The Blessed Bernard')



'The Blessed Bernard'

was killed in action at Arras. It was only by chance that Mike, having salvaged details about Bernard from a dustbin, decided to investigate further. He initially referred to the standard works on the Battle of Arras and quoted Cyril Falls '*The most savage infantry battle of the war*'. This was his inspiration for digging further!

In 1917 both Asquith and Lloyd George told a reluctant Haig to support the Nivelle offensive and this resulted in the Battle of Arras in the spring of 1917. Mike's point of view is that the results of the Battle of the Somme were inconclusive whereas Arras achieved a limited success. He then went on to give a brief account of two KORL regiments that took part in the Somme and Arras (Bernard's 1st Battalion at Arras) and

followed this with his comparison of the two battles

The 1/7th KORL were in training until the 1st July 1916. They were involved in the attack on Ovillers and La Boisselle and later at Bazentin. During July 1916 the battalion had 7 Officers and 71 Other Ranks KIA plus 12 missing. Comparing this with Arras, Mike described the 1st KORL. Before the battle they had a complement of 20 Officers and 658 Other Ranks. They were provided with a hot meal and although they suffered casualties to shellfire by 16.00 hours they had taken the German trenches at Fampoux. Then snow fell and when the Germans counter-attacked it resulted in 4 Officers and 175 Other Ranks becoming casualties.

Bernard wrote home to his mother on the 7th May and at this time the 1st KORL had 2 Officers KIA and 5 wounded as well as 19 Other Ranks KIA and 88 wounded. 34 Other Ranks. (including Bernard) were missing.

Returning to his comparison between the battles, Mike suggested that the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) in 1917 did not allow as much information about Arras as had been the case for the Somme. Also, the film of the Somme had been seen by over 20 million people whereas the film about Arras gave the impression 'that we did not do well'. This was a thought provoking talk and a lively question time, ably dealt with by Mike. (Andrew Brooks)

Austro-Hungarian Memorabilia: April 2018 (17 attended)



This talk was given by our very own **Andrew Brooks** who has been collecting printed ephemera, mainly of the Great War, for over 60 years. It was through collecting WW1 letters that he joined the WFA.

He gave us a talk on a number of topics relating to the postal history of the Army - British, French and American and brought along an interesting range of postal history to support his talk and for us to examine.

Censorship :

The British censored all mail going home but not that being received.

The Austro-Hungarians censored all mail and as their territory encompassed 9 ethnic groups there was therefore the same message in 9 languages on the printed cards sent home.

The correspondence of Ernst Vencovsky :

Started in Jan 1915 when he was on his way to fight and wrote to his younger brother Otto asking for lice powder and writing again a few weeks later to say the lice had gone!

He sent various cards but the last one was on 17th July 1915, as he was seriously wounded and transferred to a hospital in Vienna (he was from north of Vienna) and died some time after as his funeral was end Oct/early Nov.

Ernst's father was also in the Army but too old to fight. Otto received his calling up papers and his brother's uniform and went to fight on the Italian front. Otto ended up in a naval hospital but his fate is unknown.

The correspondence of Wilhelm Homuth who was a German soldier :

He was on the fighting line all the time and was injured more than once. He fought in Voges and was transferred to the Eastern front from where he was back and forth after being wounded.

Wilhelm had a sister who was a nurse. He received gunshot wounds to both legs and went home by train, remains at home for 5-6

months then back to the Eastern front, before being sent to Verdun. The last letter in Andrew's collection was from hospital; somewhere on the River Rhine as he had been injured again.



One lovely card in Andrew's collection had the 4 rulers of Germany, Austro-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey along the top.

Other postal history items that Andrew brought to show us included items from the naval conflict in the Adriatic, items relating to Montenegro and the war in the Balkans.

Austria occupied Montenegro and Albania and took over the postal systems. They also did this in South Poland and Serbia. (Fiona Bishop)

PROGRAMME OF FUTURE MEETINGS (FIRST MONDAY OF THE MONTH AT 7.30 PM)

June 4th: *From Brandhoek to Camp Bastion* - Jonathan Bell

July 2nd: *Territorial Gunners at War* - Terry Dean

Aug 6th: *A Moonlight Massacre: The Night Operation on the Passchendaele Ridge, 2 December 1917* - Dr Michael LoCicero

Sept 3rd: *The Aisne Again: May 1918 - the essence of blitzkrieg* - David Blanchard

Oct 1st: *A Trip to Switzerland - a little known aspect of WW1* - Tony Foster

Nov 5th: *Verdun, 1916, the battle that changed the 20th century* - Philip Stevens

Dec 3rd: *A.G.M and Christmas Social* - An invitation to members to speak for 10 minutes on any WW1 topic

THE BATTLE OF THE LYS 1918: CENTENARY COMMEMORATION 9th APRIL 2018

Earlier in this Issue of Despatch there is a report in my "Linesman goes to France" series of our short visit in April. On this page I focus on photographs to record how the events of 100 years ago were commemorated.

Shortly before 11.30 am those assembled at the 55th Division memorial in Givenchy watched a procession approaching. It comprised standard



bearers, teachers and children from the local school, and others who had assembled at the church hall. At the memorial a short ceremony took place with the British and French national anthems being sung by the schoolchildren and others followed by lowering of the standards at the adjacent Tunnellers memorial. Wreaths were laid.

The assemblage then dispersed with teachers/children returning to school and all others were invited to the church hall where speeches took place with drinks and nibbles provided. In the hall there was also an exhibition of photographs depicting the events of 100 years ago.

On leaving the church hall Emmie and I, accompanied by two English couples travelled to Vieille Chapelle cemetery to lay wreaths for two VCs and her uncle, hindered by President Macron's presence in the area. (see Linesman's report on page 23)



Lieut J H Collin VC



Lieut J Schofield VC



Pte J Oddie

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