The final dogfight . . . Werner Voss against No. 56 Squadron, R.F.C.
Welcome again, Ladies and Gentlemen, to the latest edition of “The Tiger”, published slightly earlier than usual due to holiday commitments.

As the Battle for Passchendaele raged along the Menin Road one hundred years ago this month, the skies above witnessed another epic encounter, on the evening of 23rd September. A month earlier, the Germans introduced two prototypes of what would become their most famous aircraft, the Fokker Dr. 1 (Driedecker or Triplane) above the skies of Ypres. One, inevitably, was first flown by Baron Manfred von Richthofen, who added two further “kills” to his ever-growing tally in the following forty eight hours. On 15th September, whilst piloted in von Richthofen’s absence by another German ace, Oberleutnant Kurt Wolf, this Fokker Triplane was shot down by British Sopwith Camels. Wolf was killed.

The second triplane was allocated for use by arguably the finest German pilot of the entire War, twenty year old Werner Voss. The cowling (engine cover behind the propeller) of this triplane was painted yellow and Voss made whimsical use of the cooling holes by adding eyebrows and a moustache to create a face, as seen on Japanese kites of the time and as shown below.

By the end of the morning of 23rd September 1917, Voss had amassed a total of 48 “kills”, second only to the score of Von Richthofen, which currently stood at 61. A friendly rivalry existed between the two aviators and, with Von Richthofen away on leave, Voss was eager not to lose this opportunity to close the gap between the two men’s total and, in the early evening, departed on another patrol. With his new superior aircraft, Voss quickly left two colleagues in his wake and disappeared from sight. It was to be a day of intense air activity over the Front and many British and German planes filled the sky. Amongst them were eleven S.E.5As flown by the elite No. 56 Squadron of the R.F.C, six of which were led by British ace Captain James McCudden, then with 13 kills to his name, alongside other “aces” Arthur Rhys-Davids and Keith Muspratt. The remaining five planes were led by Captain Geoffrey Bowman, whose companions included Richard Mayberry and Reginald Hoidge. These six pilots alone were a formidable “Cavalry of the Clouds” who would account for 171 enemy aircraft during their respective careers.
As a dogfight developed above the village of Poelcapelle, Voss had already forced two British planes out of the battle before McCudden led his group onto the attack. What happened in the next ten minutes is recorded in aviation annals as one of the greatest aerial combats on record. McCudden attacked first from the right and Rhys-Davids from the left, with Muspratt and Canadian “Versh” Cronyn in support. All four came down behind the triplane and opened fire as they passed. McCudden would later write: The German pilot saw us and turned in a most disconcertingly quick manner, not a climbing nor Immelmann turn, but a sort of flat half spin. By now the German triplane was in the middle of our formation and its handling was wonderful to behold. The pilot seemed to be firing at us all simultaneously. His movements were so quick and uncertain that none of us could hold him in sight at all for any decisive time.

Cronyn, the last to attack, quickly found Voss on his tail and his plane riddled with bullets. Unable to continue, Cronyn escaped as best he could, but the remaining four SE5As were now joined by Bowman, Mayberry and Hoidge. Despite odds of 7:1, Voss was not found wanting and turned on Muspratt, firing into his radiator and shooting away an oil pipe. Realising he had only minutes before his engine seized, Muspratt disengaged and made for the Allied lines. McCudden noted: The triplane was still circling round in the midst of six S.E’s, who were all firing at it as opportunity offered and at one time I noticed the tri-plane in the apex of a cone of tracer bullets from at least five machines simultaneously, and each machine had two guns. Geoffrey Bowman would later recall: His machine was exceptionally manoeuvrable and he appeared to take flying liberties with impunity. Voss continued to attack without pause and flew nose on towards McCudden. Hoidge saw his chance and sent a long burst of fire into the triplane from the starboard flank. Rhys-Davids, now approaching Voss from behind, fired again and found himself so close to the triplane that both pilots turned to avoid a collision. Rhys-Davids dived again and seeing the triplane gliding west with its engine off, continued to fire upon it.

McCudden concludes the story: I noticed that the triplane’s movements were very erratic and then I saw him go into a fairly steep dive and so I continued to watch, and then saw the triplane hit the ground and disappear into a thousand fragments, for it seemed to me that it literally went to powder. As long as I live I shall never forget my admiration for that German pilot, who single-handed fought seven of us for ten minutes and also put some bullets through all our machines. His flying was wonderful, his courage magnificent and in my opinion he is the bravest German airman it has been my privilege to see fight.

Werner Voss crashed into the ground near Plum Farm, just north of the ruins of Frezenberg village and was buried in a nearby shell hole when British artillerymen reached the spot and confirmed his identity. His grave, like so many others, was lost in the subsequent fighting and his name is now remembered on Panel 63 of the German Memorial to the Missing that encloses the “Comrades Grave” at Langemarck German Cemetery. At the centenary of his passing, let us pause and remember him too . . .

D.S.H.
Your Committee Members are:

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Derek Simmonds (*Melton Mowbray*)

Our Branch Website Address is:  
[www.leicestershireandrutlandwfa.com](http://www.leicestershireandrutlandwfa.com)

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**BRANCH MEETINGS**

The Elms Social & Service Club, Bushloe End, WIGSTON, Leicestershire, LE18 2BA

7:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.  
(Approx...)

**25th September 2017**

Guest Speaker:  
Greg Drozdz  
-  
“Togo Bolesworth – The Best Soldier in the Leicestershire Regiment”

**30th October 2017**

Guest Speaker:  
Cristina Cox  
-  
“The 17th (Armoured Car) Battalion, Tank Corps”

**27th November 2017**

Guest Speaker:  
Harry Richards  
-  
“Room 40 and German Intrigues In Morocco”
OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY . . .

Leicester Postcard Fair
Postcards, cigarette cards, stamps, ephemera and coins.

SUNDAY
24th SEPTEMBER
2017

Open 10.00am till 4.00pm
Admission £1.00

The venue
Ramada Leicester Stage Hotel
299 Leicester Road
Wigston Fields
Leicester
LE18 1JW

Good parking, food and drinks available, accessible by public transport

THE
PHILP BENT V.C. MEMORIAL TABLET

will be unveiled on
Sunday, 1st October 2017
at
The War Memorial
Market Street
Ashby De La Zouch
LE65 1AF

The Service commences at 9.30 a.m.
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<td><strong>CROWNS IN CONFLICT</strong></td>
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<td>THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY</td>
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A £2.50 Contribution to Society funds will be requested

Free admittance & Parking available
As advertised in last month’s issue, the Bells destined to hang in St George’s Memorial Church, Ypres, finally left Loughborough on the morning of Tuesday, 22nd August. The Bells were safely loaded onto two Great War lorries and were then driven to Queen’s Park, where an expectant crowd had gathered to attend a Civic Ceremony in the shadow of Loughborough’s Carillon Tower. Those present were addressed from the bandstand by local dignitaries, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire Murray Colville, a representative of John Taylor & Co and the Trustee of the B4SG project itself, Alan Regan. The writers were joined by County Town Representatives Karen & David Ette (Loughborough) and Derek Simmonds (Melton Mowbray) with both Derek’s associate Mike Rawson and Tony Doyle also in attendance.

A suitable interval to allow photographs to be taken then followed with John Marshall, owner of the Thornycroft Lorry (shown right), happy to pose beside his vehicle. It was then time for the bells to depart and begin their journey to the Great Dorset Steam Fair at Tarrant Hinton, where they were displayed over the Bank Holiday weekend. Readers may also like to see a short video clip of the departure of the bells on the website of the Loughborough Carillon www.carillontower.org.uk or on their Facebook page Loughborough Carillon Tower & War Memorial Museum.
On the following Wednesday, they were transported to Ypres and officially received at the nightly sounding of the Last Post at the Menin Gate. The following morning they finally arrived at St Georges Memorial Church.

**LEFT:**
Four of the Bells arrive at the Loughborough Carillon (photograph by Tony Doyle)

**RIGHT:**
The Dennis Lorry at the Carillon (photograph by Mike Rawson)

**ABOVE:**
The Bells arrive at St George’s; are hoisted inside and then laid “on parade” in the Church aisle

**LEFT:**
The Service of Dedication held at the Church on the evening of 31st August
1* – **Atlantic:** *HMS Drake* torpedoed off Rathlin Island by U-Boat U-79. Resulting explosion kills 19 seamen although cruiser remains afloat.

4* – **Belgium:** In the Battle of Broodseinde Ridge, New Zealand forces take 5,000 Germans prisoner and secure the southern end of the Passchendaele Ridge.

5* – **Peru:** Diplomatic relations with Germany severed. Uruguay follows suit on the 7*.

9* – **Belgium:** In appalling conditions, British & Australian forces are unsuccessful in their attempt to breach the German lines in the Battle of Poelcappelle,

11* – **Britain:** *No 41 Wing*, RFC, under command of Lt-Col Cyril Newall and based at Ochey, France, formed. Preparations for bombing missions start immediately and six days later two flights of de Havilland aircraft conduct RFC’s first long-range bombing mission hitting the Burbach Iron Foundry and railway lines. A week later a Handley Page conducted first night-time long range operation.

12* – **Belgium:** Phase of Third Ypres known as First Battle of Passchendaele takes place. ANZAC forces are again unsuccessful in their attempts to reach the Passchendaele Ridge.

17* – **North Sea:** Escorted by destroyers *Mary Rose* and *Strongbow*, British convoy of 12 merchant ships is moving supplies from Scandinavia. German light cruisers *Brunner* and *Bremse* launch surprise attack sinking both destroyers and 75% of convoy.

19* – **Britain:** 11 Zeppelins conduct disastrous raid due to adverse weather and British anti-aircraft defences. This marks end of major airship raids on Britain

23* – **France:** The Battle of La Malmaison begins. In four days, French forces advance six miles, capture the fort and village of La Malmaison and take control of Chemin Des Dames Ridge.

24* – **Italy:** Austro-Hungarians, reinforced by several German divisions and specialist mountain units, fire mixture of high-explosive and gas shells opening 12* Battle of the Isonzo, also known as Battle of Caporetto.

25*(Julian Calendar) – **Russia:** The Great October Socialist Revolution (commonly referred to as Red October, the October Uprising or the Bolshevik Revolution) takes place in Petrograd. Red Guards surround Winter Palace inside which is most of Cabinet although Kerensky has managed to escape. Next day, *All-Russian Congress of Soviets* hand over power to *Soviet Council of People’s Commissars* and elect Lenin as chairman.

26* – **Belgium:** Second Battle of Passchendaele commences as Allied forces again attempt to capture German-held village of Passchendaele with Canadian Corps committed to the attack. Rate of advance painfully slow due to dreadful ground conditions and extensive use of enemy mustard gas; **Brazil:** War declared on Germany. Brazilian merchant ships have been sunk by German submarines on a regular basis.

27* – **Italy:** During Battle of Caporetto, a young German officer, Erwin Rommel, completes capture of 9000 Italian prisoners. His 250 specialist mountain troops have fought for three days to capture critical position against heavy odds. For his bravery and leadership he receives Germany’s highest award, the Pour le Mérite.

31* – **Palestine:** Allied forces, some 88,000 men divided between seven infantry divisions and the horse-and-camel-mounted Desert Mounted Corps, commanded by General Sir Edmund Allenby, launch Third Battle of Gaza. Allenby opposed by 35,000 Turks commanded by German General Kress von Kressenstein. Daylong attack culminates in daring and successful charge by Australian cavalry at dusk taking Beersheba and its vital wells. Weakened Turks forced into headlong retreat.
CONGRATULATIONS TO . . .

Madeleine Coburn & Bill Brookman of The Charnwood Great War Centenary Project upon their marriage at All Saints with Holy Trinity Church, Loughborough on 19th August 2017

TWO WEBSITES TO VISIT:
Readers may be interested to visit

www.passchendale100.org to see (or enjoy again) details of the recent commemorations of the centenary of the beginning of the Battle of Passchendaele

www.britishwargraves.co.uk an award-winning website recently commended by the Prime Minister and featured in a recent edition of The Leicester Mercury
Having concluded my first instalment with a match in which some of our local schoolboys were somewhat overwhelmed, I resume with a fixture where the boot was very much on the opposite foot. The Leicester Daily Post of Tuesday July 3rd 1917 carried this report:

**CRICKET AT UPPINGHAM**

The outstanding feature of the Uppingham School versus The Machine Gun Corps match at Uppingham on Saturday was the batting of the young schoolboy, Chapman, who was responsible for amassing 206 not out in the School’s total of 307. Chapman, who is the best and most promising batsman in the School, played a most wonderful innings, which included 7 “sixes”. With little possibility of obtaining the runs required for victory in the time available, the Corps batted steadily, and at the close of play had compiled 165 runs for the loss of just two wickets. Scores: Uppingham School 307 for 8 declared: Machine Gun Corps 165 for 2: match drawn.

Had he been absolutely on the ball and had space, perhaps, permitted, *The Post’s* correspondent would surely have conjectured that “here was an England player in the making”. And so it was. For the then 16-year-old cricketing prodigy was none other than Arthur Percy Frank Chapman, almost invariably known as Percy, for whom 1917 was a supremely productive year. His unbeaten 206 against the M.G.C. was the culmination of a sequence which also included two centuries and two further fifties, heralding his selection for representative Public School’s matches at Lords in 1918 and his appointment as captain of the Uppingham First XI in 1919. The absence of First-Class fixtures throughout the 14-18 War offered unanticipated openings for talented tyros such as Chapman. His profile was greatly enhanced through selection as one of *Wisden’s* five “Public School Cricketers of The Year” for 1919 which no doubt made him an obvious candidate for inclusion in the Cambridge University side on his “going up” to Pembroke College later that year.

His 118 on First-Class debut in May 1920 secured his place in the Cambridge team alongside future England stalwarts such as (Sir) George “Gubby” Allen, while a series of scintillating performances for the University and for “The Gentlemen” in games against “The Players” - amateurs versus professionals, brought inclusion in a “scratch” England XI which famously defeated the hitherto unbeaten Australian tourists in 1921. But this unofficial appearance at Eastbourne under A.C. “Archie” MacLaren was a mere prelude to greater glory for Chapman. He was himself appointed England captain for the final Test Match against Australia at The Oval in London in 1926. With the first four matches in the series being drawn, Chapman led Hobbs and Sutcliffe and the wily Wilfred Rhodes etc. to victory by the emphatic margin of 289 runs. What Percy had learnt on the playing fields of Uppingham had surely played a not insignificant part in England’s regaining “The Ashes”. Although not a universally popular choice as skipper, Chapman brought a welcome gaiety and panache to English cricket in the 1920s; confounding his critics with a flair that lightened the hearts of
most players and spectators in the decade of “the bright young things”. Never one to be justly accused of frivolity on the field, with his international career now ended, he captained Kent from 1931 to 36, whereupon he sadly entered something of a mental and physical decline. Percy Chapman died in 1961, two weeks after his 61st birthday.

Thoughts of Kent county cricket return me to “the true legend of the game” mentioned in my opening instalment; to one whose performance bettered even that of Warwickshire’s fast bowler Frank Field in a match played on the very same day. An item in The Leicester Daily Post of Tuesday July 3rd 1917, headed “AMUSEMENTS; CRICKET”, introduces the legend: “Sergeant Colin Blythe, the famous Kent bowler, playing for the East Anglian Royal Engineers versus the Royal Naval Division on Saturday, was almost unplayable on a pitch affected by heavy rains. Blythe’s analysis read; 4.4 overs, 1 maiden, 13 runs, 7 wickets”: i.e. in cricketing parlance “7 for 13”. With a mere 28 deliveries in total, Blythe had taken a wicket, on average, with every fourth ball, proving even more “deadly” on this occasion than Kent and England’s Derek Underwood, an equally formidable proposition in the 1960s and 70s on “a sticky dog” – a drying and sweating pitch. Both men were left-arm spinners. But Blythe is known to have bowled at a much slower pace than Underwood, giving the ball more air and deceiving the batsman with flight rather than with pace off the pitch. (Underwood, by contrast, was often regarded by many who faced him, as almost medium pace).

![Colin Blythe](image1)

Colin Blythe

![Grave of Colin Blythe with cricketing tributes: Oxford Road Cemetery, Ypres](image2)

Grave of Colin Blythe with cricketing tributes: Oxford Road Cemetery, Ypres

Many of Blythe’s individual feats are themselves the stuff of legend. Bowling in tandem with the great paceman S.F. Barnes, his sweeping aside of the Australians in their first innings during the Sydney Test of 1901 was among the first of many notable international achievements, albeit, this time, in a losing cause. Blythe’s tally of 100 Test wickets over a 14-year international career may seem decidedly modest by today’s standards. But there were far fewer Tests played in “The Golden Age” before the 1914 War and it is the average cost per wicket that really matters. Blythe’s average was 18.63 per Test wicket and 16.81 in county matches: figures that most must envy and that any would rightly be proud of in any class of cricket. 1907 was his annus mirabilis, with a best ever innings analysis of 10 for 30 taken for Kent against Northamptonshire, including 7 wickets for just 1 run in 36 deliveries. He took 14 wickets altogether that day and 7 for 18 in the Northants second innings overall to give an aggregate of 17 for 48 in this one match.
Ever a sensitive soul and of nervous disposition, Blythe often bowled himself into a state of near collapse, as at the climax of England’s thrilling victory over the visiting South Africans at Headingley in 1907. England’s skipper, C.B. Fry, recalled having to virtually carry the exhausted spinner to the pavilion at the end of the game. But Blythe’s 15 wicket haul had been key to a highly improbable outcome, given that England were dismissed for just 76 in their first innings. Blythe’s control and sustained concentration were compelling: his sinewy violinist’s fingers beguiling his victims into playing false shots, using all the skill with which he drew delicate airs from his beloved fiddle. We see him still in Albert Chevallier Tayler’s famous painting, cunningly concealing the ball in his bowling – left hand until the last possible moment, bamboozling the batsman as to which way it might turn and, more often than not, rendering him incapable of getting the cherry off the square.

A notice in The Times of Thursday May 2nd 1918 stated that “Kent County Cricket Club are to erect, on the St. Lawrence Ground, Canterbury, a drinking fountain to the memory of Colin Blythe and his comrades who have fallen in the War”. Subscriptions “limited to half a crown” - 2/6d (12½p in decimal) were also invited for the cost of “a mural tablet to be erected to Blythe’s memory in Tunbridge Church”. In August 1919 The Times reported as follows:

### FALLEN KENT CRICKETERS
#### MEMORIAL UNVEILED AT CANTERBURY

Lord George Hamilton, President of the Kent County Cricket Club, on Saturday, unveiled a memorial fountain which has been erected on the St. Lawrence Ground at Canterbury to the memory of Colin Blithe and 10 other members of the Kent team who fell in the War. Lord Harris, Lieutenant-Colonel Troughton, captain of the Kent Eleven, Mrs Colin Blythe, and many members of the Kent team and of the Band of Brothers, were present. The memorial stands near the entrance of the Ground and takes the form of an obelisk with a marble basin and octagonal base. The inscription is as follows:

“To the memory of Colin Blithe of the Kent Eleven who volunteered for active service upon the outbreak of hostilities in The Great War of 1914-18 and was killed at Ypres on the 18th November 1917 aged 38 years; he was unsurpassed among the famous bowlers of the period and beloved by his fellow cricketers: also to his comrades of the Kent Eleven who fell in the service of their country, this obelisk is raised by the Kent County Cricket Club”.

While The Times’ correspondent had been entirely accurate in transcribing the inscription, the date shown for Colin Blythe’s death was incorrect and was actually 8th November 1917. This is one of a number of errors and omissions which are being corrected even as I write, prior to the memorial’s reinstatement in a new location within what is now Kent’s “Spitfire Ground” at Canterbury, and its rededication at a ceremony scheduled for the centennial anniversary of Blythe’s passing. Speaking at the original unveiling in 1919, Lord George Hamilton said that “England was the home and nursery of sport and no locality had contributed more to that proud distinction than the county of Kent. Kent had always been famous for its left-handed bowlers, and probably Blythe was the best slow bowler Kent had ever produced”. Among the other fallen Kent cricketers, His Lordship highlighted the former England batsman K.L. Hutchings of The King’s Liverpool Regiment, instrumental in Kent gaining their first County
Championship in 1906, and Captain C.E. Hatfeild of “The Buffs”, who occasionally captained the county: also Major (Brevet Lt.-Colonel) A.H. du Boulay D.S.O., Royal Engineers, of whom more anon. The fountain stood “as a small permanent memorial of their gallantry”.

Although Blythe’s death is often said to epitomize the loss of sporting talent during the 1914 War – even of the loss of innocence of an idyllic and long-vanished age, the facts are that he enjoyed a full and supremely successful cricketing career and was reported to be contemplating retirement after the 1914 season. We naturally mourn his loss, yet an equal if not greater sadness stems from there being so many of whom little is recorded and still less remembered, not least among the ranks of younger non-First-Class XIs whose potential was unfulfilled. My object in these pieces, therefore, has been to remember some of these as well as to honour some of “The Greats”, and I close by doing so now, promising to “follow-on” with more lost cricketers at a future date.

Some readers, I know, recall the famous cricket match at Gallipoli in 1915 and it is to the Dardanelles that I turn for my first lesser-known cricketer. This was 2nd Lieutenant Hugo Frederick Grantham of 3rd Bn. The Essex Regiment; born on April 15th 1895, the eldest son of Captain & Mrs F.W. Grantham of Beeleigh Abbey in Essex. He excelled at sport while attending Cheltenham College, gaining his football “colours”, and scored an unbeaten century for Whitham Cricket Club, back in his home county. He was gazetted direct from Sandhurst in March 1915 and was commended by his colonel “for exceptional gallantry and coolness under most trying conditions in the action of June 4th”, the date of the 3rd Battle of Krithia and the launch of yet another Allied attack towards the Heights of Achi Baba. The Lieutenant was Mentioned in Dispatches for his heroics but was killed on June 28th 1915, aged 20.

Hugo Grantham

Nearer to home, The Leicester Daily Post of Monday August 6th 1917 reported the death of Rifleman John Thomas Pauley of “B” Coy. 13th Bn. King’s Royal Rifle Corps, service no. R/38013; a native of Shepshed in Leicestershire. He had perished “in a gas attack in France” on July 29th aged 37, having joined the Army in autumn 1916 and arrived in France in March ’17. We read that “Private Pauley was well known in local cricketing and football circles and his help to the Town Cricket Club and to The Albion Football Club stands out prominently and will be remembered by sportsmen for many miles around. He was an enthusiastic member of the Adult School and was a deacon at the Charnwood Road Baptist Church”. Private Pauley was buried in Pond Farm Cemetery, Wulverghem (grave ref. F. 3.), south-west of Ypres in Belgium, and was the husband of Constance Ruby Pauley of “Charncliffe House”, Shepshed.

May he, like the others, rest in fields that are for ever green: where, for batsman, the bounce is ever true and remains even for the duration and the pitch does just enough to interest the bowlers throughout the match: where snicks off the edge are unerringly snaffled in the slips and a cry of “Yes” from either batsman constitutes a firm commitment to run, rather than a basis for negotiation.
CONTACT US

We thank once again to 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

Deadline date to ensure inclusion in your next Tiger: Friday, 20th October 2017.

“We very much value your continued support”

Valerie Jacques (Branch Secretary & Newsletter Editor)
David Humberston (Branch Chairman)

EXPLORE, LEARN, SHARE.

Kent vs Lancashire at Canterbury
Colin Blythe bowling to Johnny Tyldesley at St Lawrence Ground, Canterbury, 1906.
Oil painting by Albert Chevallier Tayler