CHESTERFIELD WFA

Newsletter and Magazine issue 36

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Welcome to Issue 36 - the December2018 Newsletter and Magazine of Chesterfield WFA.

For our Meeting on Tuesday 4th December we welcome Dr Phylomena Badsey. Dr Badsey specialises in nursing during the First World War. She also maintains a broad Interest in women and warfare, occupation and social change.

Dr. Badsey`s presentation will be

"Auxiliary Hospitals and the role of Voluntary Aid Detachment Nurses during 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 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 blockade 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"***

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A Personal note from The Chair (29)

Well 'that's it then' the Centenary we have been remembering for the last four years – or is it? Certainly the Centenary is over but the remembering just as certainly goes on and you only have to look at the badge of the WFA to see that remembering is the centre piece of the WFA's existence.

Most of you will know that branch stalwart Charles Beresford sadly passed away since our last meeting. His family told me he was pleased to have made it to 11 November and watched the Remembrance Service at his local Matlock Bath war memorial streamed into his room courtesy of his granddaughter. On the 11th only a matter of a couple of miles from Matlock Bath an unusual act of remembrance took place. A replica CWG headstone (one of three specially recreated) quarried from the same local rock as the 120,000 headstones cut at Hopton Quarry after the First World War, was carried from the quarry on a horse drawn carriage into the Wirksworth Remembrance Garden where it is to stand in commemoration of the war and the local contribution to its remembrance.

You will have no doubt have received the notes about the Butte de Warlencourt issued by the Executive Committee however I have to tell you that elements within the Association are not happy to let the matter drop until a new Executive Committee has been elected, my personal concern is that this campaign is developing a life of its own and risks seriously damaging the future of the WFA. As far as I understand it the Executive Committee has tendered their resignation en masse to take effect at the next national AGM which from memory is in April next year. I fear that it will be difficult to replace the whole of the Executive Committee at one fell swoop with suitably experienced people particularly if the new committee decide to buy back the Butte with all the associated potential personal liabilities. That said, to offer a miss quote, *for chaos to reign it only requires good people to do nothing!* I will be asking at our Branch AGM if anyone would consider seeking nomination for the new Executive Committee.

Tony Bolton **Branch Chair**

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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To Order by phone (020 7118 1914) please have your credit Card details to hand

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file:///H:/WFA/(2)%20Branded%20Goods/(12)%20Calendar%202019/wfa%20calendar%20leaflet%202019%20(1).pdf

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

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

Secretary`s Scribbles

Welcome to issue 36 of the WFA Chesterfield Branch Newsletter and Magazine. The month of November saw the final build up to the 100th Anniversary of the Armistice which brought the Great War conflict to an end, culminating in the Service of Remembrance in Westminster Abbey on the evening of November 11th which I had the honour and privilege of attending.

This was followed several days later by the sad news that Branch founder member and regular attender until recently at meetings, Charles Beresford, had passed away after a short illness. There will be a 'Thanksgiving' Service for Charles at 11am on 11 December at Holy Trinity Parish Church, Matlock Bath, (up on the right hand side of the A6 as you leave Matlock Bath going south). The Vicar has arranged for parking at the church, which can be accessed from the road up to Gulliver's Kingdom.

For our December meeting on Tuesday 4th we welcome Dr Phylomena Badsey, a real expert on the role of women in the First World War. Dr. Badsey`s presentation will be *"Auxiliary Hospitals and the role of Voluntary Aid Detachment Nurses during the First World War"*. As I had a Great Aunt, a nurse pre-war, who served for a spell in France and latterly in the UK, I am really looking forward to this talk.

With the last of the 100th Anniversaries now behind us and the media scramble moving on to something else it will be left to us, members of the Western Front Association to maintain interest with the public at large in remembering the Great War. As most of you know the WFA itself faces many challenges, not least from within its own ranks, with the quite unwholesome and at times public dissension over the future ownership of the Butte de Warlencourt. No doubt over the coming months this, and indeed the future direction of the WFA will be clarified but recent events have been an unedifying spectacle from which no one emerges with any credit.

Our speakers programme for 2019 can be found at the beginning of this this Newsletter and I hope it meets with the approval of all recipients. I have tried to present a wide range of topics which should give everyone something close to their own specific interest whilst of general interest to all. Now, of course, my thoughts turn to suitable subjects and speakers for 2020, no longer can I look up a 100th Anniversary date of a specific event or action from The Great War and find a speaker who can come and educate and entertain us with his knowledge of the subject. As always, I would be happy to receive suggestions or recommendations from any of our members.

As this will be the last Newsletter of 2018, can I thank all those, near and far, who have supported the Branch and this Newsletter during the past year – Best Wishes to you all for Christmas and New Year.

Finally, a wee word of best wishes to member George Houldsworth who will be going into hospital shortly for knee replacement surgery. We look forward to seeing George back amongst us once he is on his feet and mobile again.

Grant Cullen – Branch Secretary

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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

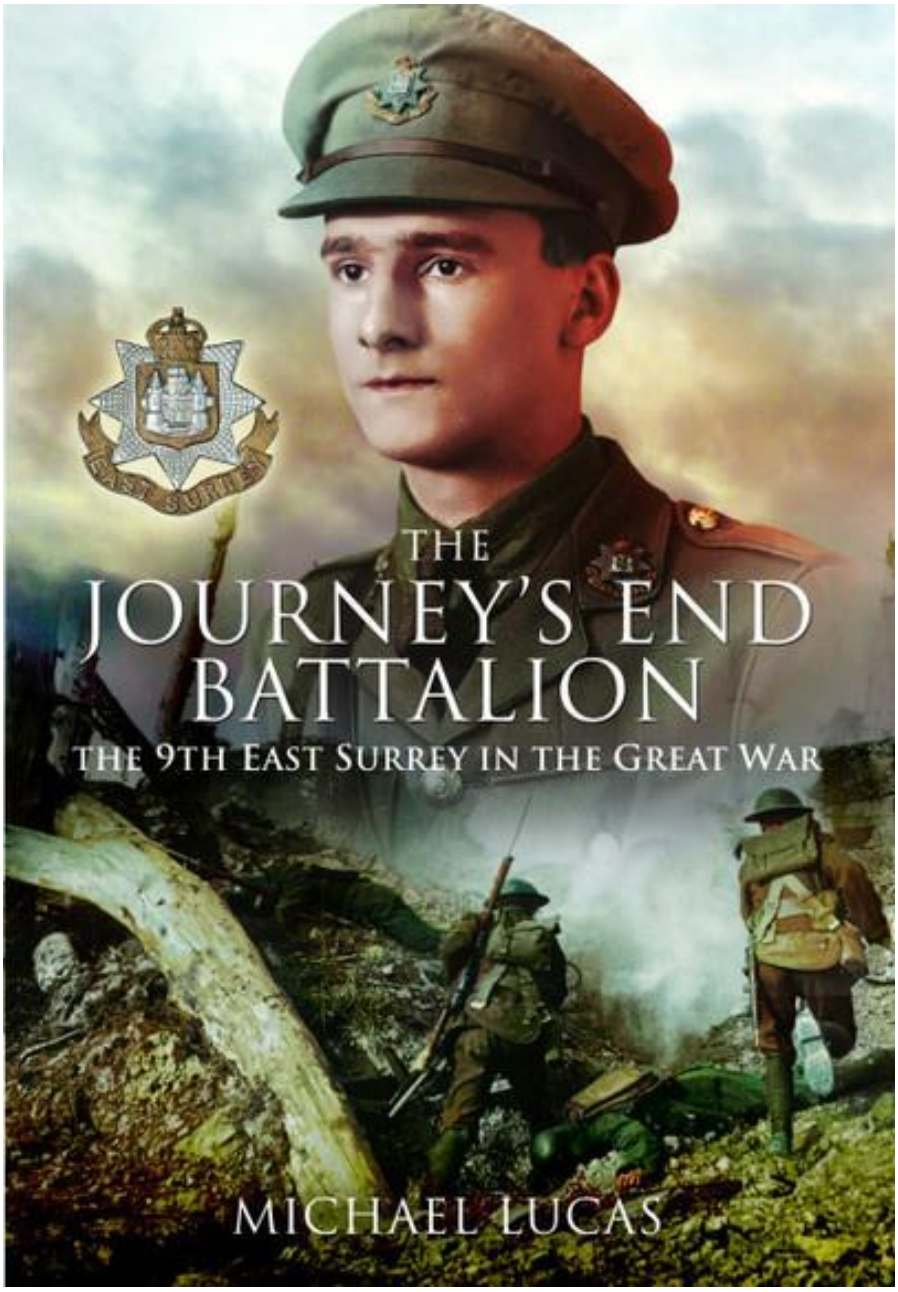
(While Stocks Last)

Price: £14 (+£3 p&p)

Book Group

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.

November Meeting

The meeting got underway in our traditional manner, with Vice Chair, Mark Macartney reciting the Exhortation from Binyon`s `For the Fallen`

Branch Chairman, Tony Bolton then took the floor and briefly mentioned the recent issues with regards to the WFA Trustees proposing to relinquish ownership of the Butte de Warlencourt to former WFA Chairman, Bob Paterson, who now lives in that part of Picardy in France. This discussion has sparked a vigorous reaction by some members on social media and, sadly, in the press, all of which has been unfortunate at this time of Remembrance as we approach the 11th November, Armistice Day. Tony said he expected more information to become available to members in the coming days.

That being over, Tony then introduced our speaker for the evening, Bryn Hammond

Bryn Hammond is Head of Collections at Imperial War Museum
Graduated PhD Military History of the First World War, from Birmingham University in 2006 his thesis being 'The Theory and Practice of Tank - Other Arms Co-operation on the Western Front, 1916-1918'
Author of Cambrai 1917: The Myth of the First Great Tank Battle (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2008) and Alamein 1942: The Battle that Turned the Tide of World War II (Osprey, June 2012).

Bryn`s talk was titled The 501 Piece Jigsaw - Tank - All arms Cooperation in The Great War and was be based on his PhD work.
The subject, Bryn said, was how you actually use tanks in battle, tanks, which present a tactical problem on the battlefield. The talk would not be about tanks acting alone on the battlefield but rather how they are used in conjunction with other arms, to create a war winning combination. So why is this subject important? for Bryn , it was his doctorial thesis so – for him, he said, it would be ! The tank is a wholly new weapon, there is no model as to how you can use this weapon and the High Command has got to learn – and learn quickly as to how this weapon can be adapted to generate results, and indeed is a test of the Generals, were they donkeys…or not. Laffin and others called them stupid, but if they were clever they could fit this into the existing jig saw puzzle of the British Army – the tank is the 501st piece.
In the First World War prior to 1916 the British Army has all the weapons it needs to be effectively used in combination to win the war, what it still has to do is to learn how to use these in combination. Then someone comes along and drops another piece into the jigsaw, the tanks have to be fitted into the all arms combination of the BEF. That of course will produce an opportunity and a challenge and the talk itself will not just be about tanks, it will be about infantry, artillery, aircraft, engineers etc.…even cavalry.

The period Bryn was going to cover was from September 15th 1916 until the 11th November 1918. There are some limitations as well as tanks were used in many actions during that period. But not all, there was still many instances of infantry advancing in the open behind a curtain of fire of a creeping barrage.
Firstly, in order to look at tanks objectively you have to forget about everything you know about tanks in the *Second World War* and after – they are totally different animals.

Secondly, in the First World War there was NO tank to tank communication – the only way a tank section commander could pass information around his section was on foot or on horseback – the latter being more particularly useful in the latter part of 1918, indeed one of the four tank VCs was won by a guy on a horse. Information could therefore not be relayed back quickly enough for the tank to respond to, indeed many tank commanders directed their tanks in the open, on foot in the battlefield. There was a few tanks equipped with wireless towards the end of the war but this was only used t0 any effect to pass messages back up the chain of command, not to act in close cooperation with the infantry to see what is going on. Most of the time, those tanks with such primitive communication devices are taking messages from aircraft which are observing the battlefield. Tanks in WW1 went into action completely closed up to protect from bullets, shell fragments and other objects which could kill or incapacitate. To see outside they used periscopes or vision slits with glass prisms which you could see through. From the tank the view of the tank is very, very limited, enhanced slightly by information coming from the gunners located in the side sponsons.

Conditions inside the tank are incredibly primitive, the engine being inside the same compartment as the crew with temperatures being around 120oF – almost 50oC!!. There is no padding, very little proper seating, everything is hot to the touch, there is no suspension, and the tank is crammed full of ammunition making it deadly should it be set on fire. There are fumes from the guns, fumes from the engine and once inside and the doors closed little could be seen, there being only a single festoon lamp to provide any illumination. The walls of the tank was the crewmen`s world, and the eight men who manned it, the population. Survival depended upon the skill of the driver – and the wits of the officer – from a quote by Percy Hobart who became fames in WW2 for his tank `funnies`.

The tanks were very slow moving, they literally crawled over the battlefield and were incredibly difficult to steer, indeed until the Mark V tank came forward, thanks required a complicated system of signalling to facilitate gear changes, carried out by four men of the eight man crew. If the tank commander wanted to steer say – to the right – he had to put one track into one gear and the other into another gear i.e. one track needs to go faster, the other slower. In order to tell the gearsmen what you wanted you instructions had to be passed above the engine noise – and in the semi-darkness – so the commander had big metal wrench, or something similar, to

bang of the hull, then hold up fingers to indicate the gear. Of course for this to be successful crew members had to see and hear the instruction – you couldn`t say…`sorry…can you repeat that`. Turning involved stopping first before swinging the tank round on the turn. Of course, when you stop, in a big 32 ton box you present a wonderful target for the Germans – its slow moving target when under way, but presents an even better target when stationary.

The maximum speed of a British heavy tank in the First World War was 3.7 mph…on good ground…..even less on broken ground pitted with shell holes. The fastest tank was the `Whippet`…whose name conjures up speed…was only 8.3mph again top speed on good ground….slower than a cyclist…..no possibility of `blitzkrieg` tactics.

For any type of equipment to function at all in war, there has to be clear communications, particularly for tanks to be able to cooperate with two other arms – infantry and artillery. If there was poor communication between -say…infantry and artillery…there was the clear risk of the infantry being at worse hit by their own artillery`s barrage…or at best being inadequately supported. In the First World War battlefield communications was very, very primitive.

Bryn then put up two pictures, Ernest Swinton (left) and Winston Churchill (right) who were considered to be the `fathers` of the tanks

Both had in mind to address the same problems – how to get across a shell torn battlefield which the Germans, in their trenches could dominate with machine guns.

The next slide up was of `Little Willie` - the progenitor of all tanks, and which is now on display at the Tank Museum at Bovington.

Swinton and Churchill believed that such mechanical devices could overcome machine guns, barbed wire and trenches.

During WW1 you had to strive for better communications and Bryn then put up a view of a Mark 1 tank, taken from the front end. He pointed out the flaps which dropped down when the tank was in action, leaving only the vision slits for the commander and driver to observe where they were going. For the drivers – and indeed the whole crew, there was a serious issue called `splash` - fragments of metal which chip off from the inside surfaces of the tank, when it is hit on the outside by machine gun or rifle fire, and these fly about inside the tank, into the faces, particularly dangerous if they get into the eyes. So the crew need protection and they came up with these masks to shield the crewmen`s faces

A leather cap and a chain mail face mask – but how would these help you to see what is going on the battlefield, or be able to see signals . You are already looking through a prism in a narrow slit.

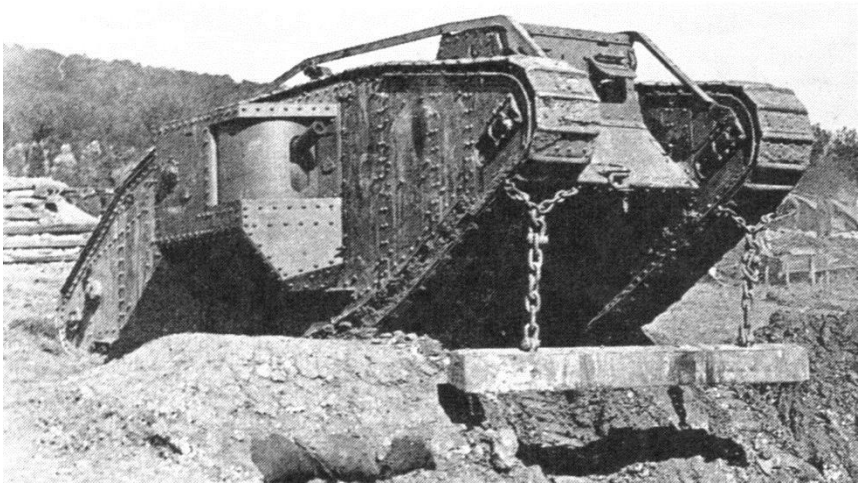
Remember, before the battle of the Somme, they were trying to fit new inventions like the tank into an all arms fighting force, but to make communications on the battlefield work, people have got to be able to see the battlefield and respond to the changing situations. If you are the infantry and you believe that these things, the tanks, can be of help to you, you need some means to attract their attention.

First of all there is signalling flags, the mills bomb or hand grenade, revolver, rifle – all of these things played a part in communications between infantry and tanks in the First World War. The first thing you have to do is to build some relationship between the infantry and the tanks so that you can decide how they are going to operate in action. By 1916, when tanks were used in action for the first time at Flers on the Somme, the BEF had a method of getting the infantry forward – the creeping barrage. An artillery bombardment is launched on the enemy`s position, the infantry wait, then at a set time or point, the infantry advance and get as close as possible to this falling curtain of artillery fire as it moves forward, in the hope and expectation that if you stay close behind it, the German infantry will keep their heads down as long as possible and the infantry will be right on the German positions just as the barrage lifts so as to kill or disable the enemy before they can get their machine guns into position. They are told to `lean` on the barrage – that being an expression of the day – and you have to be prepared to accept – indeed expect `shorts` i.e. the artillery not firing exactly as it should and some shells falling amongst the advancing troops. You were however likely to get much fewer casualties from your own fire than from the German defenders in their trenches manning machine guns.

Now you have this new weapon – a thirty ton box – which you have got to decide how to use it. Place the tanks ahead of the barrage but at some point the barrage will land on your own tanks. Place the tanks in front of the infantry but the infantry, not being so close to the barrage loses its protection. So, what do you do? Place the tanks behind the infantry? – But what happens if the tanks get delayed and fail to arrive thus creating another problem. In fact these problems are not really resolved until late in 1918.

In tanks first use on September 15th 1916 the BEF uses a classic British compromise, the barrage will go ahead but they will put gaps or lanes in it in which the tanks can operate, going forward with the barrage, so there will be no artillery fire where those tanks are going. Of course the German machine gunners can stay at their positions in these areas and not being subjected to the artillery barrage and can fire straight in front or into the flanks of the troops advancing on either side with the creeping barrage in front of them. Of course the plan is the tanks will advance across the battlefield, through these lanes and arrive at the same time as the troops behind the curtain of fire. But, of course, these are mechanical things, and as we know, of the 49 allocated for that first attack, only 32 actually turn up at the start line, and of these only around ten actually do anything. It is actually to the great credit of the BEF High command that, despite the problems they see the tanks have promise and decide to stick with them and indeed order into manufacture 1000, the order gets cancelled then reinstated but of course British industry could never cope with producing such numbers. If nothing else a principle has been established – these things will help.

Straight after that attack you get a doctrine emerging, guidance for use of tanks and it says in essence – don`t do that again. Do not just expect tanks to just turn up and leave gaps in the artillery barrage. Artillery is still the most effective weapon we have with infantry support – Tanks are an *accessory* just like gas – it is there to help but it is not the palliative or solution – they are not, at this stage a war winning weapon. There has to be a two way communication between infantry and tanks in response to the changing battlefield conditions. Initially all that could be done was to give a tank commander a map, draw some lines upon it and say – that`s your route, try and stick to it and you are expected to arrive here. Such maps and documents can be viewed today in the National Archives. None of this gives any latitude to changing battlefield conditions. Tanks are given one plan and told to stick to it. This, however, means that on the battlefield things don't go to plan, there is very little flexibility in the tank cooperation. So there has still to be means to tell a tank commander, at some time during the battle, don`t do this…do this instead…the situation has changed.



As the war progresses there are attempts to improve the tanks that serve with the BEF. Starting with the Mark I, there was the Mark II which was actually a training tank, it had no armour, but these were thrown into the fighting around Arras as there was virtually nothing else available. What they did have was shorter barrelled guns (on the `male` tanks) but what they did do was provide a means of identifying if a tank was stuck or broken down on the battlefield. Other developments were unditching beams and `spuds` - extensions to track links and both

these ideas were designed to improve a tanks ability to move or extricate itself if it got stuck in the mud.

Then there was the Mark III tank, which, like the Mark II was essentially a stopgap tank used for training, waiting for the arrival of the upgraded Mk.IV, the true successor of the Mark I. This batch of 50 vehicles was designed to incorporate all the Mk.IV improvements when ready, so as to train new recruits for the Mark IV/V series. However, the development of these features took such time that the Mark IIIs were apparently delivered as is. None ever left Great Britain.

The Mark IV became the ubiquitous heavy battle tank of the BEF in World war One.

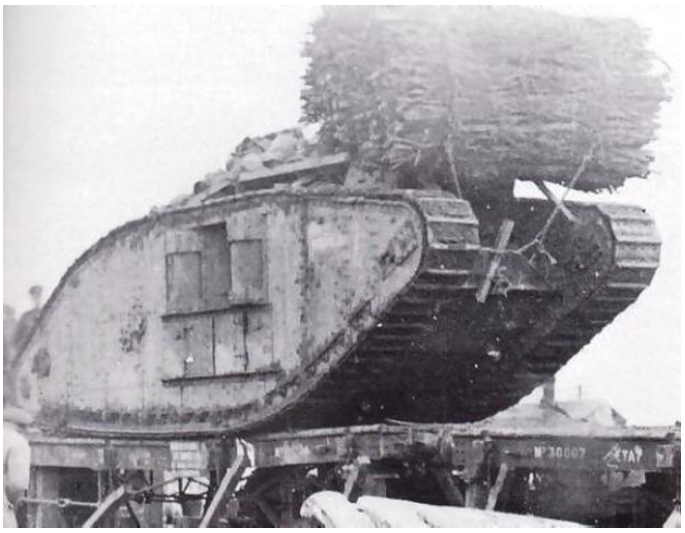
Mark IV female on display in Ashford, Kent. The white-red-white stripes on the front are a British recognition marking that was also carried by British tanks early in WW II. This was important after the battle of Cambrai when the Germans took possession of a number of abandoned or broken down tanks on the battlefield and started to use them as their own, so it became important for the BEF to be able to identify what was British tanks and those being operated by the Germans.

There were no internal changes in this tank, the crew compartment was still dark and hot with the atmosphere heavy with engine fumes. The infantry who accompanied the tanks were beginning to learn how to work with the tanks, how to signal to the tanks and vice versa about what is happening on the battlefield. If you were in a Mark IV tank on the battlefield, you need some means of telling the infantry that you were doing your job, and the infantry needs some means to be able to tell the tank that it has done its job, or the infantry need to have the means to call a tank when they are in trouble. There has to be some very, very simple means of signaling, particularly in the heat of the battle, as the possibility of confusion could lead to things going wrong.

One of the first things suggested is that the infantry can call for help from a tank, if say, an infantry platoon is pinned down by a German machine gun, the infantrymen need to be able to attract the attention of a tank and direct it t0 eliminate that machine gun. What you were

supposed to do was, to take your rifle, take your steel helmet off, put it on the bayonet on the end of the rifle, raise this above your position and wave it, that being the signal for `tank needed here`. You were supposed to do this whilst the Germans were looking the other way!!!. Now, assuming the tank sees the signal, gores forward and deals with the opposition, there now needs to be a signal from the tank to tell the infantry that the tank has done its job. This signal was a shovel or a pick waved through a hatch in the roof of the tank. Of course by now there was aircraft flying over the battlefield and observing what was going on and they would be able to see these very, very slow moving steel boxes crawling across the battlefield. They therefore came up with a means for a tank crew to be able to indicate to an aircraft that it was in fact broken down – a sheet of white material about 18 inches by 18 inches. So, in the middle of the battle, a tank becomes immobilised, for whatever reason, a member of the crew has to get out and place this white square on the roof of the tank so that an overflying aircraft can see that this particular tank is out of action. Now, could an aircraft, flying at 3000feet see a particular tank with this white square on its roof? Nevertheless these simple, crude means of communication were being tried and Bryn went on to quote from a member of the 36th Ulster Division where tanks were supporting the infantry in the Battle of Messines Where a sergeant of the Inniskillings ran up to a tank, beat upon its side with a Mills bomb to attract the crew`s attention whereby the tank took out the machine gun position holding up the Irishmen. This illustrated one of the critical aspects of communication which still applies today – face to face! The most effective form of communication on a battlefield is when you get men talking to men.

The tank`s role in 1917 is to support the infantry and , particularly at Messines is to take out the German pillboxes – not destroy them – a shell from a tank will not obliterate a concrete strongpoint – but the concussion from a shell could kill the occupants of the pillbox. The tanks were to give the infantry close support, indeed on the first day of third Ypres (Passchendaele) the most successful operations were where this close support was at its most effective, north of the Menin road in open fields, but beyond that, as can be seen today, there was forests. The trees may have been blasted and shell torn in 1917 but they still proved to be an almost insurmountable barrier to the tanks which had so little clearance underneath between the tracks that `grounding` on a tree stump was a grave risk. The Germans started to realise this and started to use trees to `channel` the tanks into killing zones, similar to intentionally leaving gaps in the barbed wire defences so that troops could be caught in enfilade fire in these gaps.



The classic point where you really need to get tank and infantry cooperation is at Cambrai, the first truly mass use of tanks, the first use where there had been formal training in infantry / tank cooperation, conducted by that `mad` tank officer JFC Fuller.He came up with a very simple drill for infantry and tanks to work together, based upon the problems the attack would encounter. There would be an artillery bombardment on certain positions – not a creeping barrage – but predictive fire. Infantry would be in sections with three tanks per section. The tanks would go forward with the infantry in positions behind them. The first tank would go forward, drop its fascine our bundle of brushwood into the trench, crosses it, turns left and fires directly into the trench. The second tank crosses the trench on first tank`s fascine, drops its fascine into the second line trench, crosses it, turns right and drives parallel to the trench, firing into it. The third tank crosses first and second trenches using the fascines, drops its bundle into the third line, crosses, turns left and runs parallel to the trench, firing into it. The infantry following behind occupies

each trench in turn, mopping up and clearing dug outs. Fuller describes this attack process as a `ceremonial drill` - a procedure which should work if the tanks and the infantry are trained properly. It should work like clockwork…but rarely does as no battlefield is like a sheet of white paper with diagrams on it. Overall though, it is successful, all down to the training beforehand, the principle being if we do this training it can only put our guys in a better situation. Of course the problem is finding the time for infantry and tanks to train together, time which rarely exists.

Another method of communication tried was by using pigeons and many tanks carried these, although the fumes inside the tanks badly affected the birds and they had often to be held outside the tank (as in the picture) until it revived and was restored sufficiently to fly off. Sending messages like this was slow, could only be used to send messages back to HQ and often by the time the message had reached HQ, the battlefield conditions had changed significantly.

Tanks also started to carry numbers – for example `F1` would indicate that this was the first tank in the 6th battalion – it is not the actual tank number which was carried further back on the hull. For the accompanying infantry they would instantly know from their training that `F1` was `your` tank and you should be following it. Tanks were also given names like `Freddie` or `Egbert`etc, which made these machines slightly more easy to identify and indeed made for a rapport developing between the tank`s crew and the infantry section.

By 1918 the main British battle tank was the Mark V – identifiable by the grilles on the sides – which saw a number of improvements made to those Marks which had gone before and was the principal tank used by the BEF in the Last 100 Days battles.

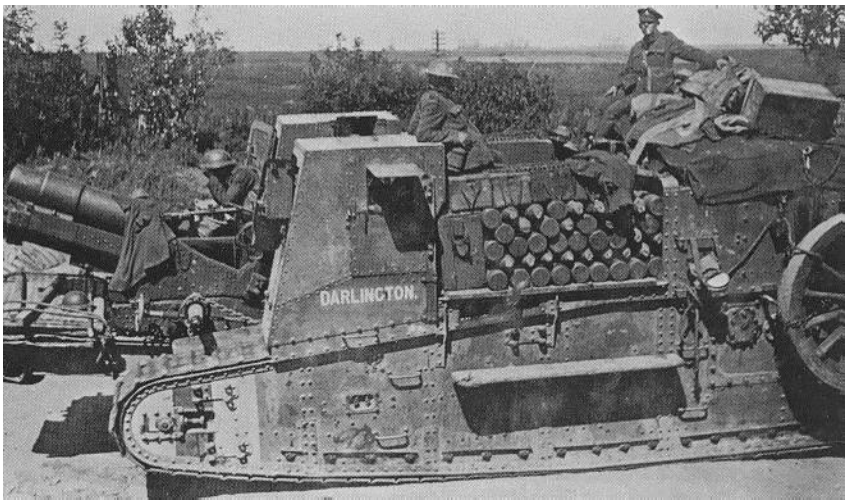
Mark V `Male` tank at the Imperial War Museum

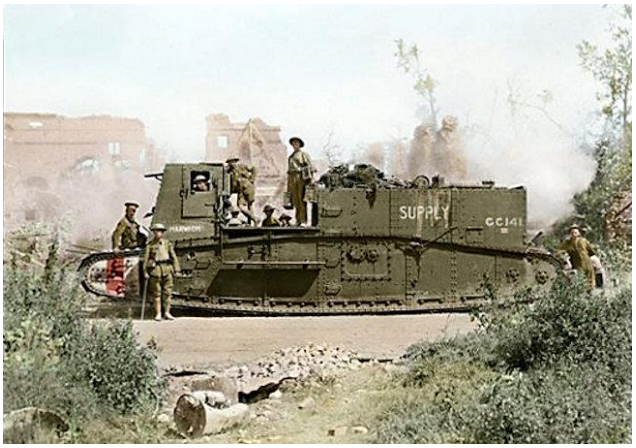
Things which had been learned were put into practice – a rear hatch between the track horns allowing for verbal communication between the tank crew and its accompanying infantry, a rearward facing machine gun, and a semaphore device on the tank roof which was operated by wires – a more sophisticated method than using simple flags. It was limited in effect as it was easily knocked off by a burst of fire from an enemy machine gun. There was also on the outside of the tank a piece of rope, pull on it and a bell rings inside the tank.

All these things are enhancements, but there is still a fundamental problem as, to all intents and purposes, the tank is still a big anonymous box, yes it might still have a name and/or a number on it, but what is needed is an effective understanding of what you other arm is going through. The crew of the tank can see what is going on outside but for the individual infantryman it is not so easy to realise that the men inside the tank understand their situation and it becomes an inanimate object. Towards the end of 1918 there is a lot of work going on to improve liaison between tank units and infantry and the biggest obstacle to be overcome is with the Australians. In April 1917 the Australians had a bad experience working with the Tank Corps at Bullecourt. Tanks were late in turning up – if they showed up at all, there was snow and the tanks left tracks which aided the German gunners to pinpoint the way the Australians would cross the battlefield. The Australians were scathing in their criticisms of the Tank Corps and only very reluctantly worked with them subsequently. In 1918 there was a requirement for the Australians to work with tanks and that was the attack on Hamel. Brigadier Courage of the Tank Corps and the Australians commander Monash worked assiduously to develop good rapport between the tanks and the infantry and basically they decide that the tanks need to launch a `charm offensive`. How do you charm Australians? Bryn quoted an Australian regimental history…."The success was based upon the close association between the Tank Corps and the AIF, the social activities which followed the more formal training and meetings. When a Digger had had a ride in a tank – or better still was allowed to drive on – under supervision of course – and followed this with a `refreshment` with the `tankies`, he got to know them better. His admiration for them and their vehicles rose accordingly and he was more than ready to cooperate with the tanks when the need arose".

Therefore a rapport developed between the tank crews and the infantry whom they would be supporting and this cooperation was seen to its advantage at the battle of Hamel. The principles were subsequently extended to Amiens when over 500 tanks supported the Australians, Canadians and British forces. Indeed many of the tanks were given names by the Australians.

Mark V * (Mark Five `Star`) tank. In an attempt to stop the tank threat, the German Army began digging wider trenches that made it difficult for tanks to cross. For example, trenches in the Hindenburg Line were widened to 11 or 12 feet, which was more than the British tanks' 10 feet trench-crossing ability. To counter this, Sir William Tritton developed the Tadpole Tail, an extension of the tracks to be fitted to the back of a tank, this lengthened the tank by about 9 feet. It was also hoped that this longer tank might carry a squad of infantry with Vickers or Lewis machine guns, but the conditions inside were so extreme that the men became ill, after some early experiments, and although several hundred were manufactured, the idea was abandoned. This in turn caused Major Philip Johnson of the Central Tank Corps Workshops to devise a plan of his own. He cut a Mark IV in half and inserted three extra panels, lengthening the hull by six feet. (It was believed for a long time that most Mark V* had been field conversions made by Johnson. It is now known that they were all new, factory-built to a new design). The V* had a reshaped rear cupola incorporating 2 extra machine-gun mounts, a door in each side of the hull, with an extra machine-gun mount on each. This tank weighed 33 tons. The total orders for the Mark V* were 500 Males and 200 Females, 579 had been built by the Armistice – the order was completed by Metropolitan Carriage in March 1919. Shortly before the end of the War, Britain supplied France with 90 Mk V*. They were not used in action, but remained in French service throughout the 1920s and 30s. A number of earlier versions of the tanks, predecessors of the Marks IV and V were converted into gun carriers, in effect to be able to bring artillery pieces forward across the battlefield where horses could not take them, but this proved to be less than successful and most were subsequently converted into supply tanks to bring ammunition, food, water and other supplies to troops occupying forward positions over broken, shell torn terrain far better than horses or mules.





Bryn then summed up by saying his presentation had been about how tanks and infantry could work effectively together and how that process had been developed and improved during the course of the war, but it should be made clear that this was a very imperfect process. For every step that was learned, the Germans soon took steps to counter it, wider trenches being one very

obvious development adopted by the Germans. What should be borne in mind that there was a constant process of trying to develop new things to try and overcome the problems being experienced on the battlefield. By 1918 you had experiments with tanks having various means to attempt to communicate with aircraft flying overhead, wireless being one and probably the most effective means, although they did try placing a *camera obscura* in a tank to see if they could spot what signals and overflying aeroplane was trying to give.

Increasingly aircraft were being allocated to the role of supporting the tanks in a ground attack mode to try and take out guns which could potentially knock out the slow moving AFVs as they crawled across the battlefield. This was generally carried out by Armstrong Whitworth FK8 planes.

In late 1918 they learn to match the speed of the artillery barrage advance with the speed of the tanks across the battlefield. Infantry and tanks would advance together, just behind the creeping barrage. Bryn said he had not mentioned smoke and on the battlefield it was often necessary to hide things – particularly lumbering metal boxes – and supporting artillery often fired a smoke screen although by 1918 many tanks were equipped to generate their own smoke. Tanks were also carrying ammunition for the infantry who if they got to a position where they could consolidate, they could be re-supplied with ammunition, particularly if they anticipated a German counter attack.

The `Whippet` tank was intended to cooperate with the cavalry, but the problem was the whipper – or Medium A tank moved at 8 miles per hour whereas a horse can travel at 30 miles per hour – but the Whippet was armoured and could withstand rifle and machine gun fire. Cavalry on the other hand if they encounter concentrated rifle or machine gun fire, they have to retire or go to ground. So out and out tank/cavalry cooperation never really worked. Whippets were equipped with four machine guns and most battalion commanders acknowledged that they could do a decent job for them.

A number of Great War tanks still exist, the Imperial War Museum, the tank at Ashford in Kent, the Tank Museum at Bovington, the Museum of Lincolnshire Life in Lincoln, and overseas in Australia, the US, Belgium – even Ukraine and Latvia have preserved examples. Why are First World War tanks found in Ukraine and Latvia?...they were sent to help the White Russian forces against the Bolsheviks.

And finally, to end on a lighter note, Bryn put up his last slide…..

We then had an excellent question and answer session with Bryn fielding a number of very interesting questions from our attendees – particularly from a first time visitor to the Branch, Tim Whitworth. The Q & A being over, Branch Chair, Tony Bolton warmly thanked Bryn for his efforts, the members responding in the time honoured manner.

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When a Sikh sepoy saved a British 2nd Lieutenant's life during the fierce Gallipoli Battle in World War 1

As a young lad, Uday Singh was known in Ferozepur, Punjab, for his wrestling prowess. In the monsoon of 1907, the recruiting party of the 14th Ferozepur Sikhs noticed Singh's massive frame and persuaded him to join the army.

In 1914, Reginald Savory was 2nd Lieutenant with the 14th Ferozepur Sikhs, stationed at Peshawar in the north-west frontier. Singh first met Savory in January 1915 on their way to Karachi. The previous month, the regiment had received orders to proceed overseas. Uday Singh's son, Harbans Singh Thandi, has documented the meeting of the two men in a book he wrote, 'Saga of Devotion and Bravery: A Leaf from the Gallipoli Campaign 1915'.

"Savory sahib responded to my father's salute saying 'Thik hai'. My father replied 'Thik hai'. Afterwards, whenever they met, they exchanged the same greeting."

In April, the 14th Sikhs reached the Gallipoli peninsula. During the Gallipoli Battle of 1915-16, more than 58,000 Allied soldiers died, including 29,000 British and Irish soldiers. In the opposite camp, 87,000 Ottoman Turkish troops perished.

According to Thandi, on June 4, 1915, Savory and Singh met on the battlefield. Savory left after discussing a few hand-to-hand fighting strategies with Singh. "My father became very concerned when Savory sahib did not return after a long time. His friends told him to leave Savory to his fate. But he didn't listen to them and went searching for him," says Thandi.

Singh discovered that Savory had passed out on the battlefield after being severely wounded. The Turkish soldiers had taken him for dead. Singh carried him on his shoulders to safety.

After a few days, Singh himself was struck by an acute attack of dysentery and evacuated to India. In 1917, he was demobilised, came back to the village in Patiala and took to farming.

The two men remained in touch through letters — the first letter was written by Savory to his mother explaining how Uday Singh had saved his life. Savory's mother wrote to Singh and sent him a wristwatch.

"We have exchanged more than 100 letters since. General Savory wrote to my grandfather, father and me," says Dr Charanjeet Kaur, Thandi's daughter. "They never served the British. They fought because they were told that the country will be given freedom if we help them win the war," she adds. In 1934, Singh discovered that Savory had become a Lieutenant Colonel, and was posted at the Indian Military Academy, Dehradun. Singh immediately wrote to Savory and they met in Dehradun.

Uday Singh died in December 1947. His family assumed that it would be the end of Savory's association with them. They were wrong. In 1968, when Savory was in India, he visited Singh's grandchildren in Chandigarh.

From the Hindustan Times 14th November 2018

Pte. Ernest Oldfield, 1st (Garrison) Battalion Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire Regiment, was killed when the dugout he was sheltering fell in during the storm at Suvla on 26th November 1915. He is buried in Hill 10 Cemetery.

“ONE OF THE TRAGEDIES OF SUVLA. “

“Chesterfield Soldier amongst a Group of the Killed. “

“The collapse of the roof of a trench has added to the roll of the fallen the name of another Chesterfield soldier, Pte. Ernest Oldfield, third son of the late Mr. Windsor Oldfield and of Mrs. Sarah Oldfield, 2 Dobb's Yard, Saltergate. Pte. Oldfield, who was 42, worked at Grassmoor Colliery before answering the call of his country on 7 September, 1914. Enlisting in the 1st Garrison Battalion Sherwood Foresters he became attached to the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force and left England on 11 October to take part in the Dardanelles campaign. His experience in the trenches was very short for he was killed on 26 November. The sad intelligence was first communicated to Mrs. Oldfield on 15 December, by telegram from the War Office. This was confirmed on Sunday by a letter from Capt. M. Martin as follows: “I deeply regret having to inform you that your son was killed in the trench on the night of 26 November, by the falling in of the roof which was covered with earth. There were eight others killed and 12 injured at the same time. They are all buried at the West Beach Cemetery, Suvla, and we will erect a cross to each man. Needless to say this melancholy accident has cast a gloom over all ranks. If there is any other information you would like to have we will gladly send all in my possession.

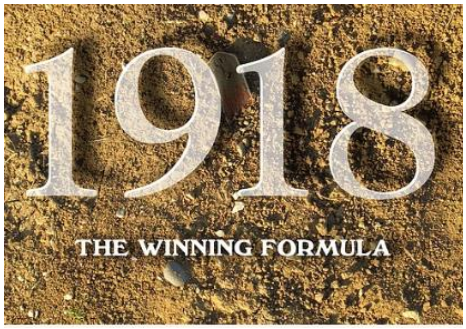
“A member of the Chesterfield Unitarian Church, Pte. Oldfield, it is understood, is the first on the connexion's local roll of honour to make the supreme sacrifice.”

'Derbyshire Courier,' 25th December 1915.`

The Western Front Association Suffolk Branch

Presented

Western Front 100 Seminar
Saturday 11 August 2018



At Waterfront Building Suffolk University Campus Ipswich

The Suffolk Branch of the Western Front Association proudly presented the fifth of a six-year-long centenary event comprising of six inter-connected annual seminars with excellent guest speakers.

Western Front 100 - 1918 Seminar 'The Winning Formula' with guest speakers...

Professor Peter Simkins: Men on the Spot - Some BEF Divisional and Brigade Commanders in the Hundred Days

Jack Sheldon: The German Army in the Allied Advance

Peter Hart: The American contribution in the last hundred days

The talks were followed by a panel session with all guest speakers, and WFA Suffolk Chairman Taff Gillingham.

Commemorations - Chesterfield

This view was taken from the Crooked Spire Church and shows the badge of the Notts & Derby Regiment – The Sherwood Foresters – laid out in the church grounds , the badge and lettering made from thousands of bottle tops and was done by Natalie Peace, Donna Booth and a team of helpers.

The front façade at Chesterfield Town Hall showing the poppy fall made from thousands of hand knitted poppies lovingly made by many hundreds of folks across the borough.

Figures outside the front of Chesterfield Town Hall – a soldier, a nurse and an airman.

Lest We forget.

Commemorations - Worksop

The original Great War Memorial in Worksop was unveiled in September 1923 and was built in to a new ward on the town`s Victoria Hospital. When that hospital was closed and demolished in the 1990s the Memorial and the foundation stones were saved and relocated into the town`s Memorial Garden, close to the Cenotaph monument. This year the Royal British Legion commemorated Worksop`s Great War dead(over 500 men) by planting individual wooden crosses, each with a deceased soldiers name and age at the time they were killed, in from of this Memorial. The foundation stones are built in to the reverse of the brick wall mounting the original memorial

The University of Wolverhampton in association with the Western Front Association

International Conference

1918 - 2018
The End of the War & The Reshaping of a Century

6^{th} - 8^{th} September 2018

International conference was held at the Centre for Historical Research, University of Wolverhampton, in partnership with the Western Front Association and First World War Network for Early Career and Postgraduate Researchers, on the 6^{th}, 7^{th} & 8^{th} September 2018. WFA Trustee Mark Macartney had a WFA branded publicity stall at the event. This consisted of Publicity items plus Branded Goods items for sale, The intention of this was to promote membership/showcase *Stand To* and Bulletin Magazines etc) and to show guests what was available. Also Helion & Company had a stall.

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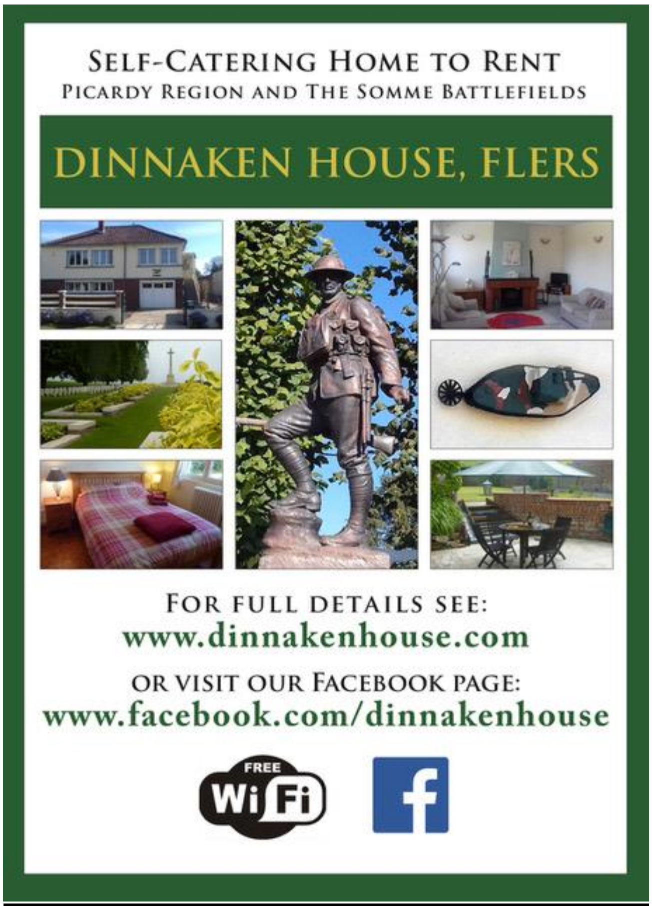


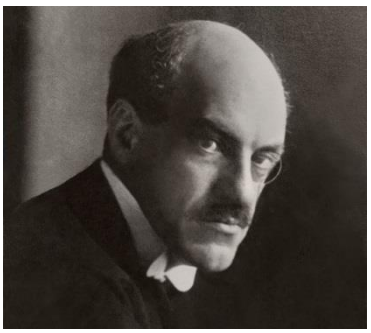
The Munitions Crisis – part 18

This royal gesture became known as `The King`s Pledge` which the nation at large was urged to adopt in conformity with the King`s example. There was sound wisdom in the scheme, for the workers habitually complained, and with all too good reason, that while their employers and the members of the so-called upper classes were eternally lecturing and rebuking them for drinking, they were themselves freely and often excessively enjoying the alcohol which they sought to deny to their employees. The `King`s Pledge` and the fact a number of distinguished persons and prominent men in every branch of industry followed his Majesty in subscribing to it, very greatly strengthened the hands of the government in the measures which it subsequently took to limit and control the supply of intoxicants. Lord Kitchener was amongst those who gave practical support to the King`s initiative and adhered it until his end. It was always a subject of general debate at Ministerial and Military tables whether total abstinence had increased or diminished the vision and efficiency of the Secretary of State for War, or whether it had left it in *status quo* and there was three distinct views on this point, each emphatically held and controverted. Unfortunately, despite its considerable moral value, the King`s example was not adopted widely enough to make any deep impression on the problem itself. The House of Commons flatly refused to pass any self-denying ordinance for its own observance, and this attitude on the part of the nations legislators helped to prevent the `King`s Pledge`from becoming the starting point which King George and his advisors had hoped it mught prove for a big voluntary movement of national sobriety. It remained, therefore, to reinforce this initial impulse by statutory powers.

The Minister, David Lloyd George, at that time gave very serious consideration to the idea of dealing with the drink traffic by buying out on behalf of the state all the private interests, and thus enabling the Government to carry through whatever measures were felt to be in the national interest unhindered by the immensely powerful influence which the drinks trade had traditionally always been able to exert on the politics of the country. To this end Lloyd George instigated an investigation to be made by Sir William Plender as to the probable total value of the interests it would be necessary to acquire. On 30th March 1915 he reported back with a preliminary memorandum which showed the market value of the shares in Breweries to be approximately £68,676,000 (1915 prices) whilst the value of the properties owned by the Breweries, Great Britain, including all tied houses, together with the value of all free public houses and other on-licences would be between £225,000,000 and £250,000,000. It should be noted here that this estimate did not include the value of distilleries. Lloyd George then appointed a `Liquor Trade Finance Committee` to advise the government on the financial arrangements that would have to be made if it was decided by the State to purchase the properties and breweries in England and Wales, to control the branches of the Retail Liquor Trade not so purchased, and to prohibit, temporarily the retail trade in sprits, while permitting the continuance of the sale of beer below a certain alcoholic strength. The Committee reported back on April 15th 1915, submitting a series of recommendations as to the extent and manner of effecting the State acquisition of liquor interests, should such a step be decided upon. This Committee estimated the total cost of transfer to the State of the properties of the breweries and the interests of the licenced free houses in England and Wales at £350 million (1915 prices), excluding allowances in respect of certain off-licences, compensation to officials and employees, and any other expenditure involved in carrying through of such acquisitions.

To politicians bred in pre-war traditions on national expenditure, the sum involved in this purchases seemed prodigious. It was held by some that in view of the heavy burdens we were already bearing to finance the war effort, it would be folly to choose this moment to incur this further heavy outlay. The sum involved was, in fact barely, one fortieth of the total cost of the

war. Lloyd George believed that in return the nation would have secured an asset, which, on the basis of the profits of that time would have given an annual return of 8%. There was, surprisingly, however a powerful section of the Temperance Movement which was up in arms against the abhorrent suggestion that the state should sully its soul by becoming the manufacturer and distributor of alcoholic beverages – notwithstanding that they had no objections to a share by taxation in the profits made by selling alcohol to their fellow citizens. The resistance of this section grew, on the practical side the Minister was faced with the difficulty that the interests which would have to be dealt with by way of purchase or compensation were so numerous and varied in character that the negotiation threatened to take many months, if not years. Some adhesion ti the scheme was secured by some, but not all, of the leading brewers and the Minister felt he could secure the agreement of the rest. The leaders of the Conservative Party were consulted as to their attitude and they intimated that they would offer no opposition to the deal if the government came to the conclusion that it was essential as a war measure. However, a number of local optionists brought such pressure to bear on Prime Minister Asquith that he feared serious trouble inside the party, and in view of the urgency of the problem of reducing excessive drinking in the interests of munition output, Lloyd George decided that, for the time being to proceed with a more limited reform.



During the course of the negotiations, the Minister received from Mr. Edwin Montagu (left); like so many other poisons in moderation, it is beneficial and total abstinence seems to be morally as great a weakness as insobriety a letter with the following contribution to the argument, putting the case against restriction forcibly and wittily:-

" (1) *I believe and believe firmly that almost without exception, except in the cases of apoplexy, a shot in the stomach, or a congested liver, a man with a moderate amount of alcohol is a better citizen, a better man, a more vigorous individual than he would be without it. Medical evidence shows that alcohol is a poison but like so many poisons in moderation, it is beneficial, and total abstinence seems to me to be morally as a great a weakness as insobriety.*

(2) *I cannot find myself in agreement with you that there is any evidence that drink has hampered us in this war on any substantial scale which calls for heroic remedies. Evil exists - there is broken time, there is disinclination to work; it is true that even with Sunday labour and overtime, the average hours worked per week are less in many important trades than before the war. I believe this is largely due to overtime itself. If a man is called upon to work substantially longer one day than he is accustomed to work, then the next day he is disinclined to work and if he is a free agent, he may even refuse to work. Our party* (The Liberal Party) *anyhow believes that Trade Unions are good institutions. They fixed the working day and its length probably empirically because experience showed them that, let us say, that eight hours was the maximum which a member of their union could work regularly to produce the full economical output of which he was capable. They insisted that overtime should be treated as overtime because they found that it was economically bad, and it seems to me that the war has proved that insistence upon overtime leads to irregular work and a smaller output, and it should be avoided as much as possible.*

(3) *It is true that receipts from the sale of drinks are large, but this is due mainly to your own taxation which has increased the price of beer, and to the increase in the price of raw materials and of labour, which has increased the price of whisky.*

(4) *It is true that employers and officials alike attribute everything that is wrong not to drunkenness - but to drink; but you must remember that although the Tory habit of mind is to*

be found on both sides of the House of Commons you are now for the first time coming into contact with the Tory mind, naked and unashamed , in bulk and I cannot help feeling alarmed that you regard it as honest, as unprejudiced as the habit of mind to which you are accustomed. It is a habit of mind which treats the working man as a machine with no vested interests in its habits and with no right to human consideration…….

(5) *It is said that holidays would not be so attractive to the labourers if the public houses were closed – but you are not going to close the public houses…and if your objective is to make drinking unattractive then you will have to close the picture palaces and music halls thus depriving him of all opportunity for entertainment.*

(6) *Every one of the deputation which waited upon you the other day drinks moderately and would be insulted if you had told them that they were unfitted for work because of this habit and I really believe that you run grave risk by insulting the people of this country of all classes by interfering with their liberty.*

This letter to the Minister gives an idea of the divisions inside the government on the drink issue. With regards to Montagu`s suggestion that diminished production was due to fatigue due to working long hours, the figures given later by the Minister as to the average hours worked in the yards and factories would supply a complete answer.

To be continued

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As many of you know I spent a week on the Gallipoli peninsula in September 2017 and since then have added to my knowledge by reading and comparing the different viewpoints. The undernoted, sourced through the Gallipoli Association website, is quite a different` take` on the normal perceived wisdom view of the German `advisors` during the campaign.

GC

THE INTENTIONS OF THE GERMANS IN GALLIPOLI

Assist. Prof. İsmet Görgülü
Başkent University

INTRODUCTION

We are proud of our victory at Gallipoli, we deserved it. We are sorry, too, for the huge number of people we lost. On the other hand, this situation is a necessity for a war. We do not deal with the questions of if we could not finish this war with lesser lost or why we lost so many people in this war. The Turkish Nation does not question this. During the 8.5 month Gallipoli Wars, we lost ten times as many people as we lost during the Independence War, which approximately lasted for 4 years. We won a huge victory in Çanakkale and saved the Turkish generation, Turkey and the independence of the Turkish nation with one tenth of the people we lost in Gallipoli. Our loss in Gallipoli is not normal; it is huge and excessive.

The reason for this loss was the few German commanders among the Turkish Army in Gallipoli Wars and especially the German commander who led the wars.
The German commanders increased the cost of our victory. They caused the Turkish Army to lose more. With the defence technique he used, the 5th Army commander Liman Pasha of Germany turned the Gallipoli Peninsula into a honeycomb on which bees would assemble.

And, in return, he kept the half million English and French soldiers on this honeycomb but the Turkish soldiers paid its cost with their blood.

The main reason for this loss was that Liman Pasha gave the enemy the chance to land on the shore by changing the defence tactics the Turkish commanders had planned. Then the German Division and the Army-corps commanders often, randomly, day and night- pushed the soldiers to make counter-attacks that were not related to any war tactics. The soldiers made these counter-attacks against the destructive machine-gun fire of the enemy. Each counter-attack destroyed 5-10 thousand Turks. Even though the enemy was the side that attacked Gallipoli, the Turkish Army attacked 4-5 times more than the enemy did.

If the Turkish Army had begun the war with the defence tactics of the Turkish commanders, like in the "18th of March", Gallipoli Wars would have ended with the defeat of the English and the French in the first days of the war. In that case, we would not have lost the number of people equal to the loss of ten Independence wars.

THE INTENTION OF THE GERMANS

It should not be expected that the Germans' intention in Gallipoli Wars could be clearly seen in the documents or sources, because a government hides its actual intentions toward the other one. The actual intention of a government can be revealed if they are analysed. We will define the Germans' intention in Gallipoli Wars by examining their practices.

On 24th of March 1918, the 5th Army, which would fight in Gallipoli, is ordered to be organised and Liman von Sanders, who is both a German General and a Turk Field Marshall, is appointed as the 5th Army Commander. Liman Pasha claims that this army is organised by his own ardour and says:

At last, on 24th of March, Enver decided to organise the 5th Army in the Gallipoli region. Of late years, German Embassy and Admiral Şuchon agreed with my perpetual ardour about making the Turkish Headquarters take this decision[1].

Liman makes a short explanation about his own appointment and says that Enver Pasha, on the same day, offered him the position of the 5th Army Commander, which he accepted "immediately[2]".

The main point here is that with the attack on 18th of March, a new front in the channel would open and the appointed commander who would defend Gallipoli and the capital city would be German. This person is the chairman of the German Improvement Commission. He came to Istanbul on 14th of December 1913 and his relationship with the Ottoman Empire was not good until the date of his appointment. The people who work for him describe Liman as follow:

He was not accepted by the Germans as an appropriate person for the Army-corps. He was incapable in adaptation to foreign conditions and was difficult in relationships with the people he worked with. He was a very proud, snobbish and angry man. He was not educated for high authority and was discourteous. [3]

It was this kind of person appointed for the duty that would affect the future of World War I and of the government. Some sources claim that this appointment is related to the Enver-Liman struggle. Enver appointed Liman for this position because he did not like him and wanted him to go away from Istanbul. The reason for this extremely important appointment cannot be reduced to only a struggle. It is understood from the sources that there was a disagreement between them. Liman Pasha, in the beginning, did not completely obey Enver Pasha who was initially the Minister of the War Academy and became the Representative of

Chief Commander after the war began. Liman Pasha considered himself superior to Enver Pasha who was actually superior to him. In this condition, Enver Pasha might have wanted to

make him go away. Before the war began, the Turkish Ministry War Academy had argued about sending Liman Pasha back to Germany and appointing Goltz Pasha instead.[5] In the end, Goltz Pasha came, but Liman's situation did not change. From the Turks' point of view, it showed that Goltz's appointment was arranged to banish Liman Pasha because of his incompatibility. However from Germans' point of view, the situation was different. During the early months of the war in November 1914 and after Sarıkamış Operations in February 1915, Enver Pasha offered the position of 3rd Army Commander to Liman Pasha twice.[6] Liman Pasha refused this offer. Yet when the duty was becoming the army commander of Gallipoli on March of 1915 the same Liman Pasha answered: "I immediately accepted the offer".[7]
The question here is: Why did the Turkish Army offer this duty to this person - he is not unique - who refused the position of army commander twice before? Why did Liman Pasha immediately accept the offer related to the Gallipoli Front although he refused the offer related to Caucasian Front twice before?

There is no document for the answers of these questions, but the following conclusion is possible from the synthesis of the information available. Enver Pasha thought that Ottoman Empire was successful in World War I because of the success of Germany, so he did what the ally asked him to do. A German was appointed even as a general staff. At that point, it might have been that Germany had a request about Liman Pasha from the Ottoman Empire and then Liman Pasha was appointed as the 5th Army Commander. That Liman Pasha, who refused the position of army commander twice before, "immediately" accepted the offer related to 5th Army Commander supports the opinion below about this issue.
Germans took control on the Gallipoli front when Liman Pasha became the Army Commander of Gallipoli. Taking control on the Gallipoli Front was not limited with Liman Pasha. In the beginning of the Gallipoli Wars, there were Germans at important positions in the channel fortification; there were no Germans in Arıburnu or Seddülbahir regions but in Kumkale region the commanders of the two-division army and of the division army were German. After May 1915, the number of German commanders had increased. The two-division army commanders, two group commanders, one army-corps commander were German in the Seddülbahir region. Five division army commanders and two army-corps commanders were again German in the Arıburnu and Anafartalar region. A German became the army commander in the Saros region. Additionally, German officers were appointed as the group and army-corps chief and the artilleryman commanders.[8]

These appointments may be regarded as natural, because Germany was the ally. The German and Ottoman Empire fought together. On the other hand, we cannot see this kind of similar appointment in Caucasus, Philistine or Iraq Fronts, which were in war at the same period. In 1915, although two commanders, one of whom was the division army commander[9] and one chief of general staff were German in the Caucasian Front; and one army commander, one division army chief of staff and one army-corps commander were German in the Philistine Front[10] , there were no German officers in the Iraq Front.[11]

These data show that Germans gave a specific importance to Gallipoli and that they were determined to control the Gallipoli operation according to their plans and that they did not want to leave the operation to Turks.
İzzettin Çalışlar, who worked for Atatürk as the chief of general during World War I in Gallipoli and 2,5 years after the war, wrote in his diary:

31st of March, 1915... Liman Pasha, 5th Army Commander; Usedom Pasha, Shore Inspector; Merten Pasha, Navy Commander; Weber Pasha, army-corps Commander in Anatolia; Cevat Pasha, Fortified position Commander; Esat Pasha, 3rd Army-corps Commander. It seems that the Germans want to take the control over the channel defence completely.[12] The importance of Gallipoli for Germans can be indirectly seen in a German source. After explaining the Gallipoli Wars in the 9th volume of Grosse Krieg, published in 1927 and found in the German Archives, the following statements are being used about Gallipoli:

The Germans kept the enemy troops in the Gallipoli region during the summer and autumn of 1915 in Gallipoli Wars and kept them away from the (European) Western Front. On the other hand, the Germans did not use nearly any German force in this region, so this seriously helped German Western Front.

The English used 410.000 and French used 79.000 soldiers in Gallipoli Wars. During the wars, the enemy lost more than 252.000 soldiers.[13]

Turkey's considerable help in the Gallipoli Wars to the German Western Front is shown as an indirect result. Nevertheless it is not an indirect result. This was the Germans' expectation of the war. If the wars are examined, it is seen that German Commanders had this idea prior to the wars and they directed the wars to make these ideas realized. The important thing for them was not to rid Gallipoli of the enemy but to mass more English and French troops there. The German Western Front in Europe in difficulty could be relieved only in this way. This is evident from Liman Pasha's defence plan and practices, and the other commanders' administrations. In the Gallipoli Wars, relieving the German Western Front by keeping half million English and French troops away from the European Western Front, and the massing of these troops to this region were not the result of these wars, but was what the Germans wanted from these wars.
The German practices that prove our approach to these issues have been examined in the paper.

1-Liman Van Sanders, Five Years in Turkey, Burçak Publisher, 1968, p. 76.
2-ibid. p. 77
3-Jehuda L. Wallach, Anatomy of a Millitary Assistance, General Staff, ATASE Publisher, 1985, p. 121-122.
4-Ibid. p.158 etc.
5-ibid. p. 154-155
6-ibid. p.155-159
7-Five Years in Turkey, p. 77
8-İsmet Görgülü, German Claims on Çanakkale Victory, Atatürk Reserche Center, Atatürk Ach. Cent., Issue 25, 1995.
9-İsmet Görgülü, The Staff of 10-Year-War, Turkish History Institution, Y. Kredi Publisher, 1993, p.112-113
10-ibid.p.140-141
11-ibid. p. 162-163
12-Two and Half Years with Atatürk, Full General İzzettin Çalışlar, Yapı Kredi Publisher, 1993, p.34
13-The Big War in the Balkans and Turkey, Issue 95, Military Periodical, İstanbul, 1934, p. 60-61.

A forgotten soldier on a forgotten front by Alan Little

Sgt Sandes, an infantry soldier in the Serbian Army, lay semi-conscious on the snowy hillside after taking the full blast of a Bulgarian grenade, and would later recall being wrapped up and bundled away like a rabbit in a poacher's sack.

"I could see nothing," the trooper wrote. "It was exactly as though I had gone suddenly blind; but I felt the tail of an overcoat sweep across my face. Instinctively I clutched it with my left hand, and must have held on for two or three yards before I fainted.

"The Serbs have a theory that you must not give water to a wounded man because they say it chills him, so they poured fully half a bottle of brandy down my throat and put a cigarette in my mouth.

"I caught the little sergeant who had helped carry me watching me with his eyes full of tears. I assured him that it took a lot to kill me, and that I should be back again in about ten days".

Serbian soldiers on the Balkan front

It was November 1916. Sandes was among tens of thousands of Serbian troops fighting, from their base in northern Greece, to try to re-enter their own country, which had been occupied by Bulgarian forces a year earlier.

It took Sandes not ten days but six months to recover sufficiently to rejoin the ranks and to return to the front line. By the end of the war, Sandes would be awarded Serbia's highest military honour, the Order of the Karadjordje Star.

Sandes is a celebrated national hero in Serbia to this day. That's all the more remarkable for two reasons. First, Sandes was not Serbian but British - born and raised in Yorkshire. And second, Private Sandes's first name was Flora. She was the only British woman to serve in uniform, in combat, as an enlisted soldier in World War One.

The British Cemetery at Karasouli is about an hour's drive north of Greece's second city, Thessaloniki. A century ago it served as a clearing station for wounded men evacuated from the fighting. Eventually it would hold the remains of more than 1,300 British men.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission maintains 24 cemeteries in Greece, and more still across the border in Macedonia. The largest of these holds thousands of dead. The smallest has just a single grave, that of the poet Rupert Brooke, who yearned to fight but who died from disease before reaching Gallipoli, and who is buried on the Greek island of Skyros.

Compared with the vast and magnificent World War One cemeteries of Flanders and northern France, there is something understated, even apologetic, about the Commonwealth war graves of northern Greece. There are no shining white upright Portland stone grave markers here. Instead, little concrete blocks ten inches high, known as Macedonian pedestals, mark each grave.

Even before the war was over it was decided that the bodies of those who died should not be returned to their families. Instead they would lie alongside those they served and fell with - an eternal comradeship of the dead.

When Alan Little visited Karasouli, a young Greek stonemason was carefully re-engraving the name of Pte John Fulton, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. It was 19 September, and he'd been killed a century earlier to the very day.

Pte Fulton was from my village in Galloway in rural Scotland. I grew up there half a century after he died and it was then the kind of place where everyone knew everyone. As a child, I read his name on our local war memorial. Had he survived I might have known Pte Fulton as an elderly neighbour - I might have gone to school with his grandchildren.

Few visit Karasouli now, or indeed any of the other Commonwealth cemeteries that are dotted across northern Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Who remembers now why these men were here, what they were fighting for and the cause for which they died in such numbers?

These are the forgotten battlefields of World War One.

British soldiers in Salonica, 1915

British troops began arriving in northern Greece in 1915, to support a larger French force.

They came by sea. Salonica, now Thessaloniki, the port city where they disembarked, had been part of the Ottoman Empire until 1911, when it was taken by the Greeks.

From a distance, the allied servicemen were charmed by its exotic eastern character. It is “a lovely place” one soldier wrote, “a fairy city with white minarets and red roofs”.

But once they were ashore the charm wore off. Salonica was a disease-ridden swamp in summer - insanitary, poor and swarming with mosquitoes. Before long the servicemen were reporting bodies of men and of horses washed up on the shore - casualties of an increasingly successful German U-boat campaign against allied shipping.

1915: A ship on fire in Salonica harbour

But the risk of death in combat was outweighed by something far more deadly - the awful conditions. Go to the cemetery at Lembet Road in Thessaloniki and you will find the graves of 1,600 British servicemen, most of whom never saw a round fired, but who were killed far from the front line by malaria or dysentery or typhus.

More than 600,000 allied servicemen came to the Macedonia front between 1915 and 1918 - French, British, Italian, Greek, and Russian. Their job was to help the Serbs in the war against Austria. But by the time the first troops landed at Salonica they had been overtaken by events. The Serbs were already suffering a catastrophic defeat.

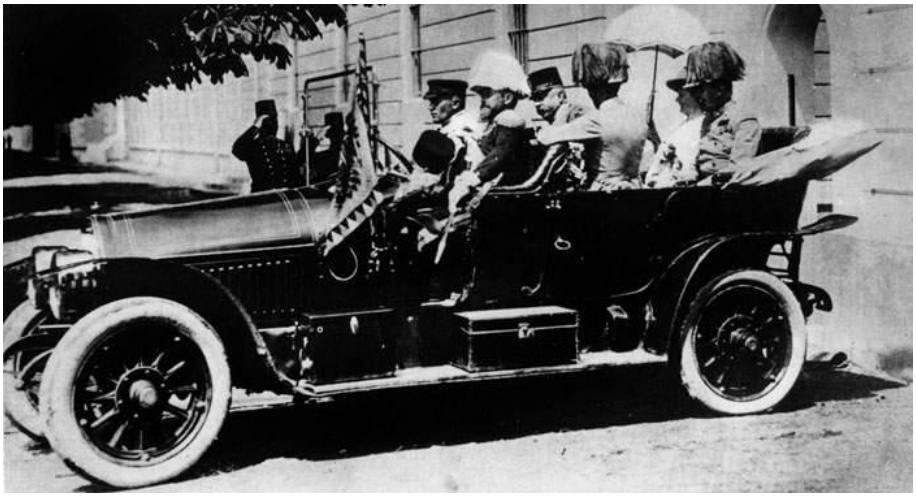
Serbia and Bulgaria had been allies in the Balkan wars of 1911 and 1912, fighting to end centuries of Ottoman rule in south-eastern Europe. But as the Ottoman Empire receded, Serbs and Bulgarians turned on each other.

1913: Macedonians on the road to Salonica during the Balkan war against the Ottoman Empire

Serbia had ended the Balkan war of 1913 in possession of the land which corresponds roughly to the modern-day independent state of Macedonia. The Serbs called it South Serbia, refusing to recognise a distinct Macedonian identity. But to the Bulgarians it was Western Bulgaria, and the Macedonian “language” was not a separate tongue at all but simply “Bulgarian written on a Serbian typewriter”.

The outbreak of war between Serbia and Austria in 1914 - the opening of World War One - was to give the Bulgarians the perfect opportunity.

The war had begun when a young Serb, Gavrilo Princip, had assassinated the heir to the Austrian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, in Sarajevo in June 1914. Princip, at 20, was too young to be sentenced to death for his crime and so lived long enough to see the unintended consequences of what he had done.



1914: The archduke and duchess, moments before their assassination in Sarajevo

The population of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was twelve times that of Serbia, a kingdom of just four and a half million people. Even so, the Serbs managed to push back Austria's first attempt at invasion in the summer of 1914 - the first Allied victory over the Central Powers of World War One. The Austrians invaded again, and occupied Belgrade in December 1914. The Serbs fought back and recaptured the city. By the end of the year, the Serbs had lost an estimated 170,000 men. That winter, a typhus epidemic swept through the civilian population, killing hundreds of thousands more. The Serbian government declared that its war aim was now not only the liberation of Serbia itself, but the liberation, from Austria, of all the Slavic speaking territories of the empire, including Bosnia, Croatia and Slovenia.

1915: Refugees during the Serbian retreat

There was further disaster for Serbia in 1915. Bulgaria entered the war in September and invaded in October, just days after Austria and Germany launched new offensives into Serbia.

The Serbian army collapsed and began a long, defeated trek across the mountains of Albania in the brutal cold of a Balkan winter.

Thousands died of hunger, cold and disease. By February 1916, the last of the survivors had reached the Adriatic coast and were evacuated by allied ships and put ashore, finally, at Salonica to rejoin the allies.

Flora Sandes

Flora Sandes was 38 when war broke out, and she wanted to serve. She was highly educated, fluent in French and German, and independently wealthy. She loved the outdoors, hiking and camping in all weathers. She could ride and shoot.

She volunteered as a nurse but was rejected by the British because she was insufficiently qualified. The War Office was dismissive of women who wanted to contribute to the war effort, though many did. Elsie Inglis, the Edinburgh-educated doctor who founded the Scottish Women's Hospitals was told by the War Office to "go home and sit still".

To be in the thick of battle was something that Flora had long dreamt of .Like Elsie Inglis, Flora Sanders did neither. She left England almost immediately and went to Serbia in August 1914 with a women's volunteer ambulance unit. When in late 1915 the Serbs were in full retreat, making their trek across the mountains, Flora refused repeated orders to abandon the forces she'd been assigned to and withdraw to safety. Eventually she was the only woman left. Her biographer, Louise Miller, says she had long wanted to be a soldier. She'd been raised on the stories of Kipling and had read and re-read the Charge of the Light Brigade. "To be in the thick of battle was something that Flora had long dreamt of… and [she] had spent hours imagining herself as the central character in Kipling's tales of heroism and adventure. She had high hopes for the climax of the Bulgarian attack.

“By now there was little point pretending she could be useful as a nurse in such conditions. Desperate not to be sent back to Salonica, she rested all her hopes on being accepted into the ranks of the Serbian army as a soldier.”

She expected rejection. Instead, Milos Vasic, the Serb commander whose men she had served, welcomed her. “If you remain with the army,” he told her, “you will have to go with them through Albania. The trip will be terrible, like nothing you have ever experienced.”

Flora asked: “Will I be a burden?” “Quite the reverse,” Vasic said. “It will be better for us as your presence will encourage the soldiers. You represent the whole of England to them”. That night, Flora Sandes became a private in the Serbian Army.

The Mausoleum

Of all the allied burial sites in Thessaloniki the one that receives by far the highest number of visitors today is the Serbian one. It is a vast and cavernous mausoleum that contains the remains of more than 7,000 Serbian soldiers. Many of them were survivors of the long and deadly winter trek across the Albanian mountains.

The burial site was founded by a Serb veteran called Savo Mihailovic, who was put in charge of collecting the bodies - many of them his friends and comrades - and burying them together on the site of a former field hospital. He never left the memorial, guarding it until his death in 1928. He was replaced by his son, Djure Mihailovic, who guarded the site until his death in 1961. He and his father are both buried in the cemetery. The keeper of the site now is Djordje Mihailovic, Djure's son and Savo's grandson. The Greek authorities have banned further burials in the cemetery but an exception has been made for Djordje, who will one day be the last Serb to be interred there.

Djordje's presence is a living link with the Serbian experience of World War One. The cavernous interior of the mausoleum he guards is a shrine to the Serb martial tradition. It connects Serbia's wars against the Ottoman Empire in the 19th Century to both world wars and the wars that Serbs waged during the break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Many of today's visitors are veterans of those later wars. The kinship they feel with the men of 1914-18 is immediate and powerful. Then the goal was to drive the Bulgarians out. But the Bulgarians could not have asked for a geography better suited to a defending army. Head north from Thessaloniki and the parched low-lying plains give way to a very different landscape.

The Allied front line in the WW1 Balkan campaign

What separates Greece from its northern neighbours is a chain of mountains, running east to west, that rises steeply and suddenly. It is a forbidding sight. Even in summer the slopes appear black and impenetrable. And it was on these mountaintops that Bulgarian forces dug in. There they would sit, for the rest of the war, ready to swat away successive attempts by the British and French to dislodge them. The allied armies gathering on the plains below were spread out like a map beneath their feet.

(Below: Bulgarian officers on a mountainside in 1917)

On 18 September 1918, the day before Pte John Fulton of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders died, the British launched an offensive against Bulgarian troops dug in along their mountain tops at Doiran, on the Greek border. It was futile. In one British unit, 500-strong, fewer than 30 men survived. The bodies of many of those killed were never recovered. The Doiran memorial, erected after the war, stands near the Greek-Macedonian border and is engraved with the names of more than 2,000 Commonwealth soldiers with no known grave. Further west, the main allied force, mostly French and Serbian, was commanded by General Franchet d'Esperey, whom British troops nicknamed Desperate Frenchie or Desperate Frankie. They launched what turned out to be the decisive attack at the end of September 1918.

General Franchet d'Esperey, the French commander in Macedonia, launched the decisive attack in 1918

The Bulgarians abandoned the positions they'd held for three years along hundreds of kilometres of the line. Bulgaria asked the allies for an armistice on 29 September 1918 - the first of Germany's allies to sue for peace. The road to the great imperial capitals, Vienna and Budapest, now lay wide open to allied forces. World War One had started in the Balkans - it was now ending there too.

But no nation lost more than Serbia. Sixty per cent of its army of 450,000 died by the end of 1918 - 25% of its entire population were killed in combat or died from disease, including more than half of its entire male population.

Aftermath

The men of the British Salonica Campaign went home to a nation that knew little about what they had done. The disastrous battles they had fought and the long and arduous months they had spent on the barren plains and mountain sides of northern Greece scarcely featured in the national narratives and quickly slipped from collective memory. There were no victories to celebrate and it was hard to see what their presence in the Balkans had achieved. In the vast literature of World War One studies, there is almost nothing on this forgotten theatre. The outstanding account is by Alan Wakefield and Simon Moody, in Under the Devil's Eye. It is a story of failed and - for the most part futile - offensives. "That evening I sat, clad in an old civvy suit, in my mother's flat in St John's Wood," one survivor wrote of the day he was demobbed. "A strange feeling of loneliness came over me. No longer was the Army there to take care of me; I faced, on my own, a new and strange world."

December 1918: Soldiers receiving their last pay packet before demobilisation

After the war, Flora Sandes, now promoted to Captain, found life "dull and irksome" and pined for a war she had clearly relished. She lived for a time in Paris, then South Africa. She married a Russian emigre a dozen years her junior, returned to Belgrade and tried to re-enlist, at the age of 65, when Belgrade was bombed by the Germans in 1941.

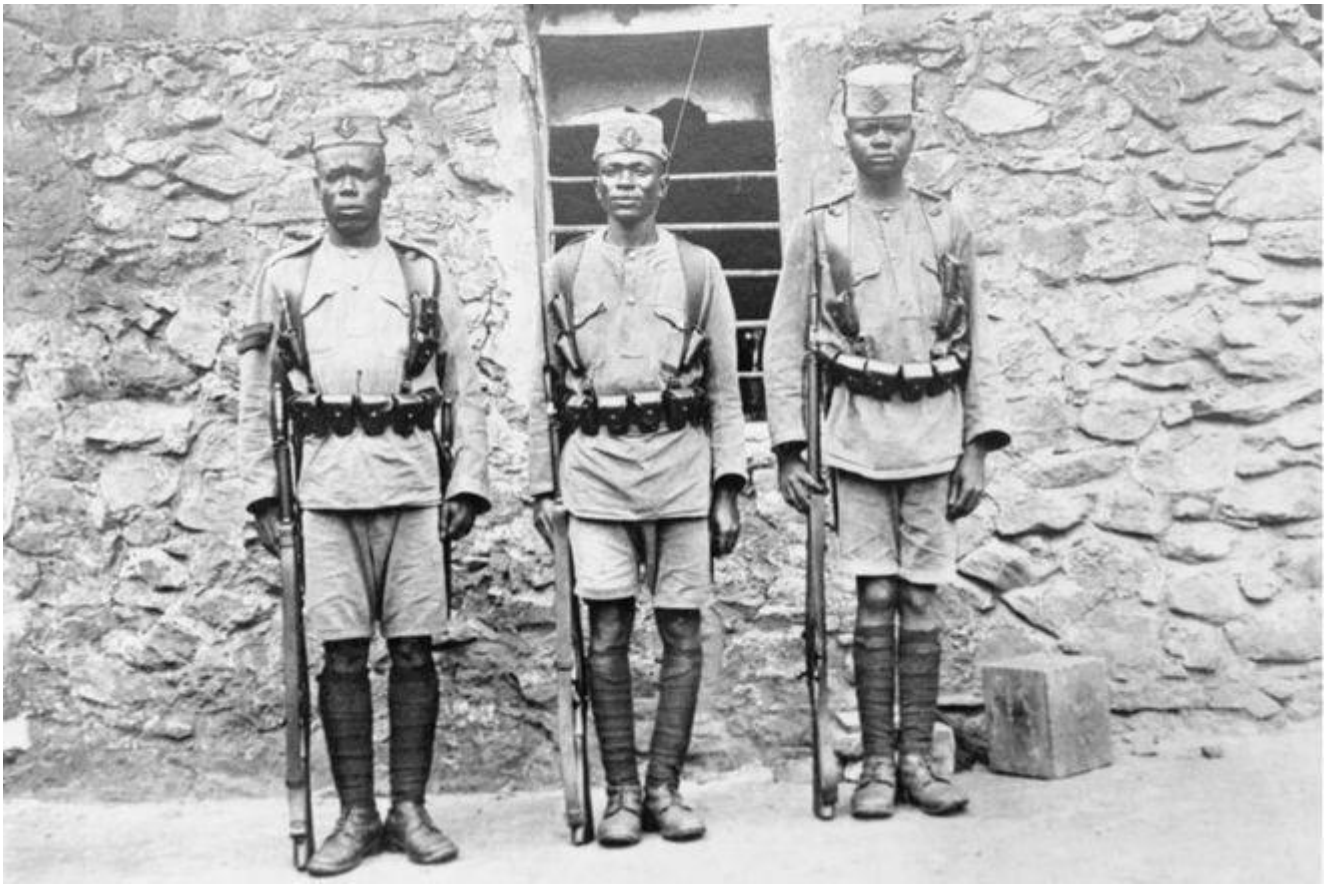
She returned to England in old age, and died at the age of 80 in a Suffolk village. In Britain she is largely unknown. There was a pub named the Flora Sandes in Thornton Heath in South London, but it closed down earlier this year. The building was boarded up and her name removed from over the front door. But in Serbia she remains celebrated. As recently as 2009, the Belgrade authorities named a street after her. In 2015 her face appeared on a special issue of Serbian postage stamps.

At Karasouli, visitors are asked to enter their names in a registry to record their visit. Not long ago I counted the entries: there had been 160 visits in four years. Forty a year; fewer than one a week.

But the cemeteries are there, maintained in perpetuity by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. They are what stand between the men of that unremembered conflict and the cold indifference of posterity.

Where World War One finally ended

The contribution of African soldiers to the war effort has often been overlooked



A fortnight after Europe marked the 100th anniversary of the armistice that brought World War One to a close, Africa is holding its own ceremonies this weekend. Andrew Harding looks at the reason behind the delay. "This was no side show. It was an important part of the world war, and the longest campaign of that war," declared James Willson, a Kenyan historian attending a small ceremony at the neatly tended Commonwealth War Cemetery in the rural town of Voi. A Kenyan army bugler played the last post as British and German diplomats looked on. A Kenyan general and small group of local and international visitors laid wreaths.

This was the start of a weekend of ceremonies and tours. A few dozen curious passers-by peered over the hedge, many unaware of the centenary in a country that has largely turned its back on events that must once have touched every family in the region. "I don't think we have been recognised, as other soldiers have," said Willie Mwadilo, a local hotelier and tour guide.

"If you go to the war graves you'll find German soldiers - born this year, died this year - but as for the locals… we need to do more.

"In this area, something like 75% of adult males in 1916 engaged in some form of military activity. That's largely been forgotten by the public. It's a great shame." Image copyright Imperial War Museum Image caption An unknown number of African soldiers died fighting on the continent in World War One

He detailed the contribution.

"Twenty-five nations sent porters and troops to East Africa. The entire country [of Kenya] had nearly a million people, either in the carrier corps, or in the King's African Rifles. That was one quarter of the population." The exact death toll is unknown. Nearly 60,000 people, the majority belonging to foreign armies, were buried in marked graves. But many more Africans are thought to have died from starvation, disease and exhaustion, as they worked carrying British supplies across vast distances.

Those distances, and the nature of the campaign in East Africa, explain the fortnight's delay in signing the armistice here. On 11 November 1918, Germany agreed to the armistice in France, but it took days for word to reach its far-flung African forces, who were still fighting, with great success, in today's Zambia.The German and British commanders then had to agree on the protocols for their own armistice ceremony. "My great grandfather was a typical colonial officer," said Felix Hagendorn, a young German farmer, who was visiting Kenya, with his wife and child, for the weekend's events.

Mr Hagendorn's relative was Gen Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, the legendary commander of German forces in East Africa - a man whose exploits earned him the nickname the Lion of Africa.

"He was outnumbered, and didn't have any supplies from Europe. So, he decided to go for guerrilla tactics. He could attack and disappear. For the last years of the war he lived off British and Portuguese supplies, stealing them and disappearing again."

The German strategy, hugely successful in its own right, was intended to force Britain and its allies to divert men and equipment away from the battle in France.

General von Lettow-Vorbeck was undefeated and when it came to the negotiating the armistice he was keen to be recognised as such. In that context, the British agreed that, after he and his officers had ceremonially handed over their weapons, they would immediately be given back.

"The problem is that nearly all the [Germans'] weapons were actually stolen from the Brits," laughed Mr Hagendorn. A compromise, involving an exchange of Portuguese guns, was eventually agreed upon. Image caption A memorial has now been set up for the African soldiers who died in the conflict

Today, in the spectacular hills and lush green wilderness around Voi, it is easier to stumble across a pride of lions than to find remnants of the war.

But guides like Mr Madwilo point out a rusting railway line hidden in the grass, and take occasional visitors up Picket Hill, with its stunning view towards Mount Kilimanjaro and

Tanzania. There, crumbling dry-stone walls indicate an old British fort, and some century-old graffiti is still visible on the granite.

'I'm very proud'

A new plaque is being unveiled this weekend, near the almost invisible remains of another nearby fort, commemorating the role of African troops and porters.

"We found a new machine gun placement just over there, only two weeks ago," said Mr Mwadilo, scratching in the red earth of a trench for old bullets.

"I'm very proud that I am finding out more about Kenyan history.

"I'm sure our children don't know anything about it. This should be included in the school curriculum. But we're getting there. I'm sure coming generations will appreciate this more."

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I read this story and found it so moving, I felt it worthy of inclusion

Finding Ben

Today it is the third anniversary of losing my Mam, Ben's niece and the driving force behind finding Ben. The following is the account of her only visit to The Somme:
In June 2015 I returned to the British Military Cemetery at Pozieres, with my Mam. The camera footage of my previous visit was greatly appreciated, but I knew my Mam had to visit and see it

herself.
We approached through Pozieres and a quarter of a mile beyond the village I stopped the car in

the layby outside the gates and helped her out. As she took in the exterior of the cemetery, I took her 'wheels' out of the boot and set them up, quickly picking up the three pots of yoghurt and two bananas that had fallen out of the seat on to the ground and which were to sustain my Mam throughout the day, courtesy of the breakfast buffet at the Hotel Regina, Ypres.
I gave Mam her wheels and then I just left her to it. This was her time. Her time and Ben's time. She had waited seventy-four years for this moment and I knew she would call me when she was ready for me to join her. As she moved down the centre path towards the altar, she stopped at a headstone, the second stone in from the path, and bent down to it. There were a couple of small weeds on the earth, which she removed. She scraped a little hole in the ground and taking a small set of rosary beads from her pocket, placed them in the hole and covered them over.

She stood up and leaned on her wheels for a minute or two, before heading to the steps up to the altar. A world-class mountain biker couldn't have got up the steps on those wheels, so I joined her, first helping her up to the level bit, then returning to get her wheels. Once she was equipped with her transport, I made myself scarce and allowed her to visit panel fifty-two, alone with her thoughts. She spent the next thirty minutes just sitting quietly and then she gave me a wave and I joined her.
"Can you help me climb up there to touch his name, sunshine?" she asked.
"Bloody hell Mam, are you mental?" I replied. "Of course I am. Now stop whingeing and give me a leg up," she insisted.
Well, with a bit of heaving and pushing, up she went. Once on the ledge she looked to the name about a foot above her head and slowly reached up with her right hand and traced the letters with her fingers. Once again it was just her and Ben. There was nothing to be said. After a few minutes she turned around and I helped her down. She was a fair old weight for a little 'un. No wonder she packed so much power into those clips around the ear, which I frequently experienced, well into my early fifties.
Once again, as on my previous visit, the sun shone on the headstones and panels and the place was pretty and peaceful, just as it should be. As we turned to leave she said: "I promised you I'd visit your Ben one day, Dad."
Then she turned to me and said, "Let's go to that café we passed on the way in. I'm dying for a cup of tea."
We slowly walked from the cemetery and as we passed the grave where she had buried the rosary, she stopped and put her hand on the top of it. The inscription read: "Known unto God".
"This might be him, mightn't it?" she said.
"Yes, Mam. It just might be," I replied as we walked back to the car.
As we left the cemetery through the high, black-painted, iron gates she turned for one last look and took hold of my hand before saying, "Thanks for bringing me. I've kept a promise I made to my Dad, to come and find Ben. Now it's done. I'll never come back here again, but make sure you do, sunshine boy."
"I will, Mam. I promise." And I put my arm around the shoulders of my little Mam and gave her a kiss on the side of her face. My Mam never visited again, but I have done…many times.

Amen