CHESTERFIELD WFA

Newsletter and Magazine issue 53

Co-Patrons -Sir Hew Strachan & Prof. Peter Simkins

President - Professor Gary Sheffield MA PhD FRHistS FRSA

Vice-Presidents

Andre Colliot

Professor John Bourne BA PhD FRHistS

The Burgomaster of Ypres

The Mayor of Albert

Lt-Col Graham Parker OBE

Christopher Pugsley FRHistS

Lord Richard Dannat GCB CBE MC DL

Roger Lee PhD jssc

Dr Jack Sheldon

Branch contacts

Tony Bolton
(Chairman)
anthony.bolton3@btinternet.com
Mark Macartney
(Deputy Chairman)
Markmacartney48@gmail.com
Jane Lovatt (Treasurer)
Grant Cullen (Secretary)
grantcullen@hotmail.com
Facebook
http://www.facebook.com/groups/157662657604082/
http://www.wfachesterfield.com/

Welcome to Issue 53 - the May 2020 Newsletter and Magazine of Chesterfield WFA.

In view of the current public health pandemic engulfing the globe, your committee took the prudent decision, before the introduction of Government legislation, to cancel the April, May and June Meetings of the Branch.

Meetings and other activities will be restarted as and when the authorities deem it safe for us to do so.

In the interim this Newsletter / Magazine will continue

We would urge all our members to adopt all the government`s regulations that way we can keep safe and hopefully this crisis will be controlled, the virus defeated, and a degree of normality restored.

Stay safe everybody – we are all – in the meantime - `Confined to Barracks`

Grant Cullen – Branch Secretary

Western Front Association Chesterfield Branch – Meetings 2020

Meetings start at 7.30pm and take place at the Labour Club, Unity House, Saltergate, Chesterfield S40 1NF

January	7th	. **AGM** and Members Night – presentations by Jane Ainsworth, Ed Fordham, Judith Reece, Edwin Astill and Alan Atkinson
February	4th	**Graham Kemp** `*The Impact of the economic blockage of Germany AFTER the armistice and how it led to WW2*`
March	3rd	**Peter Hart** Après la Guerre Post-war blues, demobilisation and a home fit for very few.
April	7th	**Andy Rawson** Tea Pots to Tin Lids…how the factory which inspired his research (Dixons) switched from making tea services for hotels and cruise ships to making Brodie helmets in the Great War. CANCELLED
May	5th	**Nick Baker** . The British Army has always fought a long battle with the debilitations cause to its soldier's efficiency through venereal disease, a combination of behavioural change and civilian interference resulted in an 'epidemic' of VD which threatened military effectiveness.CANCELLED
June	2nd	**Rob Thompson** 'The Gun Machine: A Case Study of the Industrialisation of Battle during the Flanders Campaign, 1917.CANCELLED
July	7th	**Tony Bolton** `Did Britain have a Strategy for fighting the Great War or did we just blunder from crisis to crisis? "From business as usual to total war"
August	4th	**Beth Griffiths** ` The Experience of the Disabled Soldiers Returning After WWI`
September	1st	**John Taylor.** 'A Prelude to War' (An Archduke's Visit) – a classic and true tale of `what if` ?
October	6th	**Peter Harris** Tanks in the 100 Days. Peter will present some of his researches for his Wolverhampton MA course
November	3rd	**Paul Handford** Women Ambulance Drivers on the Western Front 1914 – 1918.
December	1st	**John Beech** 'Notts Battery RHA – Nottinghamshire Forgotten Gunners'

Issue 53 - list of contents

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

We have received the undernoted from David Tattersfield at the Western Front Association regarding the very interesting `Project Alias` Please click on the link for fullest details.

http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/latest-news/february-2020/project-alias-what-is-it-and-how-is-it-going/

If anyone wants to get involved, then please contact David directly.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Several of our members has suggested a`group` discussion using an internet platform like `Zoom`…please let me know if there is an appetite for such a member interaction and we can investigate further.

Also note, elsewhere in this magazine, there is a list of links and websites that may be of interest to members.

Personal Note from the Chair (43)

If I thought it was difficult to write a witty and interesting piece every month for the newsletter in normal times then the idea of producing one during lockdown fills me with dread. A column reading, Monday stayed in, Tuesday stayed in etc wouldn't exactly fit the bill I think as at least in part, Grant's continuing Newsletters are intended to offer a diversion from the daily headlines of doom and gloom and to offer a reminder of what we used to think of as normality.

Saturday 25 April had been scheduled for the national AGM; this year it had been intended to hold it in Leeds but obviously that could not happen. I thank those of you who sent in their proxy voting forms and the results will be published in the next Bulletin. I doubt that any of you will be surprised by the results.

I have my wife to thank for drawing my attention to an article on the BBC News website on 30 April recounting a little-known protest march that occurred at this time in 1920. It predated the Jarrow March by sixteen years. The marchers, some of whom were wounded ex-servicemen were greeted by 10,000 people when they arrived in Trafalgar Square. Their demand was not work as the country was still in the post war employment boom but rather rights for the blind. Under the banner of Justice not Charity, the 250 marchers had held meetings in towns and cities as they marched to demand Government action to prevent their disability from leaving them in poverty. I am not sure how the service pension provision affected the issue, if anyone knows please let me know. The Prime Minister, David Lloyd George met the marchers on 30 April. The Government introduced the Blind Peoples Act and later in 1920 placed duties of care on local authorities 'to promote the welfare of blind people'. This is acknowledged as the first specific piece of disability legislation in Britain and was yet another of the many changes to society in the aftermath of the Great War.

The BBC had the story because the RNIB were promoting blind people to use their daily exercise to recreate or at least remember the 1920 March.

Finally has anyone noticed that official Government publicity is requiring us to 'Stay Home' since when has it been acceptable English in this country to drop the 'at' in favour or should that be favor of the American version? What Penelope Keith in an episode of the Good Life referred to as 'mid Atlantic jargonise' or is that me being a grumpy old man? I can hear my kids saying 'get a life dad'.

Best regards,

Tony Bolton, **Branch Chair**

Secretary`s Scribbles

Welcome to issue 53 of the WFA Chesterfield Branch Newsletter and Magazine.

I trust all recipients of this Newsletter/Magazine are keeping safe and well. Our entire way of life has changed – maybe not as much for a retiree like me, but for others it is a catclysmic situation – kids not at school, but not allowed to meet their friends – maybe parents furloughed as well – worried about making ends meet. Many people are certainly under a lot of stress at this time. Then there is folks – like Mark, our Branch Vice Chair, having his elective surgery postponed – and for an indeterminate time too. Every decision taken by Government and their advisors carries risk, we have to hope and pray that they get it right – but there is no precedence for them to fall back upon.

All Branch activities continue to be cancelled, including the May and June meetings. This is subject to review and we will of course adopt all measures going forward as instructed by the authorities.

I have been heartened by the number of contributions for inclusion in this Newsletter received from members and I am grateful to Jane Ainsworth, Andy Rawson , Phillipe Gorczynski and Edwin Astill for taking the time to get in touch. Andy of course, should have been our speaker at the May meeting and like others whom we have had to cancel, we will arrange new dates as soon as practicable.

One little bit of good news is the fact that Mark Macartney, WFA Branded Goods Trustee, has managed to put in place a system whereby some – not all – of the WFA branded items – are available. See Mark`s article which follows this editorial.

Sadly, I have to report the demise, after 18 years and 110 issues, of the `Great War Magazine`. This was a subscriber only magazine published by a small company in Scarborough. Usually running to 70 odd pages per issue, it was always packed full of interesting articles across all aspects of The Great War, most of which were illustrated with black and white pictures. Unique in have no advertising, the Editor, Mark Marsay, relied on contributions submitted by `ordinary` Great War enthusiasts like we all are – there was no academic treatises and no one received any renumeration for publication. Sadly, with a steady year on year decline in subscriptions, Mark took the decision not to take the magazine into a 19th year, having satisfied all existing subscribers. I for one will be sad to see the end of this wee magazine (it was A5 size), and thank Mark Marsay for bringing so much interest and pleasure to so many like minded enthusiasts over the past 18 years.

Assuming that I don`t fall victim to the ague – and we are ALL at risk – then I will endeavour to keep these monthly Newsletter/Magazines. Also, don`t forget that I am happy to talk to any member or Branch friend on an evening best between 7 and 8pm – any subject all – but preferably WW1 related – if they are alone, depressed or just want to chat with someone with similar interests – my number is below. Text me, am happy to call back. I am sure with the good sense and social responsibility of our members, friends and society in general, we will come through this trying time.

Take Care

Grant Cullen – Branch Secretary

07824628638 grantcullen@hotmail.com

THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

Registered Charity No 298365

BRANDED GOODS

www.westernfrontassociation.com

Email: office@westernfrontassociation.com

Tel 0207 118 1914

OPEN AS USUAL

After a lot of preparatory work and investigation by our Branch Vice Chairman (WFA Branded Goods Trustee) the WFA is now able to dispatch some Branded Goods without the need to go to Post Office (we do this by means of purchasing Royal Mail postage on line)

The Eshop on the Website has been updated.

The link to the Website is here

http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/shop/

(these details are as under)

Regarding the Covid-19 pandemic please note that only some orders will be accepted

These are:

Clothing items ; These are supplied direct from the Manufacturers

Orders on the following items will be accepted as these can be dispatched via Royal Mail Letter Box (but will only be sent out weekly)

Bookmarks
Baseball Caps
WFA Classic Ties

Lapel Badges

WFA Coasters (Special Edition)

Mousemats

DVD's (Individual -not sets)

Stand To Reprints (Vol 3)

The following items will not be available until further notice:

WFA Mugs

Messenger Bags

Shoulder Bags,

DVE (sets)

Binders (Stand To and Bulletin)

No orders will be accepted on these items until the situation is improved, The current thinking is that as such this is likely to endure through to the summer. Apologies for any inconvenience

Mark Macartney | Branded Goods Trustee | The Western Front Association

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

28th Division and the Hohenzollern Redoubt 1915

An interesting article by Spencer Jones, a lecturer at Wolverhampton University, is in the Spring 2020 issue of the Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research.

He notes that little has been written on the 28th Division, and not much on 1915 generally. The 28th Division in 1915 was composed of regular battalions recalled from various parts of the empire. It was commanded by Maj. Gen. Edward Bulfin, who was recovering from a head wound received in Nov. 1914. The battalions were at full strength but suffered from a lack of training opportunities whilst serving abroad, and the abrupt transition from hot climes to the cold of Northern Europe did not help their fighting efficiency. The 1st Suffolk, for example, had been preparing themselves to take on the Mahdists in Sudan. Smith-Dorrien pointed out that 'one could never become an up-to-date soldier in the prehistoric warfare to be met with against the Dervishes'. In their first month at the front 4,000 men had fallen ill, the majority from trench foot. The Germans were quick to exploit their inexperience and a trench raid on 5th February captured the 2nd East Yorks' machine guns. Sir John French detached the brigades and sent them to other divisions to gain experience. Jones notes that Edmonds, in the *Official History*, skates over this humiliation in order to safeguard the reputation of the Regular Army.

The Division was involved in the Second Battle of Ypres, where it did well. Then followed a relatively quiet summer before taking part in the Battle of Loos. The 28th was part of 1st Corps under Lt. Gen. Sir Hubert Gough, and the Corps were tasked with taking the Hohenzollern Redoubt. This was a formidable defensive position sticking out some 500 yards from the main German line. An elevated slag heap, 'The Dump', and Fosse 8 behind it, was part of this system and provided a good observation point for the enemy.

At the opening of the battle, the 9th (Scottish) Division took Fosse 8 although at great cost. On 26th September the 28th Division, which as part of the reserve and some 17 miles behind the front,

arrived to strengthen the area against German counter-attacks. The 9th Division's GOC, Thesiger, was killed that day, and Bulfin was put in temporary command of that formation. Gough and Bulfin did not make for a happy team, it seems. The 28th were thrown into action after a long march, and without being able to reconnoiter the position. Gough issued orders directly to the brigades bypassing the Division, and Bulfin was just getting over a fever. Shortly afterwards Bulfin was invalided home. Attempts to enlarge their holdings on the Redoubt were thwarted by the Germans, with each of the Division's brigades rotating to defend captured positions. It was a fruitless task, with the last British defenders ejected from the Redoubt on 4th October.

Jones notes that the battle highlighted the important of grenades, as this type of trench warfare rendered the regular battalions' experience in rifle fire and fire and movement tactics impracticable. In this the British were at a disadvantage over the Germans who had a superior grenade. Even so, 20% of the Division's infantry were classed as trained 'bombers' and great effort was made to get 'bombs' up to the front line. Private Samuel Harvey, 1st York & Lancs, won the VC for his work in bringing up 30 crates of grenades under fire before getting wounded. Even so, it was estimated that 80% of the No. 15 Ball grenade failed to detonate, largely due to the difficulty in igniting the fuse in wet weather.

Communication between the front and the rear areas depended on the use of the 'Central Boyeau' trench through which men and supplies moved and the wounded brought back. This congestion prevented heavy Vickers machine guns from coming forward, and the 1.57 inch trench mortars that did make it up were captured by the enemy. Gough order the 9th's artillery, which had registered around the Redoubt to withdraw and be replaced by the 28th's, which had no idea of the territory. Artillery support was, at best, disrupted and confused for several crucial days.

After 6 days of fighting, the British were back in their own trenches, with the 28th Division having 146 officer and 3,230 men as casualties. Gough was highly critical of their performance - the 3rd Middlesex, he wrote lacked "discipline and soldierly bearing". He condemned the "lack of discipline among Brigadiers", and there was "not sufficient energy in command. Small wonder that Pereira (GOC 85th Brigade) in his diary wrote that the "injustice and crassness of (the) Corps Comdr was beyond belief". With its reputation gone the 28th were shipped out to Salonika - ostensibly because that front needed 'seasoned' troops, although Jones suggests that it was to get rid of them in exchange for one of Kitchener's New Army formations. Jones quotes a report also in Edmonds from Vol. II of the *Official History 1915*: "it can no longer be assumed that measures which would as a matter of course have been taken in our Regular divisions in the earlier stages of the war, will now always be carried out efficiently".

Seven of the nine Regular divisions on the Western Front were reorganised by exchanging brigades with New Army divisions - a recognition, writes Jones, that the Regular divisions had lost their original identities.

On 13th October the 46th (North Midland) Division were tasked with an assault on the Hohenzollern Redoubt. That proved a disastrous failure.

Edwin Astill

Dear Members of Chesterfield Western Front Association

I was supposed to speak to you all on the evening of 7 April but, unfortunately, the national lockdown meant this was not possible. I was due to talk about Sheffield's steel industry in the Great War but this talk will now take place at a later date.

In the meantime, I thought you might like to read an article I put together sometime ago, based on my book, 'The Learning Process', published last year by Helion. This may or may not appear in Stand To at some point in the future; I am sure you can appreciate, that it is just of many things up in the air at the moment.

In the meantime, Stay Safe and try to Stay Sane! If you do get bored, do check out YouTube because there are many, many lectures covering aspects of the Great War available on there; some produced by the Western Front Association.

Best wishes and hope to see you all soon,

Andrew Rawson

Keep Your Mouth Shut!

Secrecy and Deception on the Western Front

At one time, a common view of the British generals on the Western Front was that they repeatedly attacked in the same way without learning anything from their mistakes. Research over recent years has proved this to be untrue and several noted military historians have written and lectured on the British Expeditionary Force's 'Learning Process'. What follows is a short account of two aspects of this process; secrecy and deception. Secrecy refers to the methods used to hide activity from the enemy, to make it believe nothing is about to happen when something is planned. Deception covers the fake activities used to make the enemy believe something is about to happen somewhere else, drawing attention away from the real activities.

The BEF's first major offensive at Neuve Chapelle on 10 March 1915 introduced many features which would occur as a matter of course in later attacks. The gunners quietly moved their batteries into camouflaged positions at night and then registered their guns a few at a time, to conceal the build-up of artillery. The infantry deployed

in camouflaged trenches, while dummy ones were left exposed for the Germans to shell. The first `Chinese` Attack was also used, with guns firing a barrage, while the infantry cheered and waved bayonets above the parapet; only they did not advance.

Image 1: Camouflaged Artillery

The success at Neuve Chapelle encouraged GHQ to repeat attack against Aubers Ridge on 9 May. Only the Germans had hidden their machine guns underneath stronger parapets. The barrage failed to recreate the damage and the assault troops were spotted deploying; they were cut down in no man's land. GHQ immediately realised that more had to be done to uncover what the Germans were doing.

A two-stage attack at Festubert followed a few days later. A division with knowledge of the ground attacked at night, only to discover that the troops to their flank had been told to draw attention away from the attack; their fire alerted every German in range. The second division had no knowledge of the ground, so it attacked in daylight and again the Germans were on their guard.

The German gas attack at Ypres in April may have been condemned but the British decided to try the same idea at Loos on 25 September. A forty-minute emission was required because captured German gas masks failed after thirty minutes. Unfortunately, a shortage of chlorine gas in Britain resulted in smoke candles being used to give the illusion of a continuous poisonous cloud. The new weapon caused more problems than it solved because zero hour was tied to the weather conditions, while the wind direction and speed were difficult to predict. The gas also choked and disorientated many of the assault troops.

There was little activity over the winter but one incident in February 1916 illustrates that the British soldier often looked for a way to fool his enemy. Gunners fired double salvoes against the Bluff strongpoint, south of Ypres, throughout one night before firing a single salvo at zero hour. The assault troops found the garrison sheltering, expecting the second salvo to explode.

A variation on the theme was tried after Mount Sorrel, an important observation point east of Ypres, was lost on 2 June. The Canadian Corps shelled the ridge with random thirty-minute barrages. Troops deployed while the final one was being fired on 12 June, knowing it would last forty-five minutes, confusing the Germans.

Fourth Army's plan for 1 July 1916, was to bludgeon a way through the German defences astride the River Ancre with artillery. However, the prolonged bombardment made it obvious an attack was coming on the Somme. The detonation of a large mine ten minutes before zero alerted everyone up, while a second mine eight minutes later

put everyone on standby. The lack of surprise and the absence of smoke resulted in a disaster across most of Fourth Army's front.

The attack on 14 July was a complete contrast because around 30,000 troops silently deployed in no man's land under cover of darkness. They then captured a limited objective after a short, intense barrage. Troops also crawled forward before dawn on 20 July, only to find that the mist was preventing the gunners from hitting their targets. Three days later, the Australians used similar pre-dawn creep and rush tactics to take Pozières.

Rawlinson started Fourth Army's barrage at different times on the night of 22/23 July, so the infantry would reach their final objective at the same time. Unfortunately, the first bombardment alerted all the Germans in earshot, and the combination of the counter-barrage and flares doomed the attack to failure.

Fourth Army tried several artillery tricks during August. For example, six barrages crept across Guillemont on 7 August, before dropping back to the front trench. The assault troops found the Germans under cover, expecting the same routine, when they advanced the seventh barrage. An intense bombardment ended with fifteen minutes of normal artillery fire on 12 August, fooling the Germans west of High Wood into thinking the attack had been cancelled. A third method did away with the final intense barrage, so as not to give away zero hour. Unfortunately, neither the British nor the Germans realised the attack had started because it was so dark and misty.

The codenames 'landship' and 'tank supply' had been used, to hide the true purpose of the tank but GHQ decided to use it in small numbers before the Germans learnt about the new armoured vehicle. The introduction of this new weapon onto the battlefield on 15 September 1916 compromised the artillery barrage, because gaps were left for the tanks. It left the infantry exposed to machine-gun fire when they were late or broke down.

Wet and misty autumn weather blinded the artillery, slowed down the infantry and bogged down the tanks. The dangers of moving slow was eventually countered on 13 November with a double creeping barrage. One in four guns reduced their range by 50 yards as the infantry deployed and the second blast of shrapnel kept the Germans under cover for an extra, vital, couple of minutes. The sound of the guns was then used to coordinate the advance in the fog. The gunners ceased firing on each objective, giving the infantry a five-minute warning, before they fired at double speed to signal the advance was to be resumed.

The Germans used secrecy and deception in March 1917, when they pulled back to the Siegfried Line, or Hindenburg Line. The withdrawal was as long as 15 miles in places and while it shortened the German line by over 20 miles, it did little to upset the plans for the BEF's spring offensive.

Plenty of training was carried out before the offensive around Arras on 9 April, with the infantry walking slowly over marked out courses before crossing at the speed of the creeping barrage. The two army' infantry may have practised the same but their artillery worked used two different types of deception. First Army relied on a prolonged bombardment, which culminated in five days of intense shelling of Vimy Ridge. The batteries then reduced their rate of fire, to put the Germans off their guard, before firing rapidly for three minutes before zero hour. Smoke and snow blinded the Germans as the Canadians overran their position.

Third Army relied on a five-day barrage, with the gunners switching to distant targets east of Arras on the final day, to again fool the Germans into relaxing. They reduced their range, just thirty minutes before zero hour, giving the Germans no time to reinforce the front line. The field batteries then fired three minutes of shrapnel, to warn the infantry to deploy.

The attack on 3 May was a disaster because Lieutenant General Hubert Gough wanted a barrage and a pre-dawn assault, while Lieutenant General Julian Byng wanted a surprise attack at dawn. The compromise over zero hour resulted in the timings being too fast and objectives which were too far apart for an advance in the dark. A fake barrage alerted the Germans and their counter-barrage caused problems for the assembling troops. A full moon then silhouetted the assault troops, while the creeping barrage threw up dust over the German positions.

The attack at Messines is well known for the work done by the tunnellers who secretly dug the mines which exploded under the ridge on 7 June 1917. However, the gunners had already dislocated the defensive plan by firing a complete creeping barrage just four days before. Many German batteries relocated, leaving them little time to re-register their targets before zero hour.

Batteries moved between emplacements at regular intervals as they smashed the German line east of Ypres, avoiding counter-barrages. However, the bombardment left the area so pockmarked that the infantry cleared the first objective, as the tanks negotiated the crater field, on 31 July. They worked together to tackle the second and third German lines, while the artillery's rate of fire controlled the speeds and limits of the advance.

Wet weather halted operations for so long that the Germans though the offensive had been cancelled. Meanwhile, a huge secret operation, codenamed Hush, put an entire division under quarantine for three months, following the false report an outbreak of a contagious condition. The men were actually training for an amphibious landing on the Flanders coast which never happened.

Meanwhile, the Canadian Corps used predicted fire for the first time against Hill 70, near Lens in August 1917; an important innovation for secrecy. Calibrated guns, accurate surveys and improved weather predictions meant the gunners could hit their targets without having to register their targets.

The offensive east of Ypres restarted on 20 September after the batteries had repeatedly practiced the creeping barrage over the course of a week, to test the German reactions. A creeping 1000-yard deep barrage used high-explosive shells to drive the Germans underground, before a machine-gun barrage tempted them to deploy; they were then hit by a second band of shelling. The barrage crept ahead of each objective, to fool the enemy into thinking the troops were still going forward. It then dropped back, while smoke shells were fired to tell the infantry to start moving again.

The 1000-yard barrage was successfully used again on 26 September, only this time it lasted just twenty-four hours because of a shortage of ammunition. There was no preliminary barrage on 4 October because there was even less ammunition but the creeping barrage caught the Germans in the open, as they waited to launch their own attack.

After three successful advances, surely it was the time to keep pushing? But rain turned the churned-up battlefield into a swamp and the attack on 9 October was a total disaster. Despite the problems, the fighting dragged on until Passchendaele Ridge was secured a month later.

Tanks needed good ground to break through and the Cambrai operation promised the right conditions. The rear area was divided into three areas with different camouflage rules, according to whether they could be seen by ground observers, balloon observers or spotter planes. Friendly spotter planes regularly flew overhead to check everyone was sticking to the rules. Meanwhile, lorries only showed their lights when they heading back, to make it look like the line was being thinned out.

Officers dressed as other ranks and the Scots of 51st Division even wore trousers as they checked the ground, so as not to arouse suspicions. Rumours that other parts of the line were going to be attacked were circulated, while one story related to the opening of a new tank training school, to account for the number of tank officers in the area.

The tanks would cut the wire, while the gunners used predictive fire to hit distant targets, allowing the artillery could stay silent before zero hour. The wide range of secrecy and deception techniques kept the Germans in the dark and while there was a successful break-in on 20 November 1917, the tanks could not make a breakthrough.

The spring of 1918 was a time for desperate defences for the British soldiers. Firstly, on the Somme in March, then on the Lys in April and finally on the Marne in May. There were no opportunities for trying out the secrecy and deception techniques developed during 1917 but after defying all three attempts to break their line, the BEF was ready to try them out in the summer.

The Australians used 'peaceful penetration' tactics to check that the Hamel defences, prior to their attack on 4 July 1918. Some batteries registered distant targets during routine bombardments, while others regularly smothered the trenches with smoke and gas, to condition the German into putting their masks when they heard the guns. Planes dropped bombs and flares to distract the Germans as the infantry assembled, while the gunners opened fire eight minutes before zero, to mask the sound of the approaching tanks.

The Australian success with tanks at Hamel is well known but a low-key British attack at Meteren on 18 July was also successful. Gas was used in the same fashion before the attack, while the infantry ran across no man's land as smoke and burning oil smothered the German trenches. Many Germans were taken prisoner as they donned their masks.

The main attack on the BEF's front was planned to start east of Amiens on 8 August. Each level of command was briefed on a need to know basis until the final instructions were issued just forty-eight hours before zero hour. Meanwhile, Second and First Army broadcast false plans to launch an attack in Flanders.

Tens of thousands of troops camped in camouflaged billets under radio silence, while diversionary reliefs were made to confuse the Germans. Fake troop movements were made along other parts of the line, while a couple of Canadian units were sent to Flanders and their false radio messages drew attention away from the Corps' move to the Somme. The movement of large numbers of troops and stockpiling of ammunition made it clear something big was afoot but the secrecy instructions printed in each man's pay book ended with the words; *'Keep Your Mouth Shut!'*

New batteries deployed at night and then stayed silent under camouflage; the ones which had fired relocated before zero hour, to avoid counter-battery fire. A dust cloud was created near St Pol and reported as a tank training exercise, while the real tanks followed sand covered roads, to muffle the sound of their tracks. The Royal Air Force discreetly assembled 800 planes while increasing air activity over other parts of the front.

Aircraft flew low over the battlefield to mask the sound of the assembling tanks, while their drivers reduced their throttles to reduce the engine noise. Phosphorus bombs thickened up the mist, as the infantry deployed in no

man's land, and then one thousand guns opened fire as the tanks drove past at zero hour. The infantry followed through the crushed wire and overran the enemy trenches, before they knew what was happening.

The Germans chose to hold a deep outpost zone opposite Third Army, so the artillery targeted scattered targets, rather firing a creeping barrage on 21 August. Mist allowed the infantry to outflank the German posts but the tanks were delayed; they were then left exposed when it cleared. Infantry swam across the Ancre to secure Fourth Army's bridgehead on 22 August and then used old trenches and sunken roads to outflank the German outposts.

The Canadian troops used 'bore holing' to find to find the weak spots in the enemy line east of Arras. The Germans were aware First Army planed an attack, so zero hour was set much earlier than normal on 26 August and it was a success. A staggered barrage was employed two days later but the first sound of gunfire simply alerted all the Germans in earshot. The Canadian gunners redeemed themselves with 'an ingenious barrage that rolled from right to left' along the Vis-en-Artois Switch on 30 August. The infantry attacked from both ends of the trench system, capturing two battalions.

There were few chances for Third or Fourth Army to use any surprise or deception techniques as they followed up the German withdrawal across the old Somme battlefield to the Canal du Nord and Somme Canal.

Crews used smoke dischargers to hide their tanks, as they drove through the Drocourt-Quéant Line on 2 September. The Canadian Corps then made false preparations to cross the Sensée stream and Canal du Nord until Third Army crossed the canal tunnel on 4 September. The Germans then fell back to their final prepared defensive position; the Hindenburg Line.

By now, the artillery relied on two types of shells to neutralise the enemy batteries. Gas shells reduced the crew's effectiveness, while high-explosive shells could detonate ammunition stores. Preliminary barrages were often omitted, because tanks could cut the few entanglements. Smoke shells were used liberally to hide the assault troops, while gas shells were used to make areas uninhabitable, particularly woods. The shortage of tanks was sometimes supplemented with dummy tanks made from wooden frames covered in painted hessian. Ropes would pull the models forward, while revving motorbike engines completed the charade. Despite all these techniques, it still took two weeks to crawl forward within striking distance of the Hindenburg Line.

Image 2: Dummy Tank

The BEF had a well-developed set of tactical tricks in its arsenal by the time three attacks struck the German line between 27 and 29 September. Starting with First and Third Armies in the centre, followed by Fourth Army to the

south and then Second Army in the north. The Germans began withdrawing in earnest a few days later and the BEF continued to pursue them until the Armistice on 11 November 1918.

The BEF tried and tested many types of secrecy and deception between the spring of 1915 and the autumn of 1918. Some failed but hopefully, this short piece has illustrated that many ways of tricking the Germans into thinking nothing was happening or that the threat was elsewhere, were used successfully on many occasions across the Western Front.

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

From the *Ralph Vaughan Williams Society Journal*

George Butterworth

Among the 72,000 names carved on Sir Edwin Lutyens's stunning memorial to the Missing of the Somme at Thiepval is that of Lieutenant G S K Butterworth, of the Durham Light Infantry. To those who love English music, the sight of his name is both stirring and depressing. Staring at it four years ago, during the commemorations of the Somme centenary, I reflected (as countless had, I know, done before me) of the abominable waste not just of the life of this sublime composer, but of the generation he represented.

His death in 1916 was a loss ranking with that of Wilfred Owen or Edward Thomas, to choose just two names from the creative holocaust wrought by the Great War. George Butterworth's short life – he was killed at 31 – is recalled in Stewart Morgan Hajdukiewicz's moving documentary out on DVD, called All My Life's Buried Here. The title comes from a song Butterworth wrote after the death of his beloved mother in 1911. Within a few years, it would resonate for him. His mother, Julia Wigan, was a fine soprano; his father became the general manager of the North Eastern Railway. His mother encouraged young George's interest not just in the piano, but in writing music. He had a work performed while at Eton; and read music at Oxford, becoming president of the music club there. As the film – which includes interviews with Butterworth's biographer and other experts on his music – suggests, a young composer of his generation ought to have studied at the Royal College of Music, a formidable nursery of the highest talent, where he would have been taught by Parry and Stanford, and encountered alumni such as Vaughan Williams and Holst. But Butterworth made all the connections he needed at Oxford, meeting not just Vaughan Williams, who became his friend, mentor and profound admirer, but also Adrian Boult and Cecil Sharp, the godfather of English folk-song collecting, whose influence over him was enormous.

This was the era when Sharp, Vaughan Williams and Holst sought to establish a properly English musical language, rather than taking inspiration from the great German composers of the 19th century, notably Brahms and Wagner, as Parry and Stanford, and the towering musical presence in Edwardian England, Elgar, had done. So Butterworth, often with Vaughan Williams, tramped around the English countryside collecting folk songs and writing them down. And, like his companion, Butterworth developed some he had collected into arrangements for professional singers or orchestral works, such as the Two English Idylls of 1911 and The Banks of Green Willow of 1913.

Reconstruction of scenes from Butterworth's life in the documentary All My Life's Buried Here

Folk song collecting inspired Butterworth to try folk dancing, and one of the film's greatest wonders is footage from nearly 110 years ago of him, Cecil Sharp and others shaking a leg. It also provided a starting point for perhaps his best-known work, the settings of some of A E Housman's A Shropshire Lad poems, which show how, as with Vaughan Williams, Butterworth's idiom, grounded in folk song, was heading in a more experimental direction. One is forced to wonder what Butterworth might have achieved, if, like Vaughan Williams, he had been spared.

My only criticism of this excellent film is that it omits completely what I consider to be Butterworth's masterpiece – not simply because of its sheer beauty, but because of its striking originality: his setting of four poems for tenor from W E Henley's Echoes, three of which he orchestrated as Love Blows As the Wind Blows. Those settings, more than anything Butterworth did, hint where he would have gone as a composer, and it would have been good if they could have been shared with the large audience this film deserves. The peerless recording of the orchestral version is by Robert Tear, with the CBSO conducted by Vernon Handley, if you can find it.

Hajdukiewicz's film was crowdfunded, a brilliant enterprise and noble of those who supported it. It is scandalous that no major broadcasting network commissioned it and put its resources behind it; presumably because of its lack of diversity, or because it requires some intelligence to appreciate its profundity, or because it did not offer an opportunity for Dr Lucy Worsley to dress up. The film opens with the most touching ceremony in the village of Pozières in France, where local people commemorate, on the anniversary of his death each year, the fine English composer who came to drive the Germans from their country. How typical that our cultural tsars don't afford Butterworth's memory the same respect.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

WFA Chesterfield Newsletter Editor

Dear Grant

I'm not aware that there is a Letters from Members section in the Newsletter – forgive me if I've missed it or forgotten in these distracting times. I would like to propose having one please and that Members are encouraged to use it, especially during Lockdown, which may be extended for a long period. I would like to contribute the following …

MAKING TIME TO CHAT AND SERENDIPITY IN 'LOCKDOWN'

When I sent Grant my article 'Making Time to Chat' at the beginning of February – included in the April Newsletter – I had no idea how much life would change over the eight weeks in between!

The malevolence of Covid-19 has caused the deaths of at least 12,000 in England and more than 100,000 worldwide. Numbers for the UK are inaccurate and underestimated because statistics are only collected from hospitals and even these can be several days out of date. Totals for Care Homes and people in the community have yet to be added. Whatever the correct number, I am unable to imagine so many individuals of all ages, backgrounds, occupations and interests or the suffering of their family, friends and colleagues grieving for their loss.

It's a salutary lesson to compare this with the millions of predominantly young men who were killed in the First World War or millions more by the 'Spanish' flu of 1918. Is it any wonder that there are discrepancies in the total numbers killed? Or that the Government – and Councils – of 100 years ago were unable to collate every name without the advantage of computers?

'Lockdown' was introduced three weeks ago as I write this on Easter Monday, while meticulously washing hands to avoid infection by Covid-19 and 'social distancing' have been in place for longer. Three weeks has felt like three months to me as I'm on the high-risk register and housebound for 12 weeks (another nine to go), while my husband Paul is 'shielding me'. I suspect the period might be extended further for everyone. I'm resigned to being restricted and having to take safety measures in the hope I won't be infected; I'm grateful we live in a comfortable house with private garden. There's a huge amount of research I can do on the internet and I enjoy writing.

Sadly, though, there is no chance of being able to chat face to face with strangers now, despite having plenty of time! I must content myself with phoning people I know or exchanging emails, but even here serendipity is alive and kicking …

I was delighted to be contacted very soon after receiving yet another fascinating Newsletter from Grant by WFA Member Yvonne Ridgeway from Sheffield. It struck me how curious it was to receive any response to one of my articles, but especially one asking about the Crimean War rather than my more familiar territory of the First World War. I was delighted and Yvonne's suggestions have proved extremely helpful.

Yvonne told me how she used to see the four griffins in Castle Square, cast by Chris Bouton in 1995 from moulds of the originals on the Crimean War Monument. (More information is in the Public Art Research Archive, Sheffield Hallam University, or Public Art in Sheffield website). I knew nothing about these griffins previously and I'm looking forward to viewing the sculptures post Covid-19.

I hoped to find some photos to use in the WFA Chesterfield Newsletter, but none were of a high enough resolution. If any readers have taken photos they are willing to share with me, I would love to see them please. As a huge fan of William de Morgan's ceramics, I'm an admirer of griffins. These legendary creatures have the body and tail of a lion with the head, wings and talons of an eagle, respectively the kings of the animal and bird worlds. Popular in Ancient Egypt and Persia they symbolise Power and Protection.

Yvonne also recommended a book by Stephen Johnson: "The Old Greybeards: Sheffield's Waterloo, Crimea and Indian Mutiny Veterans" (self-published in 2018). I tried my usual internet sources but found no copies for sale, so I 'googled' 'Stephen Johnson'. Bu lucky chance, Sheffield Family History Society had recently added information about Stephen's research for his second book - about the Boer Wars – with contact details for anyone with relations who served.

I emailed Stephen and he agreed to reserve a copy of “Old Greybeards” for me to collect when I can; he lives in Sheffield so I may as well save on postage – I am from Barnsley!

I also enquired about the area covered by his Boer War research because of my interest in the 16 men listed on the ornate Memorial in St Mary’s Church in Barnsley. I’d tried to identify them a couple of years ago without success. Amazingly, Stephen is familiar with this Memorial and, because his research covers a wider area than just Sheffield, he had already researched some of the men on it. He very generously sent me some basic information on eight of them and I hope this will assist me in fleshing out their stories when I can.

I would love to hear from any WFA Members who have photos they are willing to share of the Crimean War Memorial and cast griffins. If you know anything about local men (relations or other) who served in the Boer Wars, I can facilitate contact with Stephen Johnson.

Stay well and happy!

Jane Ainsworth

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

On the same topic `Correspondence`, I received the undernoted e mail from Phillipe Gorczynski at Flesquiries in the Somme Valley, France. Phillipe as most folks know discovered the tank `Deborah D51` on his land, had it excavated and for years it was on display at his small private museum – which he was always happy to open up to visitors by prior arrangement – as I did back in 2006. Last year, after years of negotiation with the local authority `Deborah` was moved to a custom built museum.

Dear Grant,
I hope you are keeping safe and far from the micro invaders.
You could be interested to know about this information
You can share it as much as you can.
Kindest regards
Philippe

“Deborah the Tank film project is to be part of BBC museum event tomorrow, so please tweet her everywhere! Links below #MuseumFromHome hashtag @bbcarts and @ahrcpress

Anything we can do to help in this COVID time for museums and our friends in communities and organisations we are trying and it seems Deborah short film has been accepted to this BBC event tomorrow.”

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

DR JAMES NIVEN (1851 – 1925): AN EXTRAORDINARY MAN

"The Prime Minister lies ill in a hospital ward having succumbed to the pandemic that was taking the lives of so many citizens. He needs help breathing.

"This, however, is not April 2020 but September 1918 and the Prime Minister is the charismatic David Lloyd George, the Prime Minister of First World War Britain. He survived the 'Spanish' flu but only just. His valet said it was ‘touch and go’. The news was kept fairly quiet.

"He was in Manchester at the time and this is interesting. There was an Influenza battle being fought in the city that has made it one of the most frequently cited responses to the 1918 pandemic. Manchester had one of the most progressive Medical Officers of Health in Britain, James Niven, and we are still living with this unsung hero’s legacy. He had managed to cut the city’s death rate from 24.2 per thousand in 1893 to 13.8 per thousand in 1921 – thanks to his pioneering insistence on improved sanitation, maternity services, health visiting, infant welfare, smoke

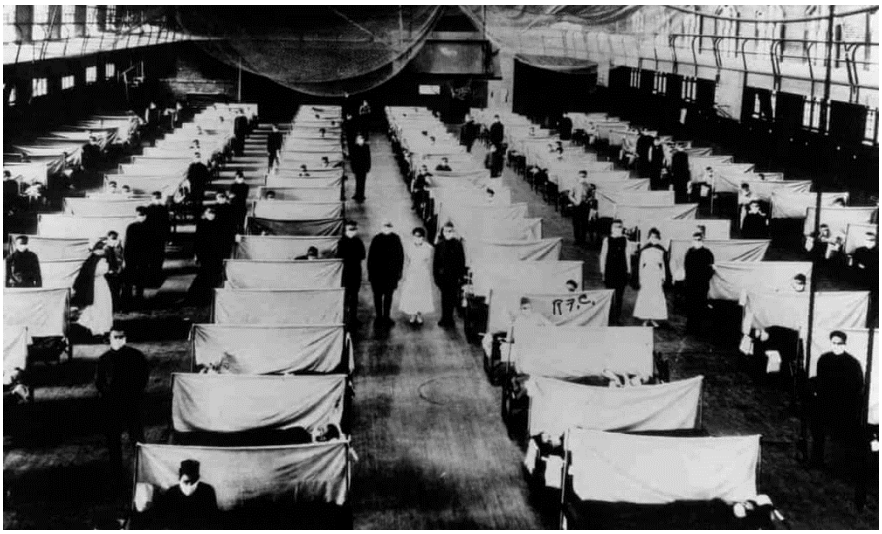
abatement, and preventive measures against TB.

"It was during the 'Spanish' flu outbreak of 1918 that Niven had become more widely known beyond Manchester. As a deadly strain of influenza spread across Europe and the rest of the world, it was Niven who pushed a simple, though unpopular, health message that kept many more Mancunians alive than inhabitants of other UK cities: close down society as much as possible to stop the spread of the disease. He proposed closing schools, Sunday schools and stopping mass events.

"He faced huge resistance. He wasn't able to force cinemas to shut but managed to get them to leave a 15-minute gap between screenings to allow for disinfecting. He issued public information leaflets telling people to isolate, distance and keep symptomatic family members in a separate room. His purposeful response was very different to the decisions made in London to carry on. It is thought that Niven helped to 'flatten the curve' in Manchester and saved huge numbers of lives.

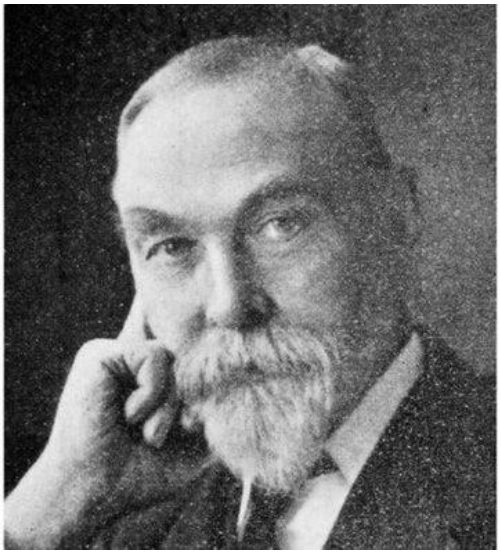
"Niven retired soon after the pandemic and only a couple of years later committed suicide. It is not known what part the pandemic played in this tragedy."

Neil and Margaret, friends of my older sister Ruth and retired Environmental Health Officers, researched Dr James Niven after watching a documentary on TV and shared the above information. I watched neither but was shocked that his pioneering and successful work seemed to be ignored or unacknowledged today. He inspired me to find out more …



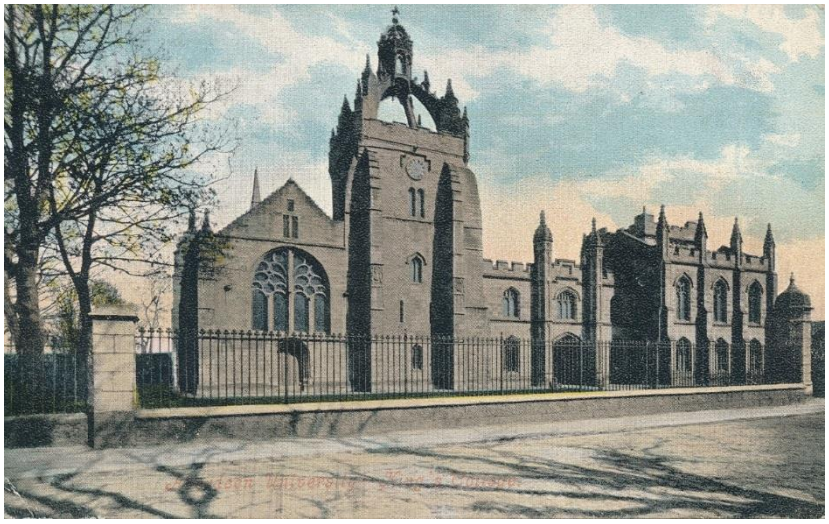
Quarantined patients in a warehouse in 1918

DR JAMES NIVEN MA LLD (1851 – 1925) - BIOGRAPHY



Dr James Niven

JAMES NIVEN was born on 12 March 1851 in Peterhead, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, and he was baptised in the local church on 17 April 1851. James was the 5th of eight children of Charles Niven (1805 – 1867) and Barbara nee Davidson (1809 – 1878). His siblings were John Gibb, William Davidson, Charles David, Barbara, Alexander, Thomas and George. James' only sister Barbara died in infancy before he was born; his younger brothers Alexander and Thomas also died in childhood.



James graduated in Arts from Aberdeen University (above) with honours in Mathematics in 1870. He then went to Cambridge University, where he obtained a first-class degree in Mathematics (as did three of his brothers) and was made a Fellow of Queen's College. He began studying Medicine while at Cambridge and took his Bachelor of Medicine degree in 1880; in 1889 he obtained a Bachelor of Surgery degree at Cambridge (BChir).

Dr James' first post was at St Thomas' Hospital, he was then appointed Assistant Medical Officer at Deptford Fever and Smallpox Hospitals. He relocated to Manchester, where he spent a short time in General Practice before becoming Medical Officer of Health, first in Oldham for eight years then Manchester for 28 years. While in Oldham, Dr James campaigned to have tuberculosis made a notifiable disease, but this would take another 20 years.

Dr James married Margaret Ethel Adams in summer 1894 in Caistor, Lincolshire, where Margaret was born. They lived for some time in a 12 roomed house at Uplands, 50 Denison Road, Victoria Park (Rusholme), Manchester, before moving to 50 Granville Road, Fallowfield, Manchester. The family employed Domestic Servants.

Dr James and Margaret had three daughters, who were baptised at St James the Apostle Church in Birch, Rusholme: Margaret Barbara, Ruth Mary and Edith Gertrude. The girls were 15, 13 and 10 when their mother died. None of them got married or had children.

> Margaret Barbara Niven (1896 – 1972) was an Artist (Painter) and Art Teacher in Manchester on the 1939 Register; her partner, Ernest Brooks, was 15 years younger, a Painter and Illustrator. Margaret died in Southwark, London, aged 76.
>
> Ruth Mary Niven (1898 – 1999) obtained a Class 1 BA degree in German with English as subsidiary at Royal Holloway College, University of London, in 1920. She became a Teacher and continued to live with her father in Manchester. In 1921, Ruth went to Lisbon with him. She departed from Liverpool for New York on Steamship SS 'Carinthia' on 22 August 1925 and may have been away from home when her father died. Ruth died in Somerset, aged 101.
> Dr Edith Gertrude (1901 – 1981) qualified as a GP then MRCS and LRCP in London in 1928. She was Resident Anaesthetist at Queen's Hospital in Birmingham, later Medical Officer at Holloway then Headington. On the 1939 Register, she was Medical Practitioner in Hampstead, London. Dr Edith visited Durban in 1952, arriving in Southampton on 6 June on Steamship RMS 'Edinburgh Castle'. She died in a Nursing Home in Harrogate, aged 80.

Dr James continued his pioneering work in Manchester and played an invaluable role during the 'Spanish' influenza pandemic of 1918, taking action that saved many lives. (*This flu was so named because Spain was neutral in the First World War and reported it in newspapers, while it was censored in the Allied Countries. It actually started in the USA*). His interest in Mathematics led to his analysis of Statistics in connection with influenza

and other diseases; the Local Government Board and Ministry of Health sought his advice about public health issues. After an exemplary and pioneering career in medicine and public health, Dr James retired in 1922.

Dr James' parents died some years before he got married. Although his wife Margaret was 15 years younger than him, she died in November 1911, aged 46. Dr James outlived his four highly esteemed brothers, three of whom were also brilliant at Mathematics and had attended Cambridge University. They died in the following order:

Rev John Gibb Niven MA (1834 - 1901) took his Master's at Aberdeen University. He was Schoolmaster at Crimond and obtained a license in the Church of Scotland. He was ordained to become a Minister in 1870, a few months before he married Helen Forbes Crombie in Newmachar, Aberdeen. They had three children: Katherine Scott Forbes Niven, who died in Bournemouth, aged 30, William Davidson and John C. Helen was living in Aberdeen with two children on the 1891 Census; she subsequently moved to Saville House in Torquay, Devon, where she died in January 1900, aged 62. It appears that Rev John and Helen were separated because he was not an Executor for her Will and she left almost £3,000. Rev John was lodging in the Manchester area on the 1891 and 1901 Censuses and died in 1901, aged 66, in Ashton under Lyne. He was interred in Gorton Cemetery, Manchester.

Dr George Niven MB (1859 - 1904) was a Physician and Surgeon. His partner was Mary Arbuthnot Knox, with whom he had four children between 1888 to 1896: William, Dugald, who died at one day old, Marjorie Davidson and Alan George. The family were living in Didsbury on the 1901 Census. Dr George died in 1904, aged 45, in Didsbury.

Sir William Davidson Niven KCB FRS (1842 - 1917) was a Mathematician and Electrical Engineer. He was Director of Studies at the Royal Naval College in Greenwich for 30 years. After retiring, Sir William lived alone in a large house at Eastburn, St John's Road, Sidcup, Kent, where he employed Domestic Servants. He died there in 1917, aged 75, and was buried in Peterhead Old Churchyard with his parents and three siblings who died in infancy. (Headstone – inscription). Probate was granted to his brother James and his Solicitor.

Charles David Niven LLB FRS (1845 - 1923) was renowned for his long and successful career at the University of Aberdeen, where he established the new Physics Department. He married Mary Stewart and they had two daughters: Lucy Barbara and Mary Stewart. Charles died in 1923, aged 78, in Aberdeen. He was interred in Banchory-Devenick Churchyard with his wife, whose parents were also buried in this Churchyard. (Headstone – inscription).

Dr James Niven died on 29 September 1925, aged 74, at Onchan Harbour, Douglas, Isle of Man. He had travelled there on the 27th and checked into a local hotel. He paid his bill the next day and told staff he was leaving but his bed was not slept in. A coat was later found on Onchan Head, which had a note in the pocket, and this led to a search. His body was discovered in ten feet of water at Onchan Beach two days later. There was an inquest, details of which were reported in several contemporary newspapers, with the Verdict that death was due to prussic acid poisoning during 'temporary insanity'.

The newspapers also reported on Dr James Niven's reputation as a Medical Officer of Health and his pioneering work.

Probate was granted to William Deacon's Bank on 10 November 1925 at Manchester; Dr James left £5,833 (*worth about £2 million in 2018 based on relative income*). The *Lancashire Evening Post* stated that Dr James Niven was 'cremated at Manchester.. prior to burial at Lincoln'. I have not been able to confirm details or where his wife was buried.

##########

PRUSSIC ACID (HYDROGEN CYANIDE or HCN, HYDROCYANIC ACID)

This derives from a blue pigment called Prussian Blue, hence its name (cyan = blue). HCN is present in pits of fruits, apples, cherries, apricots, and bitter almonds. HCN has the distinctive smell of almonds. It is a constituent of tobacco smoke.

It was used in the First World War as a chemical weapon against the Central Powers, by the French in 1916 and by the United States & Italy in 1918. It was unsuccessful because of weather conditions; it is lighter than air and disperses quickly.

HCN is absorbed into a carrier for use as a pesticide. In WW2 it was used by Germans in Concentration Camps to delouse clothing but, more notoriously, as Zyklon B (Cyclone B) for mass murder as part of their 'Final Solution' – the B stands for Prussian Blue. HCN has also been used in some States of the USA for judicial executions.

Prussic Acid / Hydrogen Cyanide is the most toxic and rapid acting of any common poison. It blocks the activity of enzymes leading to oxygen deprivation, which first affects the nervous system, The poison acts on the cardiovascular system and respiratory function with characteristic changes to the blood stream. Symptoms include: confusion, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, abdominal or chest pain, headache, shortness of breath, irregular heart-beat, loss of consciousness, convulsions and coma.

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES FROM FINDMYPAST

***Aberdeen Press & Journal* – Thursday 1 October 1925**
ABERDEEN GRADUATE / FOUND DROWNED AT ISLE OF MAN

News was received at Manchester yesterday that Dr Niven, late Medical Officer of Health for the city, had been found drowned at Douglas, Isle of Man, ….

Dr Niven crossed to the island on Monday and put up at a local hotel. The following day he paid his bill and left. Yesterday morning some wearing apparel was found on Onchan Head, and a search was made in the neighbourhood of the cliff, with the result that the body of an elderly man was discovered submerged in 10 feet of water. On the clothing was a letter, which contained a request that he should be buried at sea.

Dr James Niven was a member of an Aberdeenshire family, whose exceptional distinction as students in the University of Aberdeen and at Cambridge, and as scientific men, is well known. A brother was the late Professor Charles Niven, of the Chair of Natural Philosophy at Aberdeen University.

Born at Peterhead in 1851, the son of Charles Niven, Dr Niven graduated in Arts at Aberdeen in 1870 with honours in mathematics. Proceeding to Cambridge, he won the Eighth Wranglership**, and was made a Fellow of Queen's College. It is interesting o note that not less than four brothers in this family were Wranglers, the late Professor Niven being Senior Wrangler in 1867, and another brother Third Wrangler in 1866.

At Cambridge the late Dr Niven began the study of medicine and took his medical degree there in 1880. After a short time in general practice he became Medical Officer of Health for Oldham and later of

Manchester. Two of his brothers also occupied positions in Manchester. In such a position Dr Niven was not only most strenuous and successful in carrying out his administrative duties, but improved the sanitary position of the communities in his control, and he also found time to conduct a number of highly important investigations into various public health problems, the results of which were published in various journals and in his own admirable annual reports. His work was characterised by thoroughness and scientific accuracy and by openness of mind and excellent judgment.

*(** A Wrangler is a student who achieves a first class honours degree in Mathematics at Cambridge University. Senior denotes the highest marks, then Second etc*).

Dundee Evening Telegraph – Thursday 1 October 1925
PETERHEAD MAN'S TRAGIC DEATH / FOUND DROWNED AT ISLE OF MAN
Held Big Post in Manchester *(Same article as above with extra last paragraphs*)
His Work in Manchester
A letter received at Dr Niven's home yesterday stated that he was well and enjoying his stay, and later came news of his death.

Dr Niven was a widower, his wife having died about two years ago. He has three daughters, one of whom lives in Manchester.

Campaigns against smoke pollution and the house fly were notable features of his earlier activities but his most important work in Manchester was that, undertaken in collaboration with the late Professor Delavine, to ensure a pure milk supply.

Combating Tuberculosis
Largely as the result of this, Manchester was empowered, by what are now known as Model Milk Clauses, to deal with unsatisfactory supplies, and by this means the risk of tubercle bacili infection has been greatly reduced.

Dr Niven was one of the first medical officers to organise means of combating tuberculosis, and while in Oldham prepared a scheme, which was approved by the medical profession, for the notification of phthisis (*TB*).

Dr Niven received the gold medal of the Royal Institution of Public Health in recognition of his services to the cause of preventive medicine, and also held the Smith medal of the Public Health Conference.

***Aberdeen Press & Journal* – Friday 2 October 1925**
A GREAT SERVANT / GENEROUS TRIBUTE TO DR NIVEN
The "Manchester Guardian" of yesterday paid the following glowing tribute to the work of the late Dr James Niven …

Dr Niven was one of the greatest servants that Manchester has ever had. He not only did thoroughly well all the routine work of a City Medical Officer: in alliance with another man of high scientific distinction and single-minded devotion to the good of humanity, Professor Sheridan Delapine, he carried out several special campaigns in which research and practical sanitary improvement went hand in hand.

To have brought about, in great part by one's own administrative energy and one's eagerness to apply new scientific knowledge to daily affairs, a decline of some 40 per cent in the death-rate of a great city might well give any man a sense of having succeeded in life and done good in his generation. But if ever a man was free from complacency, Niven was. He found a check to any such feeling in a recurrent doubt of whether the very improvements of which he was a pioneer might prejudice the future of the human stock by enabling a larger proportion of persons of low physical type to survive and to transmit their deficiencies to another generation.

The highest courage has been said to be courage without hope, and perhaps the indomitable resolution with which Niven prosecuted his efforts to reduce urban mortality needed all the greater moral strength

because, like Hamlet's, it was sometimes "sackled o'er" with the pale cast of private misgiving as to its value. Highly gifted and deeply learned, but reserved, unambitious for himself, and so intensely simple as

to puzzle sophisticated people, he found his good in doing the duties of his post with such a passion of diligence as only first-rate men and women put into work which promises them no personal advantage. Very little was publicly known about him, except by a few colleagues, but he was one of the men who keep English municipal work an honourable service and maintain the dignified tradition that a man should give to the world more than he takes from it.

***Aberdeen Press & Journal* – Saturday 3 October 1925**
DR NIVEN'S DEATH / PRUSSIC ACID FOUND IN STOMACH

A verdict that death was due to prussic acid poisoning during temporary insanity was returned at the coroner's inquest at Douglas, Isle of Man, yesterday on the body of Dr James Niven, of 50 Grenville Road, Fallowfield, Manchester, which was discovered in 10 feet of water near Onchan Beach on Wednesday morning.

Evidence of identification was given by Mr James Niven Laing, Deputy Coroner for Salford, who stated that Dr Niven had retired, but had been formerly for 25 years Medical Officer of Health for Manchester and was 74 years of age. Since his retirement he had become despondent, but had no financial or family trouble. He had been a brilliant scholar.

Medical evidence was to the effect that a post-mortem examination revealed prussic acid in the stomach. The manageress of the hotel where Dr Niven stayed since his arrival in the island, said he seemed eccentric.

A letter found in Dr Niven's coat pocket read:-

In the event of my death this letter will be found in my coat by the shore.
My name is on a handbag in my room.
I desire to be buried at sea near Douglas.

JAMES NIVEN

***Hull Daily Mail* – Saturday 3 October 1925**
ANNOYED AT HIS SLOWNESS / BRILLIANT DOCTOR'S SUICIDE AT 74
(*This article contains some additional details*)

An inquest was opened by the High Bailiff of Douglas, on Friday

…

James Niven Laing, barrister, police surgeon, and Deputy County Coroner of Salford
Identified the body as that of his friend … Witness saw Dr Niven last Sunday … Recently Dr Niven had been getting very slow, physically and mentally, and that seemed to annoy him very much. He had been a most brilliant man, fellow and tutor of his college at Cambridge, and had boundless energy.

Dr Percy W Hampton said that death, in his opinion, was due to poisoning by prussic acid. A bottle, one-quarter full of this poison, was found on the deceased. …

***Lancashire Evening Post* – Saturday 3 October 1925**
TRAGIC END OF EX-MANCHESTER MEDICAL OFFICER / LAST MESSAGE OF THE DECEASED
(*This article contains additional details*)

James Niven Laing … was a great friend of the deceased's father, and the witness was christened after him. .. During the last two years (*Dr Niven*) had lived in apartments.

Dr Percy W Hampton, who viewed the body at 5pm on Wednesday, said death had taken place not more than 24 hours previously. …

Miss Bond, manageress of the Peveril Hotel, … did not see him after Tuesday afternoon tea. He had settled his account. On Wednesday morning it was observed that his bed had not been slept in.

The chambermaid also considered Dr Niven eccentric. He packed his case on Tuesday morning, and said he was going to leave by steamer, but he did not leave. He said he would go that night, but there was no night steamer.

Letter .. *In the event of my death this letter will be found in my coat by the shore.*

My name is on a handbag in my bedroom, and the address of my residence. The bag is to be sent to Miss Cheeseman, 50 Granville street, Fallowfield, Manchester. I desire to be buried at sea near Douglas.

The letter contained several erasures and one misspelling. …

***Western Daily Press* – Saturday 3 October 1925**
SUICIDE AT 74 / SAD END OF A BRILLIANT MAN
… the body … was discovered in ten feet of water …

***Lancashire Evening Post* – Wednesday 7 October 1925**
LOCAL AND DISTRICT NEWS
Dr James Niven, formerly medical officer for Manchester, who was drowned in the Isle of Man, was cremated at Manchester yesterday prior to burial at Lincoln.

***Illustrated Police News* – Thursday 8 October 1925**
DOCTOR FOUND DROWNED
… found drowned in a creek on the north side of Douglas Bay … after three hours search

***Aberdeen Press & Journal* – Thursday 22 October 1925**
LATE DR JAMES NIVEN / Further Tributes to Health Work at Manchester

At its first meeting after the death of Dr James Niven, whose long service as Medical Officer of Health for Manchester has received such widespread recognition from the medical world, the Health Committee of the Corporation of Manchester passed the following resolution:

"That the Public Health Committee of the City of Manchester desire to place on record its appreciation of the long and valuable services rendered by Dr James Niven as Medical Officer of Health for the city and to the distinguished and world wide reputation which he attained in preventive medicine. That an expression of the sincere sympathy of the Committee be conveyed to the members of his family in the great loss they have sustained".

Among the many tributes to the late Dr Niven, the following by Dr Matthew Hay, whose distinguished work as Medical Officer of Aberdeen is so well known, is at once intimate and generous:-

I have always regarded James Niven as one of the ablest and most strenuous of the British Officers of Health in my fairly long time in health service. He was always sincere and honest and thoughtful and logical and scientific in all he did. No Medical Officer that I know of did better and more trustworthy work. He never did things for show or popular applause. He worked solely for the work's sake and true object, whatever might happen or be said. He enjoyed the very highest respect and appreciation among his professional colleagues throughout Great Britain.

The Niven family of brothers formed a group of remarkable men of quite unusual ability. Only once in many years do we find anywhere such a group occurring. They were not only able men – much above the level of what is generally considered as good – but they all were as true as steel, and as trustworthy and straight as ever man could be.

The ex-Lord Mayer of Manchester has also written of Dr Niven:-

I think I had known him as intimately as anyone in Manchester, and no-one appreciates more the value of his great services to the city. In addition to being a Medical Officer of outstanding merit he was also a fine

character, although a modest and reserved man. I can recall to mind very many little acts of kindness on his part to others.

Dr Niven was an Aberdeen graduate, and a brother of the late Professor Charles Niven.

MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTIONS

Headstone in Peterhead Old Churchyard

Here lie the remains of CHARLES NIVEN who was born at Blairgowrie and died at Peterhead (where he resided for about 40 years) on the 31st March 1867 age 66 years also of his children
THOMAS, BARBARA & ALEXANDER who all died in infancy
also of his wife
BARBARA who died on the 5th Dec 1878 aged 69 years also of their son
Sir William Davidson Niven, KCB,FRS late director of studies Royal Naval College, Greenwich, who died at Sidcup May 29th 1917 age 75 years.

Headstone in Banchory-Devenick Churchyard

Here lie the remains of
CHARLES NIVEN FRS DSc (Dubl) LLD Senior Wrangler 1867,
Fellow of Trinity College Cambridge 1868-1877,
Professor of Mathematics Queens College Cork 1867-1880 and thereafter
42 years Professor of Natural Philosophy in the University of Aberdeen.
Born in Peterhead 14 Sept 1845
died in the Chanonry Old Aberdeen May 11th 1923.
In 1917 during the Great European War he exponed to the Admiralty for the
destruction of the submarines the theory of the location of sound in water.

Also of his eldest daughter ALICE MARGARET
born 17th May 1888 & died 16th May 1894
to whose memory her grandfather Sir David Stewart
inscribed a tablet in the mausoleum he erected in this churchyard

And of his youngest daughter
MARY STEWART born 10th March 1895 - died 23rd December 1937.

And of his wife MARY second daughter of
Sir David and Lady Stewart of Banchory and Leggat
born 28th Nov 1865 - died 8th Nov 1954.

And of his daughter
LUCY BARBARA born 10th Aug 1890 - died 17th Dec 1959.

And of his son CHARLES DAVID NIVEN MA BSc PHD
Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada born July 16th 1897
died in Ottawa, Canada Sept. 30th 1968.

Gravesite Details Also commemorated on parents' headstone Peterhead Old Churchyard (St Peters).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS Wikipedia; FindMyPast – Newspapers; Ancestry – genealogical records (assisted by Family Trees: Niven & Bailey, Causey & Agambar, Nell/Fuller) ;

Find A Grave; Measuringworth.com; Find A Will

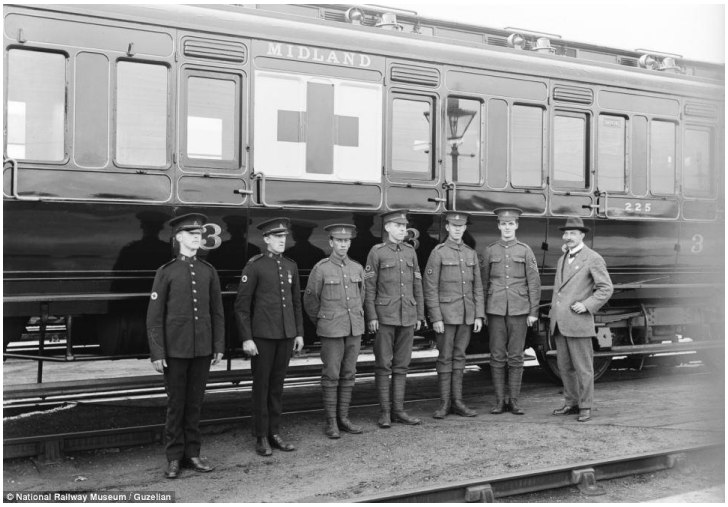
Military Ambulance Trains

Originally published in 1921 in the book `British Railways and the Great War` (two volumes)

Part Two

In May 1915, an intimation was given by the military authorities that more both of the ambulance and of the emergency trains were likely to be wanted. Thereupon the Railway Executive Committee appointed a sub committee consisting of the superintendents of the LSWR (Mr H. Holmes), the Great Western (Mr. C. Aldington), the LNWR (Mr. L W Thorne) and the SECR(Mr. E C Cox) to consider questions respecting the provision and running of ambulance trains for use in this country. Mr F G Randall , who had then recently retired from the position of Superintendent of the Great Eastern Railway was appointed secretary.

The members of the sub committee, after a preliminary sitting in London, made personal inquiries at Southampton and Dover, and they gained the impression as a result of these inquiries and from a study of traffic records that, inasmuch as many of the officers and men conveyed by the ambulance trains generally sat on the lower cots, leaving the upper berths unoccupied, it might be arranged to provide an ordinary corridor coach for sitting cases of this type, one ward for lying down cases being thus liberated from each ambulance train for the addition thereof to an emergency train. It was, however, pointed out by Surgeon-General Donovan that many of the ambulance trains were making long journeys throughout the country and that, although the patients were not lying down when they started, there might well come a time during the journey, when they might require to do so. The needs of every one of them in this respect should thus be provided for, and he thought it inexpedient that there should be any reduction in the extent of ward accommodation. With this view the members of the subcommittee having regard to the situation as here stated, concurred, and the question which now mainly claimed attention was that of providing better accommodation on the trains for the staffs attached to them.



Standard Ambulance Trains

At the outset of the war, when the enormous magnitude of our operations overseas was not foreseen, it was assumed that the ambulance trains at home would not require to make journeys much further than to London, to the Home Counties, or to places on the East, South or West coasts; but, in proportion as the number of wounded increased and the desirability of distributing them about the country became more apparent, the ambulance trains began to make journeys as far north as

Scotland. This meant that staff who travelled on them to and fro required adequate accommodation on their own account apart from the provision made in the interests of the sick and wounded themselves. The staff thus attached to and living on each train generally comprised of one medical officer, two nursing sisters, one non – commissioned officer, nine orderlies (RAMC) and two cooks, a total of fifteen persons.

In order to decide satisfactorily the various questions which thus arose, the Railway Executive Committee arranged for a meeting in London which, presided over by one of their members Mr (later Sir) Francis H. Dent, General Manager of the SECR, was attended by members of the sub-committee together with surgeon-General Donovan, Surgeon – General Russell and Captain Redman, representing the War Office. It was then agreed that there should be drawn up a specification and plans which would standardise the arrangements and the details of the fittings in regard to all further ambulance trains. Meanwhile four more emergency trains were to be provided at once, pending the provision of the same number of ambulance trains on the new basis.

The specification and plans this prepared for standard Ambulance Trains of ten eight-wheeled vehicles each, made up in the following order:-

One – guard`s, medical officers and nurses car
One – dining and sleeping car
Three – ward cars
One – pharmacy car
Three – ward cars
One – guard`s, orderlies and stores car

The first of these cars was to comprise a guard`s compartment, a bedroom, a sitting room, a lavatory, and a bathroom for the medical officer(s); a bedroom, a sitting room and a lavatory for the nurses, and a stove chamber. Each of the two sitting rooms was to be provided with aleaf or fold up table and four chairs and each was to have also, two racks and hat and coat hooks. In addition to heating of the whole train by steam from the engine, the car was to be provided with a self- contained heating apparatus which could be used when the engine was disconnected on the arrival of the train at its destination, or otherwise.

The dining and sleeping car was to be made up of a kitchen compartment, a dining and sleeping compartment, a lavatory compartment and a stove chamber. The kitchen compartment was to be fitted with a gas cooking stove and the necessary cupboards, sinks, etc., and the War Office was to specify what articles the railway companies were to provide in the way cooking utensils, crockery, cutlery, and so on. The dining and sleeping room was to be fitted with ten cot-beds of the same design as the ward cars and two portable flap dining tables capable of being fixed firmly to the floor. Each table was to provide accommodation for six men. This car was also to have its own self-contained heating apparatus.

The general arrangements of the other cars , subject to improvements in certain matters of detail, were practically the same as before;

though here, also, as throughout the train generally, everything was now standardised. The trains were to be provided with telephones, one being in the medical officers` sitting room, one in the office of the pharmacy car and one in the corridor of the orderlies` and stores car. Each guard`s compartment was to be equipped with a set of emergency tools and fire extinguishers and there was to be one of these also in the kitchen car. Throughout the whole train there would be a still more abundant provision of contrivances and conveniences to contribute to the comfort of all concerned, as well as to ensure the most perfect cleanliness and sanitation. A Geneva Cross in 10 inch red and white squares was to be painted, not alone on the side of each car, but also on the top. The total length of a standard ambulance train was about 350 feet, and the average weight approx. 250 tons.

The London and North Western, the Great Western, the Great Eastern and the London and South Western Companies undertook to find stock for the four additional ambulance trains desired by the War Office, promising to have them ready in around six weeks from the date of the order. This made, altogether, twenty ambulance trains provided by the War Office by different railway companies, namely, Great Central, three; Great Eastern, two; Great Western, four; Lancashire and Yorkshire, two; London and North Western, five; London and South Western, two; and the Midland, two.

In addition to these regular ambulance trains of a standard type. Various companies provided :-

(1) permanent emergency ambulance trains, kept always in readiness for use;

(2) other emergency ambulance trains made up whenever necessary;

(3) vans fitted up for cot cases or corridor coaches for sitting cases, which could be attached to the regular ambulance trains to supplement the accommodation which these already afforded.

To be continued

Spring News from Friends of Spital Cemetery FoSC April - June 2020

Spring is springing! The daffodils have been filling the cemetery with swathes of cheerful yellow since the beginning of February and now there are primroses everywhere! The trees are about to burst into leaf and the birds are busy making nests. The changing of the seasons is a welcome relief from the woes of the world at the moment.

COVID-19 and Spital Cemetery

As the health and wellbeing of our members who organise tours and events and people who want to attend is important to us, you may be aware we have cancelled and/or paused all our usual activities until further notice.

However, the cemetery is still open for visitors. It is a wonderful place to come for a walk as keeping fit and healthy is important for everyone at this time but don't meet people outside your household to do this and if you use the narrow paths please make sure you step onto the side a good distance if someone comes in the opposite direction. Spring is springing and it's a great time to do some bird watching, bee watching and tree ID.

Spire Christmas Tree Festival

In the last newsletter we reported on the Christmas Tree Festival in which we always enjoy taking part. It was lovely to get this letter of appreciation from Rev Coleman. “On behalf of Saint Mary and All Saints Church, I am writing to thank you for your generous presentation of a tree in this year’s festival. Please pass my thanks to everyone who took part in this great event. We were as always delighted at the level of community support: more than 20,000 people came through the doors, and over £10,000 were donated.
Special thanks go to those companies and organisations that made considerable monetary donations.”

The Gardening group

A group of wonderful volunteers come every month to do very useful jobs in the cemetery, keeping some of paths swept, weeding the island beds and taking out invasive weeds and tree saplings from areas where we would like to see wildflowers growing again, and more.
For example last year one of our regulars, Leonie, split a tightly packed clump of snowdrops into individual bulbs and planted them just uphill from the Gateway Path, so it was a real joy to see that they were flowering this spring. We expect they will become healthy clumps themselves in time. So on our last gardening session she repeated the process further down the hillside with some more bulbs, technically called ‘in the green’. We were inspired by Stephen Wright, reader at St Paul’s Hasland who has been doing this for years now, and look at the show there!

There was not a leaf or weed in sight when Alan had finished sweeping the broad stepped path up to the chapels.

This year Leonie’s snowdrops returned and hopefully there will be a fabulous show like at St Paul’s, Hasland.

Gardening as a group is certainly not wise under the present circumstance. Working together, meeting up for a bru mid session and sharing tools are part of the way things were run. However, the cemetery still needs some TLC and there are very successful ways of working a safe distance from each other, and avoiding all forms of contact. If anyone really would like to help I am happy to discuss what can be done and how the gardening group can continue to operate in these difficult times. My own feeling is that as long as allotments are still allowed to be open, and as long as the cemetery gates remain open for visitors (people coming to visit family graves, dog walkers, etc) then we can continue to work there. Please contact me directly if you want to help. Liz
Email: thefriendsofspitalcemetery@gmail.com

Litter picking equipment and some great efforts along Spital Lane

We applied to the council for a few litter pickers and high vis vests, and were successful. There is very little litter in the cemetery, the majority of visitors are extremely respectful, but this is certainly not true of Spital Lane and some of the streets around. At the moment Don Catchment Rivers Trust have been keeping the banks of the Rother and its tributary the Hipper, at the bottom of our hill, clear of litter and one of their volunteers in particular,

Jimmy, has been out and about over the last couple of months doing an amazing job on his own. Of course, at the moment, this has all had to pause and eventually the work of DCRT will come to an end, so our litter pickers will come into use. A huge thanks to the council for making them available to community groups and to Jimmy in particular.

New bird and bat boxes from DCRT

Margaret, one of our tour guides, also volunteers for Don Catchment Rivers Trust. Before the shut down they were installing bat and bird boxes along the river banks near the cemetery. They kindly put three up in the cemetery. This one is just after you turn off onto the Gateway Path, replacing very old ones that have not had residents for some time now. These were put up in about 2012 by some wonderful members of the 1st Calow Scouts Group. Can you spot any familiar faces!

DCRT tell us they would be happy to replace all the old boxes and help us look after the new ones while they are still working in the area. A huge thanks to them.

Anzac Day event 5am on 25th April

In 2018 Barry Telfer, a visitor from Australia, played his bugle for us. Here with Steve Brunt and Ed Fordham, members of the council WW1 committee and members of the British Legion.

To the right 5am at first light in the cemetery, a very special time. T-lights lined the roadway from the top entrance.

We were invited by the New Zealand High Commission to give them details about our service in Spital Cemetery planned for 25th April. It was on their website under Anzac Day Services outside London. However, in the light of the present health crisis, they cancelled all the services they were organising and asked us what we would be doing. We replied: We are sure our service would have been the quietest (at 5am) of all of your events but no less important in joining hands with friends and family across the world to remember service and sacrifice. It is with a heavy heart that we too will not hold our event in Spital Cemetery, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S41 0DZ this year.

For us at the cemetery it is also an occasion to call out the names, and in doing so, remember, each and every man and one woman who were in service who are buried here, those who are remembered here but 'did not return' and others who served and are associated with Spital.

I added this personal note: For my part as Chair of the Friends I will still call out these names from my terrace which looks directly onto the cemetery and reflect on the broader aspects of Anzac Day as the sun rises over the lime trees and lights up the chapels. I expect some of the other people who were going to take part/attend will acknowledge the day in their own ways. Liz

A Blue Plaque for nurse Anne Veronica Fletcher

We certainly can do with a good story at the moment, so I have written here of one where cooperation and goodwill from a number of people means that eventually (the tale has yet to have an end) we will be able to celebrate a little known but incredibly brave young lady who lived in Spital.

On March 14th 2018, to celebrate International Women's Day, The Friends of Spital Cemetery in Chesterfield held a service at the graveside of our one woman buried in a CWGC grave in Spital Cemetery. It was 100 years since Anne died at the age of 27. She had contacted TB while nursing at the East Leeds War Hospital (2nd Northern General Hospital). At the event in 2018 we talked loosely about getting her gravestone (the family chose to bury her in a family plot rather than get a CWGC stone) repaired and of getting a blue plaque put up on the house in Spital where she had lived. Fast forward two years and we are delighted with the progress that has been made on so many fronts thanks to the generosity and hard work of a number of people.

Much of this started when, by pure chance, I met Sandra Taylor and her husband looking for Anne's grave in the cemetery. Sandra's interest, particularly in uncovering and celebrating the little known stories of the nurses who worked in WW1, is profound (see http://www.rememberthefallen.co.uk/) and through her we started a conversation with Andy Knowlson (Regional Manager West) at the CWGC and Philip Shardlow at Croft Castings https://www.croftcastsigns.co.uk Andy started the long process of trying to find any living relatives, so far without luck, but in the meantime has ordered a Galipoli marker which will be placed within the curb sets at the foot of her grave. It will be legible, and accurately record her date of death. The family grave records the names of her parents and remembers her brother Charles who was killed on the Somme in 1916 but Anne's date of death is incorrect. The Gallipoli marker has been manufactured but is in transit this very moment from France. We hope in time to get the lead lettering repaired but need to find a sponsor for this.

Success too with the blue plaque! Again, by chance, I met up with Tracey Green on the Gateway Path which featured in our last newsletter. We were planning our opening event and sat on one of the benches there drinking coffee in the sunshine. She had invited her aunt, Jean, to join us and when I mentioned our wish to get a blue plaque for Anne but that we needed to find sponsorship she suggested asking the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps Association as she had been a nurse with them. Andy gave us a brilliant quote and Sue McAteer, General Secretary of QARANC Association secured funding from them. Maria and Donato Totsi who own the house in Spital Gardens (it's the white house as seen from the top of Quarry Bank Road) happily agreed to it going on their house. Celebrating the service and sacrifice of a nurse, particularly now during the Year of the Nurse and Midwife, and hitting us unexpectedly at this time of extraordinary happenings in the world when we are so dependent on the skills and dedication of nurses (among others) in our NHS, seems very appropriate. So, fast forward to last week when the postman left this on my doorstep.

Of course the unveiling ceremony will be delayed until we return, as we will do, to a more normal existence. In the meantime if you are interested in attending, do drop us a line and we will put your name on the guest list. Liz

About those remembered on family graves (young men for the most part who 'did not return') and others from earlier conflicts so not on the CWGC site

We were contacted some time ago by Roy Branson enquiring about one of the number of WW1 men who are not buried in Spital Cemetery but their names are recorded on family headstones/curb stones as having died or been killed in action.

We have been making a list of these memorials but hadn't made this available online. Bereavement Services only have records of people buried in the cemetery, not of the inscriptions to those who are buried or remembered on memorials elsewhere. So it was wonderful to discover that Roy and his colleagues were building this fabulous database and are happy for us to share it with you. We certainly learned of some new ones we did not know about and I believe we gave them a few in return.

https://derbyshirewarmemorials.com/places-spital.html

About our Trees

We started this newsletter encouraging you to put Spital Cemetery on your itinerary, if you live locally of course. Research shows that within minutes of being surrounded by trees and green space, your blood pressure drops, your heart rate slows and your stress levels come down. So, we will end on this happy subject and see the last page for an activity to do with kids but you may have to wait a few weeks for the leaves to come. The ash is the particularly late!

When Spital Cemetery was opened over 160 years ago it was designed to cheer people up who came to visit the graves of their family and friends. There were winding paths between trees and grass and beautiful carvings and noble inscriptions on the graves. Some of the paths have disappeared under the grass but many of the original trees are still there and there are still lots of wonderful carvings and inscriptions for visitors today to enjoy. There are over 20 different types of tree in the cemetery and within some tree types, such as with the pines, there are a few different kinds. So there are Scots Pines and a couple of others, like Austrian Pines.

In summer it is easy to find out what the different trees are because their leaf shapes and sizes are all different. It is more difficult in winter because although some of the trees keep their leaves all year round (evergreen) others lose their leaves (are deciduous).

Evergreen trees are popular in cemeteries because they symbolise 'immortality'. That means that you live forever. People like to think that although the member of their family or their friend has died, they can still live on in our minds and hearts.

Many of the trees in the cemetery are symbolically significant in this setting. You will find oak trees growing, also oak leaves and acorns have been carved on headstones. Oaks live for a long time so they symbolise longevity, wealth and importance but they also (if there is an acorn) suggest that the person came from humble beginnings.

Friends of Spital Cemetery seek to promote Spital Cemetery as a haven for wildlife, and a place of remembrance, heritage and learning for the community.
http://friendsofspitalcemetery.co.uk/
https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofSpitalCemetery email:
thefriendsofspitalcemetery@gmail.com @FOSpitalCem

Tree Activity Sheet

Here are 9 different shaped leaves that can be found on the trees in Spital Cemetery. Draw a line between the leaf and the name of the tree it belongs to.

Ash

Lime

Willow

Oak

Pine

Holly

Beech

Silver Birch

Yew

Please visit the cemetery and look for these leaves. The roadway just inside the top gate is lined with lime trees. There are lots of pine trees everywhere. Please help yourself to the pine cones on the ground. Please take care where you walk and do not lean on the gravestones.

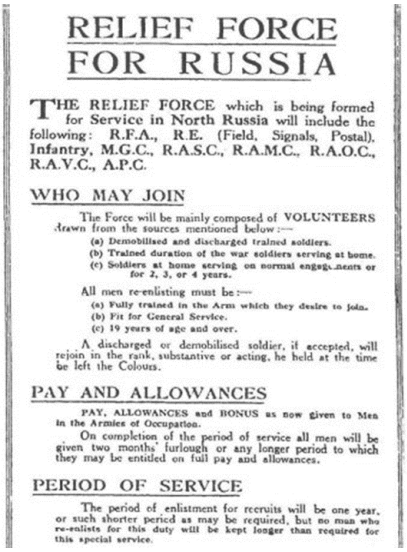
Remains of long lost Australian `Digger` Sam Pearse likely found in Russia

A 100 year old mystery involving an Australian soldier and a little-known battle in Russia could soon be solved.

- Sergeant Sam Pearse was killed in combat in Russia in 1919, a year after WW1 ended
- Australia`s involvement in the Russian Civil War is still largely unrecognised
- Russian and British governments are in sensitive negotiations to repatriate fallen soldiers

Victoria Cross recipient sergeant Sam Pearse was killed against the Soviet Red Army in 1919. After the battle the location of the grave was lost. But now his remains may finally have been found south of the Russian city of Archangel, on the icy shores of the White Sea in Russia`s arctic north. His Grandson, Richard Christen, has embarked on a journey halfway across the world in the hope of brining Sergeant Pearse`s remains home to Australia. " I thought if I ever got the opportunity I`d like to go. I`d like see where Sam died, where he was buried" …said Mr Christen…..`" We never thought the grave would be found"

Lost in the Fog of War. Sergeant Pearse`s death in combat, a year after the conclusion of WW1, marks an obscure footnote in Australian military history



RELIEF FORCE
FOR RUSSIA

THE RELIEF FORCE which is being formed for Service in North Russia will include the following: R.F.A., R.E. (Field, Signals, Postal), Infantry, M.G.C., R.A.S.C., R.A.M.C., R.A.O.C., R.A.V.C., A.P.C.

WHO MAY JOIN

The Force will be mainly composed of VOLUNTEERS drawn from the sources mentioned below:—

(a) Demobilised and discharged trained soldiers.
(b) Trained duration of the war soldiers serving at home.
(c) Soldiers at home serving on normal engagements or for 2, 3, or 4 years.

All men re-enlisting must be:—

(a) Fully trained in the Arm which they desire to join.
(b) Fit for General Service.
(c) 19 years of age and over.

A discharged or demobilised soldier, if accepted, will rejoin in the rank, substantive or acting, he held at the time he left the Colours.

PAY AND ALLOWANCES

PAY, ALLOWANCES and BONUS as now given to Men in the Armies of Occupation.

On completion of the period of service all men will be given two months' furlough or any longer period to which they may be entitled on full pay and allowances.

PERIOD OF SERVICE

The period of enlistment for recruits will be one year, or such shorter period as may be required, but no man who re-enlists for this duty will be kept longer than required for this special service.

After surviving the horrors of Gallipoli and the Western Front, he was one of 120 Australians who volunteered to fight the Bolsheviks in the Russian Civil War.

Australian military historian, Damien wright, who travelled with Mr. Christen to Archangel has been researching this forgotten odyssey for 20 years. `A band of battlefield archaeologists have been looking for Sam`s grave for at least 10 years`…said Mr Wright. `The location where the grave was eventually found was in an old scrapyard beneath timber and debris`

The battleground where Sergent pearse and his fellow diggers fought the fledgling Red Army is about four and a half hours south of Archangel. It was here at first light on august 29, 1919, that Sergeant Pearse earned his posthumous Victoria Cross when he charged a bunker of Red Army soldiers before being cut down by machine-gun fire. " I think he thought [the Russian relief Force] would be nothing – a bit of a picnic – after what he had been through in WW1", Mr Christen said.

A long way from Mildura…

A box containing the likely remains of Sergeant Sam Pearse is viewed by grandson Richard Christen and historian Damien Wright.

Mr Christen believes the remains they have discovered are his grandfather`s. "[I'm] 99.9 per cent certain, because the remains of the slouch hat were with him and he had one toe missing on his right foot," he said."Sam's Australian service record confirmed that the middle toe of the right foot had been amputated before he'd sailed for north Russia," Mr Wright added. Mr Christen is waiting on DNA testing to confirm his search is finally over.

The original gravesite of Sgt Sam Pearse in Archangel, Russia.

What happens to the remains are subject to sensitive negotiations between Russian and UK governments – the bones were found in what was originally British war grave – but Mr christen hopes that his grandfather can finally be laid to rest in Australian soil.

" In an ideal world I`d like to see Sam`s remains brought back to Mildura where is statue stands at the War Memorial", he said. " to the best of my knowledge the Australian Government has not been in the least bit helpful". The Department of Veteran`s Affairs said the Government " recognises the remarkable service offered by Sergeant Pearse VC", but that enquiries regarding the grave should be directed to the UK Ministry of Defence.

While a memorial for Sereant Pearse and other fallen soldiers stands in Archangel, Mr Christen hopes that the life, death and bravery of his grandfather and other Australians who served with him are not lost over time.

" We should know more about it, so we can give them the recognition and the commemoration they deserve, " he said.

LINKS

CWGC

https://mailchi.mp/8ab807891f62/cwgc-live-the-somme?e=2258e45255

A note from Peter Hart,

Hi chums,

Just a note to publicise my weekly series of podcasts which are going out under the Mat McLachlan Living History banner.

Some three-quarters of them cover the Great War and they should be of interest to members trapped at home! They are recorded with the help of Gary Bain who interviews me and (warning) they do contain some elements of humour – but no more so than my usual talks.

Here are the Spotify and Apple links, but they are on all podcast providers.

Spotify: https://open.spotify.com/show/22bNz8eGofwR2AixIskgs4?si=AzE2ArBrTZGLDTnGzKMaCQ

Apple: https://podcasts.apple.com/au/podcast/peter-harts-military-history/id1497949409

British History Online
https://www.british-history.ac.uk/

BHO was founded by the Institute of Historical Research and the History of Parliament Trust in 2003. Our collection currently contains over 1,270 volumes and is always growing.

Until 31 July 2020 we're making all transcribed BHO content **freely available for individual users**. This adds 200 volumes of primary materials. As a result, BHO's full complement of 1280 volumes is now available for research. Read more about this new free content.

WFA York Branch

https://www.westernfrontassociation.com/branches/united-kingdom/yorkshire/latest-news/branch-trip-to-gallipoli-may-2020/

National Army Museum

https://mailchi.mp/nam/virtual-ve-day-75-festival-anniversaries-and-more?e=95bd38abe2

And finally……

https://www.westernfrontassociation.com/branches/united-kingdom/chesterfield/