

CHANNEL ISLANDS GREAT WAR STUDY GROUP



**Lawrence of Arabia
The Bramerton House plaque**

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Hello All

Another mix and match of Great War pieces.

This time the tour de force is an article “Aux Armes” that discusses the history of the Jersey Militia. I’ve ‘borrowed’ it from the Jersey Archive Trust whose Head of Community Education Services (a Mr Doug Ford) had written it. I have taken the opportunity to edit it slightly, mainly for consistency and to remind us that the Cavalry were officered by Cornets and not Coronets! I appreciate that it is ‘Jersey-centric’, but I suspect that there are many parallels with Guernsey’s militia force, certainly up to the start of the Great War. It is somewhat relevant to the Great War in that many of the men who were serving pre-war either volunteered or were later called up for service with the Armed Forces.



As a lead into the article on the Militia, I’ve also managed to locate the accompanying photo in the Jersey Archive Trust’s collection. As anyone with service experience may recall, kit layouts such as this were intended to enable the inspection of equipment to ensure that it was serviceable and marked with the soldier’s regimental number. From the cap badge, it can be seen that it was the kit of a Jersey militiaman and his number is marked on his socks (about two thirds up the bed) - it seems to have been 7534, but I’m not sure the militia had reached that number? Kit layouts took on a life of their own in the “bull-shine baffles brains” way of life in the British Army of the late 50s/early 60s. My own military recollection of this time was to have a spare set of kit ready ironed and folded on cardboard formers to be laid out for inspection, with the soles of the boots blackened and polished and the hobnails correctly aligned!

Who said “The good old days”?

From the last Journal

A couple of points regarding the above:

Regarding the transportation of German POW, a Jersey Morning News article of March, 1915 was published advising islanders that Albert Pier was out of bounds as far as the level crossing adjacent to Castle Street while German POW were unloaded. It seems that assumptions of their travel by Jersey Rail seems sound, I saw no other articles, however, warning of out of bounds areas in the west of the Island.

Regarding Lawrence of Arabia and his address in Jersey, Heather came back as quick as a flash with the following information from the local blue plaque scheme:

LAWRENCE, THOMAS EDWARD (1888-1935) (Bramerton House, Mount Bingham)

British Soldier, archaeologist and explorer

He was popularly known as Lawrence of Arabia, because he organised and led the Arabs against the Turks in the 1914-18 war. He also wrote 'The Seven Pillars of Wisdom' (1926). His younger brother, Frank Helier, was born in Bramerton House in 1893, so that, being born in Jersey he would not be liable for service in the French Army when the family returned to their home in Dinard. This would have been when T.E. Lawrence, aged 5, would have stayed here. Other family holidays were spent in Gorey.

I know Ned has seen the house which overlooks Havre des Pas and the La Collette slipway.

"Aux Armes!" - The Militia in Jersey

Since King John of England lost control of mainland Normandy to King Philippe Auguste of France in the early 1200s the CI have assumed the role of frontier posts on the very edge of a war-zone for long periods at a time when England and later the United Kingdom and France were at war. Despite the presence of the royal fortresses of Mont Orgueil and Elizabeth Castle the defence of the island lay mainly in the hands of the islanders and their locally raised defence force. In the late XVIIIth Century a French Intelligence report stated:

"They form a militia corps which is well disciplined, has good marksmen and which is in a state, almost alone, to repel any enemy which may descend on it."

In the early 1900s some historians tried to date the foundation of the militia to the IVth Century AD when they believed that there was compulsory military service in Jersey. They also believed that in 578 AD military commanders were appointed to furnish armed men to fight raiders and it was for this reason that the islanders organised themselves into various sized groups of one hundreds and twenties and as a result the Officers become known as Connétables, Centeniers and Vingteniers. A very romantic story but unfortunately there is no corroborative evidence for this. (The earliest mention in official documents for Connétables and Vingteniers date from 1462 and Centeniers, from 1502) It is from this time that the Frankish tribes were taking over Gaul and we find that village administration was in the hands of the "hundred man" which could be taken to be the original designation of the Centenier.

The Islanders at this time were like every other small isolated community in that they had to fend for themselves. If a group of raiders landed then it was up to them to protect themselves. Once the political situation in the region stabilizes with the appearance of the Duchy of Normandy then the threats to the Islands become a distant memory and the more ordered feudal organisation of the Island begins to take place. When William, Duke of Normandy, invaded England and defeated Harold Godwinson and his army at Senlac Hill just outside Hastings in 1066, there was very probably some Islanders in his army. For the next century or so, Islanders were excused military service outside their island unless it was to accompany their Duke

in person. In return islanders were obliged to pay the sum of 70 livres. This agreement was adopted by Henry III in 1249 when he was at war with France.

The origins of the island defence force probably pre-date the island's Norman connections and it was, in essence, a *levée en masse* which was controlled by the local leaders and their subordinate officers called Centeniers and Vingteniers. The titles are essentially of a military nature, implying as they do divisions of one hundreds and twenties. Perhaps this is an echo of the Roman practice to which the earlier historians alluded and stems from the Vth century when the Roman Empire and its army fragmented leaving each area to look after itself.

As late as the XVIIIth century the Constables were responsible for all aspects of local defence from the recruitment and training of men to the provision of equipment. The Parish Church was used as a convenient place to store the Parish cannon and ammunition. The outline of a wide door to facilitate the movement of such cannon can still be seen in St Lawrence Church and the 1551 St Peter's Parish Cannon can still be seen at the foot of Beaumont Hill. This does not so much reflect the concept of the Church Militant as much as it affirms the fact that the churches were the strongest and most central buildings within the Parish. It could also be argued, of course, that the defence of one's homeland was "*a sacred and religious duty*". During the Migration Period of the Vth to the VIIIth Century the Church had also taken a military role both in England and France with armies being led by bishops. This was a tradition that was carried down the centuries with the mace wielding priests of the Norman period and the warrior monks of the Crusades.

Originally defence would have been the typical untrained *levée en masse* drawn from the property owning classes and their followers. Norman feudalism brought with it its own form of military service but the need for a more highly trained and more numerous body became more necessary with the loss of the Duchy of Normandy and the consequent war-zone and frontier status of the CI after the first decade of the XIIIth century.

In the turmoil following 1204 John, believing that he had lost the CI, sent a mercenary force led by Eustace the Monk to harry the Islands. However, when Eustace turned up again in 1214, this time working for the King of France, he was repulsed by a newly raised and armed local defence force. This then could be considered as the origins of the Jersey Militia. Records from Guernsey state that "*the whole manhood of the island*" was mustered and required to guard landing places, batteries and strong-points, while the Castles were manned by English troops. As both Islands were in a similar position then we should picture a similar situation in Jersey.

By the 1330s a number of families were exempted from payment of hearth tax on account of services rendered. Again we must draw on Guernsey sources to gain a picture of what was happening in Jersey for when Castle Cornet was seized by the French a third of the garrison were Islanders. We could surmise from this that a similar situation existed in Mont Orgueil.

In 1337, Thomas de Ferrers, the Warden of the Isles was ordered to levy and arm all men of the island capable of bearing arms and to form them into companies of 1000s, 100, and 20s. He was to lead them well armed and arrayed for the defence

of the Island. This is often seen as the origins of the ‘true’ Jersey Militia but one must bear in mind the local force raised in the first decade of the XIIIth century.

Throughout the XIVth century the Island was subjected to raids and attacks by the French and their allies.

- 1336 David Bruce, the exiled King of Scots raided the Island.
- 1338 Nicholas Behuchet, Admiral of France occupied the Island for six months but failed to capture Mont Orgueil.
- 1339 Sir Robert Bertrand, Marshal of France, invaded Jersey but again Mont Orgueil Castle could not be taken.
- 1372 Ifan of Wales raided the Island.
- 1373 Bertrand du Guesclin, Constable of France and the Duc du Bourbon invaded the Island capture Grosnez Castle but failed at Mont Orgueil.

Throughout this period the ‘militia’ seems to have operated but they were not capable of putting up a sustained resistance against an organised attack. This is shown by the events of October, 1406 when a combined Spanish/French force landed on the islet in St Aubin’s Bay led by Pero Nino and Pierre Hector de Pontbriand. The Militia drew up along the facing sand dunes and advanced on the invaders; the battle raged fiercely with hand to hand fighting until the advancing tide forced the sides apart. Overnight Nino learned of the defences of the Island which coupled with what he knew of the Militia’s capabilities made him switch his strategy to one of terrorism. The following day detachments were sent out to pillage and destroy whatever they could find but to avoid a pitched battle. This they succeeded in doing apart from a skirmish at the top of Grouville Hill (La Croix de la Bataille). The new strategy had the desired effect on the Militia who, unwilling to allow this destruction of their property and suffering to their families to continue. the Islanders agreed to pay a ransom of 10,000 gold crowns to the invaders in return for their departure.

During the Wars of the Roses, Margaret of Anjou, wife of Henry VI, sold Mont Orgueil to the French in 1461. This in effect made the Island French. While there may have been some discontent at this and according to legend the French only controlled the eastern half of the Island the fact is that there was no popular uprising and the Militia did nothing to evict them until 1468. In 1468 the Yorkist Vice-Admiral, Sir Richard Harliston in conjunction with the Seigneur of St Ouen, Philippe de Carteret, besieged the Castle and captured it. The role played by the St Ouennais was so vital to the operation that in recognition of their services they were given the pride of place whenever the Militia was drawn up - the right flank.

In 1545 the Governor of the Island, the Earl of Hertford, ordered each Parish to appoint a Captain for their Company of Trained Bands. In 1549 the French landed a force at Bouley Bay but they were defeated by the Militia at Jardin d’Olivet. This was the first time that the Militia fought in Brigades, that is the Trained Bands. At this time each Parish had two pieces of field artillery of which we still have the St Peter’s cannon which can be seen at the bottom of Beaumont Hill in St Peter and a fragment of the St Saviour’s cannon which can be seen in the Granite and Gunpowder display in Elizabeth Castle. The St Peter’s field piece was made by the Owen brothers of London who were responsible for making many of the guns on board the Mary Rose. In 1553 the States ordered the Parish Companies to practice every Sunday, weather permitting, the firing of hackbutts, bows and crossbows.

The rest of the Century was to all extents and purposes peaceful with England and France at peace; the latter riven by the Wars of Religion, and as a result the Militia became rather lax. In 1617 a Royal Commission headed by Sir Edward Conway and Sir William Bird investigated the state of the island's defences and they concluded that the Militia was in a poor state of readiness. As a result of their report the Militia was reorganised by the Governor, Sir John Peyton, the men were re-equipped and trained by professional soldiers and the whole cost of the exercise was covered by the imposition of a wine duty.

By 1622 the 12 Parish Trained Companies were reformed into 3 Regiments each under its own Colonel, they were the West which was the senior Regiment, the North and the East.

During the English Civil War the majority of Islanders were Parliamentarian at heart yet the Island was held for the King by the de Carterets who proved to be more effective leaders for their party than anyone that the Parliamentarians could produce. Rather than waste their time in futile manoeuvres trying to oust the Royalist garrisons the Militiamen just returned to their homes and farms and carried on with their everyday tasks. In 1646 all fit men between the ages of 15 and 70 were ordered to parade with their Parish Companies for the benefit of the Prince of Wales.

The Channel Islands were always a sideshow as far as the Parliamentarian leadership was concerned. Troops and spies in St Peter Port kept an eye on things and kept the Royalists occupied and when the Parliamentarian forces did direct their attention towards Jersey in 1651 the Militia men were unable to prevent a landing by Cromwell's seasoned troops and so drifted away back to their homes. The Island fell within a fortnight although Elizabeth Castle held out for seven weeks before surrendering. In 1666 Sir Thomas Morgan remodelled the Island defences and as part of this the Militia was reorganised once more into three Regiments and given intensified training - much of it under canvas. By the end of the year, Morgan could count on 4,000 infantry and 200 cavalry.

In 1685 the Militia was composed of three Regiments and a Troop of Horse as well as the twenty-four parish field guns. By the end of the century the Militia were issued with red coats and arms and equipment by the British Government.

In 1730 the Militia was made up of 6 Battalions split into 5 Regiments. The 1st (or North West) Regiment recruited its men from the parishes of St Ouen, St Mary and St John, while the 2nd (or North) Regiment took men in from the parishes of Trinity and St Martin. The 3rd (or East) Regiment drew men from the parishes of St Saviour, Grouville and St Clement. The 4th (or South) Regiment covered the most populated part of the island and so was divided into two Battalions. The men of Town made up the 1st/4th St Helier Battalion while the men from St Lawrence and the country parts of St Helier made up the 2nd/4th St Lawrence Battalion. The last militia regiment was the 5th (or South West) Regiment which came from St Peter and St Brelade. To compliment this arrangement the militia artillery was made up which were still housed in the parish churches.

Usually a Battalion in the regular army was made up of a Colonel, a Lieutenant-Colonel, a Major, 7 Captains, 11 Lieutenants, 4 Ensigns, 1 Quartermaster, 48 Grenadiers (NCOs and men), and 494 Infantrymen (NCOs and men), plus 50

Artillery NCOs and men. The Militia Battalions were not quite as organised and so the size of these Battalions varied. As a result of the Corn Riots of 1769, Colonel Bentinck of the Royal Scots was made Lieutenant-Governor with the brief of drawing up a Code of Laws. By the Code of 1771 all youths from 15 to 17 were obliged to drill once a week during the summer, and every male from 17 to 65 was bound to serve. Service was voluntary in that it was unpaid, instruction and equipment was provided by the British Government. Non-attendance was punishable by fines and coastguard duty occurred about one night in every two to three weeks. The defence of the Island was in the hands of the Militia which was composed of a Corps of Artillery, a Regiment of Cavalry and 6 Battalions of Infantry (see Appendix) as well as the regular British troops holding the Castles. Within a couple of hours the regular forces could be supplemented with nearly 3,000 trained men.

These men were in a better position than the regular British soldier for they had no need of a heavy knapsack to carry spare clothes and food in, for these items could be provided, daily, by their wives and families. It also meant that the Militia Regiments were not slowed down by large baggage trains.

In 1779 the Prince of Nassau's invasion was repelled by the 78th Regiment of Foot assisted by the Western Militia and the Militia Artillery was lead by the Rector of St Ouen's, le Sire du Parcq who brought the guns to a favourable position under fire from the hostile fleet. His name was later given to the Du Parcq Battery on the site of what was later to become the Lewis Tower.

During the Battle of Jersey in 1781 the Militia played its role. The Western Militia held La Mont de la Ville where Fort Regent now stands and fired into the Royal Square while the 95th Regiment fought the actual battle there and the 83rd Regiment joined with the Eastern Militia led by Francois Le Couteur, the Rector of St Martin, to destroy de Rullecourt's base at La Rocque.

During the French Revolutionary Wars 1793-1815 the Militia was on constant alert throughout with regular troops garrisoning the Castles and Militiamen manning the Bulwark Batteries and strong-points. It was during this period of emergency that one of the most important threats to the Militia appeared - the growth of Methodism in the Island.

During the 1780s Methodism became an important feature of Island life. Traditionally, Militia drill was held on Sundays after morning service, but this was regarded as an affront to the Jersey Methodists' religious beliefs and a desecration of the Sabbath. When the Methodists refused to turn up for parade and drill after church and the efficiency of the whole Regiment was affected the authorities acted in a high-handed manner threatening those who missed militia drill with imprisonment and banishment. In 1796 Francois Jeune was banished for three years for missing three parades in succession and in 1798 his son was imprisoned. The matter was put into the hands of the Privy Council, where it was agreed that the Methodists should do their drills on weekdays.

In 1806, Lieutenant-General Don, the newly appointed Lieutenant-Governor, ordered the erection of drill sheds to allow the Militia to muster even in the worst weather. The drill shed at St Saviour was erected by the church and across the road a public house was built to take advantage of this regular gathering of thirsty men. In 1831 to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of Jersey the Jersey Militia was created

"Royal" and the facings of the uniform were changed to blue from buff. In 1838 the 1st/4th St Helier Battalion of the Militia, in conjunction with the 60th Regiment, suppressed a riot of oyster fishermen at Gorey. This became known as the "Battle of the Oyster Shells". Of course, the embarrassing question must be asked - where were the men of the 2nd and 3rd Regiments? The embarrassing answer is that many of them were oystermen and so they were amongst the rioting.

In 1844 arsenals were built in each parish and the field pieces were removed from the churches.

In 1869 Sir John Le Couteur assessed that the strength of the militia was 5,325 men.

In 1877 the militia was once more reorganised. The Royal Jersey Artillery was formed with 4 Batteries, manned by 280 gunners under a Lieutenant-Colonel. The five infantry Regiments were reduced to three, each consisting of 500 NCOs and men under a Lieutenant Colonel.

- The 1st (or West) combined the old 1st (or North West) Regiment, the 2nd/4th St Lawrence Battalion, and the 5th (or South West) Regiment.
- The 2nd (or East) combined the old 2nd (or North) Regiment and the 3rd (or East) Regiment.
- The 3rd (or Town) combined the old 1st/4th St Helier Battalion plus those residents of St Helier who had served in the 2nd/4th Battalion.

Each Battalion had 6 Companies of about 60 men; and there was a Colonel, 2 Majors, 6 Captains, 6 Lieutenants and 6 Second Lieutenants. There was in addition to this, a permanent staff of regular officers and NCOs - an Adjutant, a Sergeant Major, a Quarter Master Sergeant, and 3 Sergeant Instructors.

In 1881 the Militia Regiments were allowed the battle honour "Jersey 1781".

In 1889 the artillery was re-organised so that 4 Batteries of Militia Artillery together with a regular Battery from the Royal Garrison Artillery formed a Regiment and were responsible for the whole of the Island's southern defences. In addition two mobile artillery forces were raised as Field Artillery and were equipped with four 20-pounder guns; these were the West manned by artillerymen of the six western parishes and the East manned by the men of the five eastern parishes. The Infantry Battalions were armed with the Martini-Henry rifle.

In 1891 parochial rivalry lead to the St Ouennais Company 'to mutiny' when they believed that they were being deprived of their traditional place on the right flank.

In 1905 the Militia was once more re-organized when it was placed under the Army Act. It was made up of a Regiment of Artillery, divided into two Field Batteries and two Garrison Companies, a Company of Engineers, a Medical Company, and three Battalions of infantry. Training was modernised. The cost to the States was estimated at £5,000 per year.

With the outbreak of war in 1914 the regular garrison troops were withdrawn and the Militia was mobilised to take over responsibility for the defence of the Island. In 1917 when the threat of invasion had waned the Militia was demobilised. The Militia as such was not sent to France but many of its members joined a volunteer Overseas

Contingent which was incorporated into the Royal Irish Rifles. [No mention here of the Royal Jersey Garrison Battalion being formed – Editor]

In 1921 a new Militia Law reduced the militia to a single Regiment. The old colours were laid up in the churches of St Helier, St Martin and St Mary and the new colours were presented to the new Regiment of the Royal Jersey Militia. Service at this stage was still compulsory, it was not until 1929 that service was made purely voluntary and the strength was reduced to 260 men with all costs being met by the States. The Militia was composed of 250 men, a Headquarters, a Rifle Company and a Machine Gun company enrolled for Island defence only.

With the outbreak of the Second World War the Militia was mobilised and with the demilitarisation of the Island in June, 1940, 11 officers and 193 men left on the SS Hoder for England where they formed the nucleus of the 11th (Royal Militia Island of Jersey) Battalion, Hampshire Regiment.

After the war in 1946, the War Office advised and ordered the disbanding of the Militia and this was done. The colours were laid up in the Parish Church of St Helier in January 1954.

Appendix: Militia Establishment (La Loi sur la Milice 1771)

The military establishment of the Militia is to consist of:

- 1 Adjutant General
- 2 Aides-de-Camp
- 12 Masters-at-Arms (1 for each parish)

Corps d'Artillerie Royale de Jersey

- 1 Colonel Commandant
- 1 Captain
- 1 Captain-Lieutenant
- 1 Adjutant
- 12 Lieutenants (1 for each parish)
- 12 Instructors or Master Gunners (1 for each parish)
- 12 Cadets (1 for each parish)
- 130 artillerymen (20 from St Helier and 10 from each of the other parishes)

From April 1778 the Artillery Corps was divided into their parish units and was attached to the Regiment in whose area they lived.

St Helier detachment:

1 Lieutenant
1 instructor
20 artillerymen
2 drummers
2 fife players

Other parishes:

1 Lieutenant
1 instructor
12 artillerymen

Cavalry

1 Colonel
1 Lieutenant-Colonel
1 Major
2 Captains
1 Captain Lieutenant
2 Lieutenants
2 Cornets
1 Adjutant

List of Commissioned Officers in Militia Regiments

1st (or North West) Regiment

1 Colonel
1 Lieutenant-Colonel
1 Major
9 Captains
10 Lieutenants
8 Ensigns
1 Adjutant

3rd (or East) Regiment

1 Colonel
1 Lieutenant-Colonel
1 Major
7 Captains
8 Lieutenants
6 Ensigns
1 Adjutant

2nd/4th (or South) Regiment

1 Colonel
1 Major
5 Captains
6 Lieutenants
4 Ensigns
1 Adjutant

2nd (or North) Regiment

1 Colonel
1 Lieutenant-Colonel
1 Major
9 Captains
10 Lieutenants
8 Ensigns
1 Adjutant

5th (or South West) Regiment

1 Colonel
1 Lieutenant-Colonel
1 Major
7 Captains
8 Lieutenants
6 Ensigns
1 Adjutant

1st/4th (or South) Regiment

1 Colonel Commandant
1 Major
5 Captains
6 Lieutenants
4 Ensigns
1 Adjutant

The Captains of each Company appointed their own Sergeants. Each parish held one flag and 1 Drum per Company; Grenadier and Fusilier Companies had two drums.

Visits

I have not heard from Alan for about a month, but know he was busy doing some tours in France and Flanders.

Meanwhile Ian has put his planned visits to Guillemont, Ginchy and other places where the Jersey Company served with the 7th Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles and subsequent units on hold. Business matters are more pressing.

Liz has been trying to get information from the municipal authorities in Arras and I quote her E-Mail from April:

"Last week I went to the Flanders Field Museum at Ypres (where a RGLI badge is part of one of the displays, incidentally), attended the Menin Gate Last Post ceremony, and had a relatively unsuccessful visit to the town and departmental archives in Arras. One was closed because heavy rain the day before had caused flooding, the other closed early without prior notice because of a staff retirement. Anyway, I took some good shots at Tyne Cot, the Arras town memorial, Faubourg d'Amiens cemetery in Arras, Ploegsteert Wood and the Ploegsteert Memorial. The planting at the cemeteries is lovely - different in different settings and seasonal - completely different from when I visited last summer. It's amazing how peaceful they always are, even when they are near busy roads or in towns. I'm in Jersey from 15th to 17th April - OU day-school on the Saturday - might even catch up with some of you from "the other isle". I've attached a photo from my trip - Tyne Cot where many Channel Islanders are commemorated. Incidentally they are not listed under RGLI or similar - they are under Channel Islands Militia. I couldn't find them at first because of this."



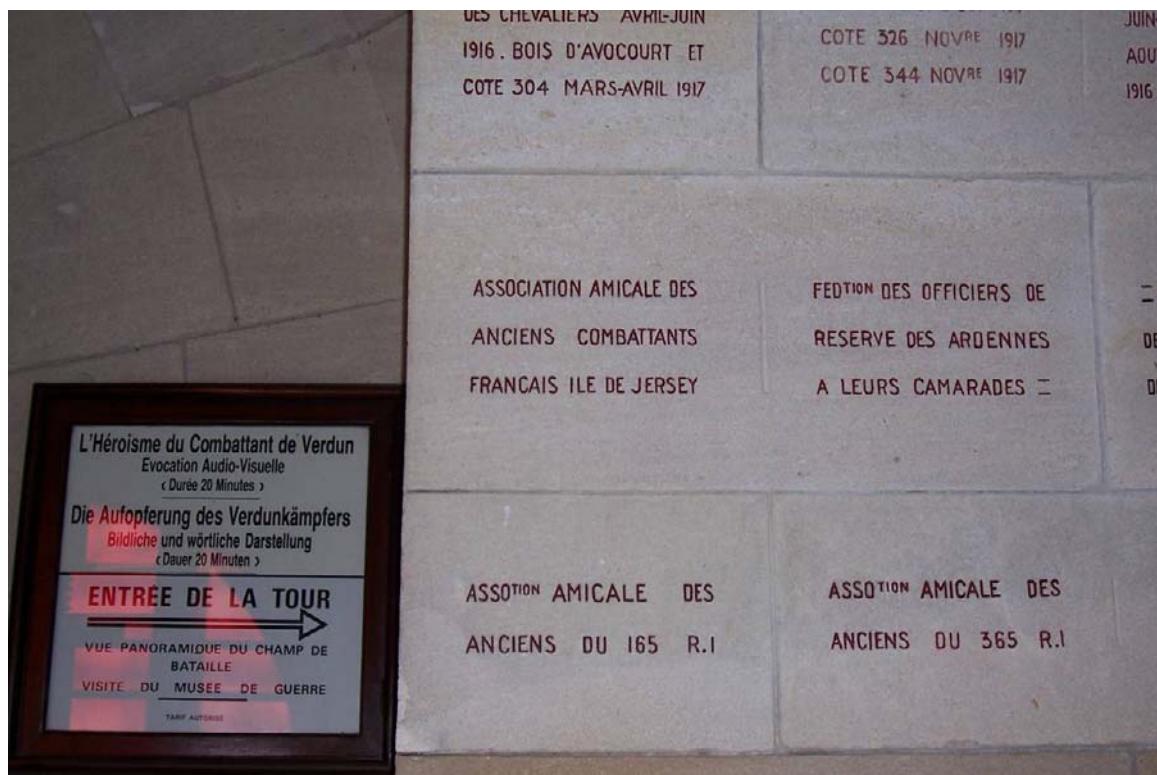
Tyne Cot – The Cross of Sacrifice

More recently Liz visited England and spent time on Salisbury Plain. To quote from a further EMail:

"Went to Salisbury Plain this week where a very helpful man - Major Bill Clarke- took me all round Larkhill, where my aunt worked before she went to France. We managed to work out exactly where the Salvation Army hut had been. I also found out that there is still a Red Shield hut at Bulford Camp but couldn't get into it this time as the person who could authorise it wasn't there. Major Clarke is a fount of knowledge about anything to do with the Plain, and especially the history of the Royal Artillery and the Royal Flying Corps. Re: Jersey - am going over again on 20th/21st M and hope to visit the Archives and maybe the library as I didn't get anything much done last time. The Salvation Army there does not appear to have any relevant records."

Liz' note interests me in that I have not been to Bulford Camp for many years but can remember that it was in many ways a "living" museum as is Tidworth which I last visited about sevens ago on business. In the mid-60s it still had a Bessonneau (correct spelling?) aircraft hangar of WW1 vintage in use. The Plain is a historic area it almost goes without saying militarily, with the various camps and sites such as the Fovant badges and the military cemetery at Codford. I suspect that most servicemen passed through the areas on their way to France and Flanders.

For my part, I was in the Verdun area during the early half of April. I probably did not get around the sites as much as I would have liked, but still managed the American Meuse-Argonne Cemetery, some of the destroyed villages and Douaumont where I re-visited the very interesting Memorial Museum and also the Ossuary. I have been to the Ossuary a number of times, but had never previously noticed (and it is quite obvious as you enter and look towards the chapel!) the commemorative stone in the picture below put up by the Association Amicale des Anciens Combattants Francais from Jersey.



We run the risk of forgetting the French in the CI, but from what I have read in some of the old newspapers of the time, when mobilisation was underway in 1914, some 2,500 plus Frenchman left Jersey for their reserve units within a week. I suspect that

it was a similar affair with Guernsey and the other islands. One supposes that any German and Austro-Hungarian nationals in the islands did likewise!

En-route back to Calais catch the train, I took a very slight detour to visit Ors Communal Cemetery and to see Wilfred Owen's grave (the centre one in the photograph below). The Cemetery contains just 63 graves, all bar one unknown and all bar one who died on the same day as Owen – 4th November, 1918). Other graves include Lieutenant-Colonel James Marshall and Second Lieutenant James Kirk, both of whom received Victoria Crosses for the action at the Sambre-Oise canal.

Lastly, as it was the 60th Anniversary celebration of the Liberation and as I am an Occupation baby (?) I came over to Jersey for the week, during which time I had the great pleasure of meeting Heather, Ned and Ian for the first time. In both Ned's and Ian's case I was able to see their material. I also met Anna Baghiani at the Société Jersiaise Library and Roland Quintaine at the Jersey Archive. Anna had rung me the week prior to my visit inviting me up to the Library to see their material on the Militia. In the case of Roland it was to look at the Nominal Rolls and Pay records of the Militia prior to and during the Great War. My expectations at the Archive regarding my capacity to cover all Battalions plus the RJA, Medical and Engineer Companies were rather excessive, and in the day, managed only those for the 1st Battalion, RMJ.

The SJ Library turned out to be particularly useful in that they possessed a copy of the Royal Jersey Garrison Battalion Muster Roll as at the time of the Armistice in 1918, see below.

Any future accounts of your visits will be most welcome for inclusion.



Wilfred Owen's Headstone at Ors Communal Cemetery

Royal Jersey Garrison Battalion – Muster Roll

This is an interesting document in that it lists those members of the RJGB – 464 names - on strength as at the Armistice. However, the regimental numbering system goes up to 1035. Having done some initial research, it can be concluded that many of the other 500 plus were subsequently called up for service with English units, and I have found a degree of corroboration with some 30 names in the CWGC Register/Soldiers Died in the Great War where the RJGB is included as a former unit. These 30 mainly served with the Hampshire, DCLI, Dorsetshire and KRRC Regiments.

The most surprising aspect of the RJGB Muster Roll turned out to be an influx of soldiers from regiments such as the Leicester (predominantly), Lancashire Fusilier, DLI, and the York and Lancaster Regiments. In all this influx appears to have consisted of 100 men (regimental numbers 880-979) and many of these had served and been wounded or gassed in France. Maybe the RJGB was, in part, seen as a unit allowing for recuperation? It certainly was not a “Jerseyman-only” unit as I had previously thought.

Furthermore, I can only presume that the RJGB was not engaged on POW camp duties as no reference is made to Lt-Col Stocker or Lt Bowers who were respectively CO and Adjutant at the camp. This analysis is supported by studying the Medal Record Index, allowing for glitches such as the Royal Jersey Graduate Battalion!! I'll be happy to share the story so far with anyone who would like the data in spreadsheet format, and any names that plug the gaps will be particularly useful.

Militia Records at the Archive

I have plenty to do on the 1st Battalion nominal rolls but it may be of interest to note that they are somewhat basic in that they gave a man's full name and an abbreviated address, largely at a Vingtaine in one or other parish, e.g. John Bosdet who lived in Petite Vingtaine in St. Ouen's. There is an element of Anglicisation and unfortunately no regimental numbers were used (though this might exist for the other Militia units). It is however possible to gauge manpower movement between the two rolls I have (April 1913 and April 1916), in conjunction with the Jersey Roll of Honour and Service so that will be a part of my forthcoming research.

The pay records are very basic, listing individual Officers being paid and then the Companies as an entity. Various disbursements are made to civilian firms for transport or, in the case of Boots the Chemist, for medical supplies of various kinds!

One group of individuals that regularly received monies were the Vingteniers Militaire for each parish within the Battalion! Were these individuals some form of Military Police, were they responsible for calling out personnel for duty or did they undertake administrative duties? I may have misread one newspaper article in that they turned up at the harbour when boats were leaving. Does anybody know of their roles?

Enfin

Last time I asked if anyone had heard of Stuart Elliot and his web-site. I am glad to say that Stuart has since been in touch (his PC had been playing up) and has since

reactivated his web-site with a new Internet Service Provider. You can now see his material at www.jersey-medals.net. I shall be including Stuart on distribution of this from now on and his E-Mail address is jermedal@itl.net

As a point of mild interest, a collector book series has been recently launched in France on the Great War. Each book is released every 2 weeks and is accompanied by a lead model of a soldier in period uniform. Costs are € 8.90 per issue. I am not sure how long the series will run but having managed to obtain the first four issues, I find that they are reasonable.

Jerseyman Ferdinand Simeon Le Quesne was awarded the VC for an act of gallantry during the 1889 Burma Expedition. He served throughout the Great War as a Lieutenant-Colonel and appears to have received the 1914-15 Star. Not mentioned in the Roll of Service, it seems he was missed off. Also, nothing seems to be known of where he went to school in Jersey yet he later qualified as a doctor at King's College Hospital in London. Private tuition? Does anyone know any details of him?

With the WFA becoming responsible for the 5 million Medal Record cards it will be interesting to see how soon they can be viewed and where they are located.

My WFA branch's next monthly meeting tomorrow – I missed last month's by being in Jersey. The April one had a very good presentation on the Salonika front.

The Cumbria WFA branch is in process of organising a visit to Haig's house and estate at Bemersyde on 17th September. They have invited members from North Lancs to go along.

Lastly, I picked up on the article in the Jersey Morning News of 5th June, 1916, regarding the States sitting of 3rd June to place the Military Service Act "en projet". It was noted that "The States unanimously put Jurat de Carteret "en defaut excusé"" as he was absent having heard of the death of his son Philip (and Ned's great uncle) on HMS Queen Mary at Jutland. It was somewhat poignant reading the article having seen Ned's material from Philip a few days previously.

Regards
Barrie Bertram
5th June, 2005

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