

BETWEEN THE LINES

Newsletter of the East Kent Branch of The Western Front Association

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Founded by John Giles
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Hazel Basford
Greg Bayne

Committee:

Hazel Basford (Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer)

Michael Lucas (Speaker Secretary)

Richard Young

Edward Holman

Rachel Wilsdon

Steve Ifield

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Articles, etc for *Between the Lines* should be sent to me in M/S Word with accompanying images attached as JPGs. The deadline for contributions (articles, letters, queries, etc) for the next issue of *Between the Lines* is Saturday, 31st August 2025. Please ensure that articles are submitted using Times New Roman font at 12 point.

Contributions should be e-mailed to me at: [REDACTED]

James Brazier, WFA East Kent Branch Newsletter Editor



Welcome to the second issue of *Between the Lines* for 2025 which contains an interesting mix of articles. It is very pleasing that Branch members continue to contribute articles for publication.

This issue contains articles from Ed Holman, Richard Young (two articles), Steve Ifield, John Drouot, John Websper and Michael Lucas as well as just two articles from your Editor. I must thank each of them for their interesting contributions and I look forward to receipt of further contributions from our 'regulars' and, I hope, to receive articles from other Branch members for inclusion in future issues of *Between the Lines*. Whatever your particular interest is in the Great War, you must have a story which would be of interest to other Branch members. Articles don't need to be particularly long. The Great War covers such a broad perspective that there are so many angles of looking back on it: perhaps your local war memorial or a relative who served in the war? In this issue of *Between the Lines*, Steve Ifield's introduces readers to a number of lapel badges produced by a range of Branches of the Old Contemptibles' Association throughout the United Kingdom. Steve's article is particularly timely as this year sees the centenary of the founding of the Old Contemptibles' Association in 1925. Sadly, none of the 'Chums' are alive today but a number of long-serving members of the WFA (including your Editor) have fond memories of having met a number of veterans who proudly wore their Old Contemptibles' Association badges alongside their WFA badges.

Ed Holman's and Richard Young's articles on Nackington demonstrate how interesting researching names on local war memorials can be. In addition, Richard Young tells the story behind the naming of "Houses" at Simon Langston Boys' School. Richard was educated at that school but is too modest to tell readers that he was Head Boy there in 1955, so I will tell you instead!

Regular contributor John Drouot has written the fascinating story of Commander George Gibb RN: John usually writes about soldiers who served with The Buffs but, this time he has written about a sailor.

John Websper's article on The Airfields of Great Britain Conservation Trust ensures that the RFC/RAF's presence in east Kent during the Great War is not forgotten.

Michael Lucas tells the sad story of the anonymous 'Lieutenant M' who can be identified from a number of clues in the story. Was 'Lieutenant M' a "Walter Mitty" character or was he simply misunderstood. Readers can reach their own conclusions.

To have received a record number of contributions for inclusion on this issue of *Between the Lines* has meant that your Editor has been able to take a 'back seat' and not feel under pressure to write as many articles as previously to fill this issue of our newsletter. Nevertheless, your Editor has put together an article, among others, on some of HM's Hospital Ships that were sunk by the enemy during the Great War.

And, finally, it was a very great - and totally unexpected - honour for me to be presented with an award for 'outstanding services to the WFA' by the Chairman of the WFA when he came to the Branch in June to give a talk on 'Mobilisation in 1914'. As can be seen from the photo below, your Editor was both 'unsuited and unbooted' for the occasion. Thank you all for the award! It now stands proudly on my desk. □



James Brazier (holding the WFA Award), Valmai Holt and Tony Bolton (WFA Chairman) at the start of the WFA (East Kent Branch) meeting held on Tuesday, 3rd June 2025. The award is made of engraved plate-glass supported by a single metal stand. The photo higher up on this page was taken at an angle against a black background to show the wording on the award

James Brazier
Newsletter Editor

Remembering the Chapman Brothers of Nackington

William Charles Norton Chapman, a brewer and his wife Alice had lived at Heppington House, Nackington Road, near Canterbury and had two sons who both died in the same week in October 1917 whilst serving in the Royal Flying Corps.

On 1st October 2017, their descendants arranged a centenary memorial service of thanksgiving for their lives to be held in Nackington Church.

Charles Meredith Bouverie Chapman was born at Bridge on 9th January 1892, baptised at Wickham-breaux on 23rd February 1892 and confirmed at St Philip & St James' Church at Leckingham on 18th March 1910. He was a trainee brewer at the Someton Brewery in Somerset. In January 1913, he obtained a commission in the 3rd Battalion, The Buffs. On 7th September 1914, as a Second Lieutenant, he landed in France with the 1st Bn, The Buffs. On 1st



Major Charles Chapman's original grave-marker in St Mary's Church

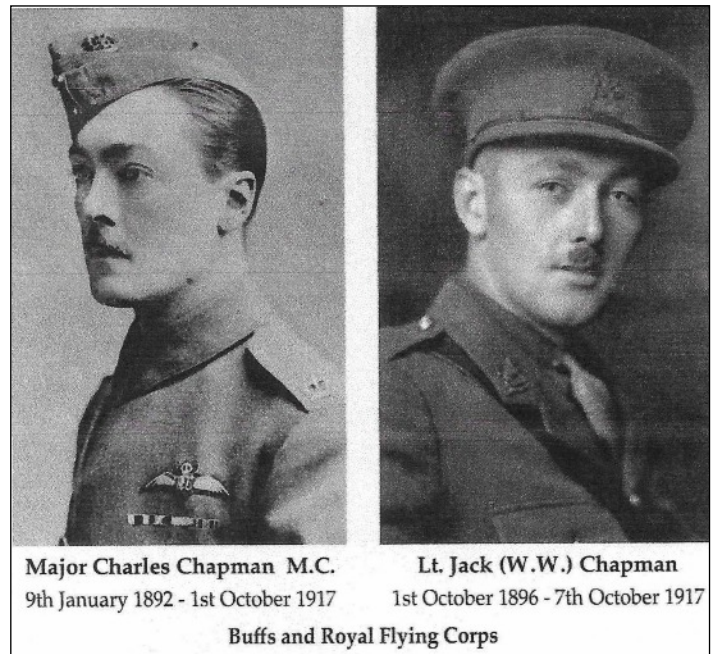


Close-up of the brass tablet on the above grave-marker

July 1915, he transferred to the Royal Flying Corps receiving his Royal Aero Club Aviators' Certificate 1491 on an L&P biplane at the London & Provincial Flying School on 31st July 1915. After receiving military flying training at Shoreham-on-Sea, he was posted to 22 Squadron which had been formed at Gosport on 1st September 1915. On 1st April 1916, he crossed to France with the squadron landing at St Omer. After a move to Vert Galand, the squadron moved to Bertangles. On 23rd May, he was posted to B Flight, 24 Squadron, joining Lanoe Hawker VC, also based at Bertangles flying the Airco DH2 aircraft.

Between 22nd June and 20th July 1916, he successfully destroyed three enemy aircraft for which he was awarded the Military Cross. The citation was published in *The London Gazette* on 22nd September 1916.

"For conspicuous gallantry and skill in action against hostile aeroplanes on one occasion he



Major Charles Chapman M.C.
9th January 1892 - 1st October 1917

Lt. Jack (W.W.) Chapman
1st October 1896 - 7th October 1917

Buffs and Royal Flying Corps

From the Centenary Order of Service



The Chapman Brothers Memorial Tablet inside St Mary's Church

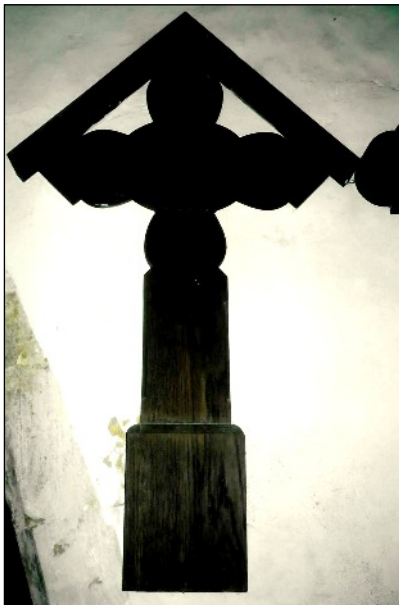
attacked three LVGs and one Fokker shooting the latter down. Later, during an air battle with eleven enemy machines he brought another Fokker down."

On detachment in the UK, he served in a number of training units. On 1st November 1916, he was promoted to Captain and flight commander. In May 1917, he returned to France serving with 29 Squadron at Le Hameau flying Nieuport Scouts in which he was credited with four more victories, all Albatrosses. On 20th July, he was given command of the squadron with the rank of Temporary Major. On 1st October 1917, during an air raid by German bombers on 29 Squadron's aerodrome at Poperinghe, he received shrapnel wounds dying later that day. He was buried in Mendinghem Military Cemetery. In addition to the Military Cross, he also received the Belgian *Croix de Guerre* and *Chevalier de l'Ordre Léopold*.

Major Charles Chapman MC is commemorated on the Nackington War Memorial and in Nackington Church which also displays his original grave marker.

William Wetherall Chapman (known as “Jack”) was born on 1st October 1896 at Hoath, Kent. He was educated at Marlborough College (Preshute House) from September 1910 to July 1914. Soon after the outbreak of the Great War, he obtained a commission in the 3rd Battalion, The Buffs (East Kent Regiment). In 1915, he went to France arriving in time to take part in the 2nd Battle of Ypres with the 2nd Bn, The Buffs. He was wounded and invalided home where he served as a bombing instructor until March 1916 when he was posted to the 6th Bn, The Buffs, 37th Brigade, 12th Eastern Division. After six months, he was wounded for a second time and evacuated back to England. On recovery, he was appointed Adjutant to a Balloon School of Instruction at Lydd, before transferring to the Royal Flying Corps as an observer with 22 Squadron, RFC. He had brought down four enemy aeroplanes in aerial combat before his death in action whilst on patrol on 7th October 1917. He is buried in Neuville-en-Ferrain Communal Cemetery.

Lieutenant William Chapman is commemorated at Marlborough College, on the Nackington War Memorial and in Nackington Church along with his original wooden grave-marker. □



Ed Holman

◀ Lieutenant William Chapman's original grave-marker now in St Mary's Church



Close-up of inscription of Lt William Chapman's original grave-marker



Nackington War Memorial with 12 Centenary wooden crosses in front

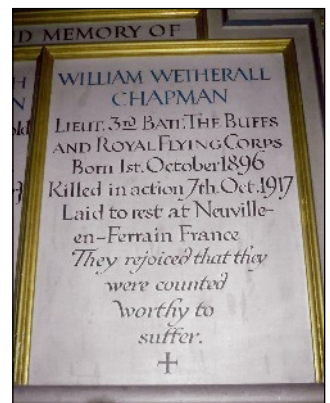


Nackington War Memorial showing 1914-1918 names

◀ Inscription on original wooden cross:

*A la memoire de
William. W.
CHAPMANN
Capitaine au British
Flying Corps
Tombé au Champ d'honneur
le 7 Octobre 1917*

► Memorial to
Lieutenant William
Chapman in St Mary's
Church, Nackington



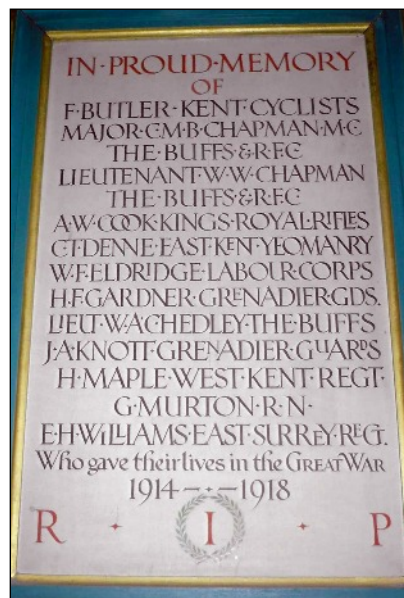
Remembering Pte Alfred William Cook, King's Royal Rifle Corps - also from Nackington



Pte Alfred William Cook's Next-of-Kin Memorial Plaque. He enlisted in February 1915 and died at Torquay Town Hall Hospital on 17th July 1918, aged 24, of bronchial pneumonia following gas poisoning. His parents lived at The Gardens, Heppington, Nackington

Pte Alfred William Cook's name is listed on both the St Mary's Church, Nackington, War Memorial Tablet and on Nackington War Memorial. In both cases, his name is shown immediately following the two Chapman Brothers (see also pages 3 & 4). □

Richard Young



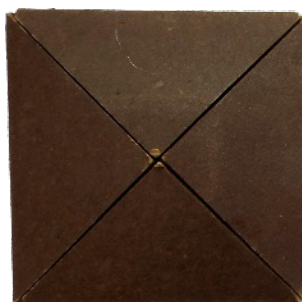
*Nackington Church
1914-18 War Memorial Tablet*



This '100th Anniversary WWI 1914-2014' wooden cross was 'planted' in front of Nackington War Memorial in 2014 in remembrance of Pte Alfred William Cook, KRRC.

The handwriting reads:

<i>WOUNDED</i>	<i>A.W.</i>	<i>BURIED</i>
<i>ARRAS</i>	<i>COOK</i>	<i>ST MARY'S</i>
<i>LATE 1917</i>	<i>PRIVATE</i>	<i>CHURCH</i>
<i>D.O.W.</i>	<i>K.R.R.C.</i>	<i>NACKINGTON</i>
<i>17-7-18</i>		



*The cardboard case enclosing
Pte A.W. Cook's Next-of-Kin
Memorial Plaque*



◀ The reverse
of Pte Alfred
William
Cook's
1914-15 Star



Pte Alfred William Cook's 1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal

Simon Langton Boys' School 'Houses' remember the Great War

When I went to Simon Langton Boys School in 1947, the four houses were Chapter, Guild, Glebe and Manor: Chapter and Guild for those living in the City of Canterbury and Glebe and Manor for those outside the City. However, my form master in 1c just simply designated the four rows in the classroom under those names with no reference to where the boys lived. Before the First World War, the six houses were given colours like pink and blue and, in the thirties, the school cap had a button of the house colour on the crown of the cap. This system was replaced by the four houses which existed when I went to the Langton but was abolished in 2010.

In 2010, Dr Baxter, then the headmaster, introduced new names after much discussion and it was agreed to name them after previous students who had fallen in the First World War. The four men were William Burgess, Archie Hardman, Cyril Mackenzie and Eric Sharp (a fifth named after Philip Young was added later) and all represent attributes to which boys of the school should aspire.

2nd Lieutenant William Burgess – 6th Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment

William Burgess in many respects embodied the true “Langton Spirit” for he took part in the annual theatrical production and was considered at his death as being the best sportsman the school had produced. He was active in all sports but excelled at football and cricket. He played in the 1st XI, captained by Eric Sharp and, in the 1913/1914 season, he scored 51 goals at centre forward and captained the cricket team and scored two centuries. He left school in 1914 and went to Goldsmith's Teacher Training College to study for a BA. He joined the college Officers' Training Corps and was gazetted to the 9th Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment in August 1916, aged 19. After training in Dorset, he arrived in France on 26th June 1916, a few days before the “Big Push” on the Somme as a lieutenant with the 6th Berkshires. The battalion found itself engaged at Mametz Wood, then on 18th July, with a fighting strength of 19 officers and 401 other ranks, received orders to move from south of Carnoy to take part in an action the following day at Longueval and Delville Wood. The 6th Berkshires attacked the northern part of the wood on 19th and 20th July and suffered heavy casualties. They were bombed and

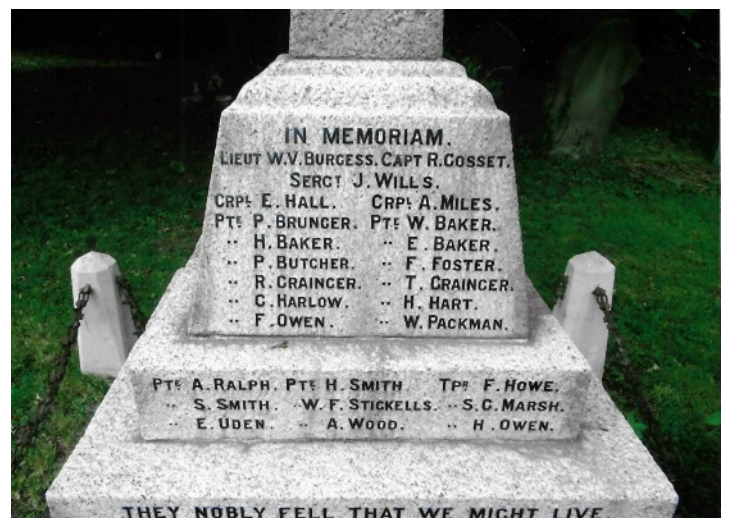


William Burgess

attacked for the next 24 hours but held their position until relieved on 22nd, by which time they had lost 40 per cent of their original number. Burgess was almost certainly killed on 19th, just 25 days after first landing in France. His body was lost on the Somme, and he is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing. His name is also on the Dunkirk (Kent) War Memorial, his father being headmaster of the



Dunkirk (Kent) War Memorial



Lt William Burgess' name on Dunkirk (Kent) War Memorial

local school where his mother was assistant mistress. His commanding officer wrote:

“He was beloved by the men and very popular among his brother Officers. He was keen and competent, so keen that when called upon to make the supreme sacrifice, he did it with a spirit of cheerfulness which many have emulated, but none surpassed.”

Captain Archie Hardman – 9th Battalion, The King's Own (Yorkshire Light Infantry)

Archie Hardman joined the Langton in the latter part of the nineteenth century, becoming Head Boy in 1902. He played full-back in the Langton 1st XI and was a 1st XI cricketer. He ended his time at the school as both Commander-in-Chief of the school's cadet force and Head Boy. On leaving school he took up a position with a bank in Kensington. He resigned in 1907 to train as a teacher, first at the Mathematical School, Rochester and afterwards at King Edward VII School, Sheffield. Despite being short-sighted, he joined The King's Own (Yorkshire Light Infantry) in 1916 in time to take part

in the Battle of the Somme where he received a gunshot wound in the shoulder at Mametz Wood and was sent back to England. In February 1917, he returned to his regiment in time for the Battle of Arras at Easter and, by July, he had been promoted to the rank of Acting Captain. On 4th October 1917, the battalion set out for the object of Reutel, near Passchendaele, negotiating several heavily-armed pillboxes. Reutel was taken by the battalion, but not before a fearsome barrage and enfilade machine-gun fire had decimated their number. Archie Hardman was hit in the temple by a machine-gun bullet and killed instantaneously, aged 32. His body was never found



Archie Hardman's name on Canterbury War Memorial

and he is commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial to the Missing about two miles

from where he was killed. His name is also on the Canterbury War Memorial.

Captain Cyril Mackenzie – 2/7th Battalion, The King's (Liverpool) Regiment

Cyril Mackenzie, born in Rome in 1892, proved to be a very able sportsman at the Langton and played for both the school football and cricket 1st XIs, as well as winning a number of athletic events on the annual sports day. After leaving the Langton in 1909, Mackenzie joined the civil service and the 1/14th (County of London) Battalion (London Scottish) Territorial Regiment. When war broke out, he enlisted immediately in his regiment. January 1915 found him on the Western Front. He wrote cheerfully home to declare that: "I am all right except for a bit of cold on my chest and feet." By May 1915, Mackenzie had been commissioned in the Liverpool Regiment, conveniently stationed at Canterbury. February 1917 found him in the front line, and he was wounded almost immediately. The medical report later recorded that he was burned and blistered, and his eyes were scorched. On 15th September 1917, he returned to duty on the Passchendaele front around Poelcappelle. At 10pm on Christmas Eve, Mackenzie went out in patrol with three other men to reconnoitre a pillbox. They crawled from the security of their trench towards the enemy line until, about 10 yards from the position, the enemy opened fire. Mackenzie was hit by a single bullet. He died on the way to the dressing station. He was buried near the village of Elverdinghe and his grave later grouped together with those known as Canada Farm Cemetery, Belgium. His name is on the Whitstable War Memorial (see photos on page 10).

Cyril Mackenzie's mother received the letter notifying her of her son's death:



Canterbury War Memorial, Buttermarket

"This is the most distressing task that has ever fallen to my lot on Christmas Day. Last night, your son went out on patrol to discover whether a position was held by the enemy or not. He got to within ten yards of the place when the enemy opened fire on him and his party. Your son was hit by a bullet and died shortly afterwards, without suffering much pain.

By your son's death, the Regiment - and the country - has lost one of the finest officers that I ever had the fortune to meet. Besides his unusually brilliant military qualities, everyone who met him respected him and those fortunate in getting to know him well loved him and respected him.

It is on this account that I do sympathise most intensely for you as I know how lovable he was."

Lieutenant Eric Sharp – King's African Rifles

Eric Sharp was born in 1895 and left the Langton in 1911 after a glittering career which saw him as captain of the school 1st XI football team and champion athlete. He was the only son of the headmaster, John Sharp. When war broke out in 1914, he joined the Royal Fusiliers as a private and, after seven months, was promoted to lance-corporal. He was then commissioned and joined The Buffs (East Kent Regiment).



Lt Eric Sharp



Eric Sharp's name on Canterbury War Memorial

He served at home and, eager to serve abroad, he joined the

King's African

Rifles shortly before they embarked for Africa. His two years' service with the King's African Rifles was exemplary and his commanding officer later wrote: "He was, to all privates and non-commissioned officers who knew him in this company, the finest type of officer, and by his interest in their welfare, regardless of any self-sacrifice, he obtained that devotion from his men of which any officer would have been proud."

On 8th May 1917, at a place called Libembo, in what was then in German Tanganyika, he was ordered to take his platoon across an open space of about one hundred yards to some rocks but found no-one there.

Later, a short distance away at Katanga, he made a forced march to the German camp and advanced to within about 20 yards of the enemy position giving orders to his men, the Askari tribesmen, to lie down.

Suddenly murderous machine-gun fire opened up on the platoon and Sharp blew his whistle and charged. His men failed to hear the whistle above the sound of the guns and consequently never moved in support. Sharp charged the guns to almost certain death. He was shot through the head and shoulder and was only found when his men advanced later that day. Death was not instantaneous, and he was taken to hospital where he died of wounds on 22nd May 1917. He is buried in Dar es Salaam War Cemetery, Tanzania.

Lieutenant Philip Mortlock Young – The King's (Liverpool) Regiment

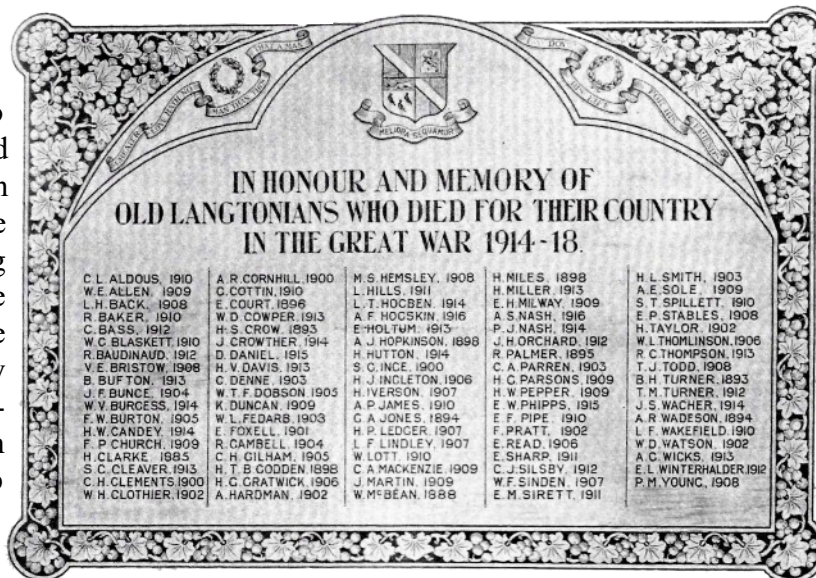
The fifth house was created later and was named after the first Old Boy of the school to die in the Great War. He entered the school in 1903 and was greatly gifted in both sports and academic studies. He was a school sports champion, was Head Boy in 1908, as well as First Prefect of the "Pink" House when the original house system began. The strength of Young's generous and sporting character stands out above all his achievements and was evident when he narrowly missed out on a prize for the best boy in the school; he set aside any personal disappointment, and wrote a letter to the school, congratulating his opponent and expressing his pleasure that the other boy had won. He took a BA in French and Latin at the University of Wales, where he excelled in rugby and rowing. He then went to Clare College, Cambridge, where he was Captain of rowing and left with a degree in Classical Tripos.

When war broke out, he was already a member of the Officers' Training Corps, and he was promoted to Lieutenant in The King's (Liverpool) Regiment and went to France where he spent some months fighting in the battles across the front. On 10th March 1915, at the age of 23, Young was part of an attack on Givenchy Ridge. He was the only officer to make it through the German barbed-wire and on to the parapet of the enemy trench, before he was killed. Young's sacrifice, along with many others, contributed to the victory that

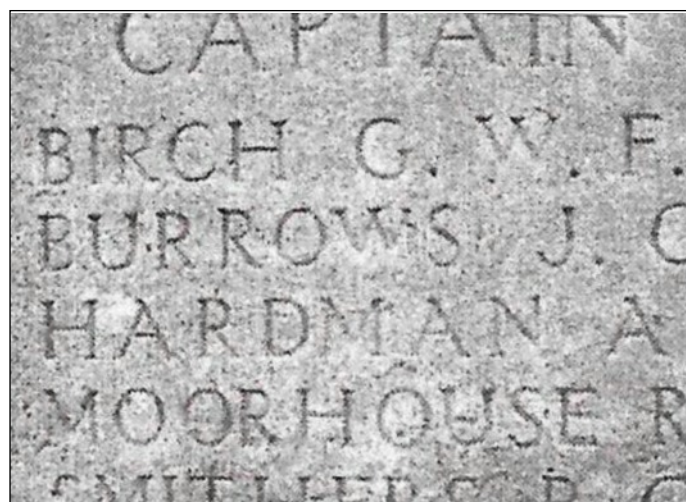
day at Neuve Chapelle. He is commemorated on the Le Touret Memorial to the Missing, at Richebourg l'Avoué.

My thanks to Dr Moffat, current head of Simon Langton Boys' School, and to Dr Baxter for much of the information in this article. □

Richard Young



The Old Langtonians WWI War Memorial at Simon Langton School



Captain Archie Hardman's name on the Tyne Cot Memorial

HEAD BOYS AND PAYNE-SMITH MEDALLISTS			
1881-2	W.H. PRIME	1908	P.M. YOUNG
1883-4	F.H. RICE	1909	H.J. SMALL
1885	C.E. DOUBLEDAY	1910	W.A. BAILLIE
1886	S.H. SKINNER	1911	F.C. WELLS
1887	F. BELSEY	1912	G.F. NEW
1888	W. DRAKE	1913	H.V. DAVIS
1889-90	A. BIGGLESTON	1914	E.G. FILE
1891	W.A.T. SHORTO	1915	T. COURT
1892	A.J. SANDIFORD	1916	R.J. BASS
1893	W.E. POST	1917	A.F. FINNIS
	R.J. RYALL	1918	J.B. FINNIS
1894	M. COPLAN	1919	L.C. COOMBS
1895	C.W. REDMAN	1920	F.E. STRAND
1896	C.W. REDMAN	1921	S.E. TAYLOR
	O. HARDMAN	1922	D. CHITTENDEN
1897	H.F. MOORE	1923	L.F. STANLEY
1898	H.A. GILHAM	1924	F.L. CLARK
1899	A.S. WALTER	1925	A.R. COLLAR
1900	G.A. CARTER	1926	R. ALLEN
1901	W. GODDEN	1927	J.E. WOOD
1902	A. HARDMAN	1928	L.W. WOOD
1903	A.H. CULLEN	1929	G. WOOD
1904	F.I. HARLOW	1930	M.O. SCOTT
1905	E.F. PATTENDEN	1931	W.L. DENNIS
1906	H.H. READ	1932	A.S. HAWKINS
1907	R. TUCKER	1933	C.G. MOSCATI
		1934	G.R. BURROUGHS
		1935	F.E.S. FINN
		1936	A. EDEN
		1937	B.C. CROUCH
		1938	K.D. BURROUGHS
		1939	J. PAPWORTH
		1940	S.B. CHANDLER
		1941	A. HOLDEN
		1942	M.I. GODFREY
		1943	D.R. WOOD
		1944	R.F. BENNETT
		1945	D.R.J. JONES
		1946	P.G. NICKOLL
		1947	E. WILSON
		1948	F.A. DALL
		1949	R.A. BARNARD
		1950	C.B. MILNER
		1951	M. WATTS
		1952	J.A. HOUSE
		1953	D. SMITH
		1954	J.S. RYE
		1955	R. YOUNG
		1956	J.R. BROOKS
		1957	P.J. NEAME
		1958	A.R. COBB
		1959	H.J. MARTIN

Board in Simon Langton Boys' School listing Head Boys and Payne-Smith Medallists from 1881 to 1959 including Archie Hardman (1902) and Philip Young (1908)

A few badges of the Old Contemptibles' Association

Introduction

As many readers will be aware, 2025 sees the Centenary of the foundation of The Old Contemptibles' Association. Members of the Association, "The Chums", wore a small bronze lapel badge, the design of which will be familiar to many, but I wonder how many are aware that several Old Contemptibles' Association branches up and down the country adopted their own badge designs? I am going to look at a few of these from my own collection.

The Standard Issue Bronze Lapel Badge



This is the standard issue badge of the Old Contemptibles' Association. The bronze badge had the "Old Contemptibles Association" in a circle and across the middle the two dates "Aug 5 to Nov 22" and "1914". These important dates being the qualification for the 1914 Star Medal clasp which the holder had to have been awarded in order to join the Old Contemptibles Association.

The reverse image of this badge shows the button-hole fixing and, along the top, the unique badge number, which could identify the Chum to whom the badge was issued. This badge was made by Toye & Co Ltd, London which can also just be made out in the picture.

Old Contemptibles Wives Social Club Folkestone badge

The Old Contemptibles had branches all over the country and, indeed, the world. The branches met regularly, usually monthly. The members paid a subscription, attended memorial services, held dinners, visited other branches, went on Pilgrimages to Mons and Ypres, but the main aims were to look after each other and preserve their camaraderie.

By 1935, the wives of the Chums had apparently got a little fed up with their husbands meeting up every month and having a good chat. The wives decided to form their own groups. Here, we have a badge from Folkestone. Their badge was a very colourful enamel shield bearing the name "Old Contemptibles Wives Social Club" with "Folkestone" across the middle.



West Hull Old Contemptibles' Association badge

There were over 200 branches in the UK, and this badge belongs to the West Hull Branch. Here we see the image of the 1914 Star Medal surrounded by "West Hull Old Contemptibles" highlighted by blue enamel. I love the rosette emblem atop the Star. The rosette features on a lot of these badges, it is a reference 1914 Star Medal with clasp. If the recipient wore just the medal ribbon, the award of the 1914 clasp would be indicated by a small silver rosette sewn onto the ribbon.



Old Contemptibles' - Hull Women's Section badge

Another example of a women's section being formed. A beautiful rosette surrounded by the words "Old Contemptibles Hull Womens Section" highlighted by blue enamel.



Old Contemptibles of Wales Association badge



Here we have a badge denoting a particular region. Wales in this example. I particularly love the silver on the rosette.

Northern Ireland Old Contemptibles Association badges



Not to be outdone, here are two badges for Northern Ireland. There are two different designs here and I like the use of the green enamel here.

GWR Old Contemptibles and 1914-15 Star Association badge



And now for something completely different. Here we have members of different organisations coming together. This Great Western Railway Association Badge, incorporating holders of the 1914 Star and the 1914/15 Star. On this badge, we can see across the middle the three colours of the 1914 medal ribbon, red, white and blue, the same ribbon was used for the 1914-15 Star.

Bristol Club Old Contemptibles Association badge

Another use of blue enamel background, with gold colour lettering, surrounding the image of the 1914 Star Medal. I have seen a couple of different designs for this Bristol Club badge.



Newcastle and District Old Contemptibles Association badge

Here is an example for Newcastle and District Old Contemptibles Association. An interesting design when you think how it would have appeared when worn on the lapel.



Old Contemptibles Association - Branch Chairman's badge



To end, I include a highly decorated badge which is much bigger than the other badges shown here. I have set a GB £1.00 coin against this picture for scale. Each Old Contemptibles' Branch appointed officers to run their branches: a Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, etc. Here we have a badge presented to a Chairman, Chum H. A. Hutt. I believe Chum Hutt was Chairman of Woolwich and District Branch. The badge is dated 1950 and is inscribed on the reverse with Chum Hutt's name and the words "For Services Rendered".

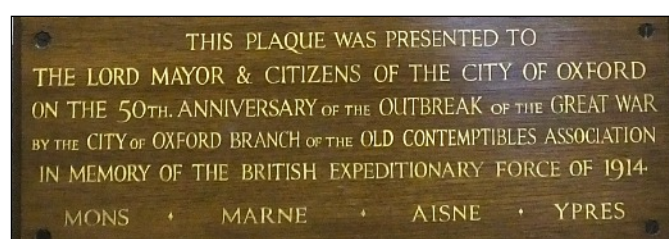
I hope that you have enjoyed seeing these badges. I am always intrigued by their design, the little details and in some cases, the use of colourful enamel. In this article I hope that you appreciate that I have tried to concentrate on pictures of the badges, letting them speak for themselves rather than writing long narrative about each one. □

Steve Ifield

Notes: The badges shown in the above article are not to scale and the use of the apostrophe in the text is consistent with that shown on each of the badges

- Ed

The plaque and explanatory caption below were photographed in Oxford Town Hall some years ago by your Editor:



The photographs below relate to Richard Young's article on Simon Langton School (see page 7):



Whitstable War Memorial



Cyril Mackenzie's name on Whitstable War Memorial

Commander George Gipps RN

Within St Peter's Church, Bekesbourne are three monuments to officers of the First World War: 2nd Lieutenant Norman Ramsey of the Rifle Brigade; Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Bendyshe of the RMLI (whose curious death was examined by Ed Holman in *Between the Lines*, No 77); and one to Commander George Gipps RN "[son of George Bowdler Gipps Esq. JP, until latterly of Howletts in this parish,] who was killed in action on board HMS Grafton in the Eastern Mediterranean on January 3rd 1916 in the 34th year of his age. This stone has been placed here by his loving sisters Edith Weir and Maud Hill".

The Gipps family had lived at Howletts between Littlebourne and Bekesbourne since 1820. George was born on 30th September 1882. By 1891, the family had moved to South Audley Street in Mayfair with eight-year-old George at boarding school in Weybridge. In 1896, he passed the admission exams to HMS *Britannia*, the Royal Naval College, at Dartmouth and in July joined as a Cadet. He studied there for two years, passing out as a Midshipman. He was posted to the China Station. Over the next five years, he learned the basics of his profession and also enough Chinese to impress his superiors.

George made a name for himself in July 1900 at the siege of Tiensin during the Boxer Rebellion, being mentioned in Admiral Seymour's despatch for his "great coolness, & ability while in charge of a gun ... at an outlying and dangerous position of the defences". In September 1901 George, now a Sub-Lieutenant, returned to the UK to undertake courses at Greenwich College and at HMS *Excellent*, the Navy's gunnery school in Portsmouth. Again promoted, Lieutenant Gipps spent a year in submarines and other vessels. In March 1905, he returned to *Excellent* for the advanced gunnery course, coming top in Practical Gunnery. He then spent eighteen months on the School's staff, receiving the Admiralty's thanks for producing a device and methodology for "determining the correction of the range due to the speed of the firing ship. A trial to be made in 'Revenge'. A report of the result after use at Battle Practice to be forwarded August '07". This refers to a paper George submitted to Arthur Pollen, who was developing a mechanical computer for predicting the future positions of moving targets over long ranges.

My sense is that George was intelligent and highly creative but also a perfectionist, ambitious and easily bored in a well-run ship that did not need, what he saw as, his talents. In January 1908, he joined the battleship *Hindustan* as Gunnery Officer (GO). She presented little to interest George and, despite being

promoted to Lieutenant Commander in March 1908, in April he applied unsuccessfully to join the Royal Naval Air Service. As George's life in *Hindustan* plodded along, he was preparing his escape. He continued to correspond with Pollen, who in 1910, requested the Admiralty to second George to his project. His record for 17th July 1910 reads: "To be allowed to remain on Half Pay for one year after being relieved in Hindustan = probably returning in Europa". The 1911 census shows George, and a Lieutenant Gerard Riley, lodging in York. Both men were working at Pollen's Argo Company: according to the company accounts, George was paid £1,000, Riley £790 on top of their naval half-pay. In June 1912 the secondment ended and George, reinstated with full rank and seniority, travelled back to the China Station.

On 1st November 1912, he was appointed 1st Lieutenant and GO in the cruiser *Newcastle*. Thirteen months later, George triggered a crisis aboard ship. He had a confrontation with a group of stokers which resulted in the imprisonment of five of them and left the rest of the crew unsettled. An immediate inquiry concluded that George "was to blame for his treatment of the stokers as a whole". On 23rd December, he was dismissed from the ship. In February 1914, further censure came from their Lordships of the Admiralty recording their "displeasure for his injudicious conduct in connection with the insubordination of stokers of Newcastle". For all his talents, George seems to have struggled to understand people.



HMS *Triumph* from George's diary in the NMM

The next item in George's record is for 7th August 1914 which notes his appointment to the battleship *Triumph*. In the National Maritime Museum, there is a diary George kept between August 1914 and January 1915. This explains that since the *Newcastle* he had been employed at the British Legation in Peking.

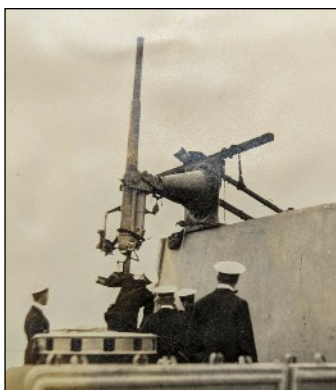
Triumph had been laid-up at Shanghai with only a skeleton crew. The first task of her newly-appointed

Captain, Maurice Fitzmaurice, was to make her up to complement. Four river-gunboats were rapidly decommissioned and their crews transferred to *Triumph*; 120 soldiers were found who were willing to switch services; any reservists that came to hand were taken on board. Despite this, when George arrived on 10th August with an order to be *Triumph's* GO, Fitzmaurice was unwilling to accept him. He claimed that he had no need for George and found a convenient error in his orders. Perhaps George's reputation preceded him.

George was not going to take this quietly. He began by lobbying the Naval authorities in Shanghai. They pressured Fitzmaurice to order George to Hong Kong to assemble, and bring back, a battery of 4-inch naval field guns. These were due to be supplied to the Japanese forces besieging the German naval base at Tsingtao. Fitzmaurice acceded but, as there was no immediate passage available to Hong Kong, George writes of spending the next five days in idle frustration on board *Triumph*. On the 16th he seems to have persuaded Fitzmaurice to allow a gunnery practice. This exposed faults with the alignment of the sights as well as an alarmingly slow rate of fire. At the end of his report George noted, probably with some satisfaction, that "The *Triumph* is undoubtedly not yet fit to go into action & render anything like a good account of herself".

On 19th August, George finally arrived in Hong Kong and immediately visited the Commanding Officer who was angry at Fitzmaurice's nitpicking. He corrected the orders, then invited George to dinner. George had assembled the battery by 2nd September only to learn that the Japanese no longer wanted it. It took him until 10th September to get back to Shanghai, with his unarguably correct orders, and finally become *Triumph's* GO: the diary makes no mention of Captain Fitzmaurice's reaction. Having outmanoeuvred his Captain, George would later prove the Japanese wrong about the field guns.

In October 1914, *Triumph*, together with the destroyer HMS *Usk*, sailed to the German port of Tsingtao to support the Japanese naval and land-based siege. *En route*, George amused himself converting some Maxims and a six-pounder into anti-aircraft guns. The Maxims worked but the six-pounder broke its mountings on its second discharge.



The 6-pounder AA gun, from George's diary in NMM



Officers larking with a Maxim gun, from George's diary in NMM

George also spent time studying maps of the defences of Tsingtao to brief the ship's company on what to expect. He went ashore to observe the Allied landings. Finally, on 28th September, the naval bombardment began: *Triumph* the solitary British battle-ship astern of three Japanese. George's diary notes that the concussion from the after 10-inch guns, firing directly over the stern, "*completely wrecked the wardroom skylights [with] much glass in pantry and Captain's cabin*". Clearly the guns had not been fired directly aft in the eleven years *Triumph* had been commissioned which, if nothing else, says something about the attitude to gunnery of the Edwardian Navy.



Japanese troops in Tsingtao, from George's diary in NMM

As the siege progressed, the fleet was required to work closer inshore to engage distant targets. This brought it within range of German mobile batteries. On 14th October, *Triumph* was hit with one seaman killed and a number of others injured. George proposed that the Japanese should use the battery of 4-inch guns from Hong Kong to engage the German batteries, whilst the fleet was close inshore. The guns duly arrived but, despite their support, the fleet and particularly *Triumph*, still struggled to reach the designated targets. George now explored ways to increase the elevation of his 10-inch and 7.5-inch guns, thus giving them greater range. With the 7.5-inch guns this was achieved by wedging blocks of wood

underneath the elevated barrels. For the 10-inch guns the solution was to flood compartments on the seaward side of the ship, causing her to list and further elevate the gun muzzles trained landward. In his after-action report, Captain Fitzmaurice acknowledges George's contribution: "*To him is due much of the credit for the successful shooting at ranges previously considered impossible for Triumph's guns.*"

Tsingtao fell on the 7th November. On arrival in Hong Kong, the ship was in dockyard-hands until January 1915 after which she sailed to the Mediterranean. At this point the diary ends.

On 19th February, *Triumph* was part of the Anglo-French fleet bombarding Turkish forts and gun positions guarding the way through the Dardanelles to Constantinople. After initial success, progress slowed as the channel narrowed. It was increasingly difficult to destroy the Turkish fortifications with the flat trajectory fire of naval guns; plunging shot from howitzers would have been more effective. The Turks, however, had mobile howitzer batteries which fired on the ships from hidden gullies. This made them hard to spot and even harder to hit. The greatest threats were the Turkish minefields. The fleet had British trawlers acting as minesweepers but their largely civilian crews were hesitant to sweep whilst under heavy fire.

In early March, *Triumph* and her sister ship, *Swiftsure*, were detached to assist in closing the Turkish port of Smyrna which it was feared might become a base for German U-Boats. No shots were fired, the situation dissolving into diplomatic bluff and counterbluff. Eventually, the Turks, misunderstanding the Allies' purpose, sank five block-ships in the harbour making it useless for submarines. *Triumph* returned to the Dardanelles where, on 18th March, the Allies made a final attempt to force their way into the Sea of Marmara. The day proved costly. The French battle-

ship *Bouvet*, British battleships *Ocean* and *Irresistible* were sunk by mines, whilst the battlecruiser HMS *Inflexible* was severely damaged by shellfire before she also struck a mine and had to be beached outside the Dardanelles to prevent her from sinking.

The loss of three capital ships and the crippling of another gave the Allies pause and everything was put on hold whilst the army prepared to make a land-based attack. This came on 25th April with *Triumph* providing fire support to the first ANZAC troops going ashore at what came to be named ANZAC Cove. As is well known, the Allied armies made little significant progress beyond their beachheads, but the fighting was fierce and continuous with *Triumph* remaining in her fire support role.

To the weary troops at ANZAC Cove, the Royal Navy was ever present and the soldiers developed a curious affection for them. In the New Zealand National Museum in Wellington, there is a postcard showing ANZAC Cove (such things were apparently possible). On the reverse the writer, in time-honoured style, asks his correspondent to note the X on the picture that marks his dugout, but he also draws attention to the tiny blob on the horizon that is HMS *Triumph* and to the white clouds on the hillside that are her shell-bursts.

Despite the closure of Smyrna, U-boats were present. Two small U-boats had been sent, in kit form, by rail to Austria. After assembly, they sailed to Turkey. A larger vessel, *U21*, sailed all the way round from Germany. On 25th April 1915, Kapitänleutnant Otto Hersing, in *U21*, sighted *Triumph* through his periscope. She was underway with her torpedo nets out and firing at the shore. Hersing fired a torpedo and, pretty much at the same time, a lookout on *Triumph* spotted *U21*'s periscope. Some of her starboard guns opened fire but had not found the range before the torpedo hit *Triumph* amidships: it



Sinking of HMS Triumph, painting by Dudley Marwood, Australian National War Memorial

had either broken through the netting or passed beneath it. *Triumph* began to list. HMS *Chelmer*, an escorting destroyer, managed to get alongside her stern and took off a number of crew. The list increased and *Chelmer* hurried to get clear as *Triumph* turned bottom-up. By now, most of the crew, including George, were in the water around the hull. *Chelmer* and other destroyers moved in and began to pick them up. After half an hour, *Triumph* sank. Fifty-two men died; the survivors, and the recovered dead, were taken back to Mudros. The dead were consigned to the “deep” off Mudros Bay whilst the men were housed and found jobs. It is possible that George was writing a second volume of his diary but, if so, it was lost with the ship. Two days after *Triumph*, *U21* sank another battleship, HMS *Majestic*.

The Navy, unwilling to risk more capital ships, withdrew the remainder to the anti-submarine netted protection of Mudros harbour. The battleships did not return to Gallipoli. This was not as great a setback as might be imagined. The big guns of the battleships had been used, primarily, to awe the Turkish defenders and inspire the troops ashore; it was the smaller-calibre guns which did the work. The shortfall in these could be made up by using more destroyers, cruisers and monitors: HMS *M33*, a monitor with 6-inch guns which served at Gallipoli, is preserved at Portsmouth.

On 26th May, Captain Fitzmaurice took command of HMS *Europa*, the Depot ship in Mudros Bay. George went with him “for charge of naval guns to be landed”. On 30th June, George was promoted to Commander and on 13th September, he became Naval Transport Officer ANZAC. At ANZAC he would have been responsible to the Principal NTO at Mudros for the management of the arrival, off-loading and departure of supply and personnel ships. He would also have provided administrative support

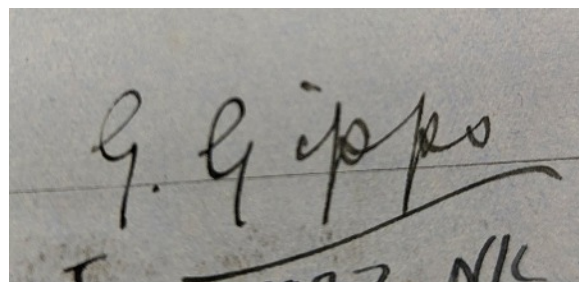
to the senior Naval Officer ashore at ANZAC. In late November, with the Gallipoli campaign reaching its sorry conclusion, Major-General Birdwood, commanding the ANZAC troops, complained about the performance of the cruiser *Grafton* in its fire-support role. George was appointed to *Grafton* to sort out the gunnery. On 5th December, he transferred direct from ANZAC, and within two hours was bombarding targets on Chunuk Bair and Battleship Hill.

Grafton followed a regular routine. In the morning, she closed with the coast, fired during the day and withdrew at night. Occasionally she visited Mudros, to take on ammunition, coal and other supplies as well as, inevitably, adding another layer of grey paint to the ship’s upperworks. In the early morning of 20th December, *Grafton* provided fire-support for the evacuation of ANZAC and Suvla and then spent the rest of the day bombarding the piles of supplies abandoned on the beaches. George, and *Grafton*, spent Christmas at Mudros, with the crew engaged in cleaning the ship and overhauling her guns. On 31st December, they were back off Gallipoli still firing at the abandoned stores before heading out to sea again. On 3rd January, *Grafton* was off Cape Helles and spent the first half of the morning firing at various targets on the coast. At 11am, she ceased fire but remained on station. At a quarter past a Turkish shell hit *Grafton*’s bridge: George Gipps was killed and a Midshipman, a Petty Officer, a Marine Bugler and a Seamen were left in need of hospitalisation. *Grafton* remained on station for the rest of day, firing as required, before withdrawing for the night. Next morning, at 9.15am, a burial service was held and George was slipped over the side before the ship sailed towards Turkey and began shooting again.

After the war, George’s married sisters, Edith and Maud, placed the memorial to him in Bekesbourne Church. Beside this, he is remembered on two memorials at HMS *Excellent* (one for former students and one for staff), on a memorial in the United Service Club in St James’s and on the Royal Naval Memorial at Portsmouth. □



HMS Edgar and HMS Grafton in action at Gallipoli, a painting by C J Smith (RMLI), in the NMM



Alas I have been unable to find a picture of him, his signature, from his diary is the best I can do.

John Drouot

Some Mementoes of WWI Hospital Ships

On 17th November 1915, the Hospital Ship HMHS *Anglia* was nearing Folkestone *en route* to Dover from Boulogne with some 200 cot cases and some 100 walking wounded on board. The ship was passing through the specially reserved buoyed entrance channel for hospital ships when the *Anglia* hit a mine. A nearby destroyer, HMS *Ure*, managed to take a number of the many men to safety. As no other vessels were allowed to travel down the reserved path which was marked with specially lit buoys, it was claimed that the Germans must have deliberately mined the course of the hospital ship.

It took the *Anglia* just 15 minutes to sink and the estimated losses vary between 120 and 164 personnel, including 25 of her crew, who were either killed by the explosion or drowned.

In October 2014 there were calls for the wreck of the ship to be designated a war grave and protected under the Protection of Military Remains Act, 1986. In March 2017, the wreckage of HMHS *Anglia* was declared an official war grave, making it illegal to remove or disturb any human remains at the wreck site.

Today, the atrocity is now largely forgotten.

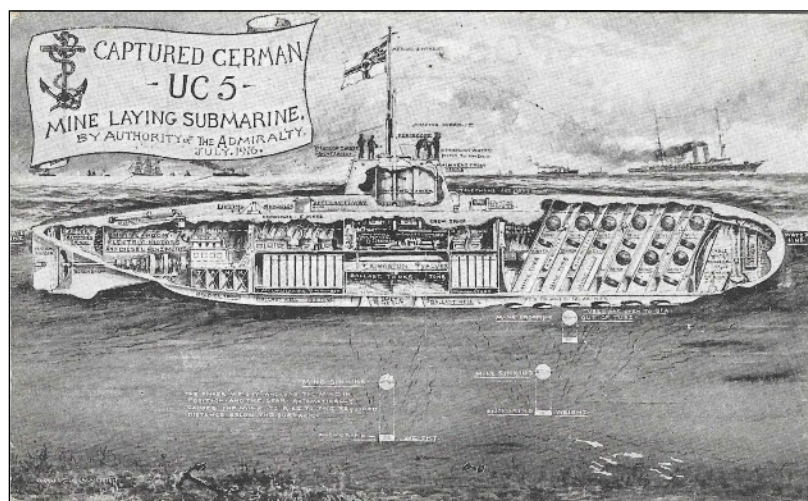


Length 16.5cm



Crested China Model of HMHS *Anglia* manufactured by Carlton China immediately after the end of the war

(It is possible that the Windsor crest was used on this model because the crest featured green and red in its design reflecting the use of the green stripes and the red cross on the ship. The Folkestone crest would have been more appropriate)



One of the postcards given to visitors to the UC-5 submarine on 26th July 1916

The captured German mine-laying submarine UC-5 went on view to the public at Temple Pier, Thames Embankment, on 26th July 1916. It is reported that, as each person passed the turnstile to enter the submarine, he or she received from a petty officer a souvenir postcard issued by authority of the Admiralty, showing in section the internal arrangement of the vessel. During the morning, a fee of 6d was charged for admission to the pier, half-price was charged for the rest of the day. The proceeds went to naval charities. Soldiers and sailors were admitted free. Note the absence of any mention on the postcard of HMHS *Anglia*!

His Majesty's
Hospital Ship
*Braemar
Castle*

Size of
each
picture
(including
backing)
25cm square

This pair of glass-fronted pictures were almost certainly produced during the war. The glass on the one on the left is, unfortunately, cracked in two places but the two pictures have survived, more or less intact, for at least 100 years!

His Majesty's
Hospital Ship
Britannic

The *Britannic*
was the sister ship
to the *Titanic*

These two Hospital
Ships were both sunk in the
Mediterranean within three
days of each other
(See **Notes** below)

Caption on picture:

SS "Braemar Castle"
Hospital ship carrying 400 sick and wounded
Sunk by Germans without warning
NOV^r 23rd 1916

Caption on picture:

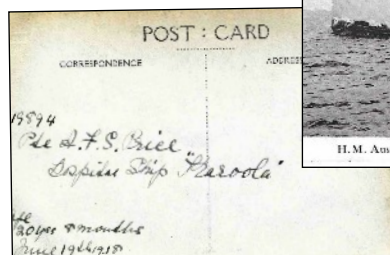
SS "Britannic"
Red Cross Hospital Ship
Sunk by Germans without warning NOV^r 29th 1916
50 lives lost

Note: According to Tony Bridgland in his book *Outrage at Sea: Naval Atrocities of the First World War*, the *Braemar Castle* was sunk on 24th November 1916, either by mine or torpedo, in the channel which runs between the islands of Tinos and Mykonos. Everyone on board was saved except one sailor who was drowned and buried with naval honours.

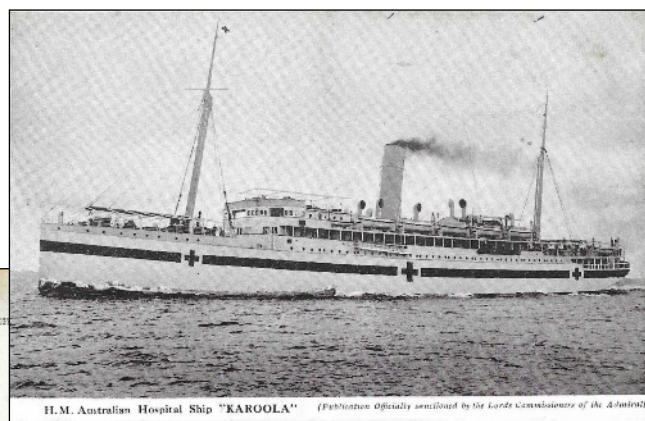
Note: According to Tony Bridgland in his book *Outrage at Sea: Naval Atrocities of the First World War*, the *Britannic* was sunk on 21st November 1916. It is believed that she struck a mine in the channel which runs between the island of Zea and the south-eastern point of Attica on the Greek mainland. The Admiralty subsequently announced that there were 1,106 survivors and about thirty lives were lost in the sinking of the *Britannic*.



◀ Studio postcard of Pte A.F.S. Price which he signed and dated on the back of the postcard presumably whilst onboard HMAHS "Karooola" ▼



19894 Pte Aubrey Frederick Salisbury Price, Australian Imperial Force
Age 20 years 8 months
June 1918



▲ Postcard view of His Majesty's Australian Hospital Ship "Karooola"

19894 Pte A.F.S. Price enlisted at Sydney, New South Wales, on 9th February 1915 and was discharged "medically unfit - not strong enough" on 10th March 1918. □

The Airfields of Britain Conservation Trust

This is a relatively new organisation set up in 2005. They have a good but sometimes difficult to navigate web-site (abct.org.uk/airfield) on which are detailed the location and history of every airfield in the UK, the two world wars and even some earlier sites used for balloon launches. In most instances, there are aerial photographs of the airfields where they still exist or a current landscape view of where it was formerly located. These images are accompanied by details of when the airfield was operational and, where known, a list of squadrons that were stationed there.

In many instances, the airfields have what are called Airfield Markers and these are listed separately on the web-site. The actual Marker is usually of polished granite standing some three-feet tall and approximately two-feet square. I have also located one site, St Mary's Bay, where there the Marker is a granite slab set into the ground. In this instance there are two, one each side of a war memorial (see image on right). The first is for Jesson & Littlestone (1917–1939) and second for Littlestone, Honeychild (1942–1944). There are some twenty sites in Kent listed. Those that have a WW1 connection include Bekesbourne, Capel, Dover (Guston Road), Leysdown (Shell Beach), Swingate and Wittersham.

The one drawback that I have found is that the Markers are on occasion positioned away from the actual site of the former runways or buildings that

remain standing. A careful look on the web-site is needed to pinpoint the exact location. □

John Websper

Bekesbourne ►



War Memorial at St Mary's Bay showing the granite slabs either side of the war memorial



Swingate (Dover)



Swingate (Dover)

Fought alongside the Turks-killed by the Germans - the strange history of 'Lieutenant M'

Quite some years ago, I was looking through *De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour* for possible material for a battalion history I was writing. This work was produced during the Great War, using material supplied by bereaved families. Although it had no relevance to my search, I was taken aback by one man's extraordinary story (accompanied by a dashing profile photograph of him in a full-dress tunic) which I set out below, slightly abbreviated.

Born 1892, he was gazetted 2nd Lieutenant in the Royal Fusiliers in 1911.

'On the outbreak of the Turco-Italian War, anxious to see active service, he offered himself to the Turkish Government, and, after a long and adventurous journey reached Turkish Headquarters. During this journey, he and Mr. Seppings Wright, War Artist for the *Illustrated London News*... were, owing to the rough weather, stranded on an island where they existed on octopus and porpoise for three days, threatened meanwhile by a mutinous native crew.

After leaving the island, their fresh water gave out, and suffering terribly from thirst, they finally reached Zwarra, whence [he] proceeded by camel to the Turkish Headquarters. Here he was given the rank of Captain, with a command of 3,000 Turkish troops and Arab irregulars, comprising the right flank of the Turkish forces. He was three times mentioned in Dispatches, and his gallantry and his control over undisciplined Arab troops led Mr Alan Ostler, War Correspondent with the Turkish forces, to describe him as a 'Paladin of the Desert.' He was severely wounded in December and returned to England suffering from dysentery having, in the meantime, been notified that the War Office demanded his resignation for communicating with the Press, as it was he who sent a cable exposing the massacre of women and children whose bodies he found in a mosque. Subsequently, he received an illuminated address from the representatives of the Moslem community resident in England. Later he visited Constantinople as the guest of the Minister of War, when he was decorated by the Sultan with the *Ordre Imperial du Mejidie* and the *Ordre de la Gloire* Nichon-I-Iftikhar, who also appointed him an ADC. At this time, an attempt was made on his life which happily failed; returned to England in March 1913, suffering from the effects of typhoid; was reinstated as Lieutenant in Aug. 1914...[served] at Gallipoli from July 1915; took part in the landing at Suvla Bay; was wounded on the ridge at Kislagh Dag, and invalided home in September with a septic wound and nervous breakdown, being invalided out of the Army, after a



'Lieutenant M'

year's ill-health. On recovery, he enlisted as a Private ...preferring not to wait in hope of recovering his commission; proceeded to France 2nd November and was killed in action on 25th November 1916, while carrying dispatches to the base, only a few days before the arrival of the recommendation for his reinstatement and consequent return to England.'

Clearly, one should make allowances that this information was likely provided by a grieving father, and without the benefit of documentation. The likelihood of the Turks giving an unknown and inexperienced foreigner command of 3,000 men seems highly unlikely. However, when I recently looked into his battalion war diary, I had serious doubts about the accuracy of the account of his British Army service, which led me on to see his War Office file at the National Archives. The war diary indicated that whilst the battalion landed at Suvla on 7th August, he was left on Mudros with another officer and 150 ORs as a first-line reserve. He joined the battalion on 14th August, but on 15th August 1915 was ordered to 'proceed to report himself at War Office'. He attached himself, to a sister battalion on the way, however, and was wounded. Being ordered to report to the War Office was rarely good news!

I also discovered, via an old post on the Great War Forum, an extract from 'With the Turks in Tripoli, being some experiences in the Turco-Italian War of 1911', by Ernest Bennett, a former MP, who had encountered 'Lieutenant M'. He says he had 'Succeeded in reaching the Tripolitan coast after a plucky and adventurous voyage in a sailing boat. On

his arrival, the Turkish officers had been very kind to him. As a soldier, he was naturally of little practical value, for he could neither give nor receive a single order or word of command; but Captain Emin Effendi, who was in charge of some Arab levies...very kindly took [him] with him, and the young Englishman was fortunate enough to see a good deal of the desultory scrapping which went on incessantly in this part of the oasis in the earlier weeks of the campaign. He was dressed in an officer's uniform and sword, which he had somehow secured at Zouara, and showed great pluck in various attacks on the Italian outposts amongst the houses on the edge of the oasis.'

Bennett goes on to say that 'Lieutenant M' was ill for some weeks and the Turks took much trouble to look after him. '[He] was naturally anxious about his future, and to my astonishment seemed to be unaware of the fact that by the King's regulations officers ... are forbidden, not merely to fight in a foreign war...but even to be present in a country where war exists or is threatened.'

Bennett says that telegrams had passed between the British and Turkish War Offices, and the Turks had offered 'M' a commission in the Turkish Army if his British commission was forfeited. He adds that 'M' had seen with his own eyes evidence of Italian atrocities, corroborated by others, and wished to stir up public feeling in England about this. Bennett advised him that this had, however, already been achieved.

'Lieutenant M's War Office file (WO339/8072) turns out to be surprisingly large, for a man who served for such a short time. (Unfortunately, there was no sign of his Service Record as a private.) It confirmed he had been given a probationary commission in the Special Reserve in April 1911. That November, the War Office received an adverse report on his efficiency, along with a report that he had left the UK without permission and apparently fought for the Turks against the Italians, and contributed an article to the *Daily Mail* alleging atrocities by the Italians. His probationary commission was cancelled on the grounds of efficiency, as there was lack of proof as to what he had done in Tripoli. His request for reinstatement in 1913 was turned down.

On the outbreak of the Great War, he applied for a probationary commission and, after some consideration, was granted one in the New Army, and sent to an Irish fusilier battalion. He was promoted Lieutenant in January 1915 and sent overseas. However, on 10th August 1915, GHQ Mediterranean Expeditionary Force telegraphed the War Office saying that 'M' was identified as the same man who had figured in the Tripoli incident, and was afterwards

implicated in a scandal in Constantinople. A 24th July memo alleged that, quite apart from his friendly relations with the Turkish military, he had been 'in company with another Jew from Baghdad who was more than suspected of unnatural offences, he frequented a low-class hotel, where one night a fracas took place between them and his companion was killed with a revolver shot.' Whilst 'M' denied many of the reports about him (which certainly have a prejudicial flavour about them), stressing that he had been acquitted after being put on trial for murder, it was suggested that his presence with the MEF was undesirable and matters should be properly investigated back in the UK. He was ordered home.

It appears his wound had been slight, and he was sent to another battalion of his regiment in Ireland. However, the CO reported in March 1916, that 'M' had spent 97 out of 142 days away from the unit, albeit partly owing to being subpoenaed as a witness for a civil case, 'M' went AWOL for a month in May/June 1916, saying he could not join his unit because he had no money, and was later admitted to hospital in July suffering from addiction to morphine. He said he had been given morphine whilst ill in Turkey and had continued using it for some time. Although passed fit for general service, he was kept in hospital to try and prevent his access to morphine. However, he went AWOL for three days, returning under the influence of opium. The Army finally lost patience with him, and it was recommended he be called upon to resign his commission. He was gazetted out and therefore liable for enlistment as a private soldier.

'M' joined an infantry regiment on 30th September and reported to a battalion in France, which, in early November was out of the line, training. It was only on 25th November that it had to provide working parties, The war diary, after reporting no casualties for many days, noted for 25th November the death of one OR - presumably 'M' with no further details. I could see no indication in his file that the War Office was prepared to restore his commission.

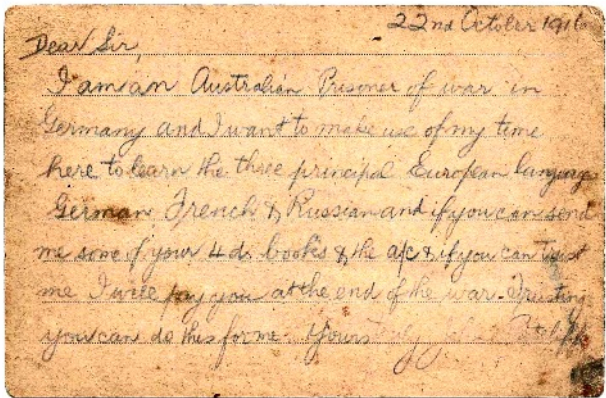
There was a curious incident three years later. 'M's mother-in-law reported that a friend of hers, who knew 'M' well, believed she had seen 'M' in Bournemouth. He had recognised her, but had got into a car, which drove off. A Deputy Provost Marshal decided enquiries should be made of the father, who ridiculed the idea and subsequently complained, with some justification, about how matters had been handled.

So ends this rather sad story of a well-meaning, but extremely naïve young man. □

Michael Lucas

Don address: 4822 W. J. Ritzsch
My address: 55 Duttons Lane
No. 1, London
Kriegsgefangenen-Sendung.
24. OKT. 1916
16.5-0N
1 d
Haythe Printing Works
Kent
England

Front of postcard sent to Hythe Printing Works by 4882 Pte J Ratcliffe, 55th Australian Infantry, No. 1 Lager, Gefangenenlager Schneidemühl, Deutschland. The postcard bears a German postmark dated 24th October 1916 and a British postmark dated 17th November 1916.



22nd October 1916

*I am an Australian Prisoner of War in Germany and I want to make use of my time here to learn the principal European languages German, French and Russian and if you can send me some of your 4 (d?) books and the a/c if you can trust me I will pay you at the end of the war. Trusting you can do this for me.
Yours truly John Ratcliffe*

I cannot remember how this postcard came into my possession but I have held on to it for at least 30 years. Why? I don't know. $\square$

P4882 Pte John Ratcliffe's attestation form shows that he joined the 15h Reinforcements, 3rd Battalion , Australian Imperial Force on 28th August 1915 and that he was subsequently transferred to the 55th Battalion, AIF. He was aged 24 years 3 months when he attested so would have been aged 25 years 5 months when he sent the postcard to Hythe Printing Works.

RETURN TO AUSTRALIA
Per *Kewarra*

TRANSFERRED TO 55th Battalion

B

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES.

15th Reinft's
8rd Bn Battalion

16 Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad.

No. *4889*

Name *RATCLIFFE, JOHN* 15th REINFORCEMENTS
Unit 3RD BATTALION
Joined on *25th August 1915*

Questions to be put to the Person Enlisting before Attestation.

- What is your Name? ... *John Ratcliffe*
- In or near what Parish or Town were you born? ... *Sydney* in or
N.S.W. in the County of *N.S.W.*
- Are you a natural born British Subject or a Naturalised British Subject (*State if the latter papers to be shown*) ... *Yes*
- What is your age? ... *20 years 2 months*
- What is your trade or calling? ... *Clerk*
- Are you, or have you been, an Apprentice? If so where, to whom, and for what period? ... *No*
- Are you married? ... *No*
- Who is your next of kin? (Address to be stated) ... *Richard Ratcliffe (Father)
Woolmairland N. S.W.*
- Have you ever been convicted by the Civil Power? ... *No*
- Have you ever been discharged from any part of His Majesty's Forces, with Ignominy, or as Insolvent, or with loss of Honour, or on account of Conviction of Felony, or of a Sentence of Penal Servitude, or have you been dismissed with Disgrace from the Navy? ... *No*
- Do you now belong to, or have you ever served in, His Majesty's Army, the Marines, the Militia, the Militia Reserve, the Territorial Force, Royal Navy, or Colonial Forces? If so, state which, and if not now serving, state cause of discharge ... *No*
- Have you stated the whole, if any, of your previous service? ... *Yes*
- Have you ever been rejected as unfit for His Majesty's Service? If so, on what grounds? ... *No*
- Do you understand that no Separation Allowance will be issued in respect of your service beyond an amount which together with Pay would reach eight shillings per day ... *Yes*
- Are you prepared to undergo inoculation against smallpox and enteric fever ... *Yes*

I, *John Ratcliffe*, do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and I am willing and hereby voluntarily agree to serve in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.

* And I further agree to allot not less than two-fifths of the pay payable to me from time to time during my service for the support of my wife and children three-fifths

Date *22/8/15* *John Ratcliffe*
Signature of person enlisting.

*This clause is to be amended where necessary and should be struck out in the case of unmarried men or widowers without children under 18 years of age.

Woodnesborough Parish Council honours former resident Major Tonie Holt with plaque on memorial bench

On 8th May 2025 (the 80th anniversary of VE-Day) Branch member Valmai Holt was invited by Woodnesborough Parish Council to attend a ceremony held in Woodnesborough Village Hall that evening. To Valmai's surprise, a new metal bench was unveiled bearing an engraved metal plaque in memory of Major Tonie Holt.

A few days later, your Editor with his wife, Sue, made a visit to Valmai's home and was told by Valmai that she wanted to take him to the Village Hall to see something special in memory of her dear late husband, Tonie. Valmai didn't let on what the surprise was until we reached the Village Hall Car Park where she pointed out the metal bench bearing a plaque. The bench is located in a most peaceful location looking across to the village church.

Valmai was so proud that the Parish Council had honoured Tonie in this way and Valmai told me that Tonie would have similarly been very proud. Tonie and Valmai have lived at Woodnesborough for some forty-five years and, during that time, became highly regarded and known to many in the village. Tonie Holt passed away on 5th September 2024, aged 91.

Tonie and Valmai Holt were pioneers of battlefield tours not only to the Western Front but also to numerous battlefield sites around the world. They started their battlefield tour business (Major and Mrs Holts Battlefield Tours) in the late-1970s. In more recent years, they wrote books on postcards of both the Great War and of World War II. As a team, they were prolific authors and amongst their many highly acclaimed books are those on Bruce Bairnsfather and Rudyard Kipling's son Jack. Today, they are best known for their absolutely superb battlefield guide-books on, *inter alia*, the Ypres Salient and the Somme which have not been bettered. □ **JB**



Tonie Holt as a subaltern - circa 1954

► *Tonie and Valmai Holt about to lay a wreath at Woodnesborough War Memorial on Armistice Day, 11th November 2022*



▲ *The plaque in memory of Major Tonie Holt*



Valmai Holt sitting on the bench in memory of her late husband, Tonie, and looking admiringly at the plaque



Valmai Holt sitting with Sue Brazier on the memorial bench with Woodnesborough Village Hall behind

Future meetings:

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month at The Hall, St Andrews United Reformed Church, Watling Street, Canterbury CT1 2UA

7:30pm start (hall open from 7:00pm)

2025

8 July (Note change of date)

Sue Woolmans: 'The Kaiser'

August (No meeting)

2 September

Christina Holstein: 'Emile Driant, first hero of Verdun'

7 October

John Tanner: 'A battalion on the Somme (1/1st Bucks at Pozieres & Thiepval)'

4 November

Mark Harris: 'The Naval War in the Baltic'

2 December

Carole Hope: 'Initiation by gas - 16th Irish Division, Loos - April 1916'

All are welcome

WFA branches are entirely self-supporting. A donation towards the expenses of the meeting is very much appreciated

For further details, please contact:

Hazel Basford



THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

Founded by John Giles. Inaugurated 11th November 1980
Registered Charity No. 298365