

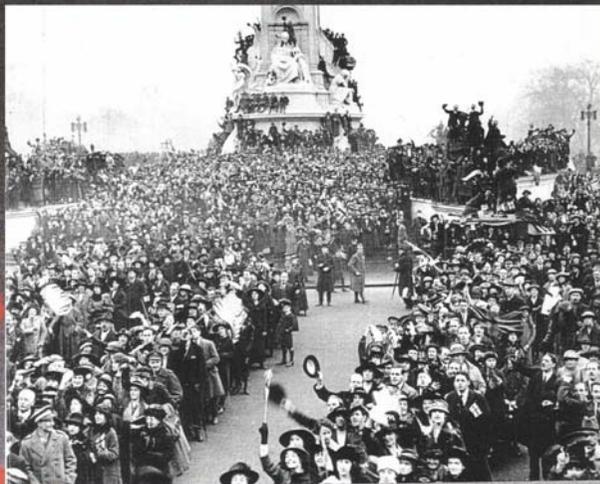


THE WESTERN FRONT
ASSOCIATION

Lancashire North Branch

Despatch

Issue 2: Nov 2008



THE ARMISTICE AT WESTMINSTER.
SIGNED. THE TERMS ENDORSED.
HISTORIC MORNING SOLEMN SERVICE OF
THANKSGIVING.

The frontispiece for this Issue of Despatch, which marks the 90th Anniversary of the Armistice, is a mixture of old and new. The photo, which resides in the Imperial War Museum's archives (Q.47.894), is the scene outside Buckingham Palace on Armistice Day. The background is a recent piece of work by local artist Mrs Kerry Hennessy. Whilst the newspaper headline is a combination of old and new being from the Times of 12th November 1918 produced from the Times on Line Archive. Overleaf is a copy of the evocative "At Westminster" article from the Times.

AT WESTMINSTER.

THE TERMS ENDORSED.

SOLEMN SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING.

WESTMINSTER, MONDAY.

"This is no time for words," said the PRIME MINISTER, in a voice broken with emotion, after he had read the terms of the armistice to the House of Commons to-day. "Our hearts are too full of gratitude, to which no tongue can give adequate expression." And the House straightway proceeded to St. Margaret's Church to give humble and reverent thanks to Almighty God.

Nothing in the war so became the House of Commons as its demeanour on the day of assured triumph. There was no note of exultation in the cheers that welled up from the great heart of the assembly. There was the joy of thanksgiving, and with it an overmastering sense of compassion which made the sitting almost a solemn act of consecration. It was eloquent of the spirit of the new time, that the clause in the armistice which drew the deepest and most sustained cheer from the House was not any, even the most stringent, for the exaction of territorial and material safeguards, but that which provided for the immediate repatriation of all Allied prisoners of war.

The House had grave business set for its decision, no less than a Vote of Credit for hundreds of millions sterling, but it instinctively put this and every other routine question on one side. No sooner had prayers been said than the Prime Minister entered the Chamber. Instantly the whole House was on its feet, and the cheering with which Mr. Lloyd George was greeted at the proudest moment of his career was a tribute of a kind rarely heard within the walls of St. Stephen's. Mr. Asquith and the ex-Ministers who sat with him on the Front Bench opposite joined cordially in this spontaneous outburst, and Mr. Lloyd George's present colleagues acclaimed their chief with all the fervour of personal affection.

The Parliamentary stage was set in the manner of a great occasion. The House was crowded in every part, and the acknowledged leaders of opinion were all in their places. The war note was maintained by the attendance of many members in khaki. There was a large company of peers, including the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Fisher, over the clock, but by an odd chance the Strangers' Gallery behind them was completely deserted.

RECEPTION OF THE TERMS.

The PRIME MINISTER was heartily cheered again on rising to read the terms of the armistice, which, he explained, had been signed after a discussion which was prolonged all night. The reading of the terms, the actual text of which will be found elsewhere, was followed with breathless interest by the House, which repeatedly interrupted the Prime Minister to express its gratification with particular clauses.

The first outward expression of emotion came with the announcement of the inclusion of Alsace-Lorraine among "the invaded countries" which were to be immediately evacuated. The cheering was renewed when the Prime Minister came to the condition for the evacuation of the countries on the left bank of the Rhine and the garrisoning of its principal crossings. Some of the clauses relating to the eastern frontiers of Germany also aroused intense satisfaction, the warmest cheer of all being reserved for the stipulation that the treaties of Bukarest and Brest-Litovsk were to be abandoned. No less welcome was the news that reparation and restitution, two of our primary war aims, were to be secured in full. The naval conditions were kept to the last, and the House unmistakably showed its conviction that with them we had achieved our third essential purpose—security.

"Thus has come to an end," the PRIME MINISTER impressively declared, "the cruellest and most terrible war that has ever scourged mankind." His devout hope that all wars had come to an end this fateful morning was echoed by Mr. ASQUITH with a full heart. The statesman who was at the head of the British Government when the great struggle began now rose to express his satisfaction with the fact that the armistice had made it impossible for the war to be resumed.

Nothing more was said, and the House gratefully accepted the PRIME MINISTER'S suggestion that all should at once proceed to St. Margaret's to give thanks for the deliverance of the world from its great peril. A procession was formed, with the Speaker at its head, and the Prime Minister and Mr. Asquith immediately following, and the Commons slowly filed out through St. Stephen's Hall across the crowded road and into the venerable edifice to which through centuries it has repaired at great moments in the nation's history. The House of Lords followed in procession, with the Lord Chancellor at their head. Rain was beginning to fall from a grey autumn sky, but it did not impair the innate impressiveness of the spectacle.

AT ST. MARGARET'S.

The service was simple and extraordinarily moving. There was no formal order of service, and no sermon. It was an hour of prayer and thanksgiving, of humble supplication and radiant gratitude. From time to time the rise and fall of cheering or the strains of a band would filter from the outer world into the church, only to emphasize the perfect harmony of hymn and psalm and prayer. The service began with the Hundredth Psalm. Canon Carnegie, the rector of St. Margaret's and the Commons' Chaplain, read some beautiful prayers of thankfulness for victory and for the comfort of the bereaved. Then the great congregation joined in singing "O God, our help in ages past," with a serene optimism not often heard outside a college chapel. There followed the reading of the Lesson from Isaiah by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Two verses from the 61st chapter of the Hebrew prophet moved the congregation profoundly. "He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." "They shall

raise up the former desolation, and they shall repair the waste cities." After the glad strains of the *Te Deum* had died away the Primate gave the Benediction, and the service ended with the singing of the National Anthem.

The Commons were seated together in the south aisle, Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Balfour, Mr. Bonar Law, Mr. Whitley, the Deputy Speaker, and Mr. Asquith occupying the foremost pew. The Lords, who were in the north aisle, passed out of the church first, and the Commons slowly followed. As the Commons proceeded from the brightly-lighted edifice into the gloom of a darkening day, they passed the simple Roll of Honour which they had placed in the church to the memory of their heroic dead. So their last thoughts on this memorable day were as their first, the saddest of all memories merging into the glory of the battle won.

Chairman Stan's Spot

After the success of the first copy of the Despatch I now welcome Issue No 2. It is with the enthusiasm of our editor Terry Dean that it has come to fruition and the submissions of you the members.

In this the 90th Anniversary of the ending of the war to end all wars the publication of our Branch's magazine contributes to ensure that even after all this time our "remembrance" is still as strong now as then.

I hope you enjoy the Issue 2 and continue to contribute any articles however small. Terry is eager for input.

Editor's Musing

My gathering of material for this Issue of Despatch was clouded by anticipation of the Armistice Prize outcome (see Branch Affairs). However St Cecilia's, Longridge have shown what schools can do in producing an excellent poem to help mark the Armistice Anniversary. I'm pleased we can also mark the Anniversary with a larger Despatch helped by my subscriptions to the Institution of Civil Engineers over more years than I care to recall (!) and, more importantly, to all contributors.

In reading this second Issue please consider how Despatch can be improved in 2009 so we can have a healthy discussion at our Christmas Social on 3rd December.

"BATTLING" PYE'S LAST FIGHT: Mike Sherrington (+P)

Pte Alfred Pye [2577] was a Preston flyweight whose skill and courage in the ring earned him the nickname "Battling" Pye. A cotton spinner by trade, he lived with his parents first in Cambridge Street and later Cromwell St, Deepdale and learned his boxing at the nearby Adelphi hall in Springfield Street. Well known in northern boxing circles, he was widely regarded as a promising fighter who had quickly established himself as a firm favourite with the fans. His first fight took place in January 1913 and by the outbreak of war he had chalked up a record of 15 victories and 2 draws with only 5 defeats.

Involvement in boxing broadened the horizons of both Alf and his brother George, who accompanied him to contests outside Preston, by giving them their first experience of staying in hotels. As working class lads, completely unused to this kind of thing, they were both very taken with the idea of leaving their boots outside the room and finding they were returned cleaned and polished the following morning. As his stock rose, Alf had a publicity photograph taken showing him resplendent in boxing kit, set off with a white sash, but unfortunately it has proved impossible to locate a copy. The war however, was to mark the end of "Battling" Pye's blossoming career in the ring.

He joined the Territorials in November 1914 and as a member of the 1st/4th Loyal North Lancashire Regiment was

billeted in Sevenoaks, Kent. Following spells in Oxted and Bedford, where they joined the 51st Highland Division, the battalion left Southampton for France aboard the SS "Onward" on May 2nd 1915. They had their first taste of front line duty at Rue d'Ouvert near Festubert on May 25th and suffered their first casualties the following day. The trenches they occupied were only two feet deep and the area was littered with equipment and bodies from earlier fighting.

On 8th June Alf Pye wrote home that he was in the pink in spite of 7 days in the trenches under very heavy shellfire. His letter concluded "Very sorry to hear that there is not much boxing going on in Preston, I wish I was back at my old game, for it seems such a long time since I had my boxing gloves on."

Just over a week later his battalion saw its first major action: An attack was planned on enemy trenches in front of the hamlet of Rue d'Ouvert and although no orders had been issued, according to Capt. Lindsay's diary the men sensed they would soon go over the top. A day long bombardment intensified around 5.30 p.m. and the assault on the German positions was launched at 6 p.m. The first line was quickly taken with the occupants of the dugouts bombed out. Pushing on to the main enemy trench line proved more difficult with uncut wire, rifle and shellfire and enfilading machine guns to contend with from a house and south of a ditch shielded by a row of trees. The third line was reached and held for some time; an eye-witness claimed 20 men got there without officers or NCOs before running out of bombs and being cleared out. As a result an order was given to dig in and hold onto the ditch shielded by trees. The enemy counter-attacked at midnight, but were

held up while a successful withdrawal was achieved under the cover of darkness and early morning mist.

Although the action turned out to be a costly failure, great praise was due for the courage displayed during the advance. Sgt Major Lindsay, from Preston was quoted in the immediate aftermath in the "Lancashire Daily Post":

"We have been through hell and back. It was terrible. We have 400 men not yet accounted for. Nearly everyone seems a bit 'potty' at present, though I expect they will shake it off as they get more rest. There will be some aching hearts in Preston over this."

It eventually emerged that 431 casualties had been taken:

- 4 officers & 19 other ranks killed or died of wounds
- 6 officers & 255 other ranks wounded
- 2 officers & 145 other ranks missing.

Pte Alfred Pye died on June 17th 1915 from bayonet wounds received during this failed attack. Treated at Lillers hospital, he is buried in the communal cemetery there [II. C. 40] and is also commemorated on the Harris Library memorial in Preston. Thus ended "Battling" Pye's last fight; he was only 20 years old. Like so many other boxers, who knows what he might have achieved, but for the war? His parents therefore must have viewed with mixed feelings the appearance in the local newspaper of a large recruiting advertisement for the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, making capital of the recent action, just a week after his death.



Above is a photo of "Battling" Pye's grave taken late last month. The note on poppy refers to this article.

QUEEN ELIZABETH GRAMMAR SCHOOL, ROLL OF HONOUR: c/o Oliver Wilkinson (+S)

Oliver Wilkinson's tribute to the fallen of Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School will provide a serious contribution to Despatch over the next nine issues. A former pupil of the school himself, Oliver completed the research in May 2008 as part of his MA in Historical Research, the individual accounts being designed to contribute to Queen Elizabeth School's rich heritage as well as providing current students with a more personal insight into the war. Individually the accounts demonstrate the grim outcomes and fortunes of the Western Front. Collectively they illustrate the multifaceted nature of the war.

Thomas Arthur Airey, Private, 8109, 14th (County of London) Battalion (1st London Scottish)

It is a poignant testimony to the sacrifice made by the old pupils of Queen Elizabeth Grammar School during the First World War that the very first name listed on the memorial is associated in one of the most infamous battles of the conflict: The Somme. Thomas Arthur Airey, a hard-working QES scholar, who had won a place at Christ Collage, Cambridge, found himself embroiled in action at Gommecourt on the 1st July 1916.

The attack here was to be a diversion, aimed to draw fire from the main Somme battlefield. At 'Zero Hour', 7:30 A.M., Airey advanced across no-mans land with the 14th (County of London) Battalion (1st London Scottish), which was part of the 56th London Division, and despite the developing disaster occurring across the rest of the front, his Battalion made it to their objectives of the German Front line trenches. In fact what the London Division achieved within the first hour is regarded as one of the successes of the Somme. The Division was regarded as the best Territorial formation in France at the time, and the soldiers that formed it were well-educated, intelligent men, who were earmarked to become officers in other divisions. This was certainly true of Airey. His QES education had stood him in good stead, and he was about to take his Theological Tripos at Cambridge when the war had erupted. Moreover, when he had joined up in January 1916, it was with the Artists' Rifles Officer Training Corps. He was clearly officer material, and it was only his eagerness to serve in the front line that had compelled him to volunteer for Foreign Service in France, and then transfer to the 1st London Scottish in June without a commission. It was thus as a Private soldier that Airey found himself in the German front line trenches.

Here the London Division held position, attempting to clear the trenches, and waiting for the 46th North Midland Division to join up with them. The link up never occurred, and it was during the fighting in these trenches that Airey lost his life. A letter from his platoon sergeant to Airey's mother described what happened to him:

"Dear Madam,

I am very, very sorry to tell you that your son was killed in action on July 1st.

He was last seen in the German line laying by the side of Corporal Briggs, my best pal.

You will be pleased to know that he died fighting against tremendous odds, being killed by a German bomb whilst proceeding along the enemy front line trench.

As platoon sergeant and a friend of your son I should like to offer you my deepest sympathy.

I am, yours sincerely, Harry Bell"

The London Division held on throughout the day, but was gradually forced back and eventually retired. The men had done what had been asked of them. The diversion had been successful, the German frontline trenches secured, and an attempted link up made with the other division. The cost, however, was great, and Airey's battalion had suffered immensely. Out of a force of 971 men, 616 were casualties, Airey amongst them. The London Scottish Medal Roll Sheet seems painfully telling with its stark dates relating to Airey. Served 05/03/1916 - 01/07/1916. He lasted just 4 months.

However, Airey had in fact been involved in the First World War prior to his military service. In spring 1915 he had volunteered to work in France with

the Young Men's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A.), providing welfare services to the men. Entertainment, recreation and leisure amenities offered by the group helped to sustain military morale, which was undoubtedly of great value. A chance encounter in July 1915 certainly lifted the spirits of one soldier:

"We are very busy. I have been on from 6:00 am to 8:30 without a break for meals for 3 days. We have now got patients in and operations are an every day occurrence. Everything is kept in the cleanest condition. I had the greatest surprise last night. I went down to the Y.M.C.A. and who should be the first person I ran into but A. Airey. He has come on the staff of the Y.M.C.A. here. He was surprised. He has been here a week now...He looks a perfect brick. I shall be able to enjoy myself now with some Barbon here"(Private A. Robinson, Royal Army Medical Corps (R.A.M.C.))

Robinson was in fact a fellow QES old boy, and he too appears on the war memorial. Unlike Airey, however, Robinson was to survive the war. Patriotic fervour proved too great a pull for Airey who wrote in his diary, "I cannot continue with the Y.M.C.A. if I can get into the trenches. It was this impulse that led him to enlist, and before Gommecourt in July 1916 he made the ultimate sacrifice. Airey's body was never recovered, and he is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial.



THE WORK OF THE ROYAL ENGINEERS IN THE GREAT WAR:

Maj-Gen. Sir Gerard Moore Heath

This article has been reproduced from the Minutes and Proceedings for the 9th March 1920 with the permission of the Institution of Civil Engineers. (www.iceknowledge.com)

The work of the Royal Engineers in the late War fully exemplified the motto of the Corps:

“Quo fas et gloria ducunt”

Not only did they carry out all the work which normally falls to the duty of the Engineers, but also a considerable portion of other duties, which, though having little connection with the engineer science, they have always been proud to father and call their own.

The following is a summary:-

Defences of all sorts, including mining and counter-mining (now know colloquially as tunnelling), consolidation of ground won in attack, camouflage, searchlights, obstacles. E.g. inundations, demolitions, anti-gas measures.

Attack, including mine attack, and gas attack.

Communications, incl. railways, canals, and their operation, roads, bridge-building.

Signals, inc. telegraph, telephone, visual, wireless, pigeons, messenger dogs, and messenger rockets.

Water-supply, inc. water purification.

Hutting (inc. hospitals and depots of all kinds), electric power and lighting, engineer workshops, forestry, docks and their maintenance, geology, meteorology, post office, and supply and distribution of plant and materials in furtherance of the above multifarious demands, and in

many cases their manufacture; and by no means least:-

Fighting, when fighting came their way.

It will be realised that a vast organisation to deal with the work thrown on the Royal Engineers in the course of the war, was not produced cut and dried: indeed, it may be said with truth that our pre-war military advisers as a whole had little conception of the scale on which modern engineering methods would be employed in a great European war: of the large number of engineers necessary; or of the enormous amount of engineering material required, not only for the strategic and tactical operations involved, but also for the maintenance of that standard of comfort for the troops which meant moral and physical efficiency. The criticisms of the various semi-official visitors to the theatres of war as to the greed of the Engineers of all branches in the matter of engineer requirements were based on similar imperfect knowledge. Still, when all is said and done, we may console ourselves with the fact that the enemy was no better off, and that the national capacity for playing up together and muddling through - another name for improvisation - brought the Engineers through with considerable credit to all ranks.

We began as all the world knows, with an Expeditionary Force of six Divisions. The total Engineer force sent across with the Expeditionary Force was:-

Divisional Headquarters	6 units
Signal Units	35 „
Field Companies	12 „
Field squadrons & troops	2 „
Fortress and works Coys	3 „
Railway Coys	2 „
Total	60 „

Total strength:-

Officers	205
Other Ranks	6348

Our need soon became apparent. The companies were increased to three per division, and other units were added until by the time the Armistice was signed, 11th November 1918, the strength of the Royal Engineers was, including transportation:-

Field etc	686 units
Signals	664 „
Railways and roads	283 „
Inland waterways & docks	204 „
Total	1837

Total strength (inc. transportation):-

Officers	17741
Other Ranks	322739

Our territorial units were the saving of us in the early phases of the war. Their N.C.Os, and men were recruited from the best artisan classes, and were full of keenness for work. We were, it is true, somewhat deficient in Engineer Officers who had specialized in the various branches of civil engineering; but thanks to The Institution of Civil Engineers, on the initiative, I believe, of Major-General Ruck, this deficiency was largely made good and there was no lack of volunteers. Men from all parts of the world proffered their services; many threw up thriving and lucrative businesses, and crossed to the old country determined to serve, if not as officers, then in the lowest ranks.

The retreat from Mons and the subsequent advance to the Aisne, and thence to Ypres and its trenches, offered little scope for engineers, except notably the destruction and subsequent

reconstruction of certain bridges. Our force was a comparatively small one, and the railways and roads were almost entirely run by the French.

Before the end of 1914 we had settled down to trench warfare, and muddy and uncomfortable trench warfare too.

In those days engineer stores were sadly lacking, but luckily the towns and villages of France could meet most of the more urgent demands. Luckily, also we had officers who were not afraid of financial responsibility, whose first thought was for the comfort of the troops, who saw things in a large way, and were determined not to be trammelled by the somewhat narrow limits of peace time finance. Waste there was, but waste is inseparable from war.

1915 saw an era of trench warfare, of mining and counter-mining, the blowing up of Hill 60 and endless other smaller mines, the battles of Neuve Chapelle and Loos.

The troops in the front line had had to endure much hardship in the winter of 1914-15, chiefly from water-logged trenches, want of cover from enemy fire and from the weather. Cases of trench-feet were very numerous, but in this year serious attempts were made to lower the water-level in the trench area, and thus obtain more comfort and cover for the troops. To this end a commission was sent out by The Institution of Civil Engineers headed by Sir Maurice Fitzmaurice, with whom was associated Captain H. Riall Sankey. As a result of their recommendation several large pumping-stations were established, their function being to dispose of the water brought down from the neighbourhood of the trenches by a system of carefully graded drains. Most of these drains were existing ones, and in peace time have by

law to be kept in order by the farmers, but neglect due to the war had reduced their efficiency to almost nil.

In 1915 two Land Drainage Companies were formed, consisting of fen-men from the eastern counties and mechanics. This combination of skilled men was a happy one, and very good results ensued, especially due to the skilful grading of drains after careful survey. Noteworthy among the pumps were two pumps fitted on barges which had been brought out from England in the early days of the war, with a view to pumping sea-water into inundations near the coast, thus protecting our flank there. These pumps were used to lower the level of the La Basse Canal and thus give the necessary head to the drainage scheme.

It may be noted here that by a happy idea the greater part of the Land Drainage Companies resolved itself, during the summer, into a Water Supply Company doing very good work.

1916 and 1917 were characterized by the big offensives of the Somme, Arras, Vimy, Messines, and Passchendaele, for all of which a vast amount of preparatory engineer work was necessary.

The spring of 1918 witnessed our retreat, and hasty demolition of bridges is the face of the enemy, and many heroic deeds in this connection. In those days 5000 miles of trenches were dug under engineer supervision, while many miles of new road and railway, with necessary bridges, were constructed to link up our defensive positions with back areas. The 8th of August marked the first day of the victory advance, which for the Engineers meant the rapid construction of communications of all sorts, of many bridges, the organization of water-supply, and the removal of enemy traps and mines.

Defences and Preparations for Attack
..... *to be continued in May '09*

MUSEUM REPORTS

The King's Own Royal Regiment Museum, Lancaster: Peter Donnelly

90th Anniversary of the Armistice

To mark the 90th Anniversary of the ending of the First World War the museum is pleased to welcome Dr. Jean Moorcroft-Wilson to talk on the life of poet, painter and soldier, Isaac Rosenberg. Wilson's biography of Rosenberg was published in April and is due to be published in paperback in 2009. The talk will take place on Friday 7th November 2008 at 7.30pm, in the fine setting of the King's Own Regimental Chapel at Lancaster Priory. Tickets cost only £4. Jean has already spoken on Rosenberg and other First World War subjects at the National Army Museum, Imperial War Museum and on Radio 4 so it is fantastic that she is supporting our commemoration of the Armistice.

Tickets from The City Museum, Lancaster or by phone 01524 555619

New Exhibition

A small exhibition has opened in the King's Own gallery with a number of photographic portraits of WW1 soldiers of the regiment along with some moving objects and archives. The exhibition is open now until spring 2009.

Expensive Postcard Missed but Image Acquired!

The King's Own Museum has to be careful when acquiring items that it does not overspend! Every penny spent has to be raised by the museum which is a registered charity. An interesting postcard appeared recently on the

internet auction website 'Ebay'. Sadly the museum was outbid, but was very fortunate in that the seller of the postcard kindly sent the museum a high quality digital copy of the image.

The postcard shows senior non-commissioned officers of the 1st/4th (Territorial) Battalion of the King's Own in France or Flanders in May 1918. It is believed all those featured have been matched with museum records, and include: Sergeant Frank Dawson, MM, from Stockport; Sergeant George Johnson DCM and Bar; QMS Fred Stanley Yates DCM; Sergeant H Dickinson, DCM and MM; Sergeant Thomas Robinson, MM, from Coniston; Sergeant Albert Ernest Miles, MM, from Liverpool; Sergeant Richard Cross; and Sergeant Arthur Bolton Birkett, MM, from York.

The image has been added to the 4th Battalion photo gallery section of the museum's website:
www.kingsownmuseum.plus.com

Fusilier Museum - A New Beginning: Mike Glover (Curator)

Sunday 26th April 2009 in Bury will not only witness the annual Gallipoli Parade to commemorate Lancashire Landing, 25th April 1915, it will also see the opening of the new £4million Fusilier Museum. This new museum will tell the story of not only the Lancashire Fusiliers (LF) but also the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers (RRF). It is worth noting that although the "LFs" left the "order of battle" some 40 years ago their traditions and spirit today thrive in the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers who remain, Lancashire's Fusiliers.

Currently located at what remains of the old Depot at Wellington Barracks on

the outskirts of Bury, the County Headquarters, the Recruiting Team, the Regimental Memorial as well as the Museum, Archive and Library are all included in the move. The "battle procedure" has begun and the Museum at Wellington Barracks is now closed to the public.

For all those involved in the project it has been difficult to come to terms with the prospect of a final move out of Wellington Barracks, after all the Regiment has been associated with the site since 1873. However the site is no longer fit for purpose and the future of the Regiment and the Collection depends on this move. The original plan to move from Wellington Barracks into Bury was abandoned in 1958 due to lack of funding. In 1958 it would have cost £30,000 in 2008 £4million!

The Museum will relocate to a refurbished building in the centre of Bury's developing Cultural Quarter where it will be integrated into the public transport network and closely linked with Bury's other heritage sites and museums. The Grade 2 Listed Building was built in 1894 as the Technical School, later became the Arts & Crafts centre and the focus for Adult Education. Building work will be completed early in the New Year and as soon as the builders are out the museum fit out team will move in.

The new museum will house three galleries, an archive and library, an education room with seating for 150, a shop and a café/bar. The Regimental Council Chamber in the County Headquarters will be available for hire and will be a fine location for a dinner night.

Once the museum opens in April 2009 it is not the end of the process but the beginning. In particular the Trustees are keen to make best use of the facilities at the museum and want to develop intellectual and social links with other heritage groups such as the Western Front Association.

King's Regiment

The Museum of Liverpool Life, which housed the Kings Regiment museum closed in June 2006 and since then only limited information (Regimental History and War Diaries) has been available in the Maritime Museum. Work on the new Museum is now well advanced and it is due to open in 2010. It will be located in a new landmark building on the Mann Island site at the Pier Head.

It is currently planned that material from the Kings Regiment Collection will be displayed in 2011 as part of the second phase of the project with a gallery being devoted to WW1. When the museum is fully operational it is envisaged that archive material relating to the Kings Regiment will be co-located with the curator and appointments will be necessary to view items.



The New Museum of Liverpool

Liverpool Scottish: Ian Riley (Curator)

On 30th September, as a result of a rent review, the Liverpool Scottish

Museum had to vacate their premises at Botanic Road, Liverpool. Following notification of this possibility in March the Trustees of the Museum had to consider all options for the future, establish the most desirable immediate arrangements and undertake the packing of all items in their possession.

The Trustees have acquired, for the medium term, the use of an office at New Zealand House in Liverpool's Water Street, courtesy of the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, to hold the archive material (documents, photos, letters, library) and from which to deal with enquiries and visitors. Displays have been dismantled and all artefacts have been boxed and placed in secure storage. It is felt that it may not be possible to re-establish a museum due to potential problems with future maintenance therefore consideration is currently being given to the optimum arrangements for holding and displaying the collection of artefacts. Possibilities include the King's Regiment Galleries at the new Museum of Liverpool (currently being built) for National Museums Liverpool, other institutions, or for the Trustees to continue to hold artefacts in whole or part as a reserve collection.

Manchester Regiment Archive features in an exhibition at the Imperial War Museum: Larysa Bolton - Archivist, Tameside



Charles May was born in New Zealand, the son of a British Officer. He

came to Britain as a child and was engaged in the family business. Some time before the First World War he joined the territorials in the King Edward's Horse, a mounted battalion of the Manchester Regiment. He married Bessie Maude Holl in 1912 and they had a daughter, Pauline, who was born on 20 July 1914. Captain May saw active service in France with B Company of the 22nd Battalion and was killed at the age of 27 on the first day of the Battle of the Somme.

The Captain Charles May archive forms part of the Manchester Regiment Archive and was kindly deposited by Captain May's family. It comprises the diaries of Captain May dating from November 1915-July 1916, along with his writings and literary works. There are also a number of personal items including letters, photographs and ephemera. The letters and diaries are extremely moving and provide a personal insight into life on the front. A number of items from the collection are currently on display at the Imperial War Museum as part of their In Memoriam exhibition. Included amongst these items is a letter from Bessie, written on 30 June 1916, the day before he died. An excerpt from the letter reads "I am trusting in God and praying - Baby with me - that you will be spared to come through these terrible days of fighting safe and well and return to us my darling man." The Captain May archive (archives reference MR4/17/295) is available for consultation at Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre, Central Library, Ashton-under-Lyne, OL6 7SG, telephone 0161 342 4242.

More information about the In Memoriam exhibition can be obtained via

<http://www.iwm.org.uk/upload/package/95/exhibitions/in-memoriam.html>

Private William Ratcliffe VC Captured German Machine Gun: Jane Davies (Curator, QLR Museum) (+P)

On 14th June 1917 the 2nd Battalion South Lancashire Regiment entered the Battle of Messines Ridge which had been raging for seven days. Orders had been received for them to advance to a new line between 'inclusive the Ferme de la Croix to exclusive Steignast Farm, the special task of the Battalion being to capture the former, and clear the left bank of the River Douve'.

At 7.30pm the attack commenced. The swiftness of the attack caught the Germans napping. Many of them were killed in their shell holes; in some cases they were not even wearing their equipment. Others were killed as they tried to retire. The only stumbling block to the British advance were the German machine guns who resisted the attack stoutly, from their position in the ruins of the nearby Farm. D Company were allotted the task of driving out the defenders. It was during this phase of the battle that Private William Ratcliffe won the Victoria Cross.

William Ratcliffe was born in West Derby, Lancashire in 1882. He joined the army aged 17 and served in South Africa during the Second Boer War. After serving 12 years he left the army and worked on the docks in Liverpool. When World War One erupted in August 1914 he re-joined his old Regiment in the same month.

His first decoration, the Military Medal, came his way in June 1917. He earned it by counter sniping and killing seven enemy snipers who had been taking a

heavy toll on his friends. The General who awarded Ratcliffe his medal, somewhat prophetically said 'We shall have you getting the other one next!' Two months later those words came true.

The gallant deed that earned Ratcliffe the Victoria Cross can best be described in the words of Major General Sir Douglas Baird, Commander of the 75th Infantry Brigade:

'Private Ratcliffe was an old soldier with the South African Medal. He was a stretcher-bearer and had done distinguished service on the Somme. In this attack he was following his platoon and, on reaching the first objective, saw a Boche machine gun in action that had not been 'mopped up' and was firing into the flank and rear of his advancing comrades. He at once dropped his stretcher and seizing a dead man's rifle went straight for the machine gun and bayoneted the German officer and five of the crew. He then picked up the machine gun and some ammunition and ran after his company, and when they had got the final objective he brought the gun into action against the enemy. He then went back and got his stretcher and spent the rest of the night bringing in the wounded through a heavy barrage.'

Ratcliffe certainly played his part in allowing the Battalion to establish a new line and complete their objectives.

What inspires a man to act with such courage? We shall never know for certain. William Ratcliffe's brother, Peter was on board the Passenger Ship the Lusitania working as a Fireman, when it was sunk by a German U-Boat in May 1915. 1,198 of the 1,959 civilian passengers and crew on board were killed in an incident that shocked the world. Maybe Ratcliffe's bravery was partly an act of vengeance or was it an amazing act of selflessness?

At the end of the war Ratcliffe returned home to a heroes welcome and became known as 'The Dockers' VC. He died in 1963 and is buried in Allerton Cemetery, Liverpool. The machine gun that Ratcliffe captured in 1917 is currently on display in the Museum of the Queen's Lancashire Regiment. His medals are on loan to the Imperial War Museum in London. Peter Ratcliffe is commemorated on the Tower Hill Memorial, London, which remembers the men and women of the Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleets who died in both world wars and have no known grave.

CWGC HEADSTONE MYSTERY: Terry Dean (+P)

Last May Emmie and I returned home from our stay in the Dordogne by driving a route to the East of Paris. Whilst away I had spent some time reading up on the Marne/Aisne in September 1914 so that our return journey could retrace some of the steps taken by the Lancashire Contemptibles.

Our mission started at Bernay-en Brie where the 1st Loyal North Lincs ended their retreat from Mons. We followed their route as they advanced north-eastwards towards the Marne then diverted to say hello to Lieutenants Chittenden and Smith of the 2nd Manchesters who are buried at Montreuil aux Lions cemetery.

They "lie" on the left as the cemetery is entered but my attention to them was immediately diverted to a few graves beyond the Cross of Sacrifice. Two red Corsehill gravestones stood prominent amongst the remainder in Portland stone. Why were the gravestones of Rifleman Jarvis and Private Bryant, killed on 11th and 19th September 1914 respectively Corsehill? When I completed the visitor

book it seemed the answer could be provided by the visitor before me on that day. He was John Moody from the CWGC office at Beaurains who was apparently on an inspection tour since we followed his signature at other cemeteries that afternoon and the next day.



On return home my first email to Mr Moody produced a prompt response from his colleague, Roger Bird that the two Corsehill sandstone headstones were concentrated from other burial sites in the area and would be replaced in Portland when the need arises. This left me wondering whether concentration of graves was still taking place.

Advising Roger that the concentration of graves could be an interesting article for our next Despatch I asked him for more information, for example:

- Original location of graves
- Reason(s) for movement
- Date(s) of movement,
- and any other information he thought may be of interest

After consulting with his Head Office in Maidenhead Roger's next email included their response:

"Rifleman JARVIS was originally buried in Latilly Communal Cemetery on his own and was exhumed and moved, together with the headstone sometime after 25 July 1934, the date

when authority to exhume (WGR1) was given "to ensure proper maintenance and non disturbance". The concentration of Graves Report for this site mentions 'Headstones erected' at this time

Private BRYANT was originally buried with one other casualty (Rifleman Meyrs) in Chateau Thierry Communal Cemetery. Both were exhumed and moved, together with the headstones sometime after 17 July 1934 again when authority to exhume was given. The concentration of Graves Report for this site mentions 'Headstones erected' at this time.

Finally, a comprehensive Graves Registration Report of Montreuil-aux-Lions British Cemetery dated 17 June 1935 i.e. after all the concentrations had taken place, confirms the Plot, Row and Grave number of each casualty with all the graves marked.

The Headstone Schedules for all three casualties are the originals which means that none of them have been replaced since they were first erected (For consistency I would have expected Meyrs H/S to have been Corsehill as well but obviously not !!)

This answers some of Mr Dean's questions but not the crucial one - why Corsehill."

In thanking Roger for pursuing my original query which is unanswered, and has elicited a similar query as to why Rifleman Meyrs has a Portland Headstone, I asked Roger whether he was aware of other situations where Portland and Corsehill headstones are mixed in the same cemetery.

His response was that he was not aware of any others in France but was sure that the ones we had found when visiting Lieuts Chittenden and Smith were

not the only ones. In the emails I exchanged with Roger he states that the Commission are very proud of their founding principles that all casualties are treated equally regardless of rank, race or religion. Each has a standard pattern headstone and the material from which it is produced is irrelevant.

My concluding comment to Roger was to suggest that the historical information on the cemetery on the CWGC website and in the Cemetery Book could usefully mention the concentration of graves in the 1930's. This could be accompanied with a reference to the different headstones in the cemetery and that they would be replaced in Portland stone when the need arises. This would give the opportunity for the CWGC to reinforce its policy on equal treatment for all and hopefully avoid others puzzling like myself.

I await any comments or similar sightings from readers of Despatch which I can pass on to Roger.

LANCASHIRE'S BEST KEPT WAR MEMORIAL - 2008: Jeanette Lowe (+P)

29 villages entered their War Memorials (WMs) in the competition this year. A total of 98 villages & hamlets entered the "Best Kept Village" (BKV) competition but a lot of the smaller ones don't have their own WMs. Also quite a lot of villages that do have WMs haven't entered them which usually means that they are not well cared for, which is sad.

The WMs are judged on the following criteria:

- 1) Condition of memorial
- 2) Condition of the surrounds, i.e. grass, flower beds & railings
- 3) Absence of litter & graffiti

4) Degree of maintenance required (this means that a WM which is difficult to maintain is given a high mark & one that is fairly easy to maintain is given a lower mark to be fair to everyone).

Up to five marks can be awarded against each criterion (therefore the maximum mark for each WM is 20) and two sets of judges mark each WM to obtain a fair mark.

The winner was Chipping War Memorial (see back page photo) which was immaculate & a credit to the people who maintain it - not a single weed amongst the flower beds, very tidy & no litter. The following five WMs were awarded highly commended certificates:

Blacko
Heapey
Preesall & Knott End
Barton, Bilsborrow & Myerscough
Sabden

Whilst not in North Lancashire your readers may be interested in what we have done for our local Adlington, Anderton, Heath Charnock & Rivington War Memorial (situated in Adlington).

Adlington & District in Bloom Action Group, is a small group of volunteers who banded together to enter the North West in Bloom competition. Our main project this year was to spruce up the War Memorial & surrounds. The stone of the WM has been cleaned, but has not come up as well as hoped, however, it is much better than it was. The bronze plaques commemorating those who died have been cleaned and look really good.

Chorley Council, whose responsibility it is to maintain the WM, replanted the flower beds & pruned the shrubbery (not as much as we would have liked but an improvement). The group received two grants - one from Awards for All & one

from O2, totaling over £5000. These funds have been used to pay for the creation of two addenda panels for the WM, commemorating those who died in, or as a result of war, but whose names have not been recorded on the WM - 25 in number. The panels will be positioned before Remembrance Day so that they can be dedicated at the Remembrance Day Service on 9 November.

The group also intends to produce a leaflet giving the history of the WM & the names of all who died. This will be distributed to every household in the four parishes & also to local schools as an educational tool.

(Jeanette Lowe is the Chair of the Adlington & District in Bloom Group, Secretary/Organiser of the Lancashire Best Kept Village Competition & Town Mayor of Adlington 2008-9)

Finding Sandy's Men: Terry Dean (+P)

At the end of September we enjoyed an overnight stay with Derek and Rosie Bird (Derek is Chairman of the North Scotland Branch) prior to presenting my talk "A Highland Officer's War". There was a good turn out at Elgin with also a member of the Sandilands family, who lives near Wick, and the convenor of the Cameron Highlander's Association attending. The next day we cycled the Black Isle returning via the Cromarty-Nigg ferry and Invergordon from where Sandy left for France in November 1914 together with replacements for the much depleted 1st Battalion Cameron Highlanders after first Ypres.

The following day we explored by car the Isle of Skye with no thoughts of WW1. Late afternoon we were near the Isle's northernmost tip and decided some

exercise was necessary. Our OS map suggested a walk by the sea via the remains of an old church. After directions from a local to avoid the bog and find the unmarked bridge across the stream we entered the church graveyard.

All that remained of the church was a battered gable-end. To my astonishment it carried a memorial to 12 locals who lost their lives in the Great War including 5 Cameron Highlanders. The (Kilmaluag) graveyard also contained the graves of one of the Camerons and two seamen. Returning to our car I was given directions to see the son of an elderly lady who is the local sage. I explained my interest in determining which of the Camerons would be known to Sandy and immediately was given a commitment to help.

On returning home the email link from Barton to Kilmaluag sent northwards a list of possible names from the CWGC records and the investigation is ongoing. However my limited analysis of the CWGC list and Medal Index Cards already confirms two of the Camerons to be known to Sandy with Private Alick MacKenzie accompanying him across the Channel aboard HMS Arundel in July 1915 to fall on the first day at Loos. A fuller report in Despatch could follow.

The first name on the memorial was coincidentally a Seaforth Highlander. This brings me back to the reason we were in Scotland in the first place. Derek Bird showed me the final proof copy of his book "*The Spirit of the Troops is Excellent*" on the 6th battalion Seaforth Highlanders which is now published. I have sought Derek's help with 2nd Lt. D. Mackay since the CWGC records do not immediately suggest a match with Skye. A further site visit may well be necessary!

DEAR EDITOR,

Finding Sergeant Nevin

Reading about this in the May "Despatch" brought back memories of the 2004 "Old Contemptibles Tour" with the Friends of the Queens Lancashire Regiment Museum. The Editor's bicycle ride in the wind & the rain was prompted by a book written by Captain Hopkinson. We were told about his gallantry while he was a Lieutenant while we were standing in a field at Fontaine au Pire where the 1st East Lancs were holding Quarry Ridge near Le Cateau .

The men were spread across the field, presumably in the prone position, to delay the Germans for a while, Lieutenant Hopkinson's platoon was to the left of the track. They were the rearguard. When the position, became untenable the Line gradually melted away as the men filed back to Ligny. Lieutenant Hopkinson's platoon kept firing until all their ammunition was gone and then ran helter skelter down the track, over the railway bridge and into Ligny (en Cambrensis). We followed down the same track and over the railway bridge and so into Ligny. On we went by coach to Compiegne (Famous for signing the Armistice). The railway carriage has gone but the train lines are still there. Next Day we drove much further south to St Sauveur where we looked at the wood the German cavalry came out of and hearing how 11 Brigade (including 1/East Lancs) were unable to halt a whole German Corps so had to retreat, three companies of 1/East Lancs marching through the village of St. Sauveur while it was being shelled. We had a chance to look round the village and wondered at the many pock- marks in the church walls caused by shell

splinters. I found the War Memorial "La commune de St Sauveur a ses enfants mort pour La France". The Battalion marched south to Nery. We followed in our coach. At Nery we looked at the cabbage field where "L" Battery RHA with guns hooked up ready to leave had shells landing amongst them. They were able to un-hook and turn round three of the guns and fire back with a dwindling number of men who continued to fire the one undamaged gun until all the ammunition was gone.(No wonder the Battery earned three VCs)

We came home two days later. We had learned a lot and reflected on our comfortable ride along the route of the Retreat which the Poor Bloody Infantry had to march, often in hot sunshine.

Joe Hodgson

By the time this issue has reached the members we should have visited Colsterdale on an impromptu branch (and friends) trip. If anybody can think of any other suitable place(s) to visit in the near future, perhaps they could give details at a future meeting. **Andrew Brooks**

BOB'S CORNER: Bob Matthews - Chairman, Cumbria Branch WFA

At its August meeting Cumbria Branch was given an interesting new talk by Niall Cherry - "Advance to Victory 1918." Supplementing the talk were maps given to the audience, on which they could follow the actions in the Somme Valley and the allies progress towards the Hindenburg Line. John Chester, the WFA's Branch Co-ordinator, makes a return visit to Cumbria in October: his talk featuring the exciting naval battles off Coronel and the Falklands, where both sides had mixed fortunes.

Arrangements are in hand for a repeat of last year's successful Branch Christmas Lunch, AGM and talks at the King's Head, Ravenstonedale. This year's event will be held on Sunday, 14 December (cost- £16), when the speakers will be Graham Kemp, whose talk will be on "Submarines of WWI," and Branch Secretary, Martin Simpson, who will talk about his many trips to the battlefields, provide anecdotes and stories about discoveries he has made, and outline proposals for a 2009 Branch Tour to lesser known sites. Anyone wishing to attend on 14 December please telephone me on 01524-761492.

The Branch's Hon President (The Rt.Hon John Hutton MP - Secretary of State for Business & Enterprise) has kindly donated a signed copy of his recently published book "Kitchener's Men." This will be raffled at the Christmas Lunch, with the proceeds split between the Royal British Legion and the Branch.

I would also like to mention a very successful "Branch Chairmen's Conference, at the Bentley Hotel, Lincoln, on 13 September, when I represented Cumbria Branch, and Nigel Hunt who, like me, is also a member of both Cumbria, and N. Lancs' Branches, and stood in at short notice for Chairman Stan. Education was again a major feature of the Conference, and opportunity was taken to report on the N. Lancs' Branch initiative the "Armistice Prize." Interest too was shown in the "Despatch," with one delegate borrowing a copy during the Conference and having it photocopied at the hotel for use as a model publication. A written report on the Conference has been produced and copies have been given to both Branch

Secretaries. As well as providing Branch Chairmen (and hence Branches) with an opportunity to see what the WFA is doing nationally, the Conference also gives scope for "networking," as highlighted by an approach by the Chairman of N. Northumberland Branch for a joint activity in Cumbria with the Cumbria Branch.

Following my attendance last year at a reception and exhibition in London, hosted by the Belgian Ambassador, aimed at promoting a better understanding of Belgium's past, and reminding us of the strong ties between Belgium and the U.K., I am now receiving regular invites to attend a series of lectures in London. Unfortunately it has not been possible for me to attend the one on 1 October on "King Albert I," and a prior commitment prevents me from attending in December, when the topic will be "Belgium in World War I:" however, a lecture scheduled for Spring 2009 is one that fascinates me and is one which I hope to attend i.e. "Beneath Flanders Fields 1915-18 (British Underground Warfare in Flanders and Recent Excavations)," and featuring Mr Franky Bostyn, Curator of the Memorial Museum, Passchendaele.

BRANCH AFFAIRS



Armistice Prize (+S)

On 1st October the closing date for submissions of a newspaper article from pupils of High Schools in Lancashire on the subject "The Major Events of 1918" passed with no entries having been received. From limited feedback from

schools the main reason seems to have been the problem of fitting an extra specific project into an already pressurised curriculum.

Some schools are doing good work on WW1 and, in response to notification about the prize; St Cecilia's Roman Catholic Technology College at Longridge asked in June whether their work on war poetry could be considered. At the time this was declined since it did not fit with the brief set for the competition. However following the nil response contact was made with St Cecilia's to see their work on war poems.

The pupils at the College have produced some wonderful poems of their own after learning about life in the trenches and having studied the poetry of Owen, McCrae and Sassoon. All the

poems were produced by pupils aged between 13 and 14. All of the pupils in the year voted for the best poem and the winner by some distance was Lindsay Donickey.

It was felt that work on the poems deserved recognition and Lindsay Donickey, the author of the winning poem at the school, has been awarded a book (H P Willmott's "WORLD WAR 1") and £25. Also the school will be the first holders of the Armistice Prize trophy which is a miniature Cenotaph similar to Edwin Lutyens' Cenotaph in Whitehall, London. This has been specially made and donated by Stone Essentials of Rossendale.

Lindsay's poem is below and all of the poems written by the pupils can be viewed on our website.

WHEN WE SAID GOODBYE

I remember when we said goodbye
You whispered
"Don't be sad and please don't cry.
Daddy will be home soon.
It's not for long"
I never knew you would be so wrong
You walked out of the door
And just said "Bye bye"
I tried to smile with a tear in my eye
T hurt so much, watching you walk away
Not knowing what would happen the next day

I sat on my bed cuddled up tight
Wishing you were here to kiss me goodnight
I tried to stay strong
For Bobby and Mum
But whenever I thought of you my body went numb
Bobby and I waiting, hoping you'd write
To tell us how you were, that you were alright
No mail was posted, not even a note
I started to get a sickening feeling in my throat
We waited and waited
And finally a reply

Mother opened it with a gulp
Then a sigh
My dear children, daddy has gone
But remember he loved you, his daughter and son

Now as I stand over your grave
I want you to know Daddy, you were so brave
Your name is written on a polished stone
Please remember
You're not alone
I am always here and love you so
But why they chose you I just don't know

Based on feedback from this year's competition it is felt in future that schools should make their own decisions on what material to submit for the prize providing it is related to WW1. Submissions could take the form of poems, essays, news articles, reports of visits, drama, videos and others. A marking scheme would need to be developed to take account of the different types of entries. Also in response to comments made about the geographical coverage of the prize area in particular the area north of the existing Lancashire County Boundary, it is proposed this should be discussed at Christmas Social and AGM on 1st December.

Report of Meetings

Those Stars that Served: May 2008

Gordon Rae gave us a fascinating talk entitled "Those Stars who Served". Gordon had become interested in the war service of actors while helping with the National Inventory of War Memorials. He found a memorial to ten actors who had died in the First World War and who had been members of the Bensonians at Stratford. Frank Benson was the leading

actor and had himself assisted the war effort by driving ambulances.

Gordon described the physical scars which so many familiar actors had hidden behind their acting ability. Claude Rains and Charles Laughton were both badly gassed and had suffered from the after effects when wearing heavy make up or clothing. There were so many others whom Gordon had researched, such as Leslie Banks who was disfigured on the left side of his face by a shell, preferring to be photographed with this side hidden, Raymond Massey who had lost a leg and John Laurie, badly wounded.

A favourite actor of mine, Basil Rathbone, won the MC and was noted for his regular sorties into No Mans Land to create havoc in the German lines. Nigel Bruce, his Dr Watson in the Sherlock Holmes films, was an Old Contemptible. I was surprised to learn that Humphrey Bogart had served in the US Navy in 1918.

On the German side, Conrad Weiss served in the cavalry on the Eastern Front and was badly affected by the Russian winters. He was withdrawn from the front and joined a concert party.

And finally Rin Tin Tin. When US troops attacked Metz, they found an Alsatian bitch and her litter. Only Rin Tin

Tin survived and was taken back to the US.

I'm sure all of us will watch the old films with renewed interest now. (Gaynor Greenwood)

From the Prairies to the Trenches via Oxford. A Yank in the Grenadier Guards: June 2008

Michael O'Brien's talk was actually about 2 Americans who had been Rhodes scholars at Oxford. They were two of thirteen Americans on a Memorial in Rhodes House, Oxford.

William Alexander Fleet gained one of the first Rhodes scholarships to attend Oxford University between 1904 and 1907. Frustrated that President Woodrow Wilson delayed America's entry into the war he travelled to England in 1916 enlisted in the Artists Rifles then gained a commission into the Grenadier Guards aged 33. Gassed at Ypres in September 1917 he returned to the trenches near Arras in December 1917 where he was caught up in the March 1918 German offensive. In May 1918 his unit was withdrawn from the front line and after attending a concert party his tent was hit by a German bomb which killed him and the other occupants.

George Wayne Anderson Jnr., born in January 1896 was a great great grandson of President Thomas Jefferson. Motivated to fight by the German U-boat campaign he enlisted in May 1917. He was promoted rapidly despite limited military experience, went to France in August 1918 and in late October 1918 was commanding a Field Artillery Company in the Argonne. He was directing artillery which was supporting 90th Division infantry north of Bantheville when he was killed by German counter battery fire. (TD)

Off Duty in Salonika: July 2008

Starting by retracing her Grandfather's footsteps in Salonika **Katherine Wills** went on to summarise the early events of the War in the Balkans from the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand to the privations suffered by the Serbs as they migrated south in 1915 following German and Bulgarian advances.

She then outlined the experiences faced by the British units which went to their aid. Road building, construction of trenches and waging a war on malaria were greater demands than those posed by the enemy. To avoid boredom, activities ranged from piano composition to gardening interspersed with concert parties.

Dick Whittington (variant), Aladdin, Bluebeard were some of the pantomimes. 26, 27 and 28 Divisions competed to build theatres and female impersonators were in demand. She told of some of the stars who performed and their futures or lack of them. Derek Oldham (ex Lancashire Fusiliers) being taken on by D'Oyly Carte after the war, whilst Eddie Dillon sought more excitement in the RFC only to perish in a flying accident. Do their ghosts walk the fields there with one being named "Theatre Field" to this day? (TD)

THINK!!
Articles for Despatch

Deadline for next Issue
is 31st March 2009

Gallipoli: August 2008

Mary Davison, a WFA member from the Lancashire & Cheshire Branch described

how the actions, which were intended to open a back door to Russia, had started as primarily a naval operation, but due to inefficient minesweeping with significant naval losses the land based actions soon commenced. They were to involve 84 regiments through the course of the campaign.

Initial landings, in April 1915, from the 'River Clyde' resulted in a disastrous loss of life as men were picked off as they emerged; 5 VCs were awarded. W Beach, or Lancashire Landing' as it became known, was no better with a 50% casualty rate in the Lancashire Fusiliers and 6 VCs won 'before breakfast'. Thousands of Anzac troops managed to get ashore to find insurmountable ridges where there should have been sand dunes. Losses mounted with little progress being made in the inhospitable terrain. Corpses lay in the open for weeks on end; dysentery accounted for more men than casualties.

By August new offensives were planned with yet another landing further north at Suvla. Fierce fighting ensued with still no progress to break the stalemate.

Munro was appointed and recommended evacuation of the peninsular. Conditions deteriorated as winter set in with flooded trenches and heavy snow and ice, accounting for 200 men drowned and 10,000 suffering from frostbite.

The evacuation commenced in December with 83,000 men, 500 animals and 200 guns from Suvla. The operations took place by night to prevent the Turks becoming aware of the withdrawal; 20,000 men per night were evacuated from 15 to 20 December. The evacuation was complete by 9th January with not a single man being killed.

Mary rounded off her excellent talk with a brief tour of the major cemeteries which differ from those found on the Western

Front in not having individual grave markers for unknown soldiers and very few gravestones; one cemetery having only 10 named stones out of the 677 buried there. (Peter Bamford)

41 Letters of a Private of the KOYLI: September 2008

Malcolm Johnson our speaker gave an excellent, well illustrated, talk based on the 41 letters Walter Parsonage of the 1/5th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry sent home to his wife in Wakefield in 1917.

In April 1917 he enrolled into the 3rd West Yorks and was sent to Whitley Bay, Northumberland, for his basic training. After a short time he is given five days leave and was then sent to France. A fortnight was spent in Etaples training before being drafted to join the 1/5th K.O.Y.L.I. (with 85 others) at Nieuport. He was in this area when the Germans attacked on the night of July 21st. This was a devastating attack with gas shells and H.E. shells. It was around this time when Walter reported sick and the M.O., took one look at his teeth and sent him to the dentist, who promptly removed twelve.

His battalion then moved to the Ypres Salient to join in the Battle of Third Ypres (Passchendaele). Walter was kicked by a mule and missed the Battle of Poelcappelle (9/10th October) and in November received a 'clout in the eye' which sent him to hospital for 2-3 weeks. He wrote home at Xmas and told the family what a wonderful time he had, eating his fill and watching the Pierrots. On the 30th December the battalion went onto the Passchendaele Ridge to repair barbed wire in No-man's -land. They were close to Vienna Cottages, near

Tyne Cot, when a shell burst close to the working party and he was killed instantly.

Malcolm Johnson who edited the letters formed the opinion that Florrie, Walter's wife, never really understood Army life (she sent him slippers and expected him to get regular leave). Walter was always most concerned about her and how she was managing with the children. Malcolm was able to interview one of the surviving children, Nancy, a few years ago and she clearly remembered being told in the school playground on the first day back in January 1918 that 'her Father was not coming home'.

It was a wonderful talk, excellently delivered, and if any members were unable to attend then they could always read Malcolm's book. (Andrew Brooks)

PoWs of the Great War: October 2008



Oliver and Stanley Wilkinson shared the responsibility for talking generally about the experiences of British prisoners in the Great War then focussed on the specific experiences of Stan's granddad, Oliver's great-granddad. Oli had researched the attitudes of PoWs and the means by which they endeavoured to escape. He concluded that Great War PoWs had pioneered the way for the well publicised escapes of WW2.

Willie Wilkinson went to France on Easter Sunday 1918 and joined the 9th Battalion KOYLI at Kemmel as a much needed replacement. After enduring punishment in the German's Georgette offensive in April he moved to the Aisne only to suffer the same again in late May and be captured. Put to work behind the lines he suffered bad treatment, poor food and survived a 5 day train journey into hospital at Crossen Camp south of Berlin.

He was eventually repatriated in December 1918 into hospital at Whalley. His experiences as a PoW taught him to waste nothing but had little effect on his longevity. He died 3 weeks short of his 100th birthday.

Programme of Future Meetings

Dec 1st: *Christmas Social and AGM*

Jan 5th: *"Post Card Messages from the Great War"* - Andrew Brooks

Feb 2nd: *"The Greater Game - Sportsmen who fell in the Great War"* - Clive Harris

Mar 2nd: *"The Battle of Cambrai - 1917"* - Niall Cherry

Apr 6th: *"V Beach Landing at Gallipoli"* - Peter Hart

May 4th: *"Several Battalion Commanders"* - Terry Dean

Jun 1st: *"Hindenburg and Ludendorf - A Brilliant Partnership"* - Prof. John Derry

Jul 6th: *"Before the Music Sounded - The Naval Career of Baron Georg-von-Trapp"* - Michael O'Brien

Aug 3rd: *"The China Affair - Airships over East Africa"* - Bob Matthews

Sep 7th: *"Photos of the French Battlefield in the Vosges Mountains"* - Michal Shiel

Oct 5th: *"The Trial of Willie Stone"* - David Tattersfield

Nov 2nd: *"Advertising in the Great War"* - Paul Michel



Odd Headstones?? - See Page 13



Chipping War Memorial - see Page 15

Occasional Day

Arrangements have now been finalised for our Occasional Day and summary details from Gaynor are as follows:

DATE: Sunday 29th March 2009

PLACE: Bare Village Club

TIME: 10.30 (Coffee) for 11.00

LUNCH: Hot Pot with various desserts

SPEAKERS:

Peter Donnelly: "TBA"

Ian Lewis: "Cumbria War Memorials"

Terry Dean: "The Lancashire Contemptibles"

FINISH: 16.00/16.30

COST: £15.00

To book contact Gaynor Greenwood (01524 410750)

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