

THE TIGER



Derek Seaton, David and Valerie at the unveiling of the Green Plaque to Colonel John Cridlan Barrett, V.C.

**THE NEWSLETTER OF
THE LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND BRANCH
OF THE
WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION
ISSUE 101**

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

Welcome again, Ladies and Gentlemen, to *The Tiger*.

The value of gathering together enthusiasts of the Great War was once more proven when the Chairs of the various WFA Branches attended the biennial Chairman's Conference at the end of last month. With an itinerary heavily devoted to Branch activities, much familiar ground was covered but, as always, something of interest emerges . . .

In an outstandingly illustrated presentation, Fiona Graham, Associate Professor, and Professor John Cassells, Department of Criminal Justice and Forensics of Staffordshire University, outlined their roles in the work currently being undertaken by the *Hawthorn Ridge Crater Association* before Colin Winn and Terry Berry, co-founders of the Association provided further details of its aims and achievements.

The explosion of the mine under Hawthorn Ridge was the very first action of The Battle of the Somme. Recorded by cinematographer Geoffrey Malins at 7.20am on the morning of 1st July 1916, the explosion is one of the best-known pieces of film of the Great War. The mine was blown for a second time on the 13th November when the 51st Highland Division captured the ridge and village.



The Hawthorn Ridge Crater Association, formed in March 2018, is a Franco-British collaboration based in France and is supported by Keele and Staffordshire Universities. Utilising the services of experienced Great War archaeologists and historians, an international team of experts and volunteers are aiming to improve the access for visitors, manage its upkeep and protect the site for future generations whilst providing a detailed study of the area.

The first phase of clearing undergrowth within the crater has already been completed and paths around the perimeter of the crater and an access path from the main road are now in place. A quite superb geophysics plan of the Crater was also distributed (copies available from yours truly upon request) and work continues to protect the crater's edge and surrounding farmland whilst research into the history of the site from both sides of No Man's Land continues. Financially, the Association, a registered Charity, will certainly need support, but one hopes this is received as the project is certainly worthy of support.

Another project brought to our attention was *Never Such Innocence*, who run an annual international poetry, art, speech and song competition for youngsters between nine and eighteen years of age, focusing on conflict and its impact. Begun during the Great War centenary commemorations, more than 11,000 young people of 47 different nationalities have now participated. From 2019 the focus of the project was expanded to include conflict of all forms past and present, including those at community level such as gang violence and knife crime.



The project takes its name from *MCMXIV* a poem written by Philip Larkin in 1964 and owes much to its founder and current C.E.O, Lady Lucy French, O.B.E., the great-granddaughter of Field Marshal Sir John French, commander of the British Expeditionary Force 1914-15. A regular presenter to WFA branches, Lady Lucy declared in 2015: *“The aim of the project is to reach right across the British Isles. NSI is very specifically working with children aged nine to 16 years and it's about getting children to take pride in the sacrifices that were made. So many people had family members involved in that war and now, more than ever I think, people generally are really interested in ancestry and finding out what their forebears have done”*. Lady French is involved in a number of other charities and is a trustee of *The Churches Conservation Trust* and a patron of the *Remember WWI* Campaign.



Lady Lucy French

Another project that may be of interest to some of our Members was the subject of an appeal from WFA Vice Chairman David Tattersfield. Project ALIAS is aiming to identify those men who received a War Pension, but who cannot be easily identified as, for whatever reason, they served under an alias. He announced that:

*Due to a very encouraging early response, the project now has two phases running side by side, with volunteers split into 'phase 1' and 'phase 2'. Phase 1 is the smaller part of the project with volunteers looking at all men who are recorded by the CWGC as having an alias. The first part of this work is on course to be completed within a few weeks which is massively ahead of schedule. Phase 2 work is by far the larger part of the project and is intended to locate those men who were killed in the Great War who joined up using an alias, but who are **not** currently recorded. The present estimate suggests this could amount to as many as 10,000 individuals - which will be double or even three times the figure recorded by the CWGC.*

Can you help? All we need is WFA members with internet access (and therefore able to check the Pension Records) to volunteer a couple of hours of their time. This will enable us to assign each volunteer a 'digital drawer'. So far everyone who has taken part has completed one drawer and have enjoyed doing it so much they have asked for another 'drawer' to work. Some of the really keen volunteers have completed half a dozen or more drawers and are wanting to do more! If we can - as an association - complete this piece of work it will be something we can all be proud of. The outcome will surely be a lasting legacy for those 'hidden heroes' whose stories have remained elusive for the last hundred years.

If you wish to take part in this exciting, interesting and absorbing project, please email me via pensionrecords@westernfrontassociation.com

Finally, it remains only for me to wish you, on behalf of the Committee, the very best of health during the coming weeks, if not months, until we are able to meet again. . .

D.S.H.

PARISH NOTICES

FORTHCOMING BRANCH MEETINGS

As previously advised, our next Branch Meeting scheduled for Monday, 30th March 2020, has been **CANCELLED** in response to Government, NHS and WFA National advice regarding the containment of the Coronavirus Covid 19 in the UK.

At present, the Branch Committee sees no other option than to reluctantly take this decision, with the continued good health and welfare of all Members and Attendees being uppermost in our minds. Although disappointing, we trust you will understand the reasons behind this action and continue to support us, as you have done so magnificently in the past, until we are all able to reunite and resume our activities.

It is our current intention to review future Meetings on a month-by-month basis and act as circumstances then dictate. In the interim, our monthly Newsletter, "The Tiger", will continue to be produced and further announcements will be made via further Communiques and the Branch Website:

www.leicestershireandrutlandwfa.com

Arrangements have already been made for our intended Speaker, Ross Beadle, to visit us in 2021, a policy that will be repeated should further Meetings need to be cancelled.

With our very best wishes until we meet again . . .

The Branch Committee

DAME EMMA MAUD McCARTHY **THE NURSE'S GENERAL** by Lynn Roffee

Emma Maud McCarthy, known as Maud, became the Matron in Chief of Nursing for the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) France and Flanders, during the First World War.

McCarthy was born at Deepdale House, Paddington, Sydney, Australia on 25th September 1865 and was the eldest of eleven children. When her father, William Frederick a Solicitor, died in 1881, McCarthy spent the next seven years helping her mother, Emma Mary (nee A'Beckett), look after her brothers and sisters. She had studied hard for, and passed with honours, the entrance exams to attend the University of Sydney but instead chose to stay at home.

On 10th October 1891, McCarthy began her general nursing training as a probationer at the London Hospital, Whitechapel, London and three years later she was promoted to Sister. At the outbreak of the Boer War, McCarthy was Sister-in-Charge of the Sophia Women's Ward. She was one of six Sisters selected by Princess Alexandra to go to South Africa as one of her own

'Military' nursing sisters to reorganise army hospital conditions there. McCarthy resigned from the hospital to serve with the Army Nursing Services Reserve (1899-1902) and on 23rd December 1899 she sailed from Southampton aboard the *RMS Dunottar Castle*. Lord Roberts, who was on board, took command of the British Forces in the Second Boer War. Lord Kitchener joined the ship at Gibraltar to become the second in command. Whilst aboard McCarthy made the khaki cover for Lord Kitchener's cap and her friend, Ethel Becher, made Lord Robert's. McCarthy served with distinction and was Mentioned in Dispatches. When she returned to England in 1902, she was awarded a special decoration by Queen Alexandra.



Emma Maud McCarthy

After the Boer War the British Government realised that a military nursing force was needed and The Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS) was established. McCarthy joined the QAIMNS in 1903 following a rigorous recruitment process and was promoted to Matron of the Cadet Hospital at Woolwich. During the next seven years she was successive Matron at Aldershot, Netley and Millbank Military Hospital's. It was thought advisable to have "*a special official as visiting and consulting head of certain departments belonging to hospitals under the War Office and by the advice of King Edward and Lord Roberts*". In 1910, McCarthy was promoted to Principal Matron at the War Office and she held this position until the outbreak of the First World War.

McCarthy was appointed Matron-in-Chief of the BEF and sailed on the first ship to leave England with members of the BEF arriving in France on 12th August 1914. She was directly responsible to Miss Ethel Becher, who was now Matron-in-Chief, QAIMNS, and to the Director of General Medical Services. The job had huge responsibility. McCarthy was responsible for coordinating the work of QAIMNS Nurses, the Territorial Force Nursing Service, the Red Cross and the Voluntary Aid Detachments (VAD), several Military nursing detachments from abroad as well as ancillary

staff. McCarthy also maintained the War Diary of the Matron-in-Chief, BEF, France and Flanders for every day from 14th August 1914 to 5th August 1919.

The region McCarthy was responsible for was the whole area from the Channel to the Mediterranean wherever British and allied Nurses worked. Later in the war she was also responsible for the American Nurses. Based in Abbeville from 1914 to 1919, McCarthy detailed in the War Diary her visits, the numbers of Nurses/ VADs arrival and departure, various meetings, staffing levels, discipline issues etc. The War Diary gives a day by day operational account and also contains the names of some Officers and Nursing Staff/VADs:

11.09.14

Sent extra help to station (No.5.) to dress wounded, assisted myself. Many very seriously wounded sent to Hospital.

09.03.15

Then to Canadian Stationary Hospital. The arrangements for the disposal of bed pans etc., brooms, buckets etc. were not as good as they might have been. The floors are cleaned with paraffin.

14.08.15

My sister met by Miss Woodford and Miss Walker. When I returned I met her. We had dinner together. After dinner went for the luggage. Saw Colonel Barefoot at Etaples who instructed me to bring her to Abbeville by car on my way to Havre to drop her at Le Treport, where she is going to work.

05.12.15

Marshy arrived in London with 2 boys. They have been attached to the Flying Corps, and he taken on as Captain RAMC, to be attached to station in London and eventually going to Malta.

06.01.16 Rouen

Before lunch went to 5 General Hospital. Nothing very satisfactory, a want of good care. Meals not very comfortably given. A great many seriously wounded, and heavy operation cases.

As the war progresses the entries become more detailed and provide a good insight into the nursing service.

29.01.16 Bethune

Went over Casualty Clearing Station, very busy evacuating. Many too seriously wounded to be moved left behind, as well as many who later will be able to return to duty. Officer's division very much improved. The operating theatre being moved into a large room where 3 tables can be going at the same time. Went on 2 Barges, all very comfortable and well arranged. All the more seriously wounded are moved by Barge from here to Calais.

After a period of leave beginning in February 1916, the Diary entries once more resume:

04.06.16

Left for Boulogne 8am with my sister who I drove to catch the boat as I learnt my younger sister was seriously ill and likely to be operated upon. Left her at the boat.

06.06.16 Abbeville

Heard the fate of Lord Kitchener, not yet generally known. Almost incredible, a stunning blow. So many came into the office to talk about it, thought by some to be the result of the Secret Service.

09.08.16

HM The King arrived at Boulogne on an unofficial visit – very few even knew of his arrival. Left for the front

30.01.17

Wet and foggy. To 7 General Hospital Malassies. A great many infectious cases of different kinds, the Enterics and Cerebro-spinal Meningitis wards being extremely heavy with many most anxious cases. Many of the Staff have been ill and off duty with a form of influenza – at the time of the visit. After dinner went over to 10 Stationary Hospital. Unspeakably sad so many hopeless cases, and so many quite blind, mostly very young.



*Emma Maud McCarthy,
QAIMNS*

as several other conditions. Many nurses too became ill, were killed or wounded.

She also detailed the visits she made during her time in France. According to her diary entry for July 1918, she travelled to more than 30 different hospitals and casualty clearing stations. She visited field units, and casualty clearing stations, hospital trains and barges, hospital ships, both stationery and general hospitals. The role would have certainly been a challenge. The overwhelming number of casualties set against the backdrop of shortages of trained medical staff and nurses, the life changing and hideous wounds inflicted on thousands of men must have been personally challenging to manage. The type of weapons used and chemical warfare brought new and different challenges to both medical and nursing professions. Trench warfare brought with it other health issues including diseases such as typhus, diphtheria and tuberculosis. The conditions the troops experienced also meant many were badly affected by trench foot, dysentery and lice as well

as several other conditions. Many nurses too became ill, were killed or wounded. It was fairly common practice for Nurses to administer anesthesia in theatre as there were often insufficient numbers of trained Medical Officers (MOs) in the field to carry out this work. McCarthy had successfully introduced Nurses to administering anesthetics in field hospitals and CCSs and she wanted this work to be recognised. In her Official report of 1917, McCarthy raised the issue about the work these Nurses were undertaking. She refers to a meeting of Consultants held at a General Hospital on 1st November where it was unanimously agreed that owing to the shortage of MO's "*women should be trained as Anesthetists*". It was agreed that Nurses who volunteered to undertake a three-month training course would be deployed at CCSs or General Hospitals. By the notes McCarthy made she felt that highly trained theatre Nurses were already able to safely administer anesthetics and had been doing so throughout the war. She wasn't happy though that Nurses were now to be away for this period of training as this put a strain on staff and wrote that it was a "*wastage in nursing ranks*".

TO BE CONTINUED

COLONEL JOHN CRIDLAN BARRETT V.C. GREEN PLAQUE UNVEILED

On the afternoon of Thursday, 12th March, invited guests gathered at the Old Guardhouse of the former Glen Parva Barracks to attend the unveiling of a Green Plaque to Colonel John Cridlan Barrett, V.C., who was stationed at the Barracks between 1916 and 1958.

Barrett was just 21 years of age and a Lieutenant in the 1/5th Battalion of the Leicestershire Regiment when he led a charge against a trench containing enemy machine guns on 24th September 1918. Despite being wounded three times, the attack was a success and Barrett was subsequently awarded the Victoria Cross. He survived the War to become a surgeon at Leicester Royal Infirmary, before attaining the rank of Colonel in the R.A.M.C. in the Second World War.



*John Cridlan Barrett,
V.C.*

After the Official Welcome by County Councillor Louise Richardson, Captain Robert Allen, M.B.E. of the Royal Tigers Association (who nominated Barrett for the award) gave an account of the gallant Colonel's deeds. Proceedings moved outside to the outer perimeter of the Old Guardhouse, where the plaque was unveiled and numerous photographs (including that shown on our front cover) were taken. The party returned indoors to enjoy an excellent selection of refreshments.



The Assembled Guests before the Green Plaque

Photographs courtesy of Karen Wilde,

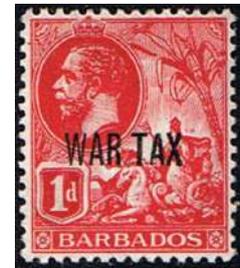
Leicestershire County Council

“VICTORY” BY POST! by David Humberston

The Great War was the first truly global conflict, affecting all the colonies and dominions of the Empires who fought it. The Carribean Islands of the West Indies were no exception, including Barbados, the most easterly of these islands, occupied by the British in May 1625 and a Crown Colony from 1662. In 1914, the Island had a population of 176,000, with 17,000 living in the capital, Bridgetown.

At the outbreak of the conflict, Barbados offered the Imperial Government the sum of £20,000 in either money or sugar. The latter offer was accepted and 1,000 tonnes was shipped to England. £80,000 in cash was subsequently paid when the offer was repeated for each calendar year of the War. Various local charities also contributed and further funds, surgical dressings and other hospital goods were provided. In total, between £28,000 and £30,000 was raised and contributed by Barbadian charities for the war effort. Barbadian troops also enlisted in the British West Indies Regiment when this was formed in September 1915.

Beginning with Jamaica in April 1916 the West Indian colonies also introduced a tax on postal matters and telegrams to assist the war effort. A tax of a halfpenny was added to the letter and postcard rates and three pence to parcels and telegrams. Stamps of these denominations were overprinted “WAR STAMP”. Antigua, Dominica, Grenada, St Kitts-Nevis, St. Lucia, British Honduras and the British Virgin Islands also issued War Stamps that same year.



*Barbados
War Tax Stamp*

Issues for Barbados, the Cayman Islands, Montserrat, St. Vincent, Trinidad & Tobago and Turks & Caicos followed in 1917; the Barbados Stamp, shown opposite, being issued on 10th October. The Bahamas, Bermuda and British Guiana belatedly introduced the tax in 1918 and issued overprinted stamps accordingly.

At War end, it was suggested that Barbados produce a “Victory” issue of postage stamps, by further overprinting the War Tax Stamp shown above. After further deliberation, it was decided to mark the restoration of Peace with a complete set of 11 stamps, ranging in value from ¼d to 3s. Two sample designs were prepared by the Colonial Treasurer of the Island and forwarded to the Crown Agents in London by the Acting Colonial Secretary in June 1919, with a covering letter stating::

It is proposed that at the conclusion of the Declaration of Peace a Victory Stamp should be issued, and I am directed by the Governor to ask you to select a design and submit for approval with information as to the cost of the die and printing and within what time it would take to supply the Stamp.

A suggestion has been put forward that the Stamp should show a winged figure of Victory in profile with drapery outflowing and with a wreath in outstretched hand, with the words Barbados at the top, Postage at the bottom, and the values in the lower corners, 1d, 2d, &c., &c. The year 1919 and the word Victory to be printed below Barbados. But the Government is not committed in anyway to this design.

After an exchange of letters between the Crown Agents and De La Rue, the official printers of Postage Stamps since 1855, it was not until 1st December that the latter produced two new versions of the sample designs that were suitable for copper plate printing. These were approved five days later, with the question of the colour of the inks to be used for the Stamps finally agreed in March 1920.



The design to be used for the eight stamp denominations in pence was based on the statue known as the Winged Victory of Samothrace, unearthed in 1863 on the island of the same name in the Aegean Sea and taken to the Louvre Museum in Paris. This marble statue is believed to commemorate a Greek naval triumph and depicts Nike, the goddess of victory, as a winged figurehead on a ship. Although the statue is missing its head and arms; the proposed stamp design added a head and a left outstretched arm holding a laurel wreath, an ancient symbol of triumph. The 4d value is shown left.

The second design, for the three shilling issues, is based on the statue by Sir Thomas Brock that surmounts the Imperial Memorial to Queen Victoria in front of Buckingham Palace in London. The gilded bronze statue on the memorial holds a palm branch of Victory in her left hand, with her right hand aloft with the index finger pointing to the sky. In the stamp design, the winged female figure stands on a globe with a laurel wreath in her right hand and a palm branch in her left. The highest value Stamp, the 3s, is shown right.. The two different designs include the word “VICTORY” and “1919,” along with “Barbados,” “Postage,” and a denomination lozenge in each bottom corner



Delivery of this issue was promised by De La Rue for April 1920, but delays occurred, and it was decided to withhold the Stamps until all of the denominations had actually arrived in Barbados. By early August, all had arrived with the exception of the 2½d value, which was not received until the end of the month. It was not, therefore, until 9th September that the Stamps were finally put on sale.



The quantities ordered were originally thought to be sufficient to satisfy demand for a one year period of time, but so great was the demand for these attractive stamps that in April 1921, it was necessary to order a reprint of the 1d stamp (shown left), duly printed on paper with a different watermark from the original issue and placed on sale on 22nd August 22nd that same year. By March 1924, only three denominations; the 3d, 4d and 3s. stamps, were still available, but by November, only the 3s. remained, a small quantity remaining to be destroyed with other obsolete stamps in 1925.

As a footnote to the above, New Zealand were the only other Dominion of the British Empire to issue “Victory” Stamps, although overprinted issues were also issued in Western Samoa, the former German colony administered by New Zealand as a League of Nations Mandated Territory. Stamps commemorating the restoration of Peace were also issued by the Bahamas and British Honduras.

ON THE NOTICEBOARD

ASHFORD PRESENTATION TANK – AN UPDATE

Following mention of the Ashford Presentation Tank in last month's issue of "*The Tiger*", further information has emerged that may be of interest to readers.

The Tank is now reported to be in poor condition; the local Council describing it as "basically stable" but warning that its structural integrity is compromised. Ashford Borough Council,



The preserved Ashford Tank

hoping to safeguard the monument's future, have requested quotations for a survey on the tank's current condition. Once received, the work will then be undertaken.

The removal of the electricity substation led to the refabrication of the rear of the tank, which is still missing its floor and interior. As the sole survivor of the "Presentation Tanks", let us hope the Tank can be preserved as planned.

INFORMATION SOUGHT

"Tiger" reader Ian Davies has contacted us with the following request for information:

I am currently researching the area of Beaumont Leys for a war memorial project.

I fully understand that the area did not have a large population as now until the late 1960's and early 1970's when the the housing developments began.

I have began researching the small areas of population that did exist at the time of the first war.

I would like to ask if any of your other members are aware of anyone from the area may have served during 1914 -18 and unfortunately not returned home.

I know its a big ask and would greatly appreciate any information that you may be able to pass on.

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

MISHAPS AND MIXED FORTUNES IN THE AEGEAN

by Roy-Anthony Birch

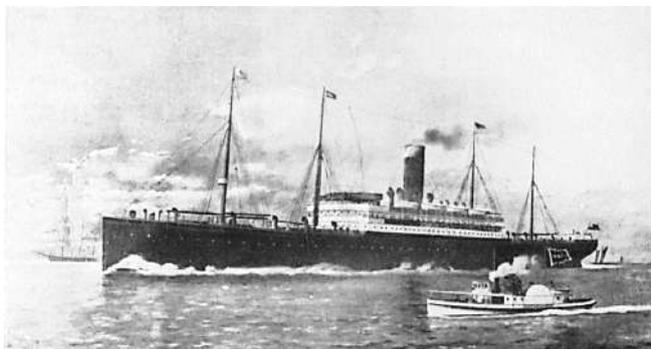
An article in *The Times* of Monday April 19th 1915, headlined ATTACK ON A TROOPSHIP may well have provoked mixed feelings among its readers; quiet and even smug satisfaction, perhaps, at the impotence and swift despatch of an enemy gunboat, tempered by sadness at the apparent loss of so many British lives. For many, the piece is unlikely to have merited a second look, especially amid the plethora of other war news, and indeed, its very brevity and blandness – facts without frills, were hardly likely to induce excitement. We read that the Secretary of the Admiralty had issued this statement “*on Saturday night*”; viz:

The transport *Manitou*, carrying British troops, was attacked by a Turkish torpedo-boat in the Aegean this morning. The Turkish boat fired three torpedoes, all of which missed. The torpedo-boat then made off, chased by a British cruiser, *H.M.S. Minerva*, and destroyers, and was finally run ashore and destroyed on the coast of Chios in Kalamuti Bay. The crew have been made prisoners. It is reported that about 100 men on board the transport have lost their lives through drowning, but full particulars have not yet been received.

Decidedly little seems to have been reported in the immediate aftermath: nothing, for example, from “The Thunderer’s” designated Gallipoli correspondent Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett (1881-1931), and little if anything to remind us of it, years after the event. Except that we in Leicester are singularly fortunate in having a contemporary account from an unimpeachable source, who penned as gripping a portrait as anything that the esteemed Ashmead-Bartlett might have written. For now, I simply quote from the October 1916 issue of *The Wyggestonian*; the magazine of the Wyggeston Boy’s Grammar School, Leicester, one of whose former scholars reminisced as follows:

It was the morning of 16th April 1915, when we were only a few hour’s sailing off Mudros Harbour, that we sighted the smoke of some craft ahead on the port side. Quite a number of us were watching; not dreaming that an enemy craft could be at large in such a place. The vessel approached us and we soon made it out to be a very small torpedo boat. I went to the foredeck to get a better view of the peculiar craft, which displayed no ensign, but on its small mast, flew the signal “Heave To”. Our ship came to a standstill and the hostile boat came up to within a score of yards of our port side, whereupon I saw the head of a torpedo as it rested in the deck tube.

The enemy crew seemed very dark, but their officer, who, with a megaphone, asked what boat we were and what troops were on board, was very fair. He was clearly a German. He said he was going to sink our ship in three minutes, and when asked to extend this to ten, as we had only eight boats, he replied that there was no time to allow that. One of the crew then raised the Turkish ensign astern of their boat, which immediately pulled out to between 150 and 200 yards.



Transport Ship “Manitou”

I soon realised there was no time to spare and made for the stern of our ship where the lifebelts were kept below deck. But it was so crowded with soldiers that it was impossible to get the

belts. Just as I reached the stern, the first enemy torpedo was fired. We saw the splash and awaited the explosion. But to the delight of all on board, it went skimming along the surface on the other side of us. Being unable to get down the gangway, I climbed down one of the hatchways to the lower troop deck where I secured half-a-dozen lifebelts, and after fixing these to the hooks of my jacket, I clambered on deck again. Taking one of the belts and leaving the others for anyone who might require them, I made for the forepart of the deck. There was only a single sentry there and we commenced to throw overboard all the loose woodwork. The second torpedo was then fired at us, with the same result as before. We were now joined by a C.O. of one of the batteries on board, who worked very hard with us, even getting the winch into action and tearing a wash-house from the deck and pitching it overboard.

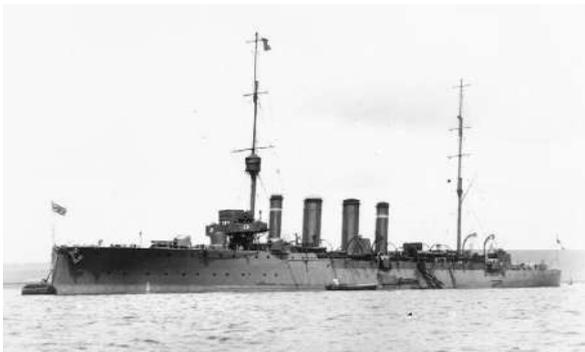
The C.O. then told me that if I could swim, he would advise me to get clear of the ship. So, taking off my boots, pulling down the chinstrap of my helmet, and fixing my lifebelt, I cleared the rails and landed heavily in the sea. With my helmet now pressing down over my eyes, I tore it off, threw it away, and struck out for a bit of a hatch-cover I had already thrown over. The water was very cold and there was a strong current which soon carried me clear of the boat. It occurred to me to strike out for all I was worth to keep a certain amount of warmth in my already cold legs. My efforts brought me very close to the Turkish torpedo boat, and I could plainly see the men on deck, and they could see me. Yet they picked nobody up. They briefly moved closer and fired their third and last torpedo before disappearing. This, like the previous two, missed!

The water became very choppy, and I gradually lost power in my legs, and was overcome with severe cramp which caused me fearful pain from the wrist downwards. It is the only time in my life I actually longed for a speedy end and wished to be put out of my misery. Suddenly I rose on the top of a wave and saw a couple of masts, but although I strained my eyes each time I was on the crest of a wave, I couldn't tell which way she was moving. After a time, she came closer, and then I saw a boat lowered and the men pulling towards me for all they were worth. But it seemed such a long time: I was shaking with cold all over and my teeth simply rattled together and, try as I did, I could not stop them. I can just remember being hauled helplessly into the boat and being rolled to the bottom before I lost consciousness. When I came to my senses, I was stripped, and three men were attending to me; two massaging my legs. As soon as I regained use of these limbs, I was led down into the kitchen where a number of others were all shivering like myself. Soon we were told to make room for others, and finding an old jacket, I put it on, and by moving about, I soon got warm and assisted in helping others that were still being rescued. Several of these, however, being too far gone, sadly died. After enquiring in which direction the Turkish boat had gone, our destroyers set out after it, caught it up, and after shelling it, ran it aground on one of the small islands. We returned to our transport in the evening of 16th April and sailed to Mudros, prior to our landing in Gallipoli.

A number of vessels were actually involved in the rescue, with that described by the ex-Wyggestonian - presumably for security reasons, as "*The Reclaimer*" being either *H.M.S. Dartmouth* or the *Doris*. But what of *S.S. Manitou* herself? Built by Furness, Withy, & Co. of West Hartlepool, England, in 1897 and originally named *Victoria*, she plied the trans-Atlantic passenger routes with the Atlantic Transport Line until 1905, having been renamed *Manitou* immediately after her maiden crossing. Transfer to the more famous Red Star Line in August 1905 made little difference in practice to the 6,848 tonner. Sailing chiefly out of Antwerp, her port of registry, and under the Belgium flag, New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, became regular ports of call until 1915, when she was requisitioned by the Admiralty as an auxiliary military transport. She retained her name but was "coded" B12 in Naval signals during the War, coming under attack on numerous occasions, in addition to the somewhat farcical encounter in the Aegean

in April 1915. Having defied both the enemy and the odds, she was able to resume her peacetime role with the Red Star enterprise, again traversing the Atlantic, until 1922. Her twilight years were spent with the White Star Line, joining their Bremen to Southampton, Quebec, and Montreal service until she was finally scrapped in Italy in 1925.

Not everyone involved in the April 1915 encounter, however, was as fortunate as the *Manitou* in surviving the Turk's bungled action and indeed completing the voyage to The Peninsula. Our Wyggestonian witness, for one, testified to several among the rescued who, "*being too far gone, sadly died*", while *The Times*' initial report stated "*that about 100 men on board the transport have lost their lives through drowning*". Yet even here, things were not as disastrous as first suggested, with *The Times* subsequently carrying a similarly succinct but now more hopeful Admiralty signal confiding that "*a further report shows that the loss of life on board the transport is less than was at first reported*".



H.M.S. Dartmouth



H.M.S. Doris

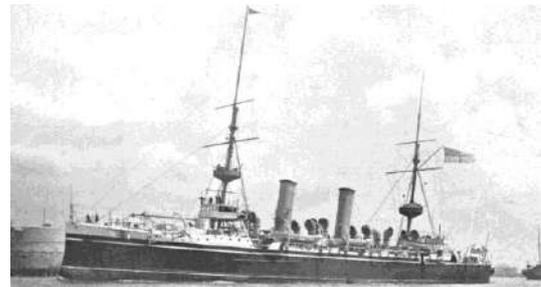
As already outlined, the light cruisers *H.M.S. Dartmouth* and *H.M.S. Doris* were to the fore in a near flotilla of vessels sent to the scene, with the former (of the Weymouth Class), being advised that *S.S. Manitou* had been attacked some 18 miles east of Skyros. This was at 10.50 a.m. on Friday 16th - (*Dartmouth's* log confirms the date) and with FULL SPEED AHEAD ordered at 11.20, she had stopped engines and lowered boats to effect a rescue by 12.30 p.m. Confusion in such circumstances over how many men drowned and how many were plucked alive from the sea and how many of those died subsequently is perhaps only to be expected, and especially where several craft are involved in a rescue. An entry for 5 p.m. in *Dartmouth's* log is not entirely unambiguous: viz; "Picked up 25 men from Royal Fleet Auxiliary; 20 men died", possibly implying that 45 were picked up in total. There is no doubt, however, that at 6 p.m. on 16th April, 20 bodies were consigned to the deep in a funeral service conducted with full military honours; *Dartmouth* then proceeding to Trebuki Bay off the Greek island of Sarakino and preparing to take station for the Gallipoli landings.

H.M.S. Doris, meanwhile, rendezvoused at the rescue site at 12.50 p.m. and played her part in retrieving men from the *Manitou* – the B12 transport, with "our" ex-Wyggestonian possibly among them. Again, however, doubts arose over the precise number of fatalities, although the Admiralty's second signal, that losses were "*less than was at first reported*" certainly holds true. A degree of uncertainty arose, and perhaps remains, over the 27 who were reported "Missing, believed drowned", in addition to the 24 who were confirmed drowned and their bodies officially identified. Although, even now, sources fail to agree a precise figure, from 49 to a maximum of 51 seems definitive. The extent of the losses would in fact have been even less than the 50 or so,

were it not for a brace of mishaps as boats were lowered from the *Manitou* during the rescue. One boat capsized in the water while another seems to have pitched its occupants into the sea prior to impact, as it were, owing to the failure of a davit to bear its load.

All of the fatalities were members either of 147th Brigade Royal Field Artillery or of 2nd Bn. South Wales Borderers, whose comrades were to constitute part of Sir Aylmer Hunter-Weston's 29th Division in the landings at Cape Helles on Sunday 25th April 1915. As far as I have been able to ascertain, none of the dead had direct links to Leicester, Leicestershire, or Rutland, while the Wyggestonian survivor seems certain to have belonged to one of these units; writing, at one point, of "*our Division – the 29th*". Most if not all of the fatalities are now remembered on the imposing Helles Memorial overlooking the entrance to The Dardanelles.

What then of the seemingly inept Turkish torpedo-boat, actually named *Dhair Hissar*? She fell prey chiefly to *H.M.S. Minerva* in a somewhat one-sided contest from which the Ottomans emerged only comparatively lightly mauled. The British light cruiser (of the Eclipse Class) was alerted to *Manitou*'s plight by the beleaguered vessel herself; *Minerva*'s log registering an S.O.S. at 10.30 a.m. on April 16th while coaling at Port Sigri, on Lesbos.



H.M.S. Minerva

Minerva weighed anchor and set course for aiding the B12 transport within the hour, and by late afternoon, the enemy had been driven onto the beach in Kalamuti Bay on the island of Chios (otherwise Khios). While the number of Turkish casualties is uncertain, all of the survivors were captured by and interned from the *Minerva*. By April 21st 1915, she had joined her sisters in preparing for the Gallipoli landings.

Without ever wishing to diminish the significance of any single sacrifice, those from the *Manitou* can hardly be said to constitute "a heavy death toll" even within the context of naval losses at Gallipoli. We recall, for example, the 501 who perished in the sinking of *H.M.S. Goliath* in Morto Bay on the night of 12th/13th May 1915, including Boy 1st Class Horace Green, aged 16, from West Humberstone, Leicester, and Gunner Wilfred Pepper (Royal Marine Artillery), aged 20, from Ibstock in Leicestershire. And even this must be placed against the still greater sacrifice caused through the catastrophic loss of the troop carrier *Royal Edward* in August 1915, where approximately 1,000 men were reported dead from an on board tally of 1,600.

Finally, let us remember George Edward Flint; Seaman Gunner R.N., service no. J/8281, a former booking clerk on the Midland Railway who truly laid down his life for his comrades. Having joined the Senior Service in 1907, he was invalided home to Leicestershire after helping to rescue soldiers whose boats had been shelled by the Turks during an attempted landing on The Peninsula. That was in June 1915, and the 27-year-old died at home in Melton Mowbray in February 1916 "*from the effects of illness contracted on active service*". He now rests in Melton's Thorpe Road Cemetery; grave reference 2120.

Chairman's Note: Readers may like to know that the *S.S. Manitou* was previously used in October 1914 to transport an early contingent of Canadian troops to England. Amongst their number was Lieutenant Harry Colebourn of the Canadian Army Veterinary Corps and his bear cub mascot, Winnipeg – the real "Winnie the Pooh"!

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