

# CHANNEL ISLANDS GREAT WAR STUDY GROUP



**For an Army about to march on its Stomach!  
(The Latter-Day “Guernseys”)**

**JOURNAL 15  
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Hello All

Looking out of my study window this morning, it seems as if the weather is doing its bit to commemorate the mud of Passchendaele of ninety years ago, and far more successfully than the assortment of TV channels that I have. Still, one supposes there is still time for the programme schedulers to wake up.

Well, on to Cambrai. Some of our Guernsey-resident members are actively helping the Guernsey Museum staff in their preparations for the exhibition to be held in November, and it is hoped that as many of the Group as possible can meet up at the Museum on the opening day, and as a reminder, please note the Special Notice that appears further on. As a Group, some of us had hoped to produce a booklet to support the Cambrai event. Unfortunately, it has been concluded that we could not do so, and while it was a first class idea from Mark Bougourd, we became a little bogged down by the logistics (that dreaded word!), the resources, timescales, geography and critically, getting a balanced approach. On the latter point, this would have been better resolved if there was more face to face contact, but by the Group's nature that it was not possible. For my part, I learnt some useful lessons and there are some very good ideas for the future. There may even be one or two books still appearing, but in slower time.

A different style of front picture this month. It is one with living people and not of the images of 90 years ago or of headstones, memorials or plaques. However, re-enactment as in this example is a means of furthering the remembrance of events that no longer merit even the occasional TV space. A brief article on Russell Doherty's efforts in this area are included. Meanwhile Liz Walton contributes two pieces, one on Nurse Violetta Thurston and another on the German Tenant of Herm, Price Blucher. With regards to the Prince, Liz feels that there remain a lot of gaps, and she would welcome any additional information. Following on from a poetic contribution "The Sling" in the last Journal, two more camp poems are included. There are the usual odds and ends that help plug gaps! I trust that there is something that you will enjoy reading. However, there is one article that may be a foretaste of a bit of exciting research, in that if successful, it would mean for one Jersey family, the news that a soldier who was reported missing in 1916 has been found. Please see page 5.

Finally, I E-Mailed Members about three weeks ago that I was looking to relinquish my coordinating and editing roles at the end of December 2007, citing the following reasons:

- A change of face that will refresh the Journal and can bring some new ideas etc.
- The opportunity to bring the Group's existence and work closer to the epicentre of the CI and to generate greater awareness
- For me personally, to complete a number of my GW projects that are still only 50% complete and work towards one (if not two) books

Although the reasons remain valid, several Members have asked me to continue, and I've agreed to for another year, however, I would hope that those living in the Islands should see themselves better placed in promoting the Group and its aims.

## Postscripts

This is a brief section to tie up some loose ends from the earlier Newsletters and Journals and to add some photographs in support if appropriate.

### A Silver Kettle

I had written a piece on the above topic which appeared on page 16 of Journal 12 back in February, and I am pleased that, since that article, I have been in contact with the owner, a Mr Len Rowlands, who had welcomed feedback on my research and very kindly arranged for the following photographs to be taken. The photographer has done an excellent job to avoid getting himself reflected in the silver.



Looking a little further into the Taylor family, in 1901 his father appeared to have been living in Southsea, whilst articles in the Times in the 1890s also referred to him being at Parkhurst on the IoW! Hopefully as a padre to the Prison, and not as an occupant!

Meanwhile Mrs Taylor's address is shown in CWGC, as Clifton, and I believe that it is (was?) on Mont Felard in St Lawrence. Her maiden name was Blunden and with her origins in Brighton, one might wonder whether she was related in any way to the poet and author Edmund Blunden, though he moved from Kent to Sussex when young and would be commissioned with "Lowther's Lambs".

I note that the date on the kettle, 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1906, is also the date when Coutart De B Taylor was promoted Captain in Jersey's Militia. Was the kettle therefore still a wedding gift or was the date deliberately coincident.

As to the circumstances of his loss of commission with the Royal Irish Rifles, I have written to the regimental Museum in Belfast to see if they are able to throw any light on the circumstances. I will also have to "break my duck" and visit the Kew to see what they hold on him in terms of Officer's Courts-Martial Records.

## Membership News

We're welcoming a few more members this month, and all ladies with a common thread with their interests related to Guernsey-men and -women who served and who are on their family trees. .

Pam Thatcher who lives in Milton on Sea, Hampshire and whose family names include Hill, De La Mare, Queripel, Robilliard and Tastival. If there are photographs of headstones and memorials in the general Southampton area required, she would be happy to take them as well as to undertake visits to Hampshire Southampton's Archives to trace merchant seamen's records.

Carol Karr who lives in Southport and has the Rowsell, Ray, Hamon and Bree families to follow up.

Marion Mabire who lives in South Carolina, USA. I'm awaiting further detail, and lastly Cheryl Lean (nee Boucher) in Australia who is looking at the Boucher, Madell, Markey and Tardifs.

### Send more Men and Money, and produce more Food

The last Journal contained a letter, dated 11<sup>th</sup> April 1918, from the Home Secretary of the British Government, George Cave, requesting Guernsey's Lieutenant-Governor to ask that the Guernsey's States could send more men, food and money to support the war effort, and was included in an attempt to attract comments whether pro- or anti-Cave. Two are included from Steve Bailey and myself, and both are pro-Cave.

Steve writes: *"While not being familiar with the details surrounding it I think my position would be that as the CI were receiving the full benefits of the Crown's armed forces in terms of their defence then it seems fair they should be asked to subscribe to the same tax and manpower regimes as the mainland. What is clear though is at this stage the Government had no idea that German collapse was imminent, there's clearly a note of desperation in the letter, almost a civil version of Haig's "With our backs to the Wall" communiqué."*

For my part: *"At the time of writing, there was a good possibility that the German Offensives could have separated French from British, who, from their national tendencies would fall back, the French to defend Paris, the British to the Channel ports. At that stage, the US forces were simply not strong enough to carry the fight. For the British, Dunkirk 1940 might have resulted 22 years earlier! One may consider that the Occupation might have also occurred earlier also? In the short term, what could the Islands achieve? To be realistic, crops were already in the ground, new recruits would take 3-6 months before they were trained to fight, and any financial offering that could be made from rural economies would be a veritable drop in the ocean. Cave's combined figures of £1000M and £5000M equate to more than £238 Billions at today's prices! Yet, while one might concede that a CI contribution would not swing the balance by itself, Cave saw that every little would help from the British Empire standpoint. I share Steve's view on Cave's desperation!"*

## An Unknown Soldier of the Royal Jersey Militia

This is a remarkable title for this item since, as most of you are aware that Jersey's Militia did not venture from the Island's shores during the Great War as a separate unit.

However, the photograph is real and the headstone is located in the Cerisy-Gailly French National Cemetery with another 392 British graves. It was taken by my relative, Alan Bertram, the great-grandson of Rifleman Ernest Bertram\* (4063), Jersey Contingent, when he was visiting the Cerisy-Gailly Military Cemetery that is close by to see the grave of another relative, Pte Alfred Richomme of 1<sup>st</sup> Bn, Dorsets.



\*My great-uncle

Why the Jersey Militia badge? At this stage, the only idea that I can come up with is that the man was from the Contingent as they wore brass "JERSEY" badges on their epaulettes and not "RIR" badges. Whatever, the actual reason, there was sufficient to identify the remains as those of a Jerseyman.

Looking at missing Jerseymen in France, Thiepval (46 names) is the most likely to have his name listed, Cambrai (13), Arras (32) and Vis-En-Artois (12) being battle areas a little too far away for the post-war clearance teams to have brought any remains to the south side of the Somme. Pozieres (17) is closer, but these are men missing in the German offensive of March 1918, though they cannot be discounted. But, if the assumption of the brass "JERSEY" badges is correct, the field is reduced to just 17 Jersey Contingent men. But, I've been wrong before!

Can he be identified? One would very much like the answer to be yes, and to that end I have E-Mailed the CWGC asking if they could provide as much information as they can from the original Grave Registration records. Hopefully this will include the reason(s) for identifying the man as a Jersey Militiaman, details where the body was originally found, and whether a rank had been established or not.

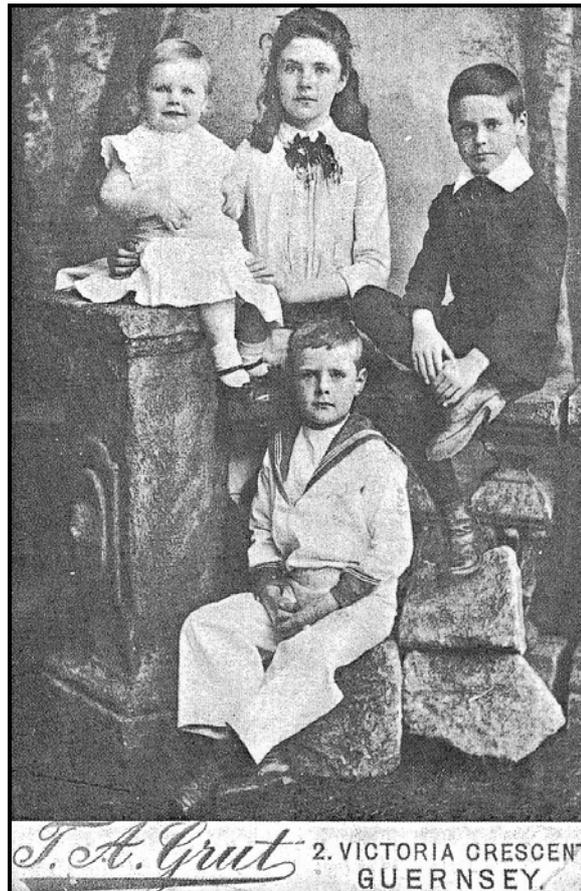
The CWGC data cannot come soon enough!

## Nurse Violetta Thurston By Liz Walton

A quick glance through the Guernsey Ladies' College Magazine for the years of the Great War yields some interesting stories. Alongside reports of marriages of past pupils and successes of netball and lacrosse teams in inter-island matches, there are contributions from and about women who made significant contributions to the war effort. One worthy of mention is Nurse Violetta Thurston, who became the one of the most high profile nurses in the Great War. From the earliest days of the war she wrote long letters to various publications, which were published week by week. She received many honours throughout her lengthy career, which spanned three wars. However contradictory reports leave many areas of her eventful life unclear.

Anne or Anna Violet Thurstan or Thurston was born in February 1879 or 1881, in Hastings, Sussex, the daughter of Dr. Edward Paget Thurstan (official records and her own accounts vary on the details here). She gave different accounts of where she spent her childhood, including Cornwall and the Canary Islands, but reproduced below is a photograph of her as a young girl with her brothers, taken by Gruts of Guernsey<sup>1</sup>.

The 1891 census has her living as a boarder in Paignton, Devon, while her father was in Australia. School records confirm that she was educated at the Ladies College in Guernsey, as do letters that she wrote to the school magazine during the war years, but she also went to school in Germany. In 1898 at the age of 19 she started work at a Home for the Incurables in London, and then moved to the East London Hospital for Children, Shadwell, at that time using the name Violet Thurstan. In 1900 she moved again, to work at the Fever Hospital in Guernsey before applying to train as a nurse at the London Hospital in Whitechapel. She was for some time Secretary of the National Union of Trained Nurses in the early days of her career, and was passionate about training and education for nurses. She wrote in *The British Journal of Nursing* of 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1912 that nurses needed to work together to "...lift our profession to a higher plane, to secure for the coming generation of nurses more education, better training, fuller opportunities than we had ourselves".



<sup>1</sup> With thanks to Melissa Hardie, The Hypatia Trust, Cornwall.

In 1907 she started a course of study with the University of St Andrew's in Scotland which led to her being awarded the "Lady Literate in Arts" Diploma in 1914. She studied French, Geography, Fine Art, Physiology and English. In 1910 she moved to London, and in 1913 she joined Westminster 146 VAD British Red Cross Service. At the outbreak of war she was called to London to help at the Red Cross centre in Vincent Square<sup>2</sup>. In September 1914, at the age of 35, she was invited by the St John Ambulance Brigade to lead a party of nurses to Brussels, where they would work with the Belgian Red Cross. Soon after her arrival the Belgian Government decided to offer no resistance to the advancing German troops, who then occupied the city. Most of the staff were evacuated, but she was one of a small number of nurses who remained there. Here she was one of three who accepted an appeal from the Burgomaster of Charleroi to help both French and German wounded. She described the conditions there - lack of food, equipment and trained medical staff - in graphic detail in her book<sup>3</sup>. She also mentions how the Belgians were waiting, expecting to be freed by the British, and how she worried about her two brothers in the Royal Navy who were involved in the battles in the North Sea.

Eventually when the German patients were repatriated and the French wounded were taken to Germany as prisoners of war, Nurse Thurstan returned to Brussels, but an order came through soon afterwards saying that all private hospitals and ambulance stations were to be closed and the wounded were not to be looked after by English nurses, who were all to be sent to Liège. Some ended up back in Brussels after various changes of orders, but eventually they were all ordered to leave, and escorted out of the city on to trains which took them to Hamburg in Germany. They were eventually released in Denmark, where they were welcomed by the nurses of Copenhagen and given a break from their previous hardships. Here she read of illness and hardship in what was called "the Belgium of Russia" – Poland, and decided that her duty lay there. After vaccinations against typhoid, and lots of formalities she and three other nurses gained permission to work with the Russian Red Cross. However to reach the front she had to travel overland through Lapland and Sweden, because the normal sea journey was considered to be too dangerous.

She then went by train to Petrograd and from there directly to Warsaw. Here the English nursing sisters were sent to different hospitals, to work with Russian Red Cross nurses, so that they would learn the language more quickly. Her first job there was in a dressing station, but as the Germans advanced on the Russian front she transferred from the hospital service to a Flying Column led by Prince and Princess Volkonsky, which was supposed to "go anywhere and do anything at any time of the day or night"<sup>4</sup>. She was sent to take charge of a temporary military hospital in Lodz, in Poland, a town under constant bombardment. The town housed about 18,000 wounded at this stage, and the makeshift hospital was bitterly cold, and food, heating, lighting and equipment were in short supply. When Lodz was evacuated she narrowly escaped becoming a German prisoner for the second time, but moved on to work at the Grand Duchess Cyril's hospital

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<sup>2</sup> Thurstan, V.A. (1915) *Field Hospital and Flying Column*, London, GP Putnam's Sons.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 25-26

<sup>4</sup> *Field Hospital and Flying Column, being the journal of an English nursing sister in Belgium & Russia*, New York: Putnam's, 1915, p.126.

and ambulance train based in Warsaw and Skiernevice. The ambulance train then moved down the railway to Zyradow and Radzivilow, to temporary dressing stations very near to the trenches. Here she spent Christmas 1914 where she notes that the dinner menu was Gravy Soup, Roast Horse and boiled Potatoes.<sup>5</sup>

Early in 1915, she was dressing a wounded soldier when a shell burst near by, and a piece of shrapnel made a gash in one leg. This incident resulted in her being awarded the Royal Cross of St. George, For Bravery", 4<sup>th</sup> class, described as "the highest honour a grateful Government could bestow"<sup>6</sup>. She was presented with it by the Tsar of Russia on 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 1915, and was the first nurse to receive this award. It was during enforced idleness as a result of septic poisoning of the wound and a slow convalescence that she wrote "*The People who Run*"<sup>7</sup> about the refugees of war.

She then went back to England, where her next task was to travel around the country lecturing for Lord Derby's appeal to men to enlist voluntarily and avoid conscription. But on 4<sup>th</sup> November, 1916 she was at the front again, this time as matron of a Red Cross hospital of 1,200 beds, at La Panne, in Belgium, the L'Hopital de l'Ocean, where she stayed until July 1917. This and her earlier bravery resulted in her later being awarded the Order of la Reine Elisabeth of Belgium.



This was an order instituted on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1915, awarded to Belgians and foreigners for wartime services. It has an image of Queen Elisabeth of the Belgians on the obverse, while the reverse depicts a veiled woman symbolising sacrifice and submission to duty and humanity.

Eventually, the British authorities decided to put women in the first line of receiving hospitals, and Miss Thurstan was chosen for one based at Rouen, the 15<sup>th</sup> Corps Main Dressing Station. Here the main wards were housed in a farmhouse and its outbuildings, while the staff was housed in tents. One night while the ambulances were away collecting wounded under cover of darkness, a German plane dropped a bomb on the farmhouse, killing a priest and wounding an orderly. He was rushed to the first-aid tent outside, and then the plane dropped another bomb, bringing down the entire structure. Miss Thurstan was knocked down by the falling roof, but recovered enough to help the stretcher-bearers carrying the wounded away, over fields of sugar-beet, in pouring rain, to the next line ambulance. This action won her the Military Medal.

The *London Gazette* of 19<sup>th</sup> November 1917 states that, "His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to approve of the award of the Military Medal for

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 170.

<sup>6</sup> *British Journal of Nursing*, March 1937, p.79

<sup>7</sup> *People Who Run*, New York: Putnam's, 1915.

bravery in the Field to the under-mentioned Ladies, Non-Commissioned-Officers and Men:.....Nursing Sister Violetta Thurstan, British Red Cross Society.”



**Violetta Thurstan on the occasion of receiving the Military Medal<sup>8</sup>**

During her convalescence from the wounds received in this action, she wrote a technical book teaching the main differences between nursing in war and peace, and *The Hounds of War Unleashed. A Nurse's account of life on the Eastern Front during the 1914-1918 war*. However she soon returned to nursing, and from December 1917 to June 1918 she worked with the Scottish Women's Hospital in Macedonia as Matron of the Ostrovo Hospital.

### **SPECIAL NOTICE 3**

In connection with the Guernsey Museum Services *Cambrai* exhibition, I will be looking to arrange dinner at the Cobo Hotel on the evening of 3<sup>rd</sup> November for those Group Members who are able to attend.

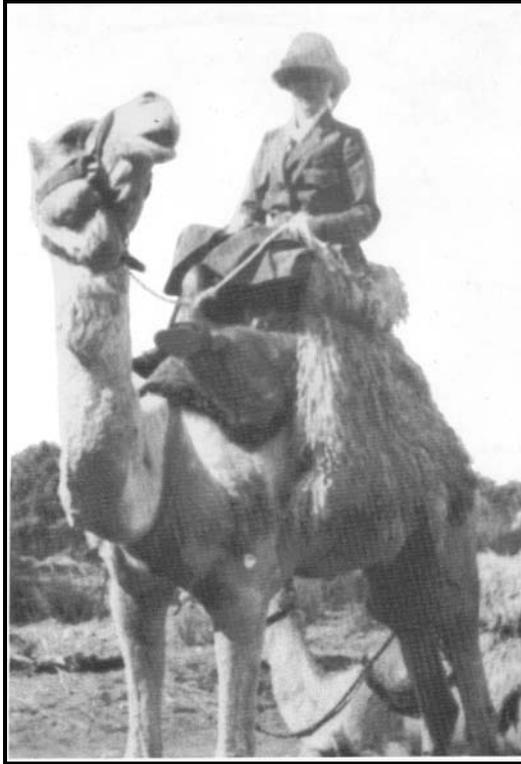
Please let me know, as soon as possible once you know your arrangements, if you are able to attend so that I can finalise table numbers. Similarly, a no thank you would also be useful.

By E-Mail or phone. Many thanks.

**From Liz Walton**

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<sup>8</sup> With thanks to Melissa Hardie, The Hypatia Trust, Cornwall



The day after the Armistice was signed, on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1918, she enlisted in the WRAF and was promoted on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1919 to be Deputy Assistant Commandant, with the grade of Administrator. On demobilisation she was appointed Director of Bedouin Industries, in charge of some Arab refugee camps. Here she supervised Arab women carpet making, creating natural dyes for their use. Her success in this area is shown by the fact that her carpets won the “Grand Prix d’Honneur” at Beyrout, as well as medals at Alexandria and Cairo. This led to her work in the 1930s as an organiser of Arts and Crafts, and her books on dyeing and weaving, which include *A Short History of Decorative Textiles and Tapestries* (1934), *Weaving Patterns Of Yesterday And Today*, and *The Use of Vegetable Dyes for Beginners* (1930) are still available and considered to

be standard texts on the subject. One of her designs was (and may still be) on permanent exhibition in the Victoria and Albert Museum. She also assisted in restoring the tapestries in Winchester Cathedral. The photograph (above left) shows her in her Bedouin days in the 1920s.

In 1937, when she was 55 or 58, according to some sources she was offered the job of supervisor of the Universities Ambulance, under Sir George Young, during the Spanish Civil War. Others<sup>9</sup> state that she was in Almeria at the time of the siege, where she “quietly set about releasing prisoners”. Whichever is correct, when the siege was lifted she was declared *persona non grata* and expelled from Spain. She went back to England, and when war was declared in 1939 she joined the WRNS as a First Officer with responsibilities for “educational duties”. She was by this time in her early sixties, but stated on her forms to the Ministry of Defence that she was 47! She then worked with Naval Intelligence in Falmouth, at the Contraband Control Base, helping with the inspection of ships, where her knowledge of languages came in useful. She also set up Chess and Craft clubs and continued with her own craft work throughout the war years. After the Armistice she served another 8 months as Education Officer on HMS Cochrane II before asking to be released. She was now 65.

After the Second World War she applied to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Association and was posted to Cairo then Italy, Austria and Serbia to work on the Catholic Relief Programme. This involved rehabilitation of people displaced as a result of the war. However she was perceived by some as rather autocratic and difficult and after some problems moved back to Cornwall in the early 1950s. Here she set about organising groups of spinners and weavers,

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<sup>9</sup> Somerfield, M and Bellingham. A (1993), *Violette Thurstan – A Celebration*, Penzance, Jamieson Library.

entering various shows and competitions, and weaving a map of Cornwall among other items. She also wrote and published novels including *The Foolish Virgin* in 1966 and *Stormy Petrel* in 1967, plus non-fiction on a variety of topics such as *Trees and Shrubs in Cornwall*. She also gave talks to various groups and clubs in the South West, and broadcast on the BBC's *Women's Hour* in 1968. She gave her last talk, on *My Life among the Bedouins*, at the age of 97. She died on 13<sup>th</sup> April, 1978 at Penryn, near Falmouth in Cornwall, and her obituary noted that "Her fragile appearance masked an indomitable spirit". She was buried with the full rites of the Roman Catholic Church, and all of her military medals were buried with her. These were listed as the Military Medal, the Order of St George (Russia), the Ordre de la Reine Elisabeth (Belgium), the Mons Star with clasp and roses, the Allied medal, Companion of the Vatican, the British War Medal, and the Victory medal.

**The Siegfried Sassoon Corner (well, not really!)  
By Barrie Bertram**

There are times where one could think that the Great War was a poet's war, not least because of the output from Owen, Sassoon, Blunden, Rosenberg *et al.* But it seems that poetry was then very much a way of expressing life in the trenches, in camps or setting out ones emotions for something that they loved and cared for, or even disliked! In the latter case, Ian Ronayne had found "The Reason" in a 1917 JEP and which was included in Newsletter 8 of June 2006. Meanwhile, the last Journal included "The Sling", a commentary that I'd found on that Camp at Bulford on Salisbury Plain.

The first poem below, that I found in a JEP of 1916, describes life at an appreciably different camp, that for British Prisoners of War in Germany – "Old Memories of Sennelager". As British soldiers of a more recent time can tell you, Sennelager was (is?) a large, somewhat flat training area, some 5 miles north of Paderborn, that had a specially built village to practice Fighting In a Built Up Area (FIBUA) and numerous ranges, amongst its many features. Looking at the map, I notice this while writing this that there is a Wilhelm Turm, and I suspect that this afforded Kaiser Wilhelm the opportunity to watch his troops manoeuvre. Certainly the area's use as a military manoeuvre area pre-dates the Great War

However, back to the poetry, and in "Sennelager" it would seem that clearly it dealt with life at that Camp. No reference to mud, as Senne apparently means sandy, yet there are some in-jokes and one wonders who Jack Livingstone, Preston, Cheese and Smith were. Of course we all know that Smith came from London!!! Lastly, I am puzzled by the "Gaby Glide". Ideas anyone?

Meanwhile the second piece of verse is provided by Peter and Paul Balshaw, and Mark Bougourd, I include it here with my thanks to them. Bourne Park Camp, as we all appreciate, would be the home to the 1<sup>st</sup> (Service) Battalion, Royal Guernsey Light Infantry for a few months before their departure for F&F, however, reading this and "The Sling" through several times, I wonder whether these were multi-use in that by changing the Camp's name, they would be used for other Camps. No doubt this might have been an early form of recycling!

## Old Memories of Sennelager

At the prisoner's camp in Senne  
Many weary hours we've spent,  
The old camp we're speaking of  
We never had a cent.

Some stood outside the cookhouse  
For hours, Oh, what a treat!  
For dinner, well, your "jam" was in  
If you got any meat!

"Spuds"? Well, we forgot the name;  
Not many did we get,  
Their peels sometimes were  
Quite a luxury, you bet!

Many times when on the string  
You'd hear a little groan,  
They'd say "Who's on the Boiler"?  
Why it's old Jack Livingstone.

Our password: "Two fags for your soss"  
No matter white or brown,  
Another password in the camp  
Was "Livingstone dip down".

You'd see the poor chaps all day long  
With shirts off, believe me,  
They'd catch big things that really  
wanted  
Tying to a tree!

We'd wash our shirts once every week  
In snow, sunshine or rain,  
But directly we had put them on  
They'd all crawl off again.

The prisoners weren't downhearted  
They all seemed bright and gay,  
You'd hear them singing "Tipperary"  
Many times a day.

For night-time for enjoyment  
We had sing-songs galore,  
They'd rig a platform in the tent  
And sit round on the floor.

Livingstone would sing a song  
Preston sang a few,  
Smith would sing "The Old Church  
Choir"  
And Cheese "Only A Few".

The first "Woodbine" came to the Camp  
November the fourteen,  
The troops they cheered, in fact it was  
The greatest day we'd seen.

To look at one, some gave a "wad"  
To smell one some gave two,  
Some blokes did the "swallow"  
And in the face went blue.

We've heard of Charges in the Field  
Yes charges in galore,  
But the best charge was at Senne  
For a "butt end" on the floor.

Once I put my "rooty" down  
To light my cigarette,  
It quickly did the "Gaby glide"  
I haven't found it yet.

When we're back at Home Sweet  
Home  
With friends, sweethearts and wives  
We'll remember Sennelager  
The remainder of our lives.

We've stuck it in the days gone by  
When things are quite a bake,  
But we'd all go through the same again  
For our dear country's sake!

## An Ode To Bourne Park Camp

There's an isolated, desolated spot I'd like to mention,  
Where all you hear is "Stand at Ease", "Slope Arms", "Quick March", "Attention"  
It's miles away from anywhere, by Gad, it is a rum 'un  
A Chap lived there for fifty years and never saw a woman,

There are lots of little huts, all dotted here and there,  
For those that have to live inside, I've offered many a prayer  
Inside the huts there's RATS, as big as a nanny goat,  
Last night a soldier spotted one, trying on his overcoat.

It is sludge up to your eye-brows you get it in your ears,  
But into it you've got to go, without a sign of fear,  
And when you've had a bath of sludge, you just set to and groom.  
And get cleaned up for next Parade, or else it's "Orderly Room."

Week in, week out, from morn till night, with full pack and a rifle;  
Like Jack and Jill, you climb the hills, of course that's just a trifle.  
"Slope Arms," "Fix Bayonets," then "Present," They fairly put you through it,  
And as your stagger to your hut the Sergeant shouts "Jump to it."

With tunics, boots and puttees off, you quickly get the habit,  
You gallop up and down the hills just like a blooming rabbit.  
"Heads backwards bend" "Arms upward stretch," "Heels raise," then "Ranks  
change places,"  
And later on they make you put your kneecaps where your face is.

Now when this war is over and we've captured Kaiser Billy  
To shoot him would be merciful and absolutely silly,  
Just send him down to BOURNE PARK there among the Rats and Clay,  
And I'll bet he won't be long before he droops and fades away.

BUT WE'RE NOT DOWNHEARTED YET!

**Norman Ramblings  
By Barrie Bertram**

Holiday time in France again, with only one photographic task assigned to me by Roger Frisby this time, an Old Elizabethan in the cemetery at Etretat, Colonel Frederick Rennell Thackeray of the RA, who died on 15<sup>th</sup> October, 1915. Duly taken along with a couple of shots of the cemetery and church interior, as is my wont, I roamed around the cemetery. One headstone caught my eye, that of Second Officer John Elias Davies of the Merchant Navy. Of particular interest was his ship, the SS South Western. It had stuck in my mind from reading Kevin Le Scelleur's very good book on CI Railway Steamers (mentioned in the last Journal) and seeing that it was torpedoed on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1918 with the loss of 25 out of the 31 on board.

The curious aspect was that the ship went down some 11 miles south-west of St Catherine's Point on the Isle of Wight, and Davies' body must have been carried about 80 miles to be brought up at Etretat. In case this was an isolated occurrence, I've checked our Roll of Honours and noted that a Jerseyman, Chief Steward Frederick Miller of the same ship would be buried at Janval Cemetery at Dieppe, 40 or so miles east of Etretat. Regrettably, I had not connected Janval with the Great War, regarding it being started with the Operation Jubilee raid in 1942. It pays to check!

Incidentally, Colonel Thackeray lost his son, also called Frederick Rennell, at Ypres just six months previously to his own death. A further Guernsey link that should be examined?

However, I spotted a reference in a tourist magazine to Arque-La-Bataille British Cemetery, a few miles south of Dieppe and so headed there. It is a Cemetery that is well-hidden overlooking A-L-B, and was started next to a Labour Camp and contains a variety of graves of men from the South African Labour Corps, British WI Regt and Chinese Labour Companies as well as Indians from various ships. As you can see, an interesting mixture of, what are now, different nationalities! I was very much taken aback to see Josiah Bertram's headstone from the BWI Regt. I assume that his family were former slaves, but I don't believe that it is from my branch of the Bertram family (who were Bertrands anyway). Perhaps the Grouville Bertrams?





**Russell Doherty And the Guernsey Military History Company team**



**Editor's Comment:** I have discovered that Russell likes to spring surprises every now and again, and he has certainly done so as you will read from the slightly amended E-Mail that I've reproduced below, although some of the dates have now passed. With the pictures, and many more on the website taken by Liz, I can only hope that I don't sound patronising when I say Russell is doing a superb job with the cadets. I don't know if he has thought of a name, but something like the Doullieu Company would be good. I've also suggested to the CCF people at Victoria College that they might like to follow Russell's lead next year, in view of the forming of the OTC in 1908 (they had existed as a Cadet Company in 1903) and the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armistice. Nothing heard on that score!

Over the last six months, with the various 90<sup>th</sup> anniversaries in mind, I have with a small group of friends, been running a WW1 living history project for the Guernsey Detachment, Army Cadet Force, this will culminate in a series of living history displays at various events through the summer, starting with the Viaer Marchi on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July. We have managed to raise sponsorship, and begged, borrowed and stolen enough correct uniform and equipment to costume 30 people, 18 as RGLI. This will be the biggest WW1 working display ever attempted on the island, complete with bell tents working soya stoves etc. we will take as our theme the training camp at L'Ancrese in 1917. To oversee the training and funding etc we have formed a new living history group now called the Guernsey Military History Company, we are building on our ties with Guernsey Museums and are working on several projects to run in conjunction with the proposed Guernseymen in the Great War exhibition starting 3<sup>rd</sup> November, including a series of living history lectures.





We are also hoping to take the project into local schools over the winter months, look out for us at Castle Cornet on 22<sup>nd</sup> July and at the West Show 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of August we have also agreed to travel to Belgium in October to participate in the events in the Ypres Salient. We hope you will all approve of our plans to mark the various anniversaries in particular those of the RGLI, and that those of you that can will come and give your support, I am shore that this message will generate a number of replies, I do not wish to appear rude but I may not be able to reply straight away as my spare time is limited and we still have a lot of work to do in the next few weeks, we wanted you to know first before it goes fully public as we are having trouble keeping it under wraps.

**A German Neighbour in the Great War**  
**By Liz Walton**

HSH Gebhard Gustav Lebrecht, Prinz Blucher Von Wahlstatt was the tenant of Herm for 26 years. Born in 1836, he was the great-grandson of Wellington's closest ally at Waterloo. His family were enormously wealthy, and he owned huge estates in Prussia and Silesia. He had a passion for islands, and in 1891 he became sub-lessee of the island of Herm, which was owned by the West Bank Leignitz of Silesia. He immediately set about improving the island, planting many trees and flowering shrubs, as well as laying roads, restoring St Tugual's Chapel and turning the house into a kind of castle (see the lower photograph on page 18). He also introduced wallabies to the island and organised shoots for his friends.



This idyllic lifestyle came to an end with the outbreak of war in 1914. Despite the fact that Count Blucher (as he was commonly known, pictured left) opposed the German policies of the day to such an extent that he renounced German citizenship in the lead up to the war, he was listed by the authorities as an enemy alien. In addition, his son, LWG Blucher, who served as a Second Lieutenant with the Militia battalion was forced to resign his commission in 1914, and did not serve at the Front. They were victims of a rush of anti-German feeling on the islands in the early days of the war, which resulted in some almost comic incidents. For example, the *Gazette* reports a man being arrested at the White Rock in August 1914, accused of espionage. He and his wife were about to embark on the mail-boat, but as he spoke German and was unable to give a good account of himself he was arrested and detained

but later released. Emotions among the crowd were said to have been high. However not everyone felt the same. The Ladies' College magazine for the same period mentions "poor Fraulein", their German teacher and hopes that she got safely back to Austria.

The Proclamation on registration of enemy aliens, signed by the Lieutenant Governor, was listed in the *Gazette* on 8<sup>th</sup> August, 1914, and stated that " ...I order and enjoin all persons of Foreign Nationality to register immediately... their names and those of their families dependent on them". A few days later all aliens were advised in the same publication that it would now be necessary for them to obtain signed permission from the secretary of the military district before leaving the island. The *Gazette* of 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 1914 refers to Count Blucher as "The German Prince" and notes that few people realise that Herm was "a kind of German possession". They also note that Blucher wouldn't allow tourists further than the shoreline which is the property of the British Crown.



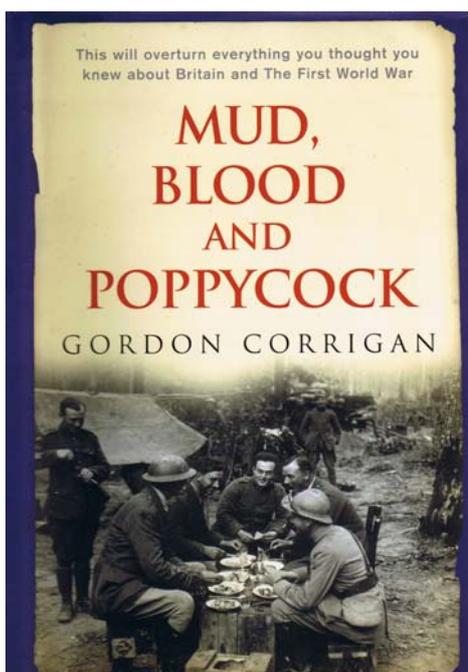
They go on to recount how a party of Guernsey people decided to go to Herm on August Bank Holiday. They stayed on the beach but decided to go swimming, the men in one place and the ladies in another, but the ladies were barely in the water when the Prince apparently sent a party of his male servants to swim in the same place. forcing the ladies to retire. The party then decided to have lunch but soon were engulfed with clouds of smoke – the Prince had decided to burn furze in nine different places, all where the wind would blow the smoke towards them. The fact that previous tenants did not allow tourist visits isn't mentioned.

The matter of the tenancy of Herm went as far as the British House of Commons in September 1914, with Sir William Bull asking the Prime Minister what steps the House was taking to end the lease of the island to a German company. Details of the lease and current tenancy were given. In addition, because it had been noted on an inspection at the outbreak of war that the Prince employed 25 staff, of whom 4 were enemy aliens, a further inspection had been recommended. This concluded that there were no visible signs of military works of any sort, and that a contingent of British troops now occupied the island. A later report from the House, in December 1914 noted that the island had again been inspected and there was no evidence of any wireless telegraph installation.

Evidence of what happened next is scanty, but at some stage the Prince must have left the island, though he was still there in 1915, while questions rumbled on in the House and in local newspapers, about the tenancy. However I have so far found no evidence that he was interned. He died at the family home at Kriebowitz in July 1916 at the age of 80. His descendants continued to live at Havilland Hall in Guernsey until well into the 1960s.

Portrait of Count Blucher courtesy of Guernsey Museums and Art Gallery.

### Book Reviews



#### **MUD, BLOOD AND POPPYCOCK By Gordon Corrigan (Cassell)**

**Reviewed By Peter Tabb**

I wonder how many historians speak Nepalese? Author. Gordon Corrigan does. In fact he cites his hobbies as Gurkhas (he was a regular officer of the Royal Gurkha Rifles and once commanded the Brigade at its headquarters in Fleet, Hampshire, hence the Nepalese), horses, The Times crossword, pricking the pompous and long lunches. He might have added tossing literary pebbles into historic pools and watching the ripples but he didn't. The title gives the game away but more of that anon.

Fifty years after its inconclusive finale in a railway carriage on a siding at Rethondes in the Forest of Compiègne near Paris, it became fashionable to portray the massive losses of the Great War as the inevitable outcome of 'lions being led by donkeys'; that Douglas Haig and his fellow generals were hopeless bunglers and butchers, indifferent to the loss of life brought about by their flawed strategies designed to move, as Captain Edmund Blackadder so eloquently put it, their cocktail cabinets a foot closer to Berlin.

It is Gordon Corrigan's opinion that this view is based on a dangerous illusion. The idea that the British Army's casualties stemmed from the incompetence of its commanders posits that cleverer men could have done the job without the casualties – a nice thought. In fact the experience of both world wars demonstrated that the German Army was very difficult to defeat. It fought with deadly efficiency in both conflicts and, man for man, was more than a match for any of its opponents. Fortunately wars are not won by men alone.

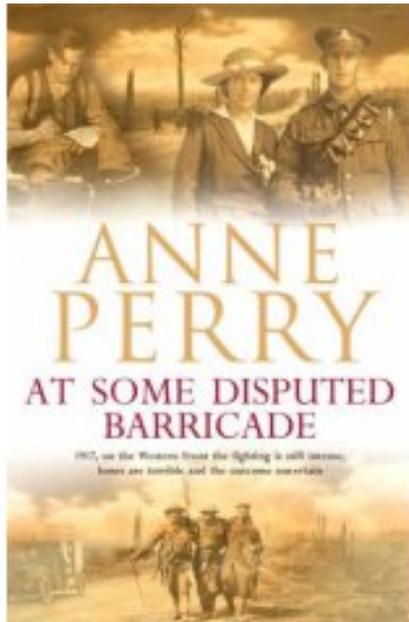
In *Mud, Blood and Poppycock* Gordon Corrigan argues (and argues persuasively) that the Great War was neither unnecessary nor badly conducted – two claims made so often in the 1960s and 70s they became the new orthodoxy. While mistakes were made, he acknowledges, they were honest errors made by men who were as well trained and well prepared as they could be given the expansion of the pre-war British army twelve-fold to more than three million men and women.

In his opinion, Douglas Haig, probably the most denigrated of the Great War commanders, far from being a bungling donkey, was the man who took a tiny British army and expanded it, trained it and prepared until it was the only Allied army capable of defeating the Germans militarily in 1918. He argues his hypothesis well.

This is a controversial book because it attacks head on what has become this new orthodoxy and does it somewhat aggressively. Gordon Corrigan writes as he speaks (he is a not-infrequent television performer), takes no prisoners and almost defies the reader to disagree with him. I have long shared his view that in both wars the fighting capability of the German soldier, sailor and latterly airman was underestimated – that at any time in the conflict we could, man for man, beat Jerry was something of a myth. Bernard Montgomery's experiences of the Great War led him to ensure that he would not embark upon his long road to defeat Erwin Rommel until the 8<sup>th</sup> Army outnumbered the *Deutsches Afrika Korps* three to one.

There are many historians who will disagree with Gordon Corrigan's hypotheses but as many will concur that for too long it has been too compelling to be Captain Blackadder rather than Captain Biggles.

Among his other works Gordon Corrigan has written a biography of Wellington and a history of the Indian Corps in the trenches of the Great War and his latest offering switches his attention to World War II. It is called *Blood, Sweat and Arrogance*. No three guesses as to who stars in that one!



**At Some Disputed Barricade  
And  
We Shall Not Sleep  
By Anne Perry**

**Reviewed By  
Barrie Bertram**

What do you call a set of five books? A quinquology? I do not know, but for another holiday read (well it did rain a lot!) I ploughed through the above books, the fourth and fifth of the set that the lady of the house obtained from the library, but in reverse order before I realised the error of my ways! But before passing comment, I thought that I would copy the synopses.

**Synopsis “At Some Disputed Barricade”:** It's July 1917, and as the sun sets over No-man's-land so Joseph Reavley's heart sinks with it. As chaplain he must keep up the men's morale, but as rumours of mutiny grow stronger he is losing any chance of getting through to them. After the death of an officer, twelve soldiers are arrested, and it falls to Joseph to uncover the truth about their involvement. Joseph's brother Matthew, of the SIS, is also in pursuit of the truth, whilst struggling to come to terms with his part in the Peacemaker's death. Approached by a Junior Cabinet Minister who is being blackmailed, Matthew learns of a plot to destroy the only men who can bring about lasting peace. As he embarks on an investigation Matthew knows his own life is in danger but thinks it a small price to pay to secure the future of millions of people.

**Synopsis “We Shall Not Sleep”:** The war is coming to a close, with huge advances by the Allies. Joseph Reavley regiment has suffered huge losses but all are living in hope that peace will soon be upon them, when a further, brutal tragedy strikes the front. Sarah Price, a young nurse, is savagely raped and murdered and Joseph, sickened by the crime, vows to find the person responsible. Matthew, Joseph's brother, is already at the front to meet a prisoner who claims to be able to identify the shadowy Peacemaker, when he becomes implicated in the nurse's death. If Matthew is to bring the prisoner to the office of the Prime Minister, he must work with Joseph to ensure that Sarah Price's killer is found, and soon. If Matthew is able to put a stop to the Peacemaker's schemes, there will be a chance for lasting peace; if he fails, then freedom and liberty could be all but a distant memory for future generations...

Having been rather critical of Ben Elton's “The First Casualty” last year, these books seem to have offered a more cohesive strand. The characters are clearly well established, though the plots are contrived. In the final book, female nurses appear to be employed well forward into the Ypres Salient to the point that the operating theatre in an Advanced Dressing Station can be overrun by Germans. I

am no medical expert, but would have not expected such proximity of these facilities to the battle line, especially in the Salient.

The books can be described as a "Boy's Own" read in that the pace is quite fast, yet Anne Perry seems to have no concept of time and distance. In Book 4 the Chaplain heads off by aircraft from near Ypres to get back some deserters and flies the length of France to near the Swiss border seemingly in a few hours, but first having encountered the Red Baron's Flying Circus in an aerial dogfight. Yet, in Book 5 while trying to get a German back to London to meet Lloyd George and expose the dastardly villain, the Reavley party takes two days to get from Ypres to the French coast in an ambulance! The books are also repetitive, in that we are reminded again and again of the fate of the Reavley parents who first discovered a plot in 1914 to get King George to sign a secret non-aggression treaty with the Kaiser, while there are clichés, which in this case focus on under-age soldiers everywhere

In conclusion, these were an average undemanding pair of books that ignored basic facts. Had it been sunny, there would be no review to write!

### **Website Workings** **By Roger Frisby and Barrie Bertram**

At present, material is steadily trickling in from various sources, however, it is clear that visitors to the site are finding it interesting and a number of contacts are finding some information directly from the site's contents and also from feedback in response to a "Contact Form". In many cases, this is two-way traffic as we can add new information that is received. In one particular case, a Polish lady working in Jersey was pointed at the site by Heather Morton, and very quickly found out virtually all that there is to know about Charles Izdebski, a near namesake, that she had spotted on St Ouen's Memorial. In honesty, it helped that he served with the Australians and their data storage is excellent.

Next time you use the Guernsey or Jersey on-line RoH searches you will see a change. Now, when clicking on a name, a new browser window will open. This speeds things up quite a lot. The two databases are quite large and a full search takes several seconds. This search result will remain open now when clicking on links within it. Previously, after opening a link and clicking the browser "back" button, the database had to re-load. Just don't forget to close all those new windows that you've opened!

There is still much that can be added. We need to find a way to get more named photographs attached. I wonder if there is a way that an appeal could go out for photographs to be temporarily loaned for scanning?

Over the next few months I hope that I can get pieces written on the Jersey British Red Cross Society, start off something on the Island's munition workers (yes there were quite a few!), and a look at the ships that ploughed the dangerous Channel waters. Again, these will be areas where those photographs are necessary.

## Out and About

As noted in previous Journal, Ned Malet de Carteret will be at Ypres in August and as he and I discussed on the phone, will be taking his father Philip with him. Ned seems to have a busy schedule planned including:

- A visit to Noel Chavasse's grave at Brandhoek Military Cemetery and where he was killed at Wieltje.
- A memorial service to Harold Ackroyd on Saturday, 11<sup>th</sup> August taken by the rector of St George's Chapel with a Menin Gate bugler in attendance.
- To Passchendaele and to Tyne Cot, and to find where his doctor's grandfather was at Frezenberg Ridge in May, 1915, avoiding getting killed when 1/1 Leicester Yeomanry were decimated – he was looking after the horses!)
- He will also be staying in Arras and doing a little of the Somme – particularly Delville Wood, and Guillemont and Ginchy for the Jersey Contingent

**Late News:** Ned has returned, and while it is too early, even for him (!), to write an article, I've attached a photograph from the brief Memorial service for Harold Ackroyd VC on the last page.

As I'm putting this together, Ian Ronayne, Liz Walton, Peter Tabb and Roger Frisby are all holidaying in France, or about to go, or even have recently returned. Hopefully one or two bits might emerge, but it seems very quite in terms of Great War adventuring!

Subject to confirmation, I am at Verdun with a group of friends from Westland Helicopters in September.

Steve Bailey is also back from the continent, having made a diversion to Tyne Cot to see the new Visitor Centre there. To quote "...they definitely need to get the Queen out to a few more sites if that's the sort of investment it triggers"!

In the light of Cambrai, Mark Bougourd is looking to see whether it is possible that the 1/RGLI King's Colour could be refurbished and better protected for posterity. It is an excellent idea, but in talking to him, I think that it will be fraught with protocol and military ceremony. Having visited Lancaster Priory recently I saw the various King's Own's colours which are sadly rotting away, so it is something that Guernsey should do. Next stop the Lieutenant-Governor's Office!

I'm heads down at present looking at Jersey Passenger Lists in the Great War, working in conjunction with the Jersey Archive. It is interesting assembling the data because it generates links and further information. For example, I wrote of a Sergeant Harper in Journal 10 having married a Jersey girl, and who after the Somme would be hospitalised. I now wonder if her name was Flora (a suitable name perhaps?) who worked at Springfield Nurseries and who was a passenger

on the SS Alberta on 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 1916, though I am not currently sure of the direction. Names of *permissionnaires* will help towards the Jersey- (and Guernsey-) French soldiers.

## Odds and Ends

### French Interest

I received a response from the Coutances genealogists (Journal 13) and they confirmed that the event would be 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> November 2008. They are considering what they might require of the Group, including a presentation (*en Français*). As yet I'm awaiting feedback but they seem to have had some E-Mail glitches. With hindsight I should have given them my home address!

### RM Museum, Eastney Lectures

Though not on the Great War, Steve Bailey reminds us the following lectures may be of interest if individuals are in the Portsmouth area in November:

- |                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| 7 <sup>th</sup> November;  | Chasing Freedom - The Royal Navy and the suppression of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. |
| 14 <sup>th</sup> November; | 3 Commando Brigade Air Squadron during the Falklands War                               |
| 21 <sup>st</sup> November; | Fighting 45 - The Royal Marines in Aden  |

The lectures are in the Mountbatten Room, RM Museum, Eastney starting at 13.00 hours.

### Fort Regent, Jersey

A recent Planning decision made in the States of Jersey has resulted in Fort Regent being declared a Site of Special Interest (SSI). However, in having been declared so, the decision excludes the dome and metal roof. For my part, I think that this is a very welcome decision, and hopefully one that is a catalyst for the Fort being restored to as near as its original condition as possible. I have even written to the JEP Letters on this theme.

Whereas Mont Orgueil and Elizabeth Castle are outstanding historically, the Fort closes the link with them from the period of Napoleonic Wars up until WW2. I firmly believe that there is scope for developing the Fort as a Museum with the Jersey Société's military collections and supported by material from related British regimental museum's such as the Devons, East Surrey's and King's Own. I have even sounded out the possibility with my Curator friend at the KO, and the answer was certainly not an outright negative

A Victoria Cross gallery? Five Victoria College winners in Bruce, the two Sartorius brothers, Pitcher and McReady-Diarmid, Islanders Le Quesne and Ingouville, residents Counter and Roddy. The names answer the question! I hope Members can give this some thought, and if of a similar opinion, can give voice in support to the people in positions where it counts.

## For Those with a Philatelic Interest

As mentioned in the last Journal, the British Post Office will be issuing a stamp to commemorate Ypres on 8<sup>th</sup> November this year, as part of a miniature sheet. They are also producing a generic sheet which I'll hopefully include next time. It is a shame that they do it this way, because they appear not sell them over counters as single stamps. And I've just noticed the dark figures on the poppy!



## A Question Answered

Some time ago, I visited Foncquevillers cemetery to photograph the headstone of Capt Nigel Choveaux (OV) for the website to nice another seven graves to the side of fellow officers. Yet there were no other ranks, and I could not understand why. I recently discovered that it was a matter of unit pride or tradition that officers were brought back behind the lines for burial.

## Passchendaele: The Battle Ninety Years On

The above header is the title of a 96 page magazine that seems to have been put out recently and is "Exclusive to WH Smith"! Costing £6.99, it is very well-illustrated and contains a number of articles, of the various aspects of the Battle extracted from books written by people such as Peter Hart and Nigel Cave. Largely the effort of Pen and Sword Books, it carries a small number of adverts, but these are not too obtrusive. Does WH Smith operate in the CI?

If you get the opportunity, do try to get one. If anyone is really keen, let me know and I'll scout around, but would appreciate the cost and postage covered.

## Discussion Groups and Contact Lists

I will update these in the next few days and get them sent out by the weekend.

## Enfin

Well, time to close off another Journal with thanks again to those who have contributed articles.

I continue to think that others will occasionally stick their heads above the parapets and offer their own views. Even it is only half an A4 page of simple research helps and it may attract useful feedback or prompt further material.

As I previously mentioned, we are clearly seeing material coming our way as a result of the website and as a result, we are slowly building a broader picture of what the Islands experienced all those ninety years ago.

Time for an anti-Cave response?

Regards  
Barrie H Bertram  
15<sup>th</sup> August 2007

### Journal Issue Dates For 2007

Issue dates remain as follows. For Issue 16, I will be looking for articles by “Close of Play” on 7<sup>th</sup> October as I will be off to France on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

Issue	Month	Articles To BB	Posted Web/Mail
12	February 2007	10 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>
13	April 2007	10 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>
14	June 2007	10 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>
15	August 2007	10 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>
16	October 2007	7 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>
17	December 2007	10 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>

### Journal Issue Dates For 2008

I plan to put next year's programme together in the next month or two and I will include it next time.



SATURDAY, AUGUST 11, 2007 | THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

TEL: 020 79313000  
 FAX: 020 79313370

**In memoriam**  
 "THEIR NAME LIVETH FOR EVERMORE"

**ACKROYD.**—In loving memory of Captain HAROLD ACKROYD, VC, MC, RAMC, sniped this day with six fellow men, 90 years ago at Glencourse Wood, Ypres, Belgium. The Ackroyd and Malet de Carieret families celebrate your life today by your gravestone at Birr X Roads Cemetery. Let us always remember you and your brave comrades of 6th Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment.  
 Online ref: 16887

ily at Stirling Royal nday 6th August 2007, band of Judi, loving nd Penny and an ther of Ben and nds welcome to ssgiving on Tuesday rymen Parish m. Family flowers be a retiring of Strathcarron  
 Online ref: 17256

**Late Addition:**

**11<sup>th</sup> August 2007**

At Birr Crossroads Cemetery, Left to Right, Ned's father Philip, Ned's sister Liz Thamfald, the Reverend Canon Ray Jones the padre at St George's Church in Ypres, Ned and Christopher Ackroyd.

The In Memoriam entry from the Daily Telegraph