

THE TIGER



His Highness Sajjan Singh Bahadur

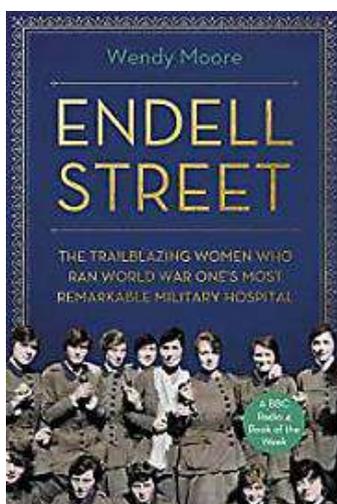
**THE NEWSLETTER OF
THE LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND BRANCH
OF THE
WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION
ISSUE 106 – SEPTEMBER 2020**

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

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

With two well-reported and flagrant breaches of current regulations by local leadership, it was surely no surprise to learn (eventually) that the City of Leicester remains under partial lockdown and yet another of our Branch Meetings is therefore cancelled as a result. Once more the Covidiot minority appear to have triumphed, to the detriment of the law-abiding majority.

Unable to meet in person, the importance of communication amongst ourselves, particularly via the pages of *The Tiger*, cannot be understated and both Valerie and I remain grateful to those who have contributed articles for publication during the last six months. The on-going sharing of information amongst ourselves has always been a cornerstone of our activities and, in the absence of physical presentations to attend, the written word gains additional importance.



With that in mind, readers may be interested to know of the recent publication of *Endall Street*, the story of the military hospital in London featured in Lynn Roffee's excellent account of the exploits of Flora Murray and Louise Garrett Anderson, recounted in our previous two editions. The book, written by Wendy Moore and illustrated left, runs to 318 pages and is available at a reduced price via the normal internet sources. Readers may also be interested to learn that a statue of Millicent Fawcett was erected



in Parliament Square in 2018 to commemorate the role of the suffragists in the enfranchising of women a century before. The statue is shown on the right.

Other additions to my personal library include *Missing*, by Richard van Emden and *Staring at God* by Simon Heffer, the latter a truly substantial volume in excess of 800 pages and an excellent account of British political history during the Great War. An ideal read to fruitfully occupy many hours of our continued incarceration, it's substantial cast reminds one that it was not only the Generals who faced a steep learning curve, but the politicians too. How ironic that, 100 years later, the same can be said of certain of our leaders in our present plight!

Take care, stay safe and remain healthy until we can meet again.

D.S.H.

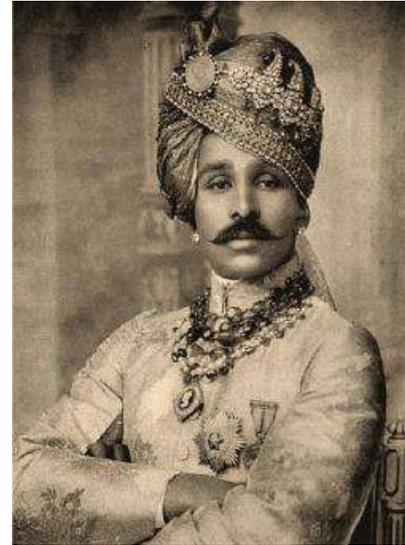


HE GALLOPED TO THE AID OF HIS KING by Valerie Jacques



Frances Stevenson, mistress, personal secretary, confidante and second wife of British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, once described an Indian Maharaja thus: *“He is a figure out of the ‘Arabian Nights’ with jewel-studded turban, an exceedingly handsome countenance and upright bearing.”* A narrative which, I feel sure you’ll agree, most certainly applies to my subject this month - Major General His Highness Sir Sajjan Singh Bahadur, Maharaja of Ratlam State, India.

Born on 13th Jan 1880 in the Princely State of Ratlam (now a district in Madhya Pradesh, Central India), he was the only son of His Highness Maharaja Shrimant Sir Ranjit Singhji Sahib Bahadur and Her Highness Jhaliji Maharani Shrimant Raj Kunverba Sahiba. Following the death of his father in 1893, Sajjan succeeded to the Ratlam throne aged just 13 and reigned under a regency until he came of age in 1898.



*His Highness Sajjan Singh
Bahadur*

Educated at Daly College, Indore, and at Mayo College, Ajmer (considered to be the Eton of India), he joined the Imperial Cadet Corps at Dehradun and volunteered with the Central India Horse Brigade. Commissioned an honorary Captain in the British Indian Army in 1908, he was promoted to Major in 1911. By the outbreak of the Great War he was a famous polo player on the world circuit and took his team to the Western Front where the nimble polo ponies, accustomed to making rapid turns, proved their worth by, for example, carrying battle orders when the hand-cranked telephones refused to work.

The ancient sport of Polo had been discovered by the British in the 1850s when tea planters came across the game in Manipur, North East India, and had founded the first Polo Club. As the British Army in India became more prevalent it was developed considerably. Handicaps were introduced and differing strategies and tactics adopted. By 1910 Clubs were well established in England, Ireland, Argentina, Australia and the USA. On a national and inter-national level, the game became ever more competitive with the requirement of top class polo ponies becoming a leading factor. At the time it was considered to be one of the best assets of the British Army and the prowess of its Cavalry. A young officer named Winston Churchill once declared, whilst serving in India before the turn of the century: *“one of the most serious businesses of life in the Army is Polo!”*

Here is an extract from *The Polo Monthly* magazine dated September 1914:

“It has long been admitted that the polo pony is a most useful type of horse for military purposes. In Indian warfare he has long been ‘facile princeps’ when compared with his larger brother. Though too small, of course, for artillery or ordinary cavalry, he makes an excellent mount for Territorials, mounted orderlies, senior officers of infantry regiments etc. He is handy, fast and easily accustomed to military service and, for his size, can carry a considerable

amount of weight. His constitution is, as a rule, excellent and he can stand any amount of fatigue. Small wonder, therefore, that the military authorities on the issue of mobilisation orders, were particularly keen on polo ponies, and we are pleased to note that several prominent players, including the Prince of Wales, handed over their entire studs for Army purposes”.

When the British Empire declared war on Germany, on 4th August 1914, the Maharajas of the then united sub-continent saw it as a glorious opportunity to follow in the footsteps of their ancestors. Many wrote personal letters to His Majesty, King George V, imploring him to give them the opportunity to become involved - they were ready to go anywhere for the privilege of serving their King-Emperor! That very month, the *Times of India*, stated: *“The swords of the martial Princes leapt from their scabbards”*. If only they’d known what was to come . . .

India, of course, had worries of her own as, if Great Britain had decided to remain neutral, Russia may have renewed her disputes in Persia and Central Asia and when the Ottoman Empire united with the Central Powers at the end of October 1914, the War became ever nearer as Mesopotamia, India’s then neighbour, was now her enemy. There were also major concerns that Germany would exploit her alliance with the Turks and move troops and armaments through the Balkans and Turkey to Aleppo, Baghdad and Basra before turning towards Afghanistan and Baluchistan, all of which would threaten the already precarious North-West Frontier. India did not wish to exchange British rule for German!

Gandhi, who happened to be in London at the outbreak of War, rallied his fellow countrymen from afar imploring them to *“offer all humble assistance as we may be considered capable of performing as an earnest of our desire to share the responsibilities of Empire.”* (Gandhi most likely saw an ideal opportunity for India to show that she was worthy of self-government.) However, the ordinary Indian volunteered in his thousands, not just to fight for his King-Emperor, or the British Empire, but also for the honour of his Regiment. Each man took part in a ceremony where he *“ate the Salt of the Sarkar”* and swore an oath on his religious book binding him to the ruling authority through the obligations of protection and loyalty. Regimental traditions were taught in Hindu and Sikh temples and in mosques and each young soldier knew that if he did not do well he would face the shame of his village. There was little mutiny or dissent and, although kept on a tight regime by their white British Officers, they would all soon be put to the ultimate test and prove their worth.

When Indian soldiers first arrived in France their King-Emperor, George V, sent the following message: *“You are the descendants of men who have been great rulers and great warriors. You will recall the glories of your race. You will have the honour of showing in Europe that the sons of India have lost none of their ancient martial instincts. In battle you will remember that your religions enjoin on you that to give your life doing your duty is your highest reward. History will record the doings of India’s sons and your children will proudly tell of the deeds of their fathers.”*

By the end of September 1914 the British Indian Army were demonstrating their vital contribution to the War effort when they were engaged in a desperate defence on the Western Front near Ypres and at Neuve Chapelle where one third of the British sector of the Allied Line was bravely held. The following article appeared in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, a German newspaper which advocated for peace both before and throughout the War: *“Today for the first time we had to fight against Indians and the devil knows those brown rascals are not to be under-rated. With a fearful*

shouting, thousands of them rushed upon us. At a hundred metres we opened a destructive fire that mowed down hundreds but in spite of that the others advanced. In no time they were in our trenches. With butt ends, bayonets, swords and daggers we fought each other and we had hard, bitter, work."

Just one month later, 31st October 1914, 26 year old Sepoy 4050 Khudadad Khan, 129th Duke of Connaught's Own Baluchis, became the first Indian soldier of the British Indian Army to receive the Victoria Cross for his conspicuous bravery at Hollebeke, Belgium. There would be a further eight Indian and Nepalese recipients during the conflict.

Much has been written of the Indian soldier's undoubted gallantry, courage and the terrible hardships endured on both the Western and Mesopotamian Fronts and I do not propose to enter into further dialogue here. I would, however, ask you to remember that the British Indian Army suffered the largest losses of any of our Empire forces and, unlike the ANZACS, do not have their specific "Day of Commemoration". But, I have seen the roll call of the dead inscribed on Sir Edwin Lutyens' magnificent Memorial Arch, *India Gate*, New Delhi, and I can assure you that their sacrifice is not forgotten. If wished, you can read more of my visit in *Tiger No 55* - the Memorial inscription reads:

To the dead of the Indian Armies who fell and are honoured in France and Flanders Mesopotamia and Persia, East Africa, Gallipoli and elsewhere in the near and the far-east and in sacred memory also of those whose names are here recorded and who fell in India or the North-West Frontier and during the Third Afghan War.



*HH Sajjan Singh (front left) with
Lt. Gen. Rimington and Sir Partab Singh.
Linghem, France, 28th July 1915*



*HH Sajjan Singh (second from right)
in the grounds of
Sir Douglas Haig's Chateau,
Montreuil-sur-Mer, 17th June 1916*

Finally, you may be wondering what happened to Sajjan . . . He went on to serve as Aide-de-Camp to King George V from 1915 and on 3rd June 1916, the occasion of His Majesty's 51st birthday, was gifted the honorary title of Lieutenant Colonel in recognition of his valuable War service. Less than two years later, 1st January 1918, the rank of Honorary Colonel was granted together with the

sanction of a permanent 13-guns salute, an increase from his present 11.

On 6th May 1919 the Emirate of Afghanistan invaded British India and Sajjan continued his service as A.D.C. to the General Officer Commanding 1st Division on the North-West Frontier until an Armistice was declared on 8th August of that year. During this time he also served as the ruler of the State of Rewa. He was also A.D.C. to the Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII) when the latter toured India from 1921 to 1922, for which he was appointed a KCVO, and continued as A.D.C. to King George V until His Majesty's death in 1936.

Always a great polo aficionado, he served as Steward of the Indian Polo Association, as the Advisor and Member of the Selection Committee for the Indian Army Polo Team and was also a member of the general councils of Daly and Mayo Colleges where he'd received his education. He married five times and had two sons and three daughters by his fifth wife, Sodhabai of Nawanagar and is remembered as a great administrator and ruler who turned Ratlam State into one of the leading Princely States of India. Sajjan died on 3rd February 1947 aged 67, six months before the partition of his country into the independent dominions of the Union of India (now the Republic of India) and the Dominion of Pakistan (now split into the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the People's Republic of Bangladesh).



*Major General His Highness
Sir Sajjan Singh Bahadur,
Maharaja of Ratlam State, India*

HONOURS:

*Delhi Durbar gold medal 1903
Knight Commander of the Order of the
Star of India (KCSI) 1909
Delhi Durbar gold medal 1911
Mentioned in Despatches 1915
1914-15 Star 1918
British War Medal 1918
Allied Victory Medal 1918
Officer of the
Legion d'Honneur of France 1918
India General Service Medal 1909
with Afghanistan-NWF clasp -1919
Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian
Order (KCVO) 1922*



J. M. EDMONDS – A LEICESTERSHIRE CONNECTION

by David Humberston

Hopefully readers of *The Tiger* will have enjoyed Valerie's article in last month's issue concerning the origins of the *Kohima Epitaph* and the part played by John Maxwell Edmonds in its creation. Further research into the Maxwell family has unearthed a connection with one of the earliest Leicestershire Great War fatalities, of which readers may not be aware . . .

John Maxwell Edmonds was the son of Arthur Jonathan Maxwell who, after a career in education, spent the last three decades of his life as Vicar of Great Gransden in what was then Huntingdonshire, prior to his death in June 1914, a month before the outbreak of the Great War. Arthur Edmonds was the fourth son of Orlando Edmonds, banker and a prominent resident of Stamford, Lincolnshire before his passing in 1866. Born in Kettering in 1802, Orlando married one Mary Jane Arnold at Tinwell, in Rutland, in August 1863, the marriage producing seven sons and three daughters.

Francis Samuel Edmonds was the youngest of those seven sons and, like his brother Arthur and nephew John, completed his education at Cambridge University. Ordained as a priest in 1873, Francis met and married his wife, Marguerite, during a four-year period working at St Peter Port, Guernsey between 1872 and 1876. A daughter, Marguerite Ethel, was born in Surrey in 1877 and a son, Samuel Frank, at Northampton the following year. By 1914 Francis had been Vicar of Foxton, Leicestershire, for six years.



Samuel Frank Edmonds (shown left) was educated at Oundle School in Northamptonshire between 1893 and 1898, where he captained the School cricket XI, was a forward in the 1st XV and was also a school prefect. A leading member of the Science Sixth, he won numerous school prizes for science and was on the committee of the newly founded Oundle School Science Society before winning a scholarship to Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. There he won a first-class degree in Natural Science in 1901 and rowed in the college boat.

After a year as a school master at Bradford Grammar School, he joined the Navy, training at the Royal Naval Colleges at Osborne and Dartmouth before spending ten years as the science instructor at the latter. At the end of 1912, he left Dartmouth for what was then known as the British East African Protectorate (modern day Kenya).

At the outbreak of war, Samuel enlisted as a Trooper in the East African Mounted Rifles, raised on 5th August 1914 at Nairobi and consisting of some 400 volunteers. Just seven weeks later, Samuel's Squadron, only 30 in number, came under attack by an enemy force which had crossed the border from German East Africa. A subsequent press report confirmed:

News has been received fighting took place on 25th September between the Magadi railway and the frontier. It appears that a German force of about 35 Europeans and 150 natives, with

two Maxim guns, attacked a body of East African Mounted Rifles (C Squadron), only 30 in number, commanded by Captain Chapman.

After one hour's severe fighting in thick bush country, the enemy were repulsed, and retired hastily towards Longido. Their casualties are said to be 36 (11 dead), and in the hurry of their retreat they left behind them many loads. In this plucky fight the casualties of the East African Mounted Rifles numbered eight killed and four wounded (none seriously).

Amongst the fallen was 209 Trooper Samuel Frank Edmonds, aged 35 years. After the end of hostilities, his grave could not be located and he is one of 1,234 fatalities remembered on the British and Indian Memorial to the Missing at Nairobi South Cemetery. He is also commemorated on the Roll of Honour and the War Memorials at St Andrew's Church, Foxton, Leics. and on a Memorial Plaque at St John the Baptist Church, Harringworth, Northamptonshire, where his father served as Vicar between 1886 and 1898. Samuel is also remembered at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge and at Oundle School, where he was the first "Old Boy" to perish.



LEFT: The War Memorial at St Andrew's Church, Foxton. ABOVE: The Memorial Tablet at St John the Baptist Church, Harringworth.

One can only speculate if John Maxwell Edmonds had his fallen first cousin, only three years his junior, in mind when he produced his series of Great War epitaphs. With the Great War campaigns in Africa largely forgotten, perhaps his most appropriate tribute is:

*Ye that live on 'mid English
pastures green
Remember us, and think
what might have been"*



The British and Indian Memorial to the Missing, Nairobi

AN ENGLISHMAN AND HIS BANNED FICTIONALISED BOOK (PART I) by Lynn Roffee



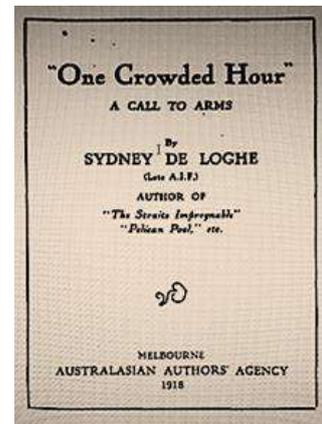
Sydney Loch

Frederick Sydney (known as Sydney) Loch was born in London on 24th January 1889. He left England on 9th March 1909 for Australia when he found out that the woman he loved was having an affair with his father. Loch arrived in Sydney on 1st May 1909 and, having a little financial help from friends, became a grazier in Gippsland, Victoria. On 28th August 1914 he enlisted in the A.I.F. at Broadmeadows as Gunner, Service No. 827, 2 Field Artillery Brigade, Ammunition Column and immediately made Colonel George Johnston's "Gallop" joining Brigade Staff.

Under the pen name of Sydney de Loghe, Loch wrote a fictionalised autobiography titled "*The Straits Impregnable*". It was a real graphic account of what he had experienced whilst serving in Gallipoli. The first edition in 1916 was written as a novel because his literary agent, Henry Champion, was concerned that the Military Censor would find out it was a true account. At the time most narratives were submitted to military censors under the rules War Precautions Act 1914 (No.10) (Repealed on 29th December 1920) but it didn't happen in this case. Only 2000 copies were printed which soon sold out and Champion printed a second edition and inserted the following words just inside the book:

*"This Book,
Written in Australia, Egypt and Gallipoli,
is true."*

The Military Censor for Victoria, Major L F Armstrong, was made aware that the book was in fact true. He demanded the book be withdrawn and threatened Champion's publishing company. Thus, the book was banned by the Australian Government. The main purpose of the censorship was designed to stop secret information, like troop movements, falling into enemy hands. However, in this case it has been suggested it was also intended to cover up the fact that the Gallipoli Campaign had cost so many lives and there was worry that it might stop young men enlisting for future service in France



Champion, worried about prosecution and what it would do to his business, spoke with his lawyer who in turn contacted the Censor to see if a negotiated way forward could be found. A compromise was proposed whereby Loch, under his pen name of Sydney De Loghe, was required to write a series of articles which were contained in a pamphlet, called "*One crowded hour, A Call to Arms*" shortly before the 1918 Armistice.

Stella Maria Sarah Miles Franklin, known as Miles Franklin, was a novelist and a feminist who had been sent a copy of the "*The Straits Impregnable*" by Champion. She was a friend of Champion's

wife and one of a few people who had been entrusted with the author's real name. It is alleged that Franklin described the book as "*a work of literary merit*".

In 1917, Franklin volunteered for war work in the Ostrovo Unit of the Scottish Women's Hospital during the Serbian Campaign of 1917/18. She was of the view that the book should be published in Britain as it would provide the British people with a vivid explanation of the difficulties encountered by Anzac troops during the Gallipoli Campaign. It is not exactly clear how she became involved with Sir John Murray buying the rights of the book to print a British edition. The book was printed as per the second Australian edition with the note that Champion had included which had subsequently got the book banned in Australia. Murray was to become a lifelong friend of Loch.



Miles Franklin

The Straits Impregnable book seemed largely to have disappeared and not to have surfaced again until 2007 when historians, Susanna & Jake de Vries, decided to write *To Hell and Back*. This book included their research as well as a slightly shortened form of the second Australian edition of *The Straits Impregnable* abridging and editing it minimally. The "de Vries" were able to identify some of the true surnames of the fictionalised characters from various personal papers and documents. For example: -

Lake - Loch
General Runner – Brigadier-General
Harold Walker
General Rivers – Major-General
William (Bill) Bridges
Carrott - Captain Bean, War Correspondent

Lonesome Pine - Lone Pine
Jackson – Colonel George Johnston
Lieutenant Sands – Lieutenant Shirley
Thomas William Goodwin
Corporal Tank - Corporal Furphey
Blankshire – HMAT Shropshire

To save confusion the Author, throughout of this narrative, refers to Lake, as Loch, and has further researched and identified the actual first names and ranks, as shown above.

Extracts below are from *The Straits Impregnable* are shown in Italics.

The book begins with Loch, having volunteered, reporting to Victoria Barracks where he undertakes training and a fair amount of signaling interspersed "*with now and then a lesson*" and looking after the horses until he sails from Melbourne in October 1914. Two weeks later *HMAT Shropshire* was "*one of a fleet of transports fifty or more strong, conveyed by cruisers*" which left Albany Harbour to an unknown destination. It was just near the coast of Egypt that the men were informed that was the destination and not England. He describes the first weeks of arrival in Cairo as hard work on his legs as brigade orders forbade riding a single horse. Men had to exercise the horses in long files in the desert and Loch described it as "*tramping in the sand was heartbreaking work*".

It was not until the Spring of 1915 that men, horses, guns and equipment were on the move again. This time Loch was aboard the S.S. Karroo which set sail for an unknown anchorage. It turned out to be Mudros Harbour but with so many transports arriving daily there was no room to dock so "*a mighty fleet lay at anchor in the land-locked waters – two fleets indeed: a battle fleet, and a fleet of transports*".

In the afternoon of 25th April 1915, Loch, the Colonel and Staff Officers, as well as “A” Battery men, guns and wagons were aboard the first boat to leave an unknown ship and headed towards a narrow sandy beach. The Anzacs intended landing on more level ground which was about 1.6 kms away from where they actually did. The rugged terrain that greeted them would have been difficult in peace time let alone dodging sniper and shell fire. The steep slopes were sharp; earth had eroded away leaving the dense shrubby vegetation that hid thorns. Even though more than a hundred years have passed, standing on the beach at Anzac Cove one wonders at the endurance, bravery, ingenuity and mateship displayed by the Anzacs and physical challenges they endured. These characteristics have become enshrined as defining aspects of the Australian character today. Gallipoli continues to play an important part in both Australians and New Zealanders culture.

There were very few Australian horses landed on Gallipoli due to the difficult and rugged terrain. Loch said *“Much of the desert training went for nothing. We had not a horse ashore. The guns were man handled to this or that position, and dug in”*.

The British landed on more level ground so were able to make use of their horses. The “bay” which he referred to in the book is now known as Anzac Cove, situated on the western side of the Gallipoli Peninsula.

Extracts from *The Straits Impregnable* book shown below in Italics may give some of the many reasons that could have contributed to why the book was banned: -

“One Red Cross fellow with a donkey has passed twice or thrice that day. He was becoming known to all: they said not fire disturbed him. On his donkey he would mount a man wounded in leg or foot. He was always cheerful and never tired.”

Although it can't be confirmed, on the balance of probabilities, it was most likely to be John Kirkpatrick Simpson, who was affectionately known as the “The Donkey Man” of the 3rd Field Ambulance A.I.F.

“We arrived at a high spot up on the hill. The country revealed itself full of shallow trenches and funkholes, which yawned like endless graves. I grew aware of many men sleeping in the shelter of these, and of tins of beef and bags of biscuits near them, and the ashes of yesterday's fires. I wondered what the men were doing here behind the firing line. Cliffe sat cross legged on tussock – “Look at these fellows” he said. I can't make out how it is allowed to go on. Every man there ought to be in the firing line. Instead of that they skulk here all day with plenty of tucker.

“Why is nothing done” I asked.

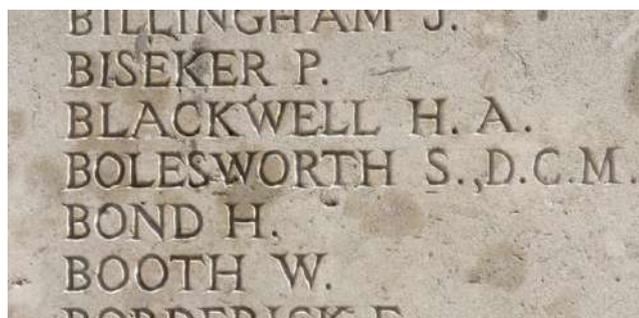
“I believe they are starting to do something, but things have been in a muddle, the battalions mixed up, and no one knows who is dead or alive. Last evening I was coming down here I spoke to one lot with a fire going, who were filling themselves with bully beef and jam, and asked them what they were doing. The fellow I spoke with seemed ready to give cheek, so I pulled out my revolver and he climbed down at once.”

TO BE CONTINUED

ON THE NOTICEBOARD

“TOGO” HONoured AT TYNE COT

Greg Drozd, our County Town Representative for Hinckley, has advised us of an amendment to the Tyne Cot Memorial to the Missing in regards to Private Sydney “Togo” Bolesworth of the 9th Leicestershire Regiment, who fell during the Battle of Passchendaele in 1917.



Greg writes:

If you recall from my talk to the Branch, Togo's name has been on the memorial for all those years without the award of his medal (the Distinguished Conduct Medal) being acknowledged. This has now been corrected, but clearly there is not enough room for his greatest accolade: "the best soldier in the Leicestershire Regiment!"

Our thanks go to Greg for informing us of this welcome news and to the National Memorial Arboretum volunteer who made contact with the CWGC and the addition was sanctioned.

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION FESTIVAL OF REMEMBRANCE



Will readers please note that the Annual Royal British Legion Festival of Remembrance, held at De Montfort Hall, has now officially been cancelled due to the ongoing restrictions caused by Coronavirus.

ONE OF THE FEW . . .

In these most unusual times, we have some more pleasing news to share with our readers!

Malcolm and Margaret Smith, of Wilmslow, Cheshire, WFA Members, *Tiger* recipients and popular regulars on our annual Armistice Tours send their best wishes to everyone who knows them, with Malcolm also surprising us with the following news via email:

29th June 2020:

“The Spit I am due to fly in did 27 sorties following D day and accounted for two Me 190s and a possible 3rd before being shot down over France. She was then put in a Normandy beach museum before being returned to the UK and rebuilt as a two seater. My pilot Flt Lt Parkinson (Parkie) has 6400 hours in his log book and was a Red Arrows pilot for some years so it should be great.”



19th July 2020:

“We have driven home from Sywell Aerodrome in Northamptonshire this afternoon, where I achieved a boy hood dream of flying a Spitfire. We have several photographs and a fantastic video of my flight which I hope to copy and share at some future date”.

VICTORY OVER JAPAN DAY

A small ceremony of Remembrance was held at Hallaton War Memorial on Saturday 15th August to commemorate 75 years since the end of the Second World War:

We remembered the courage and sacrifice of Major General “Bill” Slim’s 14th Army – known as ‘The Forgotten Army’ - because their efforts were overshadowed by the events in Europe.

There were 90,000 casualties of whom nearly 30,000 died and 12,500 were made Prisoners of War. They suffered terrible mental and physical ordeals. Held in appalling conditions, the prisoners were subjected to brutal treatment.

We remembered all those who died; all those who suffered terrible torments from their experiences; the bereaved who had to live with their loss.

After the words on the Kohima Memorial were read out, we also remembered our four Hallaton men who died in the war and held a Two Minute silence.

The following poem by Helen-Marie Donnelly was read out.

GRATITUDE

Today we unite.

Both still and silent
As the clock chimes . . .
“The Eleventh Hour”.

Two minutes out of a busy day.

Time for reflection,
acknowledgement.
To honour those who have given and
give
“Sacrifice in the name of others”.

Men and women . . .
Who have paved the way
To a life and country as we know it.

For without them . . .
their bravery and courage.
We might not have been here . . .
To give two minutes



Denis Kenyon

A CENTENNIAL COMMEMORATION IN LOCKDOWN by Roy-Anthony Birch

In temporarily suspending my current series on matters agricultural, botanical, and horticultural, I do so to mark the Centenary of the unveiling of what I regard as an undeservedly neglected War Memorial, yet one which is at least as worthy as any of our collective attention. It was in the September and October 2013 issues of "THE TIGER" (nos. 24 and 25) that I offered what was, in effect, an introduction to Leicester's Bridge Road Elementary School's World War I Memorial, situated in what is now officially designated a "Memorial Garden" in North Evington, LE5 3QN, with the September article including a report of the unveiling by Colonel Sir Charles Edward Yate (1849-1940) on 4th September 1920. (As Conservative M.P. "for The East or Melton Division in The County of Leicestershire" from 1910 to 1924, Sir Charles' constituency embraced the North Evington district of the then Borough of Leicester, where he is known to have addressed recruiting meetings at the local St. Barnabas Parish Church, and conceivably at Bridge Road School also, as, perhaps, an additional rallying venue).



Bridge Road School Memorial

Regular "TIGER" readers may also recall articles in which I reproduced a number of letters from Bridge Road Old Boys, otherwise known as "Bridge Roaders". See for example, the editions of June and August 2018 - nos. 80 and 82 respectively, viewable on our local branch website, while some of the Fallen scholars have featured elsewhere: "Charlie" Whittaker, lost from *H.M.S. Cressy* in September 1914, for one, was remembered in October 2014's "TIGER" in my article "Early Naval Calamities; Leicester Seafarers Among The Drowned". Hardly surprising then, especially to those who know me, that I was intent on organising or at least playing a leading role in commemorating the Centenary of a memorial which, as was written prior to its unveiling, was "*intended to symbolise the sacrifices made by past scholars in the War, and the reverence with which future generations will cherish the memory of their devotion to the cause for which they gave their lives*".

Equally unsurprising, given the ramifications of the continuing "Corona Crisis", will be the news that it has not been possible to organise a commemorative ceremony as I had wished. And indeed, if the related restrictions were to be lifted even as I write, time would still be against us. My purpose now, therefore, is to pay as fitting a tribute as I can: cherishing the memory of those who devoted themselves "*to the cause for which they gave their lives*" by sketching some of the background to the School catchment area and to its War Memorial; by noting some of the personnel associated with the School and again, by delving into the copious wartime correspondence received at Bridge Road from its now uniformed alumni.

The development of Leicester's Spinney Hill/North Evington district dates from the 1880s, with Rolleston Street and Square, for example, perpetuating prominent local landowner Sir John

Rolleston, (1848-1919), as does Burnaby Avenue, after fellow-landowner The Reverend Frederick George Burnaby, benefactor of nearby St. Saviour's Church. Further expansion owed much to Melton Mowbray born architect Arthur Wakerley (1862-1931), with factories, shops, and terraced housing, virtually monopolising newly laid streets by the end of the 19th century to constitute the autonomous suburb that Wakerley foresaw. By 1914, the area was indeed as much industrial and commercial as residential, with Leicester's now firmly established leadership in the boot and shoe trade very much in evidence. Large and small hosiery and footwear enterprises abounded in and around Bridge Road. One of the largest of all was The Leicester Anchor Boot Productive Society Ltd., to give it its proper original title, whose factory in Asfordby Street was a major pre-1914 employer of men and women alike. Asfordby Street itself, within easy walking distance of Bridge Road, was very much a focal point of the community, with a fire and a police station (both of Wakerley's design) abutting one-another towards one end, and a "picture theatre" just across Green Lane Road at the other. Some readers may recall the "Asfordby Street Shrine" from the 1914-18 War. Several sons of that, and indeed from numerous and similarly modest streets and houses, came to be counted among Bridge Road Elementary School's "Great War" dead. And moreover, the 133 named on its War Memorial may not be the total compliment of its military fatalities.

Bridge Road School was officially opened by James Ellis M.P. on 2nd June 1889, with members of the then governing authority - The Evington School Board, and designated members of staff in attendance. Doors were opened on the following day for the enrolment of "scholars"; for what we would now call "the initial intake", with 60 boys and 57 girls – 117 in total, being registered, although a total of 110 is cited in one source. Most crucial of all, for the establishing of a fine reputation and the careful nurturing of generations of scholars, was the appointment of Mr Arthur H. Baddeley as the School's first and almost certainly its longest-serving Headmaster. By the beginning of the 20th century, Mr Baddeley had command of a conspicuously augmented register, with Kelly's 1904 Leicestershire Directory showing an average attendance of 587 children - i.e. "juniors", and 408 infants, with maximum capacities of 607 and 421 respectively.

Other than being transferred from The Evington to control of The Leicester School Board, owing to boundary changes in 1892, all seems to have proceeded without incident until the outbreak of hostilities in 1914. We now know, of course, that Bridge Road School bore arguably a quite disproportionate share of losses among its alumni, now serving in the Army and "The Senior Service" in the majority of wartime theatres; excepting, perhaps, The Eastern European (Russian) Front but including, for example, East Africa. The esteem and affection in which the School in general and Mr Baddeley in particular were held by its former pupils were evidenced by the 4,374 communications reported as having been received during the War; some of which I continue to be able to retrieve from the columns of *The Leicester Daily Post*. Equally deserving of mention is a line from one of the School's publications to the effect that "741 Old Boys serving with The Colours visited the School during the War".

Information such as this was originally collated for a commemorative booklet issued by the School, which clearly served as a fund-raiser; priced @ 1/- per copy - 5p in equivalent UK decimal currency, and carrying the legend "Proceeds to War Memorial Fund" on the outer cover. The publication of *Bridge Road Old Boys and The War 1914-1919* in May 1919 followed steps which had themselves been taken at a meeting of The Bridge Road School Old Boys' Association in February, as reported in *The Illustrated Leicester Chronicle* of Saturday 22nd February 1919: -

On the evening of Monday 17th February 1919, The Bridge Road School Old Boys' Association met and unanimously agreed to apply to The Education Committee for approval to erect a memorial to those old boys of the School who had been killed in The Great War.

The timing of the launch of what might nowadays be called "The Bridge Road School War Memorial Project" and the slightly later publication of the commemorative booklet were not without significance. Bearing in mind that the November 1918 Armistice was likely to be seen by many as no more than a temporary cessation of hostilities which, technically at least, it was, such initiatives were perhaps tantamount to acts of faith born more of hope than of expectation, with the real prospect of a far heavier death toll being incurred over an as yet indeterminate period.

In the event, The School's Old Boys' Association's faith was well funded. The Roll of Honour published in the commemorative booklet of May 1919, listing the names of some 1,200 former scholars who had served with H.M.'s wartime forces had no need to be added to; at least not immediately. (A further Roll, said to have been displayed in the School's Upper Hall to coincide with the unveiling of the War Memorial in September 1920 - some 16 months after the booklet's publication, was said to record "*over 1,400 names*").

Having already covered the events of Saturday 4th September 1920, I turn to a Memorial Service held on Sunday September 5th in St. Stephen's Church, East Park Road, Leicester, which drew the formalities associated with the unveiling of the War Memorial to a close. In his address, the Vicar, The Reverend G.W. Brooks said: "*The death of so many of our boys had made belief in another life an absolute necessity, and to think that they were not dead, but still living, was a great comfort*". Friends and relatives of Fallen and of surviving scholars joined in the singing of *Rock of Ages* and *On The Resurrection Morning*, and the steadfast Mr Baddeley read the lesson.

A Grand Farewell Rally was held at Leicester's De Montfort Hall on Saturday July 19th 1924 to mark the retirement of Mr A.H. Baddeley J.P., after 35 unbroken years Headship of the School. Sometimes described as the scene of "*the final gathering under Mr Baddeley's supervision*", possibly implying "of the social sort", September 30th 1924 is suggested elsewhere as the likely date of his official retirement. Either way, by June 1924 it was calculated that almost 9,000 children had attended the School during Mr Baddeley's time in office, while the July Rally drew a company of some 800 former scholars, past and present teachers, and friends, under the Chairmanship of Alderman Alfred Hill. Presentations to the retiring Head were made by Mrs Amy Cole and Mr Fred G. Cleal; two of the youngsters admitted to the School on its opening day. Donations to the Presentation Fund had been received from Canada, India, Australia, and California, and from all parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr Baddeley was, of course, the initial recipient of the sackfuls of Old Boys' letters that soon found their way into *The Leicester Daily Post*. The first of my current selection, from *The Post* of Friday August 27th 1915, is from a member of the R.F.A. who, for the moment at least, seems to be enjoying his war; -

IMPRESSIONS OF THE WAR

We have had a warm time at ***** after a terrific bombardment, the nature of which is beyond my description. The shells dropped like showers of meteors and the deafening roar was the nearest approach to Inferno that I hope I shall get. We charged the trenches and, considering

the condition of things, it was really marvellous how so many of us escaped. But we managed it all right and the position is ours. Do you know that I firmly believe that we are endowed with double gifts when in action - double sight, double energy, and double strength? When we get at it we cease to be mere men: we are supermen!

You asked me for some of my impressions of the war. It is difficult to put them into words, but I must confess to a feeling of rottenness when going into action. All sorts of thoughts flash through one's mind. But when you are in action, then the tiger comes in. It is infectious and its an interesting psychological study to see how nature changes. I have heard our officers shout with delirious expressions not to be found in the dictionary, at the effect of our shells. Man for man we can beat the Hun. If it were possible to get face-to-face with them we could make them fly. By face-to-face I mean war like the olden days when one army advanced to meet the other. But in this war it is the machine and not the man. So speed up with the machines and equip us equal to our enemy, and then the end will be in sight!

A letter from a member of a Guards Regiment, published in *The Post* the previous month gives a vividly contrasting perspective. Here is a historian in the making, perhaps, whose knowledge of the accoutrements of earlier conflicts - helmets and breastplates etc., was captured in song: -

ANCIENT METHODS OF WARFARE

It is surprising how the enemy know what is going on among us. They know the regiments opposing them in the trenches and it is quite common to hear them shout out "Hello Guards" and "Come on Gordons", etc. Some time ago we took a trench and found only a few Germans there. "You are twenty-four hours too late" said one of the prisoners to me. When you read in the papers that "hand-to-hand fighting occurred", don't run away with the idea that a sort of boxing show took place. It means that the distance between the two opposing forces was so near that bombs could be thrown by hand. Bomb throwing is quite a feature in this war and in fact, ancient forms of warfare are rapidly coming into use again. Soon we shall be like the warrior of the song "Be I clad in casquet or cuirass wear".

Finally, lines from one whose unit is unspecified but with whom we might readily sympathise, having recently endured conditions not unlike his own, albeit, for us, without resort to the antipyretic preparations or their ostensibly enticing derivatives; "worm chocolate" and "worm candy". *The Leicester Daily Post*; Tuesday June 5th 1917: -

SALONIKA IN SEASON

Today - 1st May, is the day that malaria-bearing mosquitoes officially commence to "mosquito"; that is to say, on which the malaria season begins. It is most extraordinary, the number of precautions a man must take. No man must walk about with his shirt collar undone; the wristbands of the shirt are to have two extra buttons, and shirt sleeves are to be rolled up. Men on night duty are to smear the exposed parts of their body with kerosene oil, and all men must sleep under a net. Quinine becomes a daily issue. What with quinine, aspirin, phenacetin, and calomel, I feel like a drug store. Present temperature, 102.4; - not the sun's; but mine!

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

Friday 18th September 2020

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