



# The Spire Sentinel



**The Newsletter  
of The  
Branch of The  
Front**



**& Magazine  
Chesterfield  
Western  
Association**

**ISSUE 108 - February 2025**

Our aims are 'Remembrance and Sharing the History of the  
Great War'.



## Western Front Association Chesterfield Branch – Meetings 2025

Meetings start at 7.30pm and take place at the Labour Club, Unity House, Saltergate, Chesterfield S40 1NF

January	7th	. AGM + <i>'Quintinshill 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1915 - Britain`s Worst Railway Disaster`</i> Grant Cullen. <b>Meeting Cancelled</b>
February	4th	<b>AGM + Villages at War - Clowne and Barlborough in World War 1</b> by Paul Burkitt.
March	4th	Andrea Heatherington - <b>"Scamps in Khaki"</b> - <i>criminal deserters'</i> Deserters sometimes turned to crime to support themselves whilst on the run.
April	1st	<b>The Enemy Within</b> by Tim Lynch looks at German military and civilian prisoners in Britain during WW1 and about how immigrants of German descent coped when war broke out.
May	6th	<b>"Combat motivation and morale in British Empire armies in the two world wars' "</b> by Prof. Gary Sheffield
June	3rd	<b>The Zeppelin Raids on Sheffield and Nottingham</b> by Ian Castle
July	1st	<b>Jutland - Clash of Titans</b> by Scott Lindgren
August	5th	Roy Larkin - topic to be confirmed
September	2nd	<b>'Motorcycle Despatch Riders In 1914'</b> by Nick Shelley. Nick describes the motorcyclists' contribution to the 1914 campaign, using their own words and their own previously unpublished photographs.
October	7th	<b>After Kut - What ?.</b> Tony Bolton
November	4th	<b>Peter Hart</b> topic to be confirmed
December	2nd	<b>An Historians Wrongful Assumption ?</b> - a short look at Sniping and how it developed in World War One. By Morris Charlton

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*Any opinions expressed in this Newsletter / Magazine are not necessarily those of the Western Front Association, Chesterfield Branch, in particular, or the Western Front Association in general*

### **February Meeting - Barlborough and Clowne - Villages at War** By Paul Burkitt



In 2014 Barlborough Heritage Centre researched all the men from the parish who fought in WW1 and produced a booklet called 'Barlborough Heroes - Great War 1914 - 1918'. The families histories of the men has been completed over the last few years.



In 2023 Clowne Local History Society published a booklet - 'Clowne at War - World War 1' on the 105 men on the Clowne War Memorial who were killed in WW1, based on the research of Rita Mellor and help from Barlborough Heritage Centre.

The talk will focus on the research carried out, some of the fascinating family history stories and how the Western Front Association helped in verifying the details.



## *Secretary`s Scribbles*

*Dear Members and Friends,*

Welcome to issue 108 of our newsletter.

As you know after giving it much thought, Jane, Jon-Paul and I very reluctantly made the decision to cancel the January meeting due to the poor weather - snow, ice, flooding in places...and treacherous underfoot conditions being the reason. Having fallen on black ice towards the end

of November, I can (painfully) vouch for the latter. Many of our regular attendees travel from outwith the Chesterfield district and we also gave consideration to their potential reluctance to travel.

The Branch AGM will now take place at the start of our meeting on February 4<sup>th</sup>. Jane will present for the accounts ending December 2024. This will show the Branch being in a good financial situation - hence our ability to fund outings and the December meeting buffet. This would not be possible without YOUR support, particularly the regular attendees at Branch meetings. The raffle is a great way of boosting funds and we thank those who continue to donate books for the prizes.

What is also noticeable is the fact that our attendances have never got back to pre-covid levels....but we also have to face up to the fact that we have an ageing membership with greater propensity to ill health and in some sad cases, their passing, we remember Roger Avill, an ever present until January of last year - and a great personal friend of mine - who died several months later.

To try and reverse this trend of diminishing attendances, on two occasions during the last three years, I have written to all Secondary Schools in Chesterfield and District inviting their senior pupils - and staff - to attend our meetings , with no admission donation required from those still at school. I did not receive a SINGLE reply - not even an acknowledgement of receipt of my e mail from ANY of the schools I contacted. A poor show...very disappointing.

There is one member who I believe deserves special mention - Mark Macartney. Mark hasn`t been able to attend meetings for several years now but - my goodness - the work he does on behalf of the Branch is remarkable. Mark is admin for the Branch Facebook page and makes sure it`s always up to date. He also makes sure all Branch meetings - including details of the speakers, topics etc - are given full coverage on the main Western Front Association website. Mark is WFA Branded Goods Trustee (more about this later in this Newsletter) and each year takes responsibility for sending out the WFA Calendars to Branches and individuals worldwide....I understand that out of 1200 calendars he received for distribution last year he has

only about 70 left. A noteworthy effort that doesn't always get the recognition deserved.

Our February meeting sees Paul Burkitt making his speaking debut at the Branch with a talk with a bit of a local flavour - 'Villages at War - Clowne and Barlborough in The Great War'. Hopefully members of the respective villages historical societies will come along to support Paul.

The March meeting will also have a 'debutant' speaker - Andrea Hetherington - "Scamps in Khaki". Andrea will be speaking on how deserters sometimes turned to crime to support themselves whilst on the run. This talk looks at the ranks of fraudsters, thieves and murderers on the home front

Originally from the North East of England, Andrea has a particular interest in the social history of the First World War. Her own great grandfather was with the 180<sup>th</sup> Tunnelling Company and is buried somewhere near Givenchy. Based in Leeds, Andrea combines a career as a part-time criminal defence solicitor with that of an increasingly full-time historian.

Andrea is the author of three books on the First World War - *Lawnswood's Great War Stories* (Friends of Lawnswood Cemetery, 2015), *Britain's First World War Widows - the Forgotten Legion* (Pen and Sword, 2018) and *Deserters of the First World War - the Home Front* (Pen and Sword, 2021). She has also contributed chapters to several anthologies.

Andrea has provided consultancy services to a number of Great War commemorative projects and conducted research for several strands of BBC programming. She is a regular speaker at a wide range of venues from academic conferences to family history societies.

I hope to see as many of you as possible on Tuesday...will be good to get back having missed the December meeting through health issues and , of the course the cancelled January meeting.

I'm always looking for contributions to this Newsletter / Magazine - here's my contact details

[grantcullen@hotmail.com](mailto:grantcullen@hotmail.com)... Or if you use gmail please use this e-address [tgculen1952@gmail.com](mailto:tgculen1952@gmail.com) . I always available on the phone - 07824628638

February 12<sup>th</sup> is going to be a busy day for me at 10am I will be giving a talk / presentation to Ripon Probus Group 'Steaming to the Front - Britain's Railways in world War One and this will be followed that evening with the presentation 'Women Won the War' to Mansfield Inner Wheel Group .

Best wishes,

Grant

## *Development and Background to WFA Branded Goods Availability and Sales*

### *A review by Mark Macartney*

The last time “Branded Goods” (then known as WFA Commodities) were advertised as to their availability was in WFA magazine `Bulletin` issue 93 dated July 2012, and since Fiona McGrath ceased to carry out the function of sales coordinator in late 2013 it has not been able to purchase clothing etc. In early 2014 made contact with various WFA Trustees about this situation and subsequently, at their request made a list of suggested items .

While attending a WFA seminar at Milton Keynes in September 2014 I had a chat with Jane Backhouse ( the then assistant WFA Honorary Secretary) about the situation, (offering my involvement and assistance if required.) Soon afterwards I had an Email from Jane stating that she had passed up my comments and interest to the new Chairman (Bob Patterson) and he was interested in my offer of assistance and he would get in touch with me, which he subsequently did explaining that the intention was now not to hold stock but look at buying direct from the supplier on a as and when required basis, and we should start off with a very limited number of items,

I then as requested gave the Chairman a suggested list of items which was passed to the Trustees, whilst during this time a survey had gone out asking members what they felt were the items that they would be interested in purchasing. The top 5 in the league table revealed the following items: Polo shirts, Mugs, Ties, T-shirts and Rugby shirts. It was decided that Colin Wagstaff (then WFA Vice Chairman) would be the Trustee in charge of this. Prior to all this, although I had shown an interest in assisting, an official appeal had gone out in the Bulletin and various Newsletters asking for volunteers to assist in this. As I was the only volunteer it was decided that I would take the leading role in the re-launch of selling a small, tight range of WFA Branded Merchandise. After talking to Colin Wagstaff it was decided to start with Sweatshirts, polo shirts, and t-shirts, and possibly also look at ties, lapel badges and Mugs (and I should just look at the Sweatshirts, polo's & t-shirts initially) I was asked if we could go for French Navy Blue colour if possible. I subsequently contacted five suppliers, one firm did not respond, one could not do with the required logo, one would only do with a minimum order of 12, the fourth supplier could supply but cost was unacceptable and did not do the required colour. That left me with West Coast Embroidery in Liverpool, who fulfilled all our requirements and agreed on every question I put their way, so it was decided that the clothing would sell at £16 for a sweatshirt, Polo's for £15 and £13 for t-shirts. This is inclusive of postage. I have gone for quality and type of material opposed to low cost. The first time I had any “Branded Goods” on display was at WFA AGM at on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2015 at Salford University, Since then I have tried to have a display at as many Events that I could attend, Including the Presidents Conferences at Tally Ho in Birmingham.

I also looked at the opportunity of acquiring tea and coffee mugs, and it was agreed that we would need to hold stock of these following my suggestion.

I contacted six suppliers, responses are as under: from the suppliers,  
(No1) would only do a minimum of an order for 72 mugs,  
(No 2) on a par with the (No 6) but wanted a set up cost of £25 plus £15 postage plus VAT and a minimum order of 36 mugs.  
(No3) Did not respond  
No 4) On a par with (No 6) but VAT and postage would need adding  
No 5) Again on a par with (No 6 but again postage and VAT would have had to be added.  
No 6) This is the supplier I went with (Transform Images in Retford, Nottinghamshire).....why ?

They are local so I can personally sort out any problems.  
Price is very reasonable & Inclusive of VAT  
Owner will deliver free of charge. (to me)

So Mugs are now (and still) selling at £10 (including postage) or if bought at a venue (£7) I have since changed to Iron Tree Designs in Retford who do for the same price, but do a maximum of 36. (so the price has not changed since 2015.

Lapel Badges David Tattersfield our Development Trustee made the arrangements for having Lapel Badges produced, these I am now holding stock of and sell at £3.00 each (including postage) and are available on the E-shop or at Events venues

I then proceeded to have ties produced, which sells well. From info as stated above the very limited number of items has now expanded immensely and is detailed under:

**Mark Macartney**  
**Branded Goods Trustee 25<sup>th</sup> January 2025**  
**Branded Clothing**

CLOTHING IS SUPPLIED FROM A THIRD PARTY (and not directly from The Western Front Association) (full details on each specific item). Purchasers must state that you are part of the Western Front Association. Order direct from the supplier by Email, Telephone, or Post (details below). State that you are part of the Western Front Association,

West Coast Workwear, Unit 95a, Tulketh Street, Southport, PR8 1AW  
0800 169 2228 or 01704 873301 [sales@westcoastworkwear.co.uk](mailto:sales@westcoastworkwear.co.uk)

## Extract from Bulletin 93 dated July 2012

The Western Front Association *Bulletin* 93

July 2012

**WFA NEW  
BRANDED STOCK  
NOW AVAILABLE**

THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION  
**MAPPING THE FRONT**  
In association with  
the Imperial War Museum

**Ypres**  
British mapping 1914 - 1918

**Gallipoli**  
Military mapping 1914 - 1918

**General Haig's Maps-1**  
British mapping 1914 - 1918

**Somme** Southern 57C & 57D  
British mapping 1914 - 1918

**Official History of the War**  
British mapping 1914 - 1918

**Polo Shirts, Rugby Shirts,  
Oxford Shirts, Ties, Lapel badges,  
Tie bars (boxed or loose),  
Cuff links (boxed or loose),  
Binders for Stand To and the Bulletin,  
Mapping the Front DVDs**

**WFA Commodities**  
after 6pm please [redacted]  
Now available online  
[www.westernfrontassociation.com/wfa-commodities-buy-online.html](http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/wfa-commodities-buy-online.html)  
Payment only by card or cheque is acceptable

### Branded Clothing (2015 to date Dec 2024) (7 Items)

Supplied by West Coast Workwear, previously named West Coast Embroidery (Breathable Jacket, Rugby Shirt, Fleece, T-Shirt, Sweatshirt, Polo Shirt, & Oxford Shirt)

West Coast Workwear now wish to give up the work as they are not making enough profit on the deal on Royalties set.



Breathable Jacket



Rugby Shirt



Fleece



T-Shirt



Sweatshirt



Polo Shirt



Oxford Shirt

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**The Western Front Association  
West Coast Workwear Report  
Sales quantities  
(TOTAL Sales (2015-2024))**

Code No	Item Name	Record of Sales (West Coast Workwear)										Grand Total per Item sold
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
569M	Russell Classic Cotton Polo Shirt	32	28	7	9	8	9	7	30	2	12	144
762M	Russell Jerzees Sweatshirt	29	21	5	5	1	1	2	5	5	3	77
215M	Russell Classic Cotton t-shirt	9	10	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	1	24
RG122	Regatta Fleece Jacket	Not Avail	18	5	6	4	5	0	3	1	0	42
FR100	Front Row Rugby Shirt	Not Avail	11	5	3	1	1	2	5	1	4	33
510M	Russell Breathable Jacket	Not Avail	8	3	4	2	1	2	1	0	0	21
K109	Kustom Kit Short Sleeve Corporate Oxford Shirt	Not Avail	1	2	1	0	0	1	6	0	1	12
569F	Russell Ladies Polo Shirt	0	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
SS18	FOTL Ladies Sweatshirt	0	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	5
155F	Russell Ladies Slim t-shirt	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
RG122	Regatta Ladies Fleece Jacket	Not Avail	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	8
FR101	Front Row Ladies Rugby Shirt	Not Avail	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	3
510F	Russell Ladies Breathable Jacket	Not Avail	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
K701	Kustom Kit Ladies Short Sleeve Corporate Oxford Shirt	Not Avail	Not Avail	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
X	<b>GRAND TOTAL PER YEAR (Royalties)</b>	<b>70</b> £144.63	<b>109</b> £193.61	<b>31</b> £71.00	<b>31</b> £71.95	<b>17</b> £38.86	<b>18</b> £41.00	<b>16</b> £35.43	<b>52</b> £108.34	<b>9</b> £18.77	<b>24</b> £49.44	<b>377</b> £773.03
<b>GRAND TOTAL (376) Royalties £773.03</b>		<b>Grand total of items sold (2015-2024) = 376</b>										<b>Royalty £773.03</b>
Polo Shirt <b>149</b> <b>£287.27</b>												

Sweatshirt	82	£159.00		
t-shirt	26	£55.06		
Fleece Jacket	50	£116.22		
Rugby Shirt	36	£71.48		
Breathable Jkt	21	£56.80		
Oxford Shirt	12	£27.20		

## **BRANDED ITEMS Purchased/sold as up as @ 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024**

### **(a) Branded Items (Non clothing) Items Purchases from Trade (8889)**

(Mugs 244, Badges 7000, Ties 211, Caps 160, Bookmarks 200, Messenger bags 49, Despatch Bags 23, Shoulder Bags 24, Mousemats 400, Magnets 100, Mugs (2018) 108, Coasters (2018) 100, Coasters (2020) 270)

(Bottom Row Sold out) 1980/1920 Relating)





**The Western Front Association  
Branded Items (Non clothing)  
Orders and Sales ~~Quantity~~ Purchases from Trade (2015-2024)**

Item Name	Record of (Purchases)												Grand Total per Trade Purchase Item
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025		
MUGS	50 (Nov) 50 (Aug)	36 (Jun)		36 (Dec)			36 (Apr)				36 (Nov)		244
Lapel Badges	1000 (Jul) 1000 (Oct)		1000 (Feb)	1000 (Nov)		1000 (May)	2000 (Apr)						7000
Ties Classic/Logo	106 (Oct)			55 (Nov)					50 (May)				106-105
Baseball Caps		30 (Feb)		30 (Mar)		100 (Aug)							160
Bookmarks		100 (Jun)				100 (Oct)							200
Messenger Bags		6 (Jul) 6 (Aug)	6 (Apr) 6 (Jun)	6 (Jan)	6 (Nov)		6 (Apr)		7 (Mar)				49
Despatch Bags							5 (Apr) 6 (Nov)	6 (Apr)	6 (Feb)				23
Shoulder Bags		6 (Nov)	6 (Apr)	6 (Jan)					6 (Aug)				24
Mousemats						Feb Jul Oct Nov 200							400
Fridge Magnets							50 (Jan)	50 (Jan)					100
Mugs (BTTW- (Centenary) Special 2018				108 (Mar)									108
Coasters (Centenary) Special 2018				100 (Jun)									100
Coasters (40 Years) Special 2020						Jan Jun Nov 270							270
<b>X</b> GRAND TOTAL of Purchases	2206	184	1018	1341	6	1870	2103	<b>62</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>36</b>			<b>8889</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL (8889)</b>	<b>Grand total of items Purchased (2015-2024) = 8889</b>												
Mugs 244 Badges 7000 Ties 211 Caps 160 B'marks 200 Mess' Bags 49 Desp' Bags 23	Shoulder Bag 24 Mousemats 400 Magnets 100 Mugs 2018 108 Coasters 2018 100 Coasters 2020 270												

As you know I was due to make the presentation `Britain`s Worst Railway Disaster - Quintinshill - 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1915 at the January meeting, which , of course did not take place. This talk is based on a series of 12 articles I am writing on the Caledonian Railway in WW1 for the magazine `The True Line, the journal of the Caledonian Railway Association.

Here`s the article on Quintinshill.....

## **The Caledonian Railway in the Great War 1914-1919 <sup>1</sup>**

By Grant Cullen

### **Part 4**

## **The Disaster at Quintinshill May 22<sup>nd</sup> 1915**

This disaster, the worst accident in the history of Britain`s railways has been covered extensively in the literature over the years not least the excellent article in TTL 128 (April 2015) and other issues. This article does not seek to bring forth new evidence but the events of May 22<sup>nd</sup> 1915 and their aftermath are an integral part of the story of the Caledonian Railway in World War One and are therefore a significant part of this series.

In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, managing the movement of trains is simple in theory: one signal box would contact the next signal box to ask permission to send (or 'offer') a train; the principle being that only one train was allowed on the stretch of track between signal boxes at a time. If clear, then the train could proceed uninterrupted. If the track was not clear, or if there was a faster or higher priority train coming behind the current one, then the train could wait in a loop until the line ahead was clear. There were occasions when it was necessary, such as when the loops were occupied, to perform 'wrong line' shunting (transferring a train onto the opposite running line to permit another to pass).

At the time of the accident, normal northbound traffic through the section included two overnight sleeping cars expresses from London to Glasgow and Edinburgh, respectively, which were due to depart Carlisle at 5.50 am and 6.05 am. They were to be followed by an all-stations local passenger service from Carlisle to Beattock, which was advertised in the public timetable as departing Carlisle at 6.10 am but which normally departed at 6.17 am. If the sleepers ran late, the local service could not be held back to depart from Carlisle after them because precedence would then need to be given to the scheduled departure of rival companies' express trains at 6.30 am and 6.35 am. Also, any late running of the local train would cause knock-on delays to a Moffat to Glasgow and Edinburgh commuter service, with which the stopper connected

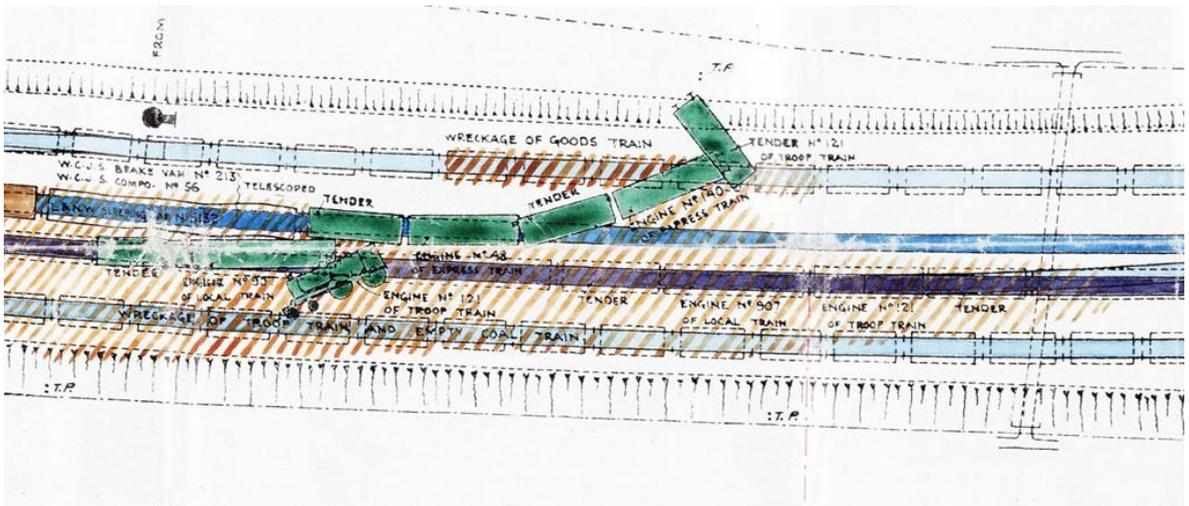
at Beattock. Therefore, in the event of one or both of the sleepers running late, the stopping train would depart at its advertised time of 6.10 am, and then be shunted at one of the intermediate stations or signal boxes to allow the sleeper(s) to overtake it. On that morning the local train comprised just three carriages and a milk van. The train's locomotive was No. 907 of the CR 903 class which was damaged beyond repair in the accident.

Responsibility for Quintinshill signal box rested with the stationmaster at Gretna railway station who, on the day of the accident, was Alexander Thorburn. The box was staffed by one signaller, on a shift system. In the mornings, a night-shift signaller would be relieved by the early-shift signaller at 6.00 am. On the day of the disaster, George Meakin was the night signaller, while James Tinsley was to work the early day shift.

At Gretna junction, just south of Quintinshill, the local train stopped and picked up (against regulations) the signaller, James Tinsley, who was about to start his shift at the Quintinshill signal box. He and his fellow signaller, George Meakin, had come to an arrangement that enabled the man starting work at 6am to arrive half an hour late. This was to be hidden by the 'Train Register' (the book detailing all trains and events) being left blank between 6 and 6.30, and for it to be written up by whoever arrived at 6.30.

Arriving at the Quintinshill signal box on the (northbound) local train at 6.30am, Tinsley would have noticed nothing unusual: a goods train was in the northbound loop. This was the loop into which the local train would have ordinarily been shunted. To enable the express trains to pass, the local train was shunted across and *backed* onto the southbound main line, where it would be held until the two express trains had cleared the loop.

Tinsley entered the signal box at 6.32am - over half an hour late. In order to cover this he had to write up the Train Register in his own handwriting. Shortly after Tinsley's arrival, a message came from the north that a troop train had passed Lockerbie. The significance of this was lost on those present, no doubt due to the confusion over who was on duty, and an ongoing conversation about the latest war-news between Tinsley, Meakin and a brakeman from the local train called Ingram who was also now in the signal box.



**Caledonian Railway. Detail of plan of accident site and position of trains at  
Quintinshill,  
National Records of Scotland, RHP81457**

The Gallipoli Campaign, the land offensive of which had been launched on 25 April, had not started well and reinforcements were needed. As a result, the Territorials of the 52nd (Lowland) Division were ordered to proceed to the Dardanelles. One of the battalions of this division was the 1/7th Royal Scots, who were largely recruited in and around Leith. The battalion was to proceed to Liverpool and then board the *HMT Aquitania*.

On the 22nd May the battalion left Larbert in three trains. The first train which departed 03.42 am - as marked today by a plaque on that station's southbound platform - carried the battalion's Commanding Officer, Lt-Col Peebles, with Battalion Headquarters, plus 'A' Company (commanded by Major J D L Hamilton ) and 'D' Company (commanded by Captain A M Mitchell). The carriages of the troop train were crowded with eight men in each compartment. The carriages themselves were obsolete and would have been scrapped had the war not broken out. Many of the compartment were illuminated using gas. The heavily laden train was running some minutes late, but railways had been instructed to give these priority over other trains. Using the downhill gradient on the southbound approach to Quintinshill, the train picked up speed to about 70mph.

Back at the signal box, Meakin and Ingram were discussing the newspapers while Tinsley continued to write up the Train Register.

At 6.35am the Fireman (Hutchinson) of the local train came into the signal box to remind Tinsley about his train but, instead of leaving, he joined Meakin and Ingram reading the newspaper. Shortly afterwards they were joined by Young, the Brakeman of the coal train - he joined the others pouring over the newspaper. All of this was strictly against standing instructions, signalmen were supposed to be left

alone. After a minute or two, Hutchinson returned to the local train, Ingram to the goods train, and at 6:38am the Edinburgh express passed on the northbound line and continued northwards. The second express (Glasgow) express was following this a few minutes behind and, once this had passed, the local train would be able to continue on its way.

The southbound troop train headed by locomotive no. 121 of CR class 139 and the Edinburgh express passed each other north of Quintinshill, no one on board either train aware of the disaster that was minutes away.

Tinsley, who should have been on duty and concentrating on the various trains was still writing up the Train Register; Meakin, who was supposed to be off duty but was controlling the trains, was also chatting to the various firemen and guards whose trains were held at the junction. The local train was still standing on the southbound line waiting for the second (Glasgow-bound) express.

At 6.42am the Kirkpatrick signal box telegraphed, offering the troop train on the southbound line. Tinsley accepted. At the same time the Gretna signal box offered him the northbound Glasgow Express again he accepted. Tinsley had failed to look out of the window at the local train just outside. Meakin stepped out onto the signal box at 6:50am to start his journey home, and saw the troop train hurtling down the line.

Fireman Hutchinson, who had previously returned to the engine of the local train, was just opening his sandwich tin when we saw the troop train coming round the curve. Both he and the train driver dived off the footplate and under the nearest trucks of the freight train.

Due to the curve of the line, the driver and fireman of the troop train would not have seen the local train until the last moment. Travelling at 70mph, it is believed they managed to slow down to about 40mph, but the collision was still catastrophic. The local train was propelled backwards by over 40 yards, but surprisingly only two passengers were killed.

Matters were much worse on the troop train. The forward carriages crumpled, mounted the engine and catapulted over it, some landing level with the local train's tender. The rest of the train was spread across both running lines; some carriages breaking apart, scattering debris. Originally a length of 215 yards, after the impact the wrecked troop train was only 67 yards in length.

Although some soldiers would have been killed by the impact, accounts show that within seconds of the collision soldiers were clambering out of the carriages. Many even survived from the forward carriages - soaked with water from the tender and thrown through the air. Most of them only had slight injuries - many caused by their rifles falling from the overhead luggage racks. But many were trapped or were slow extracting themselves from the wreckage because of their injuries. Their uninjured comrades came over to assist and also the passengers on the local train. Only now

did Meakin change the signal to try to stop the Glasgow express. It was too late, the train had passed the signal point.

The driver of the local train emerged from under the goods train and shouted at the soldiers to get off the tracks, but this warning wasn't heard. The guard of the local train and the driver and fireman of the coal train ran down the line as fast as they could in order to try to stop the express. The express train's fireman later recounted:

*"...on approaching Quintinshill the signals were all clear for us. The first notice of anything being wrong was when approaching the home signal, when I observed a guard waving his arms as if something was the matter. I shouted to my driver to stop, as I saw there was something in front. He came from his side of the engine to my side and immediately applied the brakes, shut off steam, and endeavoured to stop as hard as he could. "*

The express double headed by no. 140 Of the Dunalastair IV class and No. 48 of CR class 43 barely had time to slow down; the curve of the line again hindering forward visibility. Travelling at 50mph, the drivers were able to reduce speed to 40mph when the train struck the debris of the troop train carriages and the soldiers in them and those on the track.

The lightly-constructed carriages of the troop train were badly damaged by the double impact, which caused many deaths and injuries. When the gas canisters on the troop train carriages caught fire many men were trapped and burned to death in the resulting conflagration.

The gap between the two collisions was calculated as just 53 seconds. Six were killed on the express, plus two others mortally injured. It is unknown how many from the troop train were killed in the second collision, as the disaster was still unfurling. The two collisions had not only caused carnage within the carriages, but has also ruptured the gas lighting reservoirs, which had been fully charged. Almost instantly the wreckage burst into flames. The express and coal train crews desperately tried to douse the fire with water from their tenders, but there was little left and no way to fight it effectively, particularly as undamaged gas cylinders started exploding.

Many were less fortunate. The flames were so hot that the steel of the express carriages buckled and twisted 'like drying leaves' and few attempted to fight the fire- realising that it was uncontrollable. For those still trapped, there were few options. Later interviews recorded some using their bayonets to perform self-amputations, others cutting their own throats with jack-knives, while some begged an officer to shoot them. Apparently the officer complied.

The undamaged portions of the express and goods train were drawn clear and the engine of the goods train was sent to get carriages to take away the uninjured.

Local medical personnel quickly arrived and assisted the injured, all being placed in the adjoining field, where many died from shock. At 7:14am Carlisle station was

informed, and proceeded to assemble a special Ambulance train, which arrived on the scene at 8.10am. Doctors drove from Glasgow and Edinburgh, and Red Cross personnel also arrived, as did many locals, including a group of Scouts.

ACQUIRE the "Daily Record" serial habit if you would secure yourself a real literary treat! Our stories are greatly appreciated.

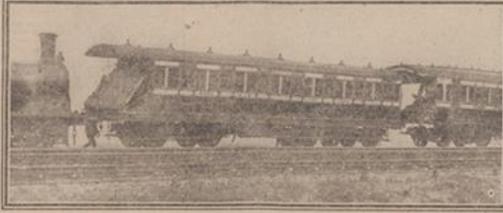
**Daily Record**

ESTAB. 1867—NO. 21,222

GLASGOW, MONDAY, MAY 24, 1915

ONE HALFPENNY

**UNIVERSAL GRIEF AT THE LOSS OF NEARLY 200 ROYAL SCOTS IN APPALLING RAILWAY DISASTER AT GRETNA.**


The latest information regarding the terrible railway disaster, which occurred early on Saturday morning on the Caledonian Railway at Gretna, shows the disaster to be one of the most appalling ever recorded in the history of the British Empire. Our photographs show two of the mangled wrecks of the train which crushed with the terrific force.

Edinburgh and Carlisle were plunged into the deepest grief when the full extent of the disaster became known. The following were killed: Captain E. M. Mitchell, 7th Royal Scots, and Lieutenant J. A. Young, 7th Royal Scots, who was killed in the following accident.

**DEAD LAID OUT IN A FIELD OF QUINTINSHILL FARM.**

The bodies passed into the hands of the 7th Royal Scots in Leith, and are now being buried in the cemetery at Leith. The bodies of the two killed are now being buried in the cemetery at Leith.

**CAPTAIN KILLED AND LIEUTENANT INJURED.**




**PAYMASTER DEAD. PRIVATE ESCAPES.**




The disaster is now given as 175, but it is believed that this number will be considerably increased in view of the fact that several are missing. Our photographs show the dead being laid out in a field near Quintinshill Farm.

**THE 7th ROYAL SCOTS LEAVING FOR THEIR WAR STATION.**

Daily Record - Monday 24<sup>th</sup> May 1915 - picture courtesy British Newspaper Archive

The first 52 injured were put aboard the intact portion of the express and taken to Carlisle's Cumberland Infirmary. Two more trains followed and most of the injured were evacuated by mid-day. The problems did not end there. Carlisle hospital had just received a large number of injured soldiers from France and was overwhelmed, so the less seriously injured were moved on as far as Preston Hospital. The Red Cross commandeered several hotels and schools to help treat the injured.

At 4.00pm, Colonel Peebles held a roll call of the battalion. Because the unit's rolls were destroyed in the fire, he simply took down names. The train had left Larbert with 485 officers and men. The roll call revealed there were only 67 uninjured - only five of these from 'A' Company.

On the following day, Sunday, back at the scene the Fire Brigade doused down the smouldering wreckage and eventually left - the fire had burnt for 23 hours. Bodies were recovered from the ashes, virtually all were unidentifiable.

The last body was recovered at mid-day, and clearance of the scene commenced. At 8.14 pm the line reopened. Of the survivors, only Colonel Peebles and six officers were declared fit for active service. In total, the disaster killed 226 and injured a further 246.

The survivors of the battalion were sent to Liverpool but on arrival it was realised that they were in no fit state to go overseas. They returned to Edinburgh and took part in the funerals of their comrades.

### **Casualties to the 1/7 Royal Scots**

Of the 1028 who set off from Larbert, three Officers, 29 Non Commissioned Officers and 182 men were killed or burned to death. All but ten of the 214 fatalities are buried at Edinburgh (Rosebank) Cemetery. The dead included Major Hamilton, Captain J M Mitchell and Lieutenant C R Salvesen.

The uninjured survivors of the crash, only seven officers and 57 NCOs and men were taken by train from Carlisle to Liverpool. Their shock was so profound that on reaching Liverpool the NCOs and men were sent home. Those soldiers from The Royal Scots who survived the crash looked so destitute when they returned to Edinburgh that they were taunted by schoolchildren who thought they were enemy prisoners of war.

B and C Companies' train reached Liverpool earlier having made a detour and Lieutenant Colonel Peebles embarked with the 4th Battalion The Royal Scots. Eventually the remnants of the battalion arrived at Gallipoli, they went into an attack on 28 June and suffered heavy casualties which resulted in them being down to just seven officers and 204 men.

In July they were temporarily merged with the 4th Battalion, Royal Scots and went into action again - only to lose heavily again. On 3 September the battalion received reinforcements of 12 officers and 440 men - comprising survivors of the crash and men from the unit's second line (reserve) battalion.

### **Other victims**

The driver and fireman of the troop train, Francis Scott and David Hannah and a sleeping car attendant on the express train died.

Also killed were Rachael Nimmo and her infant son Dickson travelling from Newcastle on the local train, and on the express train Herbert Ford, a Scottish engineer, and five other passengers, of whom four were not identified. Other passengers on the express train who were killed included three army and two naval officers.

No.	Name and Surname	When and Where Died	Sex	Age	Name, Residence & Rank or Profession of Father	Cause of Death, Duration of Illness, and Medical Attendance by whom rendered	Signature & Qualification of Informant, and Residence, if one of the Places in which the Death occurred.	When and where Registered, and Signature of Registrar.
13	Rachel Nimmo	1915, May Twenty Second	F	28	George Nesbit Glasgow	Salway Colliery	See Her Name	1915, May 27 Gretna
	Herbert Ford	1915, May 29 Twenty Ninth	M		Sarah Nesbit Herbert Ford		See Crown Sheet	See Register
	Nimmo, Arthur	1915, May 29 Twenty Ninth	M		Herbert Ford		See Crown Sheet	See Register
14	Dickson Nimmo	1915, May Twenty Second	M	30	Dickson Nimmo Glasgow	Salway Colliery	See Her Name	1915, May 27 Gretna
	Single	1915, May 29 Twenty Ninth	M		Richard Nimmo Herbert Ford		See Crown Sheet	See Register
15	Robert Army Ford	1915, May Twenty Second	M	22	William Ford Glasgow	Factor of Mill Sweden	Robert Hillier	1915, May 29 Gretna
	Coyner	1915, May 29 Twenty Ninth	M		Elizabeth Ford Herbert Ford		See Her Name	See Register
	Colinva, Susan	1915, May 29 Twenty Ninth	F		Herbert Ford		See Her Name	See Register

Deaths of Rachel and Dickson Nimmo, and Herbert Ford, National Records of Scotland, Register of Deaths, 1915, 827, nos 13-15

The deaths of all those who died at the scene of the accident were recorded in the register of deaths for Gretna, starting with the civilian victims on 23 and 29 May. From 29 May until 29 November 1915 the registrar registered the deaths of the Royal Scots. The informant signing each entry was Captain James Noel Bertram, whose home address was given, perhaps to avoid disclosing the battalion's headquarters. The three army officers and two naval personnel who were travelling on the express train were also registered.

Some bodies were never recovered, having been wholly consumed by the fire, and when the bodies of the men of the Royal Scots were returned to Leith on 24 May, they were buried together in a mass grave in Edinburgh's Rosebank Cemetery. The coffins were laid three deep, with each on the top row covered in the Union Flag.

The public were excluded from the cemetery, although 50 wounded servicemen who were convalescing at a nearby military hospital were allowed to attend. The ceremony lasted three hours, at the end of which a volley of three shots was fired, and the Last Post was sounded.

The bodies were escorted by the 15th and 16th Battalions of Royal Scots, the Edinburgh Pals battalions recently assembled and still undergoing training. The cortege took four hours to complete its task. A memorial to the dead troops was erected in Rosebank Cemetery in 1916.

Of the troops, 83 bodies were identified, 82 were recovered but unrecognisable, and 50 were missing altogether, giving the total of 215, later revised by the army to 214. The soldiers were buried with full military honours.

Among the coffins were four bodies which were unidentified and appeared to be remains of children. One coffin was simply labelled as 'little girl, unrecognisable,' and another as 'three trunks, probably children'. As no children were reported missing, the Caledonian moved the bodies to Glasgow for possible identification, but

no one came forward to claim the bodies and they were buried in Glasgow's Western Necropolis on 26 May.



In 2011 a commemorative headstone was placed on the hitherto unmarked grave, funds being raised by historian and Provost of Falkirk, Bill Buchanan. In more recent times there has been speculation in the press that the grave be opened to see if identification by modern DNA methods could be made.

The engine crew of the troop train driver Francis Scott and fireman David Hannah were both from Carlisle, and they were also buried on 26 May at Stanwix Cemetery in Carlisle.

### Investigations and High Court trial

The Board of Trade carried out an investigation immediately, and an inquest into the deaths began at Carlisle on 25 May.

The first official investigation conducted by the Board of Trade into the disaster commenced in Carlisle on 25 May at County Hall, Carlisle. It was undertaken by Lieutenant Colonel Edward Druitt RE of the Railway Inspectorate .Druitt had already spent some time at the accident site and later in Carlisle interviewing witnesses, including both Meakin and Tinsley. Both men were honest about their failures to abide by the rules and their generally lax behaviour. Druitt presented his report to the Board of Trade on 17 June 1915 and laid the blame squarely on Meakin and Tinsley.

His reported concluded by stating ....*”this disastrous collision was thus due to want of discipline on the part of the signalmen, first by changing duty at an unauthorised hour, which caused Tinsley to be occupied in writing up the Train Register Book, and so diverted his attention from his proper work, secondly by Meakin handing over the duty in a very lax manner; and, thirdly by both signalmen neglecting to carry out various rules specially framed for preventing accidents due to forgetfulness on the part of signalmen. “*

Druitt was also critical of Hutchinson for his failure to comply properly with Rule 55, and also of Gretna stationmaster Alexander Thorburn, who, in Druitt's opinion, cannot have been unaware of the irregular shift changes operated by Meakin and Tinsley.

The sequence of events leading up to the collisions featured multiple breaches of the railway's regulations, which formed the basis of the later prosecution of both signalmen. In total, eight separate rule breaches by the signalmen were identified. It concluded that the signalmen James Tinsley and George Meakin were responsible for the manslaughter of those who died in the collisions.

At the High Court trial in Edinburgh on 14 September 1915 Tinsley and Meakin were held responsible for their failure to follow railway company rules and regulations. They were convicted of culpable homicide arising from gross neglect of duties. Meakin was sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment, while Tinsley, who bore the greater share of blame, was committed to Peterhead prison for three years' imprisonment with hard labour.

PHOTOGRAPHS.	
On First Reception.	On Discharge on Licence.
 <p>Peterhead Prison R.N. 2527 9. 11. 15 James Tinsley</p>	<p>Photograph dated 9/11/15 still a good likeness.</p> <p>C. Brown M<sup>d</sup>. W<sup>r</sup>. J<sup>c</sup> Peterhead Prison.</p>
On Reception on Forfeiture or Revocation of Licence, when ordered.	On Final Discharge.

**Detail of prisoner's record of James Tinsley ,  
National Records of Scotland, HH15/10**

Evidence in the Crown Office precognition reveals that when the Dumfries police arrested Tinsley on 28 May, a doctor pointed out that he suffered from epilepsy. His condition may have contributed to his forgetfulness at the time of the accident.

Telephone message from  
Dumfries

When the constable went  
to apprehend Tinsley today  
they found him unwell  
apparently. - His own  
medical attendant  
said that he had had  
epileptic fits since  
collision - that these  
might develop into  
acute mania and  
that he could only be  
removed in an ambulance.  
He has been kept under  
supervision since by the  
Police; and it is now  
proposed to send an  
independent medical  
man and a motor  
ambulance from Dumfries  
to have him  
conveyed to Dumfries  
if he is fit to be removed.

The question may perhaps  
arise is the man fit  
to be declared. -  
P.F. writes to  
know if there is  
any objection to  
the course proposed,  
or have C.G. any  
suggestions to make.

29/5/15

L.H.O.  
Dumfries

**Note about James Tinsley's epilepsy,  
National Records of Scotland, AD15/15/29/1/1/2-3**

After the trial successive Secretaries of State for Scotland came under pressure from J H Thomas of the National Union of Railwaymen, and sections of public opinion, to have Tinsley's and Meakin's sentences reduced, or even for them to receive a royal pardon. Tinsley himself petitioned the Secretary of State on 3 April 1916.

No. 91.

J.M. PRISON *Edinburgh*  
 Date *3rd April 1916*  
 Prisoner's Name, Age, and Sentence *James Tinsley 33. 3 years 6 m.*

The Prisoner is not to write on this margin.

*Dear Sir*  
 I am writing to ask you if you will kindly consider my case re railway accident at Dumfrieshill Greta the 22nd day of May last year, as I told them at the board of trade inquiry and the world the truth about the said affair, that it was I that forgot all about the local train standing on the main line when I took the troop train on and never saw that I was doing wrong, with my mind been taken up with my other duties up till it occurred, I would have willingly laid my life down for those fine men that morning but grief and sorrow have I borne since which no one but myself knows well in fact my heart is near broken, my poor old father who as been laid in bed 18 weeks as taken it to heart, and my oldest son of 12 years was wondering if he wrote to the King would he pardon my father, I have prayed to God to help all those whom sorrow was caused over the accident as I am praying to God now for my wife & 3 children, asking you all to have pity on us and bring us all together again, which I hope you will see your way to pardon me and am quite willing to serve my King and country if fit  
 your truly  
*James Tinsley*

Image of Tinsley's petition to the Secretary of State for Scotland, 3 April 1916, National Records of Scotland, HH60/316/8/31

He was eventually released one year early, on 15 December 1916, on the same day that Meakin was released on completing his sentence.

The conviction of the two men focussed attention on their individual failings. On 4 November a Fatal Accident Inquiry at Dumfries Sheriff Court examined the circumstances of the deaths of the three railwaymen who were killed. It exposed weaknesses in the Caledonian Railway Company's practices in supervising and carrying out

signalling, but concluded that the signalmen were to blame for the crash. Other contributory factors, such as the pressures on the railway network from the high priority accorded to military trains, and technical deficiencies in the rolling stock, received little or no scrutiny in the official investigations.

After the Fatal Accident Inquiry at Dumfries on 4 November 1915, the Procurator Fiscal submitted his findings into the deaths (the result of his recognitions and the

jury's verdict) during November and December 1915. The finding that the deaths resulted from 'Injuries received in Railway Collision' was recorded by the local registrar in individual entries in the Register of Corrected Entries (RCE) for each of the civilian deaths. In effect this amended the simple cause 'Railway Collision' that had been entered in almost all entries in the Register of Deaths. The same amendment was applied to all the Royal Scots and other servicemen, but unusually they were listed in a group entry in the RCE on 5 February 1916. This group entry underlines both the scale of the tragedy and the terrible circumstances in which the many soldiers died: those whose bodies were unidentifiable were marked with a red dotted cross on the RCE. The list of Royal Scots soldiers does not include those who died of their injuries in England, having been taken to Carlisle for treatment.

**RAILWAY ACCIDENT.**  
 RETURN OF DEATH OF PERSON KILLED ON A RAILWAY, OR DYING  
 FROM INJURIES RECEIVED ON A RAILWAY.

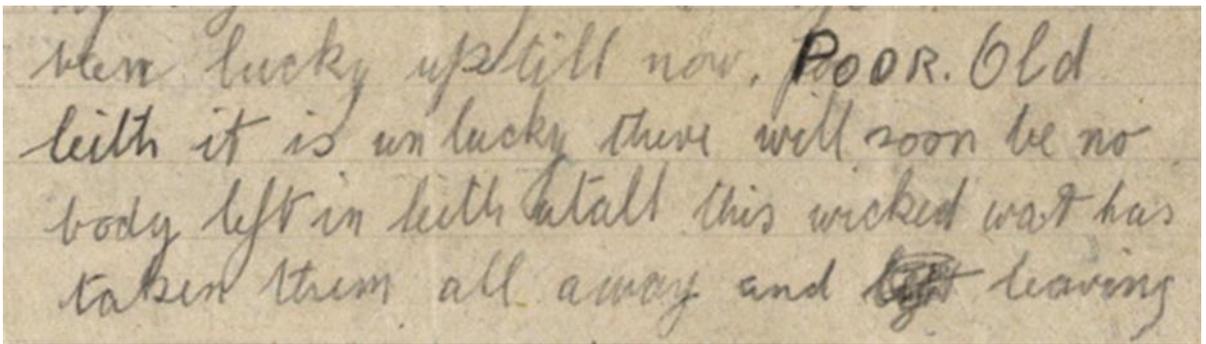
*Railway Regulations Act, 1873, § 5 (34 & 37 Vict. cap. 76).*

The above Act requires every Procurator-Fiscal, within seven days after the Inquiry, to make to the Secretary for Scotland, in such form as he may require, a Return of the death and the cause thereof. The following is the form prescribed by the Secretary for Scotland:—

1. Name of Railway. Caledonian Railway  
 (Stating whether—  
 (1) Open for public traffic.  
 (2) In course of construction,  
 (3) Belonging to private owners) Open for public traffic
2. Place where Accident occurred Quintenshill, Greta Parish, Dumfriesshire
3. Date of Accident 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 1915.
4. Date of Inquiry 4<sup>th</sup> November, 1915.
5. Place where Inquiry was held Sheriff Court House Dumfries
6. Name of person killed or fatally injured Francis William Scott
7. Whether killed on the railway, or dying  
 in consequence of injuries received  
 on the railway } Killed on railway
8. Whether—  
 1. Servant—  
 (a) of Company Engine Driver  
 (stating class of Service).

## Reactions to the tragedy

Newspapers reported the tragedy in Britain, and soon soldiers overseas learned of the terrible events. Private James Tracey, serving with the 13th Hussars on the Western Front, was deeply saddened by the deaths of so many of his Leith school friends. Just one week after the crash he wrote home to his mother Bridget in Leith: 'you have no idea how sorry I feel for those poor helpless young fellows who died, pinned beneath the wreckage... Giving my deepest sympathy to all the survivors at home.' Tracey was killed in action six weeks later on 12 July 1915.



them lucky up till now, POOR. Old  
leith it is un lucky there will soon be no  
body left in leith at all this wicked war has  
taken them all away and leaving

**Detail of letter from Private James Tracey to his mother, 29 May 1915,  
National Records of Scotland, SC70/8/136/15**

### **Soldier victims**

Of the Royal Scots battalion three officers and 207 other ranks were killed or died from their injuries, and five officers and 219 other ranks were injured.

On joining the Colours soldiers were encouraged to make wills, effective in the event of their death in service. Two examples are given here of men who perished at Quintinshill.

### **Corporal 834 Alexander George Somerville**

Alexander George Somerville was born in 1891, the son of Robert, a Musselburgh cab driver, and his wife Catherine. Alexander had been working as a brewer's clerk since at least 1911, and had lived at 37 High Street with his parents. During peacetime he joined the 1/7th Battalion Scots, like many other young men in and around the town. By the time of the crash Somerville was a corporal. General mobilisation on 30 July 1914 was followed by a declaration of war on 4 August, to which Somerville reacted by immediately writing his will, in which he left everything to his mother. He left the document at home, and after his death on 22 May 1915 it was officially recorded at Edinburgh Commissary Office. His estate amounted to a life insurance policy for £106 and a friendly society sum of £10.

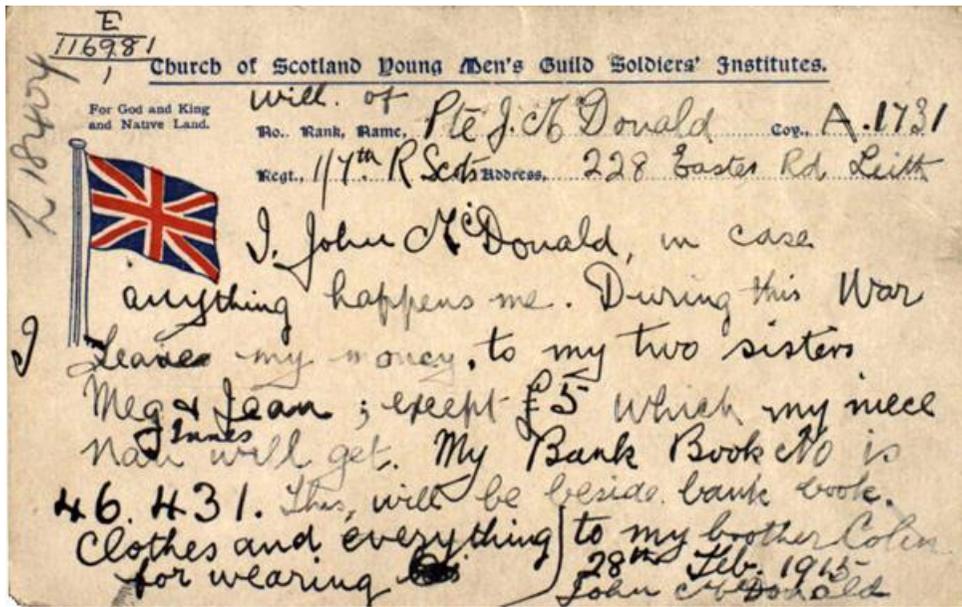
E  
12/150  
I Alexander George Somerville, Clerk residing at  
37 High Street, Musselburgh for the settlement of  
the succession to my means and estate do  
hereby give, grant, assign and dispose to and  
in favour of my mother Katherine Taylor or  
Somerville (in the event of her surviving me)  
in absolute, property, all and sundry my whole  
means and estate heritable and ~~(Otherwise)~~ moveable  
real and personal, now belonging or which shall  
belong to me at the time of my death, with  
the rents, mails and duties, writs, title deeds  
and securities vouchers and instructions thereof,  
And nominate and appoint the said Katherine  
Taylor or Somerville to be my sole Executrix and  
universally Legatrix. In witness whereof have  
subscribed these presents written by my own  
hand at Musselburgh this fourth day of  
August, nineteen hundred and fourteen

Alexander George Somerville  
14<sup>th</sup> August 1914

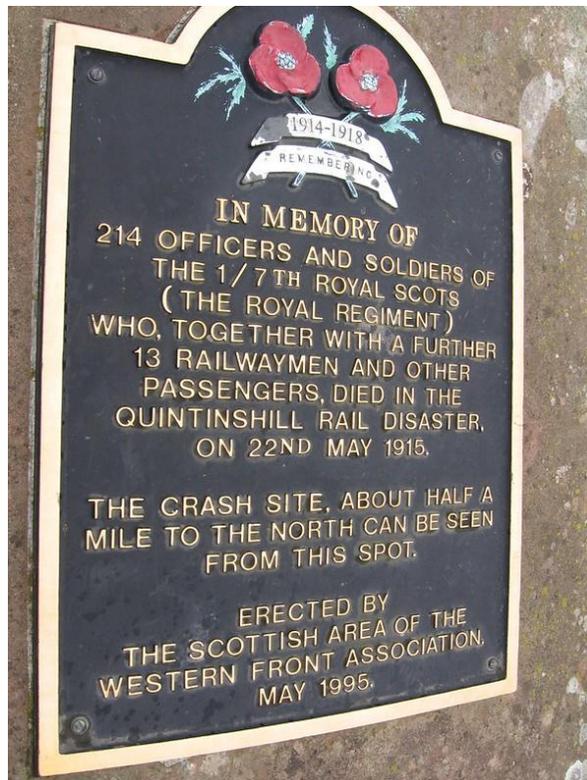
Will of Alexander George  
Somerville,  
National Records of  
Scotland, SC70/8/135/7

### Private 1731 John McDonald

John McDonald or Macdonald of A Company, 1/7th Royal Scots, was a journeyman upholsterer, who lived with his family at 228 Easter Road, Edinburgh. His parents were dead and he was single, so in his will he provided for his older sisters Meg and Jean, his niece Nan (Agnes) Innes, and his brother Colin. He wrote his will on a card provided at one of the 'soldiers' institutes', premises provided by the Church of Scotland, where off-duty soldiers could relax.



Will of John McDonald, National Records of Scotland, SC70/8/177/34





In May 1990, the Scottish Area of the Western Front Association arranged a service held at the lineside to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the crash. John Cameron of Stranraer, then Secretary of the Scottish WFA, suggested then that a

permanent memorial should be erected at Quintinshill. An appeal for funds was made through local and national newspapers and the railway press, including TTL issue 48.

The site finally chosen for the Memorial was the north side of the car park of The Old Blacksmith`s Shop at Gretna Green. From there the crash site can be seen half a mile to the north. The final design for the memorial includes a bronze Royal Scots badge on the north side of the plinth, with one in stone on the south. On top, the plaque bears an inscription explaining that the memorial commemorates not only the Royal Scots killed but also those railwaymen and passengers who lost their lives, the latter often being forgotten. The 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary actually Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> May 1995 was chosen as a suitable date for the dedication and unveiling of the Memorial. An article about the proposed memorial had caught the eye of Mrs Rachel Buchannan of Newcastle - upon - Tyne. As a three year old child she had been in the crash which claimed her mother Rachel Nimmo and one year old brother Dickson.

There could have been no one more suitable to be asked to perform the unveiling.

The service, conducted by the Gretna Minister, the Rev, Bryan Haston was attended by about 200 persons, including a detachment of Royal Scots, MP Hector Munro, whose maternal grandfather, General Sir Spencer Ewart, was GOC Scotland at the time of the crash and who had rushed from Edinburgh to co-ordinate the rescue operation, members of the local community and of the Western Front Association. Mrs Buchannan was invited to unveil the memorial after which there was a minute`s silence, the recitation of Binyon`s Exhortation `For The Fallen` and a piper from the Royal Scots played the lament `The Flowers of the Forest` Wreaths were laid on behalf of The Western Front Association, the Royal Scots, Falkirk District Council, Railtrack, ASLEF, Springfield Community Council and by relatives of the victims. The above details are to be found in a leaflet in the care of the National Library of Scotland

In subsequent years the location for the memorial was questioned. Discussions at the time between the Western Front Association and other interested parties concluded that it was important that the memorial be as near as possible to the site of the accident, yet accessible for all and where in years to come, commemoration services could be held. This decision was justified when several hundred people turned out at the memorial on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

This was attended by HRH The Princess Anne and Scotland`s First Minister Nicola Sturgeon. After the service Princess Anne attended an event at Stormont Village Hall in Gretna Green for a special poetry reading to mark the centenary of Britain`s worst train crash. Her Royal Highness spoke to locals and viewed a display highlighting the disaster at Quintinshill. Stormont Hall was used as a temporary mortuary for some of those killed in the disaster. Subsequently the Caledonian Railway paid the Stormont Hall Committee to refurbish the floor

She told one local man she was shocked at how little is known about the 1915 crash, which killed more than 200 people.



Picture Courtesy ITVX

On the same day the driver Francis Scott and fireman David Hannah of the troop train were remembered in a memorial service at Stanwix Cemetery in Carlisle.

In Edinburgh a Commemoration Service was held at Rosebank Cemetery by The Royal Scots Association (for former members of The Royal Scots) supported by members of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions of the Royal Regiment of Scotland, descendant Regiment of The Royal Scots..

The next day, Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> May over 1000 people attended the service at Rosebank Cemetery when HRH The Princess Anne laid a wreath on the grave.



On 26<sup>th</sup> September 2010 a plaque was installed by Springfield and Gretna Community Council on Blacksike Bridge, an overbridge from which the site of the accident can be seen, it was unveiled by Eileen Muir, widow of Denis Muir whose words are inscribed on the memorial.

It may be appropriate to conclude this part of the series `The Caledonian Railway in The Great War` by quoting from TC Rolt`s book `Red For Danger` which expressed common humanity towards signalmen Meakin and Tinsley.

*Imagination can scarcely conceive what the feelings of Tinsley and Meakin must have been as they watched, as from some grandstand, the frightful consequences of their carelessness taking place. Surely they are to be pitied rather than blamed, for have we not all been equally careless and forgetful on occasions, but not with such fearful result ?*

## Notes and References

Note <sup>1</sup> The armistice on November 11<sup>th</sup> 1918 brought an end to hostilities but the war did not officially end until the Signing of the Treaty of Versailles on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1919. The Caledonian, in common with the rest of Britain`s railways was still on `active service` well into 1919.

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*The True Line* No, 128

*The True Line* No, 125

*The True Line* No, 129

Other articles / letters appeared in earlier editions of TTL 42, 43, 44, 48, 50, 62, 66, 101, 113.

Testaments of officers and men who died in the crash can be found in the Sheriff Court records on [www.Scotlandpeople.gov.uk](http://www.Scotlandpeople.gov.uk)

*The 1/7th Royal Scots and the Quintinshill Rail Disaster : 22 May 1915.* David Tattersfield, Western Front Association journal `Stand To! May 2015

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<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/learning/first-world-war/quintinshill-disaster>

The Engineer <https://www.theengineer.co.uk/content/archive/may-1915-the-gretna-rail-disaster/>

British Newspaper Archive

<https://blog.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/2015/05/22/the-quintinshill-rail-disaster/>

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A short documentary on the events of 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1915, and subsequently, is available on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29yuxDwqjKA>

#### **Further reading.**

*The Quintinshill Conspiracy* Jack Richards & Adrian Searle (Pen & Sword Transport) 2013 ISBN 978 1 47384 257 1

*Gretna`s Secret War* Gordon L Routledge (Bookcase 1999)

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