

# CHANNEL ISLANDS GREAT WAR STUDY GROUP



**OVER THE TOP  
(Somewhere In France?)**

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Hello All

It is often that we complain of bureaucracy, yet if the truth is known, it has to be acknowledged that it is also an essential element in our daily lives.

With our Great War research we find that we are fortunate that there existed a large army of form-fillers, filing clerks as well as the “cover my back” merchants who ensured that much was recorded and then saved for posterity. The Somme battle for example could not have been conducted without paper, and in an idle moment one might wonder whether the weight of the paper outweighed that of the shells! These and many tens of thousands of other documents have now found their way into the Archives of the Great War belligerents and with a greater openness supported by the improvements in information technology, information is more widely accessible, and rightly so, as the public has paid for the information to be placed there, whether in taxes or in their forefathers’ blood!

The Australian National Archive is outstanding and well worth visiting on-line, with soldiers’ service papers that can be downloaded. For Channel Islanders, we are able to use them on our website on a non-commercial basis, and such an example of what is available can be seen on Jersey’s Roll of Honour for Henry (Harry) Bryant.

In a similar vein, I recently travelled down to Kew and the National Archive. It was a visit that was, for me, long overdue and I felt like a cat with two tails when I arrived. The important thing, having taken advice from “old Kew hands” Ian Ronayne and Roger Frisby, is to have a viable plan for the material to be searched, and when there to enlist help from the staff who are only too willing to sit at the various terminals or files to help researchers get the best from the facility. Some of my research from that day is reflected in “A Redeeming Flash”, however I soon discovered that not everything one hopes for is still on file. For example, before going I had noted that there was a Medal Roll for the Royal Jersey Garrison Battalion. On examination it turned out that only the English augmentees (RJGB numbers 880-979) were listed, and because of their prior service in an active zone. It now seems that “home only” RJGB men were not entitled to the British War or Victory Medals.

Following on the medal thread, Mark Bougourd has provided a couple of examples of the Medal cards which are now available on [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk). This is an improvement as the backs of the cards are now available for viewing in addition to the front as was previously only available on the National Archive’s site. The majority of the card backs are blank, but there is still information that can be derived as can be seen in the two examples.

Liz Walton kicks off the articles this month with “Nellie’s Story” which recounts in some detail poor Nellie Rault’s death. In part, her research has also benefited from National Archive material, in this instance the Metropolitan Police Files on the investigation. Sadly though, no one was ever convicted of her murder.

We also have Ned Malet de Carteret reporting on a trip to Suffolk where he attended a Western Front Association (WFA) Seminar on the events of 1918. It is somewhat of a pity that, Guernsey Museum’s “Cambrai 1917” apart, similar events are few and far between in the Channel Islands. But I had best stop at this point before I climb onto my soapbox yet again!

## **This Issue's Cover**

A soldier's eye view as he climbed over the trench parapet to advance and attack the enemy's positions ahead, taken by an official war photographer. Or was it?

In this case, the answer is no, and it is one of a number of excellent dioramas in the Imperial War Museum in London. I surprised myself in that I did not get any flash reflection and that there is, hopefully, a small measure of realism

### **Help Wanted**

Further to the "A Redeeming Flash" article below, I am wondering whether a Jersey-based member could look out in Jersey's Births, Marriages and Deaths records for the birth dates of Coutart de Butts Taylor's children or of his marriage to Lilian. Help in this area would be greatly appreciated.

**From Barrie Bertram**

## **Postscripts**

### **An Unknown Soldier of the Royal Jersey Militia (Journal 15, August 2007)**

There is unsurprisingly little progress in this very important area, I am sad to report. A small plus is that, in reading the Brigade War Diaries at the National Archive, the location of the British front line in September was to the south of where the two unknown men were later found. This confirms the "patrol in No Man's Land" theory and continues to point to Sgt Du Heume and Cpl Carver being the most likely names. No patrol reports have been found, but I will look at the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diary on my next visit to Kew, having concentrated on the Division and Brigade War Diaries. However, even with the evidence of a patrol report it would still be inadequate unless a link can be found to JM Kenny.

Curiously, based upon the map references given, it appears that John Vibert could have reached friendly trenches! This could explain a report of "Missing Believed Wounded" had he met with British troops. This is a tenuous theory however, since it seems that German and British lines were insufficiently well-defined or established.

### **Captain Hugh John Tennyson de Carteret**

I had managed to locate the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment's Great War History in seeking to trace Hugh's career, and I found that he did not even make the Index!!! However, there is one very brief reference to him going missing during a night attack by the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion to recapture trenches previously lost by Indian troops on 21<sup>st</sup> December, 1914 near Givenchy, east of Bethune. The History is more interesting for its omissions! It does not include his initials, while there is no indication of when he joined the Battalion as there were of other officers. He certainly did not mobilise with the Loyal's 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion from the UK in August. With the input from the King's Own Museum last time around, it is likely that he could not have been with Loyals anymore than three weeks before incarceration!

## Nellie's Story By Liz Walton

89 years ago, on 9<sup>th</sup> May, 1919 a young girl from Jersey serving with Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps (QMAAC) was murdered in woods near an army camp in Bedfordshire. The crime has never been solved.



Nellie Rault was born in 1898, the daughter of Jacques Rault, a saddler of 4 Weston Villas, St Helier, Jersey, and his wife Anne Elizabeth. The 1901 Jersey census shows Nellie Florence Ruby Rault age 3 living at Gordon House, St Aubin's Road along with her mother, Anne Elizabeth Rault, married, age 32, tailoress, listed as head of household, Annie Frances Rault, age 11, Adelena Maud Rault, age 8, and May Emeline Rault, age 5, daughters, all born in St Helier, Jersey. Anne Rault married John W. Bewhay, of Clifton Cottage, St Aubins Road, St Helier at some time between 1901 and 1919. According to the 1901 Channel Islands census he was a widower age 45, born in St Martin, and his occupation was plasterer. The only other Bewhay on that census is George, age 19, born in St Helier, who was with the Devonshire Regiment in St Peter's Barracks. 3/20602 Private Bewhay, a

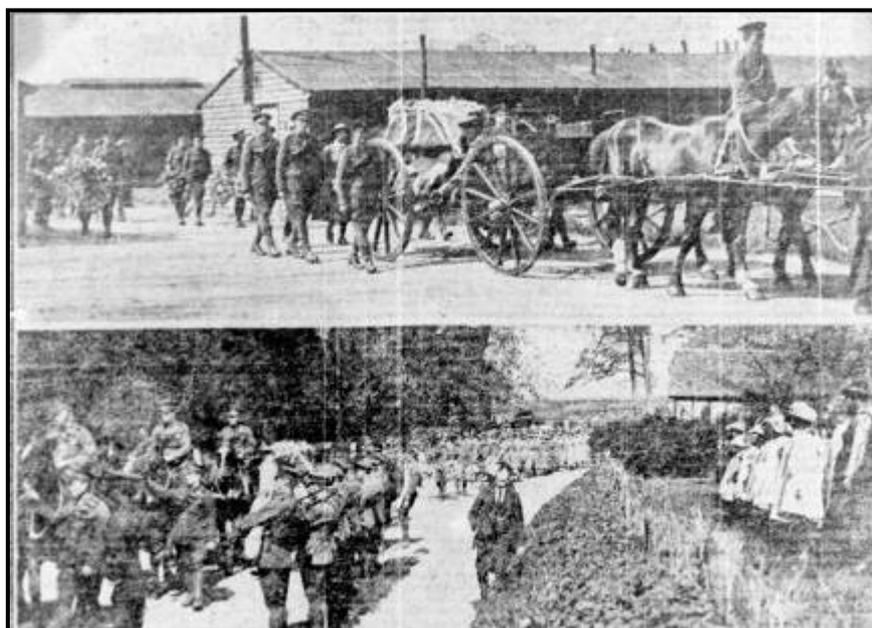
nephew of John W Bewhay, was killed in action at the Somme on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1916 (Editor's Note: He is buried in the Devonshire Cemetery near Mametz).

In 1917, 19 year old Nellie joined the newly formed Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC), after having served in the Women's Legion. The Women's Legion was raised by Lady Londonderry in 1915, initially to provide cooks for the New Army. Its members transferred to the WAAC on its formation. WAACs (as the ladies were known) did not have full military status but they wore uniform, were officially part of the British Army and worked under the War Office. In April 1917, 20425 Worker Nellie Rault was posted to Haynes Park Royal Engineers Signals Service camp, located in the grounds of a stately home in Bedfordshire.



Nellie worked as a cook in the Officer's Mess and was described as being a cheerful, respectable girl. She was less than 5 ft tall, dark and "good looking", "a sturdily built young woman of a bright and happy disposition, and a great favourite with all with whom she came into contact". She was said to be a "home loving girl",<sup>1</sup> who kept in close contact with all of her sisters and visited her family in Jersey regularly. Her last visit was at Christmas in 1918. She returned to Haynes Park on New Year's Day 1919, having recently signed up for a further year with what was by then the QMAAC.

Four months after her return to England, Nellie Rault was murdered in Wilstead Wood, Beds. She was last seen alive at about 3.30 pm on Friday, 9<sup>th</sup> May but was not missed until roll call at 9.30 the next morning. On the following day search parties were organised but her body was not found until the afternoon of Monday, 12<sup>th</sup> May. She had been stabbed several times in the chest and back, and attempts had been made to hide the body under bundles of cut undergrowth in woodland about 150 yards outside the camp gates.



**Nellie's Funeral Cortège**  
(Courtesy of the *Amphill and District News*)

Nellie's funeral took place on Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> May at Haynes Parish Church, with full military honours. Her coffin went to the church on a Royal Engineers cable wagon, covered with the Union flag and topped with huge cross of flowers from her colleagues. The lengthy procession was led by the RE Regimental Band. Her mother in Jersey had been informed of the tragedy by telegram but was not able to attend, presumably because of the time scale. The chief mourners were her uncle, Mr Tarbet and Miss Hickson who was in charge of the QMAAC contingent at Haynes Park. The *Jersey Evening Post* of May, 1919 features a letter which Mrs Bewhay received from Queen Mary, stating that:

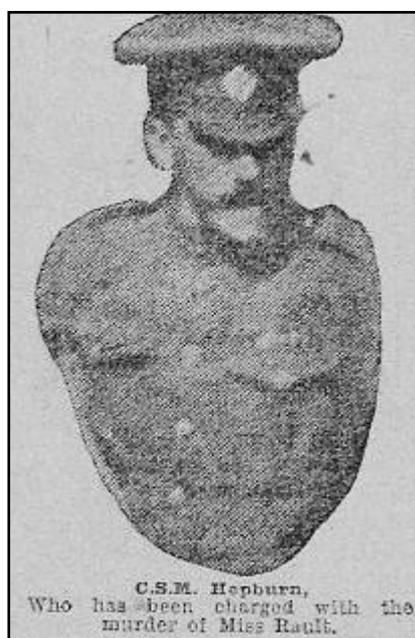
*"The Queen has heard from the headquarters of the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps of your daughter's fine record of good behaviour and splendid work since her enrolment, and Her Majesty cannot help hoping that the knowledge that your*

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<sup>1</sup> *The Amphill and District News*, May 17 1919.

*daughter in her short life was able to render such honourable service to the Corps may be some consolation to you in your bereavement."*

The inquest into Nellie's death opened on Wednesday, 21<sup>st</sup> May and over a period of four days evidence was heard from work colleagues and local residents, as well as specialist witnesses such as the doctor who performed the post mortem. Meanwhile CSM Montague Cecil Keith Hepburn, of the Royal Engineers, Haynes Park had been arrested on Tuesday, 13<sup>th</sup> May, charged with her alleged murder and remanded in custody. He attended the inquest but declined to give evidence at any stage. The Coroner, in his summing up, noted that the crime was not premeditated and that he did not want the jury to be influenced by the fact that Hepburn had been arrested by the police. He also mentioned Hepburn's popularity in the camp, and his "long and honourable career" in the army. The official wording of the final verdict was that Nellie had been "...brutally murdered by being stabbed to the heart by some person or persons unknown".



CSM Hepburn had been out with Nellie on previous occasions and they had danced together at the YMCA Hut on the evening before she died. He had also arranged to meet her on the day of her death. He was described as "a well set up man of somewhat taciturn appearance... wearing the ribbons of the Military Medal and the 1914-18 Star", "on his right arm he wears four chevrons".<sup>2</sup> 14149 Sergeant Montague Hepburn, 2<sup>nd</sup> (HQ) Signals Company, Royal Engineers, had had a distinguished military career. His Medal Index card shows that he had been awarded the standard trio of Service Medals, plus the Oak Leaf Clasp (Mentioned in Dispatches<sup>3</sup>) and Rose which means that he had been under fire as early as 1914. He had also been awarded the Decoration Militaire avec Croix de Guerre by the Belgian authorities<sup>4</sup>.

The 1891 census has Hepburn living with his parents Walter, a commercial clerk, and Alice, at 13 Garfield Road, Battersea in London. By 1901, when he was 11 years old he was an inmate of the West London Poor Law School at Ashford, in Staines, Middlesex. No parents are listed, and his place of birth is given as unknown. Children brought up in Poor Law schools were usually either paupers or orphans, and usually went into domestic service or the Armed Forces on leaving school. Hepburn was to spend his entire adult life in the Army.

When charged by the police with Nellie's murder, Hepburn is reported to have said "I can say that I am innocent - quite innocent. A mistake has been made." The trial evidence was lengthy, confused and often conflicting and much was made of whether Hepburn was wearing puttees or leggings, whether two schoolboys could have heard the attack (one of them was the son of an old Regular Army colleague of Hepburn's), whether Hepburn had travelled on a particular lorry into Bedford and exactly who had or had not seen Hepburn at various places and times.

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<sup>3</sup> Supplement to *The London Gazette*, 18 May 1917, p. 4880.

<sup>4</sup> Supplement to *The London Gazette*, 24 October 1919, p. 12998.

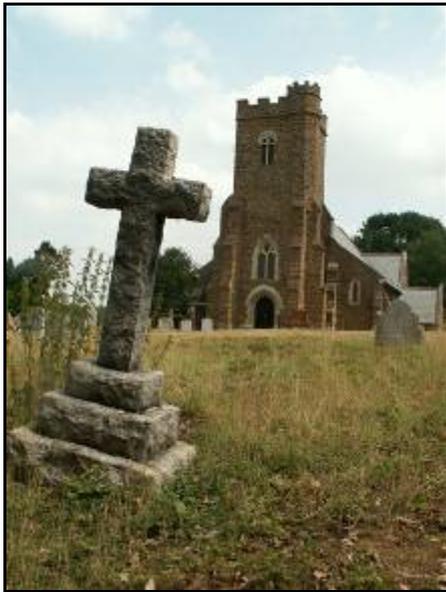
After two formal remands the Bedford Divisional Court assembled on Friday for a magisterial hearing against Hepburn, who was charged with murdering Nellie Rault “feloniously, wilfully and with malice aforethought.” However instead of following the expected course, the Assistant Director of Public Prosecutions, Mr Sims, made a statement to the effect that “The Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) has carefully considered the evidence thus far obtained in the case and has arrived at the conclusion that the best interests of justice would not be served by immediately proceeding further with this inquiry”. Directions had been given for further police investigations but in the meantime Hepburn was discharged and the case dismissed.

The Metropolitan Police CID was called in on 7<sup>th</sup> June, but officers were unhappy that it had been left so late as the inquest had concluded and the body been buried by then. However an enquiry took place under Superintendent Wensley, who reported to the Director of Public Prosecutions in July, 1919. The DPP’s response to this stated that “...upon the evidence available it is not probable that Hepburn would be convicted of wilful murder if he were to be charged with this offence.” However the case notes go on to say that “I regret to have been obliged to come to this decision because I entertain a strong personal opinion as to the identity of the person who committed the murder”. Hepburn’s alibis, his only real defence, were also totally discredited.

National and local newspapers in Jersey and Bedfordshire had made much of the murder and subsequent trial, and interest was rekindled on 10<sup>th</sup> February, 1924, when the *News of the World* carried a “cool, calculated and detailed confession” of Nellie’s murder. This was reported to come from an anonymous writer who called himself “Frenchy”. The Montreal Police had also received letters from a Mr P Peter, c/o the Montreal Tramways, which stated that he knew who had killed Nellie from what he had seen in Haynes Park Wood, and that the person involved was currently in Montreal. These letters were sent on to the CID in London. The “confession” letter in the *News of the World* received much public attention because the facts in it tied in with what was known about Nellie’s death.

The writer said he was a married man with a wife in America, and was an American army deserter who had been working at Shorts Brothers Aircraft factory at Cardington in Bedfordshire at the time of Nellie’s death. However none of the people from Shorts whom the police interviewed could identify “Frenchy”, though a letter to the *News of the World*, which was passed on to the CID, named him as Leroy Morey of Illinois. A Corporal Atkins of the RE was also investigated after allegations were made against him, and there were further enquiries in Scotland.

Despite all this no-one was charged with Nellie’s murder, and who killed her and why remains unknown nearly ninety years on. Nellie is buried in St Mary’s Churchyard, Haynes, near where the camp used to be. A stone cross with the words “In loving memory of 20425 Member Nellie Rault, WL & QMAAC, age 21, died May 9<sup>th</sup> 1919. Erected by her fellow workers in QMAAC, Officers, WO, NCOs and men of Haynes Park Signal Depot, RE. “In the midst of life we are in death” marks her grave. This is one of three headstones maintained in perpetuity here by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, who recognised that Nellie was a casualty of war.



**Nellie's headstone in St Mary's Churchyard, Haynes Park.  
(Photo by Roger Frisby)**



**Nellie Rault's 'Death Penny'  
One of less than 800 awarded to women.  
(Courtesy of Stuart Elliott)**

Hepburn continued with his military career until his death in 1943, at the age of 54. By this time he had been promoted to Captain (QM) with the Royal Corps of Signals. He had served in India in the 1920s, and had been awarded the Indian General Service medal, with clasps for service in Waziristan from 1919 to 1921 and 1921 to 1924, and Mahsud from 1919 to 1920. He died during the Second World War and is buried in Streatham Park Cemetery, London, where his grave bears a standard CWGC headstone.



**Captain Hepburn's Headstone at Streatham Park Cemetery  
(Photo by Roger Frisby)**

#### Notes

- Amptill & District News is available at the Bedfordshire & Luton Archive & Records Service, Bedford.
- The Metropolitan Police files are available at the National Archive, Kew.
- Jersey Evening Post archive is available at the Jersey Public Library, St Helier.

**A Redeeming Flash**  
**By Barrie H Bertram**

*No thorny crown, only a woolly cap*  
*He wore – an English soldier, white and strong.....*  
*Siegfried Sassoon*

**Introduction:** It was evident when originally assembling the information on Captain Coutart de Butts Taylor and his alter-ego, Sergeant Charles Edward Collins as he was known from September, 1916, that I only knew some basic events of his life. This information gleaned from a number of sources such as Royal Militia Island of Jersey records, articles from Jersey's Evening Post, plus input from the Royal Irish Rifles Museum in Belfast and references in the London Gazette helped to create a framework against which a number of assumptions were developed, to produce "A Silver Kettle: Reflecting the life of Captain Coutart de Butts Taylor, MM". All the while, it was felt that there was more information that could be had.

And, so it proved! Sorting the logistics for a long overdue visit to the excellent National Archive, I made the trek in March, 2008 from England's north-west to Kew on London's outskirts. Coutart's papers, if they existed, were prominent amongst a list of files and documents that I had planned to seek out during the day-long visit. Ploughing through a combination of file references, cross-reference charts, officers' long numbers, microfiche and an efficient on-line ordering system, some 30 minutes after placing the order, Coutart's personal file appeared in my reading locker. WO 339/39151, an innocuous combination of letters and numbers that formed the file's reference, yet the file ceased to be an inanimate collection of paper on opening, for Coutart's military career was unfurled, warts and all and every word that it contained brought him back to life for those few hours of reading.

One inch thick, the file contains a cast of characters in addition to Coutart and his wife, Lilian Florence Blunden Taylor. There are others in his family, including three children. Understandably, since the file deals with Coutart's military career, the majority of the characters are either soldiers or civil servants, ranging from an unnamed Corporal on the Provost Marshal's staff in Salonika to the British Expeditionary Force's Commander-In-Chief, Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig no less. Along the way there are a number of Commanding Officers in a supporting role, while Coutart's circumstances would attract the attention of the Army's "top table", the Army Council, and this is particularly relevant in the immediate post-war years after his death on Christmas Eve, 1918. The implied allusion to a play's cast may be appropriate, since Coutart's tale could be regarded as a Greek tragedy.

So typical of the War Office bureaucracy of those days (and today?), the file contains many position papers, recommendations, comments, comments on comments, complaints and the minutiae that underpinned the decisions that affected Coutart. However, there is also a particular poignancy about the file as it also contains two letters in Coutart's handwriting, one written in August 1916, the other one (I think) in April or May 1918, as well as letters written and forms completed by Lilian in 1919 and 1920.

Looking at the story of Coutart de Butts Taylor anew, I make no apology of my regard for him as a hero. For indeed by any account he was, and particularly so in the words of his superiors during his time when he served in France and Flanders.

This account is largely based on the WO file, and revises several assumptions contained in "A Silver Kettle". It answers some of the questions that were posed, but readers will surely discover new questions to ponder over. At this point, I will leave it to them to decide who might have been the villain(s) of the piece, if indeed there were any!

**Some further background:** We pick up Coutart's story in Jersey as he is attested from the RMIJ into the British Army in 1915. He was assessed medically fit by Colonel JR Yourdi, RAMC, although he suffered from pneumonia when aged 14, his height was given as 5 feet 11 inches, and he had been born on 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1869.

As to his previous military service, there was a reference to him previously been granted a temporary commission with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Royal Welch Fusiliers (RWF), a fact that may make his later service as Collins understandable. The commission with 1/RWF is during the period of the South African War of 1899-1902, and it is possible that it was gained because he held a territorial or militia commission in the UK. Meanwhile, Lilian would later inform us that Coutart was born in Weymouth, Dorset.

**An Adverse Report:** As we know, Coutart did not spend a very long with the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles. In fact, he was in Salonika from 18<sup>th</sup> February, 1916 for a period of ten weeks, during which the last four of those weeks were to see him in hospital.

To pick up on what occurred, we are fortunate to have Coutart's own words where, in his 1918 letter written as Collins to his Company Commander in the RWF, he sets out his account by describing the events in Salonika. In this letter, he stated that he had allegedly made an approach to a Staff Sergeant in the Military Police enquiring as to the location of a particular "house of ill fame!" It appears that both were joined by our unnamed Corporal from the Provost Marshal's staff, whereupon Coutart stood both NCOs a drink, spending a further fifteen minutes with them.

Some three weeks would elapse, and by Coutart's account, he felt that he had been performing his regimental duties more than adequately, when he was placed under arrest for "Conduct unbecoming an Officer and a Gentleman." As a result, the Army's disciplinary process was now applied whereby a Summary of Evidence was held so that Coutart's conduct could be investigated and statements taken. In Coutart's case, he acknowledged drinking with the NCOs, but refuted the "house of ill fame" claim, and he would request that he be tried by Court Martial. After a few days, Coutart was released from arrest, and appears to have returned to normal duty under the impression that no further disciplinary action was intended. At about this time he was hospitalised, apparently with total insomnia, possibly unsurprising given the circumstances. In his 1918 letter, Coutart could not explain how he had got into such a predicament, and would go on to write that the incident was totally out of character.

Coutart was clearly wrong in thinking that no further disciplinary action was intended, for, while he was in hospital, further actions were in hand! His CO, a Lieutenant Colonel Cecil ML Becher, had the time to sit down and write an "Adverse Report" on Coutart's performance as an Officer. This report would follow Coutart on his eventual return to England, thus blighting any further prospects for him to continue as an

Officer. Couched in the military jargon of the day, Colonel Becher did not pull any punches and the report stated that Coutart:

- Was incapable of conveying a coherent command
- Was apparently at a loss as to how to act on a definite order
- Had not had the requisite training to enable him to assimilate up to date requirements
- Was too old to mould into the requisite shape of a Commander for wartime.

In a final ‘throwaway’ line, Colonel Becher also stated that Coutart had been “drinking with an NCO, sufficient to justify removal.” Much of the Colonel’s comments appeared to take Coutart by surprise, as he claimed that it had never been indicated previously that the Colonel had been dissatisfied with Coutart’s military performance. Today, one might wonder whether Colonel Becher’s “Adverse Report” had been produced on his own initiative, or that the Colonel had received direction from “up on high”! The Provost Marshal’s influence can be read between the lines, and it would not be a surprise that he saw his role as ensuring that military discipline was rigorously enforced in Salonika, a town for which the word “seamy” would have been invented!

**Retention in the Service is Undesirable:** Coutart was struck off the strength of the Salonika Force on 27<sup>th</sup> April, 1916 and would commence his return to the UK on the SS Formosa. The file reports that he was at the Military Hospital at Tigné on Malta on 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1916 and, irrespective or perhaps because of the disciplinary cloud hanging over his head, it is clear that, whatever the reason, he was still ill. Given the earlier reference to total insomnia, there must have been something else seriously wrong with Coutart’s health, particularly his mental condition, and possibly Colonel Becher’s words may have inadvertently suggested such a problem. It seems that at this time the Egyptian Expeditionary Force GHQ, who were responsible for Salonika operations, were trying to locate his whereabouts, but by the time Malta had been contacted he was on the next stage of his journey home.

The next date that is relevant is 5<sup>th</sup> July, 1916, when Coutart reports for duty at Belfast with the 3<sup>rd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles. One assumes that during the period between early-May and the above date he had been in hospital and subsequently convalescing. He appeared fully fit for, nine days later on 14<sup>th</sup> July, 1916, he was sent to France and Flanders and the Royal Irish Rifles’ 12<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion. Given the existence of the “Adverse Report” this seems surprising however, the paperwork eventually caught up and after nearly five weeks the order came for him to return to England once more, and to report to an office in the War Office. There he was told that the “Adverse Report” was being looked into and he would be required to report back shortly.

At this stage, Coutart was staying at the Imperial Hotel, Russell Square in London, and it was from there, on headed notepaper, that the filed 1916 letter was written to the War Office. The reason for the letter? It appeared that when he went to his bank in London, Cox’s and Company, the bank’s staff told him that they had previously been informed that he had relinquished his commission in the Royal Irish Rifles, an action that Coutart claimed not to have been aware of! This was reiterated in his 1918 letter, and interestingly was referred to a number of times by senior Officers in post-war comments yet was not disputed as an incorrect statement!

Having complained to the War Office about his treatment, he was sent a terse response that as he still held a commission in the RMIJ he should now refer his complaint to the CO of 1<sup>st</sup> (West) Battalion, RMIJ further for consideration. The military authorities in Jersey having previously been made aware of the situation and having been suggested to that it was inappropriate for Coutart to continue as a Militia Officer would write to him on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 1916 requesting that he resign. Nothing was heard from Coutart and he vanished from sight, probably having vacated the Imperial Hotel. His 1918 letter stated that he felt that he had lost his honour and it almost goes without saying that he was at a very low point in his life. He may have felt unable to return to Jersey, to see family and friends, he certainly could no longer turn up at the Army and Navy Club. One can only speculate!

**Exit Taylor, Enter Collins:** It is fortunate that, in this case, the service papers of Charles Edward Collins had been attached to those of Coutart's in 1918 or 1919. Had they not, there would be a high probability that they would have been destroyed with those of many soldiers' records during the German blitz in 1940. Collins' attestation paper survives. Enlisting on 29<sup>th</sup> September, 1916, he was at that time staying in the National Hotel, Upper Bedford Place in London WC. Considering that he had adopted a new name, some answers were obviously fictional. He stated that he was 39, in so doing, deducting 8 years from 47, he had not served previously, and he was not married!

These fictional answers pose a couple of interesting questions. In respect to age, at this stage, the UK government had previously established national registration and later followed it up with a conscription act. One wonders whether the recruiting authorities had asked sufficiently detailed questions of Collins' background, or had the manpower demands predominated. Having stated that he was not married, the War Office would thus have been unable to pay a separation allowance to Lillian Taylor, and deduct a similar amount from Collin's army pay. Had she been provided for in some other way, since a letter that she would write after the war points to no previous knowledge of Coutart's existence as Collins?

In enlisting, Collins would indicate a preference for service with a London Welsh Battalion (At that time the 1<sup>st</sup> London Welsh were the 15<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion of the RWF, while the 2<sup>nd</sup> London Welsh had recently become the 18<sup>th</sup> (Reserve) Battalion before being absorbed into the Training Reserve at the start of September 1916), and after going through basic training in a Training Reserve unit would join the RWF. One wonders whether he was suspected of having served previously or that he was sufficiently mature, for he was promoted Acting Corporal on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 1916, and Sergeant on 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 1917. Subsequently, his record of service would show the following:

- Served with the BEF – 12<sup>th</sup> December, 1916 to 4<sup>th</sup> August, 1917
- Convalescence in the UK – 5<sup>th</sup> August, 1917 to 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1917
- Served with the BEF – 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1917 to 25<sup>th</sup> November, 1918

He would maintain the fiction of being Collins until May 1918.

**A Splendid Example under Fire:** As the Great War progressed, the continued loss of Officers required more and more men to be commissioned from the ranks. On the 30<sup>th</sup> May, 1918, Lieutenant Colonel RL Beasley, the CO of 17<sup>th</sup> Battalion, RWF would be moved to write to his superiors that Collins should have his commission

reinstated since he had “[set a] splendid example under fire, [displayed] exemplary conduct since he enlisted and his total regard of danger in the presence of the enemy!” Clearly, the deception was out, and Colonel Beasley had presented Collins with the opportunity to have his honour fully restored. This was surely grasped at with both hands and was the reason for Collins to write his 1918 letter setting out the situation as he had seen it, and closing the letter with the statement that he was in fact Coutart de Butts Taylor.

In recommending reinstatement, Colonel Beasley had to provide evidence, and would do so over the next few months as the paperwork went up through the British Army’s chain of command. He cited the following acts performed by Collins:

- At Boesinghe in January 1917, while his company was being shelled by the German equivalent of 5.9” artillery, he went up and down the main street calming the men, keeping them under shelter, and helping to avoid casualties.
- At Pilckem in July 1917, helped to ensure that the company performed well in action, and received a Gun Shot Wound (GSW) to the right shoulder.
- At Armentieres in March 1918, conducted a particularly arduous reconnoitre of a German trench system, and would be prominent in the subsequent raid, being the first man into the enemy trenches.
- At Albert in September 1918, he took over as Platoon Commander even though wounded in the leg, and having only just returned from hospital following an earlier wound.

As a general comment, Colonel Beasley also stated that Collins invariably volunteered for dangerous work, while it appears that there was a recommendation for a Military Medal (MM) on 26<sup>th</sup> May, 1918 that went unrecognised.

Reading the file today, one senses an element of recklessness in Collins’ behaviour, but clearly it would pay off, albeit sadly too late, as Colonel Beasley’s recommendation was endorsed as it moved up the chain of command reaching Sir Douglas Haig’s desk for approval on the 14<sup>th</sup> November, 1918, before being sent to the Army Council back in Whitehall.

One senior Officer would later comment that Collins was wounded four or five times, and from Colonel Beasley’s evidence there were at least three such occasions up until the end of September 1918:

- The GSW to the right shoulder at Pilckem would see Collins being treated at 61 CCS before returning to the UK to convalesce.
- He would receive a further GSW, this time to the right wrist on 7<sup>th</sup> September, 1918, being treated at 38 CCS.
- The leg wound referred to above, also in September 1918.

There was one final wound received and this would eventually prove fatal.

**An Immediate Award of the Military Medal:** From August 1918, the Germans would steadily retreat as the British and French Armies pushed forward, with the Germans maintaining an orderly defence. For the British Army, Sir Douglas Haig's instruction was for his subordinate Army commanders to take risks that Haig would not have countenanced in the earlier battles. While his hoped for reinstatement was being progressed, Collins remained in action with his Battalion throughout the period.

On 4<sup>th</sup> November, 1918, a date that is widely noted for the death of the poet Wilfred Owen, 17/RWF was advancing through the Fôret de Mormal, to the north-east of Le Cateau. As they moved forward, Collins' Platoon was engaged by a German machine gun. Collins sent three men to the left flank, and another three to the right flank, and on his own, immediately pressed forward with a frontal attack that eliminated all German resistance and capturing the machine gun. The advance could continue, but not so Collins for, during the assault, he had received a GSW that penetrated his chest.

For his bravery, he would receive an immediate award of the Military Medal (MM), while his injury would see him returned for treatment in military hospitals based in France. Three weeks after being wounded for the last time, he would depart from France to be admitted to the Kitchener Military Hospital in Brighton on 26<sup>th</sup> November, 1918, and would die there on 24<sup>th</sup> December from his wound, although it also appears that he was suffering from dysentery.

It now appears unlikely that he was sent there because of his wife's family having lived in Brighton rather that it was possibly coincidental, the town being close to the port of Newhaven.

As we know from "A Silver Kettle", he was buried in Brighton (Bear Road) Borough Cemetery, but while still Collins. It appears however, that the funeral was attended by one relative, one of his sisters, a Miss TE (It was written as such, but it may actually have been LE for Leonora Eliot, who was 12-18 months younger) Taylor, who then lived at 64 Clarendon Road in Southsea, Hampshire. How she knew to attend the funeral is unclear, and one might speculate that she had known that Coutart had been Collins for some time before his death. If so, was she sworn to secrecy because of the deep shame that Coutart had felt, and had withheld this knowledge from others of the Taylor family and of course, from Lilian?

**Reinstatement:** Following Haig's endorsement of Coutart's recommended reinstatement on the 14<sup>th</sup> November, 1918, all the members of the Army Council saw fit to approve it in early January, 1919, and as a consequence the decision was taken that Coutart was again a Captain in the Royal Irish Rifles and this was accordingly published in the London Gazette. It appears that at the time the Council reached their decision, they were unaware that Coutart, still Collins, had died on Christmas Eve.

However, before the next full Army Council meeting Coutart's death had become known by at least one member, probably the Military Secretary, who took it upon himself to revise the date that Coutart was reinstated to the date prior to his death. It is clear at this stage that the Army Council was demonstrating a great degree of pragmatism and fairness since, in respect of the date change they had

acknowledged their own slowness in decision making, and that the outcome was the right one, even though not all had been involved.

In due course Lilian would find out that Coutart had been Collins and, in one letter to the authorities, would request that Coutart's grave in Brighton be correctly shown as being his grave and not that of Collins. In another, she would seek to have his personal effects returned from the Kitchener Military Hospital.

**Seventy Pounds, One Shilling and Nine Pence:** With Coutart having died as Collins, Lilian would experience a number of bureaucratic hurdles that would have to be cleared by having to demonstrate that she was who she said she was. This was necessary in terms of having Coutart correctly commemorated and also to receive his personal effects. However, there was also the question of a gratuity that required proof of identity. This would take time with numerous letters to be written and forms to be completed.

During 1919 and 1920 matters became complicated in that, although Coutart was now recognised as being an Officer, the Finance Branch within the War Office only regarded him as having been newly commissioned and, because of his death, he had not yet served as an Officer. As such, their logic ran, Coutart's widow would only be entitled to a Sergeant's gratuity! This situation would continue for some time, and in due course Lilian would be assisted by Coutart's older brother, Colonel H D'Aubrey P Taylor to "walk Whitehall's corridors" and have the matter raised at the level of the Army Council.

Debate ensued! Concern was expressed that the Army Council's decision that Coutart had not been newly commissioned but reinstated was either being ignored or disputed at a comparatively junior level in the Finance Branch! In due course the situation would be resolved and a money draft to the value of £70.1s.9d would be forwarded in July, 1920 to Lilian, a sum that was roughly triple what she would have received as a Sergeant's gratuity.

**Learning about Lilian:** The file contains considerable amount of information on Lilian and the three children, due to her need to write letters and fill forms. In one, there is an indication that there is financial pressure with regards to the son's schooling, while the addresses at various times indicate that she had left Jersey during the Great War and would nurse at Military Hospitals and Convalescent Homes. In a letter during late 1919 she described herself as a Matron of the "Order of St John of Jerusalem in England" while she seems to have nursed at two establishments in the UK at least:

- British Red Cross Hospital, Highfield Hall, Southampton, Hampshire (Today it is part of Southampton University's campus)
- Officers' Convalescent Centre, Thornleigh, Bolton, Lancashire (Today it is the Thornleigh Salesian College).

It is uncertain the period that she was at Southampton, but it closed down shortly after the Armistice, though she would still be at Bolton in July 1920. She would also write from 10 Palace Green, Kensington, London, W8 on 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1919, however it may be that this was also the Royal Palace Hotel which she also wrote

from and which was in W8. A form that she completed on 21<sup>st</sup> January, 1920 listed the children as follows:

Name	Age	Address
Lilian Mary	17	Monkmoor, Weybridge
Terence D'Aubrey	16	Imperial Services College, Windsor
Doreen	14	[Indecipherable] Mount, Southsea

From subsequent research into the Imperial Services College, Terence entered there in May, 1916, and left in December, 1920. Furthermore, he is listed as the "Son of Capt C de B Taylor", and was born 8<sup>th</sup> June, 1903. This is surprising in that, assuming the children's legitimacy, Coutart and Lilian would have married in 1902 or even earlier thus contradicting the theory that the silver kettle had been a wedding gift in 1906.

**In conclusion:** The major fact from this latest piece of research is that we now know Coutart de Butts Taylor was sent home in disgrace from Salonika, although, whatever the medical reason, he also seems to have been ill, unless of course it was a military convenience. The assumption that he, and not the Army, terminated his temporary commission was wrong and he was not offered a "cushy billet" in Whitehall. The question of the Taylor's wedding is puzzling as Lilian would have been about 16 in 1901/1902, unless of course, the wrong lady has been identified. One wonders where the children were born and schooled, since Coutart had been commissioned into the RMIJ on 24<sup>th</sup> April, 1902. There might also be questions as to whether there is a link between the Salonika incident and when Terence joined the Imperial Services College, and whether during this period Lilian had left Jersey, and if so, under what circumstances and whether it was just to "do her bit for the war effort". Lilian appears to have returned to Jersey as evidenced by the CWGC entry for Coutart and it may be that these coincided with Terence leaving the Imperial Services College. In conclusion, there seems no conclusion, just more questions!

**Author's Note:** It is clear that reading Coutart's personal file is causing me to discard or revise many of my early assumptions, and that matters in 1916 were far more complex for the Taylors than has been evident hitherto. I certainly want to revisit Coutart's file to double check the details I've provided above, and make sure that I have not missed anything relevant during the first reading. To do so, I hope to get down again to Kew in May. Meanwhile it may be that there could be information in Jersey at the Registrars as to the births of the Taylor children. This might help in bracketing the family as to its movements.

Other areas of research will probably now include Bolton Archives, where material may exist on the Convalescent Centre, and Carnaevon Castle where the RWF Museum is lodged.

As an aside it seems that Clifton in St Lawrence where the Taylors lived was owned by a George Winter Bertram. A small coincidence, but not a relative of mine!

Coutart's mother Mary Coutart Taylor (nee McCrea) was born in Guernsey as were several of Coutart's older siblings, including Colonel D'Aubrey Taylor.

Lastly, why the article's title? Well, Coutart was very clearly redeemed after Salonika, and by joining the RWF, he would have worn the "flash"!

**Postscript:** In the last few days, I've found a couple of further items on Coutart. I know from contacting Christ Church College in Oxford that he went up in October 1887, having been educated at St Mark's School in Windsor. Meanwhile, I have discovered a Times article of 11<sup>th</sup> June, 1912 reports that, on the previous day in Jersey's Royal Court, he had successfully sued the Great Western Railway Company for the non-delivery of 350 baskets of unripe tomatoes to Newcastle-Upon-Tyne! GWR were experiencing a rail strike and had sold them in Cleckheaton and had only offered him £2.11s.0d. He won £43!

### **The Medal Cards By Mark Bougourd**

As most members probably know, the National Archive has for some period of time enabled the printing of the Medal Cards from its website. This had involved selecting the individual's card, paying £3.50, and then having the download available to be outputted on the researcher's computer. However, only the front of the card was obtained since the rear of the card had never been scanned, even though for a percentage of them useful material was on the rear. A few years ago it was the National Archive's intention, because of the early scanning, to dispose of the cards. At this point, the WFA stepped in and offered to take charge of the cards, and to provide a service that gave customers both sides. This service has recently gone live, and copies can be obtained from [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) although the fees can be higher and depend on the rate of usage and subscription periods.



Picture courtesy of the Guernsey Press and the Priaulx Library

I have picked just a couple of examples to illustrate what can be found. The first is for Guernsey's Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Launcelot Kiggell (pictured above).

Prior to that role, he had been Haig's Chief of Staff (21<sup>st</sup> December, 1915 – 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1918, when he was regarded as a 'tired man') and many of the annotations reflected this. It has been alleged that on seeing Passchendaele, he burst into tears and cried "Good God, did we send men out to fight in that?" This however is unsubstantiated. It is interesting to note that he asks the question as to Guernsey and Alderney being treated as overseas (Editor's Note: To Jersey men they are!) and whether "day-tripping" senior officers should have received the British War Medal.

S.F.F. GUERNSEY + ALDERNEY DISTRICT			
Name	Corps	Rank	Regt. No.
KIGGELL. (Sir)	Commanding Guernsey & Alderney District	Lt/Gen. / General	
L.E. K.C.B. K.C.M.G.			
Honorary Member of the Order of the British Empire			
Roll	Page	Remarks	
Staff/Off/116	173	iv. 1076/w.d/18. 1. 21. Anthy EF/6/1054	
15 STAR Staff	OFF/116	11 issued 1.V. 12/6/0. 23.4.20. EF/6/1054	
Theatre of War first served in		France	
Date of entry therein		21-12-15.	
EM/1696. IV 2386E d/30.4.20.		EF/6/1054 68/12/1081. K. 1380.	

**Correspondence.**

Lt/Gen. L. E. Kiggell makes app 11-3-19.

Lt/Gen. Sir L. E. Kiggell K. C.B. K. C.M.G. enquires whether the Islands comprised within Guernsey + Alderney District are to be considered as overseas for the purposes of the award of the B.W.M. also re-eligibility of certain Off. who took part in visits of Senior Off. to the Army in the field 26-4-19.

Lt-Gen. L. E. Kiggell applies for V.M. Emblem. Statement is entered in Sir D. Haig's despatch 7-11-17 + 7-4-18. 26-1-20. 29. 31. 4. 20.

**Address, Headquarters**  
 Commanding Guernsey & Alderney District  
 Guernsey  
 Channel Islands.

c/o. Exeter.  
 Sharing brass.

Westcott House Rockbeare  
 Exeter 31. 4. 20

It is appropriate to include the second card for Second Lieutenant Robert Hamel as he died of wounds having fought at Doulieu, 90 years ago this month. His entry into France in May 1916 seems late, but was before him being commissioned into the RGLI, while, in May 1920, his father would make the application for Robert's medals via the Ministry of Pensions. However, the card has a particular poignancy since Mr Hamel would name his house "Doulieu" in memory of Robert (Editor's Note: Is it still there?).

*B.W. Vic Medals*

Name	Corps	Rank	Regt. No.
<i>HAMEL</i>	<i>K. R. R.</i>	<i>Sergt.</i>	<i>6753.</i>
	<i>2<sup>d</sup> (Res. Bn) K. Grenadier</i>	<i>2<sup>d</sup> Lieut.</i>	
	<i> militia.</i>		
<i>Robert Sydney</i>			
Medal	Roll	Page	
VICTORY	<i>Guernsey L.I. Off 251</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>ca roll roll M/101<sup>st</sup> 6/1985 DOW 12-4-18 1.V.3603/W d/29.8.21 NW/6/4112</i>
BRITISH	<i>do</i>	<i>do</i>	
STAR			
Theatre of War first served in		<i>France.</i>	
Date of entry therein		<i>5. 16.</i>	

*mw/6/4112. K 1589.*

**Correspondence.**

*M. of P. forwards application for medals from  
A. J. Hamel, Esq. in respect of his late son. 5. 5. 20.*

*IC 329  
Ann*

**Address.** *Doulieu,  
9, Paris St Peter Park  
Guernsey.*

(95464-14a) W.L. W 8347—H.P. 6481 7000m. 10/19 H. St Est 5450/1258

## Breton Remembrance By Barrie H Bertram

For a long while I have wanted to visit the Breton monument to the GW dead at St Anne d'Auray in France's Morbihan *département*. In part it was because of family connections, in part an attempt to understand further the Breton contribution where the figures that have been quoted range from between 160,000 and 300,000. A decision to holiday in Carnac last October enabled me to realise that wish. In my ignorance, I had never known that the small town of St Anne d'Auray was of great importance in Breton Roman Catholicism.



The importance derives from the fact that it was there that Mary's mother St Anne had appeared in an apparition in July 1624, and this resulted in the town becoming the focus of Roman Catholic worship throughout Brittany. A chapel was originally built on the site of the apparition, but was demolished and replaced in 1872 by the large basilica that stands today.

Every July a *Grand Pardon* is held attended by several thousand pilgrims. It is therefore not surprising that the site was chosen for the memorial. While not intending to dwell on the religious aspects, nuns from the convent in St Anne d'Auray took refuge in Guernsey in 1907 when the French anti-clerical laws were put into effect, while others would establish the Convent FCJ school in Jersey, having arrived there in 1911, some 120 years after the return of Catholicism to the Islands at the time of the French Revolution.



The Memorial itself is a round domed building where two flights of stairs leads to the upper area where there is an altar. Beneath, one enters into a crypt where there are located altars, one for each of the old Breton dioceses of Nantes, Quimper, Rennes, St Briec and Vannes.

I say old since the diocese of Nantes, as the capital of the Loire-Atlantique *département*, was transferred from Brittany to the *Pays de la Loire* region in 1945. The Memorial, just over 160 feet high, sits in a U-shaped area at the rounded end, and the 'U' itself is a wall with spaces to enter or leave at four or five points apart from the open top of the U.

A sign greets the visitor informing him that the Memorial commemorates 240,000 Breton dead and with that, one would expect those names to be inscribed on the inner faces of the wall. Not so! I eventually discovered (thanks to buying a guide book afterwards), that only some 8,000 names are engraved, a figure one-thirtieth of the Breton total.



At equal intervals around the wall are the fourteen Stations of the Cross and panels on either side refer to the military formations in which Bretons served. The names of the men commemorated are assigned, first by diocese, and through a number of *doyennes* down to the town or village. A small proportion of names from each town or village are listed (one-thirtieth maybe?), while the total number are quoted by the village name with a cross. As can be seen from the photograph below, the village of Plaintel has three names listed, while the actual Memorial in the village shown to have 103. And it does, I have checked!



Near the Memorial there is a French National Cemetery, with graves from both Wars, the men having died at hospitals and sanatoria in the *department*. I'm afraid that I came away a little disappointed with the Memorial, having expected to see those 240,000 names listed, including those from my grandmother's family. Discounting that, the guide book is understandably more focused on the basilica, and doesn't offer much.



## Hospital Ship Sinkings

Having written of the “Llandoverly Castle” being sunk on 28<sup>th</sup> June, 1918 with Martin Kadrewell losing his life, this was by no means the only Hospital Ship that was lost to enemy action and which involved Channel Islanders. On 17<sup>th</sup> November, 1915, the “Anglia” sank a mile or so from Folkestone, in this case having struck a mine that had been laid by the German submarine UC-5. Among those onboard were Jerseyman Pte Stanley Billot from the RAMC, who was likely to have been a medical attendant for the wounded being brought home, and Guernseyman Pte Wilfred Eborall who was serving with 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Wiltshire Regiment. In his case, he may have been wounded or sick.

Both are commemorated on the Hollybrook Memorial in Southampton.

### Suffolk Branch WFA Seminar “1918” By Ned Malet de Carteret

*As some members may have already seen, the Western Front Association’s Suffolk Branch held a Seminar over the weekend of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2008 at the Kesgrave War Memorial Community Centre in Ipswich. This is a brief report of the proceedings kindly furnished by Ned who took the time to attend.*

I had decided to attend this week end seminar because of two facts. Firstly I knew little of the events of 1918 and secondly my friend Jo Legg (nee Parker) was lecturing on the German Offensive of March 1918. Jo is the daughter of Colonel Graham Parker, a retired Logistics officer of 45 years service in the army, ending his career at SHAFE in Belgium. Graham is a long time WFA member and founded Flanders Tours in the 1980’s. Graham has been leading groups to the Western Front for over 30 years. I had the privilege of touring with him several times in the 1990’s.

I arrived at the Premier Inn (South) at 6.00 p.m. on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> and met up with the Legg/Parker families for a late supper. The next morning we awoke to a 7.00 a.m. Fire Alarm!! Luckily for us it turned out to be a false alarm.

I arrived at the Community Centre at 12.00 p.m. on the Saturday and viewed the memorabilia exhibition which was very fine – many rusty bits! I also had the chance to speak to two Khaki Chums, one of who had been at Cambrai recently for the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The first lecture of about 45 minutes duration started at 2.00 p.m. and was given by the branch chairman, Taff Gillingham. Taff is a founder member of the Khaki Chums and he spoke to us about the life of an infantryman – demonstrated his kit – with one of the said chums - and also showed us the workings of a German Mauser rifle and

a Lee Enfield, and highlighted the superiority of the British weapon. This was particularly interesting.

Following a short break, Major (Rtd.) Gordon Corrigan then gave us a spellbinding 45 minutes talk on Myths and Legends of the First World War. Gordon is well known speaker on the History Channel as a Military historian. Gordon dispelled such myths as Britain lost a whole generation as casualties of the Great War. He talked about time in the line, the lot of all servicemen and women. He talked about the "Shot at Dawn men", the quality of food, the rotation of troops in and out of the line, something that was not practiced by either the French or the Germans. He revealed many interesting facts and statistics and I found his analysis and delivery simply engaging. I had managed a quick 5 minutes chat with him before the lecture. His book is called Mud, Blood And Poppycock (Editor's Note: See Journal 15 for Peter Tabb's review of this book), and I am finding it a fascinating read to be recommended to everyone.

We adjourned at 5 p.m. and some 45 attendees met up for dinner at the Holiday Inn. Most of the Suffolk WFA main members were there. Also, Bruce Simpson, the WFA Chairman, was in attendance.

I sat next to Peter Hart (Oral Historian attached to the IWM). Peter was going to talk to us about Air Warfare the next day – and I had particularly wanted to meet him – I think his writing is excellent, particularly his recent Jutland book – with Nigel Steel, which I have previously reviewed (Editor's Note: See Journal 8 for Ned's review of this book). An excellent meal was had. I also spoke with Peter Simkins (formerly the Senior Historian at the IWM) who was going to talk to us on 12<sup>th</sup> (Eastern) Division.

The next morning I took a taxi to the Centre and arrived at 9.00 a.m. – the hall was already half full – it would take 285 people that day, 250 having attended on the Saturday afternoon. The previous day they had talked to local schools in Ipswich. I reserved a row of seats for the Parker/Leggs, but they arrive very late – Jo was due to be first on at 9.30 a.m. – but Peter Simkins stepped into the breach to deliver the first lecture.

Peter's talk on the 12<sup>th</sup> (Eastern) Division was a tour de force. I found it very interesting indeed. His delivery was extremely polished and his slides excellent. He depicted the Battalions involved, each of their actions in the last 100 days of fighting. He also talked about leadership at all levels (particularly at Battalion level). Peter also gave a depiction of the VC action on 9<sup>th</sup> August, 1918 at Murlancourt by Sergeant Thomas James Harris – 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Royal West Kent Regiment.

The Division fought through the original Somme positions of 1916. It was commanded by Major-General Harold Higginson, who had previously commanded 18<sup>th</sup> (Eastern) Division (considered one of the best fighting Divisions on the Western Front) – Peter said that there should be a book written about him. I have a small interest in him as he was Harold Ackroyd's divisional commander and we have two condolence letters written by him to Harold's widow Mabel.

I also learned that 1918 saw the bitterest fighting of the War and that British lost more men that year than in any of the previous years' fighting.

After questions and a short break, Jo Legg then presented her lecture – the German Offensive of March, 1918. She spent much of the time explaining the planning made by Ludendorff and Crown Prince Rupprecht. There were six attack plans – the main ones being Michael and George astride the Somme. The Divisions were brought up to the starting line by night – a tremendous feat. She then presented the offensive and the finale in front of Amiens and Bapaume. Of course the Germans were forced onto the offensive as they wanted to put in what they thought would be a killer blow before the Americans made a significant contribution to the War for the Allies. Also the German divisions on the Eastern Front had been released to the West on the ending of the war with Russia

The main failure of the Offensive was the German army was split in two and their armies were exhausted by the end of June. They also really didn't have a strategic end game plan. Having achieved 60 miles of ground gained – they gave it all back very quickly in the final 100 days of the War. It must be remembered that there were more soldiers lost in the fighting of 1918, than in either on the Somme or at Ypres

Jo's lecture was very informative and she had many excellent slides of the players and maps of the campaign.

As we were running late, there were no questions and we adjourned for an hour's lunch

Peter Simpson the WFA Chairman said a few words and then by popular demand – Taff Gillingham then showed us how 30 rounds a minute could be fired from a Lee Enfield, it was a real eye opener! Of course an Infantryman would probably only fire around 8 rounds a minute, sighting and firing at an advancing enemy.

At 2.15 p.m., Peter Hart then gave us a talk on the Air War in 1918, entitled Aces Falling from his new book. He showed slides of all the main British and German aces and their aeroplanes. Manfred Von Richthofen and James McCudden were the two great teachers and leaders as well as being the top aces on either side. Peter's delivery was somewhat light-hearted and a little light-weight in delivery, interesting though it was.

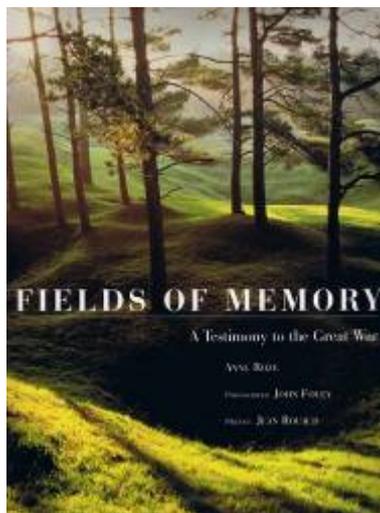
After a break for tea, the final lecture was given by WFA President and renowned historian Corelli Barnett. Corelli wrote several episodes of the 1964 BBC film series on the Great War. His lecture was entitled August to November 1918 – The Forgotten Victory. He spoke about the final 100 days campaign and the complete Allied victory over the exhausted and beaten German Army It was a very polished and learned presentation, very well delivered without slides.

In all it was a very informative week end and a pleasure to meet some new and old WFA friends, and to hear such a panel of learned historians speaking. Very well done to the WFA Suffolk Branch who have only thirty or so members for their tremendous achievement.

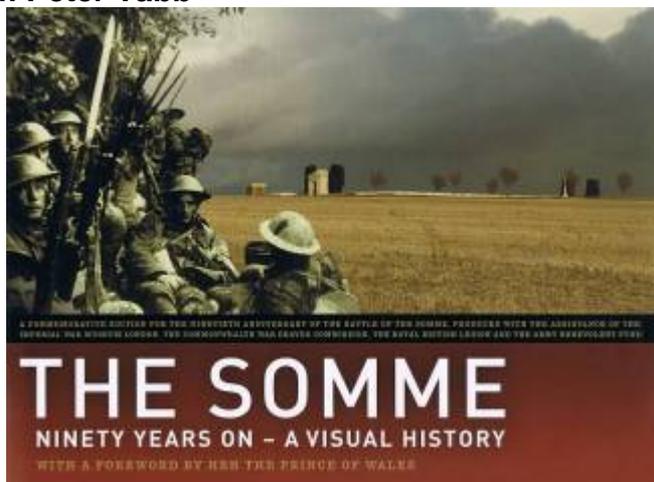
(Editor's Note: Interesting to hear of Ned's comments on Jo Legg's talk. Last evening (7<sup>th</sup> April), Peter Hart was talking at our WFA branch on the third of the German offensives and their lack of a sound overall strategy and the creation of new salients! The only attack that was strategically sound was that across the Lys in April, and from the Allies point of view, the most critical. Hence Douliou!)

## Book Reviews

### TWO TITLES From Peter Tabb



**FIELDS OF MEMORY**  
**A Testimony to the Great War**  
By Anne Roze (Seven Dials)



**THE SOMME**  
**Ninety Years On – A Visual History**  
Duncan Youel & David Edgell  
(Dorling Kindersley)

These are both large books, lavishly illustrated and both, albeit in their own distinctive way, take a similar view of the Great War – through the lens of a modern day camera.

Among my favourite publications is the quarterly magazine ‘After the Battle’ and although the publication tends to concentrate on World War II, the concept of showing the battlefields of yesteryear in the scenery of today has added considerably to my meanderings around many historic sights on the Continent. While neither of these books is as detailed as ‘After the Battle’, they adopt a similar ‘then and now’ format but treat it rather more artistically and the photography of John Foley in ‘Fields of Memory’ is nothing short of stunning. Consequently ‘Fields of Memory’ is a vivid and even haunting testimony to the Great War. It is also more than a photographic tour of the battlefields. Sweeping from 1914 to 1918, it draws on a wide range of contemporary material, including journals, letters, newspaper reports and the writings of key literary figures such as Wilfred Owen, Erich Maria Remarque, André Maurois and Siegfried Sassoon to recreate the devastating series of battles that claimed over eight million lives. Even now, 90 years after the Armistice, the countryside bears the still healing scars of conflict; the dozens of cemeteries and memorials; the crumbling fortifications and the softening trenches. In this book more than 300 illustrations evocatively contrast the images of the fighting with serene photographs of the battlefields as they are today.

Although, since this is principally a photographic essay, pictures tend to dominate the text, the author has exercised considerable skill in holding the reader to what she is telling when his or her eye is being lured towards the illustrations. There is little new to learn from this work but it is a thoroughly enjoyable read and just the sort of book to offer to someone who, while interested in the Great War, cannot visualise the impact of conflict on the peaceful fields and bustling towns of Picardy of today.

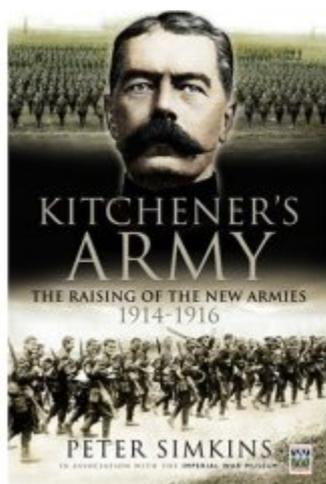
'Ninety Years On – A visual history of the Somme' fulfils much the same purpose and, as would be expected from Dorling Kindersley, is comprehensively illustrated not just with new and contemporary photographs but maps and typically informative DK illustrations.

The book was published in 2006 to commemorate the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of the Somme and was produced with the assistance of the Imperial War Museum, the Commonwealth Graves Commission, the Royal British Legion and the Army Benevolent Fund and comes with its own DVD.

This book is less of a photographic essay, more of an educational tome. Curiously where 'Fields of Memory' tends to landscape, 'The Somme – Ninety Years On' features people rather more, from the pilgrims still searching for the last resting place of loved ones, to archivists, collectors and genealogists – a section is devoted to helping readers trace any ancestors who took part in this pivotal conflict of the Great War.

As one would expect from this publisher, the book is beautifully bound and printed ('Fields of Memory' is an upmarket paperback) and while comparisons with other histories of this particular battle are perhaps inevitable, this book both sets out to do both more and less than most. Half the book (the latter half) is devoted to the legacy of the battle during whose first day 60,000 British troops were either killed or wounded. Thus the history of the battle itself tends to be somewhat summarised (although nothing significant is missed out) and a reader wanting a truly detailed account of the battle will look elsewhere. However the reader who is looking for more than just the blood and thunder of the battle itself will find an engrossing work which, to use an expression that would have been completely meaningless in 1916 (and for some of us is largely meaningless today) ticks most of the boxes.

I am currently moving house and have discovered that I have more than 40 books about the Great War, although the number I have about World War II runs well into three figures. However the Great War is catching up!



**Kitchener's Army:  
The Raising of the New Armies  
1914-1916  
By Peter Simkins**

Ned has already given an introduction above to the author thus saving me the job! This book was originally printed in 1988 and was reissued last year. The theme of the book is to look at what went into raising the new armies, and by implication, what happened to the reservists, the territorials and later on, the conscripts, since what happened at the outset of the Great War would affect efforts subsequently.

The British, out of all the major protagonists, had a professional Army that did not depend on conscription, although its territorial force had a home defence while reservists were to augment the home-based regular battalions during crises. Based on this policy, the various contractual, logistic and administrative arrangements were geared to much lower manpower levels than were the Germans or the French, while

pre-war planning to send a BEF to support the French on their left flank was never matched by the investment for any rapid expansion necessary.

Enter Kitchener! Having been on leave from Egypt in the summer of 1914, Asquith appointed him Secretary of State for War at the outbreak of war. Kitchener recognised that the War would not “be over by Christmas” and foresaw that it would last at least three years. Coupled with this, the British Army would need to increase its size considerably and this resulted in the creation of the New Armies.

Simkins covers the recruitment boom in the first few months of the War when men volunteered in response to “Your Country Needs You”, an advertising campaign that was too successful! There were problems, not least the accommodation of the new men in facilities that were inadequate, the inability of the recruiting staff still at peacetime levels (and in some cases still with peacetime attitudes!) to process the increased numbers seeking to join the army quickly enough, and the lack of attestation forms (ah the bureaucracy again!). Men sought various ways to join, some heading off to the Territorial Force, others to distant recruiting offices, particularly if they had been turned down.

Out of this upsurge, the “Pals Battalions” were created, since it was recognised that the army could not cope and that civic leaders had the organisations and skills that could help. This received Kitchener’s agreement, and it is even possible that Henry Rawlinson might have been the instigator. Similarly, the County Associations who ran the Territorial Force were allowed to use their existing infrastructure to recruit, obtain clothing and equipment, and accommodate the men.

Undoubtedly the need to cloth, equip and accommodate was a priority, and it is not surprised to note that the processes were fraught with problems. Uniforms had to be obtained for men were soon ruining their few civilian clothes for the lack of robust serge uniforms and boots. Accounts of men whose shirt tails were hanging out of their seat pants and having to march in the centre ranks to contain their embarrassment and being concealed by their fellows were not unknown!

With a vast number amassed, six divisions in the first Kitchener Army (or K1), acquiring land and then building accommodation would take time, and not a few strikes and walk outs, a situation not always helped by some regular SNCOs abusing men for their complaints. Yet though there were delays, there was also the ability to muddle through, and in due course barracks sprung up the length and breadth of the UK.

The War Office was placing increased orders for artillery shells, rifles and the various other items necessary for the prosecution of the ground war taking into account the expansion, but Simkins highlights the fact that British industry was not geared up to produce the volumes needed. Lloyd George claims that the Ministry of Munitions resolved this, with him as Minister of course, and to an extent this was correct. However, he unfairly ignores that this depended on early War Office efforts.

Training would be hampered by a lack! Experienced officers and NCOs, ammunition, equipment, uniforms, everything that can be thought of.

And what of Kitchener himself? He was almost revered by the country on taking up his position, and his fellow cabinet members regarded him in awe. However, at the

same time he would be incapable of delegation, and in due course the cabinet would be frustrated at his inability to work on a committee environment. However, it is clear that he had a grasp of the strategic implications that resulted from Britain's new found European commitment. Balancing his comments on Kitchener, Simkins is pro-Kitchener, and though he may not state it, I suspect that he considered that Kitchener may have won the Great War by his work as Secretary of State for War.

On a more general note, the book is not overly illustrated. It is however very comprehensive and well structured. With Peter Simkins having been a Senior Historian at the IWM, not surprisingly it is well researched with the 12 Chapters having some 60 note references on average, while there are also 17 pages of Bibliography to check out for a little light reading afterwards! The book can be a little dry, but I would say that it is priority reading.

However, for all that is regarded to be the British way of muddling through, the "Dunkirk Spirit" and so on, two things are clear. The first is that Britain was supremely capable of fielding a continental-sized army in just a few years, that it matched the Germans, never mutinied like the French, and is something we should be proud of. The second is that as ever, the phrase "*Si vis pacem, para bellum*" rang true then, and should continue so today!

### **Website Workings By Roger Frisby**

Work had continued on building up the Roll of Honour data, and for this, particular thanks must go to Mike and Rosemarie Thomas for the use of their research material on the Jersey casualties. This material has been useful in cross-checking the information entered to date, and where appropriate, added to or corrected. There is a useful by-product, and that is the need to highlight to the CWGC the need for name changes on the Register and possibly, on the headstones, as in the case of Alfred Le Pennec having his corrected from Pennex!

We've added a contribution from a Jersey-Canadian recently on his grandfather Pierre-Marie Le Garignon who served in the French Army. Pierre-Marie was born in Brittany and would later move to Jersey where he farmed at Coin Varin in St Peter. The article is currently in French, but an English translation will be added in the next month or so.

Two editions of the, hand-written and beautifully illustrated, R.G.L.I. "**Les Folies**" - "B" Coy, R.G.L.I. magazine are now on the website. They were produced at Christmas 1918 and New Year 1919. Ours thanks go to the Guernsey Museums Service for their permission to reproduce them.

### **Membership News**

We welcome three new members in this Journal. First of all, Anne Parouty, whose grandfather Louis served in Jersey's Militia and who would work in the munitions industry in Birmingham from August 1916, and subsequently settled there. Anne has provided some photographs of her grandfather's paperwork and. I hope, in due course we will publish them in either the Journal or on the website. Anne's family believes that between 1915 and 1916, Louis was serving in France, however to date, no documentary evidence has turned up.

The second is David Bowditch in Australia, whose father was Leonard Bowditch, a Jersey Contingent man who would later join the Hampshire Regiment. David's grandfather was WO2 James Hamon, RGA. Both are listed in the Roll of Service. The third is Norman Wood, based in Jersey, who is interested in militaria, the Jersey Militia and other Jersey material and who has the following website which you may have visited:

<http://www.jerseymilitia.co.uk/>

A warm welcome to all three.

### **Out and About**

As covered in his article, Ned attended a WFA Suffolk Branch Seminar on 1918 to be held in Ipswich the weekend of 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> March.

I attended Lancaster University part time during the period 17<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> attending lectures on “Aces High: A look at the Great War in the Air”. I'll give a brief summary of it in the Journal, along with a couple of recent WFA talks on “Artillery” and “The German Offensive on the Aisne 1918”, plus a talk at the King's Own Museum this morning on the Battle of Givenchy on 9<sup>th</sup> April, 1918 and Second Lieutenant Joseph Henry Collin VC.

Liz is tentatively planning to continue following Latimer Le Poidevin's footsteps in France as of 10<sup>th</sup> April. While Roger is also journeying on the Lys, in Arras and at various other locations. Hopefully we shall all be meeting up to visit the Wellington Tunnel just opened in Arras.

As a reminder, I have booked a gîte, aptly named “Les Coquelicots”, in Beaumont-Hamel for the period 12<sup>th</sup>–26<sup>th</sup> April. The location is at the left hand corner of the road from Auchonvillers where one turns left at the T-junction for Thiepval before going next right over the level crossing.

From 14<sup>th</sup> June – 5<sup>th</sup> July I am staying near Calais to take in Ypres and the Bethune area.

Elizabeth Morey is looking to come over from New Zealand to visit France and Flanders in 2008. She is still to determine dates.

Ian and Paul Ronayne, along with Ned Malet de Carteret are touring the battlefield in late May, their itinerary is as follows:

- Day 1: Travel to Ypres
- Day 2: Morning: visits in the Salient - some Jersey Contingent related. Afternoon: head south to visit the battlefield of 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn, Hampshire Regiment outside Bailleul in April 1918. Time permitting, some Loos visits in the afternoon. Night in Arras
- Day 3: Drive the Hindenburg Line to Moeuvres. Possible visit to RGLI battlefield. End up on the Somme - would like to see if we can visit Thiepval Wood. Drive to Honfleur for the night
- Day 4: Possible visit to the Merville Battery before heading to St Malo and home.

## Odds and Ends

**Administration:** My perennial plea in that can you make sure that, if you have changed your E-Mail address and other contact details you let me know. In any case, there are still some details to be forwarded for the contact list which I'd like to update at the end of December.

**The Jersey Contingent Book:** Ian Ronayne writes of progress to date:

After a couple of years work, I am hopefully on the final stretch to completing my book. Entitled 'Ours: The Jersey Contingent in the First World War', it recounts the story of the 300 plus men who left Jersey in 1915 to serve with the Royal Irish Rifles in France and Belgium. Obviously, the main thrust of the book is their story, however, in telling I have tried to include as much background information as possible. This will include information on Jersey during the war, and the general progress of the war to set the context. The book runs to 11 chapters plus appendices, and will be about 200 pages long.

At the current time, I am working through a re-writing a final draft of each chapter. Paul Ronayne, Ned Malet De Carteret, and Warwick Blench have kindly been reading the first chapters for me and providing critical feedback. Barrie Bertram has already performed this task on earlier drafts (and hopefully will be doing the same in the future). In terms of completion, I am hoping to complete and be ready to publish by November this year in order to coincide with the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the end of the war. In terms of publishing, a proposal and sample chapters have been sent to one company already - and rejected as being too narrow a subject. It is now with a second, with a few more to try yet. If I draw a blank with these, I will be looking for alternative options. Fingers crossed though!

**The Coutances Colloque:** Background work continues in hand to give a 30 minute presentation on the CI and the GW at Coutances over the weekend 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> November.

**A Great War Petition:** There is now a facility where people can raise and support petitions to the Prime Minister electronically (<http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/>). There has been one recently placed for the Charter of the CWGC to be changed to enable the Great War civilian dead from enemy action to be commemorated. You may wish to visit the site and your name. Though I've added mine, I suspect that it is likely to be a complex requirement on the CWGC if followed through.

**Philately Matters:** I recently discovered that the two "Lest We Forget" issues put out by the British Post Office in 2006 and 2007 topped each year's poll as best stamp in a survey conducted amongst their Philatelic Bureau's customers. As well as being well-designed stamps, clearly, such commemoration has a resonance.

With that in mind, it remains a shame that the postal administrations of both Jersey and Guernsey seem incapable of being weaned off their diet of flowers, orchids, dogs, cows and other animals to take a little time to commemorate the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Armistice as the British Post Office will be doing later this year. Sorry there is the soapbox coming out again.

**A Website Contribution From Jersey’s Lieutenant Governor:** Having seen an article in a recent Jersey Evening Post written by His Excellency, the Lieutenant Governor of Jersey, Lieutenant-General Andrew Ridgway, we asked whether H.E. would be kind enough to agree to the article – on Cambrai and Second Lieutenant Edward de Faye – being reproduced on the site. I’m delighted to say that we have received his permission, and the article is now accessible by visiting Edward de Faye’s Roll of Honour entry.

**Dorling Kindersley “Eyewitness World War I”:** You might like to look out for this book if there are younger readers in the family. Well illustrated and produced with the IWM’s assistance, it can be regarded as a primer for children who might be developing a historical interest in the Great War (as my grandson aged six seems to be doing, though not inspired by me!)

**My Boy Jack:** Peter Tabb’s review (Journal 18) moved me to get this book which I’ve since read. It does have a couple of loose CI connections in that the grave report for the cemetery, where ‘Jack’ Kipling is supposed to be buried, was ‘signed off’ by Second Lieutenant AH Domaille, a former RGLI officer but then with the Labour Corps. A letter from the Prince of Wales to a fellow officer refers to the POW having spoken to the padre of 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Irish Guards, Chaplain Simon Knapp who is listed on Jersey’s Roll of Honour. With DSO and MC awarded, the padre must be worthy of further research.

**Temps Passé:** Interesting to see a recent “75 Years Ago” piece in the JEP about a Mr GM Ahier dying in New Zealand (in 1933) and that he had lost two sons to the Great War. Cross-checking, one is recorded in Jersey’s RoH and on the CWGC also. Who was the second son? Elizabeth Morey is, I’m pleased to say, having one of her contacts looking for more information. If the report was correct, there is the likelihood of a non-commemoration to be resolved.

### Enfin

I note that Peter Tabb moved to a new house recently, mine is the same old one, but I feel that I have stood still while it has moved around me while I’ve had a series of workmen in! My study at present is more like a furniture repository, and I can only hope that it has not reflected too much in this Journal.

Do keep material coming in for articles, no matter what size, particularly of .

Regards  
Barrie H Bertram  
9<sup>th</sup> April 2008

### Journal Issue Dates For 2008

Issue	Month	Articles To BB	Posted Web/Mail
18	February 2008	10 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>
19	April 2008	7 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>
20	June 2008	7 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>
21	August 2008	10 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>
22	October 2008	10 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>
23	December 2008	10 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>