



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

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MEETINGS 2015

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

April 11th - Railway
Guns in the Great
War, Bill Fulton

May 16th - The
Indian Army 1915,
Dr Spencer Jones

June 6th - Ghosts
Among the Alders -
Munition Workers of
RGPF Waltham Abbey
& RSAF Enfield,
Dr David Kenyon

JULY NO MEETING

August 8th - The
Ardenne Campaign
August 1914,
Dr Simon House

FIELD TRIPS:
March 28th - *Imperial
War Museum—New
FWW Exhibition*

BATTLEFIELD TOURS:
May 18th-24th -
Gallipoli

Sept 11th-14th - *The
Somme - Line Albert
to Bellecourt*

ISSUE 12

MARCH 2015

Chairman's Chat

Despite the regretful cancellation of the pre AGM lunch the branch AGM was very well attended and executed very efficiently and followed by an expert talk given by Stephen Dean on the Brockton Terrain model at Canock Chase. The branch is in very good health and management continuity is assured by the re-election of 'tried' and dare I say it 'tested' trustees with the welcome addition of Angela Tozer who was also elected, having been co-opted to replace Helen who left us for the wilds of East Anglia. Many of you will by now be aware of the very unfortunate accident suffered by Janet, hence the unavoidable cancellation of the AGM Lunch. I am sure you will join me in wishing Janet a speedy recovery but after 11 years dedicated service Robert has informed me that he and

Janet feel the time has come to 'retire' gracefully and therefore will not be providing refreshments at our meetings.

Adaptable as the branch is, this valued service will be provided by Angela and Catherine with continued support from Roger. My thanks go to them for stepping into 'the breach' and continuing such an important element of branch meetings. The branch has a full schedule of events which will I am sure maintain your zest and interest. Details of branch meetings and events are on the branch website, the national WFA website and your newsletter and on behalf of your branch committee I am sure there is something for everyone to enjoy during yet another busy year in the branch calendar.

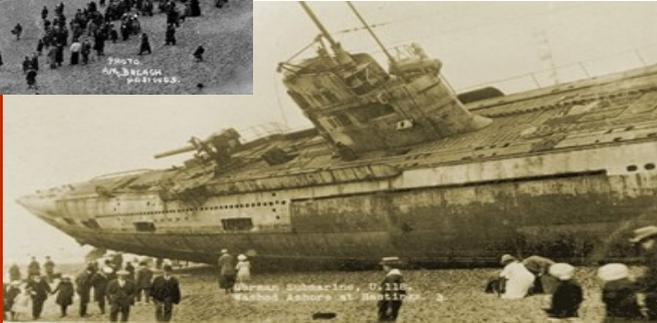
Martin Willoughby
Branch Chairman



Newsletter Editor: SANDRA TWYFORD Email: sandra.twyford@btinternet.com



Thousands of people flocked to the sea-front to catch a glimpse of the boat.



U-118, a World War One submarine washed ashore on the beach at Hastings

When the people of the town of Hastings awoke one morning to see one of the Kaiser's U-boats on their beach, it caused some shock. Thousands of

visitors flocked to see the beached submarine. The Admiralty allowed the town clerk to charge a fee for people to climb on the deck. Two members of the coastguard were tasked with showing important visitors around inside the submarine. The visits were curtailed when both men became severely ill, they both died shortly after. It was a mystery what killed the men at the time and so all trips into the sub were stopped, it was later discovered that chlorine gas which had been escaping from SM U-118's batteries had caused severe abscesses on the lungs and brains of the unfortunate men.

Under the command of Herbert Strohwasser, U-118 managed to sink two ships while on its one and only patrol before being surrendered on February 1919.



SM U-118 was commissioned on 8 May 1918, following construction at the AG Vulcan Stettin shipyard in Hamburg. It was commanded by Herbert Stohwasser and joined the I Flotilla operating in the eastern Atlantic. After about four months without any ships sunk, on 16 September 1918, SM U-118 scored its first hit on another naval vessel.

Its length: 81.5 metres!

With the ending of hostilities on 11 November 1918 came the subsequent surrender of the Imperial German Navy, including SM U-118 to France on 23 February 1919. Following the

surrender, U-118 was to be transferred to France where it would be broken up for scrap. However, in the early hours of 15 April 1919, while it was being towed through the English Channel towards Scapa Flow, its dragging hawser broke off in a storm. The ship ran aground on the beach at Hastings in Sussex at approximately 12:45am, directly in front of the Queens Hotel.

The total sum collected from the fees was almost £300 which was used in an event to welcome the town's troops returning from the

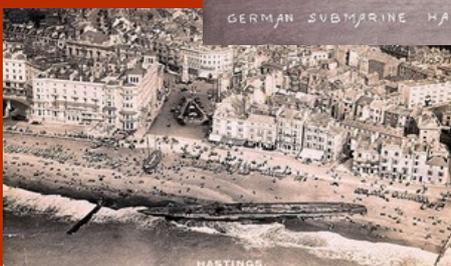
Initially there were attempts to displace the stricken vessel; three tractors tried to refloat the submarine and a French destroyer attempted to break the ship apart using its cannons. These attempts however were unsuccessful and the proximity of the submarine to the public beach and Queens Hotel dissuaded further use of explosive forces. Eventually, between October and December 1919, U-118 was broken up and the pieces removed and sold for scrap.



Interesting facts:

This type of U-Boat had a length of 81.5 m, speed: 11.5 knots (21.3 km/h; 13.2 mph) surfaced and 7 knots (13 km/h; 8.1 mph) submerged, test depth: 75 (246 ft). Total crew: 36 men.

SM U-118 was a type UE II mine laying submarine of the Imperial German Navy and one of 329 submarines serving with that navy during World War I.



The First World War Centenary Lectures - Gresham College, London

- **The Military History of the First World War: An Overview and Analysis - Professor David Stevenson**

Lecture held during 2014 by Gresham College, London can be watched online at <http://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/the-military-history-of-the-first-world-war-an-overview-and-analysis>

This lecture will analyse the reasons for the failure in 1914-15 of the initial war of movement and the factors underlying the trench stalemate that characterised the middle years of the conflict, before examining the return to more mobile campaigning in 1917-18.

It will include the war at sea as well as the war on land, and refer particularly to technology, tactics and logistics.

"This is a vast and sombre topic. To provide a summary in fifty minutes is like viewing it from Mars, and it is only through focus on the detail that the reality of the military experience can best be communicated. In Carl von Clausewitz's definition, war 'is an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will': its essence is the destruction of property and the killing, maiming and capture of human beings. Between 1914 and 1918 these things happened on an unprecedented scale, and an exceptionally eloquent body of art and literature remains as testimony to the consequences. But what I can attempt to do this evening is to survey the broader trends and underlying developments, in order to provide a framework for considering why the fighting took the forms it did, in the light of the intensive new research conducted in the last three decades. I will talk primarily with reference to the Western Front, but deal more briefly with the other theatres and the war at sea. And I will divide the lecture into three parts: the bankrupting of the initial strategic plans in the relatively mobile campaigning of 1914; the much longer and apparently more static middle period between 1915 and 1917; and the return to more fluid, semi-mobile, warfare in 1918, which was also the year of Allied victory. Why the Allies eventually won, and how the pattern of warfare evolved from mobile to static and back to mobile again are the two big questions I will grapple with."

- **The Long Shadow: The Great War and International Memory, 1914-2014 - Professor David Reynolds**

Lecture held during 2014 by Gresham College, London can be watched online at <http://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/the-long-shadow-the-great-war-and-international-memory-1914-2014>

1914-18 casts a long shadow across the 20th century. This lecture explores some of the ways it has been remembered and memorialised, arguing that each country has its own Great War and that British memory is especially distinctive - still shaping attitudes to continental Europe in our day.

"In my book *The Long Shadow: The Great War and the Twentieth Century* I offered three fundamental arguments. First, that British attitudes to the Great War have changed significantly over time. In other words, there isn't a set, received view of 1914-18 that has endured over the last century: attitudes to the conflict have shifted in the light of current beliefs and priorities. Secondly, I think we can see this best by comparing British conceptions of the war with those of other countries, so my book is deliberately a piece of comparative history. I had in mind Kipling's question: 'what should they know of England who only England know?' And thirdly, I argued that in this country and elsewhere 1914-18 is generally seen through the prism of 1939-45. Although chronologically the First World War occurred before the Second World War, conceptually the Second World War came before the First. In Britain in 1914-18 and during the 1920s and 1930s the conflict was known as the 'Great War', whereas in Germany and America it was always called the World War. Britain only adopted that terminology after 1945, when 1914-18 was seen as part of a sequence: First World War and Second World War."



Lochnagar Mine Crater at La Boisselle

This was one of the two large mines blown at 7.28 am, two minutes before Zero Hour on July the 1st, to support the attack of the 34th Division. Lochnagar was half a kilometre south of La Boisselle; the second mine - at 'Y' Sap - was alongside the Baupaume road just north of the village. 'Y' Sap was smaller than Lochnagar, having 18,000 kilograms of explosive. The main purpose of the mines was to throw up 'lips' of about 4.5 metres in height that would protect troops attacking further south and north from German machine-gun fire from the ruins of La Boisselle. It was only a secondary purpose to kill Germans in the trenches above the mines and crush dug-outs nearby.

The tunnel to Lochnagar was 315 metres, the longest dug in chalk during the war. It was started from a British reserve trench, Lochnagar Trench (so named after the mountain in Scotland by the 51st (Highland) Division when it took over from the French on this sector in July 1915). The tunnel was 1.5 metres high and less than less than a metre wide.

On approaching the German line, the work was done in complete silence. The floor was covered with sandbags. The chalk was twisted out in lumps with a bayonet by one man and caught by a second man and passed back to other men to put into bags. Progress was slow, about half a metre a day.

At the ends of the tunnels 'charge chambers' were dug into which the explosives were placed. At 'Y' Sap the Germans could be heard talking above during the final digging but the German dugouts were so deep at Lochnagar that the sound of German voices came from **below**. The Royal Engineer tunnellers completed their work perfectly and on time, and the Germans had no idea the mines were there.

Soldiers carrying out the attack on July the 1st, and one airman who was flying over the mines when they exploded, describe what happened on pages 120 - 121, 135 and 218 of *The First Day of the Somme*. Although many Germans were killed, the mines did not help the attack much. But they did provide shelter for survivors of the attack during the day and the tunnel to the Lochnagar was reopened and used by men of the 9th Cheshires, from the 19th (Western) Division which was brought up to start as new attack on La Boisselle the next day. Memorials to both the 19th Division (by the church) and the 34th Division (near the water tower) are situated in the village.

Both craters were there when I started going to the Somme but the owner of the field in which the 'Y' Sap was located later filled the crater in. It was then that a fine Englishman, Richard Dunning, purchased the site of the Lochnagar Crater to ensure its preservation and his organisation, the Friends of Lochnagar, organises the Zero Hour Ceremony there every year on July the 1st.

Martin Middlebrook



The Friends of Lochnagar, organises the Zero Hour Ceremony there every year on July 1st.



Jack Counter VC

On Remembrance Sunday 2014, an inscribed paving stone, close by Blandford's town pump was unveiled to commemorate the award of the Victoria Cross to Jack Counter in 1918. Two specially invited guests, Herbert Counter a nephew and Captain Brian Unwin of the St Helier Royal British Legion unveiled the stone. Each placed a wreath on and beside the paving stone. Although born and raised in Blandford, after being demobilised Jack Counter moved to Jersey, working there as a postman where he met and later married his wife. He was a prominent member of the Jersey British Legion.

Private Jack Counter served with the 1st Battalion, The King's Liverpool Regiment during the First World War and was awarded the Victoria Cross for conspicuous gallantry near Boiseux St Marc, France in April 1918. In September 1970, whilst visiting Blandford he collapsed and died.

After an impressive military funeral at Bournemouth Crematorium his ashes were taken and interred with his wife and daughter in Jersey. His Victoria Cross medal group is in the possession of Société Jersiaise and are displayed in Jersey Museum, St Helier.

For a fuller account about Jack Counter see 'Blandford's VC' on the Wessex Branch web-site.

Roger G. Coleman

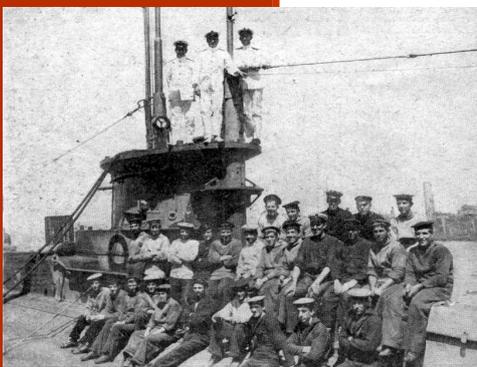


It all started.....



The Royal Navy submarine E11 being cheered by sailors on HMS Grampus as it leaves the Dardanelles on 6 June 1915.

On the night of 18 May the Royal Navy submarine E11, commanded by Lieutenant Martin Naismith, passed through the Dardanelles. This began a tour of operations in the Sea of Marmara and in the Bosphorus during which the submarine sank or disabled 11 Turkish ships. For this Naismith was awarded the Victoria Cross.



On our way back in the coach from the IWM Field Trip June 2011 - my sister and I (who was visiting from Australia) happened to mention to Martin that we had seen some memorabilia associated with the Submarine E11 in the WW1 exhibition area.

We knew that our maternal grandfather Reginald Edwin Jupp had served on the E11 as Chief Engine Room Artificer (engineer) in the Gallipoli campaign when she had been on patrol in the Sea of Marmara. Martin suggested that it would make a good subject for a 'First Five Minutes' which with the assistance of my husband who helped with the research and compiled the power point presentation, I was able to present to the branch in September of that year.

As with all research the further you delve the more you uncover and in the case of my grandfather that certainly proved the case. David Seymour very kindly obtained a disc from the Imperial War Museum of Admiral Sir Martin Dunbar, (who as Lieutenant Commander) commanded the E11 during those momentous days. The Admiral was proof-reading the book (along with its author Anthony Hunter) 'Dardanelles Patrol. In the course of their discussions Reginald's name is often mentioned, he had also been interviewed for the book, but the recording was of such poor quality that it was never used, subsequently we have not been able to find any trace of it. The book deals with the deployment of the E11 in 1915, (along with the E14 and E15) who joined the armada gathering in the Eastern Mediterranean for the Dardanelles.

The E11 entered the Dardanelles Straits at dawn on the 19th of May and on to the Sea of Marmara. Over the course of three patrols covering 97 days in total, one patrol being 47 days, (a record at that time) carried out a number of operations which would eventually lead to a V.C. for Naismith, D.S.C's for the officers and D.S.M's. for the crew.

My mother had always told the family that her father had lost his temper with the first Lieutenant D'Oyly-Hughes an outburst that resulted in Reginald's demotion down one rank to C.E.R.A2. D'Oyly-Hughes had sworn at him because it was taking too long to close the exhaust vents so the submarine was unable to dive, it appears Reginald replied to him in like manner.

We have to bear in mind that tempers and nerves were frayed-not in the least because of the very difficult conditions in which the men lived - nevertheless it was a breach of discipline and needed to be addressed. However Reginald was a valuable man and was not easily replaced. Despite Reginald's demotion Naismith was loath to deprive himself of Reginald's knowledge and expertise so he instructed the new Chief to act under Reginald's supervision.

Reginald Edwin Jupp as well as the D.S.M. was awarded the 1914-15 Star British War and Victory Medals Navy L.S.&G.C. medal and the G.V.R. 2nd issue.

Reginald's wife died in 1947 and he subsequently remarried and upon his death in 1963 Reginald's 2nd wife retained the medals. It was my understanding they had been donated to the Submarine Museum in Gosport, where various artefacts from the E11 are displayed, (most prominently its periscope which received a direct hit from a Turkish gunboat) however that was not the case. I contacted the archivist at the museum who informed me that the medals were not in their possession but had in fact been sold at auction, the catalogue price was listed as

£5,000-6,000, they actually went under the hammer for £9,000, we believe to a private collector.

Of course the family would have preferred them to have remained with us, but we hope that the person who bought them will preserve them intact and respect them.

Reginald Jupp left the Navy in 1929 but was recalled in world war two as a Commissioned Engineer (temp.) on the 22nd of January his duties including overseer of the Boom that protected Portsmouth Harbour. He remained on the Navy list for retired officers until June 1957.

My husband John (on the strength of that, First Five Minutes) went on to give a talk to the branch entitled, 'Allied Submarine Warfare in the Sea of Marmara.

So you see, **'It all started.....!'**

Angela Tozer

Submarine Service VC's



Lieutenant Commander Martin Eric Naismith

The King has been Graciously pleased to approve of the grant of the Victoria Cross to **Lieutenant Commander Martin Eric Naismith**, Royal Navy for the conspicuous act of bravery as specified below.

For most conspicuous bravery in command of one of His Majesty's Submarines (HMS E11) while operating in the Sea of Marmara. In the face of great danger he succeeded in destroying one large Turkish gunboat, two transports, one ammunition ship and three store-ships, in addition to driving one store-ship ashore. When he had safely passed the most difficult part of his homeward journey he returned again to torpedo a Turkish transport

Dated 24 June 1915.



British Or?

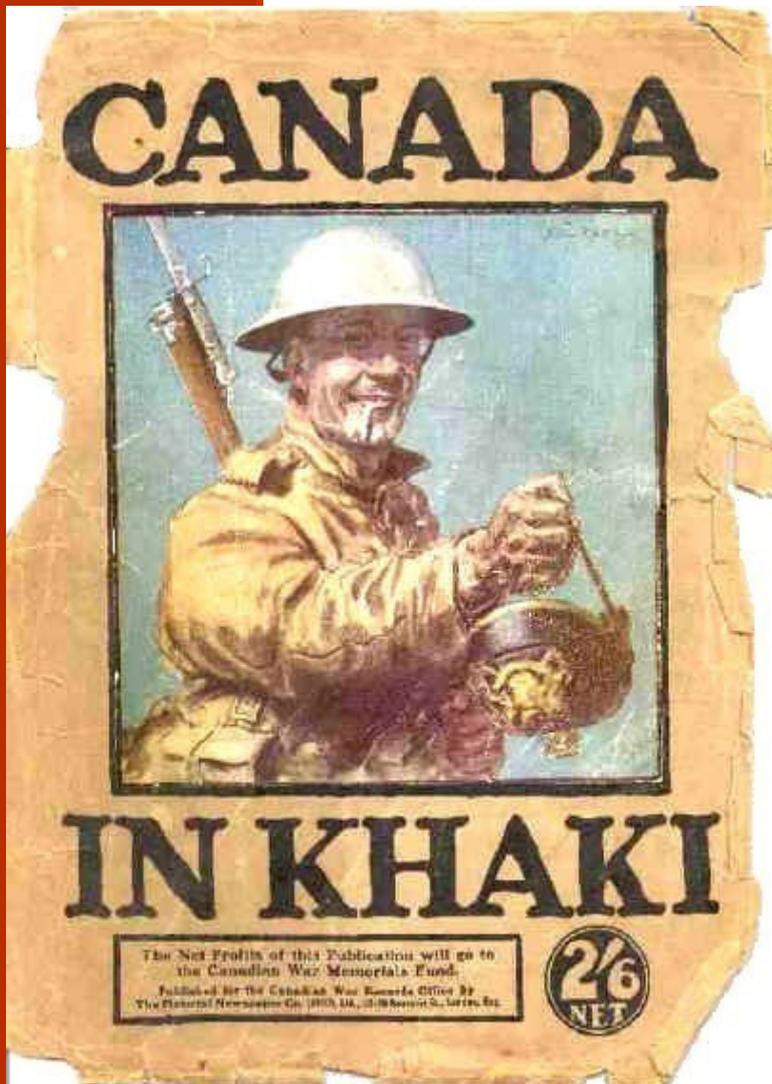
The meeting of the Dorset & South Wilts branch in April 2011 was addressed by Victoria Burbidge on the subject of "Tracing the Missing" a greater part of which was on the excavations at Fromelles.

During her talk she said some 25% of the Australian Forces during the Great War were British emigrants. Having a bit of an interest in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) I asked if she had any figures for the CEF, unfortunately she did not have that information. Knowing from past experience the labyrinthine nature of the CEF I thought I would do some research.

I should say at the outset that I feel that I have only scratched the surface of the subject, but at least the following may give members an insight, I should also remind members of the old saying that "There are lies, dammed lies and statistics".

Though I will mention the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR) and Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) which were and are regular units of the Canadian Army, the vast majority of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) were volunteers. CEF Battalions were numbered as they were raised, so for example the 5th Militia although having a long history became the 13th Battalion CEF (Black Watch of Canada) by the time it was mobilised.

There is some debate with regard the PPCLI, some sources put the UK born figure at 100% others dispute this figure. However there was only ever one Battalion of the PPCLI and the figure would have inevitably fallen as the war progressed (see the falling figures in CEF Units)



The RCR were stationed in Bermuda in November 1914, before

returning to Canada on their way to the UK, the number of UK born was 68%. (Of which English men were 72%).

CEF

Though normally referred to by their numbers, many had Local or Regimental affiliations. Eventually there were 258 Battalions.

CEF Battalion	%	Regimental name
9th	60	
31st	80(1915)	Alberta
49th	75(1915)*	Edmonton Regt
51 st	65(1915)*	
56th	75	Calgary
67th	71(1916)	Western Scots
127th	49(1916)	12 th York Rangers
211th	37 th (1916)	American Legion- There were a number of these battalions 2028 to 212
257th	44	

An interesting subject are the numbers of non Canadians in the CEF other than UK, excluding the USA(1% of CEF), they were from – Newfoundland (then not part of Canada), Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, British Guiana, British India, and 2500+ from “ other” British Countries. Japan? Denmark, and Iceland. These units were recruited at Edmonton on the same day.

Anyone wishing to read an account of the History of the CEF can find it on www.censol.ca/research/greatwar/nicholson/index



Trevor Lindley

Herbert's Sweetheart

The following is the text of a letter written in pencil by Rifleman Herbert George Roberts, to his wife Frances, during the First World War. It is undated, with no punctuation, few capital letters and written more or less in an unbroken style on five A5 size pages.

H.G. Roberts

Name address as usual

My dear sweetheart

Your last two very welcome letters to hand I also got the P.O. for 3s safe also the novel stories book was so sorry to hear of Mrs Noakes brother being killed seems so strange her not wanting her son to go & then her brother getting killed & she thought such a lot of him I think it must have been a hard blow to her still her husband & son are safe that a lot is it not sweetheart good old girl I think of you & the nippers so my kit saved up a shiilling for me well dear we have some splendid weather here at present I also am pretty fit at present as you say dear it seems years & years since I saw you could do with another leaf I am thinking never mind dear me with both keep a good heart & trust for the best as you said I was glad you keep those other books for that story I think that poor girl went through a lot don't you I am certain you yourself read it well sweetheart I trust & hope before long this war will be over & I shall be with you again but expect there will be a lot to do before that still so long as I pull through for your sake I shall be satisfied old Alfred to bring you those pieces he is very thoughtful I think had a letter from Harry am glad he is at home any rate this is Sunday have the afternoon off so am going fishing enclose a picture of a church have often seen it & it is just as the photo is I thought you would like to see it, it is near that nice little house I should like for you & I such a dear little place just built for two. Well my old sweetheart keep up a good heart & trust in God & your Herbert for so long as I am satisfied about you & the nippers I can keep a good heart & let come what may it don't worry me Give my respect to all at home & tell Mrs Wright will write her shortly am picking up fine in health lately & am pleased to hear the nippers and yourself are well & don't send me any money yet awhile & after the 1st of next month June am going to send you a field card each day so as to keep you posted about me so will close now with my fondest love & kisses to my dear sweetheart & wife & nippers from your loving sweetheart & husband

Best heaps XXX

Herbert was born c.1887 the son of William and Ellen Roberts. His father, a linen packer was born in Plymouth and his mother in Launceston. Their five children, Ernest, Herbert, Harry, Sidney and Amy were all born in the London parish of St Luke. The 1891 census recorded that the family were living at 16H Block, Peasbody's Buildings, Roscoe Street, London.

Ten years later, at the age of 14 Herbert and his elder brother Ernest were working as errand boys. In 1911 the family were still residing at the same address and Herbert was employed as a porter for a cloth manufacturer.



On the 7th July, 1912 at St Mary Magdalene Church, Southwark, Herbert married Frances Elswood Daking. Subsequently they had two children and lived at 13 Fairbank Street, East Road, City Road, London.

At the outbreak of the First World War, Herbert enlisted into the Army at Shoreditch. His regimental number, S/6673, the letter prefix indicating that he was a wartime enlistment. After training he was posted the 2nd Battalion, The Rifle Brigade, a regular Army battalion. Prior to the outbreak of war they had been stationed at Kuldana, India (now Pakistan) and upon mobilisation they travelled by train to Bombay.

On the 18th September, 1914, they embarked on the S.S. Somalia and sailed two days later for the United Kingdom. Disembarking at Liverpool on the 22nd October the battalion entrained for Winchester where they joined the 25th Brigade part of the 8th Division. On the 6th November, the battalion arrived in France for deployment on the Western Front. Rifleman Herbert Roberts went to France, possibly as part of a reinforcement draft on the 19th May, 1915.

Before leaving for overseas service Herbert arranged that a separation allowance was paid to his wife. A letter from the Army Pay Office at Winchester informed her that as from the 12th April, 1915 she would receive a weekly payment of £1 4s 6d for the two children and herself.

In the Spring of 1916 the 2nd Battalion, The Rifle Brigade participated in offensive operations undertaking raids on German positions in the Thiepval-La Boisselle sector. On the 27th June they were relieved and given two days rest in bivouacs in Long Valley near Albert.

Leaving there during the evening of the 29th the battalion began to move towards the front line. By the end of the following day they were in their final assembly trenches in readiness for the opening day of the Somme offensive. With the 2nd Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment, 2nd Battalion, Lincolnshire Regiment, 1st Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles in support, the 2nd Battalion, The Rifle Brigade were to attack Ovillers. The latter battalion were held in reserve, until 0730 hours when they moved up through communications trenches into the front line. Ordered to advance towards the German line the leading troops were subjected to concentrated artillery fire. Although some managed to reach the German front line they were forced to withdraw back to their own front line trench position where they had to endure further enemy shelling. After sustaining 134 casualties they were ordered back into the support trenches where they were relieved and returned to bivouacs in Long Valley.

On the 6th July, they entrained for Bethune and occupied billets there until the 22nd and then took over positions in the Hohenzollern sector until mid-October. Throughout this period they suffered

the rigours of trench warfare. They were given the task on the 25th-26th August to attack German positions in the Hulluch sector.

Forward observers had determined that a British artillery bombardment had cut gaps in the German wire.

At midnight three companies advanced under the cover of a barrage and within a few minutes reached the enemy wire. There however, the troops came under rifle-grenade, mortar and shell-fire from the German 2nd and 3rd line positions. The attacking troops did not come face to face with the enemy as they were not occupying the front line section which the 2nd Battalion, The Rifle Brigade attacked. In their advance the battalion sustained 131 casualties, including 26 killed.

Among those posted as missing was S/6673 Rifleman Herbert George Roberts.

His wife was notified that her husband had been posted as missing and any further information about Herbert would be communicated to her. With the 'fog of war' and the fate of many soldiers unknown, Frances was not alone waiting for news of their loved ones.

She made enquiries through appropriate channels appealing for any information. After six months of no definite news about Herbert she received a letter on the 5th April, 1917 from the British Red Cross & Order of St John's Enquiry which read as follows:-

Dear Madam,

We have been making all possible enquiries about your husband but have found it almost impossible to learn anything about him. We have, however, seen a man who saw your husband after he was wounded and I think you may wish to know what he has told us, although it is very little. This man is Pte. Pearce, 72796 of the same Regt, now in Hospital in France, and his account is as follows:-

"I saw a man named Roberts wounded in a raid at Vermelles about Sept. 26th. He was lying on the ground and seemed very bad as I crawled past him. It was dark but I am sure it was Roberts. He was a very slim built fair man, of about 30, and came from London, I heard nothing about him afterwards. He was not in my platoon."

I am afraid this must greatly deepen your anxiety and we begin to fear that there can now be no hope of any good news; but we are continuing our enquiries and perhaps someone else may be able to tell us more

With very sincere sympathy

Yours faithfully (Signed) for the Earl of Lucan

The following month a letter from the Ministry of Pensions informed Frances that the separation payment would cease on the 6th May, 1917. Instead she would receive a pension of 13s 9d and an allowance for the two children of 9s 2d. The weekly payment of £1 2s 11d paid through the Post Office at Hoxton commenced on the 9th May, 1917. This change of payment, the Ministry insisted did not indicate that there was any proof of her husband's death.

Sadly for Frances and her children, Herbert's body was not recovered from the battlefield and his name is inscribed on Panel 129 of the Loos Memorial. He was 29 years of age although the CWGC list him as being four years older. Frances would have received his campaign medals, the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal 1914-1918, Allied Victory Medal 1914-1919, Bronze Memorial Plaque and Commemorative Scroll. The group has been broken up and the whereabouts of the memorial plaque and scroll are unknown.

[Sources ~ Original and copied documents and photograph of Rifleman H.G. Roberts.

Ancestry ~ Census records for 1891; 1901 & 1911.

Forces War Records Web-Site ~ www.forces-war-records.co.uk

War Record ~ 2nd Battalion, The Rifle Brigade.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Web-Site ~ www.cwgc.org

The Great War Collectors Companion Volume II by Howard Williamson]



R.G. Coleman



LOWCA UNDER FIRE

The German naval bombardments of the East Coast ports in 1914 are well known. What is not common knowledge however is that the Imperial German Navy mounted an attack on the coast of Cumberland in the following year.

On 16th August 1915, a German U-boat surfaced off Parton Bay on the West Coast of Cumbria, and proceeded to shell the small village of Lowca, just to the north of Whitehaven.

The target for the 4.1 inch gun of U24 (Kapitanleutnant Rudolph Schneider) was the Workington Iron and Steel Company's coke plant at Lowca. A by-product of the coking process was toluene, an essential constituent in the manufacture of the high explosive used in British artillery shells.

This audacious attack in the morning twilight hours caught the community off-guard but crowds soon gathered to watch the event from Whitehaven pier. During the hour long bombardment 55 shells landed on the factory and the surrounding area. There were no local coastal defences to return fire.

Both sides used the incident for their own propaganda purposes.

The Germans claimed the raid as a significant success against a legitimate war target. They had demonstrated the German Navy's ability to strike at Britain's west coast and had put out of action a facility important to the enemy's war effort.

In Britain the press seized upon the attack on the undefended

coastline as another example of "Germ-Hun frightfulness".

The truth was a little more prosaic. By the time the U24 disappeared below the waves the total casualties ashore comprised one dead dog, and no significant damage had been done to the chemical works.

The vulnerability of the plant had been foreseen and a contingency plan had been devised to put into operation in the event of an attack. When the U.24 opened fire the majority of workers at the plant made their way to designated shelters. A small team remained behind to release flaming gas into the atmosphere and set fire to drums of oil. The flames and clouds of smoke created gave the impression that the works had been seriously damaged.

The German raid became part of local folklore. Notable beneficiaries were local youngsters who sold the shell shrapnel to eager souvenir hunters.

Local anger fell on Mrs. Hildegard Burnyeat (nee Retzlaff), the German wife of a local MP. She was the daughter of a Prussian Army colonel and her brother and other relatives were serving with the German forces. She was a strong supporter of her homeland and publicly defended Germany in the war. Hildegard was a known associate of a convicted German female spy and when strange bright lights were reported on the coast near Whitehaven just before the U-boat bombardment the implication was obvious.

She was arrested under the Defence of the Realm Act, possibly for her own safety, and interned at

Rudolph Schneider



Aylesbury. After the death of her husband in 1916, Hildegard Burnyeat was released on health grounds and was relocated to Harrogate.

The U-boat commander Rudolph Schneider had made his name earlier in the year when U24 sank the old battleship HMS Formidable in Lyme Bay. Three days after the Lowca incident, U24 sank the steamship Arabic with the loss of 44 lives including four Americans. The resulting diplomatic protest from the USA led to the German Navy abandoning the first campaign of unrestricted submarine warfare.

On 13th October 1917, whilst commanding U87 during very stormy weather, Schneider was swept overboard. The crew managed to bring him back on board but he was already dead. He was buried at sea between the Shetland Isles and Norway.

The coke works was closed and demolished around 1980.

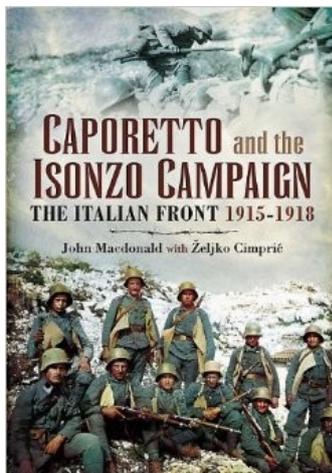


Lowca Coke Plant



U24

Book Review



Caporetto and the Isonzo Campaign

The Italian Front 1915-1918

by John Macdonald with Željko Cimprić
 Published by Pen & Sword Books in 2011
 Hardback – 194 pages. £19.99p
 ISBN 978 184 8846715

A profusion of books have and are written about the many and varied aspects First World War but the campaign fought on the Italian front has been relatively neglected. In the introduction to his book the author comments that "... There are a couple of good highly detailed academic hardbacks on the campaign ... there is a need for a shorter, highly illustrated book ..." about Caporetto and the Isonzo Campaign. The reader is introduced to the background which led to Italy entering the First World War and the internal tensions festering within the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

A short biography of the military commanders of both sides tasked with obtaining a decisive victory gives an insight to their character and military competence. The mountainous terrain of the Julian and Tyrolean Alps is vividly described and how the sudden changes in weather conditions both in winter and summer affected the fighting capabilities of the troops and logistic support.

Each of the battles, consecutively and concisely described culminates in the twelfth – the Battle of Caporetto – a decisive victory for the Austro-Hungarian army. Both sides during the three years of a hard fought campaign sustained horrendous and often unnecessary casualties. The Piave offensive and the battle on the Asiago Plateau during the final months of 1918 is briefly described.

For the battlefield visitor the author suggests places of interest to visit. Caporetto (today called Kobarid) has a museum which is internationally recognized for its exhibitions and displays about the history of the area and the campaign.

Sited on the rock strewn Carso plateau is the Redipuglia Memorial and Ossuary. The latter contain the remains of 100,000 unidentified Italian soldiers and inscribed on twenty-two terraces leading up to the memorial are the names of over 38,000 identified Italians. A cemetery at Fogliano, commemorates the Austro-Hungarian dead. Other battlefield memorials and churches in the area are also recommended to be visited.

The book contains a number and good contemporary photographs. Perhaps the maps of the battlefield could have been more clearly defined but this should detract from the overall content of a fascinating and well written book. It is worthy of a place on the bookshelf of anyone with an interest in the First World War. It is also a fitting tribute to John Macdonald who died shortly after completing this book.



Roger G. Coleman



Great War Quiz

1. Who reputedly said at the battle of the Marne "My centre is giving way, my right is in retreat; situation excellent: I shall attack."?
2. Name the three British cruisers sunk by the German submarine U9 in the North Sea on 22nd September 1914. 
3. The German Army had the Schlieffen Plan, what was the French Army's war plan known as?
4. Which Serbian secret society was implicated in the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand?
5. The first British servicemen killed on active service on the continent died on 16th August 1914. What was their unit? 
6. The first British shot was fired at what enemy target?
7. Food shortage fears led to price increases in British shops in August 1914. The price of a 2lb (1kg) loaf rose by 33%. What was the new price?
8. What was the first significant military action of the war?
9. The first German submarine lost in the war was U51 on 9th August in the North Sea. How was it sunk?
10. Which BEF unit made a last stand at Etreux on 27th August?
11. What was the "Weihnachtsangriff"?
12. Who declared Islamic Holy War (Jihad) against the British Empire on 16th November 1914?
13. Who replaced Moltke as German Chief of Staff on 14th September 1914?
14. The French Army suffered over 500,000 casualties in the first five months of the war. True or false?



BRITISH ARMY CAP BADGES

The Bedfordshire Regiment

The badge was based upon a Maltese Cross, superimposed upon the Star of the Garter. In the centre were the Garter and motto, and within, a hart crossing a ford, all in white metal. Across the lower arm of the cross was a brass scroll in scribed 'Bedfordshire'. An all brass war economy version of the badge was also issued.

Some 20 battalions of the regiment served during the war and seven soldiers were awarded the Victoria Cross.

A total of 74 battle honours were granted to the regiment including Mons, Marne 1914, Ypres 1914 '15 '17, Loos, Somme 1916 '18, Cambrai 1917 '18, Sambre, France and Flanders 1914-1918, Suvla, and Gaza.

Estimated casualties (died): 6,500.



In France (Givenchy, in the Duck Bill Trench)

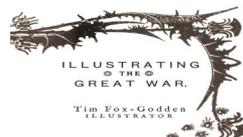
6pm, Sunday, 20 June 1915

Dear I,

I am writing this letter in the front firing trench with the Huns 250 yards away to the eastward, Our 'vis-à-vis' are Saxons and seem to be peaceable folk, but they have just begun their 'evening hate'. I have most discreetly retired to my burrow. It is too small to be a 'dugout', as it just allows me inside if I tuck my knees in, but as I want to write, I find my knees in just the right position. As if in rage at what I have just written a shell has just burst close enough to spatter me with dry bits of clay. Now the shelling has passed me and is going down the line to the right. They always shell from our left to right.

From **Veteran Volunteer, Memoir of the Trenches, Tanks and Captivity 1914-1919** by Frank Vans Agnew (Ed. Jamie Vans) available from Pen and Sword.

Illustration on the front cover courtesy of Tim Fox-Godden



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 Ferdinand Foch; [2] HMS Aboukir, Cressy and Hogue; [3] Plan XVII;
[4] The Union or Death Society better known as "The Black Hand"; [5] No.3 Sqn Royal Flying
Corps; [6] German minelayer Konigin Louise by HMS Lance on 5th August; [7] 4d (less than 2p);
[8] Austro-Hungarian bombardment of Belgrade on 29th July; [9] Rammed by cruiser HMS
Birmingham; [10] 2nd Bn. Royal Munster Fusiliers; [11] Christmas Day British seaplane raid on
Cuxhaven; [12] Sultan of Turkey; [13] Falkenhayn; [14] True.