

THE TIGER



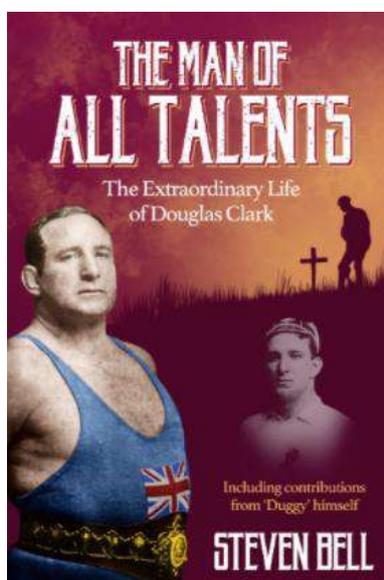
*The unveiling ceremony of the Memorial Plaque to
Prince Maurice of Battenberg
at Broodseinde, near Zonnebeke on 25th October 2020*

**THE NEWSLETTER OF
THE LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND BRANCH
OF THE
WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION
ISSUE 111 – FEBRUARY 2021**

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

Welcome again, Ladies and Gentlemen, to *The Tiger* and a belated *Happy New Year* to all our readers. With lockdown restrictions still in force and new variants of Covid continuing to appear, the return of our “normal” activities appears as far away as ever although I am delighted to report that, to the best of my knowledge, our Members and Readers remain fit and well in these difficult times.

Faced with the prospect of yet more shredding or emptying yet another long-neglected cupboard, the opportunity to read or research as an alternative holds considerable appeal. I was therefore grateful to Captain Bob Allen of the Royal Tigers Association for forwarding a link to the latest edition of the Regimental Journal, the *Green Tiger*, which can be viewed on the Regiment's website www.royalleicestershireregiment.org.uk. Readers may be interested to know a considerable archive of the journal, dating from 1904 to the present day, can also be found on this site, which may be of interest to those with “Tigers” amongst their ancestors.



Another recent publication that may appeal is “The Man of All Talents” by Steven Bell, a biography of rugby league and wrestling legend Douglas Clark. A member of Huddersfield's Rugby League “Team of All Talents” in 1914/15, Clark joined the Army the following year, being seriously wounded by shrapnel from an exploding shell as well as being badly gassed at Passchendaele.

Awarded a Military Medal for his bravery, Clark was discharged with a 20% Disability Certificate yet rebuilt his life and returned to prominence in both the sports he loved. The author, using Clark's journals and war diaries, presents the inspiring story of a humble man whose exploits will be of interest to sports fans and military historians alike. The book is available from Pitch Publishing Ltd at a price of £12.99, but can also be obtained via the usual internet sources.

The coming year will doubtless present as many challenges as its predecessor and, as we approach the first anniversary of our last Branch Meeting, let us hope the proposed programme of mass vaccinations can be quickly fulfilled and some sort of liberty restored. In the meantime, another cupboard beckons . . .

Stay safe until we can meet again

D.S.H.



CONNECTIONS & TANGENTS

by
Valerie Jacques



“ . . . And in after years, if you would blame his sadness, he was used to say,
It's dull in our town since my playmates left!
I can't forget that I'm bereft of all the pleasant sights they see
Which the Piper promised me.”

At what may have been a very different and busy festive period I hope that many of you managed to find a little time to read, or at least thumb through, the latest newsletter from The Friends of St George's which was emailed to most of you on 28th December. If so, you may have noticed the extract from one of Robert Browning's poems – *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* – on the back cover (also shown above).

The St George's newsletter editor, Derek Gallagher, who is also Vice Chairman of The Friends, has kindly advised me that he was inspired to include it one afternoon when he had a flashback of his mother quoting the poem to him as a child. It was one of her favourites and the portion he chose seemed to exactly sum up the scene in the centre of Ypres at 10:45 on Armistice Day - totally bereft of all the usual hustle and bustle of the morning without Poppy Parade, marching bands, groups, spectators and only six people allowed under the Menin Gate accompanied by just one bugler and a piper who played a lament. I agree with Derek that the poem's words sum up the scenes in many of our cities, towns and villages as this pandemic continues. Returning now to the title of this article, you may well be wondering what else this could possibly have to do with The Great War and how it will eventually lead us to Operation Chastise . . .

You'd be right to assume that one of the connections would, of course, be rats. In 1284 the town of Hamelin, in Lower Saxony, was overrun by rats as indeed were the trenches of the Western Front. Unlike the unparalleled bravery of the pipers who climbed out of those trenches, unarmed, to face machine guns and shells, the Pied Piper, employed as Hamelin's rat catcher, was able to lure them away by magic. But when a dispute occurred over his fee he led the children out of the town and none were ever seen again . . . A comparison also, perhaps, with a “lost generation” – the children of Hamelin and the lost youth of the War?



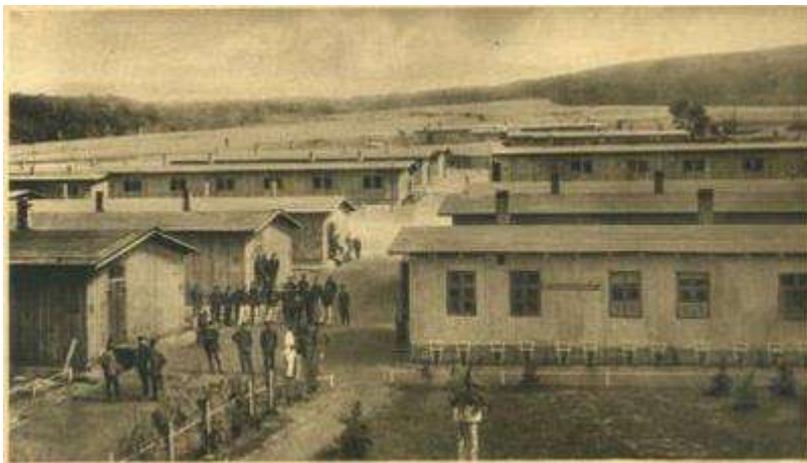
Viktor Dyk in 1917

Over the years, the legend of the Pied Piper has led to many, many stories, plays and poems including Browning's, published in 1842, noted for its humour, wordplay and style of rhyme. The legend also led to Viktor Dyk's darker and enigmatic short novel, *Krysař (The Rat Catcher)*, published in 1915. Dyk was born in the Kingdom of Bohemia in 1877 and his family moved to its capital, Prague, in 1904. A nationalist Czech poet, prose writer, playwright and political writer, he was imprisoned in Vienna in 1916 and 1917 for suggesting that the Margraviate of Moravia and the Kingdom of Bohemia could secede from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In May 1917 Dyk was one the signatories of the Manifesto of Czech Writers, an important

document designed to encourage the Czech deputies of the Imperial Council in Vienna to support Czech self-determination. In 1918, following the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Bohemia and Moravia would join Slovakia to create Czechoslovakia and Dyk was a co-founder of the Czechoslovak National Democratic Party. Dyk's birthplace, Bohemia, is also of possible additional interest to our story . . .

Bohemia came under the rule of the Habsburgs in 1526 but the suppression of Protestantism in Bohemia in the early 17th Century led to the outbreak of what became known as The 'Thirty Years' War in 1618. The Habsburg monarch, Ferdinand II, was replaced by Elector Frederick V of the Electorate of the Palatinate, whose wife was Elizabeth Stuart, daughter of King James I of England. Defeated in battle in 1620, the reign of Frederick and Elizabeth was only brief, leading to the soubriquets of "Winter King" and "Winter Queen". Elizabeth was also the sister of the executed King Charles I and one of her sons, Prince Rupert, fought for his uncle in the English Civil War. *Rupert's Gateway* in Leicester is a reminder of the Prince's presence in the town during the Siege of Leicester in 1645.

The era of Hamelin's greatest prosperity began in 1664 when the town became a fortified border town of the Principality of Calenberg. In 1705, it became part of the newly created Electorate of Hanover, ruled by George Louis, the Prince of Calenberg, who, in 1714, through his descent from his Stuart grandmother, the above-mentioned "Winter Queen" became King George I of Great Britain. He was, in turn, a direct ancestor of 17 of the German monarchs and Grand Dukes who were deposed in the aftermath of the Great War. Included in that number was the Kaiser's son-in-law, Ernest Augustus, Duke of Brunswick, grandson of the last King of Hanover before its annexation by Prussia in 1867.



Hamelin POW Camp 1915

During the War, located two kilometres from Hamelin, was a POW camp, a *Mannschafts-lager* for Enlisted Men - private soldiers and NCOs. Active from 1827, it became the parent camp of many other work camps in the surrounding area but situated to the south was a possibly more familiar named POW camp - Holzminden. Opened in

September 1917 for British and Empire Officers (Offizier Gefangenenlager), it was notorious for its tight security with its Commandant, Karl Niemeyer, boasting that Holzminden was escape-proof. However, during the night of 23rd/24th July 1918, 29 officers did manage to escape through a tunnel, dug over eight months using only cutlery and bowls, under the very noses of heavily armed guards. 86 officers had originally been on the list of escapees but, on the night, as the thirtieth man approached, the tunnel suffered a partial collapse which led to the abandonment of the enterprise. 19 men were caught but ten managed to evade recapture and reached Holland on foot before making their way back to Blighty. Holzminden is remembered for this remarkable, and the largest, "Great Escape of the Great War".

In total 573 British & Empire prisoners (54 Officers and 519 other ranks) escaped during the War. Those who did were a small, select group of the 192,848 POWs held in Germany. Amongst the Holtzminden Escape Artists were: Captain David Grey RFC, 2nd Lt Cecil Blain RFC, 2nd Lt Caspar Kennard RFC, Lt Col Charles Rathborne RNAS, and 2nd Lt James Bennett RNAS. In WW2 Bennett was secretly employed by *MI9* as a lecturer giving RAF pilots the benefit of his valuable experience and advice on how to attempt escape if captured. Many of the most remarkable escapes, including those from Colditz and Stalag Luft III, bear many echoes of Holtzminden and other Great War breakouts. (N.B. If you would like to read more of this, a thoroughly recommended book for these long lockdown days is: *“The Escape Artists: a Band of Daredevil Pilots and the Greatest Prison Breakout of WWI”* by Neal Bacsomb – published in 2018 it retails at £20.00 but is only £7.99 from PostScript Books - £16.00 from Amazon!)

Returning now to Hamelin itself. The town is situated on the banks of the largest river situated solely in Germany – The River Weser - which begins its 282 mile journey to the North Sea at the confluence of two other rivers, the Fulda and the Werra. The main tributary of the Fulda is the Eder upon which can be found a large reservoir, the Edersee, which was held back by the Edersee Dam. Built between 1908 and 1914, its 48-metre-high walls held back 199,300,000 cubic metres of water and it was one of the three



The Eder Dam 17th May 1943

attacked by No. 617 Squadron on the eve of 16th/17th May 1943 using a purpose-built bouncing bomb designed by Barnes Wallis who, during the Great War honed his career at Vickers on the development of early aeroplanes and airships. (More of Wallis’ story can be found in “Tiger 44” in an article entitled *“Severed from the Earth with Fleeting Wing”*). The innovative bomb was carried by Avro’s mighty four-engined workhorse, the Lancaster Bomber, which, coincidentally, has just celebrated its 80th birthday!



If anyone did not receive their emailed copy of the Friends of St George’s newsletter on 28th Dec, and/or you would like a physical copy sending by post, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Email: foft@live.co.uk

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**THE FRIZELLE FAMILY OF
BALLYCASTLE, COUNTY MAYO
(PART II)
by Michael Nugent**

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REPRODUCED WITH THEIR KIND PERMISSION*

One other brother however, served in the Great War and survived.

Sergeant George Henry Herbert Frizelle 13739, Royal Engineers

George Henry Herbert Frizelle was born on Friday 5 March 1886 at Newtown Cloghans, Ballina, Co Mayo. He was John and Caroline's third son. Shortly after his 18th birthday on 21 April 1904, George enlisted in the Royal Engineers at Athlone. He initially enlisted for three years with a further nine years on the Army Reserve and was issued with the service number 13739. On enlistment, George gave his occupation as a Telegraphist and although there is no unit mentioned on his service record, it is likely that he was posted to one of the Engineer's Signal units. In May 1905, George extended his service to eight years with the colours and the following year was awarded a first Good Conduct Badge. In 1910, George was attached to 2nd Cable Telegraph Company and in January of that year was appointed as an unpaid Lance Corporal. After a month however, George reverted to the rank of Sapper at his own request. Two years later in February 1912, George again extended his period of service, this time to 12 years. The following month, he was promoted Lance Corporal, this time retaining the rank.

In January 1914, whilst attached to K Signal Company RE, George made a successful application to be transferred to the Army Reserve, most likely due to an offer of employment and he left the Regular Army on 17 January 1914. George's time as a civilian was however, short-lived and the day after the outbreak of war on 5 August 1914, George was mobilized for active service at Aldershot. As so many men were coming forward to enlist, anyone with previous military service was highly regarded and he was appointed to his previous rank of Lance Corporal on mobilization. Nine days later, George embarked for France with the British Expeditionary Force.

George remained in France for only three months, returning to the United Kingdom and being posted to the Royal Engineers Signals Depot at Fenny Stratford, Buckinghamshire in the rank of Corporal.⁽⁸⁾ George remained at the Royal Engineers Signals Depot as an Instructor for the remainder of the war, an indication that he was highly skilled at his trade. He also became a Drill Instructor at the Depot when he was promoted to the rank of Sergeant in July 1916.

As George had been mobilized for the duration of the war, following the Armistice, he was eligible for demobilization. George was transferred to Class Z Army reserve on demobilisation on 31 March 1919. Class Z meant that he could be recalled to duty if Germany failed to adhere to the peace treaty. He was finally discharged from his military obligations on 31 March 1920. Having completed just short of 15 years military service, George's military character on demobilization as described as Exemplary. On demobilization, he gave his address as The Glen, Ballycastle, Co. Mayo.

In May 1920, George gained employment with the Post Office as a Skilled Workman and later that year married Maud Elizabeth Tomlinson at East Retford, Nottinghamshire, an area where he remained until his death in 1968 at the age of 82.

Sergeant Frederick John Frizelle 59994, Royal Irish Constabulary

John and Caroline's second son, Frederick John was born at Ballina, County Mayo on 15 May 1881. He was employed in the Drapery business before following his father into the ranks of the Royal Irish Constabulary, being appointed on 1 February 1901 with the service number 59994.

Records indicate that Frederick was initially stationed at Brown Square station which is just off what is now Millfield, close to Belfast City Centre. This was the Headquarters station of what was the RIC's Belfast C District. The other stations in the District being Antrim Road, Craven Street, Leopold Street, Ligoniel and Shankill Road. As a Headquarters station situated between the Shankill and Falls Roads, Brown Square would have been a very busy posting.

Frederick remained at Brown Square until August 1912 when he was posted to Magherafelt. This posting would have been influenced by his impending marriage, as RIC policy was again to post officers away from areas where close relatives resided. On Wednesday 6 November 1912, Frederick married Elizabeth McKee at St Andrews Church of Ireland, Belfast.⁽⁹⁾ Elizabeth was from Burnaby Street, Belfast, her father Andrew was a Publican and her mother Jane was a Grocer.⁽¹⁰⁾

Following the marriage, the couple set up home at Garden Street in Magherafelt. Magherafelt was again a Headquarters Station supporting outstations at Ballyronan, Bellaghy, Castledawson, Draperstown, Gulladuff, Innisrush, Maghera and Moneymore. On 13 September 1913, the couple had a daughter, Caroline Winifred, born at the family home in Magherafelt. Unfortunately, the little girl died of burns received in an accident at her home on 8 June 1916 when she was aged 2.⁽¹¹⁾

Following the death, Frederick and Elizabeth remained resident at Garden Street, records indicating that Frederick was also a member of Masonic Lodge 532, based at Curran on the outskirts of the town. On 1 July 1921, Frederick was promoted to the rank of Sergeant. Records indicate that he was most likely posted to the RIC station at Ballyronan, on the shores of Lough Neagh.

During the Irish War of Independence, the IRA waged a savage war against any entity supporting the British Government. Chief among these, and frequent targets were the officers and men of the Royal Irish Constabulary, the visible manifestation of British rule in Ireland. Many barracks, mainly in isolated areas were attacked and officers targeted both on and off duty. This campaign had the intent of discouraging Irish men from joining the force and the more subtle consequence of increasing support for the IRA as murders of Police Officers were often followed by reprisals which frequently targeted the guilty and innocent alike.

On the evening of Wednesday 3 May 1922, Frederick was on patrol in Ballyronan at around 10.30 pm. He was accompanied by Special Constables Thomas Hunter aged 22 and Edward Hegarty, aged 20. Three men came up behind the Police officers who turned and commented on the weather as they stepped aside to let them past. As they drew level, the men fired a number of shots fatally wounding the two Special Constables, one of whom managed to return fire.

Frederick was seriously wounded by a gunshot wound to the abdomen and managed to run to the Police Station to raise the alarm. The attack appears to have been a concerted one as reinforcements summonsed from Antrim came under sustained gunfire in an ambush near Castledawson, and a further ambush took place between Castledawson and Toome in the early hours of the following morning.

Frederick was taken to the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast, where he passed away on the evening of 4 May. His funeral left from his father-in-law's home at 229 Grosvenor Road, Belfast to Belfast City Cemetery. Following Frederick's murder, Elizabeth was awarded a widow's pension of £119-11-08 annually.

SINN FEIN WAR ON ULSTER

THREE VILE MURDERS.

Cowardly Attack on Derry Police Patrol.

SERIES OF AMBUSHES.

The fifth, sixth, and seventh murders of the present rebel campaign in Ulster were committed on Wednesday night in South Derry, when three police were shot under circumstances bearing the stamp of the Tipperary or Cork gunmen. The police casualties since Wednesday are five dead and seven wounded.

The cowardly and vile attack, which was of a type only too common in the South before the "truce," was made about 10.30 p.m. at Ballyronan, a South Derry village on the shores of Lough Neagh. Three men, outwardly peaceable country folk, passed a police patrol of three, and wished the constables "good night." Then suddenly they turned round, drew revolvers, and opened fire.

Constable Hunter was shot dead, Constable Hegarty fell mortally wounded, and Sergeant Frizell, who was shot in the abdomen and died in the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast, at 10.30 last night, struggled on to the barracks, where he collapsed. Very lights were sent up to bring reinforcements.

FUNERAL OF SERGEANT FRIZELLE.

There was a large and representative attendance yesterday at the funeral to the City Cemetery of Sergeant F. J. Frizelle, who was murdered at Ballyronan (County Derry), the cortege leaving the house of his father-in-law, Mr. Andrew M'Kee, 229, Grosvenor Road. The chief mourners were—John Frizelle (father), Ballycastle, County Mayo; Andrew M'Kee (father-in-law), J. J. M'Farland (uncle), Andrew M'Kee and Frank Toal (brothers-in-law), Cecil M'Farland (cousin), and Andrew M'Kee (nephew).

The funeral arrangements were in the hands of the firm of Messrs. Adam Turner.

The Belfast News Letter 5 May 1922 & The Northern Whig 9 May 1922

Thinking that I had finished with the military and police service of the Frizelle family and to complete research on the family, I turned my attention to John and Caroline's daughter Edith.

**Edith Burton nee Frizelle
and Major Louis Burton 70th Brigade Royal Field Artillery**

Edith was born on Saturday 31 March 1883 at Castle Road, Ballina, Co. Mayo, the only daughter of John and Caroline Frizelle. Following her mother's death in 1895, the 1901 Census of Ireland shows her as resident as a boarder at school in Celbridge, Co. Kildare. The school is not named however, it is titled, 'The incorporated Society for promoting Protestant Schools in Ireland.' On Sunday 15 December 1907, Edith married Louis Burton at Athlone Parish Church of Ireland,

Athlone, Co. Westmeath. At that time, Louis, who had been born at Heigham, Norwich, Norfolk, in 1874, was a Battery Sergeant Major in the Royal Artillery. Louis had enlisted as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery on 17 May 1900 at Ipswich. Aged 25 at that time, he had previously been employed as a Bank Clerk and was a part-time soldier in the 3rd Battalion, Norfolk Artillery.

In the years following the marriage, Louis was deployed to India with the 10th Ammunition Column and Edith accompanied him there. A daughter, Winifred Edith was born at Bangalore on 14 March 1909 and a son, William John, was also born at Bangalore on 31 October 1911. In June of 1911 with his period of enlistment drawing to a close, Louis had re-engaged with the Army to complete 21 years' service. The family returned to England in 1912 and two further sons followed, Louis Archibald, born 1 August 1914 and Howard Frizelle born 21 June 1916.

By the outbreak of war in August 1914, Louis was an Instructor at the School of Gunnery in the rank of Sergeant Major. With the massive influx of recruits at the beginning of the war, experienced NCO's were required to make up a shortage of officers. On 26 September 1914, Louis was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Royal Field Artillery. As the war progressed, Louis moved up the ranks and by June of 1917, he was a Major in charge of D Battery, 70th Brigade Royal Field Artillery. This Brigade provided Artillery support to the 15th (Scottish) Division. As the officer in command of the Battery, Louis would have been in charge of 200 men.

At the beginning of June 1917 Louis' Brigade was at Conchy-sur-Canche, 30 miles west of Arras. On 8 June whilst near the village of Galametz, Louis observed a runaway wagon pulled by two heavy draught horses charge past him. He immediately mounted his horse and took off in pursuit, followed by an Orderly. After a pursuit of around 400 yards, Louis' horse skidded and fell, trapping him and pulling him along the ground. He received immediate medical attention however, later that evening complained of severe pain and was taken to No 6 Stationary Hospital at the nearby town of Frevent. A telegram was sent to Edith at Broadwater Avenue, Letchworth, Hertfordshire, to the effect that Louis was dangerously ill.

Despite medical attention, Louis died the next day of a ruptured intestine. A court of enquiry was held into his death and no blame was apportioned to him, in what was a tragic accident. Louis was buried at St Hilaire Cemetery, Frevent, Grave 3. Edith arranged for the inscription, '*Only goodnight beloved, not farewell. Your loving wife Edith*' to be placed on his headstone.

FINAL PART NEXT IN NEXT MONTH'S EDITION WHICH WILL BE OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO OUR AVIATION ENTHUSIASTS

THE MOUNTBATTENS AT WAR (PART II) by David Humberston

By August of 1914, Princess Henry of Battenberg, sister-in-law of Prince Louis (whose story featured in Part I of my series of articles) had been a widow for nearly 19 years. The youngest of the nine children of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, Princess Beatrice had overcome her mother's open hostility to her marriage to the handsome Prince Henry, finally being allowed to marry her beau in 1885 on condition the couple made their home with the aged Queen.



*Prince Henry
& Princess Beatrice
of Battenberg*

Prince Henry and Princess Beatrice were blessed with four children; Alexander (born in 1886), Victoria Eugenie, known within the family as “Ena” (born in 1887), Leopold (born in 1889) and Maurice (born in 1891). In 1896, Prince Henry convinced Queen Victoria to allow him to serve as Military Secretary to the British Commander in Chief when the British Army sent an expedition to Africa to fight the Ashanti War on the Gold Coast (modern day Ghana). Whilst on active service, Prince Henry contracted malaria and died on 20th January 1896, leaving Princess Beatrice a widow with four young children aged between nine and four years of age.

Upon her husband's death, Princess Beatrice replaced her late husband as Governor of the Isle of Wight, where the couple had been married, and where Prince Henry was subsequently buried. Despite her German ancestry and family, at the outbreak of War in August 1914, Beatrice was not wanting in patriotism and her subsequent war work would operate on a number of fronts.

To the son of Alfred Lord Tennyson, whose family home was at Freshwater on the Isle of Wight, Beatrice wrote early in the conflict that *“in these days of overwhelming anxiety, surely none can hear the call to arms in vain and I feel convinced that the men of the Isle of Wight will not be Behind in volunteering to take their part in this great struggle”*. These words were not merely empty sabre-rattling, for all three of Princess Beatrice's sons would serve on the Western Front, with very differing fortunes . . .



*Prince Alexander of
Battenburg*

The eldest, Prince Alexander, had already served in the Royal Navy between 1902 and 1908 before joining the Army the following year as a probationary Second Lieutenant in the Grenadier Guards. Promoted to Lieutenant in 1913, he was seconded to the General Staff as an extra Aide-de-Camp and promoted to Captain the same year. Although Alexander was twice Mentioned in Despatches, and received a number of foreign decorations, his over-inflated opinion of himself caused many of his family to mock him. Edward, Prince of Wales, also serving in the Grenadiers, once described him as *“the completest dud”*.

Although a sufferer of haemophilia, Princess Beatrice's second son, Prince Leopold, also elected to serve in the Army and in 1909 joined the 8th (Isle of Wight Rifles, Princess Beatrice's) Battalion of the Hampshire Regiment, known as the "Isle of Wight Rifles". Prince Henry of Battenberg, Leopold's father, had been Honorary Colonel of the same Battalion prior to his death.



Prince Leopold of Battenberg

In October 1911, with the assistance of Colonel Jack Seely, of the Hampshire Yeomanry (a resident of the Isle whose mount, *Warrior*, would achieve legendary status during the forthcoming conflict), Leopold obtained a commission as a Second Lieutenant in the King's Royal Rifle Corps. His gratitude to Seely was displayed in a letter of thanks, which stated *"I am more than grateful, as I have always wanted to be able to soldier seriously and never thought I should be able to do so"*. At the outbreak of the War, however, Leopold's "serious soldering" would be restricted to a staff appointment, from which he would safely return.



Prince Maurice of Battenberg

Upon hearing the news of the death of his cousin, Prince Christian Victor of Schleswig Holstein on active service during the Boer War, Prince Maurice, the youngest of Princess Beatrice's three sons, had expressed a wish to serve in his late cousin's regiment, the King's Royal Rifle Corps. Following military training at Sandhurst, in 1910 Prince Maurice realised his ambition, being commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant.

In August 1914, he departed for the front with the 1st Battalion of the Regiment, taking part in the Battle of Mons, the subsequent retreat and the Battles of the Marne and the Aisne, being "Mentioned in Despatches". On one occasion, he had a narrow escape from death, a bullet from a German rifle passing through the peak of his cap. The men each side of him were hit, one fatally.

By mid-October, the Regiment was on the outskirts of the Belgian town of Ypres. On the 27th Prince Maurice led his men forward on the outskirts of the village of Zonnebeke where he was mortally wounded by an exploding shell. Sources disagree as to whether he was killed outright or died later in a field dressing station, but his body was taken to Ypres, where he was laid to rest in the Town Cemetery.

Although devastated by the death of her son, Princess Beatrice declined the offer of Lord Kitchener to bring his body back to Britain and the Prince remained in Ypres, his grave now marked with the standard C.W.G.C. headstone as shown right. His mother would later write *"Nothing could touch and help me more to bear this great trial, than to know that others feel for*



me. To lose a beloved promising young man is a terrible trial, but I can look back with pride on him, and on his work nobly fulfilled, and life willingly given for his King and Country". Sir Douglas Haig considered "By the death of H.H. Prince Maurice of Battenberg the Army loses a most gallant and valuable officer. In peace and war, he has done his duty to King and Country." A memorial stone (shown right) to the young Prince was subsequently erected in the Royal Burial Ground at Frogmore, Windsor.



In August 1914, Princess Beatrice returned to London from the Isle of Wight and resided at Kensington Palace with her niece, Princess Marie Louise of Schleswig Holstein, for the duration of the War. The subsequent war work the pair undertook focused on the wounded, with Princess Beatrice paying particular attention to a private hospital in Mayfair renamed in her honour the *Princess Henry of Battenberg Hospital for Officers*.



King Alphonso XIII and Queen Ena of Spain

The presence of Princess Marie Louise was some compensation for the absence of Princess Beatrice's daughter, Princess Ena, who in May 1906 had married King Alphonso XIII of Spain. This union was ill-fated from the very beginning, an assassin's bomb hidden in a bouquet thrown at the Royal carriage on their wedding day narrowly missed the newly weds but the bridal dress was covered in the blood of a guard riding alongside the carriage. The marriage produced five sons and two daughters, but the eldest and youngest sons both suffered from haemophilia, the second became a deaf mute at the age of three following an operation for double mastoiditis and the third was stillborn. Alphonso never forgave his wife for his heir's illness and sort solace in the arms of many mistresses in the coming years.

In August 1914, Spain remained prudently neutral, her Navy being inadequate for a sustained conflict whilst her Army, numbering only 150,000 men, was already committed to a campaign in Morocco. At the Palace, by common consent, the War was not discussed and relations between the English Queen

and the Austrian Queen Mother remained largely cordial. The death of Prince Maurice was a great blow to Queen Ena, who later wrote that "*It is very hard to be away from my old home at such a time and I know Mama is so sad and needs me so much. I would give anything to be able to go to her*".

Despite his faults and to his credit, King Alphonso found a way of contributing to the War effort, gaining well-deserved praise from both sides. When a forlorn French washerwoman wrote to the King to ask him to try and find information about her husband, posted as "missing", Alphonso sent a letter in his own hand promising assistance and through his efforts the man was traced to a Prisoner of War Camp in Germany. When this story became widely known, Alphonso received many more requests necessitating the establishment of a special bureau to deal with the number of enquiries. Eventually employing forty staff, all paid from Alphonso's personal purse, it is

estimated some 70,000 civilians and 21,000 soldiers were assisted in repatriation, whilst intervention was also made on behalf of a further 137,000 Prisoners of War of various nationalities. The intervention of the King also helped save the lives of 20 men and eight women sentenced to death, although his efforts on behalf of British Nurse Edith Cavell proved unsuccessful.

In July 1917, King George V requested that his English relatives relinquish their German titles and “anglicise” their names. With the disappearance of the name of “Battenberg”, Princess Beatrice reverted to her pre-marital title, whilst Princes Alexander and Leopold became Lords Alexander and Leopold Mountbatten respectively. Alexander, unsurprisingly, resented his change of status. His cousin, Lady Louise Mountbatten (daughter of the newly titled Marquess of Milford Haven) mocked Alexander’s hauteur when she wrote *“I shriek with laughter when I think of Drino, losing his title”*. The same month as his “demotion” Alexander married Lady Irene Denison, daughter of the Earl of Londesborough (whose mother, Lady Grace Fane, was a first cousin of Ettie, Lady Desborough, mother of Julian and William Grenfell, who would both perish in the War). A career in the world of business followed, before Alexander died in 1960, having served as a non-flying Pilot Officer in the Second War.



Lord Leopold had returned from the War to live with his mother, but died unexpectedly in April 1922 following an emergency operation on his hip. He and his brother Maurice are both remembered on a plaque in Winchester Cathedral (shown right) erected by their fellow Officers of the King’s Royal Rifle Corps.

During the 1920’s a growing republican movement increasingly threatened the Spanish throne and when the Army withdrew its support in 1930, Alphonso, Ena and their children went into exile. After a few months in Paris, the King and Queen separated and were never reconciled. Alphonso died in Rome in 1941, whilst Ena died in April 1969, 38 years to the day she had left Spain to live in exile. Her grandson, Juan Carlos, restored the monarchy seven years later.

In September 1920 the Ypres League was founded as an Association for those who had survived the series of battles around that Flemish town and to commemorate the comrades they left behind. As patron, Princess Beatrice would lay a wreath for the League at the Remembrance Day commemorations until the late 1930’s, by which time she walked with considerable difficulty. The last surviving child of Queen Victoria, Princess Beatrice died on 26th October 1944, the day before the 30th anniversary of the death of her son, Prince Maurice. Doubtless she would have approved of a new Memorial to him, unveiled in October 2020, depicted on our front cover and mentioned (with a local connection) in the article following this piece. When peace was restored, Beatrice was laid to rest beside her husband at St Mildred’s Church, Whippingham, on the Isle of Wight.



Princess Beatrice, 1926

**PRINCE MAURICE AND ARTHUR ALLCOTT
OF THE 1ST BATTALION
THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS
by Douglas Johnstone**

I read with much interest one particular article in the *News from Ypres* section of the "Bulletin" magazine, 118 issue, of the Western Front Association. On page 21 it announced that "a 'Blue Plaque' dedicated to Prince Maurice of Battenberg was unveiled at the Broodseinde roundabout, not far from the place he was killed on 27 October 1914." Prince Maurice, of course, was one of Queen Victoria's grandsons, son of Princess Beatrice.

The reason for my interest was that my mother's uncle, Arthur Allcroft, was killed in the same action. Rifleman Allcroft (No. 5897) was in 'A' Company of the 1st Battalion the King's Royal Rifle Corps and was reported as being "missing" on the 28th October 1914 and his name is on Ypres' Menin Gate memorial.

The War Diary of the 1st Battalion the King's Royal Rifle Corps for the 27th October 1914 reads,

"...went down to a farm in the valley south of ZONNEBEKE where we had breakfast. 'C' and 'D' Coys. found the other two companies already at this farm when they arrived.

About 9am Battalion was ordered to advance on the left of the Staffords and keeping touch with the French on their left. 'A' Company led off at once and was shortly followed by 'B' in support. The other half Battalion being kept in reserve temporarily where they were. The Staffords were to advance with their left on a small road running south west from WETERDAMHOEK and the French (18th Corps) were to advance with their right just south of ZONNEBEKE-WATERDAMHOEK road, thus giving the Battalion a frontage of about 800 yards. The line of country over which the Battalion was to advance was, as far as the PASSCHENDALE-BECELAERE main road which runs along the top of a big (for Belgium) ridge fairly steep up-hill and fairly wooded. From the above road eastwards the ground slopes down gradually to the HEULEBEEK stream. For the first 6 or 700 yards it is absolutely open cultivated land, the only cover being a few scattered farms and a line of houses running along the top of the ridge on each side of the road.

The part allotted to the Staffords was, however, wooded most of the way. About 700 yards east of the road there are a number of small and medium sized woods which afforded cover from view but proved themselves absolute shell traps. The whole of this piece of country was covered with empty trenches mostly hurriedly dug, some by the Germans and some by the French. The latter had previously advanced across this ground but had been later compelled to retreat.

After 'A' Company had advanced and deployed it was seen that the frontage was so great that 'B' Company were sent up to fill the gap between 'A's left and the French. Later 'C' and lastly (about 3pm) 'D' Company were sent on in support with orders to work rather towards the left of our section of ground. When 'B' Company had crossed the main road along the ridge the headquarters of the battalion moved up into an old German, so-called, bombproof trench just west of the crest line near a battered school.

There was an artillery observation post in this trench. While we were there the ridge was getting a terrific shelling and one "black maria" came right into our trench within two yards of Willan completely burying his servant whom we however afterwards dug out quite uninjured. During the advance eastwards from the ridge the battalion came under a terrific shell fire as well as rifle fire and 'A' Company especially lost very heavily.

Poor Prince Maurice was killed outright just on top of the ridge and also Capt. Wells (Bufs S.R.) attached.

The following 4 officers were wounded – Capt. Willis; Capt. Llewellyn (3rd Somersets attached); 2nd Lt. Hone and 2nd Lt. Sweeting (seriously).

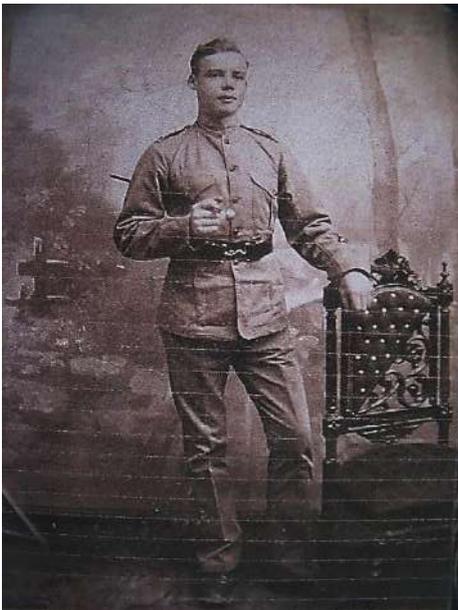
Total casualties for day – 24 killed, 130 wounded and 19 missing.

As soon as it was nearly dark Willan and I went up to the firing line then about 800 yards east of the ridge and began to sort out the companies and arrange for improving the old and indifferent French trenches in which they nearly all were."

It is fair to assume that Arthur was one of the "19 missing" as the entry for the 28th October only records 2nd Lieutenant Waring and Corporal Deeley being killed that day with no missing.

"The Battalion having improved their trenches remained in occupation of them all day under fairly heavy shell fire. Poor Teddy Waring was killed in his trench by a shell.

The Headquarters were in a cottage just behind a wood into which we had moved just before daylight from another house behind 'B' and 'D' Companies trenches. Corporal Deeley and Rifleman Wilcock were hit inside this house by bullets, the former being killed."



*Arthur while serving in Egypt,
taken in Cairo.*

Arthur Allcroft was born in 1885 in Leicester to George and Elizabeth (Betsy) Allcroft. The census for 1891 has the Allcroft family as living in Thornton Lane, Leicester. Arthur's siblings were Agnes, Alice, George William (my grandfather), Florence and Frederick and by 1901 the family had moved to Richmond Road, Aylestone.

Arthur attested into the King's Royal Rifle Corps on 23rd January 1904 at the age of nineteen, serving in Malta (1904-1905) and Egypt (1905-1909). He left the army after seven years of service and remained a rifleman throughout his service. This may have been due to having to face several charges, while in Egypt, for being "Drunk in Barracks" and "Fighting in the Barrack Room" offences for which he lost his Good Conduct medal.

Returning for home service, prior to his release from the army, Arthur suffered a fractured ankle playing football at Cambridge Barracks, Woolwich. He left the Army on

21st February 1911, his army transfer form to the Army Reserve described his conduct in the army as “very good” and as being “honest and trustworthy.” Arthur moved back to live with his parents who were now living at 3 Edith Road, Aylestone Park and he went to work as a “Rubber Hand.”

With the outbreak of the First World War Arthur re-enlisted into the King’s Royal Rifle Corps and on the 12th September 1914 embarked to join the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in France. The 1st Battalion the King’s Royal Rifle Corps had already seen action against the Germans and though they had inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy they had also suffered losses. During a period of just one week, between the 14th to 21st September, the Battalion had 5 officers wounded, with 27 other ranks killed, 136 wounded and 18 missing. Arthur re-joined his former battalion, along with 37 other Riflemen and Captain Llewellyn and Lieutenant Birkett, at Hazebrouck on the 19th October 1914.

They marched out to Ypres the next day and were billeted on the northern outskirts of Ypres for the night. The Battalion then march eastwards again to join the rest of the BEF defending Ypres. Less than a week later Arthur would be killed in action.

News that Arthur was missing in action was reported in the *Leicester Chronicle and the Leicester Mercury* on Saturday, December 26th 1914. The item read, “*RIFLEMAN MISSING – Rifleman A. Allcroft A Company 1st Battalion King’s Royal Rifle Corps has been missing since Oct. 28th. He served seven years with the Colours, and being a reservist was called up in August week. His parents live at 167 Lothair-road, Aylestone Park.*”

It was an anxious wait for his family, not knowing whether Arthur was actually dead or a prisoner-of-war. His sister, Agnes, wrote to the Red Cross to find if they had any news of him being a prisoner-of-war. Arthur’s death was finally announced in the *Leicester Chronicle* on May 15th 1915, which reported,

“*REPORTED MISSING – NOW KILLED. Private Arthur Allcroft, 1st King’s Royal Rifle Corps was killed in action on October 26 (sic). He was a reservist, and had been reported as missing. His parents reside at 167, Lothair-road, Aylestone Park.*”

The March, 1916 edition of *The Workers’ Union Record*, reported, “*The one sad thing I have to report is the sad loss in action of our late secretary of No. 2 branch, Private A. Allcroft, who was called up last August, he being a reservist, though not married. I am sure all our members here extend their sympathy to his parents in their great loss.*”

Arthur’s two brothers also saw action in France. Frederick served in the 1/4th Battalion Leicestershire Territorial Regiment, having enlisted on March 11th 1914. He was wounded in 1916 and discharged August 29th 1916 being entitled to a Silver War Badge due to the wounds he received. George William Allcroft was called up in 1916 and enlisted in the Lancashire Fusiliers. My grandfather was not a natural soldier. He was nearly 40 years old when he joined up and was disciplined for “disobedience of an order while on active service” just two months after arriving in France. He was sentenced to 28 days Field Punishment No. 1 on March 31st 1917 but on 16th April he received a gunshot wound to the head and was sent back to England to recover. George was also diagnosed as having Trench Fever. He re-joined his regiment on October 21st 1917 and served on the Western Front throughout the winter. On March 21st 1918 the Lancashire Fusiliers’ position was overrun in the German Spring Offensive and he was taken as a prisoner-of-war. That spring meant another anxious wait for the family as it wasn’t until May 7th 1918 that *The Leicester*

Daily Mercury announced that he was a prisoner-of-war. He was finally repatriated in January 1919.

It wasn't until 2014, when I started researching my family history, that my mother told me about her uncle Arthur. She told me that her father used to take her to the town hall square, when the First World War Memorial still stood there, and he would show her the name of Arthur Allcroft engraved on the memorial. Unfortunately, it was demolished in 1954 and she was upset that he was no longer remembered.



*Part of the Memorial of St James the Lesser
Arthur's name is on the left hand side,
seven names down*

Arthur's name on Panel 53 on the North Memorial. It was a very emotional experience and we attended the Last Post ceremony to remember all those who perished in the war.

Like so many, Arthur does not have a grave for us to visit and that is why these memorials are so important. Prince Maurice's body was recovered from the battlefield and Lord Kitchener offered to have his body brought back home but Princess Beatrice refused saying, "Let him lie with his men" and he was buried among his comrades in the Ypres Town Cemetery. For me, the Blue Plaque to Prince Maurice of Battenberg is not just to him but, also, to the other men of the 1st Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps who were killed alongside him. It also demonstrates that war does not discriminate between the rich and poor. I just hope that I will soon be able to take my mother to visit the battlefield on which her uncle died for his country.

With special thanks to Denis Kenyon and Chris Stephens of the *Leicester City, County & Rutland At Risk Memorials Project* and Michael Doyle.

"Their Name Liveth For Evermore"

I was fortunate enough to come across the Memorials At Risk team, who save war memorials from being destroyed and preserve them. I took my mother to see their display at St Saviour's church. Remarkably, there was a memorial they had saved from St James' the Lesser church on Landsdowne Road and it had Arthur's name on it. The church had been demolished in 1990 and the large slate memorial, bearing the names of 154 men, had been stored in a cupboard at The Church of The Nativity on Cavendish Road for 26 years.

In 2016 I took my mother to Belgium, we paid our respects at the Menin Gate Memorial and my mother was able to put a poppy below



Mum laying a poppy at the memorial panel for Arthur.

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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.

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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 12th February 2021

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