

“UP THE LINE”
 THE LANCASHIRE AND CHESHIRE
 BRANCH OF THE WESTERN FRONT
 ASSOCIATION

January 2012

CHAIRMAN’S NOTES

Good evening and welcome to our first meeting of 2012. I trust you all had an enjoyable Christmas and New Year.

It is now only just over two years to the centenary of the outbreak of the Great War. The WFA is keen that local branches try to ensure the public are made aware of what this conflict meant to the nation. As I have previously mentioned, Stockport Council’s response was somewhat tepid. Perhaps some of you, who live in other Local Authority areas which we cover, could consider contacting them to see if they have any plans. As organisations, I am sure they would welcome the diverse experience that our members can offer.

I would like to thank Simon Cooper along with Mavis and Alan Smedley for organising the Christmas ‘Trench Stew’ feast. Also thanks to Andy McVeety’s mother for the mince pies. If I have forgotten anyone else, please forgive me.

I am pleased to welcome Dr Jim Beach back to the Branch. We are all naturally interested in the sharp end of the Great War and the leading characters whose names symbolise the command of the vast forces involved. However, the organisation and structure of the fighting units had to fulfil the requirements of our war aims and the underlying system and its protagonists are often forgotten. Dr Beach will, no doubt, enlighten us on one of its major players tonight.

Terry Jackson, Chairman.



Andy Chapman presents Andy McVeety with a foundation stone for his very own bunker. The lump of concrete was found at a German bunker visited by the January 2011 group at Leuze Wood on the Somme.

LAST MONTHS TALK

Professor Peter Simkins gave the branch a detailed history of the 35th Division, its formation as a Bantam unit and how it fared in the war.

In 1914, declaration of war found the nation with a restricted number of regulars, reservists and TA forces. Kitchener believed the war would last at least three years. However, as most of his active service had been overseas, he had no real knowledge of the TA and no clear blueprint for building up the army.

As the BEF was initially pushed back by superior numbers, his call for a new army was met by an overwhelming response. On 3rd September 1914, thirty three thousand men enlisted on the day. This response found the army unable to cope. Fortunately, local leaders and dignitaries took up the idea of forming battalions of men who came from the same background or workplace. Thus the official army was able to pass over the burden of consolidating these men to such organisers.

In order to manage the numbers signing up, the lower height limit varied between 5’ 3” and 5’ 6” when required. Towards 1915, the available number of ‘normal’ sized men was winding down. There was an appeal that many small men were in fact quite fit and not in poor condition: Miners comprised many sturdy short men, used to hard work underground.

The desire of smaller men to fight was encapsulated by the Durham miner who walked as far as Birkenhead trying to be accepted by any unit. His willingness to fight any recruitment officer was seen by the local MP, Alfred Bigland. Bigland wrote to Kitchener explaining that many similar men wanted to serve and denial was a slur on their manhood.

Bigland saw in his own area, that by late 1914, most ordinary sized men had gone. He therefore recruited smaller men locally into the 15th and 16th Cheshires. The idea caught on and other towns followed suit. Leeds, Lancaster and the Forest of Dean, amongst others formed battalions. They became known as Bantams after the fighting, strutting cockerel and colloquially as the ‘Devils Dwarves’.

The units were combined as the Kitchener 35th Bantam Division, initially under the command of Major General Sir Reginald Pinney KCB. Pinney was to gain local notoriety as he banned the issue of rum. He commanded the unit until he was exchanged with Herman Landon of 33rd Division. Pinney was thought to be more assertive and the 35th was in a relatively quiet sector near Armentieres.

Thus, in early 1916 the Division was serving in II Corps in Munroe’s First Army and performed reasonably well. Only small incidents such as



Sir Reginald Pinney KCB



Alfred Bigland



Herman Landon

Bantams building up the fire-step occurred. This exposed taller soldiers and was remedied by the simple expedient of giving the Bantams two sandbags on which to stand.

It was when they moved to the Somme that performance declined. A number of factors were involved. They never attacked as a full division, but were used at brigade or battalion level. They were used for digging and carrying and many suffered fatigue. Their first action was at Guillemont, near Delville Wood on 18 July. Soon afterwards 104th and 105th Brigades attacked Hardecourt. They had to cover 1,000 yards and supporting artillery failed to see the enemy positions. The 14th Sherwood Foresters attacked silhouetted by the early sun and suffered heavy casualties. In August the 16th Cheshires failed to attack and the general decline in performance meant they were moved to Arras.

It was here that morale suffered after an incident that caused three men to be executed for desertion. In late November men of the Durham Light Infantry were holding an outpost. Sergeant Stones fled, throwing his rifle at the attacking Germans. He shouted to NCOs Goggins and Macdonald to flee. Subsequently all three were found guilty and shot. Although the Brigade

commander thought the evidence to be marginal, he believed it was necessary to set an example. Several other ranks were also given penal servitude.

An urgent review of the Bantams was carried out. Many of the replacements were found to be physically unfit and removed. Future reinforcements were of normal stature. 35th Division was not used in assaults in 1917 and in July Landon returned home ill. He was replaced by Major General Franks.

Gradually, the Division began to regain its confidence. At 3rd Ypres they attacked Houthulst Forest, but were encumbered by the failure of the adjoining 34th Division. They gained redemption during the March 1918 retreat. Franks was replaced by Marindin. They were involved in stemming the German attack at Peronne. In September 1918, with the Australians they captured Hill 60, the Bluff and Sanctuary Wood in one day.

Like the Pals' battalions this special featured grouping was not repeated.

Another in depth report by Peter Simkins. Peter also deserves a medal. He honoured his commitment to our Branch, despite having to leave early the next day for the small matter of his wife's birthday. *Ed.*

emen... pig near

by Suzanne Harvey
suzanne.harvey@lep.co.uk

WHEN war broke out in 1914, men rushed to enlist in the armed forces. However, thousands of fit and healthy men were turned away – because they were too short. Army regulations meant that would-be soldiers under 5ft 3ins were deemed unsuitable for fighting in the trenches of the Western Front.

But the excluded men – many of whom were fit and healthy and worked in factories and mines in Lancashire's industrial areas – desperately wanted to serve King and country. Terry Dean, of the North Lancashire branch of the Western Front Association, says: "There was a massive recruitment drive and a lot of small men tried."

"But they could not join up because they didn't meet the basic height requirement. A group marched from Durham, going from one office to another until they came to Birkenhead."

"There the local MP, Alf England, approached Field Marshal Kitchener and got an agreement to allow men over 5ft to fight, providing they had a chest of more than 35 inches."

The news was especially welcomed in Lancashire, where 3,000 signed up for the Army within weeks, forming the 17th, 18th and 20th Lancashire Fusiliers at Bury Barracks.

The new regiments were called Bantams – named after the small breed of chicken often used for cock fighting.

One Bantam was 31-year-old Sydney Barnes (no relation to Terry), from Preston. A clerk for Preston Corporation, he was not called up until 1915 and then spent the war as an orderly room clerk.

After the war, Sid returned to his home town and worked as a surveyor at the council.

In 1919 Sgt Barnes was honoured with the Meritorious Service Medal in the King's Birthday Honours. He was also a regular figure at Preston's Cenotaph until his death in 1972, aged 76.

The Evening Post reported in 2003 how his wartime diaries had been discovered in the bottom of a battered suitcase by his sons, Frank and Colin. The diaries have now been published online by the Lancashire Fusiliers Museum.

The Bantams served in some of the most famous battlefields of the First World War, including the Somme, Ypres, Passchendaele, Fleury and the Hindenberg line. But they also suffered from heavy casualties – more, than half did not return home to England.

According to Terry, their replacements were "not up to standard".

He adds: "Military leaders carried out inspections and saw they were not fit for the front line. That was the end of the Bantam standard."

By 1917, the specialist Bantam units had been disbanded, with the soldiers merged with regular Army battalions.

● The Western Front Association is giving a lecture on battalion commanders of the First World War at Lancaster Museum on May 5. To book a place, call 01524

Preston & Proud

TALL ORDERS: Left – two of the Bantams with a sergeant

DOING THEIR DUTY: Below – Terry Dean the Western Front Association has been researching the so-called Bantams regiments of the Lancashire Fusiliers

Bottom: One of the Bantams, Sydney Barnes, from Preston, who was called up in 1915 and won the Meritorious Service Medal. He became a town surveyor and died in 1972

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Bantams



WFA members and friends march past the cenotaph on 11/11/11



Children lay their wreaths on 11/11/11

BOLTON MEMORIALS WALK

In addition to the Bolton Zeppelin walk (See UTL November) Phil Hamer took members on a tour of the war memorials dedicated to those who fell in the Great War.

The tour began outside Bolton's impressive Town Hall at the civic memorial. Bolton held its first sub committee meeting in 1920. A rather grandiose scheme delayed progress and the Council intimated in 1921 that there was no real need for a municipal memorial. However, the lack of a focal point for the annual act of remembrance finally shamed it into action in 1924.

Ultimately a memorial was erected in Victoria Square, now pedestrianised, but in those days a thoroughfare. Initially designed by architect John Hope, a competition in 1927 was won by the sculptor Walter Marsden.

Marsden, who had served as a 2nd Lt in 1/5th Loyal North Lancashire Regiment (LNLN), reworked the original design. Further delays ensued until it was officially opened by Lord Derby in July 1928. Subsequently, William Hesketh Lever of Port Sunlight fame was elevated to the peerage. Bolton born, he became Lord Leverhulme. He financed the completion of the statutes which were unveiled by Colonel C K Potter CO LNLN in November 1932.

On either side are a pair of figures, female and youth. The northern side represents Peace Restraining War and the other side Peace Seeing the Horrors of War—a distraught female cradling the body of a dead young male.

The inscription on the front commemorates those who died in the war. To the rear is the message *"Tell ye your children our brothers died to win a better world. Our part must be to strive for truth, goodwill and peace, that their self sacrifice be not in vain"*

It was a short step to the Hall of Memory inside the Town Hall, in which is found the roll of honour. In the adjoining corridor are wall plaques of the Bolton Co-operative Society and the Temperance Movement, recovered from now demolished buildings.

We then headed to Queen's Park via the main Post Office. Behind the counter, on the wall is a memorial to those postal employees who fell. As it is in the secure area, we were not allowed to close up on it, but the staff were kind enough to let us take photographs of it.

We strolled through the park up to the memorial to the 5th Battalion LNLN, a TA Regiment covering the Bolton area. It comprises a limestone rectangular structure in the shape of a coffin. It too, was designed by John Hope. The names of those who fell are on plaques below. It contains 1,017 names. The memorial was opened on 15th July 1922 by Lord Derby. It was fitting to read the exhortation here.

Phil has a connection with the LNLN. His wife's grandfather was commended for fighting at Poelcappelle on 26th October 1917. He served in 2/5th Battalion. On our last January trip to Ypres, we were able to locate virtually the very spot where this action took place.

Walking back to the town centre, we stopped at the Bolton Artillery Monument. This is in the form of a cenotaph and lists the names of 171 local men who died whilst serving in that arm.

A final walk took us to the parish church and we passed a scene associated with the earlier conflict of the Civil War. Nearby is the market cross. The Royalist troops led by the then Lord Derby massacred many people in the siege. Subsequently he was captured and spent his last night in the 'Olde Man and Scythe'. It still contains the chair he sat

on before he was taken outside and beheaded.

St Peters, the parish church, is of the late Victorian style. Stocconians would recognise the similarity to Stockport's St George's as the churches share the same designers, Paley and Austin. Inside is a substantial marble wall plaque to the parishioners lost in the war. (This featured in my earlier report on Angus Virtue Makant whose name appears on it. UTL August. ED).

We were met by Reverend Judie Horrocks, who indicated some of the Church's interesting points and conducted a simple service of commemoration.

After completing the walk research was carried on some of the soldiers inscribed on the memorials (ED).

Richard Waddington MM was a Bombardier in RFA 'A' Battery 211th Brigade, killed on 28th September 1917 and is buried in White Horse Cemetery, St Jeans-les-Ypres.

Captain Alan Brodie Hoare was the youngest of six children born to Edward Brodie Hoare MP and his wife of Tenchleys, Limsfield, Surrey. He was born in 1882. The 1881 census shows two adults and five children together with seven servants and a governess. Alan was educated at Harrow and Pembroke College Cambridge. He was employed by the Bleachers Association at Firwood, Bolton. He married Audrey Lois in 1916 and lived at 64 Napier Court, Hurlingham, London.



Alan Brodie Hoare

He joined the LNLN and progressed to Captain. He served in France in 1917, where he was wounded. He saw action at Messines He was killed at Poelcappelle on 26 October 1917, leading the 2/5th LNLN. This would appear to place him very near to Phil's relative, who was wounded on that day (Tyne Cot Memorial).

Pte John Marron died on the 26th August 1916, age 35, serving with the 2/5th LNLN. He had only been on active service five weeks, having joined up in 1915. He was formerly a collier at the Earl of Ellesmere Brackley pit. He was a keen footballer for the Sunday School Peter and Paul team and played in regimental games whilst training. He lived at 457 Lynton Road and left a wife and two children. He is commemorated on Thiepval.

RSM Albert Watts MC DCM was born in 1871 to Worthy and Mary Ann of Norton St Phillips near Bath. It was a large family and several of his brothers worked as agricultural labourers. Albert decided to travel to London and joined the LNLN. He served in India, Mauritius, South Africa and Ireland. He married Eliza Beatrice Bull in 1903 and they had seven children of whom five survived. In 1914 he became RSM 1/5th Battalion and served at Ypres, The Somme and Cambrai.

Albert was killed during the German counter attack at Cambrai on 30th November 1917, age 46. It was not until later, a letter from his friend Thomas Bennett, then a POW, indicated that he was last seen being treated by two German Red Cross men. This was also confirmed by Private Percy Ashworth. He is commemorated on the Cambrai Memorial at Louveral.

Lancashire Regiment for some time, and is now in hospital in London.

N.C.O.'s AND MEN. Killed.

Through July 21, Sergt. STANLEY SMITH, King's Own Scottish Borders, was a reservist called up at the outbreak of war, and had been on active service 15 months when, on September 25th, he died from wounds at No. 5 Casualty Clearing Station. He previously lived with his father at, Morris Green Lane, Deans, and was a piece of Messrs. Haslam's Mill, Chorley Oldred. He was also connected with Quebost, Mexico.

Mr. T. J. Yates, 14, Avondale St., Bolton, has received a letter from Sergt. A. Grundy, conveying the sad news that his son, Lance-Sergt. H. F. YAPES, Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, was killed on September 25th by the explosion of a shell in his dug-out. Another comrade was killed at the same time. Deceased was 26 years of age and had been out with the battalion 20 months. He was employed at Columbia Mill, and attended St. Joseph's Church.

One of five brothers in the Army, Corp. ALBERT STRONGE, Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, met his death on August 25th, the official notification having reached his widow at 155, Havelthorpe, Bolton. Previously a sprayer maker in Messrs. Dobson and Barlow, employes, Stronge joined the Colours on September 3rd, 1914, and left for the front 12 months. He was aged 25.

Private JOHN MARRON, 55, Hawthorne Rd., Bolton, and in receipt of the sad news his major gave him the following tribute: "He did his duty well, and performed his work in a way which did credit." He was instantly killed at a shell hole, Headquarters, to which he was attached. It is the end of a career full promise. Educated first at Pike's School, Wallwork, won a scholarship to Municipal Secondary, and after a short period of service on the staff of the Central Lending Library, qualified for admission to the Post Office, where, as a telegraph operator, he enjoyed the esteem of his fellow-deceased's elder brother James is serving wireless operator with the R.F.C. in France. Deceased was on the Rolls of Honour Mawdsley St. Congregational Church, De Church, and the Municipal Secondary School.

The death is announced, only five weeks after his departure for the front, of JOHN MARRON, 457, Linton Rd., Bolton formerly a collier at the Earl of Ellesmere Brickley Pit. He joined the L.N.L.R. on May 10th, 1915, and was killed August 26th. Deceased, who leaves a wife and two children was a keen footballer, being a member of the S.S. Peter and Paul team, whilst he also took a prominent part in regimental games when training. He was years of age.

Private FRED LORD, Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, youngest of the four sons of Mrs. Lord, 65, Rixton Lane, Bolton, was




L. Col. F. SHIPSIDES, Lt. Col. E. COLLANEY, 3rd Battalion, Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, met his death on August 25th, the official notification having reached his widow at 155, Havelthorpe, Bolton. Previously a sprayer maker in Messrs. Dobson and Barlow, employes, Stronge joined the Colours on September 3rd, 1914, and left for the front 12 months. He was aged 25.

Private John Marron



RSM Albert Watts MC DCM

Watts Collection July 25th 1916

My Own Dearest Wife

Just a few lines to let you know that your darling is quite well - but this will find myself and the children well also. My love we are on the move again, going to take in a different part of the line, which is a bit warmer. I just can't wait to follow up. I will now close with just love to yourself and the children. Love from your ever-loving hubby Ed.

The three final soldiers have set a puzzle that it would be interesting to investigate. On the Parish Church memorial are recorded the names of Albert and Alfred Stronge as parishioners. However, in the CWGC Register there are two Alberts and one Alfred, all with Bolton connections. The conundrum is that one Albert and the Alfred served in the Canadian Army.

The CWGC details are as follows:-

Cpl Albert Stronge, 8th BN LNR died 26th August 1916. (Thiepval)

Pte Albert Stronge, 116th BN Central Ontario Regiment died 21st May 1917, age 26. Son of Albert James and Bridget, Lord Street, Kearsley, Bolton. (Petit Vimy British Cemetery).

L/Cpl Alfred Stronge, died 22nd April 1917 3rd BN Central Ontario died 22nd April 1917 age 31. Husband of Mrs Stronge, 19 Rowland Street, Daubhill, Bolton. (Bolton Tonge Cemetery).

The local press confirms Albert LNLN died on 26th August 1916 age 25 and his widow lived at 135 Hawthorn Road, Bolton. This must be Albert, (soldier) age 24, who married Lillian at Bolton Parish Church on 11th September 1915. His father was Walter (deceased) Albert was then living at Kestor Street, Bolton.

The newspaper also indicates Albert LNLN was a former spindle maker at Messrs Dobson and Barlow. He was one of five brothers serving in the army. I cannot confirm any details of his siblings.

I cannot relate Alfred to either Albert at present. It would appear that the Canadian Stronges must have emigrated at some time. Why then is Alfred buried in Bolton? Also on the Parish Church Memorial there is only a single entry for both Albert and Alfred.

This is confusing as, all three lived in the Bolton area. Perhaps one of the Alberts was not a parishioner of that church. Also, Alfred and Albert both served in the Central Ontario Regiment, a suggestion that they were possibly related. This would then suggest that Albert LNLN was not of the parish, but he was married in the parish church. Also why is Alfred's widow living in Bolton?

There is also the possibility that the three soldiers were related. Some extended families give the same Christian name to the first born. Were these men cousins?

It would be interesting to research these men further. The final twist in the tail is that Reverend Horrocks is Canadian.

Our thanks must go to Phil for organising this walk. But, now he has me wanting to solve the puzzle of the Stronges! Ed.



Bolton Temperance, Town Hall



Bolton Civic Memorial



Bolton Co op, Town Hall



Phil recounts 5th LNL Memorial



Bolton GPO



Bolton Artillery Memorial



Terry considers the Stronge family & Angus Makant-Bolton Parish church



Ninety Five Years Ago The Zimmermann Telegram

On 16 January 1917, Arthur Zimmermann, the German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, sent a telegram to the German representative in Mexico. It instructed him to offer help to Mexico regain lost lands if they would declare war on the USA.

The telegraph was intercepted by British Intelligence. However they did not immediately release it. They may have wished to avoid the suspicion that the German codes had been broken. The communication had been sent through several channels and British Intelligence did obtain parts of it via the American system. This early example of hacking could have antagonised the USA. The position of America was by no means certain and German and Irish immigrants had no love of Albion's cause.

Eventually the telegram was made known to the American Authorities. By then the recommencement of unrestricted submarine warfare enabled the British to reveal the telegram. It also persuaded the American Government to ensure the role of British Intelligence was not revealed. Thus on 6th April, America declared war on Germany.

Over the years, the interpretation of this event has been considered by historians. The telegram itself specifically indicates that the proposal would only be relevant after the opening of hostilities by the USA. In that respect it could be said to be a consideration of Germany's position in those circumstances. It has been also suggested that the Germans anticipated the Americans would read it on their own system and might hesitate to declare war.

However, it can be seen to be naive at the least. Mexico had no wish to antagonise its much stronger neighbour and the forces needed by America to stem this threat would have been a pinprick in the numbers of soldiers that would eventually make their way to Europe. The Monroe Doctrine and the Roosevelt Corollary had also made it quite clear that the USA would not allow any European interference in Latin American affairs.

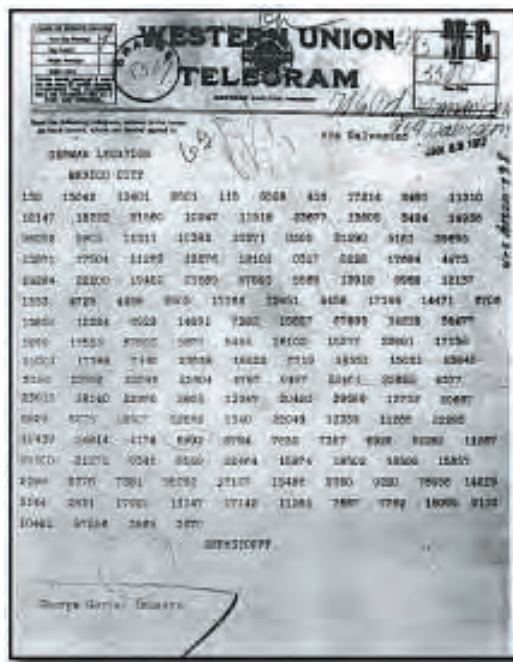
Germany seriously underestimated the effect of unrestricted submarine warfare. The drowning of American civilians on unarmed ships was an open affront to the USA's integrity. The telegram also increased the suspicions that Germany could not be trusted and was willing to use underhand methods to gain its aims. It was also considered as confirmation that Germany had always intended to renew the submarine campaign no matter what.

It could then be regarded as the last straw for America. Wilson would have surely regarded this as an insult to his earlier efforts to end hostilities. It would also have finally pushed reluctant American politicians to agree to declare war.

Strategically, it also formed one of a number of mistakes that were eventually to sound the death knell for Germany. The German military hierarchy were convinced they would starve

Britain into peace before America could effectively mobilise. The eventual acceptance of convoys by the Royal Navy and improved anti-submarine techniques foiled that ambition. The March 1918 offensive initially seemed to offer Germany hope, but poor strategy finally brought about the defeat of its army, to which the Americans had made a significant contribution.

(Despite some doubts about its authenticity, after the war, Zimmermann confirmed it was genuine. *Ed*)



See decoded below


Berlin, January 16, 1917
 On the first of February we intend to begin submarine warfare unrestricted. In spite of this, it is our intention to endeavour to keep neutral the United States of America.
 If this attempt is not successful, we propose an alliance on the following basis with Mexico: That we shall make war together and together make peace. We shall give general financial support, and it is understood that Mexico is to re-conquer the lost territory in New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona. The details are left to you for settlement.
 You are instructed to inform the President of Mexico of the above in the greatest confidence as soon as it is certain that there will be an outbreak of war with the United States and suggest that the President of Mexico, on his own initiative, should communicate with Japan suggesting adherence at once to this plan; at the same time, offer to mediate between Germany and Japan. Please call to the attention of the President of Mexico that the employment of ruthless submarine warfare now promises to compel England to make peace in a few months.
 Zimmermann (Secretary of State)

NEXT ISSUE

Copy, Word docs, pictures, jpegs, cuttings etc. by **5th January** please to the Editor, Terry Jackson, 4 Scaliot Close, New Mills, SK22 3BX.
 Tel: 01663 740987
 Email: jackson.terence1@sky.com

Chairman: Terry Jackson MA BA (Hons) MRICS
Secretary: Position Available/Volunteer needed

Venue: The Armoury (TA Centre), Greek Street, Stockport, SK3 8AX.
 Meeting on the second Friday of every month. 7.30 for 8.00pm.



1914-1918
REMEMBERING

Lancs. & Cheshire Branch Diary

Feb. 10th Peter Hart, Butte de Warlencourt, November 1916

March 9th Martin Purdy, Gallipoli: Lancashire & Legacy

April 13th Mike O'Brien, Britannia's Rebellious Stepchildren. Americans killed in the BEF 1914-17