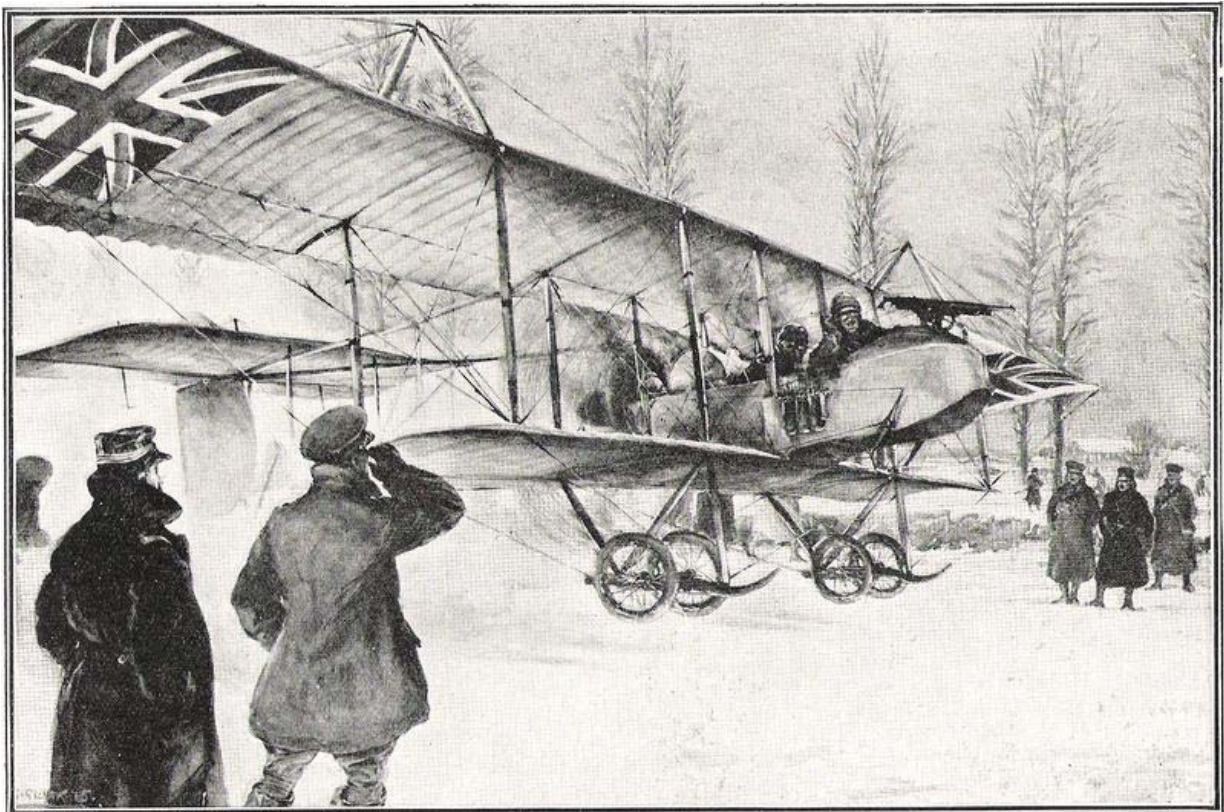


**JOURNAL  
30**

**Channel Islands  
Great War  
Study Group**  
[www.greatwarci.net](http://www.greatwarci.net)



**FEBRUARY  
2010**



**A Wintry Departure  
Near Hollebeke in 1915**

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Hello All

The topic of weather is frequently a conversation point when one meets people, and this will have been particularly so the last few months with some of the snow and ice that persisted. Indeed, as I look out I can still see snow in the folds of the high ground to the south and east of our valley. Then of course, there is the contentious debate over Global Warming, a topic that I dare not touch, even with a barge pole!

Undoubtedly there were many who struggled to and from work, flights and trains were disrupted, not least Eurostar and Eurotunnel, and hospitals and the emergency services had to cope with the increased demands on their time and resources. Yet, most would be able to return to a warm house at the end of their travails. Not so the men who stood to in the trenches in the winters of the Great War. Frequently during the recent spell of cold weather I wondered about those times and those men, and what they would have given for a parka or an anorak!

There was a poignant reminder of that weather during the re-interment ceremony of the first of the 250 or so men at the new Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery a few weeks ago (30<sup>th</sup> January), when there was a light layer of snow covering the newly laid turf and grave covers.

Turning to this Journal, it is slightly thinner than the bumper 49 pages that appeared in Journal 29. However, it is hoped that the articles will still be of as much interest as before. I am continually surprised at what can emerge from the 'old shoe box on top of the cupboard', and yet I feel sure that there is much more that could be revealed.

Thanks as ever to the sturdy contributors!

**A Get-Together in Jersey  
19<sup>th</sup> March, 2010**

**An informal Group get-together in Jersey is planned over a meal starting at 7.30 pm on the 19<sup>th</sup> March at the Bistro Soleil at Beaumont. Obviously, anyone present on the Island at that time is welcome to come, and with guests. A table has already been reserved by Peter Tabb with a tentative number for those attending.**

**If you are planning to attend, please contact Peter Tabb to let him know as soon as you feel able. His Email address is on the Distribution Note that tells you of this Journal being available on the web and his telephone number is in the Phone Book.**

**Thank You - BB**

**This Month's Cover**

Wood, wire, canvas and very little else to protect aircrews from the winter elements in the days of the Great War while flying at a sedate 60-70 mph. We know with our cars how sluggish a cold engine can be when first started, so starting an aero-engine when the aircraft has a pusher (as opposed to tractor) configuration as is illustrated must have been a work of art!

## **CWGC Non-Commemorations**

Work is continuing to identify cases for the CWGC to commemorate Islanders who have been forgotten or unrecognised for one reason or another.

On the plus side, OV Major Gerald Norcott has now been accepted as a Great War casualty, and this is largely due to the “In from the Cold” project team. However, no feedback has yet been received on Second Lieutenant Garnet Cory Burton, Leading Seaman Thomas Helman and Sapper William John Le Noury.

We know from Australia that the case of Archibald Leopold is still under assessment, thanks to an Email in early January advising that requested paperwork had been delayed but was then available.

Two very recent submissions have been forwarded for OVs Major John William Dustan and Surgeon Alfred Nicolle de Gruchy. In these cases, it is too early to have expected a response.

While not strictly a non-commemoration issue, we’ve seen Officers’ Steward Emile Drieu’s memorial corrected at Haslar. His name had been spelt DRIEN.

### **Snapshots from France, 1917-1923 By Liz Walton**

My aunt, Ada Le Poidevin was in Northern France from early 1917 until 1923, working for the Salvation Army. Initially she worked in rest huts for the troops, but after the war she worked on their war graves visitation programme. Part of this work involved taking photos of groups of relatives who were visiting the graves of family member. Also if relatives were unable to visit she and her colleagues would place flowers on the grave, take a photo of it and then send the photo back home in a card, together with some pressed flowers. Because of this side of her work she had her own camera, and took a lot of other photos which were left to me after her death in 1983. I have been scanning and restoring them over recent months and would like to share some that might be of interest.



Ada spent much of the time in Arras, where the Salvation Army had a Hostel of Consolation for grieving relatives at Rue Michelet to the north of the city. It was run by Captain and Mrs Tickelpenny, Ada, the taller of the two women, and Symonia Tickelpenny are seen here standing by the ruins of the belfry in Arras in about 1919. At about this time she sent a postcard back to her parents in Guernsey stating that it was a two hour walk to the cemeteries that she visited and that you needed stout boots because of the state of the roads. The uniform by this stage had become far more practical than the flowing skirts and bonnets that the Salvation Army women had worn at the outbreak of war.

The staff of the Arras hostel can be seen below. Many of the other hostels were permanent buildings- the one at Ypres was housed in a chateau, but the Arras hostel was based in a hut which had previously been used as a rest hut for soldiers at Ostrohove near Boulogne. At the end of the war it was dismantled and taken to Arras where it remained until the 1930s.



This photo is typical of the type of picture that would be sent home to families unable to travel abroad to visit the graves of their loved ones. It was taken at Aubigny Communal Cemetery Extension, approximately 15 km northwest of Arras on the St Pol road. The grave marker to the right is that of Lt Guy Ashwin of L Flight, 1<sup>st</sup> Wing, the Royal Air Force, and is formed from the wooden propeller of an aeroplane of the time. Lt Ashwin was only 21 when he died in September, 1918. He had joined the London Regiment at the outset of the war at the age of 17, fought at Ypres, Neuve Chapelle, Loos, Vimy and on the Somme. Wounded twice, he returned to England in February, 1917 where he joined the Royal Flying Corps. On receiving his commission he returned to the Front and was killed in a flying accident, along with his observer, about a year later



Ada was present at the reopening of many cemeteries after the Commonwealth War Graves Commission had replaced the original wooden crosses that marked the graves with the now familiar white headstones. She also attended the dedication of several war memorials in the region. The sepia photo above was taken on the occasion of the unveiling of the 9<sup>th</sup> (Scottish) Division memorial on 9<sup>th</sup> April, 1922. The memorial now stands next to Point du Jour cemetery near Arras. It was moved recently as its original position had left it stranded in the middle of a busy dual carriageway. The more recent picture was taken from the gates of Point du Jour Military Cemetery in April, 2007, some 85 years later.



Ada visited Point du Jour cemetery on a regular basis. Many men of the RGLI were buried here after the Battle of Cambrai, and one of her notebooks records the names

of some of them. The above picture appeared in the *Guernsey Weekly Press* of November, 1923 together with an article describing her war work and stating that she had recently returned to the island. There are no entries on her passport after this date.

### **Demented, Deranged or just Deadly? The Case of Verney Asser**

**Introduction:** At the best of times, I am a scruffy note-taker and even after a few days, my hieroglyphics would challenge an Egyptian scholar, never mind something written a good three or four, or even more, years previously when going through observations on Jersey Evening Posts of the day. Yet, revisiting some notebooks I saw a surprisingly clear reference to a soldier called Asser having been found guilty of the murder of another soldier called Durkin, both serving with the Australian Imperial Forces. Curiosity rekindled, it was time to look for these two men's service records.

**The killing:** On 27<sup>th</sup> November, 1917 at about 11.00 p.m. at the Australian Training Centre at Sutton Veny in Wiltshire, an Acting Corporal Verney Asser made a report to the Guard Commander that another Acting Corporal, Joseph Harold Durkin, had appeared to have shot himself in what was the Lewis Gun Training Hut. This hut consisted of two rooms, one a large room where instruction in the Lewis Gun was carried out, the other smaller room where Asser and Durkin were billeted.

The Orderly Officer and the Medical Officer (MO) were called out and inspected the body, the latter declaring Durkin dead. The room was inspected by the Orderly Officer and the Guard Commander, while Durkin's body was moved to the camp mortuary. The following morning The Orderly Officer returned with the Commanding Officer and a Police Sergeant and the room was again inspected.

**The inquest:** Two days later, an inquest was convened by the local Coroner and with a jury in place.

The first witness to be called was Asser. In his evidence he stated that he had known Durkin about three years, back in Australia, furthermore he had been both depressed and snappy on the day of his death, and this seemed to have come about after the receipt of two letters, one from Australia, one from Salisbury. Durkin had apparently previously passed letters for Asser to read, but this day, he had apparently not. Both had gone to bed about 9.40 p.m. and at about 10.45 p.m. Asser stated that he had been woken by the sound of a shot. Although he said that it was pretty light, he struck a match and saw Durkin lying there, groaning, with a rifle which he snatched away and opened the breech. There was some questioning over the letter from Salisbury which had been written by a Mrs Dymond in 9 Knox Row, whose husband had only recently died, and who, Asser claimed, Durkin was having an affair with. However, the letter had not given an indication of who had actually sent it, although Asser had known who it was from even though he had not seen it.

Questions followed on how Durkin might have got the ammunition, it being compatible for use on both an SMLE rifle and a Lewis Gun. Asser stated that ammunition was normally kept in a store, away from the Training Hut, and it might have been possible for Durkin to have kept some from the firing ranges.

The second witness was Sergeant Frederick Smith, the Guard Commander. In his evidence he contradicted Asser in saying the rifle was resting in Durkin's right hand, but agreed that the breech was open. There was no sign of a struggle, while the bed on which Durkin lay was up against the wall.

Witness three was the MO, a Captain Eric Loftus McKenzie, RAMC. He described that Durkin had been shot with one round entering the head approximately 2" in front of the left ear's lobe and exiting about 2½" behind the right ear's lobe, the exit wound being much larger than the entry wound, and death was practically instantaneous. The MO was then asked to give a practical demonstration of how the rifle might have been fired by Durkin. In one position, with the butt resting on the ground and the MO leaning his cheek on the muzzle, he could not reach the trigger, however, standing erect with the rifle at his cheek, he could. He gave the opinion that the injury could have been self-inflicted. It was also noted that Durkin was not a tall man (in fact he was 5' 7¼" tall). Some debate as to the rifle's position found resting in Durkin's hand followed, but it was considered that Asser could have placed it there as he went to seek help. Asser was not recalled to be further interviewed.

The final witness called was Captain George Lamerton, Australian Infantry, Orderly Officer on the night Durkin died. He described Durkin as lying on the bed on his right hand side in a crouched (foetal?) position although the legs were only slightly drawn up, and partially covered by a blanket. To the suggestion that Durkin may have shot himself, Captain Lamerton reiterated the blanket partially covering the body.

Some discussion involving the Coroner, Jury Foreman, Captain Lamerton and an unnamed Police Sergeant followed on the ballistics, and it was noted that the bullet had exited the hut wall at a point about 6" above the floor. Again, Captain Lamerton affirmed Sergeant Smith's view that there was no sign of a struggle, and also Captain McKenzie's opinion that Durkin's injury could have been self-inflicted.

After Captain Lamerton had completed giving evidence, the Coroner gave his summary to the jury, and was clearly of the opinion that Durkin had committed suicide. However, the Jury Foreman had interrupted and questioned the simplicity of this view. Reading between the lines, it is evident that he saw the possibility of murder given the difficulty in firing the rifle from the likely angle. However, the Coroner did say that suicides often chose difficult routes to kill themselves. (As an aside, there is evidence for this view, as the JEP carried the news, in August, 1916 that two soldiers had jumped together into the River Stour at Wimborne in Dorset and drowned. They had tied themselves together with their puttees!).

The Jury returned the verdict that "We have concluded that the wound was self-inflicted during a period of temporary insanity."

**What followed:** For Corporal Durkin, the answer is simple. Within a few days, he was buried with full military honours in grave number 251A.B.18 at St John's Churchyard in Sutton Veny. Over a period of time, his paperwork would be concluded and his father, Bartholomew, would receive a pension of 14s. per fortnight from 1<sup>st</sup> February, 1918. Entries that were made referring to death by suicide were later countered by the findings that he had been murdered by Asser.

Turning to Corporal Asser, it appears that within days of Durkin's death and inquest findings, he was arrested and charged with "Conduct prejudice to good order and

military discipline in that he made a false statement to his Commanding Officer", and was found guilty and reduced to the rank of Private. On the 4<sup>th</sup> December, 1917, Asser was removed to Warminster and placed under arrest by the civil authorities. He appeared at Wiltshire Assizes on 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> January, 1918 charged with the murder of Corporal Durkin, was found guilty and sentenced to death. (A copy of the Court's papers is held by the Australian War Memorial (AWM 10, Code 4304/9/75, but it is not readable on the Internet). The Jury's conclusion largely depended on whether Durkin could have fired the rifle, and if not, there was only one other person in the room, and it must therefore have been him!

An appeal was lodged, and it appears that another soldier called Milne had inculpated Asser by stating that Asser had entered Milne's Hut three times between 09.30 p.m. and 11.00 p.m. on the evening of Durkin's death on the pretext of taking away empty Lewis Gun magazines. Two charged magazines, each containing 48 live rounds, had been found among Asser's possessions.

The appeal hinged on Asser's sanity, and it was claimed that he had been in and out of mental institutions and that his father had been a suicide in Bootle, Lancashire some time previously. It was pointed out to the Appeal Judges that Asser had been hospitalised in July, 1916 for Derangement, but had been discharged after four five days since this had been attributed to alcoholism. An interesting claim was also made at the Appeal that Asser was in fact James Nugent, a former bugler boy in the Royal Navy who had been discharged some fourteen years previously suffering from dementia! (There is some corroboration for this in that a James Nugent from Liverpool was in the RN (service number 217914), having been born on 1<sup>st</sup> May, 1886. This is something still to be checked!)

The Appeal Judges rejected the Defence's case that Asser was insane, saying that this line of defence had not been presented at the trial. With the end of the judicial process, the sentence on Verney Asser was carried out and he was hanged at His Majesty's Prison at Shepton Mallet on 5<sup>th</sup> March, 1918, and afterwards buried in an unmarked grave. His file records that the Australians did not wish for him to receive medals and apart from returning his estate to a brother (?) the file was quickly closed. It appears that the trappings of an execution at Shepton Mallet such as the tolling of a solitary bell were suspended and that his execution was shrouded in some secrecy.

**Looking Back:** Durkin enlisted in Australia in January 1916, aged 22 years, 5 months and having been born in Melbourne, he had been in Egypt where he contracted Venereal Disease and spent 100 days in hospital between May and August, 1916, and seems to have had an otherwise unblemished record in terms of military offences. His service record gives no indication of service in France, even though he was reinforcement for the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion. Asser meanwhile enlisted at Zeitoun in Egypt at the beginning of March, 1916 aged 28 years, 9 months and having been born in Ballarat! Why Zeitoun? Apparently he had been a stowaway on the SS Malwa, a P&O liner. His service is no different to many Australians and is a series of minor military offences, such as absence and drunkenness and hospital visits, for follicula and bronchitis, other than his spell of derangement. He does serve in France as part of the Australian 1<sup>st</sup> Division Supply Train. It is difficult to see, before Sutton Veny, whether the two men's paths crossed militarily. Given that Melbourne and Ballarat are some 80 miles apart, it is just possible that they knew each other as Asser had claimed.



It would be interesting to see the trial papers. Other than Milne's evidence, the rest of the case against Asser does seem to hinge greatly on circumstantial evidence. Asser owned up to snatching the rifle away from Durkin so it was pointless to take fingerprints assuming that that forensic process was available. How soon after the killing were the charged magazines discovered? That the Appeal Judges had rejected the Defence's case that Asser was insane on the basis that this line of defence had not been presented at the trial seems unfair, given that the onus was on the prosecution to provide proof of guilt, and not for the defence to provide proof of innocence.

Given the antipathy of Australians to past British sentencing and executions of 'their boys' during the Boer War some discretion may have been necessary in this case. But, clearly, British civil law would have taken precedence, and it was an Australian murdering another Australian. The Australian military also paid for the defence counsel, even though it was unclear that this was correct in terms of the Australian government rules on the military. However, it was an exceptional occurrence.

**Was Asser guilty:** Without the evidence presented at his trial to read, it is difficult to be certain, but there is a high probability that he was given the circumstances described. I am curious as to the content of the letters and what, if anything, Mrs Dymond had to say, although I suspect that she may not have been asked!

**CWGC Commemoration:** It is unsurprising to note that the CWGC had never erected a headstone in the prison at Shepton Mallet. Yet, it struck me that, in fairness, Asser should still be commemorated, even though he was found guilty of murdering a comrade. There were similar offences in the British Army during the Great War, not least Lance Corporal Price and Private Morgan of 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, the Welsh Regiment who were executed on 15<sup>th</sup> February, 1915 and are buried at the Bethune Town Cemetery. So, given that there was some precedence, at the end of last December I asked the CWGC whether it was appropriate to commemorate Asser. In the remarkably quick time of four weeks, I received the response that the Australian government had agreed to commemoration, and that the CWGC are now studying where he might have his name engraved, considering that Shepton Mallet is probably out of the question!

**Postscript:** I was mindful of the tale of 'Breaker' Morant when I had been putting this account together, although I had deliberately made no reference to him. It will be recalled from the Edward Woodward film of that name that he had been found guilty and executed by a British Court Martial for killing prisoners during the Boer War, and that this act of execution was not welcomed by the Australian government of the time. However, it was odd to note from the Times (11<sup>th</sup> February, 2010) that an appeal for a pardon for Breaker is currently being submitted to Her Majesty the Queen.

## **Royal Air Force Officer Records 1918-1919**

**Introduction:** In the last Journal I advised that these Records were now available at the National Archive, and that I needed to analyse the sample that I had obtained, noting that there was a lot of "white space".

Having now spent time going through them, a few pennies have dropped, not least that the period we are dealing with was approximately one year on for most of these men because they were “Hostilities Only” and would be released during the course of 1919. Of course, with the creation of the Royal Air Force (RAF), not everyone was a pilot, and there was a need for the many trades and disciplines that fall within the general terms of ‘Engineering’ and ‘Administration’. So, in retrospect, information was going to be a little light and varied, while a new ‘language’ is needed to decipher the entries. So looking at the records obtained, I’ve tried to extract what can be understood for each name.

Before listing their details however, there appears, a number of times, the word ‘Census’ followed by different numbers. I am making a guess here that a form of ‘stock-taking’ took place of the man-power that would transfer from the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) and the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) on a ‘per unit’ basis (hence the different numbers assigned to units probably) and the new RAF would create the records from the information now provided. Thus, the level of information would vary to what the individual stated, and one must presume that both the RFC and the RNAS retained their records to close the book on these men? Let us now look at these officers:

**Edward George RUMFITT:** Born on 11<sup>th</sup> June, 1883, he gave his address as Laurel House, Hadnall, Shropshire, although there was a brief spell living at Norwich. His wife was his Next of Kin (NOK). His previous employment was as a secretary in Shrewsbury between February, 1911 and September, 1914 when he enlisted into the King’s Shropshire Light Infantry (KSLI) rising to Sergeant before being commissioned in 1916. He was at 26 TS (Training Squadron) at Narborough in February, 1918, having arrived from Egypt, and it appears that he was training as a pilot and had flown on the Avro 504, BE2C, BE2E and the RE8. It is unclear as to what RAF units he subsequently served with. There is also an annotation that looks like MF (SH) and, if correct, one assumes that this stands for Maurice Farman Shorthorn.

Another annotation appears to read 48<sup>th</sup> TRB, which if correct was the Training Reserve Battalion formed from 9<sup>th</sup> (Reserve) Battalion, KSLI in September, 1916. This coincides with London Gazette entries. The record makes no reference to him being wounded and no mention of the award of a Croix de Guerre either. Transferred to the Unemployed list in March, 1919, he would apply to join the Officers’ Emergency Reserve in December, 1938 and the RAF Volunteer Reserve (RAFVR) in July 1940 when he was living in Bromley, Kent. There is no indication whether he was successful, and would die on 27<sup>th</sup> April, 1959. In his paperwork reference is made to Census/207.

**Frederick Charles YANDELL:** Born on 12<sup>th</sup> April, 1892, he gave his address as 3 Balmoral Terrace in Jersey (he was living there in 1955). His father was his NOK. His previous employment was as a Surveyor of Taxes at the Inland Revenue in London, commencing in October 1910. It appears that he had lived in Maastricht for 7 years before the Great War and was fluent in French and Dutch and also had a working knowledge of German and Flemish. He had flown on the Maurice Farman Shorthorn, Avro 504, BE2C, BE2E and the RE8. He was previously a Lance Corporal in the Royal East Kent Yeomanry, and arrived at 51 TS at Waddington from the Middle East in December, 1917. From the 51 TS, he goes to the NT Brigade (?) in March, 1918, then to the 44, 48 and 15 TDS (Training Depot Station) at Bicester,

Waddington and Hucknall respectively, between November, 1918 and February, 1919.

Transferred to the Unemployed list in May, 1919, he relinquished his RAF commission in January, 1921 when appointed to the Territorial Force Reserve. His paperwork referred to Census/339.

**Leopold Rupert EVERSLED:** Born on 10<sup>th</sup> September, 1891, he gave his address as Lauries Mow, Hassocks in Sussex, while again, his father Edward was his NOK. He had been a self-employed jeweller, goldsmith and diamond merchant in civilian life with premises in Hove. There was a reference to the 24<sup>th</sup> Divisional Signal Company, and following this up in the Medal Cards, they show that he had previously been a Corporal in the Royal Engineers with the service numbers of T1257 and later 538072.



He qualified as a Pilot on the 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 1918, I believe, at 14 TS and went to 5 Squadron having flown Avro 504, BE2E and RE8, and also passed a course in aerial gunnery. I think that if he returned to his former Squadron which is today based at RAF Waddington, he would be very impressed at the differences between the RE8 and today's Sentinel R1!

Transferred to the Unemployed list in February, 1919, there is no Census reference.

**John Willis BUCK:** Born on 26<sup>th</sup> March, 1899, he lived at St Mary's Lodge in St John's Road in Jersey, his NOK being his father, FA Buck. It appears that he came to the RAF via the RNAS route, not surprising as some of his papers were stamped 'Naval'. The forms tell us that he had previously been a student, as well as a member of the Officer Training Corps, at Victoria College between 1913 and 1917, although College records say he started in 1914. He appears to have first gone to Greenwich in September, 1917 and about five weeks later on 15<sup>th</sup> October, had reached the Training School at Vendôme in France.

What happened next becomes slightly obscure, and it appeared that he was at 206 TDS in late-April, 1918 before being transferred to the Reserve Depot on 27<sup>th</sup> July of that year. However, a 'bold as brass' entry states "Termination of Appointment in RAF 24<sup>th</sup> August, 1918", while another entry reports that he had flown 8 hours solo, possibly on a Caudron aircraft, and, very likely, a twin engine model. With so few hours, it is clear that he did not complete flying training, but why? The College's Book of Remembrance does have an annotation against his name to indicate that he had been wounded. So it may be that this wound resulted from a crash whilst under training? The Census Report was numbered 370.

**Roney Forshaw MESSERVY:** Another OV, Captain Messervy's documents provide a bit of variation in that his RAF career, was with balloon units! Born on 20<sup>th</sup> April, 1892, he gave his address as 75 Ladbrooke Grove, London, W where his mother also lived, her being named as the NOK. However, there is also a reference to an E Messervy living at 55 Halkett Place, St Helier in Jersey, on a further form. Before serving with the RFC and the RAF, he had previously been commissioned in the Duke of Wellington's Regiment.

Turning to his civilian employment, he was apprenticed to an engine company in Victoria Street, London SW between 1908 and 1911, before moving onto other companies in Westminster and later Deptford until 1914. The form highlights his experience in Workshop Practice and Motor Engineering, and very interestingly, in Competition Driving! Motor racing buffs might like to follow this up in old Autocar magazines of the period.

As with John Buck above, the College's Book of Remembrance does have an annotation against his name to indicate that he had been wounded. However, there is some support for this in his assessment of being on "Permanent Light Duties", so it is likely that he was wounded with the "Duke of Boots". In 1917 he attended a course at the BRS – Balloon Repair School? – before joining the 10<sup>th</sup> Balloon Company with the grade EO3. Does this stand for Equipment or Engineering Officer? He was assigned to the Company's Stores, but I would have thought that his civilian expertise would have been put to use.

Leaving 10<sup>th</sup> Balloon Company, his next posting was the Headquarters of 8<sup>th</sup> Balloon Wing (though the Company may have formed part of that Wing) in June, 1918. Returning to the UK in February, 1919, he attended a Dispersal Centre at Crystal Palace and from there, was discharged from the RAF on the 14<sup>th</sup> before being transferred to the Unemployed list in 18<sup>th</sup> February, 1919. The Census reference is 661.

**Bernard YANDELL:** The brother of Frederick Charles Yandell above, he also gives the name of his father as NOK. An OV and formerly in the Manchester Regiment, there is no mention of his date of birth, nor his previous civilian employment, and definitely nothing as to his RFC/RAF career except for a few references in the column on Units. It appears that he is with 18 RS (Radio School?) and is then transferred to the BEF and 7 Squadron on 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1917. However, less than two months later, he is hospitalised on the 13<sup>th</sup> June and, in the standard terminology, is "Struck Off Strength EF" the same day!

There is a succession of Medical Board entries:

- On 7<sup>th</sup> July, 1917, he is considered "Unfit for any service for 3 months"
- On 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 1917, he is now assessed as "Unfit GS 6 months, HS 3 months and LD 1 month at Canterbury"
- A month later on 22<sup>nd</sup> November at Herne Bay the assessment is "Unfit GS Permanently, HS 3 months, LD 3 months"
- Moving onto 1918 and Taplow Hospital, he is assessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> April as "Unfit GS 4 months, HS 2 months, LD 2 months"
- Again at Taplow a month later on 15<sup>th</sup> May, the assessment is "Unfit GS 4 months, HS 13 weeks, fit for LD – Ground Duties only."

Whatever the cause, Bernard Yandell was definitely not a well man, and an entry on 26<sup>th</sup> June, 1918 states: "Resignation approved; to be gazetted out and granted honorary rank of Lieutenant". At this point his address was given as 45 Grove Park Road, Eastbourne in Sussex. In his case, the College's Book of Remembrance does not have an annotation against his name to indicate that he had been wounded.



We are therefore left with the question as to whether he was wounded, and if so, during flying duties on the BE2 aircraft (pictured left) that 7 Squadron were equipped with at that period, or if he was seriously ill. Perhaps the answer might yet be found in the Squadron's War Diary?

**Robert Francis LE BAILLY:** Robert Le Bailly is the oldest man of the sample I took, being born on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 1866. He entered via the Naval route, having been a Lieutenant, RNVR involved in Recruiting. His wife was his NOK and they lived at Y Gill, Queen's Park, Colwyn Bay in North Wales. Given his age, it is no surprise to learn that he was a highly experienced civil engineer and had an office at 33 Tothill Street, Westminster in London, SW1 (and a stone's throw from the current Chilcot Iraq Inquiry!). He had had 30 years of practical experience working on Railways and Harbour installations, and one suspects that much of it was in the Middle East since he could speak Greek, Arabic and some Turkish, as well as French.

He was drafted to Vendôme in France in September, 1916, but before that he had briefly been at Pulham (St Mary), which was an RNAS Airship Station in Norfolk. This may have been because of his civil engineering expertise as the Station had only been completed the previous year.

(As an aside, the Station was in use until 1958, although one of the Airship sheds had been sent to Cardington after the R101 disaster. A mooring mast base remains however!)



He spent the remainder of the Great War at Vendôme, serving with HQ 84 Wing and 205 TDS, but was hospitalised in late-November, 1919 and would be admitted to a joint British/French hospital. His forms begin to look like "alphabet soup" in 1919, with as host of acronyms that could mean anything! But it seems that from May he served with HQ ACS in London and with that HQ's SE Area Office in Kensington. Does ACS equate to Airfield Construction Services? On 9<sup>th</sup> November, 1919 he was transferred to the Unemployed list.

**Eric George DE CARTERET:** Eric de Carteret was born on 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1896 and gave his address as Vale Farm, St Peter in Jersey where his father and NOK, Mr GW de Carteret also lived. During 1911 to 1914, he had worked for the Jersey Railways and Tramways Company Ltd, and could claim a thorough knowledge of internal combustion engines to go with his knowledge of French. Sandwiched in between working on the Railways and the RAF, he had with the Royal Army Service Corps with the service number M2/033751 (though shown on his RAF papers as '251).

His civilian engineering knowledge must have help in seeking a commission, for after a spell at No 2 Cadet Wing, he was sent to No 2 OTTW (Officers' Technical Training Wing) in May, 1918. A fortnight in July, 1918 is spent away at 1 S of A, and

then back to No 2 OTTW. On 12<sup>th</sup> October, 1918 he joined 110 Squadron, then a unit equipped with the De Havilland DH9A aircraft, forming part of the Independent Air Force in France undertaking long-rang, day-time bombing raids. He did not stay long in France with 110 Squadron, being hospitalised at 42 Stationary Hospital (then based at Camiers I believe) on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, before returning to the Home Establishment on the 15<sup>th</sup> of that month.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 1918 he is listed as being with 11 Irish Group, and it is difficult to discern which TDS he is now serving with. His form lists 19 TDS, and from data I have seen, that unit was based in Egypt, whereas 11 Group had 23, 24, 25 and 26 TDS as their units. He was clearly in Ireland, for there is reference to Baldonnell, which in 1919 was one of a number of RAF Stations given over to training. However, it seems that his RAF career was over on 7<sup>th</sup> May, 1919, when he was transferred to the Unemployed list.

**Henri Charles BIARD:** The sample would not have been complete without 1921 Schneider Trophy winner Henri Biard, and after having read his rather imprecise biography, I thought that it would be useful to have some more detail, but sadly there is not much! He was born on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1892 at Godalming in Surrey, and he lived at Highgate in North London, presumably because of his civilian role as a flying instructor at Hendon, before joining the RNAS at Greenwich in December, 1917.

Vendôme followed in February, 1918 and then Calshot in May of that year, serving with 209 and 210 TDS. Given his flying experience, his forms are not very enlightening in that they tell us that he flew Land Machines, Seaplanes, Flying Boats and Amphibians!

Although transferred to the Unemployed list in May, 1919, he remained on the Reserve for many years after, and there is a sequence of entries exempting him from annual refresher training. By the 1920s when he was working at Supermarine, he had a number of home addresses in the Southampton area, the last one being 111 Portsmouth Road in Woolston. I wonder whether there is a commemorative plaque to him on this or any of the other Southampton addresses? Finally, like Edward Rumfitt above, his death on 18<sup>th</sup> January, 1966 was noted, referring to the Times' Obituary two days later. It is obvious that almost 50 years on from the end of the Great War, some civil servant was still maintaining the documents!

**Conclusion:** At first when I set out to analyse the nine men's set of record sheets, I was somewhat concerned that there was little to find. But contrary to expectations there was plenty to discover. What is evident is that the contents were generally less than one finds in Naval Rating records for example, or in an Army officer's well-populated War Office file. However, the initial frustration did turn to fun once I could draw on information and research in books or by surfing the internet. Unfortunately, like for so much Great War material there is no "Book of ...." or "How to ....", so there had to be some scratching around or trying to come up with intuitive assumptions. I am sure that I've made a few mistakes, but hopefully someone will come and correct me if I have.

These men came from different backgrounds, were involved in different areas and branches of the RAF, survived the Great War and, with the exception of Henri Biard, we do not know what they did subsequently. Perhaps there are descendants who can close those chapters.

## Faces Remembered



**923 Private CC Morton,  
Royal Jersey Garrison Battalion**

In terms of the Journal, this photo is a “first”, as it is of one of the 100 or so men who came from the UK to make up the RJGB’s numbers in the later stages of the Great War. I have to thank a lady for this and another photograph, namely Claude Charles Morton’s grand-daughter, Vivien Concannon. Sometime ago, it had been noted that Claude had been in the York and Lancaster (Y&L) Regiment, and had been given the number 31330, prior to the RJGB. A close examination of the photograph has revealed that the cap badge is indeed that of the Y&L, and though not readily visible in the photo, the shoulder titles also state Y&L. However, a close inspection also reveals a wound stripe which goes towards explaining his presence in the RJGB.

According to Vivien, Claude was born on 20<sup>th</sup> August, 1886 in East Dulwich into a family of entertainers – his parents and siblings being Music Hall performers, his father (Vivien’s great grandfather) was a tightrope walker during the 1850’s and 1860’s, his mother a dancer, singer and choreographer. However Claude, being the youngest member of the family, became a painter and decorator – far removed from the glamour of the greasepaint, etc. and the family tradition of entertainment.

All Vivien knew of her grandfather’s military record is that prior to the Great War, he was a member of a Territorial Army (TA) unit in Hemel Hempstead and had won prizes for shooting. When and where he joined the York and Lancaster Regiment (31330) is not known to her, and he was badly wounded in the arm, Vivien being told by her father that the muscles in Claude’s upper arm were destroyed. As he was not fit enough to rejoin the Y&L he joined the RJGB. After the War, he returned home to his wife, son and spent the remainder of his life working as a painter and decorator, rather handicapped by his war wound, in Hemel Hempstead where he died in 1949.

Now, another photograph was mentioned above, and although it has not been included here, it is also of Claude in uniform albeit earlier than the one above. It showed that he was wearing a different cap badge and, though somewhat fuzzy, it initially appeared to have been either of the Dorsetshire or the Northamptonshire Regiment. But, given that he had been in the TA, it could not be ruled out that it was from one of the units in the London Regiment, though of which, I was unsure. His Medal Record entry on the National Archive website offered no clue yet it was there that I went.

Checking numbers either side of 31330 for the Y&L, it became evident that most, if not all, of the men in the range of numbers 31261 to 31340 were ex-

Northamptonshire Regiment men from the range 25000 to 25500, Claude had to be part of the same batch, thus confirming the identification of his earlier Regiment. The SDGW data offered more information in that Y&L men in the range of 31261 to 31340 and Northamptonshire Regiment men in the range 25000 to 25500 were dying in France during late-1916. Given some of the Battalion numbers, I was inclined to think that most if not all of these 80 Northamptonshire men were assigned to make up the numbers in the much depleted Sheffield City Battalion – the 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion, who had suffered over 50% casualties on the first day of the Somme, .

Claude's arm (shoulder?) wound must have resulted at about this time, for his name is listed in the Casualty List contained in the Times of 4<sup>th</sup> January, 1917, implying that he was wounded in late-November, 1916. One suspects that he had to endure many months of treatment and rehabilitation before even being just regarded as fit only for Home Service, and thus being sent to Jersey. Clearly, he endured for many years after.

However, following that analysis, Vivien came up with first, the fact that her grandmother and her father had gone to stay at Gillingham to be near to Claude when he was stationed there to be trained. Checking the Northamptonshire Regiment, its 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had indeed been located at Gillingham between May, 1915 and May, 1918. So, this reinforced the assumption that the correct Regiment had been identified. And then, I am glad to say that she had a 'let us visit the old shoe box on top of the cupboard' moment when she rediscovered a number of postcards with the following details on the reverse:

- Date stamp 10<sup>th</sup> July, 1916 (?). No 025416 G Co 3rd Co, 3rd Northampton Regt Twydall Camp, Gillingham, Kent
- Date stamp 6<sup>th</sup> June, 1917. C15 Hut, Yorks and Lancs Regt, C Squadron, Cavalry Command Depot, Eastbourne, Sussex
- Undated. 5 Hut, D Comp, 9th Batt, Royal Defence Corps, Kilnsea, Nr Hull
- Dated possibly July and August, 1918. A Company, 64 Room, RJG Batt, Fort Regent, Jersey

With this additional information, it was pleasing to have the analysis verified although it would not have been possible to pick out the Royal Defence Corps reference. Given the dates, it appears that the UK increment for the RJGB did not arrive until the summer of 1918, almost suggesting that Jersey was running out of partially fit men. Meanwhile, a planned study of the Ralph Gibson and Paul Oldfield (OV) book, "Sheffield City Battalion" is now very much on the cards.

### **205600 Leading Seaman Ernest Ruaux**

We have Ernest Ruaux's grandson, David W Joyce to thank for the two photographs over the page. As you may recall from Journal 29, Ernest was a crew member of HM Submarine E18 that was lost in the Baltic in 1918, the submarine's location being discovered fairly recently. News of the discovery featured in the national media, both on television and in the newspapers, and a lady in Jersey prompted us about it, reminding the Group of the Ruaux/E18 connection.



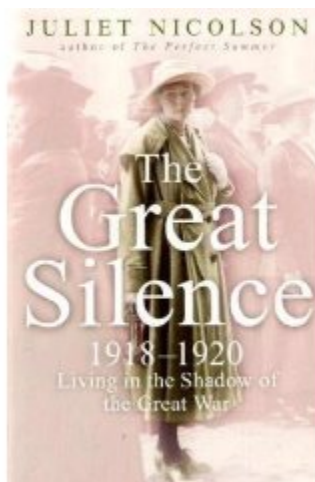
Mums Dad (and unknown friend) - date unknown



While the JEP originally carried a brief news item on the discovery back in October, it now took a prompt from the Group to highlight that connection. Subsequently, they published a *Temps Passé* item in early January and that probably was the reason for David to get in touch.

In the picture of Ernest and his unknown chum, both have HMS Duke of Wellington on their cap tallies, and the only entry on his record shows that he was on board (it may have been a shore establishment!) between 17<sup>th</sup> January and 7<sup>th</sup> March, 1903. At that stage he had not received his first good conduct stripe which is shown in the picture with his wife Clara. It is difficult to be as exact in terms of dating the second picture as he received his stripe on the 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1905 and the second on 15<sup>th</sup> March, 1909, a four year window.

## Book Reviews



**The Great Silence, 1918 – 1920**  
**Living in the Shadow of the Great War**  
**By Juliet Nicolson.**  
**Review by Liz Walton**

The book covers the period from Armistice Day to its second anniversary in seventeen chapters, the first of which is entitled “Wounds” and the last “Acceptance.” Its author describes it as a book about silence, not only the silence that followed the incessant thunder of the Great War but also the silence of grief, of isolation, denial, emptiness and reflection.

Miss Nicolson states in her introduction that ...“This is a book about the pause that followed the cataclysm: the interval between the falling silent of the guns and the roaring of the 1920s.” As such I was looking forward to reading it in the hope of gaining some insight into the rapid social change of that period.

It takes 274 pages to cover the two year period in chronological order. However though it does contain some interesting information on subjects as diverse as the lack of any financial allowance for men with facial injuries as these injuries did not affect manual productivity, the slowness of the demobilisation process, the slump in the popularity of organised religion, and the building of the Cenotaph, these tend to be lost amongst increasingly lengthy descriptions of what was happening to the social figures of the day, those the author describes as “ young, in love, aristocratic and keen to dance.” We hear of Queen Mary’s increasing acquisitiveness, the Christmas menu at the Savoy, celebrations at Sandringham and Chanel’s development as a fashion designer who “...designed fur coats from rabbit rather than mink so that warmth became available to rich and poor alike.” I doubt many unemployed people in the immediate post war years bought Chanel furs, even if they were made of rabbit skin!

The book appears to focus on Society life to a greater extent as the reader progresses through it. For example Chapter 14, entitled “Surviving” starts with a rather over dramatised description of “the overcrowded homes of the very poor” in Spring 1920; “ A striking pot-pourri of tea, manure, tobacco, sweat, soup, fried fish and poverty rose up...” It then goes on to include sections on Tom Mitford’s life at home and at boarding school, Dame Nellie Melba’s first radio broadcast, Diaghilev and the Ballet Russe, the work of Satie and Picasso. Within all this are three sentences mentioning Adolf Hitler and the rise of militant groups in post war Germany. None of this is followed up in any depth elsewhere in the book, and there are no references to source material.

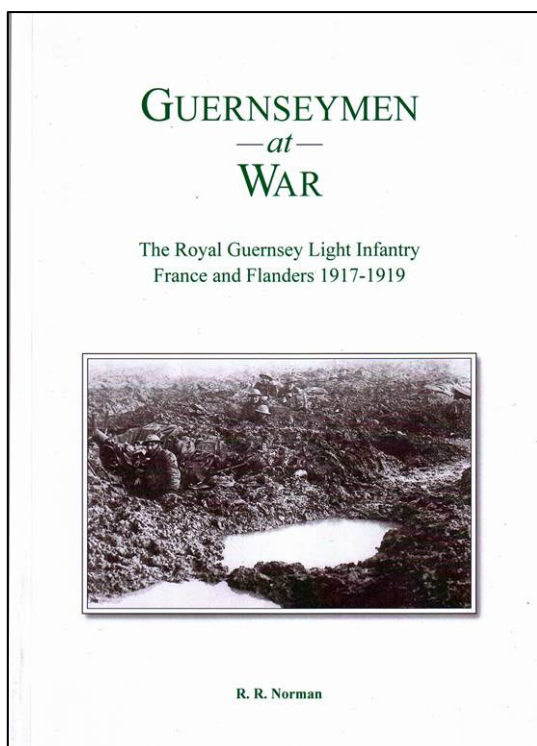
The last two factors make it less useful than it might have been as a source for the social history of the period. In addition, the over dramatised descriptive language, and dwelling in depth on at the horrors of some situations makes it difficult to read as a “serious” history. The bare facts of this war were dreadful enough, without needing any embellishment but the author describes “pus green chlorine gas” and “parts of bodies no bigger than a Sunday roast.” For Spanish Flu victims, “The drama of the sickness was reflected in an explosion of colour reminiscent of the heliotrope flower or polished amethyst”.

The social bias of the accounts also leads to inaccuracies. The section on pilgrimages of remembrance for example focuses on the commercial aspects of package tours, overpriced photos of war graves, and “enterprising companies” charging high prices for escorted visits. There is no mention of the charities such as the St Barnabas Society, Salvation Army or other charitable organisations who provided escorted pilgrimages either at cost, or with assistance for those who could not afford even their modest prices. Nor is any evidence given for the statement that increasing levels of literacy caused by the need to communicate by letter with family members away at the Front meant that people no longer wanted to go into domestic service, or for many other statements which are presented as facts.

The last few chapters are largely given over to what could be called, possibly unkindly, society gossip. Chapter 15, “Resignation”, deals with the early summer of

1920 and tells of the sale of Devonshire House by the Duke and Duchess, their financial difficulties (not war related), Harold Macmillan's marriage to their daughter, and the demolition of the Great Conservatory at Chatsworth. A few lines mention the escalating violence in Ireland. Chapter 17, entitled "Trust" is concerned with Lady Ottoline Morrell's affair with a stonemason, Frieda and DH Lawrence's lifestyle, Conan Doyle's belief in fairies, Chanel's new perfume, Winifred Holtby and Vera Brittain's time at Oxford, and the social life of people like Lady Diana Cooper and the Prince of Wales. The opening of the Imperial war museum is mentioned, and the author returns yet again to the work of Harold Gillies with the facially disfigured, but again in a rather sensationalist fashion. She focuses on a gender change operation and a woman with breasts "like vegetable marrows" rather than on Gillies' pioneering work helping the wounded in the aftermath of the Great War.

Overall I found the book disappointing for its social bias and lack of reference to primary source material, despite being described by Melvin Bragg as "social history of the highest order". There is a bibliography and a list of *dramatis personae* (the author's term) but no links as to which information comes from which source - and these range from the Daily Mail to the authorised biography of TE Lawrence. It was difficult to read because of its lack of organisation within chapters, and its somewhat overblown style, though the Literary Review sees it as "...sparkling, elegant and often funny." Maybe I missed the point. (**Editor:** Unlikely!)



**Guernseymen at War,  
the Royal Guernsey Light Infantry  
France and Flanders, 1917-1919,  
by RR Norman  
Review by Liz Walton**

The book is in A4 format, soft covered, consisting of 49 pages of text and photos and costing £6. Its author, Ron Norman is a Guernseyman himself and the son of 934 Pte Jack W Norman, RGLI. He looks first at how little has been published on the RGLI, mentions Blicq's "Norman Ten Hundred" (published in 1920) and Parks' "Diex Aix" (1992), and states that his intention is "...to put the service of the RGLI into context and give some idea of what they had to put up with in the brutal and brutish conditions of the Western Front."

He writes in a clear, straightforward style but with a personal touch that immediately engages the reader. The sources are clearly listed, technical terms explained and additional material includes a brief Cambrai battlefields tour, the testimony of 1526 Private John Henry, RGLI from his days as a Prisoner of War in Soltau camp (where my Uncle Bert Le Huray was also taken after Cambrai), and lists of the 94 names of RGLI men with no known graves on the Cambrai Memorial at Louveral and the same number on the Ploegsteert Memorial near Ieper.

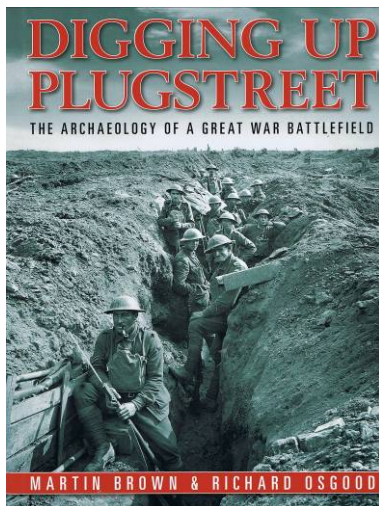
As to the account itself, Mr Norman starts with a very brief overview of the island's military history, mentioning French raids and the development of the Militia. He then moves on to look at the main focus of the book - the Great War, starting with what happened before the formation of the RGLI, then looking at how the Regiment came into being and its early days at Bourne Park. This is all explained clearly and concisely, with interesting details such as the fact that the Battalion mascot, Joey the donkey, went back to pulling a milk cart in Guernsey when the troops went to France. He then looks at life in the Army, comparing the tactics and strategy of the British and the Germans, before moving on to an account of life in the trenches, thence leading into a more detailed section on the battle of Cambrai. The background sections, though of necessity lacking in detail, are again clearly explained and include enough information for the complete newcomer to the subject to be able to place what follows in context.

Some 12 pages of text and 4 of maps and pictures are devoted to Cambrai. The author starts by looking at the general situation in October, 1917, moving on to summarise the plan for Cambrai itself. He then describes how the RGLI had to march 5 miles by night over rough ground, carrying full packs, before they reached the battle lines. It is a graphic account giving the reader an insight into what was involved and showing that it wasn't a matter of a column of men marching along straight roads to the area where they would fight the next day. His account of the attack of 20 November is detailed, with information from a variety of sources giving different viewpoints of what happened. He then looks at the tragic events of 30<sup>th</sup> November and 1<sup>st</sup> December, 1917, again bringing together material from a range of sources to give a well written and concise account which is also very readable, and the maps and current photos of scenes mentioned in the account are useful to anyone visiting the battlefields.

The battle of the Lys is dealt with in less detail, but still gives a good overall picture of what happened. The information on casualties is rather sparse but the reason for this is explained and possibly our database could be used to shed further light on this. The fact that they provided a guard at Haig's GHQ is mentioned, but I had hoped that further light might be shed on what the RGLI men who didn't stay at Montreuil were doing after May, 1918. This isn't dealt with here, probably because there is no mention in the Battalion War Diary or other official documents and my only sources so far are unofficial private accounts so I may have to accept that we may never have the full story.

The final sections of the book include a brief account of what was happening on the home front, a verbatim eye witness report by Sgt WJ Le Poidevin of the battle of Cambrai and a brief biography of Captain Robert Gee, VC, MC who played an important role at Cambrai. These are followed by the appendices listed previously. Overall it is a very readable book and would be of great use to people wanting to find out more about what their ancestors in the RGLI might have experienced. It would also be useful and to take on a tour of the battlefields. Its strength is not so much in the fact that it introduces new material but that it brings together information from a wide variety of sources to give a clear and concise picture of the events of 1917 to 1919.

The book is printed by Melody Press, Guernsey, and is available from the Lexicon Bookshop, St Peter Port, Guernsey price £6



**DIGGING UP PLUGSTREET**  
**The Archaeology of a Great War Battlefield**  
**By Martin Brown & Richard Osgood**  
**(Haynes Publishing – 2009)**  
**Review by Peter Tabb**

This is an unusual book because it addresses the Great War from several perspectives and, in my view, succeeds in all of them. As a (small-time) collector of Great War memorabilia, I was attracted by the archaeological finds that are still being discovered along the Western Front; as an historian I was interested to read the history of the soldiers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Infantry Division at the Battle of Messines, and as a writer I was intrigued by a book so well written that it could hold my attention enough to read it in one go.

“Digging Up Plugstreet” is the story of the men of Australia who travelled to England in 1914 to fight for the ‘Mother Country’ on the Western Front. The authors follow their footsteps, from training on windswept Salisbury Plain to the cheerless trenches of Belgium, where the Aussies dug in north-east of Ploegsteert – known as Plugstreet to the soldiers – to face the Germans. It is also the story of what they left behind and, most poignantly, of one soldier whose hunched skeleton was found largely intact.

Rusting barbed wire and clips of mud-caked bullets, bent brass cap badges and buckled shoulder titles, a broken harmonica, the rusted frames of a Luger pistol and a SMLE 0.303 rifle. These make up the detritus of the titanic struggle that took place almost a century ago.

Unusually the authors, both professional archaeologists, began their diggings in Britain, on Salisbury Plain, where the Australians trained (and where, of course, the Ministry of Defence still maintains extensive training facilities). A surprising amount of debris was discovered giving an insight into the lives of these men who would shortly be facing an enemy many thousands of miles from their home.

On the Western Front the authors investigated a section of the Allied front line held by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Division, which served as their starting point for the epic Battle of Messines in June, 1917. An area of no-man’s-land over which they attacked was also excavated as well as a section of trenches occupied by their German opponents.

It may seem odd that almost a century later there should still be much to find. Almost all of the Western Front has disappeared under rolling farmland, regenerated woodland, motorways and even urban sprawls but from the air the ghosts of the trenches that once stretched from the Channel coast to the Swiss border are still to be seen. Despite the inevitable ravaging of ploughs and bulldozers clearly there is much still to be found.

Anyone familiar with the battlefields of the American Civil War will marvel at how well entire battlefields have been preserved – the Battle of Gettysburg took place over an

area the size of Jersey and the battlefield and its topography have been preserved in their entirety, albeit with the addition of 3,300 monuments – but with few exceptions the actual battlefields of the Great War have vanished. However they still exist under the rich soil of Belgium and Picardy.

Using archaeology as the vehicle for their story, Martin Brown and Richard Osgood lead us along a new route into the history of a piece of the conflict that is otherwise already well documented. Their archaeological finds help to build a comprehensive picture of who these Aussie soldiers really were, how they lived and, as often, how they died. Some of their discoveries have even challenged accepted wisdom. You'll have to read the book to find out how.

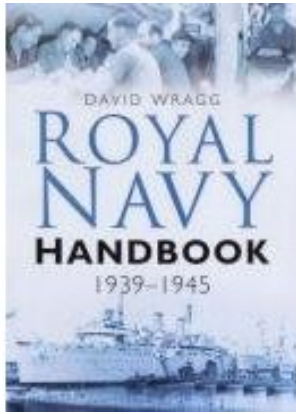
Their finds range from bone fragments to firearms, bullets to respirators, bayonets to buttons, bottles of HP Sauce to ampoules of iodine, belt buckles to Eno's Fruit Salts. Many of the casualties at Messines stemmed from intense mining activities under the front. The authors tellingly illustrate just what being 'blown to smithereens' really means.

The most compelling chapter in the book is titled 'The Unknown Soldier' and concerns itself with the discovery, on 5<sup>th</sup> August, 2008, of the remains of one of the missing Australian soldiers whose name is among those on the Menin Gate. The remains were found at St Yvon. The team were excavating a German trench that had been overrun by Australian infantrymen and they had already uncovered the sole of a boot, the side lugs of a *pickelhaube*, spent Mauser cases and long strands of German barbed wire. Then another boot was found and then another. These were soon seen to still contain the feet and legs of a soldier. In accordance with procedure, work was stopped for the find to be reported to the Belgian police, the Belgian Army and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Permission was obtained to proceed and the almost complete skeleton was uncovered. Although the remains were only 40cm (15 inches) below the surface there was only slight disturbance from the ploughing that had taken place above him. The body was obviously not in any sort of grave and he was found in the centre of the positions in the line attacked by the 33<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 9<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Division on 7<sup>th</sup> June, 1917. The completeness of the skeleton indicated that he had not been one of the many thousands killed by direct shellfire (many of whom would have been blown to fragments) but had probably been killed as he crossed the German lines and subsequently buried by a shell blast.

Although no artefacts were found that could identify the soldier (his identity tags were found but were so corroded that they yielded nothing even to X-ray analysis) but amongst the items found with the body was a relatively well preserved *pickelhaube*, clearly a battlefield souvenir because it was found in the remnants of his haversack.

The authors are well qualified for their task. Archaeologist Richard Osgood is head of the Defence Estates Historic Environment Team at the Ministry of Defence and Martin Brown is a specialist military archaeologist with Defence Estates (MoD).

"Digging Up Plugstreet" makes fascinating reading.



**Royal Navy Handbook, 1914-1918**  
**By David Wragg**  
**(Sutton Publishing)**

I think that there is a classic Morecambe and Wise sketch with Eric sat at the piano playing a piece of Mozart rather badly. When challenged by Ernie, he comes up with the punch-line that he is playing the notes that Mozart wrote, although "...not necessarily in the right order!" Sadly, I was reminded of that sketch as I finished reading this book.

David Wragg is a prolific author, but I have never read any of his other works so cannot compare this book. But most of the ingredients were in it, i.e. a considerable volume of information, excellent photographs, accounts of the major sea engagements, lists of ships and so on, and yet the entire book is less than the sum of those individual parts. An example of this is the Appendix on Victoria Cross Awards. Once the pages on which awards are reached, the Appendix does make sense and the many acts of bravery are well recounted, but the first page is spent referring to the Albert Medal and identifying winners. It struck me that if he wanted the Albert Medal material in, he should have produced a separate Appendix for it.

There are omissions. While major Naval Bases such as Portsmouth, Chatham and Devonport are referred to, albeit with an average two to three paragraphs, and Naval Air Stations are listed, no mention was made of the many other Shore Stations from which the Navy functioned (Crystal Palace is one location that springs to mind). For all of these, it would be nice to have been told that the seaplane station at Peterhead was known as HMS Pelican (or whatever its actual title was). Similarly, a list of aircraft operated by the Royal Naval Air Service should have featured.

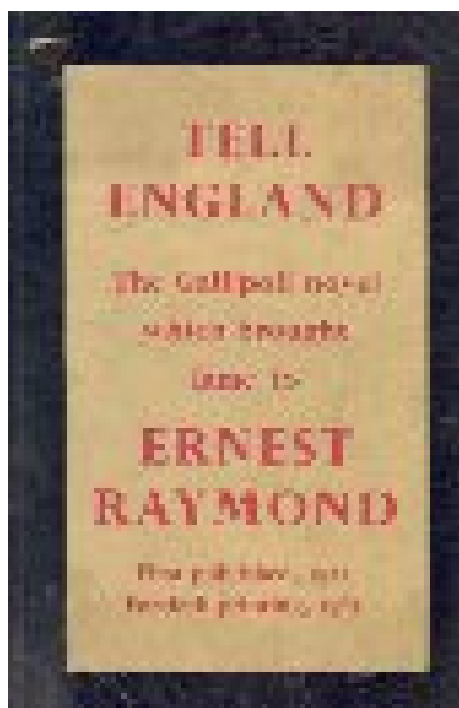
When a book has the word "Handbook" in its title, it gives the author some opportunities to use features more frequently than in a historical account, say. This is particularly true of tables, and in this book, there was a lot of scope for that method of presenting information to be applied. References to rates of pay were made, such as an Engine Room Artificer, 4<sup>th</sup> Class receiving £100.7s.6d. per annum, while the 1<sup>st</sup> Class man would receive £18.5s.0d. more. It was a good idea to provide this, but a table of all rates would have been a far better approach. Conversely of course, there is the risk that there could be too many tables, but the author is not in any danger here!

Discounting the criticism raised, there is much of interest. We learn some naval jargon and discover that a "Spithead Pheasant" is in fact a kipper, while, far more importantly, his first Chapter looks at the period between Trafalgar and the outbreak of the Great War, when the Navy 'ruled the waves' yet never fought a major naval engagement of the type that would result at Jutland. This period of 109 years is remarkable in that the Navy had changed. From the three mast ships of the line capable of firing broadsides, while their captains sought to close with the enemy ships, raking them from stem to stern, with cannonball, the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century saw the pre-Dreadnoughts and the Dreadnoughts patrolling the seas and capable of hurling 12-inch (or larger) shells upwards of 8 miles, sometimes the enemy ship just a shadow in the smoke and haze. It is interesting yet unsurprising to note that the Navy had become a touch complacent, and 'spit and polish' now ruled, to the extent

that watertight doors on one ship, for example, were worn nearly paper thin with all the rubbing that had taken place. The Navy were less prepared than they might have been for the Great War, and the lessons of Tsushima may not have been fully taken on board, and it may be that complacency was a better 'ruler'!

The Royal Naval Division is covered in a few pages, and it is interesting to see that it resulted from a Winston Churchill idea in response to too many men being available to crew the fleet. Ill-equipped and poorly trained in their new role of soldiers, they were thrust into unsuccessful action against the Germans at Antwerp, with the Collingwood Battalion reduced to 22 men as a result. Churchill was even trying to land in Belgium at one point to take charge of the Division, and had been promised a commission as Lieutenant General by Kitchener. Fortunately common sense prevailed and the Prime Minister ordered him back!

Mention was made of the many excellent photographs and most of these are from the IWM Collection, while the book's appearance and quality is also good. It is a companion volume, by the way, to Andrew Rawson's British Army Handbook, 1914-1918 and has many comparable features though some 60 pages fewer. Like the Army Handbook it is normally priced at £25.00 though reduced by 15% on Amazon. Is it worth at that price? I think not. But, if it is on your local library shelf, do borrow it and don't be surprised by its disjointed nature.



**Tell England**  
**By Ernest Raymond**  
**(Now Out of Print?)**

Written in 1922, and in print for some 50 years, the most likely source to obtain this book is from the specialist second-hand bookshop, or, as I did, from your local library.

It largely takes the form of a biography of the main character, Rupert Ray, as he grows up and eventually joins the Army, heading to Gallipoli where many of his fellow scholars have also been sent. Much of the book is given over to his school – a public school named Kensingstowe – and the years spent there growing up. His particular friend is Edgar Doe who eventually joins the same unit as Rupert, and the book focuses on this relationship, which can be up and down.

A lot of this part of the book is given over to the boys' puberty in terms of their hero-worship of some masters who can be regarded as father figures, their distaste at some of the other masters, and the boyish rivalry as to who is their special friend! The author does convey the sense that, as the boys mature, they are learning the values of honesty, courage, and sportsmanship.

Summer 1914, and they enlist as officers, eventually to be sent as replacements for casualties in the Gallipoli campaign. Again the author moralises, and among some new characters, Padre Monty appears on the troopship sailing from England to the Aegean. He is looking to and succeeds in converting Rupert, Edgar, and the other



young officers to a less casual form of Christianity, through discussion and daily communions, even suggesting that the campaign can be likened to a latter-day Holy Crusade to free Constantinople from Muslim control.

The scene shifts to East Mudros where Ray and Doe wait to be called forward to Suvla or Helles. Life here is one of frequent funerals for the casualties who die of wounds having been brought from the peninsula, the heat and the flies, who are forever landing on the food and anything else that can be infected. Reading about East Mudros, one does get to sense that the description of life there is accurate, and the same can be said for the trench lines and dugouts at Gallipoli when they reach there via a stop at Suvla. It is in these trenches that they go forward to attack the Turks, and where Doe is seriously wounded, before dying in the hospital near to W Beach and being buried at Pink Farm Cemetery. The evacuation proceeds with few hitches, Ray paying his final respects before leaving. It should be mentioned that Padre Monty has been with them throughout.

The final chapter sees Ray somewhere in France during the final week of the war. It is clear that this chapter, written in an autobiographical style, indicates that he may sense that his mortal time on earth has come, and that he will fall in the next action. Yet, he is more than ready to meet his Maker, and seems is spiritually, come what may. It is very much a case of "Dulce et Decorum Est".

Looking at the book overall, it is clear that the author, having written when he did, tried to convey both the moral case and the military justification for the war and the sacrifice of the young men who, had circumstances been rather different, would have been the leaders, writers, poets, engineers and so on, for a still powerful British Empire. At that stage, the more pacific voices were still to be heard, and one could suggest that the book was intended to give spiritual and moral meaning to so much loss experienced by many thousands of families.

I cannot say that I particularly enjoyed reading the book having set out with the expectation that it would prove a "good read", not least, because it dwelt too long on the school days and too little time at the "sharp end". The language was dated but it clearly reflected the period. But, perhaps it is worth reading to understand the values being propounded.

## **Out and About**

### **Looking Back:**

It is unsurprising that the winter months tend to be a period of hibernation, but not so for Ian Ronayne who recently gave a presentation to the Jersey Archive's staff and who writes: *"Following my presentation in November as part of the Jersey Archive's open Saturdays, I was asked to go back and repeat it for the Archive staff as a training exercise. This took place in February and was well received."*

### **Looking Ahead:**

A busy schedule before I give a talk on Coutart de Butts Taylor to the North Wales WFA on 4<sup>th</sup> September, 2010, at Caernarfon Castle. Preparatory work is well in hand and I hope that the first draft is ready in about a month's time. Another trip to Kew on 20<sup>th</sup> February, talks on Suvla Bay from IWM's Peter Hart on 1<sup>st</sup> March in Lancaster

and on the Reverend Theodore Hardy VC on 12<sup>th</sup> March in Kirkby Lonsdale. Jersey between 17<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> March, and visiting various Museums (Bovingdon, Dorchester, FAA) in Dorset and Somerset over a week in April.

Liz Walton will be giving another talk at the Candie Lecture Theatre in the Guernsey Museum on the 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2010 commencing at 19.30 hours. This time the topic is “Guernsey-women and the Great War”.

Meanwhile, planning is underway for this year's Ronayne Battlefield tour with two options under discussion for early May: 1) Ypres - Arras - Honfleur (same run as last year, different sites); and 2) Verdun - Reims – Paris.

### **The Salient and the Somme**

My visit last October to the Salient and the Somme turned out to be one of three halves!

We had decided to spend a few days in Ypres before heading off to our gite and so travelled down on the Wednesday to negotiate the tunnel and rest up at the Coquelles Ibis overnight. A leisurely trip to Belgium was on the cards the following morning with a stop first of all at the V2 launch base (La Coupole) near Wizernes in France. The reason for this was to see what turned out to be an excellent photographic exhibition of the Pas de Calais and Nord areas during the Great War.

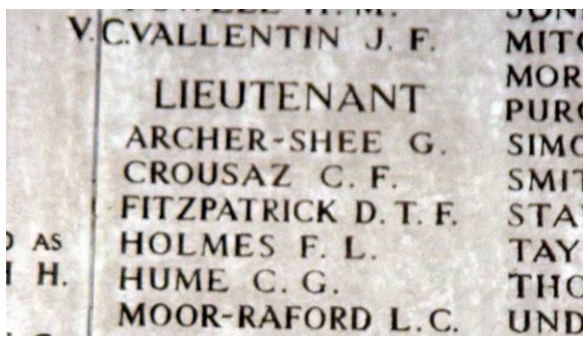


The photographs were ranged the length of a very long cavernous tunnel and a number of side chambers also, and, as can be seen from the photograph above, installed on dual-language presentation boards (something similar to this would not

go amiss around St Helier or St Peter Port in the future?). After lunch at La Coupole, the afternoon was taken up by pauses at a number of cemeteries en-route to acquire headstone photographs before reaching our watering hole for that and the following night, the excellent Ariane Hotel. Victualled up on the Friday morning, further cemeteries beckoned in the area around Poperinghe and the road from Ypres. From there, a trip to complete unfinished work at Tyne Cot was a journey itself, thanks to the road being up at Poelkapelle, probably crossing parts of Flanders last visited by the British in 1917!



An overnight stay in Ypres is incomplete without attending the Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate, and with a throng of the old and the young, we attended on the Friday evening. The format of the ceremony is generally unchanging, but not so on this occasion, for a party of New Zealand dignitaries including, I presume, politicians attended. Furthermore the party included a number of Maoris who left their mark by reciting a number of Maori prayer chants alongside the exhortation. They laid the magnificent wreath which can be seen above.



Wandering around the Gate, I happened upon the name of George Archer-Shee, although there is no known link to the CI. As will be remembered, he was the subject of a highly publicised case over the theft of a postal order at the RN College Osborne in 1910, the story later being used as the basis for "The Winslow Boy" by Terence Rattigan.

Saturday saw the end of the first half as we journeyed via Lens to Arras and the Somme, a journey enlivened by a speeding Frenchman who overtook us and then managed a 540° spin on a roundabout on the stretch between Lille and La Bassée. Fortunately, I'd slowed beforehand and was able to give the idiot a wide berth!

The middle half started as we arrived at the gîte, and we were faced with the owners finishing repairs to the sewerage system. The less said the better, but for about 7 to 9 days my good lady was very unwell, being confined to bed for much of that period. Any plans that we had went out of the window, and I could venture out occasionally on photographic sorties. There was a definite causal link between sewerage and illness, and that gîte is off our list for the future. However, to use that hackneyed phrase so beloved of failing social services, lessons were learnt regarding holiday insurance arrangements for the future.

The third half was one of salvaging what might be saved from the rest of our stay, but, in reality little of real note followed – trips to Albert, Arras and Peronne, plus a drive up to La Targette and Notre Dame de Lorette for some Jersey-French graves.



### **Website Workings By Roger Frisby**

The Jersey Roll of Service has undergone an update that has seen a net addition of approximately 135 names. Further work is planned for the next two months as Barrie works through his old notebooks. A steady drip feed of additions to both Rolls of Honour continue, the latest being that of Guernseyman, Thomas Martin GUILBERT, discovered by Mark Bougourd. Otherwise, current effort is best described as ad hoc maintenance.

## Odds and Ends

**Foreman (Head Horse) RL Martin:** Recently, the “In from the Cold” project team discovered that a man whose name is commemorated on the Merchant Navy Memorial at Tower Hill was in fact buried in Jersey after his body had been washed ashore in 1915. Foreman RL Martin was onboard the SS Anglo-Californian as it was bringing horses from the USA to Great Britain when it was engaged by a German submarine on 4<sup>th</sup> July, 1915. The ship was about to heave to allow crew to abandon ship when a signal was received that the RN were approaching. The ship’s master, Captain Parslow then rescinded the command and the ship got underway again, with the U-boat firing at it. Captain Parslow would be killed, and a number of men were in a lifeboat which was also hit, and it is assumed that Foreman Martin was one of these men. Captain Parslow would receive the VC posthumously.

Confirmation is awaited that Foreman Martin was buried in the Strangers’ Cemetery at Westmount, now landscaped as part of the Crematorium’s gardens.

**Survivors in one War, Casualties the Next:** This does not appear to be an area where we’ve looked into to date. But, it seems that four men whose names are in the Jersey Roll of Service became war dead in the Second World War, and who are:

- Emile Gustave Blanchard
- Albert George l’Estrange Le Gallais
- Patrick Windsor Lynch-Blosse
- Leonce l’Hermitte Ogier

One wonders how many others there might be?

**Naval Gazing:** Another batch of names should be available for the next Journal. I am anticipating at least one addition to the JRoH.

**Clarrie goes to War:** An exciting package recently greeted Anna Baghiani at the Société Jersiaise recently, namely the Great War journal of one Clarence Ahier who served as a Gunner in the Royal Field Artillery. Derived from diaries that he maintained up to date against orders, it appears highly accurate. For example, he describes the gruesome task of recovering a comrade’s remains on a particular date, and a check with the CWGC confirms that the date is correct.

As to what the SJ intends, this is under review, while it is planned that a copy of his unit’s War Diary is obtained for further background information. Consideration is being given to possible future publication.

**Ours:** Ian Ronayne’s publisher reported that sales of “Ours” passed six hundred at the end of January and that they also paid him his first royalty cheque! His modesty prevents him from saying how much, but sufficient to say, that he advises that he has no retirement plans as yet!

**Guernsey’s Ambulances:** Mark Bougourd found a photograph in the Guernsey newspaper, The Star of 18<sup>th</sup> August, 1915, showing an ambulance for the front that was provided by subscriptions from Guernsey folk. There is a comment in the article that a Guernseyman was to drive it, and Mark wonders who. Any thoughts as to who it might have been out there?

**Jersey Heritage's What is your Story - 2010:** For the third year running, Jersey Archive is opening on a number of Saturday mornings to feature various historical aspects of Jersey life. This year, they are featuring talks on a number of streets and who lived on them. A detailed programme has not yet been produced, but the first talk is scheduled for 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2010.

**St Lawrence Parish Memorial, Jersey:** Recently received feedback from the Constable in St Lawrence is that a number of names have had their details corrected on the Memorial. These included the correct decorations, and in one case, the correct name.

### Enfin

Thank you for the inputs large and small! I hope that the next issue will be somewhat thicker and, as ever, of interest.

Regards  
Barrie H Bertram  
15<sup>th</sup> February, 2010

### Journal Issue Dates For 2010

Planned Issue dates for Journals in 2010 are as shown below.

Issue	Month	Articles To BB	Posted Web/Mail
30	February 2010	10 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>
31	April 2010	10 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>
32	June 2010	10 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>
33	August 2010	10 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>
34	October 2010	10 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>
35	December 2010	10 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>

As in previous years I will advise if there are any changes for individual issues as publication dates approach.

### The Occurrence at Moulin Huet.

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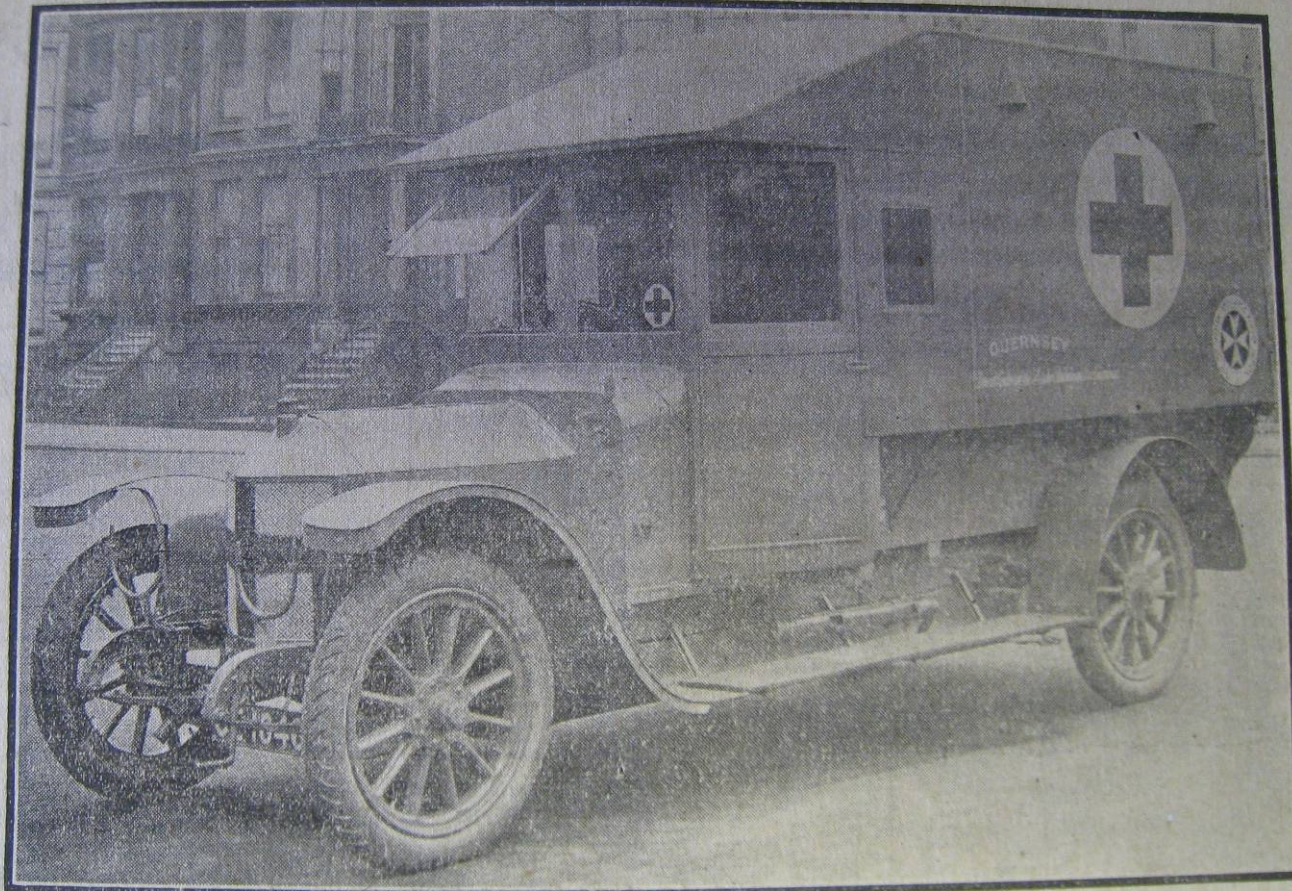
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## THE "GUERNSEY" AMBULANCE.



The Fund for the purchase of the above motor-ambulance for use with the British Forces was started in "The Star." The Fund was generously supported, and more than enough money was raised to buy the car. Up to the present £653 has been raised. We understand that a Guernseyman will drive the car and that another similar car has been given from this Island.

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**PRICES**  
**NOTE**

Reserved Seat  
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