



THE WESTERN FRONT
ASSOCIATION

Lancashire North Branch

Despatch

Issue 7: May 2011



Ninety four years ago in April/May 1917 the battles raged east of Arras. The above image (IWM Ref Q6228) of British troops boarding buses at Arras after returning from the capture of Monchy-le-Preux was used on the covers of "Cheerful Sacrifice" by Jonathan Nicholls published in 1990 and "Lancashire's Forgotten Heroes" by Stephen Barker and Christopher Boardman published in 2008. A brief outline of the battles is inside together with a tribute to one soldier from Kirkby Lonsdale serving with the Honourable Artillery Company who fell as the battles ended. Also inside is an account of the commemoration of the Canadian Memorial on Vimy Ridge in 1936 seen through the eyes of a schoolboy who was there, and much more including a tribute to Mike Sherrington (Page 26)

Editor's Musing

Recollection of my interest in WW1 goes back to visits as a young teenager to scour the shelves of Atherton library but it was not until early 1992 that I made my first whistle-stop tour of the battlefields. The excuse to travel alone to France was a meeting in Luxembourg. I took two days leave from work and travelled early via Charles de Gaulle and visited the Somme, Arras/Vimy, le Cateau and Verdun.

One of the books in the forefront of my mind at that time was the then recently published "Cheerful Sacrifice". Setting aside the picture of buses on the front cover which made me hark back to a childhood where my daily routine was often influenced by my father's shift patterns as a bus driver, to me, Jonathan Nicholls's book, woven with veteran's stories, was a masterpiece in describing the events of April/May 1917.

As I mulled over a suitable frontispiece/focus for this Despatch with the experience of numerous subsequent visits and gains in WW1 knowledge, nevertheless I thought the Battles of Arras would do nicely.

MORE INFORMATION FOR ARTICLES WHEN:

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

(+S) : supplementary information report

See our website www.wfanlancs.co.uk and look against this Despatch

THE BATTLES OF ARRAS 1917: Terry Dean

The Battles of Arras 1917 are best known by the capture of Vimy Ridge, which happened in the first stage. They actually included several phases: 9th to 14th April, the First Battle of the Scarpe

and the Battle of Vimy Ridge; 23rd-24th April, the Second Battle of the Scarpe; 23rd-29th April, the Battle of Arleux; 3rd-4th May, the Third Battle of the Scarpe; and 3rd-17th May, the Second Battle of Bullecourt, fought after a first unsuccessful attack on the 11th April.

Including the fighting round Bullecourt, 33 British and 37 German divisions took part.

After a 5 day preliminary bombardment the offensive started on Easter Monday, 9th April in sleet and snow. Initially the British and Canadians were successful. The British captured Neuville Vitasse and Fampoux whilst the Canadians made their famous capture of Vimy Ridge. Over the next few days the British advanced their line to capture Wancourt and Monchy-le-Preux but the Canadians lost impetus after the first day. When the offensive eventually started at Bullecourt on 11th April it was a complete failure with the Australians losing more troops than on any other day of the war.

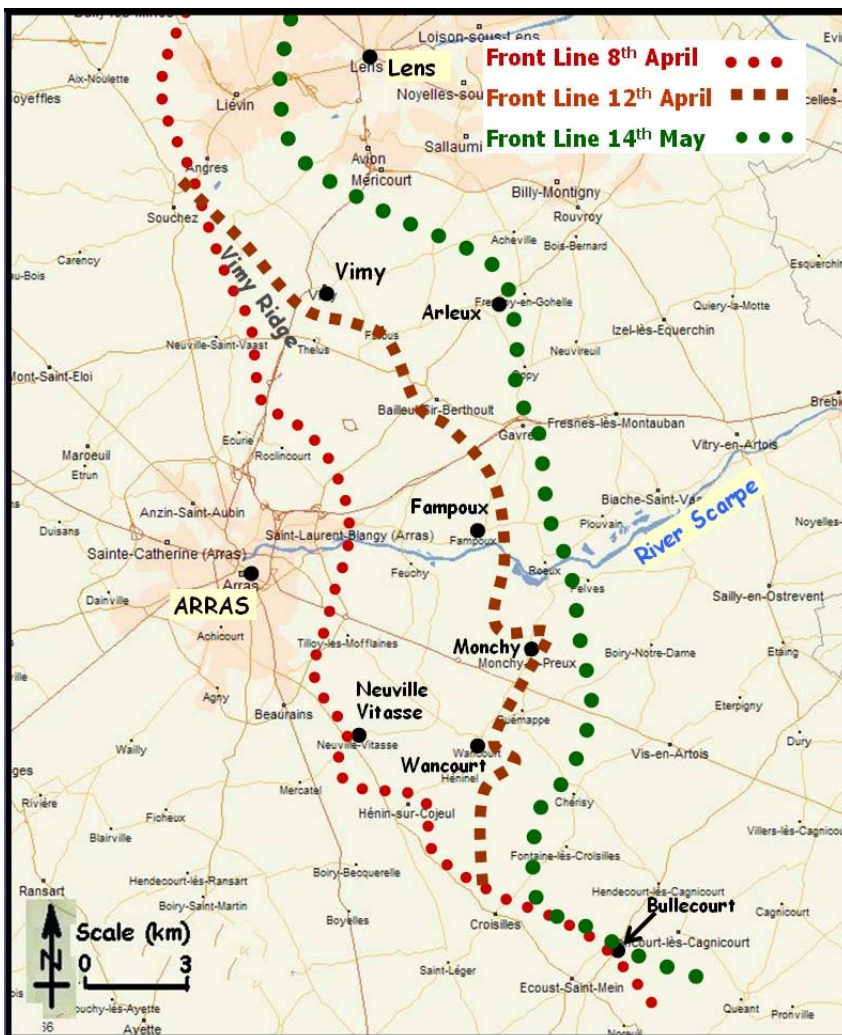
With troops suffering from the intense cold as well as fatigue, the offensive was maintained only to distract attention from preparations for the Nivelle's French offensive to the south. It was halted on April 15th.

The offensive was resumed on 23rd April to support French operations on the Chemin de Dames with further gains east and north of Arras, but, according to the Official History, attacks were continued after they would normally have ceased. The second very desperate Battle of Bullecourt commenced on 3rd May and resulted in further heavy Australian and British losses.

In "Cheerful Sacrifice" Nicholls points out that the average daily casualty rate was far higher than either the Somme or Passchendaele. The Allied casualties for

the 39 days that the battles lasted are estimated at slightly fewer than 150,000. The Official History indicates there is “reason to suppose that the German casualties in the Arras offensive up to the end of May were lighter by comparison with those of the British than in most of

The Official History devotes approaching 400 pages to the Battles of Arras and with regard to the next article mentions the 2nd Battalion Honourable Artillery Company taking over part of the line in Bullecourt on the night of 14th May. It goes on to describe the last and



the British offensives. The tactical dispositions adopted by the Germans after the first few days did not expose their troops to the same degree as on the Somme in 1916.

biggest counterattack made by the Germans on 15th May which was repulsed with heavy losses on both sides and how “*Second Bullecourt had the reputation of a killing-match typifying trench warfare at its most murderous.*”

QUEEN ELIZABETH GRAMMAR SCHOOL, KIRKBY LONSDALE, ROLL OF HONOUR: c/o Oliver Wilkinson (+S)

Wilfred Henry JACKSON Sergeant, 4246, 2nd Battalion Honourable Artillery Company (HAC)

Wilfred Henry Jackson in many respects can be seen as Queen Elizabeth Grammar School's favourite son. Throughout his service he kept in contact with the school, and perhaps because he had only left a year before the war started, his former teachers held him in high regard. He also proved his worth as a soldier, rising through the ranks to become a senior NCO, before being killed during a massive German counter-attack on 15th May 1917. QES had lost a bright and greatly loved son.

In May 1917 it was decided that a huge assault of the Hindenburg Line would take place, with the objective of capturing the village of Bullecourt. Jackson's unit, the 2nd Battalion Honourable Artillery Company (HAC) was involved in the assault on the village on the 3rd May but was unable to capture it. The 91st Brigade achieved this objective on the 7th May. However, the cost was extremely high, and the HAC in particular suffered huge casualties. Thus, on the 14th May, when the battalion was ordered to relieve some newly captured front line trenches, the fighting strength of the unit stood at just 250 men. Jackson was included in this number.

The relief of the new trenches was undertaken without incident, but the battalion did not have time to get comfortable in the new positions. At 4 a.m. a massive enemy counterattack was opened, and 'C' Company was almost entirely annihilated. Consequently 'B'

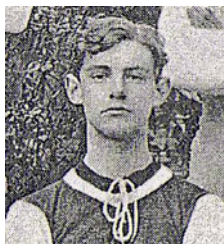
Company was pushed back as far as Battalion Head Quarters (H.Q.) and there was a danger of the Germans enveloping several battalions.

Jackson and the rest of 'D' Company, together with survivors of the other companies, were ordered to attack and clear Bullecourt of the Germans. As a sergeant of a Lewis Gun Section, Jackson took charge of his gun and it was reported by a corporal in his section that he knocked out a German machine gun position as well as two German snipers. The German attack was checked and subsequently faded away.

Unfortunately during the resistance Jackson was killed, however, his sacrifice was said to have made a real difference. His work had prevented 3 Battalions being enveloped and afterwards the Divisional Commander had complemented all the gunners of 'D' Company, referring to Sergeant Jackson in particular, for their excellent work.

Jackson, however, was not there to hear this praise, and he was not the only absent man. All that was left of the whole 2nd Battalion were 4 officers and 94 men.

The life of Jackson was, like many of the 'old boys', full of potential. He was born on 14th December 1895, the only son of John Warbrick Smith Jackson, Kirkby-Lonsdale's blacksmith. Initially he was educated at the National School, and



then went to Queen Elizabeth Grammar School for four years. At the school he became captain of the football team, and his sporting ability in both football and cricket was said to be unequalled. Moreover he was also talented academically, particularly in mathematics and

languages. In extra-circular activities he was an accomplished violinist, and he played in competitions at the Winter Gardens, Morecambe.

Upon leaving school he began studying to gain entry into the Civil Service and successfully secured an appointment to the Inland Revenue, where he was described as having a promising business career. When war came he was employed as a Second Division Clerk at the Admiralty in London. This was a 'war job', meaning that Jackson had no need to join up, and for a year he was content in his administrative position. However, his patriotic flare got the better of him and on the 23rd August 1915 he joined the Honourable Artillery Company (HAC).

The HAC was a regiment in the Territorial Force and the oldest regiment in the British Army dating back to 1537. In WW1 the HAC provided two infantry battalions for service overseas and also formed four field artillery batteries and a siege gun battery.

Jackson, at just 19, spent over a year with his new unit on Home Service, which would have included a period of time training at Tadworth Training Camp, Surrey. On 2nd October 1916, however,



Tadworth Camp

he embarked at Southampton for Le Havre, France, by which time he had already been promoted to Lance Corporal. In a letter to the school he described his journey:

"We got aboard a transport on the Sunday night, but did not set sail as it was found to be rather dangerous, two of three neutrals [neutral ships] having been torpedoed the night before. So we marched back six miles through the dark to a rest camp where we stayed the night. The next night we sailed and after a seven hours pleasant voyage arrived in France. Followed a long, uphill, tedious march to a camp, and next morning a march back to the station, where we entrained in cattle-trucks for a railway journey of 21 hours."

After the Battalion arrived at the trenches Jackson received a baptism of fire. Within just a few days at the front Jackson had had what he described as "one or two near squeaks." A German shell had exploded near him as he reconnoitred the front-line trench and he was buried in earth. A few days later another shell exploded near by, and it was only a section of sandbags that saved Jackson's life. Moreover there was constant threat from snipers.

Nor were the German's Jackson's only enemy. He describes in several of his letters to the school how poor weather conditions, rain and later frost, made his life uncomfortable. Additionally he refers to the danger of 'trench foot', which could result from the conditions. Despite such hardships and 'near misses' he kept in high spirits, often looking back at his QES days with a nostalgic eye. The headmaster cultivated this nostalgia by sending Jackson copies of the school magazine. Jackson wrote in one letter:

"It's a lot better here than I ever expected, even though we have come out at the worst time. I would prefer, however, to be back at the old school, but really I cannot grumble as I had a very

good run.....With best wishes for the success of the old school in every way."

As his service progressed so did Jackson. He was promoted to Corporal in February 1917, Lance-Sergeant in March and Sergeant in April. He also progressed from being simply a member of a Lewis Gun Team, to being in charge of one, training his own men and taking a great deal of pride in the task. In fact a corporal in his team described the last hour of Jackson life as follows:

"I feel sure that his last hour was the happiest of his whole life as he saw his gunners, the men he trained, working hard and standing like Old Guards"

Thus when Jackson died repelling the German counter attack on Bullecourt, his Lewis Gun Section, his Battalion, his division, his family and his old school all grieved. Jackson's body was not recovered and he is remembered on the Arras Memorial

IF THIS IS THE PRICE OF VICTORY OH
GOD FORBID ALL WARS -
Pte B Wild, Lancashire Fusiliers

A NOTABLE MEMORY - THE COMMEMORATION OF THE VIMY RIDGE CANADIAN MEMORIAL: Joe Hodgson

In 1936 Mr Lamont took a party from Preston Grammar School for a holiday in Bruges in Belgium. We stayed at the Hotel van Eyck in the Rue d'Argent (Zilverstraat). After a few days we were all flea- bitten so all the bedding had to be changed. For me, Bruges was a fascinating place with all its gates in towers, its network of canals and its Grand Place. Here was the tall tower of the belfry where I toiled up the spiral

staircase and had a splendid view over the town.

I was a loner and I explored Bruges on my own. There was plenty to interest me. I soon found a cafe where I had Moules Fritz to supplement the meals we had at our pension. Also the shops. One had a window full of pistols and revolvers; another, a Tabac, had no hesitation in selling twenty Players and a box of matches to a schoolboy. That night I went down by one of the canals to experiment with my first ever cigarette. I had no sooner lit up when two Gendarmes came up and asked me "Was I thinking of committing suicide?" That stopped me from smoking for good and saved me a lot of money.

One evening Mr. Lamont told us that next day a new memorial to the Canadian dead of the Great War was to be unveiled at Vimy Ridge and we were all going to watch the ceremony. Next morning we boarded our coach and set off. As we passed through Armentières I realized that we really were on the Great War battlefield. We arrived near the memorial and de-bussed. Mr Lamont told us what time he wanted us back at the bus and disappeared on his own personal journey of Remembrance.



Unveiling of the Memorial

We joined the crowd. It had a Canadian flavour. Quite a lot of Mounties were there in their familiar scarlet tunics

and Scoutmasters hats. The Guard of Honour was composed of sailors from HMCS Saguenay, a Canadian destroyer. King Edward VIII arrived in naval officers' uniform and the ceremony began. Eventually it was all over and our school party converged onto the bus and so home to Bruges.

In more recent years I have been on several Battlefield Tours that included Vimy Ridge in the itinerary. Now there are tours of the network of tunnels where

some of the troops sheltered before the successful attack. The guides are Canadian students who certainly know all the facts. We even passed by a shell in the wall of the tunnel that had not exploded. Back at ground level there are some preserved trenches you can walk in.

When I am on these tours and say I was here at the unveiling I become a minor celebrity for a minute.

**A Favourite Card:
Andrew Brooks**

This picture postcard received a Kiel postmark for the 8th February 1914 and was addressed to; Fraulein Suzy Aolamoff, Brighton on Sea, 40 Grand Parade, Cranbrook, England.



The card is signed on the front and reverse by at least fourteen officers/sailors of the S.M.S. Kaiser. The message reads;

Kiel 31/1/1914

My Dear Suzy. This morning I got your nice postcard during my duty! I think our cards have crossed. This evening we are feasting the birthday of our Kaiser. Lovely greetings from here. Yours very sincerely H. Cluis.

On the front of the card someone has written 'How long will you still remain in Brighton. Come to Germany! There are nice bathing places near Kiel!'

The S.M.S. Kaiser was involved in the Battle of Jutland and she sank the Russian destroyer Grom in the Baltic in 1917. I would like to think that Suzy was a German spy sent to observe the movements of the pleasure boats in Brighton - but I am afraid that would have been highly unlikely!

MUSEUM REPORTS

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

Members of the Branch attending the last meeting will be aware of the proposal to relocate Lancaster's market into the City Museum. The present market building, built just over 15 years ago, is proving very expensive and is under-occupied by traders. The City Council have agreed to investigate the relocation of the market to the City Museum building, with plans for an additional extension to the rear in New Street Square. Opinions differ as to how much of the First Floor will be occupied by the market although a clear statement has been made that the King's Own collection will remain. The history of Lancaster collections are planned to be relocated elsewhere and it is possible that a café and lifts etc will be installed to enhance the visitor experience. Where this leaves the "behind the scenes" offices, kitchen and education room (used for monthly WFA Branch talks) is at present unclear.

The Friends of Lancaster City Museum are amongst a number of organisations and individuals who have expressed concern at the proposals and the "dumbing down" of the city's heritage. A civic heritage so closely associated with the proud military heritage of Lancaster's regiment.

Meanwhile some interesting acquisitions have been made, one of which has been generously funded with a £100 donation from the WFA North Lancashire Branch. The wooden door sign of the "Commanding Officer 2nd/5th Battalion, King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment" was spotted on the internet auction site, Ebay, and the museum was successful in the bidding. The sign can

be viewed on the museum's website:
<http://www.kingsownmuseum.plus.com/ko2839-26.htm>



Future Museum Events:

Thursday 19th May 2011
Free Lunchtime Talk, 13.00 Museum Meeting Room, access from New Street . Habbaniya and Falluja, the 1st Battalion, King's Own Royal Regiment, in Iraq, 1941.

Friday 27th May 2011
Free Lunchtime Talk, 13.00 Museum Meeting Room, access from New Street . Lancaster Unlocked: Discover some recent acquisitions at the King's Own Museum

Saturday 28th May 2011
Lancaster Unlocked: King's Own On Parade! Meet the World War Two soldier character with real objects to handle. Free. 13.30 to 16.00 King's Own Gallery.

Bank Holiday Monday 30th May 2011
Free. On the War Path - Military Heritage Walk around Lancaster , guided by Regimental Curator, Peter Donnelly. Starts 11.00 from the City Museum , finishes around 15.30, lunch will be taken along the way at a pub (pay your own bill!). The walk will include Westfield War Memorial Village and Bowerham Barracks.

Further details from Peter Donnelly, Curator, King's Own Royal Regiment Museum, Market Square, Lancaster, LA1 1HT. Telephone 01524 555619.

www.kingsownmuseum.plus.com

SAY NOT GOODNIGHT BUT IN
SOME FAIRER CLIME BID ME
GOOD MORNING - Pte J Jackson,
South Lancashire Regt

Fusiliers Museum: Mike Glover (Curator)

FALLEN FUSILIERS

The centenary of the First World War will soon be upon us and the staff at the Lancashire Headquarters Royal Regiment of Fusiliers (LHQ RRF) and the Fusilier Museum, are already considering plans for commemoration including temporary exhibitions, a publication programme and more specifically how to commemorate the Gallipoli Landing. I would actually like to go out to Gallipoli in 2015 but fear that it will be covered with Australians looking for Mel Gibson. Although it is at the forefront of our minds, it would be fair to comment that for the vast majority of the public the First World War is little more than an obscure period in history involving something to do with Germans, trenches and railway timetables. For the staff here in Bury the reality is somewhat different and that the

consequences of the First World War are very much part of our daily business.

One of the key roles of a regimental secretary is to provide support to local families of serving Fusiliers who have been killed or injured. Sadly, you will recall that the Second Battalion of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers (2RRF) during their 2009 operational tour of Afghanistan suffered seven dead. Two came from the North West and this Headquarters was fully involved in assisting the families and remains engaged to this day.

This role is not just confined to contemporary casualties in areas of operations such as Afghanistan. It covers a wider context including casualties from the First World War. In 2007 I was involved in the organisation of a full regimental funeral for Private Richard Lancaster of the Second Battalion of the Lancashire Fusiliers (2LF) who was killed on operations on 11th November 1914. The fact that Richard Lancaster had died some 90 years ago did not detract from the seriousness that the MoD and the Regiment treated the funeral and the impact that it had on his family.



The Funeral of Private Richard Lancaster in Prowse* Point Cemetery 2007

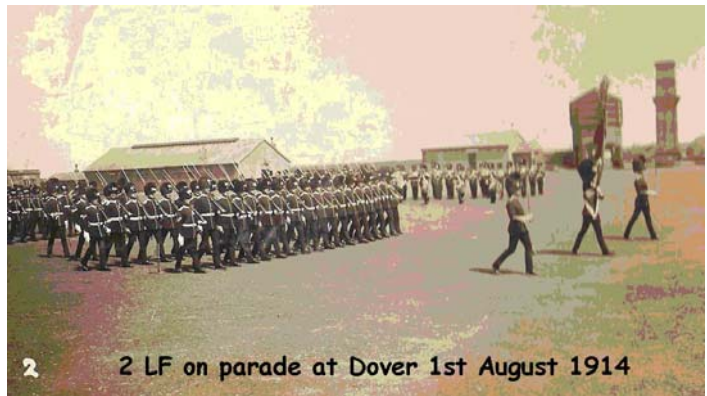
It was therefore with some interest that in November last year an email was received from a French archaeologist, Emmanuel Brill, stating that during a recent excavation in Belgium his team had discovered the remains of six British soldiers of the First World War. Emmanuel Brill had

previously worked on the excavation of Richard Lancaster and Harry Wilkinson also from 2LF and was therefore well known to the Regiment. He had therefore developed considerable knowledge on the activity of 2LF in the period 1914-15 and had focussed his excavations in an area to the south of Ypres including Ploegsteert and Le Touquet.



Excavation of Private Richard Lancaster 2006

In August 1914 2LF found itself stationed in Dover as part of 4th Division. They were able to celebrate Minden Day (1st August) in the usual style little realising that in a few days time they would be preparing for war.



2 LF on parade at Dover 1st August 1914

On the outbreak of war 2LF deployed to Norfolk to counter a possible German invasion and cover the move of the BEF to the continent. The battalion moved a few weeks later and on 22nd August disembarked in Boulogne. By October the Battalion found itself committed to the First Battle of Ypres operating around Le Touquet to the South of Ploegsteert. The Battalion remained there till April 1915.

Using his knowledge of the Lancashire Fusiliers and their operations in the Le Touquet area Emmanuel carried out a targeted excavation in 2009/2010. He chose a specific location on the old railway line which used to run south west/to the north east of Le Touquet. Six bodies were located and based on cap badges and other insignia found on the bodies, two were identified as being Lancashire Fusiliers, two Kings Own Royal Lancaster and two unknown. A

search through the Lancashire Fusilier Annual for that period held in the Fusilier Museum Archive in Bury revealed that on the 17th October the German Army had advanced as far as Frelinghien on the border with Belgium and was likely to affect a river crossing and take Le Touquet. 2LF formed part of a brigade operation, 2LF on the left and Kings Own on the right, to take and hold Le Touquet.

“Our machine gun, worked by Sergeant Parkinson, Private Pulford, Private Lynn and Private Yates, did wonders. The two first named were unfortunately sniped by two consecutive shots during the action. Both had done splendid work from August 25th till the moment they fell.”



Sergeant Parkinson with an unknown private soldier with one of the two Vickers Machine Guns issued to each battalion.

Battalion Headquarters in Le Touquet following the successful attack. Note 2LF were still operating out of buildings, trench warfare had not yet set in.

The action lasted till the evening of 22nd October when the battalion was relieved. During four days of incessant fighting the battalion lost 30 killed, 69 wounded and seven missing. Of the 30 killed, three are recorded as:

“Believed lying under the culvert on Railway N E of Le Touquet Station.”

The three were named as:

1412, Sergeant Edgar Matthew Parkinson, of Rusholme Manchester

1596, Private Henry Pulford, of Bradford Manchester

9054, Private James Rowan, of Wigan Lancashire

All three were recorded as having been killed on 20th October 1914. Unusually the regimental diary also has a specific entry relating to Sgt Parkinson and Pte Pulford:

It is worth noting that Private John Lynn would be awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) and later in May 1915 the Victoria Cross (VC) for using his machine gun to stop a German advance during a gas attack. Lynn would die the following day from the effects of the gas.

At present the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) are working with the MoD’s Joint Compassionate and Casualty Centre (JCCC) to try to identify the bodies using existing records. If this fails it may be possible to identify the bodies using DNA from living descendents and to this effect an appeal was made in the local media to identify relatives of Parkinson, Pulford and Rowan. So far the response has been very encouraging and to date relatives of both Sergeant Parkinson and Private Pulford have been identified. Research has shown that Private Rowan

was an Irish immigrant who never married. It would also appear that Private Rowan's family later returned to Ireland consequently the trail has gone cold.

It will be several months before CWGC and JCCC complete their enquiries and DNA tests possibly called for. It is my hope that at least one of the bodies can be identified and buried with a name rather than as an unknown. There is considerably more work to do with the ultimate goal of a full regimental funeral to honour the dead of our antecedent regiment.

*** Editor's Note:** Brig. Gen Charles Bertie Prowse commanded the 11th Infantry Brigade which included the 1st Battalion East Lancs Regt. He was killed on 1st July 1916 and is referred to in next month's talk.



I COUNT MY LIFE WELL LOST TO
SERVE MY COUNTRY BEST - Capt G J I
Smith 1st Batt Can Inf

Teeth, Bread and Blood: Jane Davies (Curator, QLR Museum)

One of the most appealing aspects of being a museum Curator is being able to research objects that are donated to the museum. Sometimes items can initially seem very ordinary but on closer investigation they often reveal a fascinating story.

The collection of the Queen's Lancashire Regiment holds a few 'mundane' objects relating to the First World War, for example, the museum has a piece of bread. Not very exciting at first

but, when you look into the story behind the bread, it becomes very interesting. The bread was donated to the museum by the family of Private Arthur Jordan who served with the 8th and 9th Battalions of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. In 1918, during the last great German push for victory, Private Jordan



was badly wounded and became a prisoner of war. He then spent the next few months in captivity. By this stage of the war, rations were scarce and bread was often made out of things other than wheat (it was often said that sawdust was used). The bread was indigestible. When the prison camp was liberated, Private Jordan decided to keep a piece of bread as a souvenir and it became his 'lucky talisman'. It remained on his mantelpiece as a symbol of hope until he died.

The museum also has in its collection a pair of false teeth made out of aluminium. These too belonged to a



Prisoner of War, a Private James of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. It was said that

he had to wash his mouth out, three times a day, using acid. Not surprising then that he had no teeth.

On display is also a cutting from a tree. Once again, visually uninteresting but, the story behind the cutting and how it came to be in the museum is captivating. The cutting was presented to the

museum after the end of the war by Lieutenant Ronald A. Barker late of the 1st Battalion, Loyal North Lancashire Regiment.

On September 25th 1915, the Battalion took part in an attack against the German line of defence at Loos. The enemy position had been subjected to four days of heavy bombardment and on the morning of the attack, at 6.34am, gas was released from the British trenches to further 'soften up' the German line. Unfortunately the wind changed direction and blew the gas back on to the attackers. The front and support lines suffered considerably and the gas also caused the advancing lines to become intermingled. This and the fact that the German wire remained uncut forced the Battalion back to its starting point. Attempts were made throughout the day to take the German lines but to no avail. However, at some point, one person was able to take a cutting from the 'lone tree' that was the objective of the 1st Battalion and bring it back to the British trenches.

By the end of that day 16 Officers and 489 other ranks had either been killed, wounded or were missing in action. The cutting, although it doesn't look much actually represents so much more.



Manchester Regiment Archive: Ruth Beattie, Military History Trainee (+P)

The British and French military relationship during the Great War is a subject often overlooked in the historiography of the Western Front. Few accounts emerge of the personal and working relationship some British officers had with their French allies training

American soldiers in trench warfare. One such British soldier was Captain Ernest William Mawdsley of the 19th Battalion, Manchester Regiment. The personal papers of Captain Mawdsley have recently been gifted to the Tameside Archives and offer some insight into the working relationship between the two countries; the collection comprises newspaper articles from his time in the USA, rare photographs of French soldiers and artillery weapons, aerial reconnaissance photographs and well-worn maps of France showing the British, French and German lines.

Captain Mawdsley enlisted for wartime service in September 1914, initially serving three months with the King's Liverpool Regiment before being commissioned as Lieutenant and later as acting Captain of "B" Company, 19th Battalion. He was twice wounded, once at the Somme on July 9 1916 through shell-fire, and upon his recovery, declared



fit for light duty thereafter. His combined expertise in trench weaponry and experience of warfare qualified him for a training role. Thus he was sent to Camp Lewis, California, sometime in late 1916, alongside French officers as part of the allied mission to prepare the American military forces for combat in Europe.

His speciality was the trench mortar having used the weapon extensively during his time in France and Belgium; his collection of maps and aerial reconnaissance photographs would have been invaluable to the artillery section

when seeking the enemy position. His experience and enthusiasm for trench weapons and admiration of French designs in particular, is apparent in the rare photographs depicting the trench mortar in various occupations. The photographs were produced by the French Army and are unique to this particular collection, and certainly unique to archival material concerning the Manchester Regiment for this period. It is thought Captain Mawdsley would have used these photographs when at Camp Lewis in his teaching role. They offer the historian of today an account of the French and British training collaboration and the Western Front enthusiast a visual history of French weapons as they would have been employed in the field.



The relationship between the British and French seemed to be one of mutual admiration at Camp Lewis. The men appointed to the role had come more or less directly from the Western Front with a minimum of two years fighting experience for their respective armies. The Californian newspaper articles of the time covered their activities from both a military and social aspect and made much of the comradeship between the two countries. Captain Jean Champion of the French Army, speaking at a meeting of allied officers, made the following

remarks regarding morale in the French trenches:

“People knowing of the rats, vermin and mud pity us. We don’t want that. The boys are always in good spirits. They have their jokes, their cards and their wine ... and they have the knowledge they are fighting and dying for the people of the world.”

Captain Mawdsley followed the comments with his own interpretation of morale and the Anglo-French relationship:

“There is more genuine comradeship now ... I believe also there will be a fusion of the allies. Before each one of us was jogging along in his own little way. Now it is different between the French and English.”

The story of Captain Mawdsley, like many other personal collections held at the Tameside Archives of the men who fought for the Manchester Regiment during the Great War, offers an alternative view by the individual soldier and his unique personal experience of life on the Western Front. No two soldier’s experiences are alike and it is through fascinating material such as the collection comprises, that fresh interpretations continue to come to light some ninety seven years after the war began. The collection is available to view at the Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre, Ashton-under-Lyne, catalogue number MR4/17/318.

OTHER MUSEUMS IN SHORT:

Kings Regiment: 1st Phase of new Museum opens at Pier Head on 19th July.

Liverpool Scottish: Archives moving to offices on Dale Street at the end of May.

Museum of Lancashire: Not open until mid November at the earliest.

MORE IN NOVEMBER’S DESPATCH

HE LEFT NO WILL BUT GOOD WILL
AND THAT TO ALL MANKIND - Corp H J
Mathewson, The Cameronians

**A STUDY OF THE INFLUENCES ON
SOCIAL ATTITUDES ON THE HOME
FRONT AS PORTRAYED BY ONE
PARISH CHURCH IN THE ROCHDALE/
HEYWOOD AREA OF GREATER
MANCHESTER: Richard Preston**

I am sure many WFA members have or are studying a particular village, town or church War Memorial, trying to put a life to the anonymous names inscribed on the block of stone or etched in a window. To me it is an important task to give faces and personalities to the names so that we can identify with them more closely. This fits in with the wider educational aims of the WFA.

I have been researching a parish memorial in the Bamford area of Rochdale. It has 47 names inscribed on it, 42 of which are First World War. During 2009/10 I discovered a soldier who had lived and

worshiped in St Michael's parish but was not named on the war memorial, this I am pleased to say has now been rectified, he is also remembered on the Basra Memorial, Iraq.

An off shoot of the study was the church's attitude to the war as portrayed in the monthly message from the vicar to his parishioners. If wars are to be fought then, up to a point, the population at

home has to support the cause. The messages from the vicar, particularly at the beginning of the C20, would be one of the powerful influences on the civilian population.

To understand the reaction to the declaration of war in August 1914 one has to not only to get under the skin of the then population but also see the influences which acted upon society, the education provided, types of work people engaged in and the place and attitude of a person's religious denomination are but some of the influences on opinion formation.

History tells us that society generally greeted the WW1 with enthusiasm. Rev. Brierley Vicar of St Michael's, encouraged his parishioners by saying "we are fighting for the lives and liberties of the whole people" and "England will not do her duty unless every man that is capable of bearing arms enlists". Clearly very strong support for the cause but as 1914 proceeded there was a recognition that this war would be a "long one" but that did not deter him from saying "this war will need the best the nation can give of its youth and strength" to serve in the

forces. Subsequently he went on to condemn the "spectacle of thousands of men playing and watching football on Saturday afternoon whilst the country is in the death grapple for its existence.....our young men must respond to our country's call".

This condemnation of football was not original. It is said that it emanated from an officer in a Yorkshire regiment at the



front. The Times had condemned spectators at Football matches on 7th Nov 1914, while other newspapers referred to the Football league as the “shirkers League”. Indeed the football league was suspended at the end of the 1914/15 season for the duration of the war.

During 1915 the attitudes began to change, the jingoistic calls had gone, and the newsletter discussions were more tempered. Perhaps it was the Roll of Honour at the head of most months’ newsletter that focused the mind on the real suffering that war could bring. Discussions from then on were more sober, humanistic and compassionate. Of course the desire to win the war was still there, for example the vicar encouraged women to go out to work so that men could be freed to go to the front to fight but there were other references to services of intercessions and comments of a biblical nature that “death was not the end”. On the communal side practical assistance was offered by collecting for a convalescent home in Egypt- £14.14s. (£14.70p) was raised, a significant sum in 1915. This was for the wounded of the Territorial’s (1/5th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers) who had gone out from Heywood/Rochdale area to fight in the Gallipoli campaign.

Rev. Brierley supported the sending of photographs of the wives and children with the Christmas card and gift. In January 1916 a comforts committee collected £23.00 to send 35 parcels by March. Subsequently there were quotes from letters of those who received the parcels in the magazine. One said that he “had taken the opportunity to change his shirt, which we had not been able to do in five weeks” while a second said that “the articles would be useful in the cold winter to come”.

Shortages began to show, some social events were cancelled because “food could not be obtained” while Sunday Evensong was changed to the afternoon in the winter months to comply with lighting regulations”.

Throughout the war years Rev. Brierley commented that “the Allies were making good progress” but by August 1917 the comments were less optimistic “Progress was necessarily slow” and “the end does not look in sight”. By November 1918 the mood had changed again “the Allies made splendid progress...It is reaping the fruits of the boundless sacrifice of the last four years... We must husband our supplies or undergo unpleasant shortages in the future.” The next month, December 1918, “The War Is Over: glorious news....devout thanks that this terrible war is over...To the soldiers of England...the world owes a debt that we can never repay”.

In 1919 a War memorial was planned which was dedicated in April 1920. The end of the war though did not totally change attitudes. With the signing of the Peace Treaty in July 1919 and the scuttling of the German fleet in Scapa Flow Rev Brierley said in August 1919 that “there has been no change of heart by the Germans...and they cannot be trusted...The Allies need to compel Germany to fulfil all their obligations under the Peace Treaty”. So lay the seeds of a future conflict!

So this church administered to its parishioners. Its official voice was bellicose at first but then as war developed it had more compassion, giving hope for the future, succour to the suffering and bereaved and fortitude to the general public so that they were able to bear the hardships of war on the home front. Sadly though, there was no magnanimity in victory.

WAR GRAVES AND THINGS..... POSTSCRIPTS: Peter Denby (+P)

Soon after the excellent talk *'War Graves and things...'*, by David Shackleton (October 2010), I went on a *Leger* tour to look at the battle of 'Fromelles. I was dropped off for a couple of hours in Bethune Town cemetery, where I visited the grave of my great uncle, Pte John Edwin Denby. A pre war regular with the Green Howards, John Edwin took part in the First Battle of Ypres. In 1915 he was in the trenches in Northern France, where he was wounded in the line north east of Festubert. He died of wounds at the Casualty Clearing Station at Bethune on 16th May 1915.

Bethune Town Cemetery has its own footnote with regards to the inception of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Thus the history of the Commission (*The Unending Vigil*, Philip Longworth) records:

"During October [1914] a Red Cross Medical Assessor, Dr Stewart, came to inspect the [Red Cross Mobile] Unit. Stewart's visit was significant from the point of view of the development of a graves organisation. He and [Fabian]



Fabian Ware

Ware happened to visit Bethune Cemetery, where, according to Ware, they 'found a number of English graves all with plain but carefully made wooden crosses on them'. It was while standing there that Ware first realised that although the graves were fairly

adequately marked, there was no evidence that their position had been recorded or registered. Moreover, nobody seemed to be responsible for their maintenance. That same October day marked the first extension of the Unit's work in relation to graves beyond merely identifying them for the 'missing lists'.

The idea seems to have come from Stewart. As Ware himself wrote the next year, this work 'had its origin in a suggestion made to me last October by Lt Col Stewart' who committed the Red Cross to paying for more durable inscriptions. Soon it was persuaded to provide the means for marking and registering all the British graves the Unit could find".

A later chapter adds:

"It had been a long haul from that miserable October afternoon in 1914 when Ware had stood with a Red Cross Official in the town cemetery at Bethune. In the years between he had fashioned a vast organisation...As Durham told him 'you have created a new Empire within and without the British Empire, an empire of the Silent Dead'".

Some other burials close to my great uncle John Edwin caught my eye. My fellow Fylde Coast readers may be interested in Pte Ernest Patrick Lynn, of - as the cemetery register quaintly puts it - 46 St Albans Road, St Annes-on-the-Sea.

Also close by is Lt Frank Alexander DePASS VC, of the 34th Poona Horse. The inscription on his grave is a quotation from a sonnet by his Rugby school-fellow Rupert Brooke. He won his VC near Festubert for his attack on a German sap and for subsequently rescuing, under fire, a wounded man.

Then there are the two Garrod brothers, sons of the Regius Professor of Medicine, Oxford University.

I then noticed an obviously anomalous headstone (see over), for Capt S E N Cesari RAMC, and it is this which brings me back to David Shackleton's talk in which he discussed some of the irregularities which occur in CWGC cemeteries.

The headstone inscription for Capt Cesari reads 'KILLED IN ACTION AT VERMELLES OCTOBER 3rd 1915. ERECTED BY THE OFFICERS NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN OF NO 6 FIELD AMBULANCE'.

The cemetery register confirms him as a Captain in the Royal Army Medical Corps, but gives his initials as S F M, and lists his date of death as September 3rd 1915.

I was puzzled as to why this RAMC Capt does not have a standard headstone.

To my surprise a 'Google' search showed that Capt Cesari and his anomalous headstone were discussed on the 'Great War Forum' in 2007.



Capt Cesari was a Scottish doctor who enlisted into the RAMC in 1913, soon after he qualified from Edinburgh University. His death occurred whilst he was handing over evening duties, he being wounded by a rifle bullet fired from the Hohenzollern Redoubt, which was

about 1000 yards away. He was carried to a trench where he died soon afterwards and was subsequently buried in Bethune Town cemetery.



Bethune Cemetery early 20 C

It seems that Capt Cesari's headstone was erected privately at the time by his RAMC colleagues. Most such private headstones were, with the agreement of families, subsequently replaced by standard CWGC headstones. In this case (as in a few other cases) it seems the family preferred to keep the original private headstone, not least because of its good quality. The headstone is thus private property, although should it ever fall into disrepair the CWGC will then replace it with a standard headstone and formally take over responsibility for its maintenance. (See back page for current photo)

Whilst it is not unusual for private headstones to bear incorrect information, in this case the family records, supported by War Diary entries, show that the date of death was indeed 3rd **October** 1915 as recorded on the memorial, and not 3rd September as recorded in the CWGC records.

The CWGC does however correctly give his initials as S F M (Sydney Fraser McAlpine) rather than S E N as shown on the memorial. Because the memorial is private property the CWGC is not at liberty to amend any incorrect details on it.

I have not come across any of the - very few - other private headstones which can be found in CWGC cemeteries of the Western Front.

As a final postscript to David's talk, he showed the headstone of Second Lieutenant Hugh Gordon Langton in Poelcapelle cemetery, the headstone bearing a mysterious musical inscription. The photograph is included in the 'Remembrance' exhibition in the museum. This jogged my memory, and looking back though my old slide collection I found I had visited this very same headstone on a trip in 2001. Our knowledgeable guide on that occasion told us the inscription represents the opening bars of the Masonic Anthem.

Editor's Note: "*The Unending Vigil*" was reprinted in 2010 by Pen & Sword. An excellent addition to my bookshelves via Amazon.

WE DREAMT GREAT THINGS FOR YOU
GOD INTERVENED AND SO THE
DREAM CAME TRUE - Capt F W
Haldinstein, Royal Engineers

LT. COL SIR GILBERT MACKERETH'S GRAVE: Terry Dean

In last November's Despatch I reported the developments since publishing the problem about Sir Gilbert's grave in Spain. At the November meeting I showed many of the photographs which were contained in the album held by John Sloan, Sir G's first cousin. Since meeting John and his wife Sheila I have kept in close touch with them, and was saddened to hear that with the recent deaths of his two



sisters John is the sole survivor of Sir Gilbert's generation in the family.

I also mentioned ongoing work to seek Sir Gilbert's medals and other memorabilia which was taking place in parallel with investigations to determine what to do with his grave in San Sebastian. I have been able to contact several persons named in the Wills of Sir G's wife and his brother-in-law who died after Lady Mackereth. Unfortunately none were able to provide information about his medals/memorabilia or, more importantly, whether Sir Gilbert specifically wished to be buried in Spain. Therefore it is of paramount importance to see whether Sir Gilbert's Will, if it exists, contains any indication as to his wishes.

Early last September I requested a search of Probate records in England which established that no Grant of Representation had been granted for Sir G in England or Wales. On 20th September I reported this to my contact in the British Embassy in Madrid. Having regard to: the language barrier, the apparently complex procedures and the special circumstances of this case I sought the Embassy's help to pursue Sir G's Will on my behalf and John Sloan.

On 28th March I received a copy of his Death Certificate. This is the first stage in obtaining any Will in Spain. I was also advised of the next procedures to be followed to pursue Sir G's Will. I requested the Embassy to provide further assistance in pursuing Sir Gilbert's Will but they declined. Myself, John and Sheila Sloan were very disappointed at this situation

Consequently Carlos Martinez, a friend at my gym, has helped me fill-in Form 790 for forwarding to Spain's Ministry of Justice. Thus determining whether Mackereth's Will exists and which Notaire

has it. The situation has been discussed with staff at the Spanish Consulate in Manchester and hopefully Sir Gilbert's Will, if it exists, can soon be obtained.

Should no Will be found, or the Will contains no expression of Sir G's wish for his remains to lie in Spain then, John and Sheila Sloan are minded for his remains to be exhumed, cremated and his ashes scattered in the Fusilier's Gallipoli Garden in Bury. Should the Will indicate that Sir G wished his remains to be in Spain the Sloan's are minded for his ashes, after exhumation and cremation, to be placed in a suitably reverent place in San Sebastian.

Last November's Despatch mentioned James Barr's forthcoming book *A Line in the Sand* which covers Sir Gilbert's work after the First World War as a diplomat in the Middle East. Sir Gilbert joined the consular service and was posted to Damascus at a particularly sensitive point, when an Arab revolt was convulsing neighbouring Palestine, which was then British-run. Relations between Britain and France in the Middle East were very poor. When the French had asked for British help to deal with Arab insurgency in Syria in the 1920s, the British had refused to offer it; now when the British needed assistance from the French because the rebels were using French-ruled Syria and Lebanon as a sanctuary, they received a similarly cool response.

In Damascus MacKereth therefore took it upon himself to wage a one-man war against the rebels: as he put it, with some understatement, 'from then on, much of my work was of an unusual nature'. Using previously overlooked documents Barr tells the fascinating story of MacKereth's highly unorthodox activities at this time. The book is due to be published on 18th August.

"THY WILL BE DONE" IS HARD TO SAY
WHEN ONE WE LOVED WAS CALLED
AWAY - Lanc Corp H J Hobbis,
Middlesex Regt

FRANCE VISIT: Niall Cherry (+P)

Towards the end of September 2010 I once again sorted myself out for a trip to the Western Front, this time I was off to one of those forgotten battlefields of the Great War, namely that of Loos. I'm sure many people who read this will know this battle is one of my specialist subjects, mainly because it was the first time my Grandfather had been in action.

In 1915 he was a corporal in the Royal Engineers Special Brigade and so 2010 was the 95th Anniversary of this momentous battle. It was of course the first time the BEF used poison gas and up till that point in the Great War it was the largest offensive carried out by the BEF. On the first day virtually 6 Divisions assaulted along a 6 mile front.

One of the Divisions that took part on the first day was the 47th (2nd London) Division, which was a Territorial Division and had been in France since March 1915. One of the 12 infantry battalions in this formation was the 19th (St Pancras Rifles) Battalion The London Regiment. Even though this unit has not been on the order of battle for many years there is still a flourishing Old Comrades Association, although many of the members are only relatives of those who served, and it was with them I travelled to Loos.

After two days visiting the scenes of action in and around Loos and holding a small service at Dud Corner, on our third day, a visit had been arranged to two places in Arras. The first was the Wellington Tunnels. This was a new visit for me and it was a unique experience to

go underground and see the tunnels that had existed since the Middle Ages and in the Great War had been extended by New Zealand mining companies, hence the name of

Wellington from the city in that country.

They played a major part in the Battle of Arras of 1917,



allowing troops to appear as if by magic in No Man's Land.

The second visit of the day was to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission offices at Beaurains. After a brief audio visual presentation on their world wide role, we were allowed to visit the workshops. Here they have a metalworking shop where replacement boxes for the cemetery registers are made using traditional techniques. I was somewhat surprised to learn that the boxes that the registers are kept in are not a standard size and also how many of these boxes are damaged and stolen over the course of a year. The gates are also made in the workshops here.

However, the main thrust of the effort at Beaurains is directed towards headstones. Any new or replacement heads for any location in the world are engraved at this office. At the back of the stone shop are a wide selection of blank headstones all pre-cut to size, obviously in a lot of different stones. One particular stone that caught my eye were black headstones for New Zealand forces. The CWGC has two engraving machines which are at work almost 24 hours a day.

It takes around 9 hours to do a headstone on an automated engraving machine.



One of these machines has two cutting heads and so can do two headstones at a time. From Arras the headstones are shipped to wherever they are needed and whilst we were there, consignments were ready to be shipped to such diverse places as Israel, Kenya and the UK. A selection of photographs taken here accompany this article.

After leaving here we stopped off at Pheasant Wood Cemetery at Fromelles on our way back to the Channel coast and London. So all in all a very enjoyable three day trip to the Western Front. I think apart from the 19th London's there were about 20 people remembering the 95th anniversary of Loos. Surely Loos deserves a more important place in the British psyche than this?

SEARCH OF THE PRESTON PALS: Joe Hodgson

On 2nd April I travelled to France with a small group of Prestonians to follow in the footsteps of 'D' Company, 7th Loyal North Lancashire's, otherwise know as the Preston Pals. The group proposed a memorial to the Pals on Preston railway station and our mission was to gain knowledge of the battle area where they had fought. Paul Garlington was our

battlefield guide and we stayed at the Mercure hotel in Assevillers.

On Day 2 we had a crash course on the Somme battles visiting all the usual Battlefield Tour sites. This was so we could put the Preston Pals in context against the bigger picture. At the Thiepval Memorial we found the names of some of the Pals on Pier 11a. This names 902 Loyals including the 7th Battalion VC winner Lieutenant Thomas Wilkinson. We laid a poppy wreath on the Stone of Remembrance then visited Newfoundland Park and got as far into No Man's Land as the Danger Tree.

On Day 3 we visited a supermarket to buy the makings of a picnic, paused at Martinsart Cemetery to see the Corse Hill red sandstone grave markers, then on we went to Sheffield Park where the Accrington Pals came out of the wood to be mown down like corn. From there to Death Valley and Flat Iron Copse Cemetery where we located the four Preston Pals buried here and had our picnic on the cemetery wall. The supermarket had done us proud! Then to Caterpillar Valley Cemetery to photograph seven more Pals graves.

In Bazentin le Petit we parked across from the brick memorial to Nine Brave Men, Royal Engineers, who were killed while building a strong point here. One of them, Sapper Thomas Blakely came from Preston.

On the 19th of July 1916 the 7th Loyals filed into the trenches at Bazentin le Petit as 56 Brigade relieved the 98th. They had to cover 1000 yards with only 480 rifles. At 12.20 on the morning of the 23rd July as part of much larger attack the 19th Division moved across No Man's Land to attack the Switch Line. The 7th Loyals left their trenches and advanced uphill to the crest where they were hit by machine guns in an Intermediate trench that

Headquarters did not know was there so it had not been shelled. Some of the Pals got up to the German wire but could get no further. Lieutenant Tovani withdrew what was left of the Pals, (about 50 men), to our Front Line. At 8.30 they were relieved and marched back to some dug-outs in Mametz Wood.

We walked along the track behind the position of the 1000 yard trench manned by 480 rifles. Then we drove to Crucifix Corner near Bazentin-le-Grand where a pre-1914 crucifix, (much damaged by shellfire), still stands. Here I laid a Poppy



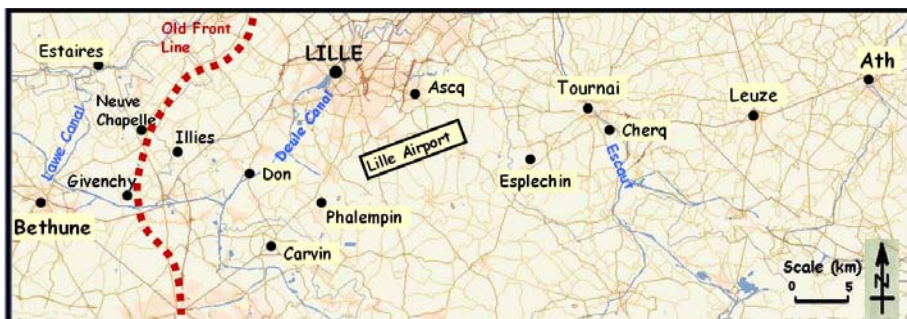
Wreath in memory of the Pals and tied it to a bush. Anything after this did not matter. We had walked where the Preston Pals had walked.

When we achieve our plans and erect the Memorial to the Preston Pals on Platform 4 of the railway station we hope this will be a worthy tribute to the lads who marched away and never came back.

THERE'S NOT A JOY THE WORLD CAN
GIVE LIKE THAT IT TAKES AWAY -
Lance Corp G H Brookes, Royal
Warwickshire Regt

LINESMAN'S 2011 TRIP TO FRANCE: TD (+S)

On 5th April Linesman (L), the trench mapping system linked to current French maps, arrived in France again, this time with 3 human accomplices. The objective of the trip was to cover the ground of the 55th West Lancashire Division's famous defensive action north-east of Bethune in April 1918 and then follow their Advance to Victory which ended at Ath.



3 rooms for 3 consecutive nights were not available in Lille centre so we stayed at the Nord Citotel on the rue du Faubourg d'Arras, 1½ miles south. A good base which had covered, secure parking for car/bikes and an excellent Relais within nice walking distance.

Day one's mission started at Bethune Town cemetery with the placing of a poppy cross on the grave of Peter Denby's great uncle (Page 17 refers). Then Trevor and I set off on bikes to cover ground where 166 Brigade of 55th Division had to establish a defensive flank following the adjacent Portuguese Division's evacuation of their positions when the Germans attacked on 9th April 1918. John, the 3rd of our trio, favours other modes of travel to cycles so had the important role of driving the broom wagon (Tour de France parlance). We criss-crossed the ground between the original

front line and the Lawe canal identifying the location of the various strong points such as Mesplaux Farm, Loisine Central and Route A Keep also the new front line and the 'G' switch.

From Givenchy we went eastwards crossing the crater line which was won on 24th August 1918 when the 55ths Advance to Victory commenced. Pausing for lunch and relaxation in the German cemetery at Illies I viewed the numerous graves and mass burials places resulting from the British attacks

at Neuve Chapelle on 9th May 1915. By this time the broom wagon driver had left us to discuss plans for day 2 and we continued our ride eastwards passing the positions reached by the 1/5th King's Own on 3rd October. As we approached Don we cycled down the street where the 1/10th King's Liverpool (Liverpool Scottish) suffered casualties when the German defence stiffened on the line of the Deule Canal.

Our rendezvous point with John was at Don Communal Cemetery where we noted unusual headstones (see back page) and mounted bikes on the broom wagon to call and "say hello" at the Carvin and Phalempin cemeteries on our way back to our Citotel.

Day two started with a visits to Lille Southern Cemetery then Asq Communal Cemetery where the CWGC plot and our thoughts was somewhat overshadowed

by the graves and memorial to 86 local men massacred by Germans in WW2 following an explosion which derailed a train carrying 12th SS Panzer Division to Normandy.

Then followed the high point (literally) of L's trip. Aviator, John's aircraft, a Cirrus SR22, was waiting at Lille Airport to take us on a circuit planned to cover an airborne recce of the 55ths Advance to Victory, the le Cateau battlefield, Somme, Vimy and Givenchy. Unfortunately le Cateau had to be dropped from our itinerary since this was in direct line of the climb out from Cambrai airbase - as it was we saw two echelons of French fighters zooming in at high speed below our level (1500 feet) so probably discretion was the better part of valour! However we had a never to be forgotten 1½ hour flight with aerial views of the 166



Brigade Escaut crossing point at Cherg, Thiepval, and the Notre Dame de Lorette to name a few.

On return to Lille airfield at 14.30 we set off eastwards in the broom wagon, paused for refreshment and reached Ath at 1800 hrs. We crossed the Escaut at Cherg where the 1/5th South Lancs forced a crossing of the river during the night 8th/9th November. We also had pauses to reflect and say "hello" at Esplechin, Tournai and Leuze cemeteries. At Esplechin we viewed the grave of Private W Morgan who was the last of the Liverpool Scottish to be killed

in action his headstone wrongly stating OBE rather than BEM. In Tournai it was appropriate that aviator John, on his first trip to the WW1 battlefields, should see the graves of the first two British airmen killed on active service in WW1.



Lieut C G Bayly
RFC Observer

2nd Lieut V Waterfall
RFC Pilot

WHO STANDS IF FREEDOM FALL?
WHO DIES IF ENGLAND LIVE? - Lieut
Charles George G Bayly REs attached
RFC

MARTIN MIDDLEBROOK'S LAST SALLY?: Terry Dean

On 11th March over 80 souls gathered for the Lancashire and Cheshire Branch meeting in Stockport Drill Hall to hear Martin Middlebrook talk on "The Somme and its Origins". He split his talk into three elements:



- Why did it happen
- Why it is so deeply remembered
- What actually happened

Starting by describing the initial French and German war plans he then explained how the German's Schlieffen Plan failed

in August and early September 1914 and how the "Miracle of the Marne" led to stalemate on the Aisne and the eventual stalemate on the Western Front after the "Race to the Sea".

He then went on to describe Kitchener's role in expanding Britain's army from 6 to 66 Divisions and how a big battle of attrition was inevitable. With the New Army and Pals battalions containing large numbers of men from the middle and skilled classes this explained why the Somme and its casualties are part of the British psyche.

The Chantilly Conference of December 1915 considered the Allies strategy for attacks in 1916 but the French involvement in planned British/French attack astride the Somme had to be scaled back due to the Germans assault on Verdun in February 1916. Martin described Rawlinson's role in determining the flawed strategy for his Fourth Army's attacks on 1st July 1916. Not enough high explosive shells were available to destroy German wire or dugouts and, on sections of front, requiring troops to form up in lines before crossing "No Man's land" proved suicidal.

Martin described how; the British strategy changed in the successful attack of 14th July, the subsequent attack in September when tanks were used in action for the first time and, Haig's decision to continue the attacks until November.

He then mentioned how 1st July 1916 was dwarfed by the size of the German's attack on 21st March 1918 which gave him the opportunity to add a plug for his book "The Kaiser's Battle" to his other literary works which he mentioned in his talk.

Concluding Martin told us he would be 80 next birthday and that he did not think he would respond positively again to a

Terry Jackson (Lancs & Cheshire Chairman) entreaty to travel so far again to speak. Hopefully he thinks again.

MARTIN'S CORNER: Martin Simpson - Chairman, Cumbria Branch

On Sunday 12th June commencing 10.30 am we will have our Occasional Day at Hundith Hill Hotel, Lorton, Cumbria. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be available on arrival and there will be a 3 course lunch with menu choice. For anyone wishing to stay over at the hotel there is a reduction in room costs for WFA members

We have 3 speakers with different themes:

"The war art of Stanley Spencer" by David Haydock

"Nursing in France and Flanders" by Sue Light

"The Pirate of Buccari" (The adventures of Gabriels D'Annunzio on the Italian Front) and it should prove to be a very interesting day.

If you wish to attend please contact me: Tel No: 01229 584141 or Email: mcsimp2002@yahoo.co.uk

Our programme for the remainder of the year is as follows (all meetings at Penrith British Legion commencing 7.45 pm):

Aug 18th: *"Guns, Gunners, Gunnery September 1914"* - John Aspinall

Oct 20th : *"3 ships sunk during WW1"* - Frank Walmsley

Dec 4th : AGM, including Christmas Lunch. Speaker - Peter Hart.

BRANCH AFFAIRS:

Remembering Mike Sherrington 1949 - 2010



Mike was a founder member of the North Lancashire Branch of the Western Front Association and over the years he became well known at other branches throughout the country when he visited to deliver one of his talks.

I was lucky enough to persuade Mike to give his first talk to the branch and this and subsequent talks were based on his research into members of his family who took part in the First World War. My favourite was the one that recounted the exploits of Pat Durham and his escape from Lechfeld Lager. Mike researched Pat's story for quite a few years and I remember quite clearly the many occasions he would ring up and tell me about the latest finds sent to him from the Australian War archives in Canberra. I am sure that many WFA members will remember the boxing feats of Pat Durham and other incidents from Mike's meticulously researched talks.

Mike was also a connoisseur of good food and fine wine and this was shared with Liz, his wife. My wife and I managed to meet up with them in 2004, in a restaurant south of Amiens and after a wonderful meal Mike and I went to

Mouquet Farm where we braved a fierce guard dog and found the exact spot where Pat Durham was wounded and captured. We also met up for another gastronomic experience in Nerja, Spain, as this was a resort where separately we had spent many happy holidays. In 2006 when I mentioned to Mike that we were going to St. Remy he provided books and information on where to visit. I am pleased that Mike was able to enjoy a family holiday in this charming French town in 2010.

I can honestly say that I have never met such a courageous and optimistic person. Throughout his prolonged fight against cancer his mood was always upbeat and I never felt it difficult to talk to him about his illness. He endured operations and treatment that I could hardly conceive, with cheerfulness and always had confidence in his doctors. I must also say that Liz was a tower of strength during this period.

At his funeral I was able to hear about his family life, his working life and his other interests which I knew very little about. I wish that I had met Mike much earlier but I will always value the ten years I knew him and I still marvel at his fortitude. (Andrew Brooks)

A CHEERFUL VOICE A SMILING FACE
ALAS NO ONE CAN FILL HIS PLACE -
Pte H H Simpson (Aus Inf)

Branch Who's Who

The proposal was agreed at the December AGM and those who attended the April meeting know I commenced to collect information and photographs. I shall be collecting information from others at coming meetings with a view to completing Who's Who by September.

Alternatively you can send passport style photo and information i.e.:

Name

Contact details (address, tel. no, email)

Occupation (current or pre-retirement)

Interests

by email to: editor@wfanlancs.co.uk

MEETING REPORTS



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Chairman's Night: November 2010

(27 attended)

Chairman Stan Wilkinson presented an entertaining selection of adverts from magazines and newspapers published during the First World War. He also talked about Remembrance and the first tourists to the battlefields. Stan then introduced his three guest speakers, all members of the Branch.

Terry Dean described the outcome of worldwide publicity about the possible eviction of Sir Gilbert Mackereth from his grave in Spain. He had met with John Sloan, the first cousin of Sir Gilbert, and showed many of the First World War photos of Sir Gilbert which were in the family album held by John.

Chris Payne described how the contents of a letter written from the Western Front in June 1918, by his grandfather Private Charlie Payne (5th Battalion West Riding Regiment), revealed a family friendship with the Australian Prime Minister, Billy Hughes. Welsh by birth, Hughes was a forceful member of the British delegation at the Versailles Peace Conference.

Howard Martin gave an update on the concrete soldier in the grounds of Cartmel Grange Nursing Home in

Grange-over-Sands. Originally donated by Normanton Central Liberal Club for an unknown reason, the soldier had deteriorated and North Lancashire WFA paid for a structural survey. The soldier is now fully repaired and a remembrance ceremony is held there every November 11th. Howard also talked about Private Samuel Wassall, who was awarded the VC at Isandlwana and whose grave is in Barrow-in-Furness cemetery. (Gaynor Greenwood)

Christmas Social: December 2010

(14 attended)

Barrie Bertram looked at the differing backgrounds of three Commanding Officers with Jersey connections who led battalions over the top on the first day of the Somme. Harry Allardice was a highly promising young Indian Army officer and was appointed CO of the 13th Northumberland Fusiliers a fortnight before the attack. He was killed and is buried in Dartmoor Cemetery. George Guyon had been wounded at Gallipoli serving with the Royal Fusiliers and returned to duty in command of the Bradford Pals. He was killed in the first minutes of the attack on 1st of July and his name is on the Thiepval Memorial. Robert Raymer survived the Great War, although he was injured on 1st July leading the 1st/5th Battalion of the South Staffordshires at Gommecourt. He later commanded a number of other battalions. He returned to teaching as a Colonel in 1919 with a CMG, DSO and 4 MiDs, later becoming a priest. He died in 1948 having ministered as a padre for a period in the Second World War.

Graham Kemp told the story of three officers of the 67 Sqn (Aus) of the RFC, based in Palestine, 1918. They had flown to an abandoned German airbase

and in a nearby cave found cases of top class champagne. Unable to load them in their planes, they went back to their airbase and commandeered a Turkish railway truck. They placed an aero engine on the front, called her Agnes and returned to base to load up the champagne. After sampling the wares, they soon found themselves roaring into the desert, forgetting that aero engines have no reverse. Fortunately they came across a General's staff car en route to the General. Claiming to have emergency medical supplies, they commandeered the car and returned laden to their squadron base at Haifa. Members of the squadron helped them to dig a hole by the side of the base to secure their hoard, but it was very hot night, and hard work, and by the time the hole was ready there was no champagne left to put in it. (Gaynor Greenwood)

The Anatomy of an Alias: January 2011
(18 attended)

Some soldiers used aliases during the First World War, generally for honourable reasons. As an example, **Barrie Bertram** told the interesting story of Coutart de Butts Taylor.



Prior to the War, Taylor served in the Jersey Militia. On joining up, he eventually served as an officer in the 6th Royal Irish Rifles. He used an alias after being struck off British strength in 1916 following an adverse report accusing him, amongst other things, of being too old to mould into the requisite shape of a wartime commander and drinking with an NCO.

Taylor changed his name to Charles Edward Collins and joined the 17th Royal Welch Fusiliers, eventually becoming a sergeant. After showing leadership and bravery in several actions, his true identity was discovered in May 1918 and his reinstatement was recommended by his CO.

However by the time this recommendation was finally approved in January 1919, Taylor was dead. He died on 24 December 1918 as a result of being shot during an action on 4 November in the Mormal Forest, for which he received the MM. His reinstatement was backdated to 23 December. He had redeemed himself. (Gaynor Again!!)

HE DIED FOR US IS IT IN VAIN - Pte H E
Kitchen. Lincolnshire Regt

German Commerce Raiders (Part 1):
February 2011 (32 attended)



Graham Kemp clearly enjoyed his belated delivery of his Part 1 talk on German Commerce Raiders having revealed Part 2 in September 2010. In his inimitable style he told how German warships and commercial vessels in far flung ports made the transition from peace to war in July/August 1914 and

often ran rings round or outran the Royal Navy in the process.

Dumping of unnecessary materials (carpets and curtains), camouflage (paint, changing silhouette and extra funnels), armaments, securing fuel and clearing ports were the German's priority. Detecting the location of Royal Navy ships through listening to their wireless signals coupled with canny judgement of which direction to travel enabled the Karlsruhe to evade HMS Bristol and HMS Suffolk but she nearly ran out of coal.



An imperative for the raiders was securing the right type of coal (Cardiff coal) to fuel their ship's engines. With the lack of overseas bases the Germans had established the *Etappe* system to allow coaling at sea from a network of colliers. The Germans also tried to get coal from captured prize vessels. Details of vessels captured were outlined and how the Germans treated captives humanely.

Graham's talk drew to a close by revealing how the Emden, Dresden, Karlsruhe and others met their end but their successes had pointed the way to how the war could be won. (TD)

The Divisional School and other Aspects of Training in the 55th (West Lancashire) Division: March 2011 (29 attended)

It is often said that a soldier's life in wartime is 99% boredom and 1% terror, or thereabouts in percentage terms.

Undoubtedly, many talks focus on that 1%, whether it is going over the top on the first day of the Somme, or slogging one's way backwards on the Retreat from Mons. It is sometimes refreshing to have a look at the percentage of soldiers' lives that fell into the category of boredom, and what better way to understand that than listen to **Ian**

Riley's

account of the training. Not that there is a suggestion that Ian's talk was boring, far from it! For me, it highlighted a number of



aspects about training that I had not readily appreciated previously, and the continued importance of training, be it in today's military or in the civilian workplace.

It was clear that the expansion of the British Army in the early years of the Great War was such that the basic training in the UK was exactly, basic! While the technological advances may not have been as rapid as those of the next war, tactics had changed and continue to do so. Though criticised as 'the donkeys', the Generals had the 'nous' to establish training schools at the various levels of Army, Corps and Division, and then to see that the syllabi rapidly adapted to the changes resulting from the experiences at the front line as the War progressed. Although Ian focused on the 55th Division, it is clear from the talk that there was dialogue both vertically and horizontally in the BEF's chain of command, and the activities of the Divisional School were mirrored throughout.

What did emerge was the *raison d'être* of the Schools in that their underlying role was to 'train the trainers', this very much coupled with the emerging importance of the platoon commander and his sergeant. This continues today, and it was the much quoted Field-Marshal Slim who said that the command of a Platoon was one of the best jobs in the Army. Indeed, and what also emerges from the talk was the importance of 'on the job' training, necessary to plug the gaps that the theoretic training, provided back in the UK, could not readily address.

The approach that was adopted also ensured the existence of the twin concepts of 'objective based' and 'through life' training, the former designed to focus on maintaining the offensive spirit, the latter to ensure the refreshment of skills and continuity. However, Ian might like to have commented whether there might have been a risk of staleness from this.

There are parallels with today's military who, as much as ever, need to keep their cutting edge sharp through realistic training, but with half-baked defence reviews, coupled with the risks inherent in budget cuts, they will be less than ready to face new more deadly threats, thanks to a current crop of politicians who, while they maybe able to translate *Si vis pacem, para bellum*, somehow fail to grasp the meaning.

Of course, the civilian workplace is no different, with pressures on staffing numbers and overheads reduction. In such circumstances, an organisation's training budget is often the first to be cut while there also exists a culture of 'You've seen the film, you've read the book, now get on with the job'. In such circumstances, one might also ask as to who is the 'platoon commander'.

Finally, we must not forget that Ian's talk highlighted that the training given throughout was relevant to the situation 'on the ground', and bridged the gap between basic training and the aim of achieving the end objective. I found the talk of great value, enjoyable, and I left thinking that, with slight amendments, it could be given business audiences. (Barrie Bertram)

FIRST BLITZ: April 2011 (24 attended)

In his preamble **Neil Hanson** discussed how the Great War still resonates politically and militarily today.

The first - ever - air raid on Britain was by aeroplane, on Dover on Christmas Eve 1914, when small bombs were dropped by hand.



However it was Zeppelins which posed the air threat to Britain in the early stages of the war, having greater range, safer flying height, and bigger bomb loads than the early aeroplanes. By November 1916 however, improved fighter defence had ended the Zeppelin menace.

As technology advanced true bombers evolved - culminating in Gothas and 'Giants' - and it was these that superseded the Zeppelins, although very high production costs restricted their numbers.

Throughout 1917 and 1918 London was the primary target of bombing raids; secondary targets included Folkestone, where a raid in spring 1917 killed 95 and wounded many more.

A raid on London's east end in June 1917 hit a school killing many children. Anti German feelings ran high. Air raids were a frightening new experience, and panic led to fatal crushes in station shelters at Shoreditch and Mile End. Primitive air raid warnings and clumsy attempts at censorship lessened morale and increased civilian resentment against perceived government and military incompetence.

Actual bomb damage was not normally great, although the 'Blitz of the Harvest Moon', over several nights on London, did disrupt output at the Woolwich arsenal.

Air raid precautions, shelters and air defences gradually improved; a new fighter airfield at a hitherto unknown site - Biggin Hill - came into operation. Even so, in the whole war only 18 enemy aircraft were shot down, most of them over the coast on their way home; more enemy aeroplanes were lost in airfield crashes. But air defence did have a deterrent effect, forcing a move to night raids by September 1917.

By spring of 1918 a highly combustible incendiary bomb had been developed, designed to devastate London and Paris. Thus it was that on 23rd September 1918 thousands of these bombs were loaded onto Gothas and Giants, and aircrew were readied for enormous raids on the unsuspecting French and British capitals.

However the rapidly deteriorating situation on the Western Front led Ludendorff to issue an 11th hour cancellation of these raids. He was later to say this was on humanitarian grounds, but he knew the raids would have had no influence on the outcome of the war, and he was no doubt fearful of allied reprisals. Indeed a big British raid on Berlin had been set for 12th November, and so in the

event the citizens of London, Paris and Berlin were spared.

This excellent talk ended where it began, with a discussion on the legacy of the Great War. Both sides had drawn different conclusions. In the Second World War Germany was to place emphasis on battlefield air support, doubting the efficacy and cost effectiveness of strategic bombing. It was the allies who were to take strategic bombing to its extreme. (Peter Denby)

HE GAVE HIS YOUTH THAT THE
WORLD MIGHT GROW OLD IN PEACE -
Serj L Tunbridge, 29th Bn Australian Inf

PROGRAMME OF FUTURE MEETINGS ALL MEETINGS ON MONDAY, 7.30 PM

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

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

Aug 1st: *"Accumulated Weariness: living with the effects of war"* - Tricia Platts (Bradford Mech. Inst. WW1 Group)

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

Oct 3rd: *"A German soldier's journey from the Baltic to the Black Sea"* - Andrew Brooks (N Lancs W.F.A.)

Nov 7th: *"Kemmel Hill Revisited"* - Jon Honeysett

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

MORE WAR GRAVES AND THINGS: Terry Dean

Here is the current photo of Captain Cesari's headstone as referred to in Peter Denby's article at Page 17. As mentioned there it is private property and should the headstone fall into disrepair the CWGC will then replace it with a standard headstone and take over its maintenance. Peter's photo and my recent inspection shows it to be in a good state and unlikely to be threatened in the near future,



With my awareness raised of the CWGC's policy towards private headstones by Peter's article and Philip Longworth's "*The Unending Vigil (TUV)*" a reward was when accompanying Linesman to France (Page 23). On entering Don Communal Cemetery, amongst the serried



ranks of Portland stone, my eyes were drawn to **two** identical non-standard headstones.

According to *TUV* a ban on private memorials had been issued by the Army in 1916 but in Don Communal the graves of Sappers E Evans and George

Amey of the Inland Water Transport Branch of the Royal Engineers who died on 22nd and 30th November 1918 respectively were marked by memorials placed by NCOs and men of Number 4 Canals and Rivers Unit. To date I have been unable to find any explanation for the departure from CWGC guidelines. Harking back to David Shackleton's talk last October do the twin exceptions further prove the rules?

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