



WFA SUFFOLK BRANCH

Branch Briefing

September 2020

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Special Email Edition ! (6)

Private 2518, John Hervey Wiggin, 5th Battalion, Suffolk Regiment Kelvin Dakin

112, Company Sergeant Major, Wilfred Samuel Hunt, 5th Battalion, Suffolk Regiment

Wilfred Hunt was born in Sudbury in 1878, the son of Samuel and Celia Hunt. His father was a chemist and the family lived 'over the shop' at 37 Market Hill. His father died in 1884 and Wilfred was sent to school at the Reedham Asylum for Fatherless Children in Purley, Surrey. By 1901 Wilfred was boarding at 1 Girton Terrace, Sudbury, and employed as a Clerk at a mat factory. He married Eleanor Frances Parmenter in 1910 and they lived at 'River View' in Cornard Road.

Wilfred went on to become a manager at William Armes, the matting factory in Cornard Road - the factory owned by the Battalion's Commanding Officer, Lt Colonel William Morriss Armes*.

Wilfred enlisted in Sudbury in 1908 and was promoted to Colour Sergeant in 1914. He landed with the Battalion at Suvla Bay on the 10th August 1915.

In September the battalion was at Hill 60 and on the 15th they took over Norfolk Trench. Wilfred was killed during an attack by the Turks on the 18th and 19th.

His widow received a letter from Captain B E Oliver, an extract was printed in the Suffolk and Essex Free Press on 13 October 1915:

'It may be of some slight comfort to you to know that he died doing his duty, and also to hear that without exception he was the best man in the Battalion, and his loss is the greatest blow which my company could receive. Being my Company Sgt-Major I have been in the closest contact with him, and I may say that I never want to meet a finer character nor a better personal friend. No one knows more than I what he has done for this company and Battalion: and quite apart from his value as a soldier his loss has been greatest personal blow to me since we have been out here: in fact it has cast a deep gloom over the whole battalion. I know you will want to hear how he died so I will tell you briefly. We had been for three days in the trenches and were about to be relieved at five o'clock last night (Sept 18th), when the Turks started a rather severe artillery bombardment and a heavy musketry fire all along the line. I was in charge of the trench and was sitting in my "dug out" with your husband and my cousin, Capt C.M. Oliver who was about to relieve us. We all three rushed out to get into the fire trench, your husband following me. On reaching the fire trench I went along to the right and never saw your husband alive again. He went to the left and was standing close to my cousin when he was suddenly struck in the face either by a piece of shell or a ricocheting bullet, I cannot tell which. It may be some comfort to you to know that he did not suffer, as he was killed instantaneously. We buried him last night by moonlight, the service being conducted by our chaplain, Capt Rev Pierrepont Edwards. I am having a wooden cross put over his grave.'

CSM Hunt is buried in Hill 60 Cemetery, Turkey. (Picture from CWGC website)

He is remembered on the Sudbury and Great Cornard War Memorials and as a member of the Sudbury Conservative Club his name was recorded on their Roll of Honour.

Information adapted from the Sudbury Museum Trust website at www.sudburysuffolk.co.uk/greatwar/

*Lt Col Armes was killed on the 12th August see: www.friendsofthesuffolkregiment.org/operation-legacy/archives/08-2015



THE DOUBLE DOG TAG Dave Hedges

The CWGC are producing interesting articles on their website <http://blog.cwgc.org/> and I was sent this one by Arlene King from Beaumont Hamel Memorial Park. Arlene is due to retire in October after many years, more about this next month.

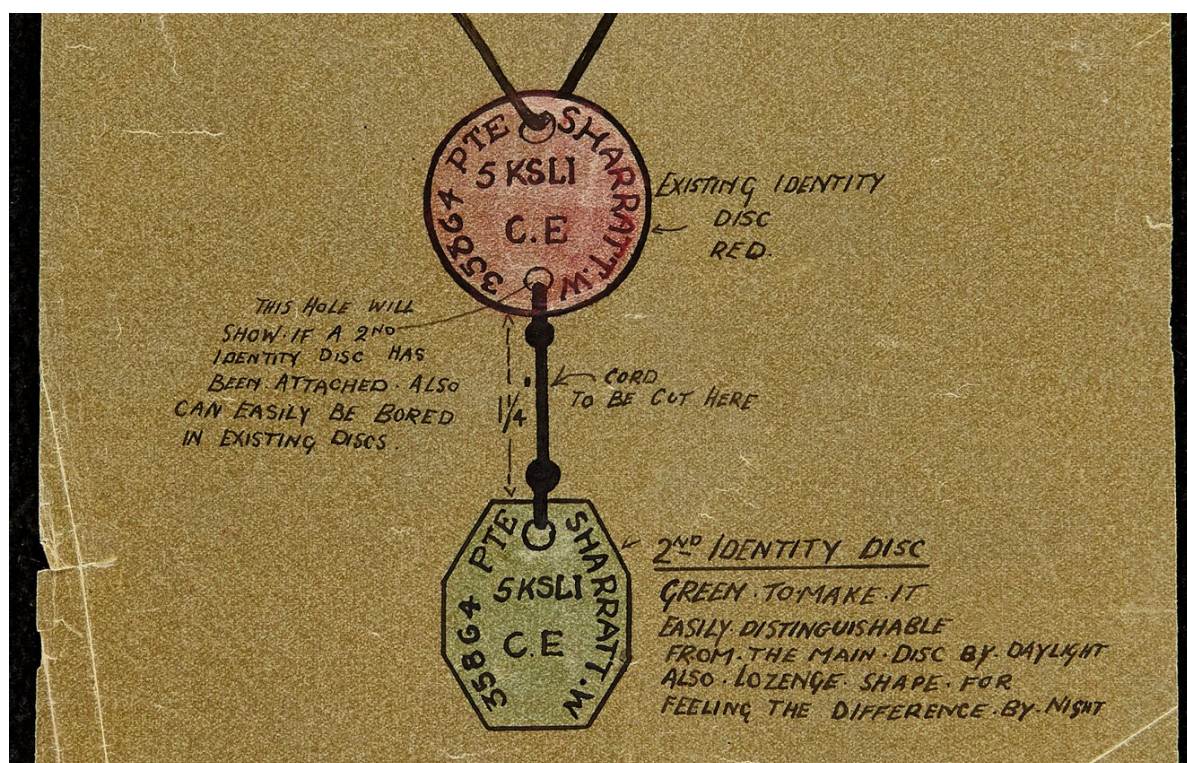
THE STORY OF THE DOUBLE DOG TAG



Sarah Ashbridge

PHD Researcher,
University of Huddersfield

This week Sarah Ashbridge, a Researcher from the University of Huddersfield, explores how the Commission's founder, Fabian Ware, was involved in the development of an iconic piece of military equipment used during both World Wars, which played a vital role in the work of Commission staff – the 1916 double identity disc or 'dog tag'.



In 1914 the British Army had introduced a single fibre identity disc, replacing the 1907 aluminium disc. It was to be worn around the soldier's neck, beneath their clothing, and if they died, the disc was to be removed and returned to confirm the death. Soon into the war it became clear that removing the disc left the dead unidentifiable.

In May 1916, Temporary Major Arthur Albert Messer of the Directorate of Graves Registration and Enquiries wrote to Adjutant General to the Forces, Nevil Macready, on behalf of Fabian Ware to address these difficulties in the field, making a proposal for the provision of two identity discs, as had been introduced by the French to remedy the issue of unidentifiable soldiers on the battlefield.

Through Messer, Ware reminded Macready that he had previously proposed a similar scheme which had been rejected as there '*were serious reasons for doubting if British soldiers would adapt themselves to the system*'. However, as it had been found to '*work satisfactorily in the French Army*', it was hoped that the idea might be considered once again as '*the number of graves which are unknown owing to this cause is very considerable*'. Ware also consulted the armies on the matter, with all replying in favour of a new duplicate disc scheme.

ask your consideration of the following points :-

- (i) Identity discs are frequently removed at the time of death as evidence of death, and, when casualties are heavy, many bodies are not buried for some days; or it may even be weeks, as in the case of the Battle of Loos, when burying in some parts of the field of battle was stopped by the Corps General for military reasons.
- (ii) When burying parties are eventually able to carry out their work, it is found that numbers of bodies bear no mark of identification, so that the identity ~~of~~ of many is never established.
- (iii) The provision of two discs (a system which has been introduced by the French during the present war), one of which is left on the body until the moment of actual burial, would seem to be the only practical means by which in these cases identity at the time of burial could be ensured and the grave marked in the usual way.

I raised this question on a former occasion, when

Excerpt of Letter from Major A.A. Messer to the Adjutant General, 16 May 1916, CWGC/1/1/34/18 Directorate Of Graves Registration And Enquiries: File 18 - Scheme for duplicate identity discs (SDC4)

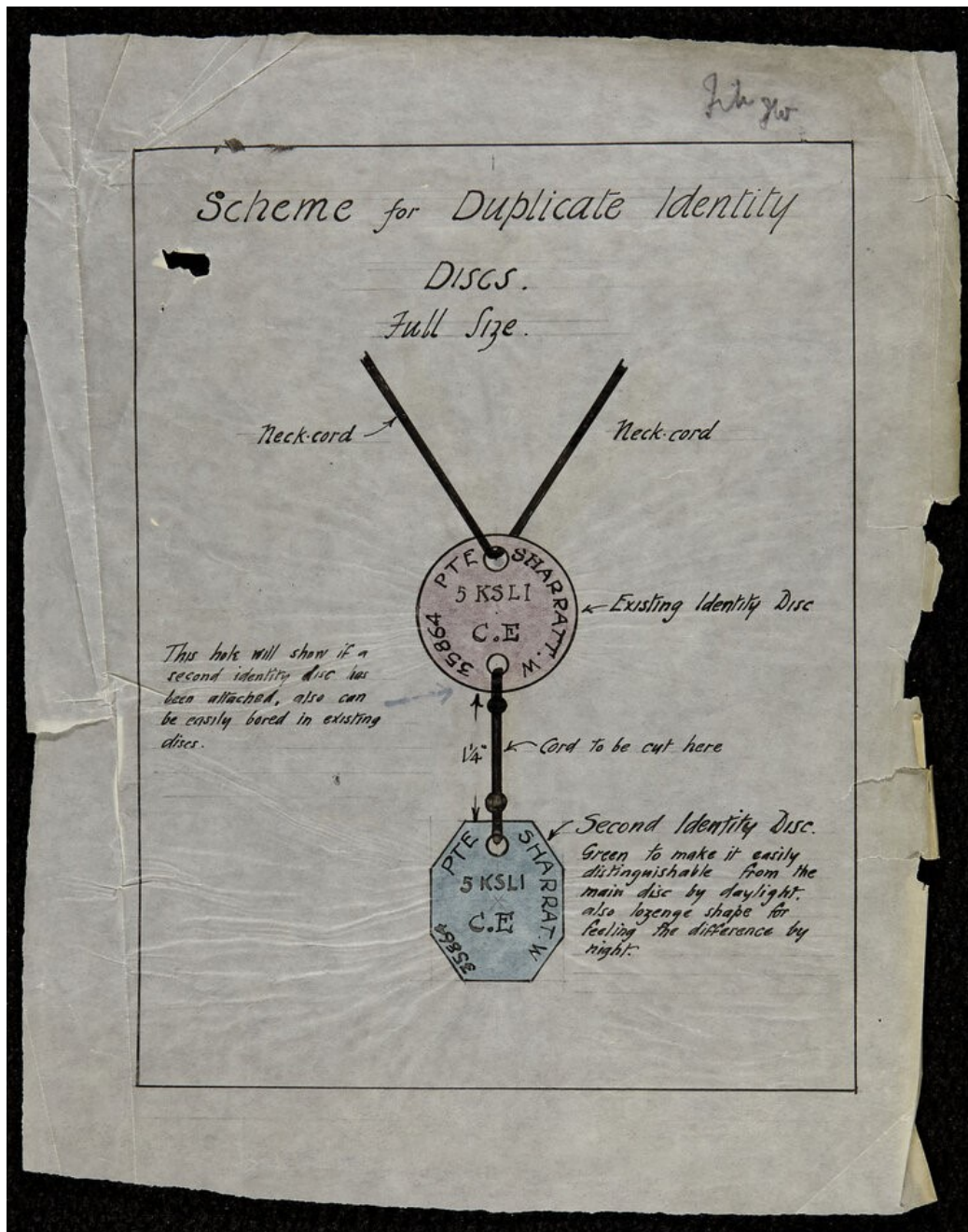
As a result of Ware's consultation, it was decided that the French system of two discs, with one worn around the neck and one worn upon the wrist, would 'not be suitable' for the British Army, as where the French had been able to rapidly supply the second disc to men in the field.

Ware sketched a design for a two-disc system, which included a new octagonal, green disc, worn suspended from the original red disc by a short piece of cord. The lower disc would be removed '*for the purpose of evidence of death*' and the original upper disc would remain on the body to be removed at the time of burial when a grave marker would be placed to help to ensure that the soldier was identifiable in the future.

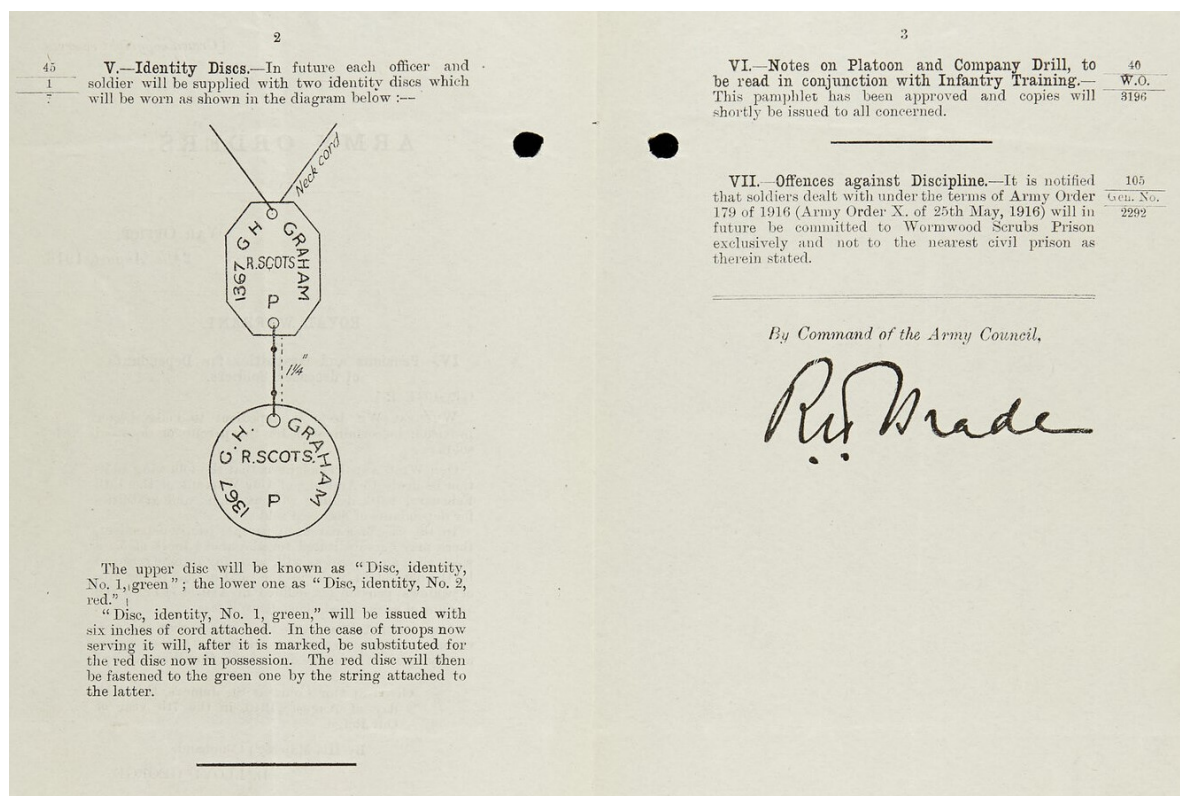
The shape of the new disc, and the additional holes punched into the existing round disc would allow any searcher to feel the disc in times when vision was limited, to ascertain whether the death was recent or if it was an older disc.

The scheme was approved on the 24th June 1916, and four million green discs were ordered, to be fitted with cord by the contractor. All orders for new red discs were to be amended to feature the additional hole at the base of the disc, and existing red discs in stores were to be perforated in the same way.

The double identity disc scheme was announced to soldiers in an Army Order on 24th August 1916. The order described the discs which each officer and soldier would be supplied with 'in future'. The drawing of the discs features the same discs depicted in the original design; however, the location of the discs had been reversed. There are no surviving documents which confirm the reason for this change, but from the information given in Major Courage's letter to Ware, we can presume that this switch removed the requirement to punch an additional hole in the existing red disc which would save both time and money, allowing the discs to reach soldiers in a more timely manner.



Scheme for Duplicate Identity Discs (undated),
CWGC/1/1/1/34/18 Directorate Of Graves Registration And Enquiries:
 File 18 - Scheme for duplicate identity discs (SDC4)



**Description of the new identity discs,
published 24th August,
CWGC/1/1/1/34/18 Directorate Of Graves Registration And Enquiries:
File 18 - Scheme for duplicate identity discs (SDC4)**

By September, soldiers were instructed that in the case of the death of a soldier or an officer, the lower red disc should be removed, though the upper green disc was not to be removed and should be buried with the body. Where a body could be reached and identified, but not buried at the time, the lower red disc was still to be removed *'to ensure proper notification of death'*, with the upper green disc remaining *'as a safeguard against loss of identity'* in the future when burial might be possible.

Despite this warning, it would be months before the new discs were ready for dispatch. On 12th November 1916, Ware wrote again to Macready asking if there was anything that could be done to *'expedite the issue of the new double identity discs to troops in the fighting line'*, reiterating the large numbers of unidentifiable dead found in recent months due to *'the want of the second disc'*.

Ware received a reply a few days later, stating that 200,000 new discs had arrived in France and were being distributed at a rate of 50,000 a week. By the 1st December it was reported that 1,067,000 new discs had been issued to France, with a further 690,000 owed. It was expected that the order would be fulfilled within a further four weeks.

CWGC archival documents allow us to witness the speedy design process of a new piece of kit in the British Army, with Ware acting as a facilitator on behalf of the Armies in order to initiate change. This resulted in the creation of one of the most iconic pieces of military kit, recognised by even those with little knowledge about the war.

In the Spring of 1920, the Imperial War Graves Commission would come to the conclusion that the fibre identity discs had *'not proved satisfactory'* as the discs had turned to pulp when exposed to the elements or left upon a decomposing body.[1] Despite this knowledge, the 1916 double identity disc was used until long after the conclusion of World War 2, with no recorded efforts to improve the disc material.

[1] CWGC/2/2/1/22 Commission Meeting No.22 April 1920

An unusual commemoration?

This story about Pte Wilfred Henry Green was found on the Hintlesham War Memorial website. Has anyone come across similar incidents where soldiers, who died long after the war was over, were commemorated by their community?

<http://hintleshamwarmemorial.com/hintlesham-ww1/>

Pte Wilfred H Green 5232 / 202042 Suffolk Regiment

Died 26 April 1924 aged 32

Wilfred Henry Green was born and baptised in Hintlesham in 1891, the son of David and Annie Green. In the 1911 census, his occupation was listed as domestic gardener and he was living with his parents in Duke Street.

Wilfred married Gertrude in 1914 and served with the Suffolk Regiment. He survived the war and according to family members he was a prisoner of war. He returned to Hintlesham, but in 1924 died as a result of his physical and mental injuries. At the time of his death, it must have been felt he was as much a “casualty” of the war as those named on the memorial and his name was added at least 4 years after the memorial was unveiled.

Wilfred is buried in the graveyard adjacent to the war memorial at St Nicholas Church in Hintlesham. The gravestone was fading and heavily covered in moss, but after cleaning it is now possible to make out the regimental crest of the Suffolk Regiment. In spring, daffodils and primroses grow on the grave (see photo). Whether Wilfred was buried next to the memorial by purpose, or accident, it is nice to think of Wilfred resting close to his comrades from Hintlesham.

Wilfred’s brother, Sidney, also died in the Great War.

Wilfred was indeed a Prisoner of War as detailed in the four entries found in the International Red Cross records:

m. de Suley *Langenwalsen* **2 JUN 1917** *Langenwalsen* **P.A. 11106**

1	2	3	4	5	6
Efd. Nr.	a) Familienname b) Vorname (nur der Rufname) c) nur bei Russen Vorname des Vaters	Dienstgrad	a) Truppen- b) teil c) Komp.	a) Gefangennahme b) (Ort und Tag) c) vorhergehender Aufenthaltsort	a) Geburtstag und -Ort b) Adresse des nächsten c) Verwandten

fr. de Suley *Darmstadt* **20 JUN 1917** *Darmstadt* **P.A. 11756**

1	2	3	4	5	6
Efd. Nr.	a) Familienname b) Vorname (nur der Rufname) c) nur bei Russen Vorname des Vaters	Dienstgrad	a) Truppen- b) teil c) Komp.	a) Gefangennahme b) (Ort und Tag) c) vorhergehender Aufenthaltsort	a) Geburtstag und -Ort b) Adresse des nächsten c) Verwandten
a) 43.	Green Wilfrid	sold.	4. Suffolk	23.4.17. Arras	23.8.91. Hintlesham
b) X			ks.	Kr. Gef. Laz. Langen	Dep. Suffolk. Frau
c)			A.	salza.	Gertrude geb. Dyer i. Hintlesham.

Griffel 21 JUL 1917 P.A. 12914

1	2	3	4	5	6
Efd. Nr.	a) Familienname b) Vorname (nur der Rufname) c) nur bei Russen Vorname des Vaters	Dienstgrad	a) Gruppen- b) teil c) Romp.	a) Gefangennahme b) (Ort und Tag) c) vorhergehender Aufenthaltsort	a) Geburtstag und -Ort b) Adresse des nächsten c) Verwandten
					<i>Limburg</i>

Green 4 SEP 1917 P.A. 14371

1	2	3	4	5	6
Efd. Nr.	a) Familienname b) Vorname (nur der Rufname) c) nur bei Russen Vorname des Vaters	Dienstgrad	a) Gruppen- b) teil c) Romp.	a) Gefangennahme b) (Ort und Tag) c) vorhergehender Aufenthaltsort	a) Geburtstag und -Ort b) Adresse des nächsten c) Verwandten
a) 10 b) X c)	<i>Green</i> <i>Wilfrid</i> <i>5232</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>4</i> <i>Suffolk</i> <i>A</i>	<i>23-4-17 Arras</i> <i>Verw. Knockel</i> <i>Laz Darmstadt</i>	<i>23-3-92 Hintlesham</i> <i>Mrs Green- Duke St</i> <i>Hintlesham</i> <i>Suffolk</i>

(Wilfred was born in 1891 and not 1892 as in some of the records)

Wilfred's gravestone in Hintlesham churchyard and his name on the memorial:



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:
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Next Committee meeting: tba
Approach a committee member if you want any issue raised.