



# THE WAR GRAVES

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# PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECT

## Summer 2016 Newsletter

### Contents

- Page 1 - Welcome!
- Page 2 - Help!
- Page 3 - Family Tree Magazine
- Page 4 - The new TWGPP Website
- Page 5 - A new Chapter / Thiepval
- Page 6 - Thiepval Commemoration
- Page 7 - A walk along the front line
- Page 8 - Blitz on Merseyside
- Page 9 - Blitz on Merseyside
- Page 10 - Blitz on Merseyside
- Page 11 - MoD Dependants
- Page 12 - WWI Civilian Casualties
- Page 13 - WWI Civilian Casualties
- Page 14 - Unknown Warrior link
- Page 15 – Ring of Remembrance
- Page 16 – Ring of Remembrance

**Welcome to the new look newsletter** whose colour scheme should complement that of the updated website which is now 'live'.

I was hoping to get this newsletter out to our volunteers before the 1st July but as most of you are aware the mid to end of June period was primarily taken up with trying to sort out the issues of our Project and its association with the CWGC.

Without repeating all the concerns for our other readers the CWGC dropped all links to TWGPP from their website. I eventually received these few lines after asking why:

*"We are writing to inform you that we have carried out a review on all of the partner information we hold on our website... The aim of this was to ensure that we only list organisations that we are currently partnering with and with whom we have a close working relationship.*

*As a result of this we will only show our current partners information from our website from 11th May 2016."*

Through further communication with the CWGC, I was informed that if we moved into a commercial arrangement with them, via a 'pay per click' or 'paid out brain' system, they might reinstate links. This would effectively mean that we pay them for the 'privilege' of supplying a service, that until recently, we fulfilled at no cost to the CWGC. The alternative, in the simplest of terms, was to just hand over the archive and let them field requests via their enquiries section. The outcome of this would have been to fold the Project.

All volunteers have now been polled with a unanimous decision by 97% that we now stand alone, with pride, and continue as we are helping families and researchers obtain a photograph of a loved one's grave. For the record, 1% said hand over the archive and terminate the project, whilst 2% favoured that we go down the commercial route ourselves, something that we have opposed for some years now.

We have never been funded by the CWGC but actively promoted their work through our volunteer network. Our 'reward', for want of a better word, was knowing that families were able to find us if they ever searched the CWGC website and found the link to us. This facility for families is no longer there but the CWGC will inform them of our presence, if asked! We have accepted that having provided a photographic service, at no cost, to the CWGC for the past eight years this has now ended and we move on.

## Help!

I have never asked for 'Help' before and can only remember actually calling for it once when I stumbled into a storm drain in Belize whilst walking back to my ship in 1976. I may have had a few 'sherbets' at the time, I don't remember, but can still see the massive cockroaches now in my mind's eye.

However, I am taking the unusual step to send a copy of this newsletter to all of those that have requested an image from us, in the past, so that they are aware of the change of circumstances as detailed above. If you, as a recipient, have valued our service and could 'help' in promoting us it would be appreciated.



Since the removal of our links we have noticed a considerable drop in requests from Australia which is a pity as we used to get 3 or 4 overnight so there must be families out there searching, but not necessarily finding us. Don't forget that we have over 1.8 million images of all Commonwealth forces including Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, South Africans and Indians.

### Responses from our volunteers have raised a few issues including:

1. **Use of images** – many of you have donated images for our use only and are vehemently opposed to any hand over to CWGC since this development. Especially if being sold via a third party pointing out that the CWGC would have to write to every volunteer asking for permission.
2. **Succession** – In a previous newsletter I mentioned the potential to start winding down the project due to increasing costs and reducing requests in 2018. Since then I have managed to change servers at a considerable saving so extending the stay of execution! However, we must look towards the long term to when I have finally had enough! Recent events do not help at all!

I had considered the Imperial War Museum as a depository but feedback from them is that they are not looking to include war grave headstones in their archive but would be content to take just the 'Family memorials' we photograph.

With the drop in costs I am happy, along with Sandra, to continue managing the project for an indefinite period, even though it takes up considerable time. This decision has been helped by the many letters of encouragement and support from you.

3. **Public Relations** - Unlike some organisations who are in need of a PR Department, the feedback on our 'Thanks' page does tend to sway towards the fact that the public actually like us. However, I am aware that we do need to raise our profile somewhat and would ask anyone that if you have particular skills in this field and can provide some free advice or contacts it would be helpful. I am afraid we have no budget even though a number of responders said that our 'staff' should be paid or can they drop in to our 'offices' for a chat. Sandra does not appreciate me taking strangers up to our back bedroom!

## FamilyTree

Bringing you expert advice for over 30 years

### How-to Guides

*Wherever you are in your family history research, our bitesize guides to getting started in family history*

Page: 1 of 2



#### How to get a photo of your soldier ancestor's war grave

You've identified where your soldier ancestor is buried and now you'd like a photo of the grave - here's how to ...

📅 02/07/2016

[Read More](#)

Helen Tovey, Editor of Family Tree Magazine has very kindly added the Project to their 'How To' guides at no cost <https://www.family-tree.co.uk/how-to-guides/>. The team at 'Family Tree' realise the importance of families to be able to obtain a photograph of their war casualty's last resting place.

It feels like Facebook is helping now spread the work word but it does appear to be a means of digressing when families start to have a conversation via our page! However, if you can 'share' or even 'like' our page <https://www.facebook.com/twgpp/> it would be appreciated.

4. **Sponsorship** – One means of us obtaining funds to cover the overheads of running the site would be for an organisation or business to sponsor us. I have tried in the past to offer sole 'agency' to sponsor our website tending to go for industries like Eurotunnel or Ferry operatives considering many visitors to war cemeteries use this facility.

To date I have not even had the courtesy of a response to any requests! If any of you can help in this aspect or know of a business or organisation that might be interested please make contact.

5. **Charitable status** – We have tried this route in the past by applying to the Charities Commission but they did not consider what we do as being charitable albeit we know for a fact that many war widows have found our service of great comfort. One response I have had indicates that if we were to supply images free of charge and then ask for a donation then this might swing things our way if re-applying. The project currently runs along a tight shoestring budget with no contingency bucket of money. If we were to go down this route of supply and take on risk I know, from experience, that the empty bucket would be deeper and the costs of maintaining the site on a server would have to be borne personally.

6. **Crowd funding** – Sorry, but I don't do begging!

7. **Lottery Funding** – Tried a few times now but we fail at the first hurdle. They do not fund existing projects.

So, given the limitations above in providing a global service, we carry on as we are unless of course you can 'Help' in anyway?

## The new TWGPP website

The feedback that we have had on the new website is very positive - *“Meant to say, I am really impressed with the new pages, much more user friendly and very easy to understand and use. It also looks really professional. The old one was very good but this is a marked improvement. Wish a lot of other sites I use were as user friendly as this.-Bill Webb”*

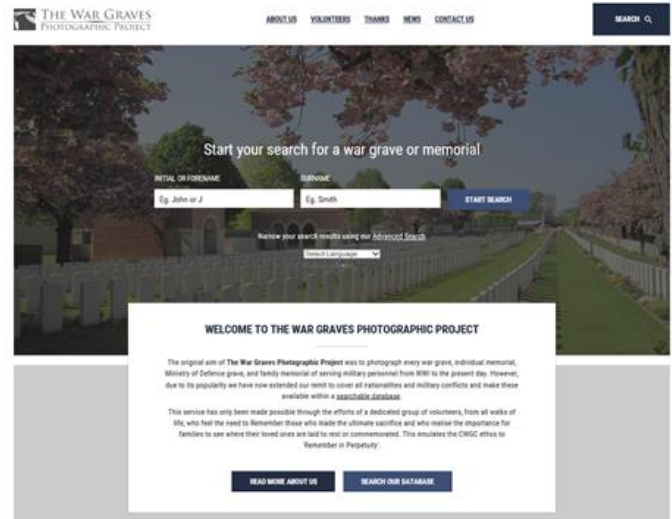
However, 'Jez' (web designer) and I are reviewing it during its infancy and making adjustments to improve its use where we can.

The 'management' functionality of the site is still ongoing as we had to make some last minute adjustments to get it up by July 1st but these will be sorted throughout the month. I cannot upload new images just yet or make many text adjustments but if you see anything awry just e mail Sandra or I as we are compiling a 'to do' list for when we get full access. Please bear with us for the time being.

One facility that I find particularly clever is the choice of reading the site in any language which will hopefully be useful to those searching for non-Commonwealth forces.

The new site is 'cleaner' for want of a better expression but more importantly it can be used far easier on Smart phones and I Pads. This was proven during a stay near Péronne when we were sharing a hotel with a group from Ledger Tours.

Whilst discussing the day's events (1<sup>st</sup> July) with some of the group, all of whom had never heard of TWGPP, we decided to try the site out to see if it got a result. One couple, from Devon, had never been to Mendinghem cemetery in Belgium but had a relation buried there. We typed in the details on a phone and up he popped! To the amazement of 'Rob' the image of the gravestone also had a photograph of the casualty planted adjacent to it. This resulted in a comment *“xxxxxx hell, you have just made my day as this means there must be another relation out there that we are unaware of who has visited his grave”*. New found friends of the Project!





## A New Chapter

One of our own casualties of the recent developments with the CWGC is the standing down as France and Belgium Co-ordinator by Derek Mountjoy. Derek has been with the project since its formation and was a volunteer beforehand for a number of years. Not only did he co-ordinate France and Belgium but also a number of Southern counties in UK so many of you will have corresponded with him in the past. June would have been his 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary of being involved in the project in one form or other and as he has said *“Twelve years is a long time and a lot of water has gone under the bridge. I need a break and time to re-charge my batteries before embarking on a new chapter in my life.”*

I have told Derek that we are indebted for all his efforts in managing France and Flanders as well as the untold work of answering queries, making up spreadsheets and uploading images to site. I am sure that you will all agree he now needs the break to concentrate on other things and we wish him well.

## Thiepval Commemoration



Sandra and I felt very privileged to be able to attend the Commemoration at Thiepval on July 1<sup>st</sup> as guests of Jim and Pauline Pedersen. We had failed in our bid for tickets but Jim and Pauline were particularly lucky in winning four and invited us along which we jumped at. As soon as the results were released it felt like accommodation was snapped up as an extra 10,000 additional ‘tourists’ to the area for just one day soon exhausted the capability in the immediate vicinity of Thiepval.

We had booked two nights in Peronne to cover the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> July and a very early morning Eurotunnel crossing with a plan to get down to Albert for around 10:00 . However, closer to the event, we were informed that we would actually have to be at Albert Airport to go through security checks at 0700! So a quick change of plan meant getting over the day before but the closest accommodation we could get by that stage was an hour away in Bethune. All sorted.

We picked Jim and Pauline up at Peronne at 0600 and drove across country (the bliss of SATNAV) to Albert Airport where there was already a considerable queue of British registered number plates. It was obvious from the amount of gendarmerie and road closures that security was very tight. Apparently it had been like this for two days previous so I really do not know how the local businesses had coped.

As we walked along the queue to get a coach I bumped into an old boss of mine from about 10 years back who I never knew had an interest in WWI! Small world.

Getting to Thiepval ran quite smoothly with numerous coaches ferrying passengers. We were issued with 'Goody bags' with information about the event, water and all importantly a waterproof 'Poncho' as we had already been briefed – no umbrellas. Considering it had been raining constantly for days prior to the event this was a good idea.

As we entered the village of Authuille, just below Thiepval ridge, the bells started to ring out indicating that it was 0730, the jumping off time for those on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916. It made the hairs on my neck stand on end as I knew what this had meant to many



When we stopped at Thiepval, a couple of minutes later, a chap on the coach blew a replica whistle which made the event even more poignant.

Off the coach and on to a tented city adjacent the memorial. The French authorities were certainly prepared for every eventually with first aid posts, fire engines, ambulances and even medical 'casevac' helicopters at the ready.

The coffee and early morning pastries were very welcome to those of us that were up too early to get breakfast. The coaches continued to drop off passengers for the next two hours including those that had arrived in Albert on the specially chartered Eurostar. With clouds rolling in we were eventually let through a cordon to get a seat in front of the memorial – first come first served unless you were a VIP and allocated a seat. Fortunately towels were placed at the end of the rows so that we could wipe off the rain.



My efforts to try and charge a euro to wipe them all did not come to fruition so must have been lost in translation.

Once we were all seated and the dignitaries had arrived the service started with Charles Dance performing his first oration. No need for me to reiterate the whole of the service here as I am sure many of you saw the event on TV and to that end you will have had a better view of all that went on than we did in the audience. Only once did the heavens open up which made the majority start searching their 'goody' bags for the waterproof poncho. Jim nearly strangled himself in the process of putting his over his head whilst others like Marie Le Pen, of the French National Front. took a 'rain check'



After the service and the provision of a good 'bag meal' (no greasy pasties) the crowd were given the opportunity to explore the memorial and adjacent cemetery which was now covered in wreaths and many flowers. Sandra overheard one young Private who had a 'speaking part' in the service say that 6 months in Helmand Province of Afghanistan was easier than standing in front of a crowd of 10,000 doing his piece!

Jim and I took the opportunity to lay a wreath on behalf of the project on the cross of sacrifice where the other dignitaries had laid theirs and we planted remembrances crosses on behalf of Marian and Wynn whose relatives are commemorated on the Memorial.

Unfortunately the damp conditions prevented many from just sitting and taking in the atmosphere so there was a mass exodus for the coach trip back to the cars parked at Albert Airport. Imagine a football crowd surrounding four buses and you will get the picture! Wouldn't have missed it for the world!



## A walk along the front line

Due to the security situation, the road network around Thiepval was not fully opened up until the following day. Many people had remained in the area to take the opportunity to explore the cemeteries and other points of interest on the Somme. It was good to see so many cemeteries with people actually in them when we are used to seeing so many void of any activity. Sandra and I parked up near the Celtic Cross erected to the 1/8th Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, near Beaumont Hamel and walked up Sunken Lane which is often seen in the Imperial War Museum's film of The Somme.



There were many floral tributes here as this was the 'Jumping off' point for many troops on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1916. At the top end of the lane is Redan Ridge No. 2 cemetery where we planted our Remembrance cross at the grave of Lance Corporal Bertram William Rogers of the Hampshire Regiment, a native of Hayling Island in Hampshire. He had died on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1916 aged 29. After a moment of contemplation we walked down into Beaumont Hamel and then across the fields via 'Rue de Parc' which took us into the rear access of Newfoundland Memorial park.

Newfoundland Park was the busiest I have ever seen it with the car park full and roadway access very busy. We had timed this quite well as a group of Medical orderlies and nurse re-enactors had just arrived with a restored ambulance so this made a good photo opportunity. We even chatted to a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in full dress uniform who had attended the official ceremony just the day before.

A stroll back along the road towards Auchonvillers, to be overtaken by the ambulance, and then across country to Hawthorn Ridge cemetery, down past Hawthorn Crater and back to Sunken lane completed our small pilgrimage across the old front line.



### Blitz on Merseyside – John Hurst

Liverpool was the most bombed city outside of London. The Government maintained a news blackout to prevent information about damage to the ports on the Mersey as the Nazis tried to starve the nation of food and armaments, so not a lot was publicised about the city. However, the bombing that began on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1940 and continued (weather permitting) until the end of May 1941 with 'nuisance' raids continuing for months afterwards.

At first the raids were relatively small but grew in intensity as time wore on. By the end almost 3400 people were killed, both servicemen and civilians. Total civilian dead for Liverpool was 2716 whilst Birkenhead suffered 442 with Bootle 409 and Wallasey 332 dead. They were tough times and as a child, born in 1943, I can still remember the adventure playground we'd play in and the empty shells of buildings, especially the department stores. Today there's little evidence but there are signs if one looks for them.



At the Pier head the Monument to the Titanic crewmen is pock marked with shrapnel and a lot of damage is evident at Huskisson Docks when the ammunition aboard SS Malakand blew up. Even as recently as 2012 an Auxiliary Fire Service Fireman, Joseph Gallagher, was recognised for his gallantry during this episode. He died of his injuries after holding the fire back until the areas were cleared of people.

Joseph Gallagher helped save thousands of lives as the area up to two miles away was devastated. Parts of the ship were found miles away.



Similar heroism was performed elsewhere but in one incident a soldier home on leave rescued three young girls. He overstayed his leave to help and was declared absent without leave (AWOL) and sent to a prison! At least he had a clear conscience. Besides the docks the Luftwaffe aimed for the Edge Hill goods yard, the largest in Europe at the time. The goods yard was never hit though the adjacent Botanic Park was totally destroyed and ended up like a desert. I remember as a child the air raid shelters at Littlewoods Pools (still there today underground). We used to dig in and go around with candles.

But the worst episode was what we know here as the Durning Road incident at the Ernest Brown Junior Instructional College or Edge Hill College. On 28<sup>th</sup> November 1940 a parachute mine scored a direct hit on the college. Local people had used the college as a shelter. Though 'near miss' proof, it was not 'direct hit' proof. Those not killed by the falling masonry were killed by scolding water from the boilers or cracked gas pipes which spewed out flame and incinerated many people trapped inside.



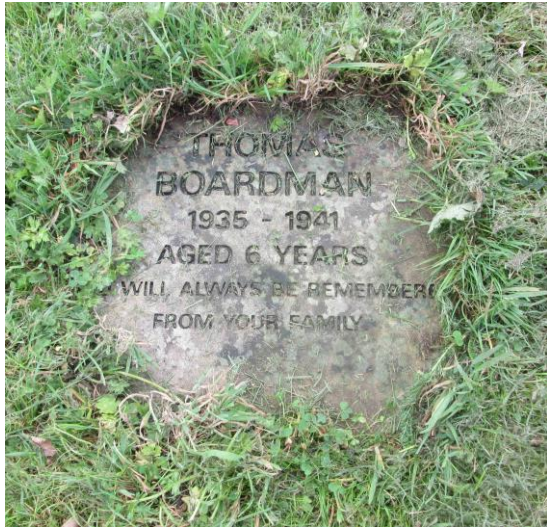
**Anfield Blitz Vault**

Even in the 50's when building Edge Hill Secondary School they were finding human remains. The official deaths were 166 but it is estimated as a lot higher as many were cremated in the inferno that ensued. The remains were buried with other blitz casualties at Anfield blitz memorial communal grave. I always thought it was just a mass grave but recently learned it is in fact a huge vault.

Raids continued on a regular basis but the next massive ones were called the 'Christmas Raids' at the end of 1940. There was a huge loss of life and severe damage to Liverpool city, Birkenhead and Wallasey, a present from Adolf. After Christmas, raids were light until the weather improved but the May 1941 blitz is still in people's memories as sheer terror, especially the 1<sup>st</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> May. An estimated 681 aircraft dropped 870 tons of HE bombs, 112,000 incendiaries. Most of the dockside berths were put out of action but, due to heroic efforts of the workers and servicemen, most were back in action within days. A total of 1741 deaths in those eight days and many more injured. Many areas and housing near the port were totally destroyed with direct hits on shelters on Adlington Street and Lace Street.

One grave I noted at Liverpool (Ford) cemetery, whilst photographing civilian war dead for TWGPP, were two elements of the same family (The Neary's). Fourteen members were killed and their two headstones stand side by side near the cemetery entrance. Whole tenements were destroyed. When Hitler attacked the USSR the raids became intermittent and on 9 January 1942 a Luftwaffe pilot jettisoned his bomb load to escape a chasing fighter.

The bombs fell and damaged several houses in Stanhope Street. Ironically, one of those houses belonged to a certain Mr Alois Hitler, Adolf's half- brother! Amongst those killed were many merchant seamen of many nations, Belgians, Dutch, Norwegians, etc. These were also interred in the Anfield memorial.



Searching for civilian war graves isn't easy. They were never formally recognised as war dead so none are covered by a CWGC headstone. I tend to look for air raid dates and take photos of those either on the dates or thereabouts as they could have died later of wounds. If you have difficulty finding locations it is always best to ask the cemetery office for a copy of the plot layout numbers. At Anfield cemetery different sections have different numbering systems. Some left to right and others up and down.

Some graves have no headstone but it is always best to approach them as one or two may have flat plaques on the ground. At Kirkdale there is a plaque commemorating the brother of Stan Boardman, the comedian, who now lies in a mass public grave. But for a bit of luck Stan could've joined him. At the time Stan was behind a young girl in the shelter and the young girl got the full blast, saving Stan's life but killing her.

Liverpool, including Bootle, has about nine cemeteries, two quite large and many churchyards. I do have the locations of about half of the civilian casualties from one of the catalogues at the archives in Central Library, but one volume is missing I have to be patient and go around cemeteries physically looking at every gravestone. It is always worthwhile getting in touch with 'Friends of \*\*\*\*\* cemetery' or get a plot location plan from the cemetery office. Local authority offices will quite often assist with records but one needs to be patient as many don't even have a headstone or are in a mass public grave. After Liverpool I have many cemeteries in outlying areas like Southport, Crosby and across the river in The Wirral to search for these often forgotten civilian war dead.

Recently, I was walking past St Luke's Church, or better known as 'The bombed out church'. I heard two people say '*Wouldn't you think they'd rebuilt it by now?*' They didn't understand why the church is left as a memorial and used for peaceful purposes, like art displays and other exhibitions.

I hope to complete the list of those interred in the vault at the Anfield Blitz Memorial and try to get the Council to erect a plaque of the known names interred within in the vicinity of the vault. I think they do deserve to be remembered even though half are 'unknown's'.

## The Value of Photographing MoD Dependants

Dear Sir/Madam,

It has recently come to my notice that a link to The War Graves Photographic Project has been removed from the CWGC casualties pages without giving a reason!

Maybe I can explain to you how the TWGPP plays an important role in assisting me, in my voluntary roll helping to trace Ministry of Defence (MoD) graves for people who have tried and failed using many avenues of searching.

Most of the cases where I have found a grave for a person, obtaining a photo of the grave means a lot to them, especially when they are unable to visit the cemetery, this is where TWGPP plays an important role in that volunteers have taken photos of CWGC cemetery graves worldwide.

My current case is nearly coming to an end, having finally met the KIRKMAN family yesterday. The family travelled from Australia to Hamburg for the second time in three years searching for the grave of their siblings. Their father was a serving soldier when the children died soon after birth and were buried somewhere in northern Germany in late 1949 and 1950. Richard Kirkman, a bother of the two children, spent many hours searching the CWGC cemeteries of Hamburg, Kiel, Neumunster and Luebeck in Germany in 2013 after travelling from Australia. He already knew that in many CWGC cemeteries abroad there are MoD graves especially if a garrison had been set up in the vicinity during the post war reunification.



The original grave of Patricia and Philp Kirkman

My part in the searching started in March 2016, when Richard Kirkman put out a request for help via the BFG/BAOR web site forum, which I am a member of. Richard explained he was returning again to UK in June 2016 to continue his searching in Germany for the grave of PATRICIA KIRKMAN and PHILIP KIRKMAN. See photo of 'white cross' grave above. Sadly the crosses no longer exist, unbeknown to Richard, they had been replaced. Staff at the various CWGC Germany cemeteries, though helpful, had never seen such grave crosses before!!

I approached Steve Rogers of 'The War Graves Photographic Project' for advice and asked why I was unable to trace the white cross graves, and there was no KIRKMAN listed which fitted the burial dates shown on the CWGC site. Through his reference to the archive photos and name Kirkman, Steve quickly solved the puzzle:



- a. The white crosses were no longer used
- b. The 'Cushion' shaped gravestone, which had replaced the original cross, had the wrong name engraved on it!!! ie 'KIRKHAM' and not 'KIRKMAN'.

Following this discovery, I spoke with the UK MoD Department responsible for keeping post 1947 grave records and discovered that their records had added notes indicating there was a problem with the spellings of the names!



So to conclude. Had the photos not been available via The War Graves Photographic Project, it would have been perhaps another drawn out search where Richard Kirkman could have been looking at another visit to Germany from Australia? The archive held by TWGPP is priceless.

Kind Regards - Alan Yates

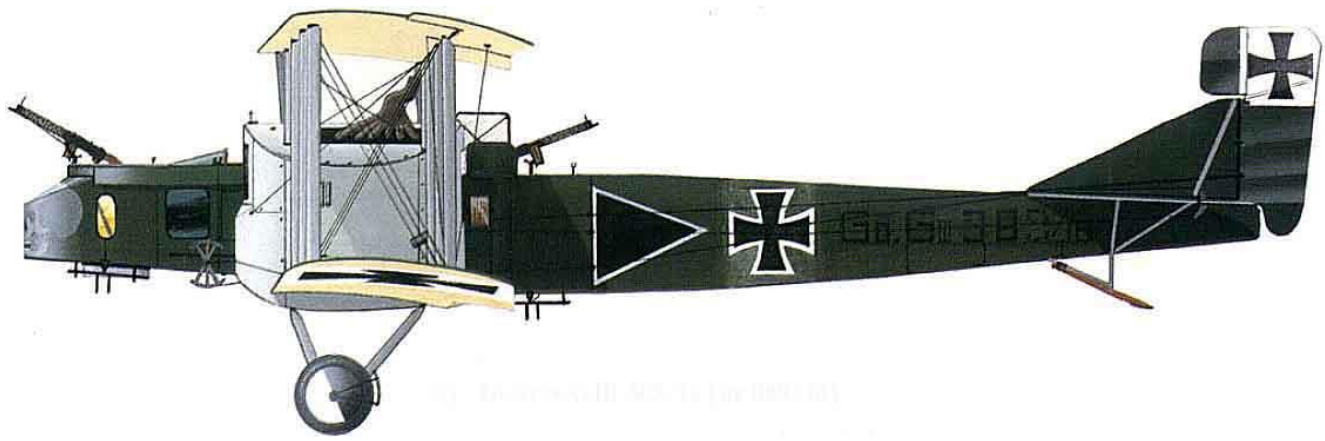
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## WWI Civilian Casualties

We are used to hearing of large numbers of Civilian casualties as a result of bombing raids in WWII, as described by John Hurst, but these casualties first started to be recorded on raids over London during WWI.

Airship losses during 1916 caused the Germans to increase the ceiling of their airships. This was first achieved by lightening the existing craft, by removing one of the engines. These measures increased the ceiling to over 16,000 ft. Meanwhile, new types of airship with a lightened hull frameworks were being developed.

In late 1916 Germany had begun planning a daylight bombing offensive against Britain using aeroplanes, called **Operation Türkenkreuz**. In anticipation of the campaign, German *Kampfgeschwader der Obersten Heeresleitung* (Bomber units) were formed under control of the German High Command. No 3 *Kagohl*, nicknamed the "England Squadron", and consisting of six squadrons under the command of Hauptmann Ernst Brandenburg was formed. The squadron initially operated from Saint-Denijs-Westrem and Gontrode in the Ghent area of German-occupied Belgium. The first raid of 1917 took place on 16–17 March: five high-altitude Zeppelins encountered very strong winds, and none reached their targets. On the return flight L 39 suffered an engine failure and, blown over French-held territory, was brought down in flames by ground fire. This experience was repeated on 23–24 May, when six Zeppelins set out to bomb London but were frustrated by a combination of high winds and thick cloud. A few bombs were dropped on Suffolk, killing one person and causing £599 damage.



## Daylight Gotha raids

*Kagohl 3* received the first Gotha G.IV aircraft in March, and on 25 May 1917 the squadron commenced **Operation Turkenkreuz**, sending 23 Gothas to bomb London. Two were forced to turn back over the North Sea due to mechanical difficulties, and cloud over London caused the remaining bombers to divert to secondary targets at the Channel port of Folkestone and the nearby Army camp at Shorncliffe. The raid resulted in 95 deaths and 195 injuries, mostly in Folkestone. In Shorncliffe, 18 soldiers (16 Canadian and two British) were killed and 90 were wounded. Nine Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) Sopwith Pups engaged the returning bombers near the Belgian coast, shooting one down.

A second attack on 5 June 1917 was diverted to Sheerness in Kent but a third attack on 13 June resulted in the first daylight raid on London, causing 162 deaths and 432 injuries. Among the dead were 18 children killed by a bomb falling on a primary school in Poplar. This was the deadliest air raid of the war. No Gothas were lost. In 1938, Air Commodore Lionel Charlton described the raid as "the beginning of a new epoch in the history of warfare." News of the raid was received enthusiastically in Germany, and Brandenburg was summoned to Berlin to be awarded the Pour le Mérite, Germany's highest military honour. On taking off for the return journey, the engine of his aircraft failed. Brandenburg was severely injured, and his pilot, Oberleutnant Freiherr von Trotha, was killed. The reason for the relatively large numbers of casualties seems to have been ignorance as to the threat posed by aerial bombardment of a city in daylight.

Lt. Charles Chabot, a Royal Flying Corps (RFC) pilot on leave recorded that: "*...Raids hadn't become a very serious thing and everybody crowded out into the street to watch. They didn't take cover or dodge*".

Just one casualty of this raid of 13<sup>th</sup> June is now buried in South Hayling cemetery in Hampshire. Sydney Herbert Chaplin was killed during the air raid aged 50. I expect many pass the headstone and are totally unaware of the story behind it.



## Unknown Warrior Link – Martin Briscoe

A vigil marking the Centenary of the Battle of the Somme was held at Westminster Abbey overnight on Thursday 30th June until 07:15 on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016.

The vigil remembered those lost in the battle, which claimed over one million lives and affected the lives of millions more at home. Those who took part on all sides of the Battle were represented by the groups of service personnel and others keeping vigil in 15-minute watches throughout the night.

Her Majesty The Queen, accompanied by His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh, attended a Service on the Eve of the Centenary and laid a wreath on behalf of the nation on the Tomb of the Unknown warrior.



There was no mention of the Army Chaplain that initiated the bringing home of this Warrior so we will give him credit now.

Rev. David Railton M.C. served as a Chaplain in World War I. He was in Armentières in 1916 and saw a grave in a garden marked with a wooden cross in pencil 'An unknown British soldier'

In 1920 he suggested to the Dean of Westminster that the body of an unknown soldier might be brought back to Britain and interred in Westminster Abbey.

The idea was taken up and on 11th November 1920 a coffin was taken to Westminster Abbey via the Cenotaph then interred in the Abbey with the King as chief mourner. It was covered with a union flag that Railton had used many times in France, the flag now hangs near the grave of the Unknown Warrior.

Railton had been born in London in 1884 and ordained in Liverpool in 1908 before taking up the curacy of Edge Hill, Liverpool. In 1910 he moved to Ashford then curate of Folkestone in 1914-1920.

After World War I he returned briefly to Folkestone then was vicar of St John the Baptist, Margate 1920-1925; curate of Christ Church of Westminster, vicar of St James, Bolton, Bradford; vicar of Shalford 1931-1935; rector of St Nicholas, Liverpool and archbishop's visitor to the RAF 1943-1945 before retiring in 1945 to Ard Rhu, Onich.

He died in 1955 when he accidentally fell from a moving train in Fort William railway station.

Martin Briscoe, a volunteer of TWGPP, found his grave and forwarded photos of its peaceful location for us to use in this article.





Inside the ring, 500 sheets of bronzed stainless steel list 579,606 names. Beyond the memorial's precisely defined boundary are far stretching views of seemingly uneventful countryside.

Hard to believe now, this was once the heart of France's coal-mining industry, a strategic target for attacking German armies. It's hard to believe, too, that these green farmlands – poppy-strewn in summer – were once churned into an ooze of mud and blood by an estimated 1.5 billion artillery shells.

“To give shape to brotherhood, to unite yesterday's enemies,” says Philippe Prost, the memorial's architect, “I chose the ring as a figure to bring together the names of the soldiers, thinking of the circle formed by people holding hands. The ring is synonymous with unity and eternity.



Unity, because the names form a sort of human chain, and eternity because the letters are joined without an end, in alphabetical order without any distinction of nationality, rank or religion.”

Invention and engineering skill as well as a lightness of artistic touch has made this apparently simple war memorial both special in its own right and comparable, even though so very different, to both the most revered First World War memorials in France and Belgium and to those witnessing the loss of life in later wars. What these share is the power to move people across time, nationality, class and religious background.’

### Next Newsletter

I am afraid that because we had the news about no longer working in association with the CWGC and the Somme event which needed to be reported on now, articles submitted for this edition have had to be put on hold until the next. This is due to the final size of the newsletter and I am aware that some of you are limited on attachment size on e-mail. We will use the articles. Anyone wishing to forward something to be added at a later date are more than welcome to submit.

Make the most of the summer we have got left! – Regards **Steve Rogers**



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