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INTRODUCTION

The history of the First World War has been widely written about eminent historians. In Great War 100 Years, we aim to provide a true insight into the first months of war, covering many of the first battles from the perspectives of those who witnessed the terror.

With this year marking the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War, the heroic efforts of those who experienced it are brought to fore. The lives of so many people were changed forever after Britain officially declared war on Germany at 11.00 pm on 4 August 1914.

Before the month was out, The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) had crossed the Channel to fight in a conflict that was inaccurately predicted to be over by Christmas. However, the soldiers of the British army and those of the German army clashed in a series of epic battles which, by winter, had evolved into a stalemate that lasted four years. Through diary entries, memoirs, recollections and research, much can be learned about the first months of war and the battles leading up to the surprising Christmas truce: the Battle of and the Retreat from Mons, the Battle of Marne, the First Battle of Aisne, Flanders and the First Battle of Ypres and many more.

This magazine has been published by Pen & Sword Military Limited, with the purpose of creating an awareness and interest in the Great War, with a focus on the opening months.

For over twenty-five years, Pen & Sword has published numerous military books that cover various conflicts throughout history, a vast amount of which focus on personal accounts of soldiers who fought. The titles featured in this magazine are only a small selection taken from a large collection of subjects, which relate to the First World War.

Extracts have been taken from a number of these titles to produce this magazine, however only small sections have been taken from each book that are seen at the end of each chapter. We would encourage you to buy these titles as far more information can been gleaned from their pages.

These publications would not have been possible without the skill and dedication of our authors who have painstakingly researched and written about the subjects that bring to light these historic events.

Pen & Sword Books would like to thank; William Langford, Matthew Richardson, Bob Carruthers, Nigel Cave and Jack Sheldon, Richard Van Embden, Philip Stevens, Simon Fowler, Paul Oldfield, Arthur Banks, Herbert Sulzbach, and Toni and Valmai Holt, whose works have appeared in this magazine: GREAT WAR 100 YEARS.

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THE FIRST MONTHS OF WAR IN 1914

After years of tension in Europe, the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, on 28 June 1914, kick-started the Great War. The build up to war quickly progressed, and between August, September and October, Europe became locked in a series of battles in a war that would span over almost four years.

AUGUST

The voluntary recruitment movement in Britain peaks between the months of August and October 1914, with troops joining up and training after countries across and beyond Europe declare war on each other.

1. Germany declared war on Russia.

3. Germany declared war on France.

4. As soon war was declared, twenty-one German spies scattered around Britain were arrested. Moltke ordered the Schlieffen Plan, whereby Germany would attack France on the mobilization of Russian forces near the German border, to proceed. The German troops entered Belgium leading to Britain's declaration of war on Germany.

5. The BEF mobilized and Lord Kitchener was appointed Britain's Secretary of State for War.

7. Kitchener called for 100,000 men to join the British Army, stating, 'Your Country Needs You.' Meanwhile the Battle of the Frontiers commenced.

12. Big Bertha, howitzers often used by the German forces, were used against Liege Forts, destroying many of them in the next days. The Austria-Hungary troops also invaded Serbia, leading to the declaration of war from Britain on Austria-Hungary.

14. The French troops entered Lorraine.

19. The U.S. President, Woodrow Wilson, announced the United States would remain neutral, although they joined the war in 1917.

22. The BEF arrived in France and the retreat from Mons was initiated, whereby the allied forces retreated to the River Marne, closely followed by the Germans.

23. The Battle of Mons began in Belgium, where British troops attempted to delay the advance of Germany into France.

24. The first PALs battalion of the war commenced and the French army abandoned plan XVII; an offensive strategy along the Franco-German border.

26. The Russians were defeated by German forces at the Battle of Tannenberg and the Battle of Le Cateau, France, began. This was regarded as one of British military history's most successful holdings as the British forces held off overwhelming numbers of the enemy.

28. The Battle of Heligoland Bight proceeded in the North Sea. It was the first naval battle of the First World War and a British victory.

SEPTEMBER

By September, the Great War was well underway and already there were heavy losses for all countries embroiled in the war. This was the month that saw the First Battle of the Marne begin and the formation of the St Mihiel Salient.

1. General von Kluck's First Army launched three major attacks on the retreating BEF. The key action that morning was at the small village of Néry. There the British 1st Cavalry Brigade (and its six guns, manned by L Battery (RHA), had bivouacked during the night of the 31 August. Early on the

Much of the fighting at Mons took place in built up areas from which many of the inhabitants had been unable to flee in time. COLOURED BY JON WILKINSON

morning of 1 September, a fog descended, and the 1st Brigade was hit by a surprise attack from the German 4th Cavalry Division, which was on its way to demonstrate in front of Paris. In the event, the British fought back gamely and the six German cavalry regiments were driven off, losing their guns. It was the end of the German attempt to advance on Paris. The British had won the field, but continued their retreat, leaving behind some 100 casualties.

5. The Battle of the Marne began and ran until 12 September. The German invasion of France was stopped during the First Battle of the Marne as German troops were forced to the north side of the Marne River, causing the Schlieffen Plan to fail.

10. The First Territorial Division (42nd East Lancashire Division) went on overseas service to India.

13. French troops attacked the German Army at the River Aisne, France, beginning the Battle of Aisne. This battle would not finish until 28 September, and even then the result was inconclusive.

French infantry moving to take up new positions during the opening weeks of August.

20. In a speech at Woodenbridge, Co Wicklow, John Redmond, an Irish nationalist politician and leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party from 1900 to 1918, called for the Irish Volunteers to join the British army to show Britain that Ireland could help it in times of danger and need, thus making Home Rule more likely.

25. The Battle of Albert began as part of the 'Race to the Sea'.

OCTOBER

The Battle of the Yser and Ypres were just some of the conflicts that occurred in October. By this time the troops were realizing that the war may not be over by Christmas ...

1. The Battle of Arras began as the French army attempted to prevent the German Army's movement towards the English Channel. The French were forced to withdraw towards Arras.

5. The first German aircraft was shot down by an Allied plane.

16. Canadian troops arrived in Britain and the Battle of Yser commenced until 29 October.

18. The first Battle of Ypres commenced in Belgium, which ran until 11 November. It was an allied victory.

29. Turkey joined the Central Powers.

31. Japan attacked and captured Tsingtao, China, a lightly garrisoned port city on the Yellow Sea. It was held by the Germans since 1898, until they surrendered on November 6.

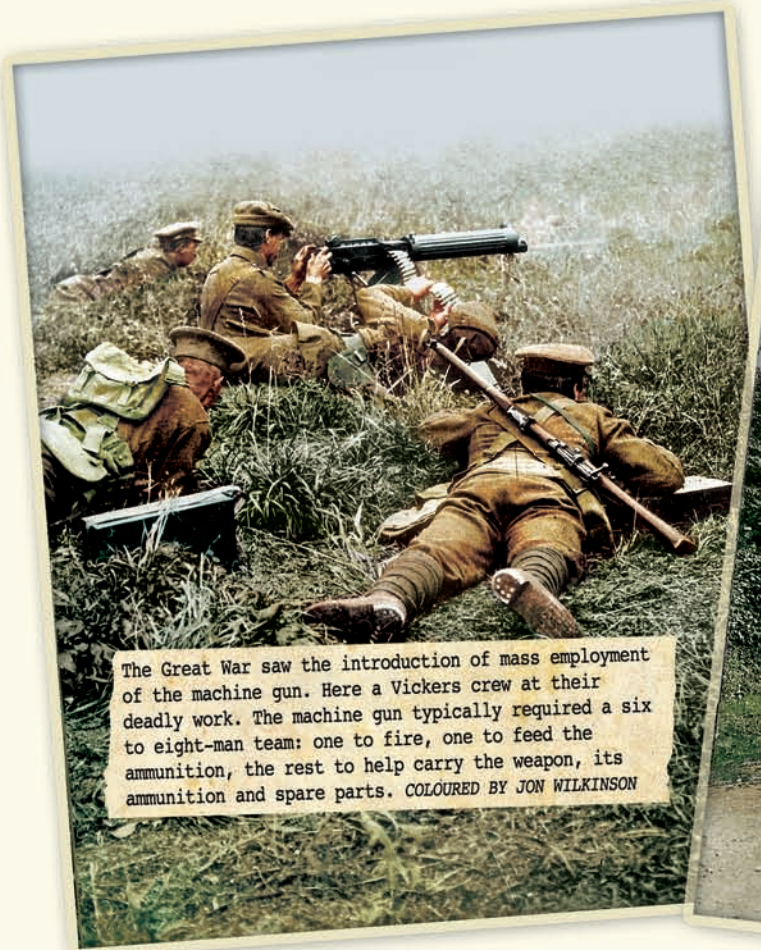
British infantry having just stopped German Uhlans. *COLOURED BY JON WILKINSON*

IMAGES OF 1914

The Great War Illustrated 1914 features hundreds of images that capture the essence of the beginning months of World War One. They demonstrate the true nature of war, revealing the hardships of life for those fighting on land and at sea. Some of these images have rarely been seen before.

By William Langford

Extracted from *The Great War Illustrated 1914* and reproduced by permission of Pen & Sword Books Ltd.



The Great War saw the introduction of mass employment of the machine gun. Here a Vickers crew at their deadly work. The machine gun typically required a six to eight-man team: one to fire, one to feed the ammunition, the rest to help carry the weapon, its ammunition and spare parts. *COLOURED BY JON WILKINSON*

British cavalry advancing through a Belgian village, August 1914. *COLOURED BY JON WILKINSON*

A German camera captures the scene after fighting took place in the French town of Lille.

British prisoners taken at Mons by men of the German 24th Regiment, 12 Brigade, 6th Division. This German regiment had crossed into Belgium 12 August as part of General von Kluck's First Army.

THE GREAT WAR ILLUSTRATED 1914

By William Langford

£25.00

This is the first of a series of five titles which will cover each year of the war graphically. Thousands of pictures were taken by photographers on all sides during the First World War. These pictures appeared in magazines, journals and newspapers of the time. Some illustrations went on to become part of post war archives and have appeared, and continue to appear, in present-day publications and TV documentary programmes – many did not. The Great War Illustrated series, beginning with the year 1914, will include in its pages many rarely seen images with individual numbers allocated, and subsequently they will be lodged with the Taylor Library Archive in order for them to be used by editors and authors.

Great War Illustrated 1914 covers the outbreak of hostilities, the early battles, the war at sea, forming of the great trench line stretching from the coast to the Swiss border and ends with the Christmas truce. Some images will be familiar – many will be seen for the first time by a new generation interested in the months that changed the world for ever.

Copies of the above title are available in all good bookshops or from Pen & Sword.

VOICES OF 1914

It suffices to say that the long anticipated Great War was the final explosion born out of years of simmering tension. In August 1914, the BEF journeyed across the Channel to join forces with their French allies, in the the hope that, by winter, they would conquer the Germans. However, the war developed into a stalemate that spanned over four years. Those who experienced these harrowing first months tell their stories.

By Matthew Richardson

Extracted from *1914 Voices from the Battlefields* and reproduced by permission of Pen & Sword Books Ltd.

THE FIRST SONG OF THE BULLET

On 22 August 1914 Trooper Ernest Thomas, of C Squadron of the 4th Royal Irish Dragoon Guards, fired the first shot from a British soldier in the First World War. He takes up the story:

'I saw a troop of Uhlans coming leisurely down the road, the officer in front smoking a cigar. We were anxiously watching their movements when [suddenly] they halted, as if they had smelt a rat. They had seen us! They turned quickly back …

My troop was ordered to follow on in support, and we galloped on through the little village of Casteau … We could see the 1st troop using their swords and scattering the Uhlans left and right. We caught them up. Captain Hornby gave the order '4th Troop, dismounted action!' … Bullets were flying past us and all round us and possibly because I was rather noted for my quick movements and athletic ability in those days I was first in action. I could see a German cavalry officer some 400 yards away standing mounted in full view of me, gesticulating to the left and to the right as he disposed of his dismounted men and ordered them to take up their firing positions to engage us. Immediately [when] *I saw him I took aim, pulled the trigger and automatically, almost instantaneously, he fell to the ground, obviously wounded . . . at the time it seemed to me more like rifle practice on the plains of Salisbury.'*

Ernest Thomas of the 4th Dragoon Guards who fired the first British rifle shot of the war.

MOST AWFUL AND BLOODTHIRSTY

14 September saw several British battalions attempting to force the passage of the Aisne over the hastily constructed pontoon bridge at Vailly, however they had to retreat back over it after being roughly handled by the enemy. The 1st Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers emerged into open country and subsequently into the full view of the Germans. The leading company attempted to charge with the bayonet, but they were thrown back. Among these men was Lance Corporal Fred Heatherington, who later spoke to a journalist:

> *'We were so near the German trenches that we got the order to charge. When they saw the steel glittering on our rifles they squealed like rats and bolted from the trenches. To escape us they had to get over other trenches behind, and some of them were not quick enough. One fellow scrambled out just in front of me. He may have had a mother living, a wife, children, a sweetheart. I cannot say; I did not stop to think of that, but while I ran blindly towards their fire, I just thought of our fellows lying dead and wounded in the trenches. As I struck, I tripped and fell right over him. By the time I had picked myself up, the charge was practically over. They opened fire on us from the trenches behind, and we had to fall back. We were about 300 yards from shelter. I think I did that 300 yards in shorter time than it would take me to do 100 at another time. They trained a couple of machine-guns on us, and then all they had to do was to move it from side to side … Every inch we ran the bullets were spitting all around us. Every step we took we were saying to ourselves, 'The next one is mine; the next one is mine; the next one – hah.' Then a man would drop, but still we ran on in the hail of bullets. Out of the 200 of us that went out in the charge, forty answered the roll! When we reached shelter and looked behind, we could see the wounded crawling, inch by inch, to our lines. Then one of them would give a spasmodic jump, and we would know that he would crawl no further. Yes, it's a bit vivid, perhaps, but it is war – real war. To live in it is to go through purgatory on earth.'*

A MOST PECULIAR CHRISTMAS

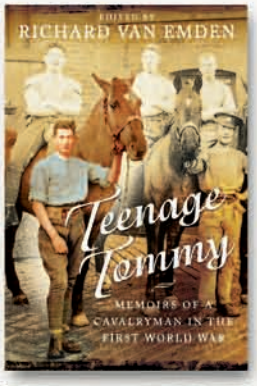
It was initially thought that the Great War would be over by christmas, but 1914 was just the beginning. Towards the end of the year a series of spontaneous – and never again repeated – truces broke out on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. The truces were remarkable considering the fact that there was heavy fighting in some areas right up to Christmas Eve. Private Frank Richards was serving with the 2nd Royal Welsh Fusiliers. He provides a detailed account of events from the point of view of his battalion. He wrote:

Private Frank Richards, of the 2nd Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers, who arrived in La Ferte sous Jouarre on the Marne on 8 September.
MRS MARGARET HOLMES

'On Christmas morning we stuck up a board with "A Merry Christmas" on it. The enemy had stuck up a similar one … Two of our men then threw their equipment off and jumped on the parapet with their hands above their heads. Two of the Germans done the same and commenced to walk up the river bank, our two men going to meet them. They met and shook hands and then we all got out of the trench. [An officer] *rushed into the trench and endeavoured to prevent it, but he was too late; the whole of the company were now out, and so were the Germans … We and the Germans met in the middle of no-man's-land … We mucked in all day with one another. They were Saxons and some of them could speak English. By the look of them, their trenches were in as bad a state as our own. One of their men, speaking in English, mentioned that he had worked in Brighton for some years and that he was fed up to the neck with this damned war and would be glad when it was all over. We told him that he wasn't the only one that was fed up with it … The German Company-Commander asked* [our officer] *if he would accept a couple of barrels of beer and assured him that they would not make his men drunk. He accepted the offer with thanks and a couple of their men rolled the barrels over and we took them into our trench.'*

PEN AND SWORD MILITARY BOOKS

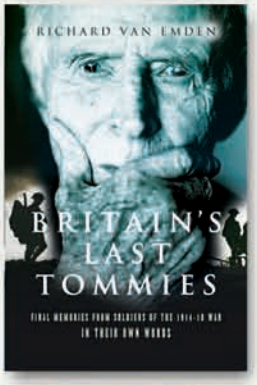
TEENAGE TOMMY – RICHARD VAN EMDEN



Benjamin Clouting was just 16 years old when he embarked with the British Expeditionary Force for France in August 1914. The youngest man in the 4th Dragoon Guards, he took part in the BEF's celebrated first action at Casteau on August 22nd, and, two days later, had his horse shot from under him during the famous cavalry charge at Audregnies. Ben served on the Western Front during every major engagement of the war except Loos, was wounded twice, and in 1919 went with the Army of Occupation to Cologne. Ben's lively sense of humour and healthy disrespect for petty restrictions make *Teenage Tommy* more than just a memoir about trench warfare. It is an entertaining and moving story of life at the front.

£19.99

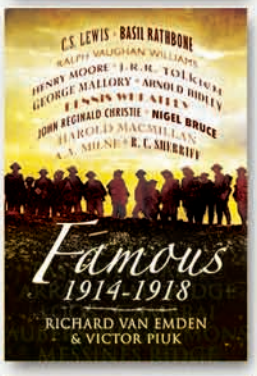
BRITAIN'S LAST TOMMIES – RICHARD VAN EMDEN



Britain's Last Tommies is a culmination of twenty years of work by Richard who has carefully interviewed and recorded the memories of over 270 veterans for this book. It is an extraordinary collection of stories told by the veterans themselves and through the author's memories of them. Their reflections are remarkable, sad, funny and moving. *Britain's Last Tommies* features an outstanding collection of old photographs taken of veterans as soldiers during the war and images of them taken in recent times in their homes and back on the Western Front, at the final veterans' reunion. *Britain's Last Tommies* offers a unique list of veterans, all of whom individually hold the poignant title of being the last Gallipoli veteran, the last Royal Flying Corps veteran, the last Distinguished Conduct Medal holder, the last cavalryman, the last Prisoner of War.

£19.99

FAMOUS – RICHARD VAN EMDEN



Famous tells the Great War stories of twenty of Britain's most respected, best known and even notorious celebrities.The generation that grew up in the late-nineteenth century enlisted enthusiastically in the defence of the country. Many would become household names such as Basil Rathbone – the definitive Sherlock Holmes, AA Milne – creator of *Winnie the Pooh*, and Arnold Ridley who found fame and public affection as the gentle and genial Godfrey in *Dad's Army*. Each story will be examined in detail with pictures taken of the very spot where the action took place along with maps of the area that will guide enterprising readers to walk in the footsteps of their heroes.

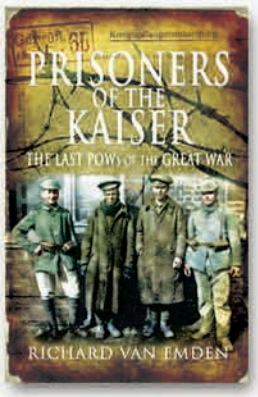
£25.00

VETERANS – RICHARD VAN EMDEN

Using the veterans' own words and photographs, this book brings to life a mixture of their excitement of embarkation for France, their unbound optimism and courage, the agony of the trenches, and numbing fear of going over the top. The fight for survival, the long ordeal of those who were wounded and the ever present grief caused by appalling loss and waste of life make for compelling reading. The veterans give us first-hand accounts of stark honesty, as they describe experiences that have lived with them for over 80 years.

£9.99

PRISONERS OF THE KAISER – RICHARD VAN EMDEN



Drawing on the memories of the last surviving prisoners of the 1914-1918 war, this book tells the dramatic story of life as a PoW in Germany. Stories include the shock of capture on the Western Front, to the grind of daily life in imprisonment in Germany. Veterans recall work in salt mines, escape attempts, as well as the torture of starvation and the relief at their eventual release. Vivid stories are told using over 200 photographs and illustrations, almost all of which have never before been published.

£9.99

Copies of the above titles are available in all good bookshops or from Pen & Sword.

PRIVATE HITLER'S WAR

On Saturday, 1 August 1914, in response to the news of Russian mobilization, came the Imperial order for the mobilization of Germany's great war machine. For Adolf Hitler, what he described as 'the most memorable period' of his life had now begun.

by Bob Carruthers

Extracted from *Private Hitler's War 1914–1918* and reproduced with permission by Pen & Sword Books Ltd.

HITLER AND THE LIST REGIMENT

On Saturday, 9 October, the 1st Company of the 16th Bavarian Reserve Infantry, with Adolf Hitler in its ranks, set off on foot for Lechfeld, and began the long march that would take them seventy miles west of Munich to the confluence of the rivers Lech and the Danube.

The next day the company continued their march to Lechfeld on what was described as a bitterly cold Sunday, they marched for thirteen hours before bivouacking in the open for the night. Finally, on 11 October 1914, Hitler and the rest of the 1st Company reached Lechfeld in mid afternoon. The regiment was to receive no respite after its gruelling march and immediately embarked upon a programme of further training. Shortly after, the fresh warriors of the List Regiment now boarded a troop train which headed north and west and, just as Hitler had hoped, they soon deduced that their fate was indeed to fight on the Western Front.

On Sunday, 2 August 1914, a 25-year-old Adolf Hitler was amongst thousands of people gathered at the Odeonsplatz in Munich. The crowd joined in exuberant enthusiasm for the war and Heinrich Hoffman was on hand to record the scene. He later identified Hitler as a figure in the crowd.

WITH RIFLE IN HAND

On 29 October 1914 the List Regiment was temporarily attached to the 54th Reserve Division, and it was with this division that the untried men of the regiment experienced their first action. They were sent forward to relieve a hard-pressed Württemburg unit and took some casualties as a result of their non-standard Landsturmmuetzen head gear which so closely resembled the British 1914 pattern caps. Rounds were fired by the men on their own side under the mistaken impression that the Listers were British troops.

With English and Belgian shells falling all around, the battle continued for three days, with fierce causalities on both sides. Hitler and the 1st Company advanced and retreated into a storm of fire four times until, eventually the village of Gheluvelt finally fell into German hands. The task for the 1st Company of the List Regiment was to take up positions just to the north of the main road to Ypres and to cooperate with the Württembergers and other elements of the 54th Reserve Division in order to capture the village and open the road to Ypres. The chateau of Gheluveldt village was captured by the Listers but fell back into the hands of the British after a ferocious counter attack by the men of the Worcester Regiment.

The fight clearly made a huge impression on him and he went to some trouble to ensure that Herr Hepp had all of the details. The situation was fluid and confused, and although trenches were beginning to appear on the battlefield, this was one of the last occasions on the Western Front on which armies would manoeuvre in the open:

Adolf Hitler, then a battalion-messenger, seen in May 1915 with his rifle slung over his shoulder. Hitler was in the process of delivering a message. This photograph first appeared in the Official Regimental History of the 16th RIR.

'Early, around 6.00 am, we came to an inn. We were with another company and it was not till 7.00 am that we went out to join the dance. We followed the road into a wood, and then we came out in correct marching order on a large meadow. In front of us were guns in partially dug trenches and, behind these, we took up our positions in big hollows scooped out of the earth; and waited. Soon, the first lots of shrapnel came over, bursting in the woods, and smashing up the trees as though they were brushwood. We looked on interestedly, without any real idea of danger. No one was afraid.

Every man waited impatiently for the command: "Forward!" … We swarmed out of our positions and raced across the fields to a small farm. Shrapnel was bursting left and right of us, and the English bullets came whistling through the shrapnel; but we paid no attention to them. For ten minutes, we lay there; and then, once again, we were ordered to advance. I was right out in front, ahead of everyone in my platoon. Platoon-leader Stoever was hit. Good God! I had barely any time to think; the fighting was beginning in earnest! Because we were out in the open, we had to advance quickly. The captain was at the head. The first of our men had begun to fall. The English had set up machine guns. We threw ourselves down and crawled slowly along a ditch. From time to time someone was hit, we could not go on, and the whole company was stuck there. We had to lift the man out of the ditch. We kept on crawling until the ditch came to an end, and then we were out in the open field again. We ran 15 or 20 yards, and then we found a big pool of water. One after another, we splashed through it, took cover, and caught our breath. But it was no place for lying low. We dashed out again at full speed into a forest that lay about a hundred yards ahead of us. There, after a while, we all found each other … Once more we advanced. I jumped up and ran as fast as I could across meadows and beet fields, jumping over trenches, hedgerows, and barbed-wire entanglements; and then I heard someone shouting ahead of me: "In here! Everyone in here!" There was a long trench in front of me and, in an instant, I had jumped into it; and there were others in front of me, behind me, and left and right of me. Next to me were Württembergers, and under me were dead and wounded Englishmen … At last, at ten o'clock, our artillery opened up in this sector. One – two – three – five – and so it went on. Time and again a shell burst in the English trenches in front of us. The poor devils came swarming out like ants from an ant heap, and we hurled ourselves at them. In a flash we had crossed the fields in front of us, and after bloody hand-to-hand fighting in some places, we threw (the enemy) out of one trench after another … At last we reached the main highway … On the left lay several farms – all occupied – and there was withering fire. Right in front of us, men were falling … we advanced straight into the forest, fanning out to the left, because there was no way of advancing along the road. Four times we went forward, and each time we were forced to retreat … Finally, at 2.00 am, we advanced for the fifth time; and this time, we were able to occupy the farm and the edge of the forest. At 5.00 pm, we assembled and dug in, a hundred yards from the road. So we went on fighting for three days in the same way, and on the third day the British were finally defeated.'

GEFREITER (CORPORAL) HITLER

It would appear that the fighting for the farm at Becelaere and the village of Gheluvelt and was the only

occasion on which Hitler fought with rifle in hand. By early November, he was already serving as a regimental messenger. However the brief combat at Gheluvelt seems to have been enough for Hitler to distinguish himself in the field. It is conceivable that, even during his first taste of fighting near Gheluvelt, Hitler was already being entrusted to carry messages in the field. If that was the case it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that he may never have fired a shot in anger as a rifleman. Hans Mend certainly gives the impression that Hitler was already employed as a despatch runner at some time during the first engagement and describes Hitler in action: 'He lined up fearlessly for the most difficult messages, he was one of the best and most reliable battle ordinance men.' Mend also quoted the opinion of one of the officers of the List Regiment; 'I still can't understand how he puts his life at such risk when he owns not a single stone in Germany, he is certainly a strange one and lives in his own world, otherwise he is a capable individual.' Westenkirchner however gives a different account and clearly recalled Hitler fighting as an infantryman. We will never know the truth for certain but, in any event, Hitler certainly carried out the duties assigned to him to the satisfaction of his commander and in recognition for his service as a runner, by 9 November he was selected to serve permanently at Regimental headquarters. He was to achieve the remarkable distinction of serving in that capacity and in that regiment for the next four years.

The remains of the German trenches at Wytschaete near Ypres. Hitler served on this sector of the front and was awarded the Iron Cross 2nd Class for his actions at almost this exact spot.

Horace Ham, Resident at The Royal Star & Garter Homes, 1986-1995

THE ROYAL STAR & GARTER HOMES: HORACE'S STORY

The Royal Star & Garter Homes is a charity that was established to care for the severely injured troops returning from the battlefields of World War One.

As WW1 raged in Europe, Britain's military hospitals became inundated with wounded sailors and soldiers. After Queen Mary expressed concern for the future of these disabled Service men, an independent charity was set up and, in 1916, The Royal Star & Garter Home opened its doors to 65 residents, providing a "permanent haven for paralysed and severely disabled men of the King's Forces." The average age of residents was 19.

One such resident was Horace Ham, who had enlisted in 1915, aged 20. A year later, Horace and his regiment, the 16th Middlesex, fought at the Somme. Horace recalled:

'I joined up with four friends and we stuck together until the Somme. Then, within a few minutes two were dead and two of us injured. Only 100 men out of our 800-strong battalion made it back.'

After recovering from his injuries, Horace returned to France in 1917, but was shot in the arm and permanently disabled. Standing in waist-high water in the trenches also caused osteoarthritis in his spine. When his wife died, Horace came to The Royal Star & Garter Home in Richmond:

'Star & Garter is my home now. It's a wonderful, wonderful place. I only hope, just as the Home was here for me when I needed it, it will be here in years to come for brave Service men and women.'

The residents' stories, past and present, reinforce the Charity's mission to care for those who sacrificed so much. Today the Charity provides brilliant, specialised care to the whole military family in friendly, modern and comfortable Homes. Such care does not come cheaply and the Charity relies on donations and support from fundraising events, such as the World War One Centenary Battlefields Trek, planned for September. This sponsored Trek along the Western Front promises to be challenging, thought-provoking and extremely satisfying. It will raise funds to support the Charity in caring for those who served our nation for generations to come – just as Horace hoped.

THE BATTLEGROUNDS OF 1914 – LANGEMARK

Prior to 20 October 1914, the name of the village of Langemarck in West Flanders was not even obscure; it was totally unknown to the outside world. This agricultural community, surrounded by meadows, crisscrossed with broad and deep drainage ditches and sandwiched between the Steenbeek and the Broenbeek, was about to become notorious for the intensity of the battles which erupted around it, and to gain undying heroic status as a bastion of the allied defence which prevented the German assault troops from bearing down from the north on the medieval town of Ypres.

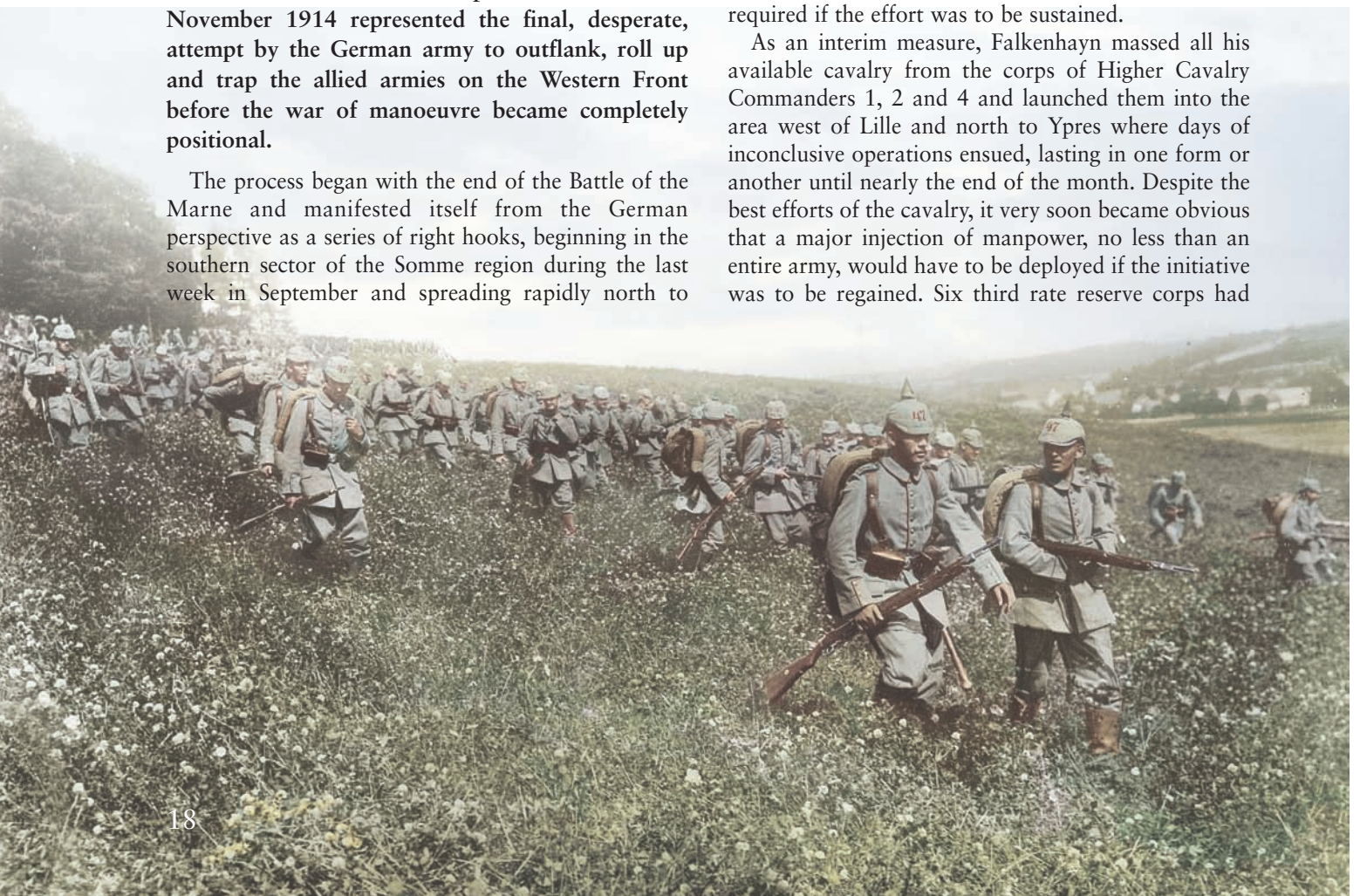
by Nigel Cave and Jack Sheldon

Extracted from *Ypres 1914: Langemark* and reproduced with permission by Pen & Sword Books Ltd.

The battles which unfolded from Ploegsteert north to the sea at Nieuport in October and November 1914 represented the final, desperate, attempt by the German army to outflank, roll up and trap the allied armies on the Western Front before the war of manoeuvre became completely positional.

The process began with the end of the Battle of the Marne and manifested itself from the German perspective as a series of right hooks, beginning in the southern sector of the Somme region during the last week in September and spreading rapidly north to Arras by 5 October and on into French Flanders. It soon became clear that additional forces would be required if the effort was to be sustained.

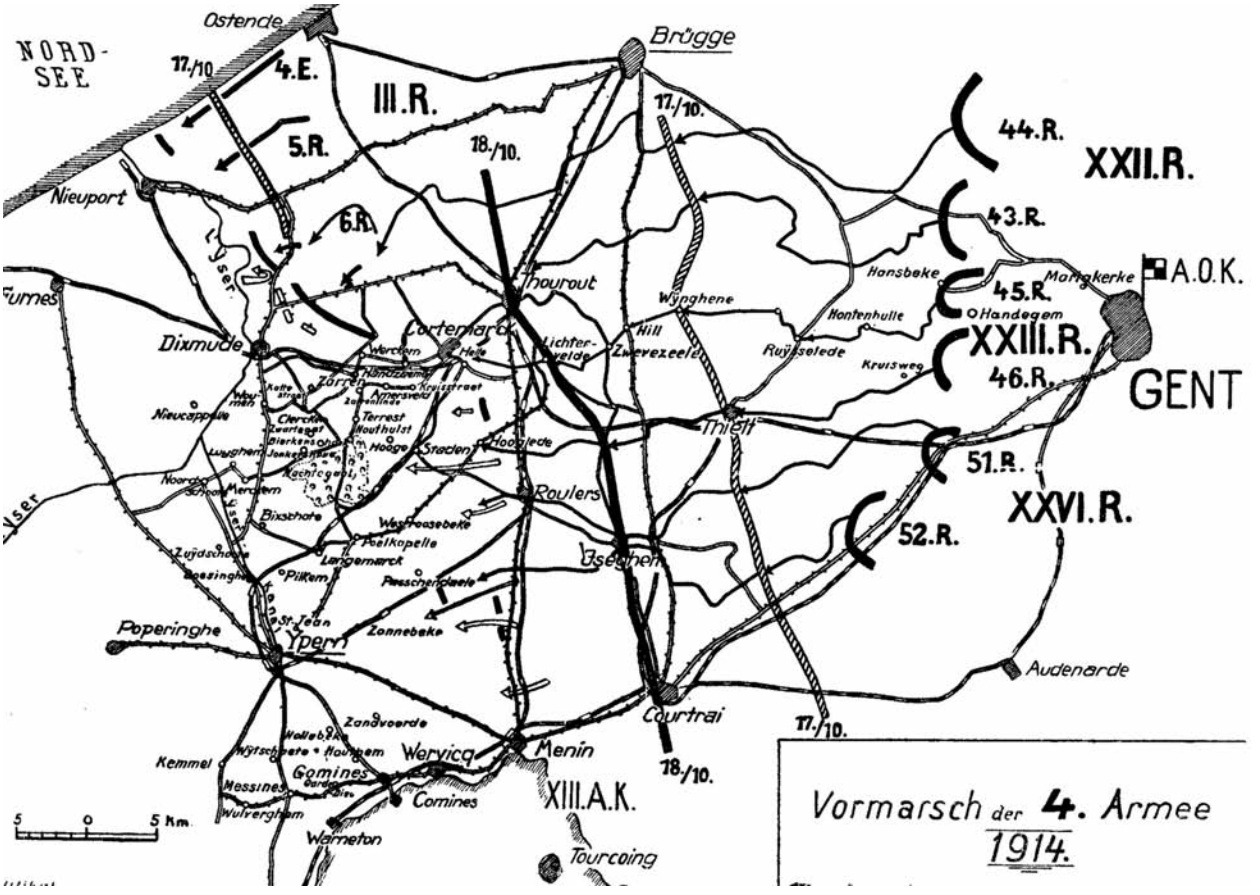
As an interim measure, Falkenhayn massed all his available cavalry from the corps of Higher Cavalry Commanders 1, 2 and 4 and launched them into the area west of Lille and north to Ypres where days of inconclusive operations ensued, lasting in one form or another until nearly the end of the month. Despite the best efforts of the cavalry, it very soon became obvious that a major injection of manpower, no less than an entire army, would have to be deployed if the initiative was to be regained. Six third rate reserve corps had



been forming up in Germany since August. Composed for the most part of older reservists and men of the Landwehr, and boosted by a large number of war time volunteers, they were poorly led, grossly ill-equipped and had received only the sketchiest of training. Nevertheless, Falkenhayn decided to despatch four of these corps to join up with III Reserve Corps once the latter had completed the capture of Antwerp on 10 October and, beginning on 19 October, to launch them in a sweep parallel to the coast, designed to force the line of the Yser and then to swing south towards St Omer, with the aim of outflanking the Allied armies and encircling large numbers of troops.

To command this offensive, the original Fourth Army under Duke Albrecht of WŸrttemberg was dissolved, then, on 9 October, a new one with the same number was created and established its headquarters at Ghent, where it attempted to give substance to Falkenhayn's grand design.

In the event, heroics by the Belgian army, which managed to evacuate 80,000 troops from beleaguered Antwerp and, boosted by French forces, to defend the line of the Yser for several days, throwing German timings badly out and ultimately, following the flooding of the polders, to bring operations in the north of the region to a complete halt. By that time Langemarck, defended briefly by the British army, had assumed great importance as the bulwark of the defence protecting the approaches to Ypres from the north. Possession of this vital ground was disputed intensely from 21 October to mid November, as the German XXVI Reserve Corps threw in attack after attack in an attempt to capture it. Its early naive attempts were utterly smashed with huge losses by the British defenders and then, once the British army was withdrawn on 24/25 October to concentrate its efforts astride the Menin Road, the French army furiously fought off all subsequent assaults by reinforcements from III Reserve Corps and 9th Reserve Division rushed north from Verdun, until the battle ended with both sides temporarily exhausted.

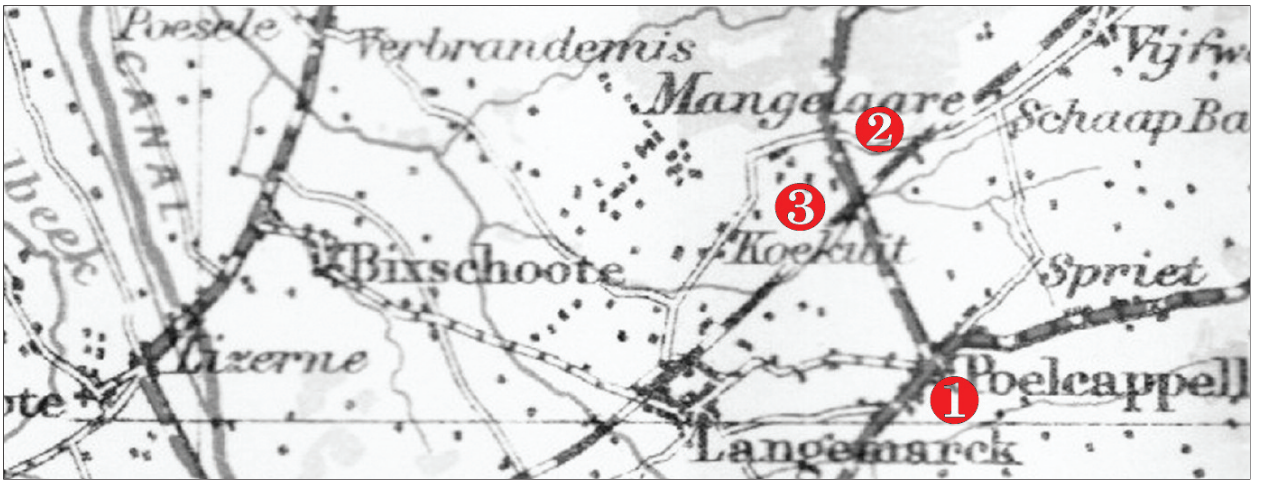


Advance of Fourth Army, October 1914.

TOURING THE BATTLEFIELD OF LANGEMARK 1914

Jack Sheldon and Nigel Cave takes us on a journey to where these preliminary manoeuvres began …

This tour begins, for convenience, in the centre of Poelkapelle (**1**); plentiful parking is available there, in particular in front of the church. It is always useful to have a good look at the spires of the churches, as these become useful distant marker points during the battlefield tours. At the central roundabout, with the distinctive 'stork' memorial to French fighter ace Georges Guynemer, take the turning to Houthulst and Diksmuide and proceed for about two kilometres, looking to the left (west) as you do so, across terrain across which the Germans advanced and over which there was heavy fighting for much of late October and November 1914.This will bring you to the site of (**2**) Poelkapelle Railway Station (now gone). There is space to park immediately on the further side of the line (the rails have been ripped out), on the right hand side of the road. The line is used as a cycle track in this area. Walk south west along the track until it emerges into open countryside (**3**); from here there are excellent views over the area where part of the German 51st Reserve Division launched its attack on Langemark (to the south west) and Koekuit (to the north west) on 21 October; there were numerous attacks of varying ferocity across the same ground over the subsequent three weeks or so.



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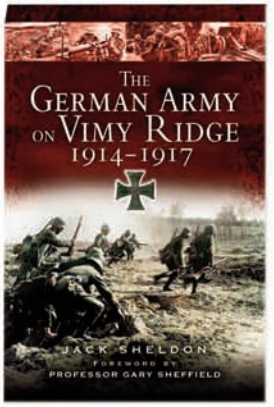
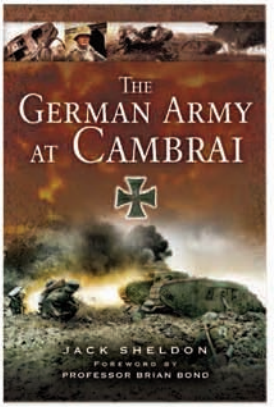




THE GERMAN ARMY ON THE SOMME 1914-1916 JACK SHELDON

By drawing on a very large number of German sources, many of them previously unpublished, Jack Sheldon throws new light on a familiar story. In an account filled with graphic descriptions of life and death in the trenches, the author demonstrates that the dreadful losses of 1 July 1916 were a direct consequence of meticulous German planning and preparation. Although the Battle of the Somme was frequently a close-run affair, poor Allied co-ordination and persistence in attacking weakly on narrow fronts played into the hands of the German commanders, who were able to rush forward reserves, maintain the overall integrity of their defences and so continue a successful delaying battle until the onset of winter ultimately neutralised the considerable Allied superiority in men and materiel.

ISBN: **9781844152698** • Hbk • **£25.00**

THE GERMAN ARMY ON VIMY RIDGE 1914-1917 JACK SHELDON

The book starts with on the capture of Vimy Ridge and the nearly spur of Notre Dame de Lorette in October 1914. The major battles of spring and autumn 1915 are described, as is the twelve month period from late autumn 1915 when British forces occupied the lines on the western ridge. The period from late autumn 1916 onwards when the Canadian Corps was preparing for the April 1917 assault on the ridge, is given detailed treatment, with special emphasis (based on original German intelligence and interrogation files) on how the defenders built up a detailed picture of Allied plans and how they intended to counter them. The battle (9 - 14 April 1917) is described in detail and the conclusion summarises the aftermath of the battle and its consequences for the way the German army prepared for the Third Battle of Ypres.

ISBN: **9781844156801** • Hbk • **£25.00**

Copies of the above titles are available in all good bookshops or from Pen & Sword.

THE GERMAN ARMY AT PASSCHENDAELE JACK SHELDON

Even after the passage of almost a century, the name Passchendaele has lost none of its power to shock and dismay. Reeling from the huge losses in earlier battles, the German army was in no shape to absorb the impact of the Battle of Messines and the subsequent bitter attritional struggle. Throughout the fighting on the Somme the German army had always felt that it had the ability to counter Allied thrusts, but following the shock reverses of April and May 1917, much heart searching had led to the urgent introduction of new tactics of flexible defence. When these in turn were found to be wanting, the psychological damage shook the German defenders badly. But, as this book demonstrates, at trench level the individual soldier of the German Army was still capable of fighting extraordinarily hard, despite being outnumbered, outgunned and subjected to relentless, morale-sapping shelling and gas attacks. The German army drew comfort from the realisation that, although it had had to yield ground and had paid a huge price in casualties, its morale was essentially intact and the British were no closer to a breakthrough in Flanders at the end of the battle than they had been many weeks earlier.

ISBN: **781844155644** • Hbk • **£25.00**

THE GERMAN ARMY AT CAMBRAI JACK SHELDON

This latest 'German Army' book by Jack Sheldon covers a shorter time frame than his earlier works. The author concentrates on German aspects of the bitterly fought battle of Cambrai from 20 November to 6 December 1917.

The narrative splits easily into two parts. First the defensive battle 20 - 29 November followed by the counter-attack which saw the German Army regain not only most of the ground lost in the opening phase but more besides.

As with his other books, full use is made of primary source material from the Munich Kriegsarchiv, the Hauptstaatsarchiv in Stuttgart, regimental histories and personal accounts. But for many the most fascinating aspect will be the experiences of the front line soldiers.

ISBN: **9781844159444** • Hbk • **£25.00**

TEENAGE TOMMY

Benjamin Clouting was just 16 years old when he joined the 4th (Royal Irish) Dragoon Guards in 1914; he was the youngest in his battalion and participated in the first action of the BEF at the Casteau on 22 August, had his horse shot from under him in the famous cavalry charge at Audregnies, and after this fought on the Western Front in every major engagement of the war. This is his story …

Edited by Richard Van Emden

Extracted from *Teenage Tommy: Memoirs of a Cavalryman in the First World War* and reproduced by permission of Pen & Sword Books Ltd.

CRAZY TO BE A SOLDIER

From as far back as I can remember, I was crazy to be a soldier. As a child I brandished a wooden sword, with red ink spattered along the edges, and strutted around the estate like a regular recruit. I daydreamed about the heroic actions of former campaigns, and avidly read highly-charged tales of action in South Africa.

I was 15 years old when I came home from Colonel Campion's stable in July 1913, which I left school for, so it was necessary for me to get into the army any way that I could. It was while I was weighing up my options that an officer, Captain Carton de Wiart of the 4th Royal Irish Dragoon Guards, visited the stables.

'I see your boy's home,' de Wiart observed to my father. 'What does he want to do?'

'He's intending to join up,' my father replied, 'he's talking of the artillery.'

I was told that de Wiart exploded at this. 'He doesn't want to be a bloody gunner. Tell him he can join my regiment, the 4th Dragoon Guards. I'll ensure he's looked after.'

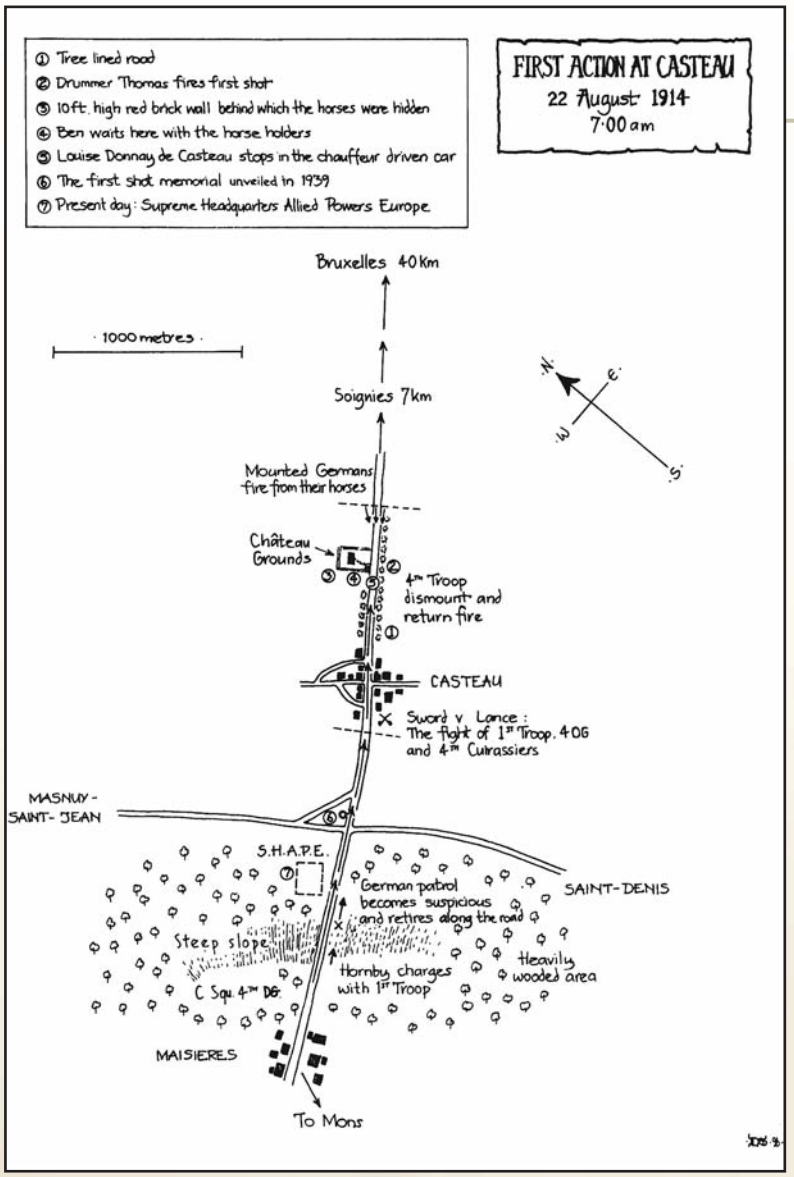
After one or two informal questions, he began to put my details in his ledger. It was necessary to conceal my age so I could enlist as an 18-year-old, but in my excitement I told him I was born on September 15th 1895.

Ben poses for a picture whilst on home leave in 1917.

'Well you are not 18 then, are you?' Lying did not come naturally and I sheepishly corrected myself.

At home I awaited formal confirmation that my papers were accepted. A travel warrant duly arrived with an order to attend a medical examination in Brighton, during which my measurements were taken along with the smallest physical characteristics, in case I should ever desert: a brown mark on the inner side of my left knee, and a 'scar small on back' where my mother had once used scissors to dig out a sheep tick. Lastly, the swearing-in ceremony before an officer and I was in the army; the date was 28 August 1913.

Nearly a year later, with the news that the war had broken out, everyone was excited at the prospect of a fight, troopers firing off blank cartridges in a show of delight. We were going to war; we were doing something. No one stopped to think about what that actually meant. We



were about to wipe the floor with the Germans and anything else was conceivable.

THE FIRST SHOTS OF WAR

Our first instructions were to let everything go rusty. Nothing was to be polished – buttons, cap badges, stirrup irons – anything that could reflect sunlight and so give notice of our presence in France. With everything ready, the regiment left for France and by 20 August 1914, they had reached Damousies. By 21 August, travelling light, the Squadron moved off towards the village of Maisieres, where a halt was made for the night. But Bridges, the 43-year-old Squadron leader, felt uneasy and so he moved his force across the main Mons to Brussels road to a nearby hill.

Our Troop was in a cornfield, along the back of which ran a wood. A screen of sentries was sent out, allowing those not on standby to eat something or catch up on some sleep. We were warned that for all we knew we might already be surrounded and that we mustn't speak to anyone. A few of us slackened off our horses' girths to let them breathe freely. But silence was the order and, as horses were prone to play with their loose bars, we held or tied handkerchiefs around the bars to muffle any sound.

At about 6.30 am, we arrived at a farm on the corner of a staggered crossroads and began watering our horses in a trough. There were already a few people about and as we waited, a farm worker came in saying he'd seen four Uhlans coming down the road. Once this was confirmed, there was a flurry of action, and a plan was hatched to capture the patrol as it passed. Four men from 4th Troop were dismounted and ordered to fire a volley of shots into the patrol at close quarters. This would be followed by a 2nd Troop charging forward and bagging the remainder. I, along with the rest of 4th Troop, was placed out of sight, mounted, waiting with drawn sword. I believe a man was sent out behind a hedge to signal when the Germans were about to arrive, but in his excitement he ran to grab his horse and gave the position away.

The 1st Troop C with Hornby at their head went after them, and the rest of the Squadron followed on in

support, with drawn swords. Our troop officer, Lieutenant Swallow, led the Troop at a fast canter, everyone was highly excited and I recall looking round to find our saddler sergeant major, not with a sword, but with a cocked '45 in his hand.

As the Germans retired into the village they met with a larger group of Uhlans, and, owing to the congestion, were soon caught by the 1st Troop. However, we arrived after the Germans had scattered, with the main body splitting off and carrying on up the main road. We continued to give chase, our horses slipping all over the place as we clattered along the square-set stones.

A last picture before leaving Tidworth.

Our chase continued perhaps for a mile or more, until we found ourselves flying up a wide, rising road, tree-lined on both sides. The Germans, reaching the roads crest, turned and, though they were still mounted, began firing back down the hill. 'Action front, dismount,' rapped Hornby, 'Get the horses under cover!' In one movement the Troop returned their swords, reached for their rifles and dismounted, dashing for cover, lying flat on their stomachs behind the trees. Glancing up the hill, I saw several Germans filling the road. They made a perfect target, and Thomas, the first into action, shot one from his horse.

The whole action can't have lasted much more than three minutes and as the fighting abated, the order was given to cease fire and withdraw.

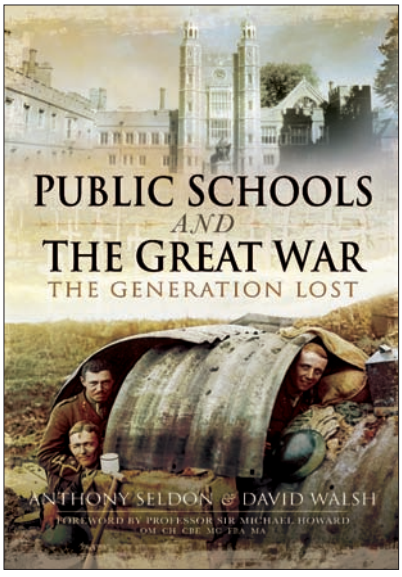
Review

PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND THE GREAT WAR 1914

The Generation Lost

Anthony Seldon and David Walsh

£25.00



The year 1914 was one of high drama for public schools. With the war looming over Britain it became apparent that a larger army than ever before was needed for the nation to be victorious: the number of officers would far exceed that of the past and the public schools stood ready to supply them. But even with this army, the new 'industrial war' could not be won on courage alone; a new kind of professionalism was needed, one that could master weapons that were barely even invented themselves. This professionalism could be learned only by a ghastly process of trial and error. Without it, the heroic courage instilled into the pupils of public schools was simply suicidal, and to demand it of troops under their command all too often murderous.

Anthony Seldon and David Walsh draw on new evidence from 200 leading public schools and other archives, in order to investigate the impact public schools had on the conduct of the Great War. They draw on their academic backgrounds to challenge the commonplace idea that it was the public school ethos that was partially to blame for the needless suffering on the Western Front, and largely other places that were embroiled in the war.

Together, Seldon and Walsh distinguish between the younger front-line officers, who had recent school experience, and the older 'top brass', whose mental outlook was shaped by their military background rather than their memories of school.

They argue that public school education imbued them with idealism, stoicism and a sense of service, which did help them care selflessly for the men under their command in conditions of extreme danger, but resulted in a death rate that was almost twice the national average.

Using unpublished detail about public school life before and during the war, and how these establishments, and the country at large, coped with the devastating loss of so many of its brightest and best, helps them to conclude that, 100 years on, public school values and character training remain relevant, and that the present generation would benefit from studying them.

This poignant and thought-provoking work covers not just those who made the final sacrifice, but also those fortunate enough to return from the war, but often whose lives were shattered by their physical, if not, psychological wounds. This book should be read by anyone tempted to make instant judgements about the quality of the leadership of the British Army in the First World War. Those who read *Public Schools and the Great War* will have their prevailing assumptions about the role and image of public schools challenged and perhaps changed.

The house hockey team at Marlborough 1913 – Harold Roseveare, the captain, was killed in September 1914, six weeks after leaving school. Thomasset, Blech, Gould and Empson were also killed. MARLBOROUGH ARCHIVES

Copies of the above title are available in all good bookshops or from Pen & Sword.

THE GERMAN ARMY AT YPRES

A series of battles took place north of Lille in the late Autumn of 1914, mainly, these trysts were between the German Army and Old Contemptibles of the BEF, but also with the French and Belgian armies. The Germans strained to achieve a breakthrough and the BEF heroically resisted – the effect being the stalemate of nearly four years.

By Jack Sheldon

Extracted from *The German Army at Ypres 1914* and reproduced by permission of Pen & Sword Books Ltd.

The situation around Langemark, located about 4 miles north-east of Ypres, on 24 October after the Battle of Langemark that was part of the wider First Battle of Ypres, was one of total confusion and chaos as the entire battlefield was littered with dead and dying soldiers. Officer casualties had been especially high so that even where groups of survivors were still in action, they frequently lacked leadership, direction or even any kind of orders to follow. All around Poelkapelle and towards Mangelaar, shattered subunits of Reserve Infantry Regiments 233, 234, 235 and 239 were hopelessly intermingled and occupying shallow trenches more or less randomly scratched out in amongst the beet fields. For obvious reasons the situation could not be allowed to persist so, although there were no immediate plans for further offensive operations on this part of the front, the highest priority was placed on reorganizing the tangled bands of men who were still able to fight and re-establishing command and control as soon as possible. Oberst

A German prisoner being closely escorted to the rear by a mixed group of Belgian soldiers.

Wilhelmi of Reserve Infantry Regiment 236 had been severely wounded and Oberst von Gilsa of Reserve Infantry Regiment 235 was killed trying to establish some sort of order, so drastic action was required.

It was no easy matter to attempt to construct a continuous defensive line. No element of 5th Reserve Division was much further forward than the Langemark – Kortekeer Cabaret road, the resulting salient formed by advance of the 44th Reserve Division was vulnerable to enemy counter-action and so the entire garrison spent the night stood to. There were indeed half-hearted French attempts to snuff out this protuberance in the German line and the whole area was kept under incessant artillery fire. With its left flank securely anchored on the Ijzer, the left flank was bent back to conform and the severely depleted regiments spent another two days forward in truly grisly conditions. Both here and in the adjacent 5th Reserve Division sector, losses through enemy action and increasing rates of sickness continued to be serious, so the newly gained positions were only held as a result of the timely arrival of reinforcements scraped up from throughout the III Reserve Corps area. The Machine Gun Company of Reserve Infantry Regiment 24 was one such sub unit pressed into service in this manner and their after action report shows just what an effort this intervention cost men themselves very close to the limit of endurance.

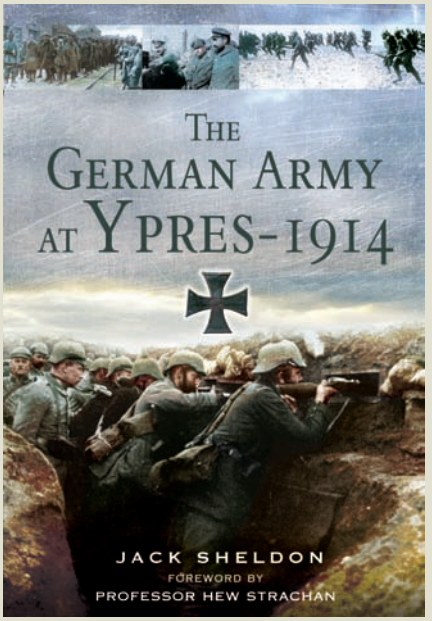
'At 10.00 am on 10 November, the company was ordered to move forward to 1st Battalion Reserve Infantry Regiment 48, together with 1st and 2nd Companies. Initially we moved into a trench about one hundred metres further right, where enemy artillery fire pinned us for a lengthy halt. Towards midday we moved off again. For the most part these … [trenches] … were full of fresh mud, so moving through them with heavy loads under intermittent shell, shrapnel and small arms fire was extraordinarily strenuous and difficult. In between we also had to dash across country in places. Despite everything the company suffered no losses and we arrived on the position of the 48th about 3.00 pm … It rained heavily during the night. The platoons were unable to get any food, because it was impossible to link up with the vehicles . . . We fed ourselves from tinned rations which we took from the bodies of dead British and French soldiers who were lying around. We could not do any work on the trench by day, because the French maintained a rapid rate of fire on it. This was particularly marked at midday each day, when we were also shelled. The battle continued unabated through 13 November, when it rained all day and throughout 14 November as well … At dawn each morning, the battle, which had faded somewhat during the night, increased once more in intensity. One day our artillery fired six heavy shells short, landing them in our trenches and forcing us back. Once the error was corrected we regained our old positions … At long last, at midday on 16 November, orders arrived stating that III Reserve Corps was to be relieved complete by VIII Corps in an operation which was to be complete by 11.00 pm. It poured with rain all day! The platoon positions came under heavy artillery fire again and the relief was delayed, not being completed until 3.00 am. The march back through heavy enemy artillery fire, carrying the weapons and ammunition boxes to

The battlefield between Poelkapelle and Langemark, November 1914. The rows of dots in the distance are the bodies of some of the German fallen.

A pre-development photograph of Oberst Julius List and a group of officers from Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment 16 wearing the ill-fated Landsturm forage caps. At the end of the battle for Geluveld, List and seven others had been killed. Two officers were evacuated wounded and only two survived unscathed one of whom was the Regimental Medical Officer.

the wagons and the continuation of the march along bottomless tracks, where the vehicles sank up to their axles in the mud, was very difficult and strenuous. Progress was extremely slow. It was not until 2.00 pm that the company arrived at its billets and both men and horses were utterly exhausted.'

In its way, this report typifies the entire battle. It never really ended, not for another four years. It just ground to a halt, descending into dangerous stalemate, where death was random, daily life was eked out amidst a sea of filth and mud and the dreary routine was punctuated by periods when the fighting flared up once more.



£25.00

GERMAN ARMY AT YPRES – 1914

By Jack Shelon

This book uses the comprehensive histories of the participating German regiments found in the Kriegsarchiv, Munich and the Hauptstaatsarchiv, Stuttgart. Their use adds authority and authenticity to the book while the narrative adopts a chronological approach.

The book focuses on some of the most bitterly disputed battles of the first three months of war, when the Germans strained to achieve a breakthrough and the BEF resisted heroically, at the price of its own destruction.The book employs a similar format to the author's previous works; that is to say the greater part of the text uses the words of the German participants themselves and the primary focus of the book covers the experiences of the fighting troops at regimental level and below. Linking paragraphs provide historical context and commentary and evidence from senior commanders will be introduced as necessary.

Jack Sheldon is now firmly established as the leading authority on the German Army in the First World War. A retired soldier he lives in France and is fully engaged researching and writing. His German Army on the Somme was a run-away success and he has built on his reputation with *The German Army At Passchendaele*, *The German Army at Cambrai* and *The German Army on Vimy Ridge*, all with Pen & Sword Books.

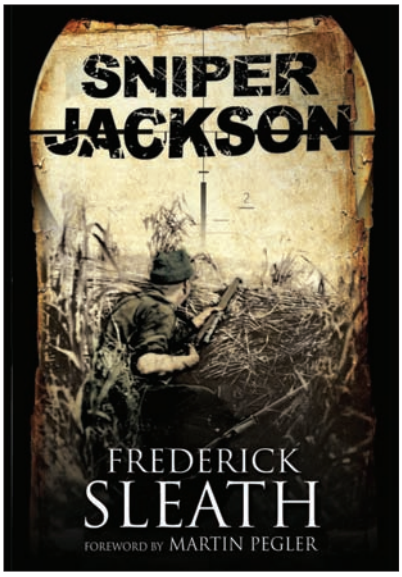
Copies of the above title are available in all good bookshops or from Pen & Sword.

Review

SNIPER JACKSON

Frederick Sleath

£19.99



Through Fredrick Sleath's protagonist, Ronald Jackson, we are given an insight into Frederick's experiences as a sniping officer, as well as a wealth of information about little-known aspects of life in the trenches of the First World War.

Frederick, born on 28 September 1889, joined the Officer Training Corps (OTC) at Edinburgh University, the place where he had received his masters degree a month before the declaration of war, and enlisted in the regular army as a private soldier on 30 November 1914, being 25 years of age at the time. He was promoted to corporal in January 1915 and gazetted to second lieutenant on 12 March of that year. He arrived in France in July 1915 and was serving in the Ypres sector before the end of the year, but at what point he became the battalion sniping officer can only be speculated. He was in charge of the sniping section for some time and he left, not through his own admission, but as a result of a freak accident.

On the night of 7 March 1916, Frederick was aiding stretcher bearers to recover three men sunk to their necks in deep mud near an area called 'The Bluff'. One stretcher bearer slipped and the trench-board being used as a makeshift stretcher swung round and struck Frederick hard over the heart. He developed bronchitis, and during routine tests it was discovered that his heart had been damaged. He was shortly evacuated to England, where he continued his duty at a desk in the War Office.

The book begins with the awakening of Ronald Jackson, ex-medical student of Edinburgh University, with the Battalion, the 2nd Eastshires.

> *Awakened by the sound of a violent explosion. A shell had broken behind his quarters … a man rushed out of one of the dugouts. He turned first one way, then the other, completely panic stricken. Finally he seemed to run into the explosion. He was lifted up into the air; his body crashed against the roof of the dugout, and rebounded thence to the ground. 'This is war,' thought Roland.*

Although it reads as a novel, Sniper Jackson can be justifiably viewed as 'faction' by its weaving of true events around a mythical character. This was a commonplace method of writing at a time when many serving or ex-soldiers did not want individuals or events in their books to be identified, and many used pseudonyms to conceal their identities.

Sleath's work bears all the hallmarks of personal experience, in particular those small details of trench life and the insights into the close-knit camaraderie commonly found in specialist units that only those who have experienced it could know. Unusually for such work, Sleath includes many personal details of men in his section. It also documents many of the more commonplace events of life on the line.

Parted from their own families, the love the men had for French children is touchingly and sadly portrayed. The the near obsession the British had with spies, rest, leave and the sometimes uncomfortable relationships with French soldiers and civilians are all touched upon.

It would be a mistake to dismiss such literature as imagination or fabrication, bearing little relationship to reality. The truth is that such books contain a wealth of information, and *Sniper Jackson* is a rare piece of eyewitness history about sniping, a little-known and rarely discussed element of trench warfare on the Western Front during the First World War.

Copies of the above title are available in all good bookshops or from Pen & Sword.

OVERVIEW OF THE GREAT WAR

On 4 August 1914, the first German soldiers violated Belgian territory on the Western Front. This action overshadowed the conflict in the Balkans, and finally set Europe ablaze in the Great War that would last until the armistice declaration on 11 November 1918.

By Geoff Bridger

Extracted from *The Great War Handbook: A Guide for Family Historians & Students of the Conflict* and reproduced by permission of Pen & Sword Books Ltd.

The history of the Great War, especially its famous battles, has already been well chronicled by eminent historians. In consequence, I here place greater emphasis on the less well-publicized origins and opening moves rather than the overall cataclysm.

The fighting in the various theatres of war, other than France and Belgium, were often intense and cost many lives. And yet the final outcome of the war would only be decided on the Western Front. Whilst the other theatres of war (often called, I feel disrespectfully, 'side-shows') are briefly covered, the main emphasis in this short narrative is devoted to the Western Front. With the full realization that it was a world war involving so many nations, the main focus is on the British involvement because of space constraints. Sadly, even then only a very brief summary is possible.

PRELUDE TO WAR

The name Gavrilo Princip will be familiar to many students of the Great War. It was he, after all, who fired those fatal shots in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914.

Princip, a disaffected 19-year-old consumptive youth, was part of a disparate Serbian nationalist gang optimistically recruited, armed and despatched by Colonel Dragutin Dimitrijeviç, head of the Serbian military intelligence and the terrorist group 'Black Hand'. Their mission was to assassinate Archduke Ferdinand, the heir presumptive to the Austrian-Hungarian Empire and a man deeply opposed to Serbian nationalism. Sophie, the Archduke's wife, was also shot dead – an unnecessary act for she had no political or royal standing at all.

This spectacular assassination has been called the 'fuse that set Europe ablaze' but that was a slight exaggeration. It certainly did not calm the situation but it was by no means the sole or even principal cause of the First World War. One has to look further back and further afield than that.

What is true is that the immediate origins of the First World War stem from the volatile area we loosely call 'the Balkans'. It was (and still is) populated by very many different ethnic groups, who found each other disagreeable for numerous historical reasons that date back centuries. The same was true of the once great Austro-Hungarian Empire, which by 1914 was losing its grip on power, but still had ambitions in the region where many alliances and much intrigue prevailed. Those ambitions were above its military capability, for its standing army by 1914 had dwindled to about 400,000 – small by European standards of the day. It

Western Front, SUE ROWLAND.

was not very well equipped with modern field artillery either. As a result of of internal politics between Austria and Hungary, the army had not expanded adequately to keep pace with European rivals and its reserves were small. Along with recently semi-independent Balkan states it wanted a share of the retreating Ottoman Empire, most especially towards the south-east. Unfortunately, Serbia was in the way.

Austria-Hungary had already antagonized the Russians by arbitrarily annexing Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908. Russia, still weak after losing the Russo-Japanese War of 1904/5, could do little more than protest and harbour resentment on that occasion. Serbia too disliked the colonization, which blocked its own aspirations for an Adriatic port. As Bosnia had a large Slav population, Serbia considered she, and not Austria-Hungary, should rule there. Serbia was already an expanding and antagonistic state as a result of two Balkan Wars in 1912 and 1913 and was not frightened by its large neighbour to the north that had kept out of those conflicts. Austria-Hungary, by contrast, was nervous of potential conflict and the wider implications of regional war without the full support of a powerful backer.

The assassination of Archduke Ferdinand by Serbian terrorists was largely an attempt to show solidarity with the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was also to raise the profile of Serbia, whose ambitions were to reclaim as much as possible of its old empire, which had been lost to the Ottoman Empire long before. Tensions were running high.

Earlier policy decisions to implement fresh alliances for Austria-Hungary were delegated to ambitious and volatile Foreign Ministry officials, among whom were Franz von Matscheko and Alexander Graf von Hoyos. The initial policy document was not too confrontational, but matters escalated considerably following the assassination of the Archduke. The whole blame for that was laid fairly and squarely upon Serbia and the greatest proponent for swift retaliatory action against it was the chief of the general staff, Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf. He was a man of great ambition and personal drive but limited intellect. Diplomatic meetings between Austria-Hungary and Germany were hurriedly arranged and much spin was brought into the situation. The actions of Dimitrijeviç's men at Sarajevo did not represent the Serbian government's official position, although there was much public support for the assassination.

THE WESTERN FRONT – WAR

On the Western Front the Great War actually commenced on 4 August when the first German soldiers violated Belgian territory. That action overshadowed the conflict in the Balkans and finally set Europe ablaze.

Scene of devastation in Chateau Wood, Oct 1917. The duckboards were essential. Many men drowned in this type of quagmire.

Britain sent an expeditionary force to war in France under the command of Field Marshal Sir John French. It consisted of one cavalry and four infantry divisions, comprising of around 81,000 men. Reinforcements rapidly followed. It was to concentrate on the left of the French Fifth Army near the town of Maubeuge, close to the Belgian border and less than twelve miles south of Mons.

Although it had been observed during the Russo-Japanese War of 1905, the possibility of trench warfare in France was considered most unlikely in 1914. Long-range, accurate rifle fire by the infantry, supported by light field guns and the cavalry, seemed the most likely course of events.

The BEF moved to intercept German units approaching Mons and was soon in action. Faced with overwhelming odds the British first fought, then delayed, then were forced to retreat from massed German battalions, which had already overcome spirited Belgian resistance. And that despite having marched several hundreds of kilometres from their bases in Germany. The retreat started on 23 August 1914 and lasted until 5 September, during which time the British soldiers were fighting rearguard actions and surviving as best they could. They crossed the River Aisne and then the River Marne before halting, tired, hungry and footsore, within twenty miles of Paris.

Poorly equipped British sailors, in the recently formed Royal Naval Division, attempted unsuccessfully to aid Belgian forces in the defence of Antwerp in October 1914. Many escaped to the Netherlands where they were interned for the rest of the war.

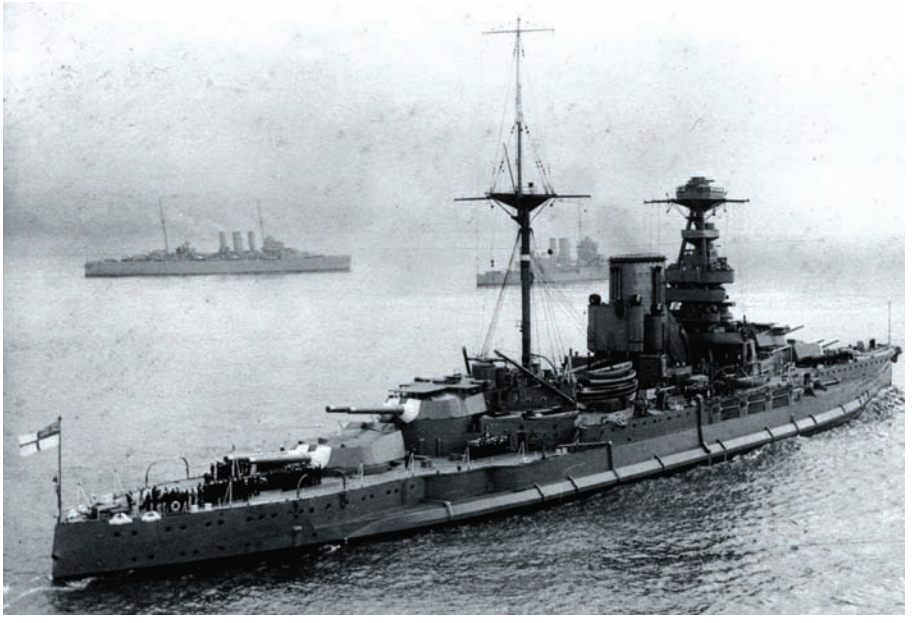
Any invading army is at a disadvantage when it comes to resupply. It can only carry limited amounts of food, fuel and munitions. Fresh stocks have to be brought through hostile territory over an ever-increasing distance. The transport system itself uses fuel and food even if it does not have to fight. A retreating army within its own country falls back on rear-based supplies and the population is generally friendly. The Germans effectively advanced, over the River Marne, to the point of exhaustion. They were low on munitions, food and other essential materials. Even the soldiers' boots were worn out. Their retreat to a place of entrenchment was inevitable. They chose to fall back on the north bank of the River Aisne and stand their ground in an easily defensible position. After a brief but bloody battle the BEF entrained for the Ypres Salient in Belgium leaving the French to face the enemy across the Aisne. The BEF, still small in numbers, took over part of that infamous salient and remained there for the rest of the war. Gradually it assumed responsibility for more and more of the front-line in Belgium and France. Thus the periods of stagnation, which became known as 'trench warfare', commenced. The length of the front-line in France and Belgium for which the British were responsible varied from an average of 25 miles in 1914 to over 123 miles in 1918. To carry the vast amounts of war materials required from dockside to railheads, nearly 5,000 miles of railway track were laid, including over 3,000 miles of broad gauge. Great use was also made of the canal system in Northern France for moving supplies.

Following Britain's declaration of war, the Dominions and Colonies, including Australia, Canada, India, Newfoundland, New Zealand, South Africa and other parts of the old empire, rapidly sent contingents of fighting men to help. Not all fought initially on the Western Front but all made great sacrifices during the course of the war.

ROYAL NAVY

Whereas most soldiers engaged in fighting were able, albeit perhaps unwillingly, to see what was going on, few in the Royal Navy witnessed the actions their ships

The mighty battleship was to be outclassed by the invisible submarine.



fought. Most were entombed within the steel cladding of their pitching warship, doing their job amid noise and smoke, but unable to see beyond their action station. Certain officers and lookouts were often the only ones to actually see an enemy vessel – and then usually only at several miles distance. Many sailors were never in action. Some remained in shore stations, affectionately called concrete battleships, or spent the war swinging around the anchor in harbour. Others were sent, as part of the Royal Naval Division, to fight alongside the army ashore.

From the very beginning of the war the Royal Navy blockaded Germany. It was not a close blockade but maintained at a distance to stop and capture or sink merchant vessels and so slowly starve Germany. The Imperial German Navy was largely impotent and unable to defend its merchantmen whereas the Royal Navy, together with the ships of our allies, literally ruled the waves. This blockade contributed considerably to the downfall of Germany.

Various famous actions were fought, about which much has been written over the decades, and it is not necessary to repeat the details here. The words Heligoland Bight, Dogger Bank, Coronel, Jutland and actions such as that at Zeebrugge, are on the lips of everyone who has read about the war at sea. Ships put to sea and shore batteries engaged German ships bombarding northeast coastal towns. Cruisers patrolled the oceans, keeping Allied shipping lanes free from German raiders. Most big ship actions were indecisive and yet many lives were lost. The vast majority of casualties at sea, in all branches of shipping, remain at sea. It is their grave.

During the First World War the battleship theoretically reigned supreme. Improvements in guns, gunnery, protective armour and speed were made all the time. The fleets were huge and the cost of producing and maintaining them immense. They required colossal manpower and yet the most powerful elements of all fleets, those massive battleships, saw relatively little action. In truth it was submarines on both sides that decided the course of the war at sea. Both sides sank a huge tonnage of shipping with much loss of life.

One of the most controversial actions of the Great War was the sinking of RMS *Lusitania* on 7 May 1915, which resulted in 1,198 deaths. It was sunk by U-20, one of a fleet of submarines that altogether sank nearly 13 million tons of Allied shipping. This resulted in severe shortages of supplies for Britain. Of over 350 submarines built, the Imperial German Navy lost over 200 during the course of the war. By comparison, of the total British submarine fleet of over 200 boats – some of which were obsolete, fifty-four were lost. Submarines are traditionally referred to as 'boats' – not ships! The German name for a submarine was 'unterseeboot', or U-boot (Uboat) for short.

Another weapon of naval warfare employed by both sides was the sea mine. It was tethered to a weight on the seabed and floated a few feet below the surface. It was detonated by direct impact with a passing ship or submarine. Various areas of the seas around Britain and the continental shelf were mined to prevent unauthorized access by each side. Generally one's own minefields were well charted with safe passages noted but mines often broke free from their moorings and drifted away from their planned positions. It was a mine that sank HMS *Hampshire* en route to Russia on 5 June 1916. Almost everybody on board was lost including Field Marshal Kitchener. Another famous incident was when Turkish mines guarding the Dardanelles stopped it being forced by British and French fleets in March 1915. Fleets of small ships were eventually equipped to counter the mine threat and were very successful, but many mines remain in the seas to this day – legacies of the Great War.

MERCHANT NAVY

These were the brave men who fought, not only the enemy but also the elements, in ships that were not always of the highest quality. If armed at all it was with a few surplus or obsolete guns, manned, usually, by Royal Navy personnel. Without the merchant fleets, and also the fishing fleets, Britain would have starved. It was not self-sufficient in food or war materials and needed to import a great deal. Before the days of the convoy system merchantmen sailed alone, and were easy prey to surface raiders and submarines that attacked them at will. With convoys, whereby a large number of merchant ships were grouped together and protected by escorting warships, the dangers receded but never passed. It was still easy for a torpedo to be aimed at a ship unseen from beneath the waves. Some 3,305 British merchant ships were sunk during the Great War, with more than 17,000 officers and sailors being killed. Most have no known grave and are commemorated on a special memorial at Tower Hill in London.

THE AIR SERVICES (RFC, RNAS AND RAF)

Although their stores and main personnel travelled to France by ship, most aircraft of the original Royal Flying Corps contingent of just four squadrons took to the air and flew across the Channel. The first to arrive did so on 12 August 1914. Their initial job was reconnaissance to determine the location of the

One of the best known British airfields used by the Royal Flying Corps in the Great War was Vert Galland where the DH2s of 32 Squadron were based.

German invaders. The eye in the sky had arrived. On 22 August the first contact was made and a German column identified. The aircraft was unfortunately shot down by ground fire and became the first ever to be lost due to enemy action.

From that small beginning the Corps expanded rapidly. However, because of the limitations of early aircraft no fixed armaments were carried and only lightweight officers were accepted as pilots. As their primary role was reconnaissance, it ideally suited former cavalry officers used to the 'lighttouch' required to control horses and essential to fly the delicate flying machines of 1914. Overall about one-third of deaths among flyers were caused by accidents.

Once more powerful machines were developed each side tried to deprive the other of air space. After five confirmed aircraft 'kills' (balloons counted as a half-kill) a pilot was known as an 'ace'. Despite the highly publicized exploits of those aces, on both sides, they had little real effect upon the war.

Spotting the fall of shots for the artillery became commonplace. Contact with the ground was usually one way only. Initially, messages placed inside weighted streamers were thrown out. Later primitive transmitting radios were used.

First the Royal Naval Air Service, then the Royal Flying Corps and later the Royal Air Force deployed large numbers of fixed kite balloons for observation over enemy lines. They were usually either the Drachen or the French Caquot types. Beneath each canopy was slung a wickerwork basket that held two observers, typically an officer and an NCO. The men were attached, whilst airborne, to prepacked parachutes that were contained in inverted cones attached to the outside of the basket. Initially only home-made harnesses were available. In an emergency the act of jumping from the basket pulled the parachute free from its container and deployed it and over 400 lives were thus saved during the war. Although defended by antiaircraft guns sited on the ground, most often the observers went aloft unarmed in the fond hope that enemy aircraft would only shoot at the balloon and not at its crew. The balloons were tethered to a tender (lorry) by a cable that was unwound to allow the balloon to ascend to above 6,000 feet (1,800m) altitude. It could be rapidly rewound on a drum mechanism if attacked. Communication with the ground was by telephone along a separate cable to that supporting the hydrogen-filled balloon. To distinguish their status qualified observers wore a special single winged badge with the letter 'O' attached.

Bombing of strategic targets, such as Zeppelin sheds and railway junctions, was undertaken with limited success, due to the primitive methods of aiming the bomb. Tactics to bomb and strafe (machine gun) troops on the ground were slowly improved and caused much damage and consternation, especially in the latter part of the war.

Ships were escorted, usually by the Royal Naval Air Service, and that arm also undertook anti-submarine searches and attacks. For these missions the RNAS frequently flew highly manoeuvrable airships of various designs.

Squadrons of aircraft were kept in Britain to protect us from air raids by Zeppelins and German bombers. Attempts failed to shoot down any airship, some of

which bombed with apparent immunity from heights of up to 19,000 feet, until Lieutenant Leefe Robinson shot one down on 3 September 1916 over Cuffley in Essex. It was technically not a Zeppelin but a wood-framed Schutte-Lanz airship. Of whatever design, all the hydrogen-filled hulls were very vulnerable to the new incendiary bullets and airship raids soon ceased.

Late in the war long-range bombing was undertaken. Various bombs, culminating in the 1,650lb (750kg) heavy bomb carried by the Hanley Page O/400 late in 1918, were carried to cities in western Germany in an attempt to interrupt armament production. Although judged to be of military importance, the success of those air raids was minimal.

As an independent air force the Royal Air Force was formed on 1 April 1918. It encompassed the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service and had a separate command structure from the military and navy. From a tiny beginning, by the time of the Armistice, the RAF possessed, albeit not all in good order, many thousands of flying machines of one kind or other. Later, the navy re-established its own airborne branch and became separate again in 1937.

Aircraft carriers as such did not play much of a role in the Great War. It is true that several ships were converted as seaplane launchers – indeed, one was used to spot for the capital ships guns in the Dardanelles. In addition many larger warships carried seaplanes. Some could be launched from the parent ship, being flown off temporary platforms built over forward gun barrels. Others were lowered over the side to take off. All were recovered by crane after landing at sea. It was not until after the war that the modern conception of an aircraft carrier emerged.

Launching a kite balloon.

GETTING STARTED WITH GREAT WAR RESEARCH

With a variety of research resources now available, often the most difficult part is knowing where to begin. This guide to online resources will help you get started.

By Simon Fowler

Extracted from *Tracing Your First World War Ancestors: A Guide for Family Historians* and reproduced by permission of Pen & Sword Books Ltd.

RECORDS ONLINE

The majority of records for the men and women who served in the First World War are online. This means that with a bit of luck you can very easily build up a fairly good picture of your ancestor with very little effort.

There are two major commercial data providers with significant First World War content: Ancestry and The National Archives' (TNA) Online Records Service, although Findmypast has increasing amounts of material. In addition, there are a few small databases that appear on a number of different sites. These include:

- Soldiers Died in the Great War.
- De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour: A Biographical Record of His Majesty's Military and Aerial Forces Who Fell in the Great War 1914–1917.
- Ireland's Memorial Records of the Great War.
- National Roll of the Great War.
- Distinguished Conduct Medal Citations, 1914–1920.
- Naval Casualties.
- Royal Navy Officers' Medal Roll.
- Royal Marine Medal Roll, 1914–1920.

ANCESTRY (WWW.ANCESTRY.CO.UK)

If you are researching the Army then you will probably need access to Ancestry because it has the core material of medal index cards and other ranks service records. In addition, they have campaign medal rolls for the Royal Navy (RN) and a large range of smaller databases which could prove useful. They are described in the appropriate place in the text.

Ancestry is the largest data provider both in terms of content and subscribers, and it can be very good. It is a subscription site: you pay for a year's unlimited access to the data. If you are not already a subscriber, it is worth trying the free fourteen-day trial. Alternatively, access is free at TNA, the Society of Genealogists (SOG) and many local libraries. However, Ancestry can be difficult to use, because the indexing is at best erratic and it is not always easy to find particular databases. It is hard to suggest a way round this, but if you are new to the site then it is worth using the various tutorials before you do any real research. Otherwise, it is a matter of trial and error. You may be lucky, but occasionally you may have to trawl through page after page of names before you find your man.

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES ONLINE RECORDS SERVICE

(www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/our-online-records.htm)

TNA's Online Records Service (which until fairly recently was known as Documents Online) is different to other providers because you pay for each document you download: at the time of writing the fee is £3.36 per item. However, some records (generally non-genealogical sources) can be downloaded for free.

There are a wide variety of sources for the First World War, particularly for the RN, which include:

- Medal index cards (which largely duplicate what Ancestry has).
- Some war diaries.
- RN service records for ratings, non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and officers.
- Royal Marine (RM) service records.
- Royal Air Force (RAF) officers service records.
- Merchant seamen medal cards.
- Nursing and women's service records.

Women who served in various theatres of operations were also entitled to campaign medals. Left to right: the Royal Red Cross; 1914 Star; British War Medal and Victory Medal with an oakleaf denoting a mention in despatches. JOHN SLY.

RESEARCH PITFALLS

Occasionally you can't find your person, and there are two main reasons for this:

- You may have made a mistake in your research, such as noting down a date wrongly or transposing a service number (5130 for 1530, for example). It is easy enough to do. So check and recheck everything. It is a very good idea to have a file for each man you are researching where you record everything about him.
- If my experiences in researching this book are anything to go by, Army and RAF clerks and Navy writers made lots of mistakes. In particular, names are sometimes wrongly spelt or the wrong initials are given. Staff nurse Phyllis Pearse, for example, is sometimes written as Pearce. But if you have done any family history at all then you will have probably come across various misspellings of the names you are researching.

But occasionally one can come across something more puzzling. 6901 Private Philip James Forster, 1st Royal Norfolk Regiment, died of wounds in Brighton's Eastern General Hospital on 24 September 1914 and was buried in the town's Main Cemetery with full military honours. Thousands of mourners lined the route of the funeral cortège, in the way they would not have done later in the war. He came from Attleborough, Norfolk and the local newspaper contains a long description of his funeral. Although there is a medal index card and service record, he seemingly does not appear in either the Commonwealth War Graves Commission database or the volumes of Soldiers Died in the Great War. However, he is listed there under Foster, and use his initials PJ rather than his full name, so PJ Foster is really Philip Forster.

These records can be accessed through the main Records homepage, which includes the Discovery catalogue to the holdings of TNA or through **www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/our-online-records.htm**. This is not particularly easy to use, but once when you have found the individual whose record you want to download it is simple and secure to do so. It is important to remember that you should use double quote marks, such as 'Douglas Haig', around the name you are searching. If you do not do so, you will come up with all the Douglases and all the Haigs.

OTHER PROVIDERS

The other major commercial data provider is Findmypast (**www.findmypast.co.uk**), and although its holdings for the First World War are growing rapidly, they are still rather disappointing. It does have indexes to birth, marriage and death records for service personnel. Its holdings, specifically for the First World War, mainly consist of databases sourced from the Military Genealogy website. It has an increasing number of unique sources including several databases relating to military nursing. However, it does have a complete set of the 1911 census, and the surviving pre-1913 soldiers' documents which might be worth checking out if you are researching an old soldier who re-enlisted on the outbreak of war.

Brightsolid, the company that owns Findmypast, also owns Genes Reunited (**www.genesreunited.co.uk**) and has made almost all of Findmypast's record collections available here as well. Brightsolid also owns ScotlandsPeople (**www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk**), which is the major online resource for Scottish genealogy. There's very little here of a military nature, let alone specifically about the First World War, to be found here except registers recording the deaths of Scottish

THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

If you become passionate about the First World War as I am you should consider joining the Western Front Association (WFA). The Association exists to further interest in the Great War of 1914–18 and aims to perpetuate the memory, courage and comradeship of all those on all sides who served their countries in France and Flanders and their own countries during the Great War. Members are a mixture of academics, enthusiasts and family historians.

The Association publishes four journals and four comprehensive newsletters a year, holds several conferences and now runs an excellent and informative website. At the time of writing membership is £26 per annum.

soldiers in what is called ‘the minor records’. ScotlandsPeople also has the 1911 (and other) Scottish censuses. One tangential source is the Valuation Roll for 1915–16 which gives the valuation of property for taxation purposes, listing heads of the household and their landlords.

A specialist provider is Military Genealogy (**www.militarygenealogy.com**) which has a number of databases relating to the First World War. However, Naval & Military Press, which owns the website, has licensed the data to other users so this information is available on Findmypast and Ancestry. There is little point joining unless you do not have access to other sites, although it has to be said that their rates are competitive.

TheGenealogist (**www.thegenealogist.co.uk**) has the 1911 census and an index to war deaths compiled by the General Register Office, together with odd Army and Navy Lists and related records. FamilyRelatives (**www.familyrelatives.com**) also has the war death indexes, a few Army and Navy Lists and material licensed from the Naval & Military Press.

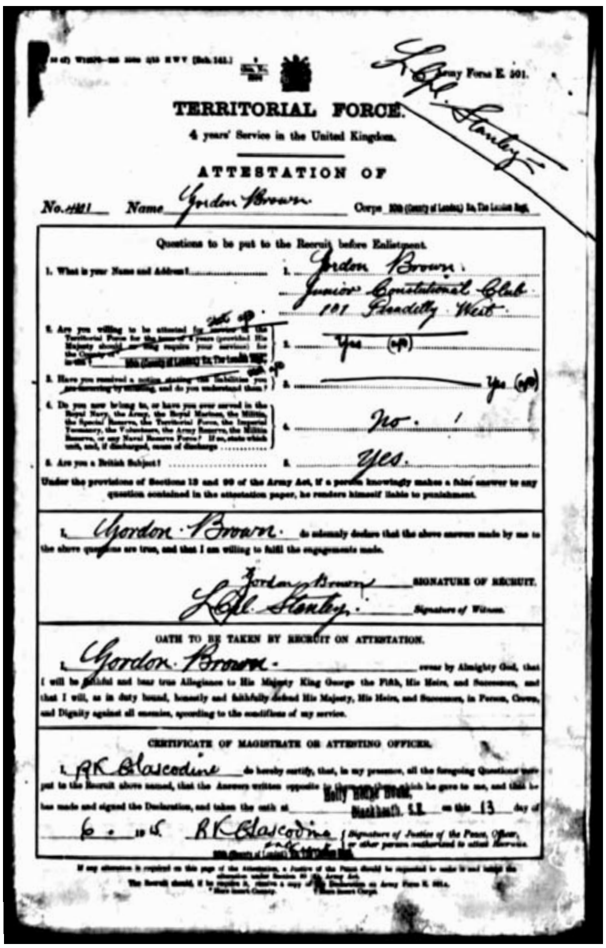
There is also Forces War Records (**www.forces-war-records.co.uk**) which claims to have records on over 2 million forces personnel going back to about 1350 (7 million men and women served in Britain’s armed forces during the First World War alone). It is impossible to find out exactly what they have without subscribing, which I have not done. In addition, several of my students who joined have reported that it is not worth the money.

ARCHIVES

Regimental and service museums and archives hold records relating to their service or regiment. What each place has various tremendously. The big service museums are the Imperial War Museum (IWM) (for all services), the National Army Museum (NAM), the Royal Naval Museum (RNM), the National Maritime Museum (NMM) (particularly good for the Merchant Navy) and the RAF Museum (RAFM). In addition, most regiments have their own regimental museum and archive, although their archives are increasingly likely to be found at the appropriate county record office. The NAM also has papers from many of the former Irish regiments that were disbanded in 1922, the Indian Army (shared with the British Library (BL)), and the Middlesex and East Kent regiment (The Buffs).

Regimental archives may include collections of personal papers and photographs, war diaries (which duplicate those at TNA), regimental magazines and registers and records that TNA for one reason or another did not want. What each archive has varies greatly, but one thing is certain they DO NOT have any service records (these are either at TNA or with the

The attestation papers for Gordon Brown, London Regiment. Other papers in his file suggest that he was under age when he enlisted and was really only a butcher's lad rather than the gentleman he pretended to be. TNA-PRO WO 363/B889


Army Form E. 501.

TERRITORIAL FORCE.

4 years' Service in the United Kingdom.

ATTESTATION OF

No. Name Gordon Brown Corps

Questions to be put to the Recruit before Enlistment.

1. What is your Name and Address? 1. Gordon Brown. Junior Constitutional Club 101 Piccadilly West.

2. 2. Yes

3. 3. Yes

4. 4. No.

5. Are you a British Subject? 5. yes.

Under the provisions of Sections 13 and 99 of the Army Act, if a person knowingly makes a false answer to any question contained in the attestation paper, he renders himself liable to punishment.

I, Gordon Brown do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements made.

Gordon Brown SIGNATURE OF RECRUIT.

Signature of Witness.

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY RECRUIT ON ATTESTATION.

I, Gordon Brown swear by Almighty God, that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty King George the Fifth, His Heirs, and Successors, and that I will, as in duty bound, honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs, and Successors, in Person, Crown, and Dignity against all enemies, according to the conditions of my service.

CERTIFICATE OF MAGISTRATE OR ATTESTING OFFICER.

I, R K Blascodine do hereby certify, that, in my presence, all the foregoing Questions were put to the Recruit above named, that the Answers written opposite to them are those which he gave to me, and that he has made and signed the Declaration, and taken the oath at Blackheath S.E. on this 13 day of 6 . 1915 R K Blascodine Signature of Justice of the Peace, Officer, or other person authorised to attest Recruits.

Ministry of Defence (MoD)). The smaller archives in particular are likely to charge for research and take weeks to respond as they are generally run by a small cadre of volunteers. However, in my experience they have all been very helpful. Most will allow you to visit, but you usually have to make an appointment in advance. The museum website may be pretty basic (an exception is The Wardrobe Museum in Salisbury for the Berkshire and Wiltshire regiments, see **www.thewardrobe.org.uk**).

The Army Museums Ogilby Trust is an excellent institution which coordinates and campaigns on behalf of regimental museums and maintains a very good website which links to museum websites and provides details about individual regimental museums at **www.armymuseums.org.uk**.

County archives (or record offices) are also likely to have material, particularly relating to the impact of the war on local communities. In particular, they are likely to have sets of local newspapers, local government records, school records, large collections of photographs and maps of the locality, diaries and personal papers deposited by old soldiers or their families, records of local businesses and charities. And a few have the regimental archives deposited by the local county regiment. Where this is the case the information is always made clear either on the archive's website or that of the regimental museum. There may also be records of territorial regiments from whom many of the 'Old Contemptibles' came in 1914 and 1915, local agricultural committees which increasingly controlled local farms and what was grown, rolls of honour and files about war memorials, the provision of help to war refugees, recruitment of special constables and occasionally papers of Conscription Tribunals, which heard appeals from men who did want to serve or wanted to defer their military service.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Just because you can't find your ancestor in an online catalogue does not mean that there are no records about him as relatively few records are indexed to this level of detail.
- Not everything, by any means, is online so you may well need to go to record offices to look through original material for yourself.
- Using search engines can be tricky, particularly those used by local record offices, so if there are any instructions it is a good idea to read them before you start. And in general the more information you type in the more it will confuse the search engine, so try to keep it simple.

WHAT'S WHERE?

To find the addresses, websites and other contact details of all British (and some overseas) archives visit ARCHON – **www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon** – which has links to individual archives' websites. For regimental museums, however, it may be easier to use **www.armymuseums.org.uk**.

The National Register of Archives (NRA) provides a database to collections found at local and other archives in England and Wales (and occasionally elsewhere) and where they are to be found **www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/nra**.

They are mainly general descriptions of what is to be found, such as correspondence or papers. For a more detailed breakdown of what a collection holds, you need to consult the Access to Archives (A2A) database (**www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a**). A2A is by no means complete and is increasingly being supplemented by local archive online catalogues, but it is still a surprisingly useful resource. Some of the better resourced regimental museums and archives have added details of some of their collections. There are also less complete equivalents for Wales (**www.archivesnetworkwales.info**) and in Scotland the Scottish Archive Network has something similar at **www.scan.org.uk**.

There are also many more specialist repositories ranging from the BL, which is comparable to TNA in size and importance, to company and hospital archives. These are not likely to hold much direct information about the First World War.

Many towns have local studies collections which may include newspapers, photographs and maps, diaries and other material. Their great strength is likely to be a card catalogue to newspaper clippings which should include references to those who received medals or who were killed in action. Virtually all the London boroughs, metropolitan boroughs and large cities also maintain a local studies library.

Basic information can often be gleaned from the archives' websites. There are likely to be downloadable leaflets which describe the types of records held including, if you are lucky, something on the First World War. An increasing number of websites include online catalogues which can be searched for particular types of records or records about a specific place. Unfortunately, these are often difficult to use, so if you are not familiar with manipulating search engines and databases you might prefer to visit a record office for yourself. Details of opening hours and other requirements are given on the websites. It is often a good idea to ring in advance to discuss with an archivist what you are looking for.

NEWSPAPERS

Newspapers remain the least used major genealogical resource, although this is changing as papers begin to be digitized and placed online. If you have an ancestor who was killed in action, won a gallantry medal or even collected funds for a local charity, it is certainly worth seeing whether there is a story it in the local paper.

Newspapers themselves provide a wealth of information relating to:

- Biographical details of individual soldiers, sailors and airmen.
- Individual battalions, regiments, RN and merchant ships.
- Specific battles and campaigns from all theatres of conflict.
- The home front, from recruiting campaigns to conscription tribunals, and the everyday lives of local people, from agricultural shows to magistrate court appearances.

FURTHER READING

- Simon Fowler, *Tracing Your Ancestors*, Pen & Sword, 2010 offers a succinct introduction to the major sources for researching family history.
- The British Newspaper Library has an excellent online guide, *Family History Research and British Military History, 1801–1945*, at **www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelprestype/news/britmilhist/famhistresearch/familyhistbritmil.html**.

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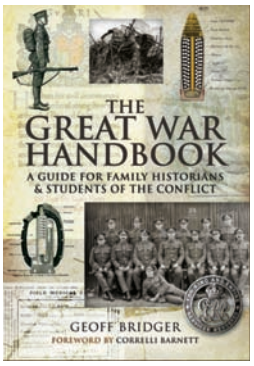

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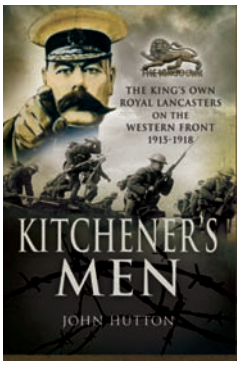

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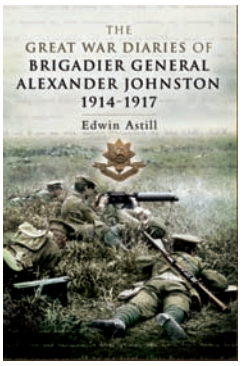

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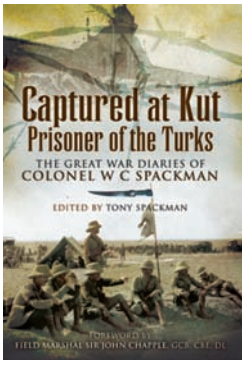

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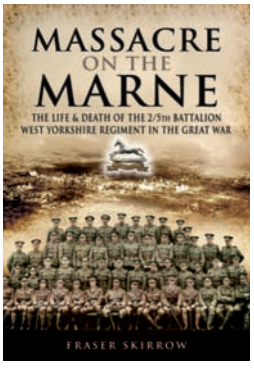

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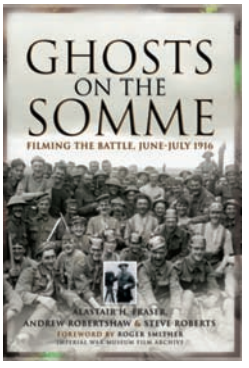

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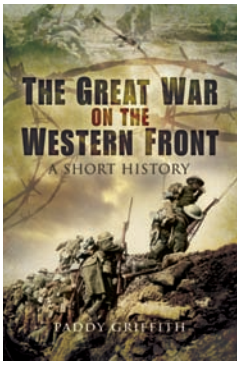

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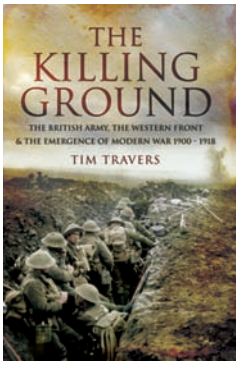

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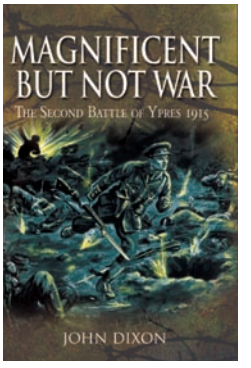

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VICTORIA CROSSES ON THE WESTERN FRONT 1914

Every man who put his life on the line for King and country during the Great War was just as heroic as the next. However, some of these men received the Victoria Cross for valour in the face of the enemy. These are their stories …

by Paul Oldfield

Extracted from *Victoria Crosses on the Western Front August 1914–April 1915* and reproduced by permission of Pen & Sword Books Ltd.

THE RETREAT FROM MONS

At dawn on Sunday 23 August 1914, German artillery fired the opening salvoes of the Battle of Mons. Soon after British troops were in action on the continent of Europe for the first time since Waterloo in 1815.

CPL CHARLES GARFORTH, 15TH HUSSARS (3RD DIVISION), HARMIGNIES, BELGIUM

While the Royal Fusiliers battled it out at Nimy railway bridge, Mons, 3rd Division Cavalry (A Squadron, 15th Hussars) had been busy on the right flank. 4 Troop went to Mons to assist the infantry and participated in a rearguard action falling back on Villers St Ghislain. During this tricky operation elements of the Squadron found themselves trapped by a wire fence at Harmignies. With complete disregard for their own safety **Corporal Charles Garforth** and Lance Corporal Ball dashed to the fence and cut several gaps to allow the horsemen to escape. During the next fortnight, Garforth was involved in two other incidents that, together with his actions on 23 August, resulted in the award of the VC. On the afternoon of 6 September near Dammartin, southeast of Senlis, Sergeant Scarterfield's patrol came into contact with two enemy squadrons. Some Germans opened fire while others made ready to charge the British patrol. There was no alternative other than to gallop off towards safety. While jumping a ditch, Scarterfield's horse was hit and fell, pinning him to the ground. Garforth turned back despite the heavy enemy fire, managed to pull Scarterfield clear of the dead animal and then carried him to safety on his own horse. The next day Garforth was again on patrol near Meaux, south east of Dammartin. On this occasion Sergeant Lewis had his horse shot under him. Garforth drew the enemy's machine-gun fire away from Lewis and covered his withdrawal with three minutes of rapid rifle fire.

LCPL CHARLES JARVIS, 57TH COMPANY RE (3RD DIVISION), JEMAPPES, BELGIUM

On 23 August, at 2.30 am orders had been issued to prepare all bridges over the Mons-Condé canal for demolition. West of Nimy and Mons. Lieutenant Boulnois was given eight men, a cart load of explosives and one exploder to deal with the five bridges from Jemappes station to Mariette. These bridges were of the drop type (rather than swing) and 12-15m in length. Boulnois allotted men to bridges as they passed each one and arranged to return to set off the charges with the only available exploder. The Lock 2 bridge near Jemappes was allotted to **Lance Corporal Charles Jarvis** and Sapper Neary. Jarvis enlisted the help of two soldiers from B Company, 1st Royal Scots Fusiliers, defending the bridge. Using a small boat, which the infantrymen held in position, the two sappers fixed twenty-two gun cotton slabs to the three main girder supports. As they worked, the enemy fire intensified and Jarvis sent the infantrymen back into cover. He then sent Neary to find Corporal Wiltshire, whom he understood had the exploder at the Jemappes station bridge. Although under heavy fire, Jarvis completed the work on his own, making occasional dashes back to the infantry barricade to fetch extra explosives and run out the leads. Keeping well down in the boat Jarvis pulled himself along the bank and then crawled over it to safety.

THE BATTLE OF AISNE 1914

The Battle of the Aisne in 1914 was the Allied follow-up offensive against the right wing of the German First Army and the Second Army as they retreated after the Battle of the Marne earlier in September 1914. The offensive began on the evening of 13 September, after a hasty pursuit of the Germans. Following the intense fighting for command of the Aisne Heights on 14 September, the opposing lines north of the river gradually settled into entrenched positions.

PTE ROSS TOLLERTON, 1ST CAMERON HIGHLANDERS (1ST (GUARDS) BRIGADE, 1ST DIVISION), CHIVY, FRANCE

During the capturing of the Aisne Heights, Lieutenant James Matheson (B Company) had been seriously wounded on the Blanc Mont spur in the initial attack north west of the Chivy – Cerny road. He fell face first into soft earth and almost suffocated. **Private Ross Tollerton** and Lance Sergeant George Geddes turned Matheson over and managed to get him onto Tollerton's back. Geddes was shot dead, but at great personal risk Tollerton carried Matheson into the cover of a corn stook. He then returned to the firing line and was wounded in the right temple and hand. When the order to retire was given, Tollerton stayed with Matheson despite being surrounded by Germans. He continued his vigil for two days and nights, patiently waiting for a chance to carry the officer back to the British lines. It was cold and frequent rain showers soaked them through. Wounded again, weakened by loss of blood and having eaten nothing since the morning of the attack, Tollerton would have been lucky to make it back on his own. It was impossible for him to carry Matheson as well. In the late afternoon of the 16 September the Germans pulled back a little. Seeing British troops digging in some distance away, Tollerton staggered towards them and a stretcher party was sent to recover Matheson.

CAPT HARRY RANKEN RAMC, ATTACHED 1ST KRRC (6TH BRIGADE, 2ND DIVISION), SOUPIR, FRANCE

Captain Harry Ranken, medical officer of 1st KRRC, distinguished himself throughout the fighting on 19-20 September during the actions on the Aisne Heights. On one occasion he had to cross a ravine to reach the wounded. During one attack he was in the thick of the action attending to Lieutenant Alston, when he was seriously wounded in the leg by a British shell. Although the injured limb was only hanging on by a scrap of flesh, he arrested the bleeding and went back to work. By this selfless act he sacrificed whatever chance of survival he might have had. Eventually, when he was too weak to continue, he allowed himself to be carried to the rear. His leg was amputated and it was thought he might survive. Lieutenant H Robinson saw Ranken lying on a stretcher at Braine Station platform:

> '*When I saw him… he was smoking a cigarette and talking with animation. He had recently had his leg amputated somewhere above the knee and said he was in no pain and was quite comfortable and well. We were all horribly shocked to hear a day or two later that he had died* (on 25 September) *suddenly of an embolism.*'

THE FIRST BATTLE OF YPRES 1914

The First Battle of Ypres, 19 October to 22 November 1914, saw some of the most desperate fighting of the war, during which the BEF was stretched to the limit. The cost was enormous on both sides, but particularly for the BEF, with its regular divisions being reduced to the strength of weak brigades in some cases. The Salient was formed and its defenders faced almost three years being overlooked on three sides. Eight VCs were awarded for the Battle.

DMR WILLIAM KENNY, 2ND GORDON HIGHLANDERS (20TH BRIGADE, 7TH DIVISION), KRUISKE AND ZANDVOORDE, YPRES, BELGIUM

When war broke out, 2nd Gordon Highlanders was recalled from Egypt. With eight other battalions from overseas and the last of the home-based battalions it formed the new 7th Division. Although well trained, most of the Division's soldiers were not in the best physical condition and they suffered on long marches. **Drummer William Kenny** was among these. It is known that on 21 October he went out and brought in the mortally wounded Corporal 'Cockney' Robertson of C Company and then helped carry in more wounded. On 23 October, Kenny came under fire from a sniper, but succeeded in reaching the safety of his lines. He then rescued five wounded men under heavy fire. Next he organized a stretcher for 10556 Private Alexander 'Tim' McBain and helped move him to the dressing station. Despite these efforts, McBain died the next day. In the days before this, Kenny twice saved machine-guns from

capture and on numerous occasions took urgent messages over fire swept ground; quite an achievement for a man of only 5'3". The final action which contributed to Kenny's VC award took place on the morning of 29 October. The Germans launched a furious attack and 2nd Gordon Highlanders was driven back. Kenny spotted a machine-gun had been left behind, so sprinted across open ground, retrieved the weapon and then continued delivering urgent messages.

LT JAMES BROOKE, 2ND GORDON HIGHLANDERS (20TH BRIGADE, 7TH DIVISION), NEAR GHELUVELT, BELGIUM

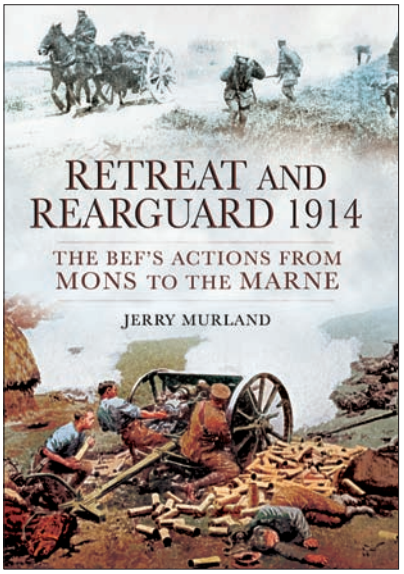
It was calm on the foggy morning of the 29 October, until 7.30 am when the Germans opened a terrific bombardment. 1st Grenadier Guards then came under heavy fire and was attacked all along its front. The Battalion was outflanked from the north and cut to pieces after a gallant fight to front and rear. 2nd Gordon Highlanders was also attacked from the front, but was not in danger of being overwhelmed. C Company in reserve went to assist 1st Grenadier Guards, which was pushed back to the high ground east of Gheluvelt. The Germans continued to attack, but suffered heavy casualties and gained no more ground. The situation was gradually brought under control. Early in the fighting **Lieutenant James Brooke** was sent by his CO to deliver a message, but on the way he became involved in C Company's attack and noticed the Germans breaking into part of the line. A Grenadier sergeant leapt to attention and saluted when Brooke appeared, and they had one of those bizarre conversations that only take place in wartime. With bullets whizzing around them, Brooke remarked casually, 'Things not too good here Sergeant?' The Sergeant replied indignantly, 'Them Jerries are in our trench'. 'They won't be for long', Brooke replied. Moving along the trench he cracked jokes, raised morale and then addressed a group of Guardsmen, 'Are you gentlemen of the 1st Guards averse to going into action with humble Highlanders?' One Guardsman replied, 'Not bloody likely Sir!' 'Good man', responded Brooke, 'now then who's going to win the VC? Fix bayonets and give 'em hell!' He led his force of about 100 Gordons and Grenadiers in two determined counter-attacks against heavy opposition and succeeded in regaining one of the lost Grenadier trenches. In order to hold the position Brooke knew he must have support. On two occasions he left the cover of the trench and dashed to a nearby house to send messages detailing his requirements to hold the front line. He had 25m of open ground to cover to reach the house, with the Germans only 200m away, sniping at anything that moved. A Grenadier officer noted dozens of bullets ricocheting off the walls every time Brooke passed the house. Inevitably, one eventually hit him and he was killed instantly. However, his bold action had restored the front and saved the situation.

Review

RETREAT AND REARGUARD 1914

Jerry Murland

£19.99



The British action at Mons on 23 August 1914 was the catalyst for what became a full blown retreat over 200 blood-drenched miles. In this fascinating book Jerry Murland examines 18 of the ensuing desperate rearguard actions that occurred over the 12 days of this near rout. While those at Le Cateau and Nery are well chronicled, others such as cavalry engagements at Morsain and Taillefontaine, the Connaught Rangers' action at Le Grand Fayt and 13 Brigade's fight at Crepy-en-Valois are virtually unknown. Jerry Murland gives us an insight into these revealing how, in the chaos and confusion that reigned, units of Gunners and other supporting arms found themselves on the front line.

The fact that no less than 16 VCs were won during this historic retreat shows that, even in these darkest hours, individuals and units performed with gallantry, resourcefulness and great forbearance. The work of the Royal Engineers responsible for blowing bridges over rivers and canals behind the retreating troops comes in for particular attention and praise:

> '*Whereas much of the spotlight inevitably falls on the lot of the infantry and cavalry soldier it is all too easy to forget that very often the last of a rearguard force to retire were the men of the Royal Engineers. The sappers worked tirelessly to prepare positions and blow bridges during the retreat under the most trying and dangerous circumstances. This vital work began with blowing the bridges of the Mons-CondÎ Canal and concluded with the destruction of the Marne bridges. Their story provides continuity over the 200 miles of the retreat as we follow the fortunes of the Royal Engineer Field Companies during their march south.*'

Extensive use of primary source material, including first-hand accounts, letters, diaries and official unit records, brings to life this delightful and informative account of a historic, if not victorious, chapter in our nation's military history.

Today, the retreat of the BEF during the summer and autumn of 1914 is marked only by the trail of military cemeteries scattered along a route, which is occasionally punctuated by a memorial. The ground over which much of the retreat was conducted has changed very little since the thousands of boots of the BEF made their mark on the landscape. It is the men that filled these boots, and the rearguard actions they fought, that this book is primarily concerned with. *Retreat and Rearguard 1914* would make an excellent companion on a battlefield visit.

Jim Pennyman's luncheon party at Beaurevoir after the Le Cateau retirement on 27 August. Most of the Borderers have still got their weapons and some have picked up non-regulation headwear. Very few of these men would survive beyond 1914.

Copies of the above title are available in all good bookshops or from Pen & Sword.

A MILITARY ATLAS OF THE FIRST BATTLE OF YPRES 1914

When the Great War broke out, no one could possibly know the scale that this war would escalate to. Through maps and diagrams, *A Military Atlas of the First World War* covers many aspects of the Great War, and through these we can learn so much about this notorious battle that gave way to the trenches that were developing along the Western Front.

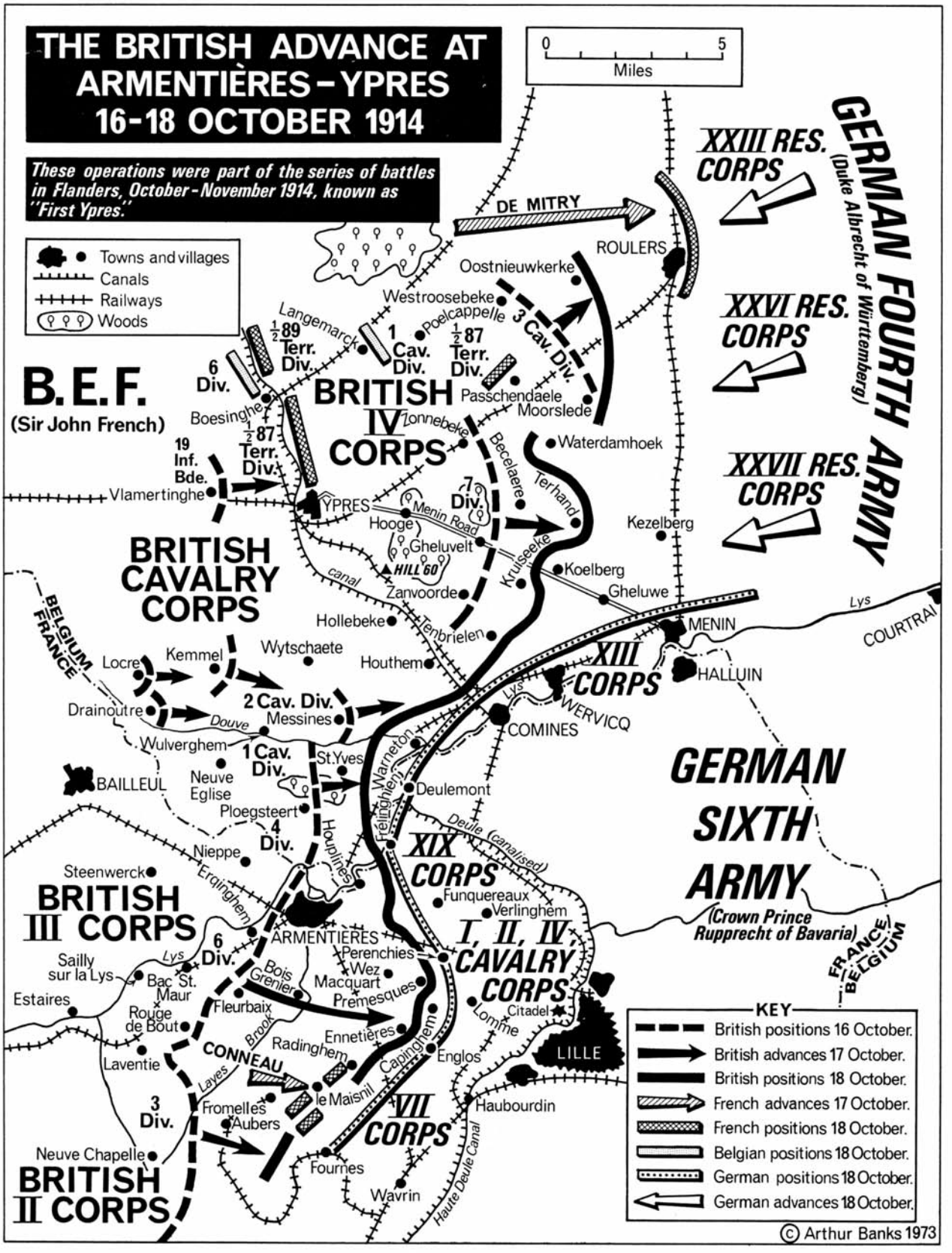
By Arthur Banks

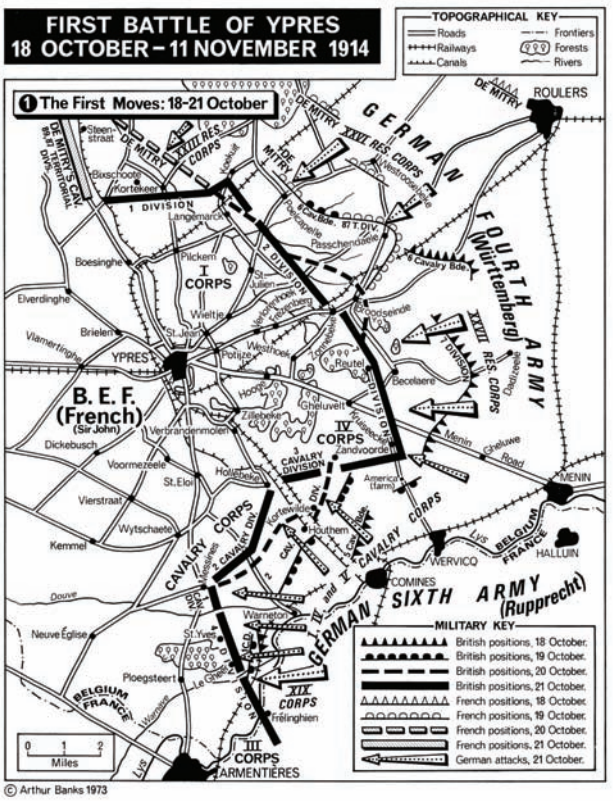
Extracted from *A Military Atlas of the First World War* and reproduced with permission by Pen & Sword Books Ltd.

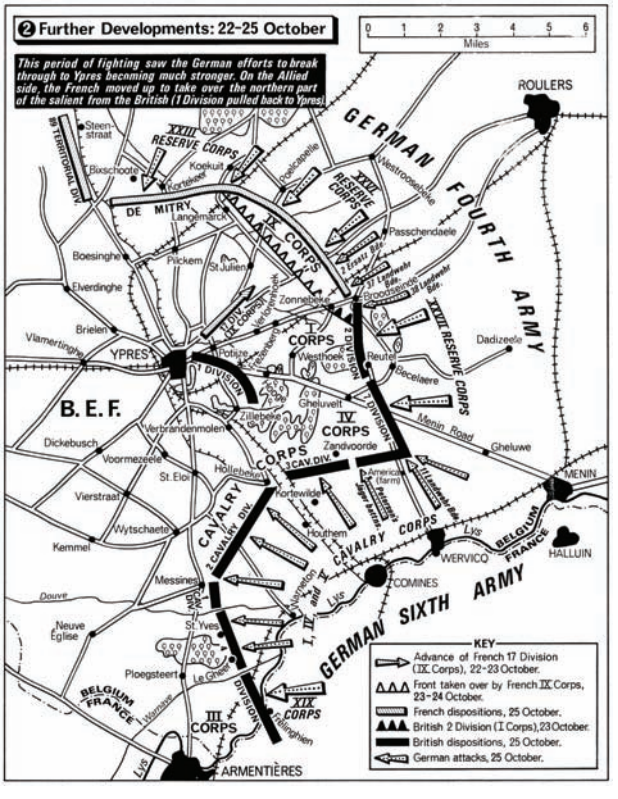
The coming of the Great War took the European peoples by surprise. In the spring of 1914 the nations of western and central Europe had been at peace with each other for over forty-three years, a longer period free from conflict than ever before in their histories. But by 1914 this had changed and a war was certainly on its way – there had never been so great a concentration of military forces as in August 1914.

There were over a million Frenchmen on the Western Front and by the end of the year over a million volunteers had come forward to join Kitchener's 'New Army' both to battle the Germans who also had over a million men in Belgium and France only two weeks after the war had been announced. It was these huge numbers that determined the character of the war, which, by the end of the year had progressed into a stalemate. The First Battle of Ypres (October – November 1914) virtually destroyed the British Regular Army with 50,000 men falling in the autumn alone. The hardest hit were those known as the 'old contemptibles', the original men who had gone forward to Mons in August 1914, who had retreated for a gruelling fortnight before turning back south of the Marne, forcing Germans northwards to the Belgian frontier. By the end of November one in ten of these were dead, with the Germans losing twice as many as the British. Winter set in before the First Battle of Ypres was over, which marked the end of open warfare. It was this that paralysed the opposing armies on the Western Front by barbed-wire, trenches, minefields and machine-gun emplacements.

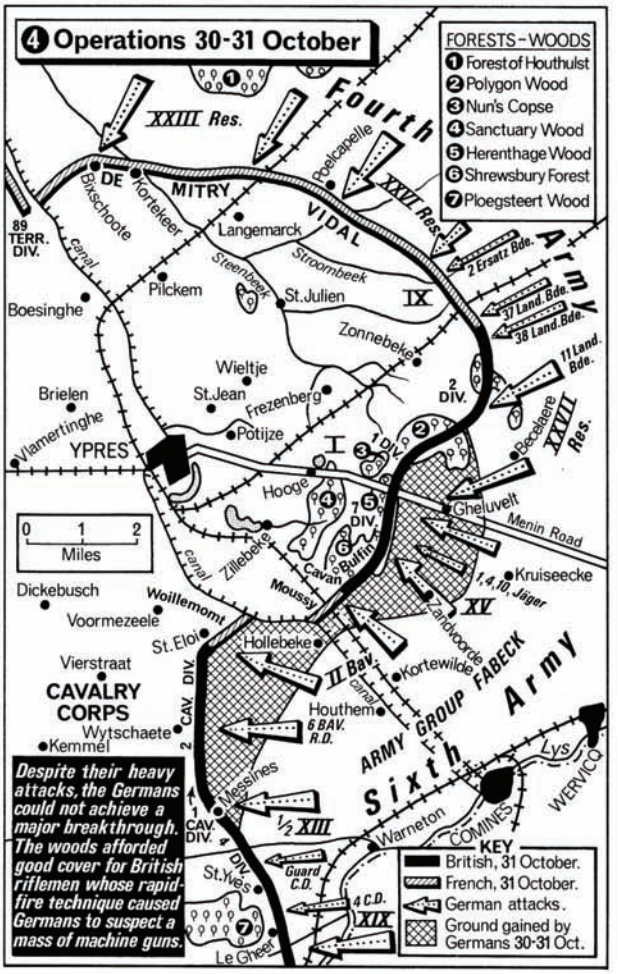
British infantry marching north towards Ypres.

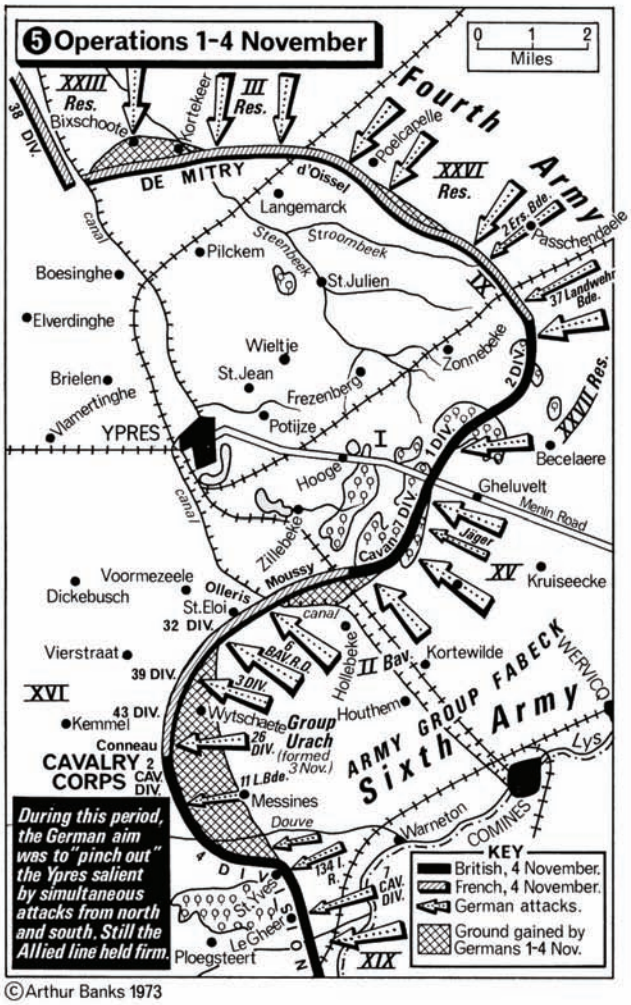

THE BRITISH ADVANCE AT ARMENTIÈRES – YPRES 16–18 OCTOBER 1914
These operations were part of the series of battles in Flanders, October–November 1914, known as "First Ypres."
0
5
Miles
Towns and villages
Canals
Railways
Woods
B.E.F.
(Sir John French)
BRITISH IV CORPS
BRITISH CAVALRY CORPS
BRITISH III CORPS
BRITISH II CORPS
I, II, IV CAVALRY CORPS
XIX CORPS
XIII CORPS
VII CORPS
GERMAN FOURTH ARMY
(Duke Albrecht of Württemberg)
XXIII RES. CORPS
XXVI RES. CORPS
XXVII RES. CORPS
GERMAN SIXTH ARMY
(Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria)
DE MITRY
ROULERS
Oostnieuwkerke
Westroosebeke
Poelcappelle
Passchendaele
Moorslede
Waterdamhoek
Zonnebeke
Becelaere
Terhand
Kezelberg
Koelberg
Gheluwe
MENIN
COURTRAI
HALLUIN
WERVICQ
COMINES
Lys
Langemarck
Boesinghe
Vlamertinghe
YPRES
Menin Road
Hooge
Gheluvelt
HILL 60
Zanvoorde
Kruiseeke
Hollebeke
Tenbrielen
Wytschaete
Houthem
Locre
Kemmel
Drainoutre
Messines
Douve
Wulverghem
Neuve Eglise
BAILLEUL
St.Yves
Deulemont
Ploegsteert
Nieppe
Houplines
Frélinghien
Warneton
Deule (canalised)
Steenwerck
Erquinghem
Funquereaux
Verlinghem
ARMENTIÈRES
Perenchies
Wez Macquart
Premesques
Citadel
Lomme
LILLE
Haubourdin
Englos
Capinghem
Ennetières
Radinghem
Fleurbaix
Bois Grenier
Brook
CONNEAU
Layes
le Maisnil
Fromelles
Aubers
Neuve Chapelle
Fournes
Wavrin
Haute Deule Canal
Sailly sur la Lys
Bac St. Maur
Estaires
Rouge de Bout
Laventie
Lys
1 Cav. Div.
2 Cav. Div.
3 Cav. Div.
6 Div.
4 Div.
3 Div.
7 Div.
19 Inf. Bde.
½ 89 Terr. Div.
½ 87 Terr. Div.
KEY
British positions 16 October.
British advances 17 October.
British positions 18 October.
French advances 17 October.
French positions 18 October.
Belgian positions 18 October.
German positions 18 October.
German advances 18 October.
© Arthur Banks 1973

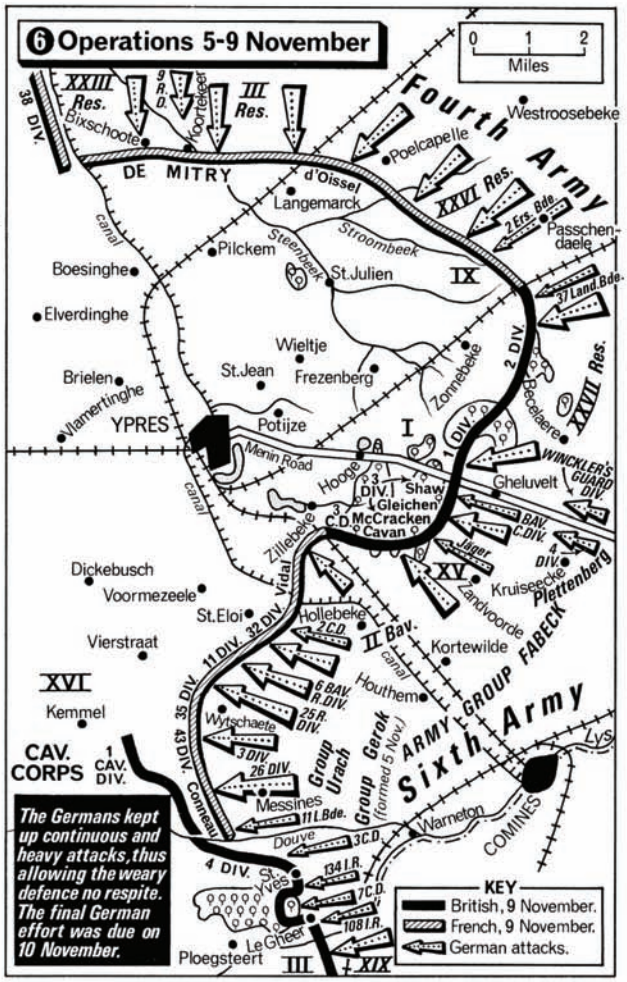

FIRST BATTLE OF YPRES
18 OCTOBER – 11 NOVEMBER 1914
TOPOGRAPHICAL KEY
Roads
Railways
Canals
Frontiers
Forests
Rivers
1 The First Moves: 18-21 October
B. E. F. (French) (Sir John)
GERMAN FOURTH ARMY (Wurttemberg)
GERMAN SIXTH ARMY (Rupprecht)
YPRES
ROULERS
MENIN
WERVICQ
COMINES
HALLUIN
ARMENTIÈRES
MILITARY KEY
British positions, 18 October.
British positions, 19 October.
British positions, 20 October.
British positions, 21 October.
French positions, 18 October.
French positions, 19 October.
French positions, 20 October.
French positions, 21 October.
German attacks, 21 October.
0 1 2 Miles
© Arthur Banks 1973

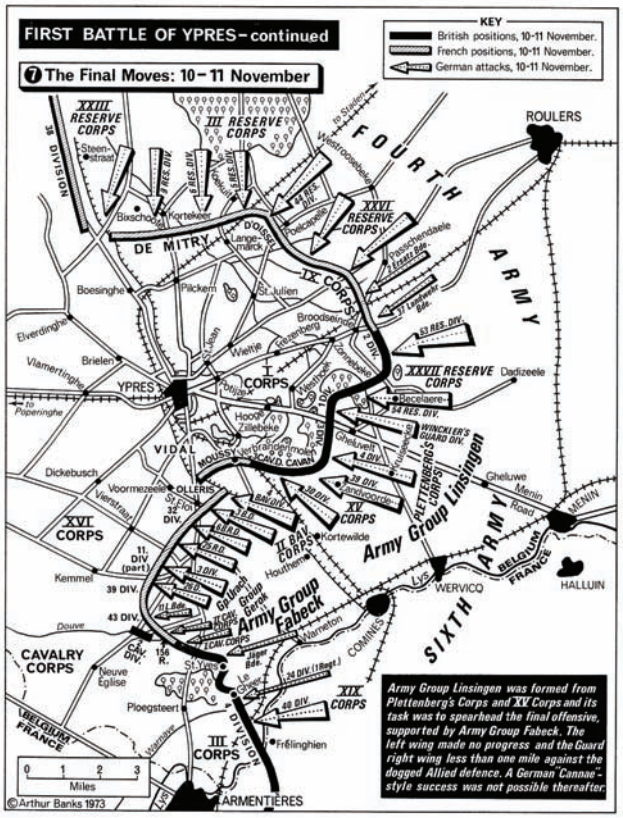

2 Further Developments: 22-25 October
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Miles
This period of fighting saw the German efforts to break through to Ypres becoming much stronger. On the Allied side, the French moved up to take over the northern part of the salient from the British (1 Division pulled back to Ypres).
B. E. F.
GERMAN FOURTH ARMY
GERMAN SIXTH ARMY
YPRES
ROULERS
MENIN
WERVICQ
COMINES
HALLUIN
ARMENTIÈRES
KEY
Advance of French 17 Division (IX Corps), 22-23 October.
Front taken over by French IX Corps, 23-24 October.
French dispositions, 25 October.
British 2 Division (I Corps), 23 October.
British dispositions, 25 October.
German attacks, 25 October.


FIRST BATTLE OF YPRES – continued
3 Operations 26-29 October
0 1 2 3 Miles
GERMAN FOURTH ARMY
GERMAN SIXTH ARMY
ARMY GROUP FABECK (attacking)
CAVALRY CORPS
YPRES
Army Group Fabeck was formed on 27 October and this increased Germans at Ypres by six divisions.
KEY
British, 26 October.
British, 29 October.
French, 26 October.
French, 29 October.
German attacks.


4 Operations 30-31 October
FORESTS – WOODS
1 Forest of Houthulst
2 Polygon Wood
3 Nun's Copse
4 Sanctuary Wood
5 Herenthage Wood
6 Shrewsbury Forest
7 Ploegsteert Wood
0 1 2 Miles
Fourth Army
Sixth Army
ARMY GROUP FABECK
CAVALRY CORPS
YPRES
Despite their heavy attacks, the Germans could not achieve a major breakthrough. The woods afforded good cover for British riflemen whose rapid-fire technique caused Germans to suspect a mass of machine guns.
KEY
British, 31 October.
French, 31 October.
German attacks.
Ground gained by Germans 30-31 Oct.

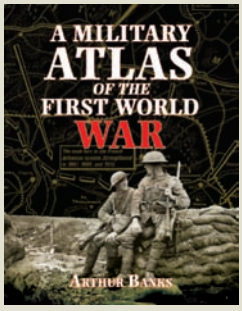






A MILITARY ATLAS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

By Arthur Banks



£16.99

A comprehensive atlas based on the Arthur Banks atlas first published in 1975. The maps in the original were all painstakingly hand-drawn in black & white, covering every aspect of the first truly global war. This book takes the information laid down by Banks and re-interprets it in full colour, computer modelled cartography. The book covers the main reasons why the major powers entered the conflict, the individual battles fought along the Western Front as well as in depth coverage of the war in the east of Europe. The War at sea is mapped in great detail, including the clashes at Dogger Bank and Jutland as well as the German submarine campaigns and the first major seaborne landing at Gallipoli. The First World War saw the first extensive use of air power, maps show the routes taken by the German Zeppelin raids on eastern England as well as the Allied strategic bombing effort at the end of the war.

Copies of the above title are available in all good bookshops or from Pen & Sword.

WAR DIARY OF A GERMAN ARTILLERYMAN

28 June 1914: Archduke Francis Ferdinand has been murdered, with his wife (the Duchess of Hohenberg), by two Serbs at Sarajevo. What follows from this is not clear. You feel that a stone has begun to roll downhill and that dreadful things may be in store for Europe.

By Herbert Sulzbach

Extracted from *With the German Guns* and reproduced by permission of Pen & Sword Books Ltd.

I am proposing on 1 October to start my military service instead of going to Hamburg as a commercial trainee. I'm twenty, you see, a fine age for soldiering.

14 July: I travel to Wiirzburg, report to the 2nd Bavarian Field Artillery Regiment and get accepted.
Böhm, the German airman, has scored a world record with 24 hours of continuous flight.
23 July: Ultimatum delivered to Serbia by Austria-Hungary.

No strong action by Austria appeared to have been taken since the assassination on 28 June until suddenly this note was presented, containing ten demands which among other things were supposed to allow Austria herself to take action on Serbian soil against activities hostile to Austria. Serbia has to accept the ultimatum within 48 hours, otherwise Austria reserves the right to take military action. A world war is hanging by a thread.
25 July: Unbelievably large crowds are waiting outside the newspaper offices. News arrives in the evening that Serbia is rejecting the ultimatum. General excitement and enthusiasm, and all eyes turn towards Russia – is she going to support Serbia?

The days pass from 25 to 31 July. Incredibly exciting; the whole world is agog to see whether Germany is now going to mobilize. I've hardly got enough peace of mind left to go to the bank and do my trainee job. I play truant as though it were school and stand about all day outside the newspaper offices, feeling that war is inevitable.
Friday, 31 July: State of war declared and total mobilization announced in Austria-Hungary.
Saturday, 1 August: 6.30 pm: The Kaiser orders mobilization of the Army and Navy. That word 'mobilize', it's weird, you can't grasp what it means. First mobilization day is 2 August.

Try as I may I simply can't convey the splendid spirit and wild enthusiasm that has come over us all. We feel we've been attacked, and the idea that we have to defend ourselves gives us unbelievable strength.

Russia's dirty intrigues are dragging us into this war; the Kaiser sent the Russians an ultimatum as late as 31 July. You still can't imagine what it's going to be like. Is it all real, or just a dream?

My brother-in-law travelled to Wilhelmshaven on 3 August. He's a staff medical officer on the Naval Reserve. I put my name down on the nominal roll, as a war volunteer, of course; I'm hoping to get into our 63rd. I go to the barracks and try my luck. A lot going on there, and people very enthusiastic; some tearful good-byes too, as the regiment of regulars is pulling out.

I visit my nice motherly friend Martha Dreyfus and get given a lucky penny. My brother is in London and means to be here in four days' time, or six at the most.

Berthold, who has been our manservant for quite a time, is joining his regiment, and our dear friend Hauptmann Rückward has already pulled out of barracks. Very rapidly, you might almost say in a few hours, nearly all the men one knows have disappeared from civilian life. My sister and all her married women friends are left alone – their husbands have joined the colours. The first enemy aircraft is reported to have flown over Frankfurt.
4 August: I think I'll certainly be able to get into the 63rd. All of us who have reported as war volunteers are enduring hours of anxiety in case there won't be room for us.

Mobilization is going as smoothly as you please, and people feel a terrible hatred for the Russians and the French. England's attitude is ambiguous.

Reports are coming in of the first clashes on the frontier. There's a huge spy-hunt going on inside Germany, and notices in foreign languages are disappearing from the shops. And a curfew at 11 o'clock. My friends who have already completed their year of military service are all off now, and our beautiful Adier car has been 'called up' too.

The German Army has a huge job on its hands: war on two fronts. We can only hope that Providence will stand by us. At home our first officer is billeted on us, OW, Leutnant, Army Reserve, from Herborn.

On 4 August, in the evening, news that England has declared war.

7 August: My brother has landed at Hamburg, so he got away from England all right. My last day in civvy street. News in the evening that Liège has been taken by assault.

8 August: I am a soldier at last. Everybody so friendly, most touching. The girls are all most concerned, getting very motherly. Incidentally, I've been unbelievably lucky to have got into the 63rd, because no fewer than 1,500 war volunteers applied there in the first few days, and only 200 were taken; many of my school friends are in the same artillery battalion. My brother-in-law is in the SMS *Ariadne*.

9 August: My brother has arrived.

10 August: We are allowed out into the town in our fatigue uniforms: it is not very easy for us, since we can't even salute properly yet, but we manage it without being too glaringly conspicuous. The next few days are given over to training; the old drivers take particular pleasure in making us do 'stables', so that we get to know this aspect of military life. It isn't easy at first to muck out the stalls, water the horses, feed them and groom them. We start having instruction periods on shooting technique.

10 August: We hear about the victorious battle at Mulhouse in Alsace; also news of the battle of Lagarde. My brother has not been accepted by the Hanau Uhlans. When Liège was taken, a Zeppelin went into action giving air support for the first time.

11 August: Montenegro declares war on us, after previously declaring war on Austria-Hungary.

13 August: France and England declare war on Austria-Hungary. Japan is still keeping neutral, but seems unfortunately to have an alliance with England.

Our Zeppelin, the *Viktoria Luise*, comes over every day to do practice bombing. The German battleship *Goeben* is unfortunately stuck in the Mediterranean. Mobilization is gradually finishing off. It went marvellously. There are still a lot of military transports coming through.

20 August: Brussels has surrendered without firing a shot (Ghent did too, on 23 August). We need to occupy Belgium before we can be happy about advancing into France, because otherwise the French, whom the Belgians would certainly have let through, would have attacked us from the rear.

20-22 August: Great victorious battle in Lorraine, after which the French go into general retreat, more like a rout. Huge number of prisoners. It's the biggest battle so far, on a 300-kilometre front. The Crown Prince of Bavaria has been in command. In Paris the people seem to be very depressed.

23 August: My sister has arrived from Kissingen with her small child. My brother is with the 9th Hussars at Strasburg. Japan's ultimatum to us over Kiauchau not replied to means war with Japan as well. The few thousand Germans over there won't be a match for the superior weight of Japanese forces, but they'll fight like heroes until they are killed or taken prisoner.

Victorious action by the Crown Prince's army at Longwy.

24 August: Big victory celebration here under summer night sky.

25 August: Namur falls.

26 August: Longwy falls.

26 August: We are sworn in.

26 August: Hauptmann Rückward has been wounded and is back from the front, also Ottomar Starke and other people I know.

27 August: Our Reserve Battalion is ready to march. Wild enthusiasm.

28 August: Belgium has been completely occupied, and the French Army bulletins are beginning to admit that they are on the defensive. Big victory at St Quentin against the British and French.

29 August: Big victory against the Russians in East Prussia; General von Hindenburg in command.

Terrible news: the *Ariadne* has been sunk in a sea battle off Heligoland. And my brother-in-law was in the *Ariadne*. I was just beginning to say good-bye to my parents and my sister and, at the very same moment, my sister had news that her husband has died a hero's death: he went down with the *Ariadne*. It is nearly impossible to say good-bye to her because she finds the sight of me in uniform too painful.

Morale at the barracks is terrific, and I'd be just as happy and enthusiastic if this terrible misfortune hadn't happened to us; even the sympathetic telegram from the captain of the *Ariadne* is not able to bring us any comfort. The death of my brother-in-law is also honourably mentioned naval despatches.

The victory in East Prussia which I have already noted seems to have had a decisive effect, since the

Russians who had pushed into East Prussia are pouring back in full retreat across their own border. Down in Galicia a battle is raging between Austrians and Russians.

We've been ready to march since 28 August, the very day my brother-in-law was killed in action.

1 September: we had more shooting with live ammunition at Bergen. In the evening news that 70,000 Russians have been taken prisoner in East Prussia, a huge victory, while the gigantic battle between the Austrians and the Russians seems to have ended in a draw after six days.

2 September: Reveille at 3.45 am; then a solemn church parade, and at 8.00 am the long-awaited march-off after a bare four weeks' training. We are among the first few volunteers to reach the front. We entrained at the goods station, and I was seized by a strange feeling, a mixture of happiness, exhilaration, pride, the emotion of saying good-bye, and the consciousness of the greatness of the hour. We were three batteries, and marched in close order through the town to the cheers of the inhabitants. We travelled away through the country I love, past Boppard, Coblenz and on past all those enchanting villages and little towns along the Rhine. We were given our rations at Mehlem.

We hear that Turkey is mobilizing against Russia.

The journey continues. The horses stand quietly in their vans, and we lie between them. It is an idyllic picture; the men are cheerful. The first night, with a wonderful full moon, makes you feel a bit melancholy. You lie there in your fatigue uniform and try to sleep. Among my fellow war service volunteers are many acquaintances and friends from my schooldays. I know my Obergefreiter, he was a hairdresser. 2 September, that is the day we marched off and the anniversary of Sedan, overwhelming victory by the German Army against the French Army at Verdun. Apart from that, the Germans are only forty kilometres from Paris. If we could only be up there ourselves!

The Austrians are having another hard fight against the Russians at Lemberg.

3 September: Aachen. We got breakfast on the station. Many convoys travelling west, but strangely enough, three Army Corps as well, travelling from the west to Russia.

Last German railway station: Herbesthal. We get very ample rations, and the horses have oats, hay and straw in plenty. At Herbesthal again, more and more military trains, and I see the first trainload of prisoners, Frenchmen and Englishmen. Poor chaps, all dirty and untidy. I gave them as much to eat as I could find. At Herbesthal our convoy train stood still for hours, and fresh German convoys kept passing in both directions. We moved off towards Brussels. Our train stopped often on the way, and you saw the first ruined villages and country mansions; we saw our first carrier-pigeon in flight. During the night, a very long halt. At first it was eerie, but then we were reassured by a beautiful full moon shining down on a ruined mansion, like a scene in a fairy-tale. The men are relaxed and cheerful.

4 September: the picture changes. You see sentries everywhere, guarding railway crossings and bridges. It doesn't look so peaceful. Towards evening we get an order to stop looking out of the train and to shut the doors. Then we get an order to harness the horses in the train – not very easy for us.

5 September: at 2.00 am, in the fortress at Namur, taken a few days before, we moved into the Belgian Uhlans' barracks and stables. At daybreak we snatched a few hours' sleep on the straw. Next day begins with 'stables', just the same as in barracks at home. Then we can go out and look at the town, sit in the cafes and fancy ourselves!

We hear that the German cavalry is within a few kilometres of Paris.

There are a lot of German troops in the town: Stoipe Hussars, Mainz Dragoons, Hanau Uhlans. Strolling round the town, I see the first signs of artillery fire: houses in ruins and sad-faced inhabitants. The effects of bombardment made a very deep impression on us. In the town itself, all private houses have to be shut up by 9.00 pm. You get back at last to the habit of washing yourself properly.

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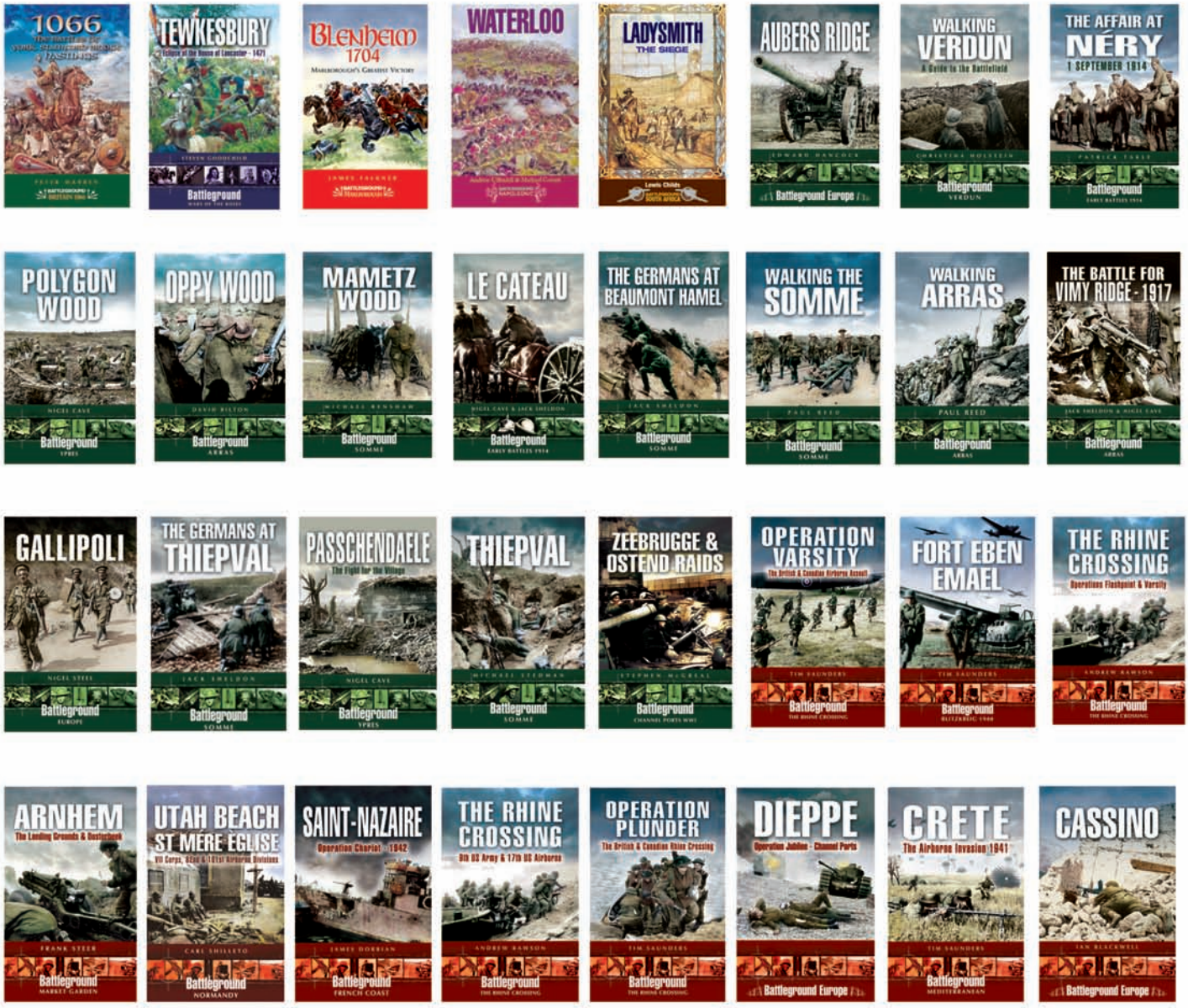

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BAIRNSFATHER'S CHRISTMAS TRUCE

Trench life was a great shock to Bairnsfather and he concealed his true feelings, as many officers did, under a puerile, public school approach to the war. It became a team game in which ritual patterns soon developed, so that preoccupation with routine dulled overt sensitivity to the horror all around.

By Tonie and Valmai Holt

Extracted from *In Search of the Better 'Ole* and reproduced by permission of Pen & Sword Books Ltd.

Christmas 1914 saw a lull in the 'game', and Bairnsfather took part in one of the most extraordinary episodes of the Great War, an episode that might have brought him a court martial. It started on Christmas Eve. He tells the story himself.

The day had been entirely free from shelling, and somehow we all felt that the Boches, too, wanted to be quiet. There was a kind of invisible, intangible feeling extending across the frozen swamp between the two lines, which said *'This is Christmas Eve for both of us – something in common.'*

About 10 pm I made my exit from the convivial dug-out on the left of our line and walked back to my own lair. On arriving at my own bit of trench I found several of the men standing about, and all very cheerful. There was a good bit of singing and talking going on, jokes and jibes on our curious Christmas Eve, as contrasted with any former one, were thick in the air. One of my men turned to me and said:

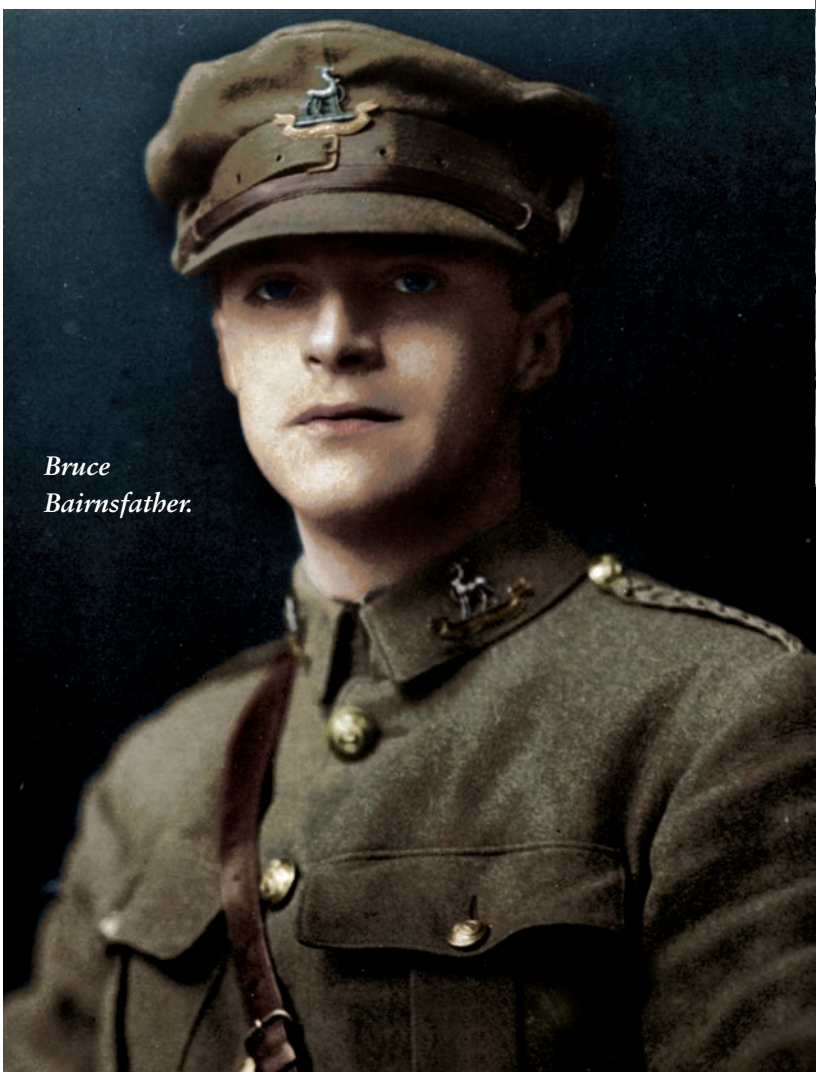
'You can 'ear 'em quite plain, sir!'

"Hear what?" I inquired.

'The Germans over there, sir; you can 'ear 'em singin' and playin' on a band or somethin'.

I listened; away out across the field, among the dark shadows beyond, I could hear the murmur of voices, and an occasional burst of some unintelligible song would come floating out on the frosty air. The singing seemed to be the loudest and most distinct a bit to our right. I popped into my dug-out and found the platoon commander.

'Do you hear the Boches kicking up that racket over there?' I said. *'Yes,'* he replied: *'they've been at it some time!' 'Come on,'* said I, *'let's go*



Bruce Bairnsfather.

Bainsfather captures the Christmas Truce in this cartoon.

Lieutenant Bainsfather on his way to the Christmas Truce, December 1914, St Yvon.

along the trench to the hedge there on the right – that's the nearest point to them, over there.'

So we stumbled along our now hard, frosted ditch, and scrambling up on to the bank above, strode across the field to our next bit of trench on the right. Everyone was listening. An improvised Boche band was playing a precarious version of *Deutschland, Deutschland, über Alles*, at the conclusion of which, some of our mouth-organ experts retaliated with snatches of ragtime songs and imitations of the German tune. Suddenly we heard a confused shouting from the other side. We all stopped to listen. The shout came again. A voice in the darkness shouted in English, with a strong German accent, *'Come over here!'* A ripple of mirth swept along our trench, followed by a rude outburst of mouth organs and laughter. Presently, in a lull, one of our sergeants repeated the request, *'Come over here!'*

'You come half-way – I come half-way,' floated out of the darkness.

'Come on, then!' shouted the sergeant. *'I'm coming along the hedge!'*

'Ah! but there are two of you,' came back the voice from the other side.

Well, anyway, after much suspicious shouting and jocular derision from both sides, our sergeant went along the hedge which ran at right-angles to the two lines of trenches. He was quickly out of sight; but, as we all listened in breathless silence, we soon heard a spasmodic conversation taking place out there in the darkness.

Presently, the sergeant returned. He had with him a few German cigars and cigarettes which he had exchanged for a couple of Maconochie's and a tin of Capstan, which he had taken with him. The seance was over, but it had given just the requisite touch to our Christmas Eve – something a little human and out of the ordinary routine.

After months of vindictive sniping and shelling, this little episode came as an invigorating tonic, and a welcome relief to the daily monotony of antagonism. It did not lessen our ardour or determination; but just put a little human punctuation mark in our lives of cold and humid hate. Just on the right day too – Christmas Eve! But, as a curious episode, this was nothing in comparison to our experience on the following day.

On Christmas morning I awoke very early, and emerged from my dug-out in the trench. It was a perfect day. A beautiful, cloudless blue sky. The ground hard and white, fading off towards the wood in a thin low-lying mist. It was such a day as is invariably depicted by artists on Christmas cards – the ideal Christmas Day of fiction.

Walking about the trench a little later, discussing the curious affair of the night before, we suddenly became aware of the fact that we were seeing a

'I clambered up and over our parapet, and moved out across the field to look. Clad in the muddy suit of khaki and wearing a sheepskin coat and Balaclava helmet, I joined the throng about half-way across to the German trenches.'

British and German soldiers nervous of the photographer in case of repercussions.

lot of evidence of Germans. Heads were bobbing about and showing over their parapet in a most reckless way, and, as we looked, this phenomenon became more and more pronounced.

A complete Boche figure suddenly appeared on the parapet, and looked about itself. This complaint became infectious. It didn't take 'Our Bert' long to be up on the skyline (it is one long grind to ever keep him off it). This was the signal for more Boche anatomy to be disclosed, and this was replied to by all our Alf's and Bill's, until, in less time than it takes to tell, half a dozen or so of each of the belligerents were outside their trenches and were advancing towards each other in no-man's land.

A strange sight, truly!

I clambered up and over our parapet, and moved out across the field to look. Clad in the muddy suit of khaki and wearing a sheepskin coat and Balaclava helmet, I joined the throng about half-way across to the German trenches.

It all felt most curious: here were these sausage-eating wretches, who had elected to start this infernal European fracas, and in so doing had brought us all into the same muddy pickle as themselves.

This was my first real sight of them at close quarters. Here they were – the actual, practical soldiers of the German army. There was not an atom of hate on either side that day; and yet, on our side, not for a moment was the will to war and the will to beat them relaxed. It was just like the interval between the rounds in a friendly boxing match. The difference in type between our men and theirs was very marked. There was no contrasting the spirit of the two parties. Our men, in their scratch costumes of dirty, muddy khaki, with their various assorted head-dresses of woollen helmets, mufflers and battered hats, were a light-hearted, open humorous collection as opposed to the sombre demeanour and stolid appearance of the Huns in their grey-green faded uniforms, top boots, and pork-pie hats.

The shortest effect I can give of the impression I had was that our men, superior, broadminded, more frank, and lovable beings, were regarding these faded, unimaginative products of perverted culture as a set of objectionable but amusing lunatics whose heads had got to be eventually smacked.

'Look at that one over there, Bill,' our Bert would say, as he pointed out some particularly curious member of the party.

I strolled about amongst them all, and sucked in as many impressions as

Bairnsfather at work – one of his own cartoons.

On the edge of Ploegsteert Wood at Le Gheer. It was on ruined buildings in this area that Bruce Bairnsfather began his cartooning.

I could. Two or three of the Boches seemed to be particularly interested in me, and after they had walked round me once or twice with sullen curiosity stamped on their faces, one came up and said *'Offizier?'* I nodded my head, which means 'Yes' in most languages, and, besides, I can't talk German.

These devils, I could see, all wanted to be friendly; but none of them possessed the open, frank geniality of our men. However, everyone was talking and laughing, and souvenir hunting.

I spotted a German officer, some sort of lieutenant I should think, and being a bit of a collector, I intimated to him that I had taken a fancy to some of his buttons.

We both said things to each other which neither understood, and agreed to do a swap. I brought out my wire clippers and with a few deft snips, removed a couple of his buttons and put them in my pocket. I then gave him two of mine in exchange.

Whilst this was going on a babbling of guttural ejaculations emanating from one of the *laager-schifters*, told me that some idea had occurred to someone.

Suddenly, one of the Boches ran back to his trench and presently reappeared with a large camera. I posed in a mixed group for several photographs, and have ever since wished I had fixed up some arrangement for getting a copy. No doubt framed editions of this photograph are reposing on some Hun mantelpieces, showing clearly and unmistakably to admiring strafers how a group of perfidious English surrendered unconditionally on Christmas Day to the brave Deutschers.

Slowly the meeting began to disperse; a sort of feeling that the authorities on both sides were not very enthusiastic about this fraternizing seemed to creep across the

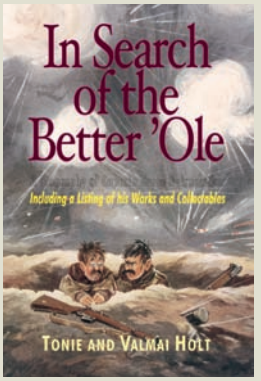
Young inquisitive replacement: "Who made that 'ole?" Fed-up old soldier: "Mice!" The Germans felt the need to explain this when they used it in a manual on humour. 'It was not mice. It was a shell.'

gathering. We parted, but there was a distinct and friendly understanding that Christmas Day would be left to finish in tranquillity. The last I saw of this little affair was a vision of one of my machine-gunners, who was a bit of an amateur hairdresser in civil life, cutting the unnaturally long hair of a docile Boche, who was patiently kneeling on the ground whilst the automatic clippers crept up the back of his neck.

The Commander of the BEF, General Sir John French, heard about the Christmas Truce, as it became known, and although in retrospect his attitude mellowed, at the time he reacted firmly:

> *'I issued immediate orders to prevent any recurrence of such conduct and called the local commanders to strict account...'*

Bairnsfather with time on his hands in the winter of 1914 .



IN SEARCH OF THE BETTER 'OLE:

By Major and Mrs Holt

£19.95

Bruce Bairnsfather created one of the best-known cartoon characters of the First World War – 'Old Bill' and he drew what many consider to be the most enduring cartoon of all time – the 'Better Ole'. Reprinted due to popular demand, this biography was the first to be published about the man and his work. During the First World War the contribution of Bairnsfather's work to the morale of the Nation, through laughter, is without question. Indeed these were those who thought he was the 'man who won the war'. The authors trace his life in fascinating detail. The story is lavishly illustrated with over 150 photographs and drawings, and includes a useful section setting out the range and values of Bairnsfather memorabilia and collectables.

Copies of the above title are available in all good bookshops or from Pen & Sword.

HOW WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

Over the course of the next four years or so, there are hundreds of ways in which the Great War is being commemorated. Television channels nationally are releasing hundreds of programmes that tie in with the centenary, and Pen & Sword have released (and are releasing) a series of DVDs that bring to life the realities of the First World War.

The recent popular BBC One Sunday night favourite, *The Crimson Field*, is one of the first of many programmes that mark the centenary of the Great War, with more to come from the BBC as they commemorate the war with their four-year project. BBC's *The World's War* tells the story of thousands of Indian, African and Asian troops, who fought and died alongside European troops, while *The Railway War* uncovers World War One's railway history, 100 years on: from the very earliest military planning prior to the declaration of war, until the signing of the armistice in a railway carriage in Compiègne. Other programmes include the drama *The Passing-Bells*, which relives the war through the eyes of two young men who joined the war effort expecting it to be over in months; and *Teenage Tommies*, which unearths the stories of British boy soldiers, who were little more than children when they were plunged into the trenches.

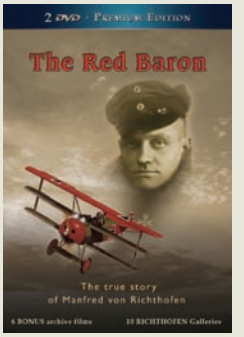
Meanwhile on ITV *Our Story: The Great War*, released in the summer, includes the tale of Harold Gillies, the New Zealand doctor who pioneered the use of plastic surgery on men disfigured in the fighting.

In addition to what can be seen on the television, Pen & Sword have released a selection of DVDs to commemorate the centenary of the outbreak of the war that is often regarded as the bloodiest conflict known to mankind. It was the first truly modern war, with the introduction of weaponized gases, tanks and combat aviation, as well as other new technologies leading to the slaughter of millions. Pen and Sword's Great War DVD capture these horrors of this war, drawing on the extensive knowledge of numerous experts to draw an informative picture of what happened on those famous killing fields …

MONS 1914
£16.99

The Battle of Mons was an iconic engagement of the Great War when soldiers of the BEF fired the opening shots in the west. This 90-minute film follows the story of Mons from the mobilization of the BEF in August 1914, through to the area where the fighting around Mons took place. Much of the filming is on site in Belgium, interspersed with contemporary footage and interviews with experts. Interviewees like Paul Oldfield, Mike Peters and Ed Church bring the stories to life and talk with easy-to-understand terms. The 90 minutes are entertaining and interesting, covering some lesser-known stories as well as the famous ones. Reviewed by *ww1centenary.net*.

THE RED BARON
£19.99



In this DVD the archive film is accompanied by bonus archive films and photo galleries. The subject of this documentary is a legend internationally known – the Red Baron – one of a few individuals who achieved a high level of celebrity during the bloody war of attrition that saw millions of Europe's young men slaughtered in the mud and filth of the trench lines. It was also a war that saw volunteers from the British and French colonies joining in the battle against Germany. After his death Manfred von Richthofen (the baron) became a symbol, and his body was moved several times before ending in a family plot. His story has been told very well in this documentary. Reviewed by *Firetrench*.

TRACING GREAT WAR ANCESTORS: FINDING UNCLE BILL

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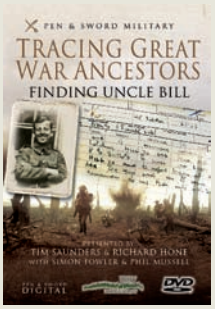

This documentary gives an insight into the often daunting task of tracing ancestors who fought during the Great War: military historians Tim Saunders and Richard Hone delve into the resources available. It follows Richard's search for the story of his great uncle, William Pye, who died just weeks before the Armistice. They uncover his movements, orders of battle and final resting place at Tyne Cott cemetery. Review by *Best of British Magazine*.

YPRES: SLAUGHTER OF THE INNOCENTS

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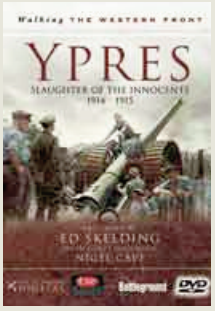

Most military enthusiasts will recognize the name of Ypres and the epic battles of the First World War, and this new 70-minute long DVD from Pen and Sword looks at the actions in some detail, returning to the battlefields to recount those dark days of World War One. It's a well-produced film with modern colour footage, intertwined with black and white imagery from the time and offers a fascinating insight into the battles of Ypres. Review by *Military Machines International*.

YPRES: THE IMMORTAL SALIENT

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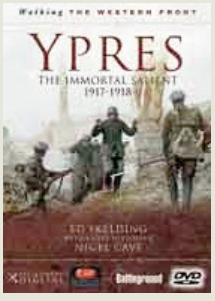


This DVD is another of the excellent *Walking the Western Front* series that Pen and Sword do so well. The presenter, Ed Skelding, a war historian, is joined by the eminent historian Nigel Cave. Together they take us on a journey, from the opening scenes at Menin Gate, with its thousand upon thousands of names, via Tynecot, the largest British war cemetery in the world, and retell stories of the battles, the places and the people that fought there. It is educational, informative and of great interest, as are most – if not all – of the series from Pen & Sword, It is worth having for those who study history, for those who study war, or for those who would just like to know a bit more about those terrible days. Review by the *Army Rumour Service*.

Copies of the above titles are available from Pen & Sword

LE CATEAU

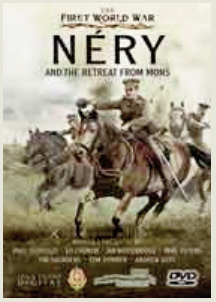
£14.99

This is another great title from the Battlefield History TV team (BHTV). With narration by Tim Saunders the documentary begins with a brief overview of the events which led to the battle at Le Cateau. The narration is complemented with costumed re-enactment and archive footage of the soldiers as they prepared to fight. Most of the present-day footage is shot on location, which reveals much about the landscape the men had to traverse. As ever, the subject is meticulously researched and presented in a lively and informative way, covering many aspects of the retreat from Maubeuge to the clash at Le Cateau.

New Releases:

NÉRY AND THE RETREAT FROM MONS

£16.99



The BHTV team of historians and battlefield guides take us to the scene of some sharp rear-guard actions fought during the retreat from Mons, including the great cavalry actions at Cerizy and Néry, where the mounted British soldier established domination of his German counterpart. As they travel the highways and byways of France the team analyze the decisions made by the commanders in the fog of war that spelt the end of the Schlieffen Plan and set conditions for the 'miracle of the Marne'.

BATTLES OF THE MARNE, THE AISNE AND THE RACE FOR THE SEA

£16.99

While the Allied generals were nearing panic as the Germans approached Paris, Marshal Foch quickly realized the German's intent and that the Schlieffen Plan was unravelling. In a master piece of military diplomacy he persuaded Field Marshal French to join the attack on the exposed flank of the Germans, as it wheeled to the east of Paris. The battle was monumental and indeed a miracle, with the British playing a key part alongside the French in halting the German advance and driving them back behind the next river – the Aisne.

Review

DIARY OF AN OLD CONTEMPTIBLE

Peter Downham

£25.00

This is a most unusual chronicle of the events of one man during the Great War. A professional soldier at the outbreak, Edward Roe was one of the first to cross over to France in 1914, and as such, he fought in the early battles of the war and took part in the Retreat from Mons. He was there for the crossing of the Marne and Aisne, the dreadful fighting at Ploegsteert and for the extraordinary events during the first Christmas. His diary provides a rare insight into the debacle at Gallipoli, the re-embarkation and evacuation of the Peninsula, the campaign in Mesopotamia and the final campaign that captured Baghdad.

Roe enlisted on 27 April 1905, at the age of 19 years, describing himself as a labourer on his enlistment forms. These papers outline that he was 5 feet 91/2 inches tall, with a fair complexion, dark brown hair and grey eyes.

The diary begins when Roe has been put on the Active Reserve list in March 1914, just as he has travelled home to Ireland. He has hardly arrived before he is recalled to mobilize in August 1914 at the outbreak of the First World War.

> *'On 4 August war was declared between England and Germany. The early morning post [5 August] brought my mobilization order to rejoin at Preston at once, so I will have to take the earliest train to Dublin … After breakfast I went around and shook hands with all the neighbours. One or two asked me, did I think I would be killed? The only answer I could give was that I did not know, quite a number will be killed for certain.'*

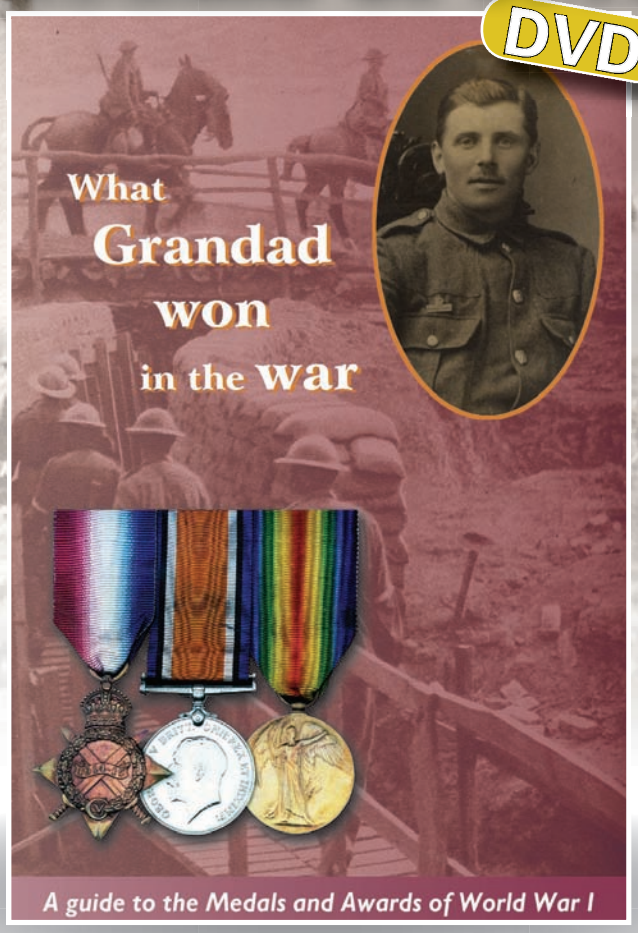
Edward Roe's diaries are exceptional in a number of respects. Not only do they cover active service in three major theatres of the Great War, namely Northern France, Gallipoli and Mesopotamia, but the diarist was one of the lucky few to survive the four years of conflict.

Diary of an Old Contemptible is a compelling read for both those with a detailed knowledge of the Great War and also for those who wish to gain a unique insight into the experiences of a young soldier caught up in the dreadful conflict.

A photo taken in Baghdad shows Edward Roe on the far right of the front row with a puppy on his lap. The board declares that these men of the East Lancashire Regiment had served on the three different fronts of France, Dardanelles and Mesopotamia during the Great War.

Copies of the above title are available in all good bookshops or from Pen & Sword.

A guide to the Medals of WWI



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Pen & Sword has the Great War covered, with nearly 700 World War One titles in print and many more on the way over the next few years.

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Although it reads as a novel, *Sniper Jackson* can be justifiably viewed as 'faction' weaving true events around a mythical character. Sleath's work bears the hallmarks of personal experience, in particular those small details of trench life and the close-knit camaraderie commonly found in specialist units that only those who have experienced it could know. • **£19.99**

3. *The Great War Illustrated 1914* by William Langford
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