



The Spire Sentinel



**The Newsletter & Magazine of The
Chesterfield Branch of The Western Front
Association**



ISSUE 72 - February 2022

Our aims are 'Remembrance and Sharing the History of the
Great War'.

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WFA ZOOM MEETINGS for February, but please keep an eye on the Website and Facebook pages as sometimes there are amendments during the month Follow these links for registering (please note dates and times)

03 FEB 2022 20:00 "BIG QUIZ" By popular demand the 'Big Quiz' nights continue, for members to get together, and to test their knowledge. The next of these will take an hour or so and will start at 8pm (UK time) on Thursday 3 February. The Quiz is meant to be light hearted and hopefully we will be able to pitch this at a level that is not too difficult. In order to make this even more engaging, we are inviting members to think up ten questions which will be asked of those taking part. Those members who would like to think up ten questions are requested to email these to the host, Andy Thompson no later than 2 February. Andy's email address is andy.ewt@gmail.com To register to join this quiz, simply register using this link >>>

Big Quiz Registration https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_-wljS8FbS5S7pcWVtaoNgA

07 FEB 2022 20:00 Chaplains of The Western Front by Dr Emily Mayhew <http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/events/online-chaplains-of-the-western-front/>

10 FEB 2022 19:30 ONLINE VIRTUAL TOUR #5 Mont St Quentin 1918: 'A necessary feat of arms?' <http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/events/online-virtual-tour-5-mont-st-quentin-1918-a-necessary-feat-of-arms/> (There is no pre-registration for this event)

14 FEB 2022 20:00 The Escape Artists by Neal Bascomb <http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/events/online-the-escape-artists/>

17 FEB 2022 20:00 THE BIG QUIZ CONTINUES <http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/events/the-big-quiz-night/>

21 FEB 2022 20:00 The Demon Saves the Day: Charles FitzClarence VC and the First Battle of Ypres 1914 by Dr Spencer Jones <http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/events/online-the-demon-saves-the-day-charles-fitzclarence-vc-and-the-first-battle-of-ypres-1914/>

24 FEB 2022 19:30 VIRTUAL TOUR #6 'Yorkshiremen, Highlanders and Champagne': The attack on the Ardre Valley July 1918 <http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/events/online-virtual-tour-6-yorkshiremen-highlanders-and-champagne-the-attack-on-the-ardre-valley-july-1918/> (There is no pre-registration for this event)

28 FEB 2022 20:00 High Wire: Travels along the Italian Front By Tom Isitt <http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/events/online-high-wire-travels-along-the-italian-front/>

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



Secretary's Scribbles

Dear Members and Friends,

Welcome to the February issue of the Branch newsletter and magazine. I think I am not alone by saying that I thought the January meeting went well - a good AGM with some interesting comments about where we, as a Branch go, now that we seem to be emerging from the dark pit of covid. Great to see Jon-Paul Harding making his speaking debut with his talk on the CWGC 'Eyes On - Hands On' project. J-P gave a confident performance which certainly made members aware of the great work he is doing looking after CWGC grave sites in cemeteries in and around Chesterfield.

I recently visited the widow of one of our late members. Due to infirmity he could never get to meetings but loved the updates he received via the Newsletter and, of course the Stand To! And Bulletin magazines. The lady donated his collection of VHS video tapes, most are on WW1 subjects, but there are others of general military interest. I am aware that very few of us now possess VHS players, but, if you are interested, please peruse the list in this newsletter and let me know if you would like any. It would be a shame just to throw them away. The lady also gave me three folders of transcriptions of WW1 soldier's diaries. The originals, being very fragile, indeed now barely legible, have now been placed in the care of the Imperial War Museum. The transcriptions will appear in future issues of this newsletter.

C'est moi !.....will be Tuesday night's speaker...me!. As many of you know I also have a great interest in railways and their history, particularly the days of steam. I have recently been doing a series of articles for a railway enthusiasts journal on the North British Railway in The Great War - four parts have been published, part five is with the editor and I am now working on the concluding part - six. Doing the researches for these articles really opened my eyes to the indispensable part Britain's railways played during the 1914-1918 conflict. From that I have put together a presentation which I hope will be of interest to members 'Steaming to the Front - Britain's Railways in The Great War'. Much of my information came from Edwin Pratt's *magnum opus* - all 1200 pages of it which recorded the organisation, difficulties and achievements of British Railways in WW1. Please do come and watch / listen, your support will be appreciated.

Andy Rawson will be presenting again at our March meeting'They Think It's All Over'.....*Plenty has been said about the breaking of the Hindenburg Line. This time Andy will let us look at the pursuit of the Germans which occurred during the final weeks of the war.*"

E mails went out at the weekend to several other potential speakers for future months, members will be advised when these are confirmed.

In addition to our normal raffle at the end of the meeting, I will be having a book sale table. No fixed prices...take your pick...all we ask is a modest donation to Branch fundsand don't forget the VHS tapes.....

Look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on Tuesday

Our friend and colleague at the Lincoln and North Lincolnshire WFA Branch, Jonathon D`Hooghe has asked if we could give the undernoted a mention...if anyone is interested please get in touch with Jonathon directly, or via myself. Jonathon and some from his branch have organised a trip to Gallipoli this coming April but now finds he has three vacancies on the trip...hence this message.

Hi Grant,

If you could advertise for me, that would be appreciated.

The total cost, sharing a twin room, is in the region of £1380 (depends on the cost of the flight at the time of booking). We go Sunday April 3rd from Heathrow for 6 nights and the cost includes an English and Turkish guide/mini bus driver, full board accommodation and all travel - air and bus.

Only extras are your evening bar bill, any museum entry fees, souvenirs etc

Only the flight needs paying at this stage, we pay the Turkish hotel costs when we are there and we pay the UK guide when we get home.

Hope that all makes sense?

Should anyone be interested, they can contact me on this email address.

Leger tours are currently £1200pp but are not full board. Battle Honours tours are currently £1575pp. These are 50+ persons on and off the bus tours, whereas ours is a small bespoke tour with more opportunity to walk the ground.

Thanks

Jonathan

From one who visited Gallipoli in 2017, it is an unforgettable experience, so little has changed in over 100 years.

Jonathon can be contacted on

chairman@lincolnbranchwfa.com

Anyway, that`s all for now,

Grant Cullen

Branch Secretary

07824628638



BRANDED GOODS AVAILABILITY

New items are always being considered, so please check the Branded goods part of the shop for all items available.

Prices are inclusive of postage within UK (Branded Items Nos 1-11)

www.westernfrontassociation.com/shop/wfa-branded-items/?p=2

or call Head Office (Sarah Gunn or Maya Shapland) on 020 7118 1914

And the (Branded Clothing, Nos 12- 18) note new prices (under) effective from 1st July.

Order direct from supplier (West Coast Workwear) www.westernfrontassociation.com/shop/branded-clothing/
or ring (0800 169 2228 or 01704 873301)



1	Fridge Magnet	(£5)	59mm dia, front metal plate, high strength neodymium magnetic backplate, and plastic mylar front cover
2	Anniv' Coaster	(£8.50)	4" in diameter hand crafted slate. Individually polished, screen printed by hand and backed by a baize
3	Mousemats	(£6)	196 x 235mm fabric surface and are of high quality. They have a rubberised base layer
4	Bookmarks	(£2)	(dims 55 x 175mm) rich UV High Gloss Coating provides protection against stains and damage
5	Baseball Caps	(£8)	Lightweight 5 Panel cotton cap, adjustable with velcro rip-strip, one size fits all
6	Ties	(£11)	Length 142cm, width 9cm (at widest part), 100% Polyester
7	Lapel Badges	(£2.50)	25mm Dia. Die struck + imitation hard enamel, Silver Nickel Plating, Butterfly clutch pin
8	Mug	(£10)	11oz ceramic mug (95mm high x 85mm diameter) features the bold official WFA logo design (two sides)
9	Messenger Bag	(£27)	37 x 29 x 11cm, 100% Cotton. Full cotton lining. Zippered organiser section, Capacity:13 litres
10	Despatch Bag	(£30)	40 x 30 x 12 cm, (10) Washed Canvas, dual rear pouch pockets. Multiple zippered pockets. Capacity: 14 litres
11	Shoulder Bag	(£25)	40 x 28 x 18 cm, (10) (11) Polyester. Internal valuables pocket. Zippered front pocket. Capacity: 14 litres
12	Oxford Shirt	(£27)	Kustom Kit Short Sleeve Corporate Oxford Shirt. Easy iron button down collar, 85% cotton, 15% polyester
13	Breathable Jacket	(£71)	Russell Hydro Plus 2000 Jacket. Nylon taslon with PU Coating
14	Rugby Shirt	(£25)	Front Row Classic Rugby Shirt, 100% Cotton
15	Fleece	(£24)	Regatta Thor 111 Fleece Jacket, 100% polyester anti pill
16	T-shirt	(£17)	Russell Classic Cotton T-Shirt. 100% ringspun cotton
17	Sweat Shirt	(£22.50)	Gents Russell Jerzees Raglan / Ladies Fruit Of The Loom Raglan
18	Polo Shirt	(£20.50)	Russell Cotton Pique Polo Shirt. 100% cotton

As mentioned elsewhere the widow of a deceased member of the WFA has kindly donated her late husband's collection of VHS video tapes - all boxed , all in good condition. Below is the catalogue of tapes - these are available for any member if they would like them...and still have a workable VHS player. All we as a branch seek is a modest donation to branch funds and any postage if applicable

BBC Series `The Great War`. This is a boxed set of 10 videos of this iconic series.

BBC Series 1914-1918 `The Crucible` - 2 videos

BBC Series 1914-1918 `Total War` - 2 videos

WH Smith Video - The Story of the Great War

WH Smith Video - The Battle of the Somme

WH Smith Video - Life in The Trenches

DD Video - Voices From the Western Front

DD Video - Forgotten Men - Human Experience of WW1

DD Video - Battles of Vimy Ridge

DD Video - The Tunnellers War

DD Video - Dying at Verdun

DD Video - Pozieres

BBC Video - Haig - The Unknown Soldier

The following tapes are of general military interest - not WW1

DD Video - Warriors of Naval Aviation

DD Video - Vickers Wellington

DD Video - Warriors of the Night - Fighters and Bombers

Story of the Spitfire

Story of the Lancaster

Story of the Hurricane

Dunkirk

Battle of Britain - 50th anniversary Tribute

Battle of Monte Cassino

Battle of Waterloo

Flying Legends - Duxford

RAF - Camel to Spitfire

RAF - Lancaster to Tornado

January 4th 2022. WFA Chesterfield Branch AGM and Members Presentation Evening

Branch Chair Tony Bolton opened the meeting expressing appreciation at the better than anticipated turn out. Rob Nash then spoke The Exhortation. Tony then passed the meeting over to Branch Secretary. Grant said that it was great to have been back having live meetings in the second half of 2021 and thanked members for their support. With the exception of Mark Macartney, all Committee members and Office Bearers had offered to stand for re-election. Grant gave a vote of thanks to Mark, saying that Mark would still run our Facebook page and regularly update the Branch`s activities on the main WFA website. Grant mentioned that Mark in his role as WFA Branded Goods Trustee had, with the assistance of his wife Jean organised the sales, orders, and distribution of the WFA 2022 Calendars. They succeeded in selling out the entire print run of 1200 calendars - a magnificent effort.

Andy Rawson had expressed an interest in being elected to the Committee and his name was added to those for re-election. All were appointed unanimously. Here is your committee for 2022



Chairman (Tony Bolton)



Secretary (Grant Cullen)



Treasurer (Jane Lovatt)



Jon-Paul Harding (committee)



Peter Harris (Committee)



Andrew Kenning (committee)



Andrew Rawson (committee)



Publicity Administrator (Mark Macartney)

Branch Treasurer, Jane Lovatt made her report saying that, in spite of everything - with respect to covid - the Branch was in good health financially, and, as had been previously agreed by the members a new digital projector had been acquired and would be used for the first time tonight. Jane cautioned that we were holding quite a large sum in Branch funds (£4375.67) and should seek to use some of this money for branch / members benefit, for example a new computer for linking with the projector. Members agreed and Jane was thanked for her work in maintaining our solid finances. Jane advised that the Labour Club had not taken a membership levy for 2021

Tony Bolton wound up the AGM part of our evening by saying that, as we (hopefully) come out of covid restrictions we should engage more with the community, perhaps by seeking publicity through local newspapers and websites, local Facebook pages and such like. Tony also said the Branch should look to the future as in two year`s time he intended to stand down as Branch Chair as his position as National chair was taking up more and more of his time. Tony also said it would be nice to see more of our `old campaigners` return in 2022, having chosen to stay away during the pandemic.

There being no further business the AGM part of the meeting was closed.

Branch Accounts 2021

CHESTERFIELD WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION 2021

INCOME

MONTH	ATTENDANCE	RAFFLE	CALENDARS	BOOK SALES	INTEREST
JANUARY	No meeting				
FEBRUARY	No meeting				
MARCH	No meeting				
APRIL	No meeting				
MAY	No meeting				
JUNE	No meeting				
JULY	No meeting				
AUGUST	68	36			
SEPTEMBER	69	34		51.6	
OCTOBER	60	35	20	61	
NOVEMBER	72	47	30	32.5	
DECEMBER	51	30		22.6	
TOTAL	318	182	50	167.7	2.02 (E)

EXPENDITURE

MONTH	SPEAKER	ROOM	CALENDARS	MISCELLANEOUS
JANUARY	No meeting			
FEBRUARY	No meeting			160 DUDLEY GILES ONLINE PRESENTATIONS
MARCH	No meeting			
APRIL	No meeting			
MAY	No meeting			100 REISSUED CHEQUE RE: MALCOLM ACKROYD
JUNE	No meeting			
JULY	No meeting			
AUGUST	30	15		35.8 MEMBERS DRINKS * -1.61 LOSS MARCH 2020
SEPTEMBER	35	15		
OCTOBER	100	15		
NOVEMBER	30	15		
DECEMBER	51	15	25	
TOTAL	246	75	25	297.41

OPENING BALANCE 4299.36

CLOSING BALANCE 4375.67

TOTAL	246	75	25
OPENING BALANCE	4299.36		
INCOME	719.72		
EXPENDITURE	643.41		
	76.31		
CLOSING BALANCE	4375.67		

NB LABOUR CLUB SUSPENDED JOINING FEE FOR 2021

The business part of the evening over, it was now the `Members Presentations`

First up was Jon-Paul Harding who received hearty good wishes from the members on the occasion of his marriage to fiancé Donna on Christmas Eve .



Jon-Paul`s presentation was on his `Eyes On - Hands` work for the CWGC. He explained how he first became interested in WW1 when his grandmother gave him her father`s medals and `Death Penny`. In later years he sat down with his mum looking at family history and found that three ancestors had fought and died in the Great War. One was known about - from the medals - but not the other two as J-P`s mum had been adopted. Further research re-kindled his interest in WW1 and he followed this up with battlefield visits including finding an ancestor`s grave in St. Omer,

and others commemorated at Thiepval and Tyne Cot.

Having been impressed by how the cemeteries are cared for in Northern France and Belgium by the CWGC, upon hearing of a new project being started by the CWGC called `Eyes On - Hands On` to look after war graves in this country, of which there are over 100,000, many overgrown and forgotten. J-P applied to be involved in this project and was accepted as a volunteer. Covid struck and things got put on hold but now with restrictions relaxed, it is back on. After thorough training , he was allocated six cemeteries in and around Chesterfield. Two in Bolsover(17 graves), one grave in Calow, two graves in Duckmanton, one in Scarcliffe and Brimington with 16 graves, including a VC winner but he is commemorated only by a plaque indicating where his ashes are buried as he didn`t die in service. The CWGC helped by supplying site maps to make it easier to locate the graves, some of which are private. Only CWGC headstones qualify for major restoration or repair work. His initial visit was to familiarise himself with each cemetery and his first slide indicated the state some of them were in.



As shown in these pictures these were surrounded by weeds and overgrown grass, the stones marked with moss which as the pictures show J-P he has started to clean as well as clearing the grass and weeds surrounding each stone



Some of these stones are over 100 years old so there is no intention to having them look `brand new` simply to make them looked `cared for` again . No cleaning materials are permitted to be used...simply water and a brush...and elbow grease .

This was Jon-Paul`s first presentation at a WFA meeting, it was well received - cerinly judging by the questions which came his way after concluding - and most certainly won`t be his last!

Andrew Rawson now stepped up to the lectern to deliver his short presentation.

What Did the Romans Ever Do for Us?

Those who know me will be aware of some of the 15 World War I books I have written



But did you know I have written 25 books on other subjects

My recent interest has been in the American Civil War

A little too interested because I needed a new book shelf

I have been to two of the largest battlefields; Gettysburg and Antietam

And I plan to visit Virginia to see more when this pandemic business is over

So, what have I got to tell you that is so interesting?

Something of a War Tourist

Grant titled the talk, what did the British learn from the Civil War for 1914

In two words, bugger all! I don't think the British Army sent any observers



here was Captain Arthur Freemantle who went on a three-month holiday

But he has been described as 'a bit of a war tourist'

Happened to be present at the battle of Gettysburg

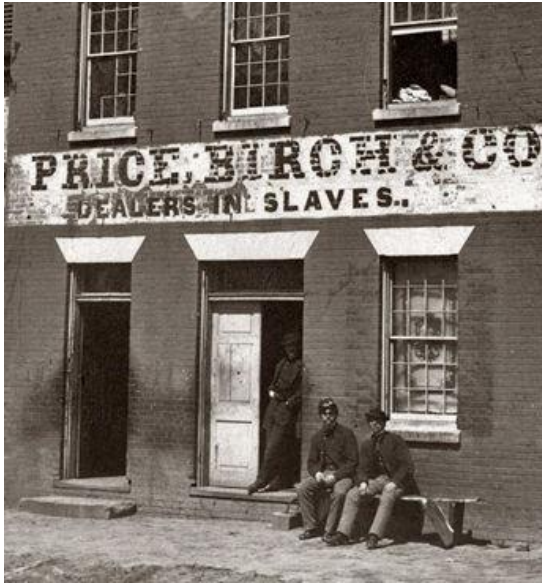
As you can see we British like our afternoon tea, from the film of the battle

He wrote a book about his travels but I will let you make your own mind up

If the British Army took any notice but bear in mind

Too busy fighting Chinese, Indians and Africans to take any notice of the colonials

Why Go to War?



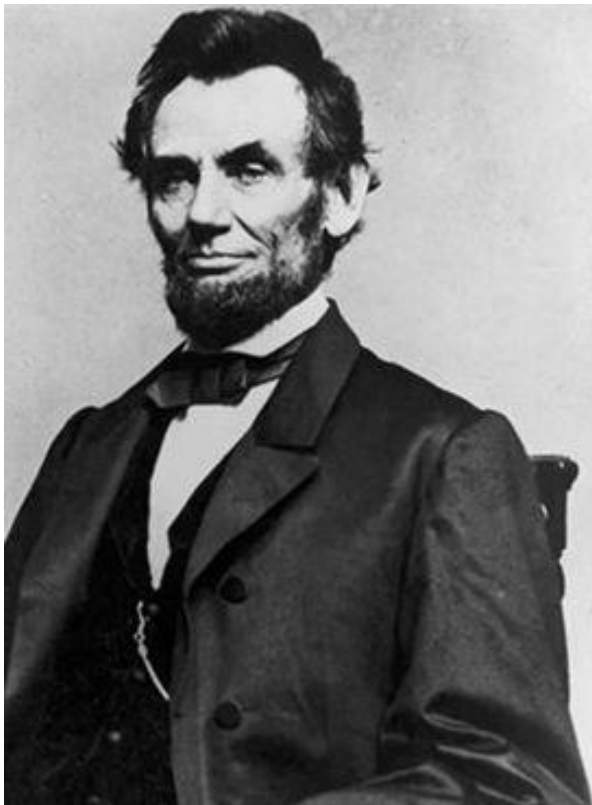
The north wanted to end slavery because it had no slaves

Meanwhile, the Southern agricultural economy depended on slavery

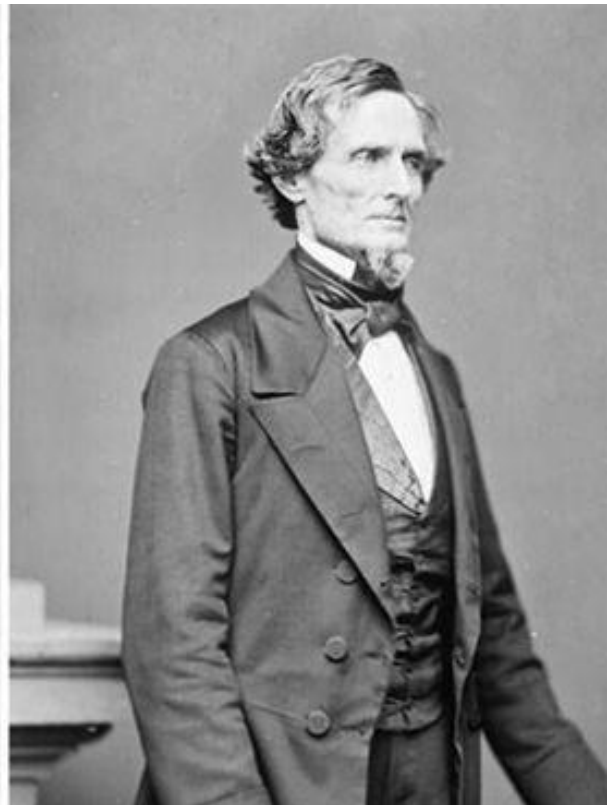
It was an affront to States Rights; the changing of laws that the majority wanted

But the north was not much better, for example Illinois which banned African Americans

So, eleven states seceded or did a Brexit, leaving twenty in the Union



Abraham Lincoln



Jefferson Davis

The war would last from April 1861 to April 1865

Expanding Armies



Regular Army was only 16,000 strong and was scattered in outposts

Militia was akin to British territorials

They were called up for three months, because that is how long the war was expected to last



Volunteer regiments akin to the new Armies were formed

By local dignitaries and ex-soldiers, like pals battalions

Over 3 million would serve eventually

Nearly half a million were of Irish or German ascent

200,000 African Americans in combat services many as slaves on war work

The big difference was half the officers stayed with the Federal Army, known as the Union Army

The other half joined the Confederate Army, known called the rebels

It resulted in friends and comrades facing each other across the battlefield

The Generals

The senior ones had experience from a war with Mexico 20 years before

The junior ones, many in their twenties, learnt on the battlefield

Politicians and lawyers clamoured for commissions, looking to hit the headlines

They were often hit by flying metal as they led their men into battle on horseback



Ulysses Grant won the war for the Union and was called a Butcher



Robert Lee was the hero of the Confederacy

He has been taken down and stored away because he was a slave owner

The Infantry



The soldiers marched many, many miles across the plains or rode rail cars

They lined up shoulder to shoulder and advanced towards their enemy

And stood firing away at each at no more than 100 yards apart

The problem was, new weapons were being developed

But the means of deploying them had not

Inexperienced officers lost control in the heat of battle, often with deadly results

Harry Heth has the best quote about his commanding officer

“He was as incapacitated for the work he had undertaken as I would have been to lead an Italian opera”

The Cavalry

Started off as pickets and moving screens, manning outpost and scouting the enemy

They usually dismounted to fight on foot with carbines

Their best tactical value came later, when large groups raided behind enemy lines

Stealing horses, burning supplies, blackmailing towns, ripping up railways, demolishing bridges

The Rifles



They started as single shot muzzle loading weapons

Turning to breech loading weapons

Ending with deadly repeater rifles which could fire multiple shots

Grenades and Mines



Grenades were used in sieges, the Ketchum (catch em?) was a ball shape

Others were a dart shape but they did not explode the first time they were used

So, the confused soldiers threw them back and this time they did work and the fun began...

The Rains mine was an anti-personnel landmine, you cannot see it because it is buried

Sniping and Mining



Sniping was carried out by sharpshooters, more so in siege warfare

But officers and standard bearers were targets in open battle

Major General John Sedgwick's were

'They couldn't hit an elephant at this distance'



Then we have tunnelling; you know about Lochnagar and Hawthorn Ridge

But coal miners dug tunnels under the trenches around Vicksburg and Petersburg

And then blew up these two smaller affairs

The Petersburg battle of the Crater is rather famous because the two Union commanders sat in a bunker getting drunk while their men ran into the crater, only to get stuck and shot at.

The Almost Rans

The Gatling Gun was a primitive machine gun but only a handful appeared

Either privately bought or on ships

The army snubbed them, which sounds familiar

Barbed wire did not appear until after the war

But cut down telegraph wire was staked out as trip hazards

The Entanglements



Instead saplings and branches were used to form all forms of obstacles

From stakes to frames to tangled obstacles

Specially trained teams armed with axes would chop gaps through them

Leading raids and attacks into enemy trenches

The Trenches



Rifle pits or foxholes would be dug for overnight stays

Then ditches were dug and logs erected to form breastworks

Massive trench systems with forts surrounded key towns

The South used slave labour to build 10 miles around Petersburg, called the Dimmock Line

Mortars and Railway Guns



Mortars were very popular in sieges, and both 12 inch and 24 inch models were popular

Simply drop the charge and the missile in and light the touch paper

Logs were also used as dummy guns or Quaker guns

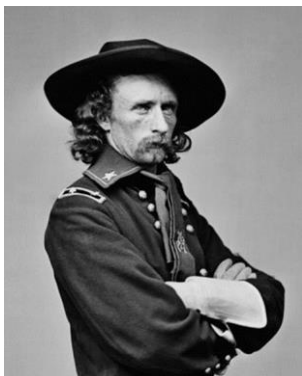
The Artillery



The artillery came in all shapes and sizes

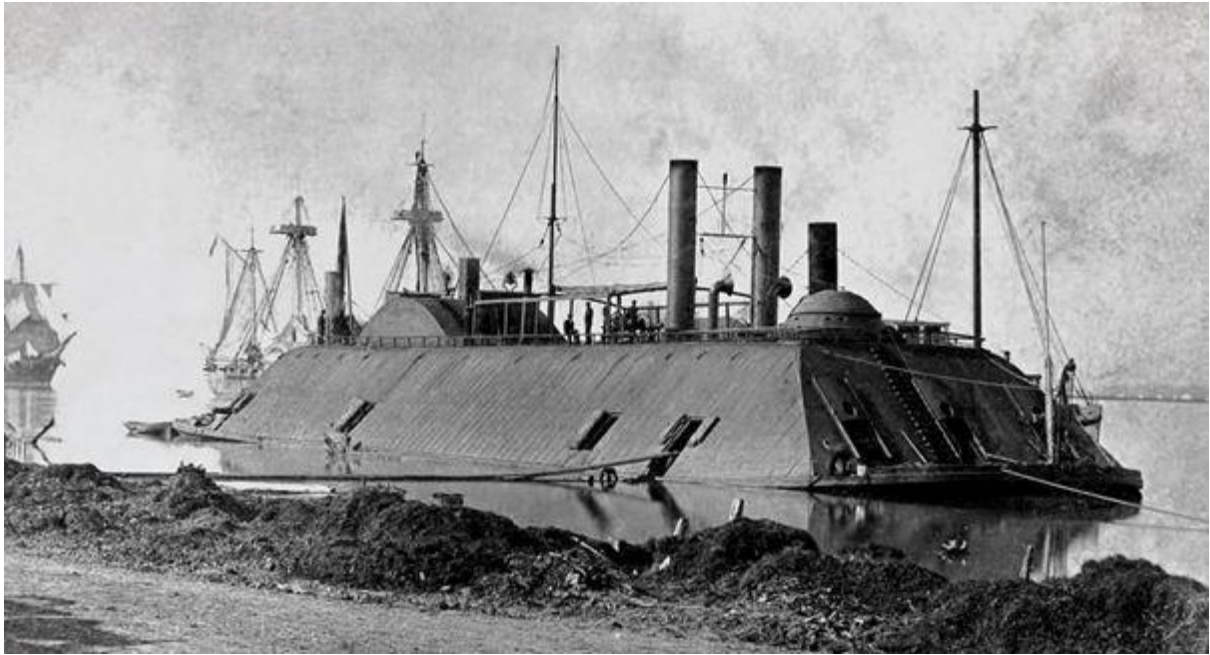
A mixture of muzzle loaded and breech loaded weapons and used direct fire on the battlefield

They were mainly defensive because they did not have timed fuses



And yes, that is General George Custer on the left, who the Indians chopped later

Out On the Water



Ships ranged from sailing ships to paddle steamers to ironclads

They had battles out at sea, gave artillery support and moved men and supplies up the rivers



Mines were used to stop them and the occasional submarine lurked out at sea

The Casualties



Of the 3 million who served, there were 620,000 casualties of one form or another

205,000 in combat and 315,000 from sickness

22,000 casualties on one day at Antietam, more than all the battles America had been in to date

It was not a war to be wounded in; infection and disease were hard to

control

Medical facilities were basic and men were often far from home if they were injured

There was no formal casualty clearing service

Scaled up today's population size it would be equivalent to 7.5 million deaths in four years

The Battlefields



A lot more battlefield preservation though because it is their own soil not foreign soil

A total of acres 53,000 acres has been preserved by the Battlefield Trust

Guides are professionals on the bigger sites

Have been since 1917 on Gettysburg, to stop fraudsters

It welcomes 100,000 re-enactors and ½ million visitors a year

War Memorials



Countless memorials and markers detail many facts

They come in architectural, warlike and sentimental designs

Gettysburg alone has over 1300, over 400 cannons, nearly 150 preserved buildings

War Cemeteries

Post war cemeteries are huge, peaceful gardens

Very similar to the Commonwealth Wargraves cemeteries



General Lee's property near Washington DC was confiscated and it became Arlington Cemetery

Tyne Cot has 12,000 graves while Arlington has 400,000 war graves from many conflicts

The Archives

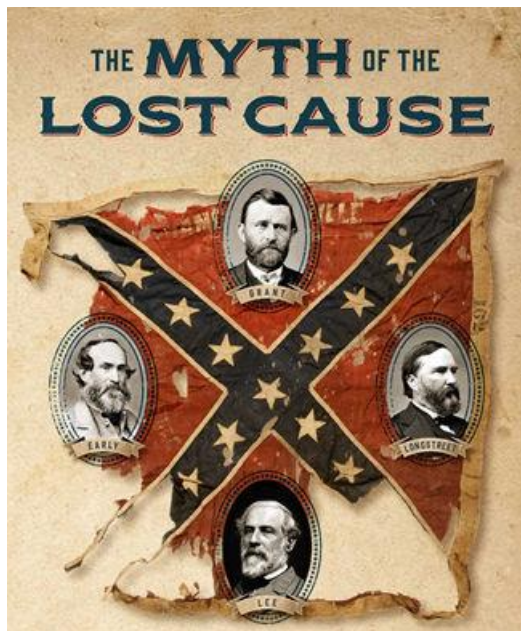
Pension records in National Archives I – I spent one hour there before heading to

Government documents in National Archives II – I spent two months there

Printed documents in the Library of Congress – and another two months there

I was researching my thesis and researching my books

The Lost Cause



As expected, there are arguments over the memory of the war continued after 160 years

As academics battle it out in books, papers and articles

But the losing side maintained it should have won

Germany may have had the ‘Stab in the Back’ but the South had ‘The Lost Cause’

The war had been about States rights, not slavery

They had been protecting their honour and had

been invaded

The North had been aggressive and had a much larger population and industry

In Popular Memory

Cursory observers of the Civil War are also obsessed by a suicidal attack

Only it was made on 3 July 1863 not 1 July 1916

That was Pickett’s Charge across open fields at Gettysburg rather than on the Somme

Described by the Confederate artillery commander, General Edward Alexander

“Never, never, never did General Lee himself make such a bollox of a fight as he did of this”

Such displays also look good when re-enacted



Especially when overweight, elderly men play the part of fit young lads

The End

Now, you think there are a lot of books on the First World War

Consider that there were over 50,000 on the Civil War at the last count

So, I might need another bookshelf or house...

To conclude, Grant Cullen, our Branch Secretary gave his short talk.....



Grant`s presentation was on the only winner of the Victoria Cross from Worksop during The Great War - William Henry Johnson.

William (Bill) Henry Johnson was born in the autumn of 1890 as the second child of William Johnson, a house painter, and his wife Elizabeth. He was one of three sons and a daughter brought up in various basic houses in courts of Worksop`s Bridge Street and the lower end of Park Street, with a final move to a five roomed cottage No. 14 Forest`s Yard, off Lead Hill. The family suffered the loss of William senior in September 1904 and Elizabeth, who became a charwoman, must have well appreciated the financial contribution made by Bill and his elder brother Edwin, modest as this may have been initially. Bill - known as `Our Billy` by not only his family but by all who knew him well into his adulthood went to the `Abbey Boys` on Worksop`s Vicars Walk.



In the summer of 1909 at the age of 19 Bill married Gertrude Walton and some months later were joined by their first child, Mabel Annie. The new family lived with Gertrude's parents in a four

bedroomed terraced house (now demolished) at 21 Priorswell Road in Brewery Road. These premises were tied to the Brewery company where John Walton, Bill's father in law, worked as a labourer. However, the extended family moved on to a larger house No. 1 Shelley Street. Bill obtained work at Manton Colliery and in 1911 is described as a Filler meaning he shovelled coal into tub at the coal-face for transport to the shaft but by 1915 he was to describe himself as a miner meaning that by that time he must have been working at the face winning the coal.

By the time war came in 1914, Bill had shown his depth of character in protecting his family in the event of illness or incapacity to work as he had joined the 'Smith's Pride Lodge' of the Friendly Society, the Sheffield Equalised Independent Druids, based at the Golden Ball Hotel, Worksop. These premises are still there but are now used by the Poplars Church. He worked voluntarily for the Lodge and served as Lodge President whilst still in his teens. Bill also became a member of the Priory Church bell-ringing team. Well regarded for his skill, he was recorded as ringing as No. 2 to the Captain, Herbert Haigh.

As a family man, with two young children, the pressure to enlist following the outbreak of war during the August Bank Holiday weekend in 1914 would have given Bill a dilemma as to whether to follow the behest to volunteer for the Army or to stay at his job at home and look after his family. After all the recruiting pressure Bill joined the local Territorial battalion the 1 / 8th Sherwood Foresters, enrolling at Newark on 9th February 1915. He would remain a Sherwood Forester for the next 4 years and 31 days. Bill's qualities were recognised and he was made up to Lance-Corporal, albeit unpaid on 28th February 1916. Later he recalled writing to his mother telling her he was now an N.C.O and although she should be proud she should still speak to her neighbours as usual - and must not take on a larger house!

Bill settled in well with the BEF and was promoted to Sergeant, by this time he was in the 1/5th Sherwood Foresters part of 46th Division, a move which would ultimately lead him to the highest honour.

Following the successes of the 8th August 1918 at Amiens, the Germans had been pushed back to the Hindenburg Line which many feared would be impregnable. The St Quentin Canal ran near the western boundary of the Hindenburg Line with protective lines to its west. On September 28th men of the 46th Division attacked and according to Sir John Monash, in command of the Australian forces to the north it was an 'astonishing success'. 46th Division then enjoyed a few days' rest, when according to plan, 32 Division passed through its ranks to continue to take the fight to the enemy. 56 Division then leapfrogged 32 Division to attack

the rearmost portion of the Hindenburg Line between Joncourt and Ramicourt. The first objective for B and D companies of the 1/5th Sherwood Foresters was the Fronsomme Line which ran along the crest of a ridge. Heavy casualties were suffered and the Battalion History records,



‘The enemy machine gunners put up a stiff resistance and the majority were bayoneted at their guns. It was just after passing the Fronsomme Line that Sergt. W H Johnson on the left, finding his platoon held up, rushed two positions and was awarded the VC’

The Official citation reads....

“For most conspicuous bravery at Ramicourt on October 3rd 1918. When his platoon was held up by a nest of enemy machine guns at very close range, Sergt Johnson worked his way forward under very heavy fire, and single handily charged the post, bayonetting the gunners and capturing two machine guns. During this attack he was severely wounded by a bomb but continued to lead forward his men.

Shortly afterwards the line was once again held up by machine guns. Again he rushed forward and attacked the post single-handed. With wonderful courage, he bombed the garrison, put the guns out of action and captured the teams.

He showed throughout the most exceptional courage and devotion to duty”



Bill`s wounds were caused by what today would be referred to as a grenade and are stated, in what remains of his service record to be in his back and possibly his side and were caused by fragments of the metal case. 46th Division was fortunate in having as its Assistant Director of Medical Services Lt. Col. W Beavor who had concluded that the trauma following injuries could be major factor in causing the death of men who could otherwise have survived. Therefore he was an enthusiastic prescriber of opiates to

seriously wounded men and he was in charge of the Advanced Dressing Station which had moved up to Bellingese. Bill was subsequently moved by ambulance to the Casualty Clearing Station at Roissel about 11 miles east of Peronne. Bill, although seriously wounded was assessed as not requiring an immediate operation and was sent to hospital in Rouville by ambulance train. In early December Bill told his wife in a letter home that he had had another operation two weeks before and, although improving was still bedridden.

The award of Bill`s VC was gazetted on Saturday 14th December 1918 and was made public by the Vicar of Worksop, Rev. George James Audamour D`Arcy the following morning in Priory Church.



By this time Bill`s recovery was moving apace and he found himself convalescing in one of the hospitals in the Birmingham hub, based on the Great Hall of the University pending his discharge on February 11th 1919.

Bill formally left the army on the 11th March 1919 `being surplus to military requirements having suffered impairment since the entry into service` and on March 29th he proudly entered Buckingham Palace to have the Victoria Cross pinned on his chest by King George, with a very proud Gertrude looking on.

No. 306122 Sjt. William Henry Johnson,
1/5th Bn., Notts. & Derby. R. (T.F.) (Work-
sop).

For most conspicuous bravery at Rami-
court on the 3rd of October, 1918.

When his platoon was held up by a nest
of enemy machine guns at very close range,
Sjt. Johnson worked his way forward under
very heavy fire, and single-handed charged
the post, bayoneting several gunners and
capturing two machine guns. During this
attack he was severely wounded by a bomb,
but continued to lead forward his men.

Shortly afterwards the line was once more
held up by machine guns. Again he rushed
forward and attacked the post single-
handed. With wonderful courage he
bombed the garrison, put the guns out of
action, and captured the teams.

He showed throughout the most excep-
tional gallantry and devotion to duty.



Sgt Johnsons medals.

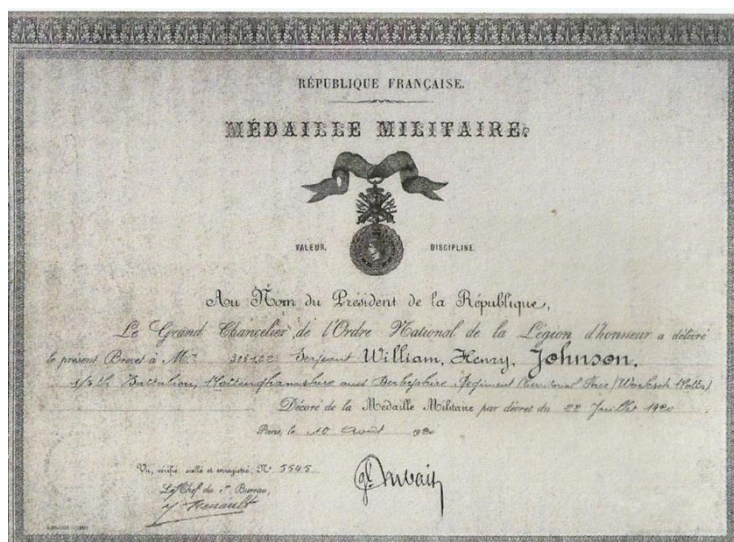
*L-R: Victoria Cross, British War Medal 1914 - 1920, Victory Medal 1914 - 1919,
King George VI Coronation Medal 1937 and the Medal Militaire*

Bill and Gertude were due back in Worksop at 7.42 pm but missed their
connection at Retford and they didn't get back until 9.29pm when they were
welcomed by the Worksop Town Band playing 'See the Conquering Hero Comes'
who escorted them back home via Eastgate.

On 26th June 1919 Bill was to be entertained again by the King as he - and
Gertrude - were guests at a garden party at Buckingham Place for all holders of
the VC. The Johnson's didn't seem to have much luck with trains as again their

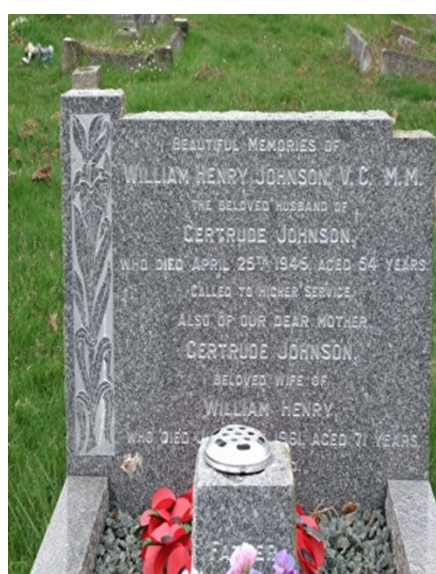
train from Kings Cross to Retford was late, they missed the connection to Worksop and had to walk the eight miles from Retford arriving home in the early hours!

In March 1920 Bill was awarded the French Honour the *Medaille Militaire* and when the initials MM appear in association with Bill`s name it is this award to which these refer and he was never awarded the Military Medal.



Bill left his employment at Manton pit and took up tenancy of the Masons Arms pub on Leverton Road, Retford but upon the opening of an ex-servicemen`s Club in Arnold, Nottingham he was appointed caretaker and the family moved near to the club. These premises burned down but Bill found employment with the tobacco company John Player & Sons and now lived at 33 Nelson Street, Arnold.

Bill took up arms again in WW2 as a member of the Home Guard but sadly died suddenly on 25th April 1945 at the age of 54. He was buried with full military honours in Redhill Cemetery, Nottingham.



There is a sad footnote to Bill`s life as Gertrude was denied an additional pension as his widow. She was left in receipt of the 10 shillings a week widow`s pension only despite her own poor health. The local British Legion pointed out that she had the responsibility of looking after a double amputee son and a 17 year old

daughter with severe health problems and who couldn't work. It is ironic that a man could and perhaps should have taken some action was the then Secretary of State for War, Frederick Bellinger MP - was MP for Bassetlaw which includes Bill and Gertrude's home town of Worksop.

In 1991 a permanent memorial to Bill in the form a whitethorn tree was planted in Worksop's Memorial Gardens and then, on October 3rd 2018 - one hundred years to the day that Bill won his VC a plaque was unveiled nearby by members of his family in front a large crowd. These included a colour party from the Mercian Regiment (as the Sherwood Foresters are now part of), members of the Royal British Legion, the Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Association, representatives of the Western Front Association, and members of Bassetlaw District Council and Nottinghamshire County Council.



Robert Ilett of the Western Front Association spoke an Appreciation of the life of William Henry Johnson VC.



Grant finished by thanking Robert Ilett for using extracts from his book 'Sgt William Henry Johnson Victoria Cross - A Man of Moral Courage and Modesty' in the preparation of this short talk.

On January 20th we had another joint webinar with our friend from Lincoln and North Lincolnshire Branch WFA. Over 40 members and friends registered - including some from Holland and Belgium.

This was organised by Peter Garland (Lincoln) The speaker was Graham Kemp, who has, of course, spoken to us at Chesterfield.

Dr Graham Kemp has been a historian of the Great War for the past 40 years. He is a retired tour guide / museum manager at Lancaster Castle, as well as an ex-teacher. He is an experienced speaker, from Castle Outreach talks, WFA talks, to International Conferences on his Doctorate Subject of Peace and International Relations. His passion is getting across the human prospective and experience in his talks. He is currently Chairman of the Lancs (North) WFA branch."

Graham`s talk was

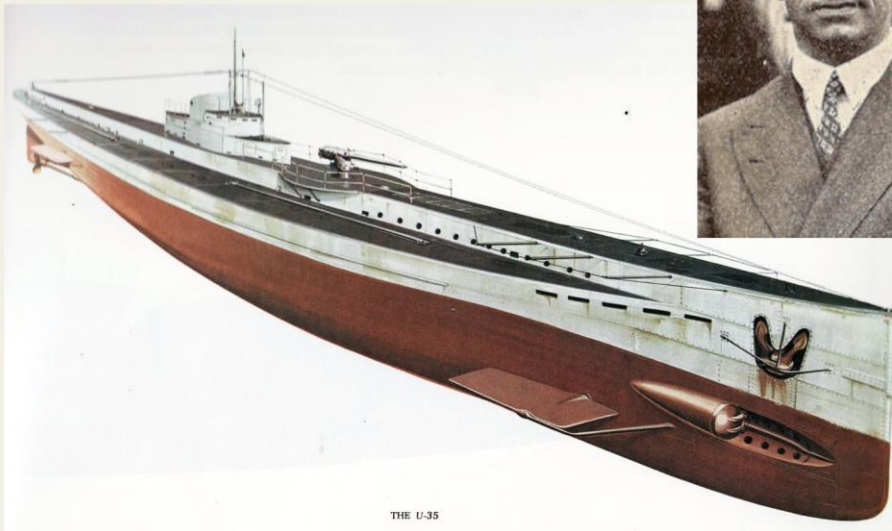
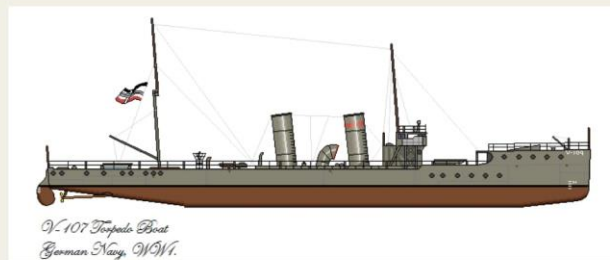
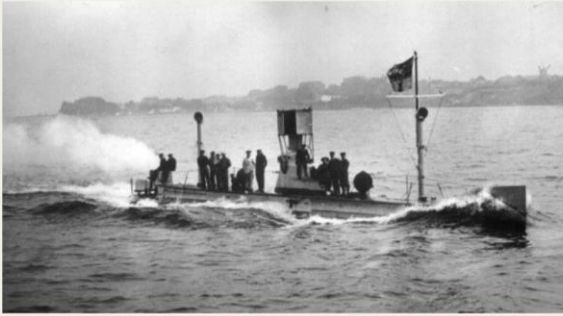
"The U-Boat Campaign in 1914-1918 - The Inside Story".

In it Graham shoud how the German U-Boat became *the* commerce raider of the Great War, and how it ended in failure. It included the remarkable stories and experiences of those who served in the U-Boats, and what it was like to serve in them.

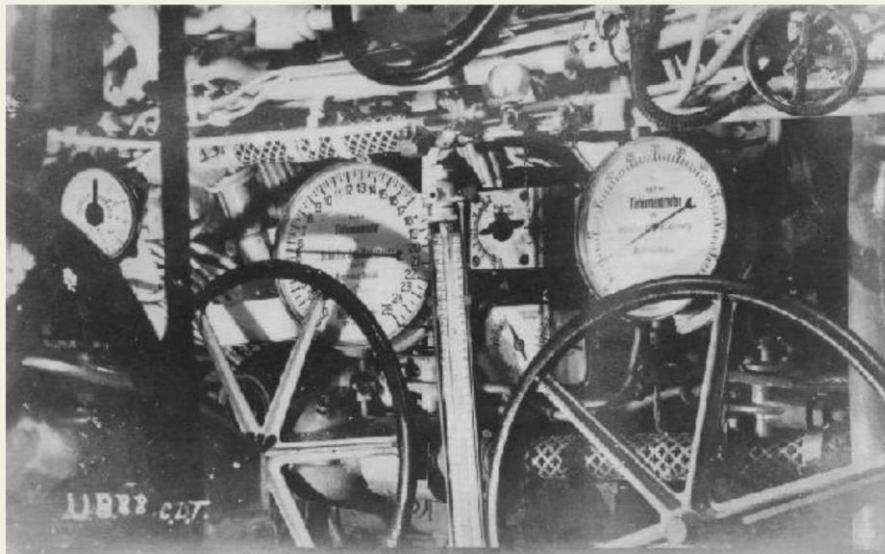
Here following are the slides from Graham`s presentation....

U boat War 1914-18 The Experience





THE U-35

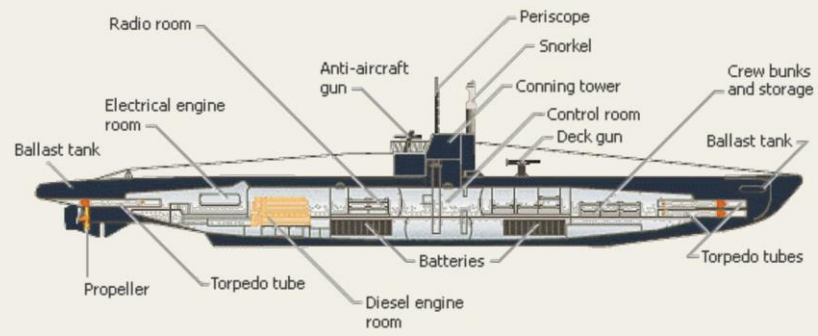


224 Merchant Ships, over 500,000tons, but
only fired 6 torpedoes in his 17 patrols

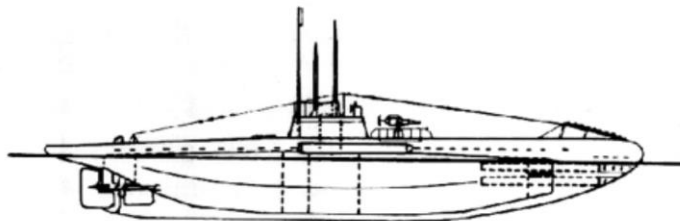
**Lothar von
Arnauld de
la Perière**

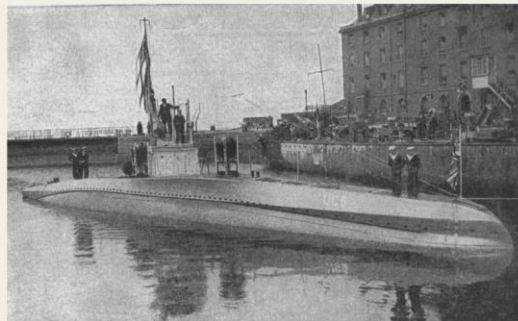
U35



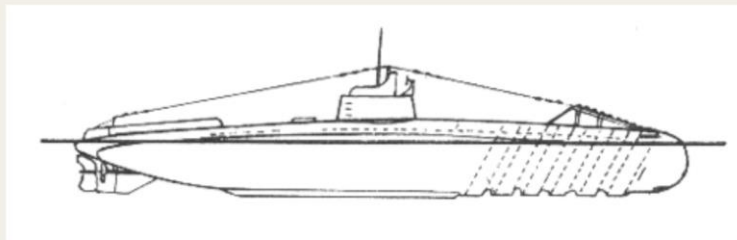


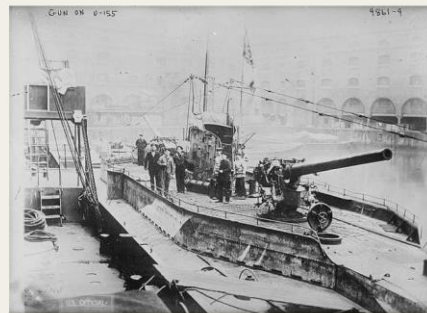
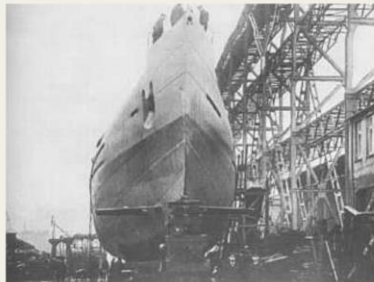
UB Boats





UC BOATS





Klein Krieg





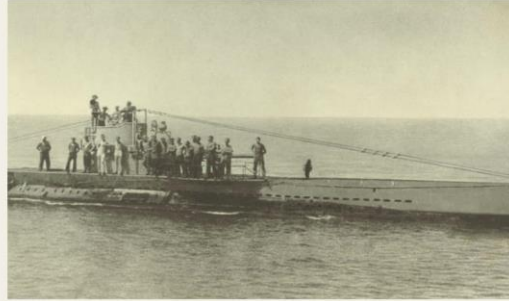
SS Glitra
20th October 1914

By U17
Captain Feldkirchener

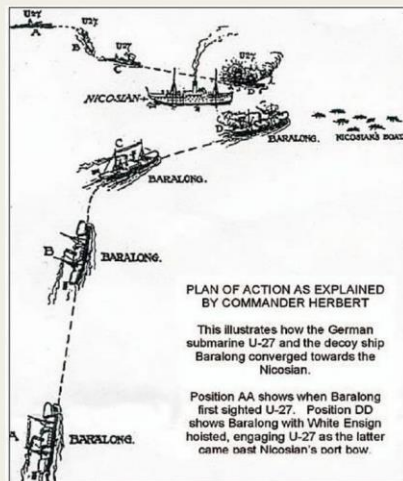


4th February 1915
..warning of reprisals in
response to the Entente's
stoppage of maritime
trade between neutrals
and Central Europe.





Max Valentiner U38



BARALONG AFFAIR

Order in Council March 1915 - Reprisals Orders

A declaration to

- a) cut all commerce through German Ports
 - b) cut all commerce to Germany via Neutral ports
- which include continuous voyage applicable to all contraband

Its object were to intercept enemy commerce by adaption of the law of blockade (Marion Siney)

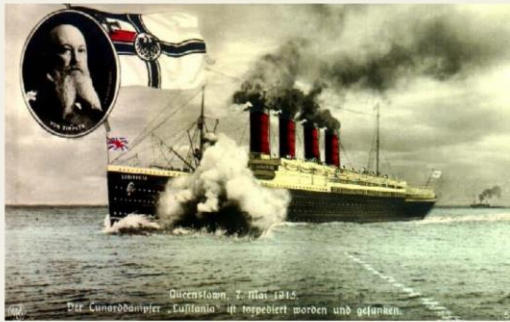
BRITAIN DECLARES TOTAL Warfare

Now England wants to victimize the women and children , the old aged and sick of nation of numbering 70 million, in order to force us to submission – *Bethmann-Hollweg Imperial Chancellor*

...is to starve the whole population, men, women, children, young and old, wounded and sound...into submission
Winston Churchill First Lord of Admiralty 1914

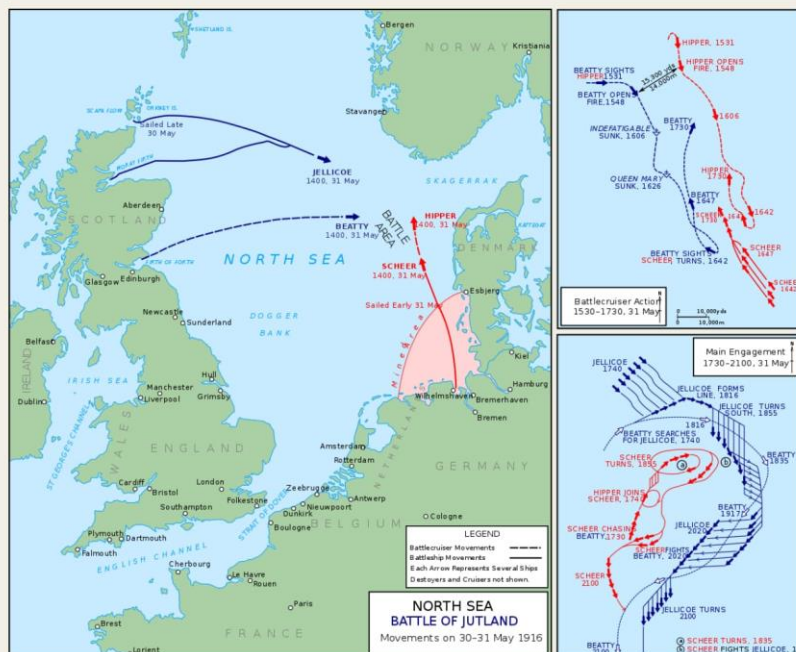
..we did everything in our power to starve the women and children in Germany”
Duff Cooper First Lord of Admiralty 1937





Walther Schwieger

U20



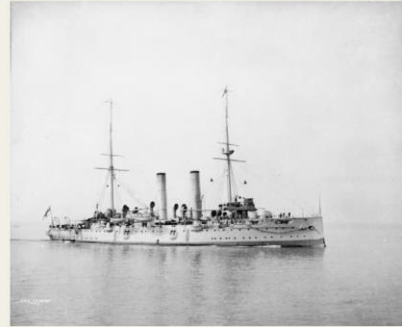
HOW 10th CRUISER SQUADRON WON THE WAR



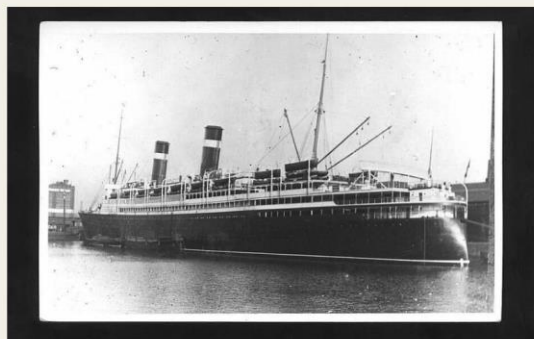
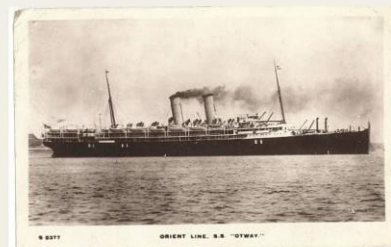
10th Cruiser Squadron
FOUNDED 1914

EDGAR CLASS CRUISERS

Built 1889-90
ABOUT 7,000 tons



HMS Crescent – Admiral du Chair



HMS Alsatian
(new Flagship)

The conclusion of the matter appears to be this... the process of stopping neutral ships, taking them into port, searching the cargo, and requiring reasonable evidence of its destination must and always will be a source of annoyance to the neutrals (1916)

As the FO put it in 1915,

The object aimed at should be to induce vessels not to carry goods for Germany Vessels should therefore be detained long enough to make them feel the inconvenience of carrying such goods and the advantage of not doing so...

GERMANY IN A DIRE SITUATION

"Reason refuses to allow that we are in a condition to end the war by victory under such difficult circumstances."



Imperial Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg



Naval Plan



Sink 600,000 tons a month – & lack of neutral shipping wish to supply Britain - Britain out of war in 6 months

US may come into war – but take a year at least, before she can intervene militarily - by that time war over

Raider Mowat discovered so US supply war supplies to Allies., this would stop it.



When I travelled about on leave, and so often saw children whose angel souls shone through their pale starved bodies.....I was seized with a fury against this inhumane enemy who had cut off Germany's food inputs. And what I felt all my comrades on the sea felt. It was enemy's crimes that forced sailors like ourselves to sink ... [merchantmen], CPO Bader U boat 1917

Hymn to Hate

French and Russian they matter not
A blow for a blow and a shot for a shot
We love them not, we hate them not
We have one for, and one alone

Hate by water and ahte by land
Hateof the head and hate of the hand
We love as one we hate as one
We have one for and one alone ENGLAND!

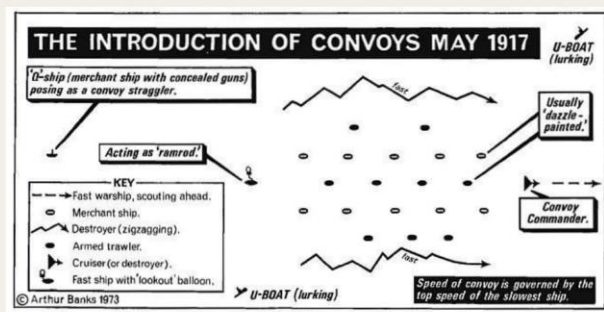
And drinking Toast

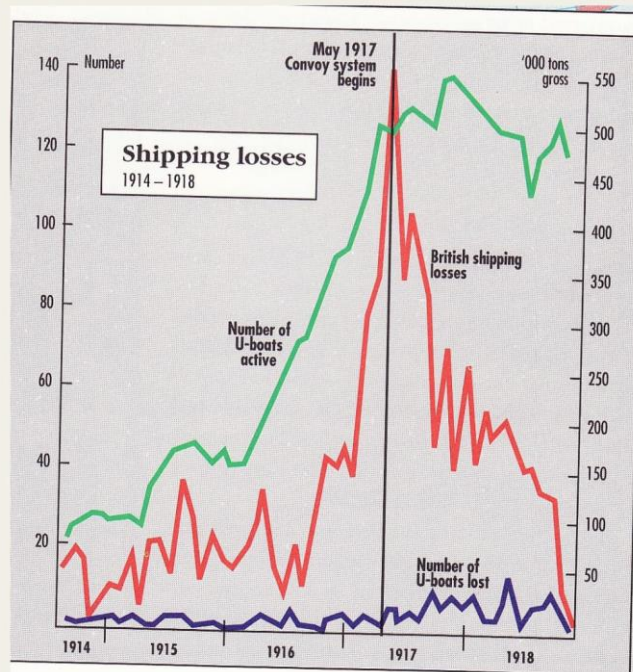
Gott strafe England



MONTH	Tonnage	U Boat loses
Feb	536,000	5
March	603,000	3
April	875,000	8
May	594,000	2
June	684,000	7
July	549,000	5
August	511,000	11
September	340,000	11
October	498,000	5
November	292,000	9
December	394,000	8

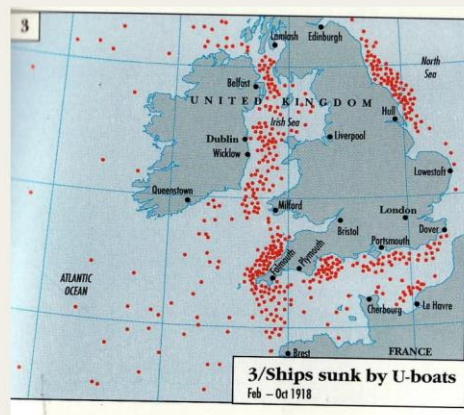
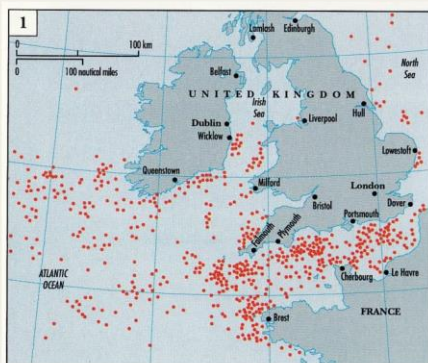
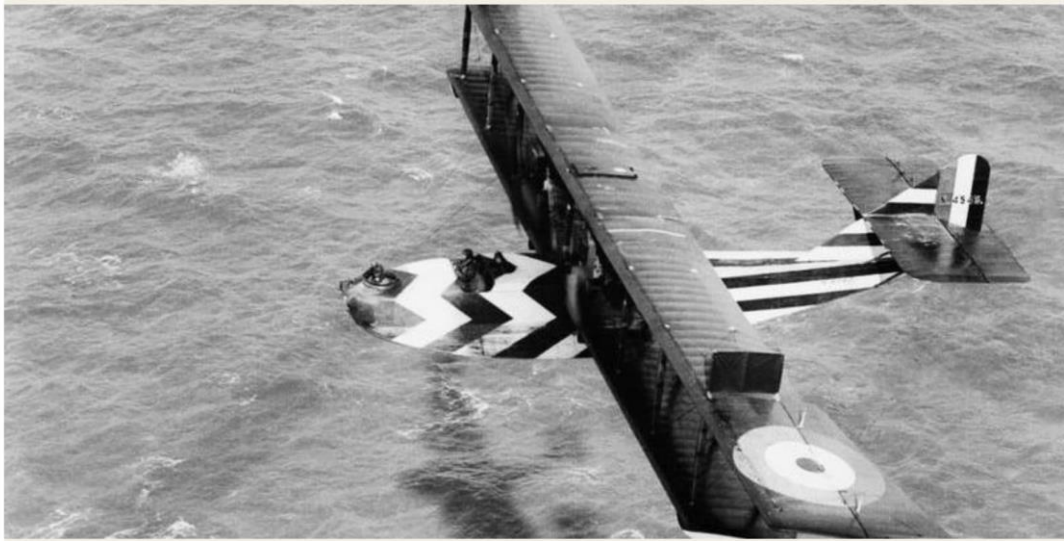
After that average of 200,000/ month, until October reduced to 112,000





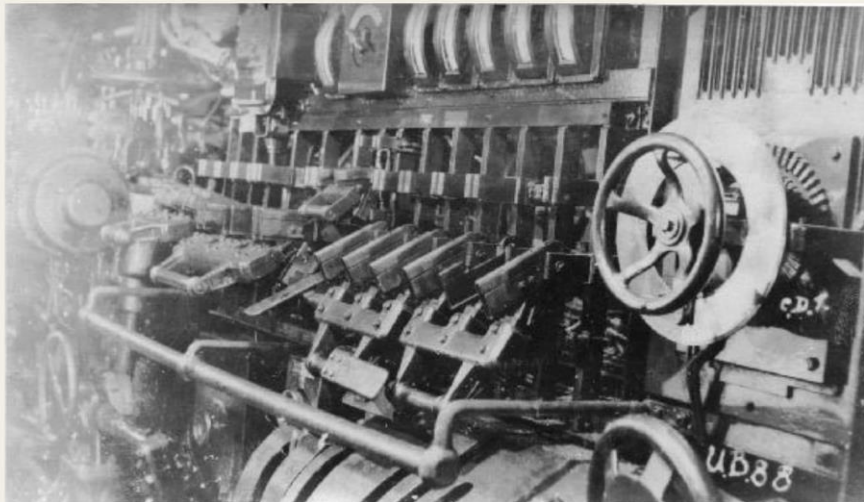
U Boat losses 178

Enemy Subs	19
Decoy Q ships	14
Mines **	20
Net Barrages	6
Aircraft	5
Destroyers etc	72
Accidents	9
Unknown	33



“Whether our position is so desperate that we are forced to play a game of roulette, in which we stake our existence as a great power and our all future; a game in which odds supposed to be our favour are not calculated odds, but mere speculation that Great Britain will be reduced by the autumn... reason refuses to agree *Bethmann Hollweg*







STRESS



A QUIET HOUR ABOARD THE CONNING-TOWER

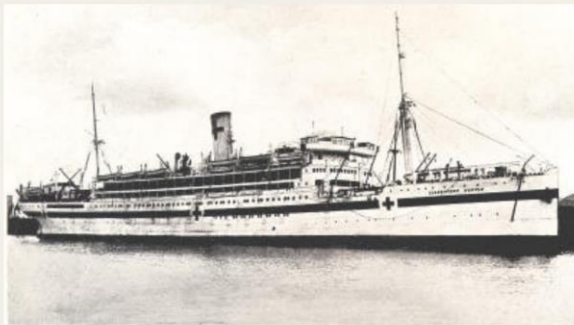




Captain Patzig



SM U-86. Sank in two years 32 ships for a total of 119,411 tons.



Hospital Ship
Llandovery Castle
(Union Line) 27th
June 1918

More than 12,000,000 tons of shipping (5,000 ships) had been sunk by U-boats, with the loss of 15,000 lives. 60% of that tonnage was sunk by 22 commanders, the most successful ones were:

Lothar von Arnauld de la Periere

454,000 tons

Walther Forstmann

380,000 tons

Max Valentiner

300,000 tons

Otto Steinbrinck

290,000 tons

Hans Rose

214,000 tons

Reinhold Saltzwedel

170,000 tons

Waldemar Kophamel

149,000 tons

These men were followed by 40 others with sinkings over 100,000 tons.



WESTWARDS!

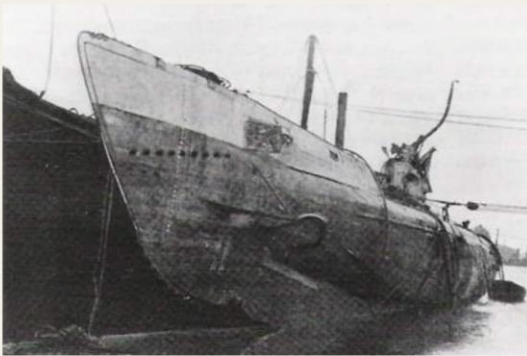
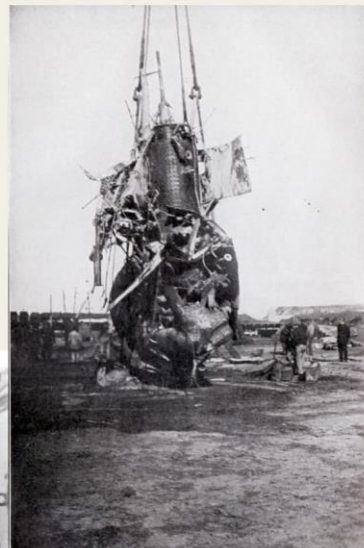
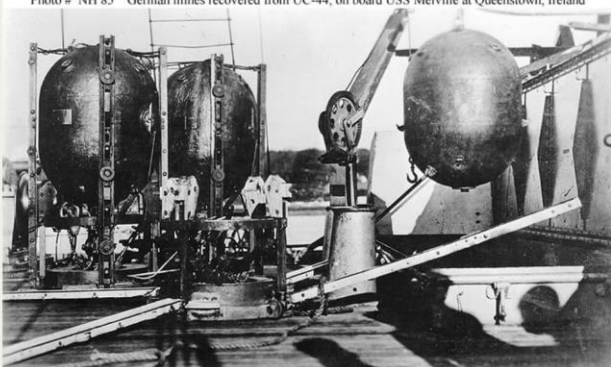


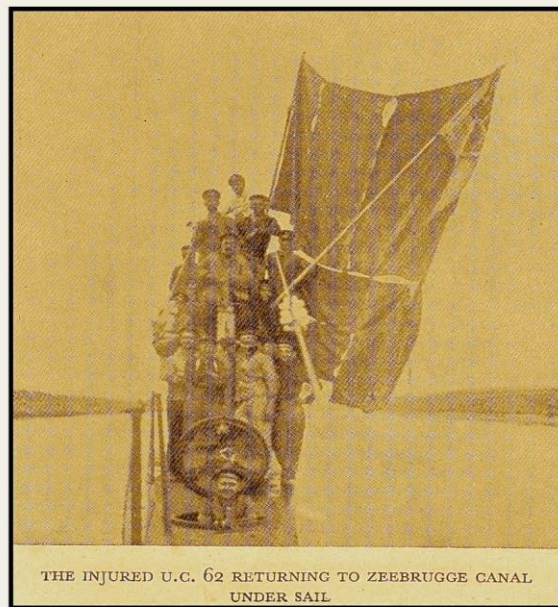
Photo # NH 85 German mines recovered from UC-44, on board USS Melville at Queenstown, Ireland



The effect of a mine on a submarine. In all, 178 raiders of the deep lie somewhere on the floor of the ocean.

Kurt Tebbenjohanns

Weuner Furbringer (*Fips*) & UB 2





And so the history of this War lives on in us, as an enduring memorial, as a tremendous monument of warning to the nations of Europe"

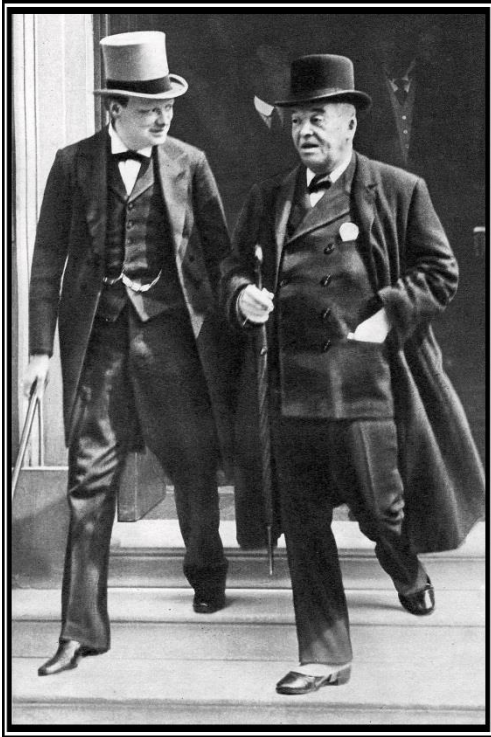
Ernst Haushagen Commander



Surrender of U Boats Harwich

Thank You

Letter sent by Lord Fisher to Winston Churchill January 3rd in 1915.



DEAR WINSTON,

I've been informed by Hankey that War Council assembles next Thursday, and I suppose it will be like a game of ninepins!

Every one will have a plan and one ninepin in falling will knock over its neighbour! I CONSIDER THE ATTACK ON TURKEY HOLDS THE FIELD! - but ONLY if it's IMMEDIATE!

However, it won't be! Our Aulic Council will adjourn till the following Thursday fortnight! (N.B. When did we meet last? and what came of it???)

We shall decide on a futile bombardment of the Dardanelles which wears out the irreplaceable guns of the Indefatigable which probably will require replacement. What good resulted from the last bombardment?

Did it move a single Turk from the Caucasus? And so the war goes on! You want ONE man!

This is the Turkey plan:

I. Appoint Sir W. Robertson the present Quartermaster-General to command the Expeditionary Force.

II. Immediately replace all Indians and 75,000 seasoned troops from Sir John French's command with Territorials, etc., from England (as you yourself suggested) and embark this Turkish Expeditionary Force ostensibly for protection of Egypt! WITH ALL POSSIBLE DESPATCH at Marseilles! and land them at Besika Bay direct with previous feints before they arrive with troops now in Egypt against Haifa and Alexandretta, the latter to be a REAL occupation because of its inestimable value as regards the oil fields of the Garden of Eden, with which by rail it is in direct communication, and we shove out the Germans now established at Alexandretta with an immense Turkish concession—the last act of that arch-enemy of England, Marschal von Bieberstein!

III. The Greeks to go for Gallipoli at the same time as we go for Besika, and the Bulgarians for Constantinople, and the Russians, the Servians, and Roumanians for Austria (all this you said yourself!).

IV. Sturdee forces the Dardanelles at the same time with 'Majestic' class and 'Canopus' class! God bless him!

*But as the great Napoleon said, 'CELERITY' - without it - 'FAILURE'!
In the history of the world - a Junta has never won! You want one man!
Yours, F.*

[Source: Churchill, Winston S.. The World Crisis: 1915]

Memorandum sent to the 1st Battalion The Border Regiment 3rd January in 1916:

SECRET

0/424/4

Headquarters

8th Army Corps

31st Dec 1915.

MEMORANDUM - Destruction of Material & Supplies.

1. Although it is certain that a large quantity of material and supplies will not be removed, the Corps Commander trusts that nothing of any use and particularly not a round of ammunition will be left to fall into the enemy's hands. To ensure this, it is necessary that careful preparations should be made beforehand for the destruction by fire or other means of all such material and supplies.
2. Divisional commanders will take the necessary steps to have thorough inspections made throughout their areas to ensure that everything which cannot be removed is marked down for destruction.
3. The GOC 13th (WESTERN) DIV and the GOC RN DIV will each select an Officer who will be responsible for the destruction of all stores on GULLY BEACH and V BEACH respectively. The OC Corps Grenade Park will be responsible for the destruction of all stores on LANCASHIRE LANDING.
4. As soon as it is known that the final evacuation will take place all stores capable of being burned will be saturated with oil or creosol. Tins containing stores should be split open. Water tanks will be punctured, pumps broken with hammers and all copper and brass-fittings either removed or thrown into the sea.
5. Stacks of stores to be burnt on the beaches will be fired simultaneously and not until the last troops are leaving the peninsula. The order for firing will be given by the GOC. Embarkation and if all troops have been evacuated from any one beach previous to this, a party must be left for the purpose, a few rifles being kept to cover them.
6. Arrangements must be made so that any stacks of stores to be burned other than those on the beaches are not fired till sufficient time has elapsed for the evacuation to be completed. Fuze bound round a candle in a hurricane lamp leading to a detonator surrounded with inflammable material placed in contact with the oil-saturated stack will ensure this. A candle burns at the rate of 1 inch per hour approximately. More than one lamp should be used. This system can also be applied to stores which it is necessary to blow up.

7. Any stores or vehicles which it is not possible or desirable to burn should be placed, on or before the last night in positions such that they are in full view of the sea, so that they can be destroyed by the fire of the ships on the morning after the evacuation is completed

H E Street

Brig Gen

GS

VIII Army Corps

[Source: 1st Bn Border Regiment. Great War Diaries]



LANCASHIRE LANDING beach, September 2017