STAND TO!

THE JOURNAL OF THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

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MAY

6

Newcastle upon Tyne

2017 Spring Conference and AGM

University of Northumbria, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 1XE

Programme for the day

9.30am	Doors open. Teas/coffees
10.15am	Welcome by the Chairman
10.20am	**British casualty evacuation from the Somme, July 1916: success or failure?** by Jeremy Higgins
11.20am	**Winning With Laughter: Cartoonists at War** by Luci Gosling
12.20pm	buffet lunch
1.20pm	**Politics and Command: Conflict and Crisis 1917** by John Derry
2.20pm	Teas/coffees
2.45pm	AGM
4.30pm	Finish of proceedings

FREE EVENT / BUFFET LUNCH AT COST
A loose leaf insert will be sent out with the next Bulletin (107) giving full details. Contact the WFA office to confirm your attendance and reserve your place.

JUNE

3

Birmingham

6th WFA President's Conference

Saturday 3rd June 2017
Doors 09.00
Start 09.45 until 16.30

Tally Ho! Sports and Social Club, Birmingham B5 7RN

- **An Army of Brigadiers: British Commanders at the Battle of Arras 1917:** Trevor Harvey
- **Arras 1917 - The lost opportunity:** Jim Smithson
- **Messines 1917 - The Zenith of Siege Warfare:** Lt. Col. Alex Turner
- **Fritz von Lossberg and German flexible defence 1917:** Jack Sheldon
- Panel Discussion including Prof. Peter Simkins and Prof. John Bourne

JULY

8

York

WFA York Conference

Saturday 8th July 2017
Doors 09.00
Start 09.45 until 16.15

Manor Academy, Millfield Lane, Nether Poppleton, York YO26 6AP

- **The Wider War in 1917:** Prof Sir Hew Strachan
- **British Propaganda and The Third Battle of Ypres:** Prof. Stephen Badsey
- **If we do this, we do it properly: The Canadian Corps at Passchendaele 1917:** Rob Thompson
- **An equal and opposite reaction: The BEF's response to the German counter-attack and the final days of the Battle of Cambrai 1917:** Dr. Bryn Hammond

BOOKING DETAILS: £30 for each conference which includes buffet lunch plus tea/coffee. £50 combined fee for both conferences. Book by contacting WFA Office - **020 7118 1914**

STAND TO!

The Journal of the Western Front Association

No. 108 January/February 2017

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Although 2016 is already receding into history at an alarming rate and we are edging towards February, may I start by wishing all members and readers a very happy and healthy New Year.

2017 was only a few days old when the BBC broke news of the government's plans for a large-scale, national commemorative event centred on Ypres in late July 2017. The main event will take place at Tyne Cot Cemetery on 31 July to mark the centenary of the Third Battle of Ypres and a ballot was opened for the 4,000 seat, ticket-only ceremony, similar to that held for last year's Somme commemorations. Descendants of those who fought in the battle and those with a personal connection to it are invited to apply and there is still time if you wish to attend and haven't yet entered as the ballot closes on 24 February. Visit the official website at https://passchendaele100.org/

In addition to the event at Tyne Cot there will also be a free public event the night before in the Grote Markt in Ypres following the traditional Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate. The plans for this sound fascinating - a multi-media extravaganza combining live performance with projections thrown onto the grey stone façade of the Cloth Hall to tell the story of the Great War in the Salient. It is sure to attract large crowds and again interest can be registered on the official website. Readers will perhaps know that I have spoken of my great uncle Albert Cooksey before. He was killed in the two-division attack north of Passchendaele in the early hours of 2 December 1917. Newspaper reports dug out by Linda Hutton in Barnsley confirm that he and John Burke claimed to have buried another of their mates – Frank Moorhouse – somewhere near Ypres three years earlier, so Albert had undoubtedly 'done his bit' in defending the Salient and eventually lost his life in it. His death, however, is beyond the 6 November cut-off date for Third Ypres so do I qualify for a connection to the battle? According to Michael LoCicero in his excellent study of the 2 December fighting - *A Moonlight Massacre: The Forgotten Last Act of the Third Battle of Ypres* - the Germans felt Passchendaele went on well beyond the Battles Nomenclature Committee termination date. I will just have to wait and see.

Although Third Ypres is the government's chosen peg on which it will hang its key commemorations, 2017 also marks the centenaries of other momentous events which should not be forgotten. The new visitors' centre at Vimy Ridge is taking shape and will be the focus of major Canadian events on 9 April but the British Army's efforts at Arras and the Australian struggles at Bullecourt – battles which have for so long been in the shadow of Passchendaele - will also be remembered. Neither should the successes at Messines in June be forgotten, nor the fighting at Cambrai in November and December which will see the year 2017 draw to a close. Doubtless some members will be travelling to France to mark these events. There will be many others, however, who, throughout the year, will think of those - on land, at sea or in the air - who may not have been directly involved in the major battles of 1917 but who nevertheless gave their lives one hundred years ago. We will remember them.

Contact Sarah Gunn at the WFA Office:

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Front Cover: *Repair and re-use: Two French girls photographed by Lieutenant John Warwick Brooke washing salvaged boots before they were repaired at the Army Boot Repair Shop in Calais, 24 June 1918. Courtesy IWM Q6739*

Communication Lines

Footnotes

ST 106 – the Somme Special – was an excellent issue to which I am still turning. Many thanks for your hard work and indeed that of the various authors. If I may I should like to add a couple of belated 'footnotes' to two articles:

1. 'Tunnelling Companies on the Somme': David Whitaker refers to the death of Lieutenant W R Cloutman RE. His brother also served in the Royal Engineers during the Great War. Serving with 59/Field Company, Major Brett Cloutman won a VC at the Quartes Bridge, Pont–sur–Sambre on 6 November 1918. He reached the rank of lieutenant colonel and after the war became a member of the judiciary retiring as His Honour Judge Cloutman. Brett was cremated and his ashes were scattered near his brother's grave at the Norfolk Cemetery Becordel–Bécourt on the Somme. His was the final 'Sapper VC' of the Great War.

2. 'Private Harold Page: A Norfolk Man': It is pleasing to see Harold Gillies featured in an article. The pioneering work he did at Queen Mary's Hospital, Sidcup is much deserved of recognition. My former colleague Dr Andrew Bamji should be congratulated on ensuring that the exceptional archive of Sir Harold Gillies – generally regarded as 'the father of plastic surgery' – and others is now in the hands of the Royal College of Surgeons. In 1930 Gillies invited his cousin to join his specialist practice in plastic surgery. He took up the challenge and became pre–eminent in this field in the Second World War – his name – Archibald McIndoe. Gillies did not rest on his laurels and helped organise plastic surgery units whilst working at Park Prewett Hospital, Basingstoke in the Second World War. He continued to do pioneering plastic surgery work after the war and died aged 78 whilst still working in 1960.

Martin Stoneham, Chairman of the Friends of the Royal Engineers Museum, via email

Art amendment

I always enjoyed the War Art section by David and Judith Cohen and was keen to read their piece in *ST* 107 as I have a particular interest in Thomas Ivester Lloyd. I met his son who was a keen hunting enthusiast, particularly following beagles and Basset Hounds.

However the caption to the bottom illustration on p.38 is clearly incorrect. This is not 'An Indian Sowar (cavalryman) with his unwilling horse' but a soldier of the Indian Mountain Artillery (probably a driver), leading an artillery mule which is carrying the forepart of a 10–pdr BL mountain gun barrel.

Brian Hill via email

Smoking poet

With reference to the very interesting article 'Smokes for the Blokes' in *ST* 107, the March 1916 edition of the *Growler Magazine,* produced for the 16th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers (Newcastle Commercials), featured this excellent poem cum cigarette advertisement by 'Advert', which was most likely penned by 16/197 Corporal Benjamin Carr, the then editor of the magazine:

> 'My 'RUBY QUEEN' is a 'LIFE RAY' to me,
> Her 'GOLD FLAKED' locks shall ne'er be severed by 'SCISSORS' cruel
> Were I 'ALL ARMS' oh, what embraces would be ours. Had I the power, in 'ARF A MO,' a 'STATE EXPRESS' would whirl us far away, down the 'PARK DRIVE' of a 'MANSION HOUSE,' We would wander neath the 'WILD WOODBINE'
> 'THREE CASTLES' would be our heritage, a 'COUNTRY LIFE' with many a 'GOLDEN DAWN,' 'BLACK CATS' to drive all 'CRAVEN' fears far, far away. 'PLAYERS' in joys and drama we would be, no 'TRUMPETERS' needed to herald forth our happiness. Love would be constant 'CHAIRMAN' at our meetings, nectar we'd drink with 'CONNOISSEURS' our true delight, and trouble would all fly away in blue filmed smoke.'

Benjamin Carr was killed on 1 July 1916 when the 16th Battalion attacked the fortress of Thiepval.

The son of Mrs A Carr, of 143, Bayswater Road, West Jesmond, Newcastle–on–Tyne, and the late John Carr, the 1911 Census records that Benjamin was then a single man, aged 25, living at 32, Honister Avenue, Newcastle upon Tyne. Occupation: Actor.

The Church of the Divine Unity in Newcastle, which Ben attended, produced a magazine and the following quotation has been taken from its pages:

> *'Ben had a genial personality which won those he met, and especially fitted him for the profession he had chosen, that of an actor. Just prior to enlistment he was showing great promise as an interpreter of the gentler type of manhood. Being deeply moved by the German tactics he not only enlisted at the outset of the war, but undertook to address recruiting meetings. He had the ability as a speaker, and the work he did was appreciated by those in authority. He was early offered promotion, which he refused, and only accepted his stripes under pressure. It was his deep sense of duty that made him into an efficient soldier, for he was by nature an artist and idealist. He had a fund of humour and a delicate literary touch.*

His remains were never found and today he is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial, Pier and Face 10, 11 and 12 B.

Ian Johnson, via email

The front page of the March 1916 issue of The Growler *and the poem by 'Advert' as it appeared on page 3*

Tank myth taken to task

I am reluctant to take issue with the late Trevor Pidgeon and his well–researched book The *Tanks at Flers,* which was drawn to our attention in David Fletcher's article 'The First Tank Action in History' (*ST* 107) and in particular the section headed 'Drama' which deals with the alleged suicide of Lieutenant George Macpherson. David was kind enough to refer in his footnote to my earlier article *Rewriting History – An Alternative Account of the Death of Lieutenant George Macpherson of the Heavy Section of the Machine Gun Corps.* He confirms Trevor Pidgeon's view that Macpherson did commit suicide. Whilst not wishing to revisit my article it is important to mention that in spite of Trevor's forensic research he missed two sources which might just have shifted him to a more agnostic position of the event. He did not discover in the Bovington archives the key transcription of the 'Secret' lecture that Henriques gave in March 1917 to new officers in the nascent Tank Corps regarding the attack on The Quadrilateral. It confirmed his earlier report following the action, both of which contradict his own later 1937 account in his memoir *The Indiscretions of a Warden*. It is in this book that the myth of an unnamed tank officer committing suicide passed into the public domain. It was through Trevor's research that this officer was finally named, ie George Macpherson. Henriques' earlier accounts also contradict the views of Brigadier Osbourn regarding the events of 15 September 1916 which were made in his 1935 letter to Sir James Edmonds. The myth remained within the arcane understandings of military history until 2007 and the *Who Do You Think You Are?* programme in which Sir Matthew Pinsent, George Macpherson's great nephew, was the subject. This put the allegation firmly in the popular domain of the general public.

The programme's researchers discovered in the archives of Winchester College the reference to the alleged suicide put there at the behest of a junior history teacher based on Trevor's account. The archivist was asked not to inform Sir Matthew when he visited the college. It was on camera that Trevor told Sir Matthew, to his considerable discomfort, of the alleged suicide of his great uncle. No mention was made of the alternative possibility of shell fire. The broadcast also caused further hurt to the Rev. Ewen Pinsent, Sir Matthew's father, whose mother, Kathleen, had been very close to her younger brother George, although he was aware of Trevor's revelation in *The Tanks at Flers.*

Following the publication of my article in 2010, Winchester College deleted the reference to the alleged suicide from their archives and some relief was brought to the Rev. Pinsent. However, a hare was set running. Ignoring these personal issues or even the blots on the escutcheon of the Tank Corps and Winchester College, the myth of the alleged suicide highlights two important issues for the military historian:

a. how do you stop the hare in its tracks when it is so far ahead? Even the great John Terraine bought into the myth in his book *The Smoke and the Fire* (p.149), ironically when he was attacking the myth that the tanks were war–winning weapons and
b. how can serious military history be disentangled from 'good' TV and imaginative journalism? In spite of two attempts to obtain the source of Christy Campbell's account of the alleged suicide in his readable book *Band of Brigands* (pp. 202–203), I have been met only with silence and can only conclude that the 'journalist' in Mr Campbell got the better of the 'historian'. The reader will not be surprised that I had toyed with the alternative title *Myth, Memory and Mendacity* for my article. Clearly I resisted the temptation to engage in alliteration.

Colin Hardy Stroud, Gloucestershire

Somme special memories

It is always interesting to read *Stand To!* but especially two articles in *ST* 106, the Somme Special. Peter Hart's excellent 'Life in the Trenches' included an extract from sergeant Jack Dorgan 1/7 Northumberland Fusiliers. I had the privilege to meet Jack while I was living and working in Nottingham in the mid–1980s. He was an ex–miner and Boy Scout leader who was then living in Nottingham with his daughter. Jack told many such stories like the one featured in Peter Hart's article.

The Nottingham branch of the WFA then was fortunate to have at least six veterans amongst its ranks.

It was also good to see a thought provoking article – 'Off the Beaten Track' – by Tonie and Valmai Holt as I had travelled with them on several of their early battlefield tours. They introduced me to the Western Front with their mini 'time capsules', I may not have had the opportunity otherwise.

I miss those days. Thank you.

David Wallis, Bishop's Stortford, Herts

Zeppelins over Edinburgh

Truths and Myths of the First Bombing Raid on Scotland

by Alan Reid

At noon on Sunday 2 April 1916, Zeppelin L 14 *of the* Kaiserliche Marine*, rose from its base at Nordholz on the German* Nordsee *coast. Eleven hours later, its bombs began to fall on Edinburgh and the port of Leith. It was the first time a Scottish city had been attacked from the skies, and the first experience for Scotland of air–raid casualties. Last year was an important one for commemoration in the United Kingdom, with national events marking one hundred years since the Battle of the Somme. The centenary of the airship attack on the Forth, however, was also recognised by some as a significant date for Scots. The bombs that night heralded a new era of total war for Scotland, when conflict moved beyond the battlefield and civilians found themselves in the crosshairs of the enemy. Alan Reid shares his research on this significant event.*

Misleading

In the last few years, the Zeppelin attack on Edinburgh has attracted some comment both in the media and online, as a trawl through the Internet will soon reveal. For many writers, it was an occasion when a defenceless and unprepared city was subjected to a punishing aerial bombardment. So desperate, we are told, was the plight of the defenders that from the battlements of Edinburgh Castle, the famous 'One o'clock Gun' was called into action for the first time – albeit, suggests one account, only firing blank rounds.[1] In this Caledonian version of 'Lions led by Donkeys' the civilians take the place of the infantry, and like the soldiers in the trenches, are betrayed by those in high command.

For the author, this retelling of events is misleading and uses the benefit of hindsight too much, a luxury not afforded to those in charge at the time. Critics fail to place the raid properly within the context of a German strategic bombing campaign against Britain (the first in history); fail to appreciate that British defences at home are, like the British Expeditionary Force in France and Belgium, on a 'learning curve' – a process that will result in the decisive defeat of the Zeppelin menace by the end of 1916. They do not sufficiently recognise that the primary objective for German raiders on that April night was the naval base at Rosyth (not Edinburgh) and the failure of a strike–force of four Zeppelins to drop even a single bomb on their main target revealed the limitations of the airship as a weapon of war.

In many respects, April 1916 can be seen as the high–water mark in Zeppelin fortunes. The bombing campaign had opened in January 1915 with a raid on Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn; by May, London had been attacked for the first time and in January 1916, the raiding was extended to the towns and great cities of the Midlands and northern England. Buoyed by the extent of their incursions into British airspace, and keen to use the protection offered by the darkness of a new moon, the Naval Airship Division embarked on its so–called 'big week': a period of high intensity operations, the most ambitious of these an attack on Rosyth – home of the 1st Battlecruiser Squadron of the Grand Fleet, commanded by Vice Admiral David Beatty.

Vagaries

Despite the understandable 'shock and awe' first generated by their appearance in 1915, Zeppelin sorties over Britain faced considerable difficulties. Rudimentary navigational equipment, and the vagaries of bad weather and unexpected winds, left many crews over the North Sea hopelessly lost. To keep an airship roughly on course, radio direction finding was used, although the bearings supplied from German bases were often unreliable. Indeed while off Dunbar on the evening of 2 April, Zeppelin *L 14* obtained D/F fixes with errors of between 60 to 100 miles. [2]

Signals intelligence became an important element of an increasingly sophisticated British response to the bombing. A chain of listening stations was extended along the east coast to pick up German radio traffic. From this data, the defenders could often establish Zeppelin positions much more accurately than German air crews. Details were passed to Army HQ at Horse Guards Parade, which then alerted areas under threat of attack. Furthermore, from early in the campaign, the British had instigated lighting restrictions, initially only in the south, but then progressively extended across the rest of the country, finally reaching Scotland on 25 February 1916, with the Lights (Scotland) Orders. The blackout would prove to be one of the most effective counter measures of the war and continually baffled airship commanders.

Thorn in the side

The four Zeppelins detailed to attack Rosyth soon ran into difficulties. Mechanical problems

Zeppelin L 14 *of the Imperial German Navy*

The approximate routes believed to have been flown by Zeppelins L 14 and L 22 on their approach to Edinburgh and Leith. Courtesy the author

forced the *L 13* to abandon its mission. A northerly wind pushed the landfall of the others much further south than intended. *L 16* quickly gave up any attempt at reaching Scotland and scattered high explosive (HE) over Northumberland instead, although to no great effect. The *L 22*, commanded by *Kapitänleutnant* Martin Dietrich, mistakenly believed it was over Newcastle – and dropped most of its bombs harmlessly on countryside west of Berwick–upon–Tweed. However, the redoubtable *Kapitänleutnant der Reserve* Alois Böcker in the *L 14* doggedly pushed forward and, escaping an encounter with Royal Navy destroyers off St Abb's Head, finally reached the mouth of the Forth around 9.45pm, triggering a sighting report by HMS *Ferret*, one of the guard ships. [3]

After twelve months on operations, Alois Böcker had established a reputation as one of Germany's top airship commanders, arguably second only to their great ace Heinrich Mathy of the *L 13*. Joining the Imperial Navy in October 1896, the 36–year–old Böcker had matured into a strict disciplinarian and a man of decided views; with, it was said, a sublime confidence in ultimate victory. In the vernacular used by RAF Bomber Command during a later conflict, he was a 'press–on type'. Böcker's determination to always get through to his target appeared motivated by his strong opposition to the Royal Navy's blockade of German ports. This policy, he stated, caused unjustified suffering to the civilian population.[4] Böcker and his crew had been a thorn in British sides since 1915: they had bombed Croydon and Derby, caused heavy civilian casualties at East Dereham in rural Norfolk, and terrorised the population of Hull in March 1916.

Kapitänleutnant der Reserve *Alois Böcker and the crew of the* L 14.*Böcker is the wing–collared officer seventh from the left*

Fast approaching

Now, circling over Inchkeith Island at 8,000 – 10,000 feet, Alois Böcker searched in vain for the Rosyth naval base. Also in the command gondola was Wilhelm Jensen – the s*teuermann* (navigator*)* of the *L 14* – an experienced mariner from Schleswig and believed to have been familiar with the topology of the Forth from sailings before the war. A sea mist was, however, obscuring part of the estuary and both airmen failed to locate the base. [5] Years later, Victor Heyward described, in his memoir *HMS* Tiger *at Bay,* how the fleet heard the Zeppelin motors overhead but kept guns and searchlights secured for fear of giving away its position. Abandoning the search, Böcker now swung *L 14* towards Leith, possibly catching sight of some lights from merchant ships unloading stores in the roadstead. To the dismay of watching police officers, the Zeppelin was seen fast approaching the port at 11.25pm. [6]

To Leith would fall the dubious distinction of being the first Scottish town subjected to an ordeal of fire and high–explosive delivered from the skies. Nine HE and eleven incendiary bombs were dropped by the *L 14*. [7] The greatest damage to commercial property was caused at Ronaldson's Wharf, where an HE bomb hit the roof of a four–storey whisky bond belonging to Innes & Grieve Ltd, completely destroying the warehouse and its contents to the value of an estimated £44,000. [8] The inferno created a lurid red glow that lit up the surrounding area and was clearly visible to Wilhelm Jensen thousands of feet overhead. [9]

Ronaldson's Wharf, Leith in 1910. The large Hanseatic looking building in the centre of the background is the Innes & Grieve whisky bond warehouse, the recipient of a direct hit by the L 14*. Courtesy Archie Foley*

Ronaldson's Wharf today. Author

The sixth bomb dropped on Leith fell on the roof of the tenement at 2, Commercial Street, near the harbour, killing a man in his bed on the top floor.[10] Robert Love, a shipyard worker in his mid–sixties, originally from Busby in Renfrewshire, became Scotland's first air raid fatality. [11]

'Screaming bombs'

Moored alongside the docks at Leith, aboard the 1,000 ton DFDS steamer *Vesta*, from neutral Denmark, Faroese businessman Herluf B Thomsen watched the bombing. [12] He left a vivid and emotive account,

> 'And when everything was twice as silent we hear the rotations of the engines on the airship – uneven, falling and rising – far away and then very close. And now it is right above our heads! We look at each other with sickening expressions; would there be a call for us… Invisible for every eye the Zeppelin hangs under the stars and drops his screaming bombs on the just and unjust. And in a moment I understand how these opponents have locked their teeth into each other's throats, and why they can't let go until one of them is taken by the fight for death.' [13]

Following the line of the Water of Leith, Böcker and *L 14* arrived over Edinburgh about 11.50pm. During the next thirty–five minutes the Zeppelin made at least three runs across the city, dropping seventeen HE bombs and seven incendiaries. [14] Noticing no heavy anti–aircraft fire, Böcker felt confident enough to bring his airship down to low altitude in an attempt to improve bombing results. According to Jensen, the *L 14* was as low as 2,500 feet at one stage – probably in an unsuccessful effort to locate the main railway stations. [15] Although there was no moon, the stars were out, and people on the ground could clearly discern the outline of the airship as it crossed the night sky.

Despite the low altitude and long duration of the raid, bombing was scattered across the city, with bombs dropped on the Mound, Castle Rock, Grassmarket, and the Royal Infirmary as well as schools and tenements. During the attack, Martin Dietrich in the *L 22* also appeared above Edinburgh, although remaining at high altitude. Three HE bombs from this Zeppelin fell on the city's outskirts at Slateford, Comiston and Bridgend, causing no loss of life, or significant damage. [16]

The majority of the deaths occurred at about 12.20am, during Böcker's final sojourn across Edinburgh. A HE bomb landed on the pavement outside 16, Marshall Street, killing six people sheltering at the entrance of the tenement and wounding a further seven. One of the injured, an off–duty soldier from the Royal Scots – died later in hospital.

Shock

Both *L 14* and *L 22* arrived safely back in Germany on 3 April; Böcker had dropped 4,200lbs of bombs. [17] The Scots were left to count the cost: thirteen dead in total, twenty–three injured – and damage of £73,113 (estimates vary from between £5M – £20M pounds sterling at today's values). [18] No naval or military installations were hit. Casualties were felt to be relatively light, due in part to the small calibre of bombs dropped – 110, 128 and 220–pounders, supplemented by 25–pound incendiaries. One hundred years on, the Museum of Edinburgh has a few defused examples from the raid in its collection.

16, Marshall Street, Edinburgh in the aftermath of the attack. Seven were killed, the greatest single loss of life suffered during the air raid. Courtesy IWM Q044208

The entrance to 16, Marshall Street today still recognisable a century after the raid. Author

William Breakey (45) was struck in the chest by a bomb fragment at the Grassmarket. He died later in Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. Edinburgh Evening News and Despatch

David Robertson (27) was wounded in the abdomen by shrapnel and later died in Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. Edinburgh Evening News and Despatch

Goldschmidt incendiary bomb, recovered after the air raid and now in the collection of the Museum of Edinburgh. Courtesy Mike Taylor

Bomb map of Leith compiled by the author, and based on the original bomb map drawn up by the police and burgh surveyor after the attack. The author has marked HE bombs in yellow, and incendiaries in red. Base map reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland

In the aftermath of the attack, the shock in the local communities was palpable. Private Charles Sandeman of 3/Highland Light Infantry, wrote to his mother on 3 April,

> '… it was a pitiful scene to see all the woman and children running about the streets … I can tell you we had a terrible night of it. While going about the streets this morning about four o'clock I found 3 wee lassies lying in a park sleeping and it brought the tears to my eyes to see them. So I took them home and they were crying all the time.'

Critics maintain that Edinburgh was completely undefended during 2–3 April 1916. The basis for that charge is the absence of any heavy anti–aircraft guns in the city. This allowed the *L 14* to bomb from a lower altitude than was normal (although this hardly improved its accuracy). Certainly, the sight of a Zeppelin so low over the capital was bad for morale and would have

damaged public confidence in the war effort, if repeated.

The lack of heavy guns, however, must be placed in the context of the multitude of demands placed upon Whitehall. The country had entered the war grossly unprepared for a major conflict. In the spring of 1916, industry was still gearing up for wartime production. The government had to balance the insatiable artillery demands of the Western Front, with the pressing need to arm merchant vessels against U–boat attack – but still find the resources needed to counter the Zeppelin threat.

In February 1916, there were just 295 anti–aircraft guns in the whole of the UK – and only a paltry 80 of those were viewed by the War Office as 'efficient'. [19] A large contract had been placed in December 1915 for new guns, particularly the modern 3–inch piece. Until they arrived in numbers, however, the authorities had to balance competing demands as best they could – and Edinburgh had only limited military significance. And even had an ancient 6–pounder been placed at the top of Arthur's Seat, it may only have forced Böcker to fly a little higher – neither foiling his bombing, nor preventing its indiscriminate nature. In any event, the author will argue that the Scottish capital was hardly *undefended.*

Indeed Edinburgh was hardly unique in its lack of heavy armament, Hull found itself in a similar predicament during a raid by the *L 14* on 5–6 March 1916 and it was 250 miles nearer the Zeppelin bases. Arguably, the distance between Scotland and Germany was sufficient protection. Of the four Zeppelins which left their bases on 2 April only one actually reached the Forth with its bomb load intact. Distance and weather conditions meant the air raid had already lost 75 per cent of its effectiveness before it even reached Scotland.

RNAS first

Often not fully recognised today were the efforts of the senior service to contest the German incursion. The Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) launched an Avro504C (serial no.8588) from its new airfield at East Fortune at 9.40pm. [20] Flight Sub Lieutenant George Cox, only 20 years old, flew Scotland's first air–to–air interception mission. The RNAS seaplane base at Dundee also attempted to get three Wight Admiralty aircraft (serials nos. 1411, 9C24–25) away on patrol. [21] That none of these aircraft ultimately encountered Böcker or Dietrich wasn't untypical at this stage of the war. Night flying was hazardous, and interceptions were rare.

In addition to air activities, the navy also deployed surface units to intercept the raiders. The C–in–C of the Grand Fleet, Admiral Jellicoe, ordered a light cruiser squadron and four destroyers to sail from Rosyth at 10.00pm. [22] The ships plotted a course across the probable route of the Zeppelins, but failed to make a sighting. To modern eyes, it may seem a strange expedient but Zeppelins were not much faster than light naval units. Indeed a month later, on 4 May 1916, the cruisers HMS *Galatea* and HMS *Phaeton* would pursue Zeppelin *L 7 f*or thirty minutes off the Danish coast before their fire brought it crashing down into the sea.

Military engaged

In his research, the author has been unable to find any record of the One o' clock Gun being called into action from the battlements of Edinburgh Castle, although he has found documentary evidence of other military units engaged. The first to do so was a detachment from 4/Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders which spotted Zeppelin *L 22* crossing Gullane Bay at 11.05pm and opened up with 1,000 rounds of rifle and machine–gun fire. [23] On the battlements of the castle, albeit not using the famous artillery piece, forty riflemen from the same regiment expended 800 rounds at the *L 14.* [24]

Just to the north, from East London Street School, men of 3/Highland Light Infantry engaged a Zeppelin overhead on four separate occasions. [25] Meanwhile, a machine–gun section from the same battalion, situated at Juniper Green, just south of Edinburgh, fired 130 rounds at the *L 22*. [26] And famously, perched 800 feet above Edinburgh, at the top of Arthur's Seat, a machine–gun detachment of 3/King's Own Scottish Borderers let off 250 rounds using Vickers and Lewis machine guns. [27] Indeed their fire may have drawn the stick of HE bombs which fell in King's Park as the *L 14* cleared the city about 12.25am.

Critics may question the effectiveness of infantry small–arms fire against airships, but it had proved surprisingly effective against low–flying Zeppelins. In August 1914, three German Army airships (*Z VI*, *Z VII* and *Z VIII*) were brought down on the Western Front by Belgian and French troops. Meanwhile, another Zeppelin (*Z V*) was shot down by the Russian Army at the Battle of Tannenberg. Although solid bullets were unlikely to cause a dramatic hydrogen explosion, sufficient strikes could cause a loss of gas pressure and force an airship to crash land.

Early warning system

The other charge levelled is that the municipal authorities were completely unprepared for the German attack, however, the author would again argue otherwise. From early 1916 the War Office, under the direction of Lieutenant Colonel Philip Maud, had put together a centralised and increasingly effective early–warning system using GPO telephone lines and utilising intercepted Zeppelin radio messages, code–breaking by Admiralty Room 40 and visual sightings. Far from being unprepared, local officials in Edinburgh and Leith were given over four hour's warning of a potential Zeppelin raid.

On 2 April 1916 at 6.50pm, with the Zeppelins still off the Northumberland coast,

Bomb map of central Edinburgh compiled by the author. Compared to Leith, the bombing was more scattered, perhaps reflecting the difficulty the blackout presented for Zeppelin air crews when inland, despite the city's distinctive topology. There does appear to have been an attempt to bomb the castle. Base map reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland

the Warning Controller for Scotland issued a preliminary 'Field Marshal's Warning only'. [28] At 9.02pm, the alert status was escalated to 'Order to take Air Raid action'. [29] All off–duty police officers and special constables were turned out, traffic was stopped and lights on vehicles extinguished. In Leith alone, 250 special constables were on duty, assisting with enforcing the blackout. [30] Electric street lighting was lowered, plus the Fire Services and Red Cross alerted. Elsewhere in central Scotland similar action was taken: in Glasgow the lights went down at Queen Street station and in Kirkcaldy a policeman made a sharp peremptory knock on the candle–lit window of a *Sunday Post* reader![31] [32] The somewhat scattered nature of the German bombing in Edinburgh does suggest the blackout was reasonably effective.

Fear and fascination

There had been no provision made for a public warning system, however, and this is perhaps the most controversial aspect of the raid. Unlike in the Second World War there was no howling air–raid siren to alert the population. Only householders with electric lighting received some intimation of what was coming, as Edinburgh shut down the supply. The vast majority of homes, however, used gas for lighting and obtained no warning.

In February 1916, the issue of a sound signal to warn the public had been debated at a senior level in Edinburgh town council but the Chief Constable, Roderick Ross, was strongly against the measure, as indeed was his opposite number in Leith, John MacLeod. [33] Their opinion reflected what was felt to be best practice at that time. Even London, the most bombed city in Britain, did not receive a public warning system until 1917.

Police officers like Ross and MacLeod believed the safest place for the public was at home. They argued that warnings only filled the streets with large numbers of people. The context behind their objection was the popular attitude to Zeppelins. In this early era of flight, people still regarded them with a mixture of fear and fascination. The sight of these lumbering leviathans overhead was almost like science fiction – lifted from the pages of an H G Wells novel. Much to the chagrin of the authorities, when advance warning of an air raid had been tried, it brought a throng of excited people onto the streets – all clamouring to see the 'Zepps' at first–hand.

Caught in the open

And this is indeed what happened on 2 April, when even without an official warning, rumour quickly got around. Charles Sandeman's earlier testimony tends to support anecdotal evidence of thousands of expectant spectators milling around. Coroners in England had estimated that 75 per cent of the deaths through German bombing in 1915 had been civilians caught in the open. Tragically, it would also prove so in Scotland's capital, with over half the people cut down by bombs not fully under cover. [34]

The Zeppelin attack on Edinburgh was arguably the most significant single incident on the Scottish home front during the Great War. Despite long–cherished myths, the city and its population were not left abandoned and defenceless. On the contrary: air, naval and infantry units were deployed to contest the German incursion. A civil defence response was also mobilised. Admittedly, the military defence of the Scottish capital was not greatly effective, but then neither was the German bombing. Both efforts were not untypical of the situation in early 1916.

The man who bombed Scotland, Kapitänleutnant der Reserve *Alois Böcker. Courtesy IWM Q068013*

Significantly, though, the British would soon get better at defending their airspace, while the Zeppelin campaign quickly spiralled downward into terminal decline with the death – or capture – of their top aces, including Alois Böcker. The events of that night were small in scale but they were a harbinger of what was to befall the home front 25 years later, when German bombers would once again invade Scottish skies.

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The Home Base – The UK 1914–1918
Part One – Mobilising the Nation

by Bob Butcher

*The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) could not have existed without a sound, secure and well–organised base. In this, his first part of a short series, ex–*Stand To! *editor Bob Butcher examines various aspects of the functioning of that Home Base.*

Divisions sent overseas from the UK

Existing divisions:

Six regular and fourteen Territorial Force (TF) infantry;

War–raised divisions:

Two regular cavalry
One Yeomanry mounted
Five regular infantry
Eight Second Line TF infantry
Thirty New Army infantry
One Naval infantry

The two cavalry and the mounted divisions were formed from existing units upon mobilisation or soon after. The five war–raised regular infantry divisions were composed of battalions brought home from overseas. The Second Line TF divisions were duplicates of existing divisions.

In addition three mounted and nine infantry divisions, which did not leave the UK, were formed. Moreover an air force of more than 100 squadrons was raised and the huge Royal Navy was maintained (the Grand Fleet alone included more than 120 vessels).

Recruiting

At first the expansion of the army was by the recruitment of volunteers by:

a. The War Office for replacements and the New Army divisions
b. Local authorities, industrialists or committee of private citizens to form 'Pals' – or similar – battalions
c. County Territorial Associations for the TF divisions.

Altogether 250 Service and 82 Reserve battalions were raised by the War Office; 145 Service and 70 Reserve battalions by the Pals–raisers; and 283 additional Field and 206 Reserve battalions by the Territorial Associations.

By 1915 the numbers of volunteers fell away so in August a National Register was compiled of all men aged 18 to 41 and those not engaged on essential war work were canvassed as at election time to persuade them to enlist at once or agree to do so when required. This 'Derby Scheme' failed so that in January 1916 all single men and widowers aged 19 to 42 without children or dependents were liable to be called–up. Conscription was later extended to married men but both married and single men might be exempted if engaged on vital war work.

Time–expired regulars, reservists and Territorials could now no longer claim a discharge, and Home Service Territorials were liable to be sent overseas without their consent.

Conscription was not extended to Ireland although that country provided large numbers of volunteers.

Total enlistments were:

1914 (from August)	186,357
1915	1,280,362
1916 (conscription introduced in January)	1,190,075
1917	820,646
1918 (to August)	493,462
Grand total	4,970,902

It has been estimated that perhaps just under 1,500,000 were voluntary enlistments.

Forming the new divisions

In general, New Army recruits reported to the appropriate depot where they were registered and issued with any items of clothing or equipment that might be available but stocks were soon exhausted and further supplies were long in coming. Recruits then went to their units, usually accommodated in requisitioned buildings or tents until hutted camps had been completed. There they commenced training and eventually the whole division moved to either the Aldershot or Salisbury Plain training centre for divisional training after which they were sent overseas. The first New Army division to arrive in a theatre of war – the 9th (Scottish) – landed in France in May 1915. The 'Scottish' in its title denoted that it had been formed in Scotland from battalions of regiments which recruited in the country.

Recruits from the locally–raised Pals battalions usually remained at home and reported daily until their hutted camps were ready. The body raising them was responsible for paying, feeding, equipping (except arms) and accommodating them until the War Office was ready to take them over.

Unlike the New Army divisions, the fourteen TF divisions did not have to start from scratch although they suffered from the New Army units being given priority. The TF was envisaged as a home defence force but it had been visualised that there might be enough volunteers for overseas (the Imperial Service Obligation or General Service) to enable battalions or divisions to join an expeditionary force after six months post–mobilisation training. It was found, however, necessary to recruit new men to bring units up to strength with general service men, home service only men being transferred to reserve units. Recruits usually reported to a local centre from where they were sent to their units at war stations. Training was done within the unit.

The first complete TF infantry division to go overseas – the 42nd (East Lancashire) – landed in Egypt in September 1914. However,

Colonel James William Greig, the CO of 14/London Regiment (London Scottish), giving instructions to a NCO in London, 7 November 1914. Courtesy IWM Q53393

in view of the critical situation in France at the beginning of the war, some TF infantry battalions – 60 per cent of whose members had volunteered for overseas service – were sent to France. The first such battalion, the 14th London Regiment (London Scottish) landed in France in September 1914.

Each TF division raised a duplicate or 'Second Line' division, eight of which went overseas and six remained on Home Defence. Battalions and units in these divisions also raised a Third Line which became reserve units with a draft–finding role.

The men necessary to keep the armies in the field up to strength were trained in 'reserve' units of the regiment or corps concerned. After the introduction of conscription most of the reserve battalions formed during the war became battalions of the newly–formed Training Reserve.

Munitions

Soon after the outbreak of war the Master General of Ordnance at the War Office placed substantial orders for munitions with the government's three factories (the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich, the Gunpowder Factory, Waltham Abbey and the Small Arms Establishment, Enfield) and the seven recognised armament manufacturers in the country. The latter expanded their production by sub–contracting and government grants were available to help them enlarge their factories. Orders were also placed in Canada and America. It obviously took time for those orders to be filled, meanwhile the reserves of munitions (severely limited by pre–war government parsimony), were soon exhausted by the intensity of the fighting. It was then a question of getting munitions from 'factory to gun' as quickly as possible and – please pardon the pun – shells 'landed' in France in the afternoon of one day could be used against the Germans the next.

Shortage of shells was blamed for the BEF's reverse at Aubers Ridge in May 1915 and Loos in September the same year, although there were, of course, other factors. This so–called 'shell scandal' or 'shell –crisis' resulted in the acceptance that the whole of British industry must be fully engaged in war work and a Ministry of Munitions was formed to bring this about. The new ministry had wide powers to requisition factories, plants and raw materials and to order manufacturers what to make. It also set up more than 200 'National Factories' for the manufacture and filling of shells. Women were used extensively for this latter, very dangerous and unpleasant task. It even established its own women's police force with a separate intelligence body.

Delicate negotiations with the Trade Unions resulted in them agreeing to abandon certain restrictive practices and to accept the 'dilution' of skilled labour with women and semi–skilled workers.

When the Minister believed that all–day drinking resulted in absenteeism from war work, he was instrumental in securing the afternoon break in licensing hours and state control of licensed premises in Carlisle, provisions that remained in force until well after the Second World War.

By mid–1916 very considerable quantities of shells had become available, although many of those made by firms not used to the small tolerances demanded, failed to detonate. For the rest of the war the army was never seriously short of ammunition. Indeed the enormous quantities produced made possible the massive bombardments that were such a feature of the usually overlooked string of British victories during the Last Hundred Days (on one occasion 1 million shells were fired in a 24–hour period). The total tonnage of ammunition of all kinds (including small arms) shipped to France was 5,253,388. In addition huge quantities were sent to other theatres.

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Women workers explodering shells and pouring picric acid in the Filling House, No. 14 National Filling Factory, Hereford. Courtesy IWM Q101840

Death in the Ramparts – December 1917

by Colin Taylor

Dugouts in the ramparts around Ypres in 1915. Courtesy IWM Q28949

The ramparts around Ypres were 17th century fortifications built by French military engineer Vauban to surround and protect the city from attack. They had also been added to and modified in the years after construction and during the Great War they offered extensive shelter for troops in the rear of the British Army's operations in the Ypres Salient. The ramparts were considered a relatively 'safe place' for troops compared to garrisoning the trenches that girdled the town to the east but that was not always the case, as Colin Taylor reveals here.

Perils

Whilst the shelling of Ypres by the German guns caused casualties to those in the open, the various cellars, tunnels and dugouts in the ramparts were largely impervious to this fire. Many thousands of men sheltered both by day and night, either billeted temporarily, working in headquarters or involved in logistics infrastructure work. Generally speaking, in the Great War, the perceived view was that working in a headquarters was a cushy billet with many creature comforts and few dangers; this was not necessarily always the case. While subterranean living might result in fewer casualties from enemy action it still had its perils. As officers and men endeavoured to make themselves as warm and as comfortable as possible on one cold December night in 1917 an accident occurred which was to have tragic consequences. The effects of this accident, and the investigations as to its cause, provide interesting insights into life in one small section of the ramparts and into the workings of the advanced portion of a British divisional headquarters within them.

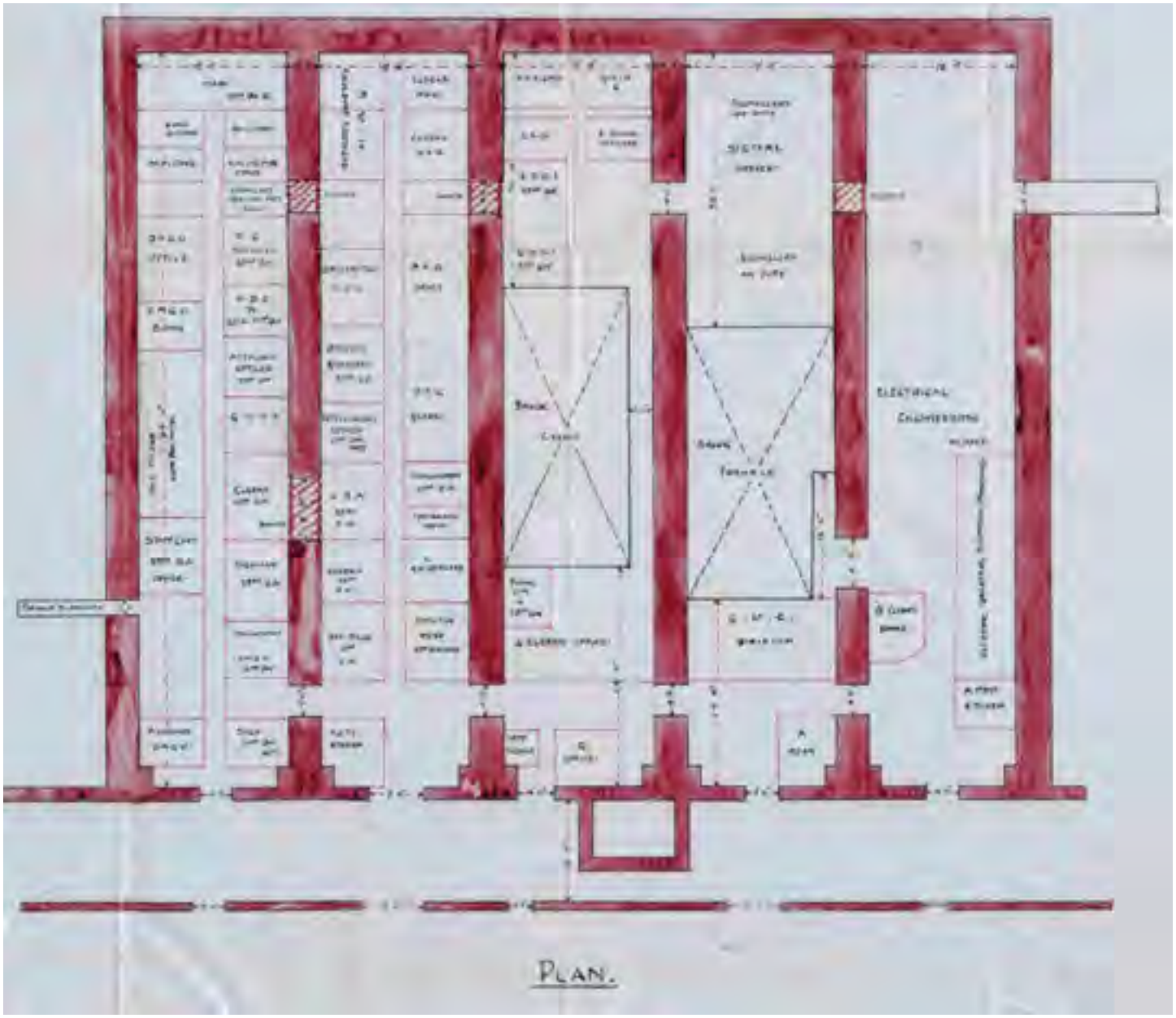
The 33rd Division, under Major General Reginald John Pinney CB spent much of its time in the Ypres Salient during the winter of 1917–1918 holding the front line near Passchendaele at the furthest point reached during the advances of 1917. An advanced divisional HQ was in a section of galleries built into the ramparts some 150yds (137m) south of the Menin Gate and opposite the rear of Saint James' Church (Sint Jacobskerk).[1]

The layout of the headquarters revealed a cramped and confined living and working space, heated by a couple of fires and lit throughout by electric lighting powered by an in–house generator. Personal space was limited and there was little privacy. Major General Pinney had an area of approximately 10–feet by 19–feet allocated as a living space.

The headquarters were not solely in use by the 33rd Division; there were personnel from the staffs of three different divisions crammed into this space as well as the headquarters of 77 Heavy Artillery Group (77 HAG).[2] The underground basements were pre–existing and built in brick. They had been lined in canvas and had been divided up into areas and alcoves by wooden partitions lined with canvas. These galleries were treated as a camp to all intents and purposes. The commandant of these

Sketch of the building and galleries in the ramparts where the fire started

The modern entrances to these galleries photographed from the south. The Menin Gate is a little further along the road, on the right



Plan of the galleries occupied by the 33rd Division advanced HQ and HQ 77 Heavy Artillery Group

Major General Reginald Pinney who was in command of the 33rd Division in 1917

galleries, and bearing responsibility for them, was Captain Alan Kennard.[3] This was a rather unlikely role for the *aide de camp* (ADC) to a major general but suggests that other officers of the headquarters were busy with other roles.

Major General Pinney employed rather a mixed bag of officers and relatives as aides during his tenure as a divisional commander. He had previously had his brother, Baldwin Pinney, working for him. Aged 45, he was not the first choice for an ADC, a job normally given to a more dashing, younger officer. Being an ex–padre who had been forced to resign over a scandal, his qualifications for the role seemed to stem from his familial relationship with his patron.[4] Another previous ADC was another relative, Pinney's nephew, Lieutenant John Pinney; 1/Royal Fusiliers and 38thCentral India Horse. His youth better befitted the role of the stereotypical ADC but he was undoubtedly a brave and resourceful young officer with combat experience. He left this role and was later killed in action on 1 December 1917.[5] In December 1917 Major General Pinney's other ADC was Captain Frederick Collins Hooper, Dorsetshire Regiment. Hooper was an experienced regimental officer who had suffered from shell shock and gas poisoning.[6] Kennard, a yeomanry officer, had served with Pinney for several years and must have been a conscientious and effective individual to have remained so employed for this period. Far from being a flunkey to the GOC, Kennard held a highly–responsible job.

'Fire!'

According to routine, at 1.00am on 13 December the electric lights were turned off in the galleries. HQ staff members either continued their work using lanterns or settled down to snatch a few hours of valuable sleep until the electric lighting came on again at about 6.00am; During the night Kennard was awoken by shouts of 'fire':

> '… [I] got up immediately and put on my coat and hat and went out to investigate what was happening. When I got near the exit the smoke was so thick it was difficult to breathe and I could hear the crack of the flames in another part of the dugout on my left.' [7]

Kennard was presumably sleeping fully clothed. The flames had almost reached the northern entrance and Kennard used his electric torch to light the way for those behind him to escape. He then went to the entrance further south to check Major General Pinney's sleeping area. He later organised the firefighting attempts.

The fire had started in the second most northerly corridor to the entrance. This was in use by the HAG and the Commander Royal Artillery of 33rd Division. Colonel W F T Corrie of 69 Heavy Artillery Group was in residence in the HQ of 77 HAG as he was commanding that brigade and his own whilst Lieutenant Colonel H de L Walters (commanding 77 HAG) was away on leave.[8] Corrie was woken by the shouts of 'fire' and fumbled for his gas mask. Putting it on he set out to find the exit:

> 'I found 2 or 3 men between me and the entrance who were running back and shouting that the way there was in flames and blocked. I spoke to Captain Isaac, 77th HAG and he assured me that there was a way out at the further end. He went that way. There were a good many people that end (having only been there 5 days I knew scarcely any of them – nor did I ever go up the corridor more than 3 or 4 yards & know nothing about it). In a short time I heard such expressions [as] "try here", "I think this is the way", "it is too smoky among the rafters", which made me very doubtful as to whether anyone who really knew the way was present. I was the very last person of all – that is, nearest the fire … So I resolved to force my way through the flames.' [9]

Captain Isaac counselled against this and was sure of an alternative route. Corrie felt his way along the passage – the smoke being very dense – and, avoiding the flames licking the walls, got near enough to the exit to be dragged outside by another. The remaining troops within were presumably overcome by the smoke before they escaped and every member of the 77 HAG Battle HQ gallery, with the exception of Corrie, perished.[10]

91975 Gunner Philip Marshall, a draughtsman attached to the 33rd divisional artillery, was awoken in the fateful corridor. He found the officers' mess and the officers' cubicle to the east on fire and the adjacent artillery of 33rd Division clerks' office also ablaze. He got dressed, found his respirator and donned it and came across Bombardier Taylor who was also wearing his:

> 'The passage was full of smoke and very difficult to breathe in … The doctor, sleeping in the same passage, said he would go in front and shew [sic] a light down the passage as we tried to go through the fire. We arranged to hold each other's tunics and keep in touch as we went along. When we got to the fire those in front turned back and Bombr. Taylor disappeared.' [11]

Captain Herbert Mather Spoor MC who was killed in the blaze

In another statement Marshall added: '…when we came near the Officers' Mess the fire was so strong that the other two turned back, but I thought it best to go on, and dashed forward and managed to get out.' Marshall collapsed with smoke inhalation when he got out and was unconscious for some time. The doctor and the others in the party were presumably the two Corrie met saying that they couldn't get out. The doctor was presumably Captain Herbert Spoor; one of those who died.

Ignoble escape

152383 Corporal James Leslie and 100352 Corporal Reginald Chiffey were in the clerks' office in question and when roused found the officers' mess and officers' accommodation on fire; they could see the glow through the glass window of the former. 31297 Corporal William Edward Sharp and 132985 Corporal John Brazell were clerks with 77 HAG.[12] A stroke of good fortune had meant that there had been insufficient space for them to sleep with the rest of the Group HQ and they had bunked elsewhere. On being alerted to the fire Sharp recalled:

> 'I went outside [with Corporal Brazell]. The smoke was very dense, and candles would only burn with difficulty. I made my way towards the passage where our office was and found the entrance to this a fiercely burning mass. I then spent 10 mins or so assisting to clear out our telephone gear. Going outside I enquired from various people to see if our officers and those in that passage were clear but could get no information. Returning to the entrance of the burning passage it had the appearance of a blast furnace and there was no reason to suppose anything but that the whole passage was similarly alight. The flames were also rapidly spreading to the other passages on either side, in spite of efforts being made to stop them. By 7 o'clock the whole of the passages were fiercely burning and were still burning about 9am when we left the place to proceed to our rear billets.' [13]

The senior staff of the 33rd Division – the GSO1, GSO2 and the CRA – were woken and those who left immediately were able to make a safe but ignoble escape, still wearing their pyjamas. However the Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster General, Lieutenant Colonel Edmund Packe DSO, chose to get dressed and in that time the fire had spread and blocked his exit. He and several others had to take the passage to the signals office, break through the partition into the generator room and get out that way. He was also later able to brave the smoke to rescue some personal kit via the same route.

96694 Lance Corporal Alphonse La Brecque was on duty and was sleeping in the divisional signals office. As there was little smoke initially he had time to communicate with sub–units and tell them that the HQ would be moving. Meanwhile, the rest of the personnel in the signals office had broken through a partition into the electrical generating plant room and made their escape.[14]

There were moments of farce: S/19237 Warrant Officer Class 2 Ernest Northcote Soilleux, ASC, completed his duties in the 'G' Office at 1.00am and bedded down in his bunk area in the middle gallery:

> 'I was partly awakened by Pte Carter (employed as orderly), who said, as far as I can remember "Come on [Sergeant] Major – get up", without mention of 'Fire'. Knowing that arrangements had been made for lights to come on at 6.00am I turned over and dropped off to sleep again, to be awakened again by Pte Carter who said "COME ON OR YOU'LL BE TOO LATE TO GET OUT AS THE PLACE IS ON FIRE".

Detailed plan of the corridor in which the majority of the men who died were accommodated

Survivors: Major Graham Seton Hutchison DSO MC commanded 100 Machine–Gun Company and was divisional machine–gun officer by December 1917

Captain W Andrew of the MGC

Lieutenant G Harrison MC, MGC

> I immediately jumped up, and after partly dressing rolled my blankets up and made for the entrance. The fire had then reached 'G' Clerks' Office and 'G Officers' Office…'

As a warrant officer, and in spite of the haste imposed by the situation, WO2 Soilleux could not leave an untidy bed!

Major Graham Seton Hutchison MC, the divisional machine–gun officer (DMGO), had lost almost all of his equipment in a similar fire earlier in the year. However, 'On this occasion, though I escaped through the vigilance of my good batman, Porter, a number of officers and men were trapped in the dugouts and burnt alive.'[15] In comparison Hutchison got off lightly, losing £73.00 worth of personal kit in the fire rather than his life. In addition, according to Hutchison, all the records and diaries of the 33rd Division Machine Gun Companies (MGC) were lost.[16] One of his officers, Captain W C Andrew, commanding 248 MGC, recalled; 'I got up and rushed out to investigate and found that the fire was spreading from the centre tunnel along the front passage into my tunnel. I found it impossible to get back to my tunnel entrance again to save any property.'[17] He escaped along with Lieutenant G Harrison MC; however, Harrison's batman, Private Turner, did not; he presumably perished in the flames.

Gutted

The 33rd Division's headquarters was gutted by fire. All papers were destroyed. Luckily the 50th Division was to take over command of the trenches at mid–day and this formation opened its HQ at Brandhoek. News even filtered down to the battalions of the 33rd Division; Captain James Dunn of 2/Royal Welsh Fusiliers recorded; 'Divisional HQ in the ramparts of Ypres has been burned out: 3 officers and 3 men (or more) are missing: the flames closed behind one officer who went back for something, he was dug out through an uncompleted exit.'[18] The fire burnt for three days before attempts could be made to recover bodies or salvage equipment. Sharp added; 'I saw the charred remains of bodies that were removed some four or five days afterwards from amongst the debris. They were entirely unrecognisable.'[19] However, identification was possible; presumably due to personal effects and badges. They were all buried in Ypres Reservoir Cemetery.

An enquiry was held on 8 January 1917. The financial cost of the fire was significant – Major General Pinney recommended the writing off of £3,126–14–10 of personal and military equipment as a charge against the public.[20] The source of the fire was unknown; there were two stoves in the galleries – one in the GOC's office and another in the 'G' Office – but neither was near the source of the blaze. There was considerable electrical current produced by the generator but this was turned off from 1.00am until 6.00am every night and was not a hazard. This was confirmed by 1259 Sergeant H M Wilson of the Australian Electrical and Mechanical Company who was in charge of the generator in the southernmost gallery. Wilson

Map of Ypres showing the site of the HQ of the 33rd Division and the location of the cemetery where the dead were buried

was unable to prevent the eventual spread of the fire into this gallery and the complete loss of his machinery. There were no flammable stores held within the galleries but presumably a lot of the documents, personal equipment and partitioning was flammable The brigade major of the 33rd divisional artillery, Major Thomas Durie MC, was at the entrance end of the fateful corridor and got out. He believed the fire started east of the cubicle occupied by the two RGA officers, Huitt and Isaac who both perished in the fire. There was a fireplace in the HAG mess area further west which had been lit the evening before but he didn't believe this to be the cause. With regard to the results of the court of enquiry the exact source of the blaze was unknown. Fire regulations were followed and the only major conclusion was to state that:

> 'With regards to the regrettable loss of life involved, the Court considers it its duty to draw attention to the defective structural arrangements of this dug–out. As will be seen from the plan attached, lateral passages originally existed at the eastern ends of the five main tunnels, of which the dug–out consisted. Before the occupation of the dug–out by the 33rd Divisional HQ three of these passages had been closed … The effect of this was to leave all five tunnels with only a single exit in case of fire … arrangements should have been made to clearly indicate their existence by notice boards, and to provide for their being made readily available as emergency exits in case of fire…' [21]

Such recommendations would not bring back those who had perished in such tragic consequences. Ironically It had been exactly a year since 77 HAG had arrived in France. On this anniversary they lost all three officers and three men who comprised their battle HQ.

It must be wondered if those civilians who sheltered in these galleries during the Second World War and those who have worked within them in the years since then ever knew the circumstances of how ten British soldiers died in the most horrific of circumstances within their walls.

The dead

1. Captain Herbert Mather Spoor MC, MB RAMC, aged 45. Educated at Kingswood School, Bath, Spoor had been a medical student at Edinburgh University from 1902 to 1908. He was married and lived in Middle Stoke, near Rochester. He was promoted lieutenant in April 1915 and was attached to the RGA. He was awarded the Military Cross in 1917, the same year he became a captain:

   > 'For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. Under an intense hostile bombardment he dashed out of a cellar, where he was sheltering, and ran across the open to attend to two men who had been wounded in a dugout. After attending to them, he noticed that the house he had just left was hit, whereupon he ran back again through heavy shell fire to see if his services were required. He displayed splendid gallantry and total disregard of his personal safety.'

2. Lieutenant (Acting Captain) George Duncan Isaac RGA, from Charlton, London, was aged 28 and was reported accidentally killed on 13 December 1917. He had been in France for a year since disembarking on 14 December 1916 with only nine days of leave since that time. He was educated at the Military School in Woolwich and King's College London. He was employed as a civil servant, with the Post Office and, aptly, had previously served in 15/London Regiment (Civil Service Rifles) since 1909 reaching the rank of sergeant. He served in France from 18 March 1915 and was wounded. He returned to the UK his service having expired. He completed a course at an Officer Cadet Artillery Brigade from 14 July to 3 October 1916 when he was gazetted into the Royal Garrison Artillery. [22]
3. Second Lieutenant Richard Henry William Huitt RGA, aged 24, was from Ryehill, near Hull. He was serving with 224/Siege Battery RGA but was attached to HQ 77 HAG. Huitt was formerly a sergeant in 21/Siege Battery RGA. He was the son of a company sergeant major in the RGA and had enlisted in 1906, aged 14. He had been trained as an observer. He arrived in France on 24 May 1915 and had returned to the UK in August 1916; he spent a second stint in France from 23 December 1916 with 238/Siege Battery RGA. On 7 July 1917 he was granted a permanent commission in the RGA and was attached to 224/Siege Battery. He had planned to marry his fiancée, Gladys Marshall, on his next UK leave.[23]
4. 253169 Sergeant Charles Edward Smalley, Royal Engineers, 77 HAG Signals was aged 27. He was born in Legbourne, Lincolnshire and was from Louth. Formerly 6928 Lincolnshire Regiment and 34334 RGA, Smalley had disembarked on 23 December 1914. He had been signals sergeant with 77 HAG since before its departure to France.
5. 115989 Corporal George Frederick Gray, aged 31, was born in Beckenham and lived in Crouch End. He worked as a traveller and enlisted in Haringey on 8 December 1915. He disembarked in France with 77 HAG on 14 December 1916.
6. 89222 Gunner William Thomas Le Noury, RFA, 9th Divisional Ammunition Column was aged 29 and a Guernsey man. He disembarked on 13 May 1915. Knowing Lieutenant Colonel Walters' previous service with the same unit it is unlikely that Le Noury was serving with 77 HAG as the result of a coincidence.

Three clerks from 33 divisional artillery were also accommodated on the same corridor as HQ 77 HAG; all three also perished:

7. 618 Regimental Sergeant Major Walter Gubby, aged 35, served with the RGA attached to the 33rd divisional artillery HQ Born in Croydon he was living in Hunslet Carr, Leeds but enlisted in his home town. He disembarked in France on 16 August 1914 with the artillery clerks' section of the RGA.
8. L/6356 Bombardier Alfred George Taylor, 192 Brigade RFA from Streatham, London was.aged 19, He disembarked on 11 December 1915.
9. 90248 Gunner George Pavitt, Royal Field Artillery, aged 34, was from Balham, London had worked for London City Council in the Tramways Department.

In addition, a member of the 33rd divisional MG officer's HQ also died:

10. 70936 Private Lawrence Cecil Turner was aged 27. He originally enlisted with 20/Royal Fusiliers (service number 7754) on 7 June 1915 and had embarked with them on 14 November 1915. He was wounded on 17 July 1916 and had a close escape on 25 August 1916 when he was buried by a shell. On 2 December 1916 he transferred to 19/MGC, the Machine Gun Corps and at the time of the fire he was batman to Lieutenant Harrison who was acting adjutant to the divisional MG officer. Born in Chellaston, near Derby he was employed as a clerk and stationer. He enlisted in Birmingham on 7 June 1915. His service record states that: '… No witness can be found who actually saw Turner perish in the flames but he was last seen in the Ramparts just after the fire broke out.'[24]

References

(1) These galleries now house a restaurant and, at the time of writing, the 'Coming World Remember Me Project'. For a small fee – currently 5 euro – anyone can take a ball of clay and fashion a small sculpture of a hunched figure to which will be added a dog tag with two names; one of the dead and the name of the person who made a figure. Each figure represents one of the 600,000 killed in Belgium during the Great War. These will eventually form a permanent land art installation on a section of what was no man's land around Ypres in the spring of 2018. Many British school pupils and others from across Europe have taken part in the project already. See http://www.comingworldrememberme.be/

(2) Also referred to as 77 Heavy Artillery Brigade (77 HAB) or 77 Brigade Royal Garrison Artillery (77 Brigade RGA). 77 HAG had been formed in Aldershot on 27 October 1916 and was transferred to Lydd on 3 November 1916. A month later on 12 December 1917 the HAG moved to Southampton and arrived in France the next day. 77 HAG had supported the attacks on Vimy Ridge in April 1917, the Messines Ridge in June and various stages of the Third Battle of Ypres. In France and Belgium an HAG was responsible for a number of RGA siege batteries which would vary in number and longevity with the HAG. Generally an HAG might form a 'double group' whereby one HAG was responsible for two other HAGs and the siege batteries they controlled. Often, when supporting major offensives, one 'double group' of about ten siege batteries might be responsible for the frontage held by an infantry division. H de L Walters, *History of the 77th Brigade RGA*

(Spottiswoode:1919), p.10.

(3) Captain Alan Spencer Gaskell Kennard, aged 31, from Naish Priory, near Yeovil, of the Hampshire (Carabineers) Yeomanry, was a qualified MG officer. He was seconded to be ADC to GOC 35th Division (then Major General Pinney) in August 1916 and remained with him when he moved to 33rd Division. He relinquished his appointment as ADC on 22 February 1919 on demobilisation. He was previously the director of a flour mill. Officer's service file for Captain A S Kennard, The National Archives (TNA) WO374/39169.

(4) Lieutenant Baldwin Francis Still Pinney had been a clerk in holy orders living near Blandford, Dorset. He was employed as a Chaplain to the Forces but suffered a fractured collarbone after a riding accident. Whilst in a ward at the Royal Herbert Hospital Woolwich he was implicated in bad behaviour involving gambling, indecent postcards and the telling of indecent stories by officer patients. Though a court of inquiry found there was no case to answer the Chaplain General considered; '… the conduct of Mr Pinney has fallen below the standard required of a clergyman who is going to exercise a spiritual and moral influence. I do not think his services should be retained.' He resigned his commission on 25 November 1916. He became ADC on 22 February 1917 a role he filled until 31 October 1917. He subsequently commanded a Labour Company in Italy before becoming an ADC again on 23 November 1918 and commanded another Labour Company until demobilised 15 September 1919. Officer's service file for Lieutenant B F S Pinney, TNA WO339/58267.

(5) Lieutenant John Charles William Adderley Pinney, aged 21, from Bredon, near Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire was educated at Wellington College and the Royal Military College Sandhurst. He was appointed to a commission on 11 November 1914. Until 8 July 1915 he was employed as an observer with the Royal Flying Corps. After this date and until 26 June 1916 he was employed as an ADC to his uncle. He was employed as a staff officer from 27 June 1916 to 6 May 1917. After this time he was attached to the Indian Army. He was wounded in action near Hargicourt whilst repelling a German raid on 7 July 1917. He was killed in action whilst leading a dismounted attack on Kildare Trench, near Epehy and was buried at Tincourt New British Cemetery. He was mentioned in despatches on 1 January 1916. Officer's service file for Lieutenant J C W A Pinney, TNA WO339/14105.

(6) Captain Frederick Collins Hooper, aged 25, from Bruton. He was educated at Sexey's School and University College London where he was a member of the University of London OTC. He was gazetted to the Dorsetshire Regiment as a Special Reserve officer 15 August 1914. He embarked for France on 26 February 1915 and after initially serving with 1/Suffolk Regiment he joined 1/Dorsets on 27 March 1915. He suffered from neurasthenia after a shell exploded above him on 30 April 1915 but recovered after ten days rest. He was sent to hospital sick from shell shock suffering from depression and nightmares on 1 June 1915 and this time returned to the UK. He returned to France on 30 September 1915 and was attached to 1/Middlesex Regiment; he was promoted captain on 27 March 1916. He was also gassed at some stage. He served as a claims officer with HQ 33rd Division from 16 June 1917. He became ADC to Major General Pinney on 1 November 1917 until 11 December 1918 when he again became a claims officer. He was demobilised on 19 March 1919. Officer's service file for Captain F C Hooper, TNA WO339/24032.

(7) 33rd Division Adjutant and Quartermaster's War Diary, TNA WO95/2409.

(8) Lieutenant Colonel William Francis Taylor Corrie had been educated at Cranleigh School and the Royal Military Academy. He had previously served in India, on the Northwest Frontier, Tirah Expedition, South Africa (mentioned in despatches twice), and with the Aden Field Force arriving there on 5 July 1915. By the end of the war he had been awarded the Distinguished Service Order (*London Gazette* 2 January 1919) and mentioned in despatches four times.
Lieutenant Colonel Hubert de Lancey Walters had previously commanded the 9th Division Ammunition Column and had originally arrived in France on 11 May 1915. He was mentioned in despatches on 1 January 1916, 18 May 1917 and 11 December 1917. By the end of the war he had been awarded the Croix de Guerre (French), DSO, and had been made CMG.

(9) 33rd Division Adjutant and Quartermaster's War Diary TNA WO95/2409.

(10) Captain G D Isaac, who was adjutant to Colonel Corrie, died in the fire.

(11) Service records of 70936 Private L C Turner, TNA, published by Ancestry.

(12) Sharp survived the war and was demobilised on 19 March 1919. Brazell also survived and was demobilised as a sergeant on 1 February 1919.

(13) Officer's service file for Lieutenant G D Isaac, TNA WO339/67772.

(14) 96694 Lance Corporal Alphonse E La Brecque (also misspelt La Breque and Labrecque) had been in France since 15 November 1915. He was discharged in July 1919. TNA WO95/2409.

(15) Hutchison, Graham Seton, *Footslogger* (Hutchinson: 1931), p.190.

(16) Hutchison, Graham Seton, *History and Memoir of the 33rd Battalion Machine Gun Corps* (L Waterlow Bros: 1919), p.38.

(17) TNA WO95/2409.

(18) Dunn, Captain J C (*The War the Infantry Knew 1914–1919* (Janes: 1938 republished 1987), p.423.

(19) TNA WO339/67772.

(20) The equivalent of £237,000 now. However, such claims must have been open to some abuse. It is interesting to note that Major General Pinney had one of the smallest claims made in comparison to the majority of HQ officers. This might suggest he was not present at the time as no documents mention his actions during the fire. TNA WO95/2409.

(21) TNA WO95/2409.

(22) TNA WO339/67772.

(23) Officer's service file for Second Lieutenant R H W Huitt, TNA WO339/121935.

(24) Service record of Private Turner.

AIF Battalion Commanders in the Great War

The 14th Australian Infantry Battalion – a Case Study

by William Westerman

In a 1933 article in the New South Wales Returned Sailor's & Soldier's Imperial League of Australia publication Reveille*, Charles Bean, the former official Australian correspondent in the Great War and Official Historian of Australian operations in the war wrote: 'Of all the men who can make or mar an Australian force, the [battalion] commander is the most important.'* [1] *This was a significant statement from someone who had been embedded with the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) for much of the war. Even without personal experience in the army, Bean recognised the role that battalion commanders played within the AIF and understood why it was important for able, effective leaders to hold these commands. William Westerman sheds new light on these men here; where they came from, what their commands entailed and why some succeeded when others failed.*

Assessing battalion command

An infantry battalion in the Great War was a tactical unit of around 1,000 men divided into four companies and a headquarters element, usually under the command of a lieutenant colonel (although some majors were temporarily appointed or acted in command of battalions when needed). The commanding officer of an infantry battalion was specifically referred to as the Commanding Officer or CO. The specific title of Commanding Officer is only given to officers holding commands at this level, as all others are Officers Commanding or General Officers Commanding depending on their rank and appointment. This nomenclatural custom recognises that there is something distinctive about holding a battalion command separate from any other within the army's structure. Many officers consider it the pinnacle of their careers.

There were 183 men who held substantive battalion commands in the AIF during the war. Each battalion had, on average, three COs of a year's duration each during the war. Far from being a marginal aspect of Australia's involvement in the Great War, they were central to the AIF's structure as a command that exercised significant influence in the way Australian infantry fought. The infantry battalion was, and remains, a key military grouping, a tactical unit with its own distinct culture and identity to which most, if not all, infantrymen would identify.

In assessing the effectiveness of Australia's battalion commanders it is important to understand the nature and complexity of command. Martin van Creveld, the Israeli military historian and theorist, famously argued: 'Command may be defined as a function that has to be exercised, more or less continuously, if the army is to exist and to operate.'[2] Although this definition is neat it is not altogether helpful. What we might say is that to be in command is to be in authority over a group of people for the purpose of achieving a set task. In this context this involves raising, training, maintaining and organising a battalion of infantry so that they might close with the enemy, kill, capture or otherwise incapacitate them, capture their ground and hold it against counter–attacks.

To do this, a battalion commander needed to be competent in three broad areas, requiring different skills. First, he needed to be tactically proficient – implementing training programs, commanding in combat and then disseminating the lessons of battle into reports to aid the future conduct of both the battalion and also the wider force. Second, the CO needed to be administratively aware and capable. A battalion might be tactically proficient, but if they were ill–fed, with dirty clothes and poor accommodation their fighting effectiveness would suffer. Therefore the battalion commander needed to manage both his human and physical resources well. This was accomplished by the delegation of tasks and areas of responsibility to his key subordinates, particularly the quartermaster, transport officer, RMO and chaplain often under the overall guidance of his 2/ic. The CO would then oversee the battalion's administrative arrangements, intervening only when necessary. He could also advocate on behalf of his battalion to his superiors in matters that were outside his control, such as leave allowances.

Leader

Finally, the battalion commander needed to be an effective leader. This is a far more complex topic than can possibly be addressed here, but needs to be touched on briefly. Leadership in this specific sense relates to the ability of a commander to influence his subordinates to follow him. What that looks like in any given context changes dramatically, but the basics are still the same. Military leadership has an advantage, given the structural and authoritarian nature of the leadership dynamic, but even there the difference between a good leader and a poor leader are evident in the way in which the subordinates respond to the orders of the commander. Three key indicators of how well a battalion commander was leading his men were unit morale, administrative effectiveness and battlefield performance, all of which were linked and were to a large degree interdependent.

The AIF was replete with good leaders, bad leaders and average leaders; each had their own style reflecting experience, personality and ability. What made a good leader for soldiers (exerting influence by visible demonstrations of competence, concern for welfare, effective but not overbearing discipline and courage) was not what necessarily made a good leader for officers, which required the development of personal working relationships.

To explore how these three areas related to each other and played out in practice over the course of the war, this piece will examine the commanding officers of the 14th Australian Infantry Battalion from 1914 to 1918, as they provide good archetypes of the various officers who commanded AIF battalions through the course of the war. It is important to follow this process from 1914 to 1918, because battalion command was a learned skill and an evolutionary process and Australian officers did not know how to hold and execute these commands effectively from day one.

Lieutenant Colonel Richard Courtney: August 1914 – June 1915

Richard Courtney was the 14th Battalion's first CO and was typical of officers who initially commanded the AIF's infantry battalions. At the start of the war he was a 43 year–old solicitor from Melbourne and an officer in the Citizen Forces, CO of the 51st (Albert Park) Infantry.[3] He came from a prominent Victorian military family, and might have had an inflated expectation of his importance when the AIF was being raised.[4] Unfortunately for him he was not selected for one of the initial Victorian battalions in 1st Australian Division and in Egypt, when he came across several of the officers who had been given these appointments, he was allegedly very cold towards them, possibly feeling that he deserved one of their commands.[5]

After missing out on a command in 1st Australian Division he was appointed CO of the 14th Battalion, tasked with raising and training it for combat. The battalion, part of the 4th Australian Infantry Brigade, New Zealand & Australian Division, was deployed onto the Gallipoli Peninsula for the initial landing, and arrived on 26 April 1915 as 4 Brigade's reserve battalion. His unit was pushed up to a position that would bear his name forever, and he established and held Courtney's Post. On 30 May he was invalided sick, suffering physical and mental strain, never to return to the unit.[6]

Courtney was a well–regarded militia CO, assessed as: 'One of the best Militia CO's in this district.'[7] Unfortunately for the AIF he was unable to translate command of a militia battalion into effective command of a line battalion on active service. His reputation diminished as his time on Gallipoli demonstrated that he was physically and mentally incapable of commanding in modern warfare. His brigadier, Colonel John Monash, did not think particularly highly of him, and rumours of his tendency to dive for cover at the first sign of a Turkish shell earned him the nickname 'Dug–Out Dick'.[8] Regardless of whether this was an accurate representation of his character the proliferation of such rumours undermined his authority as a combat commander.

However, we must be careful about assessing a CO based on one single facet of the command experience, as Courtney had several strengths as a battalion commander. He was an excellent organiser and was proficient at training and administration, the skills he developed during

Lieutenant Colonel Richard Courtney (right) c. 1916, Darge Photographic Company. Courtesy AWM DAOF076

a long career in a peace–time army.[9] He had the right attitude an approach to delegation, preferring to select the right subordinates to serve under him and trust that they would carry out his intent correctly, rather than micro–managing their independent commands.[10] Nevertheless, he struggled as a battalion commander because robustness mattered. If a CO could not maintain his command his tactical and administrative ability went to waste.

Majors John Adams and Robert Rankine: May – August 1915

It is important when looking at the history of a unit's battalion commanders that those who missed out on commands be examined, so that we can more clearly see why certain officers became COs and others did not. Succeeding Courtney in the order of succession was the 2/ic, Major John 'Jack' Adams followed by Major Robert Rankine, Officer Commanding 'A' Company, yet neither were permanently appointed to replace him. Adams seemed to be an effective officer, but was wounded after the landing, returning to command but then having to be evacuated with debility in July and again in August. Thus his temporary command of the battalion was very temporary indeed. After a while he was ruled to be medically incapable of continuing with the AIF and returned to Australia.

While he was absent, command of the battalion fell to Rankine, who had a little longer as temporary CO than his immediate superior, although his command cannot be judged to have been successful. Like Courtney he was deemed medically incapable of commanding the battalion. He collapsed during the August Offensive at Anzac and left the unit, never to return. Also like Courtney there were rumours surrounding his character that undermined his standing within the unit.[11] Major Durrant, the brigade major of 4 Brigade during much of the campaign, believed that 'Rankine's DSO was not earned, that in fact the story of how he won it was supplied by himself + really written out + emphasised + vouched for by R E [Courtney] himself when he was nowhere near the place.'[12] Rankine ultimately returned to the AIF with the 39th Battalion, 3rd Australian Division, but suffered the same fate that befell him on Gallipoli, being invalided out only weeks after the battalion arrived in France. The case of these two officers demonstrates that command could often be a lottery.

Lieutenant Colonel Charles Dare: August 1915 – December 1916

With Adams, Rankine and many more 14th Battalion officers becoming casualties from April to August 1915, there was an opportunity for robust junior officers to rise through the ranks quickly. This is what happened to Courtney's permanent successor, Charles Dare, a captain in the 51st (Albert Park) Infantry who began the war as the battalion's adjutant.[13] He was a relatively young officer when he took command after Rankine collapsed. Bean described him as 'the first of the boyish commanders who eventually became common in the AIF.'[14] Courtney thought very highly of him, and was pleased when he found out that Dare was in command of his old battalion.[15]

Dare took command during the August Offensive, during which 4 Brigade was required to execute a night time march to assault the heights of Sari Bair. The whole operation was poorly planned and the units involved were given a very difficult task and, not unexpectedly, the whole operation failed. During this time Dare showed significant courage and determination, both in the Sari Bair offensive as well as an additional assault the battalion was required to make against Hill 60 on 21 August 1915, which met with the same fate as the earlier operation.[16]

After a promising start to his command, his authority as a CO began to diminish once the administrative aspects of battalion command became apparent. At the start of 1916 the AIF returned to Egypt after the Gallipoli campaign for re–training and reorganisation. To bring his total number of officers up to establishment he was able to get a friend, Captain Noel Fethers, transferred into the 14th Battalion. However, by placing a relatively senior battalion officer within the unit many of the junior officers who had been through the Gallipoli campaign were frustrated as they were now further down the order of seniority. Additionally, he made Fethers the mess president, as position that some felt an original officer should hold.[17] When the 14th Battalion was split to provide the nucleus for the newly formed 46th Battalion, the perception among those who remained was that Dare was not sympathetic to his original men, appearing to prefer reinforcement NCOs and men for promotions.[18]

Once the AIF arrived in France the battalion prepared for action against the German Army. Dare's authority and leadership continued to diminish, as small incidents eroded his authority and respect. On one particular route march, Dare and his adjutant took a wrong turn and did not discover their mistake until the battalion had almost reached the top of a very long and steep hill. By the time Dare realised his mistake and ordered the unit back his men were exhausted. Lieutenant Edgar Rule wrote: 'the camel's back fairly broke. If curses ever did men any harm, the lives of those two were ruined for ever.'[19] By July his inefficiency as a CO was starting to be noticeable to his superiors, and Dare started sending long epistles to John Monash, his former brigadier, lamenting his poor ability as a CO.[20]

On the Somme the battalion held the line at Mouquet Farm in August under heavy German artillery. It was noted that the 14th Battalion was not called on for offensive operations, and some speculated that this was because Brigadier General Brand had 'no confidence' in Dare.[21] Again under criticism, Dare wrote a long letter to Brand, explaining in detail every action and decision he had made in the line. At this point he was evidently a commander with little confidence in himself. In late August the battalion went back into the line, this time to go 'over the top'. Brand instructed Dare to take Mouquet Farm but Dare, on the advice of a forward sub–unit commander, told Brand that this was impossible.[22] Brand was not impressed and ordered the 13th and 16th Battalions to attack instead. Neither succeeded, justifying Dare's opinion, but it did him no good in his vertical relationship with his superior.[23]

Dare's end came swiftly and ruthlessly. In December I Anzac Corps was tasked with capturing a position known as Fritz's Folly. This was to be a relatively small operation, involving two companies and a bombing squad. Dare's 14th Battalion was to carry out this minor action, and on the afternoon of 1 December, while the battalion was in the line, Dare sent the plans and a barrage map to his company commander via a runner, Private Allen Yeo. Unfortunately this runner deserted on his way back and the I Anzac Corps plans ended up in German hands. Dare relinquished command of the battalion the next day.[24]

Dare's command had come to an inglorious end. He was perhaps too young and inexperienced for such a complicated command, unable either to make the leap to the sophisticated warfare of the Western Front or to transfer from 'hands–on' command at a junior level to command requiring more managerial skill and nous. As such, confidence in his leadership diminished and morale and effectiveness suffered.

However, he was brave and courageous, a

fact even his detractors acknowledged.[25] Even Lieutenant Rule, no friend of Dare's, observed that he had won 'the unstinted admiration of his men on the foothills of Sari Bair'.[26] The lack of courage sank many COs, including Courtney. Nevertheless, Dare's faults were more significant than his virtues, and he returned to Australia to play no further part with the AIF. There was more to battalion command, Dare discovered, than being able to lead from the front.

Lieutenant Colonel John Peck: December 1916 – May 1917

Dare's successor was perhaps the best CO the 14th Battalion had during the war. John Peck was a professional soldier in Western Australia when the war broke out. Like many staff officers in the Permanent Forces he was appointed to an infantry battalion to leaven the inexperience of the Citizen Forces by inserting experienced professional officers into the important role of battalion adjutant. He served in the 11th (Western Australian) Battalion and gained a reputation as a 'first–rate' adjutant who 'ran the battalion in the early stages.'[27]

After serving as a brigade major and a battalion 2/ic he was appointed to command the 14th Battalion in December 1916.[28] After Dare's command the battalion was in a poor state. The incident that had resulted in his dismissal was emblematic of this, as the express intention of Private Yeo had been to desert the battalion. Evidently the conditions in the 14th Battalion were so poor that crossing no man's land was seen as preferable to staying with the AIF.[29]

Peck got the battalion back to work, he re–organised it, took a much greater interest in the interior economy (ie the administration), got to know his officers personally, encouraged sports as a means of physical exercise and introduced a 'vigorous programme of training'.[30] With his staff background Peck was brilliant at administration, but he also brought a keen understanding of personal leadership to his regimental command. This was particularly evident in his approach to discipline, where he was strict, but knew how to use discipline as a positive force.

Adulation for his command over the period came from all levels. Lieutenant Rule, who had been critical of Dare, remarked: 'Colonel Peck was the most inspiring soldier I've ever met. It was easy to play the game for him.'[31] One 'very senior' staff officer stated that Peck had 'three precious possessions – a brain, a saving sense of humour, and unlimited courage, physical and moral. He was a soldier by instinct, and with hard work and study he strove by instinct to be a master of his job. He did not strive in vain, for it is safe to say of him that he was outstanding among his contemporaries.'[32] The battalion historian observed:

> He was … the soul of all the Battalion's activities, and his popularity with all ranks was unbounded. Everyone recognised the efficient leadership, the sound judgement, and the strength of will which had raise the Battalion to the zenith of its discipline and efficiency. Regret at his departure was universal…[33]

Peck built the battalion back up to a state where it could go into action at the First Battle of Bullecourt on 11 April 1917. Although this action was a failure, none of the blame can be attributed to Peck or the other battalion commanders in 4 Australian Brigade. It is perhaps the only gap in Peck's record that he was never fully tested as a tactical commander, but this is an observation rather than a criticism. Peck described his time in the 14th Battalion as the 'happiest of his career' and told the battalion's historian that had he not been a professional soldier he would have refused to leave.[34] Unfortunately for the battalion their much loved CO was needed to fill divisional staff appointments and he left the battalion in May 1917 to be GSO II with the 3rd Australian Division. With his professional military background and obvious capability and competence he was a valuable prospect for the AIF's difficult–to–fill senior staff positions and finished the war as the GSO I, 5th Australian Division. His time in the 14th Battalion demonstrated that the right man in a command could make a difference and professionalism counted for something.

Lieutenant Colonel John Peck, December 1917. Courtesy AWM E01582

Majors Noel Fethers and Otto Fuhrmann: 1916 – 1917

Again, it is wise to look at the officers who could potentially have taken command of the battalion, but were ultimately not appointed as the substantive COs. This is particularly important during 1916 and 1917 – after Dare departed from the 14th Battalion, every one of his successors was transferred in from outside the battalion. This is an indictment of the senior battalion officers who were potential replacements as CO but were ultimately unsuited for command of the unit.

The two most prominent officers in this regard were Majors Noel Fethers and Otto Fuhrmann. Both held the second–in–command position and were presumptive battalion commanders in 1916 and 1917. As mentioned earlier, Dare brought Fethers into the battalion in 1916. Fuhrmann had been an original officer in the battalion, a second lieutenant in August 1914 and a major by February 1916, who took temporary command of the battalion between May and July 1917 while a more suitable CO was being found.[35]

The reason that neither Fethers nor Fuhrmann became the substantive 14th Battalion CO was that they were not deemed to be competent in a regimental command with neither officer impressing as a potential CO and both being removed from the position of 2/ic. In June 1917 Brigadier General Brand wrote of Fethers:

> I have made two applications for Major Fethers to be removed to another appointment. I do not consider him fit to take the 4th T[raining] Bn; he has little knowledge of training men for War. He has been QM the greater portion of his time in AIF since August, 1914. I would very much like to see him appointed to an area job or be sent back to Australia to do Area work in camp there. I cannot make a direct charge against him for inefficiency but he is absolutely unfitted for the position he is now in.[36]

Several months later, Major General Sinclair–MacLagan, GOC 4th Australian Division, wrote:

> I am satisfied that it is to the best interests of the Battalion that Major Fuhrman [sic] should leave it. I have no specific charges to lay against this Officer, but there is no doubt that as

14th Battalion Officers' Mess, February 1916. Major Noel Fethers seated far left, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Dare seated in the middle of the photo and Major Fuhrmann seated second to the right. Courtesy AWM A01221

> Second in Command he has failed to foster a good regimental and Brigade spirit amongst the Officers of the Battalion, and to bring to notice small matters detrimental to discipline which have been going on in the Bn…[37]

Fuhrmann was transferred to the 53rd Battalion to see if he could do better in a different environment, but did not really impress there and was shifted to a lines of communication command in early 1918. Fethers had a series of rolling illnesses through late 1916 and early 1917 and in June 1917 was deemed inefficient and surplus to requirements and sent back to Australia. The weakness in these two officers is why Brand had to bring in 'outside' officers as COs until a 'home–grown' officer could be appointed. This process was the AIF working effectively at its own internal management, because it was better, as had not been the case with Dare, that poor officers be removed before they became battalion commanders, rather than afterwards.

Lieutenant Colonel Eliazar Margolin: June 1917 – September 1917

With Peck's departure, the battalion was left to find another CO. Best practice was to have the 2/ic take over, unless they were too inexperienced or the unit needed a clean sweep and a fresh approach. As mentioned above Peck's 2/ic was Major Noel Fethers, but Brand had already identified him as inefficient, and on 29 June 1917 he had been instructed by Lieutenant General William Birdwood to 'report to the Commandant, AIF Administrative Headquarters for return to Australia for termination of [his] appointment'.[38] The officer selected to replace Peck was Eliazar Margolin, distinctive both for his Russian place of birth and his Judaism. Born in Belgorod, Kursk Province in Central Russia, he was 26 years old when he arrived in Australia in 1901 and worked as a merchant in Collie, Western Australia while serving the Citizen Forces.[39] Enlisting in the AIF with the 16th Battalion, Margolin took command of the 14th Battalion on 8 June 1917, the second day of the Battle of Messines, when the 14th Battalion was in reserve.[40]

Much like Dare he was an effective junior leader, brave and resilient, who cared for the welfare of his men.[41] However, he was not a good fit for the 14th Battalion, having come from the 16th Battalion where there was some rivalry, and continually invoking how things were done in his previous unit.[42] To his credit he also recognised his weaknesses, identifying that he was not doing well in the 14th Battalion and asked to be sent back to the 16th Battalion.[43]

Given his unsuitability for command of the 14th Battalion he was transferred back to 16th Battalion as 2/ic, demonstrating that the interpersonal leadership dynamic was important to a battalion commander. As an interesting postscript to Margolin's Australian service he later left the AIF in early 1918 to command 39th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers, one of three battalions in the Jewish Legion, which served in Palestine during the latter years of the war. When this formation was demobilised the remnants who wanted to stay in Palestine formed the First Judeans under Margolin's command. This unit, which included future Israeli Prime Minister David Ben–Gurion, remained in the Holy Land until an incident involving disruption and antagonism with the Arab population forced its disbandment in 1921.[44]

Lieutenant Colonel Walter Smith: September 1917 – March 1918

With the failure of Margolin (and the low opinion of Fethers and Fuhrmann) Brigadier General Brand, commanding 4 Brigade, wanted 'another Peck' to command the 14th Battalion, and singled Walter Smith out as that man. Smith was another professional soldier, and the divisional commander, Major General Sinclair–MacLagan, told William Birdwood: 'Brand asks if he can have Lt. Col. W J Smith appointed to command the Battalion: he is at present in England Brand says that he will be just the man to get the Battn going well. He knows him very well and says that he is a second Peck'.[45]

Many of Australia's professional soldiers were taken in the 1st Australian Division, and subsequently there was a concern that this was leaving Australian forces with too few regular officers. Thus Smith had to wait until the 3rd Australian Division was raised before he could join the AIF, and he was appointed as the brigade major of 10 Brigade, serving under former 6th Battalion CO Brigadier General Walter McNicoll. In January 1917, when one of 10 Brigade's battalion commanders proved medically incapable of continuing in his command, Smith was appointed CO of the 37th Battalion.[46] During this time he commanded the battalion at the Battle of Messines on 7 June 1917, the 3rd Australian Division's first major engagement of the war.

As the battalion CO, Smith demonstrated his staff and organisational ability, but struggled to command in battle. Specifically, his divisional commander, Major General John Monash, stated:

> This Battalion displayed, during the operation, evidence of considerable disorganisation, failed to reach its objectives, withdrew, without sufficient reason, from intermediate objectives gained; and another Battalion had to be substituted, in the middle of the fight, to carry out the tasks originally allotted to the 37th Battalion – I attribute these circumstances to lack of leadership, driving power and energy on the part of its Commander. I am of the opinion that, under the stress of the fighting, he personally lost control and grasp.[47]

He was shifted to a lines of communication appointment soon after, but was given a second chance at battalion command when Brand, a fellow permanent officer, approached him to command the 14th. Smith took command in early September just before the 4th Australian Division fought in the Third Battle of Ypres. He commanded the battalion at Polygon Wood on 26 September 1917, which would be its only involvement during this period. As an experienced staff officer he brought many of those skills and his experience to his regimental command, he was well liked and proved an able administrator and effective with battle procedure.

However, unlike Peck, he could not pick up the additional skills needed for a regimental command. Brand believed that Smith lacked 'the power to command', specifically failing to ensure that his orders were carried out.[48] He could not handle a battalion in combat. Smith's time in command demonstrated that regimental leadership was different to staff work, requiring additional skills and abilities. His command came to an end in February 1918 when he was gassed in a severe attack that wounded 16 other officers and 250 men. Smith was affected so badly that he had to return to Australia and took no further part in the war.

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Crowther: March 1918 – Armistice

The 14th Battalion's final CO was probably its best after Peck. He was also the CO required to command the unit in battle most frequently. Henry Crowther was very much typical of the later AIF COs. A junior officer in the Citizen Forces before the war he was a schoolmaster by trade. He enlisted in the 21st Battalion as an officer and worked his way up through the various promotions until, as 2/ic of the 21st Battalion, he was appointed as 14th Battalion CO in March 1918.[49]

Crowther assumed command just before the German Spring Offensive that began on 21 March 1918. The 4th Brigade was sent immediately to a troubled area and on 26 March, five days after the German offensive began and only twelve days after Crowther took command, the battalion was involved in a counter–attack near Hébuterne. Only Charles Dare, who had to take command in the middle of an offensive action, could claim a more daunting start to his command. As a testament to his capability, Crowther did well, and the battalion held the line until 2 April when they were relieved. The unit history noted: 'One source of satisfaction to the whole unit had been that the new CO had shown himself a man of capacity, and capable of effectually dealing with a difficult and delicate situation.'[50]

The battalion was in reserve at the Battle of Hamel on 4 July but fought at the Battle of Amiens on 8 August where it formed the centre of 4 Brigade's advance on the second objective. He had a great advantage, in that he was commanding experienced troops, a great asset for any commander. As the battalion historian noted: 'the CO was cool and resourceful, and the war–hardened veterans of the 4th Brigade – inured to all war's emergencies – quickly adapted themselves to the contingencies arising from this unexpected exhibition of the enemy's vitality'.[51] The 14th Battalion was in action again on 18 September against the Hindenburg Outpost Line, seeing its last bout of fighting of the war.

Crowther, possibly more so than any of his predecessors, understood the tactical element of command and was able to adapt to changing circumstances. He showed great awareness of tactical issues when the battalion was training through the middle months of the year, earning his subordinates' confidence by his expertise.[52] He was also a competent administrator, demonstrated by the fact that there were no complaints about the handling of the battalion's interior economy while he was in command. Like many AIF COs at the end of the war he was not a particularly powerful personal figure but he did not need to be, because his command was built on proficiency, ability and respect for his experience.

Insight

This survey of the COs of the 14th Battalion should give some insight into battalion command in the AIF during the Great War and the complexity of the command experience. The key lesson is that the ability to command at battalion level was not a skill possessed by every officer. Indeed, in the 14th Battalion the majority of COs or potential COs struggled. Many were good junior commanders in a part–time citizen army context or as professional staff officers, but needed to learn and adapt to the requirements of battalion command on active service. Those that could not were moved on; quite rightly the AIF did not tolerate low flyers. But for those who got command right, there was little else in their military experience to match it. As the former Chief of the Defence Force and CO of 3RAR, Sir Frank Hassett noted: 'There is no other command appointment, or indeed any other appointment, quite so rewarding … Very little can match the feeling of commanding a good battalion in action.'[53]

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The Camera Returns (90)

by Bob Grundy and Steve Wall

In Lancashire Fusilier George Ashurst's memoir *My Bit*, written c 1921 and first published in 1987 (with a biographical note by one of the authors), he states 'One such village I remember was called Nesle and the boys said this must be where the tinned milk came from'. Clearly this was not the case and to add to the soldier's misconception the village's name is actually pronounced 'Neller'. Ashurst was writing of the advance to the Hindenburg Line in the March of 1917, Nesle being within the scope of the German retirement.

In fact, as stated in Martin Middlebrook's Somme battlefield guide, Nesle was spared by the Germans in 1917 as it was a place where French civilians were concentrated. This is borne out by these two photographs – IWM Q5039 and Q5806 overleaf – which show French civilians fraternising with Allied troops on 22 March 1917, four days after the town was occupied by British and French cavalry. The IWM caption says that the French troops in Q5039 are from the 75th Infantry Regiment.

Whilst Nesle itself, 17 miles southwest of St Quentin, was easy enough to find, the actual location of these two photographs necessitated the involvement of a local mademoiselle, her sister and an amateur historian who eventually pointed us in the direction of the rue du Faubourg Saint–Jacques. Here we found that most of the buildings in the photographs had survived the rigours of the preceding 100 years remarkably well and were mostly intact. We discovered that Q5039 had been taken outside house number 24, looking towards number 9. Q5806 had been taken outside number 42, looking towards number 17.

Q5039 shows British and French Troops talking to French civilians whilst Q5806 shows troops gathered around a field kitchen. For some reason a soldier is standing to attention with rifle sloped, perhaps for the benefit of the cameraman, the children in the foreground – dressed in agricultural smocks – appear to be wearing boots several sizes too big, whilst behind them can just be seen a number of seated soldiers, one wearing a bandage over his left eye and a blanket over his head.

Nesle was retaken after severe fighting on 25 March during the German advance of 1918 and recaptured by the French again on the following 28 August. From April to June 1917, 21 Casualty Clearing Station was located in the town and in early 1918 Fifth Army Headquarters was there too but wisely closed and moved before the Germans arrived.

Nesle from a trench map corrected to 17 March 1917 – five days before the photographs seen here were taken – with the buildings along the rue du Faubourg Saint–Jacques circled in red

General Sir John Steven Cowans

Pre–eminent Military Administrator and a War Winning Genius

by Terry Dean

Whilst reading WFA President Peter Simkins' study of the vast expansion of Britain's military forces 100 years earlier in his book Kitchener's Army *of 2014, Terry Dean was particularly struck by a comment about an 'outstanding' officer he knew nothing about; an officer who was Quartermaster–General throughout the war. The man in question was General John Steven Cowans and after reading about a local connection to his Lancashire North Branch in the two–volume biography of Cowans the author became fixed on writing a piece about the man who was responsible for feeding, clothing, equipping and transporting the army in England and overseas during the Great War. His object was to tell the story of his life and work, including some of the problems he tackled, and he presents his findings here.*

General Sir John Steven Cowans. Quartermaster–General to the Forces – June 1912 to March 1919 Courtesy Cumbria Archive Service, Carlisle

Young 'Jack'

Who's Who on firstworldwar.com states that Cowans 'remained ever unperturbed at the enormous task of overseeing the huge expansion of Britain's army services [and] was viewed with great approval by the demanding David Lloyd George (both were noted philanderers).' My resolve to know more about him was further strengthened by the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, which also noted that 'few studies of Britain's war effort have troubled to acknowledge or assess the significance of this pre–eminent military administrator.'

The above mentioned biography – commissioned by Lady Cowans, written by Major Desmond Chapman–Huston and Major Owen Rutter (hereafter C–H & R) and published in 1924 – is the main source of information and in their preface the authors reveal that 'Generous assistance from scores – indeed hundreds – of the friends of the late Quartermaster–General has been showered upon us. Everyone was eager to do his utmost to help make a memorial of a valued friend and comrade and a great life–work.'

John Steven Cowans, known as 'Jack' from infancy, was born at Woodbank, near Carlisle on 11 March 1862. His father, John Cowans (born 1816), was apprenticed on Tyneside to Robert Stephenson & Company, whose founder invented the steam engine, and there he met Edward Pattison Sheldon. Together they formed Cowans, Sheldon and Company which had its beginnings in 1846 at Woodbank and produced railway engineering equipment.

In 1861 John married Jeannie Steven and after Jack they had two more sons: William Greenwood (died 1886 in Italy) and Ernest Arnold, who served as a brigadier general in the Great War and died in 1942. After Mr Cowans died in 1873 Jack's mother spent much of her time abroad and Jack, together with Ernest Arnold, lived with their aunt at Over Kellett near Lancaster. Before he was 14 Jack went to Dr Burney's Academy at Gosport with a view to him joining the Royal Navy but he failed his examination. He was sent abroad with a tutor, travelling in France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland and on return went back to Dr Burney's to be prepared for Sandhurst, which he entered in 1878 and passed out with distinction at the end of 1880.

Greenjacket

He gained a commission in the Rifle Brigade and in March 1881 sailed for India to join the 1st Battalion at Poona. For a period, soon after arrival, he was acting ADC to Sir John Ross who commanded the Poona Division of the Bombay Army. Thus, early in his career, he was in close contact with important people who would be of much use to him later. In India he gained a reputation as a sportsman, particularly at cricket.

He returned to England towards the end of 1883 on sick leave and on 14 February 1884 married Eva May Coulson. She was the eldest daughter of the Reverend John Edmund Coulson, vicar of Long Preston, Yorkshire. The marriage did not result in children.

Lieutenant John Cowans of the Rifle Brigade

In spring 1886 Jack was at the Rifle Brigade Depot having 'a very pleasant easy time with a good deal of hunting and shooting, and cricket in the summer.' Later that year the 1st Battalion was sent to reinforce the expedition in Burma and Jack endeavoured to rejoin them to get experience of active service. After several refusals he was allowed to go but did not reach India before the campaign ended. (It was in this campaign that the later Field Marshal Sir Henry Hughes Wilson received the eye–wound which he carried all his life. He had gained a commission as a subaltern into the Rifle Brigade in November 1884).

Field Marshal Sir Henry Hughes Wilson

In May 1887 Jack joined the 2nd Battalion at Woolwich and whilst continuing to enjoy all games and sport he began to take his profession seriously. In 1889 the battalion moved to Dover and Jack was in the detachment quartered at Fort Burgoyne. Also there was Lieutenant Henry Wilson having recuperated from his wound. Captain Coke commanding D Company thought 'Cowans and Wilson were even then the most remarkable subalterns in the battalion. They were great friends and full of life and fun.' He described them as a 'perfect pair.' Another man who was to become one of the ablest in the battalion, and lifelong friend of Jack, was Captain Charles à Court who joined the regiment in 1878. He would become Charles à Court Repington in 1903 on the death of his father and go on to resign his commission in 1902 to become a military journalist.

Whilst at Dover Jack decided to pursue entry to the Staff College and after passing the exam he entered in February 1890 and passed out with distinction in December 1891.

He then joined the War Office working on mobilisation schemes which formed the basis of arrangements implemented for the Boer War and the Great War. He also gained intimate knowledge of the newly–created Army Service Corps.

Captain Cowans, seen here in the role of brigade major of 2 Infantry Brigade. Courtesy Royal Green Jackets Museum

Key Role

In September 1894 he became brigade major to 2 Infantry Brigade. On leaving that post in August 1897 he went to India, however, he again missed seeing active service since the 3rd Battalion of the Rifle Brigade was ordered back from the North–West Frontier after suffering heavy casualties from sickness, mainly due to the men drinking bad water, a lesson which would not be lost on Jack.

In March 1898 he was promoted major and posted to one of the Rifle Brigade's home battalions and shortly afterwards was appointed Deputy–Assistant Quartermaster General in the Movements Branch of the War Office. He was immediately involved in moving troops to support the Nile Expedition of 1898 followed by making the necessary rail arrangements to move 78,000 troops for the first ever autumn manoeuvres. From October 1899 Jack had a key role in the despatch and return of troops and horses engaged in the Boer War and had to sacrifice the opportunity for active service but his reward was promotion to the rank of lieutenant colonel in March 1900.

In August 1902 he had the prestigious role of leading the King's procession for Edward VII's Coronation.

In April 1903 he was promoted colonel and became Assistant Quartermaster General of the 2nd Division at Aldershot, a post which brought him into closer contact with troops and 'rounded off' his training as a staff officer. In February 1906 he became Director General of Military Education in India and aided Lord Kitchener in setting up a Staff College there. In December 1908 he took command of the Presidency Brigade and in 1910 became a major general.

DG and QMG

Whilst on leave from India in October 1910 Secretary of State for War Lord Haldane offered Jack the post of Director General (DG) of the Territorial Force (TF), then in the third year of its existence. The new post would bring Jack back into close contact with Henry Wilson, who had held the Director of Military Operations (DMO) position for two months, and he would be the man 'on the spot' when the Quartermaster General (QMC) post became vacant.

Haldane needed to get best value from the limited money available; improve cohesion and cooperation of the TF County Associations and improve the popularity of the Force so that it 'wagged its tail.' Consequently Jack toured the country visiting the County Associations; met with employers and landowners; visited drill halls and inspected the men and made frequent speeches to stimulate public interest in the Territorials. He gained the goodwill of the Associations; employers became more sympathetic, land was secured for exercises and training became more attractive and practical.

Whilst he was DG of the Territorial Force it was brought to Jack's attention that there was a problem with relying on County Associations to acquire horses upon mobilisation. Following discussions he arranged that the Army Annual Act 1911 and associated Circular made it the responsibility of the General Officer Commanding (GOC) of each Army Command to select and classify in peacetime the horses and vehicles required to bring units up to war strength plus a margin of 25 per cent for casualties.

In September 1911 it was announced that Jack was to become Quartermaster General (QMG) to the Forces and as QMG Elect he commenced to review and appoint his staff.

Jack became QMG and Third Military Member of the Army Council on 3 June 1912 and C–H & R review the man who, at the relatively early age of 50, had attained that high position. In summary, they report that it was solely through his ability, his qualities and hard work. Furthermore, being a good manager he chose his subordinates well, delegated as much as possible, laid down clear guidelines and trusted his staff. Staff returned his confidence and in consequence he obtained results. Also he was a good decision–maker, was kind and sympathetic.

Weakness and Knighthood

His biographers also record that 'Cowans, as who does not, found in women a source of refreshment and renewed energy, and if he did not always turn to the most refined and cultivated he shared that weakness, if it be one, with men even greater than himself.' Ancestry reveals Eva May Cowans first petitioned for divorce in February 1896 which was dismissed in November the same year. She petitioned again in December 1910 which was dismissed on 1 March 1912 'the parties having come to terms' before Jack became QMG.

Following the autumn manoeuvres in 1912 it was evident that the use of aircraft and mechanical transport required a petrol reserve. When this was secured Jack insisted on the provision of containers (steel drums, cans and cases) in huge quantities and carried the day in discussion with the Treasury. In the King's Birthday Honours List of June 1913 he became Sir Jack Cowans.

The arrangements for requisitioning horses and in setting up the voluntary Army Horse Reserve were perfected by Lieutenant Colonel George MacMunn who was one of Sir Jack's new staff. Modifications to wagons and equipment were introduced so that two heavy horses, which were relatively plentiful, could be used to pull non–tactical transport instead of four light horses. These changes were in place in April 1914. Also by then, using his previous experience in the War Office and elsewhere, he had made many changes to his senior staff collecting tried men who he knew.

He was also chairman of a committee, set up in autumn 1912, to work out a complete plan for mobilisation. Henry Wilson as DMO was the driving force and, as recorded in *Stand To!*

A dump of empty petrol and oil tins on the Albert–Amiens road, September 1916. Courtesy IWM Q1412

Sir Jack in his room at the War Office. Courtesy Daily Mail/*Associated Newspapers*

No.10, Sir Jack delegated three of his officers to work with his old friend in planning and implementing the movement of the BEF to France in August 1914. According to Sir Jack his Movements Department 'worked out every item of detail with the railway companies and Admiralty Director of Transports.'

The movement of the BEF to France was a significant achievement but it was only the prelude to Sir Jack tackling the most gigantic task of its kind over the next four years or so. This can be depicted by two statistics from his report *Supply Services during the War* (see later) which shows an almost 33–fold increase in personnel fed each day. Total strength of forces being fed at home and abroad prior to the Great War was 164,000 men whilst total ration strength on 11 November, 1918 in France, Egypt, Salonika, East Africa, Mesopotamia, Italy and Home (exclusive of Army in India and permanent garrisons overseas) was 5,363,352.

Management style

To deliver the tasks for which he was responsible effectively Sir Jack needed to be a high quality manager and delegate wisely to his staff. So before dealing with the tasks facing him an indication of his management style is relevant and C–H & R give an example of his approach in the early weeks of the war when the BEF moved to France.

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

In *The Business of War* by Isaac F Marcosson the author gives an example of how, during the course of the war, Sir Jack monitored factors on which victory in the field stands or falls.

> 'Before him each morning is laid a sheet of paper less than a foot square on which is typed the feeding strength of all the British Armies – man and beast – in every theatre of the war together with the precise quantity of food, fuel, forage available for them. On another sheet is a compact summary of all supplies contracted for or speeding on ships and trains towards the zones of distribution and consumption.'

Such management information would enable him to appraise and focus where any situation might merit his attention.

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

'K' and Cowans

Lord Kitchener was appointed Secretary of State for War on 6 August 1914. Kitchener knew and respected Cowans from their time together in India. In 1906 Kitchener had told those in whom he confided that when the war with Germany came he would require three million soldiers to begin with and that the war would be some years in duration. This was reported to C–H & R by Major General F G Bond whom Sir Jack had appointed Assistant Director (Quartering) in August 1914. Bond had served with Cowans in India under Kitchener.

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

After the War, Sir Jack prepared an extensive report – *Supply Services during the War (August 1914 to March 1919* – on the work of his department. It was Part XXXII of the *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War*. Selected content has been abstracted, supplemented with comments from C–H & R and elsewhere as appropriate, to illustrate some the work for which he was responsible.

The officer photographs shown are of some of his senior staff identified in the October 1914 Army List.

King George V and Queen Mary inspecting the first Nissen hut

Quartering

On mobilisation, barracks could accommodate 174,800 single men. Clearing barracks of married families and conversion of other barrack space increased this to 262,000 men. However, this was only a small portion of the total numbers to be provided for; that is the New Armies, expansion of the Special Reserve and the increase in Territorial Forces which required accommodation on an extensive scale. Large numbers of troops were placed for a time under canvas, others were accommodated in schools, institutions and specially–hired buildings but the bulk had to be billeted on the population, as many as 800,000 being quartered in this way at one time. Many troops were moved from tented camps to billets because winter 1914–15 was a bad one. Area quartering committees were set up in the different Army Commands to manage the provision of cost effective accommodation other than in barracks and hutments.

Some of Cowans' Senior Staff in October 1914. Left to right: Brigadier General S S Long, Director of Supplies, (courtesy RLC Museum); Major General F W B Landon, Director of Transport; Major General W H Birkbeck, Director of Remounts, (both courtesy G G Bain Collection, Library of Congress, Washington DC); Major General R Pringle, Director of Veterinary Services, (courtesy VC and DSO Book). Unfortunately a photograph of Major General Sir C E Heath, Director of Quartering, could not be located

A great number of small and large hutted camps were pursued to accommodate some 850,000 men as training centres, depots, remount centres or for detachments. Further problems arose with the large influx of troops from overseas and the expansion of the Royal Flying Corps, Tank Corps and formation of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps to name a few. At the end of June 1917 some 1,750,000 troops were accommodated in the UK and during the year the number of hospital beds provided in the UK reached 320,000.

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

Major General Sir J Steevens, Director of Equipment and Ordnance Stores photographed by Walter Stoneman in 1917. *Courtesy National Portrait Gallery, London*

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

Supply

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

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

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

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

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

Mechanical transport

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

Remounts

The increase in number of horses from a peace establishment of 25,000 to 165,000 required for the BEF and Territorials in August 1914 was largely achieved due to the schemes of registration and impressment which had been developed by Lieutenant Colonel George MacMunn

Cover photograph of Behind the Scenes in Many Wars *by Lieutenant General Sir George MacMunn*

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

Wounded horses arriving at No.10 Veterinary Hospital at Neufchatel–Hardelot. Courtesy IWM Q11518

Veterinary services

Sir Jack commented on the small number of trained personnel who were initially available and how by engaging civilian veterinary surgeons, constant advertising and appeals to professional organisations it was possible to meet demands on a minimum basis. Significantly he pointed out that the health of animals at home and in all theatres was maintained throughout at a higher standard than in any former war. He mentions that the assistance rendered by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was very considerable.

Equipment and ordnance

Sir Jack devoted most words in this section to the problem of clothing and equipping the New Armies, starting with the expedients resorted to in dealing with the first rush of recruits. Clearly the free hand he gave to Home Commands, financially and many other ways, to meet shortages of clothing, blankets, and other equipment in late 1914 and early 1915 was essential in meeting the comfort and health of all ranks. He ended the section by extolling the outstanding developments in reclaiming and repairing equipment and clothing of all kinds.

Inspection of Quartermaster General's Services

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

Canteens

In this, the last section of his report, Sir Jack described the importance of the Expeditionary Force Canteens in adding to the comfort of all ranks. The amount of goods shipped increased fifteen–fold between 1915 and 1918. Also he helped the YMCA to provide refreshment and recreation for troops.

The Marchioness of Londonderry. Courtesy IWM Art 3095

1915 – The Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps

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

Also in July Sir George MacMunn tells in his book *Behind the Scenes in Many Wars* how he and Sir Edward Altham were summoned by Sir Jack and sent to the Dardanelles where according to Sir Jack the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force had got themselves into a hell of a mess. 'The transport and supply problems were proving beyond the capabilities of General Hamilton's staff.

1916 – The Cornwallis – West Affair and others

1916 was a very trying year for Sir Jack. On the death of Lord Kitchener on 5 June Cowans lost the friend and support he had enjoyed for many years. The Somme battles began on 1 July but beforehand 100,000 vacant hospital beds needed to be secured without revealing the purpose. In February he had become responsible for solving transport and supply problems in Mesopotamia when the War Office took charge instead of the campaign being controlled from India. He was fortunate after the Gallipoli evacuation that George MacMunn was available to move there as Inspector General of Communications.

However, when the new Secretary of State

Fitters of the WAAC at work in Etaples in July 1918. Courtesy IWM Q9049

Lieutenant General John Cowans, Quartermaster General to the Forces, in conversation with another officer, Boulogne, 15 June 1918. Courtesy IWM Q8955

for War, Lloyd George, set up a secret House of Commons Court of Enquiry into matters which had already been dismissed by Kitchener this almost paralysed the activities of Sir Jack and nearly cost him his job.

The Cornwallis–West case, as it became known, is referred to in Stand To! 79 and the book The Blue Beast: Power and Passion in the Great War, is reviewed in Stand To! 98. The case related to two separate personnel matters in Western Command where Mr and Mrs Cornwallis–West had a home at Ruthin Castle. The first concerned a junior officer that Mrs Cornwallis–West was smitten with and the second a brigadier general whom she thought should be replaced by a colonel she knew. The full story is told in Tim Coates' excellent book Patsy: The story of Mary Cornwallis–West which he has written using archive records where available.

The driving force in the case was Mrs Birch whose husband was the Cornwallis–West's land agent. She fought for the newly–commissioned officer who was in her care recuperating from wounds. He had been stripped of his commission for the content of a letter he had written to 'Patsy' – the name is a shortened form of her fifth forename Eupatoria – rebuffing her advances and Western Command would not hold an inquiry into the decision. Sir Jack was an old friend of the Cornwallis–West family and, according to C–H & R, in trying to help Patsy 'the utmost that could be charged against Cowans was that in the innumerable preoccupations of the War, he wrote a letter that might have been more carefully phrased.'

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

The result of the enquiry was made known on 22 December 1916. Two senior officers in Western Command were felt to have acted improperly and the court commented at length about Patsy in particular 'the lady's conduct has been highly discreditable and given untruthful evidence.' Referring to Cowans it was stated in Parliament that 'in view of his distinguished war services he was retained for the present in his position but that he had been informed of the displeasure of the Government at his act.' Apparently Lloyd George offered him the post of QMG in France if he would leave the War Office to which Cowans replied 'Put that in writing.'

When the court's report was published, The Times of 5 January 1917 carried a long article written by Colonel Repington praising the work of the QMG's Department. In his book The First World War, Repington felt it was Lloyd George's aim to replace soldiers in Cowans' department by civilians and within days of Repington's article Sir Sam Fay became Director of Movements in the War Office Department of Movements and Railways headed by Sir Guy Granet.

He replaced Major General Richard Stuart Wortley who was Director of Movements working for Sir Jack. In his book The War Office at War Sir Sam tells how Sir Jack was not pleased but, after a long discussion, assured Sir Sam he would help him all he could and Sir Sam records that Jack 'was as good as his word until demobilisation.'

Earlier in this article reference has been made to the liking of women by Cowans. In his book The Blue Beast Jonathan Walker refers to Sir Jack's affair with Emilie Grigsby in 1915 but by 1916 he was in a longstanding relationship with Dorothy Dennistoun. Dorothy Dennistoun's husband ignored the affair in exchange for career advancement. The affair with Mrs Dennistoun became public knowledge in 1925 during her divorce–related court case, four years after Sir Jack's death.

1917

In March 1917 Andrew Weir (Lord Inverforth), a civilian, took the new post of Surveyor General of Supply at the War Office. He was to

Sir Jack receives the acclaim of the crowd after receiving the freedom of the City of Carlisle for his great service to the Commonwealth as Quartermaster General throughout the Great War, 18 September 1919. Courtesy Cumbria Archive Service, Carlisle

Sir Jack's funeral procession departs Westminster Cathedral for St Mary's Cemetery, Kensal Green. Courtesy Pathe News. See: www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEUzjtRD_Wg *for the film clip*

organise industry and so control raw materials and worked alongside Sir Jack. On 6 April the United States declared war on Germany and in the 'common cause' C–H & R record the help Sir Jack gave the Americans for which the United States bestowed on him their Distinguished Service Medal. He made several visits to France during the year; in May to enquire personally about the wastage rate of horses and on 30 September he presented the town of Verdun with a British Flag sent by the Army Council in recognition of the burden borne by the French Army there. He did not see active service in the war but French newspapers published details of his visit and the Germans promptly bombarded his route up to and in the city.

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

1919 to 1921

Promoted to full general in the 1919 New Years Honours list Sir Jack received an offer of employment from an oil group interested in exploring the oil situation in Mesopotamia. He retired from the QMG post on 15 March. In September, after visiting Mesopotamia with General MacMunn he was in Carlisle to be presented with the Freedom of his native City and the Mayor spoke about his great services to the Commonwealth.

In his reply Sir Jack spoke about some of his experiences during the war and expressed his great disappointment that Lloyd George's recent speech of thanks to the troops made no reference to the administrative services. He ended his speech by describing the work undertaken by his department, giving full praise to his staff and other organisations including the Women's Legion and the Canteens Board

In 1920, whilst unwell, he continued with his business interests but an operation was necessary in November to relieve him from the pain caused by 'disease' to his stomach organs after which he went to stay with friends in the South of France. Lady Cowans arrived there on 5 April; he converted to the Roman Catholic faith on 11 April and died in Menton on 16 April 1921, aged 59. There is no doubt that his early death, at least in part, was caused by the strain of the war.

After a service in St Michael's Church he was borne with full military honours to Menton station thence by rail to Calais where HMS Walrus transported his body to Dover. His coffin was laid in the Chapel of Holy Souls in Westminster Cathedral on 23 April where it was visited by many.

Following a service in Westminster Cathedral on 25 April his body was borne with full military honours to St Mary's Roman Catholic Cemetery at Kensal Green for burial.

Final Analysis

Cowans' biography includes many fine comments from contributors about him but these are tinged with details of his private life. He might have been pleasantly surprised by the words that Lloyd George wrote about him in his 1934 memoirs. 'Cowans was an excellent business man ….there never was a murmur from any quarter as to the efficiency with which Sir John Cowans did his work. That is more than can be said about any other prominent figure in the War, military or civil.' For this alone he deserves remembering.

His memorial cross stood appropriately upright and clean amongst a jumble of other graves when I called to say hello and leave my token of remembrance. I reflected for a short while and thought of the enormous and complex burden he had borne in supplying and maintaining our armies in the Great War. He truly was a war–winning genius.

Acknowledgements

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Sir Jack's grave in Kensal Green cemetery on the author's visit in 2015

John Kipling: On the Balance of Probability

by David Langley

On 23 September 1919 a cold front passed from north to south through the Loos area late in the afternoon. The gusty Force Five wind veered sharply to become a northerly, and the temperature fell about 10 degrees Fahrenheit to 50˚F. (10˚C). It was overcast with outbreaks of rain.[1] *At some time that day the Graves Registration Unit (GRU) of the 18th Labour Company recorded the finding and subsequent relocation of a body that they identified as an 'Officer Lieut. Irish Guards'. This was truly remarkable, because the regiment had not recorded that a full lieutenant was killed and the corpse unaccounted for. The Irish Guards only fought there in September/October 1915, so the body, if of that regiment, dated from that time. The action in which John Kipling and many others perished was fought on 27 September 1915. David Langley looks once more at a case which has long fascinated researchers.*

Counting the cost

On 30 September 1915 the 2nd Battalion Irish Guards (2/Irish Guards) was able to count the cost of the previous three days. The battalion war diary, written by (or at the direction of) the adjutant and signed off by the commanding officer, noted 25 other ranks killed, 198 wounded and 101 missing.[2] The officer casualties are transcribed below, as near as possible exactly as the handwritten original. See below, bottom of page.

Note that the two officers principally concerned with the administration of the battalion are in no doubt regarding Kipling's rank at the time of his death. This fact cannot be over–emphasised. The divisional war diary casualty summaries also confirm his rank twice.[3]

Stand To! Number 105 of January 2016 contained an article by Lieutenant Colonel Graham Parker (Retd) and Joanna Legg (henceforward referred to as 'Parker & Legg') which described their research and presented their conclusion regarding the long–running and controversial saga of John Kipling's grave.[4] They concurred with the 1992 Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) report by Records Officer N Christie and concluded that: 'on the balance of probabilities the Irish Guards Lieutenant found on 23 September 1919 must be John Kipling'.

When Christie had reviewed the evidence he identified that the battlefield exhumation and recovery in question was attributed to the wrong map reference. He provided what he claimed to be the correct one, which Parker and Legg and the Canadian Expeditionary Force Study Group have since confirmed independently.[5] Christie was satisfied that the body was Kipling's, wearing the rank badges of a full lieutenant of the Irish Guards, and this is the received wisdom reiterated from time to time by the Ministry of Defence and the CWGC.

The 1992 CWGC and the 2016 Parker and Legg conclusions are flawed. They depend on the rank identification being correct and then rely on Kipling's posthumous substantive promotion having been effective in his lifetime. New research and insights are now offered which provide an alternative view.

Six propositions

Parker and Legg appear to rely on six propositions, which can be shown to be of doubtful merit:

1. That the Foot Guards did not action promotions in accordance with *King's Regulations*.
2. That Kipling's pay records show that he served from April 1915 as a full lieutenant (whether temporary or substantive).
3. That the GRU rank and regiment identification was correct and was subsequently accurately transcribed.
4. That Kipling had adopted lieutenant's rank badges in the eight days since he wrote home asking for a new identity disc marked as a '2nd Lt.'
5. That there is no other feasible Irish Guards officer candidate for the body.
6. That alleged current military practice is a good guide to procedures 100 years ago.

Proposition 1: Kipling and promotion protocol

Parker and Legg rest part of their argument on the Military Secretary's Branch causing Kipling's posthumous substantive promotion to be actioned in his life time. They say:

> 'Second Lieutenant (on probation) John Kipling was confirmed in his rank and promoted to Lieutenant on 7 June 1915' and 'The Military Secretary's (MS) Branch was the authority providing the official notice of a promotion'.

This is not correct. *King's Regulations paragraph 211*, amended to 1 August 1914, state that the authority for promulgation of promotions was the *London Gazette (LG).*

> 'The London Gazette, published by authority, in which all military appointments, promotions, exchanges, and removals are inserted, is transmitted to each G O C–in–C to enable him to notify, in orders, such details as affect his command. Notifications so published will be official for all military purposes'.

There is no mention of a role for a Military Secretary in promulgating promotions, despite Parker and Legg's supposition.

John Kipling's commission was as a probationary second lieutenant in the Special Reserve of Officers. All Guards second lieutenants ('ensigns') were probationary on first appointment. The pre–war Peace Establishment of a Foot Guards battalion provided for the four companies to be commanded by majors or captains, each with a second captain. Below them were ten full lieutenants and eight second lieutenants. By contrast the War Establishment required sixteen 'subalterns' (that is either lieutenants or second lieutenants) as platoon commanders, plus a subaltern machine–gun officer and an adjutant (officially any rank from second lieutenant to major, with lieutenants predominating). One platoon commander was also to serve as transport officer. The different establishment for war reflected the fact that exact proportions could not be maintained on active service and that 'the job description' was the same for both ranks. The actual strengths of 1/Irish Guards on disembarkation in August 1914 were thirteen lieutenants and five second lieutenants, but in July/August 1915 the ratio was very different at seven to eleven. The 2/Irish Guards had six lieutenants and fourteen second lieutenants in late August 1915.

The lifting of probationary status, and subsequent or simultaneous substantive promotion from second lieutenant to lieutenant, depended on competence and recommendation (later in the war a period of 18 months was adopted). War time losses and army expansion led to unusually rapid promotions for subalterns during the early war period. The increased administrative burden resulted in long delays in the promulgation of substantive promotions in the *London Gazette*. Kipling's promotion to substantive lieutenant was published in the *LG* on 11 November 1915, with an effective date of 7 June (for seniority and pay purposes). It first appeared in the *Monthly Army List* in December. He had been dead since 27 September.

We can substitute speculation about Guards officers' promotion protocol and replace it with some hard facts.

Substantive and temporary promotions

Analysis of over twenty Guards Division war diaries reveals 132 subalterns who were promoted to substantive lieutenant in 1915.

2nd Lieut Packenham Law	**died of wounds**
Capt & Adj Hon T Vesey	**wounded**
Capt Wynter	**"**
Lieut Stevens	**"**
2/Lieut Clifford	**missing, probably killed**
" Kipling	**wounded and missing**
" Sassoon	**wounded**
" Grayson	**" (shock)**
	Signed by L Butler, Lt Col Commanding 2/Irish Gds

They are collectively mentioned over 500 times in the diaries. 99 per cent of the data consistently record them as second lieutenants after the gazetted effective date and before the date of issue of the *LG*. There is overwhelming evidence that these subalterns did not 'put up' rank ahead of the *LG* announcement.

Eliminating four blatantly obvious errors by diarists, there are only three remaining anomalies in over 500 mentions. Conflict with other official records and the *LG* dates indicates that these are also very likely to be errors by the diarist. Furthermore there is no evidence that the Irish Guards treated promotions any differently from the remainder of the division.

The critical misunderstanding by Parker and Legg is of the treatment of promotions to temporary rank. The evidence in the diaries clearly demonstrates that temporary promotions were treated very differently from substantive promotions.

In May 1915 the War Office clarified the situation regarding the filling of vacancies caused by casualties. (6) This was reiterated in the House of Commons. (7) When casualties occurred, the next senior man was to move up, but without promotion in the short term. This often meant junior officers stepping into the shoes of an officer one rank higher. Having served in this capacity for 30 days, the incumbent would be automatically promoted with temporary rank. When this cascaded down through the officer ranks, with each newly created gap being filled by the next most senior subordinate, it created a number of synchronised promotions. The Irish Guards provide a clear example of this cascade effect when Lieutenant C D Wynter and Second Lieutenant W B Stevens are promoted to temporary captain and temporary lieutenant respectively on the same day shortly before the battle of Loos. The war diary recorded their temporary promotions, as was customary. Temporary ranks were 'put up' in the immediate interests of command and control. There are 41 examples of promotion to temporary lieutenant in the Guards in 1915 and there is not a single exception to this rule. The *LG* announcements followed in short order. This rapid treatment did not extend to the 132 substantive promotions.

Kipling was a platoon commander on the day of his death. There is no evidence that he was ever a temporary lieutenant – the only plausible explanation for him wearing the two stars on each shoulder of a lieutenant. Two of the three examples cited in the Parker and Legg article are also temporary promotions, including one in Kipling's promotion cohort – Lieutenant W B Stevens.

The treatment of temporary lieutenants provides evidence that severely undermines the Parker and Legg proposition. Within the data are nine subalterns – including W B Stevens – who were *gazetted temporary lieutenants after the effective date of their substantive promotion to lieutenant.* This is the crux of the matter; if these nine officers were already substantive lieutenants there would be absolutely no need for them to be 'promoted' to temporary lieutenants. The *LG* has no promotions from 'lieutenant to temporary lieutenant'. It would be nonsensical. Aside from the 500 examples of the treatment of substantive promotions highlighted above, this is the most compelling evidence that Guards officers did not 'put up' rank ahead of the *LG* announcements for substantive promotions.

The third example cited by Parker and Legg of a 'promotion' is clearly a diarist's error. Second Lieutenant Sassoon is recorded as a lieutenant but then days later as a second lieutenant by the same diarist. There are four other references to him as a second lieutenant including a mention in the 4th Field Ambulance casualty records after the battle. The important factor here is that this was a witness, independent of the battalion, who was recording what he saw on the shoulder strap while treating the gunshot wound to Sassoon's leg. Two other casualty reports also record him as a second lieutenant, all entries being recorded after the 'Lieutenant Sassoon' entry in the 2/Irish Guards war diary.

There is no evidence whatsoever that Kipling and the other ten officers in his promotion cohort 'put up' rank. Taking an 'on the balance of probabilities' argument to its logical conclusion, the probability of Kipling wearing a lieutenant's rank stars in breach of Guards' protocol and *King's Regulations* (and without the knowledge of his commanding officer or adjutant) has been shown to be negligible.

Paper trail

The *Monthly Army Lists* and the *Monthly Supplements to the Army Lists* are available online via the National Library of Scotland.(8) It is possible to track Kipling's rank as recorded in official documents on a monthly basis. He is listed as a second lieutenant (on probation) right through until December 1915, when the November 1915 gazetting of his substantive promotion to second lieutenant and further promotion to lieutenant was recorded in the same publication.

It is worth noting that the monthly lists were all updated as of the last day of the previous month. One could make a reasonable argument that the Army lists only lagged temporary promotion events on the ground by a month or so. All promotions – substantive and temporary – would be recorded, so there is a reliable paper trail regardless of any 'lag'. Any temporary promotion that Kipling might have had would be reflected in these documents. Their absence demonstrates that he had no temporary promotion.

Of interest is the supplementary list. The *November 1915 Supplementary List* summarises the promotions and appointments made by the Irish Guards, with dates and *Gazette* dates. Again, there is no mention of Kipling. It includes promotion from lieutenant to temporary captain and promotion from second lieutenant to temporary lieutenant in addition to promotions from second lieutenant to lieutenant 'on augmentation of establishment' – ie the creation of 2/Irish Guards – which includes seven subalterns making this step. This is perhaps an indication of the attempt to maintain an initial balance between second lieutenants and lieutenants.

Proposition 2: Pay

Parker and Legg examine the Kipling financial settlement after the war, and base an argument on the Gratuity Admissions figure of 186 days at lieutenant's pay rate (8/6 – as opposed to 7/6 – per day for a second lieutenant). They deduce that Kipling became a full lieutenant (temporary and later substantive) on 29 April 1915 and continually thereafter. This necessitates suggesting

> '...39 days ... for carrying out the duties of a Lieutenant' from 29th April 1915'.

As has been explained above, there were no specific duties within the unit for a full lieutenant; all posts below captain were for subalterns. The battalion was not on active service in April 1915 so there were no senior appointments requiring to be filled urgently.

The Pay Warrant of 1914 paragraphs 496 and 497 provides:

> '… officers of the Special Reserve of Officers when employed with Our Regular Army ... a Gratuity at the following rates ... 124 days' pay for the first year of service, and 62 days' pay for each subsequent year of service or part of a year'.

Also Cabinet Office Minute 24/72/93 of 7 January 1919:

> 'the rate of Gratuity should be fixed according to the rank held by the officer on 11th November 1918'.

The clerk annotating John Kipling's file did not have to perform any calculation beyond 124 days plus 62 equals 186. Parker and Legg's theorising is unnecessary. (9)

Proposition 3: The Graves Registration Unit evidence

It is known that the GRU made a gross error of map reference in the 'Kipling' case. That they were capable of worse is exemplified by an exhumation and reburial dated 25 September 1919 whereby a 'Star' (singular) is the means of identification of an unknown 'Lieut'. That was subsequently corrected in manuscript to '2nd Lt', precisely the type of case that Parker and Legg fail to address. See top of next page.

The initial findings of a GRU were usually noted in manuscript (not preserved) and then transcribed at least once. The officer in charge of the unit did not sign the typescript version of the alleged Kipling reburial, thus we cannot be sure that it was checked. The single entry 'UBS Officer Lieut. Irish Guards' is asked to bear far more weight than it can carry.

Proposition 4: Kipling as a lieutenant

We have seen above that Parker and Legg deduce (although their meaning is not entirely clear) that Kipling was paid posthumously as a full lieutenant from April 1915. There was a military tendency to group subalterns of both ranks under the collective 'lieutenant'. The Welsh Guards, for example, did so in some war diary entries and in their published history. (10) Soldier eyewitnesses' uses of 'lieutenant' quoted by Parker and Legg are counterbalanced by the war diary's '..... *2nd Lieutenant Kipling was wounded'*. Just as a soldier would refer to his lieutenant colonel commanding as 'The Colonel', so would he refer to any grade of lieutenant as 'lieutenant' or the equally ambiguous 'Mister'. John Kipling is known to have gone into action as a platoon commander, with no need whatsoever for an extra star on each shoulder. He had signed as a second lieutenant as recently as 5 August 1915 when he witnessed the will of Private Bernard Edney. Eight days before his

Extract from a burial return for Poelkapelle, CWGC 25 September 1919

death he wrote home asking for an identity disc bearing that same rank. John is said to have written home twice more, the last being on the eve of battle. [4] He wrote not a single word regarding promotion. It is almost inconceivable that he would not have told his proudly martial and patriotic father.

Rudyard Kipling, in his long investigation and search for his son's grave after the war, was never in any doubt as to John's rank whilst serving. Rudyard's *The Irish Guards in the Great War Volume II* reinforces this belief, with John's posthumous notification of promotion only acknowledged in the Appendix A: killed and wounded.

No contemporary record made by any of John Kipling's chain of command before, during, or immediately after the Battle of Loos has him as a lieutenant. No credible case to the contrary has been made.

Proposition 5: No other candidate?

If we discount the 'lieutenant' attribution by the GRU, there is at least one other candidate for the body in Chalk Pit Wood: Second Lieutenant Thomas Packenham–Law, 2/Irish Guards. The evidence of his wounding, death and burial are so confused as to merit deeper investigation. He was variously described as 'died in hospital', 'died from wounds received in action and was buried', 'buried at Chalk Pit Wood between Lone Tree and Chalk Pit Wood', and 'buried in a garden at Loos'. He has no known grave. But there is a witness – a Sergeant Kinsella – quoted by Parker and Legg:

> 'A couple of shrapnel burst right over his head. I saw (Mr Kipling) fall … (I) started back with the help of a stick for the Dressing Station. On the way back I came on Mr Law who was dead and then met Sergeant Cole ... he said 'poor Mr Kipling is killed'. Then I came on Mr Kipling myself, I am sure he was dead'.

This places Law lying dead to the east of Kipling because the sergeant was limping westwards towards his lines. We know from other witnesses that Kipling was said to have moved or been moved a short distance after wounding, but we do not know if this was before or after the sergeant's sighting. Kinsella's testimony (written very soon after the battle and full of circumstantial detail) is not helpful to the Parker and Legg case. They suggest that the sergeant was concussed. Either way, we have another stricken Irish Guards officer, probably Law, in the vicinity of the 1919 exhumation. Second Lieutenant Packenham–Law's remains have never been identified. We might ask, given the grievous state that he was in, who managed to retrieve him, alive or dead, for any of the contradictory scenarios quoted above.

Proposition 6: Current and recent practice

'The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there'. (L P Hartley, *The Go–Between*). The cited modern practice, if true, of 'putting up substantive rank' on the authority of the Military Secretary's Branch and ahead of the LG is not necessarily applicable to 100 years ago.

The Guards Division, that bastion of doing things properly, are alleged by Parker and Legg to have ordered that for John Kipling. If so, they did it for nobody else, and his commanding officer knew nothing of the matter.

Conclusion

Parker and Legg's six propositions have been shown to be wrong or unproven. They have produced no firm evidence that John Kipling ever wore the two stars of a full lieutenant. All that can be said is that there is a chance that the body under John Kipling's headstone is his. There again, it might be Second Lieuenant Packenham–Law, or a full lieutenant of another regiment, or indeed a misidentified other rank. Short of more compelling evidence, we shall never know. In any case, may he Rest in Peace.

Acknowledgements

To Martin Gillott, Charles Messenger and Tony Nutkin, for very helpful and substantial contributions, comments and encouragement. To Great War Diaries Ltd, for specialist war diary research and to members of the Great War Forum, for input and comment, especially regarding London Gazette *and the* London Gazette Index *research.*

For a full description of Guards promotion protocol as it affects the Kipling case, please see the Great War Forum reference: http://1914–1918.invisionzone.com/forums/index.php?showtopic=238319#entry2388826

References

(1) Data from the Met Office.
(2) WO/95 1220 1.
(3) WO/95 1197.
(4) For example: *My Boy Jack*, Major Tonie and Valmai Holt, (Pen & Sword). This well–researched and written account comes to very different conclusions.
(5) http://cefresearch.ca/is–this–really–the–grave–of–rudyard–kiplings–only–son/
(6) MS1/2246 as quoted in 7th Division Standing Orders.
(7) Hansard 19 July 1915, Vol 73.
(8) http://digital.nls.uk/british–military–lists/pageturner.cfm?id=88735803
(9) WO/339 53917.
(10) *The History of the Welsh Guards.* C H Dudley Ward DSO MC. (John Murray: 1920).

‘Big’ Cross, ‘Little’ Cross – Why?

by Tom Tulloch–Marshall

‘There is no exception to the rule that every rule has an exception’.
James Grover Thurber

Why are some Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) headstones for those soldiers of a Christian faith engraved with a ‘big’ cross whilst others have a ‘small’ cross – more properly, either a ‘Broad’ Cross or a ‘Latin’ Cross? Having seen this subject raised on the Internet and going beyond the sometimes bizarre claims which occasionally appear there, Tom Tulloch–Marshall investigates further.

Document destruction

After the Great War regiments and corps were allowed to nominate which one of these two approved designs – either the ‘Broad’ or the ‘Latin’ cross – was to be used on the headstones of their men. That is the answer which most battlefield guides will give, and it’s almost correct!

The CWGC confirm that this was the case, with the added proviso that they cannot substantiate the original policy as ‘… a result of destruction of many documents during the Second World War.’ My own searches of the Commission’s archives have similarly failed to unearth any evidence of the policy of its predecessor – the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC) – with regard to which cross should be used, and I have found no hard evidence of detailed correspondence or negotiations with the regiments and corps.

The current internal CWGC policy manual notes that the following ‘... is a list of all the units [which] opted to use the Broad Cross:– Bedfordshire Regiment; Calcutta Volunteer Battery; Ceylon Garrison Artillery; Coldstream Guards; Devonshire Regiment; East Yorkshire Regiment; Green Howards; Jamaica Militia Artillery (sic); Lancashire Fusiliers; Lincolnshire Regiment; Loyal North Lancashire Regiment; New Zealand Army; Royal Artillery; Royal Horse Artillery; Royal Dublin Fusiliers; Royal New Zealand Air Force; Royal New Zealand Navy; Royal Scots; Worcester Regiment; Yorkshire Regiment.’ That is of course a post–Second World War compilation including both Great War and Second World war units and titling.

Clear cut?

My own observation of IWGC / CWGC Great War headstones over the years essentially tallies with the Commission’s current unit schedule (for Great War units) with just one exception. I have yet to see a Great War period headstone to a named soldier in the Royal Artillery which bears a Broad Cross, and the artillery sub–units with Broad Crosses which are seen in Great War cemeteries (RHA, RGA, and RFA) are not itemised on the Commission’s schedule. The list of units where the Broad Cross ‘should’ be used on the headstones of identified British Great War casualties, in Europe, is therefore as follows (in alphabetical order): Bedfordshire Regiment / Coldstream Guards / Devonshire Regiment / East Yorkshire Regiment / Lancashire Fusiliers / Lincolnshire Regiment / Loyal North Lancashire Regiment / Royal Artillery (although an example has not yet been seen) / Royal Dublin Fusiliers / Royal Field Artillery / Royal Garrison Artillery / Royal Horse Artillery / Royal Scots / Worcester Regiment / Yorkshire Regiment.

For Great War period ‘overseas’ units the only application of the Broad Cross would be with the New Zealand contingent of the ANZAC Force. That is borne out by observation.

Clear–cut then: the Great War period units listed above will have headstones with a Broad Cross and every other headstone which bears a Christian symbol will use the Latin Cross? It must be fairly obvious that the answer is going to be no, even before we take into account J G Thurber’s adage above.

Misleading

The CWGC’s policy manual notes are also a bit misleading in that they infer the universal use of the Broad Cross for the units listed, which is far from being the case as the Latin Cross is almost always used on the headstones of unidentified soldiers of these units. Again, the provenance of this use of the Latin Cross on these particular headstones cannot be established as the CWGC advises that ‘…. the decision to use Latin crosses for unknown casualties of these regiments was also documented somewhere at the time but has subsequently been lost.’ The Commission has suggested, however, that the Latin Cross was used on these particular headstones in order to maintain visual continuity with the headstones of completely unidentified soldiers. Photographs ‘a’ and ‘b’, below, show examples where both crosses were used, depending on whether the soldier was identified or not.

That is the major exception, but there are others, as follows:

1. Headstones for identified men of units where a Broad Cross might be expected and whose headstone is associated with a ‘Duhallow Block’ memorial have a Latin Cross. See photograph ‘c’ for an example from the Lancashire Fusiliers.

Photograph ‘a’ – Devonshire Regiment headstones in Cabaret Rouge British Cemetery near Souchez north of Arras

Photograph ‘b’ – Royal Dublin Fusiliers headstones in Dury Crucifix Cemetery, 17km southeast of Arras

Photograph 'c' – Lancashire Fusiliers Special Memorial in Queen's Cemetery, Bucquoy on the Somme

Photograph 'd' – Bedfordshire Regiment headstones in Feuchy Chapel British Cemetery near Arras

Photograph 'e' – the headstone of David J Hamblin who 'served as' Sergeant D J Thomas in Heninel Communal Cemetery Extension near Arras

Photograph 'f' – New Zealand burials in the AIF Burial Ground, Grass Lane near Flers on the Somme

Photograph 'g' – Latin Cross on the headstone of a Royal Dublin Fusiliers soldier in Busigny Communal Cemetery Extension, 10km southwest of Le Cateau

Photograph 'h' – the headstones of Lieutenant Edward Archibald Gallie and Private J W Hunter, both of the Highland Light Infantry in Lonsdale Cemetery

Photograph 'i' – in Haynecourt British Cemetery, 6km northwest of Cambrai, Canadian Private John Alden McIntyre's headstone displays a Broad Cross, while next to it the stone of Corporal H J Rees, killed just three days later, has a Latin Cross

Photograph 'j' – Private Thomas Searle Warren's headstone in Adelaide Cemetery, Villers–Bretonneux

2. The Latin Cross is also used on the headstones of identified soldiers of the relevant units in cases where one of the various forms of superscription appear on the headstone. For example headstones displaying the words 'Known to be buried in this cemetery' / 'Believed to be buried in this cemetery' / 'Buried near this spot' and 'Believed to be…'. See photograph 'd', top right page 37.
3. Headstones of identified men of the specified regiments and corps who 'Served as' also have the Latin Cross. See photograph 'e', bottom left page 37.

With the Dominion forces, whose headstones would conventionally have shown a Christian symbol, the Broad Cross was only chosen for the headstones of identified New Zealand casualties. See photograph 'f' bottom right page 37 for an example.

I have, however, seen examples with a Latin Cross where a broad cross would be expected. The exceptions for British burials listed in 1 to 3 above also appear to have been applied to NZ commemorations.

As a matter of record it should also be noted here that no cross of either form appears on the headstones of identified men of the units listed above when it had been requested that no religious symbol be shown, or the man was of the Jewish faith, or a Victoria Cross winner, in which case the Star of David or an image of the VC would be engraved.

Special layout

As with so many 'rules' numerous exceptions are to be seen. Mainly these are headstones to named men where you would expect to see the Broad Cross, but the stone bears a Latin Cross. An example for the Royal Dublin Fusiliers is shown in photograph 'g', opposite page, but by far the most common exceptions to the rules appear to be the use of Latin Crosses on the headstones of identified men of the RGA, RHA, and RFA.

The other exceptions are headstones to named men who served with units which are not on the list above, where you would expect to see a Latin Cross, but the headstones bear Broad Crosses. These are not terribly common and until the IWGC paperwork associated with the men's burials was released I had thought that they were aberrations which had somehow been created in the Commission's headstone manufacturing facility in Arras. However, it now seems that this might not be the case, not universally at least.

For example, photograph 'h', opposite page, shows the headstones of Lieutenant E A Gallie and Private J W Hunter side by side in Lonsdale Cemetery near Authille on the Somme. Both men were with 17/Highland Light Infantry and both died on 1 July 1916. Private Hunter's headstone is inscribed as expected but Lieutenant Gallie's has a Broad Cross.

Photograph 'i', opposite page, shows the headstones of Canadian infantrymen J A McIntyre and H J Rees at Haynecourt British Cemetery, McIntyre's headstone also bearing an unexpected Broad Cross.

A partial explanation for Gallie and McIntyre's stones is found in their IWGC headstone schedules where it is noted that 'A special layout is provided for use with this headstone.'

Altered

Private Thomas Searle Warren's grave in photograph 'j', opposite page, is one of two Australian headstones which have been seen with a Broad Cross, and although there is no note of any 'special layout' on his headstone schedule the typed headstone design code has been altered by hand. It is thought that these variations from the norm must have been requested by the soldier's next of kin (nok), but unfortunately some 99 per cent of the original nok 'Final Verification Forms' do not survive, so there is no way of substantiating this absolutely.

As J C Thurber warned, the only real certainty is that there will be uncertainty, but as far as 'policy' can be determined from the surviving IWGC records, supplemented by my own examination of many thousands of CWGC headstones over the years, the foregoing seems to be a plausible explanation of the headstone cross issue.

Acknowledgement

With thanks to Andrew Fetherston and the staff of the CWGC Archive at Maidenhead who, as ever, have been of great help in identifying and accessing relevant records, and offering advice.

A Great War Legend
Major Frederick Elliot ('Boots') Hotblack
by Colin Hardy

Major General Frederick Elliot Hotblack was striding towards the War Office. It was spring 1940 and he had been appointed to command the 2nd Armoured Division for the proposed Trondheim Expedition during the ill–fated Norwegian campaign. On the Waterloo Steps above the Mall he was suddenly rendered unconscious by what he later claimed was 'a soft blow to his head'. It was probably a stroke although he believed he had been attacked by enemy agents. The actual cause, like other aspects of his career, remains a mystery.[1] *Whatever the reason, it brought a distinguished military career to an untimely end, a career examined here by Colin Hardy.*

Legend

During the Great War Frederick Hotblack became a staff officer who was decorated six times. His decorations included the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) and Bar and the Military Cross (MC) and Bar, Legion of Honour (5th Class) and the Russian Order of St Anne inscribed 'For Valour in War'. [2] He was Mentioned in Dispatches (MiD) four times (17 February and 22 June 1915, 15 May 1917 and 25 May 1918). Even then, some people felt he was 'under decorated'. [3] He was also wounded five times. His was a career that is difficult to piece together partly because he never left his own complete account of it and partly because what papers do exist are widely scattered across all the main archives. [4] A further explanation might be that 'all the 1916–18 Reconnaissance stuff was sent to Bovington and had, later, to be drastically weeded out on account of lack of storage space.' [5] Further, a number of his activities were clandestine and apparently went unrecorded and are thus shrouded in mystery. This has all contributed to building a substantial 'legend'.

Major Frederick Elliot Hotblack: a photograph taken after the war. Courtesy Tank Corps Museum and Archives

Head hunted

Hotblack's war began on 5 August 1914 the day after Britain declared war on Germany. Although he was already 27 years of age and had neither been in the Territorial Force, the OTC nor a Kitchener volunteer, he was nevertheless granted a temporary General List commission in Intelligence on 2 September as a temporary second lieutenant (special appointment). He landed in France on 12 September 1914. Prior to the war he may have been employed in the family brewing business in Brighton. His parents had moved from Norwich, where his family had originally been footwear manufacturers specialising in military boots (which might go some way to explain Hotblack's soubriquet of 'Boots' amongst his close friends), [6] to Lewes to join his uncle's brewing business. He was educated at St Mark's, Windsor (later incorporated into the Imperial Service College and, later still, Haileybury) where he passed the Oxford Local examination in 1903 aged 16 and at Brighton College where he trained as an accountant. [7] This was followed by a period at Geneva University (not Lausanne as is generally believed) and two years travelling in the Rhineland, the purpose of which is not clear. Hence he became very fluent in both French and German.

A youthful 'Boots' Hotblack prior to the war. Courtesy British Newspaper Library

His rapid involvement in the war may owe something to the work of Colonel George M W Macdonogh, head of the Special Duties Section of the Director of Military Operations (DMO) at the War Office, who had followed the advice of Brigadier David Henderson. In 1912 Macdonogh had '…started to compile a list of linguists and others possessing skills likely to be of value in intelligence work on the Continent. These men, all of whom were civilians, would be asked to join the Intelligence Corps if and when Britain went to war … On 5 August 1914, within hours of Britain's declaration of war against Germany, the War Office sent out telegrams to report to Southampton, and practically overnight, the Intelligence Corps sprang to life.' [8]

Hotblack was probably 'head hunted' by Macdonagh for the 'Intelligence Corps' which might explain his earlier Rhineland activities. Initially he, with other Intelligence Officers, all of whom lacked military training, 'were employed chiefly as dispatch riders to help keep contact with the French Forces'.[9] In particular he was appointed to Field Marshal Sir John French's General Headquarters (GHQ) as liaison officer to Castelnau's 2nd French Army. [10] He was to serve in all the major BEF operations from the Marne in 1914 to the breach of the Hindenburg Line during the final 'Hundred Days' campaign on 28 September 1918. It was during this time in 1914 that he apparently received a wound from the bayonet point of an elderly French Territorial sentry whilst motor cycling at night through the Villers Cotterêts Forest. He is alleged to have plugged the wound with cotton wool taken from his distraught assailant.[11]

First Army

On 28 October 1914 he was attached to Sir Douglas Haig's I Corps during the First Battle of Ypres where he came under the command of Major John Charteris, Haig's General Staff Officer for Intelligence. Following the First Battle of Ypres and the withdrawal of I Corps from the line, Hotblack was transferred on 4 December to IV Corps commanded by Lieutenant General Sir Henry Rawlinson then based at Merville. Later in 1915 he was 'head hunted' by Charteris and Haig and returned to their command – now First Army HQ. Under Rawlinson he had served at Neuve Chapelle and Festubert (where he had been attached to 'Barter Force' and had been 'only slightly wounded in the left hand and … resumed his duties') [12] and under Haig at Loos and on the Somme.[13]

Lieutenant Hotblack, Intelligence Officer 1914 (General List). Courtesy Intelligence Corps Museum and Archives

Hotblack modestly claimed not to know why Haig wanted him, especially as he felt useless as an untrained intelligence officer during First Ypres. He could only put it down to 'a light–hearted remark, made during the dark days of the Battle, which made Sir Douglas Haig laugh and laughs were in short supply at that time.'[14] His appointment raised issues about the responsibility for intelligence personnel. The controversy was whether Intelligence Corps officers should be posted to specific units or retained by Higher Command and directed by them 'to lower formations and moved about according to the military situation (or the wishes of John Charteris)'.[15] The issue went as far as the War Office without any apparent solution except that Haig 'pulled rank' and Hotblack was posted to First Army HQ on 21 August 1915 and eventually – in 1916 – joined Haig and Charteris at GHQ of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) after Haig had become its Commander–in–Chief in December 1915.

First class advertisement

Underpinning the problem was the shortage of good intelligence officers which made the talented Hotblack such an asset. He was concerned that he had courted controversy which might affect his military career but was reassured by Brigadier General Whigham, the Deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff (DGIGS) of the War Office. Whilst Hotblack was giving him a conducted tour of the Somme battlefield Whigham said that he had '…wanted to have a look at me because he was all–too–familiar with my name as there had been a fat file going round the War Office, dealing with my services. I made some apologetic remark, and he said "You have no cause to worry, with John Charteris and a couple of the Bold Bad Barons (Corps Commanders) competing for your services, you have had a first class advertisement."'[16]

Hotblack's role was 'Battle Liaison for Intelligence'. He was, however, employed by Charteris 'on a considerable number of jobs, not always strictly Intelligence', for instance, talking to War Correspondents or the French. Although he had a car and driver he used a motor cycle to get about since it was quicker on the congested roads, unless of course, he fell off, which he did on at least one occasion. Consequently, when King George V visited GHQ Hotblack sported a black eye when he was presented to him.

Regard for 'The Chief'

Hotblack had a high regard for Haig. One encounter between Hotblack and Haig showed a side of the 'Chief' that is rarely considered. Hotblack claimed that although 'I was very junior and seldom reported to him personally … I saw enough of him to know that he was not indifferent and callous about the very heavy casualties that were incurred when he commanded I Corps and later when he was commander in chief (sic)'[17] He also had a personal experience which reinforced his regard for Haig. During the opening of the Arras offensive on 9 April 1917 Hotblack was wounded (his second) in the head by a shell. He was evacuated to No. 1 Red Cross Hospital at Le Touquet established by the Duchess of Westminster. Although his head wounds appeared superficial, there was a concern that his skull was fractured. It was rumoured that he was to be evacuated to England and therefore, following the usual practice, would cease to be on the strength of the BEF. Clearly this was not to his liking so he took his uniform, which contrary to regulations he had hidden under his bed, went 'into the bathroom, dressed and escaped through a window'.[18] He walked the 5 miles to GHQ at Montreuil in the snow and there ordered a car to return him to his unit. He was clearly suffering from concussion. However, he was intercepted by Brigadier General Charteris who had been instructed by Haig to make enquires about Hotblack at the hospital. They had reported that he had serious head injuries and was being evacuated to England. Charteris, therefore, placed him under open arrest to await a return to the hospital under escort.

At the hospital he was informed that he would be court–martialled for being absent without leave (AWOL). His position 'was probably made worse by some wag of a medical officer at GHQ who had telephoned the Hospital to say that they had heard that the Hospital was trying out a new treatment for head injuries which apparently involved the patient wandering about in snow storms'.[19] Haig saved the situation by pointing out to the commandant of the hospital that he would not confirm any court–martial decision especially of a person whose aim was to head for the frontline not away from it. Instead he granted Hotblack leave, allowing him to convalesce in the UK.

Many years later, on 5 June 1970, Hotblack was interviewed by a BBC researcher preparing a Horizon television programme on the tanks' contribution to the Battle of Cambrai in November 1917. During the interview he admitted 'that though I thought I could judge things objectively now, I might be a little prejudiced about Haig … he helped me with kindness and understanding. The BBC representative gasped and changed the subject. He had, I expect, seen Joan Littlewood's film 'Oh What a Lovely War'. I did suggest that he might consult Miss Littlewood as an expert on warfare, but my irony was lost on him.' [20]

Regular

He decided to become a regular officer and so, on 9 June 1915, he obtained a regular commission in the Norfolk Regiment. Later, in October 1918, he became a captain in the Northamptonshire Regiment.

Between 3 March and 3 June 1916 he went 'under cover' as an 'ordinary Intelligence Officer' for the British Mission to the Belgian Army at La Panne on the coast. The Mission was led by Prince Alexander of Teck. It was probably for this work that he was awarded his first MC which was gazetted on 8 June 1916, although a citation never appears to have been published perhaps because of the clandestine nature of his work. Even to his family he never spoke about the reason he was awarded this decoration. However, there is an unsubstantiated suggestion in the family that he 'worked behind the lines'. It is even suggested he talked his way out of being arrested by the Germans. If this was the case the supposition is that Hotblack's purpose might have been to inform GHQ about this location with a view to a British landing on the Belgian coast (Operation 'Hush'). This was to take place in conjunction with any British offensive that might take place in the Ypres Salient. This idea was taken forward in the preparations for the Third Ypres campaign in 1917 but later dismissed. Hotblack had reported on the unfavourable conditions for any seaborne invasion which included the possible enfilading of Ostend harbour by German artillery. His reconnaissance and study of large scale maps showed the complicated system of land drainage northeast of Ypres which would, and did, prove vulnerable to a prolonged artillery barrage.

Tank man

It was at this time that the new tank unit, the Heavy Section Machine Gun Corps (HSMGC) was gathering at Elveden in Suffolk. They received their baptism of fire on 15 September 1916 with the commencement of the Battle of Flers–Courcelette on the Somme. Amongst the many problems faced by these first tank crews was a lack of adequate reconnaissance of routes up to the front line. On 25 September 1916 the newly–appointed commanding officer of the tanks in France, Colonel H J Elles, wrote to the War Office confirming the initial establishment of the Tank HQ team. In order to overcome the problems of reconnaissance Elles noted that:

> 'The GSO 3 (I) will be appointed in a day or two as soon as we can get the right man. This officer will not be for secret service, espionage, prisoners, censorship or that sort of I work, but for ground work, such as roads, approaches, obstacles, aeroplane photographs, and maps.' [21]

The intention, therefore, was to place as much emphasis on reconnaissance of the British side of the hill as the enemy's side.

Captain Frederick Elliot ('Boots') Hotblack was the 'right man' and he was 'handpicked' by Elles for the job. Hotblack overheard Brigadier Charteris tell Elles that 'the Chief has issued instructions that you can pick your staff … You can pick anyone you like. I got the job.' [22] Before the Somme campaign was closed down following the Battle of the Ancre in November, 'Boots' Hotblack had made a national name for himself in his new role as officer commanding the newly–established Intelligence and Reconnaissance Department of the renamed Heavy Branch of the Machine Gun Corps, later the Tank Corps.

'A Legend' is how Clough Williams–Ellis described 'Boots' Hotblack both in a letter of 5 January 1918 congratulating Hotblack on gaining a bar to his MC and in his autobiography. He wrote that:

> 'my immediate superior in Tank Corps reconnaissance and intelligence was Major (later General) 'Boots' Hotblack … His legendary gallantry, experience, tireless enterprise and energy made him the very pattern of the good soldier. Always good humoured and helpful however exhausted, we others could not but strive, however vainly, to live up to his example. One thing he did for me was to make the war more interesting through his own intense absorption and keenness. The other, though it did not make me 'brave' in his own rare way, taught me to be at least fatalistically unafraid in tight places.' [23]

Six months before the Battle of Arras Hotblack had responded with alacrity to Elles' 'job specification'. At Tank Corps HQ he gained Fuller's attention as 'a lover of beauty and battles, a mixture of Abelard and Marshal Ney'.[24] Whilst it is not difficult to understand the allusion to Ney and a 'Lover of Battles', his decorations and wound stripes are testament to that, and also to Abelard, the peripatetic medieval scholar who wandered across northern France, the reference to being a 'Lover of Beauty' is more obscure.

Hail of bullets

One of his first acts as GSO3 (I) demonstrated his courage in battle. On 13 November, the last tank operations of 1916 on the Somme, a single tank commanded by Lieutenant Partington made an attack on the 'Triangle', a German position between the villages of Beaumont Hamel and Beaucourt on the western bank of the Ancre. Hotblack had undertaken a reconnaissance and taped the route the previous evening. However, an overnight snow shower had obscured the tape. Hotblack proceeded to guide the tank 'by actually leading the tank forward by walking in front of it, despite the hail of enemy bullets aimed at the tank – and therefore at him.'[25] In fact Hotblack took advantage of the protection afforded by shell holes although they were full of ice and water. Afterwards, Partington's tank was needed to support another infantry attack. Since there was no other way of communicating with Partington 'Major (sic) Hotblack came forward and again he crossed the fire–swept zone undeterred. He reached the Tank and piloted it back behind our lines, where a renewed attack was planned … It was for this remarkable piece of work that Major Hotblack was awarded his DSO (sic).[26]

It is noteworthy that the first VC awarded (posthumously) to a member of the Tank Corps was for a similar action on 4 October 1917 during the Third Ypres campaign. On that occasion Captain Clements Robertson, a section commander in 1 Tank Brigade, reconnoitred and then guided his section on foot across the Reutelbeek towards Gheluvelt. However, he was killed in the action. Hotblack's action was applauded in the *News of the World* and *Daily Mirror* on 11 January 1917 and the pieces were accompanied by his old pre–war photograph whilst the *Graphic* later published the full page, melodramatic reconstruction of the action.

Hotblack successfully complained to the *News of the World* and *Daily Mirror* through his solicitor, that the photographs were published without his permission. Both newspapers published an apology.[27] In response to the *Graphic* illustration his solicitor wrote that 'this, no doubt, is purely an imaginary picture and I do not see how any objection can be taken to it.' The question arises as to why Hotblack should object to the publication of his photograph: he may have been concerned that the photograph did not project a sufficiently military image.

A melodramatic artist's impression of Hotblack's action during the Battle of the Ancre, a representation to which he objected. Courtesy Tank Museum and Archives

Force Multiplier

Clough Williams–Ellis believed that this and other inspiring actions were critical in establishing a standard of competence and conduct and 'much of the subsequent efficiency of the Reconnaissance Branch of the Tank Corps may be traced to this incident. Reconnaissance took its proper place, it was recognised as a fighting service and its work was seen to be a necessary preliminary to every action.'[28] J F C Fuller claimed that 'tank operations require the most careful preparation and minute reconnaissance in order to render them successful.'[29] Frank Mitchell saw reconnaissance as 'that most important subject.' [30] Christopher D'Arcy Baker–Carr opined that the Tank Corps' Reconnaissance Department was 'not only necessary; it was a matter of life and death' and that 'good reconnaissance work was the foundation of all success.'[31] Browne remarked that 'there were contingencies that affected no other arm. Especially was this the case with reconnaissance; for success or failure hung upon the tank commanders' familiarity, from thorough coaching beforehand, with the ground they had to cover.'[32] Reconnaissance was a 'force multiplier'. Hotblack acknowledged that in these early experiences he had learned a great deal, some of which he was able to pass on to Major J F C Fuller for purposes of training future reconnaissance officers (ROs).

Hint of criticism

Another reconnaissance officer, Captain Norman Musgrave (Mark) Dillon, confirmed that Hotblack 'was the most outstanding of the staff at Berlesmont (sic). [33] He was a man of the most astonishing bravery' but there was a hint of criticism as he continued 'he had no need to go near the battle … because he was a staff officer.' There is also an implicit criticism that his act of leading a tank into action set a precedent and expectation amongst tank commanders so that during the Battle of Arras Dillon had 'to take over a tank whose officer had been killed leading his tank over perfectly good ground … and it became a craze'.[34]

Bars and blindness

Hotblack was awarded a bar to his DSO a year later during the Battle of Cambrai (gazetted 12 February 1918) and his portrait was painted by Sir William Orpen.

Hotblack had been tasked by Brigadier General Elles to observe the actions of 1 Tank Brigade on the left wing of the attack.[35] The citation reads:

> 'For conspicuous gallantry on November 23 during the attack on Fontaine–Notre Dame. By his personal example and initiative he carried on the attack, reorganising the infantry, whose officers had become casualties, and collecting tanks. He had to pass through a heavy barrage and was continuously under machine–gun fire, but succeeded in launching a fresh attack with tanks and infantry. This officer has been present throughout the four great battles of the year, except Arras, where he was wounded on the first day. He has shown throughout persistent gallantry and contempt of danger in the pursuance of his duty as a reconnaissance and battle liaison officer which has been an inspiration to all ranks.'[36]

The citation for the bar to his MC is equally detailed. The action occurred as British, American and Australian forces attacked the Hindenburg Line over the St Quentin Canal tunnel in the area between Vendhuile and Bellicourt on 29 September 1918:

> 'For conspicuous gallantry, initiative and devotion to duty near Quennemont Farm on the morning of September 29 1918. This officer, who is GSO2 Intelligence, was following up the operations when the mist lifted and disclosed a strongly held enemy position dominating the advance to the south. He at once ran across two tanks and directed them on this strong point, himself going into action in one of the Tanks to make certain of success. The position was later found to be the actual German front line and was strongly held by machine guns with field guns in close support. The Tanks met with strong opposition and the heavy machine–gun fire made it impossible for the gunners in the Tanks to work their guns, though the enemy were at close quarters and exposing themselves freely. Major Hotblack then opened the revolver loopholes and fired his revolver into the enemy repeatedly; driving them off.
>
> He was wounded in the eyes and temporarily blinded. The two Tanks of which he was in charge were knocked out by shellfire and his crews were almost all wounded. When the position had been cleared of the enemy Major Hotblack in spite of his wounds at once got the wounded into safety and organised a hurried defence with a few infantry against a possible counter attack. The very prompt and gallant action of this officer overcame a situation which would in all probability have held up our advance to the south of QUENNEMONT farm.'[37]

Had a more senior officer witnessed this action then he may have received a higher decoration. This was his fifth wound and followed a fourth received between the opening of the Battle of Amiens and 25 August 1918.[38] The attack on the Bellicourt Tunnel was his last action in the Great War as his wounds were such that he was transferred to England blinded permanently in the right eye.

Hotblack in the uniform of the newly–constituted Tank Corps. Courtesy Tank Corps Museum and Archives

Maps

However impressive and 'headline grabbing' these actions were, as Dillon remarked, they were not the principal role of an intelligence staff officer. Foremost was Hotblack's responsibility for strategic reconnaissance. Hotblack, together with Major Giffard le Quesne Martel (brigade major), explored both the Messines Ridge and Ypres salient as early as April 1917 prior to both actions. Both officers followed up their strategic reconnaissance with 'appreciations' concerning the employment of tanks in the Salient. Hotblack coloured maps to indicate the areas that he believed would be a hazard for tanks if extensive artillery barrages destroyed the drainage system. In order to keep a check on conditions Hotblack had air photographs taken daily. He worked out the spread of ill–drained areas which he transferred onto 'swamp maps'. 'A copy of each day's 'swamp map' was sent to GHQ. until we were instructed to discontinue sending them.'[39] There was, however, a degree of ambiguity in the reconnaissance reports. Hotblack's later report of 13 June indicated that in the Fifth Army operational zone 'the area cannot be considered good for the use of the present type of tank, as too much depends on the weather conditions.' However, he also indicated that 'the main ridge and side spurs should be suitable for tank movement except in *unusually* wet weather [his emphasis added]'.[40] Similarly Hotblack and Martel reconnoitred the Cambrai area weeks before the offensive was sanctioned. Both strategic and, later, tactical reconnaissance was undertaken covertly in order to ensure secrecy and both mislead the enemy and indeed the local British infantry units.

> 'Every effort was made to disguise the possibility of a tank attack in the Cambrai area. To this end, all badges were removed, all coming and going in the forward area was managed as inconspicuously as possible and plausible explanations and aliases were provided. Here some reconnaissance had already been carried out in the area by Hotblack and Martel, disguised (so the rumour ran) in beards and bowler hats as War Correspondent and Labour Member respectively.'[41]

Before the Battle of Amiens in August 1918 south of the River Somme, there was one occasion on which '… Major Hotblack and another British Officer met on the banks of the Luce and each made lengthy explanations which explained everything except the real reason they were there. Two days later these officers met at a conference on the operations, and congratulated each other on the plausibility of their several explanations. It had been no easy matter to pretend that it was quite a normal thing for them to paddle in the Luce in close proximity to the enemy'[42]

De facto expert

Liaison work was also a part of Hotblack's remit. In proposing that Hotblack's rank as major was made substantive, Major General Hugh Elles recorded that 'Lieutenant (Temporary Major) F E Hotblack, DSO, MC, Norfolk Regiment … has continued to render very valuable service. Notably during the recent operations on the SOMME the successful crossing of the LUCE River by Tanks under the very nose of the enemy was chiefly due to the detailed reconnaissance and arrangements made with the French on our immediate right by this officer.'[43]

Dr Jim Beach has noted that 'as the Tank Corps' lead intelligence officer … Hotblack became the BEF's de facto expert on German Tanks'.[44] Hence Hotblack may well have had a leading part to play in the preparation of SS203, *Instructions for Anti–Tank Defence (Provisional), February 1918* as a part of his responsibilities for 'protective reconnaissance' prior to the German March 1918 offensive.

A further responsibility was Hotblack's contribution to the training of ROs and tank commanders in reconnaissance work. He led 12–day courses for battalion reconnaissance officers, for instance, that aimed at disseminating experience and good practice. A further purpose was to supply battalion reconnaissance officers with the necessary materials for carrying out courses for their sections and tank commanders within their own units. This work kept him fully occupied until his war ended at the Hindenburg Line.

Post–war work

In 1920 he spent a year at the Staff College, Camberley where he 'Passed Staff College' (psc). In 1922 he was appointed brigade major of the 1st Rhine Infantry Brigade, Silesian Forces. The permanent formation of the Royal Tank Corps in 1923 led to Hotblack's

appointment as a General Staff Officer for military training. On 21 January 1932 he was appointed to the Staff College, Camberley until 19 December 1934. At the College he displayed a 'quiet sense of humour and was a kind and considerate instructor.' [45] He was due to be posted to the Armoured Car Company (ACC) in India but instead he became Military Attaché at the British Embassy in Berlin between 1935 and 1937 and was promoted to colonel (with seniority) on 5 May 1935. He witnessed demonstrations by the *Wehrmacht* at Kassel which included an all–arms battle involving tanks, anti–tank artillery, the air force, infantry and cavalry.[46] While in Germany he forwarded his knowledge of the growing German Panzer Corps to the War Office where it seems to have gathered dust. He was aide–de–camp to King George VI in 1939 but there is a suggestion that just before the outbreak of the Second World War he returned to Berlin.[47] He was promoted to brigadier and returned to France for a second time with the British Expeditionary Force on the staff of Field Marshal Sir John Dill. He soon returned home on his appointment as commander of the 2nd Armoured Division and his promotion to temporary Major General. As noted above, however, his military career came to a sudden and mysterious conclusion in 1940.

Hotblack in retirement. Courtesy Geoffrey Hotblack

Nonetheless, he made a full recovery after an operation and lived a long life dying at the age of 92 on 9 January 1979.

This account of the military career of Frederick Elliot 'Boots' Hotblack is based on the author's recent publication The Reconographers: Intelligence and Reconnaissance in British Tank Operations on the Western Front 1916–18 *published by Helion Press.*

References

(1) The Army Personnel Department in Glasgow refuses to release any of his medical details at the moment although the matter is still being pursued by the family.

(2) According to the *Northampton Mercury* on 9 February 1923 this was a 'fine record … not achieved by any other Captain in the British Army'.

(3) Letter of appreciation, undated, written by Brigadier George M O Davy, CB, CBE, DSO.

(4) These include the Brotherton Collection, the University of Leeds (BCUL), Intelligence Corps Museum & Archives, Chicksands (ICMA), Liddell Hart Papers, Kings College, London (LHCMA), Tank Corps Museum & Archives (TCMA), Imperial War Museum (IWM), The National Archives (TNA), The British Newspaper Library (BNL).

(5) LHCMA, 9/28/43, *Letter from Hotblack to Liddell Hart,* 22 March 1948.

(6) *Bury Free Press,* (St Edmunds), 7 November 1885, an advertisement for military boots especially 'Hotblack's Health Boots', BNL.

(7) *Reading Mercury*, 22 August 1903, BNL.

(8) Thomas G Fergusson, *British Military Intelligence 1870–1914* (MD: University Publications of America, Inc., 1984), pp. 178–181. Quoted in Jeffrey D Schnakenburg (major USAF, later colonel), *The Limits of Intelligence: the Role of Intelligence in Great Britain's Response to Technological and Doctrinal Surprise During World War 1*, (unpublished MSc thesis submitted to the faculty of the National Intelligence University, 2013), pp. 57–58. Col. Schnakenburg suggested to the present writer that 'had Hotblack been an American Hollywood would have made a film about him'. See also Jim Beach, *Haig's Intelligence, GHQ and the German Army, 1916–1918,* (Cambridge University Press: 2013), p. 68.

(9) ICMA, Chicksands, Bedfordshire, *Hotblack Papers*, Accession No. 199, p.1.

(10) Macdonagh was Sir John French's head of Intelligence.

(11) Ken Chadwick, 'Boots': The Call for Service (*The Tank,* Vol. 57, 1974, pp.513–517). This reference is not sourced by Ken Chadwick and there is no reference to this wound in his military papers kept at the Army Personnel Centre, Glasgow.

(12) *Sussex Express, Surrey Standard, and Kent Mail,* Friday, 11 June, 1915. The short report included a photograph of Hotblack in uniform.

(13) 'Barter's Force' was an ad hoc grouping of 1st and 47th Divisions formed on 13 May. It took its name from the CO, Major General Barter (GOC 47th Division. This wound was the first one to be officially recorded.

(14) ICMA, *Hotblack Papers*, (accession no. 514), ICMA, Hotblack, p.2

(15) Ibid, p.2.

(16) Ibid, p.2.

(17) Ibid, p.1.

(18) Ibid, p.1.

(19) Ibid, p.2.

(20) ICMA, Hotblack Papers. This has no accession number but is entitled: *RECOLLECTIONS – F E HOTBLACK. CONFIDENTIAL. BBC TV PROGRAMME ON TANKS.* The film, of course, was actually produced by Sir Richard Attenborough although based on the Joan Littlewood's stage production.

(21) TNA, WO158/836, *War Office, Military Headquarters; Correspondence and Papers, First World War, FRANCE, BELGIUM AND GERMANY, GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, tanks, 01 September1916–31 October 1916.* 'I' is Intelligence.

(22) TCMA, *Hotblack Papers, Box 1, 19876(2),* Letter to Martin Gilbert, 28 November 1968.

(23) Williams–Ellis, *Architect Errant*, (London Constable & Co. 1971), p.127.

(24) Fuller, J F C *Tanks in the Great War1914–1918* (Naval & Military Press Ltd: reprint of 1919 publication), p.xv

(25) Trevor Pidgeon, *Tanks on the Somme, From Morval to Beaumont Hamel*, (Pen & Sword Military: 2010), p.148.

(26) Williams–Ellis, *The Tank Corps*, p.37. At the time of these actions Hotblack was still a captain.

(27) Letter dated 30 January 1917 from Edward W Candler, solicitor, to Hotblack. A copy was forwarded to the present writer by Geoffrey Hotblack 'Boots' great nephew.

(28) Williams–Ellis, C & A, *The Tank Corps* (Country Life: 1919), pp.37–38.

(29) J F C Fuller, *Tanks in the Great War 1914–1918* (John Murray: 1920), p.59.

(30) F Mitchell, *Tank Warfare. The Story of the Tanks in the Great War* (T Nelson & Sons: 1933), p.86.

(31) C D Baker–Carr, *From Chauffeur to Brigadier* (Ernest Benn Ltd: 1930), p.193, p.211.

(32) Browne, *Tank in Action*, p.54.

(33) He meant Bermicourt.

(34) Brotherton Library (Special Collections), University of Leeds also the Imperial War Museum, recorded interview (9752).

(35) Majors Martel and Boyd–Rochford respectively observed 2 and 3 Tank Brigades.

(36) Maurice, R F G (ed.) *Tank Corps Book of Honour* (Naval & Military Press Ltd: reprint of 1919 publication), p.115.

(37) Maurice, p.208.

(38) Letter dated 25 August 1918 from Major General Hugh Elles to GHQ. Army Personnel Centre, Glasgow. Since the Centre is not allowed to release the medical history of individuals it was necessary to piece together details of his wounds from various other sources.

(39) Fuller, J F C, *Memoirs of an Unconventional Soldier*, (Ivor Nicholson & Watson: 1936), p.144.

(40) Ibid, p.133.

(41) Foot, S, *Three Lives*, (William Heinemann Ltd: 1934), p.190.

(42) Williams–Ellis, *The Tank Corps,* p.195.

(43) Hotblack papers, Army Personnel Centre, Glasgow.

(44) Jim Beach, British Intelligence and German Tanks, 1916–18, *War in History*, Vol. 144, pp.454–475.

(45) At the Staff College his students affectionately called him 'Hotboots'. Davy letter of Appreciation.

(46) Reported in *The Yorkshire Post,* 8 July 1935, BNL.

(47) Davy letter.

Great Scientists and Gunnery Innovation in the Great War

by William Van der Kloot

When the Great War began the British government – unlike France and Germany – did not bother to mobilise the nation's scientists. Months later, men well down the chain of command set out to find some desperately needed help. William van der Kloot examines the stories of two men who were called upon to do their duty for king and country by applying science as a means of waging war and tells how, through their successes, they enabled British science to become organised more effectively for the Second World War.

William Lawrence Bragg

In July 1915 Second Lieutenant William Lawrence 'Willy' Bragg (25), Royal Field Artillery (RFA), was ordered to London to meet a Royal Engineers colonel. [1] He had no idea why but once there he learned that the French were pinpointing hidden German guns from the sound of their firing. They recorded the times at which the 'boom' was heard at widely spaced, precisely surveyed points along the front. From the time differences they could zero in on the source. The most precise but expensive way to measure the times was to use a newly developed 'string galvanometer' which could simultaneously record the signals from six microphones on fast moving photographic film. Differences of 0.002 of a second could be measured: the time taken for a sound wave to travel a little over 2–feet. After weeks of persistent salesmanship the REs were permitted to order a galvanometer. Now they needed a physicist to operate it.

Bragg jumped at the chance. He was a 'sore thumb' in the RFA: an Australian physics prodigy – aged 19 when his family moved to Leeds, after which he studied at Cambridge – Bragg had never been 'one of the boys' and among ardent horsemen had assumed only a faked interest in snaffles and the like. Training to gallop into action to fire over open sights seemed positively antediluvian to him. He left the interview 'walking on air'. For help he was authorised to select a physicist and chose one who was by now a Royal Garrison Artillery (RGA) officer. After a short, inconclusive visit to a quiet French front, where neither side had enough ammunition to do much firing, they reported to Major Ewan MacLean Jack, the 42–year–old head of the topographical section at GHQ. [2] Jack supplied them with a car, a truck and ten men, including an officer's servant.

Ewan MacLean Jack, RE (1873–1951)

The Braggs. William Henry on the left, 'Willie' (William Lawrence) on the right

Tragedy and triumph

In October Bragg collected the galvanometer in Paris and transported it up close to GHQ. The rest of the needed parts took weeks to obtain: high quality electrical cable was especially scarce. As they were laying out the lines, sometimes under shellfire, Bragg received some shattering news: his younger brother had died of wounds on Gallipoli. He had a week at home to mourn with his father, mother, and younger sister. His father was the physicist William Henry Bragg; hereafter referred to simply as 'WHB' to avoid confusion, just as his daughter did in her affectionate memoir. [3]

In November 1915 there was better news: WHB and Bragg shared the 1915 Nobel Prize in Physics 'for their services in the analysis of crystal structure by means of x–rays'. [4] William Bragg is still the youngest Nobel laureate and they are still the only father–son team to share the prize. X–rays were discovered in 1895 when an invisible beam clouded a photographic film wrapped in black paper. Sensationally, the rays pass through flesh; within weeks they were being exploited in medicine. WHB's experiments suggested that the rays are streams of uncharged particles; his competitors thought they were waves, like light or sound. In 1912 German investigators found that when the beam passes through a crystal the photographic plate shows a reproducible pattern of dots. Particles would go straight through; waves create patterns. While his father's scientific star might have been waning, Bragg's was on the rise: a physics student at Cambridge, he wrote a simple equation that predicted the angles at which a beam of x–ray waves hitting the face of a crystal would be reflected. Testing the equation required the meticulous measurements that WHB was so good at. His instrument maker at Leeds built an apparatus to precisely tilt a crystal in an x–ray beam so that reflected energy could be measured. Father and son worked together, often long into the night. Their results fitted the Bragg equation perfectly, which enabled them for the first time to measure x–ray's wavelengths and also to deduce the structure of the atoms in simple crystals. The RE must have been delighted that they had selected him.[4]

Wash out

Bragg's team placed six microphones at carefully surveyed positions along a 3,000 yard baseline, which was about the same distance behind the front. Each microphone was wired to the galvanometer in a shed another 3,000 yards further back. Telephone wires connected the shed to two forward observation positions. When Bragg or the other observer saw a gun flash they phoned for the film transport to be turned on. Imagine their joy when they saw deflections on the film.

Major Jack enthusiastically ordered more galvanometers and planned for the creation of additional sections, each needing twenty–one men. Bragg submitted a list of physicists serving in the army to be seconded, for example

Charles Galton Darwin (a grandson of Charles) an ace Cambridge mathematician then in France censoring letters. Bragg also attended parades where he ordered men with a scientific background to step forward for interview. All new men were trained in Bragg's 'Section W'.

His letters home were despairing. Their first year 'was really a wash–out, though we tried to pretend it was not.' [5] Some traces gave reasonable locations for enemy guns; others were ludicrous, often appearing to be on the British side of the line. Soon they understood the problem. They could locate older howitzers whose muzzle velocities were below the speed of sound. But most guns fired shells at supersonic speeds. Their 'gun–wave' is very low frequency; the human ear cannot hear it but if close enough one would feel a gust on the cheek. The microphones performed almost as poorly as the ear. As the shell approached the listener it broke the sound barrier, generating a sharp 'shell–crack'; ears ached and microphones vibrated vigorously, wiping out any slight deflection from the following gun–wave. Desperate to find a solution, Bragg's team tried to work from the position of the shell–crack – a difficult and unreliable process.

Pinpoint

In 1916 Bragg obtained the services of Corporal William S Tucker, a former lecturer at Imperial College, London. He told Bragg about his experiments with a wind detector: a length of fine platinum wire with an electrical current flowing through it. A breeze that cools the wire decreases its electrical resistance, giving a faint electrical signal. They ran a fine wire the length of an ammunition box and cut a hole in one side. It responded brilliantly to gun–waves and barely reacted to gun–cracks. It took weeks to figure out how to shield the Tucker microphone from wind gusts by wrapping it in layers of camouflage netting and covering with a pile of brushwood.

Their calculations had to take into account the speed of sound, which varies with temperature, humidity, and wind direction. At first they laboriously obtained daily values with test explosions, but later the improved daily army meteorological reports gave all the information needed.

Now the team could localise all enemy guns, as long as the wind was not behind their backs – all too common on the Western Front. When the British artillery returned fire, sound rangers measured the distance between the explosion of their shells and the target. Bragg invented a plotter that enabled them promptly to tell the gunners how to adjust their settings to hit the target. When the Germans withdrew to the Hindenburg Line in 1917 sound rangers followed at their heels to see how successful they had been. They had pinpointed 87 per cent of the gun pits. The Royal Artillery judged sound ranging to be the major development in its work in the year 1916. A captured German order praised British sound ranging and ordered that whenever possible two guns should fire in tandem. [6] Sound rangers liked that idea – usually they could pinpoint both. [7]

Ideal opportunity

Sound ranging was hopeless during major battles. Along the Somme the sound rangers were stymied as soon as the 1,537 British guns opened the preliminary bombardment. In 1917 in Flanders, General Gough was so sanguine about the British advance on the first day of the Third Battle of Ypres that he insisted that the microphones be placed just behind the start line; hopeless for amassing reliable data. 'The experiences of the Passchendaele battle did a great deal to discredit the capabilities of sound ranging in a battle.' [8]

That autumn at Cambrai, however, the British had an ideal opportunity as their guns were silent until the massed tanks started to crawl forward. The attack began with British batteries blasting the German guns localised on the preceding quiet days; few German guns opposed the tanks or infantry tearing through their trench lines.

Yet there were still improvements to be made. Initially the microphones were placed at convenient locations spaced along the baseline and then surveyed. It was suggested to Bragg that it would be better to survey first to space them at equal distances from one another. He was sceptical that it would be worth the trouble, but when it was tried the 'computers' who read the film found them far easier to decipher.

Nonetheless Bragg remarked that he went through 'terrible times of ups and downs for you know what a fearful fellow I am for taking my tone from everyone round about'. Later he wrote that '… the British Army is getting a lot better and more reasonable'. Every two months he hosted a conference for representatives from every section. They presented technical papers, posed for a group photograph, and concluded with 'a binge of heroic magnitude'.

Accuracy

Bragg's father was also working on sound projects and specifically on hydrophones, listening for enemy submarines. It had taken WHB many months to become involved and to gradually acquire staff and facilities. Following a visit from Bragg he set up a string of six hydrophones, each a mile offshore along a 15–mile baseline. They localised undersea explosions excellently because acoustically sea water is much more uniform than the air. By using two stations 100 miles apart they pinpointed blasts between 0.5 and 200 miles away. Explosions were detonated to upgrade the accuracy of maps of the North Sea and even the monitors bombarding Zeebrugge during the attack on the U–boat pens in 1918 were pinpointed. If the film transport was running when a German mine went off they could locate the minefield. [9]

Before the great German assault in March 1918 their guns had been hauled secretly into position and opened up without firing registration shots, rendering the sound rangers helpless. Some had their equipment blown up, others had to retreat and fight as infantry but as soon as the front stabilised they set up again, some 40 miles behind their former positions. Bragg wrote home that they had had a 'hairy time'; two sound ranging officers were killed.

In April 1918 Bragg was assigned to GHQ to oversee all sound ranging and training, while still commanding Section W. Some pupils were American, because they had adopted the British system in preference to that of the French. Bragg regarded that as a coup. [10]

Bragg had a panoramic view of the next assault in Flanders from the top of Mount Kemmel. Below him Armentières was lifeless, smothered in German mustard gas to place it out of bounds for both sides. As the Germans pressed forward the sound ranging apparatus was taken back 7,000 yards to previously surveyed positions, they were in action in five hours.

Bragg was staying put. As soon as the Germans shifted their attacks to Champagne he finished building his four–hole golf course. Clubs were smuggled over. One evening he thrashed both of the RE colonels at GHQ, '… a very impolitic thing to do'. He was taking French lessons and hacking Jack's pony when his superior was away.

Greatest days

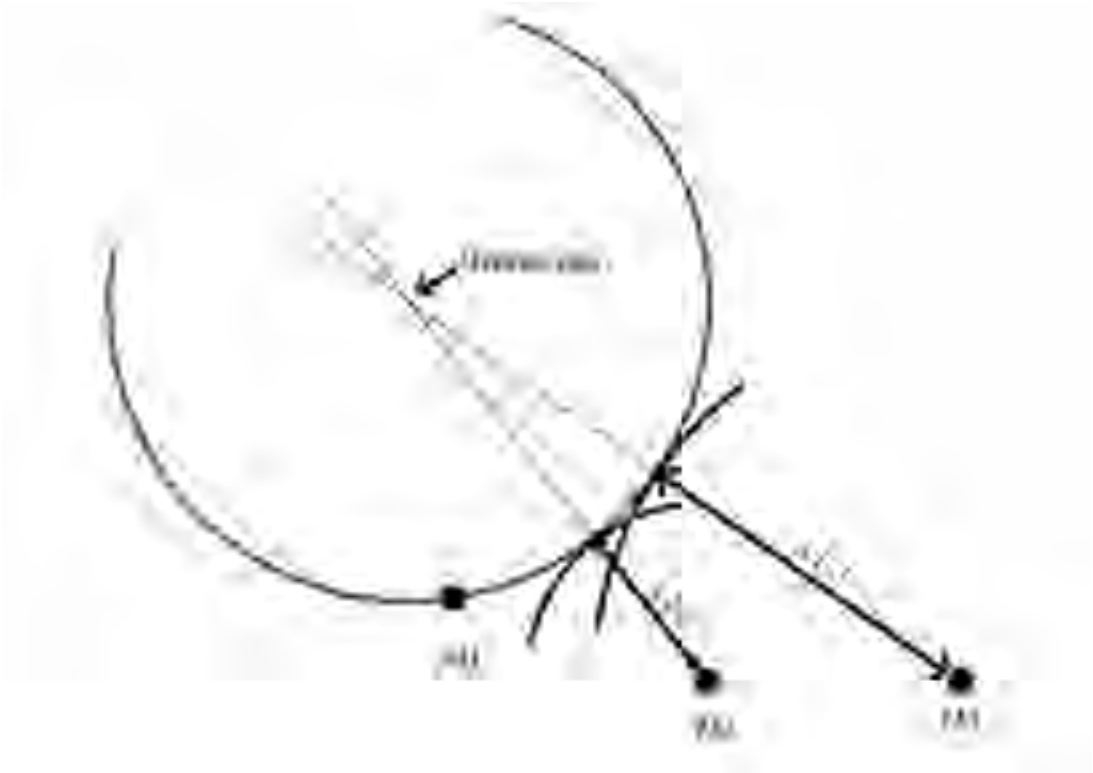
Sound ranging's greatest days came when the British attacked near Amiens on 8 August 1918. For days before the attack the region was shrouded in thick mist – windless – ideal conditions for sound ranging. The Germans relocated many of their battery positions but as soon as they fired a shot or two they were located. The RE had transformed artillery tactics. [11] Each newly–arrived British gun was placed into a precisely surveyed position. A short distance in front was a precisely surveyed pole, the bearing picket. The commander was handed a map board on which his gun's position was marked by a pin with a string tied to it. The map showed all known German gun pits. To fire at a target the string was positioned over it on the map. On top of the map was a scale showing the angle between the target and the bearing picket. The gun layers set their barrel at that angle. The length of string between gun and target was the distance the shell must travel. The angle that the gun's barrel must be elevated was calculated from the range table, taking into account each gun's muzzle velocity. Muscle velocity was measured by: 1). Firing on a test range to measure how far the shell travelled. 2) Firing the gun out over the Channel at Bragg's coastal site. The shell broke two wires 100 yards apart and the time elapsed between the breaks was measured with a galvanometer. 3). Sound ranger's measurements taken at the front of the time elapsing between the gun firing and the shell exploding.

With this groundwork the guns fired with a fair degree of accuracy from the map, without alerting the defenders with registration firing. (Some authors laud German map firing. [12] The British were not behind). At Amiens the British peppered the German batteries, many were never manned. Entire German units surrendered. For Ludendorff it was the black day in the history of the German army. 'H' sound ranging section had to move forward, they laid 40 miles of cable and were in action again after 56 hours.

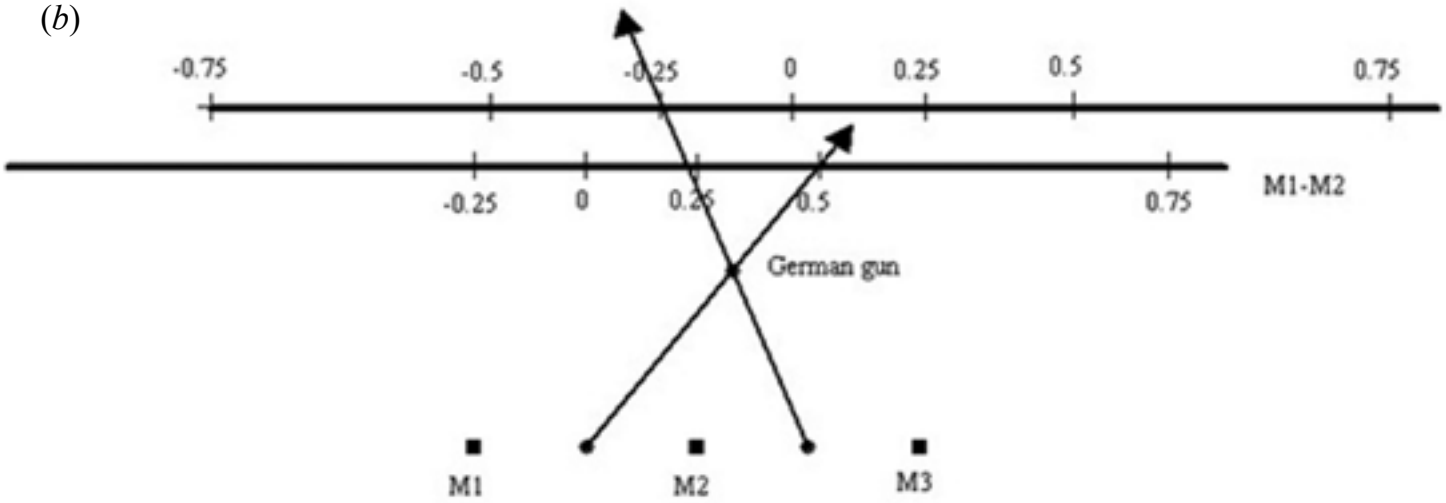
As the war wound down Bragg put out feelers for an academic job. He turned down two offers from the US, surprisingly because 'Americans are much too intelligent and too polite and I feel a clumsy idiot when I am with them.'

Major Bragg was demobilised in early 1919. He had been Mentioned in Dispatches three times and had been awarded a MC and an OBE. Years later as professor of physics at Cambridge he established the Laboratory of Molecular Biology, which used x–rays to unravel the structures of huge protein and DNA molecules. Ewan MacLean Jack became director of the Ordnance Survey. He should be remembered in

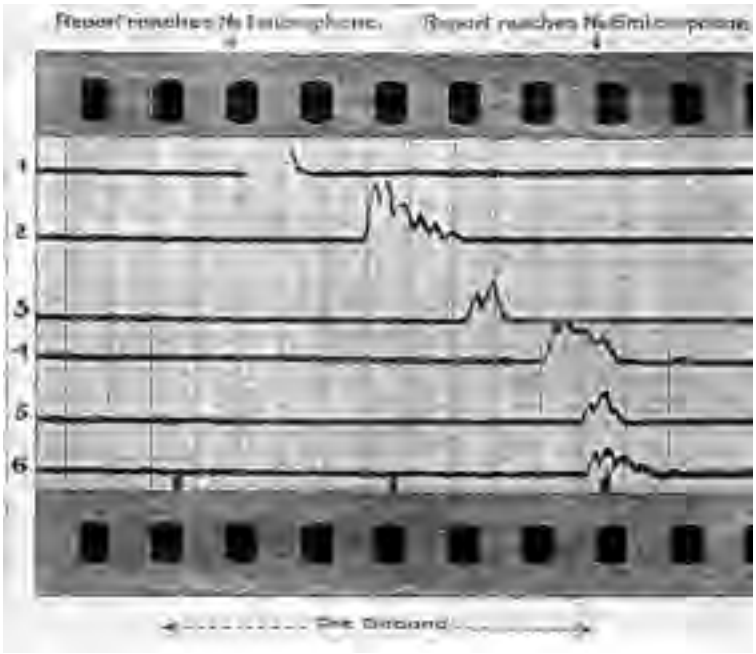
(*a*)



(*b*)



(*c*)



Sound ranging – (a) The basis of the method. The sound first reaches microphone 1 (M1). From the difference in time required for the sound to reach M2 and M3 the distances are calculated that the wave travelled during these intervals. Arcs with these distances as the radii are drawn on the map. The position of the gun is calculated by determining the centre of the circle that runs through M1 and touches the arcs drawn from M2 and M3. (b) A simplified view of Bragg's method for ready computation of the gun's position. The arrows represent strings that the operator positions on the scales at the top according the time differences between the arrivals of the sound at each pair of microphones. The gun is where the strings cross. (c) A section of a string galvanometer recording of the signals from six Tucker microphones when a German gun fired. Time differences as short as 5 ms were determined from the records

Sound ranging record at 10:59am on 11 November 1918 on the left; after 11:00am on the right

the histories for producing detailed maps of the territory behind the German lines in France and for developing techniques for map firing. Sound ranging, which was used almost unchanged in the Second World War, was a side–line.

Archibald Vivian (A V) Hill

David Lloyd George launched the Ministry of Munitions in mid–1915. Reacting to vociferous public condemnations of the feeble British scientific effort he appointed forty–eight eminent scientists to a Munitions Inventions Department (MID). H G Wells, a leading advocate for science, described them unkindly: 'A press clamour for invention and scientific initiative was stifled under a committee of elderly celebrities and eminent dufferdom …' [(13)] One 'duffer' was Horace Darwin (Charles's fifth son), a 64–year–old engineer who had founded the Cambridge Instrument Company, which manufactured specialised scientific equipment, and was an authority on aviation. [(14)]

On New Year's Day 1916 Darwin wrote to Captain Archibald Hill (aged 29), who was home on leave. [(15)] A first–rate rifle shot, he had been gazetted temporary captain in 1/Cambridgeshire Regiment (Territorial Force) from 8 October 1914. Darwin knew him as a Cambridge physiologist, a buyer of instruments, and as a lively, inventive brain. He asked Hill to give up a leave day to consult about training anti–aircraft (AA) gunners without firing in order to save scarce ammunition.

They met a few days later at an aerodrome where Darwin projected a faint image of a flying aeroplane on the floor of a portable camera obscura, as a step in calculating its position. Hill immediately suggested an improvement: they should have two large, absolutely–flat mirrors a mile apart. Observers would look at the mirrors through an open eyepiece a foot or two away. On a telephoned signal both would mark the target's reflection with an ink dot. Its coordinates would be measured from a grid engraved on the mirrors. Then it was child's play to calculate the exact position and height of the target; Hill casually jotted down the equations.

Better use

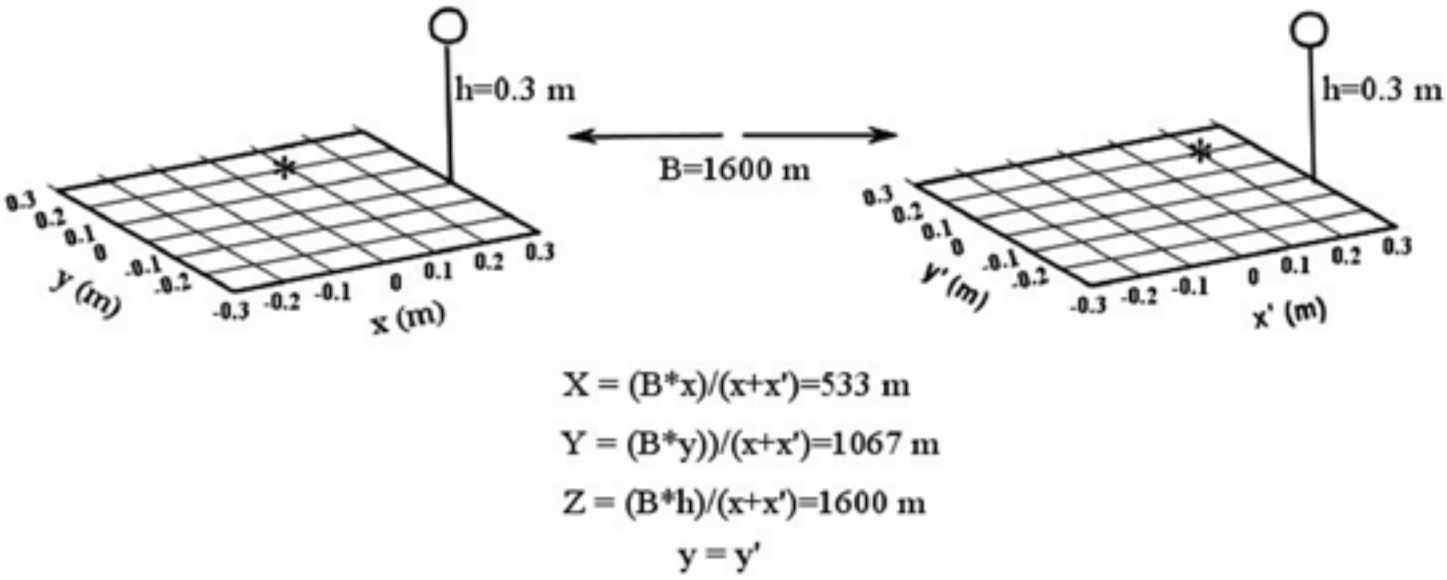
Darwin asked whether he would accept a transfer to the MID. Hill consented, aware that there were better uses for his brain than musketry, but later noted that 'that was not the sort of thing one talked about when other chaps were killed.' Darwin rush–ordered the mirrors from his company. Hill hunted in Cambridge for more hands and brains. A friend, Ralph Fowler, well–known as a golfer and a mathematician, could help for a few weeks. [(16)] He was a Royal Marine Artillery officer recuperating from a shoulder wound. Conscription ruled out men of military age. A 19–year–old mathematical prodigy, Arthur Milne, joined them. [(17)] They tested their mirrors on a tall telephone pole of known height. So far, so good.

Back at the airfield Hill recruited a retired lecturer in engineering and a distinguished, senior Cambridge mathematician volunteered. Their first try with an aeroplane was a triumph: their heights were almost identical to the altimeter reading. Typically, Hill bubbled over with ideas about all they might do. High on his list was to measure precisely where AA shells burst when fired with different fuse settings. They set up the mirrors at a harbour where a monitor was firing to test a new AA sight. After several frustrating weeks the weather broke so they obtained a series of points on the gun's trajectory. The explosions were far away from where the gun's range table predicted. With the mirrors they could prepare accurate tables for each type of gun firing each type of shell.

Hill was even more ambitious. He had made his name by fitting equations to physiological data. If they could fit their points with the ballistic equations they would understand the variables governing shell flight and be able to prepare accurate range tables much more readily. The mathematics involved was formidable. The approximate solutions used for ordinary gunnery are useless for firing at angles above 20 degrees. They would have to perform thousands of stepwise calculations which a modern PC can now achieve in seconds. They would start by guessing the air's resistance to the shell and how resistance varied with velocity and altitude, and then revising their guesses when the calculated trajectory failed to go through the points. But how to obtain the data with shells so precious a commodity? At a dinner party Hill met an officer from HMS *Excellent*, the gunnery school in Portsmouth Harbour, where they fired in order to train. They were invited there.

The inventors of the mirror method. A V Hill in 1914 on the left and Horace Darwin. Courtesy Churchill Archives, Cambridge and The Royal Society

(*a*)



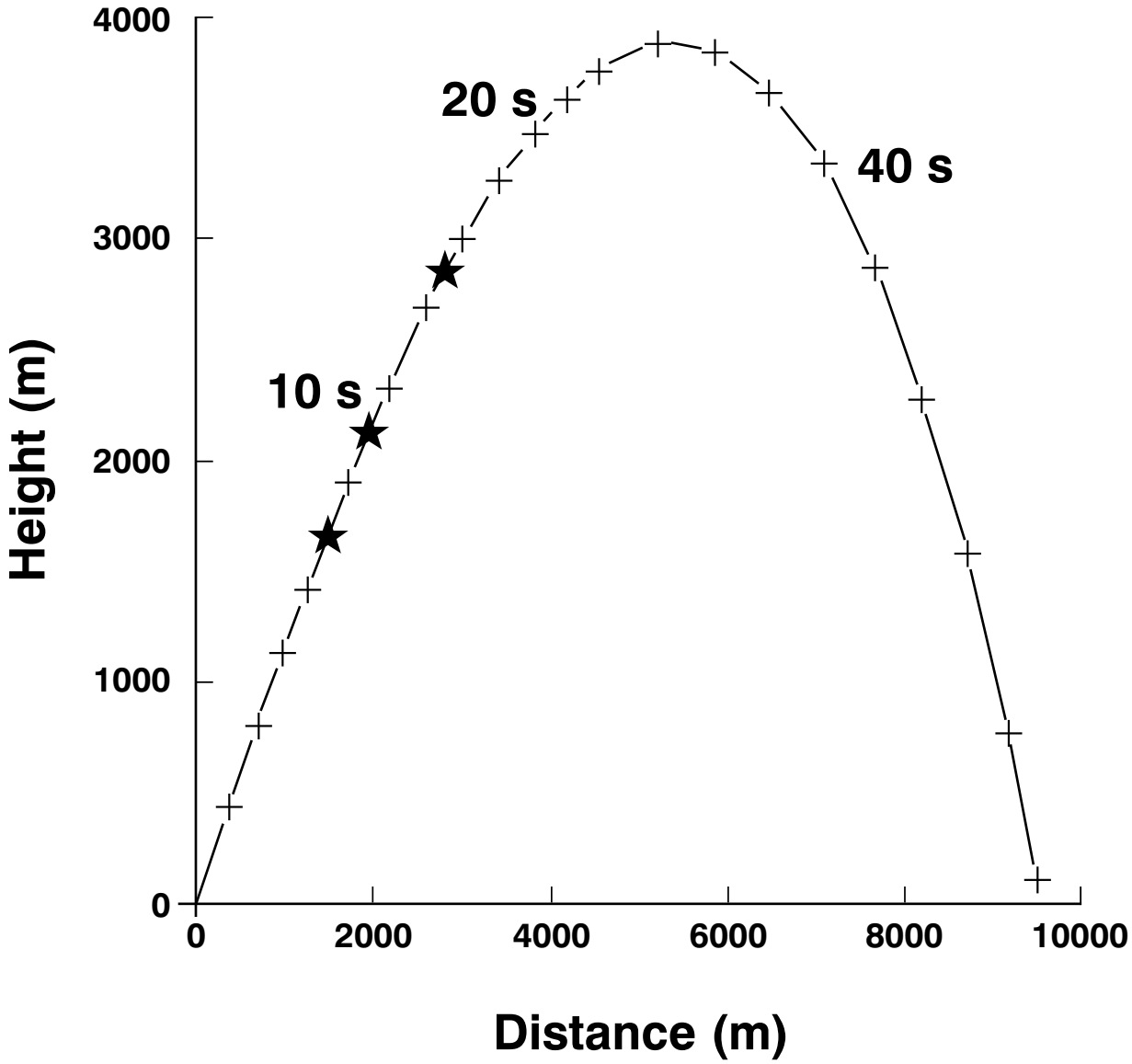
$X = (B*x)/(x+x') = 533$ m

$Y = (B*y))/(x+x') = 1067$ m

$Z = (B*h)/(x+x') = 1600$ m

$y = y'$

(*b*)



The Darwin–Hill mirror method and a major application. (a) Two mirrors are placed far apart. On a signal the observers look through their eyeholes and mark where a target in the sky appears on their mirror, indicated by the asterisks in the drawings. Its coordinates on the mirrors are used to calculate the three–dimensional coordinates of the target from the mirror on the left. (b) The calculated trajectory of a shell (+ − +) fired from an AA gun and the position at which three smoke shells with different fuse setting would explode (asterisk). The Brigands measured the locations of the shell bursts and then by trial and error determined the parameters for the trajectory that fits the points

The 'Brigands' at HMS Excellent*. From the left are H Richmond, Ralph Fowler, T Wren (a mathematician), Hill and Commander V L Bowring of the* Excellent*. Courtesy Churchill Archives, Cambridge*

Brigands

They team perplexed *Excellent*'s mess: an army officer, a marine officer, two elderly civilians and a lad. Some wag identified them as Hill's 'Brigands'; a label they proudly adopted. They were just getting underway when – despite their entreaties – Fowler was sent to a shipyard as a steel inspector. As a last resort Darwin went to the top, contacting First Lord Arthur Balfour, a college classmate; Fowler was back two days later.

Their guns fired out over the Channel. To locate bursts at all altitudes they used three mirrors, one half–a–mile distant and another 5–miles away. Hill struggled to unearth more brilliant lads and older men to man the mirrors and to pitch in on the tedious calculations. When they hit a snag Hill usually saw the way around it, while his wit and good humour kept them working together effectively.

While waiting for a gun to come into action they measured the velocities of clouds. They were astounded by the strength of the winds in the upper atmosphere. Hill purchased balloons sold for advertising; brigands followed their ascent to determine wind velocity and direction at many altitudes. They produced tables that enabled gunners to correct for wind. Since shells could ascend far higher than aeroplanes, Hill convinced the AA gunners to use heavier shells packed with more shrapnel.

At high altitude shells were often 'blind' – failed to explode – or exploded far later than stipulated by the fuse setting. The brigands' tables told gunners how to set fuses to detonate where desired. Blinds are caused by the spinning of the shell which packs down the gunpowder train in the fuse. By this time Hill had earned the clout to have a test gun made with rifling that halved the spin. Blinds were almost eliminated, wear was decreased, but trajectory was not altered. His rifling became standard.

During 1916 Zeppelins dropped 116 tons of bombs on Britain; 293 were killed. [(18)] On 2 September an attacker was transformed into a flaming hulk by a phosphorus–containing machine–gun bullet, invented by the physicist Richard Threlfall and fired by William Leefe Robinson, who was awarded a VC. Threlfall was knighted. Five more dirigibles were incinerated in the following weeks.

More brigands were recruited to work at other locations on sound detectors and searchlights. Hill sped between the workstations and to frequent meetings in London on his beloved motorcycle. When their youngsters were about to be conscripted Hill and Darwin succeeded in having them commissioned in the RNVR and stationed on *Excellent*.

Gotha threat

In 1917 the Germans attacked with multi–engine bombers – the Gothas. They flew over at 18,000 feet with crews breathing oxygen, but descended for their bomb runs, where they were deterred by AA guns and cables dangling from fixed balloons. Their final raid on London was in May 1918. All told six Gothas were lost to AA, five crashed en route, and thirty–two crashed while landing – difficult to handle without bombs as ballast. British civilian morale remained staunch so the Germans concluded that they were gaining less than they were losing. Thenceforth the Gothas were used on the Western Front. Nevertheless half of the British AA guns and searchlights were held in Britain.

Small groups of brigands were sent out to the field to use the mirrors to adjust sights and to monitor target practice now that the supply of shells was plentiful. Hill called them 'flying circuses'. They also studied AA gunners in action, an early example of operations research. The best tactic was to set up a wall of shrapnel blocking the route the intruders were heading. Gunners started with bursts of four rounds and then adjusted aim. If they succeeded the attackers almost invariably turned tail.

When the war ended Hill was a major with the OBE commanding about 100 brigands. Working with Hill and Fowler was superb training for the youngsters; Milne and several others became outstanding scientists.

Preparing for the Second World War

In 1920 Hill was awarded the Nobel Prize for Physiology and Medicine for measuring the heat produced by contracting muscles. [(19)] He and WHB were professors at UCL. Neither had forgotten the impediments that had made scientific war work so difficult. Bragg enunciated their goal in 1933 in a public lecture on the physics of sound:

'… we urge that both the Army and Navy must keep in touch with science, that there should be a skeleton corps of scientific men engaged in the study of the scientific problems of war, who would be a nucleus around which all of the sciences of the country would gather in time of war, ready to play their part at once.' [(20)]

His exact words are quoted here because they were echoed with fidelity in a report, published in the same year, of the Army committee that evaluated the lessons drawn from the last war:

'That is why we urge that both the Army and Navy must keep in touch with science, that there should be a skeleton corps of scientific men engaged in the study of the scientific problems of war, who would be a nucleus around which all of the sciences of the country would gather in time of war, ready to play their part at once. [(21)]Army and scientists were hand in glove. In 1935 WHB was elected president of the Royal Society, Hill was biological secretary. The Royal Society prepared a national register of scientists willing to serve and the armed forces employed promising, vacationing students to work on military problems. [(22)] Max Hastings has concluded that: '... mobilisation of the best civilian brains, and their integration into the war effort at the highest levels, was an outstanding British success story.' [(23)]

William Van der Kloot was born in the US and served in the US Navy at the tail end of the Second World War. He researched and taught at Harvard, Cornell, NYU, and Stony Brook University, where he became distinguished Professor of Physiology and Biophysics. He has published some 160 papers. Later in life he left the laboratory bench for the archives and libraries, where he learned how scientists had altered the course of the Great War. In the past decade the Royal Society has published five of his articles on this subject and he has published two books on other aspects of the War: The Lessons of War *(History Press) about Hitler and six other future world leaders in the war, and* World War I Fact Book *(Amberley).*

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Garrison Library

Lieutenant Colonel Bob Wyatt co–ordinates reviews in his capacity as *Stand To!* Review Editor.

All reviews – at or around 400 words in length – should be sent direct to him at 33, Sturges Road, Wokingham, Berks. RG40 2HG, UK, along with a good quality copy image of the front cover for illustrative purposes.

ANZAC – NO LESSONS HERE?

MELEAH HAMPTON

Attack on the Somme: 1st ANZAC Corps and the Battle of Pozières Ridge, 1916

Helion, (Wolverhampton Military Studies No. 19) 2016, £25.00, 230pp, 25 ills, 37 maps, Appendix (order of battle), bibliog, indices, (people, places, formations and units).

ISBN: 9–781–910–777–657

Forget any other book you have read about Pozières or Mouquet Farm (never Mucky Farm). I now know what my two relatives at Mouquet Farm REALLY experienced and why Captain John Crompton Sale deserved the first of his two MCs. Meleah Hampton's detailed analysis of the evidence of thousands of war diaries and pink signal papers in The Australian War Memorial and The National Archives, destroys the myth of the all–conquering Australians, who fought tenaciously at Gallipoli, through to the shock troops of 1918. It is refreshing to read a book that objectively criticises, from signals analysis, the actions of an army commander down to the level of company captain.

Each attack phase merits a chapter comprising an introduction, the preparations, the assault – all supported by excellent line maps – and finally a thoughtful and generally critical strategic analysis, gained from the signals and other evidence in over one hundred war diaries. Hampton – an historian at the esteemed Australian War memorial – reveals that basic orders and memoranda contained fundamental contradictions which were ignored with impunity. Here Hampton paints a picture of confusion which percolated all the way down from Gough, the Reserve Army commander, through to brigade and battalion staff. Gough clearly stated that 'preparation must be thorough and careful', yet preparation was always of secondary importance to 'push on as soon as possible' – if not sooner. Long casualty lists resulted, giving rise to an infamous statistic: this phase of the fighting witnessed the highest number of Australian casualties suffered in a single day throughout the entire war and severely depleted battalions were thus recirculated to the front line without sufficient respite.

Staff officers were out of touch with what had become a fluid front consisting of a landscape of shell holes and 'scrapes' which had once been trenches or 'objectives'. Rather than influencing planning, patrols had to confirm aerial photographs, made available in four hours. There was no 'learning curve' here: the earlier Somme experiences were perpetuated, except for the initiative of the subaltern at the front. Planning lacked foresight and the failed plans of 28 July 1916 were repeated in late August to the delight of the German defenders. Waves of soldiers attacked featureless and non–strategic objectives across 100m plus of no man's land following orders short on strategic coordination and at too short a notice. Fourth Army units attacked at different times to those of Reserve Army and commanding officers in adjacent Australian battalions modified brigade plans and went their own ways in their own time. When the 'experienced' but depleted 13/Battalion was inserted between two novice battalions of a different brigade, the novice battalions stalled leaving both 13/Battalion flanks naked and exposed. The casualties from enfilade fire resulting from the creation of this 'salient within a salient' were heart breaking. Throughout, Mouquet Farm was neither a strategic objective for the infantry nor the artillery. Troops entered the farm on two occasions before withdrawing, without realising it sheltered many German troops.

The Somme was an artillery war, yet the Australian artillery failed to support attacking troops. The artillery was inexperienced; they did not have enough guns, the guns were not registered on strategic targets or for counter battery work. Barrage 'lifts' failed: planned lifts never occurred, lifts landed behind and on the jump–off trench, in the middle of nowhere, beyond the objective but rarely on planned tactical objectives. Artillery staff remained defiant that their guns were not falling short. Both friendly and the effective enemy artillery destroyed trenches, caused catastrophic casualties and many cases of shell shock, which Meleah Hampton frequently and 'loudly' recognises.

Without artillery support, the waves went forward to assault a German defence already using the doctrine of firepower scattered amongst random shell holes rather than manned trenches that may have been hit by lucky artillery shots.

Although the capture of Pozières and Mouquet Farm were costly pyrrhic victories Meleah Hampton reveals the profound inefficiency of the Australian Corps of 1916 and contends that its staff decimated the Australian First and Second Divisions. (Fromelles is ripe for a similar analysis.) At one event I once defended the Australian generals and Monash in particular and from the back row a voice piped up: 'And there were some bad ones'. Professor Gary Sheffield was right. There were indeed some 'bad ones' at Pozières and Mouquet Farm: officers who did not absorb 'lessons learnt'. This is a quality 'must read' from Wolverhampton Military Studies.

Richard Crompton

AUSTRALIAN DETAIL

W T DUPEROUZEL

Somewhere in France: The Story of 4783 Private James Ross Duperouzel, 51st Battalion Australian Imperial Force

Privately published, 2016, £19.95 plus post, soft covers, 232 pp, many ills.

Copies of the book from the author: email william@duperouzel.org

ISBN: 9–780–954–43–419

Member William Duperouzel's uncle, who was killed between 14 and 16 August 1916 at Mouquet Farm, served as a Private in the 51st Battalion AIF. Ninety–nine men died, only twenty–two of them have a grave. James Ross Duperouzel is one of the seventy–seven men of his battalion with no known grave and this excellent book describes the search for an answer as to where his remains may be. The result is the most in–depth study of an individual casualty that I have seen, the book contains copies in colour of every record to have survived and it is interesting to note how much more has been preserved in the archives of Australia than is likely to be available to his British counterparts. Add to this the detail in the war diaries and we have enough material to make this interesting history of one man during the war.

It is very well presented with near perfect illustrations: not the muddy images so often seen in memorial books. This novel approach based on CWGC data uses other burial information to establish likely burial sites, yet his remains may still lie on the battlefield on which he fell. It is indeed a worthy memorial to James and his colleagues.

Bob Wyatt

THE RUSH TO WAIT

PETER DOYLE and CHRIS FOSTER

Kitchener's Mob: The New Army to the Somme

The History Press, 2016, £25.00 224pp, colour and monochrome ills throughout, bibliog., notes and refs.

ISBN: 9–780–750–964–951

This is far from the first book about Kitchener's 5.7 million strong new armies. The story is old and well known; since the publication of the immensely popular *The First Hundred Thousand* in 1915, prepared from articles by John Hay Beith MC and first published in *Blackwoods Magazine* (under the name Ian Hay) many works of varying quality have been published on the subject. *Kitchener's Mob* must, however, be considered quite the most handsome on the subject. Even before turning to the text it is impossible not to be struck by the book's exceptional design, elegant typography and its copious well–chosen colour and monochrome illustrations. Add an exceptional bibliography, high quality printing and binding then at £25.00, it represents terrific value for money.

The quest for quality by the publisher and authors, military historian Peter Doyle and artist/photographer Chris Foster FRSA, is obvious on every page. Whilst the work's oversize format (10"x 10") may be awkward to shelve – and, it must be said, hard for this reviewer to manoeuvre in bed – page size has ensured the reproduction of large illustrations, both old, some handsomely colourised and many newly taken to illustrate uniforms, badges, recruiting posters, mementos and impedimenta. The copy is well written and cohesive.

Kitchener's Mob is a worthwhile addition to any serious collection of books about the British Army and one which it would be impossible to offer anything but the highest commendation.

David Filsell

JUTLAND

JOHN BROOKS

The Battle of Jutland (Cambridge Military Histories)

Cambridge University Press, 2016, £31.49 (e–book £20.28p), 584 pp.

ISBN: 9–781–107–150–140

There will, undoubtedly, be books published in the future about the Battle of Jutland, being, as it was, the principal naval engagement of the Great War. Whether they will have very much more to say on the subject after John Brooks' volume is debatable. The book opens with a discussion of the various technologies employed on either side, including an in–depth discussion of both the methods of signalling available to Jellicoe and Beatty and the problems with using such means, especially flags, to control the movements of large fleets of warships spread across huge tracts of ocean. There is also a description of the doctrine of massed torpedo attack and how it was countered, including the fact, of which this reviewer was unaware, that HMS *Iron Duke* was fitted with a trial version of the 'Bunbury Enemy Torpedo Calculator' a mechanical 'computer' that calculated the degree of turn required to avoid an enemy torpedo. In this discussion Brooks does, however, appear to have confused the British 'Extreme Range' 21–inch torpedo, which had limited availability at Jutland, with the capability for all British 21–inch torpedoes to reach a range of 17,000 yards.

When discussing the battle itself, Brooks' mastery of sources is impressive. Apart from the inclusion of all British signals, including those made to and by the lighter forces (as well as the German signals traffic available in mainly secondary sources), Brooks has examined all available logs and navigation charts for the British warships involved as well as the Range and Rate charts, where these are still available. The latter two show the estimates of both the range, and its rate of change, of enemy ships, and provide some ability to cross–check the navigation logs. Brooks uses these for a number of purposes, but the most interesting is possibly to provide additional evidence as to whether HMS *Lion* (and the following Battlecruiser Fleet) carried out a 360 degree turn during what is known as the 'Run to the North'.

Brooks' analysis of the destroyer night actions is comprehensive and the descriptive part of the book then covers the morning following the battle and the events and decisions that enabled the German High Seas Fleet to regain their bases without a renewal of the action. The final third of the book contains a review of the impact that tactics and technology had on the final result of the battle, a discussion as to whether the decisions made by the senior commanders were reasonable, based on the information they had available to them at the time. That includes a description of the stratagems and dissimulations that both Jellicoe and Beatty used in the days and years after the battle to justify their actions and refute criticism. Both were guilty of modifying the truth, but Jellicoe did so far less blatantly than Beatty.

Overall, this is a book that everyone with an interest in the principal naval battle of the Great War should read.

Niall Ferguson

A LONG WAIT

RANDALL NICOL

Till the Trumpet Sounds Again: The Scots Guards 1914-1919 in Their Own Words

Vol. 1 Great Shadows August 1914 – July 1916, Helion, £30.00, 608pp, 96 ills, 16 coloured maps, alphabetical list of other ranks mentioned in text – deaths and POWs denoted, select bibliog, 4 indices: people; places, military units and formations, general and miscellaneous terms.

ISBN: 9–781–911–096–061

Vol.2 Vast Tragedy August 1916 – March 1919, £37.50, ix, 447pp, 86 ills, 32 maps, index

ISBN: 9–781– 911–096–078

The preparation of the history of the Scots Guards in the Great War has an unfortunate history. Wilfred Ewart (who served with the regiment in France from February 1915) was accidentally shot in Mexico City during the 1923 New Year's Day celebrations after he had completed two chapters. (Fortunately, he had already written his memoirs, *Scots Guard*, published in 1934 – still available from Amazon – and a great war novel, *Way of Revelation,* which was highly regarded by Henry Williamson). Authors considered suitable, and available, to write a competent regimental history were rare in the post Great War rush to publish regimental records. Nevertheless, the regimental committee appointed the prolific 77–year–old military writer F Loraine Petre to complete the task. Petre died in July 1925 and the short volume was completed by Major General H Cecil Lowther an officer who had seen action in France. It has been judged the poorest of the Guards Regiments histories.

The Scots Guards' thirty Great War battle honours range from the Retreat from Mons to the Sambre – via Ypres, Loos, the Somme, Cambrai, Arras and the Hindenburg Line. Randall Nicol's two deeply researched volumes o*f Till the Trumpet Sounds Again* record the events at all of these locations and many others. The author, a former Scots Guards officer, employs the regiment's own extensive archives, its war diaries and much previously unpublished contemporary correspondence; both that of officers and those in the ranks – some semi–literate. Included are the generally ignored experiences of PoWs, those wounded, missing and who died in action. The author offers readers a comprehensive day–by–day, trench–by–trench, billet–by–billet account of the regiment's Great War service. The realities of battle are supported records of the 'rush to wait', tedious and wearing days in the trenches, in reserve, at rest, on long marches, in billets and fatigues in foul conditions.

The experiences of no single regiment or

battalion can typify the toil and trouble faced by the British Army in the Great War and this work contains things which surprise and are often overlooked. The huge levels of trench foot early in the war – then regularly diagnosed as frostbite – and the toll of everyday ailments was huge. They ranged from infections to broken bones, strains, sprains and a thousand other ailments. Neurasthenia, recently judged by one author to be an officers' only diagnosis, was applied to officers and other ranks alike in the Scots Guards. Men died in 'military' accidents – grenade training caused regular fatalities and not uncommonly killed groups of participants. A live cartridge placed by pure fluke amongst dummies in a practice Lewis pan killed a watching soldier.

Equally unexpected are the records of the considerable time – after being wounded – officers and other ranks alike spent in the UK before returning to the line; either to their original battalion or, frequently, to its sister unit. Other surprises included the number of officers judged to be performing below par, who, through stress were sent home to be rested, the large number of officers 'posted–in' to the Scots Guards from 'ordinary' line regiments, the number of non–commissioned officer promoted from the ranks and the rapidity with which bright young soldiers moved through non–commissioned ranks of the Guards – in one instance from private to sergeant in six months.

The contemporary first–hand accounts about everyday life here put the accounts in many rehashed 'voices' works about 'Tommy's war' in the shade. Figures of losses are generally recorded in regimental histories and officers inevitably gain more extensive reportage. Here they all are detailed, officers and other ranks, day by day. Whilst no work of sociology, *Till the Trumpet Sounds Again* places those serving with the Scots Guards in true and contemporary context, including civilian careers, places of birth, marital status, even tattoos and records of military 'crimes' and punishment. Nicols reveals the de–skilling suffered by the entire BEF in 1914 and 1915 and the loss of trained officers and men alike which affected competence at virtually every level until after the Somme. His account of the Scots Guards' actions at Ypres in 1914 must be judged as being as comprehensive as could possibly be written. It is no easy task to reveal detail of this muddled 'soldiers battle'. It is one which has defeated many military historians. Equally the account of the Christmas Truce is fascinating, fresh and detailed, as is that of the spluttering Christmas peace initiative of 1915 which resulted in court martial for two Scots Guards unable to prevent fraternisation.

This then is no normal, traditional regimental history, no retread of previously published works, although it draws on them shrewdly. Nor, like many regimental histories, is it the result of committee diktat or a top down work detailing the objectives set by the staff. *Till the Trumpet Sounds Again* is the story of 'everyman' and 'every officer' in an elite regiment rendered in sharp perspective and with historical awareness and understanding. The two volumes must be judged the best and most exhaustive regimental history in the Great War. It is fairly priced and well produced by Helion and was, quite possibly, the best Great War work of 2016.

Bob Wyatt and David Filsell

BREAD LINES

JEFFREY B MILLER

Behind the Lines

Milbrown Press 2014, £15.00, 441pp, ills (in page), sources throughout, notes and refs, index.
ISBN: 9–780– 990–689–300

In the years after 1914, the story of Belgium in the Great War received scant coverage in Britain. After the German invasion, the flood of refugees to Britain and France, the heroic decision to open the sluice gates and the German War Crimes – Louvain and the shooting of so called 'Francs–Tireurs' out of hand for example – events in the nation between 1914 and 1918 remain pretty much a closed book in Britain. Yet what followed the invasion, the destruction and loss of life and the canal and rail infrastructure, was cruel, with widespread homelessness and restrictions imposed by an unforgiving military German government. This included the almost total theft of agricultural production and livestock and restrictions of movement. So harsh were the measures that, almost immediately, they triggered the real risk of starvation for the population. In effect German callousness in 1914 paralleled much of what was to follow in occupied countries under the Nazis.

The alleviation of genuine starvation in Belgium in 1914 was prevented only by the efforts of a neutral American, Herbert Hoover – later President of the United States – when he created the Commission for Relief in Belgium (CRB). *Behind the Lines*, the first of three planned volumes privately published by American author Jeffery B Miller, tells of the creation of this effective international non–government organisation and those involved in preventing Belgium's starvation and in bridging gaps – administrative, political, practical and financial – between the Germans and the allies and those involved in food distribution.

By 1914 Hoover, an established international businessman – short on words and graces – emerges as a highly effective thinker and operator, a man of massive practical compassion who managed, communicated and controlled the CRB with total and professional objectivity. Not least his command and management of propaganda on behalf of his objectives was groundbreaking and internationally effective. It ensured worldwide press coverage for the organisation's aims, objectives and successes from its very formation. Not least in face–to–face meetings, Hoover successfully forced, even blackmailed, Britain and the irascible Lloyd George – who, like Churchill, considered civilian aid to Belgians akin to offering aid and comfort to the enemy – into enabling CRB's work to continue in late 1914. Many other all–American heroes emerge from this story, the majority extremely young Rhodes scholars at Oxford whom Hoover deliberately selected for work on the ground in Belgium and who created order from chaos.

In this first volume the author's research into the 'who', 'what', 'when', 'where', and 'why' of the organisation, and the events and effects of war on the Belgian population, underline his research and knowledge of events. A harsh critic might judge the work overlong, indeed so dense is the detail that until reaching the end of the book I was entirely unaware that it was the first of three planned works of a story fascinating in its telling of the people – Americans, Belgians and Germans alike – whose efforts for good or ill it catalogues. *Behind the Lines* is a book about aspects of the Great War, of which, I suspect few British readers are aware.

David Filsell

IT BECAME HARDER

ALEX REVELL

Victoria Cross: WW1 Airmen and their Aircraft, (expanded second edition)

Aeronaut Books, large format, 2016, £24.99, 156pp, ills throughout (in page), colour plates.
ISBN: 9–781–935–881–414

In his introduction, Alex Revell makes his views clear; that as the war continued the award of the Victoria Cross for aviators became more difficult to earn. Flyers who later matched William Leefe Robinson's Zeppelin success gained the DSO. The author notes that this was '... no mean honour in itself, but not the VC', and adds, 'Robinson was fortunate in that he was the first airman to destroy an airship over England'. Head on, the author also faces the dilemma of facing up to the gloss coated and long accepted opinions of VC flyers' feats. He accepts that claims and depictions of some are distortions, and favours newer research above past and long–accepted writing. Most notable is the strange award of the Victoria Cross to William Bishop VC, since recent re–evaluations of his claims indicates that they were not firmly anchored in fact. Equally the reported actions of Lieutenant Alan Jerald VC – made by others – do not seem to pass muster when subject to modern archival research.

Revell records the careers of the nineteen flyers, all winners of the gunmetal cross, four of whom gained the award posthumously. In addition to the well known – Ball, Hawker, McCudden, and Mannock – there are others like Captain John Liddell, Sergeant Thomas Mottershead, Lieutenant Gilbert Insall and Captain Ferdinand West whose wartime service

and bravery are less well remembered or recalled. I have previously expressed my esteem for Alex Revell's carefully researched books. This one offers taught biographies of the subjects' lives and military careers alongside well–chosen illustrations, in addition to profile and plan view illustrations – in colour – of the aircraft they flew in action.
David Filsell

TANKS – FOR THE MEMORY

STEPHEN POPE

The First Tank Crews: The Lives of the Tankmen who fought at the Battle of Flers Courcelette, 15 September 1916

Helion 2016, £26.95, 400 pp, ills throughout.
ISBN: 9–791–910–777–771

Trevor Pidgeon self–published his seminal work *The Tanks at Flers* in 1995. His decision was dictated by the fact that no publisher was prepared to contemplate publishing his two oversize volumes in the form the author wished. Trevor was simply unprepared to edit the work into the smaller book the publishers considered saleable. He would not countenance small–scale reproductions of the twelve large scale maps for volume two or any reduction in the number of colour and monochrome pictures for the work. Since his death the book has been out of print and copies are coveted rarities for those who consider the first tanks to be the big boys' toys of choice in the Great War.

Whilst Stephen Pope, author of *The First Tank Crews*, clearly owes much to Pidgeon's work – which he fully acknowledges – his book embarks on a far less technical view of the first tanks at war. It is therefore important, before purchasing this book, to be clear – this work is not about the technology or the minutiae of combat at Flers and if you are a tank 'completist', or if armoured combat and technology drives your reading, then this may not be a book for you. Instead Steven Pope's detailed approach concentrates on those who crewed the vehicles at Flers. It is the story of the officers and men who operated the tanks, died in them or were wounded in them; the young men who joined the Motor Machine Gun Corps and took unreliable, untried weapons into action and suffered both the immediate and long term consequences of their war.

Like Trevor Pidgeon, Steven Pope is an undaunted researcher and a writer who presents his, often surprising, conclusions with skill and fascination. *The First Tank Crews* is no simplistic review of battles fought, lost and won, it is above all a highly–detailed work of memorial to the tank pioneers who crewed and directed the tanks in their first battle, their lives, deaths and for the more fortunate, their return to civilian life. Together, Pidgeon's and Pope's books offer a fascinating perspective on the fight for Flers and the 'tankies' who fought it. That Steven Pope's publisher is Helion is in itself a guarantee of textual, illustrative and publication quality, good proof reading and sensible pricing. That the publisher is also republishing *The Tanks at Flers* after 21 years is a bonus for anyone who shares a fascination with the tank at war and the men who fought in them.
David Filsell

KILDARE BARRACKS

MARK MCLOUGHLIN

From the Royal Field Artillery to the Irish Artillery Corps

Merrion, an imprint of Irish Academic Press, 2016, 2 appendices, 30 ills, bibliog, index.
ISBN: 9–781–908–928–467

This is an important view of Anglo/Irish relationships written in two parts, which are the British military in Ireland from 1902–1922 and the Irish from 1922–1998. These were momentous times, starting in the era of Field Marshal Lord Roberts, the C–in–C in Ireland until his posting to sort out the Boer War, through the Easter Rising and the dramatic changes to establish an independent Irish Army, the Civil War, the Curragh Incident and the stabilising of the Irish Government. The British Army by 1900 had benefited from great changes to its Victorian heritage with the Cardwell Reforms and the huge improvements to the life of the soldier, whether in India or the United Kingdom.

The author gives an excellent record of the building of a then modern barracks for the Royal Field Artillery in Kildare. The author's attention to detail about the integration of the military with the local community – married artillerymen in married quarters, men returning from India and veterans from the Crimean and Boer Wars – reveals a happy life style. The well–organised, disciplined military associated with the highly–skilled artillery gunners and all the support activities from blacksmiths, saddle/harness makers and logistics are covered and linked well with the activities of the local community by sports, trade and inter marriage. Gunners cheered off by the locals in August 1914, were amongst the first in action at Le Cateau later the same month.

The second part is inevitably more complex after the Easter Rising but there was a relatively smooth handover to the fledgling Irish Army, with the exception of the murder of Lieutenant John Wogan–Brown, as the British withdrew in 1922. There is plenty of fine detail of the growth of the Irish Field Artillery and in spite of hostility from some senior officers; new units were replicas of their British counterparts. The change from horse power to motor traction also followed British practice. The 'Emergency', whilst the Second World War raged around them, is an aspect of history as seen from two different points of view.

The Kildare Barracks, closed in 1998, was the centre of so much life and history and the real focus of this readable book. Perhaps a map of Ireland would have helped to locate the gunnery range at the Glen of Imaal!
John Battersby

SEDBERGH HERITAGE

DIANE ELPHICK (Ed.)

Sedbergh and District 1914–1918. But who shall return us the children?

Sedbergh and District History Society, 2016, limited number free at £5.00 postage from SDHS, 72a Main Street, Sedbergh, Cumbria. LA10 5AD, soft covers, 355pp, many ills, index.
ISBN: 9–780–956–430–328

Through the generosity of Heritage Lottery funding this book brings together a wealth of historical sources spanning a wide rural area in the Dales of the old West Riding of Yorkshire and from Hawes in the North Riding into Westmorland. Details of the first casualty – Joseph Smith – are given on p.58 with a portrait and a good range of data including extracts from local papers and this is followed by 112 biographies, some highly detailed, covered by a separate index. Some of these obscure sources give descriptions of battles and events not described elsewhere and are reproduced here for the first time since the appearance of the original source. In addition to the letters home there are details of hospitals, home front and agriculture, good coverage on conscription and conscientious objection together with proceedings of local courts and tribunals. Details and pictures are given of all the local memorials making all–in–all a thoroughly useful record.

An interesting point arises with regard to Sedbergh School which caters for boarders, many, if not most, of whom (250 Old Boys and four Masters died) were non locals. In this book only the school memorial is described, being something of a feature in the town, but not the names of the Old Boys, which would seem inappropriate in a book dealing with those who lived locally. The solution in this and similar volumes would seem to be the mention of memorial volumes of the school in the bibliography. As a matter of interest the school did have a sumptuous Roll of Honour to which people may like to refer. I can supply details for anyone interested.
Bob Wyatt

DUDLEY'S HEROES

JOHN HALE

Dudley's 1914 –1918 War Memorial and the 720 Men Commemorated

The Black Country Society, £10.00 + £3.20 p&p. 154 pp, ills throughout. http://www.blackcountrysociety.co.uk/publications/ Also available at Dudley Archives & Local History Centre, Tipton Rd, Dudley DY1 4SQ or via Michael Pearson, The Black Country Society, 54, Fairmile Road, Halesowen, West Midlands. B63 3QB.

ISBN: 9–789–904–015–966

This is a worthy addition to the growing ranks of books concerned with local war memorials. It is also an important contribution to the history of Dudley, a community very much at the heart of the Black Country. John Hale is an employee of Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council and member of the Wolverhampton branch of the WFA. A few years ago, seeing the memorial for the first time, having lived in the borough all his life and being unaware of its existence, he decided it would be a suitable topic for further investigation. Originally the author compiled the information 'for my own private amusement' as he states in his foreword. Fortunately that information is now more widely available in this fine book. In his introduction, Roy Peacock, the Project Director of the Black Country Society, writes 'The outcome gives a mini–biography of each individual but together they provide an interesting portrait of Black Country society at that time.'

Hale sets out clearly the approaches he used to compile this volume and for anyone considering a similar project this work is a useful guide to a possible strategy. His meticulous methods have helped to expose a number of errors on the war memorial. Beyond the potted biographies for each man – some of course more detailed than others depending on the information available – he has provided a useful analysis indicating matters such as the number of men commemorated who served with the local Worcestershire Regiment, which streets in the area suffered more than others and why three of the fallen served with 10/Lincolnshire Regiment – the Grimsby Chums.

This is a work in progress. Sixteen of the 720 men on the memorial have yet to be identified and he only has partial information on four others. It is to be hoped that one result of this book being available now is that members of the local community will come forward to contribute more details to the stories of the lives outlined in its pages.

Chris Twiggs

POCKET SOMME

SARAH WEARNE

Epitaphs of the Great War – The Somme

Uniform Press, 2016, £10.99, 132 pp.

ISBN: 13: 978–1910500521

As the author points out in her foreword, Twitter limits authors to 140 characters whilst the Imperial (now Commonwealth) War Graves Commission limited relatives of the dead of the Great War to only sixty–six on their loved one's headstone. Sarah Wearne has selected 100 epitaphs covering deaths during the almost five months of the Battle of the Somme for this volume. The entries – one per page – include the well–known; men like Walter Congreve and no less than three members of the Asquith/Tennant family group but the majority were just ordinary soldiers.

Below each inscription and identity the author gives the circumstances of the individual's death, where known, either from the unit war diary, letters to the relatives, or similar, and discusses the origin and possible reason for the inscription – and a translation for those in a foreign language ranging from Latin through Welsh and Finnish to Zulu. Lines from poems feature frequently but are often from verses less well known today. Such inscriptions are more meaningful if the reader knows the lines that follow those selected, such as that for Serjeant Francis Hawes, RGA, in Hersin Communal Cemetery Extension. His epitaph: 'I have felt with my native land I am one with my kind' comes from the end of Tennyson's lengthy poem *Maud* (now best known for the line 'Come into the garden Maud'. The line following that used for the inscription is, 'I embrace the purpose of God, and the doom assign'd'.

It is such insights into the social history of the time that make this volume so interesting. The book is linked to a Twitter account which intends to 'tweet' an epitaph every day of the centenary and to the author's website: (www.epitaphsofthegreatwar.com). A volume to slip in one's pocket perhaps when touring the Somme.

Niall Ferguson

GUN ACTION

PAUL COBB

Battery Action! The Diary of a Gunner 1916–19

Reveille Press; 2015, £19.99, 390pp, 28 b/w photos, 11 maps, index, bibliog.

ISBN: 9–781–908–336–644

Paul Cobb, WFA Wiltshire Branch Chairman, has performed a great service to those interested in the Royal Artillery of the Great War. He has edited and arranged to have published the diary of Sydney Hall, a gunner who served in the Royal Garrison Artillery. Sydney Hall volunteered in July 1916 and was trained as a battery commander's assistant. He went to France in January 1917 with a new army unit, 282/Siege Battery (282/SB), equipped with motor tractor towed 8–inch guns. He served with 282 as a 'spare' man, undertaking fatigues and filling in on the guns. 282/SB provided artillery support for the Arras, Messines and Third Ypres offensives.

In November 1916 he dropped a 200lb shell on his foot while working a gun. Fortunately no bones were broken. His diary describes his progress through the medical evacuation chain to 14 Convalescent Camp at Trouville. In December, Hall judged fit, was posted to a Regular Army unit – 81/SB – equipped with horse drawn 6–inch, 26cwt howitzers, in the Ypres Salient. 81/SB moved to the 5th Army area near Bapaume in late February 1918 and fought in the March *Kaiser's* Battle, and in the advance to and breaking of the Hindenburg Line in the last 100 days. Hall describes in detail many of the technical aspects of heavy artillery, for example, the calculations required to adjust a gun's range for factors such as barrel wear and air temperature. He also covers how an artillery battery was organised and describes the various tasks of each speciality, such as a signaller.

Paul Cobb gives a brief introduction to each chapter setting the scene and provides footnotes expanding some detail and giving information on people and events. In the opinion of this reviewer *Battery Action* is the best book he has read on the nitty–gritty of how Great War artillery worked. Moreover, it is the only book he is aware of, written by a Great War gunner; the rank not a generic term. Written from the perspective of the artillery's lowest rank, it is similar in scope and coverage to Frank Richards's *Old Soldiers Never Die*. For anybody interested in the Royal Artillery it is an essential and enjoyable read.

Geoff Spring

NOTICE TO BATTLEFIELD VISITORS

Wartime relics, such as shells, grenades etc are usually in a highly dangerous condition and still cause death and injury. Any such object found during visits to the battlefields should be left strictly alone. Also, most of the land is private property and must be respected as such. Strict laws (which are being enforced) apply in respect of the collection and export of battlefield detritus.

THE LAST HURRAH

DAVID BLANCHARD

Aisne 1918 (Battleground Europe Series)

Pen and Sword, £14.99, 280 pp maps and ills throughout, index.

ISBN: 978–1783–377605–6

As well as a broad interest in the Great War, many of us devote our time to specific areas as our main interests; in my case 1914, senior commanders and the literature of war. In consequence some aspects of the war escape one's close attention. Until now the actions on the Aisne in 1918, triggered by the German Operation *Blücher–Yorck,* (which was planned to be followed by the cancelled Operation *Gneisenau*) fitted neatly in the box labelled 'ignorance'. Not only has David Blanchard filled this gap in my knowledge, he has produced a particularly good addition to the long running Pen and Sword *Battleground Europe* series. As I have frequently noted, the quality of works in this series is highly varied. Whilst many works have been excellent, too many have enjoyed poorly reproduced illustrations and mapping and copy editing. Here, such criticism is unjustified. My only cavil is that the author's clear, well–researched narrative – rich win personal accounts and opinions – lacks, like others in the series, a bibliography. The book employs the established and successful Pen and Sword format; a narrative of the battle and those involved, the important general touring advice for the tyro and two motor tour routes and walks. *Aisne 1918* is an excellent work about one of the lesser known battles of the Great War.

David Filsell

SHELL SHOCK

TAYLOR DOWNING

Shell Shock – The Crisis

Little Brown, 2016, £25.00, 399pp, 18 ills, 4 appendices, bibliog., 2 maps.

ISBN: 9–781–408–706–619

Once, when asked what really interests the House of Commons, a MP is reputed to have said, 'Buggery and badgers'. A wild simplification, yet, if one was to ask a similar question of a member of the general public about the Great War, they might, possibly, scratch their head and say 'The Somme', possibly 'The waste of lives' and 'Shot at Dawn'. Despite increased awareness of Post Traumatic Shock Syndrome and its crippling effects, the scale of 'Shell Shock' in the Great War is relatively unknown.

Taylor Downing links the Somme with shell shock, analyses the massive increase in cases during the battle and provides an overview of its treatment – the good, the effective, and the appalling. He also highlights the massive concerns felt by the army about the huge numbers affected and its fear that such breakdowns could create – and in some cases appeared to have created – an epidemic. Although a very large number of books on the topic, its symptoms, causes, diagnoses and treatment, were written during and after the war, the majority have been directed at a specialist audience and rarely employed in research by military authors either popular or academic. Downing offers a link between popular and serious history. Early chapters – titled *The Pals Battalions, Training a Citizen Army* and *The Big Push* – will be very familiar to those with a serious interest in the Great War. Whilst sharp, insightful, and in apparent alignment with the latest educated thinking on the British Army and its development, his views will I suspect be skipped or skimmed by more knowledgeable readers. Equally there are a number of 'facts' presented in these sections of the text, not least the unwarranted award of the MC to the un–medalled – apart from 'Mutt and Jeff' that is – R C Sherriff. A warning to all here – including top authors, historians and TV producers – cross check your facts and do not trust everything you read on Wiki!

Much of the author's research appears to have been drawn from secondary sources – I am sure, for instance, that many readers will, like me, argue that Official Histories (OH) do not entirely deserve to be judged as primary sources, even if they are 'official'. Nevertheless, Taylor Downing has been assiduous in his analysis and the length, breadth and depth of his research and much in this fascinating book was entirely new to this reviewer. Not least the analyses of the magnitude of problems during the Somme battles, their consequences and the overall reaction of commanders. Nevertheless things improved, doctors while often disagreeing about modes of treatment, learned. Treatment near the front line – which became standard practice so quickly that the US Army employed it from the start of its time in France and became standard operating practice in war – returned the less seriously affected to duty surprisingly effectively.

Not least, Downing indicates that definitions of 'shell shock' were fixed' by the nomenclature in use at the time – ie Neurasthenic, NSW (Shell Shock Wounded), SSW (Shell Shock Sick) – with the hint of malingering. Equally, many cases went unrecognised – or unaccepted. The British Army, concerned by the 'wastage' of troops, took a tougher line with sufferers after the Somme and not least there was a strong – and perhaps questionable – whiff of social and class judgement in the author's statement that the 'kinder' diagnosis, neurasthenia, was largely reserved for officers. More important is the fact the use of the term NYDN (Not Yet Diagnosed Nervous) was deployed in line with wishes from above. It certainly muddied the waters and there is evidence to suggest that obfuscation by the army also allowed many of the afflicted to be inadequately or inaccurately diagnosed.

Certainly the *War Office Committee of Enquiry into 'Shell Shock'* in 1922 expressed its regrets about unsatisfactory statistics in its deliberations, noting them as a '…cause of concern'. While the OH accepts a figure of 16,138 cases of shell shock between July and December 1916, the figure, the author notes, excludes, 'Shell shock 'S', and does not include all diagnosed with Neurasthenia'. The author judges the more likely figure to be between 53–63,000 cases during the war.

Whilst academic books on the topic have been written, this is a valuable and highly readable work for any collection of books about the less well travelled roads of Great War history. Strongly recommended.

David Filsell

SEX EDUCATION

BRUCE CHERRY

They Didn't Want to Die Virgins: Sex and Morale on the Western Front 1914–18

£25.00, Helion, (Wolverhampton Military Studies No. 150), 327pp, 38 ills, appendix, bibliog. index.

ISBN: 9–781–910–777–701

Nothing published in the now fifteen–volume strong Wolverhampton Military Studies (under the skilled series editorship of Stephen Badsey) has failed to interest and impress me. They are serious books; academic in their rigour and authorship. Each offers high production values, sound proof reading, well chosen and plentiful on–page picture and illustrations, bibliography and indices. Above all they are published by Helion at a sensible price. Few publishers of academic military works in 2016 offer such consistency in thought or deed.

They Didn't Want to Die Virgins offers a fascinating evaluation of sex (to suit all tastes) and its relationship to morale in the Great War. This is a book which should not fail to appeal to either those of an honestly prurient nature or indeed serious students of the Great War and its sociology. The results are certainly illuminating – and it was fascinating to read of the 'moral support' the author apparently needed during the book's writing! This is a work whose content can be easily judged by its chapter headings and enjoyed through its reading. One chapter heading makes it clear 'It's not something a gentleman talks about' even if he actually indulged in it, despite the fact that many did with the connivance or the 'Nelson's eye' of the military. The author seeks to quantify the extent of sexual activity, its effect on morale and morals and fraternisation

with the local Mademoiselles. Here are harlots of every variety and quality from the regulated and the 'up market' (primarily only officers for the pleasure of) to the strumpets which, in less politically correct times, were known to some as the 'behind the bike shed' variety. And if that was not all here, gentle reader, the subjects of pornography, masturbation, assaults, rapes and sodomy also raise their heads.

Extensive and detailed research – from manuscripts at the National Archives to unpublished Imperial War Museum memoirs, as well as those in eight foreign archives, other primary sources, (monographs and the work of a host of well and lesser known authors ranging from Richard Aldington to Henry Williamson), underline the author's quest to know more about sex in the Great War.

The unholy grail at the end of his search is a fascinating, detailed view of a subject about which most writers about the war have generally only tipped the occasional nod or a wink to their readers. Bruce Cherry has not become lost in his evaluation of this unusual and fascinating subject and this aspect of men at war which has, as far as I am aware, never been evaluated in such depth and erudition – or has been so well illustrated and written.

David Filsell

STATISTICALLY IRISH

STEPHEN SANDFORD

Neither Unionist nor Nationalist: The 10th Irish Division in the Great War

Irish Academic Press, €45.00 hb, €22.45pb on the publisher's website, 318pp, 10 maps and ills, 10 graphs, 34 statistical tables, notes and refs, sources and bibliog.

ISBN: 9–780–716–532–606

The formation of the 10th (Irish) Division, one of the first New Army Divisions (K1) was authorised in August 1914. The division received its baptism of fire at Gallipoli and served in the Balkans and the Middle East. Perhaps unsurprisingly, as Stephen Sandford makes clear, its ranks were not totally filled with 'true born' Irishman. In addition to Irish Protestants and Catholics, they included a very large cadre of Englishmen – some 50 per cent of officers and men. Yet Sandford, Professor of History at University College, Cork, concludes that the division's ethos did remain truly Irish.

For good or for ill, this is certainly no normal, off the peg, divisional history. It fulfils a different, perhaps higher, purpose in being far more a sociological and heavily–detailed statistical study of the formation and those who filled its ranks. Indeed its service in the line is but lightly covered in a single twenty–one page chapter – Chapter 5. That said Chapter 8 – *From the Curragh to the Judean Hills: the Lesson Learned* – also offers an evaluation of the division's performance in relation to the 'learning curve' which the author appropriately describes quite rightly in my view as a process which '... might be more realistically described as a series of developments at different speeds and trajectories; technical, tactical, weapons and strategic development, that really only fully intersected in the last 100 days of the war'.

Although described in the foreword by the late Professor Keith Jeffery of Queen's University Belfast as the 'first full account of the 10th Irish Division', he also underlines that it explores the vital, human story of the division. I certainly do not judge it a full account. As noted, its purpose it seems to me is far, far, different. And, equally if it can be truly considered a vital, human story, it must be noted that it is one illustrated very largely by, and dependent upon, statistics and statistical analysis and comparison. The human touch I judge is lacking here.

Whilst this approach by no means devalues the quality of the author's research, I suspect that this welter of statistical analysis, of conclusions and comparisons drawn with other formations – on recruitment, of men and officers' backgrounds, on leadership, morale and discipline (a constant worry in the division) overwhelms. The graphs and statistical charts underline the book's academic nature and it is perhaps as such that it should be judged.

The bibliography alone – covering archive collections, official publications, web– based and electronic sources, newspapers and periodicals, books and unpublished material – underlines the author's compulsive search for detail. Yet, whilst statistics are an invaluable tool, here the ferocity of the un–lifting numerical barrage seems likely – to this reviewer at least – to limit the book's appeal and its ability to hold the average Great War reader, and perhaps even the most knowledgeable. However, as research into newly–recognised or long unanswered questions about the British Army in the Great War continue to grow, *Neither Unionist nor Nationalist* will certainly be judged a valuable academic tool.

David Filsell

ON THE DEFENSIVE

JACK SHELDON

The German Army in the Offensives of 1917: Arras, the Aisne and Champagne

Pen and Sword 2015, £25.00, 384pp, 55 ills, 13 maps, notes and refs, 2 appendices (including selective biographical notes, bibliog, index.

ISBN: 9– 781–783–463–459

This volume of Jack Sheldon's highly–detailed series of books on the German Army in the Great War follows his usual effective model – employing the clear writing and knowledge learned from dogged, detailed research which he has effectively deployed in each of the previous six volumes on the German Army on the Western Front.

Soldiers who write about war authoritatively – rather than simple self–serving biographies – are now rare. Jack Sheldon offers rare and highly important expertise – he is a soldier who graduated from the German Staff College, and, despite the well–known destruction of many relevant official German records of the Great War, he has developed what must now be an unrivalled knowledge of German archives, unpublished sources, and published works on the Great War, particularly regimental histories, to fill the many gaps in our collective knowledge of Germany at war.

So, yes, I am a committed enthusiast for his books, for Pen and Sword's sensible pricing and the author's willingness to share his knowledge. His ability to link, comment and judge the German material he deploys has made an important contribution to 'knowing' Britain's enemy between 1914 and 1918. His works allow us to see 'The Other Side of the Hill' as Wellington famously put it: something far too long denied serious readers and military historians alike.

The German Army in the Offensives of 1917 brings German reactions to events in combat to life and reveals the strength, flexibility and performance of its soldiery as well as the strength of its defensive purpose. Here the author examines events at Vimy Ridge, in the British assaults north and south of the Scarpe, in the French assault along the Aisne, at Bullecourt, east of Arras and on the Aisne/ Champagne battlefield.

Above all, this is a book which valuably reflects the experiences of those on the battlefield and those who commanded the Germany Army on the Western Front. Throughout, we hear tales of dogged, soldierly defence, of outrageous bravery, rapid and adroit re–planning and reaction during the course of battle and sacrifice in fighting enemies whose attacks bent the line and deployed ever growing amounts of artillery to huge effect. While the allies did bend the German line they were unable to rupture it completely. Nor, in 1917 could they break the fighting spirit of the German Army whatever the ground conditions, weight of artillery barrage or infantry assault on chosen ground.

The personal accounts of German soldiers of various ranks are frequently similar yet intensely individual. They add layer upon layer of horror – the overwhelming power of the 'drumfire' of British gunnery on battered trenches and shell holes, of the foul, corrupted, conditions under which the battles were fought and where men died. Rarely in my reading about the Great War have I felt the weight of geographical and personal despoliation and of bravery so affecting, or strength of will and willingness to sacrifice so overwhelming.

Personal accounts are one thing, but in such a book it is the guiding authorial voice and expertise which must work – must draw together experiences, conditions and events and provide the narrative thread which guides the reader through the complexities of events.

Here, as ever, Jack Sheldon succeeds in his task admirably. It would be impossible to offer other than the highest recommendation for this book.
David Filsell

UNSLEEPING DRAGON

DR JONATHAN HICKS
The Welsh at Mametz Wood
y Lolfa, £12.99, 381pp, in–page maps, ills, endnotes, un–indexed.

Dr Jonathan Hicks' authorial approach in this book is somewhat unusual – and one about which I have some personal reservations. Nevertheless, it would certainly be difficult to question the extent of his research and knowledge about the battle for Mametz Wood, the 38th (Welsh) Division, his eye for detail, or his overall conclusions. However, his strange decision to include extensive biographical details of those who died in the battle within the battle narrative (rather than in appendices) seems to me to sit uneasily within those chapters recounting the battle. While I recognise, and commend, the author's wish to honour those who fought and died, I believe this important information would have fitted better in separate sections. These 'memorials' – to this reviewer – seem to sit inelegantly within the text and interrupt the battle narrative. A harsh view? Perhaps – and some will judge me to be wrong but, whilst recognition of the lives and inevitably limited careers of the fallen are important, such detail may well not be of compelling interest to many who read this excellent work.

The Welsh Division's exertions at Mametz Wood are sharply and clearly told day–by–day, from 2 July 1916 until its relief on the 12th. Valuably, each daily account also outlines the activities of the 38th Division's Royal Engineers field companies, its Royal Field Artillery brigades, Signals Companies and Field Ambulance brigade – information frequently omitted from works like this. Equally welcome are the many unpublished personal accounts of the fighting, the chapters relating to those awarded medals for their actions and, the generally ignored, contemporary press reports of the battle.

The author concludes that the attack on Mametz Wood was 'doomed to failure' yet underlines Welsh 'courage and skill' in capturing it. Overall, this is a valuable addition to the history of the fighting on the Somme with an unusually high level of information about those who lost their lives during the battle. *The Welsh at Mametz Wood* is valuable for 'Sommistas' and those with a specific interest in the important Welsh contribution to victory in the Great War alike.
David Filsell

TRANSNATIONAL

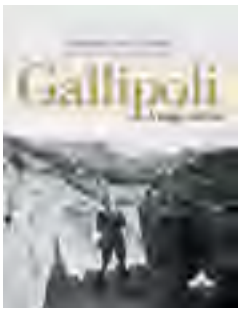
PETER DOYLE AND ROBIN SCHÄFER
Fritz and Tommy: Across the Barbed Wire
The History Press 2016, £20.00, 288pp, ills (in page), postscript (voices quoted), bibliog, index.
ISBN: 9–780–750–956–840

Military historian (and 'go–to' television presenter 'hunk') Dan Snow's reputation is now, apparently, such that his view, of *Fritz and Tommy* as 'One of the few genuinely transnational books about the First World War', is run as a talisman above the book's title. There is certainly much in Peter Doyle and Robin Schäfer's book – an exercise in contrasting and comparing the experiences of Britain and Germany soldiery in the Great War – that makes compelling reading. The authors/editors underscore the large commonality of thought and experience of combatants on both sides of the wire – although of course no single man's experience of war could ever be the same as another's. And, interestingly, national traits do seem to out themselves in these letters. Whilst not a judgement, from my own evaluation of German writing about the Great War – personal accounts and fiction – the tone of German writers remains frequently different to that of British authors. As the book shows, those who wrote from the BEF's perspective seem to me to be largely more stolid in their writing, more accepting – if grousing – of conditions and of 'just getting on with it'.

Overall, German writing and authorship on the Great War is frequently more consciously heroic, patriotic, more recognising of the need for sacrifice and, at the beginning the war, more imperialistic in tone than that of Britons. Yet rarely, in any of these letters home – a duty which in itself must have dictated deliberate self censorship as well as concern for the officer's blue pencil – do correspondents show the weakness of spirit, diminution of resolve or the self pity many of them must have felt.

As well as the works of authors as significant as J C Dunn, Guy Chapman, Rowland Feilding and Ernst Jünger, the authors have selected British and German front line correspondence drawn from an impressive selection of archives, books and private collections. Chapters are logically grouped in six key areas of activity and consequence: The Armies/*Die Armeen*, In the Field/*Im Feld*, Morale/*Die Moral*, Battle/*Die Schlact*, Wounds and Death/ *Vewundung und Tod* and Blighty/*Die Heimat.* Editorial input – and the links between the letters – is judicious, valuable and in context and the in–page pictures are well chosen.

Fritz and Tommy provides far more gripping reading than the average hackneyed and ill–contextualised lazy jaunt through the archives represented by the 'voices of…' volumes.. The views of serious military historians like Paul Reed, 'essential reading' and Spencer Jones, 'fascinating, thought provoking and frequently touching', inside the book jacket are far more compelling than the marketers' pull quote from Dan Snow on the cover. This is a book whose content is likely to be pillaged by future writers.
David Filsell



ASHLEY EKINS (Ed.)
Gallipoli: A Ridge Too Far
Exisle Publishing (Australia), 2015, £16.56p pb, £11.99 e–book, 336 pages
ISBN: 9–781–921–966–934

This volume consists of a series of papers by various historians analysing aspects of the land campaign on Gallipoli. The volume is a result of a conference held at the Australian War Memorial in 2010 to mark the 95th anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign, and was first published in 2013 – this is a revised edition. Authors include Robin Prior, Stephen Badsey, and Holger Afflerbach. There are fourteen papers or chapters split between four sections, but those looking for a modern overview of the entire Gallipoli campaign may be disappointed.

Although the initial three chapters deal with planning and strategy and the final two discuss legacies – including a fascinating chapter covering the Australian Official Historian, C E W Bean's re–visitation of the battlefields in 1919 – the bulk of the book deals with the battles for Chunuk Bair, Lone Pine, The Nek and associated places which took place in early August 1915. That said, the volume provides an interesting analysis of those battles, seen from both the Allied and Ottoman Turkish perspectives, and considers why they failed and whether such outcomes were always doomed to be so as the majority, if not all, the authors think they were.

For this reviewer one of the most interesting chapters is that dealing with logistics. The complexity of the logistic chain leading to Gallipoli was immense, stretching back to the UK with ships being re–packed in Egypt and then unloaded again onto lighters at Mudros, before finally reaching the beaches on Gallipoli during the night in order to minimise losses from submarines and Turkish artillery. Small wonder then that a garrison battalion of the Royal Scots was moved to Helles to act as a labour battalion unloading those lighters.

Overall this volume provides a really useful assessment of the reasons for the ultimate failure of the Gallipoli campaign, and deserves a place on the bookshelf of anyone with a serious interest in the war against the Ottoman Empire.
Niall Ferguson

FROM THE SOMME

RICHARD van EMDEN

The Somme*: *The Epic Battle in the Soldiers' own Words and Photographs

Pen and Sword, 2016, £20.00 hb, £11.99 pb and 15.00 e–book, 355pp, fully illustrated throughout, index.

ISBN: 9–781– 473–855–21 2

Richard van Emden is an 'everyman' author. He has published many titles that need no repetition here. His work is very popular and it seems that this book is an almost instant bestseller; not surprising in this centenary year of the Somme battle. The book consists of letters and photographs – the author assuring us that many have never been seen before – and also four pages of sources and permissions and two general maps. The author deals with events in chronological order, not just from the start of the battle on 1 July 1916, but from the time in the summer of 1915 when the BEF took the area over from the French Army. One of the strengths of this book is the author's introduction, in which he explains just how these men came to be at war with cameras, often the relatively new Vest Pocket Kodak (VPK). Photography had become much more accessible to the masses in the years before the war, with the introduction of the 'vest pocket' camera. Not really pocket by modern standards – although the dimensions of the VPK were not much different to those of a modern iPhone – but at least amateur photographers no longer had to visit specialist studios or rely on professionals lugging around cameras on tripods with bulky glass plates. Although the VPK type cameras were relatively inexpensive, at around 30 shillings (£1.50), it has to be said that most of these photographers would have been officers given that the cost would have been beyond the income of the typical working man.

Soon after the war started, the photographs taken by these amateurs started to be published in newspapers and magazines; such was the demand for 'action shots' as the War Office had not appointed official photographers from the start of hostilities. As these images started to appear, the authorities panicked and the use of cameras on the Western Front was banned. Severe punishments were threatened. Many men complied and sent cameras home with the re–issuing of this edict during 1915. Fortunately for us, some men ignored the warnings and carried on. Many amateur photographs were annotated on the rear or in albums so that one could identify who the subjects are. The author asserts that many men gave up their cameras because they had become disillusioned as the war descended into unremitting attrition and the sense of adventure and optimism had ebbed away; even more so after the Somme.

Generally I feel that these types of books are 'lazy' history, in that they do not include any original research. In spite of that I do like this book because some of the photographs have links to the text, rather than just being a narrative illustrated with stock photographs. Personally I would have liked to have seen see a few more linking pieces, but at least the author allows the officers and men to tell the story of the battle as it unfolded and as they saw it at the time. Finally I must applaud Pen and Sword for the quality of paper this volume is printed on. A big improvement and a trend that they need to persevere with.

Barbara Taylor

FLYING DVD

COMPILED BY CHRIS HOBSON

Airmen Died in the Great War: The Roll of Honour of the British and Commonwealth Air Services

Naval & Military Press, £65.00 (winter sale £52.00) plus VAT

Once I had managed to open the case containing the DVD–ROM (front and rear were fused together requiring the case to be broken open) it loaded onto my computer with no problems (be aware, however, that you will need a PC running Windows Vista, 7, 8 or 10 with 4GB RAM installed and a 4x speed DVD drive and it will not work with MacOS or Linux). Similar to the well–known Soldiers Died in the Great War this database is fully searchable, covering members of the RFC who died, not just during the Great War, but from November 1911. Thus all pre–war casualties are included and that is certainly true for the first three RFC flying casualties, although Staff Sergeant Richard H V Wilson, killed in a flying accident on Salisbury Plain in July 1912 is described as a 'Pilot' rather than as Eustace Lorraine's observer, and neither appears in the field 'Other Names' linking two individuals killed in the same aircraft. Searches for a number of other individuals proved accurate.

Of course, one doesn't have to search for a name: date of death is an option. On 21 March 1918, the first day of the German Spring Offensive, individuals including Captain Cecil Gordon, serving with the 59th Training Squadron at Cirencester and flying DH6 No. C1994, Cadet Samuel Arnheim, killed flying at the Aerial Gunnery School in Canada, and Air Mechanic 1st Class Frederick Jones of the RNAS serving on the seaplane carrier HMS *Pegasus* died. Cause of Death is categorised as 'Killed in Action', 'Killed whilst flying', and various other ways such as 'Died (cause unknown)'. This demonstrates that dying in a flying accident was far more common than being shot down. Even on that day, only four individuals were KIA whereas no less than nine died in flying accidents!

The above demonstrates how many fields can be searched, including the aircraft involved (where recorded) giving the information that 269 individuals died whilst flying FE2Bs, including Captain James Annersley RAMC (actually Annesley – there are occasional errors), the Medical Officer of 25 (Reserve) Squadron on 19 May 1917, who asked to be taken up as he wished to discover for himself 'the effect flying had on the nerves'!

In compiling this database Chris Hobson has cross–checked CWGC records against official casualty cards at the RAF Museum, and casualty lists kept at the Imperial War Museum. These were then cross–checked extensively against the Roll of Honour that appeared weekly in *Flight* and *The Aeroplane*, and other sources such as articles in *Cross and Cockade*. Also included are casualties from the Australian Flying Corps, the Women's Royal Air Force and the US Air Service. The author states that he has been working on this database since 1980 and I can well believe it – he deserves to be congratulated.

Niall Ferguson

LOCAL HEROES

I think this is the first time that I have reviewed a newsletter, but *The Local Hero,* the highly professional quarterly publication by the busy and effective Royal Borough of Kingston–upon–Thames War Memorial Association, most certainly deserves mention in *Stand To!*

Available from Graeme Hodge, 37, Aldridge Rise, New Malden, Surrey, KT3 5RL (0208 949 6919) and based on the fruits of 15 years of labour, the association researches, publishes and marks those who served in the Great War from the Borough of Kingston (Kingston–upon–Thames, New Malden, Surbiton, Tolworth Hook and Chessington). Its detailed research shows that 2,200 men from the area fell during the Great War and it is now also looking at the roles and stories of those who fell in the Second World War. *The Local Hero* – typically a 20 plus page A4 newsletter – offers valuable details of people, places and events using editorial backed by material from important photographic archives, museums and websites.

The latest edition offered, for example, a biography of a local recipient of the Victoria Cross; letters from an army chaplain to his parish church in Kingston; transcripts of the East Surrey's war diaries; a roll of honour for May and August 1915; men with Kingston connections who served in Gallipoli and Belgian refugees in the borough; association news and details of local events – talks and meetings – relevant to those interested in the history of

the Great and Second World War. With an eye for detail, the March 2016 edition reports the youngest (15), the oldest, (60), and the average age of the borough's military personnel (26–27) and posits a total of 5,000 of the area's soldiers were wounded. *The Local Hero* is an example of local and national history of the Great War which I highly recommend
David Filsell

SHORT NOTICES

After giving us the war diaries of the Western Front, Naval and Military Press has produced 40,056 pages of the military entries of the *London Gazette*, from a run originally held at Chelsea Barracks and priced at £145 plus VAT and £3.85 postage The *Gazette* is the official government organ listing promotion of officers and awards and citations from the VC to 'mentions', including foreign awards not given elsewhere. They have never been easy to access as there was no common complete index but now they all appear in one place and all entries can be searched by typing in a name or any other feature (unit, type of award, date etc.). The *Gazette* contains masses of other information which have nothing to do with the war – bankruptcies for example – and these are all excluded to avoid spurious information coming up on a search. All you need to enter another world of detail on the Great War is a PC running Windows7, 8, 10 or Vista with 4GB of RAM installed and a 4X speed DVD drive. Stephen Wade brings us ***No More Soldiering: Conscientious Objectors of the First World War,*** Amberley, 2016, soft covers, £16.99, 251pp, ills, bibliog. index, (ISBN: 9–781–443–648–941). The prelude of this book tells the story of James Brightmore of Manchester and his cruel tormentor Captain McBean and of Ernest England the Quaker from Leeds. It describes the severe regime in prison with the help of an unpublished photograph album. We are given a careful and insightful study of conscientious objection which includes descriptions of major figures such as Bertrand Russell and Fenner Brockway and the work of the Friends' Ambulance Unit and the part played by the women. In the closing conclusions the seemingly complete lack of knowledge about a cruel camp in Carmarthen called 'Red Roses' is mentioned – many suffered there and its story needs to be unearthed. I agree with the author that the time has come for a full bibliographical survey of writings on Great War conscientious objectors, he has made a good start by listing over 100 sources and by looking into the work done by Cyril Pearce who has traced records of 16,500 objectors; over 20,000 Tribunal records are being gathered by Stoke–on–Trent Archive Service. There will be a mass of information available to future historians. A good book to include in any library dealing with this controversial subject. *Bob Wyatt.* An elegant, half coffee table size book is ***And the World Went Dark: An Illustrated Interpretation of the Great War*** by Steven N Patricia, Casemate, 2016, £15.99, 96pp inc bibliog, (ISBN: 9–781–612–003–481). The author is an artist and architect who has worked as an historical illustrator for over 30 years. The book is very nicely produced and gives an illustrated overview of the war on land, sea and in the air, utilising contemporary diary extracts as well as more familiar passages. The text is produced in a 'handwriting' font and all the illustrations are hand drawn; some copied from well–known images. So an attractive design and the kind of book to flick through as a 'nice to have', especially perhaps for younger readers or people newly interested in the Great War, which I feel is its target audience. I doubt, however, that it will be a 'must have' for the serious student of the war. *Barbara Taylor*

2017 Spring Conference and AGM

University of Northumbria, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 1XE

MAY 6

Newcastle upon Tyne

Programme for the day

9.30am	Doors open. Teas/coffees
10.15am	Welcome by the Chairman
10.20am	**British casualty evacuation from the Somme, July 1916: success or failure?** by Jeremy Higgins
11.20am	**Winning With Laughter: Cartoonists at War** by Luci Gosling
12.20pm	buffet lunch
1.20pm	**Politics and Command: Conflict and Crisis 1917** by John Derry
2.20pm	Teas/coffees
2.45pm	AGM
4.30pm	Finish of proceedings

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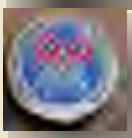

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It does not seek to justify or glorify war. It is not a re-enactment Society, nor is it commercially motivated. It is entirely non-political. The object of the Association is to educate the public in the history of the Great War with particular reference to the Western Front. Applications for membership are welcomed from anyone with like mind.

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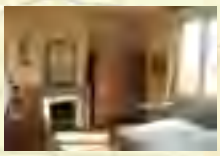
SOMME BATTLEFIELD SELF-CATERING ACCOMMODATION

SNOWDEN HOUSE

Situated in Longueval, ideally located in the heart of the Somme Battlefields, one minute from Delville Wood. Historic Snowden House was a front-line position for a month during WW1 and was used as a resistance hideout during WW2.

The House sleeps up to 16 guests in 5 bedrooms, it's also ideal for a family holiday or smaller groups. The front bedrooms look over Delville Wood the rear bedrooms look over Trones & Bernafay Woods. The two bathrooms and the kitchen are fully modernised. The living-room & dining room both have wood burning fires, a WW1 library with over a hundred books covering the Somme battlefields, TV & video, the house is decorated throughout with local Great War memorabilia. Outside in the established gardens are two patios & BBQs. There's plenty of secure off road parking and a garage. UK Sky TV.



CHAVASSE FARM

Situated in the quiet village of Hardecourt aux Bois, four mins from Delville Wood and fifteen mins from Thiepval. Chavasse Farm has three cottages that are ideally situated for exploring the heart of the Somme Battlefields.

The Farm has three self-catering cottages. Chavasse House has a large living room with an open wood burning fire, modern kitchen, 2 bathrooms, 4 large bedrooms and sleeps up to 12. The farm stables have been converted into two cottages, Coury and Dupres Houses both have under floor heating, living room with wood-burning fires, modern kitchens and bathrooms, 2 bedrooms, outside patio's and both sleep 4. All three cottages are decorated throughout with Great War memorabilia. Outside are large gardens with a terrace and BBQ overlooking the countryside and your own pub 'The Rum Ration' with an open fire and sand-bag bar. There's plenty of secure off road parking. UK Sky TV and free WIFI.

For Further Information and Availability Please Contact Jonathan Tel: 07855850889

email: snowdenbillet@aol.com
Web: snowdenhouse.co.uk

email: chavasseferme@aol.com
Web: chavasseferme.co.uk

2017 WFA BATTLEFIELD TOURS

We have received very high interest in this year's tours and have to advise that the 23/26 June Tour has only four places still available. The 6/9 October Chairman's Ypres Centenary Tour is now fully booked.

23/26 June 2017 - Chairman's Arras Centenary Tour
£500:00 (£95:00 SSup) - Only 4 spaces remain
Based in central Arras to include Vimy Ridge,
The Railway Triangle, the Harp, Monchy-le-Preux, Croisilles, Gavrelle & Roeux.

contact tours@westernfrontassociation.com or call 01438 880725

BATTLE HONOURS

Just a short note to say thanks for a fantastic trip to the Somme. I found the whole experience hugely interesting, exciting, emotional and educational. I now really understand what you mean by "walking the battlefield" and how this approach gets you up close and personal with the realities of the Great War in a way which a tour bus just couldn't. The geographical orientation at each stand was helpful and the use of veterans' memoirs and the stories of those buried in the cemeteries we visited brought history to life. A personal highlight was getting so close to the field where my grandfather was wounded. I will definitely sign up for your tours in the future, what better recommendation than a repeat customer.

Alan Davis (Berkshire)

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BRINGING BATTLEFIELDS TO LIFE SINCE 2005

7 - 11 April – Arras/Vimy 100 tour - Led by Clive Harris & Rory Stephens
Tour now full

7- 12 May - Walking Gallipoli - Led by Clive Harris & Steve Chambers
£1400:00 **£1200:00 no flight option* (£120:00 single supplement)

4 - 8 June - Messines Walking Tour - Led by Clive Harris
£720:00 (£120:00 single supplement) *6 spaces left*

9 -13 July - Somme Strolls - Led by Clive Harris & Rory Stephens
£720:00 (£120:00 single supplement)

29 July - 2 August - Third Ypres 100 - Led by Julian Whippy & Clive Harris
£750:00 (£120:00 single supplement) *6 Spaces left*

10 - 15 Sept - Walking Italy - Led by Mike Sheil
£720:00 (£120:00 single supplement)

24 - 28 Sept - Walking Salonika - Led by Steve Chambers & Alan Wakefield
£1400:00 **£1200:00 no flight option* (£120:00 single supplement)

5-10 Nov – The Palestine Campaign –Led by Gareth Davies & Julian Whippy
£2100:00 **£1700:00 no flight option* (£250:00 single supplement)