

THE TIGER



ISSUE



MARCH 2020

**THE NEWSLETTER OF
THE LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND BRANCH
OF THE
WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION**

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

Welcome again, Ladies and Gentlemen, to the 100th edition of *The Tiger*!

Having written in my previous column of the many changes to European geography one hundred years ago, it is only proper that my attention this month focuses on our own personal centenary – our 100th Branch Meeting and the corresponding issue of our Newsletter. Since our inception in October 2011, the loyal support we have received from you, our Members, has enabled the Committee to build the Branch to its present level and promote our cause to great effect.

Some readers, I know, have printed and kept copies of all the editions and I'm sure they will agree that a review of the earlier editions in comparison to our more recent numbers illustrate how much *The Tiger* has grown in stature across the nine calendar years of its existence to become a respected mouthpiece for the Branch, with a wide readership across both our Counties and beyond. I also remember from those early days the scepticism expressed by one particular party as to “whether sufficient material existed to produce a Newsletter every month” and the reassurance that this would not be problematic. 99 issues later we are still going strong!

From the compliments our Newsletter receives, it is apparent that it is not only the content, but the way that content is presented, that appeals to our readers. It is therefore time to congratulate our Newsletter Editor, Valerie, for nine years of sterling service and to recognize her dedication and the time and effort she invests in assuring *The Tiger* is always of the highest possible standard. I, of course, see at first hand exactly what the production of *The Tiger* involves, from its compilation, printing (in a limited number of cases) and distribution and I am certain all readers will join me in thanking Valerie for her dedication to the cause. Thanks too must also go to all our contributors, both regular and periodic, for their continued flow of articles which both educate and entertain our readership. Their willingness to share their research and interests with both Members and readers is very much appreciated.

Another anniversary to fall in 2020 is the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Western Front Association itself back in 1980. I will be attending the latest Branch Chairman's Conference in London shortly after you receive this Newsletter in the hope that this will be a less tempestuous occasion than the last Annual General Meeting, when the debacle of the sale of the Butte de Warlencourt was uppermost in everyone's thoughts. I will travel with an open mind, hoping to find that the Working Committees set up after that Meeting have been allowed to function as intended and have therefore produced a blueprint to lead the Association forward into the future. I shall, of course, report back to you all in due course . . .

In the meantime, please continue to enjoy both our own Branch Meetings and *The Tiger*, as we enter our own personal “second century” of remembrance. As I have said many times before your continued support and participation enables us not only to survive, but to thrive, as we have already proven by reaching our own centenary. Long may we continue!

D.S.H.

PARISH NOTICES

FORTHCOMING BRANCH MEETINGS

The Elms Social & Service Club, Bushloe End,
WIGSTON, Leicestershire, LE18 2BA
7:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m. (Approx.)



CHANGE TO THE ADVERTISED SPEAKER

24th February 2020

Guest Speaker: **Jed Jaggard**
Arming Tommy and Jack

A debut visit to the Branch for our highly-regarded Speaker, whose “hands-on” approach to his subject will both educate and entertain . . .

30th March 2020

Guest Speaker: **Ross Beadle**

*There was more to it than Tanks:
Cambrai, 20th November – 8th December 1917*

Whilst the Battle of Cambrai certainly marked the first large-scale, effective use of tanks in warfare, this is only part of the story of that action, as Ross Beadle, making a welcome return to the Branch, will explain . . .



27th April 2020

Guest Speaker:

Professor Stephen Badsey
*The German Corpse Factory:
The Strangest War Propaganda Story*

The story of the German Corpse Factory is often regarded as the prime example of the falsehood of British wartime propaganda. Tonight, Professor Badsey separates the facts from the fiction of this controversial tale . . .

OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY . . .

<p>SUNDAY 23rd FEBRUARY 2020</p>	<p>BARKBY FOOD AND CRAFT FAIR</p> <p>Church View Nursery Queniborough Road Barkby LE7 3QJ</p> <p>Copies of Dr Karen Ette's novel <i>"Don't Be Late in the Morning"</i> will be on sale (see Pages 9 & 10 for further details)</p>
<p>SATURDAY 14th MARCH 2020</p>	<p>ADVICE OF CANCELLATION</p> <p>HISTORY AND HERITAGE SHOW 2020</p>
<p>SATURDAY 21st MARCH 2020</p>	<p></p> <p>AT RISK WAR MEMORIALS OPEN DAY</p> <p>The Chancel, Rear of All Saints Church, Highcross Street, Leicester</p> <p>11.00 A.M. – 4.00 P.M.</p> <p>Visit www.atriskwarmemorials.co.uk for further details</p>

**SATURDAY
21st MARCH
2020**

“REMEMBRANCE”

A Bill Brookman Play



**7.00pm
Woodhouse Eaves Baptist Church
Main Street
Woodhouse Eaves
LE12 8RZ**

**£10 on door
(£5 young people, £20 family group)**

BILL BROOKMAN PRODUCTIONS Ltd.
38 Alan Moss Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire, LE11 5LX
Office: 01509 236175
Bill@BillBrookman.co.uk www.BillBrookman.co.uk/Foundation

**FRIDAY
25TH APRIL
2020**

**Friends of Welford Road Cemetery
ANZAC Day Service**

**Welford Road, Leicester
LE2 6BF**

**10.30 A.M. for 11.00 A.M.
(Meet in the Cemetery Visitor Centre by 10.50)**

**Visit www.fowrcl.org.uk
for further details**

YOUR BRANCH WILL BE IN ATTENDANCE

A FALLEN (TUDOR) ROSE OF NO MAN'S LAND by David Humberston



Barbara Esmee St John

eldest son by Sir Oliver St John (13 times great granddaughter to be precise) is Barbara Esmee St John, the subject of this article.

Readers of *The Tiger* will, no doubt, be familiar with the ties between Leicestershire and the founding of the Tudor Dynasty in August 1485, with the defeat of King Richard III at Bosworth Field by the Lancastrian pretender, Henry Tudor. A further link to the illustrious House of Tudor can also be found in our County, with a direct descendant of the maternal grandmother of King Henry VII, the victor of Bosworth Field, commemorated for her service in the Great War.

Margaret Beauchamp, born around 1410, was a wealthy heiress whose first husband, Sir Oliver St John, died in 1437 leaving a widow and seven children. Her second marriage, to John Beaufort, 1st Duke of Somerset, produced a daughter, Margaret Beaufort (the future mother of Henry Tudor) but a direct descendant of her

Born in September 1885, Barbara St John was the second and youngest daughter of the Reverend Henry Beauchamp, once of Holy Trinity Church, Ashby De La Zouch, but from 1914 at the Church of St Mary the Virgin at Ninfield in Sussex. Barbara would serve in the 112th Sussex Voluntary Aid Detachment and serve for a year at the 5th General Southern Hospital at Southsea before being sent abroad to the 26th General Hospital in Étaples, 16 miles south of Boulogne.. An old fishing town and port, Étaples lay on the coast at the mouth of the River Canche and became the site of the largest Army Camp ever established by the British Army, which was built alongside the railway line that ran adjacent to the town.

With the beginning of the Battle of The Somme in July 1916, Barbara St John soon found herself, according to the *British Journal of Nursing* “in charge of a surgical ward of thirty-five beds with occasional stretcher cases in addition, working a thirteen hour day, with only a young orderly of seventeen to help her. A Sister looked in to help when necessary”.

Overworked in the circumstances, Barbatra St John succumbed to scarlet fever on 4th October, her Matron-in-Chief’s *War Diary* recording that, three days later, “a Miss St. John, VAD, had been sent to 14 Stationary Hospital” at nearby Wimereux. Further Diary entries for 12th & 13th October conclude the affair:

12.10.16

DDMS Boulogne, telephoned, informing us of somewhat sudden death of Miss St. John, VAD, at 14 Stationary Hospital suffering from scarlet fever. She had been admitted on the 6th. The night before she had developed certain heart complications but was not very ill, but during the night she became worse and died next day. Funeral was tomorrow but owing to nature of illness it was not considered advisable that it should be delayed in any way to enable the relations to attend.



*Wartime Étaples:
26th General Hospital is
ringed in red*

13.10.16

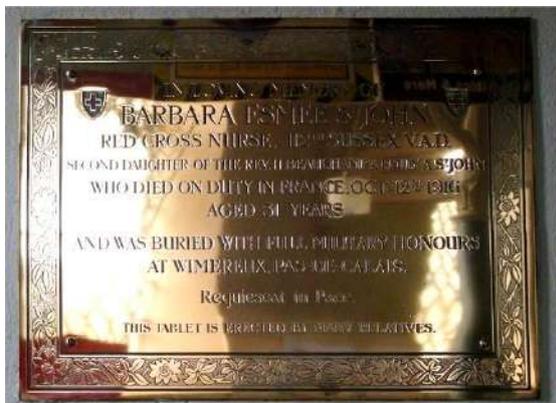
Went with Miss Hill, VAD, to Boulogne, to attend the funeral of Miss St. John, VAD. In consequence of being delayed on the road, only arrived in time to hear the Last Post being sounded.

Barbara St John actually rests in Wimereux Communal Cemetery, where she was buried with full Military Honours. Her headstone is one of many in that Cemetery laying flat to the ground, as can be seen right. Although the cause of her death was given as “paralysis”, the *British Journal of Nursing* also commented that: “We have often criticised young women not thoroughly trained being given responsibility for which they are not sufficiently experienced . . . this sad death points out that the more conscientious the woman the greater the strain upon her physically and mentally. The conditions described, under which she worked, would tax the resources of a highly experienced Nurse”.



(Readers may also be aware that Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, author of the famous poem “In Flanders Fields” rests in the same cemetery, with his headstone also being flat to the ground).

Today, Barbara Esmee St John is remembered both in Ninfield (where her name appears on a plaque at the Church of St Mary the Virgin) and also on the village War Memorial. She is also remembered at Holy Trinity Church, Ashby De La Zouch, her residence for a number of years, with this brass plaque hanging to the right of the entrance door.



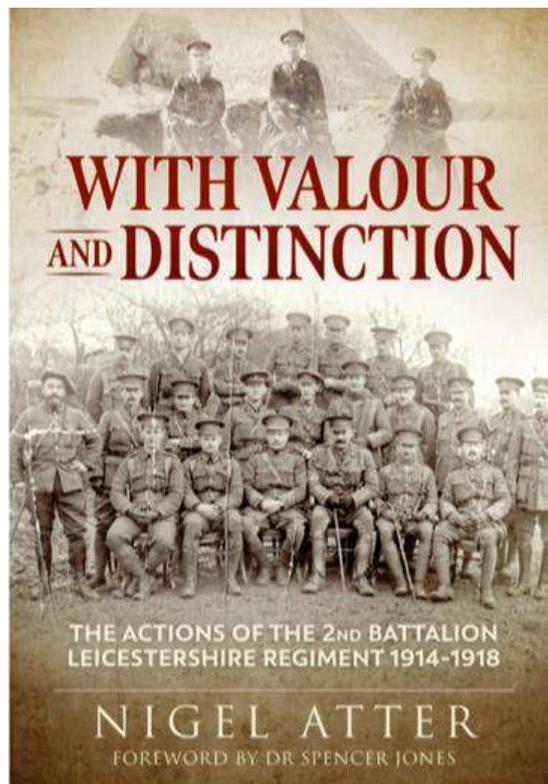
The inscription reads as follows:
*Barbara Esmee St. John,
Red Cross Nurse, 112th Sussex V.A.D.
Second daughter of the Rev Henry
Beauchamp St John and Emily A St John who
died on duty in France October 12th 1916
aged 31 years
and was buried with full military honours at
Wimereux, Pas De Calais.
Requiescat in Pace
This tablet is erected by many relatives*

In 1918, a song, *The Roses of No Man's Land* was published in France as a tribute to the Red Cross Nurses of the Great War with a version with English lyrics appearing in 1945. Military historian Lyn Macdonald adopted the same title for her book on the same subject, first published in 1980. The term has now become synonymous with the gallant ladies to whom it refers.

Given her illustrious ancestry, I hope readers will forgive my description of Barbara St John as a “fallen Tudor Rose” and join me in remembering a gallant lady whose service to her country resulted in an untimely and early grave.

WITH VALOUR AND DISTINCTION THE ACTIONS OF THE 2ND BATTALION LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT 1914-1918

by Nigel Atter



Nigel Atter is a founder member of our WFA branch. His work on the 8th Lincolns' at the Battle of Loos was greeted with high critical acclaim. Nigel's next book focuses upon the actions of the 2nd Battalion Leicestershire Regiment during the First World War.

This new history spans the 2nd Leicesters' military operations undertaken on the Western Front 1914-1915, in Mesopotamia 1916-1917 and Palestine in 1918. Nigel has undertaken extensive archival research in the Wigston based Record Office, the National Archives and made good use of previously unpublished primary sources. The generosity of Branch members has meant that Nigel has had access to artefacts and archives kept by direct descendants and collectors of 2nd Leicesters' memorabilia.

Nigel's work is considerably enriched by the author's access to previously un-published photographic archives. The extensive use of Helion's cartographer has also ensured that the maps are appropriately embedded in the text.

The 2nd Leicesters fought with valour and distinction winning one Victoria Cross, handfuls of Military Crosses, and Distinguished Conduct Medals in abundance. Nigel's eye for detail focusses upon the actions of the Leicesters at Neuve Chapelle, Festubert, Loos – Sheikh Sa'ad, the Dujaila Redoubt and Sannaiyat – Meggido, Beirut and Tripoli.

The volume has an Order of Battle; biographies of selected officers and men, the details of the only 2nd Leicester to be shot at dawn and a roll of honour.

Should you wish to buy a discounted signed copy of Nigel's book please contact him on nigatt59@gmail.com

ON THE NOTICEBOARD

HARRY PATCH MEMORIAL RECOVERED

The Memorial stone laid by Harry Patch, Britain's last surviving veteran of the Great War has been recovered two years after it was reported missing. Believed stolen in July 2018, more than £3,000 was raised to replace the Memorial, originally unveiled by Harry on the outskirts of Langemarck in 2008, the year before he died aged 111.



Harry Patch

Military historian Jeremy Banning, a friend of Harry, has now revealed the chain of events, stating: *“It is believed a lorry driver, who happened to be parked nearby, saw a local farmer in his tractor reversing into the Memorial. The farmer was in a rage and was trying to remove the stone, which he considered was in his way, with a view to throwing it into the Steenbeek. The lorry driver remonstrated with him and took the stone away before reporting the incident to the Police. No action was taken at the time”.*

The Lorry Driver has now contacted Johan Vandewalle, proprietor of De Dreve Café at the corner of Polygon Wood and, on 18th January 2020, crossed from his home in East Belgium to hand over the Memorial Stone, which will be on display until May, when it will be transferred to its permanent new home at Talbot House in Poperinghe.

ROYAL UNITED SERVICES INSTITUTE, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

Lynn Roffee has returned from a visit to Australia with the following information:

Whilst in Melbourne, we had an unexpected invite to the Royal United Services Institute - Victoria by its President, Major General Mike O'Brien CSC (Retired). I did mention that we were members of the Western Front and Mike said that they would be more than happy for anyone to visit. The library is located at Victoria Barracks, B Block, 256-310 St Kilda Road, Southbank, Victoria 3006.

As the RUSI is run by volunteers, they are unable to undertake subject searches or provide a list of books on a subject. They do have an on-line title search so if anyone was planning a visit they can search before visiting. RUSI Victoria have something in the region of over 34,000 items which includes books, maps and pamphlets. Anyone over 18 years can also apply for membership. RUSI is happy to receive visitors but you should contact the Secretary, Lieutenant Colonel Bob Hart RFD Retired, at least 24 hours in advance - secretary@rusivic.org.au - to check that the visit can be accommodated. You will need to take your Passport as the library is on a Defence establishment.

INFORMATION SOUGHT ON MELTON MOWBRAY TANK

Derek Simmonds, our County Town Representative for Melton Mowbray, is seeking information on the awarding of a Great War Tank to the town of Melton Mowbray in the aftermath of the 1918 "Tank Bank" scheme (details of which have appeared in a previous issue of *The Tiger*).

Readers may not be aware that in 1919 the Treasury agreed to give 264 "war battered" tanks to various towns and cities in gratitude for their financial efforts during the conflict. The National War Savings Committee decided which towns and cities would receive one of these presentation tanks, which, upon receipt, were intended to be sited in parks or commons. Most, due to a lack of funds or general indifference, were unfortunately left to deteriorate and all but one were sold for scrap to aid the War effort twenty years later. The only survivor is at Ashford, where an electricity sub station was installed inside the Tank in 1929, a major factor in its subsequent survival. This Tank is now a Registered War Memorial.



The preserved Ashford Tank



A Newspaper clipping from April 1919, part of which is shown right, lists all the intended recipient towns across Great Britain, which included Leicester (not at that time a City), Hinckley, Loughborough and Melton Mowbray. Tanks were subsequently delivered to the first three named on 3rd November 1919 and 4th February and 26th March 1920 respectively, but, despite evidence that the an official offer was made to the town, nothing further is known about the proposed Melton Mowbray tank.

Despite his own Great War research, Derek has not found any mention of the offer subsequently being accepted and wonders if any reader of *The Tiger* can shed further light upon the matter.

We are happy to forward to Derek any information received via foft@live.co.uk .

AN APPRECIATION OF THE Y.M.C.A.
PART II
by Roy-Anthony Birch

A letter from an old Bridge Road schoolboy to his former headmaster, Mr A.H. Baddeley, is at least as fulsome as anything I might write in praise of The Young Men's Christian Association, and most especially of its sterling work among British and Empire Forces during the 1914 War. The sadly unidentified correspondent must surely have spoken for many in his unqualified endorsement, drawing together several of the strands from my opening - last month's, instalment, and thereby enabling me to expand on some of what has gone before. From *The Leicester Daily Post* of Tuesday April 20th 1915, therefore, under the headline LETTERS FROM THE FRONT, we read: -

I don't think it is possible to speak too highly of the splendid work which the Y.M.C.A. is doing in military centres during the present war. There are many men who would have absolutely no means of enjoying themselves during their spare time were it not for these Y.M.C.A. centres. They provide a soldier with stationery and writing materials so that he may write his letters, purchase his stamps, and go to the post without leaving the building. He may purchase refreshments, play billiards or draughts, read, or join in a free-and-easy sing-song. If he is anything of a musician, he may play the piano or sing to his fellow soldiers and he may be spoken to for his soul's good, in a quite sincere way at which it is impossible to take offence. In short, the Y.M.C.A. does everything possible to make a soldier happy and it does not try to force religion down his throat. It is for this reason that I believe the Association to be the grandest thing of its kind in the country.

No less fulsome were the plaudits delivered by Lieutenant Colonel Louis Kenneth Harrison and Her Grace The Duchess of Rutland at the official opening of the new Y.M.C.A. Hut in the grounds of the 5th Northern General Military Base Hospital on 30th June 1917. This was in fact the second of two such facilities sponsored by the Y.M.C.A. in Leicester – the first was at the North Evington Auxiliary War Hospital, with both being sub-divided into sections for R.A.M.C. staff and the “solider-patients” respectively. The building at the Base Hospital in the then Victoria (now University) Road had been erected and equipped in a reportedly record time of just three weeks and it fell to the President of the local Association, Mr G.C. Turner, to formally hand the Hut over to Lieut.-Colonel Harrison, C.O. of the Hospital who, in turn, invited The Duchess to perform the opening. Predictably enough, perhaps, Her Grace said “*It gives me the greatest pleasure to declare this beautiful and useful building open*”. She trusted and was sure “*that both patients and R.A.M.C. staff would spend many happy hours in it*”.



*Violet Manners,
Duchess of Rutland*

In commending the Y.M.C.A. for therapeutic work already being undertaken at Evington, Colonel Harrison looked forward to similar strides being taken at the Base Hospital, with convalescent servicemen being encouraged to learn and produce a variety of handicrafts, often to a highly creditable and indeed saleable standard, much as I described last time. Such was the value of occupational therapy in “*assisting the men to recover the use of limbs and muscles and, at the*

same time”, according to the Colonel, in “*serving as an introduction to new occupations for those who, through injury or disease, will be unable to resume their old trades*”. While not for a moment wishing to disparage the contribution of Y.M.C.A. volunteers in this respect or to dismiss the Colonel’s no doubt laudable motives, one wonders if there is not an element of the paternalistic here; of “things being done unto” rather than men being allowed to explore for themselves whether they might be able to resume their pre-War occupations? After all, many were skilled or semi-skilled craftsmen, well grounded in their own and allied trades, often having had to adjust to altered situations and innovative working practices in peacetime. Not so great a leap into the unknown then, for some, to the devising of personalised approaches to compensate for a now missing limb or to the engineering of a jig to aid a now enfeebled hand. Perhaps the real value of the Y.M.C.A.’s hospital work lay in instilling the belief that all was not necessarily lost or irretrievable.

We trust that a similarly optimistic spirit - of hope for the future, pervaded the wards of The Borough’s remaining wartime Auxiliary Hospital, irrespective of its being housed in an institution widely regarded and often feared as a place of last resort. But with a seemingly endless and indeed increasing tide of casualties pouring into Leicester in late 1917, capacity at Evington and at the Base Hospital was overstretched to the point where patients could often only be accommodated on mattresses on floors. Colonel Harrison was thus compelled to consider placing patients in hotels and at the Edward Wood Hall in London Road - now the Fraser Noble Building within the University of Leicester, but the various parties failed to agree terms. Granted, to us, the prospect of being sent to the Union Workhouse on returning to Blighty might seem a poor reward for continually being shot at and taking a bullet on His Majesty’s behalf. Yet to “Tommy”, the promise of a “proper” bed, even within a regimented military hospital, must have seemed almost a luxury: a welcome release from the chivvying of “lesser” N.C.O.s and the barking of the C.S.M.; Matron notwithstanding! Life for many of the 378 admissions to the Swain Street Auxiliary (overlooking the Midland Railway Station) during its brief existence from July to December 1918, may not therefore have been as grim as some have suggested; their spirits no doubt being significantly lightened through the influence of Y.M.C.A. volunteers.

Ties between local Y.M.C.A. Associations and our Armed Forces often pre-dated the outbreak of the 1914-18 War. The establishing of annual training camps for Territorials in Leicester, - both Borough and County, from c. 1910, has already been mentioned, and the onset of hostilities served to consolidate or intensify the relationship. (We observed last time that it was often said that the British Army was the making of the Y.M.C.A. and that it could justifiably be argued that the Y.M.C.A. helped make the British Army). The Leicester Association was quick to become involved in war-related activities, most especially in the training of those on the cusp of eligibility for Army service and others who might not be eligible owing to medical shortcomings, for example, but who might still make useful contributions. Men aged 19 and over who fell into the latter category were enrolled in the Y.M.C.A.’s own Volunteer Corps to be prepared and held in reserve for deployment in possible (though unspecified) Home Front emergencies. But rigorous training and military discipline still held sway: “*two drills per week or three per fortnight; - compulsory*”!

Training sessions for those who were at least theoretically ready for military service became another important aspect of the Y.M.C.A.’s war work. The poor physical condition of many who presented themselves for enlistment, either as volunteers or as conscripts – undernourished and undersized etc., is a matter of record, with those from poorer backgrounds regularly falling below what constituted “fighting fit”. Hence, Leicester’s East Street Hut became an officially recognised

centre for physical training under the auspices of the local Recruiting Committee, where Y.M.C.A. instructors duly proved their worth. A report to that committee in October 1915, for instance, included a review of recruiting over the previous six months. Of 535 men sent to the Y.M.C.A. to be brought into condition, 376 or fractionally over 70% had achieved the required standard and been accepted for service.

More than 1,200 members of the local Association were said to have served with our Armed Forces during the War; by no means all of them with the Army. I am currently unable to say how many died, but I am pleased to have the opportunity to pay tribute to the following; both of whom were Assistant Scoutmasters to what I can now confirm was the Leicester Y.M.C.A.'s own Troop; the 3rd Leicester. Private Albert Edward King, service no. S/21806, served with 1st/5th Bn. Seaforth Highlanders and was killed in action on 24th July 1918 aged 19. The son of Harry and Jane King of 34 Hartington Road, (Spinney Hills), Leicester, he is buried in Marfaux British Cemetery, (grave reference III. I. 4.), Marne, France.

Signaller Eric Harold Hubbard may well have belonged to the Syston Scout Troop as a boy. He was a Royal Navy Reservist (service no. London Z/6346); the son of Thomas and Annie Hubbard of The Bungalow, Brookfield Street, Syston, and was reported as having “died from exposure” after his ship, *H.M.S. Orama*, was torpedoed south of Ireland on 19th October 1917. The armed merchant cruiser *Orama* (12,927 tons) was on escort duty with a 21-strong convoy bound for England from Dakar – capital of present-day Senegal, when she received a hit from U-62 on the port bow which eventually sank her. The fatal blow had actually been struck at 5.55 p.m. and it was not until 9.50 p.m. that she finally foundered, having spent the intervening hours listing heavily to port but enabling most of her crew to be taken off safely by US vessels protecting the convoy. Sadly, however, and in all but the very strictest sense, Signaller Hubbard was unable to be counted among the survivors. It appears that he lingered for a little over a fortnight after the loss of the *Orama*, until the effects of exposure to the elements overwhelmed him. He died on 5th November 1917 and was laid to rest in Leicester's Welford Road Cemetery, (grave reference O. “C”. 74, shown above.). Like his fellow Y.M.C.A. Assistant Scoutmaster, he died aged just 19.



Except for these tributes to two of the local Y.M.C.A.'s Fallen, my remarks thus far have dealt solely with the Association in the UK and particularly in Leicester. (Even the words “*in the country*” which conclude the Bridge Road Old Boy's letter with which this article began, I take to indicate Britain). But the work of the Association and indeed its high profile, often within easy range of the guns on the battlefields, were of an importance at least equal to that at home; arguably more so. Appeals for funds such as that in *The Times* of Monday July 30th 1917, backed by the C-in-C, testified to the continuing demand for facilities at The Front:

IF YOU COULD LOOK DOWN.

If you could see, outspread beneath you, the whole panorama of the British lines in France and Belgium, you would understand why our soldiers themselves ask you to support the Y.M.C.A. Mile after mile, hour after hour, you would see, thousands of feet below you, the never-ending movement of tens of thousands of khaki figures swarming round the Y.M.C.A. huts and tents and dug-outs. And you would realise, to quote the words of Field-Marshal Sir

Douglas Haig himself, that the constant extension of the work of the Red Triangle “*itself testifies to the high regard in which it is held by our soldiers*”.

Commander-in-Chief and Private are at one in their appreciation of the work the Y.M.C.A. does, often under fire and often within a few minutes’ walk of the front line trench. Only the other day a wounded soldier, grateful for the refreshments given him on his way back from the fighting, emptied his pockets of all that he had and insisted on offering it as his donation to the Y.M.C.A. He had risked his life; he had done his bit; he was wounded and in pain; but he offered every penny he possessed. What will you give for him and for his comrades? In France and Flanders they are asking for more Y.M.C.A. Huts. £600 will provide a completely equipped portable Hut which can be easily moved up as the British Line advances. If you cannot give a complete Hut, Will you contribute part of the cost?

Reference in the opening paragraph above, to “*huts and tents and dug-outs*” ought not to be seen as advertising hyperbole since impromptu Y.M.C.A. refreshment posts were just as likely to be found in dug-outs as in more formal settings; within army camps say. For me, one of the most



*Ernest William
Hornung*

poignant stories surrounding the more informal wayside facilities involves E.W. Hornung, author of the famous *Raffles* stories, whose son, Arthur Oscar, was killed while serving with the Essex Regiment on The Western Front in July 1915. E.W. (Ernest William) volunteered to serve with the Y.M.C.A. in France in 1917 with the quite deliberate intention of placing himself as closely as possible to situations in which his young subaltern son - his only child, had fought and died.



*Arthur Oscar
Hornung*

Basing himself near Arras, and with complete disregard for his safety and comfort, E.W. sought and found one of his son’s closest friends and fellow Old Etonians – Lieut. Carlos “Pip” Blacker M.C., of the Coldstream Guards. The celebrated author spent hours over the coming months speaking of young Arthur while imbibing the atmosphere in and around the teetotaler’s “bar” that he - E.W. had created; a simple but homely corrugated iron shack embedded in a sunken road. It was as if, that in chatting to his “customers” while dispensing tea and biscuits, Arthur might almost live again. Lieutenant Blacker came to understand that Hornung Snr. derived much consolation from these encounters, with the younger man later reflecting on his own conversations and writing of E.W. that “*any new thing I could tell him was like a priceless jewel*”.

Although, as I have said, E.W. Hornung had an ulterior or even a primary motive for volunteering with the Y.M.C.A., I know of no reason to question his simultaneous willingness to be of the utmost service to others. Perhaps his predicament in his final years - he died in 1921 aged 54, typified that of so many contemporaries, and not only of the tens of thousands who ministered under the Y.M.C.A.’s ubiquitous Red Triangle logo. For here was a life blighted by inexpressible and unquantifiable sadness, balanced, if not outweighed, by a generosity of spirit practically expressed for the greater good.

CONTACT US



Leicestershire & Rutland

YOUR BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

David Humberston
Chairman & Speakers List

Paul Warry
Vice Chairman, Treasurer & Website

Valerie Jacques
Secretary & Newsletter Editor

Angela Hall
Events

Roy-Anthony Birch
Promotion & War Memorials

YOUR COUNTY TOWN REPRESENTATIVES:

Greg Drozd - *Hinckley*
David & Karen Ette - *Loughborough*
Derek Simmonds - *Melton Mowbray*

Branch Website Address:
www.leicestershireandrutlandwfa.com

Branch Twitter Address:
[@WFALeicester](https://twitter.com/WFALeicester)

We thank once again those readers who contacted us following the production of previous issues of *The Tiger*. Your comments are valued and welcomed and we are always open to suggestions as to what you, our readers, would like to see included/excluded.

All articles reproduced in this newsletter are accepted in good faith and every effort is always made to ensure accuracy of the information given. It should be noted however that the opinions expressed by the contributors are not necessarily those of the Editor, her associates or the Western Front Association. The Editor reserves the right to amend, condense or edit any article submitted although the full version will be available, via e-mail, upon request.

Anyone wishing to submit material is more than welcome to contact us by e-mail at: foft@live.co.uk

The deadline date to ensure inclusion in your next edition of *The Tiger* is:

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