

THE TIGER



Coalville War Memorial

**THE NEWSLETTER OF
THE LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND BRANCH
OF THE
WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION
ISSUE 109 – DECEMBER 2020**

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

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

With all our efforts to lay wreaths at both the Menin Gate, Ypres, and the Cenotaph in London falling foul of ongoing lockdown restrictions, Valerie & I were forced to spend a very un-traditional Armistice Day in Leicester, for the first time in over 20 years. Thankfully our additional Branch wreath was laid in Oakham, with Brian Smith and Peter Orpin able to make arrangements to pay a personal visit to the Town Memorial following a limited Official Service on Remembrance Sunday. I know other members and readers paid personal tributes on both Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day, which I'm certain were very much appreciated.

The cancellation of many of the proposed commemorations was a great disappointment to many, including the good people of Coalville, where the recently restored Memorial Clock Tower (featured as our cover photograph) now includes new wreath holders at its base, designed to allow up to 56 wreaths to be placed. Unveiled on 31st October 1925, additional wing walls were raised to accommodate the addition of the names of the fallen of World War II, with fatalities from Korea, Cyprus and Iraq also remembered. The Restoration work had taken just over two years to complete after a structural survey raised considerable concern and was predominantly financed by grants from the National Lottery (£54,000) and War Memorials Trust (£30,000).



Despite the enforced absence of the living, there was no lack of local effort to remember the dead and I am grateful to Graham Flatt for his photographs of a display at the village of Sileby, shown above, with silhouettes of a soldier, a military nurse and, tied on a lead to the railings beside a blanket of purple poppies plus dog, representing the fallen animals, all forming part of the tribute. Other local Remembrance photographs appear on Page 12.

With news of potential Coronavirus vaccines appearing more positive by the day, let us hope that some sort of normality can be restored early in 2021 and our Branch Meetings and other activities can resume as before and we can, once again, collectively remember “the lads”.

Stay safe and well until we can all meet again.

D.S.H.



SINT MAARTEN
A Patron Saint of Soldiers
(Also of beggars, wool-weavers, tailors, vintners,
innkeepers and geese!)
by
Valerie Jacques



Many of you will be aware that for the first time in 14 consecutive years our annual Armistice Tour to the Battlefields of Flanders did not take place due, of course, to this ghastly pandemic. Everyone concerned was understandably disappointed but at least we had our memories of tours past over which to reminisce at this recent Remembrance-tide. As well as traversing the cemeteries, sites and memorials of the Salient, and taking part in the various Armistice Day commemorations at, and near, the magnificent Menin Gate, many of our travellers have been surprised by an additional ceremony culminating in the Grote Markt of Ypres during the early evening of 10th November. This is the celebration of a much revered Saint - *Sint Maarten* (Saint Martin) and, for any onlookers, it certainly proves to be a most colourful spectacle. Indeed, we have to take great care in choosing our return route from our day out on the battlefields as many of the roads leading into the centre of Ypres are closed off, and marshalled, in preparation.



Upon this eve the children, especially, take great delight in participating in paper lantern processions around the streets of Ypres whilst singing traditional songs and having a wonderful time. The festivities are headed up by a man supposedly dressed as the saint although he actually resembles St. Nicholas! He rides a white horse and is accompanied by his trusty, but mischievous helper, *Zwarte Piet* (Black Pete). Lots of sweets, chocolates, baked bread men and other delicacies are consumed and an edible surprise will be awaiting each of us at the hotel! There is always much laughter and jollity and, once home, gifts are

exchanged in much the same way as at Christmas, for tomorrow is not only Armistice Day but also Saint Martin's Day! This year, however, things have been very different as the locals of Ypres, as has the whole of Belgium, received similar instructions to ourselves to "stay at home"!

It was in Savaria, Pannonia (now Szombathely, Hungary), around A.D. 316, that Martin entered the world as the son of a Roman Tribune of the Imperial Horse Guard. He grew up in Ticinum, (now Pavia, Italy) and, at the age of ten, decided to become a Christian. Christianity had only been made a "legal" religion three years earlier and permission was promptly refused by his father. By the age of fifteen, and as the son of a veteran officer, he joined an Ala (Roman Cavalry Unit) and within three years he was sent to Samarobriua, Gaul (now Amiens, France). It was there, whilst on horseback, that he met a starving man begging alms at the city gates. Moved by an inbuilt deep compassion, he took his sword and split his red woollen cloak into two and gave half to the beggar. The next night he had a dream in which he saw Jesus surrounded by angels wearing his half-cloak and came to the realization that he must devote his life to Christ.



He found military duty more and more incompatible with his Christian faith and became what we would today recognise as a conscientious objector. He was imprisoned for refusing to fight, having been accused of cowardice, and was eventually released from military service. Having now declared his vocation he made his way to Caesarodunum (now Tours, France) and became a disciple of Hilary of Poitiers. He travelled and preached widely and is described as a kind man who later began a life of quiet simplicity and lived as a hermit before again resuming his travels.

In AD 371, Martin was acclaimed Bishop of Tours, a position he accepted reluctantly. He was so unwilling that he'd hid in a stable which happened to house a flock of geese. Their inevitable honking and hissing eventually gave away his hiding place and, following his appointment, he withdrew from the city to live in Marmoutier where, in order to have a secluded place to escape attention, he founded a monastery which faced Tours from the opposite shore of the River Loire. Despite his preference for reclusiveness he was an extremely popular figure and, due to his earlier travels and connections with other countries in Europe, he is considered to be a spiritual bridge across much of the continent. He died in Candes-Saint-Martin, Gaul, France, in 397 and was buried in a small grove outside of Tours.

Incidentally, St. Martin's remaining piece of cloak ("cappa" in Latin and from where our words chapel and chaplain have their origins) became a sacred relic and was preserved, in Marmoutier Abbey, Tours, in what was known as The Cappella. In the 6th century the mediaeval King Clovis I of the Franks took St. Martin as his patron and since then the observance of the day has been followed. Always accompanied by a priest as its caretaker, the half-cloak was carried into battle as a banner signifying the presence of God. St. Martin's cloak was lost during the French Revolution when the Abbey was destroyed. His tomb, however, survived and was re-housed in the Basilica of St. Martin of Tours, France.



St. Martin is one of many Patron Saints of Soldiers or, in his particular case, Infantrymen. He is also a Patron Saint of beggars (because of the sharing of his cloak), wool-weavers and tailors (again because of his cloak), vintners and innkeepers (as his feast falls just after the late grape harvest) and geese (as they gave away his hiding place and because their migration coincides with his feast). Roast goose has since traditionally been eaten on St. Martin's Day supposedly to punish the birds for their betrayal! Additionally he is a Patron Saint of France, his popularity being much renewed during The Great War and, when the Armistice was signed on St. Martin's Day, the French saw it as a sign of his intercession in the affairs of their country.

It certainly appears to be no coincidence that the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month was chosen in 1918. Other wars and conflicts have also ended with treaties signed on this significant day e.g. The Treaty of Zsitva -Torok in 1606; The Canandaigua Treaty in 1794 and The Treaty of Sinchula in 1865. Some suggest that those who have historically sought to bring an end to hostilities on St. Martin's Day, also known as Martinmas, revealed their own ancient heritage, steeped in the Catholicism which, for all practical purposes, built European civilisation once Rome fell . . .

Photographs courtesy of Vanessa Vandaele, Ypres

**EDWARD GEORGE HONEY
AND THE TWO MINUTES SILENCE
(PART II)
by Lynn Roffee**

Edward George Honey (shown right) is officially recognised by the Australian Government as the man responsible for the “Two Minutes Silence”. Others recount the role played by South African businessman Sir Percy Kirkpatrick. The story continues . . .



On 7th Nov 1919 The Times published a press statement issued by Buckingham Palace:-

**KING'S CALL TO HIS PEOPLE
TWO MINUTES PAUSE FROM WORK**

To all my people,

Tuesday next, November 11, is the first anniversary of the armistice, which stayed the world-carnage of the four preceding years, and marked the victory of right and freedom.

I believe that my people in every part of the Empire fervently wish to perpetuate the memory of that great deliverance and of those who laid down their lives to achieve it.

To afford an opportunity for the universal expression of this feeling it is my desire and hope that at the hour when the armistice came into force, the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, there may be, for the brief space of two minutes, a complete suspension of all normal activities.

During that time, except in the rare cases where this may be impracticable, all work, all sound, and all locomotion should cease, so that in perfect stillness the thought of everyone may be concentrated on reverent remembrance of the glorious dead.

No elaborate organisation appears to be necessary.

At a given signal, which could easily be arranged to suit the circumstances of each locality, I believe that we shall all gladly interrupt our business and pleasure, whatever it may be, and unite in this simple service of silence and remembrance.

GEORGE R.I.

When Sir Percy Kirkpatrick heard the news, he said *I was so stunned by the news that I could not leave the hotel. An hour or two afterwards I received a cable from Lord Long of Wexhall saying “Thank you. Walter Long” Only then did I know that my proposal had reached the King and had been accepted and that the Cabinet knew the source.*

On 30 January 1920, Sir Percy received a letter signed by Lord Stamfordham: -

Dear Sir Percy, The King, who learns that you are shortly to leave for South Africa, desires me to assure you that he ever gratefully remembers that the idea of the Two Minute Pause on Armistice Day was due to your initiation, a suggestion readily adopted and carried out with heartfelt sympathy throughout the Empire.

*Signed
Stamfordham*

Several sources have said that both Edward Honey and Percy Kirkpatrick attended the remembrance rehearsal carried out by the Grenadier Guards at Buckingham Palace. There is no official record to confirm that Honey was present or that he was aware of the silent pause in Cape Town nor is there any evidence of the two men having met to discuss their ideas or via official communication.

Exactly when Honey became seriously ill and unable to work is not known, but he was admitted to the Mount Vernon Hospital, Northwood, Middlesex where he died on 25th August 1922 at the age of 36 years. In 1926 his friend and fellow journalist, William Edward Hayter Preston, born in Newfoundpool, Leicester and later to live in Melrose Street, wrote a tribute to Honey: *He was a forgotten genius who conceived a masterpiece. He never had to strain for an effective 'story' as he thought dramatically. He talked drama. Indeed, he talked little else.*

On 8th January 1929 The Labor Daily, (Sydney NSW) ran an article headed:-

**CREATOR OF TWO-MINUTE SILENCE
LATE EDWARD GEORGE HONEY
HIS LONELY GRAVE**

Another Armistice Day came and went recently, but the lonely grave at Northwood, Middlesex (Eng) bears no tribute of worldly recognition for the man who lies buried there. One looks in vain for a tablet on which is recorded the country's respect for his genius; or public flowers of acknowledgement and remembrance; or visitors to plead against oblivion for his name; how he claimed no credit and received none; how he sank into miserable poverty and finally succumbed to tuberculosis. His tragic story has been told at length years ago.

PAYMENT FOR THE DEBT

That some sort of official recognition of Honey is inevitable, I do not for a moment doubt, writes an overseas journalist, but the Government know the facts and the people know the facts, and further delay can only spring from scepticism or indifference. Sceptics there will no doubt always be, and such as grudge tribute to a single individual for so universal an idea; but after the proofs which were published last year it is difficult to convince disinterested scepticism in this connection. And indifference is shameful. It does not of course, essentially matter whether Honey is officially recognised or not. What does matter is his conception' and that belongs to the world for all time.

On 11th November 1931, The West Australian (Perth) newspaper posted an article headed *Origin of a great idea* and referred to Honey as the *wayward journalist of Fleet Street*. It is not known why he was referred to in this way but it may have been as result of his poor judgement and

dalliance going to the races instead of to the Hydro all of those years ago. Over the years there have been several articles published in Australia relating to Honey and or his wife. Honey's wife, Amelia, known as Millie was now the subject of an article that appeared in the Northern Star (Lismore NSW) on 19th August 1937:-

WIDOW OF THE AUSTRALIAN WHO SUGGESTED THE "GREAT SILENCE"

London, July 31 (By Air Mail) (From a Special Correspondent)

The story of Mrs Edward G Honey is a reminder that London's most impressive ceremony – the "Two Minutes" Silence had an Empire origin, Australia and South Africa sharing the honour. Mrs Honey, who is the widow of the man who first suggested in England the "Two Minutes" silence on Armistice Day has just been discovered working as a door-to-door-canvasser at 30s a week. She is a slight, fair haired woman with whom life has dealt hardly since her husband's death in 1922 from tuberculosis aggravated by his war service.

LEFT WITHOUT A PENNY

Mrs Honey is a most versatile woman. She has managed a dancing school, been an interior decorator, and has had considerable business experience. "My husband, whom I adored, was ill for so long before he died that his savings had vanished and his earning capacity was gone, so I was left without a penny" she said.

"In the 15 years since his death I have managed to scrape along some – how often I wonder just how.

The last thing I want to do is to trade in on my husband's memory, or accept charity on his account.

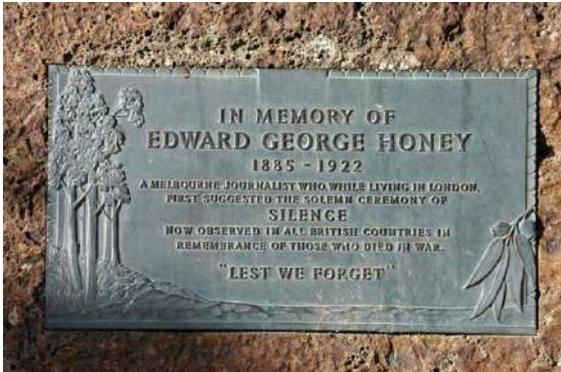
But I do feel that somewhere there must be somebody who could give me work that I could enjoy doing, as some tribute to his great idea, which has meant so much to so many people".

In 1962 The Edward George Honey Memorial Committee met in Melbourne with the purpose of getting recognition for Honey in the form of a memorial. It is unclear how this was set up but the Chairman, Eric Harding O.B.E. M.M., appears to be the initiator. Harding had also served as a Gunner in the A.I.F. in the Great War winning a Military Medal at Messines and had to have a leg amputated. He was the President of the Limbless Soldiers Association of Australia.

The Committee, comprised representation from the Premier's Department and many military organisations, had agreed that information needed to be gathered into Honey's role in the *Two Minutes Silence*. This took some time and information received from London confirmed Sir Percy had mentioned a pause having been observed daily in South Africa during the war and had submitted a suggestion to Lord Milner who had transmitted it to Lord Stamfordham. Lord Milner's letter was dated 27th October 1918, which was nearly 6 months after Honey's proposal had been published.

The Committee agreed that it must be conceded that it was through Sir Percy's representations to Lord Milner that the matter was taken up officially; thus he was entitled to the credit as the man who had the matter brought to the attention of the King for which he had received acknowledgment. The Committee also agreed that Honey hadn't received recognition for the concept and that his case was on a different basis and was not in conflict with Sir Percy's actions.

On 11th Nov 1963 the Committee agreed to proceed with the erection of a memorial plaque to Honey. The plaque was erected on a pedestal of polished granite with bluestone base on a site in the Kings Domain, Birdwood Avenue near the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne. It was unveiled by the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Leo Curtis on 7th May 1965.



The Edward George Honey Memorial, Melbourne

To add a further dimension to this narrative on 8th November 2018 the BBC ran an article titled *The Scot who began the two-minute silence*. The “Scot” turned out to be non-other than Robert Rutherford Brydon, who the BBC alleges had *the idea for the silent reflection came from a Scot who lived in South Africa during the conflict*.

In the scheme of things, it does not matter who originated the idea of the “Two Minutes Silence”, though historical facts should be recorded accurately and it is a moral obligation that the right person gets the recognition. Many people may have had the same idea about the silent reflection. Not everyone voices or writes down their thoughts; they may not have the platform to submit a worthwhile idea or have the right connections to progress it. It is perhaps status and power that drove the idea of the two-minute silence to take place. Edward George Honey didn’t have either of these. The important thing today is that we continue to honour the fallen.

Sources

Evening News, London – 8th May 1919
The Cape Times, 13th May 1918,
The Times, 7th Nov 1919
1911 UK Census
BBC Bitesize – Armistice 8th November 2018
Attestation & Discharge Papers - Ancestry.co.uk
Marriage – Ancestry.co.uk
Photo City of Melbourne
Two-minute Silence – South African Legion www.salegion.co.za
The Observation Post – South African Military History
Victorian Collections
Chronical Adelaide, 7th April 1928
The Labor Daily, Sydney 8th January 1929
The West Australian (Perth) 11th November 1931
Northern Star, Lismore, (NSW) 19th August 1937
The Argus, Melbourne, Vic Sat 10/11/1945
Australian Initiative – The Silence by Eric Harding The Canberra Times 7th November 1964
The Edward George Honey Memorial Committee - Minutes 11th November 1963
The Australian Women’s Weekly 12th November 1969
J. C. Abrahams (Tannie Mossie)
Lest we forget by M F Orford published in 126th Issue November 1961 of The Victoria Historical Magazine - slv.vic.goc.au
Wikipedia

TRULY YE ARE OF THE BLOOD
A FORGOTTEN ROYAL FATALITY
by David Humberston



***The headstone of
2nd Lt. G. FitzGeorge Hamilton***

At the rear of Warlincourt Halte British Cemetery near Saulty, a French village some 12 miles south west of Arras, stands the headstone of 2nd Lieutenant George FitzGeorge Hamilton of 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards. The records of the Commission offer no clue whatsoever to the identity of this 19-year-old fatality as no personal details are quoted. His epitaph, however, reads *Truly Ye are of the Blood* and suggests there is more to be uncovered . . .

The epitaph is the opening line of *England's Answer*, a poem written by Rudyard Kipling in 1893 in which, at least according to one source, he “*speaks of the blood ties that link the people of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa to the British Empire and lauds the qualities of the British race and the responsibilities it has assumed in the world*”. Selected by the young man’s stepfather to adorn his headstone, there is, however, a still deeper meaning to these particular words, as they actually refer to the illustrious ancestry of this young Officer.

Born in London on 30th December 1898, George Edward Archibald Augustus FitzGeorge Hamilton was the son of Sir Archibald Hamilton (son of Sir Edward Hamilton, 4th Baronet of Trebinshun House and 2nd Baronet of Marlborough House) and his first wife, Ola FitzGeorge, granddaughter of Prince George, Duke of Cambridge. Paternally his ancestry could be traced back to King James II of Scotland whilst on his mother’s side he was the great-great-great grandson of King George III.

Prince George (whose statue in Whitehall featured in October’s issue of *The Tiger* on Page 3) was born in March 1819 and, until the birth of his cousin, Victoria, two months later, was the only living legitimate grandchild of the King. Created Duke of Cambridge in 1850, Prince George was an Army Officer by profession and served as Commander in Chief of the British army between 1856 and 1895. His marriage to Sarah Fairbrother, a commoner, in 1847 contravened the 1772 Royal Marriages Act and therefore prevented his descendants inheriting the Dukedom. His youngest sister, Princess Mary Adelaide, was the mother of Princess May of Teck, the future Queen Mary.



Four Generations: Prince George of Cambridge, left, his son Sir Adolphus FitzGeorge, right, his granddaughter, Olga FitzGeorge, centre and great grandson George FitzGeorge Hamilton.

It was Mary, as Duchess of York, alongside her husband Prince George (the future King George V) and the child’s great grandfather, the Duke of Cambridge who stood as sponsors when the infant FitzGeorge Hamilton was baptised in the Chapel Royal at St James’s Palace. In 1902,

however, his parents divorced and Sir Archibald was awarded custody of his son. Young George was educated first at Hawtreys in Westgate-on-Sea and then at Winchester College, which he attended from 1912 to 1915. Following the death of his paternal grandfather that same year, FitzGeorge became heir apparent to the Hamilton baronetcies, before entering the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst in 1916.



*2nd Lieutenant
FitzGeorge Hamilton*

On 1st May 1917, FitzGeorge Hamilton was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Grenadier Guards, a Regiment in which his great-grandfather, the Duke of Cambridge, had served as a Colonel from 1862 until his death in 1904. In late 1917 FitzGeorge Hamilton departed for France and in January 1918 joined the 1st Battalion of the Regiment.

During May 1918, the Battalion was at the Front or in reserve between the villages of Alette and Bucquoy, both south of Arras, but still under threat from German artillery and aircraft. The Regimental History would later record that: *On the 17th the area occupied by the 1st Battalion near Warlincourt was subjected to a severe bombing by aircraft; Second Lieutenant W.A. Fleet and Second Lieutenant G.E.A.A. FitzGeorge Hamilton were killed, and Second Lieutenant S.J. Hargreaves and Second Lieutenant G.D. Neale were seriously wounded. The two latter never recovered from the wounds they received, and died the next day. The loss of these four keen young officers was deeply felt by the whole Battalion.* According to family legend, the four officers had departed on leave, but then returned to the village of Warlincourt to retrieve FitzGeorge Hamilton's leave pass which he had accidentally left behind

FitzGeorge was buried at Warlincourt Halte British Cemetery in Plot XII Row B Grave 6 where 2nd Lieutenant Fleet rests beside him. On 18th June 1918, a Memorial Service was held in the Chapel Royal at St James's Palace, where the young Officer had been baptised 19 years earlier. George FitzGeorge Hamilton is remembered in the Winchester College War Cloister and also on a Memorial Board at St Mary's Church in Iping, near Midhurst in West Sussex. A silver gilt communion plate, or paten, given by Sir Adolphus FitzGeorge to the Guards Chapel on Birdcage Walk in memory of his grandson, was lost when the Chapel was bombed and destroyed by a German V1 flying bomb on 18th June 1944 (ironically the 26th anniversary of the Memorial Service at the Chapel Royal).

Both of George's parents subsequently remarried, with Sir Archibald Hamilton converting to Islam before becoming a leading member of the British Union of Fascists (led by Sir Oswald Mosley) prior to his death in 1939. George's mother, Olga FitzGeorge (then Mrs Lane) died in 1929 and in her will bequeathed a gold cup presented to her son by her grandfather to the Officer's Mess of 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards. She also left the sum of £1,000 to Winchester College to establish the George FitzGeorge Hamilton Fund, to assist in the education of the children of Wykehamists (Old Boys of the College) who had fallen in the War. Unfortunately, I have been unable to find any further information regarding this legacy.

Today, the name of George FitzGeorge Hamilton may be largely forgotten, but, as his epitaph suggests *Truly Ye are of the Blood . . .*

ON THE NOTICEBOARD

LOUGHBOROUGH CALLING!

Hello Everybody,

Hope you are well and coping in these most trying of times?

We have signed up to the Charnwood Community Lottery as a 'Good Cause'. For every £1.00 spent 50p goes to your chosen good cause and 10p into a Good Cause Fund'. You have the chance of winning the weekly top prize of £25,000.00. You do not have to choose us to be the beneficiary but it is our sincere hope that you do.

We want to raise £1300.00 to pay for a Community Cabinet, a cabinet where individuals and organisations are offered the opportunity to display their collections. This will attract a wider and more diverse audience and will give organisations and individuals to show off previously unseen collections. Visit: [Charnwood Lottery](#) and choose Loughborough Carillon Tower & War Memorial Museum as your chosen good cause. There is also a link on the attached flyer.

Thank you in anticipation.

Mel Gould

Loughborough Carillon Tower & War Memorial Museum

Visit our Website at: www.carillontower.org.uk

Facebook: [Loughborough Carillon Tower & War Memorial Museum](#)

Our Instagram: [loughboroughcarillon](#)

BLOGS FOR LOCKDOWN

Branch Member Brian Fare has advised us of the titles of a number of history blogs he has created during our various lockdowns. We list the details below for our readers to enjoy and thank Brian for his welcome message.

Please see the following links:

<https://historyfare.co.uk/military-history/26-the-death-of-a-melton-ww1-ally-sloper/>

<https://historyfare.co.uk/military-history/18-anzac-gt-uncle-george-defending-the-suez/>

<https://historyfare.co.uk/military-history/11-anzac-gt-uncle-george-a-lancashire-digger/>

<https://historyfare.co.uk/military-history/08-seaman-gunner-george-edward-flint/>

<https://historyfare.co.uk/military-history/06-major-ronald-anthony-markham/>

<https://historyfare.co.uk/military-history/04-a-mech-3-william-ernest-plumb/>

<https://historyfare.co.uk/military-history/03-2nd-lt-george-howard-boorne/>

REMEMBRANCE DAY IN LOCKDOWN

With our traditional Remembrance Day commemorations prohibited, we were asked to remember in a more personal, albeit solitary, manner:



Branch Member Tony Doyle observes the “Two Minute’s Silence” on the doorstep of his home. Tony is wearing the Great War Medals of his grandfather, Charles Arthur Cank, South Staffordshire Regiment, and the Second World War Medals of his father, Desmond Doyle, Seaforth Highlanders.

A more public memorial was the “Knitted Tommy” at Syston, which received much local publicity.

Our thanks go to Richard & Anne Hardy, Lynn & Brian Roffee and Graham Flatt, who all forwarded to us photographs of this unique tribute to our fallen.

You may also have seen it featured in the National & Local Press!



A YULETIDE MISCELLANY

by Roy-Anthony Birch

Even as I write, I wonder if we shall still be in lockdown over Christmas, or indeed at any point during the extended festive season: and if so, shall we, even by then, be sure of the rules as we prepare to raise a glass. Shall we be allowed to circulate or must we sit? Might we be permitted to mingle, indiscriminately, at the bar or to “treat” a casual acquaintance, and by what time precisely must we have “drunk up”. This last question was just as contentious 100 or so years ago, often being resolved only through recourse to law under the wartime intoxicating liquor regulations.

An item in *The Daily Telegraph* of December 30th 1915 showed how the regulations occasionally placed even the soberest magistrates in a quandary; in this case, specifically, over the extent to which “extra time” might be allowable without contravening the law: -

DRINK WITH MEALS; LONDON MAGISTRATE'S DECISION

A case of considerable importance alike to licensed victuallers and the public was decided by Mr Charles Hall at Old Street Police Court yesterday; the main point being whether, under the extended licensing order, a licensee is entitled to allow a customer who has ordered a meal to consume intoxicating drink after hours, providing it is subsequent to the meal having been disposed of.

John Robert Bailey, licensee of the Trafalgar public house in Bennington Street, St. Luke's, was summoned for selling and for permitting to be consumed on his premises at 2.45 p.m. on the 14th inst., intoxicating liquor, while, in connection with the same case, Thomas Varney was summoned for consuming intoxicating liquor during prohibited hours.

Police-Sergeant Pearce said he saw Varney entering the public house at 2.40 p.m. and pick up a glass of ale and drink it. Varney, in evidence, said he worked at a builders' adjacent to the public house and, with his foreman, entered the bar at 2.15; both of them calling for bread and cheese and a glass of ale. Ten minutes later he was called away to the telephone, and picking up what remained of his bread and cheese and leaving part of the ale, he hurried away. When he returned, after 2.30 p.m., he simply drank the ale he had left; being that with which he was served a quarter of an hour before the proscribed hour for ceasing to serve intoxicants.

Mr Ricketts, the solicitor who defended the licensee, Mr Bailey, contended that bread and cheese constituted Varney's midday meal and that under the extended licensing order he - Varney, was entitled to an extra half hour in which to consume the intoxicating drink ordered with the meal. The Magistrate said he had some difficulty coming to a decision. But he thought the new licensing powers cast upon the licensee the duty of ensuring that the intoxicating liquor was consumed with the meal. In this case it was clear that the meal was finished at 2.30., because Varney took away what remained and the landlady removed the plate.

This seemed to the Magistrate to be an infraction of the regulations. If it were not so, a person might go away for three or four hours and on returning, demand drink he had previously ordered. This case was hard on the defendants, and the Magistrate thought it would be met by ordering them simply to pay the costs. He hoped it would be understood, however, by other licensed victuallers in the neighbourhood, that the regulations would be enforced in a very strict way if other cases came before the Court. The case against Bailey for permitting the sale of intoxicating drink during prohibited hours was dismissed.

The licensing laws had been decidedly liberal before the War, with pubs permitted to operate at any time between 5.30 a.m. and 12.30 a.m. on the following morning; Sundays excepted. By 1915, however, far stricter limits had been imposed, opening being confined to between noon and 2.30 p.m. and 6.30 until 9.30 p.m. in urban centres, with local authorities being empowered to vary (closing time in Leicester was generally 9 p.m.), as were the military authorities, in garrison towns especially. The issue here seemed to rest on the extent to which Varney was seeking to bend the rules to his advantage; to “pull a fast one”, we might say, in resuming his drink after, rather than alongside, his lunchtime repast. But the magistrate may himself have been imbued with the Christmas spirit, giving both parties the benefit of the doubt while issuing a stern warning to any that might follow not to do likewise, lest the law itself be deemed “an ass”.

The ever-ardent Bishop of London, The Right Reverend Arthur Foley Winnington-Ingram, featured in my November 2020 “TIGER” article on W.C. Pell, had his own typically forthright rebuff to the bottle; exhorting the nation to follow the example of their King in abstaining from both grape and grain for the duration. I quote from his letter to the Editor of *The Times* published on December 24th 1915: -

DRINK OR WAR LOAN; A SUGGESTION FOR THE NEW YEAR.

Sir; No thinking man can disregard your leading article of Monday last, regarding national economy. And yet, on looking into his daily habits, the ordinary citizen may easily be puzzled to see where he is to save.

Even if he finds he has too large a purse and would cheerfully change it for a smaller, it is not easy to effect the exchange in time of war. He can cut down his meals to two courses, and ought to have done so from the beginning of the war. Yet there is one tremendous item in the national expenditure which he can help to diminish, and that is the £160m spent on drink. Even if £50m could be taken off this expenditure and invested in War Loan, it would appreciably help towards what every patriotic citizen ought to be set upon. And that, is winning the War.



*The Right Reverend
Arthur Foley
Winnington-Ingram*

Up to their waists by day and night in cold and muddy water and at the risk of their very lives, our gallant comrades guard their country's honour and safeguard the freedom of the world. Many who remain at home are asking Is there no sacrifice I can make which will cost me something but may help to shorten the War for them, and save some of their lives? And the answer lies in this simple resolution. Unless told by the doctor that it will endanger health or retard recovery to do so, I will resolve this Christmas to drink no alcohol whatever until the end of the War, and will give what I save to the starving Serbian or Armenian or Belgian refugees or invest it in War Loan.

Men who return from the Front and from all that this implies, are often surprised to find the old comfortable life at home so little changed, and wonder whether, even after a year and a half of war and with the end not yet in sight, the nation really takes the conflict seriously. It will not have escaped notice that during the first six months of this year, the nation spent on drink £88,084,000 as opposed to £80,154,000 in the first six months of 1914. I think that the wearing of 40 million war pledges of the type that now lies before me and can be supplied for its cost price of 1d. by the Church of England Temperance Society might convince them more than anything, that the whole nation was at last in earnest.

For all that the Bishop was clearly at one with “the men”, “*up to their waists*” etc., one wonders whether his sympathies would have extended to their field officers at least; similarly quagmired, though often far better connected. Rather less restraint here at times, or confinement to just two courses, with Fortnum & Mason hampers satisfying most upper-crust palates. Foie gras and preserved ginger, with caviar, old brandy and champagne, were among the delights served at a large dinner party attended by Lieutenant Raymond Asquith of 3rd Bn. Grenadier Guards, while serving in France in early November 1915. Christmas 1915 was no holiday, however, for the Prime Minister’s eldest son.

I quote from his letter to his wife Katherine (née Horner) of 21st December:-



*Lieutenant
Raymond Asquith*

We had a better time in the trenches this last two days – nowhere much to sleep, but fine weather and a certain amount of liveliness. We had about a dozen casualties from rifle fire and at last the Bosche succeeded in putting a shell right into the trench, which damaged three men pretty badly. The company on my immediate right suffered much more and lost about two dozen men during the bombardment - largely their own fault as they went into dug-outs which are more death-traps when high explosives are going over, instead of standing in the trench and taking their chance. But being only a line regiment, I suppose they didn’t know any better. One of the trenches held was called “the Duck’s Bill” and ran straight out from our general line towards the Germans, about 70 yards distant. The Germans have mines on both sides of it and we have counter-mines from which dirty looking engineers occasionally come blinking up into daylight, plastered with bright blue clay. I spent a good deal of time trying to spot Germans working on the parapet opposite and then getting one of our machine guns moved along the trench and loosing off 50 rounds at them in about five seconds. We get two or three of them that way. It keeps the men amused.

Yesterday afternoon, the Germans began firing rifle grenades into the Duck’s Bill. The grenade explodes like a bomb, only much more violently when it touches the ground. The men get very excited when one of these duels is going on, and swear and sweat horribly. It is almost the only fun they get in the trenches, poor dears.

We now know that Christmas 1915 was to be Raymond’s last, as it was for so very many in the cauldrons of Verdun and The Somme etc. Yet something approaching optimism was suggested in *The Times*’ correspondent’s dispatch from France published on 26th December 1916: -

CHRISTMAS SEASON AT THE FRONT; MISTLETOE ON THE GUNS

So far as the weather is concerned, there is no desire on the Western Front for “a good old-fashioned Christmas”. For in the mild and sunny weather now following yesterday’s gale, lies the best possibility of comfort that the season is likely to afford. Wherever possible - in hospitals and billets and in thousands of messes along the Front, the spirit of festivity, generally taking the form of something extra good to eat, is not to be denied, and the very guns themselves are sometimes decked with incongruous holly and mistletoe. In all their instinctive efforts to keep the feast, troops are boosted by the marvelous Army organisation and the generosity of countless friends and Societies at home who may rest assured that their kindnesses can never be bestowed with greater blessing than they are on the wintry fields of France.

The Campaign itself has no concern with Christmas, but goes grimly on to its appointed and inevitable end. Our trench raids, each seeming so unimportant in official communiqués, aggregate a formidable minor offensive. They are pursued systematically all along the line, yielding a steady increase of prisoners and information. What the Germans seem to desire above all is to be let alone and not to provoke us to the kind of activity which they feel may break out against them at any moment. Thus, while greater things are preparing, our raids and patrols continue and our guns unceasingly probe the areas behind the German lines wherever work and consolidation are being attempted.

A passage from a German infantry officer's letter affords a singularly clear instance of the change in the average German soldier's attitude towards us. Even a year ago, their pre-occupation was with what they were doing or were going to do to us. Now, it is with what we are doing or may be going to do to them. Dated Beaumont 12/11/1916 it reads: -

"Yesterday was a critical day. From morning 'til night, the enemy's artillery was hammering away at our trenches, which were almost flattened. Thank God; not a single company dug-out has been blown in. But all three entrances to my dug-out were blocked up and I have had them cleared again today. From the violence of the enemy's bombardment we may presume that another infantry attack is impending. If only it had begun already, so that this drumming might at last cease! At the end of this month we are to be relieved and to go into a quieter part of the line. By then, we shall perhaps be already drowned in the mud. *The Breslau General Advertiser* that usually can only talk of our "splendid airmen", who in reality don't put in an appearance, and of our "splendid artillery", which in reality doesn't shoot, utters the truth in its issue of November 8th, in its article entitled IN THE MUD OF PICARDY.

I had just to break off writing and, like a fugitive, seek a hero's cellar next to my dug-out. For the Swine [the Brits.] were bombarding with heavy guns. One day during the fortnight that we have yet to be here, they will certainly knock the place in, and if I am not inside, my belongings at least will be lost".

This is not the letter of a coward. But for that very reason, the evidence it affords of the changing point of view to which I have referred is the more striking. Consider this change as taking place not in an individual but in an army. Then you will see this as one of the results of the Anglo-French offensive of the second half of 1916.

Finally, from *The Daily Telegraph* of December 30th 1915, I offer something which at this distance, I suggest, sounds a lighter note: -

CAROL SINGER SHOT

At Newcastle yesterday, John Nixon, farmer, of Wylam, was remanded on bail charged with wounding James Clark by shooting him. It was alleged that, at about one o'clock on Christmas morning, a number of young men went to the defendant's farm; singing. Nixon, apparently annoyed, came out of doors, and one of the young men wished him the compliments of the season. The defendant retorted "I will Merry Christmas you", and immediately afterwards there was a report from a gun and Clark was struck by a bullet. The wounded man was too ill to appear at the court yesterday.

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*

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 11th December 2020

“We very much value your continued support”

EXPLORE, LEARN, SHARE