

BETWEEN THE LINES

Newsletter of the East Kent Branch of The Western Front Association

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Trustees of the East Kent Branch:

Hazel Basford
Greg Bayne

Committee:

Hazel Basford (Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer)

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Richard Young

Edward Holman

Rachel Wilsdon

Steve Ifield

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Articles, etc for *Between the Lines* should be sent to me in M/S Word with accompanying images attached as JPGs. The deadline for contributions (articles, letters, queries, etc) for the next issue of *Between the Lines* is Sunday, 29th September 2024. □

Contributions should be e-mailed to me at: [REDACTED]

James Brazier, WFA East Kent Branch Newsletter Editor



Welcome to another bumper issue of *Between the Lines*. In this issue, it gives me great pleasure to include contributions from three of our members in addition to my own. Although Rachel Wilsdon and Steve Ilett's joint contribution was received after the copy deadline, I decided to include it in this issue even though it displaced other contributions from yours truly! Steve has promised me another for the next issue and John Drouot has intimated that he too will be submitting another of his fine series of articles relating to The Buffs. It was my ambition to make our Branch Newsletter truly representative of the Branch and I feel that I have now achieved that ambition - so please keep on sending in your contributions for publication.

John Drouot tells the story of The Buffs at Radinghem in October 1914 when their 1st Battalion were engaged in fighting with heavy losses. Today, that action is largely forgotten but inspections of war memorials in the our area will reveal numerous casualties. I took the liberty of supplementing John's article with information on just two of those casualties who came from St Peter-in-Thanel.

My main contribution to this issue of *Between the Lines* tells the story of the "Thanet" ambulance and its driver, Arthur Boulting. I hope that readers will find it as interesting as I found when researching it.

Arthur Boulting has a most interesting backstory. His brother, Charles (born 1884), had emigrated from Margate to Australia arriving at Sydney on 12th April 1912. Almost immediately afterwards, Arthur (born 1889) also emigrated to Australia arriving at Sydney in early June 1912. On the 1911 Census, Arthur's occupation is shown as Chauffeur and on his outward bound passenger list as Mechanic. Whilst Charles remained in Australia for the rest of his life, Arthur chose to return to the UK in August 1915 in order to 'take his part in the war'.

As shown in my article on the "Thanet", ambulance, it was decided in June 1915 that the driver of the ambulance should be a resident of the Thanet. Whether Arthur chose to return to the UK with a view to securing that appointment is not known but with his mechanical knowledge of motor cars and his driving experience he was certainly very well qualified for the job and, in my view, he proved to be the perfect choice.

Not only had Arthur Boulting driving experience and mechanical knowledge, he also enjoyed writing as is evident from the letters he sent from France to the Mayors of both Margate and Ramsgate and, the letters to wrote to the editors of both *The East Kent Times* and *The Isle of Thanet Gazette* reporting on his driving activities in France. In one of those letters (reproduced in my article), he made reference to a diary he was keeping recording 'the car's doings, distance, number of wounded, etc, so that anyone would care to read it they may'. However, it is probable that his diary was unfortunately lost when the "Thanet" ambulance was totally destroyed by shell-fire on 24th April 1917. He continued working for the British Red Cross until December 1918. What stories he could have told and how sad it is that they are now lost. At the end of the war he was awarded the Médaille Militaire by the French Government.



Médaille Militaire

Arthur secured home-leave towards the end of 1916 in order to return to Margate to marry his sweetheart Jessie Frost. Later, they set up home at Whitstable where they both saw out the remainder of their lives.

Press advertisements from the 1920s show Arthur as having set up a motor garage and taxi business in Whitstable. He also sold fishing tackle and, when he died in 1950, was sadly mourned by the Whitstable & District Angling Society of which he had served as Honorary Secretary for many years. In 1948, his elder brother Charles returned to the UK to visit Arthur at Whitstable. Since they last met in 1914, Charles had qualified as a doctor in Australia and, in 1944, had been sent by the Austalian Government's medical service to look after the health of the population of Norfolk Island in the South Pacific. The island, which measures five miles by three miles had just 130 cars at the time. But more importantly - to Dr Charles Boulting - was that there was no income tax or, in fact, any taxes at all on Norfolk Island.

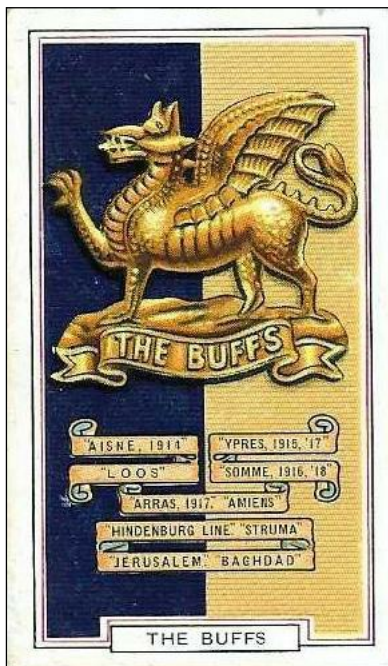
What stories the two brothers must have told each other during Charles' visit to Arthur! □

James Brazier
Newsletter Editor

The Buffs at Radinghem 18th – 20th October 1914

In the immediate post-war years the question of where, and when, a regiment entered the war was particularly significant: it was a matter of pride but also of status. Depending on how you look at it, The Buffs entered the war on 9th September 1914, when the 1st Battalion, along with the rest of III Corps and the 6th Division, arrived in France; nearly four weeks after the initial regiments had arrived on 16th August. The Battalion first met the Germans on the Aisne, on 21st September, a month after Mons. It remained on the Aisne until 12th October when it was moved north to Armentières with the rest of the Division. It was here between 18th and 21st October 1914 that the battalion had what The Buffs' historian, Colonel Moody, described as its "first battle", at Radinghem-en-Weppes. This was the best part of two months after the BEF started actively fighting the Germans: during that period the West Kents, for instance, had seen action at Mons, Le Cateau and the Marne.

When, in 1923, The Buffs Battle Honours Committee submitted its proposals for the First World War, its claim for the Aisne was turned down on the grounds that the 1st Battalion had not arrived until after the official end-date of the battle and was positioned outside the designated battlefield area: officially, The Buffs had not fought on the Aisne and their first battle was Armentières, which included Radinghem. It was only after significant lobbying of



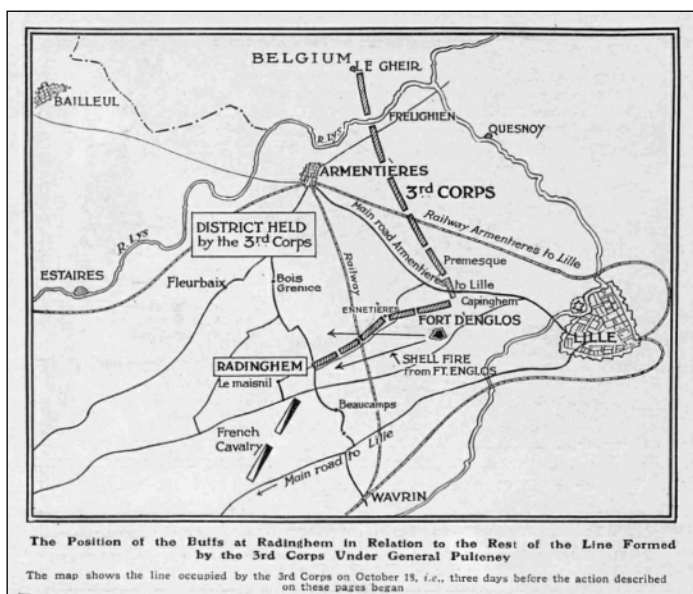
Cigarette Card produced by Gallaher Ltd in their 'Army Badges Series' showing The Buffs' Battle Honours

the King, by the Regimental Colonel Sir Arthur Paget, that The Buffs were allowed to add the honour to its Colours. Timing and location aside, the 1st Buffs' service on the Aisne was largely confined to the sort of trench-keeping duties that typified the experience of the BEF for the bulk of the war. Had Paget's efforts with the King not paid off, the regiment had been prepared to accept Armentières as a poor second for its earliest Honour.

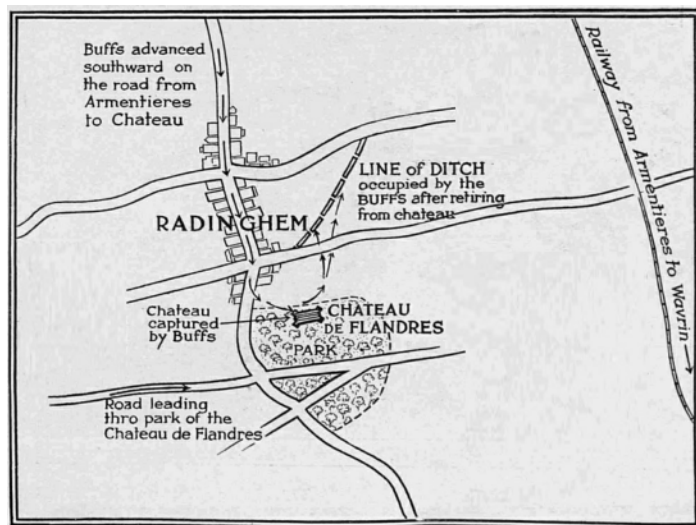
On arriving at Armentières on 16th October, the 6th Division had advanced south-westwards seeking to establish the limits of the German advance west of Lille. The 1st Buffs, as part of 16th Brigade, was on the Division's extreme right along with the 2nd Yorkshire and Lancashire Regiment (2Y&L). To the Brigade's left was 18th Brigade and, to its right,

French cavalry.

On the 18th October, The Buffs and 2Y&L passed through the village of Radinghem-en-Weppes. To the south of the village was high ground, covered in trees surrounding a large house known as the Château de Flandres. Continuing their advance, the Buffs and the 2Y&L came under shell, rifle and machine gun fire. They attacked and, after hand to hand fighting, the Buffs briefly took the Château before German counter-attacks pushed the two battalions back to Radinghem. By nightfall of the 18th October, The Buffs were digging-in on the



The situation for III Corps, on the 19th October (as shown in The Sphere, March 1915). Note Radinghem, with 16th Brigade and the 1st Buffs, on the Corps' left



Map based on illustration in The Sphere (March 1915), showing The Buffs' position on the evening of 18th October. The part played by 2Y&L was not included in the article and, consequently, the battalion is not shown on the map, but were to The Buffs' left. After they were withdrawn, The Buffs' line would have extended leftward

southern and eastern sides of Radinghem, with the Y&L on their right. The Buffs' forward units (B, C and D Companies) were commanded by Lt-Colonel Hasler, with A Company and Battalion Headquarters, under Lt Colonel Hill, back in Radinghem. During this time, Hill made contact with units from 18th Brigade holding the railway crossing on his left.

The Germans around the Château de Flandres were part of the German Sixth Army, a battle hardened formation that had been fighting since early August. Its job was to protect the left flank of the offensive being made by the Fourth Army seeking to capture Ypres and the Channel Ports. As this major attack was not scheduled until 20th October, from 16th Brigade's perspective, things were quiet during the day of the 19th. That evening, the 2Y&L were withdrawn, leaving The Buffs holding a two-battalion front with three companies. At 11pm on the 19th, the Germans began shelling the 18th Brigade on The Buffs' left: a bombardment that continued all night and, soon after dawn, was extended to The Buffs' positions. The artillery fire continued all morning, seriously wounding Colonel Hasler who was replaced, in command of the front line, by Major McDouall.

At 2pm, German infantry began advancing towards Radinghem, making inroads on The Buffs' left and right flanks. McDouall reported to HQ: "Situation very serious. Am holding on. No officers left, but Rice. Machine-guns knocked out." By 3.30, the Germans had got between C Company, on the left, and the rest of the line. In a further message, McDouall described his situation as "a tight corner". McDouall was mistaken when he said "No officers left"; Captain Chichester, commanding C Company, was still fighting but out of contact with McDouall. Chichester sent a runner back to Battalion HQ requesting permission to withdraw; Colonel Hill, recognising the overall danger, ordered McDouall to fall back by companies into Radinghem; at which McDouall replied somewhat uncertainly: "Very difficult but will do the best we can."

It is no great surprise to read McDouall's uneasiness around his companies' ability to extract themselves from their scratch trenches and move back into the village. British Infantry were well trained in fire and movement: rapid accurate fire that would suppress the capacity of enemy troops to fire in turn, whilst bodies of men rushed forward (on a good day). Prior to Radinghem, the 1st Buffs had been engaged in static trench warfare on the Aisne and had little experience of the practicalities of movement under machine-gun and artillery fire. Major McDouall's men were losing the fire fight: his machine-guns were



Artist-drawn postcard design depicting The Buffs' charging the German Troops attack during the storming of the Chateau de Flandres, Radinghem on 14th October 1914

out of action, his officers were dead, wounded or cut off. He was confident his men would do their best, but was not sure what this would amount to. As it happened, McDouall had worried unnecessarily: his men had worked their way back into Radinghem by 4.50pm. At this point, Brigadier Ingouville-Williams (known as Inky-Bill in the army) stepped in, ordering The Buffs to "hold on at any cost", promising to send back two companies of the 2Y&L.

The Buffs began digging in along the road from Radinghem to the railway-crossing east of Le Bas Champs Farm to stay in touch with 18th Brigade. At seven, the 2Y&L companies arrived followed, at half past, by the Brigadier himself. By this time 18th Brigade, and the French, on either side of Radinghem had withdrawn north of the village. Nevertheless, Ingouville-Williams emphasised his expectation that Radinghem be held, despite now being threatened from three sides. It is perhaps fortunate that, at 10pm, a Staff Officer from the 6th Division arrived with orders that 16th Brigade was to withdraw to a line two miles to the north. The Buffs spent much of the night moving back to Grande Flamengerie Farm, arriving at 4.30 the next morning.

So ends, what Colonel Moody' in his *Historical Records of The Buffs* calls, the "Action at Radinghem". Within a few days, 6th Division had withdrawn further and the 1st Buffs were digging in around Bois-Grenier between Radinghem and Armentières: a position they were to occupy until the end of May 1915. On the 18th October, after the advance towards Château de Flandres, The Buffs' casualties were 18 dead, 58 wounded and five missing. On the 21st, when the roll was next called back at Grande Flamengerie Farm, there was an additional 21 dead, 61 wounded and 62 missing. Today, 73 men from these three days, are recorded on the Ploegsteert Memorial as having no known graves.

The CWGC website says of the Ploegsteert Memorial:

“Most of those commemorated ... did not die in major offensives, such as those which took place around Ypres to the north, or Loos to the south. Most were killed in the course of the day-to-day trench warfare which characterised this part of the line, or in small scale set engagements, usually carried out in support of the major attacks taking place elsewhere”.

Radinghem, after all, was just another “small scale ... engagement[s] ... carried out in support of a major attack”. It may have been the regiment’s “first battle” but it was barely remembered by The Buffs themselves and, these days, is known mainly by family historians and Buffs and Yorkshire and Lancashire, obsessives. It is first, publically, mentioned in *The Sphere* in March 1915, spinning the story of British tenacity and claiming that The Buffs held Radinghem until 23rd October. A more accurate account is given by Colonel Moody, but looking in copies of the post-war *Dragon*, the contemporary record of regimental memory, I have been able to find few references to Radinghem.

The October 1921 edition mentions the anniversary of the fight and illustrates it with a photograph of the village. This provoked a rather larky letter in March 1922 from a Captain Hallam, the first part of which recalled his time there, as a sergeant: losing his greatcoat; nicking a roast chicken from a farmhouse; and taking the wounded Lieutenant Rice to the hospital. The bulk of the letter, however, is concerned with ragging old comrades from pre-war times. Most other references in *The Dragon* relate to men wounded at Radinghem who, on recovery, had been posted to other regiments and, in the post-war years, had popped back to Canterbury to give their best wishes to any who might remember them.

Alongside these accounts of “Happy Days!” and pleas of “do you remember me?”, there is one account from October 1934, which specifically refers to Radinghem. It describes a “combined holiday” organised by the London Branch of The Buffs’ Past and Present Association. This visited many places on the Western Front where The Buffs had fought during the war. The group was made up of old comrades and families, including widows, and the account in *The Dragon* shows how the event walked a complicated line between holiday, reunion and pilgrimage. At each location, an old soldier from the relevant battalion led the visit. In the case of Armentières and Radinghem this was “Mr. Hukins” who “gave us an idea of the fight at Radinghem, and how eventually the 1st Battalion came back to this spot. We

understand that Mademoiselle [sic] is no longer in residence at this world-famed town.” I am assuming the phrase “came back to this spot” refers to Armentières in 1914/15, as I can find no reference to the 1st Buffs in either location at a later time. Albert Hukins had been a Private with the 1st Buffs in 1914.

In *Between the Lines* No. 78, I wrote of a pilgrimage taken by two men, identified as M & R. in January 1921. They started on the Aisne and proceeded to Ypres, Armentières and Bois Grenier. Both men appear to be from the 1st Buffs and were probably at Radinghem, yet do not mention it. Beginning with the Aisne, they moved on to reminisce about the diversions of Armentières and life in the trenches around Bois Grenier, they pay homage to the 2nd Battalion at St Julien, but they make no mention of The Buffs’ first brief, costly battle, at Radinghem. It is not clear whether this was simply because, to them and their readers, Radinghem as just another “small scale ... engagement” that had disappeared into the jumbled memories of many fights during the war. Or did the start of M & R’s journey on the Aisne and the omission of Radinghem from the article, reflect The Buffs’ adamant position that the former was its first battle? □

John Drouot

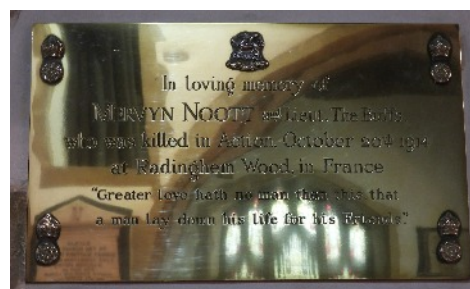
¹ Thanks to James Brazier for details of *The Sphere* article.

Editor’s Note

The Buffs’ Regimental History records that: *In this action at Radinghem on (20th October 1914), four officers were killed and three wounded. Of the rank and file, 17 were reported killed and 62 missing, but these were undoubtedly all, or nearly all, killed; 57 were wounded.*

The names of the Buffs who lost their lives at Radinghem (without known graves) are commemorated on the Ploegsteert Memorial to the Missing. Amongst those names are Pte Albert Masters and 2/Lt Mervyn Noott - both from St Peter-in-Thamet.

Both names are listed on the St Peter-in-Thamet War Memorial and are remembered on the following two pages. **JB**



The brass plaque in St Peter’s Church in memory of Mervyn Noott

Two of the Buffs who lost their lives at Radinghem on 20th October 1914

Pte Albert Masters was killed in action at Radinghem on 20th October 1914. He lived at Reading Street, St Peters-in-Thamet.

Albert Masters enlisted (Short Service - three years in the Regular Army and nine years in the Reserve) in The Buffs on 4th October 1902 at the age of 18. As a Reservist, he was called up on the outbreak of war. He was sent to re-join his battalion serving in Ireland and, subsequently, landed at St Nazaire on 7th September. On 4th October 1914, he was technically re-engaged in the Reserve Army. Just 16 days later, he was killed in action at Radinghem.



Pte Albert Masters' much-treasured next-of-kin memorial plaque and scroll - which still remain in the possession of his family descendants



◀ Pte Albert Arthur Masters,
1st Bn, The Buffs

▶ 2/Lt Mervyn Noott
1st Bn, The Buffs

Both men were killed in action at Radinghem on 20th October 1914 and both names are commemorated by the CWGC on the Ploegsteert Memorial to the Missing



1914 S. H. BLIGHT	Private.
R. H. BRENCHLEY	1st Class P.O.
J. J. GOODEY	Rifleman.
J. F. HORN	1st Class P.O.
F. KEMP	Private.
T. J. MILLER	1st Class P.O.
A. A. MASTERS	Private.
M. NOOTT	2nd Lieutenant
C. A. SETTERFIELD	1st Class Stoker.
1915 J. E. BRENCHLEY	Private.

The names on the St Peter-in-Thamet War Memorial are listed in alphabetical order within each year of the war. This photo of the first ten names on the memorial shows the names of Pte A. A. Masters and 2/Lt M. Noott who both fell at Radinghem on 20th October 1914 serving in the 1st Battalion, The Buffs (East Kent Regiment). Shockingly, three of the ten names shown here (R. H. Brenchley, J. F. Horn and T. J. Miller) perished on HMS *Cressy* and C. A. Setterfield on HMS *Aboukir* - all on 22nd September 1914. Furthermore, J. F. Horn was the brother-in-law of Albert Arthur Masters. The enormity of these losses in the first three months of the Great War on the population of St Peter's at the time can only be imagined today.



2/Lt Mervyn Noott, 1st Bn The Buffs, was amongst the many Buffs from east Kent who were killed in action at Radinghem on 20th October 1914. The East Window in St Peter-in-Thanet Church was gifted to the church in 1921 by Mrs Louisa Noott in memory of her son. He was aged 24.



Brass plaque in the church in remembrance of Louisa Noott of Upton Lodge who generously gifted the magnificent War Memorial East Window to the church



The East Window in memory of 2/Lt Mervyn Noott



Detail showing a sailor and a soldier

Detail showing a naval rating and an army officer



Detail showing a mother grieving at her son's grave

Why Lt Vernon Austin was interred at St Martin's Churchyard, Canterbury



The headstone at the grave of Vernon Austin in St Martin's Churchyard

Issue 74 of *Between the lines* contained a most interesting article by regular contributor Ed Holman on 2/Lt Vernon James Austin, RFA who was killed in action on 26 January 1915 at La Bassée and whose grave is in St Martin's Churchyard, Canterbury. Indeed, Vernon Austin was one of the very few whose bodies were repatriated before an embargo was placed on further repatriations by the Government in 1915. In his article, Ed wrote that Vernon

Austin was buried in St Martin's Churchyard at the specific request of his father, Sir Herbert Austin, founder of the Austin Motor Company. Ed also reported that Vernon Austin had attended the King's School Canterbury for a number of years before going into the Army.

It has puzzled me for a number of years just why Vernon Austin's father should have wanted his son to be buried in St Martin's Churchyard when the Austin family home was in Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. Was it, in some way, connected with Vernon's attendance at the King's School or was it for some other reason? I now think that I know the answer to that question although I might be wrong. No doubt, others with a greater knowledge than me will put me right.

At the outset, I must declare that my knowledge of religion is very limited despite being confirmed into the Church of England in 1953 (as I recall).

I knew that St Augustine had landed on the Isle of Thanet in 597 AD and that he is attributed with the bringing of Christianity to England. I also knew of the Venerable Bede whose *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (completed in 731 AD) told of the conversion to Christianity by St Augustine of the Anglo-Saxon tribes. I also knew of the St Augustine memorial cross at Ebbsfleet (near Minster-in-Thamet) which was erected in 1884 and, I had been led to believe, was in memory of the landing of St Augustine in 597 AD. I knew very little more about St Augustine but I soon found out that St Augustine had actually landed at Richborough - not Ebbsfleet!

I decided to find out what I could about both St Augustine and the memorial cross at Ebbsfleet in the hope that my research would lead me to the reason why Vernon Austin is buried in St Martin's churchyard.



◀ St Augustine's Cross, Ebbsfleet - erected in 1884 by the Earl of Granville to mark the spot where King Æthelbert met St Augustine and his monks in 597 AD. It is generally believed that St Augustine landed on the Isle of Thanet at Richborough (some two miles from Ebbsfleet) earlier that year - not at Ebbsfleet as some people now claim.

It is said that the Earl of Granville selected the site at Ebbsfleet because he operated both tea-rooms and lavender fields nearby making it a 'tourist spot' destination for horse-drawn brakes to visit!

I knew that Julius Caesar had first invaded Celtic Britain in 54 BC and that the Romans had again invaded Britain in 43 AD under Emperor Claudius landing with a large army at Richborough. Having recently visited Richborough Castle, I was also aware that the Romans had withdrawn from Britain in 410 AD. What I didn't know was that the Romans had first introduced Christianity to Britain during their period of occupation and that, once they had departed, the people of Britain largely returned to pagan Anglo-Saxons. Then, in 597 AD, Pope St Gregory the Great decided to send St Augustine from Rome, together with some 40 monks, to England to convert the pagan Anglo-Saxons to Christianity.

And that is where St Martin's Church enters the story for when St Augustine entered Canterbury that year, Christianity was already practised by the Kent Queen, Bertha (formerly a Frankish princess) in what was then an ancient Roman building, now St Martin's. After converting the Kent King, Æthelbert, St Augustine became the first Archbishop and created both a cathedral (on the site of what is now known as Canterbury Cathedral) and an abbey (originally known as St Peter and St Paul but now known as St Augustine's Abbey) at Canterbury. Roman Christianity then spread to Rochester, London and across England. It is because of its history that St Martin's Church is now regarded as Canterbury Cathedral's Mother Church. St Martin's Church is also the oldest parish church in the English-speaking world and has been designated a World Heritage Site. It is for these reasons why I believe that Vernon Austin was interred at St Martin's Churchyard at his father's request. But I could be wrong! □

The Story of the "Thanet" Ambulance and its Margate-born driver, Arthur Thomas Boulting



Photo of the "Thanet" motor ambulance showing the name of its coachbuilder 'Wright, Ramsgate'. According to newspaper reports, the outside of the ambulance was painted dark green



The Mayor of Ramsgate, Councillor J. W. Chapman, standing in front of the "Thanet" ambulance outside Ramsgate Fire Station in 1915. The driver of the ambulance - Arthur Boulting (wearing a Red Cross armband) can be seen on the left of the photo



Read the full remarkable story of the "Thanet" ambulance and its driver, Arthur Boulting, as told in newspaper reports, in the following pages

◀ A studio photo of Arthur Thomas Boulting of Margate, the driver of the "Thanet" ambulance. He is proudly holding his cap with goggles

THE "THANET'S" TOUR.

INSPECTION OF THE NEW MOTOR AMBULANCE.

The Thanet motor ambulance provided for service at the front by the people of the Island, made a tour of the towns in the division on Monday and was the subject of general admiration.

"The Thanet," the body of which was built by Mr. F. J. Wright, of Ramsgate, presents a very serviceable appearance, and is capable of accommodating eight "sitter" cases or four stretcher patients.

Painted a dark green outside, the ambulance bears emblazoned on either side in red and white the inscription, around a red cross, "British Red Cross Society—St. John's Ambulance Association," and beneath it the one word "Thanet." The red cross prominently displayed on other parts of the vehicle announces in unmistakable manner the mission of the car.

Built on a War Office pattern, the interior of the car is painted white and fitted with electric light for night work. A speaking tube affords communication with the driver and there is a communicating window of celluloid. Ample ventilation comes through the shutters at the head of the van. The motor, a 20 h.p. Vulcan, is also British made.

The driver is Private A. T. Boulting, of the British Red Cross, who came home to Margate from New South Wales two months ago in order to take his part in the war.

The car was expected to be on duty near the firing line this week.

The preliminary tour began at Ramsgate, the car being first on view at the Fire Station. When it left, the Mayor (Councillor J. W. Chapman) took his seat beside the driver and builder. Broadstairs and St. Peter's were afterwards visited, and the car was also inspected at Margate and other parts of the district.

AT MANSTON.

While at Ramsgate the short stay of the "Thanet" attracted comparatively little attention, at the village of Manston there was something in the nature of a reception for the vehicle when it arrived in the evening. The Mayor of Margate was in charge and the whole village turned out to view the Ambulance. The assembly included a great number of the schoolchildren, for whom Mr. W. Hawkins, headmaster, acted as spokesman. He welcomed the Mayor of Margate to the village and congratulated the Isle of Thanet on having provided such a serviceable vehicle for the ameliorative portion of the agony of war. He wished it success in its mission of mercy and thanked the Mayor of Margate for honouring the village with his presence.

At Manston the arrival of the Motor Ambulance was the event of the week.

From: The Thanet Advertiser, 16 October 1915

Courtesy of the British Newspaper Archive

The following newspaper reports - in chronological order - are from the British Newspaper Archive and tell the story of the "Thanet" ambulance and its driver, Arthur Boulting:

Copied from *The East Kent Times* 14 April 1915:

ISLE OF THANET MOTOR AMBULANCE

Dear Sir - We believe you will agree with us when we say that Thanet has every reason to be proud of the part it has played since the beginning of the war. The residents have subscribed liberally to the National Relief Fund and to the numerous local and other funds for the relief of distress, a large number of Belgian refugees and wounded have been hospitably accommodated and provided for, the Voluntary Aid Detachments of the British Red Cross Society have nobly done their share in connection with the British wounded, who have come under their care, and most important of all, the large number of recruits in His Majesty's Forces shows that the men of the Island have not been backward in responding to their country's call.

But yet there is more to be done, and another way in which we can all help is to provide and equip a motor ambulance for service at the Front, and we understand the War Office will welcome the gift. The cost will be £500.

At a meeting of the Mayors and Chairmen of the Local Authorities in Thanet it was unanimously decided to appeal to the generosity of the residents for funds for this purpose, the ambulance to be named "The Thanet".

To those of us, who, for various reasons are unable to join the fighting units, this appeal should come with irresistible force. Our gallant fellows are giving their lives in thousands for their country and for us. What can we do for them?

This is the one way in which we can do something, and we therefore confidently and earnestly appeal to the inhabitants of Thanet for funds to provide the "Thanet" motor ambulance, feeling sure that the object of our appeal, namely to assist in the alleviation of the sufferings of our gallant soldiers and Allies will meet with a generous and ready response. Subscriptions will be thankfully received and acknowledged by way of the undersigned.

We have the honour to be,

Yours very truly,
WILLIAM BOOTH REEVE
 Mayor of Margate
 J. W. CHAPMAN
 Mayor of Ramsgate

(Followed by the names of the Chairmen of the other local authorities in Thanet)

Editorial in *The East Kent Times* 14 April 1915

"THE THANET"

We hope the "Thanet" motor ambulance will arrive. We commend in that connection to our readers the appeal which appears in our columns to-day from the Mayors, and the Chairmen of the Councils of the Thanet towns. The movement will enable those who cannot help in other ways to contribute to a most necessary work. The proposal to equip a motor ambulance for service at the Front has, we understand, met with the approval of the War Office, and is such as must instantly appeal to the sympathy of Thanet. When one realises what the gallantry of the men means, this seems but a small return to make to them for all that we owe them. But it is something that we in Thanet can do. In addition to the fine work already associated here with the nursing of the wounded, "The Thanet" ambulance must be found for Thanet's reputation. We must not let the opportunity pass. Thanet must find her ambulance.



Alderman William Booth Reeve JP, Mayor of Margate 1910-1911 and 1913-1919 - oil-painting portrait by Westgate-on-Sea artist Grace Hawkins. In 1918, Alderman William Booth Reeve was awarded the MBE for his services to the people of Margate during the Great War. And in October 1920, he was made an Honorary Freeman of Margate 'in recognition of the eminent services rendered by him to the borough during his Mayoralty, 1913-1919'

Copied from *Isle of Thanet Gazette* 19 June 1915

THE "THANET" MOTOR AMBULANCE

SUCCESS OF THE APPEAL: AN EXCELLENT RESPONSE

A THANET DRIVER WANTED

The response to the appeal issued by the Mayors and the Chairmen of District and Parish Councils of Thanet for funds necessary for the equipment of a Thanet motor ambulance has met with a gratifying response. Between £500 and £600 have been raised. It will be recalled that towards the end of April an appeal was published in the columns of the *Isle of Thanet Gazette* bearing the signatures of the various Mayors and Chairmen of the authorities interested, asking for funds for the purpose of providing an efficiently equipped motor ambulance to bear the name "The Thanet". This endeavour to assist in the alleviation of the sufferings of our gallant soldiers and Allies has been responded to in spite of the multiplicity of appeals which are made to the generosity of the public in these strenuous days. The reply to the appeal of the Mayors and their colleagues brought prompt contributions, most of which have already been acknowledged in our columns.

We now learn that the funds in the hands of the Mayor are approximately as follows: Margate's contribution, £225; Ramsgate (per the Mayor, Councillor J. W. Chapman), £100; Broadstairs and St Peter's (per Dr F. E. Brightman, Chairman of the Urban District Council), £100; Minster (per Mr C. F. Kennett, Chairman of the Parish Council), £11 5s.; Monkton (per Mr H T. Willett, Chairman of the Parish Council), £6 3s. 6d.; St Nicholas (per Mr W. Broadley, Chairman of the Parish Council), £11 3. 6d; St Nicholas (per F. Marsh Smith, £6 0s. 6d.; St Lawrence Extra (per Mr W. Hawkins, Chairman of the Parish Council), £21; Garlinge (per Mr J. White, Chairman of the Parish Council), £12 16s. 3d.; Westgate-on-Sea (per Mr G. S. Chittenden, Chairman of the Parish Council), £74; Sarre (per Mr S Champion, Chairman of the Parish Council), £4 15s. 6d.

The Committee which has taken in hand the arrangements consists of the two Mayors and the various Chairmen of the other Councils in Thanet. Several meetings have been held, and now the necessary sum has been secured as a result of Press and personal appeals, a Sub-Committee was appointed to visit London and arrange with the Red Cross authorities for the supply of the ambulance car. The Sub-Committee, consisting of the Mayors of Margate and Ramsgate and the Chairman of the Urban District Council at Broadstairs, accordingly visited London on Tuesday to ascertain what were the requirements. As a result an order has been placed through the Red Cross Society

for a chassis, and it has been decided to invite Thanet coach-builders to submit tenders for the body of the vehicle, according to the specifications of the Society. Particulars in this respect may be obtained at the Offices of the Town Clerks of Margate and Ramsgate. It being desired that the ambulance car should be in every possible way associated with the Thanet people who have so generously contributed the necessary funds. It has been decided to employ as a driver a resident of the district who will be employed on terms approved by the Red Cross Society, i.e. at a salary of 35s. per week, with uniform and rations, but without compensation for injury or separation allowance. The driver must be a person who is approved by the Central authorities, and men seeking the position should make their applications to the Mayor of Margate.

From: *The East Kent Times* 10 November 1915

THANET AMBULANCE

NOW IN FRANCE

Mr A. T. Boulting, the driver of the Thanet motor ambulance has sent the following letter to the Mayor of Ramsgate. Thanet subscribers will take an interest in the doings of the car.

Mr Boulting writes:

Dear Mr Mayor, - Just a short note to let you know 'Thanet' is in France and doing duty. In a few days' time I hope to be on a convoy, so the car will then be doing the duty which the public would like, no doubt, to hear about, but am afraid I will have to wait till I come home again. I will enter in my diary each day a record of the car's doings, distance, number of wounded, etc., so that later on if anyone would care to read it they may. At present I am billeted, with a large number of drivers, in a warehouse, and consequently, there is plenty of fun; otherwise it is a dull place. I have been most anxious to move again. Still, as long as I get there and can do good I do not mind.

In regard to your letter, I think it is most kind of you. At present there is nothing that I require, but, from what I hear of drivers who are just back from convoy, a sleeping bag is a useful thing. Anyway, I will let you know later on.

As soon as there is any news to send you I will; but I might state that the reason the car has been delayed a short time is the design of the rims has been altered. Everyone passes the remark that they have not seen a better-finished car.

I am, yours obediently,

ARTHUR T. BOULTING

The Mayor of Ramsgate was J. W. Chapman, who can be seen in the photo of the "Thanet" ambulance on page 9

From: *The East Kent Times* 14 June 1916

THANET AMBULANCE IN FRANCE

DRIVER'S EXPERIENCES

Mr A. Boulting, driver of the Thanet Ambulance, now attached to the French Army, write home to his brother, Mr G. C. Boulting, of the Cinque Ports Hotel to say that last week he was exceptionally busy and was quite glad when the lull came.

As for himself, he says: *"I never felt better before and open-air life suits me A1. Of course when we get a lot of rain it is very uncomfortable, but the nature of the soil here a few hours after the rain has finished makes it quite dry again and then we get another treat - dust!"*

“When we meet some hundreds of cars in a few miles you can guess what the dust is like. In fact it has a funny side for you can hardly recognise anyone after a few miles driving behind a convoy - the eyes and beard being so thick with dust.”

“Night time is very difficult on the narrow roads with no lights, and we are glad to see 2:30 (a.m.) come, as it gets light then.”

Editor's Note:

It is almost certain that the “Thanet” ambulance was in service in the Verdun sector when Arthur Boulting wrote to *The East Kent Times* in both May and June 1916

▼ *Arthur Boulting is shown in the 1911 Census return (below) as a boarder at 5 St Paul's Road, Margate. Interestingly, his occupation is shown as 'Chauffeur'. When he went to France in 1915, he was around 27 years of age*

*Arthur Boulting's
entry in the 1911
Census* ►

From: *The Thanet Advertiser and Echo* 9 June 1917

THANET AMBULANCE DESTROYED

The Mayor of Margate notified the total destruction by shell fire on April 24th, of the Thanet Motor Ambulance and it was unanimously decided to endeavour to raise sufficient subscriptions for the provision of another ambulance to take its place.

From: *The East Kent Times* 13 June 1917

EDITORIAL

AMBULANCE FLAGS

To the credit of Councillor Langley, Ramsgate, lies the suggestion of holding a flag day throughout the district to raise funds to purchase a substitute for the "Thanet" ambulance car which was destroyed by hostile shell-fire in April. The suggestion at once commended itself to the members of the Council who were present at the meeting when it was made and although nothing definite was arranged, we feel that there is no doubt it will fructify. When such a cause is concerned there can be no hesitation in breaking the rule made by the Council of one flag day per month. The original car was provided principally through the initiative of the energetic Mayor of Margate, but the purchase money came from all the towns and villages in the island. The thought that the car might be instrumental in perhaps saving the life of one of their own relatives led many a person to subscribe, and it is certain that the same feeling will again predominate when the call is made. No one could wish for a better method of equalising contributions than by means of the sale of flags. Both well-to-do and poor alike can subscribe according to their means for there is no limit to the amount one can give for a flag. Few flag days will make a stronger appeal than one for this purpose, and the sooner it is arranged the better, for it will be generally felt that no time should be lost in sending "Thanet Ambulance No. 2" to the Front to carry on the good work undoubtedly done by the first. As far as Ramsgate is concerned, the Mayor, we take it, intends to put the matter in hand. Without doubt the Mayor of Margate will make arrangements to cover his borough, and we have no hesitation in making the surmise that the genial chairman of the Broadstairs and St Peter's Urban District Council will fall in with the suggestion that he should undertake the task in his district. As far as Westgate, Birchington, Minster and the outlying villages are concerned, there are ladies and gentlemen there who will be willing and eager to do all they can to help in the raising of the £700 considered to be necessary for the purchase of a new car worthy of Thanet.

From: *The Thanet Advertiser and Echo* 7 July 1917

The Thanet Ambulance

The public readily responded to the appeal issued some months ago, when it was proposed to send a Thanet Ambulance to the Front. That vehicle performed useful service during a brief career, cut short by the explosion of a shell. An attempt is now being made to provide a second car, also to be named the "Thanet", and there is no reason to believe the effort will fail. All branches of public life are interesting themselves in the movement, and though the pioneer work has come from Margate, none will begrudge the sister town the honour that attaches to the prompt effort made to replace the car blown to pieces in France.

From: *The Thanet Advertiser and Echo* 11 August 1917

THANET AMBULANCE

GENEROUS LOCAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

The following letter received from the Mayor denotes that Ramsgate is doing its full share in the provision to replace Thanet No. 1, destroyed by the enemy some months ago.

The Mayor writes:

May I crave the indulgence of a small space to express my thanks, on behalf of the Mayors and myself, to all who helped us in our desire to secure funds for the Thanet Ambulance No. 2. Everyone concerned must be extremely pleased with the result of the day's work, £70 1s. 7d. being obtained.

Thanks are due in particular to Miss Stancomb-Wills for her generous contribution of £50 and to Mrs Sebag-Montefiore for an equally welcome gift of £5. I would add that further contributions would be welcomed, as the expenses of providing the Ambulance car are very heavy. All contributions will be publicly acknowledged in due course. When all the sums received in the various collections are to hand I propose to submit a detailed statement of the amounts.

It would appear from the returns available that Ramsgate easily headed the list in the street collection.

*British Red Cross Society
tunic button as worn by
Arthur Boulting*



From: *The Thanet Advertiser and Echo* 16 March 1918

THANET'S HELP

The Mayor of Margate has received a letter from the Motor Ambulance Department, the British Red Cross Society, stating that the sum of £379 which has been collected for a second Thanet ambulance, was not sufficient for that purpose. He suggests, therefore, that the sum should be sent to the Transport of Wounded Fund, and that they should endow a motor ambulance, and place upon it an inscription to the effect that the car is being maintained by the people of Thanet.

The writer adds they are at present more urgently in need of funds for the maintenance of their large ambulance fleet than for the provision of new cars. He hopes, therefore, that Thanet can help them in this way.

Editor's Notes:

- (1) Presumably, the money collected was passed to the Transport of Wounded Fund as no newspaper report has been found confirming that action
- (2) Arthur Boulting married Jessie Frost in Thanet in the last quarter of 1916



Arthur Thomas Boulting (from Margate), driver of the "Thanet" Ambulance, proudly wearing his British Red Cross and the Order of St John of Jerusalem Association uniform

Surname	Boulting			10007 - OCT 1918	1595
Christian Names	Arthur Thomas			(Mr., Mrs. or Miss)	
Permanent Address :	33, Bromwell Road, Whitstable, Kent				
Certificate No.	5671	Age when engaged	27		
Date of Engagement	Oct 1918	Rank		Pay	35/-
Date of Termination	Dec 1918	Rank		Pay	11/- bones
Previous engagements under Joint War Committee, if any, and where					
SSA. 18		Dept. for References			
Honours awarded					
Character					

The British Red Cross Society (Motor Ambulance Department) record card for Arthur Boulting showing his dates of engagement (Oct 1918) and termination (Dec 1918) and his home address at Whitstable

The “Thanet” British Red Cross Society and St John Ambulance Association Ambulance



The Mayor of Ramsgate, Councillor J. W. Chapman, standing in front of the the “Thanet” Ambulance outside Ramsgate Fire Station in 1915. The driver of the ambulance - Arthur Boulting (wearing a Red Cross armband) can be seen on the left of the photo



For information on this particular crested china ambulance - see page 17



The British Red Cross Society Medal for War Service 1914-1918. Arthur Boulting would, almost certainly, have been awarded this medal for his war service



These two images show the interior of the “Thanet” Ambulance. The image on the left shows the ambulance’s four stretcher-supports folded and the step at the back of the ambulance in the ‘up’ position; and the image on the right shows the ambulance’s stretcher-supports ready for use and the step in the ‘down’ position



▲ The "Thanet" Ambulance before it went to France. The chassis was made by The Vulcan Motor & Engineering Co Ltd of Southport (Lancs) and the ambulance body was made Francis John Wraight, coachbuilder, whose works were at Eagle Hill, Ramsgate. The vehicle registration number is A1-RX (A1 was a London number and the RX might have signified 'Red Cross'). A different vehicle registration number would have been allocated to the vehicle when it went to France



Pervijze Diksmuidestraat – 30/07/1917 : met hun gemotoriseerde ambulance door het verwoeste dorp.

▲ The caption to the image that was on display at Pervyse at the Tentoonstelling 1914-1918 exhibition when the WFA (East Kent Branch) visited the exhibition during their 2010 battlefield Tour. This particular ambulance body was fitted to a Ford Model T chassis

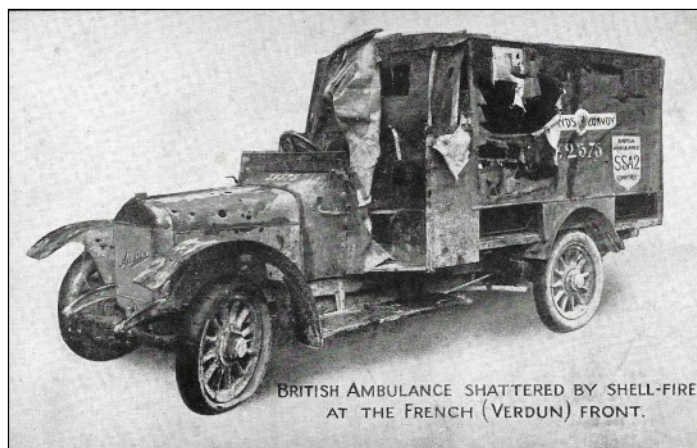


The notice board outside the Ten Berck (Church Square) building at Pervyse advertising a display of objects from 1914-1918 inside the building. The church is behind the notice board

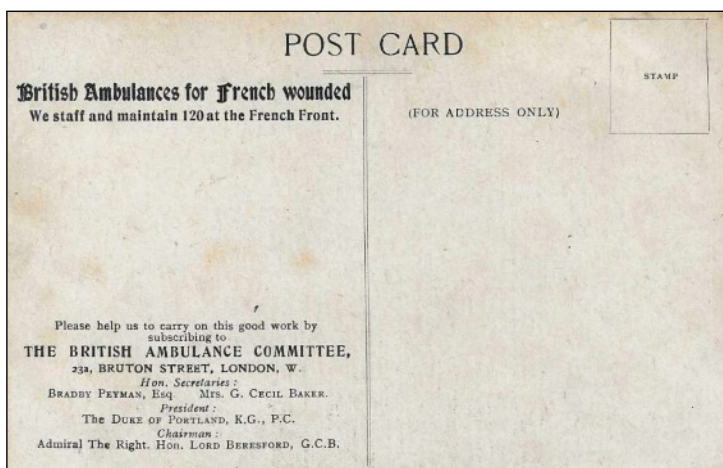


▲ This fine Matchbox "Model of Yesteryear" of a WWI British Red Cross and St John Ambulance Association ambulance based on a Renault A G chassis. This 1910 vehicle was originally a light commercial vehicle that was converted to serve as an ambulance during WWI. This model was produced in a limited edition by Matchbox International Limited in 1986

◀ This image showing Elsie Knocker and Mairi Chisholm seated in their ambulance at Pervyse was on display at Pervyse when the WFA (East Kent Branch) visited a most interesting display of WWI objects during their day-trip to Belgium in July 2010. The ambulance was the gift of the people of Sutton Coldfield



▲ A WWI fund-raising postcard showing a 'British Ambulance shattered by shell-fire at the French (Verdun) front'. On the side of the ambulance (made by the Austin Motor Co) can be read ...YDS CONVOY. Could it be that this particular ambulance was provided by Lloyd's (of London)?



The postcard was published by The British Ambulance Committee to raise funds to provide 'British Ambulances for French wounded'

More Crested China model Ambulances bearing local Coats-of-Arms



Bearing Ramsgate's Coat-of-Arms

These china models were manufactured in the Potteries during the Great War as souvenirs. It is believed that a number of these particular models were also sold to raise funds for the British Red Cross Society.



Bearing Ramsgate's Coat-of-Arms



Bearing Canterbury's Coat-of-Arms

The models illustrated on this page all bear Coats-of-Arms (or crests) of various towns in east Kent and would each have been sold in the town bearing the appropriate crest.



Bearing Canterbury's Coat-of-Arms



Bearing Dover's Coat-of-Arms

(See also the very fine Crested China model of the Red Cross Society & St John Ambulance Association Ambulance that was manufactured by Grafton China illustrated on page 15)



Two different sized models each bearing Margate's Coat-of-Arms



Display of model crested china ambulances including the rare very large model



Bearing Sandwich's Coat-of-Arms

Later advertisements and press reports relating to Arthur Boulting

**HIGH STREET MOTOR GARAGE
AND TAXI OFFICE,
19, High Street, Whitstable
(Over Home & Colonial). Garage at rear.
Arthur Boulting,
(Proprietor.)
TAXI FOR HIRE AT ALL HOURS.
REPAIRS, ETC.**

From: *The Whitstable Times* - 26 March 1921

Courtesy of the British Newspaper Archive

**HIGH STREET MOTOR GARAGE
AND TAXI OFFICE,
19, High Street, Whitstable
(Over Home & Colonial). Garage at rear.
Arthur Boulting,
(Sole Proprietor).
No connection with any other Firm.
TAXI FOR HIRE AT ALL HOURS.
REPAIRS, ETC.**

From: *The Whitstable Times* - 30 April 1921

Courtesy of the British Newspaper Archive

High Street Motor Garage,
Arthur Boulting, Proprietor
19 HIGH STREET, WHITSTABLE. Phone 67.

CHEAPEST PLACE FOR FISHING TACKLE.
Lines from 9d. Bait to order, and Boats arranged for.
Only Allcock's and Milward's of Redditch goods sold.

Cycle Tubes, 1/6. Covers, 6/6.
Repairs Quickly Executed at Cut Prices.
Compare my prices with Canterbury.
Cars for Hire and Daily Bus Service to Canterbury. Fare 6d.

From: *The Whitstable Times* - 8 September 1923

Courtesy of the British Newspaper Archive

Editor's Note:

1939 Register for England and Wales

In the 1939 Register, Arthur Boulting is shown living with his wife, Jessie Lydia and their 20-year-old son Arthur Frederick (whose occupation is shown 'Postman') at 57 Westmeads Road, Whitstable. Arthur Boulting's occupation is shown as 'Radio & Electrical Engineer'.

**THE WHITSTABLE AND DISTRICT ANGLING SOCIETY
SPECIAL COMPETITIONS IN AID OF
LOCAL PRISONERS OF WAR IN JAPAN**
WEDNESDAY, 25th JULY 1.30 to 5.30 Boats
SUNDAY, 29th JULY - 2.30 to 6.30 Boats
SUNDAY, 29th JULY - 2.30 to 6.30 Beach
SUNDAY, 29th JULY - 2.30 to 6.30 Beach
Under 16 years
Entrance Fee 2/- Boats 1/- Beach 6d. under 16 years
Open to Visitors.
1st Prize Heaviest Fish. 2nd Prize Heaviest Catch in each section
Please Enter Early to Hon. Sec., ARTHUR BOULTING, 3 Victoria Street.
If you cannot enter please give to the lady members out with the organ. We raised £110 last year, so help us to beat this, please.

From: *The Whitstable Times* - 21 July 1945

Courtesy of the British Newspaper Archive

Death of Mr. Arthur Boulting

LOSS TO ANGLING SOCIETY

We regret to record the death, which occurred on Saturday of Mr. Arthur Thomas Boulting, of 57, Westmeads Road, Whitstable, at the age of 61 years.

An extremely well known local resident, Mr Boulting was born at Margate and was the youngest son of the late Mr. C. J. Boulting.

In 1910 he went to Australia to work as a motor engineer, but returned to England on the outbreak of war in 1914, taking out to France, under Red Cross auspices, an ambulance subscribed for by the people of Thanet. He did a great deal of ambulance work in France and was eventually transferred to the French Army, with which he had been serving. He volunteered for Verdun and in recognition of his services was awarded the *Medaille Militaire*.

From: *The Whitstable Times* - 22 April 1950

Courtesy of the British Newspaper Archive

CARRYING ON!
Mrs. Boulting has asked us to state that she is carrying on the business of her late husband, Mr. Arthur Boulting, at 33, Harbour Street, Whitstable.

From: *The Whitstable Times* - 29 April 1950

Courtesy of the British Newspaper Archive

Arthur & Jessie Boulting - an epilogue

I found researching this story most interesting. I had no previous knowledge of the "Thanet" ambulance nor of its driver, Arthur Boulting. A chance finding of a photograph of the "Thanet" ambulance led me to discover the story of its driver, Arthur Boulting. By linking the two together and undertaking research on the British Newspaper Archive simply uncovered more and more information on this fascinating story. Finally, I found the two charming photos below of Arthur with his wife Jessie, on the web, making such a lovely couple.

Arthur Boulting died on 20 April 1950 aged 61 years and Jessie Boulting died on 18 April 1972 aged 80 years.

The whole story is very much east Kent related and I simply could not resist putting this rather lengthy article together in the hope that fellow members of the WFA East Kent Branch will similarly find it as interesting as I did.

There must be many other stories of local interest relating to the Great War just waiting to be told. □

JB



*Arthur & Jessie Boulting on the Promenade at Herne Bay
- April 1948*



*Arthur & Jessie Boulting on the Beach at Whitstable
- May 1948*



This group photo taken on Margate Sands in June 1919 (probably on the day that the Peace Agreement was signed - 28 June 1919) shows the Cinque Ports Hotel (as it was then known) behind at 50 Marine Terrace. At that time, the Cinque Ports Hotel was run by Mrs Boulting

Rachel and Steve's Aegean Adventure - July 2024

For our holiday this year, we decided to go on a cruise around the Aegean Sea. Having several previous cruises under our belts, neither of us had been to any of the ports on the itinerary and it promised to satisfy our thirst for historical sights and knowledge.

We sailed into Thessaloniki on a glorious hot day. In the morning, we had an excursion booked to visit the tomb of Philip II, father of Alexander the Great. The tomb itself was discovered intact and not looted in antiquity. They were comparing it to the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun. Our guide, an archaeologist herself, revelled in talking about the funeral rites of this civilisation. The grave goods were impressive: gold craftwork and armour among the artifacts to be seen.

We were back onboard our floating hotel at 1:30pm, had lunch and had a decision to make. With a blistering 38 degrees outside, do we make our planned trip to the CWGC cemetery? The one named Lembet Road Salonika Cemetery in Thessaloniki. Of course we do! We loaded with water - correction - Steve loaded his rucksack with water (like some pack mule), and we set off. An hour later we arrived. For those not familiar with this cemetery, it is multinational. Here we have a necropolis of Serbians, Italians and French and the CWGC at the back. Not sure how long we would be here for, as there was little to no breeze and the shade provided no respite from the heat, we headed to the CWGC plot, with 1,694 casualties, evidence of the 18 hospitals that were in this area.



Lembet Road Salonika CWGC

Right by the great cross we could not miss the impressive private gravestone of Katherine Harley. Killed at Monastir in 1917 and revered by the Serbian people. Katherine was born at Ripple, Deal, Kent and was a sister of Sir John French, Field Marshal, Commanded BEF 1914 to 1915, 1st Earl of Ypres. Before the war, she was married to an officer of The Buffs. Upon the outbreak of war, she joined The Scottish Womens' Hospital for foreign service as a nurse, being awarded the Croix de Guerre. In late 1915, she was transferred to Greece, where she

established a motorised ambulance unit attached to the Royal Serbian Army. At the end of 1916, she joined an independent ambulance unit based in Monastir, Serbia. It was here that she



Katherine Harley headstone

was killed by shellfire on 7th March 1917; she was over 60 years old. Her funeral was attended by General Milne, Commanding the British Forces in the Balkans and the Crown Prince of Serbia.

Then straight to the Stone of Remembrance as next to it is the cemetery register and visitors' book. There were lots of visitors recorded since 2022, we added our names to them. The Stone of Remembrance was interesting, not a solid block but made of several smaller blocks like a brick wall. With our respects paid and pictures taken, we moved to the French section totalling 8,089 casualties. These were stark cement crosses, not the normal French style crosses we see in France.

The Italian section was secured behind a wall of stone and iron. Nice private memorial to Commander of XXXV Division who also fell at Monastir. Also, a large, covered memorial dedicated to 479 unidentified Italian soldiers.

The main section of the cemetery is for the Serbians. Here there is an impressive Chapel with a crypt. There are rows of graves tended by the Cemetery Commandant. This man made himself known to us from his house on the site, and although we shared but a few words, he unlocked the door to the crypt so that we could descend the steps and pay our respects.

It was time to leave, we were consuming a lot of water and unsure of the route back. We said farewell to the Commandant and, thanking him, we set off down the road, heading back to the city centre.

Then something fortuitous happened. A passing taxi driver, who, slowed by the heavy city traffic, beckoned us over to him. Steve said that we were English and wanted to go to Mikra. Our driver knew few words of English. However, he invited us into the cab regardless. We would come to understand that a fare was a fare to him. Steve showed the driver where we wanted to go on Google Maps. It was 40 minutes



Lembet Road Salonika Chapel

away. The driver was still unsure of our requested destination. We had a request from our fellow branch members, Helen and George, to visit Mikra British Cemetery, but the Greek driver could not understand why we would want to go there. However, by luck, he said his daughter spoke fluent English and the driver called her and Steve was soon negotiating via his mobile phone with the driver's daughter. It was important that the driver would wait for us at the cemetery and take us back to the port. We had only two hours left before we sailed. Negotiations complete we set off through the traffic. Our new driver friend did not know of Canterbury, but knew Liverpool, Manchester, Stoke City and Norwich City. Probably all English football teams who had played there in recent years. Our driver could also multitask while driving, talking to us, programming his satnav using the details on Steve's mobile to get the destination details and giving his expert opinion of other drivers' skills with road vehicles.

Thessaloniki is Greece's second biggest city, and Mikra is one of its many suburbs. After 40 minutes of crawling through traffic, we arrived at another beautiful CWGC cemetery. We did not have long; Steve had negotiated 10 minutes.

We had done our homework; we knew where we needed to go in the cemetery. Fair play to our driver, he came into the cemetery with us. He pointed at a gravestone by the gate, and then occurred yet another uncanny moment that day, for our driver had pointed out a soldier of The Buffs. Among 1,966 headstones in that cemetery that he could have chosen from, he had commented on a local man from Faversham. A man of 2nd Bn The Buffs (East Kent Regiment) L/9427, Lance Corporal L. Hawkes who had died of pneumonia on 19th September 1918, aged 24.



Mikra British Cemetery

Surrounding the Great Cross in this cemetery was also a memorial wall. It had on it 478 casualties listed as missing. In particular, we were charged in taking a photo of those lost aboard a ship the *H T Marquette*. As we were standing there, Rachel recalled at this point that the sinking of this ship featured in an Australian television drama, called the *ANZAC Girls*.

The *HT Marquette* had been carrying troops and nurses to Thessaloniki when it was sunk by a torpedo on 23rd October 1915. 167 souls were lost in the sinking including 10 nurses of the New Zealand Army Nursing Service. The sinking prompted the New Zealand Government to request that nursing personnel should be transported on marked Hospital Ships going forward and not troopships.

We took our pictures and signed the visitors' book. Our driver was getting itchy feet, he was back in his taxi; we were keen to get back to our ship too. Traffic was heavy, it was rush hour. It transpired that all the buses were on strike that day in Thessaloniki. Taxis were busy. So, with Rachel and me in the back, he picks up another passenger who happens to be going in our direction on the way back to the port.



Buffs Casualty Mikra (CWGC)

This passenger, sitting in the front seat. No sooner had this lady been dropped off, our driver picks up another fare. As we saw, a fare was a fare to him. We arrived back at the port with 45 minutes to spare. It was time for a shower and a cool refreshment to recognise a big effort



Memorial Wall at Mikra CWGC

in the now 40 degree heat.

Our next port of calling was Volos, another Greek port. We had an excursion booked here and was not expecting anything but a nice walk amongst some picturesque Greek villages. However, this time the Greek guides held a national strike, and we were left to our own devices. A quick check on CWGC website followed and we were off to the local cemetery. Our mission to pay our respects to 17 men of the Royal Marines who were killed aboard HMS *Devonshire* in a gun explosion in 1929.

It was hot again, high thirties. The cemetery was located after an hour's travel. It was the city's old cemetery. The main entrance and immediate gravestones were in a reasonable state, but the men we sought were not here, they were against the back wall. As we walked to find them, the cemetery took a turn for the worse. Graves poorly maintained, crypt doors open, graves



Volos Memorial

smashed. It did not look promising especially when Steve found what appeared to be a white, bleached forearm bone just laying on the path. Luckily, the men we sought were found to be protected behind a walled enclosure of their own. The headstones were in good order and a memorial to their tragic end was also there. We were pleased that this enclosure had been respected despite the carnage around it. On the floor we found face down a plaque that had fallen off the wall where it appeared to have been stuck with double-sided tape. The plaque had been laid by the Royal Marines Association. Steve cleaned it off and propped it up against the memorial.

HMS *Devonshire* was a light cruiser and had been completed in March 1929. She was deployed to the Mediterranean and, along with other ships, was taking

part in a live firing exercise in the Aegean on 26th July 1929. A faulty breach led to an explosion in "X" turret killing instantly or severely wounding the Royal Marines manning it. The ship made for the nearest port, Volos, where the hospital ship *Maine* was waiting. Unfortunately, 17 Royal Marines died and were buried in Volos Cemetery. Captain J. A. Bath DSC has a private headstone memorial, the remainder having standard CWGC headstones with the shoulders cut out.

As an aside, Captain Bath was awarded his DSC for actions aboard HMS *Suffolk* in 1918. At the time, his ship was stationed in Vladivostok and was supporting actions on the Ussuri River against the Bolsheviks.

HMS *Devonshire* was repaired, and afterwards served in the Second World War. Notably, she evacuated the Norwegian Royal Family in June 1940 after Norway was invaded.



Volos Devonshire Plot

We were not expecting to find anymore connection to the Great War on the rest of our trip. However, at the next port, Steve went off to have a guided tour of the ancient city of Ephesus. As part of the tour, the group visited the nearby holy shrine of The House of Mary. There, Steve was told about out two bronze statues of Mary, about three feet high, that were present at the shrine. The statue within the shrine had been cast with the hands made of gold. The shrine had been looted during the Great War by persons unknown. Both statues were found in a nearby field after the war, but one minus the gold hands. The statues were put back, but no replacement hands were ever made. Today, miniatures of the statues are sold in their gift-shop - without any hands.

On the last day of our cruise, we made the port of Heraklion on Crete. We visited the palace at Knossos and heard stories of the Minoan civilisation and the mythical Minotaur. We then had a guided tour of the archaeological museum which, with our guide, was very interesting. All too soon though our holiday was over, but we had had an adventure. □

Rachel Wilsdon and Steve Ifield

More photos from the archive



◀ David Cohen (on right) - then WFA Chairman and James Brazier - then WFA Treasurer - who together laid a WFA wreath at the WFA Passchendaele Memorial Plaque on the first anniversary of the unveiling of the plaque at Passchendaele in 1989

- 25th September 1989

Photo: Sue Brazier

► The scene at the unveiling and dedication by John Terraine of the WFA Memorial Plaque at Passchendaele - 25th September 1988

A report on the occasion was published in WFA Bulletin No. 22 (October 1988)



Future meetings:

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month at The Hall, St Andrews United Reformed Church, Watling Street, Canterbury CT1 2UA

7:30pm start (hall open from 7:00pm)

2024

August - no meeting

3 September

Phil Sutcliffe: 'The Somme: April - September 1916 through the eyes of a foot soldier'

1 October

Peter Hodgkinson: 'The 4th Army in the Battle of the Selle, 17-31 October 1918'

5 November

Viv Newman: 'Regina Diana - seductress, singer & spy'

3 December

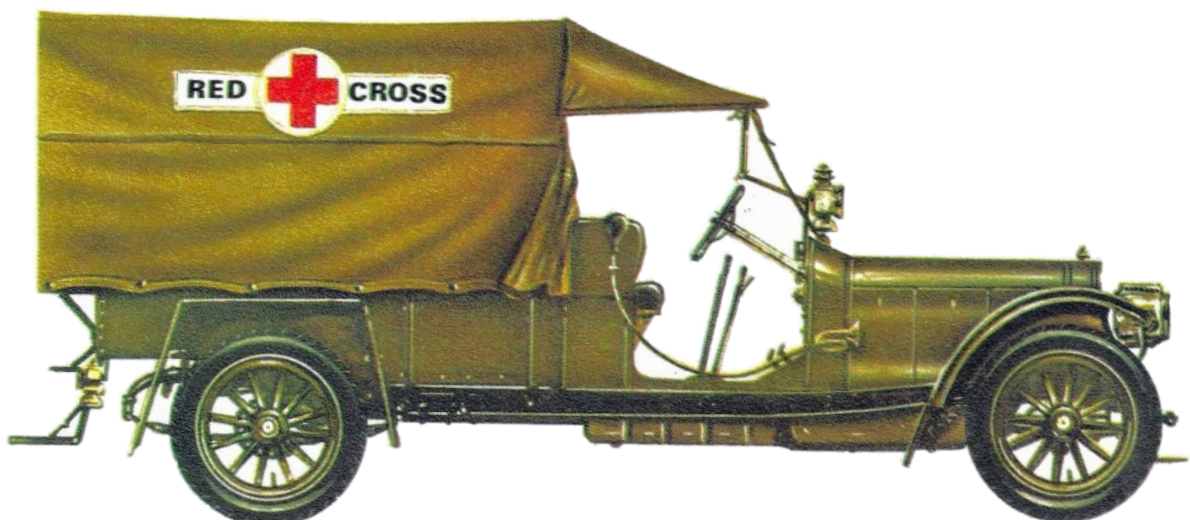
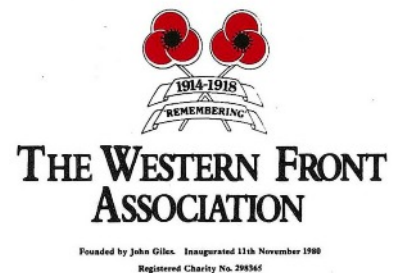
Mark Connelly: 'Not so silent nights: the 1914 Christmas Truce'

All are welcome

WFA branches are entirely self-supporting. A donation towards the expenses of the meeting is very much appreciated

For further details, please contact:

Hazel Basford



A Delaunay-Belleville ambulance built for service with the British Red Cross in 1916