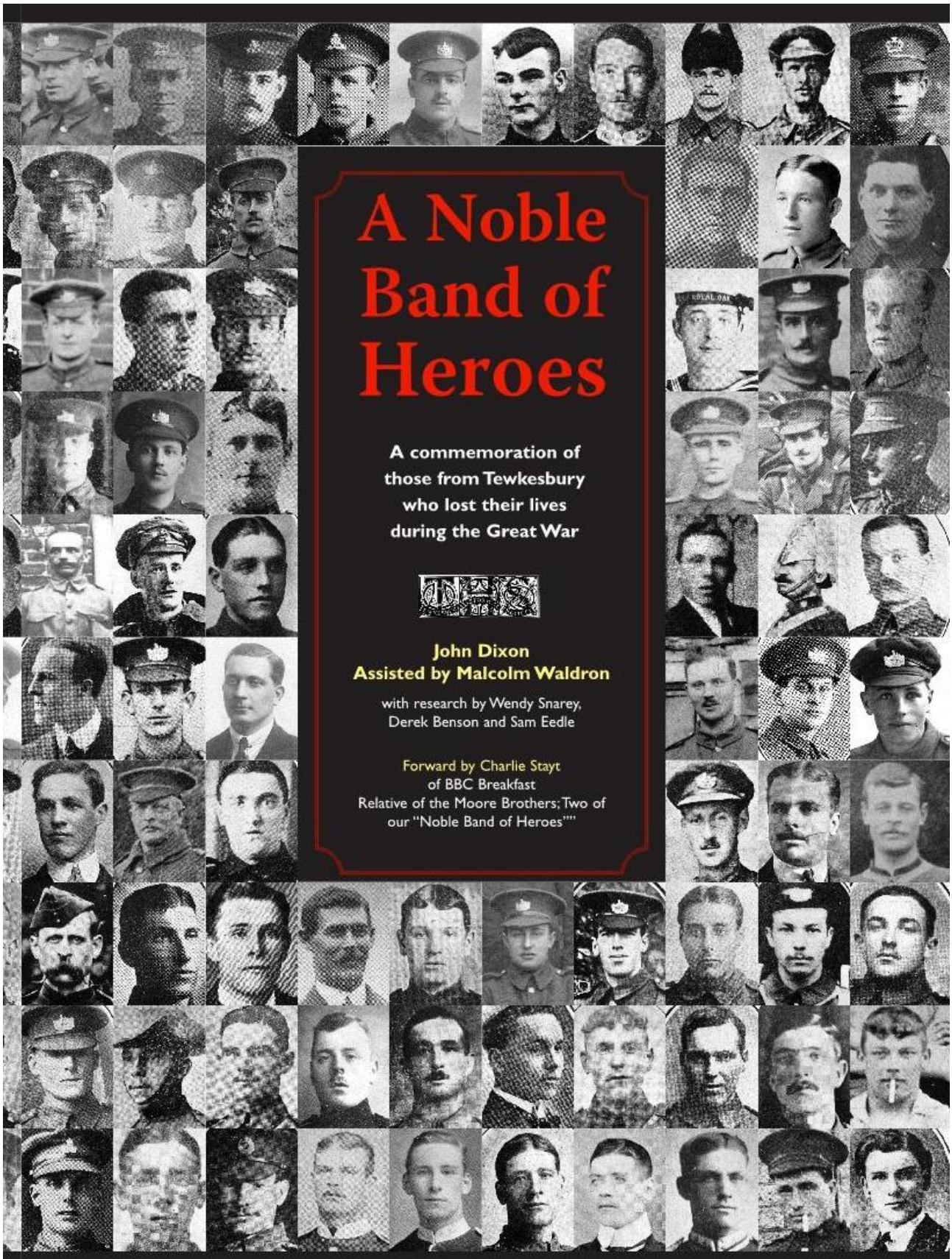

A Noble Band of Heroes

A commemoration of those from Tewkesbury who lost their lives during the Great War

John Dixon
Assisted by Malcolm Waldron

with research by Wendy Snarey, Derek Benson and Sam Eedle

Forward by Charlie Stayt
of BBC Breakfast
Relative of the Moore Brothers; Two of our "Noble Band of Heroes""

Tewkesbury Historical Society Publication No. 9

Tewkesbury Historical Society Publications

- The Book is ***THS Publication 9***, the latest of an occasional series, intended as a means whereby Society publishes results of research on aspects of Tewkesbury's History. Further details can be found on ***http://www.ths.freeuk.com/publications/publications.htm.***
- The **Author** of his book is John Dixon, President of THS, although in Section V he has edited the work of contributor Malcolm Waldron. The maps have been produced by Sam Eedle. Comments upon this book should be sent to the Author, preferably by email to ***johnhistory46@btinternet.com***
- Further copies of this issue are available from the Treasurer. THS Members or relatives of those who are commemorated in the Town's Memorials who wish to buy copies at the special price can only do so through the Treasurer. Our main distributor is **Alison's Bookshop**, 138-9 High Street, Tewkesbury, GL20 5JR, which also operates a mail order service. For further information email: ***info@alisonsbookshop.co.uk*** .

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Acknowledgements

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John was the co-founder of ***THS*** in 1991 and has been Chairman/President during the past 25 seasons. Born and educated in Grimsby, Lincolnshire, he read history at the LSE and Warwick University. Until his retirement, he was a teacher of History, culminating at Tewkesbury School from 1983-2001. Upon retirement, he moved his home to Tewkesbury and has been able to concentrate upon researching Tewkesbury's fascinating History.

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Factual Auditor of Section I

Our Colleagues

The Author is very grateful for the research assistance from ***Members of T.H.S.***; in particular **Derek Benson, Wendy Snarey, David Willavoys, Cliff Burd** and **Gordon Baker.**

Our Sponsors

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Illustrations

The cooperation of named suppliers of illustrations is gratefully acknowledged and especially the Director of the ***Imperial War Museum*** for permission to reproduce Hammerton's photographs

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A commemoration of those from Tewkesbury who lost their lives during the Great War, 1914-1919

A Noble Band of Heroes

The years 2014-2018 have given us the opportunity to focus upon the Centenary of the War which failed to be the '*War to end all Wars'*. It was, nevertheless, a war which scarred not only the valiant generation but it also engulfed, future generations who are still trying to come to terms with its long-term consequences.

It is only just, therefore, that the Government, through the auspices of the *Heritage Lottery Fund*, encourages local people to undertake research about the war as it affected their communities.

In the post-wear years the people of Tewkesbury commemorated the loss of so many of its young people on various memorials in the Town, sponsored by different community groups. Usually for the most innocent of reasons, not all those who lost their lives in the conflict were officially remembered. The Society has set out to commemorate in this book not only those whose sacrifice has been officially recognised but also those who were omitted. The Society, therefore, has identified the deaths of 192 men and one woman who lost their lives as a result of this conflict. At least two remain unidentified.

The primary aim of this book is to write a biography of all those – now largely forgotten – names that appear on the several war memorials in the Town. These biographies will appear in **Section V** but, on **page 107**, we have endeavoured to fill these gaps in commemoration by providing an ***Extended Roll of Honour.***

The secondary aim is to place those deaths in the context of the *Great War, 1914-1919*. The focus for **Sections I-IV** is to provide an analytical narrative for relatives and the general reader. In doing so we have also remembered as many as possible of those who did not lose their lives but were badly wounded, rendered prisoners of war, widowed and orphaned; in addition, we salute the conscripts as well as the volunteers, all of whom constitute this ***Noble Band of Heroes***

Photographs

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TEWKESBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

"Noble Band of Heroes"

CONTENTS

Foreword

Foreword by **Charlie Stayt** of ***BBC Breakfast***

I was delighted to be asked to write this foreword – and I know many hours, weeks, months, even years have gone into the writing of this book.

The actions of those from Tewkesbury who served in the First World War are wonderfully documented in the pages that follow: the research and attention to detail is extraordinary. For my own part reading about the contributions of members of my own family is both fascinating and humbling.

As I write this, in mid July 2015, a number of thoughts come to mind about just how important it is to remember and learn from what happened in conflicts all over the world.

Recently in Srebrenica (in Bosnia, as is Sarajevo) there have been ceremonies to mark the massacre carried out twenty years ago, and we live in a world where new kinds of conflict have emerged, linked to terrorism and ideology.

In my industry, television journalism, the speed of communications means contemporary reporting is far more immediate and the risks taken to recount what happens in distant places are very real.

This week I was particularly moved by the words of a young RAF pilot involved in the Battle of Britain commemoration, including a flypast over Buckingham Palace. He had the honour of meeting the pilots who flew the fighter planes in wartime. He concluded how much he could still learn from what they had seen and done.

That principle seems to be so important in this book too, where individual stories of sacrifice from one town, are told against the backdrop of the First World War.

It is a chance to hear detailed accounts, from so many sources, about a bravery that should not be forgotten.

(Born in Gloucester and educated at Wycliffe School, Charlie is a relative of the ***Moore Brothers;*** two of our ***"Noble Band of Heroes".*** Charlie is a fourth great-grandchild of patriarch Charles Moore (d. 1810), while the Moore Brothers were second great-grandchildren.)

Author's Note

This project was, indeed, conceived in 2008 as part of any 90th anniversary commemorations of the war. However, it was soon clear that the only appetite for commemoration was for the start of the war in 2014. For this event, the ***Heritage Lottery Fund*** has been involved; it has made a grant to the Society so that we can publish an anthology of biographies of all those from Tewkesbury who had lost their lives in that war.

The concept built on that established in 2005, when the focus was World War II. *THS* then published a book[1] of biographies of all those local men who had died. We started with the brief names inscribed on local memorials – yet it was soon evident that the inscription of names was not at all a scientific exercise and that the names of some of those who had lost their lives had been mysteriously omitted.

Thus our ***"Noble Band of Heroes"***[2] will comprise, not only those who have been inscribed on memorials, but also those who, for various reasons, were omitted. All organisations impose arbitrary dates – 1925 for names on the War Memorial while, for the ***Commonwealth War Graves Commission,*** it was 1921. However, human beings do not always die according to that timetable because of the deleterious effect of war wounds. The *CWGC* has rightly won international respect for the way it has marked all those who died in service. The terminal date of 1921, however, ensured that a significant number of war victims now have unmarked graves since any permanent commemoration was left to the family; to have family information included on the gravestones, the *CWGC* required – after the Great War only – the payment of *'3 pence hapenny'* (2p) a letter for a headstone.

The Centenary of this war would, therefore, be the appropriate time to use the benefit of modern research tools to make sure that all those who lost their lives for their country are included in this anthology – whether or not they are commemorated officially.

[1] John Dixon, *'Never has so much been owed ….'*, *THS* Publication No. 4

[2] The term was first used concerning the death of the first Volunteer, **Harry Preston [†]** in 1915

I. Introduction

"Noble Band of Heroes": THS wishes this project to take a broad definition of this emotive label. In a democracy, we feel it is the right of all those who lost their lives while being part of the armed forces – or even as civilian victims – to be commemorated. That should still be the case if that death was the result of an accident or natural causes. We rightly salute the enthusiasm of those who volunteered but also praise those whose fate it was to be conscripted by their government or to lose their life "unheroically".

The book was also inspired to remedy another deficiency of most memorials in that they record a minimum amount of information about so many people. After a century, many descendants may not realise that a name might belong to their family because generations of marriage have changed family names. Tewkesbury's official Memorial also has the disadvantage of being designed in days when the impact of the motor vehicle was not understood – to study the names is a serious road safety hazard.

Photography was also in its infancy and expensive and so photographs of WWI victims are harder to trace. Newspapers, like the *Cheltenham Graphic*, did a fine job in publishing photographs of those who served until the depressing days of 1916, when so many were dying. This was considered bad for civilian morale to see those now forlorn faces. Many photographs were indeed taken of volunteers, who had the time and enthusiasm to have that all-important photograph in uniform taken before they left for active service. Conscripts had no such leisure as they were swept off to the Front, without parade or ceremony.

One major research handicap has been a lack of minutes from an official Council committee, set up to decide which names should be commemorated. We must also be aware that the County Archives have never held much information on the biographies of simple soldiers. However, commercial on-line collections of data have transformed the life of the researcher. To have the availability of the 1911 census, compiled so close to 1914, helps significantly in building up the personal profile of these recruits. We can also benefit from the voluntary work of so many members of societies like the ***Tewkesbury Historical Society (THS)***, which has built up over two decades an invaluable ***Woodard Database*** of local information. A project which pre-dated *THS* was that of Tewkesbury Library when it started indexing the local newspaper, the *Tewkesbury Register*. That information, linked to microfiche copies, has enabled us to learn so much more.

The fact that many soldiers were recruited from the poorer classes at a time when laws were far more draconian than they are today, poses something of an editorial dilemma. Some soldiers committed youthful indiscretions, which came before the courts. We have felt it important not to censor this information, unless it appeared likely to be unduly upsetting to families today. Perhaps society can obtain some measure of satisfaction that such indiscretions were significant in forming the character and strength of the young people who went on to serve their fellow men so well. In the same way, we would mark the evident bravery of 'conscientious objectors', who suffered for their beliefs, yet who went on to serve their country, however reluctantly, in various ways. So far as we know, nobody from Tewkesbury was executed following a court martial but one was sentenced to death for quitting his post along with four others.[3]

Our ***Noble Band of Heroes*** is, therefore, a diverse mixture of characters, social classes and experiences. We felt it very important to record the military experience of the people and to record the circumstances in which they fought and lost their lives. To write a biography of an officer is easier than that of so-called *"Other Ranks"*, since the fate of an individual *"OR"* is rarely mentioned by name. The best we often receive from a war diary is *"10 ORs were killed"* on a certain date and we can work out possibilities through filtering other known information. Newspapers often reported circumstances of death – but cannot be relied upon since obituaries were often written by hard-pressed young officers or chaplains, who wished to spare the family as much pain as possible. Families also possess handed down stories, which do not always stand up to official evidence.

We, therefore, set out to try to write a biography of each person from Tewkesbury who lost his life in this war. I am deeply indebted to two close colleagues in particular**: Malcolm Waldron** and **Sam Eedle,** who both have a long history of research into this war. **Derek Benson, Wendy Snarey, the late David Willavoys, Cliff Burd**, **Gordon Baker** and our **Proof-Reader** (whose advice was absolutely invaluable) are other members of the Society who have provided so much information and support, without which this book could not have been written. **Jan Nattrass** has shared the journey with great patience and forbearance.

[3] The sentence of this soldier was commuted but he died in late 1918 in the Middle East; and his name is rightly commemorated on the War Memorial – for further discussion of his service, see page 65.

The *"Great War"*

This was its name until 1939, by which time no one could claim it was *"the war to end all wars".*

Medal for the "Great War for Civilisation, 1914-1919".

It is commonly known as the ***1914-1918 War*** because, from the point of view of the British Empire, it started on 4 August 1914 and ended with an *Armistice* at 11 a.m. on 11 November 1918. When the British Government declared war, it was taken for granted that the colonies of the British Empire would do likewise, even though Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa were self-governing 'Dominions'. These dates focus upon the war against Germany but, in addition, the Empire fought Germany's allies, known as the *Central Powers*: Austria mainly in Italy, Bulgaria at Salonika and The Ottoman Empire (Turkey) in Egypt, Palestine and elsewhere in what we still term the Middle East which stretched as far east as Mesopotamia (now Iraq).

On 6 April 1917 it really became a "World War" when the USA finally abandoned its neutrality to enter the war on the side of the *Entente*. Its president also inspired the *Armistice* – yet this word only means a cease-fire; the war formally did not end until the peace treaties were signed with the defeated countries, in Paris on 28 June 1919. That is why even some War Memorials speak of the *"**1914-1919 War**"*. The War against Turkey reignited, lasting until 1923. We have forgotten – perhaps conveniently – that, after the *Bolshevik (Communist) Revolution*, Russia was forced to withdraw from the *Entente* in 1918. The British government subsequently sent a force to fight the Communist menace. **Pte. Albert Hodges [†]** lost his life in this war – although his memorial is in Iran.[4]

Another unexpected aspect for contemporaries was that it was mainly a war of armies. In 1914 it was the Navy which was the 'Senior Service'. It was naval rivalry, over the race to build revolutionary steam-powered and steel-hulled '*Dreadnought*' battleships, which helped prepare psychologically both nations for war. Yet, the two main fleets only clashed once at the Battle of Jutland in 1916. No Tewkesburians lost their lives in this clash; indeed, only four local naval personnel lost their lives in the war and constituted only 49 of the 689 official volunteers. One of those killed was in the *Royal Naval Division* – superfluous sailors, converted into infantrymen, who fought in trenches rather than on the high seas. Despite these facts, many argue that the enemy was defeated, not least, because of the successful naval blockade. This denied its population and armed forces of the food and supplies they desperately needed.

By contrast, a terrifying new type of warfare took place in the air. Yet, even though the *Royal Flying Corps* had been formed in 1912, only four local volunteers were accepted and only two lost their lives.

Even though more than half the adult population of Tewkesbury was female, none is represented on our War Memorials – although the *CWGC* has buried a female nursing auxiliary in our cemetery. It was, however, a mother who was accorded the honour of unveiling the Town War Memorial. Women could not avoid many of the consequences of war on life at home but this project is only focused upon those who lost their lives as a consequence of the war.

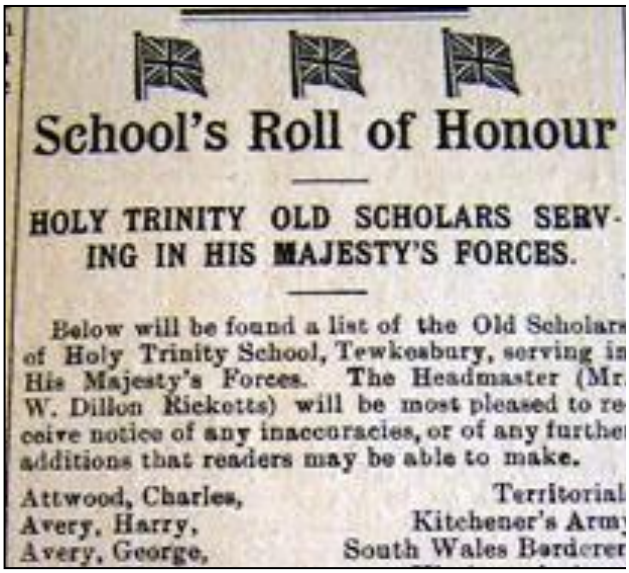
The CWGC Headstone of Worker Kathleen Sollis [†]

Every effort has been made to write an accessible history for those not fascinated by military detail. All such terms and language have been explained in **Section IV** – before the Biographies, which are published in alphabetical order of surnames in **Section V**.

[4] Men, like **Pte. Albert G. Hodges [†],** whose names are emboldened and marked, have full-page biographies written in **Section V**.

II. Tewkesbury's Memorials

The urge to commemorate emerged as soon as men started to volunteer for service in the Armed Forces at the outbreak of war in August 1914. The local newspaper led the way, encouraged by school headmasters who were keen to publicise their old boys who had volunteered. All too soon the commemoration changed to *Rolls of Honour* – lists of those who had lost their lives in the conflict. These continued throughout the



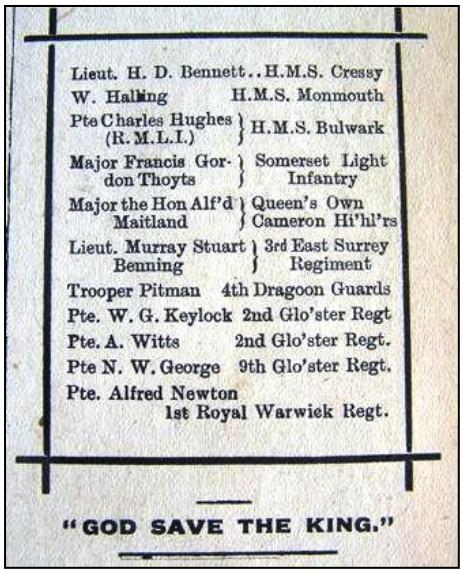
School's Roll of Honour

HOLY TRINITY OLD SCHOLARS SERVING IN HIS MAJESTY'S FORCES.

Below will be found a list of the Old Scholars of Holy Trinity School, Tewkesbury, serving in His Majesty's Forces. The Headmaster (Mr W. Dillon Ricketts) will be most pleased to receive notice of any inaccuracies, or of any further additions that readers may be able to make.

Attwood, Charles, Territorial
Avery, Harry, Kitchener's Army
Avery, George, South Wales Borderer

Notice in the Tewkesbury Record from Holy Trinity School[5]



Lieut. H. D. Bennett	H.M.S. Cressy
W. Halling	H.M.S. Monmouth
Pte Charles Hughes (R.M.L.I.)	H.M.S. Bulwark
Major Francis Gordon Thoyts	Somerset Light Infantry
Major the Hon Alf'd Maitland	Queen's Own Cameron Hi'hl'rs
Lieut. Murray Stuart Benning	3rd East Surrey Regiment
Trooper Pitman	4th Dragoon Guards
Pte. W. G. Keylock	2nd Glo'ster Regt
Pte. A. Witts	2nd Glo'ster Regt.
Pte N. W. George	9th Glo'ster Regt.
Pte. Alfred Newton	1st Royal Warwick Regt.

"GOD SAVE THE KING."

Roll of Honour, November 1914 from the Tewkesbury Register

war, becoming – sadly – much longer. Families were encouraged to submit news for this feature. As news of deaths filtered through, a Roll was maintained bordered in black.

This spontaneity reflected the mood of the time but resolutions followed to make more formal and permanent memorials. It was the Abbey that took the lead in designing formal commemorations. In 1915 it commenced the List of Volunteers: *"There are over 600 names*[6] *on that roll, including only those who have enlisted from Tewkesbury itself. The names are being illuminated on vellum, and will be encased in a handsome gold frame, which will hang in the Abbey as a memorial to future generations of those who freely offered themselves."*

Tragically that *"smaller roll"* grew significantly. In May 1918 it was reported that the ***Memorial Shrine for the Gallant Dead of Tewkesbury*** had been affixed to the west wall of the Abbey. The Abbey was very careful to draw up as accurate a list of names as possible and four later deaths were added in 1922.

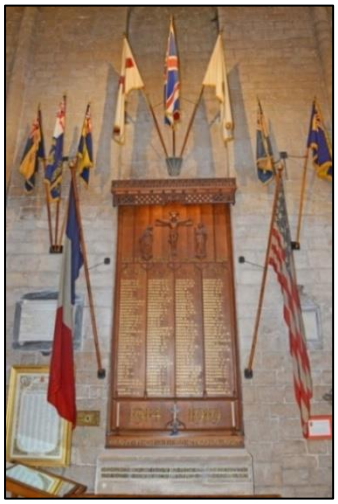
Inevitably after the war, there was a mood for a ***War Memorial*** in the Town itself and the Vicar of Tewkesbury, Revd. Ernest Smith, continued to play an active part in wartime deliberations. The first reference to this came at a meeting in December 1918, when it was proposed that a Town Memorial be erected at the Cross. There followed a struggle between Town and Abbey for the location. In that time, other institutions in the town commenced their own commemorations of their members. The Boys' Grammar School, then located in Church Street, led the way with its own memorial on 6 November 1919. It is unique among the memorials, as the names were listed in order of rank. It also contains names of pupils who lived in the countryside around Tewkesbury; often they are commemorated on village memorials, rather than in Tewkesbury.

[5] In 1915 Holy Trinity School produced an 'Illuminated Scroll' of 127 volunteers. This has not survived. [S. Eedle]

[6] We are indebted to the Abbey Archivist, Pat Webley. The author has identified a list of 689 volunteers from the Abbey Archive. Inevitably some names were omitted. The Vicar went on to discuss provision of a list of *"the names of those who waited to place their services at the disposal of their King till Lord Derby's scheme was in operation will be recorded on a separate roll"*. This has not been found.

Commemorative Plaques of Institutions within the Town[7]

Abbey Roll of Honour for Volunteers, 1914-1915

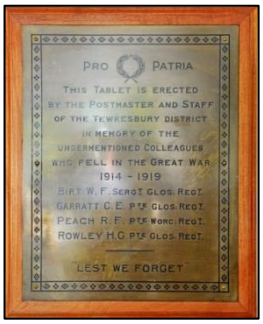


Abbey Memorial Shrine for the Gallant Dead of Tewkesbury, April 1920

Tewkesbury Boys' Grammar School Memorial; since 1972, maintained in the Town Hall

Memorial in the Methodist Church at the Cross, 8 May 1921

The Congregational Memorial, 28 May 1921; now in the Methodist Church



The Post Office War Memorial; then Church Street, now in the R.M. Sorting Office, Northway

The Methodist and Congregation Churches unveiled their own memorials in 1921; however, the only surviving memorial to employees was that of the ***Post Office***. The *Register* reported on 9 April 1921 that *"a brass tablet to be affixed over the posting box"* in Church Street, then located next to the present *YMCA.*

The last memorial to be unveiled was, in fact, the Town's Memorial, which today dominates the Cross. We accept it today as a permanent fixture but to place the memorial in that location was not the original plan. Nor was it always enthusiastically embraced as Mr. Sargeaunt of Tewkesbury Park *"expressed surprise that the memorial had not aroused a greater interest amongst all classes"*. The Mayor, more optimistically, thought people were holding back until a decision on type and place had been chosen. A year later a meeting of subscribers narrowly voted to place the memorial at the Cross – and the Council agreed.

Work then progressed quickly. The Committee approved a design for the memorial at the Cross by Abbey architect, Mr. Caroe: it was 26 feet high on a hexagonal base with panels for names. By mid-1921 Mr. Sargeaunt moved that the £155 balance of patriotic fund be transferred to Memorial Fund – but of £421 promised, only £361 was paid – and that the original design of the approved work was to proceed as soon as possible. By 18 March 1922, work for the foundations was commenced at The Cross.

The Memorial was duly unveiled in May 1922. Naturally the Vicar, Revd. E. F. Smith, presided – but the honour of unveiling the new memorial was accorded to **Mrs. Letitia Didcote.** She had simply suffered the biggest family loss as three of her sons had died in the conflict.[8] She was attended by her orphaned

[7] All photographs on this page taken by *Jack Boskett, 2014*

[8] Mrs. R. Rowley also lost three sons but the last, **Pte. A. H. Rowley [†]**, died of TB on 21 April 1922; his name was added to the Abbey Memorial but his grave is unrecognised by *CWGC.*

grandson, Harry, who donated all these photographs for posterity and who was well known as foreman of the Tewkesbury Car Mart (now beneath the shopping precinct). Mrs. Didcote *"pulled a cord releasing the Union Jacks which draped the pedestal and they fell away ...".*

The War memorial is Unveiled by Mrs. L. Didcote (grandmother of donor Harry Didcote)

Harry Didcote accompanies his grandmother, with the Vicar, Revd. E. F. Smith, to his right

Alderman Baker formally – and very publicly – presents the Town's War Memorial to the Mayor.

The solemn event took place on a Sunday 7 May 1922. Alderman Baker presented the memorial to the Mayor for acceptance, on behalf of the (old) Borough and of the Town.

> ***May it be well cared for ... as a witness of the gallant men of Tewkesbury who went forth to fight for Right against Might and gave all that they had – even their lives. The remembrance is to us, the reward is to them.***

The Mayor, Cllr. W. T. Boughton, replied that *"he gladly accepted the Memorial"*, culminating: *"**the present corporation and all succeeding corporations would guard it with jealous care and see that nothing untoward happened to it**".*

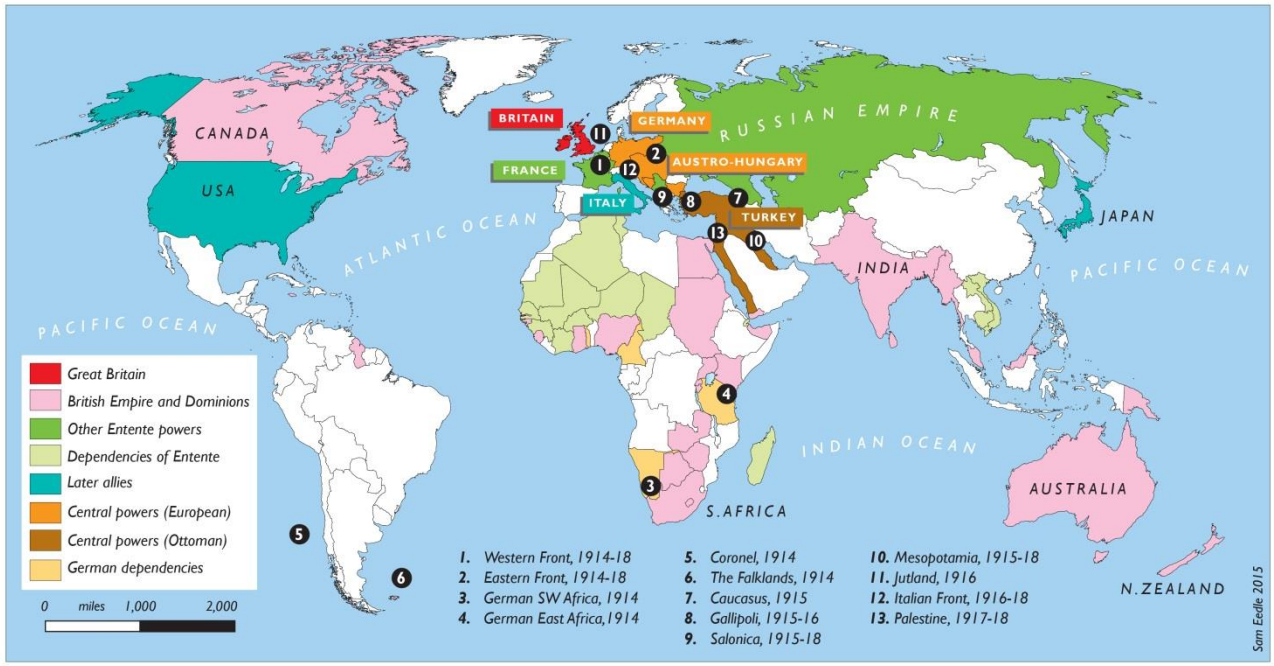
At this stage, no firm decision had been made about the names to be commemorated. As no formal records have survived, all we know is that families were asked to submit names and, four years after the unveiling in 1926, the bronze plaques were affixed with the names of 152 men.[9] It was then revealed that the *"cost of placing names on the memorial [was] defrayed by a person who wishes to remain anonymous".*

It is the several War Memorials that perpetuate the memory of those who lost their lives. It is the aim of this project to reveal the history and context of each individual who lost his life in this Great War.

[9] The one woman, **Kathleen Sollis [†]**, is buried in Tewkesbury Cemetery. In WWII a further 29 men and one woman are commemorated – although fourteen names were unscientifically omitted. After 1972, the name of **Bryan D. Soden**, killed in Northern Ireland, was affixed. By 1931, its state was said to be a "disgrace"; maintaining it has been a worrying task ever since. In 2013 it was a suffering 91-year-old and the Council appealed successfully to the townspeople. The memorial was restored by replacing the metal shaft which supported the cross. The editor, with *THS* member Sam Eedle, published the *'History of Tewkesbury's War Memorial'* in 2014 to raise money for this project.

III. The War through the Eyes of Combatants

Map of First World War



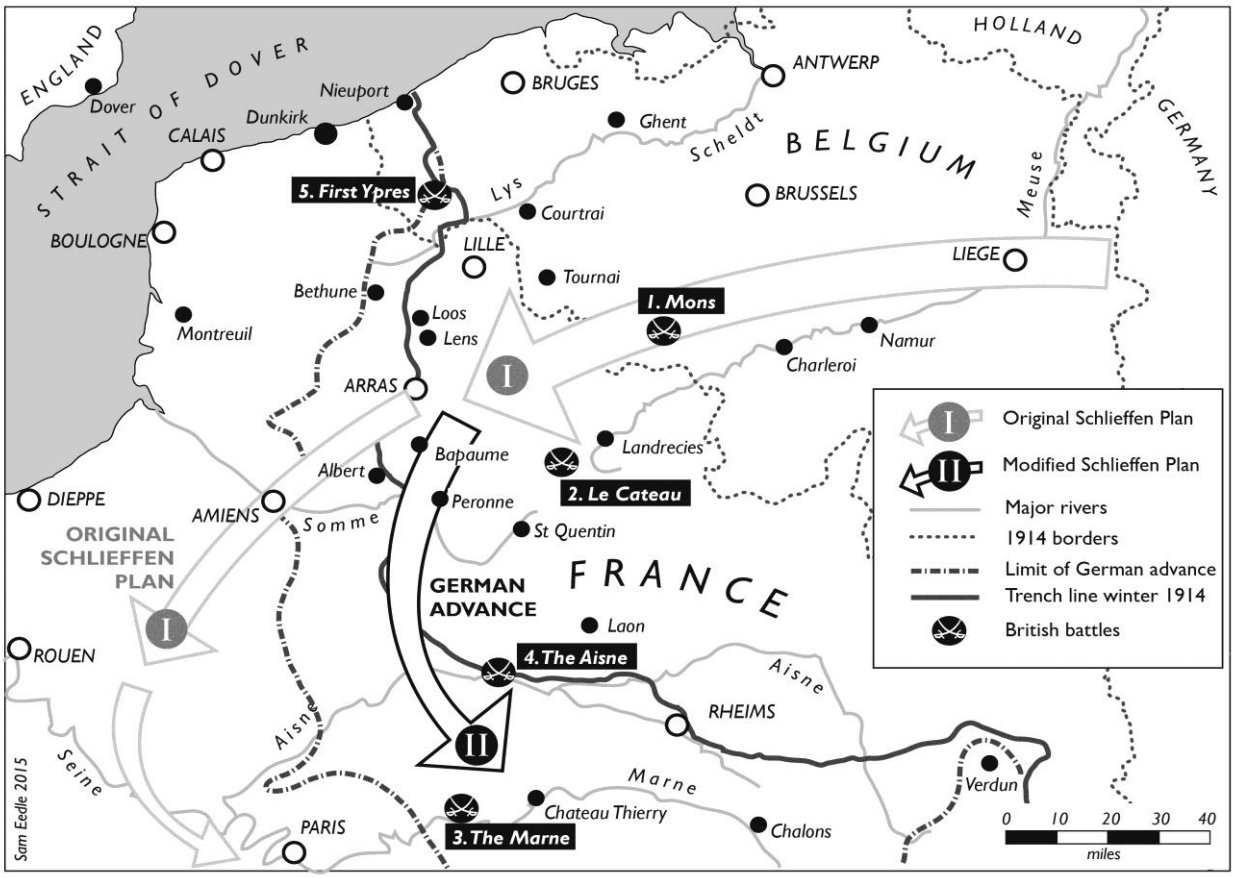
Synopsis of Events

DATE	WESTERN FRONT	WORLD	NAVAL WARFARE
1914	Aug-Sept: *Mons, Marne, Aisne* Oct-Nov: *1st Ypres* and Trench Warfare	28 July: First Declaration of War by Austria-Hungary	Blockade Nov: *Coronel and Falklands*
1915	*Trench Warfare* and *2nd Ypres* Sept-Oct: *Loos*	*Dardanelles/Gallipoli/ Mesopotamian* Campaign	*Dogger Bank* *U-Boats: Lusitania* sunk
1916	April-Dec: Germans *v Verdun* March: *Conscription* in UK Jul-Nov*: The Somme*	Defeats – **Egypt**: *Katia* and **Mesopotamia** (Iraq): *Kut* Bulgaria: Salonika, Greece	*Battle of Jutland* Unrestricted *U-Boats*
1917	Spring: Germans withdraw to *Hindenburg Line* Jul-Nov*: 3rd Ypres (Passchendaele)* Trench Warfare	**April USA enters WWI** **Nov: Russian Bolshevik Revolution** Dec: Jerusalem taken from Turks	Unrestricted *U-Boats* German *Blockade* tightens
1918	21 March: German Attack 8 Aug: Allied Counter-attack 11 November: *Armistice*	Russia makes peace: UK sends force to fight in Civil War UK Italian Campaign v. Austria German allies withdraw	Germany: *Turnip Winter* because of Blockade German ***Naval Mutiny*** *Blockade* continues until June
1919	28 June: Peace of Paris, signed by most belligerents, ends war		
1920-1926	Memorials erected in Tewkesbury		

A. *1914: "Over by Christmas"?* The Period of Optimism

Events and Map of the War of the Autumn of 1914

DATE	MILITARY
August 4	**Britain declares War on Germany after attack on Belgium**
14 August	***BEF*** of 5 Divisions (80,000 soldiers) arrived in France.
23-24 August	***Battle of Mons;*** the *BEF* delayed the German advance in Belgium; 1,600 British casualties and 2,000 German
26 August	***Battle of Le Cateau***: UK loses 7,182; Germans 2,900
7-10 Sept.	***"Miracle on the Marne"*** where the French and *BEF* thwarted the German attempt to capture Paris; British casualties, 15,000.
12-15 Sept.	***Battle of the Aisne***, an offensive against the German retreat from the Marne; start of trench warfare. **First official Tewkesbury death**.
1 October	the *BEF* started the transfer to *Flanders* to protect the Channel Ports;
19 Oct.- 22 Nov.	***First Battles of Ypres*** – the last attempt by both sides to force a decisive breakthrough on the Western Front in 1914. The attacks failed so the Germans dug into the higher, drier ground and both sides regrouped.
24-25 Dec.	The *Christmas Truce*: we think no Tewkesburians took part.



In an era when newspapers were the only source of official news, the people of Tewkesbury had to wait until Saturday 8 August 1914 to read officially about the state of war. The authorities had already taken action before war was declared on Tuesday 4 August. Banks had been closed for the week on Sunday and on Wednesday formal news of the declaration, in fact, reached the town. The mood may have been solemn – yet the *Territorials* were mobilised *"in excellent spirits"*.[10] On Friday, the *Lancers* actually commandeered horses at the Swan Inn for the cavalry. In the meantime, former *Regulars*, who had served their time but still remained in the *Reserve*, flocked back to join their local regiments – the *1st Gloucesters* in this county.

[10] *Register*, 8 August 1914 p1 and research by David Willavoys

The *BEF: Regulars* and *Reservists*

According to previously made plans, the *BEF* of 80,000 men under the command of **General Sir John French** was despatched to France on 14 August 1914 in order to expel the Germans from Belgium. The *1st Gloucesters* travelled appropriately in *SS Gloucester Castle* and the army received an enthusiastic welcome from the French population. It was then moved forward in cattle trucks to meet the German attack but this small professional army was involved in a war where the two major western protagonists, Germany and France, had raised conscript armies of approximately 4 and 3.6 million men respectively

A postcard from France sent home by a member of the BEF
[Bishop-Todd]

However, the *BEF* only reached the frontier town of ***Mons***, before overwhelming German invaders had occupied the Belgian capital city, Brussels, as part of the German *Schlieffen Plan*, which required the defeat of France within six weeks. The speediest route to Paris lay through the lowlands of Belgium, despite the fact that in 1839 both Britain and Prussia (now Germany) had signed a treaty guaranteeing Belgian independence. The commitment to that treaty was the catalyst for Britain's declaration of war on 4 August.

It was at Mons that the first battle took place between Britain and Germany on 23 August 1914. The rapid and accurate rifle fire of the British inflicted significant casualties on the invaders at a cost of 1,600 but the German's greater numerical strength and superiority of firepower forced the *BEF* to start what became known as the *Retreat from Mons.*

This proved to be a 200-mile epic of endurance over 13 days in the summer heat with little rest at night, as the army tried to avoid defeat, while being harassed by the advancing German troops. On 19 August, the Kaiser had allegedly given the order to *"exterminate the treacherous English and walk over General French's contemptible little army".*

However, the *BEF*'s rear-guard was constantly harassed so that on 26 August it stopped to engage the pursuers at ***Le Cateau***, where it suffered the losses of 7,182 killed with 2,600 taken prisoner. One of the dead was ***Major F. G. Thoyts***.[11] The *1st Gloucesters* lost its first officer whose body was retrieved by Tewkesburian, **William Styles**. The *BEF* caused 2,900 casualties but, despite the apparent disparity, it had crucially avoided defeat and the retreat continued in good order with flanks protected by British and French cavalry. However, it was a very hot summer with the army short of both food and water and only able to rest for short periods each day with the best accommodation at night being a bivouac in the stubble of a cornfield.

The leadership suffered a strategic crisis at the end of August. Gen. French had concluded that the only way, in which he could save his army from destruction, was by taking it out of line and retreating behind the Seine for recuperation and refitting. This plan was much to the consternation of Gen. Joffre, the Commander-in-Chief of the beleaguered French Army. It was only the personal intervention on 1 September of Secretary of State for War, **Lord Kitchener**, who visited Gen. French expressly to overrule him. He was ordered to continue the trek to the *River Marne* in concert with the French army. The *BEF* succeeded in crossing the river on 3 September, enabling the retreat to end in apparent exhaustion with estimated casualties of 15,000 of the 80,000 who had arrived in France a month earlier. No more Tewkesburians had been killed in the retreat. It was evident, therefore, that the German advance had been slowed down; Paris had been saved – and the soldiers proudly dubbed themselves *'Old Contemptibles'*. Despite all its suffering, the *BEF* was still capable of continuing the fight – and so it proved.

Unbeknown to the Allies on 30 August, however, the German commanders had themselves made a fatal mistake by changing the direction of their advance to the south east of Paris, rather than passing to the west as the *Schlieffen Plan* had demanded.

[11] The father of Major Thoyts, a former Mayor of Cheltenham, resided at the Mythe for only a short time until his death in 1918. For that reason, the Major is not included on the Town's war memorials, except for the *Abbey Memorial to Volunteers*. He has been included, however, in our ***Extended Role of Honour*** on page 107.

Despite its fatigue after 13 days of fighting retreat, the *BEF* counter-attacked on 7 September and, led by cavalry, drove the invaders back north across the *River Marne* by 10 September. The Allies faced 900,000 German troops. By 9 September the attack seemed to be faltering but the Germans again erred by themselves ordering a retreat. Thanks to the *"Miracle of the Marne"*, Paris had been saved and the German plans for a quick victory had been thwarted.

A post-card despatched in Sept. 1915 – an exaggerated claim? [G. Baker]

On 12 September, the advance continued north to *the River Aisne*, led by the cavalry, but the Germans managed to retreat in good order until the river was reached. The pursuit then ground to a halt under fire from the German machine-guns and artillery; the enemy was digging in on the higher ground north of the river. There followed *"16 days under an unceasing fire day and night; raining nearly the whole time, and without any overcoats"*. Tewkesbury lost its first accredited casualty on the *Aisne*: **Pte. Henry Newman [†]** of *1st Battalion, Loyal North Lancashire Regiment*, who died of his wounds as a prisoner. The set-back at the ***Battle of the Aisne*** proved to be the beginning of four years of *Trench Warfare*.

At this crucial point, the Germans changed the line of their attack and moved towards capturing the Channel ports, so vital for British supplies and reinforcements. This phase was known as the *"Race for the Sea"*. The British troops, including the *1st Gloucesters*, were then moved by rail to a town, which would become infamously synonymous with the war – ***Ypres***. During encounters between both sides, two local men were lost: **Pte. Reginald Clarke [†]**, *18th (Queen Mary's Own) Hussars* (whose contribution on the *Marne* had been commended by Gen. French), possibly died of wounds in German captivity and **Pte. Alfred Newton [†]**, of *1st Royal Warwicks*, died during heavy shelling. Both had their names only commemorated on the *Ploegsteert Memorial*.

There followed the ***First Battle of Ypres*** from 19 October to 22 November 1914, which represented the last attempt by both Allied and German forces to force a decisive breakthrough on the Western Front in 1914. Simultaneous advances met 'head on', with a series of bitterly contested actions following, in which superior German numbers forced the Allies into the fiercest of defensive battles. The fighting (in which French support was vital to British resistance) was widespread, desperate and continuous, with three critical phases of action. Ultimately, neither side prevailed: the shape of the Western Front for the next four years was set by the end of 1914.

More Tewkesbury men lost their lives in battles in subsequent fighting, especially in very effective German counter-attacks. **Pte. W. J. Barnfield [†]** was one of 127 casualties of the *1st Gloucesters* at *Langmarck*. In the same battle two Apperley men were wounded: **Pte. Fred Pope** recovered well enough to be returned to the Front but **Pte. William Humphries** was wounded in his left thigh by a rifle bullet and also lost the sight of his left eye. (His story did have a silver lining: his engagement was announced in March 1915, whilst he was recuperating in a private convalescent home. He survived the war.)

Following their failure to break the Allied line at *Langmarck*, the Germans switched their attack to *Gheluvelt*. The battle began on 29 October, when the *1st Gloucesters* suffered 167 casualties, including **Pte. Richard Day [†]**. A further 120 were captured to spend the rest of the war as *POWs* including **Pte. John Hanson.**[12] In the same action, **Pte. Harold G. Stubbs [†]**, of the *2nd Grenadier Guards*, died from his wounds. The climax was a crucial action on 31 October, when the British line was broken. However, the initiative of local commanders and a bold attack by the *2nd Worcesters* restored the situation. Not to be deterred, then came the last ferocious assault of the season at *Nonne Boschen*, led by the elite Prussian Guard Division, which lost 17,500 perhaps irreplaceable attackers against the losses of 7,850 defenders. **Pte. W. Keylock [†]**, of the 1st *Gloucesters* died of wounds sustained in the valiant defence that proved of such long-term significance.

[12] Pte. Hanson's contribution to the history of captivity is to be found on page 104.

The Germans had, indeed, failed to make their own break-through and, although fighting continued, the concerted attacks petered out in bad weather. The Channel Ports were – for now – safe. That failure had cost the Germans losses of 46,765. The serious concern for the Allies was that they now held a deep *salient* at **Ypres**, overlooked by the enemy. The cost in casualties of the fighting had been enormous: 58,155 of the *BEF* were casualties: the *'Old Contemptibles'*, all *regulars*, had effectively ceased to exist.

The Mons Star & Clasp awarded for this campaign.

In December, the *1st Gloucesters* were transferred to the Festubert area near Givenchy. This change afforded little respite in the short term because the battalion then took part in the ***Battle of Givenchy*** (18 December-22 December), an attack initiated by a request from the French to relieve pressure at *Arras*; the cost to the battalion was 45 men killed, 109 wounded and four taken prisoner. **Pte. Charles Hurcombe [†]** was declared missing after this action although his body was only discovered on 21 February 1915. His temporary grave was destroyed in later fighting and he is commemorated only by name on *Le Touret Memorial*.

For the *1st Gloucesters* fighting had come to an end for 1914. After nearly three months of continuous action, the battalion had suffered 945 casualties; of the original complement that sailed to France in August, only two officers and 100 *'Other Ranks'* were still fit for duty. It was of little enough comfort that 400 reinforcements had arrived to prepare the battalion for the battles in 1915. Any feelings of optimism, however, had been by now completely dispelled.

For the Allies as a whole, the year had ended in disappointment and stalemate. Although the German invasion had been checked, their forces still occupied swathes of Northern France and nearly all of Belgium. Although there is no universal agreement as to precise casualty figures the cost had been high. Britain had suffered more than 98,000 casualties up to the end of the year, a significant proportion of the pre-war regular Army. Meanwhile the French, with a much larger army fighting over a wider area, had lost something like ten times that number. Their casualties were in the region of one million men of which it is estimated that over 450, 000 were killed; approximately one third of the French soldiers killed in the entire war lost their lives in the first five months. By the end of the year the *BEF* had grown in size to 11 infantry divisions and five cavalry divisions (estimated at around 270,000 men). It was holding some 24 miles of the front, including the hazardous *Ypres Salient*, through the low-lying Flanders plain, where the shallow trenches often flooded.

A Soldier contemplating his "Gift from the Nation" [Hammerton]

In November 1914, an advertisement was placed in the national press inviting monetary contributions to a *'Sailors & Soldiers Christmas Fund'*, created by Princess Mary, the seventeen year old daughter of King George V and Queen Mary. The purpose was to provide everyone wearing the King's uniform and serving overseas on Christmas Day 1914 with a '*gift from the nation'*. (www.kinnethmont.co.uk)

Naval Warfare

We have already noted that the role of the Navy was much less prominent than that anticipated, since the arms race for building *Dreadnoughts* had caused much of the tension that propelled both German and British people into a *'jingoistic'* frame of mind.

The Navy had three main aims – first: to ensure that the *BEF* could be supplied without interference. That was successful as the Channel was never attacked directly by the *High Seas Fleet*, although submarine warfare subsequently became a threat. Second: to place a blockade on ports so that the Germans could be starved out of the war. After four years this policy proved successful and this unglamorous campaign played a significant role in defeating Germany. Third: to protect British commerce, as Britain was dependent upon imports to feed its population and to provide raw materials. The crisis year was 1917![13]

Immediately war was declared, a naval squadron including ***HMS Monmouth,*** a pre-*Dreadnought* battle cruiser, with professional sailor, **William Halling [†]**, as a crew-member, was sent to the South Atlantic to meet the threat of surface raiders. It had joined the squadron in time to meet the German Pacific Squadron that had been forced by the alliance with Japan to leave Chinese waters. The two squadrons met at the ***Battle of Coronel***, off the coast of Chile and the superior German squadron easily defeated the inferior British force on 1 November. *Monmouth,* along with *Good Hope* and *Glasgow,* was lost in what was the worst British naval defeat of the First World War – and the first British defeat at sea since the War of 1812. *Monmouth* was sunk with all hands, including Able Seaman Halling.

Even though the Germans enjoyed an easy victory, destroying two enemy armoured cruisers for just three men injured, the engagement also cost half their irreplaceable supply of ammunition. Shock at the British losses led to an immediate reaction and the despatch of more ships that, in turn, destroyed the majority of the German squadron at the ***Battle of the Falkland Islands***. British commerce was safe from such surface predators – for the time being.

The Germans did try to entice the Navy into battle in the North Sea in December 1914, when a force evaded the *blockade* and shelled **Hartlepool, Whitby** and **Scarborough**. The attack resulted in 137 fatalities and 592 wounded, many of whom were civilians. The attack resulted in public outrage towards the German navy for an attack against civilians – and against the Royal Navy for its failure to prevent the raid. It was, however, a very helpful stimulus for the desperate need to persuade men to join the armed forces. Recruitment had fallen to its lowest level since August but, in January 1915, it spiked at 117,860.[14]

Despite this flurry of activity the naval war seemed superficially to play a secondary role although the supply ships crossed the Channel unhindered and the blockade of ports gradually gathered strength. In 1915 the naval war concentrated upon the North and Irish Seas in order to combat the *U-Boat* menace.[15]

Recruitment poster exploiting the attacks
[Remember Scarborough.co.uk]

[13] For further discussion, see page 59.
[14] Peter Simkins, *Kitchener's Army* (1988). He is currently President of the *Western Front Association* and addressed *THS* in the 1990s. All figures on national recruitment are taken from this book.
[15] For further discussion, see page 22.

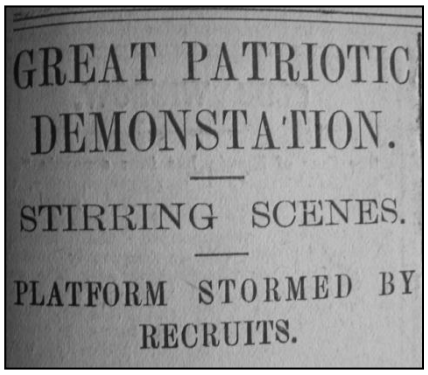
The Recruitment *"Storm"*

The day after war was declared ***Field Marshal Lord Kitchener*** was appointed Secretary of State for War, the first soldier appointed to this position, and it was his responsibility to coordinate the war effort. He predicted that the war would not be over by Christmas and would last for at least three years. That being so the British Regular Army was far too small to sustain such a war. He had a great mistrust of the 300,000-strong *Territorial Force*, its main disadvantage being that it was designed only for Home Defence and he was unsure that men would volunteer to serve abroad. Territorials were, therefore, required to 'volunteer' a second time to serve abroad – and about 90% did so. By the end of August, 70 Battalions had volunteered. In Gloucestershire there were three Territorial Battalions – the 4th, 5th and 6th: most Tewkesbury men served in the *1st/5th Battalion*.[16]

This mistrust, as well as the need for a much bigger army, led Kitchener to persevere with his plan to raise a *"New Army"* (later known as *Kitchener's Army*). Initially he called for a million men – eventually 2.5 million volunteered. Kitchener decided that it would be part of the existing system of county regiments and local recruiting offices were set up to enlist volunteers. It became evident that men would be more willing to enlist with those whom they knew, hence the phenomena of *"Pals Battalions"* or in the case of the author's home town of Grimsby, *"Chums"* – both terms were used in those days for groups of friends.

The optimistic and enthusiastic desire to volunteer was a fascinating phenomenon of the time – and one which was evident in most belligerent countries – in the wish for a short and, inevitably, victorious war. The reasons are complex and much debated. In the long term, there was a form of aggressive patriotism evident in most countries but, in the short term, it was less easy to explain. Certainly the German invasion of Belgium placed the British government firmly on the high moral ground and there was a belief in patriotic duty. On the other side of the coin, perhaps men seemed to have less to lose by volunteering: few people had mortgages and most only weekly tenancies and monotonous jobs with little career advancement.

We have noted that, as early as 8 August, the *Tewkesbury Record* published the first list of those already serving in the War; schools almost competed to list their patriotic former pupils. On 15 August the *Register* published Kitchener's call of *"Rally to the Flag"*. However, the Vicar was not yet satisfied with the response as he demonstrated in his sermon of 23 August: *"They came not to the help of the Lord"*. On 29 August a meeting in Twyning claimed that *"Your Country Wills You To Duty"* and, in the same edition, it was claimed that *"about 240 (had) gone to war"*.


GREAT PATRIOTIC
DEMONSTATION.

STIRRING SCENES.

PLATFORM STORMED BY
RECRUITS.

The Recruiting Surge of 2 September 1914 [(Register]

The Mayor sends off recruits from the Railway Station to Horfield Barracks, 26 September 1914 [Graphic]

It was on that day that recruitment in Tewkesbury – and nationally – surged into a *"storm"* with that *"inspiring"* meeting in the Watson Hall, when 80 recruits stormed on to the stage – and received a badge. That week came the first publication of a *"Roll of Honour"* celebrating the many who served with *"Lord Kitchener's Armies"*, along with entreaties to families to post information. *"More NCOs Wanted"* – these were *"Dug Outs"* – ex-servicemen often from the *Boer War* needed to train new soldiers. By 26 September there were 669 names *"with 26 added since last issue"*. Nationally, that month saw what proved to be the greatest number of recruits – 174,901.

The *Graphic's* photograph illustrates the formal despatch of the men with, apparently, the whole town including the Mayor turning out to wave them off. *"More Tewkesbury men for Berlin"* were to keep on

[16] The 5th Battalion became the *1st/5th*, with subsequent reserve battalions numbered *2nd/5th* and so on.

following, as the government exhorted: *"Another Half Million Men Wanted"*. Villagers came by cars lent by local worthies; there were also gifts of tobacco from Dr. A. F. Turner and auctioneer C. C. Moore!

Perhaps it was inevitable that recruitment dipped in October but news, trickling through about the *Retreat from Mons*, encouraged 169,862 to volunteer in November. On 7 November, the *Register* claimed that they had *"786 Names with 25 added since the last issue"*. It was the Abbey, which chronicled the list of volunteers systematically with its first Memorial of 1916: it recorded 689 volunteers (including *Regulars, Reservists and Territorials*), the majority of whom (610) joined the army.

Apart from the reaction to the East Coast shelling, volunteering was in decline and it is perhaps significant that, as early as 17 October, the *Register* published a letter, in a somewhat facetious style, from *"White Feather Hotel"* claiming that able-bodied young men of Tewkesbury were not joining up.[17]

Trench Warfare during the Winter

Historically warfare obeyed the dictates of the seasons. In the mechanised warfare of World War I, there was little respite from the suffering of war. Wyrall records that *"heavy rain, alternating with frost and snow, turned trenches into muddy waterways, in which men were forced to stand for hours suffering the agonies of rheumatism and frost bite"*.[18] Although the ferocious battles around Ypres may have then petered out, large armies have to be kept busy, *"maintaining an offensive spirit"*.[19] While the *BEF* might have wished for time to recover, the French were as determined as ever to rid their soil of the invader.

Winter in the Trenches [Hammerton]

On 25 January 1915, again at *Givenchy*, this time it was the Germans who attacked with *1st Gloucesters* bearing its brunt. It was defeated but at cost of 37 casualties and the award of five gallantry medals – but no Tewkesburian was lost. After six months of almost continuous fighting, the battalion was withdrawn from the fighting zone until October 1915.

The *2nd Gloucesters*, however, arrived in France in the middle of winter on 18 December 1914. Located on Empire duty in China on the outbreak of war, it had promptly returned and was despatched to France after a rapid turnaround in the UK. Although in early 1915 officially *"no matters of outstanding interest"* occurred, the battalion underwent a *"hardening period"*.

Moreover, it was the *2nd Gloucesters* that suffered the first fatality of 1915, during a period of trench warfare. **Pte. F J. Collins [†]** had enjoyed just four days home leave before re-embarking and, after Christmas, he wrote home informing them about *"Princess Mary's Christmas card and message, which he very much prized"*. The next news came in the *Register* report that "*Mr. and Mrs. Collins have heard from a comrade, who saw their son killed, that he was struck by a piece of shrapnel, and death was instantaneous"* on 4 February 1915. The *Battalion War Diary* added that there was *"Very heavy artillery fire all day"* near *Ypres*. Unusually for such a Diary, it actually named the *"Other Ranks"* killed.

We have seen that both regular battalions had taken losses in the autumn and winter of 1914-15 but their brethren in the Territorial and Service battalions enjoyed the leisure of winter training in the UK. The *1st/5th* was at Chelmsford, Essex, and the *10th Gloucesters* managed to spend winter in billets in Cheltenham. Winter training was not without its hazards: Tewkesbury lost its first volunteer, 37-year-old **Pte. Thomas Underwood [†]**, who died of pneumonia in Malvern Hospital. He was a veteran *"Militia man"* who, in the 1910 procession on the death of King Edward VII, was one of those who *"wore the medals they had earned in the service of the Crown"*. The death of this father of six struck a chord in the district and £81 was raised by public subscription for the family's benefit. Despite this effort, three of the children still had to be taken into homes of the Church of England's Waifs and Strays Society.[20]

Christmas 1914 had, indeed, arrived but it brought no prophesied end to the war – merely some spontaneous and informal truces in which **Pte. H. Preston [†]** may well have participated.

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[17] The '*White Feather*' was a device used by certain young women to shame men into enlisting

[18] E. Wyrall, *The Gloucestershire Regiment, 1914-1918* (Methuen 1931). Quotations without reference are hitherto taken from Wyrall. See Section IV, page 128, for further discussion.

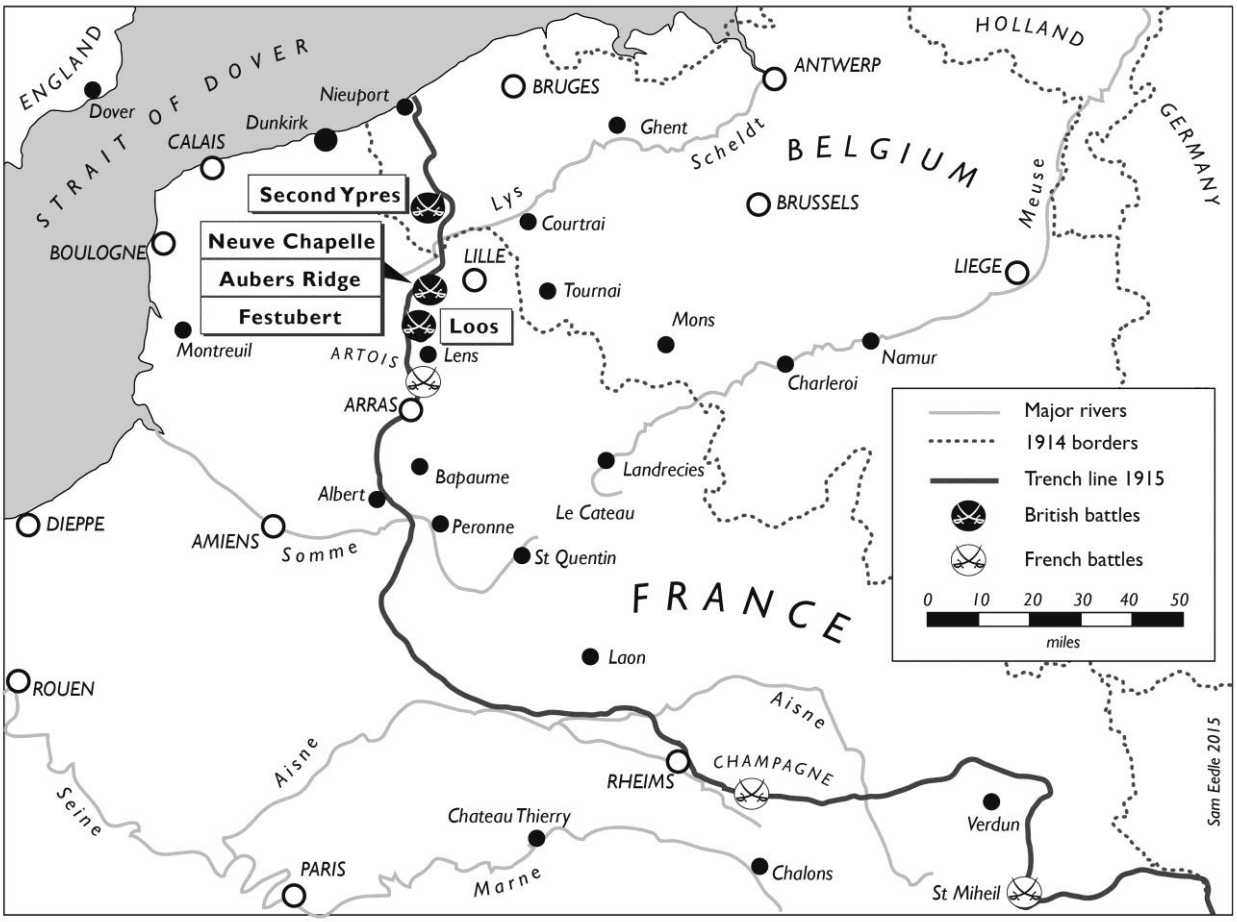
[19] The phrase was highlighted in Alan MacDonald, *A Lack of Offensive Spirit?: The 46th (North Midland) Division at Gommecourt, 1st July 1916* (Iona Books, 2008)

[20] For further information, Sam Eedle, *From the Town Hall to the Boar's Head*, in *THS* Bulletin 11 {2002]

B. 1915: A Year of Futile Campaigns on Land and at Sea?

Trench Warfare: the Arrival of the *Territorials* and First *Volunteers*

In the west, the German strategy for 1915 was based on a predominantly defensive approach; priority was given to the Eastern Front, where it expected to achieve more against the Russians than on the deadlocked Western Front. French perspective differed: their only option was to pursue an offensive policy to try and liberate Northern France. Although not under direct French command, the *BEF*'s efforts were dictated by French strategy; the Allies were fighting as a Coalition – in which Britain was the junior partner.



MAIN EVENTS OF THE FRONT IN 1915

	Spring 1915		**Autumn 1915**
10-13 March	*Battle of Neuve Chapelle*	25 Sept.	***Third Battle of Artois***
22 April	***Second Battles of Ypres***	25-28 Sept.	*Battle of Loos*
9 May	*Battle of Aubers Ridge*	8-14 Oct.	Resumption of the *Battle of Loos*
15-25 May	*Battle of Festubert*	4 Nov	End of battle season
25 May	***End of 2nd Ypres***	25 Nov.	*2nd Gloucesters* entrain for Salonika
		Nov.-Dec.	*Trench Warfare* continues

The *2nd Gloucesters* were involved in March in the *Battle of Neuve Chapelle*, the first large-scale organised attack undertaken by the *BEF*. Intended as a joint Allied offensive, the simultaneous French attack was cancelled. The battle was a tactical success in that the attackers broke into German defences – but a strategic failure as they were unable to break through to objectives beyond. Nevertheless, it had demonstrated British offensive capabilities to the French.

Before the Allies could launch their next offensive, however, the Germans struck at ***Ypres***, the focal point for much of the efforts of the *BEF*. There were four major battles for the medieval town during a four-year period, as well as numerous minor actions, and something like half of the British soldiers killed on the Western Front were lost in or around this sector. On 22 April the Germans attacked the northern flank of the ***Ypres Salient***, in what became known as the *Second Battles of Ypres.* The offensive was used primarily as a

means of diverting Allied attention from the Eastern Front and for using of chlorine gas to make up for depleted reserves. The latter was the most significant new development of the war so far but was largely experimental at this stage. German objectives at Ypres were limited to seizing the high ground around the villages of *Pilckem* and *Langemarck*, in the hope that it would become impossible for the Allies to hold the ***Salient***. The German gas attack proved a complete surprise and the French, with no protection against the effects of gas, were forced to retreat, which evoked great sympathy from the British *Commander-in-Chief*, Sir John French. The German attack captured considerable ground but, lacking reserves, they failed to exploit their success – thus missing the one opportunity they had of a breakthrough in the west in 1915.

British and Canadian troops quickly plugged the gap and held the line at great cost. Yet they could not regain any of the lost ground. In May a letter from the trenches reported: *"I saw some of our infantrymen last night. They were affected by the awful gasses the Germans are using – it was a terrible sight. They were absolutely helpless – like anyone drunk and black in the face. It is more like murder than war, the methods they are adopting, but I hope we shall soon be able to have our own back on them"*. General French would later fulfil the soldier's hope – at the cost of many lives of Gloucestershire soldiers at the *Battle of Loos*.

By 7 April, *2nd Gloucesters* had been transferred to *Ypres;* it was to prove a torrid experience. At the time of the gas attack, the battalion was holding support positions around *Sanctuary Wood*, following a tactical withdrawal, when they were pursued by the enemy who occupied the evacuated trenches. The War Diary for 5 May reported heavy shelling throughout the day, resulting in many casualties. **L/Cpl. Charles Wyse [†]** was undoubtedly killed during this bombardment; his body was never recovered nor identified. Although **Pte. John H. Cook [†]** died on 11 May 1915 in a base hospital in Boulogne of wounds, they were probably sustained during the same bombardment that had killed Wyse. **Pte. Walter King [†]** had only arrived as a replacement on 27 April and, by the 11-12 May, the Battalion suffered regular German attacks, after which they retaliated with their own counter-attack s, some at bayonet point. Pte. King was initially posted as missing – yet the *CWGC* date of his death pinpoints it to the time of the artillery exchanges of 11-12 May.

Whilst the *2nd Gloucesters* were fighting at *Ypres*, the *1st Gloucesters*, including *Boer War* veteran **Pte. F. J. Woolcott [†]**, took part in the disastrous *Battle of Aubers Ridge* on 9 May. This was undertaken to support a major French offensive, the first of a series of Allied attacks. These were intended to exploit German weakness, following transfer of troops to Russia, and to seize vital upland ridges as a prelude to the much desired 'breakthrough'. The battalion lost 264 men because of poor planning and inadequate shell supply – problems which should have been resolved before attempting the *Battle of Loos*. It is important to record losses in *trench warfare* because of the sheer physical hardships the soldiers suffered. **Pte. H. S. Thompson [†]** was a *Reservist* who arrived in theatre on 20 January 1915 to join the *1st Gloucesters*. However, within a month, the *Register* reported that he was *"now in Wincanton Hospital, suffering from frost bite"*. Discharged from the army with a *Silver War Badge*, he had returned to civilian life. Yet he died in 1920 of *Tuberculosis*, a likely consequence of his time in the trenches.

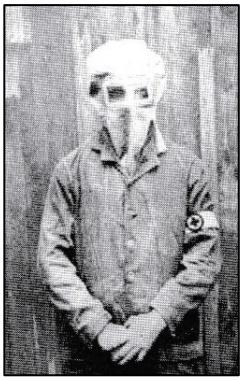
The battles for higher ground continued at *Festubert***. Harry Preston [†],** who was living in Croydon in 1914, had joined the *2nd West Surreys* and lost his life in this battle on 16 May, in what was effectively the second phase of that Allied offensive. This was designed to attract German divisions to the British front, rather than strengthening their defences opposite the French near *Arras*. It was at this point that the *Register* commented that*: "Private Preston was one of the* ***noble band of heroes****, and Tewkesbury should be proud that one of its sons laid down his gallant young life in the service of his King and Country"*.

Meanwhile the pressure in the ***Ypres Salient*** was constant and the *trench warfare* in that area caused the death of another exile. **Pte. James Cole [†]**, a married 42-year-old Reservist living in Swindon, had been posted to the *1st Wilts* as a replacement. On 16 June, he was killed in the confused and fierce fighting during an attack on the German trench system at Bellewaarde Ridge at the apex of the ***Ypres Salient***.

Apart from persistent trench warfare, the summer of 1915 remained relatively quiet but, at the request of the French, the British agreed to an extension of their Front south of Ypres, and to an offensive in September before the weather broke. This offensive was the British component of the wider *Third Battle of Artois*, an attempt by the French to break through the German defences and restore a war of movement. The location for the British attack was chosen by the French and they selected the ***Loos*** sector. This was a mining region north of *Arras*, an area not favoured by the British. When surveying the locality, where the Germans were securely dug into an industrial landscape of mining suburbs, slag-heaps and pitheads, one senior commander claimed that *"it is most unfavourable ground and we shall be heavily taken upon"*. The British *C-in-C*, **Sir**

John French, with the support of **Gen. Haig**, decided against the attack: *"We should not be helping the French by throwing away thousands of lives knocking our heads against a brick wall"*. Coalition imperatives prevailed. The French *C-in-C*, ***General Joffre***, applied severe pressure and, following Allied setbacks elsewhere, Lord Kitchener ordered Generals French and Haig to accept Joffre's plan.

There were two new features in the offensive, now known as the *Battle of Loos*. The first was the introduction – albeit earlier than Kitchener had originally intended – of *New Army Service Battalions* to augment the Regular and Territorial units.[21] Thus the *10th Gloucesters*, which had been sent to France in August, was allocated to the Regular 1st Division, replacing a Guards battalion. The *1st Gloucesters* were in the same division and acted as their mentors. The second feature was the availability of gas, which eased Haig's fears about the *BEF*'s shortage of heavy artillery and ammunition stocks. (Sir John French himself had criticised the inadequate supply of shells in the press in May.) Over 5,000 canisters were hauled to the front-line and the gas was released at 05.50 hrs on 25 September but it behaved erratically as a result of the varying wind conditions. In the south where the gas drifted into the German trenches the attack was successful – virtually all the objectives were seized, including the village of Loos itself.



Elementary Gas Protection at Loos [N. Christian]

In the north, it was a different story and the attacks largely failed. Some of the gas blew back into British positions creating confusion – over 2,500 were gassed, although there were only seven fatalities. After the initial shock, the German defenders recovered and emerged from their strengthened defences to subject the British to murderous machine-gun fire. The *"Fighting 10th advanced through all objectives"* – but lost 459 men in the process. Among them were many local men: ***Sgt. T. Hall* [†]** *"was killed in action whilst leading his men"*; **Cpl. J. A. Simms [†]**; **L/Cpl. Arthur Harrison [†]** (a school teacher and member of the *Volunteer Training Corps*: *"the first of those who enlisted from that body to lay down his life"*); **Pte. E. Nunney [†]** and **Pte. C. W. Wagstaffe [†]** of the *2nd Oxford & Bucks*. On 26 September the reserves, comprising two *New Army* divisions held back by General French in controversial circumstances, were thrown into the battle to try to exploit the first day's success. They were repulsed with heavy casualties. This decision would be a major factor in the removal of General French as the British *C-in-C*. A further attack on 27 September to stabilize the situation involved the *Guards Division* that included in its ranks Tewkesburian, **Pte. Ernest Rice [†]**. A *Reservist* in the *4th Grenadiers*, he was killed, when *"the guardsmen immediately ran into scything machine-gun fire"*. As the British tried to consolidate their positions in the next few days, they were subjected to heavy shelling: this took the life, on 29 September, of one of the few Tewkesbury cavalrymen, **Trooper W. G. Dutton [†]** (*2nd Life Guards*). He was fighting as dismounted infantry, using bicycles for transport.[22]

It might have been expected that inexperienced troops like the *10th Gloucesters*, would have been withdrawn for recuperation – but they remained in place. In a German counter-attack on 8 October, however, the *1st Gloucesters* took the brunt, losing 134 men including **Sgt. Tom New [†]**. The *Register* reported that *"fighting side by side were two Tewkesbury brothers, Sgt. Tom and L/Cpl Ernest New (who) were caught up in the thick of the fighting. Tom was mortally wounded and removed to a casualty clearing station where he died the following day"*. **Ernest New** survived, wounded by shrapnel, but **Cpl. A. J. Didcote [†]** was killed. Yet another attack was ordered on 13 October: the *10th Gloucesters* had a further 150 casualties and were at last withdrawn from the line. One replacement, **Pte Joseph Cook [†]**, had arrived in theatre on 4 October to replace the battalion's losses. He was possibly in time to take part in the final attack on 13 October, also a failure. (Pte. Cook's family still claims that his death in 1919 was a consequence of his being gassed.[23])

Although minor fighting continued for some weeks, the attack was effectively called off on 14 October. Despite heavy casualties, there had been considerable success on the first day in breaking into the deep enemy positions near Loos. As so often happened, however, the opportunities could not be exploited, resulting in stalemate. The *BEF* suffered nearly 60,000 casualties (around 16,000 killed, including three Major Generals). The French offensives fared little better with losses of over 200,000. The end of the *Battle of Loos* signalled the conclusion of the offensives planned for 1915, although localised fighting continued.

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[21] The first local 'Kitchener Battalion' to be thrust into battle was *7th Gloucesters* in Gallipoli on 26 July 1915.
[22] See N. J. Christian, *In the Shadow of the Lone Tree*, [2nd Ed., 2012] for an excellent account of the *10th Gloucesters*.
[23] For further discussion, see page 90.

As part of the expansion of the *BEF* during 1915, the first line units of the three *Territorial Battalions* of the *Gloucestershire Regiment* – those that had volunteered for overseas service – had landed in France at the end of March: the *1st/4th, 1st/6th and 1st/5th* battalions, the last of which contained most of the Tewkesbury Territorials. Indeed the "*Old Contemptible*" – and unofficial *Register* reporter – Pte. Jack White, sent a list of Territorials for the interest of local readers in July 1915. They were soon introduced to *trench warfare* in the Ypres sector. In August, **Pte. F. W. Harvey**, later a war poet, first found local renown winning the *DCM* with a *"brilliant little patrol engagement"*, which resulted in the killing of three of the enemy. A repeat action in 1916, however, resulted in his capture. There was no medal for **Lt. T. H. Moore [†]**, the first member of the local Territorials to be killed. On 27 September 1915 he exuded the requisite 'offensive spirit' and, as his *CO* wrote, *"your son was an exceptional officer... died bravely.. .shot while in charge of a patrol engaged in reconnaissance work and while nobly attempting to rescue a stricken corporal [Rodway]..."*. The loss of a leading member of local society must have been traumatic in bringing home the impact of war.

The commemorative memorials of Lt. Moore & Cpl. Rodway. [D. Earle, WFA]

Others just disappeared in this form of warfare. **Pte. Ernest Williams [†]**, a local reservist allocated to the *6th Dorsets* upon re-enlistment, was merely listed as *"killed in action"* on 13 December. As there were no major actions being fought at the time, it does suggest that his death was caused by random shelling or sniper fire. The last Tewkesbury man to die on the Western Front in 1915 brings us back to the *"Fighting 10th"* which still found little respite after *Loos*. The Battalion had been relieved and spent the next month resting and recuperating. On 14 November 1915, the Battalion returned to the *Loos* area and, as was the norm during quiet periods, moved regularly between the front line and reserve positions, resting, training, re-equipping and even cleaning streets. From 14 to 26 December 1915 the Battalion was in the front line trenches and the War Diary noted: *"Battalion in Loos sector and employed as a digging or pioneer battalion, 5 casualties"*. **Pte. C. H. Bailey [†]** was undoubtedly one of them, as he was killed by a shell-burst on 19 December. In a letter to his parents a fellow battalion member, Pte. A. W. Woolcott, commented that*: "he died a hero on the battle field, doing his duty nobly for King and Country"*.

On 21 November, after being mercifully stationed in a quiet sector, the *2nd Gloucesters* entrained for Salonika, war having been declared on Bulgaria. The war was expanding to engulf more of the world.[24]

As 1915 came to a close, another year of disappointment and huge losses for the Allies, some key events unfolded. General French, as we have seen, was replaced by General Sir Douglas Haig as commander of the *BEF*. The decision had also been taken to evacuate ***Gallipoli*** – which, as we shall see, was a very expensive and unsuccessful sideshow – and concentrate efforts on the Western Front. The British Army in France was continuing to grow and, at the year-end, comprised 37 infantry divisions and five cavalry divisions, giving it a strength of nearly one million men; the *BEF* now held around 70 miles of the front. Its casualties for 1915 amounted to 312,000 men; those in the French Army exceeded 1.2 million.

The *Gallipoli Campaign*: Ending the Stalemate?

The **Gallipoli** Campaign of 1915 was a bold – but some would say misconceived – attempt to end the stalemate on the Western front by launching a campaign against Turkey. The Allies had originally sent supplies to the Russians via the only available route, the *Dardanelles* and the Black Sea. That became impossible after the Allies declared war on Turkey (the ***Ottoman Empire***) on 5 November 1914 as the Turks then mined the *Dardanelles Straits.* The Allies saw that as an opportunity to strengthen their own cause and to weaken Germany, by seizing the ***Gallipoli Peninsula*** on the western shore of the Dardanelles, with Constantinople as its objective. By capturing Constantinople, the Allies hoped to link up with the Russians, knock Turkey out of the war and, possibly, persuade the Balkan states to join the Allies.

The campaign began with a naval attack, conceived by Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty. British and French warships bombarded Turkish forts on the Dardanelles Straits in February and March

[24] For further discussion, see pages 28, 58 & 64.

1915. The assault failed; many of the ships were damaged or sunk by mines and the naval force was withdrawn. With the element of surprise already lost, a major land invasion of the Gallipoli Peninsula started on 25 April, involving British and French troops, as well as divisions of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (*ANZAC*s). The campaign was, therefore, hastily organised to capture the north coast of the Peninsula and silence the Turkish artillery. Lack of sufficient intelligence and knowledge of the terrain, along with fierce Turkish resistance, hampered the success of the invasion. By mid-October, Allied forces had suffered heavy casualties and had made little headway from their initial landing sites.

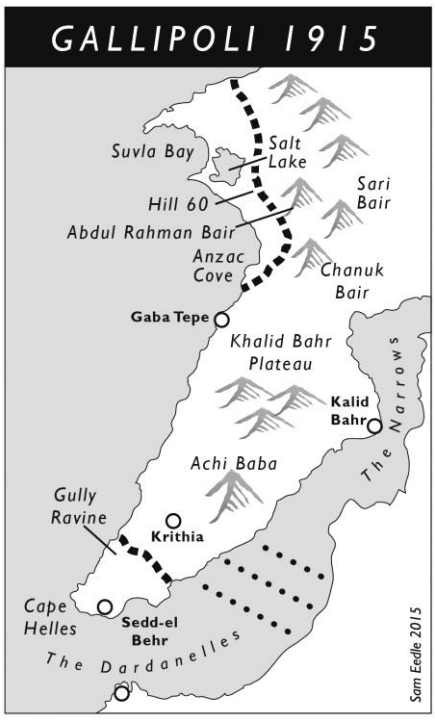
At the outset, the nearest soldiers were Australians and New Zealanders resting in Egypt on their way to Europe – and the ***Royal Naval Division*** comprising naval reservists who were surplus to requirements. Further British and French colonial divisions were added to create what became the *Mediterranean Expeditionary Force*. This delay enabled the Turks to organise their defences under German command.

Cross-Channel supply routes were never really hampered by the enemy – but supplying an army in the Mediterranean mounted more significant problems. It was no surprise, therefore, that the first Tewkesbury loss on 17 April 1915 came with the sinking of a troopship, *SS Manitou*, by a Turkish submarine: *"What might have been the destruction of an entire brigade of artillery resulted in a regrettable but comparatively small number of casualties by drowning and bruises"*. One of them was **Shoeing-Smith Walter W. Pittman [†]** of *147th Regiment, RFA*. To lose vital guns was an inauspicious start to the campaign.

MAP AND EVENTS OF GALLIPOLI CAMPAIGN

DATE	EVENTS
August 1914	Russian defeat at *Tannenburg*
5 Nov. 1914	UK declared war on Turkey
18 March 1915	**Naval attack via *Dardannelles***
25 April	**Landings at *Cape Helles***
May	**Formation of Coalition Government in UK**
12-13 July	Third Battle of *Krithia*
19 July	***7th Gloucesters* land**
8 August	Suvla Bay Landings & *Battle of Chunuk Bair*
6-21 August	*Battle of Sari Bair*
20 August	Reinforcements land at *Anzac Cove*
21 August	*Battle of Hill 60*
11 October	Declaration of War by Bulgaria for *Central Powers*
Dec. 1915 - Jan. 1916	**Evacuation of *Gallipoli* Theatre by Allies**

MAP



The initial landings at *Cape Helles* were successful, if costly, in that the Allies managed to establish poor quality coastal footholds. They were not able to progress inland and were subject to effective counter-attacks by well-organised Turkish forces, determined to expel the invaders. It does not seem that Tewkesbury men took part in these early battles. **Cpl. George Eagles [†]** of the Royal Naval Division was a replacement, who only joined his battalion at *Cape Helles* on 30 May. He was involved in the protracted *trench warfare* on the barren peninsula. He was merely posted *"missing, presumed dead"* on 13 July, the day when his unit was involved in a follow-up attack to the *Third Battle of Krithia*. Some limited progress was made but at great cost; the *Royal Naval Division* suffered some 600 casualties, including Cpl. Eagles.

Six days later, reinforcements arrived straight from Britain, among them the *7th Gloucesters*, the first local *Kitchener Battalion* to fight. They were soon in battle and, just a week later on 26 July, **Pte. W. J. M. Parker [†]** was shot through the head in the vicinity of *Gully Ravine.* The final offensive on this front petered out by the middle of July so it is reasonable to assume that Pte. Parker was killed in the *trench warfare* that followed; the nature of his wound suggests he may well have been the victim of a sniper.

Failures caused both sides to call up reinforcements and, on 8 August, the Allies sent a new invasion force to *Suvla Bay*. Again it was initially successful but, by the time the Allied troops attempted to move inland, Turkish reinforcements had arrived to strengthen their defences. The *Battle of Sari Bair* then took place during which the Australian *15th Battalion* was part of a force involved in an attack on 6 August against the *Abdul Rahman Bair* heights, known to the Australians as *'Hill 971'*. The attack was a failure and, by 8 August, this battalion alone was reduced to about 30% of its normal strength. **Pte. J. G. Coleman [†]** was one of the casualties and was the first Tewkesbury pre-war emigrant to be killed.

At the same time the *7th Gloucesters* were involved in this final attempt to break out of the *Anzac Cove* perimeter. The *Battle of Chunuk Bair* was one of a number of battles to this end. Although the plan was sound, previously taken aerial photographs were deceptive, as they did not reveal timber-reinforced overhead protection on the Turkish trenches. The fighting was bloody, confused and both sides suffered 'friendly fire' casualties. Despite that, elements of the battalion reached the crest of *Chunuk Bair* and, as Turkish reinforcements arrived, repulsed repeated attacks throughout the day. The dwindling band of survivors was relieved on the evening of 8 August by other British units but, two days later, the position was lost to a major Turkish offensive. The battalion lost every officer and sergeant and over 350 other ranks: **L/Cpl. W. G. Prosser [†]** was killed in action on 8 August 1915; his body was never recovered nor identified.

Part of the same attempt to break out of *Suvla Bay* involved the *1st Herefords*, a Territorial battalion, which included Tewkesbury exile, **L/Cpl. T. J. Osborne [†]**. He was killed on the last day of the battle on 15 August; one hopes that the family took heart when the battalion was specifically mentioned in despatches by *C-in-C* General Ian Hamilton: *"the 1st/1st Herefordshire attacked with impetuosity and courage"*.

Reinforcements arrived at *Anzac Cove* on 20 August 1915. The second of Mrs. Didcote's sons, pre-war emigrant, **Pte. W. B. Didcote [†]**, took part almost immediately in the *Battle of Hill 60*, the last major assault of the ***Gallipoli*** campaign. The attack was launched on 21 August and, whilst the men were fresh and healthy – in stark contrast to the veteran troops – they were inexperienced and ill-equipped. Attacking with bayonet only, they suffered 383 casualties in their first attack. Pte. Didcote's body was never recovered. The Australians seemed to mount an inquiry into every death and concluded that, *"the intervening ground was covered with low scrub which caught fire from the bursting Turkish shells, so that it was impossible to recover the discs or recognise the bodies. It is to be hoped that the knowledge that Pte. Didcote fell in one of the most gallant and historic charges, which has taken place in this war, will be of comfort to his friends"*.[25]

Thereafter, the campaign petered out into stalemate, dysentery being the most serious enemy. However, the environment could still be lethal as evidenced in November 1915, when the *Record* reported that **Pte. W. A. Attwood [†]**, *1st/1st Herefords*, had received a gunshot wound in the head, presumably during the endemic trench warfare. He was successfully evacuated to the hospital base on Malta. Despite the claim that he was attended by the best surgeons, he died on 6 December as the last local casualty of this campaign. The lack of success, and the declaration of war by Bulgaria, led to the campaign being abandoned: the decision to evacuate *Gallipoli* was inevitable.

It is acknowledged that the evacuation, without further losses, was the best-executed segment of the entire campaign. More than 100,000 troops were evacuated, although much equipment had to be abandoned. Official casualties were estimated at 205,000 British (including around 33,000 ANZAC troops), 47,000 French and 251,000 Turkish. To illustrate the conditions in Gallipoli, around 145,000 of the British casualties were due to sickness: dysentery, diarrhoea and enteric fever. Politically the Turks were much encouraged to defeat the British in Mesopotamia – while Russia descended into chaos in 1917.

The campaign had also caused a major political crisis in England; as early as May 1915 a Liberal-Conservative Coalition Government was formed with the demotion of Churchill as a pre-condition. The failure in Gallipoli caused the resignation of Prime Minister, ***Herbert H. Asquith***, and his replacement by ***Lloyd George***. The leader of the Turkish defence forces, ***Mustafa Kemal***, became President after the war.

Even the surviving British soldiers did not earn the expected *"Blighty One"* as some were sent on to **Salonika** and others back to the Western Front. Tewkesburian **Pte. Thomas Day** was one of the lucky ones – his shot in the arm earned him that precious *"Blighty One"* with this 'pith helmet' as a souvenir – he went on to father two founding members of *THS.*

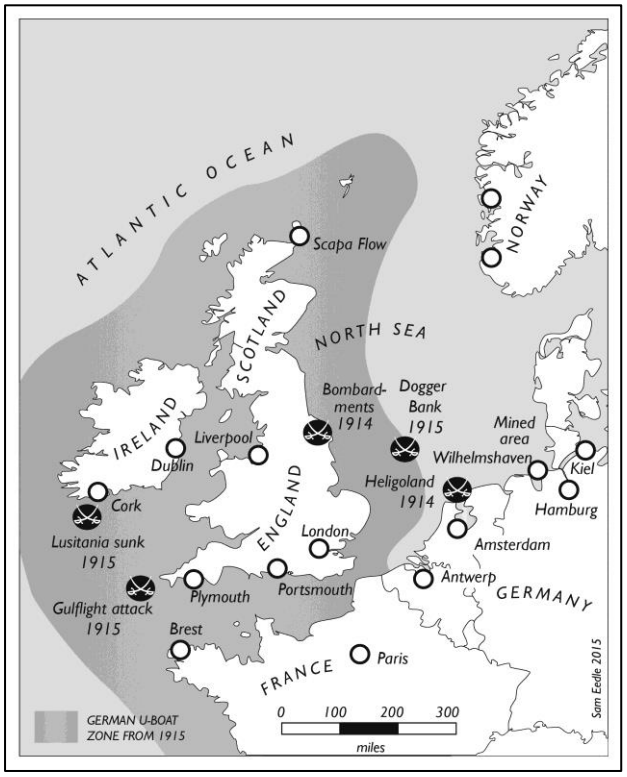
[25] Mrs. Didcote received a pension of *40s* (£2) fortnightly from 23 October 1917; but not from the date of his death.

Naval and Aerial Warfare

Just as naval rivalry to build revolutionary '***Dreadnought***' battleships had contributed to the atmosphere that had led up to war with Germany in August 1914, it had been similar concerns that provoked the Ottoman Empire into siding with the central Powers in late 1914. That ambitious country had ordered two *'Dreadnoughts'* from British shipyards. **Winston Churchill** suspended the contract, provoking outrage. The Kaiser opportunistically presented the Ottomans with two battle cruisers, the *Goebben* and *Breslau.* There followed the first naval drama of the war as the two ships evaded the British Navy to reach Constantinople, after which hostilities broke out and Churchill's ***Gallipoli Campaign*** was the consequence.[26]

The North Sea once again drew attention on 24 January 1915 with a battle on ***Dogger Bank***. The Germans were using the same strategy, as in the bombardment of the East Coast – to provoke Britain into committing its fleet to battle. Using radio intercepts, the Royal Navy triumphed by disabling the *Blücher*, a modern armed cruiser. Former Tewkesbury sailor, **Signal Boy E.W. Simons [†]**, had been serving on the *'Dreadnought' HMS Tiger*, which was involved in the battle, but he died mysteriously from a *"chill in the wound"* on 1 February – aged only 17.

Added to the Falkland Isles defeat, these frustrations at being unable to defeat Britain with surface warfare caused the Germans to turn to the use of equally revolutionary ***U-Boats*** in 1915 – with fateful consequences. The USA was neutral when war broke out in Europe because many of its citizens had fled a Europe smitten with economic problems and warfare. There was little appetite to end that neutrality. The German use of *U-Boats* was, at best, reckless and, inevitably, the ninth ship sunk by '*U30'* on 1 May, was the US tanker *Gulflight*. The Germans apologised for that attack but, when the ***Lusitania*** was sunk on 7 May 1915 causing 1,198 people to lose their lives including 128 Americans, the Germans refused to apologise. Their reason was the claim that the ship was carrying munitions destined for the UK. In the long term that mattered little: the USA did not declare war until 1917. It is now clear that the sinking of this ship started to turn opinion in the USA against Germany – especially after August 1915, when the sinking of ships without warning was announced.



North Sea Theatre in 1915

Furthermore, the Germans had other revolutionary weapons which seemed to prove its *"frightfulness"*.[27] ***Zeppelin*** airships introduced a new dimension of war. On 5 May 1915, the Imperial German government permitted bombing raids on civilian targets and so, on 8 September, *Zeppelin L13* dropped the biggest bomb so far on London (660lb); 22 were killed with 87 injured – including the Sayer family, formerly from Tewkesbury, who suffered serious injuries. During 1915, 181 British civilians were thus killed.[28]

In July and August came a new terror: the *"Fokker Scourge"* – this was a monoplane with synchronised machine-guns way in advance at the time of the Allies. Although these developments had no immediate and significant military impact on Britain, the psychological effect was considerable and, perhaps, confirmed the righteousness of the war amongst the British people.

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[26] On 20 January 1918 a British submarine ***E17*** tried to attack the *Goebben*, then flagship of the Turkish navy. *E17* was sunk by mines during an attack when Turks attacked the British base of Mudros in Aegean Sea – only 7 hands were saved. One crew member, **Signaller Charles M. Timbrell**, a professional seaman, Council School volunteer and grandson of Chance Street Crossing gate-keeper Charles Haines, was posted as a POW. He was later freed.

[27] *Schrecklichkeit ["frightfulness"]* was the policy adopted by the Military Occupation authorities in occupied Belgium in 1914 and was successfully seized on, for propaganda purposes, by the British press.

[28] Harold Sayer's wife Kitty died in 1922 aged only 35; younger brother, **Pte. R. C. Sayers [†]** was killed in 1916.

Recruitment *"Storm"* Abates

The Declaration of War and the appeals of Lord Kitchener had combined with other factors to create the 1914 *"Storm of Recruitment"*. In 1914 the total available number of men of military age was 5.5 million, with around 500,000 **more** reaching the age each year. By late September 2.25 million men had been enlisted and 1.5 million were in ***"Starred Occupations"***, being deemed vital to the war effort. It was soon realised that uncontrolled volunteering would deprive industry of vital war workers – yet, at the same time, such was the fervour to persuade men to join up that some men were being unfairly targeted by women's ***white feathers***. Hence an unofficial scheme of 'starred' workers, denoted by a badge, was devised to protect them.

The 1915 Badge for Starred Occupations [Sole Society]

It was, perhaps, inevitable that the initial fervent enthusiasm would abate but, in addition, the realities of war were beginning to sink in with reports from serving soldiers, like **Jack White**, reaching the local newspapers in November 1914. In addition, the *Gallipoli Campaign* made it clear that soldiers were expected to fight a long way from Belgian atrocities. Thus volunteer numbers fell to around 70,000 a month. More worryingly, almost two in every five volunteers were entirely unsuitable on health grounds.

So the government felt compelled to intervene. At the time, ***Conscription*** was regarded as "un-British" despite being commonplace on the continent of Europe, recalling as it did folk memory of the unpopular 17thC. Cromwellian government. The result was the inevitable compromise. The ***Derby Scheme*** was a voluntary policy created in 1915 by Edward Stanley, 17th Earl of Derby, who later became Director of Recruitment. The concept was that men who voluntarily registered would only be called upon for service when necessary. In addition, married men would only be *"called up"* once the supply of single men was exhausted. A **National Registration Act** created a register that revealed the number of men still available and they were targeted in a number of ways – with posters, tales of German atrocities, and the threat of shame. The *Derby Scheme* used door-to-door visits to encourage men to *attest* to serve if needed.

This poster from September 1915, still displayed in the Museum, ultimately failed to inspire enough volunteers.

The scheme proved unsuccessful. 215,000 men enlisted and another 2,185,000 attested for deferred enlistment – but 38% of single men and 54% of married men who were not in *"starred occupations"* had still avoided this form of recruitment. Their reticence did much to hasten a move to full conscription.

The **Military Service Act** was passed on 27 January 1916 and, for the first time, introduced ***conscription*** from 2 March 1916, when all men aged 18-41 were liable to be called up unless married, widowed with children or in *"starred occupations"*. A system of local tribunals was also set up to hear appeals against conscription.

All attempts to end the stalemate had proved futile, with no cause for renewed optimism. Yet 1916 was to provide a year of paradox. The Government passed an unprecedented act for ***Conscription*** and perhaps the most infamous battles of the war – those of the ***Somme*** from July to November 1916 – were fought mainly by those volunteers from 1914-1915, aided by the few surviving *Regulars* and the *Territorial* battalions. Indeed, they had been recently filled with volunteers for these momentous battles. The major confrontations at land and at sea may have seemed as futile as those which had preceded them – yet underlying changes were taking place that were to have profound consequences in the coming years.

C. 1916: A Year of Paradox?

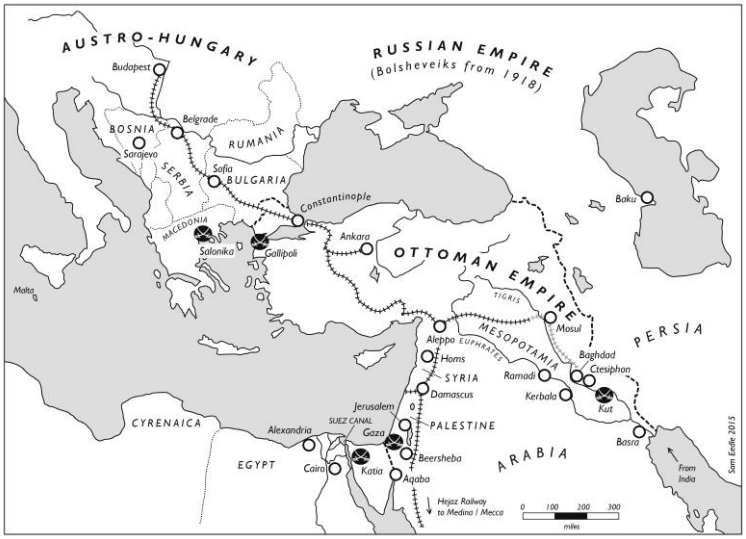
The year, which proved so significant in the history of the British army, started relatively quietly on the Western Front for the British, if not the French. It also provided an anti-climax for the Navy at the *Battle of Jutland* and unheralded – but important – developments in the Empire. Yet the events of this disappointing year produced a significant impact on the outcome of the war.

WESTERN FRONT	**DATE**	**WORLD WAR**
	13-21 Jan.	**Mesopotamia**: costly battles to relieve ***Kut***
	31 Jan.	**Air**: *Zeppelin* attacks
Germans attack *Verdun*	21 Feb.	
Conscription in Britain	2-7 March	***Kut*** relieving force defeated.
	19-22 March	**Naval**: '*U68*' sunk by '*Q-Ship*'
	23 April	**Egypt**: ***Katia*** defeat***;*** **M'potamia**: ***Kut*** fell
	31 May- Jun.	**Naval**: ***Battle of Jutland***
First day of the ***Battles of the Somme***	1 July 1916	**Russia**: *Brusilov Offensive*
	4 Aug.	**Egypt**: Battle of ***Romani***
Germans start *Hindenburg Line*	29 Aug.	
	3 Sept.	**Salonika**: Allied Offensive
Battles of the Somme peter out	18 Nov.	
Verdun: end of German attack	12 Dec.	**Egypt**: GB starts advance
	11 March 1917	**Mesopotamia**: Baghdad captured

Imperial Wars in Egypt and Mesopotamia

Mesopotamia[29]

THE CAMPAIGNS IN EGYPT AND MESOPOTAMIA



We have noted already that Britain and Turkey declared war on each other on 5 November 1914. On the same day, the *Indian Expeditionary Force D* landed at **Fao** on the Persian Gulf and, by 22 November, the force had captured **Basra**. This indicated an unpublicised, but important, war aim.

For the Turkish government at this period, the defence of Mesopotamia was not a priority. It was for the semi-autonomous Indian Government; this explains the haste of the expedition. The *Berlin to Baghdad Railway*[30], started in 1903, was now almost complete. Clearly, the importance of oil to future warfare was appreciated and interests in the *Persian Gulf* had to be protected.

However, the Indian government also had designs on extending the empire to Baghdad. Oilfields having been secured and because of the importance of the failing Gallipoli campaign, the Government in London was content with playing a "safe game". Despite this, the Government of India ordered its ***6th (Poona) Division*** north along the River Tigris in September 1915. This was a force of both Indian and British Battalions; one of the latter was the *1st Oxford & Bucks*, one of the few battalions stationed in the Empire that was not recalled home to fight. Serving with it was *Regular,* **Pte. W. A. Price [†]** from Twyning, who would have shared the initial success moving north along the Tigris until the Ottoman army, buoyed up by its

[29] Chapters on Mespotamia rely upon an excellent account by ***A. J. Barker*** of this "***Neglected War***"; discussed on p128.
[30] The railway, in fact completed only in 1940, was conceived by German government to befriend the Ottoman Empire.

Gallipoli successes, decided to make a stand 22 miles south of Baghdad at ***Ctesiphon*** from 5 October 1915**.**[31] Pte. Price was wounded during this battle, sustaining a bad fracture to his thigh. He was one of 4,600 casualties, which caused Gen. Townshend to order a retreat to ***Kut*** *(-al-Amara).* It may have appeared that Pte. Price was one of the few, fortunate ones, evacuated to a hospital in Bombay, India. The journey to Basra caused *"hideous sufferings"* for the wounded because of woeful inadequacies of support. Perhaps not surprisingly, he died of his wounds on 22 January 1916.[32]

He was perhaps luckier than his comrades – who were surrounded and cut off at ***Kut.*** It was captured on 29 April 1916**.** Realising their predicament, the Army had sent a relief force that was itself checked in costly battles from January to March[33] so that the rescue was abandoned. The garrison, therefore, had no choice but to surrender on 29 April 1916. This was a shattering blow to British prestige following the failure in Gallipoli. British dead or wounded at 30,000 were three times the losses of the Turks – also 13,000 were made *POW*s, 2,500 of them British.[34]

Egypt

From the start of war, Egypt was regarded as a vital part of the Empire to be defended from Ottoman attack, especially because of the Imperial artery of the ***Suez Canal***, through which soldiers from India and the ***Dominions*** flowed to the crucial base at **Alexandria**. The ***Royal Gloucestershire Hussars [RGH]***, a *Yeomanry* unit of the *Territorial Force*, was despatched there in April 1915 (before being diverted to Gallipoli as infantry, landing at *Suvla* on 18 August and being evacuated in December).

April 1916 was, therefore, a dreadful month for the survival of the Empire since, on the 23rd six days in advance of ***Kut***, a British force was defeated at ***Katia*** whilst defending the *Suez Canal*. It had been cut off by a superior Turkish force and lost 500, mainly as prisoners of war to join those from *Kut.*

Katia was not such a long-term disaster as was *Kut*, because an augmented force of reinforcements turned the tables on the Turks at nearby ***Romani*** on 4 August 1916**.** The Suez Canal and Egypt was, therefore, safe.

The RGH Memorial in Gloucester Cathedral Close [Author]

It was, however, a long-term disaster for those taken prisoner. Serving at *Katia* were the **Neale** brothers**. Charles** evaded capture but, although he saw his brother hit, he *"could not render any assistance"*.[35] His younger brother, **Frank Neale [†]**, was one of those taken prisoner; they were then subjected to an 800-mile forced march across the Desert with no food and very little water. Of the 2,500 British, 1,750 did not survive the journey, dying of maltreatment or disease.[36] The luckier ones, including Frank, went to Jerusalem but, nevertheless, he died of wounds on 13 September 1916. **Pte. W. E. Greenwood [†]** died only six days later on 19 September even though he had possibly reached Ankara in Central Turkey. There he died of cholera (a horrid death, the cause of which was polluted water). In July 1916 the parents of **Trooper F. Perkins [†]** had more positive news since he was declared *"wounded and no longer missing"* after *Katia*; he was being held as a prisoner of war but was also suffering from dysentery. Somewhat surprisingly in the circumstances, his parents heard from him from time to time up to the last three months before his death on 11 November 1916 at *Anon Karahissar* in Turkey, where he was buried in a grave marked with a distinctive sign.[37] Enquiries made in 1917 revealed this and that he had survived six months in captivity but had died of typhus, another disease caused by unacceptable living conditions.

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[31] At this time, the ***Gallipoli Campaign*** was petering out into stalemate before the evacuation by 9 January 1916. However, this allowed Turkey to move battle-hardened and victorious troops to besiege Kut.

[32] In an interesting footnote to the attitude of the British Government, the request of Pte. Price's mother to have him posthumously awarded the *1914-15 Star* was refused because his death did not occur on the Western Front.

[33] Future Town Crier, **Albert Curtis**, was a veteran of *Gallipoli* and a member of the relieving force. He was wounded, sent to Bombay and home. See p111. Future P.M. (1945-1951), **Clement Attlee**, was also wounded in this campaign.

[34] The *C.O.* at *Kut*, Maj.-Gen. **Sir Charles V. F. Townshend** (1861-1924) ,was also taken prisoner – but was well-treated by his captors. He was taken by train to Istanbul, near which he lived in comfort for the remainder of the war on a small island. He was given use of a Turkish navy yacht and had receptions in his honour at the royal Turkish court. He was awarded the *KCB* for his command at ***Kut,*** while he was a POW in 1917. His popularity waned post-war. No Tewkesburians lost their lives in Kut or its failed relief, although the *7th Gloucesters* joined the fight on 5 April 1916.

[35] Charles survived the war and was demobilised in April 1919.

[36] Martin Gilbert, p244 concluded that *"the saga of pain and death was one of the most evil aspects of the war".*

[37] Barker, p295-6, exemplifies this camp as one which was administered by a sadistic Naval Officer who was dismissed under international pressure on the Turkish Government and then executed after the war.

It was 4 January 1919 when the news of the last *POW* to die reached Tewkesbury. He was **Pte. Albert Clarke [†]** of the *Worcester Yeomanry,* who had died aged 27 on 24 December 1918. This battalion had shared the same actions as the *RGH* and Pte. Clarke was another captured at *Katia*. As with Frank Perkins, Albert appears to have marched all the way through Palestine to Syria: 330 miles. On 8 July his mother reported a letter from him *in Damascus*: *"We are treated alright by the Turks, who do their best to make us comfortable. It is a different way of living to ours; we have been told that parcels and letters will come alright"*. From other evidence his comments need to be treated sceptically; the next news came nearly three years later: he had *"died in Egypt of Malaria"*. Casualty records confirm that he **had** died on 24 December 1918 and was buried in *Beirut War Cemetery*, Lebanon. His date of death suggests that he had been released from captivity and that he was being treated in one of the *Combined Clearing Hospitals* based in the town, in Allied hands since October. Sadly it did not save his life.

In view of the atrocious conditions they had experienced, it is perhaps miraculous that some survived. **Trooper Jack Pullin** returned home by December 1918; it was reported that they were "*recovering their health after the hardships they had endured*". **Thomas Strickland**, from Apperley, also survived but died in 1938 aged only 47 from *TB*, probably exacerbated by life as a *POW*.[38]

Mesopotamia after *Kut*

Mesopotamia was deemed to be too important to be abandoned even after what has been described as *"the most abject capitulation in Britain's military history"*. After this, a new commander, **General Maude**, re-organized his army and then launched a successful campaign that captured ***Baghdad*** on 11 March 1917.[39]

Tewkesbury men were involved in this second phase of the war in Mesopotamia because, after fighting in *Gallipoli,* the *13th (Western) Division* was withdrawn in early January 1916 and arrived back in Egypt later in the month where the division held forward posts in the Suez Canal defences. As the crisis developed around Kut in February 1916, the Division began to move to Mesopotamia in order to strengthen the force being assembled for its relief. It was the only British Division to serve there and was part of the *Tigris Corps*. The division then took part in the failed attempts to relieve ***Kut***, after which the British force in the theatre was built up and reorganised in order to renew the offensive in 1917.

Driver Albert Cleal [†] was the first to die in this campaign. Serving with the Division's *66th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery*, he died on 19 July 1916. The division had arrived at his burial place of *Sheikh Saad* on 20 March to try to relieve *Kut*. It was not until the *Register* report of 9 December that it was learned that he had *"died of disease"*. By the end of August 30,000 sick had been evacuated.

The counter-attack waited until the night of 13/14 December 1916 when it was launched on both banks of the *River Tigris*. Approximately 50,000 men were involved in the advance.[40] Progress was slow – if sure – on account of heavy rain and an overriding concern to minimise casualties. **L/Cpl. A. G. Taylor [†]** of the 7th *Gloucesters* was the first to be killed on 15 December 1916 with **Pte. N. J. Mann [†]**, *9th Worcesters*, the next day, right at the start of the attack; both served with *39th Brigade*. Success did not come until the capture of the fortress of *Khadairi Bend* on 29 January 1917. By this time conscript **Pte. H. G. Rowley [†]**, *7th Gloucesters*, had been killed on 15 January, during the fight to clear the resistance. Conscript replacement **Pte. Clarence Howell [†]**, *9th Worcesters*, followed on 25 January, and then **Pte. J. J. Parnell [†]**, *7th Gloucesters*, on 10 February 1917. The bodies of Taylor, Mann and Howell were neither recovered nor identified; only their names are, therefore, commemorated on the ***Basra Memorial***, along with 40,000 other Commonwealth soldiers. Rowley and Parnell were buried in *Amara Cemetery*, next to which was a hospital so we can deduce that they died of either wounds or disease.

None of these men were able to participate in the fall of ***Baghdad*** on 11 March 1917 when, at last, the Mesopotamian adventure seemed to be paying dividends. The fall of Baghdad coincided with increased concerns about oil supplies – to the north at **Mosul** and, indeed, the oilfields of **Baku** on the *Caspian Sea,* which caused the loss of life of a Tewkesburian in 1918, just before the Armistice was signed.

For the time being Gertrude Bell aptly summed up the situation in a letter home: *"And that's the end of the German dream (the German) place is not going to be in this sun"*.[41]

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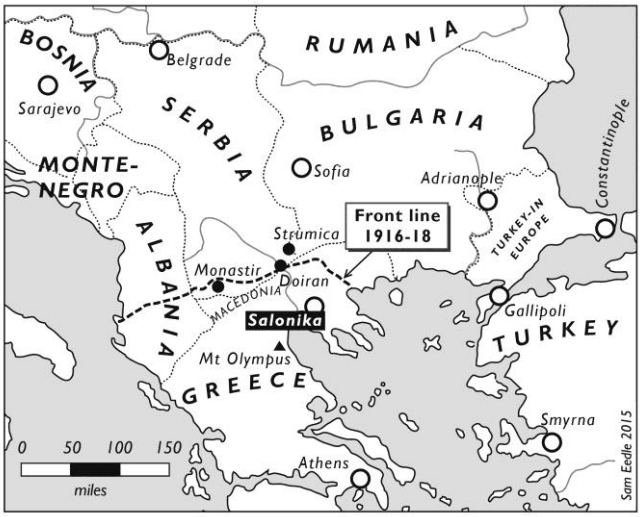
[38] Born in 1886, Pullin belonged to the butcher family of 15 Barton Street; for more on Turkish *POW*s, see page 104.
[39] James Morris, Farewell *the Trumpets: An Imperial Retreat.* Lt-Gen. Maude died of cholera on 18 November 1917.
[40] The force included **L/Cpl. F. Underwood**, the second Tewkesburian to win the ***Military Medal*** in November 1916.
[41] Gilbert p313. **Gertrude Bell**, *CBE* (1868 –1926) was a writer, traveller, political officer, administrator, archaeologist and spy who explored, mapped, and became highly influential to British imperial policy in Arabia. [Wikipedia]

Entente Solidarity? The Salonika Campaign

DATE	EVENTS
14 Oct 1915	Bulgaria declared war on Serbia
24 Nov	*26Div./9th Gloucesters* + *8th Oxford & Bucks* arrive
12 Dec.	27Div./*2nd Gloucesters* arrive
August 1916	*Battle of Horseshoe Hill, Doiran*

THE CAMPAIGN IN ITS BALKAN CONTEXT



The Salonikan Campaign was a response to the declaration of war on Serbia by Bulgaria on 14 October 1915 and its joining the war on the side of the Central Powers. Serbia was an ally of the Triple Entente and so an Anglo-French Force was sent immediately to try to save it from invasion but it arrived too late. At that stage it had the cooperation of the Greek government, which allowed a base at **Salonika** (Thessalonika). The main force arrived in November 1915 with the 26th Division including the *9th Gloucesters* and *8th Oxford & Bucks*; a month later the 27th Division arrived with the regular *2nd Gloucesters*.[42] After an initial battle, the theatre was relatively quiet – with health and conditions the main enemy. That would remain the case until victory came in 1918, although there were some further campaigns to be fought.[43]

The main task certainly facing the *2nd Gloucesters* was road-building and they acted as 'navvies' rather than infantrymen whilst only quartered in tents. So much barbed wire was used around the Salonika base that it was dubbed the *"Birdcage"*. There was an initial danger to camps posed by German bombers and, after Serbia pulled out of the fighting, the Greek government and its soldiers were reluctant hosts; King Constantine was regarded as pro-German. On 17 January 1916 Greek cavalry galloped over a road under construction. After protests there was an official apology and the officer in charge was gaoled.

Also in January, 176 soldiers had been stricken with illness (malaria and influenza), some being evacuated. In 1916 **L/Cpl. E. N. Hindmarsh [†]** was evacuated to Malta until he recovered and returned. **Pte. H. J. Waylen [†]** was less fortunate. A long-term territorial, he was in France with the *1st/5th Gloucesters* but, due to his experience – much needed in the *Kitchener 9th Gloucesters* – he was transferred to Salonika in November 1915. He contracted a cough in January and discharged, as "*Totally Disabled*" for service on 9 August 1916, having suffered from *tuberculosis (TB)*, attributed to active service.[44]

The *2nd Gloucesters* certainly had little attention from the Bulgarians until 3 September 1916, when the diary recorded "*increased artillery activity*". This was probably an oblique reference to the *Battle of Horseshoe Hill*, which involved the *26th Division* 10-18 August 1916, when a Bulgarian promontory near ***Lake Doiran*** was stormed, provoking artillery repercussions. However, the *2nd Gloucesters* did take part in two attacks in October 1916, which were successful though causing 90 casualties. By then, winter had beset the army and the weather was abominable and flooding to the *River Struma* caused problems. In late November another 114 casualties were incurred in an attack which *"drew artillery fire"*. Thereafter, the diary reported *"All quiet"* to such an extent that a leave party to England was permitted; **Harry Sayers** of *RFA* was on leave from Salonika and promoted to Cpl. in March-April 1917.[45]

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[42] Wyrall devotes three chapters to the *2nd Gloucesters* but largely ignores the *Kitchener Battalions.* See page 128.
[43] Interestingly *Wikipedia* claims: *"The British Government accepted the need to maintain a presence in Salonika to keep the French happy, but the Army chief did not favour offensive operations"*.
[44] He was awarded a pension of 25/- [£1.25p] a week. He is buried without *CWGC* recognition in the Town Cemetery.
[45] *Register*, 07 April 1917; on 6 Oct.1917 **Cpl. Harry F. Sayers**, RFA, had serious attack of malaria; after convalescence, had relapse and back in hospital in Salonika. His brother was killed on the Somme in 1916.

Naval and Aerial Warfare

The role of the Royal Navy in World War I also seems paradoxical. We have noted that, in 1914, one of the major causes of tension was the *'Race'* to build *'Dreadnoughts'* – yet the anticipated decisive naval battle did not materialise. We have also noted that, while the Navy was regarded as the *'Senior Service'*, only 50 of the 689 volunteers joined the Navy and, of those who did, half were deployed into the *Royal Naval Division* – as infantrymen. Only four Tewkesburians lost their lives serving with the Navy and only one of those was killed in action.[46] None was killed at *Jutland*.

At last, in 1916 the Germans attained the naval conflict that it had desired since August 1914 when the two fleets met at the ***Battle of Jutland*** from 31 May to 1 June 1916.

Location of Battle of Jutland

As far as we know, there were only a few Tewkesbury participants; Warrant Electrician **T. Brotheridge** was *"not in the thick"* of the battle; and the most graphic recall from ***Jesse Collins*** on *HMS Colossus* who wrote to his Holy Trinity Headmaster*: "we saw several German battleships and cruisers sinking... (we are) safe and sound"* and concluding that the *"British Navy is still alive"*. The *Record* hailed it as *"Probably the Greatest Naval Battle in History"*. The *Register* was a little more sober when, a week later, it claimed a *"Great Fight at Sea..... Enemy driven home"*.[47]

History records that the German navy inflicted more damage and one of the crucial weaknesses of our ships was exemplified by the death of **Able Seaman S. H. Price**. He was killed on 31 May 1916 when *HMS Indefatigable* was *"sunk by a salvo from Battle Cruiser von der Tann, which penetrated magazines**;** only 2 of 1012 were rescued"*.[48] On a happier note, one of Tewkesbury's few naval volunteers, **Chief Sick-Berth Steward A. E. Gregson,** won the ***DSM***.

The paradox lay in the fact that, although it was technically a victory for the Germans in that they destroyed more ships, the enemy had been "*driven home*" and never ventured out of port again. That situation played a crucial role in forcing the German Government to halt the war in November 1918.

After this brief interlude, the German Imperial Command reverted to its strategy of submarine warfare to starve Britain into surrender. Whereas in 1915, *U-Boats* had sunk 1.3m tons, in 1916 the total increased to 2.3m.[49] After Jutland, it was announced that *U Boats* would once more attack – though with a warning. The *U-Boat* campaign was moving towards its climax in April 1917.

In 1916 there were some hints of a counter-attack. On 23 February the Government set up a *Ministry for the Blockade*; this indicated its perceived importance. One month later, U-68 was the first *U-Boat* to be sunk by depth charges launched by a *Q-ship,* a heavily armed merchant ship with concealed weaponry, which was designed to lure submarines into making surface attacks where they were most vulnerable.

A sad, but significant, footnote to the sea war came on 5 June 1916, when *HMS Hampshire* was blown up by a German mine north of Scotland. This was a lucky strike for the enemy's sea-power, as on board was ***Lord Kitchener***, en route to Russia on a diplomatic mission. This seemed then a massive blow to British morale but it is, perhaps, fair to say that, by this time, Kitchener's power and influence was waning.

Meanwhile, the air war was still causing concern with *"Great Zeppelin Raid"* of 31 January. Aiming as far as Liverpool, 61 were killed in Walsall – but the Germans were increasingly concerned at the high rate of their losses. A determination to improve defences led to an enquiry, which created the ***RAF*** in 1918. Before then, however, the Germans started using a new weapon of aerial warfare: the bomber.

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[46] **William Halling [†]** killed in action; **Charles Simons [†]** and **Frederick Raggatt [†]** died of illness or wounds; **George Eagles [†]** was killed in *Gallipoli* with the *RMD*.
[47] *Record* 3 June 1916 p4 & *Register* 10 June 1916 p6
[48] Aged 26, he was the son of Mrs. Ellen Price of 7 Chance Street in 1891 but is commemorated in Cheltenham
[49] In May-July 1916, the period of Jutland, the monthly tonnage lost did decrease significantly. [Wikipedia]

Conscription

We have noted that ***Conscription*** was introduced for the first time from **2 March 1916**, when all men aged 18-41 were liable to be called up unless they were married, widowed with children or in trades deemed to be vital to the war economy: *"starred occupations"* (which also included clergymen).

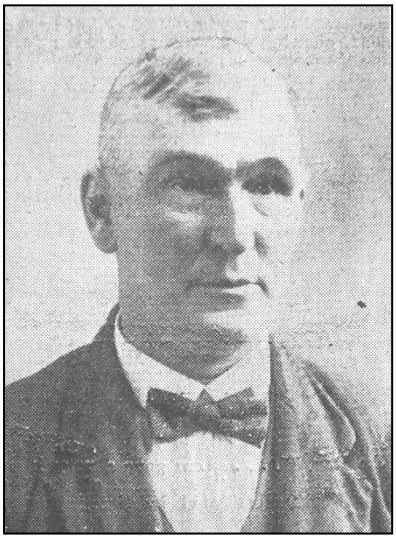
A system of appeals tribunals was established, to hear cases of men who believed they were disqualified on the grounds of ill-health, occupation or conscientious objection. The tribunals met from borough to national level. Although they are best known for their heavy-handed attitude towards cases of *Conscientious Objection,* most of the tribunals' work dealt with domestic and business matters. Men could apply on the grounds of their doing work of national importance, business or domestic hardship, medical unfitness, and conscientious objection; only around two per cent of applicants were *conscientious objectors*.[50]

We do have a newspaper report for a Tribunal in Tewkesbury, just before the Act came into force.[51] Entitled *"Local Tribunals – Applications for Exemptions from War Service*; *Board: H. Bishop (Mayor), A. Baker, C. W. Jones, G. C. Bayliss, G. P. Howell and T. W. Evans* (all local businessmen and elected councillors) *with Major Champion and C. Strickland representing Military Authorities."* There were two cases reported:

"1. Mr Wallis, Hay Merchant gained extension for a Hay Trusser, whose two brothers had enlisted.
2. Willis and Son refused for baker.
Altogether 4 out of 16 (were) refused extensions"

On 1 July 1916, with a sublime sense of timing, it was reported that all those gaining exemption *"must join the Gloucestershire Volunteer Regiment*" (a form of Home Guard).

Tewkesbury did have applications from *Conscientious Objectors*; some, like **Albert C. Purser [†]**, eventually accepted service in the armed forces and he was killed in 1918. The most famous locally was ***Frederick John Procter***, Flour Porter and Caretaker who was brought before the Magistrates in September 1916 as a "*Conscientious Objector: Charged with Being Absentee"*. The *Register* reported this case and the statement by the accused: *"I won't RAISE A RIFLE AGAINST A BROTHER; I would rather be taken to the Cross and shot*; (he) *wanted to see his dying mother but not with police*; Charles Mellor Jnr. offered to accompany him but he refused: *"You may make me a corpse but never a soldier"*. He considered the tribunal not fair as *"the cases were settled in a corn dealer's office beforehand"*.[52] According to local folklore, Frederick Procter did come to the Cross in post-war years – but he was wearing his cap from Dartmoor Prison where, allegedly, he was incarcerated. In 1933 he unsuccessfully stood for election to the Council as a Labour candidate. Although he only came fifth, he won 30% of votes cast.[53]



F. J. Proctor 1931 [Register]

The Act initially failed to deliver: only 43,000 of the men called up qualified for general service in the army. Another 93,000 failed to appear when called up – and filled the courts. 748,587 men claimed some form of exemption, filling the tribunals. In addition, there were the 1,433,827 already "starred" as being in a war occupation; or those who were ill or who had already been discharged on these grounds. Within four months, a revised version of the Act was passed; this enabled the War Office to extend the service of time-expired servicemen and brought, within the terms of the Act, all men – regardless of marital status – from the ages of 18 to 41. The government also gained the right to re-examine men previously declared medically unfit for service. More revisions were to follow in 1917 and 1918

We must stress, however, that the Army that fought so valiantly on the Somme in 1916 was mainly the late Lord Kitchener's volunteer *"New Army"*.

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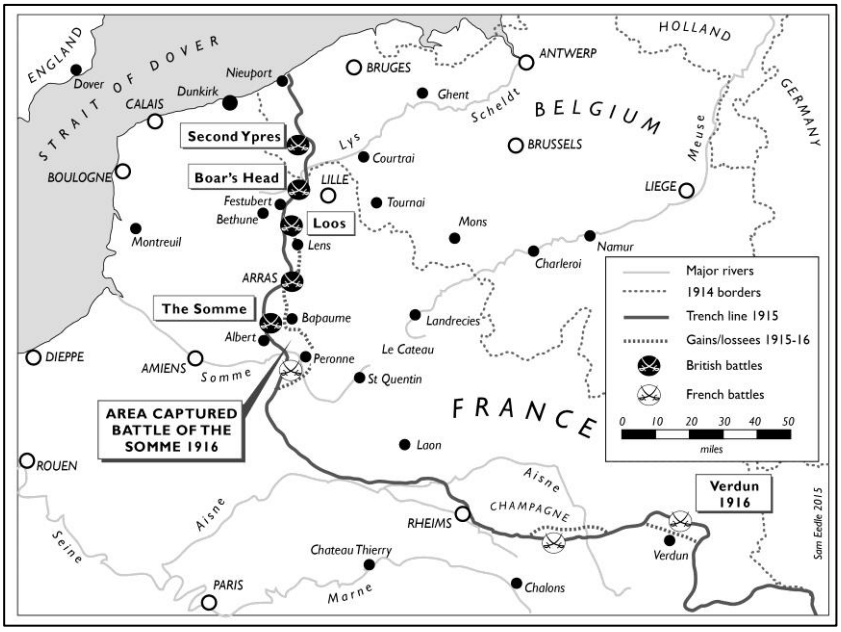
[50] Wikipedia. The main source of local information came from the *Tewkesbury Record*; for some reason, the *Register* chose not to cover this item of news. Most of the cases did not provide names and there are no records of these tribunals in *Glos. Archives* as the Ministry of Health ordered the destruction of the archives in 1921. Only those in Middlesex and recently in Staffordshire have survived [*The Sentinel*, 13 August 2013]
[51] *Record*, 26 February, 1916 p4/4.
[52] *Register*, 30 September 1916 p5/3
[53] *Register* 7 November 1936 p5/1. It is not the place to study ***Conscientious Objection*** in this book.

Winter Warfare on the Western Front

The lives of four local soldiers were expended during this winter. It was well into Spring when **Pte. Leonard Devereux [†]** was killed on 2 March. An 'exile', living in Glamorgan, he had volunteered with *10th, Royal Welsh Fusiliers* in 1914. The battalion had reinforced the *BEF* at Boulogne on 27 September 1915. Accordingly he was awarded the *1914-15 Star*.

The battalion was stationed near ***Ypres*** and the Germans were in an aggressive mode. To gain higher ground, they captured an important position on 14 February. The British were determined to recover this spoil-heap, an unusual observation advantage across the ***Salient.***

THE LOCATION OF THE SOMME ON THE WESTERN FRONT



The 76th Brigade, to which his battalion belonged, began an intensive training exercise to prepare for a frontal assault, planned to take place at dusk on 29 February 1916. Notably, all troops were equipped with the new steel helmets. The bombardment eventually opened on 1 March, destroying the German defensive works and thus enabling the infantry to attack in the early hours of 2 March. The attack was successful as it achieved complete surprise; all their objectives were captured within the hour and gains were consolidated. However, Pte. Devereux was one of the 1,620 British casualties. The *Register* reported that he was "*instantaneously killed by a fragment of shrapnel"*. His body was never recovered nor identified and so his name only is commemorated on the *Menin Gate Memorial* at Ypres.

The intermittent nature of *trench warfare* is demonstrated by the next loss coming on 21 May 1916 – when we meet up again with the *1st Gloucesters* who had remained in theatre in the old *Loos* battlefield until June 1916, shortly before moving south to take part in the Somme Campaign**. Pte. William Hodges [†]**, a veteran *Reservist*, was not able to join them as he had already been killed. The diary for 21 May records a bout of random shelling: *"Fair amount of shelling around Maroc … 1 killed"*; this was Pte. Hodges.

In June 1916 the *13th Gloucesters*, a *Pioneer Battalion*, was using its members' mining, building and agricultural skills to supplement the work of the *Royal Engineers* in the construction of fortified emplacements and other field works. The battalion was assigned to a quiet sector, to serve its apprenticeship in the trenches, as repairs were never-ending. There was routine wear and tear but some bombardments damaged trenches out of all recognition. The War Diary suggests that **Pte. T. Bishop [†]** was killed on 6 June, when his company had been allocated to work on various sections of the line near *Festubert.* The only clue to Thomas' fate was an entry in another soldier's diary: *"one of our chaps was killed last night"*. Pte. Bishop's body was recovered and he was buried nearby in *Brown's Road Military Cemetery*.

However "quiet" was deemed the sector, the battalion was involved in the attack by the 39th Division on a position called the *Boar's Head* on 30 June. Just under 1,100 casualties were sustained, of which the *13th* suffered 86, including **Sgt. T. Harrington [†]**, an early volunteer. The role of the battalion at that time was to dig two communication trenches and two breastworks to allow the passage of reinforcements between the original British front line and newly captured German trenches. The fate of Sgt. Harrington was unknown until 15 July, when a letter from fellow Tewkesburian, Cpl. Tom Bassett, explained that he had been *"badly wounded in the back…under the conditions of a perfect hell"*. It was not, however, until May 1917 that the War Office confirmed his death. Sgt. Harrington's body was never recovered nor identified; his name only is commemorated on the *Loos Memorial* in *Dud Corner Cemetery*.

The battle, in which he was killed, was not officially recognised as a separate battle. This was 24 hours before the much better known battle – *the First Day of the Somme.*

The Battles of the Somme, July to November 1916

Battle / date	Events
Winter 1915-16	*Trench Warfare*
1 1-13 July	Battle of Albert (inc. La Boiselle): First Day – 57,470 casualties
2 14-17 July	Battle of Bazentin (and diversionary attack at Fromelles)
3 20-25 July	Attack at High Wood
4 15 July-3 Sept.	Battle of Delville Wood
5 23 July-3 Sept.	Battle of Pozières (involving 1st/5th; 1st & 10th Gloucesters)
6 3-9 Sept.	Battles of Guillemont (3-6 Sept) & Ginchy (9 Sept.),
7 15-22 Sept.	Battle of Flers-Courcelette (first use of tanks)
8 25-28 Sept.	Battle of Morval
9 26-28 Sept.	Battle of Thiepval,
10 1-18 October	Battle of Le Transloy,
11 1 Oct.-11 Nov.	Battle of the Ancre Heights
12 13-18 Nov.	Battle of the Ancre: end of the Somme

The Cross Section, from ***Albert*** to ***Le Transloy*** has been drawn by **Peter Finnigan**, architect, to whom we are deeply indebted for his help.

The numbers refer to the battles; others can be studied by checking their location near to the four battles above.

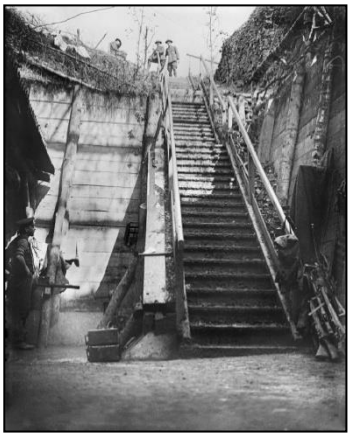
The ***Battle of the Somme*** is how the *"Big Push"* of 1916 is known – infamously – today. We remember 1 July as being the *"most disastrous day in the History of the British Army"*. Its infamy is derived from the horrendous losses on the first day of the battle that wiped out so many of those enthusiastic volunteers from the autumn of 1914. The high casualty rate reflected badly on the commanders and fed the *"Lions led by*

Donkeys"[54] interpretation of the war. The law of unintended consequences also came into effect once again. It had been a clever ruse by Kitchener to encourage friends to volunteer with their friends – but, when the dreaded telegrams arrived, whole streets in the north of England in particular were depressed by the closing of black curtains, then the traditional way to commemorate a family death – and one which lasted into my generation. It provided also the abandonment of the system of recruitment into locally based battalions.

The government also committed another well-meaning mistake, by deciding to commission and show to the public a film of the battle. For the first time, the families back home could see for themselves how alien were the conditions in which their men were fighting and dying.

We are also less well aware today that it was a **series of battles** in the Somme area, which continued until they petered out in November 1916. This happened because of the exhaustion of soldiers on both sides and the onset of winter, which traditionally led to a welcome pause in hostilities. The campaign was not one of the choosing of Gen. Haig but it was undertaken once again to support his French ally as part of a "Grand Offensive" in which the British would play a role. The French logically, therefore, became the senior partner in coordinating allied forces. Politicians agreed the strategy in November 1915 but there was considerable debate about the part British troops would play: Haig preferred to fight in the *Messines* area of ***Flanders*** to the north.[55]

However, all this optimism was shattered on 21 February 1916 when the Germans launched their own attack on the fortress of **Verdun**. This attack was designed to be decisive in the long term by *"bleeding the French Army white"*. The French were consequently under the most severe pressure; both sides believed that, if Verdun fell, then the consequences for French morale and government would be incalculable. Haig still preferred to await 15 August for his attack – but he was overruled, inevitably, by the desperate French.



German dugout on the Somme [Wikipedia]

The sector allocated to the British was also highly unsuitable to infantry attack. It had been relatively quiet during the war so far – the French adopting a 'live and let live' philosophy. The Germans had, meanwhile, made good use of the time and chalk to build strongpoints and deep lines of trenches which would be very difficult to destroy by artillery fire – as it proved. In addition, a study of the cross-section of the Somme Battlefield on page 31 will demonstrate that English forces would be attacking uphill – with little or no cover if the machine-guns were not silenced by the artillery barrage.

On the other hand, British forces in France had increased, from the 5 divisions of the *BEF* in 1914, to 43. This was the result of the recruitment campaign in 1914 and, by early 1916, these *'Kitchener battalions'* had been trained in the UK and transferred to France. Inevitably many of the divisions were very inexperienced, except in trench holding. The new and energetic Minister of Munitions, **Lloyd George**, had promised that the deficiencies of shell supply, which had proved so disastrous at *Loos*, had been remedied. The problem was, by 1916, not so much the quantity of armaments – but the quality: Haig's plans depended on the artillery destroying the German defences, in order for the inexperienced infantry to move forward in waves.

Despite all these caveats, Haig has traditionally been assailed for succumbing to the common British error of unreasoned over-optimism at the 'beginning of a season'. It must be stressed that opportunities were created – but missed – for the desired cavalry breakthrough to the open country beyond.[56]

It is not surprising, therefore, that a significant accepted belief is that the Battles of the Somme were a costly failure. Although it is undeniable that too many young men lost their lives, we shall need to revisit the consequences of the battle and ask if it was not, indeed, a success in the long-term – even though, in the event, it would still remain, most definitely, a costly and very bloody victory.

Battle of *Albert* (including *La Boiselle*), 1-13 July

Unfortunately the *"Big Push"* was not a big secret: the Germans were expecting an attack and prepared for it. It was heralded in the now traditional way with an intense artillery bombardment which was tasked with

[54] *"Lions led by Donkeys";* for further discussion of the historiography see Section IV page 123.
[55] There were successful battles *in Messines* in the 1917 campaign; see page 46.
[56] M. Waldron points out that operational command was in the hands of Gen. Sir Henry Rawlinson and claims that Rawlinson missed an opportunity on 1 July to exploit the success in the south of the sector.

cutting the barbed wire and neutralising German artillery. The British artillery fired more than 1.5 million shells, more than in the first year of the war; another 250,000 shells were fired on 1 July. The bad news lay in the quality of British shells. While British shell production had increased since the shell scandal of 1915, many shells failed to explode. *Shrapnel* was virtually useless against entrenched positions and there was insufficient *High Explosive* ammunition to cut the wire. The bombardment actually commenced on 24 June – with the infantry attack delayed two days to 1 July

Despite French problems at Verdun, the attack on 1 July was still an Allied effort. There was Allied success to the south but the British attack of 110,000 men was to take place along the road uphill from ***Albert*** to ***Bapaume***. This was a disaster: very little progress was made with troops being stuck nearly all along the line at a cost of 57,470 casualties, of which 19,240 were killed. One of the problems was that the machine-guns had not been wiped out by the artillery: they cut swathes through the infantry advancing in waves at walking pace. In terms of casualties, it was *"the most disastrous day in the history of the British Army"*.[57]

The Gloucestershire battalions were fortunately not involved in this first advance – but Tewkesburians fighting in other units did lose their lives. **Rifleman John Walker [†]**, a 41 year old Territorial serving in the *5th Battalion, London Regiment*, was part of a diversionary attack to the north; the objective was to draw German reserves away from the main part of the Somme offensive. The assault was initially successful but the situation deteriorated significantly as the Londoners were cut off from their reserves by the strength of the German artillery. The battalion was also subjected to counter-attacks and the survivors were eventually forced back to their original lines. Despite the early success, the attack was ultimately a complete failure. The War Diary reported a total of 588 casualties; one of the fatally wounded was Rifleman Walker.

It is believed that **L/Cpl. G. M. Topham [†]** was killed on the first day, but in part of the main attack. This former Grammar School boy had moved to Sheffield and volunteered – probably underage – for a *"Pals Battalion"*, the *12th (Sheffield City) Battalion*. After serving briefly in Egypt, the battalion was in France for the attack: its role was to capture the heavily fortified village of ***Serre***. The attack failed: *"They had to pass through a terrible curtain of shell fire and German machine guns were rattling death from two sides".* The remnants of the battalion were taken out of the line on the evening of 3 July. The Diary for 7 July records 495 casualties. L/Cpl. Topham was one and one can only imagine how long he lay in *'no man's land'*, before he was taken to a *Casualty Clearing Station,* where he succumbed to his wounds on 10 July.

We have noted that the centre of the attack stalled before the village of La ***Boiselle*** and, two days later, reinforcements including the *8th Gloucesters* were brought into the attack. This cost the lives of two local friends who, on that fateful recruiting rally at the Watson Hall, were *"the first to mount the platform to enlist"*. **Ptes. L. Rossell [†]** and **H.E. Rowley [†]** enlisted together – and were killed together on 3 July.

By then, there was no element of surprise and German reserves were being rushed to the front. A series of relatively small-scale attacks succeeded, at great cost over the next 12 days, in pushing forward within sight of the enemy's second line so that eventually ***La Boiselle*** was captured.[58] The two were killed on the second day – *"working a machine gun"*, in the case of Rossell. The Diary reported 302 casualties during the advance and subsequent retention of the line. The bodies of both friends were never recovered nor identified but their names are recorded in close proximity on the *Thiepval Memorial*.

Once an attack had been successful, the land had to be defended against counter-attack and artillery fire – and this cost the lives of soldiers uninvolved in direct attacks. Artillery batteries targeted each other; this is how early volunteer, **Gunner W. A. Day [†]**, lost his life**.** We think that he was part of the 30th Division which achieved considerable success, unlike the ill-fated attempts further north. The artillery bombardment was more effective in this part of the line, paving the way for the successful infantry assault. Serving in 'B' Battery, one of four batteries in the brigade each with six 18-pounder field guns, Gunner Day was killed in action on 15 July 1916, two days after the nominal close of the *Battle of Albert*, probably during the normal artillery exchanges that were taking place. Gunner Day's descendants were informed that he *"was in charge of the Cavalry. He got blown up among the horses – killed instantly by shell burst"*.

By this phase of the battle, the Territorial *1st/5th Gloucesters* had moved out of reserve, its main action coming on 19-20 July when it moved into the attack. It failed to capture its objective and *"lost heavily"*: two officers and 50 *'ORs'* – including, no doubt, **Sgt. Henry Cook [†]**. He was the second local *Territorial* to be

[57] Alastair H. Fraser etc., *Ghosts on the Somme: Filming the Battle, June-July 1916* (Pen and Sword, 2009)
[58] *8th Gloucesters* was involved in this success and its *C.O.* was awarded a *VC* for his role that day.

killed, lamented as one of *"many of the old hands (who) have shed their blood"*.[59]

Sometimes it is difficult to pinpoint an action when fatal wounds were sustained. **Pte. R. C. Sayer [†]** died officially on 8 September 1916 at *Abbeville Base Hospital.* He was wounded in the thigh on 21 July when *"he was hit shortly after carrying in Lieutenant Percy Badham"*.[60] War Diaries usually recorded the names only of officer casualties and **Lt. Percy Badham** was wounded during an unsuccessful attack in the area of ***La Boiselle***. Pte. Sayer is thus mentioned by name, because he had rescued an officer. However, when his death was reported it was due to a *"serious chest wound"*; it is not clear when but, in the preceding weeks, the War Diary recorded numerous incidents that resulted in casualties.[61]

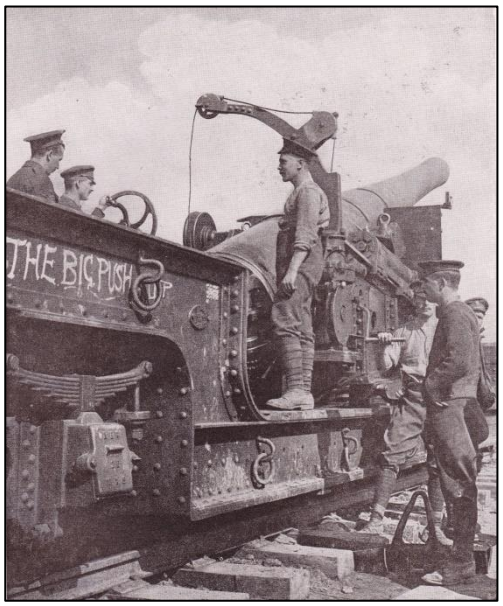
Once captured, a strong-point had to be defended from counterattack and on 10 September the Canadian *10th Alberta Battalion* took over the front line. It was then involved in a series of defensive operations, primarily successful, near ***La Boiselle***. In one of these actions, **Pte. William Herbert Jones [†]** was severely wounded in the buttock and lost a lot of blood. He died of these wounds on 25 September 1916 at a *Casualty Clearing Station* in Puchevilliers and was buried in the nearby *British Cemetery*. **He was the first emigrant to Canada from Tewkesbury to be killed in the war.**

Battle of *Bazentin*, 14-17 July

By 13 July the British attack was progressing slowly and painfully uphill towards the second line of German defences. At the beginning of this battle, British troops broke through the line during a night attack – only to face stiffening enemy defences on the higher land beyond. No local men were killed here.

Diversionary attack at *Fromelles*, 19 July 1916

To take pressure off the beleaguered British forces on the Somme, a diversionary attack was planned further north in the area of Armentieres, at *Fromelles*. Unfortunately, untried Divisions were used in what turned out to be an ill-planned attack that achieved nothing at a cost of thousands of casualties. The attack was the début of the Australians on the Western Front, described on the Australian War Memorial, as *"the worst 24 hours in Australia's entire history"*. Of 7,080 *BEF* casualties, 5,533 losses were incurred by the 5th Australian Division; German losses were 1,600–2,000, with 150 taken prisoner. (*Fromelles* is now known for the recent discovery and re-burial of 250 Australian and British soldiers killed in this battle.)



The "Big Push": Heavy artillery
[Hammerton]

The British contribution was the *61st Division* which included a second line *Territorial* battalion, the *2nd/5th Gloucesters*:[62] however, *'second line'* Divisions had suffered for some time from lack of equipment. This Division had landed in France on 23 May 1916 but was not involved in the main offensive – until this disastrous, diversionary attack. The *2nd/5th Battalion* was in reserve and did not take part in the assault; consequently the casualty return in the War Diary for 19 and 20 July records just two wounded men. Although the *61st Division* did not suffer as badly as the Australian division in terms of casualties, it had damaged its reputation to the extent that it was only used for holding trench lines until 1917.

The battalion's **Cpl. A. H. Askew [†]** met his death over a month later on 31 August 1916. His battalion had remained in the *Fromelles* sector during August and both sides engaged in trench raids, in which the

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[59] *5th Gloucester Gazette*. The *Graphic* did not announce his death until October 1916. Although the Chaplain reported that he had died of wounds, his body was never recovered; his name only is commemorated on the ***Thiepval Memorial***. His grave was probably destroyed in the second Battles of the Somme in 1918. [See page 70] Sgt. Cook was awarded the *1914-1915 Star*; all his medals are held by the *Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum* in Gloucester.

[60] **Lt. Percy Badham,** son of the Town Clerk, was commissioned into the *3rd/5th Gloucesters* in 1915. [See page 102]

[61] **Pte. Sayer** was not awarded a gallantry medal for his rescue. News of his fatal wound came in the *Register* of 9 September 1916; it then published an obituary on 16 September. His brother had been wounded in the *Zeppelin* attack on London – see page 22.

[62] When war broke out Territorials were 'asked' to volunteer for service abroad. 90% did so and constituted the first line battalions. 2nd Line battalions comprised men who were slower to volunteer for whatever reason. With the advent of *Conscription* in March 1916, this 'choice' was removed.

Gloucestershire poet, **Lt. F. W. Harvey**, was captured on 17 August 1916 in the German front-line trench, whilst on a lone reconnaissance patrol.[63] Two weeks later Cpl. Askew was killed. The War Diary is not very informative on the activity that day and simply notes that the unit was in trenches and suffered *"one Other Rank killed and three wounded"*. Cpl. Askew's body was buried in *Laventie Military Cemetery*.

The uphill attacks, trying to conquer the German strengthening defences, continued: there were simultaneous attacks on ***High Wood, Delville Wood and Pozières Ridge***. 23 July, when these attacks were taking place, was another dismal day, on which four Tewkesbury men – serving in different battalions and in different battles – lost their lives.

Attacks on *High Wood*, 20-25 July

The 19th (Western) Division had arrived in France on 18 July 1915 and entered the front line at ***Bazentin le Petit*** and took part in one of a number of unsuccessful attacks on the key position of ***High Wood***. The *8th Gloucesters'* War Diary entry for 23 July commented that: *"...Attack failed, our casualties being one officer killed, five wounded and eight missing..186 casualties among other ranks"*. The one officer was the second local officer to be killed and the first of the family of Edward Priestley, Headmaster of the Grammar School.[64] **Lt. S. N. Priestley [†]** led his platoon in the attack – but did not return. One of his men reported: *"I saw him wounded and fall not far from the German Parapet. He struggled to his feet. I saw him stand and sway as I passed him"*. Although the dreaded telegram had reached his father, the War Office did not recognise his death officially until 24 February 1917. His body was found in November 1917 but it was never identified after the war and so he is commemorated instead on the *Thiepval Memorial*.[65]

Battle of *Delville Wood*, 15 July-3 September

The 5th Division was relatively experienced after fighting near *Vimy Ridge*, in front of Arras so, at the start of the Somme offensive, the Division was enjoying a period of rest and re-fit. That soon came to an end when they were moved to take part in an unsuccessful attack on *High Wood*. One constituent battalion was the *14th Warwicks*, the *'Birmingham Pals'*, and serving with them was former Tewkesbury *Territorial*, **Pte. P. C. Hawker [†]**. One *Pal* recalled his memories of the action: *"A Company returned with 4 men & 1 Officer, afterwards 3 more men come in, after lying in a shell hole for 48 hrs. Reported they saw German snipers shoot our wounded, who raised themselves up, or tried to take off their equipment. We were enfiladed by machine-gun fire, in a field of oats…"*. Pte. Hawker was killed in that action on 23 July 1916. His name only is commemorated on the *Thiepval Memorial*. British and South Africa troops suffered serious losses – significantly, also a German Division recorded *"the loss of many good, irreplaceable men"*.

Battle of *Pozières*, 23 July-3 September

Cpl. Austin C. Papps [†] and **Pte. T. Parrott [†]** were both Tewkesburians who lost their lives in this battle whilst serving with the *145th Brigade*; however, they served with different regiments.

Cpl. Papps had moved to Reading and so served in the *Royal Berkshire Regiment*. Already a corporal aged only 18, his battalion was not involved at the start of the offensive but took part in this later phase for *Pozières Ridge*. The division helped gain and hold – at a high cost – the key village of ***Pozières***, located on a ridge of high ground between *Albert* and *Bapaume*. The role of the 145th Infantry Brigade was to carry out a night attack to capture German trenches to the west, whilst the Australians attacked from the south. The War Diary commented: *"the captured trenches being continually under fire...the Battalion did well in the attack and later when holding the captured trenches"*. The battalion lost 128 men.

Pte. Parrott, a Territorial relocated to Llandrindod Wells in Wales, had re-joined the *1st/5th Gloucesters* who found themselves alongside the Berkshires during the *Battle of Pozières Ridge*. The battalion launched its attack at 12.35 a.m. on 23 July when, according to the War Diary: *"The attack was quickly discovered by enemy …. Heavy barrage of artillery and machine-gun fire were opened and in spite of being reinforced the objectives were not reached"*. The Regimental historian, Wyrall, praised *"their gallant efforts"* that had cost 148 men. One casualty was Pte. Parrott, although there is some mystery about the exact circumstances of his death. His body was never recovered nor identified; he, like Cpl. Papps, is commemorated at *Thiepval*.

L/Cpl. A. E. Wilkes [†] was also killed in this battle on that tragic day for Tewkesbury – and is also commemorated, with 73,000 others, at *Thiepval*. He was serving in the 1st Division with the *10th Gloucesters*

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[63] *Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum*. Another eminent local poet, **Pte. Ivor Gurney**, also served in the battalion.
[64] Lt. Priestley obtained a commission early in the war, 29 December 1914, because he had served in his University *OTC.* as well as being an experienced *Territorial NCO*.
[65] Many temporarily buried graves were destroyed in subsequent fighting in 1918 – see page 70 onwards.

and had served as an early volunteer with the "*Fighting 10th*" at *Loos.* The battalion did not see action again until July 1916 during the *Battles of the Somme*. It did not participate on the opening day but was involved 10 days later in burying the dead from the initial assaults, although 28 men were still killed and wounded through enemy shellfire. On 22 July the battalion was in the front line south of the German stronghold of *Martinpuich,* preparing for an attack the following day. At 12.30 a.m. on 23 July (at the same time and in the same offensive, supported by 145th Brigade of **Papps** and **Parrott**, to capture this dominant ***Pozières Ridge*** to the north) **L/Cpl. Wilkes** was one of the fatal casualties, when 12 were killed; his body was never recovered nor identified.

23 July 1916 was, therefore, a black day for Tewkesbury's soldiers but the battle for ***Pozières Ridge*** continued and cost the lives of five more.

The *8th Gloucesters* had also stayed in this crucial battle and its **Cpl. Joseph Walker [†]** died a week later on 30 July 1916, when the War Diary noted: *"6.30pm – our attack was held up by enfilade Machine-gun fire and concealed snipers from the right.....Casualties were 14 officers killed, wounded and missing; 160 other ranks".* Cpl. Walker was killed during this unsuccessful assault; he is commemorated at *Thiepval*.

We have emphasised already that, once a target had been captured, it had to be held despite the furious German counter-attacks for which they were renowned. Thus, on 1 August, **Pte. W. H. Sheldon [†]**, then living in Birmingham, enlisted with the *11th Warwicks*, lost his life whilst his battalion was holding the front line at ***Bazentin Ridge*** – which had been captured, in theory, back on 17 July. The battalion had already lost 275 men on 15 July in an unsuccessful attempt. The War Diary for 11 August noted: *"Hostile artillery very intense throughout the day... A large number of men were buried by HE (High Explosive) shells, this accounts for the missing...4 bodies were dug out afterwards and pieces of other men, unrecognisable...This was a very trying day for the troops".* The casualties recorded were 63 men; one was Pte. Sheldon – although the *Register* did not announce his death until 3 March 1917. Not surprisingly, therefore, his body was never recovered nor identified; he too is commemorated on the *Thiepval Memorial*.[66]

The *9th Essex Regiment*, with veteran Tewkesburian **Sgt. L. V. Mann [†]**, had been brought up into the battle, preparing to launch an attack in the evening of 12 August against German trench systems. During the evening of 11 August and the following morning, the battalion's own trenches were subjected to a heavy artillery bombardment that caused about 110 casualties. The attack in the evening captured the enemy position without opposition and then successfully resisted German counter-attacks. Small compensation it was to Sgt. Mann who was one of the fatalities on 12 August. A veteran of India, the Boer War and *Loos,* his body was never recovered nor identified he is also commemorated instead at *Thiepval*.[67]

Serving also in the *"Fighting 10th"* was 37-year-old **Pte. James Jeynes [†]**, who had already been wounded in July – but his wound had *"nearly healed"*. However, just two weeks later, the *Register* reported his death in action on 17 August 1916, when the battalion was in the front line trenches at ***Bazentin le Petit***. Its War Diary noted: *"17/18 August – Co-operated in a bombing attack in front of Martinpuich. The attack was unsuccessful".* However, there were 72 casualties, among whom was Pte. Jeynes whose body was never recovered nor identified; he also is commemorated on the *Thiepval Memorial*.

Still linked with the *10th Gloucesters* in the *1st Division* was the regular *1st Battalion.* It had been in reserve for much of the Somme Campaign so far – but it moved into the front line in the middle of July. As part of the ***Battle of Bazentin Ridge*** in July, the battalion carried out successful attacks to capture German trenches. After a quiet first half of August, on 20 August the battalion moved into the front. During the long and bitterly fought ***Battle of Pozières***, Its War Diary recorded: *"Front line held by A Company with 2 Lewis Guns and 10 men in advanced post...A Company's advanced position was attacked and driven back 30 yards where a position in shell holes was taken up".* There were 52 casualties, of which one fatality was another local reservist *"Old Contemptible"*: **L/Cpl. F. Dickenson [†]**. His body was never recovered nor identified and he is also commemorated on the *Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme*.

On 25 August, during that same ***Battle of Pozières***, the first line *Territorial 1st/5th Gloucesters* had moved into the front line in readiness for an attack. The second of the Moore family of Territorial Officers, **Lt. Lionel Watson Moore [†]**, had taken command of 'B Company' on 2 August. The War Diary for 27 August, the day on which Lt. Moore was killed, recorded that: *"Several dug outs were bombed and trench*

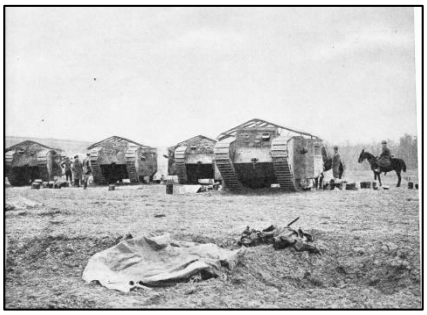
[66] Pte. Sheldon's brother, **Edward Sheldon**, volunteered in August 1914 and served in the *1st Gloucesters*. He was badly wounded on the Somme in August 1916 but, according to a local nurse, **Miss Merrell,** he was *"cheerful"*. Nurse **Mary E. Merrell** was one of the few local *VAD* nurses who served on the Western Front – see pages 98-102**.**

[67] Sgt. Mann's brother, **Pte. N. J. Mann [†]**, *9th Worcesters*, was to be killed in Mesopotamia in 1916; see page 26.

consolidated...About 50 prisoners were taken...enemy's other losses estimated at about 200 killed and wounded". The *Register* later added that his death had come after he *"led a trench raid after lighting up a cigarette; he ran down a trench firing and laughing and the Germans surrendered"*, except one who, *"out of spite"* or not knowing of the surrender, shot him through the head, killing him instantly. In anger, a wounded private shot Germans until he also died. The padré attempted some consolation in a letter delivered by a welfare officer: *"I buried your splendid soldier son this morning at 4 a.m. in the very trench in which he and his men were killed while taking it most magnificently"*. Despite the padré's words, Lt. Moore's grave marker was evidently lost later; he is also commemorated on the *Thiepval Memorial*.[68]

Another Territorial battalion involved was *1st/6th Gloucesters* which we have not so far encountered amongst local fatalities although it was involved in the battles of ***Albert*** and ***Bazentin Ridge***. During the fighting in July alone, the battalion had suffered heavily, sustaining nearly 400 casualties. Surviving those battles was a conscript, **Pte. H. A. Greening [†]**, transferred as a replacement into this battalion in June 1916. The battalion subsequently took part in the ***Battle of Pozières***, an eventual success – albeit at great cost. On 3 September, officially the final day of that battle phase, the battalion was in the front line trenches at ***Thiepval***, *"heavily shelled by heavy howitzers from 5am to 3pm"*. **Pte. Greening** died on 3 September, when a shell fell on the parapet of the front line trench, burying and killing him instantly. It was reported that *"he passed away to his eternal home without any pain"*. His body was recovered and he is buried in *Auchonvillers Military Cemetery*.

The fierce ***Battle of Delville Wood*** was nearly two months old but ended on the same date with the death of **Gunner William Henry Jones [†]**, a member of the newly important *Machine Gun Corps (Motor Branch)*. The Corps had formed in November 1914 as a result of lessons learned that year and was organised into *Motor Machine-gun Batteries* to provide infantry divisions with extra mobile machine-gun firepower, fitted to motorcycles and sidecars. By late 1914, however, fighting on the Western Front had settled into static warfare and the opportunities for *Machine Gun Corps* units to operate as a mobile force were limited; in many cases, they had to operate as conventional machine-gun sections until 1918.



Weapon of the Future at Flers
[Hammerton]

Gunner Jones had been a volunteer living in Stoke on Trent in May 1915; by July he was serving in France with the 18th Division. His unit took part in many of the ***Battles of the Somme***: ***Albert, Bazentin Ridge*** and the subsidiary attacks on ***High Wood*** and, fatally for Gunner Jones, ***Delville Wood.*** He was killed in action on 3 September 1916 – the battle's final day – after a successful, but such a costly campaign, that it was known as *"Devil's Wood"* to those who had endured it. On 31 August the Germans made yet another counter-attack, recapturing a narrow band in a corner of the wood. A British response on 3 September failed to retake the lost ground and the final elements of the German forces were only driven out on 8 September. Given the date of his death and the place where he was buried, it is reasonable to assume that Gunner Jones' unit was in support when he was killed. An officer wrote to his father: *"Poor Jones was killed in action, whilst the Battery was under heavy shell fire. His death must have been instantaneous, as he was struck by a heavy shell"*. Despite the manner of his death, his body was recovered for burial, appropriately, in the *Delville Wood Cemetery*. He was the first man, commemorated locally, to be killed whilst serving in the *Machine Gun Corps*.

Battles of *Guillemont* and *Ginchy*, 3-9 September

The Allies could not rest on their laurels after the costly seizures of firstly ***Battle of Bazentin Ridge*** and subsequently ***High Wood*** and ***Delville Wood*** because the Germans were still able to bombard them – as was evidenced by the death of Gunner Jones. The attack had to continue, therefore, towards the village strongpoints of *Guillemont* and *Ginchy*. The British Official History claimed that the *"defence of Guillemont was judged by some observers, to be the best performance of the war by the German army on the Western Front"*. The loss of *Ginchy* deprived the Germans of observation posts, from which they could observe the entire battlefield and also enable the British to eliminate German artillery-fire from three sides. Many counter-attacks had been sprung by German infantry in July and August; the attack on 31 August being the

[68] Lionel's older brother**, Lt. T. H. Moore [†]**, had been killed almost a year earlier on 27 September 1915, also in the Somme sector; see page 19.

largest mounted by the Germans during the *Battle of the Somme*. Better coordination between the Allied armies in September enabled the capture of much more ground and inflicted approximately 130,000 (irreplaceable) casualties on the German defenders. **No local men lost their lives in this phase.**

As a result of capturing *Ginchy,* the Allies were then ready to continue the offensive in the *Battle of Flers-Courcelette*, during which Tewkesbury would lose another veteran *Reservist*, one of the dwindling band of *'Old Contemptibles'*, awarded both the *1914 Mons Star* Medal and *Clasp.*

Battle of *Flers-Courcelette,* 15-22 September

This battle was historically significant because, after so many failures in attack, the British used a few highly secret *'tanks'* for the first time as they progressed slowly on the former Roman road from *Albert* to *Bapaume*.

Since the death of L/Cpl. Dickenson at ***Pozières*** on 20 August and the end of the battle on 3 September, the *1st Gloucesters* had advanced upwards along that crucial road to take part in the ***Battle of Flers*.** It did not involve the battalion's direct participation, although it was once again used to carry out work to consolidate captured positions. On 21 and 22 September the War Diary noted: *"Two Companies on fatigues clearing Cork Alley... carried in wounded"*. The Diary does not mention any casualties but records one officer and three *Other Ranks* on the following day, when **L/Cpl. George Thomas Mann [†]** was killed in action. We know no more but, as with so very many, his body was never recovered nor identified; he is also commemorated on the *Thiepval Memorial*.

Battle of *Morval,* 25-28 September

Having broken through the prepared lines of German defences at long last, the British now faced a new set of challenges as it approached yet more slopes towards the ***Transloy Ridges***. The fighting was severe as ever but the British pushed forward in costly fashion. Once more the weather intervened with autumn rain, making the battlefield increasingly difficult and stretching men to the limits of their physical endurance.

Battle of *Thiepval,* 26-28 September

Thiepval had been one of the strong-points in the German first line and, thus, a target from the first day but it proved impossible to take. After recent progress to the east, the defenders were now outflanked; the heights, upon which it sat, fell to an efficient attack. No local men were lost in this subsidiary battle.

Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme [CWGC]

However, 19 men from Tewkesbury – whose bodies were never recovered nor identified – are among the 72,190 whose only commemoration in France is on these white marble surfaces. All the *Gloucesters* are grouped together on *Pier & Face 5A & B* with one from the *11th Warwicks*. However, the three men serving with the *Berks, Essex and 14th Warwicks* are listed separately.

The site was chosen because firstly of the difficulty in capturing it – yet it was achieved eventually; and secondly it can be viewed for miles around. This outstanding memorial, – geographically as well as architecturally - designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, was built between 1928 and 1932 and unveiled by the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII) , in the presence of the President of France, on 1 August 1932

Battle of *Le Transloy,* 1-18 October

Progressing ever up the slopes, the ***Battle of Le Transloy*** actually began in better weather and a strong-point was captured on 7 October. Subsequently, however, rain enforced pauses during 8-11 and 13-18 October. This also allowed time for a methodical bombardment, when it became clear that the German defence had – yet again – recovered from earlier defeats. Haig consulted with the army commanders and, on 17 October, reduced the scope of operations by cancelling large army attacks. Instead, he confined the British to limited operations, in co-operation with the French Sixth Army.

Even if there were pauses in attacking, fatalities continued. On 12 October it was the turn of **Pte. R. F. Peach [†]**, serving with *4th Worcesters*. This battalion had already suffered 101 casualties on the Somme

during a failed attack on the strong point of ***Beaumont Hamel***. By then, the Somme ridges had *"melted into knee deep mud"*. On that day, the battalion was in a reserve position north of ***High Wood,*** and in the evening, carrying parties struggled up to the front line with ammunition. It was reported that one officer was killed and 12 other ranks wounded. One of the wounded was Pte. Peach. He died of his wounds but, unusually, his body was neither recovered nor identified after the war (probably due to the fighting in the area in 1918); he is, therefore, commemorated on the *Thiepval Memorial*.

Another pause followed, before operations resumed on 23 October towards the northern flank. Serving with the same battalion was a veteran 44 year old, with a chequered and colourful career in the army: **Cpl. Arthur G. Amott [†]**. After serving in *Gallipoli,* the battalion was soon involved in the Somme offensive. After the severe losses at ***Beaumont Hamel*** in early July and a period of recuperation around Ypres (a quiet and neglected front in 1916 only), the battalion took part in the struggle to capture ***Transloy Ridge***, an attack which had already cost the life of Pte. Peach. Sometime before it was relieved on 21 October, **Cpl. Amott** was wounded and, on 26 October, *"died of wounds, received in action"*. He had managed to reach a *Casualty Clearing Station,* as he was buried at the adjacent *Heilly Station Cemetery*.

Bad weather again caused another delay until 5 November; yet fatalities still took place during *"trench warfare"* as troops tried to hold the ground they had captured. The *1st/6th Gloucesters* had moved away from ***Thiepval*** to the ***Transloy Ridge***. It was here that another veteran *regular* was lost. On 3 November, **Sgt. W. F. Birt [†]** was killed, not in battle, but probably during routine trench maintenance, when a shell killed him instantly. Unsurprisingly, his body was not recovered and he is commemorated at *Thiepval.*

One of the limited operations took place on **5 November 1916** when the *2nd Worcesters* carried out an attack on a sloping German position known as *Boritzka Trench* – in an effort once again to gain higher, drier ground before the final days of the campaign. The attack, however, took place during a thunderstorm, accompanied by lightning: *"through the rain came German shells but in that slough many of them failed to explode"*. The trench was, in fact, captured – but the casualties amounted to some 200. **Pte. Fred Dee [†]** was almost certainly wounded in this action as the battalion was relieved the next day and taken out of the line. Pte. Dee had joined the battalion in September only to experience the particularly wet autumn: the heavy rain, which became more continuous, caused *"the countless shell-holes* (to become) *slimy pools; the churned soil of the Somme ridges melted into knee-deep mud, which made movement more and more difficult"*. He was evacuated to one of the *Base Hospitals* in Rouen but died of his wounds on 8 November 1916; he was buried in the nearby *St. Sever Cemetery Extension.* The *Register* merely reported *"another Tewkesburian killed"*. His Company Commander was awarded the ***Victoria Cross*** for his part.

At the time of this last death, however, Field Marshal Haig ordered that offensive operations should cease on 6 November, except for small attacks intended to improve positions and divert German attention from attacks being made by the French army. These larger operations were only resumed in January 1917.

Battles of *the Ancre Heights* and *the Ancre*, 1 October-18 November

The line of attack now reverted to attempting to capture strong-points on the ***Ancre Heights*** that had proved impossible earlier in the campaign. This time, with an attack from the east along with foggy and wintry conditions, the attack on ***Beaumont Hamel*** was successful.

At this late stage of the campaign the *63rd (Royal Naval) Division* became involved with a constituent pioneer battalion, the *14th Worcesters*. As with the *13th Gloucesters*, the role of pioneers was to provide skilled labour to supplement the work of the sappers of the Royal Engineers in the construction of redoubts, emplacements and other field works; they were also equally capable of fighting as infantry. Soon after arriving in France, the division took over the trenches on *Vimy Ridge* and remained in the general area of Arras for the next three months, the various companies being employed to work on the surrounding defences.

The division had only moved to the Somme at the beginning of October and this was to be its first major operation on the Western Front, although it had previously served in Gallipoli. The battalion consolidated defences and built communication trenches from the start line towards captured German trenches. Tewkesburian, **Pte. L. Gurney [†]**, having enlisted in October 1915, was killed in action on 13 November, the first day of the battle and just five days before the Somme campaign ended. The *Register* reported that he had been *"killed instantly by a shell whilst out with a party at night"*. His body was never recovered nor identified; as with twenty-seven other local men, he is commemorated instead on the *Thiepval Memorial.*

The last Tewkesburian to be killed in the campaign was a 40-year-old former Grammar School student and emigrant to Australia. **Pte. W. A. Gorton [†]** was serving with the *25th Battalion, AIF*, which had participated at the end of the *Gallipoli campaign* before disembarking at Marseilles on 19 March 1916, the

first Australian battalion to land there. In July the division had moved to the Somme front where it lost 785 casualties in the ***Battle of Pozières***. The division was then transferred to a quieter area in Belgium to recuperate. At the end of October, however, the division was recalled to the Somme. The *25th Battalion* took part in two attacks to the east of ***Flers*** in November, both of which ultimately floundered in the mud; the Australians managed to capture some of their objectives, but were eventually forced to withdraw. **Pte. Gorton** was killed in action on 14 November during that offensive. His body was never recovered nor identified but, because of his adopted nationality, he is commemorated instead on the *Australian National Memorial* at *Villers-Bretonneux***,** near Amiens.

The ***Battles of the Somme*** had, therefore, petered out in atrocious, wintry conditions after over four months of relentlessly intensive fighting. The British and French had advanced about 6 miles on the Somme, on a front of 16 miles at a cost of 419,654 British and 202,567 French casualties, against 465,181 German casualties (although historians have long argued over the true cost).[69]

At the time the Army felt it was a victory – if a costly one. Thereafter in the 1930s, a negative attitude gradually grew in resonance, partly due to Winston Churchill being a powerful influence with his book, *The World Crisis* published in 1931. He had objected to the way the battle was being fought as early as August 1916 and Lloyd George, when Prime Minister, criticised attrition warfare and condemned the battle in his post-war memoirs. In the 1930s a new orthodoxy of *"mud, blood and futility"* emerged and gained more emphasis in the 1960s, when the 50th anniversaries of the Great War battles were commemorated.[70]

Yet another way to view these statistics was to accept them – but to emphasise that German losses were much harder to replace. In addition, the destruction of German units in battle was made worse by lack of rest. British and French aircraft and long-range guns reached well behind the German front-line to thwart the formation of potentially successful counter-attacks.

One could then counter by noting that, despite the strategic predicament of the German army, it survived the battle, withstood the pressure of the *Brusilov Offensive* in Russia, and conducted an invasion of Romania. In 1917, the German army in the west survived the large British and French offensives of the *Nivelle Offensive* and the *Third Battle of Ypres,* though – again – at great cost.

On the other hand the original German commander during the Somme, Falkenhayn, was sacked and replaced by ***Hindenburg*** and ***Ludendorff*** at the end of August 1916. Undoubtedly these were the two most successful German Generals from the Eastern Front. However, Ludendorff himself concluded in his memoirs: *"we were completely exhausted on the Western Front"*.

One of the reasons for their success was that they were realists and therefore, at a conference at Cambrai on 5 September, a decision was taken to build a new defensive line well behind the Somme front. The *Siegfriedstellung* (later known as the ***Hindenburg Line***) was to be built from Arras. These lines were intended to limit any Allied breakthrough and to allow the German army to withdraw if attacked. Work began on the *Hindenburg Line* at the end of September 1916. Withdrawing to the new line was not an easy decision: the High Command struggled over it during the winter of 1916-1917.

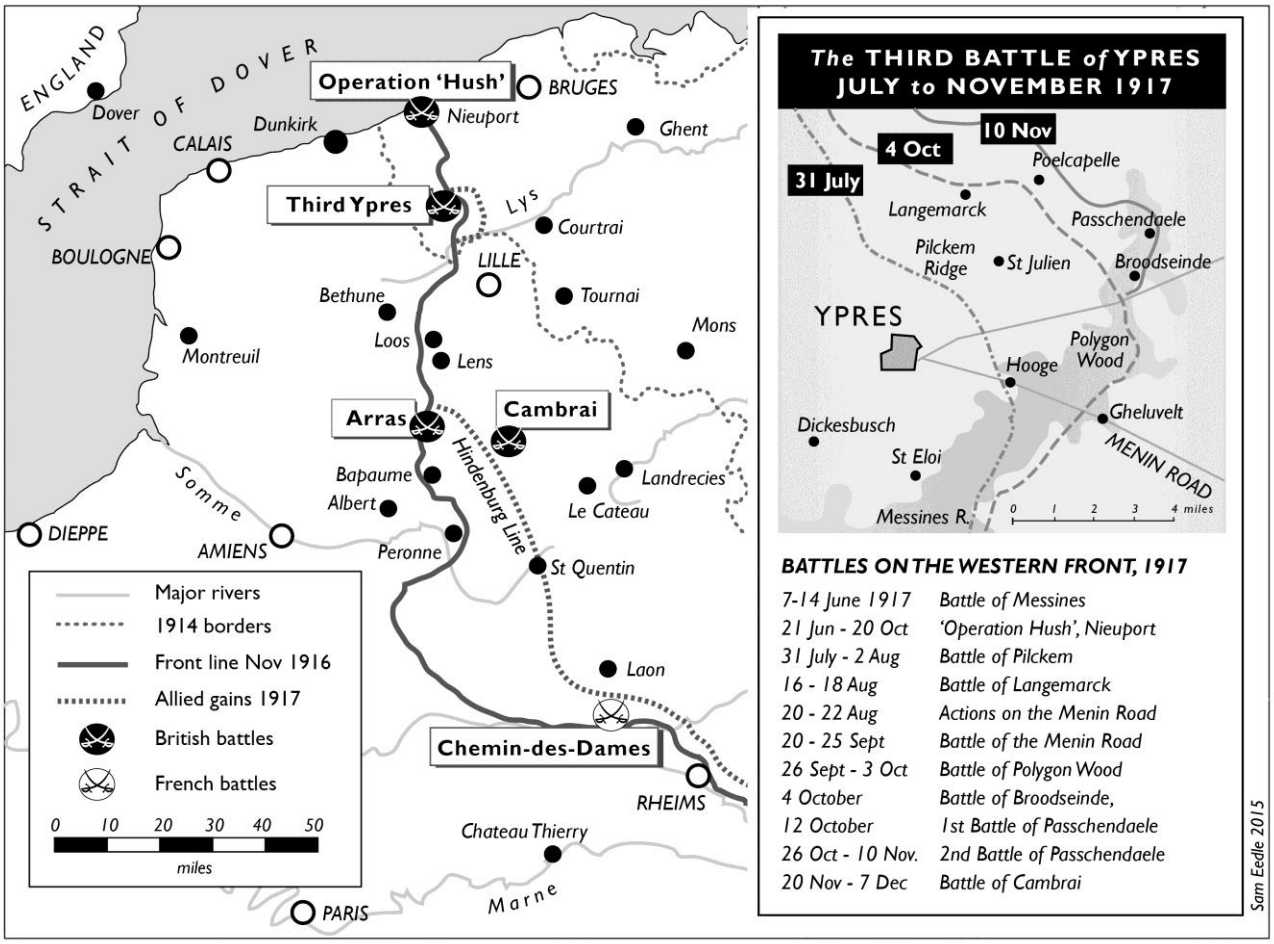
At the time, when the towns of northern England especially were mourning the loss of so many *"Pals"* and *"Chums"*, it must have seemed that the British had suffered a very serious defeat. Yet, looking back from the perspective of 1918, the campaign may be viewed more positively. Although men from Tewkesbury fought in many different units during the campaign, the loss of 30 men, most of whose bodies were never recovered nor identified, must have seemed a heavy blow.

It was, therefore, the termination of a paradoxical year in the war. It was paradoxical because it seemed there had been so many disappointments – there was no evident victory on the Somme or at Jutland and there was indisputable defeat in Mesopotamia and Egypt. However, as with the Somme, each would prove to have played a vital – if costly – part in the long-term success that emerged, at long last, in November 1918.

[69] M. Waldron points out that recent research has generally settled on 600,000 German losses.
[70] This was the era of "Donkeys" and *"O, What a lovely War"*. See discussion on Gen. French, page 123

D. 1917: A Year without Hope?

Western Front



DATE	EVENTS (INCLUDING WORLD)
26 Aug **1916**	Decision to create *Hindenburg Line*
11 March **1917**	**Mesopotamia:** Baghdad captured from Turks
16 November	End of *Somme Campaign*
14 March – 5 April	Retreat to the *Hindenburg Line*
6 April	**USA declares war on Germany and its allies**
9 April-4 May	Battles of *Arras*
16 April-5 May	French *Nivelle* Offensive
15 May	French Mutiny: Pétain replaces ***Nivelle*** as French *C-in-C*
7-14 June	*Battle of Messines*
June-August	Operation *Hush*, planned but not implemented
31 July	***3rd Ypres*** starts: *Battle of Pilckem*
12 October	***3rd Ypres:*** *1st Battle of* ***Passchendaele***
26 Oct.-10 Nov.	***3rd Ypres*** ends with *2nd Battle of* ***Passchendaele***
20 Nov.-7 Dec.	*Battle of Cambrai*
24 Oct.-12 Nov.	**Italy***: Battle of* ***Caporetto*** – Britain sends *48 Div.* including 1st/5th
Oct.-Nov.	*Gloucesters*
9 December	***Bolshevik Revolution*** **in Russia**
15 December	**Palestine: Jerusalem captured by the British from the Turks**
	Russia announces cease-fire and states wish to leave the war

1917 may have seemed a hopeless year on the Western front. The Somme was replaced by apparently futile battles near Arras and back again – for the third time – around Ypres. However, seismic changes were taking place in the wider world which would have a beneficial long-term impact on the war for the Allies.

The Italians, allies since 1915, now proved something of a burden for the *Entente* as troops had to be diverted there to stop the country being overwhelmed by the Austro-Hungarians. Yet, there was cause for hope in the Middle East, where Baghdad was at long last captured and Lloyd George won his promised *"Christmas Present for the Nation"* with the capture of Jerusalem from the Turks.

Russia, on the other hand, seemed to be sliding into hopelessness with the two revolutions, culminating in the *Bolshevik Revolution* and the withdrawal of Russia from the war. At long last, Germany thought it would have a chance of winning a 'one front' war in the West but their recklessness at sea had provoked the USA into declaring war on Germany – a real sign of hope for the Western Allies that they might survive this dreadful war.

In the winter of 1916-1917 in the trenches one would imagine that hope was in short supply.

Trench Warfare, Winter 1916-1917

> "*It is said that Time dims the memory of all things but few of those living who went through that first winter on the Somme after the battles of 1916 will ever forget the awful conditions under which men lived and fought… nothing can ever take away the vision of the ghastly dreariness of great stretches of mud and morass… knee deep in water which had taken on the consistency of soup…. Death clutched and snatched the lives of brave men for whom indeed some minded not the going – since it meant release from the manifold miseries of a terrible existence."*[71]

The *1st Gloucesters* and *Territorial* battalions experienced these conditions in full measure, but in 1917 the Regulars would endure a better year, suffering no fatalities. The Territorials and the Kitchener *12th Battalion*, however, lost ten, while another 33 Tewkesburians died whilst serving with other regiments. The spring brought the ***Battles of Arras***, fought in order to assist our French allies. There followed ***the Third Battle of Ypres***, planned by Haig but which caused so many losses amidst the mud and morass. Despite early successes derived from lessons learned on the *Somme*, the need to adopt a more active role, as a result of the French mutinies in April 1917, caused continuing high casualties.

The first months of 1917, therefore, brought mainly the miserable conditions described by Wyrall with the occasional respite in a hutted camp. *1st Gloucesters*, which had been fighting since August 1914, had received many replacements to fill their exhausted and depleted ranks: this was the initiation to active service. Occasionally a pattern was followed: about three days in a front -line trenches, followed by three in support, then three in reserve before so called *'rest'* in the occasional hutted camp. We must stress that the word *'rest'* was relative and it usually involved labouring work, especially road making, or training. Stationed on the Somme, the regular battalion experienced glorious weather in May (when further south the *Battle of Arras* raged) and was also lucky that their Brigade commander believed in sports as a way of maintaining fitness. As a result, work was suspended when out of line during the afternoons and Wyrall reported the success of the *Gloucesters* at Rugby – but not in boxing.

A regular respite from war?
Roadmaking on the Western Front [Hammerton]

The *Territorial* Battalions were not so fortunate, although they did manage to spend all of January "*out of line"*. However, death from random shelling or snipers was ever-present. The first Tewkesbury death of 1917 came in this way on 18 January when **Driver Tom Beesley [†]**, *of 11th Divisional Ammunition Column, Royal Field Artillery*, died of wounds after the *Capture of Munich Trench* during t*he Operations on the Ancre (11 January-13 March 1917).* Although the final phase of the Somme campaign had officially

[71] Wyrall p 179. We must remember that this author was a journalist, who served as an officer in the *ASC.* He received the *British War Medal* for service in India from 5 January 1917 but was not apparently awarded the *Victory Medal.*

ended in November 1916, military operations by both sides were mostly restricted to survival in the rain, snow, fog, water-logged trenches and shell-holes. At the beginning of 1917, the 11th Division was still in the area where the British were attempting to keep German attention on the Somme front by making localised attacks to capture portions of the German defences. Meanwhile preparations proceeded for the Allied offensive at Arras, planned for April 1917. His C.O. emphasised the ever-present dangers in his consoling letter to his parents: *"I have to inform you that Driver Beesley was engaged with a fatigue party near the trenches, on the return journey a shell burst near the party, and mortally wounded".*

The good fortune of the *Territorials* continued into February and early March, even when in the trenches. On 12 March, the *1st/5th* War Diary recorded the cryptic comment: *"Weather very good…. But still no signs of an enemy retreat: can't be too long now".*[72]

German Retreat to the *Hindenburg Line*, Spring 1917

DATE	**EVENTS** (Map on Page 41)
26 August 1916	Decision to build *Hindenburg Line*
9 February 1917	Start of the dismantling of old Defence Lines
14 March	Retreat starts
9 April	***Battle of Arras***
16 April	*Nivelle Offensive*
3 May	*Third Battle of the Scarpe*
4 May	End of ***Battles of Arras***
7 May	German counter-attack

Peronne after the Retreat
[Hammerton]

The diarist had been referring to the first most significant development of 1917: the German retreat to the ***Hindenburg Line***. Unknown to the British, orders for the construction of a new line of defences had been issued on 26 August 1916, nearly two months into the *Battles of the Somme* and after the appointment of joint Heads of the German army: **Hindenburg** and **Ludendorff**. Wyrall used this as a defence of the 1916 battles: *"if any justification for the Somme Battles of 1916 were needed then surely the most cogent may be found in the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line in 1917… the Germans had lost so heavily that they were forced to shorten their line".* He quoted Ludendorff himself*: "The decision to retreat ..implied a confession of weakness bound to raise the morale of our enemy".*[73] The balance was quietly changing.

The dismantling of the former trench lines started on 9 February, while the first day of retirement was 16 March 1917. However even before that, soldiers were vulnerable to the random attacks of *trench warfare* and, on 5 March, Tewkesbury lost one of its exiles, **Pte. Samuel Preece [†]** of *1st/8th Notts. & Derbys. "Very little happened on March 5th".* According to the *Record*, Pte. Preece was a company runner and his Commanding Officer was quoted as saying: *"he was with me at the time, acting as my runner when he was sniped".*[74] He died of wounds, after being treated in one of three *Casualty Clearing Stations* in the area.

The *Gloucester Territorials* had the job of gradually moving forward, clearing the pockets of resistance in the form of machine-gun nests and booby traps, with which the Germans intended to make the retreat as painful as possible for their enemy. One such incident on 5 April 1917 cost the battalion 57 men in an ultimately successful operation, one was **Cpl. H. W. Hyett [†]**, shot whilst leading his machine-gun section. That night the battalion was relieved and the German Retreat officially ended.

Unfortunately for the Territorial Battalions, their new station was subjected to frequent attack and counter-attack. One of them turned out well for **Sgt. Albert Coopey [†]** of the *1st/5th* when the battalion was involved in an attack in *"abominable heavy rain"*, capturing new positions. Sgt. Coopey and one other survivor received the ***Military Medal*** for gallantry: the second such award for a Tewkesburian. Exemplifying the dangers of this period of warfare, on 18 April all the senior officers of the *1st/6th* were killed when a mine exploded underneath their HQ. Six days later on 24 April, it was the turn of the *1st/4th* to

[72] Wyrall p184
[73] Wyrall p185 and Ludendorff, *'My War Memories', 1914-1918*. Wyrall, as a historian, could be criticised for omitting the counter-balance of the cost in human life of these battles.
[74] *Record*, 17 March 1917, p4/4

lose its *C.O.* during an attack.[75] The battalion was forced to retire to avoid being surrounded and one can presume that it was during this operation that **Pte. Charles Simons [†]** was seriously wounded, dying two days later after being successfully evacuated to *No. 1 General Hospital* at Etretat near Le Havre.

What the British discovered, as they moved slowly and painfully forward, was the reality of a German *scorched earth policy* of what they had abandoned. As they continued to fight a rear-guard action, more deaths followed. At the beginning of May, the *61st Division* including the *2nd/6th Gloucesters* held the line just west of *St. Quentin*, which was still in German hands. According to the War Diary, the battalion was in reserve at the start of the day on 10 May 1917 until it moved into the front line in the evening to relieve the *2nd/7th Worcesters*. That day, **Pte. T. J. Evans [†]** was killed, but the Diary makes no reference to casualties on that date, only "*intermittent artillery fire"*. The battalion was primarily involved in improving trench wiring. We can only assume that Pte. Evans was a random victim of trench warfare.

Battles of *Arras*, April-May

As the weather improved, the desire to attack became irresistible. The French, ever keen to expel the hated enemy, had appointed a new commander, ***Nivelle***, famed for his *'Offensive Spirit'.* He won the backing of Lloyd George to order Haig to support his own offensive with a British attack near ***Arras*** to the north. Comprising soldiers from the *Dominions* as well as Britain, it was to take place a week before the French attack on 9 April 1917 in order to draw German troops away. Perhaps predictably, there were major gains on the first day – followed by stalemate. The battles of *Vimy* and the *1st Scarpe* showed that Somme lessons had been learned. Although the *BEF* advanced 3.5 miles initially and cost the Germans 125,000 (less easily replaced) casualties, the British lost nearly 160,000 supporting its ally.

Six of these were Tewkesburians; but the deaths also reflected the Commonwealth nature of the army involved. The *Kitchener 12th Gloucesters* lost two members. The first, in somewhat tragic circumstances, came on 22 April. The Battalion was north of Arras; it had taken over a section of the front line and there had been a daily round of casualties as the Germans shelled the positions for several days. The Colonel wrote that *"the Battalion had a rough time, especially from shelling – one platoon of 'A' Coy. being blown up by a shell that penetrated their cellar"*. In particular, on 22 April, heavy German shelling was reported with 19 casualties. One of these was **Pte. Charles Sandford** [†], a former *'Abbey Boys'* volunteer. A fellow *'Abbey Boy'*, **Sgt. Frank Kitching**[76] made subsequent enquiries by letter and on 30 May was successful: "*Dear Sergt, I had your letter handed over to me, …a shell burst in the trench and buried the whole team, some of the boys immediately dug them out but I'm sorry your friend had been killed"*. As was often the case, the area once again became a battlefield in 1918 and so Pte. Sandford's body was never recovered.

Subsequently the Battalion was part of a force, including Canadians, which, after the success at ***Vimy Ridge,*** pushed eastwards across open country until they reached German defence lines. The village of ***Fresnoy*** became the focus of attack. However, after ferocious German counter-attacks were launched, the Canadians and British were pushed back. The front-line then stabilized, although in that counter-attack the *12th Gloucesters* suffered grievous losses, including at least five officers. **Pte. F. T. Price [†]** was one of the unnamed soldiers also killed on 8 May 1917. We can presume that he was killed by shell-fire: his body was never found so only his name is commemorated on the *Arras Memorial,* along with that of Pte. Sandford.

Arras captured April 1917 [Hammerton]

In that battle on 5 May, the Canadians managed to capture the village but Tewkesbury had lost its first Canadian exile, **Cpl. V. W. Marment [†]**, serving with the *31st Alberta Regiment*. Cpl. Marment was killed by an exploding shell on 3 May during the *3rd Battle of the Scarpe* for Fresnoy. Unusually for such a death, his body was recovered and he is buried in *Liévin Communal Cemetery*, near Lens.

[75] Wyrall p213

[76] Later commissioned, Lt. Frank Kitching, of 'Porthpean', Bredon Road, survived the war and was sent to Ireland with the *Royal Irish Constabulary* where he *"fractured a rib playing football in Dublin"*. [*Register* 5 February 1921 p4/4]

It is ironic that, on the same day, **L/Sgt**. **H. N. Bloxham [†]** of *8th Battalion, Rifle Brigade*, was killed. The cousin by marriage of Cpl. Marment, he was put in charge of a *Lewis Gun* section; these light machine-guns provided much of the infantry battalion's firepower. On 3 May the battalion took part in a pre-dawn attack, but surprise was lost as men advanced over the ridges with the setting moon behind them. They successfully captured the German trenches but German counter-attacks meant they had to withdraw. L/Sgt. Bloxham just disappeared; as one senior officer noted: *"We had a rough time all the morning"*. Of 194 men lost, a third, 69, were from his company; none of the bodies were ever found. Subsequent enquiries could only yield the report that "*I saw Sergt. Bloxham during the withdrawal. ... He must have been hit ... whether it was fatal or not the writer could not say. ... no news of the gallant sergeant has been gleaned"*.

The third death of that tragic day for Tewkesbury, 3 May 1917, was that of **Pte. R. Hall [†]** of the *112th Company* in the recently formed *Machine Gun Corps*. The aim creating this new, specialised Corps was to concentrate infantry firepower and emulate German success. This company was attached to the *37th Division* and was heavily involved in the three battles in April. It is thought that Pte. Hall must have been wounded in one of these actions; he was soon reported as being treated in a Canadian Hospital in France.[77] His wound was serious enough for him to be transferred to the huge military base at ***Etaples***, near Boulogne, where he died and was buried. In 1917 the facilities there could deal with 22,000 wounded or sick at any one time.

The final fatality at *Arras* was **Pte. J. L. Greenwood [†]** had enlisted as a *Yeoman* with the *RGH* but, cavalry being almost redundant, had been transferred to the infantry with the *16th Royal Warwicks.* He was killed in action on 10 May. According to its *War Diary*, the battalion's front line had been subjected to an artillery barrage for some hours and Pte. Greenwood was no doubt a victim of this. His name joins his comrades, Bloxham, Sandford and Price, on the ***Arras Memorial***. The battle was almost the last part of the ***Battle of Arras,*** which terminated amidst great losses on 17 May 1917.[78]

Even after battles had been won, lives could be lost when newly captured areas were being secured. Such a fatal location was the ***Mindel Trench***, located further south of Arras at Laôn. The Allied front line ran practically through here and the trench was captured on the first day of the offensive. Two months later on 31 May, Tewkesbury lost its third officer, but the first to be conscripted: **2nd/Lt. Leonard Tysoe [†],** serving in the *39th Company, the Labour Corps.* One hopes that it was his skills as a surveyor that caused the army to draft this 37-year-old into the unfashionable *Labour Corps* as an Officer. This Corps was newly formed in January 1917: its task to undertake the immense effort of building and maintaining the huge network of roads, railways, camps, stores, telephone systems, etc.[79] We have no details of his death but one can assume that work was being done to secure the area, when Lt. Tysoe was wounded. In the area were *Field Ambulances* and so Lt. Tysoe may have died of his wounds.[80]

As a tragic footnote, the ***Nivelle Offensive*** was also a disastrous failure. Nivelle had promised a decisive war-ending victory over the Germans in 48 hours; the men were euphoric on entering the battle. The shock of failure soured their mood overnight. The result was that nearly half of the French infantry divisions stationed on the Western Front mutinied.[81] Despite its losses and privations, the British Army did not mutiny. It would need its celebrated *"indomitable pluck"*[82] when *C-in-C* **Haig** decided to mount Britain's very own offensive in *Flanders* – what is now known as the infamous ***Third Battle of Ypres*** (or *'**Passchendaele**'*). It cost the lives of 26 local men.

Third Battle of Ypres, 31 July

Haig had not really wished to fight the *Battle of the Somme* in support of his French allies, but had long valued his position near the Channel ports and the crucial railway hub at Roulers; choosing this sector possessed military logic. Preparations for operations in *Flanders* had begun in 1915, with the improvements in railway supply lines: by mid-1917 they gave the area the most efficient supply system of the *BEF*. An

[77] *Register*, 21 April 1917 p5/3

[78] A luckier local on 7 May was **Pte. Oscar Dickenson**, of *1/2nd (City of London) Battalion*, who was captured; he was welcomed home by the Mayor in 1919. He was the younger brother of **L/Cpl. Frank Dickenson [†],** killed in 1916.

[79] And also for moving stores; it grew to some 389,900 men (10% of the total size of the Army) by the *Armistice*.

[80] *Register*, 9 June 1917 p5/5: short obituary; the *Record* of same date claimed that he arrived in France in March 1917

[81] The new commander, **General Pétain,** restored morale by talking to the men, promising no more suicidal attacks, providing rest for exhausted units, home leave and fair discipline. 554 mutineers were sentenced to death but over 90% had their sentences commuted. The mutinies were kept secret from the Germans. [Wikipedia]

[82] Wyrall p236

additional impetus to action was the vulnerability of British lines south and east of *Ypres* to artillery based on higher ground; trench mortaring, mining and raiding from January to May caused 20,000 Allied casualties.

On a strategic level, Haig wished to start this before the feared collapse of the Russian front and it was also felt that the capture of *Zeebrugge* would lessen the severe ***U-Boat*** threat. **Lloyd George** did not really favour Haig's plans but acquiesced as nothing better was proposed by **Foch**, the French Chief of the General Staff, who had also opposed them in favour of the *Nivelle Offensive* (which failed). Because of all this opposition, Haig did not receive approval from the War Cabinet for the *Flanders* operation until 25 July.

Battle of Messines, 7-14 June

The stunningly successful capture of this *ridge* after 7 June encouraged all doubters; it was regarded as a necessary precursor to an offensive to capture *Passchendaele Ridge*.

Unfortunately a Tewkesburian lost his life in this victory on 7 June 1917. **Pte. D. R. Hutchinson [†]** was a conscript replacement in the *3rd Worcesters*, which took a leading part in the battle. The newspaper reported with enthusiasm: *"In seven minutes from the start the enemy's front system of defences had fallen, almost without a blow… . However, Fire from German machine guns checked the advance … . The Worcestershire platoons became separated"*. It was, indeed, a successful attack that captured the ground; however, the battalion had lost 240 men.[83] One of these was **Pte. Hutchinson,** who died of his wounds; this was confirmed by his burial at *Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension***,** attached to a major hospital centre.

Nevertheless, the major concern was that the German defences were in such depth that the desired break-through would be impossible – and so it proved.

'Operation Hush', 21 June-August

This was the code name for a planned – and highly secret – consequence of anticipated success in the battle. The capture of high ground would permit a coastal attack on ***Zeebrugge***, the base from which ***U-Boats*** attacked our shipping. The *1st Gloucesters*, after their months of recuperation and training, were chosen for this amphibious attack. The battalion was, therefore, relatively safe in camp from July to October, when *"Hush"* was abandoned because of the failure of the campaign to capture the necessary higher ground.

Safety was relative since one worrying aspect for the long term was that some of these camps in so-called 'safe zones' proved vulnerable, not only to long-range artillery, but also to aeroplanes. Furthermore, Wyrall failed to mention that the Germans were aware of these preparations and launched a surprise attack on 10 July. The brunt fell on *2nd King's Royal Rifle Corps*, whose diary recorded *"intense enemy shelling on all areas all day. Enemy attacked at 7.10 p.m., when about 70% of the Battalion became casualties"*. One of the losses was former *Territorial*, **Rifleman A. L. Brookes [†]**. At first he was posted as missing but his death was confirmed on 4 August. Although reportedly dying of wounds, his body was never recovered so his name is commemorated on the ***Nieuport Memorial.***

The operation was eventually cancelled and news of the crucial defeat was appropriately suppressed. On 5 November the *1st Gloucesters* joined the rest of the armies in the *"hopeless mud and morass"* of *Flanders*.[84]

One of the earliest casualties in this sector was **Cpl. R. G. Williams [†]** of *2nd South Wales Borderers*, a regular who had already fought in China, *Gallipoli*, the *Somme* and *Arras* before he died of wounds on 17 July 1917. This was before the *Battles of Ypres* had started but, as he was buried at *Dozinghem Military Cemetery*, attached to casualty clearing stations (called by the troops *"Mendinghem, Dozinghem and Bandaghem"*), we can only deduce that he was yet another victim of trench warfare.

Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing, Ypres, 1914-1917 [CWGC]

Battle of Pilckem, 31 July to 2 August

This was the official opening of the campaign, after which 18 square miles of land was captured. However,

[83] Register, 16 June 1917, p5/3
[84] Wyrall p220

three days after the battle ended, but during a period of unsuccessful German counter-attacks on 6 August, the veteran Territorial, **CSM C. H. Attwood [†]** of *1st/5th Gloucesters*, was killed instantly by a German shell that hit his dugout. His body was recovered and he is buried at the *New Irish Farm Cemetery*. **Pte. W. H. Bastable [†]** of the *1st/7th Warwicks* was less fortunate as his body was not recovered – he is one of the last of the 54,322 names commemorated on the ***Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing*** before space ran out on 16 August when a new, much enlarged, memorial was created at ***Tyne Cot Cemetery***.[85] When he was killed on 11 August 1917, little is known precisely of the battalion's exploits, so it must be assumed that Pte. Bastable lost his life during aggressive trench warfare, possibly due to shelling, as his body was never found.

Battle of Langemarck, 16-18 August

The *1st/7th Warwicks* was again involved in this second phase of Ypres. Reported missing on the first day was **Pte. Frederick W. Hawker [†]**. Called up under the *Derby Scheme*, he had already been invalided home with *'trench foot'*. His record indicates that he died of wounds but his body was never recovered and his name only is commemorated on the new *Tyne Cot Memorial*. This suggests that his grave was destroyed in subsequent fighting in 1918.

No relation was **Pte. William T. Hawker [†]** of *1st/5th Gloucesters*, who died the same day. A former *Home Service Territorial*, he had also been wounded on the Somme. Here, his body was not recovered and he too is commemorated on the *Tyne Cot Memorial*. Wyrall wrote at length about this battle which was aimed at capturing a German concrete 'Pill Box', a small concrete fort which was an innovation in this sector that was impervious to artillery fire. Initially, the battalion was heavily shelled and checked by machine-gun fire. Pte. Hawker was one of 209 casualties of this battle.[86]

Also commemorated at *Tyne Cot* is **Pte. R.N. Coleman [†]**, of the *2nd Berkshires*, who disappeared on the same day. Pte. Coleman was an Australian emigrant, who had lost his brother in *Gallipoli*. Furthermore, in what is becoming a feature of losses in 1917, he had already been invalided home after the *Somme* and had only returned to the front on 16 May. Even before *Ypres* commenced, he had taken part in a trench raid on 10-11 July and was awarded the ***Military Medal*** for gallantry. Less than two weeks later, he was dead.[87]

The Actions *on the Menin Road*, 20-22 August

The fighting continued after Langemarck to capture strong-points along this road and on 22 August, **Pte. G H. Jones [†]** of the *2nd/1st Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry* disappeared during this fighting. His battalion had taken part in a series of attacks but, even before these had started, the men were living in bivouacs, being *"much vexed by German aeroplanes, and to a less degree by German shells"*. Indeed, before the captured *'line'* could be consolidated, they *"found themselves the victims of sniping and machine-gun fire"*. Once the attack had started, some *"had to remain in shell-holes unsupported and shot at from several directions for over fifty hours"*. His battalion was involved with the *Gloucester Territorials* in attacking a strong-post, assisted by tanks and, despite the losses, it was successfully held. His body was never recovered nor identified and his name only is commemorated at the new *Tyne Cot Memorial to the Missing.*[88]

The battalion came out of the front line for a brief respite but *"it befell that some of our attacks, before they had commenced, were ruined by deluges of rain"*. On August 27 a further attack was made. *"The mud and enemy machine-gun fire alike proved terrible"*: the advance failed to reach the German 'pill-boxes'.

Still the men pressed on – and the date of 27 August was to become a fatal one for local men. **Pte. Samuel Hathaway [†]** and **Cpl. Harry Knight [†]** were both killed in this same operation. They were serving in the *2nd/4th Gloucesters* , also in *61st South Midland Division*, but were "resting" when Pte. Jones was killed. Their attack was unsuccessful: *"the failure to reach the objectives was chiefly due to the mud and to the men having to lie in water for 12 hours prior to the attack"*. The *Register* reported that Pte. Hathaway served in the Lewis Gun section and was shot *"instantly in the heart. Acting Cpl. Harry Knight was killed by machine-gun fire; (he was one) of the best gunners and was killed in advance upon a strong German position"*. These attacks were minor operations but were, nevertheless, costly and inconclusive: the battalion lost 183 men. During August, nearly 300 more were lost out of an effective strength of around

[85] S. Eedle points out that this was an arbitrary date, allocated a decade after the battles when the memorial was built.
[86] Wyrall, p224
[87] *Record*, 4 August 1917, p4/4
[88] Battalion online War Diary; Wyrall pp224-5; to compound coincidences, in 1911 Henson Jones was boarding with William Hawker at the home of William's uncle.

1,000 at the start of the month. Field Marshal Haig called a halt to these operations amidst tempestuous weather, which was such a contrast with that experienced in the autumn of 1914.[89]

On that same dreadful day died another Tewkesburian – but the cause was one of the unfortunate and bizarre circumstances that occur in war. **Gunner Harry Hurcombe [†]**, of *78th Siege Battery, R.G. A.* died – and Tewkesbury lost its first recipient of the ***Military Medal,*** awarded *"for conspicuous bravery in repairing communication wires under shell fire"* in August 1916. On that fateful day, he was apparently safe at a rest camp on the coast. Nevertheless, he lost his life as he was taking a walk along the beach – he was overcome by a gas cloud and succumbed to its effects. A letter from his Officer to his mother explained: *"I am very sorry to have to tell you of your son, Harry's death* ***in action*** *(sic). I have waited till the result of the Court of Enquiry was obtained. He had been sent away for a few days rest at the seaside, behind British lines, and went for a walk along the beach. He must have walked unawares into a gas cloud, which has no smell and gives no warning, and was overcome. He probably became unconscious at once".* Gunner Hurcombe, M.M., was buried in *Zuydcoote Military Cemetery* near Dunkirk.[90]

There followed a pause in Allied general attacks between late August and 20 September. The British had changed some infantry tactics, by adopting the *'bite and hold'* method of advance: waves of infantry stopped once they reached their objective and then consolidated the ground, while other waves passed through the objective to attack the next one; the earlier waves then became the tactical reserve. General adoption of this method had been made possible when more artillery was brought into the area. July had been exceptionally wet but, in August and September, drier weather and extensive road repairs made it much easier for the British to move vast amounts of supplies forward from the original front line. Visibility increased except for frequent ground fog around dawn, which helped conceal British infantry during the attack, before clearing to expose German troop movements to British observation and attack.

*Battle of the Menin Road, 2*0–25 September

Another new feature appeared by 1917 in the re-posting of soldiers after convalescence. Those who had been wounded and returned to active duty were often placed in a battalion, where they were needed with no reference to enlistment or local loyalties. Along with raw conscripted recruits, even experienced servicemen were sent to the huge camp at *Etaples* for retraining and despatch to new units.[91] **L/Cpl. Fred. Mayall [†]** of *13th Gloucesters*, when he was killed on 17 September, had been wounded with *1st/5th Gloucesters* during Somme. His new battalion was used as *Pioneers* to the 39th Division. 17 September came just days before the start of this third phase; this was particularly successful. Part of the reason for this success was the meticulous preparation for the offensive, an aspect in which *Pioneer Battalions* would have been heavily involved. L/Cpl. Mayall, along with five others, was killed by the same shell-burst whilst preparing the ground to give the infantry assault battalions the maximum chance of success *"just where a narrow gauge line, used for stores, wounded, shells, etc.; all there blown to bits"* .[92]

Pte. Frederick Taylor [†] was another soldier who had been transferred out of county at some stage. A former artillery *regular*, he was serving with the *8th York & Lancasters* when he was killed on that same day. This was a particularly successful action; according to the Diary, the battalion moved into the front-line trenches on 16 September, until they were themselves replaced in the evening of 18 September and suffered 78 casualties. The Diary does not mention any specific incidents or reasons for the casualties. It is likely, therefore, that Pte. Taylor was a victim of trench warfare: of random and unpredictable artillery, mortar or machine-gun fire from the German positions. In this particular situation, however, it was probably quite deliberate; the Germans would have been aware that another assault was imminent and they would have tried to disrupt the preparations. Again his body was not recovered and Pte. Taylor is commemorated on the *Memorial to the Missing* at *Tyne Cot Cemetery*.

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[89] *Register* 15 September1917, pp4/7 & 5/4. M. Waldron points out that German Commander, Crown Prince Rupprecht described the weather as *"our greatest ally"*.

[90] *Register*, 5 August 1916 and 3 September 1917

[91] Etaples gained a negative reputation for its handling of soldiers in the so-called *"Bull Ring"*. On 9 September 1917 unrest broke out there, which is now featured in popular culture by the *'Monocled Mutineer'*, a BBC programme of 1986. A Board of Enquiry discovered that records of the event had been destroyed but subsequent research has established that official records show that the so-called mutineer's regiment was *"en route to India during the Étaples mutiny. No evidence exists to show that Percy Toplis was absent from his regiment"*. [Wikipedia & Paul Kelby, *"The Monocled Mutineer is innocent"*, The Independent, 12 February 2006]

[92] S. Eedle, Boar's Head, above p28.

The battle for the ridge continued and on 20 September 1917 it was **Pte. A. H. Cornish [†]**, who was killed fighting with the *10th Worcesters*. According to Regimental History, *"after the fighting of the previous month, the Germans still clung to the edge of the high ground …and the attack of the 19th Division, of which the 10th Worcesters was one of the assaulting battalions, was to drive them down the slope into the valley beyond"*. It continued: *"Apparently the enemy had not expected the attack to be prolonged … and the German resistance, though stubborn, was not well supported. The attack was completely successful. The German front-line defences were overrun without difficulty; then after a pause, to allow the artillery to lengthen their range, the platoons in rear passed through and pushed down the slope"*. The cost to the battalion of this successful attack was 150 casualties. Although Pte. Cornish was temporarily buried on the battlefield, his body was not recovered, probably because of subsequent fighting; he is, therefore, commemorated on the *Memorial to the Missing at Tyne Cot*.[93]

Remains of Zonnebeke Village, August 1917 [Hammerton]

The battle for the ridge continued and *the 6th Kings Own Scottish Borderers* was tasked to attack a final objective, the strongpoint *'Zonnebeke Redoubt'*. It was reported to be captured on the opening day *"without any difficulty"*. The battalion spent two days consolidating their position in the front line and repelling German counter-attacks before they were relieved on 22 September. The War Diary records 261 casualties. One of the missing was **Pte. J. L. Jones [†]**, the Diary does not make reference to any incident on that date: the entry for 23 September simply states *"On relief, Battalion proceeded to camp"*. It is possible but not certain, therefore, that he was actually killed in the earlier fighting. In any event, his body was not recovered and he is commemorated *at Tyne Cot*. Why Pte. Jones was serving in a Scottish Regiment is a mystery but he had enlisted initially in the *Fife and Forfar Yeomanry*, a *Territorial Force* cavalry unit.

Two days later, on 25 September, **Gunner William Ball [†]**, of *10th Siege Battery RGA*, died of wounds. *Siege Batteries* were equipped with heavy *howitzers*, which sent large calibre high explosive shells in a high trajectory over considerable distances. The usual armaments were 6 inch, 8 inch and 9.2 inch *howitzers*, although some had huge railway or road mounted 12 inch *howitzers*. *Siege Batteries* were most often employed in destroying enemy artillery, as well as putting destructive fire down on strong-points and railways behind enemy lines. It is often difficult to pinpoint the activities of such a unit but it was attached to the *Fifth Army* that attacked to the north of the *Menin Road*. Gunner Ball's obituary quotes in full a letter from his C.O.[94]: *"(he) was wounded on the 25th of last month, died of his wounds the same day at some casualty clearing station. .. At the time he was wounded he was assisting the battery as a cook, and had gone up to rather an unhealthy spot for this purpose. It was a matter of the most unfortunate circumstances that he should have fallen, for he was in the safest place he could be at the time. As soon as he was hit he was attended to and taken away, but it was obvious that though he was badly hit yet he might recover if he did not lose too much blood. …The sad thing is that he passed away when no one of his battery was with him"*. His body was recovered and is buried in *Bedford House Cemetery*.

The ***South African Brigade***, as part of the *9th (Scottish) Division*, had participated in a particularly successful action in the *Zonnebeke Valley* from the 20 to 25 September. We can be sure that our first Tewkesbury emigrant to South Africa was wounded in this battle. **Pte. A. E. Sircombe [†]** served in the *2nd Regiment*, which arrived in England in 1915, had then been posted to Egypt before arriving in France in April 1916. Because he is buried in *Brookwood Military Cemetery*, Surrey, we can be sure that, after being wounded, he had been evacuated along a well-established chain of medical posts from the front line at Ypres to a hospital on the coast. From there he would have been transferred to a hospital ship and onwards to a hospital in England. If he survived the journey, he would have eventually reached the *South African Military Hospital* in Richmond Park, Surrey, next to his final resting place.

[93] Website of the *Worcestershire Regiment* [www.worcestershireregiment.com]
[94] *Record*, 20 October 1917 p4/5

Despite these losses, the British infantry had succeeded in capturing most of their objectives and then holding them against German counter-attacks, inflicting many casualties on the local German defenders. German defences on higher ground, which had been retained or quickly recaptured in July and August, were lost and the British were able to attack again on 26 September in what was to be known as

Tyne Cot Memorial and Cemetery, commemorating the names of 15 Tewkesbury soldiers [CWGC]

Battle of Polygon Wood, 26 Sept.-3 Oct.

The Germans suspected what was afoot and launched a pre-emptive strike on 25 September in a clear attempt to delay preparations. Although the attack was eventually beaten off with heavy losses, it coincided with a change of division, when units of the *33rd*, including the *2nd Worcesters*, took over the front line. The battalion participated in the initial stages of the battle, which were again *"successful"*. There was, of course, a cost and the battalion suffered 217 casualties. **Pte. D. Morgan [†]** died on 25 September during the pre-emptive attack. We believe that he had been a replacement to this regular battalion after its success in the *1st Battle of Ypres*. If that were the case, Pte. Morgan would have experienced the major battles from 1915 to 1917. His body was not recovered and he is commemorated at *Tyne Cot.*[95]

The *1st/5th Gloucesters* was involved for a short time in this battle but, although the Germans used gas during heavy shelling, it suffered no fatalities from that engagement.

However, the *12th Gloucesters* lost **Pte. W. H. Cripps [†]**, who died from his wounds on 3 October. He had only lived in Tewkesbury briefly and is not listed as a Volunteer. His obituary confirms that he had recently arrived in France as a replacement after the *Battle of Arras*.[96] Although the *Australian Corps* carried out the main thrust of the offensive in Polygon Wood, *12th Gloucesters* was responsible for providing flank protection and successfully repulsed a number of German counter-attacks to recapture lost ground. Pte. Cripps is accordingly buried in *Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery* near Ypres. The battle was a tactical success.

When discussing ***Operation Hush*** earlier, we noted that camps away from the main battle fields were vulnerable to air attack. Such an attack killed conscript **Pte. A. C. Woodhall [†]** on 2 October. Pte. Woodhall was serving with the *14th (Labour) Battalion, Devonshire Regiment*. Although the army was able to use some mechanical vehicles for haulage, the immense effort of building and maintaining the huge network of roads, as well as moving stores, relied on traditional physical effort by horses, mules and humans. Some infantry regiments formed labour companies but the organisation of manpower was haphazard until the formation of the ***Labour Corps*** in January 1917.[97] The *Record* reported that Pte. Woodhall *"was killed by enemy aircraft on October 2nd"*. He is buried in *Coxyde Military Cemetery*, situated near the Belgian coast and some 10 miles behind the front line of 1917, to the north of Ypres. His death was, therefore, a result of the bombing of British rear positions to try to disrupt the preparations being made for the *Battle of Broodseinde*, which took place on 4 October. The cemetery contains the graves of five other soldiers from the Company killed the same day, most likely in the same bombing incident. The manner of death from the air was a worrying portent of future warfare.

It is perhaps ironic then that, soon afterwards on 10 October 1917, Tewkesbury lost its first member of the ***Royal Flying Corps.*** **A/Sgt. J. S. Clarke [†]** was actually killed whilst taking part in a raid above Ypres;

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[95] The derivation of the name remains unresolved; one theory is that it may derive from the fact that soldiers of the Northumberland Fusiliers thought the barn on the skyline resembled cottages at home.

[96] *Register*, 20 October 1917, p4/5

[97] The Corps was manned by those medically rated below the *'A1'* condition needed for front-line service; Pte. Woodhall's classification on recruitment was *'B2'* – not surprising for a 40-year old. In April 1917, a number of battalions were transferred to the Corps including the *14th Devonshires*, which became the 154th and 155th Companies. This Corps was always regarded as a second-class organisation: for example, the men who died are commemorated under their original regiment, with *Labour Corps* being secondary. Hence, Albert's official records show the *Labour Corps* as his last unit whereas the regimental badge and title of his parent regiment, the *Devonshires*, are engraved on his headstone. His Obituary was in the *Record* 20 October 1917, p4/4 where he was erroneously called Woodhull.

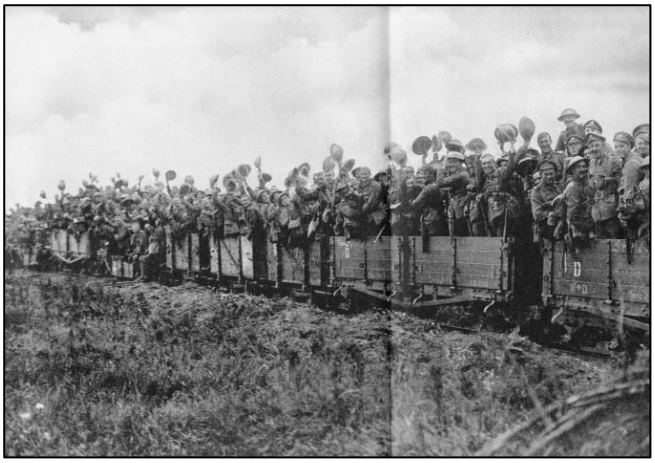
a German *Jasta 36* pilot claimed to have shot down a plane, capturing one crew member but Sgt. Clarke was killed. He was serving with *57 Squadron* which had been formed in 1916 and had crossed to France in December. In May 1917, it converted to *De Havilland 4s* and moved to the Ypres sector, starting long-distance bombing and photography raids.[98] Clarke's body was recovered and he was buried in *British Cemetery* at *Harlebeke*, the focus of the battle in the 1917 *Passchendaele* campaign. **He was the first of our "*heroes*" to be killed in the youngest fighting unit.**

Battle of Broodseinde, 4 October

This was another battle to capture higher ground near *Gheluvelt*. The *1st/5th Gloucesters* were in support on a day which was said to present *"beastly conditions – a heavy rain was falling and the going heavy"*. The line was consolidated and the Diary claims casualties were *"light"* – with 131 lost to the battle! Fortunately no local men were included in the fatalities.

First Battle of Passchendaele, 12 October

We have already noted that Haig's aim was to capture the higher ground of *Passchendaele Village* when the campaign started on 31 July but, although we have mentioned *"tactical successes"*, the cost was so high and the weather so unpredictably bad that the objective still had not been captured two months later. Its capture was an imperative as the alternative of a withdrawal towards Ypres was inconceivable. Nevertheless, on 11 October Crown Prince Rupprecht wrote a report suggesting that a withdrawal should be made far enough back to be out of artillery range.[99]



Propaganda photograph purported to be taken 30 July, en route to Ypres [Hammerton]

12 October was to be that day – but the German's 1917 ally again intervened: heavy rain and mud made movement difficult and little artillery could be brought closer to the front. Allied troops were exhausted and morale had fallen. After a modest British advance, German counter-attacks recovered most of the ground lost opposite Passchendaele causing 13,000 casualties – 2,735 were New Zealanders on what is now known as the country's worst day in its history. Haig called off the attack until conditions improved but Tewkesbury had lost **Guardsman Tom Ball [†]** of the *1st Grenadier Guards*. He was probably a *conscript*, who joined this famous battalion as a replacement in December 1916. The *CWGC* website comments: *"Despite advances (in the north) where the Guards Division succeeded once more in gaining their final objective, .. the high ground around Passchendaele, the principal objective, remained firmly in German hands"*. [100]

Before conditions were right for the final attack, soldiers were still being lost in trench warfare. **Pte. R. C. Fletcher [†]** of *12th Royal Sussex* was wounded and died on 20 October. A conscript in February 1917, he had been trained and sent to the front as a replacement for losses the *39th Division* suffered during all the constituent battles that autumn. We can only surmise that Pte. Fletcher died of wounds sustained in the commonplace trench warfare, as there were no major battles taking place at the time. He did manage to reach hospital in *Bailleul* but a nurse wrote home that *"his wounds were bad, and he quietly passed away"*. He is buried in the attached *Outtersteene Communal Cemetery Extension.*

Before the final assault, subsidiary attacks needed to take place in preparation. The *18th Lancashire Fusiliers* were involved in minor operations 20-22 October in order to maintain pressure while the *Canadian Corps* prepared for their assault. Former Tewkesburian, **Cpl. Arthur Thacker [†],** had found himself in this battalion and he was killed during an attack on 22 October, an action in which it lost 222 men. Cpl. Thacker was a Tewkesbury Volunteer despite having moved to Birmingham with his family. He was

[98] According to the book, *The Sky Their Battlefield* by Trevor Henshaw, on 10 October he was involved in a bombing operation to Oostnieukerke, Belgium, with a Sgt F.V. Legge but, on return, they were reported as *"missing in action"*.
[99] M. Waldron
[100] The *Battle of Poelcappelle* 9 October, has been omitted from the narrative, as no local men died in it. However, some of the *Territorial Battalions* were involved in this attack where *"the going was truly terrible, through mud and water"*. Despite losses, it was considered a successful attack. [Wyrall p228]

originally assigned to the *Army Service Corps* and was thus eligible for the *1914-1915 Star*. As the Fusiliers did not arrive in theatre until January 1916, we can assume that he served first in France for the *ASC* before being transferred, for some reason, to the infantry. His officer wrote home reporting that *"he was instantaneously killed soon after going into action".*[101] Cpl. Thacker's body was not recovered and he is commemorated, therefore, on the *Tyne Cot Memorial*.

Second Battle of Passchendaele, 26 October-10 November

A typical Ypres Battlefield in summer, 1917
[Hammerton]

On 26 October conditions were at least deemed suitable to mount the final assault in the perpetually muddy conditions we associate with the battle. Tewkesbury's two losses in that attack both served in the *Royal Naval Division*, whose role it was to provide flank support for the central thrust by the Canadians; in a three-day period the brigade suffered around 2,000 casualties. One of these "redundant sailors turned infantryman" was **Pte. E. G. Andrews [†]** of the *RMLI***,** who was wounded on 26 October and died three days later. Pte. Andrews had enlisted at Tewkesbury on 10 December 1915, possibly as part of the *Derby Scheme*, and was posted to France on 28 June 1917 as a replacement for losses to the *1st Marine Battalion*.[102] Pte. Andrews was evacuated to the *4th Casualty Clearing Station, Poperinghe*, from where the Matron wrote: *"he was badly wounded by shrapnel in the chest, and although everything possible was done for him, he passed peacefully away at 7.15 this morning"*. He is buried in nearby *Dozinghem Military Cemetery*.

On 30 October 1917, four days into the battle, *"the sorrowful news came through"* that acting **L/Cpl. D. L. Priestley [†]** "had been killed instantaneously while leading his platoon by the explosion of a large German shell on 30 October 1917". L/Cpl. Priestley was son of the Headmaster of Tewkesbury Boys' Grammar School but he was the only one of his brothers who did not volunteer to join the army, even though he had previously served in a *Gloucesters' Territorial* battalion. A married man, he did not attest until 7 December 1915, probably under the *Derby Scheme*. He was assigned initially to the Reserve but was eventually mobilised on 28 September 1916 and posted to the *1st/28th (County of London) Battalion (Artists' Rifles)*, one of the London Territorial battalions (perhaps because he then had a home in London). The Battalion had moved to France in October 1914 but Priestley disembarked on 6 November 1916. Even though he spent some eight months with the battalion when it was operating as a training unit, Donald was not commissioned as an Officer, unlike his brothers. In June 1917, however, the battalion was transferred to front-line duties and joined the *63rd (Royal Naval) Division*. The Division took part in the *Arras Offensive* before becoming involved in the *Second Battle of Passchendaele.* In October, just before his death, he was appointed as an *"unpaid Lance Corporal"*, the lowest *non-commissioned* rank.[103]

After 30 October, the battle carried on until called off on 10 November 1917 after Passchendaele was captured – although, thankfully, with no more local casualties.

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[101] *Register*, 17 November 1917 p4/4

[102] *Register*, 10 November 1917 p4/4, reported the news of Pte. Andrews' death; it differs in some facts from his service record. It stated that "*It is scarcely eight months since Pte. Andrews joined HM Forces".* [Researcher's emphasis]

[103] The *Artists' Rifles* was a curious phenomenon. It was, in fact, raised as a *Volunteer Militia* battalion in 1859 and comprised art students. By 1914 this was not the case but it remained a popular unit for volunteers; recruitment was restricted to recommendation. It particularly attracted recruits from public schools and universities. [Wikipedia]

The *1st Gloucesters* returned from the *abortive Hush Operation* just in time for the end of the battle on 10 November! The night before the rain fell continuously and with incessant violence throughout the 10th. The attack, with the *Gloucesters* in reserve, started promptly – but was a complete failure, losing "only" 50 men.

It was obvious even to commanders that both sides were exhausted after four months of fighting: the conditions meant prolongation was impossible. Even Ludendorff recalled (from his HQ) that *"it was no longer life at all. It was unspeakable suffering"*. The fighting petered out and the regular battalion managed to enter a camp for Christmas dinner on 26 December with turkey, plum puddings and beer provided by the *"kind folk in England"*.

The *Territorial Battalions* had ended their battle somewhat prematurely on 11 October, relieving the Canadians at captured *Vimy*. However they could not rest on any laurels since the end of fighting enabled the Army to order the *48th Division*, containing our territorials, to travel to Italy after the Central Powers had won a significant victory at ***Caporetto*** by 19 November 1917. A week later, the men were on the train to a destination which provided not sun but snow – and which took the lives of two Tewkesbury men.

Two Atmospheric photographs of life at Ypres, 1917 (Hammerton)

So had the ***Third Battle of Ypres*** been worth the loss of the lives of 26 Tewkesbury men with countless wounded and prisoners? Lloyd George, who only reluctantly and belatedly acceded to the campaign, concluded: *"Passchendaele was indeed one of the greatest disasters of the war ... No soldier of any intelligence now defends this senseless campaign ..."*. However, the Germans were seriously considering – even before 11 October 1917 – withdrawal from the *Passchendaele Front* so far back that the superior British artillery would have to redeploy completely.[104]

There is still controversy about the actual number of casualties. However, the most important figures demonstrate the higher number of casualties for the attacker. This should not be surprising. Haig's defence would be (possibly with the benefit of hindsight) that the Germans could not afford to lose that number in the long term in view of the approach of American armies. Yet, of course, it was likely that the Germans could extricate their forces from Russia and, indeed in the last stages of the battle, they had already been reinforced. Furthermore, although rather cynical, one can also point out that, while staggering, British losses were less than on the Somme the previous year when 450,000 men were lost between July and November.[105]

Part of Haig's problem was that, in addition to the losses, he did not fulfil his objectives: there was no breakthrough and ***Zeebrugge,*** with its *U-Boat* menace, had not been removed from the war. Yet, on the other hand, it had deflected attention from the weakness of French armies to the south after the Mutinies and the consequent grant of leave to many soldiers. The Germans, themselves, concluded that *"English stubbornness bridged over the crisis in France"*; the alliance was saved and the outcome of the war was ensured.[106]

[104] M. Waldron
[105] www.westernfrontassociation.com
[106] M. Waldron quoting the German Official Monograph *'Flandern'*

Battle of *Cambrai,* 20 November to 7 December

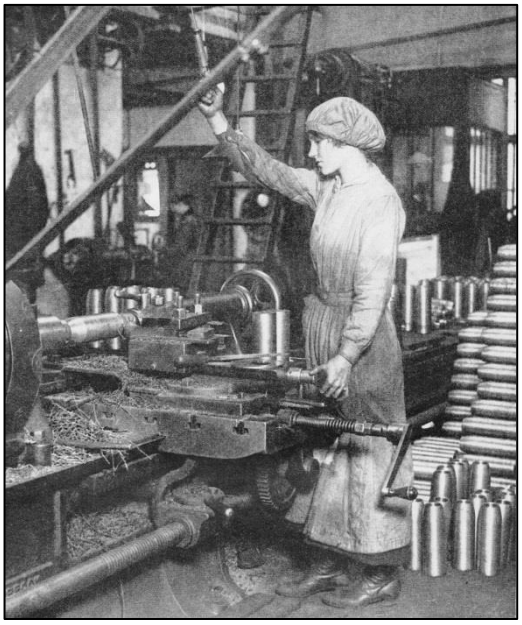
No Tewkesbury soldiers lost their lives in this battle but it is important to mention as it seemed that the use of massed formations of tanks would transform the method of fighting and achieve that long promised breakthrough. So successful was the first day of this battle that church bells rang for the first time since war had broken out but it was over-optimistic: mechanical failures and the usual successful German counter-attack reduced short-term gains. However, evolving tactics used would mature into the successful *"100 Days Campaign"* of 1918.

A deliberately dramatic photo of tanks at Cambrai
[Hammerton]

Other seismic changes had occurred in 1917 – although they were not to have their full impact until 1918. The desperate German attempt to blockade Britain had provoked the USA to declare war on **6 April**. By the end of the year, only one division had entered a fighting zone in North Eastern France and it was not until the summer 1918 that they were to play a part in tipping the balance finally towards the Allies.

The Germans were, however, able to exploit more quickly the other 'earthquake' of October/November 1917,[107] when the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia. Lenin's government decided to negotiate for peace in December, after which the Germans were able to transfer some troops to the Western Font. Peace was finally signed at the *Treaty of Brest-Litovsk* on 3 March 1918 and, within three weeks, Germany had transferred 500,000 battle-hardened troops to fight in France.

Had one been alive in the spring of 1918, such was the sense of hopelessness that one might be forgiven for believing that the Germans would win the war.



[Hammerton]

Was this evidence of some reason for optimism?

With poor quality shells causing the soldiers serious problems, Lloyd George had become Minister of Munitions, leading a growing army of female *"munitionettes"* to support the men at the front.

The year had started badly on 17 January with an explosion at the Silvertown Munitions Factory in East London which killed 73.

However, after the Ministry started regulating hours and wages – though females still earned on average only half what men were paid – by June 1917, 80% of munitions used were made by these *munitionettes*.

This was another development which would have significant long-term consequences for the benefit of the Allies.

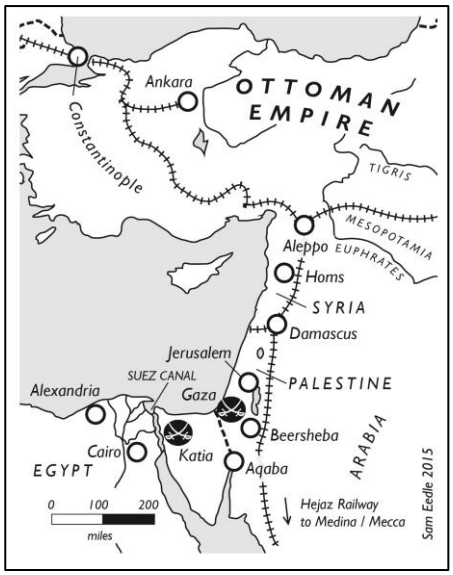
[107] There is confusion over the date of the revolution because Russia still used the *Julian* calendar whilst we had used the *Gregorian* calendar since 1752. Thus, in Russia, the date was **25 October** but, in the west, it was **7 November**.

Middle Eastern Front

Egypt and Palestine

DATE	EVENTS
March and April	2 British defeats in *Gaza*
June	Arrival of new *C-in-C,* **Allenby**
6 July	Lawrence and Arab forces capture ***Aqaba***
27 Oct.	Palestine expedition starts – *3rd Battle of Gaza*
3 Nov.	Capture of ***Beersheba***
8 Nov.	Victory at *Huj*
7- 9 December	**Capture of Jerusalem**
26-30 Dec.	**Defence of Jerusalem**

PALESTINE, 1917



There was more optimism to be found in this theatre. By the end of 1916, Egypt, and its Suez Canal, was safe for the time being, yet the Turks still threatened from their stronghold of ***Palestine***. It was not to be until early 1917 that sufficient force had been gathered, and lines of communication established, for an assault on the large Turkish forces there. Two attempts on the difficult and fortified Turk positions at *Gaza* on the coast narrowly failed, but alerted the Turkish command, which ordered a strengthening of the front all the way from ***Gaza*** to ***Beersheba***. The ***Royal Gloucestershire Hussars*** (***RGH***), who had shared the ignominy of ***Katia*** and its revenge at ***Romani,*** had taken part in these two battles of *Gaza* in March and April 1917 but now took part in this progression to victory. We are very fortunate to have as a guide an anonymous, but very literate, member of the *RGH* whose diary has survived.[108]

With stalemate in the West, the British government was increasingly anxious for success somewhere and that brought about the appointment in June 1917 of a new commander, **General Allenby**. This entailed a change of approach and also a marked strengthening of the British force – which was filled out, as in Mesopotamia, by a large Indian Army contingent as well as *ANZAC* mounted troops. The Palestine theatre became the second largest in terms of forces deployed, after the Western Front.[109]

It was not, therefore, until October 1917 that Allenby was ready to launch an attack with the ***Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF)*** of 200,000 men, including artillery and supported by naval guns offshore, that swept successfully north and east, capturing the notable prize of Jerusalem before moving into Syria. In the ***Third Battle of Gaza*** (27 October – 7 November) the *EEF* defeated the defending Turkish army, directed by Germans, so that Gaza was cleared of Turkish troops.

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[108] For *Katia,* see pages 23-4. "A Trooper's Diary, the RGH on Service 1914-1918", edited by Lawrence Birkin (Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum, 2014) but first published in the *Gloucester Journal 1914-1918* in instalments. See Section IV Sources page 128 for further discussion.

[109] **Field Marshal Allenby (1861-1936**) was an Indian army cavalry commander who participated in *Retreat from Mons* and *1st Ypres* before being appointed to lead the Third Army. However, after severe losses on the Somme and at Arras, Haig sent him back to England. Despite this, he was chosen as the right *"Dashing commander"* to make progress in Palestine to compensate for no progress on the Western Front. Thus, he was given the task by Lloyd George of taking Jerusalem by Christmas and was promised the necessary resources. A cavalryman's war, he was suited to the task and worked with **Colonel T. E Lawrence** to win support of the Arabs who started work with them in October 1916. After capture of Aqaba on 6 July 1917, he was given a free hand to encourage the Arab Revolt that led to the fall of Damascus on 1 October 1918.

The ***RGH*** had set off on the 27 October, with the infantry of the *53rd Welsh Division* working its way up the coast. The *Hussars* had an easy time initially and our correspondent praises the success of an Australian Cavalry charge which caused a speedy retreat leaving the road open. The RGH was able to rest in ***Beersheba*** until 7 November when he commented on the success of infantry and artillery clearing Turkish defences. On 8 November he wrote that *"swords were baptised in Turkish blood, when Warwick and Worcestershire Yeomen carried out the* ***famous charge at Huj****, capturing 14 guns and opening the way for the infantry to press home the attack".*[110] Our author concluded that the charge *"would rank with Balaclava as one of the finest"* such charges in history. However, British casualties were heavy; of the 170 men taking part, twenty-six were killed and forty wounded. They also had 100 horses killed. The author recorded that one of the dead was **Major Albright**, *a "Master of Foxhounds and greatly loved throughout the brigade"*, was killed and buried on the spot.[111]

Lady Butler's atmospheric painting of the Cavalry Charge at Huj
[Cranston Fine Arts-Wikipedia]

The *EEF* then progressed victoriously[112] until Allenby fulfilled his promise to Lloyd George and entered the Holy City, on foot, after the **Capture of Jerusalem** from 7 to 9 December 1917 – well before Christmas!

The Turks and their German General were still ready to surrender and mounted a counter-attack. Even after its fall, Jerusalem was still within range of *Ottoman* artillery and there was still the risk of counter-attack. An offensive to push the Turks further northwards was planned for 24 December but was delayed by bad weather. This gave opportunity for the Turks to attack; initially, they drove the British outposts back and captured several important places. The engagement continued for two days and was ultimately unsuccessful. On 27 December the British infantry advanced about two miles, while the *53rd (Welsh) Division* covered their flank. With Ottoman and German machine-guns hard to locate amongst the boulders, the fighting was severe and stubborn. On 29 December the Division also joined a general infantry advance, which pushed the whole line ahead until the whole front was secured. The Ottoman Army lost over 1,000 casualties and 750 prisoners; the British infantry captured 24 machine-guns and three automatic rifles.

The British, however, had lost 18,000 during the month of December including volunteer **Pte. Arthur Joseph Sallis [†]**, a veteran of the *Battle of Loos*. He was then transferred to the *1/4th Welsh Regiment* as a replacement after it had served in *Gallipoli*. It then joined Allenby's *EEF* as part of the *53rd Division* and Pte. Sallis participated in the successful advance to Jerusalem before Christmas – only to lose his life on 28 December, during the Turkish counter-attack. He was buried in *Jerusalem War Cemetery.*

His death was part of the price of the *EEF*'s victorious campaign from October to December 1917. It resulted in the first military defeat of a Central Power and led to a substantial loss of enemy territory. This was in marked contrast to the hopelessness of the British situation on the Western Front.

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[110] **Lady Butler** (1846-1933) was married to a Lt.-General and one of the few female painters to achieve fame for history paintings, especially military battle scenes. [Wikipedia]

[111] **Major Martin Chicheley Albright** (b. 1887) had married in 1915, Barbara, the sister of Lt. Strickland who had been captured at ***Katia***. It is likely that Barbara joined the *VAD* and travelled to Egypt with the fiancée of Lt. Strickland and survived being torpedoed in transit. Formerly of Eton and Cambridge and an officer with the Worcestershire Yeomanry, Major Albright was part of the industrial firm of Messrs. Albright & Wilson of Oldbury, Worcestershire.

[112] Unfortunately our *RGH* diarist ceases his journal until 28 April 1918 when we find him in Jaffa. History records that at this time the *RGH* was involved in a major reorganisation of cavalry. It skirted Jerusalem but then descended into the Jordan valley and our trooper did not sample Jerusalem – ironically dubbed his *"City of Peace"* – as an enthusiastic tourist until June 1918. After this climax, he mysteriously ceases writing his journal. [RGH pages 146-155]

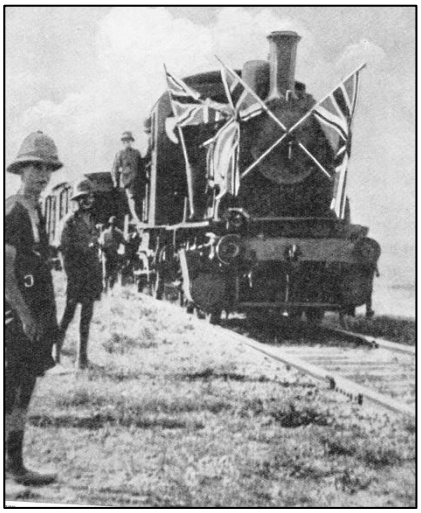
Mesopotamia

DATE	EVENTS
11 March	Fall of Baghdad to British
July	Railway Kut-Baghdad finished
September	Capture of Ramadi Flood Station
18 November	Death of General Stanley Maude

MESOPOTAMIAN CAMPAIGN

We have followed the faltering progress of the Expeditionary Force in 1916 until victory came on 11 March 1917 when ***Baghdad*** was captured along with a large part of the Ottoman army (some 15,000 soldiers).[113] This success followed the decision of London to take over the campaign after the humiliation of Kut and fund it appropriately. There followed a period of younger commanders and administrators who solved the problems of chronically poor communications which had contributed significantly to earlier failures. Basra was built as a modern port, riverboats were updated and railways were built. Furthermore improvements to agriculture won over wavering Arab support and actually managed to feed troops and horses.

The infantry was now much better supported and the *7th Gloucesters* were part of this ultimately victorious force, although, along with other units, it was forbidden to quarter in the city. British *C-in-C*, **Gen. Maude** was received as a self-proclaimed *"liberator"* and the Turkish army withdrew up the *River Tigris* to form an army of 30,000. London allowed the campaign to continue; the Turkish armies were forced to retreat but the British sustained 18,000 casualties out of an initial 45,000 strong army – with a further 37,000 hospitalised, many of them from replacement drafts. The summer from May to September 1917 was more severe than most in terms of heat. It was not surprising, therefore, that Maude determined to pause the operations in order to regroup and recover.



November 1917 – the first train enters Baghdad – a symbol of the investment which led to victory [Hammerton]

In September 1917, the offensive was renewed to capture a flood-control station at *Ramadi*, situated on the right bank of the *River Euphrates* and garrisoned by a large Turkish force. Using armoured cars and cavalry, the Turkish garrison was encircled as the British seized numerous ridges above the town and an escape attempt by the garrison force was thwarted. It was, therefore, an unusually decisive victory (for this theatre). However, further progress was halted because armoured cars could not cope with predictably poor road surfaces.

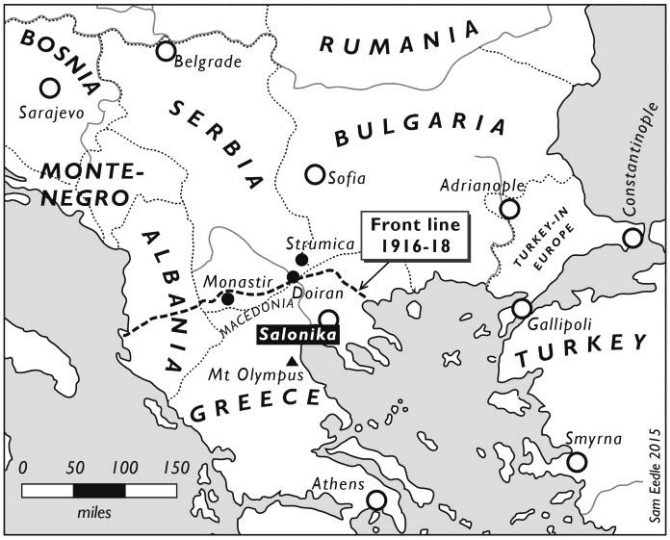
In November 1917 the campaign was dealt a severe blow with the death from cholera of General Maude. Naturally his successor, Lt.-Gen. N. A. Marshall, paused during the winter before renewing his campaign in 1918. However, by this time British forces in Palestine had succeeded in capturing Jerusalem and so Marshall was under great pressure to reduce the size of his forces to augment the Western Front where a manpower crisis was developing.

[113] See pages 22-24 for Mesopotamia in 1916

Salonika

DATE	EVENTS
1917	
April-May	Repulse of Bulgarian invasion at *Doiran*
1918	
4 July	*26 Div./9th Gloucesters* leave
	Allied attack at *Doiran*
July-Sept	
	Bulgarian Armistice
30 Sept	
	26 Div. back on W Front with
21 Oct	*9th Gloucesters; 8th Oxford & Bucks* Bulgarian occupation duties

THE CAMPAIGN IN CONTEXT OF THE BALKANS



There was apparently little of interest to report in March for the *2nd Gloucesters* yet, in that month, the *9th Gloucesters* lost an NCO, **L/Sgt. John Matty [†]**, killed on 17 March. A former member of the *1st Gloucesters*, surviving *Loos*, he transferred to the *Kitchener 9th* where his experience was much needed and he was promoted. After *Horseshoe Hill (Doiran)*, there was little activity except around the lake where *"the line was adjusted several times by each side"*. We must assume, therefore, that it was during these operations that L/Sgt. Matty was killed, although initially he was declared a prisoner. He probably died of wounds and his grave is at *Karasouli Military Cemetery*.[114]

9th Gloucesters "enjoying topees and shorts" [A Devereux]

In late April, the battalion lost two other Tewkesburians. The first was **Pte. C. E. Garrett [†]**, who died on 25 April 1917 when the British had attacked and gained a considerable amount of ground, whilst resisting strong counter-attacks. **L/Cpl J. Parsons [†]**, another former *'Abbey Boy'* Volunteer, died of his wounds on 28 April, probably in the same action. Both were buried in *Karasouli Military Cemetery (Thessalonika).*

Summer in Salonika had arrived, unfortunately bringing with it mosquitos and consequent malarial casualties. **Harry Sayers** who had earlier enjoyed home leave was struck down and later suffered a relapse. One consolation was that the troops were issued with topees and they were allowed to wear shorts**.**[115] A shortage of water was an inevitable additional problem. Little activity was reported before the cold arrived in October; in addition wattle and daub huts were introduced with "*proved very popular*". The year ended with Wyrall commenting that while the *2nd Gloucesters* could be accused of doing little, they "*did their job and did it well*". Although the *9th* lacked its own historian, some success can be deduced from reports of **CSM W. H. Price [†],** not only being mentioned in despatches, but also being awarded the ***Meritorious Service Medal (MSM).*** **S/Sgt. Bernard G Smith** of the *ASC* was similarly praised.[116]

[114] The cemetery was begun in 1916 for the use of casualty clearing stations on the *Doiran* front. At the *Armistice*, it contained about 500 burials but was greatly expanded when graves were transferred from other cemeteries. [CWGC]
[115] When Samuel Bennett died aged 68 in 1938, he had *served 25 years in army at Boer War and Great War with the 2nd Gloucesters*, and was *"invalided out with sunstroke whilst serving in Salonika". [Register* 22 October 1938 p3/5]
[116] We know that **S/Sgt. Smith** was luckier and survived the war, getting married in 1922. Before the war he was a Land Valuation Officer and, when he volunteered, he was claimed to be a "*Clerk [at] Kitchener's Army Head Quarters*". He was mentioned in despatches on 22 September 1916 by the *C-in-C* in Egypt. However, a newspaper erroneously reported that he had "*died of wounds*" on 4 September 1916. From 24 August to 12 September 1917 he was on leave at home from Salonika. For Harry Sayers, see also page 27.

Naval and Aerial Warfare

DATE	EVENTS
January	Losses: 49 ships; 368,521 tons
31 January	Unrestricted *U-Boat* Warfare
March	Losses: 147 ships
7 April	**USA declares war on Germany**
April	Losses, 860,000 tons: 6 weeks supplies of wheat
May	Losses: 600,000 tons
May	Last failed *Zeppelin* attack
27 May	First *Convoy* to Gibraltar
25 May	*Gotha* raid on Folkestone
June	Losses: 700,000 tons
13 June	*Gotha* Raid on London
3 September	1st *Gotha* night raid; attack on bases

To consult a map, please return to page 26

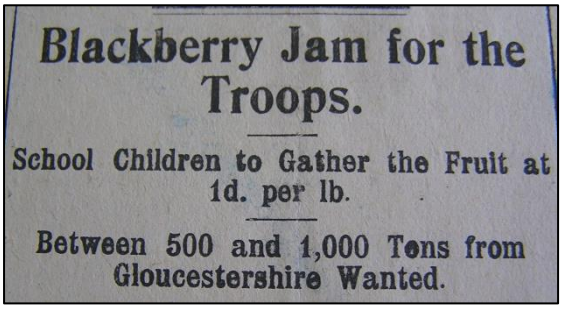
German Propaganda – discovered in Baghdad 1917 **[**Hammerton]

Naval War

No-one from Tewkesbury was killed whilst serving in the Navy or the Merchant Navy in 1917 or 1918 (as far as we know)[117] – yet it is vital that we consider the paradoxical importance of the Navy once again. Admiral Beatty explained the importance on 27 January 1917: *"The real crux lies in whether we blockade the enemy to his knees, or whether he does the same to us"*.[118] Fortunately it was Germany which was forced *"to its knees"* by October 1918 and this is the crucial background to most of the events that led to the end of the war – whether at land or at sea.

In the spring of 1917, however, it seemed as though Britain was *"on its knees"*. As a consequence of the strategic defeat of Germany at the ***Battle of Jutland*** in 1916, after which its *High Seas Fleet* stayed in port, the Germans resumed unrestricted ***U-Boat*** warfare in January 1917. They had calculated that, by sinking 600,000 tons of shipping per month, Britain would run out of ships and would be forced to sue for peace within six months – well before the Americans could intervene effectively. After the Kaiser signed the order, however, the *Chancellor* (*PM*) Bethmann-Hollweg predicted in despair: *"Germany is finished"*.[119]

The Food Crisis of 1917: two examples of the response from Local Newspapers

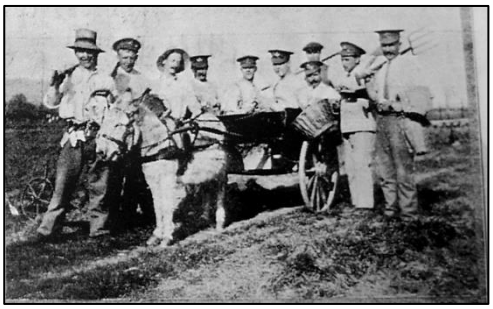


Blackberry Jam for the Troops.

School Children to Gather the Fruit at 1d. per lb.

Between 500 and 1,000 Tons from Gloucestershire Wanted.

The Children doing their bit – before the war, it was a problem – but a solution in war. [*Record* September 1917, G.A.]



A delightful photograph of wounded soldiers and donkey named "Mrs. Asquith" at Mitton VAD Hospital doing their bit to grow food [Cheltenham Graphic]

[117] During World War I nearly 5,000 merchant ships had been sunk by *U-Boats*, with the loss of 15,000 Allied sailors. The **Tower Hill Memorial** is a *CWGC* war memorial in London, which commemorates those from the Merchant Navy and fishing fleets who died during both world wars and have *"no grave but the sea"*. The memorial was designed by Edwin Lutyens and unveiled in 1928, with 12,000 names engraved on the plaques.

[118] John Howard Morrow, *The Great War: An Imperial History*. (Routledge, 2005), p202.

[119] Wikipedia quoting from T. Fitch, M. Poirier, *'Into the Danger Zone…', (History Press, 2014)*

Germany had 105 submarines ready for action on 1 February 1917 and – initially – the campaign seemed a great success, nearly 500,000 tons of shipping being sunk in both February and March. It was calculated that a full 25% of all Britain-bound shipping was sunk, with a further 860,000 tons in April. That was the crucial month for Britain when its supplies of wheat shrank to six weeks' worth. Even after that, matters did not improve: in May losses exceeded 600,000 tons and in June 700,000. Germany had lost only nine submarines in the first three months of the campaign.

One can be sure, therefore, that the German Chancellor had in mind the very real danger that the policy would lead to the USA joining the war – before Britain was starved into surrender. We must remember that the *USA* was initially determined to remain neutral – until reckless German actions weakened its resolve. Perhaps the key to the change had been the sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915.

Diplomatic consequences in 1917 were swift: on 3 February, directly in response to the new submarine campaign, ***President Wilson*** severed all diplomatic relations with Germany. Three U.S. ships were sunk in March 1917 and the 10,798-ton *SS New York* followed on 9 April. By then, on 6 April, the U.S. Congress declared war on the *Central Powers*. Therefore, short-term German success had turned into an almost inevitable long-term defeat.[120]

Militarily also the Allies were fighting back. We have already noted the use of *Q-ships* with *depth charges* but after a very long debate the British accepted the ***convoy system*** reluctantly and the first convoy sailed from Gibraltar on 10 May 1917. After that a regular system of trans-Atlantic convoys was established, and from July the monthly losses never exceeded 500,000 tons, although they remained above 300,000 tons for the remainder of 1917. It had the additional benefit of bringing warships escorting the convoys in contact with attacking U-boats, leading to an increase in U-boats destroyed. German submarine losses were between five and ten each month, and they soon realized the need to increase production, even at the expense of building surface warships. However, production was delayed by labour and material shortages.

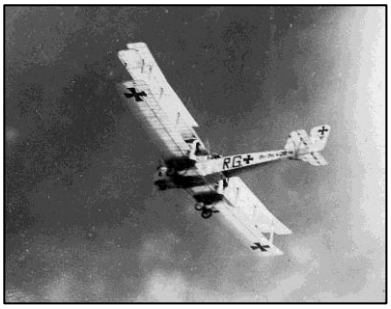
Air War

The first ***Zeppelin*** raid of 1917 took place on 16–17 March but did not reach its target. Two air-ships were lost on return. The repeat on 23-24 May, when six Zeppelins set out to bomb London, was frustrated by the weather and only one victim was killed in Suffolk. By this time, even the Germans appreciated that civilian casualties made the *Zeppelins* an object of hatred, and they were widely dubbed *"baby-killers"*. With the development of effective defensive measures, the airship raids became increasingly hazardous; in 1917 the airships were largely replaced by bombers.

A Zeppelin fragment, displayed in Tewkesbury's Museum. Fragments had wounded the Sayer family, in 1916 living in London. [see page 22]

The first bomber was the ***Gotha*** and 23 took part in their first raid on London on 25 May 1917. Bad weather diverted the attack, which still resulted in 95 deaths and 195 injuries, mostly in Folkestone. By this time Britain was developing defences with fighter interceptors and anti-aircraft fire so daylight raids had to be abandoned.

The first night raid took place on 3 September, targeting Chatham Docks. Although only a five plane "experimental raid", it caused 152 deaths, including 130 naval recruits whose dormitory received a direct hit. It was the worst single bombing incident of the war. At the same time, the ***RFC*** itself carried out a series of bombing raids on the German bomber airfields and forced a move inland.



A Gotha Bomber from 1917
[Internet, unstated source]

Whether or not the British people appreciated that there was cause for optimism in 1917 is very doubtful. After the initial euphoria, the Americans seemed a long time in coming and food was becoming very expensive. Vera Brittain's *Testament of Youth* eloquently describes the growing hopelessness that afflicted the British people during the last two years of war.[121]

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[120] **Woodrow Wilson** was President of the USA from 1913-1921. A reluctant war leader, Wilson was provoked by Germany into asking Congress to declare war in order to make *"the world safe for democracy"*. In 1918 he published his *"Fourteen Points"* that set out to be a blue-print for making a just and permanent peace.

[121] Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* (first edition 1933; new editions were published to complement the 2014 film).

E. 1918: The Astonishing Campaigns!

If hopelessness might have been the dominant characteristic of 1917, then in the spring 1918, the British people were staring defeat in the face and, after three years of privation, one can only imagine the prevailing sense of desperation. Yet, astonishingly, within eight months the Allies claimed Victory.

Although that victory came on the Western Front, one should explain the unpredictable developments of 1918 by focussing upon the naval events that produced fateful consequences for the whole war.

Naval and Aerial Warfare

DATE	EVENTS
January	Losses: 300,000 tons+ of shipping
February	Introduction of rationing
21 March	German land offensive stops bombing attacks on GB
1 April	Creation of ***RAF***
23 April	Attack on *Zeebrugge*
19 May	Last bomber attack
5 August	Last failed Zeppelin raid
October	Losses: 119,000 tons
3 November	***Kiel Naval Mutiny***, Germany
9 November	***Kaiser*** abdicates
11 November	***Armistice*** (cease-fire)
19 June 1919	***Treaty of Versailles*** ends the war
21 June 1919	***Scapa Flow***: German Fleet is scuttled

RAF Badge 1918
[RAF website]

Air War

Gotha attacks had been perceived in 1917 as having potential for success so in mid-March 1918 the *Gotha* squadron was once again ready to attack England. However, military concerns on land intervened and the bombers were required to support the German last-chance ***Spring Offensive*** of 21 March.

On 1 April there were signs that Britain was learning the lessons posed by aerial attacks and, after a report written by South African PM, Jan Smuts, the ***Royal Air Force (RAF)*** was officially created.

The last and largest aeroplane raid of the war took place on the night of 19 May, when 38 *Gothas* took off against London, only to suffer heavy losses. Six *Gothas* were shot down by the RAF's interceptors and anti-aircraft fire, while a seventh aircraft was forced to land after a protracted close-quarters engagement with a *Bristol fighter* out of Biggin Hill in Kent. The last Zeppelin raid on Britain took place on 5 August – it was a failure. Less than 22 years later ***RAF Biggin Hill*** was the focus of the Battle of Britain.[122]

Naval War

British shipping losses were still over 300,000 tons in January with the lowest 119,000 tons only being experienced in the last full month of war. It is, perhaps, surprising that it took so long for the British Government to make another unpopular historic decision to rival that of conscription in 1916 – to introduce rationing of food nearly a year after the crisis of April 1917. This delay was more interesting because, right at the beginning of the war, the government had passed a *Food Supplies Act*, giving it the right to control food if prices were too high or supplies were too short.

Reports appeared in newspapers on 3 February 1917 that the government's food controller wanted to avoid compulsory rationing – if there was urgent success in economizing. People were asked to restrict their eating to no more than 4 lb. of bread or 1 lb. 8 oz. of meat (including bacon and sausages) and 12 oz. of sugar a week. People were told that there was no shortage of fish or eggs. Newspapers published recipes for nourishing food that required less meat, like a savoury meat roll made with minced meat, bread and eggs or a

[122] Wikipedia using Christopher Cole and E. F. Cheesman, *The Air Defence of Great Britain 1914-1918*, (London, 1984). Biggin Hill became the symbolic HQ of RAF Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain, 1940.

stew made with chestnuts. People were encouraged to eat more pulses, for example lentil soup, and to have herrings for breakfast instead of bacon. Hotels and gentlemen's clubs were asked to have meatless days.

There is no evidence for this in Tewkesbury – until June 1917, when a survey was to be held to ascertain whether Tewkesbury was exceeding the suggested bread ration of 4lb. per person. Two weeks later the report suggested cutting the actual 4 lb. 6oz. per head to a '*Food Control'* ration of 4 lb. The Government finally introduced statutory rationing of meat, ½ lb. sugar and ½ lb. total fats each a week. The local newspapers started to record the advance of rationing, the first coming in February with the adoption of a food rationing scheme. In April a notice on meat rationing appeared; the whole country was now affected rather than just London. That same month permission was granted to use potatoes in bread and in June bread was rationed.[123] We have little evidence of local resistance. One is sure that a sigh of relief was heaved in August when it was announced that sugar became available for jam making.

Militarily, the situation at sea was improving throughout 1918. Strangely the Germans failed to introduce *wolf pack*, as they did so effectively in the next war. On 23 April a raid was mounted on the main *U-Boat* base at ***Zeebrugge*** with dubious results[124]; the blocked canal was open again after a few days to submarines at high tide, and British casualties were 583 men against German losses of 24. Despite the reality, the raid was publicised as a great British victory and many medals were awarded.

Perhaps less publicly, aircraft began to play an increasingly effective role in patrolling large areas quickly. While they had little effect when attacking (only one *U-Boat* was confirmed as sunk by air attack) the presence of aircraft forced the *U-Boat* to dive or risk the air patrol summoning hunting warships to the scene. During 1918 no convoy escorted by air patrol lost a ship and *U-Boats* were forced increasingly to operate at night or beyond aircraft range. Germany lost 69 *U-Boats* in 1918. The tide was surely turning.

The Impact of the Naval War on Political History

Propaganda sheet about Kiel Mutiny [Wikipedia]

It was, indeed, the war at sea that helped force the Germans to sign the *Armistice* on 11 November. Politically, the German government realised it was doomed after the ***Naval Mutiny*** in ***Kiel*** on 29 October. The German sailors were vulnerable to Bolshevik ideas partly because of the boredom, which set in after having been confined to port for over two years. This takes us back to the ***Battle of Jutland*** in June 1916: the British may have sustained more losses but the German fleet never again ventured out of port. The sailors set up decision-making *'Soviets'* (committees) and their example had spread to other towns in Germany, notably Bavaria by 7 November. Two days later on 9 November the Kaiser abdicated and the *Armistice* soon followed on 11 November.

A contributory factor to the mutiny was the reduction in food rations that affected the sailors and most German civilians since the end of 1916. By then, staple foods, such as grain, potatoes, meat, and dairy products, had become so scarce that many people were obliged instead to consume *ersatz* (substitute) products, including *Kriegsbrot* (*"war bread"*) and powdered milk. A German source claimed that 763,000 German civilians died up until the end of December 1918 from starvation and disease caused by the blockade. This was evocatively dubbed the *"Turnip Winter"*. That figure has been disputed – it proved, however, that Beatty had been right – the belligerent that imposed the most effective blockade would win. Much has been written in this account about the attempted German sea blockade of Britain. Yet much less is known of the history of the blockade on Germany – except its results.

Moreover, it is all too easy to forget that the *Armistice* did not end the blockade: it was kept in operation until the Germans accepted the terms of the *Treaty of Versailles* on 28 June 1919. The food blockade was officially terminated on 12 July 1919.[125]

Before the peace treaty was signed, there was a fascinating footnote to the naval war. Under the *Armistice*, the German *High Seas Fleet* had been interned at ***Scapa Flow***, the naval base in north Scotland. Fearing that the fleet would be seized and divided amongst the allies, the commander gave the order to ***scuttle*** (*self-destroy*) the fleet on 21 June 1919, when the sailors obediently sank 52 of their 74 warships.

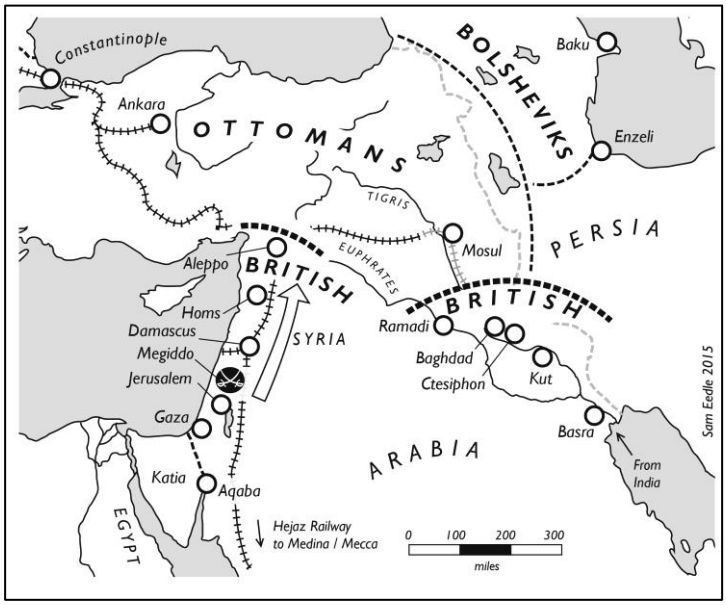
[123] *Register*: 1917: 6 April p5/2; 13th p6/5; 2 June p 2/5; 16th p4/6; 1918: 16 February p8/1, p7/5; 31 August p 4/4
[124] To consult a map, see page 28.
[125] Wikipedia & The New Cambridge Modern History Vol. 12(2nd ed.), Cambridge University Press, 1968 p213.

The Middle Eastern Campaigns

1918 – Victory in Palestine

DATE	EVENTS
19 Feb	Advanced on Syria
4 May	Victory in Syria
19-25 Sept.	*Battle of Megiddo*
1 October	Fall of Damascus
16 October	Fall of Homs
25 October	Fall of Aleppo
31 October	**Turkish Armistice**
	End of War

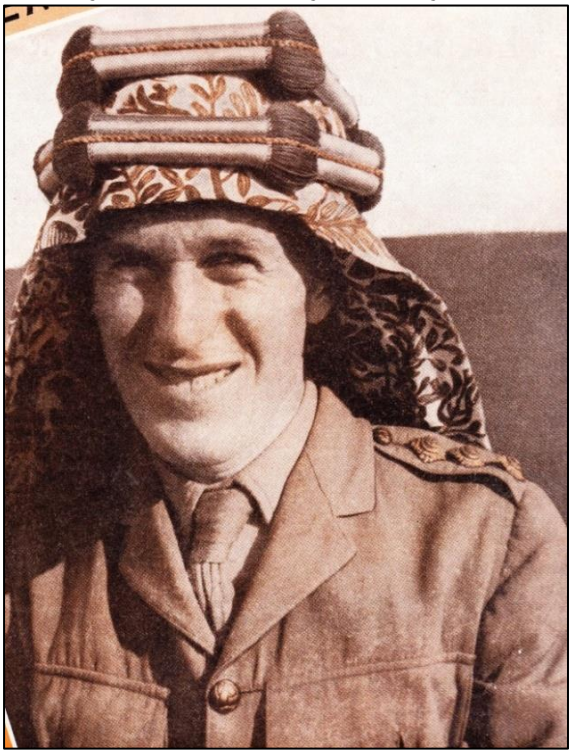
PALESTINE & MESOPOTAMIAN THEATRE



1917 had culminated with the promised 'Christmas present' of the capture of Jerusalem; the New Year then witnessed the advance into Syria via operations in the Jordan Valley from 19 February to 4 May, in which the ***RGH*** and our erudite diarist took part. During that period, on 26 March, emigrant **Raymond G. Bloxham** of the *Queensland Light Horse* was declared wounded and missing.[126] ***Damascus*** fell to General Allenby's forces on 1 October, followed by *Homs* and *Aleppo*. With the threat of *Asia Minor* being invaded, the ***Ottoman Empire*** capitulated on 30 October with the signing of an *Armistice*.

In 1919 Allenby, the former 'failure' on the Western Front, was inevitably promoted Field Marshal and created "*Viscount Allenby, of Megiddo and Felixstowe",* Suffolk. (*Megiddo* was the successful battle in September 1918 that opened the way to final victory.) Allenby's former ally, now famous as "***Lawrence of Arabia"***, had led the Arab revolt on the understanding that it would win them independence. However, he became disillusioned when the secret *Anglo-French Sykes-Picot Agreement* of 1916 had divided up Arab territories in the Ottoman Empire between the French and British – completely ignoring the wishes or needs of the inhabitants.

Jerusalem remained in British hands until 1948, when the Empire retreated in the face of Jewish hostility. Thus the state of ***Israel*** was created, much to the anger of the Arab world because of perceived broken British promises from 1917-1918.

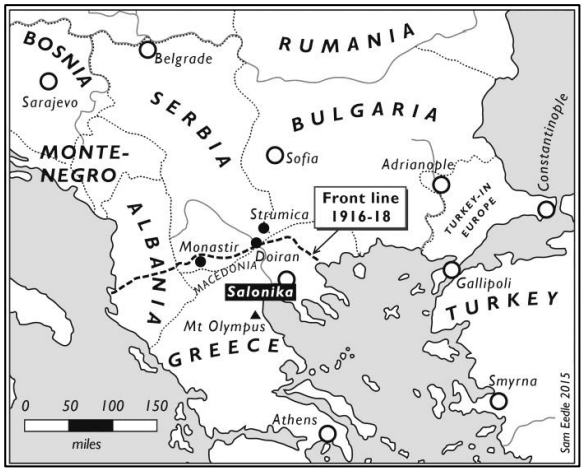


'Lawrence of Arabia': his success was a propaganda present in November 1918. [Hammerton]

[126] He was wounded in the thigh and recovered in hospital in Egypt; he won the *"Military Medal for Tewkesbury Colonist*" [*Register*, 08 June1918 p4/5]. He had emigrated to join his brother Harry as farmers in Australia; Raymond Bloxham and Frank Dee sailed for Australia on board *SS Beltana* [Register, 13 June 1912 p5/5] also **Sapper Daniel Rix** was reported seriously ill from typhoid in Egypt [*Record*, 1 June 1918 p4/4]

Salonika

DATE	EVENTS
4 July	26 Div./*9th Gloucesters* leave
July-Sept.	Allied attack at *Doiran*
30 Sept.	**Bulgarian Armistice**
21 Oct.	*26 Div*. & *9th Gloucesters* returned to the Western Front; *8th Oxford &Bucks* despatched on occupation duties in Bulgaria



The *2nd Gloucesters*' diary reported that the period until 30 April 1918 *"has been marked with no incident of great importance but there has been plenty to do … the strength of the positions has been considerably increased"*. However, an officer was wounded by a *"blind shell"* and lots of medals were issued – but none were received by local men. The summer was exceedingly hot but the enemy was largely inactive. In June the men enjoyed a camp at the seaside. Because of the granting of home leave and sickness, the battalion strength had been halved to 438.

In was not surprising, therefore, that the decision was made to withdraw troops from Salonika to meet the very successful German attacks in France after 21 March. On 4 July the *9th Gloucesters* left to take part in the *"100 Days"*. This campaign won the war, earning three more battle honours to the two earned in Salonika (and one in France in 1915). The *8th Oxford & Bucks* remained behind, as did the *2nd Gloucesters*.

Despite the weakening of the forces in Salonika, an attack was planned to finish the Bulgarian war, again at *Lake Doiran*. The *2nd Gloucesters* was awarded *"position of honour in the attack"* on 2 September, which was *"successful in every detail"*, despite 18 casualties in the enemy's retaliatory bombardment.

The battalion was in reserve for the subsequent *Battle of Doiran* 18-19 September. It has been claimed that this attack was a *"disaster for the British Divisions",* as they had to make a frontal assault on a 2,000-foot high ridge, heavily defended with fortresses built on some of the higher mountains.

Typical Conditions of Warfare in Salonika in 1916
[Hammerton]

The consequences were not as serious as they might have been, as Bulgaria was seeking an armistice which took place on 30 September. The *8th Oxford & Bucks* stayed in the area on occupation duty but, on 2 November, the *2nd Gloucesters* were sent to the Black Sea for operations and remained at Tiflis and Batum until 24 September 1919, by which time it could then return home.

One local man who started the journey but failed to return was **L/Cpl. E. N. Hindmarsh [†]**, who died on 23 December 1918. His obituary reported that he *"endured considerable hardships in the retirement to Salonika"*. L/Cpl. Hindmarsh was reported to have died "*in service"*; probably while on occupation duties. Possibly while being treated in the nearby *No. 31 Casualty Clearing Station*, he had fallen ill from pneumonia. He is buried in *Dedeagatch British Cemetery, Greece*,[127] an area which was occupied by Commonwealth forces from October to December 1918.

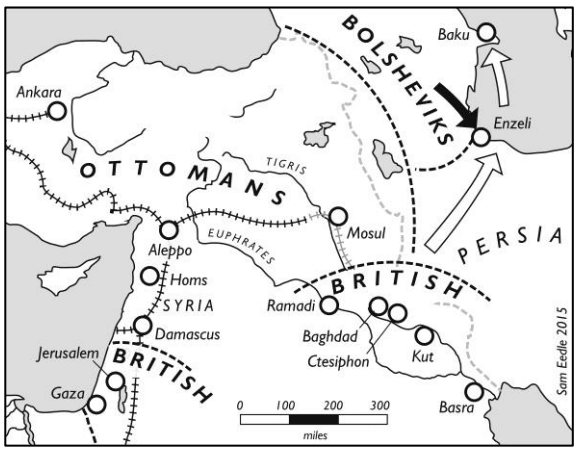
[127] Until 1913 the area was part of the Ottoman Empire (Turkey); after the *Second Balkan War* in 1913 the area became part of Bulgaria; and in 1919, following Bulgaria's defeat, the area was ceded to Greece. The town of *Dedeagatch* was subsequently renamed *Alexandroupolis* (after the Greek King), although the cemetery kept the original name.

Mesopotamia

Victory in Baghdad was insufficient by late 1917 as the use of oil had vastly increased and so control of oilfields became once again a priority. Mosul was, therefore, the next logical step. However, Marshall was not only forced to give up two divisions, but also had his command undermined to create a special force to capture the **Baku** oilfields on the Caspian Sea before either the Turks or, significantly, the Bolshevik Russians. The ***Dunsterforce***, led by **Maj-Gen. Lionel Dunsterville**, was specially formed to attack Baku – and the 39th Brigade, with the *7th Gloucesters*, was detached to join it.

FROM MESOPOTAMIA TO BAKU 1918

DATE	EVENT
January	*Dunsterforce* leaves for **Baku**
February	**Mosul** force leaves Baghdad
25 May	Force pauses
26 Aug.-15 Sept.	**Baku** – *Dunsterforce* eviction
31 October	**Turkey signs *Armistice***
31 December	Turks evacuate Mesopotamia
1922	**Creation of British Iraq**



This force weakened the attack on Mosul. The depleted army finally moved north in February 1918 – with some success until 28 May 1918, when it paused in an inhospitable place, men enduring summer temperatures as high as 111°F in the shade. Once again soldiers reverted to being navvies for roadwork.

This proved to be the last attack on the Euphrates Front. In the autumn the remaining force pushed north towards Turkey – but was halted by the Turkish Armistice of 31 October. By 31 December, the Turks had evacuated all the oilfields that had originally attracted the British forces in 1914.

One Tewkesburian at least found himself a member of the *Dunsterforce*, which departed in January 1918 and comprised a fleet of 750 military transport vehicles to ensure its supply across the 300 miles of barren terrain in which it was to operate. Matters were complicated because this area was already in the grip of a serious famine after the depredations of the Bolshevik army, which delayed the Force. In August, however, it did manage to occupy **Baku** to help the garrison repel a Turkish attack. Superior numbers, however, forced it to withdraw towards Baghdad after a short, but brutal, siege, taking along with it 50,000 Christian refugees. Nevertheless, after the war ended, the British returned to Baku as an occupying force. **Pte. Albert G. Hodges [†]** was a veteran volunteer, serving with the *7th Gloucesters* in *Gallipoli* as well as Mesopotamia. He was involved in the *Defence of Baku* (26 August-15 September 1918) and would then have been among the survivors who retreated from Baku. During this withdrawal, he died on 19 October 1918 and is buried in *Tehran War Cemetery,* Iran;[128] total British losses were about 200. When news reached the British press, there was fierce criticism – *"nothing had been achieved"*.

Watson records that 97,379 had been killed in winning the Mesopotamian campaign –ignoring countless thousands wounded and sick. He cited future P-M Bonar Law: *"I wish we'd never gone there"*.[129]

Mesopotamia ceased to exist with the expulsion of the Turks and, after the secret Anglo-French *Sykes-Picot* agreement of 1916, it became known as ***Iraq***. From 1922 it was effectively administered by the British Empire until the Kingdom of Iraq was formed in 1933. The British boots, which landed in the invasion of Iraq in 2003 to occupy Basra, were following a well-worn British trail, inaugurated in November 1914.

(It is worth remembering that the *Kitchener* ***13th (Western) Division*** had been the only wholly British Division to have served in both Gallipoli and Mesopotamia, leaving on 13 June 1915 and remaining on overseas service until it ceased to exist on 17 March 1919. During the war it had suffered casualties of 12,656, with an additional 57,667 sick.)

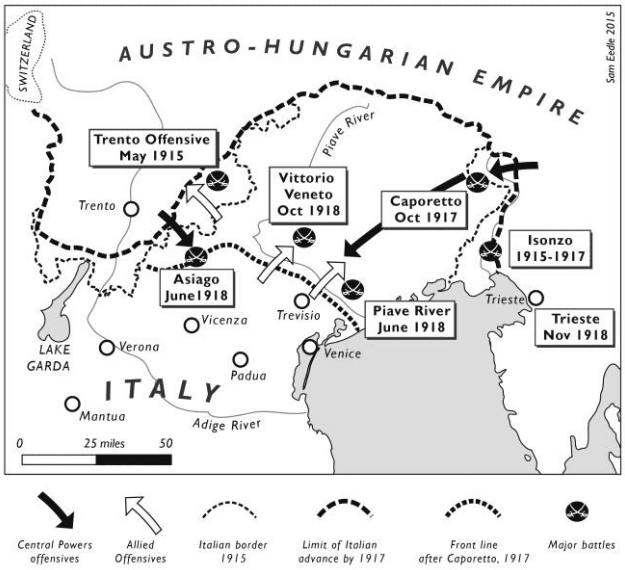
[128] A memorial in Baku was established to the Ottoman soldiers who were killed in combat. There is [possibly still] also a memorial to the British soldiers there. Pte. Hodges' body was probably re-interred in Iran with all the other *Dunsterforce* soldiers. At the time, however, his mother was informed that *"he died at Basra"*. This was probably deliberate misinformation as the British intervention in the Caspian area was not something to be broadcast.

[129] Watson pp 434-453

The Territorials' Italian Adventure

DATE	EVENTS
23 May 1915	**Italy declared War on Austria-Hungary** – having left *Triple Alliance* of the *Central Powers*
27 Aug. 1916	Italy declared War on Germany
4 Nov. 1917	**Italians defeated at Caporetto**
23-24 Nov.	*Territorials* entrain for Italy
30 Nov.	*Territorials* arrive
28 Feb. 1918	*48th* Div. in front line
21 March	German offensive in West
15-16 June	***Battle of Piave***
10-17 Sept.	*1st/5th* return to France
2 November	*48th* Div. enters Austria
3 November	**Austria-Hungary Armistice**

THE ITALIAN THEATRE OF WAR 1918



For the county Territorial battalions of the *48th Division (1st/5th , 1st/4th* and *1st/6th*) it must have seemed as if Christmas had come early in 1917 when, in October, the order was received to abandon *Ypres* and entrain for Italy. Thus, on 23 November, the battalions departed, on what Wyrall describes as a *"pleasant experience"* via Paris, Marseilles, Turin and Milan.[130] A week later they had arrived – not in sunny Italy about which they may have heard but in the North between Lake Garda and Venice. In winter, snow is both the enemy and friend, but at least it ensured that there was little enemy activity.

The enemy that they had come to fight was Austria-Hungary which, in alliance with Germans, defeated the Italian army at the ***Battle of Caporetto*** in October 1917 and threatened to overwhelm our ally. When war broke out, Italy should have sided with the Germans but vacillated and was persuaded in 1915 that its own territorial ambitions would be best accommodated by fighting for the *Entente*. By 1917 that alliance had become a burden; part of the cost of supporting Italy was the loss of three gallant local men.

Until the end of February the snow was a hindrance, which delayed the division's arrival on the front lines on the ***River Piave***. The soldiers were rotated out of front lines after four days and even in April and May *"there is little to record of outstanding interest".* However, all that was to change because of events in France after the gigantic German attacks on 21 March. The Germans required that their Austrian ally create a diversion, perhaps to lead to the transfer of more British troops out of France.

That did not happen but, nevertheless, on 15 June on the ***Asiago Plateau,*** four Austrian Divisions attacked two British divisions. In early June they had been weakened by *influenza* with 30% in hospital, the average strength was 491 – half the normal size. An artillery bombardment forced the depleted battalions to retire until a new line of defence was attained. The attack was then halted.

However, the *1st/5th* Battalion had suffered heavy casualties including the gallant **Sgt. Albert Coopey, M.M. [†]**. His obituary recorded that *"his body was found the next day"* and he was buried in *Boscon British Cemetery*, one of 17 men from the battalion buried in the cemetery who were killed on the same day.

On the following morning, the *1st/6th Gloucesters* mounted a counter-attack and, within four hours, the Austrians (*"apparently in no mind to put up any further resistance"*) decided to withdraw. Unfortunately that successful attack cost the life of **Pte**. **Frank N. Green [†]**, killed by machine-gun bullets, while *"charging the enemy"*.[131] Pte. Green is now at rest in the same cemetery as Sgt. Coopey.

One cannot disagree with Wyrall when he describes Austrian efforts as an *"inglorious affair, in which they lost the land they had gained"*. The cost to the *1st/5th* had been very heavy with 219 casualties. The *1st/6th* had lost 58 but had captured 199 men, 14 machine-guns and one *"flammenwerfer"* (flamethrower).

[130] Wyrall p243 and chap. XXXVIII; unless otherwise stated the narrative comes from this source.
[131] *Record*, 13 July 1918; for further discussion on this reorganisation, see page 68.

The third – and last – Tewkesbury soldier to be killed on the Italian Front was **Cpl. H. Warner [†]**, serving with *1/8th Worcesters.* Originally a volunteer with the ***RGH***, he was one of many cavalrymen deprived of their horses and converted into infantrymen with different regiments. Cpl. Warner had survived the ***Battle of Piave*** and, on 23 July, he had written home optimistically that *"we shall very soon be home by what I hear of things in France & Germany"*. His battalion enjoyed six quiet weeks in August, after which *"patrols became increasingly active, raiding parties taking (hundreds of) prisoners".* We can only assume that Cpl. Warner, who was recorded as *"killed in action"* on 3 August, was lost in this period of warfare. Unlike the other two, his body was never recovered nor identified and his name is commemorated on the *Giavera Memorial to the Missing,* near Treviso in Italy.[132]

The fatal – but successful – adventure was over for the *1st/5th* Battalion; its reward, however, was to be returned to the Western Front, in a reconstituted *25th Division*. The army was, by then, so depleted that units had to be reorganised to form fighting forces for (what turned out to be) the last big push of the war. By the 17 September, the men found themselves back to earth – on the Somme.[133]

Western Front: The Stalemate is Broken – Eventually

DATE	EVENT
7 November 1917	***Bolshevik Revolution*** in Russia
Jan-early March 1918	*Trench Warfare*
3 March	End of Russo-German War; *Treaty of Brest-Litovsk*
21 March	***Kaiserschlacht 1: Operation Michael*** (and *Mars* in April)
26 March	Foch *C-in-C* on Western Front
9 April	***Kaiserschlacht 2: Operation Georgette***
27 May	***Kaiserschlacht 3: Operation Blücher-Yorck***
	(followed by *Gneisenau* in June and *Marneschutz* in July)

At the end of 1917, following the costly victory of the British at ***Passchendaele***[134], both sides were exhausted yet there was an expectation that important developments would take place in 1918. The ***USA*** had declared war in April 1917 and Germany was well aware that gradually the strength of US forces in France would increase. On the other hand, the ***Bolsheviks*** had taken power in Russia, with Lenin promising his people *"Peace!"* (as well as *"Bread!"* and *"Land!"*). To that effect, Lenin started prolonged negotiations with the Germans in December. The Allies, therefore, were aware that 32 divisions (hundreds of thousands of troops) would be transferred from the moribund Eastern Front. After the losses of ***Third Ypres***, Haig's own position was precarious; nevertheless, he survived. He also predicted that Germany would implode politically during the year but, before that, the Germans would make, in his words, a *"gambler's throw"*. The crucial question concerned its timing: March was the obvious and traditional choice.

Trench Warfare

Meanwhile both sides licked their wounds, prepared for the next battles – and traditional '*trench warfare'* continued. The first casualty was an Australian emigrant – and the third of Mrs. Didcote's sons to be killed. On 12 January 1918 **Sgt. Harry F. Didcote [†]** of *17th Battalion, Australian Infantry, (AIF) (*who had been '*Mentioned in Despatches*' on 3 March 1917) was killed by enemy shellfire. His captain wrote: *"a shell burst in the trench, and he was hit and all was over"*. Unusually for such a death, his body was recovered and he is buried in *Gunners Farm Military Cemetery*, near Ypres.

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[132] Another casualty reported: Pte. Charles Halling (*Gloucesters*) missing believed *POW* [*Record* 29 June 1918 p1/5-6]

[133] See pages 81-83 for an account of the *1st/5th* on the Western Front in 1918. The *1st/4th* and *1st/6th* Battalions stayed in Italy to continue the fight against the Austrians who were *"showing signs of weariness"*. A policy of raids was maintained and on 2 November a general advance was started – they were the first troops to enter enemy territory. However, at 3 p.m. on 3 November their attack was stopped by the Austrian Armistice. The British Divisions diplomatically allowed the Italian Army to march into the regional capital, Trent. The *1st/4th* stayed in Italy until demobilised in March 1919 but the *1st/6th* garrisoned in Albania and Montenegro before travelling to Egypt in May 1919 and arriving home in Bristol on 25 March 1920. It had lost 864 soldiers – the size of a whole battalion – and served abroad for as long as five years and seven months.

[134] See page 52 for a full account

Such was the unpredictability of *trench warfare* that it was another month before a Tewkesbury man was killed. This time it was 18-year-old *conscript*, **Pte. Bert Devereux [†]**, *2nd Devons*, who was killed on 15 February 1918. His manner of death was similar in that he was killed instantaneously by a shell, which entered the *"forward post killing three"*. Pte. Devereux was one of the unlucky victims of the hazards of trench life, being killed at a time when no major attack was taking place. The *Register* reported that *"Mr. and Mrs. Devereux have also received the official notice of the death and the message of sympathy from the King and Queen, signed by the Secretary of State for War"*. Although honoured with a temporary burial, his body was not recovered after the war; these temporary graves were destroyed by subsequent shellfire so Pte. Devereux is commemorated on the *Tyne Cot Memorial to the Missing* near Ypres.

The manner of Pte. Devereux's enlistment reflected changes in recruitment that had taken place after ***conscription*** had been introduced. Having enlisted on 19 February 1917, he was initially allocated to the *206th Infantry Battalion*, a unit of the Training Reserve rather than, as happened previously, to a training battalion of his local regiment. After the start of conscription, the prevailing regimental system simply could not cope with the numbers. The localized recruitment for infantry regiments was abandoned; the entire system was centralized. Once his service in the *Training Reserve* was completed, Pte. Devereux was posted where he was needed irrespective of locality, hence his posting to the *Devonshire Regiment*, a much reduced original regular battalion of the *BEF* of August 1914.

Conscripts training en masse at Etaples [Hammerton]

Pte. A. W. Wallace [†] was also a *conscript*, posted in the same way to a battalion with a similar pedigree, the 2nd *Worcesters.* Pte. Wallace was sent to France as a replacement on 29 October 1917 and was killed on 5 March 1918 – according to the *Register*, *"somewhere in front of Ypres"*. For the day of 5 March, the Diary simply comments *"Battalion in line"*; no reference is made to any actions or casualties. On the day before Pte. Wallace's death, the battalion had received a visit from a group of Welsh MPs. In the absence of any record of specific activities, it is most likely that Pte. Wallace was the victim of trench warfare, killed perhaps by a stray shell or sniper's bullet. His body was recovered and he is buried in *Dochy Farm New British Cemetery* near Ypres.[135]

Although he died on the infamous day of 21 March, it is likely that **Gunner W. C. L. Green [†]**, of 'B' *Anti-Aircraft Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery*, was the last victim of trench warfare. *Conscripted* in March 1917, he was assigned to an *Anti-Aircraft Battery*, an arm of the artillery which had not existed at the outbreak of the war and which evolved progressively to address this new menace of warfare – aircraft. In the absence of any surviving army service records, it is impossible to identify exactly where Gunner Green was serving at the time of his death. However, his unit was known to be part of the *First Army* in northern France at the end of December 1917, only a matter of weeks before. The battery had been a permanent fixture in the *First Army* for the whole of 1917 so it is reasonable to assume that was still the case on 21 March 1918. At that time, the *First Army* was holding the line from *Givenchy* north towards *Armentières*. Although the date of William's death coincided with the first day of the *German Spring Offensive*, his death cannot be attributed to that attack as it was delivered some distance to the south of his unit.[136]

[135] The cemetery was created after the Armistice, when isolated graves were brought in from the Ypres battlefields.

[136] Other soldiers wounded in early 1918, presumably in *trench warfare* were: **L/ Cpl. W. Bettany**, in January, who in March 1918 was recovering in ***Mitton VAD Hospital*** and ***Pte. Harry Linnell***, posted missing 12 March 1918.

Manpower Crisis in the Army

These winter deaths took place at a time of organizational change for the Army in France. So depleted were its ranks that it was facing a significant manpower crisis as replacements were not keeping up with losses. Haig claimed that he was by now 70-80,000 men short in the infantry alone. The *Army Council* had been pressing insistently on the Government the need for more men, all through the second half of 1917. However, on 3 November 1917 the War Office informed Haig that they would not be able to replace expected losses. The current shortfall of 70-80,000 would be closer to 256,000 by 31 October 1918.

There was a fierce debate occurring in political circles in London, which was not well received by commanders at the front. For example, a Cabinet Committee on manpower placed the needs of the army after those of the fighting needs of the Navy and Air Force; shipbuilding; tank and aeroplane production; and then food production, timber felling etc..

Moreover, because of the perceived failures on the Western front with its 62 under-strength divisions, Lloyd George was seeking increased prestige through success in the Middle East with 10 divisions in Egypt as well as eight in Salonika, India, Mesopotamia. In addition, more than eight divisions remained in the UK to repel an invasion (which, of course, never came and was never remotely contemplated). Furthermore, Alliance political considerations had forced Haig to send 5 Divisions (including *Territorial Gloucesters*) from France to Italy in late 1917. Lloyd George might well argue that the army in France was bigger by 324,000 men on 1 January 1918 than a year earlier – but there were 100,000 fewer fighting troops.

Consequently Haig was forced to reduce every division from 12 infantry battalions to 9. All this was occurring well before the USA would be an effective fighting force. In February 1918, therefore, the army underwent a huge reorganisation, which caused further chaos after the process of cutting the army from its local roots and its hard-won loyalties had commenced in 1916.[137] Before the 1918 reorganisation unit loyalties had been gradually rebuilt.

Battle Honours of 2nd Gloucesters' Cigarette Card [www.flickr.com]

Battle Honours are awards following a campaign which are designed to inspire loyalty to and pride in one's regiment.

A ***Battle Honour*** is usually presented in the name of a country, where the unit's distinguished act took place, usually together with the year when it occurred. Fighting in a battle does not automatically merit an Honour.

The *2nd Gloucesters* earned 2 *Campaign Honours* for *"France and Flanders, 1914-1915"* and *"Macedonia (Salonika) 1915-18"* with the other 6 for specific engagements; e.g. *Ypres 1915*.

Within the ***Gloucestershire Regiment*** the following battalions were disbanded on 20 February 1918. *Territorial Second-Line Battalions*: *2nd/4th* (4 *Battle Honours*[138] mainly in 1917); *2nd/6th* (4 in 1917); The *Kitchener 10th* (8 – after its grievous losses at ***Loos*** and on the ***Somme***) and *14th* (5 in 1916-1917). Men from this battalion were transferred to the *13th* Battalion, which was itself much depleted by losses due to enemy action. However, a new *18th Battalion* was sent to France on 1 August (to win 1 Honour). In the early months the big question concerned whether this reorganised and disjointed army could survive the anticipated German onslaught. [139]

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[137] www.1914-1918.net/manpower.htm; S. Eedle points out that the changes caused protests at Parliament in Sept. 1916
[138] wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_honour and Wyrall pp353-4
[139] From 21 March to 31 August 1918 another 544,000 troops were sent to France, of which 419,000 were A-grade fighting troops. This does not include another 100,000 who came through movement of divisions from Italy and the reductions in Egypt, Palestine and Salonika.

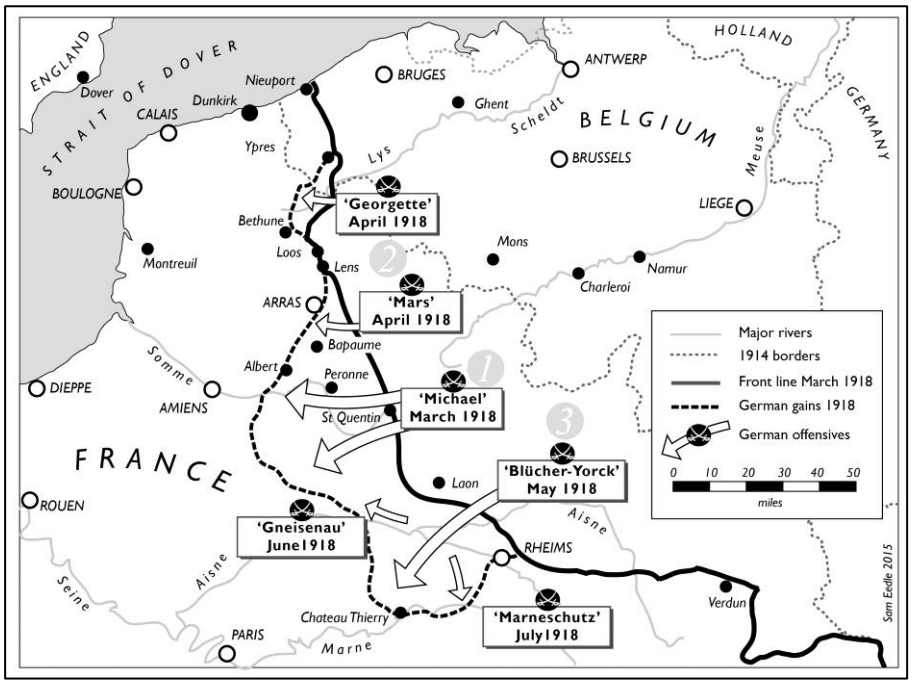
The German Spring Offensive ('*Kaiserschlacht!*'), 21 March 1918

Operation Michael, 21-30 March 1918

The period of sterile – but lethal – *trench warfare* was about to be terminated by one of the largest, most violent and, initially, most successful attacks in history. On 21 March 1918 the German *High Command* launched the much-anticipated ***Kaiserschlacht*** *(Kaiser's Battle).* This title is indicative of its importance as it had to be won before the Americans could intervene effectively and used 74 divisions (c 910,000 men), of which 50 victorious, battle-hardened divisions had been transferred from Russia. Its code name was ***Michael*** and was intended to break through the Allied lines, outflank the British forces, which held the front from the Somme River to the English Channel, and defeat the British Army. Once this was achieved, it was hoped that the French would seek armistice terms.

DATE	EVENTS
21-30 March	***Kaiserschlacht*** attack ***Operation Michael –*** *Battle of St. Quentin +* ***Mars***
9-29 April	***Operation Georgette*** **(4th Ypres) –** *Battle of the Lys*
27 May - 4 June	***Operation Blücher-Yorck*** *(or 3rd Battle of the Aisne) +* ***Gneisenau*** & ***Marneschutz***

GERMAN ATTACKS OF 1918



The preliminary bombardment was a *"hurricane"* of just five hours where 6,600 guns fired 1.1 million shells of all descriptions (including gas) onto the British lines. The bombardment was incredibly accurate, on both the forward lines of the British and also the reverse areas, smashing communication and transportation infrastructure as well as supplies and reserve camps. Not only did the British lose 7,500 men in the barrage, but also there was absolute chaos behind the lines.

The *3rd Worcesters* was a constituent battalion of the *Third Army* in the Bapaume area of the Somme and **Pte. J. Broadwell [†]**, was killed on the first day of the subsidiary *Battle of St. Quentin*, the opening phase of *Operation Michael*. Pte. Broadwell's body was neither identified nor recovered from the battlefield and he is remembered on the *Arras Memorial* in the *Faubourg-d'Amiens Cemetery*.

In the chaos of that day, whole Battalions were virtually wiped out. One such was the *7th Royal West Kents*. Its own sparse account, its War Diary commented that the *"Battalion was annihilated on the first day of the German Spring Offensive"*; it suffered *"approximately"* 597 casualties. One of them was **Pte. Arthur Francis Sallis [†]**, who had probably enlisted in Birmingham in 1915 as part of the *Derby Scheme.* He was posted to different battalions, needing reinforcement; his final posting was to the *7th Royal West Kents*. In his case, we are fortunate that the 'fog of war' had lifted by October 1918, as newspapers provided information, via the *Red Cross*, from Berlin: *"Disc sent in on 6/6/1918. The owner was killed and buried. No further details"*. Nevertheless, Pte. Sallis' body was recovered after the war, most likely from the German cemetery in which he was originally buried, and re-interred in *Chauny Communal Cemetery*.[140]

[140] *Record*, 26 October 1918 p4/4. The British Extension of this cemetery was one of those created by the *CWGC* after the *Armistice* to accommodate battlefield burials and burials in smaller cemeteries in the surrounding area.

The success of this German offensive is often credited to the use of new tactics and weapons. One portent to the future was the close support of aircraft and one victim was **Gunner P. Barnes [†]**, who, according to the *Register*, was killed by a bomb dropped from an enemy plane. Attacks by aircraft on key targets, on and behind the British lines, would have been a crucial part of the German strategy. Gunner Barnes himself belonged to a modern unit of the *Royal Field Artillery*, as a Gunner in the *213th Anti-Aircraft Section*, an arm that had not existed at the outbreak of the war and which evolved progressively to address this new menace of warfare – aircraft. The role of the *Section* of some 40 men with two 3-inch anti-aircraft guns was to defend key locations on the supply lines such as bridges, railways, depots and the like from attack by enemy aircraft. Gunner Barnes may well have been discovered as wounded in the chaos of that first day and transported to *Abbeville*, the natural evacuation point from the Somme battlefields and headquarters of the Commonwealth Lines of Communication with a number of hospitals stationed there. He is accordingly buried in the adjoining *Abbeville Communal Cemetery Extension*.

Behind the creeping barrage of artillery and bombers came waves of *'storm-troopers' (Stosstruppen)* who would then move forward, in dispersed order. They would avoid attacking defended positions whenever possible, infiltrate the Allied defences at previously identified weak points, and destroy or capture enemy headquarters and artillery strong-points. When the big guns fell silent, a dense mist had enveloped the entire battlefield allowing the fortunate storm-troopers to penetrate deep into enemy territory undetected. The massed infantry followed quickly behind, also covered by the mist, and, despite some heroic defending by the British, over-ran almost all of the British front-line areas.

Trying to forestall this phase of the attack were the newly constituted *Machine Gun Battalions.* Each Division was allocated one, following the amalgamation of separate companies in each infantry battalion. Each battalion took its number from its Division and on that fateful day *14th (Light) Division* held the front line south-east of St. Quentin. There were no major defensible features of ground in the forward zone and the division was faced by more than three German divisions. In the initial attack, the forward defences of the Division were overwhelmed and the surviving units were forced to retreat. The division suffered heavy casualties, particularly in the machine-gun units which provided a key part of the first line of defence. The role of the Machine Gun Corps, *"first in, last out"*, led to it being dubbed the *"Suicide Club"*. One member of the "club" that day was **Pte. H. W. Mann [†]**, a former member of the *Gloucesters*. Probably a conscript, he was posted first to the training *4th Battalion* and subsequently transferred to a *Machine Gun Battalion*, formed on 1 March 1918, just a matter of weeks before his death. Although he was undoubtedly killed on 21 March 1918, no obituary was published in the newspapers. His death was not formally announced until 22 November 1919, a year after the end of the war. So many men went missing on that day that it must have been a further anguish for the families that there was inevitably no information for such a long time.

Badge of MGC as part of a post card, sent earlier by Pte. J. Bishop, taken POW [Bishop-Todd]

There is some dispute over the date of death of **Pte. A. C. Purser [†]**, of 6th *Somerset Light Infantry*, who was originally deemed by *CWGC* to have died on 21 June 1918. However, the *Record*, of 11 May claimed that he actually went missing on 21 March 1918. His parents accordingly appealed for information in the *Cheltenham Graphic* of 22 February 1919 but his death was eventually accepted and he was included on the Congregational Chapel memorial, unveiled by 28 May 1921. As with so many, his body was never recovered nor identified and he is remembered on the *Pozières Memorial* on the *Somme*. The evidence, however, suggests that the *CWGC* record is incorrect, given that his battalion returned to England three days before his official date of death. The report in the *Register* is a much more likely scenario; the battalion was reduced to a skeleton in the fierce fighting at the start of the battle and it is most probable that he was killed in action on 21 March 1918, although the actual date cannot be proven. Pte. Purser is interesting as an individual, as he actively resisted being conscripted. In August 1916 he was posted to the *6th S.L.I.*, one of only three battalions holding the *'Forward Zone'* near St. Quentin, opposite nearly four German divisions – and directly in the path of *Operation Michael.* The task of their infantry, with extra-light machine guns, mortars and flamethrowers, was to attack on narrow fronts against any Allied strong-points the shock troops missed. Mortars and field guns would be in place to fire as needed to accelerate the breakthrough. On

21 March they overwhelmed these forward defences, forcing the division to retreat to more defensible positions. The Somerset Archives include a comment to the effect that *"During the Battle of St. Quentin only four men from the 6th battalion made it back to Brigade Headquarters"*.

There was, of course, more than just a creeping barrage, and shells fell throughout the day and next night claiming the life of **Pte. Frederick Green [†]** of the *13th Gloucesters*, then a *pioneer battalion* for the *39th Division.* On that fateful day, the Division was holding the line in the southern part of the sector that had been targeted by the Germans. On 20 March 1918 men of the battalion were reinforcing the sector that was most likely to be attacked. They had been preparing fortifications behind the lines when the German attack broke in the early hours of 21 March; the battalion then moved close to the front line. The men went into huts to rest but, during the night, one was struck by a shell and an entire company was wiped out. An officer reported: *"during the night of the 21st/22nd a company of the 13th Gloucesters was totally destroyed while sleeping in a large hut. An Austrian shell … wiped them all out."* 41 men were killed and about twenty wounded. Owing to enemy pressure the battalion was ordered to retire, as a consequence of which there was no time to bury the bodies; some of the wounded may also have been left behind. The bodies were subsequently buried by the Germans where they fell and, by 1925, they were exhumed and re-interred. The *Register* reported on 13 April 1918 that *"Mrs George Green, a widow of Providence Place, has received official news that her youngest son, Private Frederick Green, was killed in action on the 23 March. .. He had been on active service about 18 months when he laid down his life for his country".* Pte. Green was one of those killed and he is buried in *Peronne Communal Cemetery Extension*; he could be identified collectively but not individually and he is, therefore, commemorated by a special memorial headstone bearing the inscription *"Buried near this spot"*. Although news of his death was known before 1925, it remains a mystery why his name was not commemorated on the War Memorial at the Cross.

By the end of the first day, the British had no choice but to execute a fighting retreat. They may have inflicted 40,000 casualties on the Germans, but they had suffered a similar number themselves and were quite literally running for their lives. According to the German plan, in the last stage of the assault, regular infantry would mop up any remaining Allied resistance.

The German advance continued, as did the British retreat – although stalling actions were enacted. Having advanced 8 miles, on 24 March they finally broke through the defences of the *14th Division*, which had cost the life of Pte. H. W. Mann on the first day. However, the advance had been costly and the German infantry was beginning to show signs of exhaustion; transport difficulties had emerged, supplies and much heavy artillery lagged behind the advance. The Germans crossed the Somme and captured *Bapaume* on 25 March, at which point it seemed as if the British and French might be separated. Therefore, on 26 March, a commanders' conference had to be hastily convened to stem the rot. The Germans still maintained the advance taking *Albert* on the 27th. This enabled them to switch their attack in the direction of *Arras*.

Supplies proved one of the biggest problems for the Germans. [Hammerton]

Tewkesbury is perhaps fortunate to have lost no more lives in the last five days of the retreat but, on 28 March **Guardsman J. W. Timms [†]** of the *2nd Grenadier Guards* was killed in action in obscure circumstances. *Conscripted* in early February 1917, he had already been wounded on 10 November 1917, and then had been sent back unusually to his own Regular Battalion. On 28 March, it fought in the subsidiary *First Battle of Arras 1918.* The Guardsman's body was not recovered; he is commemorated on the *Arras Memorial to the Missing*.[141]

By this time, therefore, the attack had failed to make the anticipated breach. Furthermore, the Germans had suffered significant casualties so that 30 March proved to be the last day of this attack.

Nevertheless, Ludendorff attempted – and failed – to capture *Amiens*. The last throw of *Operation Michael* was the *Battles of Ancre* (4-5 April 1918). Stemming this advance had a cost for Tewkesbury

[141] On 25 May 1918, the *Record* reported an *"unfounded rumour",* but said to be "*absolutely incorrect"* – presumably that he was still alive, even though it had reported that he died of wounds. In reality, he was probably killed in action.

conscript **Pte. W. Fitton [†]**, who died of wounds on 7 April in Abbeville, near the French coast. He would have been evacuated from the front line along a well-established chain of medical units until he reached one the Stationary Hospitals based in *Abbeville*. Unfortunately, he still did not recover from his wounds.

Another who died as a result of wounds most likely sustained at this battle was **L/Cpl. H. P. Jones [†]**, of *9th North Staffordshires*, who finally expired on 17 May. *Conscripted* as an Artilleryman, he was transferred sometime in 1917 to this *Pioneer Battalion*, serving with the *37th Division* during *Michael*. As his wounds were attributed to gas poisoning, he must have been in the front-line zone at the time. L/Cpl. Jones would have been evacuated from the front until he reached the French coast at *Le Treport*, near *Dieppe*, then an important medical centre. Despite having been treated at the best of hospitals in France, he succumbed and is buried in the *Mount Huon Military Cemetery*.

The Germans had, indeed, captured 1,200 sq. miles of France and advanced up to 40 miles – however, they had not achieved any of their strategic objectives. Over 75,000 British soldiers had been taken prisoner and 1,300 artillery pieces and 200 tanks were lost. It was of little military value compared with the casualties suffered by the German elite troops and the failure to capture Amiens and Arras. Significantly, in some areas the advance had slowed, when German troops looted Allied supply depots: troops were running short of vital supplies (due in part to the British *Naval Blockade*[142]). The initial German jubilation at the successful opening of the offensive soon turned to disappointment, as it became clear that the attack had not been decisive and so many experienced and irreplaceable soldiers had been killed.[143]

Operation Georgette: Battle of the Lys, 9-29 April *('4th Ypres')*

Originally planned by General Ludendorff as *Operation George*, its scale was reduced to become Operation *Georgette*, with the objective of capturing ***Ypres***, thus forcing the British forces back to the Channel Ports and out of the war – which had been one of the primary objectives in *Operation Michael*.

Ypres in 1918 was regarded by the Germans as a weak area of the British, where depleted battalions were recuperating. One of these was the *1st Gloucesters*, who had spent the winter reinforcing dugout defences and building concrete emplacements in an anticipated *'Battle Zone'*. As ever, the winter weather was *"bitterly cold"* with *"incessant heavy rain"*. Fortunately, the battalion did enjoy occasional warm and comfortable billets. With the reorganization of the army in February, the replacements that arrived were the remnant of the *10th Battalion*, with which it had fought valiantly at ***Loos*** in 1915. There were few raids on the enemy since their higher authority, at this time, did not believe that raids were essential for maintaining morale. The front remained relatively quiet after *Operation Michael* had started but on 8 April the *1st Division* was transferred south to the area of *La Bassée Canal* – just in time for *Georgette*!

In this second phase of the offensive the Germans used similar *storm trooper* tactics and firstly chose to attack very weak *Portuguese* Divisions.[144] The attack won 8 miles of territory on the first day until it was halted by British reserves. The next day, 10 April, they pressed on to re-capture *Messines* (lost in June 1917), forcing the *25th Division* to withdraw. Fighting with that division, which had already been involved in *Michael*, was volunteer **Sapper A. E. Reynolds [†]** of *130th Field Company, Royal Engineers*. The Official Divisional History records that: *"The enemy attack broke through... and advanced along the Ypres road, endangering the garrison holding Ploegsteert Wood. Ordered to counter-attack , the **Royal Engineers** and other elements of the Division became involved in heavy fighting … and there were many remarkable acts as some units managed to extricate themselves and withdraw"*. Sapper Reynolds was fighting as an infantryman, losing his life in the desperate defensive fight. His body was neither identified nor recovered and he is remembered on the *Ploegsteert Memorial* in the *Berks Cemetery Extension*, south of Ypres.

Six days later another Tewkesburian fighting in the same unit died of his wounds. In that time the Germans concentrated first (unsuccessfully) upon the *Hazebrouck* transport centre but then overwhelmed the defenders to capture the British base at *Bailleul*. It is during this rear-guard action that **Sapper F. W. Wilkinson [†]** was fatally wounded. Having probably enlisted as part of the Derby Scheme in 1915 and

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[142] For a fuller discussion, see page 59.

[143] In addition the following were casualties: **Pte. Percival J. Mayall** of *Royal Marines Light Infantry*, missing since 24.03.1918; **Rifleman Frank Woolley**, missing since 23.03.1918; **Rifleman Harold Crouch** missing (both *Royal Irish Rifles*): all three were declared later *POW*s**; Gunner W. Parsons**, *RFA*, gassed, in hospital in France; **Pte. Jack Hodges** (*Kings Shropshire LI*), wounded by shrapnel to left leg and shoulder [*Register*, 30.03.1918 p4/4 & 5/4]

[144] Although Portugal is strictly Britain's oldest ally since 1373, it was neutral in the war until tensions over *U-Boat* attacks and its colony of *Angola* in South West Africa, caused Germany to declare war on Portugal on 9 March 1916. At the *Battle of Lys*, the Portuguese lost 7,125 soldiers, about 35% of its effective fighting capacity.

fought during *Michael*, his Division was by now thoroughly exhausted and was fragmented by heavy losses. Sapper Wilkinson would have been evacuated from the front line along a well-established chain of medical units until he reached the French coast and the massive *Etaples* training camp, incorporating 16 hospitals and a convalescent depot. He died from *"gunshot wounds to the thigh"* on 16 April 1918 in the *1st Canadian General Hospital* and he is buried in *Etaples Military Cemetery*.

The British then had to withdraw from *Passchendaele*, won at such cost five months before, but held *Mount Kemmel*. *Georgette* then turned south to attack *Béthune* – where the *1st Gloucesters* and the *1st Division* were waiting. The Official Despatches following this attack record: *"they succeeded in entering our positions but, after severe and continuous fighting throughout the day, the troops of the 1st Division regained by counter-attack practically the whole of their original positions"*. The Germans used an *"enormous"* amount of gas in their attack. The despatch concludes: the enemy *"appeared to realise their attack had failed and they could not hope for reinforcements"*. The battalion lost 179 men – but had won 33 gallantry medals.[145] Perhaps more importantly the battalion was soon relieved and found field baths to soothe their travails!

A 1916 photo of a bath house [Hammerton]

The Germans pressed on but faced a new situation on 25-26 April – the arrival of reinforcing French troops. This was a direct result of **Maréchal Foch** being appointed Allied *C-in-C* on 26 March. On 29 April 1918 Ludendorff called off the ***Battle of the Lys*** – again without achieving his main aims.

Although suffering no fatalities, the Territorial *2nd/5th Gloucesters* had been involved heavily in the German attacks of 21 March and the ensuing days. Part of the *61st Division*, it was holding the forward zone of defences in the area northwest of *Saint Quentin*. It lost many men as it fought a chaotic – but ultimately successful – withdrawal back over the Somme crossings, taking over ten days. By the time it was relieved, after fighting all the way back to the very gates of *Amiens*, the Division had been involved in continuous action since August 1917 and was exhausted. The remnants were moved north to what had been a quieter part of the line. Unfortunately, it was near where the Germans launched the *Georgette* offensive on 9 April 1918. The Division became involved and many casualties were incurred. On 23-24 April the *2nd/5th Gloucesters* were ordered to straighten out the line north-east of *Béthune*. *"The attack was completely successful"* – but at the cost of 153 casualties. One of the wounded during this battle was Boer War veteran, **Sgt. Ralph Hartell [†]**. He had already been wounded three times in 1917 with the *1st/4th Battalion* but was reallocated to the *2nd/5th* after he had recovered only to sustain a *"GSW"* (*Gun Shot Wound*) to the head, resulting in his return to Home Duties. He was finally discharged as *"No Longer Fit for Service"* on 7 December 1918 and was, at least, awarded the ***Military Medal*****.** However, his biography reveals that he was disabled for the rest of his life, dying in 1932 – far too late for official recognition.[146]

Perhaps it seemed as if the Germans had given up, since there followed nearly a month of relative quiet. However, there was always *trench warfare* to waste lives and, on 4 May 1918, it was the fate of a distinguished *NCO*, **CSM John Stanley Dale [†]**, of *8th Gloucesters*. An early volunteer, he had been promoted to the higher *NCO* ranks and his battalion was holding the line near *Ypres*, having been involved the previous month part of the *Mount Kemmel* during the *Battles of the Lys*. According to the Battalion War

[145] Wyrall pp 264-270

[146] Barnes, page 118. **CSM J. V. Parsons** was also wounded in this engagement; he was wounded in hand with a *"miraculous escape"* after shell killed six and *"blew his coat to atoms"*, when the Germans counter-attacked to no avail. Others listed in the press were: **Pte. Bert Parsons** (*Gloucesters*) wounded, now in hospital at Leicester; **Pte. Jack Yarnall** (*Gloucesters*), wounded in ankle; **Pte Horace Jordan** (*Rifle Brigade*) bullet wound through thigh; **Capt. W. H. Stubbs** shrapnel wound in thigh; **Cpl. Edward C. Alcock** (*8th Gloucesters*?) wounded between right eye and nose; hoped he will not lose his sight; **Cpl. C. Owen Thomas** (*RE*), *POW*, 4 April; **Cpl. H. Poulton** (*Essex Regt*) *POW*; **Cpl. Christopher Kendal** (*Leicesters*) wounded; **Pte. John Wilkins** (*East Surreys*) a wounded POW; **Cpl. Aubrey Papps** missing since 9 April 1918, *POW*; **L/Cpl. C W Packwood** (*Essex Reg*.) wounded; **Pte. Harry Walkley** in hospital; **Pte. Cecil Newman** (*Warwicks*) missing since 12 April; **Pte. John L. Stephens** (*Gloucesters*), *POW*; **Pte. William Hewett** (*W. Yorks*) mildly gassed; **Pte. Wilfred Fellowes** *(Gloucesters)* gassed and in hospital; **Pte. J. Hooper** *(W. Yorks)* missing since 25 April; and **L/Cpl. E. J. Vosper of KRRC**, missing since 13 April 1918.

Diary, much of the first half of May was spent in reserve or in training. On that fateful day, the diary entry simply states *"In the line at Dickebusch"*; no reference is made to any activity or casualties, unusual given that an officer, Captain Ernest Cowper Slade (presumably his Company Commander) was killed by fragments of the same shell and officer casualties usually warrant an entry in the diary. It would seem that they were victims of *trench warfare* as the situation at that time was otherwise generally quiet. It was fortunate that an officer could write to his widow and fulfil "*a most unpleasant and painful task CQMS* (sic) *Dale was killed with his Captain, while doing his rounds in the line. Both were killed instantly by some portions of a shell, so he did not suffer in the slightest degree".* The CSM and Captain are, appropriately, buried next to each other in *Klein-Vierstraat British Cemetery*, Kemmel, Belgium.[147]

Also in this "quiet" period, the air was being patrolled by aircraft of the newly created ***RAF*.** One of the early members was **2nd/Lt. F. J. Brotheridge [†]** of *3rd Squadron, R.A.F*. Having qualified as a pilot with the former *RFC* in 1917, he spent the next few months with a variety of units before being posted on 27 March 1918 to *3 Squadron* in France just a few days before the Corps was renamed the *Royal Air Force*. *No. 3 Squadron* was one of the three founder squadrons and has the dubious distinction of providing Manfred von Richthofen, the *'Red Baron'*, with his final two kills (79th and 80th) on 20 April 1918 – the day before he was himself shot down and killed. On 19 May 1918, Lt. Brotheridge was flying a ***Sopwith Camel* fighter plane** on a *'Wireless Interruption Patrol'* (that is destroying enemy Wireless Communications) and was involved in combat with an enemy patrol. He and a fellow pilot shot down a two-seater German aircraft. However, Lt. Brotheridge was himself shot down in the ensuing dogfight and his aircraft was seen *"going down in flames and out of control"*. His kill was claimed by German Ace, *Offizierstellvertreter* Robert Heibert of *Jasta 46*. Frederick's body was neither recovered nor identified and so he is commemorated on the *Arras Flying Services Memorial* at Arras.

A typical Sopwith Camel fighter [aussiex.org]

The *1st Gloucesters* too were enjoying this 'quiet' period still in the area of Béthune *"busily engaged on the defences"*. The Germans were only spasmodically active with, on 21 May, a "*considerable amount of gas shelling*". Wyrall confirms that the British replied with *"400 tons of gas"* with *"another dose of gas, 200 projectors on 24 May"* – after the spell of fine weather had broken.

As we have learned, quiet periods in the trenches could still be lethal: **Pte. Fred Thacker [†]**, *2nd/8th Worcesters*, died on 2 June 1918. Relocated from Tewkesbury to Birmingham by 1914, he was as a volunteer in the *RAMC* in August 1916; but, at the age of 17, he was too young for overseas service. When old enough, he found himself in the *2nd/8th Worcesters*, a home service unit. In 1916 most second line units were mobilised for overseas service and the battalion landed in France on 24 May 1916. In 1918 the *61st Division* was involved in the defence against the *Kaiserschlacht* and fought a successful withdrawal back over the Somme crossings. By the time it was relieved after fighting all the way back to *Amiens*, it was exhausted after being involved in continuous action since August 1917. The remnants were moved north to what had been a quieter part of the line on the *La Bassée Canal* near *Béthune*. Unfortunately it was near to the place of the next German attack – and again the Division became involved. At the close of the Lys battles at the end of April, the *2nd/8th Worcesters* were in the area south of the River Lys, in the Robecq sector; here they remained until 11 July 1918, alternating between the front line, support and reserve. Apart from a small trench raid at the end of May, nothing of note happened during this period – nevertheless, 10 men were still reported killed. Pte. Thacker must have been one of those, as he was recorded as *"killed in action"* on 2 June 1918, most likely as a victim of random shelling or sniper fire; his body was recovered and he is buried in *St. Venant-Robecq Road British Cemetery*, Robecq.

[147] There is a frequent discrepancy between ranks – the lower rank (*Company Quarter Master Sgt*) would be permanent and the higher one temporary, as a result of *"filling dead man's shoes"*. The official rank expressed by the *CWGC* was crucial as it was reflected in the rate of pay and a widow's pension. See pages 94 Section IV, & 122 *'War Gratuity'*.

The *1st Gloucesters* remained in *"Active Defence"* until July, according to Wyrall. On 17 June it moved to the *Hohenzollern* sector but the enemy was "even more inactive" than in the previous sector.[148] However, according to their War Diary, the battalion was in the front line between Béthune and Loos on 18 June. It comments: *"Enemy artillery was inactive and did not respond to the activity of our own. There were occasional Trench Mortar duels at dawn and dusk. Two OR (Other Ranks) were killed and one OR was wounded (at duty) this day".* It would seem that **Pte. T. J. Smith** [†] was killed in action that day. A volunteer in August 1914, he could not go abroad until 1915 when he was 19. He subsequently would have fought with the battalion for over two years on the Western Front where the *1st Division* took part in most of the major actions, such as ***Loos*** and the ***Somme***. The *Register* reported that this veteran of 22 years of age was *"killed instantaneously whilst in action".*[149] Pte. Smith is buried in *Sailly-Labourse Communal Cemetery*, south-east of Béthune and some two miles behind the front line where he was killed.

Despite a few raids, the Battalion diary could note on 1 June that "*the present tour in the line is quiet*". This was, no doubt, because the enemy was very active elsewhere.[150]

Operation Blücher-Yorck,[151] 27 May-4 June *(Third Battle of the Aisne)*

27 May opened to a furious bombardment (*Feuerwalze*) of the Allied front lines with over 4,000 artillery pieces. The British suffered heavy losses, because the French commander was reluctant to abandon the *Chemin des Dames Ridge*. That promontory had been captured at such cost the previous year and he had ordered his men to mass together in the front trenches, in defiance of instructions from the French Commander-in-Chief, Gen. Pétain. Huddled together, they made easy artillery targets. The bombardment was followed by a poison gas drop. Once the gas had lifted, the main infantry assault by 17 German *Sturmtruppen* (Storm-trooper) divisions commenced.

The aim of this third phase of the ***Kaiserschlacht*** (witnessed by the Kaiser himself) was to capture the *Chemin des Dames Ridge* before the *American Expeditionary Force* could arrive completely in France. The prize of Paris would then be in view for the first time since 1914. Taken completely by surprise and with their defences spread thinly, the Allies were unable to stop the attack and the Germans advanced through a 25 mile gap in the lines. Reaching the Aisne in less than six hours, the Germans smashed through eight Allied divisions between Reims and Soissons, gaining an extra eight miles of territory by nightfall.

Cartland Calvary
[R Ross]

The Allies had lost 137,000 men by the end of the battle. One of them is something of a local celebrity because he was ***Major J. B. F. Cartland* [†]** of *1st Worcesters*, father of future novelist Barbara Cartland.[152] Having been mentioned three times in despatches from 1915 to 1917, he was posted as second-in-command of his battalion, part of *8th Division*. The Division had been heavily involved in *Operation Michael*, as one of five divisions that had borne the brunt of the fighting on the Somme and in *Flanders*. The battalion had, therefore, been transferred to a quiet area of the French front to give them an opportunity to rest and recuperate. It was moved to the Aisne area early in May and placed under the command of the French. Despite protests from the British commanders, their divisions were deployed in positions, making them vulnerable to attack. The front-line was a very short distance in front of a river; thus there was no means of withdrawal. This disposition ignored the latest principles of 'defence in depth'. By an unfortunate coincidence, the Germans were about to launch *Operation Blücher-Yorck.* On that day Major Cartland was in temporary command of the *1st Battalion*. The forward units were overrun during the initial assault by the Germans on the first day and, in the confusion of battle, Major Cartland was declared "*missing".* After some confusion due to the fog of war, his death was subsequently confirmed but his body was never identified nor recovered and, accordingly, his name is recorded on the *Memorial to the Missing* at *Soissons* nearby.[153]

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[148] Wyrall p275
[149] *Register*, 29 June 1918
[150] Wyrall pp271-4: chapter entitled *The Period of Active Defence*.
[151] Named after two successful Prussian generals in the Napoleonic Wars
[152] The desire of his widow to ask the people of Tewkesbury to contribute to a memorial to her husband caused controversy. In 2015, however, the *Cartland Calvary* is a cherished embellishment to the entrance to the Abbey.
[153] The author has studied documents in the N.A. [PRO/WO339/40185-107652/9], which showed that his widow was still fighting for a Lt. Colonel's pension in 1954 – however, he remained a for pension purposes a Major.

Belonging to the same *8th Division* and also – in theory – at rest in the area were the *2nd Devons*, who were subjected to the same murderous artillery attack, which deployed both high explosives and gas shells. By the end of the action, the battalion had earned the epithet of the *'Glorious Devons'.* Serving in that battalion was Tewkesburian **Pte. A. L. Jones [†]** ("Len"). At 3.40 German storm-troopers attacked, *"No one in Headquarters had any idea of what was happening"*. However, the soldiers of the battalion staged *"a spectacular"*, but ultimately ineffective last stand, for the bridge. Holding off the oncoming Germans meant that fleeing (allied troops) were able to cross back over the River Aisne. *".... When the gunners ran out of ammunition, single individuals would creep forward to ransack the packs of their dead and wounded lying between them and the Germans. Eventually, .. the men were down to a few rounds each."* As a result of this action, the Battalion was awarded the *Croix de Guerre* and its new epithet *"Glorious"*. Pte. Jones was killed on *2*7 May and his body was not recovered. Accordingly, his name only is also remembered at *Soissons*.[154]

Croix de Guerre Memorial to 2nd Devons on the Aisne. [CWGC]

No other local men were killed in this third phase. Victory seemed so near for the Germans: they had captured just over 50,000 Allied soldiers and well over 800 guns by 30 May 1918. After having advanced within 35 miles of Paris on 3 June, the German armies were beset by numerous problems, including supply shortages, fatigue, lack of reserves and many casualties – which they could just not afford. On 6 June 1918, following many successful Allied counter-attacks, the German advance halted on the *Marne* – as it had done in 1914.

Attacks may have officially petered out but "*Active Defence*" continued to claim victims. Over a month later, **Gunner Walter Roberts [†]**, *of 21st Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery,* was killed on 2 July. Gunner Roberts had enlisted, as part of the *Derby Scheme* on 10 December 1915, and was assigned – as was then customary – to the Army Reserve before being allocated to the *Royal Artillery*. Wounded but convalesced in 1917, he had been re-assigned to the 21st Siege Battery, responsible for operating four *9.2 inch Howitzers* that, on the fateful day, in the Ypres sector. The *Register* reported comments from his Commanding Officer that he was killed *"on the spot"* while *"his gun was in action…I had promised to recommend him for a commission"*. There was, however, no major action taking place in the Ypres area in July, since *Operation Georgette* had finished by the end of April – with Ypres still in Allied hands. It is probable, therefore, that Gunner Roberts was killed during a routine exchange of artillery fire. His body was recovered and he was buried in *Canada Farm Cemetery* nearby.

A fortnight later, it was also the fate of **2nd Cpl.**[155] **A. C. Day [†]** serving with *203rd Field Coy, Royal Engineers,* who died aged 42 on 16 July 1918. Because he was employed as a bricklayer, initially he was in a *starred occupation,* but he enlisted during the *Derby Scheme* and was allocated to the *RE* where his skills would be needed. On 5 July 1918 the *35th Division* took over the line between *Ypres* and *Bailleul* and 2ndCpl. Day's unit spent the next month improving the front line defences**.** On 16 July 1918, 2ndCpl. Day was killed by a stray shell, while working with a *Trench Mortar Battery.* His body was recovered and he was buried a few miles behind the front line in *Godewaersvelde British Cemetery*.

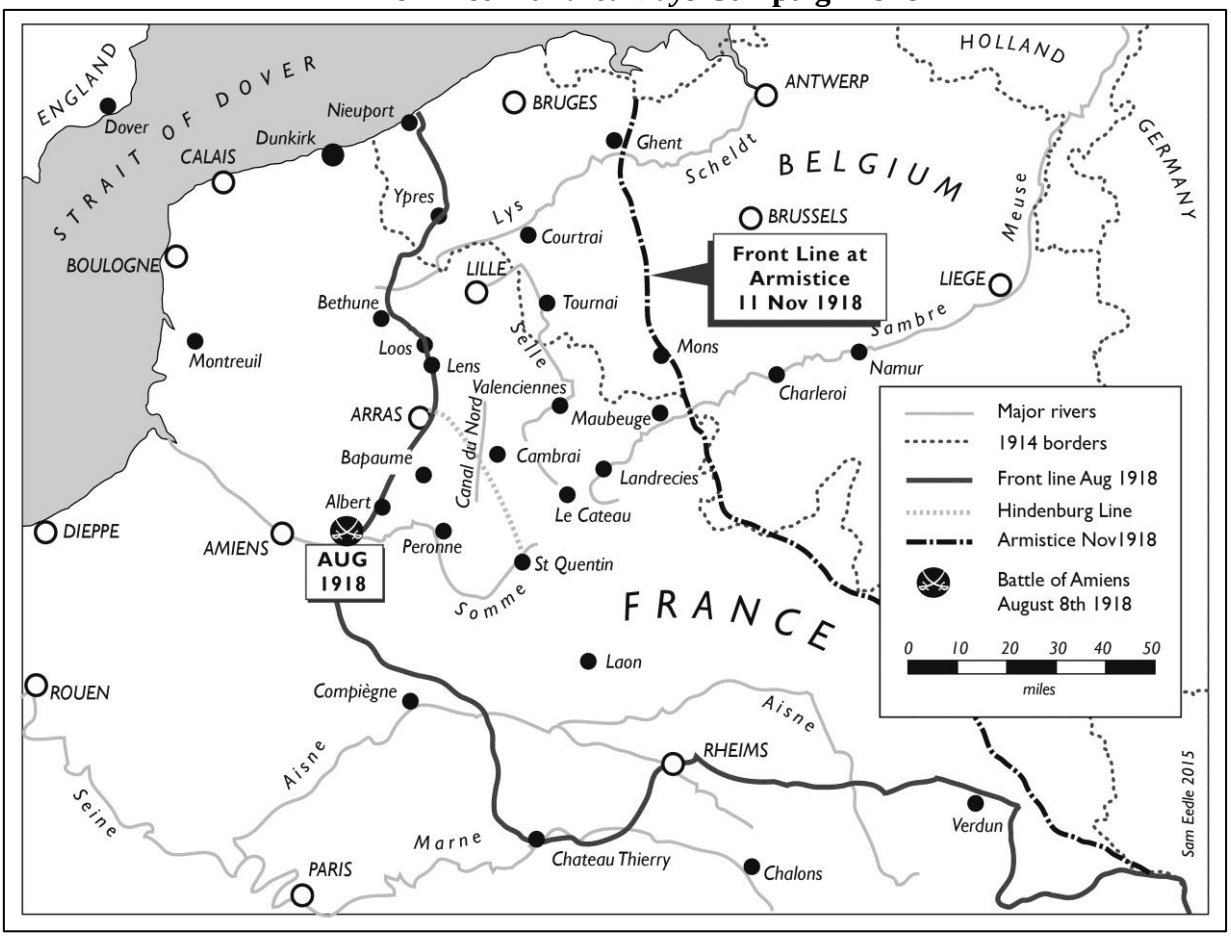
The ***German 'Kaiserschlacht' Offensive***, from 21 March to 4 June 1918, was an attack using the most modern weapons and tactics. Its aim was the same as 1914 – the capture of Paris. It seemed that it would be successful until the army, after suffering irreplaceable losses, foundered on that most traditional of causes – it had outrun its ability to be supplied. This failure was caused in great part by the British *Naval Blockade* of German ports. Thus, after almost three months, the attack had petered out – with no victory to the Germans.

17 local men had been killed in this campaign – with two more in the subsequent lull. It would be less than a month later, when the Allies themselves counter-attacked the German forces and, although it was ultimately successful, it took the lives of a further 16 men. This phase of the war has been subsequently dubbed the *"100 Days Campaign"*.

[154] On the Memorial at the Cross, he is remembered as "**L. Jones**".
[155] Equivalent to a L*/Cpl*. in the infantry [see page 126]

Hundred Days Offensive, 8 August-11 November 1918

The Allied *Hundred Days* Campaign 1918



DATES	EVENTS
8 -11 August	**Allied 100 Day counter-attack *Battle of Amiens***
8 August	***"Black Day of German Army"***
15 Aug.-3 Sept.	***Battle of the Somme II***
26 Aug.-2 Sept.	**Advance to *Hindenburg Line***
12 Sept.-17 Oct.	**Battles of *Hindenburg Line***
28 Sept.	***Ypres V***
17 Oct.-11 Nov.	**German Retreat**
Sept-Nov.	Allied successes force **Turkey**, **Bulgaria** and **Austria-Hungary** to surrender
Nov. 11	**11 a.m. Germany signs *Armistice* (Ceasefire)**; the fighting is over
June 1919	***Treaty of Versailles:*** The *Official* End of the ***Great War***

A New Style of Warfare [Hammerton]

This campaign, as with the earlier German attack, was a series of co-ordinated battles, conducted consecutively all the way along the line by the Allies, that gradually forced the German Army to retreat to the point where the civilian politicians ended the fighting by signing the ***Armistice*** on ***11 November***.[156]

The defeat of the German attackers for the second time on the *Marne* caused Foch to be promoted to *Marshal of France*. As *Allied Supreme Commander*, he was keen to expel the invader and was further buoyed by the effective build-up of US military power, as well as British reinforcements as victorious troops from Palestine and Italy were gradually returned to this theatre. In addition, reserves which had been – allegedly – held back by Lloyd George were sent to France. The fear created by the German attack in April

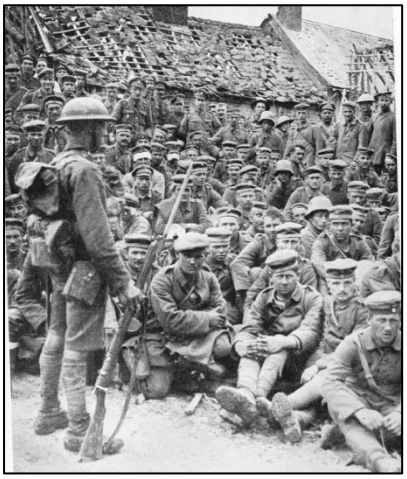
[156] S. Eedle points out that historians today regard this campaign as the most successful in British military history.

1918 had induced the Government to amend the *Conscription Act* for the fifth time – in order to include men from 17 to 51 (instead of 41).[157]

Finally Foch accepted Haig's proposal to attack on the ***Somme***, east of Amiens and southwest of the battlefield of the 1916 *Battle of the Somme*, with the intention of forcing the Germans away from the vital Amiens-Paris railway. As in 1916, the *Somme* proved suitable ground for the offensive, because the two allied armies conjoined there – thus making cooperation far easier. Furthermore, the countryside provided a good surface for tanks – this was not the case around Ypres. The Germans were also weaker in this area because of successful Australian inspired tactics of *"peaceful penetration"* – raiding parties to perturb the enemy. The loss of so many men on this battlefield in 1916 provided an added incentive to motivate Haig.

Battle of Amiens, 8-11 August

It was accordingly on 8 August 1918 that Maréchal Foch ordered a coordinated Allied attack. This carefully prepared battle, with 10 divisions and 500 tanks, achieved complete surprise – at long last, the British Army achieved a 15-mile breakthrough. Allied losses of 6,500 contrasted with 30,000 Germans, including 17,000 prisoners and 330 guns. The collapse in German morale was labelled by Ludendorff as *"the Black Day of the German Army"*. They began to retreat towards their strongpoints of the ***Hindenburg Line.***



It was now the turn of the Germans to be captured en masse on 8 August 1918 [Hammerton]

Only one Tewkesburian was killed – on the day after the battle had ended in this battle. His manner of death illustrated how tactics were changing. **Gunner A. E. Jordan [†]** of *88th Royal Field Artillery Regiment* was killed by a bomb. On 12 August 1918, the former *Territorial* was posted to this unit, which had been part of the original *BEF* but was now equipped with 18-pounder guns, the standard weapon of the field artillery. (Unlike infantry units, artillery batteries were moved more frequently to where they were needed. By the time of the Armistice, it was attached to *Fourth Army; w*e know this because of the location of the cemetery in which Alfred was interred. In addition, the artillery was increasing its fire power: during 1918, at a time when infantry battalions were shrinking, the brigade expanded to include four Batteries each one operating six 18-pound field guns.) In August 1918 the British had returned to the Somme, captured from the Germans in 1916 but lost again after March 1918. The *Australian Corps* finally recaptured this historic battlefield on 8 August 1918.

The death of Pte. Jordan indicates that the battle was far from over and the manner of his death illustrated the increasing threat of air power. On 12 August 1918, at around the time the *Battle of Amiens* was coming to an end, Gunner Jordan was apparently the victim of a bomb dropped from an enemy aeroplane whilst *"on his way back from the YMCA Hut"*. Initially he was buried in a local churchyard, but his body was exhumed after the war and re-interred in *Heath Cemetery, Harbonnières*. This cemetery is located around the mid-way point on the straight main road from Amiens to St. Quentin, just behind the British front line at the time Alfred was killed.[158]

Second Battles of the Somme, 15 August-3 September 1918

On 15 August 1918, Foch demanded that Haig continue the *Amiens offensive*, even though – just as it had with the Germans earlier – the attack was faltering as the troops outran their supplies and artillery. In addition, German reserves were being moved to the sector. Haig managed to persuade Foch to allow him to launch a fresh offensive at *Albert*, which opened on 21 August. Switching the point of attack was a success, as it pushed the Germans back over a 34 mile front. *Albert* was captured on 22 August. The attack was then widened by a successful French attack to the south.

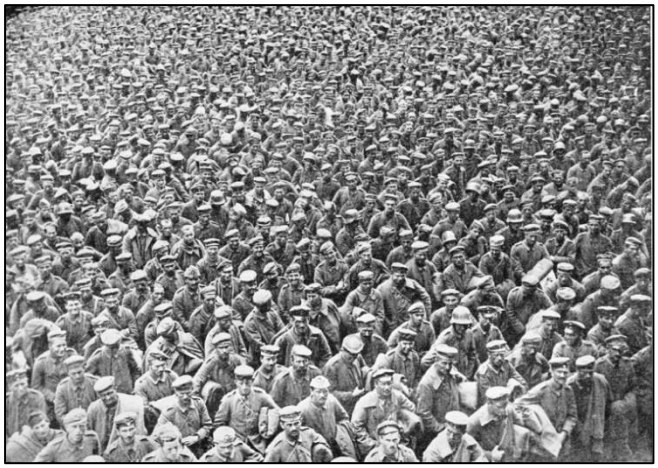
There was, however, a cost in local life because volunteer **L/Cpl. Cecil Taylor [†]**, of *32nd Battalion, Machine Gun Corps (Infantry)* was killed on 23 August during this battle. Too young for overseas service when he enlisted, he was eventually posted to the new *Machine Gun Corps*. At the time of the German attack, the Corps had been reorganised into battalions and his was part of *32nd Division*. In August 1918,

[157] Controversially Ireland was included in *Conscription* for the first time. When the act was first introduced in 1916, Dublin was in armed revolt against the British government (the *"Easter Rebellion"*). Despite the amended law, *conscription* was never enforced in Ireland.

[158] *Heath Cemetery* was created after the Armistice when graves were brought in from the battlefields in the area.

this Division participated in the *Battle of Albert,* under the command of the Australian Corps. L/Cpl. Taylor was killed in action on the final day of the *battle,* when "*a shell landed and a small piece struck him on the head*". His body was recovered and he was eventually buried in *Heath Cemetery, Harbonnières*. In this battle the Allies lost 22,000 – but cost the Germans an irreplaceable 30,000.

On 26 August, to the north of the initial attack, the British *w*idened the attack by another seven miles with the ***Second Battle of Arras***: *Bapaume* fell on 29 August. 1914 volunteer **Pte. Aldred V. Grimmett [†]** initially served with a *Transport Company* of the *Army Service Corps*, before being transferred, no doubt as a much-needed replacement, to *13th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers*. By 1918 the battalion was part of the *37th Division* which had taken part in the *Battle of Albert* but continued as the British moved to *Bapaume*. The Regimental History comments that the *13th Royal Fusiliers*, attacking a railway cutting, *"had a stirring time"* and recounts the battalion's *"fine success.. the cutting was like a rabbit warren. It was simply alive with Germans, and their surrender was almost embarrassing. The position had been thought so secure that in one of the dug-outs a meal had just been taken. Hot coffee lay on the table. It was one of the greatest days experienced by the battalion.. over 1,000 prisoners were taken"*. It was noted that the battalion's casualties from 21 to 27 August were *"little more than a fifth of this number"*; clearly this was considered an acceptable figure for what had been achieved.



An even more dramatic photograph of POWs on 27 August [Hammerton]

However, Pte. Aldred V. Grimmett was killed in action on 23 August and must have been one of those casualties as he is buried in *Achiet-Le-Grand Communal Cemetery Extension*, near *Bapaume*.[159] Also lost in this battle was a Tewkesburian, who was part of a new generation of Grammar School educated officers, **2nd Lt. F. E. Hale [†]** of the *13th Kings Royal Rifles.* He had been a member of the Territorial *1st/6th Battalion*, and he had landed in France at the end of March 1915 but had returned to the UK for officer training until the autumn of 1917; he had already been mentioned in despatches. At some stage, Lt. Hale was transferred to the *13th Battalion,* part of *37th Division,* which had already taken part in the *Battle of Albert* that had extended into the *Second Battle of Bapaume.*[160]

The life span of a *subaltern* was notoriously brief and, on 25 August 1918, Lt. Hale was killed instantaneously by a machine-gun bullet in the head, having participated in three attacks in four days – *"in each of which your boy played a prominent and brilliant part"*.[161] His body was recovered and he is buried in *Bucquoy Communal Cemetery,* near *Bapaume*.

Advance to the *Hindenburg Line*

In the same division and sharing in the same battles were the *6th Bedfords,* one of whose officers was an early volunteer, **2nd Lt. P. J. Holt [†].** Having enlisted as a signaller, he had been wounded in Gallipoli, before being granted a *temporary commission* in September 1917. He took part in the *Battles of Albert* and *Bapaume,* where his battalion assaulted German positions, suffering badly from machine-gun fire and gas. The next day was spent consolidating their new positions under fire, during the course of which 2nd Lt. Holt was wounded. He died of his wounds at 4.50 a.m. on 6 September 1918, whilst being evacuated on the *14th Ambulance Train,* bound for *No. 2 Red Cross Base Hospital* at Rouen.

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[159] Pte. Grimmett's brother, **Pte. Alfred Victor Grimmett [†],** was to be killed in action on 21 October 1918.

[160] Early in the war, most officers were recruited from Public Schools. The Moore brothers of Tewkesbury had both graduated from Tewkesbury Grammar School to attend the 'minor' Public School of King's, Worcester. Lts. L. W. Moore and S. N. Priestley were also members of their Universities' *OTC [Officer Training Corps]*. During the war 247,000 *commissions* were granted, of which 100,000 came along this route. Lts. Hale and Holt were regarded as *"Temporary Gentlemen for the duration of the war only"*! [http://www.ww1schools.com]

[161] On 23 August his *C.O.*, **Lt-Col. A. N. Strode-Jackson,** was wounded. He had been educated at Malvern College, and remains the youngest ever Olympic 1500 metres Gold Medallist. He was one of only seven to have been awarded the *Distinguished Service Order* (*DSO*) four times.

Battles of the *Hindenburg Line*

By 2 September 1918 the Germans had been forced to retreat almost back to the ***Hindenburg Line*** – the start line for the attack on 21 March. There was then a pause, while Foch planned his *Grand Offensive:* it started on 26 September and was a series of attacks, designed to break German communications. The *62nd Division* was involved in the *Battle of the Canal du Nord (27 September-1 October 1918).* In two days, an advance of six miles was made on a twelve-mile front; 10,000 enemy prisoners and 200 guns were taken. However one casualty was **Pte. John Greening [†]**, by then attached to the *Territorial 2nd/20th Battalion, the London Regiment.* He was a *conscript*, sent to France in 1917 with the *ASC (Horse) Remount Service*[162]. As with so many, he was converted into a desperately needed infantryman. Pte. Greening was killed in action on 27 September, the first day of the battle; *"killed instantly by a shell.. a fine soldier who did some fine work during a successful attack, playing a great share in the capture of some prisoners.. he knew no pain"*. His body was neither recovered nor identified and he is commemorated on the *Vis-En-Artois Memorial*.[163]

This spectacular success represented a vital preliminary to a joint French and British attack on the ***Hindenburg Line*** scheduled for 29 September, known as *Battle of the St. Quentin Canal* (29 September to 2 October 1918), – and this attack was to bring back the *1st Gloucesters* into offensive action. Although stationed in this sector, their experience during September had been quite uneventful – except for a *"splendidly successful"* raid on 14 September at a cost of 60 losses.

Now serving in the ranks of this battalion was **Pte. Alfred J. Fletcher [†]**. He was a volunteer and *"one of the few remaining Territorials"*, who appears to have served in home service battalions for up to two years.[164] So depleted were its ranks after four years at the front, the battalion was in need of constant replenishment from soldiers on home service. At some stage – probably during the *German Spring Offensive*, commencing 21 March, when gas was used – Pte. Fletcher had returned home. He was one of the few local men to be treated at *Mitton Red Cross Hospital* – for a period of five weeks. He was, however, needed at the front. His biography reveals some disagreement about the cause and date of his death. As he was killed officially on 29 September 1918, we believe that he was a casualty of the much bigger offensive when the British Army attempted to breach the supposedly impregnable *Hindenburg Line*. The attack by the *1st Gloucesters* on 29 September was successful, as was the overall battle; the War Diary comments at the end of the day that *"by dark both second and third objectives had been gained. Casualties were 8 Other Ranks killed and 47 wounded"*. Pte. Fletcher is most likely to have been one of the eight casualties referred to in the War Diary for that day. He is buried in *Bellicourt British Cemetery*.

The *Hindenburg Line* had been breached, so an exploitative attack was planned for 3 October. This would involve the *1st/5th Gloucesters*, who had been hurried back from their Italian adventure as part of the re-constituted, but weakened, *25th Division*: companies being reduced from four platoons (120 men) to three (90). The battalion took part in a *"highly successful"* operation on 5 October at a loss of 53 men.

Fifth Battle of Ypres

On the same day another Tewkesburian was killed – but he was to be buried in a revitalised sector – *Ypres*, where the last battle commenced on 28 September, with an international army commanded by King Albert I of the Belgians. The British attacked without preliminary bombardment and, unlike in the previous four battles, quickly penetrated the defences and advanced up to 6 miles, much of the ground west of *Passchendaele* being recaptured The only constant factor was the rain! Despite the captured ground becoming another slough, all of the high ground around Ypres had been occupied by the Allies and the advance continued until 2 October, when German reinforcements arrived and the offensive outran its supplies. Due to the state of the ground, a new method of resupply was introduced – 15,000 rations were delivered by parachute.[165]

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[162] This was the branch of the *ASC*, responsible for the acquisition and training of horses and mules for all other army units. Animals were obtained by compulsory purchase in the UK and by purchasing from the Americas, New Zealand, Spain, Portugal, India and China. For further discussion, see page 87 and biography of **Pte. C. W. Rice [†]**.

[163] This memorial bears the names of over 9,000 men, who fell in the period from 8 August 1918 to Armistice in the *'Advance to Victory'* and who have no known grave.

[164] Wyrall pp290-292 & *Record*, 12 October 1918

[165] Parachutes were not used in World War I as a means of delivering soldiers to the battlefield; in 1918 it was the Germans who introduced the parachute. Its efficacy, however, was relatively poor and many pilots died. In the UK Sir Frank Mears, a Major in the *RFC* in France, registered a patent in July 1918 for a parachute with a quick release buckle, known as the *"Mears parachute"*. The Parachute Regiment was not formed until 1941. [Wikipedia]

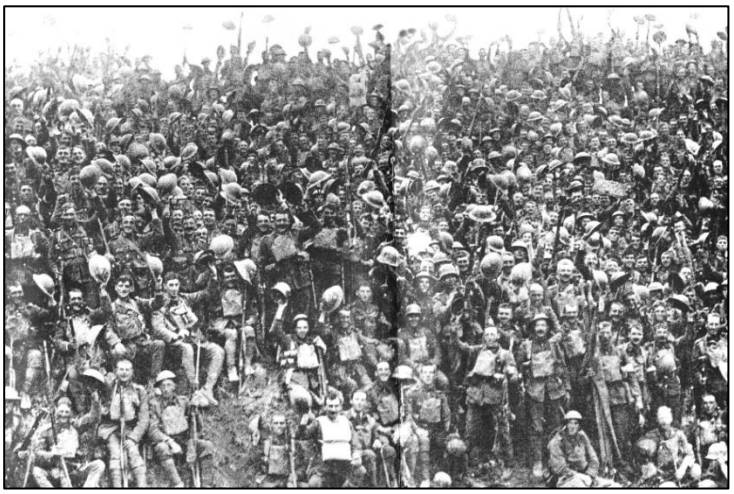
Therefore, when **Pte F. C. Clements [†]** of *1st Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers* died on 4 October, the attack had halted.[166] He had sustained *"a gunshot wound in the chest received in action"*, perhaps from sniper fire from the German rear-guard whilst the ground was being secured. He was serving in such a distant battalion because it was in need of urgent replacements when Pte. Clements had recovered from injury – this was then common practice. Originally he had been a volunteer with the *3rd/5th Gloucesters* but, having volunteered for Foreign Service, he was fighting in France in 1916, being wounded three times in November 1916 and August 1917. On the second occasion, he received *"a severe wound"* in the buttocks; he wrote home that *"my wound is not very bad this time, but plenty bad enough for me"*. His wounds were, however, not serious enough to earn him a permanent *'Blighty One'* that would have saved his life. He is buried in *Dadizeele New British Cemetery*, near Ypres. The *Register* commented: *"one more addition to the list of noble dead"*.

Another killed in the aftermath of the attack near Ypres on 5 October was **Pte. G. Turberville [†]** of *1/7th Cheshire Regiment.* According to his obituary, *"he was killed instantaneously by a shell"*. He was yet another victim of the random shelling of *Trench Warfare*. The chaplain went on to claim that *"his death (was) instantaneous. His comrades dug the grave"*. Because of the date and the fact that the army was advancing, his temporary grave was discovered and he is now buried in *Hooge Crater Cemetery*, Ypres.[167]

German General Retreat

To emphasise how widespread was the battlefield at this stage, to the south on 8 October, the *Canadian Corps* along with the British broke through the *Hindenburg Line* at the (second) ***Battle of Cambrai.*** This collapse was very significant as it forced the German *High Command* to accept that the war had to be ended.

However, at the time Tewkesbury only experienced another loss: *"Tewkesbury Canadian Killed in Action"*.[168] He was **Gunner T. J. Horne [†]**, the third emigrant to Canada to lose his life. A member of the *10th Brigade, Field Artillery*, he actually died on 7 October 1918, the day before the crucial attack. The War Diary reported that *"on the 7th the enemy did a great deal of scattered shelling, which would indicate that he was making ready to evacuate"*. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that Gunner Horne was yet another victim of the random shelling. His body was recovered, to be buried in nearby *Bourlon Wood Cemetery*.



A now famous photograph of British Soldiers cheering their successes in Oct. 1918 [IWM-Hammerton]

On the day of the attack, it was the turn of another artilleryman to lose his life: **Gunner R. B. Sweet [†]** of *A Battery, 210th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery.* Officially he died of wounds on 8 October so it is difficult to be precise about the circumstances of his sustaining them. A veteran soldier with an interesting record, his unit was in 1918 part of the *42nd (East Lancashire) Division* and at the forefront of the Allied offensive. On 9 October, it participated in the *"Pursuit to the Selle"* river. At some point Gunner Sweet suffered *"a penetrating wound to the abdomen and a wound in the right arm. He was very weak.. he sank gradually into an unconscious condition and passed away very quietly"*.[169] He was buried in *Rocquigny-Equancourt Road British Cemetery*, Manancourt in the Somme region.

On 6 October, *1st/5th Gloucesters* were back on the *Somme* near the *St. Quentin Canal* and came under fire from an advanced enemy post. Despite sustaining casualties, the battalion moved forward slowly and on 9 October an attack was ordered under a creeping barrage. They pressed on, despite machine-guns and snipers, until 10 October when 'B' Company led an attack that was halted by heavy machine-gun fire. The

[166] His death was not reported by the *Register* until 19 October.
[167] Why Pte. Turberville volunteered in Macclesfield is a mystery. He too had survived Gallipoli, after which he served for two years in Egypt and Palestine until his battalion was transferred before deserved victory to the desperate fighting in France. He did not live long enough to share in that victory.
[168] *Register*, 23 November 1918 p5/1.
[169] *Record*, 2 November 1918 p1/4.

company lost *"all its officers wounded and many NCOS as well…. The Company was forced to fall back"*. It was not until 15 October that an *NCO* in *B Company*, **Cpl. T. Simmons** [†], was reported as having died of wounds. As usual, it is difficult to be precise about the circumstances of sustaining the fatal wounds. We know that he was buried in *Doingt Communal Cemetery Extension*, near *Peronne* on the *Somme*. At the time, there were three Australian *Casualty Clearing Stations* in the village and it seems likely that he would have been treated in one of them. We do not, however, know how long he was in hospital but one wonders why he had not been evacuated to a base hospital in the five intervening days. It is perhaps reasonable to suppose that he was wounded in that failed attack on 10 October.

An early volunteer, Cpl. Simmons had enlisted in the *7th Gloucesters* and fought with them in *Gallipoli.* Afterwards it was sent to Egypt, where it briefly served on the Suez Canal, before moving to Mesopotamia to join the *Expeditionary Force.* During 1916 the division took part in many of the battles in the Mesopotamian campaign, including the recapture of *Kut al Amara* and pursuit of the Turkish forces towards Baghdad. Units of the Division were the first troops to enter Baghdad when it fell in March 1917. However, sometime in late 1916 or early 1917 (possibly after illness or injury) Simmons was transferred to the *1st/5th Gloucesters,* and promoted to the rank of Corporal. After fighting in France in 1917, he would have moved with his Division to Italy before it returned in time for the last campaign and his death.

Nevertheless, the army continued its attack to cross the **River Selle** on 17 October, when the British ejected the Germans from its new defensive line, created after being forced out of the *Hindenburg Line*. On this day was killed **Lt. C. L. Davey [†]**, then serving with the *18th Battalion* of the new *Machine Gun Corps*, formed on 16 February 1918 and part of the *18th Division*, one of the divisions in *Fourth Army*, which was in the forefront of the *Grand Offensive*. As he was educated at the same college as the *C-in-C*, Haig, he belonged to the officer class and enlisted via the *Public Schools Brigade*; he was commissioned in 1915. His body was recovered and he is buried at *Honnechy British Cemetery*, near Le Cateau.[170]

The *19th (Western) Division* with the *8th Gloucesters* was also part of this attack over the ***River Selle*** and one if its members, **Pte. Alfred Victor Grimmett [†]** died on 21 October 1918. We do not know, however, the circumstances of his death. An early volunteer, acting (unpaid) L/Cpl. Grimmett had landed in France with his battalion on 20 September 1915 and was involved in many of the key battles on the Western Front. Pte. Grimmett was buried initially in a temporary grave before being moved after the Armistice to *Romeries Communal Cemetery Extension* near *Valenciennes*.[171]

The attacks pressed on towards the **River Sambre** with the *1st* and *1st/5th Gloucesters* heavily involved. On 23 October the Brigade diary records merely that the attack was *"successful but casualties heavy owing to the intense barrage put down by the enemy….. whole objectives gained. Casualties 7 killed and 14 wounded*".[172]

Pte. G. H. Brotheridge [†] of the same battalion also lost his life and was probably one of those casualties. He died at a Dressing Station on 24 October 1918 of wounds received in action a few hours earlier, without doubt, during the *Battle of the Selle*.[173] We are not sure when Pte. Brotheridge enlisted but we know that he did not join this battalion until 24 May 1918, thus did not see service in Italy. The battalion was heavily involved in the Grand Offensive of that year. He is buried in *Highland Cemetery*, Le Cateau.[174]

The *Great Advance* continued involving battles such as *Valenciennes*, 1 November, and the (River) *Sambre*, 4 November. One should not assume that by this time the advance was a rout. The *1st Gloucesters* lost five men in repelling yet another enemy counter-attack. The battalion crossed the Sambre and it seemed that their creeping barrage was effective as the enemy only emerged in order to surrender. It was then involved in *"mopping up operations"* capturing 450 *POW*s and equipment – at a cost of 32 men. The battalion was relatively safe in billets when the *Armistice* came into force.

The *1st/5th Gloucesters* were also involved in the crossing of the *Sambre*. Wyrall emphasises the absence of a German collapse by claiming that *"the first three days of November* (before the attack) *were unpleasan*t". In a hostile bombardment, *"four or five men"* were lost and, after an enemy counter-attack, the men fell back relinquishing the advanced post they had set up. The attack on the 4 November fared better

[170] As he was not an accepted Tewkesburian, we have no obituary to shed light on the manner of his death. He is commemorated on the *Grammar School Memorial* as the school took pupils from beyond the town.
[171] Alfred's brother, ***Aldred Vincent Grimmett* [†]** had been killed in action two months earlier on 23 August 1918
[172] Wyrall, pp306-7
[173] *De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour (1914-1924),* [Ancestry]
[174] His younger brother**, 2nd Lt. F. J. Brotheridge [†]** of the *RAF*, was killed on 19 May 1918.

with 350 prisoners and equipment captured at a cost of 67 men in the brigade. The battalion stood down on 5 November but, after a day in billets, the advance continued although the battalion was not in the Corps front line. On 9 November, the men were greeted by French people *"distributing tricolor flags and flowers"*. The rest of the day was spent in camp cleaning up and resting; the 10th was a Sunday with a Church Parade and light duties: *"commonplace in the extreme was the work of the battalion on the last day of the struggle between Nations which had raged for four long years and more"*. The last words in the Battalion Diary were: *"News of Armistice received, very little interest – a few Verey lights let off in the evening. A.A. guns dismounted"*.[175]

Armistice, 11 a.m. 11 November 1918

Elsewhere, fighting continued until the last minutes before the *Armistice* took effect at **11 a.m. on 11 November 1918**. One of the last soldiers to die was Canadian **Private George Lawrence Price**, two minutes before the armistice took effect. Fortunately, no Tewkesbury men lost their lives in battle after 24 October. The *Kaiserschlacht* had cost 18 local lives while the *100 Days to Victory* had cost 18 as well. Wyrall is surely right when he states that the *"most wonderful thing was the silence of the battlefields…… Peace fell amidst a hush almost painful in its coming"*.[176]

It is important to stress that, while the Germans were in retreat, they were not routed – except in that the Allies had almost expelled them from France. However, they still occupied much of Belgium southwest of Ghent and Mons – the expulsion of the Germans was the major British war aim in 1914. Otherwise, the Armistice was the result of a complete political collapse of will in Berlin, following a similar breakdown in the capitals of most of their allies in the *Central Powers*.

Results of Blockade in Germany: 'Turnip Winter'
[Hammerton]

On 29 September two interconnected events took place: the sailors at ***Kiel*** mutinied (as an indirect consequence of the *British Naval Blockade*[177]) and Ludendorff, realising defeat was inevitable, recommended asking the US President for a cease-fire based on his ***Fourteen Points***.[178] Ludendorff was forced to resign so that discussions, conducted by civilians, started on 4 November. On 9 November the Kaiser abdicated and negotiations ended with the signing in the railway carriage at *Compiègne* of an agreement to start the ***Armistice*** at the historic time: **11 a.m.** on **11 November 1918**.

There was, however, an unhappy post-script for a local soldier. **Driver R. J. W. Taylor [†]** died of wounds on 23 November 1918. This death is all the more poignant because Driver Taylor was an *"Old Contemptible"*, who left for France on 17 August 1914 and stayed in theatre for the whole of the war – even when his unit was transferred temporarily to Italy. In view of his pre-war occupation, it was natural that he should have joined one of the Horsed Transport Companies in the *Army Service Corps* (*ASC*). His death is all the more frustrating to the precise historian because the records of his death are confusing and there was no obituary in the local newspapers to explain how and when he gained his wounds. We do know that he died probably following treatment at the *Hôpital Notre-Dame* in *Tournai, Belgium*. He was laid to rest – in Peace – in the nearby *Tournai Communal Cemetery Allied Extension*.

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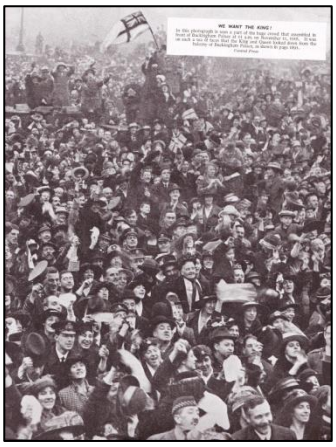
[175] Wyrall, pp309-315. *Verey Lights* were like fireworks which lit up the sky. ***A**nti-**A**ircraft Guns* – a sign of the times.
[176] Wyrall p349
[177] For a fuller discussion of the importance of the *Blockade*, see pages 59-62, 116
[178] This was an idealistic and moral agenda announced by ***President Wilson*** on 8 January 1918 – it would have sounded more appealing to the Germans than to our Allies. Subsequent British policy was to accede to popular demand to *"Hang the Kaiser"*. However, he died in retirement in Holland in 1941 – a year after the Nazis invaded and occupied that country in World War II.

Post Script

It has been argued that the war started because of timetables laid down after 1905 by Gen. von Schlieffen. That may or not be the case but it is certain that wars do not end according to timetable for many service men and civilians who are caught up in the war. Here the law of unintended consequences reigns supreme.

An artist's interpretation of the Armistice on the Western Front [Wikipedia]



Photograph of "delirious" crowds celebrating back home [Hammerton]

These two illustrations sum up the effective alienation of the soldiers from the people back home

The Vicar of Tewkesbury, ***Revd. E. F. Smith***, had played a leading role throughout the war so perhaps we should leave the provisional judgement to him. Below is an extract from his letter to the *Tewkesbury Parochial Magazine* of December 1918, a month after the cease-fire:

"My Dear Friends – What a miraculous change has come over the face of the whole earth since I wrote my last monthly epistle!

It seems indeed too good to be true that the fighting is over and the aims assured for which we took up arms on August 4, 1914. But King Albert is back in his capital, Alsace Lorraine is restored to France, and British troops are, with their French comrades, occupying the great fortress towns on the Rhine! Best of all, our deeply wronged prisoners are coming back to us, and soon, please God, the soldiers and sailors and airmen will themselves begin to return. No wonder the people of England were delirious with joy on that ever-memorable Eleventh of November, which will, I trust, be made in all Allied countries henceforth an annual international holiday. At the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of this, the most eventful year of modern history, the first and worst of our foes capitulated, and the great guns were silenced which had thundered unceasingly for fifty-one dreadful months. That which has happened to the nations of Central Europe is a collapse without any parallel since the world began: it is indeed the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes."

Therefore, the cease-fire was successful – yet the war only officially ended when the ***Treaty of Versailles*** was signed on 28 June 1919, on the fifth anniversary of the assassination in Sarajevo. Until that point – for the German people – the war had not ended – because of the *British Naval Blockade.*

Two Contrasting Views of the War's End

A grey day in Mons on 11 November 1918; Canadian Troops end the war – victoriously -- where it began in August 1914 [Hammerton]

This is, undoubtedly, a staged propaganda photograph of well-fed children welcoming a victor [Hammerton]

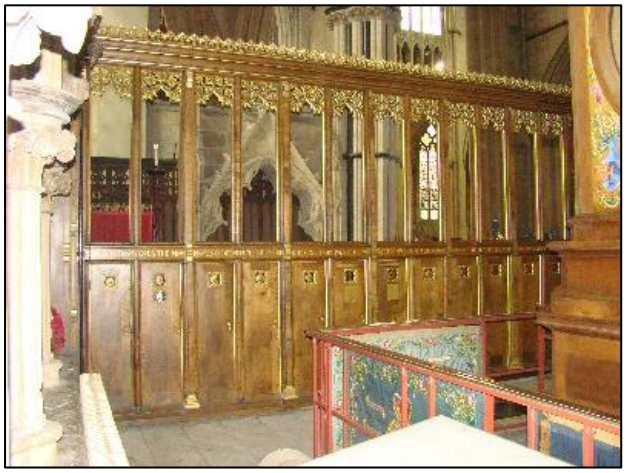
F. The Unintended – but Inevitable – Consequences of War?

The Impact of the *Spanish Influenza* Pandemic (Jan. 1918 - Dec. 1920) [179]

This unexpected and shocking cause of death – at the end of four years of interminable warfare – took **eight lives** amongst Tewkesbury service personnel. It also included the Town's only known female fatality. Conditions of life for soldiers could be debilitating, especially when living outdoors in winter conditions. The first loss to pneumonia came as early as 25 March 1915 when 36-year-old volunteer, **Pte. Thomas Underwood [†]** died whilst training near Malvern. It was a death which touched the conscience – and generosity – of local people. The *CWGC* paid for his grave in *Tewkesbury Cemetery* and he is commemorated appropriately in the Town.

Pte. Frederick William Taylor [†] shared a similar fate on 11 April 1917 when, after catching a chill which developed into pneumonia, he died at *Foye House Hospital*, Clifton, Bristol. Pte. Taylor was a 17-year-old conscript into the *10th Worcesters* but had transferred on 27 February 1917 to the *Army Service Corps (ASC)*, in the *Remounts Service* at Shirehampton, Avonmouth. Here, he caught his fatal chill. One more appropriate consequence of dying in the UK was that the Army permitted him to be buried in *Tewkesbury Cemetery* so that his family and friends had the compensation of being able to attend his funeral and to tend his grave henceforth – supported by *CWGC*. Although he was accorded a *CWGC* grave and he died well before 1925, his name was not commemorated on the Memorial at the 'Cross'.

The first death, actually attributed to the influenza epidemic, was that of our only female war fatality – **Worker Kathleen R. Sollis [†]**. She had enlisted in the *WAAC* that was converted in 1917 into the *Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps*. The rank of *'Worker'* reflected the necessity for women to undertake the menial jobs that freed men for the Army. When she was taken ill, she was ironically working at Tredington Isolation Hospital – and that is where she died on 22 March 1918, officially of *"acute cerebro-spinal meningitis"*. Did she contract the disease from some of her patients? We shall never know. *'Worker' Sollis* was buried in a *CWGC* grave but her name has not been included in any of the official memorials in the town – even though she died well before 1925.[180]



Five Sisters Memorial in York Minister, 1925 – the only memorial to Women War Dead of WWI, including the name of K. Sollis. [www.qaranc.co.uk]

Seven months later the 'flu struck again locally – ironically (but not surprisingly) – amongst wounded soldiers at *Mitton VAD Hospital.* The irony lay in the fact that it was the first death there during the war.[181]

Another UK death from pneumonia was that of **Cpl. W. H. Jordan [†]** of the *Labour Corps* who died on 5 November 1918 in hospital in Bristol. He was a pre-war *Territorial* who had served with the *1st/5th Gloucesters* in France. At some stage he was transferred to the *Labour Corps (Agricultural Company)*, which was manned by officers and other ranks who had been medically rated below the 'A1' condition needed for front-line service. Many of them had returned after being wounded. This suggests that Cpl. Jordan either had been wounded, or had suffered an illness, which affected his level of fitness. Because of his death in the UK, he was permitted to be buried with honour in his adopted town of Cheltenham. His name is, however, commemorated on Tewkesbury's War Memorial.

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[179] Although the epidemic actually started in an army camp in the USA, it was called *Spanish 'Flu* because the King of Spain became gravely ill during the pandemic. Spain was neutral and thus under no wartime censorship restrictions, so his illness was reported to the world, while outbreaks in the belligerent countries were concealed. This gave the false impression that Spain was the most-affected area; thus the pandemic was dubbed *the Spanish'Flu*.

[180] Kathleen Sollis is commemorated, together with other female casualties of the Great War, on the Roll of Honour in York Minster. It was unveiled on 24 June 1925 by the then Duchess of York (the late Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother) and dedicated by the Archbishop of York. There are 12 panels, on which are inscribed the names of 1,465 *'women of the Empire'* who died during or because of the after-effects of the War. As one would expect, the nursing services are well represented, with the main cause of death being *"Spanish 'flu"*.

[181] *Record*, 26 October 1918, p1/4.

The epidemic also spread, perhaps inevitably, to the privations of the Western Front where **L/Bdr. Thomas Williams [†]** of *B Battery, 298th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery,* died on 3 November 1918. The *Royal Field Artillery* provided light, mobile guns giving firepower in support of the cavalry. In November 1918, the *298th Brigade,* part of *Fourth Army,* was pursuing the retreating German Army towards the French/Belgian Border. He died on the eve of the crossing of the River Sambre – eight days before the *Armistice* – and was buried militarily in *Premont British Cemetery*, near Cambrai. An insight into how unpleasant was this method of dying comes from the army record of **Driver P. L. Marment**, who died on 31 October 1918 at Le Havre – he was admitted with a temperature of 102-103°F with *"pains all over body".*[182]

The 'flu epidemic was no respecter of the Armistice. On 13 November, **Pte. Alfred C. Sallis [†]** of the *8th Gloucesters,* died from pneumonia. We know regrettably little about his military career but his battalion was part of *'The Last Hundred Days'* campaign that saw the Allies inflict a series of morale-sapping defeats on the German Army, culminating in that cease-fire. On 11 November 1918 the Division was stationed in billets close to the border with Belgium. He was buried with military honour in *Awoingt British Cemetery,* near Cambrai in France, presumably after being treated unsuccessfully at one of the three *Casualty Clearing Stations* in the neighbourhood. He was commemorated appropriately in Tewkesbury.

On 16 November, a death from 'flu took place in Bristol where **Pte. C. W. Rice [†]** was serving at the *Remounts Depot* of Shirehampton, Avonmouth, with the *ASC.*[183] We believe that he spent his war there and was buried in *Arnos Vale Cemetery,* Bristol, which then accommodated bodies from local hospitals.

The dispassionate historian feels deeply that the death of one of our most distinguished soldiers – from pneumonia and eight days after the end of a war – exemplifies the wastefulness of war. **CSM W. H. Price, *MSM* [†]** *of 9th Gloucesters,* died from pneumonia on 19 November 1918. Not only that, but he was a real veteran. In 1901 he tried to volunteer for the Boer War but was dismissed for being under age. He volunteered again – this time successfully in September 1914; was quickly promoted to Sgt. in the Kitchener *9th Gloucesters,* serving with them in *France* and then Salonika**.** There the harsh climate was the greatest threat: sickness or disease killed or disabled far more than enemy fire. Whilst there, on 28 November 1917 he was *Mentioned in Despatches* on 28 November 1917 and subsequently, awarded the *Meritorious Service Medal.* On 4 July 1918 the battalion was rushed back to France for the epic battles of the *Last Hundred Days* Campaign, which saw the Allies inflict a series of crushing defeats on the German Army, culminating in the *Armistice*. He then died of pneumonia which was no respecter of rank or experience. One can easily imagine that the privations of Salonika made him more vulnerable to disease. He was buried in *Busigny Communal Cemetery Extension,* situated between St. Quentin and Le Cateau. There was a fitting post-script in March 1919 when his medal was presented to his widow.

It also seems poignant that a man who had emigrated to Canada – and had enlisted to fight in the then European war – should die in this futile way. **Pte. Albert Smith [†]** of *14th Quebec Regiment, Canadian Infantry* died of pneumonia on 21 December 1918. He had volunteered (there was no conscription there!) at the age of 37 in 1917 and his battalion fought in most of the major engagements on the Western Front until the end of the war. He was buried in *Terlincthun British Cemetery, Wimille,* near Boulogne, which was attached to a hospital centre and rest camp.

The end of the war had not ended the epidemic. We have already noted that **Cpl. E. Hindmarsh [†]** had died of 'flu on 23 December 1918, while being repatriated from the debilitating conditions of the Salonika.

The end of the year did not end the deaths. **Pte. Albert Edward Hooper [†]** of *13th Devons (Labour Corps)* died of pneumonia on 16 March 1919 after being a patient in the Blandford Camp Military Hospital on Salisbury Plain. However, the *Register* reported that he was serving with the *Army Service Corps (ASC).* His first posting, after he volunteered in 1915, was to the *Devons* but he may have been deemed less than A1 standard of fitness and transferred to the Labour Corps, formed in 1917, which used such men for labouring work behind the lines. It is not thought that he had served abroad. He was granted a military funeral when

[182] **Driver P. L. Marment** is not included on the Town's Memorial, despite the inclusion of his brother **Cpl. V. W. Marment [†]**. Their father was living at the Mythe in 1919 but the former had moved away and married after 1911. The latter was engaged to a Miss Doris Dyer, who belonged to a prominent local family.

[183] The *ASC Remounts Service* was responsible for the provisioning of horses to all other Army units. It consisted of approximately 200 (generally older, experienced) soldiers, who trained at any one time 500 horses. The Shirehampton Depot operated from September 1914 until October 1919. It was established to receive horses and mules landed at Avonmouth from Canada, America and other countries. Over the five years, 347,045 horses and mules, passed through the Depot and were supplied to British forces in this country and abroad.

he was buried in *Tewkesbury Cemetery*: *"a number of discharged and demobilised soldiers attended under Sergeant.-Major Curtis and, at the graveside, the 'Last Post' was sounded by Bugler Crockett"*.[184]At least the Town and Abbey also recognised his service, by commemorating his name at the Cross and then adding his name later in the Abbey

The epidemic was still taking lives in 1920. **Gunner Henry Knight [†]** of the *17th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery* died on 10 March 1920. He does not appear to have joined his brigade overseas prior to the *Armistice*, as there is no record of any campaign medals having been awarded to him. **Gunner Knight** died – eighteen months after the war had ended – in *Cambridge Hospital* at *Aldershot Barracks*. His death certificate cited *"influenza, pneumonia and empyema"* as the causes. Because he died in this country, his burial was permitted in his hometown, so his grave is in *Tewkesbury Cemetery* and he has a *CWGC* headstone. His name is not commemorated in the Abbey or on the Cross (although he met the Town's deadline).

Deaths due to Accidents

Sapper A. C. Wilkinson [†] *of G Company, Royal Engineers*, was killed on 30 March 1918 when he was based at the Depot in Chatham, Kent, probably training new recruits; his history of wounds most likely took him out of active service. On 30 March 1918 he tragically lost his life when he was in charge of horses that bolted. He is buried at *Fort Pitt Military Cemetery* in Kent, which contains 265 First World War graves. Sapper Wilkinson was a professional who enlisted in 1904, so volunteered immediately as a *Reservist* and was an "*Old Contemptible*". He is also commemorated on the Memorial at the Cross and added to the Abbey Memorial.

Late Additions to the Abbey Memorial to the Fallen [Jack Boskett]

Pte. A. J. E. Parsons [†] has not been commemorated in this way. This is, no doubt, because he died after being accidentally drowned, while bathing in the River Avon at *'The Witheys'* on 13 August 1919. The fact that he has a *CWGC* headstone on his grave and that he appears in the *CWGC* Register would indicate that he was either still serving at the time of death or that he may have been the recipient of an Army pension. The cause of death would not appear to be service related, unless he was still a serving soldier.

Nevertheless, Pte. Parsons had been a Tewkesbury volunteer, posted to the *3rd/5th Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regimen*t. He must have volunteered for overseas service since he was co-author of *"A Message from the Front with the 2nd/5th Gloucesters – somewhere in France, August 6th 1916"*. The *61st Division*, of which it was part, did not take part in any of the Somme battles but was involved in the infamous *Battle of Fromelles* on 19 July 1916, with the 1st Australian Division, in order to divert German troops from the Somme. As stated on his headstone, at some point he transferred to the *Machine Gun Corps*, formed in October 1915. It is believed that the transfer occurred in the first week of August 1917, presumably upon recovering from a wound, as was the custom. The *Register* of 16 August 1919 contained a graphic report of the circumstances of his drowning and, furthermore, his family believed his breathing may have been impaired by his being gassed. However, a subsequent study of his death certificate has failed to corroborate this theory.[185]

[184] **Curtis** may well have been Albert who had been a Sgt. with the *7th Gloucesters* in Mesopotamia and became Town Crier in 1938 (for more information see page 111) and the bugler **Arthur Crockett**, formerly of the *King's Royal Rifles*.

[185] It is most regrettable that no records have been discovered of submissions to and discussions of the committee, which decided the names to include on the plaques for the Town Memorial. Nor is his name recorded on the *Abbey Memorial to the Fallen.* The last death to be recorded late on that Memorial was 21 April 1921.

Commemoration

Those who died after the War, included on the War Memorial and buried with *CWGC* Recognition in Tewkesbury Municipal Cemetery.

Tewkesbury Municipal Cemetery: CWGC maintained World War One Section [Author, 2014]

It is noteworthy that some veterans, who had served right throughout the war, died after it had ended. Not only was **Pte. F J. Woolcott [†]** a *Reservist* in 1914, but he had also volunteered for the Boer War. He arrived in France to join the *1st Gloucesters* by 18 February 1915. In May, he was mentioned in a letter home from fellow soldiers, mentioning the fighting at *Aubers Wood*. He was almost certainly wounded in the *Battle of Loos* but returned at some point only to be wounded once again – but gassed this time – in August 1918, whilst serving with the *Royal Sussex Regiment*. After recovery, he was transferred, as less than *A1* fitness, to the *Labour Corps*, until demobilised on 29 April 1919. **Pte. Woolcott**'s obituary in the *Register* suggested that his death was a result of being gassed and he was buried on 25 August 1920 in Tewkesbury Cemetery: *"His coffin was draped in a Union Jack, was borne by a party of employees from the Borough Flour Mill and followed by a number of discharged soldiers"*. Accordingly, his grave is maintained by the *CWGC* and his name was a late addition to the Abbey's *Memorial to the Fallen*. His death was also well in time to be included at the Cross in the normal way.

One of the first to die of *TB* was **Pte. J. Martin [†]** who had been discharged with a *Silver War Badge* from the *Army Veterinary Corps* – the only local example of service in that corps. He died on 12 January 1919. Joseph volunteered on 26 March 1915 and joined the *Territorial* South Midland Division. His army service lasted just over 18 months until he was discharged on 15 October 1916 as *"No longer physically fit for War service"*, apparently as a result of a pre-existing medical condition that was not identified when he enlisted. Subsequently he spent periods in hospital before his condition was diagnosed. The report concluded that his *"Disability was not caused by but may have been accelerated and aggravated by service"*. Pte. Martin was never posted overseas. He is buried in his native Bredon but is also commemorated on the Grammar School Memorial.

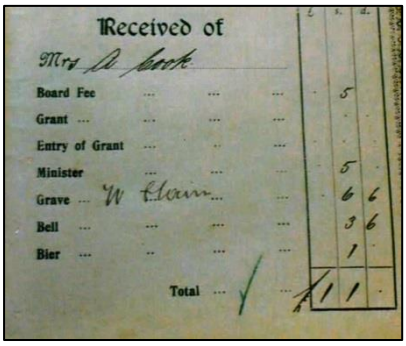
Pte. H. S. Thompson [†] was another veteran who joined the *Gloucesters* as a *Reservist*. He arrived in France on 20 January 1915 as a replacement with the 1st Battalion, thus qualifying for the award of the *1914-15 Star*. By 27 February 1915, he was a casualty *"suffering from frost bite"*. He was discharged on 30 November 1915 with a *Silver War Badge* on the grounds of *"sickness"* due to service *"overseas"*. Nothing more was heard of Pte. Thompson until his death, the cause of which was certified as *"Phthisis"* (*Tuberculosis/TB*). Accordingly, in October 1920, he received a burial with *CWGC* recognition.

It was almost another two years before veteran **Guardsman G. H. Taylor [†]** of *3rd Coldstream Guards*

died aged 39 on 21 April 1922**.** He had tried to volunteer for the *Boer War* but was too young. In the autumn of 1914, he volunteered as a *Reservist* for his Guards' regiment. He arrived in France on 22 January 1915, thereby qualifying for the *1914-1915 Star*. He was initially promoted to Corporal and then to Lance Sergeant. We do not know much about his subsequent war service but his obituary described him as *"Ex-Sergeant".* He was buried in Tewkesbury Cemetery on 22 April 1922 in the World War I section and his grave is maintained by *CWGC.* His death was too late for his name to be included on the *Abbey Memorial to the Fallen* – but it was included on the Memorial at the Cross.

Those who died after the War, without a CWGC Burial, but in time to be included on a Tewkesbury Memorial

Another, whose family believe died prematurely after being gassed, was **Pte. Joseph Cook [†]**, formerly of *10th Gloucesters*, who died 15 February 1919. He was buried without Military Honour in Tewkesbury Municipal Cemetery**,** with his widow paying the fees. Nevertheless, Pte. Cook is commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey – yet has no formal *CWGC* recognition unlike his comrades.


Received of

Mrs A Cook

Board Fee		5	
Grant			
Entry of Grant			
Minister		5	
Grave W Elam		6	6
Bell		3	6
Bier		1	
Total		1	1

Burial Receipt [Family]

Burial Headstone [Author]

Joseph Cook had volunteered immediately after the outbreak of war; in the *Gloucestershire Regiment* on 31 August 1914 and was posted to the new *Kitchener 10th Battalion* formed. The battalion was sent to France on 8 August 1915 where it was attached to the *1st Division*. The battalion was soon involved in the *Battle of Loos* (25 September-18 October 1915), in which it suffered significant losses. According to his medal records, Joseph did not land in France until 4 October 1915, probably as a replacement in time to take part in a failed final attack on 13 October. Once again the attack was opened with a gas attack: in ten minutes, the division lost 3,663 men. The battalion did not see action again until July 1916 in the *Battles of the Somme* but, by then, Joseph was no longer with them. He had been discharged on 13 January 1916 because of 'sickness'; he was awarded a *Silver War Badge* as evidence that he had undertaken military service and that he had been discharged because of wounds or illness. The causes of death on his certificate were *"1. asthma & emphysema, 2. syncope"*, which do not admit the direct contribution of gas. His older daughters were reputed to have claimed in later years that *"he was sick every day from his return to his death. He could not breath, going into coughing fits. He lost all his strength and unable to do a full day's work for more than a couple of days at a time".* [186] That may be hearsay – there can, however, be little doubt that he was in France with his battalion when gas was used and he was officially is discharged from the army on health grounds. One would hope that would merit a *CWGC* maintained headstone.

The mortal remains of **Pte. Arthur L. Jones [†]** of the *Labour Corps*, who died on 11 February 1921, have suffered a similar fate – recognised by the Town but not by *CWGC.* Having enlisted in 1915 under the *Derby Scheme*, his call-up was delayed until 15 March 1917. It is possible then that his health had been medically rated below the 'A1' condition needed for front-line service. Shortly afterwards in April, the *Labour Corps* was created. Pte. A. L. Jones served in France until 25 April 1918 when he was reported as wounded, possibly gassed.[187] He was subsequently discharged on medical grounds with a *Silver War Badge* and a small pension attached. He died on 11 February 1921 but there was deemed no need for a post-mortem as his death certificate stated the cause as a childhood condition that is triggered later in life. This verdict contradicted his obituary which claimed that he *"died from illness from German poison gas"* but, as with Pte. Cook, there is no reference to any such condition on his medical reports or discharge papers. Accordingly he was buried in Tewkesbury Cemetery without the military honour of the *CWGC.*

[186] Family information supplied by descendant, Margaret Ann Bastie (née Wilson) on novathistle@eastlink.ca
[187] *Record,* 11 May 1918.

Pte. Arthur H. Rowley [†] of the *Durham Light Infantry* died aged 23 on 16 April 1921. He too is buried without *CWGC* recognition in Tewkesbury Cemetery but his name is commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey. Probably conscripted, both newspapers in May 1917 reported that he was wounded *"in right thigh on 23 April"*. His obituary confirmed this – but added that "*he experienced a good deal of hard service abroad where he was wounded and gassed"*. There is, however, no evidence that he had been awarded the *Silver War Badge* to mark his injury. Indeed, he had continued to serve after the Armistice "*with the British Army of occupation in Cologne".* It continued that, *"upon leaving the Army he went to work in Birmingham but his constitution was unable to withstand the effects of his military service and tuberculosis set in and he lay ill for many months"*. He may not be recognised by the *CWGC* but he was by his bearers: they *"were all ex-Service men".* Not only did the lateness of his death probably cause *CWGC* to ignore his grave – but also it perhaps cost his mother the honour of sharing with **Mrs. Didcote** the unveiling of the Town's War Memorial in May 1922. Mrs. Rowley had also lost three sons.[188]

Pte. Basil Williams [†] of *1st Gloucesters,* died aged 43 on 5 March 1924 – too late to accorded a military gravestone. However he was a long-serving veteran of the Regular Army 1904-7, who then volunteered on 5 August, proceeding to France with the *BEF* on 13 August 1914. By 12 September, the *Register* announced that he had already been wounded at the *Battle of Mons,* the first action involving British forces. That initial overseas service did, however, mean that he was not only awarded the *1914 Mons Star* medal, but was also entitled to be known as an "*Old Contemptible"*.

Pte. Williams recovered and returned to France on 27 October 1915, probably as part of a replacement draft for heavy losses at the *Battle of Loos*. After brief home leave, he was assigned to the Kitchener *7th Gloucesters* and posted to Mesopotamia where the battalion was involved in a number of battles during 1916. He was evacuated home on 4 January 1917, *"Fit for service at home"* only. Pte. Williams was finally demobilised at the end of March 1919, having completed more than 16 years military service. Yet when Mr. Basil Williams died on 2 March 1924 from *"pulmonary tuberculosis"*, he was buried in Tewkesbury Cemetery in a militarily unmarked grave. It was apparently too late for him to be accorded a military funeral and to be added to the *Abbey Memorial to the Fallen*, but death did, at least, come in time for his name to be included on the Town's Memorial at the Cross.

Artificer F. T. Raggatt [†] was more fortunate than **Pte. Cook** in that he had a determined local family, which was in a position to effect what they perceived as justice for their deceased son**.** His story underlines perhaps that rules of honouring the war dead were not *'set in stone'*.

The facts are that Artificer Raggatt died on 19 November 1919 but is not commemorated by *CWGC*, and his burial is only remembered on the family grave in *Tewkesbury Municipal Cemetery*. His name is also commemorated on the Memorial at the Cross – but this was not originally intended. His name is included on the *Abbey Memorial to Volunteers.* As with many other naval volunteers, he was surplus to requirements for service on a ship but, as an engineer, his skills were valued: he was *"chosen to assist in fitting the engines and boilers in HMS Resolution* [a *Revenge Class* battleship] *at Jarrow-on-Tyne"*. He did subsequently serve on two ships and *"after the signing of the Armistice, he met with an accident to his leg through which, after some months in hospital, he was discharged"*. However, Artificer Raggatt died at the Isolation Hospital, Tredington, on 19 November 1919 of enteric fever (possibly typhoid). The fact, that he was invalided out of the Navy and was performing civilian work, probably explains why he was only accorded a civilian burial in the Municipal Cemetery on 22 November 1919.

What happened next is part of Tewkesbury folklore. Artificer Raggatt's name was not included on the *Abbey Memorial to the Fallen,* yet it is included on the Memorial at the Cross. This is an inconsistency but family lore insists that: *"Fred Raggatt (senior) stormed into the council chamber and told the councillors that if Freddy's name was left off, he would get some dynamite and personally blow* [it] *up".* The result is inscribed in bronze.

We, therefore, need to be aware of the rules:

Commonwealth War Grave Commission (CWGC)[189]

Today still an esteemed body, it was the brainchild of ***Fabian Ware***, who was deemed too old to volunteer in 1914. So he became a commander of a mobile unit of the British Red Cross, arriving in France

[188] **Pte. H E Rowley** [†] (1916) and **Pte**. **H.G. Rowley [†]** (1917)

[189] Until 1960 it was known as the ***Imperial WGC***. By then most of the Empire had been lost and metamorphosed into the *Commonwealth* of equal independent nations, presided over by the Queen – and not the British Prime Minister.

in September 1914. He was then struck by the lack of any official mechanism for documenting or marking the location of graves of those killed and felt compelled to create an organization within the Red Cross for this purpose.(6) In 1916, the unit was transferred to the British Army as the *Graves Registration Commission*. As the number of graves and memorials required grew inexorably and as it was considered that the matter was not best left in the hands of the burial country, Ware arranged for the French to purchase the land, grant it in perpetuity, and leave the management and maintenance responsibilities to the British. The French and other governments agreed under certain conditions. In 1917, the Imperial War Conference set up the ***Imperial War Graves Commission***; it was established by Royal Charter, with the Prince of Wales serving as president, Secretary of State for War, Lord Derby, as chairman, and Ware as vice-chairman.

By 1918 it was realised that the task was most daunting. By then, some 587,000 graves had been identified and a further 559,000 casualties were registered as having no known grave.

The scale of casualties produced an entirely new attitude towards the commemoration of war dead. Before the First World War, individual commemoration of war dead was often conducted on an ad hoc basis – almost exclusively limited to commissioned officers. This war, however, required the mobilization of a significant percentage of the population, either as volunteers or through conscription. An expectation had consequently arisen that individual soldiers should be commemorated, even if low ranking. A committee report proposed two key elements: that bodies should not be repatriated and that uniform memorials should be used to avoid class distinctions. Beyond the logistical nightmare of returning home so many corpses, it was felt that individual repatriation would conflict with the feeling of brotherhood that had developed between serving ranks. With publicity from the bereaved Rudyard Kipling and political support from Winston Churchill, the Commission was authorised to proceed, assured of support for its principles.

Budgets were a problem in an 'age of austerity' heralded by the *Geddes Axe, 1922*.[190] To ensure cemeteries remained within their budget, the Commission decided not to build shelters in cemeteries that contained less than 200 graves, and not to place a *Stone of Remembrance* in any cemetery with less than 400 graves and to limit the height of cemetery walls to one metre.

Heath Cemetery with Stone of Remembrance [CWGC]

Ramparts Cemetery, Ypres; fewer than 200 graves [CWGC]

Financial problems continued. Between 1920 and 1923, the Commission was shipping 4,000 headstones a week to France. In many cases small cemeteries were closed and the graves concentrated in larger ones. By 1927, when the majority of construction had been completed, over 500 cemeteries had been built, with 400,000 headstones, a thousand Crosses of Sacrifice, and 400 Stones of Remembrance.

According to the *'Qualifications for Inclusion', "the Commission only commemorates those who have died during the designated war years, while in Commonwealth military service or* ***of causes attributable to service***. *The applicable periods of consideration are 4 August 1914 to 31 August 1921 for the First World War".* The emphasised text should be noted. One can only conclude that the realisation that wounded soldiers do not always die to timetable has been subordinated to the financial constraints of the 1920s – an unhappy precedent had been established.

[190] The so-called ***Geddes Axe*** was the result of the drive for public economy and retrenchment in UK government expenditure recommended in the 1920s by a Committee on National Expenditure chaired by **Sir Eric Geddes**. During and after the Great War, government expenditure and taxation increased and it was Geddes' job to identify ways in which government expenditure could be reduced. The Reports advocated economies totalling £87 million but the Cabinet decided on savings only amounting to £52 million. Total defence expenditure fell 41% by 1922-23. One wonders if the decision to terminate graves in 1921 was a result of this crisis.

The Town Council

It took about seven years to draw up names to be included on plaques on the War Memorial. However, no records of these deliberations have survived to our knowledge.[191]

The latest death of a serviceman, whose name was included on the War Memorial, was that of **Driver H. J. Wagstaff [†]**, of the *Royal Horse Artillery,* who died in March 1925.[192] Pte. Wagstaff had been a regular soldier in 1909 and volunteered for military service again, enlisting in the *Royal Horse Artillery* on 7 March 1915. His medal records confirm that he served in Gallipoli from 23 July 1915 but on 10 December 1915 he was discharged from the Army, the reason given as "Sickness" (a feature of the *Gallipoli* campaign). He was awarded a *Silver War Badge* and the *1914-15 Star*.

On returning home, he lived in Birmingham but we can infer that he fell on hard times since he appeared in court in 1916 to be fined for *"stealing a hare and 6 books"* while in 1921 he was accused of *"loitering on the footpath"*.[193] Civilian H. J. Wagstaff was buried on 9 March 1925 in *Tewkesbury Cemetery* but in a plot unmarked by *CWGC*.

Those who died during the War whose names are omitted from the War Memorial:

Pte. Frederick Green [†]
Worker Kathleen Sollis [†][194]

Those who died too late for a Military Grave or for The Cross

Pte. John C. Mayall [†], of *2nd Gloucesters/Labour Corps*, died aged 54 following a stroke before 1 July 1925. He was buried without Military Honour in Tewkesbury Cemetery and, despite his date of death, his name is not commemorated in Tewkesbury, except on the *Abbey Memorial to Volunteers*.

However, Pte. Mayall was one of the longest-serving and much travelled soldiers. He enlisted as a regular in the *Gloucesters* in October 1889 and saw service in India, Malta and Egypt, before being recalled as a *Reservist* for over two years in the **Boer War**. He was then discharged with a gratuity for 12 years reckonable service. At the outbreak of war, then aged 43, he attested as a Special Reservist and was finally posted to the *2nd Battalion*, a pre-war regular unit. He did not sail with them to Macedonia but was posted instead to the *1st Battalion*, his old unit, on 11 November 1915. As a consequence of this service, Pte. Mayall was awarded the *1914-1915 Star*. He remained with his *Battalion* for nearly two years. During that time, the division took part in a number of the *Battles of the Somme 1916*, as well as the *Retreat to the Hindenburg Line* in 1917. Possibly after being wounded, Pte. Mayall was transferred to the *Labour Corps* on 16 October 1917 aged 46. Pte. Mayall survived the war and was demobilised on 25 March 1919 at the age of 48. His death was evidently regarded as one of a civilian and he is buried in an unmarked grave in Tewkesbury Municipal Cemetery – despite his longevity of service.

The case which I find most poignant is that of **Sgt. Ralph Hartell, M.M. [†]** of *the Gloucestershire Regiment* who died aged 56 on 13 October 1932 – much too late for the inflexible deadlines set both by *CWGC* and Tewkesbury Town Council – his name is not commemorated on our War Memorial and he only enjoys a very well sustained family grave in Bredon Churchyard. He was clearly a doughty veteran and one issues the challenge to the authorities to contradict that he died ***"of causes attributable to service"***.

Sgt. Hartell's service to his country began in 1895 and he was a regular soldier in the *Gloucesters*, serving overseas in India, South Africa and Ceylon. During the Boer War, he was present at the *Siege of Ladysmith*. It was a disastrous day for the battalion, and the then Pte. Hartell was recorded as 'Missing'. He remained in the Army Reserve. In 1914 the now Sgt. Hartell was 34 years of age but, possibly because of his age and experience, continued on Home Duties until March 1917. He was wounded twice in the field: the second time in 1918, during the *Georgette Offensive*, when he received that fateful but not fatal *'GSW'* (Gun Shot Wound) to the head, after which he was finally discharged as *"No Longer Fit for Service"*. He was, however, awarded the ***Military Medal***.

He lived the rest of his life as an invalid with a very serious head wound; economically life was very hard for his family. Ex-Sgt. Ralph Hartell finally died on 13 October 1932, his Death Certificate acknowledging *"rt. sided hemiplegia (war wound)"*.

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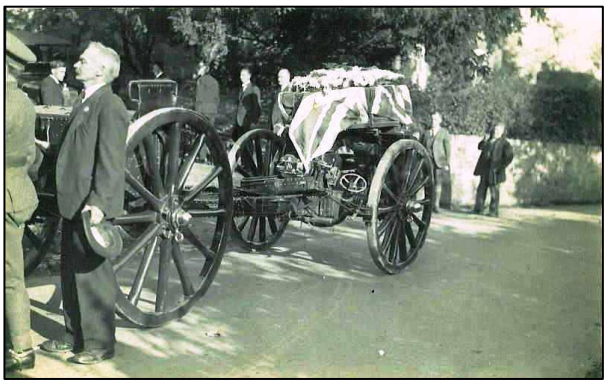
[191] For more information refer to pp 5-9
[192] On the War Memorial, he is known as "J. Wagstaff" and was referred to colloquially as "Jack".
[193] *Register*, 11 November 1916 p5/2 & 12 February 1921 pp4/5-6
[194] See F. Green p 72; K. Sollis pp 4 & 86; For Hartell also see page 74



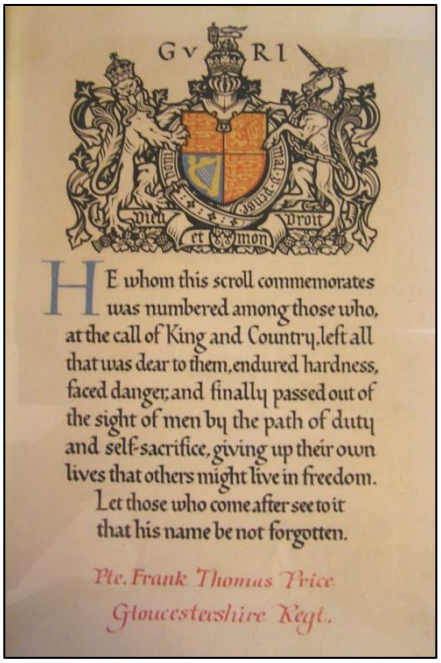
The Military Funeral of Sgt. Ralph Hartell [Courtesy of Mrs. Betty Hawkes, his youngest child]

Sgt. Ralph Hartell may not have been deemed qualified for the honours which he would have received had he been killed in 1918 but he was accorded a very dignified Military Funeral by his former comrades. They marched behind his coffin from his home in Twyning to his final resting place in the church in his native Bredon. However, although his death was very much hastened by his severe war wounds, it came at least seven years too late for his name to be included on an official war memorial or recorded by the *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*.

Commemorating the Death in Active Service of Pte. Frank Thomas Price [†]

[Derek Round, grandson]

"Dead Man's Penny" with the recipient's name



Certificate from King George V

What financial compensation was offered to a dead soldier's family? We have some examples of a *gratuity* (single payment) being made. For example, the widow of **Pte. H. G. Rowley [†]**, with one surviving child in October 1919, was awarded £3 while the widow of **Pte. N. J. Mann [†]**, married since 1902 with three children, received £10 even though she had remarried. Parents also could receive a gratuity: the mother of **Pte. C. Howell [†]** was granted £3 while the father of **Pte. R. C. Sayer [†]** was granted £9. Pensions were also payable; in 1918 a private soldier's pension was £1.10s.0d. (£1.50p) + 50p per child a week. Thus the widow of **L/Cpl. Frank Dickenson [†]**, with three children, was awarded £11.10s.0d. (£11.50p).[195]

[195] In 1919 £1 was worth about £37.56p in modern values.

Demobbed! – and Unemployed?[196]

It is fair to suggest that the speed of the German collapse caught planners by surprise. Continuing the battle into 1919 seemed far more of a priority than demobilisation of so many soldiers. One can criticise the army for the manner of ***demobilisation*** in 1919, yet it was just another example of necessary extemporisation that seemed chaotic at the time. The first reaction of the soldiers can perhaps best be summarised as *"Thank God it is all over"* followed by *"Let me get home as soon as possible"*. We can be consoled that lessons were learned which could be applied at the end of the next world war.

We have already noted that the army had been forced to reorganise in February 1918 because of shortages of soldiers. Nevertheless by the end of 1918, the army had reached its maximum strength of 4 million men and could field over 70 divisions. It would perhaps be useful to use the *Gloucesters* as an example of what took place with this huge army after the Armistice.

Fate of the Battalions of the Gloucestershire Regiment

Battalion	Type	Fate	Battle Hons.[197]
1st	Regular	German Occupation Force	31
2nd	Regular	Garrison duties in Tiflis (Georgia) until 1919	8
3rd	Special Reserve	Disbanded at the end of the war	
1st/4th	Territorial	Reduced to care strength in Italy March 1919 then returned to Bristol	12
2nd/4th	Territorial	20 Feb. 1918: disbanded in France	4
1st/5th	Territorial	Demobilised in Gloucester 1919	16
2nd/5th	Territorial	Demobilisation in January 1919 men were leaving for home at a rate of 1,000 per week.	13
1st/6th	Territorial	Garrison duty in Albania and Montenegro; 8 May 1919 Egypt; Bristol 25 March 1920 for demobilisation after 5 years and 7 months abroad. It had lost 824 killed	11
2nd/6th	Territorial	20 Feb. 1918: disbanded in France.	4
7th	Service/Kitchener	July 1918 : Brigade transferred to North Persia Force	10
8th	Service/Kitchener	Demobilisation began in December 1918 finished by 27th of June 1919.	23
9th	Service/Kitchener	22 September 1918: Pioneer Battalion	6
10th	Service/Kitchener	14 February 1918: disbanded in France.	8
11th	Home Reserve		
12th	Service/Kitchener	19 October 1918 : disbanded in France	22
13th	Service/Kitchener	6 May 1918 : reduced to cadre strength	9
14th	Service/Kitchener	11 February 1918 : disbanded in France	5
15th	Home Reserve	Converted into training battalion; Disbanded at war-end.	
16th	Home Reserve	Converted into training battalion; Disbanded at war-end.	
17th	Home Reserve	Converted into training battalion; Disbanded at war-end.	
18th	Service	Former in 1918; landed in France 1 August	1
RGH	Yeomanry/Territorial	14 July 1921 Armoured Car Company	14

We have to remember that most men enlisted *"for the duration of the war"* and, at first, there was some confusion concerning whether the war ended with the Armistice or the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919. Consequently, after some time, a system of demobilisation was adopted; for example the *Territorial 2nd/5th Gloucesters* were demobbed at a rate of 1,000 per week.

The process and timing of the demobilisation of a soldier after the war depended on his terms of service.

- Soldiers of the *Regular Army* who were still serving their normal period of colour service remained in the army until their years were done.
- Men who had *volunteered* or who were *conscripted for war service* generally followed the routine. Although nearly everyone wanted to go home at once, it was simply not possible. Not only would it

[196] For this section, we are deeply indebted to the ***Long, Long Trail*** [http://www.1914-1918.net; Milverton Associates]
[197] Wyrall pp352-4

have been practically impossible to process all men in a short period of time. In addition, the British Army still had commitments it had to fulfil, in Germany, Russia and in the garrisons of Empire.

- Consequently those released early were men with scarce industrial skills (including miners) and those who had volunteered early in the war.
- However *conscripts* – particularly the 18-year-olds of 1918 – had to wait until last.

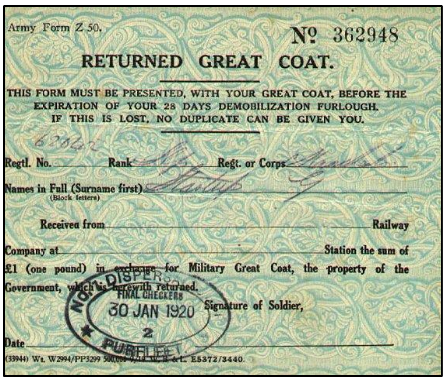
Even so, most of the war service men were back in civilian life by the end of 1919.

Before the soldier left his unit he was medically examined and given *Army Form Z22*, which allowed him to make a claim for any form of disability arising from his military service. He was also given an Army *Form Z44 (Plain Clothes Form)* and Z18, a *Certificate of Employment* showing what he had done in the army. A *Dispersal Certificate* recorded personal and military information and also the state of his equipment. If he lost any of it after this point, the value would be deducted from his outstanding pay.

He was not allowed to bring back to the UK any Belgian or locally issued French banknotes. The soldier would spend some time in a transit camp – an Infantry Base Depot – near the coast before being warned for a homeward sailing.

On arrival in England the man would move to a Dispersal Centre. This was a hutted or tented camp or barracks. Here he received a *Z3, Z11* or *Z12 Protection Certificate* and a railway warrant or ticket to his home station. This certificate enabled the man to receive medical attention, during his final leave.

Some demobbed soldiers received an *Out-of-work Donation Policy,* which insured him against unavoidable unemployment of up to 26 weeks in the 12 months following demob. He received in addition an advance of pay, a fortnight's ration book and also a voucher – *Army Form Z50* – for the return of his greatcoat to a railway station during his leave. He could choose to have either a clothing allowance of 52 shillings and sixpence or be provided with a suit of plain clothes. If he chose the latter he would hand in his Z44. His final leave began the day after he was dispersed. He left to go home, still in uniform and with his steel helmet and greatcoat.



Army Form Z 50.

No 362948

RETURNED GREAT COAT.

THIS FORM MUST BE PRESENTED, WITH YOUR GREAT COAT, BEFORE THE EXPIRATION OF YOUR 28 DAYS DEMOBILIZATION FURLOUGH. IF THIS IS LOST, NO DUPLICATE CAN BE GIVEN YOU.

Regtl. No. Rank Regt. or Corps

Names in Full (Surname first) (Block letters)

Received from Railway Company at Station the sum of £1 (one pound) in exchange for Military Great Coat, the property of the Government, which is herewith returned.

30 JAN 1920

Signature of Soldier,

Date

Form Z50. This is evidence of a rather late demobilisation, in January 1920.[Long, Long Trail]

While on final leave he was still technically a soldier although could now go about in plain clothes. Legally he could not wear his uniform after 28 days from dispersal. During leave he had to go to a railway station to hand in his greatcoat. For this he was paid £1. This was counted as part of his war or service gratuity payment. Any other payments due to him were sent in three instalments by Money Orders or Postal Drafts. These could be cashed at a Post Office on production of the Protection Certificate. The man could also take his Demobilisation Ration Book to the nearest Food Office and exchange it for an Emergency Card, which he could later exchange for a civilian Ration Book.

As we know, despite Premier **Lloyd-George**'s promise of creating a 'Land fit for Heroes', it did not turn out that way because of an economic crisis which affected the former dominant export trade. Unemployment was the dominant issue of British society during the interwar years. Levels rarely dipped below 1 million and reached a peak of 3,000,000 in 1933, a figure which represented 20% of the working population.

In Tewkesbury in 1932 there were 300 men unemployed or 31% of the insured population[198] but the problems had started by 1921 with the Town Council being exercised by the problem. For example Councillor W. Walkley enquired if *"state aid was available for schemes, e.g. raising Wyatts Meadow, laying trunk road from Barton Street to Gloucester Road to provide employment for the considerable numbers on the dole who want to work"*. The Mayor set up a fund to relieve distress caused by this problem and methods of raising money included a *"Comic Football Match in aid of Unemployment Fund. Arranged by W Chatterton of Messrs. Frisby. Prize-winners for Funny Costumes"*.

Less comic were court reports. One suspects that, when the magistrates warned **H. J. Wagstaff [†]** and friends about loitering outside Frisby's, they were *"loitering"* because they were unemployed. In an even more unfortunate case in 1922, a former Sgt. /Drill Instructor and Storekeeper with the 5^{th} *Gloucesters*

[198] Anthea Jones, *Tewkesbury* (Phillimore, 1987) p180

pleaded guilty to *"stealing 9 pairs of army trousers and 9 pairs of boots"*. He claimed to be unemployed, with no home. The Inspector stated that the *"prisoner had been very helpful and had a very good war record"*. The Magistrates sympathised to a degree in imposing a sentence of one month *"without hard labour"*. This sentence would not cause the prisoner to be deprived of his pension of 10s. (50p) a week. By 1924 the *British Legion* had been formed to look after the interests of former servicemen and their families and in 1924 *"158 children of unemployed ex-servicemen were treated (no doubt to food and entertainment) at the Club"*. In 1928, 254 children were entertained – the numbers were growing.

By 1926 the unemployed were becoming less passive. The Town Council received a deputation of 30 unemployed, complaining that the proposed establishment in Tewkesbury of a *Michelin Tyre Company* factory had not been given sufficient consideration. They stated that *"the only alternative to 'dole' was to saw wood at the Workhouse at 15 shillings (75p) to £1.1s.0d. (£1.05p) per week"*.

Finally this woeful decade ended on 28 October 1929 with 110 men and 23 women officially unemployed.[199]

A solution for some unemployed ex-servicemen was to re-enlist into the Army, as **Frank Kitching** had done.[200] Despite the ending of the main war, Britain faced greater peacetime military commitments than when she entered it in 1914. There were forces to be maintained in the Army of Occupation in Germany; in Palestine; in North Russia; in the garrisons of Empire; in Afghanistan. Ireland was another source of strife which required troops. Therefore, to fill this need, re-enlistment was encouraged by the short-term offer of a considerable financial incentive.

It was offered to *NCOs* and men aged between 18 and 35, married or single, who were in medical categories A or B1, if they were still serving or on demobilisation leave. It was not open to men who had already been discharged, transferred to reserve or demobilised. It was quite attractive as a man re-enlisting for 27 months would be paid a £20 Bounty, paid in three instalments, the first being on acceptance. He would receive normal rates of pay but would also receive the War Bonus paid to the men in the Armies of Occupation. He would receive War Service pay and two months home leave on full pay (which would be *"wherever possible granted immediately"*). Married men would be accepted and separation allowances paid to their family if married prior to 11 December 1918. A 39-month contract would attract a bounty of £40; for 51 months: £50. This was a considerable incentive. *"The pay ... is on such a scale that the lowest rank can at present expect to put 21 shillings per week into his pocket clear of all expenses of living. This compares more than favourably with the average man in civil life"*. Added to which, the man would pick up £10 Bounty and two or three months paid leave to begin it all![201] Little wonder that *The Scotsman* newspaper of 22 March 1919 reported that men were re-enlisting at the rate of 700 per day.

In April 1919 the offer was extended to men who were then serving in *Class Z Army Reserve*, men who had been discharged and 'disembodied' men of the Territorial Force. Men aged 18 to 37 would be permitted to re-enlist into the regular army for 2, 3 or 4 years' service, with no additional reserve commitment. There would, however, be no pay bounty for such enlistments and the man would draw normal Corps pay. He would still receive the War Bonus, as long as Britain maintained the Army of Occupation in Germany. Married men would be accepted and separation allowances paid to their family.

Those not involved in fighting or occupation duties were demobilised. The demobilisation of 4 million men that followed the end of the war had, within a year, reduced the army to 800,000; by November 1920, this figure had fallen to 370,000 men. That enabled cuts to be made in defence spending which fell from £766 million in 1919-1920, to £189 million in 1921-1922, and to £102 million in 1932.[202]

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[199] For the section on unemployment, please refer to *Register* 24 Sept.1921 8/4; 16 Dec.1922 p3/7; 18 Feb.1922 p5/3. Calculated by the RPI, the pension would be worth only £17.30 in 2015. [In 1924 the Club was located in the building of the former Railway Station in the High Street] 12 Jan. 1929 4/2: the Workhouse is the building in 2015 known as *"Webber House"*, a retirement complex opposite the Borough Council offices; the "*dole*" [Social Security for the unemployed] was, therefore, worth ten times an army pension; *Register*, 5 January 1924 p3/3 and 2 November 1929 p2/7.

[200] See page 44**; ex-Sgt.** – **now Lt.** – **Frank Kitching** served with the *Royal Irish Constabulary*, which probably means the *"Black and Tans"*. This was a force of ex-soldiers recruited to fight the continuing Irish rebellion; they wore allegedly black police hats (they were actually 'rifle green') and khaki uniforms, hence the nickname.

[201] Website: *Long, Long Trail.* In 1921 £1 was worth at least £37.56p in 2015's values [website: *'measuring worth'*]

[202] Wikipedia

The Wounded and their Care

The cost of victory was high. The official *"final and corrected"* casualty figures for the **British Army** – including the Territorial Force – were issued on 10 March 1921. The losses for the period between 4 August 1914 and 30 September 1919 included 573,507 *"killed in action, died from wounds and died of other causes"* and 254,176 missing (minus 154,308 released prisoners) – a net total of 673,375 dead and missing. Casualty figures also indicated that there were 1,643,469 wounded.[203]

It must have been a notoriously difficult task to be precise about these figures. Whereas great trouble was taken by bodies like the *CWGC* to record deaths of service personnel, the precise tracking of the wounded must have been almost impossible.

Locally there are no official lists to guide us; the only recourse is to exploit the Society's ***Woodard Database***. It must be stressed that this invaluable resource can only offer an indication of the facts.[204]

Using this method, the editor can only **suggest** that – **at least** – **209** men, who survived the war, were wounded in some capacity and with varied consequences for themselves and their families in the long years ahead. Of them:

112 suffered general wounds

12 were wounded at least twice
1 suffered severely from frost bite
7 suffered amputations of limbs
11 affected by gas
19 described as "*severely wounded*".

13 classed as invalids, in receipt of a *Silver War Badge*

6 suffered from sickness, mainly those who had served in the Middle Eastern Theatres

We know that the government was shocked when it analysed deaths in the ***Boer War***: of the 21,042 who died, only 27% were killed in action with 10% dying of wounds and a huge 63% succumbing to sickness.

Lessons were learned in the preparation for a future war. A review was conducted by an Army doctor, Alfred Keogh, and the first improvement came in 1902 with a reformed Army Nursing Service. A reserve corps was added in 1908 with Haldane's Army Reforms which re-created the *Territorial Army*. Amongst the reserve bodies was the ***Voluntary Aid Detachment*** **(*VAD*)** run by the *Red Cross* so that the reserve comprised 20,000 men and women. **Mary Ellen Merrell** of Tewkesbury was one of these volunteers who went on to serve in the War, at home and abroad.

The ***Royal Army Medical Corps***, comprising trained doctors and medics and tasked with caring for the wounded, had been formed in 1898 but came of age in WWI.[205] Of the 80,000 strong *BEF*, 11,500 medical personnel were deployed including nurses – but women doctors were rejected. It is probably fair to say that these plans were thwarted by the shocking casualties inflicted by modern weapons such as artillery and the machine-gun. One wonders, therefore, if one should be relieved that a soldier was wounded, rather than killed.

In theory, the wounded followed a planned *"**chain of evacuation**"*:

- find their own way, assisted – if lucky – by a hard-pressed stretcher bearer, to the ***Regimental First Aid Post*** with – in theory – one doctor.
- the ***Advanced Dressing Station*** to be treated by a *Field Ambulance* located away from the front line, often in a ruined building.
- the ***Casualty Clearing Station***, which was located in a base area and, by 1916, could resemble a hospital, with 25 nurses. The problem for the wounded was finding suitable transport. One in which **Cpl. R. G. Williams [†]** succumbed to his wounds was at Dozinghem near Poperinghe – known to the troops inevitably as *"Mendinghem, Dozinghem and Bandaghem"*.
- **Base Hospitals** far enough from the front-line near the coast to afford safety such as Treport, Abbeville and the main army base at Etaples – although Vera Brittain reminds us that, even there,

[203] The Army Council. General Annual Report of the British Army 1912-1919. Parliamentary Paper 1921, XX, Cmd.1193.,PartIV p62–72
[204] For a discussion of the value of the Database, see Section IV page 128.
[205] It lost 749 officers and 6,130 *OR*s. Of those who enlisted from Tewkesbury, we can find only 14 who served with the *RAMC*.

hospitals became increasingly subject to bombing attacks. Transport could be by the newly kitted out *Ambulance Trains*. Once at Base, there was a reasonable chance of survival – but most such hospitals had a cemetery attached.

- **Evacuation by Hospital Ship** to the UK
- **Transport by Ambulance Train,** using the dense network of Victorian Railways, to hospitals in the UK and Ireland, specialising in different type of care. Often they were converted from their original use such as, initially, the ***Watson Hall*** in Tewkesbury and then Mitton Farm donated to the *Red Cross* for the duration by Lady Coventry. There was a railway line then from Southampton to Cheltenham via Swindon and then on to Ashchurch for Tewkesbury, Malvern and beyond. ***Mitton VAD*** was mainly a convalescent hospital directed by local G.P. (*Territorial* Major) **Dr. William Devereux**.[206]
- **The cured soldier** would then be returned to the Front.
- Soldiers who were too badly wounded would be discharged from the Army with a ***Silver War Badge*** to corroborate their active service. This was the highly desired *"blighty one"* but we must be under no illusions that life at home for an invalid soldier would be a 'bed of roses'.[207]

As for **pensions**, **Pte. H. J. Waylen [†]** was discharged in 1917 with a pension of 25/- (£1.25p) a week.

Case Study 1: a Wounded Soldier, who earned a *"Blighty One"* – Pte. Thomas Day

The newly recruited Pte. Day in 1915

Armstrong Hospital, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Born in Tewkesbury in 1891, he was a domestic gardener when war broke out. He immediately volunteered and was allocated to the *Kitchener 7th Gloucesters,* whose fate it was in 1915 to be shipped out to ***Gallipoli***. He was part of the second wave of attackers who landed at *Suvla Bay* after 3 August – Pte. Day was shot in the elbow on 8 August and was fortunate enough to be evacuated first to hospital in Alexandria, Egypt, and then to Armstrong College, a converted hospital in Newcastle. He was not deemed to be suitably recovered to re-join the colours so, on 24 November 1916, he was discharged from the Army and was awarded a *'Silver War Badge 102,403' for "wounds sustained overseas"*. He subsequently returned to civilian life, married and raised two children whilst working at Healings Mill. He died in 1970 aged 78.[208]

Case Study 2: those who suffered amputation

Pte. Bertram Askwith

It is as well to remember that soldiers would suffer accidents leading to amputation without reaching the front line. Bertram Askwith was born in 1898 to the jeweller and watch smith of 81-82 Barton Street. He was educated at the Boys' Grammar School and was a Boy Scout, but volunteered for the forces when aged 18 in September 1915. In early 1916 he suffered an accident whilst a despatch rider on Salisbury Plain, resulting in the amputation of his leg. He returned to civilian life to follow his father as a jeweller but he was also the treasurer of the local branch of the *National Federation of Discharged & Demobilised Sailors &*

[206] For a history of ***Mitton VAD***, see pages 102-103.
[207] An excellent reference book is Susan Cohen, *Medical Services in the First World War,* Shire 2014
[208] For a full biography, please see *www.ths.freeuk.com.* We are grateful for the help of Pte. Day's son, Clifford.

Soldiers. In 1924 he married Gertrude Sayer and in 1925 his daughter, Margaret, was born. (Gertrude was sister of *Zeppelin* victim, Harold, and war victim, R.C. Sayer.) Bertram died in 1976 aged about 79.[209]

Pte. B. Askwith, Despatch Rider

Mr. B. Askwith, jeweller in later life

Pte. G. H. Smith

George Henry Smith was born on 18 June 1898 at 1 Union Place, the son of a printer compositor. He attended the Trinity and Council Schools, which he left in 1912 to become a baker.

Pte. G. H. Smith [Dave Smith]

On 21 June 1916 he was one of the first *conscripts*, joining the *2nd/6th Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment*. He too became a despatch rider and in February 1918 was serving in France near St. Quentin. Whilst riding his motorcycle near the front, he was shot through the lower part of his right leg; the bone was shattered and required the lower leg below the knee to be amputated. . After going through a Clearing Station, he was shipped back to the UK. However, the reality was that, according to his mother and Aunt, they had to travel to the docks to pick him up and escort him back to a Red Cross Hospital.

He was subsequently discharged from the army as unfit for active service on 30 Oct 1918 and was awarded the *Silver War Badge* and a war pension. He returned to Tewkesbury and became the steward of the *Tewkesbury United Services Club* (then in Quay Street). On the 2nd August 1930 he married Louisa Peters (originally from Ripple) at the Roman Catholic Church at the Mythe.

However, on the 1st April 1940 George and Louisa moved to London where George was employed by the Royal British Legion in the Poppy factory in Twickenham. He retired from this job 26 Oct 1962, soon after Louisa's death, and once again returned to Tewkesbury.

In 1968 he moved to a *British Legless Ex Servicemen's Association (BLESMA)* home in Southsea, Portsmouth. He died there on 11 May 1975, aged 77, and is buried in Portsmouth.[210]

Charlie Pope was an invalid on crutches who helped prove that occasionally even war and wounds could produce humour. A Conscript, his crutches supported his ponderous bulk. Ever ready with a joke, he had only one gripe which lasted fifty years. According to him, being wounded was all part of the job, but what roused his ire was that, as he was being carried to safety, *"some bugger of a Gerry sniper shot me in the head"*. On crutches and with a silver plate in his head, he survived to eighty-seven.[211]

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[209] We are grateful for the assistance of Mrs. Margaret Langley

[210] We are grateful for the research of Dave Smith, his great-nephew. When he went to visit the grave, the cemetery superintendent told him that the headstone and marker had been paid for by *BLESMA*, and that he was buried with another *BLESMA* veteran.

[211] B. Linnell, *Tewkesbury Gossip*, (1978, Theot Press) p30

Official Compensation*? Certificate of Disability after Honourable Discharge*
Pte. Alfred Thomas James: In 1931 he had a war disability pension of £1 per week. He died in 1974 aged 79.
[Tewkesbury Museum]

In addition to these veterans, six other servicemen (four of whom were *conscripts*) are known to have suffered the loss of limbs: **Percy Brotheridge, Frank Gannaway, Jack Stiff, James Hodges** and **Alfred T. James** (above). We know about the deaths of four of them but they lived to an age between 76 and 79.

Case Study 3: those who were "gassed"

Gas was the terrifying new weapon of the war which was first unleashed onto unsuspecting troops on 22 April 1915. It was, moreover, often lethal to the troops deploying gas – as British soldiers ascertained at *Loos* in 1915. One possible victim of British gas was **Pte. Joseph Cook [†]**, who died in 1919.

Gas affected men in different ways. **Pte. Frank Gannaway** (a conscript) suffered "gas burns" as a result of which he needed an operation, during which he lost one leg. **George William**: **Hewett**, an early volunteer, was in charge of horses in the frontline but, four years later, in 1918 *"he was wounded in the head, and was affected by Mustard Gas, which took all his hair off, and it never grew again"*. Nevertheless he lived until 1962, aged 75 years.[212]

Gas may well also have caused many to die prematurely. It is often difficult to prove as ascertaining that gas was used is difficult and, after obtaining several death certificates, it is clear that doctors only recorded the primary cause of death.[213] **Francis Harold Booth** died aged 37 in 1931. A member of the *1st/5th Gloucesters*, the *Register* reported in his obituary that he had been *"badly gassed in September 1915"* (at *Loos*?). Similarly **Cpl. Walter Coopey,** a Volunteer in the *10th Gloucesters*, had been *"badly gassed in September 1915"* and died in 1934 aged 45 in *"an isolation hospital"*.[214]

[212] We are grateful for the assistance of John Pocock, his son-in-law.
[213] For example, **Pte. A. J. E. Parsons [†]** who drowned in a misadventure. His family however, claim that his lungs had been weakened by being gassed. I have seen no examples of autopsies made after such deaths
[214] *Record* 30 September 1916 p4/4 and Cemetery Burial Register. He had also fought at the ***Battle of Loos*** – but returned to duty to be wounded a second time in 1916. Both men are included on the Roll of Honour on page 107.

Case Study 4: the "Sick"

2nd Lt. P. Badham 1916 [Graphic]

It could be argued that, with only six men being declared "sick", the problem of soldiers dying from this cause had been vastly improved since the Boer War. Again the problem lies in declaration and recognition. **Lt. Percy Badham** is an interesting case. Born in 1889, he was the son of the Town Clerk and a solicitor, as well as being a *Territorial*. He was commissioned into the *3rd/5th Gloucesters* in 1915. However I would have left matters there except by chance his burial record revealed that he had died in 1941 aged only 52 at *Cotswold Sanatorium*, Cranham. Further investigation revealed that in 1917 he had been granted 'Sick Leave' from Macedonia (Salonika). Consequently he had *"relinquished his commission"* in 1918 *"due to ill health and granted honorary rank of Lieutenant"*. All seemed to be well as, in 1926, he married in New York. Yet only fifteen years later, he had died in an expensive private sanatorium. His sister was a nurse.

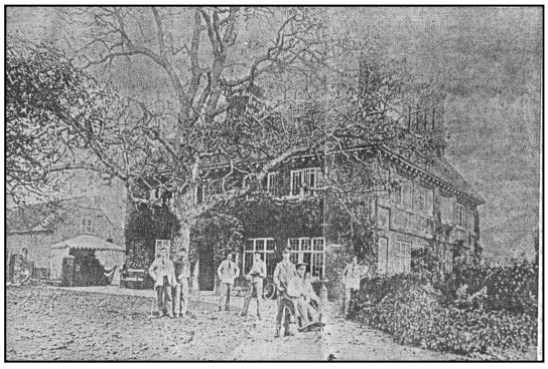
Tewkesbury's Nurses and Hospitals

It was with luck that we discovered that Tewkesbury had a nurse serving on the Western Front when a **Nurse Merrell** of Tewkesbury had written a letter concerning a dying solder in 1916. [215] It has not proved an easy task, researching information from the Red Cross[216] but we know she was **Miss Mary E. Merrell**, who had joined the '*Gloucester/12 VAD'* on 13 November 1914. She had served at the Tewkesbury VAD Hospital as a 'General Duty Member' but by 31 August 1915 she was working in France. She was officially engaged as an Assistant Nurse at a Military Hospital in France from 5 October 1915 to 4 July 1919. For this she earned the honour of *"2 Scarlet efficiency stripes"* on 1 April 1918 and *"Royal Red Cross"* on 1 January 1918.[217]

Armed with that information, the *Woodard Database* revealed that Mary Ellen was born in 1885 the eldest daughter of William H. and Ellen Merrell, a wine merchant of Tewkesbury who was living at 28 Church Street (The Crescent) employing two live-in servants. It is possible that she was involved with the Rural Hospital as early as 1896, then aged 14, when two Misses Merrell performed in an entertainment.[218] In 1899 their father died but her two brothers carried on the business so that in 1901 she was living at 62 Church Street. By 1911 the family had moved to 21a High Street and Mary was not officially employed – that enabled her to join other such young ladies as volunteer nurses in 1914.

The **Watson Hall** was the first hospital to be used in Tewkesbury to meet the emergency produced by the *BEF* suffering casualties in the Mons campaign. However, it was soon proved insufficient so that Lady Coventry donated in September 1914 the use of her empty property, Mitton Farm (now Mitton Manor) for use as a 50 bed VAD Hospital, mainly for convalescence.

Watson Hall VAD Hospital 1914 [*THS* Archive]



Mitton VAD with blue uniformed soldiers [Graphic]

[215] See page 36**;** *Register*, 9 September 1916

[216] A reply to an enquiry was received from Elaine Fisher, Curator (Acting); British Red Cross Museum and Archives, 9 Grosvenor Crescent, London, SW1X 7EJ; tel: 0207 201 5153; email: enquiry@redcross.org.uk for which we are very grateful.

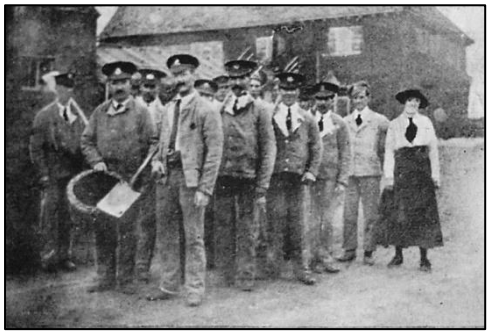
[217] *Register*, 26 January1918 p3/2.

[218] *Register* 11 January 1896 p1/6; Order Signed by M.W. Colchester Wemyss, Chairman of the Glouc. CC & S.J.C. pro Chief Constable Headquarters Office, Cheltenham; 22 June 1915; Register 3 July1915, p1 /c3

The Medical Director was Dr. Devereux of North House and the Commandant was his wife, Mrs. Ethel May Devereux, who was awarded the ***OBE*** for her work in 1918. Many of the family servants were recruited to work at the hospital including the chauffeur/gardener who drove the ambulance, being on call 24 hours a day to drive an old Ford converted lorry-van. The first wounded soldiers, including Belgians, arrived in November 1914. After the start of the "Big Advance" (the Somme) overcrowding was eased by the erection of a tent. *"There has been an immense increase in the number of our guests"* – there were now 70 and an appeal for donations was made. Despite its adoption by the government, facilities still depended on private charity; included in that was an appeal to buy a car to act as an ambulance in 1916.

For the soldiers wounded on the Western Front, Mitton Farm *VAD* must have seemed like paradise. Money was raised by gymkhanas and amateur dramatics; also the soldiers grew their own food.

We can tell from the order of the chairman of the County Council that soldiers were evidently frequenting public houses in the vicinity since, in 1915, *"all occupiers of Licensed Premises are warned that they must under no circumstances allow such patients to enter their houses or to be served with intoxicating drinks".*



The hospital was given land for cultivation. This may have been used as allotments after the war (Mrs. Devereux pictured)
[Graphic 25/05/1917]

Lord and Lady Coventry help to raise funds, as the Government did not fund all things. The Event would also boost morale.
[Graphic 25/05/1917].

Another VAD nurses were *"respectable maiden ladies"* such as **Miss Doris Dyer**, daughter of a land owner from Bredon whose fiancée, the Canadian **V. W. Marment [†],** was killed in 1917;[219] Miss Catherine Lucinda Badham, unmarried daughter of the Town Clerk (who was eventually drafted to the Middle Eastern Front), and two of the daughters of Revd. Steward, the lord of the manor of Northway: Misses Jessie and Eleanor Holland Steward (the latter suffering blood poisoning caught during her work).

On 26 October the first death at the hospital was announced – one from influenza. The war came to an end and the hospital closure was announced in December 1918: *"1,223 patients treated since 1914"*. To celebrate the Mayor presided at *"a fancy dress ball.. prizes were won, including one to Miss Bloxham"*.[220]

Mrs. Devereux was awarded the ***OBE*** for her work as Commandant at the Red Cross Hospital and, in 1919, she was able to celebrate the marriage of her daughter at the family home in North House.

There was, however, a tragic ending to the life of the Hospital's Commandant. At the relatively young age of 61, she suffered an illness that forced her husband to sell up in Tewkesbury and move to Cambridge where she soon died a tragic death in 1931.[221] Presumably the Manor stayed in the ownership of the Earl of Coventry until 1945 when its 93 acres was sold to a refugee from Austria, Baroness Gagern.[222]

As for **Nurse Merrell**, when she retired, she lived with her sisters Marjorie and Emily in Hucclecote near Gloucester, where she died in 1962.[223]

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[219] Cpl. Marment's father lived on Mythe Hill and donated 97 Church Street for use of the YMCA [as it is in 2015].
[220] *Register* 31 Dec. 1918 contained in a scrapbook loaned by the late Mrs. K. Hall (née Reeves; a Bloxham by descent.
[221] 23 May 1931 p3/4 *Tragic Death of Doctor's Wife: Mrs Ethel May Devereux, aged 61 … now living at Cambridge – died after scalding herself in the bath".* His wife's illness explains *"why Dr. Devereux left Tewkesbury".*
[222] In 2015 it is still a private home though the farm land now accommodates a housing estate.
[223] In 2005 an email was received form a relative Helen Slinger, whose father was her nephew. She had been matron of the National Temperance Hospital in London during World War II.

Prisoners of War (*POWs*)

In January 1919 the *Register* reported that the Mayor had invited all the returned POWs to a reception in their honour and, in turn, it had interviewed some of them about their experiences. The luckier ones were those who fell prisoner by the thousand near the end of the war after the 21 March but others had endured a long period of captivity.

Pte. R. Green, of the *Worcesters*,[224] returned after **four** years *"in the hands of Hun"*. He had fought at Mons and through the *"retirement",* in the course of which he received a gunshot wound in the left foot. He was in hospital for three weeks in Cambrai, until that town was taken by the Germans, when he and about 70 others were captured whilst in hospital. The *Register* reported his testimony on 1 January 1919:

"They were all put into one unclean railway truck, and for four days and nights were travelling under the most distressing conditions, and without food. At one station Pte. Green asked a German Red Cross nurse for some water for a comrade who was very ill. She took his water bottle, threw it on the platform, and spat in his face. During the journey up the line, the people threw stones and small boxes of lime at the unfortunate captives. They arrived at Dobritz at midnight, and were put in a tent, each man being given two blankets, which were so thin that they could be shaken to shreds, and the suffering from cold was intense. Here they joined other British. The daily rations of the prisoners were coffee in the morning and later some cabbage and fish soup with a little bread. After a week there was a medical inspection, and the men were put to work, some in the barracks and others to pull wagons of sand. At this camp, which the Britishers called "hungry hill", Pte. Green saw a man horsewhipped for insisting that he had not received his coffee issue … . Dysentery broke out, and Pte. Green had a bad attack, no attention was provided, and the sufferers had to get better or die.

He was then given a job as a tailor, but was soon sent off with a working party to fill wagons with sand, required to fill a bog over which a railway was being laid. After six weeks of this he was examined by a doctor and told his heart was bad, nevertheless he had to continue his work for a time, until ... he was taken seriously ill and sent to Prussia … . His next move was to Berlin Gas Works, where he was when the Revolution broke out, and he was set free by the guard, on the 9th November. There was a number of other prisoners there, and they went to the Unter den Linden, where they saw many strange sights and considerable bloodshed in street fighting amongst the Germans, who were firing at each other with machine guns.

During the long captivity, thanks to the British Red Cross, British prisoners were fairly well supplied with parcels. In Berlin "The Times" was obtainable. On Sunday the 10th November, the prisoners were told of the armistice, and on the following day the news came that it had been signed. The British prisoners were offered 13s. a day if they would remain at their work, but they declined. On the 30th November they left for Stettin where they embarked for Denmark. They had a splendid reception by the Danish people….

Pte. Green says he cannot repeat some of the acts of cruelty he has seen practised on the prisoners. The Hun did his best to break the British spirit, but he could not. He has seen men tied to trees for hours with no support but the ropes which bound them, and he has witnessed the shooting in cold blood of many of his fellow country-men. The prisoners were beaten and ill-treated by the guards on the least excuse. At times they were glad to eat the scraps left by the German soldiers, and to take what they could find from the swill tubs. (Pte. J. Hanson, captured at Ypres in October 1914 reported a *POW* having his *"arm blown off by a German Guard"* and the *"flogging to death of guardsman"*.)

The German civilian population was very short of food, their chief diet being black bread with salt on it, and any fruit they could get, and half a pound of potatoes was considered a great food.

After the Zeppelin raids over England, the returned Zeppelins would give an exhibition flight over Berlin to the delight of the public.

We are glad to say that Pte. Green, who is a smart intelligent soldier, is recovering from the ill-effects of his long internment."

[224] He may well have been Pte. Robert Green, an adopted son of George Green of Church Street. He had been employed by F. J. Pullin at the Kings Head Inn before the war; he was reported as captured on 24 October 1914.

Cpl. C. Cole of *1st Rifle Brigade* was captured on the **18 October 1916**, on the Somme:

"After terrible fighting….. he was …employed on road making. The food consisted of a small quantity of bread, with Swedes and marigolds. Several men died of hunger and starvation. Corpl. Cole suffered from dysentery, and whilst seriously ill was pulled out of bed and made to work. He and other British prisoners had to work on the Hindenburg line, where Russian prisoners were put to concrete the trenches…. They were under fire of the British guns all the while, and were in a very deplorable condition, some without boots, and all with no chance of washing themselves. From here Corpl. Cole was transferred to St. Ledger, where he received slightly better treatment and benefitted by the kindness of the local inhabitants. … He was taken to various places until he left for Germany, by which time only 120 men remained of the original 250. He was taken on a stretcher into Germany in such a condition that he did not weigh 7 stone, and had it not been for the kindness of a serg-major of his own regiment, he would not have survived.

Whilst at Minden, Corpl. Cole met Sergt. Tom Mayall, of the Coldstream Guards, of Tewkesbury

For eleven months Corpl. Cole had to work behind the German lines, and he says the conduct of the Germans towards their prisoners was brutal in the extreme".

Rifleman H. Crouch[225] and **Signaller R. Bedford** have returned to Tewkesbury after their release from German prison camps. They were amongst the last group of POWs captured:

"*Both are recovering from the effects of the hardships they have endured. Rifleman Crouch was captured on the 24th March 1918, near St. Quentin, and for the first three months of his captivity he was engaged carrying shells and laying railways within the range of British guns. The raids of our airman provided considerable interest to the captive; though on one occasion eight British prisoners were killed at Ham by the explosion of a bomb. During these raids the German guards sought shelter, leaving the Britishers unattended, and often this gave an opportunity to increase the food supply. The food supplied to prisoners – cabbage or barley soup and black bread, with roasted barley water. The German guards had similar fare though more of it. Rifleman Crouch, spent the last six months of his captivity in Alsace Lorraine, the greater portion of the time being in hospital. Here he was treated as well as could be expected under the circumstances, and he was in hospital when the French took possession . Rifleman Crouch brought home a loaf of German black bread. He worked for a time in a bakery, and says one of the ingredients was sawdust."*

*"**Pte. Bishop**[226] , of Tewkesbury and the Machine Gun Corps, was captured by the Germans on the 21st March in the great enemy push near St. Quentin. He and others captured with him were marched, a distance of about 12 kilometres, and it was not until the 23rd that they were given food, when they were served with a slice of black bread and roast barley water. … they were set to work all day unloading ammunition provender, which had evidently come from Russia or Rumania. Their daily food during this time consisted of a slice of bread in the morning before commencing work and half-a-pint of thin soup at night."*

Allowing that this information was relayed second-hand by a reporter, it does corroborate with an account of his own experience by Capt. C.F. Barnes, M.C. who edited the history of the *2nd/5th Gloucesters.* Warning us that memory can be viewed as *"the treacherous ally of invention"*, his memoir was written in 1930 – and is very well written, with some irony. He came to three conclusions about his captors: he was shocked how few spoke English; he was disappointed by the lack of discipline *("slackness"*) and insubordination towards officers and, thirdly, the general lack of interest in the war. He contrasted the arrogance and brutality of the victorious period in the spring of 1918 with the "obsequiousness" when the Germans realised they were

[225] **Harold Crouch**, the baker of 35 High Street, was Mayor of Tewkesbury who welcomed home the *POW*s of World War II. He died in 1947, aged only 54. **Reginald Bedford** , born in 1897 and son of George Bedford the plumber of 91 High Street, was a 1915 volunteer and had worked for Gyngell's garage before the war.

[226] **Pte. John Bishop** has left a superb set of postcards with his descendants, Emma Bishop and Charlotte Todd, that are available for study at the Town Museum. Pte. Bishop married Frances Stephens in 1911 and was the driver of the bus, which conveyed passengers to and from the Swan Hotel and the Railway Station [then in Station Road]. His brother-in –law, **John Lewis Stephens** of *8th Gloucesters* living in Union Place was also a *POW*, captured in March 1918 then suffered some *"brutal treatment"*. The collection also contains postcards from his early experience with the *5th Gloucesters* before the war. It is also interesting to demonstrate how censorship worked.

losing the war. He met both saints and sadists – but agreed that he did not experience any instance of deliberate mistreatment.[227]

It is unfortunate for the author that no Tewkesbury officers experienced captivity because recent research has revealed that Officer *POW*s were expected to submit a written account of the circumstances of their capture after repatriation. These documents were added to personal files, 70% of which have survived to be available for study in the National Archives at Kew. Some officers were recalled to be subjected to interrogation about their accounts. The researcher, who shares the same surname, commented on the experience of our celebrated local *POW* and poet, **Lt. F. W. Harvey**. He asserted that *"some officers fudged certain aspects of their incarceration. Lt. Harvey explained: "I was captured on patrol", implying that he was leading an authorised patrol…. However a more elaborate account which he published in 1920 shows that, although he was ordered to lead a patrol that night, he decided on his own initiative to slip across the lines in the afternoon to reconnoitre the intended patrol route, a piece of foolishness that led him into German hands."*[228]

Amongst those POWs welcomed home by the Mayor was **Trooper Jack Pullin**, of the *Royal Gloucestershire Hussars*. He was recovering his health after the hardships he had endured, at the hands of a different enemy with a contrasting culture – the Turks.[229] Trooper Pullin had been captured on 23 October 1917, whilst on patrol duty (during the Battle of Gaza). The army was then fighting in Palestine, en route by Christmas to Jerusalem. The *Register* reported his story.

> "*Apparently his horse fell, and he was secured by a body of enemy cavalry after being wounded in the arm. After being examined at enemy headquarters, he and other 90 prisoners were marched for three days to Jerusalem. They endured great hardships .., and many were so weak that they had to be helped along by their strongest comrades. Bread and water was their diet. They were confined in three small rooms in a town three miles from Jerusalem for three days, and one day had no food. They then went by train to Damascus, where (he) was in hospital for seven weeks suffering from dysentery and malaria. He was not treated at all well in hospital, and five days after leaving hospital was sent with a party to Aleppo by rail 40 men in a truck. From here they went into the mountains, working on tunnels on the Bagdad railway*[230]*. The prisoners were pressed to work 16 hours a day, but they refused and last February were removed .. and for a month were at work making cement slabs. Ultimately … on the 2nd November,* (The Turks had signed their Armistice on 31 October) *the Commander told the prisoners to finish work; after a week in camp they were conveyed to the British Embassy in Stamboul, where they received every care, and left there on the 17th November for home, Whilst in the hands of the Turks Trooper Pullin saw many Germans and Austrians. He speaks of the Turk as a most inhuman beast. The food was principally crushed wheat flavoured with onions, and .. the worst kind of beef once a week. The prisoners were paid five piastics* [currency] *a day, and with this were allowed to make the small purchases this meagre amount could command."*

Trooper Pullin survived the war but had endured captivity nearly a year less than those taken at Katia, such as **Troopers Neale [†], Perkins [†] and Clarke [†]**, who died as a result of conditions in captivity. Although we recorded that Trooper Clarke had written home in positive terms about his captivity, it was probably written knowing that it would be read before despatch. We have learned also that **Lt. Strickland** may have survived but died aged 47 – significantly of *TB* – in 1938. Devereux and Sacker have claimed that 60% of Turkish prisoners died in captivity, while Watson cited 70% (but, interestingly, only 27% of Indian POWs).[231]

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[227] A. F. Barnes, M.C., (editor) *The Story of the 2nd/5th Battalion the Gloucestershire Regiment, 1914-1918* (Gloucester, 1940 – recently reprinted by Naval and Military Press, n.d.). Few Tewkesbury men served in this Battalion; one was **Cpl. A. H. Askew [†]**

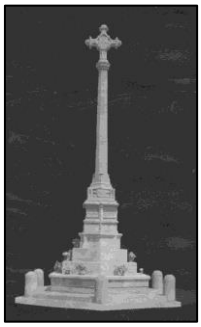
[228] A. D. Harvey, "*How I fell captive to the Germans"* (BBC History Magazine, February 2015, pp36-39). The files at *NA* can be downloaded from http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/prisoners-of-war-ww1.htm . The author, Harvey, claims that 200,000 British soldiers were captured by the Germans.

[229] Jack Pullin was part of the well-known butchery family of 16 Barton Street [in 2015 *The Button Draw Haberdashery*]. He did not die in Tewkesbury and so we know nothing further of his fate.

[230] Possibly the *Berlin to Baghdad Ra*ilway that was so important to German strategy. See page 22 for more.

[231] See page 26; J. Devereux & G. Sacker, above, *Leaving All That Was Dear*, (Cheltenham, 1997) & Watson p 296.

Tewkesbury's Extended *Roll of Honour*



Of those who died because of war service –
but whose death may not be fully officially commemorated[232]

Those marked **[~]** feature on **the Cross**; **# have no *CWGC* Headstone**; **[†] have a biography in Section V**.

NAME	DATE (AGE)	INFORMATION
Pte. F. H. Booth	3 Dec. 1931 [b] (37)	*Volunteer;* gassed**#**
Pte. J. Cook [†][~]	15 Feb. 1919 (33)	*Volunteer*; died after discharge; gassed.**#**
Pte. W. Coopey	15 Dec. 1934 [b] (45)	*Volunteer;* gassed**#**
Pte. T. E. Drinkwater	10 Jan. 1924 [b] (32)	*Reservist* who died prematurely after being *"invalided to hospital"***#**
Pte. G. C. Green	22 Sept. 1939 [b] (41)	Wounded 1917; invalid for 10 years**#**
Sgt. R. Hartell [†]	13 Oct. 1932 (56)	*Boer War Reservist* serious head wound**#;** *MM*
Capt. N.C. Healing	5 June 1926 (53)	*Regular*; died of "*trouble produced by war service*"**#**
Pte. A. L. Jones [†][~]	11 Feb. 1921 (23)	*Conscript*; gassed**#**
Pte. J. C. Mayall [†]	1 July 1925 [b] (54)	*Boer War Reservist* who died after discharge**#**
Pte. P. J. Mayall	23 Aug. 1937 [b] (43)	Wounded three times and *POW***#**
L/Cpl. C. W. Packwood	4 Oct. 1940 [b] (43)	"*Suffered from wounds when torpedoed*"**#**
Art. F. T. Raggatt [†][~]	18 Nov. 1919 (22)	Died after discharge from the Navy**#**
Flt. Comm. V. H. Robeson	20 Oct. 1923 [b] (29)	*Mentioned in Despatches*; died prematurely**#**
Pte. A. H. Rowley [†][~]	16 Apr. 1921 (23)	*Conscript*; gassed; died after official deadlines #
Worker K. R. Sollis [†]	22 Mar. 1918 (20)	Died of influenza
Pte. F. W. Taylor [†]	11 April 1917 (19)	Died of influenza
Sgt. G. H. Taylor [†][~]	21 Apr. 1922 (39)	*Reservist*; died after official deadlines #
Major F. G. Thoyts	26 August 1914 (44)	Died of Wounds
Driver H.J. Wagstaff [†][~]	9 Mar. 1925 [b] (32)	*Volunteer* who died after discharge **#**
Pte. H. J. Waylen [†][~]	2 May 1917 (30)	*Volunteer*; died of illness after Salonika service **#**
Pte. B. Williams [†][~]	2 March 1924 (43)	"*Old Contemptible*"; died after deadlines #

This list is not exhaustive – other names may well emerge after research.

[232] The dates are dates of death where known – [b] is burial date from Cemetery Register courtesy of Mike English. As discussed on pp 3, 7, 88, 93 & 113, commemoration was not a scientific process and id involved arbitrary deadlines. **The aim of this Roll of Honour is to emphasise that deaths, caused even indirectly by war service, ought to be properly commemorated.** The other premature deaths have been researched from other sources, notably the local newspapers. The mention of "gas" is often anecdotal and rarely confirmed on death certificates.

Gallantry Medals

38 Service men from Tewkesbury were awarded Gallantry Citations

Medal	Image	Recipients
Military Medal Awarded to Other Ranks	 [Wikipedia]	Cpl. James **Bishop**, L/Sgt. George W. **Chandler** Pte. R.N. **Coleman [†]** Sgt. Albert **Coopey [†]** Sgt. R**. Hartell [†]** Gunner Harry **Hurcombe [†]**, Sgt. A. J. **Jackson**, Bombardier Archie **Lewis**, Sgt. Harold **Parker**, Pte. William **Peacey**, Sgt. Joseph **Pitman,** Bombardier C. **Pitts**, Cpl. William **Vosper**, L/Cpl Frederick **Underwood**[233] Pte. Roland **Wilkins**
Military Cross Awarded to Officers		Lieutenant Percy **Baker** Lieutenant Bert **Green** Captain John A. **Healing** Captain Norman C. **Healing** Major Raymond E. **Priestley** Flt. Comm. Vyvyan A.H. **Robeson** Major James W. **Watkins**
Distinguished Conduct Medal Awarded to Other Ranks ***Distinguished Service Medal*** (Naval)	 	**Battery Sgt. Major Bertie V. Kirby** **Chief Petty Officer Albert E. Gregson**

[233] Frederick T. Underwood was the first Tewkesburian to win the *M.M.* in Gallipoli in 1915. He subsequently became part of the town’s folklore. As Dr. David Evans recollected: “*when I used to stay at 49, High Street there was an unusual character who lived in the alley next door. His name was Fred Underwood and he had a notorious friend, Harry Drinkwater. When they were not in the Anchor public house, they had the most wonderful stories about their adventures in the First World War. Fred's house was close to being a museum of wartime memorabilia”*. It is thought that the two of them could have been part of the famous *Pistol, Nym and Bardolph* group featured anonymously in John Moore’s *Portrait of Elmbury*. He died in 1953 aged 63.

Medal	Image	Recipients
Distinguished Service Cross Awarded to Officers	 [Megan Robertson]	Flight Commander William G. **Moore** (for Service in East Africa)
Distinguished Service Order Awarded to Officers	 [Wikipedia]	Captain Norman C. **Healing** Captain Joseph H. **Priestley** Major James W. **Watkins**
Mentioned in Despatches	Captain Joseph H. **Priestley**, C.S.M. William H. **Price,** Flt. Comm. Vyvyan A.H. **Robeson,** Private Harold G. **Stubbs**, Staff Sgt. Bernard G. **Smith**	
Meritorious Service Medal Awarded to *NCO*s	 [Wikipedia]	Cpl. A. **Holmes** Flt. Sgt. Percy E. **Jones** C.S.M. William H. **Price** Sgt. G. **Roberts**
Croix de Guerre (Belgian) [Wikipedia]		Sgt. John H. **Walker**

Those who prospered: despite – or because of – their War Experience?

It has been the aim of this project to recall those who sacrificed their lives in the war effort, in whatever capacity. We have often discussed the impact on the future of the loss of a generation of young people. However, we should also emphasise that some of those, who survived the trials and tribulations of war service, prospered in the post-war world.[234]

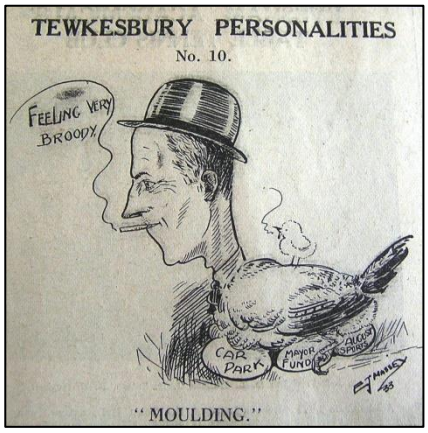
Mayors: at least five of Tewkesbury's mayors were veterans of the Great War.

R. A. Gaze: according to the *Register*, he was the

First Mayor To Have Served In Great War

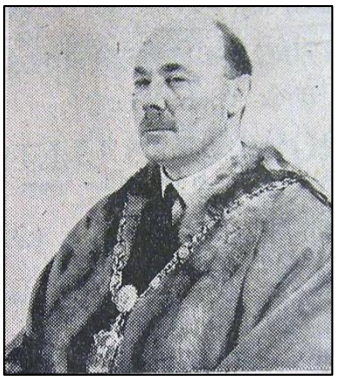
Fact that we cannot allow to be over-looked and which infuses Monday's appointment with special interest, is that Councillor Gaze is the first ex-Service man to become the head of our community. Having served His Majesty the King on the stricken field, he has now the further distinction of serving him as the chief citizen of the ancient and loyal borough of Tewkesbury; Councillor Gaze served in the Great War as a Lieutenant in the Honourable Artillery Comp. Whilst in France he had the honour of being one of the guard upon the occasion of the King's visit to Sir Douglas Haig at his headquarters at Montreux, and before leaving England he was engaged upon guard duties at the Tower of London and the Bank of England. That one of their number is now the Mayor of Tewkesbury is an honour which all ex-Service men will understand and appreciate[235]. He was not a native of Tewkesbury but served as Mayor for eight years.

S. J. Moulder: Mayor, 1935-7 and the youngest mayor elected. Educated at the Grammar School, he lived in the town except for war service. He was a Volunteer L/Cpl in the *Gloucesters* and was wounded in 1917. By profession, he was a self-employed confectioner. Before his elevation to the Mayoralty in 1933, he was made the subject of this cartoon by E. J. Massey and he has the rare honour of having a road named after him in Newtown.



The first mayor after World War II was baker, **Harold Crouch**. In 1945 he welcomed home the *POW*s from that war – it was most appropriate because he had been a *POW* in the First War, after being captured in 1918; he then spent six months in hospital, suffering from effects of poison gas. He was a conscript who married in 1916 and then was father to five daughters. A Liberal, he was first elected to the Council in 1931 when he came second in the poll. He died a year after his Mayoralty in 1947, aged only 54.

[234] This roll call is not scientifically composed, nor will it prove exhaustive, but is the result of research from other sources of information, notably of course the local newspapers, which are contained in the *Woodard Online Database.*
[235] *Register* 14 November 1931 p1



J. O. Martin: Mayor 1946-1949. He had volunteered to serve in the *Army Service Corps* in May 1915. As Mayor, he was responsible for the ambitious Riverside Walk Scheme that cleared the Back of Avon of industrial detritus. He was a prominent businessman who developed an industrial estate at Newtown.

F. H. Knight: Mayor 1949-1952 and 1957. Frank Knight was the son of a railway labourer who only came to Tewkesbury from Northamptonshire in 1907. He completed his apprenticeship to the trade of a clothier with the late Alderman W. T. Boughton, who was himself seven times Mayor of Tewkesbury.

In the First World War, he served with the *Gloucestershire Regiment* until he was commissioned as lieutenant in the *Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry* in 1918. At the end of the war he entered into partnership with Alderman Boughton, who for very many years was secretary to the Tewkesbury Building Society. In 1924, Knight was appointed assistant secretary of the Building Society and, upon the death of Alderman Boughton in 1933, was appointed secretary, an occasion which produced this photograph in the *Register*.

Appointed J.P. in March 1937, he was elected to the Town Council in the following year and was raised to the Aldermanic bench in October 1946; from 1935 to November 1938, he was Borough Accountant and also Treasurer of the YMCA. He was also a member of the Congregational Church and had been a lay preacher since 1913. After a long public career in the Town, he is now been immortalised with *Alderman Knight School*.

William Bettany was mayor in 1956. He was a *conscript* in the *Royal Artillery* who was wounded first at Passchendaele and then in early 1918, but was fortunate enough to be treated in his local ***Mitton VAD Hospital***. Before war service, he was employed on the clerical staff of Collins and Godfrey, subsequently becoming a director of what was the Town's biggest employer. In his spare time he had been the organist at the Congregational Church for 25 years. He was first elected Conservative councillor in 1945 and died in 1962.

W. E. Lane was Mayor twice in 1958-1959. He had served as a Territorial Signaller in the county regiment but was invalided home to Birmingham from France. In 1918 he was commissioned.

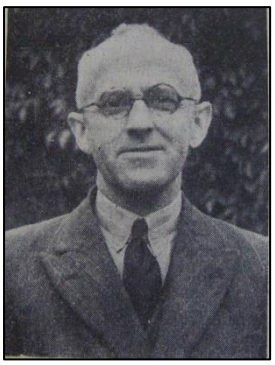
Town Crier, 1938

Traditionally this role has been filled by *"old Soldiers";* in 1939 the Echo ran a regular feature to identify the town's oldest soldier. Town Crier, **Albert Curtis,** who died in 1955 aged 79, certainly qualified. Born in Maisemore but educated at Trinity Schools, he joined the army as a *Regular* in 1891 and served in Egypt and India before he re-joined for the Boer War, serving under Sir Leslie Rundle in what was known then as *"the Starving Eighth Division"*.

"War and the Army entered Mr. Curtis' life again in 1914", when he volunteered for the first *Kitchener Army*. Promoted to corporal, he was sent back to Egypt and, on 25 May 1915, he re-joined his battalion to relieve the famous *29th Division* in the *Dardanelles*. He was promoted to the rank of sergeant *"for devotion to duty on the field of action"*. Sgt. Curtis took part in the evacuation of Suvla Bay and eventually found himself in Mesopotamia, taking part in the failed relief of Kut. Unfortunately they were too late to save the position. He was wounded by shelling and was evacuated to convalesce in India before being repatriated in 1917. For his services, Mr. Curtis received five medals, one of which – a *King Edward Medal* – is especially valuable as, to attain it, a soldier had to have 18 months unbroken service during the South African War.

Other prominent roles were taken by ex-servicemen.

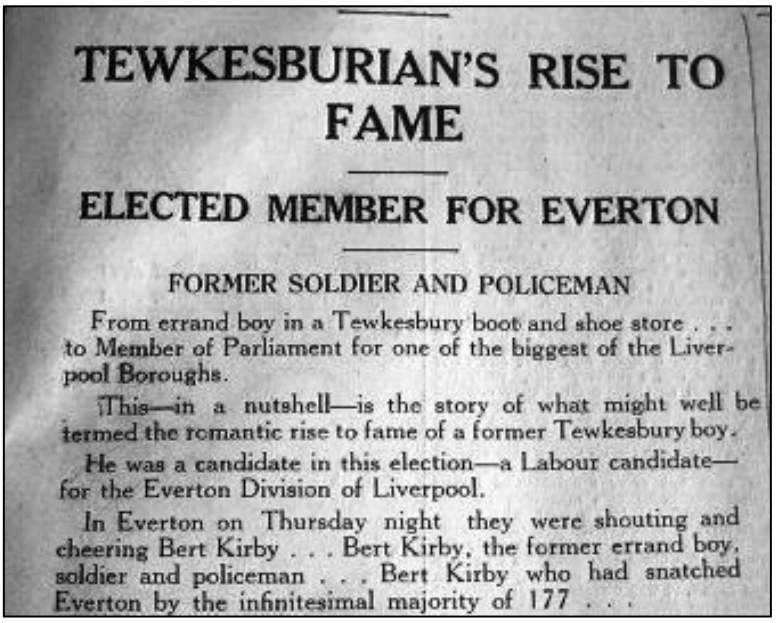
Business and Other Fields



The Borough's Accountant, appointed in 1939, was another veteran. **Henry Lemuel Norman** *"has been wounded and hospitalised for three months".*

Aubrey Papps, another member of a Tewkesbury drapery dynasty, was achieving prominence. Having been wounded and rendered a POW in 1918, in 1933 he was elevated to the position of President of the City Chamber of Commerce in Worcester**.**

Further afield, local volunteers were making professional progress. By 1933 **Harry Herman** had become Chief Constable of York but the highest prominence came to a former errand boy at Frisby's: **Bertie Kirby (1887-1953)**, who became MP for Everton in Liverpool from 1935 to 1950.



TEWKESBURIAN'S RISE TO FAME

ELECTED MEMBER FOR EVERTON

FORMER SOLDIER AND POLICEMAN

From errand boy in a Tewkesbury boot and shoe store . . . to Member of Parliament for one of the biggest of the Liverpool Boroughs.

This—in a nutshell—is the story of what might well be termed the romantic rise to fame of a former Tewkesbury boy.

He was a candidate in this election—a Labour candidate—for the Everton Division of Liverpool.

In Everton on Thursday night they were shouting and cheering Bert Kirby . . . Bert Kirby, the former errand boy, soldier and policeman . . . Bert Kirby who had snatched Everton by the infinitesimal majority of 177 . . .

Register article from 1935 *Liverpool Echo Obituary 1953*

This *"former soldier and policemen"* had actually been born in Cheltenham but came to Tewkesbury as a baby and in 1909 was living at 3 Pansy Cottages. Son of a gardener, he was educated at Barton Road Schools after which he worked for *Frisby*, once the town's famous boot and shoe shop. His progress in life started in 1907, when he enlisted as a *Regular* with the *Royal Horse Artillery*. By 1914 he had served his time but re-enlisted as a *Reservist*, thus becoming an *"Old Contemptible"*. He served during the *Battles of the Somme* as a Battery Sgt. Major, and it was during the *Battle of Passchendaele* that he was awarded the ***DCM*** before being discharged with a *Silver War Badge* in 1919.

After the war as a Trade Unionist he entered local politics before winning as a Labour MP that *"infinitesimal"* majority of 177 in 1935. In World War II he also served in the Home Guard and was made a ***CBE*** in 1947. However, a boundary change and increasing ill-health helped ensure his defeat in 1950, after which he died three years later aged 66.[236]

We will, therefore, never know which of Tewkesbury's war dead would have achieved post-war prominence. It is, however, salutary to record the achievements of some of those who had survived the ordeal to prosper in the difficult post-war world.

[236] A ***CBE*** [*Commander of the British Empire*] is the highest civil national honour bestowed by the Monarch that does not bring a title. A biography of B.V.P. Kirby M.P. is written by J Dixon in *"Once Errand Boy in Local Store – Now M P", (THS Bulletin 21, 2012).*

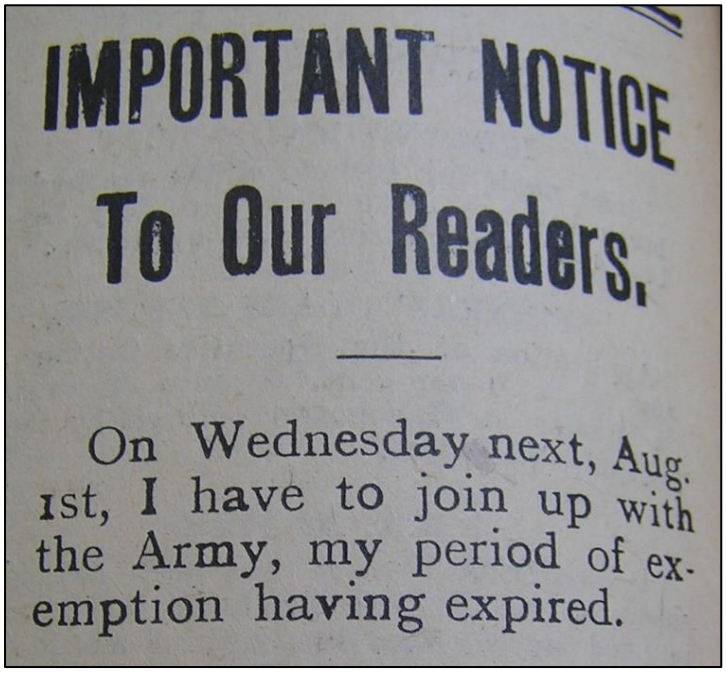
G. Conclusion – Reflections on the Impact of a World War

"A Noble Band of Heroes"?

In 1914 Tewkesbury possessed a population of about 5,300. There were no residential housing estates in Mitton, Battle, Wheatpieces or Northway. A finger of semi-detached villas was moving eastwards along the Ashchurch Road – one was temporarily named *Mafeking* which helps us date them – together with *"Tin Town"*, houses in Newtown Lane, actually made of galvanised iron. The first hesitant political steps to build council houses were taken in Gloucester Road and Prior's Park in 1913. Most people, therefore, lived in alleys, lanes and thoroughfares around Church Street, Barton and High Street. However 5,300 people were not available to serve in the armed forces: perhaps we can suggest there were only **1,500** mainly men.[237]

Using the Society's Database, it has been suggested that we have identified **890** who were involved actively in the war. We have written biographies of **193** who lost their lives (with another two we cannot positively identify) and who have been commemorated – more or less – on the plethora of Town Memorials. In addition, thanks to the Abbey's enthusiasm to encourage and record volunteers in 1914-1915 for display, we can identify **689** official volunteers, of whom **126** lost their lives. We have also identified from the *Woodard Database* **228** who were wounded, but not fatally, and **18** *POW*s.[238]

As far as we know, nobody compiled lists of ***Conscripts*** to be celebrated after the war; they were called up, from 1915 onwards, with little time for the traditional photograph; they left for their barracks on trains with no mayor or crowds to bid them farewell and, after a perfunctorily short period of training often at *Etaples* within the range of sounds of gunfire, they were despatched to the front-line. In contrast with 1914, conscripts were unlikely to enjoy the consolation of being allocated to a local unit to find the solace of a reunion with Tewkesbury men. The database has suggested a figure of **134** conscripts – but they were mainly ones who were newsworthy because of death (**68**), wounds or being made a POW (**50**). That leaves only **18** conscripts who were recorded as surviving unscathed – yet there must have been many more.



IMPORTANT NOTICE

To Our Readers.

On Wednesday next, Aug. 1st, I have to join up with the Army, my period of exemption having expired.

The Editor of the Tewkesbury Record had the means of announcing his own Conscription [GA]

Statistics can only furnish an impression – and a **conclusion that the people of Tewkesbury really *"did their bit"* so successfully in the *Great War*.** (*Those* who participated on the *Home Front* do not feature in this study.)

Were they, in reflection, a *"**Noble Band of Heroes**"*? We took the title for this study from a phrase published in the *Tewkesbury Register* in 1915 at a time when local newspapers attracted profitable readership with its news of the war. In 1914 it published stories from *'Old Contemptibles'*, like Pte. Jack White – but these were soon censored. Newspaper photography was in its infancy and it is only the *Cheltenham Graphic* that provided photographic evidence of the men who fought until so many were killed that it was deemed bad for morale or until conscripts were leaving for the front with no time for photographic rituals. After that, we only had the solemn **Roll of Honour**, bordered in funereal black, to record the toll of war.[239]

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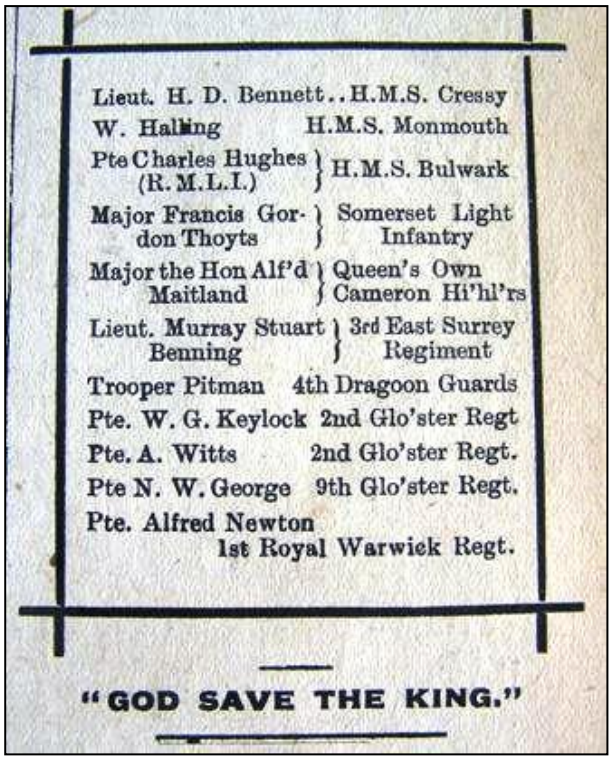
[237] Website *Vision of Britain [http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/]* presents the total population based on 1911 census but pointed out that there were 50% in the 15-64 age group. Furthermore, perhaps over half were female. Thus, perhaps 1,500 were available to serve in the armed forces. Some were also attracted from the countryside villages.

[238] The ***Woodard Database*** suggests that there were about 36 others, mainly *reservists*, who could be added providing 725 volunteers. We noted in **Part A** that the vast majority joined the Army rather than the Navy.

[239] The *Rolls of Honour* published in the newspaper were spontaneous records of the time and, for many reasons, will not necessarily conform to the ***Roll of Honour*** contained in this book. For further discussion see page 120.

How should one define the term *"**hero**"*? We have recorded the names of the relatively few who won *Gallantry Medals* and naturally some bereaved families wish to remember the departed as a *"Noble Band of Angels"*. It was not, however, just the Duke of Wellington who observed that many fine soldiers had been saved from a criminal system that was much harsher than today. Patriotism is today not an unquestioned quality but the many who succumbed to the enthusiastic atmosphere of 1914 to volunteer their services must be regarded as heroes for doing what was perceived at the time as merely doing one's duty – this was then deemed an attribute of paramount importance by government and educational system. Whatever the coercion, ***Conscripts*** also did their duty – if without fanfare and communal rejoicing. Thus they are heroes. *"Conscientious Objectors"* may be deemed worthy, at least, of respect if they were sincere in their beliefs and willing to pay the price, however brutal it was for our modern taste. We have also tried to raise the profile of those we know who suffered from being wounded or made prisoner. Their experience is all too easy to forget as they tried to blend back, almost anonymously, into civilian life as best they could.



Lieut. H. D. Bennett..H.M.S. Cressy
W. Halling H.M.S. Monmouth
Pte Charles Hughes (R. M. L. I.) } H.M.S. Bulwark
Major Francis Gordon Thoyts } Somerset Light Infantry
Major the Hon Alf'd Maitland } Queen's Own Cameron Hi'hl'rs
Lieut. Murray Stuart Benning } 3rd East Surrey Regiment
Trooper Pitman 4th Dragoon Guards
Pte. W. G. Keylock 2nd Glo'ster Regt
Pte. A. Witts 2nd Glo'ster Regt.
Pte N. W. George 9th Glo'ster Regt.
Pte. Alfred Newton 1st Royal Warwick Regt.

"GOD SAVE THE KING."

The Register's 'Roll of Honour' from 1914.
[By 1918, it inevitably consumed a whole page of broadsheet.]

This project was, therefore, inspired by the determination to relate the experience of those who paid what was termed the supreme sacrifice. It must be to the credit of post-war society that every village and town, which suffered fatalities, raised money to commemorate their names in a variety of forms. When the plaques were finally unveiled in 1926, the people of Tewkesbury could wander safely up to their War Memorial to read the names of people whom they remembered as personalities in their own right.

In 2015, however, we no longer have the luxury of studying the names on the War Memorial because of the dangers imposed by incessant traffic – that might be a valid reason to consider a move to a safer place!

We must also accept that most of the names on our War Memorials are just that – names without memories attached. Life had to go on and as the years pass it is inevitable that memories dim. The majority of women still change their names upon marriage and often do not realise that a name on a memorial belonged to their family. It is, therefore, the aim of this project to create – historically speaking – the lives of those who died – who were their families?; what did they do before the war?; and in what circumstances did they join up, serve and, ultimately, die. As, at that time, soldiers were buried or commemorated where they died, where can relatives visit to pay their belated respects?

In some ways the project team has been disappointed with the scarcity of information yielded by the families behind the names. Perhaps that makes our endeavours all the more important. We have also been handicapped by the complete absence of discoverable official records that revealed the thinking behind the selection of names for commemoration. Although we do not know the specific reasons, it is evident that other people, who lost their lives because of ***"causes attributable to service"***, did not succumb before artificially imposed deadlines.[240] Into that void has marched technology and the project is extremely grateful to this increasingly vital – but unreliable – resource for filling in the gaps. The team is also conscious that it may have missed people but it is our intention to maintain this commemoration electronically for as long as we are able. Simply contact ***www.ths.free.com*** and we shall do our best to update the commemoration of our own "***Noble Band of Heroes***".

We, **therefore**, **invite our readers to study the biographies in Section V**, using **Section IV** for guidance on military terminology.

[240] For a fuller discussion, please see pages 86-94.

IV: APPENDICES

Glossary of Terms

Military Terms

People (other than those covered in Section V)

Army Ranks

Military Units

Sources

Index to Sections I-IV

Military Terms

AIF (Australian Infantry Force): a voluntary expeditionary force raised to assist the UK in August 1915.

Alliance: a **formal** commitment between two countries usually to defend one another if attacked by another power. Those allied to Britain were known as the *"Allies"* opposed to the *"**Central Powers**"*.

ANZACS: abbreviation for *Australian and New Zealand Corps* which fought at *Gallipoli*

Armistice: a cease-fire or temporary end of fighting in advance of ***Peace*** negotiations

Belgium: see ***Schlieffen Plan.*** Although the Belgian army fought on, the country was occupied and was subjected to harsh German military rule, labelled by the British press as *"**German frightfulness**"*. This news also encouraged more British volunteers and Belgian refugees were welcomed in the local area after 21 October 1914. (A descendant made available the memories of the experience in ***THS Bulletin 15 (2006)***)

Bivouac: an improvised tent for temporary shelter during campaigns

Blighty (one): this was a wound sufficiently serious to earn a ticket for a permanent return to the UK. *'Blighty'* was a corruption of a Hindu word for Britain, used by the Army in India.

Blockade: a system in WWI whereby a navy prevented the import of supplies.

Boer War: a colonial war following the rebellion of Dutch-speaking settlers in British South Africa. The war finished in 1902 with **South Africa** being granted ***Dominion*** Status and with Britain learning military lessons that contributed to the success of the ***BEF*** in 1914.

Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in October-November 1917. The *Bolsheviks* were the dominant group with Communist beliefs. See page 54 for an explanation of the problem over a precise date.

BEF [***British Expeditionary Force***]: an army of 80,000 sent to France/Belgium in 1914

Cavalry: soldiers who fought on horseback; sometimes known as *Hussars* (*Regular*) or *Yeomanry* (part-time)

Central Powers: military allies of *Germany*, comprising mainly *Austria-Hungary* and *Turkey (Ottoman Empire)*; so called because of their geographical position in Europe.

Chaplain: usually a minister of religion of ***Commissioned Officer*** rank, appointed to a military unit to care for the religious and moral welfare of servicemen. In combat, they often performed unofficial medical roles.

Colonies: countries governed by a militarily powerful country, which together forms an ***Empire***. In 1914 the largest was the ***British Empire***. By 1914 *Australia*, *New Zealand* and *Canada* had been granted self-government and were called ***Dominions.*** ***(****South Africa* won this status as part of the peace settlement, following the ***Boer War*** in 1902.) ***Dominions*** in 2015 form the ***Commonwealth***.

CO: ***(****Commanding Officer)* of a military unit; ***C-in-C*** (*Commander in Chief*) of an Army

Commissioned Officers: soldiers of the rank of ***2nd Lieutenant*** and above, who were in possession of the *King's Commission* (assignment). In 1914 most were recruited from University *Officer Training Corps* [*OTC*] or Public Schools, although as the war developed some Grammar School boys were promoted.

CWGC [***Commonwealth War Graves Commission***]: initially the *Imperial WGC*, it was set up in 1921 to ensure that all those who lost their lives would be officially buried or, with no body, have their names preserved on a Memorial. In World War I, it was policy to bury and commemorate near the place of death.

Conscientious Objector: those who objected to being conscripted could appeal to Military Tribunals on grounds of serious disruption to commerce or because of personal conscience. The Tribunals were effectively dominated by the Military so it was difficult to succeed. Nicknamed *"Conshies"* those who failed with their appeals could be sent to serve in medical units on the front line. ***Absolutists***, who refused this compromise, were often imprisoned suffering unofficial brutality.

Conscripts: male recruits who were required by law to serve where required in the armed forces subject to age limits (initially 18-45) which could change: it was raised to 51 in 1918. This was introduced into British Law for the first time since 1649 after the ***Military Service Act*** of 2 **March 1916** and lasted until 1919. ***Reserved Occupations*** were those workers deemed to be vital to the war effort.

Conscription Categories [241]

On 27 January 1916, the **Military Service Act** became law**, every man between the ages of 18 and 41, if unmarried**, was *'deemed to have enlisted'*. On **25 May, married** men were *'deemed'* to have done the same.

The following categories were established:

A: General Service.	"***A1***" is the highest level of fitness
B1: Garrison Service Abroad	C1: Garrison Service at Home Camps
B2: Labour Service Abroad	C2: Labour Service at Home Camps
B3: Sedentary Work Abroad	C3: Sedentary Service at Home Camps

The Official History records the physical standards defining each category:

A1: Able to march, see to shoot, hear well and stand active service conditions.
B: Free from serious organic diseases, able to stand service on the lines of communication in France, or in garrisons in the tropics.
B1: Able to march five miles, and see to shoot with glasses and hear well.
B2: Able to walk five miles to and from work, see and hear sufficiently for ordinary purposes.
B3: Only suitable for sedentary work.
C1-3: Free from serious organic disease, able to stand service conditions in garrison at home.

"Contemptibles, Old": name adopted by veterans of the ***BEF*** fighting in France and Belgium in 1914. It was adopted after the ***Kaiser*** ordered his military on 19 August 1914 to *"exterminate the treacherous English and walk over Gen. French's* ***contemptible little army****"*. He did not succeed.

Convoy System: this required all merchant ships to sail together under naval escort. It was introduced with some success in 1917.

Court Martial: a trial for serious breach of military law (often being *"absent without leave")* with punishment in the hands of military authorities. In effect the courts were dominated by *Commissioned Officers*, although after 1916 one with civilian experience of the law was preferred. A lesser offence would be dealt with by the ***C.O***.

Dardanelles – see ***Gallipoli***

Depth Charges: these were explosive devices, projected into the sea to explode at a predetermined depth

Derby Scheme of Enlistment: by October 1915 it was clear that there were insufficient volunteers to meet the demands of the army but there was a deep antipathy to the 'foreign' tradition of ***Conscription.*** The Director of Recruitment, the **Earl of Derby**, then persuaded the government to require that all men of military age be registered as *"willing to serve if called upon"*. Married men were assured of preference. The scheme was intended to prick the conscience but it did not work as by the end of the year less than half the 2.179m men registered had attested. ***Conscription*** followed in 1916.

Diary, Unit War Diary (of ***Battalion, Brigade, Division***): an official record of warfare compiled by an officer. Officers could be named but not *"****ORs****"*. **Pte. F.J. Collins [†]** was a rare example named.

Demobilisation (into Class Z): after the war it seemed that the Army took too long in letting soldiers return to civilian life. Most were released in 1919 into ***Army Reserve Class Z***, which provided for the recall of trained men in the event that Germany did not sign the peace treaty and that hostilities were resumed.

[241] Martin Hornby, from *'Military Service Act – 27th January 1916'*.

"Dreadnought": *a* revolutionary design of British battleship. It had a metal superstructure, was steam-powered and possessed large turret-guns. When launched in 1906, it rendered all previous battleships obsolescent. Britain, therefore, lost its traditional advantage of a superior number of capital ships. A naval race ensued, to build these ships, which produced tensions that contributed to the outbreak of war. Before WWI, both sides developed *"**Armoured Cruisers**"*, which had the speed of the smaller *Cruiser* but the armament of the larger *Battleship.*

HMS Dreadnought, 1906
[Wikipedia]

Enlistment: or joining the Armed forces; from 1914 to 1915 it was voluntary; if passed as fit men would swear an oath to fight *"**For King and Country**"* and accept the *"**King's Shilling**"* – ***5p*** which was a day's wages. Although many were volunteers, even in 1914 there was propaganda in the form of posters and intimidation in the form of women handing out ***white feathers*** to men not in uniform. From 1915 the ***Derby Scheme*** was adopted but, in March 1916, ***Conscription*** was introduced.

Entente Cordiale: a *"friendly understanding"* of 1904 between Britain and France, which ended centuries of enmity and led to a military **alliance** in the War. France was already militarily allied to **Russia** since 1892 and the prospect of Germany having to fight two powerful enemies, on the Eastern and Western frontiers at the same time, inspired the making of the vitally important ***Schlieffen Plan.*** In ***1907*** Britain and Russia made a formal alliance to create the ***Triple Entente***.

Flanders: a region on the French-Belgian border with **Ypres** as the main town. It was very flat and badly drained terrain, which became synonymous for mud and ***trench warfare***

"Fokker Scourge": a monoplane with synchronised machine-guns; a terrifying new weapon.

Gallipoli: a campaign which took place on the *Gallipoli Peninsula* in Turkey; it was separated from Asia Minor by the ***Dardanelles Straits***

'Gazetted': this jargon refers to records of being ***"Mentioned in Despatches"*** or being awarded Gallantry Medals, the announcement of which was published officially in the ***London Gazette.***

Infantry: foot soldiers; colloquially known as *PBI*: *"Poor Bloody Infantry"*.

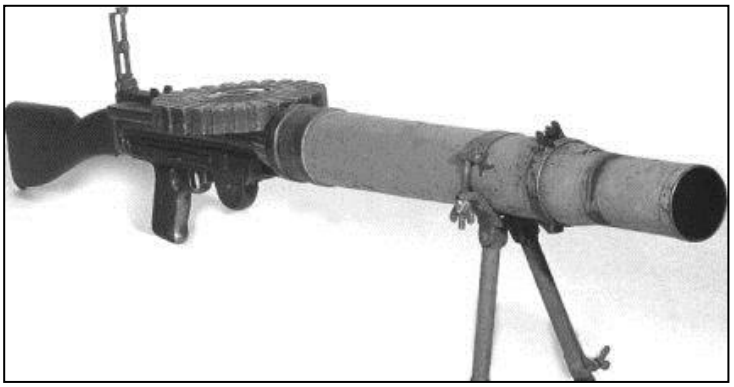
Japan: an ally of Britain since 1902 but in 1914 it proposed to the ***Entente*** that it would declare war on the ***Central Powers*** if it could attack German-held territory.

Jingoism: is exaggerated *patriotism* (love of country) in the form of aggressive foreign policy. It was perhaps first used in the disagreement with Russia in 1878 and took the form of a rhyme:

> *"We don't want to fight but, **by Jingo**, if we do, we've got the ships, we've got the men, we've got the money too"*

It played a part in the naval race of building ***Dreadnoughts: "We want eight and we won't wait!"***

Lewis (Light) Gun: a (Drum-magazine-fed) Machine Gun:
an automatic gun that fires bullets in rapid succession for as long as the trigger is pressed. [picture Wikipedia]



Medals:

Gallantry Medals and Service

The highest **Medal for Gallantry** is the ***Victoria Cross***, instituted after the Crimean War. It could be awarded to all ranks. None were awarded to Tewkesbury soldiers during this war.

Other awards, issued to local men, can be seen on page 108-109. *"Crosses"* were issued to ***Officers***, medals to ***ORs***

Mentioned in Despatches: a soldier, whose bravery was noted in an officer's report – it may have led to the award of a medal but was often seen as a sufficient reward as it was ***"Gazetted"***.[242]

Campaign Medals

1914 Mons Star & Clasp –
for fighting 22 Aug.-22 Nov. 1914

1914-1915 Star[243]
Awarded for fighting on the Western front, 1914-1915

1914-18 War Medal
Awarded to all who entered a theatre of war; (later to 1920)

Allied Victory Medal
Awarded to all participants

Colloquially known as: ***"Pip"*** ***"Squeak"*** ***"Wilfred"***

Conduct Medals

Meritorious Service Medal
Originally a ***Long-Service Award***, from 1916 it was also for gallantry or meritorious service when not in face of the enemy

Distinguished Service Medal
First instituted in 1854 as an award for ***Distinguished Service in the Field*** for *Non-Commissioned* ranks

[242] See page 108-9 for medals awarded to local servicemen.
[243] Sam Eedle states that the *1914-1915 Star* was an award, like the *British War* and *Victory* Medals, issued after the war.

Royal Decorations:

CBE
(Commander of the Order of the British Empire)
the highest honour in the order of precedence not conferring a title

OBE
(Officer of the Order of the British Empire)

MBE
(Member of the Order of the British Empire)

King George V founded the Order on 4 June 1917 to fill gaps in the British honours system. It comprises classes in civil and military divisions.

Militia: a part-time military unit for Home Defence that existed throughout history with varying degrees of efficiency. The 1881 Army Reforms set up more formal units: the Tewkesbury Company of the *2nd Battalion (Volunteers) The Gloucestershire Regiment* re-formed in 1885. In 1908 it was reorganised in the ***Territorial Force.***

No Man's Land: land lying between enemy front-line trenches which acted as a lethal buffer zone.

NCOs (Non-Commissioned Officers): soldiers promoted by officers to control groups of fellow soldiers. They held **ranks** from ***L/Cpl*** to ***RSM***.

ORs (Other Ranks): soldiers below the rank of Commissioned officer

Occupation: after a war, the victorious army would send troops to a part of the defeated country, usually to ensure it made Peace as quickly as possible to the victor's advantage

Ottoman Empire (Turkey): The *Ottomans* were the dominant tribe which built up an empire between the 14th and 20th centuries, which stretched as far north as Vienna in 1683. After defeat in World War I, it became the *Turkish Republic* with similar boundaries to 2015. Its first President was ***Mustafa Kemal***, the victorious general from the ***Gallipoli Campaign***.

Peace Treaty: an agreement to settle the differences between two countries that had been at war; it usually follows ***a Cease-Fire*** or ***Armistice***

Pioneer Battalions: The job of a Pioneer unit entailed hard manual labour and included digging trenches in forward battle areas, wiring and building encampments for other troops, as well as ordinary infantry work. They were paid an extra two pence (1p) a day. The *13th Gloucesters* were an example; many were miners from the Forest of Dean and other coalfields, as well as labourers from the local 'Three Counties'.

POWs (Prisoners of War): POWs of all sides were nominally protected by ***the Hague Conventions*** of 1899 and 1907. The ***Ottoman Empire*** did not sign these treaties, and thus their POWs were not internationally protected. [244]

Recruitment (see Enlistment)

Red Cross: an international charity, inaugurated in 1870, which provides care for anyone affected by crisis. It was involved in this war by providing nursing care for wounded soldiers and care for ***POW***s by sending food parcels and searching for information about the missing.

[244] For the effect on local soldiers see pages 26 & 106.

Regimental Organisation in World War I (typical Infantry as in Gloucestershire Regiment *Gloucesters*)

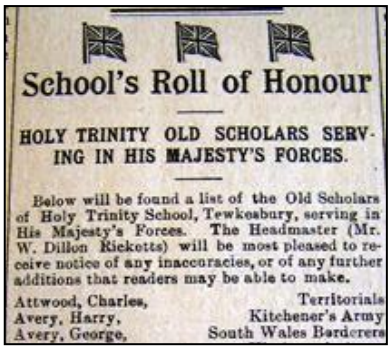
Type	Enumeration	Comment
***Regular* professional**	**1 based in UK (*1 Gloucesters*)** **2 based in the Empire**	Comprised full-time paid ***Regular*** soldiers; the Battalions rotated periodically
Base Depot Battalions	**3. at Regimental Headquarters**	For administration, training and supplying 1 & 2 Battalions with recruits
***Territorial Force* from 1908**	**4 Bristol** **5 Gloucester** **6 Bristol** **17 (1918)**	Part-time soldiers who could only serve in the UK but from 1914 volunteers asked for foreign service; after the outbreak of war, more battalions were added; First (Original 1908) Line: $1^{st}/4^{th}$; 2nd Line $2^{nd}/4^{th}$ etc. An extra Home Service only battalion
***Service Battalions* from August 1914**	**7** onwards to **16 + 18**	Known as *"**Kitchener Battalions**"* as their formation due to his appeal in 1914; in some northern towns known as *"Pals"* or *"Chums"* Battalions

Regular* Soldier**: professional who regards it as his job; in 1914 signed on for 12 years – 7 in the '*colours*' with 5 more on '*reserve*'; they would mainly serve in the ***1st and ***2nd*** Battalions of their County Regiment.

Reserved (Starred) Occupations: workers deemed to be employed in occupations vital to the war effort

Reservist: a former Regular who had served 7 years and had returned to civilian life but must train at annual camp and report back to the "colours" in an emergency.

Roll of Honour (ROH): soon after the start of the war and the spontaneous enlistment of volunteers, local newspapers, such as the ***Tewkesbury Register***, started publishing weekly lists of names – firstly of *volunteers* from 5 September 1914 and subsequently of those killed. Such lists had a black border. In all cases readers were invited to submit names. From 19 September Headmasters started to publish lists of pupils from their own schools who had volunteered and rival schools followed suit.



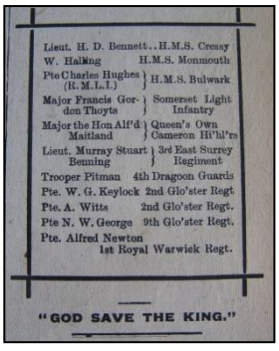
School's Roll of Honour

HOLY TRINITY OLD SCHOLARS SERVING IN HIS MAJESTY'S FORCES.

Below will be found a list of the Old Scholars of Holy Trinity School, Tewkesbury, serving in His Majesty's Forces. The Headmaster (Mr. W. Dillon Rieketts) will be most pleased to receive notice of any inaccuracies, or of any further additions that readers may be able to make.

Attwood, Charles,	Territorials
Avery, Harry,	Kitchener's Army
Avery, George,	South Wales Borderers

Holy Trinity's List



Lieut. H. D. Bennett	H.M.S. Cressy
W. Halking	H.M.S. Monmouth
Pte Charles Hughes (R.M.L.I.)	H.M.S. Bulwark
Major Francis Gordon Thoyts	Somerset Light Infantry
Major the Hon. Alf'd Maitland	Queen's Own Cameron Hi'hl'rs
Lieut. Murray Stuart Benning	3rd East Surrey Regiment
Trooper Pitman	4th Dragoon Guards
Pte. W. G. Keylock	2nd Glo'ster Regt
Pte. A. Witts	2nd Glo'ster Regt.
Pte N. W. George	9th Glo'ster Regt.
Pte. Alfred Newton	1st Royal Warwick Regt.

"GOD SAVE THE KING."

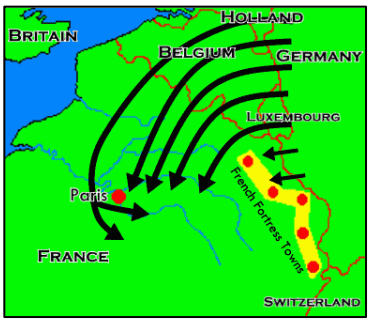
Roll of Honour of the Fallen [Nov. 1914]

Royal Naval Division: was formed in September 1914 and fought on land as infantry alongside the Army, especially in ***Gallipoli***, but also on the ***Western Front*** as the *63rd Division*. It originally comprised naval volunteers, surplus to the needs of the Royal Navy but later other armed formations.

Salient (at Ypres): is a battlefield feature that projects into enemy territory. Therefore, the salient is surrounded by the enemy on three sides, making the troops occupying the salient vulnerable. The ***Ypres Salient*** was the most infamous of the War.

Schlieffen Plan: after the ***1904 Entente Cordiale***, Germany faced the nightmare scenario of fighting a war on two fronts (v France and Russia) and so devised this plan. The aim was to capture Paris and knock out France before Russia could mobilize, thus giving Germany time to move her troops east. Speed and surprise were essential and for this reason the Germans gambled upon attacking via the plains of Belgium rather than the mountainous French border. It was a gamble because in 1839, when the **State of Belgium** was created, both Britain and Germany signed a Treaty, guaranteeing Belgian neutrality. Germany believed that Britain

would not fight over this 75-year-old "*Scrap of Paper".* The gamble failed and, when Germany attacked Belgium, Britain declared war. On 31 August 1914, the German High Command fatally undermined the ***Schlieffen Plan***, when it moved troops from the attack to the undefended west of Paris to fight the Allies on the **River Marne**. The consequence of this miscalculation was four years of ***Trench Warfare*** – which Germany lost.[245]



Schlieffen Plan
[School History Co.]

Scorched Earth Policy: a harsh military tactic whereby everything of use to an invading army is destroyed.

Shell-Shock: was a form of nervous breakdown caused by excessive exposure to artillery bombardments. It was not medically recognised in the War but today it is known as *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*.

Shrapnel: bullets or shells, packed with smaller balls or pieces of metal which are ejected on explosion killing and maiming indiscriminately.

Silver War Badge (sometimes known as ***Silver Wound Badge*)*:*** see ***Wounded***

Starred Occupations: in WWII called *"**Reserved Occupations**";* some men were being unfairly targeted by women's *'**white feathers**'* (a traditional symbol of alleged cowardice). Accordingly, an unofficial scheme of *starred workers,* with a badge, was devised to protect them and the war effort.

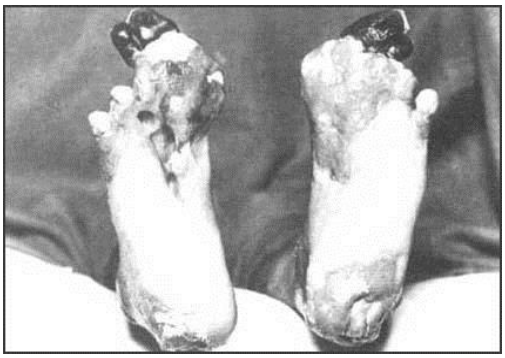
Subaltern: a traditional term to describe a junior officer of the army; a Lieutenant

Tanks: a new weapon of war, pioneered by the British Army. It was a land battleship, propelled using 'caterpillar' tracks. It was called a 'Water Tank' and disguised as such to shroud it from German spies.

Territorials: part-time soldiers who were paid to train weekly and attend annual camp; their commitment was only to defend the UK if attacked. However, in 1914-15 they were asked to volunteer again this time for service overseas (90% apparently did so). After the 1908 modernisation, they constituted the ***4th***, ***5th*** and ***6th*** Battalions of most County Regiments.

Theocsbrians (***Old)***: former pupils of *Tewkesbury Boys Grammar School* that included pupils from country areas. Their names would, therefore, not automatically appear on the Town's War Memorial at the Cross.

Trench Warfare: to avoid machine-gun fire, both sides were forced to dig trenches for living, fighting and moving. The unpleasant contemporary term *"**trench wastage**"* referred to the loss of life – not in official attack or defence – but random death from shellfire, sniping etc. during everyday life in the trenches. ***Trench foot*** was a common cause of invalidity. This was an infection of the feet caused by cold, wet and insanitary conditions. In the trenches men stood for hours on end in waterlogged trenches without being able to remove wet socks or boots. The feet would gradually go numb and the skin would turn red or blue. If untreated, trench foot could turn gangrenous and result in amputation. Trench foot was a particular problem in the early stages of the war; during the winter of 1914-15 over 20,000 men were treated for trench foot. Brigadier-General F. P. Crozier argued that: *"The fight against the condition known as trench-feet had been incessant and an uphill game"*. [http://spartacus-educational.com]



Trench foot [Spartacus Educational]

Tuberculosis (TB) aka ***Phthisis***: this is an infection disease which attacks the lungs and can be fatal, especially in World War I when suitable drugs were lacking. It is still associated with poor living conditions. It is also a recurrent disease, even after an apparent recovery.

U-Boat – ***'Unterseeboot'*** *(under-the-sea boat)*: the German for submarine and they were used to great effect to destroy vital shipping bringing imports to the UK. However, their very success caused problems in that the sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915 with 1,198 mainly American dead, helped weaken the resolve of the USA to remain neutral. A resumption of the *U-Boat* Campaign after the ***Battle of Jutland*** was so successful that Britain had only a six-week supply of food before starvation would set in. The sinking of US ships + the ***Zimmermann Telegram*** persuaded the USA to enter the war on the ***Allied*** side on 6 April 1917. When U-Boats hunted together they were known as *'**wolf packs**'*.

[245] See pages 9-12 for an analysis of the events.

***VAD* Hospital: *Voluntary Aid Detachment* (see *Red Cross*)**

VAD Volunteer Nellie Bloxham
[late Mrs. K. Hall]

Realising that medical care for soldiers was inadequate, emergency hospitals were created to take care of the wounded returning from the front. The *Red Cross* established these hospitals, the first in Tewkesbury being the Watson Hall. The staff was all-volunteer who were trained to assist professional nurses – they called themselves ***VADs***. As the casualties mounted, bigger units were created such as ***Mitton Farm VAD*** in 1915. **Nellie Bloxham** (pictured left) was a volunteer. Born in 1889, Ellen Bloxham was a daughter of local butcher William Bloxham who was also a Town Councillor. In 1911 she was the book-keeper of the butcher's shop. She was also the sister of two soldiers, **Heneage Bloxham [†]**, and **Raymond Bloxham**. She married William James Stagg after the war in 1921.

Volunteers: recruits who joined the armed services of their own free will; in 1914 they signed up for 3 years or *"for the duration"* of the war. In theory, there was a lower age limit, especially for overseas service.

War Gratuity: this was a government grant, paid as compensation to the family of those who lost their lives due to war. The fathers of single men could be recipients as well as widows with children.

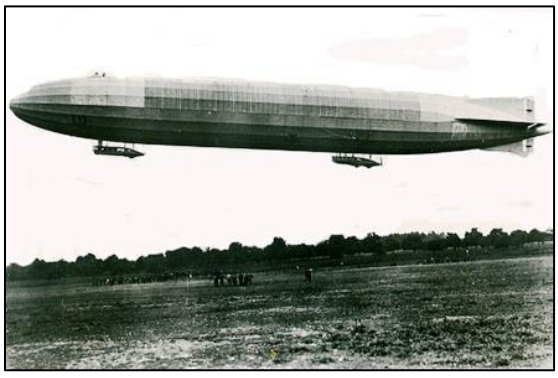
Western Front: refers to the fighting in France and Belgium

Wounded: eventually there was a system: **1. Stretcher bearers of *RAMC*** would administer first aid and remove wounded to unit ***First Aid Post* or *Field Ambulance***; **2. *Casualty Clearing Stations*** were often located just behind the front lines (and therefore needed to be mobile) near to railway lines as decisions were made here whether to return a man to combat or to transport him on an ambulance train or motor ambulance to **3. *Base Hospitals***, usually well behind the lines at a seaside resort, where hotels could be converted and manned by trained medical staff; examples are *Le Treport, Rouen* and *Etaples.* Some men here were lucky enough to be awarded a *"blighty" ticket* to a **4. hospital in the UK**; such as ***Mitton VAD (see VAD).*** From here a soldier could be returned to the Front when cured or **5. discharged** from the forces with a ***Silver War badge*** and a graduated disability pension (35s or £1.75 pw for T. Day).[246]

Silver War Badge awarded to Pte. T. Day

Yeomanry: is a historic word for volunteer, part-time cavalrymen; such as the *Gloucestershire Hussars*

Zeppelins: were a type of rigid airship named after the German pioneer, Count von Zeppelin. It first flew in 1910 but the passenger craft was transformed into a bomber which killed over 500 in Britain.



Zeppelin L14 [Dutch website]

Zimmerman Telegram: of January 1917 was intercepted and angered the Americans as it purported to be an offer by Germany to support Mexican aims to recover states such as Texas if they assisted the German War effort. This allied with the sinking of US ships by U-Boats convinced the US government to declare war on Germany on 6 April 1917.

[246] See pages 98-103 for a fuller account of the care for wounded.

People

(of those who do not feature in the **Biographies in Section V [†]**)

Asquith, H.H., Prime Minster 1908-1916*:* He was a successful peacetime leader who found it difficult to adapt to the demands of war. He was replaced by David Lloyd George. He lost a son on the Somme.

Churchill, W. S. 1874-1965, First *Lord of the Admiralty*: most famous as the PM during World War II, he had been a pre-war government minister. He was responsible for the failed expeditions to Antwerp and ***Gallipoli.*** His reputation could not survive the latter; he left government to fight on the Western Front, commanding the *6th Battalion, the Royal Scots Fusiliers*. He survived to return as Minister of Munitions.

Didcote, Mrs. Mary Letitia

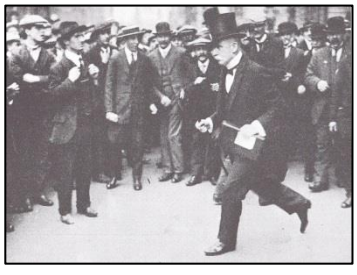
Mrs. Didcote, along with grandson Harry, unveiled the War Memorial in 1922

Mrs. Didcote with her family in happier times
[Both photographs supplied by late Harry Didcote]

As we saw in Section II, Mrs. Didcote was awarded a vital role in 1922 when she accepted the invitation to unveil the Town's War Memorial. It must have represented for her a painful honour as, according to her *Register* obituary, *"she was selected for the important task (honour of unveiling the War memorial) as she lost no fewer than three sons...."*. Born in Twyning in 1861 Mary Letitia Price married Apperley waterman, Thomas Didcote, in Gloucester in 1878. They went on to have 11 children, of whom only six were still alive in 1911. Two brothers, Harry and Wilfred, emigrated to Australia in 1910. Albert and Wilfred were killed in 1915, whilst Harry succumbed in 1918. The year 1915 must have been her *'annus horribilis'*, as she lost her husband, in addition to the two sons, when they were living at 2 Jeynes Row. She lost another son Walter, aged 51, in tragic circumstances in 1933 after he had fallen ill riding by bicycle home from work in a Lydbrook colliery. When she died on 25 October 1939, she was living at 38 Church Street and was survived by two daughters. Harry, the son of Albert baptised on the day of the assassination in Sarajevo, was well-known after World War II as the manager of *Tewkesbury Car Mart* in the High Street.

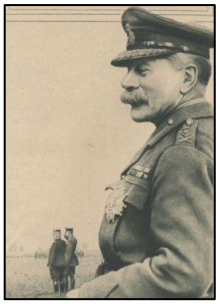
French, Field Marshal Sir John, 1852-1925; C-in-C *BEF* 1914-1915; 1st Earl of Ypres

He made his name in the ***Boer War*** as a ***Cavalry*** commander. Some members of post-war generations have castigated French because of his ordering the *'Retreat from Mons'*. This photograph was used by a leading historian of the 1960s, A.J.P. Taylor who deliberately chose the mischievous caption: *"in training for the retreat…"*. It is worth noting that Taylor dedicated his book to Joan Littlewood, who satirised the war in *"O, What a Lovely War"* a musical which, along with *Blackadder*, has reinforced the *'Lions led by Donkeys'* interpretation of the War. Even if he had to be instructed by Kitchener to retreat, not to the Channel Ports but to defend the French Army, he did ensure that the *BEF* remained intact to go on the offensive at the Marne. He was criticised for the debacle at the ***Battle of Loos, 1915*** and so he resigned as ***C-in-C*** to be replaced by **General Haig**.[247]



Sir John French, C-in-C BEF
[A.J.P. Taylor]

[247] A.J.P. Taylor, *First World War*, Penguin Books, 1963; *Oh, What a Lovely War!* is labelled by Wikipedia, as *"an epic musical developed by Joan Littlewood and her ensemble at the Theatre Workshop in 1963"*; *Blackadder Goes Forth*, BBC1 1989; Capt. P.A. Thompson, *Donkeys* (1927) and Alan Clark, *The Donkeys* (1961). Malcolm Waldron points out that the phrase, *Lions led by Donkeys*, was part of a conversation between Ludendorff and another general who had never fought the British. When challenged on the provenance of the dialogue, Clark allegedly admitted that he had invented it.



Field Marshal Haig [www.1914-1918]

Haig, Sir Douglas, Field Marshal, 1861-1928: British ***C-in-C*** on the Western Front, 1915-1918; blamed by some historians and politicians for the failures and high loss of life on the ***Somme*** and ***Passchendaele*** – but was also responsible for leading the Army through the victorious ***Hundred Days*** in 1918. Created an Earl after the War (as was the tradition), he started *the Earl Haig Fund* for British victims of the war, which today we call the *Poppy Appeal*, culminating at *Remembrance Day* on the 11 November every year.[248]

Harvey, F. W.: ***DCM***, **1888-1957**, was an English poet, broadcaster and solicitor whose poetry became popular during and after World War I. Initially a Private soldier in the *5th Gloucesters*, he won his medal in 1915 but was captured in 1916, writing poems in his POW camps. He became a friend of Gloucestershire composer ***Ivor Gurney*** (1890-1977) who had suffered from *shell-shock.*

Hindenburg, Paul von; Field Marshal, 1847-1934*:* he was the German Military leader with ***Ludendorff*** from 1915 to 1918. He was credited with the defeat of the Russians in 1914 and in 1916-1917 a fortified Line of Defences was named after him. From 1925 to 1934 he was President of Germany.

Jaeger, Cpl. then Sgt. William Frederick, 1874-1937: took part in the ***Retreat from Mons*** and was wounded at the ***Battle of the Aisne*** in October 1914 about which the *Register* published an account on 31 October. He was a professional soldier and veteran of the Boer War. He was, therefore, a *Reservist* who joined the ***BEF*** in the ***2nd Coldstream Guards***. He was wounded in the leg during the *Battle of the Aisne* but it was reported that, despite this, he and others tried to rescue buried officers in a collapsed trench. In 1922 he led one of the platoons of veterans at the inauguration of the War Memorial. He died aged 63. Born in Apperley, by 1891 he was a hairdresser's assistant, aged 15, employed by Frank Neale, his stepfather of 154 High Street. He returned to that role after the war living (from 1907) at 43 Church Street. He was invalided from the front in July 1916 during the Battle of the Somme. He had married Clara Slatter in 1906 and had three children born in 1907, 1908 and 1911.

Kaiser **William II, 1859-1941, last Emperor of Germany, 1888-1918: *Kaiser*** is derived from *Caesar*, meaning *Emperor*. He was the grandson of ***Queen Victoria*** but was reputed to harbour a deep jealousy of British power, especially her Navy. There is much speculation that his character was corrupted by having a handicapped left hand that prevented him enjoying the traditional military career. He was diplomatically tactless and proved an ineffective war leader. He was forced to abdicate by Army Generals in 1918. Although the British wished to *"hang the Kaiser"*, he found exile in Holland until his death. (Wikipedia)

Kitchener, Field Marshal Lord Herbert Horatio, 1850-1916: Appointed Secretary of State for War 1914-1916 because of his popular reputation as a military hero defeating Islamist revels in Khartoum, Sudan and in the ***Boer War***. He was responsible for having appreciated that the war would be of long duration and, consequently, the small ***Regular*** and ***Territorial*** Army would need augmenting by the recruitment of ***volunteers***: the so-called ***Kitchener Armies***. This campaign was highly successful and his iconic image has now become synonymous with this achievement. He drowned on *HMS Hampshire* in June 1916 as he left to negotiate with the Russians. Many babies were christened in his honour, including the child of veteran soldier **Ralph Hartell [†]**

Lloyd George, David, 1863-1945; Prime Minster 1916-1922: he was a reforming Chancellor of the Exchequer before the war and became Minister of Munitions in 1915 after the "Shell Scandal". His perceived success led to his replacing Asquith as PM in 1916. He played a major part in negotiating the ***Treaties of Paris*** in 1919 (*Versailles* etc.) with the defeated nations.

Nivelle, Robert, Gen., 1856-1924: an artilleryman, he came to prominence when halting the German attack on Verdun in 1916. Promoted *C-in-C* of French Armies, he devised the *Nivelle Offensive* of 1917 which promised a break-through. Its failure led to widespread Mutinies in the French Army and his replacement by Gen. Pétain.

Mustafa Kemal, 1881-1938: was the Turkish General who, with German help, defeated the *Gallipoli Invasion*. He went on to be the founding President of the Turkish Republic, being entitled *"Ataturk"* (*"Father of the People"*) in 1934.

[248] See the biography of **G. H. Smith** on page 100.

Stubbs, Cpl. Francis George: the second son of Frank H. Stubbs, who had three sons away fighting. He was a member of Newcastle Police before re-enlisting in the *Royal Field Artillery*. He was ***Mentioned in Despatches*** on 24 October 1914 and survived the war. In 1919 he was awarded the *King's Police Medal* and a cheque for £10. At the time of his being *MID*, his brother **H. G. Stubbs** was fatally wounded, but his other brother **Herbert** also survived to be commissioned as an officer.

White, Pte. M. J. (Jack): a *Reservist* in *1st Gloucesters*, he was possibly born in 1888 son of widowed nurse, Harriet E. White, and was living in Eagles Alley in 1901. On 7 November 1914, his *"Thrilling Experiences"* were published in the *Register*, when he had *"returned to his home at Tewkesbury, invalided, on a short furlough"* after nearly three months active service. He wrote another letter in 1915. He survived the war and moved to Twyning, as an article was written in the *Register* (10 February 1945 p1/1) about a *"Twyning Family's Remarkable War Record of Service"*. He was described as an *"Old Contemptible"* and then served for 13 years; *"now Home Guard"*. He had married in 1908 and produced five children who were then serving in the armed forces: Pte. John Albert White, stretcher-bearer in Italy after 17 years' service; Pte. Albert Charles White, honourably discharged from the Pioneer corps; William Bernard White, RAF for 5 years; Stanley Richard White, Tewkesbury Grammar School, RAF; and Margaret in WAAF.

Williams, Sergt. R.G. [†] *The Register* (14 October 1916 p5/3)*: "We have received the following lines from a well-known Tewkesburian, of the South Wales Borderers, who has fought in various parts of the world since the outbreak of the war, and is still at the front."*

Sgt. Williams was killed in action 17 July 1917.

ONLY A LETTER

When you're looking sad and weary,
And you feel you can't be cheery,
And from your dirty trench you cannot roam,
There's a sight to stir your heart,
Makes all care and pain depart,
(A letter from the dear old home)

Perhaps it's from your brother,
Or your old grey haired father,
Or sweetheart, or dear wife, that loving line,
But it sets your heart at ease,
When that message from o'er the seas,
Just tells you all the folks at home are fine,

There's the other side to tell,
And it don't sound half as well,
It seems to give your heart a sudden wrench,
When the mail is given out,
And you find without a doubt,
You're the only one forgotten in the trench

In your throat a lump will rise,
And a tear start in your eyes,
You wonder why on earth they fail to write,
How it makes you sick of fun,
And it's pity to help the Hun,
Who bumps you in the next bayonet fight,

The smiling faces meet you,
And hearty laughter greets you,
When all discuss the news of their home town,
How it makes a man look small,
If he's cared for not at all,
And no one cares a rap if he goes down,

Show him you really care,
And when you've time to spare,
Just drop a line to him who bears the brunt,
It is not much to ask,
And t'will ease his heavy task,
There's someone waits your letter at the Front

Army Ranks (in descending order of seniority)

Type	**Abbreviation**	**Rank**	**Symbol**	**Role – in command of**	**Abbr.**
Officer (Recipients of ***King's Commission***)	F-M	Field Marshal		Group of Armies	
	Gen.	General		Army	
	Lt-Gen.	Lieutenant General		Corps	
	Maj-Gen.	Major General		Division	Div.
	Brig. Gen.	Brigadier General		Brigade	Brig.
	Col.	Colonel		Regiment (several Battalions)	Regt.
	Lt-Col.	Lieutenant Colonel		Battalion (1,000 men)	Bn.
	Maj.	Major		2 i/c Bn. or i/c Company	
	Capt.	Captain		2 i/c Company (120)	Coy
	Lt.	Lieutenant: 1st [2 *"Pips"*] & 2nd [1]		Platoon	
NCO ***Non Commissioned Officer***	RSM, CSM	Regimental & Company Sergeant Majors	 	Reg, Batt. Coy. Highest rank of *NCO* in respective unit	
	Sgt.	Sergeant (Serjeant – *CWGC*)		Platoon (30)	
	Cpl. (Guards); Bomb. (Artillery)	Corporal, Lance Sergeant; Bombardier		Section (10)	
	L/Cpl; L/Bomb.	Lance Corporal/Bombardier		Section Assistant (often unpaid, 'Acting')	
Lowest Rank	Pte.	Private (Infantry)			
	Sapper	Sapper (Engineers)			
	Gnr.	Gunner (Artillery)			
	Trooper	Trooper (Cavalry)			

Military Units

Abbreviation	Unit	Information	Today
ASC	**Army Service Corps (Royal** after 1918**)**	Military supplies	**Royal Logistical Corps**
AVC	**Army Veterinary Corps**	Animal Welfare	**RAVC**
AOC	**Army Ordnance Corps**	Ammunition	**Royal Logistical Corps**
Cavalry (Horse)	**Yeomanry**	Territorial	**Motorised TA**
	Hussars	Regular	
	Infantry	Foot Soldiers	County Regiments now amalgamated: e.g. *Gloucesters = Rifles*
LI	**Light Infantry**	Speedy, lightly armed infantry	
MGC	**Machine Gun Corps**	Formed 1915 as weapon dominated trench warfare	**n/a**
	Provost	*"Red Caps"*	**Royal Military Police**
RAMC	**Royal Army Medical Corps**		**RAMC**
RE	**Royal Engineers**	Built and maintained army installations	**RE**
RFA	**Royal Field Artillery**	Horse-drawn howitzer guns	**Royal Artillery**
RGA	**Royal Garrison Artillery**	Less mobile Heavy artillery	
RHA	**Royal Horse Artillery**	Light guns to support cavalry	
RFC	**Royal Flying Corps**	1912-1918 part of the Army, then RAF	**Royal Air Force (RAF)**
RNAS	**Royal Navy Air Service**	1 July 1914-1 April 1918 then renamed ……	**Fleet Air Arm/RN**
RMLI	**Royal Marines Light Infantry**	Soldiers on ships increasingly used as land infantry	**Royal Marines**

Unit Badges – a Selection

Gloucesters

Royal Warwicks

South African Infantry

Grenadier Guards

Royal Horse & Field Artillery

Machine Gun Corps

Army Service Corps

Royal Army Medical Corps

Sources

Online

The ***Woodard Database*** is a unique resource to THS. For over two decades we have been adding to our local history knowledge by maintaining this database of random information. Database software makes searching for specific information very rapid. It is, however, only as reliable as the people who have collected and input the data; thus verification is very important.

The project was started in the 1980s by former Librarian, **Kathleen Ross**, who, with a group of volunteers, started indexing the ***Tewkesbury Register*** with data written onto cards which were stored in a shoe box.

Bob Woodard was an early pioneer in the recording of local historical information using personal computers and he introduced us to *Idealist* software, published by *Blackwell*, which was then a random scientific database. Using volunteers we transcribed the written data and have constantly added to it.

As *Idealist* software could only be accessed by the public at the Library, our webmaster, **Derek Benson**, has pioneered the transfer of this data onto an online database, ***Google Drive***. To access without charge, you merely need to be a member of *THS*.

Books

Barnes, A.F., ***MC****, The Story of the 2/5th Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment 1914-1918*, (Gloucester, 1930)

Barker, A.J., *The Neglected War: Mesopotamia 1914-1918* (Faber & Faber, 1967). When it was stated on p 22 that *"Pte. Price was one of the more fortunate ones, evacuated to a hospital in Bombay, India"*, Barker's account would remind us that one of the aspects of *"**neglect**"* was the woefully inadequate medical services allied with little provision for communications. He also claims that, after the oilfields of The Gulf were secured it was the prospect of capturing Baghdad that drove the strategy, controlled at the outset in Simla by the Indian Army rather than by London. Defeat at Kut shocked both the British public and government – London at last took charge of the war and, in particular, modernised the support for an army. Thus Maude was able to capture Baghdad. However, events elsewhere caused London to neglect this campaign once again until late 1918 when the oilfields of Mosul and Baku beckoned. In 1922 Iraq became a British protectorate. The invaders of 2003 ought to have read Barker's book as part of their preparation. Barker brought to us an invaluable Arab proverb: ***When Allah made hell, he did not make it bad enough – so he made Mesopotamia.***

Buckle, Henry, L/Cpl.: *A Tommy's Sketchbook*, edited by David Read (Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum, 2012). This is the author's diary of the War from 1914 to 1915 when he was invalided out of the Army. In 1901 he was a tinsmith living in Baptist Chapel Court. He had married in Somerset in 1907. Because he was also an excellent artist, the book is an excellent insight into the first years of the war.

Gilbert, Martin, *The First World War, a Complete History* (London, 1994)

Hall, Kathleen, *"Historical Scrapbook"*. The late *THS* founder member, Kathleen Hall, was granddaughter of ***Daisy Bloxham***, who kept an invaluable historical scrapbook during her youth in World War I.

Morris James, Farewell *the Trumpets: An Imperial Retreat* (London, 1978)

Palmer, Alan, '*The Gardeners of Salonika: The Macedonian Campaign, 1915-1918*' (Faber, 2011) .

Wyrall, Reginald Everard, was a professional author, journalist and military historian who was born in 1878, in Cheltenham, son of photographic artist Charles Wyrall. He rarely used his first name. In 1911 he was registered just as Everard and was an unmarried Journalist living in the Temple, London. He had a fair amount of military service behind him, serving in the Boer War and then WW1 as a 2nd/Lt. in the *ASC*. As he only won the two standard medals, we can assume that he did not serve on the *Western Front* or *Gallipoli* before 1916 but he participated in the *Third Afghan War*, 1919.

He owned and edited the first photographic magazine to be published in South Africa and also worked as a sub-editor in Fleet Street (presumably in 1911). He had a strong social conscience and voluntarily entered workhouses, broke stones and picked oakum, in order to see at first hand, how the State treated the very poor. The results of his investigations were published in the *Daily Express* in 1908. He also carried out investigative work into charitable organisations. One of his hobbies was the study of the Great War. *The Gloucestershire Regiment in the War, 1914-1918* was first published in 1931 by Methuen. I notice that he also wrote up the History of the *West Yorkshire Regiment.*

When I read *The Gloucestershire Regiment,* I was intrigued to ascertain his point of view: he wrote it as a journalist rather than active participant. He clearly defends Haig in his judgement of the *Battle of the Somme*. I was, however, disappointed that he ignored the roles of the *Kitchener Battalions* in the War – even the *9th* in Salonika, a campaign which I felt appropriated a disproportionate part of the book.

I, therefore, checked out the photograph of Field Marshal George Francis Milne, who wrote the *Foreword.* I learned that he was Commander of the *27th Division* which contained the *2nd Gloucesters* from 1915 and was the British officer commanding troops in Salonika from 1916 to 1918!

Wyrall died in 1932, aged 54, soon after publishing the *Gloucesters*' biography.[249]

Anonymous: "A Trooper's Diary, the RGH on Service 1914-1918", edited by Lawrence Birkin (*Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum*, 2014); first published in the *Gloucester Journal* (GJ) 1914-1918 in instalments.

It is a very well written diary by an obviously educated trooper who remains anonymous to this day. He was not, however, an officer as might be expected at that time. He writes about the period from enlistment through training in this country until embarkation to Egypt where his opportunity to enjoy cavalry life in the sun was truncated by a spell as an infantryman in ***Gallipoli*** from 18 August to 15 December 1915. He survived to be reunited with his horse in Egypt and took part in manoeuvres which involved ***Katia***. He was lucky enough not to be in the contingent which was forced to surrender with great losses but was part of the composite regiment which gained revenge at *Romani* in August 1916. There is an unfortunate and unexplained gap in the diary between 9 January 1917 and 27 October 1917, after which he describes with some relish the advance of the traditional cavalry through Palestine until he becomes an enthusiastic tourist in the Holy City of Jerusalem. On p. 155 one was very disappointed to read: *"up till this we have ridden together, but here fate steps in and divides the writer from his comrades, and some other pen must describe the final stages of the campaigning"*. Whether there was 'another pen', we do not know and it is such a lack of commentary which weakens the editorship of this book. The reader is left to make his own notes about what was actually happening in the context of the war.

We are provided with appendices of members of the Regiment for cross-referencing with our records:

A. Roll of Honour (those who had enrolled by 12 September 1914 (GJ): 2,153 men
B. Recruits since Mobilisation last: 2,267
C. Active Service Roll 8 May 10915 (GJ) Last number 2, 638

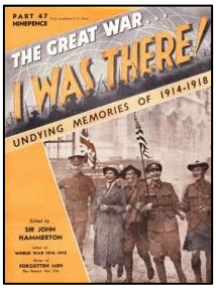
We only have four members of the *RGH* from Tewkesbury who lost their lives and two who survived:

- **Frank Neale [†] [**and **Charles Neale**, his brother, who survived}
- **W. E. Greenwood [†]** and his brother, **J. L. Greenwood [†]**
- **Frank Perkins [†]**:
- **Jack Pullin**, a *POW* who actually survived his captivity

Newspapers

Tewkesbury Register: indexed from 1858 by *THS* volunteers, it features in the ***Woodard Online Database*** and photocopies of the newspapers can be studied on a reader at **Tewkesbury Town Library.**
Tewkesbury Record: indexed and available on ***Woodard Online Database***, it can only be studied at the *Gloucestershire Archives*, Gloucester
Cheltenham Chronicle and Graphic: this publication has proved invaluable, as it was the only source of photographs of individual soldiers. It can be studied at Cheltenham Reference Library.

Historical Publications



The Great War – I was there!, edited by Sir John Hammerton; "complete in about 40 parts" dated c 1938 and published by the Amalgamated Press Ltd using photographs of the Imperial War Museum. The publication reads like a post-war propaganda document but **Sam Eedle** points out that it contained first-hand accounts written by WWI participants. It was privately published and eagerly bought by many veterans and their families. ***THS* is grateful to the Imperial War Museum for granting permission for us to scan and use its photographs.** The whole series of the publication was kindly lent by Mrs. Julie Gibson of Apperley.

[249] S. Eedle points out that Wyrall used R. M. Grazebrook [Compiler], *The Gloucestershire Regiment, War Narratives, 1914-1915,* [1927].

THS Publications

Members of the Society have written excellent articles for its *Annual Bulletin of Research* over two decades featuring aspects of the war. Individual articles can be accessed via the Society's website on *www.ths.freeuk.com/publications/bulletin/contents_by_topic.pdf* .

Title	Author	Year/Volume	Page
Baker, Percy; photos: *Turning Negative to Positive*	Chris Kirby	2004/13	53
Bloxham, Heneage: his Disappearance	Sam Eedle	2003/12	57
Civilian Community in 1917	Janet Devereux	2005/14	68
Glosters, 13th: From Town Hall to Boar's Head	Sam Eedle	2002/11	40
Glosters, 5th: "*'Our' Tommies are always Cheerful*"	Janet Devereux	2003/12	20
Gurney, Harvey & Howells: *Three Gloucestershire Friends*	Janet Devereux	2004/13	64
Halsey: *Bagging a 'Blighty'*	Jim Freeman	2004/13	41
Halsey's Great War	Jim Freeman	2002/11	12
Halsey's Lost War Records	Jim Freeman	2003/12	37
Teenage Refugee from Belgium	Clementine De Leender	2006/ 15	22
Territorials: *The Abbey Boys*	Sam Eedle	2004/13	21
Voluntary Recruitment 1914-1916	Gemma Wall	2000/09	58
Volunteer: *Goodbye, Mr. Harrison*	Sam Eedle	2014 23	22

Monograph:

The History of Tewkesbury's War Memorial, John Dixon with Sam Eedle; 2012-2013 Appeal

All *THS* Publications are available via the Society's Website or from *Alison's Bookshop*

Internet

Freely available

Freebmd: excellent website for BMD 1837 to 1937 when Tewkesbury lost its own Register Office. Thereafter records are unreliable in their availability.

The ***Long, Long Trail***: a superb reference website for understanding the movement of individual army units and much more. It grants us permission to use it if it is suitably referenced The website has been developed over 15 years and represents thousands of man-hours of effort and maintained by **Chris Baker**. Full copyright over content is owned by Milverton Associates. We thank them for their endeavour on our behalf.

The ***Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum***: *(http://soldiersofglos.com/).*

Army Service Numbers 1881-1918 *(http://armyservicenumbers.blogspot.co.uk/),* a site created and maintained by Paul Nixon that identifies regimental numbers and the corresponding date of enlistment (by regiment and battalion), from a selection of surviving army service records. By definition, therefore, it is not a complete list; this is impossible because of the high percentage of records destroyed in 1940 but, if Paul has information on a particular regiment and battalion, it is useful to estimate when an individual enlisted.
***Wikipedia*:** perhaps it is a too convenient source of knowledge but it must always be verified by other sources**.** Notwithstanding that caveat, the author supports the concept and submits articles.

Commercial Websites Requiring Subscription

Ancestry.co.uk: this website proved particularly valuable for Military Records especially *Medal Rolls* and the *Silver War Badge*. Researchers must be aware of the loss of 60% of service Records during the Blitz of World War II. When available, these records are invaluable.

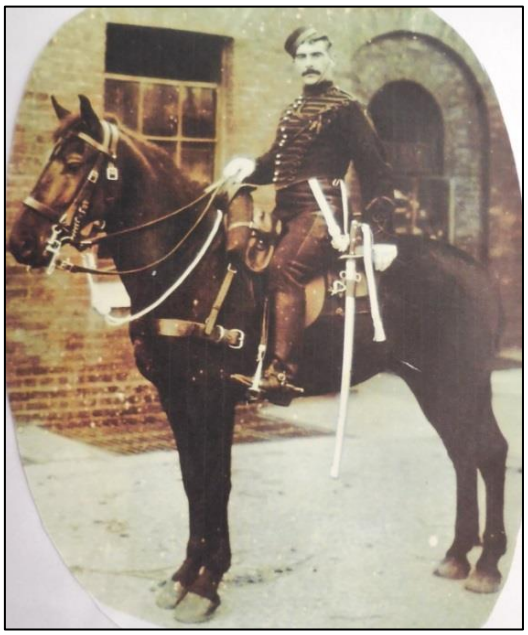
Find My Past: is less comprehensive for **military records** but its **census search mechanism** is very good. The availability of **1911 Census** has proved invaluable; it was not available at the start of the project in 2008.

The ***National Archives*** *(www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/*) allows the downloading of *Battalion War Diaries*, as well as RFC/RAF and Royal Navy service records for a fee.

INDEX TO SECTIONS I-IV

Organised as **General, Battles, Military Units, People, Places,**
generic terms; *italic script***:** refer to ***Section IV*** (pp115-130) for more information
Bold refers to **significant** information

Historical artefacts keep on enriching our knowledge!



George Spencer, Reservist (C. Scott)

This photograph of a splendid horseman was only recently submitted by a family member – just proving that one has never finished writing a history – it is but a report of a point in time.

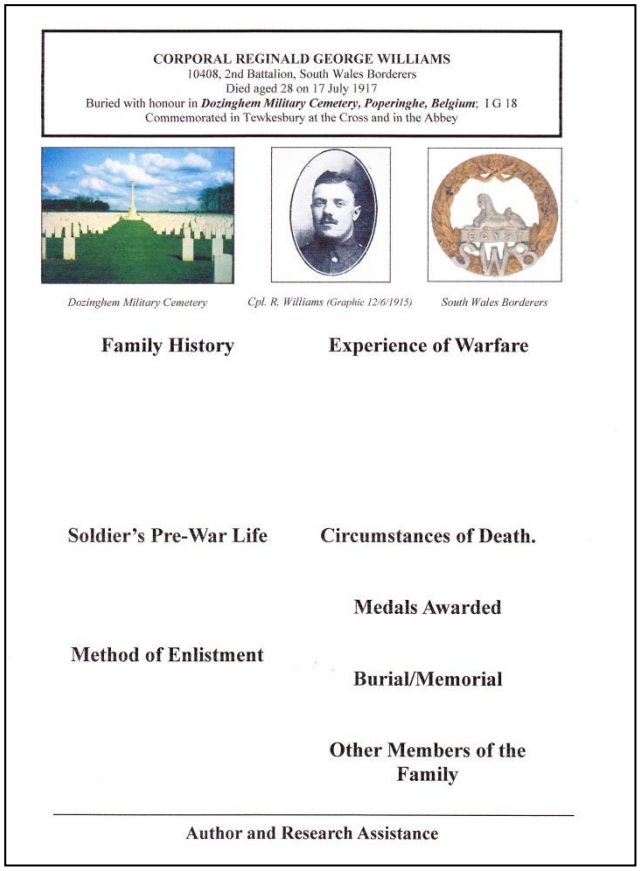
George Spencer became a regular soldier in 1897 when he joined the *Royal Horse Artillery* – the photograph was taken at Woolwich Barracks on a horse from the Chestnut Troop, so named by King George V. Spencer fought during the Boxer Rising in China in 1901 but, on his return home, left the army and married Alice Brush in Ripple Parish Church in 1904. In 1914 he re-joined the colours as a *Volunteer/Reservist* but was allocated to the *Army Service Corps*. We know little of his war service except family lore maintains that *"his horse got shot from under him and his hair went white overnight; like a lot he never said much about it at all"*. He ended the war as an 'Acting Corporal'. He celebrated his Golden Wedding in 1954 and died aged 82 in 1956.

We hope more such splendid photographs will emerge as a result of reading this book.

V. Biographies of our "*Noble Band of Heroes*"

Introduction

The biographies are presented in alphabetical order, as they are on the Town's War Memorials (except for the *Grammar School Memorial*). They each follow a similar pattern:

Biography	Structure
	**Top Row**: contains commemorative information provided by CWGC with additional details of where locally the person is commemorated. **Second Row**: 1. *CWGC* photograph of Burial/Memorial 2. Photograph of person (if available) or his *Gallantry Medal* or *Campaign Medal* (if awarded and not including the general *War* and *Allied Victory* medals). 3. Cap badge of his *Regiment/Corps* **Two Columns of Text**: biography containing information (where available) of the person's life, following the headings outlined. **Bottom Row**: Authorship: the main author and his named research assistance. The text was written and researched mainly by **Malcolm Waldron** with assistance from other members of ***THS*** and edited by **John Dixon.** Typesetting was by **Roxy Base.**

There follow 193 biographies of those commemorated on the Town's various War Memorials.

However:

- Two names have yet to be identified: **S. Davies** and **A. Jordan**
- Biographies of those who died because of the war but who are not officially commemorated are also included.
- The research team is conscious that, despite our endeavours, we have omitted others who died, mainly of war injuries but after official deadlines had passed. We urge those who possess information to contact the team; biographies will be added, in due course, on *www.ths.freeuk.com.*
- It is inevitable that some military terminology has been used in these biographies. We, therefore advise readers to refer to **Section IV**[250] where, we hope, all will be explained.
- There follows a **List of Biographies** (in alphabetical order of surname) for all those men and one woman who lost their lives in this war. The pages are not numbered.

[250] See pages 115-130