

BETWEEN THE LINES

Newsletter of the East Kent Branch of The Western Front Association

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Founded by John Giles
Inaugurated 11th November 1980

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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 Saturday, 30th May 2026. Please ensure that articles are submitted using Times New Roman typeface at 12 point font. Contributions should be e-mailed to me at: [REDACTED]

James Brazier, WFA East Kent Branch Newsletter Editor



Welcome to another edition of *Between the Lines* which is the sixteenth issue under my editorship. When I volunteered to take over the role of Editor from Paul Barnett three years ago, I thought that I might do it for a couple of years before 'passing on the baton' to a new editor. But no-one has stepped forward and I have much enjoyed producing *Between the Lines*. My health has rather gone down-hill since I took on the editorship but, on the other hand, producing our newsletter has occupied my mind and widened my knowledge of the Great War thanks to our numerous contributors. I hope that the newsletter has also widened Branch members' knowledge of the Great War. I just hope that my health will hold out and that I will be able to continue to produce more issues of *Between the Lines*. We shall see.

Today (11th March), as I write this Editorial, the sun is shining and Valmai Holt - our Branch's most distinguished member - is on her way to Windsor Castle to receive her investiture as a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for her 'Services to Military History and War Commemoration'. Her investiture will be performed by HRH The Prince of Wales (Prince William). She is being accompanied by her daughter, Sian, and her son, Gareth. Valmai was deservedly honoured in the 2026 New Year's Honours List. It will be a very special day for Valmai and her grown-up children, but especially so for Sian who has suffered so much from serious ill-health for the last few years.

Valmai, who celebrated her 90th birthday only a few months ago, recently had a nasty fall in her kitchen. Fortunately, no bones were broken in her fall but she did bruise herself, particularly her face, very badly. She was able to phone for an ambulance and was first admitted to hospital for a few days before being transferred to the same nearby care home where her daughter, Sian, has been for the last three years or so. Having known Valmai for getting on for half a century, I know just how much her MBE means to her. Valmai really is a most remarkable lady and we are lucky that she lives in our area and is able to get to some of our Canterbury meetings. As members will know, Valmai lost her husband, Major Tonie Holt, eighteen months ago, aged 91. I know that Tonie will

be with Valmai - in spirit - at the investiture as Valmai considers that the MBE award ought to have been made to the two of them as they had worked constantly together on 'Services to Military History and War Commemoration' for over half a century. However, it is understood that it is not possible for honour awards to be made to two people at once. Tonie and Valmai were an inseparable couple who achieved so much together as will be apparent from reading the tribute article on the following two pages. The Branch should be proud that she is amongst our members and that she attends our meetings whenever she can.

In this issue of our newsletter, you will find more articles by our regular contributors John Drouot and John Websper. I have already received further articles from the 'two Johns' for inclusion in the next issue of *Between the Lines*. Please do send in contributions: they don't need to be lengthy. I feel sure that all members can compile an article which has some relevance to the Great War. An article telling about how you became interested in the Great War or your favourite WWI book or your favourite cemetery are just a few suggestions.

As will be apparent from this issue of our newsletter, I have again taken the opportunity to share with members some of the many souvenirs and mementoes that were produced during and immediately after the Great War and which I have collected over the last 60-plus years. I feel sure that other members have collections of Great War artefacts, such as medals or certificates, which would be of much interest to other members so why not share them with members?

I make no apology for including photos of more of my collection of Great War crested china in this issue. When I started collecting these ceramic pieces, they were to be found in every junk shop around. Today, there are relatively few junk shops and, where military crested china pieces can be found, they are not as cheap as they once were. When I was WFA Bulletin Editor, I approached the late Nicholas Pine - who is credited with re-instating interest in crested china - for an article to go in the Bulletin on WWI crested china. He very kindly asked the then manager of his business at Horndean, Pat Welbourne, to provide me with an excellent article *Crested China and the First World War* which I published in WFA Bulletin 51, dated June 1998. That article can be easily accessed by WFA members by logging on to the superb new WFA website, selecting Searchable Magazine Archive and then searching for WFA Bulletin 51 - pages 26-27. By coincidence, I have just learnt that 12th March is the new International Day of Ceramics - which makes my articles on WWI ceramics very timely. □

James Brazier
Newsletter Editor

A tribute to the late Major Tonie Holt and to Valmai Holt MBE

Valmai Williams (as she then was) first met Tonie Holt when she was 17 and still at school and Tonie was 20 and newly commissioned in the Army. They almost instantly knew that they wished to get married but, owing to Tonie's Army commission, Tonie had to wait until he was 25 before he could marry Valmai. They married in 1956 and Tonie continued his military career while Valmai looked after their two children, Sian and Gareth.

Finally in his military career, in 1972, Tonie started work in Malvern on mortar-recorded radar, etc. There Valmai regularly attended auctions and, one day, bought an interesting series of postcards. They included many cards of WW1 and she and Tonie were fascinated by the amount of them there-in. So much so that they searched for a book on the subject but could find none and therefore decided to write one themselves. Tonie became so involved that he managed to retire from the Army. They became totally interested in postcards and finally together wrote the book which eventually led them to their Battlefield Tour life.

The book, titled *Till the Boys Come Home: The Picture Postcards of The First World War*, was published by Macdonald & Janes. Then, Purnell's Military Book Club offered the book to its members. During a lunch with the Manager of Purnell's, he asked Tonie and Valmai if, in order to keep his members longer, they would offer them a battlefield tour. Of course, Tonie and Valmai knew nothing about organising such tours and they spent a large time meeting the experts in Ypres, the Somme in particular.

When their first tour was published, the demands came rushing in and it was full. It wasn't long before they were overcome by the question: 'Where are you taking us next?'. Gradually, they followed their wishes and added tours to Verdun, Arnhem, Munich, Berlin, etc and gradually further – to the American Civil War, Gallipoli, India, Italy, etc.

By that time 'Major & Mrs Holt's Battlefield Tours' were

born, - then the only such battlefield tours available to the public.

They soon realised that they needed other Tour Leaders and gradually they employed military experts like Col Piers Storie-Pugh (son of the famous Colditz escapee, Col Peter Storie-Pugh); Lt-Col Mike Martin, who commanded the Hampshires (long-time members of the WFA East Kent Branch will remember Mike Martin who much enjoyed attending our meetings where he contributed many a good story), and his wife Pat; Lt-Col Howard Holroyd and wife Jill; Capt Paul and wife Barbara Snook; and Royal Marines Colonel David Storrie and his wife, Linda.

To make room for their enlarged team, the Holts moved to a big office in Sandwich, called The Golden Key, from which they were close to Dover from where so many of their tours left.

Further tours as time went on included Channel Islands, Berlin, Paris, Verdun, Holland, Bastogne, Waterloo, Dieppe, Colditz, Arnhem, Gallipoli, Luxembourg,

USA, Italy, Athens, The Crimea, Egypt, Tunisia, India, South Africa, Singapore, China, Hong Kong, Norway, Pearl Harbour, Norway, China – Yangtze, Korea, The Falkland Islands, Burma, Palestine, Korea, Malaysia, Japan and more...

Holts Tours were the first British people to visit Russia when Mikhail Gorbachev initiated reforms, allowing more foreign people to enter Russia. They visited Moscow and the Crimea – the majority of meals consisting mostly of courgettes!

Then, as the tours continued to grow and grow,

Tonie and Valmai started writing Battlefield Tours Books. The first was a small (48 page) *Guide to The Ypres Salient*, published in 1982. The books about other battlefield areas, such as Gallipoli, Market Garden, The Somme, Normandy, etc grew and grew, to be followed by books about Rudyard Kipling's son, John, and the artist Captain Bruce Bairnsfather, the Poetry of the War, etc.

During those years, Tonie and Valmai worked for the Royal British Legion until they asked



*The Mametz Wood Memorial to the
38th (Welsh) Division
- dedicated 11th July 1987*



*The Welsh National Memorial
near Iron Cross, Pylkhem Ridge, Ypres
- inaugurated 16th August 2014*

Piers Storie-Pugh to take over their tours as their leader had died. This he did and he led the Royal British Legion Tours superbly for many years.

Over the years, Tonie and Valmai were able to assist many of the battlefield tour people they visited, such as - on the Somme – helping Avril Williams, of the Ocean Villa Tea Rooms to develop a museum; financial help to Richard Dunning, who bought the Lochnagar Crater, etc. Being Welsh, Valmai also worked a great deal with Harry and Pat Evans of the Cardiff Branch of the WFA got the fine red Welsh Dragon, sculpted by David Peterson, erected on the Somme at Mametz Wood.

Valmai did the same in Ypres – with Tonie's help - for the Welsh National Memorial, a red Welsh Dragon surrounded by a pleasant memorial garden, near Iron Cross, which was inaugurated on 16th August 2014.

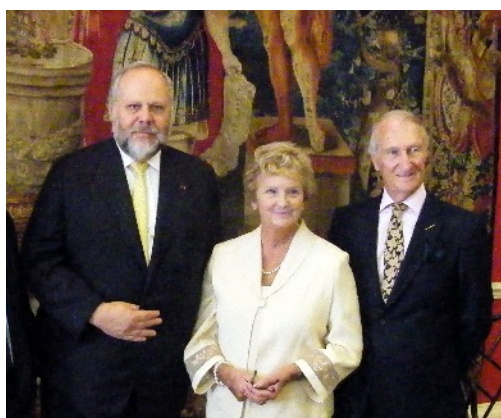
Tonie and Valmai received many awards for their help in Ypres over the years that we visited it, including being made Life Members of the Last Post Association.

In the UK, Tonie and Valmai joined the East Kent Branch of The Western Front Association and became Honorary Members of the Guild of Battlefield Guides 'In recognition of significant contribution to the study, practice and development of the craft of Battlefield Guiding' when the Guild was founded in November 2003. Valmai is happy to still actively belong to both those organisations.

As readers will appreciate, Tonie and Valmai were together a most remarkable couple who achieved so much in their lives. Valmai has soldiered on since the death of her darling Tonie in September 2024 but he is forever in her thoughts.

It was a great privilege for me to have first met Tonie and Valmai in the late-1970s when we soon became good friends and it is a great honour for me to have continued my friendship with Valmai right up to the current day. □

JB



Major & Mrs Holt with the Belgian Ambassador at the Belgian Embassy, London to mark a Bruce Bairnsfather event - September 2009

Earlier awards made to Major & Mrs Holt

Major & Mrs Holt being given the 'Medaille Centenaire' by the President Conseil Général de la Somme for 'their work in promoting knowledge of the Great War and tourism in the Département' - in 2014



Major & Mrs Holt at the Welsh Dragon Memorial on Pilkhem Ridge in 2014. Tonie & Valmai had given much help as Valmai is Welsh. Also are shown, left to right: Mario Liva, Marc Decaestecker and Erwin Ureel - in 2014

Major & Mrs Holt holding two of the first bugles to be played under the Menin Gate, with The Last Post Association Chairman, Benoit Mottre. Earlier they became 'Life Members of the Last Post Association' for their work concerning The Last Post and the Ypres Battlefield - in 2017



Major & Mrs Holt holding two of the first bugles to be played under the Menin Gate, with The Last Post Association Chairman, Benoit Mottre. Earlier they became 'Life Members of the Last Post Association' for their work concerning The Last Post and the Ypres Battlefield - in 2017

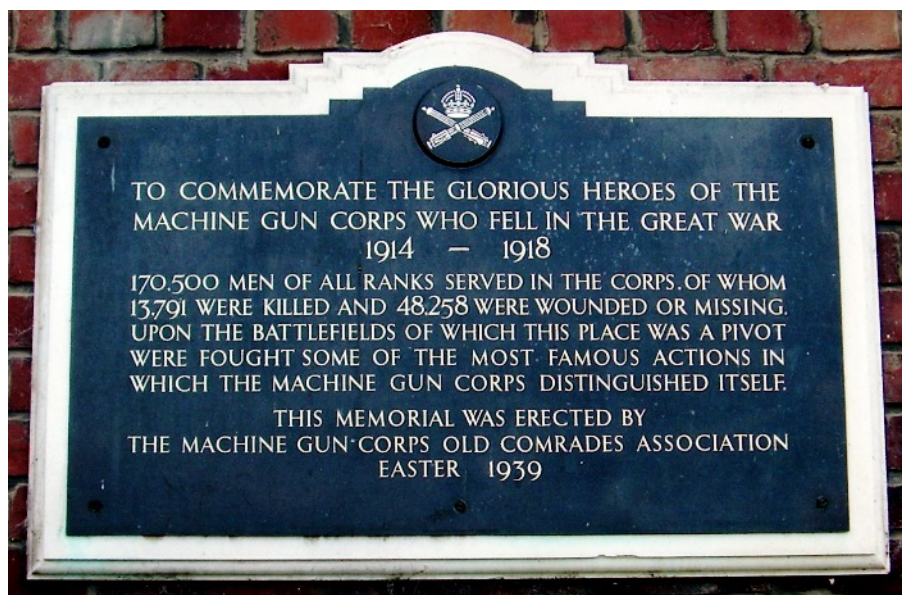


Major & Mrs Holt being thanked by Alderman Jef Verschoore and Tourist Officer, Peter Slosse, for their 40 years of researching, bringing visitors to, and writing about, the Battlefields of Ypres - in November 2017.

At another earlier time, they had been presented with a picture of Ypres for a similar reason

CEMETERIES THAT MAY HAVE PASSED YOU BY

PART ONE: The Salient and the Somme



Machine Gun Corps plaque in the Hôtel de Ville, Albert, Somme

When I retired from British Rail in 1997; my wife decided that I wasn't going to idle my time around the house and quickly established that the local corner shop was seeking a part-time worker. An interview and terms were agreed in no time. Three mornings a week (5:30am to 8:30am), open up, sort the newspapers, ensure the paper-boys were out on their rounds and serve early-morning customers (20 cigarettes and the Daily Mirror - less than £2). Tim Keenan was a regular customer and introduced me to the WFA and took me to my first branch meeting at Chartham. I think it was in the very first edition of the WFA Bulletin I received that there was a paragraph about a project that the Machine Gun Corps Old Comrades Association was about to launch: to visit and photograph the 13,791 graves of MGC men who had fallen in WW1. A further 48,258 were wounded or missing.

My initial visit to France, a natural history trip to the Camargue, had been in 1963. Over the next thirty years or so my wife and I became frequent visitors to the country, often popping over for lunch and a little shopping, we became firm Francophiles so here was the perfect opportunity to visit new areas of the country. I contacted the organiser of the project, Graham Adams, a member of Cheltenham WFA, who explained that he was building a data-base that would contain details of those MGC members who had died in WW1 and, for anyone who was planning to visit to the battlefields, he could supply a list of names and locations. In the first year or two it was easy. Turn left after leaving the ferry terminal and head up the old RN1 to the Belgium border or strike inland on the newly opened (1989) A26 for Bethune and Arras. The A16 linking Boulogne and Dunkirk was still under construction. The Michelin map for this area

(Sheet 53) was overprinted with the locations of many WW1 cemeteries. This was superseded in 2004 by the CWGC's booklet *Cemeteries and Memorials in Belgium & Northern France*; an absolute "must have" guide. An extended day-trip meant that the Boulogne, Bethune and St Omer areas were all within comfortable driving distance. An added bonus was that we began to create a list of good restaurants and hypermarkets. For no good reason we ignored Calais South, the nearest cemetery to the ferry terminal, for some years. As the project developed we extended our visits to three days and based ourselves either at Ypres, Albert or occasionally Béthune. The reason for

that being that the ferry companies offered substantial off-peak reductions for two night/three day stays. It was at this stage that two problems began to emerge. Firstly cameras were still using 35mm film so it was difficult to check to see if you had secured a reasonably focused shot. Secondly most of the headstones had been in place for around eighty years and the engraving on many was badly worn. It was some years before the CWGC began a programme of mass replacements of headstones in time for the centenary commemorations in 2014. Additionally, at either end of the year, we rarely visited in July or August, the lower position of the afternoon sun can cause havoc with shadow and over exposure. Sending perhaps four or five rolls of film for development & printing only to find on their return some with badly eroded engraving or a dreaded note enclosed "Over exposure unable to print". Hard - and expensive - lessons quickly learnt by this amateur 'snapper'. On one occasion, I lost a whole run of prints after a member of the local 'Yobbery' snatched a bundle of



Lagnicourt Hedge Cemetery containing 67 graves including one MGC grave



Warlincourt Haulte British Cemetery containing 1,288 graves including 21 MGC graves

letters and packages from the postman's bag. All of these problems were of course swept away once the digital age became established.

How does one set about looking for MGC headstones in a cemetery that may contain a thousand or more burials from numerous regiments? Two examples from the Ypres Salient - Dozinghem holds in excess of 3,300 burials of which 86 are MGC and Mendinghem 2,400 burials of which 85 are MGC members. The Corps badge is quite distinctive and with care can be recognised two or sometimes three rows back from where you are walking. There are always distractions however. You cannot walk past a headstone where the casualty may have been awarded the Victoria Cross or some other bravery award, a man maybe very young or exceptionally old. It could be someone of high rank. Who could ignore the epitaph of Pte John Croak VC buried in Hangard Wood: *"If you wish to show your gratitude, kneel down and pray for my soul"*. All of these warrant a few moments of your time. Then comes the wording which time and weather have worn away. If you are sensible you will have put two or three bottles of water into your rucksack. Failing that, you face a walk back to the nearest watering point where there may or may not be a watering can. Cover the whole front, not part, of the headstone with water and the worn engraving will become legible for a short period: a tip given to me early on by a professional photographer!

Where to begin? The major battlefields around the Ypres Salient and the area of the Somme are where the largest concentration of cemeteries are located. The mileage on any particular visit to these areas would be relatively low while the number of graves visited would be high so this is where we focussed our

early efforts. Additionally, it was thought important to get the project off to a good start so as to encourage more volunteers to come forward. The long drives south and east towards the Vosges and the Marne seeking, in some instances, just one or two MGC graves would come later. Finally, it would be the Channel coast - Calais to Rouen the area where once the German 'race to the sea' had been halted that an almost continuous string of field-hospitals and training camps were established. A visit to Terlincthun, Étaples and St Sever Cemeteries is a sobering experience - a combined total of almost 27,000 victims of the war are buried here, among them 330 members of the Machine Gun Corps.

I have several hundred photographs from sites across the two countries so it is difficult to make a balanced selection. Three MGC men are actually buried in Marseilles but Besançon, a town best known for the Tour de France, was the furthest south that my wife and I reached to find Pte Thacker who lies close to two unidentified RAF men from WW2. Haguenau, a French National Cemetery close to the Swiss/German border would have been another long drive but it was



Railway Cutting Cemetery containing 92 graves including one MGC grave

part of a week's stay in the Vosges and other locations east of Verdun. To the north, we visited Robemont Cemetery near Liège where, of the 43 WW1 burials, three were MGC - one of whom, Pte W Hopkins passed away in December 1918 a month after the Armistice. My one regret of this project is that I failed to keep an exact record of our mileage but in the first decade of this century our trusted Peugeot never let us down whatever terrain or weather it was asked to tackle.

Part Two of my article will take readers down the Channel coast to Rouen and east to Reims and beyond. □

John Websper

Rudyard Kipling and the Minesweepers of the Dover Patrol



Rudyard Kipling (Wikipedia)

There is a much anthologised poem by Rudyard Kipling called "Minesweepers". A quick reading makes it clear that it is set in the waters off the Kent coast and involves vessels from the Dover Patrol. In this article, I examine how the poem came about and the extent to which it reflects the reality of minesweeping.

By the autumn of 1915, the Admiralty had become concerned about the Royal Navy's public image on both sides of the Atlantic. Most people identified the navy in terms of the dreadnoughts and battlecruisers of the Grand Fleet but, in 1915, with two exceptions, the battle of Dogger Bank and the Dardanelles bombardment, they did not appear to have played a significant role in the war effort. Neutral America had an interest in the effectiveness of the Royal Navy. Its ships and citizens, travelling to and from Britain, expected the navy's protection. The torpedoing of RMS *Lusitania* on 7th May 1915 had taken 123 American lives, some of them prominent people. What was being done to keep the sea lanes open and safe for travellers, crews and trade?

The capital ships of the Grand Fleet were either lurking in Scapa Flow or having the occasional encounter with the Germans and the Turks. Other, much smaller, vessels were very active and effective: but not in ways that merited the attention of national newspapers. These were the destroyers, paddle-steamers, trawlers, drifters and yachts of the various commands dotted around the coast which were responsible for maintaining the nation's seaways. They also formed part of the blockade of Germany and were the first, and often last, line of defence against German coastal raids. The British might read about these ships in local papers, when lives were lost, but nationally their efforts were unrecognised.

Americans were even less likely to know about this work and the Admiralty believed that it was

important for trade and British prestige that they did. Sometime towards the end of summer 1915, it hatched a plan to get this information to the British and American publics and to do so in a way that merited national attention. Their key unit for this operation was the internationally-renowned journalist, author and poet Rudyard Kipling. According to Alastair Wilson of the Kipling Society (www.kiplingsociety.co.uk), Kipling was in Dover on the 18th and 19th September 1915. After this, he moved on to Harwich to build a picture of the work conducted from both ports. He produced six articles in all, each prefaced with a poem; the first was published in America on 19th November and the second, which included "Minesweepers", on the 22nd November. The whole series appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* in the UK across the winter of 1915/16. The poem goes like this:

Dawn off the Foreland—the young flood making
Jumbled and short and steep—
Black in the hollows and bright where it's breaking—
Awkward water to sweep.
"Mines reported in the fairway,
"Warn all traffic and detain.
" 'Sent up *Unity*, *Claribel*, *Assyrian*, *Stormcock*, and
Golden Gain."

Noon off the Foreland - the first ebb making
Lumpy and strong in the bight.
Boom after boom, and the golf-hut shaking
And the jackdaws wild with fright!
"Mines located in the fairway,
"Boats now working up the chain,
"Sweepers *Unity*, *Claribel*, *Assyrian*, *Stormcock*,
and *Golden Gain*."

Dusk off the Foreland – the last light going
And the traffic crowding through,
And five damned trawlers with their syreens blowing
Heading the whole review!
"Sweep completed in the fairway.
"No more mines remain.
" 'Sent back *Unity*, *Claribel*, *Assyrian*, *Stormcock*,
and *Golden Gain*."

Structurally the first four lines of each stanza provide a narrative account whilst the last three take the form of a signal sent by the local Senior Naval Officer (SNO) to nearby ports and RN signal stations, advising of the danger and summarising the progress towards countering it.

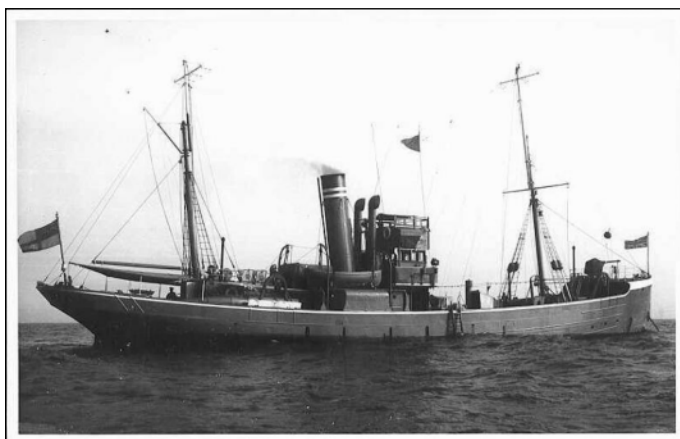
This is not strict reportage and the opening line of the first stanza locates the story vaguely between the North and South Foreland lights. The stanza goes on to describe the sea conditions in the area, pointing out that these will present a difficulty for any minesweeping operations. Kipling, the journalist, would have taken the trouble to understand the sweepers' problems but Kipling, poet and propagandist, knows that too much detail will destroy his word picture.

The SNO's signals in the first stanza, initially warn of the risk and require all shipping movement in the area to be stopped. In the final line he identifies the minesweepers tasked with making the area safe: "*Unity, Claribel, Assyrian, Stormcock and Golden Gain*". I have explored the various online databases of RN ships in the First War and only vessels named *Assyrian* and *Golden Gain* appear. Trawlers were good minesweepers and whilst *Assyrian* was a trawler, she sank in 1914. *Golden Gain* was a drifter and less structurally suitable for sweeping, although this could happen. Kipling, the poet, chose the names for their pleasing sound and rhythm. Beside the poetry of the names they are also, distinctly, not those of warships and reflect an aspect of the British civilian contribution to the naval war effort.

that was supposed to catch in the anchor cable of a mine, cut through it and cause the mine to rise to the surface. Of course the effectiveness of the process depended upon mines being between the ships, not directly in front of one of them!

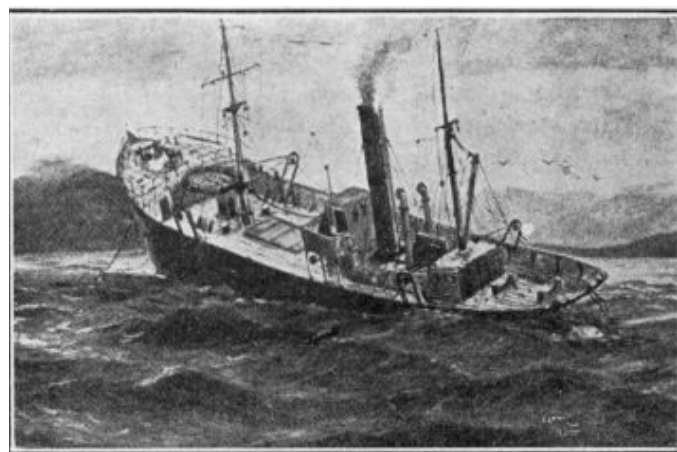


Minesweeping Service cap badge (Hull Museum)



HM Hired Trawler John Edmund (Naval-History.net)

Mines in the First World War were buoyant casings containing explosive. They were anchored to the seabed by a weight attached to a cable, the length of which was preset to allow the mine to float below the surface where it would be invisible but could still be struck by a passing ship. Trawlers were constructed to tow large pocket-shaped nets through the water pulling fish into them. They were powered and structured to cope with this drag over the stern and could easily be adapted to minesweeping. Minesweepers worked in pairs each trailing a cable attached to a weight that could be pulled along the seabed. The weights were joined by a serrated cable



Minesweeper at work illustration in "Flag and Fleet – How the British Navy won the Freedom of the Seas" by Lt Colonel William Wood – (downloaded from Project Gutenberg)

Drifters like the *Golden Gain* fished by extending a long, curtain-like buoyed-net astern of them. Rather than pulling it along like a trawler, having laid out the net they drifted with the current. Fish were caught when they swam into the net and became entangled. In the war, drifters were used to support long anti-submarine nets like the ones that extended across the Channel between Kent and France. The anti-

submarine nets had mines attached to them to explode when hit by a U-boat.

It is important to note that trawlers and drifters were used for many other duties than minesweeping and barrage maintenance. Armed drifters were stationed in Ramsgate along with torpedo boats from the 6th Destroyer Flotilla, to provide protection for the ships of the Downs Boarding Flotilla which was charged with inspecting for contraband, all merchant shipping passing between the Goodwin Sands and the Kent coast.

The poem's second stanza gives an account of what was supposed to happen after a mine was brought to the surface. Mines had a series of spikes, or horns, projecting from the casing that triggered an explosion when hit. The sweepers would fire rifles at a surfaced mine to either hole it sufficiently to sink it to the bottom where it could do no harm or, with a lucky shot on a horn, explode it. The trawlers would be pitching and yawing in the "lumpy" sea as would the partially-submerged target. For Kipling's "Boom after boom" to be accurate, the shooters on the sweepers would have had to be inordinately good shots or deeply blessed. But the drama of the word-picture requires this series of explosions.

The reference to the "golf-hut shaking" helps us to locate the action as taking place somewhere between the North Foreland and Deal. The North Foreland Golf Club, Broadstairs; the Royal St George's and Prince's at Sandwich; the Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club, Deal all date from before the war. It is unlikely that Kipling went to sea to witness mine hunting, but he may have watched it, in the distance, from a golfers' shelter or perhaps a hospitable clubhouse.

The final stanza finishes the story on a series of high notes. The SNO character is a very optimistic man. His first signal, "Sweep completed in the Fairway", is reasonable but, given the limitations of the sweeping process, "No more mines remain" is bold. In all probability, one or two were missed by the pairs of trawlers groping for them blindly in rough sea conditions. Another bit of colour comes from the description of the sweepers trumpeting their success with their "syreens", as they lead a parade of released shipping through the swept channel. I cannot say that this never happened but believe that Kipling was giving his readers what they and the Admiralty wanted - a positive story.

The trawlers were hired vessels, brought into the navy for the duration, mainly from fishing ports on the east coasts of England and Scotland. Many came complete with their established crews who were taken wholesale into the Royal Naval Reserve (Trawler Division) and given a naval rate and pay.

These men had little alternative as their boats, and livelihoods, had gone. In some ways, the work was similar to the fishing: cold, miserable, technically challenging and dangerous. But mines are far more dangerous than fish and enemy submarines and surface warships added a further dimension to the perils of the sea. So, rather than cavorting on deck and whooping on the siren, all the men that could be spared were probably below getting warm, getting some food, drinking their tot and getting their heads down.

The reality of the naval war in the English Channel was one of regular and tragic attrition. Kipling was in Dover on the 18th and 19th September 1915; four days before his arrival HM Trawler *City of Dundee* had been in a collision off Folkestone when seven men died. On the day of Kipling's arrival, HM Trawler *Lydian* struck a mine and sank off the South Foreland with the loss of eight of her crew. On the 24th September, five days after Kipling had left, HM Drifter *Great Heart* was sunk when she accidentally struck one of the mines attached to the anti-submarine net she was attending. Again eight men died. They are commemorated, along with over 2,000 others, at the Dover Patrol memorials at St Margaret's Bay, in Calais and, no doubt for the propaganda value, in a park in Brooklyn, New York City.



The Dover Patrol Monument, St Margaret's Bay (Wikipedia)

In October 1915, when he was writing his articles, death and loss were haunting Rudyard Kipling too. Prior to visiting Dover he had been at the Western Front and had observed a German bombardment from the relative safety of a rear trench. According to Charles Carrington, Kipling's biographer, once the author was back in his hotel in Paris, he wrote to his 18-year-old son John, a Lieutenant in the Irish Guards: "I hope you'll never get nearer to the Boche than I did". It was not until 27th September that Kipling finished his tour of naval facilities and returned home. On 2nd October 1915, came the devastating news that John Kipling was among the missing in the Battle of Loos, having got considerably closer to the "Boche" than his father wished for him. Despite his grief, and the many calls on his time, Kipling went to work on the articles and poems he had been commissioned to write. He had never doubted the horror and tragedy of the war but he had also never doubted its justice. His hatred for the Germans was intensified by John's death and if the fight against the beastly Hun and his uncivilised weapons could be enhanced by a few gung-ho stories, then so be it. □

John Drouot



Lieutenant John Kipling, Irish Guards (Wikipedia)

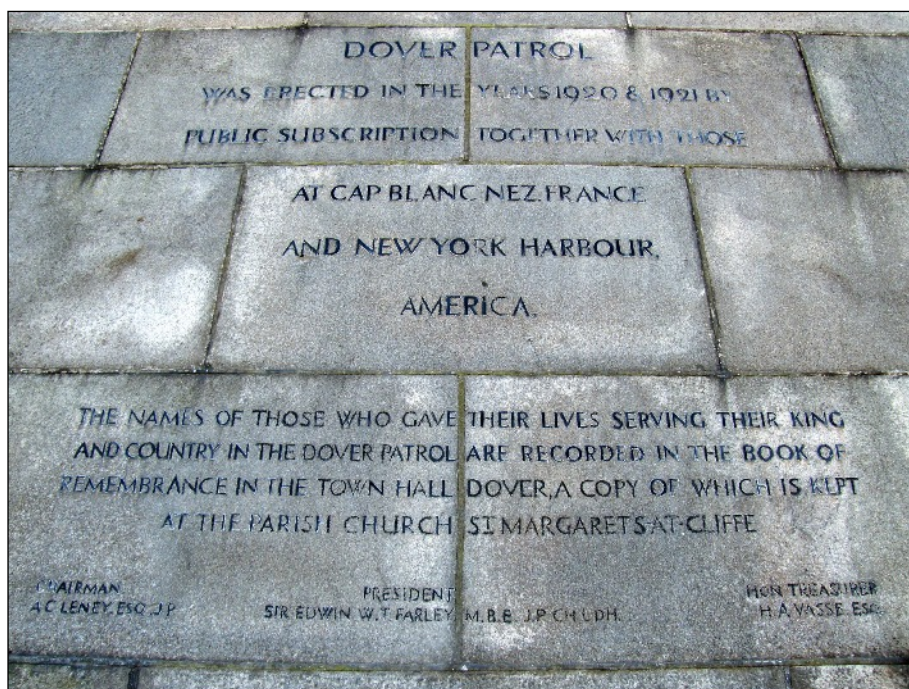
Crested China Models of Minesweepers



Two Crested China Models of British Minesweepers
(both damaged)



The Dover Patrol Monument at St Margaret's-at-Cliffe, Dover



The north-eastern unframed side of the monument

This page supplements John Drouot's article on Rudyard Kipling and the Dover Patrol in this issue of *Between the Lines* (pages 7-10), and shows the inscriptions on the monument.

JB



The locked doorway on the south-western side of the monument

For further information on impressive this monument, visit War Memorials Online and search WMO/120951

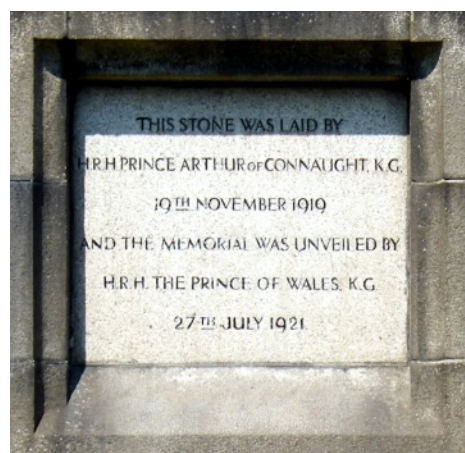


The south-eastern side of the monument (facing the steps). Note the additional inscription for the 1939-1945 War



Two crested china models of the Dover Patrol at St Margaret's-at-Cliffe. The model on the left bears the Dover Coat-of-Arms and the model on the right, the St Margaret's-at-Cliffe Coat-of-Arms.

The model on the left was made by Willow Art China whereas the one on the right does not have a back-stamp and is thought to have been made overseas (probably in Germany). They were both made as souvenirs



The north-western unframed side of the monument recording the unveiling of the monument by HRH The Prince of Wales in 1921

Old St Mary's Churchyard, Walmer

Like so many similar churchyards, that at Walmer has suffered from neglect and vandalism over the years but with a little searching two interesting graves relating to the First World War are to be found. Firstly, that of Midshipman Evelyn James Williamson who, aged just fifteen, was one of the 788 victims when HMS *Bulwark*, part of the 5th Battle Squadron, exploded and sunk whilst at anchor off Sheerness on 26th November 1914. There were just a dozen survivors. Midshipman Evelyn Williamson is commemorated on the Naval Memorial at Portsmouth.

The second grave is that of Brigadier-General Henry Cecil de la Montague Hill (1864-1931). A career soldier with several Kentish connections. He was stationed at the School of Musketry, later the Small Arms School, at Hythe, Commandant of the Duke of York's School at Dover (1920-1921). He served in Ireland with The Buffs, became Colonel of the 1st Battalion taking them to France in 1914 where they took part in the battle of Vailly on the Aisne in October 1914, one of WW1's 'forgotten battles'. He was invalided out of France in 1915 and, later the same year, was appointed as Commandant of the newly-established training camp at Belton Park near Grantham, Lincolnshire where members of the newly-fledged Machine Gun Corps undertook their training. □

John Websper



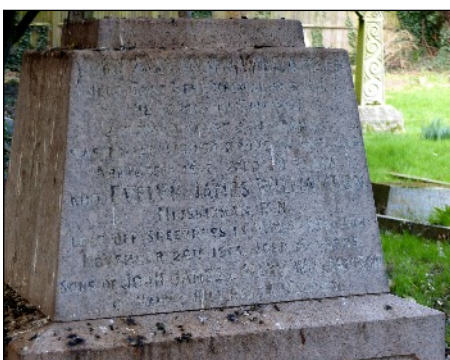
Brigadier-General Henry Cecil de la Montague Hill's grave in Old St Mary's Churchyard, Walmer. Note the Machine Gun Corps plaque and The Buffs badge



Close-up of inscription on Brig-Gen Montague Hill's gravestone

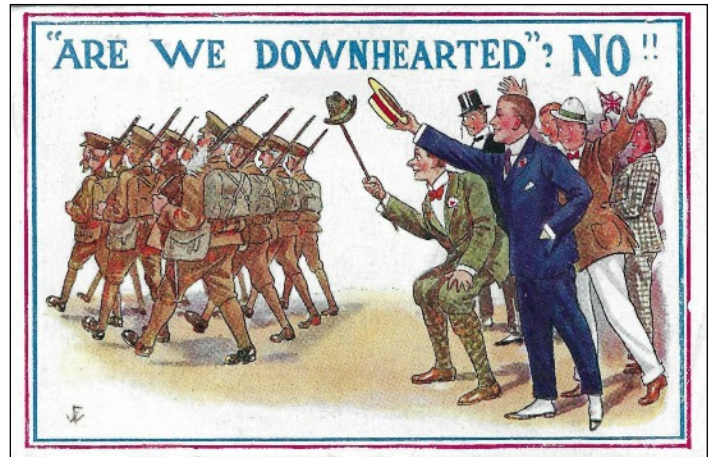
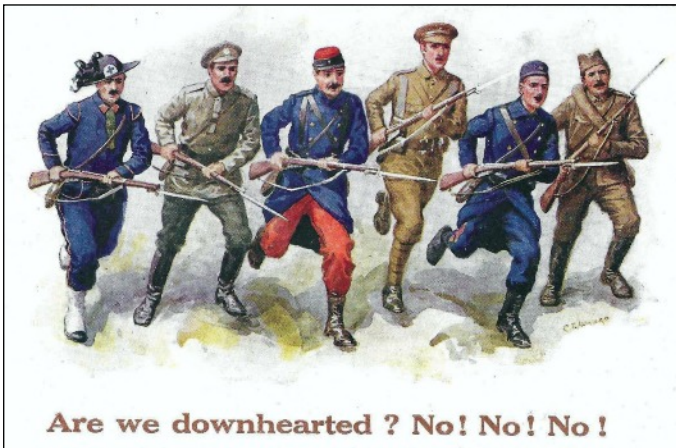


Midshipman Evelyn James Williamson's grave in Old St Mary's Churchyard, Walmer



◀ *Close-up of inscription on Midshipman Evelyn Williamson's gravestone in Old St Mary's Churchyard*

The war-time slogan: *Are we downhearted? No!*

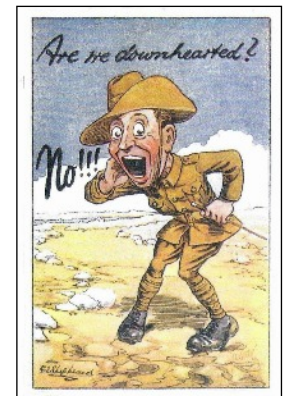


The popular war-time slogan *Are we Downhearted? No!* was sometimes known as the “British Battle Cry”. It to have originated from the popular song of the same name that was written in 1911 - just three years before the war. There are two interesting short short films on *YouTube* which are worth watching. One pre-dates the Great War but the second contains interesting original footage of London omnibuses transporting soldiers to the battlefields to the sound-

track of Arthur Boyton - a popular music-hall singer of the time - singing a version of the song.

Numerous postcards were produced during the Great War featuring the slogan as illustrated by the postcards on this page. The artist G. E. Shephard designed a number of postcards in a series as shown in the strip below. They certainly bring a smile to one's face.

JB

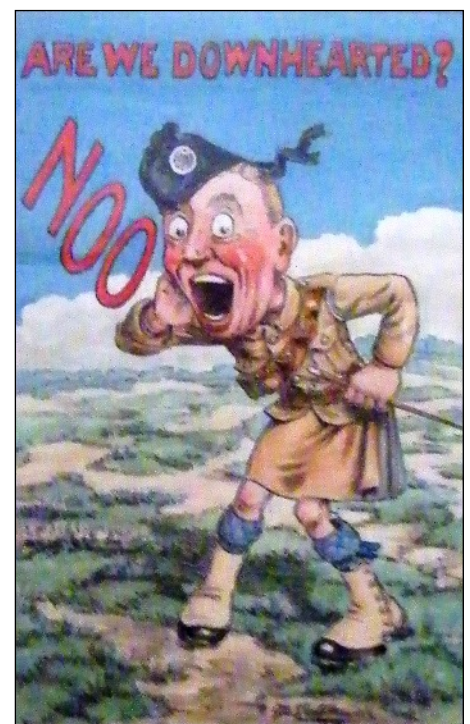


Crested china models of 'Tommy' and 'Jock' with Guildford crest and the slogan 'Are we Downhearted? No!' at the foot of 'Tommy'



This patriotic slogan was even produced as a pendant to be worn on a watch-chain or whatever

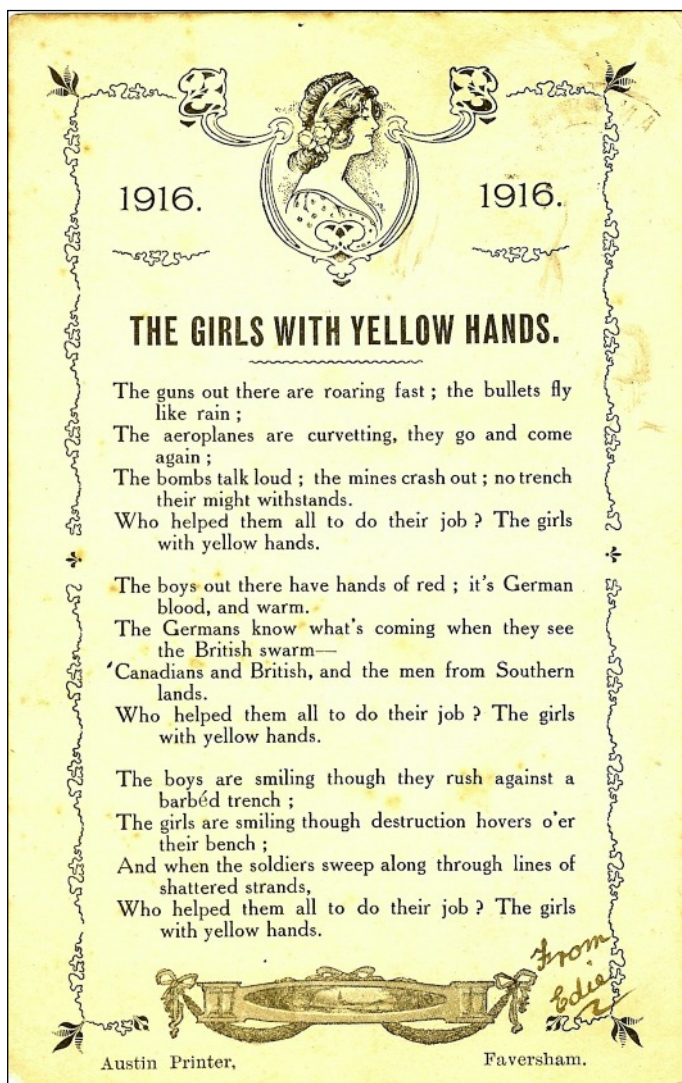
► Very few of the original artworks by postcard artists such as a G. E. Shephard have survived the last hundred years or so since the war ended. Your Editor found this original artwork at an antiques fair at Bournemouth some 50 years ago and couldn't resist adding it to his collection



The Story of Neuve Chapelle - in Mementoes of the Great War



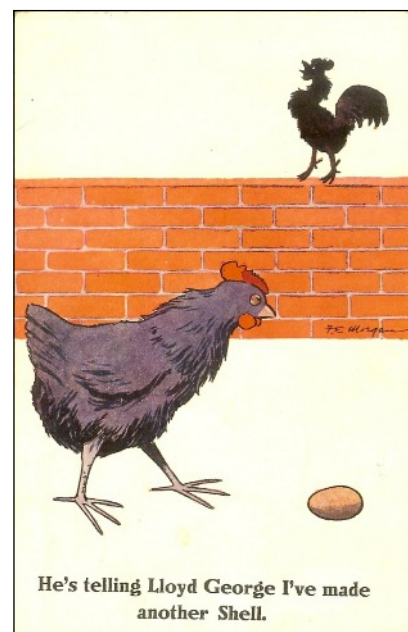
Crested China Model of Cannon Shell bearing Neuve Chapelle Coat-of-Arms - Carlton China. It is not known whether this crested china piece was made for sale in France as well as in the UK



The above patriotic postcard was printed in Faversham where many female munition workers were employed during the Great War

Munition workers were a popular theme of patriotic postcards produced during the Great War.

The crested china manufacturers produced a wide range of models of shells and bullets as well as an attractive model of a female munition worker as can be see below. The model of the munition worker shows her not only holding a shell also wearing the official brass 'On War Service 1916' badge on her chest



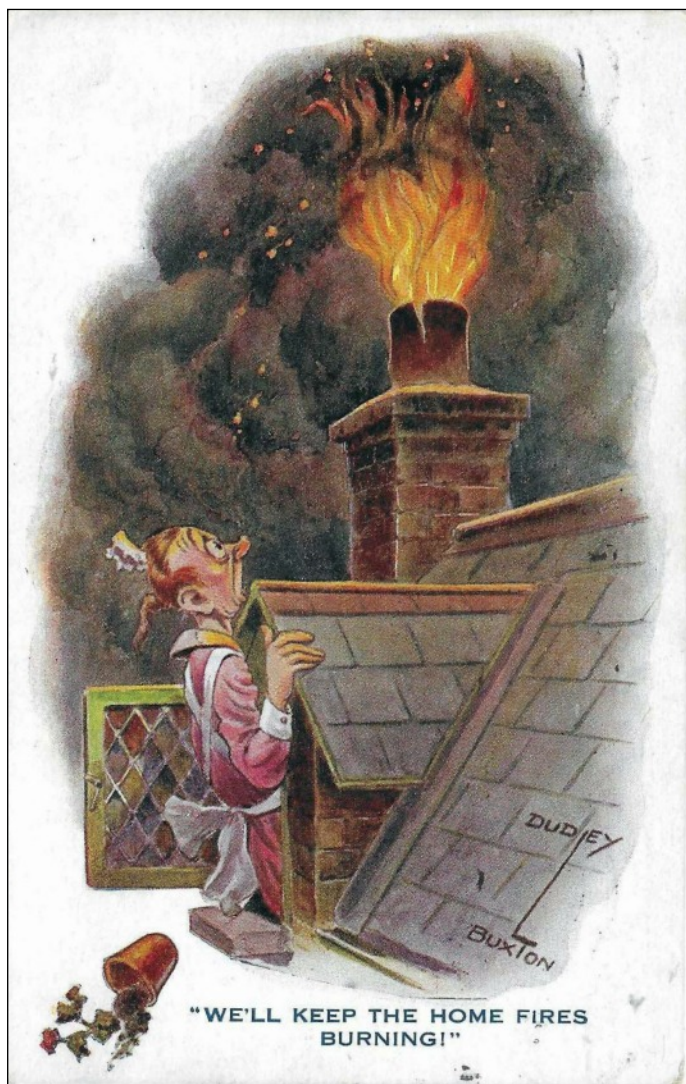
“Keeping the home fires burning till the boys come home” in crested china and a WWI comic postcard



“Keep the Home Fires Burning” is a famous British patriotic song from World War I, composed by Ivor Novello with lyrics by Lena Guilbert Ford, published in 1914. It served as a morale booster, encouraging those on the home front to stay strong while soldiers were away fighting.



Note the homely teapot and the lucky black cat



On the page are shown crested china models of three fireplaces all based on the song “Keep the Home Fires Burning” and bearing the coats-of-arms of Winchester, Dover and Walmer respectively



Front



Back

Take me back to dear old Blighty



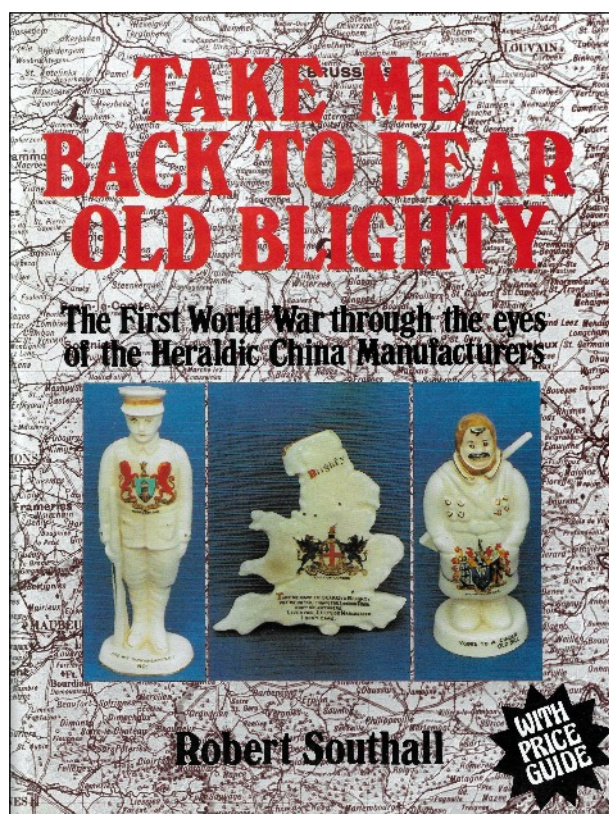
WWI comic postcard by Fred Spurgin



Silver and enamel
Blighty pendant



Crested china model of Blighty (England). Note that London, Liverpool, Leeds and Manchester have been marked on this model. Note also that Scotland and Ireland have been totally disregarded



Front cover of Robert Southall's seminal book on WWI crested china Take me back to dear old Blighty (published 1982)



WWI comic postcard by Reg Maurice

Remembering HMS *Tiger*



Height of bookend 17cm

HMS *Tiger* was a battlecruiser built for the Royal Navy during the 1910s. The ship was the most heavily armoured British battlecruiser at the start of the First World War in 1914, but was not yet ready for service. The ship was assigned to the 1st Battlecruiser Squadron for the duration of the war and participated in the Battle of Dogger Bank in early 1915, though she was still settling down and did not perform well. HMS *Tiger* next participated in the Battle of Jutland in

1916, where she was only lightly damaged despite suffering many hits by German shells. Apart from providing distant cover during the Second Battle of Heligoland Bight in 1917, she spent the rest of the war on uneventful patrols in the North Sea. HMS *Tiger* was sold for scrap in 1932. (*Wikipedia*)

It is believed that the wood used in the above bookend is teak also from HMS *Tiger*.

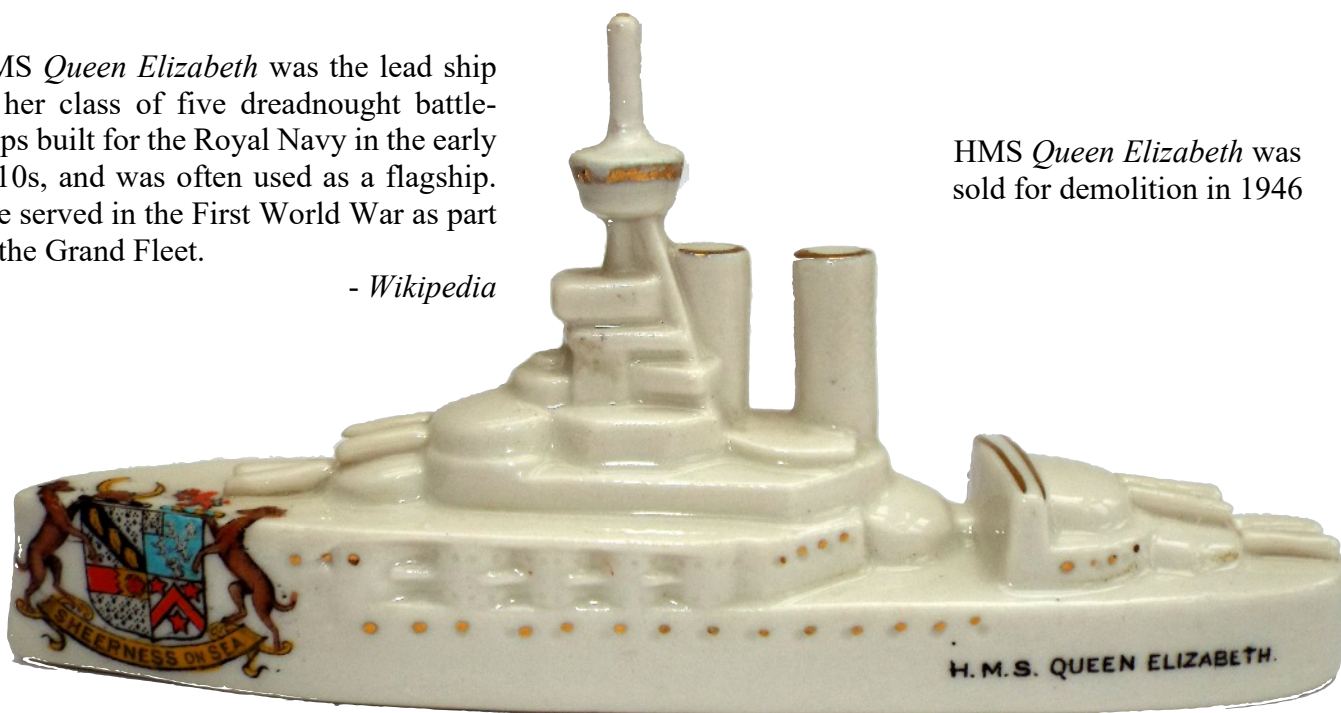
JB

Remembering HMS *Queen Elizabeth*

HMS *Queen Elizabeth* was the lead ship of her class of five dreadnought battle-ships built for the Royal Navy in the early 1910s, and was often used as a flagship. She served in the First World War as part of the Grand Fleet.

- Wikipedia

HMS *Queen Elizabeth* was sold for demolition in 1946



Crested china model of HMS Queen Elizabeth bearing Sheerness-on-Sea coat-of-arms - Savoy China



Cigarette Barrel
Height 78mm



Match Barrel
Height 53mm

FROM THE TEAK OF
HMS "QUEEN ELIZABETH"
DARDANELLES 1915
EARL BEATTY'S FLAGSHIP GRAND FLEET 1917

More Ship-Timber Souvenirs - but are they Trench Art?

Here are a few examples of the wide range of domestic items that were made from the teak of Royal Navy ships that were broken up in the 1930s and 1940s. The Lister Woodcraft advertisement below shows items made from the teak of HMS Ganges and HMS Terrible which were both broken up in the 1930s. The photos below show items made from the teak of HMS Iron Duke which was broken up in the late 1940s and HMS Queen Elizabeth which was sold for scrap in 1948. □



Match Barrel
Height 55mm

Cigarette Barrel
Height 80mm

► Brass plaques
on both of the
above Barrels

FROM THE TEAK OF
H.M.S. "QUEEN ELIZABETH"
DARDENELLES 1915
EARL BEATTY'S FLAGSHIP GRAND FLEET



Pipe Rack
Height 18cm, width 20cm

FROM THE TEAK OF HMS IRON DUKE
ADMIRAL JELLICOE'S FLAG SHIP
JUTLAND 1916

THE "NELSON TOUCH"

LISTER WOODCRAFT MADE
FROM THE TEAK OF
H.M.S. "GANGES"
AND H.M.S. "TERRIBLE"

Carved from the teak of these famous old British Battleships, Lister Woodcraft is touched with the romance of the sea. Each article, solidly made and perfectly finished, bears a neat metal plate naming the ship from the teak of which it is made and serving also to emphasise its romantic associations.

Beautiful in appearance and of everyday use, each Lister article makes an ideal gift, especially at Christmas time. Prices range from 1/- to 7/6.

Special lines, apart from those listed here, are also available for distribution as advertising gifts and can be arranged to carry suitable messages for business houses.

Write for full particulars and lists.
R. A. LISTER & Co. Ltd.
WOODCRAFT DEPT.
DURSLEY, Gloucestershire.

Cigarette Barrel with Top. Height 8 in. Diameter 4 in. With all-right top to take a tin of 20 cigarettes. Price 6/-.

Match Barrel. Height 5 in. Price 3/6.

Turret Ashbowl. Diameter 5 in. Height 12 in. Price 7/6.

Seacrest's Bookends. 3 in. x 4 in. Height 7 in. Occupies the Match Box and takes of 10 cigarettes. Price per pair 6/6.

PaperKnife. 14 in. x 11 in. tapering to 2 in. Nameplate counterpane. Price 1/-.

Wardroom Candlestick. Height 6 in. Diameter at base 2 in. Price 4/6 each.

Tidy Candlestick. Height 14 in. Diameter at base 1 in. Price 7/6 each.

Gunroom Ashbowl. Diameter 5 in. Height 12 in. Price 7/6.

Scout's Ashbowl. Diam. 5 in. Height 1 in. Price 8/6.

Kitchen Ashbowl. Diameter 4 in. Height 11 in. With 20 in. handle. Price 6/-.

Lister WOODCRAFT

Made from the Teak of famous Battleships

Advertisement for Lister Woodcraft products believed to date from the 1930s - copied off web hence low resolution of image



Fire Screen
Height 67cm, width 46cm

► Brass plaque
on back of
Fire Screen



FROM THE TEAK OF HMS IRON DUKE
ADMIRAL JELLICOE'S FLAG SHIP
JUTLAND 1916

The Canadian Mother's Cross



Width 31mm



I found this solid silver medal at a collectors' fair at Farnham more than 30 years ago - well before the internet. It reminded me of the Military Cross but it was smaller than the Military Cross and it featured maple leaves thus leading me to believe that it was of Canadian origin. The seller was asking just £5 for it which I willingly paid as the silver content alone was worth more than that at the time. A few years later, after the CWGC Debt of Honour had been launched on the CWGC website, I found that the medal related to 21135 Pte Walter Lewis Coleman who had been killed in action on 24th April 1915 in the Second Battle of Ypres and that his grave is in Perth Road Cemetery.

Walter Lewis Coleman was born at Llandrindrod Wells, Radnorshire on 20 January 1878. He attested in the 7th Battalion, (British Columbia Regt) on 23rd September 1914 at Valcartier (some eight nautical miles northwest of Quebec City, Quebec). He was aged 36 when he attested, and 37 when he died.

From the CWGC records, it would appear that he was first buried in a German grave at St Julien and later re-interred at Perth Road (China Wall) British Cemetery, Ypres.

It would seem that Walter had emigrated to Canada before the war and that he attested shortly after the start of the war. I found a Walter Lewis Coleman in the 1911 British Census which suggests that he most likely emigrated to Canada between 1911 and 1914.

His mother, Mrs Elizabeth Pryce, Lodging House Keeper, is also shown in the 1911 Census living at Hill Crest, Llandrindrod Wells (presumably having remarried), aged 74. She was living with her son.

The Wikipedia entry for the Canadian Mother's Cross reads: "*Canadian Mother's Cross*" refers to the *Memorial Cross*, a silver award granted by the Government of Canada to the mothers, widows, and other designated loved ones of military personnel who died on active duty or whose death was attributed to their service. It is often simply called the "*Silver Cross*".

Thus, it would seem that the Canadian Mother's Cross in my possession was awarded to Walter Coleman's mother, after the war had ended, and that it had passed through her family until it came on the market sometime in the 1990s, if not before.

Most of these Canadian Mother's Crosses are probably in Canada. Around 66,000 Canadians died on service during the First World War but I have not been able to determine how many Crosses were issued.

The Canadian Mother's Cross was worn around the neck suspended from a purple ribbon. Similar Crosses were also awarded to the immediate next of kin of Canadian Armed Forces personnel who lost their lives in the Second World War and subsequent wars. □

JB

The Canadian 'brooding soldier' Memorial at St Julien, Ypres



◀ Brass souvenir of the St Julien Memorial - probably dating from the mid-1920s for sale to the pilgrims to the battlefields, possibly for use as a pin-tray

Height 12.5cm



1920s postcard showing the Canadian Memorial at St Julien surrounded by saplings

It is probable that 21135 Pte Walter Lewis Coleman (see article on his Canadian Mother's Cross on the previous page) was amongst the 2,000 Canadians who fell in action at St Julien during the German gas attacks of 22nd to 24th April 1915 and whose lives are collectively commemorated on this magnificent memorial at St Julien which was unveiled in 1923. Today, the trees surrounding the Memorial have grown tall as can be seen in the magnificent drone photo below taken by Steve Kerr which featured in the WFA Calendar for 2020. What a super photo it is!



Crested china cap bearing Canada crest and SOUVENIR OF CANADIAN OVERSEAS FORCES 1915



Above photo taken during the Branch visit to Ypres in 2017



The Canadian Memorial at St Julien as seen from the air

Photo: Steve Kerr

▶ Another brass souvenir of the St Julien Memorial - probably also dating from the mid-1920s for sale to the pilgrims to the battlefields



Height 10cm

A selection of Canadian Great War Mementoes



Height 30mm

Canadian Forces cap badge



Diameter 23mm

Canadian Expeditionary Force bronze
and enamel badge
FOR SERVICE AT THE FRONT



Warning on back of badge regarding
misuse of badge: PENALTY FOR
MISUSE 500 DOLLARS OR SIX
MONTHS IMPRISONMENT

Number on back: 225654

(The two images above show the
back of the badge before and after
the removal of the screw fitting)



Diameter of medal 30mm

Canadian Legion 1936 Vimy Pilgrimage
medal worn by participants of the pilgrimage
during which the Vimy Ridge Memorial was
unveiled by King Edward VIII



◀ First World War hand-made Canadian gold-
plated silver sweetheart brooch with pin fitting

Height 24mm



Canadian Engineers
brass-and-enamel
sweetheart pendant

Width 19mm



Height 22mm

Number on back: 57536

Silver and enamel Canadian Great War
Veterans' Association badge - the GWVA
was formed in 1917 and was the precursor
to the Canadian Legion (see badge below)



Height 20mm

Number on back: 1214

Brass and enamel British Empire
Services League
Canadian Legion badge
The Canadian Legion was formed by
the amalgamation of a number of
ex-servicemen's associations (includ-
ing the GWVA) in 1925



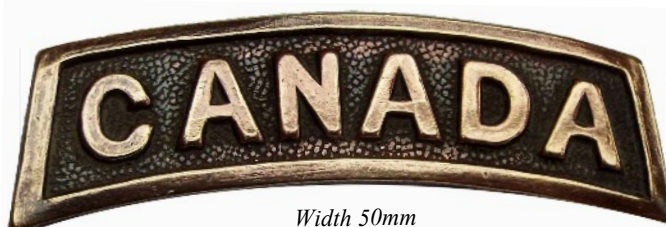
Height 39mm

Front and back of a commemorative medalet
to mark the 50th anniversary of the capture
of Vimy Ridge by the Canadians in 1917



Height 30mm

Canadian 1st Overseas Pioneer Battalion badge. The 1st Canadian Pioneer Battalion was formed at Victoria, British Columbia, in 1915. Note the maple leaf, the beaver and the pick and shovel in the design of the badge

Width 50mm
Shoulder badge

Height 32mm

Canadian 44 Overseas Battalion sweetheart brooch in silver and enamel (Birmingham hallmark for 1916)

The 44th Infantry Battalion was raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba



Height 30mm

Canadian 50 Overseas Battalion cap-badge.

The 50th Overseas Infantry Battalion was raised in Calgary



Height 33mm

Canadian 65 Overseas Battalion sweetheart brooch.. The 65th Infantry Battalion was raised in Saskatchewan

Another Memento of the French 75mm field-gun



NOTRE PORTE BONHEUR (our lucky charm)

(Width 20mm)

It was no coincidence that *Between the Lines* No. 75 featured an article on the French 75mm field-gun on page 4 of that issue (reproduced above)

I have often wondered whether the number 75 seen on French vehicle registration plates was deliberately allocated to Paris in recognition of the significance of the French quick-firing 75mm field-gun which was used so successfully in the Great War when it was regarded by the French as being their lucky charm. Do any of our readers know whether the allocation of the number 75 to Paris was in recognition of the importance to France of that number? □

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)

2026

7 April

John Gilder: 'James McCudden - Master Craftsman'

5 May

Luci Gosling: 'Goodbye old man - the artist Fortunino Matania's vision of the Great War'

2 June

Christina Holstein: 'Emile Driant, first hero of Verdun'

7 July

Sofiya Anisimova: 'The Russian Expeditionary Force in France and Macedonia 1916-18'

August - No meeting

1 September

Juliette Pattinson: 'The First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY)'

6 October

Peter Hodgkinson: 'A tale of two Quadrilaterals (6th Division's attacks in 1916 and 1918)'

3 November

Fraser Skirrow: 'Most of the credit, most of the blame, none of the credit - platoon commanders in the First World War'

1 December

Pip Gregory: 'Wartime cartooning - a legacy of laughter'

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



Another photo from the archive

This group photo was taken inside Villers-Bretonneux school-hall on the June 2013 Branch Battlefield Tour. The tour guide, Andrew Thompson, can be seen second from the left. Sadly, Bill Westall (fifth from left) and John Herbert (on extreme right) - and possibly others - are no longer with us.

