CHANNEL ISLANDS
GREAT WAR STUDY GROUP

Jersey National School Roll of Honour
(At the Rear of the Jersey Library)

JOURNAL 1
APRIL 2005

Hello All

I thought that I would put a few bits together and circulate them. After some mishaps in sending out photographs to friends and family, and either clogging computers or losing them in the ether, I am posting this to everyone on the list.

First of all, I am attaching a couple of articles written by Liz Walton. One of them – “Guernsey’s Lost Generation” resulted in Liz winning a cup at an Eisteddfod in Guernsey, while the other – “Salvation Army Women in the Great War” will shortly be published in the Great War Magazine (?). Congratulations are certainly due for both. Liz is happy that the articles are shared with you.

German Prisoners of War

I’ve been identifying files I want to look at in the Jersey Archive Trust on the web, and in doing so, discovered the following pictures on file there showing Prisoners of War (POW) who appear to have just landed and are being marched off to the POW camp on Blanches Banques in St Ouen’s Bay.

The pictures interest for a couple of reasons. First, two Germans to the left hand side of the first picture look quite happy for either (a) their photos to be taken (in contravention of the Geneva Convention?), or (b) that they are safe and well at an appreciable distance from the Western Front, and likely to continue to be?

Secondly, the logistics of transferring POW from a ship to the Blanches Banques POW camp obviously required some effort if the number of guards lining the route every 5-10 yards with fixed bayonets is to be considered as per the photograph below. I feel sure that the view is of them at the landward end of Albert Pier, and I

would guess that they would be boarding a train at the old Jersey Railway terminus to be carried to the old La Moye Station. Disembarking there, they would then have marched down La Pulente to the camp.

Does anyone else have any thoughts or ideas?

Guernsey's Lost Generation

The huge loss of life in the First World War resulted in a missing generation of young men, and a total change in the way of life in Guernsey, just as it did in larger communities on the British mainland. Measuring approximately 9 miles by 7 and having a population at that time of about 40,000, Guernsey is situated in the Gulf of St Malo and is part of the British Isles but not the United Kingdom. It was and still is self-governing in terms of home affairs, but has a special relationship with the Crown which is represented locally by the Lieutenant-Governor. Part of this relationship involves the fact that no Guernseyman could be conscripted to serve overseas except to rescue the King or to help in the recapture of the British mainland.

However in 1915 Lieutenant General Sir Reginald Hart VC, KCB, KCVO was appointed Governor. He persuaded the Island's government, the States of Guernsey, to authorise the raising of a Battalion of the Royal Guernsey Light Infantry (RGLI), to serve in France and thereby show the island's devotion to the Crown. Despite the devastating effect on small local communities caused by heavy losses in the Pals' Battalions of Kitchener's Army during the previous year, and the fact that many Guernseymen had already volunteered and were serving in other army units, it was felt that there should be a unit bearing the Island's name on the field of battle.

So on 1st June, 1917 the 1st (Service) Battalion, RGLI left the island for advanced training at Bourne Park Camp near Canterbury. The local newspapers contained

many optimistic and patriotic articles about military matters at this time, echoing the predominant mood on the island. For example, on the 12th May, 1917 the *Weekly Press* reported that the Chanson de Roland had been adopted as the RGLI Regimental march, and on 9th June, 1917 there was a photograph of Joey the donkey, the RGLI mascot, sharing the pages with reports of school prize-giving's, temperance meetings, flower shows and sales of work. The same newspaper on 7th July, 1917 carried a story praising a Mrs. Sarre of the Rocque Poisson, St Pierre du Bois who had "eight of her sons in khaki at the same time", and there were also several groups of photographs of "brothers in arms" - members of the same family serving in various units.

On 26th September, 1917, following much ceremonial including inspections and presentation of Colours, 44 Officers and 964 Other Ranks of the RGLI left the Island for Southampton and France, where they travelled by train to join 86th Brigade of the 29th division at Stoke Camp, Proven. This Regular Army Division had been involved in the war from its earliest days, and by this time was made up largely of drafts and conscripts, having suffered 4,700 casualties in two months. Almost immediately the RGLI became involved in intensive training for the Battle of Cambrai. The first attack on 20th November, 1917 was a success, with large areas being captured with relatively few casualties.

However the events that were to have such a devastating effect on the Guernsey community began on 30th November, 1917, only two months after the RGLI had left the island in their full military splendour. Although originally in reserve, they were ordered to hold the village of Les Rues Vertes which they did eventually after being pushed back, retaking the village twice in hand-to hand fighting. However this stand left them surrounded on three sides by the German lines, a position which could not be held and so on the night of 1st December, 1917 they were ordered to give it up. General de Lisle wrote to the Bailiff soon after, stating that "Guernsey has every reason to feel the greatest pride in her sons, and I am proud to have them under me, fighting alongside my staunch veterans of three years' fighting experience..... I regret the casualties were heavy, a further proof, if any were needed, that they fought magnificently".

Pride was not the only emotion to be felt when news came through that 1 Officer and 14 Other Ranks were killed, 8 Officers and 266 Other Ranks were wounded, and, perhaps worst of all, 2 Officers and 214 Other Ranks were missing. This news gradually began to filter through early in 1918, with many Guernsey families enduring the Christmas period knowing that there had been heavy fighting but with no news of their sons and husbands' fates. In fact as late as October 1918 newspapers were still listing confirmation of deaths of soldiers previously listed as missing from 1st December, 1917. The figures themselves are horrifying enough but when individual stories are examined the almost unbearable toll of suffering on Guernsey families become evident. Two of the sons (Privates Nico and Wilfred Sarre) of Mrs Sarre who less than six months earlier had been proudly reported as having eight boys in khaki, were killed at the same time and buried side by side. Two more, Privates Peter and E Sarre were taken prisoner in the same battle, as was her son in law, Private E Martel. Mr Sarre was by this time an inmate of the country asylum, and was therefore unaware of all this. Her remaining sons were all still on active service, and soon afterwards Private William Sarre was reported wounded. Other families suffered devastating losses, for example Privates Walter and Bertie de la Mare, adopted sons of a Mr Williams of Torteval were killed at the same time,

and Privates Adolphus and Archie Gallienne, twins from St Pierre du Bois died within three days of each other. Almost 40% of the Battalion's total strength had become casualties.

The effect on the people of Guernsey must have been devastating. Many soldiers had been listed as missing for months before they were officially declared killed in action, which meant that families had to endure a long period of uncertainty before they could make appropriate arrangements and then grieve properly. Also the loss of each man affected the whole community, on a small island where most people are related by family, work or just proximity. Other problems also arose from the sudden loss of social stability, for example *La Gazette de Guernesey* of 25th January, 1919 reports a case of bigamy involving the widow of a Private de Carteret, who was listed as missing on 1st December, 1917 then presumed dead in October, 1918. A Private Atkinson of the RGLI, based at Fort George, married her in May, 1919 despite having a wife and several children in London. It was stated that he did this because she was the recipient of a war widow's pension. The widow of a Private Brimage was just one woman, who was left to cope with seven children between the ages of 13 years and 7 months when he was killed on 1st December, 1917. Many island women had to take over jobs previously done by their men folk in order to keep the island functioning, and to earn themselves a living. Local newspapers report that they were employed as tram conductresses, drivers of horse vans, and office and bank workers as well as working on farms and in greenhouses, situations that would have been unthinkable before the war.

As if this was not enough suffering for one small community, early in 1918, Sir Reginald Hart asked the War Office for help in making up the numbers of the RGLI so that the Battalion would not need to be disbanded. As a result of this, groups from various other Battalions were drafted in, so that almost half of the RGLI of 1918 consisted of men from outside the Island. Almost as soon as numbers were made up, they were moved in to the Passchendaele area, where they were involved in sporadic fighting with what Parks[1] describes as a steady trickle of casualties. But on 13th and 14th April, 1918, fighting suddenly escalated, with heavy artillery fire and the battalion was virtually decimated in the attack on the Le Doulieu region. Although Haig's dispatch of 20th July, 1918, remarks on the gallant service of the RGLI, this would be small consolation for Islanders reading the lists of men killed, wounded or missing, presumed dead, that filled lengthy columns in the Guernsey papers for the second time in four months.

Just over six months after they arrived in France, the RGLI had virtually ceased to exist. The few men who remained from the original Service Battalion and the second draft were joined by recruits from the Second Battalion in Guernsey, but they could no longer be a fighting force. Instead they were given the role of guard troops at Haig's Headquarters in Montreuil. On 21st May, 1919, six months after the Armistice was signed, they left for Guernsey on the SS Lydia. There remained in the war cemeteries of Flanders more than 300 graves of RGLI members, to say nothing of those of many other Guernseymen who served with other units. The Cambrai Memorial at Louverval in Northern France and the Ploegsteert Memorial in Belgium, both of which are memorials to men who died in the conflict but have no known grave, bear long lists of Guernsey names - Bisson, Guilbert, Le Tissier, Queripel and Sebire, to name but a few. Many families are represented on both memorials.

[1] Parks, E.1992, *Diex Aix: God Help Us. The Guernseymen who marched away, 1914 – 1918,* Guernsey Museums and Galleries, Guernsey.

Meanwhile Sir Reginald Hart retired from his post as Lieutenant Governor of Guernsey in 1918, on reaching the age of 70. He left the island immediately.

However for the people of Guernsey things could never go back to the way they had been before the war. Not only were families torn apart by the loss of fathers, sons and brothers, but the island as a whole had lost a large portion of its fittest young men. Many young women would remain single, as they now outnumbered the men quite considerably. Many had had the opportunity to work outside the home, and to earn money, for the first time and they were able to continue with this because they were not needed or indeed able to be wives and mothers, and also there were not enough men to fill all the vacant posts. For many of the men who returned, their experiences in France had widened their horizons to a point that would have been unthinkable before the war. In fact a significant number signed on again for regular military service, despite the suffering and hardship that they had endured. They had seen a wider world and could not return to the confines of a small island. Guernsey's "lost generation" can never be forgotten because of the impact they had on every aspect of Island life.

TE Lawrence – A Jersey Connection

As you may recall, I recently visited Jordan having been fortunate enough to win a holiday there through a Sunday Times competition. Before going I contacted the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) to see whether there were any CWGC cemeteries. Surprisingly there were none. I was interested in any Lawrence link.

I have included a couple of pictures on the next page. The first shows some of the terrain that Lawrence would have experienced, and I am sure that the Arab forces under Prince Faisal and he would have camped and moved in this area. A spring a few miles away is in fact known as Lawrence's Spring though it may be named just for we unsuspecting tourists!

The second picture shows a railway line also close to Wadi Rum. This line apparently runs down from Ma'an to Aqaba, and is almost certainly not on the main pilgrimage route from Damascus to Medina that the Hejaz railway was originally built for. To some extent, and I am guessing this from a map of the route and taking into account the proximity of this particular line from Aqaba (about 40 - 45 kilometres). The line seems narrower when comparing it with the images in David Lean's "Lawrence of Arabia" film. However, the Hejaz gauge was 1.050 metres.

The actual line exists further north, and some of the old stations and their guard forts still remain however, and the line is in use today shipping phosphates down to Aqaba.

All of that doesn't address the title however!!!

The Lawrence family lived for a time in Jersey.

TE's father, Thomas Chapman, had been part of the Irish land-owning gentry but had left his wife to be with Sarah Lawrence, one of the servant staff. They had five sons including Montague Robert born in Dublin in 1885, Thomas Edward born in Tremadoc, Wales in 1888 and William George born in Kircudbright in 1889.

Arabian Desert – near Wadi Rum, Jordan (Taken 8th March 2005)

Railway Line – near Wadi Rum, Jordan (Taken 8th March 2005)

In the early 1890s the family was living in Dinard, France and a fourth child was on the way. Mindful of the liability of French military service for males, the family moved to Jersey for about a year so that the fourth child, another boy as it turned out, could be born there in 1893. He was named Frank Helier – the Helier being after St Helier. After that, they moved to Totton near Southampton in 1894 and Oxford two years later where the last son – Arnold W was born in 1900.

Although not listed in the Jersey Roll of Honour, Frank was to die at Richebourg L'Avoue on 9th May, 1915 while serving as a Second Lieutenant in 3rd Battalion, the Gloucestershire Regiment and is commemorated on the Le Touret memorial. Incidentally, William was also killed as an observer and a Second Lieutenant with the RFC on 23rd October, 1915. Does anyone know of where they lived in St Helier?

Salvation Army Women in the Great War

"I insist on the equality of women with men. Every officer and soldier should insist upon the truth that woman is as important, as valuable, as capable and as necessary to the progress and happiness of the world as man.[2]"

So said William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, in 1908. He proved that he meant what he said when he placed Brigadier Mary Murray in charge of the Salvation Army's "Naval and Military League" at the time of the Great War. She, together with Staff Captain John Aspinall and Ensign May Whittaker went to Belgium and France in 1914 to see what help could be given to the men of the British Expeditionary Force. The result of this was a service which eventually provided forty Camp Centres near the war zones, and later a war graves visitation service for bereaved relatives, under the direction of another woman officer, Adjutant Mary Booth.

These services were not only organized by women officers, but also many of their volunteer war workers were young working class women. My aunt, Ada Le Poidevin was a typical example. Born in Guernsey in 1895, the second daughter of a *charrotier* in a local quarry, she attended the state primary school until the age of about 14 before going into domestic service. The family members were ardent Salvationists, her father being a lifelong member of the band of the St Sampson's Corps. In 1917, patriotism was rife on the island as on the mainland. The RGLI had just been formed and was being trained prior to going to France. A Staff Captain Dalziel had also visited the island and talked about Salvation Army work among the troops. Ada must have decided at this stage that she had to offer her services for the war effort.

Her first passport shows that she left the island in 1917 and apart from periods of leave did not return until late 1922. During wartime she did what was referred to as "camp work". The Salvation Army ran Camp Centres wherever there were large concentrations of troops in France. Ada was stationed at Boulogne, Abbeville, Arras, and Ostrohove at various times. Her notebook records that she was under fire on more than one occasion:

"Slept in barn. Jerry over. Dropped five around us. Shrapnel through roof. Awful experience"

[2] Booth, W. (1908) *The Founder's Messages to Soldiers*, London, The Salvation Army.

Reads an entry for 13th August, 1918, whilst another for the 14th August, 1918 reads:

"Arrived hut half past four morning. Shrapnel through roof. Table smashed."

She also records lengthy journeys on foot, and states that:

"You need stout boots on these roads".

The huts were typically staffed by a married Salvationist couple plus five or six young "sisters" who assisted them with the day to day work. Routine camp work involved catering for the soldiers in what *The Great War* magazine[3] describes as "real homelike style". The staff had to obtain what food they could within an area where the front line was constantly moving, and where entire towns and villages were totally devastated by shells and bombs. Ada's notebooks include several shopping lists for basics such as carrots, turnips, flour, cheese and eggs. However they always seemed to find something, and "Ma" Huish, one of the best known camp "mothers", based at the huge transit camp at Etaples, was reputed to have fried 2,000 eggs a day for the men.

The women workers also washed and mended uniforms, wrote letters to relatives at home, or simply listened and talked with the men as well as appealing to their spiritual side with Biblical readings and music. They also visited the sick and dying in hospitals and wrote letters home for them or brought them small comforts such as soap and handkerchiefs, or simply sat with them and listened to their worries. An obvious advantage was that they tended to come from the same social classes as the men with whom they were working, and so could relate to them in a way that "lady" volunteers in other welfare organizations could not in the clearly defined class structure of those days.

That the work was valued is reflected in a note[4] from Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, which states that the fact that women volunteers worked so close to the front, and endured the same dangers and hardships as the men was excellent for morale among the troops. Also many letters and diaries left by soldiers of the time show that the Salvation Army women were held in high esteem by the troops for sharing their hardships and trying to provide basic comforts whatever the circumstances - as Trooper George Jameson[5] of the 1st Battalion, Northumberland Hussars said:

"I'd give full marks to the Salvation Army ……The main road came through Vimy and down on to the plain that way. Well, you didn't take that main road if you could avoid it, it was under constant shellfire. ……But tucked into the side of the hill was the Salvation Army. And they used to have tea and whatever going all hours of the day. How they survived there I don't know. Wonderful people. In the middle of nowhere to suddenly walk into a place and get a piping hot pot of tea, it was a great reviver."

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[3] Hammerton, J.A. (ed)*The Great War,* Vol. XI, Part 205, pp 419-420, London, The Amalgamated Press

[4] Haig, Field Marshal Sir Douglas, (1919) report on the "*Features of the War*", fourth supplement to *The London Gazette*, Tuesday, April 8, 1919.

[5] Jameson, J Arthur M (2002) in *Forgotten Voices of Great War ,*London, Ebury

Immediately after the war Ada and a small contingent of Salvation Army women were involved with the War Graves Visitation Department. Their "Pilgrimages of Remembrance" involved travelling to England to meet with parties of bereaved relatives, escorting them to Folkestone then across the Channel to Calais or Boulogne from where they travelled to a "Hostel of Consolation" near one of the many cemeteries in the region. From there they would be escorted to the actual graves of their relatives either on foot or by "motor conveyance". The work must have been arduous and harrowing, travelling through areas devastated by war damage, where bodies were still being found on a regular basis. However journey times were relatively short - according to their booklet[6] you could leave London Victoria at 10.00 hours and be in Boulogne by 13.40 hours.

Ada's photographs show that the cemeteries were in many cases simply areas cordoned off from the surrounding battlefields by barbed wire, with most of the graves marked by a simple wooden cross with a metal nameplate tag. There were also some more individual memorials made by colleagues of the dead servicemen, such as the crosses fashioned from wooden propellers that marked the grave of RFC and RAF members. If families were unable to visit the grave two Salvation Army "sisters" would visit in their place and put some flowers on it their behalf. A photograph would then be taken and this would be sent, with a card containing a few pressed flowers, to the bereaved family.

She continued with this work until late 1922, by which time most of the cemeteries had been taken over by the Imperial War Graves Commission (now the CWGC), and furnished with the standard white headstones. She then returned to the island and never left it again. Whether the work continued is difficult to ascertain, as many records at the Salvation Army headquarters were destroyed by fire in the London Blitz. Ada herself died in Guernsey in 1983 at the age of 88. She left her passport, war worker's pass, some notebooks, an autograph book and a large collection of photographs and postcards. This story has been pieced together from these documents plus other outside sources in an attempt to tell the tale that she, like many old soldiers of the same era, never talked about.

Forthcoming Visits

It seems that quite a few of us are or will be in France and Flanders over the next few months.

According to Alan Marquis's latest letter, he should be there about now (30th March, 2005) on one of his conducted tours.

Liz Walton will also be in Arras at the end of March or in early April looking at the department and municipal archives while Ian will be in Albert, Cambrai and Ypres during May with his brother (a WFA member Ian?) looking into the locations experienced by the Jersey Contingent.

For my part, I will be staying for eight days in Murvaux about 25 kilometres north of Verdun starting next Thursday (7th April, 2005) having travelled via Cambrai, Le Cateau and Sedan. If not too far off my route, I'll be happy to do some digital

[6] *Pilgrimages of Remembrance,* The Campfield Press, St Alban's (Courtesy of the Imperial War Museum, London)

photography of graves, memorials etc. However I would need to know by last thing on Tuesday (5th April, 2005).

Enfin

Just a few odds and ends to fill the last page and prompt others for future inputs:

Continuing the TE Lawrence theme, I believe that the Imperial War Museum (IWM) is doing an exhibition on him starting mid-October, 2005.

Though not totally relevant to our interest, IWM North in Manchester is doing something on WW2 in the North and this may include material on CI evacuees living in Cheshire and Lancashire.

I hope Ian can soon recount his experiences in getting his book on the Jersey Contingent published and let us know of the likely publication date. I'm keen on getting a few copies, both for personal use as well as gifts for family and friends.

Ned has recounted to me his excellent sponsorship work for the RAF Benevolent Fund – who knows, if we go towards a website, he could find us a sponsor?

Have had an interchange with Liz on Hart VC and his departure from Guernsey in 1918 at the age of 70 and it seems that he slipped away "under the carpet" so to speak? Do Lieutenant Governors hand over with an amount of ceremony? He lived until 1931.

I found a website called www.jersey-medals.com about a 10-14 days ago organised by an ex-policeman called Stuart Elliott. Since then it has expired and although I had E-Mailed him prior to that I have heard nothing. Had anybody seen it or knows of Stuart?

Lastly, as mentioned previously, I am only too prepared to circulate material if you are happy for it to be as I've done with Liz's essays. The aim is to share CI relevant Great War information amongst us that might not appear in the normal WFA publications – in a sense I am trying to make better use of the word Association in the title WFA.

Regards
Barrie Bertram
30th March, 2005

Postscript: Fully Revised and Renamed as a Journal on 12th June, 2008.