



The Dugout

Newsletter of the Dorset and South Wiltshire Branch of the
Western Front Association (Registered Charity : 1142787)

www.wfa-dorsetswilts.org.uk

Parish Notes

Chairman:

Martin Willoughby
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Diary Dates 2011

Meetings:

Saturday, 6 August - Double Bill
Julie & Mick McDonald - Rosemary for Remembrance & The Fokker Scourge

Saturday, 17 September
Paul Handford - Entente Cordial British Volunteer Ambulance Units on the French Front

Saturday, 15 October
Graham Parker - Attack! Attack! Attack! The French Army 1870-1914

Saturday, 19 November
Rod Arnold - The Battle of Coronel, 1 November 1914

Saturday, 10 December - AGM
David Seymour - The Battle of The Falkland Islands, 8 December 1914

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

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

Battle Field Tour

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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## Chairman's Chat

Welcome to Issue 8 of *The Dugout*. Since the last issue the branch has had a full itinerary with two very good field trips. The first trip in March combined the CWGC at Maidenhead and the Museum of Army Chaplaincy at Ampert (small but well worth a visit and has excellent grounds) and more recently a return visit to the Imperial War Museum (IWM). Both trips were well received and enjoyed by all. Our monthly meetings continue to be well supported and the range and variety of topics covered stimulating.

The remaining itinerary maintains the range and variety of topics and I for one am looking forward to the branch battlefield tour which has been subject to an extensive reconnaissance and research by our guides to bring you the less well known aspects of this 'mobile' phase of the Great War.

The branch received a welcome boost to its profile as a result of the Dedication of the Dorset Great War Memorial on May 7th and we should rightly be proud of our support to this project. We were once again able to support the British Memorial Association - Fromelles in commemorating the Battle of Aubers Ridge on May 9th thus playing our part in restoring 'balance' to the actions in that area.

In commending our remaining programme for the year to you and with your continued support I conclude with expressing my gratitude to your committee who

work tirelessly to ensure the smooth effective running of the branch and varied and interesting itinerary.



## The Dorset Great War Memorial Service of Dedication



The Service of Dedication of the Dorset Great War Memorial - the project, supported from its very beginning by the Dorset & South Wiltshire Branch of the WFA - was held on a brilliant sunny day on Saturday 7 May 2011 close to the village of Authuille at 11 am. The service, conducted by Reverend Nick Wall MBE TD, was attended by H.M. Lord Lieutenant of Dorset, Mrs Valerie Pitt-Rivers, the President of the Devonshire & Dorsetshire Regiment Comrades Association General Sir John Wilsey. Our hosts, the French, were represented by M. le Sous-Prefet, the Conseil General and the M. le Maire d'Authuille. Among the 150 strong congregation were fifty Dor-

setshire Regiment Comrades, fifteen boys and girls of the Dorset ACF including the Lord Lieutenant's Cadet. Martin and Judy Willoughby, members from our branch, other supporters of the project and people of the commune of Authuille were also present. The family of Pte Dobson of the Dorsetshire Regiment killed here on 1 July 1916 had travelled from Weymouth to be part of the service were also able to see his grave in Lonsdale cemetery. The service was filmed and covered by BBC South Today.



Major (Retd) Tim Saunders MBE started the service by giving a short address on the historical background and was followed by the Lord Lieutenant who spoke fluently in French thanking the Authuille people for their kind hospitality and kindness, M. Philippe Drouin Somme Remembrance Association for all his help and M. Gamain who had donated the piece of land on which the memorial now stands. She spoke of how this part of France was so similar to Dorset and how the horrors of the battle that took place

ever be a part of Dorset. The Mayor of Authuille replied.

Following the Bidding and the Lord's Prayer the congregation sang the hymn 'O God, our help in ages past'. Mr James Crane, a descendant of Pte Samuel Crane of the Dorsetshire Regiment, killed 11 January 1917 read 'A Soldier's Prayer'. The Rev Walls spoke the Dedication Prayer, and the congregation joined together in 'The Commitment'; the Collect of the Regiment was said and then the Blessing.

The wreath laying then took place with the Lord Lieutenant and M. le Sous-Prefet laying the first wreaths. The youngest to lay a wreath and descendants of men who had served in the Regiment were Reuben, age 9 and Tabitha Burbidge, age 12. In-Pensioner Vic Farminer of the Royal Hospital Chelsea spoke the Exhortation and ringing over the 'old front line' of the Somme battle fields Bugle Major Cox sounded the 'Last Post' signalling the 'Silence' during which the standards of both the Dorset and French Comrades were lowered and time stood still as the mighty Memorial to the Missing at nearby Thiepval overlooked this most poignant moment of the ceremony. 'Reveille' was sounded and the Rev Walls lead the singing off our own National Anthem immediately followed by the rousing French Anthem 'La Marseillaise'. This brought the service to an end.

Half an hour later a simple ceremony at Authuille village war memorial took place and again the Lord Lieutenant laid the wreath. All then ad-



joined to the village hall for the Vin d'Honneur where General Sir John Wilsey thanked the Mayor and presented him with a water colour painting depicting soldiers in uniforms of the Regiment circa 1914 the mayor reciprocated by presenting a gift of wine. Glasses of wine were provided with brioche and a little later a finger buffet provided us all with much needed nourishment. The event then came to a conclusion with the Comrades and Cadets doing a battle-field tour.

All agreed that it was a most memorable day and that the memorial we had worked so long for was a fitting one to the 4500 Dorset men who lay 'in a foreign field'.

**Roger Coleman (Bournemouth)**

**Photographs - Nick Saunders**





## **Branch Support for Dorset Memorial Fund**

Launched in 2006, the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, the aim of the Dorset Great War Memorial Project has been to commemorate those lost whilst serving during World War One with the Dorset Regiment, a regiment which has now been amalgamated into The Rifles. The project has, from its inception, had the enthusiastic support of the Dorset & South Wilts Branch of the WFA, which helped to launch the fund-raising appeal with a donation of £500.

Since May 2006, through regular updates from Dorset Great War Memorial Committee and Branch member, Roger Coleman, Dorset & South Wilts Branch members have followed the progress of the memorial closely. Through a bumper Christmas raffle, a bookstall and auction as well as individual donations and sponsorship of Roger's walk to churches with Dorset Regiment memorials, Branch members have continued to help to swell the project's funds. Members Helen Kerridge, David Seymour and Gary Toomer also undertook research into the Associated Newspapers War Memorial, which generated a donation of £2000 for the appeal. Branch members have watched the memorial develop from drawing to carved stone and from Dorset stonemason's workshop to final site in France close to Lonsdale Cemetery near Authuille Wood, from where the 1st Dorsets attacked the Leipzig Salient on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916.

**Katherine Seymour, Memorials Officer**



### **Branch Research leads to £2,000 for Dorset Memorial Fund**

#### **Associated Newspapers' Roll of Honour research**

The research which enabled this report to be compiled was conducted in 2007 - 08 by Helen Kerridge, David Seymour, and Gary Toomer, members of the Dorset and South Wiltshire Branch of the WFA. Lord Rothermere, proprietor of Associated Newspapers, suggested that if the Branch could find out something about the names on the Associated Newspapers' Roll of Honour he would make a generous donation to the Dorset Great War Memorial Project. The research was carried out and a grant of £2,000 was forthcoming in May 2008.

## **The Roll**

The Associated Newspapers' Roll of Honour includes the names of men from all three of the firm's offices: Manchester, London, and Paris. There are 123 names on the Roll, of which forty-seven can be positively identified as referring to only one man. Of the remaining seventy-six the choice of possible identities ranges from two for J F Eastman, C T Howell, A E Marriot, and C A More to 1699 for A Smith.

## **Family backgrounds**

Of the forty-seven a number had family connections with the printing industry, at least two were from a military background, and two others had pre-war military experience. There was a slim Dorset connection for two families. In one case the casualty's mother and sister were born in Wimborne and in another the casualty's father was born at East Melbury.

## **Places of birth**

Most were born in the London area. Others came from Austria, Bishop's Castle, Derbyshire, France, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Nottingham, Pendleton, Whitley, Winchester, and Wolverhampton.

## **Photographs**

We were able to find photographs of three individuals: Tom Barnfield, William Arthur Bond, and David Schneider.

## **Units**

The majority of the identifiable names were those of men who served with H. M. Forces whilst a few served with the French Army. The majority served in the Infantry (including the Black Watch, the Essex Regiment, the London Regiment, the Manchester Regiment, the Middlesex Regiment, the Royal Irish Rifles, and the Royal Sussex Regiment), mostly as private soldiers or non-commissioned officers. Others served in the Artillery, the ASC and the RAMC.

## **Cemeteries and Memorials**

The majority of these men were lost whilst serving on the Western Front. Further afield men are on memorials or are buried in Basra, Jerusalem, Lancashire Landing, Mikra, and Tehran. Most of the men were killed in action.

## **One immortalised in print - *An Airman's Wife***

The most highly decorated was Captain William Arthur Bond who won the MC and Bar. His MC was won whilst serving with the Yorkshire Light Infantry: *"For conspicuous gallantry when on patrol. An enemy patrol was met and bombs were exchanged, one of which wounded both 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Bond and another officer. The enemy retired and opened machine-gun fire, which again wounded the other officer. 2nd Lt. Bond - and Private Garnett - at great risk brought him in over 200 yards under heavy machine-gun fire."* His

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Bar was awarded for action with 40 Squadron, Royal Flying Corps, flying Nieuports: *"For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. While on patrol he attacked at close range a hostile machine, which was sent down out of control. Shortly afterwards he attacked another, which stalled and fell sideways. On another date he flew over the lines at about 50 feet and attacked a hostile balloon, bringing it down in flames."* He lost his life to anti-aircraft fire on 22 July. His wife, Aimée (writing as Aimée McHardy), wrote up his letters to her in *An Airman's Wife*, first published in 1918 and recently re-published by Grub Street

**David Seymour, Branch Education Officer**



### **The Army Ordnance Corps and Equipment Repair**

In Issue 5 of the Dugout I attempted an overview of logistics in the Great War. I would now like to look in a little more detail at some of the work of the Army Ordnance Corps (AOC). The AOC came into being towards the end of the nineteenth century and was responsible for providing the weapons and ammunition needed by the army and was organised to support colonial operations. In the Great War the AOC together with the Army Service Corps (ASC) were responsible for much of the logistic support of the units and formations of the BEF. In rough terms AOC provided hardware and the ASC food and transport.

On deployment in 1914 the BEF comprised a general headquarters (GHQ) and a number of divisions grouped into army corps under the operation control of corps headquarters. In outline ordnance support was controlled by a Director of Ordnance Services (DOS), a Brigadier General, at GHQ and an officer of the AOC, usually a major, at each divisional headquarters as DADOS (Deputy Assistant Director of Ordnance Services). Actually in 1914 the DOS was part of the of the Inspector General of Communications' headquarters, but latter became part of the Quartermaster Generals staff at GHQ. The headquarters of the army corps only dealt with operational matters and the logistic support of divisions was arranged by GHQ where the DOS had an Assistant Director (ADOS), a Colonel, and a few clerks. At divisional headquarters the DADOS had a Staff Sergeant, a horse and a box of stationary.

Operations in 1914 showed that the DADOS could not operate without more staff and some transport. By early 1915 the DADOS of each division had four Warrant Officers, four clerks and six storemen. They

were also provided with one lorry per brigade and one other. Headquarters also grew and by the end of the war the DOS at GHQ had 29 other officers and 170 clerks including 45 women. As the BEF expanded and the increasing numbers of army corps were allocated to armies to meet operational needs each army headquarters acquired ordnance staff similar to that at GHQ.

When the BEF deployed in 1914 it there was little equipment outside the divisions comprising the force and it was considered that equipment in need of repair would be returned to a workshop to be set up in the base area and provided with machine tools, lathes and the like. As the amount of equipment, in particular artillery, in the emerging corps and armies increased the need to provide for repairs nearer the front was soon apparent and lorries fitted with machine tools were procured. These were the basis of mobile workshops which were established with each army corps. The growth in artillery equipment was enormous; The BEF had 216 18 pounders, the most numerous field gun, when it went to France and 2562 at the end of the war; heavier artillery increased from 16 to over 1,600 to say nothing of large numbers of mortars.

The first 'Mobile Gun Workshops (light), to give them their formal title, were set up from May 1915 on the scale of two per army corps. They were commanded by Ordnance Mechanical Engineer Officers (OMEО) and had 21 tradesmen, two lorries equipped with machine tools and a lorry for stores. Heavy workshops, one per army were also established. These had two OMEОs and 89 tradesmen and a wide range of tools including a steam powered hammer. During 1916 further Medium Workshops were also set up and allocated to army corps in relation to the distribution of artillery. The light and medium workshops were intended to be mobile, but tended to take root during the long phase of static warfare from 1915 to mid 1918

Guns and howitzers fired very large quantities of ammunition and their detachments lacked the experience of the pre-war garrison and field gunners. As a result the equipment, in particular the springs and hydraulic buffers of recoil systems, suffered. With high rates of fire fluid leaks occurred and unless the systems were kept topped up the recoil would not be absorbed, parts were damaged and springs lost their resilience and become deformed. Repairs to these systems and dealing with the damage from enemy shell fire kept the workshops busy. At one stage the workshops of the 4<sup>th</sup> Army were changing 200 sets of spring per day and a French firm was found capable of re tempering the springs removed.

A further example is a record of the work undertaken by 16 light and 5 medium workshops over a 6 week period in 1917 and the number of rounds that the equipment they repaired had fired may be summarised as:

| Artillery equipment          | Quantity overhauled & reissued | Average rounds per type fired |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 18 pounders & 4.5" howitzers | 1,176                          | 3 to 4,000                    |
| 60 pounders                  | 140                            | 3,000                         |
| 6", 8" & 9.2" howitzers      | 350                            | 2,000                         |

And, 450 guns and 390 carriages were returned to base for repair or were declared beyond repair.

Both the AOC and the ASC were granted the title Royal after the war. The RAOC lost its repair task to the newly created Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers in 1942. RAOC and The Royal Corps of Transport, a successor to the RASC were merged as the Royal Logistics Corps in more recent rationalisations.

**Ian Duffin**



### Wool Churchyard

Last year the Church walking group found themselves in Wool Churchyard. There they found 71 War Graves, and asked the question "Why are they here"

Before modern practice, servicemen were buried where they fell, or rather in the country they died in. Clearly therefore these men had died in the UK, how? I undertook to find out more.

Of the 71, 18 are WW1 era and I think they were all based at Bovington Camp.

Soldiers, who died abroad, say in France, are listed as "Died of wounds" etc. This does not seem to be the case for soldiers who died in the UK; they are listed as "Died" except that is for Commonwealth soldiers. Three of the 18 were Canadian and I have been able to find out that they all died as a result of the 1918 Flu epidemic, one of who had enlisted in April and was dead by October 1918. There is one Australian who died of Meningitis in November 1916.

There is one other interesting soldier, Leonard Sorzano. He was born in the West Indies in 1890 leaving Trinidad in September 1916, and died of Flu and heart failure in February 1917.

Of the other 53, I have yet to begin looking, except sources tell me that "Boy" Sampson (aged 16) of the Tank Corps died in September 1921 "after a short illness".

**Trevor Lindley**



### The Dreadnought Hoax

One of the features of the years leading up to the outbreak of war in 1914 was the Naval Race between Britain and Germany. Progress in the Race was principally measured by the number of "Dreadnoughts" built by the two sides. Dreadnought was the name given to the first of a revolutionary design of battleship completed for the Royal Navy in 1906. Subsequent ships of this type, regardless of their nationality, were known as Dreadnoughts.



In the first few weeks of 1910, the British Home Fleet was carrying out a series of tactical exercises in the English Channel. During the first week in February the ships, lead by HMS Dreadnought, the flagship of the Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C), put in to Weymouth Bay.

On 7<sup>th</sup> February a telegram arrived advising the C-in-C to prepare for a visit by a group of Abyssinian princes. The telegram was signed 'Hardinge' – Sir Charles Hardinge was the Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs at the time. The fleet had three hours to prepare for the royal visitors. Civic dignitaries in Weymouth were alerted and the warships were dressed overall.

Meanwhile in London, a party of four VIPs, dressed in flowing robes, turned up at Paddington Station. They were accompanied by a Foreign Office representative, who gave his name as Herbert Cholmondeley, and an interpreter. Here Cholmondeley demanded a special train to take the group to Weymouth. The station master arranged for a special coach to be attached to a train.

On arrival at Weymouth the group was greeted by cheering spectators – the news of a royal visit had spread around the town no doubt encouraged by local officials wanting to create a good impression. The VIPs disembarked on to a red carpet and were met by a senior naval officer. After inspecting a guard of honour, the royal visitors were driven to the pier where a picket boat was waiting to take them out to the flagship anchored in Weymouth Bay.

It appears that no one had been able to find an Abyssinian flag or identify the country's national anthem. When the four princes boarded HMS Dreadnought the Royal Marine band struck up with the national anthem of Zanzibar and the flag of that country was raised at the masthead. This did not appear to concern the visitors. On the quarterdeck royal party was welcomed by the C-in-C and the Dreadnought's captain and then taken on a tour of the ship.

None of the princes spoke any English. They communicated through their interpreter in an unintelligible language where the words "bunga, bunga" were prominent. After asking for, and making use of, prayer mats, they bestowed honours on some of the naval officers. The party was taken ashore again with full ceremony to rejoin the royal train for their return to London.

The four princes and the officials were never seen again.

The hoax was carried out by a group of Cambridge students led by an undergraduate named Horace de Vere Cole. The other members of the party were Virginia Stephen (later Virginia Woolf), her brother Adrian, Guy Ridley, Anthony Buxton and the artist Duncan Grant. Cole was "Herbert Cholmondeley of the Foreign Office" and Adrian Stephen took the part of the "interpreter". One of the naval officers who met the visitors knew both Cole and Virginia Stephen but failed to recognise them in disguise.

The escapade was made public when Cole sent a photograph of the "royal party" to the Daily Mirror. This drew attention in Britain to the emergence of what became known as the Bloomsbury Group and caused considerable embarrassment to the Royal

Navy. Virginia Stephen is the bearded figure on the left of the photograph.



In 1915 HMS Dreadnought rammed and sank a German submarine. A number of congratulatory telegrams were received. Among them was one that read "BUNGA, BUNGA!"

**Rod Arnold**

#### **Acknowledgements**

- *Warship Profile: HMS Dreadnought, 1906-1920 – John Wingate*
- *The Dreadnought Hoax – Wikipedia*
- *The Battleship Dreadnought – John Roberts*
- *The Greatest Hoaxer – Daily Express 25/03/2010.*



#### **A GHQ Museum at Montreuil**

In the last issue of *The Dugout* I wrote about the base areas in northern France and mentioned visiting the pleasant town of Montreuil, where Haig's GHQ was located. Since then I have read an article about the recent establishment of a permanent museum to commemorate GHQ and Montreuil and the pivotal role it played in operations – operations by the biggest army our country has ever put into the field. To this end, a British charity, "**The Expeditionary Trust**" has been set up and has started by installing some exhibits in the town's Citadel, which was GHQ's communications centre. Montreuil, as GHQ, has been described as "the focus of a spider's web of wires". As well as a centre of battle planning, it was the centre of a vast organisation supplying five armies spread over a wide area with food, ammunition, medical and other supplies, petrol for the thousands of motor and armoured vehicles and fodder for half a million horses and mules.



The directors of the Trust are working with the civic officials in this project and the first stage of the exhibition should be open this summer. So for anyone going near Montreuil, and it is not all that far from the channel ports, a visit could be well worthwhile.

**F D Hoskins**



### **The Shapwick War Memorial Restoration Project**

At the February 2011 meeting of the Dorset and South Wiltshire Branch of the Western Front Association an eighty-strong audience heard details of the support given by the Branch and by War Memorials Trust to the project to restore the First World War memorial in the village of Shapwick in Dorset.



Since 1997, War Memorials Trust has been providing specialist advice as well as grants to ensure the protection and conservation of war memorial heritage throughout the UK. Memorials which have benefited locally from grants, for work including cleaning, re-lettering and repairs, include East Stoke and Portland in Dorset and Broad Chalke and West Dean in Wiltshire. A full list may be found in the *Grants' Showcase* on the Trust's website: [www.warmemorials.org](http://www.warmemorials.org)

The Dorset and South Wilts Branch of the WFA has recently developed its own memorials policy in response to the growing number of requests for help with restoration projects. Details of previous Branch memorial projects may be viewed at on the branch website (see front page). Keen to promote best practice, one condition for the awarding of grants from the Branch is that the project, where appropriate, meets War Memorials Trust conservation guidelines. Grant applicants are also made aware of the work of WMT and information, including a file showing details of local projects supported by the Trust

and WMT advice helpsheets, is always available at Branch meetings and events.

Shapwick - "Sheep farm" - between Wimborne Minster and Blandford, has had a market cross at its heart since the medieval period. In 1920 the war memorial, which has as its base the octagonal steps of this village cross, was unveiled. Forty-three names are engraved on the memorial. These include the seven names, along with their regiments: the Black Watch, the RFA and the Dorset Regiment, of those men from the village who did not return from World War One.

Unfortunately, when repairs were last needed, in 1997, the joints on the base of the memorial were re-pointed using cement mortar. Cement has been found to be too inflexible and impermeable as a mortar for historic stone, which needs to breathe and to move. When "suffocated" by cement mortar, dampness can build up inside an historic structure such as Shapwick memorial, leading to decay. The rigidity of cement also prevents natural movement within the structure and this can cause cracks to appear.

By Spring 2010 it had become clear that the use of cement mortar had caused serious problems for the base of Shapwick's memorial. Joints between the stones were being exposed by flaking cement. If the rainwater which was penetrating the structure froze the stone would be severely damaged. It was feared that without urgent remedial action the memorial would not be able to withstand another hard winter. Mrs Shirley Kerley is Chairman of the Pamphill and Shapwick Parishes. Born and bred in Shapwick, the memorial is "only a stone's throw" from her house.



Her children and grandchildren have been amongst the many youngsters who have played on and around the village cross. Determined that the memorial would not fall into disrepair, Shirley has tirelessly led the

restoration campaign. Fund-raising began in June 2010 with a tombola and table-top sale during the village Open Gardens week-end, followed by events including a concert in the church and what Shirley told Branch members was her “most disheartening moment” of the whole project, a pitch at a car boot sale which netted just £10! Fortunately, however, funds continued to mount up. Donations were received from organisations including the National Trust, which owns the nearby Kingston Lacy estate. Even the very youngest members of the village community were involved in the project, with the children from Shapwick Nursery holding a sponsored “Singalong” at the memorial itself.



Whilst the fund-raising continued, specialist advice was being sought on the best way to restore Shapwick memorial. War Memorials Trust advises that mortar used for pointing should always be softer than the surrounding masonry. Moisture will travel through the weakest part of a structure and thus a softer mortar will encourage the necessary transfer of moisture from the inside of historic stone to the surrounding atmosphere. The most suitable material for mortar in historic buildings and monuments, used routinely until the late nineteenth century, is lime mortar. Available in varying strengths, even at its strongest, where it is used for hard stones such as granite, lime mortar remains permeable and flexible. Inevitably, because of the role it plays in absorbing moisture, lime mortar crumbles and has to be renewed from time to time. The plan by the village to restore Shapwick memorial includes provision for regular inspection and an ongoing maintenance fund. Replacement of the mortar is not only cheaper but also preferable to replacing the original stone of a monument.

As part of the WMT grant application process, before work began to carefully rake the cement mortar out of the joints by hand, extensive trials were undertaken in order to establish the exact mix, colour, texture and finish of mortar which would be appropriate for the

friable and weathered stone which makes up the base of Shapwick memorial, which is thought to date from the fifteenth century. Although the mixture finally chosen will remain a darker colour, due to the specific aggregates in this mortar, it will weather to become harmonious with the colour of the stone. Describing the challenges of this project, WMT Conservation Officer Amy Davidson explained that the age of the base of this cross meant that the project was particularly interesting for WMT as the majority of memorials seen by the Trust are structures which date from the early twentieth century.

I read about the £637 grant awarded to Shapwick by WMT in my regular Regional Volunteer newsletter. In view of the extent of the work needed, the obvious commitment of Shirley Kerley and the village to the project and the approval of WMT for the work undertaken, a decision was made by the committee of the Dorset and South Wilts Branch of the WFA to make the maximum Branch grant award of £500 to the Shapwick War Memorial restoration fund.

After viewing a powerpoint presentation showing images of the history of the memorial, as well as before and after photos of the restoration work, some of which were kindly provided by Mrs Kerley's 13-year old grand-daughter, Amber, Branch members were thanked, on behalf of Shapwick village, by Shirley, who was presented with a cheque by Branch Chairman, Martin Willoughby.

**Katherine Seymour,**  
**Branch Memorials Officer and Regional Volunteer, War Memorials Trust**  
*Photographs courtesy of: Shirley Kerley, Minster Memorials, & Dorset & South Wiltshire Branch WFA)*



### Medals Found After over 50 Years

My Great Grandfather, James Wilding, was born in 1887 in Blackburn, Lancashire and enlisted as Pte. James Wilding 5694 in the 6<sup>th</sup> Dragoons (Inniskilling) in 1906 on his 19<sup>th</sup> birthday.

In 1911 he was in India as part of the Mhow Cavalry Brigade but re-called to Britain at the outbreak of war in 1914; he subsequently transferred into the 2<sup>nd</sup> Life Guards as part of the “Composite Regt of Cavalry,” as it was at the time.

James was wounded at Zandvoorde in Belgium on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 1914. He was one of only 6 or so survivors from approximately 500 men and only one



having a known grave, the others are commemorated on the Menin Gate (another "Fromelles" possibly). James was wounded in the back and was hospitalised back in Blighty.



In 1916 he transferred to the RFC as an armourer. He died in 1957 at the age of 70. After he died all his effects, including his 14 Star/Bar trio were sold off to a Rag & Bone man. It is hard to believe that families attached little or no importance to these items, but that's that way it was and still is in some circumstances.

The hope of one day finding his medals seemed an almost impossible task, and after years of scouring auctions, fairs etc, I found them listed in an old auction back catalogue as sold in 2000 in London. The medals in 2000 were still all together and complete, so I placed a wanted advert in all the medal magazines and associated publications, hoping that someone may get in touch.

Within 6 weeks I had a phone call from a dealer in Co Armagh, Northern Ireland. The dealer had purchased the medals only two weeks prior to my advert, so a deal was done and after 53 years they came back into our family. Quite an amazing journey for a set of medals, and I can only hope that my Great Grandfather would be very pleased that we've managed to re-acquire them.



It just goes to show that these things can happen, so if you are looking for some old family items, don't give up, keep looking and with luck you can find these things – if you don't try you'll never find them. Don't give up & good luck.

**Alan Leeson**

## Private 244333 Noah Stanier The Cheshire Regiment

Noah Stanier was born on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1895 at Church Street, Cherterton, Staffordshire. He was the eldest son of Elizabeth Ann and Noah Stanier.

In 1911 Noah and his family lived in North Street, Mount Pleasant, Mow Cop, on the Staffordshire / Cheshire border.

At the out break of War in 1914, Noah, a colliery worker aged 18 and 317 days went into Congleton to sign up and fight for his country.



Noah's enlistment papers actually state that he signed up on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1914; he was attached to the Cheshire Regiment, Regimental No: 244333. On his enlistment records dated 1914 his particulars were height 5ft 4 and 3/8 inches, weight 91lbs, eyes grey, hair light brown, physical fitness good.

After Noah signed up and before he was sent to France we think he went home to see his family, you can see by the picture how proud he looks in his uniform.

Noah was never to return home to Mow Cop. He was killed on the 10<sup>th</sup> April 1918, at Le Toquet near Messines, in Belgium; he is buried in Strand Military Cemetery, Comines-Warneton, Hainaut, Belgium.

In 1919 Noah's mother received a letter from a Sergeant, who was with Noah when he died, here is part of the letter he wrote:

*Dear Mrs Stanier*

*Sorry I did not reply sooner as I have been away from home and left no address, your son Pte N. Stanier was alone with me at the time of his death, it was on the morning of April the 10<sup>th</sup> 1918 at Le Toquet near Messines, the time would be I should think about six o'clock am. He was shot by a German through the neck by an explosive bullet. He died about one minute after this happened when we were surrounded by German's. I tied my field dressing in his wound and was just about to go through his pockets, when the German hauled me in his bag of prisoners,*

*that was the last I saw of him, dead with a smile on his face, I shall never forget that smile*

## **Majors Kent and Raper and the Bray Road Cemetery at Fricourt**

Noah is mentioned on the headstone of the family grave in St Luke's Church, Mow Cop, Stoke-On-Trent. He is also mentioned on the WW1 memorial plaque in the church and mentioned on the WW1 memorial in All Saints Church, Odd Rode, Cheshire.

When we started to research Noah we found that the CWGC computer records were incorrect, they had his initial as M not N, and so we set about getting this changed.

In January 2011 we went to Belgium and took a photo of his grave, not only for our records but also for the family. We rang the CWGC and they asked us to forward all the details onto them, instead of posting them we decided to give them in person as we had already booked ourselves on the branch field trip on the 18<sup>th</sup> March.

The trip to the CWGC was fantastic; we gave all the paperwork we had to a member of the office staff, and she photocopied them and said they would look into it.

A couple of weeks past, but one vital piece of paperwork was missing, his birth certificate, so I got his birth details off Ancestry ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)) and applied for a copy from the General Register Office (GRO). Once the birth certificate arrived we sent a copy to the CWGC.

We have now heard back from the CWGC; they have agreed that all our hard work and effort has paid off. They have changed Noah's details on their computer records and will be replacing his headstone within 22 months and they will send us a photograph of the new headstone when it is done. We think if Noah was looking down on his grave he would be pleased to see that his name is now correct and that future generations will be able to find his details easier on the CWGC records.

### **Beverly & Alan Leeson**

*Most people, I would suggest, have never heard of Mow Cop, let alone the tiny Odd Rode but by chance All Saints Odd Rode was the church my paternal grand parents worshiped at and in whose churchyard they are buried, very close to relations of Alan's. A small world. Editor*



A company of the 7<sup>th</sup> Green Howards (also known as The Yorkshire Regiment) made an unauthorised attack in the area around the cemetery on 1 July. The attack was made diagonally across the lane outside the cemetery and the field on the other side of the lane. Other companies were in action later in the day. After the battle had moved on, all of the battalion's identifiable dead were buried in an enlarged shell hole where the cemetery now stands. The battalion also erected a wooden memorial nearby listing the names of the dead. Other dead were later buried in two rows behind the shell-hole grave.

The Imperial War Graves Commission preserved this cemetery after the war, erecting 'special memorial' headstone for the Green Howards, inscribed with the words, 'known to be buried here', or something akin. The Green Howards also replaced the wooden war-time memorial with a permanent stone one.

Towards the right of the back row can be found the grave of Major Robert Raper. On 2 July his battalion - the 8<sup>th</sup> South Staffords, part of the 17<sup>th</sup> (Northern) Division, were sent to capture the village and the nearby wood. Major Raper was in charge of a bombing (hand grenade throwing) party. He successfully cleared the village but was killed in the wood. He was buried in a single grave over the road from the cemetery. After the war, his family erected a private headstone there and also gave money for the rebuilding of the village church. The civilians who returned to Fricourt regarded him as the 'liberator' of their village. The street from the centre to the church is named after him and the Stations of the Cross in the church are named in his honour. The Western Front memorial of the 17<sup>th</sup> Division is also in the church. In 1965 the CWGC persuaded the Raper family to allow the grave to be moved into the cemetery so that it could be looked after properly.

What became of the Green Howards company commander who took his men into that premature attack on 1 July? His name was Major Ralph Kent. He was badly wounded that day and evacuated to England. He did not return to the battalion and so never explained the decision that cost the lives of his men. Later in the war he was promoted and commanded the 4<sup>th</sup> Green Howards, 50<sup>th</sup> (Northumbrian) Division, in 1918 when the division was sent to a 'quiet sector' on the Chemin des Dames, after suffering heavy casualties in the German Spring Offensive on the Somme. Unfortunately the Germans chose that sector for a later offensive and Lieutenant Colonel Kent was killed. He has no known grave and is named on the Soissons monument to the missing.

**Martin Middlebrook**

## Book Reviews



### **Lady Under Fire on the Western Front The Great War Letters of Lady Dorothea Feilding, MM.**

Edited by Andrew and Nicola Hallam.  
(Pen and Sword 2010)



At the beginning of the First World War, Lady Dorothea Feilding was 24 years old. Two of her brothers were in the Army and another was in the Navy. Following brief nursing training she responded to an advertisement calling on adventurous young women to equip an ambulance unit for service in Belgium. By December 1914 she was described by Captain S. J. Carter, RAMC, as “a lady of

*whom Britain can be proud”.*

Branch members who enjoyed Diane Atkinson’s talk in June 2010 and her book *The Angels of Pervyse* will already be familiar with two of the other women selected by Dr Hector Munro for his ambulance unit, Mairi Chisholm and Mrs Elsie Knocker. Dorothea’s letters add to the story of that unit by giving insights into the Munro Ambulance Corps from another viewpoint, but they are also extremely interesting and well worth reading in their own right.

Dorothea Feilding spent almost three years at the Belgian Front and was the first woman to be awarded the Military Medal for bravery in the field. Andrew and Nicola Hallam made the fortunate discovery of Dorothea’s letters whilst working on a project at the Warwickshire County Record Office. They have made a good selection from the letters by Dorothea which survive. Presented chronologically, the letters take the reader through all the ups and downs of Dorothea’s war including the laughter, the petty annoyances, the often understated difficulties and dangers and above all the conviction that she would not

have wanted to spend the war anywhere else but “*out here right at the heart and pulse of things*”.

Capable and popular, Dorothea mixed easily with royalty and ordinary soldiers alike. A fluent French speaker, she was held in very high regard by the French Brigade of Fusiliers Marins, whose Vice-Admiral mentioned her in a special Order of the Day on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1914 “*for exhibiting to everybody, almost daily, the finest example of devotion and contempt of danger*” for her work in evacuating many of the Brigade’s wounded.

Many of Dorothea’s letters are uncensored and often contain accurate military information as well as frank observations about people and events. Kind, generous, grateful to those who supported the work of the Munro Ambulance Corps and tireless in her efforts to rescue and care for the wounded no matter how dangerous the situation, Dorothea could also be highly critical of those she perceived to be shirking their duty, unhelpful or inflexible in their attitudes. In her letter of November 4<sup>th</sup> 1914, for example, she describes the frustrations of being a civilian in a war zone:

*“After our cars had been getting in masses and masses of wounded from far up while all the army ambulances stayed in the Grande Place at Ypres, a Captain Fitzpatrick dashed up, was frightfully rude...and tried to arrest us for working in the English lines without being “army”....It was disgusting too because we were doing work that no-one else was.....We got two loads away & had promised to come back for the others when Fitzpatrick refused to let us go on working & we had to go knowing the poor devils would probably be left there for hours until they were brought off on an old horse cart that jolted like mad & lucky if they were fetched at all. The RAMC have crowds of lovely ambulances that are too “precious” to go near the firing.”*

In the same letter Dorothea describes Mrs Knocker and Mairi Chisholm – “*The latter a great dear – only 18 but as brave as can be & most refreshingly calm and good-tempered under all circumstances. Mrs Knocker is a capable lady but a little trying at times when she overdoes things and gets on the party’s nerves – but given lots of hard work to do she A1.*”

Although Dorothea’s attitude towards Mairi remained friendly throughout the war, there are hints that her relationship with Elsie Knocker was far from smooth. In November 1915, imploring Dorothea for help in converting to Catholicism before her marriage, Elsie proceeds to apologise “*for all the diverse unpleasant remarks she ever made to me & to swear she never meant them, wouldn’t do so again*”. Following the publication in 1916 of what Dorothea calls “*a damnable book*” about the cellar in which many wounded



were treated by Elsie and Mairi in Pervyse, Dorothie gives it as her opinion that Mrs Knocker "*should have been held under water for 48hrs when young*"!! Dorothie married Captain Charles Moore, Irish Guards, in July 1917. Charles survived the war but two of Dorothie's brothers, as well as a number of her friends, were killed. Writing on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1918, she said: "*Mother dear, thank God that supreme sacrifice was not for nothing as I have often feared it would be.*"

Don't judge this book by its front cover, which, in my view, is rather drab. If you enjoy reading first-hand accounts from the First World War I recommend Dorothie's letters for their immediacy, for the insight which they give us into her day to day life as a nurse and her concerns for her family as well as her frank opinions and feelings about all aspects of her war, written without later revision or thought of publication.

**Catherine Seymour**

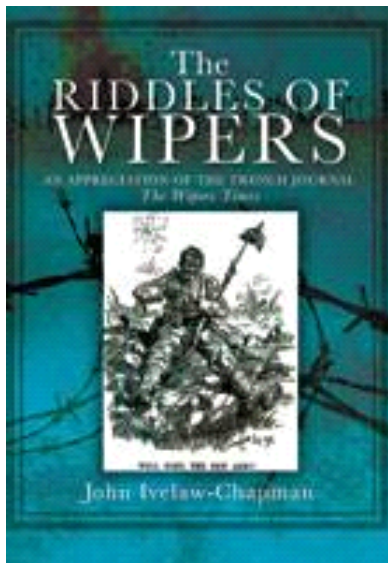


**The Riddles of Wipers**  
An appreciation of *The Wipers Times*  
a Journal of the Trenches

by John Ivelaw-Chapman

Pen & Sword Military 2010, £12.99, 204pp,  
Paperback, ISBN 978 184884 191 8

**The Riddles of Wipers** is a gem. The Wipers Times was not the first trench magazine but was certainly among the best. **John Ivelaw-Chapman's** masterly analysis of the journal deciphers many of its coded illusions. If you have ever wondered about the difference between a 'minnie', a 'Jack Johnson' or a 'whizz-bang', all is revealed here. In the process he uncovers many fascinating nuggets that, combined with his own accounts of discussions with veterans, tell us much about life in the Ypres Salient. He guides us through the humour, satire and gentle fun that sustained the men in the trenches. There is derision too



– usually reserved for parodies of war correspondents who had clearly never been in harm's way. There are some excellent poems and illustrations, notably Bruce Bairnsfather's, drawn from elsewhere. All in all, readers will delight the discoveries they make whenever they dip into this remarkable book.

**Christopher Newbould**



**"Why do we place our right hand  
on our left breast?"**

I was recently asked the history behind the placing of our right hand over our hearts at funerals and remembrance services. After some research I found the following and was surprised to learn that we are actually placing our hand over our medals. If you could forward to Sub Branches for their info I would appreciate it.

The Salute by Veterans at the Cenotaph or Wreath Laying Ceremony (Remembrance Service) It will be noticed at any Remembrance Service or when passing a Cenotaph Veterans will place their Right Hand over their "Left Side" many may believing that they are placing their 'Hand over their Heart' in Respect or Remembrance of their Fallen Comrades";- this is not so.

The Veterans Salute to their "Fallen Comrades" originated in London on Armistice Day in 1920, during the ceremony to unveil and dedicate the Cenotaph in Whitehall at the same time a funeral procession accompanying the remains of the "Unknown Soldier" halted at the Cenotaph during the ceremony before proceeding to Westminster Abbey for internment. Those present included the senior Soldier, sailor and many Victoria Cross winners. The ceremony concluded with a march past. The Regimental Sergeant Major of the Guards Regiment conducting the ceremony, faced with a gathering of highly decorated and high ranking military men (including many Victoria Cross winners), all wearing rows of medals, decreed that all would salute the Cenotaph as they marched past by placing their hand over their medals, signifying that "No matter what honours we may have been awarded they are nothing compared with the honour due to those who paid the supreme sacrifice".

*'Stolen' from a recent RMP Old Comrades newsletter*

