



# **WFA SUFFOLK BRANCH**

## **Branch Briefing**

### **June 2020**



**Our Website : [www.suffolk-wfa.org](http://www.suffolk-wfa.org)**

**Our Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/WFASuffolk>**

# ***Special Email Edition ! (3)***

**AN “OLD CONTEMPTIBLE”** Kelvin Dakin

**8532, Sergeant James Joseph Marsh, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment**  
**15<sup>th</sup> March 1888 – 4<sup>th</sup> June 1971**



James was born in Ipswich – he was the son of Joseph and Kate Marsh. In 1891 the family was boarding at 51 Cavendish Street, Ipswich.

In 1901 James is not at home with his family, who are by now living at 48 Gibson Street, Ipswich (in St Helens Parish). However, James has been traced to the Northamptonshire Reformatory in Tiffield. A newspaper report (Suffolk Chronicle, 24<sup>th</sup> January 1901) explains why James was there:-

## **AUDACIOUS THEFT BY IPSWICH BOYS.**

### **STRANGE DEALINGS IN STOLEN KNIVES.**

At the Ipswich Borough Petty Sessions this (Thursday) morning, before the Mayor (W. F. Paul, Esq.), and other Magistrates, James Josiah Marsh, 13 years, Gibson Street, Alfred Burton, 11, and Walter Bowen, 11½ years, Rope Walk, were charged with stealing seven pocket-knives, value 11s. 7d., the property of Mr. John Orton, ironmonger, Butter Market.—The defendants stood in a row in the dock, each with his mother behind him, and were most impudent-looking boys.

(A similar article in the Ipswich Journal reported James's middle name correctly)

The report goes on to say that the Schools Attendance Officer gave all the boys a bad character and they had been trouble – mainly truancy - from an early age. James Marsh, however, had been before the Magistrates on several occasions – from the age of nine.

In passing sentence, the Magistrates gave James one more chance before he would be sent to a Reformatory but given twelve strokes of the birch for the present offence - the other boys were given six strokes.

Obviously by the time the 1901 Census was taken, on 31<sup>st</sup> March, James had had his last chance. No subsequent reports have been found, so it's not known how long he was at the Reformatory, but he had enlisted in the Bedfordshire Regiment on the 13<sup>th</sup> June 1906.

In 1911 he is at Prospect Camp, Hamilton, Bermuda with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, under the command of Lt General Walter Kitchener – the Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Bermuda.

On the outbreak of war James went to France with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on the 16<sup>th</sup> August 1914 as part of 15<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 5<sup>th</sup> Division.

A War Office report lists James as having received a gunshot wound to the left hand on the 19<sup>th</sup> April 1915 – his battalion was involved in the heavy fighting at Hill 60 at the time.

He was discharged with a Silver War Badge on the 24<sup>th</sup> October 1916 due to wounds but in the meantime, he had married Elsie D Scoggins, in Ipswich, in the latter half of 1915.

In 1939 James was living with his family at 25 Ascot Drive, Ipswich and he is working as a lorry driver. He is also a Police Reservist.

The July 1955 edition of the Fisons Journal published an article on J J Marsh's retirement from the company after 10 years' service at their Cliff Quay works.

The article goes on to say that he was a "genial and amicable type of person" and "a popular and welcome person at Duke Street".

For his part James said that his job as a lorry driver with Fisons had enabled him to make friends all over the country.

When he died in 1971 an obituary notice was placed in the "Old Contemptible" magazine as a member of the Ipswich & District Branch and gave details of his service number and regiment. This in turn enabled more of his service history to be traced. At the time he died he was living at 3 Osborne Road Ipswich. A colourful character indeed!

(Copies of the "Old Contemptible" magazine can be found on the Facebook page @OldContemptibles1914 run by Andrew Thornton – News from the Ipswich & District Branch was often published in these pages along with obituary notices of members)

\* \* \*

**Retirement of Mr. J. J. Marsh.**

Jim Marsh retired on the 1st of April, after ten years' service with Fisons. We knew him as a lorry and van driver, but the capacity in which he claims to have excelled was as barman in the Fisons tent at the major agricultural shows, such as the Royal Counties at Reading, and the Royal Shows of Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. He was, in the widest application of that term, an old soldier, and had served in many parts of the world, including India, Gibraltar and the West Indies, where he was head coachman to the then Governor-General, Sir Walter Kitchener, brother of the great Lord Kitchener of Khartoum. He fought in the first battle of Mons as a member of Sir John French's "Contemptible little army," and, while in the services, distinguished himself in the boxing ring. He claims to have been taught the violin by Nero, and claims that the burning of Rome was the only occasion on which he felt really warm!



*Mr. R. J. Parker (left) presenting the Chiming Clock to Mr. J. J. Marsh.*

## **MY VARIED FAMILY** Ed Erbes

***Dave Hedges: Ed has supplied this interesting account of his Ancestry — he won't mind me saying he's a bit of a mongrel rather than of thoroughbred pedigree ! - with a touch of Slav around the eyes.***

My maternal grandmother was born in 1898 and was the eldest of six; all her siblings were brothers. Her father - Thomas Mighall (pronounced mile) - was a worker on the Compton Verney estate owned by Richard Greville Verney the 19<sup>th</sup> Baron Willoughby de Broke. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century my great grandfather became the gamekeeper to Maurice Arnold de Forest whose estate was near the village of Gaddesby which is 5.5 miles southwest of Melton Mowbray.

De Forest was a keen motor racer and in 1903 was clocked at 84 mph over a kilometre which was faster than the then land speed record. He was also a prominent member of the Liberal Party representing them on the GLC and in 1911 won the seat of West Ham North in a by-election. He held the seat until the general election of 1918 which he did not contest.

Amongst de Forrest's guests to Gaddesby Hall were Lloyd-George and my grandmother could truthfully claim that: "Lloyd-George knew my father"; he (L-G) called him: "... a crusty old Tory". Another guest was William Wedgwood Benn – the father of Tony – who one day borrowed my great grandfather's tennis shoes and never returned them.

The head teacher of the school my grandmother and her brothers attended was Louie Burrows who from December 1910 to early 1912 was engaged to D.H. Lawrence. The character Ursula in the novels: *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* is based on her.

During the Great War my great grandfather joined the territorials as a farrier, he held the rank of sergeant; I don't know where he performed his duties. After the war he left de Forest's employment to become landlord of the Black Horse pub Foxton which is just north of Market Harborough. My grandmother's eldest brother: Arthur – nicknamed Bun – volunteered, almost certainly underage and fought in Mesopotamia. He was wounded in the leg and wrist which resulted him being repatriated to Britain. In 1917 he went back to active service in France even though at the time he still needed the aid of a walking stick to get about. After the war he became a teacher.

The next brother William - Billy – volunteered definitely underage and was a member of the Machine Gun Corps (Infantry). In one letter home he wrote that he was enjoying life in the Army whilst in another written in the trenches that the previous night his team had had: "...a fine time with our gun". On November 18<sup>th</sup> he was killed during an attack on Frankfurt Trench as part of the Battle of Ancre Heights at the age of 17. He is buried in Waggon Road CWGC cemetery and commemorated on the Gaddesby war memorial.

The next two brothers were twins and were too young to serve. One – Walter – joined the RN as a boy sailor during the Great War and served through the interwar period, WW2 and afterwards. During WW2 he was Chief Yeoman of Signals on HMS Norfolk and was on the bridge and witnessed the sinking of HMS Hood.

Walter's fellow twin – Jack – wanted to become a jockey and found a stable that was keen to have him as an apprentice because a relative of my great grandmother was the wife of Fred Archer. Archer was Champion Jockey for 13 consecutive years ending in 1886; he won 21 classics including five Derby's. In 1886 after his wife had died during childbirth he committed suicide; the pistol he used to shoot himself can be seen in the National Horse Racing Museum in Newmarket. When it quickly became obvious that Jack would not be able to make the weight he returned home and later became a teacher.

The youngest brother Edward - Ted - served in RAF between the wars, some of the time in Mesopotamia and was involved in the bombing of rebels in the Basra area. On leaving the RAF he worked for the Post Office and in 1939 joined the Army. After evacuation from Dunkirk he was selected for officer training and on gaining his commission was posted to South Africa and then to India where one of his fellow officers was the actor Jack Hawkins. After the war he re-joined the GPO and retired as the postmaster in St. Neots, Cambridgeshire.

My grandmother also trained to become a teacher and that is how she met my grandfather Francis Needham. He had served in WW 1 as a sergeant in a service battalion of the Leicestershire Regiment; fought in Palestine under Allenby and was Mentioned in Dispatches. I have a photo that I presume he took of Turkish positions after one of the Battles of Ghaza.

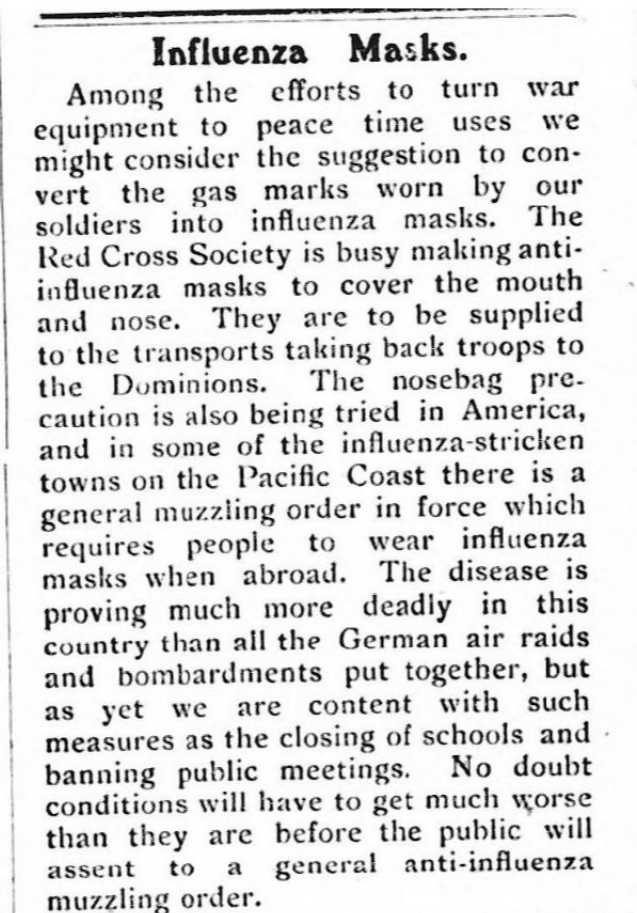
When it comes to my father's family the most important thing is that my Polish grandfather was on the other side during WW 1. He was born in Rzeszow then part of the Austro-Hungarian empire and became an infantry officer in the army. My uncle (father's younger brother) told me that he fought on the Italian front. On Poland becoming independent again in November 1918 he became a member of the Polish Army. He resigned his commission in protest against certain government policies. I'm not aware of what he did as a civilian but he must have been quite well off as he lived in a large house in Krakow – which still survives.

In August 1939 my uncle was returning home and bumped into his father at Krakow railway station. Although aged 68 my grandfather was still on the army reserve and was off to join his unit, that was the last heard of him. After the war my father tried to find out his father's fate through the International Red Cross but they had no information. In the 1990s my uncle was in Warsaw visiting the Katyn Museum and in the bookshop saw a book with a title that when translated is: "*Katyn – the Ukrainian List.*" In there he found his father's name and that he had been murdered near Kiev in April 1940, his body is in one of several mass graves on the outskirts of Kiev. The information regarding his fate and the existence of the mass graves only became available after the fall of the Soviet Union.

\*\*\*

### **PANDEMICS—nothing new**    Andy Pritchatt

I found the attached article in the Framlingham Weekly News from December 1918 that may be appropriate in the current lockdown. I hope you like it.



Dave Hedges : **nothing new (2)** I could not resist adding this from MASH

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QoKODm-AkYM>

## Introduction

Like most youngsters growing up in the 60s and 70s The Great War was a long time ago, and although my Grandad, Fred Booty, had medals in his china cabinet, along with an old photo of his brother Arthur, in Army uniform (who was the subject of a “*Centenary of Relatives Lost in the Great War*” article in the May 2016 Branch Newsletter), the only occasion when Fred did speak about The Great War was when I had built a working model Trawler, which I took to Norwich to sail on Eaton Park Pond. I proudly showed it to Grandad who, much to my surprise, became very animated and discussed all the fixtures and fittings. Unfortunately, I did not pursue this and left it as a mystery as to why Fred, who worked all his life for Norwich Union, should be an expert on Trawlers!

The subject did not arise again until I was sorting out Fred’s house, long after he had passed away, after my Aunt, who had never left home, had also passed away. I was entitled to any books from the house and was intrigued to find a copy of “Swept Channels” by Taffrail (Captain Taprell Dorling DSO, FRHistS, RN) with Fred’s name carefully inscribed on the fly sheet.

I then found in his papers a photograph, inscribed by my Aunt as “Dad with his Navy mates, 1914-18”



Fred is on the end of the second row, seated on the right (the Petty Officer’s left). The Cap Tallies say “HMS Glendower” but I can find no trace of this in any on line WW1 records. HMS Glendower in WW2 was a training base in a former Butlins camp in North Wales, and I can only assume in WW1 it was a similar establishment, though where it was located remains a mystery.

Fred’s Naval Discharge Papers were with his papers and showed he joined the RNVR at The Strand in London on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1916, 3 months after his 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday. He was not mobilized until 11<sup>th</sup> December 1916, doing his initial training at Victory VI Depot (The RNVR Depot at Crystal Palace), followed by a Naval Signaler course which he passed, with 100% marks, in March 1917. He then moved on to HMS Vivid, but this was merely an “Accounting Base” where crew were actually based on smaller ships – in Fred’s case, Mine Sweepers and Auxiliary Patrol Craft, mainly comprised of requisitioned Trawlers which were usually requisitioned complete with their crews. A new Naval Rank of “Skipper” was created to apply to the formerly civilian Trawler Skippers.

Fred and his Signaler comrades would be posted to Trawlers to operate the signaling equipment – often comprising just Semaphore Flags or a Morse Lamp. Unfortunately, there is no record of Fred’s “little ship” postings or exploits.

Fred went on to serve in the Territorial Army between the Wars, and in the Royal Air Force in WW2 – but that, as they say, is another story!

# Western Front

Why am I dwelling on a Naval Story when I am writing for the Western Front Association (WFA)? Being an Island, the United Kingdom has a very good defence against invasion, but equally required freedom of movement on the Seas (both wide and narrow) to obtain supplies and to provide supplies for the Continental Army.

The threat from mines was clearly understood long before the Great War, and in 1911 the Royal Naval Reserve (RNR) Trawler Section was formed, comprising 100 trawlers, fully manned by fishermen. On 4<sup>th</sup> August 1914 these were activated and 94 were in post within a week at ports of “military importance”, Cromarty, Firth of Forth, Tyne, Humber, Harwich, Sheerness, Dover, Portland and Plymouth. The groups were commanded by Naval Officers, often from the retired list. At this point the entire Fleet Minesweeping Force comprised 6 old refitted motor gunboats.

The laying of a large minefield off Southwold by the Germans soon dispelled the idea that mines would be used sparingly, and another 100 Trawlers were requisitioned on 10<sup>th</sup> August 1914 and by the end of October 1914 478 “Skippers” had enrolled in the Trawler Reserve, presumably along with their vessels.

Losses from Mines during the Great War amounted to:-

- 46 Royal Naval Vessels, including 5 Battleships;
- 225 Auxiliaries on Naval Service;
- 214 Minesweepers, including 24 from Harwich, HMT Dane’s base;
- 259 Merchant Vessels, with a further 84 damaged
- 63 Fishing Vessels

During the Great War, the Germans laid 22,067 Mines in the North Sea and a total of 43,646 in all areas, whilst the British laid 112,354 and 128,652 respectively. Of these the British destroyed 10,700 enemy mines in Home Waters during hostilities.

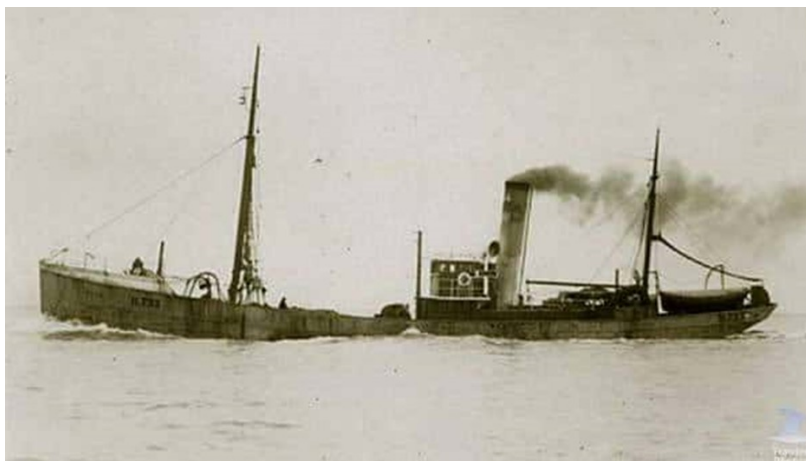
By November 1918 the Navy could muster 726 Minesweepers – purpose built or requisitioned, 412 being Trawlers – across 26 home ports and 35 ports abroad.

Clearly there was a fairly rapid learning curve as in 1914 one vessel (of all types) was lost per mine destroyed, by 1917 this had improved to 28 mines per vessel lost and in 1918 85 mines destroyed per vessel lost.

The result of all this effort was that the supply of the Western Front from home was never interrupted, which makes the Minesweeping efforts one of the success stories of the Great War.

## HMT Dane

As can be seen from the above, the Dane was one of a great many requisitioned Trawlers. She was quite modern, having been launched in 1913 at the Cochrane & Sons shipyard in Selby for the “D” Line Steam Fishing Co. Given the parlous state of our current fishing industry it is hard to imagine the numbers of Trawlers in service pre-War. Cochrane and Sons could build 8 at a time using a version of assembly line construction and had full order books.





There is no on line picture of the Dane that I have been able to source, but the photo is a very similar Trawler in terms of Gross Tonnage (265 Tons), age and size (130 feet long, 23 feet beam and 12.2 feet draught). Dane was powered by a 3-cylinder triple expansion engine, with 1 boiler, 1 shaft and 1 screw providing a maximum speed of 10 knots. Her registration was GY 947 (GY being Grimsby, not, as I had thought, Great Yarmouth!).

Dane was requisitioned in April 1915 as an Auxiliary Patrol Vessel and was based at Harwich in a group commanded by Lt. Parker RNR. Her Admiralty Number was 1446. Her loss occurred at 07:50 on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1915 1 mile North West of the North Aldeburgh Napes Buoy at 52.10.08 N, 01.41.06 E as she struck a Mine laid by the Submarine Minelayer UC6 commanded by Matthias Graf von Schmettow.

The Germans had unleashed these submarine Minelayers in April 1915. Built in Germany, these 170-ton vessels were dismantled and re-assembled in Antwerp or Pola, rather like an early IKEA kit. They were crewed by one Officer and 13 crew. They carried 12 cylindrical mines in 2 tubes and were grossly underpowered, being unable to make way against the current in the Dover straights. However, by the end of the War, 90% of German Mines in Home Waters had been laid by such vessels. UC-6 carried out 89 patrols until hitting an explosive anti-submarine net on 27<sup>th</sup> September 1917. Her mines accounted for 36 Merchant Ships sunk and 7 damaged along with 19 warships sunk (Including HMT Dane) and 2 damaged.

## Crew of HMT Dane

As regards the Crew, there seems to be some confusion and missing information. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions I have been unable to check the local newspaper archives to see if there is more definitive information there. On-line sources mention “4 ratings lost, 1 more died of wounds, 8 killed” but I can only trace 5 named casualties, none of which are of “Skipper” rank. Those named are:

Seaman **CARRADICE**, (Served as **WILSON**) RNVR No 7929/A, CWGC grave in Ss Peter & Paul Churchyard, Aldeburgh.

Deckhand **HOWARD**, Arthur Horace Samuel (18) RNVR No 4399/DA, CWGC grave in Caister Old Cemetery (He is the one rescued, but died of wounds).

Deckhand **POTTER** (32) RNVR No 6356/DA, Son of George S Potter of 4 Lime St., Yoxford . CWGC grave in Ss Peter & Paul Churchyard, Aldeburgh.

Engineman **PRETIOUS**, James William (41) RNVR No 2795/ES. Husband of Ellen Pretious of 25 Freeston St., New Cleethorpes, Lincs. Listed on Chatham Naval Memorial to the Missing.

Deckhand **WILKINS**, Ernest (21) RNVR No 7433/DA Son of Anna Wilkins of Lessingham, Norwich and the late Robert Wilkins. Listed on Chatham Naval Memorial to the Missing.

Assuming a crew of 8, there are 3 names missing, including the Skipper, and no mention of a Stoker nor any gun crew (Assuming HMT Dane was armed, at least with Machine Guns). The CWGC lists no other local Naval casualties for 28<sup>th</sup> August 1915, so currently this remains something of a mystery. Did the other 3 survive? As an average, for each Trawler sunk in action, half the crew were lost so this may be the answer. Until the COVID-19 lock-down is removed sufficiently for me to get to Suffolk Records Office and investigate the local Newspaper Archive this seems to be as far as I can progress! At that time I will also visit Ss Peter & Paul Churchyard in Aldeburgh and Caister Old Cemetery. Hopefully, in the not too distant future, I will also be able to get to the Chatham Naval Memorial.

## Conclusion

HMT Dane was one of a great many craft brought in to fight the menace of German Mines. Despite serious losses, they were highly successful, especially in the later stages of the Great War. Their losses are minute compared to those on the Western Front, but without their efforts, the Western Front could have been starved of supplies and reinforcements. Those efforts are now largely forgotten, although I note that one of the Presentations at the (cancelled) WFA AGM was to have been on this very subject.

As for Grandad Fred, his luck held throughout the Great War, and again in World War II, where he ended the War as a Ground Crew Flight Sergeant servicing fighters whose base had progressed as far as Belgium.

Fred was a fairly grumpy curmudgeon in my memory! Nonetheless, I wish I had taken the opportunity to find out about his exploits before it was too late.

## **GET TO KNOW YOUR FELLOW BRANCH MEMBERS** Dave Hedges

I would be delighted if you would send me a picture and a write up

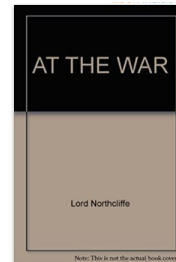
None submitted this month. Now with many of you in a state of enforced idleness perhaps you could send a miniature 'This is Your Life'. Where's Eamonn Andrews when you need him.

\*\*\*

### **BOOK REVIEW** Colin Garwood

This is a follow up to Colin's article in the May edition

#### **At the War** by Lord Northcliffe (2)



When I read the digital version on the May branch Briefing I was about to email the Editor to protest that he had left out half of my article on At The War by Lord Northcliffe, but realised that due to carelessness, stupidity or technical incompetence I had sent my original draft instead of a the final version. I trust that the offering below will add something to last month's article.

I should have made clear that the two references to Suffolk involved Alumni of Sudbury Grammar School. Sir Leander Starr Jameson mentioned as directing the despatch of Red Cross Parcels and his brother had attended Sudbury Grammar School while their father Robert William Jameson was the editor of the Suffolk Free Press, although the family may have lived in Friars Street Sudbury for less than 4 years before moving to London, where Leander studied medicine at University College. [Our editor referred to a possible speaker linking the Boer War to the Great War. One of my heroes Captain Robert Valentine Dolby Regimental Surgeon to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings Own Scottish Borderers captured at the Aisne learnt his trade in South Africa. As a medical student he had volunteered as a "dresser.]"

Henry Wickham Steed who had accompanied Northcliffe was born in Long Melford and attended Sudbury Grammar School, where he would have been introduced to foreign languages, but must have honed his linguistic ability during studies at the Universities of Berlin (1892) and Paris (1893).

The original article mentioned a subject not particularly well known in Western Front circles, but which had appeared in STAND TO No 117, February 2020.

The chapters dealing with neutral countries covered POWs interned in Switzerland, a subject featured in STAND TO as an article p34, and a book review p47, of a memoir of a Canadian interned at Murren, which Northcliffe had visited, in all likelihood at the same time.

Copies of the book can be found on the internet varying in price from £3.00 to well over £100 for signed copies. Much of the text of this book is reproduced in Lord Northcliffe's War Book published in 1917 for the American market to raise dollars for the American Red Cross, and which includes sections on the American involvement in the war. That edition can be accessed at:

<https://archive.org/details/lordnorthcliffes01nort/page/n8/mode/2up>

Regrettably it does not mention Jameson, or POWs interned in Switzerland.



**7738 CSM Arthur McGough DCM, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Suffolk Regiment**

Arthur McGough was born on the 14<sup>th</sup> July 1878 in Everton, Liverpool, the son of Owen and Annie McGough. In 1881 he was with his family at 23 Back Canterbury Street, Everton. It seems that his mother had died in 1885 and his father in 1890 so at age 12 Arthur was taken into the Beacon Lane Orphanage and Industrial School.



Opened in 1862 the orphanage grew to accommodate over 200 boys of all ages. Here they were given schooling but also trained in tailoring, shoemaking and carpentry. Unlike the typical picture of a Victorian orphanage, this one included activities such as band practice, football, visits to the local park and even two weeks under canvas on the coast. The boys were given drill instruction by Sergeant Wall of the Liverpool Schoolboard.

Arthur enlisted in the Militia (4<sup>th</sup> Battalion Liverpool Regiment) as Private No 3527 on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1896 but later, in July, was admitted to the workhouse suffering from a “cerebral” disease. Whatever this was could not have been too serious as he was discharged after just 11 days.

He attended the Militia’s annual training in 1896 but appears to have only spent 49 days in their ranks in total. Shortly after, he enlisted in the West Yorkshire Regiment as Private No 4857.

The 1911 Census finds him as a sergeant at Barrossa Barracks, Aldershot with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Suffolk Regiment. His trade was “Shoemaker”.

Arthur married Ada Ellen Reeve in Battersea on the 27<sup>th</sup> January 1912.

He crossed to France with the Battalion on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1914 and was awarded the DCM - presented by Major-General Haldane on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1915, while in the Vierstraat area:

7738 A/CQMS A. McGOUGH 2nd Bn.

For gallantry and coolness under fire on all occasions. Has performed exceptionally good work during the campaign, and has set a fine example. (1.4.15)

CSM McGough was killed while the battalion was in trenches near Hooze, on the 18<sup>th</sup> June 1915.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission record has the following information:

“Husband of Ada Ellen McGough, of 58, Harbut Rd., Clapham Junction, London. Served in the South African Campaign.” He is commemorated on the Menin Gate, Panel 21.

**THEY SHALL GROW NOT OLD ....**

**Talks at the Norwich Branch**

**Postponed for the Duration !!**

**Our next month’s talks**

**Postponed for the Duration !!**

Please send any contributions for the **Branch Briefing** to:

David Hedges, 99 Cliff Road, Felixstowe, Suffolk, IP11 9SA

telephone: 01394 272677 and email: david.j.hedges@btopenworld.com

Next Committee meeting: tba

Approach a committee member if you want any issue raised.