



The Spire Sentinel



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



ISSUE 73 - March 2022

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



Western Front Association Chesterfield Branch – Meetings 2022

Meetings start at 7.30pm and take place at the Labour Club, Unity House, Saltergate, Chesterfield S40 1NF

January	4th	.Branch AGM and Members Evening - 3 short presentations by Jon-Paul Harding, Andy Rawson and Grant Cullen
February	1st	`Steaming to The Front` - Britain`s Railways in The Great War by Grant Cullen
March	1st	`They Think It`s all Over` By Andy Rawson . Plenty has been said about the breaking of the Hindenburg Line. This presentation looks at the pursuit of the Germans which occurred during the final weeks of the war.
April	5th	Soldiers and Their Horses - Horses and Their Soldiers by Dr Jane Flynn - a sympathetic consideration of the soldier - horse relationship 1914-18
May	3rd	`Finding Deborah` by Mike Tipping. How the team that discovered tank Deborah D-51 went on to find me, and my journey to Deborah.
June	7th	TBA
July	5th	The Italian Front 1915-1918 by John Chester. Covers the fighting in Italy from beginning to end. Includes the contribution of the British and their part in ending the war.
August	2nd	TBA
September	6th	The Inventions Department by Richard Godber. A little known part of the Ministry of Munitions. Based upon Richard`s dissertation for his Wolverhampton MA, previously a very under researched area about which little was known.
October	4th	`British League of Help` by Dudley Giles. Nearly 90 towns, cities, and organisations in the UK, Australia, Canada and Mauritius signed up in the period 1920-1922 to 'adopt' a village, town or city in the Devastated Zone of France. Some of these adoptions lasted only a few years, some (like Sheffield's adoption of Bapaume, Serre and Puisieux) survived until after WW2
November	1st	`Shell Shock and the History of Psychiatry` by Jill Brunt. Based upon sessions on this subject presented to students at Northern College, Barnsley
December	1st	TBA

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- 32 -33 Douglas Haig Fellowship AGM
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- 58-72 German Tanks - Joint Webinar with Lincoln Branch

March 2022 WFA Webinar (Planned Presentations)

WFA ZOOM MEETINGS For March , 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)

07 MAR 2022 'Kill the Kaiser!' - The secret attempt to assassinate Kaiser Wilhelm II - by John Hughes-Wilson <http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/events/online-kill-the-kaiser-the-secret-attempt-to-assassinate-kaiser-wilhelm-ii/>

14 MAR 2022 Creating cinematic war memorials: the First World War battle reconstructions of British Instructional Films, 1921-1931 by Prof Mark Connelly
<http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/events/online-creating-cinematic-war-memorials-the-first-world-war-battle-reconstructions-of-british-instructional-films-1921-1931-by-prof-mark-connelly/>

17 MAR 2022 BIG QUIZ NIGHT <http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/events/big-quiz-night/>

21 MAR 2022 'A magnificent day of achievement': The Defeat of Operation Mars, 28 March 1918, <http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/events/online-a-magnificent-day-of-achievement-the-defeat-of-operation-mars-28-march-1918/>

28 MAR 2022 The Royal Flying Corps on the Western Front <http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/events/online-the-royal-flying-corps-on-the-western-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,

Hard to believe we are nearly into March...seems like the Festive Season wasn't not so long ago. I have to say a big 'thank you' to all those who attended the last meeting - on two points - firstly, it was great to see the attendance back to a pre-covid level, and secondly, on a personal note, thank you for supporting my presentation on "Steaming to the Front - Britain's Railways in the Great War." I have just submitted to the editorial team part six - the concluding part - of my serialisation for the North British Study Group's Journal on the North British Railway in the Great War. Nearly 33000 words plus

copious illustrations. I have thoroughly enjoyed doing the research work.

As many of you know, I am Secretary of the Worksop Branch of the Royal British Legion and last Tuesday (February 22nd) I had the honour and privilege of attending a ceremony in Worksop Town Hall where the local District Council (Bassetlaw) re-affirmed its commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant. I signed this as witness on behalf of the Royal British Legion. Local councils tend to come in for a lot of criticism, but I have to say that Bassetlaw go above and beyond that which most Councils do in support of the Armed Forces Covenant - including having an Armed Forces Champion - at present this is one of the local councillors.

On to our next meeting on Tuesday March 1st when Andy Rawson will be presenting g
.....*'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.'*

Please do come along and give Andy your support.

You will see elsewhere in this Newsletter that our slots for speakers are filling up nicely - somewhat to my relief ! Certainly having spoken to those who will be coming to talk to us there is certainly some exciting - and ground breaking stuff in the pipeline. Much of this was due to the excellent response I received to my request for potential speakers from our membership.

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

Enjoy this bumper newsletter

Anyway, that's all for now,

Grant Cullen Branch Secretary 07824628638

Committee Meeting - Proposals for 2022

Your Committee met after February`s Branch Meeting and decided to canvas members to gauge support for organising the undernoted branch activities , outings etc.

Please let me know if you are interested in participating in any of the undernoted. Funds are available to support these if there is sufficient interest from members.

grantcullen@hotmail.com or 078824628638

- Book Club. Committee decided we should seek to restart this..
- Great Nottinghamshire History Fair - Mansfield 15th May. Branch to attend, sharing stand with WFA East Midlands branch
- 10th WFA President`s Conference, Birmingham, 21st May - members asked to register interest in organising subsidised transport or utilising car sharing.
- Cannock Chase visit. This was postponed from 2020. Look to be rearranged for this year
- November 11th 2022 - trip to Cenotaph. Detailed planning required. Members asked to register interest in either Branch running a bus or a group train booking.
- WFA AGM & Spring Conference in Leeds. April 9th. Members asked to register interest in organising subsidised transport or car sharing
- Andy Rawson to plan walk / visit around remains of Redmires Camp , Sheffield where the Sheffield City Battalion trained prior to going on active service in WW1. Again, members asked to register interest.

Members Musings.....

Some interesting correspondence and requests from two of our members during the past couple of weeks.....

First, from regular contributor to this Newsletter, Jane Ainsworth.....

“....I’m doing some research – as always – and am stuck because I cannot find pension records. I’ve logged in and got a list but Sod’s Law the name is VERY common. I don’t know whether I can filter by Regiment or Service Number? I know there is a record because it came up on Ancestry including his wife Ethel.

Albert Walker (1890 - 1931) was a Rifleman in the 7th Battalion of the West Yorkshire Regiment – number 267783. (Barnsley).

No Service Records found – I assume he must have been wounded which may have led to his early death.

I got into WFA pension records but there are hundreds of Albert Walkers. I know there is one for him as Ancestry show a taster but you cannot access it unless you pay. I just wondered whether you knew a way of filtering the list of AW s as it is depressing going through so many looking for the right regiment or service number I dread to think about any Smiths!

Maybe a regular feature on sharing experience of research – pitfalls to avoid and suggested tips. Always helpful – we can all learn ...”

Can anyone help Jane or point her in the right direction

Here` s her contact info..... janemaa@hotmail.co.uk

Next up was one of our more far flung members Andrew - from Burton upon Trent.....

“...Although I have received and read all your emails from Chesterfield Branch, I fear that I live just too far afield to drive up the M1 to attend meetings, even though the menus are always appetizing! I live at Burton on Trent and am a keen collector of Sherwood Foresters and 46th Division insignia, and wonder if any of your members are also collectors? Perhaps you could ask around and see if anyone in the Branch might have anything for sale, in particular, a 6th T Notts & Derby brass shoulder title?

There are a few WFA members hereabouts and we have informal gatherings during the daytime at local hostelrys, and used to attend the Birmingham meetings. Age and idleness now keep us confined, alas. However, as a matter of interest, my old school - Derby School - has commissioned a brass plaque which we hope to have installed at St. George's chapel, Ypres, in April. I shall be in attendance, bedecked in WFA insignia!. Thanks for your trouble and the hope that one of your branch members might tempt me over with offers of Forester's items that I can't refuse!

If anyone can help Andrew, let me know (grantcullen@hotmail.com) and I`ll put you in touch.



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 previously 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

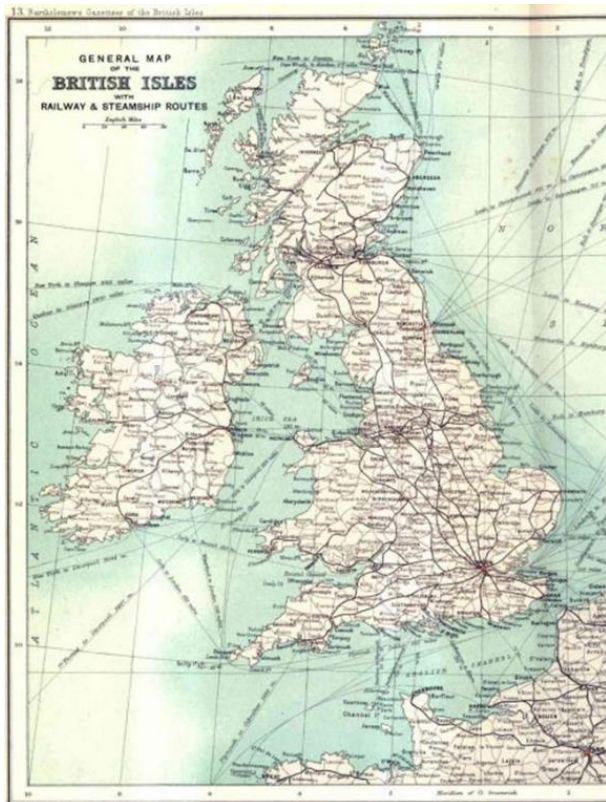
February 2022 Meeting

Branch Chair Tony Bolton opened the meeting by saying how good it was to see so many in attendance – back to pre-pandemic levels.

He then introduced Branch Secretary, Grant Cullen, who would be the evening's speaker.....**Steaming to the Front** The Contribution of Britain's Railways to The Great War

How did Grant's interest in Railways and The Great War begin?

Grant began by explaining how as a 10 year old trainspotter back in 1962 he, and some of his pals decided to pay a 'visit' to the local engine sheds in Coatbridge, the town where Grant was brought up. Steam engines were on the way out, as indeed was much of the coal mining industry where these run of the mill engines had found employment. After slipping through a gap in the sleeper fence at the shed, the boys found a line of old, rusty engines on the 'scrap' line. One stood out – it had a name - 'Byng'...now in the West of Scotland a 'bing'...was a colliery spoil heap... why was a railway engine named after a mountain of rubble ?. That same summer Grant saw another similar engine, this time working on a local freight train, but this time carrying the name 'Maude'.....why was a railway engine bearing a rather old fashioned lady's name?



In years to come the answer would become apparent.

In 1914, on the eve of war, there was 130 different companies - compared to that of today's privatised railways - each owned their own track, stations, infrastructure etc.

Today, one company, Network Rail own all the lines, stations and infrastructures, with the trains being owned / operated by the TOCs. (Train Operating Companies)



In 1914 , although there was rudimentary telephone lines, communication between signal boxes was the **railway block signalling bell code**, a system of bell sounds used in to communicate between the manually operated Signal Boxes in implementing the railway block system. Each such signal box had a bell circuit to the boxes on either side of it along the line. The equipment consists of a plunger or tapper (rather like a Morse key) which when pressed, rings a single-stroke bell in a neighbouring box. That box similarly has a tapper for communicating back, so boxes have keys each of which rings the bell in a neighbouring box. The bells sound different tones, so that the signalman can tell them apart by ear.



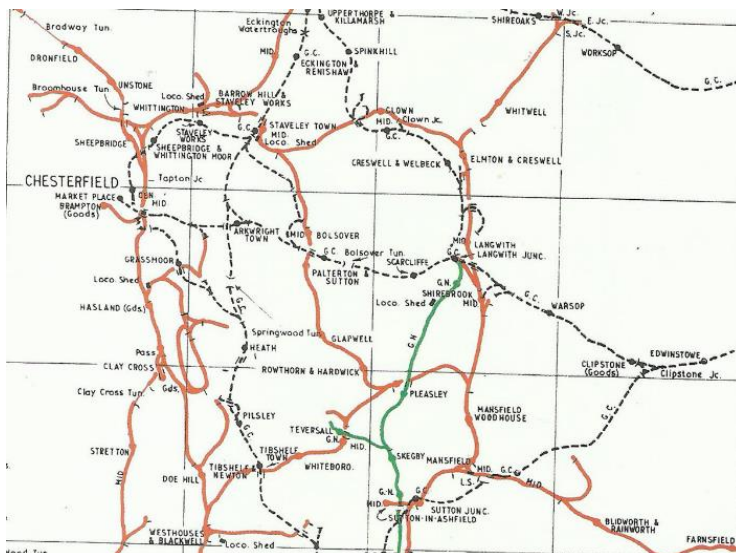
Remember that every junction had a signal box - the signalmen had to operate points and signals via rods, wires and bell crank levers - it was all mechanical operated by muscle power

The railway system in 1914 was dominated by several large companies, London & South Western, South Eastern & Chatham, London Brighton & South Coast, Great Western, Great Central, London & North Western, Midland Railway, Great Eastern, Great Northern, the North Eastern and in Scotland by the Caledonian and North British Railways although we must not forget the smaller Highland Railway`s sterling efforts in moving vast quantities of coal to northern ports to fuel the Grand Fleet plus, of course the `Jellicoe Express`. - more about which later



How was this administered - by an army of clerks (above) - with over 2000 employed at The Railway Clearing House on Seymour Street London (opposite). They also produced simple line maps covering all of Great Britain and Ireland. The Railway Clearing House was established in 1842 and later incorporated by Acts of

Parliament



A typical map, here showing the railways around Chesterfield.

The British Railway companies' involvement in World War One commenced when war was declared and finished long after the last shots were fired. The impact of railway transport on the war was immense, indeed, outside of the armed services it is hard to find any industry or body which participated in the war to a greater degree.

The Great War was fought with new technology, gains made during the industrial revolution bore fruit upon the battlefields, with armies utilising new developments in weapons and machinery to kill their enemies ever more effectively. However,

soldiers and their paraphernalia had to be in the right place at the right time to fight.

Effective transport and supply lines were just as important as weaponry. Rail networks offered huge potential to military commanders, making it possible to move fresh troops and equipment about more rapidly than ever before. They were quick to make use of the resources available and made greater demands of the British railway companies as the war progressed. Those companies were not found wanting and their efforts strongly affected the conduct of the war.

Railways had already played a part in the wars of the 19th century, particularly the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 causing the military planners to re-think the strategy of any possible European war. The days of huge land armies marching to set piece battles was over. It could be argued by some people that the Germans had little alternative other than to pursue their war once their preoccupation with the Schlieffen Plan, which was basically a railway mobilisation plan was set in stone, and they had no follow up plan, or no alternative to proceed with other than that. Of course an argument could be made that they should have made a separate peace treaty with France which. But that was never likely given the French were very keen to reoccupy Alsace-Lorraine after 1870.

The advent of fast, efficient rail networks brought a new dimension to warfare.

Commanders envisaged transporting troops to distant railheads, making lightning thrusts into enemy territory and exploiting the advantage gained by the use of cavalry. Ironically, as we all know, the result was stalemate. Far from producing a war of movement, railways may even have contributed to the war of attrition, enabling commanders to thwart enemy offensives by rapidly moving men and materials to defensive positions. On both sides of the trench lines trains carried cargoes of fresh troops and new ordnance into battle. They returned with shattered manhood and broken machinery.

The German High Command was first to realise the importance of a strategically placed rail system in the event of war. The State run network was planned accordingly. East to west lines were duplicated, indeed some lines were never used in peacetime and others terminated in obscure places far from areas of population or commercial activity. The Western frontier of Germany resembled a staging area, serving no apparent purpose. All became clear on the outbreak of war when thirteen rail lines managed to carry 1.5 million German troops and their equipment to the front in ten days!

The historian AJP Taylor, considering the events of 1914, once argued:

‘The First World War had begun - imposed on the statesmen of Europe by railway timetables. It was an unexpected climax to the railway age.’

While some thought had been given to the use of Britain`s rail network in wartime, there was no comparison to the level of organisation in Germany. Without State control there could be no overall strategic planning. Independent companies administered their own sections of line according to the economic demand dictated by their own individual customers. Planning for war did not enter into the equation.

Fortunately some planning had been done. In 1865 the Engineer & Railway Staff Corps was created, consisting of Engineers and Managers of the major rail companies under the control of the War Office. The primary consideration of this body was to formulate measures to be put into effect in the event of an invasion from the continent - remember at that time France was considered to be the greatest potential enemy threat. The Engineer and Railway Staff Corps later came under the umbrella of the Royal Engineers Territorial Force. There were other configurations but the most important change happened in 1912 with the formation of the Railway Executive Committee (REC) entrusted with the responsibility of running an efficient rail networks if war broke out. Here is a list of the members.

DA Mathieson	Caledonian Railway
■ Sir Sam Fay	Great Central Railway
■ CH Dent	Great Northern Railway
■ F Potter	Great Western Railway
■ Sir Robert Turnbull	London & North Western Railway
■ JAF Aspinall	Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway
■ HA Walker (Chair)	London & South Western Railway
■ Sir Guy Granet	Midland Railway
■ AK Butterworth	North Eastern Railway
■ FH Dent	South Eastern & Chatham Railway

Detailed plans and timetables were first assembled in 1886, these comprised of a somewhat disjointed 311 page book - a forerunner of the fabled War Book which detailed what needed to be done when mobilisation took place in 1914. There was little co-operation at this time between the railway and military authorities which made cohesive planning very difficult. Timetables were updated in a more satisfactory manner in 1904 and forwarded to the War Office. After further consultation `timetables proper` were ready in 1909.

The REC tinkered with the details, fine tuning timings and handovers until a definitive document was compiled.

War was declared at 11pm on August 4th and mobilisation plans put into immediate effect. A total of 130 railway companies came under the control of the REC straight away. Pre-war management staff continued to operate each of the constituent companies.

An official announcement stated

“The railways, locomotives, rolling stock and staff shall be used as one complete unit in the best interests of the State for the movement of troops, stores and food supplies”

The timing of the declaration of war made the task of mobilisation difficult for the fledgling national network. Territorials and regular soldiers were away attending summer camps, away from their planned wartime embarkation points. These men had to be re-located before the exodus could start and don't forget the trains were also packed with trippers as mobilisation also clashed with a Bank Holiday.



The first train containing soldiers of the BEF reached Southampton, the port earmarked for embarkation for the bulk of departures, at 8.15 am on Sunday 10th August - 33 minutes early.

The last train arrived at 5.38pm on Sunday 17th August - 22 minutes early!

Between those time trains pulled in at fixed intervals for 16 hours every day. Any train over 12 minutes late was to forego its turn and wait in the sidings - note a single train missed the appointed place in the line.

Remember as I said earlier - all was mechanical - points - signals - trains passed from section to section, company to company - communication by bell code. Quite amazing how it all worked....

A typical example of how a train was handled and passed between hitherto, rival, railway companies.... For example....a battalion had to be entrained by the North British Railway at Waverley Station, Edinburgh destination Southampton docks, via Berwick, York, Mexborough, Banbury and Basingstoke. Planning was made in reverse from the time slot that the train *must* arrive at the docks

Because of the number of men involved (and their equipment), there has to be two trains....

London and South Western (which controlled the railways in and around Southampton) has fixed upon 3pm and 4pm as the times at which those trains must arrive at the dockside.

It is about one hour's run between Southampton and Basingstoke, where the LSWR would receive the trains from the Great Western the latter company would advise to have them there, the first at 1.50pm, the second at 2.50pm.

The GWR would then advise the Great Central the times at which these trains should be at Banbury;

The GCR would give the North Eastern the time for arrival at Mexborough;

The NER would communicate with the North British concerning necessary arrival at Berwick upon Tweed.

So it would be for the NBR to fix the time at which the trains would leave Edinburgh in order to suit all these other arrangements.

In all, from all over the country, 334 specials conveyed 69000 troops, 21000 horses, 2446 horse drawn vehicles, 166 guns, 1366 bicycles and 2550 tons of stores into Southampton during this period. By 31st August, 118000 troops had been transported to Southampton.

The whole operation was a truly remarkable achievement - a combination of meticulous planning, cooperation - and SHEER HARD WORK.

Lord Kitchener, Secretary of state for War, was moved to state in parliament ***`The railway companies in the all-important matter of the transport facilities have more than justified the complete confidence reposed in them by the War Office, all grades of railway services having laboured with untiring energy and patience`***

This was only the start, now the soldiers were in France, new demands were placed upon the railways. Ambulance trains were needed for wounded soldiers being brought back to the UK for hospitalisation. There were ammunition trains, mail trains, leave trains, as well as the constant demand to carry reinforcements to the Western Front. Of course - on top of all this - there was a `normal` service to run.

The first ambulance trains came into use at Southampton on 24th August 1914 and between then and 31st December 1918, 7822 ambulance trains were despatched from the port carrying 1,234,000 wounded men. Dover Marine station handled 1,260,000 wounded from January 1915 to February 1919 on 7781 ambulance trains. Early ambulance trains were standard coaching stock, hastily converted for carrying wounded men.



As the war progressed trains were designed specifically for the task. These contained a pharmacy car, a dispensary, quarters for doctors and nursing staff, isolation car and carriages suitable for seated or bedded patients. As the scale of the war over-ran medical facilities close to the South Coast ports, trains carried wounded men further afield, including to Scotland. By the end of the war there was 49 ambulance trains, comprising 822 carriages were in use at home and overseas. Nineteen of these trains were exclusively for the use of the United States Army casualties.



Grant then put up a coloured picture of `walking wounded` boarding an ambulance train...nothing unusual in that...but....some of those wounded soldiers in the picture were from the Portuguese army contingent who, despite being badly led and lacking support from their government, performed gallantly on the Western Front

The combined capacity of these trains was 8300 wounded being broken down to 5000 sitting and 3300 bedded down. The heaviest ambulance train traffic of the war occurred in the aftermath of the Battle of the Somme which commenced in July 1916. In the period 3rd to 9th July a total of 47000 wounded soldiers were moved by ambulance trains.



The London, Brighton and South Coast Railway bore the brunt of ammunition traffic during the war. Newhaven harbour was designated the main port for handling explosive ordnance. Over 2.5 million tons of ammunition passed through this port in nearly 20000 special trains. Records show no evidence of any significant accidents.

The carriage of mail to and from the Front also imposed a heavy burden. The main route was London Victoria to Folkestone. Around 30 mail wagons left Victoria every night carrying around 3 million postal items per week. Wagons travelled in the opposite direction bearing a similar load. Over ten million mail sacks passed along this route during the war - weighing approximately 325000 tons. Of course, as with all specialised trains involved in the war effort, there was a knock-on effect on other lines, even those well away from those of London and the South Coast.

Men began arriving home in 'Blighty' on leave from about November 1914, most landing at either Dover or Folkestone and boarded trains for London Victoria. Normally a dozen leave trains ran each way daily. These trains held a poignant place in the hearts of old soldiers for many years after the war.



The above slide showed troops arriving at Nottingham Victoria station for a period of leave...Grant pointed out at least four wearing 'lemon squeezer' ANZAC caps....far travelled north for a period of leave? As someone said in the post talk Q & A many serving with the ANZAC forces were recent emigrants from Britain.



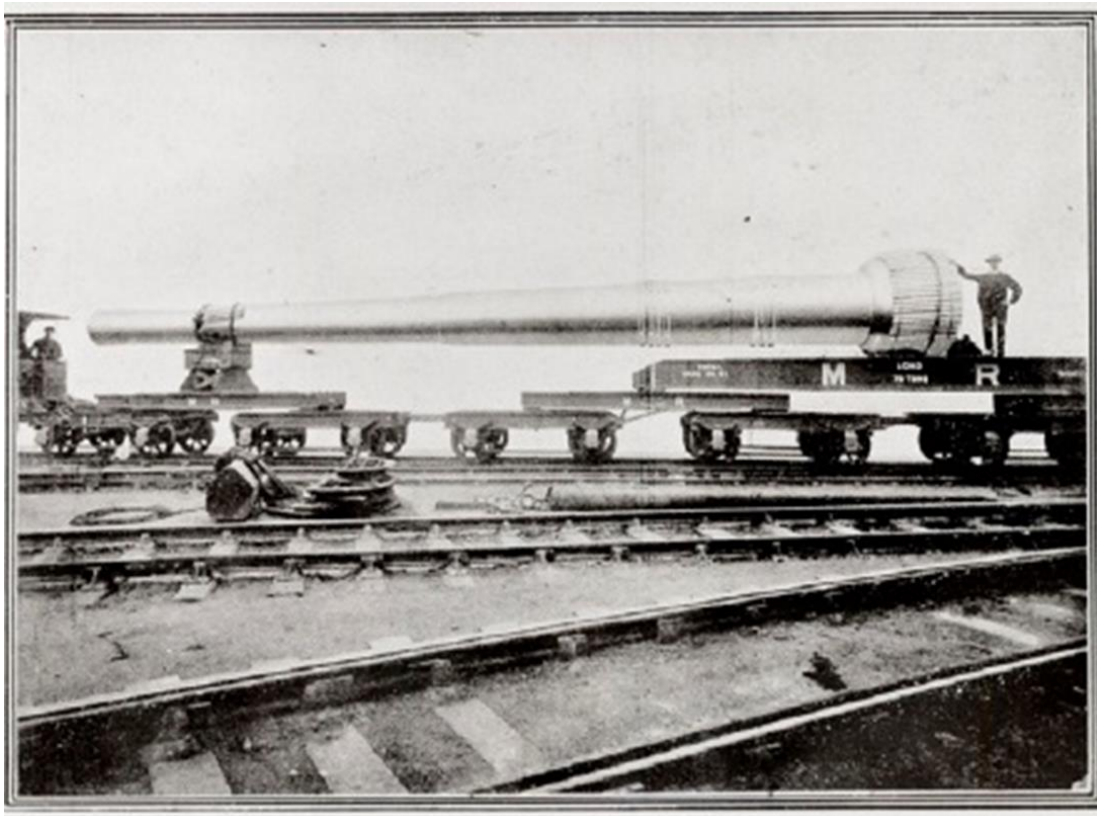
The mood of gaiety and expectation on trains to London formed a pitiful contrast to the sombre, brooding thoughts of travellers in the opposite direction. The above picture shows soldiers - mostly officers - being seen off by family and friends on their return to The Front.



The wartime government wasted no time in utilising the vast manufacturing potential of the railway workshops. As early as 2nd September 1914 the War Office called on the REC to assist with the manufacture of 12250 stretchers, and before long the maintenance and production of locomotives and rolling stock to second place to the requirements of the war. The vast array of military goods manufactured ranged from entrenching tools to heavy gun mounts.



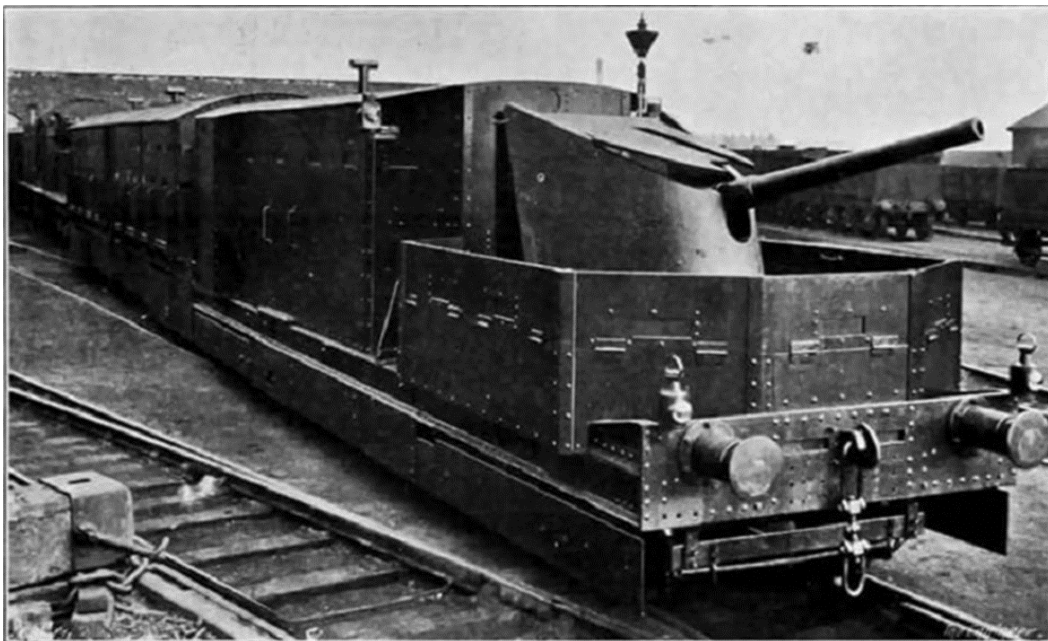
The heaviest workload was the production and recycling of ammunition. The North Eastern Railway workshop at Darlington alone made over a million eighteen-pounder shells. Some of the statistics are staggering, railway workshops re-formed 29,000,000 brass shell cases, produced 4.5 million fuses and 4.5 million adaptors. The list is endless.



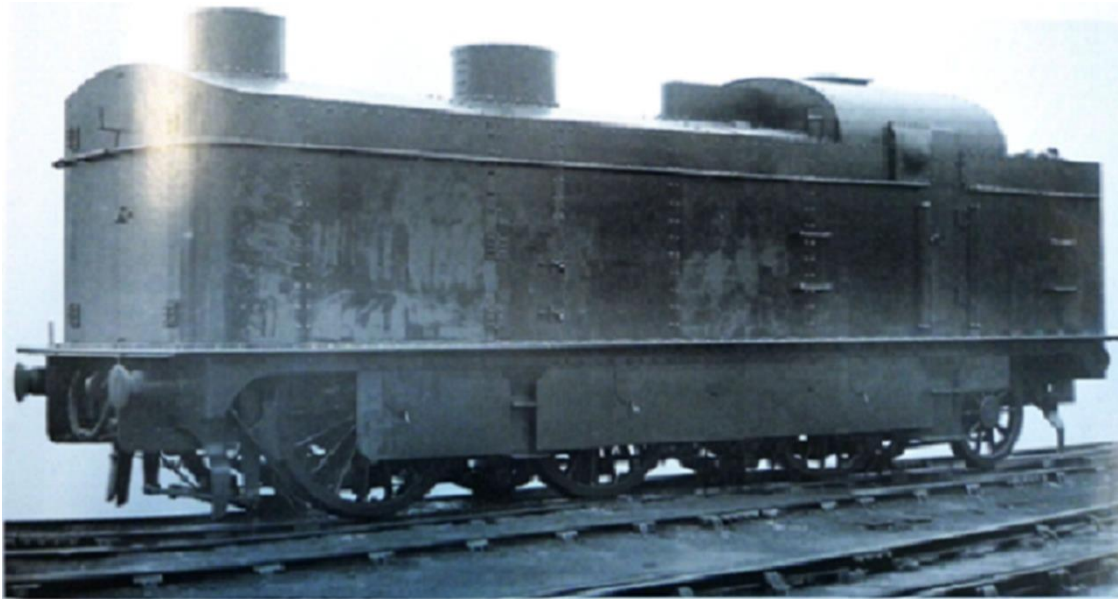


Millions of shells were filled and transported by rail to the Channel ports - this picture is from Chilwell in 1917

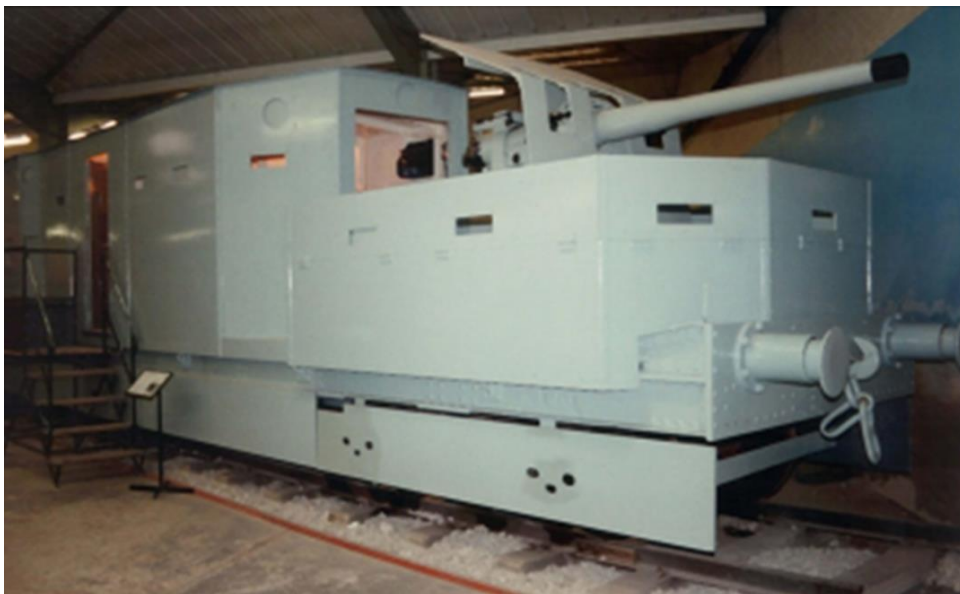
The Armoured Trains



In December 1914, Great Northern Railway Class N1 0-6-2 tank engine was purchased and two 30 ton boiler-trolleys were acquired from the Caledonian Railway, along with two 40 ton coal wagons from the Great Western Railway. These vehicles were sent to the London and North Western Railway (LNWR) works at Crewe to be made into the armoured train. The boiler-trolleys were fitted with a 12 pound, pedestal mounted, quick firing gun with a shield. This had to be fitted between the bogie wheels so that the weight of the gun, and the force of the recoil when fired, could be evenly distributed on both axles. A cabin was constructed behind the gun to house an ammunition compartment, a Maxim gun compartment and a small office for the Officer Commanding the train. The whole vehicle was clad in $\frac{1}{2}$ " armour plate into which loopholes for rifle engagement, protected by small sliding doors, were cut.



There was two armoured trains. One based in Edinburgh, one at Melton Constable in Norfolk. That in Edinburgh patrolled the coastal railway to Berwick. Likewise coastal lines around Sheringham and Cromer by the Melton Constable train.



The gun truck from one of these trains used to be on display at the Museum of Army Transport at Beverley, but since that closed in 2003 and its collection dispersed its current whereabouts is unknown and is currently not to be found on public display. Grant asked if anyone had information about its current location would be appreciated. Was the gun truck a post WW2 reconstruction?

While much extra work was carried out in railway workshops, the War Office made ever increasing demands on the railway companies. Initially on its formation in 1915, the Railway Operating Division in France used French and Belgian locomotives, but a shortage rapidly escalated as many Belgian and French engines had fallen into German hands when these countries were invaded. Gradually British engines were sent to augment the stock. Some were heavy haulage engines like North Eastern 'T1's. Many engines sent were old freight engines built in the 1880s but the oldest were some Midland Railway types built between 1871 and 1873.

Railway workshops built 521 2-8-0s on behalf of the Ministry of Munitions of which 311 were sent to the ROD in France. These were based upon a Great Central Railway design and of these 369 were made by the North British Locomotive Company workshops in Glasgow. After the war many Ministry locomotives returned to service mainly with the London and North Eastern Railway and the Great Western Railway, although some went to China and Australia. Scottish railway company, the North British Railway, sent thirty of their workhorse 'C' class engines to serve with the ROD, all of which returned to the company after the war. To mark their war service each of these locomotives received a name to denote their war service, either personalities e.g. Haig, Petain, Byng, Maude etc. or places, Somme, Verdun, Aisne, Arras, Mons. Many of these robust engines survived into the 1960s on British Railways. It was two of these engines - 'Byng' and 'Maude' that Grant referred to in his opening - both Great War generals

One of these, NBR number 673, BR number 65243, which received the name 'Maude' after General Frederick Stanley Maude was purchased by the Scottish Railway Preservation Society from British Railways in 1965 and was restored to work on special trains and pull trains on the Bo'ness and Kinneil Railway. The engine can currently be seen at the Scottish Railway Museum at Bo'ness where it awaits funds being made available for it to have a heavy repair, including re-tubing the boiler, so that once again it can be steamed and pull trains.

'Maude' spent several years on loan to the National Railway Museum at York.



Earlier mention of The Jellicoe Express ran between London Euston and Thurso in Scotland, linking the South of England with its three great naval ports and the Fleet's anchorage in Scapa Flow in Orkney.

Just for interest...here is that train's timetable (slide) for winter 1917 was:-

Euston dep. 3pm	Thurso dep. 11.45 am
Carlisle dep. 9.40pm	Perth dep. 10.25pm
Hawick dep. 11.00pm	Inverkeithing dep. 11.35pm

Edinburgh dep. 12.38am
Inverkeithing dep. 1.11am
Perth dep. 2.20am
Thurso arr. 12.45 pm

Edinburgh dep. 12.31 am
Galashiels dep. 1.33 am
Carlisle dep. 3.20 am
Euston arr. 10.05 am

Not for nothing was it called 'The Misery Express'

The ROD operated 1600 standard gauge locomotives, including 951 British built, including the 311 Ministry of Munitions engines previously mentioned. The London & North Western with 111, and the Great Western with 95 were the major contributors. A further 500 came from the USA and Canada. 229 were hired from Belgium and others were requisitioned elsewhere.



Railway Operating Division - a locomotive 'somewhere in France'

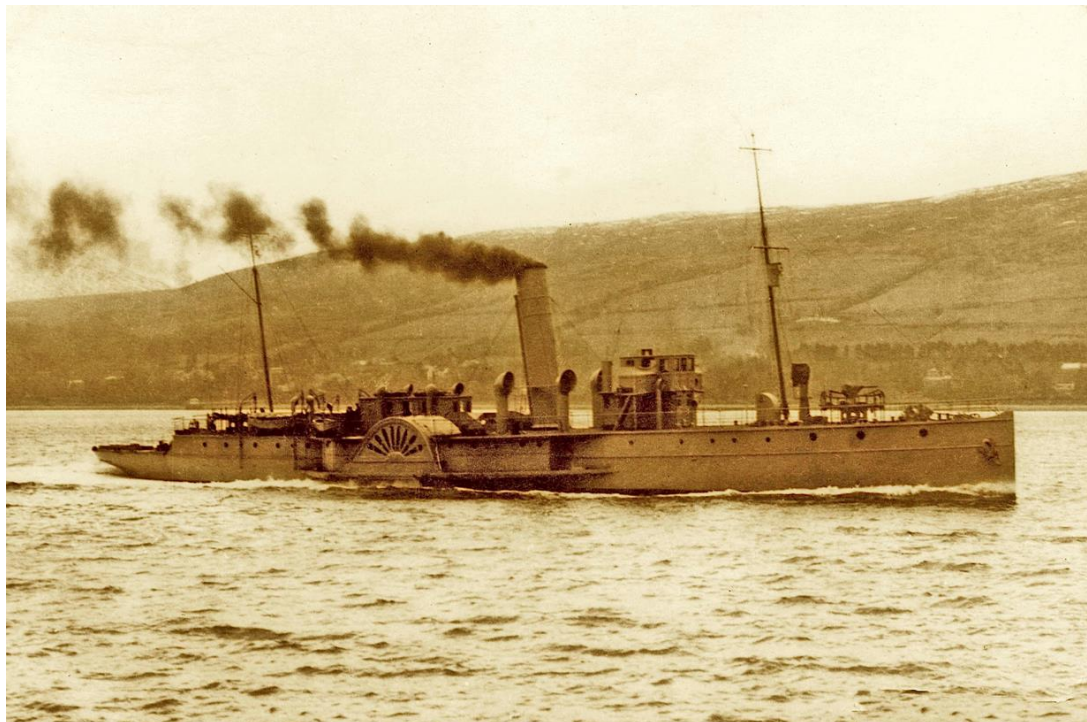
Some of these engines were still to be found on Britain's railways until the early 1960s

The War Office did not stop at demanding engines. By the end of 1916, 600 miles of track had been taken over to France. In 1918, 1300 miles of standard gauge track was laid by British and Canadian pioneer battalions. There was also a constant requirement for spares, locomotive parts, rolling stock and every other conceivable railway item.

Of course the demands placed upon the domestic railway system by the war eventually took their toll. Immediately after mobilisation there was a determined effort on behalf of the railway companies (and indeed the Government itself) to provide 'business as usual'. The services remained recognisable until December 1916 when the REC introduced wartime economy measures. Stations closed, services slashed, Pullman cars withdrawn, restaurant cars cancelled and speed restrictions applied. Standard fares were doubled at the same time to try and reduce demand. Cheap excursion fares had already been suspended at the beginning of the war.

The REC pointed out the reasons behind the drastic measures, explaining that the War Effort took priority. Among the reasons listed were the need to save coal, a fall in maintenance standards, demand for locomotives and track overseas, staff shortages and the requirement to keep trains on standby for operational tasks.

The Government swiftly seized other railway assets. A total of 126 ships operated by the railway companies were pressed into Government service. This total comprised over half the 1914 railway companies' shipping fleet. Railway ships performed most cross-Channel troop transporting, thus soldiers were carried to their port of embarkation by train, crossed the sea on railway ships and often completed their journey to close to the Front Line behind British engines requisitioned by the ROD. Thirty five ships were lost during the war, including six still operated by the railways. Of these, sixteen were torpedoed, nine were mined and one was sunk by enemy guns. Here we have HMS 'Fair Maid' of the North British Railway company, mined off Harwich with the loss of four crew members.



Enemy air raids caused some disruption to railways on the home front. There were 108 air raids during the war made up of 51 Zeppelin actions and 57 by Gotha bombers. These caused slight damage to the railway system over a wide area. Altogether 24 rail staff died as a result, including 8 Midland Railway employees killed when St Pancras station was hit by five bombs on 17th February 1918. It is probable that more problems were caused to services by the elaborate precautions adopted than by the raids themselves.

Grant then mentioned that the railway system - stations, signal boxes etc became an 'early warning' system for the passage of Zeppelins, which were slow and noisy but until the advent of dedicated high altitude night fighters, virtually invulnerable to home defences. A station or signal box on or near the coast would hear the sound of the Zeppelin passing overhead - they would phone the net railway facility along the line and, as the airship passed overhead the message would be passed on, effectively tracking the raider.

Accidents were inevitable but nothing like the tragedy which unfolded at Quintinshill just north of Carlisle when 227 people were killed on 22nd May 1915 - 215 soldiers of the 1/7th Leith Battalion of the Royal Scots, 9 civilian passengers and three railway

employees - following a collision involving five trains. Two signalmen were found guilty of culpable homicide (Scottish equivalent of manslaughter) and served short prison sentences, it being considered that there were in each case some mitigating circumstances.



A great many railway staff enlisted for service in the Armed Forces prior to railway work becoming a reserved occupation - approximately 30% of the workforce. Worst hit was the LNWR which lost over 30000 men, and the Great Western with 25000. Of all those who enlisted 21552 railwaymen never returned. Many were decorated for bravery, including six awarded the VC and thirty the DSO.

Around 40000 railway staff served with the ROD in some capacity or another.

Women flooded into vacancies left by men away on active service. Prior to the war some companies employed no women while many others only used women in traditional roles, such as maid service in railway hotels.



Technical advances have meant that hitherto black and white images from WW1 can now be 'colourised' and showed the same picture - a group of lady engine cleaners at Bradford in 1917. As Grant said it's easy to think of WW1 as being in 'black and white' ...but it was just like today...in colour....



Attitudes changed rapidly. By October 1916 the number of female clerks on the Great Central Railway increased from a pre-war figure of 76 to 1526. Twenty three companies employed female porters, twenty nine used lady ticket collectors and twelve had females in their workshops. In August 1914 13000 women work for the railways, by October 1918 the number was over 68000. Here we see a colourised picture of locomotive cleaners posing on an L & YR engine

The end of the war brought further challenges. The REC managed to take the BEF to France in August 1914 and now it was given the equally momentous task of bringing back an army which had increased eleven-fold in just over four years. The UK was divided into twenty settlement areas and men were returned by train to a dispersal location in the resettlement area in which they lived. An arbitrary system was devised whereby the War Office calculated the number of soldiers recruited from each of the 21 areas and divided resources accordingly.

Naturally, their sums did not always add up, and men often found themselves at a dispersal camp many miles from their chosen destination. Initially, 40000 men per week were demobilised. Somehow the railways rose to meet the challenge and succeeded in restoring men to their families with great efficiency. Added to this, from October 1918 railways transported 12900 horses from arrival ports to points of sale in Britain.

It must be remembered that the railway that brought the men home was not the well-honed instrument which took them away. Locomotives and stock were run down, track and buildings were in a poor state, and the entire system was fatigued and required a total overhaul. It was obvious that whilst the national network would refer to its previous fragmented state on the cessation of hostilities there was going to be changes ahead. The railway network had reached a watershed. The first seeds of amalgamation and eventual nationalisation after another global conflict had been sown.



This 'amalgamation' which became known as the 'Grouping' followed on when the REC relinquished control of the railways and was carried through by an Act of Parliament drafted by Sir Eric Geddes who had done so much during the war years to bring professionalism to the army's logistics systems in France and Flanders. Post war Geddes became the first Minister of Transport

From this Grouping their arose the 'Big Four' - comprising the Southern Railway, Great Western Railway, London, Midland and Scottish Railway and the London and North Eastern Railway and this structure remained in place until these companies were nationalised to form British Railways on January 1st 1948.

Throughout the war years Britain's railways made a vital contribution to the war effort, overcoming every challenge placed before them. Indeed if the BEF had not arrived in France so swiftly in 1914 the immediate consequences for the Allies would have been disastrous.

The smooth cooperation between forcibly amalgamated private companies who hitherto had been keen rivals in business, paved the way for future success.

With each passing year the network faced greater obstacles, yet still the demands of the War Office - and indeed the nation - were met.

The management and staff of the railways worked miracles for more than four years.

To conclude, Grant looked briefly at five memorials.



There is the magnificent Memorial to the men of the Great Western Railway (often known as God`s Wonderful Railway) at London Paddington Station.



A stone`s throw from York station, just inside the city wall is the Memorial to the men of the North Eastern Railway Company



Grant mentioned earlier the LNWR lost over 30000 men to the services, and the Great Western with 25000.

In 2019 a new memorial was unveiled at Manchester Piccadilly Station



Closer to home there is a memorial on Attenborough Station to the six members of the station staff who lost their lives in the Great War. This memorial was erected in 2013 to replace one which had been irreparably damaged.

And the last memorial, in Coatbridge, Scotland, came from a humble freight only engine shed - Kipps Works - which Grant mentioned in his introduction. When the facility closed in the 1960s the granite plaque was carefully removed and fixed to an external wall of the local Railwaymen's Social Club. It too closed in the 1970s and the premises became a pub but has been, in more recent years an Indian Restaurant. Indeed there was uproar in the town when, in the run-in to Remembrance Day a few years ago, the owners of the restaurant covered up the memorial with a `Buy One Get One Free` advertising banner.....this was subsequently removed after the protests.

The memorial is still there, a silent monument to the men of Kipps Works who went to war, and those who did not return, making this memorial rather unusual as it lists all of the men that enlisted from the depot - not just those who died for King and Country



There are still many memorials to railway staff at stations throughout the country - worth looking out for - and not just at the main City termini. Their deeds were seldom recognised - they were just `doing their job`, but their contribution to the final outcome is clear.

Just to complete, Grant mentioned where he got the majority of information for this talk....

British Railways and The Great War ...by Edwin Pratt.....two volumes..1200 pages...published in 1921. Originals can be found, but reprints are readily available at a fraction of the cost.

Pratt`s *magnum opus* is also available to view online

<https://archive.org/details/cu31924092566128/page/n6/mode/2up>

Britain`s Railways in WW1 by JAB Hamilton...published in 1956

XX

The Douglas Haig Fellowship – Annual General Meeting
28th January 2022, Cavalry and Guards Club, Piccadilly, London.



PATRON: The Rt. Hon. Lord Astor of Hever, PC, DL

Being a DHF member, WFA Trustee Mark Macartney joined other Members and guests of The Douglas Haig Fellowship in attending The Annual General Meeting . The AGM was chaired by The Rt. Hon. Lord Astor of Hever, PC, DL , Patron of Douglas Haig Fellowship (and Grandson of Field Marshal Douglas Haig)

The AGM was followed by a Buffet Lunch after which a talk was given by Seb Cox, Head of the Air Historical Branch (RAF) in the Ministry of Defence. His talk considered Haig's attitude to air power and how it might have changed over time in the light of the improvements in aircraft over the period. In particular it considered his relationship with Trenchard and the extent to which the two men's attitudes were closely aligned and the impact that this could have had. It also looked at Trenchard/Haig's application of air power and whether the many criticisms made of their approach were justified. In this respect he considered whether Haig might have been less inclined to accept Trenchard's aggressive policy in the air or whether he was justified in accepting the advice of his technical expert.

Seb Cox serves as the principal historical advisor to the Chief of the Air Staff and the Royal Air Force. He is also one of three co-directors of the RAF Centre for Air and Space Power Studies. He joined the Air Historical Branch in 1984 having previously served on the curatorial staff of the RAF Museum and thus has thirty-nine years' experience in the field of RAF history.

He is a fellow of the Royal Historical Society and a member of the British Commission for Military History and served two terms as an elected trustee of the international Society of Military History. He is also the Chair of the RAF Museum's external academic Research Advisory Board. He has written widely on the history of the RAF and in 2017 he was awarded the OBE for services to RAF History and Heritage.

This talk (to a well attended meeting) was absolutely top rate, as the Discussions afterwards proved.

Mark mentioned that Seb started his talk by praising the premises, (The Cavalry and Guards Club) and especially the room, mentioning that it always reminded him of "Only Fools and Horses" referring to the 2 chandeliers in the ceiling



Chandelier



Lord Astor



Seb Cox

Another excellent contribution by Jane Ainsworth.....

HAROLD HAWCROFT (1894 - 1918) AND FAMILY

Frank Higham and I share an interest in the First World War with a particular enthusiasm for the Barnsley Pals; Frank because of his ancestors and me as volunteer co-ordinator of the Barnsley Pals Colours Project at St Mary's Church. Frank contacted me in February 2021 in connection with acquiring a copy of my history of the Colours and he told me about his great uncle Harold.

I was fascinated by some of the unusual details and felt that Harold's story would make an interesting article for a local journal. Frank kindly sent me scans of photographs and documents, which his grandmother Annie had inherited, as well as research he had carried out to create his extensive family tree on Ancestry.

I am very grateful to Grant's friend Stuart for sharing the Red Cross Report he managed to track down for his own research. I have indulgently quoted extensively from this in the hope that readers will be as interested as me in subjects such a long way from the Western Front!

As I wrote Harold's story, I inevitably looked at his siblings' records and did some supplementary research. I decided to include their stories because of their service in the Great War. This is another Barnsley family to be proud of.

***"At the going down of the sun,
and in the morning,
We will remember them."***

Laurence Binyon – For the Fallen

#####

Harold Hawcroft was born late 1894 in Worsbrough Common to Charles Hawcroft (1857 – 1902) and Sarah Elizabeth nee Whitehead (1856 – 1914), who had married in summer 1877 in Barnsley. Charles was born in Worsbrough and became a coal miner like his father, Samuel Hawcroft. Elizabeth was born in Leeds where her father, Henry Whitehead, was a labourer. How they met is a mystery.

Charles and Elizabeth had nine children, four of whom had died by 1911, and most were baptised at St Mary's Church, Worsbrough: Edith, Mary, who died in 1909 aged 29, Walter, George Henry, Annie and Harold. (It is not possible to identify the other three Hawcroft children who died because between 1878 and 1911 in Barnsley 40 died aged 20 and under, 31 of these under 3 years old).

In 1901, Charles, a general labourer aged 42, resided at 37 Highstone Road, Worsbrough, with his wife Elizabeth, aged 43, and their four children born in Worsbrough Common: Walter, a colliery pony driver below ground aged 15, George Henry aged 11, Annie aged 8, and Harold aged 3. Edith and Mary had got married to George Burnett and George Hill Booth respectively; their families lived elsewhere in Barnsley. Charles died the following year in Kendray Hospital of typhoid; he was just 45 years old.

On the 1911 Census, Elizabeth, widowed head of household, occupied four rooms at 58 King Street, Barnsley, with three children: Walter, a coal miner (trammer) aged 25, Annie, a bottle washer (mineral water) aged 18, and Harold, a colliery pony driver (below ground) aged 15. Her granddaughter Nellie Booth, aged 3, was there, probably being cared for by Elizabeth while her widowed father, a coal miner hewer, was working. Esmeralda Hodson, aged 19, was a visitor and domestic housemaid.

HAROLD HAWCROFT (1896 – 1918)



Harold Hawcroft enlisted in Barnsley on 30 September 1914 as a Private (431) in the 13th (Service) Battalion (First Barnsley) of the York and Lancaster Regiment (Y&L). Joseph Hewitt, Commanding Officer of the Barnsley Battalion, was the Recruiting Officer. Harold's mother died soon after he had enlisted. He was a miner, 19 years and 330 days old, 5' 5 ½" tall, weighing 147 lbs with brown eyes, black hair and a fresh complexion. He transferred to the 15th (Reserve) Battalion Y&L from 29 December 1915, when they were in Colsterdale Camp, near Masham, in the Yorkshire Dales.

According to Harold's Service Records, on 4 April 1916, he was posted as a Private (29147) to the 1st Battalion of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, who were in Salonika, northern Greece, fighting against Bulgarians and their allies in the Balkans, which had been ruled for a long time by the Ottomans. From 8 October 1916 until 13 July 1917, Harold transferred as a Private (67361) to the 1st Garrison Battalion (Sherwood Foresters), Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment, who were based in Egypt from late 1915 for the duration of the war. The Egyptian Expeditionary Force was formed in March 1916 from the Force in Egypt who were protecting the Suez Canal and the survivors from Gallipoli in the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force. While some of the men were transferred to the Western Front, others continued to fight campaigns against the Ottomans in Sinai, Palestine and Syria between 1916 and 1918.

Harold was transferred again on 2 August 1917 to the 2nd Battalion of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment (2LNL) and he joined them in Alexandria on the 24th as a Private (40257). He was designated from 29 September for nearly two months as Temporary Warder at the Officers' Prisoner of War Camp at Sidi Bishr, before rejoining the 2nd Battalion on 23 November 1917.

Sidi Bishr is a seaside neighbourhood of the city of Alexandria. A Maltese Officer, Juann Mamo, served in this camp, built on sand, and created an album of documents, plans and comments to record the poor and sub-human conditions. An associate of his, Manwel Dimech, a teacher and publisher banished from Malta, was interned in Sidi Bishr camp in 1918. The dire conditions caused his health to decline rapidly and he suffered a stroke that paralysed half of his body. He was moved into a nearby hospital in November 1920 and died there in April 1921, exiled from his family in Malta and considered a martyr. Turkish and Arab prisoners of war petitioned the Camp Commandant in 1921 to expedite their repatriation after five years of imprisonment; they and their families at home were in poverty and starving.

A Report by the Delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross extracted and translated from the Official Reports of the Red Cross Society (Documents Publiés à l'Occasion de la Guerre Européenne, 1914-1917) was published in 1917. Sidi Bishr Camp was included.

7. Sidi Bishr Camp. (Visited on January 6, 1917.)

The camp of Sidi Bishr is situated 15 kilometres (9.5 miles) to the north-east of Alexandria in a healthy spot on the sea shore, where the sand dunes form little hillocks intersected by miniature valleys. Palms are scattered over it, and it lies open to the fresh breezes. The view from the highest points of the camp is very extensive. A recently constructed road for vehicular traffic leads into the camp, all the appointments of which give the impression that everything has been done to make the prisoners as comfortable as possible. A kitchen garden has just been laid out in a sheltered place, and a flat piece of ground surrounded by palm trees prepared for games, tennis, football, etc.

Strength. *The camp at Sidi Bishr contains 430 officers, 60 of whom have been here since February, 1915; 410 orderlies captured with their officers, on whom they attend, each officer*

having 1 orderly; 10 imams (priests); 20 civilians, who were captured by the Sherif of Mecca and at once handed over to the English.

The commandant of the camp is Lieut.-Colonel Coates.

The American chargé d'affaires in Egypt has twice visited the camp.

Accommodation. The equipment of the camp at Sidi Bishr not having been entirely completed before our visit we found some of the buildings still in course of erection. But the officers' quarters were ready, and lacked nothing except some furniture, which was daily expected. The barracks, 25 metres (81 feet) long and 8 metres (20 feet) wide, consisted of a solid wooden framework, with partitions either of timber or cement, constructed in the camp by native workmen. A corridor about 1 metre 75 (6 feet) wide runs all along the front of the building, and gives access to the chambers. These measure about 3 metres 50 (14 feet) by 4 metres (17 feet), and 4 metres (17 feet) from the wooden floor to the ceiling. All the interior walls are lime-washed. Each room has two windows, glazed and also covered with wire gauze to exclude insects, and a latched door. Chimneys rise above the roof, which is of timber covered with tarred felt.

According to regulation, the number of occupants of each chamber depends upon their grade. Officers up to the rank of captain are quartered four in each dormitory; captains three, and colonels two. (Some superior officers have each a separate chamber.) The orderlies are housed elsewhere. All the buildings are lighted by electricity, generated by a local plant.

Bedding. The iron beds have wire springs, mattresses stuffed with vegetable fibre, pillows, and sufficiency of blankets, to which many officers like to add curtains and coverlets. The rest of the furniture is adequate, and easy-chairs are general.

Food. The officers' mess is run by a contractor. One of the officers, appointed by his comrades, is entrusted with arranging the menus and seeing them properly carried out. No limit is fixed to the choice and quantity of food. The cost must not exceed 10 piastres (about 2s.) daily, including tea, coffee, sugar, preserves, etc. The officers can get any extras which they desire either from the canteen or from the town, except alcoholic drinks, which are forbidden. The meat is previously inspected by the veterinary of the sanitary department. The bread is particularly good. Officers are given European bread, orderlies native bread. We tasted the day's menu ourselves. No complaints with regard to food reached us. The Turkish officers take their meals in two dining-rooms, each of which seats 150. The tables are covered with cloths; the china and plate are suitable. The orderlies' fare is wholesome and sufficient.

Dress. The Turkish officers are warmly and suitably clad. They can procure for themselves all kinds of toilet articles and other equipment. Most of them wear civilian costume with a fez. An Alexandria tradesman comes to the camp to take their orders.

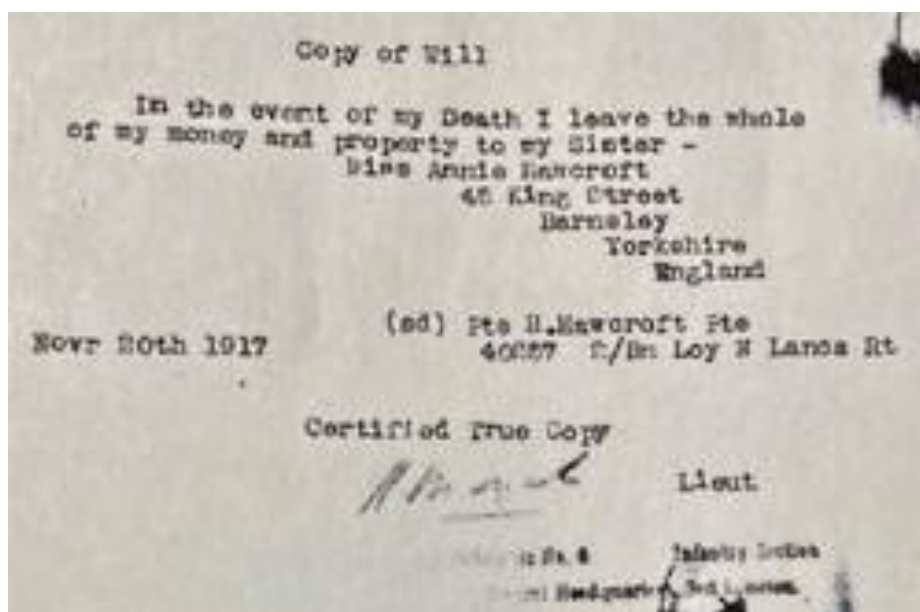
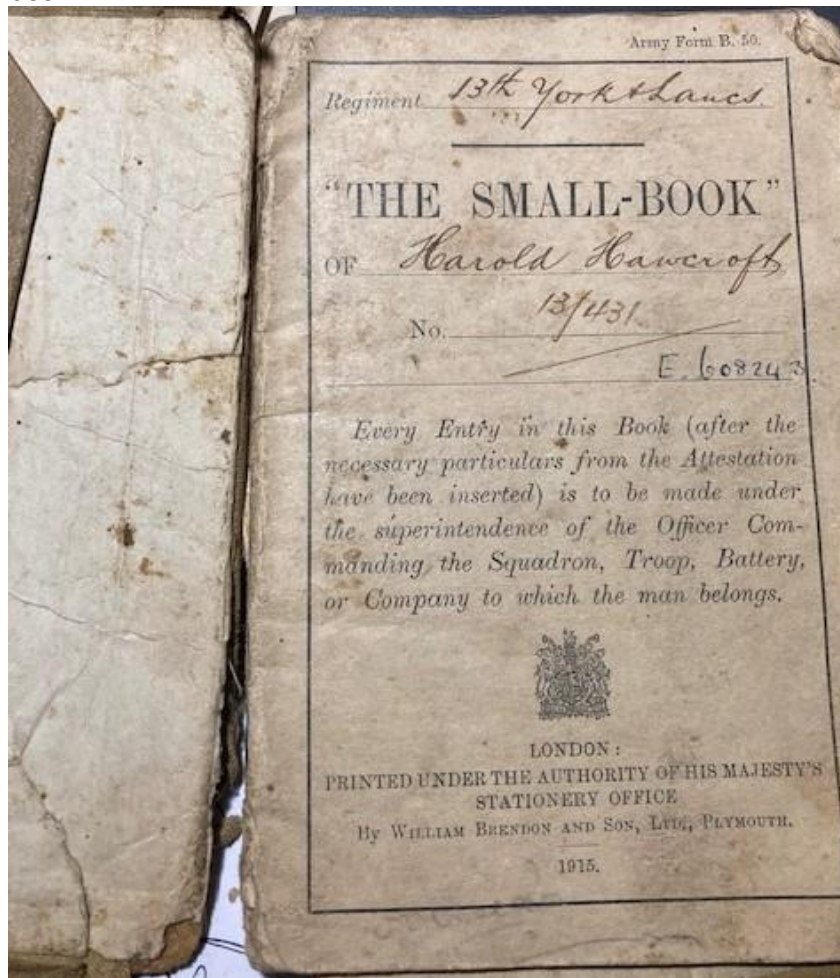
When inspecting the orderlies we heard some of them complain of a lack of linen, especially of drawers. Surprised by this, we made an immediate inquiry, which produced the following results: the orderlies all received their regulation supply of linen, and signed a receipt in the register. A certain number of them subsequently sold the articles to their officers; these are the men who now complain of a deficiency of linen.

Hygiene. Abundant and wholesome drinking water is laid on from the town system. The toilet supply comes to cement basins provided with many taps. The water from the lavatories and kitchens empties itself into a lake at some distance from the camp.

In the morning the officers use the baths or douches fitted up close to the barracks, and separated from each other by woven grass partitions.

The officers' linen is washed by their orderlies in very convenient wash-houses built of wood and cement.

There are 44 Turkish W.C.'s, cemented, at a good distance from the quarters. They are arranged over cesspools 18 feet deep, disinfected every day with whitewash and cresol, and are quite odourless.



FIELD SERVICE.

Army Form B. 2090A.

REPORT of Death of a Soldier to be forwarded to the War Office with the least possible delay after receipt of notification of death on Army Form B. 213 or Army Form A. 36, or from other official documentary sources.

REGIMENT 2nd Loyal North Lancashire Regt Squadron, Troop, }
OR CORPS 2nd Loyal North Lancashire Regt Battery or Company, }

Regimental No. 40257 Rank Private

Surname HAWCROFT Christian Names Harold

Date 1st August 1918 Place In the Field, France

Cause of Death KILLED IN ACTION

Nature and Date of Report Casualty Report dated 8-8-1918

By whom made Officer Commanding, 2nd Loyal North Lancashire Regt

* Specially state if killed in action, or died from wounds received in action, or from illness due to field operations or to fatigue, privation or exposure while on military duty, or from injury while on military duty.

State whether he leaves a Will or not (a) Pay Book (Army Book 64) Yes (attd) (b) in Small Book (if at Base) Yes
(c) as a separate document.

All private documents and effects received from the front or hospital, as well as the Pay Book, should be examined, and if any will is found it should be at once forwarded to the War Office.

Any information received as to verbal expressions by a deceased soldier of his wishes as to the disposal of his estate should be reported to the War Office as soon as possible.

A duplicate of this Report is to be sent to the Fixed Centre Paymaster at Home, or to the D.F.A.G., Indian Expeditionary Force, or Field Disbursing Officer, as the case may require, together with the Deceased's Pay Book (after withdrawal of any will from the latter). If the deceased's Small Book is at the Base, it should be forwarded to the War Office with this Report.

Station and Date G. H. 9th 17-8-1918 Signature of Officer in charge of Section G. H. 9th Adjutant-General's Office at the Base Adjutant-General's Office at the Base

W2088/21768-500,000-H. & Sr.-5/17-(10489)-Forms/B2090A/2

for Office

Infantry Section

Army Form B. 104-126.

Whether letter on this should be addressed to:
No. 2. Inr. Records,
and the following No. quoted.

Station Preston.

Date 18th Dec. 1918.

To Miss A. Hawcroft.

From Officer i/c.

64. King St.

No. 2. Inr. Records.

Barnsley.

SIR OR MADAM,

I am directed to forward the undermentioned articles of private property of the late No. 40257 Rank Private
Name Harold Hawcroft
Regiment 2nd Loyal North Lancs.
and would ask that you will kindly acknowledge receipt of the same on the form overleaf:—

1 Leather case. Photographs. Correspondence.

1 Identity Disc.

W317 3221 D.1

DEPENDANT'S PENSION.

Name *Hawcroft Harold* Regimental No. *40254*

Regiment or Ship *2nd Loyal North Lancs Regt* Rank *Pte.*

Documents received from Paymaster *10. 1. 19.*

Date and cause of death *1. 8. 18. Killed in Action*

Dependant *Mrs Annie Hawcroft.*

Address *64 King St Barnsley.*

Relationship *Sister.*

Pension *Grat. At 22 (2)* a week from

Date awarded _____ If refused *(P)*

Reason _____

P4406 18149/RTS 50m (72) 2/18 J.P. Gp. 152
P7122 4115/2048 200m (72) 8/18

Mrs A Beever
63 Wood St
Barnsley

135/20
19 JAN. 1920

Sir

Will you please let me know the reason I have not heard anything more about my brother's Gratuity Pte Harold Hawcroft 40254 2nd Loyal North Lancs Regt, as it is a month I have not heard from you about it since having heard from you I have removed from Sheffield Rd to the address above. so I

I hope you will kindly oblige.
Yours Sincerely
Mrs A Beever

Medical Attention. *The health of the inmates of Sidi Bishr Camp is looked after by an English doctor, Captain Gillespie, assisted by an Armenian doctor, who practised at Aleppo in Turkey before the war. These two doctors speak Arabic and Turkish.*

An English corporal and 5 English hospital orderlies take care of the sick.

Twenty-one Egyptian orderlies do the sanitary work of the camp; serious cases are sent to the English hospital at Alexandria. A Turkish Surgeon-Major, Dr. Ibrahim, interned at the camp, is present at operations performed upon his Ottoman comrades in the hospital. He expressed himself as entirely satisfied with the care bestowed upon them.

The infirmary contains 12 iron bedsteads, with wool mattresses and blankets. The consulting room is well fitted up, the cupboards abundantly supplied with drugs. An isolation ward accommodates

infectious cases in the incubation stage. Bathrooms reserved for the patients adjoin the infirmary, and there is a kitchen service for preparing special diet.

Officers troubled by their teeth are taken to a dentist in Alexandria.

The prisoners' garments and bedding are sterilised in a special apparatus.

All new arrivals pass 14 days in quarantine, in special quarters in one of the sections of the camp. They are permitted to join their comrades only when it is certain that they are free from any contagious malady. At present 36 officers and 34 orderlies are in quarantine.

Illnesses and Deaths *All officers imprisoned at Sidi Bishr having been vaccinated against smallpox, typhoid, and cholera, there are no epidemics in the camp. Three to five officers come forward each morning when the doctor makes his rounds. There are perhaps 6 light cases of malaria weekly, 3 to 5 cases of bacillic dysentery every month, treated with serum; 1 case of more serious dysentery was sent away to the English Hospital in Alexandria. In summer there are some mild cases of diarrhoea. There were 3 cases of trachoma among the officers' orderlies. Four tuberculous patients, coming from the Hedjaz, were conveyed to the hospital without any stay at the camp; two died after 20 & 30 days of treatment respectively.*

In the infirmary at Sidi Bishr are now: 1 officer with a foot wound, 1 suffering from pharyngitis, and one passing $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of albumen.

Some of the Turkish officers were wounded in the war: One whose thigh was amputated is provided with a fine artificial substitute; one who had both bones of the lower arm fractured, and was operated upon four times, is now well on the way to recovery.

One suffering from hemiplegia, owing to a fractured skull, is now able to move again and to walk with crutches. Another lame officer is affected by rupture of a main nerve in the leg.

Salik Sidki, judge of Mecca, entrusted us with a letter of thanks to the English authorities, in recognition of the care which he received at the hospital where he underwent a severe operation for a chronic affection of the pylorus.

Prisoners' Wishes. *Some officers complained of not being allowed to go to Alexandria to make their purchases; but in the circumstances such a request could not be gratified. On the other hand, a certain number of officers have obtained permission to go to Cairo and spend a few days with their wives interned in the Citadel; it is evident that this favour is only accorded in exceptional cases and cannot be made general. To extend it equally to sons, brothers and other relations, as some of the prisoners desire, is clearly impossible.*

The officers were offered two hours' walk every morning outside the camp, in parties of 26, under the supervision of an unarmed soldier, on condition of their giving their parole not to escape. This they refused, declaring that a conditional proposal was no privilege. They can, however, stroll about freely inside the limits of the camp, which is very extensive.

We received several complaints concerning rain having recently found its way into the barracks. But the extreme rarity of such an occurrence makes it of no importance.

Pay. *Officers' pay is fixed by the War Office. That of lieutenants comes to 5 francs daily, that of captains to 5 francs 75, that of superior officers is proportionate to their rank.*

The orderlies, being privates, are not paid. Some of them receive pay from their officers, others get nothing. Most of them have some money, but nevertheless we have decided to remit £20 to the camp commandant for the poorest soldiers' small needs.

Correspondence. *Prisoners may write as often as they like, but seldom take advantage of the privilege, and as a rule receive few letters, which take from 40 to 45 days in reaching them. Few money orders come to the camp.*

Religion and Amusements. *The prisoners have every chance of worshipping according to their own creed. The imams can use a building arranged as a mosque and lighted by electricity. There is one mosque inside the camp enclosure.*

The camp contains 40 musical instruments; a piano has been hired for the officers. The prisoners play football, tennis, cards and chess. Many amuse themselves with reading.

~CONCLUSIONS~

The Red Cross International Committee, at Geneva, has since the beginning of the war organised visits to the camps of prisoners of war and of civilian prisoners in the various belligerent countries.

The members of the mission sent to Egypt, MM. Dr. F. Blanchet, E. Schoch, and F. Thormeyer, had already inspected camps in Germany, France, Morocco and Russia. They may be allowed to compare the treatment of the Egyptian prisoners with what they had seen elsewhere.

We express our deep gratitude to the English authorities for all the facilities which they gave us for the accomplishment of our mission.

We will now sum up the whole set of observations made by us.

We visited the camps of Heliopolis, Maadi, the Citadel of Cairo, Ras-el-Tin, Sidi Bishr, and the hospitals of Abbassiah and the Egyptian Red Cross.

The camps are situated in healthy localities, and their dimensions are amply sufficient for the population that they hold. The accommodation seems to us exactly suited to the conditions of the country and climate. Whether barracks are specially constructed for the prisoners, or stone buildings are adapted to their use, these results are obtained.

Ventilation is sufficient everywhere. Measures of protection against the cold, so difficult to render effective in other countries, are unimportant here, owing to the mildness of the climate. Both boarded and beaten earth floors are kept perfectly clean.

The bedding of the prisoners of war (non-commissioned officers and privates) is composed of plaited rush mats, such as they are accustomed to use when at home. These mats are regularly cleansed, and replaced as they wear out. The officers, civilian prisoners and sick are provided with iron spring beds, and mattresses generally stuffed with vegetable fibre. For hospitals and officers, pillows and coverlets are also supplied.

The blankets assigned to each prisoner vary from 3 to 5, a number which we have never seen equalled in other places.

As to clothing, the military authorities furnish the men with all that is necessary: 2 pairs of drawers, 2 flannel shirts, 2 pairs of socks, a woollen belt, 1 neckerchief, 1 pair of trousers, a tunic of blue cloth (or beige) and a cloak. All these garments are warm, clean, and of good quality. All the Turks wear the national head-covering, the fez. Decorations are allowed to be worn unrestrictedly. Owing to the date of our visit we were not able to inspect the summer outfit, but the prisoners told us that in the hot season they wore blue linen suits.

The civilian prisoners whose personal belongings were worn out received a complete equipment.

The interned civilians were decently and sufficiently clothed.

Officers can order their clothes at their own expense from the town tailors.

The private soldiers all wear the oriental slippers; non-commissioned officers are given high-lows. All necessities for repairs are provided by the camp administration.

Everywhere we found the prisoners adequately and suitably dressed. No external mark shows their position as prisoners of war, except a metal medallion attached to the tunic.

We can assert that the commissariat of the Egyptian prisoners leaves nothing to be desired. The fact that the prisoners prepare their own food insures them a diet suitable to their tastes and customs. The quantities supplied are calculated upon a very liberal scale. The quality, whether of bread, meat or vegetables, is excellent and constant.

The officers' mess is entrusted to private contract. They arrange their own menu. The daily board is very moderate. Well-stocked canteens enable them to obtain additions at prices fixed by the authorities.

The sick in hospital have a regimen suited to their condition prescribed by the doctors. The milk provided is of excellent quality.

*The health department is remarkably well organised everywhere. Drinking water and water for washing purposes are equally abundant. There is an *_ad libitum_* supply for douches and baths in every camp. The arrangements for laundering linen are very efficient.*

Each camp is provided with a disinfecting furnace, linen and upper garments being sterilised once weekly. There are no vermin anywhere. Special pains are taken over the cleansing of prisoners newly arrived from the front. The result of these measures and of the system of vaccination is seen in the entire freedom of the camps from epidemics.

Turkish or English latrines are sufficient in number, odourless, and regularly disinfected.

In every camp medical attention is given by a staff of first-class English physicians, assisted by Armenian or Syrian doctors; hospital orderlies keep the quarters in perfect order. The infirmaries are spacious, well lighted, thoroughly stocked with drugs and with surgical apparatus and dressings.

If dentistry be needed, which is rare among Ottomans, it is supplied by dentists from the town or resident in the camps.

Cases of mutilation are provided with artificial limbs.

An examination of the medical register in all the camps has convinced us of their good sanitary condition. The small number of sick, and the slight character of the ailments, corroborate what we have ourselves observed from the hygienic point of view. The death-rate is very low.

Deceased prisoners are interred with military honours and according to the rites of their religion.

The space enclosed within the camps permits the prisoners to enjoy walking exercise as well as outdoor games.

The English military authorities have not sanctioned compulsory work for prisoners. Except for sanitary fatigue duties, prisoners have the whole disposal of their own time. The numerous complaints provoked in other countries by forced labour are entirely absent among the Ottoman prisoners in Egypt.

Imams take religious charge, and the prisoners have full liberty to carry out their daily worship.

Correspondence is less active than elsewhere owing to the large proportion of illiterate prisoners.

Letters are long on the road because of the great distances traversed. The censorship is carried out in a liberal spirit and gives rise to no complaints. Money orders sent from Turkey are paid in full; but their number, as well as that of parcels, is restricted.

Assaults and corporal punishment are totally unknown in the camps. The only disciplinary penalty, very seldom applied, consists of arrest for a period fixed by the military authorities. We were happy to learn that the discipline of the Turkish prisoners is excellent. Their own commissariat officers exercise a good influence. We were ourselves struck by the correct bearing of the men and their good humour. They fully appreciate the English authorities' kindness to them.

To sum up, our conviction, based upon careful investigations, is that the inspectors, commandants and officers of the camps treat the prisoners with humanity and do all in their power to soften their lot.

We form the impression that the English Government's proposals concerning repatriation of the interned civilians will soon bear fruit; and we hope that this measure will be extended to all mutilated prisoners of war.

CAIRO, _January, 1917_.

*The Delegates of the Red Cross International Committee.
Dr. F. BLANCHOD.
F. THORMEYER.
EMMANUEL SCHOCH.*

Harold's Battalion relocated to the Western Front, departing from Port Said and arriving in Marseilles on the Mediterranean coast of France on 27 May 1918.

The 2nd Battalion Loyal North Lancashire's (2LNL) War Diary started on 1 June 1918, when they travelled by train northwards across France for four days before reaching Racquinghem, near St Omer. The men marched to Lumbres and underwent intensive training for a week before returning to Racquinghem, where they received orders on 20 June to transfer from II Army to I Army posted to 101st Brigade, 34th Division. They marched to Aix-en-Ergny but many men were suffering from influenza, not helped by intermittent rain; 57 were in hospital by 1 July. 2 LNL consisted of 35 Officers, 1,025

Other Ranks, 27 horses, 35 mules, 36 Lewis Guns, '18 4 wheels, 4 2 wheels' and a bicycle. They marched over several days reaching Proven on 3 July, where they remained for ten days before marching to St-Jan-Ter-Biezen; they carried out reconnaissances around the East Poperinghe Line, disturbed by a lot of aerial activity. 2 LNL entrained all day on 17th, arriving in Chantilly at 4.30am on 18th, when they marched to billets in Courteuil by 8.15am.

They marched to Coyolles the next day for Operations from 23 July to 4 August, known as the Second Battle of the Marne, when the 34th Division replaced the French Colonial Corps. The 101st Brigade held the right half sector, 102nd the left and 103rd was in reserve; 2LNL were on the right and 2/4th Battalion of the Queens Regiment (2/4QR) on the left. A barrage was to precede a red rocket at 6.20am to commence the attack, artillery then infantry, who received little notice. 'C' Company were the first wave and were 'practically wiped out' before 50 yards. 'D' Company, which covered 2/4QR but was forced to withdraw, had about 60 casualties, including one Officer killed and 3 wounded; about 20 wounded men had to be abandoned. There were about 70 casualties in the wood caused by enemy shelling. 'C' and 'D' Companies were replaced by 'A' and 'B' as overnight their shallow trenches were cleared of casualties and the dead were buried. After a quiet day, the night of 24/25th was used to deepen the trenches, wiring off those near the wood which could not be improved.

Three casualties occurred because of shell fire on 25th and one on 26th by an enemy battery taking up a new position. Overnight 26/27th an enemy patrol of 12 men raided one of the 2LNL posts wearing French helmets and, while the wounded sentry was being attended to, they took 3 prisoners. The nearby enemy strongpoint was silenced by 'fire superiority by snipers posted in trees'. 2LNL were relieved by the 48th French Regiment in the early hours of 28th then marched to Bois-de-Boeuf by 5am to rest before the following day's attack. From 9pm to midnight the 101st Brigade marched to Bois-Baillette. The attack involved the 34th Division, the 11th and 30th French Corps and the 25th French Division. The 1/4th Sussex Regiment (1/4SR) and 2/4QR of the 101st Brigade were on the right and left, with 2LNL in reserve, as the Infantry advanced 3 kilometres to the Green Line between 4.30am and 5.20am on 29th. Supported by the barrage and encountering little opposition, they consolidated in old German trenches. 'Casualties had been few and a few prisoners were sent back.'

At 6.40am the second phase of the advance towards the Brown Line began. Enemy planes

and machine gun nests in the wood caused 20 casualties but they succeeded in pushing through. Point 189 was gained by 'A' Company 2 LNL at 7.40am and they dug shallow trenches in the fold of the ground. The enemy massed and counter-attacked, preventing 2/4QR joining 2LNL, who 'were able to inflict heavy casualties on the enemy by enfiladed fire'. Enemy planes and heavy shelling of the woods caused many losses, including Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. A. Jourdain DSO, who was killed. The only means of communication was by a runner, who had to return 3 kms to the Advance Brigade Report Centre. By 10.15am allies had to fall back and 2LNL's position was under threat on both sides with no response to messages requesting assistance; in the confusion of battle, they lost Point 189 and two Lewis Guns by 1pm. They withdrew to Grand Rozoy Railway Station, where 2LNL's initial strength was 6 Officers and 230 Other Ranks (OR), increasing as stragglers arrived. Total losses over the previous 24 hours: their Commanding Officer killed, one Lieutenant died of wounds, ten Officers wounded; OR: 25 killed in action, 6 died of wounds, 140 wounded and 21 missing.

2LNL were put on reserve and remained at Rozoy Station on 30th. The next day intermittent shelling day and night by the enemy led to 3 OR being killed and 10 wounded. At about 6pm the Brigade received orders to attack at 4.45am with the

original objective of taking the Brown Line and assuming the same positions. One Captain and 80 OR joined 2LNL, who were in reserve, from Divisional Reinforcement Camp at Lagny. They were heavily gas shelled from 9pm until 1am on 1st August, which made their march to the assembly point difficult. The Artillery's heavy bombardment lasted 45 minutes from 4am followed by the Infantry's advance to the wood west of Beugneux by 5.05am. 2LNL countered a heavy enemy machine gun attack with Lewis Guns then fixed bayonets, inflicting more than 50 casualties, taking 46 prisoners and capturing 12 Machine Guns. They reached the Brown Line at about 5.45am. Enemy fire reduced sufficiently by 9am to enable the 101st Brigade to reorganise by 11am with 1/4SR on the right, 2/4QR on the left and 2LNL in reserve. Intermittent shelling continued all day and at 6.15pm the 101st and 103rd Brigades were ordered to advance at 7pm. 2LNL casualties for 1 August were: killed – 1 Officer and 20 OR; died of wounds - 3 OR; missing – 3 OR; wounded – 55 OR. 'The Brigade Commander congratulated all ranks on the extremely good work done by the Brigade this day.'

The enemy's rapid retirement on 2 August allowed 2LNL to take some rest. On 3rd Major General Nicholson CB, CMG, decorated five Officers with Croix de Guerre, including three from 2 LNL, two awarded First Class and one Second Class. 'All the dead of the 2LNL were buried and services were read over each grave by the Senior Chaplain of the 34th Division. A hundred British rifles and several German Machine Guns were salvaged.'

Harold was killed in action in France on 1 August 1918, aged 22, and he was buried in the Oulchy Le Chateau Churchyard Extension, the cemetery being on the main road between Soissons and Chateau Thierry.

Harold committed three offences during nearly four years' service: on 24 August 1917, he was admonished for losing tinted spectacles by neglect; on 11 November 1917, he got 5 days CC (Confined to Camp) for being absent from church parade, and on 18 July 1918, he was drunk on returning to billets and received double punishment of 8 days CC plus 8 days loss of pay.

Harold's personal effects comprised a leather case, photographs of all his siblings, correspondence, and an identity disc, which were sent to his sister Annie, because he had made a Soldier's Will in November 1917 leaving everything to her. She would have been sent his Victory and British War Medals in addition to the Memorial Plaque and Scroll. Annie received £7 18s 7d (*worth £1,670 today*) for Harold's outstanding salary from the War Office, who authorized this payment on 14 December 1918. A War Gratuity of £3 (*worth £632*) ought to have been paid later and she may have received a pension until she got married.

Harold had a sweetheart Emily, about whom little is known because she left no surname. There are three photographs of her from Harold's leather case with a message on the back of one:

'With best respects to the one I love the dearest Harold From Emily'.

Emily put a notice in the *Barnsley Chronicle* on 7 September 1918:

HAWCROFT – In loving memory of my dear sweetheart, Pte. Harold Hawcroft, Loyal North Lancaster Regt., who was killed in action August 1st 1918, aged 22 years.

*What would I give his hand to clasp.
His dear, kind face to see;
To hear him speak, to see him smile,
Which meant so much to me.*

- Sadly missed by Emily

HAROLD'S SIBLINGS

Edith Hawcroft (1879 – 1918) married George Burnett, a coke oven drawer, late 1900 and they occupied three rooms at 64 King Street, Barnsley. They had three children between 1903 and 1906: Arthur, Alice and Lily.

George Burnett (1880 – 1957) was recorded on the 1918 Absent Voters List as a Private (31371) in the 8th (Service) Battalion of the East Yorkshire Regiment (Duke of York's Own) (8EYR), transferred to the Labour Corps No. 966228, of 64 King Street. George's Service Records have not survived to provide more details.

8EYR landed in Boulogne, France, on 9 September 1915 and took part in a disastrous initiation at the Battle of Loos. They were transferred to 8th Brigade, 3rd Division, and fought in battles on the Somme, at Arras and at Ypres before being disbanded early 1918 because of heavy casualties.

The Labour Corps was formed in accordance with an Army Order dated 22 February 1917, which replaced the Army Service Corps Labour or Works Companies and Battalions. Forty of the new Labour Companies served on the Western Front while two served in the Salonika Force. They were not required to keep War Diaries.

Edith Burnett died on 7 November 1918, aged 39, three months after her brother Harold was killed in action. *The Barnsley Chronicle* featured the story on their front page on Saturday 16 November 1918: 'SUICIDE AT BARNSELEY / TRAGIC SEQUEL TO WIFE'S UNFAITHFULNESS / A SOLDIER'S SAD HOME COMING'. Edith died after falling in her yard and an Inquest was held the next day. George explained that his wife had recently suffered from rheumatic fever and Coroner P P Maitland recorded a verdict of 'Died from sudden heart failure due to embolism following acute rheumatism'.

Later that day the police were made aware of other information and, as the Coroner had not yet completed the record, he resumed the Inquest on Monday. He expressed concern that false evidence had been provided by witnesses, which could have led to prosecution for perjury. Coroner Maitland insisted that George explain what had happened. George had returned home at the end of March for a week's leave, before being released to work in a colliery; he had been wounded on active service. He noticed that Edith was pregnant, but she refused to name the father, so he told her to leave within 7 days. After she had left, George had second thoughts; he invited her home and told her that if she obtained a letter from the father that he would care for the child, he would forgive her and take her back.

Two friends of Edith confirmed her unfaithfulness; the Coroner blamed Olive Ruddlesden, wife of a soldier in Malta, but she denied having introduced them. William (Billy) Barraclough, married and a gun planer of Dodworth Road, admitted his responsibility and said that he had arranged maintenance for Edith. Dr Brown had carried out a post-mortem on Saturday 9th and he attributed death to shock from poisoning by some corrosive acid such as oxalic acid or salts of lemon (or sorrel) - present in many plants, including rhubarb leaves, and used in laundries to remove stains; it is caustic and symptoms of poisoning include severe burning, pain and swelling of the mouth, tongue and food pipe, seizure and collapse. Dr Brown explained that one spoonful would be sufficient to cause death. The Jury returned a verdict of 'Committed suicide by swallowing corrosive poison whilst of unsound mind, having got into serious trouble and become pregnant during her husband's absence on active service'.

George got married again early 1919 in Sculcoates, East Yorkshire, to Eva Thornton Merryweather. On the 1939 Register, George, a general labourer and telephonist in Barnsley Control Room ARP (Air Raid Precautions Warden) for the Second World War, was living at 19 Grace Street, Barnsley, with Eva (1885 - ?) unpaid domestic duties and grocer mixed business, and their two children: Amy (1919 - ?) shorthand typist, filing & correspondence clerk, and a closed record for Eva born late 1922 in Barnsley.

George died at 19 Grace Street on 23 October 1957, aged 77. He left an estate of £650 (*worth about £37,000 today based on labour value*) to his widow Eva.

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Mary Hawcroft (1880 - 1909) married George Hill Booth, a miner, and they had four children: Lily, who died in 1901 aged 10 months, Harry, Walter and Nellie in 1907. Mary Booth was only 29 when she died. George got married again on 8 April 1912 to Elizabeth Rycott (1887 - ?), who appears to have had two children: Mabel in 1907 and Leonard in 1910. George and Elizabeth had a son Jack in 1915 and the family resided at 7 Meadow Works, Rawmarsh, Rotherham.

George Hill Booth (1878 - 1944) enlisted at Rotherham on 29 April 1915, aged 37, as a Gunner (19806) in the D Battery of 161 Brigade (Yorkshire) of the Royal Field Artillery (RFA) which became B Battery of 164 Brigade RFA from 26 May 1916; each Battery had an 18-pounder field gun. He was a miner, 5' 9" tall, 138 lbs weight with a 37" chest and good physical development. George served on the Western Front, embarking at Southampton on 20 December 1915 and disembarking at Le Havre, France, the next day. He was granted ten days leave early February 1917 and received 3d a day (*worth £3.60 today*) War Pay after completing three years' service. George was awarded the 1914-15 Star in addition to the Victory and British War Medals. He demobilized on 25 January 1919 after served almost exactly three years in France.

On the 1939 Register, George H, unemployed colliery hewer, and Elizabeth, household duties unpaid, lived at 271 Broadway, Hatfield, Thorne, Yorkshire, most probably with Jack (*'record officially closed'*). George died late 1944, aged 66, in Leeds.

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Walter Hawcroft (1885 - 1950) was baptised on Christmas Day at Christ Church, Ardsley. As a collier aged 32 of 45 King Street, he got married on 16 September 1917 at St George's Church, Barnsley, to Mary Elizabeth Armitage (1891 - 1967), 26-year-old daughter of John Armitage, a collier of 71 Stocks Lane, Barnsley. Their sisters Annie Hawcroft and Nellie Armitage were witnesses. They had two sons: Bernard in 1921 and Leonard in 1923.

Walter enlisted on 3 December 1915 as a Private (28112) in the 10th (Service) Battalion of the York and Lancaster Regiment (Y&L), which had formed in Pontefract in 1914 and landed at Boulogne on 11 September 1915 to fight on the Western Front. He was subsequently transferred to the 8th (Service) Battalion Y&L, which had also formed in Pontefract in 1914 but landed at Boulogne on 27 August 1915.

8Y&L relocated by train to Italy in November 1917 with the 23rd Division and other Divisions to reinforce the British presence on the Alpine front and to protect the Piave Line. The Italian force were involved in the Battle of Caporetto (also known as the 12th Battle of the Isonzo) against the Austro-Hungarians and Germans, which lasted from 24 October to 19 December 1917. Italian casualties at Caporetto were enormous: 40,000 killed or wounded, 280,000 captured by the enemy and another 350,000 deserted.

On 19 March 1918, the 23rd Division received orders and, having moved westwards to a plateau south of Asiago, carried out patrols and raids on enemy positions. The British force came under repeated attacks by the Austrians on 15 -16 June but they defeated the enemy and it proved to be the last significant attack on them in the Italian theatre.

Walter was wounded fighting overseas and discharged on 2 May 1918 as physically unfit but his Service Records have not survived to provide more details. He was given a Silver War Badge (410120) and qualified for two medals: Victory and British War. Walter was awarded a pension and his address on the record card was 9 Armin Street, Hoyle Mill.

His Battalion continued fighting in Italy until the Armistice there at 3pm on 4 November 1918. They moved to a billeting area west of Treviso on 11 November ready for demobilisation in January and February 1919. By March, the 23rd Division had been reduced to cadre strength (about 50 men).

Walter, a general labourer, and Mary were still living at 45 King Street on the 1939 Register; their sons were at home but both records are officially closed. At least one son served in the Second World War.

Bernard Hawcroft (1921 – 1942) was an Aircraftman 1st Class (1035660) in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve in the Second World War. He died of 'explosion injuries' on 29 April 1942, aged 20, in the Military Hospital in Clifton, York, after participating against the 'Baedeker Blitz' from the RAF air base at Clifton.

These air raids were named after the German Baedeker tourist guides, which highlighted important historic cities in Britain and provided maps. Hitler used the guides to select targets for destruction that would demoralise the British public; in April and May 1942, the Luftwaffe bombed Exeter, Bath, York, Cowes, Norwich, Hull, Poole, Grimsby and Canterbury. Across all these raids a total of 1,637 civilians were killed and 1,760 injured with more than 50,000 houses destroyed along with some historic buildings, particularly cathedrals, destroyed or damaged.

Bernard was buried in Barnsley Cemetery (Section 9 Grave 495). His family chose additional words to be inscribed on his Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone:

*Not just today
but every day
in silence we remember.
Mum, dad and Len*

Leonard Hawcroft (6.12.1923 - 1981) may have served in the Army in the Second World War according to a family photo. He continued to reside with his parents and appears to have lived a solitary life after they died. Frank remembers meeting him and his mother as a child, but after Mary died in 1967, Leonard went to live in a council flat at 97 Park Road, near the Outpost pub off Sheffield Road. Frank's mother, Dorothy Higham, went to see him sometime after 1981, when a stranger answered the door, explaining that as Leonard had died, aged 58, with no known relatives, Barnsley Council had arranged his pauper's funeral and disposed of his possessions.

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George Henry Hawcroft (1889 - 1953), a coal miner of 58 King Street, got married on 11 July 1909 at St Peter's Church in Barnsley to Jane Wall (1890 - 1953), daughter of William Wall, a labourer of 64 King Street. Their witnesses were Henry's sister Edith and her husband George

Burnett. In 1911, Henry, a coal miner trammer, and Jane occupied three rooms at 9 Grace Terrace, Barnsley, with their first of nine children Nellie, aged 8 months. They subsequently had, between 1912 and 1929: Nellie, Mary, Hilda, George, Gladys, Harry, Harold and Alfred followed by one more.

Henry enlisted at Barnsley on 9 March 1915, when he had three daughters under five years old, as a Private (14/830) in the 14th (Service) Battalion (Second Barnsley) of the York and Lancaster Regiment; he subsequently served in the 1st and 3rd Battalions. He was a coal miner trammer aged 25 years and 139 days, 5' 9" tall with a 39" chest. Henry resided at 5 Howard Street, Worsbrough Common, with his wife Jane and their three children – the names of three more were added to his records later. Henry served with the Mediterranean Force from 28 December 1915 to 18 June 1916.

His daughter Hilda died on 4 December 1915, aged 21 months, of measles and bronco-pneumonia; a memo from the Registrar confirmed that 2/7 (*worth £44*) payment was required for the death certificate. As this was about three weeks before Henry left England, he would not have obtained leave and Jane had to deal with everything on her own.

Henry returned to the UK for four months before transferring to the Mediterranean again from 26 October 1916 until 12 December 1918. Part of a slip dated 29 August 1918 stated "*dangerously ill*" and "*condition dangerous*". Henry got malaria and was discharged on 30 March 1919, aged 29, to 73 Honeywell Street, Barnsley. He was initially assessed as 20% disabled and awarded a weekly pension of 5/6 (*worth £47*) from 31 March 1919 plus 4/10 (*worth £41*) for five children, to be reviewed in 26 weeks. However, a later form states 50% disablement with a weekly pension of 13/9 (*worth £117*) from 15 July 1919 plus 12/1 (*worth £103*) for five children, to be reviewed in 30 weeks. He was awarded the Victory and British War Medals and ought to have received the 1914/5 Star.

Living conditions in the Salonika campaign were harsh with extremes of climate in winter and summer. Diseases were rife, especially malaria, which caused many more casualties than fighting. Malaria is a disease caused by a parasite, which is spread to humans through the bites of infected mosquitoes. It takes 10 – 15 days after being bitten to show symptoms and people who have malaria usually feel very sick with a high fever and shaking chills. It could and still can prove fatal if not treated – in 2017, an estimated 219 million people had malaria worldwide, of whom 435,000 died (mainly children in Africa).

Harold Hawcroft (1927 - 1929), Henry and Jane's youngest child, died on 26 July 1929, aged 2, following a tragic accident. *The Sheffield Daily Telegraph* reported details on 30 July under the heading: '*CHILD'S BRAIN PIERCED / Fatally Injured by Fall on to Toy Engine*'. Coroner Haworth held an Inquest on 29 July and he explained that Harold was playing in the street about three weeks ago when his temple was pierced by a sharp point of a toy engine. Complications set in and he was admitted to the Beckett Hospital where he showed signs of meningitis. Dr Ratthouse, house surgeon, explained that, although there was little injury visible on the outside, a post-mortem examination showed that it reached the brain, where an abscess had formed resulting in septic meningitis. A verdict of '*Death by Misadventure*' was returned.

On the 1939 Register, George, widower and ex miner, resided at 98 Wilfred Street, Bradford, with Hilda Harrop, a garment folder aged 47, and another person with a closed record.

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Annie Hawcroft (1892 – 1956) moved from 64 King Street after Harold's death to 6 Court 8 Wood Street. She was close to her younger brother and treasured his personal possessions: the leather case, photographs, letters, identity disc and medals, as well as the silk postcards he had sent to her from Egypt. Annie had not received his War Gratuity by early January 1920 and wrote to the War Office, but no reply has been found.

Annie got married on 7 June 1919 at St Peter's Church, Barnsley, to Thomas Beevers, a coal miner hewer aged 30, who resided at 48 King Street, where they would have known each other as neighbours. Annie and Thomas had four children: Thomas in 1920, John (Jack) in 1922, Roy in 1925, and Dorothy in 1930. The family lived at 63 Wood Street

Thomas Beevers (1889 – 1957) enlisted as a Private (1250) in the 13th Service Battalion (First Barnsley) of the York and Lancaster Regiment and was promoted to Acting Sergeant. He was transferred as Corporal (48187) to the 21st then 26th Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers. Unfortunately, his Service Records have not survived to provide more details but Thomas was awarded the Victory and British War Medals.

On the 1939 Register, Annie, unpaid domestic duties, and Thomas, incapacitated colliery hewer, resided at 37 Carlton Lane, Barnsley, with three children: Thomas, a flint glass hand (*word?*) machine blower aged 19, Roy and Dorothy, Frank's mother. Jack appears to have left home to joined the Royal Navy. Annie Beevers died on 24 January 1956, aged 63.

The two older sons of Annie and Thomas served in the Royal Navy during the Second World War. They both idolised their only sister Dorothy and sent her postcards with photos and other memorabilia from places they visited.

Thomas Beevers (1920 - 1978) probably served in the Royal Navy in the Second World War but his nephew Frank has not yet applied for his Service Records. He continued to reside in Barnsley with his wife and son until he died at 87 Grange Lane in 1978, aged 58.

John (Jack) Beevers (1922 - 1984) became a Glass Worker and remained in Barnsley apart from his Second World War Service. According to his Service Records, which his nephew Frank paid and waited six months for, Jack enlisted in the Royal Navy from 34 Bridge Street, Barnsley, in 1939 and started aboard HMS Ganges, a shore training establishment at Harwich, as 'Boy 2' (rank name for those under 18 years old) (JX162688) on 9 May. After a year, he was Boy 1 on HMS Drake 1 (the main naval barracks at Devonport, Plymouth, and 'home base' for administrative purposes) while training on HMS Impregnable (the name given to training ships) then HMS St George, on which he was promoted to Ordinary Telegraphist. Telegraph or Wireless Operators sent and received messages using Morse code to communicate by land lines or radio. He served on HMS Pembroke (accounting base at Chatham), HMS Defiance (training establishment at Devonport), HMS Britannia and HMS Attack, becoming a Telegraphist on 12 July 1942. He transferred to HMS Afrikander then HMS Pembroke again before returning to HMS Ganges on 25 May 1945, after six years' service. He continued on HMS Sultan, HMS Orion, HMS Mauritius, HMS Pembroke then HMS Fulman to 8 February 1949, when he came ashore as invalided. Jack's character was deemed very good and performance satisfactory throughout almost ten years in the Royal Navy. He was awarded four medals: 1939 - 45, Atlantic, Defence and War. Jack died intestate at 34 Bridge Street, Barnsley, in 1984, aged 62.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Frank Higham's research, family photos and memorabilia

Ancestry (including War Diaries), FindMyPast (including newspaper articles)
Free BMD, Measuringworth.com, Wikipedia
Stuart Haddaway for sharing his Red Cross Report on PoW Camps in Egypt

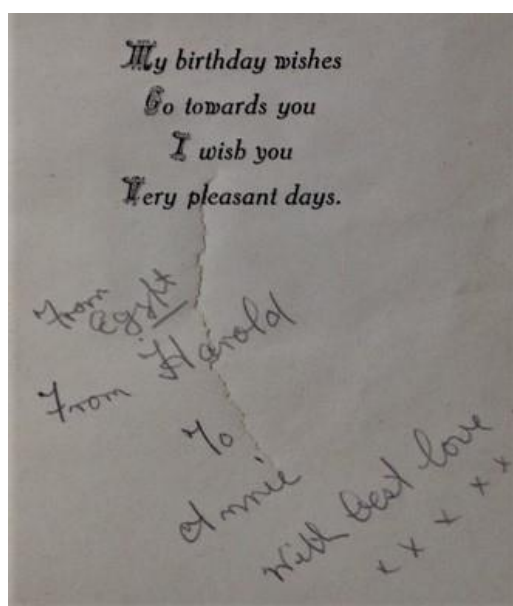
ARTICLE FOR:

Barnsley Family History Society's Journal

Chesterfield Branch of the Western Front Association's Newsletter

Jane Ainsworth

April 2021, updated November 2021







Harold's sweetheart Emily

HAWCROFT.—In loving memory of my dear sweetheart, Pte. Harold Hawcroft, Loyal North Lancaster Regt., who was killed in action August 1st, 1918, aged 22 years.
What would I give his hand to clasp,
His dear, kind face to see;
To hear him speak, to see him smile,
Which meant so much to me.
—Sadly missed by Emily.

Barnsley Chronicle



Emily



Harold's parents Charles & Sarah Elizabeth and his sister Mary



Oulchy Le Château Church and Churchyard Extension

Joint Webinar - Chesterfield, Lincoln & North Lincolnshire Branches , Western Front Association. Thursday 17th February 2022

An illustrated tour around the development of (let's say) armoured fighting vehicles during the course of WW1. Who developed "tanks" and how did they get on? A look at the only significant "tank vs tank" clash which occurred at Villers Bretonneux in 1918. Generally quoted as a British success, was it? And does the German use of tanks need some re-assessment? Finally, how might the German's development of tanks have progressed if the war had continued beyond November 1918? Was the proposed 6-gun monster the "Kollosus" practicable? And would a small fast moving tank armed with a rotating turret machine gun have made a significant difference?

The presentation was by Chris John who is currently Vice chair of the Birmingham Branch WFA and is an accredited Guide in the Guild of Battlefield Guides. Chris first visited the FWW battlefields in 1990 and has since led numerous WFA branch trips to the battlefields. He has an interest in the more obscure aspects of the conflict and delivers talks in person and on line. Chris is also a weekly volunteer at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire.

GERMAN TANKS ??

AN OVERVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT OF ARMOUR IN THE GREAT WAR.
WHO WON THE FIRST "TANK VS TANK" CLASH VILLERS BRETTONEUX?

CHRIS JOHN BRUM BRANCH WFA AND GUILD OF BATTLEFIELD GUIDES.



GERMAN TANKS??



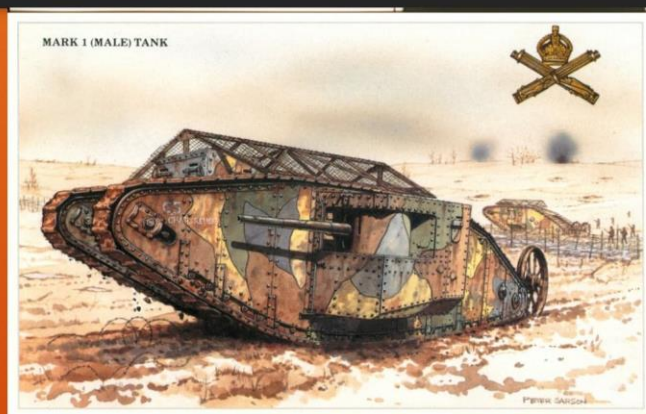
GERMAN TANKS



GERMAN TANKS??



GERMAN TANKS??



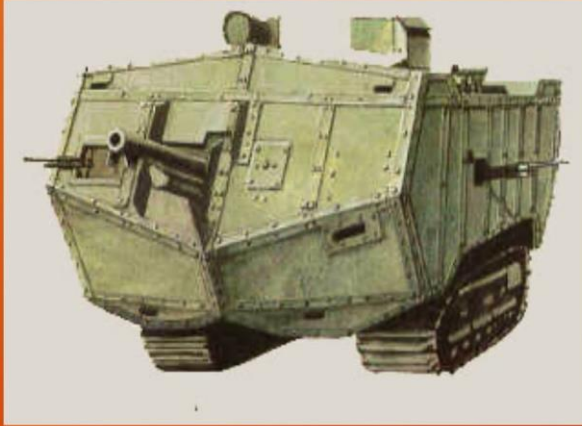
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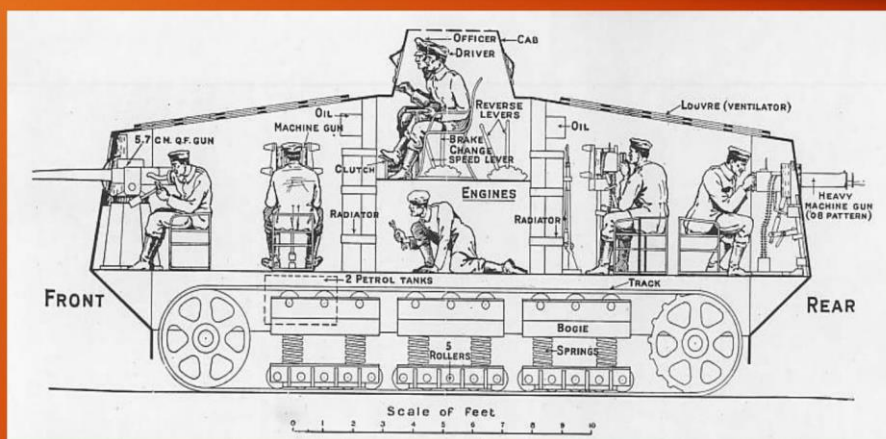
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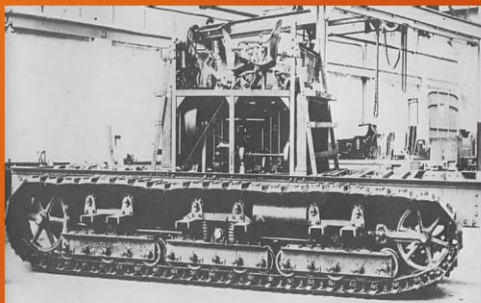
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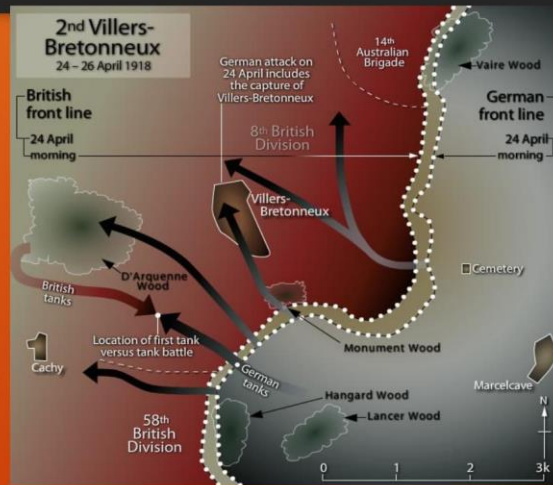


GERMAN TANKS??



Bundesarchiv, Bild 103-P1013-310
Foto: o. Ang. | 1919 Fiedling

GERMAN TANKS??



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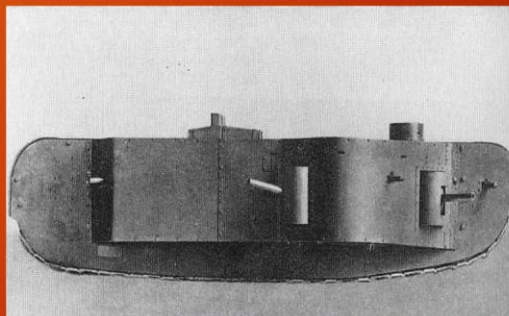
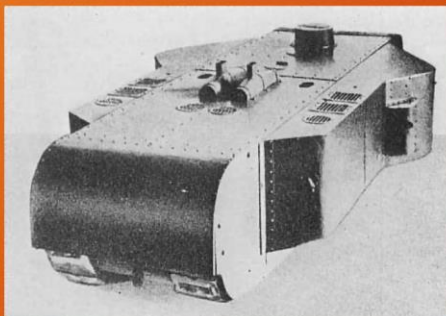
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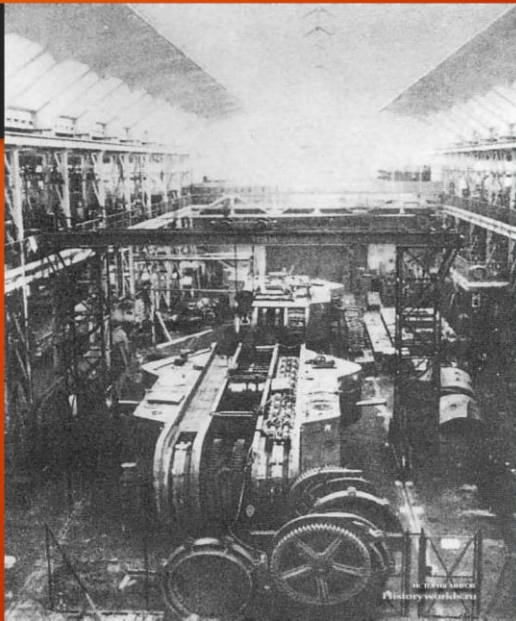
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