



THE WESTERN FRONT  
ASSOCIATION

Lancashire North Branch

# Despatch

Issue 11: May 2013



This frontispiece is especially for our long serving Chairman who is renowned for his interest in "Old Bill". Read more about the photo inside (Pages 9 & 10) and also about: Private Huggonson on the Queen Elizabeth Grammar School Roll of Honour; Sergt Fredrick Thomas Hemming MM and his story of life in WW1; Bill Myers and his first article on medals; the WW1 photos website; a link with Bailleul's History and Archaeology Association and much more.

## Editor's Musing (+S re Haig funeral)

On 8<sup>th</sup> April my embryonic musing for Despatch was shattered by the news of Baroness Thatcher's demise. I had recently read Gary Sheffield's short account of Earl Haig's funeral in *"The Chief"* (see Page 4) and as events unfolded I mused about the two.

Haig died suddenly in January 1928 and King's Regulations specified the essentials for his funeral. The service was in Westminster Abbey and according to the Times followed a solemn military pageant and silent homage of a multitude in the streets. The Prince of Wales represented the King. (Extracts from the Times are in the supplement).

Evidently much consideration was given beforehand to Baroness Thatcher's funeral, including by the Iron Lady herself. However there was a shadow over what might happen on 17<sup>th</sup> April. It was good to read the Daily Telegraph's report of *"a respectful procession followed by a moving service ... when, to a far greater degree than expected, abuse was overcome by respect, violence by decency, and hatred by love"*.

Following TV and newspaper reports of a WW1 gun carriage being used on 17<sup>th</sup> April I wondered about its provenance. The gun carriage which bore the Unknown Warrior to Westminster Abbey in 1920 also carried Haig in 1928. I suspected it was not the same carriage and this was quickly confirmed by exchange of emails with the Royal Artillery Museum. They have one funeral gun which *"is said was the one that carried the Unknown Warrior ... and it has always held a place of honour in the museum."*

I wonder what historians will write about Baroness Thatcher 80+ years from now.

### MORE INFORMATION FOR ARTICLES WHEN:

(+P) : photos, maps in Photo Gallery,

(+S) : supplementary information report

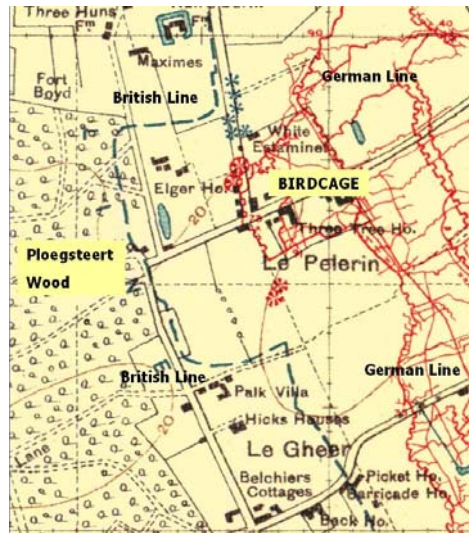
See our website [www.wfanlancs.co.uk](http://www.wfanlancs.co.uk) and look against this Despatch

## QUEEN ELIZABETH GRAMMAR SCHOOL, KIRKBY LONSDALE, ROLL OF HONOUR: c/o Oliver Wilkinson



John Wilfred HUGGONSON, Private, 1934, 1/4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry (Culham College Company)

John Wilfred Huggonson's experience reveals aspects about the First World War, which highlights the multi-faceted nature of the conflict. Through his experience we learn about the mining activity that was undertaken by both sides during the war. The awe that these mines unleashed when they were blown up was stupendous, and Huggonson was witness to one such explosion. In contrast, the circumstances of his death reveal a very different killer of the war: the sniper.



In June 1915 Huggonson's unit the 1/4<sup>th</sup> Battalion Ox and Bucks were in the south-eastern sector of the Ypres Salient at Ploegsteert Wood. The Royal Engineers were mining in this area when it was reported that the Germans were also suspected of

counter-mining close by. It was decided that the British mine, in an area named Birdcage, north of Le Gheer should be made-ready to be blown-up at a moments notice. The Ox's and Buck's helped to carry 5 tons of gunpowder to the mine head in readiness. It was the 6<sup>th</sup> June 1915 when it was decided that the Birdcage mine should be blown to prevent the Germans discovering it. Captain Conybeare with the 1/4<sup>th</sup> Battalion Ox and Buck's described what happened when the mine was exploded:

*"Everything was ready, and we waited anxiously. There was perfect stillness, save for an occasional shot from the Germans...At 10:20 a.m. the ground 150 yards in front of us gave a steady heave, and then suddenly rose something between 120 and 150 feet into the air. There was very little noise - only a sort of swishing sound - made by the earth as it rose and fell. Our own parapet, on the other hand, rocked as if there was an earthquake."*

Huggonson must also have witnessed the awesome power unleashed when the mine went up. The Germans, most probably expecting a follow-up infantry attack, responded with heavy artillery fire. The Infantry, however, had no orders to advance. Nevertheless the Germans remained on edge, and began shelling and sniping at the British every day. The Ox's and Buck's had to live with this constant activity, and it was immediately behind the trenches at a place dubbed 'Hyde Park Corner', where Huggonson was killed on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1915. The war diary for that date is painfully sparse and impersonal:

*"18<sup>th</sup> - Very Hot. Nothing to report. A good deal of shelling on Trench Line. 1 Man in 'B' Coy Killed."*

Huggonson was the unlucky 'B' Company man. He was shot around 8:30 p.m., the offending round being attributed to a snipers bullet or a stray shot. Given the sniping activity occurring in the run up to Huggonson's death the former explanation

seems the most likely. Within 30 minutes of the death his platoon commander penned a letter to John's father describing what had happened. It read:

*"Your son was shot just half-an-hour ago. He could have suffered no pain. We did everything that was possible and the doctor was there a few minutes after he was shot, but he never regained consciousness"* (Lieut. Hugh J. Deacon)

Huggonson was just 23 years of age, and had been victim of that unseen killer: the sniper.

Huggonson stands as one of the most academically brilliant 'old boys' that the school was to lose in the First World War. He was born on 26<sup>th</sup> May 1892 and spent four years at Queen Elizabeth Grammar School between 1905 and 1909. As a young man he was very much involved in the local Leck community in which he lived. He was a member of the Leck church choir, and took part in choral solo completions at the Kendal Festival. Moreover he was an active cricketer in the Kirby Lonsdale team. Upon leaving QES he continued his education at the Storey Institute, Lancaster, studying manual teaching, which seems to have kindled a passion in him for teaching. He subsequently spent time teaching at Grantham, before securing a place at the teacher-training institute of Culham College. Had it not been for the war he would have completed his training there in June 1915. In the event he was killed by that date.

When war did erupt, Huggonson did his duty and joined the Culham College Company of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. He spent the winter training at Chelmsford, and was sent to France with his Battalion landing at Boulogne on 29<sup>th</sup> March 1915. At the front Huggonson regularly wrote home to say that he had been involved in heavy fighting, yet he remained in good spirits, which was indicative of his cheerful nature. A well liked

man by all the officers and men in the regiment and in the Leck community; he was described as a man who would be “much missed.” His potential as a soldier also seems to have been considerable, as his platoon commander wrote that:

*“I feel his loss doubly, as I always considered him one of the best men in my platoon”*

However, like many of the QES ‘old boys’ his potential was cut short by the war. John’s brother and brother-in-law also took part in the war, serving with the 4<sup>th</sup> Border Regiment in India and Burma. John Wilfred Huggonson is buried in the Hyde Park Corner (Royal Berks) cemetery.

IN HIM WAS LIFE AND HIS LIFE WAS  
THE LIGHT OF MEN - Captain Maurice  
Collis-Sandes Royal Fusiliers

## FREDRICK THOMAS HEMMING’S STORY: Terry Dean (+S)

When missing our last January’s meeting through seeking some sunshine in Tenerife I took Gary Sheffield’s “*The Chief*” thinking I could leisurely digest his analysis of Haig and it might result in an article for this Despatch. I never imagined that Sheffield’s masterpiece would result in an approach from a swimsuit clad lady and an article about her sometimes errant father-in-law who gained the rank of sergeant and a Military Medal!

Margaret Hemming seeing my paperback; told me what she could remember of her late husband’s father, including about the account he had written of his WW1

experiences and enlisted my help to find out more about him. I gathered he was a man who stood no nonsense and served in the York and Lancaster’s, a Regiment I knew little about.

In early February I received Margaret’s letter containing her father-in-law’s “A Story of Life in WW1” (see Supplement on our website). Being written in August 1972 at the request of his son it would have suffered from the ravages of memory erosion but on reading the 10,000 word story it contained some interesting vignettes. Margaret was thrilled to learn Fredrick Thomas’s (FT’s) service record had survived the blitz and given me a solid framework around which to tell his story aided by the online War Diaries from the National Archives. Extracts from FT’s story are in italics.



FT enlisted in the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Hallamshire) York & Lancaster Regt on 7<sup>th</sup> January 1915. He was nearly 18, gave his age as 19 and joined the 2/4<sup>th</sup>

Battalion for training. He volunteered when a Draft was needed to join the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion but was not in the 24 picked *so I reported to the O. C. that Pte. Borbridge, who was one of those picked, was underage and that I should take his place which I did. I was only a few months older than him.*

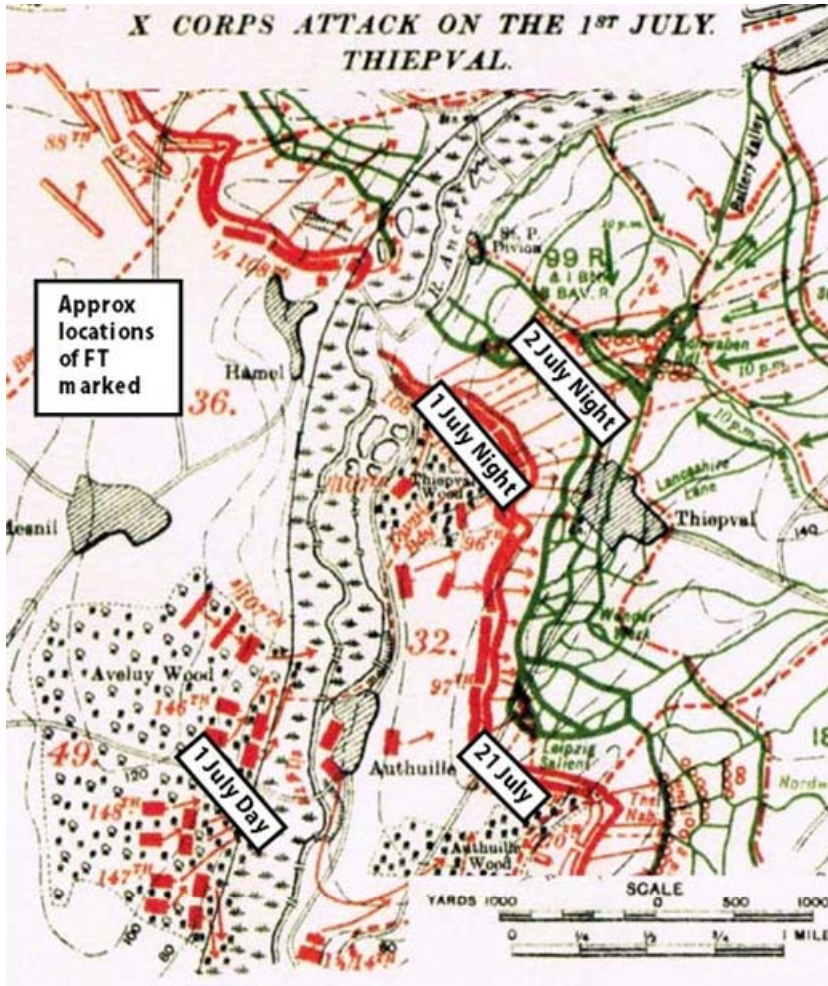
He arrived in France on 29<sup>th</sup> June 1915, joining B Company near Essex Farm. The Battalion was part of 148 Brigade in 49<sup>th</sup> (West Riding) Division. He tells of rest days to Poperinghe and of attending *the opening of the first ‘Toc H’ club by Tubby Clayton the Padre, in an old shop just off the square. Tubby was a grand chap and still is. He used to come round the lines handing out Woodbines and cheer. That’s how he got the name of ‘Woodbine Willie’.* He also tells of the effects of phosgene gas in December

1915 and moving out of the line to Calais where Gen. Plumer congratulated them on their performance in the Salient and told them they were moving to the Somme.

FT was made acting NCO in charge of a squad but in April 1916 he was given 21 days Field Punishment No 1 for disobedience of Battalion Orders. His prison was a barn behind an estaminet in the village of Talmas and his punishment was abated by his platoon mates smuggling food to him and the Madame from the estaminet pouring beer down his throat when tied up.

Apparently he soon got his acting rank

back and could see the build up taking place with lots more artillery, of all calibres, getting positioned and much more troop movement all getting ready for the big push. Contrary to FT's account 49<sup>th</sup> Division were in Reserve on 1<sup>st</sup> July. According to the Battalion War Diary they were ordered to move across the Ancre into Thiepval Wood at 8.45 pm on 1<sup>st</sup> July and report to 107 Brigade. During the night of 2<sup>nd</sup> July B Company (& FT) crossed into the occupied German trenches where they remained for 2 days short of food/water and threatened by Germans along the trench to the left. *I was on sentry duty, laid in the*



*prone position looking down towards the bend in the trench when I thought I saw a movement, but you know that you can stare at an object until you think that it moves. But this time I was not mistaken. First I saw a leg, then an arm then a 'tater masher' and finally a head. I squeezed the trigger, poor 'B'.*

On 20<sup>th</sup> July the Battalion took over trenches in the Leipzig Salient. At 4 am on 21<sup>st</sup> the Germans made a determined bombing attack on 2 saps held by B Company. They penetrated into the trench but were driven out. The Battalion lost 5 killed and 30 wounded. One of the wounded was FT: *I was throwing grenades at Jerry, and my mate, a young chap called Corbridge was pulling the pins out of the grenades and handing them to me when one of theirs came over and landed between me and my mate. He got the worst of it and I got the splashes.... the riding trousers which Billy White gave me were a godsend and prevented many more injuries in vital places.* The most serious wound was to his right hand, and at the end of July he was in hospital at Etaples. In September he was in Kitchener Hospital, Brighton suffering from impetigo.

After home leave he was at Clipstone camp where he was charged with being improperly dressed and confined to barracks



(CB) then went absent from camp to spend Christmas at home. In February 1917 he returned to France and was posted to 6th Battalion York and Lancaster's in 11 Division. His story tells of more trench warfare on the Somme, meeting his younger brother Alg (Alganon, standing in photo) at New (sic) Le

Mines, being a Corporal and how, using his good sense of direction, he saved his patrol when they got lost whilst trying to capture a prisoner.

The last episode in FT's story tells of his involvement in the Passchendaele offensive: *we were ordered to form lines and fix bayonets. I was in the first wave, the second wave would follow about seventy yards behind. Suddenly the Artillery opened up and we got the order to advance. I think that we had made three to four hundred yards but men were falling right and left of me I thought this is it. About thirty yards in front of me I saw three German helmets, the wearers were manning a machine gun which was spitting out death. I dived headlong into a shell hole and threw a Mills grenade at them. I made a bit of a firing position for myself and waited for developments.... There I stayed for five days and four nights and the only good thing about it, as far as I was concerned was that Jerry did not mount a counter attack. During this time I had nothing to eat and my water bottle was empty. On the third day I fished out my emergency ration bag. Later that day I was joined by some men from my platoon, they had spotted me from behind and under cover of darkness they crawled into my hole. That night they were relieved and FT goes on to describe the crawl back to old London buses on the Menin Road and meeting his*



company commander Major R R Willis VC who told him that he had been put on the casualty list after the first day of the attack.

FT's story ends at this point but his war continued. The 6th Battalion Y&L moved south to the area north of Loos where they stayed until August 1918. His service record confirms he was made Corporal on 3rd

January 1918. At the end of August 1918 the 6th Y&L moved to Monchy le Preux and advanced eastwards across the Hindenburg Line. He was promoted to Sergeant on 27th September and his Battalion was at Havay when the Armistice became effective. He was awarded the Military Medal for "Bravery in the field" (Supplement to the London Gazette of 14th May 1919).

Frederick Thomas Hemming died in December 1973 aged 76. Thankfully before then he wrote the story about his life in WW1.

**TO SEE DESPATCH WITH LARGER  
TYPE AND PHOTOS IN COLOUR.  
VIEW AT: [www.wfanlancs.co.uk](http://www.wfanlancs.co.uk)**

#### A FAVOURITE POSTCARD: Andrew Brooks

During the war many organisations sent cigarettes to men serving in the forces and postcards similar to the illustration were placed in the parcel so that the recipient could send thanks to the sender. For most of the war the serviceman was allowed to give his name, rank, regiment etc and it was only towards the end when cards instructed the men not to give any such details. There are quite a few different styles of cards and in each the man is usually shown smoking.



This particular card was issued on behalf of the Birmingham Gazette and the instructions on the reverse of the card indicate that the well-wisher who paid for the cigarettes is named on the front i.e. Mr.

Foster Duggan. Private E. Edwards of the 1/6<sup>th</sup> Royal Warwickshire Regiment replied; *Sir - Just a line or two to say we received cigs safe. And the lads were pleased with them, Yours faithfully, Pte. E. Edwards.*

Private Ernest Edwards 241685, aged 21, was born in Chilton, Buckinghamshire and was living with his parents, Robert and Louise, before he left for the front. Ernest was killed in action on the 27/8/1917 whilst fighting with his regiment (143Brigade 48<sup>th</sup> Division). They were taking part in the Battle of 3<sup>rd</sup> Ypres (Passchendaele) and were attacking near St. Julien. He has no known grave and is commemorated on Panel 23-28 in Tyne Cot Cemetery.

#### WW1 MEDALS - THE 1914 STAR: Bill Myers (+P)

I have collected medals for many years and this is the first in a series of articles for Despatch on medals struck to mark service or gallantry during the First World War. I start with the 1914 Star, also known as the Mons Star or 'Pip' - after a Daily Mirror cartoon dog devised by illustrator Austin B Payne. His army batman went by the nickname of Pip-Squeak. The last living holder of the medal was Alfred Anderson, of the 1/5<sup>th</sup> Black Watch. He was born on June 25 in 1896 and died on November 21 in 2005.

The 1914 Star was established by Special Army Order 350 published on November 24 in 1917. It was noted: *"His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to signify his pleasure to recognise, by grant of a distinctive decoration, the services rendered by His Majesty's military forces under the command of Field-Marshal Sir J.D.P French, GCB, GCVO, KCMG, in France and Belgium during the earlier phase of the war in 1914, up to midnight 22/23rd November 1914."*

It was to go to all those claims approved by the Army Council from officers, warrant officers, non-commissioned officers and men

of the British and Indian Forces. The star could also be claimed by civilian medical staff, nurses and others employed with military hospitals. The key factor was that you had to have served in France or Belgium on the establishment of a unit of the British Expeditionary Force between August 5 and midnight on November 22/23.

inches wide. The vast majority of the stars were not issued until 1919 and 1920.

There was also a clasp and rosette, for those who served under fire, or within the range of enemy mobile artillery. These were issued mostly in 1920 and 1921. The bronze clasp bears the dates 5<sup>th</sup> Aug - 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov 1914 and came with a small silver rosette to wear on a ribbon bar at events when medals were not being worn.

A certificate signed by an officer was needed to support a claim for the clasp, unless you belonged to a list of named units which included the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Border Regiment and the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the King's Own Royal (Lancaster) Regiment.

The normal impressed wording on the back of the 1914 Star is in two lines for officers and three lines for others. The text is in plain 'san serif' capital letters with the exception of awards to the Royal Marines and Royal Naval Division where the letters are slightly bigger and have serifs. Wording will also differ on medals which were claimed later, on medal replacements and on fakes.

The 1914 Star automatically entitles the recipient to the British War Medal and Victory Medal.

Sources vary, but up to 378,000 of the stars were issued. The vast majority are to the army but some went to naval personnel at Antwerp, a few to the Royal Flying Corps and Royal Naval Air Service and a very few to women nurses.

Men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Border Regiment qualified for the 1914 Star as they landed at Zeebrugge on October 6 in 1914. The 1/5<sup>th</sup> (Cumberland) Battalion landed at Le Havre on October 26.

The 1,000-strong 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the King's Own arrived at Boulogne, France, on August 23 and went into action three days later when it suffered 443 killed, wounded or missing. By the end of the qualifying period there had been another 327 casualties and the battalion had received 576 replacements.



Campaign: — B.E.F. 1914. (A) Where decoration was earned.  
(B) Present situation.

Name	Corps	Rank	Reg. No.	Roll on which included (if any)
(A) Dye	K.O.R. Sancil	Pte	10923	H/2/3/44
(B) James Cooper	—	—	—	K.O.R. Lancs R. Pris. of W.

Action taken

MEDAL	ROLL	PAGE
VICTORY	H/2/03 B.4	531
BRITISH	do	do
1914		

Disembarkation Date 23.8.14. 687/570  
(6.34.46) W281—HP590 500,000 4/19 HWV(P240) K008 413143 10VX.

### 1914 Star and Medal Index Card of James Cooper Dye, No 10923 of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion King's Own who arrived France 23 August 1914

It was struck in lacquered bronze with the design incorporating the year 1914 and the qualifying months of August and November. It was sent out by post with a red, white and blue ribbon which was one-and-a-quarter



Today you would be lucky to find a single 1914 Star to the King's Own or Border Regiment for under £75. A quick look at a 1986 dealer's sales list showed plenty of them available to infantry regiments at £7.50.

### Local Men Awarded the Mons Star

Among men entitled to the 1914 Star with regional connections is No 9486 William McLinden, 24, a private with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the King's Own who was killed in action on November 12 in 1914. He was the son of Wilson and Annie McLinden, of 48 Collingwood Street, Barrow. A local newspaper report said he fell at the Battle of Ypres. He is named on Panel 2 of the Ploegsteert Memorial.

Another from the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion and named on the same panel at Ploegsteert is Private James Arthur Richards who was killed in action on October 13 in 1914. He was born in West Bromwich, enlisted in Lancaster and lived in Lord Street, Barrow

Millom's Edwin Chadwick, No 7930, was killed in action on October 24 in 1914 while serving with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Prince of Wales Volunteers (South Lancashire Regiment). He is commemorated on panel 23 of the Le Touret Memorial, France.

Barrow-born Rifleman Patrick Sexton, No 4868, was killed in action on October 23 in 1914 while serving with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the King's Royal Rifle Corps. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Menin Gate.

While the majority of men, or their next of



kin, received the Mons Star in the post, there were postcards produced of a presentation ceremony carried out at Lancaster by General Parker to men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the King's Own on May 11 in 1919.

IN MANNERS GENTLE IN COURAGE  
STRONG: Serjt H Thiems Cameron  
Highlanders

### CAPTAIN WILLIAM PARKER'S WW1 PHOTOGRAPH ALBUM INCLUDING "OLD BILL": Terry Dean

A benefit of volunteering to help in the Lancashire Infantry Museum (LIM) is the access it gives to their collection. Recently



the large WW1 photograph album of **Captain William Parker** of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment (2LNL) emerged from the collection in need

of repair and digitisation. It contains originals and copies of photographs that depict the experiences of the Battalion in WW1.

When war was declared 2LNL were in India and moved to take part in the unsuccessful assault on the Germans at Tanga in East Africa in November 1914. 2LNL then moved to Nairobi and the battalion spent most of the next two years in the area between Lake Victoria and the coast in a series of running skirmishes both with the Germans and with sickness.

At the end of 1916 2LNL moved to Egypt where they spent 12 months recovering from East African campaign. On 1<sup>st</sup> January 1918 2LNL was passed medically fit for active service and at the end of February 1918 the Battalion was at Selmeh south of Jaffa. In early April 2LNL moved briefly to El Mire from

where the Battalion was warned to prepare for a move to France. During early 1918 the Battalion organized concert parties and other entertainment when photos of the "Old Bill" impersonation were taken. The caption under the front page photo is:

***Telegraphic Address "Fed Up"***

*I'm fed up straffing Johnnie here in this  
foreign land  
Where all you get for breakfast is a dixie full  
of sand  
You can keep your Victoria Crosses and all  
your DSOs  
But give me my old woman and a suit of  
civvie clothes*

Two other amusing photos and captions are:



***In the Girl who  
took the Wrong  
Turning***

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

**MUSEUM REPORTS**

**Call to Arms - Lancashire Infantry Museum:  
Jane Davies (Curator)**

Lancashire infantry Museum (LIM) has begun work with the Museum of Lancashire to provide WW1 education sessions at the museum. Due to limited space and staff time, LIM had not been able to provide schools with dedicated education sessions. Thanks to a grant from the Arts Council Sustainable Development fund, this has all changed.

The downstairs store room has been transformed into a WW1 recruitment room with original recruiting posters, attestation



***Charge***

In mid May 1918 2LNL moved to France and after a brief spell with 31<sup>st</sup> Division transferred to 34<sup>th</sup> Division. In July the Division came under command of Tenth French Army on the Marne where it fought three general actions and in the period 22<sup>nd</sup>

and training material decorating the room. During the war Fulwood Barracks was used to recruit men into the East Lancashire Regiment and Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. The men came to the barracks to attest, be presented with their kit and undertake basic training. All of these



elements have been used in the education programme which will take KS2 and KS3 through the whole volunteering process. Using our collections, we will explore the feelings of soldiers and their families and the effects of the war on the people of Preston and beyond. The sessions will develop over time to reflect the course of the war from 1914 to 1918 and the impact of battles and events on both soldiers and their families.

These sessions will be innovative as it appears that no other organisation in the country is using these topics to explore this period of history. The project is also unique as the session will take place in a building that was originally used in the recruitment process.

The class will then move to the Museum of Lancashire where they will experience life as a soldier on the Western Front. Freelance education specialists provided by the Museum of Lancashire will deliver both of the sessions.

The sessions will be available from September 2013.

The room also houses the museum's substantial collection of military history books ranging in date from the War of the Spanish Succession to the modern day. Also available for people to view are Army Orders, Training Manuals and Manuals of Military Law.

If you would like more detail on any of the information contacted in this article please contact Jane Davies at [enquiries@lancashireinfantrymuseum.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@lancashireinfantrymuseum.org.uk).

The archive is available to view Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 10.00 to 16.00 by appointment only.

### **First World War Conference in the Pipeline for Preston, November 2013: Stephen Bull (Curator), Museum of Lancashire**

By the time this journal is in your hands it will be widely known that Preston City Council has succeeded in obtaining funding for, and will probably have commenced, refurbishment of its remarkable First World War memorial on the flag market, a landmark piece designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. What may be less well appreciated is that the total package approved by Heritage Lottery Fund also includes a number of other activities and projects associated with the First World War. Perhaps the one of these most of interest to Association members will be the conference currently in planning, entitled *Finding Identities: Lancashire and the First World War*.

To be based in the University of Central Lancashire, but to include themed visits to the Harris Museum, Museum of Lancashire,

and Lancashire Infantry Museum at Fulwood, the venture is a partnership between the City, County, University, and local regiments. Being mounted on the weekend of 22-24 November, 2013, the conference will be both an effective curtain raiser to the centenary of 1914, a signpost to the newly refurbished memorial, and to the latest research work on films and digitisation. Of interest to both academic researchers, and to the interested public, *Finding Identities* will include both important speakers, and opportunities to learn about the filming of the war in France and at home, reactions to the war and associated subjects. Particularly fascinating is the promise of new evidence regarding the memorial and local casualties.

It is entirely fitting that one of the keynote speakers is planned to be Andrew Robertshaw, formerly of the National Army Museum and TV's *Two Men in a Trench*, and now curator of the Royal Logistic Corps Museum. Andrew's recent work includes not only being historical advisor to Steven Spielberg on *War Horse*, but revelatory investigation of the well known *Battle of the Somme* film from 1916, which features the Lancashire Fusiliers so prominently. 'Sun' readers will also have seen photographs of the 60 foot trench that Andrew has had dug in his back garden. Further information on the conference and booking will be made known when available.

WE DOUBT NOT THAT FOR ONE SO  
TRUE GOD WILL HAVE OTHER NOBLE  
WORKS TO DO: S F Hill Glos Regt

**Manchester Regiment Collection: Larysa Bolton, Archivist**

Work on cataloguing new acquisitions to the Manchester Regiment archive continues apace, and is increasingly punctuated by family history requests relating to First World

War soldiers. This is perhaps not surprising as we approach the beginning of the centenary of this conflict. We are planning to commemorate the anniversary with a volunteering project. We will be recruiting volunteers to do research and also to write up stories about personal experiences in the conflict which will be posted on a blog. Project planning is in progress, so any readers who would like more information or are interested in taking part should contact me on: 0161 342 4242.

We have received two recent donations of printed records relating to the regiment. The first, accession 4224, is a published photograph album of the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion, which includes images of officers and platoons.



The album belonged to 9733 Private Ernest C. Higgins. The 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion was raised at Ashton Barracks in September 1914. Private Higgins' medal index card shows that he first entered a theatre of war (France) on 7 September 1915 - according to our records the 13<sup>th</sup> landed in France on 13 September 1915, being attached to the 148<sup>th</sup> Brigade at Hebuterne until the 18<sup>th</sup> of that month. They spent 22 September to 21 October in the trenches at Foucaucourt on the Amiens-St Quentin road before being despatched to Salonika. Private Higgins received the Victory, British and 1915 Star medals for his service, and also served with the Liverpool Regiment under numbers 252687 and 94429.

The second donation, MR4/25/65, is a published biography of Major John Haworth Whitworth D.S.O., M.C. by W. L. MacKenna, former Chaplain to the Forces. The volume contains transcriptions of his letters from France dated 6 March 1917 to 31 March 1918 which add a



certain immediacy and poignancy to the memoir. Born in Manchester, Whitworth's family emigrated to Kansas for a short time before returning to Cheshire. He studied at Wadham College Oxford before becoming a barrister. He joined the Manchester University Officer's Training Corps (O.T.C.) on 10 September 1914 and after training entered the 2/6<sup>th</sup> Battalion the Manchester Regiment. He spent two and a half years training recruits before leaving for France in March 1917. He mentions his recommendation for a majority and the M.C. in a letter dated 28 July 1917. His citation reveals that Captain Whitworth was awarded the M.C. for action where he showed 'exceptional presence of mind' whilst leading his battalion across a river during a gas shell attack. His D.S.O. was awarded in respect of action whilst serving as an Acting Major in March 1918, for 'conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty when temporarily in command of his battalion'. His commanding officer on sick leave, Whitworth led his men through five days of intense fighting between 21 and 26 March. Losses at this time were heavy - according to the account, only seventeen men survived. He was shot and wounded in the chest on 26 March and was removed to the General Military Hospital at Rouen where he died on Easter Sunday, 31 March.

## **PRESTON REMEMBERS ON ALL FRONTS: Nigel Roberts, Preston City Council (+S, The Story of Preston's War Memorial 1917 to 1927)**

The City Council was successful in its bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund being awarded a grant of £835,600 to help restore the Cenotaph and to raise awareness and understanding of the Memorial and the history of Preston during, and since, the First World War. The project will involve collaborative working between the Harris Museum, Museum of Lancashire and Lancashire Infantry Museum to promote collections relating to WWI and where possible make them more accessible to a wider audience.

The main programme of works to the Cenotaph itself is due to begin at the end of April with a targeted completion before Remembrance Day 2013. The completion of the works will be linked to a national conference on WWI to be held at the University of Central Lancashire in November (see report on Page 11). In addition the City Council is currently in the process of recruiting a project officer to lead on the delivery of the learning and participation elements of the project.

Other elements of the project will include:

- Provision of new interpretative material to link the Memorial with the Roll of Honour in the Harris Museum.
- Provision of training, including heritage building skills, to support young people and former service personnel back into education, employment or volunteering.
- Promotion of improved partnership working between the City's museums and with their community partners and audiences.
- Link with the Imperial War Museum's national First World War centenary commemorations.
- Promotion of Preston's history at a regional and national level.

It was in the late 1990s when I set off to the Public Records Office at Kew with just an army cap badge and First World War memorial card to find out more about my Grandfather's and Great Uncle's First World War service. The internet was in its infancy and travelling was really the only way to find out more information. I thought it would be so easy and imagined I would be coming home with pages of information. I soon realized it was going to be much harder than I had imagined.

After searching though pages and pages of microfilms with no success the helpful people at Kew showed me some Rolls Of Honour to look through. I was absolutely transfixed reading the detailed stories of all these poor brave men and women. They were practically locking the doors around me when I finally left for home. All I could think was how many relatives, just like me trying to find out more information, would have no way of knowing the mine of information available.

I had never been on the internet but headed for the library to have a go. I decided instantly this was the way forward. A royalty cheque arriving for a local history book I had written the previous year made my decision for me. I purchased my first computer and after many sleepless nights trying to get to grips with it all, and the purchase of two Rolls Of Honour, I started [www.ww1photos.com](http://www.ww1photos.com). The names on the site increased and increased and as people purchased photos I bought more with the money. It was very hard work, especially as I was working full time as a nurse, but any grateful emails I received from relatives who had found out information encouraged me to keep going. Now 13 years later I have 37000 photos, obituaries and short records of service available. I still buy new photos with the money I make and try to add a few hundred more each month.

I want so much for people to remember the young men and women whose stories could so easily be forgotten. One such story is that of Lt Terence McManus whose grave is tucked away in an Eastbourne cemetery. He went to France in May 1916 with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Middlesex



Regiment shortly after leaving school. He was wounded on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916 close to the German lines and lay in the blazing July sun for 8 days, with no food and very little water. If he made the slightest movement the Germans fired at him. To relieve his thirst which was the most dreadful part of his suffering, he crawled painfully on his back, at night, dragging his shattered leg, to the bodies lying around him to get any water remaining in their water bottles. At last he was found by a burial party who could not believe anyone was still alive. After being brought back to England he was in hospital for nearly three and a half years when tragically, he finally died of his wounds on 19<sup>th</sup> Dec 1919. He was just 22 years old.

There are thousands and thousands of heartbreaking stories like that of poor Terence still waiting to be told and if through my small part, I can bring one anonymous soldier to life by filling in the gaps of the details of his life and death I feel all the hard work is worthwhile.

ALL YE THAT PASS THIS WAY TELL  
ENGLAND THAT HE WHO LIETH HERE  
RESTS CONTENT: Lieut G M Cartmel,  
Royal Air Force

## BAILLEUL AND WW1: Terry Dean

In last November's Despatch (Page 2) I wrote about the experiences of Billy Bagot with the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. Billy died of wounds on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1917 and when we laid a wreath on his grave in Bailleul Communal Cemetery I happened to meet Gerard Lemaire. In the rain I had a short discussion with Gerard, explained the purpose of our visit and gave him a copy of Despatch.

Shortly afterwards I received an email from Gerard explaining he was a member of Bailleul's History and Archaeology Association and they intended, for the anniversary of the declaration of WW1, to write a book on the life of the people living in Bailleul during the conflict. He went on to say:

*"That the town of Bailleul was during the WW1 a British garrison town from October 1914 to July 1917. A state major was installed in the town hall.*

*Our city located at 15 kilometers of the front line was also a significant center of supply with the railway line, a town of rest for the troops of passage and also a center of care with many hospitals. Moreover the British cemeteries of Bailleul prove it. (Bailleul Communal Cemetery, Bailleul Communal Extension Cemetery and Outtersteene Cemetery).*

*Outtersteene is a hamlet of Bailleul where I was born. These three cemeteries contain approximately 6000 tombs. Our city was occupied twice by German troops. Initially a week in October 1914, then in April 1918 until 31st August 1918.*

*The retaking of the city was terrible. The allies (British and French) bombarded it intensely and made a field of ruins of it. Bailleul was destroyed at 98%. The last inhabitants had left the city a few weeks before the arrival of the German troops.*

*In our next book we want to recall the various stages of the war but also the life of the*

*inhabitants of Bailleul in the presence of the British troops.*

*The inhabitants of Bailleul spoke French but many of them also spoke Flemish, a regional language which certainly facilitated the learning of the English language. Now in Bailleul people do not speak any more Flemish.*

*The nickname of "Hullabaloo" had been given to the town of Bailleul by the British soldiers.*

*Personally I am very interested in research on hospitals and aerodromes which were just beside the Asylum."*

In my reply I told Gerard about my interest in Bailleul's airfields and Laurent Bailleul, the President of a French Association engaged with old airfields, contacted me. Their website is [www.anciens-aerodromes.com](http://www.anciens-aerodromes.com) and they do an interesting monthly newsletter which is available from their website. In the March 2013 Newsletter is an article describing the first German bombing raid on Paris which took place by Lieut von Hildessen in his monoplane on 30<sup>th</sup> August 1914.



In subsequent emails from Gerard he mentioned their quest for WW1 related photos of Bailleul and of soldiers buried in the British cemeteries in Bailleul and Outtersteene. I have offered to do what I can with my link with the Lancashire Infantry Museum but it may be that members of our Branch can help. For example Gerard already has the June/July 2007 Bulletin (78)

article regarding Lieut Parke written by Andrew Brooks. Can readers of Despatch please contact me if have any relevant information or photos which might be of interest to Gerard. Thanks in anticipation.

## WAR MEMORIALS ONLINE: Paul Conlon

War Memorial Online is a project supported by War Memorials Trust and English Heritage.

<http://www.warmemorials.org/>

The project invites members of the public to get involved and submit information about any war memorial that they have seen or visited.

The project is separate from the UK National Inventory of War Memorial and so has differing objectives.

Creating new records or editing existing one is possible with the inclusion of information such as: location, condition, images. Concerns about memorials or notification of any threats to memorials can be reported.

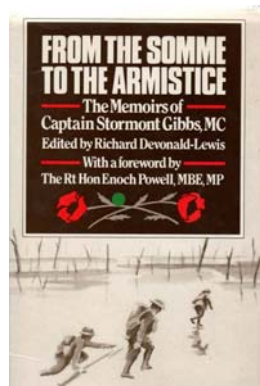
The intention is that as the project continues and more memorials are added then this will generate the addition of further information. The aim is a complete picture for every war memorial in the UK including comprehensive condition surveys.

This project is fairly informal as any member of the public can make submissions however it is hoped that more people will be inspired by it to become volunteers in the war memorial community.

TRANQUIL YOU LIE. YOUR  
MEMORY HALLOWED. IN THE  
LAND YOU LOVED: Lieut Col R C  
Chester-Master DSO & Bar Kings  
Royal Rifle Corps

## "FROM THE SOMME TO ARMISTICE - The Memoirs of Captain Stormont Gibbs, MC": Paul Conlon

I bought this book at a local book fair at a time when I already had a number of WW1 books sitting unread on my book shelves. Consequently this also sat unread for many months patiently waiting its turn.



It was certainly worth the wait as the book gives a very human picture of one officer's experiences starting from the watershed event of the Battle of the Somme.

The format of the book is excellent with the editor taking the narrative of Captain Gibbs memoirs and writing the story the 4<sup>th</sup> Suffolk's around this. It would appear that the memoirs were written about 12 years after the war purely from memory and consequently there are many inaccuracies in his recollection.

Rather than detracting from the value of the story this adds a very real human element to the book, elevating it from just another regimental history.

At one point he is relating an incident in which he was accompanied by 2 fellow officers and the regimental records show that one of the officers had in fact been killed a number of months before.

Captain Gibbs was apparently shy and retiring in later years although whether this was his true nature or partly as a result of his war experiences can only be speculated at. However I think this means he shields the reader from the more awful aspects of the fighting and trench conditions. This is possibly no bad thing as he only makes



passing references to such issues as the terrible stench of death surrounding them during the height of the battles.

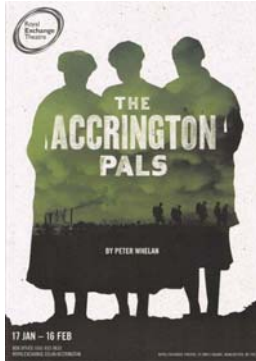
## THE ACCRINGTON PALS: Terry Dean

After hearing about the Blackpool Training Trenches on 4<sup>th</sup> February (See report Page 25) my following evening's learning experience and entertainment was in the Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester. Director Paul Dacre's opening scene with rain falling on cobblestones and a knocker-up in Accrington set the tone for his production of Peter Whelan's 1981 drama about the events of 1915/16 in the town and on the Western Front.

The cast of 5 women and 5 men performed wonderfully to show how war impacted on the community with women being liberated as the men prepared to leave for training. My attention drifted only briefly when the females gossiped but the action after the interval was gripping.

Following portrayal of the Pals attacking on 1<sup>st</sup> July the women gathered to read the first newspaper which reported of a successful assault, capture of German trenches and little mention of casualties. Only Eva, who had consummated her love for the doomed Ralph, challenged the glorifying account. As reports were received foretelling of the casualties received by the Pals she led a campaign to the Town Hall for the truth.

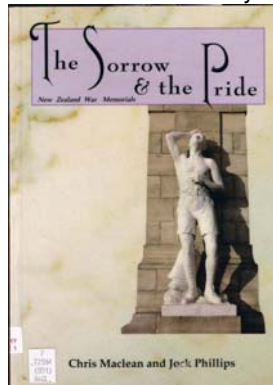
I gather there are no plans to repeat the performance elsewhere which is a pity given the coming 14-18 Centenary, but I would not be surprised if there is a change of mind.



## LINESMAN GOES DOWN UNDER: TD (+P)

In January I contacted Elizabeth Morey the Chairperson of the WFA in New Zealand to tell her I would be making my first visit to NZ with the main purpose of watching cricket. Also I told her that each year since early 2009 I had produced an article for the May Despatch entitled "Linesman goes to France" and, to maintain tradition, I planned a similarly titled article but reporting on any memorials, museums etc of interest. I sought her help/ideas on any particular places to visit.

Elizabeth drew my attention to the excellent "The Sorrow and the Pride: New Zealand War Memorials" by Chris Maclean and Jock Phillips and to proposals at the New Zealand National Memorial in Wellington. She also commented that:



*"In just about every town in NZ there is a war memorial. Some are the usual sort with a plinth and soldier or similar. However, in some small towns the memorial takes the form of a local community hall, or the gates to a park, or the gates to the local rugby fields, or a park or gardens. So as you are driving through towns, just keep a watch out."* Prior to leaving UK I also spent time on [www.nzhistoryonline.com](http://www.nzhistoryonline.com) to identify memorials on our planned itinerary.

I arrived in NZ with 2 former work colleagues (and Linesman on my smartphone). Trevor, a narrator in all my WW1 presentations, would be cricket watching like myself whilst Garth would be visiting relatives.

With a spare day in Dunedin prior to the start of the first Test my objective was some exercise to offset the inactivity of 24 hours on a Boeing 777. The soaring Cenotaph unveiled by the Duke of York in 1927 was an obvious starting point and adjacent to it I found a plaque honouring the New Zealand recipients of the Victoria Cross.



From there I trekked round the harbour and out onto the Otago Peninsula viewing the Memorial Gate outside the Anderson Bay School en route to the Otago Peninsula Fallen Soldiers' Memorial.



This stands dramatically on a huge jutting rock some 225 metres above sea level and is visible from much of the peninsula. In fact for the next few days I could see it on the hillside in the distance as we walked from our motel to the University Oval.



Another subsidiary interest on our NZ visit was railways and an afternoon escape from cricket was on the Taieri Gorge Railway from the magnificent Dunedin Station with its memorial to the fallen railwaymen in WW1.

Missing the last day of the 1<sup>st</sup> Test to see some sights on South Island we travelled by bus to meet up with Garth and his cousin Sue Sutherland and whilst touring were told about the effects of WW1 on her family. Her grandfather was a Church Minister in Dunedin who lost two sons. James Fulton Sutherland was killed at Messines on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1917 and his younger brother Clair Nelson Sutherland (a twin) fell 4 months later on the blackest day for the ANZAC Corps when they attacked Passchendaele on 12<sup>th</sup> October. Sue also told me about the father of her friend who survived the sinking of the submarine E2 in the Dardanelles.

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The stunning sight of "the Remarkables" and gorgeous views from TSS Earnshaw on Lake Wakatipu were experienced on arrival at Queenstown. The location of the memorial beside the lake reminds tourists of the sacrifices of the Queenstown community.



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The memorial is unusual. On one side are the names of those who died in service whilst the other side carries the names of all who served.

Next day we travelled towards Mount Cook through the Crown Range on the highest surfaced road in NZ and at Wanaka paused in the small park above the town to admire the view from the memorial looking northwards up Lake Wanaka (see back page).



The lunchtime stop was at Omarama where the township had

placed a huge rock outside the Police Station in 2010 to bear memorial plaques to the dead of WW1 and WW2.

The Aoraki Motel was our base for viewing Mount Cook and next morning we motored north-eastward to Christchurch viewing memorials at Fairlie, Gapes, Geraldine and Ashburton. Christchurch was an intermodal transfer location with no opportunity for sightseeing and before dawn next day we boarded the train on the coastal route to Picton which was another intermodal point. Trevor and I crossed the Cook Strait to Wellington on North Island whilst Garth and Sue took a rental car to her home near Nelson and not having to worry about "missing the boat" Garth kindly took a photo of the Picton War memorial.



The Basin Reserve, the location of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Test, is overlooked by the National War Memorial which features a Carillon, Hall of

Memories and the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior. For my visit the Memorial was covered with scaffolding and red sheeting to facilitate refurbishment and earthquake



strengthening. Also the main road in front of the Memorial had been temporarily diverted to allow the road to be placed in a tunnel above which will be a National War Memorial



Park. This is the Government's key project to acknowledge the centenary of WW1 and will be completed in time to be the centrepiece of Anzac Day commemorations in 2015.

After 3 days of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Test Garth joined us and we drove to Auckland airport with overnight stops at Napier and Rotorua. En route to Napier we paused at Greytown to view the avenue of 117 lime trees and park gate commemorating the dead of WW1 which was featured on TV during our stay in Wellington.



Stopping for lunch at Pahiatua we viewed the memorial and on visiting the second-hand book shop I added a battered



original 1917 copy of Major A Corbett-Smith's "The Marne - and After" to my collection (an interesting read). Travelling via Dannevirke we reached Napier with time to wander and view the Art Deco architecture following the 1931 earthquake which levelled the town.



We also saw the Napier Cenotaph



The last 2 days of our stay in NZ were devoted to viewing the natural features (lakes, geothermal areas, waterfalls etc) but prior to leaving Rotorua the gardens and memorials near our hotel beckoned.

In addition to the cenotaph there is an unusual WW1 memorial built by the Arawa. It has panels telling the story of the Arawa which reflect the complexity of Maori mythology.

It was a fitting last memorial to be viewed being unveiled by the Duke of York in 1927 like the Cenotaph visited in Dunedin at the start of our NZ visit 2 weeks earlier

I CANNOT SAY AND WILL NOT SAY HE IS DEAD HE IS JUST AWAY: Corp W C McBride 58th Bn Canadian Inf

### MADEMOISELLE FROM ARMENTIERES: Peter Denby

In the May 2011 Despatch I wrote about a recent visit I had made to the grave of my great uncle, John Edwin Denby, who died of wounds at the Casualty Clearing Station at Bethune on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1915. He is buried in Bethune Town Cemetery. In that article I mentioned the footnote in the history of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) which Bethune Town Cemetery has.

Last month I paid a return visit, this time taking my brother with me. Our base for a few days was an *ibis* hotel in Lille, having travelled there by Eurostar. Lille was an excellent choice, this 2004 European capital of culture having many excellent museums and galleries and being well placed to do a bit of Great War sightseeing.



(1920s War Memorial in Central Lille)

For 45 Euros each we bought a three day tourist pass, which gave us unlimited travel on the highly efficient public transport system (all buses, trams, metro and regional trains), and admission to all local, and many regional, places of interest.



**(Cathedral Plaque, Bethune)**

In addition to visiting Bethune by train one afternoon we took a tram to the satellite town of Tourcoing, where we found a notable French First World War memorial, as featured in our Berlitz guidebook -



*"Tourcoing's impressive World War 1 memorial on Place de la Victoire crowns the entrance to the town from Roubaix. Sculpted in white stone by Lucien Brasseur in 1924-1931, it is an unusually dynamic monument, as figures of the fallen climb in pyramid formation behind a figure of Victory on a winged horse".* The names of the fallen are inscribed on tablets around the memorial.

Amongst our other trips, we went by bus to Armentieres, primarily to go up the splendid Belfry there which gives panoramic views towards Messines and the Monts de Flandres.

In the tourist information centre at



Armentieres the lady directed us to a 20 minute walk to the Cite Bonjean CWGC Cemetery, and when we jokingly asked where we could find ourselves a mademoiselle, she pointed us in the direction of the military section of the town cemetery, where the mademoiselle is indeed commemorated. The lady went on to explain that the song is anecdotally based on an incident when an English officer made an inappropriate gesture towards a young lady of the town, who replied by giving him a firm slap to his face!

My last visit of the trip was to the house in the old town of Lille where Charles de Gaulle was born, and which is now a small museum.

**SOMEBODY FELL AS THE CHOSEN  
FALL SOMEBODY'S ONE AND ONLY:  
Lance Corp Bernard Richardson, 13  
Kensington Btn, London Regt**

### **Occasional Day**

Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June. Shap Wells Hotel (just off the M6).

3 speakers:

Dr Jim Beach - Sir Cuthbert Headlam and his 1<sup>st</sup> World War.

Barry Kitchener- Railwaymen who served in the 1<sup>st</sup> World War

& Dr Bryn Hammond- A brand new talk.

Carvery lunch.

Contact Martin Simpson email address [mcsimps2002@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mcsimps2002@yahoo.co.uk)

Or telephone 01229 230026

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Meeting Penrith British Legion,

22 August at 7.45pm

Neil Hanson: The Blitz on London and Paris 1914 to 1918

### **BRANCH AFFAIRS**



Supported by

**The National Lottery**<sup>®</sup>  
through Awards for All



### **ARMISTICE PRIZE 2013**

When finalizing Despatch no entries had yet been received for 2013 but on checking [competition@wfanlancs.co.uk](mailto:competition@wfanlancs.co.uk) there was an email dated 26<sup>th</sup> April advising of the need to make special arrangements to collect the first entry. At this time last year there were no entries.

I circulated all schools last December inviting entries for 2013 and will shortly be sending out a reminder. Hopefully with the "Centenary" approaching there will be more entries than last year when 7 schools submitted a total of 76 entries.

The closing date for entries is 1<sup>st</sup> August and can readers of Despatch please do what you can to encourage entries. Details of the competition are on our website.

### **The Pig's Trotter Tour: November 2012 (25 attended)**

Here we go, the audience thought, would this be yet another a tale of comic capers from the Branch's own **Stan and Ollie Wilkinson**, who were 'On the Loose', aided and abetted as ever by their director, Andrew (I should stress not Mel) Brooks. Stan started out by waxing lyrical on culinary matters, and in particular about our intrepid 'Bacon Grabbers' dining out on pig's trotters in St Menehould. For my own part, I would have preferred to start with 'Duck Soup', and then gone 'From Soup to Nuts', and so, I wondered if they had set off for France and were now 'On the Wrong Trek'. However, following a dodgy joke about a nun (I hope that he doesn't make a habit out of it), Stan was to 'Come Clean' by reminding those present that the real purpose of the tour was to visit the St Mihiel Salient and the Vosges.

The talk therefore was an account of the numerous places that were visited, along with a number of photographs and a couple of video clips. At the outset, the point was made that, for British visitors to the Great War battlefields certainly, the Ypres Salient and the Somme tend to be magnets, and comparatively few venture far beyond those areas of France and Belgium. This is a highly valid point, and as Stan pointed out, the French (and the US) sectors offer much in terms of their history, and also, the scenery which differs considerably from the comparative flatness of Flanders and the chalk downlands of the Somme. One only has to compare the Grand Ballon with the Butte de Warlencourt say, to realise that, geographically at least, the latter is a mere molehill.

While the pinching out of the St Mihiel Salient in September, 1918 is better known, the Vosges area has far less said about it,

and there was continuous fighting, albeit on a smaller scale, than in other French sectors, throughout the War. As the photographs showed, much of the defensive works such as trenches, observation posts and the ever present barbed wire remains, while the views on both sides of the line demonstrate the importance of holding the high ground. At some 4,000 feet and more, the views looked superb, while a visit is not for the faint-hearted with the odd cliff or two to fall down, and even some of the audience were spotted fearfully clinging to their chairs lest vertigo set in! As one might expect, these areas abound with war memorials and there are a number of French, German and US cemeteries to be found. Looking through the Holt's Battlefield Guide for the 'Western Front - South' subsequently, St Mihiel is well covered, so perhaps our trio should prepare an itinerary for the Vosges that might be useful for other Branch members?

Following the Vosges, and a detour via Douaumont, our 'Men O'War' wanted to be like 'Chickens Come Home' and thus headed for the all too-familiar Salient and Talbot House, from where they would then sally out to eat the Poperingheans (Is that a good word? Alright then, the Belgians!) out of house and home. One notices from the account that they did not loiter long at Verdun, was this because they feared the sudden revival of that town's eunuch trade?

In conclusion, to correct any misunderstanding, it should be pointed out that Stan and Ollie are, of course, Wilkinson Major and Wilkinson Minor. But, there is the serious point from the talk being that the fighting was not constrained to the sectors held by the British, and that we should be going further afield to understand what happened elsewhere and to appreciate the nature of those battlefields, and not least understand what our Allies suffered.

Postscript: Having sat back to let Stan do all the hard work, there was a sudden rustling of paper signifying that Andrew was now springing into action! It was the dreaded quiz that was circulated around an audience, still mentally digesting Belgian frites. And, actually it was rather good fun. The quiz I mean! Perhaps there is an idea lurking in this for a few meetings each year that gets attendees to participate in some form or another. (Barrie Bertram)

HE LIVED AND DIED A GOOD LAD AND  
A GALLANT SOLDIER: Lieut L K Swann  
MM Aus Flying Corps

#### **A.G.M: December 2012** (24 attended)

Chris Payne reported that whilst income was little changed, expenditure had risen considerably therefore Branch reserves were reduced. As a result it was agreed there should be a one-year moratorium on donations to other organisations. Budgets were also agreed for other items of Branch expenditure. Efforts would also be made to increase the numbers of people attending meeting and at the same time entrance donations to meetings would increase from £2 to £3 (£1 rate maintained for those in full time education).

On a more positive note it was reported that the national WFA had agreed to contribute £250 towards the cost of operating the Armistice Prize competition in the two year period 2013-2014.

#### **A Display of WW1 Printed Ephemera: January 2013** (31 attended)

This was an exhibition of selected material from **Andrew Brooks'** extensive collection of memorabilia rather than our usual lecture format.

Each of the three displays was preceded by a short introduction to the included topics, after which the audience was invited to come



forward for 10 minutes or so to look at, read, and get 'hands on' with the exhibited material (which could be removed from the display boards for individual scrutiny). The display boards were then swapped over ready for the next display and accompanying brief introductory talk.

It was a pity this interesting display was Andrew's 'swansong' presentation to us.

#### DISPLAY 1- Field Service Postcards 1914-1918 / Overland Route to the East 1917-1919 / YMCA

The first board of this six board display showed a variety of Field Service Postcards.

Andrew explained that during the Boer War the censoring of soldiers' communications home had proved very onerous and labour intensive, and so to lessen the burden of censorship in future conflicts it was decided to pre print postcards - soldiers would simply delete passages that did not apply so leaving short factual sentences needing little or no censoring. Some of the cards had comic passages, but no additional freehand text was allowed (other than short seasonal greetings when appropriate).

There was outrage at the initial levying of a one penny postage to send these cards home, and so on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1914 postage was made free.

Incidentally, at the end of the war millions of these cards were put into storage, and were brought out for use by the BEF in 1939.

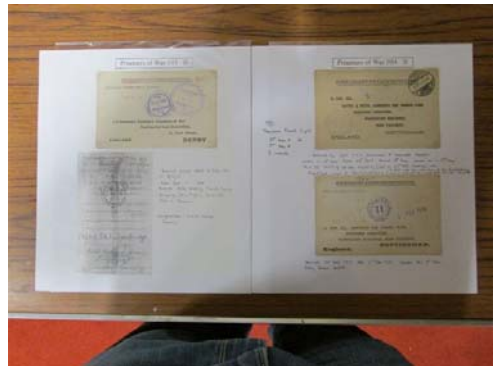
\*\*\*

By the end of 1916 enemy submarine activity in the Mediterranean had made sea passage to and from Macedonia and other eastern theatres of war hazardous, and so the War Office decided to establish an overland route from Cherbourg to Taranto.

This route was reconnoitered in January and May 1917, and the second board of this display showed a pictorial record of the route as shown by postcards collected along the route and sent home by a member of the reconnoitering team.

\*\*\*

The final part of our first display was four boards showing YMCA memorabilia, taken from Andrew's 'Postal History 1914-1918' collection.



#### DISPLAY 2- Soldiers Died in the Great War / Officers Died in the Great War / In Memoriam Cards / Re-directed Mail 1914-1918

Given the huge number of deaths in the war, a search of the records of 'Soldiers / Officers Died in the Great War' using names of servicemen taken from Andrew's collections of postcards, letters and telegrams would be expected to find entries for many men who had died in the war. To narrow the searches, names could be supplemented by other information about the



men which could be gleaned - e.g. from cap badges shown in photographs.

Moreover Andrew pointed out that postcards and letters sent home by soldiers were more likely to have been kept (as treasured items) by families if the soldier had been killed, and so, Andrew reasoned, if anything his collection ought to include an even higher number fatalities than might otherwise be expected.

This has proved to be so, and a set of boards in this display showed the entries in 'Soldiers / Officers Died in the Great War' for an interesting selection of men drawn from his collections.  
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A set of 'In Memoriam' cards relating to war fatalities was also exhibited.  
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Letters sent from home to a soldier overseas would be redirected if the soldier had moved on to another location.

Sometimes the soldier had been killed before the letter reached him, and - against protocol - such letters might be returned to the sender marked 'deceased'. The display showed some such letters. Needless to say returned letters marked in this way would cause great distress to those at home, especially if the returned letter arrived before official notification of a death.



### DISPLAY 3- Prisoners of War

The third display (of six boards) showed postcards and letters sent by, or to, prisoners of war. Whilst Andrew's collection mainly relates to British pows held in Germany, he also has material relating to Germans held in Britain and Austro-Hungarians held captive in Russia (as we know from Andrew's talk 'POWs in Russia', October 2012).

The exhibited selection included 'inventory' cards which were included in Red Cross parcels to be sent home by the captive recipient to confirm safe arrival of a parcel and its contents. (Peter Denby)

IN THE PERFECT FLOWER OF A  
GLORIOUS MANHOOD HE GAVE HIS  
LIFE FOR US - Gunner A Wallace RGA

### **The Blackpool Training Trenches: February 2013 (31 attended)**

**Nigel Neil** of Neil Archaeological Services (and a WFA Branch member) gave an excellent talk on these 1916/17 training trenches at Blackpool. Although many of the members present had vaguely heard about this exhibition and perhaps seen some of the contemporary picture postcards, they could not have realised the scope and area covered (close to the present day South Shore Amusement Park) until it was revealed by Nigel's exemplary research.

With very little information available Nigel had tracked down sources from many areas; a copy of the 1916 Guide book (with the help of Dr. Stephen Bull) was found, aerial photographs and Google Earth pictures were displayed and numerous postcards and newspaper cuttings helped to illustrate the talk. His research was not limited to this particular exhibition and many other examples were quoted. Probably the most famous of which were the practice trenches open to the public in Kensington Gardens,

London. These were derided by Wilfred Owen who said of them 'they were the laughing stock of the army'.

Luckily nearly one hundred years later the site of the exhibition has not been built over and is now known as Watson Road Park which had been laid out in the 1920's long after the event was over and all the trenches backfilled. With the help of his archaeological skills Nigel has used modern techniques to plot the trench system that was constructed in the sandy soil by 3<sup>rd</sup> Line Battalions of the Lancashire Regiment in 1916.

The exhibition was opened to the public on the 10<sup>th</sup> June 1916 and from an existing plan view it can be seen that many of the trenches were named after those used during the spring battles around Neuve Chapelle in 1915, even though the exhibition was called the 'The Loos trenches' after the battle in October 1915. In 1917 the exhibition re-opened as 'The Arras Trenches' after the April 1917 battle near this French town.

Once the trenches had been laid out in 1916 the Commanding Officer of the nearby convalescent hospital, Colonel Netterville Barron agreed that men from the hospital would take over the trenches and look after them as well as acting as guides to the public. An admission charge of 6d was made and all the proceeds went to the hospital. Over 20,000 people visited in 1916 and many purchased the picture postcards showing every aspect of the trenches and their machine-gun posts.

This was a thoroughly entertaining and instructive talk and Nigel was congratulated on all his original research. (Andrew Brooks)

### **Chinese Labour: March 2013 (26 attended)**

**John Restorick** gave a well illustrated presentation on the Chinese Labour Force (CLF). By 1916 the need for skilled and unskilled labour on the Western Front had become critical and help was sought from all

corners of the Empire and beyond. Recruitment was most successful in Shandong province with terms offered including payments four times greater than the average local income and by the end of the war over 106,000 labourers had served in France.

On arrival at the assembly point (a disused silk factory) volunteers were stripped of their clothing and doused in disinfectant. Between 30 - 60% were rejected on medical grounds very similar to those in the UK: poor feet and teeth. Each man was issued with an aluminium ID bracelet on which was a 5-digit number and a Romanised version of his name. The traditional pigtail (queue) was also removed.



**(CLF battalions at Tsingtao before embarkation)**

The labourers were formed into Companies with a British officer and platoons had either British or Chinese NCOs. The usual transportation route was across the Pacific to Vancouver and thence by train to Halifax, NS, the latter taking about a week. The Atlantic crossing took them to Plymouth or Liverpool, followed by a train journey to Folkestone and the Channel crossing. In total the journey could take 3 months! The 'Chinese' transports were unknown to most Canadians. Fearing that some may 'jump train', the Chinese were under armed guard in sealed carriages until they reached the east coast.

A wide variety of manual work was undertaken but many also became skilled mechanics and worked on tanks repairing engines, damaged track plates and devising tank sledges. The Chinese were recognised as being the most efficient of all the recruited

non-allied labourers. The CLF were segregated into special camps and thus were rather immobile as a force. However, as their worth became increasingly recognised their spread was widened and, at the end of the war, they played an especially important role in battlefield clearance.

The last Chinese left Europe in 1920 with an estimated 2000 settling in France, especially skilled men who could make a good living. There is no accurate record of the number of Chinese who lost their lives on the Western Front from either disease (including the flu epidemic of 1918-19) or the effects of war. There are many cemeteries containing Chinese graves and each headstone bears the name, number and one of four inscriptions: "Faithful unto Death", "A good reputation endures forever", "A noble duty bravely done" and "Though dead he still liveth".

Many returning Chinese labourers slipped back into their old lives almost un-noticed but the possible political impact as a passive influence in the emergence of Communism has become one field of study in the recent re-awakening of interest in the CLF in both China and Europe. John's talk was followed by discussion of many aspects of this little-known subject. (c/o Tricia Platts)

### **The Italian Front and the British in Italy: April 2013 (30 attended)**



In his marathon tour de force **John Chester** explained how Italy moved from being part of the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary in 1914 to securing victory in

November 1918 with the Allies.

Following the secret London Treaty promising them Trentino and land on the

Adriatic Italy declared war on Austria-Hungary in early 1915 and attacked across the border. The Austro-Hungarians fell back to prepared defensive positions. With the aid of numerous photographs John described the subsequent fighting in awesome mountainous conditions between Cadorna's Italian troops and Conrad's Austro-Hungarian army from different backgrounds and languages. Soldiers had to wear skis, get used to heights and low temperatures. 20,000 Italians died in avalanches. Supplies were transported by ropeways. It took months to get artillery into positions to support attacks. Italian women carried shells up to gun positions.

In October/November 1917 Austria attacked with German help and broke through to the Piave River with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Italian Army disappearing. French and British help was sought Cordona used decimation to stiffen the resistance of his troop with official estimates of Italian executions being 700 and unofficial estimates 25-55,000.

Cordona was replaced by Diaz who "repaired" the Italian Army. 2 French and 5 British Divisions took up positions under General Plumer. The Italians visited the British trench lines which transformed warfare in Italy.

John went on to describe how Lord Cavan, who had taken over command of British forces from Plumer, mounted the attack to capture the island of Papadopoli in the Piave River in Autumn 1918 which facilitated the Allies advance and Armistice on 4<sup>th</sup> November. (Terry Dean)

MY BOY IS SLEEPING HIS LAST LONG  
SLEEP HIS GRAVE I MAY NEVER SEE:  
Lance Cpl W J T Kelly MM 1st Bn  
Australian Inf

## WANAKA WAR MEMORIAL: Terry Dean

Of the war memorial photographs I took in New Zealand my favourite is that at Wanaka which records the 15 soldiers from the region who were killed in WW1. Set in a small park above the town there are impressive views over the 30 mile long Lake Wanaka.

Reading about NZ's memorials before my visit I envisaged the Otago Peninsula Fallen Soldiers Memorial (see Page 18) was likely to be the best I would capture. However I had not reckoned for the imposing barbed wire electric fencing on the approach to it which severely limits photography and gives a nasty shock should your camera strap come into contact with it!!



### PROGRAMME OF FUTURE MEETINGS (ALL MEETINGS ON THE FIRST MONDAY OF THE MONTH AT 7.30 PM)

**June 3<sup>rd</sup>:** *"Mesopotamia"* - Alan Wakefield  
(IWM, author and Chairman of the Salonika Campaign Society)

**July 1<sup>st</sup>:** *"Treading the Duckboards: Military Concert Parties"* - Kate Wills  
(Northamptonshire W.F.A.)

**Aug 5<sup>th</sup>:** *"Stories of the RN fight against the U boat"* - Graham Kemp (N Lancs W.F.A.)

**Sept 2<sup>nd</sup>:** *"Double Eagles"; Americans killed while serving with the Royal Flying Corps 1914-1918* - Michael O'Brien (Lancs & Cheshire W.F.A.)

**Oct 7<sup>th</sup>:** *"Women who fought on the Western Front"* - Lesley Wright

**Nov 4<sup>th</sup>:** *"Futureshock: Tales from the Devastated Zone" - The German Retreat to the Hindenburg Line, 1917* - Rob Thompson

**Dec 2<sup>nd</sup>:** *"A.G.M. and Christmas Social"* - An invitation to members to speak for ten minutes on any WW1 topic.

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