



THE WESTERN FRONT  
ASSOCIATION

Lancashire North Branch

# Despatch

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c/o Cumbria Archive Service (Carlisle)

On 18<sup>th</sup> September 1919 General Sir John Cowans (above) received the acclaim of the crowd after receiving the freedom of the City of Carlisle for his great service to the Commonwealth as Quartermaster General throughout WW1. Starting on Page 4 is the second part of his story from August 1914 until his early death on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1921. Also read inside about Preston's losses in the battle of Jutland; a 1915 Christmas story by Company Sergeant-Major James Fleming MC DCM; postcards concerning conscription; major events December 1915 to May 1916; reports from museums; the 2015 Armistice Prize winners and more.

It was in summer 2014 when Adrian Kay, the compiler of a database of Preston's WW1 soldiers, asked me where he might find information about the experiences of a new recruit after volunteering. Ian Riley, curator of the Liverpool Scottish museum, suggested the book entitled *Kitchener's Army* as a suitable starting point for Adrian. I never imagined that my reading of our President's 1988 masterpiece would result in the consumption of so much of my own time in the following 15 months.

As I reported in last May's *Despatch*, Peter Simkins' words about the outstanding officer who held the position of Quartermaster General for the whole of WW1 captured my thoughts and caused me to write the first part of my story about General Sir John Steven Cowans. Part 2 reveals the towering job he had which was fascinating to uncover in all its aspects as well as his work and other experiences both professional and otherwise.

One aspect that particularly interested me was his management style. It reminded me of the management courses I attended when working. Together with his own ability to monitor and grip key tasks he stood or fell by the capabilities of his senior managers and I have included photos of a few. However my failure to locate a photo of Major General Sir Charles Ernest Heath who held the position of Director of Quartering before combining that role with Deputy Quartermaster General is frustrating and it remains on my search list.

As Despatch came together on my computer I realised it was, at 36 pages, the largest yet. I hope readers enjoy reading it.

(+P) or (+S) after article title indicates more photos in Photo Gallery or Supplementary Report on our website [www.wfanlancs.co.uk](http://www.wfanlancs.co.uk)

Articles are by Editor unless stated otherwise.

TO SEE DESPATCH WITH LARGER TYPE AND PHOTOS IN COLOUR VIEW ON OUR WEBSITE

Preston's Roll of Honour in the Harris Museum and Art Gallery lists 1956 men from Preston who lost their lives during WW1. The names begin with the 39 men of the Royal Navy of whom 7 died in the Jutland battle. The timeline on Page 16 for the centenary events in the 6 months following this Despatch ends with the Battle of Jutland which commenced when *HMS Lion* opened fire at 3.48 pm on 31 May 1916.



**British battlecruisers going into action**

*Lion, Princess Royal, & Queen Mary* at Jutland

*HMS Lion* was one of 6 British battle cruisers that had sailed from Rosyth earlier commanded by Sir David Beatty. 5 German battle cruisers were to the eastward of the British ships and both forces steamed to the south at high speed fighting a fierce gunnery duel (see map on next page). A few minutes after 4.00 pm a salvo of three German shots fell on the upper deck of *HMS Indefatigable* and penetrated to a magazine causing her to commence sinking by the stern. Another salvo then struck her causing a second terrible explosion to rent her, she turned over and in a moment at 4.04 pm all trace of her was gone.

Amongst the 1017 that died were Stokers 1<sup>st</sup> Class James Gahagan and Thomas Pye.

**James Gahagan** was 19 years old when he died. Educated at St Augustine's School, Preston he had joined the Navy two years earlier and rapidly gained promotion to first class.





**Thomas Pye** of 13 Acton Street, Preston joined the Navy at the age of 17 and had completed 13 years service when he died. A month previously he was transferred from the *HMS Devonshire* to the

ship on which he lost his life. Four of his brothers were serving in the forces at the time, one of whom was a Petty Officer in the Navy.



Shortly after, *HMS Queen Mary* was the target for 2 German battle cruisers and she fought back firing full salvos. At 4.26 pm a plunging salvo crashed upon her forward deck. In a moment there was a dazzling flash of red flame where the salvo fell, and then a much heavier explosion rent her amidships. Her bows plunged down then her propellers were seen slowly revolving high in the air before she blew up.

1266 were killed including 19 year old Stoker 1<sup>st</sup> Class **William Beard Mather**. He was born Fall River, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

and in the 1911 Census was living with his grand parents at 20 Wildman St, Preston.



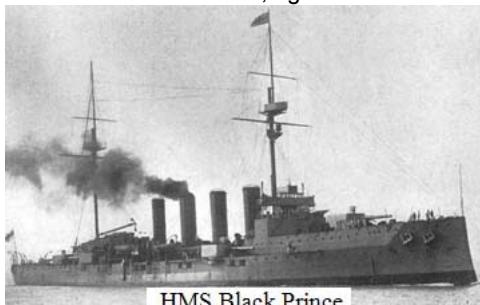
*Queen Mary* blowing up (on right) and a salvo falling round *HMS Lion* (on left)

Ten minutes later a large force of German battleships was sighted coming from the southward. At 4.45 pm Sir David Beatty's force turned back northwards to be followed by the German battle cruisers with the duel continuing. About the same time the 5<sup>th</sup> British Battle squadron of four powerful ships of the *Queen Elizabeth* class arrived and formed up 2 miles to the southward of the 4 remaining British battle cruisers and engaged the German ships. This duel continued on a northerly course until 6.00 pm. No British or German ships were sunk but several ships on both sides were severely damaged.

Shortly before 6.00 pm the leading ships of the British battle fleet under Sir John Jellicoe arrived from Scapa Flow. Action continued between the British and German fleets with *HMS Invincible* being sunk at 6.33 but by 9.00 pm all firing had ceased with the British fleet to the south-eastward of the Germans, between them and their bases.

During the night the German fleet steered south-eastwards towards the passage to their harbours via Horns Reef whilst the battle columns of British fleet went southward towards Heligoland so as to block that passage to Germany. Actions took place astern of the British battle columns as the German fleet steered across towards Horns Reef (then down the coast of Schleswig Holstein). In one action the British cruiser

*HMS Black Prince* mistook German battleships for a British squadron and on approaching was sunk. 857 were killed including 3 Prestonians: **Fredrick Charles Iddon**, aged 19, **Amos Atherton Proctor**, aged 20 and **Thomas Stanton**, aged 22.



HMS Black Prince

At dawn on 1<sup>st</sup> June the British battle fleet turned north sweeping up and down until past noon seeking the German fleet. But by then the substantially intact German Fleet were approaching the safety of their harbours.

Losses suffered were as follows:

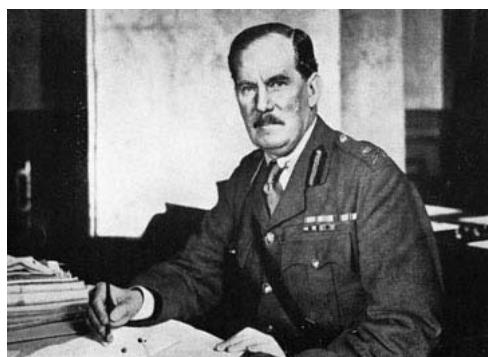
	British	German
Battleships	0	1
Battle cruisers	3	1
Cruisers	3	0
Light Cruisers	0	4
Destroyers	8	5
Killed	6097	2551

Literature about the battle shows no clear consensus on the outcome. On Page 34 in *Stand To! 48* (January 1997) John Terraine reviews V.E.Tarrant's *Jutland: The German Perspective*. "Jutland," Tarrant says: *convinced Scheer, along with the German Naval Staff and the Kaiser, that it was hopeless to attempt to force a decision (of the War) with the German High Seas Fleet... The British Grand Fleet, the Germans realised once the initial exhilaration had evaporated, was simply unconquerable and control of the sea would remain in British hands.*

SOON, SOON TO FAITHFUL WARRIORS  
COMES THEIR REST - Corporal A Wood  
Lincolnshire Regiment

## GENERAL SIR JOHN COWANS G.C.B., G.C.M.G. - THE PRE-EMINENT MILITARY ADMINISTRATOR: PART 2

Last May's Despatch contained the first part of my story about the man (Sir Jack) who was the British Quartermaster-General (QMG) throughout the war. It described his development from birth in Cumbria through to becoming QMG and 3<sup>rd</sup> Military Member of the Army Council on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1912. It ended with the movement of the BEF to France in August 1914. Part 1 was largely based on Volume I of his 2 volume biography commissioned by Lady Cowans and written by Major Desmond Chapman-Huston and Major Owen Rutter (C-H&R). Part 2 uses C-H&R Volume II and other identified sources which are relevant.



Sir Jack in his room at the War Office

The safe and timely movement of the BEF to France was a significant achievement but it was only the prelude to Sir Jack tackling the most gigantic task of its kind over the next 4 or so years. This can be depicted by 2 statistics from his report *Supply Services during the War* (see later) which shows a nearly 33-fold increase in personnel fed each day. Total strength of Forces being fed Home and Abroad prior to WW1 was 164,000 men whilst total ration strength on 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1918 in France, Egypt, Salonica, East Africa, Mesopotamia, Italy and Home

(exclusive of Army in India and permanent garrisons overseas) was **5,363,352**.

To deliver effectively the tasks for which he was responsible Sir Jack needed to be a high quality manager and delegate wisely to the new staff he had appointed to many senior positions in his Department. So before dealing with the tasks facing him an indication of his management style is relevant.

The closing pages of C-H&R Vol 1 give an example of his approach in the early weeks of the war (when the BEF moved to France). *'All this time Cowans was naturally immersed in work outside the immediate job in hand. The Cabinet wanted to know all sorts of things and many meetings had to be attended. The QMG was the last man in the world to pretend that he knew everything. He had none of the stupid false pride of smaller men. He took to Cabinet Meetings the officer on his Staff personally responsible for Railway Movements and put him up to answer questions concerning details which he himself made no pretence of knowing. It was this reliance on his subordinates - after he had thoroughly tried and tested them- that ensured to him always their utmost service. It was the plain admission that he did not pose as a know-all that enabled his superiors to realise that when he did claim knowledge it could be relied upon.'*

In *The Business of*  
*War* by Isaac F.

**Marcosson** the author gives an example of how, during the course of the war, Sir Jack monitored factors on which victory in the field stands or falls.

*'Before him each morning is laid a sheet of paper less than a foot square on which is typed the feeding strength of all the British Armies - man and beast - in every theatre of the war together with the precise quantity of food, fuel, forage available for them. On*

*another sheet is a compact summary of all supplies contracted for or speeding on ships and trains towards the zones of distribution and consumption.'* Such management information would enable him to appraise and focus where any situation might merit his attention.

He had an extraordinary capacity to sleep at will. He would return to the War Office at night after dining out, work in peace and at great speed without the constant interruptions inevitable during the official hours, *'this was the secret of his command of leisure for those social amusements in which his active temperament found the relaxation it needed. He seldom went to bed before two, would sleep like a top (as he put it) till eight and was always at the office however early he was wanted in the morning.'*

He got involved in detail if it would make a difference especially when the welfare and comfort of troops was at stake. In the winter of 1914 trench warfare brought the menace of frostbite, a danger which had been overlooked. One Monday evening Sir Jack received an urgent requisition for some form of anti-frostbite ointment. The following morning his technical advisors and the chief tallow merchants of London were in his office. Formulas were discussed, orders given, arrangements drawn up, and by the Thursday evening thousands of tins of the new ointment were on the way to France.

## **Secretary of State for War: Lord Kitchener**

Lord Kitchener was appointed Secretary of State for War on 6 August 1914. Kitchener knew and respected Cowans from their time together in India. In 1906 Kitchener had told those in whom he confided that when the war with Germany

A black and white portrait of Herbert Kitchener, 1st Earl Kitchener. He is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark suit, a white shirt, and a patterned tie. He has a prominent mustache and is looking slightly to his left with a serious expression.



came he would require 3 million soldiers to begin with and the war would be some years in duration. (This was reported to C-H&R by Major General F.G Bond who Sir Jack had appointed Assistant Director (Quartering) in August 1914. Bond had served with Cowans in India under Kitchener.)

Now Cowans and Kitchener were closely associated in the prosecution of the War and in *The Life of Lord Kitchener* it is reported he said to Cowans 'carry on and consult me if you are in difficulties, only let me be sure the men, who must be exposed to hurt and risk of life, have everything that wit can devise or money can buy for their comfort and health.' Lord Beaverbrook in his *Politicians and the War 1914-1916* remarks that 'the soldier who had the greatest influence with him (Kitchener) in England was undoubtedly the late General Sir John Cowans whose advice he almost invariably took.'

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### ***Supply Services during the War (August 1914 to March 1919)***

After the War, Sir Jack prepared an extensive report (title above) on the work of his Department. It was Part XXXII of the *STATISTICS OF THE MILITARY EFFORT OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE DURING THE GREAT WAR*. Selected content has been abstracted, supplemented with comments from C-H&R as appropriate, to illustrate some the work for which he was responsible. The officer photographs are of some of his senior staff identified in the October 1914 Army List.

### **Quartering**

On mobilization barracks could accommodate 174,800 single men. Clearing barracks of married families and conversion of other barrack space increased this to 262,000 men. However this was only a small portion of the total numbers to be provided for

i.e. the New Armies, expansion of the Special Reserve and the increase in Territorial Forces which required accommodation on an extensive scale. Large numbers of troops were placed for a time under canvas, others accommodated in schools, institutions and specially hired buildings but the bulk had to be billeted on the population, as many as 800,000 being quartered in this way at one time. Many troops were moved from tented camps to billets because winter 1914-15 was a bad one. Area quartering committees were set up in the different Commands to manage the provision of cost effective accommodation other than in barracks and hutments.

A great number of small and large hatted camps were pursued to accommodate some 850,000 men as training centres, depots, remount centres or for detachments.

The photo shows King George V and Queen Mary inspecting the first Nissen hut.

Further problems arose with the large influx of troops from overseas and the expansion of the Royal Flying Corps, Tank Corps and formation of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps to name a few. At the end of June 1917 some 1,750,000 troops were accommodated in the UK and during the year the number of hospital beds provided in the UK reached 320,000.

During the early part of the summer in 1918, when German pressure in France reached its peak, demands arrived from GHQ in France that accommodation should be held in readiness for the evacuation of 125,000 wounded from their hospitals, 65,000 prisoners of war and the whole of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Echelon and its records and pay offices.



After the Armistice, and in particular after the composition of the Armies of Occupation had been settled, the contraction of military and hospital accommodation proceeded quickly whilst providing extra for dispersal stations, embarkation camps for troops, prisoners of war and Dominion forces. A large amount of storage was required for mechanical transport and mobilisation equipment for 30 divisions.

## Supply

Sir Jack explains how the supply organisation was devised to be flexible to meet changing circumstances and he goes on to explain the scale of rations followed by the main items e.g. meat, bread, bacon, cheese, sugar, potatoes and how they were sourced. He also explains the various ways the requirement for hay was met.

The requirement for petrol was initially 250,000 gallons per month and by autumn 1918 it had grown to 10,500,000 gallons per month. Cowans, having foreseen the need for huge quantities of containers, fuel could be supplied from England in 50 gallon steel drums or 2-gallon tins but by September 1916 there was a direct service of tankers from USA to tank storage at Rouen and Calais where the petrol was transferred to tins for distribution to units. In summer 1917 railway tank wagons and road tank lorries were also used for distribution.

Supply depots were established on the outbreak of war in various parts of the country with the feeding of troops being the first consideration. At first regular officers were in command but eventually each depot had a business man at the head and the whole of their work was carried out, as far as possible on business lines.



Brig.-Gen. S.S. Long  
Director of Supplies



Maj.-Gen. F W Landon  
Director of Transport

In August 1916 supply and transport, as well as other services in Mesopotamia was undertaken by the War Office instead of being controlled in India. The necessity for utilizing local resources was stressed and considerable quantities of supplies were obtained by this method.

In concluding this section Sir Jack indicates strenuous efforts were made to economise in term of expenditure and resources at the same time assuring sufficiency for troops.

## Mechanical Transport

The outstanding feature of mechanical transport was its phenomenal growth. In August 1914 the establishment was 115 (and could draw on 727 subsidized lorries) whilst on 11 November 1918 the total of motor lorries, tractors, cars, vans, ambulances, motor cycles etc was 121,702 in all theatres. As the war progressed large numbers of women were taken on as drivers so releasing men suitable for the fighting arms. In 1914 movement by railway transport was also the responsibility of this Director.

## Remounts

The increase in number of horses from peace establishment of 25,000 to the 165,000 required for the BEF in August 1914 was largely achieved due to the schemes of registration and impressment which had been developed by Sir Jack. The raising of the New Armies required an increase in horse purchasing in the UK and overseas and when



Maj. -Gen. W H Birkbeck  
Director of Remounts

hostilities ended 467,973 horses had been purchased in the UK and 627,303 horses and mules landed in the UK from overseas. There was scepticism about the value of mules but Sir Jack was in favour of them and he was proved correct. When treated kindly they were quite tractable and not as liable to skin diseases as horses.

### Veterinary Services

Significantly Sir Jack points out that the health of animals at home and in all theatres was maintained throughout at a higher standard than in any former war. He mentions that the assistance rendered by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was very considerable.



Maj.-Gen. R Pringle  
Director Vet. Services

resorted to in dealing with the first rush of recruits. Clearly the free hand he gave to Home Commands, financially and many other ways, to meet shortages of clothing, blankets, and other equipment in late 1914 and early 1915 was essential in meeting the comfort and health of all ranks. He ends the section by extolling the outstanding developments in reclaiming and repairing equipment and clothing of all kinds.

### Inspection of Quartermaster-General's Services

In late 1915 he appointed Inspectors to look after the physical and mental well-being of soldiers in each of the Home Commands. A particular role was to improve feeding and check waste of food. Monthly statements were published of the performance of the various Commands. The scheme worked so well it was extended to France. Under the system savings ran into millions over the period of the War whilst the glycerine obtained from fats recovered from food waste (dripping, greases, bones) was sufficient to provide propellant for 28,000,000 18-pdr shells.



King George V & Queen Mary inspecting Army Clothing Factory.  
Sir Jack is behind His Majesty

### Equipment and Ordnance

Sir Jack devoted most words in this section to the problem of clothing and equipping the New Armies starting with the expedients

### Canteens

In this, the last section of his report, Sir Jack describes the importance of Expeditionary Force Canteens in adding to the comfort of all ranks. The amount

of goods shipped increased twenty-fold between 1915 and 1919. Also he helped the Y.M.C.A. to provide refreshment and recreation for troops.

## The Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps



In July 1915 the Women's Legion was formed by **Lady Londonderry** and supported by Cowans. The substitution of women cooks for men was successfully trialled. In February 1917 the Women's Legion Military Cookery Section ceased to exist as a separate organisation under the QMG and the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps under the Adjutant General was formed to serve in UK and France, known later as the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps.

## 1916 and the Cornwallis-West Affair et al.

1916 was a very trying year for Sir Jack. On the death of Lord Kitchener on 5 June Cowans lost the friend and support he had enjoyed; the Somme battles started on 1 July but earlier 100,000 vacant hospital beds needed to be secured without revealing the



purpose; in August he became responsible for supplies to Mesopotamia and then the new Secretary of State for War, **Lloyd George**, set up a secret Court of Enquiry into matters which had already been dismissed by Kitchener. This almost paralysed the activities of Sir Jack.

The Cornwallis-West case, as it became known, is referred to in *Stand To! 79* and the book *The Blue Beast: Power and Passion in the Great War*, which is reviewed in *Stand To! 98*. The case involved personnel matters relating to two separate officers and Cowans had made the mistake of 'knowing' Mrs William Cornwallis-West and endeavouring to help her.

The Court sat during September and October. On 5 December Asquith resigned as Prime Minister, which was a loss to Cowans, and on 7 December Lloyd George became Prime Minister with Lord Derby as Secretary of State for War.

The result of the enquiry was made known on 22 December 1916. Referring to Cowans it was stated that '*in view of his distinguished war services he was retained for the present in his position but that he had been informed of the displeasure of the Government at his act.*' Apparently Lloyd George offered him the post of QMG in France if he would leave the War Office to which Cowans replied '*Put that in writing.*'

When the Court's report was published *The Times* on 5 January 1917 carried a long article praising the work of the QMG's Department written by Colonel Repington. In his book *The First World War* Repington felt it was Lloyd George's aim to replace soldiers in Cowans' Branch by civilians.

Reference has been made in Part 1 of the article to the liking of women by Cowans. In his book *The Blue Beast* Jonathan Walker also refers to Sir Jack's relationships with Emilie Grigsby and Dorothy Dennistoun. Dorothy Dennistoun's husband ignored the affair in exchange for career advancement. The affair with Mrs Dennistoun became public knowledge in 1925 during her divorce case, four years after Sir Jack's death.

## 1917

In March 1917 **Andrew Weir** (Lord Inverforth), a civilian, took the new post of Surveyor General of Supply at the War Office. He was to organise industry and so control raw materials and worked alongside Sir Jack. On 6 April the United States declared war on



Germany and in the “common cause” C-H&R records the help Sir Jack gave the Americans for which the United States bestowed on him their Distinguished Service Medal. He made several visits to France during the year; in May to enquire personally about the wastage rate of horses and on 30 September he presented the town of Verdun with a British Flag sent by the Army Council in recognition of the burden borne by the French Army at Verdun. He did not see active service in the war but French newspapers published details of his visit and the Germans bombarded his route up to and in the city.

## 1918

Helping to counter the German’s March offensive by rushing soldiers and equipment of all sorts to France *‘meant a great deal of hard work for Cowans’*. From June onwards the Greek Army was also provided with considerable supplies and in June he was paid a compliment by being appointed Colonel of the Gloucestershire Regiment but in August he was very unwell and hospitalised. However he put off the question of the operation to regain his normal health and soon returned to his desk in the War Office to ensure his Department’s contribution to the Advance to Victory.

## 1919 to 1921

In the (1919) New Year’s Honours he was promoted a full General and on receiving an offer of employment by an oil group interested in exploring the oil situation in Mesopotamia he retired QMG post on 15 March. In September, after returning from Mesopotamia, he was in Carlisle to be presented with the Freedom of his native City (see front page photo) and the Mayor *‘recited his great services to the*

*Commonwealth.’* In his reply Sir Jack spoke about some of his experiences during the war and expressed his disappointment that Lloyd George’s recent speech of thanks to the troops made no reference to the Administrative Services.

In 1920, whilst unwell, he continued with his business interests but an operation was necessary in November to relieve him from the pain caused by *‘disease’* to his stomach organs after which he went to stay with friends in the South of France. Lady Cowans arrived there on 5<sup>th</sup> April; he converted to the Roman Catholic faith on 11<sup>th</sup> April and died in Mentone on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1921, aged 59. There is no doubt that his early death, at least in part, was caused by the strain of the War. Following a service in Westminster Cathedral on 25<sup>th</sup> April his body was borne with full military honours to St Mary’s Roman Catholic Cemetery at Kensal Green for burial.



Sir Jack’s funeral procession departs Westminster Cathedral for Kensal Green c/o Pathe News

(Film clip see: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEUzjtRD\\_Wg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEUzjtRD_Wg))

## Final Analysis

*GENERAL SIR JOHN COWANS* by Major Desmond Chapman-Huston and Major Owen Rutter includes many fine comments from contributors about Cowans but these are tinged by details of his private life. Having

regard to the foregoing Sir Jack might be surprised with the words that Lloyd George wrote about him in his 1934 Memoirs. '*Cowans was an excellent business man ...there never was a murmur from any quarter as to the efficiency with which Sir John Cowans did his work. That is more than can be said about any other prominent figure in the War, military or civil.*' For this alone he deserves remembering.

## Memorials



Sir Jack's memorial cross in St Mary's Roman Catholic Cemetery stood appropriately upright and relatively clean amongst other untended graves when I called to leave a token of remembrance.



The inscriptions at the base of the Cross could be read albeit the lower with some difficulty. The lower reads "HE WAS ACCORDED A STATE FUNERAL IN LONDON 25

APRIL 1921 HAVING BEEN QUARTERMASTER GENERAL OF GREAT BRITAIN'S ARMY THROUGHOUT THE GREAT WAR 1914 - 1918". The middle inscription wrongly gives his age at death as 58.

I have drawn to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's (CWGC) attention that Sir Jack was 59 when he died. Also, that their records give incorrect names for his father and father-in-law. The appropriate changes should be made to their website and Cemetery Register in the near future.

The photos clearly indicate the Private Memorial on Sir Jack's grave is in good condition. The CWGC have advised me that: "*Private Memorials that mark war graves are inspected on a cyclical basis by our Regional Supervisors, to ensure they are kept clean, accessible and legible. If any memorial can no longer meet this criteria, we would then contact the relevant burial authority, and steps will be taken to remedy the situation with a view to replacing the existing stone with one of the Commission's grave markers.*"

Sir Jack is also remembered on a tablet in Winchester Cathedral provided by the Rifle Brigade. It reads: "In memory of/General/Sir John Steven Cowans/ G.C.B., G.C.M.G., M.V.O./late Rifle Brigade/ Quartermaster General/ to the Forces 1912-1919/ Died the 16th April 1921/ Aged 59 years"



(See also back page)

**Acknowledgement:** I am very grateful for the helpful comments made by Peter Simkins and Charles Messenger on my draft article.

"WELL PLAYED SIR" - Second Lieutenant Robert Stannard Herbert Royal Air Force

**1915 CHRISTMAS EVE IN FRANCE:**  
Christopher Boardman (co author of  
*LANCASHIRE'S FORGOTTEN HEROES 8th*  
*(Service) Battalion East Lancashire*  
*Regiment in the Great War)*

Earlier this year I was a Saturday guide with Terry Dean at the Lancashire Infantry Museum (LIM) in Preston. During a quiet period we spoke about my grandfather, **James Fleming** and the short article I had found written by him, telling of an experience with the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion East Lancashire Regiment at Christmas 1915.



Growing up I often heard stories about my Grandad's bravery during the First World War. I was only two when he died and unable to talk to him about his experiences, so finding any written literature was the only way I could recount his feelings during the Great War. Finding a story about his time in the trenches at Christmas 1915 was the closest thing to talking to him. I have retraced his movements throughout the War and built a picture of his experiences, but his feelings can best be displayed by the Christmas story he wrote. I found it in the weekly newspaper "*Carbon*" dated 1924 for the Fletcher Burrows pits in South Lancashire.

Grandad's Battalion was occupying trenches east of the road between Fonquevillers and Hannescamps:

*Cheerful homesteads, bright fires, tables laden with good food, sparkling wines, good old Dickens-and we had dined on bread and poszy, and had tea that was strongly reminiscent of the old story of the three men*

*who argued as to the identity of a certain brew they were partaking of: one claiming that it was tea another coco, and the other coffee. So the cook was appealed to, who indignantly declared that it was "bon soup".*

*At six o clock I was ordered to proceed to the Btn H.Q for an interview with the second in command. I left the front line trenches wondering what mischief was afoot, for our Major by no means belied the man who said that "All Majors are mad". (The Major was Major Beauchamp McGrath famous for his photograph, see below, taken when*

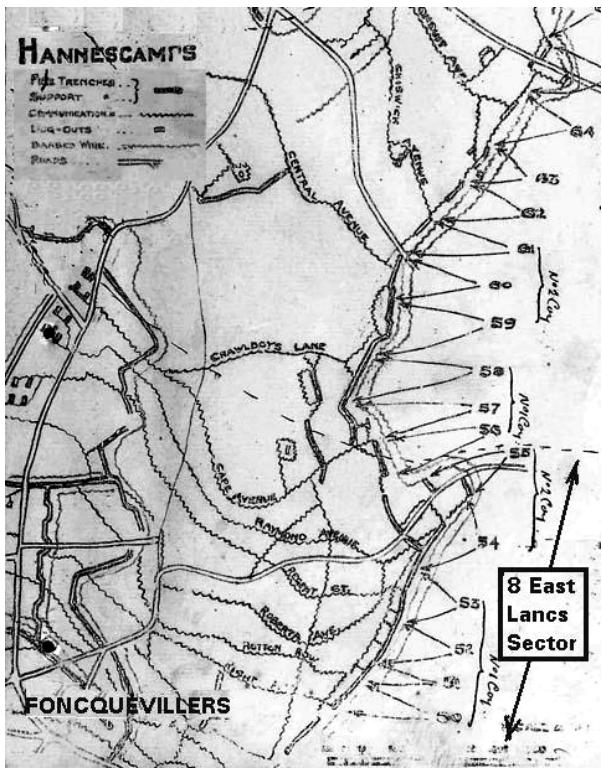


*struggling through a water-logged trench. He was killed in action in early June 1916).*

*On arrival at H.Q in the village I was told that the Major was at dinner and would see me afterwards. In the meantime I must wait in the Mess Cookhouse, an order promptly obeyed, for the cookhouses are pleasant places to cold and hungry men. There I was regaled with dinner and rum - the Majors orders - so the cook informed me. (Thoughtful man!)*

*Later on I was shown into the Major, who was in command in the absence of the Colonel. He gave me a message of*

congratulation to convey to the men of my Platoon for good work done a few days before (On 21 December Private William Young won the VC for rescuing a wounded comrade): also an order to my O.C Platoon that each man should receive a double issue of the wine that cheers.



As I made my way back through the village and into an orchard that led by a short cut to the communication trench, I was brought up sharp as a Jerry Gunner began his strafe, and as I lay behind the trunk of a tree, I heard a cry of pain and then cursing voices from the village behind. Half an hour later, after a weary plod through heavy, clinging mud, I heard again the bellowing voice of the Jerry humorist over the way, with his one line hymn of hate, "Johnny Bull, Bully Bif," and the British voice in mocking reply, "Ho, Ho, Put a sock in it."

I gave my message to the indifferent men who listened unmoved as I related the Major's words of praise-but they gave way to approving shouts of "Good old Mac" as I told them of the liquid happiness in store. We drank to each other and the "Folks at Home," and called for a toast from little Bobby C-----,

a wet, mud-caked figure, who had been on patrol between the lines. Bobby held the cup aloft, looked around the circle of grinning faces, and said "Sloppy Days".

We "Stood To" at midnight as the shells whistled and screamed overhead.

As I look back through the years I picture the scene as we "Stood To" in the dawn of Christmas Day, and I cherish the memory of the men with whom I stood and am tempted to say:-

"May the Spirit of Peace teach the heedless men,  
The folly of strife,  
By shining Sword or malignant Pen,  
Breeding hatred, denying life,  
To warring hosts."

And when men and women throughout the civilised world shall fully realise the bitter futility of war, they will surely rally to and support a League of Nations bringing "Peace on Earth" to Brotherly Hosts.

J.F

James Fleming lived in Hindsford near Atherton and worked as a collier at the nearby Chanter's Pit prior to enlisting into the Manchester Regiment on 5 October 1914. He was reassigned fifteen days later to the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion East Lancashire Regiment who

were just beginning to fill their ranks and rapid promotion followed.

On 26 June 1916 Sergeant Fleming was in trenches north-east of Hannecamps when the Germans bombarded the British trenches with artillery and rifle grenades. He was quick to spot the shower of rifle grenades which landed in his traverse and shouted to his men to take cover. In doing so he was wounded in the side and foot. He was treated in Aberdeen and returned to his battalion in early 1917.

On 31 May 1917 Company Sergeant Major (CSM) James Fleming was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his action in an attack near Monchy le Preux. His citation reads:

*'He led his company with great courage, and when finally a withdrawal was ordered he remained till the last to see that it was properly carried out. He was three times wounded.'*

Following treatment in Liverpool he joined the 11 East Lancashire Battalion. Near Vieux Berquin on 28 June 1918, disregarding severe wounds inflicted by shellfire, CSM James Fleming led two platoons of Y Company to their objectives after the loss of their officers to win a Warrant Officer's Military Cross. Later he was presented with his MC by the King at Buckingham Palace.



James Fleming, wife Emily and father William outside Buckingham Palace in 1918

After WW1 he worked for Fletcher Burrows as a chauffeur until 1938 having worked for



them from the age of 16 until enlisting in late 1914. In 1939 he was part of the British Legion Task Force and re-enlisted with the East Lancashire Regiment during WW2. After WW2 he worked for the Admiralty prior to retiring and resided at 298 Wigan Road, Atherton. He regularly led the procession to Atherton's Cenotaph on Armistice Sundays and Terry told me he must have walked behind him several times as flag-bearer for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Atherton Scout Troop. He died in 1967 after breaking his neck in a fall at his home.

THE FUTURE HOPE AND JOY OF THEIR  
YOUNG LIVES WERE SACRIFICED FOR US -  
Private W Jeffery 2nd Bn Canadian Inf.

#### GREAT WAR MEDALS - THE CANADIAN MEMORIAL CROSS: Bill Myers

Many men left Lancashire for foreign lands in the early years of the last century in search of a new life - among them was Thomas Wallace, from Askam, now part of Cumbria. When war was declared he signed up with the 72nd (British Columbia Regiment) of the Canadian Infantry and died in France on 3 September 1918.



His grandson Ray Wallace, at Ainslie Street, Barrow, has a group of medals, badges and documents recording the

soldier's war service. Included, is the Canadian Memorial Cross, issued to relatives of those killed during the conflict, and inscribed with Pte Wallace's name and army number.

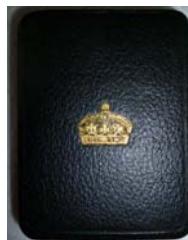


The Memorial Cross, or "Silver Cross" as it is more commonly known, was first authorised in 1919 for presentation to the mothers and widows of Canadian sailors and soldiers who lost their lives during active service or attributable to that service. The crosses were sent automatically to mothers and wives who qualified, and could be worn by the recipients anytime, even though they were not themselves veterans.

The cross was engraved with the name, rank and service number of the son or husband. It is 32mm across in hallmarked silver and on a violet ribbon.

The crosses were issued with a descriptive card and in a presentation case with a crown on the lid.

Typical examples cost around £150 to £200.



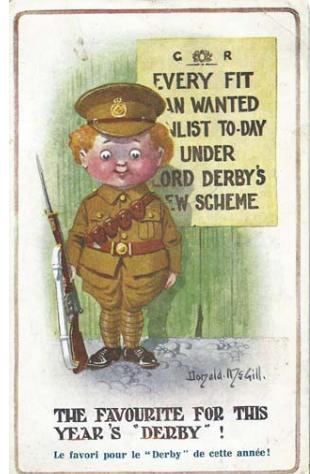
HIS MOTHER'S JOY AND HIS FATHER'S BOY  
- Pte B Howard Royal Scots

#### FAVOURITE POSTCARDS: Andrew Brooks

These postcards, apart from being favourites, were chosen for 'Despatch' No.16 as the centenary of the introduction of conscription in Britain will soon be upon us.

The first comic card was one of many issued on the topic of the Derby Scheme in the second half of 1915. Many postcards, usually of a humorous nature, depicted this attempt to encourage men to come forward and sign up but the scheme failed (over two million single men did not register) Therefore the government had no alternative but to introduce conscription and the Military Service Bill received its first reading in the House of Commons on the 5<sup>th</sup> January 1916; it was passed on the 27<sup>th</sup> January and came into operation on the 9<sup>th</sup> February 1916. Obviously postcards on the failed scheme were no longer appropriate and the postcard manufacturers were quick to turn to the topic of conscription.

The second card was one of many issued on conscription in 1916 and was sent by 'FC 154796 3 Coy. 2<sup>nd</sup> RBRE, Chattenden, Rochester, Kent to a Miss Williams in Sunderland on the 5<sup>th</sup> June 1916. The message on the card implies that he had been conscripted and that she must not laugh at his situation!



**WESTERN FRONT AND OTHER STRATEGIC EVENTS TIMELINE - 1<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 1915  
TO 30<sup>TH</sup> MAY 1916 (largely based on [www.greatwar.co.uk](http://www.greatwar.co.uk))**

Some of the centenary events to the next Despatch are as follows:-

Dec-15	Mar-16
5 British forces retreating from Ctesiphon reach Kut	1 German extended submarine campaign against defensively armed merchantmen begins
7 Siege of Kut begins	8 Second attempt to relieve Kut fails
7 British retreat from Macedonia begins	9 Germany declares war on Portugal
15 Last Allied forces in Macedonia withdrawn into Greek territory	12 Chantilly conference regarding Allied general summer offensive
15 FM Sir John French resigns as C-in-C of British Armies in France & replaced by Gen Sir Douglas Haig (on 19 Dec)	15 Austria-Hungary declares war on Portugal
20 Evacuation of Suvla & Anzac completed	28 Inter-Allied Conference in Paris declare of unity on military, economic and diplomatic affairs
22 Lieut Gen Sir A J Murray CIGS resigns & replaced by Gen Sir W Robertson (on 23 Dec)	31 German airship L-15 shot down near mouth of the Thames
30 HMS Natal explodes and sinks in Cromarty Firth, killing over 400 sailors, women & children	<b>Apr-16</b>
<b>Jan-16</b>	
1 Yaunde (Cameroons) taken by Gen Dobell's forces	1 (Approx date) Period of German mastery of the air in France ends
6 Mine sinks HMS King Edward VII	1 3rd attempt to relieve Kut begins
9 Gen Sir Charles Monro vacates command of Mediterranean E F & replaced by Gen Sir A J Murray (on 10 Jan)	20 Roger Casement arrested in Ireland after landing from German submarine
21 First attempt to relieve Kut fails	24 Outbreak of Rebellion in Ireland
27 Military Service Act imposes conscription on single men	24 Final attempt to succour Kut. Loss of HMS Julnar
<b>Feb-16</b>	
9 British command of Lake Tanganyika secured.	25 Lowestoft & Yarmouth raided by German battle cruiser squadron
10 Remnant of Serbian Army concentrated at Corfu	26 Sykes-Picot agreement for partition of Middle East concluded
15 Fifth Battle of the Isonzo begins	29 Capitulation of Kut
16 War Office take over from the India Office control of operations in Mesopotamia	<b>May-16</b>
18 Mora, the last German post in Cameroons, surrenders to British	1 Collapse of Irish rebellion, 3 rebel leaders later executed
21 Battle of Verdun begins	10 Agreement signed re employment of British & German POWs
23 Ministry of Blockade formed in Britain	13 Agreement signed re transfer of British & German sick & wounded POWs to Switzerland
25 Fort Douaumont stormed by German forces	14 Austrian offensive in Trentino begins
	25 British advance from N Rhodesia & Nyasaland into German East Africa begins
	25 2 <sup>nd</sup> Military Service Act extends conscription to married men
	31 Battle of Jutland

## INTO THE FRAY (1<sup>st</sup> December 1915 to 31<sup>st</sup> May 1916)

Regiment	Units
Kings Own Royal Lancaster	8
King's Liverpool (KL)	17
Lancashire Fusiliers (LF)	14
East Lancashire (EL)	8
South Lancashire (SL)	8
Loyal North Lancashire (LNL)	9
Manchester (Mcrs)	19
20 <sup>th</sup> Hussars & Duke of Lancs Yeo.	2

Despatch Issues 14 and 15 detailed the 85 Lancashire units entering war theatres by 30<sup>th</sup> November 1915, summarised above.

The 5 Service battalions listed below moved overseas in the period covered by this report. They were originally part of the Fifth New Army comprising 6 Divisions numbered 37 to 42. The 31<sup>st</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> divisions were originally numbered 38<sup>th</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> respectively. In April 1915, the original Fourth New Army was broken up and its units converted for training and draft-finding purposes. When this took place the Fifth New Army became Fourth New Army and its Divisions were renumbered to 30<sup>th</sup> to 35<sup>th</sup>.

Battalion/ Theatre/ Entry Date	Narrative
11S EL Egypt 1 Jan 16	Alexandria. Raised Accrington 2 Sept 14 by Mayor. Feb 15 to Caernarvon in billets. May 15 to Penkridge Camp, Cannock Chase part of 94 Bgde, 31 Div. July 15 Ripon. 5 Aug 15 taken over by War Office. Sept 15 to Salisbury Plain. 19 Dec 15 depart for Egypt. Mar 16 to France arriving Marseilles 8 Mar 16.
17S LFs France 29 Jan 16	Le Havre. Raised Bury 3 Dec 14 by Lt Col G E Wike and Committee as a bantam bn. 16 Mar 15 to Chadderton. June 15 to Masham part of 104 Bgde, 35 Div. 27 Aug 15 taken over by War Office. Aug 15 to Cholderton, Salisbury Plain. Trenches N of Bethune Mar 16. To Somme July 16.
18S LFs France 29 Jan 16	Le Havre. Raised Bury 13 Jan 15 by Lt Col G E Wike and Committee as a bantam bn. 8 Apr 15 to Garswood Park, Ashton -in-Makerfield. June 15 to Masham part of 104 Bgde 35 Div. Subsequent record similar to 17 Bn.
20S LFs France 30 Jan 16	Le Havre. Raised at Salford 23 Mar 15 by Mr Montague Barlow M.P. and Salford Brigade Committee as a bantam bn. July 15 to Conway. Aug 15 to Cholderton, Salisbury Plain. Part of 104 Bgde, 35 Div. 27 Aug 15 taken over by War Office. Subsequent record similar to 17 Bn.
23S Mcrs France 30 Jan 16	Boulogne. Raised Manchester 21 Nov 14 by the Lord Mayor and City as a bantam bn. Dec 14 to Morecambe. June 15 to Masham. Part of 104 Bgde, 35 Div. Aug 15 taken over by War Office and to Salisbury Plain. Subsequent record similar to 17 Bn LFs.

Main Sources: British Regiments 1914-1918 by Brigadier E A James & Regimental Museums



IN THE GLORIOUS MORNING OF HIS  
YOUTH FOR ENGLAND'S SAKE HE DIED -  
Pte Ambrose Newton Woodall East  
Yorkshire Regiment

## MUSEUM REPORTS

### Liverpool Scottish Centenary Commemoration of 1915 Battle of Hooge (Ypres): Captain Mike Gavin, Liverpool Scottish Museum Trust

The Liverpool Scottish took a party of 150 to the historic city of Ieper (Ypres) over four days in June to commemorate the centenary of the Battle of Hooge on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1915. Over 150 more joined them on the battlefield at the service and ceremony around the Liverpool Scottish Stone, a massive piece of carved masonry with a regimental badge, originally over the main door of their 1904 Drill Hall. Planning the complex programme had started two years earlier in the Museum Trust office.

The Liverpool Scottish were in France from November 1914 but the action at Hooge, just east of Ypres, was their first charge on German lines, made with regular units of 9<sup>th</sup> Brigade but also with Cheshire Engineer Territorials from Birkenhead. Out of 519 other ranks and 23 officers who went into the action, 381 other ranks and 21 officers were killed, missing or wounded. Afterwards, the senior officer was a second-lieutenant.

Coaches left Liverpool on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> June. On the Monday, 150 assembled at the grave of Noel Chavasse, the battalion's medical officer and winner of two Victoria Crosses. Veterans marched to the cemetery behind the Pipe Band, a spectacle enjoyed by local residents. Wreaths and other tributes were laid. Pipe Major Richard Grisdale (originally Liverpool Scottish, now with the Black Watch) played his tune, 'Capt. Noel Chavasse'.

On the Monday evening, there was a regimental reception for 160 in the atmospheric Kazematten (Casemates) Brasserie that occupies four huge 17th Century brick-lined vaults within the city ramparts, the original fortifications. This location was very apt as the casemates were actually Brigade HQ for Liverpool Scottish (1916/17) and also shell-proof troop shelters.

Space around the Stone is very confined and twelve months ahead we worried about squeezing in 150: later this became 300. Over ten families of those present in 1915 were represented. The Royal Liverpool Golf Club appeared (in memory of Captain John Graham, then a leading golfer, killed with the battalion). Civic guests were included and, slightly unexpectedly but very welcome, 25 uniformed German Reservists appeared. The 'Bellewaerde 1915' group, connected to other units present, and a further large personal group, from East Anglia attended.

On Tuesday, the exact centenary, eight parties of 25, each risking an officer guide with a map, were on the ground from 0930 for a battlefield tour organized, going from start line to objective. The last groups arrived at the Memorial Stone just before 11.00 am. The Stone, originally installed in 2000, has a new plaque, funded by the Trustees with generous assistance from *In Flanders Fields Museum*. This was unveiled during the Act of Remembrance. The pipes and drums again playing for the gathering of the clans.



Battlefield at Hooge 16 June 1915. Photo taken by Pte. F A Fyfe of Z Coy as he lay wounded.



Liverpool Scottish Stone after unveiling

When the service was over, we moved to the characterful Hooge Crater Museum and Café for an excellent lunch. The day finished with a large representation at the Menin Gate Last Post Ceremony and a dinner held by the Liverpool Scottish Officers' Association.

We were there to remember all the soldiers, particularly the Liverpool Scottish, who fought a century ago, many of whom had died and have no grave.

#### Fusiliers Museum - Fusiliers Answer The Call: Mike Glover Curator and Regimental Secretary (Lancashire)

Relatively early in the Great War regular and territorial battalions of the Lancashire Fusiliers had been committed to the Gallipoli Campaign. Thus by the end of 1915 many thousands of North West families had experienced the full impact of industrial war. It would not be till the Battle of the Somme in July 1916 that the nation as a whole would feel the full impact of war. But despite the impact of casualties on so many families in Bury, Rochdale and Salford the move to expand the Regiment from eight pre-war battalions to eventually 32 battalions gathered a pace. This short article will briefly consider the expansion of the Regiment and the mix of battalion that emerged.

By the end of 1914, it had become clear that it would not be a short war and that the British Army would have to expand to

continental levels. Throughout the United Kingdom men came forward to answer the call. It could be argued that the result was not one homogeneous British Army but four, each with a different character and ethos!

In existence at the beginning of the war the, all volunteer, regular army, had since the Boer war been little more than a colonial gendarmerie. Also in existence, was the Territorial Force, intended for home defence and was independent from the Regular Army, being organised into its own Territorial formations. This is in contrast to the situation today where the Territorial Army, now rebranded the Army Reserve, is closely linked to the Regular Army for training and operations.



3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers Reserve  
Heywood Detachment

It is worth commenting that Lord Kitchener, the then Secretary of State for War, did not trust the Territorial Force and in particular the County Associations that were responsible for it. Therefore, a massive expansion of the Territorial Army was not on the cards and thus the question became, how to expand the Regular Army using Territorial Force model? The Territorial Force model brought together groups of people who already knew and trusted each other which had the benefit of quickly developing camaraderie, cohesion, ethos and thus fighting power. This could take years in a regular battalion. The typically British compromise was the Service Battalion which was part of the Regular Army, recruited from community groups but

for war time service only. The remaining element was conscription which in turn made its own impression on Regular, Territorial and Service battalions alike.

The bed rock upon which all this was built was the existing infantry regimental system which only been in existence for some 40 years and was largely based on allocating each infantry regiment its own geographical area. This had the advantage of promoting recruiting by combining local pride with regiment. The Lancashire Fusilier regimental recruiting area had been established in 1873 it included, the Towns of Bury and Rochdale and the City of Salford. In 1873, it had been the East Devonshire Regiment that had moved its Depot from Exeter to the smoky, polluted mill town of Bury, a move that was probably a great shock to both officers and men! By way of compensation, in 1881, the East Devons were elevated to the status of Fusiliers and the Regiment that was to fight the Great War was born but would be only 33 years old on the outbreak of war.



Cross Lane Barracks, Salford

Out of this geographically small but populous area, the Lancashire Fusiliers would generate some 32 battalions. Together, they would earn 63 Battle Honours, 17 Victoria Crosses, (the VC awarded to the Lt Col Marshall MC, Commanding Officer of 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion was claimed by the Irish Guards, thus bringing the Irish Guards tally to 4) but suffer 13,642 dead. A figure exceeded

only by the Northumberland Fusiliers, the Royal Fusiliers, the Liverpool Regiment, the Manchester Regiment and the London Regiment out of 86 Regular and Territorial Regiments.

While the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion and the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Battalions of the Lancashire Fusiliers were heavily embroiled in the Gallipoli Campaign, expansion of the Regiment was well under way. Firstly the Territorial Force. For an organisation which Kitchener is reputed to have had a low opinion of, the Territorial Force generated a considerable amount of fighting power. By the end of August 1914 the Territorial battalions of the Lancashire Fusiliers had doubled in size with the formation of new battalions including 2/5<sup>th</sup> from Bury, 2/6<sup>th</sup> from Rochdale and 2/7<sup>th</sup> and 2/8<sup>th</sup> from Salford. By September, a 3/5<sup>th</sup> Battalion was formed in Bury and in March 1915 the 3/6<sup>th</sup> formed in Rochdale with the 3/7<sup>th</sup> and 3/8<sup>th</sup> in Salford. The "thirds" would not become fighting units, but would serve as reserve battalions providing trained reinforcements. The final territorial battalion to form was the 4/5<sup>th</sup> from Bury which would also become a reserve battalion.

Next, the Service Battalions for Kitchener's New Army. Technically part of the regular army, but for wartime service only, the story of the recruitment, equipping, training and commitment to battle of the Service Battalions in 1916 is a fascinating story in its own right, but that will have to wait for another day. By January 1915, 11 Lancashire Fusilier Service Battalions had been raised. Five were specifically raised in Bury, which was the Depot town of the Lancashire Fusiliers, while another four were raised in Salford.

It is on Salford that I now want to focus. At this time there was a great rivalry between the City of Salford and the City of Manchester and Salford people hated to be seen as second best. Across the Irwell, the Manchester Regiment was moving heaven

and hell to recruit eight City battalions. Not to be outdone, Mr Montague Barlow MP and the Salford Brigade Committee raised the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> (Pioneer) Battalions from the back streets of Salford.

The Salford Battalions were formed into the 96<sup>th</sup> Brigade which in turn formed part of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Division. From a regimental perspective this is interesting, as the Division also included battalions from the Northumberland Fusiliers and the Royal Warwickshire Regiment which in 1968 amalgamated to form the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers as it is today. On the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916 it was this division that was tasked with the assault of the Theipval Redoubt.



2 Platoon, D Coy, 18 Battalion LFs "Bantams"

The other Service battalion story is that of the Bantam Battalions. The Bantams were volunteers who were under the minimum regulation height of 5ft 3ins and because of this had been initially rejected by the recruiters. There were many such men in the North West working in the mills and the mines who, other than for their height, were healthy and strong. Following a successful initiative in Birkenhead, the War Office were minded to utilise this source of potential recruits. To qualify, a recruit's height had to be between 4ft 10ins and 5ft 3ins and so many came forward that ultimately two whole divisions, the 35<sup>th</sup> and the 40th were formed from "Bantam" men. The Lancashire Fusilier Bantams included 17<sup>th</sup> (1<sup>st</sup> South East Lancashire), 18<sup>th</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> South East Lancashire) and 20<sup>th</sup> (4<sup>th</sup> Salford) Battalions who found themselves in the 35<sup>th</sup> Division. In the event,

it proved impossible to keep up a supply of reinforcements who were both small enough to be classed as bantams and yet of good enough physique for active service. In December 1916 medical inspections resulted in many men in the Division being judged unfit for infantry service with their replacements coming from disbanded yeomanry regiments and from men in training at cavalry depots. In the Spring of 1917 the word "Bantam" was no longer used in the title of 35<sup>th</sup> Division or its battalions and the introduction of conscription helped keep units up to strength.

The Lancashire Fusiliers were no better and certainly no worse than any other infantry regiment in the British Army but more than adequately illustrate the role of the infantry regimental system in generating fighting power in the Great War. During the Great War from what is now the 42 Infantry Brigade area some 252 battalions were raised. The County Palatine of Lancashire raised 198 battalions alone, Scotland as a nation raised 222.

OUR BELOVED SLEEPETH - Serjeant A Sims MM Royal Engineers

#### Lancashire Infantry Museum - Zeppelin Raids: Jane Davies, Curator

The Lancashire infantry Museums contains many objects and archival material relating to our antecedent Regiment's service abroad during World War One. As many people are aware though, there were also attacks by the German Armed forces on Britain.

For four years civilians suffered the brunt of numerous bombing raids by Zeppelins with many being killed or injured. Nowhere was safe from these machines. Stationed on the east coast at Felixstowe since the start of the war was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. As the Regiment's Special Reserve Battalion they were

responsible for putting all new recruits through an intensive course of training as well as ensuring that re-joined casualties underwent a special course of hardening before being sent out to the front line. Although they were based at 'Home' this did not mean that they did not observe the enemy in action. On numerous occasions the battalion witnessed the shooting down of these airships.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> June 1917 Major F. Claridge, from Battalion Head Quarters, witnessed the descent of Zeppelin Z48 near Aldeburgh, Suffolk at 3.15am. Z48 along with five other



Zeppelins had been part of an unsuccessful raid on various targets in England that night. Captain Loudon Pierce Watkins flying a B.E. 12 was officially credited with shooting down the Z48. Major Claridge decided to commemorate the

event by painting the scene, pictured above.

Also in the museum are two ashtrays that come from the wreck of L11. This German airship (built by Luftschiffbau Schütte-Lanz and not technically a Zeppelin) was the first airship to be shot down by Captain William Leefe Robinson as it flew over Hertfordshire on the night of 2/3<sup>rd</sup> September 1916. For his actions that night Leefe Robinson was awarded the Victoria Cross. At the time and for many years afterwards the L11 was mistakenly identified as the L21 probably because downing a 'baby killer' i.e. a Zeppelin was thought to have been more of a propaganda victory.

Zeppelins and especially the L21 had wreaked havoc over the British Isles during 1916. The L21 had taken part in ten raids. On the night of the 31<sup>st</sup> January it had

mistaken the Black Country towns of Tipton, Wednesbury and Walsall for Liverpool and unleashed hell on the unsuspecting civilians below. During its tour of devastation, over 30 people were killed. The last bomb was dropped directly over Walsall town centre killing three people including the Lady Mayoress, Mary Julia Slater. Sitting on board a tram at the time she had suffered serious chest and abdomen injuries, later dying in hospital from septicaemia. This outrage had such an effect on the people of Walsall that when the Cenotaph was commissioned to commemorate the people of Walsall who had died in World War One, it was sited on the exact spot that the last bomb from L21 had dropped.

L21 also attacked Bolton, Haslingden, Ramsbottom and Rossendale on the night of the 25<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup> September. According to 'Zeppelins Over Lancashire' by Peter Smith, the attack killed 13 people; "5 men, 5 women, a 17 year old weaver called Miss Gregory, 5 year old Mary Ellen McDermott (her mother was killed, her father survived) and, along with her mother Mrs Irwin, a 'two-year-old babe which was clasped tightly to her breast".

Finally L21's killing spree was brought to an end by three RNAS pilots, Flight Sub-Lieutenant Edward Laston Pulling; Flight-Lieutenant Egbert Cadbury; and Flight Sub-Lieutenant Gerard William Reginald Fane eight miles off the coast of Lowestoft. Once again soldiers from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, Loyal North Lancashire Regiment witnessed its demise.

#### **Manchester Regiment Collection: Liam Hart**

Since the despatch of last year, Tameside Local Studies and Archives have continued its intimate work with the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion Manchester Regiment. Years of research into the official unit war diary, local newspapers and personal testimonies of men who served

in the battalion, have culminated in us gathering a wealth of knowledge on the day to day activities of the battalion throughout the First World War. Armed with this arsenal of facts, figures and stories we began recounting the day to day activities of the battalion through twitter. So far, we have told: how the men toiled in the desert heat of Egypt, of how rifles were handed out on the journey to Gallipoli in case of engagement on route, how the men fought every day to survive in the inhospitable conditions around Krithia and how Lieutenant William Thomas Forshaw won his Victoria Cross.



9<sup>th</sup> Battalion men with sun hats

By using twitter as our means of dissemination, we are able to reach out to millions of people all over the world. In the process, we are managing to bring the history of our local battalion to a global audience; an audience which would rarely if ever be reached. So far, the twitter project has been well received by the public and has enabled us to engage with “twitterstorians” on a level never before seen.

Tweeting day to day the activities of the battalion has also enabled us to bring together a multitude of different sources to tell a different story of the men, one which has never been attempted before. A story which follows the day to day activities of the men who made up the Ashton Territorial Force, men who were strictly part time soldiers. However, brave these men were, they arguably were not ready for the horrors which they were about to experience at

Gallipoli. Whether it was the lack of basic kit, supplies and ammunition or limited training and experience in modern warfare, the Ashton Territorials were hung out to dry in the Mediterranean heat. Herein follows a taste of what to expect to read from the month of November 1915, a hundred years ago to the month.

13<sup>th</sup> November: *Enemy bombed persistently but were stopped by our bombers.*

15<sup>th</sup> November: *Very heavy thunderstorm accompanied by hurricane from sea came on about 7 pm. There being no shelters, troops in subsection reserve got wet through. The men in fire trenches kept fairly dry owing to it protecting them. As the trenches are entirely un-drained, they were.*

18<sup>th</sup> November: *German aeroplane flying low over our lines. Small gun of the enemy close up to trenches damaged parapet of firing line by direct fire. No casualties. Five yeomanry hit in Mule Trench by shell case.*

You can follow the progress of the diary through twitter @TMBC\_Culture. The diary, along with all the sources used in the project is available to view at the archives.

## LINESMAN GOES TO FRANCE & GERMANY

### Lancashire's Private Memorials on the Western Front

When travelling through France last May we detoured to view two memorials in the late Barrie Thorpe's excellent little book. In the Introduction he explains that in 1991 the WFA adopted a policy to restore existing memorials rather than building new ones. He went on to say:

*Nine years later I believe we have located all that now remain. We have restored some at our expense and helped others to do the*

Private  
Memorials  
of the  
Great War  
on the  
Western Front  
Barrie Thorpe



The Western Front Association

*same, but this would be of only short-term benefit unless each memorial had a permanent 'guardian' for the future. This meant tracing families and interested parties where they existed and finding new sponsors where they did not. In this we have been extremely fortunate and the memorials and graves described here are now in good hands and their future seems assured.*

*The purpose of this Guide is to help visitors find these memorials, to tell the story of each one and to encourage anyone finding anything wrong to report it without delay.*

Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Leonard Wrenford of the Worcestershire Regiment was in command of 4 Battalion East Lancashire Regiment when he was killed near Villeret north of St Quentin in the German offensive of 21 March 1918. His body could not be



found so his mother erected a stone cross in the field where he was killed. In March 1927 his body was found in the field and re-buried in the CWGC cemetery at Cabaret Rouge.

The Wrenford's Memorial, by virtue of his name, is the last in Barrie's book and appropriately it is also last since it was only reported to the WFA Register in 1998. He reported that *with agreement from the landowner the WFA has commissioned the Rivelin Masonry Company to realign the cross and make a loose stone protective base to preserve this remote and lonely memorial while enquiries continue.* Consequently I wondered what we would find.

With the aid of Barrie's sketch map and Linesman showing the cross on the IGN 1:25000 we had no problem locating the memorial. There was even a local walker nearby who was interested in our visit and we were also fortunate in the field crop being low. His mother's inscription on the base of the cross was easily read but not that above relating to his remains having been found and placed at Cabaret Rouge.

We then visited several nearby cemeteries en route to the A26 and then relied on TomTom to direct us on the quickest route to Cabaret Rouge. After viewing Wrenford's grave we headed north to the second Lancashire memorial.

HEART OF JESUS IN THEE I TRUST JESU  
MERCY, MARY HELP R.I.P. -  
Lieutenant Colonel A L Wrenford  
Worcestershire Regiment Attd East Lancashire  
Regiment

Lieutenant Anthony George Atwood Morris of the 1 Battalion King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment was killed together with his machine gun team in attempting to support the attack on Meteren on 13 October 1914. Failing in an attempt to take his body home for burial his parents bought two hectares of land encompassing the spot where he was killed and built an elaborate open sided building with tiled roof and a large clock from their stables in England. On



completion he was buried there (above), a

private grave mentioned in the CWGC Register as '*Meteren Isolated Grave*.' In 1965 his brother decided more enduring arrangements were needed and legally transferred the land, grave and memorial to the Commune of Meteren who took on formal responsibility for its upkeep. In turn the Commune gave the farmer use of the surplus land in exchange for certain maintenance duties being undertaken. Later the clock was electrified and construction of the A25 caused the lane to be re-routed such that it was within five yards of the memorial.

By 1990 major work was required on the deteriorated fencing and structure of the building. The WFA thought the re-routed lane made the labour-intensive driveway redundant and maintenance could be simplified. In his book Barrie indicated that:

*Agreement was reached between the Mayor, the farmer and the WFA for the drive and remaining land to be given back to cultivation. The farmer would erect a wire fence around the building with a new opening on to the lane and in future he would carry out all routine maintenance on behalf of the Commune; materials being supplied. But first, essential work had to be undertaken. Through the Battlefield Memorials (Project) Fund, money was raised for the WFA to finance major repairs beginning in Spring 1999, with the Rivelin Masonry Company acting as contractors. Responsibility for the memorial remains with the Commune of Meteren, of course, and this special place now seems secure for the foreseeable future.*



There was no problem in locating the memorial, it being clearly marked on the IGN 1:25000. The building and grave seemed well maintained on our visit but the post and wire fencing was beginning to look tired. The memorial is obscured by trees that have matured over time causing the location to feel hemmed in and it is affected by intrusion/traffic noise from the A25. Sadly it now lacks any sense of "presence".

I have had Barrie's little book for 2 or 3 years it having come into my possession via my cycling friend Trevor who volunteers in an Oxfam shop. This is the first time I have made use of it and in future it will accompany my CWGC guide to *Cemeteries & Memorials in Belgium and Northern France* when driving the Western Front. Barrie's wife has sent me the last nine copies she holds of the excellent little book. The book price is £5.00 and postage is £1.50 with sale proceeds to the WFA. My contact details (Editor) are on the back page of Despatch.

### German Rail Tour

In mid September I ventured with ex-work colleagues to view steam railways in Germany. The itinerary took us from the Harz Mountains south of Hannover across to near the Czech border south-east of Chemnitz then 250 miles south-west to the Black Forest east of Freiburg. We had time also in Hannover, Leipzig and Nuremburg for other activities



One of the Pre WW1 locomotives at the Brocken Summit on our visit

The main sections of the impressive Harz network commenced operations in 1886 and

1897. The long steep gradients and traffic levels quickly found the original small locomotives wanting and by 1901 twelve more powerful engines were in operation. Six of these locos were requisitioned for war service in France during WW1 and never returned.

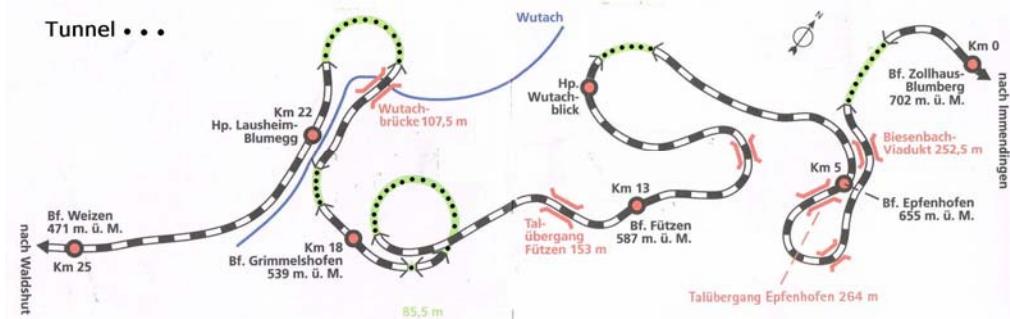
In Nuremberg, after the Kaiserburg Castle, the DB National Railway Museum was a priority visit. On viewing the '*Adler*' replica, I was surprised and astounded to find that the first steam locomotive to operate in Germany was provided in 1835 by Stephenson's of Newcastle-on-Tyne where John Cowans the father of Sir Jack (see page 4) worked. As I viewed the displays about the role of German railways in World Wars 1



& 2 my mind was dominated by thoughts of the extent Sir Jack's father might have contributed to the early development of Germany's steam locomotives!

In the Black Forest area my civil engineering background caused me to marvel at what is known as the '*Pigtail*' line. Constructed in the 1890s it allowed the movement of military supplies if the normal route could not be used through neutral Switzerland in time of war.

The middle section, from Weizen to Blumberg (see map below), involves a 231 meter gain in height, and the military authorities specified that the line must not have a gradient of more than 1:100. Accordingly, the line proceeds in a series of curves (including one complete circle), taking 25 km of track to travel a straight line distance of 9.5 km, with spectacular large viaducts, tunnels and bridges including the only spiral railway tunnel in Germany.



## A WALK IN BLEASDALE: Peter Denby

The lovely St Eadmer's church on the Bleasdale Estate is surrounded by farmland and the magnificent Bleasdale Fells. When looking round the church grounds last year I noticed two family gravestones which mention their Great War casualties (Gunner Bartle Pye, killed in France 6<sup>th</sup> April 1918 and John Bourne BA, killed in action 31<sup>st</sup> July

1917). The churchyard also has within it a CWGC headstone for '443340 Lance Cpl William Wills, Canadian Pioneers, 20<sup>th</sup> January 1917 - *He Answered His Country's Call*.

I wondered what the stories of these men were...and how did a Canadian Pioneer - William Wills - come to be buried in Bleasdale?

This year I found out. The programme for the May 2015 Garstang Walking Festival included a walk entitled 'Bleasdale in WW1, a time to remember', the same walk (retitled 'Bleasdale Remembers WW1') being reprised in September 2015 as part of the Heritage Open Events programme.

The 4 mile guided walk had been researched and was led by a local lady called Jean Fone. On the walk we were told about the effect of WW1 on the area and community; how the land was used; how people lived; and Bleasdale's contribution to the war. Farmers were encouraged to grow cereals and potatoes to counter the German blockade. Farm boys who enlisted would often end up working with horses, for example as drivers.

As with many farming communities, there was no initial rush by the men of Bleasdale to enlist, the needs of the farms coming first. But Bleasdale did make its contribution of men, the two **Rolls of Honour** - in St Eadmer's church and the Village Hall - recording the names of all the local men who served, and the 14 men with links to Bleasdale who died.

Our walk was followed by a screening of the North West Film Archive documentary 'The First World War - Life on the Home Front in North west England', which was shown in the Parish Hall after we had enjoyed a cup of tea and homemade cakes.

The Parish Hall and the nearby Bleasdale Tower (which was holding its annual spring open day to showcase its gardens) had exhibitions about Bleasdale in WW1, including biographies of the men who had

served and died, and with contributions from local primary school children.

After the outbreak of war Bleasdale soon set up a War Charities Committee to coordinate activities.

Even before WW1 it was common for eggs to be taken to hospitals to aid recovery of the sick. In August 1914 The National Egg Collection was set up, its Patron being Queen Alexandra and its aim being to collect eggs for distribution to the war wounded in hospitals and soldiers at the front (*"Every British hen should be on active service"*). Bleasdale's participation in the scheme was recorded by an article in the Preston Guardian of 6 February 1915 - 'Bleasdale and District Collects Eggs'. In all during the war Bleasdale collected some 12,000 eggs, which were sent to a Garstang depot for distribution to local hospitals, and, when hard boiled, out to the trenches. Young ladies would sometimes put their names and addresses on the eggs, and thank you letters would be received from the trenches.

On 13 February 1915 the Preston Guardian reported a recent concert held at Bleasdale School in aid of the National Relief Fund; proceedings had closed with the National Anthem, prior to which the vicar had thanked the artistes and organisers and *"called for three cheers for Belgium and our men in the trenches, which met with a rousing response."*

As is often the case, the dead commemorated on Bleasdale's memorials are also remembered on other memorials. For example, the farmworker James Mason, 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment), died of illness 24<sup>th</sup> October 1917. He was the son of James and Isabella Mason, The Old Post Office, Caton, and is also remembered in Caton (St Paul's) churchyard.

As for the Canadian Pioneer William Wills who I mentioned at the outset, he was born in 1885 at Dalton in Furness to a farming family



who, before the war, had moved to take a farm in Bleasdale. William's father died in 1905 and his mother died in 1912. William then left the family farm in the keep of his siblings and, as many young men of the time did, emigrated, in his case to Canada in 1913, leaving Liverpool on the SS Tunisian, 3<sup>rd</sup> Class passage.

When the war came he enlisted into the Canadian Expeditionary Force on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1915 at Camp Vernon, British Columbia.

He returned to Europe early in 1916 as a member of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Pioneer Battalion. In September 1916 during fighting at Usan Hill in France he was wounded, and he was returned via the medical chain to the 2nd Northern General Hospital, Leeds, where he died on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1917. His body was returned to his family in Bleasdale, and he was buried in St Eadmer's churchyard on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1917.

The Leeds hospital had been built in 1913 as a teacher training college, and during WW1 was converted to a military hospital, officially called the 2<sup>nd</sup> Northern General Hospital but more commonly referred to as Beckett's Park hospital, where it was located. After the war it was returned to educational use but during WW2 was used to treat wounded from Dunkirk. The building is now part of Leeds Metropolitan University.

William's death certificate records his cause of death as 'Gunshot Wounds Both Legs, Amputation of Left Thigh, Gassing'.

His death was reported in the Preston Guardian of 27<sup>th</sup> January 1917 under the heading 'Bleasdale Soldier Dies From His Wounds', the article recording how, after being hit by a shell the previous September, he was invalided to hospital in Leeds where he underwent amputation of the wounded left leg, dying of complications thereof. William was aged 32 and single.

In addition to his CWGC headstone in St Eadmer's churchyard and his mention on the

two Bleasdale memorials, he is also commemorated in the Memorial Chamber of the Peace Tower in Ottawa, Canada

## BEST KEPT WAR MEMORIAL

Sabden was the winner of the 2015 competition.

The Celtic cross memorial is relatively new having been dedicated in May 2008. Prior to the new memorial there were two indoor plaques in the school and parish church which carried the names of the 72 Sabden men who lost their lives in WW1 & WW2.



## PATHE NEWS: WW1 FOOTAGE

My googling regarding Sir Jack's funeral (Page 4) uncovered the collection of WW1 film clips on the Pathe News website ([www.britishpathe.com](http://www.britishpathe.com)) which are well worth a look. If the title of the Pathe clip is put in the Google search box you should find the same, but better quality clip, on YouTube.

My satisfaction at finding the availability of film footage to illustrate the solemnity of Sir Jack's funeral was dampened by the subsequent negotiations with Pathe to show a single still image to readers. Despite deploying my best negotiating and telling them Sir Jack would not be pleased at anyone making money from a photo of his funeral cortege, the lowest price I could obtain for a licence was £36. I hope readers think it worth the money.

## CUMBRIA BRANCH CONFERENCE (+S)

On Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December the Cumbria Branch in conjunction with our Branch and the Bradford Mechanics Institute will host a conference at the Shap Wells Hotel. Four excellent speakers will speak on:

- *Home Front: Total War, Total Mobilisation* (Tricia Platts)
- *'1915: Gretna Munitions - the impact of modern warfare on local communities'* (Dr. Chris Bader)
- *Bertram Lambert and the small box respirator* (Dr. Michael Slater)
- *Gallipoli 1915; Muddle and Myths* (George Sutherland)

Cost £26.50 which includes lunch and tea/coffee

MORE INFORMATION, INC. BOOKING ARRANGEMENTS ON OUR WEBSITE.

WAR'S BITTER COST A DEAR LIFE LOST -  
Private T Simpson Duke of Wellington's Regt

## BRANCH AFFAIRS



## 2015 ARMISTICE PRIZE

This year four schools submitted 53 entries which is a disappointing reduction on last year when 7 schools submitted 94 entries in total. By the closing date of 1<sup>st</sup> August 2015 Balshaws High School, Leyland submitted 15 entries in the form of photographs; Lancaster Girls Grammar School's 22 entries were in computer formats (PDFs) or photographs; I visited Ribblesdale High School, Clitheroe to photograph their three entries which were not readily portable and I also visited St Cecilia's High School, Longridge to collect 3 entries which were portable and to photograph 12 other entries.

The entries were marked separately by Paul Conlon, Phil Bonney, and Peter Denby who forwarded their marking sheets to me to collate the scores. The collated scores gave the winner as Laura Priestley of St Cecilia's RC High School, Longridge (see back page). Her winning entry was a well presented book entitled '*A-Z of WW1*' with each page addressing in turn a particular aspect of WW1.

Laura was presented with the trophy, a book (H.P. Willmott's WORLD WAR 1) and a £100 cheque at her school on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2015.

Consideration of the other individual collated scores indicated that Charlotte Rycroft of Lancaster Girls Grammar School deserved the award of the West and North Lancashire area prize in the form of Willmott's book and a £25 cheque. Her entry was entitled '*Remembrance*' and is an account of a walk by Charlotte around Lancaster visiting sites of relevance to WW1. It is illustrated by 'then' and 'how' photographs and accompanied by a commentary.

A Press Release describing the results of the 2015 competition accompanied by photographs of the two prize winners and their entries was issued on 29<sup>th</sup> October so that the media could consider using the information in advance of Remembrance Sunday. Photos of the prize winners and their entries can be seen on the Armistice Prize pages of our website.

Those who attended our meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2015 will be aware I reported receipt of a communication from a school giving observations on the disappointing reduction in entries this year. It indicated that there was seemingly "an uneven distribution of results and almost little point entering" and went on to point out that other schools in the Preston and Fylde areas "do not enter for this reason". This is a matter of serious concern and a report on the operation of the Armistice

Prize since its inception in 2008 has been prepared and sent to the school that made the observations for comment. The school as been requested to send a copy of the report to the other schools in the Preston and Fylde areas that have concerns. Comments received will be reported to our AGM on 7<sup>th</sup> December.

## MEETING REPORTS

**Bene 'n' 'ot - The Tommies' Tipple: May 2015** (28 attended)

**Denise North** told us the fascinating story of how the French liqueur Benedictine became - and remains to this day - so hugely popular in Burnley, particularly in the Burnley Miners' Club on Plumbe Street, where it is customarily, but otherwise unusually, taken with hot water (Bene 'n' 'ot). The home of Benedictine is Fecamp, on the Normandy coast, where, in the 1500s, a Benedictine Abbey was established. The monks perfected an aromatic herbal elixir which found favour until the Abbey closed in 1791 and the recipe was lost.

Enter Alexandre le Grande, a wine and spirit merchant who, in 1863, after rediscovering the recipe (although personally I suspect the 'rediscovery' was a clever marketing strategy - see below), began to distil the liqueur again, naming it Benedictine to associate it with the original Abbey. The drink's worldwide popularity soon grew, and Le Grand's increasing wealth allowed him, in 1882, to build the Palais Benedictine at Fecamp - a combination of family home and distillery. This splendid building remains a working distillery and museum.

Le Grande was a pioneer of marketing, opening his Palais to the public, and advertising extensively using newspapers



and artwork on posters, menu cards and other merchandise. The Benedictine bottle is instantly recognisable with its unique shape and red trademark.

The original workforce included local orphanage girls, but the elaborate production process involving 27 ingredients and 12 months oak cask ageing is now largely automated.

Benedictine had been available in Burnley before the war, albeit not popular in the then mining town. Meanwhile, in Autumn 1918 the Miners' Club opened, providing a venue for community and social activities.

So why did Burnley soldiers develop an association with Benedictine, and why did the drink become so popular in Burnley, so that the town is by far the UK's largest consumer? Maybe it was the Accrington Pals, which included a Burnley contingent, who took a liking to the local drink whilst stationed at Fecamp. But the Pals were stationed there in 1919, whereas Benedictine was already popular in Burnley Miners' Club by Christmas 1918.

However part of the Palais Benedictine was used as a French Red Cross hospital during the war, and it could be that some Pals were hospitalised there prior to 1919, and had sampled the drink then.

In this regard there were several other military hospitals along the coast near Fecamp, and outings to the Palais Benedictine for nurses and their recuperating patients were organised; it is known that some walking wounded from the East Lancashires attended a Christmas party at the Palais in 1917.

The liqueur was given to patients, including East Lancashire men, in these hospitals as a tonic and medicinal aid - often diluted with a jug of accompanying hot ('ot) water. Another plausible explanation tells of an occasion when Benedictine was issued to East Lancashire men in lieu of a rum ration which had failed to arrive.

Whatever the explanation, the drink's popularity rapidly grew in Burnley. 24 bottles were delivered to the Miners' Club on 21 December 1918 and by November 1919, when a representative from Fecamp attended the Accrington Pals' memorial service, the Club's consumption had grown to 75 bottles a month.

As well as the Miners' Club with its Benedictine Lounge, most Burnley pubs, and the bar at Burnley FC, sell Bene 'n' 'ot. The drink was also popular on New Street, Lancaster after this talk! Denise kindly supplied a bottle of 'Bene' and glasses so that we could all sample a rather special nightcap. (Peter Denby)

I GAVE MY ONLY SON THAT ENGLAND  
MIGHT NOT DIE RIP - Private D Rolle  
British West Indies Regt.

### Wives, workers and widows - life of women in World War 1: June 2015 (23 attended)

In this well-illustrated talk **Jennifer Wray** showed how the First World War affected the life of women and their role in society.



Working class women were working hard before the war and more women worked in Lancashire than any other county. Although opportunities increased, women's pay was usually unequal to men's. Exceptions included Blackpool tram drivers where pay was equal.

Some women wanted to do more, such as Elsie Inglis who worked to set up the Scottish Women's Hospitals Unit. Wealthier women organised fund raising events and knitting for soldiers. A separation allowance was paid to wives and de facto wives but it did not keep pace with the rising costs of fuel and food.

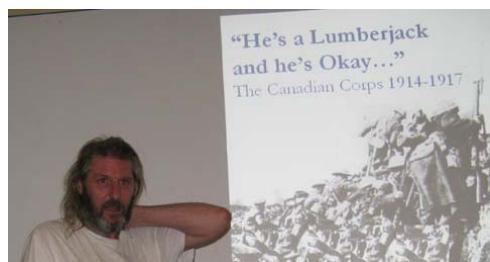
By 1918 17,081 women were employed by the BEF and about 600 memorial plaques were issued for those who died.

After the War, there was an effect on family life as many widows and mothers had to return to work. Some 16,750 children were exempted from school, boys to work and girls to help mothers.

Jennifer concluded that the War provided some employment opportunities for women but home and motherhood were still women's great and unique work. (Gaynor Greenwood)

### He's a Lumberjack and he's Okay!: July 2015 (26 attended)

I've been to a few talks given by **Rob Thompson** in the past, and I find that you learn a lot about ticks! There are politics, tactics, ballistics, logistics, statistics and many other ticks, all drawn together in a holistic fashion, and in his talk of the 6<sup>th</sup> July, he tackled (sorry!) the ticklish matter of whether the Canadian Corps was really made up of muscle-bulging supermen drawn from the plains and forests of Canada, and



was the Corps and its components far more effective than equivalent British formations.

As with Australia, the Canadian Corps was seen as the catalyst for the view that the involvement in the Great War of these two countries was the reason for their emergence as the proud nation states that we recognise today. Rob presented a cogent argument that the Canadians would undoubtedly emerge from the War as an effective fighting formation, even regarded as 'shock troops'

by the Germans, yet the route to that ‘triple A credit rating’ was littered with failure.

The point was made that the average Canadian was no different from his opposite number in the British Army, indeed, more than half who served were British by birth or who were first generation Canadians (BB: See the Attestation Records). In civilian life they were bank clerks, shop assistants, students and so forth. If they were indeed lumberjacks, it was to be the Forestry Corps for them!

Rob also highlighted the fact that, for all of their reputed prowess, they were dependent on the mother country for resources, whether material or intellectual. At the outset of the War, Canada had a permanent Militia totalling 3,000, and a further 60,000 in the ‘territorial’ Militia, but this force was politically side-lined with the creation of the CEF, in a move akin to Kitchener’s New Armies, from scratch. Unsurprisingly leadership proved a problem in the early days, and the Corps only began to improve appreciably with Byng, Harington and other senior British officers at the helm. The preparation and planning of operations thus improved also.

Although it was mooted at one stage that the Canadian Corps be broken up and dispersed amongst the BEF, political pressure from Ottawa prevented this action, and throughout the Corp’s employment, politics were very much to the forefront, while it would benefit from constantly receiving the best and most up to date equipment, and would rarely, if ever, suffer shortages. The same could not always be said for British Divisions! In a similar vein, when British Divisions were reduced in size by three Battalions in 1918, due to manpower shortages, it was ‘as you were’ for the Canadians whose Battalions were also continually well above their manpower establishments in any case. Rob rightly highlighted the successes of the Canadian Engineers, whose skills were, no doubt,

derived from working on Canadian railroads in the years before the War.

With good leadership, organisation and motivation, the performance of the Corps quickly improved as the War progressed (a lesson for most walks of life), and as a separate national force with the BEF while, given the political and materiel support, their *esprit de corps* undoubtedly grew. But, whether they were more effective overall than equivalent British formations is debatable. Rob made good use of the chopper that he had borrowed from a lumberjack to convert the muscle-bound superman myth into matchwood, and he gets a tick in the box from me! (Barrie Bertram)

A FRIEND OF CHILDREN HE DIED THAT  
THE CHILDREN OF TODAY MAY HAVE  
PEACE TOMORROW - 2nd Lieut H Davies  
Oxford & Bucks Light Inf.

#### How 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron Won the War: August 2015 (27 attended)

**Dr Graham Kemp** started his fascinating talk by explaining how in 1914, prior to WW1, Germany was dependant on imports of food and other raw materials. Germany could not sustain itself if cut off from the outside world and consequently needed to win the war quickly by employing the Schlieffen Plan. On failing to win the war in 1914 Germany was reliant on securing imports via surrounding neutral countries. However Britain did not comply with treaties on contraband and introduced a distant blockade on shipping through the Channel and North Sea.

The entrance into the North Sea round the north coast of Scotland was initially patrolled by the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron comprising old Edgar class cruisers but these proved unsuitable in the storms and heavy seas and Armed Merchant cruisers, ex liners and merchantmen, were introduced. Germany retaliated by mining the Thames and

unrestricted U boat warfare in war zones, GB tightened the blockade then SS Lusitania was sunk by a U boat.

By 1916 an effect of the blockade was food riots in Germany who considered seeking peace but instead decided to pursue all-out U boat warfare against GB thinking it would cause Britain to seek peace terms in 6 months. This was countered by introduction of the convoy system.

After America declared war on Germany in April 1917 total control was taken of neutral shipping with two-thirds used for the convoy system. This ended the need for the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron. In 1918 the average calorie intake for German adults was 1,000 calories per day and mortality rates were greatly increased. When the Armistice was declared Bonar Law stated Germany's downfall was due to the blockade.

Graham pointed out that the blockade continued to be used as a weapon of peace, not being ended until the Versailles Peace Treaty was signed in July 1919. Also there was a breakdown in German civilised society and their victimised youth of 1915-20 became the most radical adherents of National Socialism. (TD)

#### A Neutral View of the War - Louis Raemaekers: September 2015 (25 attended)

We are always pleased to welcome Michael O'Brien as we know in advance that his talk will be delivered in a calm, lucid manner on a subject that most of the members will know very little about! Again we were not disappointed.

Louis Raemaekers (b.1869 d.1956) was a Dutchman who someone once said 'Was the sixth most influential person of the Great War'. Michael was not sure if he agreed exactly with this statement



Louis Raemaekers

but was willing to accept that his work certainly had an impact on the way in which people viewed the war. The Dutch were neutral throughout the war but their Queen and many others were certainly anti-British in the beginning. They also had to be careful not to upset their neighbour, - Germany!

Raemaekers had tried, not very successfully, to make his name as a portrait painter in the pre-war period but his anti-German cartoons soon became very popular in the opening months of the war as the Germans rampaged through Belgium, shooting so called *franc-tireurs*, burning Louvain library and generally behaving in a very unpleasant manner.

One of his early images resulted from a picture his wife showed him of a submarine disaster. He drew the engine room with almost life-like men seemingly floating and it was only when the eye was drawn to a swimming fish that the viewer realised that all the submariners were dead. Raemaekers was very much influenced by Goya and the Flemish artists and Michael showed through a series of cartoons, the wide variety of topics he covered. A depiction of the 'Three Wise Men' (Kaiser etc.) presenting shells to a disgusted baby Jesus, 'Tango of Death', 'Savoy Hotel dance' (British not militaristic!), 'Turnip Winter' (only Death is prosperous) and many others that showed the Germans in a poor light.

Michael thought that when Raemaekers moved to England in 1915 his work seemed to lose its neutral viewpoint and there was certainly nothing critical of the Allies ever attempted. The move to England was forced on him as the Germans claimed that he was in a neutral country being anti-German in the extreme. It was even said that they put a reward of 12,000 marks on his head! In England he worked for Charles Masterman, the Head of the War Propaganda Department, who promptly sent him on a tour with an exhibition of his cartoons. In Liverpool

the crowd wound three times round the building waiting for the opening. After his cartoons were issued in book form his work was then syndicated to newspapers in the USA. In late 1915 and 1916 he drew cartoons on subjects such as the use of gas (by the Germans), the sinking of the Lusitania, Edith Cavell and the execution of Captain Fryatt. However by this time it was sometimes difficult to tell the difference between reality and outright propaganda. Such an example was when the German airship L 19 was brought down in the North Sea (February 1916).

At the end of the war he went back to work and produced a series of cartoon books on a character called 'Flippie Flinx'. His keen understanding of the Germans made him emigrate to the USA when Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in 1933 and he did not return to Europe until after the Second World War. After a spell in Brussels he went back to the Netherlands in 1953 and died in 1956. Michael compared him with two British cartoonists of WW2, David Low and Philip Zec and suggested that Raemaeker had more in common with Zec. (Andrew Brooks)

**British Red Cross VAD Nurses in France:  
October 2015 (19 attended)**

**Liz Thornton**  
**Howard's** excellent talk, which she delivered dressed in a VAD nurse's uniform (she having received the required permission to wear the Red Cross emblem - a symbol of neutrality and protection), told us a 'human' story of a WW1 VAD nurse called Lizzie Howard.

During the course of the talk Liz gave a brief overview of the origin of the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) scheme. The 1907 Haldane Reforms promoted increased co-



operation between the Army and voluntary agencies, and on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1908 the British Red Cross was formed from an amalgamation of several such voluntary organisations. The VAD scheme of the British Red Cross encompassed volunteers who would assist when required in areas such as cooking, hygiene, first aid and nursing; the nursing role was intended to supplement the existing regular army, territorial and hospital nursing services. During WW1 a Joint War Committee of the British Red Cross and The Order of St John was formed to administer the VAD nursing service. A training manual was produced and the number and role of VAD nurses increased. Although most VAD nurses served at home in the numerous auxiliary hospitals, some 8,000 VAD nurses served overseas, albeit not in front line areas.

The increasing role of the 'amateur' VAD nurses generated some animosity amongst career nurses, and one effect of all this was to lead greater professionalisation of the nursing profession; the Royal College of Nursing was formed in March 1916 and a Nursing Act and registration scheme was introduced in 1919.

As for VAD nurse Lizzie Howard, her story began in Trafford Park, Manchester, which in 1896 had been sold by the de Trafford family for industrial development. In 1901 British Westinghouse came on site (and did not close until 2000).

With the outbreak of WW1 Trafford Park, including the 8,500 Westinghouse workers, became a prime area of recruitment for



**Richard Howard**

Kitchener's army; one of the Westinghouse workers to enlist, on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1914, was a young man called Richard Howard, the husband of the aforementioned VAD nurse Lizzie.

Richard joined the King's Own Scottish Borders; went to France in July 1915; took part in the Battle of Loos in September that year; was buried alive and 'shell shocked' by a shell blast in July 1916; and killed in action by machine gun fire on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1916 during an attack on Falfemont Farm on the Somme. He is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.

By now most of us in the audience had guessed - and Liz, our speaker, was to confirm - that Richard and Lizzie Howard were her great grandparents.

This being so, Liz mentioned a project which she has contributed to being run by a Northumbrian couple called Pam and Ken Linge, who are putting stories to the names of those on the Thiepval Memorial (15,000 done so far).

Although Richard's wife Lizzie was left with their one year old son Arthur, she joined the East Lancashire British Red Cross as a VAD, leaving Arthur in the care of relatives. Her motivation for this is unknown - her local community had lost a number of dead and maybe she wanted make her contribution to the war effort, or perhaps the VAD pay of £20pa was a factor?

Whatever her reasons, in 1917 she found herself sent to the cliff top Base Hospital at Le Treport, France. This former luxury golfing hotel had been commandeered as a hospital, and a large 'tent city' to house its staff soon developed. The nearby railway station brought in the casualties - 'mental cases' as well as physical illness and wounds.

The hospital building no longer exists (it was dynamited by the Germans in WW2); a housing development stands there now. However the WW1 hospital is still remembered with pride by the locals, who this year (2015) put on an exhibition about it.

Lizzie left no written account of her time at Le Treport, but the hospital is documented in two published diaries, those of Edith

Appleton - 'A Nurse At The Front' and Dorothea Crewdson - 'Dorothea's War: The Diaries of a First World War Nurse'.

These publications document, sometimes in harrowing accounts, the arrival of casualties, their wounds, their deaths, and how the staff coped when often overworked and tired.

The dead are buried in the CWGC section of the local town cemetery.

All was not doom and gloom however - recuperating patients would play sports, and Christmas parties were held.

Liz also mentioned the 30 British female ambulance drivers who had served at Le Treport. One of these - Nellie Taylor, from Grasmere - died 27<sup>th</sup> June 1918 from appendicitis. (Peter Denby)

SAFE AND BLEST THE VICTORY WON -  
Pte C J Mc Carthy Lincolnshire Regiment

## 2016 HALF PROGRAMME (ALL MEETINGS ON FIRST MONDAY IN MONTH AT 7.30 PM EXCEPT WHERE STATED OTHERWISE)

**Dec 7<sup>th</sup>:** *"A.G.M. and Christmas Social-* An invitation to members to speak for ten minutes on any WW1 topic

**Jan 4<sup>th</sup>:** *"Battle of Langemarck 1917"*- Denis McCarthy

**Feb 1<sup>st</sup>:** *"Poor little Belgium"* - John Chester

**March 7<sup>th</sup>:** *"Returned to the Regiment"*- Terry Dean

**April 4<sup>th</sup>** *"The Palestine Campaign"*- David Wright

**May 3<sup>rd</sup> TUESDAY:** *"Stories and Use of the Royal Flying Corps outside Europe"*- Graham Kemp

**June 6<sup>th</sup>:** *"Their Glory shall not be Blotted Out"*: the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion The Green Howards in front of Fricourt, 1 July 1916 - Stephen Erskine

**FIELD MARSHAL SIR  
HENRY HUGHES WILSON:  
WINCHESTER  
CATHEDRAL MEMORIAL**



Part 1 of my article about Sir John Cowans in last May's Despatch (Page 6) reported how, in 1889, Captain Coke commanding D company of 2 Battalion the Rifle Brigade thought Cowans and Wilson to be '*the most remarkable subalterns in the Battalion. They were great friends and full of life and fun.*' He described them as a '*perfect pair*'.

He would never have imagined that similar memorials to the pair would be side by side in perpetuity near the main entrance to Winchester Cathedral. The photograph of Sir Jack's memorial is on Page 11 whilst that for Sir Henry is above.

It reads:

"In memory of /Field Marshal/ Sir Henry Hughes Wilson Bt/ G.C.B., D.S.O., M.P/Colonel Commandant/ Rifle Brigade/ Chief of the/Imperial General Staff/ 1918-1922/ Murdered in London/22<sup>nd</sup> June 1922/Aged 58 years/To those whom Godlike deeds/forbid to die/Unbar the Gates of Immortality"

Photographs of the two memorials were kindly provided by Robert Jordan, a regional volunteer for the War Memorials Trust.



Above is **Laura Priestley** of St Cecilia's RC High School, Longridge, **this year's Armistice Prize winner** (see page 29) proudly holding the Trophy and her winning entry "A - Z OF WW1".

**BENCH SPOTTING**



My cycling friend Trevor has sent me photos of a garden bench that has appeared at the entrance to the Royal Star and Garter home where his father lives. I wonder if readers have seen other innovative benches that might have been spawned by the WW1 Centenary. Worthy photos will be published.

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