

**JOURNAL
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**Channel Islands
Great War
Study Group**
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Fromelles

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Hello All

I turn my back for five minutes, head off for a break, and return to a deluge of articles! But, I am not in anyway complaining as I find that there are never enough hours in the days during the first couple of weeks after trips to foreign fields and anything that reduces the workload is most welcome. My thanks to all of the contributors.

Just a quick thought because of space constraints in this Issue, but an important one nevertheless. As Roger Frisby reminds us in talking of the photographing that we have been carrying out of headstones and memorials, the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the Great War is just under four years away. The question is “How should it and the subsequent years be remembered in the Islands, and what should we be doing now to influence official thinking, which as we know can be laboriously slow?”

Your thoughts will be greatly appreciated.

This Month's Cover

Fromelles provides the pictures this month with the statue ‘Cobbers’ from the Memorial Park and the VC Corner Cemetery and Memorial featured. That headstone is that of 1516 Private Victor George SIMON who, we discovered recently, was the son of Guernsey emigrants to Australia, John Blondel and Eliza SIMON. We had not known of the link as his service records show no reference to Guernsey, but a family descendant came forward and was able to provide matching DNA, and featured on a BBC Guernsey interview. Oddly, he did not feature on the CWGC search lists nor are there any German references in his records.

Volunteer(s) Still Wanted

The Guernsey Roll of Service still needs one or more volunteers who could create and maintain it. Do contact Roger Frisby or myself if you would like to have a go?

A Guernsey Munitionette at Chilwell By Liz Walton

During the Great War, the number of women employed in munitions was greater than in any other single category of war work. Approximately one million women worked in a variety of capacities, from unskilled assemblers to fully trained fitters and turners. They came from all strata of society, though the majority were from working class backgrounds, and they worked in factories all over Britain. The work was comparatively well paid and allowed for more freedom and responsibility than would have been possible in domestic service, the only employment available for many of these women before the war. They were also seen as a symbol of patriotism and modernity, with propaganda posters declaring “On her their lives depend.” The munitionette was “the girl behind the man behind the gun.” This meant that munitionettes were: “...the first stage of the production line of war....They were utterly implicated in the “making” of war.” (Woollacott 1994)

MUNITION WORKERS.



Our photograph shows four daughters of Mr. J. Coutu, of 6, Allez Street, all of whom are employed in various kinds of munition work in England. Seated in front is Miss Gladys Coutu. The others from left to right are Miss Edith Coutu, Mrs. Gillingham (née Lillian Coutu) and Miss Aline Coutu.

Many Guernsey women left the island to work in munitions factories, and the Weekly Press carries photographs of groups of sisters (such as the four Coutu sisters, pictured left), neighbours and friends leaving together for the mainland, often after the loss of a family member at the Front. As an example, Mrs Gillingham's husband had been killed in action in 1916. They may have seen the work as an appropriate way of getting back at the enemy than had they gone into one of the more traditional support or nurturing roles such as nursing or canteen work.

One "munitionette" who followed a slightly different path was Miss Dorothy Nicolls. She was born in

Kent in 1882, the daughter of Robert Nicolls, a retired Army Major and his Guernsey born fourth wife Amelia. Dorothy and her widowed mother and sisters were Guernsey residents at the time of the 1891 census and also in 1911 although the family have not been found so far on the 1901 census. The household was quite wealthy, moving between large houses in the more upmarket St Peter Port suburbs and employing several resident domestic servants. Dorothy was a single woman age 32 and living at home with her ailing mother when war broke out.

Some time in late 1915 or early 1916, Dorothy left the island to work in munitions and joined National Shell Filling Factory no. 6 as a supervisor. Chilwell was created as a result of the Shell Crisis of 1915. On 20th August, 1915 Godfrey, the 8th Viscount Chetwynd had been given the task of designing, building and superintending the running of a factory to fill large calibre shells with Amatol. Early World War I shells had been filled with Lyddite, which became unstable when stored in contact with metal shell cases, and for which the raw materials soon became unavailable. Tri-Nitro Toluene (TNT) was adopted as a replacement soon afterwards as its insensitivity to shock and friction reduced the risk of accidental detonation. However TNT was expensive to make and was soon in short supply too, so Amatol, a mixture of various proportions of TNT and Ammonium Nitrate, was adopted. Amatol allowed existing supplies of TNT to be expanded considerably, with little reduction in the destructive power of the final product, so it was ideal at a time when demand was high. It was relatively stable, although it could be detonated by severe impact.

Three main criteria were set for the location of the new shell filling factory. It had to have good access, a population living nearby to provide a workforce, and it had to be surrounded by hills to afford some protection to nearby villages in the case of accident. Chilwell in Derbyshire fitted all three. There were towns within easy reach, but there was also open space between Chilwell and Long Eaton, there were

protective hills to the north, and there was a railway in nearby Attenborough. Lord Chetwynd quickly commandeered the land, and work started on National Shell Filling Factory No. 6. Initially there was no machinery designed specifically for munitions work, so he commandeered machinery from bakeries, flour mills, and cosmetics firms all over the country. A spur connection to the nearest railway main line was laid and the road between Chilwell and Toton became a gated military road. About ten thousand workers were recruited and within 18 months shells for the troops at the Front were being produced at a rate that made Chilwell Britain's most productive shell filling factory, supplying more than half of the shells used by British troops in the Great War. The arrangements for despatch of the completed shells were described as "a marvel of organisation and control". Apparently a train could leave the works and go direct to Richborough, Newhaven, or Southampton, where trucks would be pushed in two rows on to a steam ferry without unloading. They would go across the Channel to Dunkerque, Calais, Dieppe, or Cherbourg, and from there straight onto the French railway system, where they could be transported right to the battle line.

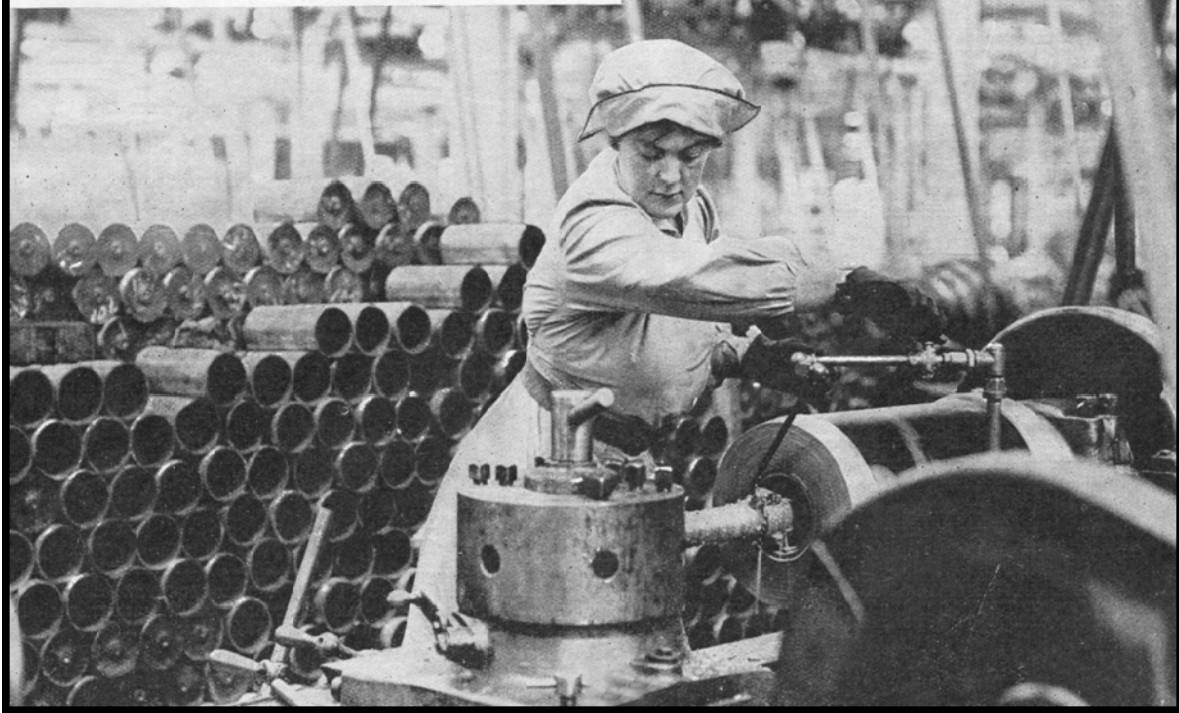
From the start the factory mainly employed women. This may have been another reason for the choice of location, as there was a tradition of women working in local textile factories in the nearby towns. Workers at Chilwell, as in other munitions factories, wore a khaki uniform without any metal buttons or fastenings and a soft cap. They often worked 12 hour shifts as the factory worked round the clock to try to keep up with the constant demand for shells. They worked with dangerous chemicals that turned their hair and skin yellow and often made them nauseous but they earned 30 shillings a week on average, which was far more than they could have earned in other factories or in domestic service. The work was described as boring and laborious – one woman's description of how her days were spent states that: "...A large amount of powder stood by each shell and this had to be rammed into the shell using a piece of wood and a wooden hammer." A video in the Imperial War Museum's "Women at War" collection shows "a typical day" for women at a British munitions factory which was later said to be Chilwell, in the spring of 1917. The resume of the film states:

"The young woman leaves her terraced house at 5 a.m. and takes the train to the factory. In the locker room she and the others change into overalls and boots, and clock on. She works on finishing 8-inch shells, pouring molten explosive in to top the cases up, capping them using a wheel to clear the screw threads, adding the detonator and stencilling them. A trolley takes another batch away. Other women, wearing masks against the fumes, top up heavier shells. The women are given a brief medical examination on site, lasting no more than a few seconds. In one suspect case a blood sample is taken. The women wear shifts to wash, which is compulsory before meals and on leaving the factory. A final close-up of the young woman, pretty without her mask and almost coy, 'working for victory'"

The picture overleaf, from the "World War 1914-1918" part work shows a scene from a typical munitions factory. These factories needed women to perform many other roles, such as nurses, canteen workers, welfare and security staff and supervisors. So the Ministry of Munitions, led by Winston Churchill, appealed for more mature, "better class ladies" to volunteer as supervisors, as it was felt that their experience of running a household and dealing with servants would stand them in good stead. Dorothy Nicolls, a woman in her thirties from an upper middle class background would have been an ideal candidate and was employed from the outset in this role.

INTENT ON HER TASK

This woman munition worker is busy at work on a lathe, carefully regulating by a tap the drip of water. Piled high behind her are shell cases in various stages of completion. Munition factories employed a high percentage of women



Air raids were always a concern in munitions factories, and there were at least two recorded at Chilwell, although no serious damage was done. Also, in the early days there had been several minor explosions as a result of struggles to perfect the chemical mix to go into the shells. These had resulted in some loss of life and injury, but as the workers were civilians and the work was of national importance censorship meant that these were not publicised. On 1st July, 1918 despite there being a heat wave, work was continuing inside the factory around the clock, as it had been for weeks. At 6 p.m. the day shift had finished and the night shift was about to start when there was a huge explosion involving eight tons of TNT. The blast was heard some twenty miles away. The factory had blown up and a large part of it had been totally destroyed in the worst disaster with explosives that the country had ever seen. 134 people, 109 men and 25 women, were killed and the explosions were so massive that only 32 of the victims could be positively identified. Another 250 were injured. The Chilwell blast resulted in the biggest loss of life during a single explosion during the First World War. Worries about morale and the censorship in force at the time meant that the only mentions in newspapers of the day were that there had been an explosion at an unidentified munitions factory in the Midlands with some 60 casualties. Most of the dead were buried, unidentified, in a mass grave in St Mary's churchyard in nearby Attenborough village. Workers returned to what was left of the factory within days of the explosion, it was rapidly rebuilt and within a month of the disaster, was said to be back on line and achieving its highest ever weekly production. In the factory's two years and nine months of production more than 19,000,000 heavy shells were filled, along with 25,000 mines and 2,500 bombs.

Winston Churchill sent a telegram to the factory saying:

"Please accept my sincere sympathy with you all in the misfortune that has overtaken your fine Factory and in the loss of valuable lives. Those who have perished have died at their stations on the field of duty and those who have lost their dear ones should fortify themselves with this thought, the courage and spirit shown by all concerned both men and women command our admiration, and the decision to which you have all come to carry on without a break is worthy of the spirit which animates our soldiers in the field. I trust the injured are receiving every care."

A telegram was also sent from the King, and some accounts and an inscription added some fifty years later to the Chilwell memorial state that the entire factory was awarded the VC. However it would appear that this is not strictly accurate. In a speech reported in *The Times*, on 9th July, 1918, Mr. FG Kellaway, MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Munitions speculated that, as the French had apparently given an equivalent honour to the Citadel of Verdun, perhaps the factory should be awarded the Victoria Cross. His reason was that as a result of the explosion there: "...had been the occasion of a display of heroism on the part of the workers as fine as anything that had been recorded in the war." The award does not in fact appear to have been made, but the site was subsequently still known as "The VC Factory". A special medal was awarded to Chilwell's workers and in addition, the King awarded the OBE to 17 employees who had distinguished themselves for presence of mind and courage. Among the 17 was Miss Dorothy Nicolls of Guernsey. The *London Gazette* of 1st January, 1919 records that Miss D Nicholls (sic) had been awarded the medal: "...for courage and devotion to duty on two occasions when explosions occurred at a shell filling factory". Local papers state that she had worked there for at least two years and had been there during earlier explosions. At least three other Chilwell women, Joan Clough, Alison McKenzie and Margaret Waller received the same award at the same time. The Works Manager, Lieutenant Arthur Bristowe was awarded the Edward Medal, a civilian decoration which was instituted on 13th July, 1907 to recognise acts of bravery of miners and quarrymen in endangering their lives to rescue their fellow workers. The medal entitlement later changed to encompass acts of bravery by all industrial workers in factory accidents and disasters, and was discontinued in 1971 when holders were allowed to exchange it for the George Cross.



A memorial to those who had died in all explosions at the site was unveiled by the Duke of Portland on 13th March, 1919. It takes the form of a small obelisk above a much larger pyramidal base.

Interestingly, the inscription commemorates the factory's achievements as much as it does those who perished in the explosion. It states: "Erected to the memory of those men and

women who lost their lives by explosions at the National Shell Filling Factory Chilwell, 1916-1918. Principal historical facts of the factory: First sod turned 13th September, 1915. First shell filled 8th of January 1916. Number of shells filled within one year of

cutting the first sod 1,260,000. Total shells filled 19,359,000, representing 50.8% of the total output of high explosive shells both Lyddite and Amatol produced in Great Britain during the war. Total tonnage of explosives used 121,360 tons, total weight of filled shells 1,100,000 tons.”

On the fiftieth anniversary of the explosion, the memorial was restored and plaques were added with the following text:

“To the glory of God and in memory of those who gave their lives in two World Wars. At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them. Their name liveth for evermore. Unveiled on 30th June 1968 by Mr. James Boyden MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Army, on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the explosion at Chilwell, the VC factory, in recognition of the bravery and fortitude of the employees.”

According to some sources the memorial does carry the names of the casualties. However munitions workers were civilians and did not work abroad so they are not listed by the CWGC, nor were they awarded and service medals. Access to it is still restricted, with applications needing to be made in advance to the Ministry of Defence. Thus it is difficult to check who perished at Chilwell and if any Channel Islanders were among the casualties. The small picture on the previous page was taken on a recent Heritage Day visit, and is courtesy of the Beeston and District Civic Society.

References:

- Haslam, M.J. (Captain, RAOC), (1982). The Chilwell Story: 1915 - 1982, VC Factory and Ordnance Depot. : The RAOC Corps Gazette.
- Woollacott, A, (1994) On Her Their Lives Depend, University of California Press.
- <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/collections/item/5522>. This item is a video of a 1917 film of work at a munitions factory. According to an article in the Nottingham Evening Post, Saturday 8th February, 2003, the factory shown is the National Shell-Filling Factory at Chilwell.
- Guernsey Weekly Press, Prialx Library, Guernsey.
- World War 1914-1918, A Pictured History, (1935), Amalgamated Press.
- <http://beestoncivicsociety.org.uk>

Thanks also to Mark Bougourd who helped with Gazette medal searches.

The Salient and the Somme – Autumn, 2010

As a result of other arrangements, it had been almost a year since my last visit to these areas, one that I had been looking forward to. The visit was a mixture of visiting ‘old favourite’ locations as well as seeing new ones, and discovering what, if anything had changed. One thing that never does is the mud and the convoys of tractors and other farm machinery going every now and again from field to field!

Having mentioned mud, it is at this point that I must apologise to any of the five hundred-odd ‘Roclincourt Valley Racers’ who may be reading this and who were cross-country cycling along what might be jokingly described as farm tracks on the

3rd October. Yes, I was the lunatic slithering and sliding in the opposite direction in my mud-splattered Passat. Elsewhere, Roger Frisby has mentioned out of date CWGC Cemetery instructions, in this case I completely ignored referring to them, approaching Roclincourt Valley the wrong way and assuming that I could effectively navigate using one of M Michelin's finest 'two hundred thou' road maps across fields and along tracks. Needless to say, a call at the Blue Elephant car wash followed, soon after, to eliminate the evidence before getting back to the good lady!

Staying at Ypres for a couple of days, we enjoyed the comfort of the Ariane, more so because of an unexpected room upgrade. It cannot be described as a budget hotel, but having previously stayed in one on the Grand Markt, the additional cost is worth it for not risking life and limb on narrow rickety stairs. I had not fully appreciated it from last year's stay (because the builders were in) but the Ariane is almost a mini-museum with a range of artefacts, pictures and other souvenirs of the Great War.



Talking of museums, we visited a crowded 'In Flanders Field' exhibition at the Cloth Hall. It will be of interest to note that it is currently undergoing development and will occupy both levels of the Hall. Disruption was invisible during our visit, but the builders are in and it will undoubtedly get worse before it is complete sometime during 2012. The following week saw a quick call in at the Historial at Peronne where there is a small exhibition on the use of gas during the War. An array of gas masks is presented in a rather strange elongated way, but seen from end on, it reminds one of Otto Dix' more horrific drawings. The exhibition had the front page of the Daily Mirror of 26th May, 1915 carrying a picture of Lt William M Ozanne who was mentioned in Journal 33 in an item on The War Illustrated and his 'death'! Of course, for me, no visit to the Historial is ever complete without a rummage in their excellent bookshop, and it is there that I acquire my back numbers of La Guerre 14-18

Time spent was collecting photographs of headstones and memorials, and I went to at least 37 cemeteries to 'take' some 54 men. It became clear that future visits to other locations will need to be better structured because of the geographic spread of the remainder, by whoever plans to go. A round trip from Beaucourt sur Ancre to the Aubers Ridge area, taking in Loos, Le Touret and Vimy amongst others saw the car clock up 150 miles that day! That trip understandably took in Fromelles, and one cannot come away from the new cemetery without being impressed at the effort that has gone into it by the CWGC.

The picture overleaf gives the barest indication of the symmetry and immaculate appearance, and it is as if there is not a single blade of grass out of place. The Cemetery was followed by a visit to the Australian Memorial at VC Corner and the Memorial Park. The distance between the two is about 300 yards, the former being

the start line of the attack, the latter the German frontline with the sturdy remnants of the bunkers. Today, it is hard to see what could have been gained tactically, and no attack solely for diversionary purposes should have been envisaged.



Setting aside difficulties with navigational skills there are always *Déviations* to contend with as one discovered in Corbie, Arras and Poperinghe with roads up and other work being progressed. The one in 'Pop' turned out to be a blessing as we were looking for somewhere to eat (Kemmel seemingly closed for the duration!) and found an excellent *brasserie*, D'Hommezak (correct spelling?) in the corner of a small square behind the town hall. Similarly, we had an excellent lunch at the Dolce Vita on the RN41 at Bruay-La-Buissière. To counter that, the café by Sanctuary Wood is off our 'dining' list for the foreseeable future and beyond! The only word that can be applied to there begins with 'Dis' and ends with 'gusting'!

Looking ahead, we will not be back on the Somme for nearly another year and hope that it might coincide with 95th anniversary commemorations of the battles of Guillemont and Ginchy. However, I have not, as I write, confirmed that this will happen. Meanwhile, our latest sojourn has proved enjoyable, more so because of the excellent *gîte* that we had rented.

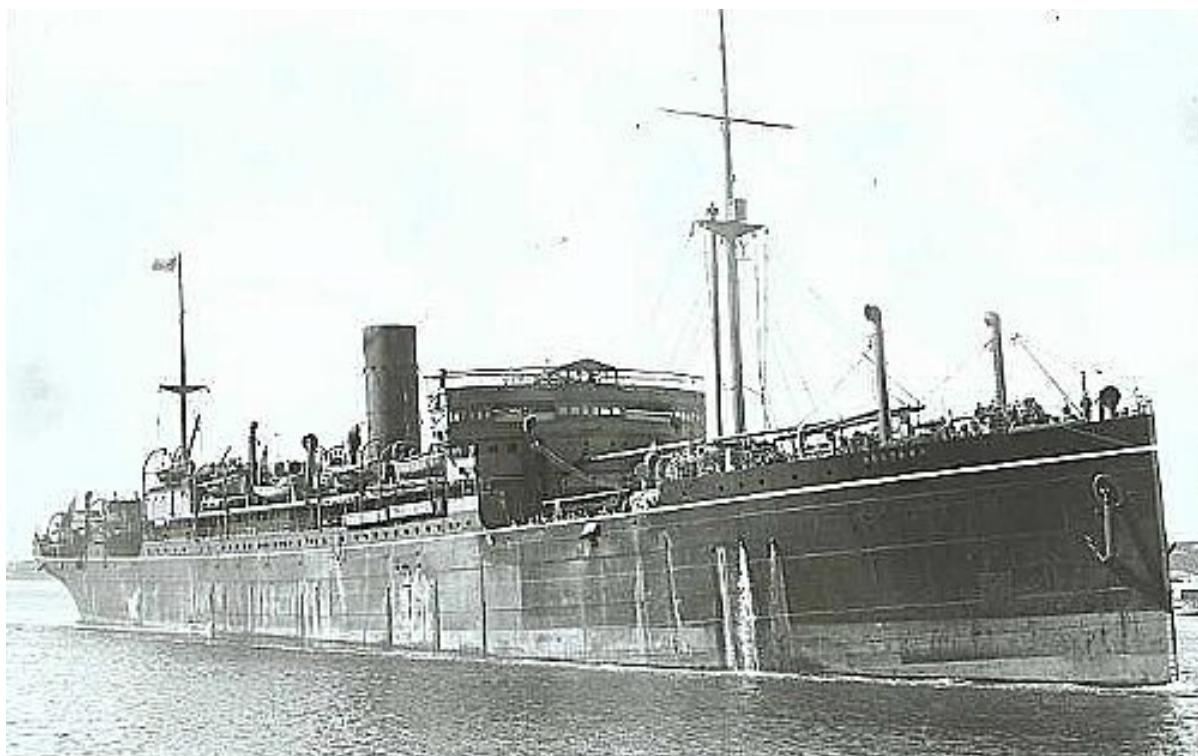
Great War Reparations

A fascinating snippet on Germany's final payment, this month, of around £60M can be found at the following link: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11442892>

**More from John Malet Armstrong
A Naval Officer in both World Wars
By Ned Malet de Carteret**

Midshipman John Malet Armstrong (Jock) originally embarked for England from Melbourne, Australia on the SS Beltana – re-designated HMAT Beltana. He was subsequently to join HMAS Australia, the battle cruiser. I have “lightly” edited the letters, but the spelling mistakes are Jock’s!

The “Beltana” (pictured below) was the second of five 11,000 ton twin-screw steamers built specifically for the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company by Caird and Company of Greenock, in 1912. The ship was 529 feet long and had a draught of 31 feet. She was capable of 14 knots. There was accommodation for up to 350 3rd class passengers and room for an extra 750 in the hold which could be removed to make way for cargo. The “Beltana” carried a crew of 260.



**Friday Evening, January 18th, 1918
Train from ? to town**

Dear Dad

We had a very good trip down and got plenty of sleep. Nell Joake and Mr Stapelton met us at Moss Vale and gave us coffee etc. arrived Melbourne good time and went to Williamstown. Reported, received £4 and then went on board “Beltana”, have cabins, leaving tomorrow about 10. Going to town for a meal. Excuse the above writing but I did it in the train and am finishing at a restaurant. I am in a cabin with Dash who is a nice docile sort. Waller gets his medal tomorrow and as the “Beltana” leaves at 10 am we have to follow in the “Protector” or “Countess of Hopetown” and be put on board again.

Am having our last feed in Auckland. Jock

At Sea, January ??, 1918
Written from an Australian Port
But not posted until South African coast reached

Dear Dad

We have just been told that there will be a mail leaving the ship tomorrow so here is the news to date.

Mr Staleton, Nell Joake and two other girls met us at Moss Vale and gave us a royal welcome. Mr Stapleton had provided coffee and cakes as big bags of fruit for us to take with us. Everybody wished us the best of luck and we gave three cheers as we went out.

The journey down was very comfortable but it was a good thing we had reserved seats on the other side of the train as it was crowded. As soon as we got to Melbourne we made a bolt for the Williamstown train.

At Williamstown we were kept waiting some time and then paid £ 4 which means we get 5/9 a day instead of 5/-. After pay we embarked in the picket boat and were taken to the wharf alongside which the transport was lying. By the way although our letters are not opened by the censor we are not to put anything in them that should be censored or to give dates or the name of the ship or the port. However you know the name of the ship. We were kept waiting sometime on the wharf but about six o'clock we went on board and stowed our gear in our cabins. I share a small cabin with Dash. They are not very large cabins as she only carried 3rd class passengers before the war but they are much better than no cabin at all.

Everybody went ashore for dinner. I went to the Paris café with John Rayment and had a first class dinner as it was our last meal on land in Australia. After dinner we went to the Tivoly which was passable. Everyone had to be at the wharf by eleven pm as Mr Dix had our pass but as he did not turn up till 11.45 we had a nice long wait.

On Saturday morning at nine o'clock we embarked again in the Naval Depot's picket boat and were taken to the Depot. There the GG inspected us all, as well as the men from the depot, and presented Waller with his medal. Then we went on board again as the transport had not left the wharf. She got under way almost at once. There was a good crowd to see the munition workers off. We arrived at the heads about five o'clock and went through at once. Our quarters are very comfortable and we mess with AIF officers. Our duties are very easy as yet. We take on a couple of hours duty on the bridge or in the Engine room each day. We have half an hours Gym before breakfast and half an hors signals in the evening. However I think there is more work for us in the near future. The munition workers and bricklayers do not look a very choice lot and some are I.W.W. men I think, more than half are going home to munition work to see what they can get out of it. The ship is very heavily loaded and has a very valuable cargo of copper, wool and rabbits on board. So far we have not had any bad weather but there is a long swell at present to which she is pitching. However it has not affected me in the slightest and none of us midshipmen have been sick yet.

Love to all your loving son
JohnMArmstrong

At Sea, February 9th, 1918

Dear Family

I wrote you a letter at an Australian Port but we only spent the night there and cleared out before day break so the mails were not taken ashore. We have to be our own censors so suffice it to say that we are going the same way as Enid went. Rumour has it that all letters posted on board will be held back till we arrive in England, so I am posting this ashore, however I think it will be censored by the postal people.

Continuing on from my last letter, we only stayed in port for the night and got away at daybreak and that and was the last we saw of Australia. There was considerable swell on outside and they had to put fiddles on the tables still none of us have missed any meals so far. Her motion is very different from the Frankl(?). In the evening there was a Oucher? Euchre? Part but I did not do very well and very nearly got the booby prize which was a broken plate. Every evening we have a formal dinner and drink the Kings health in water.

The President of the mess is a Major Richardson. Half the military officers are Doctors or Dentists and are quite new to their duties. The rest are wounded men who are returning to France. We have two of the Old Contemptibles aboard. A Lieutenant of the Black Watch whose name is Cambell and a Captain Granville, who was also ADC to one of Australia's numerous Governors. There are about a dozen Military Officers in all, and a very decent lot they are too. A few of the soldiers on board are Anzacs and tell some rather good stories. The Padre who is a Colonel and an Anzac is especially good at spinning yarns. On Monday evening we darkened ship because of a rumour that a 22 knot raider was about. However we have not met the raider so far and still have to darken the ship every night. This means that until all lights are off the dead lights(?) have to be kept closed and it makes the cabins very hot. After we first came on board all our cabins had fans in them but they were not connected so some of the electrical geniuses purloined the missing parts from their neighbour's fans and get their own going. When the others got to hear of this they bided their time and pinched the required parts back again. When the ships electrician came along to fix all the fans he finds half the parts missing and removed the fans. Now we have to replace all the missing parts when we get to port or lose our fans for the rest of the voyage.

On Wednesday we had sports for the whole ship and Midshipmen got most of the prizes. They had a tug-o-war which we won easily. The numbers pulling were arranged by weight so we got ten men to every other teams eight. At night there was a bridge tournament. I went in for it and drew a sergent major for my partner. We got right up to the finals but there our luck deserted us and our opponents won. Up to the finals we had had nothing but good cards all through and no one had scored below the line against us.

On Thursday morning we did gun drill at the old 6" we have aboard. She is a very od make and it required very good shooting to register anything like a hit. They would not allow us to do any shooting as they are only allowed five rounds for practice a month.

As Thursday was the last of the month the Gunlayer in charge of the gun fired his five rounds in the afternoon. I managed to get a very good view of the firing from the gun platform itself.

Mr Dix wanted me to get him a photo of the gun firing, unfortunately it forgot to turn the film on and took another on top of it. The Gunlayer scored three hits out of five which was quite good considering the age of the gun and the motion of the stern which is a figure of eight. The target was a cask which had been heaved overboard. The noise of the discharge was deafening from my position and I was half deaf all the evening. Once a week we have boat drill. There are three Midshipmen to every boat and we are in charge until a ships officer comes on board. There are about thirty munition workers in my boat and only two of us Midshipmen. The other Casey by name was ill when we left Melbourne and is following later on. The first time we had drill the munition workers took their own time but yesterday they were at their boats with lifebelts on in less than four minutes.

The ships officers are a very decent lot and help us as much as they can. With not having very much work to do, one hour on the bridge, one hour in the engine room and half an hour gym in the morning. Most of us take the practice of taking sights at 8 AM. I am getting quite expert and can get the ships position to a mile if she is not rolling too much.

There is not very much to do in the engine room as there is never anyone down there to explain things to us. For the rest of our time we do just about what we like which gets rather monotonous still we manage to spend the time somehow. Cards are in great demand and have learnt a lot about bridge.

Every second evening there is a concert or a card tournament or something like that. We all read a lot and there is a YMCA library on board there is no shortage of books. It is just sixteen days since we last saw land and we expect to sight it in an hour or two. So far we have not met a single ship but we had wireless news all the time. I have eaten the cake mother packed for me and enjoyed it very much. We are able to get out our chests about once a week so stowed all my extra gear away. I found greatly to my surprise that my other two white tunics fitted me much better than the ones I took home.

I have taken a couple of films which turned out very well only I forgot to bring ordinary developer with me for prints so will not be able to send you any yet. By the way would you mind sending me a snapshot of Dad as I forgot to bring mine with me.

Land has just been sighted and I am off to have a look at it so good bye for the present.

*Your affectionate son
JohnM Armstrong*

**At Sea, Posted in Portsmouth, March 2nd, 1918
Received Sydney, May 8th, 1918**

Dear Mother

We stopped at Freetown for five days waiting for another ship to make up the convoy.

The harbour is really an open roadstead with a big boom and mines across the seaward side. We went ashore almost every day but there was not much to see. Natives everywhere, in fact I think there are only about a hundred whites other than the English soldiers. When we arrived the harbour was full of ships. HMS "Bachante", a merchant cruiser and two big convoys in all about thirty ships. The battleship "Africa" came in while we were there. As soon as you get ashore you are mobbed by blacks trying to see you something however they soon give it up. The town is on low lying ground at the foot of fairly high hills. The only hill in the town itself has the English barracks and the Governors house on it and a few English houses. We spent a lot of our time at the garrison club house and at the swimming baths which belong to the officers of the garrison. They are right on top of the hill and of fresh water. The baths can't be used in the dry season as there is not enough water for them. However we enjoyed them very much. Bargaining at the native shops was exciting especially as you were generally taken down. The Indian shops were better but you could never get the price down more than a couple of bob. The usual thing with the Indians was to toss for it. The shopkeeper would ask 10/- for something, you would say 6/- and he would want to toss for 7/- or 13/-. I lost once and did not try again. The blacks usually asked either 5/-, 10/-, 15/- for what ever they wanted to sell and you could be fairly sure that even if you paid 1/- to 22/6 for it you would be taken in. There is a small railway from the town to a place called Hill Top where all the English officers live. I went up there one day with Jack Rayment but there was not much to see. And all we had to do was eat fruit. We left Freetown on a Tuesday evening in company with six other ships, a slow convoy – and the "Armada Castle" merchant cruiser is our escort. The Armadale got to work right away and generally tied the convoy up in knots making sarcastic remarks the while. I was on the bridge on duty and our skipper got quite wild. He had good reason to. Our signalman was lent us by the Armadale and is only a R.N.R. man and he tied up in his own flags. The flags are not handy as they are in a naval ship but once off the halliards there is no time to put them away and they lie around all over the place. We do two hours a day on the gun and two hours on the bridge. By this time we are quite good at the Merchant code and relieve the signalman sometimes. It is getting very cold now at nights and the woollen gear you made me is very comforting, especially when I get gun duty from 2 to 4 AM. We are the loading numbers at the gun in case of action until the arrival of the remainder of the gun crew and then we have to spot the fall of the shots. There are always two of the gun crew on duty with us and the others sleep near by. On the bridge we keep a lookout and help the signalman. Ever since Freetown except when there is no moon at night we have been zig-zagging. Each ship zigzags in Greenwich time and with a stop watch to ensure they all turn together, all the same the Armadale is always shaking someone up for being out of station. Every ship is darkened at night and no one is allowed to smoke on deck. During the tropics it was very annoying not to be able to open our cabin ports but it is not so bad now although rather stuffy. We embarked some more soldiers at Freetown and several officers returning to England after a long spell on the frontiers. Most of the officers who have just come from Freetown and German East have been down with malaria. They say the cold weather brings it out. One of the officers from German East showed us some photos taken there which were very interesting. There were some of the "Konningburg" before and after she was captured and any number of other German ships which had been captured. We put in most of our spare time playing hockey with walking sticks, or deck tennis which consists of chucking a large heavy leather ball about, or anything else to keep you warm. Bridge is played by nearly everyone in the evenings. The munition workers have been behaving better than they did at first and

when ever there is a boat parade they run as if several devils were after them. I don't know what would happen if there was a parade at night. I think they would rush the boats. One of them shot himself in the leg about three days ago but I think he is mad as every time he was asked how it happened he gave a different answer. One of the Australian officers developed measles today, I hope we shall not be quarantined.

At six oclock this morning our destroyer escort met us. One of them has a captive balloon for the spying out of submarines. At three this afternoon two of the convoy left us for Liverpool and the Armadale also left us. We just got orders to proceed direct to London but I think the Captain wirelessly for permission to land the passengers troops etc at Devonport as he does not wish to go up the channel with a lot of people on board. Goodness only knows what we shall do but I think we will proceed to Portsmouth to kit up. I do hope I will be able to see Enid. I got my No 1 uniform pressed and cleaned the other day. A munition worker who had been a cleaner before he joined up did it for the modest sum of 4/- and rather well too.

It is rather funny to hear them talking. They are not nearly so cocky as they used to be and there are rumours that some of them that are fit will be conscripted.

Well goodbye for the present, we hope to get in within the next three days even if we have to go to London.

*Your most affectionate son
JohnMArmstrong*

Grand Hotel Leicester, March 24th, 1918
Received June 1st, 1918

Dear Dad

We arrived safely at London on Tuesday afternoon after a very uneventful trip up the channel. Two ships of the convoy left us off Lands End or thereabouts to go to Liverpool and three more bound for Southampton. The "Beltana" and the "Orleston" were left to do the trip to London escorted by two destroyers and another which had the observation balloon. The only excitement was when we got lost off Dover. The entrance to the enclosed area is near Dover and it is only about two hundred yards wide it is rather hard to find. Also it is dangerous to go wandering round as you never know when you may strike a mine. However the destroyers soon found the passage and on we went. Once inside you are at once surrounded by shipping of all sorts and sizes from Battleships to Thames Barges while half an hour before you were all alone except for the escort. We took a pilot on board at the entrance and proceeded in single file to Tilbury, where we came to our anchor. A commander from Australia House came on board and told us we were to get ashore at once and entrain for Devonport. This was easier said than done as the crew finding themselves in Port refused to do Stevedores work ie shift our chests out of the hold, unless they got Stevedores pay. The Company was not willing to do this so we stayed on board that night. Next morning we were supposed to get up to the Albert Docks only a heavy fog made it impossible to move until the tide was too low so there we stayed. After Dinner, a large ferry came alongside and the crew very kindly consented to get our chests up an away we went to Tilbury wharf. There we got a train to Princes Station. After a wait of an hour big vans arrived for our gear and we got a tube for Waterloo. We just got there in time to get the seven oclock train to Portsmouth where it seemed we had been going from the first. At Portsmouth we

went to the "Terrible" a depot ship where we are going to stay and kit up. Who do you think was the first person we saw on the "Terrible"? None other than Captain Morgan who was in charge of her. He welcomed us with open arms and ever since has done his best for us in every way possible. When he leaves the ship at night, he lives ashore, we are allowed to use his cabins. We sleep in a Dormitory and are members of the Wardroom Mess. As soon as I landed I began a telegraphic communication with Enid and got leave for the Week end. Early on Saturday morning I was hauled out of bed by a Telegram from her asking me to come up by the early train. So I dashed round got the Commander to sign all sorts of papers station tickets etc and finally arrived at Leicester about two in the afternoon. Enid was on the station to meet me looking fit and well as could be. That afternoon I was taken up to the Hospital and shown all over it and incidentally introduced to the fearsome personage the matron. It is an enormous place and you could quite easily lose your way at first. I stayed at the Grand Hotel for the night and began this letter. On Sunday afternoon Enid got leave and we went back to London.. We stayed at Berners Hotel and the first person we saw was Uncle Tancred looking very well. He took us out to Dinner but we were not able to see anything of him on Monday as he was very rushed. On Monday morning I saw the Manager of the Commercial Bank and fixed up about my money. I drew GBP 25 and put it to current account as it will be much handier. Then we went to see Uncle Tancred at Australia House but he was out so Enid left a note. We lunched at "Ye Old Cheddar Cheese" and saw where Dickens and Dr Johnson used to sit. In the afternoon we went to a matinee called Lilac Domino which was very good. We had dinner at the Rendezvous where Uncle Tancred had taken us the night before and the Enid caught the eight o'clock train back to Leicester. I got an early train back to Portsmouth next morning. We are being fitted out at "Gieves" who is the naval tailor of Portsmouth, you pay for it too. The Government is giving us one new uniform and a host of minor gear. I have ordered another uniform as Captain Morgan said we would want two Mr Darley has been very good to me. He kept Enid inform as to when I would arrive and asked another Midshipman and me to dine with him the night after we arrived. He is at whale Island and is taking a batch of Lieutenant through a six months gunnery course!!

I enjoyed the dinner very much although slightly overawed by sitting down to dinner surrounded by Captains and Commanders etc. The Wardroom at Whale Island is very fine and their collection of silver I believe is the best there is. Each batch of Lieutenants give something when they leave so they have got an enormous lot there. I also met a Dr Macintosh there who knows Uncle Tancred very well and who studied Public Health at the Sydney University under you.

By the way the Government is giving us telescopes and binoculars so we won't have to get either. Very nice ones they are too in very strong leather cases. When I got back to the "Terrible" I found that our appointments were ready for us. I am in the "Australia" with eleven others so her gunroom will be all Australian. I am very pleased to get in the "Australia" in a way as she may go out home if the War finishes soon. On the other hand she has been nicknamed the Neutral Flagship as she has not been in anything yet. Did you hear that Cunningham of the first lot of Midshipmen was drowned a short time ago. He was in a submarine which was rammed by one of our own ships, awful hard luck was it not. On Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday we went round seeing places. Wednesday morning we went over to Vernon which is the big torpedo school and in the afternoon we were taken in a picket boat down to Cowes in the Isle of White and went over Osborne. The buildings are really only

temporary but there is no white out there as at Jervis Bay. The grounds are magnificent and so is the College generally. The cadets only do one year there and then go to Dartmouth for two. We were shown round by a party of c.c.'s. Next morning we went to the submarine base and went over a couple of submarines guided by a very interesting Lieutenant. In the afternoon some of us went to Gieves again and were fitted. I bought some more shirts and a pair of shoes. Owing to the Easter holidays our uniform wont be ready for some time so were given Easter leave. I did not get enough to go over to Jersey, so I am spending it in London with Enid. She managed to get two days leave although owing to convoys arriving from the front she was very lucky to get it. On Saturday I went up to Leicester and we came down together in the evening. This morning we went out to Richmond and got a boat and spent a couple of hours on the river. Then we went to Hampton Court and looked over it. I am very glad I don't have to live in a place like it. Then we came back to town on a bus and went to Westminster Abbey but we were too early for the evening service and so back to the Ivanhoe Hotel where we are staying.

The rationing does not effect us very much. You cannot get meat without tickets in London and sugar is also hard to get. Of course the bread is all war bread but it is quite nice. On board ship we are not rationed at all we just have to be careful not to waste anything.

I don't know when I will join my ship but I think it will be towards the end of this week.

Eleven other midshipmen are appointed to the Agincourt and five to the Canada, so we are going in lots of three instead of five.

Your loving son
John.MArmstrong

Ps I wrote to Uncle Rex but I have not heard anything from him yet. Uncle Tancred wished to be remembered to you and mother. Thanks very much for your letter and for mothers, they beat me over here by nearly a week.

HMAS Australia, April 9th, 1918
Received June 10th, 1918

Dear Dad

Here we are at last after many wanderings. We seem to have been on the way for weeks and realy it is only three days. When I finished my last letter I was in London with Enid. The next morning we went first to St.Pancras then to Waterloo to leave our respective luggage and who should we meet but Major Parkinson. He was waiting at Waterloo for a troop train and was on his way to France having landed at Liverpool only two days before. Enid was very glad to see him and we wanted to carry him off with us but he had to leave quite soon. He brought over a lot of gear for Enid from the Sydney Red Cross which he had left with some friends down at Streatham Hill a suburb of London. As we were not able to see him off we went down to Streatham before lunch and got Enid's things. She had to borrow a suitcase to put them in and even then there were some left out. In the afternoon we went to Chu Chin Chow which we enjoyed very much, it was even more gorgeous than Bing Boys. Enid went off by a six oclock train for Leicester and I caught one that evening for Portsmouth.

Next day the Port Admiral inspected us and was graciously pleased to give us advice. He was a very awesome person with three $\frac{1}{2}$ " stripes above his thick one. That afternoon we went aboard the "Victory" and were shewn over her by a marine, really the change of a hundred and ten years in ship construction is somewhat striking. There is a battleship in dock quite close to the "Terrible" she is being blistered which is a protection against torpedoes and consists of a large blister of iron all round ship along the waterline. The air was hideous with the sound of pneumatic riveters and drills and the night was lit up with the oxycetaline flares. On Friday we got our kit from Gieves and the uniforms are very good.

My word it was great to get into good uniform after our old ones. On Saturday morning we all left the "Terrible" and went up to London under the charge of a Commander Hudson. We spent the afternoon at a picture show and caught a naval train for Inverness in the evening. Our first orders had been for Edinburgh but at the train we got fresh ones for Thursoe in the far north. The journey was rather tiring but it was very pretty up in the Highlands. When we got to Inverness we midshipmen for the "Australia" were told that we had to go south again. We had to spend Sunday night at the Railway Hotel and came back to Edinburgh the next morning. Inverness is a very pretty town when you get out of it a bit but it was rather cold.

We got on board on Monday evening and went to the Gunroom at once. The Gunroom is very full there are thirty three in here and three subs left the day we arrived. Six of the old fourth year are next seniors to us and there are four RN snotties senior to them. There are three subs, an AP, two engineer subs and an RMR sub and five clerks. The RN snotties will be going up for their subs exam in three weeks time. Then we will have the RAN snotties as the seniors of the mess till September when they will go up for their exam and we will be the seniors of the mess although we wont be senior snotties until January next. We will most probably go for our subs exam in September twelve months. The sub of the mess is named MacGuinness and although no one has run up against him yet we hear we will be lucky if we don't. Jack Rayment and I are in the quarterdeck division under a Lieutenant Miller. We are also in X Turret which is the after turret for action stations.

My post when at sea other than action stations is in a controle hut of the after 4" battery. On Tuesday we were put on two hours notice which means that all leave is stopped but it is quite common to be on two hours notice for weeks without leaving port.

While being shewn over X Turret I managed to drop a dummy $\frac{1}{4}$ charge on my foot and I have been lame since then however it is nearly all right now. On Thursday evening I was duty picket boat and did three trips in her. I enjoyed it very much but there was a strong wind blowing and my word but was cold. On coming back from my last trip the fleet (battle cruisers) broke into a mass of bunting and when we arrived we heard we were ordered to proceed to sea in two hours time. The orders were cancelled half an hour later. So we turned in. However we went to sea at midnight and I was called at 2 AM to do my watch in the 4" controle. The ship had only just been painted and I managed to wipe off most of it on to myself before it finally found my station. It is a small iron hut above the after 4" platform which is a raised superstructure just forward of the after turret. There are two of them one either side of the superstructure. They are just boxes with a narrow window all round and numerous telephones and voice pipes. I keep a look out for submarines and pass on

any orders from the fore controle. I will continue later as I have to go to my station for two hours. Up at the station it was rather cold and very little to do so I was quite glad when it was over. The fleet steamed along in line ahead with destroyer screens and turned continually, it just seemed to be going nowhere. There was a fog and the second astern was barely visible. We got back to port in the evening and coaled ship as soon as possible. We only had four hundred tons to get in and we did it in very good time though I don't know the exact times. I was in the after hold of the coalier and had a shovel. My word we were dirty when we finished and very glad to turn in. I am very glad that you lumbago is all right again. I just got your letter while I got mothers two weeks ago. My word it is nice to get letters from Aussie Land. I got one from Nell Joake with a lot of snaps of last leave. We are all very happy so far and like the ship very much and I think we are very lucky to be on her.

Your affectionate son
JohnMArmstrong

By the way the others all went up north and I think we have the best of it down here as they say it is very cold there. Mr Dix is aboard the Australia and a draft arrives today from Australia which contains a lot of old school hands from the College.

HMAS Australia, April 28th, 1918
Received June 17th, 1918

Dear Mother

We have just got a mail from Australia the second since we left, and everybody is busy reading their letters. We have been coaling all to day from eight oclock till three in the afternoon. We had seventeen hundred tons to get in, quite a respectable amount and the mail came in the middle of it. You should have seen us at lunch. Everyone coal black except where we had washed our hands and mouths sitting around the table munching cold meat and bread and butter and reading "Aussie" mail. I got two letters from Dad and one from you and one from Kath Gaden.

When we got back from our first convoy trip we took in 1000 tons of coal and went to sea again in the evening. While we were in port we got the papers giving the account of the Zebrugge stunt. From what I hear it was an extremely fine show one of those Nelson touches. There were some stokers there from the "Australia" but none were injured which pleased everyone very much. The thing must have been planned for some time as these men left the ship about two months ago. I suppose they were rehearsing the show.

To continue, after coaling we put to sea and next day picket up a convoy. It was very calm all the time we were out, in fact both times we have been out it has been extraordinarily calm and fairly warm. With the outward convoy we sighted two submarines and our destroyers dropped depth charges on them but it is not known if they were successful. A depth charge is a sort of mine which is lowered from the destroying ship over the spot where the sub is thought to be and is then exploded. If the sub is within three or four hundred yards she is generally turned over and if any nearer she is sunk. You can hear a depth charge a very long way off, it sounds just like something hitting the ship a smart blow under water. After being out two days we dropped our convoy and picking up another returned to port to take in sixteen hundred tons. Each part of the ship takes the hold of the collier which corresponds to

its name. There are four holds QD (?) have the after hold and so on. Our hold was full to the brim and we cleaned it right out. We averaged about 220 tons per hour I think not counting stops for breakfast and lunch. I am going to turn in now I am abominably tired.

Monday: As we coaled yesterday they excused us doing Gym this morning, as a result, everybody slept in and the Commander happened along. We have to fall in every morning and be reported correct to him by six am, which I suppose is good for us, but very uncomfortable at the time. However we are treated very well and in fact I think we escape many things which RN junior snotties have to put up with, and which we would not escape in any ship other than the "Australia"

While at sea I keep watch in the Starboard after 4" controle hut. Ordinarily there are four of us doing duty there but this last trip to sea Palmer went sick with a bad cold and there were only three of us to do the duty which meant four hours on and eight off instead of two on and four off which is quite a different thing. You are on the lookout all the time and found there is no room for movement so four hours is rather long. However palmer is now happily recovered and all is well again. Morgan who is the Admirals doggie is down with Pneumonia but he is passed the critical stage and enjoying the prospect of two weeks in hospital with two weeks sick leave to follow. He was very bad I hear during the first two days but at present is lying in state in the Admiral's spare cabin. By the way the Admirals name is Levison, the Captain's is Backhouse and the Commander's is Maxwell. We also carry a Commander N and a Commander E, to say nothing of a fleet Pay and a fleet surgeon, so we are well provided with brass hats. To day we have been getting in some new projectiles in place of a batch of Lydite which is pronounced dangerous.

When we are at sea we do no other work besides our watch stations so we have an easier time than in harbour. Of course we are continually practising action stations and having dummy runs at Controle but otherwise we do so very little work. The only thing is coaling when we get to port again and is rather awful.

The RN snots had the first day of their exam for subs to day. It last for three weeks and half is oral. It seems funny them going for their subs exams, I am older than the three of them and two are still under eighteen and are not allowed to smoke yet. Three of the Australian snotties senior to us are in destroyers for a three week course. One of them was in a sweep off the Skaggarack last week and helped sink a lot of trawlers.

I hope you had a good holiday up at Exeter. I can imagine that it must have been delightful at this time of the year. Did dad go for a cruise with Mr Busby? I envy him if he did.

Dad tells me that Pat goes into the water without any fuss now, he must have progressed very much. I'm glad he defended his biscuit against the bulldog it shows there is some gut in him. Did you find any more snakes in the garden at Exeter.

It is getting comparatively warm here now but not like Australian warmth. Here's to the next mail

*Your affectionate son
JohnMArmstrong*

Ps I can't send you any photos as cameras are kept very dark or they have to be given in. We are not permitted to give the name of our base although our letters are not censored but it is enough to say that on a make and mend afternoon we can get up to Edinburgh.

HMAS Australia, May 19th, 1918
Received 9th July, 1918

Dear Dad

Many thanks for your letter dated March 31st and for the photo of yourself. It is a very good one in fact I think it is the best I have seen of you. It seems rather funny that you should have been wearing whites even at the end of March. It has been quite warm for the last week and yesterday and today have been regular Australian days, a light breeze blowing and quite hot in the sun. Last night I slept without any blankets. For a wonder too there has been no rain for over a week.

There is nothing much doing at present. We are still in harbour and have only been out once last week. Then it was to do a night firing. They had a subcalibre run with the big guns in the afternoon and in the evening it was the 4". By the way when I say evening I mean nearly midnight as it does not get dark here till after ten o'clock.

The Commander has decided that we are not getting enough work so we will do more watches and more picket boat work, however it makes little difference we can still get ashore four afternoons in every week if we want to. I went up to Dumfemline this afternoon. It is a middling town a little nearer although in the opposite direction to Edinburgh. It is not much of a place anyhow not on a Sunday. We could not get any afternoon tea, quite a necessary feature of any expedition ashore, and the place was overrun with sailors and mostly Yankie at that.

I met some of my friends from the Canada and Frank McMahon from the Agincourt. They don't appear to be having such a pleasant time in their Gunroom as we do. I also met guy Windeyer. He was flying around and seemed to be enjoying himself. He is in the "Thunderer" He is not very tall but is quite hefty and says he has taken up boxing. His seniority dates about four months ahead of mine but I think we catch up that or most of it when we go for our subs exam. He said that he was getting very homesick and tired of England. The three RN snots have finished their exams although they do not know if they have passed yet they are to put up their stripes as the Commander wants some more watch keepers. It seems funny one of them is still a kid in his ways and only one is over eighteen. They are the one fly in the ointment in the mess to us. They of course cannot make us fag for them but they have a nice habit of carrying their little troubles to the sub of the mess who uses a walking stick with great effect as I found out. However they will soon leave the ship now. It is not very comforting to have to cart chairs round for somebody nearly a year younger than yourself and who joined up at the College later than you did. Three of our crowd in the "Agincourt" have gone to destroyers for a months instruction. We all do a turn in destroyers but I did not think they would start so soon as they have done. I wrote to Enid about leave but she does not think that she will be able to get leave when I get it as her matron thinks there will be much work then.

The Australian letters have an exasperating way of arriving. I got yours dated March 31st three days ago. The next day I got one from Copper dated February 17th and none in between have arrived yet.

Mr Miller our divisional Lieutenant is on leave at present and Jack Rayment and I are in charge of the division all on our own. Hope you got your holiday to Port Stephens.

*Your affectionate son
JohnMArmstrong*

HMAS Australia, May 26th, 1918

Dear Mother

Thanks very much for your long letter. I got a bunch of letters from Australia on Monday last but there are still some missing I think. I am afraid that they have gone down or been lost somehow. The old crowd say that it is quite a common thing for letters to go astray after they have reached England. Sometimes they turn up a couple of months later sometimes they don't.

How is the cat getting on now, you said in your letter that she was not well. I imagine that Dad had a very pleasant trip with Mr Busby. I would not mind at all if I could get out of Sydney for a week end on the harbour again but until they have direct airplane passenger service with this side there does not seem much chance of my doing it.

The Germans have begun their second offensive and I hear we have lost some slight ground I wonder how it will end.

Enid expects to get her leave in a couple of weeks time. I wish we could get off together but that is impossible I think. I hear that Jersey is in quarantine for some reason and no naval ratings are permitted to go there. This puts a stopper on my going over there if the restrictions are not withdrawn by July. I hope very much that they will be withdrawn. Apart from the fact of not seeing the St Ouens people I would not know what to do with myself. Fourteen days spent at Leicester would be very dull as Enid would only be able to get off for a couple of hours a day.

Mr Miller the Lieutenant of my division has just returned from leave. He has been over to Ireland. It seems that lots of n.o's used to go over to Ireland for leave because it is not rationed. However it is harder to get over now as they have to get Passports.

We had another route march last week otherwise nothing out of the usual routine happened. The Airodrome near here had some sports and four Australian snots got a second in the officers relay race. Jack Rayment was one of them. Our own ships sports are to be held about the middle of next month. We are getting into training for it but I don't know quite what I am going to do for one. There is also a cutter race coming off soon but there are only a couple of midshipmen in the crew.

All ships are practicing for boat races and on a fine afternoon the Firth is dotted with boats. Different ships challenge one another to private races and the boats are followed by a host of noisy small craft from their respective ships. If the race comes off in the dog watches as it usually does the crews of other ships line the side and cheer them on.

Will you wish Dad Many Happy Returns of the 28th May for me please. I am sorry it is so late.

*Your loving son
JohnMArmstrong*

HMAS Australia, June 9th, 1918
Received August 5th, 1918

Dear Mother

I have just got a long letter from you it came all by itself but there ought to be some more following. We have just returned from a minelaying stunt which proved very uneventful. We thought on going out that we might see something for a change but it was just the same old North Sea all the time which with never a ship in sight other than our own gets a bit monotonous.

You ask if I would like parcels send thanks very much but I really don't need them as we get as much as we want and more in the way of sugar and chocolates. We get chocolates from Cadburys at pre war prices. Cadburys only make them for the Army and Navy now. In many ways Enid wants parcels much more than I do. She can't get any sugar while we have as much as we want for porridge, tea, etc. Some things would rather like are butter and honey. You can get tinned butter sent. We get plenty of jam and as often or not it is strawberry.

Those socks you knitted for me are wearing very well, though it has been too hot to wear them for some time now. Did you win any of your raffles?

The Germans have just begun a third offensive. I hope we can hold it this time. They will be jolly near Paris if they do as they have done in the two previous ones. I got a letter from Aunt Amy last week. They are all very well and want to know when I can get over to see them. Our time for docking has been put off so I don't know when we will get our leave, not till the end of September I expect. On the whole I am glad it has been put off as at present there are restrictions on people going to Jersey owing to Jersey having been in quarantine. However I hope the restrictions will have been withdrawn by then.

Enid goes on leave just about now. She said something about going to Devonshire. It ought to be glorious there just now. It is a pity our leave could not be made to fit in. However I will be able to put in a couple of days at Leicester.

Three of us went for a bicycle ride this afternoon. We hired the bicycles at a shop in Queensferry and of all the old boneshakers I ever saw they were the worst. We rode off towards Edinburgh and then turned off to a little village called Cramond on the waters edge. On entering the village we came to a steep hill with a very sharp turning at the bottom. Royston who was leading found his breaks would not act and hopped off to avoid hitting the wall at the foot of the hill. He was going quite fast and came a nasty cropper taking the skin off one of his hands whilst his bicycle smashed a couple of spokes.

Some people very kindly bandaged it up for him and after tea he was quite able to ride back. We came back to Queensferry by a track along the side of the Firth through the grounds of Dalmeay Castle. After leave if I have enough money left I think

I will buy myself a bicycle. At present I am saving up for leave. Sorry there is not more news.

*Your affectionate son
JohnMArmstrong.*

**HMAS Australia, June 23rd, 1918
Received August 19th, 1918**

Dear Dad

Many thanks for your letters. So far the mails from your side have arrived fairly regularly but we have heard that one from England had been sunk. I can't tell you the dates.

That was a very good photo of Holah (?) you sent me. I have sent mother a group of the Australian members of the Gunroom and some photos taken on a route march. I am also going to send you some photos taken on the trip over in the Beltana when I can get them printed. The negatives belong to Jack as all mine spoilt.

We have had several changes in our work. Four of the junior division of our mob have been put on Engineering for two months and they are complaining all the time about being overworked etc and all they seem to do is come up and sit on their chests. I am with Mr Manx the torpedo Lieutenant for action and so far the work has been very interesting. I go back to X turret when the original torp snottie comes off engineering. At sea I take my watch as snottie of the Watch instead of being lookout so I will have to try my hand at cocoa making not that it is very hard as cocoa is nearly always provided in the Ward Room at any time of night when at sea. The Commander is still on leave but he will be back any day now. I wish I could get as long leave as he has. He has been away for nearly a month now. However I suppose he has been saving up his leave for years.

Free postage has come in for the navy now so every one is trying to sell stamps. If you bought up all the stamps offered for sail at the prices asked and sold them ashore you would make a small fortune.

Enid is on leave at present. It was a pity we could not both get off together but my leave is so uncertain that it was not worth while her risking missing hers. The latest buzz going round is that we dock in the early part of august. So far I have not heard if Jersey is out of Quarantine but it ought to be by now. We have gone into Quarantine for Scarlet Fever a Signalman had it and did not report ill till he was almost delirious and he died in hospital two days afterwards. Being in Quarantine only means that we cannot visit or be visited by people from other ships and it does not affect leave at all.

We go north for the Quarterly Big Shoot next week I expect. I have not heard the big guns go off yet. I will most probably have to be outside and just above x turret on the after super structure I have got myself a pair of ear protectors. I will probably be spotting fall of shot (not our own but those of the ship which uses us as a target) I may say that it is fixed so that the shots will not come aboard us but as they pitch fairly close it is comparatively easy to spot.

We had a cricket match on Saturday against the Ward Room and got badly beaten by three hundred odd to just over one hundred. Our bowling was our weak point as

Reilly our crack bowler got a full pitcher on the head while we were batting and he had to retire for some time. We he went on to bowl he was naturally rather rocky.

I believe old Billy Hughes is coming on board to visit us and bringing Joe Cook along with him. We have to go out and do some stunts just for him. Just my luck when I wanted to go up to Edinburgh this week. Sorry I can't give you more news about what we are doing but it is "strenk verboten" or whatever the correct thing is.

Your affectionate son
JohnMArmstrong

HMAS Australia, June 30th, 1918
Received September 13th, 1918

Dear Mother

Many thanks for you letter. I got an Australian mail this morning. It has been a coincidence that the last four Australian mails have arrived on Sunday morning in the middle of a large coaling.

We are up north now having arrived here at two in the morning after being at sea for several days so the ensuing coaling was a big one.

I must wish you Many Happy returns of the 5th of September. This will probably reach you a week or so before your birthday but I don't want to be late.

I have not been ashore here yet but what one can see of it is bad enough. There in not a tree to be seen anywhere and I believe the only tree in the islands is in the large village which is called Kirkwall a place of about two hundred house and with Glasgow the only scotch town to own a real old cathedral if it is a very small one. The people who live here have to work like niggers to get enough to live on as the land is so poor. Just at present the weather is very fine for this part of the world we are told. It certainly is very pleasant. Crisp but not too cold and even hot in the sun.

The Torpedo work is very interesting and I think I am rather lucky to get the job for the time being. If you have actually done the thing it is a lot easier to remember for the exams. We want all the time we can get for torpedo work as it is the subject in which people generally fail. There is a lot of work to get through on the practical side for the subs exam as we only have eighteen months to get hold of three years work.

Our big shoot comes off sometime this week I think. I will be in the conning tower and have practically nothing to do except to log data about the position of the "enemy" with regard to the chance of a hit with the "mouldies" The "enemy" will be the second subdivision of our squadron.

You asked in your last letter if there was anything I would like sent. Well I would like to see a Sydney paper now and again, could you let me have the Sun when you are sending papers to Enid please. We get the Bulletin so there is no use in sending that but I would like to get some general Sydney news now and again. Good night for the present as I am rather tired and we have to get under way early tomorrow.

Your affectionate son
JohnMArmstrong

HMAS Australia, July 8th, 1918
Received September 12th, 1918

Dear Dad

Many thanks for your last letter you seem to have had a very busy week. We have also been rather busy but I am sorry that I cannot give you an account of our doings. It seems that I have let you have a lot of information about our doings which would have been deleted by a censor. You understand that our letters are not censored, one of the Subs initials them and we are to see that nothing which might be censored is put in them. So far I have been writing a lot of things which I find are taboo. It's a good thing I found it out before someone else did. I am afraid that in consequence my news will deteriorate.

I met three of our crowd from the Agincourt on Wednesday, Hollingworth, Tate & Dudley. They are quite chirpy about things now and seem to have found their place in their Gunroom.

There is a "cag" going in the Gunroom at present about Australian politics. Poor old Billy is being called a fool by one lot and others stick up for him, there will be a scrap in a minute and I think I will knock off till the atmosphere is quieter.

A notice has been sent round to all Australians in the Grand Fleet to the effect that anyone who wishes to may volunteer for the Australian Air Service. Officers and men are both wanted. Several of our crowd have sent their names in but I did not think it was worthwhile. First of all after six months training you may find that you have not got the "nerve" and then so much time is wasted, secondly it is a young mans job and after about thirty you are not much good for flying. The only thing you can do is retire or become one of the Administrators. As more than half the Air Force are officers in the same circumstances there will be an enormous number of candidates for the Administrative. Under the circs I did not think it good enough. Then if you did get in there is always the chance of being put in an observation balloon department which would not suit my book. at all. I don't think that any of my special friends have put their names down for it.

You asked how I was getting on for money. Up to date I am doing quite comfortably. When I arrived in England I drew on your credit for £ 25 as you know and put it to my own account. I used £ 7 for a uniform and another £ 10 while I was on leave in London.

We are paid £ 8 a month and every three months we get the balance which makes it up to £ 12 minus any slops for that month. Out of the ordinary £ 8 my mess bill is from £ 4-10 to £ 5 and I used £ 2 a month on personal expenses. Which means that I save £1 on an ordinary month and £4 every quarter. To date I have £ 6 saved. For the next leave I will have about £ 20 at the least and I will not be long in town. It will be more than enough.

As regards uniform I will not want much new gear till next year when our uniform allowances of a bob a day begins.

I got a letter last week from Miss Austin a sister of Mr Bray who knows Allan Bellamy. They want me to go out and see them at their place at Hendon when I am next on

leave. They have also intimated to Australia House that they will be very glad to entertain any Australian snotties who care to look them up.

No one knows the exact date of our refit yet and most probably wont till the day arrives, And I don't know when I can get those photos done that I promised you however I will let you have them when I can.

*Your affectionate son
JohnMArmstrong*

**HMAS Australia, July 21st, 1918
Received October ??, 1918**

Dear Mother

Many thanks for your letter. I am sorry to hear about Major Brownell and hope he is better again by now. The socks you made for me before I left are wearing very well and will last, with the others I got, all through next winter so don't bother to send me a whole new set.

Enid seems to have had a good leave. She has been as you most probably know all through Devon and generally had a good time of it. It was a pity our leaves could not be made to fit in. However mine is so jolly uncertain that it was not worth while Enid's putting hers off. The latest date for leave is September 10th but only extreme optomists put any faith in it.

Jack Rayment and Vail have both gone to Destroyers for a months course. The destroyers course is generally looked upon as a good thing. Jack joined his destroyer just as she went on "boiler clean" so that he got three days leave except for the fact that he had to sleep on board. Frank McMahon has just finished his destroyers course and although he only had four days in harbour during the whole time he enjoyed every minute of it. He got stuck on the mud once, and spent some time on the Murman Coast up in Russia.

Miss Austin a sister of Mrs Bray who knows Allan and Ken wrote to me last week asking me to look them up next time I go to London.

I have been having my teeth seen to in Edinburgh. I had to get a back tooth taken out as it was too decayed and too much "stopped" to stop again.

We played cricket against the "Lion" on Thursday up in Edinburgh on the "Grange" cricket ground. It was officers v officers. I was playing although I only just got in. We won by over a hundred runs. Pely our sub of the Gunroom mess made over a hundred not out himself. My bowling has gone off sadly and they don't even put me on as a change bowler now. I think it is the want of practice.

The Americans gave a concert-show on Saturday evening. It was a revue, concert, funny party all roled into one. They had some parts of Chu Chin Chow and it was very well done. In fact the whole show was extremely creditable to a ships company. Sorry I can not give you any news of our doings mais c'est la guerre.

*Your affectionate son
JohnMArmstrong*

HMAS Australia, July 28th, 1918
Received October 9th, 1918

Dear Dad

What do you think of the war news now. It looks a little better than it did. The Americans seem to be throwing their weight about a bit.

We had a big coal on Thursday of nearly a thousand tons. I had been on watch most of the night before so I was jolly tired by the time we had finished.

It is Enids birthday today. I wonder how she has been spending it. In her last letter to me she had been punting on the river, which river I can't say, and seemed to enjoy it. I am sorry to say there is very little news I can give you.

The King inspected the Grand Fleet Monday last and held an investiture on board the Flagship. The Zeebrugge decorations were given. Mr Boddie, do you remember him? He and Mr Stapleton took Enid & Margie Foster for a walking trip from the spit to Manly. When he was in charge of the engine room of the "Thetis" and when the engine room had been so badly damaged that the men were ordered to leave the place.

Mr Boddie volunteered to return and with some others got the engines moving again and she was able to carry on till she ran aground. He got the DSO and was recommended for early promotion. A WO seaman and a stoker got medals from the Australia. The WO's being a DSC and the others DCM's. The WO was in the destroyer that kept the Vindictive alongside the mole and was responsible for the Engine room.

Your affectionate son
JohnMArmstrong

Roll of Honour Photographs **By Roger Frisby**

Between us, group members have now visited and photographed the graves or memorials of most men and women listed in our Rolls of Honour. Ongoing research has meant that some cemeteries needed to be re-visited and some, more inaccessible, had to be tackled for the first time.

In early September, a gap in family circumstances permitted me a brief photographic foray to Belgium and France. Using our online RoH photographic guides, Google Earth and a SATNAV, it seemed sensible to base myself in Ieper and Arras.

From Calais, another visit to Dunkirk Town Cemetery, then to Longuenesse at St Omer and several around Poperinge, before arriving at Ieper. The following day was spent to the north and east of the town before moving towards Arras the day after. In all over 50 cemeteries were visited and about 100 headstones photographed. Notable among them was the new Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Cemetery and the grave of Private Victor Simon.



Three Guernseymen lie together at Sailly-Labourse Communal Cemetery near Bethune. Privates Jack Le Cras, Pierre Rabet and Albert Farley were killed in a grenade accident in March, 1916. Albert was just 17 years old.

Directions by the CWGC to some cemeteries are very out of date. Some have been almost isolated by road building and are consequently difficult to reach. Some are on farm tracks now virtually impassable without a four wheel drive vehicle. Other the other hand, Monchy British Cemetery was described as being down a 1km long track – this track is now a metalled road!



Not far from Vimy and “not far” from Noulette is Bois-de-Noulette British Cemetery. As you can see from the Google Earth photograph above left, the cemetery is small and isolated. The track from the village is now prohibited to all but farm vehicles - even from that track there is a long grass path to the cemetery. On a lovely late summer day, it was worth visiting for its calm and tranquillity. Rifleman Joseph Logan rests in peace there.

With this visit and Barrie’s subsequent trip, the bulk of our requirements will have now been met but there are still more to add. It will be satisfying if we are able to add the remainder by 2014.

**Paul Alphonse Guibout
by John Bull**



Private Paul Guibout, 26^e RIT

Paul Guibout is my wife's great-grandfather who fell at the Battle of Courcelles Le Comte (south of Arras) on 5th October, 1914.

Paul Alphonse Joseph Guibout was born in Landigou, Dept Orne, Pas De Calais, France on 12th September, 1876. His occupation is listed as a grower and he married Maria Francois Euphrasia Guibout (nee Lainé), from nearby Champsecret, in 1904. They had two children, Marcel and Henriette, in 1904 and 1906 respectively.

The Guibout family moved to Jersey and settled in St Martin in 1911. The wages in Jersey were twice what was being paid in France for agricultural workers, therefore it is easy to see why the Islands had a steady influx of French workers. There was also a famine in France which would have influenced migration.

Their home was a cottage at La Tourelle Farm in St Martin, which they leased from Mr Le Gros. They both worked for the De La Mare family at L'Abri Farm, Faldouet, St.Martin; Paul as a farm worker and Maria as a housekeeper. At La Tourelle they were closely befriended by an older couple with no children of their own and they were able to have their own small holding.

Paul's death certificate shows that he joined the 26th Territorial Infantry Regiment, (26^e Régiment d'infanterie territoriale (26^e RIT)) which was from Mayenne, north of Laval, in 1896, when he would have been 20. He was recruited in Argentan (near to his home town) so this would more than likely have been his national service.

According to a local Jersey historical author, Ian Ronayne:

"By the summer of 1914, a sizeable population of French nationals were living in the Channel Island of Jersey. For the most part, they worked in the Island's agricultural industry, which had developed a considerable export market based on its cattle, and more significantly, the Jersey Royal potato. Needing to supplement local labour, the Jersey farmers had turned to nearby Brittany where there existed a willing pool of impoverished agricultural workers. Not surprisingly, once in Jersey, they were expected to work long hours and put up with fairly basic living conditions."

While, in his memoirs, Edward Le Brocq recalls that:

"On the farm a 'domestique' was nearly always a Frenchman. He had a pretty rough time of it; getting up early to milk the cows, working all day, go to bed late."

But this did not seem to deter them coming - or staying in the Island: by 1911 there was some 5,610 French nationals present, representing almost eleven percent of the population. Of course, given that their principle purpose was manual labour, a considerable number of these would have been men within the Military Service age bracket; ready for the call up, if and when the need arose.

It was four o'clock on the afternoon of Saturday the 1st August, 1914 when the first poster appeared in Paris announcing the French government's decision to mobilise their army. In view of the deteriorating situation in the east, and the obvious signs of German belligerence, they could wait no longer. Whilst Parisians crowded round to take in the momentous news, the order was being telegraphed out to communities throughout France and the wider Empire. French embassies and consulates throughout the world were also to be notified: the war that everyone expected - and many longed for - was starting.'

When Paul was called up in 1914 he re-joined the same 26^e RIT. This is the account of the battle, which has been translated by Mrs Kelly Vallois, from the publication, 'Compte Rendu Illustre de L'Inauguration du Monument aux Morts,' 1923.



"The Germans, stopped in their invading march by our victory of La Marne, wanted to outflank our front by proceeding up North. We had to oppose them in successive barrages, between first of all Oise and Somme, then, all along their progress, between Amiens and Arras.

This role of protection was given partly to the territorial divisions of the Brugere army. On the 26th September 1914, the order was given to this army to settle on the east of Bapaume. It could not hold its position there and had to withdraw behind l'Ancre, from Bucquoy to Albert.

On the 27th September, at 5 pm, a German army corps, on its way from Cambrai, had its advanced guard in front of Bapaume. It extended on the 28th as far as Miraumont and took possession of Achiet Le Petit and Courcelles Le Comte as well as other villages on the right hand side of the railway track.

The 16^e RIT was given the mission to protect Ablainzevelle. Colonel Genin placed the 1^e and 3^e battalions in to position, as the 2^e had to remain in reserve in the woods of Biez, near Bucquoy, at the disposal of the general of the division. There seemed to be some hesitation, a lack of cohesion in the orders which followed one another and were inconsistent.

After an unequal combat during which the very violent fire of the German machine guns intervened efficiently, the 3^e battalion was compelled to withdraw. There were indeed some machine gunners in the 16th, but they had no machine guns!

Having come from Peronne as fresh troops, their equipment had not followed them. The enemy had taken hold of it and undoubtedly, at the time, was using it against us?

Nevertheless, the 1^e battalion came under enemy fire without moving. At about 15:00 hours, the 5^e Cavalry Division, commanded by General Beaudemoulin, received the order to attack Courcelles Le Comte strongly held by the enemy.

The operation needed to be supported by the infantry, the 1^e battalion was designated to accomplish this mission and march onto Courcelles Le Comte!

This combined attack was a full success, at 17:00 hours, completing the movement of the cavalry division, the 16^e RIT entered Courcelles and occupied it. The action had been swift, but very quick and the enemy had to withdraw in a hurry to Ervilliers, abandoning some of its dead, injured and ammunition.

The following day, the 29th of September, the sun rose on a vision of horror!

The church of Courcelles Le Comte was destroyed and its belfry was knocked down, the vault had collapsed, burying its altar under the debris.

Alone and stood over the ruins an undamaged statue remained and seemed to be blessing the dead lying there on the paving of the old church, without any doubt it also remained to comfort the living! For, when the chaplain entered the sanctuary, he could see a priest and an old woman on their knees and weeping.

It was the cure (vicar) of the village and his sister the poor man had found, crushed, unrecognizable, the sacred vase which contained his god, a god of peace and charity and he cried. In this setting under such circumstances, the pain of these humble people, who were also pacifists, was heart breaking.

In a corner there were some bodies, the victims of the previous day, the ransom of success. They were the dragoons of Beaudemoulin's Division, some of which were very young! There were also some commanding officers, one of them, without apparent injury preserved in the serenity of the tomb the joy of triumph his arms stayed lifted in a victorious gesture which remained imperative beyond death.

In front of them the 16^e RIT exposed themselves many gave slightly the traditional gesture of the picard before death they crossed, themselves furtively, awkwardly!

At about 9am, the enemy artillery bombarded the village and its surroundings for half an hour, without any appreciable result; another bombardment at about midday and towards the evening. An engagement of minor importance had taken place at about 16:00 hours. In its turn and for an hour, the French artillery engaged in action, but the ammunition was scarce and it had to be very economical in its blows. It was not, alas! The only inferiority the enemy was numerous and well commanded, its artillery was well stocked, it had large calibre canons...opposite those forces, there were only territorials, a few batteries of 75mm, no machine guns...too little ammunition.

However the precise order was to prolong resistance at all costs in order to cover the de-training of troops who had to stop the rush to the sea by the Germans. In order

also to provide a base of operations to the troops who to the right of the territorial divisions had the mission to recapture the left bank of the Ancre river and to free the road from Albert to Bapaume! It was under those disastrous conditions that the 16^e RIT withstood the fight.

There were not many deaths during the day of the 30th September. The weather remained splendid throughout. A few cannon shots and a light fusillade were fired without any effort.

At about midday General Beaudemoulin asked for the help of the regiment in order to back up an attack on one of the cavalry brigades upon Ervillers on the East of Courcelles. However in front of an extremely violent artillery fire the cavalry withdrew. The 16^e RIT which was no longer supported by it had to as well withdraw in stages and go back to its original positions. The spectacle of these cavaliers was truly picturesque! From the neighbouring heights one could see them in tight rows, manoeuvre on the plain...their pretty uniforms formed a large red stain, their helmets, their spurs, their swords shone in the sun ... in other circumstances, it would have been a marvel for the eyes. All of a sudden shells flanked them; shrapnel burst above them; horses reared and soon, when the burst of gunfire became more violent they were scattered.

At about 17:00 hours the enemy started a violent attack of their infantry, backed up by a very intense artillery fire of all calibres. The 16^e RIT came under it without weakening or any damage but the cavalry had suffered more. After an hour of combat, Hamelincourt had been recaptured by the enemy. At dusk, the lines withdrew to the edge of the village of Courcelles. Nevertheless the railway and the station were still held by the 16^e RIT; the station by one section, the railway by small posts set on the other side of the embankment.

On the 1st of October, at 10:35, an order arrived from General Brugere, ordaining to hold tight, but not to start any attack. The enemy artillery fire had started at about 10:30; it continued unceasingly until the evening, with a redoubling of intensity at about 13:00 hours when the station of Courcelles was seriously hit.

It was probable that the positions of the 16^e RIT had been spotted by a German plane which had flown over them early that morning, at a very low height. All of a sudden, towards the evening, after a lull, the bombardment resumed in quick bursts of gunfire, with an extreme violence. The material damage was considerable.

However, the troops, which were all on the edge of the village, at the station, along the railway or in the trenches, were not too affected and there were few accidents to deplore, a few killed, a few injured. Although a report established that the power of the missiles and the violence of the bursting, the shells were of calibre superior to 77mm, most probably to a German 105mm and maybe more, the 16^e RIT kept its countenance, its morale was good, but its tiredness was great. Besides, the provisioning was difficult. The proximity of the enemy made the cooking of the food impossible and the men were beginning to suffer. With time, the fight redoubled with violence and intensity!

On 2nd October, the brigade informed that an attack on Ervillers St Leger would be announce at about 9:00 hours and that the artillery would have to take part in this attack, but the fluctuations of the battle did not allow the realization of this plan.

At almost 15:00 hours, the 14^e RIT territorial who met with the 16^e RIT on the right, withdrew in the direction of the wood Logeast. At 16:00 hours the attack of the enemy artillery intensified on that side. The bombardment was of an incredible intensity and lasted for three hours. The calibre of the shells was surely 150mm; it was not in any way inferior to 105mm. Never before, had the territorials had to withstand such an intense fire. They were shocked and were surprised that the response from the French artillery was only weak and almost reluctant! Alas! They did not know that the cannons were few and that ammunition was even rarer.

During the day of Friday, 2nd of October, one had the impression that an enemy attack was imminent, vigilance had to be increased. More especially as the enemy was ready to use all means, violence and ruse! Already, an incident had happened which nearly led to some disturbance within the lines of the 16^e RIT.

Entrenched behind the elevated embankment of the railway, the Germans were cleverly hiding in the fields which bordered the track. At the indecisive time of dusk, before darkness had completely settled, voices could be heard: "don't shoot anymore, we are your allies, your English friends, we have come to help you! ..." The astonishment from the 16^e RIT was quite vivid. What if it was true after all? For one moment, they hesitated! One moment only, luckily, for they would have unavoidably been the victims of an enemy war ruse!

The Germans, using excellent French by the way, were trying in that way to convince the 16^e RIT that they were friends, English troops who had come in support to help them!



First thing at dawn on the 3rd of October, the positions of the 16^e RIT could not be held. The situation became critical, the combined fire of the artillery and infantry strongly supported by the enemy machine guns caused some considerable damage in the ranks of the 16^e RIT. Nevertheless it did not produce any disorder, no swaying. The 1^e and 3^e battalion who were supposed to meet up with the regiment before dawn only arrived before daylight. In a column of fours, as if it was going to take part in a review! It was an all too obvious target and the gunfire redoubled; the shells swept the road incessantly.

The injured abandoned; the two Majors, one, Major Michel, was killed by a bullet in his forehead; the other, Major Denouh, was very seriously injured. All along the line, from the station of Courcelles beyond the signal station, one resisted after all. There was bloody hand to hand fighting, bayonet combat, until 10:30 in the morning.

But the fight was so unequal that General Trumelet-Faber ordered the general retreat in the direction of Ablainzevelle and Alette.

This time the enemy was victorious; it recaptured Courcelles that the 16^e RIT had conquered on the 28th of September and had resisted for five days at the cost of an immense effort and in difficult circumstances. When they were able to count themselves, more than 800 men were missing! Killed, disappeared or injured. It was a hard outcome and how valiant though they may be, the brave territorials of the 16^e RIT were at the present time in distress.

Consequently the efforts of the command to recapture Courcelles remained fruitless.

In a column of fours, well aligned, the 16^e RIT marched up towards the lost village, but in vain. It had no alternative but to go back straight away.

The 26^e RIT came to the rescue, but its efforts were not anymore successful. This regiment had stayed in Hebuterne from the 29th September to the 30th of October where it had received a reinforcement of 500 soldiers from Mayenne.

On the 3rd of October, it occupied Alette, and its 1^e battalion advanced to the hill 122km north of Courcelles. The 2^e battalion employed to organise the terrain for the resistance, placed two companies at the Moulin (Mill) of Douchy and two companies as reserve at the North brow of the hill Alette. These companies were then sent as reinforcements to the first battalion. The 3^e battalion took position in front of Courcelles.

These two battalions fought all day and drove an audacious reconnoitring towards the village. A man even succeeded, in spite of the intensity of the fire, on entering the houses of Courcelles and spotting the machine guns in the belfry.

That day was hard for the 26^e RIT, but it maintained none the less its positions between Alette and Moyenneville.

It received the order to fall back to Adinfer on the 4th of October, after having earned the following beautiful citing:

General Chatelain, commanding officer of the 84^e DI is happy to congratulate the 26^e RIT. Having set out on the 3rd of October to attack Courcelles Le Comte, the 26^e came near the village and kept its position until night fall, in spite of very few casualties caused by a violent fire from the enemy artillery. It only withdrew after the formal order was given to it. That order had been compelled by the arrow layout of the DI.

This is how this regiment responded to the call addressed to it by its chief for its hold of command:

As can be seen by this summary of the battle of the 3rd of October, if the 16^e and 26^e RIT were not able, in spite of their bravery and sacrifice, to stop the enemy, they did not deserve any less recognition from their country and Courcelles Le Comte and we only did our duty in a modest way by solemnly paying homage to them on the 7th of October, 1923.'



A memorial has been erected to the south of Courcelles Le Comte and there is an annual Service of Remembrance for those who fell at the battle. After some research on the internet, I came across a site and managed to contact the Mayor of Courcelles, who informed us the service was always held on the first Sunday in October. Arriving in the village we made our way to the church where the service is held, we met the Mayor and were made to feel very welcome.

As can be seen in the above picture, following the service the congregation assembled outside and walked to the memorial.



Marcel Guibout and his daughter Karen laying the wreath and paying respects to Paul



The Guibout Wreath



The Memorial at Courcelles Le Comte

Paul's name is on the French Consulate memorial in St. Thomas' Church. His name is on the left hand side 6th from the bottom. His name also appears on the St. Martin cenotaph outside the church. Precise details of Paul's death are not known and his remains were never found. His death certificate states that he fell on the 5th October, 1914 at Courcelles Le Comte, 'Mort sur Le Terrain.'

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- Ronayne, Ian; 'Pour la Patrie: The mobilization of the French reservists in Jersey, August 1914', (2006), [www.greatwarci.net]
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Unseen Photographs from 1916 By Max Harrison

Some years ago a work colleague, knowing of my interest in the Great War, happened to mention a family member of his who had taken a camera with him when he joined up in 1915 to take photographs of the war. He mounted the photos he took in two albums and sent them to his wife. They show life on the Western Front, both in and behind the lines during 1916 and were taken on something like a 'Box Brownie' camera. However the quality of the photographs is very good for an amateur and I believe have never been published officially, seen only by family members. Shown here therefore are some of the thirty-eight photographs in one of the albums taken by James Bently Walters, many with his original hand written captions.

A Billet in France

All the benefits of home!
Clearly tucked well away
from the front line and
the odd stray shell, but
visible to a German plane
overhead?



Dinner Time

Suitably formal, dressing for
dinner! This was also away from
the front.

Our Motor Depot Berles-Monchel

The village of B-M can be
found on the main D939
between Arras and St Pol,
and would have been
about 10-15 miles behind
the front line at Notre
Dame de Lorette and
Vimy.





The stores carrier

The van in this and the previous photograph was requisitioned from a civilian owner as it has the original owner's name on the back:

'BROOK & (unreadable)'

Neuville-St Vaast

Virtually shelled out of existence, the village nestles below Vimy Ridge and would have attracted frequent shelling by the Germans. Just discernible in the right hand photograph is a light railway track.



The reason we're here!

Captioned 'Preparing machine gun emplacement' this reminds us of the business of war. At this stage in the war, James Walters was serving with the Motor Machine Gun Service.

The photograph overleaf is interesting photographically, taking a moving subject with a primitive camera and slow speed film is quite remarkable



Now, about the photographer James Bently Walters, who trained as a baker before the war, a profession that he returned to subsequently, to win prizes at the Manchester School of Bakers.

He had enlisted as a Private in 1915 and was eventually commissioned as a Second Lieutenant, and was later promoted to Captain in August, 1918, for gallantry in action with the Tank Corps. He was awarded the Military Cross (MC) whilst serving in the Tank Corps in October 1918 in battles near Cambrai where the RGLI had fought so heroically the year before. The citation of the award of the MC reads as follows:

"T/Lieut. (A/Capt) Walters, James Bently, 12th Batt. [Tank Corps]. For most conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty during operations at Seranvillers on Oct 1st 1918.

Capt. Walters rendered very great services to 2nd Batt. Suffolk Regiment by his fearless conduct. But for the gallantry and initiative displayed by him, our line on he final objective would have been driven back as there was no anti- tank defence. Seeing an enemy tank advancing, Capt. Walters engaged it with his own tank and put it out of action. He also did very good work in mopping up the village."

Editor's Note: As Max has indicated, the album contained thirty-eight photographs of which I have only used seven. More will feature in the next Journal.

Book Reviews



THE 1916 EXPERIENCE
Verdun and the Somme
Julian Thompson
(Carlton Books in association with the IWM – £30.00)
Review by Peter Tabb

Two names from the Great War epitomise the conflict more than any others – Verdun and the Somme, and this particular volume is an almost three dimensional encapsulation of these two cataclysmic battles on the Western Front.

The bravery and steadfastness of the French soldiers during the ten-month-long agony of Verdun remain legendary to this day. On the first day of the Somme, Britain and her Empire suffered almost 60,000 casualties, including nearly 20,000 dead – the worst day's loss in British military history. The grinding war of attrition then continued on the Somme for four and a half months. The carnage on the Western Front in 1916 was unprecedented for all sides, and had a profound effect on the eventual outcome of the First World War.

This big and heavy book is three dimensional for amongst its pages with their 200 photographs and 17 full-colour battle maps are integrated more than 35 facsimile items of Great War memorabilia, many of which are rare or previously unpublished. Touching these objects and examining and reading maps, diaries, letters, sketches, secret memos and reports, posters and booklets which up until this book have remained filed or exhibited in the Imperial War Museum and other British, French and German collections.

Facsimile of a postcard from Verdun from The 1916 Experience

There is also included in the book (tucked into the cover) is a 65-minute audio CD of veterans' first-hand accounts of the Somme.



Notwithstanding the price, it is tempting to regard a book like this as a bit of a gimmick. What text there is occurs on just 65 pages and the format is suited to the coffee table rather than a bookshelf. While there is little new to be learned from the text, although it is compiled by leading historian Julian Thompson, visiting professor of War Studies at King's College, London, and a distinguished veteran of the Falklands War, the inclusion of the memorabilia gives the work an entirely different perspective on the minutiae of the Great War. It is a book from which it is easy to cherry-pick, since that is what the format tempts you to do. For instance, one intriguing artefact is a booklet published by Gale and Holden Ltd, priced sixpence, which holds out the promise of Semaphore Simplified or How to Learn It in a Few

Hours... Inside the book are a set of instructions and a series of cards showing a somewhat Kitchener-esque figure demonstrating the various flag positions. Another publication from Gale and Polden (also priced at sixpence and identified as one of their 'Military Series') is a Section or Platoon Roll Book. Inside the cover are instructions as to how it should be completed, e.g., The names of NCO's (sic) and Drummers to be entered in order of seniority, and those of privates, bandsmen, pioneers, etc., in alphabetical order. A space should be left after each rank of NCO's, and after each initial letter of privates, etc., to permit of those joining later being entered in their proper places.

Particularly fascinating is a copy of the newspaper *Le Matin* of Mercredi 23 Octobre 1916. The newspaper's headline is VICTOIRE DEVANT VERDUN with news that the fort and the village of Douaumont have been recaptured from the Germans. The broadsheet newspaper is complete – all the one page of it – with much of the back page devoted to advertisements for various remedies for various ailments. I was particularly attracted to the wild claims made Les Pilules Pink for cleaning the blood.

It is easy to concentrate on the inclusions and pay little attention to the text but given how little space is actually devoted to it (there are also 200 pictures fighting for attention), what is there is both readable and precise and little of the details of these two battles is actually left out, a tribute as much to Julian Thompson's writing skills as it is to the editors.

The format is rather 'Dorling-Kindersley-ish' but that is no bad thing because it makes the large pages more interesting.

This book becomes less of a gimmick the more you look at it and what's in between its covers. I like the concept so much that I have five others like it but they all deal with aspects of the Second World War rather than the First. Hopefully the IWM and Carlton may decide to feature other battles from the Great War in due course.

If your bookshelf, or your coffee table, can take it, I recommend it – and it will be cheaper on Amazon!



Under the Devil's Eye
By Alan Wakefield and Simon Moody
Sutton Publishing 2004 (£19.99)

This is a book that has languished on my shelf for about 4-5 years having begun and then stopped reading it. One gained the initial impression of a book that was totally disjointed and that the story of the British Salonika Force (BSF) would not emerge. However, needs must as they say, and I took on holiday, with the intention of reviewing it for this Journal. I am glad that I did, for I learnt much of the campaign that I did not even have knowledge of and thus improved my understanding.

Sub-titled 'Britain's Forgotten Army at Salonika 1915-1918' a title that reminds us of Slim's XIV Army in Burma during the next war, it provides an overview of the

campaign from start to finish, the conditions that were experienced in the front-line as well as by the 'base-wallahs'. Summarising the reason for the BSF, by late 1915, Serbia, in part because of a typhus epidemic, was exhausted in its fight against the Austro-Hungarians who had now been joined by German and Bulgarian forces and was losing. The French and the British decided to provide support, and landed at Salonika in a neutral Greece in early October, 1915, re-deploying the 156^e and the 10th (Irish) Divisions respectively from Gallipoli. This force with the British later being reinforced by further Divisions, advancing north into Serbia, was pushed back by the Bulgarians at Kosturino, and would withdraw, subsequently building a defensive ring around Salonika known as 'The Birdcage', although the Bulgarians remained on the borders with Greece.

In April, 1916 it was decided, mainly by the French since the BSF had become the subordinate force, that ground would be retaken, and so the allied troops now headed forward to take up positions facing the Bulgars. A year later an unsuccessful attempt would be made to push the Bulgars back, involving the BSF in what was the First Battle of Doiran, to be followed by a similarly unsuccessful attempt at the Second Battle in September, 1918, with Greek troops, now that their country had come into the war on the allied side, fighting alongside them. However, the combined French-Serbian forces were proving more successful against the Bulgarians, and a general withdrawal by the latter now took place, allowing the advancing British, and particularly the RAF to harry them. With the Bulgarians looking defeat in the face, an Armistice was signed on the 29th September, 1918.

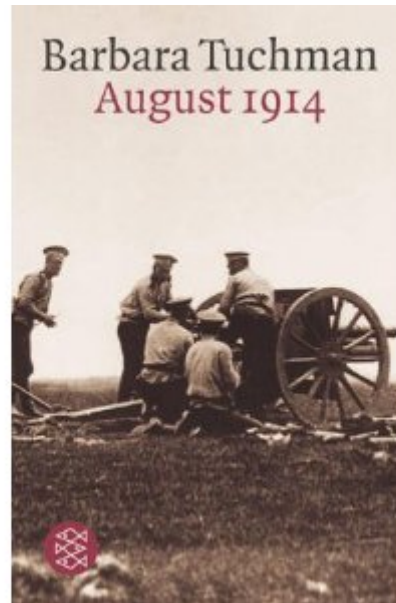
It all sounds so simple. But if an enemy such as 'Johnny Bulgar', highly adept in the mountainous terrain, was not enough, the BSF had to contend with much, not least the fact that much of the areas that were used were breeding places for mosquitoes and the attendant high level of malaria. Poor food, limited water, inadequate sanitation, an insufficiency of munitions and other material, a lack of leave all had to be endured by the men, coupled with boredom. The authors do look at this aspect of the Salonika campaign, and cover it very well. There is a particularly good chapter titled 'Medical Provision and Hospital Life' which records that anti-malarial treatment was making improvements, yet, in the first six months of 1918, some 13,000 chronic sufferers were evacuated back to England. The chapter concludes with the staggering ratio, experienced by the BSF, of non-battle casualties to battle casualties of 20:1!

An interesting insight to life behind the lines is also provided with various games such as football and hockey, amateur (and probably not so amateur) theatricals, hunting, shooting and fishing for the officers, horse shows and more beside. Given the poor rations, the BSF began to make use of derelict farms and grow more produce to improve the diet. Given the U-boat threat from the Germans and Austrians (including a certain Baron von Trapp), this was eminently sensible.

If the book has one drawback, then it is the quality of the maps (although I have the cheek to say so after Roclinourt!). Often the authors quote names of towns and villages that do not appear on the associated map, so that one is none the wiser as to the location. However, overall the book is worth putting on your shelf if you have an unvaried diet of Western Front material, and it is only 'disjointed' because the war in Salonika itself was such. Having just looked at Amazon, I see that there is a copy for sale at £100. Now, I would not go there, but do try to find one.

August 1914
(The Guns of August)
By Barbara W Tuchman (1962)

First of all, a 'health warning'. If you want to purchase this book via Amazon and you order 'August 1914', you might get the German language version, even though it was originally in English. 'The Guns of August' was the version for the American market, but it is available via Amazon also. At the risk of recycling the cliché of two countries separated by a common language, I cannot comment on the latter, having an earlier (1964) reprint of the English version.



I am not sure that I understood all of that myself, but I acquired my book, a year or two aback, in Ypres based upon the recommendation of a former American colleague, so perhaps English is more common than we think!

The book, with two exceptions of a scene-setting chapter that looks at the funeral of Edward VII in May, 1910 and the Battle of the Marne in September, 1914, focuses on August, 1914 as its title suggests. This neatly binds the events of that month without getting bogged down in Balkan politics. It looks at all of the major players, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Germany, Britain, France, Russia, the USA (even though neutral) and so forth, and by looking at the involvement in those events, avoids national bias. This means, for example, that Britain's effort in the retreat from Mons gets far less coverage than it might have done had the author been British (she was in fact American and had died in 1989). Focussing on a particular month is useful, but the drawback might be the presumption of prior knowledge in the reader. However, the technique worked in my case.

The author had a highly descriptive style and turn of phrase, and with regard to the leaders, there is a tendency to insert words into their mouths even if they never uttered them. Their characters are also looked at, Sir John French as being 'Untrained to study and with a mind closed to books' will Joffre was possessed of 'a habitual silence'. Similarly appearances are carefully noted with Russia's Grand Duke Nicholas having 'a gallant and imposing figure' and the French General Maunoury appearing svelte and delicate looking, a contrast to Joffre's 'paunchiness'! One might wonder if the performance of generals can be measured by a set of bathroom scales?

A number of different insights into the war are offered, and I was struck by the diplomatic indifference to Turkey before and at the outset of the war, that would allow it to enter the war on the German side. Churchill's retention of capital ships that had been built for Turkey was a blunder, not least because the majority of Turks had subscribed money for them. However, the closing of the Dardanelle Straits meant that Russia's ability to import and export material was reduced by 90%, and this would undoubtedly help the revolutionaries at some future point. Meanwhile, a hundred years on, it could also be seen that French and German indifference to

Turkey joining the EU might also cause unwelcome problems. An interesting corollary.

The British retreat from Mons is not an area that I've looked into too deeply before, but this book clearly gives a good overview and I am puzzled as to Sir John French who, at one point in the book, is described as being 'keyed to a pitch of valour and combativeness'. He was required by Kitchener to conform as far as possible with his allies' wishes while preserving the BEF, with many in the BEF wishing to engage the Germans at every point. Much has been made of his wish to extract a BEF from the frontline to regroup and recover, but it is interesting to note that the retreating BEF's direction was to the south-west and never westwards to the Channel ports and where his logistic bases were located, and although gaps occurred with the French armies on either flank, these were never fatal. Richard Holmes' book on Sir John might offer some further detail and this will be something to look at.

Continuing with the theme of Generals, it is clear as in WW2 with men like Patton and Montgomery, that they were not adverse to disregarding directions from higher command, taking a different view with the local situation as they saw it, and all the while, their egos looking to be satisfied with a great victory. It was not a national trait, for Generals on all sides were of similar ilk, and one must draw the conclusion that in encouraging leadership at this level, being a team-player can be a forgotten skill. It must have seemed fortunate to the combatants at the time that no individual ego-trip had cost them the war in August, 1914, although this was not so fortunate for millions.

In conclusion, overall the book is well worth reading, although I found that the final chapter fizzled out a little, and should have offered a little more analysis. Undoubtedly this reflected the self-imposed constraint of just writing about the first month of the Great War, a period when the hope that it would be all over by Christmas still flourished.



The Breton Calvaire near Boesinghe

A Look at the French Army's Organisation on Mobilisation in 1914

The Journal has often carried items that have mentioned the Islands' links with France, Frenchmen who died such as the Le Boustoullers (Journal 33), and of course, the mobilisation and subsequent enlistment of some 2,500 to 3,000 men throughout the Great War. Most of these men were former conscripts, while the French Army largely functioned as an organisation with the current annual intakes of conscripted men when mobilisation was announced. So, this article takes a look at the organisation to which those Guernsey- and Jersey-Frenchmen were sent.

Mobilisation depended upon the railways, and if it had been thought that the German plan was the only one to do so, that was wrong. To move the men quickly from Brittany or Normandy to General Charles Lanrezac's 5th Army Sector at Rehel for example, could not be achieved any other way, and this time, the French Plan XVII addressed the chaotic, almost fatal, deployment problems of the 1870-1 war that saw divisions without their commanders and all in the wrong areas to fight the Germans. Meanwhile, regionalisation had also made the French far more coherent in terms of their organisation. At mobilisation, we might also need reminding that there were differences in terms of the structure of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) when compared to the French. However, later on, the British adopted some of the French's as the BEF grew.

Regionalisation saw the creation of twenty Military Districts throughout metropolitan France and in Algeria and they were numbered from I to XX where I was Lille, II Amiens, III Rouen, XIX Algiers and so on. These Military Districts were also the headquarters (or *Quartier-Generale (QG)*) of individual Corps and thus used the same number so that III Corps was based in Military District III at Rouen. Obvious really!

The logic that underpinned this numbering system dropped down a level in the hierarchy in that each Corps was generally responsible for two Divisions, which were based in the Military District. Thus, by using I, II and III Corps as examples, we see the following:

- Under I Corps (Lille), 1st Division (Lille) and 2nd Division (Arras)
- Under II Corps (Amiens), 3rd Division (Amiens) and 4th Division (Paris)
- Under III Corps (Rouen), 5th Division (Rouen) and 6th Division (Paris)

Given that there were twenty Corps, this would result in forty active Divisions, however at the time of mobilisation, a 75th Division was listed as part of the regional reserve in the XVth Marseille District, and Divisions numbered 41 and up were Reserve Divisions sponsored by the Districts. (This is worthy of further research). Furthermore, after mobilisation took place, it was also the case that a Corps could expand or contract according to the needs of a particular operation. Pre-war logic was just as much a casualty!

Let us now look at those parts of France which are the closest neighbours to the Channel Islands, for there, headquartered in the Xth Rennes District, was the Xth Corps and its various units. The District took in all of the Cotentin and much of northern Brittany, particularly the Côtes-du-Nord and Ile-et-Vilaine *departements*, and

the various units that made up the Corps were dispersed at various towns and cities as shown below:

Rennes	QG 41 RI 241 RI 75 RIT 7 RAC 10 RAC 50 RAC 24 Dragons * 10 LG -	Saint-Malo	47 RI 247 RI 78 RIT -
		Fougères	106 RAL 136 RAL 10 RT -
		Vitré	70 RI 270 RI 76 RIT -
Cherbourg	25 RI 225 RI 77 RIT 1 RIC 5 RIC 2 RAP 2 RACol 110 RAL 130 RAL RM du Maroc -	Saint-Brieuc	71 RI 271 RI 74 RIT -
		Guingamp	48 RI 248 RI 73 RIT 4 CR -
Granville	2 RI 202 RI 79 RIT -	Saint-Lô	136 RI 336 RI 80 RIT 2 CR
Dinan	13 Hussards 24 Dragons *		

RI:	<i>Régiment d'infanterie</i>	Infantry Regiment
RIC:	<i>Régiment d'infanterie coloniale</i>	Colonial Infantry Regiment
RIT:	<i>Régiment d'infanterie territoriale</i>	Territorial Infantry Regiment
RAC:	<i>Régiment d'artillerie de campagne</i>	Field Artillery Regiment
RAL:	<i>Régiment d'artillerie lourde</i>	Heavy Artillery Regiment
RAP:	<i>Régiment d'artillerie à pied</i>	Footed Artillery Regiment**
LG:	<i>Legion de Gendarmerie</i>	Military Police**
RT:	<i>Régiment du train des équipages militaires</i>	Transport**
CR:	<i>Cavalerie de Remonte</i>	Remount Unit**
RM:	<i>Régiment de Marche</i>	Light Infantry**
RACol:	<i>Régiment d'artillerie coloniale</i>	Colonial Artillery Regiment**

Notes:

* 24 Dragons split between Rennes and Dinan

** Subject to further investigation.

Looking at the list of units above, there does appear to be a lot for a Corps that had two active Divisions (19th and 20th) and one, possibly two, reserve Divisions, yet there may be an answer in that Cherbourg is listed. As a major strategic harbour it had to

be defended, and this was most probably the responsibility of the two *Régiments d'infanterie coloniale* and the *Régiment d'artillerie à pied*, the latter possibly being better described in British terms as Fortress Artillery. Coincidentally, Brest in the XIth Nantes District, and also a strategic port, had two RIC and one RAP.

If we now consider the *Régiments d'infanterie* and the *Régiments d'infanterie territoriale* there are 24 listed, and there were in fact three types, based upon the ages of the men recruited. The RI which were numbered 2, 25, 41, 47, 48, 70, 71 and 136 were *Régiments d'active*, and, in 1914, consisted of men who were born in the years 1891 to 1893. Meanwhile, the RI numbered 202, 225, 241, 247, 248, 270, 271 and 336 were *Régiments de réserve*, and had men in them who were born between 1881 and 1890. Thus, when a man completed his period of conscription he 'moved' from, for example, 41 RI to 241 RI, and it is clear from this that there was a numerical relationship that the addition of 200 to the number of the *Régiment d'active*, which totalled 173, provided one with the number of the affiliated *Régiment de réserve*.

The *Régiments d'infanterie territoriale* that were *Régiments de territoriaux* drew upon the next age group, namely those born between 1875 and 1880, although this was progressively expanded to take in those born between 1869 and 1874. It is likely that 'our man' who had joined 241 RI from 41 RI, now moved onto 75 RIT. Looking at the RIT numbering system, it appears that it was aligned on a 'by District' basis, with the Xth Rennes District commanding RITs numbered 73 to 80, while next door, the XIth Nantes District had the RITs numbered 81 to 88 under its wing, and may explain why an addition of 400 to the number of the *Régiment d'active* was not envisaged even though it was a logical progression.

While the French had seen regionalisation as a useful 'tool' in terms of possible mobilisation, they did not follow the British route with regimental affiliation to geographical areas that occurred in 1881 with regiments with names such as the Somerset Light Infantry or the Hampshire Regiment. So, we and the French were spared the '*Grenadiers du Granville*', the '*Fusiliers du Fougères*', and other such exotic titles! However, it is interesting to contrast French logic with an emotional British attachment to a particular area, and it is a difference we British try and cling onto today, since no one has tried to number UK counties in the fashion that the French have long since numbered their *departements*.

British and French Regiments were different. As is well known, before the war the British regimental system existed with two regular battalions (1st and 2nd) with a 3rd Battalion as a reserve unit and one or more territorial battalions. But, following the creation of the New (Kitchener) Armies, the new battalions became part of the regimental system with, in a number of cases, a regiment now having twenty or more battalions. Not so the French. With the exception of eight fortress regiments who had four battalions, the French regiments had three battalions. Furthermore, a French regiment would serve within a Division as a single entity, i.e. with its three battalions. Not so the British, for we see taking the Royal Irish Rifles as an example, the 6th Battalion served in the 10th Division, the 7th in the 16th Division while the 8th Battalion was with the 36th Division. But, given that, Battalion strength in terms of manpower was about the same at just over a 1,000 men!

An article of this size cannot do full justice to such a complex subject as the French (or British or even German) Army organisation, but it is a topic of considerable import

and helps explain why 'Soldat Le Brun' headed off in one direction as opposed to another when he was mobilised. Given that Plan XVII always saw the Germans as the enemy it also has the logic that the northern based Corps were assigned to the northernmost 5th Army while the other four Armies ranged north to south along the front received their units from the Districts that were, geographically, broadly to their west. Discounting what subsequently happened, the French military organisation along with its mobilisation plan probably functioned exceptionally well in 1914.

Author's Note: Hopefully we will look at further aspects of the French Army in a future Journal. Meanwhile, a table showing the structure is shown on pages 54 to 56. It is not complete, although it is hoped to add further information in due course.

Faces Remembered



**Captain
Richard Alexander Baillie HENRY (later
FILGATE)**

At about the time that the last Journal appeared, we received some very kind comments about our website from a lady called Patricia Tardif who lives in Australia. Her husband is of Guernsey descent, as may be gathered, while her son, Phillip, is a very keen student of the North Irish Horse (NIH), and has developed the following website:

www.northirishhorse.com.au

Highly interesting, he has added the unit's War Diaries as I discovered while browsing for Richard Henry (pictured left), as he is on the JROS, having attended Victoria College between 1887 and 1892. There were two references in Phillip Tardif's work on the Diaries that caught my eye, one to RAB Henry and one to RAB Filgate, and given the forenames they appeared to be the same chap. And so it has proved, for Richard had wed a Filgate, and had subsequently taken her surname.

There was a simple reason for this, namely the provision of his father-in-law's will that sought for the Filgate name to be passed on, and for which there may have been the matter of an estate settlement. This took effect on 24th April, 1917 when, according to London Gazette (LG) 30033, the King granted a Royal License and Authority) for the surname change.

Meanwhile, what do we know of Richard's war service? From various LG (28910, 29027, 30335, 30543 and 30600) and from Philip Tardif's research we can pick out the following:

- Appointed Temporary Lieutenant in the Army Service Corps (ASC), 10th September, 1914
- Transferred from ASC to NIH, 3rd January, 1915
- Joins 'C' Squadron, NIH in France, 16th July, 1915
- Promoted Captain, 1916
- Seconded to a Road Control Squadron (with the Military Mounted Police?), 7th April, 1917
- Seconded to the Military (Mounted?) Police, 17th October, 1917
- 'Remains' seconded to command PoW Company, 15th December, 1917
- Resigns commission with rank of Captain, 28th March, 1918.

It seemed that a lot of his (as well as the other officers) time with the NIH was spent on commanding working parties and other similar duties, undoubtedly a sad reflection of the fact that the Cavalry was rarely called up to do what it was designed to do. However following my stay in Ypres, I discovered that there may be another aspect to his surname change that took place and I hope that I can offer more detail in the next Journal.

**Lieutenant-Colonel
Robert Richmond Raymer,
CMG, DSO**

Colonel Raymer was the Commanding Officer (CO) of the 1/5th Battalion, The South Staffordshire Regiment and who was wounded at Gommecourt on 1st July, 1916 during the initial attack on the "First Day of the Somme".

Born on 1st November, 1870, he was educated at Farnham Grammar School before going on to gain a science degree at London University and later a Master of Arts degree at Trinity College in Dublin. He became an assistant master at Tollington Park School in North London from 1890 before then being appointed master in Mathematics and Science at Kibworth School, Market Harborough in 1894.

He first experienced active service in the army during the South African War, where he served with the 1st Battalion, The Leicestershire Regiment and would receive the Queen's South Africa Medal with five clasps. Colonel Raymer later transferred to the Royal Militia, Island of Jersey as a Captain with the 2nd (or East Battalion) in 1904, on becoming a master at Victoria College in Jersey, later being promoted to Major in 1910.



He commanded the College's Cadet Corps where he made major improvements, and which at that time, and until 1908 when it became a Junior Officers' Training Corps (JOTC), was affiliated to the Militia's 2nd Battalion.

He married Ethel Annie Raymer on 2nd August, 1905 and they had one son, Charles Robert Peyton Raymer who was born on 3rd October, 1914.

At the outbreak of the Great War, Raymer was a master at the Clifton College (Douglas Haig's old school), having left Victoria College and Jersey in December, 1912, all the while retaining his commission with the Jersey Militia, and transferred to the 5th Battalion, The South Staffordshire Regiment on the 12th October, 1914 with the rank of Major. He was appointed Temporary Lieutenant-Colonel in February, 1915, and became the CO of the 1/5th Battalion, The South Staffordshire Regiment in February, 1915, taking over from Lieutenant-Colonel AR Crawley shortly before that Battalion's departure for France.



**Victoria College OTC in 1911
(Thanks to Captain Chris Rondel, Victoria College, CCF)**

Colonel Raymer remained in command of the Battalion until he was wounded during the assault on Gommecourt on 1st July, 1916. Recovered from his wounds, he appears to have been a 'jobbing' CO, and subsequently went on to command the following units:

- 10th Battalion, The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, from 1916 to 1917
- 10th Officer Cadet Battalion, from January to May, 1918, in the UK
- 9th Battalion, The Cheshire Regiment, and
- 5th Battalion, The South Wales Borderers, from October, 1918 to June, 1919.

He was 'Mentioned in Dispatches' four times throughout the war and was awarded the CMG and the DSO. Colonel Raymer was promoted to the rank of full Colonel in 1919, and then returned to Clifton College to continue teaching and to resume command of the JOTC there. He then took Holy Orders and served as Rector at St

Giles' Church, Sheldon in Birmingham after the war. He was recalled to the Army during the Second World War and served as a Chaplain in Greece during the 1941 campaign, later being awarded Commander of St George I by the King of Greece.

Robert Richmond Raymer died on the 12th January, 1948 and at the time of his death lived at Havering, St Mary's Road, Portishead and was a Clerk in Holy Orders.

London Gazette References: 28704, 28680, 28706, 29006, 29095, 29422, 29617, 29623, 30060, 30331, 30502, 30524, 30556, 30755, 30843, 30877, 31253, 31456, 31557, 31594. (Note: This is not a complete list).

Thanks also go to a Brian MacCormack on the WFA Forum for supplying much of the above information.

Website Workings By Roger Frisby

Incorporating the latest collection of headstone and memorial pictures will be high on the agenda. Further photographs will be appreciated, however, it should be noted that if you are using the 'Photographs Required' facility, you may find a mismatch in the page number references that are used in conjunction the CWGC's 'Cemeteries & Memorials in Belgium & Northern France' map booklet. This is because there are two issues of the booklet, and the more recent one commences on page 2 with the detailed maps. Cemetery numbers are unchanged, although some additional ones have been added.

Some new names have recently been added to the Rolls of Honour, the most recent being the Laffoley brothers who served with the Devonshire Regiment, and whose father was Jersey-born. But, a search facility has been discovered on the French SGA website that allows a better search for French soldiers who died and had been born outside of France and its colonies. This should enable any further Guernsey- and Jersey-Frenchmen to be identified.

Out and About

Looking Back: Trips to Belgium and France by Roger Frisby, John Bull and myself have already been covered elsewhere.

Ian Ronayne has given a lunchtime talk on Jersey's Great War at the Museum.

My talk at Caernarfon went ahead. I'll cover it in the next Journal, but on reflection it was a little over-long and detailed, but, generally well-received.

I am not sure that I am the best qualified, but I was recently asked to be one of the judges of poetry in connection with my WFA Branch's Armistice prize for schools.

Looking Ahead: As part of a new feature at Highlands College in Jersey, Ian will be presenting a short course on Jersey and the Great War in the new year. There are no details as yet, but the College prospectus should be out in November. The Journal should carry the details next time. La Rocquier School has asked him to do another workshop on 'Jersey in WW1' to their history students. On the back of this, he has

contacted other secondary schools to see if there was any interest. Victoria College has said yes, but next year to coincide with their WW1 study. Haut Vallée wanted him to turn up a few weeks back and present to whole school!

I'm in Jersey for a few days (28th October – 1st November), hoping for some 'microfiche time', and hope to get to Kew for at least a day when I'm next in London (25th – 28th November).

Odds and Ends

Administrative Matters: Nothing of note.

Philatelic Matters: The British Post Office is re-issuing the 'Lest We Forget 'Poppy'' stamps on the 28th October. One wonders whether this will become an annual event.

Jersey Prisoner of War Camp Memorabilia: It was interesting to see nine A4 size photographs of the Camp being constructed, recently up for auction in Jersey as part of a wider set of eighteen. The full set eventually sold for £1,200! A painted bone (?) depicting the camp will soon be up for sale also.

Enfin

Well, time for the Journal to be put to bed. My thanks to the contributors who made my task easy, my apologies to those whose inputs I have not yet used, and I hope that the slip in posting this on the web and via the mail has not been a problem.

Regards
Barrie H Bertram
19th October, 2010

Journal Issue Dates For 2010

The planned issue date for the remaining Journal of 2010 is shown in the first table below. Those for 2011 are in the second.

Issue	Month	Articles To BB	Posted Web/Mail
30	February 2010	10 th	15 th
31	April 2010	10 th	15 th
32	June 2010	10 th	15 th
33	August 2010	10 th	15 th
34	October 2010	10 th	19 th
35	December 2010	10 th	15 th

Issue	Month	Articles To BB	Posted Web/Mail
36	February 2011	10 th	15 th
37	April 2011	10 th	15 th
38	June 2011	10 th	15 th
39	August 2011	10 th	15 th
40	October 2011	10 th	15 th
41	December 2011	10 th	15 th

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

FRENCH ARMY ORGANISATION IN 1914

<u>Command</u>	<u>Corps</u>	<u>Division</u>	<u>Region</u>	<u>Base</u>
Ministry of Defence			NA	
MoD Reserve			NA	
		61st		TBA
		62nd		TBA
		67th		TBA
NE France Mobile Defence Force			NA	
		57th		TBA
		71st		TBA
		72nd		TBA
		73rd		TBA
XIV Regional Reserve			Lyons	
		64th		TBA
		65th		TBA
XV Regional Reserve			Marseille	
		74th		TBA
		75th		TBA
GHQ			NA	
GHQ Reserve			NA	
	Cavalry		NA	
		1st Cav		Paris
		3rd Cav		Meaux
		5th Cav		Melun
1st Army			NA	
	VII		Besancon	
		14th		Belfort
		41st		TBA
		44th		TBA
	VIII		Bourges	
		15th		Bourges
		16th		Dijon
	XIII		Clermont-Ferrand	
		25th		Clermont-Ferrand
		26th		St Etienne
	XIV		Lyons	
		27th		Chambery
		28th		Grenoble
	XXI		TBA	
		13th		Chaumont
		43rd		Remiremont
	Cavalry		NA	
		6th Cav		Lyons
		8th Cav		Dohl
	Reserve		NA	
		58th		TBA
		63rd		TBA
		66th		TBA
2nd Army			NA	
	IX		Tours	
		17th		Angers
		18th		Chateauroux
	XV		Marseille	
		29th		Avignon

3rd Army	XVI	30th	Montpellier	Nice
	XVIII	31st	Bordeaux	Montpellier
		32nd		Perpignan
	XX	35th	Nancy	Bordeaux
		36th		Bayonne
	Cavalry	11th	NA	Nancy
		39th		Toul
	Reserve	2nd Cav	NA	Luneville
		10th Cav		TBA
		59th		TBA
		68th		TBA
		70th		TBA
	IV	7th 8th	NA	Le Mans Paris
			Le Mans	
			Orleans	
V	9th	Orleans	Orleans	
	10th		Paris	
VI	12th 40th 42nd	Chalons sur Marne	Rheims	
		Rheims		
		Compeigne		
		TBA		
		TBA		
Cavalry	7th Cav	NA	Rheims	
	Reserve	NA	TBA	
			TBA	
			TBA	
			TBA	
4th Army	XII	23rd 24th	NA	
			Limoges	
	XVII	33rd 34th	Toulouse	Angouleme
				Perigaux
	Colonial	1st Col	Paris	Toulouse
		2nd Col		Montauban
		3rd Col		Paris
	Cavalry	9th Cav	NA	TBA
		I	1st 2nd	NA
	Lille			
Lille				
Arras				
II	3rd 4th	Amiens	Amiens	
		Amiens		
		Paris		
III	Rouen	Rouen	Paris	
			Paris	

	5th		Rouen
	6th		Paris
X		Rennes	
	19th		Rennes
	20th		St Servan
XI		Nantes	
	21st		Nantes
	22nd		Vannes
Cavalry		NA	
	4th Cav		TBA
Reserve		NA	
	51st		TBA
	53rd		TBA
	69th		TBA
Army Command			
	48th		TBA
	52nd		TBA
	60th		TBA
XIX		Algiers	
	37th		Algiers
	38th		Constantine
	45th		TBA
	46th		TBA
	47th		TBA
	49th		TBA
	50th		TBA
	54th		TBA
	55th		TBA
	56th		TBA
	59th		TBA
	61st		TBA
	62nd		TBA
	63rd		TBA
	66th		TBA
	68th		TBA
	70th		TBA