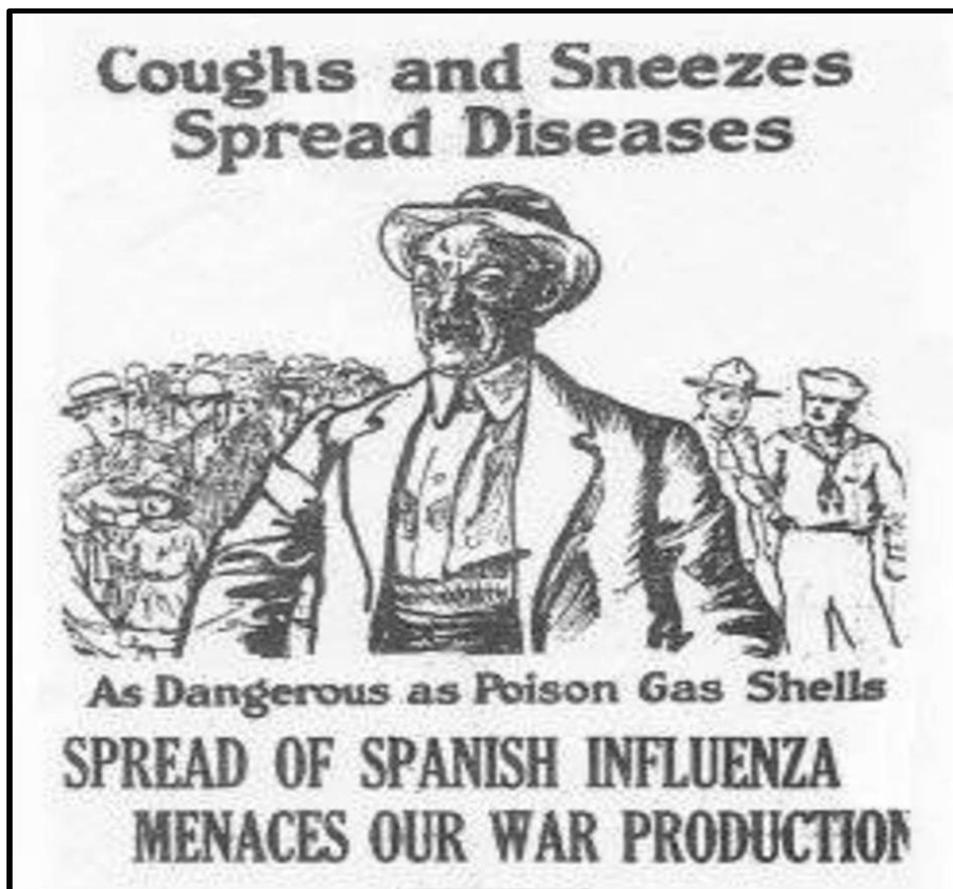




Lancashire North Branch

# Despatch - May 2020

First Email edition.



**The Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1918**



Editor's Notes



Such a change in circumstances since our last branch meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> March and now following WFA guidelines all national and branch meetings have been cancelled until further notice. However, we now live in an age where electronic communications which allows us the use of emails to disseminate information and keep everyone in contact.

I see from the WFA that more branches are setting up newsletters or bulletins. Fortunately we are in the lucky position, thanks to Terry Dean who established and edited 'Despatch' for the previous eleven years, of having an established publication for branch members to contribute their interests, accounts and opinions. In these changing times we must adapt our ways and here we have our first email edition of Despatch in a different format that will allow members to print off articles or the whole publication, if they wish to.

I am most grateful to those members who have provided articles for this edition and look forward to all the enforced lock-down articles that members now have the opportunity to put together for the next edition in November.

Stay safe and keep well.

Tom Williams

Editor

(Unless otherwise indicated, articles are by the editor.)

## The 1918 Flu Pandemic



The 1918 influenza pandemic was the most severe pandemic so far in history. It was caused by an H1N1 virus with genes of avian origin. Although there is no universal consensus regarding where the virus originated, it did spread worldwide during 1918-1919.

The U.S. Centre for Disease Control estimated that about 500 million people or one-third of the world's population at that time became infected. The number of deaths was estimated to be at least 50 million worldwide. Mortality was high in three age groups the very young, less than 5 years old, 20-40 years old, and those over 65. The high mortality in healthy people, including those in the 20-40-year age group i.e. of military age, was a unique feature of this pandemic.

The properties that made H1N1 so devastating are still not well understood. With no vaccine to protect against influenza infection and no antibiotics to treat secondary bacterial infections, control efforts worldwide were limited to non-pharmaceutical interventions such as isolation, quarantine, good personal hygiene, the use of disinfectants, and limitations of public gatherings.

### **What caused the Flu?**

The outbreak is considered to have begun in 1918 during the final months of World War I, and some historians believe that the conflict may have been partly responsible for spreading the virus. On the Western Front, soldiers living in cramped, dirty and damp conditions often became ill as a direct result of weakened immune systems. Within around three days of becoming ill, many soldiers would start to feel better however, not all would survive. During the war it could be difficult to differentiate Influenza from conditions such as Trench Fever an infection caused by *Rickettsia* (now classified as *Bartonella*) which are intracellular bacteria found in and transmitted by ticks and lice.

During the summer of 1918, returning troops were thought to have brought the undetected virus with them. The virus spread across cities, towns and villages aided by travel on a congested railway system. Within hours of feeling the first symptoms of fatigue, fever and headache, some victims would rapidly develop pneumonia and start turning blue and frothing at the mouth and nose as they struggled for air. For many death came very rapidly.

### **Why was it called the Spanish flu?**

Spain was one of the earliest countries where the infection was identified as an epidemic. some historians believe this was likely to be a result of wartime censorship. Spain was a neutral nation during the war and did not enforce strict

ensorship of its press as most of the belligerent nations did. Spain could freely publish early accounts of the illness and as a result, people came to believe the illness was specific to Spain, and the name "Spanish flu" stuck.

### **What were the symptoms of the Spanish flu?**

The definitive signs and symptoms of the disease were a deep cyanosis (blue skin) and a bluish froth around the nose and the mouth - the so-called heliotrope cyanosis - culminating with the horrific drowning of the victim in their own body fluids. There was an extraordinarily high mortality rate, up to twenty times the norm for influenza. Death often occurred within a few hours. In many of the cases that did survive the critical first few days of the influenza attack, death resulted from a secondary infection with pneumonia. This makes it difficult to determine the exact numbers killed by the flu, as the record of death was often given as something other than Influenza.

The infection spread across Europe during the summer of 1918 with the first recognised cases appearing in Britain at the end of June. The epidemic progressed to become a pandemic and by September had reached the United States through the port of Boston.

### **Where did the virus come from?**

We now know that the N1H1 influenza virus was avian in origin but over the years various theories have emerged as to where it all started. Interestingly searching through soldier's service records over the years I have noted that it was not uncommon for men reporting sick in the field to be diagnosed with influenza/flu and usually sent back to a medical facility to recover. Bearing in mind the problems of diagnosis, a number would probably not have been influenza cases. However, in a 2005 study on the emergence of the 'Spanish' flu

pandemic it noted that as early as 1889 there had been a marked increase in the number of deaths due to an influenza type infection.

### **The Chinese Labour Corps Theory.**

This theory appeared in 2013 when it was ‘discovered’ that the flu of 1918 was linked to the transport of labourers in the Chinese Labour Corps across Canada. Most of the labourers were farm workers from remote parts of rural China. They spent six days being transported in sealed trains as they crossed from the Pacific to Atlantic ports. In one account during early 1918, out of 25,000 Chinese labourers 3,000 were held back in medical quarantine. Canadian medical authorities had been slow to recognise or even accept a problem existed and by the time the main body arrived in France many more were sick and eventually hundreds died.

### **The Typhoid Vaccination Theory**

The author of a 1997 study of the genetic characterisation of the ‘Spanish’ Influenza virus notes that many Great War soldiers believed the flu pandemic was due to the compulsory Typhoid vaccination among the Allied troops on the Western Front. This predates the ‘Gulf War Syndrome’ of 1991 but there are some similarities in symptoms – Fatigue, Persistent Headaches, Muscle Aches/Pains, Neurological Symptoms – e.g. tingling and numbness in limbs, Cognitive Dysfunction – short-term memory loss, poor concentration and the inability to retain information. Large numbers of the civilian populations were also vaccinated in the event of returning soldiers bringing back an infection with them. Research into Gulf War Syndrome also noted that the symptoms were similar to those experienced by troops exposed to Mustard gas. There is however, no scientific evidence to connect vaccinations to the ‘Spanish’ flu pandemic.

## **The Etaples Flu Pandemic**

A study in 2005 hypothesised that the conjunction of soldiers, gas, pigs, ducks, geese and horses in Northern France provided conditions for the emergence of the 'Spanish' flu pandemic of 1918-19.

At the beginning of the war there were at least twenty Infantry Base Depots operating in France. It was later decided to concentrate most of these at Etaples, 20 miles south of Boulogne. The depots were accompanied by twenty-four military hospitals. It has been estimated that up to 100,000 men at any one time were located within this area and that a total of over one million men passed through the various depots during the Great War.

During February and March 1917, 156 servicemen had died following symptoms of aches and pains, a shortness of breath and the definitive diagnostic sign of the later pandemic flu – heliotropic cyanosis, a bluish pallor to the face. The identified cases had a mortality rate of up to 40%. The basic living conditions of these men no doubt contributed to the ease with which a virus could spread. Men were housed in overcrowded tents or temporary huts. A Medical officer at Etaples, Lieutenant Hammond RAMC, studied the deaths of twenty of these unfortunate men. Post mortem examination showed the men to all have purulent excretions blocking the smaller bronchi of their lungs. The results of this study were published in the Lancet in July 1917.

Simultaneously another outbreak occurred within the established barracks at Aldershot during March 1917. Again, the affected men exhibited the same symptoms with cyanosis and high mortality. The condition had by now been named as 'purulent broncho-pneumonia' was studied by Major Adolphe Abrahams, the older brother of Olympic champion, Harold Abrahams, was the officer in charge of Connaught Hospital, Aldershot. Abrahams studied the

patients admitted to the hospital and concluded they were exhibiting the same signs and symptoms as those at Etaples and concluded that this illness would probably continue throughout the winter of 1917. He questioned where it started, how was it transmitted and how could it be treated?

It was towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century that virologists discovered avian flu could cross species barriers and mutate into an influenza capable of infecting and killing humans. The huge military area of Etaples was populated by large numbers of men and horses along with chickens, geese, ducks and pigs all living in very close proximity. The question raised was did the fowls act a reservoirs for avian flu viruses? Did their faeces containing flu virus, litter the soil that was grubbed up by pigs and did the pigs subsequently incubate avian viruses and combine them with acquired human flu viruses?

### **The Swine Flu epidemics**

However, in 2009 a 'Swine Flu' epidemic appeared in the United States and was also detected in people. It was soon established that the influenza virus seen in the pigs had come from the 1918 human pandemic strain H1N1. After 1918, the rapid changes in the human influenza virus meant that it had become different to the influenza virus now seen in pigs. In samples of the human H1N1 virus taken between 1918 and 2006 from 17 countries it was shown that the virus had gradually mutated over time, exchanging genetic material between different subtypes of the virus. However, it had not gained new genetic material from birds or other sources.

Swine influenza was detected in pigs in the US as early as 1930 but it only spread to Europe in 1976 in a shipment of pigs from the US to Italy. A few years afterwards, the strain was replaced by another H1N1 strain, which had passed onto pigs from wild ducks.

A new strain was also identified in North American pigs in 1998. This virus had a complex genetic makeup, with parts of its genetic sequence from the original H1N1 swine virus but other parts from bird influenza and human influenza viruses. Had pigs acquired the flu virus from humans?



## **A Visit to Friedrichshafen and the Zeppelin and Dornier Museums**

**By Iain Adams**

Friedrichshafen, a small city of some 60,000 people, is located on the northern shore of Lake Constance/the Bodensee in southern Germany. It contains two excellent museums – the Zeppelin Museum and the Dornier Museum. It is a historical centre of aviation because Ferdinand von Zeppelin established his airship factory there at the end of the 19 century, his prototype LZ1 first flying on 2 July 1900. One of his chief engineers was Claudius Dornier who designed the rotating airship hangar. He set up his own company after WWI. In WWII the Zeppelin factory was used to construct fighters and V2 rockets using

concentration camp inmates from Dachau before a highly effective RAF raid on

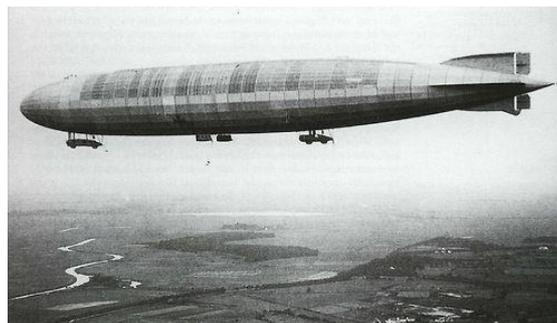
28 April 1944.

I have wanted to visit the former for a long time as I was fortunate enough to fly a WDL-1 airship, D-LDFO, when it was being used to advertise Fuji film in 1992 (Figure 1).



Figure 1. D-LDFO over Selsey Bill.

### **Zeppelin Museum**



This is located in the Bauhouse style ex-harbour railway station; the new station is adjoining. The exhibitions are excellent although photograph of many items is awkward due to the bright lights reflecting in the glass. The ground floor has a few cars either owned by or representing types owned by Count Ferdinand von

Zeppelin. From here you climb some steps into a full-size replica of a section of the Hindenburg so you can see its construction and view the social spaces and cabins. You exit this into the main Zeppelin exhibition on the first floor which contains an interesting collection of photos and relics across from the very early days to today's Zeppelin NG. The First World War section is fascinating with stories of individual machines and covers the air war from both the German and Allied perspective. Amazingly the Germans apparently thought the Zeppelins would make ideal front line ground attack machines! (See figure 2). For example, LZ 22 and LZ 23 were tasked with dropping artillery shells on the French front line on the 21 August 1914. LZ 22 managed to drop a few before being hit by intense rifle fire and forced to crash land at St Quirin, Lorraine. It was beyond repair and scrapped. LZ 23 was also shot down; the German army lost four of its six airships in the first few days of the war.



Figure 2. Bullet holes in a fabric section of Z VII (LZ22)

A small room, entitled the ‘cabinet of curiosities’, has intriguing items including an example of a medal awarded for bombing London (Figure 3).



Figure 3.

The top floor is a regional art gallery and was hosting an exhibition of WWI works by Otto Dix during our visit. The cafe-restaurant is well worth a visit with its views across the Bodensee to Switzerland.

### **Dornier Museum**

This is a smaller museum located on the airport. Most of its WWI exhibits are centred on Dornier's work at Zeppelin. There are some interesting aircraft and full-scale replicas both inside and outside. The cafe-restaurant is excellent.



**“England has been all she could be to Jews; Jews will be  
all they can be to England”**

**By Peter Denby**

On a recent visit to the excellent The Fusilier Museum, Bury, I chanced upon a small but very interesting exhibition which was running there (24-27 February 2020) entitled “British Jews in the First World War - We Were There Too”. The aim of the exhibition was to raise awareness of the estimated 41,500 Jews who served King and Country in the Great War, of whom over 2,300 were killed.

I had to admit to the enthusiastic volunteers from AJEX (the association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women) who were manning the exhibition, that the Jewish contribution to the Great War wasn't something I had hitherto given much thought to. I did however mention that on a visit to Bethune Town Cemetery to find the grave of my great uncle (John Edwin Denby, died of wounds in May 1915) I had noticed a nearby grave of a Jewish VC winner: Lt F A DePass VC.

The exhibition covered topics such as Jewish immigration and the Jewish community in the north-west at the time of the war; the enlistment and service of Jewish soldiers, sailors and airmen; nursing and VAD personnel; and the Jewish civilian contribution.

Several colourful characters were featured, and other topics mentioned were the June 1917 Ashton-under-Lyne munitions works explosion; Sir Henry Rothband's campaign for a national scheme to guarantee employment for

disabled ex-servicemen on their return to civilian life; and the service and death of the war poet Isaac Rosenberg.

I was particularly pleased to see that one feature in the exhibition discussed the five Jewish VCs of the war, the first recipient being my great uncle's cemetery neighbour Lt Frank Alexander DePass.

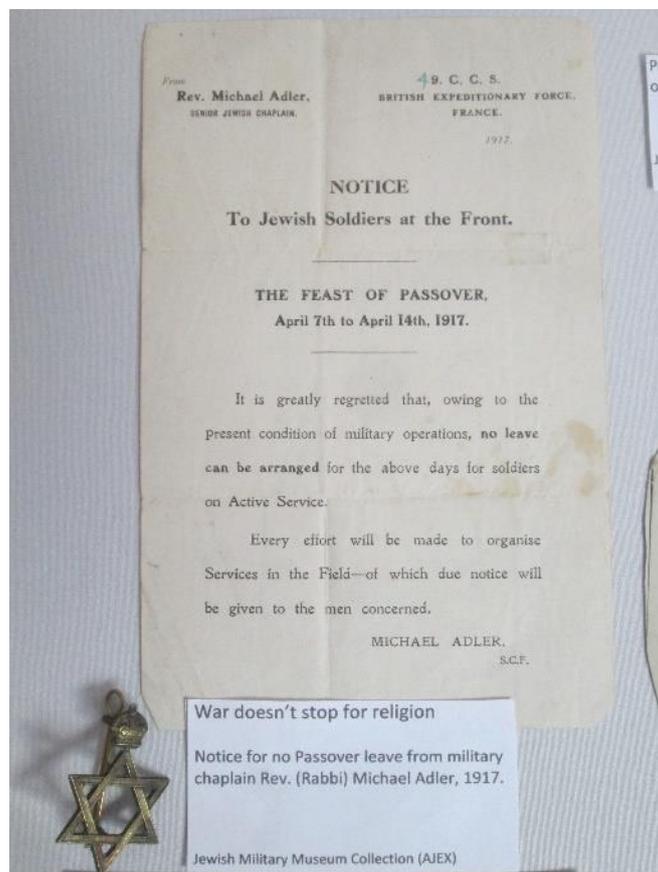


The son of a wealthy Sephardi family, his entry in the cemetery register reads:

*DEPASS, Lt. Frank Alexander, V.C. 34th Poona Horse. Killed whilst attacking a German sap 25th Nov., 1914. Age 27. Son of Eliot and Beatrice DePass, of 23, Queen's Gate Terrace, Kensington, London. Born in London. Inscription on tomb quoted from a sonnet by his Rugby school-fellow, Rupert Brooke. An extract from "The London Gazette", No. 29074, dated 16th Feb., 1915, records the following:- "For conspicuous bravery near Festubert on the 24th November, in entering a German sap and destroying a traverse in the face of the enemy's bombs, and for subsequently rescuing, under heavy fire, a wounded man who was lying exposed in the open."*

The exhibition was complemented by daily lunchtime talks. The one I attended discussed those young Jewish immigrant men who had fled persecution in Russia and settled in England, only for Russia to want them back on the outbreak of war. In defiance Jewish men chose to enlist in the British Army; in August 1914 The Jewish Chronicle encouraged enlistment with their fellow Britons with the slogan “*England has been all she could be to Jews; Jews will be all they can be to England*”.

In 1917 the British government announced the formation of a specifically Jewish unit to fight against the Turks in Palestine and about 1,500 Russian Jews joined. The Jewish units were designated as the 38th, 39th and 40th battalions of the Royal Fusiliers, later known as the Judeans. The war doesn't stop for religion. A splendid website has been set up at [www.jewsfww.uk](http://www.jewsfww.uk) which documents and commemorates the contribution of British Jews in WW1.



## An exercise in using Ancestry Pension Records



Researching individual servicemen can be both very rewarding and extremely frustrating, particularly if the records of the man in question are but one of the many destroyed during the Second World War. The availability of the Great War Pension Cards and ledgers, made available through the Western Front Association and digitised by Ancestry, are proving to be a valuable source of background information.

No doubt like many males, my philosophy has usually been ‘when all else fails, read the instructions.’ With this project in mind I would strongly recommend that you watch the videos or read the comprehensive guides published by David Tattersfield and David Henderson on the WFA website. From here you can access the Pension Records once logged in to the WFA members section.

Initially my interest was in obtaining further biographical details on the names listed on the Thornton Cleveleys war memorial. From this I extended an interest into the wider effects of the Great War on this small community and the lasting effects of those returning home disabled, injured, diseased or mentally scarred.

To date approximately 54% of the pension records have been digitised providing a wealth of information on individuals. As most will have discovered

it is much easier to obtain information on the dead of the Great War than for those who survived at least until 1919. However, this will hopefully be corrected when the pension records of the survivors are made available by the end of 2020.

In studying the casualties listed on the Thornton Cleveleys war memorial it was quite easy to put in the casualty's name, service number etc. and for most it was easy to find the specific pension card and ledger. From these cards details of their addresses, dependants and children could be obtained along with the pension awards and payments.

Having already discovered a number of casualties that for whatever reason had not been included on the war memorial, I decided to search for others using the 'place' facility. However, it soon became apparent that the non-standardised postal addresses used at that time required a bit of lateral thinking.

In 1894 Thornton, which at that time included Cleveleys, was granted Parish Council status having previously come under Poulton le Fylde. By 1900 an autonomous Thornton Urban District Council had been formed. Searching for Thornton was straightforward once you ignored all the other Thornton's within England. The search was then expanded to include: Thornton le Fylde, Thornton Lancashire, Thornton Blackpool, Thornton Fleetwood, Thornton Preston. Next were the smaller hamlets of Little Thornton, Burn Naze and Trunnah. The coastal community of Cleveleys proved no easier with Thornton Cleveleys, Cleveleys Blackpool and Cleveleys Lancashire.

### **Findings**

The Pension Record Cards and Ledgers contain varying amounts of information apart from the expected name, rank, service number, Regiment/Corps/service.

For the men identified living within the Thornton district some additional information was revealed in the pension records.

- Addresses
- Widow's name and often age and date of birth.
- Dependants: Mother, Father, Sister, Aunt etc. Number of children, sometimes names and date of birth.
- In some cases, cause of death, injury, disability or disease, degree of disability.
- Movement into or from the district by the disabled, their dependant widow, parent etc.
- The year or date when a Disability Pension became a Widow's Pension.
- Illegitimate children receiving a dependant's allowance.

### **Additional Findings.**

Searching the pension records for those disabled servicemen with a 'Thornton' postal address has revealed to date; nine local men with disability pensions, two who had a pension refused seventeen disabled men who had relocated in the post war years to the Thornton district and twenty widows or other dependants who had also relocated to Thornton. The files also provided a few additional interesting pieces of information.

- Men who had moved to other parts of Lancashire or the UK.
- Widows who had remarried or moved out of the district.

- Those widows who had died and grandparents or other family members had become guardians of the children.
- Disabled men and their families who had moved into the district mostly from East Lancashire, Manchester or West Yorkshire. Was this for employment or the fresh coastal air and milder weather?
- Of the seventeen widows who moved into the area, six have been identified as being employed at the Ministry of Pensions, at Norcross on the outskirts of Thornton. It was here that all the War Pension records were kept until the WFA thankfully acquired them. Immediately after the war this establishment would have employed hundreds of clerks.

### **Preliminary results.**

This is very much a work in progress. One of the main reasons for my interest in the pension records is an attempt to corroborate the work done by J M Winter in 2003 and apply his findings to the relatively small community of Thornton Cleveleys which had a population of around 5,000 prior to the Great War.

The *General Annual Report of the British Army 1913-1919*, was presented to Parliament in 1921 it showed that by 1919; British war losses were estimated at 722,785 dead, with 1,676,037 wounded and a further 163,242 as Prisoners of War. In the same year the total number of disability pensions awarded was 1,187,450. Based on these figures; it can be estimated that by 1919 for every man killed, 1.64 men were in receipt of a war disability pension.

Of the eighty-four men listed on the Thornton war memorial we know of seventy-seven who died during the war. Another nine men from the district have since been identified as having died during the war but are not commemorated on any of the war memorials. We can therefore identify at least

eighty-six men from the Thornton district who lost their lives between 1914-1919.

From the figures published in 1921, if we apply the ratio of 1.64 men injured or sick, for every man killed we possibly have another one hundred and forty-one men of the district in receipt of a war disability pension. What we cannot estimate is the number of men wounded or sick for whom no pension was awarded if they failed to establish that their condition was due to or aggravated by their war service. This would suggest the total number of casualties including the dead, wounded, sick and diseased of Thornton would be at the very least two hundred and twenty-seven within a population of around 5,000.

To date with only just over half the pension records available and using additional digital sources of information we can see some interesting information emerging. The very limited number of survivors found so far in the Thornton area who were claiming a disability pension have shown that following discharge by 1919 most did not survive very long. The average length of life post discharge was thirteen years, dying at an average age of forty-five, by 1929 half of them had died.

With the slightly larger sample of the men with disability pensions who moved into the Thornton area. They had an average survival time of twenty-seven years at an average age of fifty-four and by 1943 half of them had died.

The price paid by Thornton Cleveleys would appear to be quite high for such a small community. The widows were left to eke out a living with only a meagre army pension to live on and raise their children. The pensions of widows and orphans were soon reduced drastically in real terms by the post war inflation. So far, the eighty-six identified war dead of Thornton Cleveleys left behind twenty-

eight widows and forty-nine dependent children. The real number affected will probably turn out to be much higher.

If Thornton on the Fylde coast of Lancashire, is a reflection of the effects of the Great War on a small community, then its war dead are in line with the national figure of sixteen per thousand head of population (5x16=80). It would seem reasonable that the number of war widows and father-less children would be expected to be about the same. However, we should add to this an estimate at least of a further one hundred and forty-two injured, sick or diseased men returning to the community who would place a great demand on the families who would be caring for these casualties over the following twenty to forty years.

Name <i>Heir John</i>		Regimental No. <i>H 315</i>	W.I. Case No. <i>2154</i>
Regiment <i>Royal Lancs</i>		Rank <i>Serjt</i>	
Form 104-88 received	Date of notification of death	Form 104-76 received <i>15/3/2018</i>	
Date and cause of death <i>6.3.20. Cardiac Asthma &amp; Bronchitis</i>			
Widow <i>Mrs</i>	3 <i>Alcedale Terrace</i>		Date of birth
Children:— <i>Thornton - Co. Fylde. Lancashire</i>			
Name	Date of birth	Date of Expiry	Remarks
			<i>76 years 7-20-19</i>
			No. for whom S.A. is paid
			<i>Case opened Form W 45</i>
			<i>22/3/20</i>
			<i>A. &amp; P. (114) 12 14.7.20</i>
Pension _____ a week from _____			
Date awarded _____	If refused, reason _____		
Papers _____	_____		

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## The 10<sup>th</sup> Tale



### **BRIGADIER GENERAL REGINALD JOHN KENTISH (RJK)**

#### **“A GOOD SUBSTANTIAL BREAKFAST”**

**By Terry Dean**

In November 2013's Despatch I told of my visit to the Imperial War Museum to view the papers of RJK and my discovery of stories (tales) he had drafted around 1940. They describe amusing incidents he experienced in WW1. I included Tales 1 to 9 in the Issues of Despatch I produced, the 9<sup>th</sup> being in Issue 22 dated November 2018 and what follows is the 10<sup>th</sup> tale.

SCENE: TIME: PLACE: About 11 p.m. sometime in May 1915: Battalion Headquarters of the East Lancashire Regiment on the west bank of the River Yser during the Second Battle of Ypres.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE: Brigadier General C. P. Prowse, commanding 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, 4<sup>th</sup> Division; Captain Bernard im Thurn, The Hampshire Regiment (his Brigade Major); A Brigade cyclist orderly; Lieut H.T. McMullen, my Adjutant; Sergeant Brown and myself commanding the Battalion.

I was sitting in my 'dugout' – a real 'Bruce Bairnsfather 'dug out' - - on the west bank of the River Yser at the time, and for the benefit of those who do not remember that celebrated soldier-artist's descriptive drawings of 'Old Bill in the front line in the Great War' I must explain that this was just a hollow made into

the river bank with two or three pieces of corrugated iron and a few sandbags on top and round the door to keep the splinters out.

It was not even bullet proof, and any time a shell from an 8" or 5.9" landed anywhere within half a mile or so of us, it just shook the 'dug out' from end to end, as though it was coming down on our heads at any moment.

With me was my Adjutant, McMullen, a gallant and extremely competent officer, and now, as I write, just promoted to the rank of Major General and commanding the South Midland Area in the World War; and there was also a French Officer who had been sent across by his Battalion Commander – the French were at Boesinghe on my immediate left – to find out if they could be of any assistance in the attack my Battalion was about to make in a few hours' time, zero hour being at 3 a.m.

The Germans had evidently got wind of this attack, for they had been and still were putting down an extremely heavy and unpleasant barrage all along the line of the Yser doing much damage and making movement exceedingly difficult.

About 11 p.m. or thereabouts, Sergeant Brown appeared at the doorway of the 'dug-out': he had come to report the return of his ration party from the line.

"Come in Sergeant Brown" I said and he came in, and then for the first time I saw that he had blood on his face, hands and coat, and that altogether he was in a pretty bad way. "Have you been hit?" I asked him. "No, sir," he said, "but we've had a very rough time of it." "Have a drink?" I said.

"Thank you sir," he said, and after a good stiff glass of whiskey he told me that they'd got the rations up all right and had got about half way back on their return, when a 5.9" landed right in the middle of them, killing two and wounding five of the party, and then he went on: "With the help of some men of

the Support Company, I managed to get the wounded back to the Battalion Aid Post, and the M.O. is fixing them up now.. The shelling was about the worst we've had yet, sir," he said, "and it took us over two hours to get up to the line and back, but the Battalion's got its rations and that's the only thing that matters," and that was, I am sure, all that mattered to Sergeant Brown ---- a fine type, in fact the very best type of old Regular N.C.O.

Sergeant Brown had only just finished telling me this, when McMullen handed me a message. It was from Brigade Headquarters, and this is how it read: -

O.C 1<sup>st</sup> East Lancashires.

*Brigade Commander wishes you give your men good substantial breakfast before attack tomorrow stop acknowledge!!!*

Brigade Major 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade

(The exclamation marks are mine. R.J.K.)



I couldn't help laughing as I read it. A good substantial breakfast indeed! Here was Sergt. Brown, who had only just finished telling me his story of how he'd managed to get just the men's ordinary rations up to them, but only after the greatest difficulty and with the loss killed and wounded of half his party, and

immediately afterwards comes this message! What kind of substantial breakfast the Brigadier had 'in mind, God only knows!!!

It really was the limit, especially as it was then close on midnight, and there was only a bare three hours before zero hour! However, I had to acknowledge the message and so I dictated the following reply and I told McMullen to send it off at once: -

Hd Qrs 11th Infantry Brigade.

*Your message received stop please send down at once 1000 steaks stop 1000 new laid eggs stop and if not too much trouble 1000 kippers stop shall then be able to comply with Brigade Commander's order to give my men good substantial breakfast before the attack tomorrow stop*

Officer Commanding 1/East Lancashire Regt.

The reading of the message over before it was sent off caused much merriment and gave us a good laugh, which was just what was wanted, for just before the Brigade Commander's message arrived everybody was looking a bit grim.

About half or three quarters of an hour afterwards, I heard a noise outside the 'dug-out' as of someone or something falling, and on going to the door I found a cyclist orderly just getting up and brushing himself down, with his bicycle lying a yard or two away on its side. Apparently, he had come from Brigade Headquarters with an important letter, which he handed me, and had fallen just as he reached my 'dug-out'. I brought him in and gave him a drink — I gave anyone, regardless of rank, who came to my 'dug-out'<sup>1</sup> a drink, provided, of course, they had earned it, and this man having got through the very heavy barrage with his letter had certainly done so - - - and then I opened the letter, which was marked 'Personal and Confidential'.

It was from the Brigade Major and it read as follows: -

Hd Qrs. 11th Infy Brigade. 14.6.15.

*Dear Colonel,*

*The Brigade Commander has received your message and is sending you 50,000 kippers at once. But joking apart he wishes me to ask you not to send him any more messages of the kind because the signallers are, as you know, at the moment very hard worked. I am sure you will understand.*

Yours sincerely (Sd.) B. Im Thurm, Major

Brigade Major 11th Inf. Bn.”

A rebuff certainly, but it was worth it, for, shortly afterwards I went up to see my men just before they went 'over the top', and, as I came to them standing there in little groups, in silence and waiting for the word 'to go', I told them the story of the steaks and new laid eggs and the 50,000 kippers coming from the Brigade Commander, and I soon had the whole front line laughing and to have achieved this in the middle of a bloody battle was worth 10,000 rebuffs - - at least that was, and still is and always will be my opinion! !





us with additional information that we didn't know about when we wrote the profile.

Our initial assumption that Dick with KOYLI [Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry] was involved in the German Spring Offensive was correct, what we didn't know is that Dick was gassed in May 1918 and taken prisoner and sent to a PoW camp at Gustrow in Germany.

As the German Offensive stalled Dick was sent back to the front line to work as a PoW in the German Casualty Clearing Station at Tincourt, where he succumbed to dysentery and died on 20 July 1918 where he remains along with 2000 others.

Interestingly John Emmot from Lowgill, also with KOYLI; was also gassed during the same engagement, taken prisoner and sent to Berlin where he died of his injuries on 26 May 1918.

Our other good results were to find the names of other Bentham men who have no known grave and who remain on the Western Front battlefield, John Edward Leeming [BN 335], at the stunning Canadian Memorial to the missing on Vimy Ridge. Tom Harry Smith [BN 363] along with Charles Bargh [BN359] and Charles Albert Clarke [BN373] at Tyne Cot, the world largest cemetery overlooking the gentle countryside of Flanders Fields and the infamous Passchendaele battlefield.

At the Arras Memorial we found Edwin Rawlinson Smith [BN 350] lost during the Battle of Arras in the spring of 1917. At the Loos Memorial also known as Dud Corner we found John Hutchison [BN376] and then last amongst the thousands of names Lancelot Dowbiggin [BN345] and Edward Briscoe

[BN346] at the monumental Thiepval Memorial to the 72,000 men [still] missing on the Somme.

As you walk down Station Road, place a hand on the memorial plaque, say hello and thank you, tell them you may be gone but you are Not Forgotten.



## **The Lathom Remount Depot, Ormskirk**



Ormskirk station: horses arriving from Liverpool

As a young Boy Scout in 1960 I would attend camps at the Liverpool Scout Association camp site at Tawd Vale near Burscough, Ormskirk. It was here that I learned that the wooded grounds along the river Tawd had been part of the last Earl of Lathom's estate and of its vague role during the Great War. How this

site was obtained from the consumptive, dissolute Earl who was a great friend of Noel Coward and Sir John Gielgud and other theatricals is another story.

In 1914 the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Lathom being only nineteen, the estate was held in trust however, the trustees Lord Derby and Sir Guy Stephenson offered, with his consent, Lathom Hall and its parklands to the War Department should no other suitable location be found nearer to Liverpool. The port of Liverpool, specifically Canada Dock, became the focus for the importation of horses for the War Office as a remount depot. In 1915 two further ports were in use at Bristol and Southampton.

In September 1914 work started at Lathom to establish a military remount depot using mostly civilian staff. The cost to the War Office was estimated to be £60,000 to accommodate 5,000 horses and 1,800 men. The estate was divided into 'squadrons' each to hold around 500 horses supervised by a Superintendent, two assistant superintendents, six foremen and 150 grooms. Each Squadron was then subdivided into 'Troops' of 100 horses supported by farriers and experienced 'rough-riders'. The whole depot came under an Army Service Corps Headquarters with regular staff and troops.

The water for the expected livestock also required the construction of a dedicated reservoir and about ten miles of water pipes to be laid. In order to ease the movement of horses from Liverpool to the Remount Depot a new line was completed that brought the railway from near Ormskirk station to a siding within Lathom Park.

Pre August 1914 the British Army had about 25,000 horses and by September this had increase to 140,000 when the War Office commandeered horses from farms, businesses and many private owners. The first horses from Canada and

America began to arrive in October 1914 when five trains delivered 850 horses to the Remount Depot closely followed by a further 750.

The horses and mules arriving from America, Canada, and Argentina had to first pass the hazardous passage across the Atlantic, often in ships holding in excess of 1,000 animals plus other cargoes. These ships were still prey to enemy submarines and there were many ships sunk with the hundreds of horses and mules on board. Those that made it safely to Liverpool were vetted and if fit sent on to Lathom where they were inspected again and then started on a month of conditioning and shoeing.



Once recovered from their voyage and back in peak condition the horses began their training in harness or saddle. The 'rough-riders' had the task of breaking in the untrained horses. Teams of horses were trained for hauling guns or wagons before being sent out for service with the RFA or ASC. Many men of the artillery or Service Corps with no experience of handling horses were trained to become 'Drivers' alongside the new horses. This pattern was to continue and by November 1918 an estimated 300,000 horses had passed through Lathom Remount Depot.

After the war the Army swiftly stated to sell off the now redundant horse. In Ormskirk this started on 6 December 1918 when the first 115 horses were offered for sale. The camp huts and stables along with various other temporary buildings began to be auctioned off on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1919.



## **Lancashire Hospitals during the First World War**



### **The establishment of Military General Hospitals.**

When Richard Haldane, Secretary of State for War, outlined his plans in 1907 for the formation of a new peace-time Territorial Force to provide around 250,000 officers and men that could be mobilised in time of war to provide a home defence force and to expand and support the regular army. This force would also require its own medical services. Haldane further proposed ‘to organise a large new medical corps analogous to the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC). We hope to get a very large number of people connected with the medical profession to take an interest in the medical branch of the service both regular and second line....’

Twenty-three important localities had been identified by the War Office for the establishment of Military General Hospitals. They all fell within one of the six Military command Areas of the UK. The General Hospitals would only come into existence in the event of mobilisation it was anticipated that they would remain dormant except in the case of actual invasion.

Each General Hospital was intended to have an establishment of three officers: a Colonel, Major and Subaltern along with forty-three other ranks. Following mobilisation this would be increased to eighteen officers and sixty-six other ranks. Each General Hospital was also allocated a Matron, thirty Sisters and eighty-eight Nurses to attend the 520 beds in each hospital. It was anticipated that nationally 12,000 beds would be made available for military use.

At the time a continental war had not really been considered, it was only anticipated that, 'In the event of war 'within our gates' there will be a General Hospital in each district to which men at the front suffering wounds or disease may be passed on.'

Buildings were identified and appropriate staff began peacetime training with the Medical Corps of the Territorial Force in order to take up their duties at short notice. Around 700 Physicians and Surgeons had offered their services '*a la suite*' on mobilisation. The Nursing staff would come from the Territorial Force Nursing Service (TFNS) formed in 1908, mostly from professional nurses. Prior to this there had been no medical or nursing services devoted to the auxiliary forces. The TFNS was to become the sister organisation of the Queen Alexandra Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS) in providing nurses for the Army Medical Services.

Associated with the General Hospitals were thirteen RAMC Territorial Schools of Instruction, the staff of which travelled between the medical centres where

they delivered lectures, courses of instruction and promotion classes for officers and men.

### **Military Hospitals in Lancashire.**

The two Territorial Divisions of Lancashire: 42<sup>nd</sup> East Lancashire and the 55<sup>th</sup> West Lancashire required the provision of two General Hospitals. The 1<sup>st</sup> Western General Hospital based in Liverpool, was assigned to the West Lancashire Division and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Western General Hospital in Manchester to the East Lancashire Division.

Following mobilisation, the 1<sup>st</sup> Western General Hospital took over the Fazakerley Infectious Diseases Hospital in Liverpool on 5 August 1914. The first military patient arrived on 11 August. Casualties from France started to arrive on 22 September 1914 when the Hospital Ship Eloby arrived in the Mersey. This was followed on 1 October by the arrival of the first Hospital train at nearby Aintree Station. The 520 beds available at Fazakerley were soon overwhelmed and smaller auxiliary hospitals were set up at Lord Derby's home at Knowsley Hall and other large houses on Merseyside. Further auxiliary hospitals were soon established.

Eventually each of the auxiliary hospitals was able to provide around 200 beds. Wallasey Town Hall had a capacity of 430 beds almost equal to that of a General Hospital. The additional staff required to run both the main and auxiliary hospitals were provided by the willing volunteers of the combined British Red Cross, the St. John Ambulance Brigade and the men and women of the Voluntary Aid Detachments (VAD's). In the last year of the war a further three General Hospitals were created at Liverpool to relieve the pressure.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Western General Hospital was centred in the newly constructed Central High School for Boys in Whitworth Street, Manchester. Soon after mobilisation further school buildings in Manchester and Salford were appropriated for use as military hospitals. This was followed by an expansion into the surrounding towns and available large houses. An estimated 10,790 beds were made available; this figure varies considerably depending on the source (10,000-16,000). Again, the nursing staff and medical orderlies came from the volunteers of the Red Cross, St. John Ambulance Brigade and the Volunteer Aid Detachments. The volunteers worked alongside the RAMC staff and the nurses of QAIMNS.

As the war progressed and ever-increasing numbers of casualties arrived in Lancashire, the need for more accommodation and beds forced the military medical authorities to expand out from the two centres in east and west Lancashire. A search, by no means definitive, shows that from the initial two General Hospitals with a combined bed capacity of only 1,040 beds, the medical services increased to eventually include;

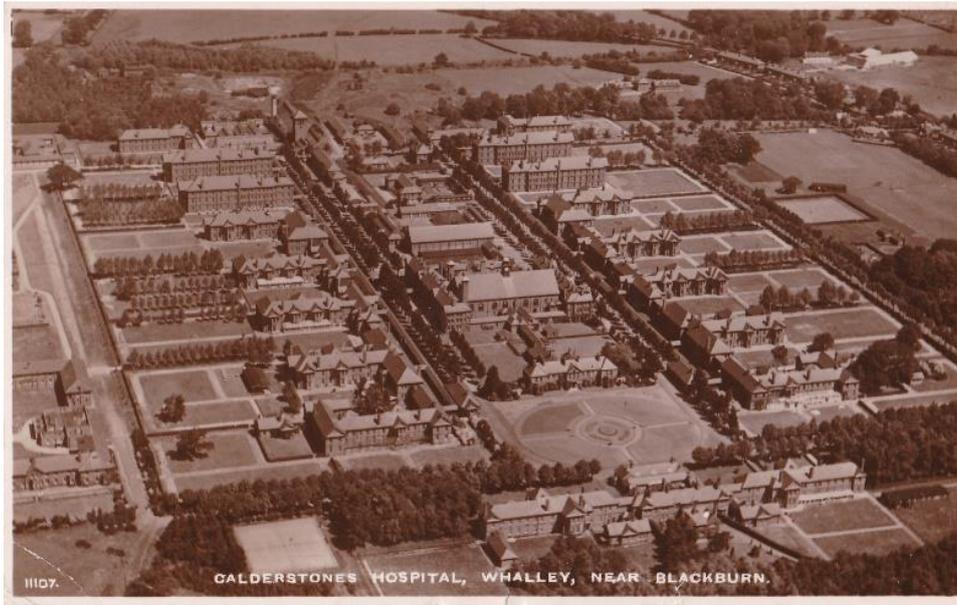
23 Civilian Hospitals

3 County Asylums

1 Mental Hospital

4 Union Workhouse/Infirmarys

149 Auxiliary Hospitals

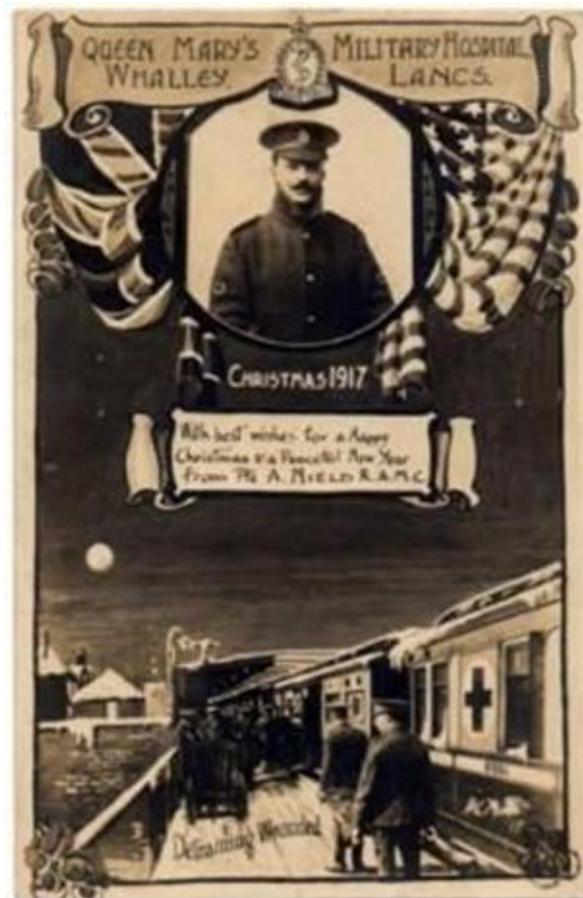


Calderstones Hospital, Whalley. Renamed ‘Queen Mary’s Military Hospital’, complete with its own railway line.

The Auxiliary hospitals, often designated as ‘Military Hospitals’ were set up in smaller or cottage hospitals, schools, public buildings, grand and large private houses often vacated by their owners for the duration. Specialised hospitals were established to treat specific medical conditions including orthopaedics, amputees, chest wounds and two venereal disease hospitals within Lancashire. Seven convalescence hospitals and homes have been identified in Lancashire mostly in the coastal resorts but they were not quite the same as their civilian counterpart. The intention was to keep the men under military control before they were returned to base depots for rehabilitation and return to service. It was expected that men of the Lancashire regiments would be sent to these local convalescent hospitals allowing visits to and from their families.

The actual number of beds provided throughout Lancashire is unknown. There are various estimates ranging from 25-35,000 which, although conservative,

show a huge underestimation of the potential casualty rate that was expected prior to August 1914. The generous response within Lancashire was no doubt repeated to a great extent in most other counties throughout the United Kingdom.



## Mates in War

*There are many kinds of sorrow  
In this world of Love and Hate,  
But there is no sterner sorrow  
Than a soldier's for his mate.*

The above lines are the final verse of G A Studdert Kennedy's poem 'His Mate'. The author, a Great War Chaplain was affectionately known to the troops as 'Woodbine Willie'. He obviously understood the deep bond of friendship often formed between soldiers. Researching soldier's stories, a number of these bonds of friendship have come to light and add a human side to the military experiences of the young men who went off to war during 1914-18.

My interest has long been the Territorial soldiers of the 5<sup>th</sup> King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment (KORL). The battalion was a mix of pre-war Territorials and men who enlisted following mobilization. The 5<sup>th</sup> KORL landed in France on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1915 and were soon drawn into the Second Battle of Ypres including the British response to the first German use of gas at Pilckem Ridge in April 1915 followed by the defensive action holding the Frezenberg Ridge in May 1915. Between 9<sup>th</sup> April and 11<sup>th</sup> May 1915, the battalion suffered losses of; 7 officers and 130 other ranks killed 14 officers and 416 other ranks wounded.

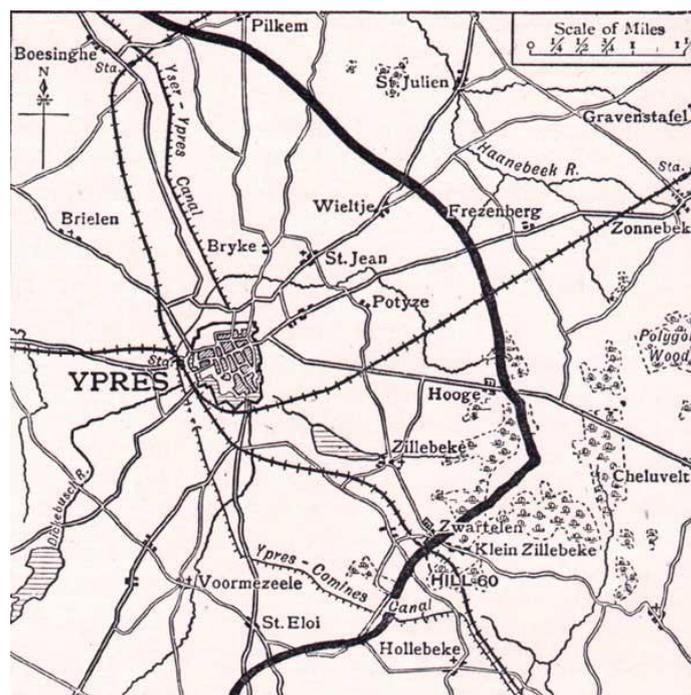
Private James Lawton Moss and his chum John Dodgson lived in the same village of Preesall and were both employed by the United Alkali Company at the rock salt caverns that surrounded Preesall. After landing in France Jim Moss

and John Dodgson along with their fellow Territorials had spent their first six weeks being initiated into trench warfare around Ypres before being flung into the breach in the line when the French Colonial troops broke in front of the German gas attack on 22<sup>nd</sup> April. The following afternoon they formed part of an attacking force rushed forward in an attempt to drive the enemy back and retake the ground lost. This swift move by British forces did not dislodge the enemy but did succeed in preventing any further advance towards Ypres. The battalion was withdrawn during the night of 29-30<sup>th</sup> April to reserve positions where they managed a few days rest before moving up to occupy the forward slopes of Frezenberg ridge on 2<sup>nd</sup> May.

The trenches here were poor, shallow, with no shelters or wire and overlooked by the Germans on the Zonnebeke and Gravenstafel ridges. The first morning was a foretaste of what was to come with five hours of continuous shelling. As the British line was shortened to reduce the salient from the east, three infantry divisions were withdrawn to new lines during the night of 3-4 May leaving the Frezenberg ridge as the new front line.

On discovering the front trenches had been evacuated, the enemy infantry and guns moved up and commenced a bombardment of the exposed positions on Frezenberg ridge. Under cover of a sixteen-hour bombardment the enemy infantry moved to within 800 -1,000 yards. The initial enemy infantry assault was driven back but at a cost to the battalion of 200 casualties. There was no shelter for the injured and no means of evacuating them. The 5<sup>th</sup> KORL were eventually relieved by their sister battalion 2<sup>nd</sup> KORL during the night of 6-7 May 1915. The respite was short-lived, by evening on 7<sup>th</sup> May the battalion moved to the St. Jean going into the reserve trenches of the newly established GHQ line – the main line of defense near Potijze Chateau. On the morning of 8<sup>th</sup> May the Germans with a seemingly unlimited supply of shells, pounded the

British front and at 08.30 the enemy infantry attacked the Frezenberg ridge. This attack and a further two more were halted 200 yards short of the support positions, by determined rifle and machine gun fire. By 15.00 that day the exhausted and depleted survivors of 2<sup>nd</sup> KORL and 3<sup>rd</sup> Monmouthshire retired and the 5<sup>th</sup> KORL and 2<sup>nd</sup> East Yorkshire were ordered to regain the ground lost on Frezenberg ridge. Elements of the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monmouths' re-entered the battle in support. They carried the advance for 1,200 yards before being driven to ground. Around 20.00 with no lack of courage a final bayonet charge was attempted but the enemy were waiting and laid down a heavy fire on the attackers. Here the bloodied survivors lay throughout the day of 9<sup>th</sup> May under continuous fire until they could be relieved that night and retired to Vlamertinghe.



Among the many killed at Frezenberg on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1915 was Jim Moss. His pal Lance Corporal John Dodgson, although no doubt exhausted after his experiences at Frezenberg found time to write to Jim's mother on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1915.

*“Dear Mrs Moss, - By the time you get this letter you will have heard the sad news of your son Jim’s death. I know it will be very hard for you, for it nearly broke my heart for, as you know, he was my best chum, a better chum a man could never have. I was with him when he got killed. It was on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> May, about 5 o’clock in the afternoon. It occurred at a little village called Frezenberg, north of Ypres. He had no pain, for he was killed outright, and never spoke a word after he was hit. We had two terrible days on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, for we were shelled all the time. There were three wounded out of the Preesall boys – Sergeant Williams, Newman Hall, and Dick Holmes. I don’t think any of them were very bad. Jim was killed with a rifle bullet. What few things he had in his pocket, I have got, and will send you what I can. If I can’t send them, will keep them until I come home, if God spares me. All the Preesall boys send their heartfelt sympathy, for we know how he will be missed at home. He is missed here, for everybody in the Company has a good word for him. There was a parcel came for him yesterday. I opened it, and gave the things to his chums. I hope I did the right thing for you. I know it would be right for him, for, whenever he got a parcel, he always dished it out to his pals. The parcel was from his girl Miss Ash. I wrote and broke the news to her. If there is anything more I can tell you, I will gladly do so, for you just need to write. It was God’s wish, Mrs Moss. He died a noble death, facing the foe. I lost the best chum I ever had. I close with deepest sympathy.*

*– From his pal. J. Hodgson.*

Sadly Lance Corporal John Dodgson was not spared. In the heroic attempts to regain the trenches at Frezenberg ridge on the afternoon of 8<sup>th</sup> May 1915 he received a shrapnel wound to the head. Against many odds he was evacuated to

one of the Casualty Clearing Stations at Hazebrouck 56K south-west of Calais, where he died of his wounds on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1915. The body of Jim Moss was never recovered and he is one of the many now commemorated on the Menin Gate Memorial. John Dodgson is buried at the Hazebrouck Communal Cemetery. Both men are remembered on the ICI Memorial, originally at the plant in Thornton and now restored and relocated at Thornton Cleveleys War memorial. Both families were to eventually suffer the additional loss of a second son.



**Preesall War Memorial**



## **Civilian to Brigadier-General in three years**



**Brig-Gen G H Gater CMG DSO GOC**

**26.12.1886 – 14.1.1963**

The extraordinary career of this fine officer first came to my attention over ten years ago whilst researching the dedication of Church Road School War Memorial, Thornton. This memorial had gone ‘missing’ when the old school was demolished but luckily it was found in a Leeds reclamation yard by a fellow WFA member and eventually returned to its rightful place. The Church Road School memorial was unveiled on 6 July 1920 by Brigadier-General G. H. Gater, Director of Education for Lancashire. I was intrigued how a Brigadier-General had become Director of Education for Lancashire.

George Henry Gater was born in Southampton, the son of a solicitor. He went to school at Winchester College before Oxford University where he studied Modern History, before graduating in 1909. He then studied for a Diploma in

Education and trained as a teacher before becoming the Director of Education for Nottingham County Council in 1911.

On the outbreak of war Gater in response to Lord Kitchener's call, enlisted as a Second Lieutenant in the 9<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters, a Service battalion of the Notts & Derby Regiment. In October he was promoted to Lieutenant. His talents must have been recognised very early when he was sent to attend a Company Commander's course at the Staff College, Camberley and just prior to the battalion's departure for Gallipoli in July 1915, Gater was promoted to Captain.

9<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters, as part of 33<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade, 11<sup>th</sup> (Northern) Division landed at Suvla Bay on 6/7 August 1915. A combination of untried Territorial and New Army troops with insufficient artillery and equipment, led by incompetent senior officers resulted in a deadlock with troops ravaged by disease. During this very difficult period Captain Gater was promoted to Major. In December 1915 the 9<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters were evacuated from Gallipoli to Egypt where they were engaged in the defence of the Suez Canal for the next six months. On 3 June 1916 Major Gater was Gazetted on being awarded the Distinguished Service order. The citation for the award has not been located and so we must assume it related to an action at Suvla Bay.

In June 1916 the 9<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters were transferred to France, arriving at the Somme front on 3 July. The battalion was engaged in minor duties and an introduced to trench warfare on the Western Front. On 15 August 1916 Major Gater was promoted to Lieutenant- Colonel and took command of 6<sup>th</sup> Lincolnshire Regiment also of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Lincolns were heavily involved in the assault on 'Wonder Work' in preparation for the subsequent attack on Thiepval ridge in late September 1916.

As the Battle of the Somme came to a close the 6<sup>th</sup> Lincolns were withdrawn and moved to the Ypres salient and commenced training for the attack at Messines in June 1917.

On 7 June 1917 following the firing of nineteen mines along the Messines ridge, nine British Divisions attacked the German lines. The 11<sup>th</sup> Division followed the 16<sup>th</sup> Division at the centre of the line opposite Wytschaete and once the leading division had secured their objectives, the 11<sup>th</sup> Division passed through to take trenches three miles east of Wytschaete.

All the brigade's objectives were taken and consolidated with minimal casualties although Lieutenant-Colonel Gater was wounded in the face. An immediate counter attack was driven off but by dusk the enemy were shelling the positions heavily. The next morning a second counter attack was repulsed. This was followed on the evening of 9 June by a third counterattack accompanied by heavy shell fire the 6<sup>th</sup> Lincolns held on and were withdrawn during the night of 10/11<sup>th</sup> June.

For his leadership and actions during this action Lieutenant-Colonel Gater was awarded a bar to his previous DSO. The citation appeared in the London Gazette on 17 September 1917;

*'For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He led his battalion with brilliant skill and resolution during an attack, minimising their casualties during three days' intense shelling by his able dispositions and good eye for ground. He directed the consolidation of, and remained in command for three days, although severely wounded in the face in this action.'*

His actions were rewarded with another DSO and promotion on 1 November 1917 to Brigadier-General commanding 62<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade, 21<sup>st</sup> Division. This followed the death in action of Brigadier-General C G Rawling. Gater's achievement was outstanding in rising from civilian to Brigadier General in just over three years and still a month short of his thirty-first birthday. The 21<sup>st</sup> Division was commanded by Major-General D G M Campbell who, it was reported, was very much a "pukka Regular" who did not court popularity least of all from New Army officers. Gater not only survived but appeared to flourish under his command.

During the German Spring offensive of 1918 Gater twice commanded ad hoc formations to assist in staunching the German advance. On 29/30 March as 'Gater's Force' a composite of battalions from 62<sup>nd</sup>, 64<sup>th</sup> and 110<sup>th</sup> Brigades supported by sixty-six Lewis guns of 4<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade. They were sent to reinforce the beleaguered 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Division. The second occasion designated 'Gater's Independent Brigade', was also a composite of battalions from 62<sup>nd</sup>, 64<sup>th</sup> and 110<sup>th</sup> Brigades under the command of the French Fifth Army were sent to help prevent the German Advance from the Marne on 2 June. Having helped stem the German offensive Gater rebuilt the 62<sup>nd</sup> Brigade and prepared it for their part in the final 100 days advance of 1918.

During the first two years of the war promotion had favoured the professional officer and it was definitely biased against Territorial and New Army officers. By the final 100 days of 1918 Infantry commanders were a combination of professional soldiers, pre-war auxiliaries and citizen soldiers. Gater was a typical commander of this period. They were by this time younger, experienced, tactically competent, quick thinking and often displaying great personal courage.

Brigadier-General G H Gater was made a Commander of the Legion of Honour and awarded the Croix de Guerre, a DSO and bar; he was mentioned in Despatches four times. Following the war he returned to education as the Director of Education for Lancashire. He later had a distinguished career in the civil service, knighted in 1941 and made a Knight Grand Cross of the order of St. Michael and St. George (GCMG) in 1944.



## **Help save Talbot House**

The wonderful and iconic Talbot House, a living memorial to the men who lived and served on the Western Front out of Ypres, needs your help. Recent investments in the permanent exhibition hall due to open for the new season starting in April, leaves this non-profit charity in need of donations.

A home for home for soldiers during the First World War, it is now the temporary residence of many pilgrims to the Ypres Salient and Poperinge each year. The Covid-19 lockdown is the first forced closure of Talbot House since the liberation of 1944. Staffs are now out of employment and volunteers told to go home. There are still costs to cover, including ongoing renovations.

Talbot House has a purpose today, as it did during the Great War. Today schools locally and coming from England make it a regular stop-over. Please help Talbot House survive the next few weeks or months and be ready for the next busy season. Rewards to donors include overnight stays, specials breakfasts and memberships. Please pledge what you can. €100,000 is urgently needed. #StandwithTalbotHouse [Gofundme.com/f/save-talbot-house](https://www.gofundme.com/f/save-talbot-house)

## North Lancashire Branch Speakers Programme for 2020

If the lock-down is lifted the branch hopes to continue with the existing program.

### Monday 1 June

Scott Lindgren – The U-Boat campaign and anti-submarine tactics and operations in the Great War.

### Monday 6 July

Dennis North – The Boys of Leith – Remembering a forgotten battalion.

### Monday 3 August

Dr Phylomena Badsey - Vera Brittain 1893-1970: Her Life Known and Unknown

### Monday 7 September

Graham Kemp - German War Birds – the role of the German air-force in the Great War

### Monday 5 October

Terry Dean – TBC

### Monday 2 November

TBC

### Monday 7 December

AGM

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