CHESTERFIELD WFA

Newsletter and Magazine issue 45

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Lord Richard Dannat GCB CBE MC DL

Roger Lee PhD jssc

Dr Jack Sheldon

Branch contacts

Tony Bolton
(Chairman)
anthony.bolton3@btinternet.com
Mark Macartney
(Deputy Chairman)
Markmacartney48@gmail.com
Jane Lovatt (Treasurer)
Grant Cullen (Secretary)
grantcullen@hotmail.com
Facebook
http://www.facebook.com/groups/157662657604082/
http://www.wfachesterfield.com/

Welcome to Issue 45 - the September 2019 Newsletter and Magazine of Chesterfield WFA.

Our next meeting is on Tuesday evening, 3rd September when our speaker will be Graham Kemp, making a return visit to Chesterfield Branch. His presentation will be `***The Impact of the economic blockade of Germany AFTER the armistice and how it led to WW2***`

Dr Kemp is an assistant manager and tour guide at Lancaster Castle. He is also an amateur naval historian who has researched the Allied blockade for the past forty years, and has given many talks on the Great War He has amassed a large library on the War, from which he draws his research for his most popular talk on the impact of the Blockade. He is the chairman of the North Lancs. Western Front Association.

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** 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 Prof. **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	**'Making the Armaments Centre of the World: Sheffield 1860-1914'** Dr. Chris Corker - University of York. The role Sheffield played in munitions production during the Great War is somewhat legendary. This talk examines some of the great names in the history of Sheffield steel in the build up to the war.
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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CHESTERFIELD WFA BOOK GROUP

By Peter Harris

As a book group we have tried to read a fairly wide range of books rather than repeatedly reading battle histories. We have read general overviews such as Travers's 'How the War was Won', unit histories such as 'The Journey's End Battalion' by Michael Lucas, local history as 'Derbyshire in the First World' by Scott Lomax and about Australian and New Zealand nurses in 'ANZAC Girls' by Peter Rees. This month we returned to more complex subjects as we read 'Artillery in the Great War' by Paul Strong and Sanders Marble.

Our next read is a bit of an experiment. On the 15th October we will be discussing a set of four short academic papers that I have come across at Wolverhampton. These are:-

Jonathan Krause, 'Ferdinand Foch and the Scientific Battle', *The RUSI Journal*, 159.4, (2014) pp. 66-74

Jim Beach, 'Issued by the General Staff: Doctrine Writing at British HQ, 1917-1918', *War In History* 19(4) (2012) pp. 464-491

Jonathan Boff, 'Combined Arms during the Hundred Days Campaign, August –November 1918', *War in History* 14(4) (2010) pp. 459-478

Paul Harris & Sanders Marble, 'The Step by Step Approach: British Military Thought and Operational Method on the Western Front, 1915-1917, *War in History* 15(1) (2008) pp. 17-42

These papers cover a range of topics that I hope will be of interest and give the group an insight into how academics approach a particular topic for study. If you are interested in joining us and read the articles please contact one of the committee members who could email you copies.

Lost and Found

After the August meeting a green `baseball` type cap was found when we were clearing away the meeting room furniture. Same night, Lucy, the Club Steward, found a grey, lightweight jacket in the bar area when she was closing up. The owners can collect by speaking to myself or Lucy in the Club bar.

Secretary`s Scribbles

Welcome to issue 45 of the WFA Chesterfield Branch Newsletter and Magazine.

Sunday saw the first day of the meteorlogical Autumn for 2019 and our evenings are fair `drawing in` all the more reason to shun the TV and come along on Tuesday night, for our September meeting. We welcome as our guest speaker Dr.Graham Kemp, making a return visit to Chesterfield Branch. His presentation this year will be `***The Impact of the economic blockade of Germany AFTER the armistice and how it led to WW2***`

Dr Kemp is an assistant manager and tour guide at Lancaster Castle. He is also an amateur naval historian who has researched the Allied blockade for the past forty years, and has given many talks on the Great War He has amassed a large library on the War, from which he draws his research for his most popular talk on the impact of the Blockade. He is the chairman of the North Lancs. Western Front Association.

2019 has seen us move away into the first year after the various Great War centenary anniversaries and it has been very gratifying to your committee to see attendances at our Branch meetings holding up, more so when we see new faces coming along, all of whom are very welcome. Tinged with sadness though when we realise that `regulars` like Malcolm Ackroyd and Charles Beresford are gone forever.
Work is now underway `signing up` speakers for 2020 and I am always open to suggestions from members as to whom we should invite, or new topics to be presented. We will endeavour to have at least one speaker on each of the Air War and that of Naval Warfare.

The Book Group numbers continue to hold steady and I would recommend you look in on the articles in this newsletter contributed by Peter Harris and Andrew Kenning. The net meeting is in October.

Listening to the radio (Classic FM !) in the car the other day the presenter said it was 130 days until Christmas, which seems a long time away – until our Branch Vice Chairman and WFA Branded goods Trustee , Mark Macartney drops off the details of the WFA calendars for 2020 – details elsewhere in this magazine. Hopefully Mark will have some available to purchase at Tuesday night`s Branch meeting.

With more than 40 pages in this edition of the Newsletter / Magazine, it is once again a `bumper `issue`. However, I am always on the look-out for contributions, large or small from across the spectrum of our members and friends,

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on Tuesday night – all welcome

Grant Cullen – Branch Secretary

07824628638 grantcullen@hotmail.com

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

Blitz `n` Pieces

Prop. Adrian Saitch

Small family business trading in all our yesterdays and promoting remembrance of the heroes of the World Wars. Selling military memorabilia from both conflicts and the smaller ones. Royal British Legion member and an ex serviceman striving to keep the memories alive of the ones that fell in war.

Badges and Insignia, Books and Ephemera, Medals and Decorations, Military Pictures – Pictures, Postcards, Silks .Visit my stall at Chesterfield Market on Thursdays, Retford Market on Fridays, Worksop Market on Saturdays

07521364509

Book Group Report

The Chesterfield WFA Book Group held its sixth meeting on Tuesday 13th August, at the Labour Club, Saltergate, when 8 members discussed 'Artillery in the Great War' by Paul Strong and Sanders Marble.

Most of us did not know a huge amount about 'Artillery', most books are written about leaders, infantry regiments and the terrible suffering so it was important to get to grips with the industrialized impersonal weapons that caused 58% of British casualties in the Great War, many of whom never got to see an enemy soldier. This short book (206 pages) takes on the challenge of summarizing the progress of Artillery during the four years of the First World War in all theatres. In addition to the all-important Western Front it includes Russia, Austria-Hungary, Mesopotamia and Italy, as well as examining reciprocal development (aka keeping up with the Jones's') of the principal weapons - as well as guns, these were howitzers, machine guns and mortars.

Most members, new to WW1 studies enjoyed the book as a valuable introduction to the complexity of artillery as well as learning about other events throughout the world. We are now aware of the importance of 'counter battery fire, indirect fire, predictive fire and may more techniques too numerous to mention, as well as having an introduction to German Artillery master, Lieu-Col Georg Bruchmueller. The difficulties with ammunition supply, the amount delivered controlled how much the offensive battle could be taken to the Central powers. Quality control (in 1915 35% of the shells were duds) was also very important, as were logistics.

From a personal point of view, I would like to know more about important factors such as weapon maintenance and barrel wear and the need for re-lining and how artillery drove the development of aircraft in its vital role of aerial spotting and photography. While we may not all be artillery experts, with one or two exceptions, we will at least be able to pay more attention to artillery tactics.

Tony Bolton recommended another book, 'Firepower, British Army Weapons and Theories of War 1904 -1945 by Shelford Bidwell & Dominic Graham, published by Pen and Sword Classics - this reports at the beginning of World War One General Sir John French led an army of 7 divisions whose heavy artillery consisted of twenty-four 5" guns. In 1918 General Sir Douglas Haig could dispose of over 60 divisions supported by 6,500 field pieces from 3" to 18".

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday 15th October 2019, again at the Labour Club when we will discuss four papers as detailed elsewhere (page 2) in Pete Harris's article'

The Western Front Association's 2020 calendar is now available for pre-order. Once again it features images of the battlefield taken by a team of volunteer photographers. It includes a bit of a Canadian theme this year The scenes depict points of interest in France and Belgium (and, incidentally, Italy, not forgetting Cobbers image to The 5th Australian Division, and the Vancouver Corner image to commemorates the Canadian 1st Division, there is also reference to Canadians on the Courcelette British Cemetery text) ditto to New Zealand because of what is written in February) some of which are well known but others 'off the beaten track'.

As well as providing superb images of a dozen views of the First World War battlefields, the calendar provides detailed commentary to each image helping to set the scene in context.

This is a high-quality product which, every year, receives superb feedback. The sales of the calendar also assist the WFA to continue its work.

The WFA's 2020 calendar is available via **the WFA e-shop** or by phone on 0207 118 1914.
The URL for the calendars on the Eshop is here http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/shop/wfa-branded-items/wfa-calendar-2020/

If you prefer to order by post just complete the order form accompanied by a cheque (details on the form) the URL for this is
file:///H:/WFA/(2)%20Branded%20Goods/(15)%20Calendar%202020/calendar%20leaflet%202020%20(1).pdf

The calendars can be ordered NOW

It is clearly the case that members like to see the calendar images first before they purchase the calendar'
These images can be seen in this URL .
file:///H:/WFA/(2)%20Branded%20Goods/(15)%20Calendar%202020/Calendar,%20Final%20Images%20.pdf
Of course Orders in addition to (as stated here) may be made over the telephone to Sarah in WFA Head Office, please ring 0207 118 1914, with credit card details to hand, or purchase on the Eshop , the Eshop link is under, you can purchase at the Branch for the same price of £10,and when purchased at branch), £5 is retained at branch level and £5 sent to the WFA.

The calendars will be available for dispatch in later this week.

Just a few images here, but if you click on the link all images are there, all 13 of them,

Above: May 2020 - Prowse Point Military Cemetery (photo: John White)

Above: November 2020 - Sacrario Militare Del Monte Grappa (photo: Jonathan Dyer)

Above: April 2020 - Vancouver Corner (photo: Steve Kerr)

August Meeting

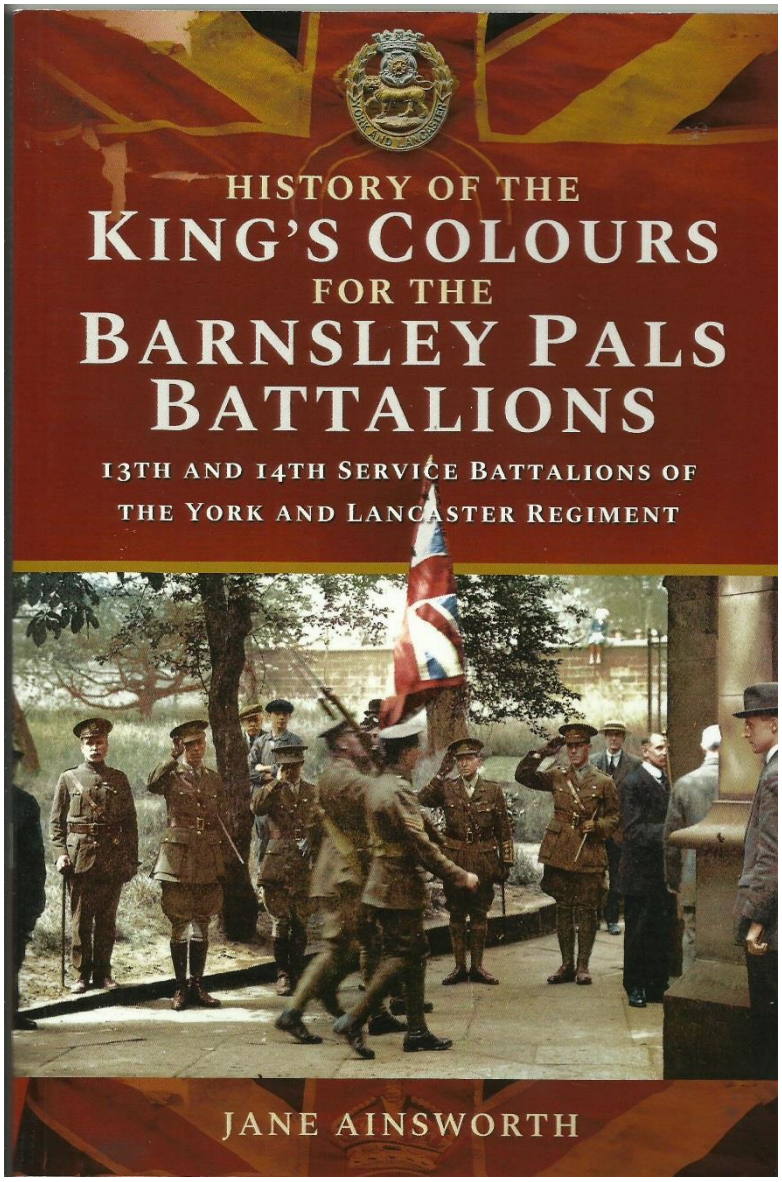
Branch Chair, Tony Bolton welcomed all to our regular meeting – a good attendance given that many folks were away on holiday and Chesterfield had just been beset with very heavy rainfall, indeed some attendees got soaked just getting from their car in the car park to the venue building. Judith Reece read Binyon`s immortal words for the Fallen to get us underway – good to see Judith back with us after recent bout of ill health. Similarly, great to see Tim Whitworth able to be amongst us once again.

Before introducing our main speaker for the evening, Chris Corker, Tony Bolton invited Jane Ainsworth to say a few words. As many of you know from reading these newsletters, Jane has been the driving force behind the `Barnsley Pals Colours Project` and she, assisted by husband Paul, had brought along a display of pictures and artefacts.

Jane takes up the story…" Replicas of the colours have been made which have been displayed at the Centenary of the Armistice whilst my husband and I acted as standard bearers at the Mayor`s Parade - until you actually carry the colours you don`t realise how heavy they are , particularly in a gusty wind. "

She explained that the original colours had been forgotten about and were slowly returning to dust in a cupboard at the back of St. Mary`s parish church. The original intention had been to conserve the old colours but she was informed by the Ministry of Defence that original colours must not be conserved but inspection

was allowed by an accredited conservator from the People`s History Museum in Manchester. This proved an invaluable exercise in obtaining photographs and dimensions. Replicas were commissioned from Flying Colours Flagmakers of Knaresborough so that now everyone can see what the King`s Colours would have looked like when first presented to the Barnsley Pals. Jane has had great financial support from various bodies and individuals without which the project could not have proceeded. Jane has had a 51 page booklet published `The History of the King`s Colours for the Barnsley Pals Battalions – 13th and 14th Battalions of the York and Lancaster Regiment` and she brought along a few of these which I am pleased to say a number were purchased from Jane by attendees after the meeting. Jane also records with the thanks the donation towards the project given to her by a member after the meeting.



We then moved on to our main speaker of the evening, Dr. Chris Corker.

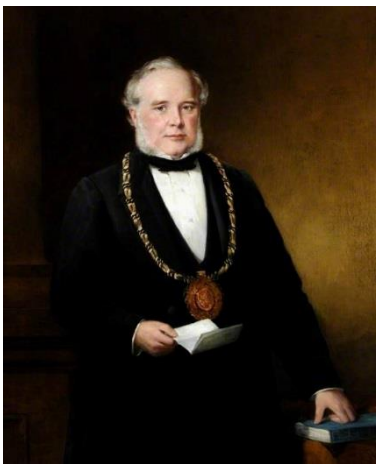
Chris was born in Sheffield and has lived in the city ever since. He has researched the steel and armaments industry in Sheffield for over a decade and is now branching into research on the metalworking industries in the Hallamshire area from the late 13th Century to the present. He completed his PhD in business history at Sheffield Hallam University in December 2016, titled 'The Business and Technology of the Sheffield Armaments Industry 1900-1930'. The following year he was awarded the annual Coleman Prize for excellence in new business history research by the Association of Business Historians for his doctoral work. He is also a recipient of the Emerald Literati Prize for the best article in the Journal of Management History in 2018. In the last two years Chris has also presented research on Sheffield steel and armaments companies at international business and economic history conferences in Montreal, Canada; Oklahoma City, and Detroit, USA; Jyvaskyla, Finland; and across the UK. On Remembrance Sunday 2018 Chris was curator and lead speaker at the 'Sheffield's Great War' event at the Sheffield City Hall in aid of the Royal British Legion. He currently works at the University of York where he is a Lecturer in Management.

His talk was on "Making the Armaments Centre of the World: Sheffield 1860-1914" and in it Chris would discuss the role Sheffield played in munitions production during the Great War with the great factories of the city's east end turning out shells by the million, yet drawing attention to Sheffield's role as a global centre of armaments production in the Victorian and Edwardian period which is sometimes forgotten. This talk would examine some of the great names in the history of Sheffield steel - John Brown, Thomas Firth, Charles Cammell, Vickers and Hadfields - and would chart the entry each company made into armaments production through to the city becoming the most famous producer of armaments products and armaments technological development anywhere in the world on the eve of the Great War.

Chris opened by asking the audience was from Sheffield and, not unsurprisingly, proved to be quite a few. He then asked if anyone had worked in the steel industry and two responded affirmatively. Chris then said he would be happy to take questions during his presentation which indeed did happen and did aid the experience. He explained that he has been researching Sheffield for more than 10 years now and his PhD subject was the Sheffield Armaments Industry 1900 – 1913.

One of the side issues you come across in the study of the armaments industry is the discovery of stainless steel and Chris went on to tell of his heavy involvement in a BBC programme – fronted by the formidable Steph McGovern – on Sheffield industry – which involved signing a contract with the promise of payment as a professional advisor…this turned out to be the princely sum of….*one pound!* Chris then quoted from a booklet produced in 1916 which proclaimed Sheffield to be the `Arsenal of the World`…people came from all over the world to Sheffield to get armaments, we are talking about heavy armaments, armour plate for battleships, finished and unfinished guns, armour piercing projectiles etc.

To the evident mirth of the audience Chris recounted the time when he had introduced his presentation by saying that Sheffield had been the Arsenal of the World……and someone misheard him…!!!! When we come to look into this claim for Sheffield we see it is a small group of companies making these weapons and to illustrate this he put up a map showing these factories, more or less along the banks of and adjacent to the River Don, about 3 miles long and half a mile wide.



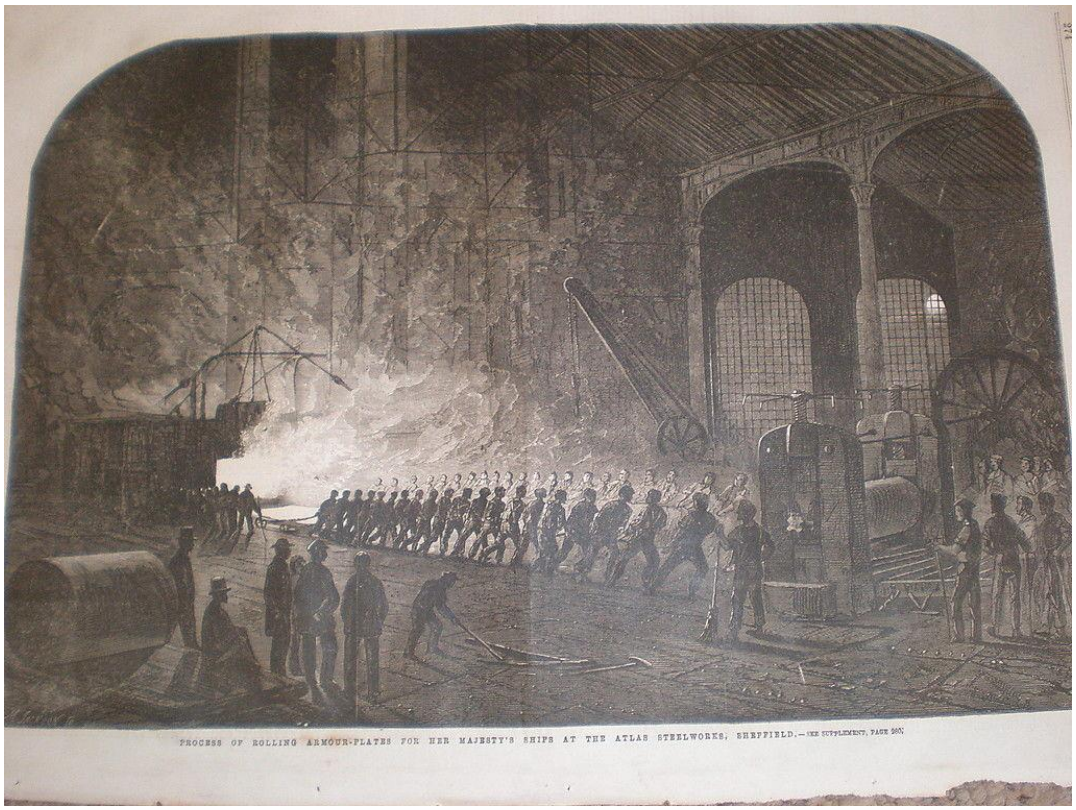
In 1914 we had River Don Works which was a Vickers works, Vickers of course being a very big company, very diverse company with interests all over the world, by Chris said he always considered River Don Works to be the `molten heart` of Vickers empire. To create the armaments they needed steel and this was where it all started. At River Don Works they were making armour plate for battleships, guns for battleships and projectiles. There was also Cammell Laird more commonly associated with shipbuilding at Birkenhead, again making plate and having gun forges – there was three other companies making guns – Coventry Ordnance Works, Armstrongs at Elswick and Beardmore`s in Glasgow. We also had John Brown`s better known as a Clydeside shipbuilder making armour plate and gun forgings at their Atlas Works. There was Thomas Firth`s Norfolk Works and the Tinsley Works on Wheelon street. Hadfields had the smaller Hecla Works and their eastern works whose site is now totally occupied by the Meadowhall shopping centre.
In 1914 Vickers, Cammell and John Brown were making what was known as Krupp Cemented Armour. This was a manufacturing process for armour plate invented by Krupp in the 1890s and licensed to these Sheffield companies, which, by a strange quirk of fate, every British battleship and battlecruiser at the Battle of Jutland was protected by armour of *German design*! These companies, and Hadfields, also made projectiles which were designed to beat Krupp amour by shell penetration and their first licensee was…….*Krupp of Germany* ! We have this international interchange of technology, especially in the Edwardian period prior to WW1 and there are documents in the Sheffield Archive which show that these companies were still collection royalties from Krupp in 1915, 1916 and 1917!
Why are these companies important ?, they were the biggest employers in the Sheffield valley, indeed on the eve of the outbreak of war these five companies were employing around 30000 people, compared with the largest cutlery factories in Sheffield employing just 1000. When we look at the Sheffield industry and the cutlery industry, the cutlers are often very small companies. Other Sheffield steel companies, Jessops, Sanderson, and Samuel Osborne become more important as the war progresses and ultimately there was around 400 Sheffield companies making weapons and munitions by the time the war ended.

Chris then looked back at the beginning – 1860 and we start with Sir John Brown (1816-1896), who gave his name to the Company. He was born in Sheffield and takes over the steelworks in the 1850s and he has the opportunity to use new technology – the Bessemer Process – and the great thing about this process is that it allows people to make steel by the ton instead of by the pound (lb) with steel made by the crucible process. You could make high quality steel by the latter route – but not a lot of it.

The Bessemer process was the first real bulk steelmaking process and the railways were the first to really benefit from this as the cost of making rails fell dramatically.

Note: There is a Bessemer Converter vessel on display at Kelham Island Industrial Museum in Sheffield

John Brown now realises that you can put steel armour on battleships instead of the more brittle iron armour withy HMS Warrior being one of the first to benefit from this new armour technology. Initially the armour is iron faced with steel.

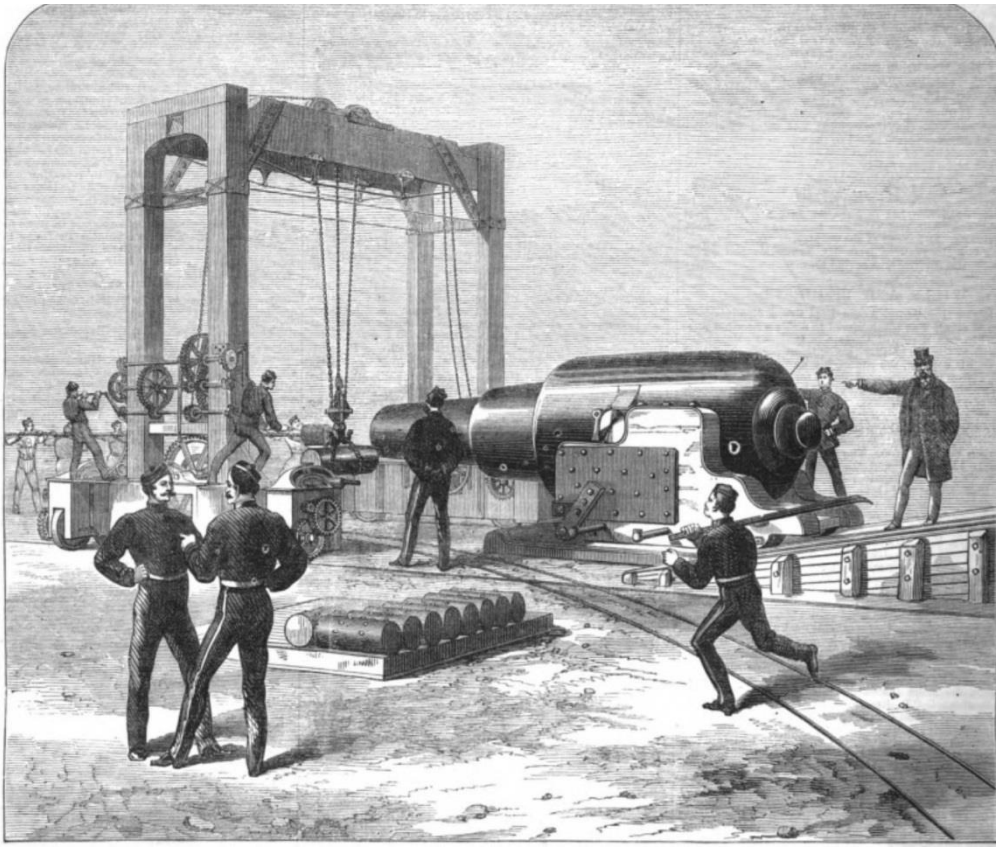


Chris then put up a picture depicting the drawing of a plate from a furnace at Atlas Works in the 1860s and made the point of there being no personal protective equipment, no hard hats, just a multitude of men going about their business.

Cammell introduce Bessemer furnaces in 1863 and the steelmaking technology evolves in the decades leading up to the dawn of the 20th century . Pictures like the one shown above appear in newspapers like the London illustrated News Magazine fostering the idea that this little place , Sheffield, is making all this armour that is protecting the Royal Navy.

Sheffield, of course, is probably the last place you would choose to `design` a steel industry around – has lots of hill but it develops as an adjunct of cutlery – anything you can make out of steel can be adapted as a weapon – there are documents in the archives recording a man in Sheffield making knives in 1554 – William Ellis. There was others making arrowheads so there was a long history of making weapons and the steel industry developed as an adjunct to that. The first steel is made in the area in 1699 and by the 1740s crucible steelmaking was in full swing and by the 1860s steel can be made by the ton and we can make much larger pieces like armour plate, indeed it is the 1860s when the Industrial Revolution really arrives in Sheffield that is when we can make things in bulk.

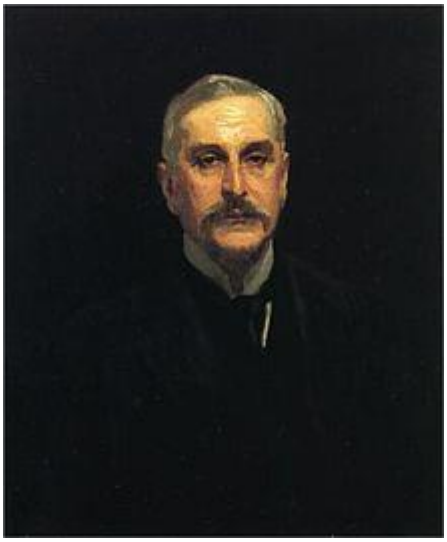
In addition to companies making armour plate we also see companies starting to make guns and the Firth family are amongst the first to be involved. We have Thomas Firth and his son, Mark Firth (left) (1819-1880) who was famous as becoming Sheffield Mayor and Master Cutler for three successive years. It was Mark Firth`s money and endowment which set up Firth College, the foundation of the University of Sheffield. He also donated Firth Park to the people of the City of Sheffield. They started to make guns in the 1870s and became famous for making the Woolwich Infant gun in 1871



These were made by the crucible method and for this you needed two hundred gangs of men all with crucibles pouring metal into moulds to cast these massive guns, each of which weighed 35 tons. By the 1880s and 1890s, Firths had transitioned into making projectiles as well, beginning earlier by making cannonballs for the Crimean War (1853-1856).

Robert Hadfield(snr) started the foundry which was inherited by his son, more of which later, was worried about French pre-eminence in the production of projectiles and he put effort into making pointed projectiles by the cast steel method from the 1870s.

So, by the 1870s we have this small group of companies making weapons, we have two companies making armour plate, we had one company making guns and Hadfields starting to experiment with projectiles, this is really the birth of the arms industry, but it is really the Vickers brothers Thomas (1833-1915) - left and Albert (1819-1890) who start it off in a big way.



They realised that having a single steel company is not going to make you millions in the arms industry but by connecting with or buying other companies.

Thomas and Albert Vickers set up the River Don Works in 1867 and which of course is now Sheffield Forgemasters on Brightside Lane. In the 1880s they are invited by the Admiralty to produce some armour plate and finished guns as well – a sort of trial order. By this time the government wants to expand the number of producers of these products and eventually this leads to the Vickers name being that of one of the best known producers of armaments in the world. These two are credited with being amongst the first big entrepreneurs in Sheffield. Towards the end of the 1890s they start to build an empire, in 1897 they acquire the Maxim-Nordenfeldt Machine Gun Company which made the famous Maim machine gun, soon to evolve into the Vickers machine gun. The same year they buy the Electric Ordnance Accessory Company, a company set up to make submarines. The also buy the Naval Construction Company at Barrow in Furness , a shipyard still there to this day specialising in submarines. They diversify into armoured vehicles and take a fifty percent holding in William Beardmore in Glasgow who had just announced they wanted to start producing armour plate and Vickers want to stifle a potential competitor. They also acquire 25% of a torpedo company, Whitehead, at Weymouth. They also begin setting up subsidiary companies abroad, in the US, Italy, Spain, Canada, Russia and in Turkey.

All this means that by 1902, Vickers becomes the first company – ever – to build an entire battleship, fit its engines, supply its projectiles and send it to the navy, all from within one

company. These are the `Castles of Steel` of the First World War – contrast with the recently commissioned aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth which had 1000 companies cooperating in its construction. Technology has moved on and today`s warships are infinitely more complex than construction over 100 years ago but you can see how Vickers acquired the expertise of the day to be able to supply the finished article .

Chris then put up a picture of Vickers gun shop where after casting the tube of steel it is machine to the external dimensions, then comes the laborious task of machining out the bore of the gun, finally boring the rifling internally. Before the First World War, to make ONE of these battleship gun barrels, it would take roughly two to three years. Most of that time is taken by machining of the rifling of the barrel to a tolerance of one thousandth of an inch. Very, very specific engineering.

Into the early 1900s, the industry is starting to make use of *metallurgy* - we start going beyond a steelmaker looking into a furnace or ladle and saying…that looks about right…more scientific methods evolve, as does the alloying techniques and those of heat treatment, quenching and tempering.

The world came to Sheffield to view all these weapons.

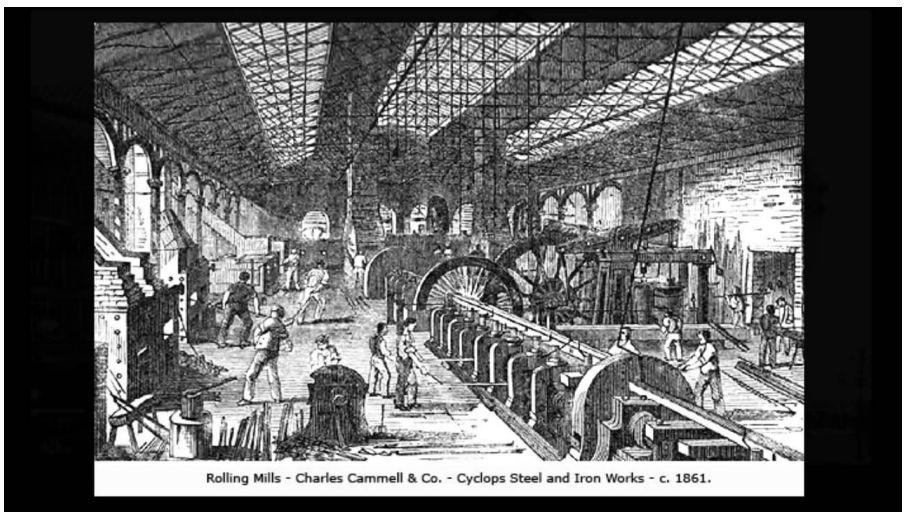
What sets Vickers apart is that they are integrated – they can make the armour and send it their shipyards and by this they can cut out other companies in the industry especially John Brown and Cammells in Sheffield. So, in the early 1900s these companies decide to start expanding as well. What John Brown does is buy the Clydebank shipyard in 1899 and they acquire 7/8th control of neighbours Thomas Firths and that gives them potentially steel for guns but also projectiles. A full merger takes place in 1913 when they become Firth Brown. What Cammells do, by 1903, they is realise that there is only one shipyard left and they acquire laird Bros. of Birkenhead.

Chris went on to say that he had spent many years in archives and had photographed many documents…he now has files containing some 40000 pictures. Cammell`s records were found in Birkenhead in around 1993 as previously it was thought that all there records had been lost in WW2 bombing of Sheffield but when the shipyard at Birkenhead closed, someone opened a cupboard door and exclaimed…`look at all these files…!. Chris went to Wirral Archive Services who said, we have all these records..do you want them?. It took a transit van SIX trips to move all these documents from the shipyard to the premises of Wirral Archive Services…even now they are not fully catalogued. There is full records of every ship built and launched from these yards.

What these companies realise as well is that because Vickers were making finished goods and one of their other competitors Armstrong Whitworth were also making guns and armour. Vickers and A-W tried to make the government only order guns and armour as a set – to try and cut the others out of the industry and therefore make more money.

The other companies come together and they start the Coventry Ordnance Works in Coventry…a rather unfortunate acronym…COW…as well as acquiring the Fairfield shipbuilding company in Glasgow. Cammell buys 25% of Fairfield and in turn force Fairfields to buy 25% of Coventry Ordnance Works in order to spread the risk around. What was not so well known at this time was that John Brown owned 50% of Harland and Wolff of Belfast who built the Titanic which struck an iceberg and sank…50% owned by H & W!

By 1900 the technology of armour is starting to evolve and Chris put up some slides of pages from a book produced in 1899 showing Cammell`s Cyclops Works in Sheffield…no idea where these names came from. Hadfield`s Hecla Works – there is a volcano in Iceland by that name.



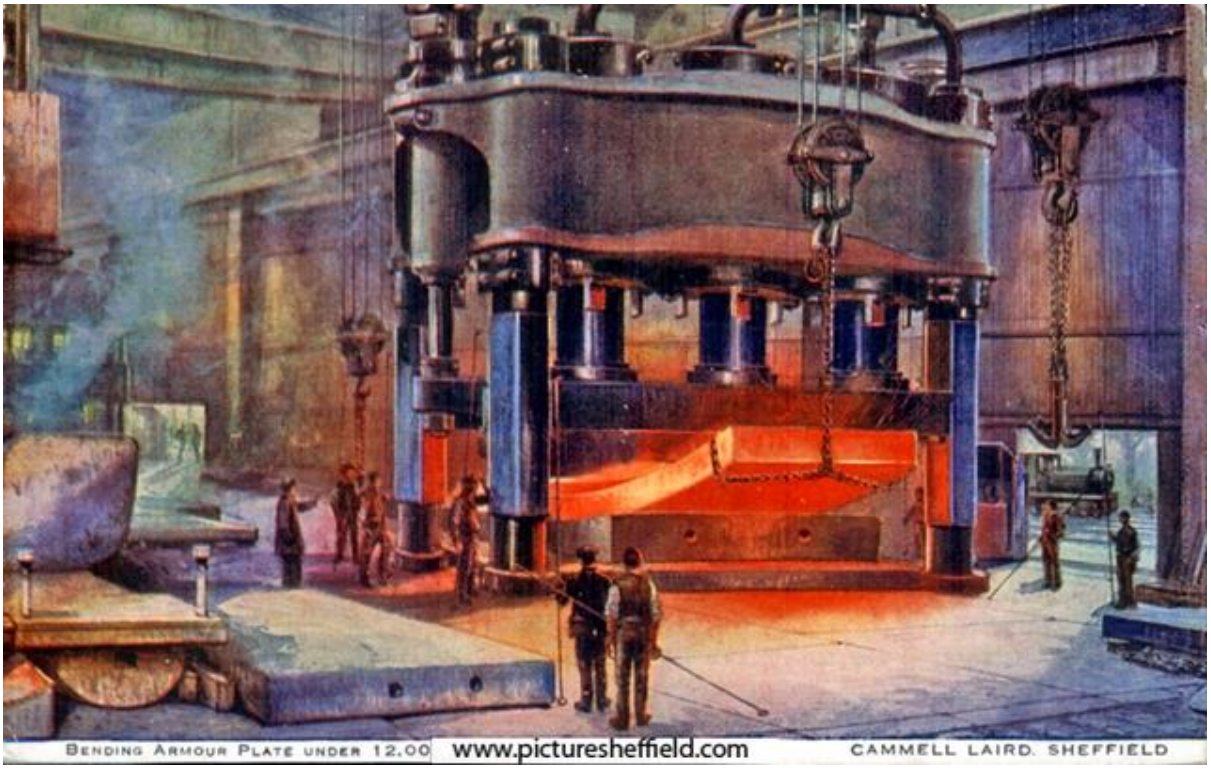
In 1891 all steel armour was being produced but they needed to harden it, as steel has produced cannot resist a projectile hit but in 1891 an American called Augustus Heywood Harvey develops a technique for quenching an armour plate from a Harvey Furnace. You produce the armour plate to the shape you want, reheat it in the furnace, then quench it to harden the face of the armour. At the same time as this is invented in the US, a guy called John Tresidder of John Browns invented the same method – the patent records are literally four days apart on either side of the Atlantic. So John Browns can use this method free of charge – no royalties to pay.

Making ordinary steel at this time you can make 8-10% profit…by using these new methods the margin goes out to 40%. There is a reason for this sort of margin – these companies are also footing the bill for the research and this is one of the few times in the history of armaments where the government is allowing private companies to do the R & D and in return the government is buying the product and is prepared to pay high prices for it, simply because they, the government does not have to set up the research facilities.

In 1894 Krupp of Germany invent Krupp`s Cemented Armour and this is where metallurgy really starts to enter the picture. What you are producing is a piece of armour plate with 2% nickel, 4% chromium. You produce the piece then reheat in a Krupp Furnace. You take the plate lay it down on the hearth of the furnace and cover it with charcoal or coke. Then you take another piece of armour and place it face down on the coke layer. You heat the whole thing for two weeks and during this time the carbon from the charcoal/coke draws into the face of the armour. When fully homogenised, the piece is withdrawn and again quenched, this time in oil (lower rate of cooling to prevent cracking).

The Sheffield companies make this Krupp Cementation Armour under license from Germany and there was a simple rule in the agreement, that, if you make any improvements to the process, you have to tell Krupps free of charge. There is a reciprocal arrangement should Krupp develop the process further.

Once you have made the piece of armour it is flat – but battleships aren`t flat and these plates have to be bent to shape and this is done in an Armour Bending Press

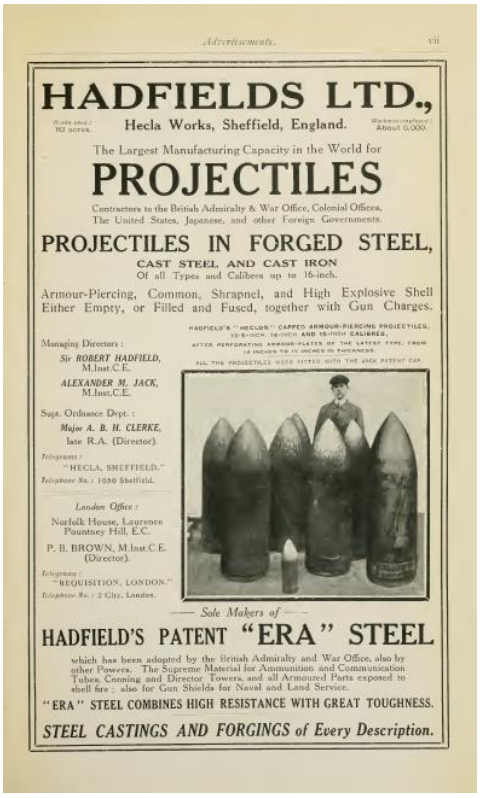


The one in the picture (from about 1911) can exert a load of 12000 tons on the plate being bent to the contour of the battleship it is being designed for. The problem with a machine like this, its sole use is in the production of armour – there is no other use for it. Of course this caused big problems in the 1920s after the Washington Naval Treaty which saw the suspension of Capital ship production.

Chris now moved on to discuss Sir Robert Abbott Hadfield (1858 – 1940). He is encouraged into metallurgy by his father and at the age of 18 he built a furnace in the basement of the family at the cost of £1000, to enable him to experiment.

In 1882, Hadfield, through his experiments, develops what is the first alloy steel in the world – manganese steel, the addition of manganese improves the hardenability of the steel making the material of choice for tramways, railway tracks etc. He invents this at the age of 24 and by the time he is 30, his father has died and he takes over the company, acquiring enough shares to ensure he remains chairman until his own death 52 years later in 1940. As well as having the majority shareholding he also pays out big dividends something which continued well into the First World War. By the 1920s he finds it perfectly acceptable to run the business from his home in the South of France.

The beauty of manganese steel is it can also be cast thus enabling complex shapes to be made out of it, like domed turrets and Chris put up a slide showing an extract from a little booklet entitled `The Hadfield System of War Materials`. This was basically a mail order catalogue for weapons of war, guns, cast gun turrets and, most important for Hadfield, armour piercing projectiles.



Advertisements. vii

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PROJECTILES

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PROJECTILES IN FORGED STEEL,

CAST STEEL AND CAST IRON

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HADFIELD'S "HECLON" CAPPED ARMOUR-PIERCING PROJECTILES, 10·5-INCH, 12-INCH AND 13·5-INCH CALIBRES,

AFTER PERFORATING ARMOUR-PLATES OF THE LATEST TYPE, FROM 12 INCHES TO 15 INCHES IN THICKNESS.

ALL THE PROJECTILES WERE FITTED WITH THE ARMS PATENT CAP.

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which has been adopted by the British Admiralty and War Office, also by other Powers. The Supreme Material for Ammunition and Communication Tubes, Conning and Director Towers, and all Armoured Parts exposed to shell fire; also for Gun Shields for Naval and Land Service.

"ERA" STEEL COMBINES HIGH RESISTANCE WITH GREAT TOUGHNESS.

STEEL CASTINGS AND FORGINGS of Every Description.

Hadfields are starting to experiment more with armour piercing projectiles and they develop the `capped` armour piercing shell which was in essence a soft steel `cap` on top of a projectile, the idea being that this soft steel cap takes the impact against the armour plate whilst the hard core passes through the armour plate. These became known as `Heklon` armour Piercing Projectiles and were invented in 1904 and of course were licensed to Krupp in Germany.

The problem with these projectiles is how they are tested, take for example a 12 inch calibre projectile, with the soft cap on top and you fire it against a 12 inch thick piece of Krupp Cemented Armour. The problem is the fact that the gun and armour are at right angles to each other – not the situation you would find in naval battle with ships firing at each other Hadfields identified this problem before WW1 and announced that they had developed a projectile that would pass through armour plate at 15 degrees angle but the Navy was not convinced, although the Battle of Jutland made them re-think.

Hadfield made these armour piercing projectiles by the thousand – 2% Nickel, 2% chromium bodies. When produced they are sent off to Woolwich Arsenal for testing, one being taken at random from each batch – if that one passed they were accepted, if that one sample failed, all were sent back. So this introduction of metallurgy and testing regime made production more scientific and can indicate the start of the alloy steel industry in Sheffield. All this experimentation and development of weapons was actually creating the knowledge base for the future development of stainless and alloy steelmaking. The eighteen inch projectile in the picture can still be seen in a museum today

Chris contrasted the picture showing the interior of Hadfield works on Newhall Road, a picture which showed the most advanced metallurgical equipment of the day, with a picture of Newhall road itself with nothing but horses and carts to be seen.

Hadfields are not the only company producing these projectiles and Bernard Firth (1866 – 1929) starts the move at Firths away from guns to making of shells/projectiles.

These companies viewed their production of weapons much in the same way we, in modern times viewed nuclear weapons – they were viewed as a deterrent, no one could envisage them actually being used in war.

Rob Nash then asked if these projectiles were solid shot or were they explosive…Chris answered that each had a cavity put in them at the base of the projectile into which 4% by weight of

cordite was added, but the armour piercing projectile which when fired travels towards its target at 1000 mph…is in effect just a mass of steel. 45.40

Chris drew attention to the lack of consideration for Health & Safety issues (compared with today) in these factories – lots of open, moving machinery, drive belts, cables lying on the floor – but the people who worked there and operated these machines were highly skilled – and the best paid workers in these plants – Chris highlighted this with an extracted page from Thomas Firth`s wage bill for 1908-09 which shows that the men in the gun department received 25% of the total wage bill for the entire workforce whilst making 40% of the total tonnage output…and 40% of the profit!

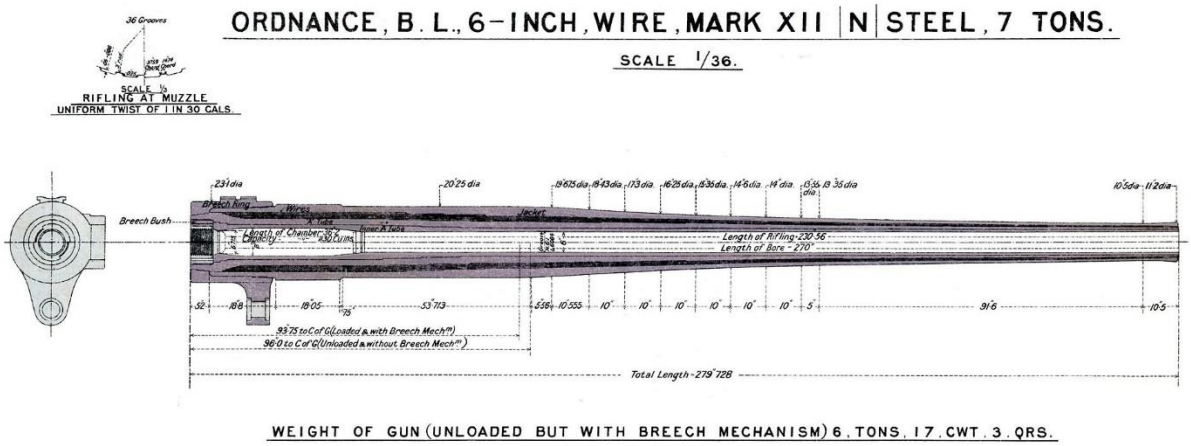
When the First World War started these highly skilled workers wanted to leave – they wanted to go and fight alongside their friends. This created big problems for the companies who often said `no` you are too highly skilled but by 1915 with the formation of the Ministry of Munitions it was necessary to dilute the labour and ways of making projectiles.

Judith Reece then raised a good point – not so much about projectiles but about the huge guns, asking how these were moved about, when the picture of a typical Sheffield street of the period only showed horse drawn vehicles as a means of transport. Chris explained that movements of these heavy pieces – both internally and onwards when finished to the shipyards was by railway. Grant Cullen added that these companies all had their own specialist wagons for transporting these types of loads.

Note. Further to this presentation Grant has undertaken a bit of research into the transportation of loads like gun barrels and this work is in an article included elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Chris showed a picture of Cammell`s 13.5 ins gun tubes which had to be sent to Coventry Ordnance Works to be finished. Meanwhile the armour plate made at Cammells had to be sent to Birkenhead to the shipyard whilst the finished gun barrel had to be sent from Coventry to Glasgow for the gun to be fitted into the ship`s turret – all very, very complicated.

Technology moves on and this saw the introduction of `wire guns`

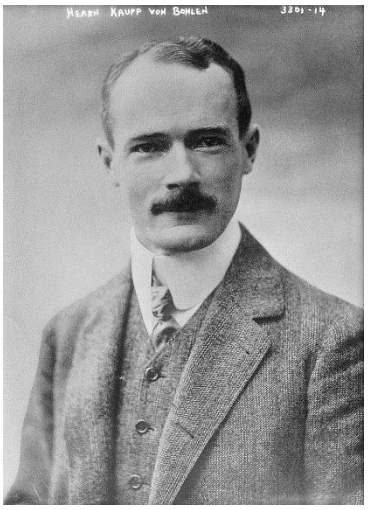


"Wire-wound" or simply "wire" guns were a gun construction method introduced for British naval guns in the 1890s, at which time the strength of large British steel forgings could not be guaranteed in sufficiently large masses to make an all-steel gun of only two or three built-up tubes. One or more central "A" tubes were tightly wound for part or the full length with layers of steel wire, and the wire was covered by a jacket. It was first used on the QF 6 inch Mk II (40 calibre) of 1892, and the first large calibre gun was the BL 12 inch Mk VIII (35 calibre) of 1895. It

provided greater radial strength, i.e., it better withstood the gas pressure attempting to expand the gun's diameter, than previous "hoop" construction methods of similar weight. This was necessitated by the introduction of cordite as a propellant in 1892, which generated higher pressures along the length of the barrel than the gunpowder used before. However, it provided less axial strength, i.e. lengthwise rigidity, and early longer wire-wound guns suffered from droop and inaccuracy. A combination of wire and traditional methods was eventually adopted to solve this problem. The successful British wire naval guns of World War I were typically shorter than German and US guns of the same calibre, which did not use wire-wound construction, e.g. British 45 calibres in length, or only 42 calibres in the 15-inch gun, compared to 50 calibres in guns of other countries. The method was found satisfactory for use with field guns and howitzers which had much shorter barrels (as well as much smaller projectiles and much lower "chamber pressures") than naval guns.

As with the monobloc gun barrel they could take up to two years to manufacture but this process reduced the risk of the gun barrel splitting after repeated firings, the wire acting like a shock absorber or spring.

With respect to the exchange of technology, the Germans led with armour, British with projectiles, but the gun was the trump card. Krupps of course were the biggest arms manufacturer of the age and they are run by Freiderich Krupp until 1902. There was a scandal in the Social Democratic press in 1902 alluding to Freiderich Krupp`s sexuality – due to the testimony of a hairdresser. The idea of being branded homosexual in 1902 Germany is too much for Friederich to take and he kills himself. This leaves the Krupp empire in Essen – which is as big as all of Sheffield – to his daughter Bertha – after whom the massive railway gun which bombarded Paris is named. It was unthinkable in German business and society that this massive industrial enterprise should be run by a woman – and a teenager as well, so she enters into an arranged marriage with Gustav Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach.



He married Bertha Krupp in October 1906. Bertha had inherited her family's company in 1902 at age 16 after the death of her father, Friedrich Krupp. German Emperor Kaiser William II personally led a search for a suitable spouse for Bertha, as it was considered unthinkable for the Krupp empire to be headed by a woman. Gustav was picked from his previous post at the Vatican. The Kaiser announced at the wedding that Gustav would be allowed to add the Krupp name to his own. Gustav became company chairman in 1909. Krupp remained in charge after WW1 and Krupp suffered failing health from 1939 onwards, and a stroke left him partially paralysed in 1941. He became a figurehead until he formally handed over the running of the business to his son Alfried in 1943. Krupp industries, under both his leadership and later that of his son, was offered facilities in eastern Europe and made extensive use of forced labor during the war. Following the Allied victory, plans to prosecute Gustav Krupp as a war criminal at the 1945 Nuremberg Trials were dropped because by then he was bedridden and senile. Despite his personal absence from the prisoners' dock, however, Krupp remained technically still under indictment and liable to prosecution in subsequent proceedings. He died in 1950, Bertha in 1957.

All of these Sheffield companies had visited Krupps indeed Robert Hadfield, in a piece in the Times of 1912 said he was ` Germanophile` and in 1914 Gustav decides he wants to visit all of the arms works in Sheffield and arising from this, all the works receive a letter (Chris found it in the Cammell archives) which says "….Gustav will visit Britain from the 6th – 13th June….he wishes to pay his respects to the gentlemen of the leading firms which are our friends….". Of course at

that time everyone was expecting a war – but NOT with Germany…..civil war in Ireland. All of the major Sheffield companies – who had been welcomed in Germany, immediately say `yes` to Gustav`s visit. As soon as the details of the visit emerge the Sheffield companies (and others in the armaments industry receive a letter from the Admiralty which, despite its diplomatic language amounts to …`for the Love of God don`t show them anything…..` Basically the Admiralty was happy enough to let the visitors see finished goods – but not the methods of manufacture. The letter concluded that the Admiralty would be happy to receive any reports of any subsequent visits by Sheffield companies to Germany. Krupp toured around the country before staying in Sheffield with….Robert Hadfield. Krupp arrives in Sheffield on 18th June and Hadfield hosts a party to which the `great and the good` of Sheffield are invited.

The following day Herr Krupp and his associates toured each Sheffield armaments manufacturer's works. Sir Robert took them on a tour of the East Hecla Works (now the site of the Meadowhall shopping centre), before they explored Vickers River Don Works (now Sheffield Forgemasters).

They next ventured to Cammell-Laird's Cyclops Works for luncheon and a stroll around the armour shops, before moving to Thomas Firths' Norfolk Works and John Browns' Atlas Works, where they were welcomed by John Browns' chairman, Lord Aberconway. Krupp finished the day with a second night at Parkhead House with the Hadfield family.

Recounting the visit in 1918, Sir Robert claimed that upon visiting the East Hecla works Herr Krupp had said to him: "I hope you do not think I have come here to spy."

He must have forgotten that his company received royalties from Krupps for using their projectile patents up to 1915. Spying wasn't necessary. These companies had been sharing technical information for two decades. Herr Krupp left Sheffield on Saturday, June 20. Eight days later, Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo, beginning a chain of events that led to Britain declaring war on Germany on August 4.

Chris had opened by saying Sheffield was the Arsenal of the World and up until that point had presented on technology, the companies were the most technologically advanced in the world, they licensed these products all over the world, but lots of companies came to Sheffield to buy weapons. Between 1900 until 1914 many countries bought weapons from Sheffield –US, Japan, Brazil, Turkey, Argentina……..etc etc. Some of these only came to Sheffield to buy in 1914 just before the First World War started - US, Japan, Turkey, Italian, Spanish - the Japanese Navy in particular was a big purchaser of Hadfield`s Heklon projectiles. The US Navy too was a big customer as America, at that time simply had not caught up with British technology. Hadfields, somewhat controversially produce projectiles for America in 1917 – during the war.

These export orders are important for these companies as it means that they can keep their works in production, retain their skilled workers when there are no orders forthcoming from the Royal Navy which, in times of low requirement can get all they need from Woolwich Arsenal, indeed in the five years prior to WW1, the Japanese alone purchase £450,000 worth of projectiles – add a couple of `0`s on to that to give you an idea of the value at today`s prices.

Chris described a document in the Hadfield archive dated April 1914 from the Ottoman government for literally thousands of projectiles for the two battleships then being constructed in British shipyards, the Sultan Osman and the Reshadieh. However, as we know, First Lord of the admiralty Winston Churchill, in August 1914 did not want these ships to go to Turkey and requisitioned them, they being renamed HMS Agincourt and HMS Erin, respectively. Ultimately this decision formed one of the reasons why the Ottomans their lot in with the Central Powers.

Somewhat more controversially, there was actually Ottoman sailors in Newcastle ready to crew the boats the very next day. The cost of these ships had been raised by public subscription in Turkey and Churchill`s decision caused outrage there.

One could question why these companies are supplying the world, surely there is issues with state security? Chris found this extract from Thomas McNamara, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, in Hansard , April 1914….

"….the government does not interfere with the construction of armaments, the contracts or design for foreign powers and cannot any more than any government can keep any development confidential when in the public domain and if at all, only for a very limited period…"

Read between the lines he is saying government – hands off – the Japanese, the Turks, the Italians, the Americans, can all order from these companies – we don`t have to. These orders are keeping these businesses going, workers employed, in profit…and these companies are doing all the Research and Development.

August 1914, the war starts..we think of battleships, projectiles – there are orders – floods of orders. By September Hadfields alone have 20 separate orders for 105,000 projectiles which they simply cannot supply as they are saying `yes` to every order – the Government were quite happy keeping this small group of armaments companies together making high profits because if others start to make armaments your profit would be eroded and things like R & D expenditure, paid for by the Sheffield companies would wind down – so the government should have known better that the companies could not fulfill all the orders by the required date .

In Hadfields archive there is an order dated January 1900 for projectiles and other smaller shells for the Boer War, to be completed in 3 months –it was not completed until 1902! The companies kept saying yes and they could not keep their promise.

Armour orders start to disappear as this is supposedly going to be a land war and by 1915, according to documents in Firth`s archive, 95% of their orders were for projectiles, indeed by the time of the Shell crisis of 1915, Firths had only supplied a quarter of the orders they had on their books – the remainder were running late. They started to expand, opening more and more shell shops but they simply could not keep up with demand. Of course this is the armament orders, other orders flood into Sheffield – 3000000 razors so soldiers can shave, knives, forks, picks, shovels, lots and lots of other things are made in Sheffield. As we get to the end of 1914 the problems are well known…but as Chris said at the outset Sheffield was the Arsenal of World and amazing development from the beginnings five decades previously.

Chris finished by reading a short extract from a magazine `The Engineer` - he also recommended going on a website call Grace`s Guide which has digitised the entire issues of this magazine (www.gracesguide.co.uk) The Engineer had its own correspondent in Sheffield for about 30 years from the 1880s until the 1920s In 1st January 1913 they point out -" The great armament manufacturers are still a substantial foundation of the steel industry……and even now the production of several thousand tons per week is considerably behind requirements"

And that concluded Chris Corker`s excellent presentation which merited a well-deserved round of applause. There was a brief Q & A session, not as long as normal , but Chris had encouraged questions during his presentation which meant there was not so many at the end.

For anyone interested in following up this topic, here is the link to an excellent source of information **www.sheffield.gov.uk/archives**

Gun Trucks

Members may recall that during the August meeting presentation Chris Corker put up a slide showing the interior of a modern (for the time) machine shop for the production of gun barrels and his next slide contrasted with a contemporary view of a street (Saville Street ?) outside this factory with the sole means of transport being horse drawn vehicles, carts etc. Member Judith Reece asked a very good question as to how these heavy gun barrels could be transported around the country, particularly to shipyards for installation on battleships and battle-cruisers. Chris responded by mentioning special railway wagons.

This got me thinking and when I got home I dug out a veritable `tome` published by the Caledonian Railway Association (I am member of the CRA and the North British Railway Study Group) covering that company`s railway wagons and starting on page 227 there is a couple of pages on `Gun Sets`. This article also references the CRA`s journal `*The True Line*` issue 84 from April 2004 where there was an article entitled `Gun Trucks`.

The undernoted is some explanation as to how these giant gun barrels – some weighing over 100 tons – were moved around the country – and internally within the various departments of the manufacturing works.

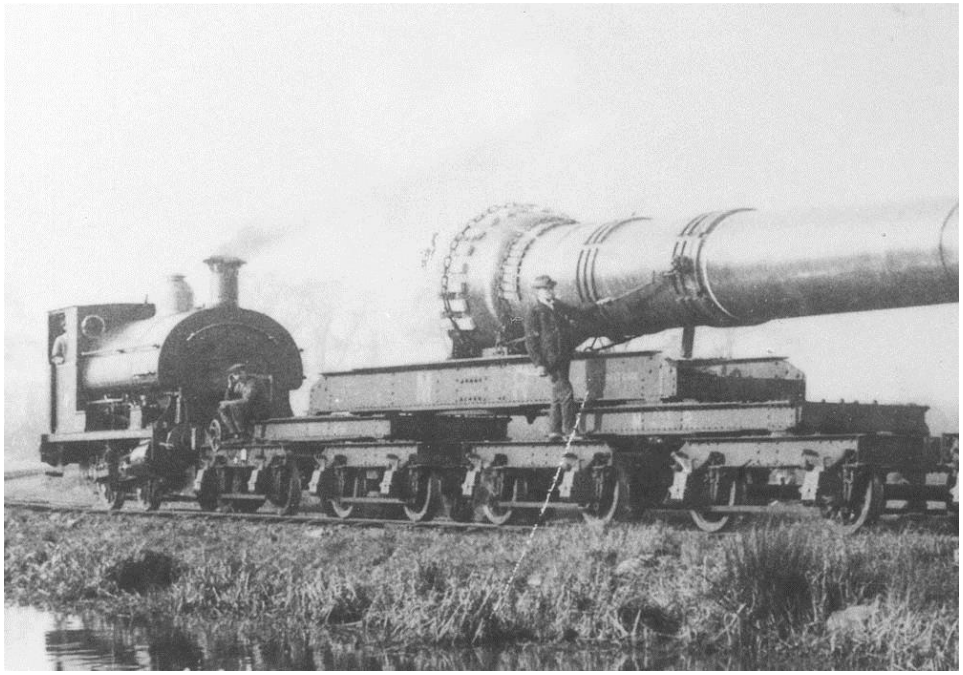
The Caledonian Railway was a Scottish railway company but operated as far south as Carlisle. The gun trucks described in these articles were used to transport gun barrels from William Beardmore`s Parkhead forge in the East End of Glasgow. No doubt very similar wagons were used by other railway companies the length and breadth of the country. The`Caley` disappeared with the Grouping of the smaller railway companies in 1922 – becoming part of the London, Midland and Scottish Railway.

In 1912 the Railway Executive Committee was formed and this body took over control of the railway system upon the outbreak of war. The REC took control of gun traffic over 50 tons in weight, the majority of which were naval guns. Requests to move guns lighter than this were made direct to the railway companies. Between 1914 and 1916 the Caledonian Railway carried 84 heavy guns, unfortunately no records remain as to how many smaller guns were carried by the company but one can guess it was a very significantly higher figure.

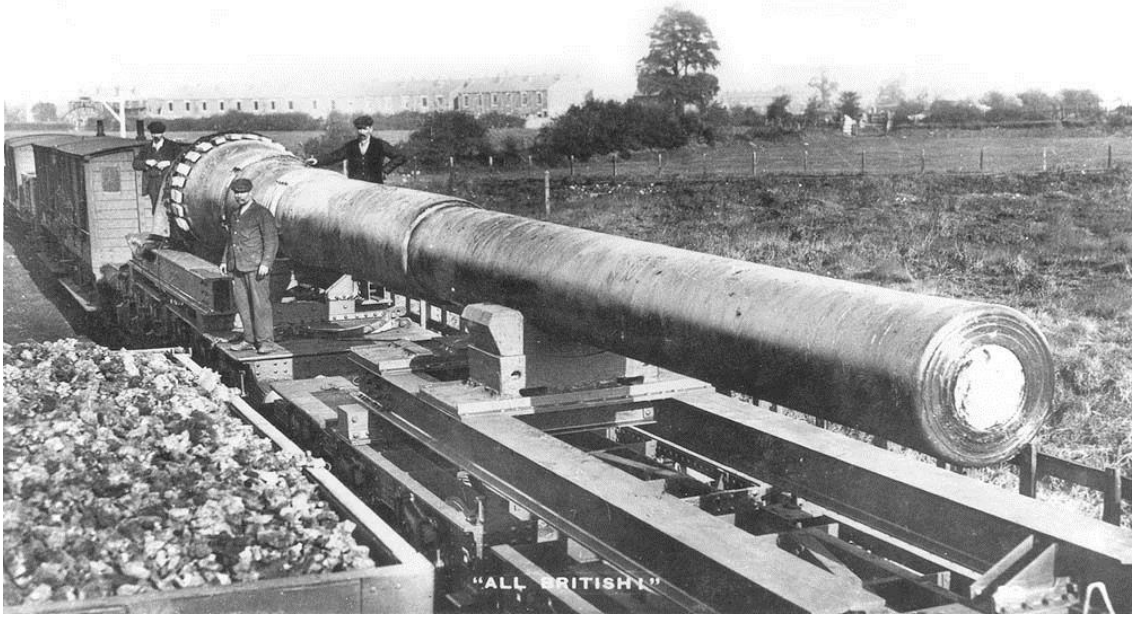
On the Caledonian system William Beardmore & Co. was a major source of gun traffic. The firm managed various national projectile factories on behalf of HM Government. During the war their Parkhead Forge manufactured around 100 gun barrels of various sizes ranging from 6 tons in weight to 100 tons. Heavy weight and ingot wagons were used in various configurations to carry guns after the outbreak of hostilities and wagons could be combined to carry guns of various sizes, generally 30 ton flat wagons and 35 ton boiler wagons singly or in pairs. From 1913 a typical 100 gun was carried on two ingot wagons close coupled and fitted with a cradle to support the barrel away from the breech. The buffers adjacent to each connected wagon were removed to facilitate close coupling. The increasing demand for transporting guns diverted wagons from their intended traffic, which had also increased to support the war effort and eventually it was found necessary to provide a specialised gun set capable of carrying even larger guns. In 1918 the specialist railway wagon manufacturer Hurst Nelson delivered a three wagon gun set of 165 tons capacity to the Caledonian railway, the firm having recently built a similar set for the London & North Western Railway. The REC obtained the set from the admiralty who paid for the wagons. These were for the exclusive use of the CR and could not be despatched to any government depot and by the end of the war this set had carried fifteen guns, each weighing between 70 to 100 tons.

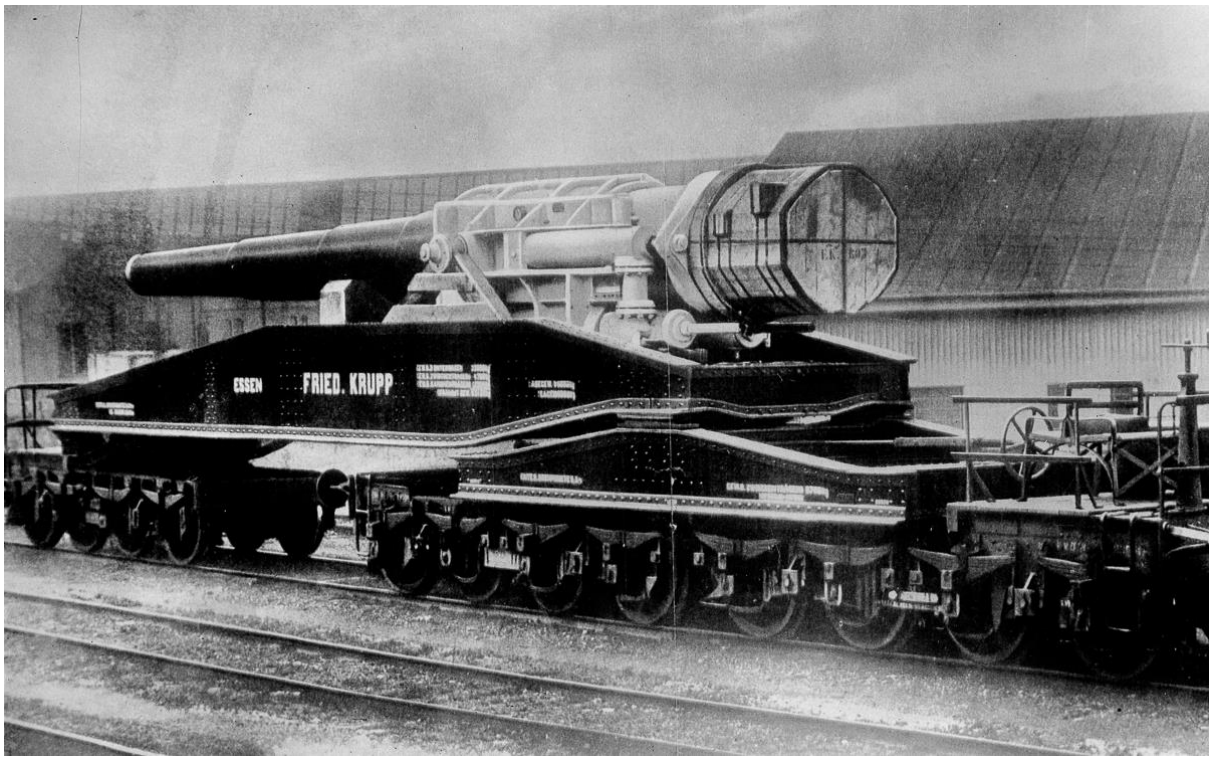
The gun set generally consisted of three wagons each with a pair of six wheel bogies. Two of the wagons were close coupled and carried between them a bolster block to support the breech of the gun. The third wagon which supported the gun barrel muzzle, was coupled to the other two by a draw bar that could be extended or shortened as required. Amazingly, many of these and similar wagons were not scrapped until the late 1950s.

At that time curves on railway lines were measured as a radius in `chains`, indeed this measurement is still used in the railways today. A `chain` is one eightieth of a mile ie 20 yards. These wagons were designed to be able to traverse curves of 1.5 chains ie a radius of 30 yards

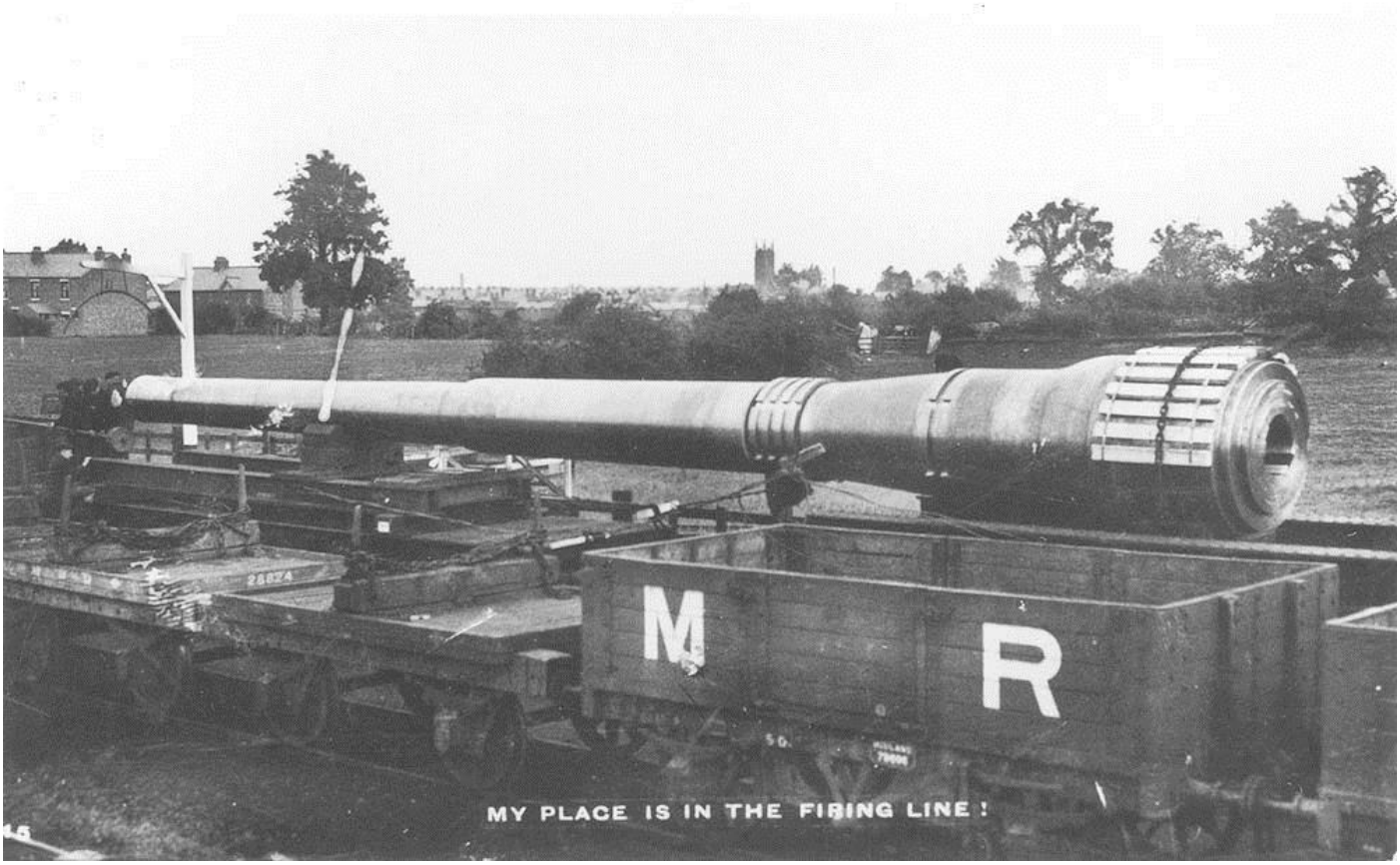


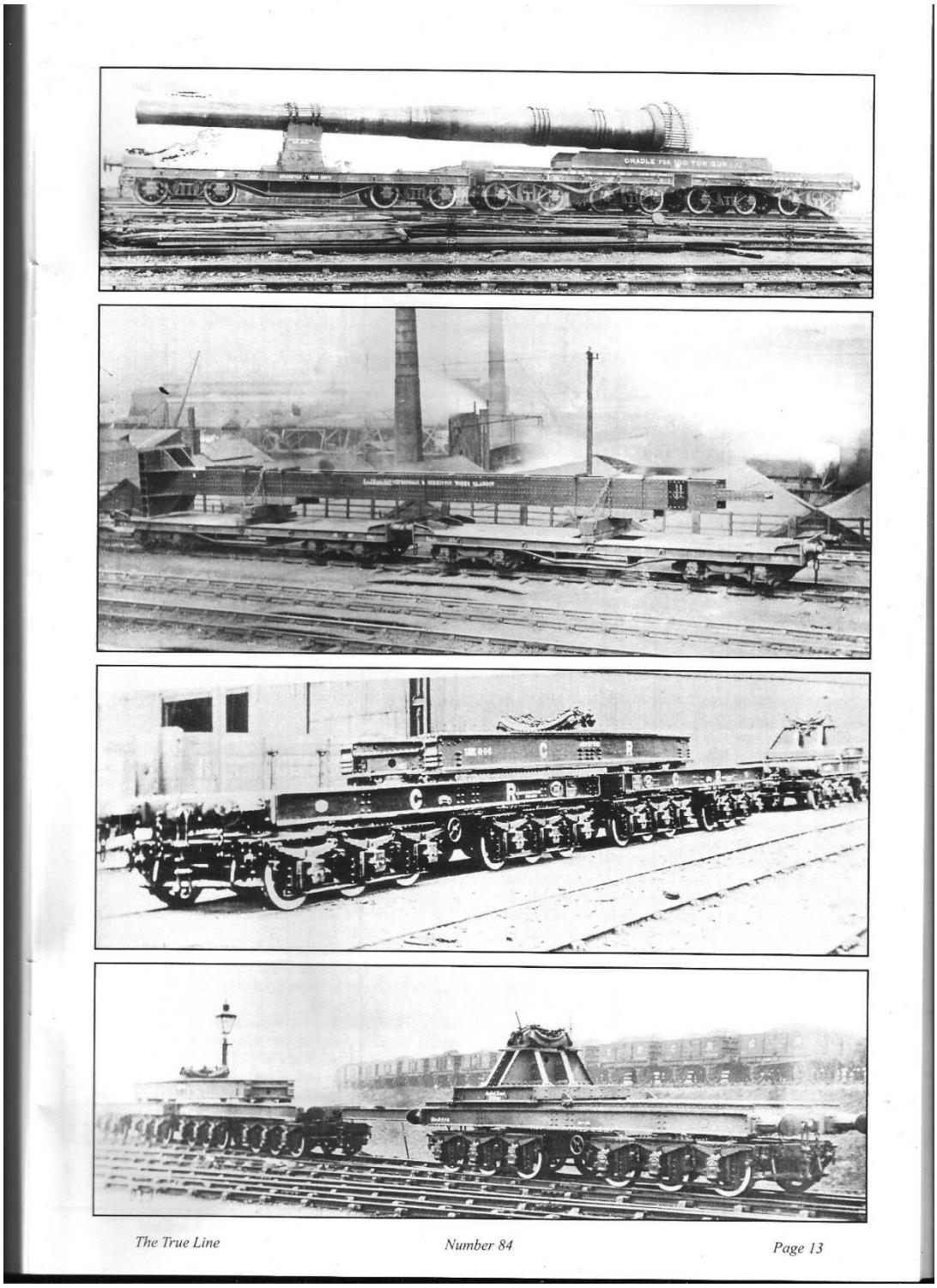
The above picture shows a gun wagon set on the Midland Railway





Gun trucks were not unique to British railways, here we have on owned by the Fried. Krupp Company in Germany





Gun Trucks on the Caledonian Railway – post war many were used to transport heavy girders and bridge sections

The following article by Lord Ashcroft was recently published in the Mail on Sunday….thought it worth sharing

Today, the tow-path alongside La Bassee canal in northern France is a haven of peace and tranquillity. At dawn, the silence is broken only by birdsong and the occasional footsteps from locals jogging or walking their dogs.
The contrast with just over a century ago could hardly be greater: early on the first day of the Battle of Loos, an artillery bombardment, machine-gun fire and exploding bombs caused a deafening cacophony.

Lord Ashcroft is pictured at the tow-path alongside La Bassee canal in northern France near where the Battle of Loos took place. An extraordinary tale of human kindness in the most unlikely of circumstances be told for the first time

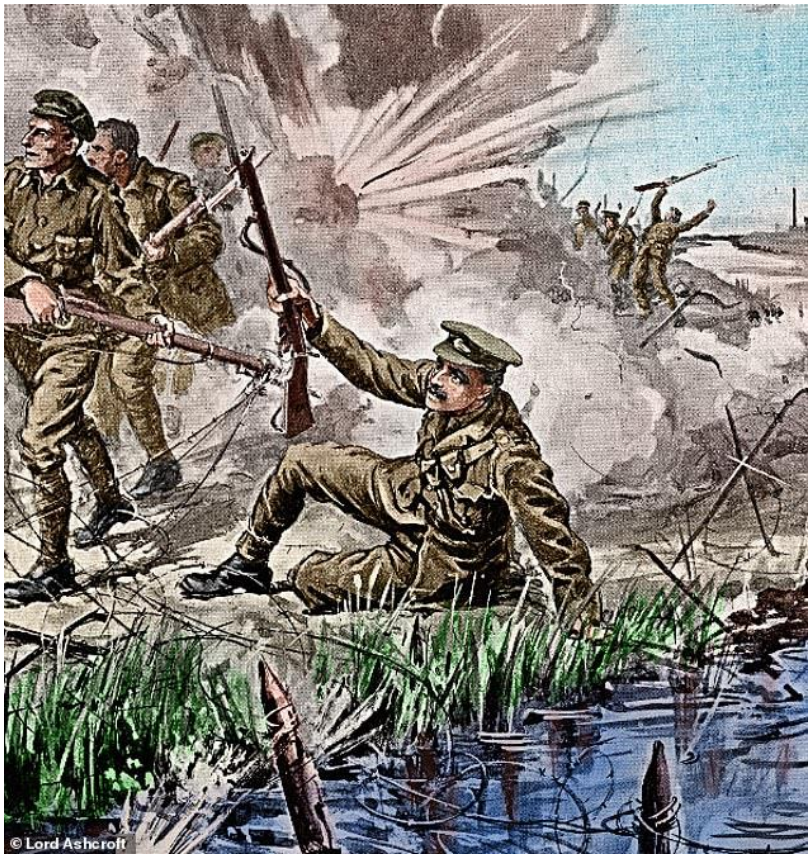
At the heart of the fierce fighting that autumn morning was Captain Arthur Kilby – tough, resolute and square-jawed, a man who had a reputation for never asking his men to do anything he was not prepared to do himself.

Even though the First World War was little more than a year old, Kilby, a career soldier aged 30, had already shown bravery on the battlefield many times over.

However, on September 25, 1915, he displayed such exceptional gallantry that he would eventually be awarded the Victoria Cross.

Like all recipients of the VC, Kilby's bravery is briefly recorded in the official citation that accompanies the award of the decoration, Britain and the Commonwealth's most prestigious medal for gallantry.

However, only now can an extraordinary tale of human kindness in the most unlikely of circumstances be told for the first time.



Under intense fire: A painting showing Captain Kirby in action before he was killed at the Battle of Loos in 1915. As they were exposed to an onslaught of stick grenades thrown from the enemy redoubt, one of Kilby's feet was shattered by an explosion. Yet still he defied terrible pain to urge his men on, firing at the enemy with his rifle

For relatives of the officer have provided me with an archive of letters and documents, more than a century old, that tell of the determined efforts of Kilby's parents to locate their missing son, who they believed had been wounded in battle and taken prisoner.

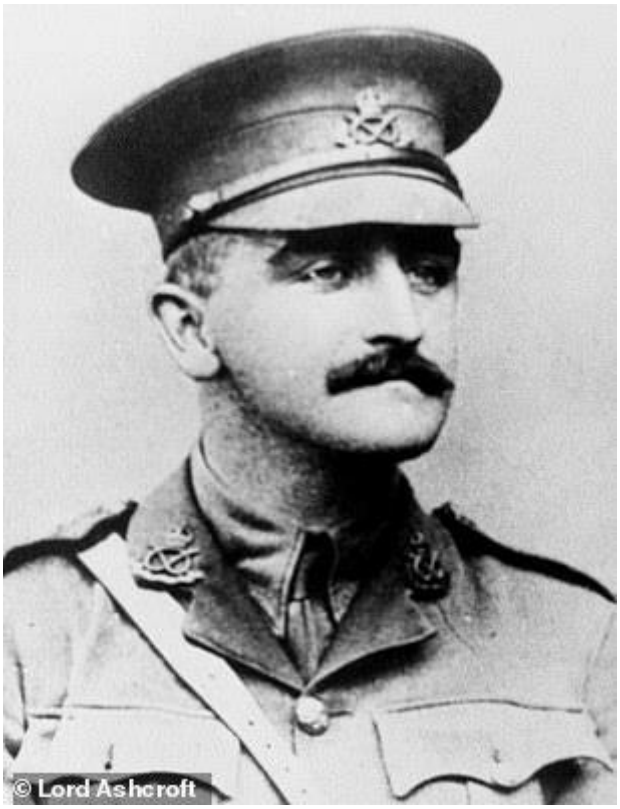
The tender letters also reveal how they were assisted in their task by none other than a German army officer they had met in Italy eight years before the outbreak of the so-called 'war to end all wars'.

Despite Britain and Germany being involved in a bitter conflict that would claim 16 million lives, General Amandus Menze was so touched by Kilby's parents' plight that he went to enormous lengths to help locate their son.

This is the full, remarkable story of Captain Kilby's life – and death.

Arthur Forbes Gordon Kilby was born in Cheltenham on February 3, 1885. He was the only son of Sandford Kilby, who had worked for the Bengal Police in India, and his wife Alice.

The young Kilby was educated at Bilton Grange, near Rugby, and Winchester College before preparing for a military career by spending time in Frankfurt. He then attended the Royal Military College, Sandhurst.



At the heart of the fierce fighting that autumn morning was Captain Arthur Kilby (above)– tough, resolute and square-jawed, a man who had a reputation for never asking his men to do anything he was not prepared to do himself

In August 1905, aged 20, he was commissioned into the 1st Battalion, The South Staffordshire Regiment, as a second lieutenant.

A little more than two years later, Kilby was promoted to the rank of lieutenant, and on April 1, 1910, he was made captain. Kilby was a talented linguist, speaking French, Spanish, German and Hungarian.

After the outbreak of the Great War in early August 1914, Kilby, by then serving with his regiment's 2nd Battalion, was one of the first to embark for the Western Front.

He arrived in France on August 13 as part of the British Expeditionary Force and, within 12 days, saw his first action at Maroilles.

The following day, August 26, his brigade was ordered to withdraw and Kilby was sent to the rear-guard to supervise their retreat.

After intense fire from German artillery, he was badly concussed by a shell. In the chaos, Kilby became separated from his unit and wandered alone for hours without food and water, before collapsing.

After being found, he was treated for shell-shock, spending nearly a month in hospital, before rejoining his battalion on September 24.

In October, his battalion moved north to the Ypres sector before heading north-west of Becelaere, where Kilby executed ‘a brilliant counter-attack’ and was awarded the Military Cross (MC), as well as subsequently being Mentioned in Despatches.

Wounded in the right arm and lung by a rifle bullet, he was forced to return to England for treatment.

Although he never fully recovered the strength in his right hand, Kilby rejoined his battalion in May 1915 and once again became involved in the thick of the fighting. In August, he was recommended for the Distinguished Service Order (DSO).

However, before a decision on this could be taken, the chaotic events of September 25, 1915 – the opening day of the Battle of Loos – intervened.

The South Staffordshire attack began about 6.30am, despite the fact that some members had been badly affected by an Allied gas attack, their first of the war. An unfavourable wind meant that more of Allied soldiers were hit than the enemy’s.

Kilby went forward along the narrow tow-path, where he and his men came under intense fire from both sides of the canal. Early on, Kilby was wounded in the hand, but still he and his men pressed on towards the enemy wire.

As they were exposed to an onslaught of stick grenades thrown from the enemy redoubt, one of Kilby’s feet was shattered by an explosion. Yet still he defied terrible pain to urge his men on, firing at the enemy with his rifle.

The situation, however, eventually became utterly hopeless and at 8am the order was given to withdraw.

Only 20 men from the battalion succeeded in making it back to the British trenches. Nearly 300 from the unit were killed or wounded, including 11 officers.

Kilby was one of the many whose whereabouts were not known, even though his men had staged a prolonged search for the officer they so admired.

Back at their home in Leamington Spa, Kilby’s parents, having been told their son was missing in action, waited for news but none was forthcoming.

As a well-travelled couple, they decided to recruit the help of friends on the Continent but, in particular, the veteran Prussian officer General Menze, whom they had met on holiday in Italy in 1906 and who now lived in Berlin.

Enquiries in Germany revealed that Gen Menze (pictured above, who helped the Kilby family) was a decorated soldier, having been presented with the Iron Cross for his bravery in the Franco-Prussian War. By the time of the Great War, he was retired

They were able to communicate with the German officer through another friend, Dutch woman Reins van de Wetering.

Because Holland was neutral in the conflict, her letters passed freely to both the UK and Germany. The Kilbys also needed her to translate their letters because, unlike their son, they did not speak German.

On October 1, Mr Kilby wrote to Gen Menze reminding him that they had played chess together in Villa Castagnola in Lugano in 1906, and then asking him for help.

‘Our countries are at war but I do not feel that necessarily changes our feeling of humanity and sympathy between German and English gentlemen,’ he wrote.

He provided details of his son’s disappearance, adding: ‘He is my only son. I appeal to you as an officer to help a fallen officer in trouble, and as a father I appeal to you to help his son. If the position were reversed, and I were asked to help you, I should so unhesitatingly.’

In the hope that his son was alive, Mr Kilby added: ‘If you would arrange to help him with clothes, money or comforts or can and will do anything to mitigate his suffering, you will have the lasting gratitude of his mother, sister and father, who will of course repay any money spent on his account.’

Throughout October and the first half of November, the general carried out extensive enquiries into Kilby’s whereabouts, twice writing to the family.

In a handwritten letter dated November 19, 1915, he told them he would let them know if he received information, adding: ‘I will do anything in my power to relieve your worries about your son’s welfare.’

However, the general warned: ‘What worries me is that your son has not yet written to you himself.

‘All prisoners are allowed to write to relatives. I don’t want to conceal from you that it is not a good sign…’

On November 25, 1915, Mrs Kilby wrote to the general to thank him for his kind letters, adding: ‘I can assure you the subject of your search is worthy of it. He is deeply respected and beloved by all ranks in his regiment and his loss is deeply deplored, and in his private life he has a blameless character, his faults being few and trifling.’

She also included postcards detailing her son’s disappearance for him to circulate with information in German as well as English.

In another letter to the general dated December 16, 1915, Mrs Kilby had encouraging news from the Army: ‘Capt Kilby was wounded in the leg and [the] informant [a private in the regiment] saw him taken prisoner by the Germans.’

She added: ‘Pray that it may prove so, and that this may help you in the kind search you are making, and for which we cannot thank you sufficiently.’

However, on February 2, 1916, the family’s growing hopes for their son’s survival were cruelly dashed in a letter from Gen Menze addressed to Mr Kilby: ‘Finally, I got a message about your son today and I will share it with you immediately, even though it will be difficult for me.’

The general had been told by the commander of the regiment confronting the 2nd Battalion, South Staffordshire Regiment, that Capt Kilby had been killed during the battle and later buried.

Adding his commiserations, the general said: ‘It might give you comfort that your son died a hero in front of his comrades.’

On February 21, 1916, Mr Kilby wrote a long letter to the general thanking him ‘from the bottom of my heart for all your kindness’.

He stated: ‘No one could possibly have done more than you have done and I am sure it was your most ardent desire to relieve our anxiety and to befriend my boy. I often wonder at my presumption in seeking your help on the strength of such a slight acquaintance. My greatest friend could not have responded with greater kindness or alacrity.’

It also emerged that the enemy had constructed a simple wooden cross where Kilby was killed that read: ‘The Kilby family may think of their son with pride, as we remember him with respect.’

It was some consolation that Kilby was awarded a posthumous VC, an award announced on March 30, 1916.

The citation, which revealed that one of his feet had actually been blown off in the battle, stated: ‘For most conspicuous bravery. Captain Kilby was specially selected, at his own request, and on account of the gallantry which he had previously displayed on many occasions, to attack with his company a strong enemy redoubt.

The company charged along the narrow tow-path, headed by Captain Kilby, who, though wounded at the outset, continued to lead his men right up to the enemy wire under devastating machine-gun fire and a shower of bombs. Here he was shot down, but, although his foot had been blown off, he continued to cheer on his men and to use a rifle.’

Kilby’s VC was presented to his father by King George V in a private ceremony in the ballroom of Buckingham Palace on July 11, 1916.

After the end of the war, Kilby’s name was etched on the Loos Memorial along with other personnel who had no known grave.

However, on February 19, 1929, his remains were found and later identified. He was eventually reburied in the Arras Road Cemetery at Roclincourt, northern France.

A marble memorial, with his bust, was erected in his honour at St Nicholas’s Chapel, York Minster, the cathedral he had admired so much.

An inscription reads: ‘His influence and example are reflected in every man of his company and will live after him. His death will not have been in vain.’

Seven years ago, I purchased Kilby’s medal group at auction and I feel privileged to be the custodian of this courageous soldier’s gallantry and service medals and to have finally – with the assistance of his family – been able to the tell the full story of his life and death.

It was in the knowledge that I owned the Kilby VC that Peter Burdett and his sister Sylvia MacKay, distant cousins of Capt Kilby, approached me with the archive of letters and other documents relating to the young officer’s disappearance in 1915.

Mrs MacKay’s late husband, Alan, had been researching Kilby’s life a decade ago when he made contact with Irene van de Wetering, who was in possession of more than 50 letters relating to Capt Kilby she had inherited from her Dutch ancestor, Reins.

Enquiries in Germany revealed that Gen Menze was a decorated soldier, having been presented with the Iron Cross for his bravery in the Franco-Prussian War. By the time of the Great War, he was retired.

He died, in his home city of Berlin, in 1918, aged 71. By coincidence, he died on the very day – April 21 – that Manfred von Richthofen, the so-called Red Baron, was shot down and killed over northern France.

I travelled to northern France as part of my research for this article. I placed a regimental wreath besides Kilby's gravestone at the Arras Road Cemetery and paid my respects to a war hero whose courage must never be forgotten.The efforts of his parents and the German general to trace his whereabouts are heart-rending and uplifting at the same time.

Even in war, human kindness can rise above the mayhem as it did in the events surrounding the life and death of Captain Arthur Kilby, VC, MC.

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July 26, 1918

Basil Rathbone earns Military Cross

Philip St. John Basil Rathbone was born in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1892, to British parents. His father was a mining engineer that fled to South Africa from Britain when he was accused of being a Boer spy. Basil did return to England for his education, and went to the Repton School in Derbyshire until 1910. After he graduated, he was employed by the Liverpool and Globe Insurance Companies. All he had done was to appease his father, who wanted him to have a normal career.

However, in 1911, Basil first appeared on stage, playing Hortensio in "The Taming of the Shrew". The bug had bitten him, and he joined his cousin's company of actors. He traveled to the United States, doing various Shakespeare plays. As Britain went to war, Basil was still on the stage, doing Shakespeare plays until 1915, when he was called up to enter the British Army.

Basil did not want to go to war and kill other men. He wrote, "I felt physically sick to my stomach, as I saw or heard or read of the avalanche of brave young men rushing to join ... Was I 'pigeon-livered' that I felt no such call to duty ... that I was pondering how long I could delay joining up? The very idea of soldiering appalled me ... Most probably somewhere in Germany there was a young man, with much the same ideas as I had, and one of us was quite possibly destined to shoot and kill the other. The whole thing was monstrous, utterly and unbelievably monstrous—irrational, pitiable, ugly, and sordid."

This was not true for his younger brother, John, how left school in May of 1915 and volunteered for the Army. He rose to the rank of Sergeant Major just in training, and then accepted a commission in the 3rd Battalion, Dorset Regiment. He was a captain one month after he joined. However, he also was seriously wounded in the Battle of the Somme in July of 1916.

Basil started his military career as a private in the London Scottish Regiment. In the Regiment were other future acting greats, Claude Rains, Herbert Marshall and Ronald Colman (Rains was "The Invisible Man", Marshall was in "The Fly" and "Duel in the Sun", and Colman won an

Academy Award for “A Double Life”). Since his brother had become an officer, Basil decided he would also try to become one. He applied for a commission and was sent to an officer’s training camp in Scotland. Once training was completed, he received his commission, and became a 2nd Lieutenant in the Liverpool Scottish Regiment.

Basil wrote, “Here again luck was with me, but this time not of my wangling! The Liverpool Scottish, Second Battalion, was attached to the Fifty-seventh Division, a division which for reasons best known to the War Office was held in England for several months." So, though it was not intentional, Basil thought he would be spared the horrors of war for at least a few more months.

In February of 1917, Basil contracted measles, and the military sent him home to recover. His brother John was there also, still recovering from his wounds. During the Battle of the Somme, John had been shot through the chest and right lung. Once Basil was healthy enough to travel, he returned to his unit and trained with his men. Basil reported into his unit, B Company of the 1/10th Battalion of the King’s Liverpool Regiment in May of 1917.

Basil wrote a letter home about life in the trenches. “We are going out of the line tomorrow, praise the lord, which means we will be able to change our clothes, wash and get some decent food and proper sleep, but it would be very fine to get some good whisky sent out before we are back again. I can’t say for sure how long we will be out, so if you could cut along and send it soon, and also some decent cigarettes, I should be eternally in your debt.”

Basil wrote of the boredom of the war, “There is chronically little of interest to report as ever, and the state of tedium we exist in can best be illustrated by telling you the captain was sent a beef and onion pie by his people about a week ago, and it is still a topic of excited conversation for us. Otherwise — we kill rats. And lice. Or play cards. Or take rifle inspections or censor letters or write our own letters home.”

There was some enemy activity, Basil wrote “Fritz has been paying this sector a fair bit of attention for the last day or so. Mostly minenwerfers and field artillery but occasionally we get one of the really big blighters. There’ll be a terrific whistle and rush and thump somewhere and the ground will shake and bits of the parapet will fall on us. Terribly jolly. The heavy stuff mostly fall on the reserves, which of course means we are getting no food sent up and are living on rations and scraps and are fairly starving right now. Sleep is impossible day or night. As soon as we stand down at dusk there is endless movement and bustle of men on fatigues and supplies coming up the communication trenches and everyone is more jittery because we can’t see so every shadow becomes Fritz creeping up on us. Star shells are going up all night. Machine guns rattle now and then at nothing. Sometimes some unlucky blighter catches it by blind chance and the call for stretcher bearers goes up even though there’s not usually much to be done. After a few days of this one is so tired and stupefied one can fall asleep standing up on watch, and is really good for nothing, and so we are sent behind the lines to sleep and wash and eat hot food and be rested enough to do it all again.”

Basil wrote of the experience in his letter of a possible gas attack, “Oh but we had a real gas scare the other day. Our part in it was small but telling. It was very near to being an incident. I was out on duty and there were a few shells coming over, nothing much and mostly falling pretty deep, when one of the men said he heard the dread call ‘gas’ coming from north of us – We were all straining to catch anything unusual on the wind, but we couldn’t see or smell anything and we thought it was just imagination, until the CSM and I went along to the next traverse and we caught the smell of something sharp and acrid in the air, and we stopped dead and looked at one another, and I said ‘is it chlorine?’ and he said ‘I’m not taking the risk’ and he spun around and called out “gas” to the men and everyone began putting on respirators, and it was only then I realised my respirator was in the abri and not at my side, which was not a happy

realisation. I'm afraid I took off and ran for it all the way back. Heroically of course. And that was it. The gas alarm proved unfounded you will be happy to know."
Captain John Rathbone would not return to France until 1918 due to his wounds. When he did end up in France, the two brothers would visit each other. Basil wrote his brother's unit, "His regiment, The Dorsets, was stationed close by, and he had leave to come over and spend the night with me. John and I spent a glorious day together. John had an infectious sense of humor and a personality that made friends for him wherever he went. In our Mess on that night he made himself as well-liked as in his own regiment. We retired late, full of good food and Scotch whiskey. We shared my bed and were soon sound asleep. It was still dark when I awakened from a nightmare. I had just seen John killed. I lit the candle beside my bed and held it to my brother's face—for some moments I could not persuade myself that he was not indeed dead. At last I heard his regular gentle breathing. I kissed him and blew out the candle and lay back on my pillow again. But further sleep was impossible. A tremulous premonition haunted me—a premonition which even the dawn failed to dispel."

Basil had another premonition a few weeks later. At one o'clock on June 4, 1918, he wrote that "suddenly I thought of John, and for some inexplicable reason I wanted to cry, and did."
Captain John Rathbone was killed at one o'clock on June 4th. He was buried in the Berles New Military Cemetery in Pas de Calais. That year was a hard one for Basil, not only was his brother killed, but his mother also died.

Basil continued, writing about his brother John, "I have all of Johnny's letters parcelled up together and I will either bring them home on my next leave or arrange for someone to deliver them in person. I would send them as you asked but I would be afraid of them being lost. The communication trenches can take a beating and nothing can be relied on. If I can't bring them myself for any reason there is a good sort here, another Lieutenant in our company who is under oath to deliver them, and who I have never known to shirk or break his word. So, you will get them, come what may."

Basil was angry at his brother, for returning to the meat-grinder of trench warfare. He wrote, "I'm sorry not to have written much the past weeks. It was unfair and you are very kind not to be angry. You ask how I have been since we heard, well, if I am honest with you, and I may as well be, I have been seething. I was so certain it would be me first of either of us. I'm even sure it was supposed to be me and he somehow contrived in his wretched Johnny-fashion to get in my way just as he always would when he was small. I want to tell him to mind his place. I think of his ridiculous belief that everything would always be well, his ever-hopeful smile, and I want to cuff him for a little fool. He had no business to let it happen and it maddens me that I shall never be able to tell him so, or change it or bring him back. I can't think of him without being consumed with anger at him for being dead and beyond anything I can do to him."
The war had changed Basil. He wrote apologetically, "I'm afraid it's not what you hoped for from me and perhaps that's why I haven't written. I suspect you want me to say some sweet things about him. I wish I could for your sake, but I don't have them to say. Out here we step over death every day. We stand next to it while we drink our tea. It's commonplace and ordinary. People who had lives and tried to hold on to them and didn't, and now slump and stare and melt slowly to nothing. You meet their eyes, or what used to be their eyes and you feel ashamed. And now Johnny is one of them. That's an end of it. Grieving is only ridiculous in this place. It could be me today or tomorrow and I shouldn't want anyone to bother grieving over that. Stand to is being called. I have to go now."

Basil had been leading the patrols into No Man's Land each night to get information on the Germans, but he convinced his commanding officer to allow him to do daylight patrols, since the night patrols were not getting much information. More than likely, Basil had a death wish after his brother died, and he was volunteering for the most dangerous missions.

On July 26th, Basil and his men were in the trenches near the village of Festubert. They had made camouflage suits, that made the men look like trees. Basil wrote, “On our heads we wore wreaths of freshly plucked foliage; our faces and hands were blackened with burnt cork. About 5:00 a.m. we crawled through our wire and lay up in no-man's-land. All sentries had been alerted to our movements. The German trenches were some two hundred yards distant.”

Basil took two other men with him, Corporal Norman Tanner and Private Richard Burton. Basil disguised himself as a tree to get close to the German camp. In an interview with Edward R. Murrow in 1957, he said, “I went to my commanding officer and I said that I thought we'd get a great deal more information from the enemy if we didn't fool around in the dark so much . . . and I asked him whether I could go out in daylight. I think he thought we were a little crazy. . . . I said we'd go out camouflaged—made up as trees—with branches sticking out of our heads and arms . . . . We brought back an awful lot of information, and a few prisoners, too.”

When Basil talked to Edward R. Murrow, he made it seem like it was just a boring patrol, however his team had to crawl extremely slowly across No Man’s Land, so they would not be seen. After moving for about an hour, they reached the German front line and cut through the barbed wire. Still moving extremely slow, they made their way along a trench that looked like it was deserted. However, it wasn’t. Basil wrote, “Suddenly there were footsteps and a German soldier came into view behind the next traverse. He stopped suddenly, struck dumb, no doubt, by our strange appearance. Capturing him was out of the question; we were too far away from home. But before he could pull himself together and spread the alarm, I shot him twice with my revolver—he fell dead. Tanner tore the identification tags off his uniform and I rifled his pockets, stuffing a diary and some papers into my camouflage suit. . . . Now things happened fast. There were sounds of movement on both sides of us, so we scaled the parapet, forced our way through the barbed wire—I have the scars on my right leg to this day—and ran for the nearest shell hole. We had hardly reached it when two machine guns opened a cross fire on us. We lay on the near lip of the crater, which was so close to their lines that it gave us cover. The machine-gun bullets pitted the rear of the crater.”

Staying together meant a better chance of being hit by artillery, so the three men split up and ran in three different directions to confuse the German machine gunners. The bounded from one shell hole to the next, until they reached the British lines. Amazingly all three survived the daylight raid. Due to this bit of insane heroism, Basil was awarded the Military Cross.

After the Armistice, Basil came back to his wife and child, but he did not feel the same about selling insurance after having lived on the edge for two years. Basil told Photoplay magazine in an interview about what we would call PTSD today, “I had come back from the war, where life had been like a long, terrible dream. At the front I had never thought about what would happen or why. There was no past and no future. Nights were either wet nights or dry nights. The important things to me were whether my billet was warm or cold, the food good or rotten. I suppose when you meet death daily for a long time you give up trying to order things. I came out of the war comparatively untouched. That is, I wasn’t shell-shocked or scarred up. But I had lost all sense of life’s realities. I found I was still a good enough actor. I got some good parts in London. Whatever they offered me; I took. Money meant nothing to me. I never thought of getting ahead. I never cared about it. Somehow, I expected to be taken care of – as I had been in the army. I shrank from decisions. I never went after things I wanted. I hated any sort of battle or argument. I just wanted to be let alone – to vegetate. I was completely negative.”

Being married to a man who had decided he was already dead, at the age of 25. He was dead, and the actual act of death had not caught up to him yet. So, when he came home, this sense of

death coming for him did not bother him, because he had already died. His marriage suffered, and in August of 1919, Basil separated from his wife.
In 1940, Basil was asked was “real” horror for him, when he was being interviewed after the release of “The Hound of the Baskervilles”. Basil said the real horror was, “War! . . . Going into an attack, paralyzed with fear, knowing that if we had our own free will, not a living man of us would go! Every living man of us would funk it. We go because we cease to be individuals. We become a mass machine. We are dominated by mass psychology. We become a composite Thing of arms, legs, heads and wills. We move into the attack only because it is the only way out. If we do not go into the attack, if we turn back one quivering inch, we are sot down like dogs – deserters. So, we are forced to go forward, not because we are brave and gallant gentlemen, but because we are in a trap. War is a trap, a monstrous, gigantic, inconceivably barbarous trap. And there you have it. A trap is the most horrible thing in the world. Any kind of a trap. Because in a trap you are alone, crouched there with fear. There is Death screaming at you in front. There is Death sticking his tongue out at you from behind. . . . In the trap a man, no longer a man, lives with Death. There is no horror like it!”

Basil returned to doing Shakespeare plays, and traveled in Britain and the United States, performing on stage. In 1926, him and the rest of the cast of the play “The Captive” were arrested due to the subject matter of homosexuality. Basil was furious, since the thought that homosexuality should be brought into the open.

His first movie was a silent one, in 1921, titled “School for Scandal”. After that he appeared in several more silent films, and he tended to play smart, suave villains. When talking movies took over from the silent screen, Basil played more roles, but his most famous were the ones where he played Sherlock Holmes, or the villain in Robin Hood, or the lead role in Mark of Zorro. In one of his few heroic roles, he played the squadron commander that is brought to a nervous breakdown in “Dawn Patrol”

Basil married again, a writer named Ouida Bergere and the two had a daughter. The daughter did not live past childhood, so the couple adopted a little girl. Basil would star in dozens of films, and would continue acting until his last film, in 1968, “Autopsia de un fantasma”. He died in New York City in 1967, of a heart attack at the age of 75.

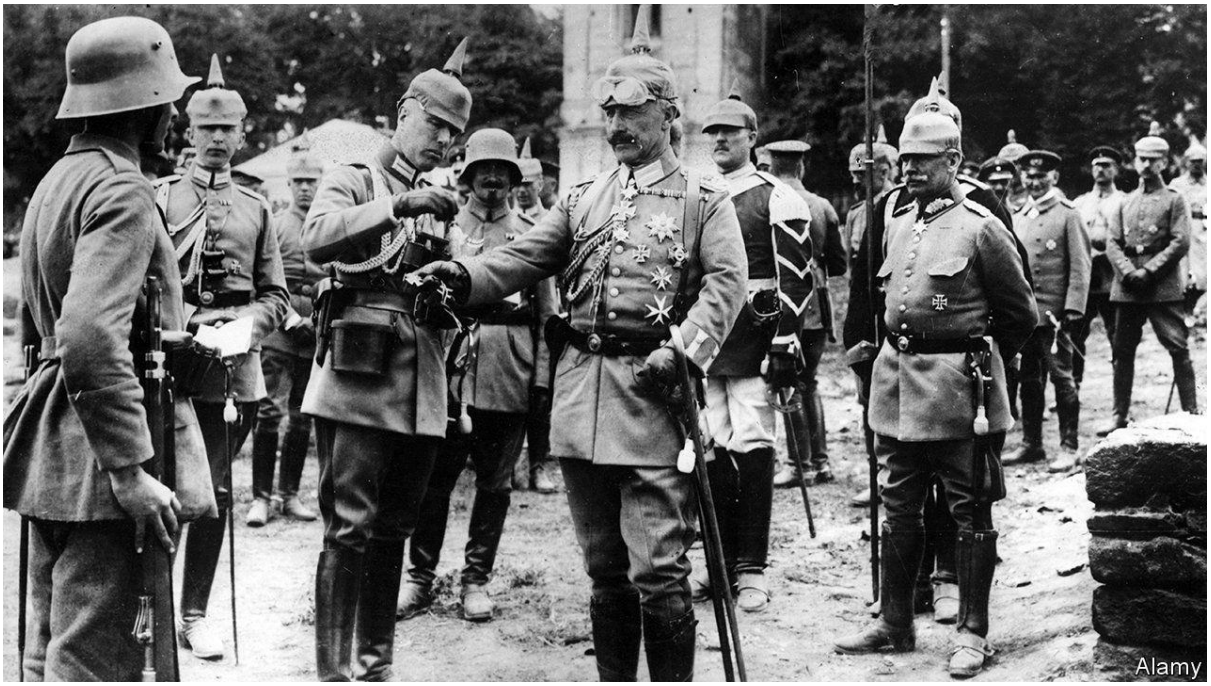
Basil Rathbone in his most famous role as `Sherlock Holmes` - a role he played in ten films.

From The Economist Newspaper…….

The Kaiser’s family’s claims for restitution provoke a backlash

The Russians stole their paintings and medals. They want some back

Aug 1st 2019 | BERLIN



PRINCE GEORG FRIEDRICH of Prussia is getting a lesson on how not to get the public on his side. The great-great-grandson of the last Kaiser has been in talks for years with the federal government, as well as the state governments of Berlin and Brandenburg, about the return of possessions expropriated by the Russians at the end of the second world war. A letter from his lawyer to the authorities has now been leaked to the press, provoking a vehement backlash against Wilhelm II’s Hohenzollern dynasty and its alleged support for the Nazis.

The document reveals that the prince wants compensation of at least €1.2m ($1.3m), the right to live rent-free at Cecilienhof (the palace where American, British and Russian leaders held the 1945 Potsdam conference that settled the post-war order), as well as paintings, sculptures, books, letters, photographs and medals from various Hohenzollern houses. The requested inventory includes Cranach paintings and the armchair in which Frederick the Great died.

The prince was perhaps naive in thinking the letter would remain confidential in Brandenburg, a state ruled by a coalition of Social Democrats and Die Linke, an ex-communist party, which is preparing for hotly contested state elections. The public reacted with Jacobin fury. “The aristocracy is not noble, but evil,” fumed Tomas Fitzel of Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg, a local

radio station. The aristocracy robbed and extorted for centuries, tweeted Kathrin Vogler, an MP for Die Linke, adding that aristocrats are lucky Germany is not France.

Like all families whose property was confiscated by the Russians and eastern Germany's communist regime, the Hohenzollerns cannot claim their houses back. Yet according to legislation passed in 1994, they are entitled to restitution of mobile property, as well as the payment of compensation. The only exceptions are families that actively supported the Nazi regime. This is the sticking-point.

If the case goes to the courts it will not be pretty. Prince Wilhelm, the son of the last Kaiser, has been called a mouthpiece for Nazi propaganda. His brother August Wilhelm was a fervent Nazi. All parties are still hoping for a settlement out of court. It is very much in the prince's interest to make it happen.

This article appeared in the Europe section of the print edition of The Economist newspaper under the headline "Jacobin fury"

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Evolution of French Uniforms in WW1

FRIENDLY MEETING BETWEEN KAISER WILHELM II AND THEODORE ROOSEVELT Jr. May 11, 1910.

Could the US have been allied with the Central Powers during WW1?

Theodore Roosevelt once said: "The only man I understand and who understands me is the Kaiser!"

Roosevelt had visited European capitals like Paris, Copenhagen, Oslo, and Vienna before receiving his honorary doctorate in Berlin on May 12, 1910. He was the guest of Kaiser Wilhelm II in Germany. On the 11th, they spent several hours on horseback reviewing a military exercise on the field of Döberitz near Berlin. The pictures were later presented to Roosevelt with the kaiser's inscriptions on the back including this one: "The argument driven home! The Germanic + Anglo Saxon Races will keep the World in order!"

"Wilhelm II built up a personal relationship with Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States since September 1901. This is remarkable because, while the Emperor's family ties easily explain his personal contacts with the ruling houses of Europe, Wilhelm II did not know Roosevelt personally until they met in May 1910, when the latter had already left office. Thus, the so-called Willy–Teddy relationship consisted of written communications and the verbal messages of the two men to each other, which were delivered through the German and American Ambassadors in Berlin and Washington as well as other emissaries chosen for such purposes." - Ragnhild Fiebig-von Hase, 2009.

Shipwreck where 200 soldiers died on way home from First World War is recognised as war grave

HMY Iolaire which was shipwrecked off the Isle of Lewis on January 1, 1919

A shipwreck where more than 200 soldiers died on their way home after the First World War has finally been recognised as a war grave.Only 82 of the 283 passengers on board HMY Iolaire survived when it smashed into rocks and sank off the Isle of Lewis on January 1, 1919. Around a third of the bodies were never recovered. Servicemen were travelling back to Lewis, Harris and Berneray after surviving the horrors of battle when tragedy struck in the early hours of the morning near the town of Stornoway. Western Isles Council has tirelessly campaigned for the shipwreck site to be given war grave designation and their calls have been backed by Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon. The council wrote to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) last year, highlighting that it would bring comfort to the soldiers' loved-ones and let them rest in peace. The designation has now been granted and will come into effect next month.

Prince Charles lays a wreath at the Iolaire War Memorial on the Isle of Lewis on January 1 this year to mark 100 years since the disaster

An MOD spokesperson said: "We can confirm that the site of HMY Iolaire will officially be recognised as a site of final resting place on September 2, 2019.

"This means the ships wreckage will be protected under the Protection of Military Remains Act 1986."

Western Isles MSP Alasdair Allan said he was delighted at the news.

“The story of the Iolaire is one of the saddest ever told in the islands," he said.

"There was barely a family on the island that didn't lose a relative in the disaster.

"This was a subject that was essentially too painful to be talked about in the islands for at least sixty years, and even now is still very raw in people's minds."

Eilean Froaich, I yearn to see you,
Sing to me the Island Ocean
Through the cries of war I hear you
Far to the west and worlds away
From the futile fields of war.

Island men i hear them calling
Sling to me the Island Ocean
Killed in vain, I see them falling
Oh take me west and worlds away
From the futile fields of war.

Four brutal years were unforgiving
Sing to me the Island Ocean
By grace of god I was yet living
And sailing west and worlds away
From the futile fields of war.

The harbour lights, I see them gleaming
Sing to me the Island Ocean
Nearly home and i am dreaming
I'm in the west and worlds away
From the futile fields of war.

The Beasts of Holm were dark and savage
Sing to me the Island Ocean
Their scythe of fate would blindly ravage
Far to the west and world away
From the futile fields of war.

New Year of peace would dawn tomorrow
Sing to me the Island Ocean
From hope and joy to wrenching sorrow
Far to the west and worlds away
From the futlie fields of war.

My lovers kiss, Her arms around me
Sing to me the Island Ocean
So near, but on the shore she found me
Far to the west and worlds away
From the futile fields of war.

The morning tide brought home our boys
They lay among the scattered toys
Our tears of love and deep relief
Became the tears of tearing grief.