

**JOURNAL
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**Channel Islands
Great War
Study Group**
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Well Turned Out, Shell Turned Out!

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Hello All

In recent months there has been the news of the deaths of two further Great War veterans, Frank Buckles in the USA, and former Royal Navy man, Claude Choules in Australia, both having reached the grand old age of 110 years. One cannot be too sad, for both had clearly enjoyed long lives, certainly way past the 'three score and ten'.

But, another death that had also occurred recently was that of Professor Richard Holmes, the military historian, at the comparatively young age of 65, a somewhat sadder event. Probably more than any other historian in the last twenty or so years, he had helped to bring to the fore the Great War, thanks to his lectures, television programmes and books. The memsahib and I attended a talk of his at the Royal Marines' Museum in the former RM Officers' Mess at Eastney some fifteen years ago, and he demonstrated his outstanding ability to talk without notes for an hour or so, holding a 300+ audience in thrall throughout. In retrospect, he may not have been as prolific as others in terms of the number of books produced, for he had a day job as well, but, he was a communicator without equal, and from several obituaries in the press and related comments, it is clear that he was widely regarded.

With Richard Holmes' passing, there are other historians who are intellectually capable of stepping into his shoes on television, and I am thinking of people such as Peter Barton, Andy Robertshaw and Gordon Corrigan. All three, and a number of others that I have not listed, are undoubtedly as knowledgeable, but given the forthcoming centenary of the Great War, one might wonder how television will present it to today's younger audiences who are more attuned to 'cool' reality and pop talent shows, and whether the three could hold an updated documentary series together.

In a slightly similar vein, I attended my local West Front Association branch meeting early this month, where the feedback from the recent national Chairmen's and AGM Meetings was provided. It was interesting to note that the national membership was broadly static at around 5,800-5,900 and that there should be a (big?) push to attract younger members, but I was left wondering at how this hope might be realised without resorting to a latter-day press-gang! Looking around that meeting room the other evening, most of us qualified for free bus passes and would look and sound distinctly 'uncool' to teenagers!

Perhaps a succession of centenary commemoration events will stimulate further Great War interest in future generations, although it is becoming more remote in history on a day by day basis, when the human links are no longer there. But, given the vast scale of that War, given the accounts, given the available data, it should not be pigeon-holed in our collective history in the manner that the War of the Roses or even Waterloo has been.

This Month's Cover

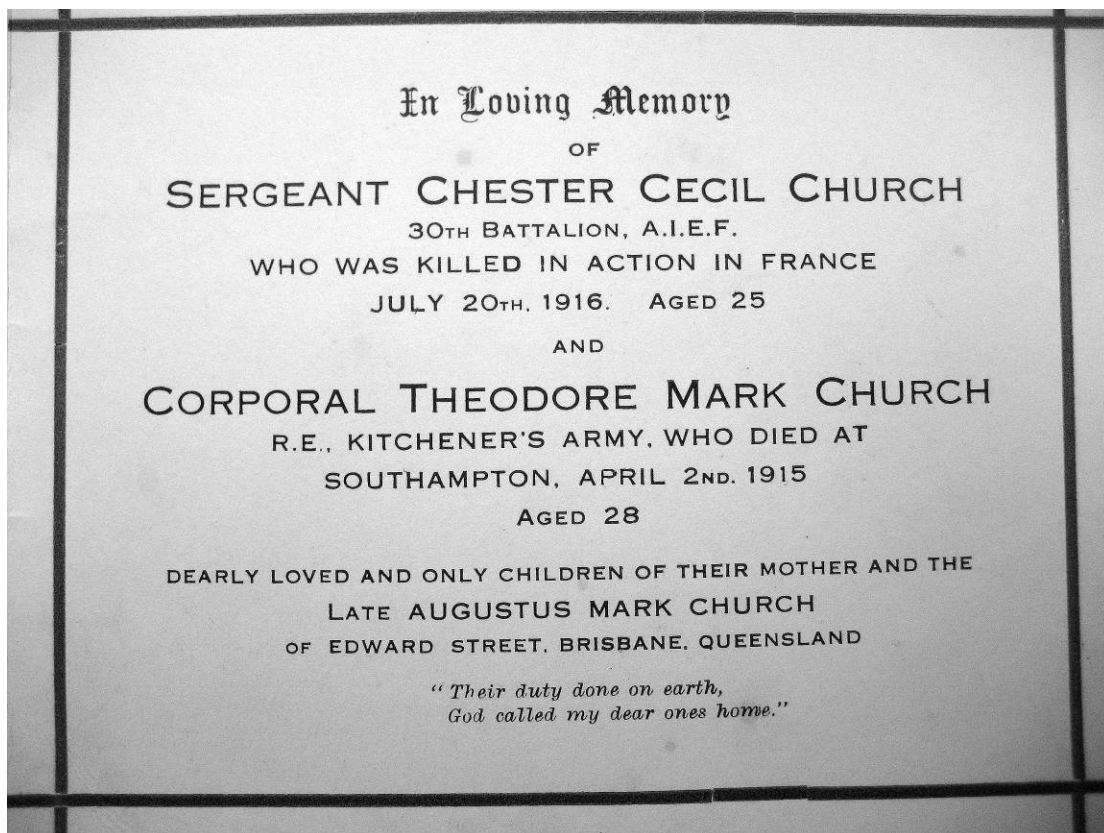
Having often complained that the Islands have far less recognised the contribution of their womenfolk during the Great War compared to men, I realise that that the Journal has never featured them on the front cover hitherto and hopefully this has been rectified with an artist's slightly racy impression of munitionettes turning out shells in somewhat pristine factory conditions. The coy young lady gazing at the artist is very much meant to glamorise her role with, in the words of the period, well turned out ankles.

Seeking Chester Church – Having Waltzed Matilda!

Success at last! Shortly before this article was being written, a number of Chester Church's family members had at last been identified, and among them, there are 'good' Y-Chromosome DNA donors. At this stage, it should be pointed out, if people are unaware, that the Y-Chromosome DNA patterns are passed from fathers to their sons, and that this continues on without mutation.

As was reported in Journal 37, after confirming the George Garland link to the Church family thanks to his step-grandmother Matilda, I had taken a breather, before resuming my research, although this breather was a bit longer than I'd expected, thanks to a heavy head cold and a week in Weymouth. The cunning plan, on returning home had been to pick up on the data that I had received from the 'Harptrees History Society' to develop my embryonic Churchy family tree. However, the plan fortunately went pear-shaped, thanks to my Society contacts E-Mailing me during my week away! They had been contacted by a chap who was researching the same family descendants of John and Hester (née Currel) Church of Fernhill Farm.

Having been pointed in my direction, we were then able to 'close the gap' and he confirmed that that I had not been barking up the wrong (family) tree, for he was able to provide a copy of the memorial card for Chester and Theodore that is shown below. Having been in his family's possession since 1917 or thereabouts, he now knows all of the background to it, while it being in his possession removed any doubt that I may have had that Mark and Augustus Mark were one and the same man.



As was mentioned previously John and Hester had seven or eight children, namely two girls and five or six boys. The named boys were Alfred, George, Charles, Henry and Mark, and my new contact, an Andrew Weller, is the great-great-grandson of Alfred.

But, his link is via Alfred's daughter Matilda (yet another one – a popular family name!), and so he cannot provide a 'good' DNA match. But, it was his family tree research that has proved vital in that he was also able to extend the line of descent from George Church, and that there appears to have been sons born at each level, thus maintaining the continuity of the 'good' DNA. Similarly, a line from Henry was also established, with the help of another family contact, Evan Bennett, who lives in Australia.

The question now was whether any male Church descendants currently living, and to find out, I posted fifteen letters, one of them to a possible descendant in New Zealand, the rest to other Churches in the BS39 postcode area around the villages of Clutton and Hallatrow in the Mendips. A couple of responses arrived within a few days, to confirm the links, and so far one gentleman has agreed to provide a sample. In his case, it is particularly poignant, given that his name is Jonathan Mark, and he tends to use the Mark!

What is there to do? Having discussed the family tree with the UK Ministry of Defence Fromelles Project Office and their nominated specialist, a Dr Peter Jones who advised that the proposed donors were acceptable, the process now is for the sample donor(s) to register their names with the Australian authorities, and to submit their DNA samples in kits provided. From my point of view, further research is no longer required, and after a little more than two years of seeking Chester, I have now become redundant!

The process will now take its course, but it is unlikely that a conclusion will be formally agreed until April, 2012, when the next Fromelles Identification Board sits. The family will be first notified that a set of remains has been positively identified before the CWGC goes public, and then it will produce a named headstone, to be in place for the next anniversary of the battle, at which time a rededication ceremony will be conducted with family members present. At some stage his name will also be removed from the Australian VC Corner Memorial to the Missing shown below.



Will Chester's remains now be identified at long last? Clearly, there has been the presumption that they were found, but there is documentary evidence to support this. His service file carries German documentation, and discusses the handing over of his identity disc. The War Diary puts him along with 'C' Company in the German trenches, while there is George Garland's statement which, although quoting what a Bert Hayes

had related, placed Chester's body in the German's second line of trenches. If we accept all that, it would now seem that the sole hindrance will be the quality of the DNA samples taken from the 140 sets of remains as yet unidentified. So, it is simply a case, now, of sitting and waiting for, it is hoped, positive news!

Guernsey's New Militia Museum By Liz Walton

The newly refurbished Royal Guernsey Militia Museum in Castle Cornet was opened on the 24th May, 2011 by the new Lieutenant Governor, Air Marshal Peter Walker CB, CBE. Mark Bougourd and I were lucky enough to be invited to the opening ceremony.



We were greeted on arrival by the sight of two sentries posted outside the museum entrance. One was Guernsey History in Action Group member Brian Garner who was in Militia uniform, the other was our own Russell Doherty in the uniform of a member of the Royal Guernsey Light Infantry (RGLI). The Lieutenant Governor made a short speech, before using a medieval sword to cut the red satin ribbon that had been tied across the museum's doorway. There were also speeches from Culture and Leisure minister Mike O'Hara and Director of Museum Services Jason Monaghan.

The new museum is on the same site as the previous Militia Museum, in what was originally the castle's hospital building, and contains many of the original exhibits but the interior has been completely refurbished. The aim is to tell the story of the Militia from its formation in the 14th century to its disbandment in the 20th century. Over the last three years it has been closed to the public while the museum service staff led by Matt Harvey carried out detailed research and designed the new display areas. They were also responsible for cleaning and conserving the items on display.



Air Marshal Peter Walker with Brian Garner outside the new museum



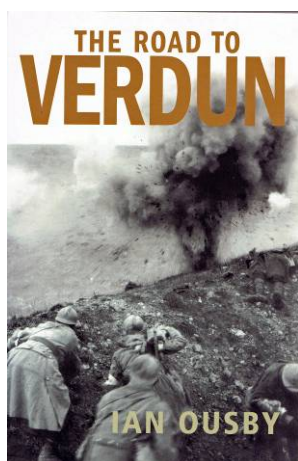
The new museum is above the RGLI Regimental Museum which opened in 2009 and is in very much the same style with dark rooms in which there are lighted cabinets containing exhibits and information about them, several of them in tableau form. On entering the museum the first display illustrates the reason for the original formation of a Militia as it depicts one of many French attempts to take the Channel Islands from the English crown. Visitors can press button highlighting particular parts of the tableau and giving further information about them. Below some of them are drawers, containing medals and other items, which visitors can open and view. Life-size historical figure models feature among the displays which also include videos and a database of all the Museum's photographs from its Militia Archive. I did not get an opportunity to use the interactive computer which is another feature of the new museum on this visit as it was very busy but hope to do so in future. After the opening ceremony and a quick visit to the new museum guests were invited to watch the firing of the noon day gun, and this was followed by a reception in the Amherst Room.



All in all it was a pleasantly informal ceremony on a beautiful day which allowed us not only to have a first look at the new museum but also to see the castle at its best.

(Acknowledgement: Photograph of the drum by Mark Bougourd).

Book Reviews



THE ROAD TO VERDUN

Ian Ousby

(Jonathan Cape 2002)

Review by Peter Tabb

Next month (July) we shall be celebrating, if that is the right word, the 95th anniversary of the first day of the Battle of the Somme, promoted by many historians as the blackest day in the history of the British Army. It is tempting to think of 'The Somme', which lasted more or less for five months (and was largely indecisive) as being the big 'set-piece' of that appalling war on the Western Front.

But while 'the Somme' was wreaking its destruction and despair there was another conflict, almost next door that had already been underway since February and would continue to the end of that bloody year. It was most notably described by Paul Valéry, French poet, essayist and philosopher, at the time as 'a complete war in itself, inserted in the Great War'. He was referring to the battle for Verdun.

Verdun was largest, the longest and the bloodiest battle between the French and German armies along the Western Front. It began on 21st February, 1916 pursuing General Erich von Falkenhayn's intention to 'bleed France white'. His target was Verdun for, in every Frenchman's heart, was the idea that were Verdun to fall then so would France.

Thus were sewn the seeds of a bloody battle that would cost 700,000 casualties. Like the Battle of the Somme, Verdun started with a bombardment although this time it was a German one and it came as a complete surprise to the French.

Verdun sits on the west bank of the Meuse within a ring of forts built to defend it, the strongest being on the east bank. The river was something of a mixed blessing for, while acting as a defensive moat for the town, it was also a significant obstacle to retreat were the forts to be evacuated. Given Verdun's iconic status – a sort of bricks and mortar Joan of Arc – by 1916 the defences had been largely run down (the French High Command had lost faith in forts seeing how those in Belgium had been so easily overrun) and although the forts still existed they were manned by platoons of reservists rather than companies of regular soldiers and many of their big guns were not functioning or were rendered inoperative by the initial German bombardment.

We all have a picture of a fort – a cross between Gorey Castle and Pippin Fort in Trumpton (or is it Camberwick Green? (**Editor:** Pass!)) – a large structure with battlements, a moat and a portcullis. But the forts around Verdun were modern fabrications, built mostly underground and with a few big guns that popped up under thickly armoured cupolas, blasted away at the enemy and then sank back into the earth again. In fact, in practice, you could actually walk over one of these forts and be largely unaware of its presence (and today that's exactly what you can do).

The battle for Verdun was the battle for the forts that guarded it on the east bank of the Meuse, principally Forts Douaumont, Vaux and Souville. As far as the Germans were

concerned they were advancing over land that was their's anyway – the province of Lorraine. They were aware that the French could not countenance the loss of national prestige that the capture of Verdun would entail – as well as opening a super highway into the midriff of France, and thus would continue to pour troops and resources into the battle until, finally, they were 'bled white'. Von Falkenhayn's plan was to literally beat the French Army into the ground, to annihilate it and remove it in its entirety from the Western Front as it defended Verdun. That was the plan.

The commander of the German forces on the ground was 'Little Willy', Crown Prince Wilhelm, son of the Kaiser, and although often treated as something of a comic figure, was actually a competent and combative leader and unlike von Falkenhayn who wanted the French to defend Verdun until they dropped, Little Willy was actually intent on capturing the city. Neither eventually achieved his objective.

Into this mix came General Philippe Pétain. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Pétain was a master of defence and did not believe in throwing wave after wave of his forces into the maw of German gunfire, instead he dug in, set up his own headquarters in the Mairie at Souilly, south of Verdun and established a supply line from Bar-le-Duc into the beleaguered city which today we know as La Voie Sacrée where each kilometre marker is supplanted with a French soldier's helmet. Pétain laid down two maxims – *Ils ne passeront pas!* – 'They will not pass' and as the German assault finally faltered - *On ils aura!* – 'We will have them'.

The British attack across the Somme on 1st July, 1916 was brought forward a month to relieve the pressure on the French army at Verdun and in that, if little else, it largely succeeded. Within two or three weeks or so von Falkenhayn had been sacked and Little Willy was on the retreat, finally ending up, in November, back where he started. Casualties on both sides were similar in number, not what von Falkenhayn had visualised at all.

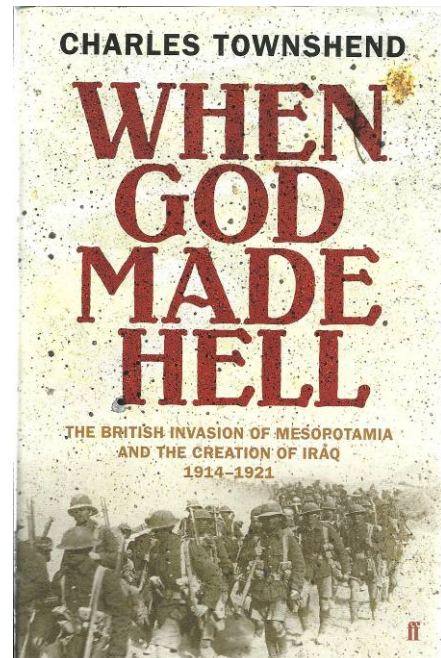
Ian Ousby's book gives a new insight into the generals' planning and the troops suffering. At the same time it goes beyond being simply a history of the battle itself – although it does that in great detail – by locating the experience of Verdun in how the French had thought about themselves, their nation and their relations with their eastern neighbour since the debacle of the Franco-Prussian War. Verdun emerges as the mid-point in the cycle of Franco-German hostility, carrying both the burden of history and – if only because of the presence on the battlefield of men like Pétain and de Gaulle, France's two leaders in the next war – the seeds of the future.

In his notes the author admits that, like most English people (and this reviewer), he first read about Verdun in Alistair Horne's *The Price of Glory: Verdun 1916*, originally published in 1962 with the latest revised edition being published in 1993. He makes the interesting comment that he is indebted to that work for its incisive narrative and the many occasions it offers for disagreement. Ousby's view is that this was not just another set piece Western Front battle (as many histories would suggest), it was, as Paul Valéry suggested 'a great war' in itself, the ultimate clash between two nations bent on the annihilation of the other. Furthermore, in your reviewer's opinion, it sowed the seeds of the Treaty of Versailles which was probably, even for many of the victors, a treatise in vindictiveness and vengeance for which one of the parties, led by the self-same hero, would pay a huge price in humiliation and degradation. It could be argued that the battle

of Verdun was finally concluded when Adolf Hitler and Albert Speer stood in the Champs de Mars and gazed on the Eiffel Tower.

I am sure that many historians will find elements in Ian Ousby's work to question and although I have read several accounts of the battle, for the moment, for me, this will remain the definitive work.

When God Made Hell
The British Invasion of Mesopotamia
And the Creation of Iraq
1914-1921
By Charles Townshend



There are those times when reading a book that one does not want to put it down. Sadly, this book comes nowhere near to qualifying in that category, even though there is much in it that is both interesting and thought-provoking. I persisted, if only to complete it for the review, otherwise it would have consigned to File 13! Having wanted to learn and gain so much from this book, I feel frustrated that the author, who is a Professor of International History at Keele University, has sadly missed a golden opportunity to produce a first-class history. So, where does one start?



In the first instance, the book is cartographically challenged in that there are few maps to support the text. The main map is one of the Middle East from the Greek Islands in the west to Gulf Oman in the east, while it includes part of the Black sea to the north and cuts into Saudi-Arabia to the south. I have scanned a section, as close as possible to the same dimensions, and as can be seen, it is yet another eyesight test!

It was of little if any use when trying to relate events to locations when reading the book and I found this to be infuriating in the extreme.

My next complaint (Yes, I know, it does sound picky!) concerned the excessive use of ampersands (&)! Now, most were contained in quotes, but for readability, I do find that their use breaks up the rhythm of the sentence to the eye. There are times when the

English became a little sloppy, e.g. 'His loaded language showed his take on the issue...', while the frequent use of Arabic or Kurdish words without a glossary was an irritation. He frequently refers to people without explaining who they are, such as the mysterious Mrs Stevens who describes Basra at night in terms of Oriental wonder. Basra may be a beautiful place for all that I know, but I am no wiser as to who Mrs Stevens was other than she made a post-war visit to Basra and wrote a book 'By Tigris and Euphrates' which the author quotes from.

Looking at the book overall, the chapters look like a collection of essays that have been written in splendid isolation, and one might wonder whether that provides a clue. For, it may just be a 'lift' from one of the author's university courses transcribed into book form, and that once each chapter has been read, one can head off to the university library to read the background material. If so, it does not help the general reader who cannot access books by Mrs Stevens or whoever. If one word can summarise the cause of so many of my negative comments, then it is probably 'Lazy'.

Let us turn to the content, and as mentioned above, there is much that is interesting and thought-provoking. We tend to think Iraq today in terms of its past and potential position as a supplier of oil, but surprisingly at the beginning of the Mesopotamia campaign, oil was not regarded as a strategic aim. The policy, such as it was, was very much aligned to maintaining the British Empire's prestige and to support friendly sheikhs in a couple of the gulf 'states'. However, the word 'policy' dignifies the situation as there was no clear statement of intent, and the British government had not been overly interested to date, while the British administration in India had seen the formerly fertile areas as a possible location for the Indians to colonise. Nobody was in charge and now, this effectively led to the military's mission creep!

With the 16th Indian Brigade, led by Jerseyman Brigadier Walter Delamain (see Journal 37), landing in October, 1914 as a fore-runner to a larger force, advanced from the head of the gulf to be joined later by the rest of the parent 6th (Poona) Division. Basra was taken, and then it was decided to advance further up the Tigris. By now, Major-General Charles Townshend (no relation to the author incidentally) had taken command of the Division, now part of the Indian Expeditionary Force 'D', itself commanded by Lieutenant-General Sir John Nixon, a man regarded in army terms as a 'thruster'. As the forces advanced, British prestige was progressively becoming more important in the decisions being made, and Nixon's 'thruster' character clearly had a bearing also. Now, Baghdad was to be taken! Kut fell to the British in September, 1915, and there followed the battle of Ctesiphon two months later. And, it was from here that the force withdrew in a very shambolic manner and was now in Kut once more.

But, those few words go nowhere near explaining the nature of the campaign. There was of course the heat, and men had to march and fight in temperatures of 110° F and more. There was also flooding, where the land, for a period, became as boggy as the Somme (no surprise, given that the Marsh Arabs were known as such!). The quality of some Indian Battalions were regarded as less than good, and on a number of occasions, a situation would be saved by one of the British Battalions that were also in the Indian Divisions. However, above all else, there was a remarkable failure in the upper levels of command to appreciate the logistics necessary for the conduct of the campaign.

Penny-pinching was the order of the day by the India government, with little effort put into developing Basra as a port geared to handle the supplies for the increasing army numbers. Given the distance involved, the Tigris was effectively the main supply line forward, but the boats were too few in number or of sufficient draft to cope with the shallow reaches. At various times, both before and after the surrender at Kut, the troops were fighting without having been fed for several days before going into action. But, the most 'criminal' failure in the logistics was that of the medical services. The numbers of casualties were higher than allowed for, and the medical service could not sufficiently cope, with injured and sick men sent rearwards on foot, sometimes in ones and twos, to a point where they could be treated. They were barely fortunate if they did not wander off course, or were not attacked by Arabs.

The withdrawal to Kut was not an event that boosted British prestige and the surrender in April, 1916 even less so. Relief columns had tried to get through, but the Ottoman forces, who in material terms were no better off, were capable of dealing with the frontal attacks launched by the British having well dug in. In Kut itself, efforts to make the food last eventually ceased, and General Townshend was obliged to surrender. Townshend has been held up as the individual responsible for the military disaster at Kut, but the author tends to see that Nixon was far more responsible, without taking his namesake's side for that fact alone. The Kut garrison were then imprisoned, and while the troops were systematically maltreated by their captors, the Officers far less so. However, there was recognition that when still in contact with his troops, Delamain tried to ensure that they were properly treated.

After Kut, more military resources were sent to Mesopotamia, and victory was achieved albeit at considerable expense with the British pushing northwards from Baghdad to Mosul and Tikrit. There is a brief mention of Dunsterforce, led by Major-General Lionel Dunsterville, whose role was to help the Bolsheviks and the Red Guard to hold off the Turks at Baku on the Caspian Sea, I only refer it to here because of the Jersey connection in that Dunsterville spent a few of his early years living in St Saviour, before heading off to Westward Ho and a life at school with fellow pupil, Rudyard Kipling.

The expense was a major post-war consideration with Winston Churchill now Chancellor of the Exchequer and the pressure to reduce military commitments. What to do with the region was the problem, trying to balance Sunni and Shia differences, while not wishing to appear as colonists. Efforts were made to set up government on British administrative lines, but in a way this was too efficient, since those who had avoided tax under the Ottomans were now doing so. The author is on far firmer ground here with his discourse on the political machinations in setting up modern Iraq, not least the inclusion of south Kurdistan into the new state to ensure its financial viability with the oilfields at Kirkuk.

The author attributes many of the recent problems that have been experienced in Iraq with the post-war decisions largely made by the British government, but also with some involvement of the League of Nations. While there may be a left-wing bias in his views, there is also some merit for his case. The early years of the new state saw the massacre of the Assyrians who had settled in Iraq as well as Baghdad's Jewish population. His summary of these issues is very good, and in fairness, given the last twenty years in particular, there is much in the book which helps a reader appreciate why Iraq is what it is today.

Out the outset of this review I panned the author (and by association the publisher) for what I see to be the book's faults which have prevented it being an excellent read. The author shows particular strength on the political, but although sound on the military side at the command levels, he does not provide the detail at the lower levels so that one does not know which Battalion of a particular regiment, as an example, is being referred to. But of course, with a Professorship in International History, his strengths will be in understanding and communicating the high level prosecution of government business. With this in mind, he may not have related this book to the needs of the general reader. I would be curious in seeing other review comments to see how different they might be to mine. I can only mention again the sense of frustration that I experienced in reading the book when I wanted to learn more of Mesopotamia than I did. Perhaps I should spend more time in a university library?

**Paul Kendall's *The Zeebrugge Raid*
A Reprise by Peter Tabb**

On an entirely different subject, the recent controversy over whether or not the last resting place of Guernseyman AB Helman, one of the heroes of the Zeebrugge Raid, should receive official war grave status, caused me to revisit Paul Kendall's book *The Zeebrugge Raid* which I reviewed in October last year.

Readers with good memories might recall that I wanted to enjoy the book and ultimately probably did, despite the author's bland style which, at times for me, rendered even the most compelling actions almost tedious. Which was a pity because the raid is documented almost minute by minute and the third of the book that is devoted to the specific experiences of individual participants makes fascinating reading if you are prepared to grit your teeth and plough through it.

I revisited the book because I did not recall reading anywhere of an AB Helman although a whole chapter is devoted to how the ballot system (covered by Rule 13 of the Victoria Cross Regulations) worked and ultimately determined who got what. In case you are unaware of it, Rule 13 states that:

In the event of a gallant and daring act having been performed by a squadron, ship's company, a detached body of seamen and marines, not under 50 in number, or by a brigade, regiment, troop or company, in which the admiral, general, or other officer commanding such forces, may deem that all are equally brave and distinguished, and that no special selection can be made by them, then in such case the admiral, general or other officer shall be selected by the officers engaged for the decoration ; and in like manner one petty officer or non-commissioned officer engaged; and two seamen or privates or marines shall be selected by the seamen, private soldiers, or marines engaged respectively for the decoration.

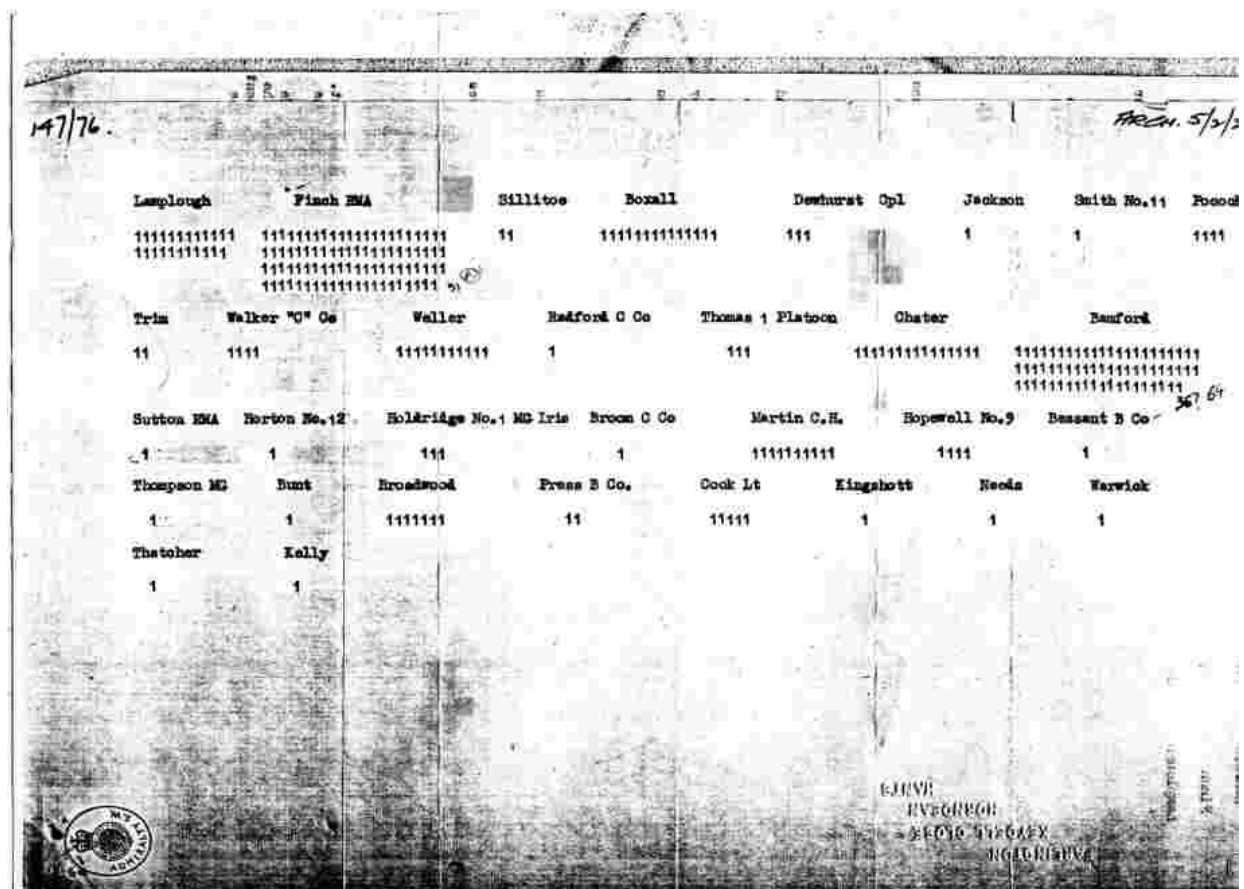
A total of eight Victoria Crosses were awarded to Zeebrugge participants (the largest number for a single action since the Battle of Rorke's Drift in the Zulu War), plus 17 DSOs, 243 DSCs, 16 CGMs and 139 DSMs.

As a consolation, all those men who took part in the Victoria Cross ballot in all participating services had recorded on their service records 'Participated in ballot for VC granted for operations against Zeebrugge and Ostend, 22nd - 23rd April, 1918. London Gazette 28th July, 1918'.

Despite his participation, sadly, AB Helman does not feature in the book.

However the book does reveal another local link. Lt Theodore Cooke DSO, OC of No 5 Platoon, 4th Battalion RMLI also participated in the battle although it was said that his actions in any other engagement would have probably earned him the VC on their own merits but instead he was awarded the DSO and the Croix de Guerre. He led the assault along the top of the seawall and was twice wounded with a head wound so severe that he required three operations. RN surgeons refused to carry out the third operation and to have it he had to seek private medical assistance at a personal cost of £250 which, at first, the ever parsimonious Admiralty refused to reimburse, although they did eventually relent.

Although born in Putney (and educated at Bedford School which has very close links with Victoria College), on his retirement in 1922 Theodore Cooke moved to Jersey where he served as an ARP Warden during the 'phoney war' period of 1939-1940 and then as a sergeant in the St John's Ambulance Brigade (which despite being a uniformed service, the Germans permitted to continue). During the Occupation, at great personal risk to himself and his family, he hid an escaped Russian slave worker in his loft, concealing him there for the duration. This was his way of contributing to the fight against the Germans. After the arrival of the SS Vega on New Year's Eve, 1944, he was made responsible for the distribution of her cargoes of Red Cross parcels. He remained with the St John's Ambulance after the war, dying eventually, aged 62, on 30th December, 1958. A hero indeed!



The above picture is of the Royal Marines' Zeebrugge ballot showing Captain Edward Bamford's and Sergeant Norman Finch's votes for the VCs that they received. Theodore Cooke is shown as is also Jerseyman RSM Charles Thatcher.

The Non Commemoration of AB Helman By Liz Walton



**AB John William Helman
(Photo courtesy of Mr André Helman)**

The saga of attempting to get AB John William Helman, RN recognised as a casualty of war continues. On 11th May last I received a letter from the Commonwealth War Grave Commission saying that based on the additional evidence that I had provided after my original claim was turned down, Helman still does not qualify for war grave status.

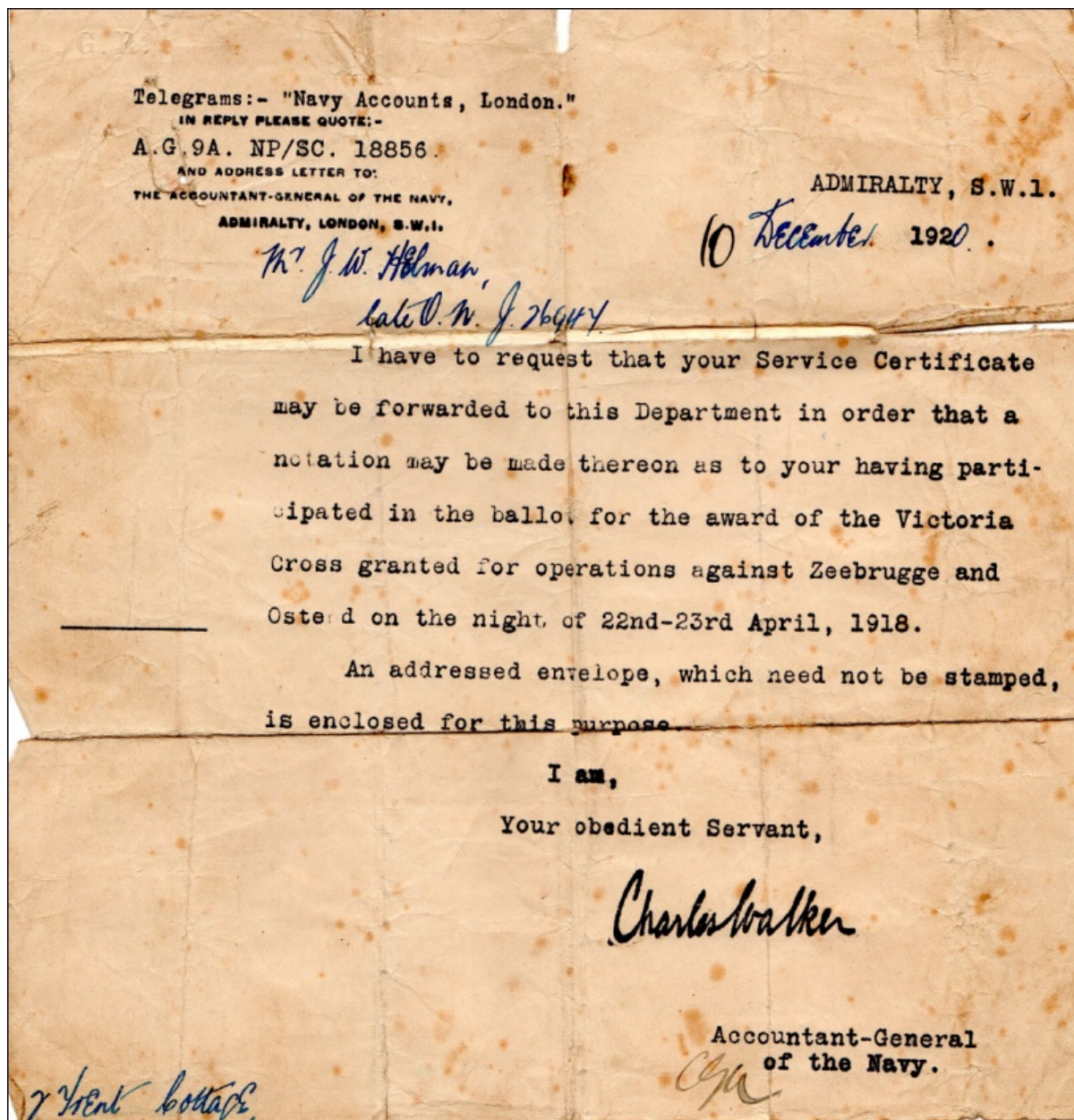
The decision was made by the Naval Historical Branch of the Ministry of Defence, not the CWGC but it means that his name cannot at this stage be recorded on the CWGC register. This in turn means that his grave will not be maintained by them. The headstone which was erected by the Channel Islands Society is rapidly falling into a state of disrepair as there is no family left over here to care for it.

I contacted the CWGC to try to find out why it had been turned down again as the latest evidence consisted of medical records from the Brompton Hospital in London showing that he was treated there for tuberculosis, the disease from which he died within the CWGC qualifying period, between the time that he was discharged from the Navy and his death. He had been treated for the same illness at Haslar Naval Hospital whilst still in service. As he had been in the Royal Navy for several years before being taken ill it seemed to me that this demonstrated that the illness from which he died must have been contracted whilst he was on active service. Also, the Brompton listed him on admission as 126947 AB Helman, HMS Iron Duke. The reason my claim was turned down previously was that his service record showed that he had been "...invalided on 13th February, 1919, with no indication of a pre-existing condition." The CWGC responded to my request for details by sending me the name of the person at the Ministry of Defence Naval Historical Branch that I need to contact. I am currently awaiting an answer.

I do not intend to give up on this as AB Helman had served in the Royal Navy since he was a boy of fourteen. Whilst in the Navy he volunteered for the April, 1918 raid on Zeebrugge, in full knowledge of the dangers involved. He wasn't officially mentioned in dispatches but his name came up several times in accounts of the action, and his service record shows that he was one of the men whose name went forward into the ballot for the VC.

It seems wrong that we are having to fight so hard for so many years for him to be recognised, when at the time of his death the Bailiff referred to him as: "one of

Guernsey's heroes", and there is solid documentary evidence of his service and of his subsequent illness which clearly must have been present whilst he was on active service.

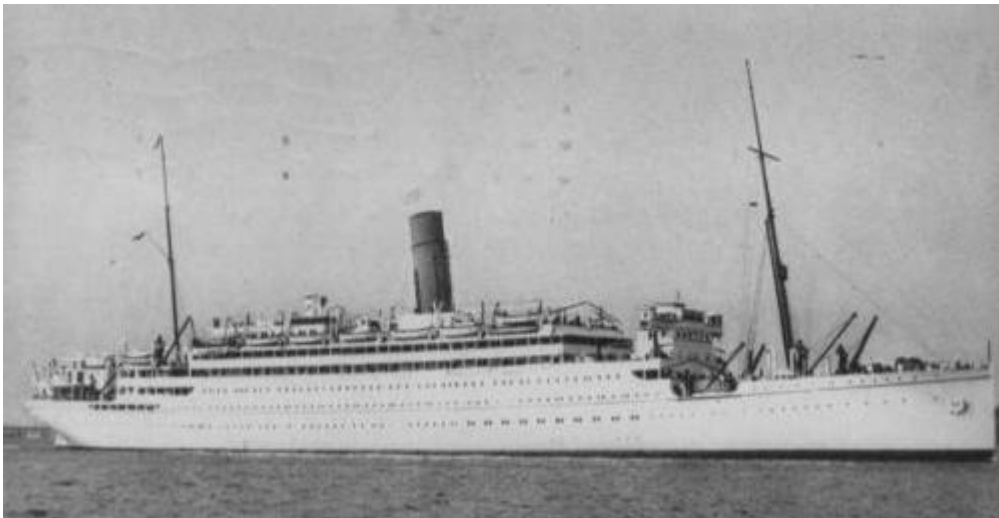


Document confirming AB Helman's Inclusion in the ballot for the VC after Zeebrugge
(Courtesy of Mr André Helman)

CWGC Non-Commemorations

The good news is that, since the last Journal, another nine Jerseymen (their names are shown in bold on the list below) have been accepted by the Ministry of Defence and the CWGC as Great War dead. This was particularly surprising as a war of words had been anticipated over the six Militia men, while the case for Thomas Whittle had also looked a little tough to argue given the time between medical discharge and death. The advocacy worked! However, there is of course the continuing disappointment that Liz Walton has suffered, in respect to AB Helman, to offset that.

To a conspiracy theorist like myself, it does seem that the Naval Historical Branch may be avoiding the obvious fact that a man who had served in the RN for a number of years only to be discharged with TB could not have failed to contract it while serving, and that this avoidance of the facts is deliberate! Was TB rife in the RN and was it concealed at the time? If so, is this now a case of concealing that concealment? With this in mind, I have done more research into Thomas Ounan who also died after his discharge from TB. I was puzzled by his apparent short RN service, from the 10th June, 1916 to the 30th August, 1916, and yet there was a reference to his having served with the 'patrol boats' in the JEP. I have discovered that he had served on the RMS Andes (pictured below in later life as the RMS Atlantis), which from March, 1915 served as part of the 10th Cruiser Squadron allocated to patrol the waters between Greenland and NW Scotland to deter merchant shipping that would bring material for Germany. During this period, he was a member of the Merchant Marine Reserve and was awarded the 1914-15 Star.



Some of the 'With the CWGC' submissions have been in their In-Trays for a lengthy period, and I propose writing to enquire as to progress.

Accepted

Norcott, Gerald *
 Dustan, John
 Cudlipp, Herbert
 Blanchet, Jean
 Warne, Alfred
 Bailey, Alwyn C
 Leopold, Archibald
Cheney, Walter A
Poingdestre, Alfred
Jouanne, Auguste F
Syvret, Edward H
Lihou, Joseph T
Le Breton, Wilfred J
Whittle, Thomas J D'A
Orange, Walter
Ellis, John
 Asser, Verney – Non-CI

With the CWGC

Logan, Lionel H
 Burton, Garnet C
 Helman, John W
 Le Noury, Walter
 Le Morzédec, Henri
 De Gruchy, Alfred
 Mutton, Harold C *
 Rundle, Cubitt S
 Ounan, Thomas P
 Turner, William A
 Vibert, John E

Pending

Pirouet, Charles A

* With the assistance of the 'In from the Cold' Project Team

Marcel Meheut RN and Trawlerman RNR By Mark Bougourd

According to the Register of Seamen's Service, Marcel Meheut was born in Alderney on the 2nd October, 1899, he is recorded with an occupation of Painter, prior to taking up service in Portsmouth with the Royal Navy on 25th October, 1917 for the duration of hostilities. His initial rating was as an Ordinary Seaman, with the service number J79889, this would suggest some prior knowledge of being and working at sea. Living on Alderney or Guernsey this is certainly possible if not probable. He served in this capacity until 18th January, 1918, when he was transferred to the Royal Navy Reserve. This is recorded on his RN service paper in ADM/188/806.

Marcel was transferred to the Trawler Section of the RNR (T) with a new rating of Deck Hand.



For his services at sea during the war he was awarded the British War Medal and Victory Medal, shown above. His medals are simply named to his RNR Service number as Deck Hand and are impressed: 19386DA M MEHEUT DH RNR. This is confirmed on the RNR medal roll in ADM 171/123, and can also be cross referenced with the RN medal roll under ADM 171/110.

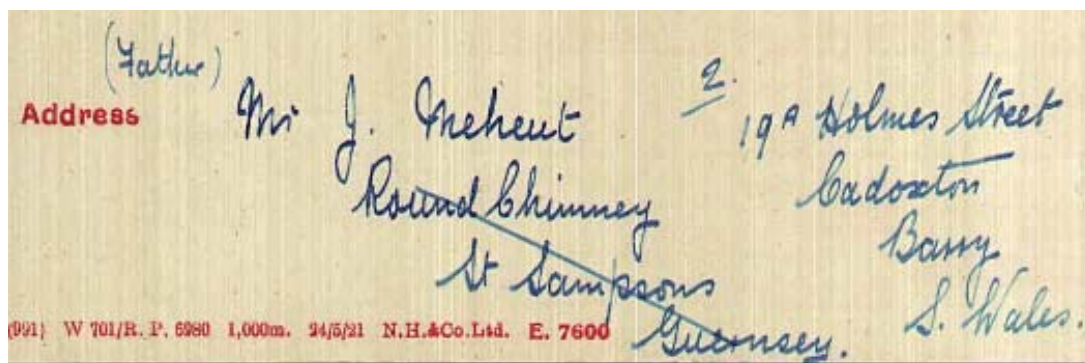
The British death register for South Glamorgan appears to record a Marcel Ange Meheut, with the date of his birth stated as 2nd October, 1902. Either this may be a register of his age at baptism being 3 years old, or he really did enlist in the Royal Navy underage like so many of his kind? Either way he lived to a ripe old age and death was recorded on the register during the fourth quarter of 1981. Little else is known about Marcel Meheut so any potential leads would be much appreciated.

(Editor's Offer: I'd suggest that his DOB was in 1902 and this was discovered, hence the transfer to the RNR. Even the role of Deckhand on a trawler carried risks as they may have been used to sweep mines! Anyone with alternative ideas?)

Other Meheut's known to have served during the Great War are:

- J81205 Theodore Meheut, RN
- 2199 Private Reginald Meheut, RGLI
- 501 Private Alfred Meheut RGLI
- 481 Private Aristied Meheut RGLI, who was 'Killed in Action' on 12th April, 1918.

Aristied's medals were returned under Kings Regulations 1743, as returned to medal office for re-issue on 19th September, 1923 to his father's new home address. If Marcel is related then it shows links to the family moving from Channel Islands to Glamorgan, South Wales, where Marcel Meheut passed away in 1981.



Shown above is an extracted section from the back of Aristied Meheut's Medal Index Card from Ancestry, detailing his father's change of address, this is also shown on the CWGC website as: 'Son of Jean and Marie Louise Meheut, of 19, Holmes St., Cadoxton, Barry, Glam'.

Unusual Headstones



Maintaining the Welsh theme introduced by Mark Bougourd in the previous item, he has also sent the photograph, above left, of a headstone for three Middlesex Regiment men, Sergeant Cording, Privates Hett and Loader, at Cardiff (Cathays) Cemetery. The reason for this is not obvious given the different dates of death, battalions, and places of origin. None of the men have a CI link.

The right hand photograph clearly does have a link, and is again from Wales, having been sent in via new Group member, Sydney Clark. Cpl George Roberts, an ex-Royal Welch Fusilier, was buried at Llanfwrog (St Mwrog and St Mary) Cemetery, located in Denbighshire. The regimental badge and inscription certainly stands out, undoubtedly thanks a few coats of paint!

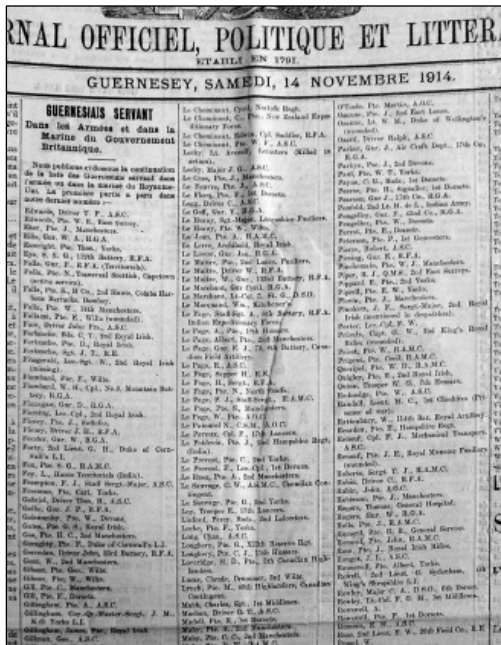
Guernsey Roll of Service By Roger Frisby

At long last I have made a start on a comprehensive Roll of Service for Alderney, Guernsey and Sark. It is a daunting task since it is not as straightforward as the Roll of Honour and is far larger.

Unfortunately there was no Guernsey equivalent of the States of Jersey Roll of Honour and Service to use as a starting point but we do have *Diex Aix* by Eddie Parks covering the Royal Irish Fusiliers, the Royal Irish Regiment, the Royal Guernsey Light Infantry, the 9th Divisional Ammunition Column, Royal Field Artillery, 321st and 329th Quarry Companies, Royal Engineers and 245th (Guernsey Army Troops Company, Royal Engineers. These lists are by no means error free, but considering that they were originally compiled in around 1990 with no online access to any records or access to the "Burnt Records" at the National Archive as we can enjoy today, it was a remarkable achievement.

Mark Bougourd has converted these lists to a digital format making the process of using them so much simpler. Unfortunately, this inevitably introduced some more errors to be corrected when compiling the new roll.

From 1914 onwards *La Gazette de Guernesey* printed extensive lists of those serving or enlisting. Usefully, these include naval service, whether in the Royal Navy or the Mercantile Marine. The Guernsey Press carried various lists and articles throughout the war with photographs and news of those serving, those wounded and of those visiting home.



Random searches of archives in Australia, Canada, France and the UK looking for common surnames with "Guernsey" as a search term will be conducted, as this produced many additions to the Roll of Honour and I expect it will also add greatly to the Roll of Service.

Some church school and club memorials also list all who served and these will also be used.

All names will be checked against surviving service records, where possible, and then against census returns.

The final format is identical to the Jersey Roll of Service and will also carry linked pages with photographs and additional information where available.

At the time of writing, I have added 3551 names, almost all entirely from *Diex Aix*, with the addition of names discovered by chance when searching service records. It will never be complete but it would be nice if it is largely so by summer 2014! It is now accessible on our web site although it is still being worked upon. However, your comments and inputs will be welcomed.

Breaking the Ice – Zealously! By Mark Bougourd

On the 19th November, 1915, the London Gazette carried the following:

"The King is pleased to give and grant to the Officers and Men of *HMS Jupiter* the authority to wear decorations conferred upon them by HM the Emperor of Russia in recognition of valuable services rendered by them."

In January, 1915 the Admiralty had received a request for assistance from the Russian Government. The ice-breaker that the Russians employed to keep the sea passage open to Archangel in the White Sea during the winter months had broken down and could not be repaired for some months, and they therefore asked if the British Navy could assist them. The Tyne Guard ship *HMS Jupiter*, an old Majestic-Class Battle Ship built in 1895 was selected for the job and left the UK for Archangel on 5th February, 1915. In making the passage to Archangel, the *Jupiter* freed a number of ships stuck in the ice by using explosive charges and it was not uncommon for the *Jupiter* to become icebound herself during the attempts to keep the passage open to enable badly needed war supplies to reach the front.

Foremost amongst these was the *SS Thracia* "loaded with special war material" which was freed with explosives and taken in tow by the *Jupiter*, her crew each receiving a salvage award. Temperatures of -20°C were not uncommon and life aboard ship was far from pleasant. The *Jupiter* remained in the White Sea area until early May when the Russian icebreaker was back on station. A grateful Tsar expressed his appreciation of *HMS Jupiter's* services by awarding numerous orders and decorations to the Officers of that Ship. Captain Drury St Aubyn Wake RN, was awarded the Order of St Vladimir, 4th Class, the Commander received the Order of St Anne, 3rd Class, while seven Officers received the Order of Stanislaus, 2nd Class, and another four Officers received the Order of St Stanislaus, 3rd Class.



It is confirmed that all of the junior ranks were also given the medal, but this is not believed to be marked on their service papers, and was not recorded individually in the London Gazette. Unfortunately they were just seen as men or ratings and not worthy of a mention.

Pictured left is an example of a rating's Medal for Zeal with ribbon of St. Stanislas. The Medal for Zeal was awarded to each of the Petty Officers and Men. The Medal rim carries the man's name, service number and HMS Jupiter. When the Medal for Zeal was given to Chief Petty Officers it had the ribbon of St Anne and when given to lower ranks it had the ribbon of St Stanislas.

(Editor: Awards of foreign medals during the Great War strikes me as being a highly esoteric subject, known to only a few. It is to be hoped that Mark will again take finger to keyboard to write similar articles in future telling us more about the foreign medals that were hung on someone's chest or around their necks.

A Signal Success

It can be somewhat disconcerting if one is a former serviceman and of a certain age, when paying a visit to those military museums that focus on the equipment that was formerly in service. There is to be frequently found the tank or the aircraft that one maintained, the vehicle that was driven, or, as in the case of the Royal Signals Museum at Blandford Forum which I visited in early May, the radio set that would always 'be on the blink' when you tried to contact others! The thought occasionally crosses ones mind that you should be on display in the Museum also!

It had been more than fifty years since I had been to the sprawling set of huts that was Blandford Camp, having spent a week there with the College's Combined Cadet Force. The place has obviously changed with the 1939 (or even earlier?) vintage wooden huts apparently long gone, but the chance to go down memory lane was extremely limited. Given that the Museum is within the confines of a military establishment, and that there had been the recent death of a well-known terrorist leader, security was understandably tight. It should be remembered too, that the security of the UK's military communications physical and intellectual assets is paramount.

With all of that in mind, civilian visitors to the Museum must produce a means of identification, have their photographs taken and once booked in, proceed to the Museum without deviating from the route and be timed in there. Taking photographs anywhere outside of the Museum is also forbidden, but not so inside. It may sound an unwelcome hurdle to scale, but the Museum is well worth the effort.

On entering, one is at once reminded that communications were not always about mobile phones the size of a matchbox or today's Wi-Fi broadband that permits us to enjoy virtually instant Email transmissions to be sent around the globe. Before the advent of electricity, commanders depended on other means, either through visual aids such as flags or heliographs, or physically by sending a galloper or a runner with the message. But, there is the obvious fact that to achieve a successful transmission by a heliograph for example, one needs a good line of sight coupled with good sunlight. Meanwhile, what guarantees are there that a lone runner will reach his destination? Therefore, how many runners should be sent out?

A particularly fascinating exhibit dealt with the Admiralty Shutter Telegraph System that would allow the average message to go from London to Portsmouth in fifteen minutes, or a pre-arranged message to Plymouth to be acknowledged in three. The system basically consisted of six shutters which, when in one of sixty-three positions consecutively for letters and numerals, displayed the message onto the next station. Each station had a crew of 'glassmen', equipped with telescopes, to continually watch their neighbours on either side of them, and 'shuttermen' pulling on the shutter ropes to display the required message. As with flags and heliographs, the visibility problem remained however.

But, there was an important feature with all of the 'mechanical' communication methods, and that was a need for the disciplined use of codes, whether it was the Morse code, Claude Chappe's telegraph semaphore system or the Admiralty's Shutters. Although some of the methods are long out-dated, the principles of good communication discipline remain today.

The 19th Century saw great advances in communications with Morse Code for example, invented in 1835, and by the 1860s, along with the overland electric telegraph, submarine cables were being laid under oceans and seas to connect countries and continents. It was surprising to learn that, in 1855, a submarine cable had linked the Army in Crimea back to Bulgaria, via overland cables across Europe, and then underwater again from France to England.

In 1870 the Royal Engineers formed 'C' Telegraph Troop to be followed by the Telegraph Battalion in 1884, this recognising the need to extend the Army's ability to communicate. The South African War would see the trialling of army radios provided by Marconi and then in 1912 the RE Signal Service was created and the role of despatch riders established, clearly bringing an element of modernisation to the role of galloper, particularly from the behind the frontlines.

The layout brings the visitor neatly to the displays that are focussed on Great War communications. The accompanying photographs (below, and on pages 31 to 33) provide the flavour of this section of the Museum, and shows that visual, telegraphy, telephony and wireless methods were all used. What I found surprising was that the equipment was surprisingly less cumbersome than I had perceived, although wood was the preferred material for containers. It is interesting to compare the 'then' technology to that of today, for the Royal Signals is, by its nature, at the forefront of developments.



Tableau of a Command Post showing a Telephonist at his Switchboard



**Among some Figures for Sale
A Despatch Rider**

Those who have seen the film 'The Longest Day' will undoubtedly recall the scene where the war correspondents launch a pigeon with a news report for their paper back in London, whereupon the pigeon flies off in the wrong direction with the cry of 'Traitor' ringing in its ears (Do pigeons have ears?)! One display cabinet features the role of 'Animals in War' and a handout that accompanies the display (10 pence in the collection box!) looks at pigeons in the War. We are told that the Romans used them as did Wellington at Waterloo, and by the British during the siege of Ladysmith.

The British first used pigeons at Ypres in 1915, thanks to the existence of many pigeon lofts in the St Omer area where Sir John French had his HQ. This venture proved highly successful, and the Army Pigeon Service was created and would become part of the RE's Signal Service by December, 1915. The Service would establish a number of fixed, horse drawn and motorised lofts throughout the British sector while despatch riders would deliver pigeons to the forward areas for each unit in the line. Men were trained up as Pigeoneers but were later given the title of Loftsman. By the War's end,

there were 400 Loftsmen, some 150 mobile lofts and more than 22,000 pigeons (A Roll of Service too far even though they were numbered!) in service.

The Museum continues on through the inter-War years, which included the creation of the Corps of Royal Signals in 1920, up to the present day, and there is clearly much more of interest. However, my focus was of the earlier period.

Like most Museums, there are the usual facilities such as a café (very popular with the troops), a shop, and a kiddies' area upstairs. I was disappointed in the range of books available, as the titles were largely of a general military nature, and did not include anything specific on the RE Signal Service. I had wanted to find out what the Archives might have held, but unfortunately the Archivist was unavailable, but I put that down to a lack of preparation on my part. As was the hoped for look at the Royal Naval Division (RND) memorial, which is not on the Camp, but on the A354 road to Salisbury!

A number of asides:

- The RND were originally at Blandford Camp before being sent to the Dardanelles
- The Museum carries a brief look at the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY)
- Looking through a number of service records for Jerseymen who joined the RE Signal Service, it can be seen that their civilian employers were required to sign certificates of the men's competency for telegraphy work.

Overall, the Museum is an excellent one to visit should you get the opportunity, and details can be found on their website:

www.royalsignalsmuseum.com

Carry some good identification and allow that little bit of time to clear security.

Website Workings By Roger Frisby

The site menu has been changed to add links to introduce the Guernsey Roll of Service which is discussed in an article earlier in this Journal. In addition, a further amendment to the Jersey Roll of Service adds a further 78 names and amends the details of 230 others.

Following Ian Ronayne's discovery of a very useful French site listing the war dead from the Manche *departement*, '*Les manchots morts pour la France en 14-18*', it was obviously time to rearrange our 'Links' menu as it was getting somewhat out of hand. It's now divided into countries and seems much easier to use now. I'm often reluctant to add extra links as their addresses can often change, causing our link to fail, but this one was a must!

Pages have been added or modified to reflect the newly commemorated Jerseymen and we now await the CWGC details to appear. Various RoH cemetery photographs continue to trickle in and are now displayed.

A few weeks ago whilst in London with a travelcard I visited Camberwell Old cemetery looking for Jerseyman Herbert Tournay. I had little time available but quartered the area where he is believed to be buried without success. It proves my long held belief that

help from the local burials office is essential when visiting public cemeteries. I should listen to my own advice!

Both the Jersey and Guernsey Rolls of Honour include men who had worked for the Great Western Railway in the Islands and on the mainland. Liz Walton discovered that Swindon Libraries has a selection of images from the Great War, including copies of the Great Western Railway Magazine containing their own Roll of Honour. We have already found a photograph of one Guernseyman:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/swindonlocal/sets/72157620893472468/with/4119012251/>

Permission is being sought for its use on our web site.

(**Editor:** OV Arthur Grellier is also pictured in the GWR Magazine).

Faces Remembered



After recounting his tale in 'A Double Entry' as well as featuring his name in 'Survivors in one War, Casualties the Next', both in Journal 36, thanks to his great-niece we can now also see what François Desvergez looked like. Furthermore, we also have the picture of his mother Selina (Celine), the instigator of the letter to the Carburton Camp CO.

Having noted that François had gone from the Bedfordshires to the Hampshire Regiment, and then being discharged as under age, only to enter the Royal Navy, I had also received a photograph showing him as a Corporal in a Highland Regiment! Taken in a studio, this has confirmed a view of mine, long held, that photographers stretched

the concept of 'artistic license' to new heights (or is it depths?) in terms of their sitters dressing up in uniforms that bore no relation to reality.

Ronayne Reports By Ian Ronayne

Talks and Walks: It is all fairly quiet for me on the Great War front in Jersey at the moment. My adult education courses, 'The Napoleonic Wars and Jersey', 'The First World War and Jersey' and 'The Second World War in Jersey' started in May, with the first and the last running, but unfortunately not enough people came forward to hold the First World War one. The Second World War is the most popular, with twelve people signed up currently. They will all be offered again in the Autumn term.

A Jersey Contingent Memorial: Nothing to report on the planned Jersey Pals memorial for the New North Quay. I am waiting to see designs from the stonemason who will be creating it. I am pleased to say that after discussions with Jersey Heritage, however, an interpretation panel explaining the story of the Jersey Company in the Militia Museum at Elizabeth Castle is being updated to correct a number of errors. They are also going to add some details on my book for those who want more information.

Société Jersiaise: Finally, last month I was proposed and elected to the Executive Committee of the Société Jersiaise, a real honour. The first meetings are already under my belt!

Out and About

Looking Back: Steve Bailey recently visited a number of Great War Belgian forts at Namur and offers the warning that opening hours can be variable. Check beforehand.

Looking Ahead: Daniel Benest is on the Somme, 25th June – 2nd July. He has a list of a few 'to be photographed' headstones that, travel plans permitting, he will endeavour to visit. I'm in Normandy, 18th June-2nd July, but as I am unlikely to visit Great War sites, I am taking several books to read instead.

Odds and Ends

Administrative Matters: It would be of help if changes to Members' Email addresses are notified as they occur. This will enable me to keep the distribution lists up to date and for members to receive prompts on particular matters. By and large, 'confetti' Emails have been avoided.

Birthday Honours List – June 2011: The recent list was notable for the inclusion of Jersey's Lieutenant-Governor, Lieutenant-General Andrew Ridgway, who received the honour of Knight Commander of the British Empire (KBE), and who will now be Sir Andrew while his wife becomes Lady Valerie. Living outside of the Island, it does seem to me that the couple have deeply involved themselves with the community without any airs and graces, and as the Queen's representative he has done a first class job and the award is well deserved, both for that and, I suspect, for his previous military roles.

On a more parochial note, Sir Andrew has shown considerable interest in matters Great War, as will be remembered with regards to his agreement that his article on Edward de

Faye could be used on our website, and for providing the Foreword to Ian Ronayne's book 'Ours'. Similarly, he has shown support to the Group on a number of related issues including non-commemorations.

Turning to a much broader point regarding the Honours List, Mark Bougourd has highlighted the fact that the List now shows the Crown Dependencies of Guernsey, the Isle of Man, and Jersey as distinct entities. A welcome change that is long overdue.

The Lieutenant-Governors: With the recent appointment of Air Marshal Peter Walker as Lieutenant-Governor in Guernsey, and the imminent changeover in Jersey when General Sir John McColl takes over from Sir Andrew in September, 2011, I hope that we as a Group will look to encourage their interest in our work as before. Both will be in post at the time of the 100th Anniversary of the outbreak of the Great War, which, it is to be hoped, will see the launch of a number of commemorative events.

Jersey Archive: The team at the Archive have recently been recognised as being first-rate in terms of their approach to the archiving, conservation and allowing for access to the material that they hold, being well up with the best in the United Kingdom. Those of us who make use of their services will agree that the recognition is well deserved.

Meanwhile, their local 'Where you live' talks are continuing, with the remainder of this year's programme listed below:

- The history of St Martin's Village on 18th June, 2011
- The history of Grand Vaux on 16th July, 2011
- The history of Mont Mado on 20th August, 2011
- The history of Les Quennevais on 17th September, 2011
- The history of Five Mile Road on 15th October, 2011
- The history of La Rocque on 19th November, 2011

Newspaper Archives: As has previously been referred to in Journal articles, authors have frequently delved deep into the Guernsey Press and Jersey Evening Post microfiche for information and other research related material. Members may wish to consider a couple of sources that I certainly have certainly found useful in my research.

The first is the Australian Newspaper Archive which can be accessed on the internet at the address below:

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/home>

It is to be a link on our website, and it provides access to papers throughout the country, and all the way back to 1803! It contains considerable personal detail, especially for the Great War period, and would be equally useful for 'plain' family research.

The second source is the Times, and that offers a full digital imagery service from the 1700s up until 1985. There is a problem in that you have to pay to access it! However, it is possible that this expense may be circumvented if you are a Library user, and here I can only cite my own Library Service, provided by Lancashire County Council, who now provide access to the Times archive via a menu facility on their website. A simple entry of my reader's number and access to two hundred years of history is immediately available!

I cannot obviously say what other Library Services provide where you live, but it would be well worth exploring what yours does offer, and to see whether they could subscribe to the service.

The Transfer of RNAS Personnel to the RAF: The creation of the Royal Air Force on the 1st April, 1918 saw the transfer of soldiers and sailors to this new service. In a logical manner (somewhat surprising it may be thought!) ex-Royal Flying Corps men retained their old army service number. The Royal Naval Air Service had a separate number system, but their numbers had been prefixed by the letter 'F'. So, to integrate RNAS personnel into the army based system, the prefix was dropped, and the figure 200,000 was added to the remaining number. Thus the man who was numbered F2345 became 202345, but a word of caution as there may be one or two exceptions to the rule.

A piece of useless information? Hopefully not, especially if you are trying to link a man's service with the RNAS on into the RAF?

La Boisselle: In the last week or two, there has been widespread media coverage of the excavation and research that has begun at La Boisselle, and in particular, the area known as the 'Glory Hole', which had remained largely undisturbed since the Great War. There is detailed information which can be found on the following website:

<http://www.laboisselleproject.com/>

But, in summary, the Group under the direction of Simon Jones (an old chum from the Lancaster University summer schools and my trip to Gallipoli) is exploring the role of the Royal Engineer's 179th and 185th Tunnelling Companies and their French and German counterparts in this particular area, as well as the excavating tunnels themselves to understand more of the lives that were led. Public visits can be made, but check the website for details regarding access. Meanwhile, the 'Blighty Tea Rooms' are just across the road!

The work to excavate should be of particular interest to Group members, because an Old Elizabethan, Lieutenant Ralph Hawtrey, had belonged to 179th Tunnelling Company before he was killed in September, 1916.

Vale Parish War Memorial: A brief update, as of 13th June, from Liz Walton:

'The decision made at the last Vale parish meeting last month was not to move the war memorial to the proposed new site by the Douzaine Room. However Bill Cohu who brought the scheme before the Douzaine suggested that the current site should be tidied up and better maintained. I drove past this morning and there were workmen cutting down overhanging trees and cleaning up the area surrounding the memorial. I will go back in a few days and take photos of the complete project, but it does look as if some good has come out of the proposal even though the original idea wasn't taken up.'

Jersey CWGC Non-Commemorations: Further to the Jerseymen being accepted for commemorations, I should point out that Vic Geary is now working to locate the graves for the CWGC 'Inspector'. It is not as simple as it appears, not least due to the lack of clarity as to what happened when the Crematorium was built at Westmount, while Wilfred Le Breton's widow appears to have 'snatched' his remains rather quickly!

110 Company, RGA: A study of service records is highlighting some changes to assumptions regarding the numbers of men who joined the Company based in Jersey. It now seems that there were two batches of service numbers allocated, 148938 to 149097 and also 158139 to 158232, making a total of 252. This seems a considerable figure, given that, as far as can be determined, the South Hill Battery was equipped with only two 6" QF guns.

Although it has not been shown in the JROS, in September, 1918 the Coastal Defence organisation for the UK was changed and coastal Fire Commands were established. Starting with N^o 1 at Falmouth, and sequentially numbered anti-clockwise around the UK, the RGA Companies in Jersey and Guernsey became 'A' and 'B' Batteries of N^o 36 (Channel Islands) Fire Command.

DVD – The Lusitania: Sub-titled 'A Damned Dirty Business', this is a 52 minute long DVD that looks at the build up to and then the sinking of the 'Lusitania' in May, 1915 by the German submarine U-20. Claiming to shed new light on the argument that the ship was or was not carrying war material along with the passengers, it does not really, for it was carrying some small arms ammunition. However, it puts forward the theory that the aluminium powder which was also being shipped, was itself war material, and in certain conditions could explode, and this is considered the cause of the second explosion that was heard. It is an interesting look at the 'Lusitania', but unfortunately there are a couple of amateur Irish historians who were interviewed and whose accents make the dialogue difficult to understand. It is just about worth buying at just under £3 from Amazon.

2014-2019: When we think about it, it is just over three years away until the first of the many Great War 100th Anniversary dates is with us. So, the question is as to how the CI might like to commemorate 1914-1919?

Amongst some of the initial ideas I have at present, there is for example the issuing of stamps commemorating key events such as the Somme and Passchendaele, or the men such as the RGLI, the Jersey Contingent and the VC winners. There could be large scale photographic displays around the town centres, and even having seen a very good set of photographs from the Australian War Museum on show in Peronne a few years ago, we know that there is no shortage of material. Some form of input into the education system would not go amiss either. But, there could also be more tangible ways to commemorate events such as an annual *son et lumière* or a tattoo, or a combination of both even, with the presence of the military, re-enactors, bands, hardware displays, and so on.

Ideas are all well and good, but there needs to be an organisation established to sift through and implement the good ideas, obtain sponsorship or other funding, and develop a plan for those five years. The Group does not have the wherewithal to do this off its own back, but members can and should be involved as part of a broader team. How should the organisation be set up?

To start getting some 'official' thinking under way in Jersey, at least, I shall be contacting some of the Connétables in the very near future, providing them with some initial ideas and asking them to consider the need to start the organising, planning and funding aspects in the next three to six months. However, that should not prevent us from thinking up other ideas, and not be backward in coming forward.

Enfin

This is a slightly thinner Journal than normal, partly due to fewer data sheets, but it is also due to fewer articles. Notwithstanding, I hope that there will be something to interest. As ever though, I welcome your contributions, it saves me 'padding out'!

Regards
Barrie H Bertram
15th June, 2011

Journal Hardcopies

As a reminder of the 'blue note' in Journal 35, after this Journal, henceforth, I shall only be forwarding hardcopies to those who have provided some measure of funding to cover my printing and postage costs. A separate note will be included with this Journal to those who are affected.

Journal Issue Dates For 2011

The planned issue dates for 2011 are shown below:

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.

MEN OF THE 30th BATTALION.



Chester Church A Postscript

Over the last two years I have been trying to find a picture of Chester, a quest that has proved unsuccessful.

However, going through the archive of Australian newspapers I found this picture of his Battalion resting after a route march in Sydney, taken on Friday, 22nd October, 1915. Less than three weeks later, the Battalion would leave Australia on the HMAT Beltana.

Chester will be among these men!

RESTING IN THE DOMAIN AFTER FRIDAY'S ROUTE MARCH THROUGH THE CITY.

the First World War

When war broke out in 1914 there were fewer than 6,000 men in the Royal Engineer Signal Service; by the end of the war there were 70,000.

The war changed the way the Army communicated. In 1914 the Signal Service was primarily a telegraphic service, by 1918 the telephone was the main means of communication on the Western Front and wireless was playing a major part in military signalling.

Each theatre of war brought particular problems for the Signal Service.

On the Western Front the length of the front, the huge number of troops requiring communications, and the damage done by artillery fire all had to be coped with. And the enemy was so close that wireless signals could be easily intercepted.



Sergeant Langford, 41st Wireless Section, Mesopotamia

In Mesopotamia, Palestine, and East Africa, on the other hand, campaigns were mobile, lines of communication were long, and the environment was hostile. In these theatres wireless was the most practical link as there was less likelihood of enemy interception of messages.

In Gallipoli, the problems arose from the slender foothold ashore and the need to provide communications to ships at sea. Wireless, again, played a useful role.

At the end of the war the prestige of the Signal Service stood very high.



Archer in Palestine

Animals in War



During the First World War dogs were trained to carry messages between frontlines or to the rear. In later stages of the war jeeps, cars, and airplanes were used as draft animals or as cable layers.

Pigeons have been used to carry messages since the time of the Greeks and during both world wars the British Army had Pigeon sections with light-bulb carrying messages back from the front line.

'C' Telegraph Troop was formed as a mounted unit and horses were used as draft animals until 1937. Horses and mules were also used to carry wireless sets and cable laying equipment.

Despatch Rider in East Africa

Archer in Palestine



