



# THE DUGOUT

Branch Patron: *The Lord Lieutenant of Dorset - Angus Campbell*

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESSEX BRANCH OF THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

Your Local WW1 Historical Society

(Registered Charity : 1142787)

[www.wessexwfa.org.uk](http://www.wessexwfa.org.uk)

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## Chairman:

Martin Willoughby

Telephone:

01929 553060

[cambrai@eastcote.go-plus.net](mailto:cambrai@eastcote.go-plus.net)

## MEETINGS 2019

At Pimperne Village Hall, Newfield Road, Pimperne Nr Blandford Forum. DT11 8UZ- 2pm for 2.30pm start

**7th September** - 'Hancocks Quest' - Kevin Patience

**5th October** - 'The Sawdust Fusiliers' Canadian Forestry Corps in UK 1916—1919 - Dr Kent Fedorowich

**2nd November** - Hillary Briffa - Malta WW1

**7th December** - Members Exhibits & Social

## FIELD TRIPS:

TBC

## BATTLEFIELD TOURS:

12th-16th September - Mutzig to Km Zero

## Chairman's Chat

Welcome to the 19th edition of "The Dugout". Wessex WFA has had a busy 2019 so far and the pace keeps up over the remainder of a year that is flying by! We continue to maintain our reputation for excellence and quality in our programme of events and speakers who make the pilgrimage to Dorset. Again they are all "First among Equals" and thanks to Judy's powers of persuasion we are able to bring a broad range of topics to those attending our monthly meetings reinforced by the deep knowledge of the speakers themselves.



In addition to the monthly meetings the branch has visited the RAF Museum Hendon which is in very good shape after its recent refurbishment. Of refurbishment I can recommend a visit to the Museum of Army Flying at Middle Wallop which is also in very good shape after its recent refurbishment.

We had our third battlefield tour to the Italian Front in May visiting the Asiago, Faenza and the Isonzo front.

June was particularly busy with branch stands at TankFest and at Armed Forces Day at Victoria Park, Netley, the latter in association with the Royal Hampshire Regiment Museum. My thanks go to those doughty volunteers who supported these events and without whom we could not have attended.



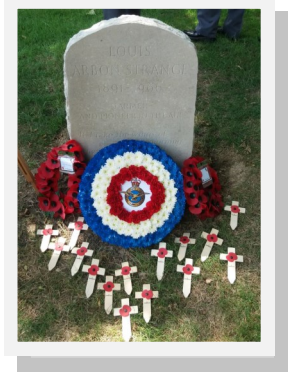
In September the branch has its 16th Annual Battlefield Tour which I'm very pleased to say is fully subscribed. The theme of this years tour "Mutzig to Kilometre Zero" marks a watershed in Wessex branches journey across the battlefields of the Western Front. Those dedicated "tourists" of the branch who have been on every branch tour over the last 16 years will have covered the entirety of the Western Front from Nieuwpoort on the Belgian coast to

Newsletter Editor: **SANDRA TWYFORD**  
Email: [sandra.twyford@btinternet.com](mailto:sandra.twyford@btinternet.com)



## Chairman's Chat continued....

Kilometre Zero on the Swiss Border, a feat the branch can be rightly proud of! Closer to home Judy and I attended a service of Remembrance and the re-dedication of the grave of Louis Arbon Strange at St Nicholas of Myra church in Worth Matravers on the 27th July. Louis Arbon Strange – DSO, OBE, MC, DFC\*, late of the Dorset Yeomanry, Dorsetshire Regiment, RFC and RAF: - Local Farmer and Aviation Pioneer served with distinction in two world wars. A fuller article on this remarkable man will follow in the future.



Whilst at Tank Fest I was approached by members of the Breaking Ground Heritage (BGH) organisation, enquiring if WFA members would be interested in attending a course on the Recovery of Human Remains (RHR). This is an integral part of any Battlefield Archaeological dig and this course would be related specifically to Great War. BGH supports Operation Nightingale which involves military veterans in archaeological digs as part of their restorative treatment and Richard Osgood, Archaeologist of the Year 2019 and recent speaker at Wessex Branch is a member of the BGH team. See flyer overleaf for details and if interested in attending contact Briony Lalor at [briony.lalor@btinternet.com](mailto:briony.lalor@btinternet.com) for further details. Courses run subject to take up and I would highly recommend the opportunity to learn about this unusual aspect of WW1 research. See Flyer below:

I am very pleased to welcome Sue Fortescue to the team. Sue has kindly volunteered to be the branches Digital Editor, looking after the branches website and she has already done sterling work improving the site and there will be further improvements over time.

On another digital note you can now follow the posts on the branch Twitter page WFA Wessex Branch.



As we look forward to a busy second half of the year my thanks go to the branch trustees and that indomitable band of supporters without whom we would not be able to achieve anywhere near the present levels of quality in our events programme, digital media and branch management, which make us “probably the best Branch in the WFA”.

**Martin Willoughby**  
**Branch Chairman**





## Recovery of Human Remains (RHR) Course

Breaking Ground Heritage was developed to work alongside Operation Nightingale to deliver positive outcomes for projects that utilise heritage and archaeology as a recovery pathway. Founded by an Ex-Royal Marine, who had himself been through the Operation Nightingale project and witnessed firsthand the benefits that participating in projects of this kind of project can bring. These profound experiences are what have driven Breaking ground Heritage to excel and deliver the best projects possible for its beneficiaries. Since our conception in 2015, we have evolved into a project that is at the forefront of the promotion of wellbeing projects in the heritage sector, leading by example and sharing our results annually in conferences, reports and presentations.

Breaking Ground Heritage is now offering two day weekend RHR course(s) to persons with an interest in the Great War and Battlefield Archaeology. Course will be run periodically dependent on achieving sufficient delegates. Approximately 12 delegates are required for the course to run.

Details as follows:

- Breaking Ground Heritage is offering a two day weekend course to provide an opportunity for participants to practice the recovery of human remains to professional archaeological standards. Using staged graves in a WWI scenario the event will be headed by Richard Osgood, Archaeologist of the Year 2019 and held at Winchester University. The cost is £190 per person.*
- This highly practical course will be of value to those with an interest in British or Battlefield archaeology and have little or no experience in excavation techniques.*
- All proceeds will be used to support BGH and assist military veterans in their recovery. See <http://www.breakinggroundheritage.org.uk>*
- If you are interested in attending this WFA specific event please contact Martin Willoughby, Chairman, Wessex Branch WFA - at [cambrai@eastcote.go-plus.net](mailto:cambrai@eastcote.go-plus.net)*

# Bois-Grenier - The Forgotten Battle

My wife's grandfather (Charles Bryce Muir) served in the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion Canadian Expeditionary Force, also known as The [Black Watch of Canada](#).

In a letter to his brother Tom he claimed to have been wounded at the Battle of [Neuve Chappelle](#). According to my early research, not only was he not wounded at Neuve Chappelle, the Black Watch of Canada were not at the battle of Neuve Chappelle.

This was what I thought, however last year when I was in France, I bought a book on the Canadian soldier which threw new light on the Battle of Neuve Chappelle.

Anyone interested in the First World War you will have heard of Neuve Chappelle. It is or was a small town south of Armentieres in between the two was the even smaller village of [Bois-Grenier](#).

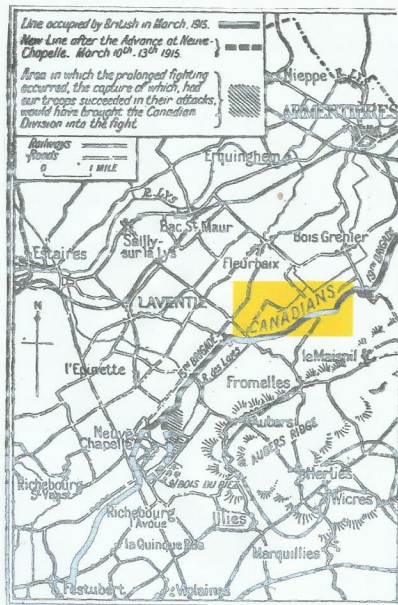
The Black Watch of Canada who had only just arrived in France were part of the Canadian 1<sup>st</sup> Division which came under command of the British 1<sup>st</sup> Army on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 1915, the battle of Neuve Chappelle began on the 10<sup>th</sup> March 1915.

The object of the capture of Neuve Chappelle was that its capture would threaten major German positions to the East and around Lille. The British had attempted an assault in October 1914, but this had been a failure.

The Canadians were allocated 6400 yards of the front at Bois-Grenier, the job of their Divisional artillery was to shell the German Line south of Neuve Chappelle basically to keep German heads down heads down. Likewise, the Infantry they were ordered not to leave their trenches but to lay down heavy small arms fire to stop the Germans moving reserves north to the battle of Neuve Chappelle. During this operation the Canadians lost a hundred men. There is some speculation that contrary to orders, they did actually attack the German line.

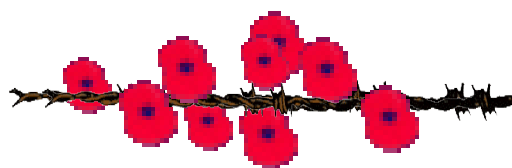
Not a lot has been written about the Battle of Bois-Grenier, much to Canadian chagrin. However, it would seem that I was right and wrong, the Black Watch of Canada **were** sort of at the battle of Neuve Chappelle and Charles Bryce Muir **was** wounded possibly at Bois-Grenier. Charles was returned to the UK in late March 1915 listed as "wounded"

Has with the importance of Gallipoli to the Australians, though on a different scale so is Bois-Grenier to the Canadians.



**Combat Deaths in France: (MARCH 1915)**

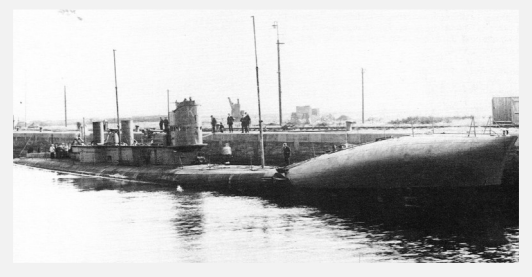
Unit	Officers	NCO's	Other Ranks	Total Casualties
Canadian Engineers			2	2
Canadian Field Artillery			1	1
Canadian Garrison Artillery			1	1
1 <sup>st</sup> Battalion, 1 <sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade	1	1	15	17
2 <sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 1 <sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade		1	9	10
3 <sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 1 <sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade			7	7
4 <sup>th</sup> Battalion, 1 <sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade			2	2
5 <sup>th</sup> Battalion, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade			3	3
7 <sup>th</sup> Battalion, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade	1		4	5
8 <sup>th</sup> Battalion, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade		1	4	5
10 <sup>th</sup> Battalion, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade			3	3
13 <sup>th</sup> Battalion, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade		2	11	13
14 <sup>th</sup> Battalion, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade		1	8	9
15 <sup>th</sup> Battalion, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade		1	2	3
16 <sup>th</sup> Battalion, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade		1	10	11
<b>Total Combat Deaths</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>92</b>



**Trevor Lindley**

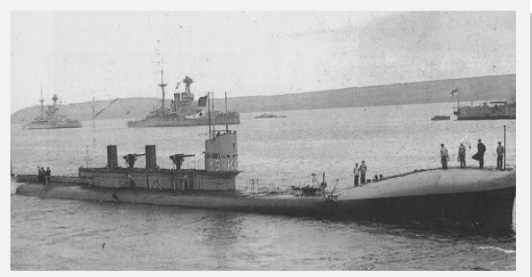
## THE BATTLE OF MAY ISLAND

### 31<sup>st</sup> January 1918



George Bruce's *'Paladin Dictionary of Battles'* covers conflicts from the Punic Wars up to the Yom Kippur Arab-Israeli war of 1973, and actions from Aachen (1944) to Zuyder Zee (1573), but nowhere does it mention the Battle of May Island.

The incident was not a "battle" – no shots were fired and only Royal Navy vessels were involved. It is the name given to a disastrous series of accidents that took place on the night of 31<sup>st</sup> January / 1<sup>st</sup> February 1918 off the Isle of May in the Firth of Forth.



In *'Dugout 18'* I told the story of the Royal Navy's steam powered K Class submarines which were designed to operate with the battle fleet. They were large boats for their time, at 339 feet (103 m) long and displacing 2,500 tons. Their steam turbines gave them the surface speed of 24 knots required to keep up with the fleet.

Misfortune dogged their short operational careers. Seventeen K Class boats were built during the war and six of them were lost through accidents.

The Battle of May Island was probably their most notorious escapade and demonstrated the fallacy in the concept of submarines operating alongside surface warships.

On the misty night of 31<sup>st</sup> January 1918 some 40 naval vessels left Rosyth bound for Scapa Flow to take part in a big naval exercise planned for the following day which involved the whole Grand Fleet.

The Rosyth group included three battleships and four battle cruisers with their escorting cruisers and destroyers, and nine K Class submarines led by two cruisers. The submarines came from two flotillas – K3, K4, K6 and K7 from the 12<sup>th</sup> Submarine Flotilla, led by *HMS Fearless*, and K11, K12, K14, K17 and K22 from the 13<sup>th</sup> Flotilla, led by *HMS Ithuriel*.



The ships steamed out of Rosyth at 6:30pm in a single line nearly 30 miles (48 km) long. At the head of the line was the large cruiser *HMS Courageous* and next came the *Ithuriel* and the five boats of the 13th Submarine Flotilla. These were followed by the four battlecruisers with their destroyers. After these came *Fearless* and the 12th Submarine Flotilla and finally the three battleships.

After dark each vessel showed only a dim stern light to the following vessel to reduce the risk of being spotted by any German submarines operating in the area. They also maintained radio silence. As each group passed the Isle of May they altered course and increased speed to 20 knots.

When the 13th Submarine Flotilla passed the island fog was descending. Several minesweeping trawlers were spotted sailing out from the port of Anstruther by the leading submarine *K11*. The boat's captain ordered a reduction in speed and a turn to port. The following *K17* did likewise but *K14* only became aware of the danger when two of the minesweepers emerged from the fog heading across her bow. The *K14* turned to starboard to avoid a collision. This action took the vessel clear of both minesweepers and the nearby *K12* but the helm of *K14* then jammed in the full right rudder position and forced the boat into the path of *K22* which was still steaming ahead at 22 knots and had lost sight of her consorts in the mist. Collision was unavoidable and *K22* struck *K14* just aft of the forward torpedo room. Both boats stopped whilst the rest of the flotilla, unaware of what had happened, steamed on.

Both vessels were now stationary in the path of the following warships now bearing down on them. Navigation lights were quickly switched on and flares fired. The radio silence order was ignored and requests for help sent out.

Fifteen minutes later three of the battlecruisers sailed safely past, although the wash they created rocked the stricken submarines violently. *HMS Inflexible* however, rode over the stricken *K22*, her weight pushing the submarine underneath her hull. As *Inflexible* continued on her way and faded into the mist, *K22* bobbed back to the surface with thirty feet of her already damaged bow now twisted at right angles to the remainder of the hull and wrecked ballast and fuel tanks. She settled by the bow until only the conning tower was above water.

Meanwhile *K22*'s distress message had been decoded on board the *Ithuriel* and the cruiser turned back to help. As the submarines behind her turned to follow in her wake, the battlecruisers passed through the line. Both groups of vessels had to execute emergency turns and narrowly avoided more collisions.

The *Ithuriel* and the remaining 13th Flotilla boats were now on a reverse course back into the Firth of Forth towards the Isle of May and the oncoming 12th Flotilla.

The leading ship of the 12th Flotilla was *Fearless*. She had passed clear of May Island at 7.54pm and, based on the radio reports of the incidents, her captain decided that he was passed the danger area and increased speed to 21 knots. He was unaware that ships from the first group had reversed course and were headed directly towards the second group. The two groups met head-on at a point some thirteen miles east of the May Island at 8.32pm.

The *Fearless*, loomed out of the mist and rammed *K17* just forward of the conning tower. The submarine began to sink and most of the crew jumped overboard. Eight minutes later, *K17* went to the bottom.

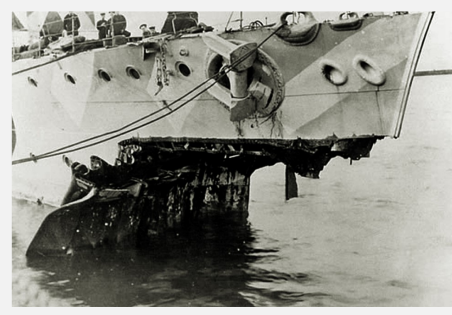
The *Fearless* was now stopped in the water and her group of submarines turned to avoid their stationary flotilla leader. The *K12* from the returning 13th Flotilla now arrived at the scene. On the way she had been narrowly missed by the battlecruiser *Australia* – the vessels had passed so close that the *Australia*'s crew had been able to look down the funnels of the submarine and see the fires glowing below.



The K12 was now on a collision path with K6 from the 12<sup>th</sup> Flotilla. Seeing the danger, K6 tried to get out of the way, but in doing so hit K4, nearly cutting the latter in half. The hapless K4 was also hit by K7. Seriously damaged K4 sank with all of her crew.

At this point the three battleships and their destroyers passed through the area unaware of what had happened. Some of the survivors of K17, struggling in the water, became victims of the destroyers as they cut through at speed. Only nine of the original crew of 56 on board the submarine survived and one of these died of his injuries shortly afterwards.

Within 75 minutes, the submarines K17 and K4 had been sunk, the K6, K7, K14, K22 and the cruiser *Fearless* had been damaged and at least 104 British submariners (55 men from K4, 47 from K17 and 2 from K14) were dead.



The accident was kept secret during the war. An investigation and court martial were held but much of the information was not released until the 1990s. More than eighty years had passed before memorials were finally erected to the disaster at Anstruther harbour on the mainland.

In 2011, surveyors conducting a detailed survey of the sea floor for a proposed offshore wind farm, published sonar images of the wrecks of the two submarines, K4 and K17 sunk at "the Battle of May Island".



## Rod Arnold



### Acknowledgements

*The Battle of May Island* – Wikipedia

*British K Class Submarines* – Wikipedia

*The Battle of May Island* – Kingdom of Fife History website.

*H.M. Submarines* – Lt. Cdr. Peter Kemp

*Royal Navy Submarines 1901-1982* – M.P. Cocker



# Canadian Ross Rifle



During the Second Boer War, a minor diplomatic fight broke out between Canada and the United Kingdom, after the latter refused to license the Lee-Enfield SMLE design for production in Canada. Sir Charles Ross offered his newly designed straight-pull rifle as a replacement. Ross was well connected in Canadian society and eventually landed his first contract in 1903 for 12,000 Mark I Ross rifles.

In this design, the bolt locking lugs are mounted on a screw, and when the operating handle is pulled or pushed, the screw automatically turns to rotate the locking lugs into place in the action receiver. The design is generally similar to that used on most artillery pieces. Unlike the more common bolt actions found in the Mauser and Lee-Enfield, the Ross action did not need to have the handle rotated a quarter turn before the bolt was pulled back, and this feature offered a theoretical higher rate of fire. In addition, unlike the Lee Enfield, the Ross rifle could be disassembled more quickly without special tools, though it was 1 lb (0.45 kg) heavier.

## Service

The first 1,000 rifles were given to the Royal Northwest Mounted Police (RNWMP) for testing. Routine inspection before operational testing found 113 defects bad enough to warrant rejection. One of these was a poorly designed bolt lock that enabled the bolt to fall right out of the rifle. Another was poorly tempered component springs that were described as being as "soft as copper". In 1906, the RNWMP reverted to their Model 1894 Winchesters and Lee-Enfields.

The Mark 1 was modified to correct these faults and became the Mark II Ross (Model 05 (1905)). In 1907, the Mk II was modified to handle the higher pressure of newly designed .280 Ross, this variant was called Mk II\*\*. The Model 10 (1910) was a completely new design, made to correct the shortcomings of the 1905. None of the major parts are interchangeable between the 1905 and the 1910 models. Although the British were now encouraging standardization across the Empire on the Lee-Enfield, Canada stayed with the Ross. The Model 10 was the standard infantry weapon of the First Canadian Contingent of the Canadian Expeditionary Force when it first arrived in France in February 1915.

The shortcomings of the rifle became apparent during the Second Battle of Ypres in April 1915. The rifle showed poor tolerance of dirt when used in field conditions, particularly the screw threads operating the bolt lugs, jamming the weapon open or closed. Another part of the jamming problem came from the bolt's outer face hitting the bolt stop, then deforming the thread shape.



The bolt could also be disassembled for routine cleaning and inadvertently reassembled in a manner that would fail to lock but still allow a round to be fired, leading to serious injury or death of the operator as the bolt flew back into his face. "Thankfully such incidents were few." Another

well-known deficiency was the tendency for the bayonet to fall off the rifle when the weapon was fired. Many Canadians of the First Contingent (now renamed the 1st Canadian Division) at Ypres retrieved Lee Enfields from British casualties to replace their Ross rifles. Lieutenant Chris Scriven of the 10th Battalion, CEF, commented that it sometimes took five men just to keep one rifle firing.

Complaints rapidly reached the rifle's chief sponsor, the Canadian Minister of Militia and Defence Sam Hughes. He nevertheless continued to believe in its strengths despite the professional opinion of Sir Edwin Alderson, the British Army officer who was commander of the First Canadian Division. The rifle became an element in political issues within Canada and between Canada and Britain. Hughes responded to Alderson's criticism by accusing Alderson of ignorance and copied the letter to many officers in the corps. The effect was to undermine confidence in Alderson and the rifle. Hughes also made accusations that Canadian officers were induced to produce adverse reports on the rifle. After the reports on the rifle were published through the *Ottawa Citizen*, and it became clear that his claims in the Commons that all faults had been cured were false, Hughes' defence of the rifle could no longer be supported by the Prime Minister.

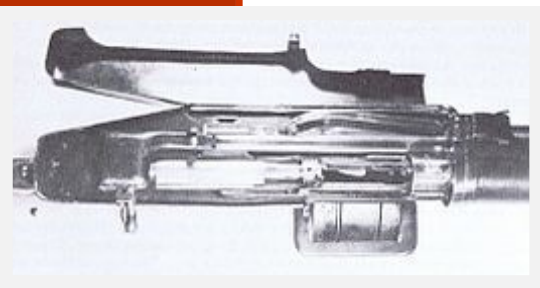
However the Ross was more accurate at long range than the SMLE, and this potentially overcame the serious problem British and Canadian troops had faced during the Boer War, with the accurate long-range fire from the 7 mm Mauser. In all, approximately 420,000 Ross service rifles were produced, 342,040 of which were purchased by the British.

## Replacement

Canadians retained the Ross even as additional contingents arrived in France. By the time of the Somme battles of July 1916, Sir Douglas Haig, the new Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force, had ordered the replacement of all Ross rifles in the three Canadian Divisions by the Lee-Enfield, which was finally available in quantity.

Hughes refused to accept that there were problems with the Ross, and it took the intervention of many influential people to persuade him otherwise. In November 1916, Hughes resigned after Sir Robert Borden's decision to appoint a Minister of Overseas Forces. Ross rifles were then used in training roles, both in Canada and the UK, to free up more Lee-Enfields for the front. After the United States entered the war in 1917, Ross rifles were shipped to the U.S. for the same reasons, freeing up supplies of the M1903 Springfield rifle. Hughes' reputation was inevitably tarnished, but Sir

Charles Ross had already made a considerable fortune from his rifle design and manufacturing contracts despite its reputation.



At around same time, the Dominion Rifle Factory (Quebec City) converted a number of Rosses into the Huot automatic rifle, under the guidance of a designer named Joseph Alphonse Huot. It was an effective design, feeding from a drum magazine, and cheaper than a Lewis Gun. Unfortunately, despite successful trials, the war ended before it could be entered into service.

## Sniper rifles

Because of its long range accuracy, the Ross rifle continued in use among Allied snipers after it was withdrawn from normal front-line use in Europe. British snipers found the rifle accurate out to 600 yards and more, with only one inherent disadvantage: the Ross accepted only perfectly clean ammunition, totally free of mud and grit, or else it invariably jammed.

Two types of Mark III sniper rifles are identified by different telescopic sights. Five-hundred rifles were fitted with 5.2X Warner & Swasey Company Model 1913 prismatic telescopic sights manufactured in Cleveland, Ohio. Serial numbers for rifles manufactured in 1915 have a FK prefix; while those manufactured in 1917 have a LU prefix. Another 907 rifles were fitted with Winchester Repeating Arms Company A5 telescopic sights. Both telescopic sights were mounted offset so the iron sights were usable and the rifle could still be loaded from charging strips.

## Sporting variant

Ross settled a gun factory in Hartford, Connecticut, with machinist J. A. Bennett, to produce a sporting rifle called **Model 1897 Magazine Sporting Rifle** a hinged hammer type rifle. By the same time, he made commercial agreement with famous gunmaker firm Charles William Lancaster, inventor of the oval bore, to be his exclusive UK agent.

- **Caliber;** .303 Brit. Early 1900, he brought out the **Model 1900 Sporter**, still made in Bennett's factory. This action used a coil spring to activate the firing pin, instead of the hinged-hammer of the M1897. Very few of these sporting rifles are known to exist. The militarized Pattern 1900 was also the first to be offered for trial to Canada.
- **Caliber;** .303 British. Following was **Model 1903 Sporter** some of these rifles were made in Hartford, Connecticut, but most (200 units, made from spare parts) were assembled at the brand new fabricating plant in Quebec City. Some of the Pattern 1903 Sporting Rifles were made in the .370 Express caliber, while some prototype chambered for .450/.500 Nitro is known to exist.
- **Calibers;** .303 Brit. (common), .256 Mannlicher (rare) and .370 Express (rare) Some sporterised M1905 (Mk II) military rifles were made available to general public in 1906. This model was called Model M. In 1907, Ross brought out the **Model E**, his first entirely Canadian-made rifle, based on the 1905 military action, chambered for .303 British and .35 WCF. Following was **Model R**, which was a plain looking rifle, no checkering, in caliber .303 British only. In November 1906, Ross while in the process of developing a new and very powerful .280 caliber sporting cartridge, made some experimental tests with a necked-down version of the new 30-06 Springfield case which he called the .28-1906 (one rifle is known to exist). This led to the design of the .280 Ross. The new high-pressure round required some strengthening of the bolt and action receiver, but the rifle was otherwise only slightly different from the .303 Mark II. This design, called MK II\*\*, was a transitional step between Mk II and Mk III actions.

- **Model M** (1905 Mk II action); .303 Brit
- **Model R** (1905 Mk II action); .303 Brit.
- **Model E** (1907 Mk II\*\* action heavy barrel); .303 Brit., 35 WCF
- **Model 1907 'Scotch Deer Stalking Pattern'**; .280 Ross
- Model 1910 (**Mk III**) was made with a totally different bolt head; instead of having the solid bolt lugs travel in a vertical position and lock in a horizontal position, like for the **Mk II** and **Mk II\*\*** (see illustration), Ross turned it 90 degrees so it travels in an horizontal position and locks vertically. Then, he used screw threads on the lugs outside which are locking into the matching threaded receiver. Some very scarce Mk II\*\* with the same threaded lugs and receiver are known to exist. He also used the same shape of heavy barrel as used on the Mk II\*\*. The M-10, in .280 Ross, is considered by many as being the finest rifle ever made by the **Ross Rifle Co.**
- **Model R-10**; .303 Brit
- **Model E-10**; .303 Brit and .35 WCF
- **Model M-10**; .280 Ross

1912 saw the introduction of the .22 sporting rifle. While using a simpler mechanism, it was still a straight-pull action. This model was very popular in Canada.

**Calibers:** .22 Short, Long and Long Rifle.

- **Model 1912 Cadet Commercial.**
- **Model 1912 Cadet "Leftover"** (no serial numbers or any other markings)  
The problems with the Ross in combat were that it was really a sporting design of rifle asked to do the work of a military rifle under trench warfare conditions. However, as a sporting rifle, the Ross became quite popular after the war. The new .280 Ross cartridge gained it a fine reputation for medium-sized game, and for a time after 1918 it was a fairly common rifle on safari. It also proved itself as being an outstanding **Match Rifle**, building a strong reputation for accuracy.

#### **Match Rifles**

- **Ross Mark II\*\* Commercial Target Model** in .303 British, with a 30 1/2 inches (770 mm) heavy barrel, was a real success in the Match Ranges from 1908 to 1913. This rifle was looking like the military Mk II\*\*, using the same bolt, except having the sight bridge mounted on the receiver. A scarce **Presentation Target Rifle** was also available. Unlike its military counterpart, it had the serial number stamped on the barrel.

- **Model 1907 and 1905/1910 Match Target Rifle** These very important single-shot rifles (two rifles are known to exist) are bearing special feature that would make the M1910 so different; the threaded locking lugs and receiver.
- **Military Match Target Rifle** unlike the military Mk III this rifle was using a box type magazine with flat floorplate. It was using the Ross Mk III military sight modified to fit the .280 Ross ammunitions. Barrel was 26 inches long.

### Developments

After the rejection of the Ross as a battlefield rifle, the Dominion Rifle Factory adapted the action to a light machinegun, the Huot, using surplus rifles. These were cheaper than the Lewis guns then in use. They were put to extensive trials; the war ended before they entered service.

### Other users

Ross rifles were used once again in the Second World War. The Mark 3 Ross rifle was supplied to the Royal Canadian Navy, the Veteran's Guard of Canada, coastal defense units, training depots, the British Home Guard, Metropolitan Police, London Fire Brigade, Port of London Authority Police and the Soviets. Coast guard units in Ireland were armed with Ross rifles during 1920 to 1921.



**Andy Irons**



## The Norfolk Regiment Cap Badge



The first is the standard WW1 bi-metal badge, the second is the all brass war economy badge issued from 1916 onwards. Several regiments issued "economy badges". They reduced the demand for nickel and were quicker to produce.

The badge shows a white metal figure of Britannia within a wreath with a brass scroll below inscribed 'The Norfolk Regiment'. An all brass war economy version of this badge was produced.

Some 19 battalions of the regiment served during the war and one soldier was awarded the Victoria Cross.

A total of 70 battle honours were granted to the regiment including Mons, Le Cateau, Marne 1914, Ypres 1914 '15 '17 '18, Somme 1916, Hindenburg Line, Landing at Suvla, Gaza, Shaiba, Kut al Amara 1915 '17.

Estimated Great War casualties (died): 6,000. A new design of badge was introduced in 1935 after the regiment became "Royal".

**Rod Arnold**

## A STROLL THROUGH A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

Situated approximately 12 miles north of Salisbury is the village of Fittleton. Several barrows in the area suggest the presence of prehistoric occupation and later Iron Age and Romano-British settlements. The village of Fittleton (Vitelstone) is mentioned in the Domesday Book. There is also a Manor House dating from the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century. A village school was also founded in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century and enlarged during the Victoria period. Years later the school amalgamated with Netheravon School and was closed in 1989 when a new school building was opened at Netheravon. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the War Office bought acres of the land in the area for military training and today forms part of the Tidworth ranges within the Salisbury Plain Training Area.



The 13<sup>th</sup> century church of All Saints, constructed of flint and stone with partial rendering was enlarged during the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the south porch added in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Within the church is a 12<sup>th</sup> century font and a memorial window dedicated to HMS Fittleton, a minesweeper, manned by members of the Royal Naval Reserve which was sunk during an exercise in the North Sea in 1976 with the loss of 12 men. It was for this reason that I went to visit the church. Afterwards I strolled through the churchyard and noticed two unusual cast iron grave markers. On close examination they were in the form of the 'Old Contemptibles' Association Lapel Badge.

The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) was the British army sent to the Western Front during the First World War. The term 'BEF' is usually used to make mention of the forces present in France prior to the conclusion of the First Battle of Ypres on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1914. However, the BEF remained as the official name of the British armies that fought in France and Belgium throughout the First World War. It has been alleged that the Kaiser, Wilhelm II of Germany issued an order on the 19<sup>th</sup> August 1914 to "Exterminate ... the treacherous English and walk over General French's contemptible little army". No documentary evidence about this order has been discovered, but in later years the British soldiers of the regular army who survived were proud to call themselves "The Old Contemptibles".

The design of the lapel badge is of voided crossed swords with the inscription 'OLD CONTEMPTIBLES ASSOCIATION' and with central scrolls with '1914' on one and 'AUG.5 TO NOV 22' on the other. The Association was founded in 1925 to 'foster the spirit of the Contemptible Little Army of 1914, to strengthen the bonds which held them together through adversity in 1914, to safeguard the interests of its members in relation to pensions and allied matters and to assist those members who may be in need'. Membership was confined to those who had been granted a clasp to the 1914 Star under the terms of an Army Order of October 1919 which covers officers, warrant officers, non-commissioned officers and men who served in France and Belgium between the 5<sup>th</sup> August 1914 and midnight 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> November 1914 and fought in the Battles of Mons, Marne, Aisne and Ypres.



Grave Marker of G.A. Bull Royal Engineers

The grave marker has a small entablature to record the name of the deceased, his regiment and the branch of the Old Contemptibles Association of which he was a member. They were awarded to members by the local branches to recipients of the 1914 Star with clasp and issued in the 1920's and 1930's.

Each of these grave markers has the voided swords and circular ring with the words around the top half inscribed in relief 'OLD CONTEMPTIBLES' and the lower half '•ASSN•'. The top most central scroll is similarly inscribed in relief '1914' and the scroll below 'AUG 5 TO NOV 22'.

The grave markers entablatures in All Saints churchyard read:

G.A. BULL  
5<sup>th</sup> FIELD COY. R.E.  
TIDWORTH BRANCH



Grave Marker Of H. Wise – Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders

H. WISE  
ARGYLL SUTHERLAND  
HIGHLANDERS  
SALISBURY PLAIN BRANCH

In the west cloister of Westminster Abbey there is a memorial tablet of limestone and Welsh blue slate dedicated to the memory of the "Old Contemptibles". Designed by Donald Buttress, it shows the badge of the Old Contemptibles Association at the base with the inscription above in gilded letters: "Remember THE OLD CONTEMPTIBLES The British Expeditionary Force which served in Flanders within the range of the enemy mobile artillery between 5 August and 22 November 1914. At the first battle of Ypres their stand against a force of ten times their number prevented the German advance against the Channel ports. Unveiled 5 July 1993 by H.M. Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother".

Online Sources

Imperial War Museum Web-Site ~ [www.iwm.org.uk](http://www.iwm.org.uk)

Westminster Abbey Web-Site ~ [www.westminster-abbey.org](http://www.westminster-abbey.org)

Wikipedia Web-Site ~ [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)

**Roger Coleman**



## Westminster Bridge With Trams, London 1918—1919

By 1903, there were 300 electric tramcars in London, which carried 800,000 passengers over Whitsun weekend in 1903. The London County Council Tramways first electric line opened in May 1903 between Westminster Bridge and Tooting and the LCC sold 3.3 million tickets in its third year of business or five times the traffic carried by its horse trams. The LCC saw the electric trams as a way of driving social change, as its cheap, fast service could encourage workers to move out of the crowded inner city and live healthier lives in the suburbs. Although the City of London and the West End of London never gave permission for tram lines to be built, soon other London boroughs introduced their own electric services, including West Ham, Leyton, Dartford and Bexley.

By 1914, the London tram operators formed the largest tram network in Europe but the onset of the Great War saw a halt in the expansion of the trams and thousands of conductors left to join the armed forces to be replaced by "substitute" women conductors known as

'conductorettes' (A tram driver, like an omnibus driver, was deemed as a reserved occupation as it was considered that women did not have the physical capability of operating the heavy electrical controller of the brakes).



Westminster  
Bridge 1918 --  
fighting  
through the  
smog



During their heyday, tram services covered much of inner London and reached out to the suburbs, assisted by facilities like the Kingsway tramway subway, which enabled the longest tram route entirely within the County of London to operate: a weekend service between Archway, then part of Highgate, and Downham via Brockley, 16 miles (26 kilometres).

After the Great War, money for investment and maintenance became harder to find, as passengers migrated to the new motor bus services. In the 1930s, The London United and Metropolitan Electric companies purchased a large fleet of modern double-deck Feltham trams, built by the Union Construction Company at Feltham. LUT accompanied this change by introducing electric trolleybuses using twin overhead wires as a cheaper alternative for 17 miles (27 kilometres) of its routes in 1931.

A Royal Commission on Transport, held between 1928 and 1931, ensured that the tram companies retained complete responsibility for the maintenance of its rails and highway, which was shared with other road users who contributed to its wear. But this was accompanied by Parliament bills in 1930 and 1933 that set up the London Passenger Transport Board to operate the LCC's existing bus and underground train service and to purchase and manage all of London's tramways. Under the LPTB, there was no new investment in tram services and the maintenance of services became a hot political issue in elections in South London, an area poorly serviced by Underground trains. The merged tram services were held back from introducing new, quieter and more comfortable track and vehicles, in favour of trolleybus services and tubes provided under the New Works Programme. Although the trams returned gross annual revenues of £850,000 (equivalent to £49,317,184 in 2016), the net surplus was £128,000 (equivalent to £7,426,588 in 2016), after costs were taken by the LCC, partly to repay the debt of £18m resulting from the merger.



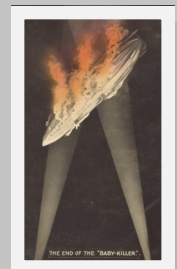
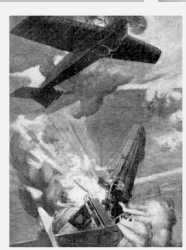
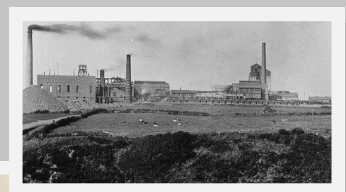
Westminster Bridge - 1918

Sourced Wiki - Courtesy of  
**Marina Amaral**

# Great War Quiz



1. Which of the following commodities were rationed in Britain in 1918 – sugar, meat, jam, tea, butter, lard and margarine?
2. What were “Jellicoe Specials”?
3. Which German army commander was the Stuart heir to the English throne?
4. The daily British casualty rate for the Hundred Days Offensive of August–November 1918 was higher than that for either the Somme in 1916 or Passchendaele in 1917. True or False?
5. Where was the poet Rupert Brooke buried?
6. Name the three British battlecruisers sunk at Jutland in 1916.
7. The Harrington Coke Oven Co plant at Lowca, Cumberland was bombed by U24 on 16/08/1915. Why?
8. What was the size of the British Army at 31/12/1915?
9. By the end of 1915, the French Army had suffered 2 million casualties. True or false?
10. How did Flight Sub-Lieutenant Rex Warneford win the Victoria Cross on 7 June 1915?



# Book Review

## BRITISH WIDOWS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

### *The Forgotten Legion*

By Andrea Hetherington

Published by Pen & Sword (Military) 2018.

ISBN 978 1 47388 676 6 Price ~ £19.99



This is fascinating and very interesting book on an overlooked aspect of the traumatic consequences of war. The author traces the history of the effects of those killed in action from earlier times upon individuals, families and particularly women as an introduction to the First World War. She outlines the system which led to the award of compensation and pensions to women who suddenly had no household income caused by the death of their husbands. It was not considered to be an automatic right that women should have a widow's pension and there were many bureaucratic hurdles which obstructed or reduced payments. The state was always eager to take away payments to which the widow was entitled. Many of these women probably had had only a basic education and would have found it difficult to know how to make a claim and to fill out the appropriate forms. Today over one hundred years later similar problems still exist, with many not knowing details about their proper entitlements. It was problematic enough for these bereaved widows during the First World War to find out what had happened to their loved ones, let alone how to obtain any compensation which only increased their grief at a particularly emotional time.

One aspect which irritated widows was the 'Lady Visitor'. A respectable, mostly upper class lady would call on the claimant to ensure that she was running her household efficiently and had no other income. It was not unusual for bereaved women to take in a lodger for extra income to support the family. Lodgers were always suspected of being either a lover or a surrogate husband. Class and background impinged upon the approach adopted by officialdom. Wives of wealthy officers especially in the early months of the war who lost their husbands did not need to seek compensation as they were financially secure. So it was argued by some why should the State then make payments to other women! As the war dragged on the rising cost of compensation paid to widows became an additional heavy burden on the public purse. Existing legislative measures concerning compensation payments were manipulated and the introduction of additional new legislation was often obstructed for the most trivial of reasons.

Andrea Hetherington has thoroughly researched all aspects about widows of the First World War. She relates to the reader about widows who sought a degree of comfort about their missing husbands through spiritualism which was widely practiced during and after the war. The problem's experienced by wives whose husbands were executed or took their own lives is also considered by the author. Other aspects include widows who broke the law, women and work, relying on charity, seeking a new life abroad, re-marriage, forfeiture of pensions, post-war deaths, emotional accounts and detailed personal experiences of widows, remembrance of those killed, attitudes of government and the military authorities, give a very comprehensive coverage of the problems and difficulties that widows of the First World War had to overcome.

**R G Coleman**

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Remembering all those who went over the top at the Somme on 1st July.  
**'The day of hope and slaughter'** as one survivor memorably named it.





Courtesy of **Jeremy Banning**

# Important Information

Meetings are held at:

**Pimperne Village  
Hall,  
Newfield Road,  
Pimperne  
Blandford Forum  
Dorset  
DT11 8UZ**



## Branch Executive Committee and Trustees

**Martin Willoughby**  
Chairman /Trustee

**Rod Arnold**  
Vice-Chairman /Trustee

**Judy Willoughby**  
Secretary /Trustee

**Marc Thompson**  
Treasurer /Trustee

**Sandra Twyford**  
Newsletter Editor/Trustee



## And finally.... (Quiz Answers)

[1] All of them; [2] Coal trains from South Wales to Grangemouth in Scotland to supply the Grand Fleet; [3] Crown Prince Ruprecht of Bavaria - a direct descendant of Henrietta Stuart, daughter of Charles I; [4] True. 3,645 compared with 2,943 (Somme) and 2,323 (Rasschendaele); [5] On the Greek island of Skyros; [6] HMS Invincible, Indefatigable, and Queen Mary; [7] Toluene, a by-product of the process, was a component of the TNT used in British shells; [8] 2,655,804; [9] True - including 600,000 dead; [10] First allied pilot to destroy a Zeppelin in the air.