



Lancashire North Branch

Despatch – November 2023

Eighth Email edition.



Keeping communications open



Editor's Notes



Welcome to our eighth email edition of Despatch. This edition contains a number of articles that may not be directly associated with the Western Front but they do have a definite local interest.

In the last issue of Despatch I looked at the man behind the 'Kentish Tales' – Brigadier R J Kentish, a man with an interesting background including the final year of the war as the Brigadier of 166th Infantry Brigade of our local 55th (West Lancs) Division. How did a 'martinet' Jeudwine and Kentish with his problems with authority get along? As Lieutenant General Jeudwine did not retain Brigadiers who did not come up to his standards, Kentish must have made the grade throughout 1918. Interestingly Kentish's biography makes little mention of Jeudwine.

Having read Robert Graves' book 'Goodbye To All That' many years ago I recently re-read it in a slightly different light. Looking at the military experiences of the author, and now having access to war diaries and published accounts of other officers from the same regiment, it was an opportunity to compare the accounts – and yes, Graves as he later proved in life was a very good story teller.

Local graveyards often contain graves that lead to interesting stories and our two articles from Allan Hartley and Peter Denby demonstrate this admirably.

Tom Williams

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

Contents

Memories of Stan	3
Bentham's Part in the Great War	6
Kentish (RJK) & his 17th tale	13
Memorial to Dick, Kerr Ladies FC.	17
The Martinet of 55th Division	23
Two Brothers and Two Ships	34
The Sinking of the Linda Blanche	48
Goodbye To All That – Robert Graves	54

Memories of Stan



Photo courtesy of Allan Hartley

Denise North.

John and I have many happy memories of being in Stan's company on the North Lancs branch trips. If there was a problem Stan was always among the first to step forward to help. On one such trip the coach picked up four young women en route who we didn't recognise as members. They weren't wearing the sensible footwear and all-weather clothing like the rest of us that was suitable for tramping about on the Western Front. From their lively chatter it became obvious that they were more used to enjoying the delights of Benidorm than visiting historical sites.

Andrew Brooks explained to us that they were all members of the same family and in a recent house clearance of a deceased relative they had come across details of an unknown ancestor who had been killed in the First World War. They had been put in touch with Andrew for information and he had established where their ancestor was buried. As he was in the process of organising a trip he offered them

places with a chance to visit the grave during in the trip for them. They were lively and bubbly and the rest of us affectionately called them ‘The Girls’.

The trip took place during the foot and mouth crisis and on every visit we made we had to trudge through troughs of disinfectant. Thank goodness for our sensible footwear, although it must have been ruinous on “The Girls’ fashionable shoes. To be fair to them they made no fuss but stuck with everything patiently waiting for their turn to visit the grave on the last day of the trip. The final day arrived and after a morning of visits, the coach set off to take us to the cemetery on the last call of the day, as it was quite far out. We travelled away from towns and cities through agricultural land to finally reach our destination.

When we got there we found that the gate to the cemetery was locked and barred, with a notice on it informing us that due to the current foot and mouth regulations within that farming area, visitors were not allowed entry. ‘The Girls’ tried desperately to climb the impossibly high wall without success. Of course Stan was the only one among us who could actually see over the wall and he realised that there was someone working inside. He called them over and explaining the position, negotiated for ‘The Girls’ to be allowed in which probably required some practical persuasion.

Stan accompanied them and asked John to go with them to take photos as they didn’t have a camera. On arriving at the grave it was found that their relative had been awarded the MM which had to be explained to the girls who became quite emotional. On the return journey back to the hotel the girls were subdued and quiet, their usual lively chatter noticeable by its absence.

Stan asked me if I would send them some photos on my return home and so I collected their addresses. On returning home I had the film developed and obtained extra prints, this was pre-digital, so I posted them together with covering letters. The next time I saw Stan he asked if I had sent the photos and he was surprised and disappointed that I had received no acknowledgement. Bless Stan what a star.



Image - CWGC



Bentham's Part in the Great War

Alan Hartley

In this occasional series we look at the lives of the 70 men from High and Low Bentham who didn't come home. This time we focus on the life of :

G/41225 Private Arthur James Harrison, 2nd Middlesex Regiment.



Arthur was born in 1891 at Clapham, the son of John and Agnes Harrison. By the time of the 1911 census Arthur is 20 and the family home is given as High Birks, Clapham Station.¹

Prior to the war Arthur had served his time as a joiner with Messrs Seed Ltd in Bentham and we presume lived in Bentham. When the war came along, we

¹ John Harrison was born at Clapham and was a farmer. At the time of Arthur's death the family home is given as Parry's Wennington.

Agnes Harrison nee Page was born and grew-up in Ravenstonedale, Westmorland

have very little knowledge of Arthur's war record and sadly we have no photo of him, but it is likely Arthur received his call-up papers in July 1916 when single young men of 18 and over were conscripted into the Army due to the sheer depletion of men from the slaughter at Gallipoli and the shortage of volunteers.

Here there is quite a bit of confusion as to who he served with as Arthur is given as enlisting in the King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment as Private 22038 and the Duke of Cambridge's Own Middlesex Regiment as Private G/41225, thereafter the trail goes cold until Arthur is recorded as being killed on the 31 May 1917 being buried at Hem Farm Military Cemetery, grave ref II.D.8.²

The regimental number assigned to Private Harrison by the King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment is 22038. Such five figure numbers were given to men that had been recruited into the regular battalions of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd Battalion or the service battalions of the 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th of the King's Own Royal Lancaster.

Arthur J Harrison was age 20 in 1911 and under the Derby Scheme, assuming he had not been granted a deferment, he would have been allocated to Group 7. This group was called up on 8 January 1916 and mobilised on 8 February 1916. Once mobilised it is probable that he was then transferred to the Middlesex Regiment.

However, given the location of the cemetery on the Southern Sector of the Somme at the village of Hem Monacu actually located on the River Somme it is likely that Arthur was involved in the latter stages of the Spring Offensive for

² Hem Farm Military Cemetery was begun by British troops in January 1917. There are 600 burials one third of whom are unidentified being of soldiers brought in from the surrounding Somme battlefield.

the Battle of Arras 9 April to 17 May and one of the many sub-battles around Albert.

The 2nd Middlesex as part of the 23rd Infantry Brigade, 8th Division (at the time attached to XV Corps) were involved at the retreat to the Hindenburg Line over 14 March – 5 April 1917. On 29/30 March the battalion, along with the 2nd Devonshire Regiment, successfully attacked the village of Heudicourt, capturing two machine guns and taking five wounded prisoners. Later on 16 April the 2nd Middlesex supported an attack by the 2nd West Yorks when they captured Villers Guislain, at the southern tip of the Arras battlefield. This was followed by an action on 5 May 1917, when the battalion carried out an unsuccessful raid on the Hindenburg Line astride the Gouzeaucourt – Cambrai road.

Arthur is commemorated on the memorial plaque on Station Road and the memorial plaque at the Methodist Church, High Bentham. Also on the Roll of Honour at Tatham Parish Church that includes a stained glass memorial window. Arthur was the 21st Bentham man to be killed. He was 26 years of age.

Well those were the notes from research that my late wife Marilyn put together for Bentham News in April 2016. Fast forward a few years to the present and things turn out to be very different. This year I went with our friends from Bradford and had Arthur on my list of cemeteries to visit. Being close to Albert we stopped at Hem Farm Military Cemetery hoping to find Arthur's final resting place. Here at his grave a number speculated that something was not quite right, with the main question being asked 'why were the Middlesex's so far south' in what was mainly the French sector?

At this stage historian Nick Hooper stepped in and went away looking to find out what really happened to Arthur? Sure enough, being the professional that Nick is, came back a few weeks later with the answer, something that none of us would have guessed.

Read on,

Pte G/41225 Arthur James HARRISON 2nd Battalion Middlesex Regiment.
Death 31 May. Burial Hem Farm Military Cemetery Plot II Row D Grave 8.
Visited with Allan Hartley and Bradford WW1 Group Battlefield Tour 9 June 2023.

Additional information

Medal Roll Index Card for Arthur J Harrison records his eligibility for the Victory Medal only, for service with King's Own Royal Lancaster. No death is noted. Medal Award Roll states eligibility for both Victory and British War Medals. Again, death not noted.

Soldiers Died in the Great War states he 'Died' 31 May 1916.

Register of Soldiers Effects does not seem to have an entry for him.

It appears he did not die as a result of enemy action.

CWGC provides the burial return – which shows that he was re-buried from map 50 x 50 yd square grid reference 62C.NW.H.6.d.8.8., together with other soldiers – on this sheet all were Australians.

On the body density map shown below (dated May 1917), this location was below the 'e' of Clery inside the red circle. The current location of his grave is circled green. The front lines were somewhat to the EAST.

The Battalion War Diary for 2nd Battalion Middlesex Regiment is catalogued as WO-95-1713/1. It is impossible to use on Ancestry as the only section available appears to be for 1918. War Diaries can be downloaded free of charge from The National Archives. The relevant part for our purposes is part 1-1 image 180. On 31 May the battalion was out of the line at CURLU (top left of map). The diary records '2 Lieuts C.G. Nash and W. Nicklin rejoined battalion from XV Corps Infantry School. Strength of Battalion on May 31st 25 Officers 661 O.R. (actually with battalion.)'.

The battalion had not been in the trenches (at GONNELIEU) since 13 May. It had taken part in a raid, but 31 May was a long time for Harrison still to have been in theatre if he had been wounded in it.

CONCENTRATION OF GRAVES (Exhumation and Reburials).

BURIAL RETURN.

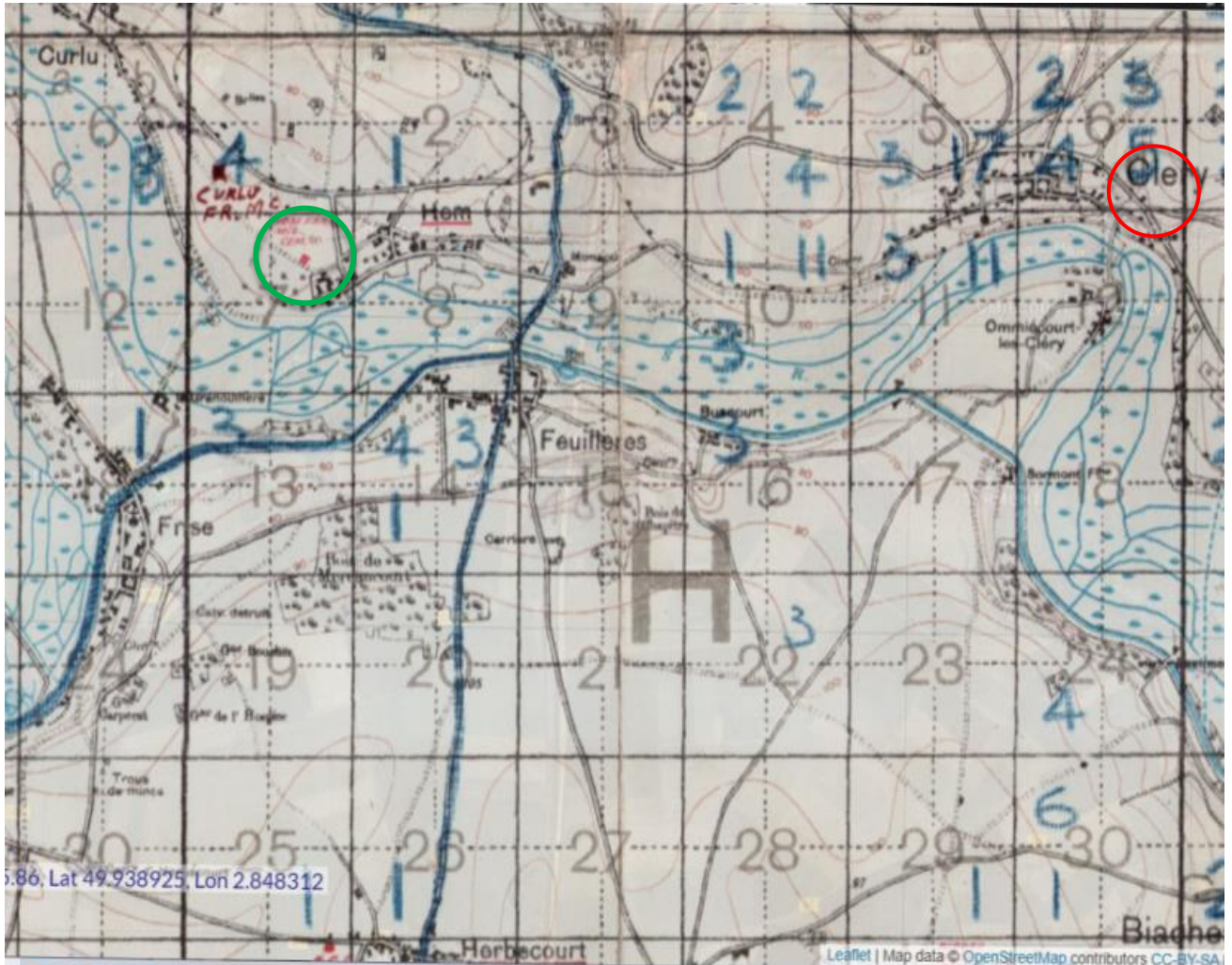
Serial No. 88.

Name of Cemetery of Reburial HOUSFORD MILITARY CEMETERY 69c. H. 7. b. 4. -R.

Plot	Row	Grave	Map Reference where body found	Was cross on grave?	Regimental particulars	Means of Identification	Were any effects forwarded to Base?
2.	D.	1.	68c. NW. H. 6. d. 6. B.	Yes	3144 Pte SHARP, C. 30 En A.I.F.	Cross & Clothing	No.
		2.	"	"	Lieut LETHBRIDGE, S. " " "	"	"
		3.	"	"	90 Pte DAVIS, P. " " "	"	"
		4.	"	"	114 Cpl TOWNSEND, D.L. 58 En A.I.F.	"	"
		5.	"	"	1934 Pte FREDLAND, W.H. 59 " " "	"	"
		6.	"	"	3295 Pte EVERETT, F. 37 " " "	"	"
		7.	"	"	987 Pte GRISHAM, G.S. A. 58 " " "	"	"
		8.	"	"	41225 Pte HARRISON, A.J. 2nd Middlesex Regt	"	"
		9.	"	"	1971 Pte LOADE, A. 58 B " A.I.F.	"	"
		10.	"	"	1709 Cpl WHEAT, V.I. 58 En A.I.F.	"	"

This form to be made out in triplicate, two copies being handed to the D.A.D. (C. of G.) and the other retained by the Burial Officer.

1154 W.V. 104. H.P. 1044. 210. 0000. 0/18. 0.0. P. 104.



Western Front Association Trench Mapper app.

The solution is provided by the WW1 Pension Ledger and Index Cards available on Fold3 and through Western Front Association membership.

Allan Hartley, High Bentham, with special thanks to Nick Hooper for his help in making a very interesting story of Arthur's life, may he rest in peace.

BRIGADIER GENERAL REGINALD JOHN KENTISH (RJK) & HIS 17th TALE



A Great Digging Feat



By Terry Dean

In the November 2013 issue of Despatch, Terry Dean first told of his visit to the Imperial War Museum to view the papers of RJK and his discovery of the tales he had drafted around 1940. The tales describe amusing incidents RJK had experienced during WW1.

SCENE: TIME: PLACE: Some trenches behind the front line East of Arras on a very cold dark night and raining hard, sometime in March 1917.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE: Brigadier General C. L. Porter, Commanding the 76th Infantry brigade and his Brigade Major; Rev. P.G. (Pat) Leonard, padre of the 1/4 King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment and 'A' Company of the same Battalion.

At the time of this story, I was Commandant of the Senior Officers' School at Aldershot and a course just having come to an end, following my wont, I had come out to France for 10 days or so to visit the front and pick up any fresh ideas and gadgets etc. ---- in a word to keep myself in touch with front line conditions, and having regard to the responsibility I had at my School of having to teach three hundred Majors and Senior captains how to command battalions, it was of course essential that I should keep myself up to date.

My first visit was to the third Army then commanded by General Allenby, whom I found comfortably housed with his Staff in a spacious Chateau two or three miles immediately west of Arras. Although they were all very busy preparing for an attack on the German line just east of Monchy, the Army commander whom I knew quite well received me most cordially and told me I could go to any part of the line I wished to and he particularly ask me to give him a picture of everything I had seen on my return.

Accordingly the following morning accompanied by the G.S.O. II of the Army - --- I think his name was Evans of the Black Watch, but I am not sure ---- we started up for the front line making first for the Head Quarters of the 76th Brigade, which I commanded just before I was sent home by Sir Douglas Haig to Aldershot to set the Senior Officers' School going. Arriving at the farm house, where Brigade Headquarters was established, I found the Brigadier (Porter of the Buffs), to whom a message had been sent saying that I was on my way up to pay them a visit, waiting to welcome me back to my old Brigade.

Porter told me that the 4th King's Own (The Royal Lancaster Regiment) and the 2nd Suffolks were in the line and that Col. Smith commanding the 4th King's Own was expecting me to lunch with him after I had been round the line.

Off we went to the line and it was a great pleasure seeing and meeting the men of my old Brigade again. They were all --- officers and men --- in splendid form, and delighted to see me.

After doing the whole of the Brigade Sector, I arrived at Smith's Headquarters, and they gave me a marvellous lunch --- in fact one the lines I had advocated at my School, when giving the Officers a talk on Messes and the importance of Commanding Officers seeing that their officers fed well ---- and it wasn't very long before everybody was in the best of form, and with the 'Old Brandy' from Fortnum and Mason's and a Corona Cigar from the Colonel's own special box, we all felt in the mood for anything ---- in fact I think that if the 4th King's Own had been ordered by the Army Commander, then and there, to go 'over the top' and take the German trenches facing them, and then push on to Berlin, they would have done so without the slightest hesitation!!

It was whilst we were all in this mood that the King's Own padre, a splendid fellow by name Leonard, known throughout the Brigade --- and indeed the whole Division ---- as 'Pat' Leonard, and now as a write this story, right-hand man to the Rev. P. B. (Tubby) Clayton of 'Toc H' fame, told the following story.

"A few nights ago," he said, "we were out of the line resting in billets and the only job of work we had to do was to find parties at night for digging a new Support Line, which the Brigade Commander had been ordered by the Divisional Commander to construct". On the night in question it happened to be 'A' Company's turn and having arrived at the rendezvous --- a march of about two or three miles --- the men were given their task, and they very soon got down to the job. After a bit it began to rain, first lightly and then very heavily, and it turned out a very dirty night.

However in spite of this the men went on digging as only Lancashire men can dig and after two or three hours or so, they finished their task and marched back to their billets, where they arrived very wet and covered in mud from head to foot, but after a hot meal and a tot of rum they soon recovered and they then turned in as they hoped for a good night's rest.

Unfortunately this was not to be, for about half an hour after they had returned, the Brigade Commander, with his Brigade Major, on his way back from the line, went to inspect and see how the new trenches were getting on, and not being satisfied, he looked in, as he passed the King's Own Headquarters, and told the Battalion Commander to order the Company back to finish to job properly!!

And so it came about that, just as Brown the Company Commander had turned in, he received orders that he was to take his Company back and 'finish the job properly'!! "Brown cursing everybody to hell --- to himself of course --- from the brigade Commander downwards, turned out and the men, having fallen in, off they marched back to the line. "What the men said about it on their way up is not related, and, perhaps sir," said Pat Leonard with a smile, "that is just as well!!

But during the digging with the rain still coming down heavily a voice in the broadest Lancashire was heard, coming out of the darkness:-

“ Six days tha' Lord made 'eaven and earth, tha' sea and all that in them is. Seventh day oop coom 'A' Company 1/4 Royal Lancashire Regiment and digs tha' 'ole ----- lot oop again!!”

“Aren't they marvellous,” said Pat Leonard. “Indeed they are,” I said, and indeed they were!!

Memorial to Dick, Kerr Ladies FC.

Preston North End (Deepdale) Stadium

Peter Denby

A while ago I attended a talk at the Lancashire Infantry Museum by Gail Newsham, author of *In a League of Their Own*, a history of Dick, Kerr Ladies FC - a pioneering football team that drew record crowds, defied sexism, and raised large sums for war-related charities. Since that talk I have been meaning to visit the Dick, Kerr memorial (pictured) which, to mark the team's centenary, was proudly unveiled at Preston's ground on Friday 22nd December 2017 by Gail Newsham, Sheila Parker (who began her playing career with Preston Ladies and in 1972 became the first captain of England), and former England goalkeeper Rachel Brown-Finnis.



The Dick, Kerr memorial at Preston North End's Deepdale Stadium

So, prompted by May's branch talk *Football's Great War* (Alex Jackson) and the Lionesses' achievements in this summer's World Cup, I recently went along to Deepdale Stadium to take a look at the impressive six metre-wide granite memorial. The frieze is based on a contemporary photograph of the team, and information panels on the memorial tell the story.

Prior to World War One the Dick, Kerr & Co factory on Strand Road in Preston made locomotives (a blue plaque now marks the site of the former factory building), but with the outbreak of war it converted to munitions production, and the factory's munitionettes soon formed a morale-boosting factory football team.

Women's football of a sorts had existed prior to WW1, but there was a huge growth during the war when women were called upon to do factory jobs left by the men who had gone to fight. The Dick, Kerr Ladies played their first game on Christmas Day 1917 at Deepdale, in front of 10,000 spectators, beating Arundel Coulthards Foundry 4-0 and raising £600 (well over £50,000 today) for injured soldiers convalescing at the nearby Moor Park Military Hospital, much to the delight of the hospital's matron.

Known as the pioneers of women's football, they quickly built up a reputation as an excellent footballing side, due in part to valuable coaching they received from several of the Preston North End players who worked at the factory. They became the most famous of all the women's factory teams, and at one point went on an unbeaten run of 320 games, drawing comparison with the Preston North End 'Invincibles' team, and raising the equivalent of £10m for war-related charities.

The Preston North End board was very supportive of the Dick, Kerr Ladies, and allowed use of the ground for their home matches and training sessions.

Defying attitudes of the time, the team drew large crowds. In 1920 they played the first ladies international at Deepdale, against a Parisian team, winning 2-0 before a crowd of 25,000, and in December of that year played their first night match at Deepdale. There were no floodlights then, and so the War Office was approached for the loan of two anti-aircraft search lights, permission being granted by the Secretary of State for War, one Winston Churchill. To improve visibility the brown footballs were whitewashed, and the Ladies dished out another 4-0 victory.

On Boxing Day 1920 they hit a peak, with an astonishing capacity crowd of 53,000 - with thousands turned away - seeing them beat St Helen's Ladies at Everton's Goodison Park ground.

Their openly gay winger Lily Parr became a household name, and indeed in the 1920s many women footballers were comfortable expressing their sexuality in public. As well as domestic matches Dick, Kerr Ladies toured to France and North America.



Dick, Kerr Ladies FC (in stripes) in action in 1921 against Lister's Ladies at Bradford City's Valley Parade ground. No prizes for guessing who won (6-0). (Still image taken from an online BFI film)

Attitudes towards women's football were being transformed for the better with favourable press coverage, and large amounts of money were being raised for charity (millions of pounds in today's money).

However the Football Association were soon to set the women's game back by 50 years. Declaring the sport "*quite unsuitable for females and ought not to be encouraged*", in December 1921 a ban was imposed on the women's game.

There was in fact no evidence of the game being injurious to women: Alfred Frankland, the manager of Dick, Kerr Ladies invited a group of doctors to watch his team play on Boxing Day 1921, where the sport was deemed by one reporter as no more taxing than a day's heavy washing or work. But the ban stood, and with women's football no longer allowed at FA affiliated grounds, teams could no longer play at pitches with spectator facilities and were forced into public parks. In spite of the ban the team played on, later as Preston Ladies, to dwindling crowds until they folded in 1965.

Not until 1971, following the formation of the Women's Football Association a couple of years earlier, did the FA finally rescind the ban on women's football, allowing women's matches back on its pitches with use of its referees.

In 1972 the first official England women's side played an international match, beating Scotland 3-2. In the 1990s the women's game was brought under the control of the FA. The women's Euros were held in England in 2005, and despite a poor showing by the home side crowds averaged over 23,000. But plenty still needed to change: the then UEFA president Lennart Johansson drew criticism by declaring, in relation to corporate sponsorship of the women's game, "*Companies could make use of a sweaty, lovely looking girl playing on the ground, with the rainy weather*". In 2022 a record crowd of over 87,000 at Wembley saw the Lionesses beat Germany 2-1 to win the Euros.

One of the post-WW2 Dick, Kerr players was Joan Whalley, who was a schoolgirl pal of Sir Tom Finney, and the two would play football together in a local park. Tom dreamt of playing for Preston North End and Joan for Dick, Kerr Ladies. Both got their wish; both played on the right wing; and both now sit in the Football Hall of Fame.

Deepdale is the spiritual home of the Dick, Kerr ladies and it is fitting that near to the Dick, Kerr memorial is *The Splash* (Peter Hodgkinson, 2004), a wonderful statue (pictured) paying tribute to Sir Tom. Set in a fountain, the sculpture is based on an award winning sports photograph, taken in 1956 by John Horton, which showed Sir Tom sliding through a puddle while controlling the ball on a waterlogged Stamford Bridge pitch (Chelsea v Preston North End; those were the days!). Also near the Dick, Kerr memorial is Preston North End's own WW1 war memorial (pictured). Should any reader wish to visit these memorials, I parked (and, yes, sought refreshment!) at the nearby Deepdale Retail Park; Deepdale Stadium is a shortish walk from there.



The Splash



War Memorial at Preston North End



The Martinet of 55th Division



©National Portrait Gallery

Lieutenant-General Sir Hugh Sandham Jeudwine

9 June 1862 – 2 December 1942

In our last edition we looked at the man behind the ‘Kentish Tales’ - Brigadier General Reginald John Kentish the man who founded the National Playing Fields Association and an Olympic Committee Member. He was also by all accounts a competent, if somewhat eccentric General Staff Officer who became the temporary commanding officer of 1st East Lancashire Regiment in May 1915 and was later promoted to GOC 7th Infantry Brigade in March 1916. Kentish returned to France in March 1918 to take command of 166th Infantry Brigade under Lieutenant-General Jeudwine, 55th (West Lancashire) Division.

These were rather different men. Kentish had previously voiced his criticism of much of the staff work during the Battle of the Somme. However, when his

unsolicited report ended up on the C in C Haig's desk, he advised Kentish to 'concentrate on leadership and leave the tactical side to the staff officers.'

Shortly after he was appointed Commandant of the Senior Officers School, Aldershot in October 1916.

Jeudwine had apparently earned a reputation for unpopularity whilst he was Brigadier-General, General Staff at V Corps. He has been described as being 'cordially disliked' by colleagues and a martinet with definite ideas of how he wanted things done. He was known to frequently review the abilities of his Brigadiers and was not reluctant to move them on if they failed to come up to his exacting standards.

Jeudwine was born in 1862. He was educated at Eton College before attending the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich from 1880 to 1882. Commissioned into the Royal Artillery_ on 22 February 1882, and promoted to Captain on 31 December 1890. He served in the Second Boer War 1899–1900, and was promoted to Major on 4 January 1900. Lieutenant Colonel in 1908, GSO Staff College 1912-13. GSO1 to I Corps 1914, GSO 1st Division 1914, BGGS at V Corps 1915, GOC 41st Infantry Brigade 1915, and GOC 55th Division 1916-19.

Major General Jeudwine took command of the Territorial 55th (West Lancs) Division in January 1916. This was the first time the division had concentrated together in France. Many of the Territorial Force (TF) battalions of the West Lancashire Division had been sent to France and Belgium previously to reinforce the British Expeditionary Force (BEF). During 1915 they had been scattered among regular brigades and although often welcomed at battalion level by regular soldiers with whom they worked and fought, at the General Staff level it was often a different matter where TF battalions were considered to be merely attached to, rather than an integral part of brigades and divisions.

The 1/5th King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment, by June 1915, clearly felt like 'odd job men'. The battalion history records that after their mauling at the Second Battle of Ypres:

'The summer of 1915 was a very awkward one. It seems as though we were to be the "hewers of wood and drawers of water" to the 83rd Brigade, and both officers and men chafed at the indignity.'

During the first half of August 1916, the 1/5th King's Own Royal Lancaster had dug 13,000 yards of new trenches and strengthened another 3,000 yards.

Jeudwine went to great lengths to explain to troops, face-to-face, the importance of digging and that 'work with the spade was as important as that with the rifle, bomb and bayonet'.

Although Jeudwine had a reputation as a disciplinarian he was generally regarded as 'firm but fair'. He also had a good understanding of the peculiarities of the Territorial soldier and recognised that each Territorial battalion began the war as a cohesive unit with many of its soldiers bound by close local links. Jeudwine quickly recognised that 'such comradeship is the foundation and essence of true discipline'. It was now up to him to mould this new formation into an efficient fighting force.



Jeudwine wisely recognised that identification with the county was important to the troops of 55th (West Lancs) Division. Uncharacteristically for a regular officer, he knew that his division had two advantages derived from its Territorial nature, it had common ties at home and a strong county pride. Jeudwine encouraged the idea of pride in their county by adopting the Lancaster

rose as the divisional badge in 1916 and later he instituted the divisional magazine 'Sub Rosa' in 1917.

Within the 55th Division, General Jeudwine became known by the affectionate and not disrespectful name of 'Judy'. He would often appear in the front line, no matter what the weather, wearing his trench coat and hat. The battalion history of the 1/10th Liverpool Scottish observed:



'No one who served in the 55th Division is likely to forget the tall figure in the tin hat and trench-coat who would appear in the front line in all weathers at any hour of the day or night, frequently unattended, nor the quiet cross-examination which invariably and as if by magic brought out – if things were not quite as they should have been – the self-damning answer before the culprit even realised he was being examined. No one will forget, either, that for those who confessed their faults "Judy" always had the right word of advice and encouragement that made difficulties disappear and

restored self-confidence. But woe betide the man who tried to bluff things out. In a moment he was laid bare to the very soul and if he were wise he did not try the same experiment twice.'

Jeudwine believed in proper in-depth training and soon recognised that the units he had inherited had different levels of military skills and knowledge. He took the opportunity to build up their skills from grass roots before the division went into the front line for the first time in mid-February 1916.

Each company should establish nearby a 'miniature' range for firing full-bore ammunition. There should also be a longer range up to 500 yards for battalion

use. The training became progressive from sections to platoons and on through company to battalion level. All battalions were to train more ‘bombers’. He insisted that troops should practice entrenching and the construction of covered positions.

Jeudwine set out his training for the new division based on the following precepts:

- Infantry training was continued even in the front line
- Every man was to be skilled with and have confidence in his weapon. This included rifle, bayonet and Lewis gun.
- Every man in the front line and the support lines was expected if possible, to fire five rounds each day.
- Emphasis was laid on achieving a rapid fire rate of 12-15 aimed shots per minute.
- Each garrison post was timed in getting from their dug-out to the firing line each day. This was repeated until a satisfactory time was achieved.
- Platoons were to be trained as the fighting unit, competent to carry on in defence or in a counter attack.
- The most senior survivors of a unit, down to platoon level, would be responsible for writing after action reports.
- Exercises were to be carried out in actual positions. Every officer and man would know his post, what ammunition was needed and where the reserves were kept.
- Men were to be instructed in how communications ran and how to keep in touch with the front line.
- Men were to be kept as physically fit as possible.

In mid-February 1916, the 55th Division moved to positions south of Arras to take over from the French 88th Division. This division entered a period of trench warfare, raids and harassment of the enemy while engaging in a steady and progressive training program. Even in this quiet period prior to the move to the Somme battlefield, the division suffered 63 officers and 1,047 other ranks killed.

Space does not allow for detailed accounts of the Division's contribution during phases of the Battle of the Somme at Guillemont, Deville Wood and Gueudecourt.

On leaving the Somme area and the Fourth Army in October 1916, General Rawlinson Commander of Fourth Army sent the following message:

‘The hard fighting in which 55th Division took part about Guillemont and Delville Wood during August and September was a severe strain on all ranks, and the progress made in these areas reflects great credit on all concerned. When put in the line for the third time to carry out the attack near Gueudecourt on September 25th, the Division exhibited a spirit of gallantry and endurance which was wholly admirable and which resulted in the capture of all the objectives allotted.’

In October 1916 the 55th Division took over a sector of the Ypres Salient between Wieltje and the south end of Railway Wood. Following a short period of ‘rest’ a programme of raids and harassment was instigated with the aim of dominating their front area. This constant action may account for the honour of launching the assault from their own front when the Third Battle of Ypres started on 31 July 1917. During their part in the battle all of the divisional objectives were achieved and heavy losses inflicted upon the enemy. The total casualties for this battle amounted to 168 officers and 3,3384 other ranks.

On 7 August the 55th Division was relieved. Reinforcements arrived and intensive training began again. By the 12 September 1917 they were refreshed, rested, re-equipped and back in their old positions. During their absence attempts by two other divisions had failed to move the line forward. The 55th Division was now asked to capture the ground it had previously taken on 31 July. The final objectives were to take Hill 37 and Schuler Farm. In very hard fighting that followed all of these objectives were finally taken and held. The division was relieved over 22/23 September 1917. On 3 October 1917 the division moved to a quiet area the south of Cambrai.

The line held by 55th Division to the south of Cambrai extended from south-east of Epehy to Lempire–Ronssoy, about 8,000 yards of front, with no continuous trench line. Within a week of arrival the division began to harass the enemy. This eventually provoked an enemy infantry attack which was repelled. On 20 November a diversionary attack was made against Guillemont Farm and The Knoll in support of the main attack taking place on Cambrai to the north. This was intended to force the enemy into retaining some of their forces in area. The operation was a success diverting enemy attention from the main attack.

During one of his characteristic tours of the forward areas, Jeudwine was aware of continuous German aerial reconnaissance. There was increased enemy artillery build up and registration shooting. From this he concluded that an attack was imminent. Brigades were alerted and patrols sent out to observe enemy movements. Efforts were made to arrange for heavy artillery to fire on probable assembly positions but higher authority failed to agree to his request. Jeudwine's suspicions were proved correct when the enemy attacked at the junction of III and VIII Corps on 30 November 1917.

Jeudwine had taken precautionary measures by establishing an in-depth defensive line of platoon posts connected by travel trenches: with patrols out in front. The division held a line of approximately 13,000 yards, supported by only two brigades of artillery. The 55th Division successfully held their ground although the 164th Infantry Brigade were almost decimated. The division was withdrawn over 6/7 December 1917. Jeudwine's training and his use of independent platoon posts had proved successful.

Although GHQ 3rd Army had been warned of this imminent counter attack by Jeudwine, this was not taken seriously and little was done to coordinate the defences at the junction of III and VIII Corps. There was also a failure to appreciate that the Germans were experimenting with new attack techniques which were later skilfully honed and used to such good effect during the German offensive in March 1918. Jeudwine had become aware of the rapidly changing offensive ideas of the German army but the inflexibility of Corps and Army HQ made changing styles of warfare more difficult than was necessary.

Following the Cambrai battle a committee was set up in early 1918 to advise on defence. Jeudwine was one of the three members who were given the task of creating a plan to introduce a new method of defence. Briefly, they came up with a defence in depth plan that consisted of a forward zone, a battle zone and immediate reserve lines.

In February 1918 the 55th Division took over the left sector of I Corps front east of Bethune. This extended from Givenchy on the north bank of La Basse Canal north towards the north-east of Festubert. Jeudwine immediately set about organising training with an increased emphasis on musketry. Patrols were regularly sent deep into the enemy territory. He once again introduced the system of forward garrisons who were instructed to hold their position even when

outflanked or surrounded. The system had been practiced continually in tactical exercises, including the movement of the reserve brigade up to the battle positions on the issue of a simple code word.

In early April 1918 there was an increase in enemy activity on the divisional front with trench raids and evidence of increased enemy artillery build-up. The 55th Divisional artillery kept up harassing fire on enemy working parties, assembly areas and front line positions. The divisional front line at the junction with the Portuguese 2nd Division was reinforced. On 6/7 April the 166th Infantry Brigade (Big Gen Kentish) went into divisional reserve.

At 4.15 am on 9 April 1918 a furious artillery bombardment fell on the divisional front and positions behind the lines. The divisional code word for an imminent attack was issued at 4.30 am and troops moved to their allotted battle positions. The front line held by Portuguese troops to the left of the 55th Division was forced back and by 9.0 am the divisional left flank was exposed. Under cover of a mist the enemy launched an infantry attack along the front. The forward garrisons were holding out and local counter attacks by companies, platoons and sections prevented the attack from developing. By 9.30 am. local counter attacks had restored the original line.

On the extreme left the open flank left by the retiring Portuguese was quickly filled by elements of the 165th Brigade to establish a defensive flank. All spare men from the rear areas were moved forward to repel any attack in the north. The divisional reserve, 166th Brigade, had stood to in response to the issue of the code word at 4.30 am and later moved to their battle positions. The 55th Division was now holding around 11,000 yards of front extending north from the La Bassee Canal. Every rifle in the division was now put into the line. At no point was the line broken.

The battle of Givenchy 9–14 April 1918 in many ways was a replica of the division's battle at Epehy near Cambrai on 30 November 1917. Once again Jeudwine's constant and detailed training of all troops within the division had proved vital in withstanding the onslaught of the attacking enemy with the left flank being in the air.

The division's success at Givenchy was due to the rigorous training and systematic defence planning Jeudwine had implemented during the months prior to the German Spring offensive. His practice of establishing forward garrisons who were to fight on even when surrounded, and then provide local counter attacks that were conducted by commanders on the spot be they companies, platoons or sections. This was a uniform process along the front where the enemy were never given the opportunity to establish themselves before a counter attack drove them back. Giving ground would have resulted in the possible sacrifice of the whole front if the Germans had poured through and fanned out to the south.

The line held by 55th Division from February to September 1918 was the only sector of the allied front attacked in force during the German offensive that held out to the end. The rigorous training and the fact that every man knew his post and his duty was crucial and played a major part in the 55th Division's defence of the line. The Official History attributed the victory at Givenchy to 'the temper and training of the men behind the guns and rifles'... 'so trained that the men could all use their weapons with effect.'

The singlemindedness of the martinet Lieutenant General Jeudwine trained a raw division into an efficient fighting unit that was able to adapt to the changing character of the war. 'Judy' was held in great esteem by the men of the 55th (West Lancs) Division and he was equally proud of his division. His interest in the division extended into the post war years when he was often present at the

unveiling of war memorials, he was the inaugural President of the 55th Division Old Comrades Association.

Further reading

J O Coop, The story of the 55th (West Lancashire) Division

Phil Tomaselli, The Battle of the Lys 1918

Gary Sheffield, Forgotten Victory

Tim Travers, How the war was won

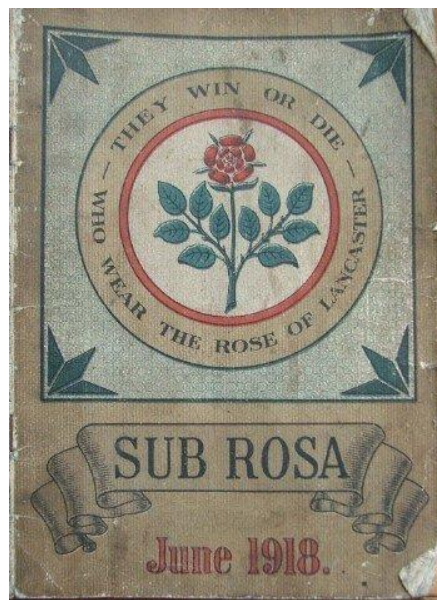
Tim Travers, The Killing Ground

Albert Hodgkinson, The King's Own, 1/5th Battalion.TF in the European War 1914-1918

Helen McCartney, Citizen Soldiers – The Liverpool Territorials in the First World War

Kevin Shannon, The Lion and the Rose. The 1/5th Battalion the King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment 1914-1919

J M Bourne, Britain and The Great War 1914-1918



Two Brothers and Two Ships

Peter Denby



The grave of Captain Arthur Sinclair, Fleetwood Cemetery (photographed in January 2023)

In September 2022, as part of the annual Heritage Weekend events programme, I went on a guided tour of Fleetwood Cemetery. The cemetery is the final resting place of many of the port's key figures and influential people. But not all the burials are of local people. Take for example the grave of Captain Arthur Sinclair (pictured), who was a casualty of the American Civil War. I believe he is - although I stand to be corrected - the only known American Civil War combatant to die during the war and be buried outside the United States. The inscription reads:

'SACRED to the Memory of Captain Arthur Sinclair of Norfolk Virginia who perished in the wreck of the Lelia January 14th 1865. Not lost but gone before'

A commander in the Confederate States Navy, Captain Sinclair died in January 1865, lost from his ship Lelia which sank in a storm off North Wales whilst on a voyage from Liverpool to North Carolina, hoping to run the Union blockade.

Last seen kneeling in prayer on the deck of his sinking ship, Captain Sinclair's body was picked up on 31st May 1865 by James Wilson, the skipper of a Fleetwood fishing vessel in Morecambe Bay ten miles off Fleetwood. His inquest was held at The Steamer Hotel on Queen's Terrace, Fleetwood, in what is now designated the 'Sinclair Room.' (Incidentally, this well-regarded pub-restaurant is now run by comedy icon Syd Little and his wife) Fleetwood townsfolk raised the money for his burial. In recent years visiting relatives of Captain Sinclair have expressed gratitude for the attention given to the grave by the cemetery department.

Interestingly, on a previous heritage cemetery tour a few miles away - Layton Cemetery in Blackpool - a grave of another American Civil War veteran, an adversary of Captain Sinclair and a survivor the war, was pointed out to us: that of George Washington Williams.



The grave of George Washington Williams, Layton Cemetery, Blackpool

An African-American, George Washington Williams was born in 1849 into a free black family in the northern state of Pennsylvania. He fought for the Union side in the American Civil War and afterwards rose to prominence making a name for himself in politics and law; writing a highly regarded two-volume *History of the Negro race in America*; and campaigning for human rights and against Belgian conduct in the Congo. All this was achieved in the late 19th century when slavery was well within living memory and discrimination was still rife.

Not long after my tour of Layton Cemetery I was pleasantly surprised to find George Washington Williams was featured in BBC Radio 4's *Great Lives* series. For anyone wishing to know more about this remarkable man - and how he came to be buried in Blackpool - the half-hour episode is still available on BBC Sounds (search BBC Sounds - Great Lives - George Washington Williams).

Anyway, as is often the case with my ramblings, I digress: this article is supposed to be about World War One. Towards the end of the tour of Fleetwood Cemetery the guide took us to see some of the cemetery's many war graves. Seeing my ears prick up, the guide explained that a separate leaflet listing all the cemetery's war graves is available from Wyre Council, which of course I sent for.

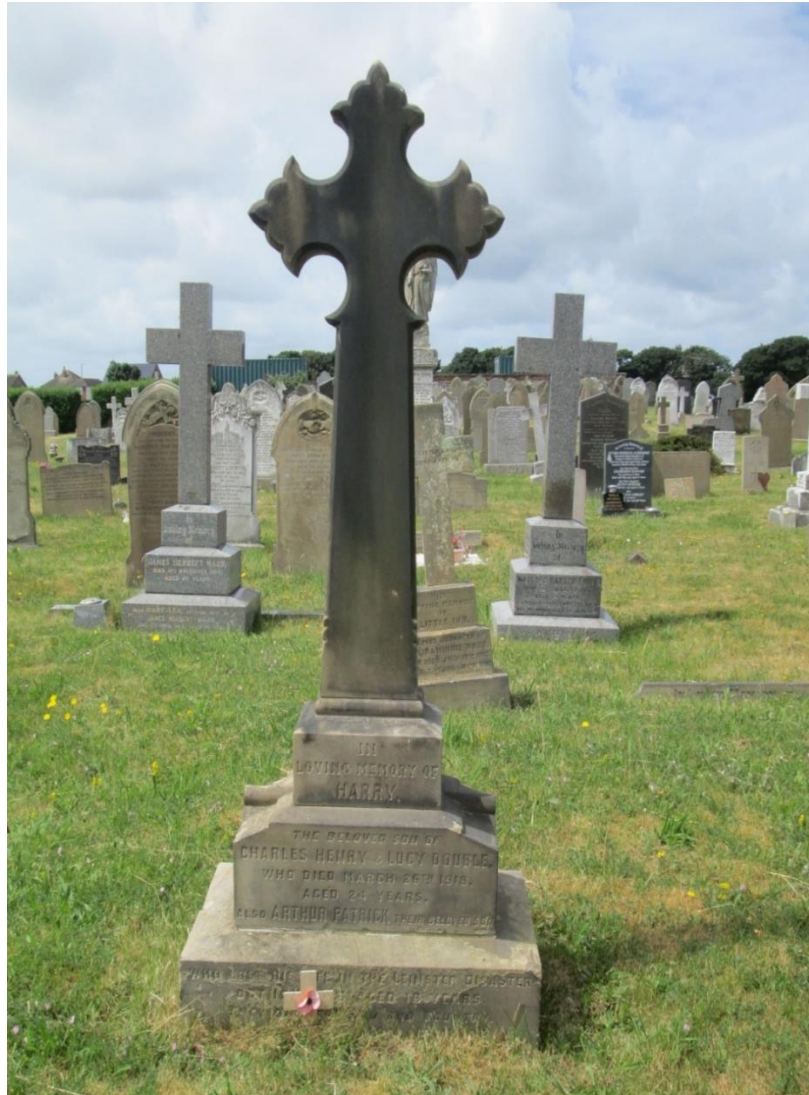
The war graves leaflet lists over 90 war graves spanning the period December 1914 to February 2009 (strictly speaking the last two burials - in 1992 and 2009 - are not war graves but army graves relating to more recent conflicts). As would be expected in Fleetwood, many of the war graves relate to naval deaths.

Being the anorak I am - and encouraged by the fact that plentiful refreshment is available at nearby promenade kiosks and / or YMCA café - I decided it would be a good January project for me to visit every one of the war graves in the cemetery.

I chose to visit the war graves in date order (as listed in the council's leaflet), starting with Captain John Thomas Mills (December 1914) and ending with Marine Darren James Smith (February 2009). This is a large cemetery, which was laid out on what had been military shooting ranges linked to Fleetwood's two 19th century barracks, and given that the graves are scattered widely in the cemetery's various Church of England, Roman Catholic and Non-Conformist plots, this meant much criss-crossing of the grounds.

Although those war graves with standard Portland stone Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstones were easy enough to spot, those casualties buried in family plots - a sizeable number in Fleetwood Cemetery - could be difficult to find, especially as the accuracy of the grave location diagrams printed in the council's leaflet was in some instances - let's say - somewhat awry.

All of this proved to be good exercise for me on three crisp January day visits, and I am pleased to say I succeeded in my mission of visiting every single one of the Fleetwood Cemetery war graves. Of course every war grave tells a story, but the inscription on one such grave, located in a family plot in the Old Church of England section, particularly caught my attention. This was the grave of Deck Hand Harry Double. The CWGC website shows Harry was in the Royal Naval Reserve, and died aged 24 years on March 26th 1918, whilst serving on HMS *Gaillardia*, and was returned to Fleetwood to be buried.



War grave of Harry Double (HMS *Gaillardia*), Fleetwood Cemetery

The inscription reads:

‘In loving memory of Harry, the beloved son of Charles Henry & Lucy Double, who died March 26th 1918, aged 24 years. Aso Arthur Patrick their beloved son who lost his in the Leinster disaster of October 10th 1918 aged 18 years. They died for God and country’

Hmm, Harry’s brother, Arthur Patrick, lost in “...*the Leinster disaster of October 10th 1918*”: that sounded like an incident I ought to have heard about, but hadn’t...

Harry Double and HMS Gaillardia

The *Gaillardia* (pictured) was an escort sloop built by the Blyth Shipbuilding Co



Ltd, and launched in May 1917. She was armed with two 4.7 inch guns and two anti-aircraft guns.

At 5am on 22nd March 1918 HMS *Gaillardia* left Lerwick to patrol off the east coast of Orkney accompanying the minelayers *Princess Margaret* and *Angora*. She was commanded by Lieutenant John Alexander McDonald and at the wheel was Commander John Sharpey Shafer, an experienced skipper in the sea region east of Orkney, and who had been at Jutland on HMS *King George V*.

Gaillardia rendezvoused with the minelayers at 7am. Also in close attendance was the destroyer HMS *Musketeer*. Minelaying operations began at 8am with the ships steering an easterly course. *Musketeer* and *Gaillardia* followed *Princess Margaret's* mine laying run steaming in a line following the marker buoys which marked the safe northerly edge of the minefield. *Gaillardia* was requested to sink some 'floaters' (mines which had broken lose when deployed), which she did. Then at about 11.55 am huge explosions erupted from the port side of the ship and *Gaillardia* immediately began to sink. Lieutenant McDonald survived but sixty-nine crewmen and two officers, including Commander Sharpey Shafer, lost their lives. Boats from the *Musketeer* succeeded in rescuing the surviving crewmen from the cold water.

(Incidentally, Commander John Sharpey Shafer was the son of Sir Edward Albert Sharpey Shafer, a renowned physician and physiologist, regarded as a founder of endocrinology. Amongst other achievements, in 1894 he demonstrated the

existence of adrenaline, and he coined the term ‘endocrine’ for the secretion of ductless glands. Both his sons died in action in WW1)

At the subsequent Enquiry it was held that *Gaillardia* and *Musketeer* were outside the line of marker buoys indicating the safe edge of the minefield and the Enquiry concluded that *Gaillardia* had almost certainly been sunk after striking a German mine. However, whilst a later Court Martial agreed that Lieutenant McDonald had been on the correct course at the time of the explosion and cleared him of any blame, it concluded that the mine(s) that caused the loss of HMS *Gaillardia* were in fact British mines which had been dragged or had floated outside the line of the marker buoys marking the edge of the minefield.

There is thus little doubt that the loss of HMS *Gaillardia* on 22nd March 1918 with most of her crew was due to the ship hitting a mine, but as to whether it was a German or a British mine will never be known. ‘Scottish Shipwrecks’ have identified a wreck at 94 meters which is believed to be HMS *Gaillardia*.



As for the fatalities, all except Harry Double died on the day of the sinking, 22nd March; Harry survived the sinking but died four days later, on 26th March 1918 from his wounds, and as noted above was returned to Fleetwood for burial.

A discussion about HMS *Gaillardia* can be found on the Great War Forum, and in 2014 a post was made by a relative of Harry giving further information and providing a photograph of him (pictured). The contributor wrote “*One of my Great Grand Uncles died of the wounds he suffered when HMS Gaillardia hit one of our own mines...He was one of 13 children from Fleetwood in Lancashire. His father was*

a trawler owner / skipper. Early in the war Charles Henry Double signed on with the Royal Naval Reserves as a Warrant Officer serving at Scapa Flow working on the Boom Defence. Six of his sons served in WW1 and he lost two of them [i.e. Harry and Arthur Patrick] in the last year of conflict. Harry in March aboard Gaillardia and Arthur Patrick who was in the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. Arthur was on his way home with his comrades on RMS Leinster...”

Arthur Patrick Double and RMS Leinster

The CWGC website confirms Arthur Patrick Double was a Private in The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, who died on 10th October 1918 aged 18 years. He is buried at Grangegorman Military Cemetery, Dublin.

Arthur Patrick lost his life on RMS *Leinster* when it was torpedoed by a German submarine on 10th October 1918, resulting in the greatest ever loss of life in the Irish Sea and the highest ever casualty rate on an Irish owned ship. Its sinking made headlines around the world, jeopardised attempts to end WW1, and yet it is a relatively unknown event - why?



Between 1850 and 1920 the now defunct City of Dublin Steam Packet Company operated a mail and passenger service between Dun Laoghaire (then Kingstown) and Holyhead. Having the post office contract to carry mail across the Irish Sea, the four ships on the route carried the prefix RMS (Royal Mail Steamer), and were named RMS *Connaught*, , RMS *Munster* and RMS *Ulster*. The ships were nicknamed the ‘Provinces’, and each had an on-board mail sorting room. The four twin-screw steamers in use at the time of WW1 had been built at Lairds, Birkenhead, and were comfortable and

fast. The Irish Sea service continued during WW1, with the ships on the route painted with dazzle camouflage and a gun placed on the stern manned by Royal Navy personnel. In 1915 RMS *Connaught* was requisitioned as a transport ship, and in March 1917 was torpedoed and sunk in the English Channel with the loss of three crewmen.

By late 1917 German submarines had focused their attacks on British shipping in the waters around Great Britain and Ireland where shipping tended not to be convoyed, and from late 1917 the remaining three ‘Provinces’ were attacked a number of times, but avoided damage. It therefore was not a surprise when the fatal submarine attack on the *Leinster* occurred, and there are questions as to whether better precautions could have been taken.

Thus in late September the submarine UB-123 set out from Germany bound for operations in the Irish Sea. The war was now entering its final weeks. Thousands of Irish men and women were serving in Britain’s armed forces and many servicemen from different countries were stationed at airfields and naval bases in Ireland.

Shortly before 9am on 10 October 1918 RMS *Leinster* left Kingstown under the command of Captain William Birch, a Dubliner who lived with his family in Holyhead. Aboard were 79 crew from Kingstown and Holyhead, 22 postal sorters, 201 civilians (men, women and children) and hundreds of service personnel (soldiers, sailors, airmen and nurses from Ireland, Britain, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) going on, or returning from, leave.

Shortly before 10 am, with *Leinster* about 12 miles out from Kingstown, a torpedo fired by UB-123 on the port side missed, but a second one struck in the vicinity of the mail room. Attempting to turn and go back to port, the ship was struck again, this time on the starboard side which doomed the ship and those on it; from

the first torpedo strike to the ship going under head-first took about 12 minutes. Survivors struggled in the rough sea, in lifeboats and clinging to life-rafts and wreckage. Royal Navy ships which rescued survivors included the armed Yacht *Helga*, which had shelled the centre of Dublin during the Rising two years previously.

The dead on RMS *Leinster* included Fleetwood's Arthur Patrick Double; Captain Birch; 21 of the 22 postal workers on board; Josephine Carr (19) from Cork, the first ever WREN to be killed on active service; and six members of the Gould family from Limerick.

With regard to Arthur Patrick Double, the authoritative website www.rmsleinster.com gives us more information about Arthur and his family. He was born in Hull in 1900 to Captain Charles Henry Double and Lucy Dutton, at which time his father Charles was a 'Fish Merchant' and 'Managing Director of the Double Steam Fishing Co'. By 1911 the family had moved to Fleetwood and that year's census shows that thirteen children had been born and twelve were living.

An October 1918 edition of the *Fleetwood Chronicle* reported the death of Private Arthur Patrick Double on RMS *Leinster*, aged just eighteen years. He had enlisted in Preston in March that year with the Loyal North Lancashire regiment and was returning to duty from a holiday in Ireland. His father Captain Double was said to be in the RNVR and on active service for three and a half years. The article detailed how six of his sons had also volunteered to serve and that the two youngest were in the Church Cadets and Boy Scouts. The article noted Seaman Harry Double's death, aged twenty-four, on HMS *Gaillardia* the previous March.

The *Lancashire Evening Post* of 14 October published a letter received by Captain Double from a comrade who had been with Arthur Double since they enlisted in Preston, *“He was all a good soldier should be - cheerful, contented and willing to give a helping hand to any of his friends”*. He said that Arthur was confirmed by the Bishop of Meath in the church in Wellington Barracks and that his body was lying in the King George V Hospital in Dublin. Private Arthur Patrick Double was buried in the military cemetery in Grangegorman (along with 143 other military casualties from the *Leinster*).

John Higgins, the only one of the 22 postal workers aboard to survive, described how he was working in the partitioned registered letter area with two colleagues. When the first torpedo struck Higgins shouted but got no reply. Stepping into the wrecked main sorting office area Higgins found himself up to his waist in sea water amongst *“a sea of white letters, floating on the water”*. He escaped by holding on to electric wires while the rising water lifted him up the space where the stairs had been. Two other postal workers joined him on deck and they put on life jackets but only Higgins managed to get into a lifeboat before the second torpedo struck; he reported seeing another postal worker go over the rails as the ship was struck again. He was eventually picked up by a British destroyer and taken to Kingstown where the Red Cross gave him dry clothes, and then taken on a military lorry to the General Post Office in Kingstown before he went home.

Meanwhile his wife had heard the news on the radio and the story goes that she and the children were praying as he walked in the door. His first words to her are said to have been *“Woman will you get off your knees and get me some tea I’m starving and frozen cold”*.



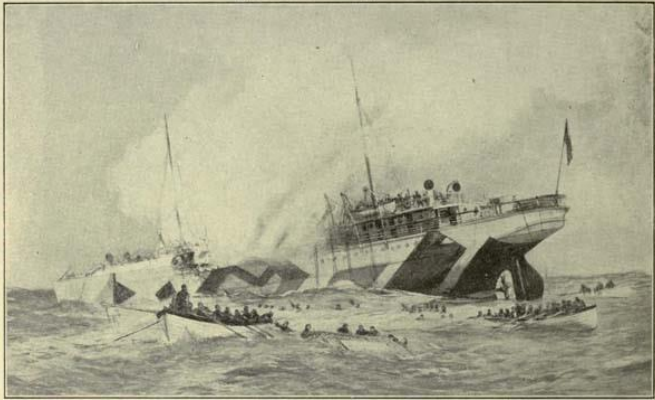
Amazingly by mid-October 24 letters and two parcel bags had been recovered, and the sodden mail was dried and where possible forwarded to its destination. As for the total losses, a full passenger list was not kept for the sailing, but a best estimate (from comprehensive research

by www.rmsleinster.com) is that out of a total of 817 people aboard, 571 were lost in the sinking (military 361, civilian 149, crew 40, post office 21); they came from Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales, Guernsey, Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand.

The wreck of the *Leinster* has been dived, and footage is available on www.rmsleinster.com and YouTube. Recovered artefacts are in the museum at Dun Laoghaire, and in 1996 an anchor which had been raised in 1991 was incorporated into the RMS *Leinster* memorial at Carlisle Pier Dun Laoghaire, overlooking the ship's old berth.

Ironically, given my above account of Harry Double's death the previous March on HMS *Gaillard* whilst on mining duty in the North Sea, within a few days of its torpedoing of the *Leinster*, UB-123 struck a mine in the North Sea whilst returning to Germany: Captain Robert Ramm and his entire crew (a total of 36) were lost.

Murder on the High Seas by the Kaiser's Minions



After the sinking of *Leinster*, it served British propaganda to emphasise the civilian deaths without acknowledging the *Leinster's* role in carrying service personnel, and in this regard on 14 October 1918 US President

Woodrow Wilson sent a harsh reply to German peace overtures which included the phrase,

“At the very moment that the German Government approaches the Government of the United States with proposals of peace, its submarines are engaged in sinking passenger ships at sea...”

Soon afterwards Germany ceased its attacks on merchant shipping.

For a short time RMS *Leinster* held centre stage as attempts were made to end WW1, but why was the disaster then forgotten? Within a year of the *Leinster's* sinking, armed conflict broke out between Irish Nationalists and British forces leading to the creation of an independent Irish state. It soon suited each side to deliberately forget the part played by Irish men and women in WW1: Irish officialdom wanted to tell a story of perpetual Irish resistance to British rule through the centuries and British officialdom, still smarting from the fact of Irish independence, did nothing to highlight the contribution made by the Irish during WW1. The sinking of the *Leinster* became part of the general memory loss.

In recent years it is the Friends of the Leinster, and the 2005 publication of the book *Torpedoed! The RMS Leinster disaster* (Philip Lecane), which have been instrumental in restoring the memory, nationally and internationally, of this huge maritime disaster - “Ireland’s Titanic”.

Sources:

Arthur Sinclair

Leaflet: *Fleetwood Cemetery History Trail*, Wyre Council

www.blackpoolgazette.co.uk

www.findagrave.com

George Washington Williams

Souvenir Program: *Friends of Layton Cemetery, Cemetery Tour*

BBC Sounds - Great Lives - George Washington Williams

The Double brothers

Leaflet: *Fleetwood, Poulton and Preesall Cemeteries: War Graves*, Wyre Council

www.cwgs.org

www.greatwarforum.org

www.irishtimes.com Article 24th April 2018 by Philip Lecane, *Sinking of RMS Leinster resulted in greatest ever loss of life in the Irish Sea*

Note: Philip Lecane has written two books on the Leinster disaster: *Torpedoed! The RMS Leinster disaster* and *Women and Children of the RMS Leinster: Restored to History*

www.postalmuseum.org Article 4th October 2018, Gavin McGuffie and the Postal Museum team *The centenary of the sinking of RMS Leinster*

www.rmsleinster.com A comprehensive and authoritative account of the RMS *Leinster* disaster

www.scottishshipwrecks.com/hms-gaillardia/

www.yorkshirebylines.co.uk Article *The sinking of the RMS Leinster: tragedy in the Irish Sea*, John Heywood, 2nd August and 14th December 2021



The Sinking of the Linda Blanche

Chris Williams



The Linda Blanche

When one comes to think of U boats, one's mind may stray to the claustrophobia of "Das Boot", or from another perspective the tension of "The Cruel Sea"; wolfpacks of technologically advanced but lethal German submarines patrolling the icy waters of the North Atlantic seeking snail-paced merchantmen and rolling corvettes.

We certainly don't associate the submarine war with chivalry, and generally not the first world war, and even if we do we don't think about the estuary of the Ribble – and yet a few miles from Lytham St Annes lies the wreck of the Linda Blanche, and side to warfare seemingly long forgotten – and with the bonus element of being a story with A Bit With A Dog.

Long before the motorway network was a glint in Ernest Marples' eye, a huge amount of freight was shipped around the British coast by tiny steamers, able to

move in and out of the smaller ports and harbours around the coast and move quantities of raw materials substantially cheaper than road or rail.

The Linda Blanche was built in Glasgow in 1914 and displaced just 530 tons – for comparison, the Titanic displaced 52,310 tons. She was owned by the Anglesey Shipping Company and had a complement of 11 men and her captain, John Ellis.

On January 30th 1915 she set sail from Manchester, moving down the Ship Canal before entering the Mersey and making course for Belfast. She carried no cargo, being on a routing voyage to Northern Ireland where she would pick up her next load. Whilst nowhere at sea during wartime can be considered truly safe, the Irish Sea was a long way from hostile territory and it is likely that the events of the night came as a huge surprise to Captain Ellis and his crew.



Otto Hersing

For waiting in Liverpool Bay that night was the formidable shape of U-21, commanded by Otto Hersing, regarded as perhaps the most successful U-boat ace of the Imperial German Navy. Hersing's successes in U-21 in the early days of the war included the British cruiser HMS Pathfinder, the first Royal Navy ship to be torpedoed by a German submarine.

On 22 January Hersing took U-21 through the Dover Barrage and up into the Irish Sea as far as Walney Island, where U-21 shelled the airfield before shore batteries forced a withdrawal. Heading south, U-21 came upon the slight silhouette of the Linda Blanche.

At 0815 the vessel was signalled to stop, boarded and the crew politely invited to leave as scuttling charges were planted. The Aberdeen Daily Angus picked up the story having interviewed a crew member:

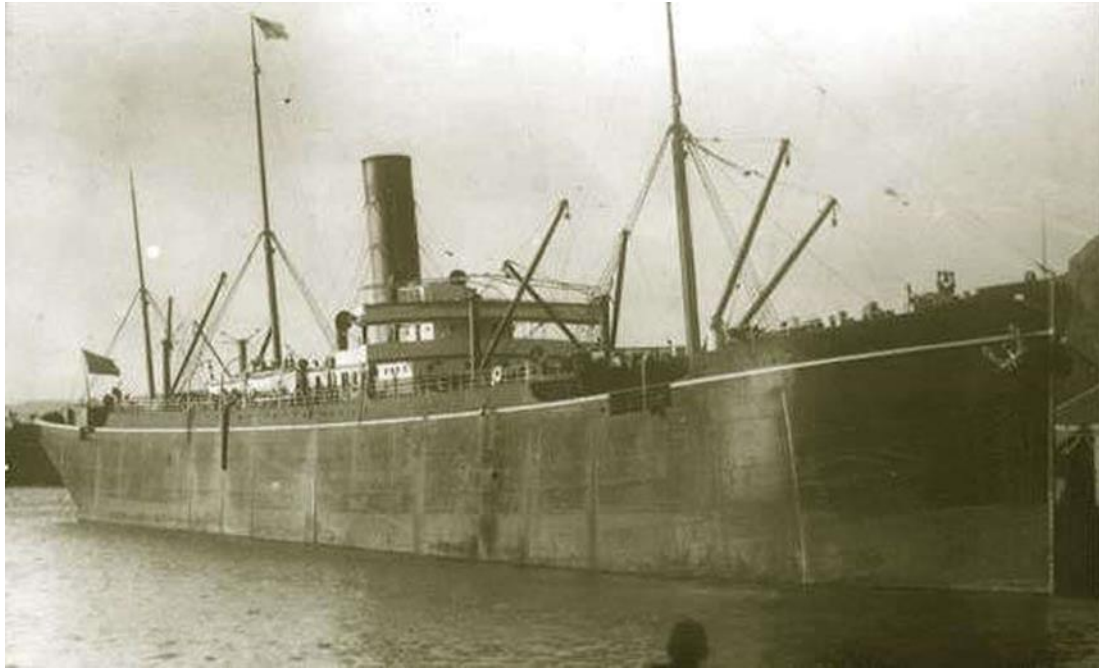
‘One of the crew of the LINDA BLANCHE, stated that they were on a voyage from Manchester to Belfast with general cargo. They left Manchester at four o'clock on Friday afternoon, and anchored for some time in the Mersey. At eight o'clock on Saturday evening the voyage was resumed , and at 12.30, when the vessel was due west of Liverpool Lightship, the German submarine U21 came alongside suddenly.

The German officer, who spoke perfect English, instructed the skipper, Captain Ellis (uncle of the man interviewed), to take the crew off within ten minutes. The two small boats of the vessel were quickly lowered and the crew got into them.

The German sailors then fixed mines on the bridge of the vessel and one in the forecastle, and these exploded. The vessel was a complete wreck in five minutes. The Germans told the crew there was a trawler in a certain direction, and at two o'clock in the afternoon they were picked up by it.

The interviewed man told an interesting incident in connection with the skipper's fox terrier. In their haste to get into the boat the animal was overlooked, and when the crew had cleared off, the dog jumped into the sea and swam to the small boat. When Ellis was interviewed the dog was in his arms.’

Repeating the trick with the 456 ton SS Kilcoan an hour later, U-21 next stopped the collier the SS Ben Cruachan, en route from Cardiff to Scapa Flow. The Ben Cruachan was a much more substantial vessel, a 3,000 ton ship carrying 5,000 tons of coal to the Naval base, with a crew of 23 under the command of Master Alexander McGregor Laing of Aberdeen.



SS Ben Cruachan

As she passed Morecambe Bay, U-21 appeared alongside the Ben Cruachan, demanded the ship stop, and two officers boarded her at 1015 on 30 January. The Aberdeen Daily Journal reported on the events:

‘The German submarine U21...has made another raid on British shipping, and has, it is feared, been responsible for the loss of three more British vessels, the scene of her further exploits being the Irish Sea. The first victim appears to have been the steamer BEN CRUACHAN, a vessel of 3,092 tons, which left Cardiff on Tuesday with 5,000 tons of coal.

She had discharged part of her cargo, and was proceeding with the remainder to Liverpool, when, at 10.15 on Saturday morning, some 15 miles north-west of the North-West Lightship, the German submarine U21 suddenly came to the surface.

According to the statements of the crew, who have now been landed safely at Fleetwood, the steamer was summoned to stop, and was then boarded by two German officers. The crew was given ten minutes in which to get their things together, and then had to leave their vessel in two small boats. The Germans placed a shell in the steamer, and within a few moments of their having left her there was a terrific explosion, and she was blown to pieces.

The submarine disappeared almost immediately, and the crew, after five hours, were picked up by the fishing smack MARGARET, and brought to Fleetwood.

Quartermaster Tom Inglis, of the BEN CRUACHAN, said:- "I was in bed at the time, and was awakened and told that a German submarine was alongside. I quickly rose, dressed, and was informed that we had been given ten minutes to leave the ship. The lifeboats were quickly lowered into the water, and the crew of 23 scrambled into them.

We then cut adrift, and were ordered to go alongside the submarine, the commander of which requested our captain to hand over the ship's papers and logs. Our skipper told him the papers had been left aboard the vessel, and the skipper was ordered to accompany a German officer and two sailors in a small boat to the ship and secure the papers. This done, the Germans took them, and placed a mine aboard of the vessel, hanging the fuse over. We got into the small boat again. The fuse was lighted, and we pulled back to the submarine.

Suddenly there was a terrific explosion, and the ship shook from fore to aft. She then commenced to sink stern first with her bow high up in the air. "After expressing regret that he had to blow up the vessel, the commander of the submarine said, 'war is war.' He voiced the hope that we would get picked up before bad weather set in, shook hands with our captain, and saluted. The submarine was then submerged and disappeared. "An hour later we were picked up by the Fleetwood fishery vessel MARGARET and landed at Fleetwood. I only managed to get some clothes, and lost everything else, as did the majority of the crew." The mate of the BEN CRUACHAN remarked - "The German officers were very gentlemanly. I give them credit for that.'

Recognising that their rather successful morning – with three British merchantmen lying at the bottom of Liverpool Bay - would likely bring unwanted attention, U-21 headed out of the Irish Sea and slipped back to Wilhelmshaven via the Dover Barrage once more.

Hersing took U-21 to the Mediterranean following the Gallipoli landings and sought to attack British shipping shelling shore positions, sinking HMS Triumph and HMS Majestic, leading to the decision to withdraw capital ships from the role

before sinking a French cruiser and a British munitions ship for good measure before entering the Black Sea and wreaking further havoc under an Italian flag fighting the Austro-Hungarian empire through the Mediterranean. U-21 finished her successful career in the North Sea, this time under the somewhat less chivalrous rules of unrestricted submarine warfare.

By the end of the war, she had sunk forty ships for a combined 113,580 tons, just 530 of which were little Linda Blanche. Hersing was ordered to take U-21, in which he had wreaked such havoc, to Britain for surrender in 1919, but it mysteriously sank en route...Hersing has long been suspected of an involvement in this. Hersing retired to Saxony and became a potato farmer, living out a long peaceful life and passing in 1960.

For little Linda Blanche, now lying on the sands of Liverpool Bay, she would be long forgotten were it not for a curious footnote. The famous German artist Willy Stower, known for his iconic if inaccurate painting of the sinking of the Titanic and a favourite painter of the Kaiser, chose to represent the sinking of the Linda Blanche in an effort to capture the chivalric ideals of the Imperial German Navy...however it seems her size was somewhat exaggerated.



Stower's *Sinking of the Linda Blanche*, 1915

Goodbye To All That – Robert Graves



Robert Graves' book *Goodbye To All That* (GTAT) has been considered a classic of the First World War. It certainly falls into the category of a seminal work of the disillusioned authors of the post war period. First published in 1929, it is an autobiography in which Graves recounts his experiences on the Western Front as a young officer with the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. It is also a valuable insight into the views and prejudices of the regular army which were adopted by the young Graves.

Robert Graves was a typical pre-war, middle class young man. He attended Charterhouse school where he was a member of the Officer Training Corps. When war was declared in August 1914 he was waiting to go up to Oxford. Knowing that he would struggle to get a regular army commission, he was advised that it would be easier to obtain a commission in the Special Reserve. He then applied to the Royal Welsh Fusiliers (RWF) Special Reserve at Wrexham

and was soon commissioned into the 3rd (Reserve Bn) RWF. Following some very basic training, his first posting was to the Internment Camp at the Wagon Works in Lancaster.

Graves became greatly impressed and imbued with the regimental history and *esprit de corps* of the RWF. During the First World War the regiment had increased to such a size that he considered it imperilled the regimental spirit. He became influenced by the ethos of the regular army which also included a deep prejudice against the Territorial Force (TF).

‘Before the war we had two line battalions and the depot. The affiliated and flashless territorials – four battalions recruited for home service – could be disregarded, despite their regular adjutants. The Special Reserve Battalion, which trained at the depot, was a poor relation’.

Note how Graves avoids the use of capital letters when referring to the Territorials.

‘More and more New Army battalions were added. The regiment, (that is, a consensus of opinion, in the two line battalions), tentatively accepted the New Army [*note: Capital letters*] battalions, one by one as they proved themselves worthy in the field. It never accepted the territorials (sic), dismissing them contemptuously as ‘dog shooters’.’

Prior to the Great War, the Volunteers had been objects of suspicion within the regular army and the militia. The officers of the Volunteer battalions of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers had been refused permission to wear the Flash.

The old Volunteer battalions had previously carried no Regimental Colours but when the TF was formed, Colours were then authorised. The only battle honours allowed to the TF at this point were those specifically earned by Volunteer units;

in this instance, “South Africa” was awarded to those units who had served in the Boer War. After the Great War in 1921, the TF became the Territorial Army and in 1925 its battalions were granted the privilege of bearing both the regimental battle honours and ‘The Flash’, in recognition of their war service.³

Graves recounts a potted, if somewhat jaundiced, history of the regiment’s Territorial battalions.

‘The fact was that three of the four territorial battalions failed signally in the Suvla Bay Landings at Gallipoli. One battalion had offered violence to its officers; the commanding officer, a regular, had not cared to survive a disgrace which even the good work that these battalions did later at Gaza could not cancel. The remaining territorial battalion joined the First Division in France in 1915, and quite unnecessarily lost its machine-guns at Givenchy.’

When Graves eventually embarked for France in 1915, he was posted to the 2nd Welch Regiment (3rd Brigade, 1st Division). He arrived at the 2nd Welch positions on the front near Cambrin, east of Bethune. The War Diary of the 2nd Welch Rgt. 18 May 1915 records that Graves was part of a draft of four other officers of the 3rd RWF, a corporal and a draft of fifty men

Graves was assigned to ‘C’ Company where his company commander immediately described the inadequacies of the Territorial unit that regularly relieved them in the trenches:

³ ‘The Flash’ is a regimental distinction of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. In the 18th century soldiers wore their hair in a queue which was held in a bag to avoid the grease soiling the back of the uniform coat. The queue was abolished by 1808, yet the Royal Welsh Fusiliers continued to wear the five black ribbons from the collar of their coats. Stationed in Nova Scotia at the time, little notice was taken of their disobedience, but on returning to England in 1834, an inspecting General ordered the ribbons removed. An appeal was made to the King who granted the Royal Welsh the right to wear “The Flash” as a regimental distinction and have worn it ever since.

“They used to sit down in the trench and say, “Oh my God, this is the limit.” Then they would pull out a pencil and write home about it. Did no work on the traverses or fire positions. Consequence – they lost half of their men from frostbite and rheumatism. One day the Germans broke in and scuppered the lot of them.”

He went on to describe their failure to maintain the trenches and the poor sanitary conditions that encouraged rats and disease as being down to slack officers.

“....Awful swine those territorials (sic).”

Graves remained with the 2nd Welch Rgt until the end of July. The War Diary for 2 August 1915 –

Lieuts Jones and Jones-Bateman and 2/Lieuts Graves and Robertson all belonging to the Special Reserve RWF left the 2nd Welsh Rgt in the morning to report with their 1st and 2nd Bns RWF respectively.

Graves and Robertson joined the 2nd RWF at their positions in the Leventie sector, roughly between La Bassee and Armentieres.

The battalion war diary of the 2nd RWF unusually makes no mention of Graves or Robertson arriving during the summer of 1915. On 15 October 1915 Graves, now age twenty, was Gazetted as a Special Reserve Captain. The 2nd RWF War Diary 26 November 1915 – ‘Captains Edwards and Graves to 1st Bn.’

This is confirmed in the 1st RWF War Diary for 27 November 1915, which records ‘Capt. G A Edwards 3rd RWF and Capt. R von R Graves 3rd RWF both from 2nd RWF.’ According to, Graves when he arrived at 1st RWF in November 1915, he was appointed 2i/c ‘A’ Company.

In January 1916, while at Montagne, 7th Division required that two company officers from each brigade should be sent to the Base as instructors. The War Diary of 1st RWF 14 January 1916 records that – ‘Capt. R von R Graves 3rd Bn. For duty at Base.’ Graves and an officer from the Queen's Royal Regiment (West Surrey) were sent as they had been serving in France the longest.

After eight months service in France, Graves now offers his opinion on who are the most dependable troops. He considers the most reliable to be those from the Midlands county regiments, industrial Yorkshire and Lancashire, and Londoners.

Graves notes in GTAT that he went on leave to England in April 1916 but unusually for this time, there is no mention of his leave in the battalion war diary. This is at slight variance with the war diary of 1st RWF, which records: 28 June 1916, ‘Capt. R von R Graves to England sick.’

Graves tells of spending Easter with his parents, before visiting a dentist and then attending Millbank Military Hospital where his broken nose was operated upon by an army surgeon. He spent his recovery period at a small cottage near Harlech that he had purchased from his mother who at that time owned a considerable amount of property in the district. At the end of his sick leave, Graves reported to 3rd RWF at Litherland, Liverpool where they formed part of the Mersey defence force.

When the Somme offensive began on 1 July 1916, Graves notes that all available trained men and officers were sent out to replace casualties. He arrived at the 2nd RWF trenches near Givenchy on 5 July 1916. This is confirmed in the 2nd RWF war diary for 6 July 1916: ‘Captain R von R Graves and 11 other ranks joined.’ Graves was assigned to ‘D’ Company.

It was here with the 2nd RWF that Graves met with the battalion Medical Officer, the redoubtable Dr J C Dunn, the author of another classic account of the Great War, 'The War the Infantry Knew 1914 -1919' (published in 1931). Graves



describes him as 'A hard bitten Scot who had served as a trooper in the South African War, where he had won a Distinguished Conduct Medal and was now more than a doctor to the battalion.' Dr Dunn lived at battalion headquarters and had been the righthand man of previous colonels. Graves observed that whoever failed to take his advice usually regretted it afterwards.

On 14 July 1916 the 2nd RWF moved through Bethune and entrained for the Somme railhead near Amiens. They moved up to the original front line and then on through Happy Valley until they reached the fringes of Mametz Wood on 15 July. It was during the Battle for High Wood on 20 July 1916 that Graves was wounded by shell fragments. He was hit in the left hand and left thigh - which according to Graves - almost emasculated him. A further fragment entered near the point of his right shoulder blade and exited two inches above his right nipple. His wounds were dressed by Dr Dunn, who noted in 'The War the Infantry Knew', that 'Graves had a bad chest wound of the kind that few recover from.'

Graves was collected from the battlefield and taken to a dressing station where he was given little chance of surviving his chest wound and was put to one side. The following day Graves was found to be still breathing. He was immediately transferred to the nearest field hospital. In the meantime, having been reported in the casualty list as 'Died of Wounds', his commanding officer had sent off a letter of condolence to his mother.

Graves was evacuated to No.8 General Hospital at Rouen. On arrival he claims all his personal effects had been stolen from him. He accused the RAMC orderlies of living up to their nickname – Rob All My Comrades.

Prior to his transfer to England, Graves managed to write to his mother and inform her that despite the official notification, he was still alive. His father was waiting for him when he arrived at Waterloo Station from where he was sent to Queen Alexandra's Hospital at Highgate.

The news of Graves' reported death had spread and by this time a stream of condolence letters had been sent to his parents and a short obituary had appeared in The Times. Graves wrote to the Advertising Manager of The Times contradicting the report of his death. The newspaper agreed to issue a statement to this effect. This was included in the Court Circular section on 5 August 1916.

‘Captain Robert Graves, Royal Welch Fusiliers, officially reported died of wounds, wishes to inform his friends that he is recovering from his wounds at Queen Alexandra's Hospital, Highgate, N,

Mrs Lloyd George has left London for Criccieth.’

Graves made a steady recovery, spending most of September at Harlech, where he was visited by Siegfried Sassoon. They took the opportunity to ‘put their poems in order’. He met Sassoon again in November 1916 when Graves reported to the 3rd RWF at Litherland. At a Medical Board review in December 1916, Graves requested that he be passed fit for overseas service, and he was returned to France in January 1917.

Graves was once again posted to the 2nd RWF then at Bouchavesenes on the Somme. When he met Dr J C Dunn, the battalion Medical Officer, he was asked, with kindly disapproval, ‘what he meant by returning so soon’. Doctor Dunn then

reported to the commanding officer that in his opinion Captain Graves was unfit for trench service. Graves was subsequently assigned to Headquarters company in the transport lines at Frises.

The severe winter weather in the trenches eventually had an effect on the health of Graves. A few weeks later Dr Dunn diagnosed bronchitis and on 12 March 1917 he was once again sent to No.8 General Hospital at Rouen. The war diary of 2nd RWF noted: 'Lt R. C. Shelley and Capt. R von R Graves to England sick and struck off strength of Batt.'

Graves was evacuated to England and sent to a military hospital within Somerville College, Oxford. Shortly after his arrival he applied for an instructor's post with one of the Officer-Cadet battalions in Oxford. Graves was posted to Wadham Company, No.4 battalion. During his time at Somerville College, Graves made the acquaintance of some of the leading figures of literature and philosophy. This was followed by a period of convalescence at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, where he enjoyed honorary membership of the Royal Yacht Squadron at Cowes, and the delights of a summer on the island.

Graves and Sassoon corresponded regularly during this period. and when Sassoon was sent back to England suffering from shellshock, Graves arranged to meet him in Liverpool. At Sassoon's Medical Board review, Graves successfully persuaded the board that Sassoon needed help. The board then assigned Graves to escort him to Craiglockhart, Edinburgh, where Sassoon was to become a patient of Professor W H R Rivers.

Returning to Litherland, Graves went before a Medical Board himself. He was classified as only fit for Home Service. He was put in command of a company, but soon realised how bad his own nerves were and how physically difficult he found the training. At his next Medical Board, he was re-classified as fit for

Garrison service at home. Graves was then posted to the 3rd Garrison Battalion RWF at Oswestry which consisted mostly of conscripts and rather poor-quality young officers. The battalion soon moved to Kinnel Camp near Rhyl, where Graves was appointed to give ‘further instruction’ to the young officers sent to him from the cadet-battalions; there being very few of the other officers who had seen active service.

At Graves’ next Medical Board he was passed as fit for Garrison Service overseas. Graves was ordered to proceed to Gibraltar to join the 1st Garrison Battalion RWF. He had hoped to be sent to 2nd Garrison Battalion RWF, based at Cairo [By September 1917 the 2nd Garrison Battalion RWF had left Cairo was then at Sollum on the Mediterranean coast of north-west Egypt, 70 miles east of Tobruk]. Gibraltar was considered by Graves to be a dead-end, but if he could get to Cairo his intention was to move on to Palestine. Strings were somehow pulled at the War Office. His orders for Gibraltar were cancelled until a future vacancy could be found for him with the 2nd Garrison Battalion RWF.

In GTAT Graves recounts a farcical event. In November 1917 it was rumoured that following an attack by the German fleet there was to be an invasion on the north-east coast of England. Several infantry battalions were to be sent to the area as a defence force. As a result, all the fit men of the 3rd Garrison Battalion RWF were put on 24 hours’ notice to move to York. However, according to Graves, an erroneous signal was sent directing the battalion to move to Cork. The battalion consequently departed for Cork and Graves remained ‘in sole charge of thirty young officers, four or five hundred crocks, and a draft of two hundred men under orders for Gibraltar’.

With few military duties to keep him occupied, Graves requested a transfer to the 16th Officer Cadet Battalion within Kinnel camp. This was approved and from

February 1918 until January 1919, when there was no requirement for officer-cadet battalions, Graves was posted to 3rd RWF at Limerick.

On 13 February 1919 Graves was notified that his demobilisation had come through. However, the demobilisation of all troops in Ireland was to be stopped the following day. After a frantic rush he managed to get on board the last train before demobilisation ended that night. He arrived in London the next day with the early stages of Spanish flu but without the necessary demobilisation stamp on his papers that would authorise his release from the army.

In a typical Graves form of serendipity, he offered to share his taxi from Paddington Station with another officer from the train who just happened to be the Cork District Demobilisation Officer. His papers were promptly stamped, and Graves was demobilised at Wimbledon later that day. After a quick visit to his parents near Wimbledon Common he made his way to his wife and new daughter at Hove, where he collapsed into bed. Within days the whole family had contracted influenza. An attending Doctor gave Graves little hope of recovery as he was now suffering from pneumonia. Graves however, had come too far to die of flu, and eventually recovered.

Goodbye To All That was first published to great acclaim in 1929 and later revised and re-published in 1957. Two of his contemporaries, Siegfried Sassoon and Edmund Blunden, took issue with the first edition. Sassoon was unhappy in how he had been described in the book and Blunden was reportedly concerned with the narrative accuracy. Paul Fussell, in his book 'The Great War and Modern Memory', describes GTAT as-

‘The indispensable guide to the literature of the First World War, Graves is, first and foremost, “a tongue-in-cheek neurasthenic farceur whose natural material is ‘facts’.

Like many other authors, most of Graves' anecdotal material during his military service cannot be verified. Some events can be substantiated through war diaries and other accounts such as that of J C Dunn. Was Blunden being a little too critical? Graves did confuse sick leave with home leave, and somehow had the War Office cancel his posting to Gibraltar without knowing that the 2nd Garrison Battalion RWF had moved from Cairo. As for the 3rd Garrison Battalion RWF being directed to Cork instead of York, then Fussell is probably closer in describing Graves as a writer of farces.





North Lancs branch Meetings - Future Programme

Monday 4 December

AGM and Members' contributions.

January 2024 - no meeting

Monday 5 February 2024

Michael Woods

The Attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt by the 46th (North Midlands) Division
13 October 1915

Monday 4 March 2024

Martin Purdy

The Effect of the Great War on British Art

Monday 1 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

Western Front Association – North Lancashire Branch

Chairman: Iain Adams
Email: icadams152@gmail.com

Treasurer: Fiona Bishop
: 0777 3399540

Secretary: Paul Conlon
Tel: 07922539256

Editor: Tom Williams
Tel: 01253 886788 / 07931963502

Email: p.conlon@live.co.uk

Email: tom@twilliams.plus.com