



The Dugout

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

www.wfa-dorsetswilts.org.uk

Parish Notes

Chairman:

Martin Willoughby
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Meetings:

Saturday, 12 February

*Martin Brown - Chocolate, Charms
and HP Sauce - Archeology of the
Great War*

Saturday, 12 March

*Mark Smith - The Will Townend
Memorial Lecture*

Saturday, 9 April

*Victoria Burbidge - Tracing the
Missing - Fromelles 1916*

Saturday, 14 May

*Peter Caddick Adams - Monty and
Rommel in the Great War*

Saturday 11 June

*John Stanyard - Under Two Flags -
The Salvation Army in WW1*

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

Further details on WFA website
www.wfa-dorsetswilts.org.uk
www.westernfrontassociation.com

Field Trips / Battle Field Tour:

Saturday, 4 June (tbc)

IWM - Ashcroft VC-GC exhibition

Friday, 18 March (note day)

Commonwealth War Graves Com-
mission / Army Chaplains Museum

Friday, 2 - Monday 5 September

'From Mons to the Marne and back'

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

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Newsletter Editor: Helen Kerridge:  
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## Chairman's Chat

For Issue 7 of *The Dugout* it is apt  
for me to summarise the past year  
and look forward to 2011.

In 2010 the Branch had a  
particularly busy year with a full  
calendar of monthly meetings,  
participation in a number of outside  
events and the continuing  
development and implementation  
of a number of projects.

The quality and calibre of speakers  
at our monthly meetings continues  
be of a very high standard and it is  
imperative but not easy to ensure  
this remains the case for the future.  
We have managed to achieve a  
great variety of topics for 2011 and  
the year got off to a very good start  
with Alan Leakey's talk on Naval  
Wonder Weapons of WW1. Attendances  
at our meetings have increased  
significantly and this is indicative  
of a varied and interesting  
programme. By the time you read  
this our list of speakers, their talks  
and other events will be published  
on the branch website.

Events where the branch was  
represented in 2010 include;  
Dorset Family History Great War  
Workshop over two days in  
September, Several of the Tank  
Museum's Out of Hours Events  
promoting the branch, our regional  
seminar and the Association, Tank  
Fest and Local exhibitions at  
Poole, Wareham and Upton.

The branch field trip to the AMS  
and RLC Museum's (two  
fascinating museums) was

extremely well supported and was  
a great success. Our 2011 Field  
Trip will be to the CWGC HQ and  
the Museum of Army Chaplaincy,  
travelling on Friday, 18 March this  
promises to be a busy but  
interesting trip.

The Chairman and Secretary  
represented the branch at the  
Aubers Ridge Memorial Service in  
May and were present at the  
dedication of Fromelles (Pheasant  
Wood) CWGC cemetery in July.  
Also in May several members  
visited Gallipoli in association with  
RND tours. Our seminar in June  
was a great success followed  
closely by Tank Fest which was  
notable for a tangible increase in  
interest in WW1.

October 2010 was a high point with  
over 100 members and guests  
attending Peter Barton's talk on  
the Red Cross Records. This  
meeting saw the launch of the  
British Memorial Association -  
Fromelles (BMA-F), the branch  
making the initial donation to  
Victoria Burbidge the driving force  
behind the BMA-F and a donation  
to Peter Barton for the Tunnellers'  
Memorial.

Our second annual School Prize  
Award Scheme was an  
outstanding success with a 50%  
increase in participation and the  
entries were imaginative and of  
outstanding quality. The Prize  
scheme for 2011 is on track to  
cement the award scheme as a  
milestone event with more schools  
expressing an interest in taking  
part.

### The Yser Front and the Northern Salient

Our 2009 Battlefield Tour was in my opinion pretty exceptional, the 2010 tour even more so. We were blessed with the continued excellence of our guides Idi and Nige and further blessed with the help of local expertise in the form of Herman Declerke (The Cellar House, Pervyse), Charlotte Descamps (Varlet Farm) and Johan van Besaelare (Tanks in the Salient and the Moraine Saulnier) The 2011 tour 'Mons to the Marne and Back' is shaping up nicely and will hopefully continue to raise the bar.

The Dorset War Memorial project is approaching the final stages with dedication due in May 2011 and we have been able to support Child Okeford Roll of Honour and Shapwick War memorial refurbishment.

Our newsletter as you will see from this issue continues to grow in content and quality and is a fundamental element in the way the branch disseminates information. The branch website has been in operation for a full year and feedback indicates it is a model of excellence in terms of structure, navigation, presentation and content. By this means communication and information availability will continue to be enhanced. It remains vital that the Secretary has up to date e-mails and I can only urge those who are not wired to become so as printing and postal costs continue to be a significant drain on the resources of the branch.

2011 will bring a programme as varied, interesting and of the same high quality as 2010. We continue to develop links to local schools, local military museums and society's, as well as support to a range of projects that meet the criteria of our business plan and associated policies.

Our success has necessitated change in the way the branch manages its affairs and guidance from HM Revenue & Customs advises the branch to register as a charity. Although this decision was deferred at the 2009 AGM our treasurer's concise dissertation at the 2010 AGM allayed any fears about this significant but beneficial move. This will bring benefit to the Branch, i.e. the ability to claim Gift Aid and will also stand us in good stead when seeking funding and or sponsorship in support of future projects, but also imposes some conditions that must be met in terms of the way we do business. None of what we do would be achievable without the support and expertise of your committee and I thank them unreservedly for their continuing support. I must also thank those members who give their time and support behind the scenes and of course to you dear reader for being there and supporting your local branch. Finally my best wishes to you all for a happy and prosperous New Year.



An early Friday morning departure from Pimperne with the mist promising a fine day later, at least on this side of the Channel! Our progress through south-eastern England was only broken by breakfast and coffee stops before we boarded the train that was to take us through the tunnel to France.

From Calais we sped north on the motorway towards Brussels and turned off for Lille before making our way on local roads to visit Dozinghem Military Cemetery just north of Poperinge. Until 1917 this was outside the front held by British and Commonwealth forces in Belgium. However, in preparation for the Third Battle of Ypres, groups of casualty clearing stations were set up in the area. Three were located at Dozinghem – a name coined by British troops to sound like local Flemish ones. They opened the military cemetery and used it through to early 1918. The cemetery also contains 73 burials from the Second World War associated with the withdrawal to Dunkirk in 1940.

Our route then took us through Poperinge and on to Ieper, our base for this tour. After a quick "wash and brush-up" at our hotel, we were on our way again, heading south across the Messines Ridge to Ploegsteert. Here we participated in the monthly Last Post



*Wreath layers - Graham Kerridge and Roger Coleman*

Ceremony held at the Ploegsteert Memorial, a poppy wreath being laid on behalf of the Branch. The ceremony was very well attended. The Memorial commemorates British soldiers but in this francophone area of Belgium the atmosphere seemed more "international" than the predominantly British "feel" of ceremonies at the Menin Gate back in Ieper.



Saturday also started misty but bright. Our first call was at White House Cemetery just outside Ieper to enable one member of our party to pay his respects to two casualties of the April 1918 fighting in the area. We moved on to the Yorkshire Trench and Dugout near the Ieper-Ijzer Canal. This was originally a second-line trench, but in July 1917 the dugout served as a command post for 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Battalions, Royal Welsh Fusiliers (38<sup>th</sup> [Welsh] Division) for the attack on Pilkem Ridge. The site was discovered in 1992 and has since been explored by the Diggers Belgian archaeological group. The name Yorkshire Trench reflects the presence in the area of the 49<sup>th</sup> (West Yorkshire) Division in 1915. Here the curator of The Keep Military Museum, Dorchester, produced a German officer's leather pistol holster found in the area by a Tommy and "souvenired". This had recently been acquired by the Museum. The pistol was back in Dorchester.

Crossing the 1917 battlefield through Pilkem and on towards Langemark, we arrived on the banks of the Steenbeek at the point where 7<sup>th</sup> Bn. Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry began their advance on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1917 to capture Langemark. The battalion was the late Harry Patch's unit and he paid for the stone which now stands on the spot "to the memory of fallen comrades and to honour the courage, sacrifice and passing of the Great War generation" and where Harry crossed the Steenbeek.

We passed through Langemark and Poelkapelle to reach our next objective, Valet Farm. We had received special permission from the owners to visit the property which now combines a working farm with a bed and breakfast business. Here we heard about the assault on the farm by the Royal Naval Division in October 1917, supporting the Canadian drive for Passendale. We viewed the remains of the buildings



existing in 1917 and the "iron harvest" collected for the Belgian Army disposal team. Away from the shells awaiting disposal, our travelling experts identified a rifle grenade and a shell case still holding cordite by the track through the farm.

An excellent buffet lunch was provided at the present farm and Charlotte Cardoen-Descamps, the wife of the farmer told us about living on and farming a battlefield. Afterwards we were able to visit the on-site museum of finds made on the farm. Charlotte left us in no doubt of her extensive knowledge of Great War munitions!

Parking near the memorial to the French air ace Capitaine Georges Guynemer in Poelkapelle, we visited the Tank Memorial Ypres Salient inaugurated in 2009. The memorial commemorates the tank crewmen of the Heavy Branch Machine Gun Corps and the Tank Corps who fell in the Salient during the Great War. The memorial is located where the remains of the tank Damon II (D29), knocked out at Poelkapelle crossroads on 9<sup>th</sup> October 1917, stood until it was removed by the Germans in 1941.



*Johan van Besselaere and his replica Morane-Saulnier*

We were treated to more local expertise when we met local technical college teacher Johan van Besaelare. He has made a special study of the 1917 tank actions in the Poelkapelle area and added his knowledge to the input from our own guides. Johan had two surprises for us. First he took us to the village hall to see a full scale replica of a French Morane-Saulnier monoplane that he had built with the assistance of his students. The machine has a genuine rotary engine. Johan claimed that the replica could fly but added that he wouldn't take it up!

Johan led us back through Poelkapelle to a workshop where he revealed his latest project in progress – a replica of Damon II! When completed he hopes to have the machine sited at Poelkapelle crossroads.

Back aboard our coach, we headed off down the Poelkapelle – St. Juliaan road with a brief halt at Vancouver Corner to visit the Brooding Soldier Canadian Memorial. En-route Johan pointed out sites associated with the tank actions including the Tank Gate and the Tank Cemetery. Our next stop was at



the site of Gallipoli Farm where we heard about the crew of tank F41 (Fray Bentos) who, cut off in no-man's-land, defended their disabled machine against German attacks for sixty-two hours in August 1917.



***Johan's Damon II***

The tank theme continued as we proceeded past Polygon Wood to Reutel tracing the route of tanks A56, A58, A59 and A60 in their advance on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1917. Their section commander, Captain Clement Robertson, led them into action on foot and paid the inevitable price. Robertson became the first Tank Corps VC.

We drove on to visit Robertson's grave at Oxford Road Cemetery, Johan's local knowledge enabling us to avoid a major traffic hold-up in Zonnebeke.

After an extremely interesting day we were back at our hotel in Ieper in good time to attend the Last Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate. A fife and drum band from Scotland paraded and a lone bagpiper added a lament to the usual bugle call.



***Belgian Military Cemetery at Houthulst Forest***

Sunday was bright and sunny. We left through the Menin Gate, once more passing through St. Juliaan

and Poelkapelle heading for Houthulst Forest and the Belgian Military Cemetery. The 1931 burials here include 81 Italian POWs used as labourers by the Germans. An Albertina Marker just to the side of the cemetery commemorates the Belgian "Final Offensive" of September 1918.

Our next planned stop was the German Cemetery at Vladso. Unfortunately road closures blocked our route to the site. Although we did try to find a way around the roadworks, a prearranged visit at Pervijze meant we had to abandon the visit and press on.

Keeping north of Diksmuide, we now crossed from the east the area deliberately flooded by the Belgians in 1914 to block the German advance to arrive in Pervijze. Here, the former railway station on the old Diksmuide – Nieuwpoort line still shows the original "Pervyse".

The building is now a house. In 1914 the railway embankment marked the Belgian front line. The route of old railway is now a cycle track and a nearby information panel marked sites along the route associated with fighting in the area.



***The Cellar First Aid Post used by Mairi Chisholm and Elsie Knocker***

One of the highlights of the entire tour was a specially arranged visit to a private house in Pervijze. Here we were shown the cellar used by Elsie Knocker and Mairi Chisholm – "The Angels of Pervyse" – as their first aid post from November 1914. A recent talk at our Branch had told us something about their experiences on the frontline, but our admiration for them increased as we were taken down the narrow staircase in groups of ten to see the cramped conditions under which they had worked. We were told they had ten casualties at a time down there - how did they get a stretcher down? We were very grateful to the Belgian family (and their bemused children) who allowed thirty-plus strangers access to their home on a Sunday morning. Apparently they were unaware of

the history of the cellar when they moved in to the property.

**Belgian observation post - Pervijze Church**



There was more for us to see in Pervijze. We were taken to a small museum in the local village hall. This displayed items of local military history from the Great War onwards. Most touching was a note in the visitor's book from a Canadian woman

whose father, a RCAF Spitfire pilot, was shot down and killed in 1943. His remains were discovered and buried in Pervijze in 1946. Some of us made our way to the churchyard and paid our respects at the grave.

Our final call in Pervijze was at the remains of an old church tower used as a Belgian observation post during the Great War. During the Second World War the Germans added an upper brick-built section.

We moved on to the Belgian Army Memorial Chapel at Oud-Stuivenskerke with its stained glass. Nearby were the ruins of the original chapel, used as a fortified observation post in 1914-18, memorials to several Belgian regiments involved in the fighting on the Yser Front and a 1918 Demarcation Stone.



**Dodengang Trench (Trench of Death) - Diksmuide**

After a packed morning Diksmuide and lunch were calling but we stopped off on our way to visit the "Dodengang" (Trench of Death) 400 metres of preserved trenches on the banks of the Ijzer. This was the Belgian forward defence position throughout the Yser battles. Here the defenders were under German fire from three sides. We almost succeeded in leaving one of our number in the labyrinth of concrete "sandbags" and shelters.

A warm sunny Sunday and lunchtime down by the river. A recipe for parking spaces being at a premium – and so it proved in Diksmuide. Happily our capable coach driver managed to manoeuvre our vehicle into a slot with a 180-degree turn on the riverbank road.

Our aperitif was a brief talk by branch member Graham Kerridge on the action of the 12<sup>th</sup> Lancers at the river bridge in Diksmuide in May 1940, a nice twist to the then and now aspect of the history of warfare. This was followed by branch member Ian Duffin speaking on the Flemish Movement and the Ijzer Tower.

Lunch was by "own arrangements", some picnicking by the side of the river whilst others headed off to find refreshment at local cafes and restaurants. With a "free" 90 minutes in Diksmuide some of the group visited the 84 metres high Ijzer Tower for a superb view of the area. The top floor has a painted panorama of the area of the Yser Front now visible from the tower showing the 1914-18 trench lines, ruins and the flooded zone. The tower also hosts a museum with a wide range of displays covering the Flemish Movement and the Great War in Belgium. At the time of our visit there was an excellent exhibit on tunnelling during the war.

We now headed back towards Ieper, pausing at the Steenstraat Memorial to the gas attack of April 1915. The original memorial was blown-up by the Germans during the Second World War because it referred to them as "barbarians". The present memorial, the 15 metres high aluminium Cross of Reconciliation, was raised in 1961.

At the suggestion of one group member, the party dined together in Ieper on Sunday evening to commemorate the late Will Townend, a very active member of the Branch and our resident expert on artillery matters. It is difficult to envisage one of our battlefield tours without Will being there to point out the battery positions and explain the barrage plans.

Our journey back to the UK began with another bright and sunny day. Once more we crossed the Pilkem battlefield, this time to see the German Cemetery at Langemark. This had been added to our itinerary to compensate for the abandoned visit to the Vladso



**Langemark German Cemetery**



Cemetery the previous day. Over 44,300 German war dead are buried at Langemark, more than 25,000 in a single communal grave. It is believed that two named British soldiers are buried with them. At the back of the cemetery is a group of four soldiers cast in bronze, standing in mourning for their fallen comrades.

From Langemark headed for Nieuwpoort, halting first in the suburb of Ramskapelle, a vital position on the railway to Diksmuide in 1914. We visited the ruins of the old railway station an important feature in the battle, later used as an observation post. We moved on to the Belgian Military Cemetery nearby, and then to Ramskapelle Communal Cemetery that has CWGC plots from both world wars. Our final call before lunch was a Ramskapelle Road British Cemetery at St. Joris just outside Nieuwpoort. This cemetery was opened in 1917 when the British XV Corps held the line from St. Joris to the sea. It holds 841 British and Commonwealth casualties.



**British Memorial to the Missing, Nieuwpoort**

The final stop on our odyssey (excluding the traditional re-supply halt in Calais) was the British Memorial to the Missing in Nieuwpoort. The Memorial records the names of 547 officers and men who died in operations on the Belgian coast including Antwerp

in 1914 and whose graves are unknown. The bronze plaques listing the names are headed by Binyon's immortal words "They shall grow not old..." This stop doubled as our lunch break with tour members free to examine the Memorial and the nearby Albert Memorial to Belgium's King and Queen during the Great War or to head into the town. The Albert Memorial overlooks the Ganzepoort (Goose's Foot) – the complex of locks and sluices that enabled the Belgian defenders to flood the inland area and frustrate the German invaders in 1914.



**Albert Memorial, Ganzepoort Locks**

Back in the UK our serene progress was halted when the radiator on our coach burst. Fortunately we were near to a service area on the M25 and were able to limp in. Some of our party made enquiries about a possible block booking at the on-site motel, but within an hour a replacement coach had us back on the road home. A great effort by our coach company!

So we completed another highly successful battlefield tour, packed (but not rushed) with interesting visits and backed up by knowledgeable guides - both our own and local personalities.

As we neared Pimperne our Branch Chairman suggested "From Mons to the Marne and back" as our theme for the 2011 tour. An issue of ammunition boots was also mentioned. He was joking about the boots...wasn't he?

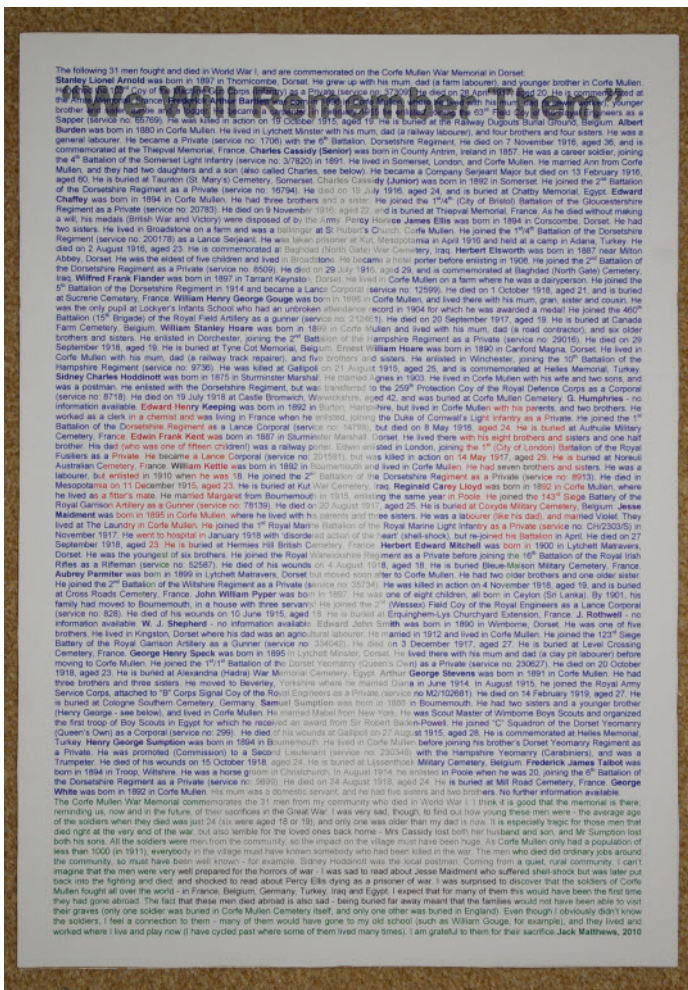
**Rod Arnold**  
**Photographs by Graham Kerridge and Martin Willoughby**





## 2010 Dorset and South Wiltshire Branch Schools Prize Award Scheme

The 2010 Dorset and South Wiltshire Branch Schools Prize Award Scheme gave an excellent illustration of the quality of work which can be achieved by young historians working in the area of the First World War.



The 2010 Award Scheme encouraged pupils to approach the Great War from almost any area of the subject and to present their research findings in either the traditional essay format or as a piece of artwork, as a model or as a film. The non-essay formats had to be accompanied by research notes and comments on the progress of the research process. Every entry had to be completed in the candidate's spare time and not as part of normal school work.

This year's Award Scheme, building on the success of that from 2009, produced thirty imaginative pieces of Great War history from pupils from Poole Grammar School and Portsmouth Grammar School.

The overall winner was an exceptional piece of work which fulfilled not only all of our judges' criteria but also exemplified the spirit in which the whole Award Scheme was offered. The quality of research, and the standard of presentation of that research, stands as a model for those entering this Scheme in future

years. Jack Matthews (Year 8), of Poole Grammar School, researched all of the names on his local war memorial at Corfe Mullen. He presented his findings in a computer-aided design of the memorial, a design which was formed using all of the names, and all of his research findings about those names. Jack's initial idea was to create a piece of artwork which could be read. To create the finished design Jack traced the outline of the memorial from a photograph onto a copy of his writing so that he knew where to highlight the text, and the poppies. He carried out internet-based research to obtain the census, grave, service and medal records and visited the Dorset History Centre. Jack commented in his research notes that research can take a long, long time and can, at times, be frustrating because sometimes the information required is lacking or contains mistakes, the latter making verification hard. However, he also discovered how extremely interesting and rewarding research can be, especially "when I found what I was looking for, it was great!". Jack has contributed his research to the UK National Inventory of War Memorials, and comments that "To understand our history, it's important to document it – otherwise it gets forgotten."

The judges were also delighted by the standard of the entries submitted by the two second-prize winners. Tom Harper (Year 9), from Portsmouth Grammar School, researched and presented, on DVD, a documentary dealing with the history of Submarines in the Great War. His film included an interview conducted with staff at the Royal Naval Submarine Museum. Scott Dodds (Year 8), from Poole Grammar School, produced a family history project centred on a splendid 1:72 model of the Handley Page 0/400 flown by his great great uncle in 100 Squadron.



Other entries, many of which were highly commended, included work on Conscientious Objection, Gas Warfare, Artillery, Jutland, HMS Warspite, and the British Army in the Hundred Days.

**David Seymour, MA, MPhil**  
**Branch Education Officer**

## The Base Areas

Late in September Ian Swarbrick and I travelled to France to link up with my brother for a tour of battlefields some 600 years older than our usual – namely Crécy and Agincourt – but, having based ourselves in Abbeville, we took the opportunity to look at some places in the Base Areas of 1914 –18. Naturally, the first concern of most WFA members is to concentrate on the front line, but for the front line troops to operate effectively it was, and is, necessary to have an enormous amount of all kinds of support in the base areas. It is a case of “they also serve.....”

The Headquarters of the Lines of Communication were in Abbeville and there were three hospitals nearby. In Abbeville itself we found a CWGC cemetery as an extension of the municipal cemetery and containing about 2,000 graves, including 1,754 from WW1 and a number from WW2, mostly aircrew. In the municipal cemetery there is also a French military section and one for civilians killed in bombing raids in WW2. These civilian graves are marked with crosses of mild steel channel, something like angle iron, and give the appearance of a hasty improvisation that has been left untouched. In the British cemetery, the WW1 graves were almost entirely of men who had died of wounds or disease in the base hospitals but among them were the graves of some women, one who worked in the YMCA, a Staff Nurse of the South African Military Nursing Service and several members of the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Service listed as holding the rank of “Worker”, so presumably they did ancillary but essential jobs in the base areas.

In 1917 there were, it is reported, 100,000 soldiers accommodated in camps in the sand dunes near Etaples – almost the size of the entire British army of today! It was in Etaples that the notorious “Bull Ring” training camp was situated, and in and around the town were a convalescence centre and hospitals, increasing to 16 over the years from mid-1915 and able to cope with 22,000 casualties at the same time – more than twice as many troops as we now have serving in Afghanistan.

As our visit was entirely spontaneous we had not done any preliminary research and so were unable to locate the Bull Ring when we drove into Etaples but, no thanks to very poor signposting, as was also the case in Abbeville, we found the cemetery and were surprised to see it described as the largest British military cemetery in France, with over 11,000 graves, including those of some 650 German soldiers. It was disturbing to think that, apart from a very small number, this huge cemetery was for those who had died of wounds or disease in the base hospitals. A telling feature of this cemetery is that the burials are all in chronological order of death, giving a vivid illustration of the numbers who died in hospital each

day, an average of seven on a rough calculation. It must have been depressing for the medical staffs, those responsible for arranging burials and also for the chaplains, to witness this regular routine of death and burials.

Another feature which we had not seen before, and which we wished we had not seen then, is that the officers' graves were separate from those of the other ranks. Hindu soldiers of the Indian Army had their own burial ground, as they would no doubt have wished as second best to being cremated, but it was also disturbing to see what now we would consider to be the totally inappropriate discrimination against what we must assume to be non-whites in that a soldier of the British West Indies Regiment and a soldier of the South African armed forces, both Christians, were buried with the Hindus rather than with the white Christians. On the other hand, as usual the Jewish graves are mixed in with the Christians and there is a German Christian soldier buried with a British Jew on either side. One wonders if the occupiers noticed this in WW2! Near the Hindus is the solitary grave of a member of the Chinese Labour Corps with the inscription in English “A good reputation lives forever”.

The afternoon of our visit was wet and cold and we did not linger for very long, but in the time available noted a scattering of MMs, MCs, DCMs, DSOs and the VC of Major Douglas Reynolds of the Royal Field Artillery. His VC was one of the earliest in WW1, awarded for valour at le Cateau in August 1914. Major Reynolds continued in front line service until wounded in 1916, the year of his death at Etaples. Interestingly, many deaths took place in 1919, as three hospitals and a convalescent centre were retained in Etaples until the end of that year. Although well behind the lines, the base areas were not immune from attack from the air and medical staff and patients were killed when hospitals in Abbeville and Etaples were bombed.

On our way back to the ferry at Calais we called in at Montreuil-sur-Mer where Field Marshal Haig had his headquarters in the Hotel de France and his living quarters in a modest chateau just outside the town. Montreuil is a lovely old walled town of attractive buildings, and quaint cobbled streets, including one which could pass as a double for Shaftesbury's Gold Hill. In the *Place Général de Gaulle* we saw a statue of “*le Maréchal Haig*”, unfortunately with most of his sword and part of his horse's reins missing. The inscription in French indicates that the statue was erected in gratitude by national subscription by the people of France. The original statue was removed by the Germans in WW2, but a replacement was erected in 1950. Perhaps this says a great deal for the way in which Haig was regarded in France,



whereas in our country he has been reviled by so many.

Lack of time prevented us from visiting any of the museums, but in Montreuil we saw *la Citadelle* where there are bunkers used by Haig's staff. Montreuil is attractive as a tourist destination and Ian and I concluded that the connection with Haig and the existence of the museum make the town also worth visiting from the viewpoint of military history. Indeed, we felt that the base areas could perhaps be worthy of consideration as a theme for a field trip.

**F D Hoskins**

## Book Reviews



### **"A Short History of Wimborne Branch, Club and Women's Section of the Royal British Legion"**



The book describes briefly the origins of the Royal British Legion and its work for the ex-service community before focusing on the formation of the Wimborne Branch. Those interested in the history of the town will find details of the buildings used by the RBL as well as descriptions of Branch activities such as fundraising events including, of course, the annual Poppy Appeal.

Benefactors, officers and members, past and present, have been researched or where possible interviewed by the authors. Their contributions to the Wimborne RBL as well as their military service are described, accompanied in many cases by photos.

There are four appendices to the book which will be of particular value to those researching their family connections with the Wimborne district or those studying the part played by the people of the area in wars including the Crimean War, the Boer War, the two World Wars and the Korean War. The authors have included the names from local war memorials, rolls of honour and memorial plaques as well as any other

information given, such as date or place of death and rank. In addition, details of the headstones in local cemeteries which mention military service have been included. The book's index allows the reader to find details of an individual easily.

At the beginning of their book Alan and Jaqueline have quoted, from the Epistles of Pliny:

"I hold it a noble task to rescue from oblivion  
Those who deserve to be eternally remembered"

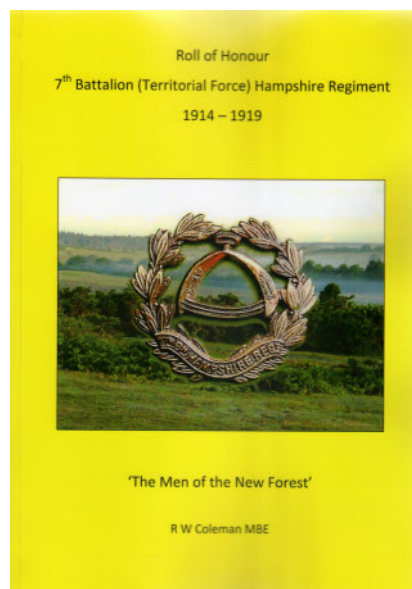
By making available their extensive research, not only into the history of the Wimborne RBL Branch but also into local memorials and cemeteries, the authors can be proud that they have helped to ensure that Remembrance carries on in their part of Dorset.

Copies of the book, at £10 each, can be obtained from Alan or Jaqueline at Dorset and South Wilts Branch WFA meetings. Copies are also available by post. Please write to: Alan Marsh, Broadacres, Oakley Straight, Wimborne BH21 1SB enclosing a cheque for £11.32 inc. p&p per copy (payable to AW & JL Marsh). Profits from the sale of the book go to the Royal British Legion.

**Katherine Seymour, Memorials Officer**



### **The Roll of Honour 7th Battalion (Territorial Force) Hampshire Regiment 1914 – 1919 'The Men of the New Forest'**



Between the two well designed covers, with a foreword by Lieutenant General Paul Newton CBE, Roger Coleman has produced a tribute to 'The Men of the New Forest'. The Roll of Honour of the 7th Battalion names one hundred and eighty nine men who died in the Great War. The Officers and soldiers came from towns and villages in and

around the New Forest, including the larger towns of

Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole and from neighbouring counties.

Each of the names has been meticulously researched providing a wealth of biographical details of the man, his family, where he served and where he died. The majority are illustrated by both photographs and maps. Included in the book is a short history of the Mesopotamia (now Iraq) campaign, where 50% of those named died. There are a number of contemporary photographs of India and Mesopotamia many of which have never been published before.

The book, running to 420 pages, is an important reference for anyone interested in family research, local heritage, the Great War and the Hampshire Regiment. Roger spent three years in its preparation and intends for all proceeds to be donated to memorial to the regiment at the National Memorial Arboretum. The Trustees of the Regiment are in total support of this tribute to one of its battalions.

Copies of the book cost £12.95 plus £4.41 P&P and can be obtained by phone 01202 574099 or E-mail [roger.w.coleman@btinternet.com](mailto:roger.w.coleman@btinternet.com)



### **At the going down of the sun...**

My wife Margaret and I decided to walk the South West Coast Path as a project for our retirement. The 630+ mile long distance path runs from Minehead in Somerset, along the coast of North Devon, Cornwall, South Devon and then Dorset to end at Poole Harbour. Of course, as non-conformists, we began at the official finishing point on Studland Beach and headed west rather than starting at Minehead!

We have tackled the task in stages and so May this year found us in Cornwall walking the path between the Lizard and Penzance. We were staying in a farm cottage just outside Helston. Hearing that we were on a walking holiday, the owner suggested that we might like to climb the hill behind the farm. He said that there were wonderful views from the top of the hill and there was a war memorial.

On returning from one of our coastal walks one afternoon I set off up the hill. The OS map gave a spot height of 194m – the highest point in the area. It was not a difficult climb – a dog-leg track took me up to the ridge line and the memorial became visible part way up. It was a three tiered plinth surmounted by a Celtic cross.

The views from the top were certainly impressive along the coast from the Lizard, past St. Michael's Mount to beyond Penzance. I thought I could even make out St. Ives. The vista stretched well inland too over old mine workings. I turned my attention to the memorial.

This had been erected to commemorate the men from the surrounding parish of Germoe and Breage that had died in the First World War. The names of those who had died between 1939-1945 had been added later.

Four 1914-1918 casualties were named: Ernest Andrew, Leonard Laity, Ernest Richards and Sampson Richards.

No other information was provided and so I decided to try and find out something about them when I returned home.



Ernest Charles Andrew was born in the parish around 1890. The son of a tin miner, he served in 7<sup>th</sup> Bn. Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry [DCLI]. This unit was raised at Bodmin in 1914 and went to France in July 1915 as part of 61 Brigade / 20<sup>th</sup> (Light) Division. The division took part in the Battle of Loos in 1915 before moving to 2<sup>nd</sup> Army in the Ypres Salient. In June 1916 the division fought alongside the Canadian Corps at Mount Sorrel. By August 1916 the division had moved to the Somme and was in action at Delville Wood and around Guillemont. On 16<sup>th</sup> September 1916 the division was involved in the first tank attack at Flers and later took part in the Battles of Morval and the Transloy Ridges.

In the early months of 1917 the division followed up the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line before returning to the Ypres Salient.

Ernest Andrews' medal card shows that he was not awarded the 1914-15 Star, suggesting that he did not join 7 DCLI before 1916. However there is not much doubt where he was killed. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission [CWGC] and Soldiers Died records show that he was killed in action on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1917. On that date 7 DCLI took part in the



Battle of Langemarck, part of the Passchendaele Campaign.

The late Harry Patch served in 7 DCLI at the same time as Ernest Andrew. In September 2008 Harry Patch visited the Ypres Salient and unveiled a small slate memorial on the banks of the Steenbeek to commemorate his fallen comrades of the battalion who took part in the assault on Langemarck on 16th August 1917.

Ernest Andrew is commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial. The CWGC lists his next of kin as his father, Joseph Andrew of Coppernoon, Germoe, Marazion, Cornwall, so it appears that Ernest had not married.



A Leonard Henry Laity was born in the parish of Germoe in 1891. His mother was Jane Rosetta Laity. She is listed as unmarried in both the 1891 and 1901 Censuses, living with her parents. Leonard's grandfather, Henry Laity, was a road labourer.

It appears that Leonard emigrated to the United States. On 19th September 1913 he arrived in New York from Liverpool on board the Lusitania. The torpedoing of this ship in 1915 was a contributory factor to the United States eventual entry into the Great War on 6th April 1917.

The Ancestry website threw up a United States Draft Card dated 5th June 1917 for a Leonard Laity born in Cornwall on 2nd January 1891. This man's next of kin are listed as his mother and grandmother albeit un-named. At the time the card was raised, Leonard was living at Gila near Phoenix in Arizona.

Perhaps Leonard decided that he could not wait to be drafted into the US Army, for he crossed the border into Canada and enlisted there on 7th January 1918. The Canadian Army recruitment papers give the same birthdate as the US Draft Card and name

Laity's last place of residence as Globe, near Phoenix, Arizona. Leonard Laity's occupation is given as a tunneller. Mrs Jane Rosetta Laity of Germoe is named as the next of kin, so there is no doubt this is the same man.

The CWGC record states that Leonard Laity served as a sapper with 2nd Battalion Canadian Engineers [2Bn CE]. He died on 25th October 1918 and was buried in Germoe Church Cemetery. If I had known this when we were in Cornwall I might have been able to visit his grave.

The 2 Bn CE formed part of 1st Brigade Canadian Engineers with 1st Canadian Division in France.

Did Leonard make it to France? Was he wounded and sent back to the UK for treatment? Did he die whilst on leave visiting his mother?

Ernest Richards was born in 1893 in the parish of Breage and Germoe. His father William was a tin miner. Ernest's full name was Edward Ernest and the 1901 Census shows that he had one brother and two sisters.

Ernest served with 6th Bn DCLI. The battalion was formed at Bodmin in August 1914 and became part of 43 Brigade / 14th (Light) Division. Ernest went to France with the battalion in May 1915.

At the end of July 1915 the 14th Division was in the Ypres Salient and received heavy casualties at Hooze, where the Germans used flamethrowers for the first time. The Division took part in the attack at Bellewaard Farm on 25th September 1915, an operation intended to prevent German reserves moving south to take part in the Battle of Loos.

In 1916 the Division was in action on the Somme at Delville Wood (August) and Flers / Courcellette (September). Early in 1917 the Division took part in the pursuit of the German Army to the Hindenburg Line and in April fought at Arras in the First and Third Battles of the Scarpe.

Towards the end of 1917 the 14th Division returned to the Ypres Salient seeing action at Langemarck, the Menin Road (Inverness Copse) and at Passchendaele.

Corporal Edward Ernest Richards died on 17th October 1917 and is buried in Tyne Cot (Plot LIX, Row E, No 26).

I have found no evidence that Ernest Richards and Sampson Richards were related but, given the small community where they were born, they may have been.

Sampson Richards was born at Germoe around 1894. His mother was Mary A. Richards. She was listed as single in 1891 (when she was working as a tin dresser) and 1901 (when she was a charwoman). Sampson had at least one brother and one (possibly two) sisters. The ages given in the censuses suggest that Sampson's mother was 16/17 when she gave birth to his eldest sibling.

United States immigration records show that a Sampson Richards, born in 1894 at Breage, arrived in New York aboard the *Campania* in May 1913, the same year as Leonard Laity. The fact that Richards' next of kin was named as Mary Richards suggests this was the man born at Germoe, a joint parish with Breage.

A Sampson Richards, born at Helston on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1894 registered for the United States Draft at Fresno, California in June 1917. His occupation is given as a self-employed farmer. He was unmarried.

I have been unable to trace a Sampson Richards from Germoe or Breage in the CWGC records, which suggests that he may have died in the armed forces of his adopted country.

The United States Soldiers Died record does list a Corporal Sampson Richards of Taft, California as a Great War casualty. No other details were provided. Taft is some distance from Fresno, but he could have moved between draft registration and enlistment. As with Leonard Laity, Sampson Richards would still have been honoured by the community where he was born.

After paying my respects at the memorial I turned to descend the hill. It was only then that I realized the significance of the location of the memorial on the hilltop. The cross faced due west and Laurence Binyon's words immediately came to mind – "At the going down of the sun..."

**Rod Arnold**



The article in the last newsletter about escaping German prisoners reminded me of another 'nearly' escaped man who almost made it back to his homeland. The man concerned, Otto Koehn, one of the German prisoners confined at the Artillery Barracks in Dorchester, who showed extraordinary ingenuity and courage in his attempted escape. A large number of the first batch of prisoners to arrive in Dorchester in August 1914 were sailors, who had the misfortune to find themselves in British ports on the outbreak of war and, after a while, it was decided to repatriate some

of the older men. Otto saw this as an opportunity to make his break. He managed to obtain a match box packing case which he addressed to Hamburg and secreted himself inside, with provisions for the journey. The case was then placed with the luggage of the departing prisoners. For lieutenant Koehn, who measured over six feet tall, the 15 hour journey to Tilbury Docks must have been cramped to say the least. The packing case was carefully measured after its return to Dorchester and was found to be just three feet long, two feet wide and two feet high. All went well for Otto and his well conceived plan until it came to loading the case onto the ship *SS. Batavier*. Thanks to the clumsiness of some porters one side of the box broke open and out popped the head and shoulders of the pale unfortunate man, to the astonishment of everyone present. He was duly returned to Dorchester as was his temporary home, which was measured meticulously by a reporter of the *County Chronicle*. His only punishment was that he was required to report to the Commanding Officer of the Camp each and every hour, a ceremony that doubtless did not continue for long. An enquiry was also held in secret as to how such an event was allowed to happen but the results were not published.

**Brian Bates**



## Great Dorset War Memorial - Unveiling



Roger Coleman advises me, that the work on the memorial continues a pace. It has now been confirmed that the unveiling will take place at 11 am on Saturday, 7 May 2011. It's location is at the beginning of footpath that leads to Lonsdale CWGC cemetery which is on the lane joining Authuille and Ovillers.

Further details can be obtained from Roger.

