



THE WESTERN FRONT  
ASSOCIATION

Lancashire North Branch

# Despatch

Issue 18: Nov 2016



The above photo shows troops moving from their assembly trenches on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1917 to attack the German positions east of Arras and amongst them was the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion East Lancashire Regiment. On Page 2 is the story of their Commanding Officer Lieut. Col. Charles James Burke who chose to fight on terra firma rather than command what happens in the skies above. Also read inside about the 9<sup>th</sup> Commanding Officer's conference, the banker who saw more than the military, the Military Cross, reports from museums, a book assessing Battalion Commanders in WW1, Stob's Internment Camp and more.

## Editor's Musing

My decision to delay use of the Mills photo of the 9<sup>th</sup> CO's Conference to this Despatch (see Page 6) had the unexpected bonus of instigating 2 other reports. That of Peter Hodgkinson's book (Page 18) which pointed me to the story of Charles James Burke, see next article. But other things are concerning.

The closed gates at the Museum of Lancashire (MoL) during October were a stark signal of the County Council's decision to close museums and libraries and reinforced my concerns when writing Issue 17. I gather school parties can visit the MoL but stopping public visits to the recently completed replica trenches during the centenary period of WW1 is poor form. Especially since negotiations are still taking place with other bodies to run the museum.

Our Branch is also suffering due to the County's budget cuts process. Our meetings take place thanks to County staff making Lancaster's museum available for our use. The County's budget wrangling threatens this arrangement and has adversely affected the formulation of our programme of future meetings and related publicity. In this Despatch I can only give information for 4 meetings in 2017 (see back page).

In the Meeting Reports (starting Page 26) the numbers attending are given. The total attendance at meetings May to October this year was 103 whilst the equivalent total for 2015 was 148, i.e. there has been a 30% reduction this year. The reduction in reports from museums, a centre-piece of Despatch, is due partly to budgetary pressures, with the nadir being a single report in the last Despatch. But Despatch soldiers on!

(+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

## Lieutenant Colonel Charles James BURKE DSO, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion East Lancashire Regiment



Brought to my attention by Peter Hodgkinson's book (see Page 18),

Charles James Burke was born 9 March 1882 at Armagh, Ireland. His military service began as a soldier in the British Army and he served in the Boer War during which time he received the Queen's medal with two clasps. He joined the Royal Irish Regiment as a Second Lieutenant from the Militia in September 1903 becoming Lieutenant in June 1904. From July 1905 to December 1909 he was employed with the West African Frontier Force becoming Captain on 22 December 1909. The following year he went to France where he learned to fly in a Farman biplane, gaining his Aéro-Club de France certificate in the process.



Burke at controls of British Army Farman

On his return to England he was employed at the Army's Balloon School from November 1910 and was involved in conducting heavier-than-air aircraft tests at the Balloon Factory at Farnborough and flew the first aeroplane purchased by the British Government. On 7 January 1911 Burke flew a Farman aircraft for two miles over Laffan's

Plain at 50 to 80 feet and landed near the Balloon Factory. A few minutes later he attempted a second flight but after only 50 yards he stalled and the aircraft came to earth on its right wing, cart-wheeled and disintegrated injuring Burke in the process. Despite this experience, Burke was not deterred from flying and in July 1911, he flew from Salisbury Plain to Aldershot and back and later on he made a return flight to Oxford. He was one of the earliest British Army officers to consider air power in depth. In November 1911, whilst serving as a captain in the Air Battalion School, he gave a lecture at the Royal United Services Institute on the military use of aircraft. He compared the reconnaissance activities of cavalry to those of aircraft and observed that just as opposing cavalry might be drawn into battle, so could aircraft.



Major Burke Checking B.E.2a No 205

On 12 May 1912 he joined the Royal Flying Corps commanding No. 2 Squadron and was promoted to Major. During the next two years he trained his squadron in aerial reconnaissance and in September 1912 he took part in the Army Manoeuvres. The August 1914 Army List indicates he was still

in command of 2 Squadron at Montrose with Lieut. Col. Fredrick Sykes in overall command of the RFC Military Wing.



B.E.2a No 240, Netheravon June 1914

By this time 2 Squadron was equipped exclusively with the B.E.2a and a B.E.2a was the first RFC aircraft to land in France on 13 August 1914. Burke's Medal Index Card indicates he also arrived in France on 13 August.

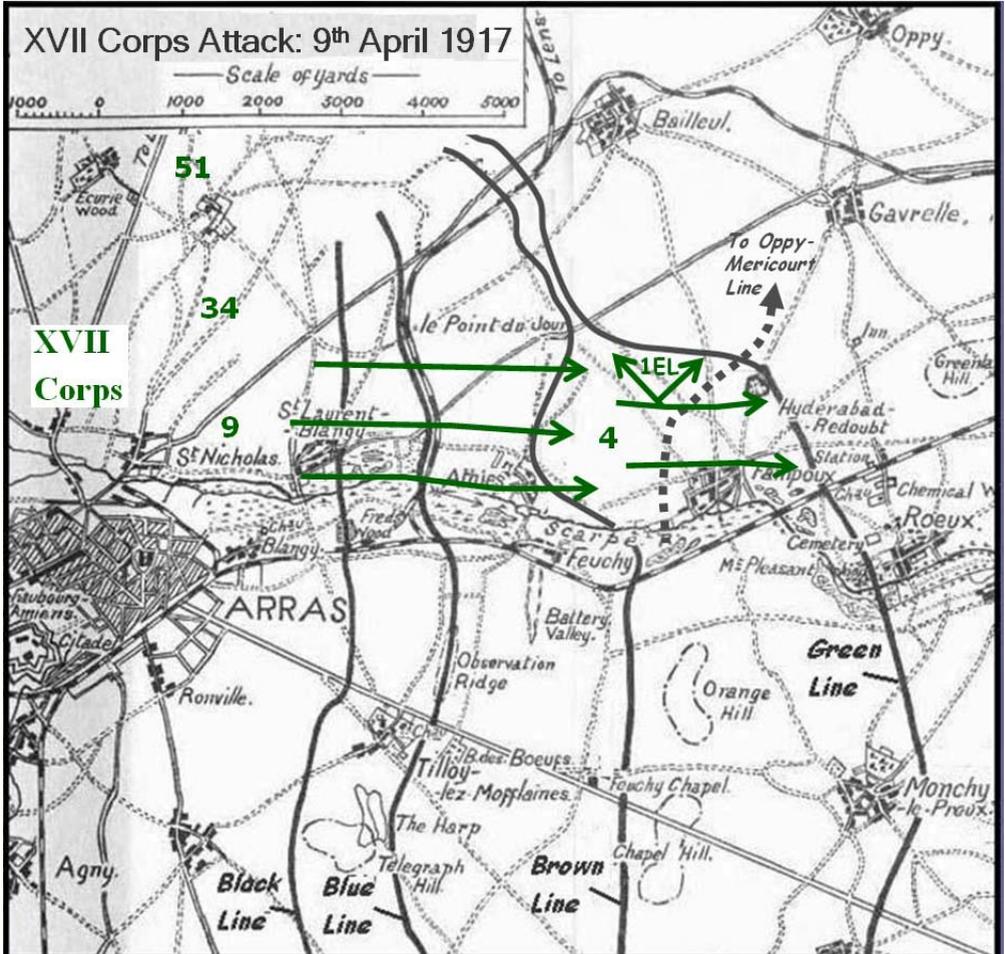
He was mentioned in Sir John French's despatch of 8 October 1914. The following month, on 29 November 1914, Burke was appointed the first commanding officer of No. 2 Wing of the Royal Flying Corps and he set up his headquarters at Saint-Omer. His wing comprised Nos 5 and 6 Squadrons and in February 1915 was awarded the DSO and the temporary rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He was then involved in recruiting for the Royal Flying Corps in Canada and as well as directly recruiting personnel suggested that training aerodromes be established in Canada under British control. For some months during 1916, Burke served as the Commandant of the Central Flying School.

In summer 1916, with the infantry suffering from shortage of officers (and him being a better leader of men than a pilot) he transferred to command 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers from 20 October 1916 on the Somme. A week earlier the Battalion had suffered heavy losses near Lesbœufs and after these were partly made good they were to attack again towards le Transloy.

The attack on 23<sup>rd</sup> October had to be delayed for 3 hours due to thick fog and when launched enemy machine guns limited the Fusiliers advance to 150 yards at a cost of 3 officers and 205 other ranks killed, wounded and missing.

Burke remained with the Fusiliers until 4 February 1917 when he left and took command of 1<sup>st</sup> East Lancashires (1EL) on

12 February. 1EL were in 11 Brigade of 4 Division. In early March the Division moved north to join Allenby's Third Army east of Arras. According to the East Lancashire Regiment History on reaching Wavans Burke "put the battalion through all descriptions of training, including bayonet fighting, bombing and the art of mopping-up a captured trench."



4<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 34<sup>th</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup> Divisions comprised XVII Corps who were deployed north of the River Scarpe with the Canadian Corps to their north and VII Corps to their south. The Battles of Arras were to begin on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1917.

On the front of the XVII Corps, the enemy's defences consisted of:

- (a) A front system of trenches and wire, well organized and 500 yards deep (The Black Line).
- (b) A thousand yards in rear of the front system was a strongly fortified railway

embankment and cutting protected against shell fire, and it had considerable command of the country in front (The Blue Line).

(c) The Athies-Point-du-Jour line, consisting of two lines of trenches, well wired and giving a good field of fire. This line was about 2,500 yards from the front line (The Brown Line).

(d) About 4,500 yards behind the front line was the German fourth system. This was sited on the reverse slope of the Point-du-Jour ridge and was not visible from any part of the British lines. The line ran roughly in a N-S direction, an extension of the Oppy-Mericourt line and is shown dotted on the map. It was organized with a fire and support trench, strongly wired and provided with dug-outs.

The plan of the attack was for the first three German systems, on the front of the XVII Corps to be captured by three divisions on the front line, the 9<sup>th</sup>, 34<sup>th</sup>, and 51<sup>st</sup> in that order from right to left. As soon as the three divisions had completed their task, the 4th Division was to pass through 9<sup>th</sup> Division to pierce the German fourth system, and then capture Fampoux, the Hyderabad redoubt, and then form a defensive flank facing north between Hyderabad redoubt and Point-du-Jour.

### 9<sup>th</sup> April 1917

The attack by 26 Brigade on the right of 9 Division went well with the most serious resistance being encountered in taking the Blue line. Athies was heavily bombarded as troops advanced to the Brown Line and "crowds of prisoners, eager only to reach safety, were sent back without escort." In the centre of 9 Division the South African Brigade suffered heavy loss from machine-gun fire but met little opposition at close quarters in their advance. In the words of the 27 Brigade Commander on the left of 9 Division the advance was "a procession, and happily so". 9 Division took 51 officers and 2,047 other ranks prisoner in taking all its objectives

In the early hours of the 9 April the brigades of 4<sup>th</sup> Division moved to assembly areas west of St Nicholas and were heartened by the sight of a long procession of prisoners going to the rear. Following a hot meal the 4th Division Brigades disposed with 12<sup>th</sup> on the right, 11<sup>th</sup> on the left and 10<sup>th</sup> in reserve moved in columns and according to the Official History reached the captured Blue Line at noon (the 1EL History indicates 13.10).

The 1EL history includes a quote from their War Diary: "*The journey across the battlefield from the old British front line was remarkable for the smooth and orderly way in which the troops moved. It was more like a route-march than an approach-march close up to the troops about to attack a definite objective. The first German trench system (The Black Line) had been damaged beyond recognition. Concrete machine-gun emplacements, elaborate wiring, dug-outs, and all the paraphernalia of the so-called impregnable line, held for two years, was now a shapeless ditch. Few dead soldiers were seen, but the garrison had no fight in them and they surrendered in hundreds.*"

After a pause the advance continued to the assembly positions behind the Athies-Point-du-Jour Line (Brown Line) where the brigades were formed up in readiness to pass through the 9th Division. During this advance there was no hostile shelling. For 11 Brigade the formation was: 1<sup>st</sup> Somerset Light Infantry (1SomLI) with 1<sup>st</sup> Rifle Brigade (1RB) following on the right and 1<sup>st</sup> Hampshire (1Hants) with 1EL following on the left. 12 Brigade continued on 11 Brigade's right

Up to the Brown Line the infantry was covered by a creeping barrage, provided by seven field artillery brigades, which the infantry considered splendid. The shooting of the heavy artillery on Athies was also accurate, and under a creeping barrage of howitzers, the village disappeared. At 15.10,

the two leading battalions of 11 Brigade, with 12 Brigade to their right - passed through the 9th Division without changing formation, and advanced in artillery formation until they came into view of the fourth German system (the extension of the Mericourt-Oppy line), when they deployed.

For the advance from the Brown Line seven field artillery brigades again provided the creeping barrage. The leading battalions, however, found the wire practically untouched. Nevertheless the battalions passed through gaps or climbed over the wire, while some men opened fire. A certain amount of machine-gun and rifle fire was met, but nearly all the Germans in the front trench surrendered and went to the rear at top speed without waiting for any escort. Those in the support trench fled eastwards, many being shot down.

Whilst the other infantry battalions of 4 Division penetrated the Mericourt-Oppy line extension towards the Hyderabad Redoubt and Fampoux, 1EL had the task of forming a defensive flank to the north.

"A" and "B" companies formed the defensive flank with "A" on the right and "B" on the left. "D" Company was in reserve and "C" remained until required as carriers.

As the leading platoons went over the Point-du-Jour ridge parties of Germans were seen retiring towards Gavrelle and a German battery was seen still in action 120 yards away. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Charney's platoon charged it and despite a shell bursting in his platoon continued the charge and captured the battery intact. The remainder of "A" Company continued preparation of their defences under heavy but wild shelling suffering 25 killed or wounded. "B" Company also suffered heavy shelling with their commanding officer being killed and a platoon practically wiped out.

According to the 1EL's history "the next disaster was the death of Lieut-Colonel Burke. He and his orderly were killed by a

shell". 1EL held and improved the line until they were relieved on 17 April.

During the visits for the "Linesman" report, later in Despatch, we called to say hello to Lieut-Col Burke in Point-du-Jour Military Cemetery. . One Officer and 13 other ranks of 1EL who were killed on 9 April also lie in the cemetery. The youngest being **Private James Harrison**, aged 19, from Burnley. He had a short war, embarking for France on 17 March 1917 and joined 1EL battalion on 4<sup>th</sup> April.



ANOTHER FLOWER FOR GOD'S GARDEN  
- Pte J Harrison, 1 East Lancashire Regt

**9<sup>th</sup> COMMANDING OFFICER'S  
CONFERENCE, 4<sup>th</sup> ARMY SCHOOL, MAY  
1917**

The photo, across, of the attendees at the above conference at Flixecourt is contained in the 1914-1924 photograph album of Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Mordaunt Mills (AMM) who is seated 2<sup>nd</sup> from left on the front row. AMM was one of the five officers who commanded the 17<sup>th</sup> Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers (17LF) during WW1 and featured in my presentation "*Several Battalion Commanders*" which is reported in Despatch, Issue 3, of November 2009. Some readers may recall that Issues 9 and 10 of Despatch (May and November 2012) contained group photographs of officers at the Staff College, Quetta from AMM's 1908-1913 album. In May 2012 I reported that AMM's grandson had kindly given me a copy of his grandfather's albums covering the period

4<sup>th</sup> C.O.'s Conference. 4<sup>th</sup> Army School. May. 1917.



W.O. Gibbs. A.H. Morton A. Bryant. J. Nall. P.V. Holberton R.P. Lewis  
 10<sup>th</sup> H. R.F.C. 17<sup>th</sup> Welch. 24<sup>th</sup> <sup>Doc</sup> <sup>R.A.A.</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> <sup>Doc</sup> <sup>R.A.A.</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> Mandeville.  
 R.J. Plumket. G.S. Shultz. P.S. Hall. M.H. McConnel J.B. Stewart A.B. Johnson. Lt. Col. R. Chubbok. C.F. Palmer H.B. Raffey P.W. Tupe.  
 12<sup>th</sup> Suffolk. 15<sup>th</sup> division. 17<sup>th</sup> B.S. 29<sup>th</sup> <sup>Doc</sup> <sup>R.E.A.</sup> 187<sup>th</sup> <sup>Doc</sup> <sup>R.E.A.</sup> 24<sup>th</sup> Kincaids G.S. 181<sup>st</sup> <sup>Doc</sup> <sup>R.F.A.</sup> 45<sup>th</sup> <sup>Doc</sup> <sup>cinco</sup> <sup>R.A.</sup> 11<sup>th</sup> <sup>Doc</sup> <sup>R.A.</sup>  
 Maj. R. Ray. A.M.M. P.B. Saenger Col. A. Harman. Maj. Gen. A.D. Montgomery W. Cooke - Oates H.C. Darlington A.C. Bailey.  
 Ch. Insp. 17<sup>th</sup> <sup>Doc</sup> <sup>R.F.A.</sup> 29<sup>th</sup> <sup>Doc</sup> <sup>cinco</sup> <sup>R.A.</sup> Commandt. C.G.S. 4<sup>th</sup> Army. 2<sup>nd</sup> <sup>Doc</sup> <sup>Sherwoods</sup> 81<sup>st</sup> <sup>Doc</sup> <sup>Mandeville</sup> C.R.E. 40<sup>th</sup> <sup>Doc</sup> <sup>R.A.</sup> Adj.

1893 to 1939. Being taken in the timeframe covered by this Issue a report on the photo is appropriate.

My presentation "*Leadership, Morale and Esprit de Corps - The Winning Factor?*" reported in November 2011's *Despatch* told the story of Brigadier General R J Kentish (RJK) who, in November 1915, became the first Commandant at Flixecourt of month long courses for officers and NCOs. After running courses for 4 months RJK had the idea of taking some battalion commanders and senior majors out of the trenches and running week long conferences where they could vent their views. This was the genesis of this 9<sup>th</sup> Conference.

When writing this report I contacted Peter Hodgkinson to whom, several years ago, I had provided names of battalion commanders who had been "sent home" in 1914. At that time Peter was undertaking a major study about infantry battalion commanders in WW1. I found he had completed his study and a book entitled "*British Infantry Battalion Commanders in the First World War*". The cover photo was from AMM's album with him at the centre of officers of 17LF's HQ at Arras in January 1917. I obtained a PDF copy of his great work from Peter (see Barrie Bertram's review at Page 18) and he also kindly provided me with information about the 6<sup>th</sup> Commanding Officer's Conference:

"The Fourth Army Infantry School of Instruction ran its 6<sup>th</sup> Commanding Officers' Conference from 22 to 30 January 1917, attended by 25 British and Australian officers, predominantly infantry, but with other arms represented as well. The program of work for the week was tactically focused, allowing COs to engage in discussion and view demonstrations of specialist weapons and technologies."

There are 25 officers on the AMM photo, five of whom are General Staff in connection with the course, including Major General A.A. Montgomery, Chief of Staff 4<sup>th</sup> Army who was

with AMM at Quetta. Of the others 12 are from infantry battalions, 4 from artillery formations, 2 cavalry, 1 Royal Flying Corps and 1 Royal Engineers.

By quirks of fate, 5 of the 12 infantry battalion officers are from Lancashire units of whom 4 get mentions in Peter's masterpiece **and** no others. The Lancashire officer not getting a mention is Philip Walter Jupe on the right of the middle row who was a Major in the Highland Light Infantry and attached to the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion King's Own Royal Lancaster's. He was probably at the conference because he was a machine gun specialist. One of the officers lived locally after WW1 and held a prestigious position.

AMM qualifies for mention in Peter's book as an example of a cavalryman turned infantry CO. He was, '*a captain in the 18th King George's Own Lancers in August 1914 serving as adjutant and quartermaster at the Quetta Staff College. His regiment joined the Indian Cavalry Corps in France in late 1914, and, after serving as a staff captain with the Ambala Brigade from June to November 1915, he was sent as major, second-in-command, to the 14<sup>th</sup> Gloucestershire. He went on to serve as CO of the 17th Lancashire Fusiliers from April 1916 to July 1917*' and was awarded his first DSO in the 1917 New Year's Honours. In 1917 the Indian Army required back all its officers below the rank of Brigadier General and AMM returned to the 18<sup>th</sup> Lancers. On 1<sup>st</sup> December he used the infantry skills he had learned to lead his Squadron's dismounted attack on Gauche Wood and was awarded a bar to his DSO. He was awarded a second bar for his role in operations to capture Nazereth in September 1918.

Philip Vaughan Holberton, second from right on the top row, was born 1879 in Twickenham, entered Sandhurst in 1898 winning the Sword of Honour, and served with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Manchesters in the Boer War. In 1907 he was Adjutant of the West African Regiment and in 1911 held the same post

with the 1/6<sup>th</sup> (T.F.) Manchesters. He fought with the Battalion throughout the Gallipoli campaign receiving his brevet majority in 1915. He was then G.S.O. and Brigade Major in Egypt in 1916 before becoming CO of the 1/5<sup>th</sup> Lancashire Fusiliers in October 1916. He was on the waiting list for brigade command when he was killed in action on 26 March 1918 during the retreat to Bucquoy.

**Richard Percy Lewis**, on right of top row was born 1874 and educated Winchester College and University College, Oxford. He was one of the finest wicket-keepers of his



generation playing cricket for Surrey and Middlesex. On outbreak of the Boer War he joined the City of London Imperial Volunteers and after serving with them for some time in the Orange Free State, obtained a commission in October 1901, with the Devon Regiment. In 1904, he was appointed to the Central Africa Battalion of the King's African Rifles and took part in the Nandi Expedition of 1905-1906, being mentioned in Despatches. In 1908, he was appointed to the Egyptian Army, and was detained in Egypt for some time after the start of WW1 as an intelligence officer at Cairo. Early in 1917, after a period of service as Brigade-Major, he was appointed to command the 10<sup>th</sup> Manchesters. On 7 September 1917 he was giving instructions to a runner at Battalion HQ between Frezenberg and Westhoek when he was hit by a shell splinter and died the same day.

**Henry Clayton Darlington**, third from right on bottom row, was born 1877 and educated at Shrewsbury School.



He served in the Boer War with 1<sup>st</sup> Manchesters and in August 1914 was Major in 1/5<sup>th</sup> Manchesters. He commanded the Battalion in Egypt, Gallipoli and in France (there is no record of him commanding the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion). He was knighted in 1925 and became Sheriff of the County Palatine of Lancaster in 1945 when living at Melling Hall, Carnforth.

OH FOR THE CLASP OF A  
VANQUISHED HAND THE SOUND OF A  
VOICE SO STILL - Pte M L Crompton  
Aus Mach Gun Corps

### THE BANKER WHO SAW MORE THAN THE MILITARY: Paul Conlon

We are led to believe that the stalemate and attritional nature of the Great War was an unforeseen type of warfare. In fact the prediction that this is how a war between great powers or alliances of great powers would proceed was delivered in 1901 to the British Military establishment.

The messenger was **Jan Bloch** or **Jean de Bloch** as he came to be known. He was a Polish Jew and a self-made rich and influential figure in the Russian Empire, of which Poland was a part.



One premise was that modern warfare had developed the defensive capabilities to such a degree that a major war could only be won with huge casualties. He argued that the infantry could not engage the enemy because the last few hundred yards had become a 'killing zone'. This notwithstanding that he did not foresee the destructive power of the machine gun or the use of indirect fire by huge artillery pieces.

Quote:

“Everybody will be entrenched in the next war. It will be a great war of entrenchments. The spade will be as indispensable to a soldier as his rifle. The first thing every man will have to do, if he cares for his life at all, will be to dig a hole in the ground. War, instead of being hand-to-hand contest in which the combatants measure their physical and moral superiority, will become a kind of stalemate, in which neither army is able to get at the other, threatening each other, but never being able to deliver a final and decisive attack.....It is that war which, I maintain, has become absolutely impossible.”

He was of course incorrect in his final conclusion but for political rather than military reasons.

A copy of Bloch's book “Is War Now Impossible?” can be downloaded from the internet archive at:

<https://archive.org/details/iswarnowimpossible00bloccoog>.

A MOTHER'S SUPREME GIFT - Pte J M  
Wilson, Royal Lancaster Regt

## GREAT WAR MEDALS - THE MILITARY CROSS: Bill Myers (+S)



The Military Cross was introduced by Royal Warrant on December 28 in 1914 to provide a gallantry award below the Victory Cross and Distinguished Service Order for junior Army officers and warrant officers.

It was struck in silver and mounted on ribbon of deep purple and white stripes.

The medal was first won by Lieutenant G. F. H. Brooke of the 16th Lancers on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1915.

Silver bars to wear on the ribbon for second or subsequent awards had a crown emblem in the centre.

The medal was always issued unnamed but some have been privately engraved on the reverse.

Citations, giving the circumstances of the medal award, are carried in the government's newspaper The London Gazette which can be searched online.

Since 1938 the reverse of the medal has had the name of the recipient and year of issue engraved on it.

A total of 37,000 were awarded for First World War service.

There were 3,000 double awards, with 170 receiving two bars and four men earning three bars.

Acting Captain Francis Wallington of the Royal Field Artillery was the first person to be awarded a third bar to his MC on 10 July 1918.

A single MC of the First World War - which came in a fitted case - currently sells for around £600 to £700.

One in a group of named medals is likely to be in excess of £1,000.

Until 1979 you had to have survived your act of gallantry to get the medal.

Since 1993 the medal has been open to all ranks.

The first woman to be awarded the Military Cross was Pte Michelle Norris of the Royal Army Medical Corps for service in Iraq. It was presented by the Queen on March 21 in 2007.

**A FAVOURITE POSTCARD: Andrew Brooks**

Christmas cards, whether in postcard form or the folding variety were for a long time a major part of my WW1 collection. In fact the talk I gave on this topic, in front of John Terraine and Corelli Barnett, at the Abergavenny conference in 1998, must be regarded as the peak of my WFA talks (downhill since then and now over!).

In 2005 I had two Christmas cards reproduced by a local printer and this resulted in Ann Clayton (Editor - 'Stand To!') asking me if I would be willing to send her some examples for possible WFA cards. Until she retired as editor I sent her a selection each year and she would choose two for publication. I quickly learnt that she did not like cards that depicted the Germans being humiliated - this ruled out many comic cards!



Recently the card illustrated turned up in a small collection of German cards purchased for WW1 postmarks. It is one of the most

colourful and cheerful cards I have seen and after a two year gap this has now been printed as my personal card for 2016. It was published by the Nurnberg Red Cross and sent to a lady in Hier on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 1915.

**INTO THE FRAY (1<sup>st</sup> December 1916 to 31<sup>st</sup> May 1917)**

Despatch Issues 14 to 17 detailed the 92 Lancashire units (90 infantry battalions plus the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars and a squadron of the Duke of Lancaster's Yeomanry) entering war theatres by 30<sup>th</sup> November 1916 (below).

Regiment	Units
Kings Own Royal Lancaster (KORL)	9
King's Liverpool (KL)	17
Lancashire Fusiliers (LF)	17
East Lancashire (EL)	9
South Lancashire (SL)	8
Loyal North Lancashire (LNL)	10
Manchester (Mcrs)	20
20 <sup>th</sup> Hussars & Duke of Lancs Yeo.	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>92</b>

Of the 90 infantry battalions going "into the fray" 25 were battalions of the Territorial Force which had offered themselves for Imperial Service. As a result of this in September 1914 Army Order 399 authorised that each Territorial unit should be expanded by forming a "second" line and "third" line. The "second line" units so organised were to be equipped and trained for service overseas whilst the "third" were to be draft finding for the original and new battalions. This scheme was separate from the formation of Kitchener's New Armies and was implemented by the existing machinery of the County Associations.

By early 1917 the "second line" units were ready for deployment overseas the exception being the 3/5 LF's and the 4/5 LNL's which were extra battalions created for overseas

service by the 2 regiments. The 2/5 LFs (plus 1/4 KORL, 1/8 KL, and 1/4 LNL) had already gone to France with 154 Brigade, 51 (Highland) Division in May 1915, becoming

known as the "Lancashire Highlanders". The 3/5 LFs and 4/5 LNL went to France with 197 and 170 Brigades respectively (see below).

The 24 infantry battalions in the table that follows represent the total infantry of the 57<sup>th</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> West Lancashire) Division and the 66<sup>th</sup> (East Lancashire) Division.

The commanding officers of the 57<sup>th</sup> and 66<sup>th</sup> Divisions had contrasting futures. Lieutenant General Robert George Broadwood was mortally wounded by shellfire and died on 21 June 1917. Major General Herbert Alexander Lawrence became Haig's Chief Intelligence Officer in January 1918 and shortly after was promoted Chief of Staff.



Gen R G Broadwood  
57 Division



Gen. H Lawrence  
66 Division

Battalion/ All France/ Entry Date	Narrative
2/5 KORL 7 Feb 17	L Havre. Formed Lancaster Sept 1914. Nov 1914 to Blackpool. Feb 15 to North Lancs Bgde, 55 Div, Sevenoaks. April 15 to 170 Bgde, 57 Div. July 1916 to Aldershot. Third Battle of Ypres.
2/5 KL Feb 17	Formed Liverpool Sept 14. Nov 14 to Blackpool. Feb 15 to 171 Bgde, 57 Div, Canterbury. July 16 to Bourley, Aldershot. Sept 16 to Woking. Second Battle of Passchendaele.
2/6 KL 14 Feb 17	Boulogne. Formed Liverpool 10 Sep 14. 10 Nov 14 Blackpool. 8 Feb 15 to 171 Bgde, 57 Div, Canterbury. 15 Mar 15 to Margate. 13 Jul 15 to Upstreet Camp. 15 Jul 16 to Bourley, Aldershot. 27 Sep 16 to Inkerman Barracks, Woking. Second Battle of Passchendaele.
2/7 KL Feb 17	Boulogne, Formed at Bootle about Oct 14. Nov 14 to Blackpool. Feb 15 to 171 Bgde, 57 Div, Canterbury. Jul 16 to Tweseldown, Aldershot. Sep 16 to Woking. Second Battle of Passchendaele.
2/8 KL Feb 17	Formed Liverpool about Oct 14. Nov 14 to Blackpool. Feb 15 to 171 Bgde, 57 Div, Canterbury. Jul 16 to Tweseldown, Aldershot. Sep 16 to Woking. Second Battle of Passchendaele.
2/9 KL Feb 17	Formed Liverpool about Oct 14. Nov 14 to Blackpool. Feb 15 to 172 Bgde, 57 Div, Ashford, Kent? Jul 16 to Mytchett, Aldershot. Sep 16 to Blackdown.
2/10 KL Feb 17	Formed Liverpool about Oct 14. Nov 14 to Blackpool. Feb 15 to 172 Bgde, 57 Div, Ashford, Kent? Jul 16 to Mytchett, Aldershot. Sep to Blackdown. Second Battle of Passchendaele.
2/5 Mcrs Feb 17	Formed Wigan Aug 14. Nov to 199 Bgde, 66 Div. Remained in Lancashire until about May 15 then to Crowborough area. Mar 16 to Colchester. Third Battle of Ypres.

2/6 Mcrs Feb 17	Formed Manchester Aug 14. Subsequent record as 2/5 Bn Mcrs
2/7 Mcrs Feb 17	Formed Manchester Aug 14. Subsequent record as 2/5 Bn Mcrs
2/8 Mcrs Feb 17	Formed Ardwick Aug 14. Subsequent record as 2/5 Bn Mcrs
2/9 Mcrs Feb 17	Formed Ashton-under-Lyne Aug 14. Nov 14 to 198 Bgde, 66 Div. Remained in Lancashire until about May 15 then to Crowborough area. Mar 16 to Colchester. Third Battle of Ypres.
2/10 Mcrs Feb 17	Formed Oldham Aug 14. Subsequent record as 2/9 Bn Mcrs
2/4 LNL 8 Feb 17	Le Havre. Formed Preston Oct 14. Spring 15 to 170 Bgde, 57 Div, Ashford area. July 16 to Aldershot. Oct 16 to Blackdown. Apr/May 17 trench actions S of Armentieres. 2nd Battle of Passchendaele
2/5 LNL 9 Feb 17	Le Havre. Formed Bolton Oct 14. Subsequent record as 2/4 Bn except arrive France 1 day later. 2nd Battle of Passchendaele
4/5 LNL 12 Feb 17	Le Havre. Formed in 1915 and to Ashford area in 170 Bgde, 57 Div. Jul 16 to Aldershot. Oct 16 to Blackdown. March 17, trench actions S of Armentieres. 2nd Battle of Passchendaele
2/4 SL 16 Feb 17	Boulogne. Formed Sept 14 at Warrington. Feb 15 to 172 Bgde, 57 Div, Ashford. June 16 to Mytchett, Aldershot. Oct 16 to Blackdown. May 17 trench actions S of Armentieres. 2nd Battle of Passchendaele.
2/5 SL 20 Feb 17	Boulogne. Formed Sept 14 at St Helens. Subsequent record as 2/4. Except arrive France 4 days later.
2/6 LF 26 Feb 17	Le Havre. Formed at Mossborough 29 Sept 14. Oct to 197 Bgde, 66 Div in billets at Southport. May 15 to Crowborough. Oct 15 to Tunbridge Wells. Mar 16 Meeanee Barracks, Colchester. Mar 17 trenches at Festubert. Third Battle of Ypres.
2/7 LF 28 Feb 17	Le Havre. Formed at Salford Aug 14. Sept 14 to Mossborough. Oct to 197 Bgde, 66 Div in billets at Southport. May 15 to Crowborough. Oct 15 to Tunbridge Wells. Mar 16 Hyderabad Barracks, Colchester. Mar 17 trenches at Givenchy. Third Battle of Ypres
2/8 LF 28 Feb 17	Le Havre. Formed at Mossborough 29 Sept 14. Subsequent record same as 2/7 Bn.
3/5 LF 1 Mar 17	Le Havre. Formed at Bury 11 Oct 14. At Bury till May 15 then to 197 Bgde, 66 Div at Crowborough. Mar 16 to Colchester. Mar 17 trenches at Givenchy.. Third Battle of Ypres.
2/4 EL 2 Mar 17	Le Havre. Formed at Blackburn, Sept 14. Nov 14 to 198 Bgde, 66 Div, Southport. May 15 to Burgess Hill, Sussex. June 15 to Peas Cottage, south of Crawley. Oct 15 to Crowborough. Mar 16 to Colchester. Mar 17 trenches at Givenchy. Third Battle of Ypres.
2/5 EL 4 Mar 17	Le Havre. Formed at Burnley, Sept 14. Subsequent record as 2/4 Bn except arrive France 2 days later.

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

**WESTERN FRONT AND OTHER STRATEGIC EVENTS TIMELINE - 1<sup>st</sup> DECEMBER 1916 TO 31<sup>st</sup> MAY 1917 (largely based on www.greatwar.co.uk)**

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

<b>Dec-16</b>		<b>Mar-17</b>	
4	Mr Asquith, British PM resigns	11	British forces occupy Baghdad
7	Lloyd George becomes British PM		Allied offensive in Macedonia to free Monastir begins
8	Entente powers begin blockade of Greece	12	Russian Revolution begins
11	Lloyd George Coalition Govt formed in GB, Lord Derby Secretary of State for War		USA announce arming of merchant vessels in war zone
18	President Wilson suggests peace negotiations	14	Germans withdraw from Somme
26	Alliance powers reply to Pres. Wilson's note		China severs diplomatic relations with Germany
30	Entente Govts reject German peace proposals		New Provisional Govt in Russia
<b>Jan-17</b>		15	Tsar Nicholas of Russia abdicates
3	Portugese start to arrive in France	23	Allies end Macedonia offensive
9	Battle of Kut, 1917, begins	24	British begin Palestine offensive
10	Entente Govts send joint reply to President Wilson's note, Allied war aims outlined	26	First battle of Gaza begins. Ends next day
17	Inter-Allied conference (Russia, GB, France, Italy) to discuss war policy	<b>Apr-17</b>	
25	Southwold & Wangford shelled by German destroyers	5	Germans complete withdrawal to Hindenburg line
<b>Feb-17</b>		6	USA declare war on Germany
1	German 'unrestricted' submarine warfare begins	9	Battles of Arras (Vimy Ridge & First Scarpe) begin
3	USA sever diplomatic relations with Germany	11	Brazil sever diplomatic relations with Germany
13	Scandinavian Govts' joint protest against German submarine war	14	Battles of Vimy Ridge and First Scarpe end
23	Kut reoccupied by British forces	16	French Aisne (Nivelle) offensive begins
25	Rumania agrees convention with Entente Powers	17	Second Battle of Gaza begins ends 19 April
25	Germans withdraw from positions on Ancre (start withdrawal to Hindenburg line)	19	French Aisne offensive stopped
26	British SS "Laconia" sunk by sub	23	2 <sup>nd</sup> Battle of Scarpe ends 24 <sup>th</sup>
26	Pres. Wilson seeks powers to arm merchant ships	24	Samarra taken by British
27	Pres. Wilson considers "Laconia" sinking "overt act" waited for		First Battle of Dorian begins
28	German proposals to Mexico for alliance against USA published in American press	<b>May-17</b>	
		2	3 <sup>rd</sup> Battle of Scarpe & Bullecourt begin
		4	3 <sup>rd</sup> Battle of Scarpe ends
		9	First Battle of Doiran ends
		15	Gen Petain succeeds Nivelle & Gen Foch replaces Petain as Chief of French General Staff
		17	Battle of Bullecourt ends
		19	USA decides to send Division to France at once

WHERE THOU ART GONE ADIEUX AND  
FAREWELLS ARE A SOUND UNKNOWN -  
2 Lt C L M Todd, South Lancs Regt

## MUSEUM REPORTS

### Liverpool Scottish Regimental Museum Trust: Ian Riley

Whilst we continue our work in answering queries (almost as many in the last year, a hundred, as the infinitely more prestigious Museum of Liverpool holding the King's Regiment Collection) and in improving the catalogue of our extensive archive, other things of interest have crossed our horizon.

We were contacted by Professor Mary Gobbi of Southampton whose mother, Mrs Ellen Gobbi, had been successful in the lottery for places at the National Commemoration at Thiepval on 1st July 2016, the centenary of the start of the Somme campaign. Mrs Gobbi's uncle, Corporal Kennedy



O'Brien, had been killed in action with the Liverpool Scottish during the 55<sup>th</sup> (West Lancashire) Division attacks at Guillemont 8/9 August 1916. She and her daughter wanted advice about the battle and a suggestion for an appropriate wreath. Mrs Gobbi is 96 (nearer to 97) and was not prepared to let her wheelchair be any sort of obstacle to boarding Eurostar in London at 6.30 am and to return later that day after being present at Thiepval. The full story can be seen on our website at the link below.

Mrs Gobbi's query was just one of quite a few family and institutional queries that we

received about the fighting around Guillemont. John Mitchinson and his son Adam were able to lay the wreath of the Liverpool Scottish Regimental Association on 9<sup>th</sup> August at Guillemont Road Cemetery in their personal pilgrimage in memory of their forbear Pte Albert Smith 6376 of the Liverpool Scottish. Through the museum contacts, they were able to meet with Toby Beaumont, Usher (deputy head) of Magdalen College School in Oxford, a school attended by Captain Noel Chavasse VC and Bar who won his first VC on the Guillemont battlefield.

In September, at our archive office in Liverpool, we were visited by Richard and Sally Slocock. Richard is the grandson of Lancelot Slocock, Captain of England's Rugby Union side, 1907/08. Slocock was also killed in action at Guillemont with the Liverpool Scottish when Richard's father was just over two years old. We were able to show him the adjutant's handwritten account (much more extensive than the official war diary) of the battle including the difficulties of the 1/5<sup>th</sup> Bn Loyal North Lancashire Regiment attacking on the left flank of the Liverpool Scottish but unable to reach the start line until forty minutes after the artillery barrage, through no fault of their own. Also, rather movingly, we were able to show him an original manuscript letter from the adjutant describing how he searched the battlefield for Slocock and others, with little success, when the ground had been captured in September.

A dramatic event was the destruction/demolition by fire of the



Edwardian Liverpool Scottish Range Hut at Altcar Ranges between Southport and Liverpool, built to a high standard and some expense in 1904 to assist musketry training in the Volunteer battalion and the Territorial Force battalion from 1908. Soldiers would leave their offices in Liverpool, travel out for an evening's shooting, stay out on the range, sleeping and eating in the hut, and return by train the next morning. A managed blaze was



sadly, the most cost effective way of demolishing a 110 year-old wooden structure that had become unsafe and beyond economic repair. Again there is a link to our website.

<http://www.liverpoolscottish.org.uk/~liverpo4/the-regimental-family/visit-to-thiepval-memorial-2016/>

<http://www.liverpoolscottish.org.uk/~liverpo4/the-regimental-family/the-battle-of-guillemont/>

<http://www.liverpoolscottish.org.uk/~liverpo4/the-regimental-family/farewell-to-the-forbes-hut/>

## Fusiliers Museum - The Missing of the Somme Exhibition: Sarah Stevenson

The Missing of the Somme exhibition opened at the Fusilier Museum in July to mark the centenary of the Battle of the Somme, which saw twelve battalions of

Lancashire Fusiliers drawn into the conflict between July and November 1916.

The exhibition tells the story of Lancashire Fusiliers who have no known grave and are commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing in France.

These men have been tirelessly researched by Pam and Ken Linge, who have to date compiled information and photographs on almost 12,000 of the 72,000 men, most of whom were killed during the 141 days of the Battle of the Somme.

The exhibition includes stories such as that of **Joseph Murphy**, a Private in the 15th Battalion, who died on 1st July 1916 aged 21 years. He was the husband of Beatrice Murphy of Cheetham Hill,



Manchester. Patrick and Beatrice had one daughter, Eileen, who he never saw.

On 21st December 1916 his wife wrote to the Commanding Officer of "C" Company saying, "hoping you can give me some good news about my husband."



The exhibition also features **William Murfitt**, a Private in the 2nd/5th Battalion, died on 9th September 1916 aged 25 years. He was the son of William and Mary Murfitt of Tottington, Bury. A pre-war

Territorial he was mobilised on 4th August 1914.

A letter from a comrade Pte. W. Harrison, stated:

*"Willie Murfitt was with three other non-commissioned officers by a traverse, next but one to me, when a shell blew in the trench...death was*

*instantaneous, as we were not half-a-minute in getting them out, and they were dead when got out. The date was September 9th, about two or three o'clock."*

The exhibition will run until July 2017 featuring twenty stories throughout the year long run of the exhibition.

THESE WHO DESIRED TO LIVE WENT OUT TO DEATH - Lieut J R M Wilkinson, Middlesex Regt

**Lancashire Infantry Museum - Brigadier General G G R Williams: Dominic Butler, Assistant Curator**

The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment has a unique distinction of being the only British unit to serve in East Africa in the first half of the war. It came at a price though, at the Battle of Tanga, particularly for one 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant, George Giffard Rawson Williams.

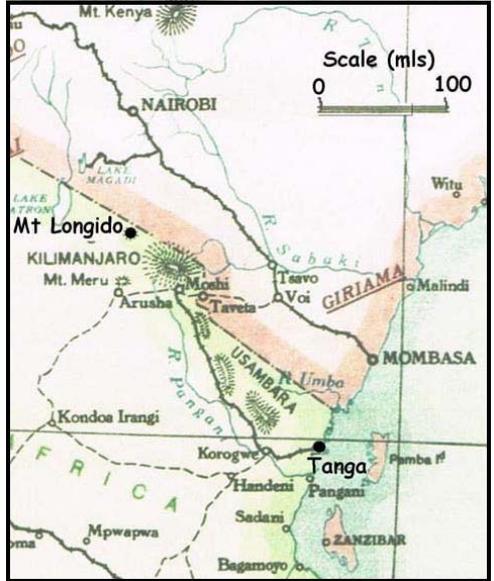


Brigadier General G G R Williams

2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Williams, or Giff, was Commissioned on 24<sup>th</sup> January, 1914 into The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment from the Royal Military College, Sandhurst and posted immediately to the 2nd Battalion in Bangalore, India. He was there on the outbreak on World War I, and sailed in October with the Battalion in Expeditionary Force " B " to German East Africa, which was involved in the ill-fated attack on Tanga.

The Battle of Tanga, sometimes also known as the Battle of the Bees, was the unsuccessful attack by the British Indian Expeditionary Force "B" under Major General A.E. Aitken to capture German East Africa (the mainland portion of present-day

Tanzania) in concert with the invasion Force "C" near Longido on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro. It was the first major event of the war in Eastern Africa and saw the British defeated by a significantly smaller force of German Askaris and colonial volunteers under Lieutenant Colonel Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck.



After a botched landing of some of his forces, Aitken ordered his troops inland towards the town of Tanga, where it met resistance from the local Askaris. In the ensuing fights over the next 36 hours, the majority Indian forces would retreat back to the sea, leaving the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion to hold the line against intense fire. The situation on 4<sup>th</sup> November was made worse, when numerous Killer Bee's nests were disturbed by the fire, causing the bees to become angry and to defend their homes, by attacking the men on the ground. There was one case of a Loyal's man being stung up to 50 times.

On 4th November 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Williams was wounded in the head and left for dead on the battlefield. As the Indian Force retreated, the Germans advanced, and found Williams, still alive. He was made a prisoner of war in

German East Africa until he was handed back to the 2nd Battalion on 18th November, 1917. As part of the deal to return POW's, he could not hold a front line command, nor could the other ranks be in a front line unit.

In January, 1918, having recovered from his incarceration, now a Captain, he was an Instructor at the Army School of Instruction, Borden, in Aldershot Command until December the same year. From here he was posted to the 1st Battalion at Tidworth going with them to Malta and then Ireland until September, 1921. From here until December 1924 he was OC Training Company at the Depot, Fulwood Barracks, when he met Ruth Holland Grierson.

From March, 1925 to August, 1929 he was with the 1st Battalion in Tientsin and then Secunderabad. During this period, on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 1926, he married Ruth Grierson.

They returned to the UK in September, 1929 when for four years he was Adjutant of 5 Loyals TA in Bolton. On leaving this appointment he was promoted to Major and posted to the 2nd Battalion at Tidworth only to return to Lancashire a year later as OC Depot Loyals at Fulwood Barracks, Preston.

From the Depot he was posted in January, 1938, to Shanghai as 2/IC 2 Loyals, moving to Singapore the same year, and commanded 2 Loyals from January, 1939, to September, 1940, having been promoted to Lt-Col on 24th April, 1939. So the outbreak of World War 11 found him once more in the Far East. This time in Malaya.

He was appointed temporary Brigadier and, at different times, commanded the 1<sup>st</sup> Malaya Infantry Brigade and the Singapore Infantry Brigade in fighting against the Japanese. On 15<sup>th</sup> February 1942 he was again captured by the enemy and was a POW in Singapore, Formosa and Manchuria until August 1945.

In June 1946 he was promoted Colonel, with seniority, with effect from April 1942 and retired in July 1947. He became Colonel of

The Loyal Regiment in February 1949 and died 19<sup>th</sup> April 1972.

The Museum has objects and photographs from the East African Campaign, in the main display area of the Somme Room including Brigadier Williams' medals.

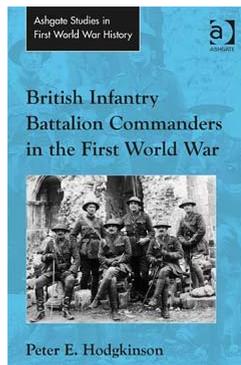
TIS ONLY WE THAT LOVED YOU  
UNDERSTAND HOW WE MISS YOU - Pte J  
Welsh, Duke of Wellington's Regt

**BRITISH INFANTRY BATTALION  
COMMANDERS IN THE FIRST WORLD  
WAR** by Peter E Hodgkinson - Ashgate  
Publishing (£70.00): Barrie Bertram

Seeing that I had been mentioned in the *Acknowledgement* section of Peter Hodgkinson's book for helping to identify battalion commanders, Terry Dean "loaned" me a PDF copy he had obtained so that I could provide a report for Despatch.

Based upon the author's dissertation for a Doctorate, and given the eye-watering, minimum price tag of £70.00, one soon questions whether a book such as this offers value for money. Weighing in at 265 pages, one soon notes a 20% reduction to that figure with the usual front- and back-end requirements for any book, as well as the 'Intentionally Blanks'. Thus, in terms of the book's 'meat and two veg', one is left with 210 pages to digest!

The author sets out his stall with the first sentence to the Introduction, 'This book examines the evolution of the Battalion Commanders of British Infantry Regiments during the First World War', and by so doing,



he seeks to answer the following four key questions in a chronological order:

- How and where resources were found from the small officer corps of 1914 to cope with the requirement for Commanding Officers (COs) in an expanding army,
- What was the quality of the men who rose to command a Battalion,
- Beyond simple overall quality, exactly what qualities were perceived as making an effective CO, and,
- To what extent did a meritocracy develop in the British army by the Armistice?

However, in his undoubted enthusiasm for the subject, the stall soon gets kicked over as he immediately starts presenting his arguments in the Introduction, sometimes to counter the opinions of others, with the result that any opportunity for a different book structure is lost.

The question of CO quality is, without question, an important topic, given that a CO, in normal circumstances a Lieutenant-Colonel, is the most senior rank in the Army to directly command a body of men, given that Brigadiers and those above them, are there to direct formations. So, one would expect that the requirements for CO quality should be bench-marked in Chapter 1, after all, the author is writing of an evolution. The reader however, finds in an excellent Chapter 6 that he addresses some of these issues, but when evolving, there is a need for a starting point, and what better than from the situation in August, 1914? One would have liked to have seen a discussion of what the War Office saw as a job description, if you will, whereby a CO could be judged, along with performance criteria for his regiment. After all, the author reminds the reader at the outset on page 1 that Bonaparte was reputed

to have said that, 'There are no bad Regiments, only bad Colonels'!

With the outbreak of war, the author points out that the demand for further COs soon showed, first of all to cope with the Army's expansion in terms of the numbers of infantry Battalions raised, but also to fill the gaps due to attrition, which also increased as the additional Battalions were fielded. It is interesting to note that the author adopts a broader interpretation of what constituted 'attrition', given that 58% of regular COs, in post with deployed Battalions in August, 1914, were no longer there at the outset of 1915. Whilst most readers simply see it as to mean those killed, wounded, missing and imprisoned, in his calculations, the author rightly includes those COs promoted, moved sideways into staff roles, illness, or in a number of cases, were presented with the military equivalent of a P45. After all, in whatever fashion that a CO departed, a vacancy was created as a result.

COs, both as replacements for the existing and newly raised Battalions had to be found, and, with the expanded Army, the 5,000+ COs that have been identified by the author during his research would have provided leadership to 1,762 infantry Battalions from a just few days to a few years.

Under normal circumstances, those replacements would generally have been expected through the promotion of regular officers to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, but attrition affected that source and given that, the number of COs would also include those officers from the Special Reserve, the Territorial Force and Kitchener's New Armies. Along with the regulars, these three elements would, in varying proportions, become the source, alongside the 'dug outs' and men commissioned from the ranks. A small number of the latter would indeed be appointed as Lieutenant Colonel in a brief military career of 2-3 years following commissioning. One also sees that the

average age of COs understandably decreasing in the four years of war, and it is clear that fitness and stamina had a part to play.

There is of course the evolutionary aspect, and not just through age and the broader range of candidates. The 1914 COs were, almost to a man, greatly experienced thanks to earlier active service in South Africa, the Sudan, Egypt and the many other places wherever the British Empire had raised its flag. In general, they would have become COs largely due to their seniority within the Regiment (It is not a coincidence that no two officers of the same rank in a Regiment had the same seniority date, one had to be junior to the other!). Others further down the rank structure, many 'dug outs', and former rankers would have also shared those experiences, but for those who had joined during the war, that experience was soon acquired in the very hard school of front-line service. But in due course this would be supplemented by the establishment of a Senior Officers' School where the most up to date doctrines could be taught along with the skills to command a Battalion. At the same time, the School provided opportunity for an exchange of views between the aspiring COs.

The author covers the foregoing in his book and has also used a number of vignettes covering elements of the various COs' careers and, in some cases, their fate to support his thesis. This provides a very welcome human face to what might be otherwise regarded as a dry account. One particular CO of considerable note who is brought to the reader's attention was Lieutenant Colonel Ivor Thord-Gray, a Swede, and for whom service as a British CO during the Great War was just a three-year interlude in a military career that also saw him serving with thirteen countries, a number too many to list individually here! (Another, who caught the Editor's attention, is

Lieutenant Colonel Charles James Burke who was said to be a better leader of men than a pilot, see Page 2).

There has been much research that underpins the content of the book, and the author should be lauded for the work that has been undertaken. However, there are two areas of concern with that. The first is the Bibliography, a dozen pages long, which lists the references which he had consulted. There may be a risk that, in quoting passages, myths might be interpreted as fact. The second concern is that he has forgotten the oft repeated cliché that 'a picture is worth of a thousand words' for the book is devoid of photographs and illustrations. One feels that, where analyses had been undertaken, the author could have presented the results visually via graphs, pie charts, bar charts and other such formats to reduce reliance on describing the results in lengthy prose.

Overall, the author has answered the four questions that he had set himself, and showed that COs had carried a heavy load on their shoulders in terms of getting their Battalions capable of waging war whilst maintaining unit morale. Most COs were very much up to the mark, although of course, as in many other enterprises, there were some who were not fit enough for the task and would have to be replaced. Meanwhile others would suffer mental stress such that the War Office soon recognized the need for COs to be rested for lengthy periods away from the front-line. By and large, and despite the criticisms above, the book is credible addition to the ongoing debate about the command of the British Army during the Great War. Finally, this brings the reader back to the question of whether a book such as this offers value for money at £70.00.

Sadly, the answer must be 'No'! But notwithstanding, the subject very much merits a wider audience, and it would be unlikely for the book to appear on Public Library shelves anytime soon. Perhaps a

solution might be to revisit the structure, expand the book's content to 450 pages including illustrations as well as the front- and back-end requirements, whilst looking to retail at £30-35.

Recognizing the high cost, Peter Hodgkinson is willing to let a reader of Despatch have a PDF copy for £10 on request to [pehodgkinson@gmail.com](mailto:pehodgkinson@gmail.com).

WE COMMEND TO THY FATHERLY  
LOVE AND CARE OUR BELOVED SON -  
Pte L W Nichols, Royal Sussex Regt

### STOBS INTERNMENT CAMP, HAWICK: Rick Preston

The First World War developed into "total war" which affected not only soldiers but also civilians. Aliens were soon regarded as suspect which had been encouraged by the number of spy books published over the previous 20 years and the actions of the Germans during the course of the War e.g. the sinking of the Lusitania and its loss of civilian lives further affected public opinion. As aliens the German civilians, many of whom had lived in the UK for 40 years or more, had families here and were involved in industry and commerce including Pork Butchers, but they became suspect and were



German Post Card of Stobs Camp

soon imprisoned in Concentration or Internment Camps. I was aware of a camp in Lancaster, and the largest British Camp in the Isle of Man, Knockaloe, but my

knowledge of other camps was sketchy to say the least.

In Scotland, Stobs Internment Camp at Hawick, became the largest camp in Scotland, and during the weekend of 18/19<sup>th</sup> June there was a Study weekend to explore how this camp came into existence and its development. It was sponsored by the Arts and Heritage Council, Aston University and Scottish Border Council. Being just an hour from home near Carlisle Sue and I attended.

The Saturday was given over to the history behind the Camp, there were a number of talks covering anti German riots in Scotland, enemy aliens in Scotland, the camp History, Ahmednager Camp in India which gave an international dimension and a practical session looking at letters sent from the camp, maps and other documents relating to its history.

Sunday was a field visit to the area of the camp, which is some 2 miles south of Hawick off the B6399. There are a number of Military building still standing relating to the Army camps of 1914/18 and 1939/45, and the outline of the internment camp with its road system and a wooden hut, the only one left in



Current view of Stobs camp (with hut arrowed)

its original position in GB and perhaps the world, where the German Internees lived for up to 4 years. Each hut housed up to 60 inmates. The estate was sold into private hands in the late 1950's and the hut has been used by the local farmer for storage and breeding and raising of grouse. Although it is

in need of some renovation, particularly the rear gable end, it is in a remarkable state of preservation considering its age.

The internment camp was placed here because of the availability of isolated land, the presence of a British Military camp and the close proximity of the Waverly railway line. The land was already in the ownership of the army at the beginning of 1914 due to the reforms after the Boer War. The Stobs Estate was acquired in 1903 with a plan to develop it as the "Aldershot of the North" but the plan never fully materialised but the land was kept. It was used for training and the summer camps for the Territorial Army. At

By the end of the war there were some 30000 enemy aliens in camps all over the Britain and another 10000 in the wider Empire. These were separate from prisoner of war camps for soldiers. At the end of the war the majority of the internees were sent back to Germany in spite of the fact that many had lived in the UK for many years. This caused many family problems. Family



Remaining Hut (see arrow on photo)

break-ups developed as some wives did not wish to go and live in Germany. Other couples eventually emigrated to North America. Relatively few German nationals were allowed to stay in Britain.

More research is planned when funds become available. The study weekend was most interesting, informative and well worth the travel north.

## **WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION, YORK CONFERENCE, 9 JULY 2016 - 'PERSPECTIVES ON THE SOMME': Paul Conlon**

This was a national WFA conference hosted by the Yorkshire branch which is headed up by David Tattersfield. The venue was the Manor CE Academy, Nether Poppleton, York. This is an excellent place for a conference with good parking, lecture hall and first class catering.

The early start of 10am Saturday morning encouraged me to stay local and so I coupled the conference with Friday trip around York, a good meal and a few pints of good ale.

Peter Simkins welcomed us on the day and introduced us to the first class team of historians; as opposed to the second team fielded by the BBC during the Somme commemorations. These are his words but a sentiment that gets my full support.



Stobs camp just pre WW1

the beginning of the war the army did use the area as a camp. As the internment of enemy aliens started to take place during 1915 onwards the internment camp was built. These camps were of a set pattern and design. Stobs conformed to the pattern it had accommodation for 4500 men with their own hospital, bakery, prison, internal small gauge railway, direct connection to the main railway line, a YMCA and swimming pool all surrounded by a barb wire fence. It also had its own cemetery the remains of which are still visible although the bodies were transferred to Cannock Chase in the 1950's. Similar camps could be found in the West Indies, India, Australia and New Zealand and were of an identical nature. Conditions were usually good with no hard labour according to representatives of neutral nations who inspected these camps.

All the speakers were there for the full day with the exception of Rob Thompson, who true to form arrived by superbike. Fortunately on this occasion he arrived in good time. I have extracted a few key points from each of the talks.

### **Prof John Bourne.**

In the immediate post-war years Passchendaele was the main memory of the slaughter in the Great War until Martin Middlebrook's book 'The First day on the Somme' started the change.

The Somme was the bloody grave of the German Army dug by British Industry but not on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916.

"Our Generals were not the problem it was the Germans", a quote by an unknown aged veteran.

### **Geoff Spring**

Parts of this talk were for the hardware and stats geeks but a good talk nevertheless.

The success of the 30<sup>th</sup> Division at Montauban was contrasted with the 31<sup>st</sup> Division failure at Serre by looking at the different artillery plans of the two attacks. Yet another illustration that the methods and tactics employed along the Somme front were not uniform in the run up to the first day and on the day itself.

The after action report highlighted that overall there were not enough guns; too many committed for defence instead of attack.

### **Dr Jim Beach**

An examination of 3 important points in time and how the intelligence reports influenced the decisions made on the start, progression and continuation of the battle into the final phases.

Incorrect interpretation of German troop movements and wrong identification of new units in the East meant that there were 3 Divisions more in reserve than the British believed at the start of the battle.

In August the belief in London that attrition on the battlefield was working, coupled with the naval blockade success led to continued high optimism. This should have been balanced with the lack of intelligence about the conditions in Germany.

October saw another period of high optimism based on flawed intelligence concerning the quality of German front line troops and low morale of the German Army overall.

Basically the intelligence available was wrong from the start and was used to justify the proposed courses of action.

### **Prof Gary Sheffield**

"Rawlinson's career was saved by Haig and he was therefore Haig's man".

This assertion was examined and dismantled thoroughly and it is not easy to pick out just a few salient points.

It is worth mentioning Haig was a 'breakthrough man' and Rawlinson 'a bite and hold' advocate.

Haig could have operated more control of Rawlinson and was wrong to put Gough's reserves under Rawlinson's control.

Rawlinson seemed to have refused to believe the optimistic news from the South and missed the opportunity to reinforce this success.

### **Rob Thompson**

There was not one Somme it consisted of many battles and led to many lessons being learned.

The logistical developments on the Somme were crucial to the war efforts in 1917 and eventual success in 1918.

The movement from static to mobile warfare entailed the use of different logistics however I'm unclear quite how this transition occurred.

AND HE COUNTED NOT THE COST -  
Lance Segt T Hughes, Kings Liv Regt

# LINESMAN IN FRANCE AGAIN (+P)

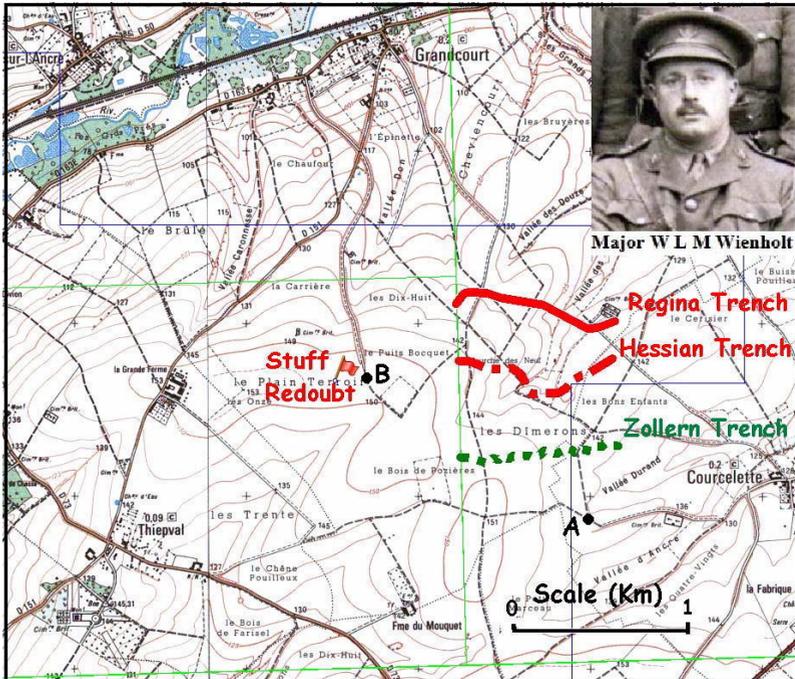
In September we briefly visit the Somme on our way home from visiting Germany and the Dordogne.

Arriving Saturday afternoon we were soon struck by the coachloads and numerous carfuls of visitors. We called at several cemeteries and viewed, with approval, the

good work of the CWGC including the "new" information boards. We then travelled via Courcelette to view the terrain from 'A' on the map.

Sunday morning we arrived at Thiepval about 9.30 and again were surprised by the crowd. After viewing the many information boards, the Memorial and the British/French cemetery we moved via the road to Grandcourt to view the terrain from 'B' on the map.

My particular interest in this area was sparked in early July, when on Saturday duty at the Lancashire Infantry Museum. I took a telephone call from John Curtis seeking information concerning his grandfather, **Sergeant 14271 Arthur Brotherton**, who was killed on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1916 and is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial. John wished to know as much as possible about his grandfather's



Major W L M Wienholt

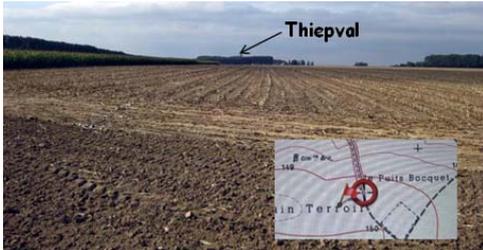
service record together with where and how he died.

Fortunately Arthur's service record survived the blitz and I could provide it to his grandson together with information from the Regimental History and War Diary of the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment (9LNL). Arthur crossed to France with 9LNL on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1915. They suffered numerous casualties before reaching the Somme and on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1916 9LNL suffered further heavy losses in attacks on Ovillers. After occupying quiet sectors of the front and two weeks rest/training at Abbeville they moved again towards action.

On 5<sup>th</sup> October Major Wienholt's War Diary entry indicates they took over a line of trenches Map Ref 57DSE 1/20000 R28A&B from 8<sup>th</sup> Battn Border Regiment. This would be Zollern trench which is marked on the map above together with Hessian and Regina trenches above in square R22. The Regimental History indicates 9LNL were preparing for attacks on Stuff Redoubt and

related trenches when Arthur was killed but “there were several casualties from the enemy shells”. I advised his grandson it was very likely that one of these shells was the end of Arthur in Zollern trench. Subsequently 9LNL was involved in taking Regina trench.

I also provided his grandson with relevant maps from my Linesman system and advised him that I planned to visit the location of Arthur’s death since this is an area of the Somme battlefield I had not been.



The above photo is a view from B looking towards the Thiepval memorial on the skyline. The terrain is relatively featureless, and more difficult to discern with standing crops. Linesman facilities are very helpful, see inset with circle confirming my iPhone location.

Returning to Grancourt Road we walked the headstones in Stump Road cemetery and I noticed that Private Brumfield (Yorks and Lancs) had a familiar famous (?) inscription, being the same as Private Crompton on Page 9. We then headed north to call on Lieut-Col Burke at Point-du-Jour cemetery north of Athies and then to the Ring of Memory at Notre Dame de Lorette.

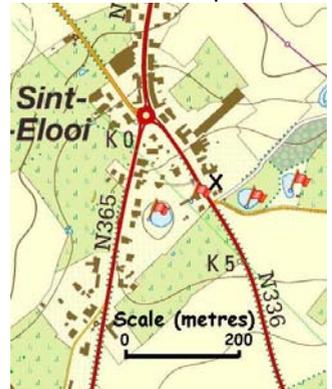
Emmie’s objective was to view the name of her uncle James Oddie who was killed at Givenchy on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1918. James had a



privileged position on the Ring. His niece could easily and tenderly finger his name.

Driving to our hotel in Arras and seeing the signs to Mont-St-Eloi were the inspiration to view the St Eloi craters south of Ypres next day en route to Zeebrugge.

Arriving at St Eloi we parked at ‘X’ and on the opposite side of N336 was the gate leading to private land where the



largest crater is located. The 4 flags on the current map were placed on the craters which show on the October 1916 trench map. I telephoned the information office in Ypres to obtain the access code for the gate lock and walked along a decaying wood path to a large water filled crater. This large crater was created on 7 June 1917 when the largest explosion of the war took place as part of the Battle of Messines.



The information boards also tell of the explosions on 27 March 1916 and how subsequently Captain Billy Congreve single handed brandishing his revolver captured a large number of German officers and men. Behind the trees on the opposite side of the lake are the well preserved remains of a British bunker.

IF LOVE COULD HAVE SAVED HIM HE  
WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN KILLED  
Lt C F T Chute, Royal Munster Fus



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## 2016 ARMISTICE PRIZE

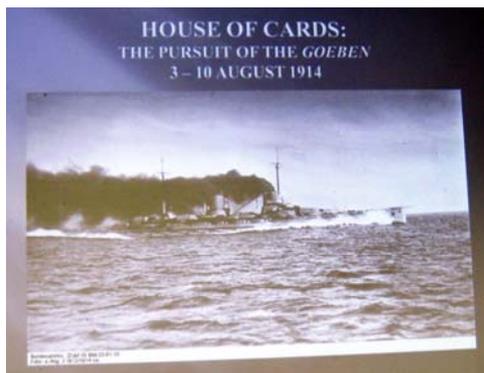
Three schools submitted a total of 17 entries which is a disappointing reduction on last year when 4 schools submitted 55 entries. Most of the entries were typed or handwritten text relating to WW1 with others being models or artwork. The entries were marked by Fiona Bishop, Paul Conlon and Peter Denby and I collated the scores.

The winner was Isabelle Pugh of Oakhill School, Whalley (see back page). Her entry was a large hand drawn map of the Ypres Salient on which she had placed notes and photographs relating to the 3 day cycle tour by staff and pupils. Isabelle was presented with the trophy, a cheque for £100 and a book (H.P. Willmott's "WORLD WAR 1" at her school on 19<sup>th</sup> October.

Marking indicated two other entries obtaining the same score marginally lower than the winner and was decided to award two area prizes. Grace Rushton of Ribblesdale High School, Clitheroe deserved the award of the East Lancashire area prize for her work entitled '*WW1 + Trenches*' and Isabel Bruce of St Cecilia's RC High School, Longridge deserved the award of the Central and South Lancashire area prize for her work entitled '*WW1?*'. They each receive Willmott's book and a £25 cheque.

A Press Release describing the results of this year's competition accompanied by photographs of the three prize winners and their entries was issued on 1<sup>st</sup> November 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. I plan to report to our AGM on the future of the competition.

## House of Cards - The Pursuit of the Goeben in the Mediterranean (3<sup>rd</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> August 1914): May 2016 (16 attended)



Dr Scott Lindgren gave a comprehensive talk on some of the naval events which took place in the Mediterranean between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> August 1914. The Goeben was quite a pretty ship of the Maltka Class and had not been long in the service of the German Navy although she was a poor sea boat.

The German Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean was Wilhelm Souchon who was politically astute. His role at this time was to maintain some form of German presence in the Mediterranean and hamper transportation of French colonial troops from Algeria to the European mainland.

On 28<sup>th</sup> July 1914 the Goeben was at Pula in the Adriatic as her boilers were in poor condition. The concentration of forces and clearing of the Adriatic was the logical thing to do as this would increase strength and reduce the risk to the Breslau. Greater sea room was required by the German Navy in addition to enabling its intended function of intercepting troop ships crossing the Mediterranean on a South to North route.

For the British Navy, HMS Inflexible was the flagship of the Mediterranean fleet. The fleet consisted of 3 Battle cruisers, 4

IN ANSWER TO HIS COUNTRY'S CALL  
HE GAVE HIS BEST HIS LIFE HIS ALL -  
Pte L C Thompson 19 Bat Aus Inf

Armoured cruisers, 4 Light cruisers and one flotilla of 14 Torpedo boat destroyers.

On 4<sup>th</sup> August 1914 Souchon had orders to proceed to Constantinople but he first undertook to dock at Messina to re-coal the ship. This resulted in contact between SMS Goeben and Breslau and HMS Indomitable and Indefatigable. They passed each other on opposite courses but at this point war had not yet been declared.

The British Navy had permission to engage Goeben if German vessels attacked the French Navy although this was later rescinded. The German vessels docked at Messina and the British Navy had to respect Italian neutrality and not enter territorial water (6 nautical mile limit) and therefore cover exits.

During 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> August the Germans remained in the neutral port for 24 hours and there was a lack of clarity over instructions.

This has been called the 'Engagement that never was' as the German force then headed towards the Adriatic and interception was averted. They next refuelled at Zante.

During 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> August Souchon continued east to rendezvous with a collier. The Breslau engages HMS Gloucester.

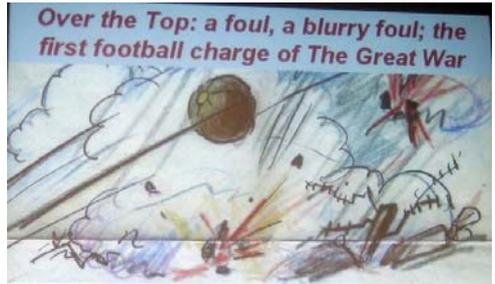
On 8<sup>th</sup> August the British battlecruisers move east all the while keeping watch in the Adriatic.

On 10<sup>th</sup> August at 17:00 hours the Goeben and the Breslau reach the Dardanelles and are granted permission to pass. Since Turkey is nominally neutral at the time international legal ramifications are evaded by transferring both vessels into the Turkish Navy.

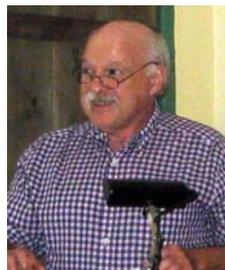
There are numerous implications of the escape and transfer of the Goeben.

Turkey entered the war on the side of the Central Powers and severed grain supply to Britain. This created a threat in the Eastern theatre, draining resources and leading directly into the Dardanelles campaign. (Fiona Bishop)

Over the Top : June 2016 (17 attended)



It can be difficult listening to a talk about



footballing in the Great War. Phrases like 'Show 'im a red card ref', 'that Jurgen Klinsmann is a diver' or 'the Germans always win on penalties' readily spring to mind. But,

the majority of attendees for **Doctor Iain Adam's** talk on the first assault at Loos in 1915, made by the London Irish whilst the men were dribbling a football, were completely 'nutmegged' by a complete lack of clichés!

Iain pointed out that by the outbreak of the Great War, football had become the sport of the working population, while reminding his audience that the first ever FA Cup involved a team from the Royal Engineers. Football became part of the Army's sports diet, and that with the influx of civilians into the military in the territorials, the creation of football teams and the demand for a never ending supply of footballs grew. However, while accepted behind the lines, the appearance of footballs in the trenches would prove far less so. The football that the London Irish advanced with had been deflated and stuffed

into a jacket (had it not, a few eyebrows might have presumably been raised?), and then re-inflated by huff and by puff! Kicking the ball forward, the men now advanced into clouds of smoke and gas getting ever nearer to the enemy's first line of trenches and then the second. The London Irish took their objectives, but unfortunately, the poor football was shot!

Iain also gave an insight as to how the event was mythologized through cartoons and paintings, even to the point of showing an officer taking the first throw in at Loos. All of this was designed to stress the British soldier's disregard of danger, his manliness (difficult with a lump of leather in one's jacket!), and his independence of thought. Iain emphasized that there were very few, if only one other football charges, that notable exception being the charge by the 8<sup>th</sup> East Surreys at Mametz in 1916. As the Branch had previously heard some years ago, this had, however, been at the instigation of an officer, Captain 'Billie' Nevill. Sadly, Iain could only provide what was the beguiling tip of a much larger story of sport as a means of keeping men fit, countering the boredom of trench life, and helping develop an *esprit de corps*.

Finally, perhaps on that note, the Branch might also take inspiration from the London Irish by establishing its own football team? In goal we would see Stan the Stopper, while the back four would include Paynesie and Deansie. Then, up front, running into the channels, we'd have Nipper Brooks, and team Doctor Graham Kemp would dash on every now and then with the magic sponge! Now that's a thought. (Barrie Bertram)

**Royal Flying Corps - Desert Warfare Experiences in the Near and Middle East: July 2016** (19 attended)

The story of the RFC on the Western Front is well known; this talk by **Graham Kemp**

gave us an account of the RFC's activities elsewhere - in particular in Egypt, Mesopotamia and Palestine.

As usual Graham delivered his interesting talk with well-informed enthusiasm, augmenting his narrative with several colourful anecdotes.

His source material included two books - *Aces and Kings* (L W Sutherland) and *In The Clouds Above Baghdad* (J E Tennant).

In the desert theatre of war, particularly in Mesopotamia, the Allies had to contend not just with the Turks and the Germans. The intense heat was crippling to both men and machines (warping of aircraft wings meant flying was often restricted to the cooler dawn and dusk) and disease (dysentery, cholera, sand-fly fever) and poor diet (lack of fresh food) were major problems. New pilots, aircraft and spare parts were in short supply, and personnel in the desert theatre got little leave. Local Arab tribesmen, although not officially hostile, could be opportunistic thieves and bounty hunters.

It had been a demonstration by the Indian Flying corps in 1911 which had persuaded Haig of the potential for air warfare, and indeed it was the Indian Flying Corps that was initially sent to Egypt in the autumn of 1914, basing its Farman aeroplanes, later supplemented by BE aircraft, at Ismailia.

In January 1915 five aircraft, helped by aircraft of the Royal Naval Air Service, provided important reconnaissance regarding Turkish troop camps and movements in the desert.

Meanwhile declaration of Jihad in Constantinople encouraged the Senussi in Libya to rise against the British, but again there was nowhere to hide from just two RFC spotter planes; the aircraft helped guide in fire from off shore ships and also guided an armoured car attack, and the Libyan fighters were defeated.

In 1916 the hitherto non hostile Tama tribe in Darfur joined the Jihad. In a triumph of

logistics the British soon established a main and reserve air base using canvas hangars to accommodate its two BE2s. These aircraft located and hand bombed the enemy, with victory most notably at the decisive Battle of Beringia.

In Sinai Lt Col Sir Geoffrey Salmond took things on by bringing in new aircraft, building new aerodromes, improving training and lecturing army officers on what the RFC had to offer. Again the main role of the RFC was reconnaissance of the area between Sinai and Gaza.

However the introduction by Germany of the Fokker Eindecker and the Albatross, both of which outperformed the BE2, led to Germany dominating the skies over Sinai from March 1916 until October 1917. The technological see-saw then swung back in favour of the Allies with the introduction of eight Bristol fighters (bought with donations from Australia) along with pilots of the Australian Flying Corps (AFC).

The allied air superiority now culminated in the Battle of Gaza - a disaster for the German air force which was overrun by Allenby's forces.

Thereafter the British ruled the skies over Palestine and the Sinai desert, the Bristol aircraft even giving reconnaissance support to T E Lawrence.

The AFC had been born in 1915 in Mesopotamia (now modern Iraq); the Indians and British had no pilots to spare and so four Australian pilots and a New Zealand pilot were recruited along with a few aircraft to establish a base near Basra.

By flying over the Tigris area, valuable reconnaissance information was given to the British army (Townshend) during the advance on Kut-al-Amara. However at a crucial stage, the shooting down of a reconnaissance aircraft led to a lack of intelligence regarding the Turkish strength, and this contributed to Townshend's defeat. Moreover attempts to both relieve and supply Townshend's force

were repeatedly thwarted partly by German air reconnaissance, and Kut surrendered. Of the 44 Australian air contingent, only six survived the allied prisoner 'death march' from Kut.

After the arrival of BE2s in Mesopotamia in June 1916, Baghdad was taken, much of the German air force was destroyed and - in contrast to the situation in Sinai as mentioned above - the British thereafter commanded the skies of Mesopotamia.

Graham concluded his talk at the 1918 Battle of Megiddo - the climactic battle of the Sinai and Palestine campaign - when the RFC and AFC again provided valuable information contributing to the defeat of the Turks. But in a portent of things to come, the air role now went beyond reconnaissance. Thinking it had trapped a transport column in a narrow gorge on the Ferweh Road the RFC and AFC attacked and destroyed this using bombs and machine guns, only to find that this was in fact the remnants of the retreating Turkish army. (Peter Denby)

THROUGH HONOURS GATE TO GLORY -  
J Preece, West Yorks Regt

### The 49<sup>th</sup> West Riding Division in the Great War: August 2016 (18 attended)

Derek Clayton's talk on the 49<sup>th</sup> West Riding Division was illustrated by his analysis of the Division's performance on three days in the



war. The objective of his research had been to evaluate the extent to which such units in the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) performed better as the war progressed. The first day that he selected was during the

Battle of the Somme on 3 September 1916 at Thiepval; the second was the 9<sup>th</sup> October 1917 at Poelcapelle during Third Ypres, and the third at Valenciennes on 1 November 1918, ten days before the Armistice.

The 49<sup>th</sup> Division, was the West Riding's First Division, raised from Territorial Forces, that arrived in France between 12-16<sup>th</sup> April 1915. Four Yorkshire-based regiments were represented amongst the three Brigades (146<sup>th</sup>, 147<sup>th</sup> and 148<sup>th</sup>), including KOYLI (Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry), the Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, the West Yorkshire Regiment and Yorks and Lancs Regiment.

By 3 September 1916, Thiepval Ridge, a target that had originally been set for the first day of the Somme, had still not been captured and, two months later, was now set as a target for 49<sup>th</sup> Division. Subjected to enfilading Machine Gun fire and German bombing up the trenches, the Divisional attack completely failed to achieve its objectives. Though the Army commanders, Gough and Haig saw the failure as a lack of 'fighting spirit', Derek Clayton's conclusions were that the heavy casualties incurred by the Division (471 fatal, 1728 wounded) were more appropriately attributable to a failure to neutralise German Machine Gun emplacements, the loss of most of the officers involved, and a consequent lack of leadership, an inadequate artillery barrage and no counter-battery fire against German artillery positions.

On 9 October 1917, at Poelcapelle, the Divisional target was to deliver a 'bite and hold' attack as part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> ANZAC Corps targets. Fighting in an almost- featureless landscape and using compass bearings, the Division did advance the front line to some extent, and some advanced positions were held. Unlike Thiepval Ridge, the attack was not a complete failure. New platoon tactics introduced in February 1917 were implemented, and lessons had been learnt.

The creeping barrage used had made some improvements but the extreme difficulties of moving the guns forward, and supplying sufficient shells in the muddy conditions, compromised the attack, as did the non-existence of Trench Mortars. Casualties amongst the Allied forces were proportionally lower than the numbers at Thiepval.

At Valenciennes, on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1918, 49<sup>th</sup> Division was now reduced to 3 battalions per Brigade (first introduced in January 1918) and each battalion had depleted numbers of men at that stage of the war. However, they faced a weakened and retreating enemy, although the German Machine Gun units continued to provide fierce opposition. However, artillery support and particularly counter-battery work, was much improved. Despite a German counter-attack at one stage in the day, supported by four captured British tanks, the Division achieved its targets. With only 443 casualties (97 fatal), the outcome was regarded as a success and illustrated that Divisions such as the 49<sup>th</sup> West Riding had contributed to the improved performance of the BEF.

There was no shortage of questions from the floor. Derek Clayton has published a battalion history that covers some aspects of his research. It is entitled "From Pontefract to Picardy: The 9<sup>th</sup> King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry in the First World War." Published by The History Press in 2006. (Chris Payne)

***"The story of a New Army Battalion" - 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion Rifle Brigade 1915-18 including the personal account of Rifleman No 16111: September 2016*** (15 attended)

**Graham Kemp** told in outline the story of the 20<sup>th</sup> (Light) Division during WW1 and included the experiences of his grand father Charles (Chas) Thomas Green.

The Division was formed in September 1914 and, like many others, suffered shortages of uniforms, rifles, guns and

accommodation in winter 1914/15. In July 1915 the Division crossed to France and had their baptism of fire in trenches near Neuve Chapelle before moving to the Ypres Salient. 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Rifle Brigade was in 59 Brigade commanded by Brigadier General Cameron Shute (according to a poem "*that shit Shute*").

At the end of July 1916 the Division moved to the Somme and Private Green joined 10<sup>th</sup> Rifle Brigade. Graham recounted his granddad's description of attacking south of Guillemont **before** their artillery barrage lifted which aided the taking of their 5<sup>th</sup> objective. However Chas was hit in the shoulder hospitalised to Rouen but the wound became septic and he returned to England.

He rejoined his Battalion in December 1916, was wounded again in January 1917, and rejoined in April after the Germans had retreated to the Hindenburg line. From Lagnicourt they were promised 6 weeks of rest at Candas but this was cut short and in July the Division moved to Ypres. In August 1917, after attacking across the Steenbeek near Langemark, Chas was wounded again and returned to "Blighty".

Graham then described how the Division was west of Cambrai when the Germans counterattacked on 30<sup>th</sup> November. 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion HQ was surrounded and the Commanding Officer and others captured. The Battalion itself was scattered but Graham did not know whether his granddad was involved.

Private Green was with the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion when it was abolished in February 1918 and troops transferred to other units. He subsequently got another "Blighty" wound and was recuperating in Nottingham when the war ended.

Graham concluded his informative and entertaining talk by telling how his grandmother's sleep was affected by her husband's nightmares of the horrors he had experienced. (TD)

## The Big Match - 25 December 1914: October 2016 (18 attended)

With the scheduled speaker unable to perform **Iain Adams** stepped into the breach to recount in detail how, possibly, the most famous match in history took place without bungs for the senior managers of the Divisions concerned.

When the 134 Royal Saxon Infantry moved up to occupy German trenches near Plugstreet Wood before Christmas 1914 they



carried presents from home, decorative trees and were instructed by Lieut. Zehmisch not to fire unless attacked. Following shouting between the German and British positions Bruce Bairnsfather pursued a meeting between the trenches when cigarettes and presents were exchanged and promises made not to fire for two nights.

During Christmas Day Germans mounted their trenches and meetings took place in no mans land, respective dead were buried, photos taken. Iain speculated on where the famous football match took place. The "peace" continued after Boxing Day but there was no intermingling and 3 weeks after Christmas a shooting took place and the War recommenced with vengeance. (TD)

HIS HEART FOR HOME HIS LIFE FOR  
COUNTRY HIS SOUL TO GOD -  
Lieut Col Ernest A B Alston,  
Northamptonshire Regt

## 2016 ARMISTICE PRIZE COMPETITION

Sitting proudly in the Principal's office at Oakhill School, Whalley is Isabelle Pugh the winner of this year's Armistice Prize competition. On the table is her winning entry, a large hand drawn map of the Ypres Salient with notes and photographs relating to her 3 day cycle tour together with the Armistice Prize Trophy. The book prize she holds is H.P. Willmott's masterpiece on WW1 inside which is a cheque for £100. (see page 26)



### 2017 PART PROGRAMME (ALL MEETINGS ON FIRST MONDAY IN MONTH AT 7.30 PM EXCEPT JANUARY)

**Dec 5<sup>th</sup> (2016):** *A.G.M. and Christmas Social*  
- An invitation to members to speak for 10 minutes on any WW1 topic

**Jan 9<sup>th</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> MONDAY IN MONTH):** *The British War Dead - their story* - David Wright

**Feb 6<sup>th</sup>:** *General Sir John Steven Cowans - A War Winning Genius* - Terry Dean

**Mar 6<sup>th</sup>:** *Battlefield Medicine in the First World War* - Dr Lesley Wright

**April 3<sup>rd</sup>:** *Navy takes to the Air - story and experiences of the RNAS 1914-17* - Graham Kemp

### BEST KEPT WAR MEMORIAL



Bilsborrow won this year's award for the Best Kept War Memorial.

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