



The Dugout

Newsletter of the Dorset and South Wiltshire Branch of the
Western Front Association

Parish Notes

Chairman:

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Diary Dates 2010

Meetings:

Saturday, 10 April

Verne Littley - Basra CWGC Cemetery and Memorial WW1 to 2005

Saturday, 8 May

Joanna Legg - 21 March 1918 - The German Attack

Saturday, 12 June

Branch Seminar - Tank Museum

Saturday, 19 June

Diane Atkinson - Elsie & Mairi go to War

Saturday, 7 August

Dale Hjort - Italy and the Great War

Saturday, 18 September

Andy Grainger - Colonel Bruchmuller - German Artillery Specialist

At Pimperne Village Hall, Blandford -
2pm for 2.30pm start.

Further details on Branch website
www.wfa-dorsetswilts.org.uk

Field Trips:

Battlefield Tour

3 - 6 September - The Yser Front
and the Northern Salient - Ypres

Further details from the Secretary,
Judy Willoughby, or the Chairman

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Newsletter Editor:

Helen Kerridge:  
[baytnaa@btinternet.com](mailto:baytnaa@btinternet.com)

## Chairman's Chat

Welcome to Dugout 5. On the back of a very successful 2009 I think you will find the programme planned for 2010 every bit as good as last years if not better. Our monthly meetings have got off to superb start with two excellent talks given by Andy Robertshaw and Victoria Burbidge and most recently a fascinating talk by Joanna Legg who gave us her perceptive insights into how it was on the 'other side' of the wire with 'A study of the German Defence - 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916'. Also 33 branch members and guests have enjoyed a visit to the Army Medical Services and Royal Logistic Corps Museums.

The rest of the speaker programme promises variety, interest and the unusual. Later in the year we will welcome the author Diane Atkinson and the renowned military historian Peter Barton. Details of speakers and topics are on the brand new branch website [www.wfa-dorsetswilts.org.uk](http://www.wfa-dorsetswilts.org.uk).

This venture is a valuable resource for communications and information exchange and I congratulate Marc Thomson, the driving force of this project, for seeing it through to a successful conclusion and he continues as branch website manager. Thanks must also go to Tim Backhouse of CIS who constructed the site. This is a resource whose value and utility will grow. Articles, information requests etc should be submitted in the first instance using the 'contact us' tag on the website. I view the 'Dugout' and the website as complimentary and we now have plenty of space for your research

articles, book reviews and items of interest to be published for the benefit of our members.

Other key events are the branch Gallipoli Tour, our September battlefield tour which this year looks at the Northern Salient and the Yser Front and our first ever Regional Seminar.

The Seminar has four great speakers and will be a fantastic day. One year's entry to the Tank Museum is included in the ticket price, so support your branch, and bring a guest or two for a fascinating day at a world class venue! Tickets will be available at our monthly meetings and further details from branch secretary if you need them. Details of the seminar are also on the branch website, the WFA website and WFA Front Forum, The Great War forum, Tank Museum website and the Great War site [www.greatwar.co.uk/events](http://www.greatwar.co.uk/events).

For the ardent researchers amongst us The National Archive at Kew has recently introduced parking charges and revised opening times. The Dorset History Centre at Dorchester has also introduced parking charges for its very limited parking capability. As with all things check before you go!

The branch had a stand at Poole Library for their Family History Week and will have a stand at the Tank Museum Out of Hours events until our June seminar. Like last year we plan to have a stand at Tank Fest and a return event at The Keep Military Museum is being planned. May I remind you all that the branch has corporate member

ship of The Keep, production of your WFA membership card gets you free entry and you can use the research facilities free of charge as well, but please make an appointment. Last but not least our School Prize Award 2010 has a record number of entries of a very good quality. Details of the Prize Award Evening will be announced in due course.

There is before us an exciting year of tours, trips, and events as well as our monthly meeting programme and our newsletter and website. For the branch to do this requires planning and organisation and this is down to the dedication of the committee who work so hard in support of the branch for which I give my grateful thanks, not forgetting of course the 'unsung' who are not on the committee and help in many ways to make our meetings and events a success. I hope that the support you have all given the branch continues and grows thus sustaining the success of the branch and that you can encourage others to come along.



### **Birmingham Old Contemptibles Come Home**

My great-uncle Thomas Henry Eginton went to France with 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment in 1914. The battalion formed part of 22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade / 7<sup>th</sup> Division. During the First World War they took part in the Antwerp operation and the battles of Ypres (1914), Festubert and Loos (1915), the Somme (1916) and Ypres (1917). The battalion moved to the Italian Front in November 1917 and saw action at the battle of Vittorio Veneto in 1918.

Thomas Eginton survived the war although he was wounded at least twice. The first occasion was in September 1916 at either Ginchy or Ploegsteert. He was wounded again at Bullecourt in July 1917. This was a serious facial wound and he was returned to the UK. He recovered receiving extensive skin grafts, but he remained badly disfigured.

There is a family story that Thomas' younger brother William Henry Eginton attempted to enlist under-age to avenge his brother but was found out and sent home. The brothers were very close. William did eventually serve on the Western Front with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Essex Regiment as one of the "boys of 1918", and he too was wounded.

Back in his home town of Birmingham after the war, Thomas joined the Old Contemptibles Association (OCA). The Birmingham Branch of the OCA met at a public house in the city centre - the Albion Hotel in

Edmund Street. Their link with the public house was so strong that in 1953 it was renamed The Old Contemptibles.



Photograph: Rod Arnold

Whilst recovering from his first wound towards the end of 1916, Thomas Eginton married Lily Orton in Birmingham. They eventually had six children – five of them boys. Their eldest son, also named Thomas, was born on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918.

Only one of the sons is still alive, Leslie now aged 85. He has told me that after the

First World War his father had great difficulty finding work. Leslie attributes this to his father's war injuries. For some years Thomas Eginton was an evening newspaper vendor on the Moseley Road in Birmingham. Leslie says that it was 1935 before his father found a "real job" with a newsagent in Moseley.

Thomas Eginton had worked in the gunmaking industry before joining the Army and he returned to his trade when he found employment at the Birmingham Small Arms (BSA) factory around 1938/39. Presumably the rearmament programme had created more employment opportunities.

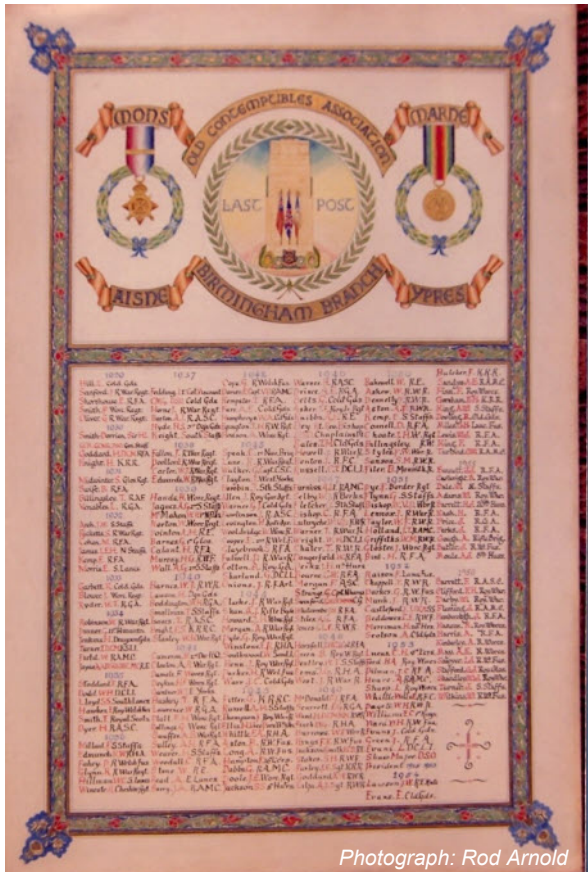
Leslie states that his father died in 1941. One of his last wishes was that his 1914 Star and clasp, Victory and War Medals should pass to his brother William. In memory of his deceased brother, William wore



Thomas's OCA badge in the lapel of his jacket until his own death in 1964. However he always wore the badge reversed (i.e. with the face behind his lapel) because, as he said "I am not entitled to wear it".

William Eginton was my maternal grandfather. Some three years ago I was given William's First World War medals, and with them came those of his brother. Unfortunately Thomas' British War Medal, silver war badge and OCA badge had been lost over the years.

In September 2007 our annual Branch Field Trip took us to leper (Ypres). Visiting a shop in Meensestraat, I found and purchased an OCA badge. The badge had a serial number on the back (1708) and on my return to the UK I wrote to the Western Front Association (WFA) journal 'Stand To' requesting information about the OCA and asking particularly if there was any way of identifying the original owner of the badge from the number.



Photograph: Rod Arnold

None of the replies I received were able to suggest how I might be able to find the name of the original owner of the badge I had bought. I realised that this was probably now a lost cause, but my letter to 'Stand To' did produce an unexpected development.

In July 2008 Martin Willoughby, our Branch Chairman, forwarded to me an email from Graham Boddy, a member of the Yorkshire Branch of the WFA, who had "important information about Thomas Eginton".

When I made contact with Graham I was told that the OCA Birmingham Branch had kept a Roll of Honour which recorded the deaths of individual members of the branch as they occurred. The Roll of Honour had presumably been displayed at the OCA 'Branch HQ' – the Albion Hotel / Old Contemptibles – until either the branch became defunct or the premises were refurbished. Evidently it had found its way to Yorkshire and was now in Graham's possession.

Amongst the 245 names listed on the Roll of Honour was a "Thomas Eginton" of the Royal Warwickshire

Regiment. Thomas' death was listed for 1942 (his son Leslie states it was 1941). Other names appearing on the list were those of General Horace Smith-Dorrien and a Bishop Dey.

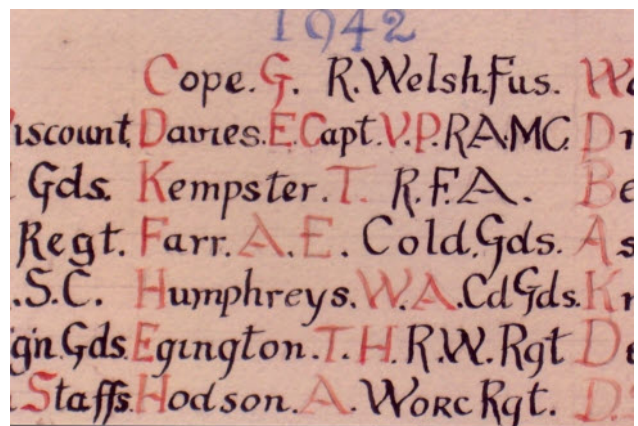
Graham was faced with down-sizing and was wondering if I might be interested in acquiring the Roll of Honour. Emailed photographs showed a highly decorated work of calligraphy showing the names of individuals, any decorations and their unit under the year of their death. The years 1929 to 1956 were covered. Unfortunately it was quite a size (2' 3" x 3' 5") - rather too large for the dining room wall!

My mother (Thomas Eginton's niece) felt strongly that the Roll of Honour should be on public display, ideally back in Birmingham. So I began a search to find it a new home. I thought it would be quite easy to place such a historical artefact, especially within 5 years of the 1914 centenary. I was in for a shock.

For various reasons approaches to Birmingham Museum, the Museum of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers in Warwick, the National Army Museum, Birmingham Anglican Cathedral, Birmingham Parish Church (St. Martin's in the Bull Ring) and the National Memorial Arboretum all drew a blank. I was on the verge of making an appeal through the Birmingham press when someone suggested trying the British Legion (BL).

The BL Birmingham County Secretary consulted his colleagues and they agreed to accept the Roll of Honour. He even agreed to go to Yorkshire to collect the item!

After repairs to the frame and reglazing, the Roll of Honour is now on the wall at the BL County HQ in Birmingham. On 20<sup>th</sup> July 2009 I took my mother to view it and see her uncle's name. "My father would have been very proud of what we have done to help preserve the memory of his much loved brother and his chums," she said.



The Roll of Honour may not be at its final home. Apparently the City of Birmingham has plans to construct a 'Peace Museum' at the site of a church bombed during the Second World War. A 'Peace

Garden' was created around the ruins some years ago. Coincidentally my great-grandparents were married at this church (St. Thomas's) back in 1868. If the proposed museum is developed the Roll of Honour may be transferred there to go on public display and our objective will have been achieved.

The day after I had taken my mother to see the Roll of Honour, I travelled into Birmingham city centre to visit the Old Contemptibles and remember Granddad and his brother Thomas over a pint!

**Rod Arnold**



*The following articles are two of a number that have been kindly supplied to us by **Martin Middlebrook**. Martin is a well known author on a variety of military subjects and I am delighted that he is to be one of the keynote speakers at our June Seminar.*

*Editor*

### **Authuille Military Cemetery**

This cemetery a particularly attractive location and a perfect example of what I call a 'Comrades Cemetery' (not an official term). It does not receive the attention it deserves.

The village of Authuille was sheltered from German observation and was a useful forward base for British units holding the line between Thiépval and Ovillers. The cemetery is down a short lane starting near the

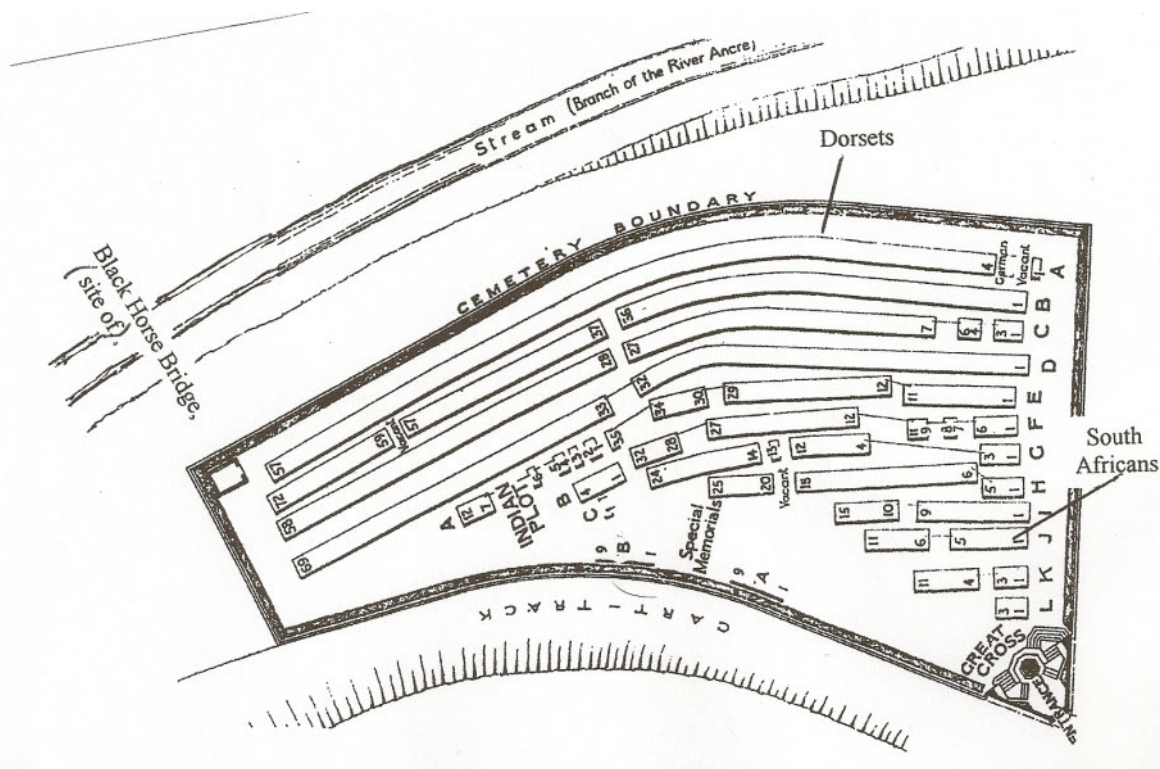
church and then on a steep bank running down to a branch of the little River Ancre. The slope gave it particularly good protection from German shellfire. The well-used Black Horse Bridge across the Ancre was close to the bottom of the cemetery. A Royal Army Medical Corps Forward Dressing Station was permanently located nearby.



CWGC Photograph

The cemetery was mainly used by units of the 51<sup>st</sup> (Highland) Division when it took over this sector from the French in 1915, by the 36<sup>th</sup> (Ulster) and 32<sup>nd</sup> Divisions in 1916 when they were holding the line before the battle, and then by the Territorials of the 49<sup>th</sup> (West Riding) Division who were regularly involved in the attacks here for three months after the 1<sup>st</sup> of July.

In the quieter trench-holding periods, battalions of all these divisions would have brought their fatal casualties back to Authuille from the trenches; the dead often being buried by their own friends - hence the

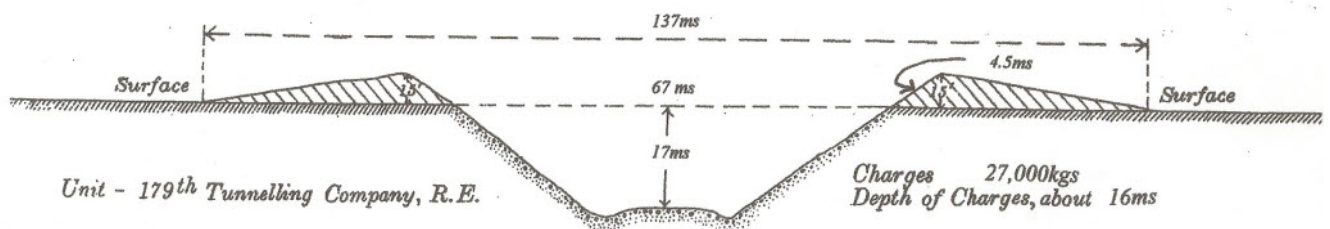


description of it as a 'Comrades Cemetery'. Many little groups of such graves can be seen in the cemetery. A particularly prominent example can be seen in the row nearest the Ancre. Thirteen men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dorsets, 32<sup>nd</sup> Division, were killed in May 1915 when the Germans bombarded the front line and then sent across a raiding party. Twelve of the men were buried in a communal grave; their officer, 19 year old Second Lieutenant Vere Talbot Bayly, has a separate grave nearby.

There are 451 graves; nearly all identified. Near the left top corner is a small plot of eighteen Indians, mostly cavalrymen who were relieving British troops by holding trenches or providing working parties in September 1915; they were buried separated from the white soldiers. Just by the entrance are the graves of three South African artillerymen, members of their Heavy Battery that was located near here in 1916.



### The 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 1<sup>st</sup>, to support the attack of the 34<sup>th</sup> 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 dugouts 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 51<sup>st</sup> (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 1<sup>st</sup>, 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 9<sup>th</sup> Cheshires, from the 19<sup>th</sup> (Western) Division which was brought up to start as new attack on La Boisselle the next day. Memorials to both the

19<sup>th</sup> Division (by the church) and the 34<sup>th</sup> 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



Photo : Helen Kerridge

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 1<sup>st</sup>.



## Logistics, an overview

*Logistics is a useful word but was not, I believe, used by the British army during the Great War, administration and transportation being the common terms; however it is very useful and if nothing else is shorter than administration and transportation. This attempt to provide an introduction to the subject, from the top, is based on my reading. In particular I would like to mention Ian Brown's British Logistics on the Western Front. If I have misquoted any of the authors I have read it's my mistake.*

The army that deployed in 1914 was guided by Field Service Regulations first published in 1912 and again in 1914 which built on experience in the Boer War where commanding officers were not encouraged to meddle in administration. Future commanders had however learned the importance of transportation. Henry Wilson (then Major General later Field Marshal), when Commandant of the Staff College introduced ASC (and RAMC) officers to the directing staff. At the top of the BEF the Quartermaster General (QMG) at GHQ advised the GOC in C and the Inspector General of Communications (IGC) with his own headquarters ensured the BEF's support. The ultimate size of the BEF was not foreseen and many changes would become necessary as it grew and the nature of the campaign changed.

It must not be forgotten that neither GHQ nor L of C units existed before August 1914. Plans for the for the Lines of Communication (L of C), included veterinary units, four battalions for general duties and two railway and one works companies of the Royal Engineers. The War Office had drawn up plans and liaised with civilian railway companies, but railways in France were French and their priorities for their much larger army conflicted. Until the BEF exceeded five divisions the system was made to work and coped with the advance of the BEF to Mons and its retreat to the Marne over a different route; no mean achievement. But the strain was beginning to show, in the first actions the 18 pounders were firing 14 rounds per gun per day but only 7 rounds per gun per day came from UK.

During the transition to trench warfare and as the BEF grew problems in the higher levels of logistics emerged. At home the factories manufacturing ammunition could not meet demands; in part because skilled labour had been lost to the army. The relationship between IGC and QMG was found to be less than ideal. Both reported to the C in C directly but there was an overlap in their responsibilities. The QMG controlled a number of Directors including, Supplies, Transportation, Railways and Ordnance Services. However Railways and Ordnance were located with IGC or in the Lines of Communication (L of C) and received instruction from him. The strain was being felt and this may have been one of the factors leading FM French to consider retiring to the channel ports to regroup just before the Marne battle. In any case, by the end of 1914 restrictions had to be placed on the use of ammunition by the most numerous field gun the 18 Pounder.

The expansion of the BEF lead to the formation of Armies, formations that had not previously existed in the British army. The responsibilities of the Army HQs for logistics had to be defined. There was a shortage of staff officers for the new Army and Corps HQs being formed and the tendency was to take administrative staff officers to make up the shortfall for operational staff. As early as October 1914 the Director of Supplies proposed that civilians from large firms who had experience in moving good around Britain and around the world could be usefully employed. This seems to have been resisted but by early 1915 that Director had become IGC and Mr Dent of SE & Chatham Railway was appointed to act as WO Agent in Boulogne. Boulogne and Le Harve were the main supply bases.

The logistic demands of the increasing size of the BEF were compounded by the increasing numbers of heavy guns and howitzers and their requirements for ammunition. As an extreme example of the scale of change, in 1915 Rawlinson's corps used 1,800 tons of ammunition for Festubert but in 1917 the Canadian Corps used 40,900 tons at Passchendaele. A number of principles emerged, among them the concept of 'standard' divisional supply packs, GHQ control of the L of C and Army HQs being responsible for all functions from the railhead forward. However ammunition shortages continued through 1915 and daily limits of firing were imposed e.g. for the 4.5" howitzer 7 rounds per gun per day, also reserves of SAA fell to 100 rounds per rifle less than the required holding.

By the end of 1915 the output of British, Canadian and United States munition factories had increased dramatically. It may also be significant that when Haig replaced French as C in C his first contacts in GHQ were with the Adjutant and Quartermaster Generals departments followed by the General Staff. By

the end of the Somme campaign transportation was faltering. During this campaign it appears that Haig asked Lloyd George for assistance with organisation of transport and Lloyd George appointed Eric Geddes with the task of improving transportation without having to remove troops from the front to provide labour. Geddes who had been a senior railway manager arrived at GHQ in September 1916. He was given the honorary rank of Major General and, in effect, replaced the IGC. His appreciation was that the ports were satisfactory but that there was insufficient railway equipment, canals were not being used and that the roads were in a poor state. He expressed the opinion that army officers had become accustomed to having to cope with tight purse strings and hence, in war, put forward demands for equipment that were below the real need. By November he had ordered 160 locomotives, 7,000 wagons and 1,200 miles of track, arguing that production of railway equipment was a higher priority than armaments as without railways the armaments could not be brought into use. It is also interesting to note that during 1916 the units employed in the L of C increased to include 11 RE battalions working on roads, 20, or so, labour battalions working in forestry and quarries and 29 ASC companies. Around this time light railway equipment for use within army areas was provided. Light railways needed less road stone for their construction and maintenance than roads meeting the same purpose and could be laid up to the heavy artillery lines. Geddes left the BEF in May 1917 leaving a system that was able to support four major offensives in 1917; Arras, Messines, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ypres and Cambrai. The system was able to cope with the unexpected, for example in December 1916 a freighter sank at Boulogne blocking a third of the harbour and trapping 14 ships, but the system was flexible enough to continue supply. Indeed the rate of ammunition supply was improved to the extent that guns wore out faster than they could be repaired.

Ammunition supply was not the only problem. At the end of 1917 GHQ ordered armies to plant as many potatoes as possible in their areas to offset a shortfall in supply from UK due to German submarine warfare. The German offensive of early 1918 was foreseen and changes to logistic systems were planned to counter any loss of ground. Armies selected alternate railheads capable of accepting up to 50 trains per day and as the offensives developed supply dumps were successfully removed. The German penetration towards Amiens led to preparation to close the southern L of C and for the supply of the 5<sup>th</sup> Army by the French. However, much equipment was lost including 859 guns, 380 lorries and 80 Holt tractors, but reserves had, by then, reached such a level that all guns, less 2 12" howitzers were immediately replaced. Tractors and lorries were more difficult as the

UK motor industry was not on as much of a war footing as armaments.

I recall a speaker at a seminar saying that by 1918 the BEF were fighting a 'rich man's' war. The following figures illustrate how ammunition usage grew throughout the war.

The figures are thousands of tons in each quarter of the years from 1914 to 1918.

| Quarter         | 1914 | 1915 | 1916 | 1917 | 1918 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> |      | 1    | 3    | 150  | 350  |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> |      | 2    | 7    | 500  | 400  |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> |      | 2    | 300  | 550  | 600  |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> | 2    | 3    | 200  | 400  | 200  |

It is clear that the highest rate of ammunition expenditure was during the '100 Days'. The ability of the system to cope with these rates if the war had continued is an open question. The system had been honed during the static phases of the war. It would have been severely tested if instead of seeking an armistice the Germans had retired to their frontier and made a stand. Of course there were many other factors which are outside the scope of this article.

I have sought to provide an introduction to the way in which the logistic support of the BEF was handled at high levels. I have not touched the work of the Army Ordnance Corps and the Army Service Corps whose men did much of work. Such detail as I have given is concerned with artillery ammunition which I hope allows some appreciation of the size of the logistic task which the BEF tackled.

**Ian Duffin**



## **The Last Great War Survivor**

The Daily Mail has recently reported on the last known survivor of the First World War. She is 108 year old Florence Green.

Florence enlisted aged 17, into the Women's RAF two months before the end of the war and worked as a waitress in the officers' mess at RAF Marham and Narborough Airfield, both in Norfolk.

Mrs Green went on to marry her husband, Walter, 1920 and now widowed, lives with her 88 year old daughter, Mary in Kings Lynn. She told the newspaper that she had thoroughly enjoyed her time in the WRAF

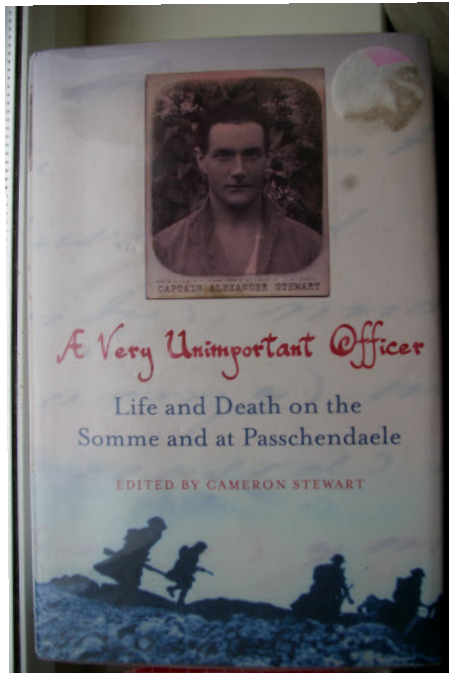
## Book Reviews



### **“A Very Unimportant Officer”**

***edited by Cameron Stewart and published in 2008 by Hodder and Stoughton.***

This book is based on rough notes made in a diary whilst the author, Captain Alexander Stewart, was serving with the Scottish Rifles in France during the Great War. Cameron Stewart, although only six when his grandfather died, has vivid snapshots in his memory of “the man who lived through what you are about to read.”



This edited version of the diary, with the commentary on it written in 1928 by Captain Stewart in order to flesh out the necessarily brief notes made in the field, was published following Cameron Stewart's rediscovery of it after nearly eighty years on a family bookshelf.

We follow Alexander Stewart from his pre-war position with the Malay States Volunteer Rifles through training as an officer in the Cameronians and on, in March 1916, to serve in France. Throughout the diary, which will eventually cover Captain Stewart's service on the Somme and in Flanders until his evacuation to a London hospital in September 1917 following a very serious neck wound, we read his wide-ranging reflections on his experience of trench warfare.

He begins his training in a chilly, bleak Scotland and early in the diary he makes comparisons between regular officers and those who have been given war-time commissions. His direct, no-nonsense, manner is typical: “I think that all the regular officers, anyhow all those I met up to and including the rank of Major, were splendid fellows; but nevertheless speaking

generally I soon came to the very definite opinion that the new “war officers” were infinitely more capable, led their men better and did their job better than the old pre-war regulars with whom I came into contact. The old regular was frightened of doing anything that was not quite according to Cocker, and to my mind went far too much on the assumption “theirs not to reason why”; very fine and very brave but if God has given you a brain why not use it? There were of course very many exceptions but, again speaking generally, it seemed to me that the longer a man had been in the army the less intelligent he was.”

In addition to forthright comments the diary is full of unsentimental observations of the details of trench life as well as the effect that war has on individual soldiers. We learn, for example, about the part played by the ground itself in determining whether shelling will cause serious injury or merely the annoyance of a covering of mud. We follow the planning and the attack on High Wood on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1916 “all done with commendable precision”. The morale-boosting effects of such things as shelter, however slight, hot food, and the reliability of the postal service are included. He praises the “fortitude of the armies on the Somme”, explaining the effects of lack of sleep, especially for Company Commanders, as well as the problems of flies, frequent movement and the confusion which often accompanied it. He is interested in the way his fellow officers and men behave in the various circumstances of war and especially how they are affected by fear.

Captain Stewart reserves his most vehement criticism, for the “blasted ignorant fool of a General” who wanted to stop “the finest thing that ever happened in the trenches”, the rum ration. His judgment is that “never was it more needed than on the Somme”. He concludes his tirade thus: “Those who have not spent a night standing, sitting or lying in mud with an east wind blowing and the temperature below freezing point may consider that I am extravagant in my abuse of the men who denied the soldier his rum ration. Those who have will know that I have been too temperate in my language.”

At 2am on July 21<sup>st</sup> 1916 “as the sole surviving Company officer” Stewart writes of leading, with difficulty, what was left of the Battalion out of High Wood and finding transport men with some jars of rum when they reached Mametz Wood. “I immediately dished out a rum ration, going round with it myself; occasionally standing myself a nip when it was suggested (quite frequently). Then when everyone had had their tot I took one myself, retired into a convenient shell-hole, and so to sleep. The blasted blackguards that tried to stop the soldiers' rum ration should have been taken to High Wood and chained up there for a week. I believe that some of the clergy at home said that the

rum ration was teaching the young soldier to drink and for that reason should be stopped. The absence of rum certainly taught the young soldier to swear."

As well as providing valuable, often drily humorous, insights into the daily life of an "unimportant" officer's war in the trenches, Captain Stewart's forthright opinions on the conduct of the war make this very accessible book a most worthwhile read.

**Katherine Seymour**



## Great War Economy Cap Badges

There is a long history of armies using distinguishing marks on their clothing or equipment to enable friend to be recognized from foe.

Before this became formalized, soldiers often placed "field signs" such as sprigs of laurel, acorns, thistles and roses in their head-dress before going into battle. All of these have featured in modern British Army cap badges.

Perhaps the oldest sign that still survives today is the badge of the Welsh Guards – the leek – which was used by the Welsh as a 'field sign' as far back as 640 AD.

A Royal Warrant was issued in 1751 prohibiting the use of unauthorised badges or marks, but it was not until the closing years of the nineteenth century that cap badge designs as we know them today finally emerged.



Until 1952, when the "staybrite" badge of anodized aluminium appeared, British cap badges were normally made of either white metal (nickel) or brass. Many regimental badge designs used a combination of the two metals and were described as "bi-metal".

In 1916 there was a shortage of nickel. Some badges normally made using that metal, in an all white metal or bi-metal design, were struck all in brass. This also had the advantage of speeding-up the production of

cap badges at a time when they were needed in large numbers.

As far as I know, there is no official record of which badges normally produced using nickel were replaced by all brass versions. However John Gaylor, in his book 'Military Badge Collecting', reproduced an unofficial list compiled by a group of badge enthusiasts based on badges in their collections.



This showed some 15 cavalry and 47 infantry regiments that had all brass economy version badges issued. The Army Veterinary Corps, 6 yeomanry regiments and 10 Territorial infantry units (who had badges that differed slightly from their Regular infantry parent badge) were also included on the list.

Nickel and bi-metal badges were reintroduced after the end of the First World War.

A similar metal shortage in 1941 led to the introduction of plastic cap badges for many regiments, but as in the earlier conflict, no official list of these appears to have survived.

**Rod Arnold**



## Certificate Prices to rise 32%

The General Register Office has announced that the standard price for birth, marriage, and death certificates ordered via its website is to increase by 32% from £7 to £9.25 on 6 April 2010. This means that there is one price whether you know the GRO reference or not, unlike the present time when you were required to pay extra for the staff to do the leg work for you.



## Field Trip 2010 Army Medical Services Museum and Royal Logistics Corps Museum

This year's field trip was slightly closer to home than previous years, so allowed us to visit two very different museums.

The Army Medical Services (AMS) Museum, located at Keogh Barracks, Ash Vale was the first where we were met by the curator, Pete Starling, who gave an overview of the museum. It is not a huge place but considering the centuries of history it had to cover it was an absolutely fascinating place plus we had access to the marvelous library



The AMS incorporates the medical, nursing, dental and veterinary services and all four areas were covered superbly; the progress

of what was to what we have now was well portrayed and we should be very grateful for this progress. The horrors of war have always seen great advancement in medical treatments, and the war today is no exception.

Not surprisingly medical officers have often been the recipients of the Victoria Cross and the museum has a fine display of these together with numerous other medals, including that awarded to Lt Col Arthur Martin-Leake who was received the VC in 1902 and then a bar in 1914.

On leaving Keogh Barracks it was only a short drive to the Royal Logistics Corps (RLC) Museum at Deepcut. The RLC was formed in recent years from amongst others the Army Catering Corps (ACC), the Royal Corps of Transport (RCT), Royal Army Ordnance Corps (RAOC) and Pioneer Corps.

Again it was fairly small museum with a huge subject to cover and again it did it very well. We were met by historian and museum director, Andy Robertshaw. A buffet lunch had been provided and as well as time for a good look round Andy gave us a talk on looking at family history from the other direction; rather than

starting with what is known and work back, start with the unknown and work forward. This was admirably illustrated by his archeological work on the Western Front where human remains found were identified by the use of a number of skills and techniques and living relatives located. Some will remember his programme, 'Trench Detectives'.



Also that day the museum was holding a 'Meet the Expert' Day and a number of the group were able to 'pick the brains' of not only Andy, but the museum archivist, Gareth Mears, Andy's co author of his recent book, 'Ghosts of the Somme - Filming the Battle', Steve Roberts (ex RMP I am pleased to say) and Dr David Kenyon. Some of us came away with immediate answers, some are awaiting a more in depth answer by e mail.



It was a excellent day all round; good weather, good company and two excellent museums which are thoroughly recommended. Thanks to Martin and Judy as ever for their hard work.

**Editor**

**Photographs courtesy of Phil Mills**

## Child Okeford Roll of Honour

Like most villages and towns the village of Child Okeford near Blandford Forum has its war memorial but it also has a Roll of Honour in the church. This was commissioned in about 1955 by the village branch of the Royal British Legion to be used on Remembrance Sunday to read the names of those who had died in the two World Wars. This tradition continues and it was whilst hearing the

names in 2007 I thought it would be an interesting and worthwhile project to learn more about the men who died in the First World War and produce a short biography on each in time for Remembrance Sunday 2008, the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armistice.

Starting with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website, it quickly became apparent that there were errors in the spelling of surnames, incorrect ranks and an incorrect Christian name not to mention one name missing, and he was buried with a CWGC headstone in the churchyard. By November 2008 the first 'edition' was produced and it was satisfying to know that the right names were being heard at the Remembrance Sunday Service.

I then approached the Church Council, of which I was secretary at the time, for approval to have the Roll rewritten and corrected; this was granted. At the same time the Council was also approached by Lt Col & Mrs Pat Soward, R Signals (ret'd) both members of the church to have their late son's name included. Duncan, a Corporal in the REME, had died in November 1991 following his service in the First

Gulf War. This too was approved and so began the hoop jumping that is the Church of England's bureaucracy. Thankfully it was decided that a full Faculty was not required and after eight months the permission was granted.

I had already identified a lady to complete the work, Lisa South based in Shaftesbury, and once I knew her estimate I made a request to our Chairman for support towards the cost. The Committee generously agreed to pay half the amount, which was wonderful, and I was even more delighted when the Sowards said they would pay the remainder.

In January 2010 work started on the new Roll and it was with great pleasure and excitement that on Friday, 19 March Lisa and I fitted the new one. Taking to account the amendments and additions, it was an exact copy of the old one and absolutely glorious with bright vibrant colours.

All being well in the coming weeks a service of dedication will be held and those involved in the project thanked publicly. As for the research project, that continues with more information being added on a regular basis; there are twenty eight First World War names and each has proved fascinating and incredibly diverse. I will not deny, the process has had its frustrations but I have learned to so much, met some delightful people who have generously allowed me access to photographs and letters and at the end of it I know that we will commemorate the right men the right way in the future.

I thank the Branch for its support in this venture and should you be passing St Nicholas Church, Child Okeford do go in and have a look.

**Helen Kerridge**

