



Lancashire North Branch

Despatch – April 2024

Ninth Email edition.



Keeping communications open



Editor's Notes



Welcome to our ninth email edition of Despatch. This bumper spring issue includes seven articles from our members for which I am more than grateful. Now that spring is on the way we can at least look back on an interesting mix of speakers at the branch meetings over the winter months. The experiment of holding a daytime meeting in November at the Storey Institute, followed by a convivial lunch at the Waterwich on the canal side proved very popular.

Our secretary Paul, has organized another daytime meeting on Monday 3 June with a walking tour of Lancaster to explore the various war memorials in the city. The Victoria Institute in Caton, the home of our regular meetings, is to hold re-opening event on Saturday 13 July 2024, following the re-wiring of the building. The branch has been invited display the activities of the Western Front Association and specifically the activities of the North Lancashire branch.

In Bob Mathew's article on Sunset on the Somme, he mentions how often one comes across references to the First World War and the Western Front on our travels and in everyday life, This is something I suspect we all have in common. You can never walk through a churchyard without spotting a CWGC headstone then look up the details of those remembered and that is when you find a story. It happens so often and in so many ways.

Tom Williams

(Unless otherwise indicated, articles are by the editor.)

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A Letter from the Trenches
2/Lt. Charles William Rowlands MSM
Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

Andrew Brooks

APO S.14 (Fervent) 14th April 1917.

Sent to his cousin in Washington, USA.

BEF France 13th April '17.

My dear cousin Myrtle,

Really, I must apologise to you most sincerely (I feel that if it were practicable I'd go down on bended knee to ask your pardon) for having made such a tremendous delay before writing to you. It was about Xmas last that you wrote & since then things have happened (including the entry of the USA into the war with Boschland) & perhaps it is because of these constant changes that I have not written. Certainly, it is that and also the terrible spirit of disinclination to write letters which has hold of me six days out of seven! Before the war I could sit down at almost any time and pen a letter either positively good or positively bad- but now owing to the fact that with more to write about, one has far less freedom to write. If there is any sort of alteration in my mentality as a result of the war, I turn out a very negative or neutral sort of epistle.

Compared with my position when I wrote you last, I enjoy now some advantage. I do not have to submit my letter to the inspection of an officer so that his signature may appear on the envelope. Being an officer now I can do that for myself though this means that I can avoid the position of a third person gaining knowledge of my affairs, & of what I write to family and friends. I am still as much bound by Censorship Regulations as heretofore. Especially at the present time as letters to the USA,

a very large proportion, are likely to be opened at the Field Censor's Office. As a matter of fact, I wouldn't mind betting (if I were a betting man you know) that when you get this letter, you'll get it with the envelope decorated with that nice white piece of paper bearing in nice red letters the words 'Opened by Censor'. Now just see! We'll have a little talk, I think. Tell me when you next write what your views on the US participation in the Armageddon are. You are a staunch supporter of 'Teddy Roosevelt' are you not? The past winter- it isn't really the 'past' winter either yet for we had snow and a rather heavy fall two days ago- it is the most severe for something like thirty years. The cold weather began in October last & has continued despite the Almanac (which says on March 21st thereabouts 'spring commences') to the present moment. The temperature was particularly low during January and February. Bearing in mind of course the fact that we here are not in Baffin Island nor yet in a spot as frigid as Spitsbergen, the frost at times were things to remember. Must have been very uncomfortable over yonder where Fritz waited for that 'pile driver' of a Spring Offensive which we are giving him now. In the trenches unless one is engaged in a Big Push when trenches are pounded to rubble heaps by big gunfire it is possible to make one's toilet

once at any rate in the twenty-four hours at some time, during the day or night. But the cold weather has rather hampered these processes at times. During the cold spells when men who had ‘em went about with icicles inches long suspended from their moustaches and it was a common occurrence to find a few moments after use, one’s toothbrush sponge etc frozen hard as adamant & all the water left standing for a few minutes had to have a decent layer of ice on the top broken before using. I have been in the war in France, that is, now for nearly two years. I have become adept in the arts of the simple life. I remember once how three of us, unkempt, unshaven and altogether looking like a crowd of ‘Apaches’ as depicted in the movie desired very much to be a little more presentable. An old tin which had once contained some of the luscious Bartlett pears which, no doubt you know quite well, was filled with water- and ice. Then in our dug-out (dimensions 6ft wide by 6ft long, about 5ft high), we almost boiled him on a brazier. This brazier was not an elaborate affair & quite of a familiar type, being an old petrol drum with sides and bottom perforated with vent-holes & burning after a few hours persuasion & suffocating emissions of dense smoke (which had to be cajoled so that the Hun shouldn’t twig it) wood, coke or charcoal after the water in the 2lb Bartlett pear tin had done its work on the dirty vagabonds, but soldiers of the King, they appeared so no longer, instead were washed, shaved & even had their hair brushed in a style reminiscent of those far off days when they ‘promenaded’ immaculate in straw hats, bright ties, brighter silk socks, black toed shoes & other impedimenta which went to make up the ‘bloods’, the ‘Beau Brummels’ of the period. What a really nasty G- experience old Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosser as he styles himself has had with that which he once called a ‘contemptible

little army'. Now it was small 'tis true but of fine quality & was employed chiefly in the garrisoning of our dependencies. Even with our Territorials (which correspond to your Militia or guards as you so call them, I think) which were about double the strength of our Regular Army, it was still a little army compared with the Continental Conscription Armies. The Kaiser found very early that it was not 'Contemptible' however, he now finds, too, that it is not small either, it is the best armed and best equipped in the world. If necessary, the USA could follow our example, I'm sure, in raising & arming a large & powerful army. Do you find that the young men out your way are flocking in any number to join the army? Though there is now in Britain a system of compulsory training, the rush to join the colours was at one time tremendous. You may profit too, by the experience gained by the realisation of our own mistakes & the remedies.

My address, by the way, is 2nd Lieutenant C.W. Rowlands, 10th Royal Welsh Fusiliers, BEF, France. If I am still in the land of the living, I hope to be able to welcome a letter from you, in shall we say about six weeks' time. I have a photograph of myself- & also I might say of a young lady in whom I am rather interested! To send to you as soon as the restrictions regarding the despatch of photographs to the USA are removed. Would you like them?

As regards Angleterre I'm afraid I cannot tell you much that you may not get from sources-newspapers & the like- as accessible to you as they are to me, for I have not visited England since October 1915!

I hope that business is good with all of you over there and that you are enjoying the best of health. Give the love of her nephew to your mother

and remember me to Mr. Brown & tell him I'd rather think of him as Uncle John. Hope he's not too proud to fight!

Well, my dear Myrtle I must finish this the longest letter I have written since war broke out! Very best wishes & love

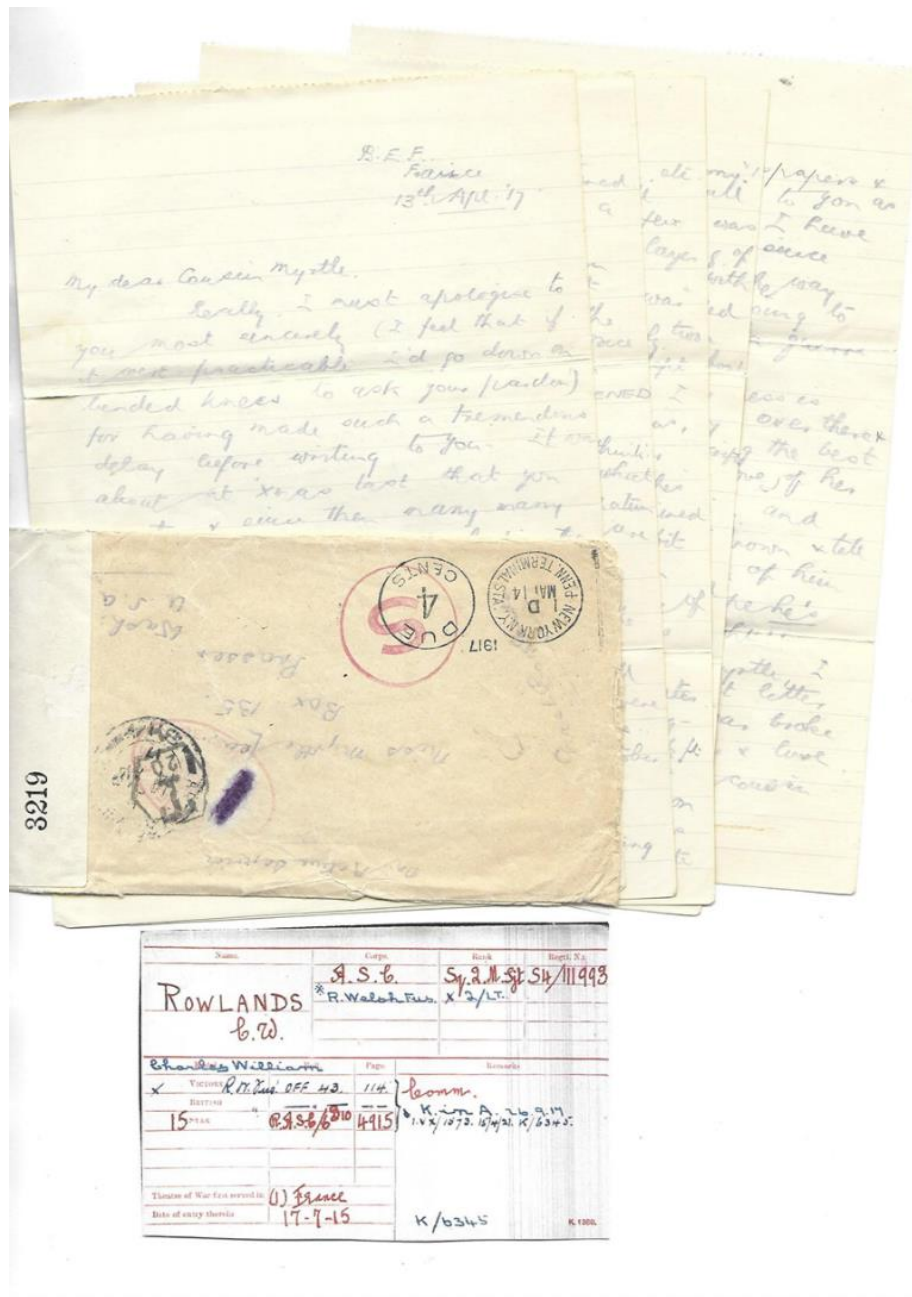
Your affectionate cousin

Charlie

Charlie was 22 when he was KIA on the 26 September 1917 and may possibly have received a letter from Myrtle before he died. He was the son of Thomas and Elizabeth Rowland of 7 Tolson Street, Albert Park, Broughton, Manchester.

He was killed in action on the opening day of the Battle of Polygon Wood (26 September to the 3 October). This battle was part of 3rd Ypres (Passchendaele). The 10th R.W.F. were in 76th Brigade, 3rd Division. They attacked at 5.50 a.m. and met little resistance as they crossed the Steenbeek, but the attack lost momentum under heavy machine-gun fire from the station.

Charlie joined the Army Service Corps (A.S.C) in 1915 and became a Quarter Master Sergeant. Whilst in the A.S.C. he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal (MSM). This award was only given to Non-Commissioned Officers for meritorious service in the field or non-combat gallantry. He was later commissioned as a 2nd Lt. in the 10th R.W.F.



The original correspondence and Medal Index Card of Charles W Rowlands



Sunset over the Somme

Bob Matthews



Having been a lover of Scotland and an ardent Scottish Country Dancer (now retired) for over 45 years, I decided to treat myself and to go and see the "Tannahill Weavers" perform at the "Old Laundry Theatre," Bowness-on-Windermere on Sunday 17 March. The "Tannahill Weavers" were formed during a pub session in Paisley, Scotland in 1968, and named after the town's historic weaving industry and local poet laureate Robert Tannahill. They are one of the world's premier traditional Celtic bands.

On taking my seat in the theatre imagine my surprise on discovering that I was sitting next to Branch Treasurer Fiona and her mum. However, this was not to be the only connection with the Western Front, as subsequent events were to reveal. The most recent addition to the Weavers is Iain MacGillivray, who is Scotland's youngest Clan leader and an exceptional performer with the bagpipes.

Iain proceeded to tell us all about the history of the pipes that he was playing. They belonged to his Great Uncle, a piper with the Cameron Highlanders, who fought on the Somme battlefield during the First World War. Tragically, Iain's

Great Uncle was killed whilst playing the bagpipes during the Battle of the Somme, but the bloodstained pipes were repatriated to the family and now proudly played by Iain. A tune, part of the evening's performance, was entitled "Sunset over the Somme." This, we were told, was in memory of the tragic events that took place during the battle and as a tribute to everyone who has military connections.

If anyone cares to go on-line and Google "Tannahill Weavers" and "Sunset over the Somme", a video and track are available, which shows Iain with the famous bagpipes and describing their background.

It just goes to show; you never know where or when references to World War I and the Western Front pop up.



Buckingham Old Gaol & Museum

Iain Adams

A current project of mine is researching the 48th (South Midland) Division's Fanshawe Cup. The cup was donated by the Division commander, Major-General Fanshawe, in January 1916 for a football tournament in which all units of the division had to compete.

Apart from reading all of the units' War Diaries, I am attempting to visit all of the associated museums and archives. The 145 (South Midland) Brigade

included two battalions of the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, the 1/1st and 1/4th. This prompted my visit to the Buckingham Old Gaol and Museum.

The Old Gaol and Museum is situated on Market Hill, Buckingham. There is convenient parking in the nearby Cornwall's Meadow Public Car Park (which is ridiculously cheap for those used to paying for parking in Lancaster and it has free public toilets). The Old Gaol is a short walk through the Meadow Shopping Centre.



The Old Gaol, Buckingham

The Old Gaol was built in 1748 with funds provided by Richard Grenville Temple, Lord Viscount of Cobham. In 1830 Irish bare-knuckle prize fighter Simon Byrne, 'The Emerald Gem', was jailed here charged with manslaughter after the death of an opponent, Scottish champion Alexander McKay. Byrne

was found not guilty but died three years later following his match against James Burke, a bout that lasted 3 hours and 6 minutes. Like Byrne, Burke was charged with manslaughter but acquitted. Through the 1840s over a third of the prisoners in Buckingham gaol were jailed for poaching. The building ceased to be used as a jail in the late 19th Century becoming the Fire Station and from 1892 the armoury of 'C' Company of the 1st Bucks Rifles until 1926. A variety of uses followed until the Buckingham Heritage Trust bought the building and the museum opened in 1993.

The museum traces the town's history through the ages with a series of displays, many in the old cells. The story boards are well done and cover a diverse range of topics including the Civil War (both Charles I and Oliver Cromwell stayed in the town), development of the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the local militia and both World Wars. The Buckinghamshire Military Museum appears to be responsible for the displays which trace the military history of the town and the area. Following the abolition of the Royal Bucks King's Own Militia in 1908, local public pressure led to the renaming of the Oxfordshire Light Infantry as the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry with a new Territorial battalion, the Buckinghamshire Battalion. The 1/1st (Buckingham) Ox & Bucks and the second line Territorial battalion, 2/1st Ox & Bucks saw action during the First World War; the 1/1st Ox & Bucks in France, Flanders and Italy. The 2/1st Ox & Bucks in France and Flanders. A painting by W B Wollen depicts the 1/1st Ox & Bucks at Pozieres on the Somme 23 July 1916.

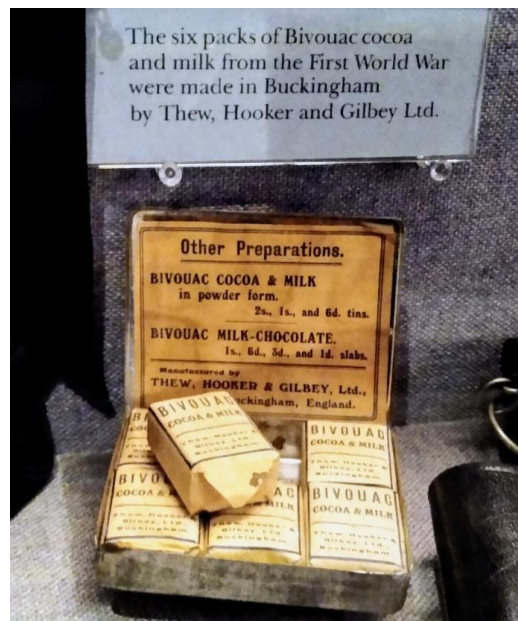


A further Territorial battalion, The Royal Bucks Hussars, a mounted arm of the Territorial Force, served in Gallipoli and Palestine. A large painting by J.P Beadle depicts the charge by the 1/1st Royal Bucks Hussars at El Mugar on 13 November 1917.



© Defence Academy of the United Kingdom

Also, Buckinghamshire raised three battalions of Volunteer Training Corps during World War I to face possible German invasion. There are a number of interesting items displayed such as a locally made pack of bivouac cocoa, an appreciation certificate to a wounded man and a Dead Man's Penny memorial plaque to Edward Foreman.



The museum is probably not worth a large detour but if in town it is worth an hour or two and is good value at £3.50. Most of the archives pertaining to the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry battalions appear to be at the Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum in Woodstock. No doubt the pursuit of the Fanshawe Cup will draw me there soon.



Captain William Henry Pollard MN



Allan Hartley

In this occasional series we look at the lives of the 60 men from Bentham who didn't make it home. This time we look at the life of William Henry Pollard.

William was born in 1860 at Hindley near Wigan in Lancashire, to William and Ann Pollard, both from Hindley. ¹ His father was the innkeeper of the Commercial Inn in the market place.

By the time of the 1871 census something had happened to the Pollard family unit, as William now aged 11, is recorded as one of three boys boarding with John and Tabitha Wilson and their family at Mount Pleasant, Bentham. John

Wilson is described as ‘Teacher, Grammar School’ and a farmer with 4 acres. The two older children Amelia and William are listed respectively as ‘Teacher, Private School’ and ‘Assistant Teacher’.

It was later reported that William attended Skipton Grammar School.³ When Mr Wilson died, sometime between 1871 and 1880, William was sent to King William’s College, on the Isle of Man, for two years.⁴ From here he obtained an apprenticeship with the Harrison shipping line in Liverpool, where he obtained his Masters Certificate in 1885 at the age of twenty-four. In 1885 William married Annie Eliza Wilson, the youngest daughter of his teacher at Bentham. In 1891 William and Annie have moved to Liverpool. His widowed mother-in-law Tabitha Wilson is living with them in Wynnstay Street, Princes Park, Liverpool.

Ten years later, in 1901, all three have returned to Bentham and are living at Sunny Bank, High Bentham. In the 1911 census William is staying at a boarding house at 164 Bedford Road, Bootle, Merseyside, no doubt to be near his work and the sea. He is recorded as a boarder, a Master Mariner aged 51, married with no children. At the time of the census Annie Eliza Pollard, now aged 49, is staying with her older sister Amelia Wilson, aged 59, at Woodstone, Peterborough. Both are married with no children and are of ‘private means’.

During the war Captain William Henry Pollard continued as a master in the merchant navy. An insight into his war service can be obtained through a number of articles that appeared in the *Craven Herald and Wensleydale Standard*.

25 June 1915

High Bentham – Old Grammar School Boys on Service

Captain W. H. Pollard is at present in the transport service for the French Government between America and France. In a letter received from him this week he has something interesting to say concerning New York sailors, and the difficulty of keeping the Italians from going for the Huns. He wonders why the eligible young men of the country districts, “don’t hurry up and join the forces to help smash the Prussians”.

A later article throws more light on William’s war service:

19 October 1917.

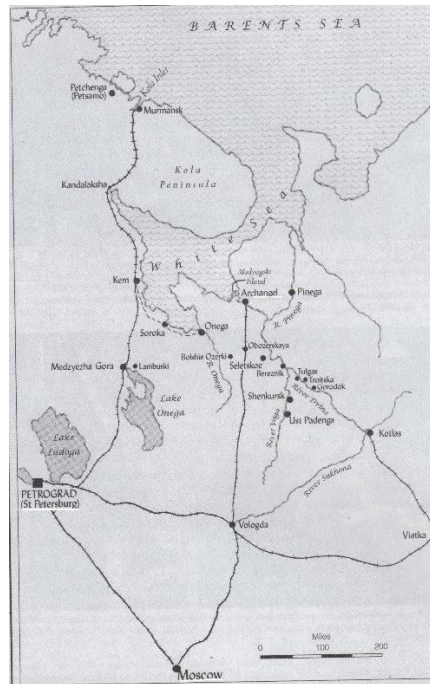
Captain William Henry Pollard, whose residence was Ashville, Bentham, died at sea on the 9th instant, the cause being dysentery. He was sailing under the Admiralty....

During 1916 he was 12 months at Archangel, the ship being icebound. He left there in May and had not since been at home. The ship visited North Africa, India and France, and on the way home he saw a doctor at Gibraltar, who considered that he was then a little better, and he left that port on 1st October. Later he became delirious and died on his ship on Tuesday, the 9th inst at

5 a.m. His vessel being under convoy, his remains could not be brought ashore, so he was buried at sea. He leaves a widow to whom the greatest sympathy is felt. The officers and crew of the ship have sent expressions of sympathy.

As a port, Archangel had a strategic location as the northern railhead linking the major Russian cities to the south, the most notable being St Petersburg and Moscow. By the time Captain Pollard’s ship and others arrived in Archangel, Russia was in a dreadful situation; from not only being ill-equipped to fight a

war with Germany, but its people were starving, and a second front was opening up due to civil unrest and an emerging Bolshevik Revolution.



The port of Archangel

Being stranded in port put immense pressure on Captain Pollard; not only had he to secure the ship's cargo with a limited military presence, he had to maintain the discipline and morale of the ship's crew. Outside of the port, the city of Archangel is best described as being a city rife with disease and violence.

A memorial service took place on 16 November 1917 at St Margaret's Church, High Bentham for William and other recently killed Bentham men, with the Rev G C H Bartley officiating, who noted the mounting cost to the Bentham community with the great loss of such fine men.

William is commemorated on the memorial plaque on Station Road at the Town Hall, and also on the memorial plaque at St John's the Baptist Church, Low Bentham. William was the 29th Bentham man to die in the war. He was 57 and

the oldest of Bentham's men to die during the war and the only Benthamer to die at sea.

Notes

1. We do not know what happened to William and Anne Pollard nor the reasons why William was sent to live with John and Tabitha Wilson in Bentham?
2. There is no mention of how many other children there were nor their names.
3. We believe this to be a reporting error at the time of William's death and our best guess is that he attended Bentham Grammar School given that he was living in Bentham.
4. We don't know when John Wilson died except sometime between 1871 and 1880.
5. Annie Eliza Wilson, William's wife, was the daughter of John and Tabitha Wilson. The couple married in 1886 soon after William became a ships Master, sadly we have no further information of her life with William, when she died and if the couple had any children.

Research by the late Marilyn Hartley

Words, Allan Hartley



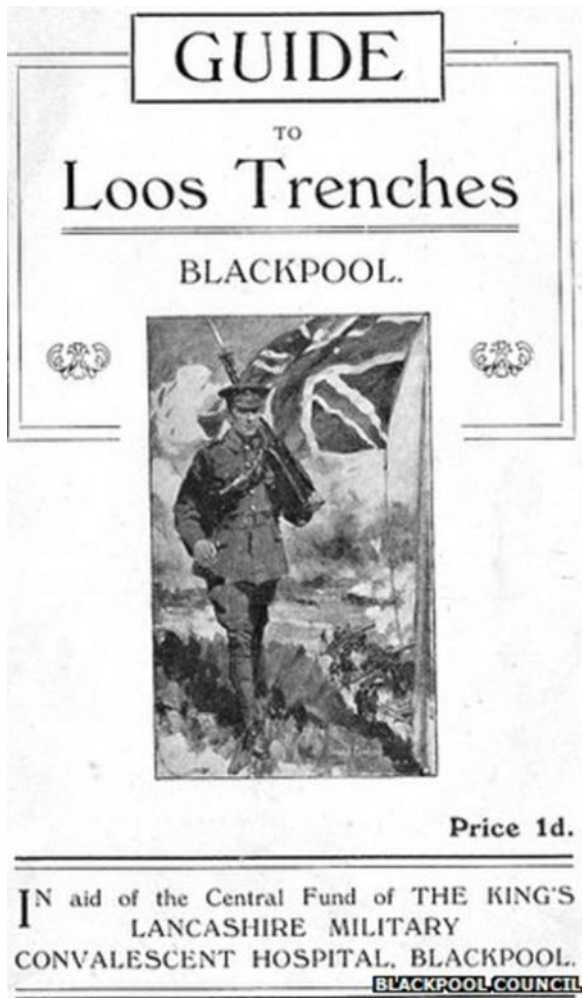
Another Rabbit Hole



The Loos Trenches in Blackpool

At the branch meeting on 5 February 2024, the speaker Dr Michael Woods, gave an excellent account of the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt by the 46th (North Midland) Division on 13 October 1915 during the final stage of the

Battle of Loos. During his talk Dr Woods mentioned the part played by the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment at the Battle of Loos.



A week or two later, whilst searching through local newspaper archives for 1916 another rabbit hole opened when I came across an account published on the 13 June 1916 reporting on the opening of the ‘Blackpool Loos Trenches’ which took place on Saturday 10 June 1916. The trenches were described as ‘an opportunity of seeing the conditions under which our heroic soldiers are performing their duties on the fields of Flanders, without of course the dangers and discomforts which they daily undergo’. The trenches were originally constructed for the training of the troops billeted in Blackpool. The

3/4th and 3/5th Loyal North Lancashire Regiment were formed respectively in April and May 1915. They moved to Kirkham in June 1915 and on to Blackpool in October 1915, where they remained until April 1916. The 2/4th King’s Own Royal Lancaster were formed in Blackpool in February 1915 and remained there until April 1916.

The newspaper article states that divisional officers had ‘expressed a wish that the trenches should be maintained, so that people might see how trench warfare is conducted and to augment the funds of the King’s Lancashire Military Hospital.’

The convalescent hospital was based at the grandstand of the Clifton Park Racecourse at Squires Gate, the site of the present Blackpool Airport. The hospital was opened on 1 October 1915 to look after those injured men who had their home in Lancashire or who served in any of the Lancashire regiments.



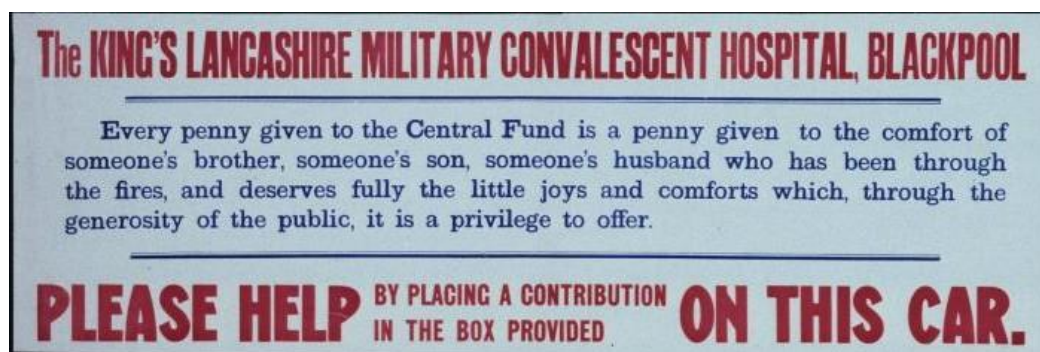
The trench system was said to be ‘practically a perfect replica of the trenches at Loos’, constructed under the supervision of a RE officer who had served at the front and had been in the trenches at Loos where ‘one of our biggest battles was fought’.

The trenches had been handed over from the army to a local committee who had thought it far better to open them to the public rather than filling them in. Parents and friends would now have the opportunity to view the conditions under which their dear ones were fighting. They also aimed ‘to help those who had come home wounded and were in the convalescent camp’.



A group of rather casual guides in the Loos Trenches, Blackpool. Two men in 'hospital blues'. The man in front belongs to the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment

The men from the convalescent hospital also acted as guides and maintained the trenches. All proceeds raised from the visitors went to the committee of the convalescent camp to be spent entertaining the men and providing for their comfort and welfare. Collecting boxes were also placed on the local trams.



By June 1916 the country had been at war for almost two years, so why was this system of trenches, which had previously been used to train troops, named the 'Loos Trenches'? Although Dr Woods only mentioned the Loyal North

Lancashire Regiment in his talk, there were other Lancashire regiments involved at the Battle of Loos.

Lancashire battalions directly or indirectly involved at the Battle of Loos.

By the end of the battle quite a number of Lancashire regiments had been drawn into the Battle of Loos. Some were engaged directly in the main battle, while others acted in diversionary or supporting roles. The following battalions were involved.

LNL	KORL	East Lancs	South Lancs	King's Liverpool
1 st 7 th (div)	2 nd 1/5 th 7 th (div)	2 nd (sub) 7 th (div)	2 nd (sub) 7 th (div)	1 st 1/5 th 1/7 th 1/9 th 1/10 th (div)

LNL – Loyal North Lancashire, KORL – King's Own Royal Lancaster. Div – diversionary, sup – subsidiary.

Diversionary and subsidiary attacks

The 56th Infantry Brigade, 19th (Western) Division, were in the Action of Pietre, east of Festubert, a diversionary action to the north of the main Loos battlefield. The 56th Brigade was made up of Lancashire Service battalions; 7th Loyal North Lancs, 7th KORL, 7th East Lancs and 7th South Lancs.

A similar diversionary attack took place at Bois Garnier north of Aubers where the 2nd East Lancs were in action. A subsidiary attack was also launched on 25 September, The Second Attack on Bellewaarde ridge, at Hooge near Ypres, this action involved the 2nd South Lancs and 2nd East Lancs.

The number of casualties incurred by each of the Lancashire battalions vary considerably. For six battalions their war diaries contain no casualty figures, while the war diaries for September 1915 for the 2nd South Lancs and the 1st

King's Liverpool are missing completely. From the war diaries that are available, two battalions stand out as having particularly high casualty rates; 1st Loyal North Lancs with a total of 505, and 1/9th King's Liverpool with 333.

Battalion	Action	Killed	Wounded	Missing
2 nd KORL	Loos	9	36	1
1/5 th KORL	Loos	-	-	-
7 th KORL	Action of Pietre	1	20	-
1 st LNL	Loos	54	357	92
7 th LNL	Action of Pietre	-	-	-
2 nd East Lancs	Bois Grenier	9	34	-
7 th East Lancs	Action of Pietre	3	19	-
2 nd South Lancs	2 nd Bellewaarde	-	-	-
7 th South Lancs	Action of Pietre	-	-	-
1 st KLR	Loos	-	-	-
1/5 th KLR	Loos	-	-	-
1/7 th KLR	Loos	4	14	2
1/9 th KLR	Loos	110	223	-
1/10 th KLR	2 nd Bellewaarde	4	25	-

With fourteen Lancashire battalions involved at various sites and times during the Battle of Loos, the number of wounded passing through the medical services would have been around one thousand. Many of these men would have ended up being treated at the King's Lancashire Convalescent Hospital. Interestingly towards the end of the war the trench site was re-named The Loos and Arras Trenches.



A Cleveleys War Memorial

Peter Denby

Readers may be familiar with the war memorial at Four Lane Ends in Thornton, but that is not the only war memorial in the locality: there is a small memorial in the Garden of Remembrance at St Andrew's Church in Cleveleys.

In the early 1920s a memorial hall was built at St Andrew's to remember those Cleveleys men - of all denominations - who fell in WW1. Upon completion in 1926 a memorial stone was unveiled by Lord Stanley.

The memorial hall was used extensively by the people of Cleveleys for a wide range of activities, but by 1990 major structural repairs were needed and the hall had to be demolished. In the early 2000s a new hall space was created in the main church building, and the memorial stone was relocated to form part of the external wall of the north transept.

Until recently an overgrown hydrangea obscured the memorial stone, and it was decided to clear away the shrubbery and create a small memorial garden to appropriately honour the local men who gave their lives and who are named on the memorial stone.

Funding was obtained from Wyre Borough council and the work was carried out in September 2023 by volunteers from the church congregation. The names on the memorial stone include three Thomson brothers. I understand the lettering on the memorial stone is due to be restored in due course.

I first visited the church in mid-November and it so happened that a fitness class was just finishing and so I was able to go inside the church and speak to a church volunteer. I was pleased to see that local schoolchildren and uniformed organisations had created some excellent remembrance season displays exploring WW1 and the local men named on the memorial stone.

I also learned that the memorial stone was to be rededicated on Sunday November 19. I went along to this, but alas due to a misunderstanding of the timing I missed the service...although I was in time for the refreshments served afterwards!

However, despite my absence the rainy event was well attended by Army, RAF and WREN veterans; local Army Cadets; the Royal British Legion; and members of the congregation and public, the service and rededication being led by the Vicar of the church, the Reverend Graham Young. The rededication service is available to view on YouTube.

As an interesting extra, when I visited the church I noticed a Commonwealth War Grave Commission plaque indicating the presence of a war grave at the church. This puzzled me because there isn't a graveyard at the church and despite a thorough look round the grounds I couldn't find any sign of a war grave.

The mystery was solved when I went in the church and was able to speak to the volunteer. It turns out the war grave is *inside* the church, which is a new one on me! When the first vicar of the church - Thomas Everard Healey - died in 1933, his ashes were placed in the church. When his grandson - Sgt Pilot John Bruton Healey - was killed in September 1941, the family asked that his ashes be interred in the church next to those of his grandfather.

A few years ago, the CWGC wrote to the church to explain that this is officially a war grave and so requested that their plaque be placed at the church to indicate its presence there. Although the church is not routinely open, anyone wishing to look inside can visit on a Saturday morning, when tea, coffee and bacon butties are served, with stalls selling various goodies.



The restored memorial stone at St Andrew's Church, Cleveleys



The ashes of Sgt Pilot John Bruton Healey and his grandfather



BRIGADIER GENERAL REGINALD JOHN KENTISH (RJK) & HIS 18th TALE



A Captain and a Royal Lodge Keeper Too!

By Terry Dean

SCENE: TIME: PLACE: Sometime in July 1917: The Senior Officers' School, Aldershot.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE: H.M. King George V: H.R.H. The Duke of Connaught; The Commandant (myself); 300 Senior Officers on parade and the Adjutant, Captain J. S. Heath, the East Lancashire Regiment, lately a Company Sergeant Major, Grenadier Guards.

I had received word the night before that the King and the Duke of Connaught would be coming to see the Senior Officers' School and the work going on. It was a lovely July morning and so I had arranged to have all the work going on in the open and when the King arrived the 300 Senior Officers were being instructed in Battalion Drill by my Adjutant Captain J.S. Heath --- a most capable officer who, starting the war as a Company Sergeant Major in the Grenadier Guards, had gained rapid promotion for gallantry, and then having

been badly wounded, he had been sent home and, when fit for duty again, had been posted as adjutant to the Senior Officers' School.

After watching the movements for a few seconds, the King asked me about Heath who, apart from being a fine figure of a man --- he stood six feet six in his shoes --- was one of the finest 'drills' in the Army and I told Majesty his history. "But what are all these Officers, like Heath, promoted from the ranks, and with no private means, going to do when the War's over?", said the King to the Duke. "They won't be able to afford to live with their regiments as Officers!"

"A very difficult problem, Sir," said the duke. "Why," went of the King, "Only the other day I had a letter from a man who, when the War started, was one of my Lodge Keepers at Sandringham. Before that he had been a Sergeant in the Coldstream and, on finishing his time with the Colours, he had applied for and obtained the job of Lodge Keeper. When the Army mobilised, being a reservist, he rejoined his old regiment, got a commission from the ranks, did very well and became a Captain, then, like Heath, was badly wounded and was sent home; now being unfit for further service he has been discharged with a wound pension and the rank of Captain, and has written to ask if he can come back to his old job".

"But how," said the King, "can I have as a Lodge Keeper a man who holds the rank of Captain in my Army? And if I don't take him back, what is he going to do?"

"Most difficult Sir," said the Duke, "unless he is willing to give up his rank,"

"But why should he," said the King, "after having done so well and having been promoted for gallantry in the field?" "A most difficult problem," repeated the Duke.

And then I called Heath up and presented him to the King who, after congratulating him on his record --- he had won the M.C. in France --- and also

on the splendid work he was doing at the school, asked him if he had thought about what he was going to do after the War was over. Heath told the King he had not, but he hoped to find some suitable appointment, and then, again congratulating him, the King followed by the Duke, we and our orderlies rode on.

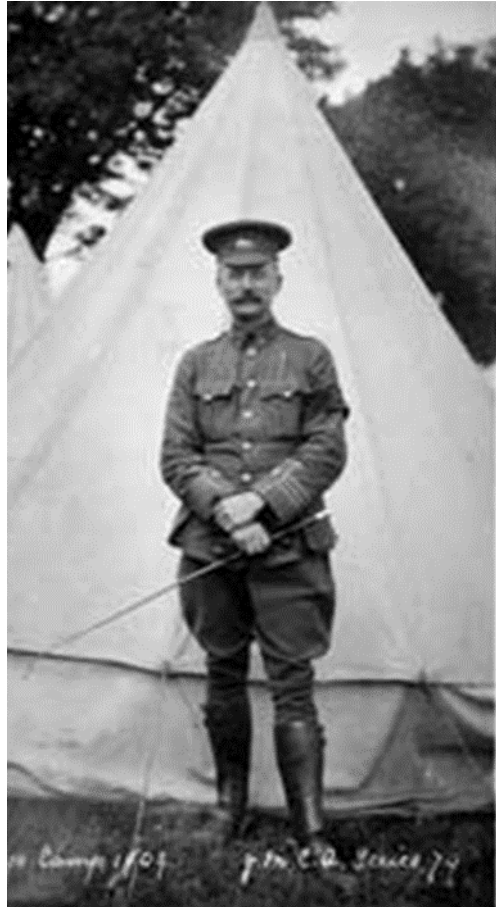
As a matter of interest Heath solved the problem, so far as he personally was concerned himself, because shortly after the War was over, he applied for the Headmastership of one of the Fairbridge Schools in Australia. This, with his fine record and with the help of his Officers, under who he served, he had little difficulty in obtaining, and when I last heard of him --- only a few days ago --- he was doing splendidly.

But whether the King ever took his exalted Lodge Keeper back again, I never heard!



Major John Henry Bates

1/5th King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment (TF)



Major Bates, 5th King's Own, at Caerwys Camp, Flintshire, 1909.
Accession Number: KO0104/58

John Henry Bates was Born 12 January 1865 at Preston Patrick, Westmorland. He started his working life as a solicitor's clerk at the age of sixteen, before becoming a bank clerk and eventually rising to become a bank manager with the Liverpool Bank in Kendal. In August 1883, at the age of twenty-one, he married

Sarah Eleanor Knight in Kendal. They were to eventually have four children. The youngest, Stanley, was born at Morecambe in 1898.

Service in the Rifle Volunteers

The 5th King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment was formed out of the original 10th Lancaster Volunteer Rifles, who were established on 30 May 1850. In 1875 they became the 10th Lancaster Rifle Volunteers. In a later reorganisation they were then formed into the 1st Volunteer Battalion King's Own (Royal Lancaster) Regiment on 14 February 1883. Lord Edward Cavendish was appointed as Colonel.

On 1 December 1900 the Lancaster detachment of the 1st Volunteer Battalion was formed into six separate companies with detachments around the Lancaster area. With the disbandment of the Volunteers and the formation of the Territorial Force on 1 April 1908, the 5th Battalion of the King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment (KORL) was formed with Lt. Colonel Lord Richard Cavendish in command. Among the officers joining this new battalion in 1908 was Major John Henry Bates.

Service with the Territorials

In the Lancaster Guardian of 12 September 1908, under 'Local Military News', it was reported that 'Major J H Bates has passed an examination for the rank of field officer.' Major Bates had been second in command of the 5th KORL in the years prior to mobilisation, and afterward during their service on the Western Front from 15 February 1915.

Following their brief introduction into trench warfare under the guidance of regular army battalions, the 1/5th KORL was attached to 83rd Infantry Brigade, 28th Division alongside their own 2nd KORL from March to September 1915.

The Second Battle of Ypres

At the start of what became the Second Battle of Ypres, the 1/5th KORL were in reserve positions in Ypres when the first gas attack broke through the French positions to the west of St. Julien. The battalion was rushed forward as part of the hastily formed ‘Geddes Detachment’, in an effort to plug the gap in the line and prevent the Germans advancing into Ypres. For a full account of the actions of Geddes Detachment see Despatch November 2020.

On Friday 23 April 1915 1/5th KORL formed part of a counterattack against the German positions, which were now formed along Mauser Ridge to the north of St. Jean, with the intention of closing the gap in the line between the Canadians to the east at St. Julien, and the French to the west near the Yser canal. The battalion was initially to act in support of the attack. They were given only the vaguest outlines of the objective and the direction of attack. Three companies were to take part, with one in reserve. ‘C’ Company under Major Bates was to lead the battalion advance.

Major Bates briefly described the event in the battalion history:

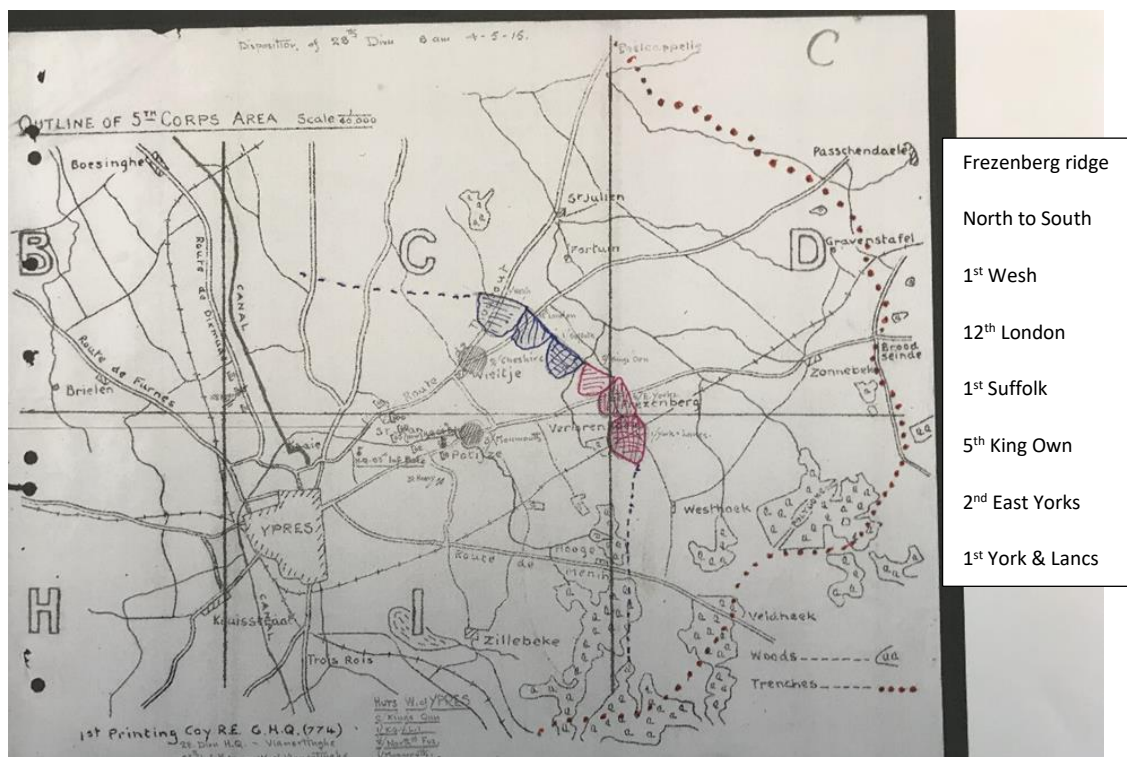
‘At 5 p.m. the Battalion move for attack, ‘C’ Company leading. As they deployed they were met by a heavy shell fire. Immediately they reached their position they came under machine-gun and rifle fire from the front and both flanks. Casualties were numerous from the very outset. The advance was carried out in perfect order, every man pressing forward to the objective. On coming in line with the troops of the attack they were held up for lack of support. A halt was made and each man selected or made for himself cover. Later it was deemed advisable to fall back 100-

200 yards and dig in a new line. ‘A’ Company and a platoon of ‘D’ taking this duty, whilst the remainder of the Battalion fell back to its position prior to the commencement of the attack.’

Major Bates survived the advance with only his uniform torn by a bullet. The battalion later dug in along the ridge at Hill Top where they had started from and remained in these positions until relieved on 29 April 1915, when they moved back to huts on the other side of Ypres.

May 1915

On 2 May 1915, the 1/5th KORL moved into positions about two miles behind the front, east of Frezenberg and close to the Ypres-Zonnebeke road. There was no wire in front of the trenches which were narrow, half finished, with poor communication trenches and worse – they were on the forward slopes of Frezenberg ridge, overlooked by the Germans. They were constantly shelled.



The withdrawal to Frezenberg ridge

At 9.45 p.m. that evening, the British began their planned retirement in order to reduce the extent of the Ypres Salient. Firstly, all reserves withdrew across the Yser canal and the following morning, 3 May at 11.45 a.m., a complete withdrawal was started. The new line now ran from near Hill 60 through Sanctuary Wood, then in front of Hooze, Frezenberg, Mouse Trap Farm and on to Turco Farm where it joined the French line, an average retirement of around 4,000 yards.

The Germans soon began to shell the new front line and attempted an infantry attack between the 11th Brigade and 85th Brigade, just north of Zonnebeke. The 1/5th KORL were among the units rushed forward to reinforce the new line. During the night of 3-4 May, and aided by a ground mist the following morning, the withdrawal to the new line was completed. Once the enemy realised that the forward trenches had been evacuated their infantry began probing forward followed by their field artillery.

The exposed positions held by the 1/5th KORL on the forward slopes of Frezenberg ridge were soon identified as a weakness in the new British line, and the area was subjected to continuous shellfire for the next sixteen hours. At dawn on 5 May the German shelling increased in intensity and under cover of this fire the enemy infantry advanced and dug in between 800-1000 yards in front of the British positions.

The Germans launched a determined attack against the 83rd Brigade astride the Ypres–Zonnebeke road at Frezenberg. The infantry attack was driven back but the enemy artillery maintained a heavy fire on the British positions. The 2nd KORL, who had only been out of the line for twenty-four hours, were recalled to help support the 1/5th KORL. The 1/5th battalion was eventually relieved at

11.0 p.m. that night. The poor trenches, an absence of shelters, and the difficulties in getting the wounded out of the line had resulted in nearly two hundred casualties.

Returning to huts near Vlamertinghe on the night of 6-7 May, their respite was short lived. On the evening of 7 May the battalion was ordered into reserve positions just south of St. Jean. At 1.0 a.m. on 8 May the battalion moved into the reserve trenches in the GHQ line on the Ypres-Zonnebeke road, opposite the Potijze Chateau. During the night the enemy carried out numerous probing patrols and small small-scale attacks, all of which indicated a forthcoming attack.

At 5.30 a.m. a violent bombardment fell on the whole of the front, again concentrating on the 83rd Brigade, particularly the forward slopes of the Frezenberg ridge. By 8.30 a.m. the shellfire had also intensified between the Menin Road and Mouse Trap Farm. When the enemy guns lifted onto the support trenches, the German infantry attacked Frezenberg ridge. The major part of the assault fell on the trenches previously occupied by the 5th KORL, but now held by 2nd KORL, 1st Suffolk and 2nd Cheshire.

During the morning of 8 May, the defenders held off three attacks with rifle and machine gun fire, but eventually, as reinforcements could not be sent forward, the decision was made to evacuate the trenches. During this withdrawal the Germans made a fresh attack, isolating elements of the 2nd KORL and 3rd Monmouths. About 3.0 p.m. the battalion was ordered forward along with the 2nd East Yorks, with the intention of reestablishing the positions previously held by the 2nd KORL and the 3rd Monmouths.

Casualties were heavy due to machine gun fire sweeping the open ground. When the attack started the small, previously isolated elements of 2nd KORL

and 3rd Monmouths, joined in with the 5th KORL. They managed to advance about 1,200 yards before taking shelter in trenches west of Verlorenhoek. They could go no further. It was during this advance that the Commanding Officer Colonel Cavendish was wounded. At 8.0 p.m. a last valiant attempt was made to rush the enemy with a bayonet charge, but the alert German defenders were ready for them, and they were forced back.

The battalion remained in these exposed positions under continuous fire throughout the 9 May. It was here that Major Bates' son, Lieutenant Stanley Bates, was shot in the neck and died shortly afterwards.

The exhausted survivors of the 83rd Brigade, now scarcely holding just a half mile of trenches between the railway and the Ypres–Zonnebeke road, were withdrawn and made their way back to huts near Vlamertinghe. The whole brigade was now accommodated in a battalion sized camp.

Their reprieve was short lived. On 10 May the 83rd Brigade was formed into a composite battalion and marched to Potijze where they spent the night digging trenches. The following day they moved forward into the GHQ line. It was later that night when the exhausted and depleted battalion was finally relieved. They had not had a full night of sleep since 1 May 1915.



Frezenberg ridge 2023

1/5th KORL battalion history records that on 3 May 1915 Capt. Eaves was still in command of 'C' Company. When the commanding officer, Colonel Cavendish was wounded on 8 May 1915, the battalion history records,

‘As the Colonel had been wounded, Major Bates and Major Cadman gone to England sick, and the Adjutant, Captain Young, also gone to England with enteric, Captain F Eaves, Officer Commanding 'C' Company, was now in command.’

It would appear that Major Bates had been evacuated home on 6 May 1915. Unusually there is no mention in the battalion war diary of any officers being sent to hospital, wounded, or killed during the fighting in May 1915.

The Lancaster Guardian carried a brief article on 15 May 1915:

‘After the severe fighting around Ypres Major J H Bates was invalided home to Penrith. He passed through Lancaster station on Tuesday (Ed.11

May) and his condition caused some relative anxiety. His hearing has been affected by shellfire and will require a slight operation. The news of the death of his son will come as a great blow after the Major left the battalion.'

At the bottom of the same page is a photograph of Lieutenant Stanley K Bates.



'Major J H Bates was officially notified on Thursday (13 May) at his home in Penrith, that his son Lieutenant Stanley K Bates of the 5th King's Own had been killed in action near Ypres on May 9th. During the recent fighting he was shot through the neck and died in two minutes. The sad news is confirmed by letter from the front which arrived on Thursday. Lieutenant Stanley K Bates was only 18 years of age, but his experience in the Officers Training Corps at the Lancaster Grammar School prepared him for his commission on August 10th in his father's regiment. While at school 'Kat' as he was known, was very popular at cricket and football.'

A later report on Major Bates appeared in the Lancaster Guardian on 12 June 1915;

'Major Bates of 5th King's Own Royal Lancaster who has been invalided home from the front, has been appointed to take charge of the training camp of 3/5th King's Own Royal Lancaster at Weeton, Fylde,'

The 3/5th KORL remained in England throughout the war. It supplied drafts of replacements to the 1/5th and 2/5th battalions.

Lieutenant Stanley Knight Bates.

Lieutenant Stanley Knight Bates was considered to be the youngest commissioned officer in the British army. Born on 19 June 1897 in Morecambe. He joined his father's regiment and was commissioned on 10 August 1914. On 28 December 1914, he was promoted to full Lieutenant at the age of seventeen. A former pupil at Lancaster Grammar School, he was a member of the Officers Training Corps, a keen athlete, who represented his school at cricket and rugby.

Lt. Stanley Bates arrived in France with the battalion on 15 February 1915. It was during the fierce fighting of 8 May 1915 that the Colonel and five other officers were wounded and Lt Bates, the son of the Second in Command was killed. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission records Stanley Knight Bates as being killed in action on 9 May 1915.

An account of Lt Bates death appears in Kevin Shannon's book, *The Lion and the Rose*, the 1/5th Battalion the King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment 1914-19 Volume 2.

‘Major Bates’ son died in my arms. We had nothing to eat or drink for two days, so Lt. Bates said he could spare us a bit of bread, and while he was handing it round the corner he was shot in the neck and dropped into my arms. He only lived about two minutes.’

In du Ruvigny's Roll of Honour his death is reported as taking place ‘in front of Potijze at noon on Sunday 9 May, 1915, while bringing food for the few men he had left with him.’ He was buried in front of Potijze Chateau.

Major Bates was fifty years old when he arrived in France in 1915. He had endured two months of winter in the trenches and the constant front-line experiences before the opening of the Second Battle of Ypres on 22 April 1915. During the attack on Mauser ridge – later named the Battle of Gravenstafel Major Bates was at the head of ‘C’ Company as they led the battalion into action for the first time.

By the time the battalion was taken out of the line on 29 April 1915 Major Bates was clearly feeling the strain of war. In a long letter published in the Lancaster Guardian ostensibly in May 1915, he recounts some of his experiences;

‘The past fifteen days have been most strenuous and I appeared to have lived years during that time. We have seen a lot of fighting and while our good God has spared me and my lad for a little while, he has called to Himself many of my dear comrades.... We have been under heavy shellfire for the past fifteen days and on two of these we did heavy fighting ourselves.... We lost many, over sixty the week before last, and well over 200 on Friday last, in less than two hours. It was awful... I pray to God that I may never see such an awful sight again.

To see God’s handiwork blown to atoms before your eyes! Yes at your very side, it is a shock few can face without a failing heart.... Poor Lt. Coupland, my son Stanley’s mate! He went down early, shot through the stomach. He was such a fine lad. I loved the little fellow.... I can feel for his parents knowing what it would be if I had lost my own...’

Major Bates was to experience the awful loss of his own son within the next week. One can only guess what this grief added to his heavy heart. The diagnosis of neurasthenia on his Pension Record Card is understandable.



The training of the local Territorial unit – 5th King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment TF



The 5th King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment (KORL) based in Lancaster was an infantry battalion of the Territorial Force and like many other Territorial units it had its roots in the old Lancashire Volunteers.

When R B Haldane (the Secretary of State for War 1905-12) reorganised the auxiliary forces, the Volunteer battalions were re-formed into one of the newly established Infantry battalions of the new Territorial Force.

The introduction of the Territorial and Reserve Forces Bill in 1907 created the County Associations, the Territorial Force, and the Special Reserve. On 19 March 1908 all existing units of the Yeomanry and Volunteers were transferred to the new Territorial Force, commencing on 1 April 1908. The 2nd Volunteer Battalion became the 5th King's Own Royal Lancaster TF, with its headquarters in Lancaster and companies at Morecambe, Carnforth and Fleetwood.

Before the Haldane reforms the auxiliary forces basically consisted of three elements; the Militia, the Volunteer Force and the Yeomanry. Haldane estimated in 1905 that the auxiliary forces were costing the government £4,000,000 per year.

The Militia was the oldest constitutional force within the UK, and while it lacked cavalry and artillery it was costing around £2,000,000 a year. By 1905 its efficiency was declining; it had an establishment of 131,000, but had only a strength of 85,000. It was staffed by country gentlemen but still had a deficiency of 1,000 officers.

The Volunteers had been formed for the purpose of home defence against an expected French invasion between 1859–61. The Volunteer Corps and had originally been self-sufficient. The Commanding Officers bore the sole financial responsibility for their units, and any further funds were often raised by public subscription. The Volunteer Corps had originally been self-sufficient due to its large middle-class component, but by 1906 social and financial circumstances had changed this. The government at this time was spending £1,750,000 to support the Volunteers. The funding was based on a capitation grant for each ‘efficient’ soldier, to cover the costs of uniform, equipment and attendance at camp.

The Yeomanry had been recently reorganised in 1901 when it became the Imperial Yeomanry. It consisted of fifty-six corps of mounted landowners and farmers with a further 25,000 all ranks. They trained annually for 15 – 18 days, possessed no staff, brigade organisation or an administrative service. The Yeomanry had grown since its origins during the French Revolutionary wars, without planning or any defined wartime role. Again, there was little concern for efficiency or economy. However, the Yeomanry could provide the nucleus of a second line cavalry.

The 5th KORL, as a newly formed TF Infantry battalion quickly established a training program that conformed to the training requirements as set out in Appendix 6, Sub-Appendix IV, of the Regulations for the Territorial Force and

County Associations 1908. This set out the training for the Territorial Force Infantry.

The basic obligations for the rank and file during the first year were:

- a) 40 Drills, of which 20 must be performed before the annual training in camp.
- b) The annual training in camp of his unit.
- c) Recruits course of musketry.

Thereafter –

- a) 10 Drills to be performed before annual training in camp.
- b) Annual training in camp.
- c) Annual course of musketry.

A schedule of Drill nights, weekend training and the annual training in camp was established under the direction of the Commanding Officer and the regular army Adjutant. From August 1908 orders for the week, notices of weekend training and details of the forthcoming annual camp were published in the Lancaster Guardian.

Local Military News.

5th Battalion, The King's own Royal Lancaster Regiment. – Orders for next week by Lieut. – Colonel J. E. Willan, V. D., commanding.

Sunday, August 2 – Headquarter Companies parade at 8.30 a.m. in full marching order. Kit bags to be carried by each man. Personal baggage of officers and sergeants to be placed in the brake-van at Midland Railway siding before falling in. the Fleetwood, Morecambe, and Carnforth detachments will join headquarters at Heysham. The annual kit inspection will take place in camp. Every man must be fully equipped. The following soldiers are appointed lance corporals: - "D" Company.

Pte. R. H. W. Baines; “F” Company, Ptes. R. Anyon and F. Molyneaux; “H” Company, Ptes. J. R. Bamber and J. Corrigan. Corporal A. Jones. “B” Company, is reverted to Private for misconduct. Pte J. T. Atkinson having been awarded imprisonment, is discharged. Instructions for camp, and a plan of the camp is posted up in the drill hall for the information of all ranks.

The following N. C. officers and men will be employed in camp:- Brigade clerk, Lce-Sergt. Sipson; Brigade police, Ptes. R. Tyson and D. Nixon; Brigade office orderly, Pte. H. Nickson. These men to report to Brigade Major at 9.0 a.m. on Monday next. Canteen, Q.M.S. Wilson. Ptes, J. N. Jackson and T. Thorpe. Canteen check box, Pte. G. Barrow; groom and driver for Maxim gun horse, Pte E. Pattinson; orderly room clerk, Pte. Graham; Regimental Police, Sergt. J Clarke, Ptes. Rogerson, Finn and Askey; Pioneers, Lce. Sergt. H. Farnsworth, Ptes. B. H. Simpson and J. Simpson; stretcher bearers, Ptes. Dudley and Parsonage. -(signed) R. N. Dobson, Captain, Adjutant.

Lancaster Guardian. 1 August 1908. p 8.

Similar articles followed on a regular basis until October 1914. Brief extracts from a number follow;

29 August 1908 p.5

This article was published following the battalion’s annual camp at Ramsey, Isle of Man.

- *The Commanding Officer wishes to thank NC officers and men of the battalion for the admirable discipline maintained in camp at Ramsey. He also is pleased to receive the good report of the Town Clerk of Ramsey as to the excellent behaviour of the battalion in the town.*

- *29 August Rifle Meeting. Details of rail travel arrangements. Each man to pay his own return fare of 5d.*
- *Usual drills and practices this week.*
- *This year's recruits reminded that they must have 40 drills completed by October.*
- *There are musketry courses on 5 and 12 September.*
- *Officers and men of the Territorial Force are exempt from serving on a jury, provided they have their names struck off the list. The names are placed on the doors of the Parish church the first three Sundays in September.*

5 September 1908 p.5

- 5 September – musketry course and details of travel arrangements
- 12 September – Recruits musketry course and details of travel arrangements.
- Recruit drills at 7.0 p.m. every evening, in addition Tuesday and Thursday at 8.0 p.m.
- Details of band and bugle practice.
- Results of the Rifle competition and notice that rifles can be returned to the Armoury any evening.
- Efficiency Medal – entitled if a man has been serving on 31 March 1898, joined the Territorial Force, has twelve years' service including Volunteer service, the last five years being continuous and must have been efficient each year.

12 September 1908 p.5

- Details of the Recruits musketry courses, parts I and II on 12 and 19 September. Details of rail travel.

- Notice of proposed route march on 26 September with outpost and reconnaissance practice.
- Notices of promotions to officers and NCOs.
- Notice of the formation of new squads of recruits to begin training on 1 October.
- Requirements for new recruits; Must be at least 17 years of age. 5foot 3 inches in height, 32 inch chest measurement and good eyesight.

19 September 1908 p.8

- Musketry course for trained men and recruits on 19 September, travel arrangements.
- Practices and recruit's drills as usual.
- Recruitment has now recommenced (training starts 1 October). 2/- paid to a person bringing a recruit provided he is fit and accepted.
- A Guinea will be paid to the person bringing the largest number of approved recruits by 31 December 1908. Enlistments every evening 7-9 p.m.

This format of reports and notices of the regular weekly training, musketry courses, notices of promotions and specific training such as 'opportunities for NCOs desirous of going to Aldershot for a course of cooking.'

Arrangements for annual camp, complete with employment details continued until 1914 and each notice gave warning that 'all ranks are cautioned that under no circumstances must nails be driven into tent poles. Occupants of such tents will be stopped the amount of damage done from their camp pay.'

Details of the training program - to be held at what would turn out to be the final annual camp at Kirkby Lonsdale - were published on 25 July 1914. The 5th King's Own Royal Lancaster, as part of the North Lancashire Infantry Brigade,

were to camp between Devil's Bridge at Kirkby Lonsdale and the east side of the river Lune. The battalion expected to muster 650 men.

On Sunday 2 August the companies were to arrive by various trains at Low Gill and Kirkby Lonsdale and then march into camp. The first three days were to be spent on company and musketry drill, with a battalion drill and Adjutant's parade on Thursday 6 August followed by training in attack on Blaze Hill. Friday will be outpost work at night and on Saturday the Howard Cup Competition and further lessons in attack.

Monday 10 August was to be devoted to field firing, and on Tuesday a battalion movement at High Biggin with night work. On Wednesday there was to be a battalion scheme in which the battalion opposed the 4th Loyal North Lancashire. Thursday 13 August was to be for defence and entrenchment work. On the last two days a brigade scheme against the 4th Loyal North Lancashire under field service conditions was organised. This involved bivouac on the Friday night.

When the various elements of the battalion arrived in heavy rain on 2 August, they found a sodden camp and then had to manage with only one blanket, no groundsheets and a shortage of cooking equipment. However, by midnight training had been abandoned when orders were received for the battalion to return to Lancaster and other centres to await orders. They did not wait long; on Tuesday 4 August 1914 orders came to mobilise and proceed to Barrow.



A Fleetwood War Memorial

Peter Denby

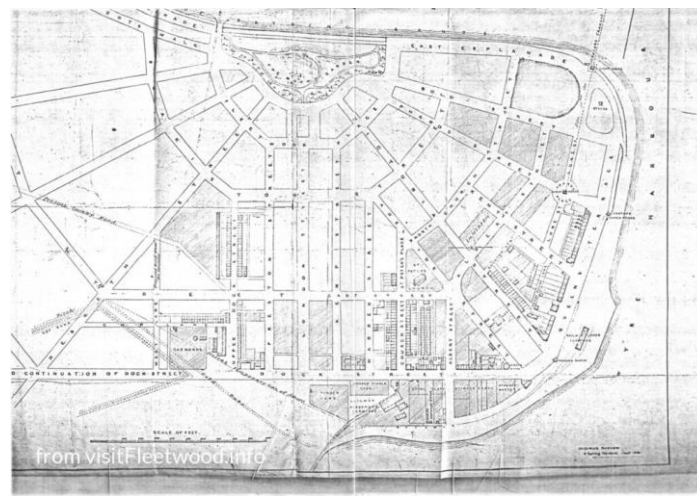


The Mount Pavilion and clock

Fleetwood's splendid main war memorial is in the town's Memorial Park, but another WW1 memorial - a clock - sits atop the Grade II listed Mount Pavilion opposite the Marine Hall. The clock sits on the pavilion's cupola, which also has a weather vane depicting a fishing trawler.

Fleetwood was coastal dunes until the 1830s, when Fleetwood's creator Sir Peter Hesketh Fleetwood commissioned the famous London architect Decimus Burton to design his new town, which would be a port, a tourist attraction in its own right, and a stopover for travellers arriving by train from London to catch the boat to Scotland (hence the town's North Euston Hotel).

Decimus used a large sand dune (Tup Hill) as his focal point, which became known as The Mount. This hill dominates the landscape, with the town's streets radiating from it like the spokes of a half-wheel.



Fleetwood streets radiate from the Mount

A pavilion was built in the 1830s, replaced by the current one in the early 1900s, and in 1919 the local businessman Isaac Spencer, a fish meal producer, paid for a clock to be placed at the very top of the pavilion in memory of local men killed in WW1. The clock was made by Potts of Leeds. Its workings are visible through a glass display case.

A plaque was put in place when the clock first ran on 19 February 1919, giving it the recognised status as one of the country's very first WW1 memorials:



THE GREAT WAR 1914 - 1918

FLEETWOOD MEMORIAL CLOCK

THIS CLOCK IS IN RECOGNITION OF THE MAGNIFICENT RESPONSE MADE BY THE MEN
OF FLEETWOOD TO THE NATION'S CALL. THEIR DEVOTION TO DUTY,

THEIR NOBLE AND COURAGEOUS DEEDS ON SEA AND LAND, AND IN SO MANY CASES
THEIR SUPREME SACRIFICE IN THE DEFENCE OF FREEDOM; ALSO IN SYMPATHY WITH
THE MAIMED, THE WIDOWS, AND THE FATHERLESS.

The pavilion was renovated in 1986 and more recently a generous £1m donation from the late Mrs Doreen Lofthouse (of the town's Fisherman's Friend lozenge business) along with funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund allowed further restoration of The Mount and its pavilion.

On a fine day a panoramic 360° view of the coastline, Bleasdale Hills, Beacon Fell and beyond can be seen from The Mount, or better still from the pavilion's

balcony (when open: I visited on an evening walk with the Garstang Walking Festival; refreshments were provided afterwards in the pavilion!)



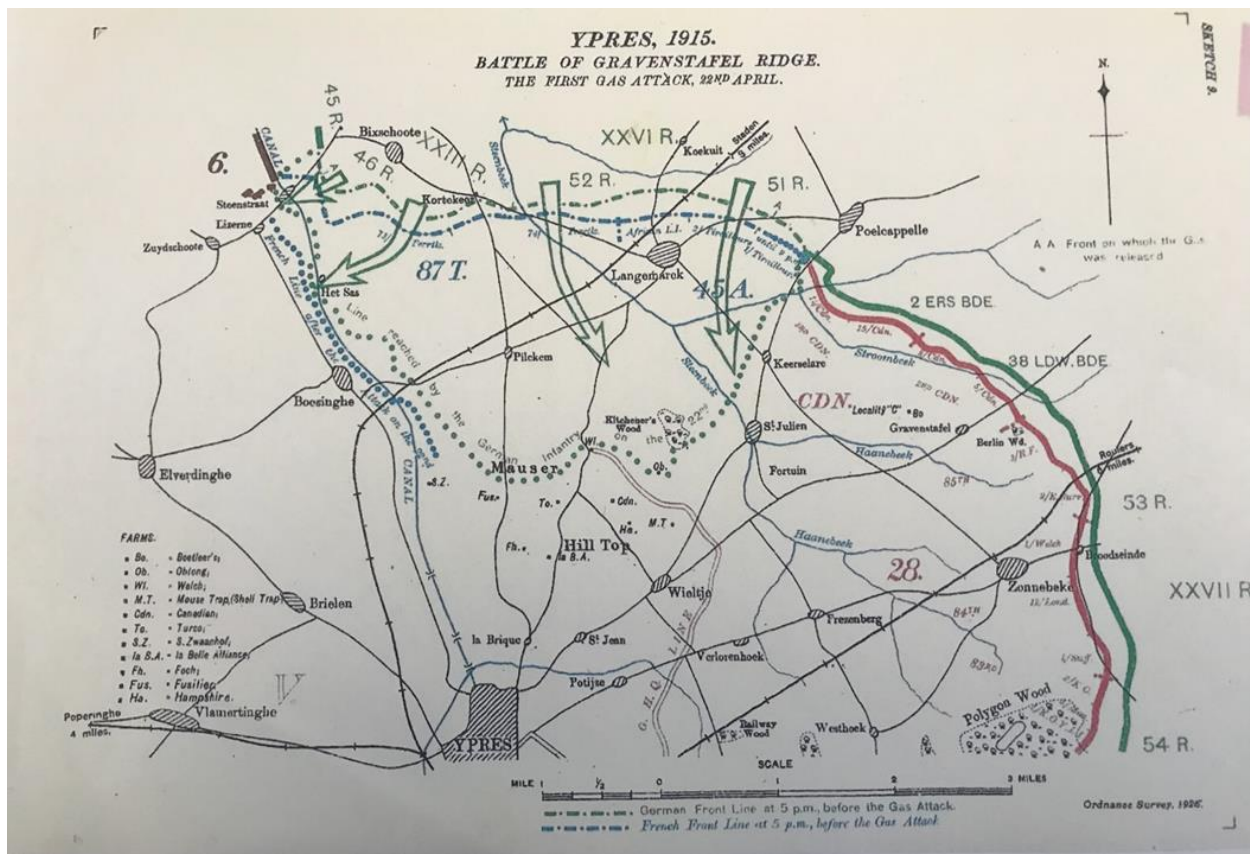
View from the pavilion balcony at sunset



Walking the Battlefield

The battleground of the 1/5th King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment at the Second Battle of Ypres 23 April 1915.

Whilst writing the article on Major Bates of 1/5th King's Own Royal Lancaster (KORL), it brought to mind a trip my son and I took to Ypres in 2023. The intention was to walk the site of the battalion's first action following the first German gas attack on the allied line on 22 April 1915. The 1/5th KORL were part of an ad hoc formation, made up of battalions within in the Ypres area.



The first gas attack 22 April 1915 from the Official History

The gas attack on the French sector of the Allied line left a four mile gap between the Yser canal in the west, to the junction with the Canadian positions

north of St. Julien in the east. A full account of this episode can be found in the November 2020 edition of Despatch. This formation became ‘Geddes Detachment’, after the senior officer in command, Lt. Colonel Geddes of the 2nd Buffs.



Topography today – thanks to Google Earth

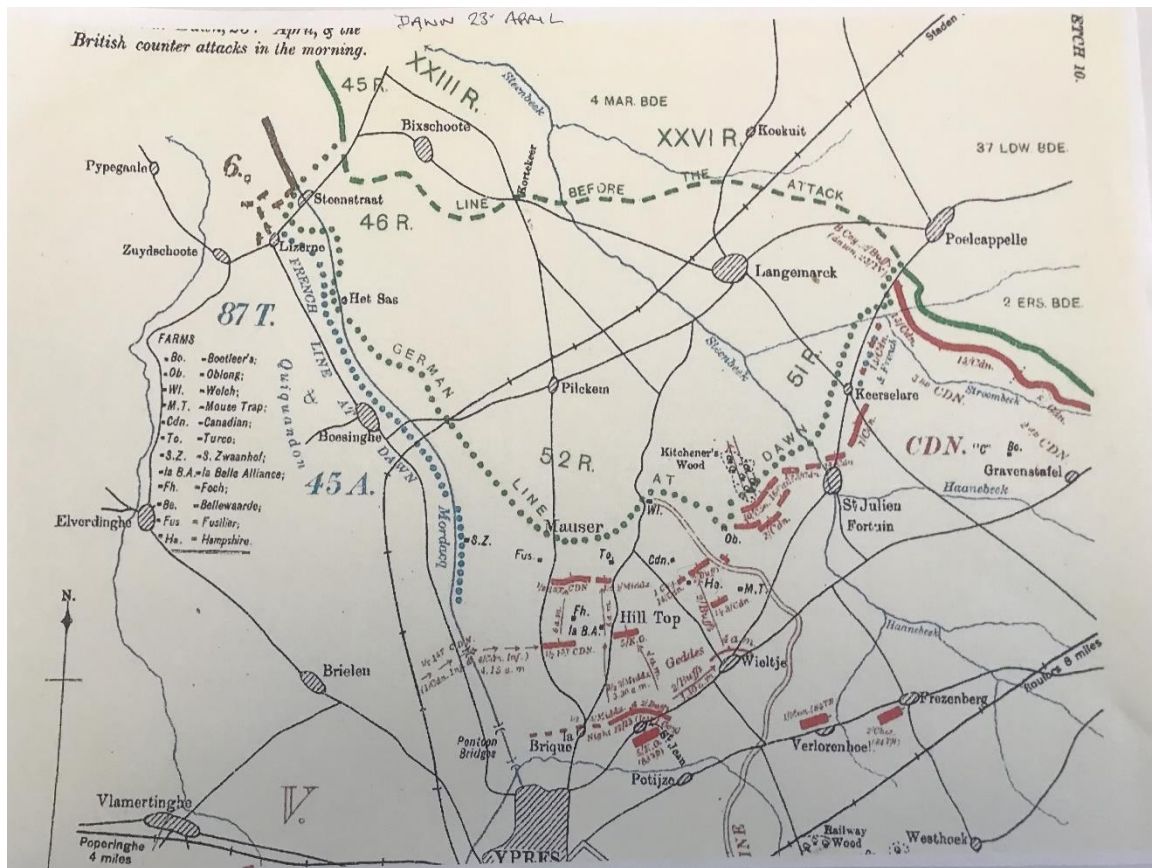
The 1/5th KORL had moved out of Ypres due to the heavy shelling of the town, and by the evening of 22 April 1915 the battalion was in reserve, just south of St. Jean. The position was about three and a half miles behind (south) of the original French front line. While the Geddes Detachment was being assembled around St. Jean, the Canadians had extended to their left in an attempt to find the French right flank. Patrols sent out from the St. Jean area located elements of the 2nd Canadian Brigade.

Later that night, at 1.50 am on the 23 April 1915, Geddes was ordered to close the four-mile gap in the line between the Canadians and the French. His

instructions were to drive back the enemy, and if that was not possible, to dig in. At 4.0 a.m. that morning the 1/5th KORL moved north to the crossroads between La Belle Alliance Farm and Hill Top Farm about a mile north of St. Jean. They dug in as best they could with their entrenching tools.

Geddes began organising his force by firstly sending the 3rd Middlesex west to link up with the exposed French right flank, with orders to then move right and link up with the Canadians. Two platoons of the Middlesex were left to guard the pontoon bridge over the Yser canal. The 1/5th KORL held the centre, while the 2nd Buffs moved northeast to assist the Canadians near St. Julien. Arriving a little later, the 1st York & Lancaster were also directed north west of Wieltje as additional support for the Canadians.

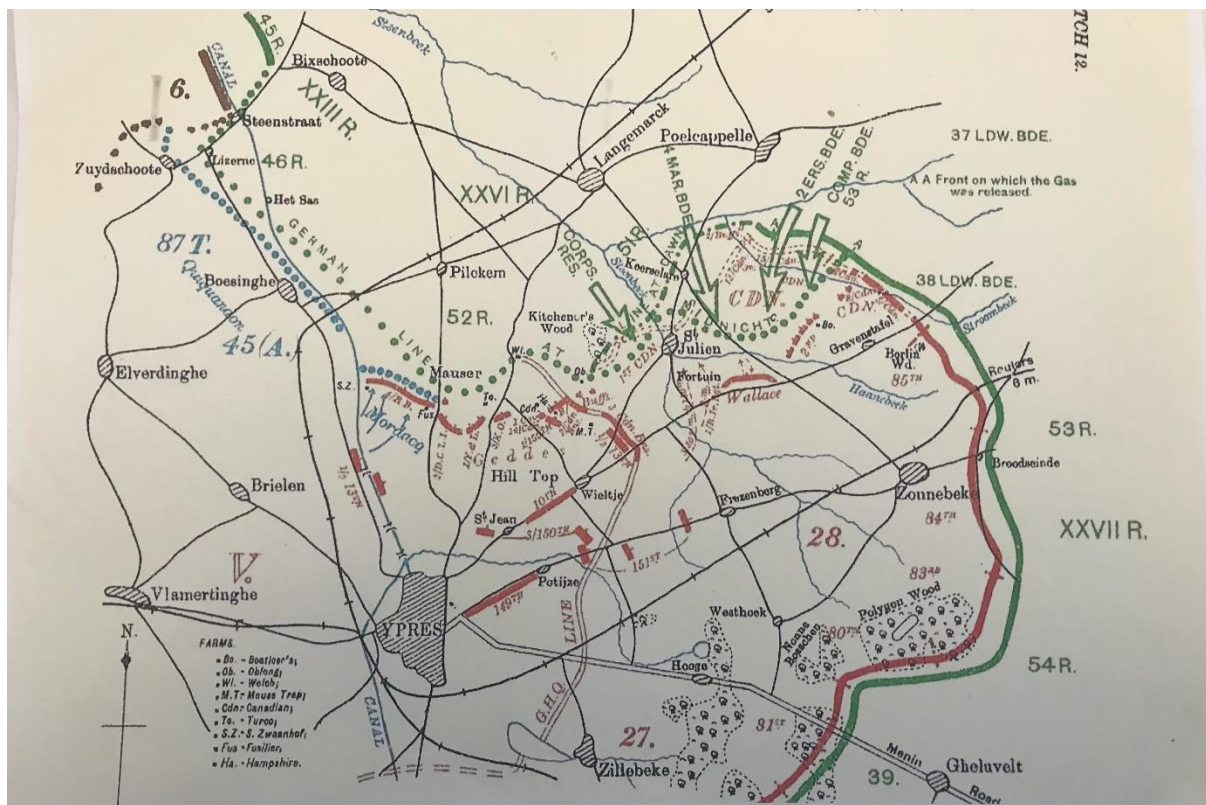
The French were advised of their intentions to re-take the lost positions at 5.25 am. In support of this attack, which did not materialise, the Middlesex and two Canadian battalions advanced towards Mauser ridge and reached Turco Farm about three hundred yards from the ridge before they were stopped by heavy rifle fire. By 9.0 am the Middlesex and Canadians had withdrawn and dug in about six-hundred yards in front of Turco Farm. Meanwhile, the 1/5th KORL at Hill Top were now coming under artillery fire including lacrimatory shells. Geddes' Detachment were now the only troops between the Germans and the town of Ypres.



Positions at dawn 23 April 1915. From Official History

An attack was planned for the afternoon of 23 April at 3.00 p.m., on a line from Kitchener's Wood in the east, to the Yser canal in the west, directed towards Pilkem in the north. This attack was eventually postponed but the artillery were not informed and started their preliminary bombardment at 2.15 pm. This left little ammunition to support the eventual attack later that afternoon.

The 1/5th KORL were still in their positions on Hill Top when orders were received from Col. Geddes at 4.10 p.m. The plan was for the newly arrived 13th Brigade to cross the Yser canal and extend to the west of the Ypres-Pilkem road. The 2nd East Yorks and 1st York & Lancs were by now on the east of this road and each extended to advance on a front of 500 yards. The 3rd Middlesex and 2nd Buffs were to advance from their existing line, with the 1/5th KORL following in reserve.



The advance on 23 April 1915. From Official History

The battalion formed up and moved off at 5.0 p.m. behind the 2nd East Yorks and 1st York & Lancs. For 850 yards the ground sloped down from Hill Top to Turco Farm where it then rose up to Mauser ridge, a distance of 1,300 yards. Mauser ridge is more of an undulation in the ground at 25 metres high; Hill Top was the high point at 27 metres and Turco Farm is at 22 metres. It was a crystal-clear afternoon; every man was distinctly visible to the Germans.



The advance from Hill Top to Mauser ridge

Major Bates, at the head of 'C' Company, led the battalion as they advanced with fixed bayonets. They were followed by 'A' Company led by Capt. Atkinson, then 'B' Company led by Capt. Sharpe. 'D' Company followed with Capt. Carter and Colonel Cavendish. As the battalion came into line, a gap appeared between the two leading battalions drawing the 1/5th KORL into the front line. They now came under high explosive, shrapnel, machine gun and rifle fire. After advancing 560 yards they reached a large ditch, previously held by the 3rd Middlesex. This caused some delay and disruption in the order of the companies.

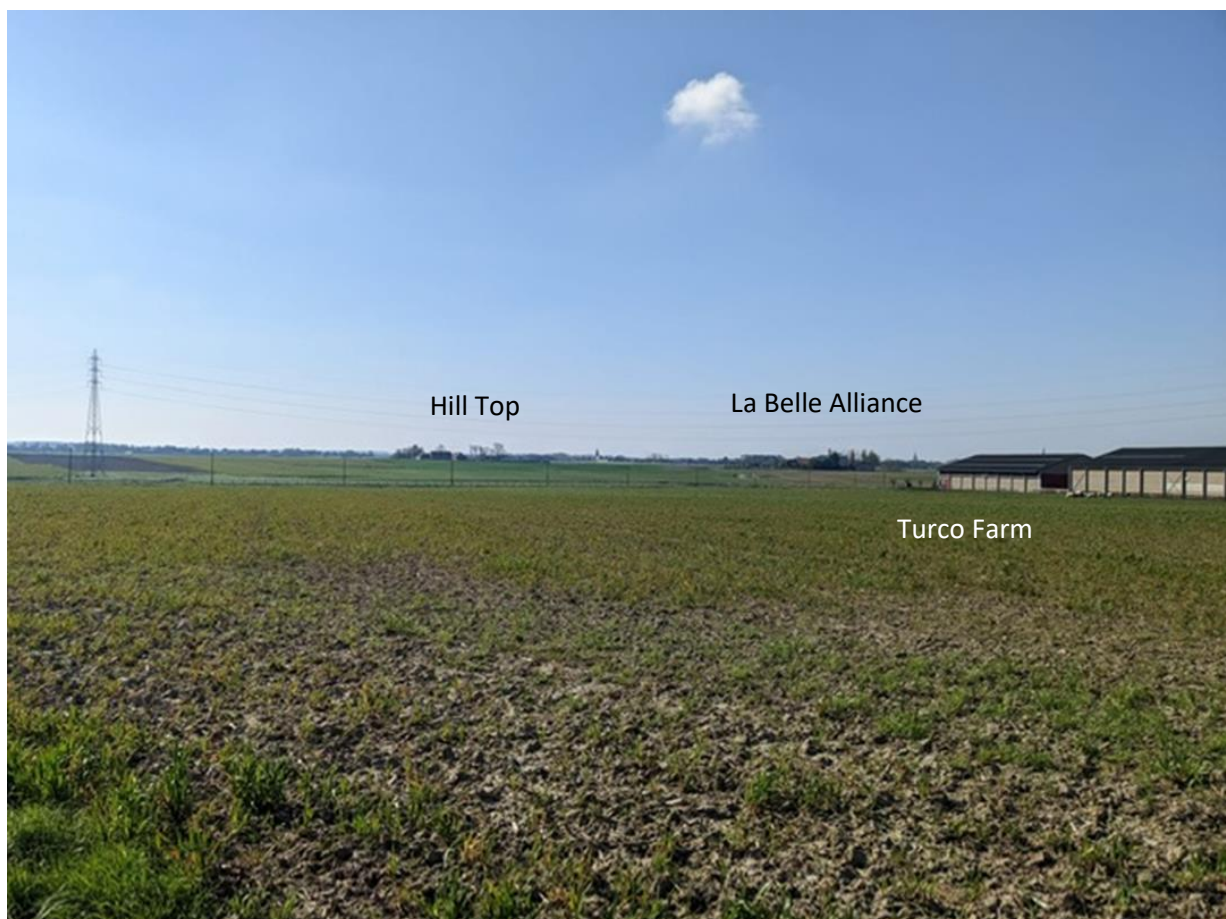


The route of advance from Hill Top to the Ditch – 565 yards



The ditch in front of Turco Farm looking west to Ypres-Pilkem road

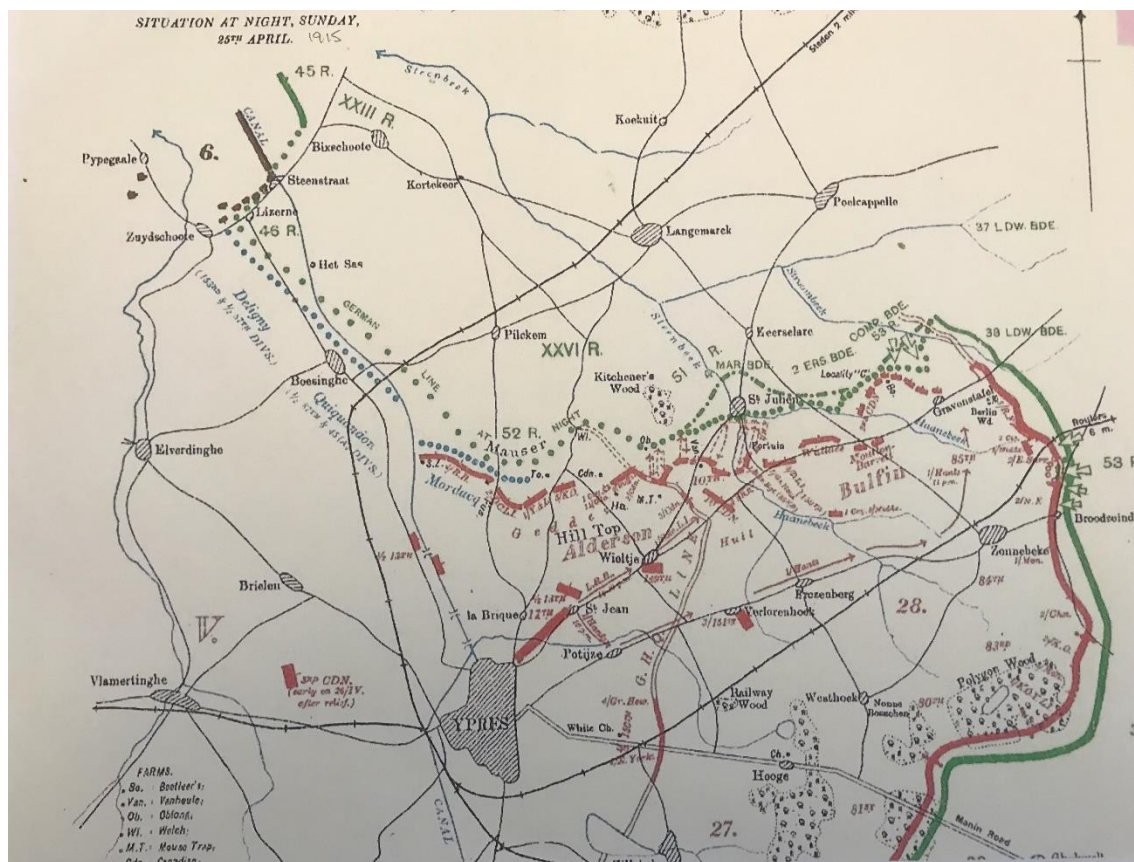
The defending Germans had excellent fields of fire, and few of the attacking troops made the last few hundred yards to the buildings at Turco Farm. Most were stopped 300 yards away. There was no supporting artillery and the increasing number of casualties left too few men to rush the enemy line. The 2nd East Yorks on their left had, by this time, almost ceased to exist. With the crews of both machine guns lost, the attacking Territorials were reduced to clusters of men and a handful of officers. The survivors remained within the ditch and around Turco Farm until nightfall, when Colonel Cavendish pulled his men back a further two hundred yards and dug in.



View of the battlefield from below Mauser ridge

‘A’ Company and a platoon of ‘D’ Company remained in this new line while the remainder of the battalion retired to Hill Top and once again dug in. Fortunately, the Germans did not take advantage of this weak British line and the night passed relatively quietly

The advance of Geddes’ Detachment and the actions of 1st Canadian Brigade had now established an almost continuous line from south of Kitchener’s wood to Hampshire Farm, and then west following the depression in front of Mauser ridge, through Turco Farm and on to within 1,200 yards of the Yser Canal.



Positions night of 25 April 1915

A number of observations can be made from standing on the battlefield even one-hundred and eight years later. Allowing for a few modern buildings and farming practices, the most obvious aspect of the ground is the absence of any

cover between Hill Top and Mauser ridge, a full 1,300 yards of open country, the nearest cover being the ditch and buildings at Turco Farm, 850 yards distant.

The lowest point on the route of advance towards Mauser ridge is the ditch which runs east-west in front of Turco Farm, about seven metres below Mauser ridge. Apart from the farm buildings there was no other cover. Colonel Cavendish describes how his men sought shelter behind mounds of manure deposited around the fields.

The break in the Allied line was roughly four miles across. From Hill Top the whole battlefield is open. Looking north along the line of advance to Turco Farm is Canadian Farm, with Hampshire Farm in plain sight on the right. Looking to the east, Mousetrap Farm is in sight, and when you move to Mousetrap Farm, Oblong Farm and the area of Kitchener's Wood come into view. Today there is no evidence of Kitchener's Wood. The Canadian memorial marks what would have been the edge of Kitchener's Wood. You can walk the whole battlefield in an afternoon.





North Lancs branch Meetings - Future Programme

Tuesday 2 April

Alistair Baker

CWGC – Gardening the World; Architecture and Conservation.

Two half hour talks completing the story of the CWGC for the branch.

Tuesday 7 May

Anne Buckley

Skipton's POW Camp and its German Prisoners

Monday 3 June

Walking tour of Lancaster war memorials

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