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Into Action
Guns of the Royal Horse Artillery going forward!

Hello All

With an interval that is steadily increasing, it does seem that the events of the Great War continue to generate interest. In the last few months, the film ‘War Horse’ has had a considerable impact in the media, undoubtedly encouraged by the distributors who are only doing their job in helping to fill cinema seats. Yet, that is not a bad thing if it brings such a well-made film of the war to the public’s attention, even if it is fictional. In a similar vein, television has brought us the second series of ‘Downton Abbey’ that covered the Great War period, and more recently, ‘Bird Song’. But, there seems to be a continuous and welcome stream of new facts and information appearing in newspapers and other media nowadays with increasing frequency. In the last few weeks, we have read of the death of the last lady, Florence Green, who had briefly served in the War, having joined the Women’s Royal Air Force in September, 1918. A soldier, one Edward Sigrist who had served in the Royal Engineers, left a diary of his war-time service which has recently been revealed. Interestingly, it was written in a form of shorthand that is no longer in use and has long been forgotten, while he had used scraps of paper as well as toilet paper! Then there were newspaper reports of the discovery of the bodies of 21 Germans in a wrecked dugout in France, near to the German and Swiss borders, although I suspect having seen the photographs that the discovery occurred last summer. Whether it is through fact or fiction, it strikes me that anything which maintains people’s curiosity in the Great War and could prompt the appearance of further material that can only add to what we know. With that thought, perhaps someone might tell us whether Elizabeth and Victoria Colleges did receive German machine guns as trophies after the war, and if so, what did they do with them in 1940?

Finally, there is mention elsewhere in this Journal of the fact that the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) changed its website a few weeks ago. As a result of that action, Roger Frisby has gone through the 3,000 plus records in our Rolls of Honour ensuring that they are correctly still linked to the CWGC entries. This was a lengthy task, and Roger deserves our thanks for devoting a lot of time over the last fortnight working to update those links.

The Front Cover

This Journal has a slightly ‘horsy’ feel, a fact that will not surprise readers given the publicity associated with the ‘War Horse’ film that appeared in cinemas a month back. Now, I know little about horses save that they have a leg at each corner and the one that I backed in last year’s Grand National has yet to finish! However, that hasn’t prevented the inclusion of an article on the various roles that horses, mules and other four-legged animals were made to perform during the Great War, and by all of the participant nations. From each nation’s point of view, it would have been impossible to wage war on such a vast scale with any hope of achieving its war aims.

One wonders what might have happened had horses not been created?

Latimer's Notebook – Summer 1918
By Liz Walton

In this section of his notebook, 656 Private Latimer Le Poidevin describes events after the disastrous battles in the Doulieu area which decimated the 1st Battalion of the Royal Guernsey Light Infantry (RGLI). Losses here were such that the Battalion could no longer exist as a fighting force, the casualty lists from the 11th to the 13th of April, 1918 including the names of almost 400 men wounded, taken prisoner of war, missing or killed in action in just those three days.

Latimer did not fight in this battle, as he was one of the 10% kept in reserve, and when they were called forward their transport broke down and it was all over before he arrived at the front line. However he describes the events that followed thus:

"We left on April 19th 1918, and marched towards Hazebrouck. From this place we did the same work as before, only more on the right of Caëstre, every day passing Hazebrouck which the Germans shelled day after day. At the side of this Farm where we were billeted there was a light railway which was called Hecke-Meulon. We were kept at this place for over a week, so one morning we was told to clean up our gear as the Brigade commander was going to inspect us during the afternoon and was going to give us a speech. We all wondered what was going to happen, we all thought it was for the line again. Well to our surprise this afternoon which was on the 27th of April, 1918, the speech was to tell us that the Battalion was relieving us the same day, and to wish us au revoir and farewell. He had been very pleased to have the Guernsey Battalion in his Brigade, and he thanked us for the good work we had done while under his command. He wished us all good luck and of course we returned the same. So we left the 86 Brigade which belong to the 29th Division on the 27th of April, 1918.

We came away the same day from Hazebrouck having the 29th Division brass band to lead us down to the station. On our way down we passed some of the Battalions of the 29th going for the line. We arrived at a station called Ebblinghem and camped for the night in a few tents which we put up for the night. The next morning we packed them up again and marched for the station. We left this station on the 28th of April and as the train was leaving the brass band of the Division played the farewell. On our way we passed St-Omer, also the quarries in which some of the Guernsey boys was working. During the night we arrived at Etaples and from the Station marched to No. 9 rest camp.

We left this camp on the 29th April and our little band in front marched through the town of Etaples and got billeted in a village called St-Aubin. I was only a day at this when I was taken sick with trench fever, and was admitted to Hospital on the 1st of May, 1918, to No. 24 General Hospital, Etaples. The Battalion left St Aubin on the 3rd of May for Montreuil where they joined the General Headquarters, and kept on GHQ for a time. The Battalion was billeted in a village called Ecuires."

He then goes on to describe his admission to hospital in Etaples suffering from Trench Fever. This was a common disease of the period, transmitted by the bites of body lice which were ever present in the trenches. The chief symptoms were headaches, skin rashes, inflamed eyes and leg pains. Despite such wide-ranging symptoms, which were similar to those of typhoid and influenza the condition was not particularly serious. However it usually meant spending several weeks in hospital as victims tended to suffer relapses often after intervals of several days. Private Le Poidevin was sent to No. 24

General Hospital in Etaples, which had been established in June, 1915 and was to remain until well after the Armistice. The writer of *'Testament of Youth'*, Vera Brittain worked here as a VAD nurse from the Autumn of 1917 to the Spring of 1918. The pre-war population of Etaples amounted to a little over 5,000, but during the war the town became a vast Allied military camp and then a huge hospital complex, many hospitals being under canvas. These hospitals, which included eleven General, one Stationary, four Red Cross Hospitals and a Convalescent Depot, could deal with 22,000 wounded or sick.

He writes:

"*When I was taken to hospital I was fetched in a motor ambulance. When I arrived at the hospital I was in the waiting room, then I was taken to No.9 ward. We were about 40 sick in this ward and looked after by three nurses, two day time and one night time. I found my bed quite nice, and it was quite different laying between white sheets. There was over nine months I hadn't laid on a bed. Night and day there was sick getting brought in and taken away. Those going were either taken to another hospital or for Blighty. After a while I was there everything was getting on fine, getting well fed, then when I got a lot better and started to walk about. I used to visit the different hospitals about Etaples as every hospital was close to each other.*

Then as I got strong enough to work, one of the nurses asked me if I wanted a job as orderly. I was only too pleased to take a job like this. My job was to take the meals around to the sick and wash up. Every morning I had to take in the dirty clothes and bring back clean. One day a French soldier was brought in, so when the doctor came around to visit the sick, I was the only one that could speak to this French man, so I had to speak for the doctor. Everything went on fine till one evening just about midnight the alarm went, Germans was raiding the place. They dropped two bombs at the top of our hospital where a few marquees had been put up. My word, the noise of these bombs coming down was something awful, and these marquees on fire.

This evening I stayed in bed as there was no other place for shelter. This was on the 19th of May, 1918, and during the raid 27 bombs was dropped over the hospitals and the town of Etaples. In our hospital alone over 200 came in that had got wounded during the raid and one camp that was close to Etaples there was 147 casualties in which 44 died. Between the soldiers and the French people there was [sic] over 1000 casualties.

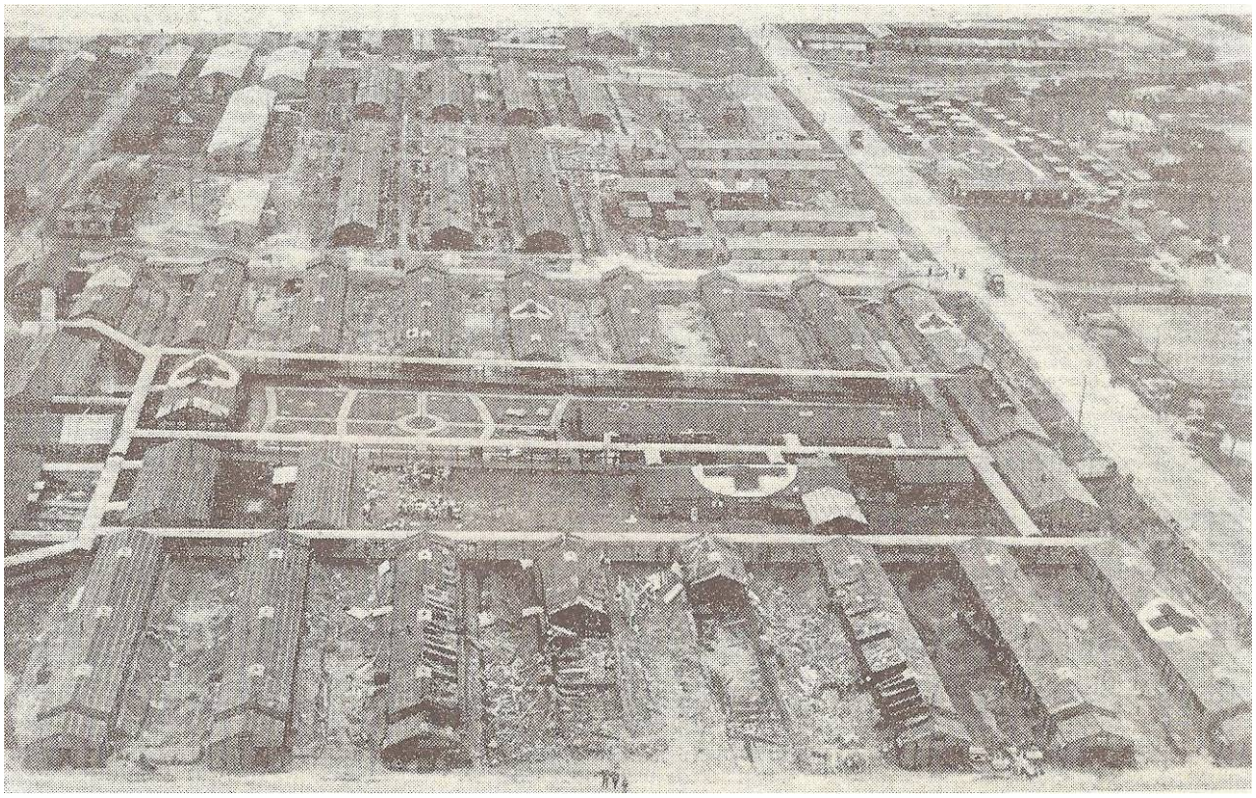
The next day when we saw what had happened we started making trenches along side of every ward. The next night was as bad, I thought my last minute had come. About the hospitals was nothing else but dead lying about. But the third night was the worst night for us. When the alarm was given the bombs was already dropping in the Hospital and before we had time to get in our trenches one bomb fell on No.17 ward, smashing all the windows of our ward. Some couldn't move from their beds, so we used to put the clothes of the ones that was able to walk on those that couldn't move.

After the bomb had hit No.17 there was not a piece of ward standing and some of the chaps that was in were never found again. A Canadian Hospital had five Canadian nuns killed, and one of the wards they found a door down with a chap laying on top dead and a nurse in under living. Then after the third night they began clearing the hospital, and only the ones that could walk about was kept back. Then at night time every nurse was carried away in motor ambulances, and we would sleep in the wood for the night, we

used to take two or three blankets each and go down by the river for the night. We used to find ourselves back about six o'clock the next morning. This carried on for a week or so, and this week Gerry never came over at all, then he started again on his raiding."

The War Diary of the 7th Canadian Stationary Hospital confirms Latimer's description, noting how on the 19th of May, 1918, Germans aeroplanes attacked the hospitals at Etaples. The entry for Monday the 20th of May states:

"Last night, about 10:30, we had a disastrous air raid as a result of which we lost two men (one killed and the other died of wounds) and had one man wounded and also the OC, Major EV Hogan, wounded. Enemy aircraft suddenly were heard, and began dropping bombs without our having received warning. Practically the entire Etaples hospital area was subjected to an aerial bombardment for fully an hour, after which the raiders departed, returning again some time after midnight, and dropped more bombs. They also employed machine guns. It is unofficially estimated that the total casualties in the Etaples area were about one thousand. Casualties were numerous in the staffs of several of the hospitals, and certain patients were also casualties."



Bomb Damage at Etaples (See Editor's Note)

The war diary of Miss Maud McCarthy, the Matron-in-Chief, British Expeditionary Force (BEF)[1] confirms Latimer's account of digging trenches and going out into the countryside, stating that:

"...Everywhere strong dug-outs are being made and in the meantime the whole of the day staff are being taken into the country in details with 2 officers and 2 NCOs in charge, the Matron and night staff remaining with the hospital."

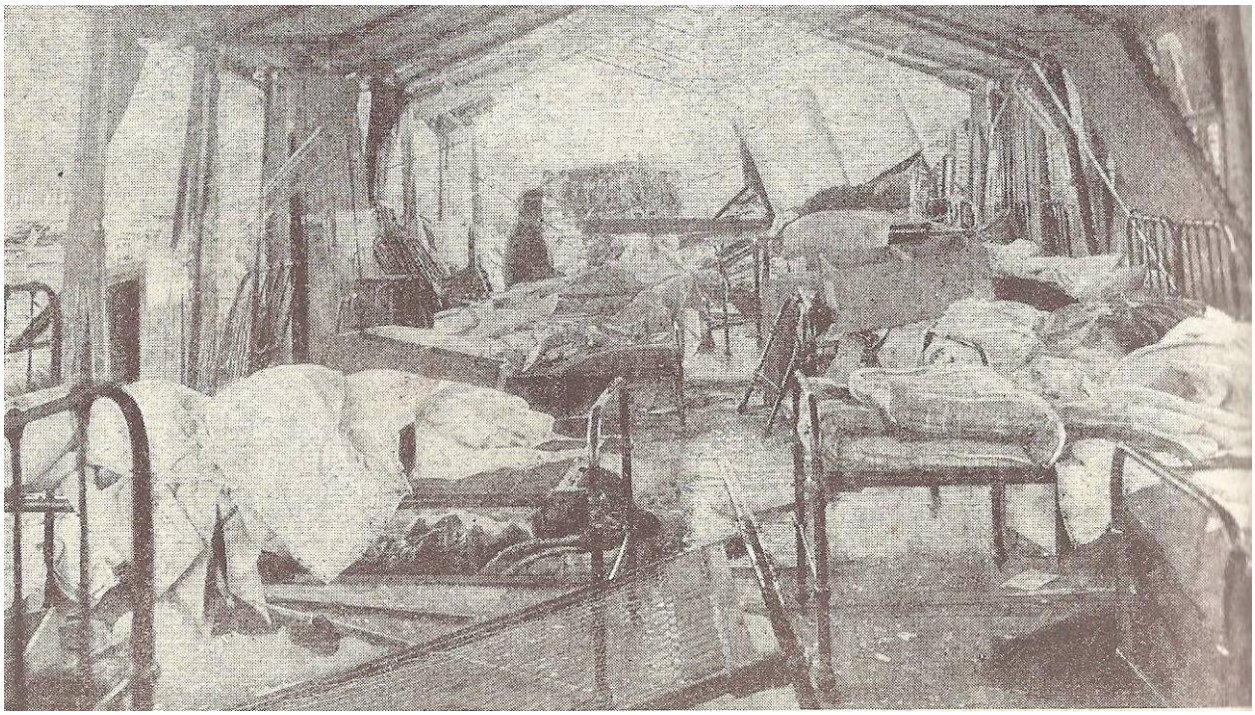
[1] The National Archives, WO95/3990.

The *'Summary of Inspections and Work done during the month away from Headquarters'* for the 31st of May,1918 describes how:

"...There was a terrible raid right over the hospitals. Practically all the Etaples hospitals suffered, those which had the most casualties being the St John's Ambulance Brigade hospital, where 1 Sister was killed and 5 wounded, besides many patients and personnel, the Liverpool Merchant's Hospital (1 Sister wounded), No.24 General Hospital[2] (2 of the nursing staff wounded, one severely), No.56 General Hospital, where there were no casualties amongst the nursing staff but the administrative block was almost destroyed, and No.26 General Hospital, as well as the two Canadian hospitals (Nos.1 and 7) which had suffered so severely before. The St. John's Ambulance Brigade Hospital, which was beautifully equipped, is entirely wrecked."

The entry for the 1st of June goes on to say:

"Etaples air-raid: Received telephone message from Etaples saying that there had been a very bad air-raid the night before – nearly all the hospitals in the Etaples area had suffered, particularly the St. John's Ambulance Brigade Hospital, Liverpool Merchant's Hospital, 24, 26 and 56 General Hospitals. At the SJAB Hospital one Sister had been killed and 5 wounded and a few others were suffering from shock. At No.24 General Hospital[3], Miss Freshfield, VAD, had been seriously wounded in the head, and one other Sister had been slightly wounded. Informed Matron-in-Chief, War Office, and BRCS, and DGMS."



A damaged Ward at the SJAB Hospital (See Editor's Note)

All of these accounts match Latimer's version of events. He then goes on to describe his move to a convalescent camp at Trouville, further along the coast:

[2] The hospital where Latimer was a patient.

[3] The hospital where Latimer was a patient.

"Somehow or other I happened to pick up some bits of shell which poisoned my blood causing a rash over my body. The day before I left this hospital there was only three or four chaps left in my ward. These were getting the same sort of rash as myself, and on the 6th of June in the afternoon I left this hospital for another. We were fetched in motor buses for the station, then we got on a British Red Cross train. We had 18 hours journey, then from a station near Trouville we got on a light railway, which took us right up alongside of our hospital which was No.72 General Hospital, Trouville, J block, No. 4 ward. This was a very nice place, also a very large place. The hospital itself could hold 5,000 men, and there were two other hospitals which were as large. These three hospitals were close to each other, and besides they were 3 Convalescent camps with 5,000 men in each.

After I had been in this hospital for a week, I was marked out fit, then I had to give in my blue suit and get a new suit of khaki. Leaving this hospital on the 11th June I was sent to No.15 Convalescent camp and put in R Company, No. 8 Hut. This was one of the finest places going, there were all kinds of sports every day, and two or three times a week we were marched down to the beach, which was about two miles away, having the brass band to lead us down. From this camp we were allowed out in the different villages nearby, only in the town of Trouville we had to have passes. We had to write out all the places and roads that was out of bounds. Here are the names of these places:

Cafe Blighty bar, Rue de La Mer.
Cafe Venot in Rue Pont L'Eveque,
Cafe Hudieson, "
Cafe Lion D'or "
Cafe Lecorna Reverick "
Hotel Tresnon, Rue Carnot""

No. 72 General Hospital at Trouville was opened in December 1917 and remained there until October 1919. The official diary of the Matron-in-Chief, BEF[4] described it saying:

"There are two hospitals already established and a third unit in the making, all composed of 2500 beds, entirely hutted, with fine accommodation for officers, Nursing Sisters and men. The hospital is built in self-contained blocks of 250 beds, each a little hospital in itself. Each unit has accommodation for 100 officers and the rest is for men. They have most splendid mess, dining rooms, kitchens, store-rooms, a great big reception hut and a good administrative block. The Sisters' quarters are first-rate in every respect – a great big mess and ante-room and accommodation for 125 people in cubicles, all under cover and connected by corridors. There are 4 bath-rooms only. All the out-houses, kitchens, etc. are first-rate, similar to those in our other units but larger in comparison. The unit is lighted with electricity and heated with coal stoves, and when the road is made and they have got rid of the mud, it will be first-rate. It is situated on the top of a hill. At the time of the visit 72 General Hospital had 1600 patients and they were taking in at 73 General Hospital the next day. They are beginning to lay out the grounds and are going to have large vegetable gardens."

[4] The National Archives, WO95/3990.

Latimer was said to be suffering from blood poisoning, probably as the result of shrapnel wounds (some bits of shell). The main treatment then was cleaning up the source and site of infection and if that didn't work, surgery might be needed. However he appears to have been one of the lucky ones with a good immune system. However a relapsing skin rash was also one of the symptoms of Trench Fever, the illness for which he was initially admitted to hospital. He seems to have made a fairly speedy recovery as he mentions having to give in his blue suit and get a new khaki one. Soldiers staying in Military Hospitals were issued a Hospital Blue uniform. This clearly distinguishable bright blue uniform with a red tie was useful in helping medical staff to identify their patients but it also marked out those who had "Done their bit" when they were out and about. He also mentions going down to the beach once he was in Convalescent Camp. Convalescent or Command Depots were half way houses for casualties returning to the front - men who no longer required hospitalisation but were not yet fit to rejoin their units.

The Depot at Trouville had its own brass band consisting of convalescent bandsmen from various units which as Latimer described, led groups of convalescents to the beach for their daily exercise. The Imperial War Museum (IWM) also has images of various forms of entertainment such as an open air boxing match and performances in front of a large audience of troops by the "Bohemians" Concert Party. Their stage had been erected in the shell of a ruined building. The places that were out of bounds are all cafés except one which is a hotel. Presumably they were places where alcohol and "loose women" could be found and were therefore seen as possible sources of trouble and indiscipline for the recovering soldiers.

Latimer's period of convalescence was soon to come to an end. He notes:

"*I left this convalescent camp on the 25th of June 1918. There were squads leaving this camp every afternoon, for the base. From this camp we marched to a station in Trouville, being a few hundred together. Here we got on a Red Cross train which was very cosy. We arrived at Rouen at about mid-night, where we had something to eat and a bed till the morning, and about 10 o'clock the next morning we marched off for our base. I stayed at the base for about a week, and then I was sent off for the Battalion. From the Base we marched for the station, we were four Guernseys together, and got up in the old cattle truck. From Rouen we passed Abbeville and stopped at Etaples and took another train for Montreuil, then from the Station we marched through the town of Montreuil where we found here and there some of our Battalion on duty. Then at last we got to the Battalion headquarters, I got put in the same company, C, this being on the 3rd of July."*

Later sections of his notebook go on to describe his time with the remnants of the RGLI at GHQ at Montreuil, and also his travels around northern France as a Lewis gunner, guarding the train which Haig used as his advanced GHQ. His descriptions of these events and his earlier notes on Passchendaele and Cambrai tie in as closely with official records as do the sections quoted here. This accuracy is quite remarkable considering the fact that he only wrote his notebook after he returned home in 1919, apparently from memory.

(**Editor's Note:** The pictures are from bound copies of The War Illustrated magazines of October and November, 1918. The originals are a little 'tired' so apologies. However, I hope that they illustrate the damage described by Latimer Le Poidevin sufficiently).

The Jersey Passenger Lists – A Fresh Look

A few years back there was the discovery of the existence of sets of cards that were produced for passengers to be completed when travelling on the mailboats between the Islands, England and France. This was part of a widespread move, during the Great War, to maintain security control and to intercept undesirables before the caused damage to the British war effort through espionage and sabotage. If an individual was intending or was required to travel from Jersey, they would have to get authorisation from the Government Buildings for their journey a few days before hand.

The cards, now in the safekeeping of the Jersey Archive, were found in the proverbial 'bottom of a cupboard' and were used to record the name of each individual, their occupation, their address, and the ships' sailing details. Resulting from that discovery, the Group worked in conjunction with the Archive and, over a few months, transcribed them onto a spreadsheet which can be found in our website's Members' Area. Not all of the individual entries are complete, and undoubtedly a number of typos have resulted, some from the interpretation of the travellers' handwriting. However, the 5,200 plus entries still provide an interesting sample of who travelled between 1914 and 1919.

There were those, such as commercial travellers or merchants, who had to continue to ply their peacetime businesses to put goods on the shelf or food in the grocers. There were students travelling home at the end of a term or the beginning of another, and of course the teachers, such as Constance Emily Butler from the Jersey Ladies College, as well. There were boys from the Elizabeth College OTC coming to Jersey for a joint summer camp with their opposite numbers at Victoria College. What also seems evident today is that the hotels in Jersey, such as the Somerville at St Aubin, the British, the Royal Yacht and the Hotel de L'Europe in St Helier, not to forget the Temperance Hotel at Gorey, continued to function, if not flourish, and from what little data there is it seemed that the Island's tourism industry started to recover in 1919.

Unsurprisingly, among that figure of 5,200, some 20% of the passengers were soldiers, sailors or marines, and more sadly, in a few cases, one or two were war widows such as Annie Devitt who was travelling, accompanied by her four children. It was with the existence of those 1,000 service names that I recently decided to revisit the Passenger List, at last picking up on a task that I had intended carrying out sometime ago, the purpose having been to identify those whose names should have appeared on the original Jersey Roll of Honour and Service, but somehow who were missed and have not been picked up to date from other documentation. There have been a number of additions, not least Sergeant Robert Algate of the Devonshire Regiment, who had married a young Jersey lady, Laura Victoria Bree, but who was killed during the Third Battle of Ypres.

In the research that has been undertaken to date, looking at many of the names of those men and women in uniform, it is blindingly obvious that there were two categories, those who were linked to Jersey in some form, and those who were not. For those with Jersey links, as mentioned earlier, it was to identify new names, but also to reaffirm existing ones. But it was also interesting to look at those with no identifiable connection with the Island. Not surprisingly there were a number of men who were coming to Jersey to join the South Staffordshire Regiment lodged at Fort Regent while others were guards at the Blanche Banques Prisoner of War Camp or staff at the Military Hospital at Brighton Road or at the Jersey Military District Headquarters at the Government

Buildings. But, it also appeared that there were some who chose to spend their leave on the Island, although I suspect that one or two of these had relatives in Jersey. In any case, there would also be an excuse for a man to spend his leave as this would entitle him to a day's travelling time at each end of the leave period because of the length of the journey. Undoubtedly many Australians and Canadians would also take up this option.

There was one particular individual who had caught my attention from the 1916 period, and that was Cecil Boyner Colborne-Smith, who would travel on board the SS Alberta from Jersey to Southampton on the 29th November, having stayed at 4 Roseville Villas. Turning out his Medal Index Card (MIC), he had been entitled to the 1914-15 Star having taken part in a little known campaign in Africa, namely that by the South African forces of capturing German South West Africa (GSWA) (present day Namibia).

The Germans had settled there in the 1880s and had built a capital at Windhoek in the north and had two other settlements on the coast, Swakopmund to the north and Lüderitz Bay in the south, with railways linking all three. Britain had a small enclave at Walvis Bay, apparently doing a roaring trade in guano! Meanwhile, the Germans were not great colonialists, and killed many of the indigenous population in what can only be described as genocide during the early 1900s. With the outbreak of the Great War, the campaign to deal with the Germans was necessary as GSWA was home to a radio station where messages could be relayed to German warships, and because it could also provide bases for the ships themselves, particularly during the period prior to Admiral Graf von Spee's Squadron being disposed of at the Falkland Islands.

The Durban LI Badge

The campaign had come to a successful conclusion in July, 1915 for the South Africans, who had been lead by General Louis Botha and Jan Smuts, while it seemed that no British army troops were involved although I suspect that some Royal Navy vessels were used to support the landings. Coming back to Cecil Colborne-Smith, for a time I was thus rather perplexed by his MIC that stated that he had served as a Private in the 2nd DLI, especially as that Battalion of the Durham Light Infantry served throughout the War in France. Eventually, the penny dropped when I realised that the 'D' stood for Durban and not Durham!

On the 22nd July, 1916, a year after the conclusion of the GSWA campaign, Cecil would come ashore at London having been a passenger onboard the SS Llanstephan Castle, and must have already applied for a commission, for on the 22nd November, he became a Second Lieutenant with the 3rd Battalion, Royal Scots Fusiliers. After that his military career is unclear, and he may have stayed with the Battalion at Greenock for the remainder of the War, but would relinquish his commission in June, 1919, as a Lieutenant.

Interestingly, his parents and younger brother Gifforde had come to London at the beginning of 1915, with the intention that Gifforde should study for and sit the London University Matriculation Examination. However, he decided to enlist in October with the London Regiment's City of London Rifles. However, as with so many young lads, he lied about his age and stating that he was Gerard. A letter from father led to him being

discharged a few days later, but he would eventually apply for and was granted a commission with the Leicester Regiment in September, 1916. It would be interesting to know whether there was a substantial Island link.

It is also evident that during the immediate post-War period, a number of servicemen were also travelling to Jersey. Canadians and Australians, while waiting to be shipped home certainly were, while there was a programme set up throughout the UK by the Australian government that saw Australians sent to manufacturers, farms and other locations to acquire new skills that would be applied on the return home. A number of these men came to Jersey (Ian Ronayne has done some research in this area) to learn more of farming and I had initially assumed that Donald William Mitton was one. The Passenger List shows that he had travelled on the SS Alberta on the 24th June, 1919 and had given his address as Radier Farm in Grouville.

The assumption may have proved incorrect as his service file showed. Donald had enlisted on the 3rd August, 1916 at the age of 29 years 2 months, listing his mother as NOK, while answering the 'Are You Married' question with a Yes. Originally earmarked as a reinforcement soldier for the 56th Battalion, AIF, he sailed from Sydney in October, 1916 landing at Devonport at the end of December. Training in the UK followed and at the end of February, 1917 he was sent to France and to undertake further training at Etaples' Bullring. From there he was sent to the 19th Battalion, being taken on strength on the 24th March, 1917. Some six weeks later he was wounded through a GSW to his right calf.

Casualty evacuation back through the medical chain ensued, and on the 16th May, 1917, he was admitted to No 4 Southern General Hospital at Plymouth where it appears that he stayed until the end of August of that year before returning to the open arms of the AIF. After a spell of sick leave in September, he would spend the next 8 months at Weymouth and Hurdcott regaining his fitness, and would eventually rejoin the 19th Battalion towards the end of May, 1918. A further two months later he again became a casualty, but this time being gassed. However, the injury did not involve a return to the UK, and he remained in France to recover and eventually to join the Australian Base Depot in France. Then, on his record it was noted that he was sent on leave for a fortnight, the date being the 23rd June, 1919, a day before his trip on the Alberta!

Now, this is where the paper trial becomes interesting, for on the 22nd September, 1919, he was on 'indefinite leave awaiting [a] family ship'. Then, a few pages further on, there is an extract from a Marriage Register that, now aged 32, he had married 24 year-old Alma Blanche Miller on the 26th August in Grouville, and that she lived at Radier Farm! At this stage it appeared to have been as the result of a whirlwind romance until some research into her was conducted. But, it proved not to be, for it turned out that she had travelled from Jersey to Weymouth on the 27th June, 1917 and that she had been a VAD Nurse at the Ford Military Hospital at Devonport. And, Ford, a former workhouse, was the site of No 4 Southern General Hospital where Donald was being treated. Clearly she had met him whilst he was recovering from his GSW.

But, was Donald a bigamist? After the Conrad Krimmel case, I was beginning to wonder given the 'Are You Married' response of Yes when he had enlisted. It really began to look that way when a letter from an Elsie Mitton reached the Australian Department of Defence on the 21st November, 1919 enquiring as to when Donald would be returning to Australia. More importantly, she had been kind enough to enclose a pre-paid envelope

with her address and her title, Mrs DW Mitton! In their subsequent response the Department was very circumspect stating that they did not have any travel details but that his NOK, i.e. his mother, would be informed when they were known. Furthermore, they asked for details of her marital status, undoubtedly well aware at that time that he had married in Jersey. There are no further letters from Elsie so it is possible that she had discovered that Donald and Alma had married.

But, it turns out that Elsie had been Donald's wife, and we've the Australian Newspaper Archive to thank for that, and the fact that Alma had not entered into a bigamous marriage. The Sydney Morning Herald had reported in September, 1916 that Elsie had been granted a decree nisi as a result of Donald's desertion, and it must be presumed that it became absolute within a few months. Having waited for a 'family ship' Donald Mitton embarked on the SS Thermistocles on the 22nd December, 1919 'With Wife', and landed back in Australia on the 9th February, 1920. One hopes that, together, they enjoyed a peaceful life subsequently and that Elsie found herself another man.

In conclusion, there is still much to do in checking through the Passenger Lists, and when I get to them, I suspect that the French *soldats* will prove to be particularly challenging. However, starting from, what is after all, a form of landing card it is remarkable to be able to discover more about individuals and their time in uniform. One wonders what else might be found the other names. Certainly, Cecil and Donald both proved interesting, albeit for very different reasons.

CWGC Non-Commemorations

Work on seeking further commemorations has been rather quiet over the past few months, other than we have been waiting for family information on Charles Pirouet. We do have against Jersey's Roll of Honour about 20 British names still where there are queries as non-commemoration, and perhaps the list below which summarises the current status as to Non-commemoration submissions ought to be amended.

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

Accepted
Burton, Garnet C
Helman, John W
Le Noury, Walter
Logan, Lionel H
Ounan, Thomas P
Turner, William A
Mutton, Harold C *

With the CWGC
Rundle, Cubitt S
Le Morzédec, Henri
De Gruchy, Alfred

Pending
Pirouet, Charles A
Owen, Guy

TBA
Anderson, Frank B
Touzel, Walter H

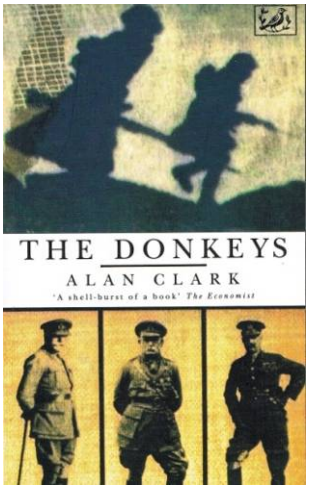
Rejected
Adams, Frank H
Vibert, John E

Not Submitted
Syborn, George T
Raymond De Caen
Mourant, Sydney A
Surguy, Sidney

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

Book Reviews

Donkeys
By Alan Clark
(Pimlico - £10.99)
Review by Peter Tabb



I must confess that if someone mentions the name Alan Clark to me, my mind automatically turns to thinking of the roguish Member of Parliament who penned an often salacious series of diaries. I had forgotten that the same Alan Clark was also a historian of note. *'Aces High: The War in the Air over the Western Front'* was one of several works which also include a significant work on Germany's invasion of Russia in 1941.

'Donkeys' takes its title from the memoirs of General Erich von Falkenhayn, Germany's Chief of Staff from 1914 to 1916 where he reported that General Ludendorff commented that the English soldiers fight like lions to which his chief of staff General Hoffmann replied: "True. But don't we know that they are lions led by donkeys."

The 'lions led by donkeys' endured as a myth for many years and it is only comparatively recently that, thanks to historians such as Hew Strachan, Gary Sheffield and others, the myth has been largely dissipated.

Alan Clark's book was written in 1961 and is a study of the Western Front in 1915 concluding with the replacement as commander-in-chief of the BEF of Sir John French by Douglas Haig. It is also, in the author's own words, the story of the destruction of an army – the old professional army of the United Kingdom that always won the last battle, whose regiments fought at Quebec, Corunna, in the Indies, were trained in musketry at Hythe, drilled on the parched earth of Chuddapore, and were machine-gunned, gassed and finally buried in 1915.

It is principally the story of the mismanagement of the Western Front by the commanders of the British and French forces – Field Marshal Sir John French and Marshal Joseph Joffre - but Alan Clark has little time for subordinate commanders such as Generals Rawlinson, Watson and Haig himself although he does summon up considerable sympathy for General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien whose masterly general-ship at Le Cateau ensured that the 'donkeys' still had a British Army to lead to destruction but who was dismissed at the instigation of Sir John French, the incident famed for the manner in which the dismissal was effected, a telephone call from Chief of Staff General Sir William 'Wully' Robertson, who had famously risen from private soldier to general (and eventually to field marshal) – "'Orace, you're for 'ome!".

On 26th September, 1915 twelve British Battalions – almost 10,000 men – were ordered to attack German positions at Loos. In the three and a half hours of the actual battle they sustained 8,246 casualties. The Germans suffered no casualties at all.

The book also examines the earlier battles of that year; Neuve Chapelle and Aubers Ridge, which Alan Clark scrutinises in considerable detail. According to critic Michael

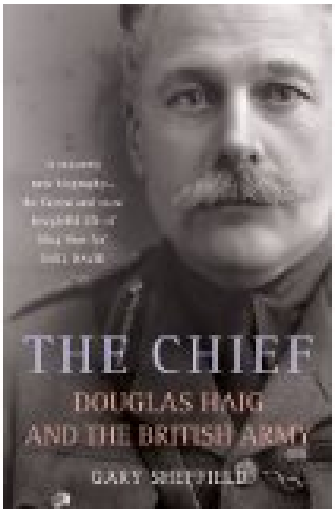
Howard, writing in the *Listener*, 'his descriptions of battles and battlefields are sometimes masterly'. I would agree.

Paul Johnson, writing in the *New Statesman*, opined that: 'Mr Clark writes with verve, venom and real feeling for the men whose lives the brass hats squandered'.

I would agree with that too since in places the narrative is a scathing indictment of the poor general-ship and bitter in-fighting that went on amongst the 'brass hats'. Today they would say that they each had their own agenda and only occasionally did that agenda include winning the war.

Alan Clark is a skilful writer because he encourages his reader to believe that there will be something more on the next page – and there always is.

This is a valuable book, even though several of its hypotheses have been overtaken by more up-to-date scholarship, because it exposes how ill-prepared the High Command was for the conflict that became the Great War and how personality played as much a part of the long drawn out agony that was the Western Front as did the high water table of Flanders Fields.



The Chief
Douglas Haig and the British Army
By Gary Sheffield
(Aurum Press - £25)

For me, Christmas morning is invariably an electronic Bookfest! Clutching my Amazon vouchers, I am very quickly navigating through the offers to choose those titles that I've been waiting for or for the 'make weights' that helps me to avoid receiving a rather large credit card bill subsequently. Professor Gary Sheffield's '*The Chief*' clearly fell into the former category.

Published last year, this book follows his two earlier works: *'Forgotten Victory'*, and *'Douglas Haig – War Diaries and Letters 1914-1918'*, and collectively, all three books (the 'Diaries' in conjunction with John Bourne) represent the revisionist counter to the 'Blackadder and the Donkeys' school of historical thought. And, having all three, I must confess that my sympathies lie very much with the arguments offered by the Professor as opposed to those propounded by the late Alan Clark, Basil Liddell Hart and others who regarded Douglas Haig as a murderous incompetent.

Being a biography, the book is, unsurprisingly, a 'cradle to grave' account of Haig's life and we are told that he went to Clifton College as opposed to Rugby because he could not get the examination marks for the latter. A spell at Brasenose College followed, although he left without a degree thanks to missing a term through illness. In February, 1884 he went to Sandhurst at the 'advanced' age of 22, and at the end of the year passed out top of the 129 Gentlemen Cadets in his intake. Walter Congreve incidentally, was in fifth place. From there, he joined his first regiment, the 7th Hussars. At this stage, he was perceived to be destined for the top while also having been

regarded as a bit aloof at Sandhurst, however this could be attributed to his age when it is considered that the bulk of the Cadets in his year were 17 or 18 years old.

Progression in the regimental system, including a stint as Adjutant, followed where his diligence and hard work was being noted by his superiors. Although not outstanding intellectually, he was very bright and demonstrated a good aptitude for staff work, and as a captain in 1896 was given a major role in the revision of the *Cavalry Drill Book*. He had visited France and Germany, and from these trips he had produced excellent reports based upon his observations of those countries' military exercises and manoeuvres, recognising that the Germans would pose a military threat at some future point. The British Army at about this time was very cliquey, and Haig would benefit from the patronage of Sir Evelyn Wood. However, he was not alone in this respect, Roberts and Kitchener would look after Plumer, while Rawlinson was a 'fully paid-up' member of the Wolseley Ring.

Staff College followed in 1896, and then active service in the Sudan and South Africa, where he took command of the 17th Lancers before returning to the UK in late 1902. Now on the Army's fast-track, he was progressively given more important appointments on the Staff as well as in command. A spell in India as the Inspector General of Cavalry was followed by a further three years in the UK, this time as Director of Military Training (DMT), an appointment which saw him working closely with the Secretary of State for War, Richard Haldane.

The Army, at this time, was to undergo major change following the South African War, and as DMT, and then later as Director of Staff Duties (DSD), Haig was well placed to influence the changes that were necessary, and in this, he was mindful of the threat posed by Germany. As Sheffield notes, reorganisations and reforms are not the most glamorous roles to be performed, however, working with Haldane, Haig standardised the Army's organisation, doctrine, procedures, mobilisation plans, the training, and the myriad of other facets to make the Army more efficient in its conduct and preparation for war.

Two other important aspects of his time as DMT/DSD should be noted. The first is the writing of *Field Service Regulations, Part 2* (FSR) which gave officers the necessary guidance regarding the doctrine of waging war. With an Army long resistant to change, producing the FSR was no mean feat, yet it could not be a prescriptive menu, relying as it should do on experience-based initiative. Haig's second contribution was in working with Haldane on the integration, into the Army's organisation, of the Militias (less those of the CI), the Yeomanry and the Volunteers thus forming the Territorial Force and creating a better relationship with the Regular Force. Both of these activities would be of considerable benefit to the British Army in the conflict ahead.

A return to India followed in 1909 where, now a Lieutenant-General, Haig became Chief of Staff to the C-in-C of the Indian Army, and would look to carry out standardisation once more, applying the FSR, thereby bringing the Indian Army broadly in line with the British Army. Sheffield points out that in one area Haig failed, and that was in the preparations for the Indian Army to undertake major operations outside of the Indian subcontinent. However, in this, the Viceroy of India (Sheffield is not clear whether the Viceroy was Minto or Hardinge) had forbidden that such plans be produced! Coming to the end of his three year spell in India, in March, 1912, Haig was appointed to the Aldershot Command and was thus in command of troops once more. Comprising the 1st

and 2nd Divisions, and the 1st Cavalry Brigade, in the time of War, the Command would become, as indeed it did in 1914, the British Expeditionary Force's I Corps. Over the next few years, Haig's focus would be on the preparation of his men for war, and following mobilisation in August, 1914, he would take them to France as part of the BEF led by Sir John French. His subsequent elevation to C-in-C of the BEF is well known, so I shall not repeat it here.

If one considers Haig's career, at times it clearly reflected a measure of acceleration being applied by his superiors, and he enjoyed some support from 'friends in high places', if not patronage. However, that was the norm for the period, and there were others who were similarly helped up the ladder. Yet, how far up that ladder can 'bunglers' climb without their incompetency becoming noticed? Before 1914 there was nothing in his career to suggest that Haig would be a 'bungler'. He was probably the most outstanding Staff Officer of his generation, capable of applying solid thought to military problems and, more importantly, coming up with sound solutions. And, when in command of troops he had demonstrated leadership skills, indeed, his skills in this were appreciated by his senior NCOs when he had commanded the 17th Lancers.

The Great War takes up much of the book, and Sheffield, in charting Haig's progression from Corps Commander, examines each battle in which Haig was involved and looks at what Haig did right and what he did wrong. At the same time Sheffield has his own running battles with other historians who have drawn different conclusions from material available. We are reminded that Haig, like Sir John French before him, was leading the BEF in a coalition where the French, understandably, were the 'senior partners'. Both British C-in-Cs had to conform to French wishes, while maintaining the integrity of their force and remaining responsible to His Majesty's Government. This was not a role to which a 'bungler' should be appointed. As to the battles themselves, it was not until Messines and Third Ypres in the summer of 1917 that the British decided fore themselves where they would fight on the Western Front. Before then, the Germans at First and Second Ypres, or the French in 1915 had largely done the deciding. Similarly, the Somme had been decided upon at the Chantilly Conference in December, and before Haig became C-in-C.

We are reminded that British success or lack of it in the various battles could not be solely put down to bad or indifferent general-ship. The role of pre-war governments must, Sheffield implies, be considered as a major factor in the inadequate military capability of the British Army to face the Germans. In 1914, we might even consider, as Peter Hart had recently suggested to me, that the Kaiser was correct when he described the BEF as a 'contemptible little army', recognising of course that Wilhelm was referring to the quantity of the men deployed rather than their quality. During the following year the battles were largely fought by the Territorial men, while there were insufficient artillery shells, and the Government was also diverting manpower and resources to 'sideshows' such as Gallipoli, Mesopotamia and Salonika. The surge of volunteers had not yet filtered into making the British Army comparable in size to the continental Armies.

Turning to the Somme, this was Haig's first 'big show' as C-in-C, and not on ground of his choosing. It reminds one of that hoary old joke about the tourists who ask an Irish passer-by how they can get to Dublin from where they are, to which he replies "If I wanted to get to Dublin, I wouldn't start from here". Haig had seen Ypres as a far better strategic opportunity. The Somme earned Haig the 60s nickname of 'butcher', largely

because of the first day's casualties and his willingness to persist once the numbers became known. However, Sheffield reminds us that a cessation of the battle the day after would not have gone down very well with the French, who were suffering at Verdun as they had already been doing for four months. Meanwhile, shells that in 1915 had been a problem through lack of numbers were now more plentiful, but a third of them failed to explode!

As to the 'butcher's bill' for the Somme, it should not be forgotten that it was higher at Arras in 1917, and in circumstances where Lloyd George had handed over the responsibility of setting the BEF agenda to Nivelle and the French, much to the disgust of the CIGS Robertson and Haig. Where Haig does merit criticism is in his apparent unwillingness to 'grip' Rawlinson with regards to the planning for the battle, and the latter's reticence to use cavalry. In part, Sheffield attributes this to Haig's attitude of giving overall direction, and then allowing the 'man on the spot' to plan as he saw fit, a mistake that Haig repeated a year later with Gough at Third Ypres.

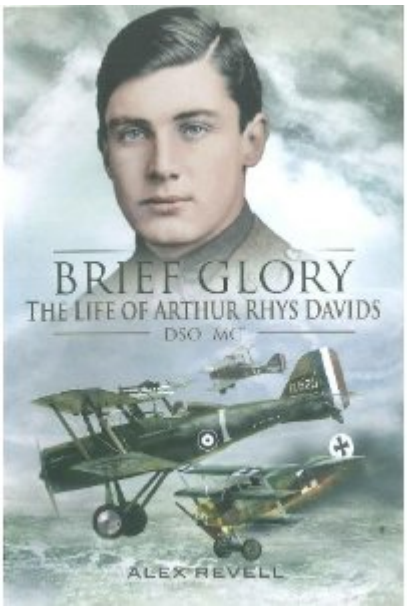
Much of the Great War passages deals with the criticisms that have been levelled at Haig, and, similar to Peter Hart in *Gallipoli*, Sheffield also maintains a running battle with the 'off camera historians' who accused Haig, amongst other 'crimes' of being a technophobe, too optimistic and, because of his past service, hidebound of the cavalry's role. If Haig should be accused over the use of new technology, it should have been because he was too technophile and had not allowed time for developments to mature sufficiently. As to optimism, it would have been wrong for Haig to plan for failure, and it was the correct thing to have plans that dealt with all stages of a battle ranging from the assault or break-in, the break-through, and then the break-out or exploitation phase. It is in this latter phase also, that the cavalry could have made its mark as after all, horses could travel twice as fast as an infantryman, pressing hard upon a retreating enemy's tail.

The last element of the book deals with Haig's final ten years of his life. This period was spent in looking out for the needs of ex-servicemen in a land that was clearly not 'fit for heroes', and if he had not been unpopular with Lloyd George previously, he was now. While not endeavouring to take the role of leader, his influence was vital in encouraging the establishment of the British Legion, in 1921, from a number of smaller ex-service organisations. Indeed this caused some concern in government that the Legion might have become a military force as was emerging elsewhere in Europe. However, Haig was a conservative man and a military overthrow was never on the cards, and we may consider that the UK might have been politically different today had Haig not proved to be a calming influence on the more radical ex-servicemen.

Whatever your views of Douglas Haig may be, this book is a 'must have, must read'. If Haig's Great War career is considered objectively, no other British general was ever given the power of life and death over such a size of Army as that the British Empire had mustered for the Western Front. There were no parallels before, and there have been certainly none since. Add to that the continuing need to conform with the French, and after the 1917 mutinies to press the Germans, all the while dealing with a range of problems from training and logistics, through to the varying degrees of political support from a UK Government that sought supposedly easy military ends to bring the war to a successful conclusion while ignoring the fact that it was the Germans who had to be beaten, not the Bulgars, nor the Turks! However, that is not to suggest that Haig was without faults, for like any human being he made his share of mistakes, some sadly

costing lives giving his ‘exalted’ position as C-in-C of the BEF. Professor Gary Sheffield has presented a first class biography in terms of Haig’s overall life, at the same time as offering a sound and highly readable argument that elevates Haig’s reputation far above the accusations that he was simply ‘a butcher and a bungler’.

Brief Glory
By Alex Revell
(Pen and Sword Books, £19.99)



I am occasionally puzzled by seeing biographies written about the lives of 20-somethings who play football or can warble their way through some tedious pop song. What can they really have achieved? This book, sub-titled ‘The Life of Arthur Rhys Davids DSO MC’ deals with another 20-something, in this case that ‘-something’ being just one more month when this young man would lose his life fighting in the skies over France and Flanders in September, 1917.

At first glance, the opening three Chapters of the book may seem superfluous, as they look at Arthur’s home life and schooling at Eton. His parents, aged 54 and 38, were both scholars studying and understanding the Pali language in which the early Buddhist scriptures were written. One senses that Arthur’s father, Thomas, was a remote figure, for it is clear that his mother, Caroline, was the main communicator as many letters between the family members (Arthur had two sisters Vivien (b.1895) and Nesta (b.1900)) which have survived, demonstrate. The conclusion is that Arthur enjoyed a family life that was largely sheltered and that his mother doted on her only son.

The account of his years at Eton indicates that, had circumstances been different, Arthur would have been a classics scholar at Oxford and would have, after university, progressed to some senior position in the Indian Civil Service or in academia. His health at this period was not of the best, yet he coped with the joint rigours of study and sport equally, playing rugby for the school. It is clear from his letters in 1914 and onwards that his interests were changing, as a number were now containing mentions of aircraft including seeing Gustave Hamel looping the loop over Windsor Castle. Becoming a member of the Officer Training Corps, he also would become Captain of Eton before leaving in the summer of 1916. The effects of the war would have been only to obvious with the frequent news of Old Etonians dying in the conflict that raged across the English Channel and elsewhere.

In late August, 1916, having already been accepted, he would now become a Temporary Second Lieutenant in the Royal Flying Corps. Six weeks of officer training and ground school followed at Oxford before a posting to Netheravon for flying training in early October. It is here that he began to discover that the army life was ‘coarse and uneducated’ and this does seem that it was indeed a culture shock to a young man with his background. At this point in reading the book, it became a culture shock for me with my aviation background also, for the flying hours and the weeks of training were surprisingly few in number at each stage that he progressed through. He spent a month

at Netheravon to reach the stage with three solo hours safely flown before heading the few miles north to Upavon and his 'wings' course which was complete at the end of January, 1917. A spell at Turnberry in Scotland followed where those selected as fighter pilots would be trained. At the beginning of March he was sent to the recently formed 56 Squadron, just over six months following his enlistment.

Undoubtedly the RFC must have regarded him as a highly promising fighter pilot, because 56 Squadron was very much a case of having all of the 'good eggs put in one basket', especially when among the flight commanders there would serve Albert Ball and James McCudden, VC winners both. Sent to France with the Squadron in April, 1917, he would go on to prove that the RFC's regard was not misplaced, and in the six month period before his death on the 27th October of that year, he would claim a remarkable twenty five victories, the most notable being that of the German ace Leutnant Werner Voss in September over Frezenberg near Ypres.

In reading the book, the early letters between Arthur, his doting mother and affectionate sisters now take on the role of a benchmark. There is very much a heightening in the concern shown by the ladies while Arthur in his wartime letters tries to play it down. However, it is also clear from his earlier letters that he was enjoying the business of shooting down the Hun, and appeared to be looking forward to a party with 'There is going to be some bust up when we get our 100th Hun'. He retained his classicist view but perhaps was becoming worldly as well. However, the letters also show that exhaustion was setting in as he continued flying patrol after patrol, by becoming shorter and more abrupt in their content. He was also making more reference to the turnover of pilots, some through losses, some through fatigue and waiting for his turn for a rest from operational flying back in the UK.

More generally, the book looks at the air war on the Western Front and lets us determine the reasons for pilot exhaustion. Lengthy patrolling while being forever watchful for the 'Hun in the Sun', the cold, the rarified air and so forth, these being among the causes. For both sides, the prime targets for the fighters were the observer planes, which were either photographing their enemy's trenches or rear communication areas, or artillery spotters directing shells on targets. British pilots would, like their opponents, have to contend with anti-aircraft fire, but, there was the added inconvenience of the prevailing wind which would cause aircraft, flown by unwary pilots in an aerial dogfight, to be carried eastwards over German-held territory. Having exhausted their ammunition and running low on fuel, the homeward trip could be fraught with than enough danger!

There was a surprising appreciation of the German pilots' skills and courage. In particular, Voss' last fight saw him tackling seven or more British aircraft, with some of the best British pilots, and causing damage to every one of them with his ability to turn the highly agile Fokker Dreidekker on a sixpence. After Rhys Davids had brought him down there was little elation among those who had taken part, no doubt recognising that Werner Voss had proved such a doughty and skilful opponent.

The circumstances in which Arthur lost his life were confusing and he was reported missing at first, his fellow patrol members being rather occupied themselves and too busy to see what had happened to him. However, two months later the Germans dropped a note advising that he indeed had been killed near Dadizele in Belgium. Understandably, Caroline Rhys Davids was grief stricken after Arthur's death, and in

March, 1918 would write an unnecessarily harsh letter to the new commander of 56 Squadron, complaining that no one had told her how he was killed. The response was a masterful piece of diplomacy that handled the difficult question of dealing with a grieving mother sympathetically. It is worth reading the book for that alone.

Turning to the author, he is an aviation writer who has produced a number of books that deals with unit histories and aircraft in the Great War, and in one case, on 56 Squadron itself for which he has later used the research for 'Brief Glory', and why not? I suspect that he has much more research material such as combat reports tucked away and could have included far more detail than the average reader could stand! However, given Rhys Davids' 20-something years, the author has produced an excellent and fascinating account of a brave young man whose skills were recognised with the award of a DSO as well as an MC and Bar, and who actually achieved something. It is a book that is well worth reading. Incidentally Arthur's face may be better known than his career, for his portrait, painted by Sir William Orpen, hangs in one of the Great War display cabinets at the IWM.

Bonne Fete de Noël et Meilleurs Voeux pour L'Année 2012

They say post early for Christmas, but sadly the greetings (see page 31) from the La Boisselle Study Group failed to reach us in time so that it could have been included in Journal 41. However, I am sure that the thought is still appreciated, and moreover, I am sure that readers will be impressed with the views of the two tunnels. The Study Group's progress can be checked via: www.laboisselleproject.com

War Horsing Around

You've eaten your hay, you've read the book, and now you've seen the film, and possibly, you are just wondering how close to real life Steven Spielberg's 'War Horse' may have been? Surprisingly, while I might be tempted to criticise the chronology with regards to one or two scenes, I would suggest that this excellent film was remarkably accurate in encapsulating the fate of the many horses that went to war, some, sadly, never to return.

Now, if we shift our view back a hundred years to the beginning of the 20th Century, we would see that trains had supplanted stage coaches and the use of the automobile was becoming steadily widespread. Yet, Britain would still depend on horses, as it had for many centuries, for much of its economic effort, its movement, and its social and leisure pursuits. There was farming and forestry, barges and trams to be towed, horse drawn omnibuses and, of course, the trap to be brought out on Sundays for courting purposes. Certainly, Jersey was no different, as evidenced by postcards of the period showing carriages waiting at the harbour to take travellers from mail-boat to hotel, carts at the Weighbridge loaded down with potatoes or vraic gathering on the beach. In those days, we could even find ourselves a horse at the Paragon Livery Stables in Halkett Place!

Of course, horses had also long been used in the pursuit of military conquests and victories down the ages from the time of Alexander the Great, to Boadicca and her chariot mounted with scythes (an early application of cutting-edge technology perhaps?), and later, the Boer Kommandos. But not just horses. To digress briefly, other animals of the four-legged variety, such as mules, camels, elephants and oxen would also be employed in the military, even during the Great War, and in some cases

during more recent conflicts and military operations. What did the horse offer? Well, it certainly ticked all of the boxes in the areas of communications, mobility, speed, reliability, simplicity, logistics and its use, if you will excuse some modern ‘defence speak’, as part of an integrated weapon system.

At the outset of the Great War in 1914, the British Army could field 247,432 men and 25,000 animals, mostly horses, and not all in the same place at the same time, with a sizeable garrison in India and smaller garrisons existing elsewhere. With Kitchener’s face glaring out from ‘Your Country Needs You’ posters, 500,000 men would soon volunteer and flock to the colours filling the places of the New Armies that were being created, while another 210,000 reservists would also turn up for duty. More men equalled more horses, and within two weeks, the Army had recruited 165,000 horses ‘for the duration’ throughout the UK, by a purchase process that verged upon the compulsory, clearly not appreciating Kitchener’s appeal. However, more and more would be needed, and the number of horses and mules on strength would total 869,931 on the third anniversary of the outbreak of war.

Great Britain and Ireland could never provide that number, although it managed a further 303,323 by the end of March, 1920. Consequently, the War Office established Purchasing Commissions that were sent to buy horses in Canada, North and South America, Australia and elsewhere. By the cessation of hostilities, the number of horses and mules shipped from North America, for example, would total 703,705, although 2% would never reach the UK, France or Flanders as a result of death from enemy action at sea, or from natural causes. Interestingly, Jersey was indirectly touched by the fact that horses were being shipped from the USA when the remains of RL Martin were recovered from the seas off La Corbière in August, 1915. Martin was a Horse Foreman, and had been onboard the HMHT ‘Anglo-Californian’, a Horse Transport, when it was attacked by a U-Boat a month previously. Taking to a lifeboat, it was hit by a shell, and he was thus killed. However, the ship and the horses were saved as a Royal Navy cruiser steamed into sight causing the submarine to dive.

Before the Great War, the UK had comparatively little accommodation to deal with a large influx of horses so additional Remount Depots were established to those that had already existed at places like Arborfield, with the larger ones being near the ports of Bristol, Liverpool, and Southampton. We can liken these and the other Depots to Depots for the men being recruited as the principles were common to both! Horses were kept under veterinary supervision initially, before being conditioned and trained, and then afterwards shipped to the Base Remount Depots in France to wait being sent to one of the many units that constituted the BEF. Incidentally, Springfield in St Helier was used as such a Depot, after initially being considered as a Prisoner of War camp in 1914, before Blanche Banques was settled upon.

Taking a slightly different slant on the expression ‘Horses for Courses’, we would find that for many horses and mules their role would be little different to that of their former lives before being ‘called-up’ for military service. A boon to Quartermasters everywhere, they would pull the Army’s ubiquitous General Service (GS) Wagons, which were laden with the men’s kit, equipment, mobile kitchens, rations, stores, ammunition and the thousand and one items that enabled units to perform their military functions effectively, if not comfortably. Mirroring the role of towing trams in London and other towns, horses could also be found hauling carts along the light railways that ran behind the lines of trenches that criss-crossed the Western Front.

The mule was a vital means of transporting stores forward to the front line where access by horse and wagon would prove impossible or inadvisable, often making difficult journeys, as we are reminded by Paul Nash's painting of 'The Mule Track', through areas that 'enjoyed' the unwelcome attention of German artillery. Nor can we forget the images of those animals that had strayed off the beaten track only to flounder in the Flanders mud.

Mules carrying supplies between Cambrai and St Quentin

While we tend to think that the infantry marched everywhere, and the majority indeed did so, horses were also an essential feature of the many battalions, undertaking tasks in addition to drawing the wagons with the Quartermaster's Stores on board. This was particularly so in the earlier stages of the Great War, when the lines between the opposing forces had not yet fossilised into trenches. The horse afforded Commanding Officers and their subordinates the opportunity to move quickly between deployed companies with ease, and to gain an appreciation of the terrain and the military situation, as well as enabling the passage of fresh orders as a battle evolved. Similarly, higher level formation commanders, i.e. Brigade and Divisional Commanders through their Staff Officers were also able to liaise and to communicate with the units under their command more speedily. Of course, this was long before the availability of viable battlefield radios.

Yet, after the onset of trench warfare the infantry would still retain their horses, undoubtedly in the hope of a return to a war of manoeuvre. However, as the war progressed and the number of officer casualties grew, fewer and fewer new officers knew how to ride, many of them having received their commissions after the briefest of officer training courses. But, it is interesting to read a typical battalion's war diary to see, that when the unit was out of the line, the participation in the divisional inter-unit horse shows and competitions organised by the parent division, even to the extent of prizes for the best maintained GS Wagon or groomed horse team. A source of unit pride, many hours would go into polishing leather and brass before the big day.

Horses were also much used in a less passive role during the Great War, not least with the three branches of the Royal Artillery, namely the Field (RFA), Garrison (RGA) and Horse (RHA). It has been argued by some that artillery was the war-winning weapon. Indeed, statistics indicate that it caused more death and injury than the other forms of killing and wounding combined, even though the 'Shell Shortage Scandal' of 1915 or the high percentage (33%) of 'duds' at the Somme in 1916 might have suggested otherwise. But techniques such as box and creeping barrages, shooting 'off the map', and taking into account meteorological factors all contributed to artillery improvements

in the later years, backed up by an increasing number of guns of all sizes. Of course, as front lines moved backwards or forwards, guns similarly had to move accordingly, and when the war became static they might also be moved to concentrate extra fire down upon a particular target.

Teams of horses would provide that battlefield mobility, by pulling the guns to where the gun crews could engage with an enemy whose counter-battery fire would seek out those guns. Typically, a team of six horses would pull the 18 Pounder guns and 4.5" Howitzers, the standard weapons of the RFA and the RHA. However, it is no surprise to note that the hoped for mobility would often be constrained for the advancing gunners by having to traverse shell-pocked ground. In such situations, early success proved to be fleeting. As to the heavy and siege guns of the RGA, while there were some that would be towed by tractors, again the majority of guns were hauled by teams of eight or more shire horses.

The last area of horse use to be considered is with the cavalry, and it is probably the most contentious because of the idea that British generals were all ex-cavalrymen who thought that horses would survive on a battlefield swept by machine gun fire. Whilst the latter half of that idea is accurate, in certain circumstances the mobility afforded by the use of cavalry could prove valuable, especially when an enemy had not the opportunity to organise defensive positions or was in retreat. Few men would be willing to stand and face a charger, with its rider armed with a lance or sword, bearing down upon them. On occasion, such opportunities presented themselves, as at Mons in 1914, High Wood on the Somme in 1916, and then at Amiens in 1918, but not all were taken through timeliness or poor communication. Of course, not all of the cavalry were expected to fight armed with lance and sword, many were armed with rifles or carbines, and would engage the enemy while dismounted. Yet, any planning to use cavalry was not simply based on a misplaced sentimentality, for once it was clear of a shelled area, cavalry could pursue a retreating and demoralised enemy more effectively than men on foot or tanks, which even by 1918, lacked speed and reliability. Furthermore, regardless of whether the Army was advancing or withdrawing, the cavalry could act as a screening force and was thus able to carry out reconnaissance tasks.

British Yeomanry in Damascus in 1918

Taking Flight!

In a reversal of the earlier equation, we see that more horses equalled more men, for there was a need to care for these animals while in service. The Remount Department expanded from 350 officers and men at the outbreak of the war to a figure of just below 20,000 four years later. The Royal Army Veterinary Corps (RAVC) would, over the same timeframe, similarly expand from 500 to over 29,000 to deal with injuries and illnesses. Supported by civilian animal welfare organisations, the RAVC would deal with some 2.5M equine casualties of which more than 80% would be cured and returned to duty. Arrangements that were comparable to those for men would be established throughout the Army, including the provision of veterinary stations and horse ambulances. Of course, animals would require to be fed, and it is interesting to note that when artillery was regarded as the war-winning weapon, in terms of tonnage, the figures for fodder shipped to France from the UK during the Great War exceeded those for shells and bullets!

With the war over, the surviving horses and mules that had given such sterling service now had to be disposed of alongside the many thousands of men who were rapidly being demobilised. Some animals had to be retained, and as an example, the Indian Army units in Mesopotamia returned home with a full establishment while the British Army on the Rhine also required a stock, this being supplemented by a reserve at the Remount Depot in Cologne. But, between the Armistice and the 31st March, 1920, almost 500,000 animals (the bulk of them horses or mules) would be sold off at civilian markets in the UK, France and in other former theatres of war, many sadly to conditions of life far harsher than they had ever experienced in military service. Even more sadly, another 61,000 would be disposed of for meat, and a little surprisingly, 10% of those animals would be sold off in the UK! The post-war trade in livestock does appear to be unfortunate, but there were few sensible options available to the UK government

following a long, bitter and expensive war. It could no longer afford the fodder bill and wanted to recoup the millions spent. Many pre-war horse owners had lost their best animals to support the war effort and with a hoped-for recovery, those animals had to be replaced.

Whatever the events that led to the Great War, looking back today, it is difficult to see how the participants, and not just the British Empire, could have gone to war without using horses, mules and the other beasts of burden. Mechanical transport had not yet achieved an acceptable level of reliability or ruggedness, although, by the end of the war, there were some 110,000 vehicles of all types, about half of that figure to be found in France and Flanders. I am sure that the British approach would have been very much mirrored by France and Germany, though, from what I have understood, their horses became far more worn out more quickly through poor care. This may have resulted from a continental attitude that may have seen the horse solely as a 'tool of the trade' rather than a British trait that found an affinity with the horse. Not being a 'horsy' individual myself, I leave it to others who might offer a better insight. But, in conclusion, I would hope that the overview I have offered of the role of horses in the Great War and Joey's film 'life' stand comparison.

Website Workings
By Roger Frisby

The updated CWGC website was launched at the end of January, and for us, it resulted in several thousand non-operational links with our Rolls of Honour. The Commission had obviously taken note of the many complaints that they had received, when they attempted this last year, as they have scripted their site to accept existing links to their cemeteries and casualty records. Unfortunately, our casualty links were to certificates rather than to casualty details! With hindsight I made a mistake when we launched our Rolls a few years ago, and if I had chosen to link to CWGC casualty details instead of to the certificates, their changes would have had very little impact on us. *C'est la guerre!!*

Now, each of our 3000 casualty pages has a link to both CWGC casualty and cemetery details. In most cases where a casualty has not been visited by us or where a photograph has not been obtained, our database links directly to the CWGC's records necessitating updating these in our database. All in all, about 3000-4000 edits are required. At the time of writing this, Guernsey's RoH is complete and Jersey's is about halfway done (**Editor's Note:** Jersey's RoH is now also complete). However, if you do spot a case where I may have missed establishing a link, please let me know.

Because of the CWGC changes, our work on Guernsey's Roll of Service was put on the back burner, but we now list over 4000 names. Meanwhile, a further update to Jersey's should be loaded in the next week, listing just over 7,100 Jerseymen.

Although it slowed down the process of updating the links, I also took the opportunity to tidy up and add additional information to our casualty records. One result of this was the discovery of a change to the CWGC details of Alderney born Sergeant William Law. Some years ago, we submitted his details for recognition and, after acceptance, the Commission decided to add his name to the Brookwood 1914-1918 Memorial. However, he is now listed as being buried in Ann's Hill Cemetery in Gosport. Is there someone who could undertake a photographic sortie to snap his headstone and cemetery? In a similar vein, can I ask that people, who maybe visiting the cemeteries in the near future,

check to see whether Channel Islanders are there, and if so, look to take photographs of their headstones. The CWGC is undertaking a replacement programme and the new ones will have much clearer engravings.

Finally, congratulations are due to the CWGC for this major upgrade. My own view is that the appearance of their new site is a real improvement. It is clean and bright in appearance and, although they have work to do still, it allows for a greater number of search terms. Well done!

Chester Cecil Church

Well, the long wait is almost over! Hopefully the Fromelles Identification Panel that will sit in early April will formally report that his remains have been found, thanks to the DNA samples that are being provided by family descendants in the UK and New Zealand. In addition to the obvious pleasure of having his identification secured, it will also be of interest to discover what, if any additional material or artefacts were used in support.

There is a good reason for this. In thinking of the casualty burials in the Pheasant Wood pits by the Germans, it struck me some 18 months ago or more that the Germans, they being a very orderly people, would quite possibly have listed the bodies by pit, by row and by position. Suggesting this at the time to a few Fromelles people, no one ever came back with information to support or reject the idea. However, I recently received a very good Australian study of the battle at Fromelles that made use of a number of maps that had been obtained or copied by Peter Barton at the Bavarian Archive in Munich. This brought to mind that I had met Peter at La Boiselle last October (Journal 40, page 18), recalling the conversation that we had concerning Chester and Fromelles.

Mentioning my ‘pit, row, position’ theory, Peter responded, saying that, when recovering the bodies from the battlefield, the Germans had pinpointed the position of each on a (I presume, form of trench) map. That being so, the logic of German orderliness has some measure of support, and it might just be reasonable to assume that the CWGC has a fair idea of who is actually buried at Fromelles, far more than is generally thought, but without other evidence such as DNA, any German map and ‘pit, row, position’ lists are circumstantial. Well, that’s the theory!

RMS Titanic

There are few ship disasters that can still capture the attention of people in the way that the Titanic did after it struck the iceberg in 1912. The Lusitania in 1915 does, but in between those two sinkings, few people for example remember the Empress of Ireland in the St Lawrence River in May, 1914 with another four figure death toll. But, we stick with the Titanic as the well-known Jersey journalist, Alasdair Crosby, has added to the many books that exist with his *‘Titanic: The Channel Islands Connections’*. Published just before Christmas, it was reviewed by the JEP, and last month, the newspaper, ran a series of articles, looking at some of the Jersey people who were on board.

I followed that series with interest, but the article that particularly prompted my attention was Thomas Ryan who had been articled as a Steward on the Third-Class section of the ship. Sadly, he would perish on the Titanic, but even so, he had a connection that indirectly linked him to the Great War, and this was through of the marriage of his sister Rita (or Emma – I am unclear which, but I’ll stay with Rita for the moment) to Frederick

Charles Farmer, a picture (unfortunately a scan of the on-line JEP image) of which is shown below, with Thomas standing on the left holding his hat.

Frederick had been a soldier serving with the 1st Battalion, the East Surrey Regiment when it had garrisoned Jersey between 1905 and 1908. But, at the end of his colour service, he had then settled in Jersey, only to rejoin the Battalion in early September, 1914 shortly after it had been sent to France. Wounded, he then died in hospital at Boulogne-sur-Mer on the 14th February, 1915. To compound the sadness inherent in that photograph, Rita would die some two years later, reputedly of a broken heart.

However, that wedding photograph is also fascinating in another respect. The gentleman directly behind the happy bride and groom is Frederick's father, Joseph John Farmer, and although the picture is a little fuzzy, the reader might note that there are two medals on the chap's chest. One is the Victoria Cross!

Joseph, also pictured left, and looking much younger, was awarded the VC whilst serving as a Corporal with the Army Hospital Corps (now part of the Royal Army Medical Corps) for tending the wounded while under fire at Majuba Hill on the 27th February, 1881, during the First Anglo-Boer War.

They say that every picture tells a story, but without the subjects realising it, that of the wedding is remarkable in spanning three major events over 40 years, and a VC to boot!

Jersey Archive

'What's your Street Story' Talks: Jersey's Archive is again holding these talks on Saturdays commencing at 10.00 a.m., throughout 2012, the programme being as follows:

- 17th March - Rozel Bay
- 21st April - Six Rue, St Lawrence
- 19th May - Five Oaks
- 16th June - St Peter's Village
- 21st July - FB Fields
- 18th August - Springfield
- 15th September - Gorey Common
- 20th October - St Brelade's Bay
- 17th November - Bath Street

If you are looking to attend, you will need to book by ringing 01534 833300.

Document Releases: A number of documents that had been held as secret for one hundred years, are now available for public access at the Archive, the JEP announced recently, with the rather catchy headline: *'Meet the bigamist, the prostitutes and the pie poisoner'*. My attention was caught, and I soon discovered that the bigamist was Conrad FW Krimmel who we commemorate on Jersey's ROH. It appears that having married a Maud Alice Swatman in Colchester in 1908, he repeated the process in Jersey some two years later when he 'married' Annie May Bourke at Mary and St Peter's Church. For this he was fined £2 and was sentence to a year's hard labour.

Conrad died of wounds on the 2nd December, 1916 while serving with the 8th Battalion, the King's Own Lancaster Regiment, and it became clear that he was serving with the 2nd Battalion in Jersey when he embarked upon his second marriage, when he appeared on the 1911 Census at the barracks at Greve de Lecq, with William as his first name. Given that he was imprisoned, the Army would have discharged him immediately, but looking through his service papers, those for the period before sentencing do not exist, and it is thanks to the King's Own Museum that I know that his first service number was 7114.

Any reserve commitment that he had seems to have been terminated as a result of prison, but he re-enlisted in July, 1916 and was now given the number 24422. The consequences of his bigamous marriage had to be resolved. First, his re-enlistment had to be authorised by a senior officer. Then his daughter, by Annie, had to be acknowledged as his. This was followed by the need for his Infantry Records Office (at Preston) to accept Annie's status as a bigamous wife, thus enabling her to receive a separation allowance. With all this in place, it is clear that the Army was being very good in providing Annie and her daughter Kathleen with financial support. The 'paper chain' for the process even included letters from the Town Hall in St Helier! As to Maud Swatman, nothing is recorded but after his death she would have been able to marry without it being bigamous.

Looking at Conrad's file, it seems that he had arrived in France on the 11th November, and had only joined the Battalion a week before his death from his wounds caused by shrapnel.

Out and About

Looking Back: Nothing to report.

Looking Ahead: I shall be in Jersey for the week commencing 17th March, with the prime aim of going through the 1914-1917 Militia Pay Lists. Before then I will be working on preparatory data.

Odds and Ends

Administrative Matters: As ever, 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.

2014-2019: Nothing has been received from the Constables on this topic as yet.

Guess the Guardsman: Thanks to Mark Bougourd, from the left as you look at them, the Guardsmen are from the Grenadiers, Scots, Welsh, Irish and Coldstream Guards.

The distinguishing features are the plumes on the bearskins and the tunic buttons, which reflects the order of seniority within the Brigade of Guards, namely:

- Grenadiers Guards (white plume and buttons singly),
- Coldstream Guards (scarlet plume buttons in pairs),
- Scots Guards (no plume and buttons in threes),
- Irish Guards (blue plume and buttons in fours)
- Welsh Guards (white/green/white plume and buttons in fives)

Coutart de Butts Taylor: I have done very little, if indeed any, research on Coutart for a year or more, but I have recently been in touch with a Guernsey lady now living in the USA. From her family research, it appears that he was a distant relative to Douglas Haig, via his mother's family! An interesting piece of news that will be followed up.

Enfin

As ever, many thanks to those who contributed to this Journal for their inputs, large and small. If you haven't managed to write up something this time, there is always the next Journal that is waiting for that article from you.

Regards
Barrie H Bertram
15th February, 2012

Journal Issue Dates For 2012

Planned issue dates for 2012 are shown below:

Issue	Month	Articles To BB	Posted Web/Mail
42	February 2012	10th	15th
43	April 2012	10th	15th
44	June 2012	10th	15th
45	August 2012	10th	15th
46	October 2012	10th	15th
47	December 2012	10th	15th

As in previous years I will advise if there are any changes for individual issues as each publication date approaches.

Bonne Fete de Noël et Meilleurs Voeux pour l'Année 2012

Le Groupe d'étude de La Boisselle