



The above photo is the polo team of the 18th King George's Own Lancers who won the Indian Cavalry Tournament in 1913. Mills (seated bottom right) was one of "Several Battalion Commanders" of the 17th Battalion Lancashire Fusilier's during WW1 who figure in this month's talk to the Branch. The photo appears briefly in the talk but nothing is said about the other members of the team. See page 8 to read about 6 DSOs, 4 KIAs, 2 Knights, an MC, a VC and the BEF's first shots in the War!

Chairman Stan's Spot

I look forward to this our first Anniversary Issue of the Despatch. Our branch magazine has come through several problems in its birth and hiccups but thanks to Terry and all contributors one year has past and 3 Issues are now "in the bag".

Here's looking forward to our second Anniversary with Despatch gaining strength along the way.

Editor's Musing

Producing this Despatch and finalising my talk "Several Battalion Commanders", which has involved a trip to France for late site visits, has made for an interesting last month.

A dilemma when producing Despatch was its length. My initial thought was for 20 pages but when it was beginning to get difficult to fit everything in I opted for 24. The Duke of Wellington when writing to his son started "Dear Son, if I had more time I would write you a shorter letter"

Synergy between my roles as Editor and this month's speaker at our meeting contributes significantly to this Despatch. The frontispiece and two articles being spin-offs from my talk. I hope you like the text boxes which I will use in future for "Featured Epitaphs" and similar rather than page footnotes.

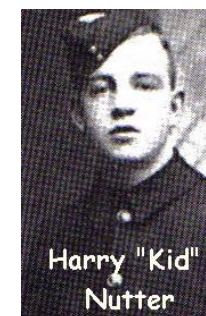
Thanks to all contributors and a special mention for David and Pat Shackleton for sharing with me their special Epitaphs. Theirs fill the majority of the new text boxes and I hope all readers will keep a keen eye for other evocative grave inscriptions which could figure in future Issues.

MORE INFORMATION FOR ARTICLES WHEN:
(+P) : photos, maps in Photo Gallery,
(+S) : supplementary information report
See our website www.wfanlancs.co.uk and look against this Despatch

The Fighting Nutters: Mike Sherrington

The exploits of Alfred "Battling" Pye were featured in last November's issue, but he was not the only Preston boxer to pay the ultimate price. Albert Victor Nutter, a riveter by trade, lived on Water Lane. Early in 1914 he achieved the unusual feat of twice taking the legendary flyweight Jimmy Wilde the full distance, although eventually losing on points on both occasions. Wilde, who later became world champion, is generally accepted as being pound for pound the greatest boxer Britain has ever produced. His punching power was phenomenal, hence his nickname "The Mighty Atom." Nutter's feat of endurance, surviving for 30 rounds, should therefore not be underestimated.

Pte Albert Nutter [17129] 7th Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment was killed in action during the fighting at High Wood on July 22nd 1916. He is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial [Pier & Face 11A] along with another boxer, Harry "Kid" Nutter from Rishton.



Ironically, Harry "Kid" Nutter had fought and lost on points to Alfred Pye in March 1914 at Preston's Adelphi Athletic Club. Neither could have imagined that by the end of the year they would be in uniform, less still that they were destined never to return to the ring.

He was a 19 year old miner and member of a Blackburn boxing family which included elder brother George "Ginger" Nutter, a well known bantamweight. Although his career as a flyweight had barely started, he had recorded victories in about half his fights and shown sufficient potential to be regarded as one for the future. However, like many sportsmen he answered the call for volunteers and as Pte Harry Nutter [15920] of the Accrington Pals, 11th Battalion East Lancashire Regiment, took part in the disastrous attack on Serre on July 1st 1916. He had written to his mother shortly before, "I can duck the hooks and sidestep the straight lefts, but I know I stand no better chance than any of the other boys. I have only once to die, but should I steer clear I will come down our street singing 'Are we downhearted?'-'Not likely'-while the Kid is floating about."

His optimism was sadly misplaced; he was one of 234 killed and his name appears on the Thiepval Memorial [Pier & Face 6C].

The fate of "Battling" Pye and the fighting Nutters was far from unique. Many boxers were either killed, or wounded so badly that it proved impossible for them to resume their careers. Others like my grandfather, Joe Durham*, the pre-war bantamweight champion of the north of England, gave their best years to the service of their country and as a result were denied the opportunity to fulfil their sporting potential. The battlefield claimed its

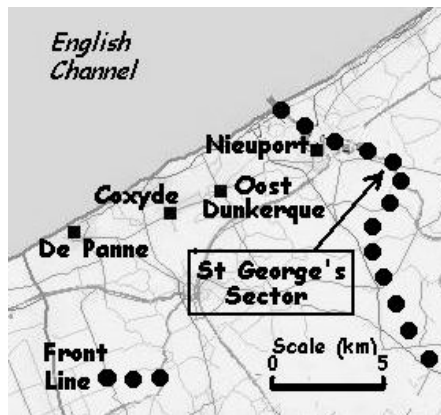
victims indiscriminately. Hundreds of boxers-from former champions to amateurs, public schoolboy boxers to honest journeymen professionals-failed to beat the count and suffered the cruellest of knockout blows.

(* Visit www.boxrec.com for Joe Durham's boxing record, biography and photograph.)

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

Arthur ARMER, 2nd Lieutenant, 11th Border Regiment (Lonsdale)

Arthur Armer's war service charts a very diverse and colourful career, incorporating a rise through the ranks and service in various theatres of war. His death, however, reinforces the grim reality of the First World War.



In September 1917, Armer was attached as a 2nd Lieutenant to the 11th Battalion Border Regiment. This unit was training at village of Oost Dunkerque approximately 5 kilometres west of Nieuport (see map). On the first of the month the tone was set when the village

was subject to an artillery onslaught from "long distance high velocity guns." On the 4th September the Regiment was rotated into the front line in the St George's Sector. The trenches they occupied were in a poor state of repair, and enemy shelling was a continuing threat. The war diary for the 5th September reveals in stark detail what happened to Armer:

"Some "Minnies" [Minerwerfer] troublesome on the Left Company Front, 2nd Lt A Armer killed and 3 O.R. wounded"

The Germans had been active in evolving efficient trench warfare weapons, and by September 1917 the Minerwerfer (Mine thrower) was a deadly addition to their arsenal. It was a mortar designed to rain high explosive, gas or smoke shells on the allied trenches. As Lt Armer was about to enter his dugout in the front line one such shell exploded close by, and he was struck on the head and killed outright. He was not involved in any huge offensive, nor any elite operation, he was merely engaged in a mundane trench rotation. He was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time when the mortar landed. In fact the war diary for virtually the entire period describes the area as "Fairly quiet." His death, however, reveals the reality of the war. Death was literally rained down on men, and it was artillery above any other determinant that was the biggest killer. He is buried at Coxyde Military Cemetery.

Arthur Armer's life, however, was far more dynamic than his death. Born on the 28th February 1894, he had attended Queen Elizabeth Grammar School for only a short period of time in 1908. In August 1914, Armer was a solicitor's clerk and also a member of the local

territorial unit, the 4th Border Regiment. His 'soldiering' had in fact even earlier foundations, with him serving in the Cadet Corps before becoming a territorial soldier. Upon outbreak of hostilities Armer was thus 'called-up' for service and began training with the 1st/4th Border Regiment (Territorials). Many other local men, including 'old-boys' from QES such as Herbert Hartley and Percival Harrison, were also Territorials in the same regiment, and likewise commenced training. By the end of 1914 the 4th Borders were 'in theatre' on active service. However, they were not in France or Flanders, but were in fact in India, engaged in policing the British Empire. Native elements were described as troublesome, and even India regiments could prove challenging to handle with the British Army stretched thin by the continental conflict. An officer of the 4th Borders, writing early in 1915, described how the regiment was employed in musketry training, scouting and patrolling, digging and bayonet fighting, and he concluded that the men were "coming on splendidly."

Armer had fulfilled his required time in the Territorials by 1916 so he returned to England. However, he clearly remained devoted to duty and quickly re-enlisted with the 1st Border Regiment at Kendal on 28th June 1916. His previous military service stood him apart in training, and in August he was promoted to Lance Corporal. Then in September 1916 Armer was back in theatre, this time in France on the Western Front. During this period a sniper killed a fellow Kirby-Lonsdale man, Harold Hardacre. Like Armer, Hardacre had been to India with the Borders. Their service careers had run in parallel and undoubtedly the two men had got know each other in Kirby before the war. Armer now had the

unenviable task of writing to Mr W.H. Hardacre, and describing how his son had been killed. Shortly afterwards Armer's abilities had marked him out once again, leading him to be promoted Acting Corporal, before being sent back to England in December for a Temporary Commission. Consequently in the early months of 1917 Arthur Armer was training as an officer at the 10th Officer Cadet Battalion at Gailles in Ayrshire. He was officially discharged from the 1st Borders on 29th May 1917, and gazetted as a 2nd Lieutenant to the 11th Battalion Border Regiment. It is not known when he joined his battalion in France after his appointment, but when he was killed in September he had only been there a 'short time'. Despite this short period with his new unit he was described by his Lieutenant-Colonel as a man loved by all ranks, and an emblem of courage and devotion to duty. This devotion can hardly be questioned in over three years of military service, beginning as a Private in a territorial formation and ending as a Lieutenant with the new armies.

Unfortunately tragedy for the Armer family did not end with Arthur's death. His wife, Alice Ruth Armer, was also a patriot and joined the Women's Royal Air Force at Bristol on 14th October 1918. Alice Armer subsequently served as Member 22699, as a Technical Store Worker. Her military service was, however, short-lived and she died at the General Hospital, Cheltenham, on 12th November 1918. She had succumbed to the influenza epidemic sweeping across Europe, her official cause of death being cited as pneumonia. Ironically that flu epidemic would proceed to claim more victims than the Great War that had claimed the life of her husband Arthur Armer.

"I MUST GO DAD IT IS MY DUTY TO GO" -
Sapper H Brown, REs

THE WORK OF THE ROYAL ENGINEERS IN THE GREAT WAR:

Maj-Gen. Sir Gerard Moore Heath

..... Continued from November 2008

Defences and Preparations for Attack

Many of us have been to France and have seen the trenches; it is unnecessary to describe them. But the organization of a defended zone requires much more than trenches. Suffice it to say that the organization included, as an ideal, a front system with front line trench, support line, and reserve line, and as many rear systems of similar lines as time and labour permitted - the whole, extending to a depth of 10 miles or more, linked together by numerous defended localities, e.g. villages and woods, and interspersed with numerous machine-gun positions.

The Engineers, as tactical experts in defence matters, working with the General Staff, had a good deal to say as to the lay-out of these lines of defence, but their purely engineering duties lay more in the construction of obstacles, revetments, drainage, and water supply, and the making of shelter for garrisons and guns against enemy fire and weather; offensive and defensive mining; and the provision and maintenance of communications by wire, road and rail. All these works were also required in preparation for a deliberate attack, and after successful attack, in consolidation of ground won.

In connection with defence or attack, as is well known, camouflage played an important part, while the operations of our survey companies covered the whole field. Nor must we forget the arduous and often heroic work done by our "special service" engineers both in attack and defence, nor the forecasts of our

meteorological experts, which had an important bearing on the plans of commanding officers.

An important duty of the Engineers, both in defence and preparations for attack, was the making of shell-proof cover, many dug-outs being 20-30 feet below the surface. Deep dug-outs near the firing line had, however, obvious disadvantages, and the Germans found to their cost that they often formed traps, in which they were easily captured by our quickly advancing troops; deep dug-outs, moreover, were impossible in parts of the water-logged areas of Flanders. This led to the construction of the concrete pill-boxes, which were such a conspicuous feature of defence in those parts. We have a great deal to learn as to the value of reinforced concrete for resisting heavy shells, and as to the best method of applying this and other materials ordinarily at our disposal for resisting penetration or the effects of delayed action. We laid down as a result of observation of fire effect, and of experiments, that 5 feet of monolithic concrete, unreinforced, and 3 feet of reinforced, was necessary to keep out a 6-inch shell. No pill-boxes made were proof against sustained heavy bombardment but they certainly stood a good deal of hammering, for it is not every shell that is heavy, and probably very few hits are normal to the surface (curved surfaces are best). There is no doubt, however, that apart from this, concrete shelter gives much moral protection. The difficulty in the field was to get clean materials to the site; to overcome this both the Germans and ourselves evolved portable concrete block construction, the block being made of good stuff at a well-equipped factory in the rear of the fighting zone, and properly seasoned before being sent up. Towards

the end of the war, our biggest concrete factory, which was organized by Captain Ambrose, began to season the blocks by passing low-pressure steam through and over them in a specially-prepared box; the results appeared to be extremely successful. After 12 hours these blocks attained the strength of 3 to 4 weeks old normal concrete. The blocks were themselves reinforced with expanded metal, chiefly with a view to strengthening them for transport purposes. When built into the structure they were further reinforced by vertical and horizontal rods passed through holes made in them during the manufacturing stage, and the whole grouted together with liquid cement.



In judging the effect of shell-fire on pill-boxes, one must not forget the effect of concussion on the garrison inside them. After the battle of Passchendaele it was freely stated that many Germans had been killed in their shelters entirely by concussion. Efforts were made to get over this in our designs. Our experiments went to show that an inner chamber with air-space between it and the outer walls reduced the shock, provided the air in the air-space was not confined.

Camouflage

As everyone knows now, the science of camouflage had great prominence in this war. The art is an old one, but the credit of organizing a department to apply it scientifically in the field belongs to the French. It called for much study,

and the art of producing invisibility under different circumstances of light and shade became very highly developed.

Good camouflage makes for small losses, particularly so among the gunners and their guns.

The increase of aeroplanes on both sides kept our special works parks very busy, for it became necessary to conceal whole positions. The extent of their operations may be gathered from the total output, which amounted to:-

Painted canvas sheets	959,000 sq yds
Wire netting	6,000,000 sq yds
Fish netting	7,000,000 sq yds
Covers for guns	15,000 sq yds
Road screening	850,000 sq yds

In addition to the above, our artists were very ingenious in designing camouflaged observation posts in parapets, trees, and so on, and not the least of their inventions was an imitation in canvas and wood of an infantry attack moving across "No Man's Land." These were most useful to deceive the enemy as to the true point of attack in connection with our numerous raids on his trenches. Snipers' suits were also designed to the number of 4,000, which, harmonizing with the sandbags or grass against which the sniper was working, allowed him to get close up to his objective.

Towards the end of the war, when our Army Headquarters had to advance into the devastated territories, whole trains and camps were camouflaged against probable enemy bombing.

During the monotonous period of trench warfare the camouflage sculptors provided us with exact imitations of "Private Thomas Atkins's" head. These, when put up on the parapet, were a certain draw to the enemy's sniper, and

by noting the direction of the bullet mark in a couple heads so placed, the position of the sniper could often be located.

BETTER ONE CROWDED HOUR OF
GLORIOUS LIFE THEN A CENTURY
WITHOUT A NAME - CSM Colcutt,
Cheshire Regt

Searchlights

Our searchlight organisation began in 1915 with only six 60-centimetre projectors, brought out for the protection of General Headquarters at St. Omer.

In 1916 it was increased in order to protect the lines of communications, but heavy losses from enemy machine guns, fired from their low-flying aeroplanes, soon brought our searchlights to the front, where they did excellent work.

It was found, however, that the 60-centimetre projector was not powerful enough. It was replaced gradually by the 90-centimetre projector, and in 1917 the co-operation of these lights with anti-aircraft guns became effective either in bringing down enemy planes, or in forcing them to fly at altitudes from 6,000 to 12,000 feet, thus tending to make their bombing operations inaccurate.

Our searchlight detachments in front areas were often themselves heavily bombed; the detachments were very plucky in sticking to their posts while working their lights - anyone who has experienced air-raids at close quarters will realize the sort of courage that is required.

In June, 1918, a night-flying aeroplane squadron became available for employment with anti-aircraft resources, and about this time we asked for still more powerful projectors, of 120 centimetres.

All this time enemy bombing of front areas had been increasing, and the

nervous strain on our men was very great in consequence, but towards the end of the war, having acquired sufficient lights, we began to establish an illuminated belt along our whole front, and some 2,000 to 6,000 yards behind the front trenches. This belt was provided with rows of searchlights three to four deep: the result, in co-operation with our night-flying squadron, was so effective, that in a short time enemy bombing almost ceased in those areas.

During our great advance at the end of the war, anti-aircraft searchlights were no longer required as such, but the lights became very useful for night bridging operations.



The personnel of our searchlight sections was largely recruited from the London and Tyne electric engineers, and numbered 3,000 of all ranks by the date of the Armistice. *To be continued*

POLO TOURNAMENT WINNERS

(Front Photo c/o History of the 19th King George's Own Lancers 1858-1921,)

Besides Mills the other 3 members of the winning team justify mention. Going clockwise on the front photo starting top right is the short stature of Lieutenant Spencer Julian Wilfred **Railston**. He was on leave in England when war was declared and like many other officers on leave from India found employment at once with the Expeditionary Force.

He was attached to the 4th Dragoon Guards (4DG) and whilst there is no specific mention of him in their War Diary he would share with the 4DGs their experiences. The first unit of the BEF to exchange fire with the Germans north of Mons on 22nd August they saw serious

action at Elouges and then helped protect the right flank of II Corps at le Cateau. After actions in the battles of the Marne and Aisne the 4DGs were seriously involved at Ploegstreet then at Neuve Chapelle and Messines. Railston was killed on 31st October "whilst gallantry trying, under heavy fire, to rescue a French peasant woman".

The career of Arthur Mordaunt **Mills** is described in "Several Battalion Commanders. In summary, after service in the Boer War with the Devon's he joined the 18th Lancers and with them he went to France in 1914. He transferred to command the 17th Lancashire Fusiliers in 1916 and won his first DSO. After reverting back to the Lancers he won two Bars to his DSO for actions west of Cambrai in December 1917 and in Palestine (1918). He served as Aide de Camp to King George V, gained the rank of Major-General and was knighted in 1938.

Sitting to the right of Mills is Francis Aylmer **Maxwell**. For services as a Lieutenant on the North West Frontier (India) he gained the DSO in 1898. Serving in the Boer War he earned the Victoria Cross at Sanna's Post. "Lieutenant Maxwell was one of three officers not belonging to 'Q' Battery RHA, specially mentioned by Lord Roberts as having shown the greatest gallantry and disregard of danger in carrying out the self-imposed duty of saving the guns of that battery during the affair at Korn Spruit on 31st March 1900 ...".

At the outbreak of WW1 he was Military Secretary to the Viceroy of India and could not be spared from that position until May 1916. He was at once given command of the 12th Battalion Middlesex Regiment which he soon made one of the best fighting battalions in the Army. Then as Commandant of

the 27th (Lowland) Brigade he gained yet greater glory around Arras in spring 1917 and later at Ypres. He gained a bar to his DSO for 'conspicuous bravery and leadership'. He was killed by a sniper on 17th September 1917 after his Brigade had made a successful attack in the third Battle of Ypres. For many years afterwards on the anniversary of his death there appeared a brief notice on the front page of the Times: "Frank Maxwell, the bravest of the brave."

Finally, top left, is Frederick S Gwatkin. He served with the 18th Lancers in France during WW1 earning the DSO and MC. He gained the rank of Major-General and was knighted in 1942. His two sons served in the Indian Army and he suffered the tragedy of both being killed on 14th March 1945 in Burma. They are buried side by side in Tankkyan War Cemetery.

WAR POEM: Michael Holmes (+S)

My maternal grandfather wrote a poem (extract below) just before he died on the Somme in November 1916. It portrays a graphic illustration of his feelings and observations at some of the horrors of that war. Whilst he was not an educated man, the poem cannot but strike some emotion in a reader. (the full poem can be seen on our website)

Dedicated to His Most Gracious Majesty King George the Fifth

*Hear O King of mighty nation
Most illustrious Sire
Where'er the need for arbitration
May thy labours never tire
Gracious Sire when thine the task
Peace to make or for to mar
Grant the prayer thy people ask
Banish all grim thoughts of war*

*Perpetual peace needs a creator
War grows more hideous year by year
Souls are flung before their maker
Yet we think our conscience clear
Shall we dare to ask God's blessing
On our instruments of war
Other nations fondly caressing
Thoughts that they God's chosen are*

*O God of battles is our cry
With victory crown our arms again
The foe also to God draws nigh
O God of battles is their refrain!
Hear the cry of wounded soldier
Midst the carnage and the strife
"For God's sake give me water"
As he battles for his life*

*Shall we then our friendships sever?
Shall we then unsheath the sword?
Shall we then have war forever?
Shall we sow and reap discord?
Lo! We hear a sound in wonder
That does set our hearts aglow
Voices like a clap of thunder
Peeling forth a mighty "No!"*

*Where are the seed of British race?
Thrown to the winds with bonds of blood
Be friends of Peace, the foes of hate
Upholders of the common good
Peace in thought, as well as deed
Peace in motive and in prayer
Peace in heart as well as creed
And at home and everywhere*

"Let there be Peace"

Private Edward Darlington Loyal N.L.Reg't. (died, 20.11.1916)

(Michael Holmes attended his first Branch meeting in March and mentioned to me his grandfather's poem. TD)

I AM HERE AS THE RESULT OF
UNCIVILIZED NATIONS – Corp. J C
Goodall, 26th Aus Inf

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SKIN WANTED: Peter Bamford

I came across this rather unusual request in the 'Personal' column of the Times dated 28th April 1915:

"SKIN - OFFICER REQUIRES 4in. by 3in. of SKIN to cover wound and expedite his return to duty: opportunity for unselfish patriot."

The follow up article was published in the edition of 30th April.

SKIN-GRAFTING VOLUNTEERS.

PATRIOTIC OFFERS TO A WOUNDED OFFICER.

That there is a large number of people—and a very considerable proportion of them women—who are apparently willing to be deprived of portions of their skin in a worthy cause is shown by the replies to an advertisement which appeared in the "Personal" column of *The Times* in the following terms:—
"Skin.—Officer requires sin. by 3in. of skin to cover wound and expedite his return to duty; opportunity for unselfish patriot."

The advertiser, one of our Army airmen, is at present in a London hospital recovering from injuries received in a flying accident several weeks ago. When seen at the hospital yesterday afternoon he had received more than 50 offers from people in various parts of the country volunteering for the skin-grafting operation. Most of the replies came from women, the seriousness of whose offers were shown by one business-like letter, which stated, "If the advertisement is a genuine one and skin is needed for grafting, I offer mine most willingly." Another business-like offer read, "I can very comfortably spare the skin, and you can have it first thing Monday."

The women volunteers included the headmistress of a girls' school, who would require a "guarantee of your need and particulars of the hospital and surgeon who would perform the operation"; a woman resting in London after ambulance work in France who "finds time drag heavily on her hands"; one who says "there would be no need for me to see you or even know your name"; a girl of 25 who pleads for the chance to help her country, as she has no brothers or other relatives fighting; and one who, declaring her willingness to undergo the operation, adds that she is perfectly healthy, but her skin is very thin.

Among the male volunteers are a London student who is ready to part with a piece of skin on condition that the operation will not disturb his studies for a university examination; a Civil Service official, whose skin "heals very quickly," and who has been "always practically a teetotaler"; a boy of 17 who does not want his letter "in any way to bind me under any obligation to volunteer, as I wish thoroughly to count the cost first"; and a Cardiff man of 48, who also offers his blood, if any be required, "to any extent the surgeons think I can spare without crippling me for life."

Unfortunately I can find no further articles on whether the procedure was undertaken nor of its result.

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MUSEUM REPORTS

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

This spring will see the launch of a set of World War One trench maps printed from originals in the King's Own Museum's collection, in partnership with Yorkshire based printing firm G H Smith & Sons.

The selected maps include two from the Macedonian Front, one used in September 1918 by Lieutenant Richard Brown who was awarded the Albert Medal in 1917 and one covering the area of Givenchy, France, where the 1st/4th and 1st/5th Battalions of the King's Own saw action in April 1918. The Givenchy map, although from just after the period, shows the position where 2nd Lieutenant Joseph Henry Collin, of the 1st/4th Battalion, won his posthumous Victoria Cross. The replica maps are due to be on sale soon from the museum shop.

The museum is very pleased to receive the original wooden grave marker cross from the grave of Herbert Edward Adkins of the King's Own. Private Adkins, originally of the Army Ordnance Corps transferred to the 8th Battalion, King's Own, in the autumn of 1918 and served as an infantry soldier until the war ended. He then transferred to the 1st/5th Battalion and saw service in Belgium as part of the army of occupation. He fell ill in early December and died on the 16th December, probably from the influenza epidemic. In the 1920's the wooden cross was replaced by the War Graves Commission by a Portland Stone headstone. Private Adkins's family, who lived in Leytonstone requested that the wooden cross be sent to them on replacement and since then the cross has remained in the hands of Iris,

daughter of Private Adkins. Iris, now aged 93 years old, presented the cross to the museum's collection, along with his medals and memorial plaque. The cross is a wonderful addition to the museum's collection. The museum has no crosses and whilst they do survive they are few and far between. The museum is most grateful to Iris and her family for this generous donation to the King's Own collection.

It is planned that the cross will go on display along with other material relating to the aftermath of the First World War covering the 1919-1924 period.

SONS AS YET UNBORN SHALL READ
HOW BRITISH SONS MET BRITAIN'S
NEED. REST WELL BRAVE HEART -
Gunner A Smith, RFA

Fusilier Museum: Mike Glover (Curator)

Final preparations are now in place for the move of the Fusilier Museum and Headquarters from Bolton Road to Moss Street in Bury. It is sad that the link established in 1873 between the 20th Foot, then the East Devonshire Regiment, later the Lancashire Fusiliers and Wellington Barracks will be broken. However sentiment did nothing to improve the condition of the Lancashire Fusilier Collection and has to be balanced against reality. The reality is that to stay in Wellington Barracks would have led to a terminal decline in the state of the Lancashire Fusilier Collection and ultimately to the closure of the Fusilier Headquarters in Bury. The move to the new location will in one stroke secure both the future and the past of the Fusiliers in Lancashire.

The Collection recently acquired a fascinating object in the form of a Webley Revolver. The Museum already has

several examples but this was something special. Regimental Museums are "People Museums" not "War Museums" and the objects in the collection exist to tell the story of the Regiment and it's people. This Webley Revolver certainly had several stories to tell.



The first story concerned it's discovery in a charity shop in Leicester where it fell out of a bundle of donated clothing. However who donated the clothes and how the revolver came to be included may never be known. The second story involved Sergeant Richard Matlock of the Leicester Police who secured the revolver and carried out an investigation to establish if the weapon had been used in crime. The story could have ended here with the weapon being sent for destruction. However Sergeant Matlock was also an enthusiastic amateur historian and he had become fascinated by the Webley.

He established that a Lieutenant Hugh Sayres purchased the .455 Webley in 1912 before he went out to join the 1st Battalion of the Lancashire Fusiliers in India. The Webley was a very fine example of its type and cost three times more to manufacture than the later standard issue Webley. Sayres joined the 1st Battalion in India and was with the Battalion when war was declared. The 1st Battalion found itself in 86 Brigade, with other Fusilier battalions and part of the new 29th Division. On the 25th April 1915 the Battalion landed on "W" Beach on the Gallipoli Peninsular and

established the Lancashire Fusiliers as one of England's most celebrated regiments when it won the famous "Six VCs before breakfast." Sayres did not land in the first assault but was later wounded and returned to England to convalesce.

On recovery the now Captain Sayres played a part in the raising of the 20th Battalion or the Fourth Salford Pals. However in 1916 he was posted to the 2nd Battalion then preparing for the offensive planned for June of that year. It was on the 1st July 1916, shortly after 9am, that Captain H W Sayres while commanding C Company was killed in what is recorded in the regimental history as the "first serious barrage" to hit the Battalion. His body was recovered and he is now buried at Sucrerie Military Cemetary Colincamps.

However you may think that the story may have ended there. However Sergeant Matlock is continuing his researches and is determined to bring the story of this gallant Lancashire fusilier officer to life and members of the Sayres family are making contact with the museum. The story goes on....!

TO US A GRAVE TO HIM THE
RAINBOW'S END - 2nd Lt. C S Gillespie,
Loyals

Liverpool Scottish: Ian Riley (Honorary Secretary)

As reported last November, the Trustees of the Liverpool Scottish Regimental Museum now have an office in New Zealand House, Water Street, Liverpool. Archive material (documents, photos etc) can be viewed there by appointment on Wednesdays and at other times by arrangement (phone Mr Dennis Reeves on 0151 645 5717). The

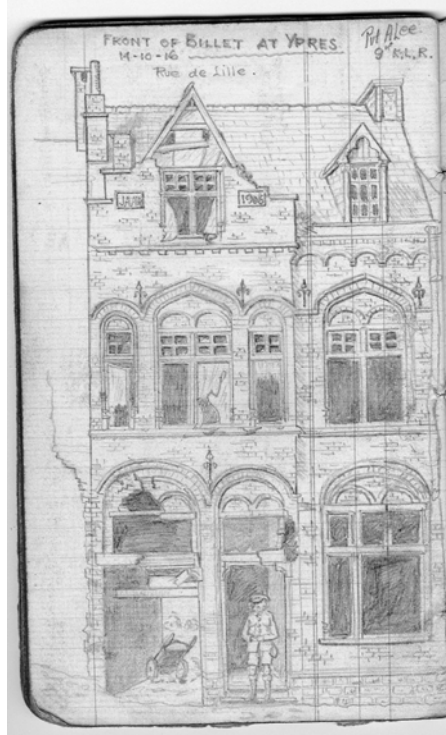
collection of artefacts is in storage pending negotiations with other museums and institutions as to its future. The King's Liverpool Museum has nothing to report.

Manchester Regiment Archive, Sketches of the 17th: Larysa Bolton - Archivist Tameside (+P)

One of the series of records that forms part of the Manchester Regiment Archive is that of Personal Documents. This series generally contains records of service, letters of appointment, service and discharge certificates, pocket books, correspondence etc. The records are arranged by individual and each packet offers something exciting and unique. One such collection is that of 9210 Private Thomas Brough, 17th Battalion, E Company Platoon no. XVII. Manchester Regiment (MR3/17/141). Pte Brough joined the 17th Battalion Manchester Regiment at Heaton Park on 18 January 1915. We know from the small number of service records that survive for him that he was 27 years of age when he enlisted and was five feet seven inches in height with hazel hair and brown eyes. He lived in Hollinwood, Oldham, with his wife Sarah, whom he had married in 1913, and had previously been employed as a fireman.

The 17th Battalion spent the early part of 1915 in training at Grantham and Lark Hill, Sailsbury Plain, before departing for France on 8 November that year. They arrived at Covin on 7 December to receive tuition in trench warfare. The battalion went on to fight at the Maricourt Sector, at the Somme, Montauban, Trones Wood and Guillemont, and in the Arras Sector and at Ypres. An invaluable description of these battles and the activities of the 17th Battalion is available

in printed form in the Record of the First City Brigade (16th, 17th, 18th, 19th Battalions, the Manchester Regiment).



Amongst Pte Brough's papers is a small notebook. This contains various notes and lists but also a series of pencil sketches depicting trench life. They are incredibly detailed and reveal quite a talent. There is a detailed sketch of the front of the billet on Rue de Lille in Ypres dated 14 October 1916, which may have been drawn either by Pte Brough or Pte Lee of the Kings Liverpool Regiment along with various depictions of guns, equipment and fellow soldiers. Copies of these are on our website

R.S.M. Albert Watts M.C. D.C.M: Jane Davies (Curator, QLR Museum) (+P)

The medals awarded to R.S.M. Albert Watts, M.C. D.C.M. of the 1/5th Battalion

Loyal North Lancashire Regiment are currently on display in the museum with other material donated by his relatives in our archives.

Watts joined the 1st Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment in 1889 and served in the 2nd Anglo-Boer War. According to his 'Small Book' he was 'mentioned in Earl Robert's despatch to the Secretary of State for War, 4th September 1901.'

After 19 years of service with the 1st Battalion he was then posted to the 5th Battalion. Watts was with this Battalion when he arrived in France in February 1915. Up until his death in November 1917 he sent postcards home to his wife and 5 children. The majority wished them Happy Birthday etc, but the occasional one described life in the trenches.

On 30th November 1917 R.S.M. Watts was killed in action. The Battalion had been taking part in the Cambrai operations. This was the first battle where there had been no preliminary artillery bombardment; instead tanks were used to cut through the German wire. The attacks started on the 20th November and initially Allied advances were remarkable but the breakthrough was not achieved. The Germans then launched a counter attack. It was during the counter attack that Watts lost his life.

The extract from the Battalion War Diary for that day reads 'Heavy German bombardment along whole of front followed by strong flank attack. Front line Captain surrounded, nothing definite known as to what exactly happened. Enemy seen approaching Gloster Road from direction of Sherwood in great numbers at about 8am. Battn. HQ made



stand in Gloster Road until 8.30am. Seeing themselves outflanked on both sides by the enemy they were forced to withdraw to [?] Willows where they dug in. Casualties 3 Officers wounded, 2 Officers wounded and missing, 16 Officers missing, 2 Ors Killed, 27 Ors wounded, 384 Ors missing.'

It wasn't until February 1919 that Mrs Watts received official confirmation that her husband had died. For many months she asked her husband's colleagues if they had heard any news. A letter from Thomas Bennett, a soldier in the 1/5th Battalion and also Albert's friend seemed to confirm the worst. The letter, written from a POW camp in 1918, states 'Now when I left him, our own Doctor had seen him and he seemed to think his chance of recovery was doubtful. He was then outside our own little Dugout... He was seen again two hours afterwards in the same place by Private Percy Ashworth who said he was then being attended to by two German Red Cross men,.... under the circumstances his case certainly seems doubtful.'

Watts was 46 years old when he died and is commemorated on the Cambrai Memorial at Louverval.

HE GAVE HIS HEART TO HIS LOVE AND HIS LIFE TO HIS COUNTRY - Capt. Kyrke-Smith, The Kings (Liv)

2008 ON THE SOMME: David & Pat Shackleton

We have enjoyed spending our summers at Authuille on the Somme since 2003. We are now fully "adopted" by our kind villagers and inevitably see and learn of things which may interest readers of Despatch. We hope to report on "things" in the November issue each

year but having missed last November's Despatch we catch up on 2008 here.

390132 C. Serjt. Maj. Thomas William (Will) MANKTELOW, DCM Queen Victoria's Rifles (QVR): 9th Bn. The London Regt.



In 1914 at the age of 19, Will enlisted in the QVR, the London Regt. By the summer of 1918 he was a Company Sergeant Major with a Distinguished Conduct Medal. By August 1918 the German advance had stalled at Amiens and his unit was part of the general advance eastward, north of the River Somme. It was here, on the 24th August, near Bray that he was killed in action. His Company Commander wrote to his expectant widow to say that he had been buried at Bronfay Farm Military Cemetery.

Almost 90 years later in 2007, the family, who now live in Canada, visited for the first time to pay their respects. They were astonished to find, even with their evidence, that Will had no headstone, nor was there even a headstone to an unknown soldier of his

regiment. By chance whilst there, they were fortunate to meet Paula Kesteloot, an English lady with an interest and knowledge of the Great War, who lives in Albert. With her help, they contacted CWGC at Beaurains, who informed the family that because no marker existed, his name was commemorated on the Vis-en-Artois Memorial.

But this story is simply yet another thank you to the continuing excellent work done by the CWGC, without whose dedication, our visits to the Western Front and elsewhere would have a great deal less meaning. On 24 August 2008, on the 90th anniversary of his death, Jane, Will's granddaughter and family returned to France to witness the unveiling of his grave marker, now "Buried elsewhere in this cemetery" These are her words,

"It is truly a heart warming story. I discovered after my father's death a letter from the Captain of the QVR to my grandmother attesting to the location of my grandfather's burial site. As no headstone was ever erected, it has been carved this year (2008) and is only being put in place now, as a result of me sending a copy of this Company Commander's letter as verification to the CWGC.. My father was only given the box of letters and information about his father when HE was a senior citizen. Until then, he had not known that his mother had married his father's older brother after his real father's death. The man he knew as "father" was indeed his uncle. My grandmother was only 3 month's pregnant with dad when her husband was killed. I only wish my dad were here to see what has happened over the past year. It would have been the highlight of his life." Jane Manktelow-Hutchings, Canada

The Inscription on Will's grave marker reads:

FONDLY REMEMBERED BY HIS
LOVING WIFE LOYAL BROTHER
AND UNSEEN SON
PROGENIE VIVAT

The continuing work of the CWGC

Not only does the CWGC maintain the cemeteries but it is also responsible for burying the remains of soldiers who even now are found in France and Belgium. Although burials are not uncommon, little or no publicity is given by the CWGC and it is usually the gardeners who spread the information.

On a particularly vile day in April 2008, we were fortunate to attend two burials in the Somme Department, both of unidentified soldiers of the Gloucester regiment. The first burial in Ovillers Military cemetery was of a body found in nearby La Boisselle. There were few spectators in the driving rain but the Rev. David Kennedy, chaplain for Nord & Pas de Calais officiated, in the presence of a British Attaché from Paris and a representative of the Gloucester regiment.

After welcome refreshments at Longueval we proceeded to London cemetery at High wood. Here the party was swelled by a group of New Zealanders who were staying nearby. The unknown Gloucester had the additional honour of having his coffin piped to his grave, despite the cold and rain, by a New Zealand ex-pat piper!

The body had been found near Contalmaison by two Dutchmen and the rumour, soon to be stated as fact, was that all his remaining artefacts had been removed from his body. (When visiting the Somme, beware of rumours and facts disseminated by some experts!)

When the coffin was lowered into the grave, the Dutchmen placed on the coffin the sole item which identified the soldier, his metal shoulder title. We were all visibly moved.



We are sure when these young men left for the front they would never have envisaged such funerals. May they rest in peace.

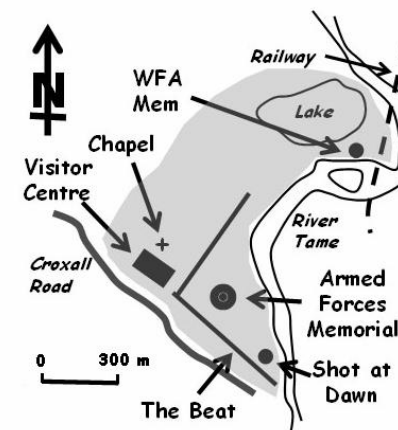
ONE DAY OUR LORD WAS GATHERING
FLOWERS AT EVENTIDE HE GATHERED
OURS - Pte L Shilton, Lancs Fus

THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM: Terry Dean (+S)

After checking the weather forecasts I set off in late March on my first visit to the National Arboretum. Joe Hodgson who had visited there twice and still had unfinished business kept me company. My mission was to photograph the plaque for William Stones in the "Shot at Dawn" memorial. Stones is mentioned in my talk "Several Battalion Commanders" and his trial is the subject of our October meeting.

After our 2 hour journey from Preston we arrived in time for several essential sips of coffee before attending the daily act of remembrance at 11.00 a.m. in the Millennium Chapel. This includes Last Post, silence and Reveille. It was followed by short briefing about the Arboretum which was of such perfect duration that the remains of our secreted coffee in the Visitor Centre were at ideal temperature to expedite our mission.

Our campaign plan was to view the Royal Engineers memorial then proceed



separately either side of "The Beat" in the direction of the "Shot at Dawn". In this manner of advance we hoped to miss nothing of significance. Passing memorials to REME, the Logistics Corps, and the Lancashire Constabulary we paused to admire the Royal Tank Regiment plinth bearing a replica WW1 tank.

The statue in honour of the Royal Corps of Signals was the next to be admired before we viewed the Roll of Honour to those members of the Showmen's Guild who made the supreme sacrifice. This included a panel for the Lancashire Section. We then took the shortest route across the soggy turf to the "Shot at Dawn" for photos and planting of poppy crosses provided by Joe.

We then made our way to the centrepiece Armed Forces Memorial via the Soroptimist's Garden. The Memorial has panels remembering those killed each year in conflicts since WW2. It is "striking and emotive and is quickly assuming national significance". From there we negotiated the temporary pathways back to the Visitor Centre for lunch.

In the afternoon we allotted two hours to reach the far flung Western Front

Association memorial and others en route there and back. The Gallipoli Memorial was passed on the right followed by a diversion to the left to view a Bofors (?) Gun on the Defensively Equipped Merchant Ship Memorial. As the wind started to bite we moved north-eastwards along the bank of the River Tame. Partway Joe wisely waited at Special Forces Memorials whilst I went to view the WFA's effort.

I was disappointed to find little to justify the trek. Only a few memorial plaques and saplings were to be seen and I left wondering what further was planned. As Joe and I made our way back to the Visitor Centre for a cuppa before departure we bypassed enough memorials to justify another visit in the future.

Subsequently I have been in contact with Jonathan Dale, Chairman of the Birmingham Branch who is leading on the WFA Memorial. Proposals for "our" memorial have recently been agreed by the National Trustees of the WFA and approved, in principle, by the Arboretum. An £8m appeal has also been launched by the Arboretum to completely revamp the site and the WFA's memorial location could be moved as part of the master plan. A visual of the WFA's proposals is in the supplementary report. The cost is about £120,000.

The National Arboretum would make an excellent venue for a Branch visit. Over to our visit organiser

COLSTERDALE VISIT: Andrew Brooks (+P)

A small party of eleven, from the North Lancs branch and members of the Bradford Mechanics Institute assembled at Masham to be guided by Harry Taylor

through this delightful part of the



Yorkshire Dales.

Our objective was the camp used by the Leeds Pals in Colsterdale but first we visited Masham Station (now a cafe) where the Pals arrived from Leeds before a six mile march up the valley. At Harry's request the cafe owner laid out a vast display of photographs showing the station in 1914. A further stop was made at Fearby village where Shaun (pub landlord) opened up the village hall so that we could examine the WW1 Memorial and photographs. A quick pub lunch and off again up the valley.

The history of this camp is well documented in 'The Leeds Pals' by Laurie Milner and Harry had very thoughtfully reproduced a few to show us what the camp was like in 1914. He then gave us an excellent guided walk round the site. The foundations of all the barracks, toilet blocks etc can still be easily seen.

This was an excellent day out and somewhere that must be visited by all WW1 enthusiasts.

LINESMAN GOES TO FRANCE (& TD) (+S)

On 20th April Linesman (L) had its first journey through the Tunnel to justify my investment in it (for detail of the system see www.greatwardigital.com). The

objective of the trip was the next stage of our cycle odyssey of the Western Front covering the section from la Basse canal to Plugstreet. Initially, however, we sped to woods southwest of Cambrai to view the terrain over which "Several Battalion Commanders" attacked in 1917.

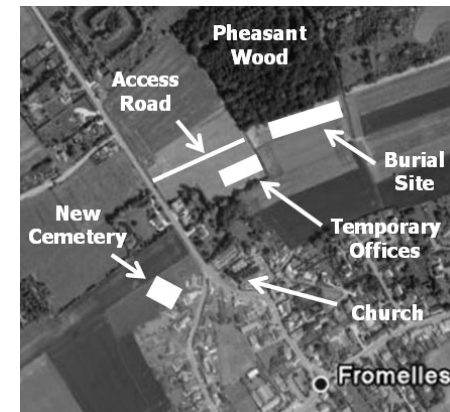
Next day bikes and L were transported from Arras to the 55th Division Memorial in Givenchy where we recommenced our odyssey. Thanks to L we were armed in our map cases with 1:25,000 IGN maps showing the main trench lines and our route for the day. Additionally my PDA (mini-computer) was on my handlebars linked to GPS showing our position on trench maps as we moved along.

A diversion was necessary to get near the Boars Head south of Richebourg and it was here that I noticed the supplementary power cable to my PDA had snapped. This coincided with me realising that viewing the trench maps was not easy in the ambient light conditions when at the same time avoiding pot holes. The broken cable had forced an early conclusion that Linesman trench maps via PDA on handlebars is not recommended!

From Richebourg our outward route was to the north of Aubers Ridge travelling southeast of Neuve Chapelle then through Mauquissant, Fauquissart, Petillon, les Rouges Bancs, le Touquet, and the industrial zone of Chapelle Armentieres to Ennetieres. We called "to say hello" at cemeteries en route and looked for notable grave inscriptions.

Our return to Givenchy was to the south of Aubers Ridge and on reaching Fromelles failed in our quest for a cup of tea but found things happening on the Fromelles project. Work is to start shortly recovering remains of British and Australian soldiers from a mass burial

site to the south of Pheasant Wood. Following preliminary investigations the burial site had been marked by a plaque.



A temporary access road had been built to Pheasant Wood and temporary buildings had been delivered nearby where examination of remains, including DNA testing, will take place. A new cemetery location had been marked out that day in a field opposite the church. Following examination of remains burials will progressively take place in the new cemetery site. When all the remains have been examined and the cemetery completed, probably August next year, it is understood the final remains will be interred and the cemetery commemorated in a special ceremony.

Staying overnight in Armentieres we viewed the impressive environmental improvements that had and were taking place. My friend Trevor, who has a healthy scepticism for mapping systems commented: "If you have ever spent time marking trench lines on a French IGN map from WW1 guide books and not been sure when you get in the field they bear any relationship to reality you will appreciate this software, particularly if your friend buys itoverall a good system". The following morning we started at the New Zealand Memorial (Cite Bonjean Cemetery) and it was here

we became aware of the New Zealand Government's policy on not permitting grave inscriptions.

From there L had our route via Chapelle-d' Armentieres, hugging the front line to Frelinghien from where we sallied north to Plugstreet Wood enduring the poor road conditions for cyclists en route.*Continued on back page*

ONLY A BOY BUT HE GAVE HIS ALL
-Pte W P Edwards (18) Somerset LI

DEAR EDITOR,

Corsehill Stone

You invited comments on your article entitled "CWGC Headstone Mystery" in last November's Despatch.

Almost all WW1 headstones are of Portland stone, although now, any new stones are made of Botticino limestone, it being a more durable material.

There are, however, certainly 4 war cemeteries in France in which the stones are all in red Corsehill stone, Meaulte Military, Courcelles-au-Bois Communal Cemetery Extension, Mesnil Communal Cemetery Extension, Mesnil-Martinsart and Bailleulmont Communal.

This stone was used as an "experiment" to see if it would wear less quickly than Portland stone.

There are also a few known to me in which the stones are mixed, Montreuil aux Lions, Gouy-en-Artois Communal Cemetery Extension, Bleue Maison Military Cemetery, Eperlecques and another (name forgotten!) near Cambrai.

How could this mixing occur?

It seems reasonable to assume that when CWGC decided to trial the Corsehill stone, a number of stones were ordered from the quarry. The bulk were cut and despatched from UK to France and erected in Meaulte, Courcelles etc.

Some of the surplus stones would presumably be used in small communal cemeteries, some being moved into Military cemeteries at a later date. Others were erected alongside original Portland stone at the time the cemetery was made and still exist.

After the war, around 4000 headstones a week were being made to replace the original wooden grave markers. What a task and one which was not completed until 1939.

The Commission's principles that each of the dead should be commemorated by name on a headstone or monument, which is permanent, uniform and with no distinction made on account of civil or military rank, race or creed, have been strictly adhered to. I can think of no reason why the Commission should keep a record of the colour of the stone.

As far as I am aware, there are no red stones in Belgium. Maybe someone has some further information? **David Shackleton**

Note: Roger Bird, of the CWGC at Beaurains, comments that Botticino limestone headstones are not always used in preference to Portland stone. In some conditions Portland stone is more durable. (TD)

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

Everything has been fairly quiet on the "Cumbrian Front" since my last report in issue 2 of the "Despatch." 26 members and friends did, however, enjoy an excellent Christmas Lunch at the "George and Dragon," Dent, provided by one of our members (Gary Kirby) and his staff. This was followed by an excellent, entertaining and illuminating talk by Graham Kemp on "Submarines of WWI."

At my request, Graham wore his 'decadent' waistcoat, with which N. Lancs Branch members will be familiar.

The January Branch meeting was taken up by a talk by Branch Member Frank Walmsley on the "White Lund, Morecambe Munitions Factory explosion and other Munitions Factory explosions." The topic attracted attention from far afield, and we even had a Fire Brigade historian travelling from Ox & Bucks to hear the talk. He has, subsequently, supplied supplementary information about the White Lund explosion. To my mind this, in part, is what the WFA helps to achieve, i.e. bringing together like minded people to share fellowship and knowledge relating to the First World War.

On a more personal note, I attended the lecture in the Guards' Chapel, London on 21 January, when Franky Bostyn, Curator of the Passchendaele Museum, gave the audience a fascinating talk about WWI tunnels under Flanders fields, which were excavated in the 1990's, but which have been sealed again because exposure to the air was resulting in their deterioration. We were told that some of the tunnels are starting to collapse, sometimes with devastating effects, as witnessed by one farmer's wife, who disappeared into one when the floor of one of the farmhouse rooms caved in. I was joined at the Chapel by Peter Donnelly and former N. Lancs Branch Member and now employee of the IWM, Fergus Read.

By the time this article is published Cumbria branch should also have enjoyed a day of fellowship with the North Northumberland Branch, who are scheduled to join us at the Border Regiment Museum and the Solway Aviation Museum. They have very kindly suggested a reciprocal visit to Alnwick,

its castle, the Northumberland Fusiliers Museum and RAF Boulmer; possibly in September.

Lastly I would "plug" our Summer Luncheon (3 courses) and Talks at Hundith Hill Hotel, Cockermouth on Sunday 21 June (10am - 2.30pm), with tea/coffee on arrival, when we will have the eminent speakers, Bryn Hammond (Cambrai 1917 - the myth of the first great tank battle) and Peter Hart (Haig) at a total cost of £16. This is a delightful venue, with magnificent views, and we hope many other branches will be represented, at what should be a good day. The hotel is also offering discounted rates for anyone wishing to stay overnight.

BRANCH AFFAIRS



In the light of Alan Lenord's decision to relinquish his post as Secretary with effect from June Andrew Brooks is considering possibilities for Alan's replacement. If necessary, Andrew will temporarily perform the role of Secretary with help from Barrie Bertram and yours truly. Barrie will take responsibility for the Branch's equipment (laptop, projector, speakers etc) and I will liaise with the WFA on our input to the national website.

Armistice Prize

Following the report in last November's Despatch and discussion at the AGM all public and private High Schools in Lancashire and the southern part of Cumbria up to the northern boundary of the County Palatine were invited by email in late January to submit entries for the

Armistice Prize in 2009. The following points were made to schools:

- Entries can take the form of poems, essays, news articles, artwork, reports of visits, drama, videos and others from eligible pupils.
- Eligible pupils should normally be in years 9 and 10 but submissions can be from pupils in other year groups if the school feels the entry to be particularly worthy.
- Entries should be sent by the Head of History, or equivalent to competition@wfanlancs.co.uk. If it is not possible to email the submission because of its nature, then details of the submission should be described and arrangements will be made for it to be considered.
- Entries can be made at any time up to the closing date of 1st October 2009.

Consideration has been given to the marking scheme for entries. It is anticipated that the scheme will award marks on the basis of:

- Content
- Structure
- Presentation
- Reasoning/understanding and
- Grammar/diction

This should fairly cover the vast majority of submission types mentioned above. However special consideration may be necessary for a submission that is entirely artwork or for any other submissions that do not lend themselves to the marking scheme envisaged.

At the time of writing two schools have sent in a total of six entries.

An email will be sent out shortly to all schools reminding them of the Armistice Prize and giving details of the marking

scheme. The email will also draw attention to this Issue of Despatch which can be viewed on our website. Please do what you can to encourage entries.

Report of Meetings

10th (Service) Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment - Fricourt, 1st July 1916: November 2008

Les McHugh became interested in the 49th West Riding Division as his uncle served with them at Aveluy Wood. After undertaking some research, Les discovered that the 10th West Yorkshires had taken the most casualties on the first day of the Somme. The 10th West Yorkshires were raised in York and fought at Fricourt on 1 July 1916 as part of the 50th Brigade. Les described how, on 1 July 1916, two companies of the 10th West Yorkshires attacked at 7:30 am. Philip Howe, whose account of his experiences is quoted in Martin Middlebrook's "The First Day of the Somme", was in one of these companies. When the other two companies followed, they took many casualties from enfilade fire.

Les showed slides he had taken of the Fricourt area to illustrate the attack. He spoke about the casualties which included Major James Leadbitter Knott DSO (whose body was later exhumed to be reburied with his brother in Ypres Reservoir Cemetery) and the poet Lt A V Ratcliffe. (Gaynor Greenwood)

IT WAS GOD'S WILL IT SHOULD BE SO
AT HIS COMMAND WE ALL MUST GO
Pte J Jones South Lancs Regt

Post Card Messages from the Great War: January 2009

We rightly regard the Great War as the first global conflict, one that saw the combined industrial might of nation cast against nation. In his highly interesting talk on 5th January titled "Postcard Messages from the Great War" however, **Andrew Brooks** reminded us of another facet, that of the explosion of the photographic images that would drop through countless letterboxes carrying words that might appear mundane by themselves.

This mundanity was very soon dispelled as Andrew reminded us of his matchless skills in interpreting this censor's mark or that Forces Post Office number to bring life and character to long forgotten and nameless faces serving in a particular theatre of war or a unit. We heard of a chap writing to his young lady in Norwich telling her that the previous week had been particularly rough, an understatement considering that the Germans had been busy gassing and attacking his unit on the Frenzenberg Ridge during Second Ypres. Andrew recounted the tale of Joseph Wilson seeking to mollify his parents over the news that his brother George was missing at Suvla Bay. We saw the effort, even before the then IWGC busied themselves, made to bring orderliness to the cemetery at Etapes.

One can only wonder at the numbers of postcards that were sent by all sides, and the combined figure must be in the many hundreds of millions. Even with just a score of images from his collection, Andrew must be complimented on reminding us of this feature of the Great War, and that it involved the "little people" just as much as it did the "great and the good". A good talk with which to kick off 2009, and I, for one, am greatly looking forward to his follow up talk 90

years hence on "E-Mails from the Front in the early 21st Century"! (Barrie Bertram)

Battle of Cambrai - 1917: March 2009

With his inimitable style of presentation involving use of overhead projector and map handouts **Niall Cherry** commenced his presentation by describing the background to the November 1917 battle. In April 1917 it had been agreed with the French there would be dual attacks later in the year. A key element for the attack was to be surprise with no advance artillery preparation. Tanks were to make gaps in the German's barbed wire for the following infantry. The Tank Corps looked forward to the chance of the attack over good ground conditions. With poor prospects for offensive taking place at Ypres Haig needed a success when on 13th October he authorised the Cambrai operation.

The attack was launched in dull, misty conditions on 20th November using 476 tanks supported by 289 aircraft, 1000 artillery pieces, 4 Divisions of cavalry and infantry. The plan was for tanks to be used in groups of 3, each group supported by 4 platoons of infantry. Unfortunately on the north flank the attack plan was varied and the tanks also met German gunners who had trained using the guns in anti-tank mode. To the south there were problems in gaining bridges over the St Quentin Canal. The initial 6 mile breach made to a depth of 4000 yards in the German defences could not be exploited. Haig authorised continuing attacks for a week before stopping the offensive. The Germans counter-attacked on 30th November and the battle ended on 5th December.

Niall felt the battle was "just about a victory for the BEF". British casualties were 45,000 compared to the German's

50,000. Two-thirds of the tanks were lost. Delays and hesitation caused the failure. (TD)

V Beach Landings, Gallipoli, 25 April 1915: April 2009

To a full house Peter gave a fascinating and entertaining talk on the V Beach landings, questioning a lot of commonly held beliefs. Turkish forces lacked machine gun capability and were incapable of covering all possible landing sites. W & V beaches had no MGs and only a single company covered each. Only a handful of troops covered Y & X beaches. There was, however, a brigade in reserve to reinforce wherever needed.

The Allied attack was dispersed across five beaches. V Beach, a natural amphitheatre, was not ideal but a plan was devised by Royal Navy Officer Edward Unwin, to run aground on the beach in an old collier, the SS River Clyde, filled with troops. She grounded 80 yards short; other assault troops and sailors, in rowing boats, were subjected to 'murderous fire' on approach and were virtually wiped out.

Attempts commenced to reach the beach from the River Clyde via special gangways fitted either side, and lighters brought forward to form a pontoon bridge from the ship. Unwin and a seaman, William Williams attached a line to the lighters and swam to the beach where they held the line. The troops using this route made an easy target; they took to the water but were soon overcome by the weight of their kit.

After failure of the first attack another attempt was made later in the morning with the same result, as by then, Turkish reinforcements with a few machine guns

had arrived. Unwin won a VC for single-handedly undertaking a rescue mission for the wounded. Many Staff Officers needlessly lost their lives by becoming too involved at the 'sharp end' rather than directing operations. The village was eventually stormed but the Turks had already withdrawn to their next line of defence.

Peter summarised the action as rather than being the British being overcome by insuperable odds, it was the Turks who had the odds stacked against them; the defeat being caused by incompetent planning and stupidity in allowing reserves forces to come up during the battle. (Peter Bamford)

Programme of Future Meetings in 2009

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 Stones"* - David Tattersfield

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

Dec 7th. AGM (7.15 pm) then *"The Greater Game - Sportsmen who fell in the Great War"* - Clive Harris

& Christmas Social

A FAVOURITE POSTCARD:

Andrew Brooks

The card illustrated was drawn in 1916 by Corporal J. Porterfield of the Machine Gun Corps. The card was published and printed by C.W.Kilby of the Rupert



Press in Leicestershire. As well as being a very humorous postcard the message written on the reverse is interesting.

19/4/17.

Dear Ethel,

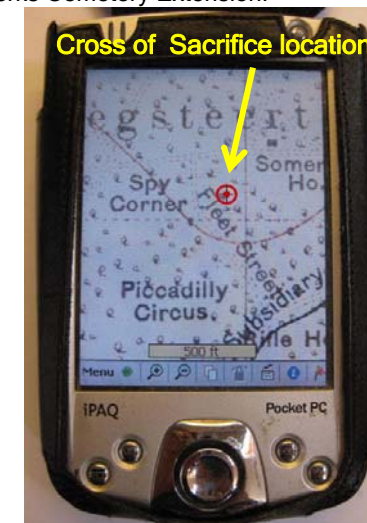
just a card showing the way to "Victory". Just note the reins of this fiery steed. They are a cartridge belt. The lance is a cleaning rod used for cleaning the bore of the gun. The figures represent England, France, Belgium & Australian troops charging Kaiser, Crown Prince, King of Austria with the Turks in full flight. Note the "Tripod". This is a very good picture. I think & I hope you will give it a place in your album

With love from G.M.

Ethel did put the card in her album and many years later I removed it and it is now in my care for a few more years.

Linesman in France (cont'd from Page 19)

Here one of L's last jobs was to pinpoint the Cross of Sacrifice in the Military Cemetery against a 1918 trench map. It was then back downhill to Armentieres via Berks Cemetery Extension.



Western Front Association, North Lancashire Branch

Chairman: Stan Wilkinson

Treasurer: Gaynor Greenwood

Tel: 01524 262302

Tel: 01524 410750

Secretary: Alan Lenord

Editor: Terry Dean

Tel: 01254 812092

Tel: 01772 864182 Mob: 07866 493210

email: secretary@wfanlanacs.co.uk email: editor@wfanlanacs.co.uk

Website: www.wfanlanacs.co.uk