

THE TIGER



One Bugler; One Message: "Remembrance" continues . . .

**THE NEWSLETTER OF
THE LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND BRANCH
OF THE
WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION
ISSUE 102**

JOHN TAYLOR



It is with great sadness that I inform our readership of the recent passing of John Taylor in the early hours of 2nd April, following a valiant battle against pancreatic cancer.

John was extremely supportive of our Branch and its activities and his generosity with his expertise, time and vast collection of memorabilia was very much appreciated.

His untimely passing leaves an enormous void amongst his large circle of friends and is a tremendous loss to our Branch and its members.

To June and the family, we offer our deepest condolences in these most difficult times.

John's funeral was conducted on 22nd April with only family members present.
A Memorial Service will be held when possible to allow his many friends to pay their last respects.

David

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

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

As we continue to endure another period of enforced isolation, we can at least continue to communicate via the pages of this Newsletter until we meet again. Our mission of "Remembrance" also continues unfettered and unabated, led by the sterling efforts of the Last Post Association of Ypres who, since 18th March, have continued their nightly Act of Remembrance, an unbroken sequence since the liberation of Ypres in 1944, with a solitary Bugler and no public present. The inspiring image on our front cover depicts the scene, but cannot, of course, show the thousands who must stand in spirit alongside our gallant fireman.



Talbot House

As advised in my recent Communique, one institution that could not remain open is Talbot House in Poperinghe, whose manager, Simon Louagie, has been forced to launch an appeal via www.gofundme.com/f/save-talbot-house to attempt to ensure the House can survive. At the time of writing, some 40,000 Euros have already been donated to this noble cause, including individual donations from some of our own Members and readers and from branches of the WFA.

We have also notified WFA Central of the appeal and it is hoped that all Branches will be made aware of the situation and respond accordingly. A recent article in *The Times* further highlighted the plight of this historic House, which surely cannot be lost to us all in such unfortunate circumstances . . .

News from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission confirms that whilst their sites remain open where possible, operations have been scaled back in line with local health advice. Many events, including planned commemorations for ANZAC Day on 25th April, have already been cancelled. More disturbing, despite the current domestic restrictions, a war graves plot at Leeds (Harehills) Cemetery has been vandalised, with recently laid turf ripped up and thrown at the Cross of Sacrifice, as shown right. A C.W.G.C. official correctly commented that: *Having to deal with the fallout from heartless vandalism is a waste of everyone's time and effort, especially at a time when the public at large is proving how grateful we can be for those who serve the nation.*



There will, regrettably, always be those all too ready to show a lack of respect to those whose actions deserve so much more. That is why it is imperative that we all survive this crisis and rise again to continue our good work. Take care, stay safe and remain healthy until we can meet again . . .

D.S.H.

PARISH NOTICES

FORTHCOMING BRANCH MEETINGS

As anticipated, our next Branch Meeting scheduled for Monday, 27th April 2020, has been **CANCELLED** following the extension of the National lockdown to continue the containment of the Coronavirus - Covid 19 in the UK.

It remains our intention to review our 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.

Our proposed Speaker, Professor Stephen Badsey has been contacted with a view to visiting us in 2021, a policy that will be repeated as long as our Meetings continue to be cancelled.

Please stay in good health until we are all able to meet again . . .

The Branch Committee

DATES TO REMEMBER . . .

THURSDAY, 23rd APRIL 2020

ST GEORGE'S DAY

102nd Anniversary of the Zeebrugge Raid
and "giving the dragon's tail a damned good twist"

105th Anniversary of the death of Rupert Brooke



SATURDAY, 25th APRIL 2020

ANZAC DAY

105th Anniversary of the Gallipoli Landings



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

During her time in France, McCarthy is credited as being one of the first to recognise what was to become known as “shell shock” and now known as Post Trauma Stress Disorder. She set up separate units for men with this condition and those with head injuries. She also lobbied for VADs, whom she had been supportive of, to receive training to be nurses after the war if they wished to become professionals. McCarthy introduced Isolation units to minimise infection and Nurses wore overalls and orderlies had both overalls and canvas suits which were removed before going to barracks.



Emma Maud McCarthy

In an article, published in the Sydney Morning News in 1916, Lady Roberts is quoted in a written letter to a friend that McCarthy “*She is a very retiring modest woman about her achievement’s, but has a wonderful gift for concentrated work in connection with the War Department*”. McCarthy was the only head of a department in the BEF who remained in her original post throughout the war. Extracts from her War Diary below show she had two periods of sick leave and on both occasions received a telegram from Queen Alexandra. (It should be noted that these extracts were written by a Principal Matron).

13.03.17

Sir George Makins came to see Miss McCarthy at 12 a.m. Said that he considered her condition to be serious and an immediate operation was necessary. The operation took place at 3 p.m. at 5 Stationary Hospital “B” Section. A bad appendix abscess was found, and Miss McCarthy was placed on the seriously ill list. Informed Matron-in-Chief, War Office and Capt. McCarthy by wire and all areas by telephone and said a daily bulletin would be issued for the next few days.

14.03.17

Miss McCarthy, VAD arrived from Cap Martin.

17.03.17

Miss McCarthy’s condition satisfactory. Seen by Sir John Rose Bradford. She received telegram from Queen Alexandra expressing deep regret at her illness.

19.03.17

Miss McCarthy’s dressing done by Sir George Makins – good deal of pain - on Carroll Dakin treatment. Sir George satisfied with her abdominal condition. Seen also by Sir J Rose Bradford, who reported her to have a slight touch of pleurisy.

11.06.17

Miss McCarthy received a telegram from Queen Alexandra expressing regret at her second operation and hoping for a speedy recovery.

05.07.17 Abbeville

Memo received from DGMS approving 3 weeks sick leave being granted to Miss McCarthy any time after July 10th. He did not wish her to go before as Her Majesty would be visiting the Hospital on that date.

10.07.17

Her Majesty Queen Mary, accompanied by the Prince of Wales, inspected 2 Stationary Hospital Annex (Sick Sister's Unit), in the morning; saw Miss McCarthy, Matron-in-Chief, and all the sick Sisters.

14.07.17

Miss McCarthy, Matron-in-Chief, proceeded to England on 3 weeks sick leave. Proceeding from Calais with their Majesties. Boat left at 5.pm and arrived London 8.30

By mid-August, she had returned to her duties, as the following Diary entries confirm:

14.08.17

On my way back from Boulogne to Abbeville I called at GHQ, where I reported myself in person to the DGMS on my return from sick leave.

12.06.18

Lady Hadfield's Hospital: On return visited Lady Hadfield's Hospital and saw Capt. Hastings A'Beckett. He had been wounded in the jaw; the third time he had been wounded. This time the bullet had gone through from one side of the jaw to the other leaving no disfigurement whatever, merely fracturing his jaw in two places, a miraculous escape. (Note: This hospital was situated at Wimereux and it is thought that Captain A'Beckett was a relative of her mother's.)

23.04.19

... I then visited the DDMS Boulogne, Colonel Thurston, with regard to the Staff which would be required for No. 8 Stationary Hospital when it opened on its new site, that of 54 General Hospital, as it was merely going to take in cases of v. disease and skin cases. I asked him to consider the question of whether any Nurses at all were advisable, and said that I was anxious to remove the Nurses from the Mental Division also. (Note: v.* refers to "venereal")*

On the 24th July 1919 The Daily Graphic published an article headed "*The Nurse's General*" describing McCarthy taking part in the Peace Procession in London. McCarthy is quoted as saying "*As the Peace Procession passed before the London crowd, I noticed on all sides men who had given their best for their country. They had waited for hours to salute the flag and give one more cheer for their comrades. Both British and Allies as they passed by in triumph. The cheers and gratitude of these fellows fully repay us for what we did for them*". McCarthy ensured she took her diaries back with her when she returned to England. They are now kept at the National Archives.

On 5th August 1919 McCarthy, now a Dame, left France for the final time in her capacity as Matron-in-Chief BEF. Many British Officers and representatives from the French Medical Service and the Secretary to the Sous-Prefecture who represented the French civil population Government saw her off. Nurses lined the quay side and sang "*she's a jolly good fellow*". A special dinner had been held in her honour the night before.



After the First World War Dame McCarthy (left) became Matron-in-Chief of the Territorial Army Nursing Service and retired five years later. It is perhaps not unsurprising that McCarthy's name is not nearly as well-known as many of the Generals. Society at that time didn't recognize women's contribution in the same way as they did men. McCarthy did much more than head up the nursing service. She promoted nursing as a profession and contributed to putting in place 'advance prior learning' for VAD's who wanted to become qualified nurses after the war. It has been suggested that McCarthy was ahead of her time. Her meticulous diary entries refer to having huts for self-inflicted wounds and isolation

wards for those with infections; and the need for specialist mental health care and convalescence for men who had self-harmed; her support for the recognition of mental health as a nursing specialty.

It has been suggested, and records appear to confirm, that McCarthy never returned to her native Australia. She visited Ottawa, Canada in August 1926 and gave a speech as part at the unveiling ceremony for the Nurses Memorial and the following is a short extract "*Those of you who worked in the Ypres sector early in 1916 will remember the constant receiving and evacuating of large numbers of wounded and gassed patients and those heavy death rolls in such distressing circumstances. There was a severe winter of this year, frost and snow lasting well into April 1917. Later in 1917 work again carried on under shell fire and enemy air raids, and then casualties and deaths occurred amongst nurses. The work was so heavy that the Nursing Staff worked in some cases for 48 hours at a stretch and in many cases in 18-hour shifts for continuous periods*".

According to the 1911 Census, her sister Madeline (known as Matty), was living with her at 47 Markham Street, Chelsea. A Blue Plaque (shown right) was put on this house in 2014 by English Heritage. McCarthy lived here until 1947 when she moved a short distance away to a smaller property at 6 St Lukes Street, Chelsea where she lived until her death on 1st April 1949. Although the War Diary was not a personal one, there are at least seven remarks regarding her brother and two sisters and other family members who are mentioned in a formal way.



It is surprising that there has been so little public awareness made of the role this woman played in the centenary commemorations held in 2014-2018. There is no doubt that Dame Maud McCarthy was an amazing woman working in a very challenging environment, particularly at a time where woman were not traditionally seen in such high positions. Perhaps, if she had been a man in the role, the name McCarthy might have featured more in the history books. Non the less, the name Dame Maud Emma McCarthy will now hopefully be known to a few more people.

Awards received by Dame Maud Emma McCarthy

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| King's South Africa Medal (1902) | Florence Nightingale Medal (1918) |
| Queen's South Africa Medal (1902) | Lady of Grace of St John of Jerusalem (1918) |
| Royal Red Cross (1902) and Bar (1917) | Medaille Epidemies an Vermeille (France) (1918) |
| American Red Cross Medal (1918) | Royal Red Cross Bar (1918) |
| Dame Grand Cross of the | Chevalier of the Legion d'honneur (1920) |
| Order of the British Empire (1918) | Medaille de la Reine Elisabeth (Belgium) (1921) |

DEATH OF A PRINCESS; END OF AN EMPIRE

by David Humberston

As recent events have proven, a disease will strike its victims regardless of rank or privilege and the recent news released from Spain concerning the death from Coronavirus of a member of the Spanish Royal Family is a perfect example of this point. Readers may not be aware, however, of the connection between the Princess concerned, Maria Teresa of Bourbon-Parma, and attempts to end the Great War by use of Royal diplomacy in the early months of 1917.

Princess Maria Teresa (born in 1933) was the second daughter of Prince Xavier of Bourbon-Parma, himself the third of twelve children of Robert I, the dispossessed Duke of Parma (a small state in northern Italy annexed in 1859 by Sardinia-Piedmont) and his second wife, Infanta Maria Antonia of Portugal. With nine of the twelve children from his first marriage surviving infancy, the issue of Robert of Parma were certainly numerous, but it is Xavier and two of his full siblings that are the central characters of our story.



Princess Maria Teresa

In October 1911, Xavier's sister Zita married Archduke Charles of Austria, who became heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire following the assassination of his uncle, Archduke Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo in June 1914. Succeeding to the Imperial Crowns upon the death of his great-uncle, Franz Joseph, in November 1916, the now Emperor Charles immediately pledged "to win back for my peoples the sorely-missed blessings of peace".

The outbreak of the War had divided the Bourbon-Parma family, with two of Zita's brothers serving in the Austrian Army, whilst Xavier and his elder brother Sixtus declared their loyalty lay with France. Debarred by French law as members of a foreign dynasty from serving in the French Army, the brothers made overtures to their maternal first cousin, Queen Elisabeth of the Belgians, thus gaining permission to serve in the Belgian Army on the Western Front.



*Prince Xavier in
Belgian uniform, 1914*

Emperor Charles began his secret peace overtures when a letter from the Empress, endorsed by a few lines from Charles himself, was hand delivered to Sixtus and Xavier in January 1917 by their mother, the Duchess of Parma, then residing in neutral Switzerland. With the permission of King Albert of the Belgians, the two brothers agreed to the undertaking and Sixtus, described by one source as "a real political animal" drafted a four-point plan for peace, which Charles received in mid-February 1917. The restoration of Alsace & Lorraine to France, the evacuation of both occupied Belgium and Serbia and the granting of Constantinople to Russia were terms that Charles could certainly agree to, although the creation of a new Slav monarchy consisting of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania and Serbia was preferred to Serbian independence.

Momentum in what would become known as "The Sixtus Affair" was maintained by a secret meeting between the main participants in Austria in March 1917. A letter written by the Emperor addressed to Sixtus, but intended for the eyes of French President Raymond Poincaré, was delivered on 31st March and, unsurprisingly, was initially well-received. Then reservations began to

emerge as the other Allies were consulted. David Lloyd George – ever the opportunist – approved, but French premier Alexandre Ribot urged caution until the Italians had been consulted. Italy had joined the Allied cause in May 1915 after being promised substantial Austrian territory. As the situation for France and Great Britain was later described: *The interests of the Ally they had had to pay dearly for thus clashed with those of this new would-be friend who was offering herself for nothing.*



Prince Sixtus of Bourbon-Parma, 1910

Sixtus and his brother-in-law met again in May 1917, when Charles declared he would sacrifice territory to Italy if “some compensation could be given in return”. Further talks in London and Paris found Lloyd George full of enthusiasm, but Ribot and Poincaré sceptical that Italy, having gained its coveted territory by a separate peace agreement with Austria, would leave the War altogether with their prize. Conversely, Italy realised she stood to gain more territory under her original (and secret) Treaty with France and Great Britain than the Austrians were currently offering. Both France and Italy began to stall and negotiations ground to a halt.

The Emperor, who had already met with Kaiser Wilhelm to subtly suggest that Alsace and Lorraine would need to be surrendered for peace to be achieved, appeared defeated and would soon find himself in greater trouble when in April 1918 his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Ottakar Czernin (whom Charles had included in his secret peace initiative) attacked the French Government over their attitude to a peace settlement. In retaliation, the French made public the Emperor’s letter to Prince Sixtus regarding the future of Alsace & Lorraine. Subsequently Czernin was forced to resign, the Emperor was discredited, the Empress vilified as “a traitor” and German influence over Austrian affairs increased.

With the inclusion of self-determination for the peoples of Austria-Hungary amongst Wilson’s Fourteen Points, it was now apparent that Emperor Charles, even if he could broker a peace settlement, would not be able to save his Empire. Following the Armistice, Charles “renounce participation” in state affairs and departed for exile in Switzerland in March 1919. After two aborted attempts to regain the Hungarian Crown, he died in Madeira in March 1922. His widow, Empress Zita, died in 1989 aged 96, the last surviving child of Robert, Duke of Parma

Post-war, Prince Xavier resided in Paris, where he married and raised six children, the third of which was Princess Maria Theresa. Designated the Carlist pretender to the throne of Spain in 1936, Xavier was exiled from the country two years later and returned to France. At the outbreak of the Second War he re-enlisted in the Belgium Army and became, for a brief period, a German Prisoner of War. Later released, he returned to Vichy, where he joined the French Resistance, before being re-arrested in 1941 and sent to Dachau, which was finally liberated by American troops in 1945.



Prince Xavier in later life

Active once more in Spanish politics in the 1950’s he was proclaimed King of Spain in 1952 under the title Javier I. Exiled from the country by the Franco government, Xavier became titular Duke of Parma in 1974. In frail health following serious injuries in a traffic accident two years earlier, he “abdicated” in favour of his elder son in 1975 and died two years later.

ON THE NOTICEBOARD

A MESSAGE FROM PETER HART

Just a note to publicise my weekly series of podcasts which are going out under the Mat McLachlan Living History banner.

Some three-quarters of them cover the Great War and they should be of interest to members trapped at home! They are recorded with the help of Gary Bain who interviews me and (warning) they do contain some elements of humour – but no more so than my usual talks.

(Chairman's Note: Those of you familiar with Peter Hart and his style of delivery will also be aware of the profanities these podcasts will probably contain!)

Here are the Spotify and Apple links, but they are on all podcast providers.

Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/show/22bNz8eGofwR2AixIskgs4?si=AzE2ArBrTZGLDTnGzKMaCQ>

Apple: <https://podcasts.apple.com/au/podcast/peter-harts-military-history/id1497949409>

PRESENTATION TANKS – A FURTHER NOTE



Following our previous pieces on Presentation Tanks, readers may be interested to know that, in September 2019, a replica Mark IV Tank was presented to the town of Waltham Cross in Hertfordshire. This now stands on the same site as the original Presentation Tank received by the Town in 1921, which was sacrificed for the War effort in May 1940.

The Tank was originally constructed in 2006 for use in the film *Magic Flute*.

Twelve years later, its engine and track system were used for this Memorial, with the local Council providing the funding for the external body. On 1st July 2019, the replica was driven to the town's Cedar Park, where it was mounted on the same plinth constructed for its forebear.

PLAY CONTINUES BUT IT'S NOT CRICKET! **by Roy-Anthony Birch**

In what might ordinarily be thought of as a “normal” British summer, tens if not hundreds of thousands of supporters across the generations and with divergent allegiances, both local and international, would be relishing the prospect of a new cricket season. Currently, however, we cannot be said to be experiencing anything even remotely resembling normality. Dates which would otherwise have heralded the umpire’s initial invitation to “play” and the opening bowler’s first turn of the arm, have necessarily had to fall by the wayside; sacrificed in the interests of a far greater good and to a far graver purpose.

Outfields will, no doubt, continue to be trimmed in the hope of a resumption of play, albeit at a date which it is pure folly to anticipate; just as it was in not altogether dissimilar circumstances little more than a century ago. Present-day parallels between “the war against the Corona virus” and “The Great European War” of 1914-18 are by no means far-fetched. Yet there were significant differences: one of the most visible being that cricket and Rugby grounds, in Leicester as much as elsewhere, were not allowed to lay dormant, let alone to become “no go” areas to the general public. On the contrary. Many became venues for a range of enthusiastically supported activities; though not necessarily of the Rugby-playing or the cricketing sort!

Life at Leicester “Tigers” R.F.C. Welford Road ground and the wider wartime contribution of the club’s admirable Hon. Secretary Mr T.H. Crumbie must, perforce, await another “TIGER” article. For now, I feature two events from the summer of 1917 held at what was then “the new” County Cricket Ground on Leicester’s Aylestone Road. The first was staged over two days during the August Bank Holiday by Leicester’s West End Association; a now sadly and undeservedly neglected organisation, but one which drew widespread public support in its day as a leading fundraiser for local wartime charities; especially those supporting wounded servicemen in hospital or otherwise convalescing. Its aim was to generate funds, not so much through “conventional” street collections say, but rather by promoting events such as the sporting and horticultural extravaganza at Aylestone Road where its encouragement of the then burgeoning allotment movement brought forth fruit as well as vegetables and flowers in veritable abundance, to yield “*success beyond the expectations of the most sanguine*”, according to *The Leicester Daily Post*.

Proceedings on the opening day (6th August), were launched by Mr Hugh Goodacre, High Sheriff of Leicestershire, accompanied by other familiars such as Sir Samuel Faire and Mr John Russell Frears - Leicester’s first wartime Mayor, together with Mr J.L. American, Secretary and undisputed guiding light of The West End Association since its inception in October 1916. The presentation party also included Leicester’s Chief Medical Officer Dr Charles Killick Millard, Alderman Edwin J. Yearby, whose second son, Lance Corporal Frank Victor (R.M.L.I.), had been lost from the *S.S. Kingswood* in March 1917, and the Reverend A.E.W. Manvell, Vicar of St. Barnabas Church Leicester and Assistant Chaplain to the 5th Northern General Military Base Hospital. With regard to the competitive element of the produce show, Mr Goodacre was quick to acknowledge in particular the quality and range of vegetables produced by holders of wartime allotments - comparative novices in the field, compared to that submitted by what were classed as “permanent” gardeners, though all was good: “*nothing has astonished me more*”, he said, “*than the extraordinary amount of talent there was among the amateur gardeners of Leicester unless it was the kindness of heart which went with it*”.

Sir Samuel Faire was equally impressed by the resourcefulness of the newest recruits to allotment

gardening, saying “*it was marvellous how people had been able to achieve such success in so short a time. They were to be heartily congratulated*”. Mr Frank Bouskell of Market Bosworth had been supremely resourceful, offering, surely, an early example of re-wilding while mirroring the inalienable love of nature and of gardening carried by so many officers and men to the Front: servicemen for whom, as therapy, both during and after the War, the answer did indeed lie in the soil. Having converted his flower beds into vegetable gardens, Mr Bouskell still managed to create an eye-catching herbaceous border – of “*beautiful blooms*”, using naturally occurring specimens nurtured on ground which he found ill-suited to vegetables production.

For those not instinctively attracted to the ancient arts of fruit bottling or the pickling of shallots etc., there were plenty of topical alternatives. Practical instruction in domestic poultry-rearing, for one, was of marked significance with the onset of food rationing and the ever threatening U-boat campaign. Yet quite how the judges were able to choose a winner in the egg competition - clutches of six at a time from the same hen, is difficult to fathom. Regularity of shape and colour, perhaps, with brown ones being thought more wholesome? Or is that something of a myth?

With entertainment and recreation the essence of this holiday attraction, it was the very youngest competitors who stole the show. It fell to Dr Millard to lead the judging in the baby competition, and with no fewer than 80 entrants across half-a-dozen or so categories, one only hopes he felt equal to the task! There were separate sections for breast-fed and for bottle-fed babies - boys and girls again separately, and for boys and girls, separately, under six months old. Additional sections were for twins aged up to 12 months and for soldier's babies of two years and under. One can readily believe the newspaper reporter's comment that the crawling competition for infants up to 15 months “*created considerable amusement*”.

Almost all the fun of the fair then, for what the *Daily Post* summarised as “*Another West End Association Success*”. Profits from the event may well have boosted the fund from which an abundance of books was donated by the Association to the library of the Military Base Hospital, several of whose buildings were to form the nucleus of the Leicester Leicestershire & Rutland College – later University College Leicester, after the War. It may be recalled that the original College itself was designated a War Memorial in perpetuity. So that the Association's funding of two specific War Memorial Prizes of £200 each was very much in keeping with its defining principals. (The prizes were to be awarded to the most outstanding students in history and modern languages respectively, on graduation).

The Association also merited a mention in my second non-cricketing event of 1917, held on July 21st and reported in *The Leicester Daily Post* on Monday 23rd. The headline and the first two paragraphs immediately following are as per the *Post's* original, with the rest remaining essentially true to the article, but rendered rather more “reader friendly” and likely to be more instructive, in my view, to the present-day reader.

LEICESTER B.P. BOY SCOUTS; RALLY AND SPORTS MEETING.

A large number of spectators were present at the rally, display, and sports, of the Leicester Boy Scouts' local Association held on the County Cricket Ground on Saturday afternoon. Those who visited the ground included the Mayor (Alderman J. North), Mr Hugh Goodacre (High Sheriff), and Major W.G.S. Rolleston. About 100 tickets had been purchased for wounded soldiers by the Leicester West End Association. The proceedings opened with the Scouts saluting the flag, after which each Troop gave a display including ambulance and firemen's work, camping out, bridge-building, and Swedish drill. Another interesting feature of the day was the exhibition of Scout handiwork. There were model bridges, electrical apparatus, woodwork, and garden produce. The 24th Leicester Troop won the prize

for the best display with their illustration of how badges are earned, the judges being the District Commissioners for West Central Birmingham and for Edgbaston, Messrs. F. Beall Grave and G.A. Phillips, and Mr H.O. Sleigh, Assistant District Commissioner for Birmingham.

The article then gave a breakdown of the sports competition – said to prove “*the value of a Scout’s training in the open air*”, listing in turn, for example, those who secured the first three places in the under and then in the over 15’s relay races and in the tug-of-war for the same age groups. Here, boys of the 2nd Leicester (St. Paul’s) Troop clearly excelled, gaining first place in both the relay and the tug-of-war in the under 15 category, while youngsters from the same Troop took the honours in the Wolf Cub race. Several events of the type perhaps to be expected peppered the programme; leap frog and an obstacle race - its precise nature unspecified, with distance races run over a mile and another over 220 yards. This last was “open” to youths from any organisation and so included members of The Leicester Junior Training Corps, one of whom finished second, while the winner was a Scout from the 5th Leicester (West End) Troop.

An event which one suspects may have failed to survive into our own day was the Trek Cart Race. As the name suggests, this is likely to have required competitors to haul a cart laden with various items of kit – camping and bridge-building equipment – planks, poles, ropes, and spars, plus provisions, possibly, either tugging by hand or even man-hauling with a harness after the manner of certain Antarctic explorers. (This last, something of a flight of fancy on my part perhaps, but conjuring quite a picture, nonetheless). And one wonders whether carts were supplied or whether the lads would have needed to construct their own, and if so, whether there were any “design specifications”, for want of a better phrase! After all, cart or trolley-making was a popular and sometimes even a perilous pastime for many a street Arab well into the 1950s and 60s. Either way, one imagines a certain amount of chuckling among the crowd and the relishing by fellow competitors of any unlooked for “spills” as the carts came on.

There must indeed have been a number of lighter moments, albeit tinged with pathos in the only event which seemed to feature adults. Firstly, however, there was the Blindfold Chariot Race where boys evidently teamed up in pairs, with quite what hilarious results one can only begin to imagine, especially if both parties - horse and charioteer, presumably, were blindfolded! Equally entertaining, no doubt, though more admirable in its way, would have been the egg and spoon race for wounded soldiers, clearly attracting men who readily cast all cares to the winds, irrespective of any temporary loss of dignity. The winner here was Gunner Ward of the Royal Field Artillery, with Corporal Buckle of the Royal Flying Corps coming second and Lance-Corporal Hitchman of the Royal Fusiliers, third.

The overall winners of the sports were the 28th Leicester Troop under Mr A. Leafe, with the 17th Leicester (Wesley Hall) Scouts under Mr T.G. Mills as “runners-up” and boys of the 6th Leicester (Mill Hill) Troop, under their Scoutmaster Mr Adams, coming third. Mrs H. Goodacre, wife of the High Sheriff, distributed the prizes before three rousing cheers were given for her at Major Rolleston’s prompting and Mr Goodacre himself thanked everyone involved. The visiting District Commissioners too were “*extremely pleased*” with the whole display, saying “*it reflected great credit on those responsible*” and that “*the Leicester Association had reason to be proud of its very able Secretary, Mr H. Mills Whittle*”.

These events, at what some still call “The Old Aylestone Road County Cricket Ground” were no doubt a welcome diversion for many in those unprecedentedly uncertain days. God willing, and in time, we will come to witness the return of the game for which such grounds were originally intended; when something resembling normality as we have known it, is restored.

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:

Friday 15th May 2020

“We very much value your continued support”

EXPLORE, LEARN, SHARE