Reveille

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Welcome…

…to the March 2021 edition of our magazine Reveille.

We hope that you have all had some good winter months and are keeping well. As a committee we have been discussing when and where we might be able to meet again. If all goes to plan with vaccinations and the opening up of venues, we should have some semblance of normality by the end of June or the beginning of July. We think that the earliest we can possibly meet is September 2021. We also think that our last venue The Guild Ale House may be too small a room for our meetings given the possibility that people may still want or need to spread out more.

There are a number of options. For example, the Stanley Arms on Lancaster Road (not far from the Guild) also has an upstairs room for hire which is larger and they can also provide catering should we need it. The bar is not as good as the Guild, but still has a decent range of beers. The Harris Museum and Art Gallery has a number of rooms with great space. It would also provide a cultural ambiance but unfortunately no bar. The rooms are also expensive which would necessitate us having a larger audience (or to put up door donations) to be worthwhile.

So, what is your opinion on where we should pitch up? Do you think having more space is a good idea? Could you live without a bar? If we moved to a place like the Harris, would you be prepared to make a larger donation, say a fiver? What speakers would you like to see and subjects covered? All opinions are valid, so let us know!

As ever we are also seeking contributions to this magazine. Any articles should be sent to Charlie by email. We are looking to produce the next issue at the end of May or early June.

We hope you enjoy this issue of the magazine. We have articles by Geoff Aldridge MA, Stan Grosvenor MA, Peter Sullivan, William Bradshaw and Adam Cree.

Best wishes from Charlie, Stan and Trudy.

Cover image: 'The Advance', by W Bernard Adeney, 1918. A tank moving over broken ground, the front raised high into the air, with a gun firing from the left-hand side. Two soldiers stand on the right advancing with the tank. © IWM Art.IWM ART 2707

How important were tanks to the British military success in the 'Hundred Days'?

Geoff Aldridge MA

New weapons such as the Tank or Aeroplane did not win the war in their own right, but each when working together with the Infantry and Artillery would help and prove to be the deciding factors of the war. Understanding the impact of new and improved technologies can explain how the Allies eventually won the war. To single out tanks and assess their usefulness for the war effort might ultimately display a general lack of overall vision of importance. There was a significant learning curve involved. Human losses of the Tank Corps and of tanks themselves were prohibitive, but it is also suggested that when tanks were used, they could also save lives. Some statistical evidence exists to suggest this. The tanks were subject to breakdown, overheating, poor design, and not being able to withstand a direct enemy hit, but equally, they were generally misunderstood and handled by commanders who had little or no experience in how to use them or to know what tanks were actually capable of doing. This helped push them away from the war winning weapon that they might have been. They may not have been the decisive factor in the run to victory, but they were used more during the hundred days than at any other time during the war. Good and important work was achieved by them, but tanks were never available in sufficient numbers until other arms such as artillery or aircraft were achieving their own final goals in the run to the Armistice. Their importance is without doubt, but they would not prove to be the war winning weapon. Many commanders thought they could do without them.

David Lloyd George when speaking of Tanks in his memoirs suggested the tank was the ultimate British reply to the machine gun and that there was no doubt whatever that it played a very important part in helping the Allies to victory[1]. Lloyd George had in 1936 recognised, with some considerable hindsight, that had it not been down to the 'stupid handling' of insufficient numbers of tanks on the Somme in 1916, the usage of inappropriate ground conditions at Passchendaele and the failure to exploit their initial gains at Cambrai in 1917, the Germans might have realised the worth of the tank and produced some themselves. This inadvertently presented the Allies with what turned out to be an excellent psychological weapon in their favour. Lloyd George appears to have made only brief mention of artillery which, arguably, was the most important aspect in the last six months of 1918.

The tank had an influential following. Major Clough Williams-Ellis, Major-General J.F.C. Fuller and Captain B.H. Liddell-Hart saw the tank as a revolutionary new weapon[2]. Winston Churchill was said to be obsessed by them[3]. It was Churchill that gave initial

[1] Lloyd George D. War Memoirs of David Lloyd George (1935) Pg 381
[2] Ibid Pg389
[3] Broad L. Winston Churchill (1956) Pg 161

A Mark V tank being driven over a trench at the Tank Corps Driving School. The tank shed can be seen in the distance. Aveluy, spring 1918. © IWM Q 9894

representations to Haig[4]. Without his intervention, there would have been none for the war, and whilst not the inventor he can be seen as the custodian of its evolution and development. For the future, not achieved in 1918, the vision for 1919 was for masses of tanks along all fronts. Tanks would be produced in their thousands. For 1918, Tim Travers notes comments from John Terraine, 'It is clear that both mechanically and humanly, the tank of 1918 was not a war-winning weapon[5]. Travers gives a reasonable and accurate account of the inadequacies of the tank, but accepts that had they been handled properly and in sufficient numbers, the situation might have been different, even becoming the final weapon to sweep the Allies to victory. The view is not dissimilar to that of Lloyd George.

[4] The Official History of the Ministry of Munitions The Supply of Munitions (Reprint 2008)Vol XII Part III Chapter I Pg 29
[5] Travers T Could the Tanks of 1918 Have Been War-Winners for the British Expeditionary Force? (1992) Pg 389

Three key questions arise. Why not make a decisive sweep of available tanks on a wider front for a more successful outcome, as was eventually envisaged for 1919? Secondly, could deliveries of tanks be reliable in the sense of meeting the constraints of military battle planning? And thirdly, despite advances in technology and engineering, why were tanks still imperfect and slow?

One of the reasons for not allowing a major tank battle in the hundred days was that they were still recognised as very unreliable machines. In August 1918 tanks had reached Mark V in their evolution. In engineering and technical terms, the design and capability of the Mark V had improved tremendously over previous versions. Epi-cyclic gearing allowing one person instead of two to control the steering, more substantial metal plating for protection and the positioning of fuel tanks externally to reduce noxious substances and so on, did much to make the tank crew's situation more bearable, but in practice, the crew could still not go beyond an eight-hour duty. Some crews that had been in action for two or three days found they could barely go beyond three hours without being physically ill. Ventilation was still an issue. Performance of the tank was questionable too. The Mark V had a greater speed and turning power, but a top speed of not much more than walking pace was still not satisfactory.

The delivery of tanks to the battlefield depended on a variety of factors. The issue of how and when they were ordered, the efficiencies of the production line at home, how they would supply to the field and how long it would take and whether there were sufficiently trained men to receive them in France. These factors influenced Haig's decision- making processes in how he used them. In 1917, Haig was aware of the limited experience of men with the later models, but this didn't prevent him from ordering more tanks in greater quantities. He required eighteen battalions to be equipped, nine heavy and nine medium versions with a lead-time and delivery of only six months. For all the enthusiasm in Haig's mind, his priorities were that tanks would be secondary to aircraft, road transport and guns[6].

The reasons why tanks were imperfect and slow can be based on simple evolution. It was a new weapon. The principal of caterpillar traffic had been muted some years before, but only in the desperation of war had the idea been taken up. In the beginning, the tank had not had an easy life. The War Office, as Lloyd George had often hinted, was less than enthusiastic, and so were many others, even Kitchener is reported to have referred to the tank only as 'a pretty mechanical toy'[7]. By 1918, when tanks were being manufactured by much improved production processes the numbers of deliveries and orders had increased. The Americans too could be relied upon to supply in greater numbers. What a year 1919 might have been.

[6] The Official History of the Ministry of Munitions The Supply of Munitions (Reprint 2008)Vol XII Part III Chapter I Pg 52

[7] This was later denied suggesting that Kitchener had wanted to play it down in the interests of national security. He was actually quite impressed at the tank demonstrations at Hatfield Park in February 1916

Churchill's substantial belief and effort in tanks had increased the strength of the Tank Corps by 27 per cent in the six months lead up to 1 August 1918. Increases in the Machine Gun Corps and of Aircraft in France had also reached around 40 per cent each[8]. Commencing a battle with insufficient numbers of tanks as reputedly happened at Flers, or the expectancy of running tanks over poor ground conditions as happened at Passchendaele in the third battle of Ypres, or even the lack of exploitative gains at Cambrai, was not going to happen again[9]. The wastage of tanks to October 1918 had been five times more than expected and stocks of spares dangerously depleted[10].

Many writers have described Douglas Haig as being opposed to new technology and lacking the foresight to realise that wars must be won by weapons other than with his beloved cavalry. Haig was undoubtedly traditional as Travers tends to suggest, but Haig was very receptive to new ideas, and in the early phases of tank design sent his representative General Hugh Elles to Hatfield Park to watch and report the trials. Other notables in attendance included Lord Kitchener, Sir William Robertson and David Lloyd George. Elles provided a report to Haig which would lead instantly to the procurement of an order of 150 tanks. The inadequacy of the eventual early designs has been mentioned, but Haig undeterred, envisaged greater use and further orders were encouraged throughout 1917 and 1918. Haig knew that surprise was a key factor and tanks, as had been shown at Cambrai, were more than capable in achieving this. Preliminary bombardments, which served only to awaken enemy interest, became a discarded activity.

Ordering high quantities of tanks indicates the army's faith in these machines. By 1 March 1918, 700 Mark V, 600 medium, 450 supply and 48 gun-carrying tanks were on order. The Mechanical Warfare Supply Department could produce only 200 Mark V, 250 medium and 48 gun-carrying tanks, while supply tanks could not be provided at all[11]. Problems with co-ordination of users and makers and incomplete designs hindered development. This must have been worrying to the Commander in Chief. Close to the 'hundred days' Mark IV tanks had been unreliable, and whilst there were restrictions on new build, refurbished and amended units continued. Designs for Mark V's designs could not be finalised. Prospects of agreements to a Mark VI were still too distant.

The Army had 800 Mark V's on order for delivery at the end of May. The Germans realising that tanks could, on a good day, traverse a trench encouraged the enemy only

[8] Lloyd George D. War Memoirs of David Lloyd George (1936) Pg 1877
[9] The Official History of the Ministry of Munitions The Supply of Munitions (Reprint 2008)Vol XII Pt III Pg56
[10] The Official History of the Ministry of Munitions The Supply of Munitions (Reprint 2008) Vol XII Pt III Pg 69
[11] The Official History of the Ministry of Munitions The Supply of Munitions (Reprint 2008)Vol XII Pt III Pg 53

to widen the trench. In turn, this required Britain to make longer tanks, [The Mark V Star] and this caused serious design issues for the Ministry of Munitions[12].

'A Mark V Tank Going Into Action', by W. Bernard Adeney, 1918. The rear view of a Mark V tank climbing over broken ground, the front of the tank raised up at a sharp angle. The exhaust pipe runs from front to back over the top of the tank, and a cloud of exhaust fumes emerge at the end. There are three soldiers in the distance to the left of the tank, one to the right, and another in the right foreground. © IWM Art.IWM ART 2267

The continued production difficulties in 1918, rendered tank supply to be far below the army requirements. The worth of the tank had been proved, particularly with Cambrai, but to rely on a machine that was in itself unreliable was becoming more than Douglas Haig was comfortable with. Haig's faith didn't appear to falter, but he must have realised that the uncertainty of delivery and its technology would not provide a winning combination. To make matters worse, actual output continually fell below

[12] Ibid Pg 54

estimates. Tank production in July 1918 was 129 and 81 in August[13]. In France, the number of tanks considered to be 'fit' fighting machines remained high, but Haig did not have enough of them.

In terms of Mark IV's and all the variants of Mark V's, numbers available on 30 August were 271. An adequate supply of spares would have made this figure higher still[14]. Travers argues that the shortage of spares leans squarely on the shoulders of Colonel Albert Stern, head of the Mechanical Warfare Supply Department. Stern was more interested in numbers of tanks rather than supply of spares[15]. In the early days of August, the number of tanks assigned to the V Tank Brigade and available for the Amiens offensive was 534. The brigade comprised 3 battalions, each of 3 companies of 12 fighting tanks and 2 supply tanks[16]. On the 7 August a shell struck one petrol carrying tank and exploded. Knowing that they had struck something useful, the German bombardment that followed rendered a total of 25 tanks out of action[17].

The element of surprise was paramount and this was without doubt generally achieved. General Ludendorff of the German High Command in his communiqué of 4 August 1918 stated 'It is to the tanks that the enemy owes his success of the first day'[18]. Ludendorff later described the first day of the battle of Amiens as being the blackest day for the German Army. Edmonds in his Official History claims that 430 tanks went into action on that first day[19].

The presence of the Mark V during 'the hundred days', encouraged the Germans to think seriously about tanks. Bond and Cave suggest that knowing tanks were vulnerable to 'direct hits' the Germans would apply more artillery[20]. Tanks were used more in the last three months of the war than at any other time but they were not actually used in any mass battle. This has often been a criticism of Haig and a reason to imply that he didn't like them. This was not the case, but there were situations when they were inadequately used. This is not the same as being under-utilized. With casualties being as they were, tanks were given ample opportunity to show their worth. The Whippet, the medium sized tank, was faster and more manoeuvrable, and subject to marginally less numbers of 'direct enemy hits', but production levels were never sufficient for any mass exercise. To be used in the same way as the heavier tanks was

[13] Travers T. Could the Tanks of 1918 have been War Winners for the British Expeditionary Force (1992) Pg 393
[14] Ibid Pg 394
[15] Ibid Pg 394
[16] Edmonds J. Official History of the War Military Operations France and Belgium 1918 Volume 4 (Reprint 1993) Pg 24
[17] Ibid Pg 25
[18] Ibid Pg 38
[19] Edmonds J Official History of the War Military Operations France and Belgium 1918 Volume 4 (Reprint 1993) Pg 31
[20] Haig A Re-Appraisal Bond and Cave Pg 152-153

not practical. Being notably faster, around 8 miles per hour, infantry and artillery basically had the problem of keeping up with them[21].

The Official History notes that from a strategic point of view, the offensive at Amiens on 8 August 1918 was made at the wrong place. The part of the German Army that was most capable at that point just happened to be holding that part of the front. Edmonds also states that when the Germans were on the run on 8 August 'they were not kept on it; they recovered themselves[22]. Neglecting exploitation of gains was the problem again. The Tank Corps had been comprised of Engineers. They were not infantry nor artillery, but highly trained specialists who had a more important role than before. The emphasis was now moving from manpower to firepower.

In August 1918, Douglas Haig's fifty-nine divisions were set to fight twice as many German Divisions as a counter attack to the Spring Offensives and this would turn out to be the start of the war's closing phase. Viewed by many to be the outstanding Allied success of the whole war, the commencement of the Battle of Amiens on 8 August started with nearly 500 Tanks, and 800 aircraft. Tanks despite significant design changes remained imperfect and slow. They were still subject to break down and were easily knocked out by the enemy. Haig's decision to keep them in small groups to provide support for the Infantry was useful and in many instances they did good work, but they never brought any decisive results. The Tank Corps, not unexpectedly, didn't entirely appreciate the value of small unit activity and advocated mass employment[23]. Haig had faith in Tanks. He did, after all, order 150 of them in 1916 based on a report by General Elles [his representative at Hatfield Park]. He wanted to use them in any way that would give him the breakthrough that he so eagerly wanted. As the 'breakthrough' that he envisaged became more and more distant in 1918, he was right not to totally rely on them.

Travers suggests that Haig had a negative attitude towards tanks. This doesn't appear to be the case either. Haig certainly prioritised them, but he carefully considered their importance too. Haig needed persuasion to understand General Fuller's plans for Cambrai in the previous year, but this does not represent 'negativity' as Travers suggests. GHQ it appears, were the stumbling block in terms of accepting the tank as a weapon, and was severely lacking in the understanding of what tanks were actually capable of achieving. The regrets by Edmonds, of no planned or actual mass tank attack after Amiens, might only reflect his hindsight rather than Haig's negativity. Haig knew that a tank attack in large numbers would give a distinct advantage. The placement of large orders with his imposed minimal lead-times, make this plain enough. The idea that tanks themselves needed support seems to have been the point many levels of High Command were oblivious to.

[21] Ibid Pg 153
[22] Edmonds J Official History of the War Military Operations France and Belgium 1918 Volume 4 (Reprint 1993Pg 510
[23] Edmonds J. Official History of the War Military Operations France and Belgium 1918 Volume 4 (Reprint 1993) Pg 514

As Travers suggests, tanks were not being supported, and were simply wasted[24]. Small pockets of tanks within various brigades also appeared to be a worthless exercise. Not because of insufficient numbers, though this was certainly the case in some circumstances, but the fact that some commanders hadn't realised how to utilise them properly. Travers gives a not unreasonable account of a Canadian Brigade with three tanks of probably Mark IV calibre, that were asked to complete tasks that were specifically beyond their capability. The commander does not appear to have realised that three may have been sufficient for the task if other factions such as infantry and artillery had given support. It seems he dismissed tanks out of hand[25]. Commanders in other arms appear to have been less than familiar too. Travers notes that infantry commanders for instance didn't know that tanks could be used two days together, or didn't need to be used simply because they were there. Using more tanks than was necessary doesn't appear to have occurred to them either[26]. Casualties were heavy, but not much thought seems to have been given to this fact. Infantry thought they could manage without them.

During the Amiens offensive, each day saw reduced numbers of tanks employed out of action for varied reasons. By day four, few were available and these were used by the Australians, but shortly after all were withdrawn for refit[27]. Mitchell claims no fewer than 688 machines had been in action and 480 had to be handed over to salvage. The remainder required complete overhaul. Travers quotes from Bidwell and Graham that 425 had started on the 8 August, 145 on 9 August, 85 on the third day, 38 on the fourth and 6 on the fifth[28]. Edmonds gives figures of 582 tanks handed over to salvage between 8 August and 27 September of which only 14 were beyond repair[29]. Mitchell states that 'Hardly had the tanks been withdrawn from Amiens than they were called on to fight farther north.[30]' Not much time being allowed for repairs at this point, and leaving depleted numbers of tanks for any subsequent action around Amiens, this should have made the need for tank reserves seem obvious. The fact that reserves were generally not available was arguably overshadowed by the overall success of the Amiens battle.

The Battle of Bapaume commenced on 21 August. Despite heavy artillery action by the Germans, they were intimidated sufficiently by the 196 tanks available and surrendered in large numbers. Infantry casualties for the BEF were few[31]. There is overwhelming evidence to support the theory that tanks, well supported, can achieve

[24] Travers T. Could the Tanks of 1918 have been War Winners for the British Expeditionary Force (1992) Pg 397
[25] Ibid Pg398
[26] Ibid Pg 398
[27] Tank Warfare. The story of the Tanks in the Great War. F Mitchell MC Pg 257
[28] Travers T. Could the Tanks of 1918 have been War Winners for the British Expeditionary Force (1992) Pg 391
[29] Edmonds J. Official History of the War Military Operations France and Belgium 1918 Volume 4 (Reprint 1993) pg 517
[30] Tank Warfare. The story of the Tanks in the Great War. F Mitchell MC Pg 262
[31] Tank Warfare. The story of the Tanks in the Great War. F Mitchell MC Pg 262

impressive results. There is evidence too that tanks, when used in large numbers, can save infantry lives. [Tanks thinly spread during the Spring Offensives had been of little use in this respect and served to engender misunderstanding]

After Amiens and Bapaume, the tanks and crews were briefly rested. It was now becoming clear that numbers of both tanks and crews were dwindling. Mitchell records that the War Office had now at last seen the need and requirement of reserves of tanks and men but it was basically too late. The war would soon be over[32]. The infantry had come to realise that tanks performing such tasks as wire-cutting and clearing machine gun nests was actually saving Allied lives.

The philosophy of the tank had survived. They were not to become extinct. They had 'revolutionized the art of warfare'[33]. Mitchell suggested that infantry clamoured for tanks. The Canadians, as did the crack divisions such as the Guards refused to attack unless tanks led the way. Despite their battle weariness, the tank men would not let the infantry down[34]. The Allied Commander General Foch had been a believer in tanks. Learning from the tactics of Cambrai his mid-summer surprise battles had been a complete success. Soissons in July 1918 had proved to be a resounding success having brought in the element of surprise. Foch advised the Allied command that aviation and tanks should receive the greatest development possible[35].

German recognition and development in tanks were even slower than the Allies. Ludendorff was not impressed with their usage in 1916-17. Continual breakdown and vulnerability were enough to hold off serious German development. When Ludendorff changed his mind after August 1918, it was already too late for the Germans. Their first encounter in the field in April 1918 at Villers-Brettoneux succeeded in pushing the British and Australians back temporarily. Monash, the Australian Commander, a believer in technology, effectively used tanks instead of infantry to clear the way at Le Hemel in July 1918. Tanks were now receiving some of the support they deserved. By November 1918 Britain had over 2500 tanks, the French had nearly 4000 but the Germans only 20. The importance of tanks for the enemy was realised too late. Using French designs the Americans and Italy would manufacture nominal numbers also. Earlier design problems had been resolved and the machines had become more efficient.

Aircraft squadrons were in active support. The Germans had not defended in continuous trench lines as had previously been the case, they opted more for defence in depth with support of machine guns and artillery. As close to the open warfare style that it had been, the Allies found that their artillery could not respond to their needs.

[32] Mitchell F. Tank Warfare. The story of the Tanks in the Great War. (orig.1935) N & P Reprint 2007)Pg 267
[33] Ibid Pg 283
[34] Ibid Pg283
[35] Ibid Pg284

French Army Renault FT-17 light tanks. © IWM Q 71015

The Official History records many examples of the tank battalion giving support to different divisions, and is keen to note of their successes and failures in action. The emphasis is really based around tanks being in support in small ways and not being in any significant role. The continuous mention of tanks arriving late, developing mechanical problems and being easily knocked out, that Edmonds himself didn't view tanks highly. The involvement of the Air Force didn't seem to be an attractive feature either. His view was that the aerial bombing of railway junctions etc., were really without important results, and would have been more suited to reconnaissance work[36]. This hints at a false reading. The greatest technological advancements were the tank and the aeroplane. Having an understanding of them and also of artillery and better understood infantry tactics, can give an explicit view of how the Allies managed to win the war. Tanks and other armoured vehicles used over the 'hundred days' numbered

[36] Edmonds J Official History of the War Military Operations France and Belgium 1918 Volume 4 (Reprint 1993) Pg 577

1,993 of which 887 were disabled and handed over to salvage. All except 15 were repaired[37]. Mitchell states convincingly that for the Germans at least, the Tank Corps colours were the real symbol of defeat[38]. Casualties of the Tank Corps between 8 August and 27 September were 408 officers and 1,759 other ranks. [In this period 582 tanks were handed over to salvage][39].

America's entrance to the war did much to enhance the reputation and potential of the tank with huge numbers being ordered. The French too had placed a great emphasis on tank production. The French designs were very popular, being used by both American and Italian manufacturers. British soldiers in late 1918 were diverted to work in tank production. The importance of the tank is perhaps laid more with the home front during the final phase.

Most historians realistically accept that tanks did not win the war. For the first time though, the ability to cross trenches, mow down barbed wire, clear and attack machine gun nests and generally engender destruction of heavily fortified trench systems was at last achievable in shortened time. To this juncture, infantry would take weeks. Tanks could usually be brought to action in minimal time, [though not necessarily on time] and without the need for a preliminary bombardment. Mitchell argues that this change in tactics might have shortened the war by at least a couple of months[40]. It is difficult to quantify, but if Mitchell was right, any number of lives will have been saved. The Germans were faced with overwhelming numbers of infantry during the Somme battles of 1916 and failed to make a breakthrough, but the Allies managed to defeat the enemy in 1918 with almost half the number of infantry. Mitchell attributes this to the use of tanks, convincingly suggesting that 'the 10,000 fighting men of the Tank Corps were easily worth an extra dozen divisions to the British Army[41].

Germany collapsed suddenly in the final weeks. Nobody appeared to recognize its demise, despite their visible efforts to capitulate. Some Allied commanders had expected the war to go on into 1919, even into 1920. What the Allied higher command hadn't recognized was that all their improvements, expertise and technology had actually revealed the outcome of the war. Tanks were important, they had presented a new era in warfare. A new weapon to replace many life-threatening elements of an infantryman's lot. It was the tank's potential that was only realized slowly, and this made them relatively unimportant to the overall success of the Allied effort. The German Staff had similarly ignored their importance, but after the opening days of the Battle of Amiens had come to accept that tanks were an important instrument in their enemy arsenal. The British GHQ, after having mass produced the first tank, and having

[37] Mitchell F. Tank Warfare. The story of the Tanks in the Great War. (orig.1935) N & P Reprint 2007) Pg 271
[38] Ibid Pg 272
[39] Edmonds J Official History of the War Military Operations France and Belgium 1918 Volume 4 (Reprint 1993) Pg 517 Only 14 were struck off as irreparable.
[40] Mitchell F. Tank Warfare. The story of the Tanks in the Great War. (orig.1935) N & P Reprint 2007) Pg 282
[41] Ibid Pg 284

been keen to abolish tanks due to their reliability issues etc., had now got tanks in great numbers on the battlefield. Germany at this point, had neither the time nor the resources to rectify their mistake.

Beyond the final hundred days of the war, the existing tanks were becoming obsolete and new lighter models came into being. As with most military and naval budgets, the end of the war would see further moves in financial restraint to reduce the Tank Corps. Unlike the Germans, the British saw little need of tanks for the future and further development was slow. The importance of the tank does not appear to have been a lesson learned in the British mind until the coming of the Second World War.

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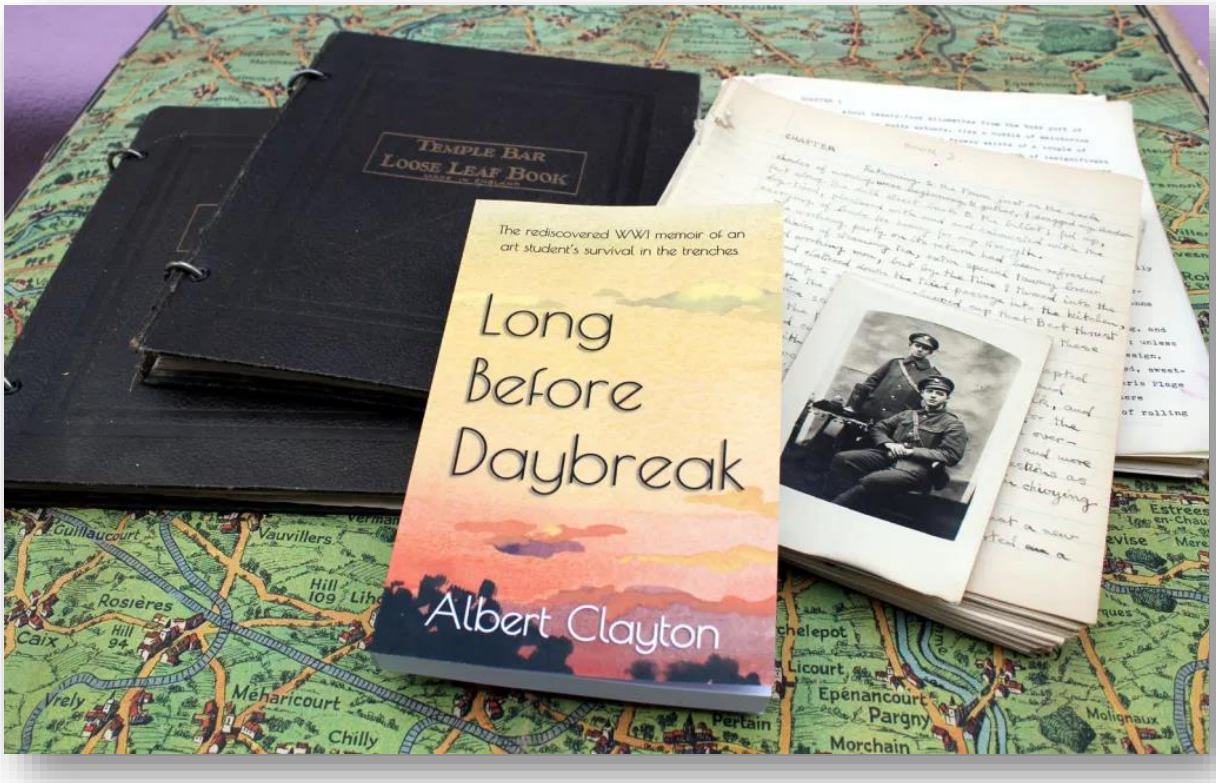


LONG BEFORE DAYBREAK

By ALBERT CLAYTON

The rediscovered Great War memoir of an art student's survival in the trenches transcribed and edited by Micah Duckworth from Albert Clayton's original manuscript.

MJ Duckworth [£10.49 at Amazon], sb, 218pp, 8ills. Map extracts, ISBN: 9781916354401.

It is some long while since I have seen a new memoir of a serving soldier. This is one of the best I have read, not just because Albert Clayton's clear command of language but also his style, intrinsic humour and well recorded observations. Those of you who have transcribed diaries and memoirs of war veterans will be keenly aware of the benefits of such skills. Albert travelled extensively in Europe after the war; it is evident that he retraced his 1916/17 steps and at some point subsequently, researched the battles in which he had fought. His story thus becomes more alive, with multiple references to individuals and places on the Western Front, these latter including Mailly Maillet, the windmill at Pozières, Delville Wood and the caverns at Arras.

Albert served in a highly dangerous job, that of a Orderly/Runner based at a Company HQ in 29th Royal Fusiliers – a so-called Public Schools Battalion. He was thus more cognisant at the time than most PBI as to the broader picture of what was going on around him. The descriptions of his comrades, their conversations, life both in and out of the line and his experiences going over the top (on several occasions) are particularly vivid.

Included are some interesting snippets:

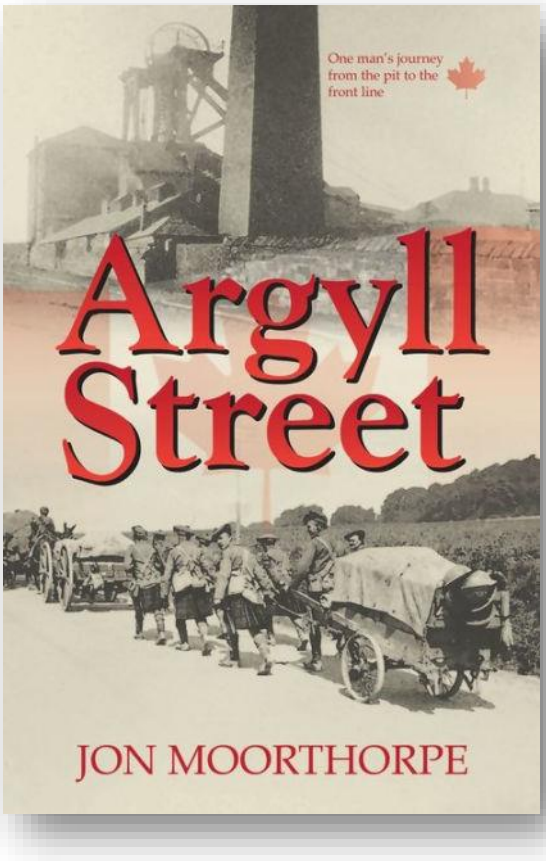
'Jerry' a new slang word for the Germans caught on in November 1916.

The medics had a number 9 pill that worked 10 times better than castor oil[perhaps the source for the Housey Housey call 'doctor's orders. Number nine'].

Trench tools were hung like a sporran to defend the groin [going over the top].

Albert came from Accrington, studied at Leeds School of Art and the Royal College of Art becoming an art teacher and exhibiting artist and was blessed with the keen observational skills evidenced by his word pictures in the book. Born in 1875, Albert survived the war, leaving the army in 1919. He retired in 1970 and died aged 86 in 1981.

Stan Grosvenor



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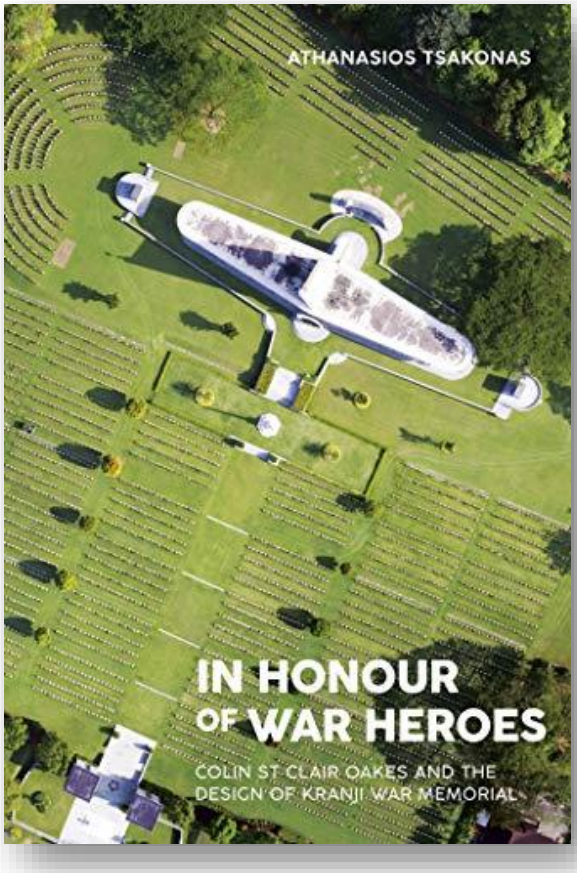
Introductory offer in paperback, £10 from j.moorthorpe2@gmail.com or 01932 852 498.

William enlisted in a Canadian Infantry Regiment, returning to the UK in 1916 to Witley Camp near Godalming in Surrey where he undertook training before embarking for France. In August 1917 he took part in the Battle of Hill 70 near Lens.



IN HONOUR OF WAR HEROES:

Colin St Clair Oakes and the Design of Kranji War Memorial

By ATHANASIOS TSAKONAS

This new book about memorials relating to WW2 sacrifice in the Far East is illustrated with photographs, maps and architectural plans; the book itself in paperback, will be physically available in the UK from late February 2021.

At the end of World War II, Colin St Clair Oakes, a young British architect who had fought in the brutal Burma campaign, was appointed to design a series of cemeteries and memorials across Asia for the war dead. He was one of the five principal architects of the Imperial War Graves Commission. Completed in 1957, Kranji War Cemetery and Memorial in Singapore is a masterwork of Modernist architecture – a culmination of Oakes' experiences in war and his evolution as an architect.

Introductory details can be found at https://youtu.be/hmb9nG6jvCw and at https://www.amazon.com/Honour-War-Heroes-Design- Memorial/dp/9814893366

NOTE:

You may remember that I was able to put the author in touch with the family of Captain Cecil Pickersgill, the officer primarily responsible for the construction of the Changi prison lychgate [Now at the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas].

This item is included particularly for those of my generation who were brought up during the Second World War and who had relatives who died as prisoners of the Japanese in the Far East Theatre. Other interesting stories of that war can still be found at http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/

Stan Grosvenor

Mission Accomplished by Banks Brass Band

29 September 2018

Peter Sullivan

Ypres Memorial Tattoo 29 September 2014

In Bulletin 94 November 2012 I reported on a trip by Banks (near Southport) Brass Band to play at the graves and memorials of band members & residents who died on the western front in the great war.

On that trip we remembered three Banks men recorded on the Arras memorial at Faubourg D'Amiens. The band also played at Tyne Cot near the South Apse terrace where three Banks soldiers are remembered.

From 26th – 29th Sept 2014 the band embarked on part two to play at the Menin Gate again and at 4 cemeteries in the Ypres area where 4 Banks soldiers are buried. The band did a short service at Thiepval and laid 8 crosses remembering soldiers who had links to people on the trip. The band played at Doullens Communal Cemetery to remember Sergeant John Blundell Royal Army Service

A band member playing last post by the grave of 15-year-old R Barnett in Rifle House Cemetery

Corps. The band remembered Private George Howard at Dickebusch New Military Cemetery, Private Thomas Howard of the Kings Liverpool regiment at Artillery Wood Cemetery, Gunner Richard Peet of Royal Field Artillery at Duhallow ADS Cemetery and Private Lawrence Abram of the Grenadier Guards at Solferino Farm Cemetery.

On 28th September 2018 the band and supporters left for Amiens and Ypres to complete the remembrance of the Banks soldiers. After a night in Amiens the band went to the impressive Villers Bretteneux Cemetery and Memorial to remember Richard Abram of the 28th Battalion Australian Infantry who died aged 24 on 29th July 2016. He emigrated to Australia 4 years earlier to take up farming but enlisted shortly after the start of the war. He survived the Dardenelles campaign. The band played O Valiant Hearts, the Last Post, read the exhortation from 'For the Fallen' by Lancashire man Laurence Binyon, played Reveille, laid a wreath by the memorial and played God be with us (till we meet again). Next the band played a short service at the Thiepval Memorial which was appreciated by the visitors and then headed to Steenwerck to visit the grave of Stephen Wareing a private in the Kings Liverpool Regiment who died on the 8th November 2017. A short service was held by the graveside in this beautiful but little visited cemetery.

Banks Brass Band wait to play at the Menin Gate Last Post Ceremony

At a packed Menin Gate the band played O Valiant Hearts, God be with you(till we meet again), Be still my soul and the Belgian & British National anthems. After many visits the ceremony at the Menin Gate never fails to move me.

On the Sunday the band could relax so spent the day in the area of Ploegsteert Wood (my choice as on my first trip to the Salient I was walking along chatting to the late Tony Spagnoly not aware at the time that he was an expert on the area).

We visited the Ploegsteert Memorial and crossed the road to visit the grave of 16-year-old Albert French subject of a Radio 4 programme entitled 'He shouldn't have been there should he? A few yards along the road we visited the Ploegsteert Interpretation Centre which has a superb interactive display which represents the changing situation in the Ypres Salient on each day of the war.

We visited Lancashire Cottage cemetery as it contains the graves of many Lancashire soldiers followed by the site of the 1914 Christmas truce and football

match. We visited the cemeteries at Prowse Point and Mud Corner then went into the wood to visit Toronto House Cemetery (78 Australian graves), Ploegsteert

Cemetery and then the highlight of the trip for me Rifle House Cemetery to hold a short service by the grave of 15-year-old R. Barnett who was killed on 19th December 1914. We played the Last Post ,read the exhortation and played Reveille. As the sound of the Last Post echoed through the wood it was truly moving. In the evening the band could relax and watch a less crowded Menin Gate ceremony where the Belgian choir Koor Cantamabile Hamme sang a version of 'In Flanders Fields'

On the 20th October 2018 Banks Brass Band held a very well attended concert to raise funds for the local hospice and replayed the service at the graves for the audience. The concert was dedicated to the three Banks soldiers who we were unable to visit as a group. Private H Baxter Army Service Corps who died on 12th July 1918 and is buried in Pemba cemetery Mozambique. Private T Wareing Northumberland Fusiliers who died on the 27th July 1918 and is buried in Niederwehren Cemetery in Germany and Second Lieutenant William George Francis of the Royal Flying Corps who died on the 10th March 1918 and is buried in San Giuseppe Communal Cemetery in Italy. A mission completed that will never be forgotten by those who made these journeys of remembrance

Banks Brass at Villers Brettenneux Cemetery

See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtndwuA9KSc for a clip of the band playing at Tyne Cot.

2715 Gunner William Stewart, RFA

William Bradshaw

PRESTON GUNNER KILLED IN ACTION.

Gunner W. Stewart, R.F.A., whose home was at 74, Plungington-road, Preston, was killed in action after being in France about seven months. A letter from the chaplain describes Gr. Stewart as a "gallant gunner," and states that he stuck to his post and was killed during a bombardment of the British trenches. A letter from his lieutenant states that Gr. Stewart was struck on the head by a splinter of shell, and that his death was instantaneous. The officer's letter goes on: "Gr. Stewart was a good soldier, and always did his duty well in very trying and dangerous circumstances. Personally, I feel the loss of a very promising member of my battery." Gunner Stewart was serving in a Trench Mortar Battery. He is buried in a grave behind the British lines, and his resting place is marked by a cross.

The Death Notice of 2715 Gunner William Stewart RFA. "PRESTON GUNNER KILLED IN ACTION." Gunner W. Stewart, R.F.A., whose home was at 74, Plungington-road, Preston, was killed in action after being in France about seven months. A letter from the chaplain describes Gr. Stewart as a "gallant gunner," and that he stuck to his post and was killed during a bombardment of the British trenches. A letter from his lieutenant states Gr. Stewart was struck on the head by a splinter of shell, and that his death was instantaneous. The officer's letter goes on: "Gr. Stewart was a good soldier, and always did his duty well in very trying and dangerous circumstances. Personally, I feel the loss of a very promising member of my battery." Gunner Stewart was serving in a Trench Mortar Battery. He is buried in a grave behind the British lines, and his resting place is marked by a cross.

1916, "Preston Gunner Killed In Action", *Lancashire Daily Post*. 12 July. Available at: www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0000711/19160712/113/0004 Accessed 27 March 2021

For Britain, 1916 on the Western Front is most remembered for the Battle of the Somme, but while this battle raged, elsewhere in the trenches, the BEF remained engaged in "business as usual" and its potentially lethal implication.

On a visit to Preston's Harris Library and rifling through Visiting the Fallen – Arras South by Peter Hughes, I came across the entry for Gunner William Stewart RFA of the 55th West Lancashire Division, from Preston, Lancashire. The entry noted that William's parents' address was "Wailly Orchid" rather than "Wailly Orchard", the place of his burial. Hughes speculates the address may have arisen from an error during the notification of death or perhaps it was an aid to remembrance.[1]

A check of Preston's Roll Of Honour and its precursor nomination forms, both conveniently in the Harris, revealed only that William Stewart was absent. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) website was more accommodating. The entry informs that number 2715 Gunner William Stewart, aged 21, of the 55th Division, Divisional Ammunition Column (DAC), had been killed on the 2nd of July 1916

[1] "Visiting the Fallen – Arras South." By Peter Hughes, 2015. Pub Pen & Sword Military, Barnsley. ISBN 978-1-47382-1. Page 324.

and is buried in Wailly Orchard Military Cemetery.[2] His parents were William and Alice Stewart of "Wailly Orchid", Cop Lane, Penwortham, Preston.

William Stewart (senior), aged 19, Bachelor and by occupation Weaver, of 7 Annis Street, Preston, married Alice Sumner, 22 years, Spinster and Frame Tenter, of 48 Plungington Rd., Preston at the Church of St Emanuel, Brook Street, Preston on Christmas Day, 1886.[3] However, it seems that William had ambitions beyond the mill. The 1891 census records him, Alice and two daughters residing at her pre-marriage home, 48 Plungington Rd. William is the head of the family and by trade a Fish Dealer.[4] Ten years later they are still at number 48. William a Fish Monger and with a six-year-old son, also named William.[5] The passage of another ten years to 1911 and the family are at 12 Plungington Rd, William Snr. Now describes himself as a Fish Salesman; sixteen years old William Jnr. Is "Assisting with the business".[6]

The point in time at which William Jnr. Joined the colours and his choice to serve with the RFA isn't known. His medal card states he arrived in France on the 23rd December 1915, this would indicate his time of joining, allowing for training, in the same year. Perhaps the 2nd West Lancashire Brigade RFA, Territorial Force (TF) based in Preston in 1914 or its predecessor the 5th Lancs RGA (V) was an influence?[7] [8]

At the beginning of the war, like other parts of the TF, units of the West Lancashire Division were on or about to begin annual training; all were recalled to their bases and mobilization begun. In response to Lord Kitchener's call for the TF to volunteer for overseas service, all units of the West Lancashire Division volunteered. However, the division didn't proceed overseas as a complete formation, but found itself being slowly dismembered as individual units moved to Flanders and France to serve with other, mainly regular, divisions. The divisional artillery stayed in England until September 1915 and then joined the 2nd Canadian Division on its journey across the Channel. The artillery served with the Canadians until mid-December of that year when it was ordered to move to near St Omer. At about the same time other units of the old West Lancashire Division were moved to rear areas. This generated rumours that the Division would be re-formed and these proved correct.

During the meeting at Chantilly in December 1915 the military heads of the Allied Powers agreed on the strategy for the following year. There should be simultaneous

[2] Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Wailly Orchard Military Cemetery stands above the village of Wailly and was begun in May 1916 by thr Liverpool Battalions of the 55th (West Lancashire) Division as a front-line cemetery.
[3] The register of the Parish Church of St Emanuel, Brook Street, Preston
[4] 1891 Census RG12 piece 3436 folio 80 page 35
[5] 1901 Census RG13 piece 3949 folio 149 page 11
[6] 1911 Census RG14 piece 25286
[7] "The Territorial Artillery 1908 – 1988." By Norman EH Lichfield 1992. pub by author at Ockbrrok, Derby, England. ISBN 0-9508205-2-0.
[8] "Soldiers Died in the Great War." The entry for Stewart lists his units as RHA and RFA. His medal card lists only RFA. "Soldiers Died…" information via Ancestry, access date not recorded. Medal index Card WO372/19/58494.

and combined offensives on all major fronts – the Anglo-French part of this general allied offensive would become the Somme campaign. Meanwhile, attrition was to continue so as to wear down the enemy. Shortly after the Chantilly meeting the French asked if the British would relieve the French 10th Army in front of Arras. While at first reluctant, the British agreed to take over part of that Army's front in early January 1916.[9]

The 55th (West Lancashire) Division TF was (re)formed beginning 3 January 1916, assembling in and around Hallencourt, near Abbeville under Major General HS Jeudine. Among the formations were the 164th, 165th and 166th infantry brigades. Divisional artillery comprised four RFA brigades and included the 2nd West Lancs Brigade RFA (Preston) and the Divisional Ammunition Column. On the 29th of the month the division, now in its complete form since the start of the war, paraded for inspection by the Corps commander. Some days later it proceeded to relieve part of the French 10th Army in a sector to the south of Arras. Having arrived in France just before Christmas 1915 it may be that Gunner William Stewart took part of these events.

The French 88th Infantry Territorial Division, part of the 10th Army, had occupied a sector to the south of Arras from November 1914. Stretching along the valley of the river Le Crinchon, the sector had, over time, varied in length. The outer most limits reached being Angy – nowadays just on the boundary of greater Arras – and Berles-au-Bois along the valley in the south-west, an overall distance of some 12km (7.5mi). Within the sector and behind the French lines, along the valley's northern side, beginning from Angy, were the villages of Wailly, Bretoncourt, Riviere, Bellacourt and Basseux. Opposite were the villages of Ficheux, Blairville and Ransart, being behind or incorporated within the German Lines. Although the French trenches were to the south of the river the German trenches were further south again but higher up the side of the valley, and so overlooked those of the French by a height of some 10m to 15m, and occasionally more. By mid-February 1916 the 88th Division's responsibility stretched from a position just beyond of Wailly, on its Arras side, to Bellacourt in the south-west – a trench line about 4.5km (2.8mi). A short while after their divisional inspection the 55th Division were ordered to relieve the French 88th Territorial Division holding the line from R.31.d.4.1. to R23.d.10.5.[10] [11] The relief was complete by the 16th February. The 55th Division's History informs that its task was "to harass the enemy as much as possible; to keep him ever alert; to lose no opportunity of

[9] "Bloody Victory: The Sacrifice on the Somme." By Wm Philpott, 2009. Pub Little John [by Abacus in paperback], London. ISBN 978-0-349-82004-1. Pages 56, 71.
[10] "The Story of the 55th (West Lancashire Division." By the Rev J O Coop DSO, TD, MA. Originally published by Liverpool Daily Post Printers 1919. pub in facsimile by The Naval & Military Press. Page 176.
[11] Map references relate to sheet FICHEUX 51C SE & 51B SW (part of) scale 1:10,000. The map may be seen on the National Library of Scotland website, military maps. Part of the map, including the villages of Wailly and Ficheux appear on pages 66, 67 of "The Great War From the Air Then and Now." By Gail Ramsey, 2013. Pub After the Battle. ISBN 9 781870 067812.

First World War period British trench mortar bomb. The 2-inch Vickers Medium Trench Mortar, also known as the 2-inch Trench Howitzer, came into use in the First World War in late 1915 but was phased out in late 1916. The term '2-inch' refers to the diameter of the mortar barrel, into which the bomb spigot (not shown here) was inserted, and the various types of bomb weighed between 39 - 42lb, with a range of up to 500 yards, depending on the size of the cordite charge used. For obvious reasons, this type of bomb was often nicknamed the 'Toffee Apple' or 'Plum Pudding' but sometimes also the 'Football'. © IWM MUN 3158

inflicting casualties upon him."[12] The West Lancs. soldiers remained in this sector until the end of July 1916, when they left to play their part in the Battle of the Somme.

At the beginning of the war the British, unlike the Germans with their Minenwerfer, were not well served by weapons in the category of trench artillery – the trench mortar. However, in 1915 British catch-up was boosted by the arrival of the 2-inch Trench Howitzer, nicknamed "Toffee Apple" or "Plum pudding" arising from its shape – a spherical bomb about the size of a football mounted on a steel shaft.[13] It weighed 23kg (51ibs) and its range about 460m (500yds). On soft ground its 19kg (42ibs) warhead produced a crater nearly 5m (16ft) across and some 2m (6.5ft) deep. This weapon became the British standard medium mortar.[14] As well as weapons changes there were organisational changes. Early-on mortars were in joint operation of infantry and artillery, but as other mortar types were introduced responsibility was divided. Light mortars being left to the infantry, medium and heavy going with the RFA.[15] Infantry divisions became equipped with three medium mortar batteries, each having four mortars. The batteries were designated X, Y and Z with the addition of the division's number as a suffix,[16] e.g., X55. In June 1916 the 55th

[12] Coop. page 25.
[13] "Trench: A History of Trench Warfare on the Western Front." By Stephen Bull, 2010. Pub Osprey Publishing Ltd. ISBN 978-1-84603-9. Page 106.
[14] Article British & Australian First World War Mortars by Martin Andrew PhD on WFA website. Accessed 12 June 16.
[15] "Official History of the War: Military Operations in France and Belgium, 1916." by J E Edmonds, 1932. Pub McMillan & Co., London. Pages 61, 62.
[16] The Long, Long Trail. https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/the-british-trench-mortar-batteries-in-the-first-world-war/ (Accessed 23 Nov 20)

Division's medium mortar batteries were created.[17] Although the Commonwealth War Graves Commission database states William Stewart's unit was the 55th Division's Ammunition Column, a posting in the "Killed in Action" column in the 12th July 1916 edition of the Preston Daily Post gives him as being a member of Y55 Trench Mortar Battery (TMB). A brief item later in the paper appears to confirm this, referring to a letter to his parents from his lieutenant.[18]

Returning to the ground. The history of the 55th West Lancs Division, describes the division's time in the Wailly sector as "a period of trench warfare, with raids of recurring frequency and recurring strength".[19] Of the many raids, two can be identified as being of note. The first on the 17th April 1916[20] and the second on the following 28th June. This latter was across the division's front. In preparation, gas and smoke were discharged along some 3.2km (2mi) of the line followed by raids in six places.[21] But, nature wasn't on the British side and the wind changed direction reducing the effect of the gas. While some of the raiders made it to the German trenches heavy enemy fire caused two of the parties to fail in their task. It is reported that those who were successful did kill many enemy.[22] The following day the division's commander congratulated his men on their performance, making special mention of the Artillery and Medium and Light Trench Mortar Batteries on their support, in some cases under conditions of much danger.

The divisional historian, in summary of the period in the sector, describes the time following the June raid as "Nothing of further importance took place during our tenure of this front." The 22 men killed on the 2nd July 1916 and buried in Wailly Orchard Military Cemetery might, were they to express it, be of a different opinion. Of the 22 on the cemetery roll for the 2nd July, 21 are King's (Liverpool Regiment) (KLR) men –

[17] The Long, Long Trail. The History of the 55th (West Lancashire) Division. https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/army/order-of-battle-of-divisions/55th-west-lancashire-division/ (Accessed 24 Nov 20)

[18] The National Archives, Kew. The War Diaries of the DAC and TMB shows transfers from the DAC certainly the Heavy TMB: 25th May 16. 3 officers and 66 other ranks joined the 55th Heavy Trench Mortar Battery (HTM). WO95/2915/4. 55th DAC War Diary. 7th July 16. Personnel of V/55 HTM – found from 55th DAC – sent to the 3rd Army School of Mortars for training. WO95/2915/3. 55th Div TMB War Diary.

[19] The historian to the South Lancashire Regiment, is equally underwhelmed stating "The time spent on this Battle Front was very uneventful, as the enemy was inactive and even his artillery did not often disturb the peace…" "'Ich Dien' The Prince of Wales's Volunteers (South Lancashire) 1914-34." by Capt h Whalley-Kelly *psc*, printed Gale & Polden Ltd, Aldershot. [Not dated.] Page 112. The 1/5th Bn. SLR belonged to 166 Bde (South Lancs.), 55th Division.

[20] The widely published photograph of members of the 1/8th (Liverpool Irish) raiding party is attributed to the raid on the right of the 17th / 18th April 1916. "The History of the King's Regiment (Liverpool). 1914-1919." by Everard Wyrall. Volume II, 1930, pub Edward Arnold & Co., London. Pages 248-250, photo opposite page 249. A brief article on the photograph entitled "The Forty Thirves appeared in Western Front Association "*Bulletin*" No.117, August 2020, page 64.

[21] Coop. page 27.

[22] During the raid 2Lt Herbert Angus Riley, 9KLR, was killed. 2Lt Darling together with 4637 Pte Frederick Winrow recovered his body. For this act Darling was awarded the Military Cross and Winrow the Military Medal. Riley is buried in Wailly Orchard Military Cemetery – see Hughes pp 144, 323. www.yarm1914.com/Darling/R%20Darling.html (Accessed 23 Nov 20); Wyrall. Page 254.

twelve of the 1/5th Bn, two of the 1/6th Bn and seven of the 1/9 Bn, Gunner Stewart completes the tally. On the few days before the 2nd July, from the 28th June to 1st July the cemetery lists a total of 10 men lost, and on the few days after – 3rd, 4th and 5th July there were none. What happened on the 2nd? It seems enemy retaliation for the raids of the 28th June.[23]

The division's 165th (Liverpool Bde comprised the 1/5th, 1/6th, 1/7th and 1/9th battalions KLR. Battalion war diaries reveal that on the 2nd July the 1/5th were in the trenches across from the village of Ficheux and 1/9th next to them on their right, opposite Blairville Wood. The battalions had been in these positions in the line at the time of the raids of the 28th and at points opposite where raiding parties had attempted to or entered the German lines. The weather on the 2nd was reported as fine. During the morning the enemy began registering artillery shots on the reserve lines of the 1/5th and on the front and support lines of the 1/9th. At 1 o'clock the Germans began intense bombardment of the front and support lines of two British battalions, damaging wire and trenches. The enemy were using heavy artillery – 4.2" (107mm), 5.9" (150mm) guns as well as lighter field guns and howitzers. It was said later that enemy had brought up the "circus" of heavy guns, 150mm and 210mm howitzers, on railway lines.[24] The shell fire continued for about an hour then stopped for 30 minutes before starting again. After another hour the enemy ceased for 20 or so minutes to begin again, finally ending at 5:30pm – in total three and a half hours of shelling. British retaliation was judged weak, but the heavy artillery were reported to have "removed the village of Ficheux except for one house".[25]

The German shelling devastated the front-line trenches and back for 200 yds. The 1/5th estimated that some 10,000 shells had landed in their stretch of the trenches and immense damage to the reserve line with two dugouts blown in. The front-line on the right totally obliterated in some places.[26] The 1/9th also had dugouts blown in – three in all, one of which was a deeper, mined version – leaving 34 men buried. Recovery of those buried was begun, continuing until 4:15am on the 3rd. All those living were got out, seven bodies were left until the following night.[27] Casualties were 12 killed from the 1/5th.[28] From the 1/9th, one officer and six other ranks (OR) killed, 10 OR wounded[29] of which two later died of wounds. There were also casualties among soldiers of the 1/6th KLR who were attached to the 1/9th – two OR killed and three OR wounded. The trench mortar batteries suffered similar devastation, "… two

[23] Using entries for Wailly Orchard Military Cemetery for deaths over a period of days to provide a comparison and assumes decisions leading to interments in the cemetery remain consistent over the period.
[24] "The Story of the '9th Kings' in France." By EHG Roberts. Page 45.
[25] 9th Kings Liverpool Regt. War Diary www.9thkings.co.uk/1-9Diary1916Q3.html (Accessed 23 Nov 20)
[26] 5th KLR War Diary, Liverpool Maritime Museum Archive (LMM) ref KR/1/5, Vol 5.
[27] 9th KLR War Diary www.9kings.co.uk/1-9Diary1916Q3.html (Accessed 23 Nov 20)
[28] 5th KLR War Diary LMM KR/1/5, Vol 5.
[29] The 6th KLR War Diary LMM KR/1/6, Vol 6 gives 3 OR attd. to 9th KLR wounded. The 6th KLR were otherwise in reserve at Beaumetz.

2-inch guns (were) buried and 6 emplacements completely destroyed … X/55 Bty replied during the bombardment. Y/55 was unable to as [the] ammunition recess was blown in and ammunition buried. Z/55 detachments unable to approach [their] positions owing to [the] barrage on communication trenches." The batteries' war diary gives casualties as 1 killed, 1 wounded.[30]

The Preston Daily Post of the 12th July refers to a chaplain saying Stewart was killed during a bombardment of the British trenches. The article continues that his lieutenant's letter to his parents informed them William was "struck on the head by the splinter of a shell.[31] (The 55th's divisional history refers to shell helmets being issued in the early part of the year – the 1/5th KLR reporting in March difficulties with fitting them[32] although the 1/9th KLR is reported as being issued with steel helmets in May 1916[33] – but sadly such armour does not guarantee total protection, if indeed William was wearing one. Given this information and his membership of Y55 Trench Mortar Battery it seems almost certain that he was killed in this action. (While the CWGC records Stewart's unit as 55th Division, Divisional Ammunition Column, as noted earlier, there is evidence of men transferring between a divisional ammunition column and a trench mortar battery, it may be that in this case record-keeping hadn't kept up?)

Such was the extent of the bombardment that repairs to the trenches took several days and nights, and were subject to sporadic salvos of shrapnel by the enemy so as to hinder those efforts.

William Stewart is included on the memorial in St Emanual's Church, Brook Street, Preston – a few streets from Plungington Road. The memorial lists the "Names of those who from this Parish served in the Great War", including those who returned. Within the list William is one of those who made "… [T]he Supreme Sacrifice".[34]

And so, to the house name …

Earlier we left William Snr and family in the year 1911 living at 12 Plungington Rd. where they still were at the start of the war.[35] At No.74 was Peter Carroll who had married William Snr's daughter, Rachel Ann, in 1908. The Preston Daily Post of the 12th July 1916 gives the Stewart family address as No.74. The 1921 Burgess Roll shows the Carrolls at No. 74 Plungington Rd but no Stewarts at No. 12.

[30] WO95/2915/3. 55th Div TMB War Diary. 2 July 16. The war diary for the55th DAC, WO95/2915/5, has a gap between 28 May and 6 July 1916, thus there is no comment on activities during that period.
[31] Preston Daily Post. 12th July 1916, final page.
[32] Wyrall. Page 243.
[33] Roberts. Page 42.
[34] Via preston remembers.org reference #162699 on warmemorialsonline.org.uk Accessed 7 Aug 17.
[35] Preston Parliamentary and Burgess Roll for 1914 / 15.

Cop Lane, Penwortham. Sturzakers Newsagents on the left. The property to the right of the newsagents is believed to be the house formerly known as "Wailly Orchard". Photograph by Charlie O'Donnell 27 March 2021.

While the availability of street directories is limited in 1922 William Snr. Appears in Barrett's Directory of Preston & District[36] at "Dun robbin", Cop Lane, Penwortham. (A house name (also) open to speculation. There is a Dun Robin castle in the north of Scotland; the double 'b' could be a mis-spelling / typo or an intriguing pun?) In the 1926 / 27 directory the house has been re-named to "Wailly Orchid", the same appearing in the CWGC record, and as suggested in Peter Hughes' book, may be due to the mis-reading of a War Graves Commission notification of William's final place of rest. By 1932 Directory the name had become "Wailly Orchard". In 1936 and onwards directories list only house numbers; Mr W Stewart is listed at number 162 Cop Lane.

Returning to the 1932 directory, along Cop Lane on the western side of the road there are five houses between Cromwell Rd. and Hollywood Ave.[37] Beginning at Cromwell Rd. by house name and householder they are "Summerfield", Iddon; "Oaklands", Hayes; no house name, Clegg; "Wailly Orchard", Stewart; "Brahmar", Gillet. House holder Mrs Clegg is listed as a grocer. As already noted, in the 1936 volume the house names have been replaced by numbers. Again starting at Cromwell Rd. these are 168, 166, 164,

[36] Unless otherwise stated, all directories are Barrett's Directory of Preston.
[37] These two side roads are not listed in 1932 bur ate in the 1936 and subsequent directories consulted.

162, 160. The householders are the same except that what is now 164 Mrs. Clegg has been replaced by a Mr. Parkinson, also listed as a grocer. In 1940 Stocks, grocer, is now at 164 and continues to at least 1952. This is the last year that William Snr. Appears. In the 1948 edition his widow Alice, is the householder at 162. Between directories for 1940 and 1948 Hollywood Ave. "moves", that is, number 160 is now the other side of Hollywood Avenue leaving 162 as the end house of the row.

Recalling the series of grocers at 164 and moving into more recent times the premises is a newsagents. In 2016 the writer asked the owners, RR & B Sturzaker, what they knew of the history of the shop. They had been in shop about 30 years. When they took it on one part of the shop was a greengrocers, but the new Booths supermarket killed that trade. The owners before them were Crundle, and before that Kellet.

From the lists recorded by the street directories over the years it seems more than likely that the house between the newsagents and Hollywood Ave. is "Wailly Orchard."

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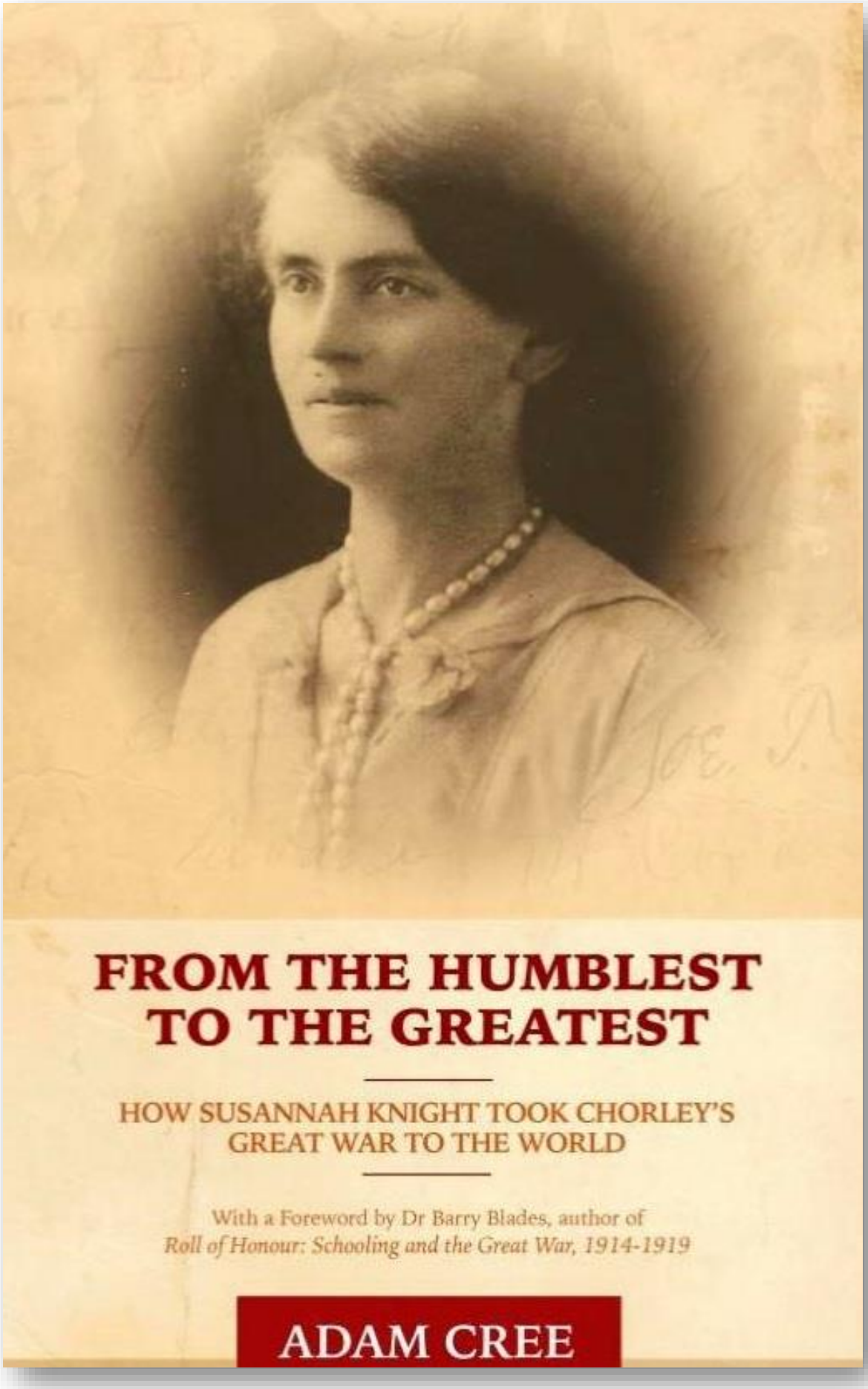
FROM THE HUMBLEST
TO THE GREATEST
HOW SUSANNAH KNIGHT TOOK CHORLEY'S
GREAT WAR TO THE WORLD
With a Foreword by Dr Barry Blades, author of
Roll of Honour: Schooling and the Great War, 1914-1919
ADAM CREE

From the Humblest to the Greatest: How Susannah Knight took Chorley's Great War to the World

Adam Cree

Astley Hall Museum in Chorley, Lancashire, has a unique WW1 memorial of three uniquely printed volumes which record men of Chorley who were taken by the Great War of 1914-20, each with a photograph and biography, two per page. There are no other copies. It is truly singular and irreplaceable.

Susannah Knight, an uncertified primary school teacher and a devout Catholic, was well-travelled before 1914 but found herself in France at the outbreak of hostilities. Returning to England, she taught French to the Chorley "Pals" Battalion until they departed for the front. She undertook to support the injured, widows and orphans though out the war and on into the 1930s.

She began to compile the Memorial Album, or 'Golden Books,' in 1919 for 777 men of the town who died in the Great War, some of whom she taught as children. She campaigned for a respite hospital to car for casualties with long term needs in 1916 but was rejected by the civic authorities who felt that the end of the war would be a more appropriate time for a memorial hospital. She argued that "there are worse things than death" and persisted in giving support to families throughout the war. She had the hearts of the ex-servicemen and was well loved for her attention and care of families that suffered through the years of war and the depression. She organised events for ex-servicemen's families in the 1920s and 1930s, with some events having up to 800 participants.

At some point in 1921 she decided that the consequences of war for the men of Chorley and their families should be brought to national and international attention. She went on to travel Britain, Europe and the USA in the 1920s and 1930s showing the books to the "great and the good" to reinforce the sacrifice of our small town to those in power. This is a unique document - not only in terms of the casualties recorded but the way Susannah used the Memorial Book to carry a message to people of influence across the allied nations.

She got the signatures of Edward, Prince of Wales and the entire British government of 1921 (including Lloyd George, Asquith, Baldwin and Churchill) in 40 signatures on just one of over 200 pages of autographs. Haig and the upper echelon of both the army and navy are represented for Britain and the Dominions. Presidents, monarchs, aristocrats, political heavyweights, doctors, chaplains and military commanders are packed into the pages, and there are over 2000 autographs, each name representing an interaction with Susannah and carrying a story of its own.

The Memorial books at Astley Hall Museum, Chorley. Photograph by Keith Robinson and reproduced under the IWM Non-Commercial License.

She gained a papal blessing for the books in 1921 and she herself was granted an apostolic blessing. Failing to get Benedict XV's signature she returned to Rome in April 1922 to get the signature of Pius IX. In between her two brushes with the papacy she visited America for four weeks, targeting the burial of their unknown soldier and the Washington Arms Limitation Conference, getting signatures from the President and his cabinet, to three quarters of the Senate, many of the House of Representatives, Koontz and Pershing, and the many more.

Susannah returned to the USA for a whole year 1935-36 to be present at the Texas centenary celebrations.

The range of people who were introduced in the Memorial Book in the 1920s and 1930s is truly surprising. This is not any simple book of condolence for a community grieving, but something far more active and dynamic. It was an appeal for peace and reconstruction, which she underlined in her vociferous correspondence with Eleanor Roosevelt.

She had brought the plight of her adopted town to the very highest reaches of political and spiritual authority over a fifteen year period. She died in 1950 feeling lonely and

spurned by her adopted town. Few in the town have heard her name and no one has taken the trouble to study her travels until now. Her grave is now unmarked.

Her own words tell her story best. In her letter to Eleanor Roosevelt in June 1935 she wrote:

"… in 1921 I got President Harding's, the cabinet, Senators and Congressmen. In addition I had the officers of the land, sea and air forces.

I have the autographs of the King and Queen of the Belgians, the King and Queen of Italy and hosts of Allied officers …

The first book is for the War Period and contains distinguished people of that period … I thought I would call the second book the 'Recovery Period' and get the autographs of those who piloted their nations safely through the most terrible period the world has ever known…

As these books are to be a gift to the British nation in memory of the Allied friendships to keep them unique there can be no copies. They will be received in Astley Hall, Chorley, and Lancashire. I hope, dear Mrs Roosevelt, that you will to refuse the request I make [for a signature] and in anticipation I thank you most sincerely."

She was successful in gaining Eleanor Roosevelt's signature but her gift to the nation lies forgotten. The time for Susannah's legacy to be recognised is well overdue.

From the Humblest to the Greatest: How Susannah Knight took Chorley's Great War to the World by Adam Cree. **Available from Amazon in Kindle or print format.**