



# THE DUGOUT

Branch Patron: *The Lord Lieutenant of Dorset - Angus Campbell*

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESSEX BRANCH OF THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

Your Local WW1 Historical Society

(Registered Charity : 1142787)

[www.wessexwfa.org.uk](http://www.wessexwfa.org.uk)

ISSUE 14

DECEMBER 2015

## Chairman:

Martin Willoughby

Telephone:

01929 553060

[cambrai@eastcote.go-plus.net](mailto:cambrai@eastcote.go-plus.net)

## MEETINGS 2016

At Pimperne Village Hall, Newfield Road, Pimperne Nr Blandford Forum. DT11 8UZ- 2pm for 2.30pm start

### 9th January -

Battle of Heligoland Bight, 1914  
- Rod Arnold

### 6th February -

'Clash of Warlords' - Churchill & Kitchener  
- Rodney Attwood & Branch AGM

### 27th February -

Jeremy Banning -  
(subject to be advised)

### 2nd April -

India's Great War  
- Adam Prime

## FIELD TRIPS:

BLETCHLEY PARK -  
9th April

WFA AGM RNAS  
Yeovilton - 7th May

## BATTLEFIELD TOURS:

GALLIPOLI -  
21st May-28th May

VERDUN -  
15th Sept-19th Sept

## Chairman's Chat

Welcome to Issue 14 of 'The Dugout'. As I write Armistice Day is approaching, many of you will have already attended services on Remembrance Sunday but as we are all aware Armistice Day itself doesn't often fall on a convenient Sunday, this year falling mid-week on a Wednesday. The WFA has for many years held a service of remembrance at the Cenotaph on Armistice Day. Whilst the WFA is about Remembering, something we do all year it being an implicit part of our branch programme of events I think it appropriate to spare a moment reflection on the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month – the day the guns fell silent on the Western Front.

I am very pleased to say that at last, after much exhortation, fresh contributors have at last come forward with potential articles for *The Dugout*. This can only be for the better, bringing fresh thoughts and designs to you the reader. This maintains the variety, interest and pull of our newsletter through continuing enrichment of content. However we cannot rest on our laurels, so do not hold back, the more items that are available for publication the better for the longevity of *The Dugout*!

Further to my announcement at our November meeting our new web manager has told me he is now in a position to start work on upgrades to our website. The aim of any upgrade will be to sharpen up the presentation, navigation for the user and improving our editorial and content management capability through the use of word express rather than HTML, which will enable immediate editing without recourse to the web manager. Your branch has a project team which will test all proposed upgrades before acceptance by the trustees. Progress reports will be given from time to time.

Please continue to visit our branch website as meeting notices are refreshed frequently and there is a wealth of interesting content which is still accessible including meeting details at [www.wessexwfa.org.uk/events/branch-meetings](http://www.wessexwfa.org.uk/events/branch-meetings). Meeting details are also displayed on the notice board at Pimperne Village Hall and also on the WFA national website [www.westernfrontassociation.com](http://www.westernfrontassociation.com)

The branch battlefield tour Aubers to Albert and Somme Points, 11<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> September was a great success despite presenting some singular challenges e.g. The Somme Marathon, the unusually inclement weather and other nuisances e.g. local road closures due to roadworks. With a Gallic Shrug and Anglo Saxon determination the itinerary containing our usual mix of less well known locations was successfully. For a full report written by Roger G Coleman see [www.wessexwfa.org.uk/articles/memberarticles](http://www.wessexwfa.org.uk/articles/memberarticles) then scroll down the page to Battlefield Tour reports and *The Dugout*.

As the Festive Season looms, I hope you all have fantastic Christmas and that peace will prevail on some fronts as it did that first Christmas of the Great War! On behalf of myself and all Trustees: Thank you for your support during the 2015 and we hope to see you next year for what will be another exciting programme of events from "probably" the best branch in the WFA!



Newsletter Editor: **SANDRA TWYFORD**

Email: [sandra.twyford@btinternet.com](mailto:sandra.twyford@btinternet.com)

## 16<sup>th</sup> Bn Highland Light Infantry on the Somme – 1916

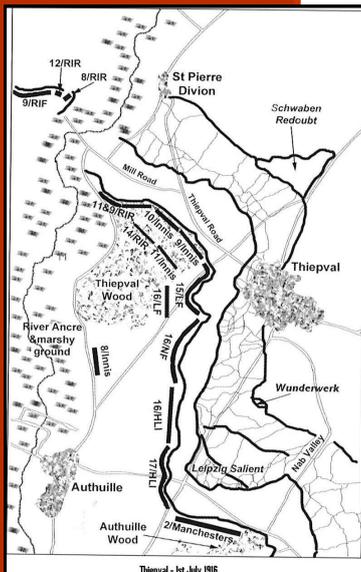


The Battle of the Somme began on a beautiful summer's day and ended in a snowy frozen wasteland four and a half months later at a cost of 432,000 British and Commonwealth casualties. The 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Highland Light Infantry (16HLI) gained the dubious distinction of fighting on both the first and last days of the battle.

The unit was raised in Glasgow on 2nd September 1914 as the 2nd Glasgow Battalion under the sponsorship of the Lord Provost and City. Many recruits came from the Glasgow Boys' Brigade. In May 1915 they were at Prees Heath, in Shropshire, before moving to Wensleydale in June. The battalion was taken over by the War Office on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1915 and joined the 97th Brigade of the 32nd Division. The division was very much a 'Pals' formation with constituent battalions coming from Salford, Birmingham and Newcastle as well as Glasgow.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1915, 16HLI landed at Boulogne. The 32<sup>nd</sup> Division lost some of its 'Pals' flavour when four of the original units were exchanged for four regular battalions, including 1<sup>st</sup> Dorsetshire Regiment, in December 1915.

At the commencement of the Somme offensive on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916, the 32<sup>nd</sup> Division was under X Corps, Fourth Army. The division was given the task of capturing the village of Thiepval and then to advance and take a strongly fortified position called Mouquet Farm.

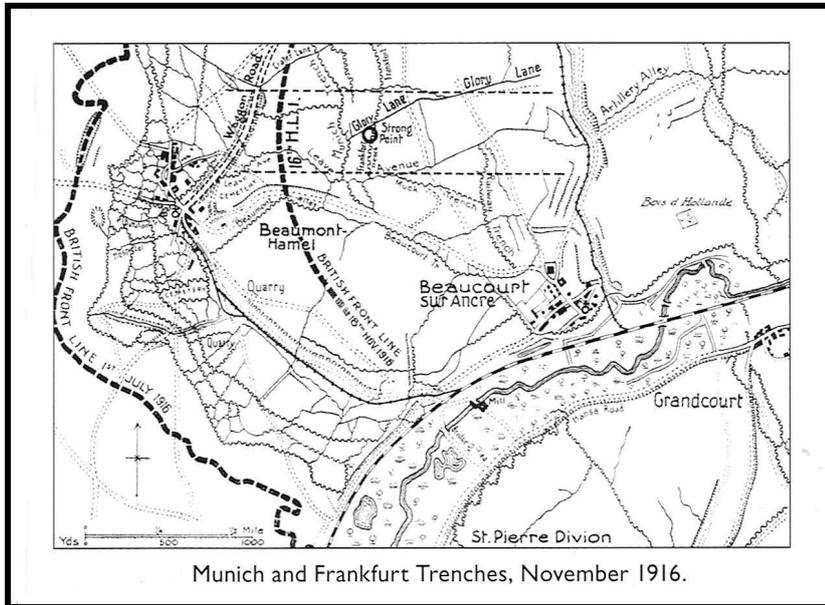


Two Glasgow battalions, 16HLI and 17<sup>th</sup> HLI (Glasgow Commercials), were to spearhead the attack on the Leipzig Redoubt. Both met heavy machine gun fire from another strongpoint – the Wunderwerk. The 17HLI managed to enter and hold for a time part of the trench system at the tip of Leipzig Redoubt, but 16HLI found the barbed wire on their front was still intact and could make no progress. They had to take shelter in shell holes in no man's land. When 16th HLI came out of the line on 3rd July its casualties totalled 20 officers and 534 other ranks, most incurred within the first ten minutes of the attack.

The battalion was again in action at the final battle of the Somme campaign at the Ancre in November 1916 when the battalion was involved in an epic stand just east of Beaumont Hamel. This village had been an objective on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916, but was not finally captured until 16<sup>th</sup> November. The 32<sup>nd</sup> Division was tasked with pushing the German line further back from the village in snow and sub-zero temperatures.

The 16HLI started out for the frontline at 2145hrs on 17<sup>th</sup> November but became lost en-route. It took them six hours to reach their assault position - the backmarkers did not arrive until 0610hrs just as the British bombardment began.

Struggling through a blizzard the battalion set off for their objective (Munich Trench) up to 300 yards away. They were met by heavy machine fire and shelling and most failed to reach their objective. However at the northern end of the battalion's area Munich Trench was only 200 yards from the British starting point and elements of 16HLI were succeeded in capturing a section of the German line. Here they were quickly joined by a few men from 11<sup>th</sup> Border Regiment.



By late morning on 18<sup>th</sup> November it was clear that the attack had failed; those who could were now making their way back to the British lines. The survivors of 16HLI, still secure in their captured section of Munich Trench, had other ideas! Two companies (D and C) continued to press forward as far as Frankfurt Trench. Their orders were to capture and hold it for 48 hours. The small German garrison of approximately 50 men was captured and sent back as prisoners, only to escape when their escorts were killed by shellfire.

C and D companies were followed by survivors from other battalions, and by the evening, Frankfurt Trench was occupied by roughly 50 British soldiers. Some 50 wounded were placed in a dugout under the care of a designated corporal with no medical resources except bandages. Those fit to fight made ready to defend Frankfurt Trench for the stipulated 48 hours. In reality they were cut-off and too far distant for relief or reinforcement.

They had only four Lewis guns, little ammunition and a limited stock of food and clean water. Water from nearby shell holes was boiled, and food and ammunition gathered from the dead that lay about in large numbers.

During the night they carried out repairs to their defences and by dawn on 19<sup>th</sup> they were ready to meet a German attack. To their surprise no attack came. The enemy were unaware of 16HLI's presence until the next day.

On 20<sup>th</sup> November a local attack supported by machine guns and bombs was launched. The now isolated defenders put up a fierce resistance and the Germans fell back, but there were now fewer fit men to hold the position. An 11<sup>th</sup> Border Regiment serjeant volunteered to try and reach British lines after dark to bring back reinforcements.

The serjeant got through and on 21<sup>st</sup> a heavy British barrage was brought down on enemy occupied trench positions around the beleaguered pocket but there was no other immediate help.

On the following day (22<sup>nd</sup>) a British aircraft was spotted and morale rose when signals seemed to suggest that help was coming. There was a further bombardment of German positions, but no relief force appeared and the men grimly determined to hold out for as long as possible.

The sixth day (23<sup>rd</sup>) saw the Germans launch a major attack. Against all odds it was beaten off, but the defenders meagre manpower assets were further reduced. An attempt by 16<sup>th</sup> Lancashire Fusiliers and 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers to breakthrough to Frankfurt Trench failed incurring 250 casualties.

The Germans brought up reinforcements on 24<sup>th</sup> November and under a white flag dispatched a message promising the surrounded troops good treatment if they surrendered. Despite the odds, the survivors refused to give in and managed to repel the subsequent enemy attack.

On the eighth day (25<sup>th</sup>), a heavy German attack finally retook the lost section of Frankfurt Trench. Only 15 men remained unwounded; there was no other option but to surrender and face captivity.

The German brigade commander on viewing the small number of prisoners remarked: "Is this what has held up the brigade for more than a week?"

The 16HLI had gone into battle on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1916 with 21 officers and 650 other ranks. Their casualties amounted to 13 officers and 390 other ranks. The epic stand in Frankfurt Trench was recognized by the award of one DSO, 11 DCMs, and 22 MMs.



Frankfurt Trench Cemetery

CWGC Frankfurt Trench Cemetery now stands near the site of the action. It contains more than 150 graves; the majority are men from 16HLI cut-off on 18<sup>th</sup> November. Five Lancashire Fusiliers buried here represent their part in the failed rescue attempt.

**Rod Arnold**

*Acknowledgement – The two maps and much of the story of the action on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1916 have been taken from 'Understanding the Somme' by Thomas Scotland & Steven Heys with the permission of Helion & Co. [An excellent book about the battle – RAA]*

## GREAT WAR MEDALS

### La Médaille Commemorative des Dardanelles ~ France

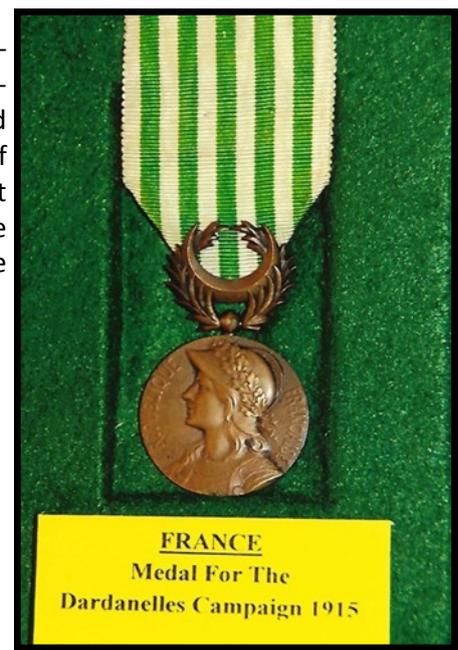
The decision to award a medal for service in the Eastern Mediterranean in 1915 was initially raised by members of the French Chamber of Deputies on the 26th June, 1917. Entitled the La Médaille d'Orient, two clasps were to be issued one for service in Macedonia/Salonika and the other for service in the Dardanelles/Gallipoli. However, the French Government opposed the scheme and it was not until 1925 that a decision was made to institute the Médaille d'Orient on the 15th June, 1926, in a different format to that previously considered.

Two medals were issued, one for the Orient (Salonika) and one for the Dardanelles. The difference between them is the inscription on the reverse of the medals, 'ORIENT' or 'DARDANELLES' and the colour of the ribbon.

The bronze 30mm diameter medal has on the obverse the effigy of La Republique wearing armour and a helmet wreathed in oak leaves. Around the edge of the medal are the words 'REPUBLIQUE' and 'FRANCAISE'. Between the 'R' of Republique and the left shoulder of the effigy in small lettering is the name of the designer George Lemaire. On the reverse flanked by oak and laurel leaves are regimental standards, a gun barrel, symbolising the Army and an anchor for the Navy. 'HONNEUR ET PATRIE' is faintly inscribed on the leading flag standard. Above the standards is the word 'DARDANELLES'. Beneath the muzzle of the gun is the hallmark of the Paris mint and the symbol 'B.R.' (bronze). The bronze suspender is in the form of two palm fronds surrounding a crescent and the ribbon ring attachment. The 36mm wide ribbon for the Dardanelles medal has six vertical white stripes 3.5mm wide and five green stripes 3mm wide.

This medal was awarded to soldiers and sailors of the French Expeditionary Force who served in the Dardanelles/Gallipoli campaign between the 26th April 1915 and 9th January 1916. France committed approximately 80,000 troops for the land campaign, nearly half of whom were to become casualties. The French Navy initially sent four battleships, Bouvet, Gaulois, Charlemagne and Suffren to the Dardanelles. The Bouvet was sunk on the 18th May, 1915 with the loss of 600 men and was replaced by the Henri Quatre.

**Roger G.Coleman**



[Source: French Campaign Medals Of The Great War 1914-1918 by Chris Rippingale, Published by the OMRs in 2005.]

**WESSEX  
BRANCH WFA ~**

**BATTLEFIELD  
TOUR ~**



## **“AUBERS to ALBERT & SOMME POINTS”**

**FRIDAY 11<sup>th</sup> ~ MONDAY 14<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2015**

On a lovely, but chilly morning we departed from Pimperne on a Mainline Coach at 0600 hours and drove towards Salisbury to pick up four members who joined the tour from there. During the journey we were introduced to our driver Brian and Anne from Mainline who liaises with our Secretary, Judy about our travel arrangements. Moving on from Salisbury we made a thirty minute break at Fleet Services on the M3 where the last two members were waiting to join the tour.

Before leaving Fleet Services Brian gave us a safety briefing and Martin, our chairman outlined the programme for the day. Motoring on along the M3 and via the M25, M26, and M20 we were able to watch a CD about the First World War on the coach entertainment system. A brief ‘comfort’ stop was made at Maidstone Services on the M20 before continuing on to the Dover Ferry Terminal, arriving there at 1115 hours. Forty-five minutes later we boarded the P&O Ferry ‘Spirit of Britain’ and our watches were advanced one hour. We arrived at Calais after a calm channel crossing, disembarking at 1440 hours, and via the A26 travelled in the direction of St Omer-Bethune-Cuinchy, over the La Basseé canal to make our first stop in France at Brown’s Road Military Cemetery, Festubert. Designed by Charles Holden, the first burials were made in October 1914 and continued at intervals until November 1917. After the Armistice the cemetery was enlarged and now contains 1,071 burials, 407 of which are unidentified. Two of our members paid a special tribute at one of the graves in remembrance of a relative who died during the war.

From Brown’s Road Military Cemetery we moved on to the Le Touret Memorial and Military Cemetery at Richebourg-L’Avoue. In the colonnaded archway Rod Arnold our Vice-Chairman gave a talk about the deployment and engagements of the BEF in French Flanders in 1914-15. This was followed by another talk by Steve Matthews about his great-uncle whose name is inscribed on the memorial and fought in the surrounding area. Unveiled in March 1930 the Le Touret Memorial commemorates the names of over 13,400 casualties who have no known grave and died between October 1914 and September 1915. Casualties of the Indian Corps and Canadian units who fought in this sector between the foregoing dates have their names inscribed on the Neuve Chapelle and Vimy Memorials. Those who died in the northern sector during the Battle of Aubers Ridge are inscribed on the Ploegsteert Memorial. The Le Touret Military Cemetery, now containing 900 burials was initially created by the Indian Corps and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment in November 1914, used until March 1918 and again after the German Spring Offensive. Portuguese war casualties who were buried in the cemetery were disinterred and moved to the Richebourg-L’Avoue Portuguese National Cemetery after the end of the war.

Time allowed for members to look around the memorial and cemetery before we moved on to Le Trou Aid Post Cemetery, Fleurbaix. Assembling in the beautiful architectural setting of this cemetery, Rod spoke about the assault by the 24<sup>th</sup> Brigade on Aubers Ridge on the 9<sup>th</sup> May, 1915. He outlined the general dispositions of German forces and of the Indian, British I and IV Corps.

The planned assault by IV Corps, commanded by Lieutenant General Sir Henry Rawlinson was described and followed by a detailed account of 24<sup>th</sup> Brigade's attack.

Aided by maps of the Aubers Ridge sector he described the 'bloody' encounter which was 'an unmitigated disaster for the British Army'. For their conspicuous gallantry on the 9<sup>th</sup> May, 1915 Lance-Corporal David Finlay, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, The Black Watch, Corporal John Ripley, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, The Black Watch, Acting-Corporal Charles Sharpe, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, The Lincolnshire Regiment and Corporal James Upton, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, The Sherwood Foresters were awarded the Victoria Cross. Three of the recipients survived the war. Lance-Corporal Finlay was killed in Mesopotamia in January 1916.



Le Trou Aid Post Cemetery was begun in October 1914 when troops deployed in the Fleurbaix area buried their dead comrades beside a regimental aid post and dressing station. The cemetery was used until July 1915 and enlarged after the Armistice and now contains 350 burials including two French casualties. After walking around this lovely cemetery we moved on towards Fromelles and listened on the coach to Rod as we passed VC Corner Australian Cemetery and Memorial about the Australian casualties buried in that cemetery. Martin informed us about the Battle of Fromelles fought by the British in 1915 and again a year later with the Australians. In October 1914 the 19<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade

were ordered to attack and occupy Fromelles and Le Maisnil. Desperate fighting ensued but the Brigade subjected to intense enemy shell-fire and determined infantry attacks withdrew after sustaining heavy casualties. After the capture of Neuve Chapelle in March 1915 the Germans strengthened their defensive positions, particularly in an area around Fromelles, known as the Sugarloaf Salient. British and Indian units attacked the enemy positions on Aubers Ridge on the 9<sup>th</sup> May, but an inadequate British bombardment made little impression on the enemy and failed to neutralise machine-

gun emplacements. As the attacking troops of the BEF advanced the enemy machine guns inevitably caused severe casualties. A year later in July 1916 the 61<sup>st</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> South Midland) Division and the 5<sup>th</sup> Australian Division fought over the same ground in which lay the remains of those who had been killed in 1915, and made no significant impact on the German entrenched frontline positions.

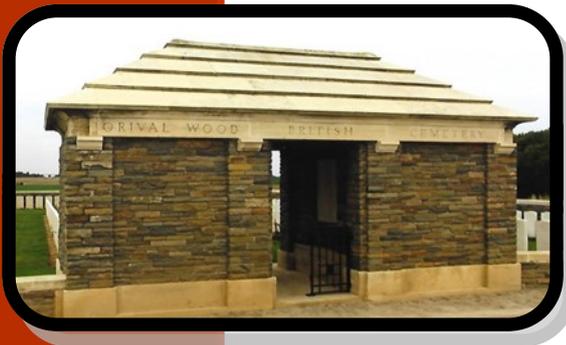
We arrived at Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery where Martin gave a brief talk about the cemetery which was completed in July 2010 and was the first new cemetery constructed by the CWGC in fifty years. 250 Australian and British casualties whose remains were discovered in the nearby Pheasant Wood in 2009 lie in the cemetery. The Germans had buried these casualties in mass graves after the two day battle of Fromelles in July 1916. In the pleasant evening sunshine our tour party enjoyed walking around and viewing the silent rows of headstones.

Leaving Fromelles we drove towards Albert via Loos where we observed from the coach the Double Crassier. Martin spoke about Loos and the relevance of the mining industry in that area and of a steel structure known to the troops of the First World War as Tower Bridge. Today the area is predominantly an agricultural region. As we passed through the French countryside and villages, now peaceful, Martin brought to our attention notable battlefield features and monuments.



We arrived at the Hôtel Ibis Albert, at 1930 hours after a long but enjoyable day full of interest. Unfortunately there was a shortage of rations available to us at the hotel to satisfy everyone. Those of our party who were able to obtain a meal at the hotel did so, but the remainder chose to be driven by taxi into Albert and had a very good meal at the Corner's Pub on the Rue de Birmingham. On return to the hotel the evening was concluded with a few drinks before retiring to our rooms.

After a good breakfast we set out on our second day in France bright and early for Orival Wood Cemetery, Flesquieres. Gathering outside the cemetery Martin gave a fascinating and detailed account of 306 Brigade, RFA at Orival Wood in 1917 and later deployments during the war. His talk was all the more engaging and personalised as his grandfather Battery Sergeant-Major Harold Sherring MM served with Brigade. Martin skilfully blended the unit's history with his grandfather's service. Harold survived the war and was awarded the MM in 1917, the MSM in 1919 and was appointed RSM in 1924. Four of his comrades who died during the war lie in Orival Wood Cemetery. In November 1917 the first burials took place during the Battle of Cambrai and again in September – October 1918. In 1930 graves from smaller cemeteries were concentrated into Orival Wood Cemetery. These included, 20 German casualties, one member of the Chinese Labour Corps, ten unidentified casualties and two special memorials whose graves had been lost. As our members walked around the cemetery they did so thoughtfully and with remembrance upper most in their minds.



A short distance from Orival Wood Cemetery is Flesquieres Hill British Cemetery containing over 900 casualties of the First World War. Time was spent viewing the graves and personal respects were paid at individual graves. Nearly 300 of the graves are unidentified with ten special memorials of which three are to men of the Royal Naval Division. On leaving the cemetery we drove on through Flesquieres, and paused to glimpse a view from the coach of 'Deborah' a Mark IV WWI tank housed in a barn. The owner Philippe Gorczynski, a historian and hotel owner recovered the tank which had been buried in a field at the end of the war. His determination and persistence was eventually rewarded in not only finding 'Deborah' but also discarded artefacts and weapons of war. These are now housed in his private museum which along with 'Deborah' can be viewed by appointment only.

Driving on towards our next stop Rod spoke about the Le Catelet Four. During August 1914 as men of the British II Corps were retreating after the gallant stand at Le Cateau large numbers of soldiers became separated from their units as the Germans relentlessly pursued them. The hot weather did not help the soldiers as "men were falling out and even dropping down in the road in dozens" one observer recorded. Some were fortunate in evading capture others were taken prisoner by the Germans. Amongst the hundreds of soldiers, seven were given shelter in the village of Villeret, approximate four miles southwest of Le Catelet. Gradually they were accepted by the local community and became a part of village life, albeit living in German held territory. The German authorities announced in early 1915 that any British soldier given protection or succour by the French would be severely punished and any British soldiers found in civilian clothes would be shot as spies.

Driving on towards our next stop Rod spoke about the Le Catelet Four. During August 1914 as men of the British II Corps were retreating after the gallant stand at Le Cateau large numbers of soldiers became separated from their units as the Germans relentlessly pursued them. The hot weather did not help the soldiers as "men were falling out and even dropping down in the road in dozens" one observer recorded. Some were fortunate in evading capture others were taken prisoner by the Germans. Amongst the hundreds of soldiers, seven were given shelter in the village of Villeret, approximate four miles southwest of Le Catelet. Gradually they were accepted by the local community and became a part of village life, albeit living in German held territory. The German authorities announced in early 1915 that any British soldier given protection or succour by the French would be severely punished and any British soldiers found in civilian clothes would be shot as spies.

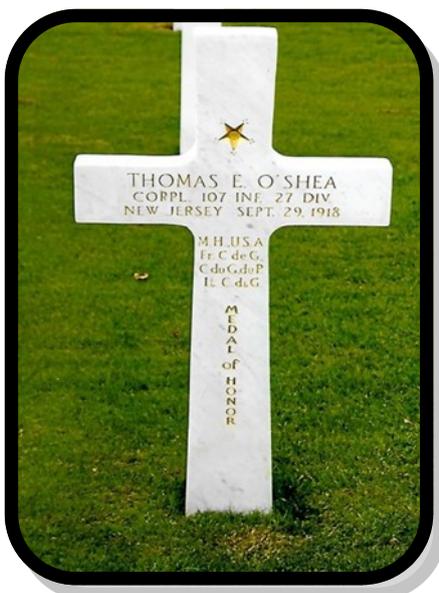
A relationship between Private Digby and a local girl Claire Desemme, resulted in the birth of a daughter Helene in November 1915. Attitudes by some of the villagers began to change

change and labelled the British soldiers as deserters. The Germans posted a deadline of the 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1916 for the soldiers to give themselves up. Six left the village hoping to reach British lines, but three returned a few days later. The Germans were notified of the presence in the village of Private William Thorpe, Private Thomas Donohoe and Private David Martin, who were all taken into custody by the Germans. Private Robert Digby escaped but on being made aware that the Germans intended to execute the villagers he gave himself up on assurance that his life would be spared. All four men were subsequently tried and sentenced to death. Privates Thorpe, Donohoe and Martin were executed on the 27<sup>th</sup> May, 1916 and Private Digby three days later. All were buried in Le Catelet Churchyard. A special memorial there commemorates another soldier, Private P. Russell of the Royal Munster Fusiliers who died on the 4<sup>th</sup> October, 1918.

Our next stop was at the Somme American Cemetery at Bony. Outside the cemetery Martin spoke about the arrival and deployment of the American forces during the First World War. The cemetery was established in 1918 as the American Expeditionary Force's Somme Cemetery No.636, and contains 1,844 casualties of which 138 are unidentified. Each grave is marked by a white marble Latin cross and soldiers of the Jewish faith by a Star of David headstone. The memorial chapel was designed by architect George Howe 1886-1955 of Philadelphia who had served with the AEF. On entering the visitor passes through two bronze double doors, on which are 48 stars each representing one of the 48 states of America on the 48 star flag of 1937, the year of the chapel's dedication. Above the doors is a large bronze eagle with wings outstretched. There are three windows in the chapel one of which above the altar is in the shape of a cross. On the floor is a large star, with 48 smaller ones representing the American states during the First World War. The names of over 300 soldiers who have no known grave are inscribed on the walls of the chapel. Those who were subsequently recovered are marked by a rosette.

Three recipients of the American Medal of Honor lie in the cemetery: First Lieutenant William B. Turner, Corporal Thomas O'Shea and Private Robert L. Blackwell – their crosses are inscribed in gold lettering. Also buried in the cemetery is Nurse Helen Fairchild, of the US Army Reserve who died in January 1918, Rifleman Samuel D. Hill, a New Zealander serving with the US forces accidentally killed in June 1918 and Lieutenant J. Grantley Hall an American who served in the RAF. He died on the 8<sup>th</sup> August, 1918.

Leaving Bony we drove on to the American Memorial, a mile to the north of the village of Bellicourt. The impressive memorial is reached by ascending a flight of stone steps. It is erected above the 6-kilometre (3.8-miles) long St Quentin canal tunnel built by Napoleon. The 92.5-kilometre (57.5-mile) long St Quentin Canal was begun in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and completed in 1810. The canal tunnel was incorporated into the Hindenburg Line by the Germans during the First World War. On the western face of the memorial is a large relief map of the surrounding area where the AEF Divisions – serving as part of the British Army – were deployed. Below the map is an orientation table with arrows pointing out the features of the battlefield. The memorial commemorates 90,000 American troops who served in battle with the British Army in France during 1917 and 1918. Martin spoke about the AEF Divisions in France and of the fighting in the area. On completion of his talk rain began to fall, lightly at first and by the time we boarded our coach the heavens open up. This disrupted our programme for the day. However, flexibility and adaptability being in the forefront of our minds Martin revised our plans and decided to visit The Historical Museum of the Great War, Péronne. A short stop was made on the outskirts of St Quentin to purchase 'rations' for lunch. At Péronne, Brian was unable to park our coach near to the museum as access roads had been closed for a concert in the town square.



Not to be outdone we turned around and drove to Albert via the D938 arriving there in mid-afternoon. A very enjoyable couple of hours were spent in The Somme 1916 Museum and afterwards some members visited The Basilica Notre Dame de Brebières. Before leaving Albert for our hotel we enjoyed suitable refreshments at a local café. Once back at the hotel some members chose to dine in Albert and were driven into town by Brian on the understanding that they made their own way back. Others enjoyed a set meal at the hotel ending a thought provoking and pleasurable day.

On coming down for breakfast on Sunday morning, news percolated that one of our members had slipped over in his room and sustained an injury to his right arm. After being examined by the French ambulance service our 'casualty' was taken to Péronne hospital for further treatment. It was intended to leave the hotel at 0900 hours but one member, subsequently nicknamed "Late Nick" over slept and had to be roused from his deep sleep. He took our jest graciously and we set off for the Lochnagar Crater.



The crater which is privately owned was bought by Richard Dunning on the 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1978 and is supported by the Friends of Lochnagar who give their time and raise funds to preserve the site. It is quite an awe-inspiring feature some 300 feet in diameter and 70 feet deep created by the explosion of 60,000lbs of ammonal, detonated at 0728 hours on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916. The mine was laid by the 179<sup>th</sup> Tunnelling Company, Royal Engineers under a German position called "Schwaben Höhe". Today it is very peaceful and quiet almost as if in homage to the death and destruction the explosion caused. The friends have instituted a plaque sponsorship scheme to commemorate those of all nations who

fell or survived the war. The plaques are inscribed with the veterans name, rank, number, branch of service, decorations, date of birth and death. For a relatively modest fee of £25 you sponsor a plank on the duck-board walkway around the crater to which the plaque is fixed.

It was our intention on leaving the Lochnagar Crater to stop at the Dorsetshire Regiment Memorial near the village of Authuille. Our best efforts to get to the memorial were thwarted by marathon runners, the intransigence of French officialdom and road closures around the area. We tried from all points of the compass to reach the memorial but had to abandon the attempt and drove instead to Péronne to collect our 'casualty' from the hospital there.

Having failed the previous day to gain access to the museum at Péronne we more fortunate and were able to park our coach quite close to The Historial Museum. Members spent two hours in the museum which displays many fascinating artefacts and material of the First World War. Leaving Péronne we drove to the village of Francilly-Selency. As we passed the village church, Martin brought to our attention a memorial erected in June 1996 to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Battalions of the Manchester Regiment who fought on Manchester Hill in 1917 and 1918 respectively.

A relatively new French road complex and landscaping has changed the outline of the 'Hill'. We stopped opposite the Manchester Quarry where Rod gave an extensive account of the deployment of the 2nd Battalion, Manchester Regiment in 1917 and the 16th Battalion in 1918. The latter battalion faced the onslaught of the German 1918 Spring Offensive. Rod quoted extracts from the War Diary and of the orders from Division to Lieutenant-Colonel Wilfred Elstob, the commanding officer of the 16th Battalion. After a heroic stand in defending Manchester Hill of the 8 officers and 160 other ranks deployed only 2 officers and 15 other ranks survived the encounter. For his conspicuous gallantry and self-sacrifice Lieutenant-Colonel Elstob was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross. His body was not recovered from the battlefield and his name is inscribed on the Pozieres Memorial ~ (Panels 64-67). During the previous year on the 3rd-4th April, 1917 Major Frederick Lumsden of the Royal Marine Artillery was awarded the Victoria Cross for his conspicuous bravery near Francilly-Selency. Leading four artillery parties and troops of the 15th Battalion, Highland Light Infantry they brought in six guns captured from the enemy which had been left in a dug-in position in advance of the British line. He was killed near Arras on the 4th June, 1918.

Martin gave another absorbing talk about the 24th and 61st Divisions who mounted a stubborn defence on the 21st March, 1918 during the Battle of St Quentin quoting from Sir Douglas Haig's despatches and about the heavy fighting in the area around Maissemy. He also related details about the raising of the 8th Battalion, Royal West Kent Regiment, their training and subsequent arrival in France during 1915. They later participated in the Battle of St Quentin, Cambrai and in the Final Advance to Victory. On conclusion of his talk he mentioned the 'Forgotten VC' Lance-Corporal John Sayer of the 8th Battalion, Royal West Surrey Regiment (The Queens) who displayed a remarkable example of gallantry on the 21st March, 1918 at Le Verguier where he held the battalion's flank against an overwhelming enemy force. Sadly he died from his wounds a few weeks later on the 18th April and lies buried in Le Cateau Military Cemetery.

Rain once again began to fall as we arrived at Maissemy German War Cemetery – Maissemy Soldatenfriedhof. On the coach Martin spoke about the creation and upkeep of the second largest German military cemetery of the First World War. The French began in 1924 to concentrate German casualties from within a 30-kilometre radius of Maissemy into the cemetery. Most of the casualties had died in the period July-November 1916 and in the Spring Offensive of 1918. Others had died during the subsequent battles fought during the Allied advance later in the same year. There are 30,478 German casualties of the First World War buried in the cemetery. Two mass graves contain 15,000 and plaques name those who are known amongst them. Inaugurated in July 1935, a memorial hall built of golden Darching Tuff a Bavarian broken stone, houses a bronze sarcophagus and a vaulted mosaic ceiling of 340,000 pieces. In 1960 a Franco-German War Graves agreement allowed the German War Graves Commission to finalise a design for military cemeteries in France and Belgium. In the early 1970s the temporary wooden markers in the cemetery were replaced with crosses of Belgian granite and engraved with casualties name and date of death. On completion of the work the cities and towns of the Ruhr renewed their financial sponsorship. They had originally sponsored the cemetery in 1934-35 but all work was stopped on the outbreak of the Second World War. The central aisle leading up to the Memorial Hall has on either side large carved turf stones bearing the coat of arms of the Ruhr sponsors. The cemetery is now in the care of German War Graves Authority.

From Maissemy we drove via Péronne to the Pozieres Memorial and Cemetery, outside of which Rod gave us short talk. The Memorial commemorates 14,691 casualties including 300 of the South African Forces who have no known grave.

Three Victoria Cross recipients are commemorated on the Pozieres Memorial: Lieutenant-Colonel W. Elstob, 16th Battalion, Manchester Regiment, Second Lieutenant E. De Wind, 15th Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles and Private H.G. Columbine, 9th Squadron, MGC (Cavalry). Sergeant C.C. Castleton V.C., 5th Company, Australian MGC, originally from Lowestoft lies buried in the cemetery – Plot IV, Row L, Grave No.43. The cemetery and memorial was designed by Mr. W.H. Cowlshaw with sculpture by Laurence Turner. It was unveiled by Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien in August 1930.

Despite the weather we were able to reach the Dorsetshire Regiment Memorial, the roads being clear of runners and marshals. At the memorial in heavy rain a Wessex Branch WFA wreath was laid followed by a short service of remembrance, exhortation followed by two minutes silence. The last visit of the day was to the Butte de Warlincourt purchased by the WFA in 1990. On a previous visit the whole site was a shambles and did not reflect well on the WFA nationally. After representations were made it has now been brought up to a standard expected by WFA membership. After spending time at the Butte we returned to the Ibis Hotel for a socially relaxing evening.



After all our baggage had been loaded on to the coach by Brian we left Albert travelling towards Doullens arriving there at 0950 hours. Approaching Doullens, Martin spoke about the Hôtel de Ville and the important meeting held there on the 26th March, 1918. Senior military and political leaders from France and Great Britain gathered at the hotel to prioritise the way forward for both countries as the German Spring Offensive surged through Allied lines. Those present were



President Raymond Poincaré, Georges Clemenceau, General Henri Mordarq, General Ferdinand Foch, General Maxime Weygand, General Paul-Louis Duparge, General Philippe Petain, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, General Sir Henry Wilson and Alfred Milner, Secretary of State for War. Differences had arisen between the British and French army staffs and at the meeting a compromise was reached at the suggestion of Douglas Haig who stated that he would 'follow any advice General Foch would care to give'. Clemenceau proposed and it was agreed that Foch would act as an overall Commander-in-Chief to ensure that the British and French Armies collaborated in the objective of defeating the German Army.

We entered the Hôtel de Ville, where in the entrance hall memorial tablets around the walls commemorate French casualties who died in both world wars. Ascending the grand staircase to the great hall on the first floor the visitor's eyes are drawn upwards to a magnificent stained glass window. The great hall has large dividing doors which can be closed to make smaller chambers in one of which the historic meeting took place.

On the table in the centre of the chamber are eight place names and photographs of those who sat around it. The chamber is dominated by another stained glass window depicting the meeting. Around the walls hang some paintings and small sculpted busts adorn a mantelpiece and furniture. Members spent considerable time in the chamber and a group photograph was taken to mark our visit which was full of historic interest.

Our battlefield tour was more or less concluded and we left Doullens at 1045 hours for Calais.



Unable to follow the major road from the town we followed a *déviation* through the lovely French autumnal countryside. There was a bonus to the detour in that we passed through a number of villages many of which had buildings of notably architectural interest, some dating from the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Eventually we joined the A26 and were welcomed by heavy showers as we approached the coast. It was during one of these showers that a crack began to appear in the

coach's windscreen which lengthened as we sped along. A replacement windscreen would be required at significant cost when the coach arrived back at Mainlines depot.

At 1245 hours we stopped for 'special rations and supplies' at Pidou and also for refreshments before proceeding to the ferry terminal. By 1400 hours we had passed through emigration and passport controls which were noticeably more thorough than they had been on previous tours. Clocks were put back to UK time and we boarded the P&O ferry Spirit of Britain at 1355 hours. Our departure was delayed due to a stowaway who had managed to get on board. The French police and port authorities removed him from the ship. There was also a delay at Dover, due to high winds earlier in the day which disrupted the departure and berthing schedules at the ferry terminal.

Leaving the ferry at 1640 hours we drove via the M20, M26, M25 and M3 stopping at Fleet Services where two of our tour party left us. As we travelled along the motorways one of our party John Collier reminded us that the following day – Tuesday – was the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Britain and about the commemorative events to mark the occasion. Mention was made about the importance of Salisbury and aircraft manufacture at Boscombe Down during the war. The story of the only Battle of Britain recipient of the Victoria Cross was also told. On the 16<sup>th</sup> August 1940, Flight Lieutenant E.J.B. Nicolson DFC, of 249 Squadron was seriously wounded by the enemy in aerial combat. Although his aircraft was being consumed by fire he pursued a Messerschmitt 110 and shot it down before baling out. Later promoted to Wing Commander he did not survive the war and was lost over the Bay of Bengal in May 1945.

Departing from Fleet Services at 1945 hours we continued on through heavy rain to Salisbury where four members alighted and in darkness the coach arrived at Pimperne at 2130 hours from where members dispersed to their homes after an excellent Battlefield Tour.

Thanks must be extended to Mainline Coaches and our driver Brian for his skilful driving, good humour and splendid company. Also to Anne who shared with us her enthusiasm and enjoyment during the tour. To Rod Arnold and Martin for their time, research and splendid talks delivered with professional skill. Steve must not be forgotten for his contribution at the Le Touret Memorial. Our battlefield tours are second to none and made possible by the dedication and time given by our chairman and secretary, Martin and Judy Willoughby who always ensure that they are successful, full of interest, immensely enjoyable and to whom we extend our grateful thanks.



Sources:

CWGC Web-Site ~ [www.cwgc.com.uk](http://www.cwgc.com.uk)

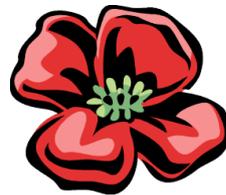
Great War Web-Site ~ [www.greatwar.co.uk](http://www.greatwar.co.uk)

Web-Matters Web-Site ~ [www.webmatters.net.fr](http://www.webmatters.net.fr)

WWI Cemeteries Web-Site ~ [www.ww1cemeteries.com.ge](http://www.ww1cemeteries.com.ge)

Extracts From Wessex Branch WFA Battlefield Tour Guide September 2015

Roger G. Coleman



## 'LOWCA UNDER FIRE' REVISITED

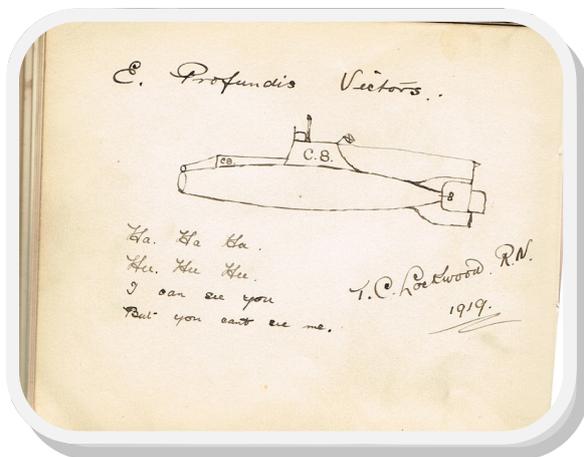
Following my reading of the article 'Lowca Under Fire' in the issue twelve of 'Dugout' has prompted me to pen a few words which may (or may not) be of interest to some members, perhaps more so to those having a nautical interest.

I had two maternal great uncles serving in the Royal Navy during World War I; one in submarines who survived and the other in a Monitor who did not. Firstly though, via the 'Lowca incident'.

U-24 was one of the more successful German submarines of the Great War, sinking 36 vessels and surviving to the Armistice. U-24's most successful commander, Schneider, did not survive however. U-24 was the first submarine to sink a capital ship by torpedo when on New Year's Day, 1915, HMS Formidable, a pre-dreadnought and arguably 'outdated' battleship, was sunk in Lyme Bay with the loss of 547 officers and seamen. This loss is not particularly well documented in my view but "Before The Bells have Faded" is a useful read (Potts & Marks, published by CPI in 2004, ISBN 0-9528760-6-10). The book states that able seaman John Cowan owes his life to a



local dog. The lifeless Cowan was washed up on a beach, was nuzzled by the dog for around half an hour but then he showed signs of life and hence Cowan became a survivor. This story of the local dog hit the national headlines. Dorset folklore has it that this dog, called Lassie, was the inspiration for the Hollywood collie dog of the same name! There may be some truth in this but that's another story.



Great uncle Thomas Lockwood served on submarine C8 throughout the War. The fact that he survived on a petrol-fuelled submersible is down to two main factors in my view. Firstly C8, although having 'its moments', had a relatively quiet War mainly serving as a defence vessel off the north east coast of England. C8 did mistakenly fire two torpedoes at two cruisers of the Grand Fleet in August, 2016, fortunately inaccurately! These 16-man crew vessels were one of the earlier designs of submarine and had by the start of the War been superseded by the 'E' class. The C-class had a short range and was temperamental to say the least. The first CO, Lt. Commander Hart, was killed by a crankcase explosion. (Incidentally, the second CO was one Max Horton). Uncle Thomas did not serve under these two commanders, joining the boat in 1912 as an ERA (Engine Room Artificer), later promoted to Chief ERA. The Lockwood family thought of Thomas as an 'exceptional engineer' and so perhaps this is the second factor in C8's War survival. He served on C8 until the 30th September, 1918.

Following the Armistice, many U-Boats were interned and several turned up at Harwich, one of them being U-24. The submarine museum at Gosport confirmed that Uncle Thomas served on U-24 from the 21st November 1918 until the 13th January 1919!!

Great uncle Reg Lockwood served on HMS Raglan, a 14-inch gun Monitor of the Abercrombie Class, from the 3rd June, 1915 until the 18th December, 1917 initially as an Ordinary Seaman, later becoming Able Seaman. Further information on these intriguing Monitors may be gleaned from Ian Buxton's fine book "Big Gun Monitors" (2008 2nd Edition by Seaforth ISBN 978-1-84415-719-8). Raglan served largely off Turkey but Reg was sent 'home for Christmas' (actually for a gunnery course) in 1917 thus avoiding the unfortunate one-sided gun action at Kusu Bay, Imbros on the 20th January, 1918. Raglan was sunk by Breslau (Midillu) and Goeben (Sultan Selim). May I suggest "The Ship That Changed the World-The Escape of the Goeben to the Dardanelles in 1914" by Dan van der Vat (ISBN 1-84158-062-7 published by Birlinn in 2000) which gives a more detailed insight into the role of these German/Turkish ships.

Although seemingly fortuitous in avoiding this action where over half of his shipmates were killed, whilst returning home in December, 1917, uncle Reg contracted typhoid fever en route and became seriously ill. Seemingly recovering, the shock of hearing the news about the loss of his ship caused a relapse and Reg sadly died on the 19th February, 1918. He is buried in East London Cemetery, Plaistow and is Remembered With Honour by means of a Memorial Plaque on a wall of the cemetery.

Uncle Reg's Commanding Officer, Henry Kitchener (Viscount Broome) took command on the 22nd May, 1916 just two weeks before the death of his uncle, Lord Kitchener. Broome, although injured, survived the sinking of the Raglan and indeed the following Court Martial! I have had the privilege of viewing the final deck log of Raglan (held at the RN Museum, Portsmouth) which was retrieved from the sea following her sinking! The log, signed by Broome, has a final entry for the 19th January, 1918:- "0756 approx.....Raglan sunk by the head". Also held by the RN Museum is Broome's "Certificate for Wounds and Hurts" issued by the RN. It states:- "a shell splinter which pierced his cap badge & wounded his left forehead". Later in 1918 Broome was attached to a desk job with the C.in C. Grand Fleet and there is a link to U24, albeit mightily tenuous!

I have come across the following exchange of signals:

C. in C. H.S.F. (High Seas Fleet) to C. in C. G.F. 20/11/18

**"Among the U boats of the 3rd consignment there are submarines U112, U24, U30, which contrary to the arrangements have no torpedoes onboard. I request information when and where these missing torpedoes should be sent." 1302**

C. in C. G.F. to C. in C. H.S.F.

**"Your 1302. Torpedoes should be sent in the transport which accompanies the next group of Submarines, to leave Germany for Harwich." 1501 Signed by Lord Broome.**

I wonder if the torpedoes were ever found, let alone delivered? Uncle Charles

attached to U24 the following day, the 21st November.

Finally, does anyone in the branch have any information concerning the Royal Navy Seaman's Hospital in Greenwich where uncle Reg died of pneumonia? The hospital supposedly closed in the late 19th century but re-opened for the War. Various people I have contacted, including the RN Museum, don't seem to know of its existence, let alone its re-opening!



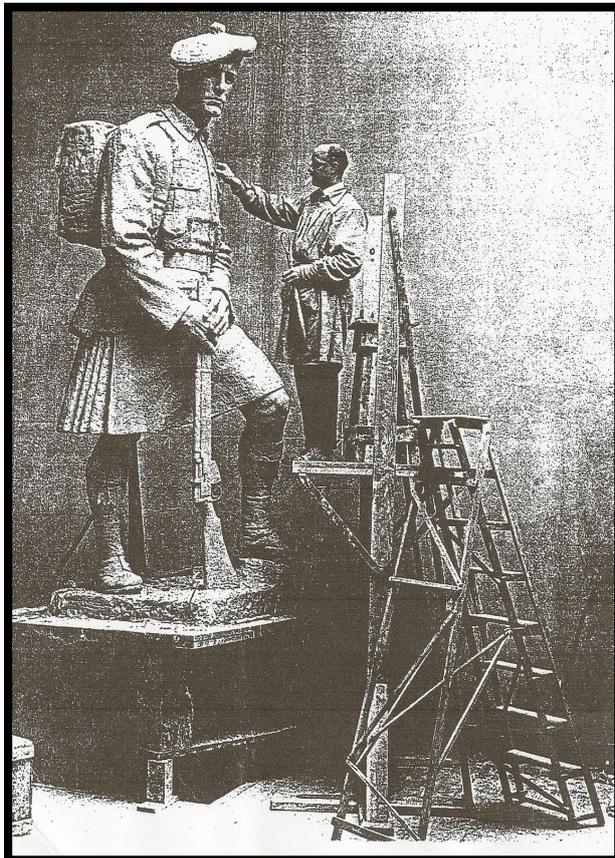
**Richard Phillips**



## The Beaumont Hamel Highlander

A few years ago I received a letter from an elderly lady who was the youngest daughter of Mr G H Paulin, sculptor of the superb kilted soldier figure that is on the top of the 51st (Highland) Division Memorial in Newfoundland Park. She sent me a copy of a photograph of her father working on the soldier and some interesting details about it.

George Henry Paulin, a Scotsman, served in the First World War in the Lothian and Border Horse (Yeomanry cavalry), then the Royal Flying Corps and finally as an interpreter in Italy. After the war he made the soldier figure for many memorials in Scotland.



He used a Sergeant Major of the division as a model for the Highlander but the family believed that the face is modelled on that of his brother who died during the war, not in action, but while serving with the police in India. If that is true, then it is a subtle memorial to his brother as well as to the Highland Division.

Another interesting point to the lady's letter is that the 51st Division wanted the memorial to be located in or close to Beaumont Hamel village which they captured in November 1916 but they were warned that Germans tunnels still in that area would not bear the weight of the memorial to be placed over them. The Newfoundland Government (not then part of Canada) then kindly offered the Scots a location in their new memorial Park.

**Martin Middlebrook**

# Police Gazette 1914-1919

## Deserters and Absentees from His Majesty's Service

Containing over 13,000 records, the lists of deserters and absentees from His Majesty's forces as published in The Police Gazette during the First World War are now available to consult online at [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk).



The Police Gazette was primarily distributed to police forces around the British Isles and contained lists of persons wanted by police, missing or stolen objects, missing people and habitual criminals. It also provided lists of deserters and absentees from Britain's armed forces. During the First World War these lists were produced as a supplement every fortnight. Unsurprisingly, many deserters went missing after a visit home so each deserter's last known address is included. Listings also included a full physical description. However, distinguishing features were often abbreviated for space: "sc" appears for "scar", "ttd" for "tattoo," etc. Parts of the body were also contracted, such as "frhead" (forehead), "frm" (forearm) or nck (neck). You will also find "bk" for back, "frt" for front and "rt" for right.

Most deserters and absentees were picked up and sent back to the army for court martial. Punishments could be severe but although execution was used in some cases it was not the norm. Some deserters evaded capture altogether, changed their name and went on to live a completely new life.

The supplements also provide a separate list of absentees from Territorial Force Units and other branches of His Majesty's forces.

**ABSENTEES FROM "TERRITORIAL FORCE" UNITS.**

Office No.	Name.	Reg. No.	Corps.	Age	Height.	Complexn.	Hair.	Eyes.	Trade.	ENLISTMENT.		Parish and County in which born.	DESERPTION.		MARKS and REMARKS
										Date of	Place of		Date of	Place of	

Also included from early 1916 are lists of large number of reservists under the Group "Derby Scheme" System who failed to report themselves on being called up (from Section B Army Reserve) for permanent service.

**RESERVISTS UNDER THE "GROUP SYSTEM" who, having failed to report themselves on being called up on Permanent Service, are therefore Absentees.**

Office No.	NAME.	Number as shown in Classification Register.	Age.	Height.	Complexn.	Hair.	Eyes.	Trade.	LAST KNOWN ADDRESS.	DESERPTION.		MARKS and REMARKS
										Date of	Place of	
752	Adams, Sidney	4	31	5 4	—	—	—	grocers asst	83, Dover Rd., Folkestone	4 Sept.	Dover	
753	Allison, J.	9061	37	—	—	—	—	—	6, Norwood Avenue, Blackpool	31 Oct.	Blackpool	
754	Anderson, R.	3065	18	—	—	—	—	—	980, Banville Rd., Ward End, B'ham	5 Oct.	Birmingham	
755	Armfield, F. J.	9	18½	—	—	—	—	—	6/5, Webster St., B'ham	9 Oct.	Birmingham	
756	Ashford, John	5318	40	—	—	—	—	labourer	c/o Allen, Lodging House, Romsey, Hants	11 Oct.	Southampton	
757	Bailey, Fredk. Geo.	—	32	—	—	—	—	carman	Laburnum Villa, Winchester	16 Oct.	Winchester	

Similar lists exist for reservists under the provisions of the Military Service Act 1916 who failed to report themselves on being called up.

**RESERVISTS under the provisions of the MILITARY SERVICE ACT, 1916, who, having failed to report themselves on being called up on Permanent Service, are therefore Absentees.**

Office No.	NAME.	Number as shown in Classification Register.	Age.	Height.	Complexn.	Hair.	Eyes.	Trade.	LAST KNOWN ADDRESS	DESERPTION.		MARKS and REMARKS.
										Date of	Place of	

A complete collection of the Police Gazette can be found at the British Library Newspaper Collection in Colindale.

**Marc Thompson**



# 25<sup>th</sup> September 1915

## Battle of Bellewaarde (Hooge)

Account coming from  
**Captain J.D. Hills M.C. Croix de Guerre**  
**5<sup>th</sup> Leicester Battalion Territorials**

**My Dad was Private Mark Huntington 2172 and he was in the 5<sup>th</sup> Leicester Battalion and was there**

Just before daylight a general order from G.H.Q. arrived,  
*'Starting at Dawn, on the 25th September, the British Armies will take the offensive on the Western Front'.*

*We felt that the time had now come when the war was going to be won and the Boche driven out of France, and some of us were a little sorry that our part was to consist of nothing more than setting fire to some damp straw.*

I presume that Captain Hills wrote these words at the time, and I find his optimism very moving. In fact instead of driving the Boche out of France it was to be yet one more loss of life for so many. It would be another three years before any real change.

Both Captain Hills and my father survived the war, I find it difficult that I didn't realise what my dad had been through and what he had done, and apart from isolated incidents, he never talked about 'IT'

*At 3.50 a.m. 25<sup>th</sup> September 1915 the Hooge battle started with an intense artillery bombardment from every gun in the salient, and it was an inspiring sight to stand on the ridge behind "50" trench and watch, through the half-light, the line of flashes to the west, an occasional glare showing us the towers of Ypres over the trees.*

*The Germans replied at once on "A1" trench, but finding that we remained quiet, their batteries soon ceased fire and opened instead on Sanctuary Wood and Hooge.*

*This was expected, for it was not in the initial attack, but during the consolidation that the 3rd Division wanted to draw the enemy's fire. At a few minutes before six our time had come, smoke bombs were thrown, and, though the wind was against us, Col. Jones, feeling that we must make the biggest possible display, ordered the straw to be lit. This promptly drew fire, and in five minutes there was not one single gun on our side of the Salient still firing at Hooge, they had all turned on us.*

*At first sight of the smoke several machine guns had opened fire opposite "50" and "49," but these died away almost at once as the Boche, thoroughly frightened at the prospect of gas, evacuated his trenches. Half-an-hour later he actually bombarded his own lines on the Northern slopes of "Hill 60" with 11" shells, presumably imagining that we had occupied them. The bluff was complete.*

*But such a success cannot be purchased without loss, and our losses had been heavy. The Staffordshires had not lit their straw because of the wind, so that the enemy's retaliation, which should have been spread along the whole front from "A1" to "Hill 60" was concentrated entirely on our three trenches "40," "50" and "A1." "C" Company (Lt. R.D. Farmer) in "50" suffered most.*

*Choked and blinded by the smoke from the straw, which blew back and filled the trench, their parapet blown away by salvo after salvo of small shells, their supports battered with 8" and heavy mortars, with no cover against the unceasing rain of shells from front and left, they had to bear it all in silence, unable to hit back.*

*Serjts. J.G. Burnham and J. Birkin were killed, and with them 10 others of the battalion, while 30 more were wounded.*

*Once more the "Doc." and his stretcher-bearers were everywhere, and many who might otherwise have bled to death, owed their lives to this marvellous man, who wandered round and dressed their wounds wherever the shelling was hottest. At the first opening of the battle our telephone lines to the Artillery were broken, and for some time we could get no support, but the Derby Howitzers and one of the Lincolnshire batteries fired a number of rounds for us, and later, thanks to the efforts of Lieut. C. Morgan, R.F.A., the F.O.O., we were able to call on Major Meynell's Staffordshire battery as well. By 7.15 a.m. all was once more quiet, and we spent the rest of the day evacuating our casualties, and trying to clear away some of the litter of straw from our trenches.*

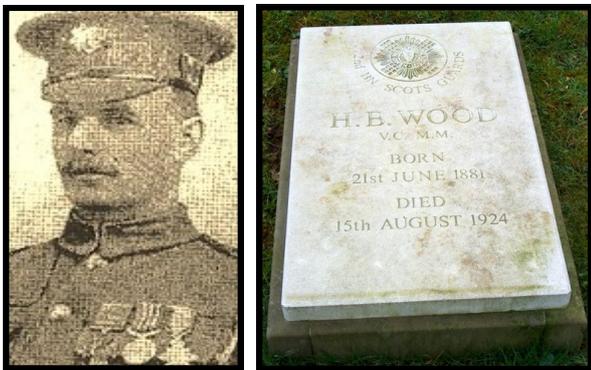
## Mike Huntington

Name.		Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
HUNTINGTON.		Leic. R.	Pvt.	2172.
MARK		- - -		240425.
Medal.	Bell.	Page.	Remarks.	
VICTORIAN	F/102. B.24	2975		
BRITISH	- - -	- - -		
SPAN				
Theatre of War first served in				
Date of entry therein				

K. 1389

# FWW SOLDIER'S TURFSTONES RELAID

Forty-five turf-stones inscribed with the names of soldiers who died in the First World War were relaid by soldiers from the 266<sup>th</sup> Battery, Royal Artillery in the Soldiers Corner of Arnos Vale Cemetery, Bristol. The turf-stones had been removed and stored in a crypt within the cemetery for a number of years. The Arnos Vale Cemetery Trust and Friends of Arnos Vale have been undertaking a planned long term restoration of the cemetery. Established in 1839 the forty-five acre cemetery fell victim to widespread neglect and faced closure and clearance in the late 1980s. A local campaign to save the cemetery was ultimately successful and its management and care became the responsibility of the Arnos Vale Trust.



As part of the First World War Centenary the Trust received a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to enable the soldier's turf-stones to be replaced near to the original positions in the Soldier's Plot. Many soldiers wounded in the First World War received treatment in Bristol notably at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Southern General and the Beaufort Hospitals and some of those who died were interred in Arnos Vale Cemetery. A total of 356 casualties of the First World War are buried in the cemetery, 239 of them in the Soldiers Plot. One of those who died in 1924 is Harry Blanshard Wood V.C., M.M. He was awarded the Victoria Cross for his conspicuous gallantry at St. Python, France on the 13<sup>th</sup> October, 1918 whilst serving with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Scots Guards. Overlooking the Soldiers Corner is a war memorial. Erected on the rear wall of colonnaded memorial archway are bronze tablets inscribed with the names and regiments of the 239 casualties who lie in the Soldiers Plot.



Campaign: 1914				(A) Where decoration was earned.	
Name	Corps	Rank	Reg. No.	(B) Present situation.	
(A) WOOD H.B.	Scots Gds	Pte 4796		MEDAL	ROLL
(B) Harry B.		Cpl		VICTO	STAR
Action taken				Re-issued	
1914. 29674. 29674. 11. 16240/2. 22. 22. 22.				Reissued. 14. 2090/c 47. 2. 21. 01/12/57.	
QUALIFYING DATE. 7. 10. 14.					

**Harry Blanshard Wood, VC, MM** (21 June 1882 – 15 August 1924) was an English recipient of the Victoria Cross, the highest and most prestigious award for gallantry in the face of the enemy that can be awarded to British and Commonwealth forces.

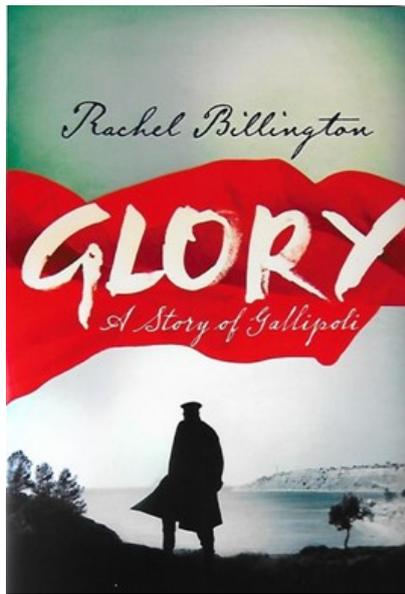
Harry Wood was born 21 June 1882 in Newton-on-Derwent, Yorkshire, the son of John Wood an agricultural labourer and Maria Nichol Dey.

At 37 years old, Harry was a corporal in the 2nd Battalion, Scots Guards, British Army during the First World War when deed for which he was awarded the VC took place. On 13 October 1918 at St. Python, France, when the advance was desperately opposed and the streets of the village were raked by fire, Corporal Wood's platoon sergeant was killed and he took command of the leading platoon. The River Selle had to be crossed and the ruined bridge gained, although the space in front of it was full of snipers, so the corporal carried a very large brick into the open space, lay down behind it and, firing continuously on the snipers, covered his men while they worked their way across. Later in the day he repeatedly drove off enemy counter-attacks.

He later achieved the rank of Lance-Sergeant. His nerves were badly affected by his wartime experiences. He died 15 August 1924 whilst on holiday; he was walking with his wife when a car mounted the pavement and headed towards them. His wife pushed him out of the way but she was pinned against the wall. She suffered minor injuries but her husband was so shocked that he collapsed and fell into a coma from which he died several days later. He was buried at Arnos Vale Cemetery, Bristol, England, at Soldiers' Corner, grave number 1738.

[Source: Arnos vale Web-Site ~ [www.arnosvale.org.uk](http://www.arnosvale.org.uk)  
Friends of Arnos Vale Cemetery Newsletter ~ Spring 2015]

**Roger G. Coleman**



## Book Review

### Glory ~ A Story of Gallipoli

by Rachel Billington

Published in 2015 by Orion Books.

ISBN 978 14091 46230. £19-99 (Hardback)  
(530 Pages).

This well written, interesting and absorbing novel about the First World War blends the facts about the Gallipoli campaign and its consequences upon the fictional characters and their families. The author's grandfather was Brigadier-General Sir Thomas Pakenham, Lord Longford who commanded the 2nd South Midland Mounted Brigade of the 2nd Mounted Division at Gallipoli. He was killed on the 21st August, 1915 on Scimitar Hill, Suvla aged 50 years, leaving a widow and six children.

His body was not recovered and he is commemorated by a Special Memorial in Green Hill Cemetery. Rachel undertook a battlefield tour of the Gallipoli Peninsula in 2012 with the historian Peter Hart who has spoken at our Branch Meetings. She visited Green Hill Cemetery and laid flowers on her grandfather's grave. The tour motivated her to write a story about Gallipoli.

The main characters in the book, Captain Rupert Prideaux, Lieutenant Arthur Lamb, Private Fred Chaffey and Sylvia Fitzpaine, Arthur's fiancée are brought vividly to life. Their fictional experiences reflect the real lives of those who lived and fought through the First World War. These characters from the landed gentry to the humble labouring classes go to war for King and Country and adventure.

The sequence of the political and military decisions which lead to Gallipoli are clearly described. As are the landings, battles, evacuation and the reality of the human aspects the conflict has upon each of the characters. Sylvia's mother is devastated at the loss of her husband, the more so that his body is not found and clings to the possibility that he may have been taken prisoner by the Turks. To alleviate her distress Sylvia travels to Egypt, Malta and eventually to the peninsula to try and find out what happened to her fictional father – mirroring the life Lord Longford. To further her search for the truth she volunteers to become a VAD nurse.

Rachel Billington has written many books both fiction and non-fiction. Her research about Gallipoli and its topography for this book will give those readers who are not familiar with the campaign a good starting point from which to learn more about the history of this controversial campaign of the First World War as well as enjoying a very good read.

**Roger G. Coleman**

# Great War Quiz



1. Which French general was known as “The Butcher”?
2. What percentage of the gas tonnage employed by all sides in the Great War was used in the final year – 27% / 38% / 52%?
3. Who were the Linseed Lancers?
4. Was bread rationed in Britain during the Great War?
5. Which song was composed “on the spot” to win a five shilling (25p) bet in the New Market Inn, Stalybridge near Manchester in 1912?
6. Who became the field commander of the RFC in France during August 1915?
7. What was the average daily death rate for the BEF at the Battle of the Somme in 1916?
8. Name the German heavy armoured cruiser sunk at the Dogger Bank in 1915.
9. Which novel, published in England in 1929, was reprinted fifteen times in the next four months?
10. Noel Chavasse was the second person to be awarded the Victoria Cross twice. Who was the first and where and when did he earn his second award?



(Answers on back cover)

## BRITISH ARMY CAP BADGES

### The Royal Berkshire Regiment

The badge was a brass Dragon of China above a scroll inscribed 'Royal Berkshire'.

Some 16 battalions of the regiment served during the war and two soldiers were awarded the Victoria Cross.

A total of 55 battle honours were granted to the regiment including Mons, Marne 1914, Ypres 1914 '17, Neuve Chapelle, Loos, Arras 1917 '18, Cambrai 1917, Selle, Vittorio Veneto, Doiran 1917 '18.

Estimated casualties (died): 7,140.



## Princess Mary Tin Christmas 1914



# Important Information

Meetings are held at:

**Pimperne Village  
Hall,  
Newfield Road,  
Pimperne  
Blandford Forum  
Dorset  
DT11 8UZ**



## Branch Executive Committee and Trustees

**Martin Willoughby**  
Chairman /Trustee

**Rod Arnold**  
Vice-Chairman /Trustee

**Judy Willoughby**  
Secretary /Trustee

**Marc Thompson**  
Treasurer /Trustee

**David Seymour**  
Branch Education Officer/Trustee

**Katherine Seymour**  
Branch Memorials Officer/Trustee

**Sandra Twyford**  
Newsletter Editor/Trustee

**Angela Tozer**  
Trustee



**www.wessexwfa.  
org.uk**

## And finally.... (Quiz Answers)

[1] General Charles Marie Emmanuel Mangin; [2] 52%; [3] Royal Army Medical Corps; [4] No, but it was adulterated; [5] It's A Long Way to Tipperary; [6] General Hugh Trenchard; [7] 893 per day; [8] SMS Blucher; [9] All Quiet on the Western Front; [10] Surgeon Capt. Arthur Martin-Leake for his conduct near Zonnebeke 29<sup>th</sup> October - 8<sup>th</sup> November 1914 (first VC awarded in 1902 for valour during the Boer War).

Illustrations courtesy of Tim Fox-Godden

