

BETWEEN THE LINES

Newsletter of the East Kent Branch of The Western Front Association

Charity Registration No. 1093915

No. 85 October - December 2025



Founded by John Giles
Inaugurated 11th November 1980

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Contents

Title	Author	Page(s)
Editorial	Editor	2
Centenary Event marking the Foundation of the Old Contemptibles' Association in 1925	Steve Ifield	3 - 4
Summer on the Somme	Hazel Basford	5
The Explosion Aboard HMS Torpedo Boat No. 4 in 1917 - Part 1	John Drouot	6 - 9
Rachel and Steve's race across Belgium and Germany, May 2025	Rachel Wilsdon and Steve Ifield	10 - 12
Historic postcard of St Mary's VAD Hospital, Birchington found at Canterbury Collectors' Fair	Hazel Basford	13 - 14
Photos discovered of the two German Field Guns as 'war trophies' given to Westgate-on-Sea in 1920	Editor	14
A selection of British Bulldog patriotic postcards and crested china from WWI	Editor	15 - 17
Queen Mary's Letter - April 1918	Editor	18
Remembering Nurse Edith Cavell	Editor	19 - 21
Remembering Captain Fryatt	Editor	22
Remembering Yvonne Vieslet	Editor	23
Remembering Gabrielle Petit	Editor	23
Programme of meetings		24
Another photo from the archive: Branch visit to Zeebrugge - Oct 2008	Editor	24

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, 29th November 2025. Please ensure that articles are submitted using Times New Roman font at 12 point.

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

James Brazier, WFA East Kent Branch Newsletter Editor



Welcome to another issue of *Between the Lines*. It is very gratifying that the Editor of the WFA Bulletin (Ralph Lomas) has devoted pages in recent issues of the WFA Bulletin to the centenary of the Old Contemptibles' Association. It is even more gratifying to me personally that Ralph reproduced my article on the Old Contemptibles' Association in East Kent which first appeared in *Between the Lines* No. 76. Since then, Steve Ifield's most interesting article on badges of some of the branches of the Old Contemptibles' Association appeared in the last issue of *Between the Lines* and, in this issue (pages 3 & 4), Steve has kindly contributed an article on the event which took place at Clapton, east London on 25th June to mark the foundation of the Old Contemptibles' Association (OCA) in 1925. Steve is meeting up in Birmingham with WFA members Andrew Thornton, Emrys Jones and Jane Backhouse in December to further promote the OCA. Steve is hoping that the meeting will include a Christmas Dinner and, no doubt, Steve will report further in a future issue of *Between the Lines*.

Andrew Thornton has created a blog 'The Old Contemptibles' Association Scrap Book' which acts as a repository for newspaper articles, documents, biographies and reports from the Association's Magazine, *The Old Contemptible*, pertaining to The Old Contemptibles' Association, its Branches and their activities. If you haven't yet visited Andrew's blog, it is well worth taking a look at on the web.

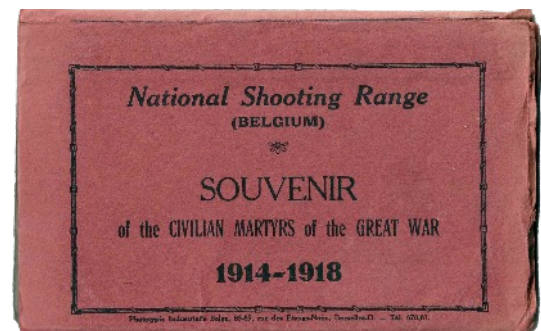
Also included in the issue of *Between the Lines* are: two timely contributions from our Chairman, Hazel Basford - one on her visit to the Somme in July and the other relating to a postcard that Ann Lucas was lucky to find at a recent Canterbury Collectors' Fair; a contribution from Rachel Wilsdon on her, and her partner Steve Ifield's, visit in May to Belgium and Germany - I feel sure that readers will find the account most interesting and wide ranging. And, last but by no means least, we have another very interesting contribution from John Drouot - this time on the Torpedo Boat No. 4 explosion in Ramsgate Harbour in 1917. John has made a detailed study of that explosion with the loss of 14 lives of naval ratings. Part 1 of the story is published in this issue of *Between the Lines* and will be followed by the concluding Part 2 in a future issue. Personally, I found John's article particularly interesting as it delves into a long-forgotten tragic incident that occurred on our very doorstep.

I had hoped that even more contributions from Branch members would be forthcoming for this issue of *Between the Lines* but, perhaps they will be forthcoming for our next issue.

I have shared some of my collection of mementoes and souvenirs of the Great War with Branch members in previous issues of *Between the Lines*. Some members will be aware that I have collected postcards and crested china (along with many other souvenirs) for well over 60 years. In this issue, I have written an article on the British Bulldog as depicted on postcards from the war and produced by some of the crested china manufacturers. I collected the British Bulldog postcards in the 1960/70s and thought that members might find them interesting.

It is not surprising that postcards dating from the Great War feature so often in *Between the Lines*. They cover such a huge field and are still readily available to buy at very reasonable cost. They lend themselves to reproduction in newsletters such as ours yet they are all interesting in their own way.

One set of postcards that is quite different from others is the set of 14 that were sold by the Belgian National Shooting Range in Brussels as a 'Souvenir of the Civilian Martyrs of the Great War 1914-1918'.



Envelope containing 14 postcards relating to the civilians executed by German firing squads during the Great War at the Belgian National Shooting Range ('Tir National') in Brussels. It is believed that the postcards date from around 1930

The postcards in the set depict the 'dark side' of the war and a few of them are quite gruesome and considered unsuitable for reproduction in our newsletter. A good number of the postcards in the set, however, relate to Edith Cavell and Gabrielle Petit and a selection of those are featured in this issue. Captain Fryatt of *SS Brussels* does not feature in the set as he was executed by the Germans near Bruges and neither does the 10-year-old French schoolgirl Yvonne Vieslet - who was shot by the Germans in France - are also remembered in this issue. It is fitting that some of the horrors of war concerning civilians are remembered - even if their memory is preserved in forgotten mementoes from the past. □

James Brazier
Newsletter Editor

Centenary Event marking the Foundation of the Old Contemptibles' Association: 1925 - 2025

On 25th June 1925, there was a meeting at the Red House, No 69 Powerscroft Road, Clapton, London E5 0PT. It was at this meeting that Captain J P Danny, RA. formed the Old Contemptibles' Association. The Red House at the time was the Headquarters of the Hackney Branch of the British Legion.

One hundred years later, I was there outside the Red House. It was midday on 25th June 2025, and I joined a small band of like-minded people to commemorate this event.



The Red House

I am sorry to report that the Red House has seen better days, the roof and guttering are broken and it badly needs some love. But it still stands and on the outside wall is a stone plaque erected to commemorate this historic meeting in 1925. The plaque is adorned with the Old Contemptibles' Association Badge, flanked by "Mons Marne Aisne Ypres". The inscription reads:

IN THIS BUILDING
ON 25TH JUNE 1925
THE OLD CONTEMPTIBLES'
ASSOCIATION
WAS FORMED BY
CAPTAIN J. P. DANNY R.A.
TO THE GLORY OF GOD
AND TO THE IMPERISHABLE
MEMORY OF "GENERAL
FRENCH'S CONTEMPTIBLE
LITTLE ARMY" AUGUST
5TH TO NOVEMBER 22ND 1914

This plaque was unveiled on 29th August 1948 by the then President of the Old Contemptibles' Association, Lieutenant-General Sir James Ronald Edmonstone Charles KCB, CMG, DSO.

You may be interested to see a British Pathé short film of this unveiling event which is available on YouTube.

It was around this plaque that we happy few gathered in the hot midday sun. This event had been arranged by Mr. Emrys Jones, Chairman of the Cambridgeshire Branch of The Western Front Association.

Mr Jones was ably assisted by Mr Matt Colley and Mrs Jane Backhouse. Also present was a historian who has done a lot of research on the Old Contemptibles' Association, Mr Andrew Thornton. We had two special guests, Mr Robert Danny and Mr Paul Danny, descendants of Captain J P Danny, RA.



The plaque on the wall of the Red House



Group photograph of those in attendance

A short service ensued, with addresses given by Mr Emrys Jones and Mr Andrew Thornton. Several wreaths were laid at the base of the plaque before Mr Steve Jenkins of the 17th Pals' Battalion Band and The Leyton Orient Buglers sounded the *Last Post*.

An interesting point to note is that Captain Danny was born Rezso Engel in Hungary in 1873. The UK Branch of the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation has recently placed another small plaque on the Red House to commemorate this.

After the service, five of us decided to make the 30-minute walk to Abney Park Cemetery in Stoke Newington. It is here that Captain J P Danny, RA was laid to rest. This cemetery is run by The Abney Park Cemetery Trust, and I have memories of how this cemetery was a decade ago when I was last there. At the time, it was heavily overgrown and moving around was greatly impaired.

After a stop for tea, we made our way into the cemetery in search of Captain Danny's grave. It was a little better than I remember it, the paths had been widened and benches placed at intervals, but the headstones themselves remained hidden among the undergrowth.

It was not long, though, before we located Captain Danny's headstone. Unfortunately, Captain Danny was not in the best of health and had passed away on 21st May 1928. The Association raised funds from branches and individuals to place a headstone on his resting place and, on 17th May 1931, the headstone was unveiled by Field-Marshal Sir George Milne, then President of the Old Contemptibles' Association. The headstone itself has the following epitaph at Abney Road Cemetery:

ERECTED TO THE MEMORY OF
CHUM CAPTAIN JOHN PATRICK DANNY
THE FOUNDER
OF THE OLD CONTEMPTIBLES ASSOCIATION
AS A MARK OF APPRECIATION
FOR HAVING FORMED INTO A BROTHERHOOD
THOSE OF THE CONTEMPTIBLE LITTLE ARMY WHO
SERVED IN THE GREAT WAR
BETWEEN AUGUST 5TH
AND NOVEMBER 22ND 1914

LORD OUR GOD SPREAD THE SPIRIT OF THINE OWN
OLD CONTEMPTIBLES
AMONG THE PEOPLE OF OUR BELOVED COUNTRY

UNVEILED MAY 17TH 1931
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION
FIELD MARSHAL SIR GEORGE F. MILNE
GCB, GCMG, DSO



Headstone of Captain J P Danny RA

After we had paid our respects, we left the cemetery and headed off to the nearest watering-hole as it was still a tad warm. We spent the rest of the afternoon cooling down and reflecting on our day. □

Steve Ifield



◀ The wording on the plaque in proud memory of Jewish WW1 Officer Capt John Danny, RA which is affixed to the front wall of the Red House and which can also be seen in two of the photographs on the previous page showing the Red House. The exposed brickwork next to the Danny plaque is where a street-sign once showed the name of the road as Powerscroft Road



Summer on the Somme

Every year we spend several weeks in the area of the Somme battlefield, principally to help look after the Lochnagar Crater, as members of the 'Friends of Lochnagar'.

Lochnagar is a very special place. A place of horror in 1916 but now a place of peace and life. Above all of Remembrance. Thousands of visitors come every year – individuals, holidaymakers, WW1 travellers, the curious, school parties on buses, even cruise passengers on buses – and perhaps my favourites, Bikers.

If it is a first visit they are astonished, often horrified. As they look around and learn more, they come to realise what a service Richard Dunning did when he bought the site 47 years ago. Thoughts and reflections follow and I am sure Lochnagar remains long in their memories when they have left.

From our base on the Velodrome campsite in Albert, we usually go up to the Crater every day. Sometimes just to put out cash donation buckets – and to take them in at the end of the day. Sometimes to stay, chat to visitors, do odd jobs (there is always something to do), or perhaps just to walk about, look at the fields, woods and hills, to think and to remember.

The Working Weekend at the end of May is a very busy time. Many more Friends come, a lot of work is done – the Crater is strimmed, the hedge is cut inside and out, tidying, cleaning benches, just to name a few things.

This year we have encouraged wildlife by leaving areas uncut. Flowers have bloomed. We found eight Bee Orchids and two Pyramidal Orchids. They were the special finds amongst the many. Butterflies and bees were everywhere. We heard many birds – Whitethroats, Linnets, Skylarks, Swallows, Chiffchaff. Lochnagar is something of a haven in the midst of the agricultural landscape. Soldiers noticed it too, in the midst of the shattered landscape the flowers would grow - one man described them as “medicine for mind and solace for the soul”.

It is good to welcome visitors. If they have not been before and perhaps don't know a great deal about WW, we explain – and, who knows, perhaps stimulate a greater interest. This year we met a young couple in a tent on the campsite. He had a family member who had been in the area in mid-July 1916 and was following his tracks. His partner was new to this, and he was mindful not to overburden her. But she enjoyed her time on the battlefields. When they left they were heading for Champagne, a hotel for a few days and a vineyard visit – and the Chemin des Dames. While they were with us we loaned them Holts' Somme Guidebook, which they found so useful. I later met another young man, an A-level student on a trip with his grandparents. He was an enthusiastic

student of history but WW1 was totally new to him. Another new recruit, maybe!

It is the stories of people – soldiers, families – that can make an impact on visitors. Lochnagar has many of these. Richard met a lot of veterans in the early days, both those who were on a pilgrimage back to the battlefields and the many he corresponded with, having put notices in national newspapers. Teenagers' eyes may glaze over when their guides are describing battle events and tactics, but when we say “here is the spot where the remains of a British soldier were found in 1998” it usually gets their attention. And so we tell the story of George Nugent many times while we are there.

Next year is, of course, the 110th anniversary. We hope there will be many new people to meet. □

Hazel Basford

Here are a few photos from our Summer on the Somme:



The Explosion Aboard HM Torpedo Boat No. 4, in Ramsgate Harbour

26th May 1917 - Part 1

This is the first of a two-part exploration of the events surrounding the explosion in Ramsgate harbour, of a torpedo on board HM *Torpedo Boat No 4 (TB4)* on 26th May 1917. In this part I look at the background of torpedo boats, at the events around the explosion, the recovery work and the funeral arrangements. In the second I look at the court of inquiry, at its findings and at the possible cause of the explosion.

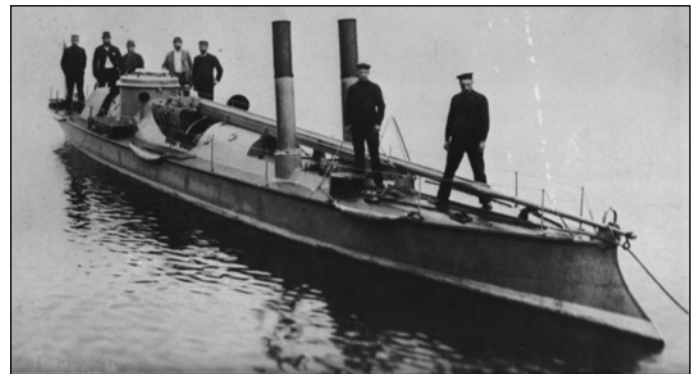
At around quarter past eight on the morning of Saturday 26th May 1917, an explosion was heard across the town of Ramsgate: it came from the harbour. Properties near the sea lost windows and damage was done to roofs. At the harbour itself, ships were damaged, with the 1st Mate of one hospitalised. Witnesses could see that TB4 was ablaze, with her bridge obliterated and her forecastle severely damaged.



His Majesty's Torpedo Boat Number 4 (Imperial War Museum)

TB4 was one of 32 “coastal destroyers” ordered in 1905. It had been intended that she be named HMS *Sandfly* but, in trials, the first two vessels performed badly in open water and were declared unfit to operate with other destroyers. The Admiralty redesignated the class as torpedo boats and gave them numbers rather than names. TB4 was launched in 1907. She had two oil-fired boilers driving three steam-turbines with a single screw apiece, giving a design speed of 26 knots. This sounds good, but it was only achievable in a flat calm whereas, in typical Channel seas, TB4 and her sisters could achieve about 15 knots. She was armed with three 18-inch torpedo tubes, one firing over the stern, one between the two funnels, with a similar one between the forward funnel and the raised forecastle: these latter two had to be trained to either side before firing. Additionally, she had two 12-pounder guns, one mounted on the bridge and the other aft. On the 26th May 1917, 14 men were to die from her complement of 39.

Torpedoes, like mines, exploit the incompressibility of water to significantly enhance the power of an explosion. The term was originally given to an explosive charge on a long spar, projected out over the bow of the attacking vessel. These would be detonated by an electrical charge once in contact with an enemy ship: and good luck to both crews.



A Defender Class Torpedo Boat built, by Thornycroft at Chiswick, for service in New Zealand (Wikimedia Commons)

In 1866, Robert Whitehead devised a self-propelling torpedo which was capable of running at a constant set depth. Torpedoes could be launched from every type of vessel capable of carrying them but it was inevitable that a specialised craft be developed for their use: a small, fast, low-cost vessel which was ultimately expendable, but which could sink a battleship. As torpedo-boat tactics developed, it became necessary for them to carry guns to fight enemy torpedo-boats before the winners could take shots at the enemy battle line. These vessels were known as torpedo boat destroyers, as that was what they were designed to do. Eventually the destroyer developed into a warship type of its own operating as adjuncts to battle fleets.

The torpedo on a stick was the first electronic device in service on board a ship; probably through sheer organisational inertia (aka traditionalism), the torpedo department was to become responsible for all electronic devices aboard (e.g. lights, radio transmitters, telephone systems, the centralised control and firing of guns), regardless of who actually used them. The generation of electrical power was the responsibility of the engine room.

At the declaration of war, TB4 was with the 9th Destroyer Flotilla at Chatham. In March 1915, she transferred to the 6th Destroyer Flotilla (6DF) at Dover, part of the Dover Patrol. At the time of the Ramsgate explosion, the 6DF comprised two cruisers, four flotilla leaders, 32 destroyers, two torpedo boats (TB4 and TB15) and six patrol boats.

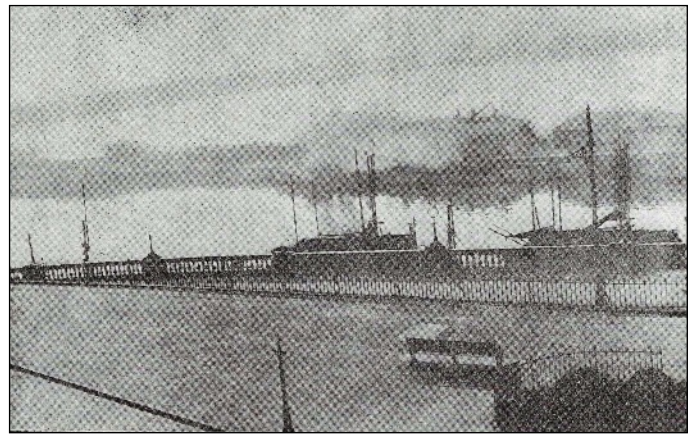
Standing orders for the 6th Flotilla stated that two TBs should be stationed in the Downs at all times (the Downs is the name given to the area of sea between the Goodwin Sands and the Kentish coast). In January 1917, there had been three boats allocated to this task allowing an adequate rotation: two on patrol, whilst one refuelled and resupplied. On 28th January, TB24 sank after ramming the harbour wall at Dover. From this time on, only TB4 and TB15 were available.

Much of TB4's work was routine, boring and tiring for her crew, and wearing on the ship. The pattern of operation was that she would refuel in Dover then, in the forenoon, would go to sea. The next day, in the afternoon, she would proceed to Ramsgate and take on supplies, resting overnight. There were a few incidents that gave her more purpose than standing guard. In 1915, she had bombarded German positions on the Flanders coast and, in the same year, had been involved in the rescue of the crew and the invalids from the sinking hospital ship HMHS *Anglia* (described by James Brazier in *Between the Lines* No. 84). On the night of 27th April 1917, a month before the explosion, a look-out on TB4 reported a star shell illuminating the coast around Ramsgate followed by the sound of gunfire. Her Captain, Lieutenant Donal McGrath, ordered her towards the shooting. At that moment, the monitor HMS *Marshal Ney*, acting as a floating battery at the north end of the Goodwin Sands, opened fire with her six 6-inch guns. Against the light of the star shell, McGrath identified the targets as German destroyers, vessels considerably more powerful than his own. *Marshal Ney's* fire was joined by that of the gun battery at the North Foreland. Both, presumably, targeting on the basis of gun flashes and guesswork.

TB4's 12-pounders were of little use against the Germans whose guns could outrange her and hit harder; her best chance was with her torpedoes, which had a range of 1,500 yards. This distance would have put her in danger of being spotted by the Germans as well as opening her to the risk of being hit by the fire from *Marshal Ney* and the North Foreland. McGrath altered course towards a position from which he hoped to launch a torpedo attack on the Germans as they withdrew. Despite her powerful engines, TB4 could barely manage 15 knots in the five-foot swells that are typical of the English Channel; the heavier German ships could move faster through the same seas. She never got within range and the enemy was probably oblivious to her presence. The German ships appear to have been firing on two bearings: one westerly, the other north-westerly. To the west, the Germans inflicted extensive damage to buildings in the St Luke's area of Ramsgate killing

two residents and injuring others. Further out they reached as far as the RNAS station at Manston. To the north west, shells hit Dumpton, Westwood, St Peter's and the outskirts of Margate.

In the following weeks, the pattern of constant patrolling continued, which brings me to the morning of 26th May with TB4 alongside in Ramsgate. The men on watch had been tasked with cleaning the ship's paintwork, while the watch below were at breakfast and preparing for sleep. The torpedo crews were working around the tubes. The subsequent court of inquiry concluded that the torpedo in the foremost tube had been fired, striking the wireless room below the bridge, the blast being channelled by TB4's raised forecastle into the mess decks within.



The above photo (taken from Nelson Crescent) shows TB4 burning fiercely amidst a cloud of smoke and steam (Photo: Thanet Advertiser)

The explosion killed the torpedo crews of the forward and middle tubes; of the breakfasting stokers, all but one were killed. Three gunners working on the bridge died, as did a signaller in the wireless room, Lieutenant McGrath had gone ashore leaving his 1st Lieutenant, William Robson, in command. Robson had been sitting in the wardroom when the torpedo exploded. He immediately came on deck and stepped straight onto the quay, where he was joined by Engine Room Artificer (ERA) Keates, the chief engineer. Not knowing the cause of the explosion, Robson imagined that it must have been the forward magazine and ordered Keates to flood the aft magazine as a precaution. Keates was unable to do this until the Ramsgate Motor Fire Brigade arrived and used their pumps and hoses to fill the magazine with water. Meanwhile, Robson arranged for TB4's depth charges to be moved to the quay and for the removal of the trigger mechanisms from the middle and stern torpedoes, thus preventing further explosions. He then recovered the confidential books. This immediate work was carried out by the surviving ratings of TB4, notably Stoker PO Howard, Stoker Hill, and two Seaman Gunners, ABs Powell and Crabtree.

Men from surrounding ships hastened to the scene to assist with damage control and recovery work. Lieutenant Commander Barker, from the 2nd Armed Drifter Squadron, threw overboard the ready use cartridges from TB4's forward gun. Sick Berth Attendant (SBA) Burrige, also from the Drifter Squadron, immediately began to tend the wounded of whom the most serious was the badly-burned Stoker Morrow, who was retrieved from within the forecastle by Seaman Kerr and Deck Hand Kavanagh from the drifters *City of Edinburgh* and *Buckler*. Other men involved were: Mr Ratcliffe, the Warrant Gunner of HM Yacht *Ceto* (a requisitioned steam vessel serving as depot ship at Ramsgate); POs Brooker and Ellicott, from unnamed "Armed Escorts". When the Ramsgate Fire Brigade arrived, Captain Tomlin, the Senior Naval Officer (SNO) at Ramsgate, ordered them to flood the fore part, including the fore magazine. This caused her to settle by the head with her bow on the bottom and the forecastle awash.

At some point, certainly after the fire brigade arrived, Lieutenant McGrath reached the scene. In his dispatch, written later in the day, he stated that a torpedo had



*The funeral procession turning from Harbour Street to King Street, 29th May 1917
(Photo Thanet Advertiser)*

exploded, speculating that it had been caused by a bomb from a German aircraft. There is a rationality in this conclusion because, as the court of inquiry was to establish, five conditions would have had to be met for the torpedo to have been fired, all of which were contrary to McGrath's standing orders.

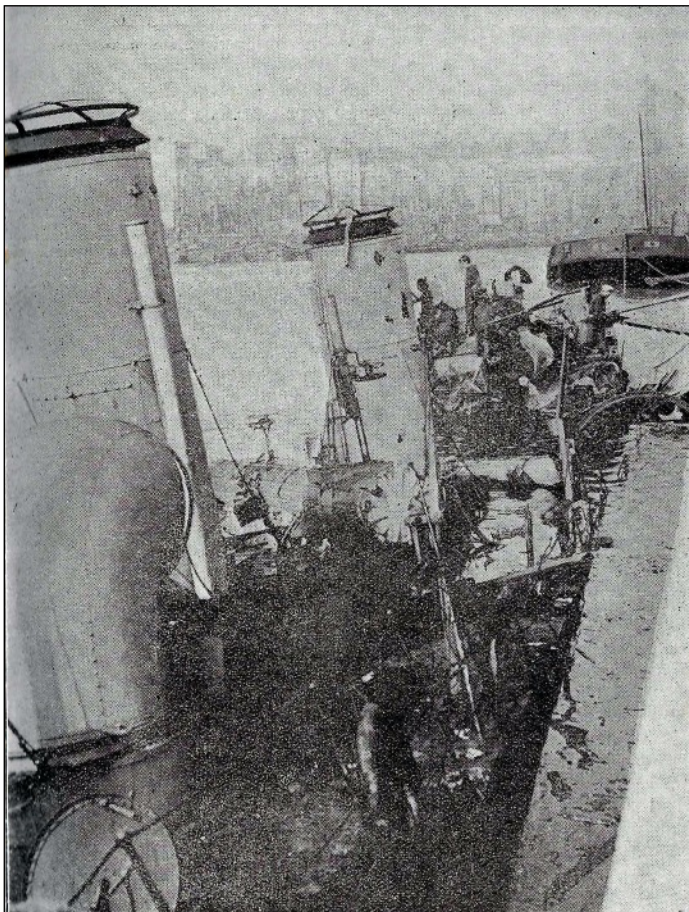
By the end of the day, the surviving ratings, apart from the hospitalised Stoker Morrow, were housed in the Ramsgate Sailor's Rest. By the 27th, seven bodies had been recovered, the rest either trapped within the flooded forecastle, or overboard in the harbour. Captain Tomlin, in his report of the 26th, stated that "Judging by the remains recovered, those in the immediate vicinity must have suffered instant death": a euphemism, I fear, for blown to pieces. Based on Stoker Morrow's wounds, it is likely that the breakfasting stokers had died in the fire following the explosion. SBA Burrige had the unenviable task of bringing the pieces together and placing them in their shrouds as the bodies were found and recovered.

By May 27th, plans were underway to lower the water in the basin sufficiently to allow any open scuttles and holes in TB4 to be plugged. A diver was then to be employed recovering the bodies in the flooded forecastle, before the fire brigade refloated the ship by pumping her out. This emergency recovery work was carried out over the next three weeks under the direction of Mr E. Crossley, an Overseer at the harbour.

Also on May 27th, telegrams went out from the Admiralty advising the next-of-kin of the funeral arrangements. The text ran as follows:

Telegram: Reply Paid

Funeral of your son/husband/grandson will take place at Ramsgate at 2:30 pm Wednesday. Two free railway warrants being sent. Please return them if not required and advise me if attending or not.



The above photo shows TB4 when she had been partially raised from the bed of the Harbour (Photo: Thanet Advertiser)



The communal grave of the thirteen crew members of TB14 in Ramsgate Cemetery. The memorial was subsequently added and was dedicated on 18th March 1918 (Photo: John Drouot)



The inscription on the front of the memorial which reads:

IN MEMORY OF
THOSE
OF HIS MAJESTY'S NAVAL
FORCES
AT RAMSGATE WHO HAVE
GIVEN THEIR LIVES IN THE
SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY
DURING THE WAR.
(Photo: James Brazier)

Presumably the text was altered to reflect the appropriate relationship but, even allowing for the brevity of telegrams, it seems very cold and bureaucratic. As well as this, the Navy was clearly confident that all the bodies would be recovered and identified and the logistics of the burial would be complete by May 29th.

The funerals duly took place. Thirteen bodies, in their traditional naval shrouds and covered by wreaths and union flags, were transported in two lorries from the harbour up through the town to Ramsgate Cemetery. The route was lined by people from the town.

At the the cemetery, the bodies were placed in a communal grave. This was later marked by a marble column and by marble edging bearing the names of the deceased surrounding the area of the grave. The one remaining body, that of Leading Seaman Welford, was transported to Gorleston in Norfolk, where his wife Jessie lived. He is buried in the cemetery there. □

John Drouot

If you have any comments or questions about this article, please contact John on

Those killed aboard HM TB No. 4. - 26th May 1917

Able Seaman	Stanley Beer	Torpedoman
Stoker	Michael Berry	
Leading Seaman	Joshua Bish	Leading Signaller
Able Seaman	John Brookshaw	Torpedoman
Leading Seaman	Walter Flintham	Gun Layer
Stoker	Archie Hennessey	
Able Seaman	Johnnie Heyworth	Gun Layer
Leading Stoker	Richard Hocking	
Stoker	Stephen Judge	
Able Seaman	Thomas Martin	Seaman Gunner
Stoker	William Northcott	
Stoker	Richard Rogers	
Ordinary Seaman	Albert Strong	Torpedoman
Leading Seaman	Frederick Welford	Leading Torpedoman

Rachel and Steve's race across Belgium and Germany: 22nd - 26th May 2025

Every year we try and do a big tour of battlefields in Europe, in the past we have toured Normandy, Waterloo, Verdun and Bastogne. This year we chose to do Western Germany.

We had been planning this tour for a couple of years now, and with an event in Ypres commemorating the centenary of the death of Sir John French, which fell a few days before the Bank Holiday weekend, we decided to tack on the Germany tour for the three-day weekend.

We were visiting four cemeteries in Germany: Cologne Southern, Niederzwehren Cemetery in Kassel, Hamburg Ohlsdorf Cemetery and Munster Haus Spital Prisoners of War Cemetery. We also visited some WWII sites such as Bergen-Belsen and the Mohne dam.

We started our trip early as we wanted to get a day's touring in before the ceremony for Sir John French. We planned to visit Lijssenthoek Cemetery first but, due to unfortunate navigating, we ended up at Haringhe (Bandaghem) Military Cemetery but it worked out as Steve had someone to see there. We then went to Nine Elms British before making it back to Lijssenthoek, followed by Ferme Olivier Cemetery and No Man's Cot Cemetery then headed to the Ariane Hotel where we would be billeted for the next two nights.

We went to St George's Memorial Church in the evening for the service of commemoration of the centenary of the death of Sir John French. We were told by the Reverend Richard Clement that the service would be as close to the original funeral as could be, wreaths were also laid at the base of the memorial to Sir John. Amongst the invited guests were Lady Lucy French and her family and the voices of the armed forces children's choir. After the service, we attended a reception given by the Mayor of Ypres. Afterwards, we all gathered at the Menin Gate for the two-minute silence, where we were joined by Princess Astrid of Belgium.

The next morning, Rachel left Steve working in the hotel room. This would be the second time Rachel has been driving around Ypres on her own so when planning this she felt it better to remain as local as possible starting out at Bus House Cemetery, then to Oak Dump Cemetery, a beautiful little cemetery in a golf course, this is near to where they have recently recovered a number of bodies during an archaeological dig. Buried in this cemetery is Second Lieutenant A. K. Nicholson of the 18th Hussars killed 31st October 1914. He is recorded as being buried in Voormezele Cemetery Enclosure No. 3 in 1919, however, in 1920 the records then show he was originally buried in Oak Dump Cemetery.



The Memorial to Sir John French in St George's Memorial Church, Ypres

Rachel then went to Spoilbank Cemetery and Chester Farm Cemetery, followed by visits to the three cemeteries in "The Bluff" - First DCLI Cemetery, Hedge Row Trench Cemetery and Woods Cemetery. Hedge Row Trench Cemetery suffered under heavy shelling later in the war and, after the Armistice, the individual graves could not be identified so all of the headstones bear the inscriptions "believed to be" or "known to be" - even the unknown headstones have this.

Rachel then went to Blauwepoort Farm Cemetery and Railway Dugouts Cemetery, by this time it was only midday, so with plenty of time to spare she then decided to take a drive to the Ploegsteert Memorial to visit her three relatives (two killed on the same day) who are all on Panel 2 under The Buffs (East Kent Regiment).

The next morning, we left the hotel at 7am. We arrived at Cologne Southern Cemetery at 11:30am driving over 200 miles. There are over 1,000 Allied graves here, brought in from around Germany. We had eight graves to visit. One of these graves was of Pte Harry Mount who lived in Ramsgate. He went to France on 1st May 1915 and served with the 2nd Buffs. During the Battle of Loos, he was captured by the Germans near Fosse 8. Sadly, he did not live long after this, dying from his wounds on the 5th October 1915. He left behind his wife, Emma, and four children. This soldier was probably captured on the 29th September 1915 the same day as Rachel's great-



Pte Harry Mount (2nd Buffs)'s headstone in Cologne Southern Cemetery, Germany

grandfather Pte Harry Coombs, of 2nd Buffs and Canterbury resident.

This cemetery is part of the communal cemetery but has a dedicated area, the main issue we found with this cemetery is that you had to park outside and walk in to find the area we needed, it was not close to the parking. Once we

had found where we needed to be, Steve found his casualty without even trying, while Rachel had to look hers up. The original plan was to go to Kassel Cemetery, however, being ahead of time, we agreed that we would visit the cemetery before heading for the hotel. The sat-nav, decided to take us via the most direct route. All was OK until the last mile, when we were directed down a small track, we should have known better when the trees started to hang over the track, the concrete beneath our wheels disappeared, a large drop appeared to our left and we were driving over tree roots. There was no way or place to turn round, so we had to charge on regardless, we turned a corner, the trees disappeared, and we had reached the cemetery.

The cemetery sits on the site of the old PoW camp, with a large Russian war cemetery next door, there are now 1,796 WWI servicemen buried here, some of these were concentrated here after the war from 190 other cemeteries. We had nine men to visit in the cemetery, among these was Private George Horace Terry - a former resident of Canterbury. He went to France on the 6th March 1915 while serving with the 2nd Buffs and was involved in the Second Battle of Ypres. His records show that by 12th May 1915 he was a PoW at Gottingen in Germany. After three years of captivity, he died on the 21st October 1918 of influenza. His brother, Private William Terry, had died two months before on the 18th August. William died of wounds received after being shelled while on a working party. He is buried in Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery alongside with three other men from his regiment, The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regt). These soldiers died in the same shelling and included another soldier from Canterbury, Private G.E. Uden, who lived only a few streets away from the Terry family. After the war, the Terry brothers'

mother claimed at least George's pension, and their father, Charles, claimed George's army back-pay of £82 3s 11d, plus an extra £24 10s in war gratuity (a total of £5,218 in today's money). What we found strange is that they paid for an inscription "He giveth his beloved sleep" to be on George's CWGC headstone, but they left William's one bare. One last sad point to note with the Terry family is that their remaining brother Edward, died on the 25th December 1918 in Canterbury, their parents losing all three of their sons in the space of four months. Upon learning this we went and searched for Edward's grave in Canterbury Cemetery. Not only did we find his grave but there are inscriptions on his headstone dedicated to William and George. Their parents are buried three rows in front.



The headstones of the brothers Pte William Terry (The Queens) in Lijssenthoek Cemetery and of Pte George Horace Terry (2nd Buffs) in Kassel Cemetery, Germany

The next morning, we were out of the hotel by 7am, today's route was Kassel to Hamburg and finishing in Munster, a 380-mile drive with several stops along the way.

Steve wanted to visit the German Tank Museum, the "Deutsches Panzermuseum", which was *en route* to Hamburg, this is the equivalent to our own Bovington Tank Museum in Dorset. Of particular interest was their full-sized replica of a Great War German A7V tank (if you want to see the only surviving A7V you have to go to Brisbane, Australia, as they "liberated" it in 1918). Only 20 of these tanks were ever produced. They also had a German field-gun and a Leichter Kampfwagen II - a tank designed in 1917 but which never saw action and looks like a British Whippet, at least 24 of these were built.

Our next stop was Hamburg cemetery. It is the fourth largest cemetery in the world, this vast necropolis covers nearly 1,000 acres containing nearly 1.5 million burials, it has two bus-routes running through it. After ten minutes of driving through the cemetery, we arrived at the CWGC section. The plot is split across the road with the WWI burials one side and the WWII on the other. In



The full-sized replica of the German WWI A7V tank in the "Deutsches Panzermuseum", Germany

the building which would normally have the register on the wall, it instead had a font, with the register box laying down and you must slide it to open.

One of the soldiers we visited was Private Charles Neill, who hailed from Dover. He came to France on the 6th March 1915 (the same day as Pte Terry who we mentioned above). Pte Neill was badly wounded in February 1917 but recovered enough to return to the front line. On 18th March 1917, while The Buffs were holding the front-line trenches at Loos, the Germans raided the line and successfully captured part of the trench for a short time. During this raid, eleven Buffs were killed (the Germans lost seven men), ten were wounded and eight were reported missing, including Pte Neill. His PoW records show that he had two bullet wounds, one in the arm and the other in his ribs. Pte Neill lived to see the end of the war, only to die on the 30th November 1918 of influenza. It is thought he is only Dover POW not to have returned home.

On the way-out Steve stopped off at the German WW1 section which the headstones were numerous.

It was another early start in Munster as we had to be back at the Eurotunnel that evening. Our first stop was at the Haus Spital Prisoners of War Cemetery, there is now only one CWGC grave there now, Sowar Ranjha Khan of 36th Jacob's Horse, he died on the 21st May 1917. Due to his religion, he has not been concentrated with the other men. He is surrounded by the graves of Russian PoWs. In the fields surrounding this graveyard used to hold Munster PoW Camp 1, there were four camps in total. From there we drove through Munster down towards Hilstrup, a town on the outskirts. It was between here that Munster PoW Camp 2 was located, and where Rachel's great-grandfather, Pte Harry Coombs (mentioned above), was held. □



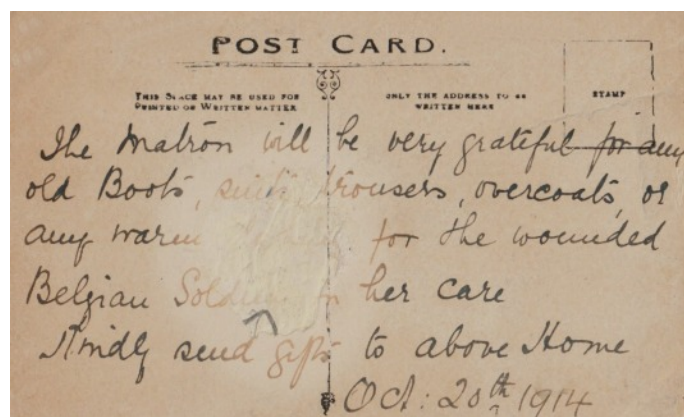
Pte Charles Neill (1st Buffs)'s headstone in Hamburg Cemetery,



Sowar Ranjha Khan's headstone in Munster Haus Spital PoW Cemetery, Germany

Rachel Wilsdon and Steve Ifield

Historic postcard of St Mary's Home, Birchington found at Canterbury Collectors' Fair



The above postcard was found recently by Ann Lucas at the Canterbury Collectors' Fair. The front of the postcard shows St Mary's Home but the back contains a message asking for donations to the VAD Hospital

St Mary's (in peacetime a convalescent home) in Beach Avenue, Birchington, was the location chosen by the Birchington Voluntary Aid Detachment for their hospital in the event of the mobilisation of the VAD. It was just across the road from Birchington station.

All the detachments had been told from the beginning of the War to prepare and to train, but not to set up their hospitals until called upon to.

This postcard has a message asking for donations to help in the work of looking after sick and wounded soldiers. Certainly more than one of these postcards were produced as I found another, with the exact same wording, 25 years ago in the East Kent Archives. It was in a scrapbook² (reference then R/U102/F1). This collection is now in Kent Archives at Maidstone. The VAD hospitals depended very much on the support of the local population by way of various donations.

When mobilisation came, it was totally out of the blue on



Quex Mansion, Birchington

- used for a time as a VAD Hospital during the Great War

the evening of 14th October 1914. A telegram, sent from Folkestone Pier Station, was received by the Parish Council Chairman in Birchington asking if they could take 100 wounded "waiting to start". Similar telegrams were sent all over Kent.

The word soon got about and Mrs Hannah Powell-Cotton of Quex Park, Commandant of the Birchington VAD, was informed. A reply in the affirmative was soon sent.

The Westgate VAD had not been able to arrange somewhere for their hospital, so Major Powell-Cotton of Quex Park told them they could use his house.

Everyone set about preparing. St Mary's was already well equipped. The Westgate VAD called in their promises of beds and equipment they and brought it all to Quex. Two Museum galleries and the Drawing Room were cleared and the beds installed.

Major Powell-Cotton managed to phone Folkestone and was told that a train would arrive at Margate Sands Station (later the site of Dreamland) after midnight. He was the local VAD Area Transport Officer and so set about organising ambulances, cars and stretcher-bearers to be at the station to meet the train. Two of the vehicles were the Major's own cars which had been converted to ambulances in September 1914.

When the group arrived at the station they found the staff knew nothing and were about to close up. The Police and the Margate Ambulance Corps were also soon there and it was suggested that Major Powell-Cotton had been hoaxed! Sight of the telegram soon proved otherwise.

While they were at Margate a message was received from Birchington signal box to say they had heard the train was arriving via Bickley at 3am. Everyone was stood down, arranging to meet up again at Birchington, ready for 3am. Then, they heard of further delay, so stood down again.

Eventually, the train arrived at Birchington at 5:20am. Two Red Cross men were in charge, ordered to take the train on to Westgate. The Major persuaded them that he could take over and get the men off the train.

It was then that it was discovered that their first patients were to be Belgian soldiers.

Twenty-seven men were able to walk across to St Mary's where the plan had been to take in 20. Fifty-five were sent up to Quex, thirty to The Thicket, another convalescent home in Birchington, where the local GP and VAD Medical Officer, Dr Worthington, took responsibility for getting them taken in. A further 23 were sent to the Morrison Bell Home, also in Birchington.

Major Powell-Cotton walked up to the Morrison Bell, where he discovered that the Matron had refused to take the men in and they were sitting on a verandah. It was raining. The Major stopped a local milk cart and had a gallon of milk and some bread taken to the men. He then went back to Quex to see how they were getting on as he had sent more men there than were expected.

Hannah Powell-Cotton, on hearing of the problem at the Morrison Bell went to see what was happening – and gave the Matron there a piece of her mind! She phoned

to ask for the cars to come down to collect the men and take them to Quex.

In preparation the large Dining Room was cleared, mattresses gathered and two continuous rows were laid down with blankets. When the exhausted men arrived they threw themselves down and slept for several hours.

Over the next few days the chaos was sorted out. Some men, including the extra seven at St Mary's, were sent to Margate and to Broadstairs where accommodation was found.

Gradually the hospitals became places of order, sanctuary and healing. Nine VAD hospitals were opened in Thanet. At Quex, their work continued until the end of January 1919.

Incidentally, when I first found Major Powell-Cotton's account of the mobilisation on 14th October 1914, I was standing in that Dining Room at Quex. As I looked around, my mind saw only the rows of mattresses... □

Hazel Basford

Photos of the two captured German Field Guns that were given to Westgate-on-Sea after WWI as War Trophies



Courtesy of the British Newspaper Archive

These two historically-important photos came from the Richard Hambidge Collection. They show members of the Hambidge family grouped around each of the captured German 9-inch field-guns that were presented to Westgate-on-Sea immediately after the Great War. The Hambidge family has been associated with

Westgate since the early 1900s. Richard Hambidge (1926-2011) was a great local collector and can be seen in each of the photos when he was 3½ years old. In these photos, the guns were sited either side of the Westgate Pavilion. Originally, the guns were sited either side of the Coronation Bandstand. The photos date from around 1930. It is believed that they are the only photos that exist of Westgate's German guns.

The photo on the left shows West Bay in the background. The boy on the gun in the right-hand photo is Collingwood - always known by the family as 'Colin' Hambidge - who served in the RAFVR in WWII and was captured by the Japanese and died on 22nd October 1944 as a prisoner-of-war, aged 22. 'Colin' Hambidge's grave is in Ambon War Cemetery, Java. □

JB



Photos: Courtesy of the Richard Hambidge Collection

A selection of patriotic postcards and crested china from WWI featuring the British Bulldog



Most of the postcards on these two pages were produced during the early months of the war. The American postcard shown on the second page was probably produced later. □ **JB**



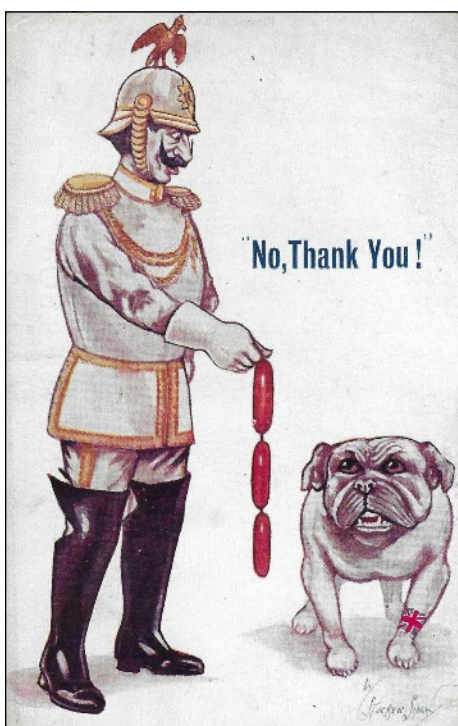
Postcard sent from Dorking, Surrey on 18th September 1914 containing the message 'The German prisoners were removed first thing before I arrived home so have not seen any so far'. A number of German PoWs were held at a PoW camp at Guildford during the war and it is very likely that German PoWs were also held elsewhere in Surrey during the war



These two models of crested china bulldogs are believed to have been manufactured during the war. The larger model bearing the legend 'Another Dreadnought' almost certainly was made during the war



The two crested china models illustrated respectively bear the coats-of-arms of Brighton and Sheerness-on-Sea. Perhaps the smaller model (with the red mouth) is a bitch



Three WWI comic postcards by the illustrator William Stocker-Shaw

More patriotic British Bulldogs - these are ready for a fight!



Who said "Germans"



Patriotic postcard: Who said "Fight"



*Crested china bust of John Bull together with another crested china model of a British Bulldog with the question: "Who said Germans".
(The bust of John Bull bears the patriotic crest "United We Stand" incorporating Richard Caton Woodville's Boer War famous design of "A Gentleman in Khaki")*

This model of a Bulldog bears the Coat-of-Arms of Wiveliscombe, Somerset, and the text: Who said "Germans". It was manufactured by Arcadian China - probably in late 1914



The bust of John Bull was manufactured by Carlton China and bears the Registered Design Number 537470 which, interestingly, was registered in 1909



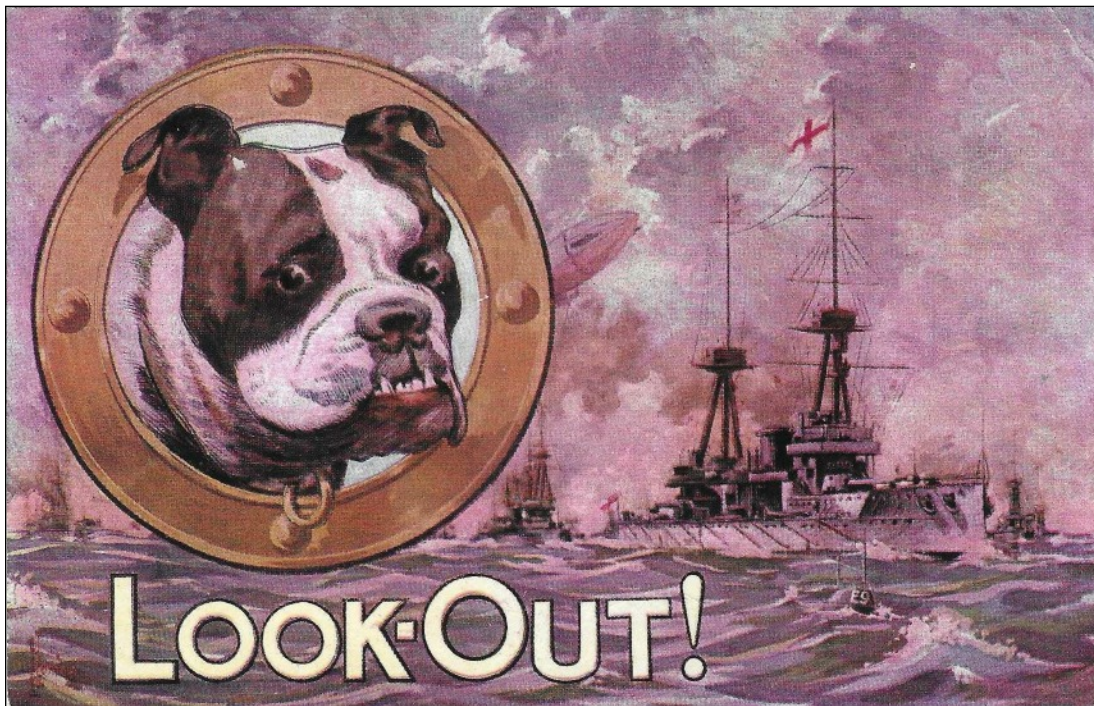
Boy Scouts also defended our nation



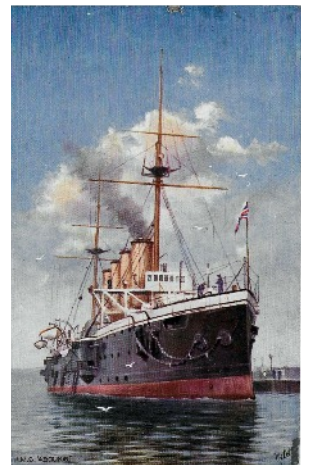
Believed to show both male and female bulldogs



Note HMS England on the Bulldog's beret



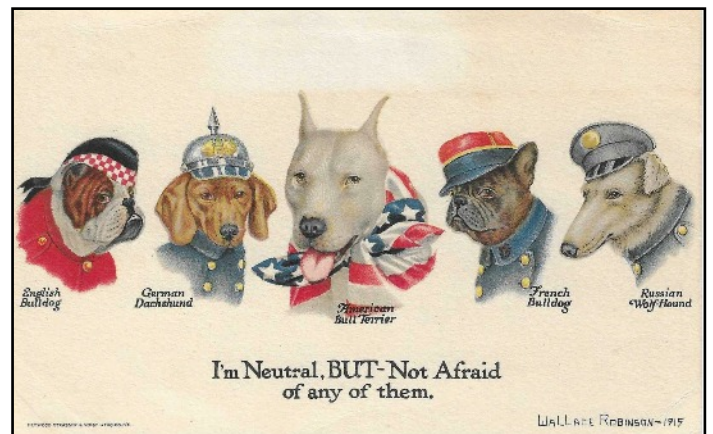
◀ This postcard was manufactured in Canada. It is particularly interesting as it shows the German submarine U9 in the foreground.. The U9 sunk the British cruisers Aboukir, Hogue and Cressy on 22nd September 1914 in the North Sea



▲ Postcard of HMS Aboukir

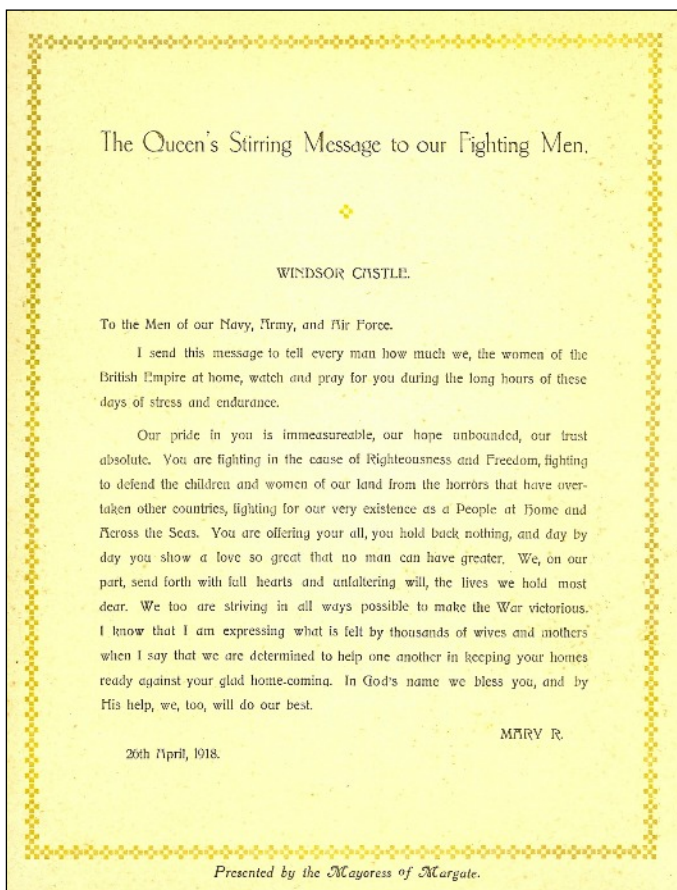


Another patriotic design



Postcard manufactured in USA - when the USA was neutral!

Queen Mary's letter that was presented by the Mayoress of Margate, in the spring of 1918, to Margate men who were serving their country



Queen Mary's 'Stirring Message to our Fighting Men' that was presented to Margate men who were serving their country in the spring of 1918 appeared in an earlier issue of *Between the Lines* (Issue No. 81 - page 12). The Mayoress at the time (Mrs Edith Booth Reeve) invited the mothers/wives of all of the men from Margate who were serving in the war in the spring of 1918 to write the name of their son(s)/husband down in a register showing each of the men's name, their service number and their unit. The register was used as a basis for distributing a copy of the message to each of the mothers and wives whose sons/husbands were serving their country.

For a time, the register was held in Margate Library and is believed to be now held by KCC. Ms Penny Ward, then the Local Studies Librarian at Margate Library, kindly photocopied for me the complete listing which proved invaluable when, more than 20 years ago, I compiled a Roll of Honour of Margate men who had fallen in the war. Only recently, have I discovered that a postcard showing a facsimile copy of the original handwritten message by Queen Mary was produced within a beautifully decorated border design by the artist Frank O. Salisbury. The postcard version - published by Raphael Tuck & Sons - is reproduced below. The wording of the message shown on each of these documents is identical. □ **JB**

The above letter was known in Margate as 'The Mothers Letter'



'Reduced facsimile of the letter sent by Queen Mary on behalf of the Women of the British Empire to the Men of the Navy, Army and Air Force'
Copies of this postcard were sold for the benefit of the British Red Cross Fund

Remembering Nurse Edith Cavell



Height 20cm

A bronze handbell model of Miss Edith Cavell. Interestingly, Edith Cavell's name is shown on the model incorrectly as 'Miss Edith Cavel'. The IWM also have one of these handbells in their collection



Diameter 60.4mm

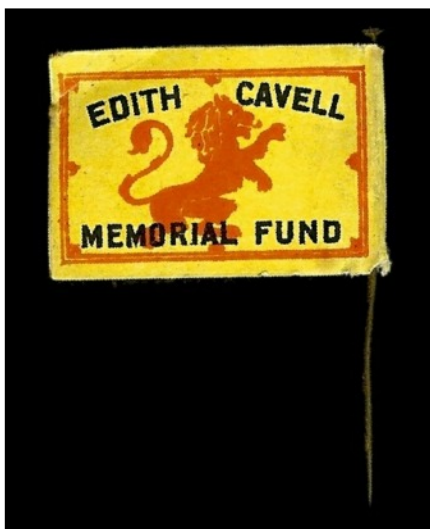


This bronze commemorative medallion, featuring both Marie Depage and Edith Cavell, was produced in 1919 in remembrance of both Marie Depage (who lost her life in the sinking of RMS Lusitania by a German U-boat in 1915 on 7th May 1915) and Edith Cavell who was executed by the Germans also in 1915. Marie Depage was a Belgian nurse, and wife of Dr Antoine Depage, the Belgian royal surgeon and founder of the Belgian Red Cross. The sculptor of the medallion was Armand Bonnetain, a Belgian sculptor and medallist



Height 9cm

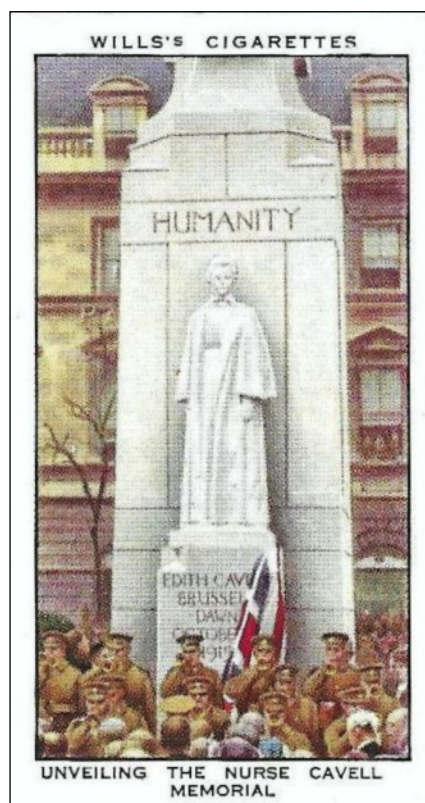
Three views of a bronze paperweight of 'Miss Cavell' holding a rosary. This was almost certainly cast by the same manufacturer that produced the bronze handbell shown alongside



Flag-day paper emblem given to those who contributed towards the fund to erection of the Cavell Memorial in London (see page 19). I wonder how many of these paper emblems still exist?



Postcard of the memorial to Edith Cavell and Marie Depage in Brussels. The building at the rear is the Edith Cavell Hospital. The sculptor of the memorial was Paul du Bois



Front and back of a cigarette card issued by W.D. & H.O. Wills in the late 1930s



Early postcard view of the Cavell Memorial



Crested china model of the Edith Cavell Memorial in St Martin's Place, London - bearing the Margate Coat-of-Arms

The 12th October 2025 will be the 110th anniversary of the death of Edith Cavell



Three early Edith Cavell postcards. The caption to the one showing the Edith Cavell Memorial in Brussels states the incorrect date of her death - it should read 12 October 1915 not 12 August 1915!

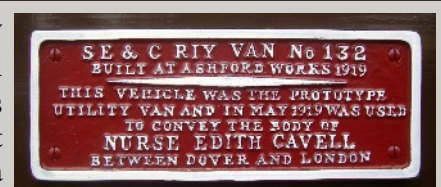


The crested china model of the Edith Cavell Memorial at Norwich appropriately bearing the Coat-of-Arms of Norwich



Postcard showing the Edith Cavell Memorial at Norwich

The Branch made a most interesting day visit to the Brighton Pavilion in May 2011 and, on the way back, called into Bodiam Railway Station to see the Cavell Van, the restoration of which had been completed the previous year. Members will be aware that the Cavell Van is probably best known as the original railway van that was used to convey the body of the Unknown Warrior from Dover to London Victoria Station on 10th November 1920. The Cavell Van was used on 15th May 1919 to transport the coffin containing the body of Nurse Edith Cavell and, on 8th July 1919, to transport the coffin containing the body of Captain Fryatt (see page 22) of *SS Brussels* on their return to England. □



Plaque on the Cavell Van

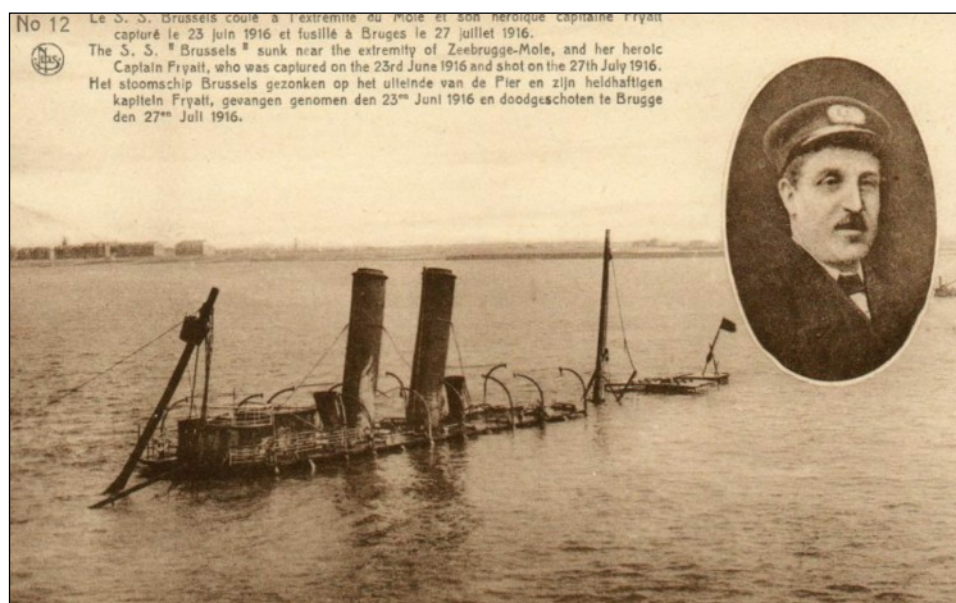
Remembering Captain Fryatt

Some of the many mementoes in memory of Captain Fryatt are shown on this page. In addition to those shown, at least one of the crested china manufacturers produced a china model of his grave at Dovercourt, Essex but the model is extremely rare and I am still looking for one! His grave at Dovercourt has recently been restored.

It was a few years ago that Branch member Graeme Boxall gave a most interesting talk to the Branch on Captain Fryatt. Graeme had, at that time, recently

retired from being a Captain of one of the cross-Channel ferries and had made a detailed study of the Captain Fryatt incident.

In October 2008, Graeme led the WFA - East Kent Branch Tour to Zeebrugge and Ostend concentrating on the Zeebrugge raid of 1918. Because of his association with Zeebrugge and his knowledge of the port, the visit proved to be a great success as everyone who went on that tour will recall. A group photo of that visit is shown on page 24. □ **JB**



Postcard of the SS Brussels sunk near the extremity of the Zeebrugge Mole



Diameter 35mm

Pendant issued by the Lest We Forget League in memory of Captain Fryatt



The back, front and inside of an In Memoriam card published in Sacred Memory of Captain Fryatt

Remembering Yvonne Vieslet



Diameter 66mm



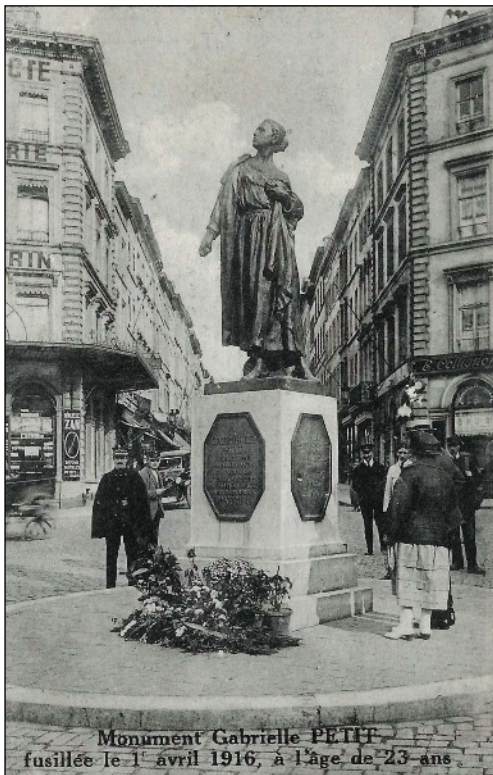
Yvonne Vieslet was a 10-year-old French girl who was shot dead by German soldiers at Marchienne-au-Pont on 12th October 1918. A group of around 20 French soldiers, shabby and starving, were trapped in the garden of the Cercle-Saint-Edouard. Yvonne, along with her mother and sister, was on the way to see her father when she decided to give her school cake to one of the prisoners. Arriving at the fence, Yvonne approached closer but was pushed away by the German soldiers. She then threw the cake through the bars from a distance and was shot by the guard. She died the next

day. The incident caused quite a stir and a monuments in memory of Yvonne were erected both in Marchienne-au-Pont and in the playground of Yvonne's school at Monceau-sur-Sambre.

This bronze medallion, by the Belgian medallist Jenny Lorrain, was sold with the aim of raising funds to build a 'Maison Yvonne Vieslet' that would be a women's centre for French culture and Franco-Belgian friendship. I have not been able to determine whether such a building was erected. □

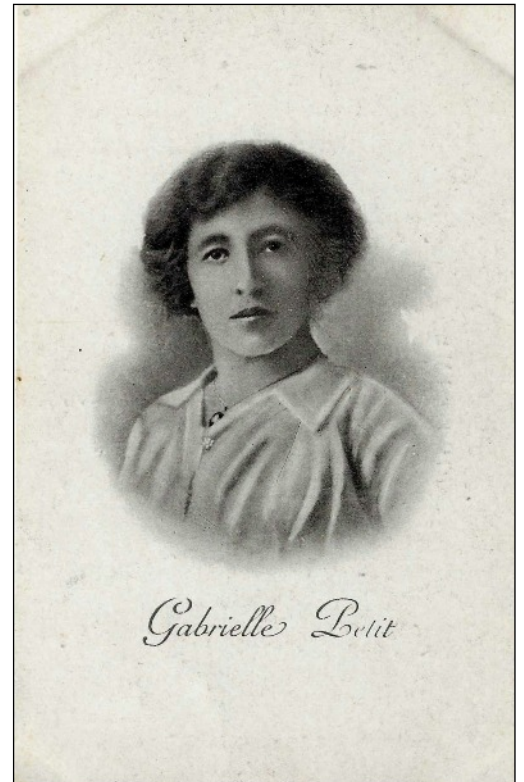
JB

Remembering Gabrielle Petit



The Gabrielle Petit Memorial in Brussels

Gabrielle Petit was a 23-year-old Belgian who was executed at the Belgian National Tir (a military training and shooting range in Brussels) by a German firing party on 1st April 1916 for espionage whilst working for the British Army. After the war, Gabrielle Petit was widely celebrated as a Belgian national heroine. She was recruited by British Intelligence at Folkestone. The memorial in Brussels was erected in 1923. These two postcards are from a set of 14 postcards that were sold by the National Tir after the war. Most of the postcards in the set related to Edith Cavell. □



Postcard of Gabrielle Petit

JB

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)

2025**7 October**

John Tanner: 'A battalion on the Somme (1/1st Bucks at Pozieres & Thiepval)'

4 November

Mark Harris: 'The Naval War in the Baltic'

2 December

To be announced

Members will be pleased to learn that Hazel Basford has now had confirmation from the church regarding availability of St Andrew's Hall in 2026 and that we shall continue to meet next year, as usual, on the first Tuesday of the month except August. Michael Lucas is now proceeding to book speakers for 2026 and is also seeking a stand-in for our December 2025 meeting.

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



Founded by John Giles. Inaugurated 11th November 1980
Registered Charity No. 298365



◀ Another photo from the archive. This one shows the East Kent Branch visit to Zeebrugge in October 2008 led by Branch member Graeme Boxall. Graeme can just be seen facing the camera, wearing sunglasses and standing in front of John Hewitt.

(See also the article 'Remembering Captain Fryatt' on page 22)