



THE WESTERN FRONT  
ASSOCIATION

Lancashire North Branch

# Despatch

Issue 6: Nov 2010



The four officers having a lovely time in early 1918 are with the 3<sup>rd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers at Thirtle Bridge Camp near Withernsea. The photo indicates 'Ert, Allan and Bill have already earned their MCs whilst Gus had nothing showing on his uniform. All four are recuperating from wounds before returning to France. The photo is amongst the collection held by John Sloan, Gilbert Mackereth's ('Ert's) first cousin. Read more on Page 12 about how the photo came to light and how Gus subsequently got a better gong.

## Editor's Musing

I remember being concerned as the copy deadline for Despatch loomed that this Issue may not get to 20 pages let alone 24. However in the few days before we left for France on 8<sup>th</sup> October and whilst away things flowed and we now have the largest Despatch yet. Thanks to all contributors.

Having secured fuel and avoided riots we were approaching Longueval on site visits for my talk next June (see P 27) when I feared our luck had run out as we met Police, mob and flags. Thankfully (see back page) things were not as I feared and I was pleased the inscription on the rear of the memorial mentioned one of the themes in my future talk.

Back home from France and reconnecting with sport headlines I muse about the level of Esprit de Corps that is manifest by certain football superstars and whether they would ever dream of visiting the Footballers' Memorial to pay homage to their football forbears who gave their tomorrow for our today.

### MORE INFORMATION FOR ARTICLES WHEN:

(+P) : photos, maps in Photo Gallery,

(+S) : supplementary information report

See our website [www.wfanlancs.co.uk](http://www.wfanlancs.co.uk) and look against this Despatch

**QUEEN ELIZABETH GRAMMAR SCHOOL, KIRKBY LONSDALE, ROLL OF HONOUR: c/o Oliver Wilkinson**

**William Herbert HARTLEY Acting Corporal, 25804, 11<sup>th</sup> Border Regiment (Lonsdale)**

William Herbert Hartley's service in many respects mirrors that of a fellow 'old boy' Arthur Armer (see May 2009 Despatch). Both were serving with the

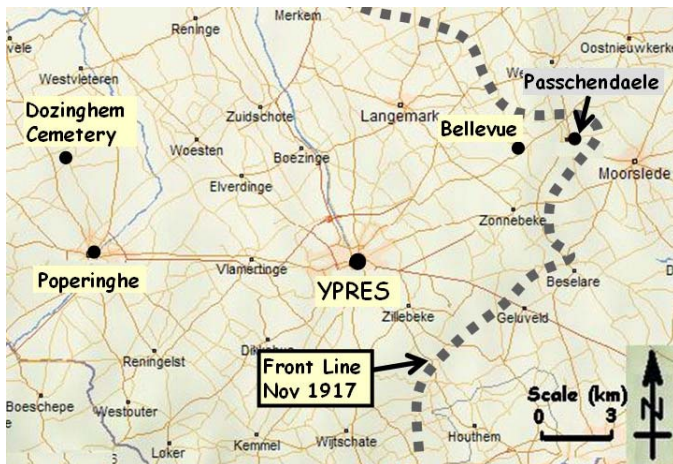
same regiment when they were killed, and in fact would have served together for a period between July and September 1917. Hartley would undoubtedly have been close by when Armer was killed, and would have felt the loss of a friend. Sadly, Hartley was to share a similar fate two months later, falling victim to the same killer: Artillery.

In November 1917 Hartley was with the 11<sup>th</sup> Border Regiment (Lonsdale) west of Poperinghe. The early part of the month was occupied with Battalion training. Then on the 24<sup>th</sup> November, the Battalion moved to the Bellevue Area (Ypres Salient) and began to undertake a relief of the trenches. The next day the Lonsdales were in the front-line when they suffered a massive enemy artillery barrage, which was effectively targeted on their positions. As a result 3 Officers were wounded, 12 Other Ranks (O.R.s) were killed, 35 O.R.s were wounded and 7 O.R.s posted missing. Hartley was one of the wounded men, suffering from severe wounds in the arm and leg. He was moved out of the line and admitted to the Casualty Clearing Station at Dozinghem, but was overcome by his wounds the next day. The sister who had attended to him at the hospital had the unenviable task of writing to Hartley's mother to inform her of her son's death. Two QES Old boys had been killed by artillery bombardments in as many months, both serving with a local regiment.

In fact the parallels between these two former pupils run even deeper. Hartley started school at Queen Elizabeth Grammar just as Armer was leaving, and like his elder, Hartley enlisted into the Cadet Corps. The natural progression from here was to become a member of the 4<sup>th</sup> Border (Territorial) Regiment, which Hartley duly did. Hartley also

seems to have been somewhat ‘green-fingered’, spending the years immediately before the war farming, gardening and assisting his father in the green grocery business, located on Market Street, Kirkby-Lonsdale. When war arrived, Hartley fulfilled his obligation as a territorial soldier, and was sent with the 4<sup>th</sup> Border Regiment to India and

*“We have not had a bad “Do” on Xmas Day. I was unlucky enough to be on guard so that I had my dinner cold. It seems very strange to have such a warm time at Xmas. It’s as hot today as in the middle of Summer at home. To-day I killed a grass snake 4 ½ feet long, just as it was running up a tree. It was as green as the grass and a little thicker than an eel.”*



The India experience would certainly have broadened the outlook of young men like Hartley, who was 21 when he wrote the above letter. Once he had completed his period of service in the Territorials, Hartley, as well as Armer, returned to

Burma. Other Kirkby men, including former QES pupils like Arthur Armer, also went out to India with the 4<sup>th</sup> Borders. As a result this territorial formation would have, to a large degree, held the spirit of a one of the famous ‘Pals’ Battalions, where men who had lived, studied and worked together would all go off to war together, to fight and even die together. Undoubtedly Hartley and Armer would have felt a sense of comradeship through their common ties to the same community and school. The 4<sup>th</sup> Borders were engaged in policing the British Empire, but for many of the soldiers it was the exotic environment, with its strange climate and colourful wildlife that proved most captivating. Hartley encapsulated these feelings when he wrote home at Christmas 1915:

England. The two men re-enlisted together in the 1<sup>st</sup> Border Regiment on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1916 at Kendal, their new service numbers running consecutively (Armer, 25803, Hartley, 25804). After re-enlistment the two friends separated, Armer being sent to France to join the Regiment, while Hartley remained in England acting as an instructor in various stations in the north. He must have held the rank of Acting Corporal at this time, and was clearly a very competent soldier to be asked to instruct. At the beginning of July 1917, however, Hartley re-entered ‘theatre’ joining the 11<sup>th</sup> Border Regiment, which was engaged in a heavy resistance of the line at Nieuport. Hartley and Armer would now have been serving together again, although Armer was now a commissioned officer. In September, however, Armer was killed, and Hartley was not to out-live his co-patriot for very

long. Artillery killed them both. Hartley was buried close to the Casualty Clearing Station where he was taken, in Dozinghem Military Cemetery.

Though gone William Herbert Hartley was not forgotten. Queen Elizabeth Grammar School remembered him in their Roll of Honour, and the Roll of Honour that now hangs in St Mary's Church, Kirkby Lonsdale, also records his name. Perhaps most powerfully, however, was the tribute that his family paid him. His mother, brother and sisters remembered their hero, and after peace was declared in November 1918 they printed a notice of remembrance to William in the local paper. It simply read:

"His end was peace"

### **A NOTABLE MEMORY - THE FUNERAL OF LAWRENCE OF ARABIA: Joe Hodgson**

In August this year I was fortunate to enter my 90<sup>th</sup> year and still retain my good memory for many things military. Consequently it has been suggested that my interesting notable memorable moments which, however loosely, can be related to the Great War should be shared with readers of Despatch.



Thomas Edward Lawrence was born 16<sup>th</sup> August 1888 and after graduating from Jesus College, Oxford in 1910 worked as an archaeologist in the Middle East. In January 1914 he worked for the British military and as well in undertaking an archaeological survey of the Negev Desert produced updated mapping of the

area with special reference to features of military relevance.

In October 1914 he was commissioned and joined the Intelligence Staff of the GOC Middle East. He became famous for his involvement with Arab irregular troops in operations against the Ottoman Empire until the end of WW1. Post-War he was disappointed at what he considered to be failure by the British Government to fulfil their promises to the Arabs. After a period working for the Foreign Office he enlisted in the RAF in 1922 under an assumed name. After exposure he changed his name again and joined the Tank Corps in 1923 but was unhappy there and rejoined the RAF in 1925.

He was a keen motorcyclist and two months after leaving the RAF in 1935 was fatally injured when he came off his motorcycle near his cottage in Dorset. He died six days later on 19<sup>th</sup> May. The nearby Moreton Estate was owned by family cousins, the Frampton family, and his mother arranged for Lawrence to be buried in their family plot at Moreton Church.

When my Dad heard about Lawrence's death and funeral he said to me "Do you want to go to Lawrence of Arabia's funeral?". Of course I said "Yes" so we set off in the family car (a second hand Rover). We had a family car because Dad had started a Coach Firm in 1925 and it was doing well. He called it Bon Chance Motors. He spelt it as he heard behind the Somme Front (It should be "Bonne Chance"). He also had driven a Leyland Lorry in the Royal Flying Corps so like Lawrence he was an Aircraftsman 1st Class.

He drove through the night. I slept on the back seat under a travelling rug but every now and then the car was flooded with light from the street lamps as we

passed through a town. There were no motorways then. In the morning we arrived at Dorchester where we had a wash and superb breakfast in the Soldiers Home.

Then on to find Moreton where Dad parked the car and we joined the crowds lining each side of the street. After a while the coffin passed by followed by VIPs, Politicians, and Generals etc. Being a schoolboy I don't think I recognised many of them. It was much later in my life I read about how Lawrence had led the Arabs against our Turkish enemies. Then much, much later the film told the story brilliantly.

In 1981 my wife Elsie and I spent a week at a guest house in Swanage in Dorset, most days out we went to an

interesting place. One day we went through Wool and found Moreton Church. In the churchyard we found Lawrence's grave with the biblical quote on the headstone.

"The hour is coming, and now is,  
when the dead shall hear  
the voice of the  
SON OF GOD  
and they that hear shall live"

We went into the church and saw the etchings on the windows. We went on from here to find Lawrence's house "Clouds Hill". It was open so we went round. I saw the sleeping bag he used, and his gramophone etc. It was so long ago I cannot remember more.



**A Favourite Card:  
Andrew Brooks.**

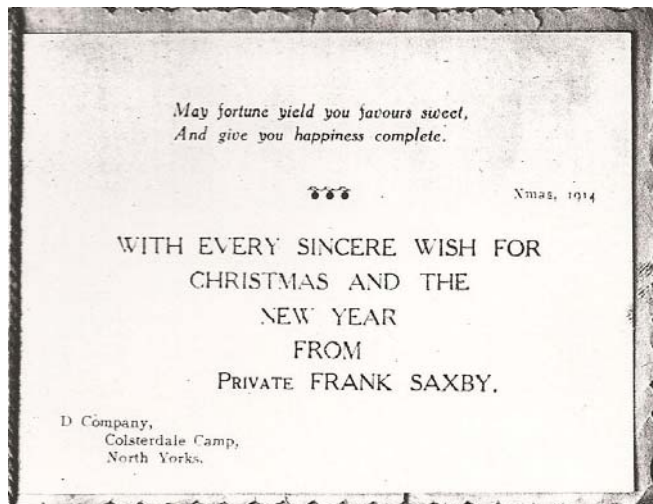
Issue No. 3 of 'Despatch' contains a short account of the trip to view the site of the Colsterdale camp which members of the branch visited in 2008. The Leeds Pals had arrived at this camp, on a hillside a few miles from Masham, on the 25<sup>th</sup> September 1914 and

they did their battalion training in the area before moving to Ripon for brigade training in June 1915.

The personalised Christmas card illustrated was sent by Private Frank Saxby of 'D' Company, Colsterdale Camp, North Yorks. I wonder how many others amongst the battalion would have gone to the trouble and expense and I suspect that his parents, George and Louisa Saxby of Pontefract had them printed for him.

The Leeds Pals sailed for Egypt in December 1915 and guarded the Suez Canal until March 1916 by which time the threat of a Turkish invasion had diminished. They were then sent to the Western Front and arrived in the area of the Somme. They went into trenches for the first time between Hawthorn Redoubt and the Redan on the 29<sup>th</sup>

March (a spot well know by some members of the branch thanks to the excellent guided walks led by Harry Taylor). For an account of their experiences over the following few months I would suggest reading 'Leeds Pals' by L.Milner.



On the 13<sup>th</sup> July the Leeds Pals moved north, away from the Somme, to billets at Vieille Chapelle. Here the front line was different from the one on the Somme and when they moved into the trenches on the 18<sup>th</sup> August they discovered the line was not continuous but rather a number of strong points in low-lying wet ground. On the 20<sup>th</sup> August they were

attacked. After 'Stand down' in the morning the Germans started to shell them but it was not observed that they were also cutting three paths through the wire and across No Man's Land for a raiding party. The attack was not a success but the Pals lost one officer and six other ranks, including Frank Saxby. He is buried in Le Touret Military Cemetery, Richebourg-L'Avoue. Plot 1V, Row A, Grave 44. Frank was aged 20.

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## MUSEUM REPORTS

### King's Own Royal Regiment Museum, Lancaster: Peter Donnelly

The summer months are always a busy time for the King's Own Museum and this year has been no exception. The media coverage of the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain and the start of the Blitz has once again marked an increase in interest in family, and through that, Regimental History. Despite being sparked off by the media covering World War Two there continues to be great interest in the First World War.

One way in which the museum can effectively reach out to a wide audience, including many people who are unable to visit in person, is through the website.

There have been numerous additions throughout the website. These include the addition of new photographs and a number of group photographs not previously digitised and added to the photo gallery pages. The listing of the holdings we have on the 1st/4th and 1st/5th Battalions in the First World War provides a full index for the first time.

The Museum was able to purchase an archive collection of General Sir Archibald Hunter, who was Colonel of the Regiment 1913-1926, the letters include correspondence with Lord Kitchener and Field Marshal Haig. Hunter was a close personal friend of Kitchener, indeed each was the other's best man! Hunter never obtained the field command that he had much longed for in the First World War, but instead was GOC Aldershot Command for much of the war and

responsible for the training of the expanding army. Hunter's archive has now been digitised and can be found on the museum's website, there is a link from the home page: [www.kingsownmuseum.plus.com](http://www.kingsownmuseum.plus.com)

The acquisition was generously supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The great civic pride in which First World War soldiers were held is seen in many forms, the Borough of Salford presented illuminated certificates to acknowledge a soldier's gallantry, the Borough of Lancaster presented tribute certificates to the next of kin of the fallen. The townsfolk of Millom were quick to acknowledge their own local hero. In July 1917 Lance Sergeant Tom Fletcher Mayson of the 1st/4th Battalion, King's Own, won the Victoria Cross in action at Wieltje. He received the Victoria Cross in October 1917, and then in December he received an enthusiastic welcome in Millom and his home village of Silecroft, where he was presented with a gold watch, chain, medal and illuminated address. The chain and medal have just been acquired, by purchase, for the King's Own Museum and they will go on display along with Mayson's original medals. The Friends of Lancaster City Museum have very generously funded the entire acquisition, their assistance is much appreciated. Sadly there is no trace of the watch or illuminated address.

The medal and chain will go on permanent display along with the five original Victoria Crosses which are in the King's Own Museum.

Don't forget to visit the museum's website which is packed full of information for anyone interested in the King's Own in World War One.

THINK WHAT A SON SHOULD BE AND  
HE WAS THAT - S Loag 9th Bn Highland  
Light Inf

## **TWO SHIPS HOTEL 1914-1918 ROLL OF HONOUR: Philip Mather, Museum Officer, The Fusilier Museum, Bury.**

In last November's Despatch a brief mention was made of the memorial 'Honours Board' that was displayed in the new Fusiliers Museum in Bury. The Board had been rescued from the defunct Tap and Spiel public house in Rochdale by Captain the Lord Havering, a veteran of the Second World War. By chance in 2003 he had seen the Board in situ in the derelict pub and realized that one of his ancestors was recorded on it. Therefore to preserve the Board and prevent it from being broken up and assigned to a skip, he bought the pub! As there was no immediate solution as to where the Board could be displayed in Rochdale it went into storage in Scarborough. Over the next few years, in collaboration with the MP for Rochdale, Paul Rowen, an attempt to find a suitable site if not in Rochdale then elsewhere in the north west. Success eluded them until Major Edmund Gartside, a member of the Museum Project Steering Group got involved and offered a place in the new Fusilier Museum. The rest as they say is history and the Board is now proudly displayed in the Normandy Room for all to see.

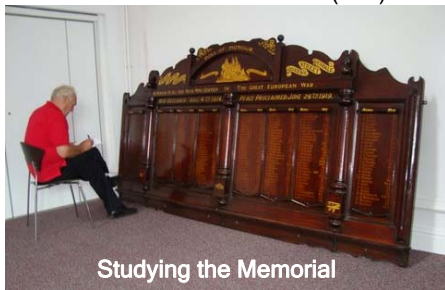
The Board was originally commissioned by the management of what was the Two Ships Hotel, Queen Street, Rochdale. In the immediate aftermath of the Great War this type of memorial was common in places of entertainment or work. Many streets also had their own memorials. Sad to say most are now lost and this board is a rare survivor of this period.

The Board measures 10 feet 4 inches in width and 5 feet 2 inches in height. It is made of wood and had eight panels in

the form of extended opened scrolls with curly bottom edges and pins. It is decorated with gilt roses, a field gun, a tank and aeroplane. The design also includes two flaming grenades carved in wood alluding to the Fusilier connection with Rochdale. It is inscribed:

*'In honour of all our boys who served in  
the Great European War.  
War declared August 4<sup>th</sup> 1914 Peace  
Proclaimed June 28<sup>th</sup> 1919'*

Within the eight panels are recorded 239 names of those men who frequented the pub and served in the Great War. Information recorded includes initials and the details of the regiment that they served in. Crosses before names denote those who died during the war. Seventy five Lancashire Fusiliers (LFs) are



Studying the Memorial

recorded, roughly one in three. A number of Irish Regiments are listed, presumably as a consequence of the large Irish community that lived in Rochdale and worked in the textile industry. Groups of names stand out including five Devaney's, six Duffy's, four Heveron's (three killed), six Kelly's and four Nyland's. How many of these were from immediate family or extended family is not known. Some of the initials used to denote regiments remain a mystery to us as they are not the official Army abbreviations. These include BF, MS, FFA, (RFA?) and LCRS. There is more work to be done here.

The Queen Street area of Rochdale had a large Irish community by 1914, many of whose ancestors had come to Rochdale to work in the textile mills following the famine in Ireland in the 1840's. Initially shunned by the native Rochdale folk because of their way of life and religion, most of them settled in an area near the bottom of Whitehall Street called Mount Pleasant but locally known as the Mount. They lived in hastily built back to back houses, cellars and garrets and the Mount became one of the worst slums in Rochdale. The area had many pubs one of which was the Two Ships on Queen Street.

When Kitchener called for volunteers in 1914, men from the community responded for many reasons including, pay, food, uniform, a sense of patriotism, excitement, action and adventure, for many it was simply a chance to get away from the poverty. More than 240 from the area (239 names on roll) are said to have joined up and one in six were killed. For an English town, Irish names such as Cleary, Brannon, Connors, Devaney, Donnelly, Finnerty and O'Day are in the majority. The roll of honour was said to have been paid for by the customers of the pub who used to have a collection every Sunday dinner time. It was put up about 1920 and was regularly cleaned. The lettering was re-guided some years later and the customers paid for that.

In the 1930's the remaining slums in the Queen Street area were gradually cleared and when the pub was pulled down, the roll of honour was installed in a new Two Ships pub, close to the original one, which opened in 1940. The pub changed its name to the Tap and Spiel (Spile) and the Board was kept in a side passage until the pub was taken over by a chain (Pubmasters) who had it cleaned and placed in a more prominent position.



However as the population in Rochdale gradually shifted, the pub became uneconomic, closed and became derelict. It was at this point in 2003 that Captain the Lord Havering purchased the site to rescue the board.

With the assistance of Marjorie Molloy I have completed some initial research on a handful of names recorded on the board. My first conclusion is that the board is not accurate and certainly should be regarded with some suspicion as a source of historical information. Nevertheless it is an important snap shot of the impact of the Great War on the community that frequented the pub at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. For example:

**F Butterworth LF MM.** No mention of an F Butterworth MM in Soldiers Died. There is mention in the Lancashire Fusiliers Regimental History of an E Butterworth MM, who survived (not on CWGC/Soldiers Died) of 2<sup>nd</sup> /5<sup>th</sup> Bn which might indicate he was a Bury lad not a Rochdale one.

**Ormsby MM.** Not recorded in the Lancashire Fusilier MM list.

**Harris T.** Some information - 9<sup>th</sup> Bn East Surrey, born Rochdale, enlisted Rochdale. Died 17<sup>th</sup> April 1917 in France and Flanders. L/Sgt number 830, MM. Buried in Bully Grenay Communal Cemetery which is fourteen miles north of Arras.

The two ships after which the pub was named were the Shannon and the Chesapeake. Both ships were involved not in the First World War but in the War of 1812-14 between Great Britain and the United States of America. HMS Shannon was involved in an action with the USS Chesapeake just outside Boston Harbor. Both ships were frigates and were evenly matched as regards size. However the superior tactics, discipline and gunnery of

the Royal Navy won the day. The USS Chesapeake was captured following a hand to hand fight after being boarded. The battle only lasted some fifteen minutes with twice as many casualties being inflicted on the American Navy than were suffered by the Royal Navy.

I will conclude by saying that museums are about objects, and our role in museums is to seek to discover what the information is that can be obtained from the object. Clearly objects can tell many stories and the Two Ships Board does just that. The stories range from the exploits of the Lancashire Fusiliers in the Great War, to the history of the Irish immigrant community in Rochdale. Finally one parting thought and it is so often the case that this unique piece of history survived not by careful planning but by plain chance.

HIS WORK IS DONE HERE BUT STILL  
REMAINS WITH US THE MEMORY OF  
HIS LIFE - Pte L Wild, RASC

**Personal Papers of 31461 Private John S. Royden, 11<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion, East Lancashire Regiment: Jane Davies (Curator, QLR Museum)**

The personal letters of Private John Royden of the 11<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion, East Lancashire Regiment have recently been donated to the museum. The archive consists of 50 letters written by Private Royden to his family from 1917 to 1918. It is a fascinating archive, shedding light on the actions of Y Company. It details the battles that the Battalion were involved in, attacks from zeppelins as well as the boredom suffered by the troops when they were out of the trenches.

A particular letter, dated 15<sup>th</sup> April 1918 goes into detail about the Battalion's

successful defence of Bleu (1 ml east of Vieux Berquin) during the second attempt by the German Army to break through the Western Front. The days leading up to the 15<sup>th</sup> April had seen particularly heavy fighting. During this time numerous towns and villages were captured by the Germans, including Armentieres which had previously been thought of as being immune from enemy occupation.

In the face of extreme danger, orders were received by the 31<sup>st</sup> Division to 'arrest at any cost the enemy's advance towards Hazebrouck.' The 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion swung into action, coming face to face on April 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, with 'no less than five and a half enemy divisions.' The 31<sup>st</sup> Division were successful in repelling the German advance though with the Regimental History stating 'By their prompt action on the morning of the 12<sup>th</sup>, and by the stubborn way that they clung to their positions on the 13<sup>th</sup> in the face of three direct assaults, the 11<sup>th</sup> East Lancashires can surely claim to have taken no small part in helping the 31<sup>st</sup> Division successfully to accomplish its mission.' At the end of the battle, 35 men had lost their lives, 47 were missing and 158 men had been wounded.

Private Royden's letter describes the action in an understated manner. 'Well to start the tale of my adventures. We went up the line last week and right into our first action. I cannot recount everything that happened, but the old 'sweats' tell us that it was the worst 'do' they had ever been in, so you can imagine our baptism of fire was quite thorough enough.' He goes on to recall a narrow escape, 'It was when a shell from our artillery fell short and exploded near the funk hole where Stokes and I were stationed side by side. A lump of shrapnel (almost red hot) dropped on my shoulder, but did no damage.' He also mentions another

'escapade'. 'I was running across a field to get out of the way of a Jerry's machine gun which was trying to put my light out. I jumped into a muddy stream and stuck there for about a minute absolutely drenched all over before I could scramble out. I felt a bit wet all the next day but am now more or less dry.' At the end of the letter, Royden states 'I think I can say I'm a soldier now.'

Private Royden's archive can be viewed by appointment at the Queen's Lancashire Regiment Museum. We are open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9.30 to 16.30. We are also open on Saturdays from 10.00 to 16.00.

**Manchester Regiment Archive: Larysa Bolton Archivist Tameside (+P)**

The Manchester Regiment Archive Catalogue is now available online. The catalogue for the holdings of Tameside Local Studies and Archives, which includes the Manchester Regiment Archive, has been made live and is available through our website at <http://www.tameside.gov.uk/localstudies>. Just click on the 'Catalogue' links. This is good news for all interested in the Manchesters and the Western Front as it means that it is much easier to find material in our collection. You can search the catalogue using words in much the same way as you would use a search engine like Google.

A good example of how useful the online catalogue is for finding material is to use Manchester Hill as an example. Readers may be aware that this is a significant place in the history of the Manchesters and that they fought on Manchester Hill twice. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion attacked the hill on 2 April 1917 and captured six machine guns and six 77mm field guns. On 21 April 1918, the 16<sup>th</sup>

Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Wilfrith Elstob DSO MC, defended the hill against an enemy attack. Most of the battalion who were on the hill were killed or wounded, Elstob being amongst the dead.

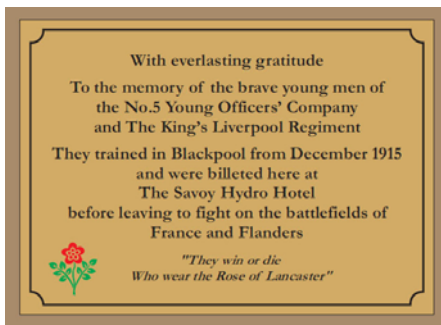
There are a number of sources in the archive relating to Manchester Hill and Francilly Seleny. They can be easily found by typing these names into the online catalogue. They include MR1/2/1/8, an envelope of material from Lieutenant Colonel Thornycroft, CBE DSO, of typescript and manuscript accounts of the operations by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion along with a General Staff Map of the district around St Quentin. MR1/2/3/11 is a collection of five aerial photographs (see Photo Gallery) of the area, which can be used in conjunction with the map. The photographs are endorsed "St Quentin" and "Manchester Hill Redoubt" and were used by the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion. Also of interest is MR1/5/2/7, Medal recommendation papers for Colonel Wilfrith Elstob, 16th Battalion, posthumously awarded the VC for his action in the defence of Manchester Hill, including maps, statements of evidence and correspondence. There is also a newly acquired bundle of material relating to the unveiling of a memorial in June 1996 at Francilly Seleny to the men and officers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Battalions. A photograph from the unveiling ceremony is below.



TOO FAR AWAY YOUR GRAVE TO SEE  
DEAR LAD NOT TOO FAR TO THINK OF  
THEE – Sapper A Lobley 2nd Aus  
Tunnelers

**Plaque dedication at the Savoy Hotel, Blackpool: Pam Hall, Wales (North) Branch (+P)**

On the 20<sup>th</sup> June, 2010, a small group of members of the Western Front Association, together with Ted Lightbown, a local historian from Blackpool, attended the dedication of a



plaque to the memory of the young men of the No. 5 Young Officers' Company, 3/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment. For the dedication, one of group (Terry Edge, see over) wore a First World War uniform, which was especially poignant as it would have been the first time that one had been seen in the hotel since 1919.

The plaque is in the Reception area of the Savoy Hotel, Blackpool and it is there because of the letters of one young man, Second Lieutenant John Hayes Fearnhead (Jack). (across)

The Savoy Hotel



played a significant part during the First World War. From 1917 to 1919 it was requisitioned by the War Office for the use of convalescent officers. Prior to that, and within a very few months of it opening in 1915, the hotel (then known as the Savoy Hydro), became home to fifty young men of the No. 5 Young Officers' Company.

They would just have been newly commissioned as officers and they were training in Blackpool, as part of the West Lancashire Division.



At this time, the hotel was also open to guests. This must have been interesting to both the guests and the soldiers, as their daily life at that time would have been at extreme ends of the spectrum. The local newspaper for the week of Christmas 1915 lists the guests by name and adds that "There are also in residence at the Savoy, some fifty officers of the West Lancashire Division, who are connected with the troops now training in Blackpool".

I learnt about the No.5 Young Officers' Company from Jack's letters to his parents and to his sweetheart, my grandmother. He was billeted at the hotel from December 1915, to his leaving for France in May 1916 and the letters are written on the headed notepaper of the Savoy Hydro. Apart from these letters, there is no record of this body of young men, who ate here, slept here,

attended lectures and for so long, called the Savoy Hotel home.

The names that we do know are - 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenants Porter, Edmondson, Taylor, Thomas, Lyon, Watson, Patterson. Unfortunately, we only have their surnames and of these boys, Porter, Taylor, Thomas and Patterson were killed in 1916.

Jack had his birthday in the trenches on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 1916 - he was twenty-one years old. On the 13<sup>th</sup> August, 1916, he was killed near the village of Guillemont, on the Somme. He has no known grave and his name is inscribed on the Thiepval Memorial, France.

We don't know what happened to many of the young men who were billeted at the Savoy with Jack and it seemed right to find some way of commemorating these brave young men, who left from here to fight on the battlefields of France and Flanders. It was a long time ago, but is an integral part of our history and we owe them so much.

HE PASSED OVER AND ALL THE TRUMPETS SOUNDED FOR HIM ON THE OTHER SIDE. - Lance Corp R R Jeffrey Royal Scots

#### **LT. COL. SIR GILBERT MACKERETH'S GRAVE: Terry Dean (+P)**

In last May's Despatch (p.15) I reported the problem with Lt. Col. Sir Gilbert Mackereth's grave in Spain. On 4<sup>th</sup> May I also circulated the story to the media and on Election Day 6<sup>th</sup> May, with political reporting banned, the media looked for other interesting stories and told how the WW1 hero could be evicted from his grave.

After breakfast-time radio interviews on Radio Lancashire and Manchester the bulk of the day was spent at the Fusiliers

Museum in Bury with Mike Glover from where BBC TV broadcast the story and numerous newspapers sought comments to compile their articles. I received many offers of financial help to solve the problem of Sir Gilbert's grave, including from the Sun Newspaper.

After further early evening radio interviews on Radio 5 Live and Wales, I received the most welcome phone call of the day from Chairman, Stan. Sir Gilbert's FIRST cousin, John Sloan had telephoned Stan and given him their telephone number. Within an hour I had spoken with John and the Sun Newspaper who then went hot-foot to John's home near Solihull to take photos and complete their story of how they had saved the WW1 hero's grave.

For several years I had searched for a photo of Mackereth in uniform and prior to 6<sup>th</sup> May I had just two poor photos of him in later life. Never in my wildest imagination did I expect to see the first uniformed photograph of Mackereth in the Sun!

John Sloan's mother (Ethel Haslam) was the youngest sister of Gilbert Mackereth's mother (Annie Haslam). John was born in 1925 and never met Gilbert who joined the Diplomatic Service immediately after WW1. John's wife Sheila recalls conversations about Sir Gilbert and on 6<sup>th</sup> May was ironing listening to the radio when she heard him mentioned.

Nine days later we visited the Sloans on our way to France. I struggled to contain my anticipation as we enjoyed lunch and talked about "family matters" before I was let loose with my camera on their photo album. It contained a record of Mackereth's war with the Royal and Lancashire Fusiliers. Here he is a stern looking Lieutenant with the Lancashire

Fusiliers after gaining his Military Cross in April 1917.

One of my favourite photos is on the front page. It was taken at Thirtle Bridge camp near Withernsea in spring 1918.



'Ert (Gilbert) won his MC when helping the 17<sup>th</sup> LFs to capture Gricourt. Allan (Captain A Parke) won his MC in October 1917 with the 9<sup>th</sup> LFs east of Poelcappelle. He was wounded before their attack commenced but remained on duty and led his company to the first objective when he was wounded again. Bill (Captain W R Fanner) gained his MC with the 2<sup>nd</sup> LFs east of Arras in April 1917 when "regardless of himself, walked up and down encouraging men" as they captured Fampoux. Gus (Captain W J Brockman) did not have any medals when the photo was taken but earned the DSO with the 15<sup>th</sup> LFs in August 1918. He led a mixed party of men to capture a battery of German field guns firing at them over open sights near Damery south east of Amiens.

A copy of selected photos from the album can be seen on our website and a copy of all the photos in the album has been given to Col. Glover at the Fusiliers Museum at Bury.

Following all the publicity an article has been developed on Wikipedia about Sir Gilbert. I have been in contact with one of the principal authors of the article to advise on WW1 information.

Also I have been contacted by James Barr, an historian who is writing a book on the British and French mandates in the Middle East which includes a chapter

on Sir Gilbert. James feels Sir G's work in Damascus in the late 1930s and in the 1940s is of very great interest, not least because of the drily witty reports he wrote to London while he was there. I provided James with details of Sir G's exploits in WW1 and from what James has revealed to me look forward to reading about his subsequent activities. The book titled 'A Line in the Sand' is due to be published in the UK next year.

### **The Future**

Having agreed to the Sun newspaper's offer to pay the outstanding taxes on Sir Gilbert's grave in San Sebastian there is no immediate need to exhume him. However should John Sloan wish to maintain Sir Gilbert's remains in the tomb the British Ambassador to Spain advises it would be necessary to put the tomb in his (or another relative's name) and to purchase the tomb. The cost of doing this would be 3,200 Euros for 25 years, 4,200 Euros for 35 years or 5,300 Euros for 49 years.

A key factor in John's decision is whether Sir Gilbert specifically wished to be buried in Spain. I am attempting to determine this in parallel with seeking his medals and other memorabilia which probably passed to his wife when he died in 1962. The trail is proving difficult and I will report further in the next Despatch.

SHORT DAYS AGO LIVED, FELT DAWN  
SAW SUNSET GLOW LOVED AND WAS  
LOVED - Pte T Mac Watt 1st Bn  
Canadian Inf

### **SEEKING CHESTER CHURCH: Barrie Bertram (+P)**

Many members will, over the last two to three years, have followed the events at Fromelles with great interest, beginning with hearing news of the

discovery of burial pits at Pheasant Wood, and eventually the official ceremony held there this July, on the 94<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the disastrous battle that takes the village's name.

From my point of view, I was interested to find if any of the men who were reported missing had a Jersey connection, and initially searched through the database of names on the website ([www.greatwarci.net](http://www.greatwarci.net)) of the Channel Islands Great War Study Group (CIGWSG) for missing casualties who died on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> July, 1916. A blank was drawn, so while retaining a wider interest, detailed research was off the agenda. Or so it seemed!

Some time later, in an unconnected piece of research I was searching Australian service records (held by the National Archive of Australia) to identify as many 'Jersey-Australians' as possible through keyword searches for 'Jersey', 'St Helier' and other related words. But, I also had a list of names previously identified and amongst those was 635 Sergeant Chester Cecil Church who had served with the 30<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the AIF, and who appeared to have survived the Great War. This 'fact' was derived from the Book of Remembrance produced by Victoria College, my old school in Jersey, and the corresponding absence of his name on the school's war memorial. His service record however, told a different story!

The file, at 52 pages, was rather thicker than those for men and women who survived the war, while a 'Missing' stamped across the front page also gave a clue of what would follow, along with the presence of German letters and confused references to the return of an identity disc. With this evidence and the CWGC Register, it was thus possible to confirm that Chester Church was one of

the Fromelles missing, and indeed the Australian authorities had him listed among those thought buried at Pheasant Wood. What next?

Given that the authorities were interested in hearing from descendants and that DNA might be a factor in identification, were there any relatives? All that the CWGC Register contained was the fact that his father (Augustus Mark Church) was deceased and that the maiden surname of his mother (Susannah Louisa Church) was Aplin. To support this, there was information from Victoria College that he had been entered in 1904 by Mr FG Aplin of the Grasshopper Hotel. Yet more questions, namely, who was FG Aplin and where was the Grasshopper Hotel since its location was not stated?

Fortunately the memsahib hit upon the blindingly obvious with the suggestion that, since the Hotel's location was unstated, it must have been in Jersey. And so it proved, thanks to contacts in Jersey's Museum, with a rather sizeable Email appearing on my PC with some 10 pages of previous research (c.1990) attached into the Hotel which had been in St Helier, its proprietor, a Miss Catherine Flowers, and Frederick G Aplin, the Hotel's manager. But, this new data, interesting as it was, took me no further up a blind alley searching for Susannah Aplin, and it was at this point Genes Reunited was brought into use as the weapon of last resort. Within minutes of seeking Chester Church, I had found a contact in Australia and subsequently would establish Susannah's family tree.

The first bit of vital information was that Susannah's maiden name was in fact Flowers, she was an older sister of Catherine, and she had been born on Portsea Island (Portsmouth) c.1856. Married to Augustus in London in 1882,

she had two sons, Chester, who we already know of, who was born in 1891 while there was an older boy, Theodore Mark born in 1886, both being born in Brisbane. Widowed in 1893, she then married Frederick Aplin in 1895. Clearly the CWGC data was (and is at the time of writing) incorrect as to her maiden name, and there was no relationship shown to Theodore, although this has been corrected.

But, the object of the exercise had to be the discovery of relatives who could provide DNA. Sadly, my Australian contact and her relatives who are related to Susannah could not, having already been in touch with the authorities in Canberra. I do not pretend to understand the complexities of DNA sampling and identification, but would simply say that the present day maternal line is too far removed from Susannah to provide a match to identify Chester's remains. For my part, I firmly believe that he is buried in the new cemetery, for the German



documents on file are strong indicators as are a number of reports in the Australian newspapers of 1916 or 1917 saying that his 'cobbers' saw him lying in a German trench. However, successful identification with mitochondrial DNA will most likely be impossible.

Can anything be done with the Y-chromosome DNA of relatives on the paternal line? Well, if we start with

Theodore, the answer is a resounding no! The CIGWSG had note of him, based upon information held in 'Soldiers Died' that he had enlisted in Jersey, and which also showed that he had been born in Portsmouth, a long way from Brisbane! Having originally enlisted in the East Surrey Regiment c.1905, he had died, unmarried like Chester, in 1915 while serving in the Royal Engineers as a Sapper. He is buried in Netley Military Cemetery, near Southampton, and it is interesting to note that his headstone is a private one, and not the standard CWGC version, showing that he was a Marconi Operator. Moreover, this headstone shows that it was erected by his step-father, one FG Aplin of Portswood!

LOST SO FAR FROM HOME AND  
FOUND SO CLOSE TO OUR HEARTS -  
Cpl W P Ryan 31 Batt Aus Inf  
(Pheasant Wood Cem)

Returning to Chester's father, Augustus, there is quite a bit of information on him in contemporary Australian newspapers from which it can be deduced that he was born c.1846. By profession a hairdresser, he was first mentioned in January, 1872 in an advertisement saying that he was setting up shop in Brisbane, having worked at salons in Bristol and London. In March, 1882 he was heading back to England via Sydney by boat (I'll avoid jokes about clippers!), but was certainly back in Brisbane by August, 1884, having married Susannah in London in August, 1882 with the help of a special license.

Discounting newspaper information for later years, the trail on Augustus' background goes cold. Having assumed that he was resident in Great Britain, he does not appear to feature in censuses from 1851 onwards, while his marriage certificate records that his father John

Church was deceased, and had been a farmer. With John Church's death being a possible reason for Augustus' return from Australia, no address was shown, and the result is that, at the present time, my research effort has ground to a snail's pace and the hope that relatives on the male line could be found to provide DNA samples remains unfulfilled.

Still, there are things to do such as getting the CWGC to record Susannah's maiden name and Victoria College to have Chester's name added to its war memorial. There are also some 267 males called John Church who died between 1845 and 1882 to research as possible candidates for being Augustus' father, and who knows, from that information, brothers and their descendants may be found. Yet I travel more in hope than expectation!

Meanwhile what happened to Frederick and Susannah Aplin? It seems that they did separate c.1908, with Susannah returning to Australia with the young Chester. From Chester's file and other material at the National Archive of Australia she had become dependent on him for financial support with a third of his army pay being forwarded to her, and after his death faced hardship, being dependent on other relatives in Australia until her death in 1926 having claimed abandonment. During the Great War Frederick acted as a shipping agent for the Australian and Canadian governments in Southampton, and afterwards, worked in the provision of coal, albeit unsuccessfully, and he eventually died in 1934. However, given that Frederick paid for Theodore's headstone, an element of mutual regard must have remained.

Yet, while Chester Church is most likely buried at Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Cemetery, there are another 249



men, of whom 96 are now identified, and who also lie there.

During our recent trip to France, the memsahib and I travelled over to Fromelles to visit the Cemetery and to pay our respects to these brave men, and we could not fail to be impressed by the first-rate appearance of the construction, the horticulture and the layout. It must be said that news pictures and television images do not adequately convey the overall quality, and I fear that my own efforts with a camera fall into the same category.

The CWGC and the other organisations that were involved deserve all the plaudits that they receive for the work that they have put in from the early days of discovery. However, we should also thank the lone amateur Australian researcher who, against some initial bureaucratic pooh-poohing, successfully argued the case for the original 'dig' to take place. The rest of us, in conducting research, may not be as fortunate as he was, but Fromelles has demonstrated the value of such intellectual work, and we may wish to consider that amateurism has a vital role to play in continuing Great War research. Furthermore, official bodies such as the Ministry of Defence, the CWGC and other similar organisations should be reminded of our worth from time to time.

## **2010 ON THE SOMME: David & Pat Shackleton (+P)**

### **Excavations near Mansell Copse**

Many of you may have seen on BBC News an excavation which took place in May near Mansell Copse. Led by Peter Barton, the prime object of their search was a Livens "flammenwerfer", a 10 metre long machine weighing 2 tons. Two

of these machines were fired on 1 July 1916 in the Casino Point area, but this one had not been assembled or used.

Over a period of 3 weeks, in very hot dry weather it was amazing to see this area transformed into a red dusty desert with hardly a hint of chalk. Daily, original trenches and artefacts emerged. Three pieces of the flame thrower were eventually found and all will be revealed in a TV programme at a later date. Throughout the whole period the team willingly shared all their finds and knowledge with anyone present and on an open weekend gave guided tours of the site to hundreds of French locals.



As the British took over the line from the French Army, it was not surprising that the bodies of 2 French soldiers were also found, one with the button of a regiment which still exists. Sadly they were interred, almost immediately, in unmarked graves in Albert French Cemetery, without any ceremony or public presence. Thanks to the efforts of an incensed French lady whose relative died in the area in 1915, the French authorities have now agreed to mark the graves as Unknown.

On a positive note, the **French Necropole at Serre** has been totally refurbished. Visitors cannot fail to be impressed by the new crosses and nameplates. A fitting tribute.

## Peronne Communal Cemetery Mystery

Several years ago, I visited the lone grave in Peronne Communal Cemetery of Corporal F J P Geard. He is No 47 of 5 Squadron RFC who died 18 August 1914, an unusually early date of death and it puzzled me as to why a serviceman obviously not a prisoner, should be buried in a town not occupied by us until 1917.

It is known that the RFC had 63 planes in France by this time and had two aircraft parks, one at Amiens and the other at Maubeuge. The first to die in France serving with the RFC were 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt E W C Perry and 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Mech H E Parfitt both of whom died on 16 August 1914 and are buried in St Achuel, Amiens.

Thankfully I had mentioned it to an interested friend in France who this year solved the mystery! Reading the memoirs of the priest of Roisel up to mid 1915 he came across the following,

*"Tuesday the 18th August, British convoys and troops pass through on their way towards Mons, aircraft flying overhead. One of these planes crashes near Hervilly. Everyone rushes towards the scene; Mr Fleury arrives first along with the mayor of Poeuilly, Mr Laleux. The pilot is badly injured and has a broken leg, his mechanic is dead. The pilot is driven to the hospital in Peronne, as is the body of his unfortunate companion. The latter is buried on the 20<sup>th</sup>."*

FIRST ON THE ROLL OF HONOUR ALL  
GLORY TO HIS NAME - 2nd Lieut E W C  
Perry RFC 16th August 1914

### Avelgem Visit

On a visit to Avelgem in Belgium, a town on the River Scheldt, liberated by the DLI in 1918, we ventured into the

church. In a country famous for chocolate, we were surprised to see a connection to Cadbury and Birmingham.

During the fierce fighting in October & November 1918, 92 men, women and children were asphyxiated by the gas bombing at Avelgem and died in the Convent of Notre Dame des Anges Fort Courtai. Responsible for the evacuation of these victims was Paul S Cadbury, aged 22, a volunteer with Friends Ambulance Unit. Paul never forgot the misery he had



witnessed and in 1923 commissioned a painting entitled "The Mount of Olives" by Joseph Southall (1861-1944) and presented it to Avelgem in their memory. Unfortunately the original disappeared during WW2 but in 2009 his family presented a copy, made from the original by the Medici Society, to the church.

Following on from our visit, we discovered that the Historial in Peronne, has on display the uniform of an officer named Cadbury who served with the British Red Cross. Paul's mother was called Geraldine Southall Cadbury.

A leading artist in the Arts and Crafts movement, Joseph Southall was born into a quaker family and after his father's death lived with his mother's family, in Birmingham.

Could they have been related? Yet another puzzle to solve!!

**Editor's Note:** David's article reminded me of the closing pages in Brigadier-General Sandilands (Sandy) little red

book "A Lancashire Brigade in France". After the reduction of Brigades from 4 to 3 battalions in early 1918 it was no longer a Lancashire brigade since the 104<sup>th</sup> Brigade then comprised the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Lancashire Fusiliers (LFs) and the 19<sup>th</sup> Durham Light Infantry (DLI). I have taken the following passages from Sandy's book since they may also be of interest with the coming anniversary of the Armistice.

*On October 27th the Brigade took over the line near Avelghem. We had become accustomed to fighting in deserted country but here civilians in large numbers were still living in the villages and farms. Every effort was made to clear these poor people from the area, but, unfortunately the enemy's gas shells caused heavy casualties, particularly among the old people and young children.*

*As the French on our left were experiencing considerable opposition about Oudenarde, it was decided to attack along the left bank of the Scheldt with a view to threatening the enemy's line of communication and causing them to go back in front of our allies.*

*The performance of our gunners in keeping the heavy howitzers in action at Avelghem, within some 1000 yds of the enemy's outpost line, was magnificent. Even war-torn veterans were amazed at the barrage which was put down. The infantry attack which followed can be counted the finest achievement of the 104<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade during the war.*

*The 19<sup>th</sup> DLI attacked on the right moving along the left bank of the Scheldt; the 17<sup>th</sup> LFs (commanded by Lt Col Gilbert Mackereth - page 12 refers) were in the centre, and the 18<sup>th</sup> LFs on the left. The bridge at Ruge was seized and saved by the 19<sup>th</sup> DLI, who were further responsible for the capture of the villages*

*of Kerkhove and Tenhove. Many prisoners were taken and an immense quantity of material fell into our hands.*

*Two motor ambulances filled with German wounded, were captured and taken back intact with their contents. The credit for this capture provides a subject for lively argument between the 19<sup>th</sup> DLI and the 17<sup>th</sup> LFs. The ambulances were used for months afterwards by the Division.*

*The Scheldt everywhere forms a considerable obstacle and several channels and overflows made the task of crossing it one of particular difficulty. Repeated attempts were made to cross the river, and finally on the morning of 9<sup>th</sup> November the 105<sup>th</sup> Brigade succeeded in getting small parties across to the opposite bank. At 9 a.m., without previous warning the 104<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade received orders to march with a view to pursuing the enemy and to attacking them should they attempt a further stand.*

*When we reached the Scheldt it had become evident that no serious opposition was to be feared and it was decided to pass the whole Brigade over the river before dark. During the night the greater part of the transport crossed by pontoon bridges.*

*Orders for a further advance were then received. We were to pass the outpost line at 9 a.m. and push forward. This necessitated an early start, but the men, in spite of already having marched 14 miles, were at the top of their form and were prepared for anything. We were greeted with extraordinary enthusiasm. Officers and men were given beer, bread, cigars and apples as they passed along.*

*We had expected to be left in peace during the next day but we were again ordered to press on at all costs. We had recently received large drafts of young*

*soldiers and the men were mad with excitement and willing to march till they dropped. So off we all started again.*

*About 10 a.m. on 17<sup>th</sup> November orders were received that there should be no movement after 11 a.m. but that every effort should be made to seize the crossing of the Dendre at Grammont by that hour. Orders to this effect were immediately sent to the 17<sup>th</sup> LFs who were leading. The result was a wild rush on horses and bicycles. The Divisional Commander, in his car, was the first to cross the bridge, where he waited the 17<sup>th</sup> LFs to come up and the Armistice.*

PRO ARIS ET FOCIS (FOR OUR  
ALTARS AND OUR HOMES) -  
Cpl S A Abbott, Gloucs Regt (18)

### **2010 WFA Tour to Normandy: Andrew Brooks (+P)**

This tour was a departure from the usual visit to the Western Front with a party of thirty-six setting off from Hull to Rotterdam heading for the Normandy beaches. However we did manage to visit two WW1 sites on the journey to Bayeux.

Harry Taylor our own WW1 guide gave us a tour of the cemetery at Wimereux where we saw the grave of John McCrae. Harry had plenty of other stories regarding this cemetery, especially one about another medical man who had been exceptionally brave but did not write a poem and so was unknown. We then travelled down the coast for a few more miles to Etaples and spent at least an hour at this massive cemetery. Once more our guide had many stories but many of the party including Bill Martindale, Bill Myers and Denise North had their own people to find. They eventually had to be hauled back to the coach by their unfeeling tour operator/tea

man who could be heard muttering 'we have a long way to go'. He nearly left the 'Mayor of Bradford' behind who was trying to photograph the cemetery when it was empty!

This is not the place to talk about the rest of the trip (all WW2) but we did enjoy it and returned home safely.

A few days later my wife and I made a return trip on the Hull-Zeebrugge ferry and headed for Alsace. We stayed in the village of Barr (between Strasbourg and Colmar) and one of our trips was a circular tour of the central Vosges. When we arrived at the summit of the Col de Sainte Marie aux mines we noticed signs for a WW1 military cemetery and a viewpoint. The cemetery was just a few yards away hidden in the woods and it was quite interesting. We then started to climb up to the viewpoint and as we climbed up through the trees passed



numerous German bunkers, machine-gun posts and old trench lines. The viewpoint itself was on the top of a machine-gun post and the views were magnificent.

We had a long conversation with the owner of the roadside café/shop who was very interested in the fortifications of the surrounding area and from a postcard display on a wall in the shop he had produced a series of cards for sale (see illustration, across). This area and the

area of the southern Vosges are full of similar WW1 sites and must be worth an extended visit.



### **“Endurance” Exhibition at Liverpool Maritime Museum (until 3 January 2011); Gaynor Greenwood**

Ernest Shackleton’s expedition to the Antarctic in “Endurance” is an inspiring story of unbelievable hardship and bravery. The “Endurance” sailed to the South Atlantic just after the First World War began and it must have been with amazement that, on their rescue in 1916, the men discovered that the war was still going on.

I have always wondered how many of the men went on to serve in the First World War and what happened to them. The “Endurance” exhibition at Liverpool Maritime Museum has helped to answer these questions. It’s an excellent exhibition, with the photographs taken at the time enlarged to reveal fascinating details. There is an absorbing account of what happened and there are biographies of the men. I made a further brief search on the internet to add to this information and some of the men served in the War, with two being killed. It would appear that Timothy McCarthy was killed in action on SS Narragansett on 16 March 1917 and Alfred Cheetham was killed when the SS Prunelle was torpedoed on 22 August 1918. The “Endurance” photographer, Frank Hurley”

went on to join the AIF and take some well known photographs.

The exhibition is well worth a visit and will finish on 3 January 2011. If you have never visited the Liverpool Maritime Museum before, there are static displays on the First and Second World Wars too.

### **MARTIN’S CORNER: Martin Simpson - Chairman, Cumbria Branch WFA**

To remind everyone our Christmas Lunch and AGM will be at the Hundith Hill Hotel, Lorton, Nr Cockermouth commencing 12 noon on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2010. The speaker will be Graham Kemp who will talk on Decadence and theatre in WW1. There is a good choice of menu and the cost is £18. Contact me for more details if you are interested in coming (tel: 01229 584141)

The programme that I have put together for the first half of next year is as follows (all meetings at Penrith British Legion commencing 7.45pm):

**Feb 17<sup>th</sup>:** ‘*Monty’s Mentor*’ - Terry Dean

**April 21<sup>st</sup>:** ‘*3 Generals sent home*’ - Leslie McHugh

**May 2011:** Proposed tour of Italian Front (more details to follow)

**June 12<sup>th</sup>:** Occasional Day at Hundith Hill Hotel with 3 speakers

### **BRANCH AFFAIRS:**



### **Branch Who’s Who?:**

Since joining the Branch over 5 years ago I have remembered faces but struggled with names. Others may have the same problem. Also a Who’s Who for

the Branch could be significant help for new attendees.

What I have in mind is a Branch leaflet similar to Despatch (but not available on our website) which would contain a passport type photo and brief details of "members" i.e.

Name

Contact Details (address, tel no, email address)

Occupation (current or pre-retirement)

Interests

Any comments at AGM next meeting.

## MEETING REPORTS

### **The Lancashire Contemptibles: May 2010** (32 attended)

It is to be hoped that when **Terry Dean's** latest talk, this time on the Lancashire Contemptibles, is compared to Walt Disney's output, no one draws the inference that Terry provided a Mickey Mouse performance! Far from it! I would suggest that far more than any other presenter in the last few years, he has applied the use of the latest information technology comprehensively. This was amply demonstrated in the combination of animation and both still images and film footage aligned with maps and sound commentary, and one may wonder whether Hollywood should beckon?

There can be a risk that a presenter chooses to show what a 'whizz' he is by making use of the 'bells and whistles' of such technology to the detriment of the subject matter, but fortunately Terry does not fall into this trap. Showing the movement of a particular Lancashire unit between locations was a welcome feature, while the film of marching men and their accounts brought to life once more the dryness and the hunger that

many must have felt during those gruelling days of August 1914. It made the post-talk coffee and biscuits a welcome relief!

Turning to the material as opposed to the method, Terry very much addressed the activities of the BEF during the period of the Retreat from Mons at all levels, from GHQ through Corps, Division and Brigade, down to individual Battalions and Regiments, Companies and Squadrons, and even to Sections of men. This multi-layered approach ensured that a comprehensive picture was presented, and I am sure that attendees left with a better understanding of the Retreat than before, I certainly did. Two topics stuck in my mind.

The first was the adequacy of the reservists recalled to the colours at the outset of war, leaving behind the comparative comfort of civilian life. Unfit and lacking training in the latest equipment (Terry mentioned rifles, but the army's webbing was also new to many for example), their unpreparedness might have seen a different outcome result. The second was the quality of command with individual commanders who appeared to pull in different directions, and themselves being equally unprepared like many of their men. What were the causes of this? Years of expeditionary warfare fighting the fuzzy-wuzzies? Regarding military service, rank and promotion as a means of climbing the social ladder? Whatever the reasons, and they are surely many and complex, the Retreat demonstrated that the need for military and political preparedness for war, of whatever shade, is essential, even today! Given that, the military cohesion of units under adversity, whether from internal or external sources, was a remarkable aspect that merits our appreciation.

In conclusion, Terry is again to be complimented in assembling a range of material and then presenting in a cohesive fashion. (Barrie Bertram)

### **Crime and Punishment in the Great War: June 2010** (39 attended)

Starting by exploring the differences between a crime in civil life and the army **Bill Martindale** outlined how the different forms of punishment had been phased out with firing squads ceasing at the end of the Great War and corporal punishment in 1948. For minor offences by troops such as absence without leave and drunkenness, punishments were determined by commanding officers. Field punishment number 1 involved being tied to posts, trees or wheels of gun-carriages and could be very hazardous for offenders if they were bound-up at crossroads subject to enemy shelling.

Bill questioned how effective were the punishments in changing behaviour citing Louis Harris who committed a string of offences, his last being in June 1918 and he was the last to be shot. Imprisonment was attractive to some as a means of avoiding front line duties and in 1915 such sentences were suspended until hostilities ended. Introduction of conscription brought a new wave of offenders with 16,000 conscientious objectors needing to be considered.

The cases of Lieut Colonels Elkington and Mainwaring of St Quentin fame in the retreat from Mons were considered as was Sassoon's statement of defiance. Mentioning the pardoning of 306 "Shot at Dawns" in 2006 gave Bill the opportunity to outline the role of the Commander in Chief in authorising executions. After explaining the case of Sub Lieut Dyett of the Royal Naval Division he speculated

on whether Field Marshall French (a distant relation of Dyett) would have taken the same decision as that made by Haig which put Dyett in front of the firing squad. The talk gave plenty to think about. (TD)

### **In the footsteps of James Bailey: July 2010** (26 attended)

James Bailey, a First World War veteran, was superintendent of Parks and Cemeteries in Burnley. In 1937 he travelled to Belgium to see how the IWGC kept their cemeteries. Using photos which James had bought showing Ypres immediately after the War and his own photos taken in 1937, **Denise North** had photographed the same locations and showed us photos from all three dates.

Winston Churchill would have liked Ypres to remain in its ruined state as a permanent memorial, but the Belgians wanted to rebuild Ypres as it had been. Luckily Jules Cooman, an architect, had measured and photographed the Cloth Hall before the War, so, with the mediaeval plans, the Hall was rebuilt exactly.

Denise took us on a tour of the reconstructed Ypres Town Square, telling us the stories of the buildings and showing how many fascinating architectural details there are above shop level. Other photos shown included the Post Office and convent, which were not destroyed, and three of the remaining temporary wooden hut accommodation provided after the War. Denise's talk could become an enlightening town trail of Ypres and I hope she can publish it one day. (Gaynor Greenwood)

HEREABOUTS DIED A VERY  
GALLANT GENTLEMAN -  
Capt H T Maffett Leinster Regt

## Aeronauts and Balloonatics: August 2010 (36 attended)



**Geoff Barker** commenced his talk with some historical introduction about the use of balloons in warfare. In the Napoleonic Wars a French balloon *L'Entreprenant* was airborne for ten hours observing the movement of the Austrian troops. The Austrians complained that it was not warfare to use balloons! By the time of the Boer War the British had four balloon sections and a photograph of *'The Heron'* showed these balloons to be round in shape. A few years later some pre-WW1 types were tear-drop shaped but they behaved poorly when it was windy.

Geoff then went on to explain how by the time of WW1 the use of balloons had become an accepted part of warfare and he proceeded to show how the contest between the balloon's ability to defend themselves was matched by the ever increasing development of the aeroplane which was trying to shoot them out of the sky. At no time was it easy for pilots to bring them down and for the men in the balloons it must have been a terrifying experience when the planes attacked. At least the 'Balloonatics had parachutes!

As the talk progressed Geoff described many events, which were sometimes comical, as well as giving detailed illustrations of the balloons, aeroplanes and the men involved. The BE2b for

instance was described as a very stable machine with a 75lb radio which could only send and not receive. In the early part of the war it could take half an hour to wind the balloon down in the event of an attack, something that later on would only take minutes. It could take up to fifty men to handle the balloon on the ground but usually only two men operated the balloon at about 4,000ft, three miles behind the front line. They soon had two-way communication with the ground by a telephone cable running down the wire holding the balloon.

Apparently quite a few of the British balloon officers were disabled. One known as 'Gilbert the Filbert' had a metal plate as a foot. Another character amongst the balloonatics was Lt. Mac Gilchrist who survived for over 200 hours and four forced jumps, the last being on the 17<sup>th</sup> September 1918 when his balloon went up in flames.

This was another excellent talk from a member of the Bradford Mechanics Institute WW1 Group. (Andrew Brooks)

## German Commerce Raiders: September 2010 (26 attended)

Actions reminiscent of 'Pirates of the Caribbean' were covered in **Graham Kemp's** well researched and very entertaining talk.

Small merchant ships were modified with disguised guns and large holds for mines & prisoners. One such was the Mowe with her 6in guns disguised as derricks and an 8,000 mile range. Her first journey took her to Cape Wrath, La Rochelle, the Azores, accounting for a ship a day for 7 days. Anything and everything was taken, soap, gold and the much prized 'Cardiff coal'. Prisoners and booty were transferred by rowing boats



and the captured ships sent off to neutral ports as a 'prize of war'.

The impact of raiders was not only the loss of materials etc. but also their presence closed off shipping lanes as merchant ships were scared to sail and insurance costs soared.

Her second voyage was to the US trade routes which had previously been untouched. The true extent of US involvement in the war effort was revealed; 9,000 tons of munitions and 3 ships being taken in one day, 100 vehicles and supplies of top quality steel on another. This voyage captured almost 120,000 tons of booty and 26 ships.

One of the most colourful raider captains was Count Felix von Lucknow; his previous exploits had been running away from school to go to sea, being saved by an albatross, becoming a kangaroo hunter and a prize fighter. He mastered an ex US sailing clipper renamed "Seeadler" disguising the crew as Norwegian sailors, even to the extent of one, 'Josephine of the big feet', being dressed as his wife to trick his enemies. He managed a successful raid in a ship with a cargo of champagne, which proved most popular with the crew. His ship foundered in the South Seas on a reef at Mopelia where he styled himself 'Governor of the last German colony', before managing to reach Fiji in an open boat.

Another captain, Karl August Nerger, with a reputation for being 'lucky', achieved the then longest ever sea voyage, 65,000 miles, lasting 18 months in command of the SMS Wolf. He laid mines of Cape Town, sailed round Australia & New Zealand, to Singapore where again mines were laid in the harbour. These exploits, which were kept secret with naval presence to prevent

them, accounted for over 200,000 tons of shipping sunk.

Graham has promised us 'Part One' of the talk covering the early part of the war at some future date. (Pete Bamford)

### **War Graves and things.....: Oct 2010 (+P)** (31 attended)

Starting by speculating on the vast number of individuals who each year stand in front of evocative WW1 graves and memorials **David Shackleton** went on to give a master class on such things. Supporting his thoughtful words was a stunning photo gallery of images covering dawn to dusk. (Some of the photographs are on our website)

David rightly gave credit to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) for the job they do in keeping records and maintaining the cemeteries. It can be (virtually) guaranteed that the individual in each grave matches the information on the standard shaped headstone. Standard religious markings are used and regimental badges always shown above the religious marking when known. David suspected that guidance was given to next of kin on the nature of inscriptions on headstones whilst the New Zealand Government decreed inscriptions were not allowed.

Having described the CWGC guidelines David went on to show photographs of exceptions which proved the rules! Regimental badge below religious marking; 3 badges entwined together for 6 soldiers; musical notes for inscription; **either** Noyce or Lumber in one grave and non-standard headstones. The photo gallery also showed a number of Corsehill (red) gravestones which was one subject in a lively question and answer discussion after David's excellent talk. (TD)

## ARMISTICE PRIZE WINNER 2010

### A SOLDIER'S DAY

A soldier's day is never done,  
Up at dawn before the sun.  
With the roar of explosives in your head,  
Wishing you could have stayed in bed.

Food is a dream, fried eggs and such,  
Yet we won't have time to eat too much.  
Going over at five, the soldiers are there,  
Crossing their fingers, looking up into air.

See to your grenades, ammunition and guns,  
For you and the boys know it is not for fun.  
God will be there, high up in the blue,  
Waiting for someone, perhaps for you.

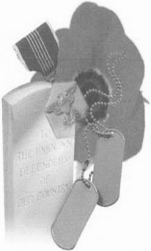
The air is cold, just fifty below,  
You need to keep warm so you don't freeze a toe.  
Sharp lookout boys, the target is near,  
We don't want to meet the enemy here.

Put on your mask, the air's getting thin,  
Return to the battle, some with a grin,  
Over the wire clutching a gun,  
ENEMY FIRE! Here comes the fun.

There goes one down, another one too,  
Our soldiers, too busy to see none gets through.  
You hear screams of pain, as another goes down,  
They gasp yell and stumble right down to the ground.

We're tired, dirty, thirsty and sore,  
The sun has gone down an hour before.  
First clean your guns, and do it good boys!  
The guns that you hold have your life, they're not toys.

Then you head for the trench, too tired to care,  
Yet, a letter from home, another from her!  
I love you she wrote, then you know you've won,  
A soldier's day is never done.



It's a great pity that Sadie Rimmer's excellent poem did not have to fight off more competition to win this year's Armistice Prize competition. St Cecilia's Roman Catholic Technology College, Longridge was the only High School to submit entries in the competition.

Peter Bamford, Barrie Bertram and I each marked the 7 poems entered by St Cecilia's using the same marking system as last year. After Sadie Rimmer the next best entries were from Albert Hadcock followed by Rachael Gregory.

Similar to 2008 when St Cecilia's were the only school to enter the competition Sadie Rimmer will be awarded £25 and a book (H.P. Willmott's "WORLD WAR 1") St Cecilia's will hold the Armistice Prize trophy for the coming year. The press will also be advised her win.

I shall be raising the question of encouraging entries to the competition at next month's AGM. Could a number of members contact several schools in their area in an effort to increase interest?

"LIFE IS NOT LOST FOR WHICH IS BOUGHT ENDLESS RENOWN" (Spencer) - Capt I G Fleming MC Gordon Highlanders

### PROGRAMME OF FUTURE MEETINGS (ALL MEETINGS ON MONDAY, 7.30 PM EXCEPT WHERE STATED OTHERWISE)

**Dec 6<sup>th</sup>:** "*A.G.M. and Christmas Social*" - An invitation to members to speak for ten minutes on any WW1 topic.

**Jan 3<sup>rd</sup>:** "*The Anatomy of an Alias*" - Barrie Bertram (N Lancs W.F.A.)

**Feb 7<sup>th</sup>:** "*German Commerce Raiders, Part 1*" - Graham Kemp (N Lancs W.F.A.)

**Mar 7<sup>th</sup>:** "*There is more to be learnt than in ordinary cases*": Major-General Hugh Judwine, *the divisional school and other aspects of training in the 55th (West Lancashire) Division, 1916-1917* - Ian Riley (Major (ret'd) & curator Liverpool Scottish Museum)

**April 4<sup>th</sup>:** "*First Blitz*" - Neil Hanson (author, lecturer and after-dinner speaker)

**May 3<sup>rd</sup> (TUESDAY):** "*French at Gallipoli*" - Peter Hart (Oral Historian (IWM) and author)

**June 6<sup>th</sup>:** "*Leadership, Morale, and Esprit de Corps - The Winning Factor?*" - Terry Dean (N Lancs W.F.A.)

**July 4<sup>th</sup>:** "*Gommecourt*" - Niall Cherry (author and N Lancs W.F.A.)

**Aug 8<sup>th</sup> (TUESDAY):** "*Accumulated Weariness: living with the effects of war*" - Tricia Platts (Bradford Mech. Inst. WW1 Group)

**Sept 5<sup>th</sup>:** "*Charlie's War: Tales of a Conscript in the 2/5 Duke of Wellingtons (West Riding) Regiment*" - Dr. Chris Payne

**Oct 6<sup>th</sup>:** "*A German soldier's journey from the Baltic to the Black Sea*" - Andrew Brooks (N Lancs W.F.A.)

**7<sup>th</sup> Nov:** "*Kemmel Hill Revisited*" - Jon Honeysett

**5<sup>th</sup> Dec:** "*A.G.M. and Christmas Social*" - An invitation to members to speak for ten minutes on any WW1 topic.

## LANCASHIRE'S BEST KEPT WAR MEMORIAL - 2010

Freckleton has won the award for the best kept War Memorial (WM) for 2010. The other highly commended WMs were at Sabden, Bilsborrow and Chipping. The marking criteria were the same as last year i.e.: condition of memorial, condition of surroundings, absence of litter & graffiti, and degree of maintenance required.



## LONGUEVAL FOOTBALLERS' MEMORIAL: (+S)

As 11 a.m. approached on 21<sup>st</sup> October Emmie and I were surprised and privileged to join an assembly including the Football League chairman, Mayor of Longueval, club representatives, armed forces and relatives for the



commemoration of a memorial to the 'The Footballers' Battalions' (17<sup>th</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> Middlesex) at the fork between the roads to Delville Wood and Guillemont east of Longueval. The moving service was conducted by Fr Owen Beament MBE, Chaplain to Millwall FC. The Two Minute Silence followed a short blast on his whistle by Gareth Ainsworth of Wycombe Wanderers and amongst those laying wreaths were the 3 great-grandchildren (across) of Oscar Linkson ex Man Utd, Barnet and Shelbourne. This would certainly be a

memorable moment in their childhoods. (A copy of the brochure for the ceremony and more photos are on our website)

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