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PAST FORWARD

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**Wigan Borough
Remembers:
First World War
Commemorative
Special Edition**

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The Fallen

BY HANNAH TURNER, LEIGH LOCAL STUDIES

One of the most enduring images of the First World War is of the seemingly endless rows of white gravestones, somewhere in a foreign field. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is responsible for maintaining cemeteries and memorials which stretch from the Menin Gate Memorial in Ypres to the Helles Memorial in Gallipoli.

Sir Fabian Ware, a British Red Cross commander, started the Commission after being grieved at the number of casualties in the first years of the war. The mobile unit Sir Fabian commanded started to record and care for the graves they uncovered. By 1915, the unit had been officially recognised as the Graves Registration Commission and by 1917 the Imperial War Graves Commission had been granted a Royal Charter.

After the armistice, land and cemeteries for the dead were sought. Three architects were commissioned; Sir Edwin Lutyens, Sir Herbert Baker, and Sir Reginald Blomfield. Rudyard Kipling advised on inscriptions on the memorials.

Today school groups and tourists visit the war graves, in fact special trips are created for those who wish to learn more about the casualties. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission website is an amazing resource which both local and family historians



Grave of Private Albert Oxley, killed in France in 1917, with a temporary cross to mark the location.

use frequently to find the names and memorials of the fallen.

However, not all casualties of the First World War were buried abroad. The fallen lie buried in our local cemeteries and churchyards too.

For instance, Private Alfred Jackson is buried in Tyldesley Cemetery. He died from wounds suffered at the Battle of the Somme. Alfred had been a member of the 1st Battalion of the King's Own Scottish Borderers, who had fought at Gallipoli and then at the Somme.

The Somme was a hideous campaign. It lasted from the 1 July 1916 until November 1916.

On the first day alone there were around 60,000 British casualties, 20,000 of whom were killed. Sixty per cent of all officers were killed on that first day too. A letter from a soldier which appeared in the Leigh Journal said that, 'the trenches were full of dead and dying, and some of them have been 30 hours waiting for attention. Ambulances are running about at full-speed, and everybody is doing his best for them. I have seen over a hundred bodies in one line waiting to be buried'.

After he was wounded, Alfred wrote home to his mother telling her that, 'we got a terrible handling. One of our men came to see me at the dressing station, and he told me that our battalion losses were very severe. But thank God every regiment did not get as tough a job as we bonnie Scotties'. Alfred also wrote it 'shall be a good bit before I am right again. My left thigh is broken and they have not got the old iron out of my leg yet'. Alfred was brought back home by ship but he died of his wounds on the 19 July 1916. Alfred received a military funeral and a firing party came from the Leigh Prisoner of War camp.

Many of those who lie buried in military graves died of diseases contracted whilst serving abroad. Nursing Sister Mary Ann Allen contracted malaria on the Mesopotamian front whilst serving at the 33rd British General

Hospital in Basra. Mary recovered but the disease had considerably weakened her. On returning home to Tyldesley, Mary was appointed District Nurse but less than a year later Mary died from her weakened state. She is buried in Tyldesley Cemetery as well.

There are other female casualties who are buried in local cemeteries. Bertha McIntosh [see Ann Glacki's article later in this edition] is buried in Atherton Cemetery with her family. Bertha died of TNT poisoning contracted whilst working at a National Filling Factory in Morecambe making munitions for battle ships. Both Bertha and her sister Ida had gone to work at the factory. On the 20 April 1917 Bertha had been taken ill, less than a month later she died on the 13 May at Royal Albert Edward Infirmary in Wigan. Bertha's family received £50 in compensation for her death.

Another young lady called Margaret Ann Silcock also died from the effects of poison whilst working at the same National Filling Factory in Morecambe. Margaret was only 22 years old. She died on the 20 February 1917 at 1 Wright's Yard, Wigan. Inquests were held for both Margaret and Bertha's deaths. Both causes were cited as

War memorial outside Top Chapel, Tyldesley, c. 1919. The war memorial was later moved to Tyldesley Cemetery.



accidental. Margaret is buried at Wigan Cemetery (Lower Ince). Also buried at Wigan Cemetery (Lower Ince), are Samuel and Jane Tomlinson, husband and wife who were killed during the zeppelin air raid on Wigan. Before midnight on the 12 April 1918, a zeppelin dropped bombs on the Whelley, New Springs, Scholes and Lower Ince areas of Wigan. The bombs created huge devastation. Six people were killed, five of them outright, including Samuel and Jane Tomlinson. Samuel, a gas inspector, lived with Jane at 35 Harper Street. On the night of the raid Samuel and Jane were asleep in bed when the bomb fell. The blast from the bomb threw them both through a window and they died from the impact.

There are of course those who fought and survived the First World War buried in local cemeteries. These veterans are not always in graves which have memorials commemorating their service but one that does is that of Alfred Wilkinson, the Victoria Cross winner, who is buried in Leigh Cemetery. Alfred was awarded the Victoria Cross for volunteering to deliver a message under heavy fire. The message was to send assistance to his company who were under attack. The four runners who had

volunteered to deliver the message before Alfred had all been killed. Alfred delivered the message through 600 yards of heavy machine gun fire. Assistance was eventually sent.

After the war, Alfred opened a sweet shop at 113 Etherstone Street with his wife Grace but he gave this up to work in the surveyor's laboratory at Bickershaw Colliery. During the Second World War, Alfred assisted in the home guard. On 18 October 1940, Alfred was found dead at work. He had died from carbon monoxide poisoning caused by a bird blocking the ventilation pipe. Alfred was buried in Leigh Cemetery with full military honours.

Over the years Alfred's grave fell into disrepair. Encouraged by Bert Paxford on behalf of the Old Comrade's Association of the Manchester Regiment, Wigan Council spent around £250 restoring Alfred's grave. A black granite cross with the Victoria Cross inscribed on it now marks Alfred's burial site.

To find out more about casualties of war buried in local cemeteries visit the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website <http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead.aspx>. A simple search such as "Hindley Cemetery" can show which of the fallen are buried in your local town.

The Archives and Local Studies indexes for the First World War are an excellent source of information. To find out more about the lives of the fallen in the First World War please visit <http://www.wlct.org/wigan/museum-archives/wals/> or get in touch with Leigh Local Studies on 01942 404559 or email H.Turner@wlct.org

First World War Cemetery walks are taking place in local cemeteries. To book please contact Leigh Local Studies on 01942 404559 or email H.Turner@wlct.org

BY YVONNE ECKERSLEY

The 5th Battalion The Manchester Regiment



Wigan Territorials, Manchester Regiment, c. 1914

Lancashire's contingent of the Territorial Force had two divisions, East and West. The Manchester Regiment was part of the East Lancashire Division. Each Regiment had fourteen Battalions of approximately 1000 men. The Wigan Battalion (5th) consisted of Wigan (A to E), Patricroft (F), Leigh (G) and Atherton (H) Companies. County Associations were responsible for its administration and military authorities for training.

The Territorial Force (TF), established in 1908, replaced the existing Local Volunteer and Militia units, and was conceived primarily as a home defence force. Their organisation and training reflected this.

The attitude of mind behind the derogatory phrase, 'Terriers playing at soldiers', resulted from policies and practices that were detrimental to the Terriers. They revealed a leadership out of touch with the realities of the lives of the working men who formed the battalions; their leaders expected too much for too little and expected part-time volunteer recruits to attain the same level of proficiency as professional soldiers.

Young men of 'good character' initially enlisted for four years, and submitted themselves to military discipline. They were required to attend their local Drill Halls twice weekly after work - men who worked night shifts attended during the day. This was non-negotiable.

At the Drill Hall, Terriers were introduced to the rudiments of soldiery. They were not passive recipients of training. They had targets to meet. The main focus, apart from Drill, was rifle training. The programme involved weekly target practice in the Drill Halls, progressing to firing at a local Miniature Range, then further training and assessment at the Regiment's Rifle Range at Stalybridge.

Apart from personal awards (proficiency certificates) they were encouraged to compete within their own company, between other companies at weekend camps, between other Battalions within their Regiment and both within, and as part of, the East Lancashire Division, against other divisions at annual camps.

Using a similar pattern, moving from personal practice to larger theatres, Terriers developed their marching expertise. Hence, from Drill Hall practice to participating in local recruiting parades, then widening their sphere. The Battalion marched at the head of the procession for the Maypole Colliery Disaster Memorial Service, from the tram lines at Platt Bridge to Abram. In this instance they were soberly dressed in green serge. When they Paraded to Wigan Parish Church and received their Colours at Haigh Hall, they paraded in their 'walking out' uniform of scarlet and white. Highly visible, they marched from their Drill Halls (Powell Street, Wigan, Ellesmere St, Leigh, Mealhouse Lane, Atherton, and Cromwell Road, Patricroft) to railway stations en-route to weekend and annual camps. They took their place among the 16,000 troops of the Manchester Regiment marching past King Edward at Worsley and participated in mass marches at multi-divisional camps at Salisbury Plain and Aldershot.

The training objectives at Camps focussed on preparation for war-readiness. A vital component of this was the camaraderie necessary to create a viable fighting force. Within the self-contained military world of the camps, Terriers shared with others of like mind activities designed to foster feelings of pride, belonging, team spirit, loyalty. They moved from being motivated by personal, to group achievement, through inter-Battalion/Division Football matches - the 5th's team was the 'All Blacks' - wrestling, boxing, marching, shooting competitions and of course war-games.

However, attending camps did pose serious problems, some of which had direct links to the parsimonious nature of funding. In 1908, the Battalions of the Manchester Regiment attended a mass camp on Salisbury Plain. On arrival, the 5th had to march ten miles in pouring rain, most without greatcoats, some wearing civilian clothes, then sleep on sodden ground without sufficient tent boards during their time at camp. Many returned ill. 400 Lancashire men were hospitalised, many with pneumonia.

Other health related issues were more chronic. Most of the 5th Battalion's Terriers were miners or mill workers, whose long hours and poor working conditions took their toll. These young men - they were mostly young, aged 19 and under - went directly from work to camp and after further exhausting themselves travelled home in time for work early next morning. For instance, whilst at weekend camp at Parbold, local Terriers were required to sleep in ditches, again in atrocious weather conditions, then due to lack of funds, march back to Wigan late on Sunday.

Government showed no real understanding or empathy for the economic reality of working men, who, without security of tenure (many miners were datallers), could not risk two weeks absence - or even a Saturday away - from work. Unsympathetic employers could simply replace them.

Unemployment or underemployment (no Saturday overtime) could result in hardship or destitution for themselves and their families. The camp allowance of one shilling a day was totally inadequate. Despite constant pressure to introduce a married men's allowance, compensate for loss of earnings or refund the incidental expenses incurred by ordinary Terriers, no progress was made. By the end of 1913, Terriers were better provided for, but were still often out of pocket.

Mandatory attendance at Annual Camp posed specific problems in Lancashire cotton towns, with their rolling timetable of Wakes Weeks. Should Annual Camp not coincide with your town's holiday week you were stuck; you either went to work and fell foul of military law, guilty of being 'absent without leave', or went to Camp and risked your job.

Yet being a Terrier was not without its rewards. There was, of course, the emotionally uplifting experience of marching to the catchy and jaunty popular tunes and songs played by military bands - perhaps with a bit of a swagger? - through their home towns, maybe watched by friends and family. For all the negative criticism in the press this type of personal experience must have been affirming. As well as pride and self-respect, being a terrier also offered opportunities to widen horizons, and not just literally by travelling outside their immediate environment. They also got the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills not normally open to them including Drill Hall classes in musketry and the use of the Maxim gun, medics or signalling training.

Though not a 'Pals' battalion as such, much of their military identity was matched by their identity as miners or mill workers. They shared personal experiences of their work and neighbourhoods. To the Terriers, alongside their fellow mill workers and miners wearing their Sunday best Monkey-toed clogs as they marched off to War in 1914, the experience would not have felt completely alien.

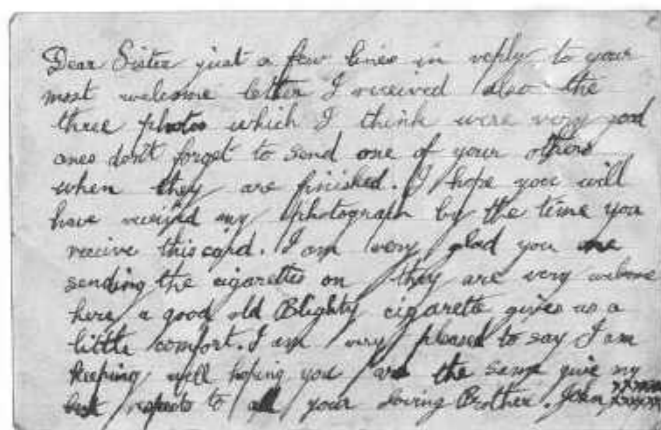
References:

References for this article available on request.

Much of our time in recent months – working with volunteers and local history societies – has been focused on the centenary commemorations, producing many new catalogues and indexes and improving access to war-time records.

This is a brief summary of what is now – or soon will be – available:

- Members of Leigh Family History Society have completed the recording of most of the Monumental Inscriptions of the Leigh Cemetery, now available at Leigh Local Studies;
- Archive volunteers have digitised every military image in the collections, now available online at <http://wiganimages.wlct.org/>, search for PC2013;
- 1914-1918 newspaper indexes for Wigan and Leigh;
- Photographic record of graves and memorials in local cemeteries;
- Full transcriptions of Wigan Council war memorials, online from 4 August;
- Digitised and indexed local military tribunal and Prisoner of War records;
- ...and finally, later in the year we will launch a full database of those who lost their lives in the Borough, linking together information we hold on these men and women, from newspapers, memorials and archive sources. Watch this space!



John Marsden, PoW Postcard

Recent Acquisitions & Accessions

Wigan Borough Archives

- Records of Wigan Baptist Church (D/NB/10) – We would also like to thank the Church for their kind donation towards the cost of cataloguing and conserving these records.
- Billinge Hospital & Leigh Infirmary, additional records (Acc. 2014/14)
- Parish Church of St Peter, Newton-in-Makerfield, additional records (DP/35)
- Aspull, St. Elizabeth Church and School, additional records (DP/4)
- Wigan Comrades Club and British Legion Comrades Club (D/DS/158)
- Records of Ruth Margaret Haddock, of Wigan, midwife (D/DZA/392)
- Mayor Sydney Burgess Collection (CB/Wi/A13/3/1)
- Rowden Family Photographic Collection (Acc. 2014/38)
- Blackley Hurst Colliery Company Limited, wage books, 1954-1956 (Acc. 2014/35)

Wigan Local Studies

- Fearnley, David A., Garswood New Hall, Ashton in Makerfield, Lancashire, Shelf Mark 942.736 FER
- Fearnley, David A., Lancashire Hussars Yeomanry Cavalry 1848 -1914 Vols 1 & 2, Shelf Mark 357.1
- Gathurst Golf Club. A History Celebrating 100 years 1913-2013, Shelf Mark 796.352
- Gathurst Golf Club. This was the year that was. A Reflection of the Centenary Year, Shelf Mark 796.352
- Wigan Rugby Union Football Club 1913-2013 Centenary Brochure, 796.333
- Wigan & District Technical College Rag Magazine, Stop Uzz, Shelf Mark WLD 741

Museum Collections Corner

Whilst researching the upcoming exhibition we have come across several interesting objects, including a German trench dagger and bayonet. This style of bayonet was horrifyingly known as the German Butcher Knife (Butcher Blade) Bayonet. The trench dagger was produced by the company Ernst Busch. It features a double-edged blade and steel scabbard and was donated by a local man who took the knives from German prisoners of war. The belt loop fitted to the scabbard is made of woven paper – a substitute for leather, which was in short supply in wartime Germany.

We also have the First World War era prosthetic arm which belonged to Robert Marsh, a local man who was born and lived in Wigan and injured during the war. Mr Marsh lost his arm and suffered damage to his eye from a gas attack. Robert was a cotton mill worker and his grandson told us he worked at Eckersley's mill after the war and never actually wore the prosthetic arm. It is likely the arm was a dress arm possibly only used for formal parades.

The objects we will be displaying represent the war both at home and on the front lines. The weapons conjure the horror and the reality of the war, whilst the post cards and personal effects show the anguish of families separated.

The cigarette case which bears the design, 'good luck for a brave man', on the front has a date scratched into the lid, '14.6.15'. It still contains two packets of Lloyd's cigarettes. One packet contains all five cigarettes the other has one left which leaves us speculating as to why they were never finished and is again a very poignant object. These and many more will be on display at the Museum as part of the First World War centenary exhibition.



Ernst Busch German trench dagger



Cigarette case with date scratched inside



Robert Marsh's prosthetic arm

DEADMAN'S PENNY

BY TOM WALSH

As the anniversary of the First World War approached I began to think about Wigan's involvement in the war to end all wars – if only it were so – and my mind wandered back to my school days at St Patrick's School and being told about Thomas Woodcock V.C., a former pupil of the school. We were told how after a Civic Reception at Wigan Town Hall he was the guest of honour at our school and that very night he left Wigan to return to the front, never to return to Wigan.

He had cheated death once but wasn't to be so fortunate a second time. He was killed in action on the 27 March 1918, only months before the armistice. His bravery was further underlined by the fact that as a recipient of the Victoria Cross, he was excused front line action, but he insisted on rejoining his comrades. Considering his experience, his insistence on returning to rejoin battle was surely as brave as his exploits on the battlefield; by this commitment surely another medal for bravery was deserved.

His citation reads:

'On the 13 September 1917 north of Broenbeek, Belgium, when an advanced post had held out for 96 hours and was finally forced to retire, Private Woodcock covered the retreat. Private Woodcock heard cries for help behind him - he returned and waded into the stream amid a shower of bombs and rescued another member of the party the latter he then carried across open ground in daylight towards our front line, regardless of machine-gun fire.'

In preparing this article I had the great pleasure of meeting Mrs Veronica Ashton, grand-daughter of this outstanding man. She was able to give me an insight into the pride his family still have almost a century after his sacrifice; she allowed me to view her albums and a picture that has pride of place in her home. She recalls clearly his medals being displayed in a glass case in her grandmother's home in Cambridge Street. Mrs Ashton has visited her grandfather's grave along with her children; she tells me of the overwhelming feeling of pride mixed with sorrow, tears only just held back. Veronica is a kind person, of steely determination and it is clear that Thomas Woodcock's traits have been passed down the generations. As she is proud of him, I'm sure he in turn would be equally proud of her.

There are memorials to this brave soldier in both St Patrick's Church and School. His Victoria Cross can be seen at The Guards Museum, Wellington Barracks, London. I haven't yet seen the medal but on my next visit to the capital I shall certainly pay a visit. I'm sure it will be a surreal experience knowing that I've shared a schoolyard with a man of such outstanding courage, albeit 55 years apart!

My only real memory regarding the First World War was of seeing a large coin type ornament on the sideboard of a neighbour in McCormick Street. Mrs Kelly had lost a son in The Great War, as she always described it, and

Thomas Woodcock, V.C.

asking her about it she explained that it was given to the families of servicemen who died in the war and that it was called 'The Deadman's Penny'.

I remember saying in a childlike way, 'a penny isn't much for a life'. I can still remember her reply, 'e love it's not but it's all I've got of him, and it's worth its weight in gold to me'.

At such a young age I couldn't fully comprehend what she meant or understand her great sorrow, which never truly healed. Mrs Kelly died in the family home in 1951, still a broken woman. The suffering of the



First World War was not only on the battlefields of Flanders and Passchendaele, but in the hearths, hearts and homes of the mothers and fathers who would never see their sons again, not even left with a grave to tend. I think I half realised, even for one so young, that part of Mrs Kelly died on that day in 1918.

As the centenary of the start of that war is remembered, my mind went back to Mrs Kelly and the so called Deadman's Penny and I resolved to find out more about her son. The following article is what I was able to ascertain with the help of the records from Wigan's Archives & Local Studies, where the newspaper index and records of the war are truly amazing; thanks are due to all who worked on its compilation. Below is the full report:

'Wigan Observer, 2 November 1918. Nineteen, and Four Years Service.

Mrs Kelly of 34 McCormick Street Wigan has received news that her son Pte. John Kelly, Royal Irish Fusiliers Lewis Gun Corps, has been killed in action. Pte. Kelly who was nineteen

years old and single enlisted in November 1914 and was last employed as a drawer at the Maypole Collieries. A comrade-in-arms, writing to the bereaved mother, tell her that her son was very well liked by all the boys in the platoon.'

John Kelly was born on the 4 June 1899, so he was only fifteen years, six months old when he volunteered (conscriptio was only introduced in 1916). Therefore, he must have exaggerated his age to enlist; I don't think many questions were asked in those days. The tragedy is compounded by the nearness of the ceasefire; had that taken place a week or so earlier, John Kelly would have returned to Wigan a war hero and Mrs Kelly would have been spared thirty-three years of heartache. If a week is a long time in politics, it must be an eternity in war.

I was only six years old when Mrs Kelly died and I have often wondered what happened to the penny. I hope it didn't go in a house clearance or was sold in a second-hand shop for a few coppers; a man's life surely deserves better than that.



Thomas Woodcock's grave

Had I been older when Mrs Kelly died I would have suggested that it was placed in her coffin. Mother and son together forever. What ever its fate, I'm sure Mrs Kelly would be proud to see her son remembered in the pages of Wigan's own history magazine almost a hundred years after his death.

NEW EXHIBITION:

Home Front to Battlefront – Wigan Borough at War

2014 marks the 100th anniversary of one of the most catastrophic wars in European history. On 28 July 1914, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia and other countries soon followed with Great Britain declaring war on Germany on 4th August. Over 60 million people were mobilised for the armed forces alone and young men signed up to serve in their thousands from all over Britain. Many of those who signed up never came home and those who did were often deeply affected by the events they had witnessed.

A commemorative exhibition at the Museum of Wigan Life tells the story of local men who fought in the Great War as well as what life was like in Wigan Borough during that time. It looks at the struggle faced by women and those left behind and their contribution to the war effort.

The exhibition features local conscientious objector Arthur Turtle, the Prisoner of War camp and Belgian

Refugees in Leigh, local industry and munitions manufacture. It also includes local heroes who were awarded the Victoria Cross for their bravery, the zeppelin raid over Wigan and sportsmen who fought in the war. There is a local family history section showcasing oral and video histories - supported by Wigan Council's Centenary Fund - from local residents telling the stories of their relatives' experiences both at home and on the frontline.

Alongside authentic First World War film footage, objects on display include William Kenealy's Victoria Cross, one of the famous 'six before breakfast' awarded for bravery at Gallipoli, Lord Crawford's original war diary, an artificial prosthetic arm belonging to local soldier Robert Marsh, medals, daggers, trench art and ammunition.

'Home Front to Battlefront – Wigan Borough at War', is a free exhibition and suitable for all ages. Open 6 September 2014 until 10 January 2015.

The museum is pleased to be hosting local artworks relating to the First World War (16 August – 30 November) and a programme of special events (see Events Calendar).



Postcard from Africa

BY GLENYS McCLELLAN

Most reports about the First World War seem to be all about what happened in France. What I wanted to know was why my grandfather sent postcards from Africa?

Robert Hewitt Dean was born in St. Helens in 1871 and married Sarah Jane Harrison in 1900. After their marriage they moved to Wigan as Robert was a butcher and had a shop in Newtown. The 1911 Census lists the family at Union Street, Pemberton but when my mother Amy was born in December 1913, they had moved to Ormskirk Road. Amy was the youngest of five children.

My grandmother always said that grandfather was never well after he returned from the war. She blamed his death in 1929 on ill health caused by conditions suffered during his time abroad.

When he came home he told my mother that he had slaughtered sheep that had been brought by train to the front line. One day, one looked up at him and baa-ed. After that he only worked on the butchering side. Whether this is a true story or one he told his young children we'll never know. He also brought home ostrich feathers for his daughters to attach to their hats; that was quite fashionable at the time.

My only clues were a collection of postcards sent and received from him. The ones from him are postmarked between 1917-1918 and show scenes of Tanga, Neu Langenburg and Berreda. An older cousin could only tell me that he had been told that grandfather landed in Dar es Salaam.

I found Tanga on the east coast of Africa in what was then German East Africa. At the start of the war Africa was largely divided into colonies, ruled by the European powers. The Governors of these colonies never expected to be pulled into a war fought largely in Europe. Unfortunately, due to the strategic placing of ports and wireless communications this was not to last.

I got in touch with the Lancashire Infantry Museum at Fulwood, Preston, who confirmed that the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment were the only British troops to land in Tanga. The Museum kindly allowed me to view the war diaries which proved to be fascinating.

In November 1914, the Indian Expeditionary Force arrived at Tanga from India aboard the British ship, Karmala, with just one British Battalion, the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. The rest were all Indian troops. They only carried rations and

ammunition for 24 hours and few entrenching tools. More rations were taken ashore during the night and they prepared to invade at eight in the morning the next day. The climate was intensely hot and the vegetation extremely dense. For the first half mile there was no opposition. However, more German troops had arrived by rail and the ensuing battle caused a swarm of bees to be disturbed. The British retreated and left their wounded in the German hospital. The muddy beaches meant they could not retrieve their ammunition and stores. Two hundred unarmed North Lancashire soldiers were sent by small boats to retrieve the injured but were not allowed to land and drifted in the harbour. They were later able to board the Karmala but had been without food and water for fourteen hours. This episode was labelled as one of the worst defeats of the war and became known as the Battle of the Bees.

Later diary entries show the Battalion moving all over the African continent pursuing Colonel von Lettow-Vorbeck, the Commander-In-Chief of the Schuztruppe, and his army. It was his intention to keep the British forces occupied in Africa, thus diverting their strength from the Western Front.

My own interest was in the conditions endured by these soldiers. Hundreds of locals were enlisted to act as porters and they suffered terrible losses as well as the troops. The losses were caused not only through the fighting but also by the terrible climate and jungle-like conditions. The diaries record that men were constantly sick and receiving quinine daily. The Commanding Officer wrote to India for a supply of mosquito nets.

In May 1915, seven officers and 150 men were sent to Karungu near Lake Victoria to salvage the British ship, Sybil. The officer's report reads:

'We spent three of the worst nights at Majita. Midnight poured with rain then attacked by mosquitoes. Every officer and man down with fever within 16 days of arrival on the Victoria Nyanza.'

However another entry made me smile:

'Everything seems very cheerful. Lancs men were fishing, others shooting geese, hippo and crocodiles. At night monotony varied by hippos strolling into camp. Imagine a mule which had never before seen anything bigger than a Abottabad bullock seeing a hippo eating its hay'.

When you think that these men were fishing for food as supplies were so low, it wasn't quite the safari adventure that we hear of today. When you look on maps at the places named in the reports, these men tramped hundreds of miles across terrible terrain and then were sent off again to some other part of the continent.

I'll probably never know exactly what grandfather did in the First World War as I have been unable to find his service or medal records. However, through reading the diaries, websites and various books, I have found that the 'sideshow' in Africa, as it was known, certainly affected my family and I'm sure many others as well.

Further Reading:

Tip & Run by Edward Pace

The First World War in Africa by Hew Strachan

<http://www.namibiana.de/de/the-battle-of-tanga-german-east-africa-1914.html>

<http://www.lancashireinfantrymuseum.org.uk/2nd-loyals-in-east-africa-1914-17>



Postcard home from Robert Hewitt Dean, 1917

BROTHERS IN WAR

BY TONY ASHCROFT

In the early years of the First World War there was a call for mobilization and many enlisted. Leigh's Drill Hall in Ellesmere Street was one of the main recruitment centres. Initially there was a great deal of optimism about the outcome, but by the end of the war families throughout the country had felt the effects of the loss or disability of a loved one.

The enormous effects of war can be mind numbing because of the large number of casualties in an event which occurred a century ago; the reality can be felt more readily today when the details of individuals are known to relatives still alive.

This article is a record of two local brothers from the Firs Lane area of Leigh, by the names of Joseph and Charles Simm whose lives were affected by the events of 1914. One brother survived the conflict; the other lost his life in 1916.

Joseph Simm D.C.M. (1894-1976)

Joseph, the son of Joseph and Alice Simm (nee Ogden) was born in 1894. The family lived in the Firs Lane area of Leigh. Joseph, like many sons followed his father into coal mining and found work in the Plank Lane Coal Pit (Bickershaw Colliery).



Joseph Simm with his wife, Nurse Alice Simm at the Lord Derby War Hospital, Winwick

On 21 January 1913 Joseph married Alice Unsworth in St Peter's Church, Firs Lane. Their first child Elizabeth was born on 5 January 1914 and was aged nine months when her father enlisted in Atherton on 3 September 1914. He had been a voluntary member of the 5th Battalion of the Leigh Territorials as a teenager but had been discharged for not attending drill. His chosen regiment was the Gordon Highlanders. He was in the 1st Battalion and experienced the Gallipoli landings of 1915. Many regiments were engaged in the attack; a large number of local men lost their lives.

Luckily Joseph survived when the troops were withdrawn before Christmas 1915.

By 22 February 1916, Joseph had been transferred to the Royal Engineers 182 Tunnelling Company. Serving in France he reached the rank of Lance Corporal. A report in the Leigh Journal of 20 July 1917 states that Joseph had been wounded during the Battle of Arras having received injuries carrying wounded comrades during heavy enemy fire; he was recovering from his wounds at the Fairfield VAD Hospital in Kent. At a later date he was transferred to the Lord Derby War Hospital at Winwick. Whilst recuperating here he received notification he was to be awarded the D.C.M. for his bravery at Arras. Joseph was finally discharged from the forces on 10 December 1918, no longer fit for service.

After the war, he found employment with the Leigh Corporation and lived with Alice at 60 Cowper Street. They went on to have eight more children, their first child, Elizabeth, having died in 1918.

For many years Joseph acted as Mace Bearer to the Mayors of Leigh. His appointment was noted in the Council Finance, Estate and Parliamentary Committee on 29 November 1935, replacing

Casualty Form—Active Service.					
Regimental No. 16429		Rank Pte	Name	Simm Charles	
Enlisted (a)		Terms of Service (a)	Service sections from (a)		
Date of promotion to present rank		Date of appointment to lance rank	Numerical position on roll of N.C.Os.		
Extended		Re-engaged	Qualification (b)		
Date	From where received	Report	Place	Date	Remarks taken from Army Form B. 103, Army Form A. 26, or other official documents.
21.7.15	C.O.	Discharged 5 days pay	in the field	22.7.15	ED 204 MPE
8.1.16	HCAS	at HCAS (H. 700) 16/7 CCS	---	3.1.16	ED 5009
8.1.16	7CCS	at 7CCS 5/701017 train	---	7.1.16	54FA
20.1.16	WO	at 56th (Inf. Con. Troop)	---	8.1.16	H 4542 1st Sub. H. 100
6.3.16	19408	at 19th B.D. 19.5.16	Etaples	5.3.16	19 10000
16.3.16	---	at 24th B.D. 19.5.16	---	6.3.16	6 10000
11.5.16	---	at 19th B.D. 19.5.16	---	10.10.16	---
14.5.16	---	at 19th B.D. 19.5.16	---	14.5.16	---
11.7.16	C.O.	Wounded	---	9.7.16	01510-52
8.7.16	76FA	at 76 FA (S. 5th Trench)	---	8.7.16	ED 100
8.7.16	57FA	at 57 FA (S. 5th Trench)	---	8.7.16	ED 97 16 50000 No. Warley

Charles Simm, casualty form

W. Rigby. The remuneration for the post was £12-12-0d per annum. During his time in this position he was in attendance when the town welcomed King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on their visit to Leigh in 1938. Leigh's V.C., Alfred Wilkinson, was also presented to the Royal couple on this occasion.

The King died in February 1952 and on Friday 8 February the young Princess Elizabeth became his successor. Crowds gathered outside Leigh Town Hall to hear the Mayor, Councillor W. Woolstencroft, read the proclamation; Joseph was in attendance on this special occasion.

After retirement his spare time was taken up with one of his favourite hobbies, gardening. He was a vegetarian and grew all his own vegetables and was particularly proud of his dahlias.

Charles Simm (1896-1916)

Joseph's younger brother, Charles, was determined to follow in his brother's footsteps. Although only 16 and not old enough to enlist, he applied to join the South Lancashire Regiment and lied about his age, giving it as 19. He managed to pass the medical examination and joined the 7th



Charles Simm

Battalion South Lancashire Regiment as a Private.

After undergoing the necessary training this young collier boy became a soldier and was sent to France. On 18 July 1915 he arrived as part of the 56th Infantry Brigade in the 19th Western Division. On 3 January 1916 Charles reported to the No. 7 Casualty Clearing Station at Merville suffering from 'Inflammation of the Connective Tissue', a term covering a multitude of muscular and joint problems. From there he was transferred by train to the No.5 General Hospital at Rouen.

The following day he was back in hospital at No.24 General Hospital, Etaples because the tissue in his right foot was causing problems. After treatment he was once again discharged on the 14 May 1916 and was able to rejoin his battalion.

About a month later on 24 June 1916 artillery bombardment of the German lines began and lasted until the start of the Infantry attack on 1 July. It was thought by this time that the bombardment would have destroyed or considerably weakened the German front line. Unfortunately this was not the case as the Germans had constructed deep underground chambers where they were able to wait until the bombardment was over. They then returned to the trenches to await the infantry advance.

The South Lancashire Regiment was given the task of taking the village of La Boisselle, situated on the Albert-Bapaume Road to Gommercourt. The attack was a disaster with over 60,000 casualties recorded in 13 days of fighting. On 8 July 1916, Charles was wounded in the abdomen and thigh, more than likely from fragments of a shell. He was taken to 57 Field Hospital which was just behind the Front Line where he was initially treated before transfer to a Special Hospital at Warloy, an advanced operating centre for urgent cases.

It was here that Charles died on 10 July 1916, aged only 18, as a result of the wounds he had received. His burial plot is in the Warloy-Baillon Communal Cemetery Extension.

Editorial Note:
The author would like to thank Mary Halliwell for suggesting the subject of the article and the relatives of the Simm brothers who allowed sight of copies of the genealogical documents relating to the brothers' war records.

BY MIKE LATHAM

From Playing Field to Battlefield

Lewis Bradley • Patrick O'Neill

Men and women from all walks of life volunteered for service during the First World War. Sports clubs were urged to encourage their players to sign-up as a means of promoting a spirit of shared duty; the 17th Service Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment was known as The Football Battalion, formed around a core of men who were professional footballers.

Wigan Borough's sporting teams were no different and many men took up arms as they marched from the playing field to the battle field.

Mike Latham explores the lives of two such men.

Lewis Bradley

Many famous sportsmen lost their lives on the Battlefields of France during World War One and the town of Wigan was in mourning during June 1918 when the death was announced of their free-scoring winger, Gunner Lewis Bradley, at the age of 27.

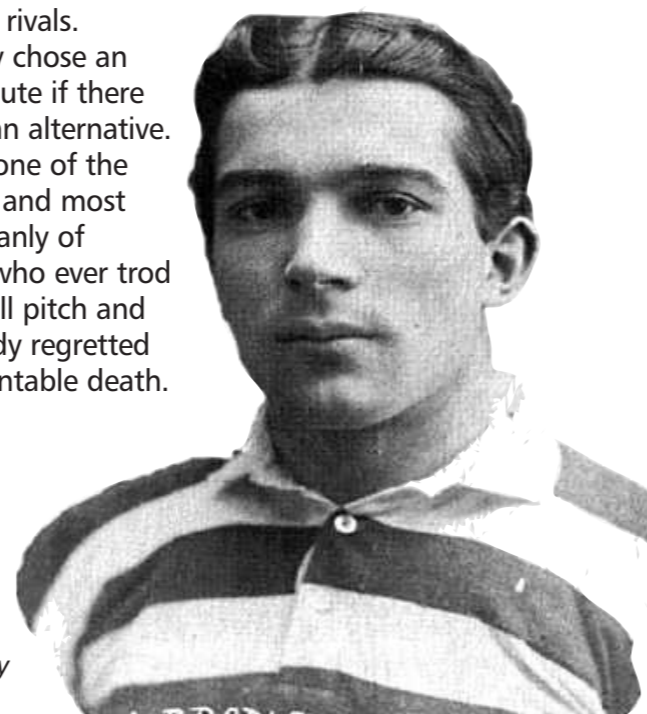
Bradley had been in the forces for three years and suffered fatal injuries in action in France. He was wounded by shell fragments which penetrated his skull and died a few days later of this and gangrene. The news was received with great sadness in Wigan, after long-serving Club Secretary George Taylor received a letter from Bradley's sister.

Lewis Bradley, known as 'Lew' was a brilliant winger who scored 117 tries in 106 games for the Club. A native of Cinderford in the Forest of Dean he began playing for his local club and soon earned County honours in rugby union for Gloucestershire in 1908. He moved on to play for Lydney and then Pontypool RU clubs. Bradley was also a well-known sprinter and his pace earned him several prizes in sprint competitions in the Border Counties.

Bradley's scoring exploits attracted the attention of Wigan scouts and he moved North in 1911 soon after impressing in a county game at Kingsholm, when Gloucestershire played Monmouthshire. Northern Union scouts were said to have been prominent at that game and Wigan won the race for his signature, ahead of stiff competition from Salford. He soon became an idol of the Central Park spectators.

A local writer of the day compared Bradley's style to that of the man he replaced in the Wigan side, the brilliant James Leytham, who hailed from Lancaster. Leytham also met an untimely death during the war years, the victim of a boating tragedy in Morecambe Bay. "There was a great difference between their styles," he wrote. "Leytham was cool and calculating and did not take many risks. In his long, raking strides, however, there was much pace and if an opponent did not meet him early he would have little chance against the North Lancashire player if it came to a race for the goal-line. Leytham preferred to go on the outside and flank his rivals.

He rarely chose an inside route if there existed an alternative. He was one of the cleanest and most gentlemanly of players who ever trod a football pitch and everybody regretted his lamentable death.



Lewis Bradley

"Bradley in style was different. Fireworks were always evident in his game. Outside or inside run mattered nought to him. He could get up pace in a stride or two and he picked up his feet at a rare rate. He could twist and dodge with a shrewdness he had assimilated in Welsh football and there were few more effective wing three-quarter backs in the Northern Union. Bradley was also a good kicker and, like others of the Welsh school, he knew the value of return pass and reverse, but he delighted most of all in the exercise of his speed and some of his runs were thrilling."

Bradley signed for Wigan in December 1911 and made his debut at Wakefield Trinity a few days later. He was top try-scorer with 37 tries in 1911-12 and with 39 tries one season later and was considered unlucky not to gain selection for the 1914 Australian tour. He joined up in the Army in 1915 and while training in Leeds played a few friendly games for Leeds as well as returning to play for Wigan. "His heart was in Wigan," his sister concluded.

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Paddy O'Neill

Paddy O'Neill was a Leigh Irishman who became one of the most prominent forwards in the Northern Union before the war. A collier at the Nook Pit, Tyldesley, he made his Leigh debut against Batley in March 1903 and was a key member of Leigh's championship winning side in 1905-06, the last season of 15-a-side. O'Neill missed only one of Leigh's 37 games during the season and was also a member of the Leigh side beaten by Wigan after a replay in the first Lancashire Cup Final.

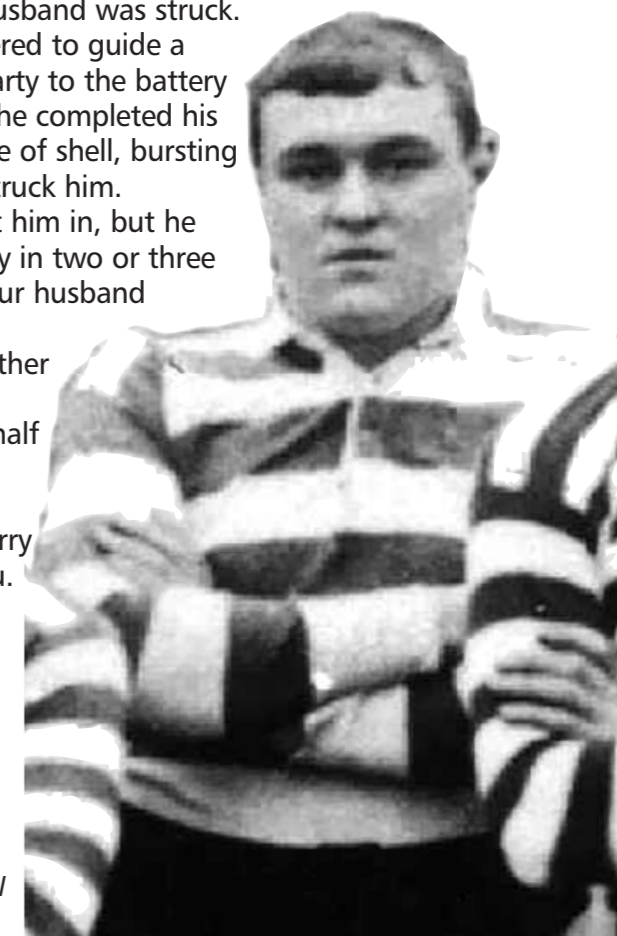
Described as fearless, strong and clever, he was considered one of Leigh's finest ever forwards and could also play halfback in an emergency. O'Neill made the transition from 15-a-side to 13-a-side with ease and he went on to make 211 appearances for Leigh, scoring 15 tries and kicking 11 goals before being transferred to Dewsbury in April 1911 alongside Billy Smith. Apart from the championship season O'Neill also featured prominently in the Leigh sides that defeated the inaugural touring sides from New Zealand (in 1907) and Australia (in 1908), both games played at Mather Lane. He also represented Lancashire.

At Crown Flatt O'Neill also became a big crowd favourite and he was a member of Dewsbury's Challenge Cup winning side in 1912. After beating the amateurs of Lane End United 36-9 in the first round, Dewsbury then had a series of low-scoring victories in their successful cup campaign. They won 9-8 at Salford, beat neighbours Batley 5-2 at home in the quarter-final and then defeated Halifax 8-5 at Fartown in the semi-final. The final, staged at Headingley was also a low-scoring affair, Dewsbury winger Billy Rhodes scoring two second half tries to win the game after Oldham had led 5-2 at half-time.

O'Neill joined the Army in May 1915 and went to France twelve months later, serving as a gunner with the Royal Garrison Artillery. When he returned to Leigh on leave, he played in some friendly games for the club. He was killed in action in Flanders on 27 September 1917 aged 35 and is buried at Belgium Battery Corner Cemetery in Ypres, Belgium. When Leigh won the Challenge Cup Final in 1921, his son Stanley was the Leigh mascot. Stanley later worked the scoreboard at Mather Lane and became a big friend of Tommy Sale. Paddy's brother James also played for Leigh and he looked after Stanley after his brother's death.

Writing to Paddy O'Neill's widow in Oxford Street, Leigh, Captain D Seed of his battery wrote:

"Everyone of this battery speaks of their sorrow for you. Your husband was a great favourite and will be deeply missed. It was during a heavy bombardment that your husband was struck. He volunteered to guide a rationing party to the battery and just as he completed his work a piece of shell, bursting very near, struck him. We brought him in, but he passed away in two or three minutes. Your husband and I have served together for the last two-and-a-half years and I cannot tell you how sorry I am for you. He was a very brave soldier."



Paddy O'Neill

THE UNMOVABLE

ARTHUR TURTLE

by Denise Colbert



Arthur and Louie

The First World War saw men placed under increasing pressure to sign up to fight at the front. This was a time when women of the Order of the White Feather would challenge any man of suitable age not in uniform to enlist, by handing them a white feather - a symbol of cowardice. Arthur Turtle, a peaceful yet steadfast man of principle, spent over two years in prison for his absolute refusal to contribute to the war in any way.

Born in Tyldesley in 1888, Arthur was a twin and one of ten children. The family were Methodists and in 1911, Arthur heard a lecture given by the Methodist minister entitled "Tolstoy: The Greatest Man in Europe". This turned out to be a pivotal event that impacted on his life in such a way that he became a

socialist and strenuous advocate for liberty and peace for all men. In later life, Arthur upheld Ghandi as another of his personal heroes; when he was due to visit England in 1930, Arthur tried and almost succeeded in getting Ghandi to talk in Leigh. A vegetarian for almost seventy years, Arthur's pacifist sensibilities clearly extended beyond the limits of humanity to include what he saw as all of God's creation.

With the passing of the Military Service Act in January 1916, Arthur received notice to report for service on 8 March 1916. He applied to the Military Service Tribunal for absolute exemption on grounds of Conscientious Objection (CO). Arthur was working as a grocer at this time,

and his employer managed to obtain a two month exemption starting from the day he was expected to report for service. This was not acceptable to Arthur, since The Act allowed for COs to be unconditionally exempted according to the extent to which they could convince the Military Service Tribunal of the quality of their objection. Arthur refused this respite in order to pursue Absolute Exemption from the Tribunal. In April 1916, he was given a Certificate of Exemption from Combatant Service which he once again appealed against.

He explains in his third petition to the Secretary of State in October 1918:

'I refused the work under the Home Office Committee because I considered it to be a scheme organised to facilitate the prosecution of the war. To have accepted it would have been to violate my principles which I am unable to do'.

In these petitions, Arthur repeatedly communicates the illegality of his imprisonment based on the fact that members of the Tribunal panel did indeed believe him to be genuine in his objection to the war. None of these petitions gained any response.

Ultimately, Arthur was arrested in January 1917. He faced several court martials in Oswestry and was eventually sentenced to two years hard labour in Wormwood Scrubs - before his transfer to Strangeways

- for the offence of 'Disobeying Lawful Command'.

In early 1916 at the age of 28, Arthur married Sarah Louisa 'Louie' Hinton-Hine. Eighteen years his senior, Louie lovingly supported her husband throughout his imprisonment; their correspondence gives a poignant insight into their common beliefs and strength. It is striking how concerned Arthur is for the well-being of his family and friends whilst downplaying his own discomfort. He later said of his time in prison, 'There were no blankets and we ate bread and water. I was very thankful for that period...I went in objecting to war and I came out objecting to everything which was wrong. I read a lot...and it gave me a fuller view of life'. Reading was not always easy for Arthur though. He was once placed under punitive measures for attempting to receive a book from another prisoner. He appealed to the Home Secretary over this injustice, again receiving no reply.

It seems Arthur's incarceration also provided opportunities for further spiritual development. He attended many Quaker Meetings for Worship in prison. He had joined the No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF) in the spring of 1916, an organisation which

Sketch given to Arthur by a friend and fellow inmate



supported young men who refused to fight as combatants, and also the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR). Many members of the NCF and FoR were Friends (Quakers) and Arthur was in close contact with members of the Manchester branches when he was imprisoned. A Christmas Greeting sent in solidarity to Arthur (via Louie) from one such, Shipley Brayshaw, contained these words of the Quaker poet Whittier:

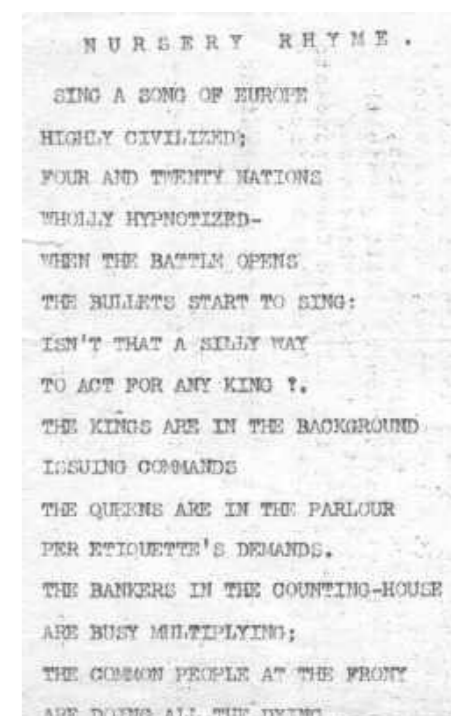
*His fame who led the stormy van
Of battle well may cease,
But never that which crowns
the man
Whose victory was Peace.*

Arthur was released from prison on 5 April 1919, three months before the earliest release date of his sentence. Although he obviously never served in the army, in May 1919 Arthur was given a dishonourable discharge certificate which warned, 'Should he attempt to join H.M. Forces he will be liable to two years imprisonment'. Understandably, this caused him great amusement.

In 1923, Arthur and Louie joined Leigh Meeting of Friends, Arthur becoming an active member and Clerk for the Quakers for a long time to come. Arthur went on to become a herbalist, opening one of the first health food shops in Leigh and later one in Atherton. The Leigh store moved to Lord Street in 1952, where it still stands today under different management. Arthur tended his ailing family, devotedly caring for his sister and sister-in-law as well as Louie who died in 1957, lovingly nursed by her husband through her final illness.

Arthur and Louie had no children but Arthur was very much involved with youth groups, spending a lot of his time helping young pacifists during the Second World War. He was also an ardent

*Rhyme appearing in the
Arthur Turtle papers*



supporter of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the 1950s. Arthur's influence on the younger generations is nicely demonstrated in a letter he received shortly before his death from an American relative, who had spent time in prison for protesting against the Vietnam War. She ends her letter, 'Your example has set my feet on a path to search for light, to listen to the still small voice within, and to act in the spirit of truth... I want to thank you for helping to create these values in my life'.

'Arthur' is a name that exudes nobility, evoking thoughts of Camelot and the round table of the mythological king. The Anglo-Saxon origin of the surname, 'Turtle', derives from a nickname for a mild and gentle or affectionate person, a development of the Old English 'turtla', meaning turtle dove. Such an apt name for our local pacifist with a warrior-heart.

The Arthur Turtle Archive can be consulted at Wigan Archives Service; catalogue information is available on the Archives website.

1915: TROUBLE ON THE HOME FRONT

BY BILL MELLING



Wigan Corporation Tramways, Aspull Route, C. 1916

For anyone interested in local history, one of the rewards of working as a volunteer at the Borough Archives is in coming across seemingly trivial facts or events which upon further examination can give a fascinating insight into the lives of our ancestors.

A recent example of this was a letter from the Wigan Postmaster to the Borough Treasurer, claiming the sum of £2-8-0d for expenses incurred, "...in consequence of the strike of Tramway Employees at Wigan, the Mails could not be conveyed by tramcar between the Wigan Post Office and Sub Offices, and it was necessary in many cases to engage horsed vehicles for the purpose". What drew my attention to this letter was the date, 18 August 1915, just a year after the start of the First World War at a time when I had always assumed the country was united in support of their men at the Front.

A visit to Leigh Local Studies, where copies of the Wigan Observer are available, confirmed that a strike had taken place which had paralysed the town and made the headlines in the national press. In 1915 most Wiganers relied on the electric tram for local transport and it was said that over 5000 people used the trams each day to get to and from their places of work. The tramway was owned and operated by Wigan Corporation and employed 260 staff who operated 73 trams, running on over 30 miles of track which radiated like the spokes of a wheel from the town centre to Upholland, Standish, Hindley, Platt Bridge, Ashton and Martland Mill.

The day to day operation of the tramway was in the hands of a General Manager, F. Buckley, who reported to a sub-committee of the Town Council, the Tramways Committee, who were responsible for financial and policy matters. The minutes of this committee are kept in the Archives and form the basis of most of what follows.

In March 1915, the Wigan Branch of the Amalgamated Association of Tramway and Vehicle Workers had applied for a wage increase, only to have it turned down on the

grounds that along with other corporation workers they had just been awarded an extra two shillings (10p) 'war bonus' to cover rises in the cost of living. However, on Tuesday 27 July they again put in a wage demand, for a halfpenny an hour increase, which on the normal 60 hour week would give a rise of two shilling and sixpence. This was considered by the Tramways Committee on the following Thursday when the union was told that the Committee would carry out a study of the wages of tramway workers in other Lancashire towns before deciding on any possible increase.

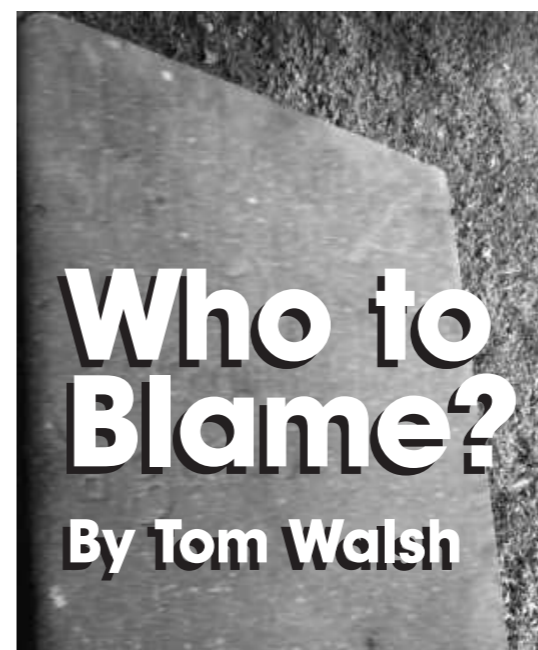
This proved unacceptable to the men who responded with a threat to come out on strike at the weekend. This in turn led to the committee posting notices at the depot threatening to sue for breach of contract any employee who withdrew their services. Notwithstanding this threat, after the last tram had returned to the depot on Sunday night the men held a mass midnight meeting and voted to come out on strike immediately.

The strike came as a complete surprise to the people of Wigan. Monday was the August Bank Holiday, the principle holiday of the summer and despite the war, all the mills, mines and factories were closed. People were anticipating a day of leisure – a trip to the seaside, a ramble or picnic in the surrounding countryside or just visiting friends and relations, all activities involving travel on a tram at some stage. Needless to say the strikers were not popular and many people thought their actions unpatriotic. A wounded local soldier, in a letter to the Wigan Observer, said, 'Isn't it a great encouragement for men risking their lives in the shell swept trenches to think of men at home striking for more money. What would happen if we refused to fight unless we got another few pence a day extra'.

Until the men actually came out, the strike had been purely a local matter; even the General Secretary of the Union only heard about it when asked by the Corporation to assist in negotiations. A telegram was also sent to the Board of Trade in London and Sir George Askwith, a high ranking civil servant indicated that because of possible implications for the war effort he wished to be involved in the negotiations. Talks on the Monday failed to reach agreement in time for the restart of local industry on the following day but intensive discussions throughout Tuesday eventually brought a solution, under pressure from Askwith.

It was agreed that a government tribunal, the Production Committee, set up under The Munitions of War Act 1915, would arbitrate and that any award would be backdated to the day the men went back to work. They did so on the Wednesday. The tribunal met on the 13 August and after hearing evidence from the Corporation and the Union and studying data on wages paid in other Lancashire towns, granted an increase of a farthing an hour, that is, half what the men had asked for. The award was accepted by both sides.

At the next meeting of the Tramways Committee there was considerable discussion on whether the Committee's threat to sue any strikers for losses incurred due to the strike, should be pursued. It was decided that since the whole matter had been passed to the Government Arbitrators no further action should be taken. With regard to the request for compensation from the Post Office it was deemed that this was not appropriate. The Committee then went on to discuss its next problem – the difficulties conductors had in getting Belgian refugees to understand the fare structure. It was agreed that the solution was to charge refugees a flat rate of one penny, but that as they say, is another story.



A sniper's bullet, a roadside bomb, a traitor's kiss, a friend's remiss.
What and how matter little now, a soldier lies dead.
A mother weeps over a cold and empty bed.
A father ponders times of yore, of holidays, football games, and those
silly, silly, childish names.
Those days can never be again, but who to blame?
Not the politician, that's not his game, nor the minister,
D, the shame!
Not the brigadier in braided splendour, nor the sergeant major with
voice like thunder.
Not the soldier in coffin dark, awaiting his long journey home,
to a family that will forever mourn.
Lessons will be learnt we're told, fighting and war will be no more.
I think we've heard that all before, but who to blame?

Editor's note: This poem was written by Tom Walsh a few years ago when a soldier from Wigan died. It has also been published as part of the Letter to an Unknown Soldier project, <http://www.1418now.org.uk/letter/>

Gallipoli

By Hilary Barker

In the December issue of Past Forward there was an interesting article on the First World War which asked a series of questions regarding the links between the war and Wigan.

My grandfather, William (Bill) Bentley was a man from Wigan who joined the South Lancashire Regiment and who ended up fighting at Gallipoli.

He was an older married man, aged 34, with a young family and had previously served with the Cheshire Regiment in 1901. He was one of the first to sign up at the outbreak of war in August 1914. Signing up with the South Lancashire Regiment in Wigan, presumably at the Drill Hall - if anyone knows for sure where the recruitment took place I would love to know - his first year was spent at training camps with the South Lancs and his first action indicated in his discharge papers was with his 'war service battalion' at Gallipoli; in August 1915 he was sent in as part of a wave of reinforcements.

His actual war records were amongst those destroyed by the Second World War bomb on Somerset House in London. So I have had to find out what might have happened by using regimental diaries and books about both the Gallipoli and the Mesopotamia campaigns.

His discharge papers record him starting in the South Lancs and being transferred at various points to other

regiments such as the Manchesters and the Northumberland Fusiliers. This was presumably because they needed reinforcements due to depletion of numbers because of casualties.

The family stories tell of him being wounded at Gallipoli, shot through the mouth during a face to face encounter with a Turkish soldier. I guess he must have been charging and yelling at the same time as soldiers are still trained to do today. The bullet passed through his mouth and out behind the ear. He said he lay wounded on the battlefield for three days until he was found and brought back for medical treatment by VADs (Red Cross Volunteers). It seems amazing to me that the Red Cross was present at Gallipoli but they are on record as being there. My dad still remembers sitting on his knee as a child and playing with the hole at the back of his ear

Gallipoli is not often featured in First World War commemorations, much more emphasis is put upon



William Bentley in later life, in his garden in Pemberton

France and the terrible conditions there, but it must be said that Gallipoli was equally terrible because of the lack of water. The heat in summer was appalling and the cold in winter equally so. The horses had thicker blankets than the men! The drinking water had to be brought in by ship from Egypt and on many occasions could only be had by boiling and filtering the sea water around them which was sometimes full of bodies and red with blood.

Fred Holcroft's excellent book, 'Just Like Hell', is an invaluable source of information with a special emphasis on Wiganers at Gallipoli. It was there that I read of Clement Atlee's role as Captain in charge of the South Lancs men and I have often wondered what effect his admiration for those plucky little Lancashire men had on his vision of a fairer world when he became leader of the Labour party. I should say that my grandfather was a forge man by trade and very strong, yet only five feet, two inches tall. Just like many of his mining compatriots they were mostly small men but great in spirit and courage.

Thanks to the ANZAC presence at Gallipoli, it has not been quietly forgotten about as I am sure the British Government of the time would have liked it to have been. But the input of the Lancashire soldiers is not quite so well remembered as was brought home to me when I was able to visit Gallipoli a few years ago and had to quietly remind our guide that not only the ANZACs fought and died here but also many others of various nationalities, including the Lancashire regiments, Sikhs, Gurkhas and French Colonial troops.

Out of the total of 410,000 troops who served, there were 205,000 casualties; one in two. 33,000 of these were ANZACs and 47,000 were French. Let us not forget the Turks who suffered equally in the defence

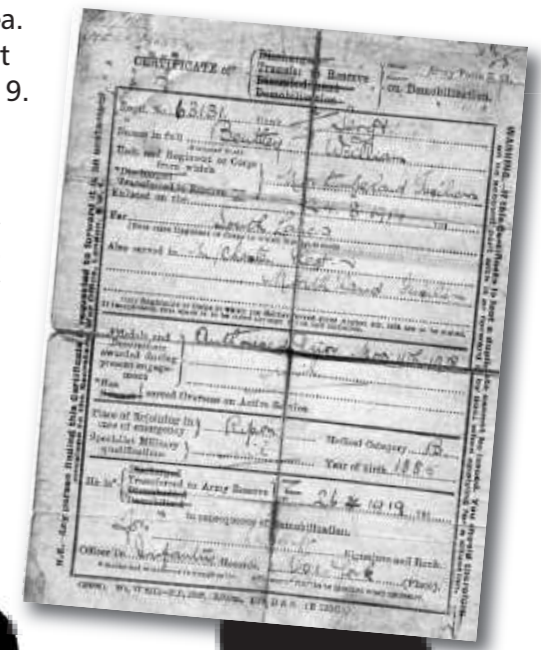
of their homeland. In popular memory it was the ANZAC's campaign but in reality it involved many others who paid an equally high price for this misguided campaign which ended in terrible failure for a variety of reasons.

Recorded in the South Lancs Regimental History, 'The three 6th Lancashire Battalions landed at Suvla in August to open a second beachhead on the peninsula and it was here that, on the 8th, in their first major battle the 6th South Lancshires, with 1/6th Gurkhas, captured Hill 'Q' on the crest-line of the vital Sari Bair ridge. This success, which could have resulted in victory on Gallipoli, was not exploited or even supported and eventual retirement was inevitable. Fierce fighting followed in which the three 6th Battalions were overwhelmed and almost wiped out, losing in all 41 officers and around 1,500 men.'

I suspect this is where my Grandad was shot.

It truly was just like hell. Gallipoli might have been hell but then Mesopotamia was to follow and that was even worse in terms of climate, lack of supplies and a grave lack of medical equipment and personnel. My Grandad then fought his way all the way up through Mesopotamia from Basra in the south to Baghdad and on northwards, battling the Turks all the way to the Caspian Sea. His war did not finish until 1919.

William Bentley's discharge papers



Damage following the Zeppelin raid, Harper Street, Wigan

BY DENNIS HOLLAND

War Time Friends: Zeppelins over Wigan

Recently my mother, born 1921 in Wigan, met a friend with whom she worked at the ROF Chorley (Euxton) during the Second World War. She had not seen her friend Megan, now aged 91, for around 50 years but they had corresponded by letter and had spoken on the telephone. They had both worked in the wages department at Euxton calculating pay by hand, making up wage packets in cash and distributing them to workers on the ammunition sections.

The reunion brought back memories of a letter sent to mother by Megan, from one of

her friends with the name of Carson who had lived in Wigan. Megan originated from Walton-le-Dale and the letter recounted a visit to Friedrichshafen by the Carson's whilst on a holiday in 1976.

The letter from Mrs Carson relates to an air raid on Wigan by a Zeppelin in 1918. It reads: 'At about this time our interests had turned to family history research. My husband had been born in Wigan, on 11 April 1918 prior to a Zeppelin raid on the town during the night of 12/13 April when a bomb had fallen on land adjacent to his uncle's

farmhouse... thankfully there were no serious injuries to any members of the family, but others less fortunate, in Wigan were killed.'

The visit to Friedrichshafen by the Carson's included the Zeppelin Museum where they discovered the following about the raid: 'Five Zeppelins based at Wittmundhaven were ordered to attack England on 4 April but bad weather forced this raid to be cancelled; then on the night of 12 April with more favourable conditions forecast the raid was given the "go ahead".'

Our particular interest centered on the airship that arrived over Wigan. This we discovered from museum records was the German Airship Number L61 which had been built at Friedrichshafen in Factory Shed 2. In length it measured 644ft 8ins; its diameter was 78ft 5ins, whilst its height was recorded as 91ft 1in. It had been powered by five Maybach engines. On the occasion of this raid it had been under the command of veteran flyer Herbert Ehrlich; it had carried a bomb load of 6,600 pounds, including four bombs of 660 pounds each, their intended target Sheffield.

Once over the English coast the weather took hold, squally rain, low cloud and later when flying at 20,000ft an east-north-east wind was encountered making it impossible to hold the correct course, and Sheffield, completely blacked out, was missed.

Eventually a well-lit area came into their sights and was assumed to be the correct target, but in fact was Wigan. The town had received no air raid warning and the blast furnaces from the Wigan Coal and Iron company were throwing up a glow into the night sky. Fifteen bombs were released on the town killing seven people injuring a further twelve and causing damage estimated at over £11,600. The last bomb dropped, the four 660 pounders fell in open fields, damaging cottages and causing further injuries.

Airship L61 made it back to Wittmundhaven and to shed 'Willie' in spite of engine trouble and an encounter with Flying Boat Number N4283 crewed by

Captains G. E. Livecock and 'Bob' Leckie. During hostilities it had been engaged in 'scouting'. It was finally decommissioned in August 1920. Commander Herbert Ehrlich died in December 1921 without knowing he had missed the most prized target in middle England.'

This Zeppelin raid and others over Lancashire are detailed by Peter J. C. Smith in his book *Zeppelins over Lancashire* published in 1991. The book confirms the raid and illustrates the route of the raid over Wigan. Smith writes: 'Continuing northwards, Ehrlich soon spotted a glare from the six blast furnaces of the Wigan Coal and Iron Company (known locally as 'Top Place') at Kirkless on the eastern out-skirts of Wigan, where no warning of an impending air raid was given. Ehrlich could perhaps be forgiven

for mistakenly entering in his log that he had bombed Sheffield rather than Wigan.'

Smith gives the tally of five dead and nine injured from local information. Was the discrepancy from the German accounts influenced by war time propaganda I wonder?

The reunion of two war-time friends after 50 years has certainly brought to light the bombing of Wigan and other recollections that I did not know about and made me conscious of the changing face of Wigan, of air power and of communications. It makes me realise how important our local industrial heritage and history is and that we should not forget it.

References:

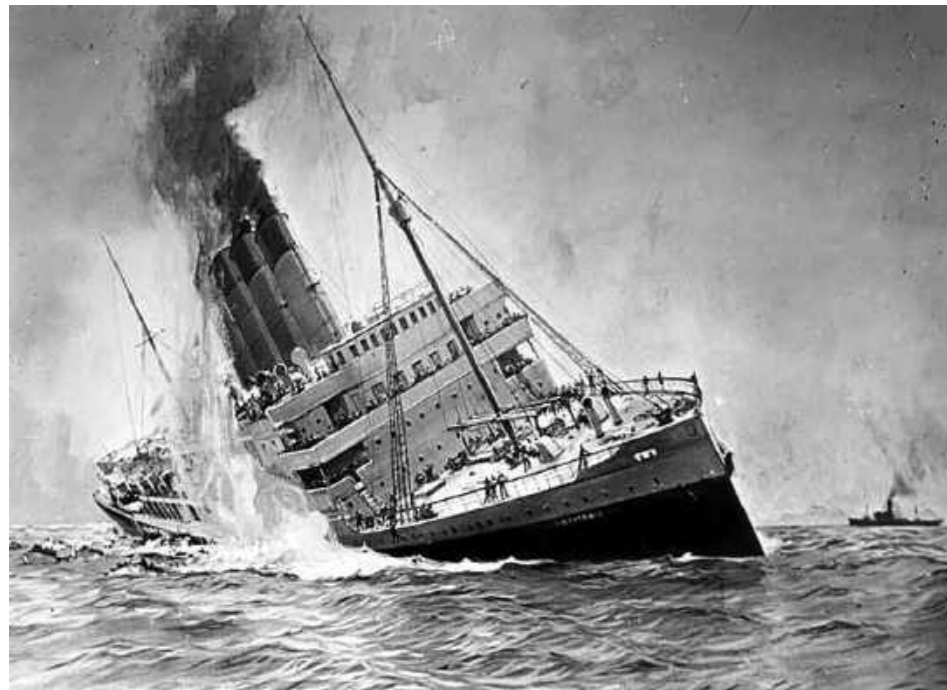
Peter J. C. Smith, Zeppelins Over Lancashire, 1991



Damage following the Zeppelin raid, Cecil Street, Wigan

Lusitania

by Jack Houlihan Work Experience Student, Leigh Local Studies



The sinking of the Lusitania, from the German Federal Archives

A famous cruise ship, the Lusitania, was sunk by a German submarine torpedo in 1915; over 1000 passengers lost their lives including Fred Isherwood, a young man from Tyldesley.

Launched in 1907, the Lusitania was at that time the world's largest ship. She was also one of the most luxurious and a favourite on the transatlantic passenger route. Since the outbreak of war, ocean travel had become more dangerous and German U-boats searched British waters to prevent war resources from getting through.

On 1 May 1915, the Lusitania set sail from New York with 1962 passengers and crew on board. A week later, near the coast of Ireland, the Lusitania was spotted by a German submarine, U20. The Germans torpedoed the liner; she took only 18 minutes to sink. The Germans believed the Lusitania was

an armed merchant cruiser carrying Canadian troops and munitions.

One of the survivors, Thomas Sumner from Atherton, did not see the first torpedo hit but he did see the line of the second. The first torpedo caused the ship to list very badly but the second torpedo completed the destruction. Thomas slid down into the water and swam until he found some wreckage to cling to. He later found, along with 30 or 40 others, an upturned lifeboat to scramble onto. They waited five hours before being rescued by the S.S. Indian Empress, which took them into Queenstown.

Another survivor, Henry Birchall, had been at lunch in the second-class saloon when the disaster occurred. He heard a noise as though a big window had been shattered. As the vessel began to list and the crockery slid off the table, the passengers made for the

deck stairway. Henry went onto the deck where he reported women were crying for their children to be brought to them and men were busy fitting them with life-belts. Henry stood with a mother and her two children on the deck until the boat sank under them. Henry felt as though it seemed a long time before he returned to the surface. He climbed onto a damaged, overturned lifeboat, the boat righted and Henry helped others to clamber in. They rowed towards a sailing vessel five miles away and after rowing for four and a half hours were taken on board another lifeboat, as their own boat was almost submerged. Women were transferred to a Hull steamer, and Henry went back with the crew of the lifeboat and helped to save several passengers. Henry made it back to his home town of Tyldesley on the 9 May in a miserable condition.

Another Tyldesley inhabitant, Fred Isherwood, had gone to live in South America for six years, part of which had been spent working in the electrical engineering department of the Chilean copper mines. Due to the outbreak of the war, Fred had decided to return home and join the British forces.

Fred travelled from Peru to New York. He sent word to his parents from New York that he expected to sail to England on board the Lusitania. Another cable-gram informed his parents that he was homeward bound on the ship. Fred travelled as a third-class passenger. After the ship sank the Cunard Steamship Company sent word to Fred's family that nothing was known of his fate.

Fred is remembered on his parent's memorial stone in Tyldesley Cemetery.

Tyldesley Creative Writers: A Commemoration

Tyldesley Creative Writers and Nightwriters is a lively group which meets weekly and writes on all sorts of topics. Like many in this Borough, we appreciate our local history and heritage and wished to write about the First World War. Several of us have stories about our own relatives' involvement in the war and this went some way to inspire our group leader, Mary Berry, to suggest we produce a presentation of our work.

We divided the conflict into its separate years and looked at each year both at the home front and at war. The stories, poems, diary excerpts and sketches we have written are based on true events, many describing local people. As ever, research has taken place using Wigan Archives & Local Studies resources. Alfred Wilkinson VC, Arthur Turtle, a conscientious objector, Shadrach and Ann Critchley, tragic suicides, Roberts Brooks, who defied orders and helped an enemy soldier in distress but lost an arm, are documented and can be studied further by interested individuals.

Tyldesley members' creative writing is interspersed with a narration of the war's chronological milestones. The production was filmed in July and props and costumes were gathered. It is not easy to find original costume but several have been made after studying contemporary pictures. We've ransacked charity shops for anything that would fit the bill – waistcoats, flat caps and braces abound. We even have a real fox-fur stole, complete with claws and glittering eyes. Amazing what one finds in a sister's attic. Battledress, helmets and weapons were harder, but we've managed it.

Next task was to find props to construct a makeshift trench - some old wooden spars sorted that problem. Our talented film-maker will be able to put real background in place of a blue-screen. So – the aspistris is watered, boots are polished and tin hat stands ready.

Our DVD will be available to any group who wishes to see it. Although there has been much organising, rehearsal and fun in preparation, we have ever been conscious of the dreadful tragedy that was the war. One of our group has researched and written about the Battle of the Falklands. Not many realise it was a part of the First World War but member Earle's description of HMS Inflexible whetted our appetite to find out more.

Diane's rendering of Vesta Tilley may ring bells with senior citizens and Christine and Joe's very funny sketch is followed by more sombre aspects as the war progressed. Soldiers writing home and vice-versa convey personal dramas that were common to every family in the land. We have tried to encapsulate as many aspects of the war as we could, from the sad execution of Nurse Edith Cavell to the destruction of over seven million war-horses. Our group has learned a lot about the war. As we have listened to aspects of the war new facts have come to light and discussed. Our project, the aim of which was to present the war to others through the eyes of local amateur writers, has proved to be an eye-opener for ourselves. Our thanks go to all who have helped us; to the Archives & Local Studies, locals who donated artifacts and costume, people who shared their family stories, volunteers who are helping with acting and filming and Tyldesley Library staff who ignore our sometimes noisy discussion as our enthusiasm gets the better of us!

Centenary Heritage Weekend St Philip's Church, Atherton

St Philip's Church, Crosby Street, Atherton, is holding a heritage weekend as part of a year of events celebrating the Church's Centenary. The Church will be open from 3pm to 6pm on Friday 24 October and from 10am to 2pm on Saturday 25 October; visitors will be able to view old registers and records and enjoy photographs of walking days and other events in the life of the church and school from the past 100 years!

A major part of the exhibition will be, 'A history of the fallen' – information and memorabilia commemorating the lives of soldiers from St Philip's who made the ultimate sacrifice during the First World War.

Everyone will be made most welcome in this lovely family church which is justifiably proud of its 100 year history. Refreshments will be available all weekend and the church has wheelchair access and disabled facilities.



For more information, please contact Reverend Reg Sinclair on 01942 892996.

By Peter Walker

Wigan Hero Wins Victoria Cross?

'Wigan Hero Wins VC. Through shot and shell to save comrade'. So ran the Wigan Observer headline on 23 January 1915; the Wigan Examiner was more cautious, 'Wigan Hero Recommended for the Victoria Cross – Gallant Rescues of Wounded Comrades' was its headline on the same date.

The names of the people from Wigan Borough who were awarded the Victoria Cross are quite well known so when I came across the name of John Gleaves, who appeared to have been missed out of the official lists, I was intrigued to find out more.

The details came to light when I was indexing the minutes of Wigan County Borough Council for the period of the Great War and I found the following item on the agenda for the Town Council meeting, dated 29 January 1915:

'To pass a resolution, if deemed advisable, congratulating Corporal John Gleaves (Loyal Lancashire Regiment), of 57 Linney street, Wigan, upon his having been awarded a Victoria Cross for his exemplary conduct at La Bassee in the present 'European War.'

However, by the date of the meeting on 3 February a note of caution had emerged.

European War - The Town Clerk read statement given him by Corporal Gleaves with reference to certain brave incidents with which he was connected whilst in the field of battle in France on the 31st December last. The Town Council congratulated Corporal Gleaves on the bravery displayed by him.'

No mention of a VC and there is nothing in the official records.

On 6 February both the Examiner and the Observer published identical accounts of the Town Clerk's meeting with Corporal Gleaves, as reported at the Town Council meeting.

The Town Clerk reported that, '...he is a very modest and retiring soldier and therefore I had to cross-examine



John Gleaves

him to get anything at all. He did not want to say anything voluntarily'.

On the afternoon of 31 December 1914 Corporal Gleaves with three other NCOs and 30 men had completed digging trenches about 150 yards from the German lines and were returning to their billets when they met Colonel Powell leading a regiment of the Loyal North Lancs and he ordered them to fall in.

Returning to the trenches they waited some time until they were ordered to fix bayonets and take the German trench at all costs. They charged against a continuous hail of enemy fire and reached the German positions, driving them out. The enemy retreated to a line of railway wagons from where they opened up a rain of deadly fire driving them back to their own trenches.

On the way back Corporal Gleaves noticed Lieutenant Rowell lying wounded about mid-way between the two lines. Having reached the safety of his own trench Gleaves rushed forward to the Lieutenant's side with shrapnel falling all around him. The Lieutenant ordered

him to go back but he said, 'No, I would rather see you safe'. While lifting the officer on to his shoulders Gleaves was shot in the arm but managed to get back to his own trenches. He then went for a stretcher and accompanied the officer back to the hospital 400 yards away, where the lieutenant shook hands with him. Returning to the trenches Gleaves again went out to rescue a wounded private who had been lying near the officer. Whilst returning with the second casualty Gleaves was struck in the foot and side by shrapnel. A stretcher party took the private but Gleaves crawled on his hands and knees through the mud to the hospital. On his way to the hospital two officers of the King's Own Rifles told him that he would be recommended for the Victoria Cross. Invalided home Gleaves spent some time in hospital in Manchester from where he was discharged on 15 January.

There is no official record of his having been awarded the VC; perhaps in the chaos of battle there was no time to obtain sufficient verifiable witnesses to justify the award.

The newspaper reports stated that Gleaves and his wife were both born in Wigan. However, research suggests that he was born in Accrington, son of John Edward Gleaves, a butcher. In 1909 he married Annie Stone, daughter of Edward Stone, fisherman, who was born in Fleetwood.

John's father may have died when he was young because the 1891 and 1901 censuses found him living with grandparents, Moses and Elizabeth Williams, in Holywell, Flintshire. He joined the Loyal North Lancashire regiment in 1906 as a regular soldier but when he married in 1909 his occupation was given as collier.

Annie's father also died when she was young. Her mother remarried and following the death of her second husband moved to Wigan where she was running a fish and chip shop in Wallgate in 1911. In 1911, John and Annie were living in Sutton, where he was described as a miner and by 1915 they were living with his mother-in-law, Margaret Jane Selby, in Linney Street Scholes. Gleaves stated that he was a regular soldier for some years prior to the outbreak of war but had been invalided home from Mauritius and given a job at Fulwood Barracks, rejoining his regiment at the outbreak of war. He appears to have survived the war, possibly living in Preston. His mother-in-law is buried in Wigan (Lower Ince) Cemetery.

Sources:

Wigan Council Minutes, Wigan Observer, Wigan Examiner, www.loyalregiment.com, www.cwgc.org, Ancestry.com, findmypast.co.uk, lancsbmd.org, www.wiganworld.co.uk/stuff/cemetery.php?opt=cemetery

• SPOTLIGHT ON •

Hindley & District History Society

The society was formed in 2001 and meetings were held in the museum area of Hindley library and museum. The society also ran the museum on a voluntary basis and was open several times a month as well as for schools, groups and by request. During this time we produced many leaflets on various aspects of Hindley as well as a DVD on Walter Hurst, well known local clogger, which was sold for charity. The society also mounted displays on on Walking Days and John Farrimond, a local author.

At the end of 2011 the library and museum building was closed and the society had to find a new home. We were fortunate in being able to store our artefacts and paper archive in Tudor House, Hindley Community Centre, where we now hold our meetings.

Our latest ongoing projects are Hindley Cemetery Walks and Borsdane Wood. Meetings are held on 2nd Monday of the month and all are welcome. Further information can be obtained from Mrs. Joan Topping on 01942 257361. The history society will be putting on a display in the shop window of Tudor House around Remembrance weekend on the First World War with information on Hindley people of the time.

Thomas Dakin: An Experience of War

BY TED DAKIN



Thomas Dakin, 1917

My Dad, Thomas Dakin, was the youngest of four brothers and two sisters, born to Richard and Margaret on 24 March 1899. Richard and Margaret were 'water gypsies' and worked on the Leeds to Liverpool canal. They also lived in a boatman's cottage at Spencer's Bridge, Newburgh, seven miles from Wigan.

With the advent of speedier road and rail transportation, canal work began to suffer, so the family loaded up their possessions, boarded their horse drawn boat, and came to Wigan.

In desperation, Grandad led his faithful horse into a local pub and tried to sell it. As a lad, Dad saw the statue of Sir Francis Sharp Powell being erected in the year 1910.

On 10 May 1917, Dad enlisted to fight in the Great War; he had just turned eighteen. He was a private in the Welsh Fusiliers and after a few months training he was shipped out to France.

On their first day on foreign soil the regiment was taken by London buses up to the front line. Dad and his company were detailed to flush out a company of German soldiers who were 'holed-up' in a small wood near the village of Esteres. They managed to get within 300 yards of the copse but the enemy, possessing heavy artillery, began an almighty bombardment. However, the British dug in and managed to hold their positions.

In the fierce battle that followed many British soldiers threw down their arms and began to retreat. Their commanding officer drew his

revolver and threatened to shoot anyone who refused to hold his position. Eventually, the troops returned to their posts and order was restored.

After another few yards advance, Dad and a few of his mates were pinned down again. This time they were trapped in a dip in a nearby field. For better protection they dug shallow trenches with their bayonets. In the chaos that followed they became separated from the rest of the party. As the light began to fade, Dad and a few more managed to reach an isolated farm which was owned by two old women. The farm was already occupied by a squad of Welsh Guards who were awaiting orders to attack the German position in the wood. Dad, who at one point was concealed behind a tree, managed to down a German soldier, who was one of a group trying to reach his comrades in the wood.

Some time later, with supplies low, Dad volunteered to get water from the farmhouse well. As he was crossing the yard he was caught in a hail of bullets fired from the copse. A machine gun bullet entered his neck a few inches below his left ear, and down he went. The time was about three o'clock in the morning on Sunday 13 May 1918. He was unconscious for some time and came to with blood pumping from his mouth and a shadowy figure kneeling over him. Later that morning he was taken by a London bus with other wounded to safety behind the lines.

He was shipped from France and hospitalised at Birkenhead, near Liverpool. The bullet, which was lodged in his right shoulder (on the opposite side to where it had entered) was found three weeks later by a matron and removed. It had missed his wind pipe by a mere fraction. They gave him the bullet as a memento of his brush with death. Because of his injuries he couldn't speak for three months. Whilst recovering, he and other injured troops were entertained nightly in a large marquee. Dad met a soldier who was suffering from the effects of shell-shock; he stole the man's army great coat to replace the one he had lost in France.

Whilst recuperating he met Dr. Floyd, a retired general practitioner, who used to have a panel of wealthy patients. Apparently he was a very

generous man and supplied Dad and other wounded soldiers with food and cigarettes. He owned a big house and kept photographs of all the soldiers he had befriended on the walls of his living room. Dad would do errands for the hospital and the less fortunate, using local trams or walking to get around. The wounded were treated well. If they were wearing hospital-blue then transport, cafes and theatres were all free.

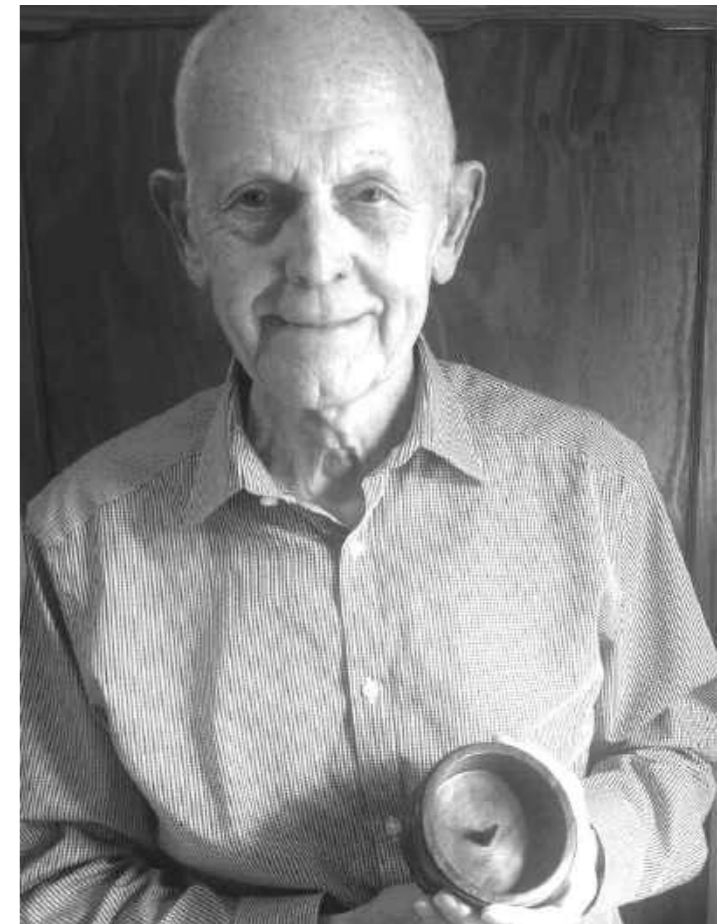
Dad was eventually discharged on 14 January 1919. He returned home wearing a thin, cheap demob suit and was issued a war pension of seven shillings and sixpence per week, which when he was on the dole he relinquished for a lump sum of £10.

On Dad's discharge certificate are the following words:

Being surplus to military requirements (having suffered impairment since entry into service).

He received one blue stripe for the wound inflicted; he died in Wigan Infirmary on 8 March 1978.

Ted Dakin, holding the bullet removed from his father's shoulder



BY RITA MUSA

Commercial Advertising and the First World War

As the war progressed there was a surge in newspaper readership, the public clamoured for news from the front. This increase presented large numbers of potential customers to advertisers. Evidence of this is recorded in Wigan Public Libraries Annual Report for 1914 when the Chief Librarian, Henry Tennyson Folkard lamented the reduction in the number of books issued, against the, 'public's insatiable appetite for Newspaper Specials'.



Because of the shortfall of recruits into the army, the Secretary of State for War, J. E. B. Seeley employed the services of the publicist Hedley Le Bas of Caxton Press to launch a campaign drawing on emotional appeals. It was acknowledged for the first time that advertising might make a contribution to the war effort.

Household names defended their existing reputations, as can be seen in the advertisements by Dunlops extolling the use of British made tyres and J. Lyons action for libel against Lipton Limited.

Patriotism was a recurring theme in commercial advertising, alongside the denigration of the enemy. Poole's Central Warehouse, Wigan, published on a regular basis advertisements such as the ones published in the early days of the First World War.

- Local businesses were behind the war effort; they reinforced propaganda messages and at the same time benefitted through the sales of their goods.

• W. R. Deakin Limited, preserve manufacturers of Bradford Mill, Bradford Place, Wigan, placed an advertisement in the Wigan Observer, 21 November 1914, under the headline, 'Leading the way as usual with Deakins'.



Also of interest is the registration, EK524, of the vehicle in the advertisement. We have in our Archives the Motor Vehicle Licensing Record for this lorry. The registration of motor vehicles was introduced under the Motor Car Act, 1903. It designated County Councils and County Boroughs as the licensing authorities.

Many more examples of similar advertisements were published throughout the local newspapers. The Wigan Observer from 1853 onwards and The Wigan Examiner 1853 – 1961 can be viewed on microfilm at Wigan Local Studies.

12 Motor Car Acts, 1895 and 1903, and Regulations of Local Government Board, 19th November, 1903, and 27th December, 1904.

REGISTER OF

Index Mark and Number on Identification Plates.	Full Name of Owner, and Postal Address of his usual Residence.	Description or Type of Car.	Type and Colour of Body of Car.	Weight Unladen.
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
EK 521	Smith & Sons Powell St. Wigan	40 hp "Pagefield"	Char-a-banc body French grey No seat 28	4 tons
EK 524	W. R. Deakin Ltd Bradford Place Wigan	30 hp "Pagefield"	Van Body Red	3 tons 1 cwt. 1 q.
EK 538	British Petroleum Co Ltd Eccles	30 hp. Pagefield	Hurry body Yellow & red	2 tons 19 cwt.

YOUR LETTERS

Dear Editor

Issue No. 66 is great but did you know it had remedial properties?

I woke up this morning with man-flu, that distressing and debilitating malady only experienced by the male of the species and therefore not understood by our wives, female partners, daughters, mothers, who tend to show little sympathy. In my miserable lonely state, I sat down with a cup of strong tea and to read Past Forward which arrived yesterday.

Its effect was amazing. Tom Walsh's article on his first day at school made me smile as I recognised features from my own beginnings in 1947 at what was St James's Road County Primary (now Newfold) School in Orrell.

Ted McAvoy's piece on Wigan collieries brought back memories of pit heads and mine shafts in Billinge, my home village. As someone who now works for the Church of England, I took perverse pleasure in 'Falling from Grace', Denise Colbert's story of the Rev. Charles Newbold. And the two tragic accounts of Peter Peters and Shadrach and Annie Critchley made me feel that perhaps I hadn't much to complain about.

The result? I feel much better thanks to Past Forward, but I'm not telling my wife yet as, being a mere man, I need more pampering.

Best wishes,
John Richardson

Edward Williams

1890-1918

BY JEAN SWIFT

My grandfather, Edward Williams, was born in St Helens in December 1890. He was the third child of Edward and Elizabeth Williams. His two older sisters were Margaret and Annie and after Edward was born there were four more children, Moses, Edith, Elizabeth and Catherine (Kitty).

Some time between 1905 and 1911, Edward senior went to work at Golborne Colliery and the family moved to Edge Green Street, Stubshaw Cross. When my grandfather left school he joined his father working at Golborne Pit, a job he hated.

In 1912, Edward married a neighbour, Mary Coombes. They lived with Mary's widowed father in Dawber Street, Stubshaw Cross and that was where their first child, Ann was born on 17 December 1912. Soon after this they were offered a house of their own to rent, 68, Golborne Road. This house was next door to an outdoor license. The owners of this shop, the Hodgkinson family, owned the house my grandparents lived in, as well as quite a lot of property in Stubshaw Cross.

Edward was still very unhappy working at the pit. His ambition was to become self-employed. One day he told his new neighbours



Edward Williams

about his ideas and they offered to lend him the money to buy a bicycle, a bucket and a ladder. He was able to leave the pit and on his newly acquired bicycle he rode round the area calling at the newly built larger houses offering to do any odd jobs, window cleaning, gardening, cleaning the drains. He gradually built up a good business

and Mary was very proud of the fact that they were one of the few couples in Stubshaw Cross who could afford to buy a daily paper. When Edward had finished reading the paper he went out and gave it to a group of men who every evening gathered under the gas lamp on Golborne Road and one of them who could read would keep the rest up to date with what was happening in the rest of the world.

When war was declared Edward's younger brother, Moses, was one of the first to volunteer. He joined the Lancashire Fusiliers as 9745, Private Moses Williams. Years later Moses admitted to me that like so many young men at the time, he saw it as a way out of working down the pit, which he too hated. Edward, however, did not want to leave his new job and his young family. Mary was pregnant with their second child and on 28 January 1915, Edward and Mary's second daughter, Edith, was born.

By 1916, by which time thousands of our young soldiers had been killed and fewer were volunteering, it was decided to introduce conscription; Edward was called up to serve in the Royal Field Artillery as 164802, Gunner Edward Williams. He did have training on Salisbury Plain and was able to go

home on leave a few times. His oldest daughter, Ann, remembered that on one occasion, when he was on his way home for a short leave, he called in at St Luke's school and asked her teacher if he could take her home for the rest of the day. Naturally permission was given. He was also given compassionate leave to see his youngest daughter, Olive, when she was born on 2 April 1917. On his last leave, when he knew that he was going back to France, he left home with a very heavy heart. When he arrived at the bus stop at the Ram's Head he realised that he'd left his rifle behind. At that time soldiers going home on leave had to take all their equipment with them. He was forced to turn back for it and Mary saw this as a very bad omen.

Edward fought in France and Belgium with 267 Company Royal Field Artillery. On one very memorable occasion he was able to meet with his brother, Moses, in Ypres when both were allowed rest from the battlefield.

On 11 November 1918, great was the rejoicing in Stubshaw Cross when the Armistice was declared. Mary remembered joining in with the rest of her neighbours dancing round the gas lamps on Golborne Road that night. It was to be more than a week later when the fateful telegram arrived telling Mary that Edward had died of wounds on 9 November. One of the ladies from the outdoor license saw the telegram boy about to go down the path of number 68, guessed what it was about and was able to intercept him and take the telegram to Mary herself.

I can't begin to imagine how my grandmother must have felt. A widow at 24 with three little

girls to support, Ann aged five, Edith, three and Olive, one.

Later through letters from two of his officers, both written on 15 November 1918, Mary found out that Edward had been wounded on 8 November, almost the last time 267 Company had come under fire. Although his companions did what they could for him Edward died the next day in a field hospital. They were near the village of Wannehain on the France-Belgium border and Edward was buried in the churchyard there.

In early 1919, relatives of those who had died were informed by the War Office that they could request a photograph of their loved one's grave. Mary filled in the necessary form and in due course the photograph arrived of a simple wooden cross in Wannehain Churchyard. When the government set up the Imperial War Graves Commission, it was decided to make large cemeteries as near to the battlefields as possible and to bring to them the bodies of those soldiers who lay in scattered graves. Before a body could be moved the consent of the relatives had to be given. Mary gave her consent and received a letter telling her that Edward's body had been reburied in Arras Road British Cemetery, Roelincourt.

Mary requested to have a personal inscription on Edward's gravestone, as did many other relatives. She then received a form from

the Imperial War Graves Commission asking her, 'to be so good as to forward to the Finance Department the sum of 11 shillings and 8 pence in payment for the following personal inscription: Gone but not forgotten, from dear wife and children'.

When my grandmother died in 1980, we found a shoe-box at the bottom of her wardrobe. In this she had kept all the correspondence relating to Edward's death, photographs and postcards, many of them beautifully embroidered, which Edward had sent to her and his children.

Sadly, Mary was never able to visit Edward's grave but in October 1984, I accompanied my mother Edith and her two sisters Ann and Olive to Arras and we were able to lay our own poppy wreaths on Edward's grave. It was a very emotional moment.

Letter informing Mary of the death of her husband

