NEW ZEALAND COMMUNICATION TRENCH

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Western Front Association

1914-1918
REMEMBERING

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The Darkness before the Dawn
By year's end 1918, hostilities were over and the Allies had secured victory

Detail of the marble panel on Wellington Cenotaph
Image: WW100 New Zealand

Commemoration of the Liberation of Le Quesnoy
4 November 2018

At 11.00 am on 11 November this year, Aotearoa New Zealand will mark the centenary of the Armistice that ended the First World War in 1918. On that day 100 years ago, after four years of brutal conflict, war finally gave way to peace.

National Commemoration

The Armistice centenary will be commemorated in a National Service at Pukeahu National War Memorial Park in Wellington on 11 November. The service will centre around a two minute silence which will be observed at 11am. The commemoration will remember the service and sacrifices of those who fought, and those who stayed behind. It will also celebrate peace, and look to recapture the sense of jubilation and hopefulness that swept many parts of the world at that time.

The service will be complemented with a 100-gun artillery salute on Wellington's waterfront, symbolically timed to finish at 11am when the guns fell silent 100 years ago. Later in the day, New Zealand Defence Force will conduct a Sunset Ceremony which will include the final daily Last Post Ceremony of the First World War centenary. The day's events will be live-streamed, so those unable to attend can still be involved.

Keep an eye on the WW100 website for information on commemoration services to be held in towns and cities throughout New Zealand (ww100.govt.nz).

The King's Speech, 1918

King George V addressed both houses of the British Parliament in the Royal Gallery at the Palace of Westminster on 19 November 1918. Having spoken about the war, "a struggle longer and far more terrible than anyone could have foretold", the King went on to pay tribute to the work of the Armed Forces and of their commanders, to the contribution of the Dominions and of India, and to the efforts of the UK's Allies. "Now that the clouds of war are being swept from the sky, new tasks arise before us," he remarked, going on to call for the creation of a better Britain, adding "The sacrifices made, the sufferings endured, the memory of the heroes who have died that Britain may live, ought surely to ennoble our thoughts and attune our hearts to a higher sense of individual and national duty." The King ended his speech with these words:

"May the morning star of peace which is now rising over a war-worn world be here and everywhere the herald of a better day, in which the storms of strife shall have died down and the rays of an enduring peace be shed upon all the nations."

King George V, with Generals Godley, Plumer and Harper, inspecting cheering New Zealand troops
British Official Photographer, Somme, France, August 1916

Image: Victoria League of New Zealand Records
Ref: MB367/148958

As mentioned in the June 2018 *New Zealand Communication Trench*, this is the final issue of the newsletter. The fact that the last issue nearly coincides with the end of the First World War centenary commemorations is a coincidence. I do not think for one second that the enthusiasm and commitment to researching and reading about the war will diminish just because we have almost come to the end of the centenary commemorations – the 6,000 worldwide members of the Western Front Association attest to this and I feel sure that the members will continue to pursue their researching and reading over the next many years. My interest in military history and especially the Great War remains strong.

I would like to thank all the people who have contributed in so many ways to the *New Zealand Communication Trench* over the last 18 years. It has been an absolute pleasure having the contact with you all.

The New Zealand Branch of the Western Front Association will now go into recess for the foreseeable future. A final financial report will be emailed to all members after the photocopying and postage expenses for this newsletter are known.

Elizabeth

Peace celebrations 1918 and 1919

Elizabeth Morey

Armistice Day in New Zealand 1918

The news that everyone in New Zealand had been waiting for finally came through on the morning of 12 November 1918 – a Tuesday. Germany had surrendered and signed an armistice with the Allies the previous day. The government had received the news late on the evening of 11 November. By the early hours it had leaked out to a few people - Prime Minister William Massey was treated to cheers and songs about 2 am. But the first most people knew was when Massey officially released it later that morning. He arranged for the message "Armistice signed" to go to the country's post and telegraph offices shortly before 9.00 am.

In Wellington the signal guns went off at 9.00 am. People quickly deserted their desks and benches and counters. Many gathered outside the Parliamentary Library at 10.30 am to hear the Governor-General's formal announcement and his correspondence with the King, and to sing the national anthem. Speechmaking and singing started at the Town Hall about lunchtime, and later in the day there were processions and a thanksgiving service at the Basin Reserve. Parliament adjourned for the day.

Most other communities received the news, and celebrated, in a similar way to Wellington. Those lacking artillery worked out their own signals. In Masterton ears listened for the gasworks siren; in Rakaia many eyes looked out towards the post office flagstaff. In Dunedin the bells started to ring out even before the official signal from the Central Battery's guns. In most places bells and whistles spread the news shortly after 9.00 am, when post offices opened.

Mayors presided over gatherings in town halls or squares. They made the official announcement before launching into patriotic speeches and songs. Other gatherings included thanksgiving services presided over by local clergy.

Some communities declared a holiday, but this was largely unnecessary. The government had advised its offices the previous day that on announcement of the German armistice, employees should be granted a holiday for the rest of the day. Others businesses, workplaces and schools closed as soon as they received the news, on their own initiative.

In many places, processions preceded or followed the morning gatherings. Some were spontaneous, with cars and people bedecked with flags. Others were more organised, including displays of fancy dress or more elaborately decorated floats.

Armistice celebrations in Levin, 13 November 1918
Photographer: Leslie Adkin
In his diary entry for 13 November, Adkin noted: "Peace celebrations - a lovely fine day for the rejoicings. Drove down to Levin about 10 am. Town full of people - a large number in fancy dress."
Image: Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Ref O.031594

An Armistice parade on Waimate's main street 1918
Image: Waimate Museum and Archives, Ref 116

The Great Peace Celebrations in London 1919

The Armistice marked the end of fighting on the Western Front, but formal negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference continued into 1919. The Allies' formal peace treaty with Germany, the Treaty of Versailles, was not officially signed until 28 June 1919.

As negotiations continued, the British government planned a public celebration. The Peace Committee was established to decide how Britain would mark the end of the war. Its initial proposal of a four-day August celebration was scaled down and brought forward after the Paris signing. A single day of festivities was planned for 19 July 1919.

New Zealand played an official part in a number of peace celebrations overseas. Perhaps the first were the celebrations held in France on Bastille Day, 14 July 1919, when a number of New Zealand soldiers participated in the victory parade of Allied forces. Kiwi soldiers subsequently took part in the victory parade in London on 19 July 1919. As reported in the *Mercury*, the New Zealanders marched with their ANZAC partners:

> An Australian tank led the Australians and New Zealanders, and each included detachments of nurses. They were everywhere received with cheers and 'coo-ees' from thousands of their comrades in the crowds.

This souvenir handkerchief or napkin commemorates the July 1919 Great Peace Celebrations held in London. The paper is printed with details of the day's official programme and has a decorative border of pink flowers. This example is one of many similar paper napkins printed to commemorate particular events and sold by London street sellers.

Source: Much of the above information is from: www.nzhistory.govt.nz

Last Post and Reveille … the music

Alistair Kerr

[This is a reprint of an article in the *RSA Review,* Winter 2018. It is reprinted with the permission of the editor of the *RSA Review* and the author.]

I recently got to thinking about the musical parts which are played after the Ode of Remembrance at funerals and other commemoration services. I wondered how many of those who listen to them know about their background.

The Last Post originally was just that. In the old days of the British Army, when the duty officer inspected the various posts, a call was sounded at each post to show that the job had been done and, of course, that particular call was made at the last one.

It signified that the day's work was done and that the troops could rest. I suppose that the adoption of that call with is association of "duty done" and "rest" was seen as an analogy to the concept of life and death, when looking at the sacrifice of life in war. That fact, and its rather poignant and plaintive tune, probably helped to see it chosen for its present role. When a good bugler plays it with feeling, it can bring a tear to the eye.

Those of us who went through the Scout and Guide movement will recall singing – perhaps at the close of a campfire gathering – a song "Day is done, Gone the sun …" Well, that is "Taps" and it is the American equivalent of the Last Post and, like ours, is used at veterans' funerals and no doubt when veterans gather at other times. That tune too can provide a truly emotional response.

The Reveille has several tunes but they all have a common factor. As they are designed to waken sleeping men, they have a quicker tempo and a more jaunty tune. A commonly-used tune is "The Rouse" and it's one firmly fixed in my

mind as it got the boarders out of bed on winter mornings at Waitaki Boys' High School! Perhaps Reveille is chosen as representing the Christian ethic of reminding us of the belief that one awakes to a new life after death.

So, next time, perhaps at an RSA funeral, on Armistice Day or ANZAC Day, or if your RSA club observes the Ritual of the Ode, this brief article will help you to appreciate the place of these tunes in our culture.

Commemorative Medallion: "ANZAC. In Eternal Remembrance. 1914-18"

The bronze medallion shows, on the obverse, the head and shoulders silhouette of a slouch hatted Australian soldier holding a rifle. In raised letters below the rifle are the words "ANZAC. IN ETERNAL REMEMBRANCE. 1914-18". Also present in small raised letters is the name "DORA OHLFSEN". On the reverse of the medallion is the raised head and shoulders figure of a woman placing laurels on the brow of her fallen son. Impressed in small letters near the edge below the woman's hand are the words "DORA OHLFSEN 1916".

The "ANZAC Medallion", as it was generally known, was designed in Rome by expatriate Australian sculptress Dora Ohlfsen, who spent most of her working life in Italy. It was produced after the First World War as a fund raising venture to aid seriously and permanently injured Australian and New Zealand soldiers, and was primarily sold in the United Kingdom. The committee overseeing the production and sale of the medallion, and the management of the funds raised, included Sir Charles Wade, Mr Graham Lloyd (London representative of the *Sydney Morning Herald*) and Generals Birdwood, Monash and Talbot Hobbs. A card accompanying the medallion read "In aid of Australians and New Zealanders maimed in the War - 1914-18". Ohlfsen used a likeness of her brother for the silhouette of the Australian soldier on the obverse, while the female figure representing Australia on the reverse was modelled upon Miss Alix Simpson, who was living in Rome at the time.

New Zealanders buried Brookwood Military Cemetery

Elizabeth Morey

Members may recall a couple of articles in the February 2018 and June 2018 issues of the *New Zealand Communication Trench* about research that Graham Grist has been carrying out regarding the No 2 New Zealand General Hospital at Walton-on-Thames, the men who were treated at the hospital, the staff who worked there and the men and one woman buried in the Walton-on-Thames Cemetery. Graham has extended his research and is now also researching the New Zealanders who are buried at Brookwood Military Cemetery.

Graham has produced two lists. One is a list of the 74 who died at Walton-on-Thames and are buried at Brookwood. The second list is the other 74 buried at Brookwood who died elsewhere in and around London. Copies of both lists are available from me (elizabeth6@xtra.co.nz). Graham has taken photos of all the headstones for those who died at Walton-on-Thames and are buried at Brookwood and has offered to supply a photo to anyone who would like one. He is also very happy to return to Brookwood and take photos of headstones of those who died elsewhere, if anyone wants one.

Brookwood Military Cemetery is located adjacent to Brookwood Cemetery about 30 miles from London and is the largest Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery in the United Kingdom. In 1917, the area to the north of Brookwood Cemetery was set aside as Brookwood Military Cemetery for men of the Commonwealth forces who died, many of battle wounds, in the London district. The cemetery contains the graves of more than 1,600 First World War soldiers. The site was extended further to accommodate Commonwealth casualties of the Second World War.

The Iron Harvest

The First World War ended nearly 100 years ago, but in some places along what used to be the Western Front in France and Belgium, the shadow of death and danger cast by that war lives on.

The amount of shelling and bombing that took place during the war was on a huge scale. It is estimated that more than a billion shells were fired and that as many as 30 percent of those failed to explode.

After the war, returning the battlefields to villages and farmland was a priority. Craters and trenches had to be filled in and munitions removed. In 1920, about 30,000 people were engaged in this work - many were civilians returning from the war, as well as Chinese labourers, French colonial troops and German prisoners of war. In some areas, up to five explosive devices per square metre were dug up. Locals began digging deeper in order to find spoils of war, some of which included valuable materials such as copper, earning a pretty penny for lucky famers in the austere post-war years

The search continues today. When the farmers plough the fields on land that was the Western Front, they have more to worry about than farmers in most other parts of the world. The Iron Harvest is what these Belgian and French farmers reap. Every year, they find tons of unexploded ordnance, barbed wire, shrapnel, bullets, and trench supports.

Because this was trench warfare, often fought in wet, muddy conditions, much of the unexploded bombs worked their way down deep into the mud, meaning no matter how hard the bomb removal crews work, sometimes the only things that can unearth the bombs are time and a farmer's plough. When farmers recover these objects, they simply leave them on the edges of their fields to be collected and disposed of by the authorities.

A display of "iron harvest" at the Hooge Crater Museum
Image: Richard Pursehouse

Some of the munitions are live, and potentially even more deadly than when first dropped, and many others are poisonous, leaching toxic yellow sludge into the ground and posing health hazards to any who might touch them.

The Commonwealth War Grave Commission's gardening staff in France and Belgium also encounter the iron harvest while maintaining the cemeteries.

In Belgium, the bomb disposal unit still receives around 3,500 calls a year, collecting over 250 tonnes of munitions. This important job carries a high price, over 20 men working for the unit have killed since it was formed in 1919.

For the people of France and Flanders, the memory of bloody warfare is buried not far beneath their feet.

New Nursing Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas, Staffordshire, 4 June 2018

Richard Pursehouse

The suggestion that there should be a memorial for all nurses of both world wars was first raised two years before the start of the Great War commemorations. The Nursing Memorial Appeal to raise funds for a memorial was launched four years ago, and around £50,000 was raised. The next stage of the fundraising, to cover the maintenance of the memorial and cost of the site at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) in Staffordshire, is ongoing.

Although there are several individual memorials across the country, and some for specific groups at the National Memorial Arboretum (NAM), there is not one for all nurses. The memorial unveiled at the NMA on 4 June 2018 honours professional nurses who worked in Casualty Clearing Stations or on hospital trains and ships, and also the unpaid volunteers serving with the Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs). Possibly the best well known VAD nurse is Vera Brittain, born in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire. Her recollections as a nurse and losing the men closest to her (fiancé, brother, friends) were published in *Testament of Youth*.

Many VADs had little or no nursing experience but were motivated - they wanted to "do their bit". Some were inspired by the work of Lady Ampthill, who during the Great War had been the Chairman of the Committee for Supplying Comforts to the Regular Bedfordshire Battalion. After the Great War many nurses and VADs came back to a life very different from the one they had left, their experiences changing them forever. Lady Ampthill began the VADs Ladies Club, for those returning to have somewhere to share their experiences. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a term that became mainstream during the Vietnam War, had been described in the two world wars in various terms - shell-shock, battle fatigue, or almost euphemistically "exhaustion". Nurses and VADs were just expected to "move on" as the soldiers had experienced much worse, the reasoning being that mental scars were not as deep as the physical ones.

The concept

Designed by sculptor Georgie Welch, the memorial has two parts: a sandstone globe measuring one metre in diameter, which rests inside two upwardly-pointing bronze "caring hands" sculpted by Georgie (her own hands being the template). The globe was painstakingly engraved by stonemason Nick Johnson; the landmasses are surrounded by a "sea of names" of British, Dominion/Commonwealth and American nurses and VADs who died during both world wars. It has been difficult to establish the exact number of nurses who died, due to difficulties in finding records. So far over 1,244 names have been included on the memorial and, as new information is uncovered on other nurses and VADs, as the story about the memorial gains exposure, their names will also be added to the memorial. It is expected that the number of names will increase to about 1,700.

Around the base is the inscription "As stars in the dark sky they lit up our world" and there is space for more names to be incorporated.

The Royal College of Nursing and the Florence Nightingale Foundation are among the appeal's official partners and one of its patrons is HRH Sophie, Countess of Wessex, who joined other patrons at the event such as Lord Julian Fellowes (writer of the screenplay for the film Gosford Park and TV series Downton Abbey). Lady Fellowes also attended, whose grandmother was a VAD nurse.

The event

Strict security surrounded the private event. Some 300 invited guests and representatives from various medical groups rubbed shoulders with attachés from numerous Commonwealth countries including Canada, New Zealand and Australia. After the helicopter arrival of the Countess of Wessex, the ceremony was opened with a welcome by Cannon Michael Rawson, Sub Dean and Pastor of Southwark Cathedral.

Alison Pearce led those gathered in singing Henry Francis Lyte's hymn *Praise, my Soul, the King of Heaven*. The Bidding explained why everyone was attending, to remember "nurses who freely gave their lives in two world wars in the service of others for whom they cared. We give thanks for their skill, generosity and bravery in bringing healing and wholeness to our broken world."

Sonja Curtis, one of the trustees, took to the rostrum to expound on the Nursing Memorial. She was followed by Lord Julian Fellowes who described the work of the Extreme Nursing Award Scheme which trains medical staff for "vital, life-saving support in extreme situations at home and overseas."

The Reading from Matthew Ch5 v1-12 was read by Group Captain Sonia Phythian, Allied Rapid Reaction Force and PMRAFNS, who was followed by Diana Scougall reading the poem *Night Duty* by Eva Dobell. Dobell was born in Gloucestershire and was a VAD nurse in the Great War.

Night Duty
The pain and laughter of the day are done
So strangely hushed and still the long ward seems,
Only the Sister's candle softly beams.
Clear from the church near by the clock strikes 'one';
And all are wrapt away in secret sleep and dreams.

Here one cries sudden on a sobbing breath,
Gripped in the clutch of some incarnate fear:
What terror through the darkness draweth near?
What memory of carnage and of death?
What vanished scenes of dread to his closed eyes appear?

And one laughs out with an exultant joy.
An athlete he - Maybe his young limbs strain
In some remembered game, and not in vain
To win his side the goal - Poor crippled boy,
Who in the waking world will never run again.

One murmurs soft and low a woman's name;
And here a vet'ran soldier calm and still
As sculptured marble sleeps, and roams at will
Through eastern lands where sunbeams scorch like flame,
By rich bazaar and town, and wood-wrapt snow-crowned hill.

Through the wide open window on great star,
Swinging her lamp above the pear-tree high,
Looks in upon these dreaming forms that lie
So near in body, yet in soul so far
As those bright worlds thick strewn on that vast depth of sky.

Eunice Drewry, dressed in a VAD uniform followed, reading extracts from letters home written by nurses and patients and sent to their loved ones. Cannon Michel Rawson then dedicated the memorial, walking around it reciting "In memory of all who are commemorated here, we anoint this memorial with the oil of healing, thanking God for the work of their hands."

The *Kohima Epitaph*, familiar to those who attend Armistice and ANZAC Day commemorations, was read out by Warrant Officer Class 1 JA Sessions of the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps. Since 2003, QARANC has had as its Colonel-in-chief HRH the Countess of Wessex GCVO.

Everyone stood for the Last Post. After Reveille was sounded by the bugler, everyone recited *The Lord's Prayer* which was followed by another prayer and a blessing and Alison Pearce again took to the rostrum to lead those attending in singing *The National Anthem*.

The staff and organisers at the NMA deserve a special mention for their involvement in the event.

Caring hands around the globe … Eunice Drewry, dressed in a VAD uniform, reading extracts from letters sent home

The formalities over, a wreath was placed to remember Nurse Edith Cavell, who the Germans executed by firing squad in the Great War for helping some 200 allied prisoners to escape. There is statue to Cavell adjacent to the National Gallery in London and the railway carriage that returned her body, and subsequently that of the Unknown Warrior, back to Britain is touring various locations across Britain.

The Countess of Wessex was introduced to some of those attending, including Cannon Michael Rawson whom she thanked for officiating at the event, and also Georgie Welch and Nick Johnson who had collaborated in the sculpture. Georgie and Nick explained that they wanted to create an all-encompassing representation of appreciation for nurses from across the world who gave medical comfort to the injured in two world wars.

Once everyone had gone, a moment for reflection. In the "tranquillity of solitude", the only sounds were the birds in the trees and the stream running just beyond this serene corner of the National Memorial Arboretum. A former nurse had earlier explained, looking and pointing to this poignant memorial, "we've got memorials for the men and now we have one for the nurses. They are all here."

Unsung heroes no more - remembered finally, the nurses who unswervingly answered the call in two world wars and gave their all.

Panoramic photograph of the invited audience at the National Arboretum Memorial in Staffordshire
Both images: Richard Pursehouse

Postscript
The red cross emblem was established in 1864 as a special symbol of neutrality and protection during armed conflict. It has continued to be used in this way ever since, including during the First World War. The main users of the emblem have always been the medical services of the armed forces and Red Cross organisations, such as the New Zealand Red Cross. In order to preserve its protective value the use of the red cross emblem is restricted by national and international laws.

The Australian Imperial Force in the second-half of 1918, on “borrowed time”?

Paul Simadas, RFD Lieutenant Colonel, Chairman Australian Branch of the Western Front Association

During the Great War, there were obvious similarities between the New Zealand Division and its five Australian counterparts, not least the shared ANZAC ethos. However, there was one distinctive difference, one that went beyond the disparate sizes of the NZEF and the AIF or their distinctive national characters. That difference was Conscription. While New Zealand had introduced compulsory military service for the NZEF in 1916, like the British and Canadians had done, the Australian government did not do this for overseas service during the war. The political cost of doing so would have divided the country and brought the federal government down.

This meant that in 1918 the AIF faced a crisis both in its manpower and the ability to prosecute the war. It had the dilemma of finding sufficient volunteer enlistments to provide its reinforcements, and then to decide where its priorities were in fighting the war.

The German Spring Offensives of early 1918 had put great strains on the British Expeditionary Force, and the newly formed Australian Corps was no exception to this. The insertion of individual Australian divisions into the line in various places to repulse the German offensives had dislocated the AIF. Its divisions had been rapidly moved about the front to meet new threats and each of the higher-level Australian headquarters had been required to rapidly adjust to this state of affairs and meet the challenges created by the return to semi-mobile and open warfare. The high casualties suffered by the Australians as a result of these operations caused disruption to the training of reinforcements in England. Men were "combed out" from training and the other rear bases to provide reinforcements to the under-strength combat units in France and Belgium.

The New Zealand Division faced similar challenges at this time. In 1917, it had demobilised its newly raised 4th New Zealand Brigade, as the NZEF had approached the limits of its manpower. In 1918, New Zealand military planners could still use conscription to forecast and plan for its reinforcements. The Australian staff did not have this option available to them.

The return to offensive operations in mid-1918 continued to place severe strain on the AIF. The demands placed upon the Australian Corps had never been greater, or the risks more difficult to balance with the available resources.

Should the Australian Goverment and military authorities completely prioritise the Western Front over that of the Middle East? Was it desirable to retain all the Australian divisions under centralised command, or to again disperse them to the most dangerous parts of the Front as had occurred earlier in the year to support the allies? Was it better to maintain the infantry battalions at maximum strength, and to deplete other units? Would it be practical to increase the AIF's reliance on British resources such as artillery, engineers or tanks to support its combat operations? Would the Australian government have been forced to eventually impose Conscription, there being no alternative in order to remain in the war as a viable combatant?

The most fundamental and immediate decision to make was whether to maintain the Australian Corps order of battle at its existing establishment or to start disbanding battalions, even brigades, to conserve manpower and maintain viable formations in the field.

These considerations, especially when considered within the context of the great uncertainty in 1918 as to how long the war would actually last, meant that the AIF was increasingly operating on "borrowed time". It was only a matter of time before manpower shortages caused by declining volunteer recruitment and battle weariness amongst the already long-serving "diggers" would bring the Australian Corps to a state of virtual exhaustion.

It has been conventional to see 1918 as the year of greatest success for the ANZACs, the pinnacle of their achievements with victory after victory in the field. This is true. However, another approach is to see this year as the most dangerous period of the war for the Australians. Committed to continuous combat operations and with very little rest between attacks, and increasingly reliant on British combat power to support its operations, the AIF was required to fight with ever diminishing resources of manpower. This made the second half of 1918 a traumatic time for the AIF.

The highly successful Battle of Hamel in July 1918 is a case in point. In this battle, the AIF moved to the operational offensive just as the German offensives had come to an end. Hamel was limited in more senses than just its limited objective and short duration of just 93 minutes. The Australian Corps had been so dislocated by its recent operations and in need of rest, that its commander General Monash had to limit the size of the attack. He chose the best available brigades he had from his infantry divisions to constitute the attacking force. He placed them under the command of the headquarters of the 4th Australian Division for the battle.

These forces were supplemented by the lavish provision of British artillery and tank resources, the Royal Engineers, and the Royal Air Force to support the attack. This was, along with sound staff work, the key to the Australian success at Hamel. The use of American "doughboys" to strengthen the infantry should not be seen as an enlightened choice by the Australians to develop co-operation with the Americans or to provide "on-the-job" training for the untested American Expeditionary Force, but rather as a pragmatic decision in order to substitute reduced Australian manpower in its infantry battalions with American manpower.

It can be argued that after the Battle of Amiens in August, some five weeks later, the AIF progressively became unable to satisfy its manpower requirements. The operations to seize the Hindenburg Line in September depended upon the contribution of the two American divisions involved, the 27th and 30th. The difficulties encountered by the Australian Corps in this battle have been attributed to the weaknesses in American staff-work, tactics and training. The Australians also faced these challenges. Strain within both its fighting forces and the Australian headquarters' staffs, particularly at the brigade and divisional levels, caused by the sustained tempo of the combat operations had depleted the Australian Corps as never before.

The high casualty rates in 1918 were indicative of the risks now being accepted by Australian commanders in order to achieve victories. Yes, firepower was being used to support the operations, to protect the infantry in their advance, and to minimise casualties. This firepower had in fact actually become the dominant offensive tool available to the AIF. As with the Canadians and New Zealanders, it was lavish British logistical support and the provision of nearly unlimited supplies of artillery ammunition, air support, and tanks that were the decisive elements in the battlefield success of the Australian forces.

In September, the Australian divisions began to withdraw from the frontline to be rested and to "refit". Some Australian battalions were disbanded and occasional instances of mutiny were reported. Discipline and morale within Australian units was apparently deteriorating as a result. At home, the recruitment figures were in significant decline.

Two minor examples offer further indications of the overall plight.

The formation of the Royal Air Force in April 1918 had required the Australian Flying Corps to re-evaluate the status of its own air forces, especially the training of its pilots. Australian training squadrons were now formed to train pilots for the three operational AFC squadrons in Europe. This stretched Australian resources to the limit. The AFC did in fact meet and overcome this challenge, but pilot skills inevitably declined and the AFC increased its dependence on the RAF for support and pilot reinforcements.

In April 1918, the British War Office had invited the Australian government to provide at least one tank battalion for service on the Western Front. If the AIF provided the 1,000 men required to man a tank battalion, the British authorities were prepared to train and equip such an Australian unit. After due consideration, the Australian government declined to accept this offer, citing manpower constraints. The flying squadrons, tunnelling companies and the 36th (Australian) Heavy Artillery Group remained a higher priority, and they were already competing with the needs of the five infantry divisions.

The Armistice of November 1918 averted an existential threat that would otherwise have confronted the AIF. What would have been the fate of the Australian forces in 1919 if the war had continued?

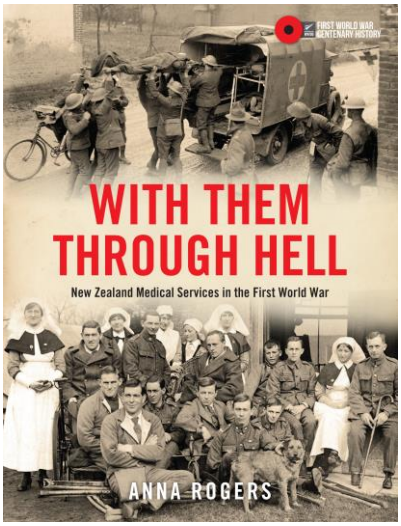
It is likely that the establishment of the Australian Corps in France would have been reduced. The 5th Division might have been removed from the AIF order of battle, and the number of infantry battalions in each of the infantry brigades in the four remaining divisions reduced to three from four (thus matching the changes already implemented in the British army). The AFC would have faced absorption into the RAF and specialist units, such as the tunnelling companies, disbanded, ostensibly as being no longer relevant to the new tactical conditions. This reorganisation of Australian forces would have placed further reliance on the provision of British firepower and logistical support to mount operations. It is reasonable to assume that the operations in the Middle East against the Ottomans would have been concluded in 1918, as in fact happened, irrespective of the situation in Europe. Therefore, those Australian forces would have been sent to the Western Front in early 1919 to bolster the Australian forces there.

Counterfactual history is conjectural at its best and is subject to critique. However, throughout the second half of 1918 the AIF was operating in difficult circumstances. Its ability to prosecute military operations was in decline. The continued reliance by the AIF on a volunteer-based force was the decisive element affecting its performance in 1918. This magnificent body of men, like the other Dominion forces in the BEF, were now dependant on the provision of British resources to assure its tactical success. In the singular case of the AIF this success was unsustainable as, without the imposition of Conscription to maintain the strength of its fighting force, it could not continue this rate of effort.

At the end of 1918, the AIF was certainly operating on "borrowed time". The Armistice intervened to prevent the Australians from facing a potentially disastrous fate in 1919. Victory was always the ideal solution to the challenges facing the AIF, and it came "just in time" on 11 November 1918!

Book Marks

With Them Through Hell: New Zealand Medical Services in the First World War by Anna Rogers, Massey University Press, 2018.



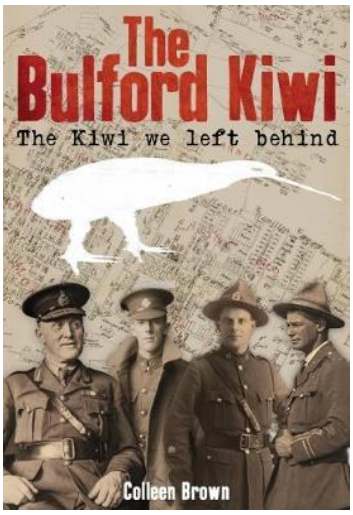
In February 2018, Anna kindly wrote an article for the *New Zealand Communication Trench* about the No 2 New Zealand General Hospital, Walton-on-Thames. I am now pleased to be able to report that Anna's book, that she was working on at the time she wrote the article, has been published and the official launch is to be held in November 2018. The book is the latest volume in the Centenary History of New Zealand and the First World War series, project managed by Glyn Harper. I have been eagerly waiting for this book for some time and although I have not yet seen the book, the following information is taken from Massey University Press website.

The thousands of New Zealand men who fought in the First World War went through hell. And right beside them was another fighting force, armed with scalpels, bandages and drugs. Hundreds of doctors, nurses, stretcher-bearers, orderlies and ambulance drivers, dentists, chiropodists, pharmacists, physiotherapists and chaplains cared for the sick and wounded, often at great personal risk. Veterinarians did the same for horses, camels and other animals.

The challenges were enormous - horrific injuries, gas and deadly diseases, especially the influenza of 1918. There were some astonishing successes - most famously by plastic surgery pioneers Harold Gillies and Henry Pickerill - but the price was high, for patients and carers.

The skilled, compassionate and courageous New Zealand medical personnel of the Great War have not always received the attention they deserve. Anna Rogers tells their remarkable story.

The Bulford Kiwi: The Kiwi we left behind by Colleen Brown, David Bateman Limited, 2018.



The 130-metre tall Bulford Kiwi cuts an imposing figure. This book covers the little-known story from the end of the First World War when New Zealand troops waited months in Sling Camp in southern England for a ship to take them home. Rioting in the camp led to plans to keep troops busy by cutting a giant Kiwi into the chalk hill behind the camp.

Originally carved to keep troops busy, the kiwi became an emblem to be proud of and a cherished link to home. For many of those involved in its construction, and later its resurrection, the Bulford Kiwi came to represent all those servicemen who had passed through Sling Camp, especially those who would never go home. It was a memorial built by soldiers, not governments, for themselves and their mates. The book also tells what happened to the Bulford Kiwi when the soldiers left for home, leaving the maintenance with the Kiwi Polish Company, its neglect after the Second World War and resurrection by UK troops, known as the "Arctic Warriors". The British Government made the Bulford Kiwi a scheduled monument in 2017.

Euglogy to a good mate

Delysse Storey

Earlier in the year, I was contacted by a cousin on my mother's side of the family. Noelene has been researching our family history and she has been gathering information about our great-grandparents and about the service of family members in the First World War. My great-grandfather had died in Australia when he was in his early thirties, leaving a widow, Mary-Ann, with six sons and three daughters (one son, Herbert John Coleman, was my grandfather; another son, William Coleman, was Noelene's great grandfather). Mary-Ann Coleman and eight of her children came to New Zealand with Mr JR Campbell in 1883. Mary-Anne and Mr Campbell were married in 1884 and four more sons were born.

Four members of the family served in the NZEF during the First World War, including Noelene's grandfather, 54227 Charles James Coleman. Charles (known as Charlie) enlisted in the NZEF in the New Zealand Rifle Brigade and left New Zealand on 16 November 1917 with the 31st Reinforcements, on board HMNZT No 97 *Tahiti*. Charlie was a man with a great sense of humour – a man who talked about the war, which was quite unique in those days. He served in France, was wounded twice and hospitalised in England and, on route home, in South Africa. He talked about being close to the enemy line, so close that each side talked to one another during the night. He recalled the game of placing a hat on top of a bayonet, holding it above the trench and waiting for an immediate response. He held on to and shared many memories - one of them: "How many soldiers had front page in the local paper with a pretty nurse standing alongside his bed?"

Charlie was one of the few selected to become a "runner", running from the front line back to Headquarters to report on progress. This was considered an important job that was highly valued, but runners were great targets for snipers. Charlie was chosen for his extraordinary skill to run through the night over planks and boggy terrain with incredible precision. He never missed a call. At the end of his delivery, Headquarters would reward him with a hot cup of cocoa. "Well worth running for this treat," he said. Who would run for a cup of cocoa today?

Charlie returned to New Zealand and was lucky enough to draw a ballot in Mahakipawa, South Island, where he farmed a fine Jersey herd of cows, along with his wife and family. He never lost his positive approach to life and living. Born in 1897, he died in 1985 at 88 years of age.

On 29 October 1978, his good mate, Perce Tierney[1], died and Charlie presented a eulogy at Perce's funeral. Charlie's sense of humour shines through and the camaraderie experienced by the men during the war was still fresh in Charlie's mind all those years later. The following is the eulogy:

[1] Probably 54231 Percival James Tierney, 3rd New Zealand Rifle Brigade, who died in Christchurch.

Eulogy to a good mate

"I write to recall memories of more than 61 years ago. Perce and I went into camp on the same day and were lucky enough to stay together until I had to go into hospital.

A camp in New Zealand and in England was lots of fun, and on the boat once we found our sea legs. Then Sling Camp – that was different, they brought us up with a jerk there. On to France, to Etaples our first taste of the Military Police – Perce could never see a reason for having those chaps around.

After being there a week or more, we boarded a train which seemed it was never going to stop, but after many hours of slow travel and lots of sudden jerks both ways, we at last came to our destination. We all felt glad and relieved to get off that packed train and stretch our legs. We stretched them alright, because we marched for another three hours after that and arrived at a cobblestone area with some buildings close by at 1 o'clock in the morning.

Our officers said "There is a paddock out there, be back here by 9 o'clock." Perce said to us – Alex Boyd[2], Jack Mackel, Son Henderson, Nugget Robinson – "We will have to look around for a farmhouse, we might find a hay stack." We did better than that, we found a shed with a hay loft, the best bed we ever had and plenty of apples too.

We had our fill and slept until we were awakened by a very angry man and his women. We had no idea what they were saying, so we filled our pockets and left. Perce and I have often talked about this with a good laugh.

Each move after this we got closer to the real thing. We had several nights at the Railway Station embankments with its dugouts all along the sides. Don't think there were any trains running on that line then.

One of those nights, Gerry let loose on us with some big stuff and although we were fairly safe because they could not get a direct hit in our position, it was still very frightening. Next morning, Perce had a look around and came back and said "What a mess, come and look, there is a cemetery on the other side of this bank and it is not the first time Gerry has had a go at it." I took Perce's word for it, others went but not me.

Before going up into forward position, we did a lot of fatigue work; we did again afterwards too. One of those jobs was to carry shells from a dump up to forward position. Perce always tried to do more than his share. We were told to carry one shell at a time, some of us tried to carry two but soon put it down, but Perce would not give in, he always got his load there.

We struck trouble on one trip. We met General Fulton and his party and he gave Perce a real BLAST about a good soldier does what he is told! A good soldier! I often wonder if there was any better than Perce. He was not far away when a job had to be done, and never once did I see a sign of fear.

There is one duty he did not like – this was when we were in the front line. Every afternoon, each platoon had to pick men to join a party and take cans back to the butts to fill, it was a nasty area. Perce had many trips on that run. I only had two.

Up the line, when things were quiet enough, our night shift was one hour on, and two hours off. Perce and I found a bit of a cave nearby, so we enlarged it a little, just enough for us to huddle in. After several nights, I said to Perce that the ground seems springy, so we had a look next morning and sure enough, there was a German body under us, so Perce put a bit more dirt on.

Thinking about being a good soldier, we had been up the line for about two weeks on low rations and everyone was just about done in. We were relieved by a Canterbury company, who told us that they had a hell of a time getting up to us and you will have it bad getting out. Keep to the duck walks if there are any left, if not you will be up to your necks in mud.

This was when Perce really showed us the kind of man he was. We will never know how many men he helped to pull out of that mud. It was dark and it was wet and I suppose we were all weaker than usual. When we got onto firm ground, Perce unloaded, which included his own and his share of platoon gear, my Lewis Gun and another man's load. Our officer would often think of the support he got from Perce, I felt sure of that.

[2] 54225 Alexander Boyd: Killed in action 8 October 1918, buried Anneux British Cemetery, Cambrai, France.

Perce and I always tried to keep our memories fresh whenever we met and, although he was a very quiet, deep thinking man, he enjoyed a few steps back in time.

Place names that come to mind are: Poperinghe, Ypres, Hell Fire Corner, Dicky Bush, Menin Road, Burr Cross Road, Hooge Crater, Corduroy Road, Dead Mule Gully, Black Watch Corner and, of course, Butts, Big Bertha – the big Naval Gun was at Burr Cross Road and she used to shake the ground when she booked. Corduroy Road was formed by placing saplings side by side over the swampy land, to enable the guns to be drawn by horses or mules up to the forward position.

Memories alive with laughter and sadness for those we lost. So long to a Great Soldier, Perce."

Vincent Miller's battlefield tour to the Somme and Ypres, 26/27 June 2018

Vincent Miller

My Dad, Paul Miller, and me and my Papa, Tim Keenan, left Blighty from the famous south Kent Port of Dover, on a ferry bound for Calais, France. After passing through immigration and customs, I was so pleased to receive an official French stamp on my Australian passport.

It was then out on to the A16 motorway travelling south towards the town of Villers Bretonneux (VB). After arriving in the town we looked for the famous infants' school of L'Ecole Victoria, which is connected to the State of Victoria as well as several towns and schools in the State. Arriving at this school I changed into my own school uniform – Lake Cathie Public School, NSW. There are two stone plaques on the front wall of the school, indicating the close connection with the Australian Imperial Force in the First World War, both in English and French. My Papa had brought a British Legion wreath of red poppies and I laid it in front of this plaque on behalf of the students of my school. I had a few moments reflection, then went to visit the First World War museum which is in the roof space of the school. It relates to the Diggers who fought very hard 100 years ago to remove the German soldiers from the town of VB – which they did in 93 minutes – a heroic feat of arms that took place on 24 April 1918, although sadly many Diggers were killed in this action.

The town of VB was virtually destroyed and in the 1920's it had to be rebuilt stone by stone, brick by brick as did many towns of the Somme and on the Western Front. I thought the museum at the school was brilliant – so interesting, with many displays of things which belonged to the Diggers. One could see from the top windows of the school into the school yard and over the entrance of the school was a huge sign "Do Not Forget Australia". The children at this school have learnt the National Anthem of Australia *Advance Australia Fair* and of course *Waltzing Matilda* in English. They often sing these famous tunes on ANZAC Day and on Armistice Day 11 November, and on other special occasions when important people come for a visit to VB from Australia. It is well known that the school children in the State of Victoria gave much of their pocket money, in pennies in the 1920's, so this school could be rebuilt. I was presented with a lovely "thank you" card, by the curator of the museum, which was made by the children of this school. It has lots of good pictures and memories from the school on it.

After a spot of lunch in the town, we then went to the CWGC's Adelaide Cemetery which is outside the town of VB. There are over 500 Diggers who rest there as well as a number of British Tommies and Canadian soldiers. But we sought out one special plot/grave – which today is empty, because in 1993, the remains of an Unknown Australian Soldier was removed and transported back to his homeland and, with great reverence, laid to rest at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

Next we travelled out into the country side in the rolling hills of Picardy to visit the famous memorial at Villers Bretonneux. The Australian National Memorial, is built in imposing white stone and was designed by the famous British architect Sir Edwin Lutyens, who was responsible for design many such memorials on the Western Front after the First World War. It is composed of a tall central tower, which we climbed to see the super view over the battlefields with two corner pavilions at each side. Two memorial walls to each side bear the names of 11,000 Australian missing soldiers whose remains were never found and still lie under the ground on the Western Front today. The walls have the places where the Australian Imperial Force fought engraved along the top. It's a lovely memorial and also holds many graves of soldiers and airmen in front of the tower. It was unveiled in 1938. An ANZAC Day Dawn Service is held here each year, to remember our Diggers.

As we left the cemetery I wrote my name in the cemetery visitors' book (which one should always do, I might add). I wrote that I was visiting on behalf of my school and to honour the Fallen.

Vincent Miller and one of the stone plaques at the infants' school of L'Ecole Victoria at Villers Bretonneux

Before leaving this site we walked to the rear of the memorial, and visited the recently opened Sir John Monash Centre, which tells the life and times of one of Australia's finest Generals who served in the Great War, namely General Sir John Monash, and the story of Australia's experiences on the Western Front. Monash was the General Officer Commanding the Australian Corps at this time one hundred years ago on the Somme and in Picardy. He is the only General in this war who was knighted in the field, at a special ceremony on the Somme by King George V. This museum is certainly a must for anyone to visit, with state of the art displays on what happened in this battlefield area. With interactive computer controlled displays and also a brief film on the Battle of Villiers Bretonneux, together with sight and sound of the action, I thought it was super.

We then took the road north for a visit to the main Somme battlefields and the area of the Battle of the Somme which started in 1 July 1918. I had specially wanted to visit the famous Lochnagar Crater near La Boisselle, just north of the small town of Albert. I was very keen to visit this huge crater as my Papa, who has visited it many times on his visits to the Western Front over the last 30 years, had told me all about how it was blown just before 7.30am on 1 July 1916 when over 60,000 lbs of explosives were set off – starting the terrible Battle of the Somme which lasted over five months. Over these months, tens of thousands of soldiers from all sides were killed. Many remains of the soldiers killed here are still buried in this crater when the mine exploded. We walked around the crater's lip and looked at all the memorials sited there. A very sad place, without a doubt.

Looking back towards the town of Albert, which was in Allied hands for most of the First World War, from the edge of this huge crater, we could see the big Basilica (church) in the centre of the town with the golden Madonna and Christ child glinting high on its tower in the evening sunshine. This church was well known to the Tommies and ANZAC's in the war. Afterwards, we headed to the small village of Mailly Maillet a small town out in the battlefields which was at times directly on the front line.

We had accommodation in a big farm house for the night. The next morning, after a traditional French brekkie, of bread rolls and jam, coffee/tea and orange juice, we set off again, and stopped at the village of Pozieres (or Possie to the Diggers) to see the huge memorial to the Australian 1st Division, then down the bank to the famous Mouquet Farm where there is a nice memorial to our lads at the side of the road, many who still lay in the surrounding countryside today. This farm was called Moo-Cow farm by the Diggers.

Vincent and his Papa at the AIF Memorial at Mouquet Farm

Then it was off again, to the huge Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme. As we rounded the trees which surrounds this huge memorial arch, my breath was taken away, an imposing edifice. As we approached this magnificent monument one could see the stone panels which surround the sides engraved with 75,000 names of the missing on the Somme – the lost soldiers of many nationalities who fought on the Allied side against the German Army. I looked in the register of names for rellies who are connected to my family. I also signed the register book on behalf of my students of my school and myself. This memorial was also designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and is the biggest structure on the Western Front. As we drove away, from this place we went to the Ulster Tower which is nearby dedicated to the 36th Ulster Division who fought in the war with distinction and is part of the military feats of Northern Ireland - most impressive. Next we returned to Pozieres and stopped at the Australian memorial where in the First World War a windmill stood on this high point of the battlefield. There are a number of nice plaques and other items to do with the actions here. A hallowed place for Australia.

Opposite this spot was the Tank Corps Memorial - the first massed tank attack which occurred nearby on 14 September 1916. I really liked the memorial as it had four miniature bronze First World War replica tanks on the top of its plinths. It also has a special fence around it, with tank track drive chains and 6-pounder guns barrels for the posts.

It was then off north heading towards the famous Belgian town of Ypres, or Wipers to the lads. It was about a two hour run which was completed quickly. We arrived at the town square near the Cloth Hall and went to a local restaurant for our lunch. I had asked my Papa if we could go and see some original First World War trenches, so we set off up the Menin Road, a deadly road during the war for those who marched up it, with continuous shells and machine gun fire, to the trenches at the Sanctuary Wood Museum, adjacent to Hill 62. We spent some time going into the trenches and looking at the many historic items in the museum: guns, rifles, bombs, shells and many other items. I really enjoyed this visit so interesting and with my Papa as a guide, who made it much clearer to me on how some of these things were used in the war.

We also visited the famous St George's Memorial Church (C of E) just off the town square. Nearly every item in this church has been given in memory of either an individual or a regiment who fought in the Great War. The church was dedicated in 1929 and was built with monies from the old boys of Eton College, Windsor. Many of the students who attended this famous Berkshire school were killed in the war. As we came out of the church, my Papa noticed a sign which stood on the pavement, which indicated the British Memorial School (initially, until the mid-1930s, known as the Eton Memorial School) next door was open to the public. This school was opened around the same time as the church and many children of the Imperial War Graves Commission cemetery workers who had stayed behind in the 1920's to tend the resting places of the soldiers who rest in the cemeteries, attended this school, effectively an English school in Belgium, where English values were taught. The vicar's residence was also next to this school. It has never been available to view since the late 1940's, so we were very privileged to be shown around this historic place. It is

now an art gallery and has only just been opened to the public. The gentleman renting this school hall told us all about the school and its activities. I should also mention that back in October 2017, a full peal (set) of bells were installed in the tower of the church, one is dedicated to our ANZAC's – and has the legend "100 years of ANZAC" with poppies cast into it [refer to *New Zealand Communication Trench* October 2017 and February 2018].

Next we visited the Tyne Cot Cemetery at Passchendaele Ridge - known to be the largest such cemetery in the world, with almost 12,000 graves and 35,000 names of the missing soldiers engraved on the rear walls of this huge resting place. Many Diggers lie in this place. We paid our respects but time was short so we were off again for a quick stop at the New Zealand National Memorial at s'Gravenstafel, which has the legend carved into the stone at the bottom "From the uttermost ends of the earth".

It was then another quick stop to the St Julien Canadian Memorial at Vancouver Corner, with the Brooding Solider. It was near this spot at St Julien where, in the early part of the war, the German Army released the first poisoned gas attack, causing many casualties. Travelling, across the battlefields we then stopped at the Langemark German Military Cemetery, which has as many as 45,000 of their soldiers buried in it. A very great contrast to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemeteries, which are full of light - here it was dark and somewhat foreboding!

Time was moving on, so we returned to Ypres and the Menin Gate where at 8.00pm each and every evening the Last Post is sounded. My Papa had contacted the Last Post Committee who are in charge of this ceremony and asked if I could lay a wreath on behalf of the students Lake Cathie Public School and my country. They replied almost straight away that it would be fine to do this and to arrive under the Menin Gate in good time, and make myself known to the person in charge. I would add this huge archway has well over 54,000 names engraved on its stone panels – they are the missing men who have no known resting place. Eight o'clock arrived very quickly, huge crowds had arrived at this hallowed location to see and hear the Last Post sounded by the Buglers of the Last Post Committee. They were dressed in their best dark blue uniforms with their silver bugles. The gentleman in charge asked me who I was and which country I was from - I told him I was here on behalf of my school in NSW and Australia. He said that in that case I would be at the front of the line, the first to lay my wreath of Flanders red poppies - I was so pleased!

The throng was called to attention by the Master of Ceremonies under the Menin Gate – everybody went quiet and the buglers of the Last Post Association raised their silver bugles to their lips and the Last Post sounded – you could hear a pin drop – and then a minutes silence was observed. It was then I was called forward, across the road under the arch, and up the steps to lay my wreath of Flanders red poppies. I felt so honoured to have been able to do this in memory of my Diggers and country and Lake Cathie Public School. Others also went forward to lay their own wreaths and when this was completed, the Reveille was sounded by the Last Post buglers and the day was at an end. I am eleven years old and will remember this trip for a long time to come.

It was then back to the car and an hour and a half's drive back to Calais Port to take the ferry back to Blighty – a grand adventure.

Many thanks must go to my Papa for organising this trip to the First World War battlefields of France and Belgium, where many of our Diggers rest today, 16,000 kms from their dear country.

We will remember them!

Special notes
There is a lovely film which last for 25 mins about the children of of L'Ecole Victoria school at VB and its connection to Australia, which can be found on the internet
https://mediacad.ac.amiens.fr/m.1195

A tip: When one is paying a visit to the new Sir John Monash Centre at Villers Bretonneux, you will need a WiFi enabled smart phone with a set of ear phones, to enable you to listen to the commentaries on the various displays, as this is to only way you can hear them.

[**From the editor**: A very big thank you to 11-year-old Vincent Miller from Australia for sharing his wonderful experience of visiting the Western Front with his grandfather, Tim Keenan from Kent in England. I am sure that Vincent will become a very knowledgeable and enthusiastic military historian, just like his grandfather.]

The adoption of a Great War grave, Cannock Chase War Cemetery, Staffordshire

Geoff McMillan

At present there is an exhibition in Brindley village, Staffordshire, England, recalling the "Legacy of the Great War". Nearby Brocton Camp had been the home of the Reserve Battalion on the New Zealand Rifle Brigade. Newly arrived troops were given final training before being sent to the Western Front in Flanders and Northern France. These troops fought well and with credit at Messines, Passchendaele and the capture of Le Quesnoy. However, the last two reinforcements were ravaged with the "Spanish Flu" generally thought to have been picked up after berthing on the West Coast of Africa. There are 73 graves of New Zealanders in the local military cemetery, most of whom were members of the New Zealand Rifle Brigade who succumbed to the disease in late 1918/early 1919.

As part of their exhibition, the Staffordshire War Centenary Group were keen to get information regarding any New Zealand soldier who had died at Brindley Hospital of the disease. A local historian, Richard Pursehouse, was known to have carried out a lot of research on the NZRB at Brocton, especially the rediscovery of a Great War scale model of Messines near the camp. He provided them with some copy files regarding my uncle, Charles Robert McMillan, that I had passed to him a few years ago.

68982 Charles Robert McMillan
New Zealand Rifle Brigade

My Uncle Charlie arrived at Brocton around September 1918. By November, he was seriously ill along with many others of the NZRB. He died on 7 November 1918, just four days before the Armistice and was buried at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Cannock Chase War Cemetery – buried in a sheet, as they were running out of coffins and, in a magnanimous gesture, gave the last few to the German POW's who were housed in a separate area of Brocton Camp.

Wards 8 to 12, part of the Ministry of Pensions' Hospital, Brindley. The ill New Zealand soldiers were put in isolation at this hospital and most of them succumbed to the pandemic influenza. This is possibly the hospital where Charles Robert McMillian died in 1918.
Image: Courtesy of David Battersby

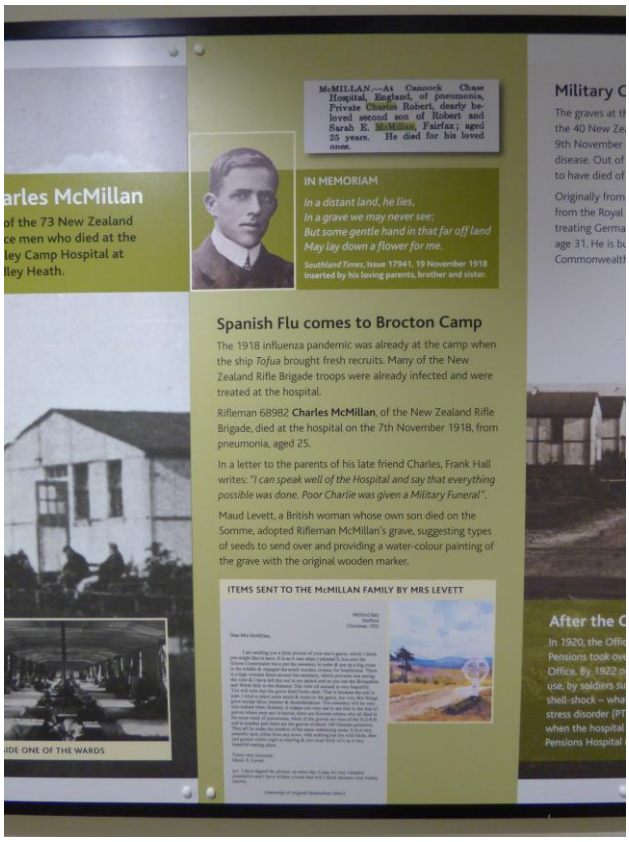
In May 1921, a well-to-do-lady, Maud Levett, who lived at the imposing Milford Hall, wrote to my grandmother advising that she had "adopted" Charlie's grave. At Christmas 1922, she wrote again, enclosing a watercolour painting she had done of the original headstone before it was replaced by the standard Portland Stone model. Whether my grandmother ever responded, we will probably never know. Possibly family records are held by Maud's descendants.

The Brindley village display only exhibited the transcript of one of Maud's letters - both are reprinted in this newsletter, along with the transcript of a letter from fellow soldier, Frank Hall to my grandmother.

An ANZAC commemoration has been held at Cannock Chase War Cemetery since just after the Great War, an indication of memories for the locals that have lingered long after the soldiers were shipped home in May 1919.

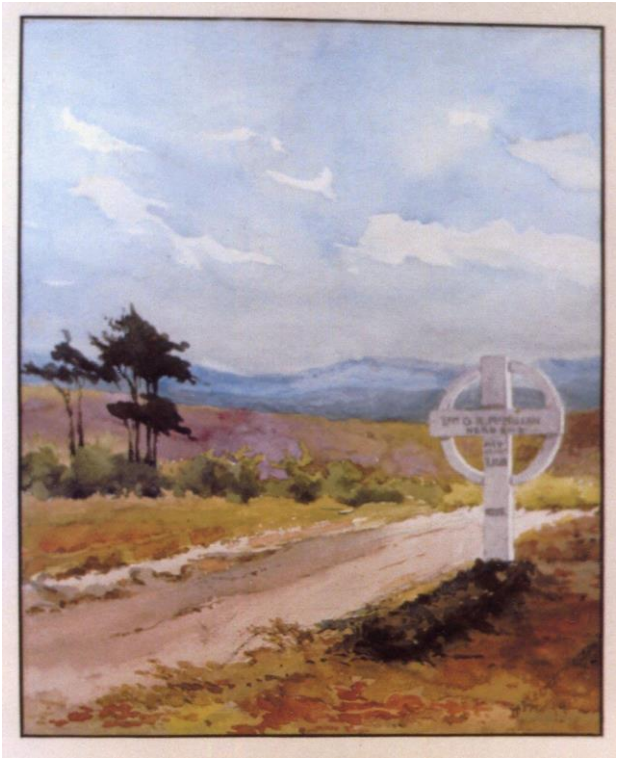
Mrs Maud S Levett from Milford Hall, Stafford

It is worth checking out Maud Levett on the web. The book she refers to is very critical of the current attitudes of the hierarchy of the Church of England and has some interesting personal viewpoints on Easter. She and her daughter "pulled strings" in 1919 to be allowed to visit her son, Richard's grave and see the carnage around the Ypres area before restoration began. Richard's batman accompanied them to point out salient features around Albert, at the time of Richard's death in March 1917.



Part of the display at Brindley, showing the information about 68982 Charles Robert McMillan
Image: Richard Pursehouse

The original marker at the grave of 68982 Charles Robert McMillan, Cannock Chase War Cemetery. The photo was taken by Frank Hall and posted to Charles' mother with a letter dated 3 January 1920. Frank refers to taking snapshots of the grave but as far as Geoff is aware, this is the only one of Frank's photos that has survived.



The painting of Charles' grave by Mrs Maud Levett and sent to his mother at Christmas 1922.

Milford Hall
Stafford
May 2nd 1921

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to let you know that on April 25th 'Anzac Day,' a pilgrimage was made by many people in this district to the cemetery on Cannock Chase, where your kinsman Rifleman C.R. McMillan was buried. A short service was held and flowers were taken in great quantities to put on the graves and each one was made bright & looked cared for & well tended. After the service those present were asked to come forward and offer to put a memorial card like the enclosed upon a grave and to send the corresponding card to the next of kin. I took the grave of Rifleman McMillan and am now writing to say that if you like I shall be happy to take charge of this grave & from time to time to put flowers on it and if you could send me a packet of seeds I would sow the latter. The soil is peat, so that such things as heath, or azalea, or rhododendrons would grow best. The cemetery is on the top of a wide open space called 'Cannock Chase,' with glorious views on every side, as it stands very hight. In the Autumn the chase is a great expanse of heather & last year I never saw such a solid mass of colour. It was quite glorious. If you look at a map of England you will find Stafford marked & the Chase is about 5 miles from the town. From the cemetery you can see the hills of Derbyshire, Shropshire and North Wales, so you can imagine it is a very lovely outlook.

It is true that it makes little difference, but as the mother of an only son left in the Military 'Rest Camp' near Albert, I know how sacred the spot in which ones dear one rests & if I can do anything to show good will toward the relatives of Rifleman McMillan, I shall be pleased to do so and should very much like to know some details about his life and career, his age etc.

Yours truly,
Maud. S. Levett

Milford Hall
Stafford
Christmas 1922

Dear Mrs McMillan,

I am sending you a little picture of your son's grave, which I think you might like to have. It is as it was when I painted it, but now the Graves Commission have put the cemetery in order & put up a big cross in the middle & changed the small wooden crosses for headstones. There is a high wooden fence around the cemetery, which prevents one seeing the view & I have left this out in my sketch and so you see the Shropshire and Welsh hills in the distance. The view all around is very beautiful. You will note that the grave itself looks dark. That is because the soil is peat. I tried to plant some seeds & roots on the grave, but very few things grow except ferns, heather & rhododendrons. The cemetery will be very nice indeed when finished. It makes one very sad to see that in the line of graves where your son is buried, there are fourteen others who all died in the same week of pneumonia. Most of the graves are men of the N.Z.R.B and in another part there are the graves of about 100 German prisoners. They all lie under the shadow of the same redeeming cross. It is a very peaceful spot, miles from any town, with nothing but the wild birds, deer and grouse within sight or hearing & you must think of it as a very beautiful resting place.

Yours very sincerely.
Maud. S. Levett

p.s. I have signed the picture, as some day it may be very valuable possession and I have written a book that will I think become very widely known.

Geoff is fortunate to have copies of the original two handwritten letters from Mrs Levett to the mother of his uncle, Charles Robert McMillan.
The handwritten letters would not reproduce well enough for inclusion in the newsletter.

Mrs E McMillan
Fairfax, NZ

Torquay
3.1.20

Dear Mrs McMillan

You will excuse me taking the liberty of writing to you. Your poor son, Charlie, and I were mates in Trentham. We also came over on the same boat and were campers together in Brocton, Eng. I know Charlie had no other mate in camp who was likely to write to you, so I have taken some snapshots of his grave and are sending you the films so that you may have them enlarged if you wish to.

I am sorry to say that I was in hospital at the time of his death and could not see him before he died. I can speak well of the hospital and say that everything possibly was done. Poor Charlie was given a military funeral.

The graves are being attended to still and arrangements have been made to do so in the future.

Well, I think this is all I can say. If you should wish to reply to this letter, this address will find me in NZ: F M Hall, c/- J Hall, Middlemarch, Central Otago.

I will close now and wish to convey my sincere sympathy in your sad bereavement.

I am
Yours sincerely
Frank Hall

PS: I shall not land in NZ until sometime in May, so my NZ

A very sincere and kind letter written by a fellow soldier, Frank Hall, to Charles' mother. Geoff has a copy of the original of this letter but it also would not reproduce successfully in the newsletter.

* *

Geoff's jottings

A farmer appellant giving evidenced before the First Auckland Military Service Board, was being questioned by counsel regarding their neighbours, and the possibility of their helping to carry on his place. "The next people further on," he added whimsically, "are un-naturalised Germans. They are within rifle shot of my whare." (Laughter) A member of the Board hoped that there was no special significance about that.
Source: *Fielding Star,* 11 August 1917

Wings of Horus: A Special Aircraft!

Tim Keenan

As it is the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Royal Air Force this year - previously the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) - I thought readers might like a resume of one special aircraft built on 4 January 1918 by the famous British engineering company Ruston Proctor and Co Ltd of Lincoln, UK. The firm was founded by Joseph Ruston in 1857 and manufactured a host of machinery for farm, rail, steam traction engines, steam rollers, threshing machines, railway locos, boilers etc, and, by 1892, the horizontal oil engine - a great many of this machinery were exported to countries around the globe. One could say they manufactured nearly everything in the engineering line.

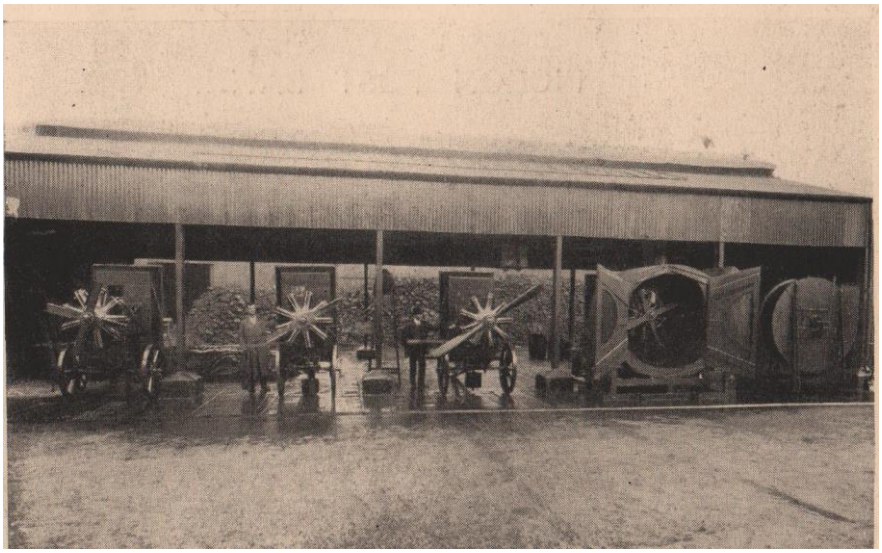
By the time of the start of the Great War, they were very well known to many government departments not least the War Office. Late in 1914, officials scoured the country for engineers accustomed to working with both wood and metal. The Ruston Proctor management was approached, as they certainly had the men with skills in many disciplines. For example, they operated for many years a fine woodworking department which included building threshing machines and other agricultural machinery, as well as extensive workshops which covered all types of engineering.

The first Ruston Proctor aircraft No 2670

By January 1915, the first contract was awarded to start work on aircraft. Immediately, work was begun to construct two new factories at Boulton and Spike Island at Lincoln, and within in six months the first (un-named) aircraft No 2670 had been completed. The directors and engineers visited a field near Lincoln on a warm July afternoon the see it fly for the first time. Naturally, there were anxious faces as the company had followed the blueprints exactly as supplied by the War Office. The aircraft's engine had been tested extensively on the ground and test reports had been excellent, but there were some concerns it might not give enough power for continuous flight! Their fears were proved unfounded – the aircraft, fitted with a 4-bladed propeller and an in line engine, performed perfectly and was pronounced by all as "a first class job". The propeller was fitted with a rather nice transfer sporting the "Lincoln Imp" (the emblem of the City of Lincoln) but with bi plane wings fitted, this was standard practice for all props.

The winged "Lincoln Imp" was Ruston's Aeroplane transfer trade mark, it was flown in the van of danger on every battlefront during the First World War
Image: Courtesy of the Ray Hooley Collection

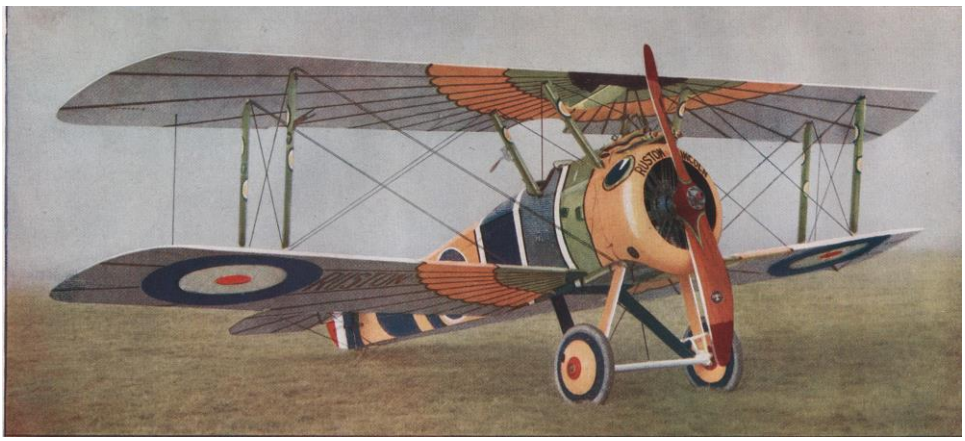
The test pilot at the time was a Captain John Edward Tennant of the RFC, he was awarded his Aero Certificate No 118 on 9 June 1914 (by July 1916 he was a Temp Major). He was an ex Scots Guards officer and during the war was awarded a MC (after the Great War he continued in the RAF rising through the ranks; sadly in 1941, he was killed in an air crash). The day after it was out-shopped, Major-General Sir W S Brancker, Comptroller-General of Aircraft Equipment, inspected this machine with other dignitaries and he complimented Ruston's employees upon their energy and devotion to duty.



The aeroplane engine test bay at the works, Lincoln
Image: From the book Our Part in the Great War:
Ruston and Hornsby Limited, Engineers, *c1919*

***Wings of Horus*: Sopwith F1 Camel No B7380**

In early January 1918, a Sopwith Camel F1 was out-shopped at Ruston 's works at Lincoln. It was given an official serial number B7380 and fitted with a 130bhp Clerget-Blin 9B rotary engine of nine cylinders and larger engines were also manufactured. This was a special aircraft, the 1,000th machine constructed, complete with an interesting colour scheme. It was specially painted in very distinctive colourful Egyptian designs. It is believed Colonel Joseph Seaward Ruston J.P. chairman of the board and the son of the founder of the firm, suggested this colour scheme being rather keen on the history and culture of ancient Egypt and, of course, it was very eye catching. The aircraft carried the name *Wings of Horus*. This event took place at No 4 Aeroplane Acceptance Park outside Lincoln on 4 January 1918, and again Major-General Sir W S Branker carried out an inspection.



View of the front of the 1,000th Sopwith F1 Camel aircraft
Image: From the book Our Part in the Great War:
Ruston and Hornsby Limited, Engineers, *c1919*

This aircraft was used to distribute five thousand War Bonds over the city of Lincoln. It was so successful that during War Bond Week, 4-9 March 1918, 10,000 similar leaflets were distributed every day by Ruston-built aircraft. A sum of £452,000 was raised, treble the amount anticipated - a huge amount even for 1918 times. It is pleasing to note these monies were collected by the many women workers who worked on the aircraft in many disciplines. Monies were also collected for the British Red Cross. They held the title of "Ruston Aircraft Munitionettes".

By 15 February 1918, the 1,000th machine was at No 4 Aeroplane Acceptance Park, just outside Lincoln and on or just after 15 February, *Wings of Horus* was flown to the Western Front. It was returned to Blighty (England) on 6 March 1918, quite likely to the RFC airfield at Wye, in mid Kent, south eastern England. Many of the RFC's planes went to France from this location, as well as from another airfield on the cliff top between Dover and Folkestone at Caple Le Ferne, being the shortest route across the English Channel to the Western Front. The special colour scheme/design of *Wings of Horus* was not considered suitable for fighting purposes and the RFC did not use this aircraft – it is not known what happened to it after it arrived back in England. Why they did not just simply repaint this aircraft is not now known?

Bleriot Experimental 2c bi-plane

Ruston's built the largest number of Camels in the First World War. It will be noted that on 3 September 1916 Lieutenant William Leefe Robinson of the RFC was patrolling over the countryside just north of London, in the fourth Ruston aeroplane built, No 2673, a Bleriot Experimental 2c bi-plane, when he engaged a German Schutte Lanz Airship (Zeppelin) No SL11, one of three which approached the English coast that night (3/4 September) and shot it down at Cuffley, Hertfordshire. It was the first hostile aircraft to be brought down on British soil. For this action, he was awarded the Victoria Cross; he was 22 at this time and the first RFC officer to receive a VC. It was Gazetted within a few days of this Zeppelin action and presented to him by King George V within the next couple of weeks. When serving my electrical apprenticeship in the mid 1960's with my local power board, I worked with an elderly electrician, whose father took him out to the crash site to see the fallen remains of this airship. He was a young chap at the time but still remembered this visit to the fallen wreck very clearly. Many thousands visited this site and the Police had to call in the military to control the crowds.

The founder's maxim: Quality

The firm of Ruston's were well known for "quality" with anything they manufactured, it was in fact the founders' maxim. Throughout the Great War they received letters from the War Office, at Adastral House on the Victoria Embankment, London, and from the Air Board Office, Technical Department, Central House, Kingsway, London, thanking them for the quality of their work, which was considered better than other makers of the time. A letter was received at the works in June 1918, it was written "In the Field" (on the Western Front) with a photograph of a badly damaged Sopwith Camel which was flying over the trenches when it received very heavy Archie fire from German gun batteries on the ground, whilst flying a high altitude. The blast from these Hun guns caused the machine to somersault a number of times and fall thousands of feet, until the pilot managed to regain control. He was able to land it safely. In this letter the Squadron's commander asked that the photograph of this badly damaged machine be put on display somewhere in the works so the workers who built it would be able to view it. He also conveyed to Ruston's the Squadron's appreciation of the good workmanship which allowed the Camel to stand up to such a blow and still carry on!

By the end of the Great War the firm had supplied 2,750 aeroplanes, over 4,000 aero engines, and equivalent spares for a further 800 engines. Other testimonials were also received from the Admiralty and the Ministry of Munitions of War, Whitehall Gardens, London, on a frequent basis at the Lincoln works.

Australian Flying Corps

Research shows, the Australian Flying Corps was formed in 1912 and the proposed flying school, in the first instance, was to be at Duntroon, ACT. However, in July 1913, Point Cook in the State of Victoria was announced as the preferred location as it was a large flat area. First flights were in March 1914. They naturally played their part in the First World War conflict. The men and machines fought on many fronts, both in Palestine and Mesopotamia (now Iraq) as well as Egypt, France and Belgium and earned a most credible reputation. The aircraft were also shipped to the German colonies in what is now north-west New Guinea with the intention of assisting the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force in capturing the colonies, but the campaign ended before the aircraft could be unpacked and assembled.

In Blighty, their main training base and airfield was at Minchinghampton, Gloucestershire, in the west Midlands. They arrived at this location in force in early in 1917. It would be a fair assumption the AFC used the aircraft which Ruston Proctor built. Just recently I paid a visit to the Western Front battlefields - I took my grandson Vincent Miller, who is School Captain of Lake Cathie Public school, Bonny Hills on the mid-north coast of NSW. We stopped at the L'Ecole Victoria (school), in the lovely Picardy town of Villers Bretonneux, which is twinned with a town in the State of Victoria. The children there have a strong connection to the Diggers, there is a museum to their feats of arms there

in early 1918. Besides the many interesting items on display was the rare flag of the Australian Flying Corps dating from 1930 or so and it was used in many ANZAC Day parades over this time.

New Zealand's contribution

During the Great War, there were many who sailed for Blighty from New Zealand to do their bit with the New Zealand Forces, quite a number joined the Royal Flying Crops and the Royal Naval Air Service. Although New Zealand 's military aviation began in 1913, when the New Zealand Army was presented with two Bleriot monoplanes, they were handed back to the British when war broke out in 1914. Fifteen lads became aces the top scorer being Keith Caldwell. On 14 June 1923, the New Zealand Permanent Air Force was gazetted.

Postscript

I have a rare book – entitled *Our Part in the Great War: Ruston and Hornsby, Engineers,* with over 123 pages. It extensively illustrates all the machinery in many types they produced for the war effort, a quite remarkable achievement. It was in September 1918 the firm of Richard Hornsby and Sons of Grantham, Lincs, joined forces with Ruston Proctor and became Ruston Hornsby and Co Ltd. Just after the war a number of engineering companies produced these patriotic books to show what they had achieved for my country. Others included William Foster and Co Ltd, Wellington Works, Lincoln, designers and makers of the first tanks, Tangye Brothers Ltd of Birmingham, and Messrs Mirrlees, Bickerton and Day Ltd, whose works were at Hazel Grove, Stockport, now part of Greater Manchester. Their fully illustrated volume was entitled *A British Engineering Shop during the War* – priced at the time of publication in 1919 at one guinea. It runs to 100 pages. They also manufactured aero engines as well as tank engines in some numbers.

It is rather ironic today, the old works at Lincoln which was owned by Ruston Hornsby and Co Ltd, for so many years is now owned by MAN Diesel and Turbo UK Ltd, a division of the famous German firm, Maschinen Fabrik Nurnberg, Augsburg, Bavaria, manufacturing the industrial gas turbine – which Ruston Hornsby and Co Ltd pioneered in the early 1950's, under the name of Ruston Gas Turbines. I am aware that a number of other engineering concerns in Blighty, also produced such illustrated books as mentioned above and are collectors books today.

Acknowledgements: Many thanks to my good friend John Williams, Margate, who has provided many details on the RFC in this article.

Image: The Closing of the Book,
Aberdeen Press & Journal,
Tuesday 12 November 1918.
Contributed by Richard Pursehouse

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Editor: Elizabeth Morey elizabeth6@xtra.co.nz

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