CHESTERFIELD WFA

Newsletter and Magazine issue 35

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Welcome to Issue 35 - the November 2018 Newsletter and Magazine of Chesterfield WFA.

For our Meeting on Tuesday 6th October we welcome Bryn Hammond, Museum professional & historian of Military history & the stuff of war Head of Collections & Curatorial team at the The Imperial War Museum. He is a respected published author with a PhD from Birmingham University.

Bryn`s presentation will be

`The 500 piece jig-saw: Tank – Other Arms Cooperation in the First World War.

The Branch meets at the Labour Club, Unity House, Saltergate, Chesterfield S40 1NF on the first Tuesday of each month. There is plenty of parking available on site and in the adjacent road. Access to the car park is in Tennyson Road, however, which is one way and cannot be accessed directly from Saltergate.

Grant Cullen – Branch Secretary

Western Front Association Chesterfield Branch – Meetings 2018

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

January	9th	**Jan.9th** Branch AGM followed by a talk by Tony Bolton (Branch Chairman) on the key events of the last year of the war 1918. Councillor Steve Brunt (a member of the WFA) will also be present to tell members about Chesterfield Borough Council`s plans for a WW1 2018 Commemorations Group.
February	6th	**Tim Lynch** ***`The Unknown Soldiers - the BEF of 1918`*** By 1918 the BEF was mostly made up of conscripts as it launched the most successful campaign in its history. How did an army many regarded as "shirkers" fight so effectively? Tim Lynch is a freelance writer and battlefield guide. This talk is based on research into his own family's part in the Great War.
March	6th	**David Humberston,** Chairman of the Leicester Branch, will be making his first visit to WFA Chesterfield to talk about ***`Women Spies in The Great War`***
April	3rd	**Peter Hart** making his annual pilgrimage to Chesterfield. His presentation will be ` ***Not Again*`** ***- the German offensive on the Aisne, May 1918.***
May	1st	Making his debut as a speaker to the Chesterfield Branch will be Jonathan Steer who will compare and contrast the `*BEF at Mons in 1914 with the BEF at Mons in 1918*`
June	5th	Rob Thompson – always a popular visitor to Chesterfield Branch. *"Running Out of Road. Supplying the BEF During the 100 Days Offensives. 1918*". This is a new talk dealing with the logistical and supply problems the BEF had as the end of the war approached (BEF needed Armistice as much as Germans).
July	3rd	**Dr. Graham Kemp. *"American Expeditionary Force"* – the story and experiences of the AEF, 1917-18. Talk covers the training of the new Army from the States to France. Taking in the experience, the hardship and humour. It looks at their first action at Belleville wood, and then turns to the success and tragedy of 'Argonne Wood.' It reveals the way the US Army contributed to the ending of the war and why afterwards US turned its back on Europe.**
August	7TH	**Peter Dennis** is an artist who lives in Mansfield but he has made a name for himself as an illustrator for the Osprey series of monographs on The Great War (as well as other conflicts from ancient times to the present) Peter will explain how he carries out his researches for technical accuracy. He will also bring some of his original artworks for members to view.
September	4th	John Beech. "*The Great Escape"*. John needs no introduction to Chesterfield members as he rarely misses a meeting. In September 1917 a group of POW German officers escaped from where they were being held (now on the site of the University of Nottingham). Using his meticulous research, John will tell this story.
October	2nd	Making a welcome return to Chesterfield will be our former Chairman / Secretary, **Peter Hodgkinson**, who will explain the ***Battle of Selle in October 1918.***
November	6th	**Bryn Hammond. Another leading light in the field of historical research, study and publication on the Great War, Bryn will *discuss `The 500 piece jig-saw: Tank – Other Arms Cooperation in the First World War.***
December	4th	Rounding the year off in style will be **Dr Phylomena Badsey** on ***"Auxiliary Hospitals and the role of Voluntary Aid Detachment Nurses during the First World War"***

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A Personal note from The Chair (28)

I have been known to moan about the difficulty in finding something to say in this column but this time I hardly know

what to include and what to leave out. Sadly I have to tell you about a rather unedifying episode at the Western Front Association which may still have some mileage left in it. The Executive Committee announced on 27 October via the digital editor that the Butte de Warlencourt had been sold by the Association. Partly as a reaction to the offhand way the Executive Committee made this announcement and partly because it was a private sale to a former WFA Chairman it has created a storm of protest which has resulted in some apparently quite offensive social media activity. The very real problems of ownership of this patch of land on the Somme battlefield and the potential insurance problems have been lost in the noise and for this the Executive Committee must take a considerable proportion of the blame but the Committee is composed of people who are I believe genuinely seeking what is best for the Association. It now looks as if there may be resignations on the Executive Committee and the buyer may withdraw or seek to reverse the sale. I believe this is a classic case of the right decisions being obscured by a public relations disaster. The timing of this debacle could not have been worse and everyone involved should be ashamed of bringing the WFA into disrepute at a time when all our focus should be on the remembrance of the Armistice one hundred years ago this month.

On a much more positive note Centenary commemorations are taking an important stage across the country, the RBL's Silent Soldiers adorn many towns and villages. Large poppies are evident on lampposts in most local authorities. In Chesterfield as we have previously recorded a considerable effort has been made, a commemorative tree is to be planted next Tuesday, the Town Hall will be adorned with a fall of knitted poppies and the public response has been so great that the surplus knitted poppies are to be used in the market hall and all the High Street shops will be displaying the remainder in their windows. At the Crooked Spire a public art work has been set up representing the cap badge of the Sherwood Foresters. I represented the Branch at the launch of Chesterfield's month long World War 1 Commemorations on 11 October at the Chesterfield Museum where they have a 'Trench Experience' some of the exhibits are interesting but the *Trench* itself is for atmosphere rather than historical accuracy but congratulations are due to all those communities around the region who have 'remembered'.

Tony Bolton **Branch Chair**

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

The Western Front Association's

2019 Calendar

is now available !

The Calendar includes high quality, modern images of scenes from the Western Front. The images are specially selected from the work of a number of committed and talented Western Front photographers.

A4 size when folded,opens out to A3 when hung on your wall. £10 (Inc p&p)

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Order by post or online or by phone on 020 7118 1914

Link to buy on the Eshop is https://www.westernfrontassociation.com/shop/wfa-branded-items/wfa-calendar-2019/

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The Calendar itself If you click on this link it will show you a low-resolution version of the calendar
file:///H:/WFA/(2)%20Branded%20Goods/(12)%20Calendar%202019/WFA%20calendar%202019%20proof%206.pdf

There will also be a limited number available at Branch meetings until the end of the year

Secretary`s Scribbles

Welcome to issue 35 of the WFA Chesterfield Branch Newsletter and Magazine. We are well under way with the Commemorations of this Remembrancetide, more poignant being the 100th Anniversary of the Armistice which saw an end to the conflict of the Great War. The past week has seen me devoting almost full time in my town of Worksop to the RBL Poppy Appeal, for which I am one of the `Honorary Organisers`, whilst Saturday afternoon was spent on my knees in the local Garden of Remembrance planting little crosses, each with name and date of death of men from the town who died in The Great War – over 500 in total. When you see the field of crosses, from a small town like Worksop, and realise similar numbers were replicated in small towns the length and breadth of the country it makes one realise the sheer scale and horror of it all.

I think all who participated would agree that the Branch outing to Lincoln on September 29th was a great success and for those who could not make it a report is included in this Newsletter. Hopefully, we can arrange something along the same lines for next year.

Following on from these notes you will find the list of speakers who are booked to present to our meetings during 2019. I hope these will meet with your approval and that you will support each speaker in turn.

October 16th saw the second meeting of our Book Group of which Andrew Kenning has submitted a report. Whilst the main topic of the evening is the book under review, the meeting soon evolves into a good discussion on quite a range of items all to do with our mutual interest and passion for the history of the Great War.

Such has been the sheer volume of material that quite a lot has had to be held over until the next issue of the magazine – a great problem to have !!

Tuesday night sees our November meeting and we welcome Bryn Hammond as our guest speaker whose presentation will be "***The 501-Piece Jigsaw: Tank – Other Arms Cooperation in the First World War***" A look at combined arms operations involving tanks and other units. As I understand, this is Bryn`s first visit as a speaker to Chesterfield Branch and I am sure we will have an educating and entertaining evening.

Grant Cullen – Branch Secretary

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Western Front Association Chesterfield Branch – Meetings 2019

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

January	8th	**Jan.8th Note Date Change.** Branch AGM followed by a talk by **Tony Bolton** (Branch Chairman) on the key events of the first year after the Armistice.
February	5th	Making a welcome return to Chesterfield after a gap of several years is **Dr Simon Peaple** who will discuss the `**Versailles Conference of 1919**`
March	5th	A first time visitor and speaker at Chesterfield Branch will be **Stephen Barker** whose topic will be the `**Armistice 1918 and After**`
April	2nd	No stranger to the Branch **Peter Hart** will be making his annual pilgrimage to Chesterfield. His presentation will be **"Aces Falling: War Over the Trenches 1918"**
May	7th	**John Beckett** Professor of English Regional History, Faculty of Arts at the University of Nottingham -` **The Chilwell Explosion Revisited**`
June	4th	**Rob Thompson** - always a popular visitor to Chesterfield Branch. We all tend to think of recycling as a `modern` phenomenon but in **Wombles of the Western Front- Salvage on the Western Front**` Rob examines the work of salvage from its small beginnings at Battalion level to the creation of the giant corporation controlled by GHQ.
July	2nd	In **Dr John Bourne** we have one of the top historians of The Great War and he is going to talk about `***JRR Tolkein and the 11th Lancashire Fusiliers on the Somme***`
August	6th	**Carol Henderson** is an emerging historian making her first visit to Chesterfield, she will talk about the `***Manpower Crisis 1917-1918***`
September	3rd	Back with us for a second successive year is **Dr Graham Kemp** who will discuss `***The Impact of the economic blockage of Germany AFTER the armistice and how it led to WW2***`
October	1st	Another debutant at the Chesterfield Branch but he comes highly recommended is **Rod Arnold** who will give a naval presentation on the `***Battle of Dogger Bank - Clash of the Battlecruisers***`
November	5th	Chairman of the Lincoln Branch of the WFA, **Jonathan D`Hooghe**, will present on the ***" 7th Sherwood Foresters - The Robin Hood Rifles"***
December	3rd	Our final meeting of 2019 will be in the hands of our own **Tim Lynch** with his presentation on ***" One Hundred Years of Battlefield Tourism"***

Received this very interesting note from member Edwin Astill

For those interested in the history of engineering and technology, the Newcomen Society offers a varied programme of talks. The Sheffield branch (which usually meets at the Kelham Island Museum) has two of particular note to those interested in the Great War.

On 24th September a talk was given on "Armour for the Grand Fleet". This traced the development of armour for naval craft from the time the fleet converted to iron rather than wood for its ships. Sheffield, of course, was at the forefront in the production of the armour.

At first armour was all iron, but in the late 1870's the Sheffield firms of John Brown and Charles Cammell developed compound armour. This had a steel face and wrought-iron back. This was not only more effective, but could offer suitable protection at less weight. At the same time, guns were improving and were capable of a greater range and hitting power. By the mid 1890's cementation processes had developed. The German firm of Krupp improved upon the process, and there was a remarkable degree of cooperation between the Germans and the British manufacturers. The Krupp process was used to make the armour for British fleet.

Another feature of the industry was the creation of the Harvey United Steel Company, in which all the world's leading manufacturers held shares. This pooled income from the various patents, and controlled international competition and prices. *

The Russo-Japanese War provided a test for the guns and armour of pre-Dreadnoughts. Two opposing schools of thought existed: the "mixed" gun approach, and the "all-big gun" school. The first wanted a mix of heavy guns and lighter quick-firers to produce a hail of fire. The second thought that larger guns were more effective and had greater range. The war of 1904-05 led to the all-big gun school winning the argument.

On 29th April 2019 the talk will be "Steam below see – the Royal Navy K Class steam turbine submarines of WW1". Non-members of the Newcomen Society are welcome to these talks. I hope to be there myself.

Edwin Astill

- The **Harvey United Steel Company** was a steel cartel whose chairman was Albert Vickers. The year 1894 would see the ten main producers of armor plate, including Vickers, Armstrong, Krupp, Schneider, Carnegie and Bethlehem Steel, form the Harvey Syndicate.
- For more details of the **Newcomen Society** http://www.newcomen.com/

Still Available

BACKS TO THE WALL

'To commemorate the 1918 Spring Offensives, the Western Front Association commissioned a Limited Edition bone china mug featuring part of Sir Douglas Haig's 'Backs to the Wall' Order of 11th April 1918. '

Available from the eShop on the WFA website

(While Stocks Last)

Price: £14 (+£3 p&p)

Book Group

The Chesterfield WFA Book Group held its second meeting on Tuesday 16th October, when six members discussed John Terraine's "To Win a War. 1918, The Year of Victory."

While most people hear a lot about the carnage of the Somme, Verdun and Passchendaele, the events of 1918 are less well known and we all found this classic narrative written by a founder member of the Western Front Association, a very good choice to unravel the events of the Kaiserschlact, the 100 Day offensive and the making of the peace leading to the Armistice.

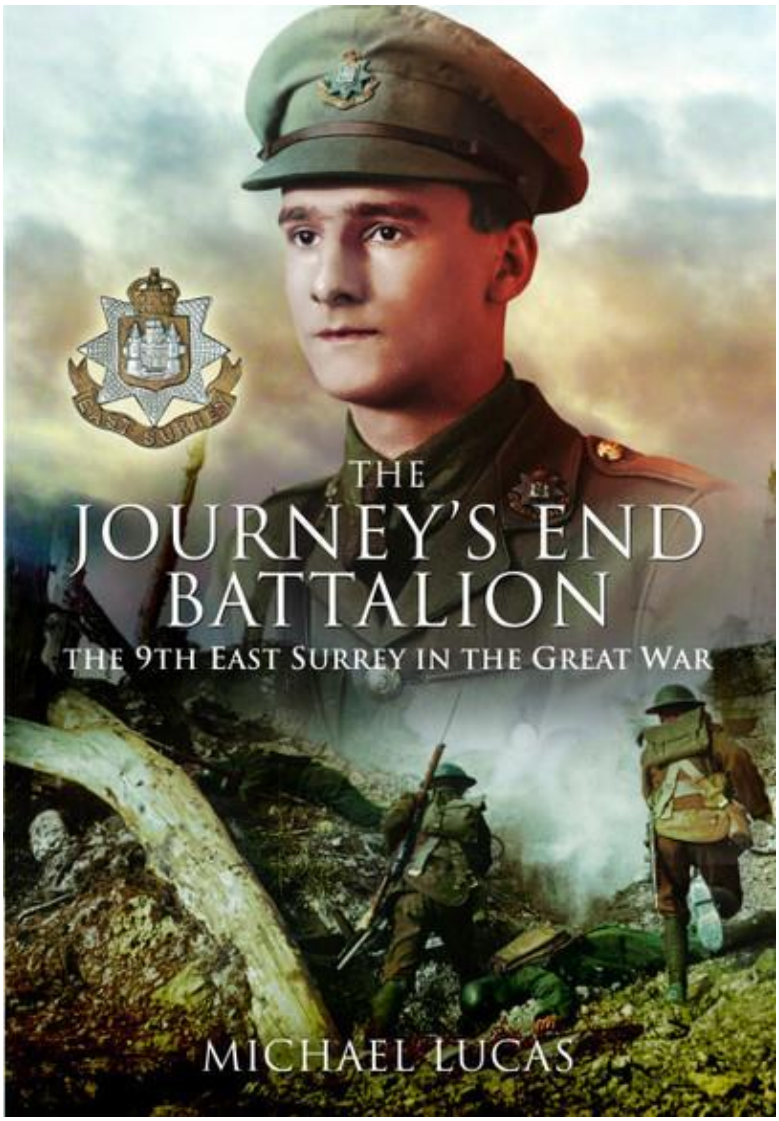
Even some of the group who have a wide knowledge of the history, were reminded of the complications posed by the tricky politicians, Lloyd George, Clemenceau and Wilson

We enjoyed meeting together again and our earnest two hour discussion could have easily continued for another two hours

Our next Book Group meeting will be on Tuesday 11thDecember, 7pm.

in the Chesterfield Labour Club Bar (not the upstairs meeting room), and we will discuss

" The Journey's End Battalion . The 9th East Surrey in the Great War" by Michael Lucas 2012



ISBN: 978 1 52674 448 7

Pen & Sword

Peter Harris has kindly agreed to lead the discussion.

Remembrance services
taking place in Chesterfield during November

Spital Cemetery
Monday 5 November at 2pm

St Augustine's Church, Whitecotes Lane
Sunday 11 November at 9.30am

Hasland
Sunday 11 November at 10am
Hasland Methodist Church

Staveley
Sunday 11 November at 11am
Taking place at the war memorial

Brampton
Sunday 11 November at 11am
St Thomas' Church,

Crich Memorial
Sunday 11 November, 11am
Organised by the Chesterfield branch, Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Association.

Old Grammar School, West Studios
Sunday 11 November at 11am

Newbold
Sunday 11 November at noon

Chesterfield Town Centre
Sunday 11 November at 11am
Eleventh Hour Ceremony at St Mary and All Saints Church
2.30pm - service at St Mary and All Saints' Church, parade and wreath-laying at the war memorial, Rose Hill.

Brimington
Sunday 11 November at 3pm
Parade and service

Christ Church, Sheffield Road
Sunday 11 November at 6.30pm
Organised by the Chesterfield branch of The Old Contemptibles' Association.

In addition, Chesterfield's Mayor, Councillor Stuart Brittain, will lay a wreath at each publicly accessible WW1 war memorial in the borough and take part in a short ceremony.

October Meeting

With the opening formalities of the meeting over, Branch chair, Tony Bolton introduced our speaker for the evening, Peter Hodgkinson. Of course, Peter really needs no introduction to Chesterfield Branch attendees as he was a founder member, secretary, then chairman when Tim Priestly stood down. With a lifetime interest in the First World War, Peter later completed an MA and PhD at the University of Birmingham, and 'British Infantry Battalion Commanders in the First World War' (Ashgate) was based on that PhD research. He then wrote 'Glum Heroes: Hardship, Fear and Death - Resilience and Coping in the British Army on the Western Front' (Helion), an essay on how soldiers managed potential trauma using resources generated by the current social norms of stoicism and manliness.

His latest work, the `British Army at the Battle of the Selle,9-24 October 1918 `has been published recently by Helion and his presentation was based upon his intensive researches that went in to producing this book.

This battle took place two months on from the Battle of Amiens where the BEF had achieved total surprise, had pre-registered 95% of the enemies artillery, had used 550 tanks, had used cavalry, they had used air power in ground attack and somewhat less successfully bridges in the enemies rear. In many ways Amiens is the second exposition of the BEF in modern warfare.

In talking of the Battle of the Selle , Peter said he wanted to achieve two things, firstly to tell of a battle about which most people know very little and in doing so to give some sense of what John Terraine would have called the `texture` of the fighting in the 100 Days. Peter said he would highlight that the Battle of Amiens was the exception rather than the rule. Secondly, he wanted his audience to understand the BEF`s way of war in the 100Days – or at least Fourth Army`s `way of war` and by doing so show the limitations of what Prior and Wilson called the `weapons system` - the infallible weapons system.

To begin with Peter looked at the chronology of 4th Army at, and beyond the Hindenburg Line.

29th September – punched their way through the Hindenburg Line

3rd to 5th October – capture the last of the Hindenburg support positions

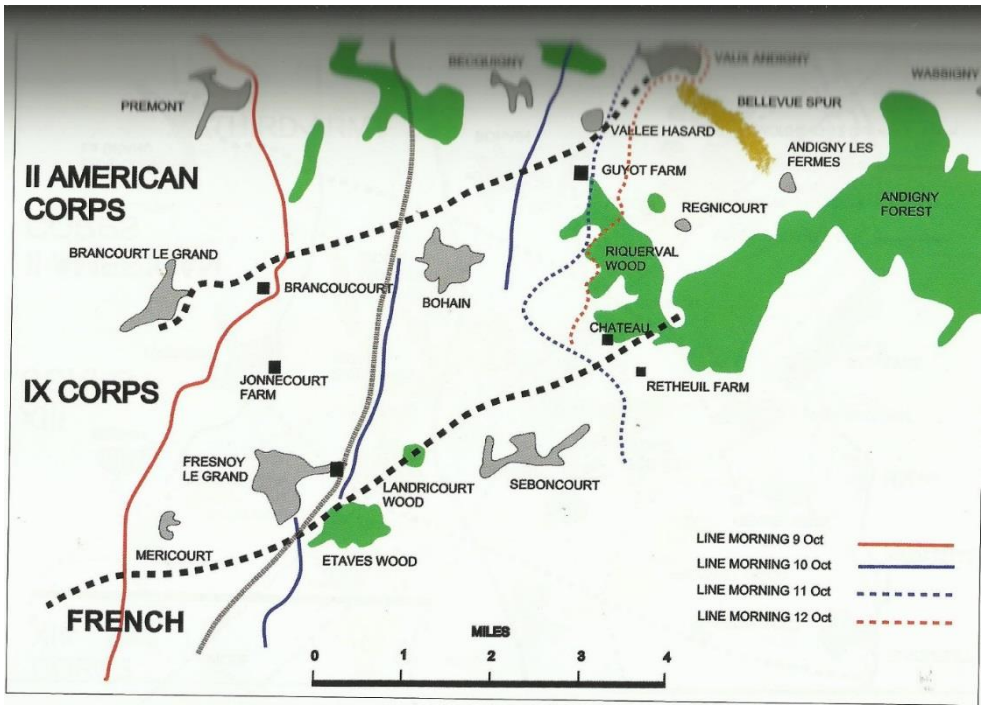
Third Army to the north is somewhat slower, Fourth army always being the spearhead. On the evening of the 8th of October, Third Army take Cambrai with the German 3rd and 18th Armies pulling back across the River Selle to prepared positions. 9th to the 12th October is the rather ill

named `pursuit to the Selle`, 17th to 19th October is the Battle of the Selle itself. In the middle of that battle the German 18th army pulls back across the River Sambre

Between 23rd and 25th October Third Army were driving into the flank of German 2nd army towards Landrecies culminating in the last battle of the war, the Battle of the Sambre.

Peter then put up – in his words – a rather indistinct map from the Official History – showing the area of the Battle of the Selle which took place between Le Cateau and the Andigny Forest to the south. There are three geographic features to note, the first the River Selle itself, then there is the Andigny Forest and finally the Bellvue Spur. The pursuit had shown the power of the German army and some of the deficits of Fourth Army as in retreating the Germans are always able during the pursuit to stop Fourth Army whenever they want by judiciously placed machine guns. It was not just these three geographic features, the Selle lies in a valley so in order to cross it to what the Germans call the `*Hermanstellung*`, you have to go down one side of the valley then up quite a steep far side. There is also the Sambre-Oise canal and in between the two there is a plateau and the Germans have withdrawn their artillery to this plateau. Of course the Germans know this ground exactly, Fourth Army has only rudimentary maps. So the Germans know every location which means they can shell it powerfully and at random whenever they choose. Fourth Army have not been faultless, they blunder at Cantigny Wood and the village of Honnechy resulting in hideous casualties and they attempt a one battalion attack on Riquerval Wood and they attempt a two battalion attack, head on, on the Belle Vue Spur, coming to grief on both occasions. Basic errors which Fourth Army should have learned to deal with somewhat differently.

The Germans have retired to the *Hermanstellung* which they ordered to be constructed on September 12th but they simply don`t have the manpower to create a substantial line but they have attempted to create their traditional defence in depth system. The *Hermanstellung* has an outpost zone of between 30 and 300 metres which of course includes the River Selle. On the east bank of the Selle they have fortified a railway which is either in dep cuttings or high embankments – an ideal position for defence. To the south along the Bellvue Spur and across the tip of the Andigny Forest they have trenches protected by barbed wire. On the slope leading up from the valley there is the German main line of resistance. The railway line is the HWL1 and on the slope out of the valley there are a series of rifle pits and machine gun nests.



Peter then said he was going to talk about two British Corps of Fourth Army not the American Corps because they were `unspectacular` at the Selle, in fact, for many reasons they failed utterly. In the south, facing the Andigny forest at the Bellvue Spur we have IX Corps commanded by Walter Pipon Braithwaite (left)

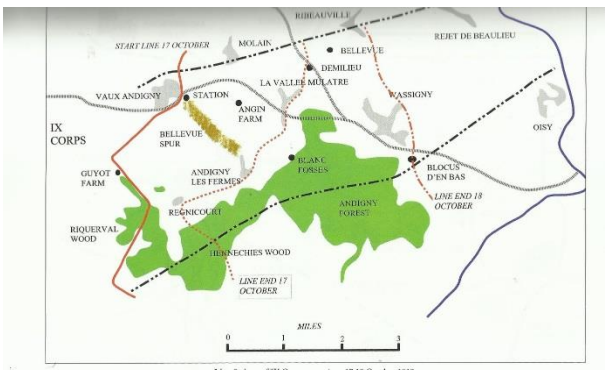
He had only taken command of IX Corps on the 13th of September and despite the blundering in front of the Cantigny Forest he was going to prove and able commander in these final stages of the war.

In the north XIII Corps was commanded by Sir Thomas Lethbridge Napier Morland and he was one of the longest living Corps commanders during the First World War but is well known for being up a tree observing the battle on the 1st July 1916 - where corps commanders are not necessarily to be found!

Of the two of them, Sir Henry Rawlinson, the army commander, rated Braithwaite higher than he did Morland.

Logistics….the planning for this battle given that the pursuit came to an end on the 12th of October and the battle commenced on the 17th, planning took FOUR days for this major set piece attack and when you think of the time it took to plan some of the other set-piece attacks of the war, that was pretty efficient.

Fourth Army`s progress and their success at this stage of the war i.e. the tempo or keeping up of pressure on the German army was largely dictated by engineering and logistics and Rawlinson was most concerned – and rightly so – with the railways which were constantly be blown up by those darned Germans ! In the south, the railhead for IX Corps was ten miles to the rear and for 1st Division who were to be involved in the Battle of the Selle, their railhead was 20 miles behind. In XIII to the north the distance from the railhead was seventeen miles and for 66th division, in the very north of the battlefield it was actually 29 miles by road from their railhead. This, therefore, is an army supplying itself by horse, motor vehicle, well in advance of its railheads. Moving artillery is equally important and in fact the gunners proved very effective in getting their guns into position and the heavy artillery and the field artillery was there to commence the bombardment on the 15th September.Peter said he had commented upon IX Corps `blundering` during the pursuit, but Braithwaite had obviously sat back and reflected on doing better and they planned an absolutely novel form of attack. So instead of mounting any head on attack



They were going to mount their attack from Vaux Andigny. Riquerval Wood and Hennechies Wood were to be subject to a `Chinese attack`by 7th Brigade who had dummy tanks, pop up figures etc. which entirely fooled the Germans on the day and the forest is going to be `pinched out` with the French moving up from the south, the British from Vau Andigny meeting east of the Bellevue Spur. 138th and 139th brigades of 46th Division are going to advance into the valley and hold the line between Regnicourt and Andigny Les Fermes. 6th and 1st Divisions are going to try something even more complex by attacking a tiny area just behind Vau Andigny station, 6th Division is going to go up the Bellevue Spur and into the Angin Valley beyond. 1st Division will then pass through them and move along the spur and into the valley. Peter then put up slides of rather complex barrage maps drawing attention to the barrage lines which shows the barrage to be oblique with respect to the attacking troops, particularly in the southern part of the area, who are not following the barrage they are going obliquely across the back of the barrage and this is going to prove problematic on the day. How accurate was this barrage? – on paper it looks pretty complex. But what 46th Division was promised that on the day it would be an `area shoot` only, the rear end of the barrage would be quite rough and not to follow it too closely, not the usual advice given to an attacking division.

The enemy had excellent positions on the Bellevue Spur, dominating the entire valley – a killing field *except* on the morning of the 17th of October, there was thick fog. The battle on the 17th starts across the whole front at 05.20 in the morning, Fourth Army`s standard attack time and Peter asked was this a wise decision to have a standard attack time? The Germans would know exactly when you are coming.

The dotted red line on the map is the intermediate objective and then there was three further objectives for the 17th of October which would take them to the Sambre-Oise Canal. The only achieved the red dotted line on the 17th of October. So, tactically, two brigades of 46th Division advanced down the valley on the left with Vickers machine guns and Stokes mortars protecting their flanks with a number of field guns under the command of the Infantry C.O.. So, it is thick fog, they are following an oblique barrage and they pass through the HWL 1 line shutting down some machine gun posts, but leaving others intact. Peter went on to make a point, machine guns, the German defence at the Selle is predicated on automatic fire, of which they had lots of. So, in one copse near Regnicourt, which is subjected to perfect SS143 infantry tactics, the 1/8th Sherwood Foresters captured 140 men and no less than 27 heavy machine guns. In this advance up the valley, in fact the 1/8th Sherwood Foresters consider this their toughest action of the entire war.

Peter then put up the barrage map for 6th and 1st Divisions which showed the Bellvue Spur, Vaux Andigny and fanning out into the Angin valley and across the ridge, the red dotted line (first objective line) and the protective barrage line. He asked the audience to note the railway line. 6th Division will take HWL1, then 1st Division will pass through them, but the Germans would have a great field of observation across the Angin valley if there hadn`t been fog that morning. 6th Division is commanded by Thomas Owen Marden, 1st Division by Peter Edward Strickland, together with Gerald Farrell Boyd, these three men have risen from Battalion Commanders (GSO1`s) at the start of the war and they represent the true evolution of the Divisional Commander during the First World War. These men are technocrats of war, they are men who understand exactly what has to be done in trench warfare, masters of detail. Despite a two day bombardment when 6th Division proceed up the Bellevue Spur they find the wire completely uncut and as with every place on the battlefield that day, the creeping barrage moving 100 yards every three minutes is lost, they have to cut the wire, they have to fight their way by hand into the HWL1 line. XV111 Brigade is going up the Bellvue Spur and they have terrible problems, they are tired, have taken a battering at the Hindenburg Line, have a large number of

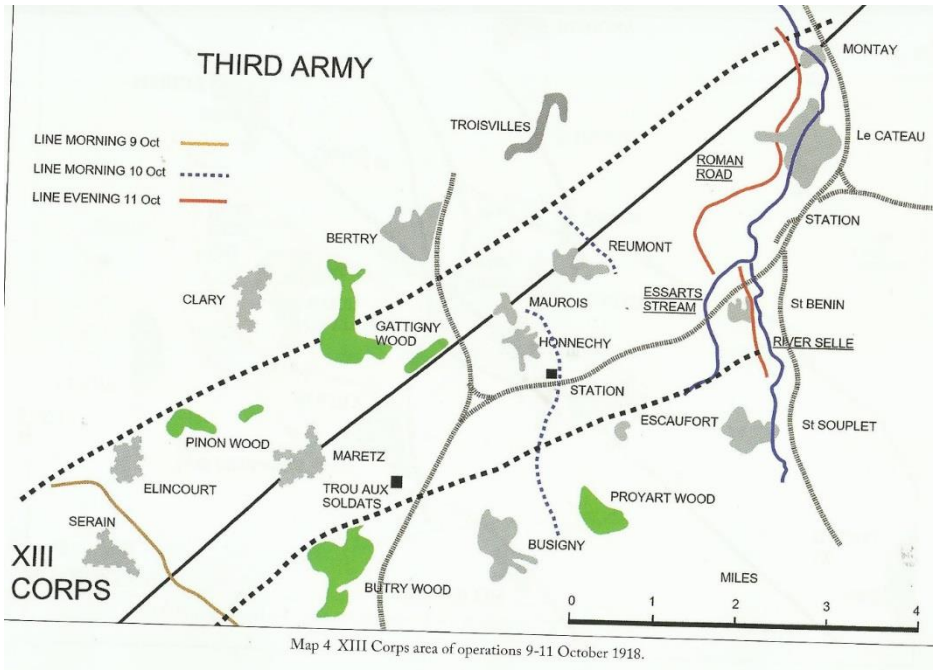
new recruits and are possibly being led by very tired commanders. 11th Essex, who are first up the Bellvue Spur, meet the uncut wire, lose their creeping barrage and simply stall. In the fog some of the 11th Essex manage to wander straight across the valley and participate in the capture of Regnicourt with the help of one of the four tanks which had accompanied them whilst in the fog the participating battalions get confused and mixed up, 2nd Durham Light Infantry are going up the angina valley and stall in exactly the same way and with Belle Vue farm untaken, it dominates the Angin valley and the advance of the Corps is pinned down. However, 1st Division, commanded by Peter Strickland are not held up by the wire and `barrel` through. 1st Loyal North Lancs go up the Bellvue Spur and outflank Bellvue Farm and in a ferocious assault they smash the enemy, taking 170 prisoners, 10 machine guns, and the advance resumes, up the Spur and down the valley. 1st Division now head for La Vallee Mulatre and Peter ask folks to note the railway line running into the western edge of the village. At 9 o`clock 1st Northants enter the village, two tanks proceeding, very unwisely down the railway line because in the town they drop into a deep cutting and of course the Germans are waiting on the other side of the railway bridge. They knock out the first tank meaning that the second tank can`t go anywhere. 1st Northants expel the enemy from the village but the Germans counter attack at midday and are pushed back into the centre. It should be noted that that day – October 17th – the Germans launched 21 counter-attacks across the whole Selle front. They are not unmotivated soldiers, they are not beaten soldiers – they use the usual German defensive doctrine of counterattack, counterattack, counterattack! Further counter attacks take place but an impasse is reached in the middle of the village. A further barrage is arranged for 5pm and unfortunately for the Germans this coincides with another counter-attack which is completely smashed and fifteen minutes later the 1st Northants control the entire village.

2nd Kings Royal Rifle corps have come down to the east of the village but are held up by concealed machine gun nests, 51 machine guns ultimately being captured from this small area. In their rear four `Whippets` of the 4th Light tank battalion come up the valley and are ordered to attack the machine gun nests and in quick succession three of these are knocked out by a single German artillery piece. And here the advance ends for the day, shown on the map by the red dotted line – what was originally the intermediate objective – not even the first objective.

The following day the 1st Black Watch will advance from La Vallee Mulatre, through the tip of the forest to take the village of Wassigny and it is worth considering this one battalion attack from the tactical point of view. They set of on the morning of the 18th, on a two company front, following the barrage very closely. They have their Vickers guns to the rear giving covering fire over their heads, a further eight guns covering their flank, which fire 6000 rounds. More machine guns follow to the rear of the units firing 12000 rounds. In all, 40 Vickers machine guns fire a total of 30000 rounds just to support this single battalion. They advance rapidly through the tip of the forest, their impetus keeping them close to the barrage and their platoons using Lewis guns mutually supporting each other against German resistance. They sweep everything before them. German resistance collapses completely on the 18th of October and Wassigny is swiftly consolidated and at the end of the day they met up with the French at the eastern edge of the Andigny Forest. It had been an absolutely model attack. On the 19th the 1st Division reach the Sambre-Oise canal, two days after they should have taken the first day`s objective.

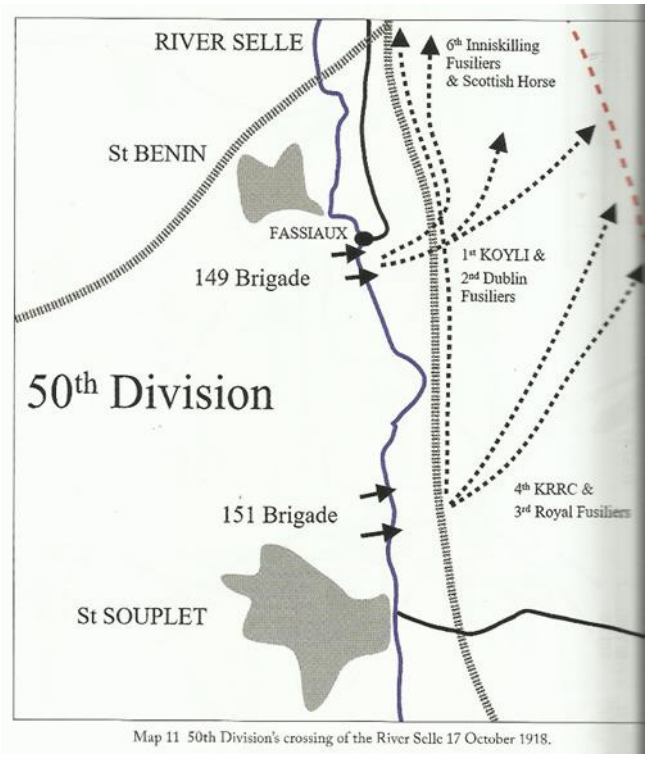
Peter then briefly touched on the II American Corps, with a picture of the River Selle..a mere stream, at Molain. Here the HWL1 line is following the railway, central north to south on the map, partly hidden in the Sabliere Wood and was a quite a proposition for the infantry to go up and take it.

To the north of the Americans is XIII Corps who are somewhat constrained because reconnaissance has revealed that recent rain – and a cunning enemy who have dammed the river south of Le Cateau – has created a big flood making the opportunities for crossing the River Selle pretty small .66th Division and 50th Division will cross at two locations.



Map 4 XIII Corps area of operations 9-11 October 1918.

Peter then put up another barrage plan which would leave Le Cateau untouched, four barrages in all, each starting at a different time and each in a slightly different direction. Whilst it was a complex artillery procedure, Peter suspected that it was inadequate, as was the barrage fired for 46th Division in the south. 50 th Division was commanded by Henry Cholmondeley Jackson, a battalion commander at the outbreak of war and a ferociously efficient man. The attack for 50th division was complex, 151 Brigade, on the divisions right are to cross the Selle near St. Souplet,

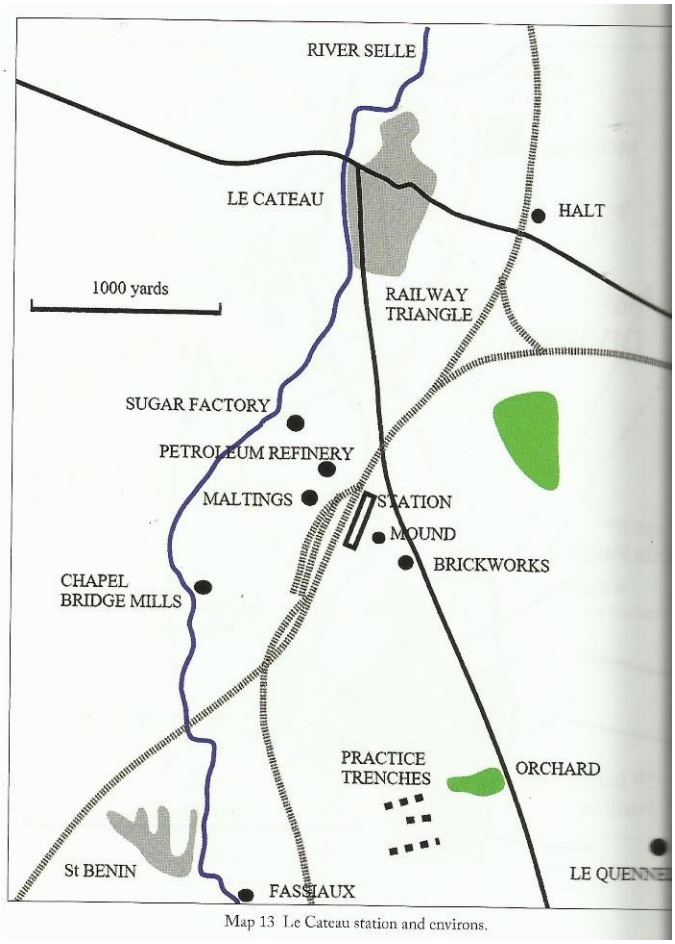


Map 11 50th Division's crossing of the River Selle 17 October 1918.

4th King`s Royal Rifle Corps and 3rd Royal Fusiliers are going to move uphill to take the intermediate objective. 6th Inniskillen Fusiliers are going to do something incredibly complex, they are going to turn left and roll up the entirety of the railway line, the main German defensive position from the south, and head towards Le Cateau station. On the left 149th Brigade are going to cross the river and do much the same, 1st KOYLI and 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers are going to move on the intermediate objective, while the Scottish Horse (13th Black Watch) are going to turn north, follow the Inniskillen Fusiliers, pass them, take Le Cateau railway station and take the strong point railway triangle just to the north of the railway station. The final brigade, 150th, is going to leap-frog these positions and proceed on and across the plateau. In the north, 66th Division are going to start somewhat later and meet up with 50th Division on the eastern side of Le Cateau. Needless to say, the enemy is not going to let all of this happen on the 17th of October. 4th Kings Royal rifle corps crossed the river and

discovered that what they had in front of them was a field of barbed wire, 30 yards deep that has not been cut by the artillery. So, just as on the Bellevue Spur, they have to spend time cutting their way through it and the barrage is lost, it taking them 45 minutes to get across, fighting in the HWL1, plus a further 4 hours to reach the intermediate objective. Ist Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, unfortunately, fell victim to a series of heavily defended orchards – remember at this time this area was a fruit growing region and it only took a single strand of barbed wire threaded through a hedge to create quite a barrier for advancing troops. The 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers take two hours to take the HWL1, the railway line such was the degree of German resistance.

Everything grinds to a halt and by midday when 150 Brigade are going to leap-frog them and carry on through, the situation was highly confused, battalions were mixed with each other and Major-General Henry Jackson calls Brigadier-General Rollo who is commanding 150 Brigade, back from the HWL1 where he has his forward HQ to discuss what is to be done. In order to restore command and control, Jackson takes a quite unusual decision, he places the 9 battalions under the control of a brigadier general irrespective of their brigade of origin and that brigadier puts one battalion commander in charge of the whole front. This is an inventive solution. Meanwhile vicious fighting is going on at Le Cateau station. This had been enlarged by the Germans to create a detraining point



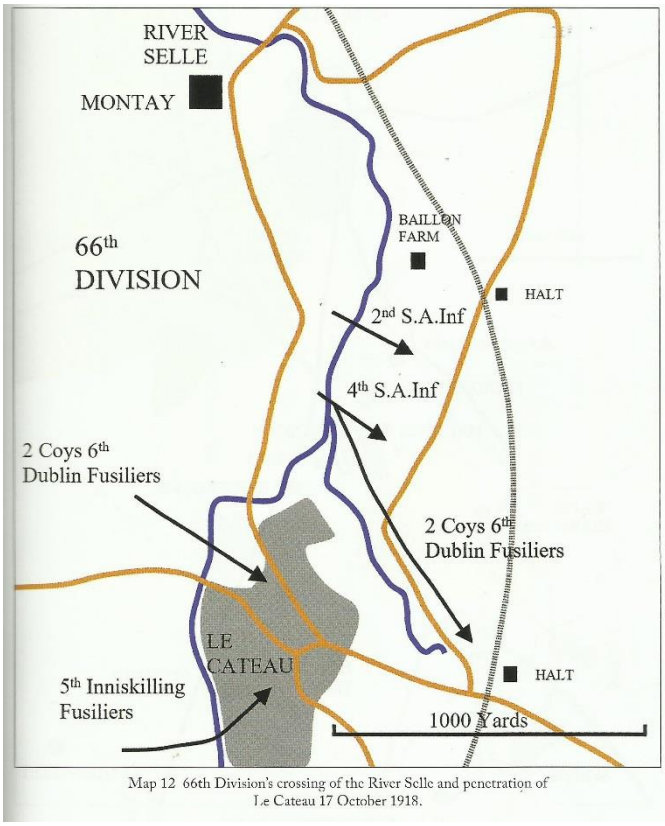
Map 13 Le Cateau station and environs.

Peter then put up a slide showing the environs of Le Cateau station, particularly the brickworks, the petroleum refinery and the maltings, each of these a little fort. To make matters worse the Scottish Horse and the Inniskilling Fusiliers are advancing up the railway and to their right is a slope and the brickworks which is a big machine gun position. There is also a mound, hidden in trees which the British haven't a clue about – no one has spotted it from the air.

The leading battalion the 6th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers arrived at the station at 8.15 and three groups of troops begin to infiltrate the station area, all in danger of being cut off from the rest of the battalion. Tanks are called for but only one appeared before the infantry arrived, made a circuit then went away. To compound matters at 12.30 the Germans make an attack downhill from the brickworks, but are repelled although the 6th Inniskiling Fusiliers are pushed back towards the railway line. 14.00hrs in the afternoon, another barrage is put down and the Scottish Horse attack through the Inniskillings and take the mound, the maltings and the refinery but by this time the British units are completely intermixed by are all subject to Henry Jackson`s re-organisation. At 5pm another barrage is called for to take the station but the infantry is still disorganised and they cannot attack. The attack is postponed until 9pm when the 2nd Northumberland Fusiliers are down to make this assault, aimed optimistically at the railway

triangle which, like most of the railways in this area run in cuttings which makes for good fortified positions. By 9.15 the Northumberlands are just in their start positions and the attack is aborted, thus ending the offensive actions on the 17th.

To the north of Le Cateau the 66th Division is commanded by the brilliant, but undoubtedly personality disordered, Major-General Hugh Keppell-Bethel, a man with a violent temper, quite an obnoxious personality, who was, incidentally, the youngest Major-General of either World War. 66th Division are going to cross the railway north of Le Cateau and are going to use the South African Brigade



Map 12 66th Division's crossing of the River Selle and penetration of Le Cateau 17 October 1918.

The 2nd and 4th South African Infantry crossed the river and were in place on the east bank and assemble within 40 yards of the enemy machine guns. They had set off later that day than some of the other units as they did not have so far to go. They have to make their way through deep belts of barbed wire, cross the railway in the cutting and fan out. The Germans have placed machine guns at and between the two railway halts (see map) from which they can enfilade the railway cutting. The Germans counter attack and drive the South Africans back into the railway cutting and there they remain for the rest of the day under fire from German machine guns positioned at the two railway halts. Archie Montgomery, MGGS 4th Army, likened this action to the maelstrom in Delville wood in 1916. The Inniskiling Fusiliers and the Dublin Fusiliers enter Le Cateau itself and there is some street fighting.

On the morning of the 18th, 50th Division attack again and the enemy, which had not been reinforced overnight simply gives way and they flee from the station and the railway triangle and an enormous gap opens up into which 50th Division drives and at this point the Battle of the Selle is over. In the south IX Corps touch the River Sambre and the line turns towards Le Cateau in the north and 3rd and 4th Army are going to drive them back before the Battle of the Sambre will take place.

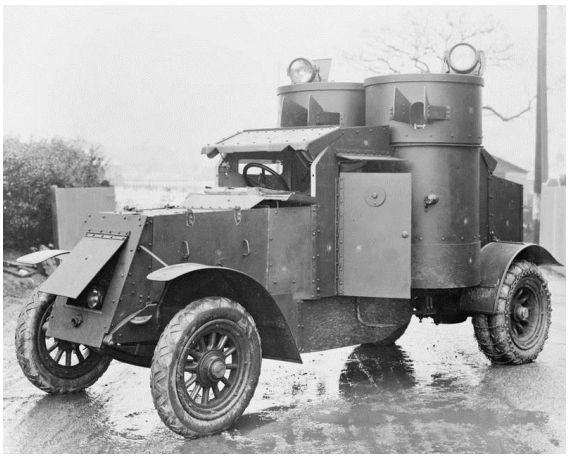
The 100 Days, even if they do represent the greatest series of victories ever achieved by any British Army, are not days of unalloyed success, the 17th of October, as we have seen was a day of intense struggle and only the intermediate objective, with three further objectives is actually obtained. But, 4th Army had demonstrated its ability to plan a major set piece battle in only four days. The main planning is of course done at Corps level. If you look at 4th army`s instructions for this battle they run to no more than eight pieces of paper, The main planning is done by competent Corps Commanders and by exceptionally competent Divisional Commanders. The inventive nature of these operations in tackling the geography seems to indicate an army very nearly at the top of its game. But what frustrated 4th Army`s way of the war at the Selle? Firstly, tempo is always frustrated by logistics, always frustrated by restoring rail and road.

Secondly, it is frustrated by Clausewitz`s `independent will of the enemy` something an army commander can never take into account and on that day the Germans give stiff resistance. Thirdly, they suffer a major intelligence failure. Fourthly, they are frustrated in their ability to deploy the weapons systems.

The Battle of the Selle represents the BEF`s most significant intelligence failure of the entire war. Firstly, they only know the outline of the German defences the *Hermanstellung* and they have no prior notice of the wire which everybody finds is completely uncut, they had no idea it was there and this is due to lack of air reconnaissance which is down to the weather. But more significantly, of the 11 German divisions in the line on the 17th of October, the BEF only expected six, possibly one more. They were aware of the other four but believed these had been withdrawn from the line. So, the BEF met many more of the enemy that morning than it thought it was likely to. Lastly, there was the inability to patrol the river to obtain prisoners. Then there was the `independent will of the enemy`….the willingness of the Germans to resist was not anticipated. This indicates some hubris on the part of 4th army, possibly due to their reliance on prisoners testimonies to judge morale and of course the Germans are surrendering in considerable numbers, especially as most know that an armistice is being asked for and any soldier surrendering to the oncoming enemy is bound to tell the oncoming enemy what it wants to hear. So the BEF has assumed that German morale was much lower than it actually was and it is an interesting question as to why the German morale was higher than the British expected it to be.

We must not be seduced by the exquisite success of the opening day of the Battle of Amiens, to think of this weapons system, so beautifully employed at Amiens, to be an infallible formula, to trot out by the BEF wherever it wanted to trot out a set-piece attack. Peter then set out to discuss each part of the `weapons system` - cavalry, air power, artillery, tanks, communications, mobile firepower and infantry.

Firstly cavalry and their mobile sidekicks, of which Peter had made little or no mention in his presentation so far, except that the cavalry takes part in the pursuit to the Selle. On the 17th of September, Sir Douglas Haig orders a training exercise , the cavalry , plus mobile arms, the RAF, Royal Engineers, artillery and infantry in buses and is clearly aimed at the Selle lines, penetration and pursuit to the rail hub at Valenciennes about 15 miles to the north. Haig is very critical of the outcome, particularly of the cavalry in this exercise. He said `….you must not make direct charges at enemy defensive strongpoints…`. So when, on the 9th of October, the first day of the pursuit, the cavalry has its chance and they attack Cattigny Wood and the village of Honnechy, in XIII Corps part of the battlefield, what do they do? They make a direct charge at enemy strongpoints bristling with machine guns leaving 58 dead, 348 cavalrymen wounded and possibly worse, 401 horses are destroyed. Peter drove home the point that even at this stage of the war the British were still pitting man, horse..and sword, against entrenched machine guns. The Canadian cavalry brigade charged, swords raised in the air - cavalry could never have penetrated the HWL1 line on the Selle - a line which Sir Douglas Haig is unaware of when he planned the advance on Valenciennes.



The Austin armoured car, destined for Russia is operated with the cavalry took part in the advance but it was underdeveloped with weak axles which often failed even on rough roads, never mind other terrain. So the most mobile part of the BEF took no part in the Battle of the Selle.

Of course air power had become increasingly important to the BEF`s armoury in two ways, in Trenchard`s mind that the RAF was there to support the forces on the ground, both in reconnaissance and ground support. Between the 9th, the start of the pursuit and the 16th, the day before the Selle battle opens, there are only two days in which the RAF can fly because of rain and fog. Captain Walter Longton of 5th Brigade RAF, makes two flights along the HWL1 and it is only due to him that the BEF have any idea at all as to what the *Hermannstellung* comprises. But it also means that they acquire almost no information for counter battery fire.

Then there is ground support which had rather mixed results on the Battle of Amiens but just to contrast it on the first day of the pursuit, the RAF in support of 4th Army dropped 500 bombs and fired 36000 rounds of machine gun bullets. On the 17th of October it dropped 84 bombs and fired off 8675 rounds of ammunition, making, therefore, very little contribution on the opening day of the Battle of the Selle as the morning fog only starts to clear about midday.

Artillery…unlike the Battle of Amiens or the forcing of the Hindenburg positions, Fourth Army fired a preliminary bombardment for two days as surprise in attack is not possible here, the chief feature of Amiens was the Germans know they were coming but do not know when. So they return to the preliminary bombardment – two days – and is based upon what Fourth Army tells the artillery to fire at, road junctions and positions that they *think* artillery might be in, but don`t really know because of the weather they cannot fly. Of course, as Peter, had already described, this preliminary bombardment was completely ineffective, its inability to destroy any of the wire obstacles. This brings into question accuracy, repeatedly moving heavy artillery from position to position to position during the 100 Days as in order to use accurate predictive fire you have to know exactly (a) where the enemy is and (b) where you are and if the mapping of the Selle was crap – which it was – you could never achieve that successfully. The issue of the barrage, the BEF had a standard barrage of 100 yards in three minutes in order to save ammunition and of course this proved to move entirely too quickly and this meant that any effect on the HWL1 and the barbed wire was lost immediately. Counter battery fire was made largely impossible by the RAF`s inability to fly. So during the four days there are only 33 zone calls – a zone call being when an aircraft reports that there is a German gun at a particular map reference. The supposed success rate on those batteries was 23% which explains why the German artillery was so effective during the Selle operations unlike at Amiens. German artillery at the Selle was accurate and effective. The mobile support supplied by field guns pushed up close behind the infantry and under the command of the infantry battalion commanders certainly was effective on the battlefield that day.

Tanks, 550 of them at Amiens, probably no more than 60 supporting Fourth Army at Selle. Moving tanks is of course a major logistical challenge, the endurance of a tank is 200 miles and it had to be driven beyond the railheads and this led to an increasing series of mechanical

breakdowns, No more than 20 tanks were supporting each of the three groups of II American Corps and of the 20 tanks of the 301st American Tank Brigade which attacked in the middle sandwiched between the two British Corps only one reached the intermediate objective. So the other 19 were lost in fog, broke down or were hit be enemy artillery and one American tank commander had the unfortunate experience of crossing the River Selle three times on account of having broken his compass! There was occasional serendipitous success but they proved incredibly vulnerable to artillery fire and rivers have marshy ground making passage difficult. Tanks made no contribution to the Battle of the Selle.

Communications. Runners and pigeons made their appearance again and the devolved command which is evident in Fourth Army at the Selle is not because Fourth Army thinks it is a good thing to have but it is the only way of overcoming the issue of poor communications making the man on the spot the best place to make a decision on what to do.

Mobile firepower, the Stokes mortar and the Vickers machine gun as we have seen during the attack by the 1st Black Watch at Andigny was probably the most important mobile firepower that assisted the infantry forward along with the use of 18 pounder field guns.

Peter Simkins maxim is no more true at any point in the 100 Days than it is at the Selle;

`The doggedness and resilience of the British Soldier remained as important, perhaps even more important than the methods he employed…`

The British Infantry certainly was dogged. This was a battle of the British infantry versus a heavily effective automatic weapon defence mounted at times, in the description of the Americans as fanatically and the British infantry was subjected to repeated counterattacks and very accurate enemy artillery fire. But, it was well led in devolved command. It was led from the front at Brigade and divisional level by highly effective men.

In conclusion Peter said we must not be seduced by the `model` of Amiens, never again in the Hundred Days was the British Army able to mobilise its weapons systems in the way it did at the Battle of Amiens.

At the Selle weather, logistics and the pace of the advance downgraded the contribution of that weapons system so much vaunted by Prior and Wilson.

The Battle at the Selle was the most violent soldiers' battle and for Peter, the Selle is the climactic battle of the Hundred Days. The Germans are no busted flush, but the Selle finishes them. The Sambre is indeed the final battle of the war but it is the Selle that sweeps the last vestiges of German resistance away.

With that statement, Peter concluded his presentation. Tony Bolton then kicked off an interesting Question/Answer / Discussion session before the evening concluded with members according Peter with a hearty vote of thanks.

Branch Outing to the Museum of Lincolnshire Life and The Lincoln WFA Branch Great War Seminar

Our intrepid travellers set off on a beautiful morning from the car park at our meeting venue, Chesterfield Labour Club at 08.30 on the 29th September. In addition to those from Chesterfield, there were members from Derby, Ripley, Nottingham, Sheffield, Cromford and Worksop in the party.

We arrived just before the museum opened at 10 am and we were soon joined by First World War tank expert, Richard Pullen.

Richard, who is chairman of the group `Friends of the Lincoln Tank had offered to come along and talk to our members about the `Lincoln tank`. As Richard explained the Mark IV tank was the most numerous of the different types of tank in use by the British Army in the First World War, with 1,220 built. It entered service in 1917. The example at Lincoln is a Female, meaning that it carried machine guns only. Male tanks were armed with cannon. It was built in Birmingham although all the design work was done at Lincoln. Only seven Mark IVs are known to survive. There are three in the UK, at Lincoln, Ashford and at the Tank Museum, Bovington, Dorset. There is one in Brussels, one in Canberra and one in the USA. The last is the veteran of the Battle of Cambrai, "Deborah", at Flesquieres, France.

Richard went on to say that for more than 30 years, the tank has taken pride of place at the Museum of Lincolnshire Life, loaned by Bovington Tank Museum to honour the city's role in the invention of the machine. During that time, it was believed to be Flirt II, a tank that had been damaged during the war in France, captured by the Germans, taken to Belgium for propaganda reasons and then never seen again until she reappeared at Bovington. However, late last year, evidence came to light suggesting it was in fact a different Mark IV Female tank that had returned. During a photo shoot, a partial serial number was found inside by Richard . That proved that the tank we all thought was Flirt was, in fact, a different one. Interestingly, this find supported a theory proposed just a month earlier by tank historian Gwyn Evans. Gwyn had said: "The evidence is that Flirt is, in fact, tank number 2743, which was possibly known as 'Daphne' and saw service in France with 12th Company, D Battalion of the Tank Corps in August 1917. "After the war, it was presented to the city of Gloucester and stood in Gloucester Park until the 1940s. Later, it arrived at the Royal Armoured Corps Centre at Bovington Camp, Dorset, where it became one of the first exhibits of the Tank Museum. Richard went on to take a number of questions from our group before we all went our separate ways to view what is in fact a very interesting (and free !) museum. Before rejoining our coach to head off down to the Seminar venue, most of us took advantage to have something to eat and drink in the little café in a corner of the main courtyard

Here we have Richard explaining some of the details of the Lewis guns mounted on the side sponsons.

There are a number of other World War One artifacts in the museum, including a German field gun and here, a Clerget rotary aircraft engine, many of which were produced in factories in the Lincoln area.

Details of the museum can be found here https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/heritage-and-tourism/museum-of-lincolnshire-life/

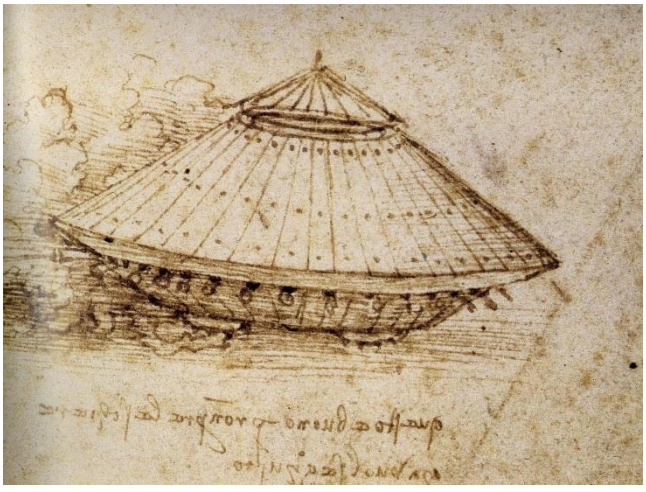
On leaving the museum we made our way by bus to the venue for the Great War seminar – set in The Leap Auditorium within The Collection Museum in the heart of Lincoln where we joined almost 100 other enthusiasts in all aspects of Great War history.

Lincoln Branch Chairman Jonathan D`Hooghe welcomed all to the event and introduced the first speaker of the afternoon, Rob Thompson, a well known visitor of course to Chesterfield. Rob began his working life as a labourer before becoming, variously, a tax clerk, motor cycle despatch rider and `Youth and Community Worker` in Salford. He then took a degree in in Politics and Contemporary History graduating with a First. It was here that he `blindly` stumbled into the world of military history and The Great War which he ended up teaching at the Salford and Birmingham Universities, subsequently becoming an independent military historian specialising in logistics and engineering in the development of the BEF`s operational method on the Western Front. His publications include `Mud, Blood and Wood - BEF Operational and Combat Logistic Engineering during the Third Battle of Ypres 1917 `– in Peter Doyle and M.R. Bennett (eds) *Fields of Battle* (Kluwer 2002) and `Delivering the Goods. Operation Llandovery Castle: A Logistical and Administrative Analysis of Canadian Corps Preparations for the Battle of Amiens 8 – 11 August 1918 in G.D. Sheffield & P.Gray (eds) *Changing the War : The British Army, the Hundred Days Campaign and the Birth of the Royal Air Force , 1918* (Bloomsbury, 2013). He has also published various articles for organisations ranging from the Western Front Association to the Chartered Institute for Logistics. After the usual introductions, Rob launched into his presentation *"Running Out of Road. Supplying the BEF During the 100 Days Offensives. 1918*". This was the same talk that Rob made to Chesterfield Branch earlier this year , dealing with the logistical and supply problems the BEF had as the end of the war approached indeed as Rob showed the BEF needed Armistice as much as Germans.

Next up was the man who had just given generously of his time to our group earlier in the day at the Museum of Lincolnshire Life – Richard Pullen – whose presentation was **1918, Vindication and Victory for the Tanks.** The story of how the tanks left their image of 'folly' or 'flash in the pan' behind and became indispensable on the battlefield. In 1918 the tanks, their crews and the tactics were finally ready and without them the last 100 days of the war could have been very different indeed. The talk also covered the gradual evolution of the tank with the final machines encompassing all the technological advancements developed over two years of warfare.

Richard said that by 1918 the Tank Corps had three types of armoured fighting vehicles at their disposal

They were, top left, the Rolls Royce armoured car, right heavy tank Mark V and above, the Medium `A` - often known as the `Whippet`.

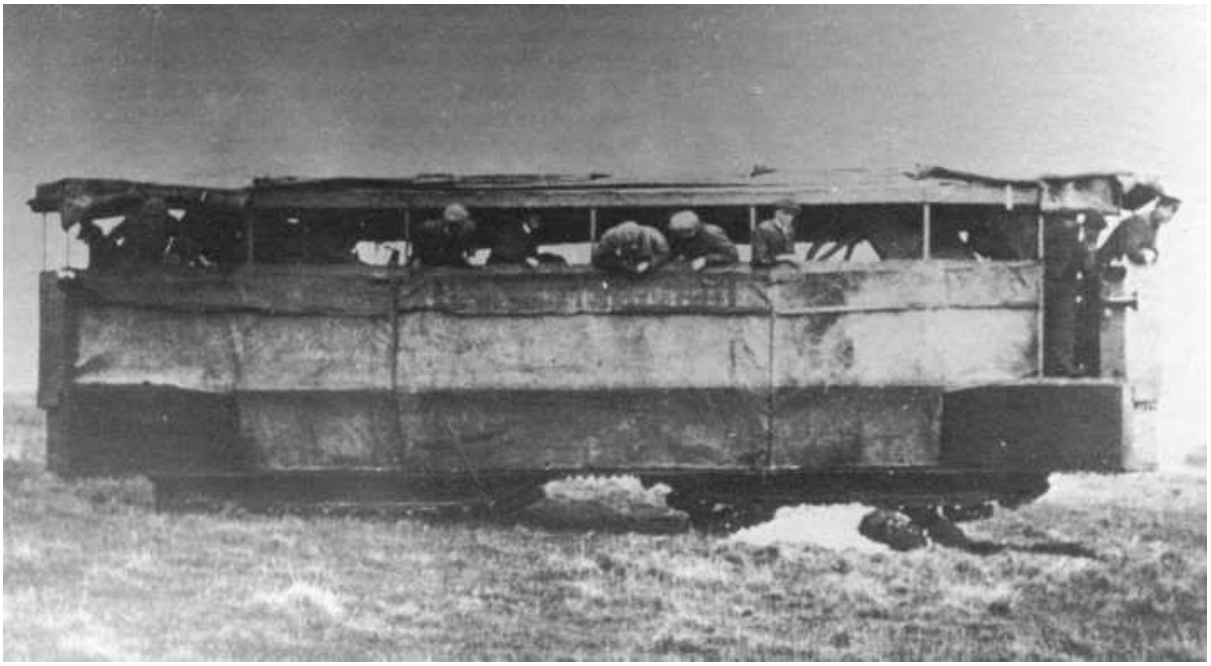


The idea of the `tank` was not a new one, it was a means of getting close to the enemy in relative safety by taking your weapon close in to a castle or other fortification for example , a trench. These designs have been looked over history but few if any ever came to anything. It was mobility linked with firepower. During the Boer war we had armoured vehicles and even armoured traction engines – although the armour plate was soon removed due to the heat in the driving compartment.

However, it was not until the Great War came along that there was an urgent need – and two other relatively recent inventions came together to create this need – barbed wire, belts and belts of it which basically ran in a continuous line from the channel to the Alps. The other invention of course was the machine gun – a weapon much favoured by the Germans indeed on the Western Front in 1914 the Germans had almost 200 to every single one *employed by the*

BEF. So for troops emerging from trenches struggling through the barbed wire into sights of the machine gunners, the inevitable conclusion was wholesale slaughter. What was needed was something to crush barbed wire and something armoured enough to ignore machine machine gun bullets - that was what the tank was – the brief the designers were given.

Richard then said he would quickly look at some of the development prototypes from which the tank evolved. The first was the `Pedrail` landship – the picture is of the prototype

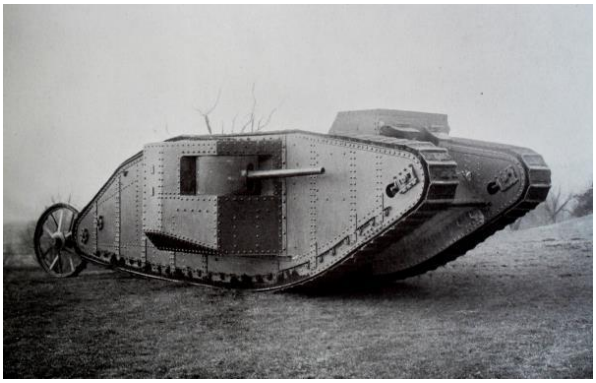


This was developed by a company in Leeds and the prototype was clad in canvas but had it gone into production it would have been sheeted in steel and bristling with machine guns. The reason it failed was because of tactics – no one was exactly sure what was to be done with these machines if they appeared on the battlefield, indeed the way this machine was going to be used was its downfall. It was to be loaded up with 30 fully combat ready troops driven across no mans` land, up to and over the German trench until the machine straddled it. When in position, a trapdoor would be opened up and the troops would drop through it into the trench below…a good idea if the Germans hadn`t seen you coming !

The net idea was the Killin Strait Tractor, here seen on trials at Wormwood Scrubs in June 1915

The idea was that they would put an armoured box around it and use it as a `landship` to get across the barbed wire but, as the picture shows it was far too small and light, no large calibre guns and was basically a non starter when it came to the landship concept. The `militarised` version had a wire cutter on the front but quite how this was to be expected to cut through the wire of the Hindenburg Line is anyones guess!

It was not until 1915 – 1916 that the idea of a `landship` took a huge step forward here in Lincoln at William Foster Ltd with the construction of , firstly, `Little Willie`, then `Mother`



`Mother` is really the prototype of the tank – she had all the features which came to be associated with a First World War tank. The six pounder cannons in the side sponsons and the rear wheels – an aid to steering – as it was considered that by turning a tank by means of stopping one side`s tracks whilst driving on the other, would just strip out the gearbox . These wheels came in handy as a counterbalance when crossing wide trenches or for carrying stores but as a steering aid proved more trouble than they were worth and they were soon disposed of completely. Mother was tested at Burton Park just outside Lincoln and one of the first things to be done was to test the guns as there was fears that when they fired the 6 pdr cannon, the entire superstructure would just collapse, indeed `Mother` had double the amount of rivets securing the sponsons compared with a production tank. After the successful tests at Hatfield near London in front of the King, Kitchener, Winston Churchill and Lloyd George it was concluded that `Mother` was what they were looking for. Such was the enthusiasm that an order for 3000 was immediately placed but, in typical military fashion that order was cut `slightly` the next day to…150! Half were to be built by Fosters in Lincoln, half by the Metropolitan Carriage & Wagon Company in Birmingham

Richard then showed a picture of a Mark 1 tank being loaded on to a railway wagon – the sponsons on the early tanks had to be removed to make the tank fit the gauge of the railway. The steering `tail` wheels can be seen, as can the Daimler petrol engine 105 horse power sleeve valve engine. Now sleeve valve engines use a lot of oil and there was no exhausts on Mark 1 tanks, the burnt fuel just escaped through vents in the roof of the tank creating a plume of blue smoke which could be seen from miles away.

The Mark 1s first saw action on the 15th of September 1916 at Flers on the Somme front

In this picture the stearing gear is raised and on the top there is a device created by an officer in the Tank Corps which he called his grenade deflector although later on he conceded that the wire netting fixed across the frame was not as tight as it should have been and would have been better described as a grenade `catcher`. That first day of action was a bit of a mixed bag of results.

One of the first problems with the tanks was lack of tactics – no one was quite sure what to do with them. Some of the military people directing the battle didn`t even want them there, didn`t know how to use them – do you send them in as infantry support – do they identify their own targets. Ultimately they sent them in in `penny packets`, a few here, a few there and, they didn`t fare well at all. Initially the Germans were terrified but it did not take them long to realise that they did not have to stop these tanks – the landscape did it for them, they got `bellied` on tree stumps, side slipped into trenches, got stuck in shell holes.

After the battle the area was full of these Mark 1 tanks, most of which had stopped due to mechanical failure. One of the main problems was where the petrol was kept, there was no fuel pump, the engine was right in the middle and the petrol tanks were in the the `horns` at the front – right where the Germans are firing at - but also the fuel was gravity fed via copper pipes down to the carburettor. It did not take for the vibration of the tank`s movement to break the soldered joints on these pipes resulting in no petrol – no engine – no tank. So they were mechanically unreliable, the landscape did for them and the Germans soon realised that they were not unstoppable.

Battlefield pictures of tanks in action are rare but Richard put up one taken at Flers which shows the crew, in the leather tank crew helmets sheltering in a shellhole along with some infantrymen and the red flag in the middle of the picture was to show that the tank was disabled.

Special leather helmets were created for tank crews to stop them banging their heads inside the tank – it wasn`t bullet or shrapnel proof – but when outside the tank in denim overalls and that shape of hat – you looked like a German – indeed tank crews were often fired upon by their own side if they had to leave the tank during an action.

Because of their mechanical shortcomings, after the battle of Flers there was many calls for the tanks to be scrapped, they hadn`t worked, this `folly` of tanks, scrap them and return the crewmen to their infantry units.

Following on from Mark 1, there was Mark II and Mark III, which were designated as training tanks but for some reason Mark IIs found themselves at the Battle of Bullecourt to make up the numbers, having lost so many Mark Is at Flers, but the problem with the Mark II was it was unarmoured – it was constructed from standard boiler plate which wasn`t capable of stopping bullets.

Back in Lincoln, the designers were beavering away having become well aware of the shortcomings of the Marks II and III and they came up with the Mark IV which was really the world`s first battle ready tank, having overcome many – but not al – of the problems associated with Marks I, II and III. Richard then put up a picture of some of the workforce at Fosters of Lincoln – all women - in front of a Mark IV tank in the spring of 1917.

This Mark IV tank was a `male` tank - they had `male` and `female` tanks – the `males` one had six pounder cannon in each of the side sponsons whilst the `female` tank had machine guns only, it was simply a means of differentiating between the two. Ernest Swinton of the Tank Corps rather unkindly said that the tanks equipped with machine guns were `female` because the machine guns `chattered like women`!

The Mark IVs, this marvelous new battle-ready tank was a huge improvement on what had gone on before, it now had a fuel pump and the fuel was stored in an armoured box so that fuel could be pumped to the engine. They had an exhaust pipe which removed most of the noxious gases from the inside compartment of the tank.

In the above picture some of the chaps at the back are holding on to the `unditching beam`, a massive hardwood beam, which, if the tank got stuck could be chained to the tracks, drawn forward by them along the rails and dropped in front to give the tank more impetus to become unstuck.

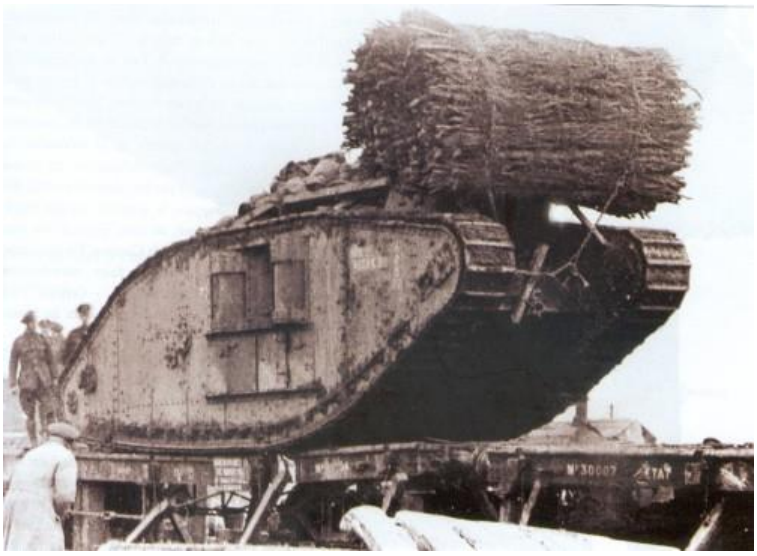
Simple pieces of engineering which proved such a great improvement over the simple Mark I tanks.

The `sponsons` on either side, enormous boxes weighing 1.5 tons each carried the cannons or machine guns but these made the tank too wide for movement by the railway and in the Mark Is they had to be removed, transported on separate railway wagons, then re-fitted when they arrived where they were going. In the Mark IV the sponsons push in and out on rails making transporting by rail so much easier.

So, new tank, what was done with it – they were sent into Passchendaele – we have all seen pictures of the awful conditions of the landscape. They could not use the roads as these had often been mined so the tanks had to cross fields turned into a quagmire by incessant rain and many of these tanks just sink into ground that wouldn`t support the weight of a man far less a 30 ton tank. Of course once stuck the German artillery starts to find them and they are soon despatched. Again tanks, out of action, are littered all over the battlefield

There were calls in Parliament that the tanks were a waste of time, they hadn`t worked, the landship experiment was a failure, return them, scrap them, let`s return to the old , traditional ways.

The Tank Corps was given one last chance – Cambrai in 1917 – to prove themselves. This time the land chosen was land which they could get across and again there was simple pieces of engineering to help them.



The simple expedient of attaching huge bundles of brushwood on to the unditching beam rails of the tank made crossing trenches which were too wide or too deep, easier. Drive up to the trench, disengage the bundle which would fall into the trench, then ride across, sometimes after several bundles had been dropped likewise. These were known as `fascines`

Over 400 tanks went in on the attack on Cambrai on November 20th 1917 and went straight through the German defences with the advance in some cases advanced miles – and this coming at times when we were often talking about advances in yards, the Tank Corps were talking about miles. But Cambrai wasn`t the success it could have been, the Germans counter attack, indeed we gave them time to get into places like Bourlon Wood, move up artillery and this picture shows how thin the armour plating was on these tanks – concentrated machine gun fire at one spot will penetrate whilst a field gun round will go through one side and out the other.

Again, after Cambrai there are tanks littered all over the battlefield but at least this time the tanks had proved what they could do – not what they couldn`t do – they had broken through the German lines and Cambrai, rather than being seen as a battle on its own should be viewed as a test for the battles to come.

For the first time, rather than just destroying captured tanks, the Germans decided to repair them when they could and use them themselves, in all around 90 were used subsequently after restoration at their workshops at Charleroi in Belgium – including painting crosses on their sides and calling them `beute panzerwagons`

These were used in Operation Michael in 1918 so the first tanks used by Germany were `Made in England`. Now we have tanks on both sides which are identical so the BEF have to paint red and white stripes on the front `horns` of their tanks so as to distinguish friend from foe

One thing we didn`t have to mix up was the Germans `home grown` machines – the A7V. There was an arms race to create the first armoured fighting vehicle – we one and it became known as a `tank` - had the Germans won the race it would have been known as a `Sturmpanzerkampfwagen`

The A7V was introduced in 1918 and only 20 were built, indeed the Germans preferred using captured British tanks. The A7V was an absolute monster, about the same length as a British tank, but very much taller which gave it a poor centre of gravity.

This picture wasn`t of troop movement, of soldiers hitching a ride, but part of the tank`s crew! A British tank had a crew of eight – the German tank had a crew of EIGHTEEN. A British tank crew were specialists – a commander could fire the guns – the gunners could operate the gears but a German tank crew each man had his own individual job – they even carried two on board engineers to deal solely with the engines.

Conditions inside were cramped and very uncomfortable – also – if the tank was hit – potentially you would lose an 18 man specialist crew. The A7V was not particularly good off road, with low tracks compared with the British tanks whose tracks went all the way around the vehicle which gave them a terrific rate of climb, indeed, some say a WW1 tank had a better rate of climb than a modern machine.

If the A7V got stuck it usually remained stuck and because of its height it lacked stability and was prone to sideslipping into a trench or even turning over, as in this picture which led to its capture , without it having fired a shot, by the French. The picture does give a good idea of what it looked like underneath.

1918 gives us the first ever Tank versus Tank battle at Villers Bretonneaux, a quick and not very spectacular affair. A patrol British Mark IV tanks out on patrol came across a patrol of German A7Vs. Those tanks in front of the British patrol were all female tanks, armed only with machine guns find their .303 machine gun bullets just bounce off the A7V tanks` armour and they reply with their 57mm Nordenfelt cannon. Suddenly, to the surprise of the A7Vs one solitary Mark IV male tank appears commanded by Frank Mitchell and he opens up with his cannons, disabling one whilst the other A7Vs scuttle off, and that was it, over in minutes, the world`s first tank versus tank `battle`.

The tanks on the Western Front had a huge impact in 1918 as by now the BEF were beginning to understand how to use them, the tactics had caught up with the machine itself. The Germans now had theirs, the French had theirs, the little Renault FT17, The St. Chammond and the Schneider, indeed tank warfare was starting to come of age in 1918.

On the Home Front, the tank was also having a huge impact. The First World War was described by Lloyd George as an `engineers war`, there was aircraft and Zeppelins in the sky, Dreadnoughts and submarines in the sea whilst on land we just had barbed wire and mud then suddenly the tank comes along and we have the `full house` - a technological answer to the barbed wire and the machine guns . So, on the Home Front, people are fascinated, they want to see this tank and want to know all about them and eventually they get their chance, Trafalgar Square 1918.

This was the `Tank Bank` - as you can imagine wars are incredibly expensive to keep going and the War Office were always on the lookout for ways of raising money to help pay for the war. The British public wanted to see a tank – they could get a look at one – and pay for the privilege. This one was placed in Trafalgar Square and the fascination of the public was totally underestimated. Soon this one tank became si tanks, going all round London and eventually all around the country raising money by selling War Bonds, one coming to Lincoln in March 1918. The people of Lincoln were asked to raise enough money to pay for a Royal Navy destroyer – in a week they raised £150,000 – enough to pay for three ! . Indeed the Germans even used a captured Mark IV tank in a propaganda film to encourage their people to buy German War Bonds, one shot showing a tank knocking trees down.

One was sent to the United States and in a propaganda shot a tank is shown crushing a German Mercedes car.

So we have tanks, on both sides, selling War Bonds.

In 1918 there was a lot interesting tank developments. As was heard earlier in the day, the Germans had their Hindenburg Line, apparently impregnable, with the Germans making the trenches wider and wider to try and stop the tanks getting across and Richard put up a slide showing the tank `Hyacinth` which had come to grief whilst attempting to cross a wider trench during the Battle of Cambrai. He made a comment about the vision slits on the open door at the rear of the sponson. These vision slits became targets for German marksmen as they stood out darker against the colour of the armour plate. To confuse the Germans, tank crew members used to paint black lines on the side of the tank so as it would be difficult to identify the real vision slits. As was shown earlier, the simple expedient of the tanks carrying and subsequently dropping bundles of brushwood into the wider trenches made crossing these possible. Of course for the Germans the construction of wider trenches meant these afforded less protection for the defenders.

Back in Lincoln, the tank designers were working at other ways of developing tanks suitable for crossing wider trenches and one design they came up with was the `Tadpole` tank. Fosters looked at lengthening the rear `horns` of standard Mark IV tank by about 12 ft., it would make the tank long enough for the tank to be able to cross even the widest trench. In this the Tadpole was successful, being able to cross even the widest German trench. The problem was, with the amount of track in contact with the ground, made it almost impossible to steer, the whole thing would twist, giving gearbox, drive and other problems, it really was a bit of a non starter, although a novel idea. Some were tested at Lincoln some at Bovington where they fitted a mortar on a fixed plate between the tank`s extended rear horns

Tadpole Tank at Fosters of Lincoln

The Mark V tank was the real answer to these wide trenches. This was longer than the Mark IV but to overcome potential problems with steering the widened the tracks. In these tanks the 105hp Daimler engine which had no oil pump and depended on the crank circulating in an oil filled sump, was replaced by an engine developed by a brilliant young engineer, Harry Ricardo. His engine developed for tank use, was created in sections. It was a straight six cylinder engine but a further six cylinders (or more) could be added. The Mark V also had improved armour plating.

In 1918 the Mark V was modified into the Mark V `star` which was even longer and could even be used for troop movements – the forerunner of the Armoured Personnel Carrier

The downside, again, was the fumes inside the tank, which often meant the troops being carried came staggering out when arriving at their drop of point, almost overcome by the carbon monoxide from the exhaust of the engine. Then came the Mark V `star` `star` which, whilst still a fighting tank, could be used to move troops around, bring munitions and other stores up to the front line.

The 225hp Ricardo engine required more cooling and fans were installed in the tank sides but they didn`t actually suck hot air out of the compartment but sucked cold air in to cool down the engine but it meant the internal compartment was still incredibly hot.

The Battle of Amiens, 8th August 1918, tanks were a big part of that, but as we have learned from Cambrai, tanks were not the `be all and end all`. Cambrai is often described as a `tank battle` when it should better be called a battle when tanks were used properly as they were also used with other elements and this blueprint was used at Amiens with the Royal Air Force now supporting the tanks. Artillery, creeping barrages and so on, and cavalry. At Amiens it all comes together, combined forces battle, and it all works like it should. On 8th August there was 342 fighting tanks available. The tanks are no surprise to the Germans, they no longer run away in fear when their bullets bounce off them, they have things to put up against the tanks, field guns being the principal weapon, but in 1918 the introduce the Mauser M19 anti tank rifle, firing a 13.2 calibre round. Single shot each round had to be manually loaded.

The rifle was operated by a two-man crew of a gunner and ammunition bearer, who were both trained to fire the weapon. Whilst designed to be used in the trenches sometimes these teams were sent out into `no mans` land` specifically to look for tanks. These guys had learned to look for the weak points of the tank so as to target their shots carefully. Due to the tremendous blunt force of the recoil, it was designed to be shot in a static position, either prone or from inside a trench.

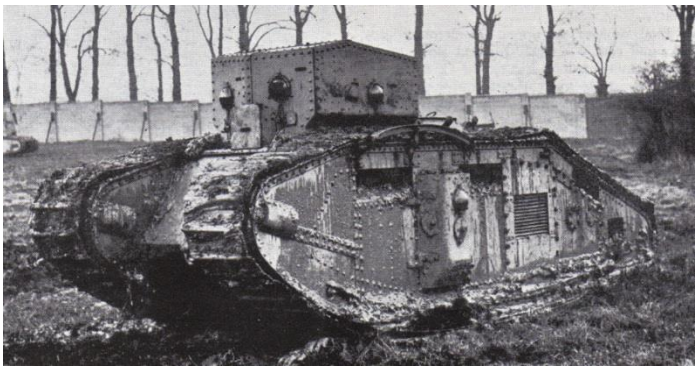
Earlier in his talk Richard had spoken about mines and as the war goes on larger and larger minefield were created, now more specifically to destroy or disable tanks. The `mines` were actually massive shells being buried underground with pressure fuses so that when the tank goes over the shell it detonates and destroys the tank.

The anti-tank rifle and shell-mines were all coming together in 1918 as the German antidote to the tanks, but of course artillery is the natural enemy of the tank and, as Richard said, 342 on the 8th August – 4 days later only 6 remain in battle ready condition. Of course, not all were lost to German action, indeed many were `lost` because we could not keep up supplies of fuel, oil, grease, spares and of course ammunition – without which a tank was not `combat ready` - and all of this was before considering the needs of each eight man crew. Indeed, logistics – supply – was by this time seriously lagging behind the tanks.

1918 also saw the introduction of the `Whippet` tank or Medium Mark A – another type produced in Lincoln. Each had twin engines each driven separate tracks. Whilst this made things simpler – no gearsmen as on the Heavy tanks, but two engines which, for whoever was driving, was essentially driving two cars at the same time, having to keep two engines running at the same speed. An excellent little tank – why was it called the `Whippet` - well, the rhomboid `heavy` tanks were good for 4 mph…..the Whippet could do 8mph !!. They became known as `new` cavalry a remark which must have irritated the `old` or traditional cavalry. They were often called into action when the RFC, after April 1918 the RAF, saw Germans massing, they would zoom out and break up the enemy formations. Many Whippets were issued with canvas covers for the tracks to try and eliminate a new phenomenon known as `track flash` as, when wet, the tracks appeared to `flash` and therefore could be observed by German spotter aircraft. Like the Mark1s and

Mark IVs, it was still vulnerable to enemy artillery, was lightly armoured and was only armed with machine guns. Like the Mark IVs, several were captured and adapted to serve with the German forces as `beute panzerwagons` One Whippet was modified by an engineer called Philip Johnson who replaced the twin Tyler engines with a aero engine, changed the gears and drive – and exceeded 30mph in trials !

All Whippets were made in Lincoln – some captured units were used by the Germans, some were transferred for use by the Russians – so – in essence – first British tank – Made in Lincoln. First German tank – Made in Lincoln and first Russian Tank – Made in Lincoln!



After the Medium `A` we had the Medium`B` which had a shorter version of the Ricardo six cylinder engine, in order to make the tank shorter in length purely to make them easier to move by rail and this type was created by a brilliant engineer, Walter Wilson, a genius when it came to gearboxes – which took him into a variety of automotive fields post war.

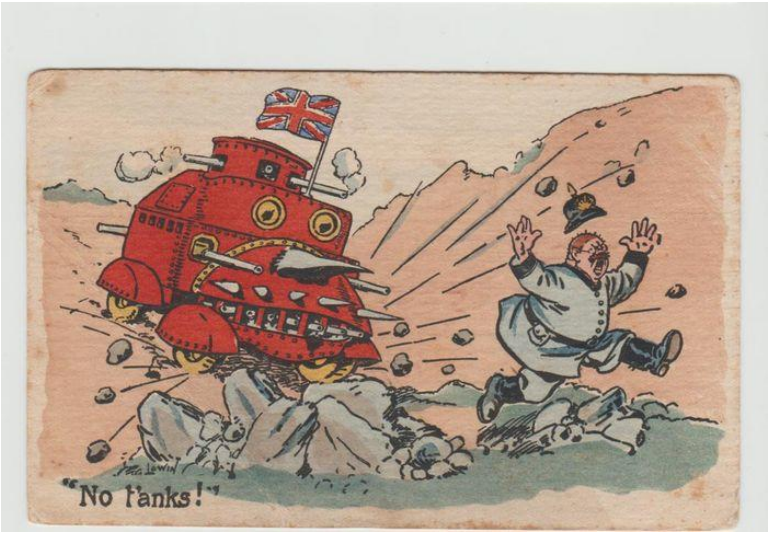
It`s downfall was the fact that to carry out any work on this tank`s engine, gearbox etc, you had to take the entire roof off the tank. Only a few were built, proved unsatisfactory so we gave them away to the Russians!

Then we come to what is really the last `heavy `tank of the First World War – the Medium `C` or Hornet, again created in Lincoln by Fosters. This was amuch better designed machine, built around the Ricardo engine which placed out of the way of the crew, the engine compartment separated from the crew compartment by a bulkhead and door. At the end of the war the Tank Corps published their losses - 40% of their crewmen were lost – and more of these men died of carbon monoxide poisoning than from enemy action, so separating the engine from the crew was a major step forward, but there were many other improvements to improve the tank`s operational efficiency. Only female versions were made although a male version was designed but never constructed. Medium `c` tanks never saw action, they arrived in France in November 1918 but the war was over before they could be used operationally.

In 1919 there was a huge parade to celebrate victory and the coming of peace in which the `great and the good` went through the streets on horseback but when the Royal Tank Corps representation paraded it was led by a Medium `C` machine.

The Mark V tanks finished off the fighting and took their place in the Army of Occupation in 1919.

1918 saw the vindication of the tank, it was really the year when the tank `comes of age`. 1916 it was created, 1917 it proves itself, 1918 it plays a crucial part in the `all arms` combined force. The tank was not the `war winning wonder weapon` it was called at the time , no single weapon can win a war, but combined with others, it helped to win the war. It changed the character of the war, it got us past the defences and it of course helped that the Germans did not, until too late, understand the advantages of such machine.



Richard finished a very interesting, yet at times humorous presentation on the tanks and their year of vindication, 1918, by putting up this slide taken from a comic postcard of the day.

Richard received a well deserved vote of thanks from Jonathan D`Hooghe, to which all in attendance responded generously.

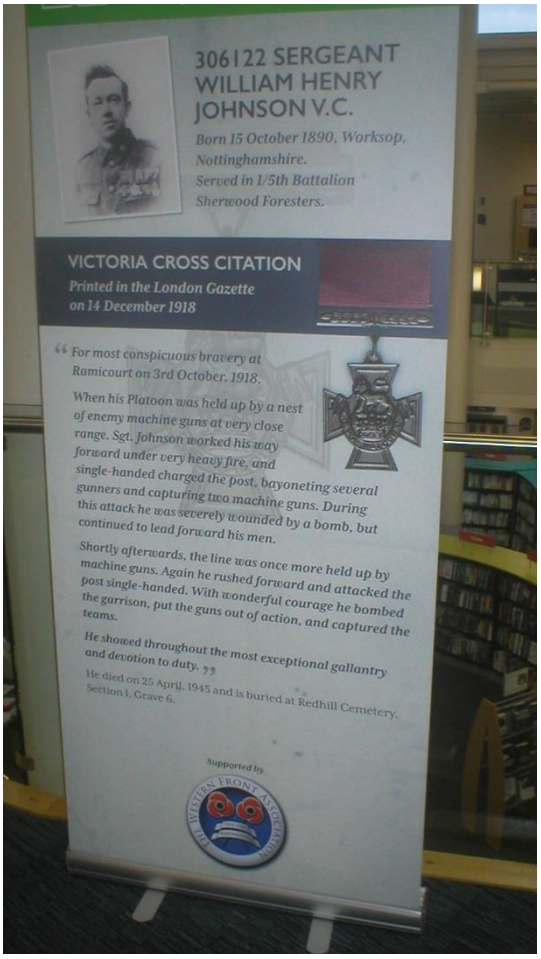
The third speaker was Peter Barton with **The Backward Glance**
Peter is a British Military historian, author and filmmaker specialising in trench warfare during World War I. He has published extensively on military mining and aspects of battlefield archaeology on the Western Front, and led archaeological excavations that have been featured in several Time Team episodes. His work has led to the rediscovery of many underground tunnels, wartime panoramas and mass graves of soldiers. It is hoped to include a report on his presentation in a future edition of the newsletter.

Sergeant William (Bill) Henry Johnson VC, Victoria Cross Commemorative Paving Stone Unveiling. Wednesday 3rd October 2018 at 1pm

Guests and members of the public alike gathered at the Worksop Library in anticipation of this event, sponsored, in part by the Western Front Association. Before making our way to the Memorial Garden, there was time to visit the display upstairs on the mezzanine floor which included Bill Johnson`s medals, normally kept at the Sherwood Foresters Regimental Museum in Nottingham Castle.

Left to right: Victoria Cross, British War Medal. Victory Medal, King George VI Coronation Medal, Medaille Militaire France.

The commemorative paving stone which has been set into a plinth in the adjacent Memorial Garden is part of a national programme to honour Victoria Cross recipients from the First World War and was unveiled by members of Sgt Johnson`s family.



Paving stones have been laid in the birthplace of Victoria Cross recipients to honour their bravery, provide a lasting legacy of local heroes within communities and enable residents to gain a greater understanding of how their area fitted into the First World War story.

A total of 628 Victoria Crosses were awarded during the First World War and this stone is one of 482 in the UK and Ireland. Each stone has been unveiled on the exact centenary of the action that led to the award of the Victoria Cross.

At about a quarter to one all those attending assembled outside the library and made their way to the nearby Memorial Garden. We were accompanied by `Private Derby` the ram, mascot of the Mercian Regiment.

On assembling around the Commemorative Stone all were welcomed by the Chairman of Bassetlaw District Council, Councillor David Challinor.

Captain Ben Griffiths of the Mercian Regiment then read out the Citation for the Award of the Victoria Cross

His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to approve the award of the Victoria Cross to:-

No 306122 Sergeant William Henry Johnson Sherwood Foresters

"For most conspicuous bravery at Ramicourt on October 3rd 1918. When his platoon was held up by a nest of enemy machine guns at very close range, Sergt. Johnson worked his way forward under very heavy fire and single handed charged the post, bayonetting the gunners and capturing two machine guns. During this attack he was severely wounded by a bomb but continued to lead forward his men.

Shortly afterwards the line was once more held up by machine guns. Again, he rushed forward and attacked the post single handed. With wonderful courage, he bombed the garrison, put the guns out of action and captured the teams.

He showed throughout the most exceptional courage and devotion to duty"

Robert Illett of the Western Front Association then read an appreciation of the life of Sergeant Johnson

The Victoria Cross Commemorative Paving Stone was unveiled by members of Sergeant Johnson`s family.

The Prayer of Dedication was led by the Reverend Geoffrey Clarke, Chaplain Royal British Legion (Worksop Branch)

A memorial bench was unveiled by the Chairman of Bassetlaw District Council and the chairman of Nottinghamshire County Council

Father Nicholas Spicer, Vicar of Worksop Priory church then said the Mercian Regiment Collect prayer.

Binyon`s Exhortation was led by the Vice Lord Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire, Colonel Tim Richmond TD, DL, OBE

Last Post was sounded, followed by a minute`s silence then The Reveille.

David Scott, Chairman of the Royal British legion, Worksop Branch spoke the Kohima Epitaph, with the final blessing being made by the Reverend Geoffrey Clarke.

The unveiling over all the invited guests were treated to a buffet lunch in the Worksop Library.

In addition to Mark Macartney, Robert Ilett and myself, Tim Chamberlin of the East Midlands (Ruddington) Branch was also there from the Western Front Association.

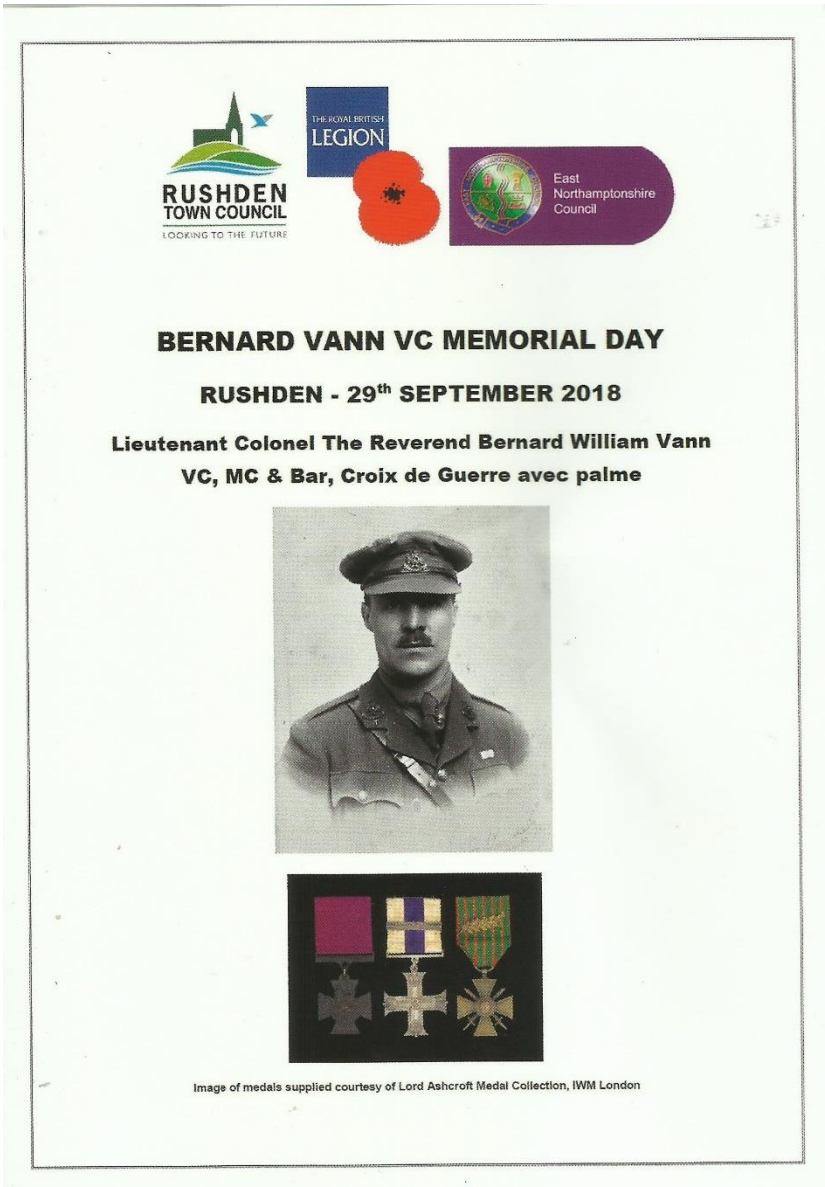
In addition to the programme of events, all in attendance were given a 35 page souvenir booklet telling the story of Sgt. William henry Johnson VC, ` A Man of Moral Courage and Modesty` written by Robert Ilett.

This publication was supported by Bassetlaw District Council, the Western Front Association and Canning Conveyors Ltd.

Bernard Vann VC Memorial Day

Rushden 29th September 2018

As many of you are aware, Branch stalwart, Charles Beresford has been ill recently and unable to come to recent meetings but fortunately he made it to the above Commemoration. Charles of course wrote the much acclaimed biography of Lieutenant Colonel The Reverend Bernard William Vann VC, MC & Bar, Croix de Guerre avec palme, `***The Christian Soldier***`



The memorial and commemorative service was around the dedication and unveiling of the Bernard William Vann VC paving stone. The stone was unveiled by Mr Michael Vann and Dr James Vann, grandsons of Bernard Vann.

The Munitions Crisis – part 17

One of the most serious obstacles encountered in the way of increasing the output of munitions was the heavy drinking in several areas. France had dealt drastically with the problem by prohibiting absinthe; Russia by forbidding vodka. The question of alcohol and drinking establishments had always been a dangerous topic for Governments to tackle even in peacetime and the War Government, being naturally anxious to avoid controversial subjects shrank from tackling it for many precious months. Consequently the nation lost substantially in production, indeed for us today it is difficult to comprehend how seriously excessive drinking contributed to diminish the output. Even today there is still a great deal of heavy drinking, drunkenness still occurs and the national health suffers from it, one only needs to visit a town or city centre at a weekend evening to see examples. Thus the Government was compelled to enforce a discipline and restriction compelled by the exigencies of war, indeed in the long term this must be counted as one of the few god things occasionally garnered from the evils of the conflict.

During the first five months of the war excessive drinking had become a serious element in the struggle to avert defeat. On the home front alcoholic indulgence shared with professional rigidity the dishonour of being the nation`s most dangerous foe. The first effect of the war was rather to increase the habit of excessive drinking and, indeed to raise it into a real menace to the nation. It is easy to understand that this would be so. The sudden onset of unaccustomed danger drove many who were out of the danger zone to the philosophy of `Let us eat and drink – especially drink – for tomorrow our comrades may die`

The disorganisation of social habit, the reckless excitement that thrilled the air, the feeling that the tables of the law had been smashed amid the thunders of the War, led some of both sees to excesses in all directions and as war work increased the earnings of many, those who drank, could afford to drink deeply, for they could afford the indulgence as they never could before. This was common to both sexes. The Government`s attention was especially drawn to this problem through reports that excessive drinking amongst the workers in firms engaged on armament production was gravely hindering the output of munitions. These reports by eye witnesses were very grave and alarming, especially when taken in conjunction with the fact – of which the Ministry of Munitions was increasingly aware – that deliveries of munitions of war were in arrears and that there was persistent reports of serious shortages at the Front in France and Flanders. Liquor consumption had certainly gone up rapidly and drunkenness was greatly on the increase, particularly in the industrial areas which were being relied upon for munitions. A considerable percentage of workers failed to show up for work on a Monday morning and when they did re-appear on a Tuesday they were very much the worse for their weekend debauchery. Some indeed tool their `leisure` at both ends of the week, indeed on one bank holiday a great number of men failed to turn up for the full week. It is little wonder that output was unsatisfactory and the Ministry passed on such reports to the War Office and the Admiralty. These bodies replied that they were only too painfully aware of the facts and that their official reports showed an even worse state of affairs than anything revealed by those of the Ministry of Munitions. The Minister, David Lloyd George therefore decided that that time and circumstance demanded that this peril to the British forces ought to be firmly tackled and on February 28th 1915, Lloyd George began to stir up public opinion on the subject of this increasing and menacing situation, with a view to making strong action possible.

Speaking at Bangor in North Wales he said.

"I hear of workmen in armament works who refuse to work a full week`s work for the nation`s nee. What is the reason? They are a minority. The vast majority belong to a class that we can depend on. But, you must remember a small amount of workmen can throw a whole works out of gear. What is the reason? Sometimes it is one thing, sometimes it is another, but let us be perfectly candid. It is mostly the lure of the drink. They refuse to work full time and when they do return their strength and efficiency are impaired by the way they have spent their leisure. Drink is doing more damage in the war than all the German submarines put together…….we have got great powers to deal with drink, and we mean to use them. We shall use these powers in a spirit of moderation, we shall use them discretely, we shall use them wisely, but we shall use them fearlessly, and I have no doubt that, as the country`s needs demand it, the country will support our action, and will allow no indulgence of that kind to interfere with its prospects in this terrible war which has been thrust upon us"

A month later, on 29th March 1915 a deputation from the Shipbuilding Employers Federation met with Lloyd George and they presented a unanimous declaration urging that the sale of all excisable liquors should be totally prohibited for the duration of the war. In particular they asked for the closing of all public houses and clubs in the areas where war munitions were being produced. They pointed out that in spite of Sunday working and all overtime the total period worked on the average in almost all shipyards was below the number of hours per week, and although work as in progress night and day, seven days a week, less productiveness was being secured from the men than before the war. The deputation was of the opinion that this was principally due to drink. The figures of weekly takings in public houses near the yards was convincing evidence of the increased sale of liquor. Allowing for the enhanced price of intoxicants and for the greater number of men now employed in shipbuilding, the takings had in one case under observation risen by 20%, in another by 40%.

The damage done by drink was sufficiently illustrated by the case of a battleship coming in for immediate repairs and having this work delayed by a full day through the absence of riveters through their drinking. This case, the deputation said, was one of hundreds. Nor was this the only reason in favour of prohibition as against curtailment. As long as public houses were open there would be found men to break the rules of the yard and come late to work in order to secure a drink beforehand. And the indisposition to work after the consumption of excessive alcohol was too obvious to need any elaboration. They urged total prohibition for the duration of the war. It was certainly not a teetotal deputation, indeed neither in figure or physiognomy did they give any impression that they were not partial to a glass or two. However, the evidence put forward was not to be lightly disregarded.

In response, Lloyd George said

"Success in the war is now purely a question of munitions. I say that, not on my own authority but on the authority of our Commander in Chief, Sir John French. He has made it quite clear what is conviction is on the subject. I think I can venture to say that it also the conviction of the Secretary of state for War, and it is the conviction of all those who know anything about the military problem – that in order to enable us to win, all we require is an increase, and in an enormous increase, in the shells, rifles, and all the other munitions and equipment which are necessary to carry through a great war. You have proved to us today quite clearly that the excessive drinking in the works connected with these operations is interfering with that output. I can only promise you this at the present moment, that the words you have addressed to my colleagues and myself will be taken into most careful consideration…..I had the privilege of an audience with his Majesty this morning and I am permitted by him to say that he is very

concerned on this question – very deeply concerned – and a concern which is felt by him is, I am certain shared by all his subject in this country"

The King had indeed shown the most anxious interest in the problem of drink and had talked over with the Minister the various methods of combating it. Reports had been coming to him from many quarters as to the damaging effect of drink on production. He was himself prepared to go to any length of self-sacrifice for this end and on March 30th 1915, the day after the employers deputation had met the Minister, he sent a letter to the Minister of Munitions, via his secretary Lord Stamfordham, a remarkable letter which, after saying that `nothing but the most vigorous measures will successfully cope with the grave situation now existing in our armaments factories`, proceeded:-

"We have before us the statements not merely of the employers, but of the admiralty and the War Office officials responsible for the supply of munitions of war, for the transport of troops, their food and ammunition. From this evidence it is without doubt largely due to drink that we are unable to secure the output of war material indispensable to meet the requirements of our army in the field, and that there has been such serious delay in the conveyance of the necessary reinforcements and supplies to aid our gallant troops at the front. The continuance of such a state of things must inevitably result in the prolonging of the horrors and burdens of this terrible war. I am to add that if it is deemed advisable the King will be prepared to set an example by giving up all alcoholic liquor himself and issuing orders against its consumption in the Royal Household, so that no difference shall be made, so far as his Majesty is concerned between the rich and poor in this question"

To be continued

TANK MEMORIAL YPRES SALIENT

Lieutenant General David Leakey, CMG, CBE, CVO
Honorary President of the Tank Memorial Ypres Salient

invites you to the

INAUGURATION OF THE TANK CORPS
GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE, BELGIUM

on Sunday 11th November 2018
at 5.00pm
The Tank Memorial Ypres Salient, Guynemerplein, Poelkapelle

With special guest mezzo-soprano Emma Brown will perform a number of musical tributes, accompanied by the band of the West Yorkshire Police

RSVP: Paul Foster, wpf1958@gmail.com

Tank Memorial Ypres Salient

Press Release

Inauguration Of The Tank Corps Garden Of Remembrance, Belgium

At 5pm on 11th November 2018 (Armistice Day) the Tank Corps Garden of Remembrance, Belgium, will be created and dedicated in the village of Poelkapelle, Belgium, by the Tank Memorial Ypres Salient.

Soil has been recovered from six cemeteries located in the Ypres Salient that have a close Tank Corps connection. It was donated by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), in addition soil from the Armour Centre at Bovington that is the home of the Tank Corps and the Royal Tank Regiment today. Stone dust has also been recovered from an Isle and Royal Manor of Portland stone quarry adjoining the very site from where the UK National Cenotaph was quarried as were the stone for many other memorials and headstones that were created in the 1920s and 1930s. In due course the soils and dust will be mixed and placed into a large original WW1 sand bag that was donated by the Hooge Crater War Museum.

On Sunday 11th November 2018 the 'Sacred Soil' will be transported in a serving Belgian Defence Force Artillery Battery Lynx LMV escorted by Belgian soldiers, members of the Royal Tank Regiment Association, TMYS and accompanied by an array of Standards.

The 'Sacred Soil' will firstly attend the 11.00am Menin Gate Memorial Last Post Ceremony before taking part in a Tank Corps pilgrimage, visiting memorials, cemeteries and battlefields applicable to Tank Corps sacrifice.

During an illuminated ceremony that will begin at 5.00pm the 'Sacred Soil' will be scattered at the Memorial that will create a new Tank Corps Garden of Remembrance, Belgium, that will inaugurated. During this unique and special ceremony international opera singer, mezzo-soprano Emma Brown will perform a number of musical tributes, accompanied by the band of the West Yorkshire Police.

Useful links:

Tank Memorial Ypres Salient: www. tankmemorial.vpweb.co.uk/default.html

Emma Brown: www.ejebrown.com

West Yorkshire Police Band:
www.westyorkshire.police.uk/about-us/our-departments/west-yorkshire-police-band/west-yorkshire-police-band

For further information contact Wilhelm Paul Foster
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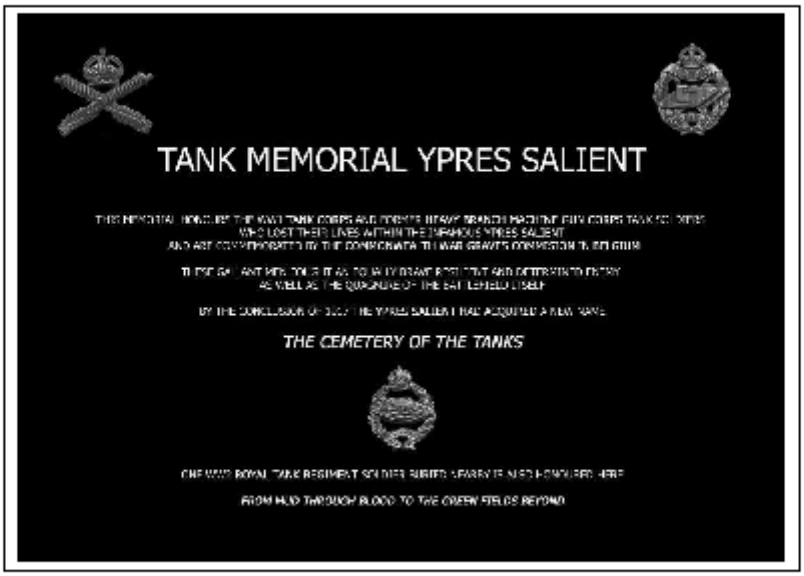
TANK MEMORIAL YPRES SALIENT FACT SHEET



Tank Memorial Ypres Salient text plate

The Tank Memorial Ypres Salient (TMYS) is the only dedicated WW 1 Tank Corps memorial in Belgium.

It is dedicated to the WW1 Tank Corps soldiers commemorated by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, who were killed in action or died of wounds incurred in Belgium, as well as a single Royal Tank Regiment soldier KIA in WW2 and buried in Cement House CWGC near Langemark.

The TMYS was conceived, designed and funded by **Royal Tank Regiment veteran** Mr. Chris Lock and his wife Milena Kolarikova BEM.
The construction plan drawings were provided by Mr. Dirk Vinck.
The TMYS construction was supported by the Langemark-Poelkapelle Council, the Flemish Government, the Royal Tank Regiment and a small group of local people.

The **TMYS was inaugurated on 10 October 2009 by General Sir Christopher Michael Deverell, KCB, MBE, ADC,** in the presence of the Regimental Colonel Lt Col (Retd) Stephen May, a contingent of the 1st Royal Tank Regiment and with musical input offered by the Ypres Surrey Pipes and Drums band.
British Army Chaplain Assistant General, Father Francis Barber, blessed the Memorial.

In attendance were other key military and civil government representatives, the standards of the Belgian Royal Entente, Royal Tank Regiment Associations, the British Torch of Remembrance as well as the general public.

On conclusion of the inauguration ceremony, the TMYS received an acknowledgement and supportive letter from Buckingham Palace along with Her Majesty's Britannic Ambassador to Belgium commendations being awarded to key persons involved in the Memorial's creation.

A View from a Bridge – Riqueval, 2 October 1918. David McClellan and images of victory

If the sustained upturn in Allied fortunes occurring during the '100 Days' of offensive operations on the Western Front after the Battle of Amiens could be expressed visually, no better image might perhaps be found than 2nd Lieutenant David McClellan's study of 137th Infantry Brigade at Riqueval Bridge, near Bellenglise, north of St Quentin.

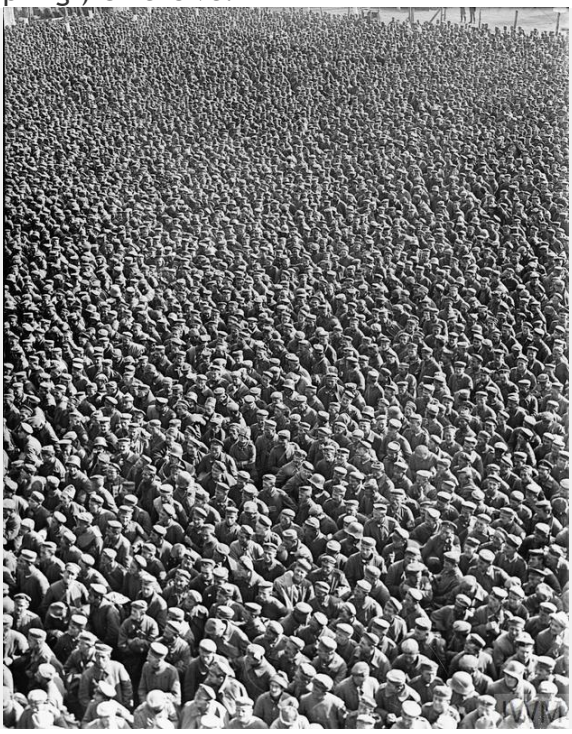
Brigadier General J V Campbell addressing troops of the 137th Brigade (46th Division) from the Riqueval Bridge over the St Quentin Canal. 2 Oct 1918. IWM Q 9534 [David McLellan, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons]

The photograph is as familiar as it is impressive. Taken on the wet morning of Wednesday 2 October 1918[1], it shows serried ranks of mud-stained infantry, misaligned precariously upon the steep (and no doubt slippy) embankment of the St Quentin Canal as they are addressed by their Commander, Brigadier-General John Vaughan Campbell VC. The victors are recorded at the precise location of their spectacular triumph, three days previously, when on the early morning of Sunday 29 September, leading the 46th(North Midland) Division's attack, they captured, intact, the Riqueval Bridge, crossed the St

Quentin Canal and pierced the supposedly impregnable German defensive system known as the Hindenburg Line [2]. The faces of hundreds of temporary warriors, citizen soldiers, gaze at the camera; some figures are still bearing specialist equipment associated with deep, wet-ditch assault crossings – life-belts, draw lines, Lewis guns; inevitably, soldiers being soldiers (however temporary), enemy 'souvenirs' are displayed enthusiastically.

McClellan[3]in his role as on Official British photographer took at least nine separate studies at the bridge or in nearby Bellenglise that morning[4]. These included shots of the canal area (showing surviving footbridges) and the infantrymen assembling (or dispersing) for the photo shoot. Other photographs show 137th Brigade Staff and Band in Bellenglise and British forces symbolically passing across the bridge, and advancing eastwards in the direction of a now retreating enemy.

But, having captured these images McClellan's working day, it would appear, was just beginning. If the IWM records are correct, that same Wednesday he somehow contrived a difficult trip to Abbeville, over 80 miles (c. 138 kilometres) distant from Riqueval Bridge, over roads choked with advancing Allied forces and vehicles – there to record other, contrasting, images of the consequences of victorious Allied progress: German prisoners assembled in a vast Clearance Depot, in the town. He took at least seven photographs here[5] – three of which were awe-inspiring studies of the prisoners '*en masse*'; impossibly large and densely packed crowds of a now powerless enemy, taken from a high angle above his subjects. He also took at least four separate 'portrait' photos of individual German prisoners reminiscent in their searching detail of the type of photographic propaganda records produced by the Germans in relation to their equally large bag of Allied prisoners in the wake of the dramatic initial successes of the March 1918 ('Spring') Offensive.



Battle of the St Quentin Canal (Saint-Quentin). Prisoners in a Clearing Depot, Abbeville, 2nd October 1918

The photographer and his pictures

The impressive power of the Riqeuval and Abbeville images owes much to the creative genius and technical skill of McClellan as a photographer. His achievements are made all the more remarkable when we consider the equipment available to him: 5 x 4 glass plates, by modern standards not overly sensitive to light, which would have needed a 'longish' exposure, depending on the brightness of the day; anything from half to one or two seconds requiring his subjects to be very still to avoid movement or blurring (particularly of the face). The heavy wooden camera, glass plates and metal and wood tripod had then all to be wrestled to the photographer's chosen viewpoint.[6]And in this regard McClellan displayed a particular knack, clearly evident during the Allied advance during autumn 1918, of selecting locations and suitable vantage points from which he could convey the epic scale of military operations

and colossal numbers of troops involved. In the process he created visual records hugely supportive of propaganda activities of the Beaverbrook's Ministry of Information. At the same time, his vast group studies (and individual portraits) were essentially humane and their production, to a degree, acknowledged the public's appetite for viewing 'crowd scenes' – the popularity of which had been rapidly appreciated by moving film makers well before 1914. McClellan's studies of 137th Brigade in particular replicated, in stills photography, a by now well established component of the popular local 'cinema picture', which quite deliberately included portraits of individuals whose likenesses could or might be recognised.[7]

The photograph of the Stafford Brigade at Riqueval Bridge, chock full of detail (Campbell's hunting horn, tucked into his tunic, may be discerned by careful use of a magnifying glass) celebrates a vitally important military success and directly acknowledges the work of the ordinary soldiers who took part in the action. The view from the bridge is, from the Allied perspective wholly positive, and the fog and smoke (which so valuably aided the attackers on the morning of the 29 September) have now cleared to reveal a vision of a war that may well indeed be nearing its end. The Staffords at Riqueval and the German prisoners at Abbeville, as depicted on 2 October 1918, shared, for that day at least, the same status as 'survivors'. A temporary status that would be fatally compromised, for some, through their involvement in the final actions of the October and November fighting, and the unavoidable and indiscriminate fatalities associated with active service – accidents and illness, the latter represented in its most virulent form by the resurgence of the deadly 'Spanish influenza' pandemic.

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- *First World War Photographers*, Jane Carmichael, Routledge, 1989
- *Mud, Blood and Determination. The History of the 46th(North Midland) Division in the Great War*, Simon Peaple, Helion & Company Limited, 2015