



# The Spire Sentinel



**The Newsletter & Magazine of The  
Chesterfield Branch of The Western Front  
Association**



**ISSUE 65 - May 2021**

Our aims are 'Remembrance and Sharing the History of the  
Great War'.

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We have another `virtual` meeting lined up for May.....Michael McLaren will speak about ***‘The First Attack at Bellewaarde Ridge, June 15th 1915’*** on Wednesday May 19th. Here is the link.....

<https://my.demio.com/ref/sTs3L2VM4VAuF9Z7>

The Monday evening webinars continue in May, these all start at 8pm UK time. We would ask that if you cannot make these events, please either do not register or if you have registered and can't attend, please cancel your registration as we are having to 'cap' these events on a regular basis. The schedule of these events is detailed below. Please click on the links in order to find out more and to register for each of the events:

03 MAY 2021 Breaking the Hindenburg Line - The assault by the 137 (Staffordshire) Brigade on 29 September 1918 by Jim Tanner, <http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/.../online.../>

10 MAY 2021 Culture Clash: British and German Military Innovation at War, 1914-18 by Jonathan Boff <http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/.../online.../>

17 MAY 2021 Lord Fisher, the Baltic and the battle for British Grand Strategy 1914-15 by Andrew Lambert <http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/.../online-lord.../>

24 MAY 2021 Baptism of Fire: The 21st Division at Loos by Derek Clayton <http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/.../online.../>

31 MAY 2021 'From this point the tourist should go on foot': experiencing the Somme, 1919-1939. by Prof Mark Connolly <http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/.../online-from.../>

We hope that you will be able to join us on these events.

*Any opinions expressed in this Newsletter / Magazine are not necessarily those of the Western Front Association, Chesterfield Branch, in particular, or the Western Front Association in general*



## *Secretary's Scribbles*

Dear Members and Friends,

Welcome to the May 2021 issue of the Branch newsletter and magazine. Again thanks to excellent contributions it is a bumper issue

With, by all accounts `lockdown` restrictions being eased, your Branch Committee held a meeting (via Zoom, of course,) to plot a way forward in restarting Branch meetings. We decided that, if possible, we would like to hold a `live` meeting in August. At present we do not know what the situation is with our venue, Chesterfield Labour Club and until that becomes clearer, particularly if there has to be restrictions on numbers etc, we cannot make any firm commitments, although hopefully things will be clarified in the coming weeks which will us to start talking to potential speakers for August and through to the end of the year.



Just to remind you what a `live` meeting looks like, here is a picture from our last one March 2020 with the ever popular Peter Hart taking centre stage

Moving forward we have another `virtual` meeting lined up for May.....Michael McLaren will speak about '*The First Attack at Bellewaarde Ridge, June 15th 1915*' on May 19th. Here is the link

<https://my.demio.com/ref/sTs3L2VM4VAuF9Z7>

Those who receive the last Stand To ! magazine will have seen a review of Malcolm`s book on this subject (starts page 56).

In addition to our `own` meetings there is a full programme of webinars arranged by the WFA. The full list, including the links for joining each talk is shown on page 2 of this newsletter.

Jane Ainsworth has (again!) sent an interesting piece (see pages 46 and 47 ) Announcing the 2021 Free UK Genealogy conference on *Open, Global Genealogy* Free UK Genealogy is to run this year's conference as a virtual event, taking place over two Saturdays in May (22nd and 29th). This may be of interest to those tracing family histories, ancestors, servicemen etc

Take care

Grant Cullen.....Branch Secretary.....07824628638

# Garrison Library

The Journal of the Royal United Services Institution. Gold Medal (Military) Prize Essay for 1918 “ *How can moral qualities best be developed during the preparation of the officer and the man for the duties each will carry out in war* ”

War in History. *Sir John Fisher and the Policy of Strategic Deterrent 1904-1908*

War in History. *The Impact of War: Matching Expectation with Reality in the Royal Navy in the first Months of the Great War*

Journal of Strategic Studies. *The Morale Maze: the German Army in Late 1918*

War in History. *The Chemical Dimension of the Gallipoli Campaign: Introducing Chemical Warfare to the Middle East.*

NWC Review Summer 2007. *Expectation, Adaption and Resignation...British Battlefleet Planning, August 1914-April 1916*

Air Power Review. *Haig and Trenchard: Achieving Air Superiority on the Western Front*

WW1 Listserve *Falsehood in Wartime: by Arthur Ponsonby MP (1929)*

Christopher Phillips *Civilian Specialists at War: Britain's Transport Experts and the First World War*

Elizabeth Greenhalgh: *Ferdinand Foch and the French Contribution to the Somme 1916*

William Stewart: *When the Learning Curve Falls - the Ordeal of the 44<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Canadian 4<sup>th</sup> Division, 25<sup>th</sup> October 1916*

Meleagh Hampton: *Hubert Gough, the Anzacs on the Somme. A Descent into Pointlessness*

Brett Holman: *Constructing the Enemy Within; Rumours of Secret Gun Platforms and Zepellin Bases in Britain, August to October 1914*

Gary Sheffield: *A Once in a Lifetime Opportunity - Personal Reflections on the Centenary of World War One in 2014*

Jim Beach: *Doctrine Writing at British GHQ 1917-1918*

Andrew Whitmarsh: *British Strategic Bombing 1917-1918. The Independent Air Force and its Predecessors*

Christopher Phillips: *Civilian Specialists in War - Britain's Transport Experts in WW1*

British Journal of Military Research *Volume 1 - October 2014*

Michael St. Maur Sheil *Does the Performance of the RFC at Cambrai in 1917 illustrate demands for aerial observation lead to the development of air power.*

Jonathan Krause *Early Trench Tactics of the French*

Paul Mulvey *The Western Front and Gallipoli 1915*

Unattributed *Gallipoli Landings from the Perspective of the Lancashire Fusiliers*

Unattributed *Gallipoli - The Last Battle of the Victorian Era ?*

James Kitchen *Going to War - Europe and the Wider World 1914-1915*

Institute of Historical Research, Andrekas Varnava *Imperialism first - War second ?. The British deliberations on where to attack the Ottoman Empire Nov 14 to April 15*

International History Review: *Sir Basil Zaharoff and Sir Vincent Caillard as Instruments of British Policy towards Greece and the Ottoman Empire during the Asquith and Lloyd George Administrations, 1915-8*

Scientia Militaria. Ian van der Waag. *The politics of south Africa`s `Second Little Bit` and the War on the Western front 1914-18*

Peter Doyle, Peter Barton, and Johan Vandewalle. *ARCHAEOLOGY OF A GREAT WAR DUGOUT: BEECHAM FARM, PASSCHENDAELE, BELGIUM*

RUSI Journal ; Jonathon Krause; *Ferdinand Foch and the Scientific Battle*

Peter Doyle *Geology and the war on the Western Front, 1914-1918*

Simon Birch *The abortive British attack on the Gommecourt salient, in support of the IV Army assault on the Somme, 1 July 1916. An operational case study at divisional level.*

Dominiek Dendooven In Flanders Fields Museum, Ypres, Belgium *Indians in the Ypres Salient 1914-1918*

E Tufan *The Late Ottomans' path to alliance with Germany in 1914, Revisited*

Dr Anne Samson, Independent Historian, co-ordinator of Great War in East Africa *With Lettow and Smuts through Africa: World War 1*

Copies of any of the above papers can be obtained via e mail.....contact [grantcullen@hotmail.com](mailto:grantcullen@hotmail.com) Let me know what ones you want and I will send them to you. Thanks

**An update about WFA BRANDED GOODS  
from the BRANDED GOODS TRUSTEE**

**BRANDED CLOTHING**

West Coast Embroidery The firm that is presently used has had a name change  
The owner of the firm (West Coast Embroidery) had retired,  
The new owner has renamed the firm "West Coast Workwear"  
(In actual fact if you look on their Website it says "Westcoast Embroidery & Workwear")  
The Website has now changed to westcoastworkwear.co.uk  
Email has also changed to Sales@westcoastworkwear.co.uk  
Phone number and Business address stay the same.  
95a Tulketh Street, Southport, PR8 1AW, Tel: 01704 873 301 | 0800 169 2228  
The WFA Website has been updated

**Also PRICE INCREASE** --NEW PRICES WILL BE EFFECTIVE FROM 1st July 2021 Because of an increase of Material cost, the supplier will be increasing prices WEF 1st July 2021, we have done our utmost to keep the increase to a bare minimum, and the supplier has agreed to hold the current prices until 30th June 2021 (Website will be amended on 1<sup>st</sup> July)

**BRANDED ITEMS Messenger Bags:** As always stock of all items are kept as low as is workable, eliminating wastage and tying up cash, so Messenger Bags are no different. On attempting to order more messenger bags it was found that the ones we had no longer were available, after much investigating and trying different firms it was realised that a firm did the same bag (not in French Navy) but in Graphite Grey, so we went with that (not too much difference and at the same price,



**Despatch Bags**

Ironically the same firm (In Chesterfield) do a despatch Bag (in Oxford Navy)  
( Quadra Vintage Canvas Despatch Bag) so it's been decided to give these a go as it suits with some members requests (More pockets and external pockets than the messenger bag, (albeit slightly more expensive)

Full description as under:

**DESPATCH BAGS,** ( Quadra Vintage Canvas Despatch Bag)

Washed Canvas, Zippered main compartment, Dual rear pouch pockets,  
Multiple zippered pockets, Padded base, Rip-Strip closure, Adjustable shoulder strap  
Dimensions: 40 x 30 x 12 cm, Capacity: 14 litres



**These items are included in the following full page of [all Branded Goods Availability](#)**



## BRANDED GOODS AVAILABILITY

During the Covid-19 pandemic members need be made aware that the Branded Goods Department is doing their absolute utmost to supply the service that they can while staying withing the Governments guidelines, so may we ask you to bear with them as there may be sometimes a slight delay on getting items to you: New items are always being considered, so please check the Branded goods part of the shop for all items available, Prices are inclusive of postage within UK (Branded Items Nos 1-10) <http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/shop/wfa-branded-items/?p=2> or call Head Office (Sarah Gunn) on 020 7118 1914

And the (Branded Clothing, Nos 11- 17) Order direct from supplier (West Coast Embroidery) <http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/shop/branded-clothing/> or ring (0800 169 2228 or 01704 873301)



- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| (1) Fridge Magnet      | (£5) 59mm dia, front metal plate, high strength neodymium magnetic backplate, and plastic mylar front cover    |
| (2) Anniv' Coaster     | (£8.50) 4" in diameter hand crafted slate. individually polished, screen printed by hand and backed by a baize |
| (3) Mousemats          | (£6) 196 x 235mm fabric surface and are of high quality. They have a rubberised base layer.                    |
| (4) Bookmarks          | (£2) (dims 55x175mm) rich UV High Gloss Coating provides protection against stains and damage                  |
| (5) Baseball Caps      | (£8) Lightweight 5 Panel cotton cap, adjustable with velcro rip-strip, one size fits all,                      |
| (6) Ties               | (£11) Length 142cm, width 9cm (at widest part), 100 % Polyester  |
| (7) Lapel Badges       | (£2.50) 25mm Dia. Die struck + imitation hard enamel, Silver Nickel Plating, Butterfly clutch pin              |
| (8) MUG                | (£10) 11oz ceramic mug (95mm high x 85mm diameter) features the bold official WFA logo design (two sides)      |
| (9) Messenger Bag      | (£27) 37x29x11 cm, 100% Cotton.Full cotton lining,Zippered organiser section, Capacity:13 litres               |
| (10) Shoulder Bag      | (£25) 40 x 28 x 18 cm, Polyester. Internal valuables pocket. Zippered front pocket. Capacity: 18 litres        |
| (11) Oxford Shirt      | (£25) Kustom Kit Short Sleeve Corporate Oxford Shirt. Easy iron Button down collar, 85% cotton, 15% polyester  |
| (12) Breathable Jacket | (£42) Russell Hydro Plus 2000 Jacket. Nylon taslon With PU Coating   |
| (13) Rugby Shirt       | (£26) Front Row Classic Rugby Shirt, 100% Cotton   |
| (14) Fleece            | (£25) Regatta Thor 111 Fleece Jacket, 100% polyester anti pill   |
| (15) T-shirt           | (£15) Russell Classic Cotton T-Shirt. 100% ringspun cotton.  |
| (16) Sweat Shirt       | (£18) Gents Russell Jerzees Raglan / Ladies Fruit Of The Loom Raglan   |
| (17) Polo Shirt        | (£17) Russell Cotton Pique Polo Shirt. 100% cotton   |

## Soldier in Unmarked Grave Remembered

Back in 2018 the Worksop Branch of the Royal British Legion decided to commemorate men from the town (over 600 of them) who fell in the Great War by attaching large plastic poppies (truckers poppies) on lampposts and street signs outside houses in the town where some of these men had lived prior to the war. This huge project was well received by the folks of Worksop and many people were so pleased to learn of the history that the house they were currently living in had once been home to a fallen soldier of The Great War.

One such man was Gary Kyriacou who lives on the town`s Park Street. His house had been occupied by a chap, Thomas Highton whose name appears on the town`s War Memorial. Gary was much taken by the local RBL`s efforts to commemorate the fallen from Worksop that he decided to find out more about `his` soldier, Thomas Highton.

To aid him in his search, he accessed, on line, the Nottinghamshire County Council `Roll of Honour`

The Nottinghamshire Great War Roll of Honour is a permanent tribute to local men and women who died during the First World War. Until this was compiled, no list of Nottinghamshire`s Great War dead has been compiled and many communities did not keep written records of 1914-18 losses. This project pays homage to the county`s fallen and creates a unique, centralised archive for researchers, historians and the general public.

Eight groups of volunteer information gatherers have collaborated with Nottinghamshire County Council which has funded the initiative and provided technical expertise.

Names have been collected across Nottinghamshire from 677 memorials in village and town centres, chapels, churches, churchyards, parish halls, factories and other work places, schools and sports clubs. Individual stories have been brought to life through the addition of biographical detail, narrative, photographs and newspaper extracts as well as entries from diaries and letters.

Fatalities unrecorded or missing from physical monuments have been added to a series of Virtual Memorials.

Many members of the public have already contributed and you it is possible to add photos or data to the site using a simple Log-In process .

The following people were the main contributors for their work on the Roll of Honour to date:

Nottinghamshire County Council web developer Tom Styles who designed the site.

Consultant Ashley Marron who developed Phase 2 of the project in collaboration with Tom Styles and Alec Buchanan.

Lynn Sergant, who has uploaded much of the data harvested from the city of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire`s districts.

Dr David Nunn who has led the team of volunteers.



## Volunteers by District

- **Nottingham** - Peter Foster, Steve Zaleski, Lynn Whiteley, Brendan Beecroft, Simon Williams and Brian Szowkomud
- **Ashfield** - David Nunn, Carol Taylor-Cockayne and Richard Clay
- **Bassetlaw** - Richard English, Colin Dannatt, Tony & Judith Goodall, Roger Caple and Robert Ilett
- **Broxtowe** - David Nunn, Hilary Hillier, Brian Taylor, Malcolm Jarvis and Richard Dodge
- **Gedling** - Tracy Dodds, Yvonne Davies, Peter Gillings, Barbara Worrall, Jean Parrott, the late Cliff Housley and Anthony Ball
- **Mansfield** - Carol Malone
- **Newark & Sherwood** - Gary Tranter and Andy McKinnon
- **Rushcliffe** - Murray Biddle and John Whalley
- **Across Nottinghamshire** - David Nunn, Rachel Farrand, Peter Gillings, Richard Clay and Steve Morse
- **Virtual Memorials** created by David Nunn

The sharp eyed amongst our readers may have noted one familiar name - Robert Ilett, WFA member and former legal officer to the WFA. Robert of course is not the only WFA member listed above.

This is the entry on the Roll of Honour pertaining to Thomas Highton.....

## Thomas Highton



Place of birth - Worksop, Notts. •

### Family History.

George and Margaret Highton, nee Greewood, came to Worksop around 1890 with a family of 4 children, Ada, Edward, Eliza and Margaret (the first two from a previous marriage of Margaret to Joseph Walton). George Highton was a retired licence victualler, the family living in Newgate Street, Grove Villa. There follow the births of 4 more children all born in Worksop, George, Thomas, Emma and Florence. Thomas was born in 1892 and volunteered to join the army in 1909 and by 1911 he was resident as a Private in the 2nd Bn Sherwood Foresters b. Worksop at Crownhill Barracks Devon, age 19. His parents still occupied their Newgate Street house in 1911 but later moved to 15 Park Street,

Worksop.

Service number 11174 and 39606

Rank Lance Sergeant

Military Unit. The Prince of Wales's (North Staffordshire Regiment)

## Military History

Thomas Highton enlisted at Worksop on the 27 Jan 1909 in the Sherwood Foresters Special Reserve, number 11174 age 17 years 8 months. After reaching the age of 18 on the 27 May he took the oath and joined the regular service. After his training, he went with his regiment to India in September 1911. Whilst there, he appears to have contracted a disease which placed him many times, on and off, in hospital, once for a period of 126 days. His medical record shows him to have been diagnosed with paratyphoid fever, malaria and tuberculosis. It was recommended he returned to England which he did in May 1914 where he was now deemed fit for service. On the 7th September 1914, he was sent to France and as he was wounded by gun shot to his right elbow, was returned once again back home on 22 Oct 1914. He spent the next few years in England and was promoted to Cpl in Sept 1916 and L/Sgt in March '17. Whilst in Sunderland, he married Winifred Patricia Buchanan in the registry office on the 4th April 1917. He was then transferred to the 3rd Battalion of the North Staffs regiment, number 39606, and 5 days after his marriage was drafted with the expeditionary force and due to illness returned home in September. He spent time in army hospitals and even had an operation on his neck for glandular problems. Eventually he appeared before a medical board on the 13th Sept 1918 and was discharged on the 19 September 1918 as being permanently unfit for army service due to persistent illnesses contracted during his service in India. As well as his 1915 star, British and victory medal, he was awarded the Silver War badge number B15754 as a member of the 3rd North Staffordshire Regiment.

Ex-Sergt Thomas Highton from the Retford Times 9 May 1919

*The funeral of ex-Sergt Thomas Highton, Park Street, Worksop, took place at the New Cemetery on Friday. The deceased who was 27 years of age, died at Bradwell, where he lived. He enlisted in the Sherwoods in 1911 and went to France with the 2nd Battalion when war broke out. He went through the retreat from Mons, and was wounded in the right shoulder at Armentieres. After a long spell in hospital he was sent to Mesopotamia with the 7th Staffords, but on reaching Bagdad his health broke down and he was eventually discharged in December 1917. Afterwards he worked in the laboratory at Firth's Steel Works. Ex-Sergt Highton stood 6' 3" Military honours were accorded the deceased, a firing party from Clipston firing three volleys over the grave, whilst buglers sounded the "Last Post." The Rev H Gray officiated. (There follows a list of mourners and floral tributes).*

His grave in Retford Road Cemetery is in Section 4, grave 191, unmarked.

Research by Colin Dannatt

Gary was, understandably surprised that Thomas`s grave in the local cemetery had never been marked with neither a family headstone nor a CWGC grave marker and raised this with Adie Platts of the local Royal British Legion, the driver behind the project to put named poppies on local streets where fallen soldiers had lived. Both agreed that attempts should be made to put this omission right as from the records, there was evidence that Thomas`s death could be attributed to his military and war service. Adie has proceeded to enter into correspondence with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to persuade them, by submission of evidence, that Thomas`s last resting place should be narked with one of their headstones. This takes time, more especially with the restrictions due to the pandemic, and no decision has been arrived at, as yet, by the CWGC.

Enter `Men in sheds`. The charity AgeUK opened the first `shed` in 2008. The `sheds` are a euphemism for a club and are actually the equivalent to industrial units where men can meet to undertake a variety of activities such as woodworking, metalworking, art and computers - almost like a youth club for the over 50's! Attending the sheds enhances men's self esteem and increases their confidence. The sheds can provide an opportunity for older men to engage in physical activity, keep mobile and live less sedentary lives than they would if they did not attend the Sheds. The sheds also provide a compassionate and supportive space for older men to share their health concerns and experiences with other men that is separate from traditional interventions and talking to other men and having somewhere to go during the week contributes to a reduction in feelings of depression.



`Men in Sheds` have a Worksoop Branch and work out of an industrial unit in Kilton Terrace in the town. RBL member (ex Royal Tank Regiment) David Boswell (pictured with the cross) arranged with his colleagues at the `Shed` to have the temporary grave marker made from antique oak and David brought this along on May 1<sup>st</sup> - almost 102 years to the day when Thomas died, for installation on the spot where he is buried.

Gary Kyriacou, several of his friends, two WW1 reenactors in Notts & Derby Regiment uniforms, and members of the local Royal British Legion Branch and WFA gathered at the graveside to see the cross installed. RBL Branch Chair, Adie Platts and Robert Ilett (WFA) spoke briefly before Last Post was sounded, a two minutes silence held, followed by reveille.



The second picture shows Robert Ilett standing behind the grave with the cross installed, flanked by the two gentlemen in authentic Notts and Derby Regiment uniforms of 1918.



Gary Kyriacou, who now lives in the house where Thomas Highton lived and a friend came to the ceremony in period dress,

Gary is next to the chap in uniform on the left.

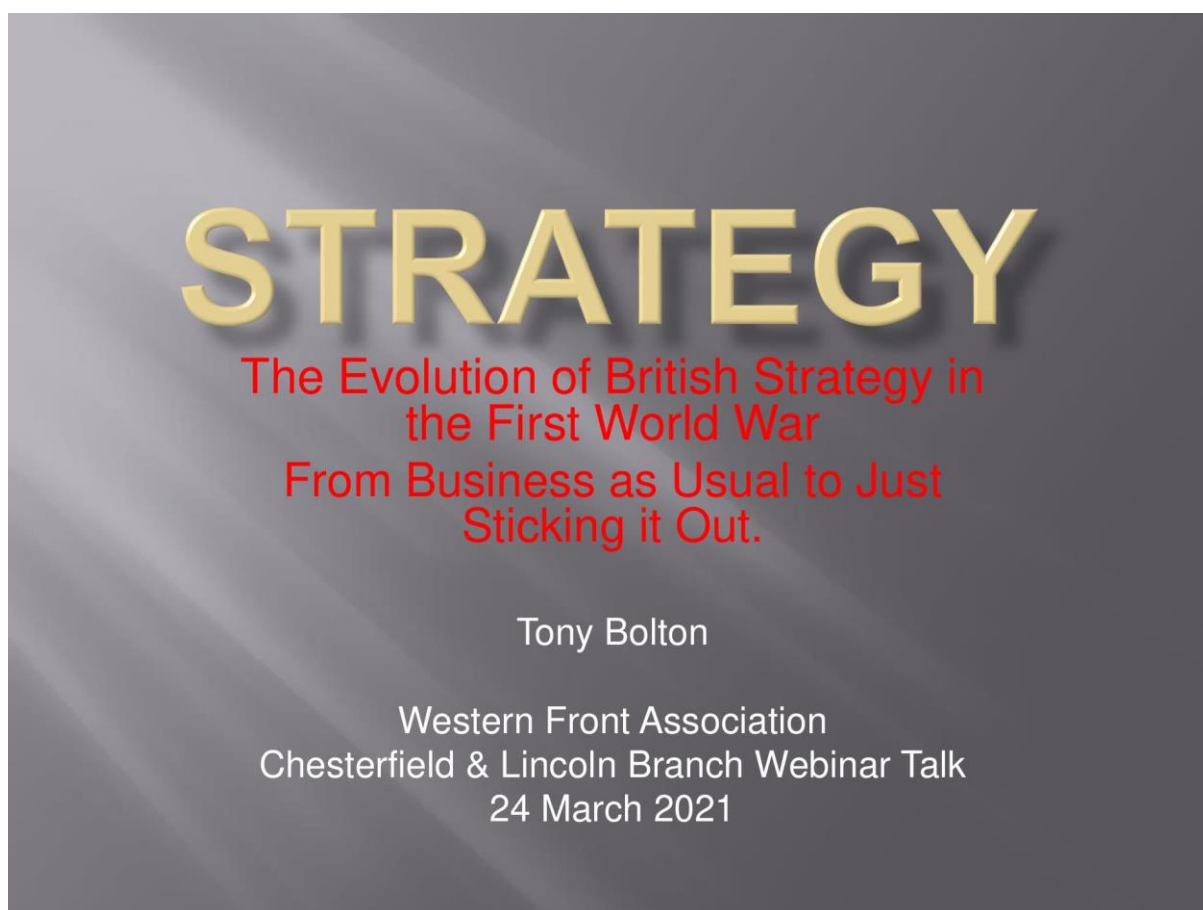


If the application to the CWGC to place one of their grave markers is unsuccessful, there are plans to raise funds locally for a permanent gravestone to be acquired and installed.



## Virtual Meeting....Chesterfield and Lincoln branches combine again.

On 24<sup>th</sup> March the two Branches joined forces to hold another `virtual` meeting , expertly organised (yet again !) by Dudley Giles using the Demio platform. The speaker was Chesterfield Branch chair, and WFA National chair, Tony Bolton. 73 registered with 51 `attending` on the night....for those who couldn`t make it Dudley sends out a link, post meeting to everyone who registered so folks can `catch up` later on. 15 members who identified with Chesterfield registered, 29 from Lincoln, the remainder from other WFA Branches, or non members of the WFA. Attendees were from the length and breadth of the UK, plus Gerry White from WFA Cork in Ireland and a lady from Belgium. Well done to all who registered and joined on the night. Here is Tony`s slides which really need no words of explanation



## STRATEGY

War Aims

Grand Strategy

Strategy

## STRATEGY

What did the Government think their strategy was in 1914? And how did that understanding change during the war as it reacted to 'events'?

indeed

Did Britain have a strategy for fighting the First World War at all, or was just a haphazard response to unforeseen 'events'?



## STRATEGY



## STRATEGY



“Events dear boy  
Events”



## STRATEGY



### Traditional British Grand Strategy

Asquith's strategy  
recognisable by Pitt the  
Younger

## STRATEGY

### Traditional Grand Strategy

Continental European Balance of Power.

Weak non threatening power in Low Countries.

Protection of the Empire.

## STRATEGY

### Strategy underpinning the Traditional Grand Strategy.

- Naval Strategy
- Military Strategy
- Financial Strategy

## STRATEGY

### Strategy of reliance on the Royal Navy

- For Home defence.
- For protection of Imperial communications.
- For keeping open access to world markets
- For the blockading of enemy ports and denial of access to world markets.



## STRATEGY



### Strategy required the Army

- To be an Imperial Police Force, principally India.
- To form a small professional expeditionary force to be 'the projectile fired by navy', to tip the balance, & support continental allies who would do the bulk of the fighting.
- Militia or later Territorial force for home defence.

## STRATEGY



### The provision of financial backing to allies.

- By levying contemporary taxation mainly Income Tax.
- By utilizing Britain's wealth which was based on Export led International trade.



## STRATEGY

### Pre War Challenges to Traditional Strategy.

Close blockade impossible in the presence of U Boats and modern mines.  
Anglo-German Naval Race



## STRATEGY



Advent of Germany as main threat required navy to station further north (Scapa).

Navy no longer confident to provide Home defence. Fear or raids on Tyne industries (Vickers).

Home defence new Territorial Force.

## STRATEGY

### Pre War Changes to Traditional Strategy

Reaction to Boer War European Anglophobia.  
End to Salisbury's 'Splendid Isolation'. Recognition Britain could no longer go it alone.

1902 Japan. Royal Navy reduces Pacific commitment.

1904 Entente cordial, Royal Navy reduces Mediterranean commitment .  
Army 'With France'

1907 Entente with Tsarist Russia.



## STRATEGY

### Pre War Changes to Traditional Strategy



Lloyd George's 1908 Budget introduces Old Age Pensions annual cost equivalent to 3 Dreadnoughts.

On going taxation funded commitment reducing the tax which could be called on in war



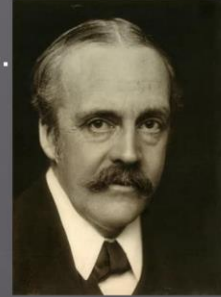
## STRATEGY

### Pre War Changes to Traditional Strategy



Committee for Imperial Defence 1904.

Balfour  
Lord Esher,  
Jacky Fisher,  
John French



Admiralty Vs War Office  
actually inter services £

Portrayed as Blue Water  
Vs  
Continental Policy

## STRATEGY

### August 1914

'The use of engagements for  
the object of the war'

Clausewitz C von  
On War

Government content to 'leave  
it to the professionals'



## STRATEGY

Asquith's 1914 Strategy identified on 4 August

### **Business As Usual**

Maximum gain for minimum pain.  
Sat well with expectation of short war.  
Restore European Balance of Power.  
Despatch small expeditionary force.  
    Impose naval blockade.  
    Provide funding to allies.

## STRATEGY

Asquith's 1914 Strategy identified on 4 August

### **Business As Usual**

Maximum gain for minimum pain.  
Sat well with expectation of short war.  
Restore European Balance of Power.  
Despatch small expeditionary force.  
    Impose naval blockade.  
    Provide funding to allies.

## STRATEGY



“Immediate and violent reaction on the inherently unstable financial equilibrium of the whole world”

Government Credit Indemnities and War Risks  
Shipping Insurance.

## STRATEGY

**Business As Usual under pressure.**

Impossible to insulate British economy from world wide trade disruption.

Serious unemployment.

Price inflation particularly foodstuffs.

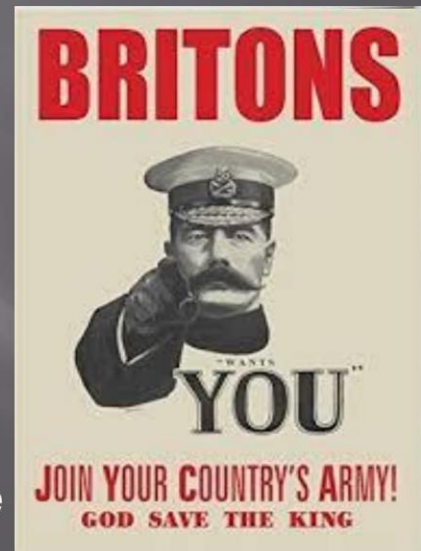
## STRATEGY

### *Coup de Grace for Business As Usual*

“ On almost the first occasion  
After he joined us”(in Cabinet)

“One of the most complete and  
far reaching reversals of policy  
Of the whole war”, W.S. Churchill.

The decision to raise a  
Continental sized army ‘Meekly’  
endorsed by Cabinet demolished the  
existing strategy at a stroke.



## STRATEGY

### A Nation in Arms

Kitchener 's Nation in Arms.  
Expeditionary force to tip the  
balance in 1917 when the  
French and Russians had  
worn down the German Army  
and the Royal Naval blockade had weakened her  
ability to resist.



Did immediately soak up the pool of unemployment



## STRATEGY

### Nation in Arms



The increased dependency on USA meant it became a cornerstone of policy not to upset America.

Consequential adverse effect on the naval blockade.

## STRATEGY

### Nation in Arms



“He may have been more prescient than his colleagues; even his foresight was seriously circumscribed. He failed to see that Britain’s allies would not be willing to allow Britain to fight the war to the last French or Russian soldier.”



Huge allied losses in opening battles of the frontiers.

## STRATEGY



On 17 November 1914 DLG 'supplementary Budget.  
Taxes raised in line with existing strategy but!  
First War Loan £350,000,000 for redemption 1925-28  
Tacit acknowledgement that contemporary taxation  
alone could no longer finance the war.  
Wartime borrowing eventually amounted to £4 Billion

## STRATEGY

Easterners Vs Westerners?  
Deadlock in France 1915.  
France joins in to keep an Imperial  
eye on Britain.



Entirely in keeping with the British Strategy for the Protection  
of the Empire.

Jihad threat.

Communications.

Kitchener's opposition more to do with preserving his New  
Armies.



## STRATEGY

### 'Business As Usual' to 'A Nation in Arms' not uncontested.



Although initially accepting Kitchener's change of Strategy.

Cabinet opposition centred on Reginald McKenna and Walter Runciman.



Deployment of New Armies would require replacement of casualties that would destroy British economy, lead to conscription, possibly bring down Liberal government.

A victory which bankrupted Britain was no victory.

## STRATEGY

### 'Business As Usual' to 'A Nation in Arms' not uncontested.



Although initially accepting Kitchener's change of Strategy.

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A victory which bankrupted Britain was no victory.

## STRATEGY

### The End of Kitchener's Strategy

Autumn offensive 1915, Loos, 'war as we must'

Fear for the survival of the coalition.

Driving priority in British strategy to keep the allies  
in the war.

'we were tied to them both in policy and strategy as  
never before. We became one with them and  
subordinated our policy to theirs' B H Liddell Hart

## STRATEGY

### Nation in Arms to Total War



'If any individual was responsible for  
changing the meaning of the word  
'strategy' in the First World War it  
was David Lloyd George'

David French, *The strategy of the Lloyd George Coalition 1916-1918*

## STRATEGY

‘Strategy came to mean more than the allotment of military resources between one theatre and another... It came to mean the planning and carrying out of the mobilization of the entire national resources, the making of choices between the production of this or that weapons systems; the evolution of social and economic policies; the conduct of propaganda’.

Correlli Barnett RUSI Vol 121.3 p12

## STRATEGY

### Total War

Conscription May 1916

The management of the Empire’s finite manpower resources became a vital element in British strategy for the remainder of the war.

Landsdowne Memorandum

Lloyd George Coalition December 1916



## STRATEGY

### Total War

1917 Strategy under strain 'A Counsel of Despair.'

Unrestricted submarine warfare, threatens to challenge the Royal Navy's ability to keep sea lanes open.

\$-£ Crisis threatens Britain's role as banker to the Entente

Revolution in Russia & French army mutinies threatens to deprive Britain of her allies.

Unrest, strikes, rising living costs, war weariness threatens the very continuation of the war

## STRATEGY



### Total War to Just Sticking it out

Threats mastered

Convoys, rationing & home production  
American entry facilitates dollar loans.

Empire steps up war effort underpinning  
D L George new Eastern strategy.

British Army takes strain in Flanders.

Effective nationalisation and higher wages in  
exchange for end to strikes.

Deeper and deeper intrusion of the state

## STRATEGY

### Total War to Just Sticking it out

'At the heart of Lloyd George's opposition to Robertson's policy of attrition was the lack of visible gains, only the pain was all too evident'.

Intimate connection between strategy and national morale'

Defence in the West

Manpower priorities, shipping, aircraft, tanks.

More toys less boys

Awaiting the US Army –victory in 1919 or 1920

## STRATEGY

### Total War to Just Sticking it out

1918

Kaiserschlacht

100 days, Damascus, Mosul,



## STRATEGY

German hegemony in Europe defeated.

A neutral Belgium restored.

British Empire reached it's zenith.

Naval blockade successful.

Current taxation funds 30% of costs but National Debt rises to £7.98billion.

By February 1919 \$/£ rate back to \$4.77 (Jan 1916)

## STRATEGY

Most serious effect widescale loss of foreign markets and the effect on visible trade balance.

Allies huge human losses testimony to their attempt to fulfil the role ascribed to them, Empire losses testimony to their inability to achieve it unaided.



## STRATEGY

Kitchener's strategy of keeping his army intact for intervention when exhaustion had been reached, and succeeding Chancellor's strategy of bankrolling the allies both successful strategies.

Unfortunately for Britain it was the USA who managed to implement them.

## STRATEGY



“The allies were tumbling into peace in just the same way as we tumbled into war...just haphazard”

Sir Henry Wilson

# Why we don't hear about the 10,000 French deaths at Gallipoli

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Author



1. **John Horne**

Professor of Modern European History, Trinity College Dublin

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**A French field kitchen in use by the French troops within half a mile of the Turkish lines on the southern section of Gallipoli Peninsula, 1915.**

With almost the same number of soldiers as the Anzacs - 79,000 - and similar death rates - close on 10,000 - French participation in the Gallipoli campaign could not occupy a more different place in national memory. What became a foundation myth in Australia as it also did in the Turkish Republic after 1923 was eventually forgotten in France.

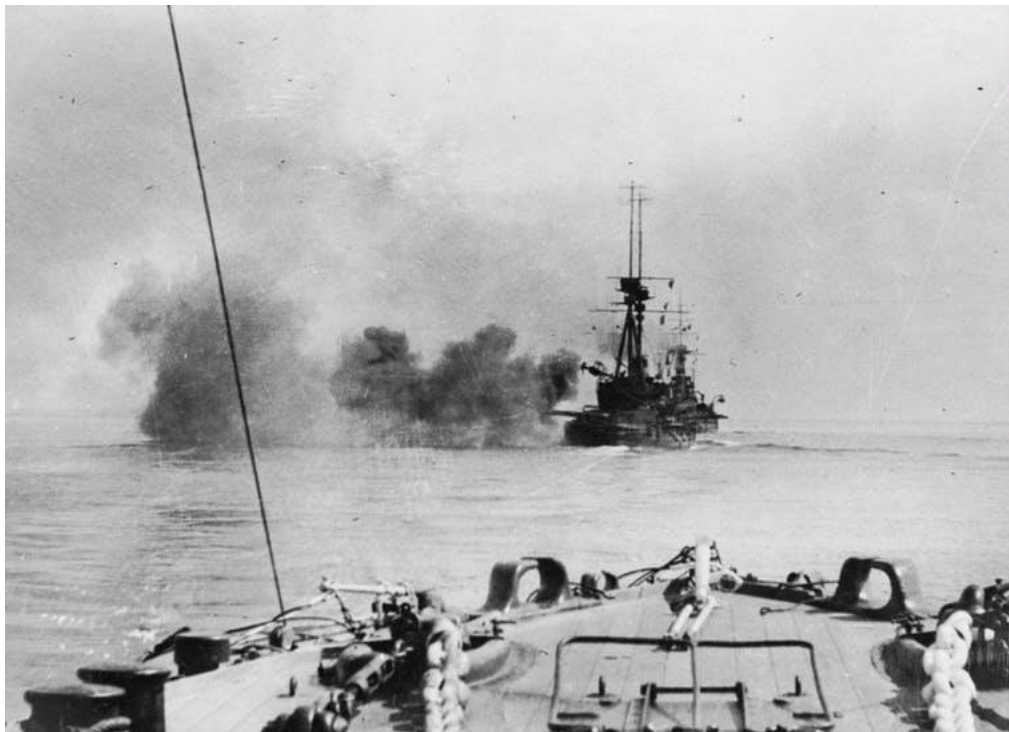
Some of the reasons are obvious.

France was fighting for its very existence and many, including Joseph Joffre, the commander-in-chief on the western front, thought Gallipoli a side-show at best and a wasted effort at worst. It was a British conceived and led campaign, although the French were a fully-fledged expeditionary force with their own staff and command structure.

It was also a failure, and while that never prevented anyone spinning redemptive narratives about heroism and national virtue, the French had plenty more relevant episodes to use for such purposes during the Great War, from the Marne in 1914 and Verdun in 1916 to final victory in 1918.

Even regarding the “front of the Orient”, as they called it, the French saw Gallipoli merely as a curtain-raiser to the subsequent campaign in Macedonia, to which most French units from Gallipoli transferred, and which finally defeated Bulgaria in 1918, contributing to the victory over the Central Powers. Gallipoli failed to achieve any of its goals.

## **What was in it for the French?**



**A French battleship firing at Turkish shore positions in the preliminary bombardment, Dardanelles 1915.**

Other reasons for the neglect of the campaign are less obvious - and more revealing - about its actual nature.

The French conceived of the Dardanelles in part at least as a colonial campaign. This was not true of its ostensible goals - since the idea of defeating the Ottoman Empire and linking up with Russia was clearly part of a continental conflict between the major European powers.

But one consequence of success would be (as it eventually was) the partitioning of the Ottoman Middle East. The French could not afford not to take part in case the British won.

Even more tellingly, the campaign was conceived in a colonial mode.

As the “sick man of Europe” it was assumed that the Ottoman Empire would collapse at the mere demonstration of Allied naval and military might. The land campaign would be just like the expeditions that had subordinated “native” peoples to French and European authority pre-war - in Indo-China, China and Morocco.

Even after the naval fiasco of March 18, when British and French ships failed to force the Dardanelles, the French imagined that the land campaign would be an easy march along the shores of the Sea of Marmara to Constantinople.

Finally, two thirds of the French Expeditionary Force were composed of colonial soldiers, though two thirds were also white. While two regiments were specially raised for the campaign from metropolitan France, many of the other soldiers came from elite European colonial regiments or white settlers from Algeria and Tunisia.

Despite initial plans, it proved impossible to use native North African soldiers (though they later went to Macedonia) because they would be fighting against fellow Muslims and possibly occupying the holy sites of the Middle East.

But a quarter to a third of the French soldiers were *Tirailleurs Sénégalais*, or Senegalese Infantry, though in reality they were recruited from all over French West Africa and included some creoles from the West Indies and islands of the Indian Ocean. While it is not true that there was no memory of the Dardanelles campaign in inter-war France, it was largely colonial, being especially strong among the settler community in North Africa.

Needless to say, the Senegalese had their own oral traditions but they were never in any active sense part of the official “memory” of the campaign. When the Empire vanished after the second world war, and French Algeria with it, the most obvious sources of a commemorative culture of Gallipoli disappeared.

### **Not exactly a colonial campaign**

The paradox, as rapidly became evident to the French soldiers, is that Gallipoli as an experience had little of the colonial campaign about it. The Turkish soldiers who opposed the landings were men fighting to defend their homeland and religion, and they did so as tenaciously as any of the other European armies of the Great War.





**A group of unidentified French gunners posed with a howitzer in the Dardanelles, 1915. Among them are a couple of Australians.**

They were also instructed and partly commanded by a significant number of German officers, who had initiated them into the rudiments of trench warfare in ways that still remain fully to be established.

Even more fundamentally, Gallipoli was as much a military part of the war in Europe as it was by virtue of its political logic. The great surprise of the first world war was that a conflict that almost everyone had imagined as a war of movement in the same broad mould as warfare since Napoleon, where the outcome would turn on the massed infantry offensive, became in reality a drawn-out conflict in which the defensive predominated.

The application of industrialised firepower only made the stalemate all the more destructive and prolonged. In effect, the “front” was invented as the battlefield of this mutual siege warfare, and Gallipoli was simply the most distant of the fronts that locked down Europe in 1915.

Unsurprisingly - though at the time it surprised everyone - the conflict that raged for eight months on this most distant peninsula of the continent reproduced the trench warfare of the western and other fronts.

As one French soldier, Arnaud Pomiro, lamented on May 15:

*So it's siege warfare, or if one prefers, trench warfare, exactly as on the French front. I see no end to it.*

Nor did he. The French, like the British, never got further than seven kilometres from their landing place on April 25 at the tip of the peninsula. As Pomiro's comment shows, they were referring to Gallipoli as a “front” within three weeks of arriving. Yet they clung grimly on.

While Paris began transferring troops to the Macedonian front from September, French soldiers remained with the British until the final disembarkation on January 8-9 1916.

As a front, confined to a tiny area but extended by naval logistics on both sides to the Greek islands and to Constantinople respectively, Gallipoli offers a perfect laboratory for historians wishing to study the nature of warfare in the Great War.

Instead of being a colonial exception, it was a microcosm of the European war at large. What the French discovered to their painful surprise becomes an exciting challenge to the historian a century on.

But the price of meeting that challenge is to end the tendency to separate out simplistic national accounts from a more complex episode that only makes real sense when viewed as a comparative and transnational whole.

## **With Lettow and Smuts through Africa: World War 1**

### ***South Africa Military History Society, Cape Town, 11 October 2012***

*by Dr Anne Samson, Independent Historian, co-ordinator of Great War in East Africa Association (<http://gweaa.com>)*

How many of you have heard about the East Africa campaign of 1914-1918? I'm going to be making the assumption that for most of you the focus has been on the military front - von Lettow-Vorbeck and Smuts in 1916, Lake Tanganyika or some other such exploit. For those of you who do not know of the campaign, I will not be focusing on the military aspects as I'd get myself into trouble given the military expertise in the audience. My plan rather is to set some of the 'behind the scenes' actions of the campaign which might well explain how or why the military aspects panned out the way they did and to briefly look at the two most well-known commanders of the campaign - Jan Christian Smuts and Paul Emil von Lettow- Vorbeck. (below)



I don't think it was the intention of any of the countries involved in the East Africa campaign to actually fight there. The only person who seemed to have had an explicit intention to wage war in the area was the German commander, von Lettow-Vorbeck, whose intention was to attract as many forces away from the German frontiers in Europe as he possibly could. However, he was subordinate to the German Governor, Heinrich von Schnee, and so could not really do anything unless the territory was threatened. Britain unwittingly provided that opportunity when a young naval rating dutifully carried out the instructions laid out in the Naval Blue Book. As a result, the British navy bombarded the wireless stations in Dar es Salaam on 8 August 1914 before a shot had been fired in Europe - the British Expeditionary Force had not yet arrived. The Governor, rather than retaliate, chose to follow the German colonial department instruction that coastal

areas be evacuated and the wireless stations be destroyed. For the Kolonialamt, defending the coastal area would be impossible due to its length and nature. Lettow-

Vorbeck took the action for what it was - an act of war and issued instructions accordingly for pre-emptive attacks. Lettow-Vorbeck had arrived in the colony earlier in 1914 and had purposefully travelled the country to ascertain what would be needed to defend the country in case of a European war breaking out - the strategic defence plans having focused on internal native unrest.

Back in London, things were in disarray. The Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, was still trying to get his country on a war footing. Although the Cabinet was meeting daily, the main focus was on protecting the island and ensuring France and Belgium received the forces promised. The admiralty was confident that its dominance of the seas would go a long way to protecting Britain. East Africa was discussed by the Cabinet as early as 5 August 1914 before Lord Kitchener had only been appointed Secretary of State for War on 6 August 1914. A decision was made to send an Indian Contingent to help protect British East Africa and another to invade German East Africa at Tanga which was broadly in accordance with the British war policy to protect shipping and not for territorial acquisition. The decision led to the fiasco at Tanga where 8000 British forces were routed in November 1914 by 1100 German troops.

This was not too surprising given some of the background. The decision having been made to send the Indian troops to East Africa on 5 August 1914, it was then decided to delay their departure before finally determining they could go. The War Office, India Office, Colonial Office and Admiralty were all involved in this expeditionary force, although the India Office would be ultimately responsible. The commander in chief, General Arthur Aitken believed the task set him would be a walkover as he was fighting black troops. His men spent six weeks on board ship - many of whom had never seen the ocean before and who fell ill. In addition they had not practiced disembarking from a ship onto a battlefield and the equipment had not been appropriately packed. On arrival in East Africa, the naval officer in charge, Captain FW Caulfield, refused to let the carriers into Tanga bay as he was concerned about mines, but more significantly a truce had been made locally by the Squadron Commander Admiral King-Hall. Caulfield felt it only fair that the Germans be told that the Admiralty had not ratified the treaty despite this giving them forewarning of the attack. He was also insistent that the bay be swept for mines. This delay of twenty-four hours enabled Lettow-Vorbeck to move troops to Tanga to deal with the possible invasion. Again, luck supported the Germans in that the planned inland attack at Longido took place a day earlier than that at Tanga which meant the German commander was not fighting on two fronts simultaneously.

In all the British territories, whilst waiting for London to decide what to do, enlistment and preparing the country for war were undertaken. On Lake Nyasa, the British ship HMS *Guendolen* put the German *Hedwig von Wissman* out of action and the battles of Kasoa and Karonga were fought - 164 lives being lost. In the run-up to the battle of Karonga, the local German administrator, Steir, wrote to his erstwhile friend and appropriate opposite number in Nyasaland, Webb, enquiring if there was a war on as there were German troops massing at Mbeya but that he had not officially been informed. Once confirmation was received, the local commander, Steinkeller sent a letter warning the administrator to remove women and children from the town before his troops launched their attack.

Northern Rhodesia sent troops to occupy Schuckmannsburg on the Caprivi Strip, the town being handed over after an hour's negotiation on 21 September 1914. Again, this could be interpreted as keeping with the Kolonialamt instruction to vacate coastal areas - Schuckmannsburg being on the river border.

The Germans were busy on Lake Tanganyika ensuring that Belgium, its rival on the lake would remain ineffective. This was to be the position until the Lake Expeditionary Force under Commander Basil Spicer-Simpson arrived in August 1915. Various battles took place around Lake Victoria between the British and Germans for dominance of the ports there and attacks were undertaken by the Germans to disrupt the Uganda Railway.

On the Indian Ocean, the German cruiser SMS *Konigsberg* was causing concern. It had sunk HMS *Pegasus* in Zanzibar Harbour on 20 September 1914. It then went into shelter in the Rufiji Delta to effect repairs and to await coal. Before either could happen the ship had been found by Flight Lieutenant John Tullock Cull and the South African hunter and later Scout, Pieter Pretorius. After about eighteen months, the *Konigsberg* was finally sunk by two monitors specially sent out from Britain, but not before the big guns had been salvaged by the commander, Captain Max Looff who with his men joined Lettow-Vorbeck's land forces. The sinking of the *Konigsberg* released a total of 35 ships and boats for service elsewhere.

Little was co-ordinated until the defeat at Tanga. Before Tanga five Whitehall departments were directly involved - the War Office controlled strategic direction, although it was split over East Africa - Kitchener, Secretary of State for War wanted to avoid war in the area, whilst the General Staff were in favour of fighting. The Colonial Office provided local direction and was responsible for costs. They were concerned about who would pay for the equipment and soldiers and were therefore reluctant to enter into any agreement which could potentially fall to the colony to pay. The Admiralty controlled the delivery of supplies and troops and given the spread of the war as well as the need to defend the carriers, cargo and ports, affected what could be transported when. The India Office supplied men and material and was in command of the two India Expeditionary Forces in East Africa which were directed by the War Office and working alongside and with the Colonial Office staff and forces. Confusion was bound to occur. In addition, the Foreign Office had an important role as it was messenger between the British Government and allies, having to ensure that British and allied policies were conducive or at least sold to the other party in a manner which was acceptable. Enough cannot be said about the work the ambassadors and consuls in Belgium, France and Portugal did to ensure participation, or rather non-participation, in East Africa when it was clear the Colonial Office did not really want other countries involved.

Overseeing all of this was the cabinet, which during these months under Herbert Asquith as Prime Minister, was relatively ineffective as Asquith believed in control by consensus which was not a suitable way to run a war. In July 1915, Asquith was forced to form a coalition government and in December 1916, he was replaced as Prime Minister by David Lloyd George. Alongside the British government were the individual colonial, dominion and company controlled territories, overseen by governor, governor general and high commissioner respectively who liaised with London. The Governor of East Africa, Henry Belfield had no desire to take his colony to war, and was, in September 1914 instructed by the Colonial Office to follow instructions sent by the War Office. Local colonists, who thronged Nairobi to enlist on hearing of the outbreak of war felt they got more information from Nairobi House than from Government House and that if they needed the Governor he'd be out fishing. The



Governor of Uganda, Frederick Jackson, was hampered by the fact that the senior military officer for East Africa had just retired and was on his way to Mombasa to return to Britain.

His replacement had not yet arrived. However, Lieutenant-Colonel LES Ward was conscientious enough to return and do what he could to get the King's African Rifles war ready and protecting the Uganda Railway. In January 1915, before finally retiring, he captured Mafia Island which was used as the base for action against the *Konigsberg*.

There did not appear to be too much faith in the Governor of Nyasaland, George Smith, as he was instructed to get permission from London before entering into any negotiations or discussions with the neighbouring Portuguese or Belgians. Although Portugal was neutral until 1916, the Portuguese East Africa colony played an important role in communications for both Germany and the allies. By all accounts, Smith had very competent military advisers, particularly Captain CW Barton, who, on the declaration of war set about preparing the colony for war. To assist the colony following the nationalist Chilembwe uprising in January 1915, 200 South Africans were sent to that colony.

Northern and Southern Rhodesia were British South Africa Company territories under the watchful eye of the High Commissioner based in South Africa. The High Commissioner was also the Governor General of South Africa and the High Commissioner of the British protectorates of Basotholand, Bechuanaland and Swaziland - a total of six territories. Shortly before war was declared in July 1914, the Governor General Lord Gladstone left, having resigned his post. His replacement, Sydney Buxton was not due to arrive until September. This meant that the role of High Commissioner fell to the General Woolfe Murray of the Imperial Garrison whilst Lord Chief Justice Sir H de Villiers became acting Governor General. To complicate matters further, de Villiers died three days before Buxton arrived and the role was filled by Attorney General James Rose Innes. This division of role caused a little delay in messages getting to Woolfe Murray as London had not registered on the fact that two people were sharing the responsibility for Britain's presence in the area and located in different buildings. They continued to send instructions for both posts to the Governor General. For Louis Botha and Smuts, the leaders of the Union, the presence of a South African acting as Governor General meant that a politically neutral sounding board was absent.



On the declaration of war, there had been no doubt about whether South Africa would be involved or not, the question was, to what extent. The cabinet was divided. Louis Botha supported by Smuts (see pictured together in 1919 - Smuts on right) saw the opportunity for South Africa to obtain German South West Africa, a territory it had long desired. However, a group led by FS Malan, felt that if South Africa invaded German South West Africa, it would split the Afrikaans people. South Africa sent its response immediately to Britain that it would take on its own defence, releasing the Imperial Service Garrison for service in Europe and would look to invade German South West Africa. However, as this action was outside the borders of the Union, parliamentary permission would be required and the forthcoming parliamentary session was scheduled to coincide with the arrival of the new Governor General. Buxton arrived on 8 September 1914 and opened parliament on 11

September 1914. Following a discussion on an incident near Nakob on the South Africa/German South West Africa border, South Africa voted to invade the German colony. The exact boundary was unclear, Smuts claiming the incident occurred on South African territory whilst Hertzog, representing the recently formed National Party, claimed Smuts had doctored the map to suit his own purposes. The result was what has become known as the 1914 rebellion. Botha personally took command of the forces against the rebels and by December 1914 the rebellion was over. The prediction by FS Malan had been realised.

This left South Africa free to invade German South West Africa in January 1915 which it did and by July 1915, the territory - where Lettow-Vorbeck had first seen service in Africa in 1904/5 - was under South African control. With the return of the troops, other avenues were sought for South Africans, Afrikaans pro-Empire supporters to participate in the war as many of the English speakers had left the Union on the outbreak of war to join British battalions. Smuts initiated the idea of South Africans going to East Africa. In this he was supported by the Governor General, and cautiously by Louis Botha who was concerned about the outcome of the October 1915 election. However, in London there was mixed reaction. Kitchener preferred South Africans to go to the Western Front, where a brigade under General H Lukin saw action in 1916 at Delville Wood. He also asked for labour which saw the South African Native Labour Contingents serve in Europe. The General Staff, led by General Charles Callwell were in favour of South Africans going to East Africa. To overcome the deadlock and to assist with determining whether Gallipoli should be evacuated or not, Kitchener was sent to the Dardanelles in November 1915 and Asquith became Acting Secretary of State for War. By the time Kitchener returned to England in early December, the decision had been made to send the South Africans to East Africa. Apart from the two white South African Regiments, this included two Cape Coloured Corps and two Indian Bearer Companies which Smuts had asked to be allowed to serve where other Indian contingents were serving, hoping it would not be East Africa. Kitchener objected on 10 December claiming it was pointless fighting over territory which could be obtained at the peace table and which Britain had given away in 1895. Kitchener had been on the Boundary Commission which had given Mount Kilimanjaro to Germany. Following the dismissal of his objections, Kitchener refused to have anything to do with the organising of the campaign, referring all Commander in Chief General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien's queries to Asquith and requests for supplies to the Admiralty. Smith-Dorrien, it was believed, although British, was acceptable to the Boers having earned their respect during the Boer War. Smuts had hoped to be the commander, however the tensions within South Africa following the October 1915 election were such that it was felt he should remain in the Union. However, as a result of Smith-Dorrien's ill-health, and a change in the political climate in South Africa, Smuts was appointed to command the British allied forces in East Africa on 5 February 1916 with Kitchener's approval, and the two men - the feature of this talk - came 'face to face', although were not to meet each other until 1929. Their paths had crossed before - albeit unknowingly. During the Boer War, whilst Smuts was invading the Cape Colony, Lettow-Vorbeck was in the German Kolonialamt reporting on events in Southern Africa. In 1904, Lettow-Vorbeck was posted to German South West Africa where as a subordinate to von Trotha, he was involved in suppressing the Herero uprising where he learnt a great deal about waging guerrilla warfare. The claims that Lettow-Vorbeck had served with Botha in South Africa are inaccurate. This could not have been possible as during the Boer War, Lettow-Vorbeck was in Germany and there was no way that Lord Milner would have allowed a recently defeated Boer General to serve with a German commander in 1904/5 especially when Botha refused to join Milner's cabinet. Smuts had learnt his guerrilla lessons a few years earlier in the Cape. Now, in

1916, having had very different fighting experiences before and during the Great War, they were to have their armies face each other.

The South Africans fought their first battle in East Africa before Smuts arrived according to the plan of battle set out by Smith-Dorrien and approved by General Wully Robertson on his first day as Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Lord Kitchener having been sidelined. The result was the slaughter on 12 February 1916 at Salaita Hill where the Indian troops showed the South Africans how to fight and hold their ground. This was to be the last major bloodshed of the campaign. There would be other battles where lives would be lost but not to the extent of that at Salaita. The environment would prove the stronger enemy to be faced - by both sides.



By the time Smuts arrived, Lettow-Vorbeck's small force was spread across the country. They were a honed fighting force having fought since the outbreak of war without any additional forces from Europe. Great use was made of black soldiers called askari, a number of whom had served with the British until as recently as 1911. As the war progressed, some of the askari were appointed NCOs - the first in any European army. Lettow-Vorbeck's forces had learnt to survive on what was

available and to find suitable alternatives. Each unit was independent, not relying on the Commander in Chief for instructions. Opposed to this was the British allied force made up of British, the Loyal North Lancashires, Indians, Rhodesians, South Africans, East and Central Africans, including four battalions of King's African Rifles. Later, the KAR would be expanded by sixteen battalions, Smuts implementing the idea initiated by Reginald Hoskins who had been Inspector General of the KAR before the war. Additional troops would be added from the Gold Coast, Nigeria and West Indies (bringing the total countries involved in action in the East Africa campaign to 23). Since 1914, the British Empire troops had seen four Commanders in Chief in North East Africa, each with their own style and numerous replacement troops. In the south, at Buxton's request, General Edward Northey formed the Nyasaland Rhodesia Field Force in 1915 combining three separate commands and only in late 1917 when Northey was appointed Governor of British East Africa in Belfield's place was command in East Africa under one General. Control and action was centralised as far as was possible with given poor communications. This proved problematical when the timing of co-ordinated attack was essential as part of Smuts' encircling tactic. Maps for both sides were scarce although until the Germans were pushed south of the Central Railway, they had better command of the terrain. In his memoirs, Lettow-Vorbeck noted that one positive of the campaign was a comprehensive map of the country as each time a map was captured, it was further developed by the other side. Such war time collaboration was common during this campaign. Although there were stories of atrocities, these were few and in the early days of the campaign. Later prisoners were exchanged, truces called to collect wounded and bury the dead and letters of complaint regarding treatment or ungentlemanly behaviour were communicated. On the occasion of Lettow-Vorbeck having been awarded the Iron Cross Second Class, Smuts wrote to congratulate him, knowing that he would not have received the news from Germany as telegraphic communications with Germany had been severed.

Both commanders were loved and hated. Stories are told of Lettow-Vorbeck walking alongside men who did not know who he was being told to beware of the commander if they were caught awol or smoking when they should not have been, only to find out at dinner that night who he was - with no punishment forthcoming. Smuts was well regarded for suffering the same deprivations as his men - unlike the perception of many British officers. Smuts was however accused of neglect by some of his more senior commanders for overstressing supply lines too much - regularly men were marching and fighting on quarter rations. When Lettow-Vorbeck was asked his opinion regarding Smuts' behaviour he noted 'No doubt, in a long war, cases of brutality and inhumanity do occur. But that happens on both sides.' Lettow-Vorbeck allegedly had instructed an officer, Fischer, to commit suicide following his poor performance in battle. During the year that Smuts was in East Africa, there is only one occasion, that I am sure of, where Smuts and Lettow were personally commanding the forces that opposed each other. This was in the lead up to the battle of Wami in August 1916. However, it does not appear that they knew this.

In January 1917, Smuts was notified that he was being recalled and would be attending Lloyd George's Imperial War meetings in London on behalf of Louis Botha. It appears that Smuts had made noises about wanting to be replaced - the German East Campaign was not the walkover the South West Africa campaign had been, nor the daring dash of Smuts' invasion of the Cape sixteen years earlier.

On his departure, Smuts announced that the Germans had been defeated. They had lost their most important centres and all that was required were mopping up operations. This was not the case at all and his successor, Reginald Hoskins, was recalled after three months for inactivity. He had been replacing much needed lines of communications during the rainy season when fighting was almost impossible. Although not completely obvious from the records, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that Smuts had been involved in Hoskins' replacement by the South African General Jaap Van Deventer as Commander in Chief. Van Deventer was to see the campaign through to its end although he was not on hand to accept the surrender. Lettow-Vorbeck's struggle had moved into Portuguese East Africa, returning to German East Africa and then into Northern Rhodesia where the last battle was fought on 13 November at Kasama, the day the Germans heard about the peace. On 16 November, Lettow-Vorbeck unconditionally surrendered providing the terms he had been presented were accurate and formally surrendered on 25 November to General Edwards at Abercorn.

Smuts, meanwhile, was in London representing South Africa at the Imperial War meetings and after they ended, stayed on at the request of Prime Minister Lloyd George and Lord Milner. Here, he became the 'handyman of the Empire' resolving issues - strikes by Welsh miners, visiting the front to discuss options and preparing the defence of London, amongst other things. It was through Smuts' request in 1916 to take over Belgian-held territory in German East Africa that the Foreign Office thought it prudent, to ascertain the war aims of the various countries involved in Africa. The Belgians and Portuguese were quite concerned that South Africa was after their territory. Although Smuts was not involved in the Foreign Office discussions about war aims, he was thinking about the future world order and drew up his plans for a League of Nations which would include the Empire as a Commonwealth of Nations. The final League of Nations and mandate system was a compromise between Smuts and American President Woodrow Wilson's thinking. During his time in the UK, Smuts' interests had become more Empire-focused, however, following the armistice and the arrival of Botha in London, South Africa again became the focus of his attention.



On 19 January 1919, exactly five years to the date he arrived in East Africa, Lettow-Vorbeck was on his way home and by the time he arrived back in Germany, the decision regarding the future of German East Africa had been made - it was not to be returned to Germany. Lettow-Vorbeck may have emerged undefeated from the war and been the only German General to occupy British territory, however he lost the territory he had fought over. Smuts, who had clearly been outwitted by Lettow-Vorbeck, or rather nature despite claims that Smuts purposefully refused to engage in combat as there would be too much bloodshed, emerged victorious in that the German colony became a British mandate. However, he failed to achieve his aim for South Africa which was an exchange of territory between Portuguese East Africa and South Africa, which would enable South Africa to round itself off to the Zambezi River. Had Smuts tabled his request for the swop to the Foreign Office before the peace discussions, he may have stood some chance in obtaining his desires. Rather, he left it to a dinner in Paris to inform Leo Amery, Colonial Secretary Milner's assistant, that he desired the territory. Milner was called from London to resolve the distribution of territory in Africa between Belgium, Portugal, South Africa and Britain, without involving the United States. He came up with an ingenious four way territorial swop which failed when Portugal refused to part with some of its territory.

The colonial struggle resumed again in 1920, when Lettow-Vorbeck and Governor Schnee joined forces for the first time, despite Schnee having stayed the course of the campaign in East Africa, to fight for the return of the German colony to Germany as they had not been defeated. The two men, Smuts and Lettow-Vorbeck, finally got to meet each other in 1929 at a dinner in London organised by Richard Meinertzhagen, who had been an intelligence officer until Smuts had him returned to England for recuperation (he then went on to work with Lawrence of Arabia fame and there is currently some question over the authenticity of his accounts which I shan't go into here). Smuts and Lettow-Vorbeck remained in contact with each other and during World War Two Smuts and other British friends sent food parcels to Germany to help Lettow-Vorbeck through some tough times after Hitler severed all his allowances. Two weeks before Smuts died in 1950, he wrote to Lettow-Vorbeck and in 1953 Lettow-Vorbeck returned to Africa to see how it had changed. He was welcomed back by his surviving askaris. Ten years later, the year Lettow-Vorbeck died, the German government finally decided to pay the surviving askari their outstanding salaries - fifty years after they had served the Kaiser.

The time Smuts spent in East Africa facing Lettow-Vorbeck has become the most-well known part of the East Africa campaign. Little information was flowing through to the British press before, particularly after the defeat at Tanga and then Jasin in 1915. The campaign was regarded as a side-show which it was when compared to the European struggles. Smuts arrival spurred the campaign into action and his driving, or rather the German manoeuvres away from him, enabled Smuts to obtain control of the German territory. Smuts, as a politician recognised the value and power of the press and ensured he sent regular positive reports back to London and South Africa. However, life under Smuts was hard and a number of authors wrote as early as 1917 to set the record straight and to assist South Africa's claim as a power in Africa. The campaign under van Deventer was to prove monotonous until the surrender, which did not make for newsworthy stories and so the campaign fell into obscurity again. Further, van Deventer, regarded as a true soldier and friend of Smuts, would not say anything to counter what his Minister for War had announced publicly and just got on with the task at hand.

In all, it is believed that over 1 million lives were lost, including porters. Of the British Empire forces, approximately 75% of the men died from disease and malnutrition. The campaign cost Britain £72 million or four times the 1914 military budget. The cost to South Africa (including South West) was £39 million. Britain achieved what it desired, except for Ruanda and Urundi, India failed to obtain colonial territory and South Africa failed to expand. Belgium gained more than it wanted and only Portugal was satisfied with the Kionga Triangle.

As a final assessment, Lord Kitchener was right. There had been no need to fight the East Africa campaign. Why exactly he was against the campaign in East Africa is for another day, as is the reason why South Africa has not done much to remember the loss of so many young lives on the African continent. Had it not been for that one year, 1916, when Jan Smuts and Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck faced each other, the East African campaign would probably still be as unknown as the west African and Palestinian campaigns of the same war.

Ref: Anne Samson, *World War One in Africa: The forgotten conflict of the Empires* (IB Tauris, 2012)

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I recently found this very interesting piece on YouTube.....

## Internal workings of Royal Navy battleship 15 inch gun breech mechanism

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytMjChHQEfU>

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### **Announcing the 2021 Free UK Genealogy conference on *Open, Global Genealogy***

Free UK Genealogy is to run this year's conference as a virtual event, taking place over two Saturdays in May (22nd and 29th). The theme of the 2021 conference is Open, Global Genealogy. Free UK Genealogy was founded on the principle of "openness" with the aim of giving everybody free access to all their family history data. We are now taking a step further to ensure that we are open in every way possible to a truly global audience. Who can attend? Everybody! The conference has been split into two sessions which are being held at opposite ends of the day (UK time) with the sole intention of enabling as many people as possible to attend part (or all) of the events, wherever in the world they happen to live. The dates and times are: Saturday 22nd May from 4pm-7pm (UK time), and Saturday 29th May from 8am-11am. Both sessions will run on Zoom, so attendees will be able to participate and enjoy the proceedings from the comfort of their own homes.

A wide and varied agenda is currently being planned which could include presentations on: technology in genealogy; an exploration of the ‘openness’ of a range of supposedly open archives, databases and records (and any impact caused by lockdown); an overview of file formats for the exchange of genealogical data between applications and data providers; and a look at how DNA and traditional genealogical sources can be combined to create a single family tree.

While the presentations will be recorded, they will be followed by a live question-and-answer session with the speakers who will also participate in panel discussions during the conference. The event will open with an update from our Executive Director, Pat Reynolds and concluded with a summary by Chair of Trustees, Richard Light.

To register your interest in attending the conference, please complete this form: <https://forms.gle/RaJ1rsAjNZcSBg298>

We also welcome additional speakers at the conference, so if you would like to present on an area related to our theme of ‘Open, Global Genealogy’, please send an email to [info@freeukgenealogy.org.uk](mailto:info@freeukgenealogy.org.uk) giving your name, your credentials/background, the subject and a brief paragraph on your presentation.

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## About Us

Free UK Genealogy is a non-profit organisation that provides free, online access to family history records. We work with a team of dedicated volunteers to create high-quality transcriptions of public records from governmental sources, parish churches, and other trusted institutions. We believe that [Open Data](#) and Open Source are key to making and keeping public records accessible to all.

Our volunteers have made available:

- Almost 300,000,000 births, marriages and deaths in [FreeBMD](#)
- 50,000,000 records from parish registers in [FreeREG](#)
- 40,000,000 individuals from census data, from 1841 to 1891 in [FreeCEN](#)

We make the databases we create freely available for people to search in order to support their family history research. Unlike many sites, which are pay-to-view after an initial search is carried out, our databases are completely free to search and view. With thanks and best wishes,

Denise



Denise Colbert

Engagement Coordinator, Free UK Genealogy CIO

+44 7825 338014 | [www.freeukgenealogy.org.uk](http://www.freeukgenealogy.org.uk)

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Registered in England and Wales, number 1167484



## Anzac Day - Commemorated at Spital Cemetery in Chesterfield



Photo of Anzac Morning Congregation Spital Cemetery ,Chesterfield

(From left to Right) Leonie Mather, David Nightingale, Catherine Longstaff, Councillor Kate Sarvent, Denise Masters, Emilio de Chiro, Paris Rawnsley, Alderman Steve Brunt, Ann Rawnsley, Councillor Jill Mannion-Brunt. And taking the photo, Liz Cook, Chair of the Friends of Spital Cemetery.

The annual Anzac Day was once again commemorated by the Friends of Spital Cemetery at first light on Sunday 25th April. A small socially distanced congregation gathered in the cemetery at 5.00am to remember that at this hour and on this day 106 years ago British and Commonwealth troops stormed the beaches on the Gallipoli peninsular in south western Turkey.

Liz Cook organiser of the event and lead for the Friends of Spital Cemetery led the service conducted by Alderman Stephen Brunt, Councillor Kate Servant and Councillor Jill Mannion Brunt.

As Liz said “This was a chance to reflect on the worldwide nature of this conflict and join hands across the world with others who helped to protect our way of life. Their contribution is increasingly being recognised and its really important to do our bit as Friends and keep alive such an important date in the calendar of commemoration particularly here in Chesterfield and in Spital cemetery the resting place of so many members of our community who were tragically killed in the Great War of 1914/1919”



The cemetery has 43 Commonwealth War Graves including one Jeb Gascoigne who fought in the Gallipoli campaign in 1915 and was later killed in action in Passchendaele in 1917.

For further information contact Liz Cook on 07447 452137

### Background Information

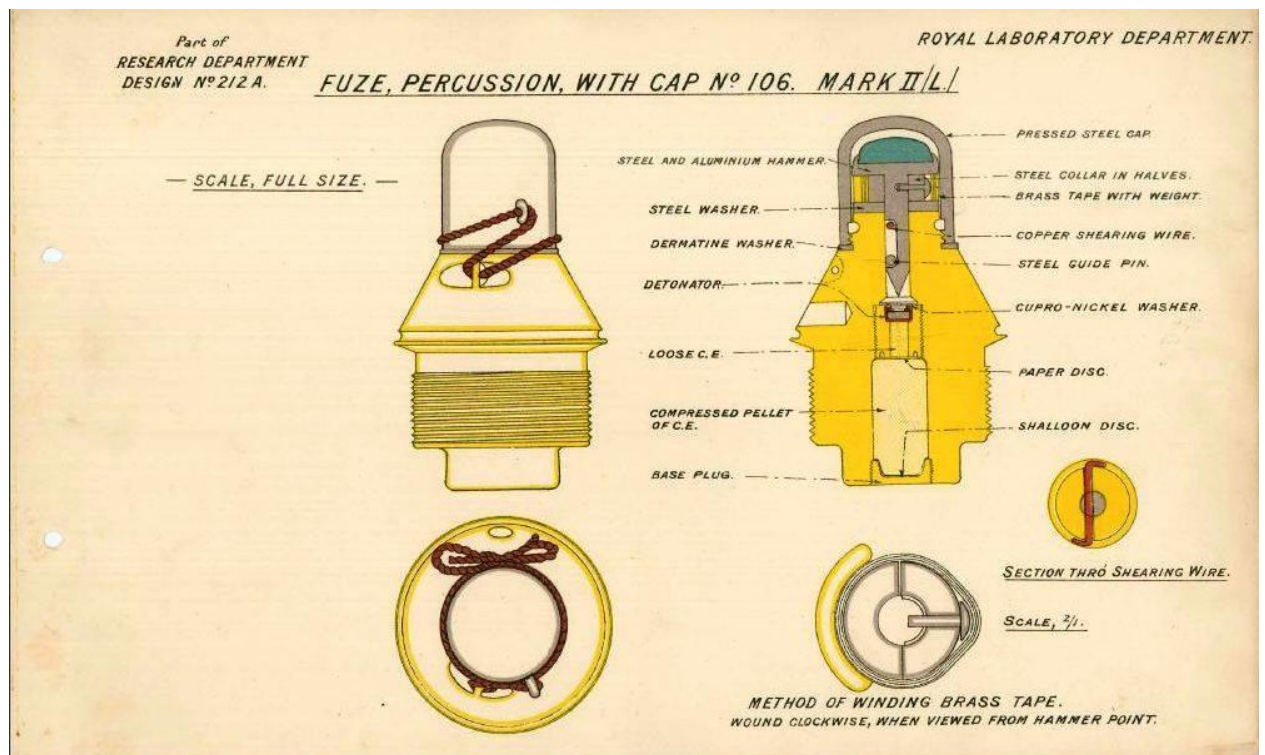
The Gallipoli campaign as it became known was the start of an 8 month battle that cost the lives of 130,000. 87,000 were Ottoman Turks, defending their homeland. 44,000 were Allied troops. Many, such as the members of the Australia and New Zealand Army Corps were a long way from home. This was their first entry into WW1 and ANZAC Day, 25th April, is celebrated annually by New Zealanders and Australians across the world.

Before the wars over 2,000 people from north east Derbyshire emigrated to Australia and New Zealand in search of opportunity and adventure. Many will have enlisted as ANZACs and some will have lost their lives. Hasland resident George Hewitt joined the Sherwood Foresters and was part of the British forces at Gallipoli. He died of his wounds and is commemorated on the Helles Memorial. We welcomed Denise and Emilio, his great grandchildren.

As day broke the names of 116 service personnel buried in Spital cemetery or remembered on family headstones (killed in action) also veterans and other personnel who lived locally. We welcomed Ann and Paris granddaughter and great, great granddaughter of John McBride remembered on the family grave in Spital but commemorated in Chester Farm Cemetery, Belgium.

Event organised by the Friends of Spital Cemetery

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## Gallipoli 30 April 1915

ANZAC - By 28 April the physical exhaustion of the 1st Australian Division was evident and Hamilton had agreed to assign four battalions of the RND returning from their diversionary duties at Bulair to hold the line while Birdwood's units reorganised and got a little desperately needed rest. The Anzacs, always confident in their own manhood, decried the physical immaturity and callow state of the marines, who were largely speaking wartime recruits and by no means the finished article as soldiers.



Photograph: Harry Baker taken by Nigel Steel at the Cenotaph, 25 April 1989.

As Private Bertram Wilson found they were to face a severe challenge when they began to take over the line between Courtney's Post and across 400 Plateau on the night of 28 April. In the pitch dark, with the rain pouring down and contradictory orders seemingly shouted from all sides, they scrambled up the near vertical scrubby hillside and took over trenches that were often still choked with the dead and wounded.

*"What confusion! Everyone shouting orders or asking for this or that battalion. Our Battalion waited for a guide to conduct them to the trenches. It was now pouring with rain. At last we commenced to move up in pitch darkness. The wounded were*

*coming down on stretchers in a continuous stream. It was hard work scrambling up this hill in dense scrub. We were utterly worn out."* (Private Harry Baker, Chatham Battalion, Royal Marine Brigade, RND)

Next night there was more confusion, but eventually Wilson was ordered to take his Vickers machine gun up into the firing line....

*"No one knew exactly where we were wanted or how to get there. It was a hard climb our hands were torn with the scrub. We arrived below the crest of the hill at 8pm. Orders came back to me that I was to remain where I was, the trenches were so full of dead and wounded that it would be difficult to move. I must have dozed off to be awakened but the voice of an Australian sergeant shouting, "Give them a good 3 feet!" I looked up and saw them dragging dead Australians over the crest and burying them close by where we were lying."* (Private Harry Baker, Chatham Battalion, Royal Marine Brigade, RND)

It was a terrifying introduction to warfare at its most basic. Also with the Chatham Battalion was Private Harry Baker who I interviewed for the IWM back in 1985.

*"We took up these positions in the dark. We were along the top of this ridge and there was what you might call a ditch about two feet deep which the Australians had dug along the top and made a kind of trench but there was very little protection there. Every few yards lay a dead man so you had to crawl over him to take up your position. There were quite a number of dead men there you could feel them and see them. That's not a very nice experience. Self preservation was the main thing and you had to keep your head down as much as possible. The lower you could get the better it was. I can assure you it was very steep just like a railway embankment all around with scrub and bush and trees - not very big trees but oddly enough quite a few that were like Scots firs. They hadn't managed to clean up all the snipers. There were still snipers in this bush behind the front line. They used to pick quite a number of men off before they got wiped out because they couldn't get out once they were behind the front line and we picked them off gradually. What you used to watch for in the dark was to see where the flash came from which betrayed where they were and we picked up quite a number like that."*

By this time the Turkish reserves had also begun to arrive. In accordance with General Liman von Sanders overall 'tripwire' plan of light of employing only light coastal detachments to hold up the landings as best they could, thereby allowing the main body of troops to arrive and launch the decisive attacks intended to throw the invaders into the sea on the night of 1 May. But there would be several more low key attacks in the preceding nights On 30 April the Chatham's noticed the Turks beginning to collect in Wire Gully ready for an attack.

*"The second day the Turks began to attack in the afternoon in huge numbers en masse. They came out of this scrub like rabbits towards you and - Oh my word! - we had a tough time repelling that. I'd got two men loading for me and I kept firing these rifles and they didn't get within fifty yards finally. I reckon if you missed one you'd probably have the next man. Mind you, you didn't get too much time to aim. You'd got to get on with the job. It was all over in minutes. They were heaped up wounded and dead."* (Private Harry Baker, Chatham Battalion, Royal Marine Brigade, RND)

There was considerable controversy afterwards as to whether the Turks had actually attacked the Chatham Battalion that night and the Australians accused the Marines of abandoning some of their trenches in the sector on MacLaurin Hill and some of the outposts in Wire Gully were lost. Baker took a very different view of events! Whatever the truth of it, there was far worse was to come for the young marines.

ANZAC - Lance Corporal Walter Parker, Royal Marine Light Infantry, Royal Naval Division earned the Victoria Cross for his bravery during 30 April - 1 May 1915 during the ferocious fighting at Anzac. He did not receive his decoration for over two years. When it was published in the local newspaper, it was reported as follows.

"A NOTTS. V.C. HERO - HOW HE WON THE DISTINCTION"



"Lance-Corporal Walter Richard Parker, of 14 Brookhill-terrace, Stapleford, is to-day a proud man - and the town in which he lives is equally proud of him - for he has by his "gallant conduct in the face of the enemy" gained that most coveted of all distinctions, the Victoria Cross, which is to be presented to him in person by His Majesty the King. Two years have passed since Lce.-Cpl. Parker performed the service which has now been duly, if somewhat tardily, recognised; and the official intimation must therefore have come to him last week to some extent as a very pleasant surprise. The following is a copy of the communication received by him from the Admiralty:-

"Sir, - I am commanded by my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to inform you that, after full enquiries made, with regard to a report which they have received of your gallant conduct in the presence of the enemy, on the night of 30th April - 1st May 1915, at Gaba Tepe, Gallipoli Peninsular, whilst serving as Lance-Corporal in Royal Marine Light Infantry, Portsmouth Battalion, they have recommended to the King, and his Majesty has been graciously pleased to approve, the award of the Victoria Cross to you, in recognition of your services on the occasion in question.

The award will be announced in the "London Gazette" in due course.

A further communication will be made to you for your attendance to receive the decoration above mentioned - Yours obediently, W. Graham Green."

"Lance-Cpl. Parker is the eldest son of Mr. Richard Parker and the late Mrs. Parker, of Lime grove, Stapleford, and is 36 years of age. Within a month or so of the outbreak of war, viz., on September 7th, 1914, he answered his country's call. Immediately after joining the colours he was attached to the Portsmouth Division of the R.M.L.I., and was sent in due course to Gallipoli.

"Whatever may be worthily attributed to other forces at the landing, there must and can be no losing sight of the salient fact that the Royal Marine Infantry rendered splendid service at the Dardanelles.

*"We were in and out," says Parker, "both night and day, attending to the wounded, and rendering first-aid to the injured. Having been at work in the Hospital some time, Col. Luard, Capt. Syson, and Capt. Morton came in quietly and called for a volunteer to go down to one of our own companies which was enfiladed. All of us realised the task was almost super-human."* Lance-Cpl. Parker was the senior N.C.O. on duty. To leave the company amongst which were many men wounded and probably dying for lack of medical assistance was a terrible thought. As no volunteers were forthcoming, Stapleford's hero himself volunteered. The time for the attempt to bring relief to their fellow-comrades drew near. He began to work his way from trench to trench for some considerable distance, when he was suddenly confronted and threatened by an Australian officer that if he did not return from such a forlorn mission he would shoot him dead. Regardless of this, he proceeded on his journey. To reach his goal he had to pass an open passage, upon which, day and night, Turkish machine guns were ceaselessly playing. The gallant V.C. ran through this deadly trap, and, running down the hill into a place called the Valley of Death, fell into a pond at the bottom. The next



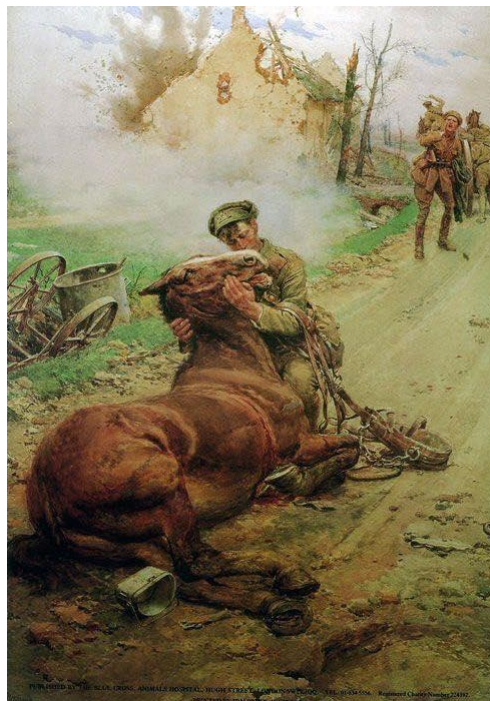
thing which aroused his failing sense was the tremendous cheering of the officers and men of his battalion, which was enfiladed also. He was the first man to go down and render them assistance, using every bandage and other equipment with which he had set out, so that none remained to dress his own wounds. He stayed with these troops throughout the night - a night which gained for Lieut. Alcock the D.S.C.; and the same night as Lieut. Hempson, the gallant little officer, was killed. That same night the Turks made a desperate charge, which compelled the British to retire slightly. After taking cover for some considerable time he was eventually located by the Turks, and shot in several places; but crawling to the top of the hill, almost exhausted, he was ultimately carried in by the stretcher-bearers of his own division. After reaching the beach Lance-Cpl. Parker was placed upon the s.s. Gondola, a temporary hospital ship, and taken from thence to Alexandria, and from there home. After a time, Lance-Corporal Parker was taken to the Royal Naval Hospital, to be attended by naval doctors; and on his discharge from hospital was sent to barracks, where the gallant V.C. was taken ill with brain fever, which badly affected his sight, and he received his discharge on the 17th June 1916."

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I SPOKE TO YOU IN WHISPERS

By

Neil Andrew



*I spoke to you in whispers  
As shells made the ground beneath us quake  
We both trembled in that crater  
A toxic muddy bloody lake  
I spoke to you and pulled your ears  
To try and quell your fearful eye  
As bullets whizzed through the raindrops  
And we watched the men around us die  
I spoke to you in stable tones*

*A quiet tranquil voice  
At least I volunteered to fight  
You didn't get to make the choice  
I spoke to you of old times  
Perhaps you went before the plough  
And pulled the haycart from the meadow  
Far from where we're dying now  
I spoke to you of grooming  
Of when the ploughman made you shine  
Not the shrapnel wounds and bleeding flanks*

*Mane filled with mud and wire and grime  
I spoke to you of courage  
As gas filled the Flanders air  
Watched you struggle in the mud  
Harness acting like a snare  
I spoke to you of peaceful fields  
Grazing beneath a setting sun  
Time to rest your torn and tired body  
Your working day is done  
I spoke to you of promises  
If from this maelstrom I survive  
By pen and prose and poetry  
I'll keep your sacrifice alive  
I spoke to you of legacy  
For when this hellish time is through  
All those who hauled or charged or carried  
Will be regarded heroes too  
I spoke to you in dulcet tones  
Your eye told me you understood  
As I squeezed my trigger to bring you peace  
The only way I could  
And I spoke to you in whispers.....*