

CHANNEL ISLANDS GREAT WAR STUDY GROUP



**Blanche Banques, Jersey Then and Now
The POW Camp**

JOURNAL 3 AUGUST 2005

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Hello All

Once again a collection of Great War pieces although it has come together slightly later than I had hoped. Since putting the last Journal together, I have been to France for a fortnight and more recently I had been attending a week's summer school course on The Battle of The Somme that was held at Lancaster University. However, more of that later.

The major article this time is an excellent piece by Ian Ronayne titled "Flotsam of War". Because he has done a great job in setting the pages up into two columns I am attaching it separately so I don't muck it up! I am not going to make any comment other than saying that I am sure Ian will want to hear of your comments and questions after you've had time to digest his article. I think that it is an article that is worth wider publication, but that's Ian's call. **[Following a revision of this Journal, Ian's article now appears on page 3 below]**

I am very pleased to say that we welcome another interested party to our small band and from New Zealand too! She had seen my letter in the last WFA Bulletin and subsequently E-Mailed. You may recognise her name from past WFA Bulletins as she is the convenor for the NZ branch of the WFA. Her link is that her great-grandmother was born in Alderney and, with her parents and brothers, emigrated to NZ in 1862. The family had also lived in Guernsey. Elizabeth has twice visited Alderney and Guernsey, and is currently in Europe on a six week trip that includes visits to Gallipoli and then France and Flanders, before getting back home in late-September (I think).

With the addition of Elizabeth and one or two other details I am also updating the contact list to accompany this.

The Last Journal

Further to previous comments on German POW, Ian (E-Mail of 31st July) has since offered the following:

Something for you. In your first Journal you included some pictures showing German POWs arriving at the harbour in March 1915. I had a couple of days leave last week and managed to get a few hours in the Archive. I came across a document with the orders for the transport of these prisoners to Blanches Banques. Details as follows:

- 1. Ship to come alongside pier at 5:30 am on the 20th inst.*
- 2. Start unloading POW's at 6:30 am.*
- 3. POWs will proceed in three batches to St Helier's Railway Station, via the Esplanade.*
- 4. They will entrain there and detrain at Don Bridge Station.*
- 5. From there they will march directly to the Camp at Blanches Banques.*

Men from the 11th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment were to provide the guard at the harbour and men from the 1st (or West) Battalion, RMIJ met them at Don Bridge to escort them to camp. (It doesn't specify who looks after them on the train)

A further group followed on the 22nd.

My earlier assumption of La Moye Station was one station out, and I suppose that they would have gone the pretty way up Quennevais Road, past St. Peter's Barracks and then down Mont à la Brune!

Flotsam of War By Ian Ronayne

Old newspapers can be tremendous sources of historical information. Particularly good are local publications - such as those produced in the Channel Islands - which manage to capture news and events at the community level. In going about their business, they record both the exciting and mundane, the significant and trivial, the big and small. In short, they can be viewed as snap-shots of contemporary events, recording life as it happens in words and photographs.

Now, having extolled their virtues, it also has to be also said that old newspapers can prove equally very frustrating as sources of historical information. The key reason seems to be that they were written to present the news at the time – as it happened. Few editors, I imagine, saw their publications as historical documents; more likely as a means to an end. This often means that key details are missed, glossed over, or tantalisingly hinted at. It can at time seem as though you are viewing life through a door that it only partly open.

Still, on balance, I find them fascinating. So in researching Jersey during the First World War, I have found myself spending hours hunched in front of the microfiche viewers in St Helier's Library, squinting at the dimly lit screens whilst seemingly endless pages of news scroll by. For the most part, my focus has been on men leaving Jersey to serve overseas. However, during my page traverses, I have come across lots of local events that have caught my eye. In come cases, I noted a few details down, together with a date as reference, and resolved to maybe go back to them at some convenient time in the future. Unfortunately, at the present, convenient times always seem to remain a long way off and so for the most part they will have to wait. However there was one item that I wanted to take a closer look sooner rather than later – mainly because of its somewhat mysterious circumstance, and its tragic nature. An offer to put something together for the CI Great War Study Group was the catalyst to head back to the library and start some work on it. In so doing, it soon became obvious that this story was a good example of the best and worst aspects of using a paper for historical research: enlightening and frustrating at the same time!

The item relates to the First World War at sea. This must have been a struggle that was followed with closely by the inhabitants of the Jersey. The Island had a proud naval background, and many people would have had relatives and friends serving in both the Royal Navy and the merchant service. In addition, of course, Jersey's very survival was dependent on the shipping into and out of the Island; with the security of routes naturally of paramount importance. Although the shallow waters of the Channel Islands would not have been particularly suitable for submarine warfare, both U-boats and mines were present at times around the Islands. They were also commonplace in the English Channel to the north, and were sinking ships there throughout the course of the war.

One legacy of this remorseless battle was the pitiful flotsam and jetsam that found its way to the beaches of Jersey. It was debris that held witness to the destruction of

both ships, and the lives of the men sailing in them. This narrative relates to one particular incident seemed to me to sum up the terrible nature of this battle, and a communities reaction to it.

It was about six-thirty in the morning of the 11th April, 1917 when the small boat was first spotted. It was floating around three hundred yards offshore in St Ouen's Bay, in front and slightly to the left, of Kempt Tower, a substantial granite-built round-tower dating from the Napoleonic wars¹. The first person to notice was a local man, Francis Le Brun. It can be imagined that empty boats on the water were usually associated with an accident or mishap, and so curiosity seems to have kept him watching its progress. The prevailing tidal conditions were pushing it towards the shore, which on this morning was laced with surf. Whilst he observed, it hit the line of breakers and was turned over a couple of times, loosing a pair of oars in the process.

As the boat moved closer to the shore, Mr Le Brun moved down onto the beach and went to the water's edge. He was joined there by Philip Du Feu, who had also spotted the craft in the water, and seen Mr Le Brun go down onto the sand. Together, as the boat drifted to within wading distance, they plunged in and struggled out through the waves to reach it. Grasping a side each, the two men hauled it out of the water and on to the beach. Gulping deep breathes to recover from their exertions they turned to inspect their catch.



St Ouen's Beach from Kempt Tower. The boat was hauled ashore at this point

The boat was some twenty-three feet in length and painted black. To all extents and purposes it appeared to be a ship's lifeboat: a conclusion borne out by marks inscribed on the bow: L21, 2B7, IDC, 0, 25 persons. In terms of fittings, it was pretty empty, containing only three copper air tanks and, at the rear, a small locker. This was not all however. The boat contained an occupant.

For whatever reason, neither man had noticed that a body lay in the bottom of the boat when they first reached it in the water. It was only now, on the beach, that they

became fully aware of its grim passenger. With trepidation, they moved to take a closer look.

By appearance, the body was that of a young man. He was lying towards the rear of the boat and was dressed in typical seaman's garb, together with two life-preservers. His head was raised, and the right arm outstretched and wrapped tightly around a chain. The two men immediately realised that the authorities needed to be informed of the discovery and so, whilst Mr Du Feu remained with the boat, Mr Le Brun went to raise the alarm.

The authorities acted with commendable speed. That afternoon, in a small cottage near Kempt Tower, the inquest into the man's death was opened. It was headed by the Viscount, Mr R Lemprière, and consisted of a jury, plus the Attorney General. They quickly got down to business, and called the first witness. Centenier Le Boutillier had been contacted by Mr Le Brun at around 10:30 a.m., and had immediately gone down to the beach to view the boat and its contents. On arrival, he had conducted a search of both the body and the boat. The body had yielded a number of items: a small book, some keys, a coomb, and an address book. The last item had a number of entries, including that of Mrs J Cawley of Bermondsey, London. Also discovered was an identity disc, inscribed GR Cawley, Boy Service, ON CE. Turning to the boat itself, he revealed that the locker contained only a box of Mills bombs, or hand grenades.

Whilst examining the boat, the Centenier was joined by a Doctor Symons, who had been called to the scene on account of the human element. Accordingly, he was the next to address the inquest, and recalled what he had found:

"On arrival I saw a boat on the shingle, and reclining in the stern with its head raised was the body of a man with its right arm around a chain. It was of average height, small limbed and well dressed in a seaman's costume. In appearance the body was that of a man of some 17 or 18 years of age. He was almost completely bald, but the teeth were perfect and they had no marks of wear. He was probably bald by reason of some skin disease. There was a little fluff on his face which he had kept cut with scissors. The hands and nails were well kept... Rigor Mortis had passed off and decomposition had set in. I should estimate he had been dead for two days to a week, but must have been in the boat considerably longer than that."

The final witness to be called was Chief Signal Officer Goodyear RN of the Coast Guard Service, who served at the Ronez Signal Station. He was asked to comment on the boat and its contents. His view was clear: neither the identity disc, nor the hand grenades were service issue and therefore this was a civilian vessel. Nevertheless, he would contact the admiralty with the details, and see if they were able to provide any information on the young man.

At that point, the Viscount ordered the inquest adjourned; to reconvene on the 26th of April. In the preparation, Dr Symons was asked to perform a post-mortem on the body.

The inquest was duly reopened at the Court House in St Helier on the 26th April, 1917. Doctor Symons was the first to give his evidence. The post-mortem showed that the body was indeed that of a young man, who had been to all extents and purposes fit and healthy prior to his death. The only exception to this was his

baldness, which was attributed to some form of skin disease. Externally, the only sign of injury was a wound to the scalp; but this was concluded to have occurred after death, and was therefore not a contributing factor. An internal examination had found all of the organs in good order. There was, however, a slight quantity of water in the stomach, leading the doctor to conclude that the cause of death was drowning.

The next to report was Chief Signal Officer Goodyear. As previously agreed, he had telegraphed the details of the finding to the Admiralty. A few days later, to his surprise, he had received a reply stating that the young man was indeed in Royal Navy service. His name was George Rhodes Cawley. He was aged nineteen, and had, at the time his death, been serving as an Officer's Steward. It was also confirmed that one of the addresses in the diary found on the body was that of the boy's mother: Mrs J Cawley of 10, Perseverance Street, Bermondsey, London. Finally, and probably understandably in wartime, the admiralty had requested that the name of Cawley's ship was suppressed.

At this point in the inquest, the Viscount gave some details of the correspondence that had passed between himself and the boy's relatives. George Cawley had been born at Green Hill, Grantham, Lincolnshire on the 13th March, 1898. His mother had last seen him in December, 1916 - with a full head of head of hair, it was added. With respect to his death, Mrs Cawley had been notified by the Admiralty that her son had drowned on 30th March, 1917.

In terms of information, that was that. Having heard the evidence, the inquest jury quickly came to a conclusion. George Cawley had met his death by drowning whilst serving on one of His Majesty's ships, on or about the 30th March, 1917. With that, the inquest was officially closed.

By the time the inquest was concluded, the mortal remains of George Cawley had already been laid to rest. News of the lifeboat's recovery, and its young occupant, had spread quickly. The apparently tragic death of this young man, alone on the open sea, seems to have struck a chord in the hearts of the Island's authorities and people. Accordingly, it was decided to hold a very public funeral in honour of this young victim of war.

On 15th April, 1917, the body was taken from the mortuary at St Helier's General Hospital and placed in a horse-drawn, glass panelled hearse. With due solemnity, it was drawn through the streets of St Helier to the Town Church. A funeral cortege accompanied it, formed from a detachment of the Royal Jersey Garrison Battalion, a Boy's Brigade Band and six local naval men who would act as bearers. The mourners followed: representatives from the Army, Navy and Coastguard services were present, together with the Island's Solicitor General and Viscount. Scout Masters with their troops, and more men from the local Garrison made up the remainder of the contingent. The roads to the church were lined with people, and as the procession passed, hats were removed and heads lowered as a mark of respect. Many businesses along the route had chosen to fly flags at half mast in honour of the young sailor.

At the packed church, the funeral service was conducted by the Dean of Jersey. Special prayers were offered for the young man's mother, who appears not to have attended the service. Afterwards, the coffin was again placed in the hearse, and

George Cawley started out on the last journey of his young life. His final resting place was to be St Helier's Almorah Cemetery, which stands on a hill overlooking the town. The journey to it meant again traversing St Helier, and again the way was lined with people paying their respects. At the cemetery, the body was laid to rest, with the Dean leading the internment. As a finale, a haunting "Last Post" was sounded, followed by three sharp volleys of rifle fire. With that, the mourners trailed away, and the George Cawley was left to lie in peace on a hillside above St Helier, in an Island a long way from his birth.

And there he remains to this day. For the newspapers which reported these events, his story ended a few days later with the closure of the inquest. They had new stories to tell, new events to report; dramatic news came thick and fast in 1917. I came across the story some eighty-five years later. Like the people of Jersey at the time, I found it a compelling one; drawn in by its tragic nature. And so I thought I would try to find a bit more in order to try to better understand why this young man had come to end his days lying in a cemetery in Jersey. I was interesting in finding out what ship he had been on; what had happened to it; how he had died; and how he had got to Jersey.

Where to start? There was nothing more to be gleaned from the papers, so a first step was the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website. At the inquest it was reported that the Royal Navy claimed him as one of theirs. A quick search confirmed this: George Cawley, Officer's Steward Third Class, serial number L/6572. But for the name of the ship, the website intriguingly stated HMS Q.36. A strange name for a ship?; or could it be that George Cawley was serving on one of his majesty's "Special Service Ships", or Q-Ships. A further internet search gave some details on this unique type of vessel:

Q-Ships were devised during World War One as an anti-submarine measure. In form, they were merchant ships - often small vessels such as trawlers, oilers, or coastal colliers - manned by a mix of service and merchant personnel. Their size was a deliberate choice. If they were spotted by a U-Boat captain, it was hoped that rather than waste a torpedo, he would surface and engage with his deck guns. As the U-Boat drew near, the Q-Ships would spring their trap. They had been adapted to carry guns, usually two or four, hidden behind false bulk-heads or superstructure. At the right moment, the screens would come down, and the U-Boat brought under fire. Simple in principle, and to a degree successful. But, as the Germans became more wary, the role became more dangerous. By 1917, many U-Boat captains preferred to settle the matter with a torpedo, regardless of the size of vessel. By the end of the war, of the three hundred and thirty-six Q-Ships deployed by the Royal Navy, some sixty-one had been sunk. One of them was indeed HMS Q.36.

HMS Q.36 was a cargo ship of one thousand, four hundred tonnes. She was built in 1904, and, it appears, launched under the name of SS Peveril. At some time early on in the war, she was chosen for conversion to a Q-Ship, and two twelve pounder guns were added. Although she received the official nomenclature Q.36, she seems to have had a number of identities, including Puma & Polyanthus, presumably linked to her clandestine status. So, it seems that George Cawley had been serving on Q.36 when it was sunk, presumably in action on the 30th March, 1917. However there was a problem with this explanation. In the book "British Vessels Lost at Sea. 1914-18 and 1939-45", it is stated that the Peveril, or Q.36, was apparently been

sunk off Gibraltar in November, 1917 by U.63, a full seven months after one of its lifeboats was washed up in Jersey.

If Q.36 wasn't the ship that George Cawley came off, which could it be? Perhaps the CWGC had got the wrong details in their register? Turning again to *British Vessels Lost at Sea*, there were a number of other candidates. The "Christopher", a Royal Navy hired trawler of 316 tonnes, appeared the most likely. She was sunk by a mine sunk off Southwold on 30th March, 1917, and was the only Royal Navy vessel reported as sunk on that day. Focusing on the "Christopher", I considered this option. She certainly was a small vessel, and therefore could be suit the requirements of a Q-Ship. Also, trawlers were stated as being one of the types used for this purpose. But, on the other hand, there seemed to be no mention of her as Q-Ship. In addition, she was sunk off the East coast of England; could a small boat have drifted unseen all the way to the Channel Islands.

If it wasn't the "Christopher", could George Cawley have been on one of the four Merchantmen sunk on the 30th of March?ⁱⁱ This didn't seem likely. He was definitely a Royal Navy serviceman, and therefore why would he have been on a merchant vessel?

So what was the answer? Perhaps, there was an explanation other than a vessel being lost. I noted that one of the tactics used by Q-Ships was that when a submarine appeared, some of the crew would feign panic, and abandon ship into lifeboats in order to lure the U-Boat in closer. Could it be that the crew of Q.36 had carried out this manoeuvre? Had George Cawley got into a lifeboat and something gone wrong when he tried to return? Perhaps he hadn't come off a ship that had sunk; rather he had got separated from one? Unfortunately, a further internet search didn't shed any more light, and nothing was mentioned in any of the books I consulted. Certainly the local newspapers had nothing to support this theory. One intriguing item the Internet search did reveal however was that another young man is listed as being killed in action that day, with the ship's name also given as HMS Q.36. Clearly, something must have happened on this day; the CWGC surely wouldn't make two errors?

Needing to conclude the narrative I decided – for the time being - to leave the subject of Q.36 for another day. However, at the last minute, some further information was forthcoming. Having posted several questions on this subject on internet forums and not received any replies, I imagined nothing would be forthcoming. However, after spotting a discussion thread on Q-Ships, I tried hanging a question about Q-36 on the bottom. To my surprise, and pleasure, I got back a response that threw new light on the situation.

It was claimed that Q.36, whilst masquerading as SS Puma, was torpedoed on the 30th March, 1917 by an unknown submarine, thirty miles South-west of Lizard Point in Cornwall. She was then engaged by the U-Boat with its deck gun, receiving some ten hits during the attack. She wasn't sunk however, being rescued by HMS *Rovenska*, who escorted her back to port. It was reported that one crew member was killed, and eight were drowned in the incident. If the details are correct, would explain how a member of the crew of Q.36 could have lost their life without the ship actually being sunk. One of the eight men drowned must have been George Cawley. What remains unclear is how it happened? Did George Cawley lose his life during the battle? Or did he get into a decoy lifeboat, and then get separated during the

action? The answer will have to wait. The contact in the Internet forum said that had come across details of the incident whilst looking at a file at the National Record Officeⁱⁱⁱ. So it may take a visit to Kew to fully understand what happened on that day. Something to plan for a future day ... unless someone else is going?

Assuming the report on the battle is correct, one further mystery remains for me. How did he die? If indeed he had become separated from Q.36 during this action, at least he was in a lifeboat. Dr Symons found no pre-death injuries on the body, so he does not appear to have been hurt in the battle. He was washed ashore in Jersey on the 11th April; a full twelve days after the CWGC gives his date of death. At the inquest Dr Symons initially concluded that he had been dead for between two days and week, but that he had been in boat for some time before that. At the second inquest however, he stated that because a small amount of water had been found in the stomach, that death had been by drowning. This doesn't seem to add-up to me. Although I cannot claim any medical knowledge, how did a man in boat drown? For me, every indication is that George Cawley died in the boat between the 30th March and the 11th April. The fact that he had life preservers on; the fact that Doctor originally concluded that he had been in the boat prior to his death; the boy's right arm gripping a chain; the reaction of the public of Jersey.

So why the conclusion of drowning? Could it be that there was something of a cover-up going on? Was it important not to reveal details of Q-Ship's tactics, possibly to the enemy? Could it be that Mrs Cawley had been given a "comforting" story of drowning, rather than the more terrible truth that her son had died alone in an open boat? Did the inquest have to "toe the line"? The truth will have to wait, and probably will never be really known. It maybe just another incident lost in the fog of a terrible war.



The grave of George Cawley at St Helier's Almorah Cemetery

In the meantime I took the time go up to Almorah Cemetery and visit George Cawley. I found him lying under a standard CWGC headstone, and surrounded by hundreds of Jersey men and women. When there, I wondered whether, with the exception of the CWGC people who added the headstone, whether anybody had come to visit since that day when the town turned out to honour this young man, washed up as "flotsam of war". Or had he simply been submerged in the greater tragedy of the First World War.

Sources:

- Jersey Evening Post: April 1917
- British Vessels Lost at Sea. 1914-18 and 1939-45

Notes:

1. Kempt Tower was one of the outposts in St Ouen's Bay used by the West Battalion of the Royal Jersey Militia during the war. It was guarded by men of No 2 Sub-Section.
2. The four ships were as follows:
 - The Somme: 20 miles E by N from C Barfleur. Five souls lost.
 - The Dee: 410 mile W by S from Cape Leeuwin.
 - The Harberton: North Sea. Fifteen souls, including Master, Lost.
 - The Endymion (SV): English Channel: Four souls, including Master, lost
3. ADM 131/85

What's In a Name (Or being a Wally over Whalley)

I make no apologies for the fact that, even having lived in Lancashire for nearly 14 years, there are times that I struggle with the regional accent!

The other Monday saw the latest branch meeting and we enjoyed a very good presentation by an occupational health nurse called Denise North on "War Can Be Good For You". She is a WFA member from Burnley. The presentation itself was well illustrated and described the improvements in the health care of people brought through the experience and discoveries of war. She cited such examples as better nursing (harking back to the Crimea), diet, increases in life expectancy, the treatment of wounds, the introduction of an ambulance service, mental health treatment and penicillin. In the later case, although it was not introduced until WW2, Fleming based it discovery on his knowledge from treating wounds during the Great War.

The talk also used reference to local material and at one point put up a contemporary view of what in the 1910s had been the Lancashire County Lunatic Asylum, but during 1916 was transferred to the War Office to become Queen Mary's Military Hospital. It appeared to be a sizeable complex and Denise said it was located at (phonetically) Warley! I knew of Warley in Essex and another in the West Midlands, but had not heard of one in Lancashire so I ventured a question as to its location. Much disdainful help followed from the floor such as its near Clitheroe, Accrington and what have you. But I still did not know where Warley was!

It was only when Denise put the next slide up of a 1917 Christmas card from the hospital with Whalley written that I knew where it was! This will teach me to ask a different question next time!

Anyway, that was enough to stimulate some research and interest, and this Thursday, I ventured over there to see it and also a Military Cemetery located to the NE of the hospital site which remains sizeable (it is now known as Calderstones NHS Hospital).

The Cemetery, known as Whalley (Queen Mary's Hospital) Military Cemetery, is quite large though it contains only 43 graves – 33 WW1, 9 WW2, 1 WW2 civilian – as can be seen from the photograph on the next page. Pendle Hill is in the left background (former home of the witches, but another Lancastrian tale).

From the memorial tablet another 253 deaths occurred at the hospital in WW1, and judging from the area, assume that they were buried there but later exhumed. Interestingly, the grass was newly cut, the soil around headstones had very recently been tidied and the headstones were new in that they had been computer engraved and not hand engraved.

There is a Channel Islands link in that the grave of 48847 Sapper Charles Phillip Carroll (aged 38) is here (fully shown between the tree and the Cross). According to the CWGC he died 22nd May, 1917 and was the son of Philip and Jane Mary Carroll of The Temperance Hotel, Gorey Pier in Jersey. As is so often the case, this does not fully match with the Jersey Roll of Honour in that he is listed as dying on 23rd May, he was a Corporal, and his surname was Carrel!

What's in a name?



A View of Whalley (Queen Mary's Hospital) Military Cemetery

1st (West) Battalion RMIJ Nominal Rolls

Work has been continuing in combining the 1913 and 1916 rolls into a single (at present) spreadsheet. I had a photocopy of the 1916 roll, and I have scanned the 34 or so pages and then edited out any scanning glitches that occurred and obvious errors, subsequently adding the 1913 data from my manuscript notes. So far I have kept it simple in that I have columns for Surname, Forename, Address, Parish, Category (1913), Category (1916), Remarks and Other Comments.

The two Category columns are key in that for each year they show whether a man is Category 1, 2 or 3 and this gives a clue to his age band. From a paper produced by Doug Ford at the Jersey Archive Trust, I have assumed that Categories were applied as follows:

- Category 1 – For 16-18 year olds who underwent 40 days training each year for 2 years
- Category 2 – For 18-35 year olds who underwent 4 days training plus an annual camp
- Category 3 – For 35-45 year olds who underwent 2 days training

Where I am not so clear however is in what constituted the active and the reserve militias, and I need to check this out further.

I can, to some extent, qualify the assumption of Category as my grandfather, Auguste Collet, was a Category 2 in both years, having been born in 1893. Comparing the two years, if an individual is Category 1 in 1913 he will be Category 2 in 1916 if he is still on the roll, and this has been proven except in the few cases of medical exemptions from militia service. Reversing the logic, an individual who is Category 2 in 1916, may have been either a Category 1 or 2, or was not listed in 1913. The assumption in the latter case is therefore that he joined in 1914.

There seems to have been about 15-20% movement in changes of residence. However, this may be excessively high in that it may be attributed to recording differences. To cite my grandfather again, in 1913 he was at Highlands Farm, in 1916 at Three Oaks, both in St. Lawrence. My recollection is that Highlands Farm had been at or very close to Three Oaks!

Individuals that are listed in 1913 have, in 1916, vanished. In sampling these names, it is evident that a number have enlisted into the armed services. However, others still need to be traced and this needs to be done in conjunction with the nominal rolls for the other two battalions as well as the medical, engineer and artillery components of the militia. It may be in those cases that they moved residence to the parishes not covered by the 1st Battalion. This work will probably not take place until next year when I get those nominal rolls.

However, overall allowing for typos and a few apparent duplications, the nominal rolls have proved remarkably consistent and I have not seen any obvious mistakes where, say, a Category 2 in 1916 was a Category 3 in 1913.

I have probably banged on a little about the Categories but I believe that there had been great relevance at the time with regards to soldiers serving under-age (the age for foreign service being 19 years), coupled with the imminence of registration and conscription. The list of names is some 1300 long, and approximately 25% would have been considered under-age in the summer of 1916. Similarly, at the other end of the scale, I would envisage that another 10% would have been categorised as too old for conscription. There is still much to be done in that I wish to be able to trace a man from the militia throughout his war service until Armistice, assuming he survived.

One interest side note to this is the occasional use of Winter as a forename. Is there an obvious answer to the obvious question?

Etretat

Most people associate Etretat as a tourist spot on the Normandy coast with its Falaises (the Falaise D'Aval shown below and the Falaise D'Amont below the headland from where the photograph on page 6 was taken) and its association with French artistic greats such as Victor Hugo, Gustave Courbet, Claude Monet and Jacques Offenbach. However Etretat was used in both World Wars, and to use the CWGC's own words:

In December, 1914, No 1 General Hospital was established in Etretat and it remained there until December, 1918. In July, 1917, it was taken over by No 2 (Presbyterian USA) Base Hospital Unit, but it continued to operate as a British hospital. The first seven burials took place among the French civil graves but in February, 1915, two plots were set aside for Commonwealth burials in the churchyard. These were filled by December, 1916 and from then until December, 1918, the extension was used. ETRETAT CHURCHYARD contains 264 Commonwealth burials of the First World War and one German grave. ETRETAT CHURCHYARD EXTENSION contains 282 First World War burials and four from the Second World War. There are also 12 German graves in the extension. The extension was designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield.



View of the Falaise D'Aval at Etretat

As ever with CWGC cemeteries, Etretat's is beautifully maintained as can be seen in one of the subsequent pictures. Looking through the Register, many of the 549 deaths were from sickness and in some cases the cause of death was quite specific, i.e. died of pneumonia or pleurisy. One wonders if the location was seen as helping respiratory conditions. The grave of Sgt Leo Clarke VC of 2nd Battalion, Canadian Infantry can be found in the Churchyard To my knowledge there are no Channel Islander graves here.

As well as the existence of the Cemetery, commemoration of WW1 (and WW2) presence can be found at the entrance of the covered market hall, and also on the sea front in the shape of a polished granite memorial seat. You can easily walk past and miss the seat as I did several times!



Commerative Plaque on the covered Market Hall in Etretat



View of the Etretat Churchyard Extension Cemetery



View of Memorial Seat to No 2 (Presbyterian USA) Base Hospital Unit

At sometime in the future I may look further into the background of the hospital and its location. A particular point of focus may be a hotel on the western slopes known as Dormy House Hotel. Was this accommodation for the medical staff? It is possible that the hospital was close to the station on the east side of the town and not far from the cemetery, and according to contemporary railway posters, four hours by train from Paris.

St Sever Cemetery and Extension, Rouen

Some poor route navigation and a particularly hot and humid day precluded a long examination of this cemetery that was located in the vicinity of some fourteen or fifteen hospitals of various descriptions during the Great War. Nonetheless, it was sizeable with numbers of British military graves exceeding 11,000, a number that rivals both Tyne Cot and Etaples. Being adjacent to the French civilian cemetery, it is more sprawling and much less compact than the other two cemeteries.

One unusual feature of the cemetery was the separate officers' burial plot. I cannot recollect seeing any other similar arrangement in other cemeteries in France and Flanders. Is anyone aware of this elsewhere?

As to Channel Islands links, I know that there is the grave of a 7026 Private Constant Le Maitre, from Guernsey, who died on 18th May, 1915. He was in 2nd Battalion, the Royal Irish Regiment.

There are at least ten from Jersey, one of whom being 9310 Sergeant William Nolais, 1st Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment who died on 8th December, 1914 aged 24. He was the husband of Gertrude Eileen Nolais, of 20 Wellesley Terrace, Simon Place, St. Helier and the son of Mr and Mrs Nolais of St Aubin's Jersey.



According to Ian's research he was described as "a most promising soldier". He had received a commission the day he was wounded when serving out ammunition.

Sent to a hospital in Rouen where his arm was amputated, his wife of a few months joined him. As his condition become more serious his parents also decided to visit but unfortunately he succumbed to his wounds before they could arrive. Prior to the war he was a champion swimmer in the St Aubin's Swimming Club and went on to be a champion diver at Aldershot when he enlisted.

Sergeant William Nolaïs' Headstone at Rouen, St Sever (Left)

Lancaster University

Although I had previously been unaware of its programme, for the second year running, the University has put on a course appertaining to WW1 as part of its Summer School programme. Last year it had been on the war in its entirety, this year was more focussed in that it addressed the Battle of The Somme and a number of peripheral aspects. For part of one day, the course also looked at tracing individuals using the various databases that can now be accessed on the internet along with other research material.

The lecturer throughout was Simon Jones, a former curator with the Liverpool Museum Service, and now a freelance tour guide and author in addition to his occasional lecturing. While with the Museum service he had organised the very successful Liverpool in the Blitz exhibition at the Maritime Museum there.

The attendees, ten in number, came from a variety of locations including an American-Dutchman from Spain with parents in Wales! (I haven't figured that combination yet)

During the week the lead up to the Somme was discussed in terms of the general political background, the evolution of the British Army from the BEF, the introduction of the Territorial and the Kitchener men, the pressure on the French and so forth. Much discussion on the general-ship took place and unsurprisingly, it was difficult to get to a conclusion on how good or bad they were. It was clearly obvious that they were not "donkeys", yet neither were they totally competent or possessing of sufficient tactical awareness to circumvent problems such as communication, uncut German wire, reinforcing success and better training and briefing prior to the assault.

The first day was covered by looking at the front line for each Corps and the results of the attack in those areas in terms of success or more frequently, bloody failure. Subsequent battles up until the “close-down” were also covered though not in quite the detail.

In presentational terms, Simon was good in using a number of videos to amplify his lectures and in particular, parts of “The Battle of the Somme” and “The Battle of the Ancre” produced for 1916 cinema goers. I had not seen these as discrete films although much of it I had recognised from TV programmes and other media. He also brought in a range of artefacts from ranging from grenades and equipment to clothing and pickelhaubes. Where he could have improved was in the immediate availability of maps per attendee, since having them on the projector tended to be an eyesight test for some of us! Fortunately I had my own.

A visit to the IWM North took place mid-week. However, it was not totally relevant to the week’s programme and the Museum is nowhere near as good as the IWM in London.

Peripheral topics included the art and poetry of the period, mining and recruitment.

As to learning, from my point I think that about 15-20% of the content was new. Nonetheless it was good to meet others with a common interest and that also provided learning opportunity. If the University runs a similar WW1 slot with Simon next year, I gather the topic will be Passchendaele. If anyone is interested in that, I will furnish details.

An Update from Liz Walton

I received the attached text from Liz and I am sure that few of us mind sucking eggs when additional information sources come our way. I have briefly looked at the Birmingham University website and it looks a very promising tool for research.

Nothing much new at the moment. I have put off going to London to the Salvation Army Heritage Centre for a while, until things quieten down. I have been clearing the decks of OU and school stuff and aim to make a concentrated effort towards hopefully producing a book, starting in September.

A couple of practical things that might be of interest to others - I've picked up some good books on “ebay” for a pittance recently - for example Peter Vansittart's "Voices from the Great War" for 99p plus £1 postage, as new.

Go to: www.ebay.co.uk

... and search for either "First World War" or "Great War", then narrow it down to the appropriate categories.

I've also joined the Friends of Birmingham University Centre for First World War Studies. They run an MA course in FWW studies, and also have regular open seminars. They seem to be every friendly and helpful and have an online Q&A section, see:

<http://www.firstworldwar.bham.ac.uk/>

I realise that I may be teaching my grandmother to suck eggs with this but am sending it anyway as maybe not everyone is familiar with online research. I've done an OU course in online research and database searches and was teaching IT until recently and am happy to help anyone just setting off in this area.

There is an offer of IT skills that others may wish to take up. Feel free to contact Liz on this.

Enfin

Nothing too much this time.

Looking ahead, I will be trying to get another two Journals out this year – the first in early October, the second before Christmas.

Your contributions will be greatly appreciated and I don't mind them appearing as manuscript, as you see, I am not adverse to "cutting and pasting" your E-Mails.

A Newsflash in that Ian's big (or is it little Ian?) brother Paul has popped his head above the sandbags! His details will follow.

I am staying in Mailly Maillet on the Somme for a week commencing 15th October, looking particularly to walk around the Serre and Gommecourt areas, but also for a day out at Ypres. Happy to visit other Somme locations for photo shoots on your behalf if you want. Undoubtedly, I will go to Guillemont and Ginchy also.

Regards to all
Barrie Bertram
17th August, 2005

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