



THE WESTERN FRONT  
ASSOCIATION

Lancashire North Branch

# Despatch

Issue 17: May 2016

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The front page of this Despatch takes on an unusual layout to display to best effect the photograph of Lady Mary Gerard and Corporal Daniel Finch MM. After Editor's Musing on Page 2 is the story behind the photo and of Corporal Finch's war. Then follows Niall Cherry's account of how Richard Townsend, a farm labourer from Warton was killed on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916. Also read inside about the British air campaign above the Somme battlefield; a Kentish tale in which he tells the Deputy Chaplain General about the best padre he had met; the Distinguished Conduct Medal won by Sergeant John Hodgson of the King's Own Royal Lancaster's; a report on museums; the meeting programme to the end of 2016; Stewart Bond's Great War Exhibition and more.

## Editor's Musing

After delivering each Despatch for printing I invariably switch my thoughts to the main issues and front cover of the next Issue, and last October was no exception. Some issues were likely to be dominant but what would be a suitable front? As described across a tinted photo taken near to my home in Wigan for 20+ years presented itself days later. Researching Daniel's story took me back to old haunts.

An emerging issue last October was the budgetary pressures facing some of the museums who contribute to Despatch. It seemed to me perverse that this was happening when so much attention was being given to remembering the events of 100 years ago. Little consideration seemed to have been given to the consequences of the budget cuts in threatening the historiography of our nation's military past. Whilst reaction to the proposed cuts stemmed immediate adverse actions the threats remain and at the start of museum reports on page 19 is a "heads up" of the current situation.

In the limit it will boil down to what museums can do to become more financially viable and the priority that is accorded to any necessary financial support from public funds. On this latter point it is not easy to overlook what a very small percentage of the vast sums that are claimed to be wasted on overseas aid would do for our country's museums.

To end my musing on a lighter note, it was a delight to me that Reggie Kentish (Page 12) chose to focus his latest tale on a padre who will be "known" by many in our Branch.

## Daniel FINCH MM, Corporal 12833, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion South Lancashire Regiment



Six days after presenting the last Despatch to our November meeting I was on Saturday guide duty at the Lancashire Infantry Museum (LIM) when Rachel Lang and other descendants of the above arrived seeking information about their ancestor. Seeing the coloured photo and our discussion caused me to speculate with them about an article and the front cover for this Despatch.

Daniel Finch was born 15 April 1891 in Ashton in Makerfield and prior to his attestation in Wigan on 6 September 1914 was a 6 ft tall coal miner. On 7<sup>th</sup> September he joined the South Lancashire Regiment (SLR) at their Warrington Depot and on 9<sup>th</sup> September was posted to the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion at Tidworth.

Daniel married in late 1913 and at the time of enlistment lived at 90 Bolton Road, Ashton in Makerfield with his wife and baby daughter. His Regimental Conduct Sheet records two periods of 8 day absences in November 1914 and January 1915 for which he forfeited pay but nevertheless he was appointed unpaid Lance Corporal in February 1915. He had a similar absence in March 1915 for which he was reduced to Private but had the reward of a second daughter in late November. In mid-May he again overstayed his leave pass and forfeited pay

Following heavy losses suffered by the Regiment's 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion in France (see later) the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reserve Battalion SLR was having difficulty in supplying suitable replacements and Private Finch embarked from Folkestone on 17 July 1915. When he joined 2SLR they were in trenches near Hooze and a "quiet"

(+P) or (+S) after article title indicates more photos in Photo Gallery or Supplementary Report on our website [www.wfanlancs.co.uk](http://www.wfanlancs.co.uk)

Articles are by Editor unless stated otherwise.

TO SEE DESPATCH WITH LARGER TYPE AND PHOTOS IN COLOUR VIEW ON OUR WEBSITE

prevailed after the gas attacks of 2<sup>nd</sup> Ypres in May.

An attack on 25<sup>th</sup> September to distract attention from the Battle of Loos would be Daniel's first experience of attacking. The attack cost the Battalion 28 killed and 228 wounded and missing. In October 2SLR transferred to 75 Infantry Brigade of 25 Division thus leaving the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division in which it had served since the start of WW1 and for the remainder of 1915 the Regimental history reports "nothing outstanding to record" in the Ploegsteert sector.

The History includes a report on losses sustained by 2SLR from 4<sup>th</sup> August 1914 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 1915:

	Officers	Other Ranks
Joining 2SLR inc those mobilised in August 1914	159	3895
Strength at 31 <sup>st</sup> December 1915	30	913
Total wastage to end of 1915	129	2982

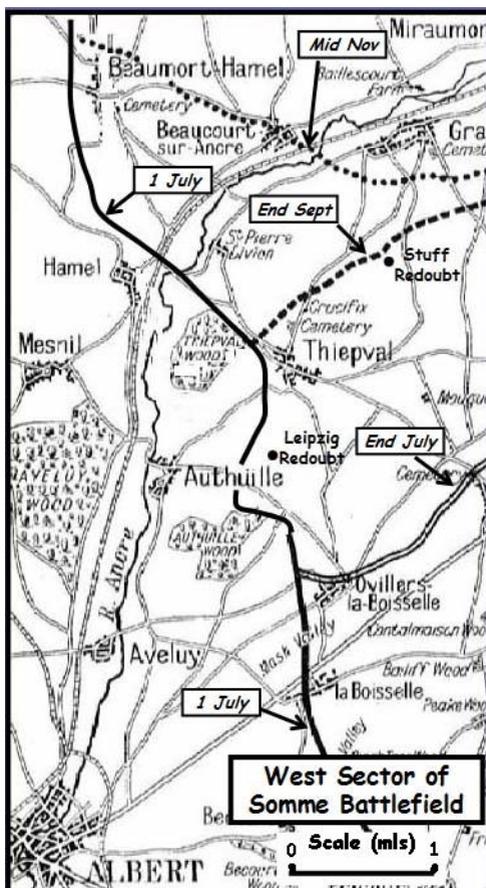
Until February 1916 2SLR endured trench routine at Ploegsteert entailing considerable hardship and steady drain in casualties. They were then withdrawn to rest at St Omer before proceeded southwards by night marches to the Somme. Training commenced for the coming offensive varied by occasional tours in trenches.

2SLR were not involved in the 1<sup>st</sup> July actions but early on 3<sup>rd</sup> July attacked German positions south of Thiepval with other units of 75 Brigade. What happened is described in the Battalion report to Brigade HQ at 9.30 am:

*"The attack is unsuccessful and we hold no portion of the enemy's line. The attack was led by D' Company on a frontage of two platoons. This company entered the German trenches in good style, but were*

*subsequently held up by machine-gun fire. All the officers of the company are missing. Of the second company to advance I can only account for approximately one officer, three N.C.Os. and about 25 men. They were apparently held up by machine-gun fire. Of the third company I can only now account for one officer, one Sergeant and 30 men. Of the remaining company I have two officers left; this company has only sustained a few casualties. ... At the moment I have no men in reserve or support. Am reorganizing front line and holding it in the usual manner."*

In the few hours of fighting the Battalion lost 14 officers and over 300 other ranks killed, wounded and missing.



After a short rest the Battalion attempted to capture Ovillers by a bombing attack on the

night of 12<sup>th</sup> July. 2SLR fought over 3 days managing to penetrate the German positions and secure ground in the vicinity of the church at a cost of over 180 killed, wounded and missing.

Later in July the Battalion were in trenches at Beaumont Hamel moving to trenches near Thiepval in late August where they suffered heavy shelling. On 3<sup>rd</sup> September the Battalion attacked German defences on the Thiepval Spur near the Leipzig Redoubt. *"The advancing waves of infantry were met with enfilade machine-gun fire, and melted away, none of the attacking units reaching their objectives. The Battalion lost 7 officers and 123 other ranks killed, wounded or missing, including the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel H. T. Cotton, D.S.O.*

On 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2SLR occupied trenches in the vicinity of Stuff Redoubt and on 14<sup>th</sup> October Daniel regained the rank of Lance Corporal (paid).

On 21<sup>st</sup> October they attacked the Stuff and Regina Trenches held by the enemy. The British artillery barrage came down at 12.06 p.m. and, in the words of the War Diary, *"When the line moved forward the spirit of all ranks was wonderful and the men went over the parapet in fine style. On arrival in the enemy's trench a few Germans were found in occupation, many others emerging from dug-outs after our entry. Some of these put up a fight, but all were accounted for—about 50 being killed—some were driven to communication trenches on the flanks where they surrendered, while about 400 surrendered to the Battalion, a number of officers being included in the number."*

The Battalion lost 6 officers and 182 other ranks killed, wounded and missing and after consolidating the position they were relieved. Shortly after, the Battalion moved north to the Ploegsteert area with Daniel being promoted Corporal on 24<sup>th</sup> November.

During 1916 individual honours awarded in the Battalion were 6 Military Crosses, 9

Distinguished Conduct Medals and 20 Military Medals. One of the MMs was awarded to Private Finch so it was earned before 14<sup>th</sup> October. It was announced in the London Gazette dated 11<sup>th</sup> November 1916 and on 23 December 1916 the Wigan Examiner reported on the MMs won by Daniel and his younger brother Albert who was serving with the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment (LNLR).



2SLR's History records the first half of 1917 as "singularly uneventful" and Daniel went on 10 days home leave on 3<sup>rd</sup> February but was not well. On 11 February he was admitted to Garswood Hall Auxilliary Hospital about one mile from his home in Ashton and on 13<sup>th</sup> February, when due to return to France, he was taken on the strength of the Depot at Warrington.

Garswood Hall was on land now occupied by Ashton Golf Club and in 1900 was the Lancashire residence of Lord and Lady Gerard. Following the death of Lord Gerard in 1902 the **Dowager Lady Mary Gerard** was active in her social work and after WW1 started she



established a V.A.D Hospital at Garswood Hall with her role as Commandant. Wigan Borough Council has a collection of postcard photos showing Lady Mary with patients and staff at the hospital. One of which is the sepia image which has been coloured as per

the front page (with the addition of his MM miniature and Corporal stripes).



Another postcard (above) shows Daniel standing tall with 7 other patients and Lady Gerard.

Daniel was discharged from hospital on 14<sup>th</sup> April and posted to join 3<sup>rd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion SLR which from 5<sup>th</sup> March 1917 had been stationed at Barrow-in-Furness. He embarked for France on 1<sup>st</sup> June and according to his service record spent a short



period with the 11<sup>th</sup> (Pioneer) Battalion SLR before joining 2SLR on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1917 in billets at Cuhem approx 10 miles west of Lillers.

On 8<sup>th</sup> July the Battalion moved to near Poperinghe and provided working parties east of Ypres in connection with the coming offensive which started on 31<sup>st</sup> July. According to their War Diary on 1<sup>st</sup> August "It rained heavily all day... left RAILWAY WOOD at 9 a.m. to relieve the support battalion of 23 Brigade. Relief was carried out in small

parties & was most difficult owing to the terrible condition of the ground which was a veritable sea of mud. All traces of tracks were obliterated & the trenches practically levelled by continuous shell fire. Battalion arrived at destination at 3 p.m. and at once commenced digging, efforts being made to obtain cover by linking up shell holes. Continuous shelling rendered this work most difficult and a considerable number of casualties were sustained." One of the 7 Other Ranks killed was Corporal Daniel Finch MM. The approximate location of Daniel's death is marked "A" on the map below. He is buried in Menin Road South Military Cemetery.

On 12<sup>th</sup> November, Daniel's younger brother Alfred was killed approximately 4 miles away near Passchendaele (marked "B" on the map below) whilst serving with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion LNLR and he is remembered on the Tyne Cot Memorial.

FOOTNOTE: When researching Daniel's story I mentioned to a friend the number of Military Medals awarded in WW1 and the difficulty often experienced in establishing the reason for the award. He did not have a particular interest in WW1 but mentioned an

article he had read in Issue 26 (November 2015) of *The Preston Magazine* about a soldier having a DCM and MC and gave me the magazine from his car. The soldier was acting **Regimental Sergeant Major Edward Nicholson MC DCM** who was also one of the 7 Other Ranks in 2SLR killed on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1917. Coincidence!



FROM THE FIELD OF BATTLE TO THE  
PEACE OF GOD -

Pte T Binks Loyal North Lancashire  
Regiment

## WARTON 1916 EXHIBITION - RICHARD TOWNSEND A NATIVE OF WARTON (+S): Niall Cherry

Richard Townsend it seems is the only man from the village to have been killed on 1st July 1916 i.e. the opening day of the Battle of the Somme.



Warton's War Memorial bearing Richard's name

Richard was born in 1892 and the son of Thomas and Ellen Townsend who ran the Post Office in the village. From information contained in the 1911 census he is shown as living at and working for Hannah Harrison at Windy Harbour Farm Warton.

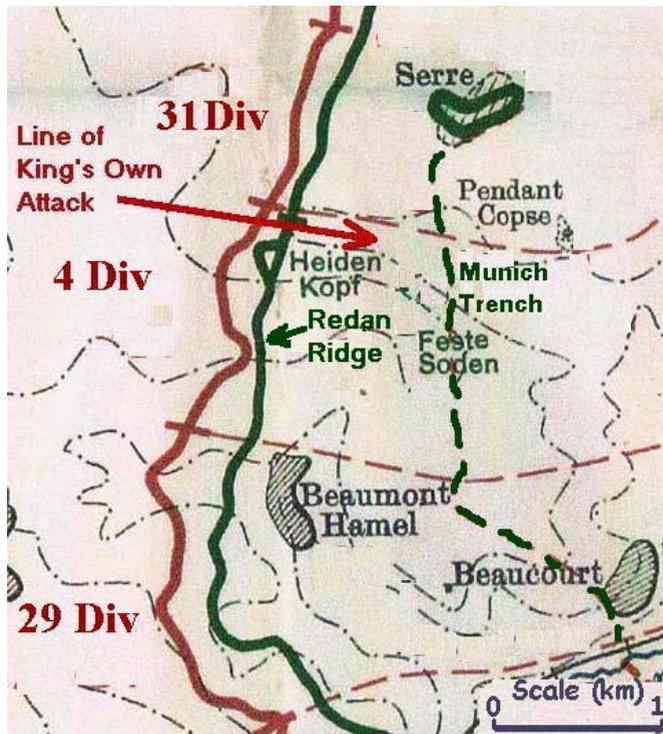
When war broke out in August 1914 many men answered Kitchener's call to arms and volunteered to serve for the duration of the war. It was obviously up to individuals as to

whether they went to war and possibly Richard felt he was doing more by continuing to work on the land. Anyway for whatever reason Richard did not volunteer for the Army until 16th August 1915 when he took the King's shilling at Blackpool. His service records state that his occupation was a farm labourer and was working at Arnott Farm, Little Layton near Blackpool and was 5 feet 5 inches tall and weighed 132 pounds (9 stone and 6 pounds or 60 kilogrammes). He enlisted into one of Lancashire's infantry regiments - the King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment and allocated the Army number of 20459. After his basic training he was posted to the 6th Entrenching Battalion and later in April 1916 as a replacement to the 1st Battalion of the King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment part of the British Expeditionary Force on the Western Front. This unit was one of the 'Regular Army' ones who had a long history and were proud of their Regular status and looked down their noses at the Territorial and New Army units. Although at this stage there were not many old sweats left in their ranks, the 1st Battalion had been part of the 12th Infantry Brigade, 4th Infantry Division for all of the war and indeed had been part of the original British Expeditionary Force that had gone to France in August 1914.

On the 1st of July 1916 Richard's unit was in reserve for the attack of the 4th Infantry Division's attack south of Serre and north of Beaumont Hamel with a particular target being a German strong-point known as the Heidenkopf otherwise known as the Quadrilateral. The Heidenkopf was about a mile south-west of the village of Serre and to the south of this location other objectives were the Redan Ridge and Munich Trench. Unlike other areas of the Somme battlefield there were no villages in this sector, which would later become household names, just the hard task of attacking German defences across a barren landscape.

Regrettably there is little information on the fate of Richard on this day except to say that he was posted missing so it will be best to recount the story of his unit from surviving records to try and gain an understanding of the day's events for Richard and his comrades.

The Battalion's War Diary account for the



operations on 30 June and 1 July starts with the following qualification: *'Owing to the fact that there are so few Officers and men now with the Battalion who made any substantial progress in the attack on 1<sup>st</sup> July it is neither possible to give an accurate nor detailed account of the operations. This account is based on information obtained from Officers and men who took part in the attack and are now serving with the Battn.'* In what follows of this report other quotes from the War Diary are in italics. A copy of the original War Diary manuscript for July 1916 is on our website.

The war diary records that by 1.30 a.m. 1st July they were in their assembly area and

that casualties had amounted to 6 up to this period. As stated before they were in reserve but shook out to form the positions they would attack in - and the plan was that each company would send one platoon forward in the lead and so the Battalion had a frontage *'of 4 Platoons approximately 500 yards'*. The men would have heard the barrage

intensifying and probably the big mine that was exploded under Hawthorn Ridge, west of Beaumont Hamel not too far away in the lead-up to H Hour at 7.30 a.m. The Battalion was not destined to go over the top at H Hour but their war diary records the following:

*The Attack.* An officer's patrol consisting of 1 officer (Second Lieutenant C MacWalter) and 20 other ranks advanced as a screen extending over the whole Battalion front at 8.41 a.m. (Note: Second Lieutenant C MacWalter was posted missing on this day and has no known grave.)

*At 8.46 a.m. leading sections of the Battalion advanced from their Assembly Area. Directly the advance commenced the Battalion came under heavy machine gun fire and there seems no doubt that a large number of casualties occurred before reaching our own front line. The two left companies seemed to have suffered most heavily up to this point. The advance still continued, however, a large number of casualties being sustained in NO MAN'S LAND from both machine gun and shell fire; this is proved by the fact that a large number of killed and wounded were brought in from NO MAN'S LAND. The two left companies again seemed to have suffered most heavily.*

Was Richard one of these I wonder? Another interesting thought is that it seems the Battalion was told to or decided to move forward 'cross-country' and did not use the communication trenches which although would have been a much slower method of advancing, it would probably have been a lot safer. The War Diary then continues as follows.

*Only a small number of these Companies reached the German frontline. The two right*



View of HeidenKopf from behind British front line to South-West

*Companies seemed to have made substantial progress. Some men state that they actually saw men crossing the German second line. The casualties in missing of these two Companies are considerably greater than in the two left companies.*

*An Officer of the left centre Company who was only able to reach the German front line owing to having so few men left states that he saw no one advancing on his left, but that to his right he could see men advancing. (Most of these men appeared to belong to the Seaforth Highlanders). He further states that the enemy were holding their second line directly in front of him and to his left front very strongly and that they had machine guns in the open just in front of their second line on his left front. Those men of the two right Companies who are now with the Battalion state that in the German second line there was a mixed force of all regiments and that at about 12.30 p.m. these men retired with the remainder of this force first of all back to the German 1st line and shortly after thence to*

*our front line owing to the strong bomb attacks made by the enemy which they were unable to meet owing to the shortage of bombs*

*As regards the left company, owing to the fact that the right Battalion of 31st Division had been unable to make any headway, few of them reached the front line.*

*There seems to be a general opinion that the Battalion lost its direction to a certain extent, advancing too much to its left as men*

*of the left Company state that when they crossed our front line there were men of the 31st Division in our front line at this point.*

*The Brigadier of the Right*

*Brigade 31st Division checked any further advance and ordered what men remained to form up in LEG END. This seems to have been about 1600 but the exact time is uncertain. (LEGEND trench at its southern point opposite the Heidenkopf was about 250 yards behind the British front line and ran northwards for approximately 800 yards.)*

*120 men remained at the end of the day (given the above I think it is fair to assume Richard had become a casualty by now) and were ordered to form up in their former Assembly trenches (Green Trench area).*

The war diary continues with a note and comments, excerpts as follows:

*Critique of Scheme and Time Table for the Attack.*

*Speaking from observation on the extreme right of the 4th Division as well as from accounts received from the left of the Division there seems to have been:*

## 1916 SOMME AIR CAMPAIGN

1. *Lack of weight.*
2. *The fact that the 11th Brigade and 31st Division were unable to capture and consolidate their first objectives, enables the enemy in places to man these objectives and with rifle and machine gun fire inflict heavy losses on the Battalions advancing in rear before they could even reach their own front line. They were thus by the Time Table unable to even act as a support to the 1<sup>th</sup> Brigade*
3. *Such strong points as the village of Serre, the Ridge Redoubt which commanded the advance inflicting heavy casualties with machine gun by cross fire must be captured before a considerable advance can be made. No doubt, owing to the fact that the 31st were unable to make any advance most of the machine guns in Serre, by that time unmolested by artillery fire were able to concentrate on the advancing troops to their left front.*

The war diary does not contain any numbers of casualties for this day except list the officers killed, wounded and missing, which amounted to seven, eleven and three respectively. One figure I have been able to find is the total casualty figure for the 4th Division for the 1st July which is 5,752. Various publications including Martin Middlebrook's book on the Somme includes a list of the heaviest suffering Battalions on this day - but only includes those with 500 or more and the 1st King's Own is not on the list.

Nevertheless Richard was one of the 20,000 men or so of the British Army who died on this day and regretfully his body was not identified if recovered and like so many others from the Great War is commemorated on the massive Thiepval Memorial to the Missing which has over 70,000 names on it.

UNTIL REVEILLE - Pte E R Adams Army  
Cyclist Corps

In the WW1 Timeline on page 17 the narrative for 1 July 1916 refers to control of the air being integral to the campaign. This article reports on the air warfare using two main sources: Peter Hart's 2001 *SOMME SUCCESS - The Royal Flying Corps and the Battle of the Somme 1916*; and Thomas G Bradbeer's 1999 Thesis *The British Air Campaign during the Battle of the Somme, April- November 1916: A Pyrrhic Victory*.

For the first time in the history of warfare a deliberate air campaign was planned and executed to support ground operations. Haig required **General Hugh Trenchard (HT)**, the commander of the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) to achieve aerial superiority over the Somme. To



achieve this HT directed his squadrons to accomplish six tactical tasks: 1) aerial reconnaissance, 2) aerial photography, 3) observation and direction of artillery, 4) tactical bombing, 5) "contact" patrols in support of the infantry and 6) air combat against the German Army Air Service (GAAS) to enable achievement of the other five tasks.



Fokker Eindecker E1 (IWM Q69222)

As more squadrons and the first aircraft designed as fighters began to join the RFC in early 1916 HT's foremost priority was to end the GAAS's dominance of the skies. The German's Fokker Eindecker monoplane, which carried a synchronised machine gun that fired through the rotating propeller, had been the dominant machine since summer

1915 causing “the Fokker Scourge”. The two new British “pusher” fighters, the Farman Experimental 2B (FE2b) and the de Havilland (DH 2) with their engine behind the pilot which allowed unimpeded observation and importantly a clear forward field of fire would be a match for the German machines.



Farman Experimental FE 2b (IWM Q69651)



de Havilland DH2 (IWM Q67537)

Also in May 1916 Lieutenant Albert Ball was posted to No 11 Squadron, a fighter unit flying the French built Nieuport Scout. Claiming up to three kills per day he became the dominant British pilot throughout the Battle of the Somme.



Albert Ball and A134, a Nieuport 16 he flew when serving with 11 Squadron

When the RFC’s casualties mounted Sir Henry Rawlinson, Commander of Fourth Army on the Somme, supported HT six weeks before the start of the ground offensive: *“for the moment at any rate we have command of the air by day on the Fourth Army front. I cannot speak too highly of the work of these young pilots, most of whom have only recently come out from*

*England, and the de Havilland machine has unquestionably proved itself superior to the Fokker in speed, manoeuvre, climbing and general fighting efficiency.”*



The British air superiority over the Fokker was further reinforced on 18 June 1916 when **Lieut. George McCubbin** in his FE 2b shot down and killed the German ace Leutenant Max

Immelmann flying his Fokker over Loos. The Kaiser promptly removed his other champion ace, Oswald Boelcke, from the firing line in so doing further reduced the Fokker menace.



Max Immelmann Oswald Boelcke

With HT’s fighter aircraft operating deep behind enemy lines to interdict their German counterparts the RFC’s aircraft assigned to artillery operations, photography and reconnaissance could undertake their tasks with greater freedom.

On 1<sup>st</sup> July the RFC’s reconnaissance patrols witnessed the French advance each side of the Somme with some success by 4<sup>th</sup> Army’s XIII and XV Corps to the north as far as Fricourt, but from there northwards they witnessed almost uniformly “pitiful disaster”. Compared to the British Army’s losses of some 60,000, HT reported aircrew casualties of one killed, four wounded and nine missing on 1<sup>st</sup> July. Though the German Army may have won the first round of the ground battle, the GAAS had been beaten in the air.

Next day RFC reconnaissance patrols detected German troop trains bringing reinforcements from Douai towards the Somme. The RFC sent several flights of

aircraft to bomb an infantry division HQ and multiple ammunition dumps. The bombing missions resulted in several ammunition dumps being destroyed and being escorted by fighters no German aircraft rose to the challenge. HT pursued his bombing offensive throughout July. This forced the GAAS to surrender all semblance of initiative and concentrate their resources on defensive patrols irrelevant to the requirements of their troops in the main battle being fought on the ground.

A disgruntled German soldier wrote home from the front line: *“Always hiding from aircraft, always, with about eight or ten English machines overhead, but no-one sees any of ours. If German machines go up at all, they are only up for five minutes and then retire in double-quick time. Our airmen are a rotten lot.”* The German soldiers were suffering from the full might of the British artillery and they could see the ‘eyes’ in the sky peering down to direct accurate bombardments that were more than flesh and blood could stand.

The RFC’s aerial superiority continued through July and August, albeit with mounting losses, as the BEF’s infantry pursued attacks against the Germans to gain ground incurring heavy casualties in the process.

However on 29<sup>th</sup> August von Hindenburg replaced von Falkenhayn as Chief of the German General Staff. Hindenburg transferred numerous aircraft supporting the battle at Verdun to the Somme front and at the same time established *Jagdstaffel* (Hunting Squadrons) or *Jastas*. The objectives of the *Jastas* were to engage the RFC’s fighter aircraft and to destroy the RFC’s aircraft performing artillery direction and observation. The *Jasta* squadrons had the best pilots with Hauptmann Oswald Boelcke, the air ace withdrawn from the fighting by the Kaiser, commanding 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron which also included Manfred von Richthofen. The units also began receiving

new aircraft including the Albatros D II equipped with two fixed machine guns



synchronised to fire through the propeller. HT remarked that the air battle had commenced a “New Phase”.

On 15 September the 3<sup>rd</sup> Phase of the Somme offensive (Flers - Courcellete) commenced with the RFC attacking all German observation balloons and flying at night to mask the noise of tanks moving so that the new weapon achieved surprise. The Bazentin Ridge was captured giving the British good observation over German forward and rear areas but a breakthrough had not been made and nearly 30,000 casualties were suffered.

15<sup>th</sup> September was a “maximum effort” day for the RFC with bombing raids being particularly successful but earlier in the day Boelcke’s *Jasta 2* had shot down 4 British fighters. 2 days later the GAAS were more aggressive and an RFC’s force of bombers and fighters lost 6 aircraft with **Baron Manfred von Richthofen** gaining his first victory. Worse was to follow, from 17 to 30 September *Jasta 2* shot down 25 RFC aircraft for the loss of only 3 pilots. In September the RFC and French *Aviation Militaire* lost 127 aircraft with the RFC suffering 134 aircrew casualties in the process whilst the Germans lost just 17 aircraft.



With Haig’s approval HT requested the War Office to double the number of fighter squadrons, and as a short term measure the Admiralty provided from the Royal Naval Air

Service (RNAS) a squadron of 18 aircraft equipped with the latest types of fighters.

HT did not abandon his offensive doctrine and on 28 October 1916 the German air ace Hauptman Oswald Boelcke was killed. When attacking two RFC DH 2's Boelcke had a slight collision with another aircraft of his own squadron which caused his Albatros to fall from the sky and he was killed on impact with the ground.

During the Somme battles 499 RFC aircrew were killed, wounded or missing compared with German losses of 359. In his thesis Thomas Bradbeer points out that whilst the ground campaign failed to accomplish most of its stated objectives, historians have argued that the air campaign was a victory for the RFC. He contends that because of the heavy aircrew casualties it in fact proved to be a Pyrrhic victory. The consequences of maintaining a continuous air offensive over the Somme led to nearly disastrous results for the RFC in its subsequent air campaign over Arras in April 1917.

I AM BUT A STRANGER HERE HEAVEN  
IS MY HOME -  
Pte James Fisher Graham Royal Scots

## BRIGADIER GENERAL REGINALD JOHN KENTISH (RJK) & HIS 5<sup>th</sup> TALE - "A PADRE OF THE RIGHT TYPE"



R.J. Kentish

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 described amusing incidents he experienced in WW1 and this is the fifth tale.

## A PADRE OF THE RIGHT TYPE

SCENE: TIME: PLACE: A GHQ car on the road from Bailleul to Auxi-le-Chateau, sometime in April 1916.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE: The Deputy Chaplain General to the Forces, Bishop Gwynne (Bishop of Khartoum); a Padre and myself.

I was commanding the 76th Infantry Brigade at the time, and we were out of the line a mile or two from Bailleul having a few days rest, when Lieut. Colonel Jimmie' Brownlow, Rifle Brigade, the Commandant of the III Army Infantry School, which I had brought to life a few months previous to this story, and which was then established in the



pretty little village of Auxi-le-Chateau, situated half way between Montreuil and Amiens, rang me up and asked me if I could possibly find time to go and give the School a "talk".

This I readily agreed to do, and ringing through to a friend at court at GHQ I asked him if he could provide me with transport to get me to Auxi-le-Chateau and back, to which he replied that he thought he could manage it and would ring me later.

An hour or two afterwards he rang me to say that a car would pick me up on the day and at the time I had asked for it, and in it I should find the Deputy Chaplain General, who was going to Amiens, and that after dropping me at Auxi, it would take him on,

leave him there and return to pick me up at Auxi and bring me back to Bailleul.

The car duly arrived on the day and time arranged and in it I found the **Deputy Chaplain General, Bishop Gwynne**, brother of Stephen Gwynne of "Morning Post" fame. He had recently been appointed Deputy Chaplain General to the Forces, and one of his principal duties was the appointment and posting of all the Church of England Padres to the Regiments in France.

Greeting him as my senior officer with one of my No.1 salutes, for, as Deputy Chaplain General, he ranked as a Major General, whilst I was just a mere Brigadier General, and a "Good morning, sir," I got into the car and off we started on our journey.

Bishop Gwynne turned out to be a delightful personality with the widest and most sympathetic outlook on life, and certainly most understanding of his fellow men and of their shortcomings. It wasn't long before I found myself talking to him as though he was a very old friend.

After telling him how the III Army Infantry School had come to life and how, during the time I had been its Commandant, I had done everything in my power to instil into the Officers, passing through my hands, the necessity of getting to know, understand, and be kind to their men, the Bishop said: "Yes, General, you are quite right. There's only one way to win battles, and that is to first get the men into the right mood, for when in the right mood they will follow their officers anywhere no matter what or how great the danger may be: and the only way to get them into the right mood is to treat them with humanity, kindness and commonsense."

And then he suddenly said: "Tell me, General, how do you find the Padres in your

Brigade? Are they the right sort? Do they get on with, and are they liked by the men? Tell me, please, I'd like to know?"

"All my four padres" - I had two Church of England, one R.C. and a Presbyterian - "are excellent fellows," I said, "and one 'Pat' Leonard" (for some years now he has been and still is right hand man to the Rev. P. B. 'Tubby' Clayton of 'Toc H' fame) "is an absolute winner.



Temporary Chaplain to the Forces 4th Class, M.P.G. Leonard DSO who, in April 1916, was Chaplain to 8th King's Own Royal Lancaster's one of the battalions in RJK's 76 Brigade

I've never met a better 'padre' ever since I joined the Army twenty years ago, and I don't think I ever shall. The men just love him."

"I'm very glad to hear what you say," said Bishop

Gwynne, "because ever since I've been

more or less in charge in France, I've been asking the Chaplain General at home only to send me out young Padres, who are prepared to live the lives the men lead out here; men who, when their Battalions go up to the line, will go up and remain with the men and help them all they can; and then, when they come out of the line to rest, not just to confine themselves to looking after the religious side of their men's lives, but to do everything possible to amuse them with sports and concerts and in every possible way to make them happy and give them other things to think about besides the war. This is the kind of Padre I've told them at home to send me out, and it's the kind I hope, in time, to have with every Battalion in France."

And then, seeing I was very interested, he went on: "And now I'll tell you a story - a true story - of one of my young Padres, who arrived in France a short time ago and whom

I sent to a Battalion to take the place of one who hadn't been a success," and with a smile on his face and saying, "I hope it won't shock you," he continued:- "The Padre duly reported to his Battalion just as it was going up to the trenches, and was cordially greeted by the Colonel, who introduced him to the Adjutant and one or two other officers, and then off they went up to the line."

"Arriving at Battalion HQ the Colonel, after taking over from the out-going C.O. said to the Padre, 'I'm going up to the line now, Padre. Make yourself at home and when you feel inclined, turn in,' and saying this off he went with his Adjutant, leaving the Padre and the Medical Officer behind."

"Directly the C.O. had gone, the Padre said to the M.O.:

'Where did the Colonel say he was going?'

'To the front line,' said the M.O.

'But isn't this the front line?' said the Padre.

'No,' said the M.O. 'This is Battalion Headquarters!'

'Then where's the front line?' asked the Padre.

'Almost a mile and a half from here!' said the M.O.

'But that's where I want to be,' said the Padre, 'in the front line with the men!'

'Well you'd better tell the C.O. when he returns,' said the M.O. 'and I expect he'll find you a dug-out somewhere in the line, although he may want you to stay back here, where the Padres always stay.'

"When the C.O. returned about two hours later the Padre made his request, and he was so earnest about it that the C.O. told the Adjutant to find him a dug-out in the front line the next day."

"This he did and with an Army blanket over the entrance and a board, on which he had chalked in white letters 'The Vicarage' over the top, he very soon settled in, and it wasn't long before he had got to know and was on excellent terms with the men."

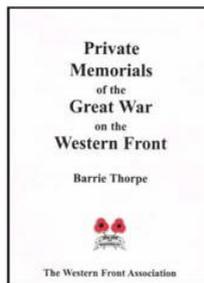
"A day or so later a young soldier, - a cockney - who had just come out from England with a draft, and had been sent straight up to the line, was being shown round the trenches by an older soldier, and as they came round the corner of a traverse they suddenly came to the Padre's dug-out, and seeing the words 'The Vicarage' on the board over the entrance, the young Cockney said: 'Gor blimey, mate! Who'd ever 'ave thought of seeing the ----- Vicarage in the ----- front line?'

"The words were hardly out of his mouth," said Bishop Gwynne, "when the Padre, popping his head out from behind the blanket, said: 'And who'd ever 'ave thought of seeing the ----- Vicar too?!'"

"What do you think of that type of Padre, General?" said the Bishop. "He's the right sort, don't you think?"

"Yes, Bishop, he certainly is," I said, "and I can only say that if I had to have 1,000 Padres serving under me, I'd like to have 1,000 all like that one." - and indeed I would!

And so ends this very human little story of two splendidly human men of the Church. A story I have told hundreds of times, when addressing officers, both old and young, on leadership and the importance of officers being human - very human - in all their dealings with their men.



**VISITING FRANCE THIS SUMMER?**  
**I have the last 5 copies of Barrie Thorpe's**  
**little book which is an ideal travelling**  
**companion. Price £5.00 + £1.50 p&p, as**  
**necessary. My contact details (Editor) are on**  
**the back page of Despatch**

AND THE SPIRIT SHALL RETURN TO  
GOD WHO GAVE IT - 2nd Lieutenant D  
R M Smith Royal Scots

Researchers are helped by the publication of citations in the government's official newspaper, the London Gazette, giving details of the man and his brave actions. A guide to the current value of the medal is provided by the sale of a DCM, plus Silver War Medal and Victory Medal (below) to

## GREAT WAR MEDALS - THE DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT MEDAL: Bill Myers

The Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) pre-dates the First World War but this conflict resulted in the issue of more medals than all other wars put together. Around 25,000 were awarded for gallant service in the First World War - compared to 800 for the Crimea and 2,000 for the Boer War.



It was introduced in 1854 with the reverse bearing the wording "For Distinguished Conduct in the Field." First World War issues have the head of King George V on the front - before 1902 the design was a pile of weapons. The 36mm medal was struck in silver suspended from a crimson ribbon with a dark blue central stripe. The edge bears the name, number and rank of the recipient. Since 1916 the DCM has ranked as superior to the Military Medal - which was issued in much bigger numbers. It has been popularly seen as being one step down from the Victoria Cross for "other ranks".



Swarthmoor-born John Hodgson on 2 March 2016. They were among lots in the sale by Bosleys Military Auctioneers of Marlow, Buckinghamshire, and sold for £1,200.

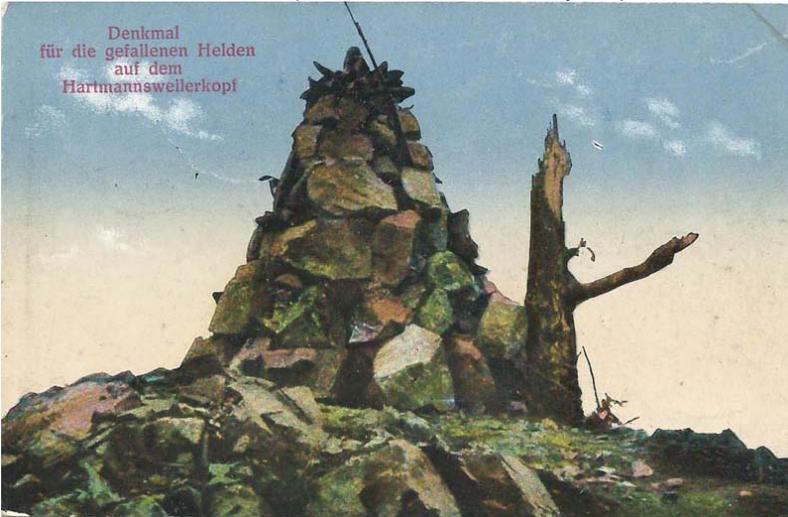
The 1911 census had a John Hodgson, aged 13, staying with his aunt Elizabeth Townson and her two sons Alfred and Harry at Goad Street, Swarthmoor. During the First World War he was a sergeant, army number 27744, serving with the 8th Battalion of the King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment. The citation for the DCM appeared in the London Gazette on December 5 in 1918. It noted: "*For conspicuous gallantry during an attack, when his platoon had fought their way through a village and were consolidating the objective forward, an enemy machine gun opened from a house behind them. This non commissioned officer immediately went back through intense fire, to attack it. Finding himself unable to get at the gun unaided he ran over to a tank 300 yards away and guided it to the house and he rushed this position and brought away the gun. His splendid courage and initiative saved many casualties and enabled consolidation to be satisfactorily completed.*"

## FAVOURITE POSTCARDS: Andrew Brooks

The two postcards (one is French and the other German) are favourites as they bring back memories of an extremely enjoyable trip to the Vosges in the autumn of 2012 with our Chairman Stan Wilkinson and his son Oliver. One of the highlights of the trip was an



exploration of the Hartmannswillerkopf (HWK), a mountain of over 3,000ft. Today the visitor can visit the museum and then can climb up to the well preserved trenches and fortifications of both the French and German armies as they fought throughout 1915 to control the summit. The French postcard almost certainly depicts some of the 1,500 German



prisoners taken when there was a final flurry of slaughter on the HWK in December 1915. The Germans counter-attacked immediately after the French and fighting continued into the New Year. After this battle both sides recognised the

futility of fighting in this region and it became a quiet sector of the front line for the rest of the war. The HWK remained in German hands and the postcard is of the memorial to the men who died. When the Americans entered the war, almost all the twelve divisions were trained on this front.

A map showing the location of the HWK in relation to the other main sites in the Vosges Mountains is contained in the supplement to the November 2011 Despatch on our website.

## WESTERN FRONT AND OTHER STRATEGIC EVENTS TIMELINE - 1<sup>st</sup> JUNE TO 30<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 1916 (largely based on [www.greatwar.co.uk](http://www.greatwar.co.uk))

Some of the centenary events in Europe to the next Despatch are as follows:-

<b>Jun-16</b>		<b>Sep-16</b>	
3	Austrian Trentino offensive starts to fade	1	Bulgaria declare war on Rumania
4	Russian "Brusilov" offensive starts	2	14 German airships raid London & other parts of England
5	Kitchener killed in sinking of HMS Hampshire	3	Battle of Guillemont begins (ends 6 Sept)
5	Arab revolt at Mecca starts against Turks (later involving T E Lawrence)	9	Battle of Ginchy (Somme)
8	2 <sup>nd</sup> Compulsory Service Act in GB comes into operation	14	7 <sup>th</sup> Battle of Isonzo begins (ends 18 Sept)
16	Italian counter-offensive in Trentino begins (ends 7 July)	15	Battle of Flers-Courcelette begins, tanks in actions for first time (ends 22 Sept)
27	Greeks mobilise against Central Powers	23	Two airships shot down whilst raiding England
<b>Jul-16</b>		24	Krupp works at Essen bombed by French aircraft
1	Somme battles begin starting with Battle of Albert (ends 13 July). Control of air integral to campaign	25	Battle of Morval begins
7	Lloyd George succeeds Kitchener as SoS for War	26	Battle of Thiepval Ridge begins
14	Battle of Bazentin Ridge begins (ends 17 July)	28	Battles of Morval & Thiepval end
15	Battle of Delville Wood begins (ends 3 September)	<b>Oct-16</b>	
19	Battle of Fromelles (ends 20 July)	1	Battles of le Transloy & Ancre Heights begin (ends 18 Oct & 11 Nov respectively)
23	Battle of Pozieres Ridge begins (ends 3 September)	9	Eighth Battle of Isonzo begins (ends 12 <sup>th</sup> Oct)
<b>Aug-16</b>		11	Greeks accept Entente demands to surrender their fleet
3	Roger Casement Executed	24	First Offensive Battle of Verdun begins by French
4	German advance into Sinai stopped at Romani	26	First German destroyer raid in Dover Straits
6	Battle of Goriza (Isonzo) begins (ends 17 Aug after Goriza taken)	29	Sherif of Mecca proclaimed "King of the Arabs"
17	End of "Brusilov" offensive	31	9 <sup>th</sup> Battle of Isonzo begins (ends 4 <sup>th</sup> Nov)
17	Rumania agrees convention with Entente Powers	<b>Nov-16</b>	
27	Rumania mobilise & declare war on Austria-Hungary	13	Battle of Ancre begins, Beaumont Hamel stormed by British forces
28	Germany declares war on Rumania	15	British advance into Sinai begins
28	Italy declares war on Germany	18	Battles of the Somme end (inc Battle of Ancre)
29	Hindenburg replaces Falkenhayn as German Chief of Staff	21	Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria dies
30	Turkey declare war on Rumania	23	Provisional Greek Govt declare war on Germany & Bulgaria
31	Defensive Battle of Verdun ends	26	2 <sup>nd</sup> German Naval raid on Lowestoft

## INTO THE FRAY (1<sup>st</sup> June 1916 to 30<sup>th</sup> November 1916)

Despatch Issues 14 to 16 detailed the 90 Lancashire units (infantry battalions and cavalry regiments/squadrons) entering war theatres by 30<sup>th</sup> May 1916 and their deployment by period is as follows:

Period	Units
4 August 1914 to 31 May 1915	41
1 June 1915 to 30 November 1915	44
1 December 1915 to 31 May 1916	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>90</b>

The table at the bottom of the article lists the 2 battalions which went overseas in the period covered by this report.

### 11S KORL

“Bantams at War” by William Carter describes the effort that was necessary to obtain the men to bring the 11<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion, The King’s Own Royal (Lancaster) Regiment (11S KORL) up to strength. A recruiting party comprising the Band of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion KORL together with an acting Adjutant and Quartermaster, Medical Officers, Parliamentary Speakers and Recruiting Sergeants all under the command of Major Worsley (3KORL) visited all the towns and villages in the Regimental Recruiting Zone.

All recruits raised were posted to the Depot (except those who wished to join particular Regiments) and any under 5 foot 2 inches in height were posted to the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion, whilst the taller ones were sent to other battalions of the Regiment.

At Aldershot it was considered necessary

to weed out those unfit for active service in the original 4 battalions of 120 Brigade and the 12<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion South Lancashire Regiment was disbanded and its fit personnel transferred to the 3 remaining battalions of the Brigade.

### 1/12 LNL

Before the campaign on the Western Front had settled down to conditions of trench warfare, it had been decided to proceed with the creation of Pioneer Battalions, and to add one to each of the New Army Divisions. The 12th Territorial Battalion, The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment (1/12 LNL) was, in accordance with the above decision, raised in August, 1915

When 1/12 LNL joined 60<sup>th</sup> Division the commander **Major-General E. S. Bulfin, C.B.** commented:

“We were fortunate in getting the 1/12th Battalion The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, which came to us as our Pioneer Battalion, under a most capable officer, Lieut.-Colonel Beckett. They were a hard-bitten, thirsty lot of Lancashire miners, but what they could do with a spade was a perfect revelation.” This was not the first time he had a battalion of the Loyals under his command. On 12<sup>th</sup> August 1914 he had travelled across the Channel on SS Agapenor as a Brigadier General in 1<sup>st</sup> Division with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Loyals under his command.



Battalion/ Theatre/ Entry Date	Narrative
11S KORL France 3 Jun 16	Le Havre. Raised Lancaster June 1915 as a bantam bn. Oct 15 at Aldershot. Part of 120 Bgde, 40 Div. Mar 16 absorbed part of 12S Battalion South Lancs Regt. Loos trenches July 16.
1/12 LNL France 22 Jun 16	Le Havre. Formed Lytham Aug 15 part of Territorial Force. Apr 16 Pioneer Battalion 60 Div, Salisbury Plain. Trenches opposite Vimy Ridge July 16.

LOVING SON A SOLDIER BRAVE A  
MOTHER'S HEART LIES IN YOUR GRAVE -  
Pte I Murphy Royal Dublin Fusiliers

## MUSEUM REPORTS

Before the normal reports from museums the following is brief information about the seven museums who contribute to Despatch.

**Museum of Lancashire:** Last November Lancashire County Council (LCC) indicated that funding was being withdrawn from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 but this date has now been put back to the end of September. The museum is now open 4 days per week (Wed, Thurs, Fri, and Saturday) compared to last year when it was open all days except Monday. It is understood that discussions are taking place with other bodies to run the museum. It is not known what will happen to the records of the 14<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> King's Hussars or the records of the Duke of Lancaster's Own Yeomanry.

**King's Own Royal Regiment Museum, Lancaster:** There is no certainty about museum funding from 1st April 2017.

**King's Liverpool Regiment Museum:** The King's Regiment collection is held by the Museum of Liverpool which is part of National Museums Liverpool.

**Fusiliers Museum, Bury:** Is operated by a Company Limited by Guarantee and "just about breaks even each year".

**Lancashire Infantry Museum, Preston:** Holds the records for the East, South and Loyal North Lancashire Regiments which are antecedent regiments of the current Duke of Lancaster's Regiment (DoLR). The DoLR has indicated it plans to withdraw its financial support to the museum in 2019 and methods of compensating for the future loss of support are being investigated.

**Manchester Regiment Collection and Museum, Tameside:** Due to staff reductions the Local Studies and Archives Section have

had to cut all work on researching and writing material for Despatch and similar for the foreseeable future. The museum has been closed since May last year for structural alterations. It should reopen this summer and information will be made known on the museum website.

**Liverpool Scottish Regiment Museum:** The Liverpool Scottish Museum Trust display at the old Edge Lane TA Centre (Botanic Road) closed in 2008. Material is now in storage with some transferred to the Museum of the Highlanders at Fort George or transferred to the Museum of Liverpool (or in the process of being transferred). The archive is held in small offices in Liverpool city centre provided by a benefactor. It is hoped to agree a permanent home for the archive by 2018 and to have completed a detailed catalogue. The Trust receive no regular financial support and rely on donations that are received from some (rather a minority) of those who make enquiries.

**Lancashire Infantry Museum - Somme, Shrapnel and Stanley Bewsher: Jane Davies Curator**

100 years ago at 7.20am on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916, the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the East Lancashire Regiment lined up at Serre on the Somme ready to go 'over the top'. A week long artillery bombardment by the British had supposedly left the Germans 'softened up'. The attack by the British infantry on the German lines that day would be a mere formality.

In reality, the bombardment had been unsuccessful. The Germans were merely shaken up and the barbed wire in No Man's Land remained untouched. As the British bombardment lifted, the German's were able to regroup and inflict devastating machine gun fire on the British soldiers who emerged from their trenches on that morning.

The 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion, East Lancashire Regiment, better known as the Accrington Pals consisted of men from Accrington, Chorley, Burnley, Blackburn and the surrounding areas. Amongst the Pals was a soldier called **Stanley Bewsher**.

Speaking in 1980, **Stanley** described what happened on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916 when the 720 men of the battalion went into action. Stanley mentioned that they took the first



German line without much resistance as it was very thinly manned. This also happened with the second line. However, when the battalion got in front of the third German line of trenches 'it was slaughter then. Men fell like ninepins.' 'There was rifle fire, machine-gun fire, it were terrible, men were falling just like...you know...'

In William Turner's book, 'Pals, The 11<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion (Accrington) East Lancashire Regiment' [Wharnecliffe Publishing Limited, Barnsley / p.150], Stanley Bewsher describes in great detail what happened to him on that day. 'I was right in front of a machine gun post. I emptied a drum at a few Germans who were on the trench parapet. They were throwing 'potato mashers' over my head - I'd got a bit too near. Some of them went back down the trench - I was surprised to see how wide it was - and I went after them. I got nearly to their second line. I looked around and there was only me there so I decided to go back. Still holding the Lewis Gun I went back to a shell hole about 20 yards into No Man's Land. I waited there thinking the lads would be coming. I suddenly saw some Germans coming back up their communication trench. I didn't know whether they were picking up wounded or not, I didn't wait to see. I fired at

them and they vanished. I was sure they were going to counter-attack so I ran back to our own lines. I had some near squeaks. One bullet hit my water bottle. I felt the water on my leg and thought it was blood. Another went through my haversack. It broke all my biscuits and hit a tin of bull-beef. A piece of shrapnel hit my Lewis Gun. It bent the barrel and knocked the foresight clean off. I saw a dead Sheffield Pal with his Lewis Gun alongside him. I threw mine down, picked his up and dropped into a shell hole. Then Gerry came back and I had another go at them. I picked up my gun, then made for our front line. By a stroke of luck I'd got to 'C' Sap. Lieutenant Colonel Rickman was there with Captain MacAlpine, the Signals Officer.'

After meeting up, Lieutenant Colonel Rickman sent Stanley Bewsher to join the defenders. As Bewsher was setting up his Lewis Gun position, he was hit on the head. The projectile knocked him unconscious and Stanley later woke up in the Advanced Dressing Station at Colincamps. He had been hit on his helmet by a piece of shrapnel. Stanley later recalled that the staff at the Dressing Station had struggled to get his helmet off as it was welded to his head.



Luckily they managed and Stanley kept the helmet as a souvenir.

Private Stanley

Bewsher survived the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916. Out of the 720 men of the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion who went over the top, 584 were killed, wounded or missing in action. For his bravery that day Stanley was awarded a Military Medal for 'reaching a German communication trench and firing his Lewis Gun at a group of the enemy forcing them to retire. When his own gun was damaged by shellfire, he picked up another and continued the attack.'

Stanley Bewsher's Steel Helmet with the shrapnel dent can be seen in the Somme Room of the Lancashire Infantry Museum. For details on opening times please see the museum's website:

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

SO YOUNG, SO GOOD, SO BRIGHT, SO BRAVE  
HE FOUGHT AND WON A HERO'S GRAVE -  
Private H G Ellis 3rd Bn Australian Inf

## 'PRESTON REMEMBERS 1914-1918' CITY TOURS: Peter Denby

Preston Remembers is a partnership project working with local communities to commemorate the First World War in Preston, and throughout 2016 (and maybe beyond) is running a series of three commemorative First World War walks.

These guided tours around the streets of Preston tell the stories of three very different people who had very different experiences of the war.

I was pleased to have joined each of the tours early in 2016 to learn about:



**Beatrice Blackhurst** - Farmer's daughter, domestic servant, solicitor's wife, mother, suffragist, campaigner for the welfare of women and children, and founder of the Preston Sailors' and Soldiers' Free Buffet;

**Joseph Garstang** - Son of a weaver and atheist, market gardener, fitness instructor, member of the Independent Labour Party,

conscientious objector, absolutist, prisoner, hunger striker; and

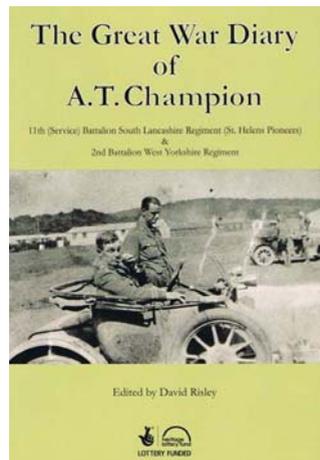
**John Gregson** - Plaster's son, brother, cotton mill worker, pre war soldier in India, husband, father, tram driver, reservist, corporal, sergeant...

The three trails cover different parts of Preston and have different starting points.

These free guided walks can be booked at [www.prestonremembers.org.uk](http://www.prestonremembers.org.uk), or alternatively they can be done as easy self guided walks - clear tour instructions and maps for each of the walks can be downloaded from the above web address, or the set of three small booklets with included maps can be picked up at various outlets (I got mine from the Harris Museum foyer).

## BOOK REVIEWS

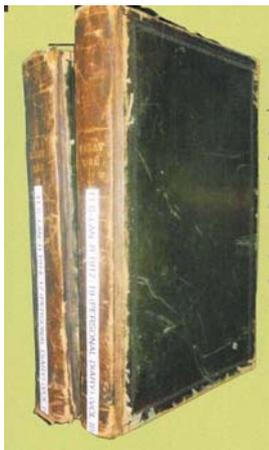
**The Great War Diary of A.T.Champion (11<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion South Lancashire Regiment (St. Helens Pioneers) & 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment: Dave Rogan (Chairman of the Friends of Lancashire Infantry Museum)**



Background - The genesis of this book came about as a result of D Risley and R Waring of the St Helens Townships Family

History Society writing the companion volume, St. Helens Pals, 11<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion South Lancashire Regiment (St Helens Pioneers) which was published in 2014.

Having finished this worthwhile piece of work, imagine their surprise when they were informed that the Lancashire Infantry Museum held a personal War Diary for one of the main protagonists in the setting up of the Battalion.



Alan Treweeke Champion was one of three brothers who followed 'Uncle Fred' to St Helens and joined the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion South Lancashire Regiment, the St. Helens Pals. From being commissioned as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in October 1914,

through commanding 'A' Company during the Battle of the Somme, until his demobilization as a Lieutenant-Colonel of the West Yorkshire Regiment in June 1919, he kept a daily diary

A personal appeal to the Heritage Lottery Fund allowed for the Diary to be edited by David Risley and produced, provided that the St Helens Family History Society was prepared to take on the extra workload. This book is the result.

At just over 350 pages this was definitely a labour of love as David struggled his way through the sometimes unclear manuscript, but the end result was definitely worth it.

Do not expect an in depth analysis of what the Battalion was up to, these are the personal jottings of an Officer who is as concerned for his men as his own billet on a day to day basis.

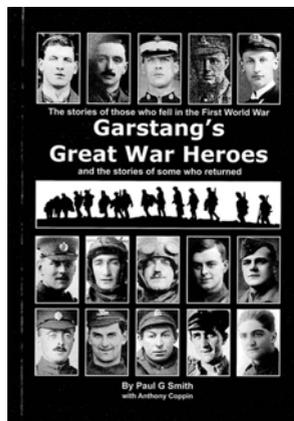
Food and the weather are the prominent, recurring items along with unclear orders and missing equipment. An example of this being A and C companies sent up to Talus Boise to work on July 8<sup>th</sup> 1916, but only finding 50 shovels and picks available instead of the 200 of each ordered.

These pioneers were in action from early December 1915 and were in action on the first day of the Somme with 30<sup>th</sup> Division. Subsequently they were involved in the battles of Arras, Messines and 3<sup>rd</sup> Ypres.

A worthwhile and meaningful addition to the story of the, often unsung, Pioneer Battalions.

### **Garstang Great War Heroes - The stories of those who fell in the First World War and the stories of some who returned: Paul Conlon**

This is not my typical reading matter concerning the Great War, having said that this book by Paul G Smith with Anthony Coppin does a good job of bringing to life the men who



fell in the Great War and are named on the Great War plaque on the Garstang War memorial. It is a good book for anyone interested in local history and the effect of the Great War on local communities. Significantly Paul and Anthony secured sponsors to meet their primary aim in writing the book of providing a copy to every pupil in the four schools in Garstang.

The title belies the content as this book is much more than just the stories of the 19 men recorded on the Garstang War

Memorials with roughly a third of the book about them. I think that the book outgrew the original brief during the research and writing phases. The book contains many good images from the period which helps bring it to life.

It also tells the story of 19 men who returned after service to resume their lives and deals with the thorny issues of how and why names were chosen for inclusion or omission from the memorial.

The difficult subject of the lengthy political infighting to get a war memorial is dealt with. It explains why the memorial was not unveiled until 1925, much later than adjoining parishes. This story has some parallels with the Accrington Pals post-war story, for anyone familiar with it.

Coverage is given to other local men who fell and are recorded elsewhere. The book concludes with the stories of two local Conscientious Objectors. Both men appeared to be true COs and were treated harshly which was the norm.

THE GRAVE THAT ENSHROUDS HIM IS  
PRECIOUS TO US -  
Pte A Knox Tyneside Scottish N F

DEAR EDITOR

*Most impressed with the amount of information you have unearthed about General Sir John Cowans. He is mentioned very briefly in 'The Private Papers of Douglas Haig' but nothing worthy of note.*

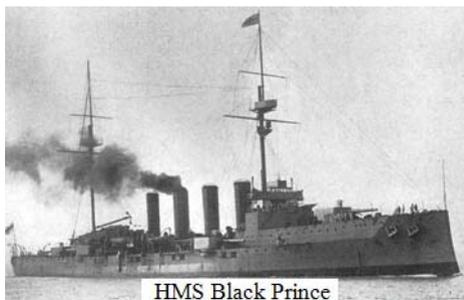
*You will probably already have realised or been informed that the 'Black Prince' illustrated on page 4 of Issue 16 is not the one sunk at Jutland, but the WW2 variety of less than 6,000 tons, put into service in 1942, sold (?) to the New Zealand navy in 1948 and scrapped in 1962. The 'Black Prince' sunk at Jutland was a four funnelled cruiser of about*

*13,500 tons, so considerably bigger than the one shown.*

*Regards, Clive Holden. (1<sup>st</sup> February 2016)*

In my reply I told Clive that his was the first comment and knowledge I had of my error re Black Prince and I would arrange a short and suitably contrite piece in this Despatch

The mitigating factors are that on googling "HMS Black Prince 1916" four images were displayed and I quickly chose the rear ship view as the most appealing but failed to count funnels or judge size! I have suitably corrected the article in Issue 16 on our website by inserting the correct image (below).



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MEETING REPORTS

**Death Battalion: November 2015** (22 attended)

**Lesley Wright** told the life story of Russian Maria Bochkareva who was born 1889, abused at home by her father she married at 15 only to suffer the same from her husband. When war commenced she decided to enlist in the army, secured the Tsar's permission and gradually won the respect of male soldiers. Over the next 3 years she was

wounded twice, awarded several decorations, formed the Battalion of Death and Emily Pankhurst visited Russia to meet her.

She was badly injured and the Bolsheviks tolerated **Maria** but after recovery she joined the White Army and was fortunate to secure



a passport to flee to America. With help from Florence Harriman she met President Woodrow Wilson and secured his promise to try and help Russia. Whilst in America she dictated her memoirs.

She then visited London, met King George V and other members of the British Government before returning to the White Army controlled Russia. She tried to raise a battalion of female White Russians but was captured by the Bolsheviks and executed by firing squad on 16 May 1920. (TD)

**A.G.M. December 2015:** Meeting cancelled due to inclement weather.

**The Battle of Langemarck, 1917:** January 2016 (23 attended)

**Denis McCarthy** presented a thoughtful perspective of the management of the Battle of Langemarck (16-18 August 1917), the second phase of the Third Battle of Ypres; setting it in the context of some significant achievements by the British Expeditionary Force earlier in 1917. These earlier achievements had included the successes at Vimy Ridge and Messines which, taken together with the earlier German withdrawal to the Hindenberg Line had encouraged senior British Commanders, including Haig and Gough, to take the view that the capability of the German Forces had

weakened sufficiently to make a significant breakthrough at Ypres, feasible.

Notwithstanding the difficult ground conditions created by rain and flooding that had seriously hampered the first element of Third Ypres, Haig decided to launch the next attack under the leadership of Gough, commander of Fifth Army, whose strengths as a 'thruster' were consistent with the desire to make a significant breakthrough of the German defensive positions. However, the outcome of the Battle of Langemarck did not achieve this objective. Though there was better progress on the Northern side of the British Front Line, early advances in the South on the Gheluvelt Plateau were not sustained and were soon forced back by powerful German counter-attacks.

Amongst the reasons cited by McCarthy for the lack of strategic success were:

- The perceived weakness of the German Forces was largely illusory at this stage of the war
- The Battle of Langemarck had all the hallmarks of poor planning, in contrast to the earlier successes at Messines and Vimy Ridge
- There were no plans for dealing with the inevitable German counter-attacks
- Corps Commanders were not united in their strategy, and too much caution was shown in several cases
- There was little or no contingency planning for the men on the ground, with poor information (e.g. too few maps distributed) and little freedom for them to take the local initiative
- Poor logistics and inadequate artillery support

In contrast, some later successes within Third Ypres, under Plumer's leadership, had more success because of more limited objectives, better consolidation against counter-attacks, and effective use of counter-

battery tactics that undermined the artillery support for German counter-attacks.

The interest in the talk was shown clearly by the substantial number of questions from the audience. (Chris Payne)

BE YE ALSO READY - Pte S Dean  
Tyneside Scottish NF

**Poor little Belgium: February 2016** (17 attended)

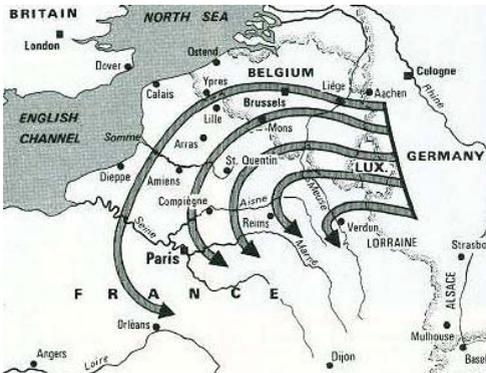
The plucky determination of Belgium's modest 1914 army to hang on to as much of



its territory as possible - in the face of overwhelming odds - was told in a talk by historian **John Chester**.

Newspapers around the world referred to "Poor

Little Belgium", as the neutral country with just 117,000 soldiers, faced everything the Germans could throw against it. Mr Chester argued that it was really: "Brave Little Belgium."



Germany's Von Schlieffen Plan called for a massed advance through Belgium at

lightning speed to take Paris and end the war. Belgium was called on to stand aside while this happened but King Albert refused and in the first 48 hours of fighting in August 1914, the Germans suffered 10,000 killed and wounded to just 400 Belgians.

The Belgians had rings of forts at Liege, Namur, Gent, Mons and Antwerp. They were bypassed or destroyed with huge howitzer guns with a barrel diameter of 42cm.

Belgium's civil guard - a militia to guard public buildings - were ordered to give up their weapons as the invasion began on August 4, or risk being shot by the Germans. It was just as well they did, as there were a number of well-documented "atrocities" when civilians were killed. Mr Chester said that at Aarschot a total of 150 were executed and 400 homes destroyed and at Tamines on August 22, some 400 were shot and killed. The medieval Leuven University Library was deliberately burnt.

Antwerp became a centre for refugees and many were shipped to Britain - along with government documents and national treasures. He said: "It was the only free city left in Belgium." Bakers distributed free bread and a civilian workforce strengthened Antwerp's defences before 125,000 Germans began an assault on the city from September 27. There was even an air raid by a Zeppelin on October 3.

Men of the British Royal Naval Division landed to help in the fight but the defenders were pushed back closer to the coast at Nieuwpoort. Engineers destroyed sluices controlling the Yser River to flood a vast area of ground and make progress difficult for the invaders. Small-scale assaults were made over defended islands left above the floods - and in winter Belgian field guns were deployed on the ice.

Despite the odds, the Belgians hung on to their small piece of territory close to the French border. There is a large memorial to

the men of the Royal Naval Division at Nieuwpoort.

**Returned to the Regiment: March 2016** (20 attended)

Although **Terry Dean** had previously mentioned the subject of this talk in 2006 it was not until I was designated to review his talk in May 2009, 'Several Battalion Commanders', that I really remembered the name 'Gilbert Mackereth'

(GM). In November 2010 (Despatch No.6) Terry gave an update on Mackereth's grave in Spain and the subsequent media interest. By May 2011 a further update



described how the search was on to discover if GM's will said that his remains should stay in Spain. When it was confirmed that there was no will and with the agreement of GM's surviving cousin, the indomitable TD collected the ashes from San Sebastian and on Armistice Day 2011 GM's cousin unveiled the Remembrance Stone, in the Gallipoli Garden, Bury, over the last resting place of Lt.-Col. Sir Gilbert Mackereth.

The evening's talk summed up the life of GM, a name that had been one of many when Terry was researching the 17<sup>th</sup> Lancashire Fusiliers. He was born in Salford in 1892 and was educated at Manchester Grammar School and Manchester University before enlisting on November 19<sup>th</sup> 1914. Placed in the 21<sup>st</sup> Royal Fusiliers, 33<sup>rd</sup> Division he trained at Woodcote Park Camp and the Clipstone Camp before crossing to France in November 1915. After a spell in the

trenches at La Bassee he was offered the chance of a commission and attended the Officer Cadet Battalion at Balliol College in the spring of 1916. By September he was an officer with the 17<sup>th</sup> Lancashire Fusiliers (LF) at Trones Wood on the Somme and in April 1917 he was awarded a Military Cross with the LF when they captured Gricourt. General Rawlinson said this had been a superb action. However after a spell of home leave GM planned the attack on Canal Wood in which he was severely wounded and had to spend five months in a Manchester hospital. He reported for duty on the 15<sup>th</sup> June 1918 and by the 13<sup>th</sup> August was the battalion commander. On the 12<sup>th</sup>



September he was removed from command and replaced by Lt.-Col. Jones who was mortally wounded on the 14<sup>th</sup> October 1918 and GM resumed command.

After the war GM secured a post in the Foreign Office, studied Arabic at Pembroke College and was appointed to the Consulate in Beirut. In October 1923 he was transferred to Fez and then in 1930-33 had a spell as a Vice-Consul in Ethiopia. He moved to Damascus in 1933 followed by Italian East Africa but left after the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1940.

When WW2 ended GM was posted to Batavia in March 1946 and was there when Sukarno declared independence for Indonesia. The period 1947-53 saw him as



our Ambassador to Columbia and he was eventually knighted by Queen Elizabeth in October 1953 after the death of King George VI.

This was another excellent talk and Terry certainly found a man worth researching and remembering. As he said in May 2012 'Project Mackereth' had maybe reached the end of the line. I doubt it! (Andrew Brooks)

**The Palestine Campaign: April 2016** (22 attended)



**David Wright** commenced his talk by declaring that his interest had arisen from his uncle serving as a batman under Allenby.

He then outlined how the Ottoman Empire had declined by WW1 and in joining WW1 on Germany's side Enver Pasha hoped to regain parts of the Empire. Churchill further outraged public opinion in Turkey by seizing 2 battleships being built for Turkey in British shipyards and all Muslims were urged to rise up against the British.

After briefly covering Turkey's losses in their December 1914 foray into the Caucasus he touched on the Gallipoli campaign before describing British and Indian efforts to secure oil in Mesopotamia which led to the surrender at Kut in April 1916 due largely to logistic problems in moving troops and supplies up the Tigris.

Following the failure of Turkish efforts to capture the Suez Canal in early 1915 they withdrew. The British moved across the northern Sinai constructing a railway and pipeline. After General Murray lost the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> battles at Gaza in early 1917 he was replaced by Allenby. Following the strengthening of his forces, gaining air superiority and an elaborate deception plan for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Gaza, Allenby captured

Jerusalem in December 1917 but the



German offensive in March 1918 caused a transfer of troops to France.

The final British offensive was fought at Megiddo commencing on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1918. It led to the destruction of three Ottoman field armies, the capture of 76,000 prisoners and the rapid conquest of Palestine, Jordan and southern Syria.

## 2016 PROGRAMME: APRIL TO DECEMBER

(ALL MEETINGS ON FIRST MONDAY IN MONTH AT 7.30 PM EXCEPT WHERE STATED OTHERWISE)

**June 6<sup>th</sup>:** *"The Football Charge at the Battle of Loos"*: - Dr Iain Adams

**July 4<sup>th</sup>:** *"Stories and Use of the Royal Flying Corps outside Europe"* - Graham Kemp

**Aug 1<sup>st</sup>:** *"Three Days in the Great War"*: Examines the performance of the 49<sup>th</sup> Division in 3 set-piece attacks - Derek Clayton

**Sept 5<sup>th</sup>:** *"The story of a New Army Battalion"*: 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion Rifle Brigade 1915-18 including the personal account of Rifleman No 16111 - Graham Kemp

**Oct 3<sup>rd</sup>:** *"India's Great War"* - Adam Prime

**Nov 7<sup>th</sup>:** *"The Home Front"* - Tim Lynch

**Dec 5<sup>th</sup>:** *A.G.M. and Christmas Social* - An invitation to members to speak for ten minutes on any WW1 topic



## THE RING OF MEMORY AND STEWART BOND'S GREAT WAR EXHIBITION (+S)

Perhaps the above panoramic photo may qualify for a world record in containing the largest number of soldier's names on a single image. The Ring of Memory stands next to the French cemetery at Notre Dame de



Lorette. It was inaugurated on 11 November 2014 by President Hollande and commemorates the memory of all men who died in Northern France during WW1 - whatever their nationality or religion.

It is inscribed with the names of 579,606 soldiers, of which 241,214 are British, the



highest number for any country. There are 173,876 Germans and 106,012 French soldiers. No rank or regiment is shown. The names are listed in alphabetical order, regardless of nationality. Thankfully I became aware of its existence from the Merseyside Branch newsletter "*Cheerio*" of January 2016 and therefore was not ignorant

of the Memory Ring when visiting Stewart Bond's Great War Exhibition.



Stewart's exhibition is displayed in the offices of his company **sbca** (chartered accountants) at 17 Moor Park Avenue, Preston. The booklet he has produced to



accompany the exhibition entitled "*The Great War*" is a supplement to *Despatch*. It states his objective: "*To encourage visits to the battlefields, educate and to the memory of those who fell in the Great War.*"

Stephen Bull, curator of the Museum of Lancashire comments: "*Capturing the legacy of the war in a way that attracts and absorbs, rather than repels, is no easy task. Yet this is exactly what has been achieved here.*"

To view the exhibition please telephone 01772 204102.

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