

## They Gave Their Todays...

*11 is an inauspicious number. A small village like Hinton has 11 names on its roll of honour – and yes 8 of them relate to the conflict that started with the expiration of an ultimatum at 11pm and ended at 11am on the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the 11<sup>th</sup> month, 1918.*

*The impact on our small community 100 years ago would have been enormous; and the personal stories of each and every household affected lie often untold. This was a generation that knew nothing of antibiotics, let alone PTSD or counselling.*

*In 1911 Hinton had a population of 147: 31 families; 62 men and 85 women; fairly static according to the 1901 statistics. But this was no straw chewing, bunch of yokels watching larks rise. It was a vibrant mix of Londoners, farmers, farm-hands and artisans, judges, imperial warriors, single mothers, hunters and traders.*

*No change there then.*



*[I have been unable as yet to look into every regimental history for the names listed as I would have liked by 11/11/2014. No slight is intended for those on the 'to do list'; far from it. If you knew the individuals concerned or can add more to their coverage here, please let me know by email: [dj@reallybusy.co.uk](mailto:dj@reallybusy.co.uk). I have used regimental histories where possible, but if for any reason you feel anything is unclear or in error, do let me know and we'll be happy to dig deeper; 'facts' are rarely simple here.]*

## John Bower HARMAN

*Second Lieutenant, 29th Battery, 42nd Brigade, Royal Field Artillery, 3rd Division.*

*He was killed in action on 26 August 1914 in the Retreat from Mons. He was 21.*

*He was the son of the late Colonel James F Harman RA and of Ellen S Harman.*

*He is buried in grave Sp Mem B 7 Caudry. Old Communal Cemetery, near Cambrai.*

John was no Kitchener-draft recruit; he was lining up for a professional soldier's career and had joined up before the war. Perhaps more interestingly he had achieved on the 15<sup>th</sup> April 1914 his 'Aviator's Certificate' in a Bristol Biplane on Salisbury Plane. This young man had a future as a spotter and in reconnaissance, more than an aspirant RFC pilot. Born in France in 1893, John came from an army family and was doing his homework well; artillery had progressed massively since the Boer war and the potential for 'spotting' aircraft was already pressing. John was clearly ambitious to be more than a simple driver. Horsemanship here was of a very high order, and the heavysset horses preferred could be a real handful. But second lieutenants are ten a penny and he was still on the bottom rung of the officer ladder. He was about to get a crash course and he passed several severe tests; but the odds were stacked against an entry level young officer.

There were several categories of 'driver' and a battery would have some 70 in all; in action they would be the chaps mounted as shown below – always in the thick of it. Biplanes had only just moved from Wright-brother style frames to early 'string bags' like the above Bristol in 1914 and John would have been trained on some very rickety 'kites'; not for the faint hearted.

Most will be more familiar with the Royal Horse Artillery, but the Royal Field Artillery were similarly equipped. A battery would be 6 guns, typically with 18 pounder field guns and a capability to deploy 1000 shells when in divisional contact. The field artillery's role was to support the army, usually tackling both counter battery work and anti-



THE BRISTOL TRACTOR BIPLANE. 70-H.P. PHOTO BY T. L. FULLER, AMESBURY, SALISBURY PLAIN.



personnel shelling. [Opposite: German infantry advancing a few weeks before Mons, 7<sup>th</sup> August 1914. Below: an RFA unit using the reverse slope/lie of the land for cover (often in short supply).]



Attached to the XLII (42<sup>nd</sup>) Brigade his unit (29<sup>th</sup> Battery) were thrown into the thick of the fighting within hours of the war being declared. Mobilisation plans from the 4<sup>th</sup>

August had been kept secret and actually worked extremely well. The Schlieffen plan had been to throw the bulk of the German forces at the join between the French and British armies as they concentrated and to seek to sweep down through Belgium to Paris, knocking the French (and British) out of the war effectively (so the Germans could turn on Russia). This meant the British forces to the north were invariably outnumbered and on the back foot. The

Kaiser had been contemptuous of Britain's small professional army, but it was led by Boer war veterans and was to prove intractable throughout the actions in the late summer of 1914.



Mons was a battle of similar size and scope to the battle of Waterloo. It was the prelude to a series of retreats over 250 miles in the coming months, but the rear-guard actions fought

especially by the artillery and cavalry units are now the stuff of legend. Having fought through 2 hard days at Mons on 23-24<sup>th</sup> August, the retreat from the 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> August was particularly hard fought, and the field artillery were in the thick of it. 29<sup>th</sup> Battery fought again at Solesmes on the 25<sup>th</sup> and the battle of le Cateau on the 26<sup>th</sup>, the date John died. Using shrapnel to break up and delay the advancing Germans, the ferocity and toll taken is shown by the British losing 38 field guns, something artillery men will wince at, as the loss of any artillery piece is always a major set-back. But it bought time. This is when the 4<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards nearby deliberately made a mounted charge to buy hours for retreating infantry. The RFA were equally exposed, often unable to make any attempt at camouflage or use of terrain to shield their position and they had been ordered to maintain fire on advancing infantry despite effective counter battery fire from the Germans. The picture of a sister unit below shows what happens when caught in the open by enemy guns where cover was scarce.

John's team were not only in the thick of it, but he would probably have had a particularly exposed role as either a driver or a spotter (or both). This was one of a series of actions that gave the advancing Germans a bloody nose, but it cost the BEF over 7800 men that day alone. Reports speak of their deployment inflicting much heavier casualties on advancing infantry, although they were hard pressed by counter battery fire. The lessons learned quickly (and hard) from 1914 for artillery were that firing in line of sight was becoming impossible and the observer role was crucial when guns were firing either longer ranges or from hidden positions. John paid the highest price for this crucial piece of tactical development. During this period the artillery scope changed from the equivalent of firing

from Hinton into Brackley (the 1914 norm), to then hitting Syresham, and within a very short time even Towcester.



The sacrifice not just at Mons and le Cateau of the men of the BEF has often been overshadowed by the later battles, but it should not be. 26 years later we were unable to achieve what they did over the same adversary and ground. It is heartening to think, however, that a lad like John would find around Hinton now both horsemanship and piloting skills to admire, long before a runway was ever dreamt of across the fields he grew up in.

# Frank William WOOTTON

*Private, 15th Battalion, Australian Infantry, Australian Imperial Force, 4 Brigade. Army no. 1369. He died on 8 May 1915. He was 23. He was a native of Hinton in the Hedges and the son of Henry Wootton, High Street, Brackley and the late Harriet A Wootton. He is remembered on panel 50, Lone Pine Memorial, Gallipoli.*

*The 15th Battalion was raised from late September 1914 and three-quarters of the battalion were from Queensland and the rest from Tasmania. 4 Brigade landed in Gallipoli late in the afternoon of 25 April 1915.*

*From May the battalion was heavily involved in establishing and defending the front line of the ANZAC beachhead north of Gaba Tepe on the west coast. The Lone Pine Memorial stands on the site of the fiercest fighting and overlooks the whole front line of May 1915. It commemorates more than 4,900 Australian and New Zealand servicemen who died in this, the Anzac area.*

## AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE—NOMINAL ROLL—continued.

Enth. No.	Name (in full)	Rank	Age	Trade or Calling	Married or Single	Address at Date of Enrolment	Next of Kin and Address	Religion	Date of Joining	A.M.F. Unit Serving as at Date of Enrolment	Pay					
											Before Embarkation		After Embarkation			Daily Rate of Interest Pay, only payable on Completion of Service with Expeditionary Force.
											Rate per Diem	Date to which Paid	Daily Rate, excluding Deceased Pay	Allowment in Australia per Diem	Net Rate, not including Allowance of Interest Pay	
s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.												
15th INFANTRY BATTALION—"A" COMPANY—continued.																
204	Tickner, Roy ..	Sergeant ..	22	Labourer	S.	23 Copeland-street, Alexandria, N.S.W.	Mrs. Alice Tickner, mother, 23 Copeland-street, Alexandria, N.S.W.	C. of E.	24.9.14	...	10 0	...	8 6	6 6	2 0	2 0
205	Tilley, Edward William Rankin	Private ..	21	Surveyor's assistant	S.	Venus Mill, Charters Towers, Queensland	John Tilley, father, Charters Towers, Queensland	C. of E.	21.9.14	...	5 0	...	5 0	5 0	..	1 0
206	Thomson, Albert James ..	" ..	33	Labourer	S.	Beach-street, Dulwich Hill, Sydney, N.S.W.	John Turnbull, uncle, Beach-street, Dulwich Hill, Sydney, N.S.W.	Pres.	1.11.14	...	5 0	...	5 0	2 6	2 6	1 0
207	Watson, Keith ..	L./Corporal	20	Clerk ..	S.	Sydney-street, Eagle Junction, Brisbane, Qld.	Elijah Watson, father, Crossington, Sydney-street, Eagle Junction, Brisbane, Queensland	C. of E.	17.9.14	...	5 0	...	5 0	2 0	3 0	1 0
208	Watts, George ..	Private ..	31	Miner ..	S.	..	Thomas Watts, brother, 25 Byggn-road, Llanelly, Wales, England	C. of E.	28.9.14	...	5 0	...	5 0	2 0	3 0	1 0
209	Wertheimer, Arnold Talbot	" ..	21	Assistant surveyor	S.	Essex House, Belleve, Tasmania	Mrs. Sara Wertheimer, mother, Essex House, Belleve, Tasmania	C. of E.	..	...	5 0	...	5 0	3 0	2 0	1 0
210	West, Harold ..	" ..	22	Labourer	S.	Marling Station, Prairie, North Queensland	Mrs. Millicent Kent, mother, Marling Station, Prairie, North Queensland	R.C.	"	...	5 0	...	5 0	3 0	2 0	1 0
211	Westaway, George ..	" ..	27	Platelaye	S.	Bairnsdale, Victoria	Mrs. Susan Westaway, mother, Bairnsdale, Victoria	C. of E.	"	...	5 0	...	5 0	1 0	4 0	1 0
212	Weston, Thomas ..	" ..	21	Labourer	S.	Mokoan West, via Goornambat, Victoria	Mrs. Margaret Weston, mother, Mokoan, via Goornambat, Victoria	C. of E.	17.9.14	...	5 0	...	5 0	3 0	2 0	1 0
213	Wright, Alexander ..	" ..	29	Miner ..	S.	Millchester-road, Charters Towers, North Qld.	J. Wright, Millchester-road, Charters Towers, North Queensland	Pres.	"	...	5 0	...	5 0	2 0	3 0	1 0
215	Yates, John Edward ..	" ..	22	Stockman	S.	..	Mrs. Jemima Yates, mother, 20 Marine-parade, Brighton, Sussex, England	C. of E.	28.9.14	...	5 0	...	5 0	1 6	3 6	1 0
216	Yells, Cyril Alfred ..	" ..	20	Sugarworker	S.	..	Mrs. Annie Yells, mother, Richmond-road, Ponsonby, Auckland, N.Z.	Cong.	17.9.14	...	5 0	...	5 0	3 0	2 0	1 0
217	Irwin, Hamilton William	" ..	33	Chemist	S.	Selwyn, North Queensland	Mrs. Margaret Elliott, mother, Selwyn, Queensland	C. of E.	19.11.14	...	5 0	...	5 0	3 0	2 0	1 0
1302	Brown, Charles Richard ..	" ..	44	Miner ..	S.	Bourke, N.S.W. ..	Mrs. Jane Brown, Bourke, N.S.W. ..	Pres.	14.11.14	...	5 0	...	5 0	2 6	2 6	1 0
1324	Little, Norman Henry ..	" ..	19	Plumber	S.	Moffat-street, Ipswich, Queensland	William James Little, father, Moffat-street, Ipswich, Queensland	C. of E.	3.11.14	...	5 0	...	5 0	..	5 0	1 0
1369	Wootton, Frank William	" ..	22	Butcher	S.	..	Henry Wootton, father, High-street, Brackley, North Hants, England	C. of E.	23.11.14	...	5 0	...	5 0	3 6	1 6	1 0

It is odd that Hinton had two of its sons in Gallipoli, but it is partly explained by one sailing from Melbourne on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1914 while the other had a shorter hop to Zeebrugge. Frank (the butcher) had presumably made the decision to emigrate but returned without hesitation (as many did) on the outbreak of war. Aged 22 he signed up on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1914 with his chum, Norman Little from Ipswich, Queensland. The 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade was one of four volunteer brigades, the 15<sup>th</sup> battalion recruiting mostly from Queensland and Tasmania. They arrived in Gallipoli on the second day of the landing in April 1915 as the division's reserve, and Frank dying effectively within the first 2 weeks of this campaign reflects how tenuous its first perch on the beachhead was.

The landings are criticised for a lack of momentum in the first days, and dispassionately this can be understandable. However, when losses for the defenders were 100% in some cases, ie the Turks were prepared to sacrifice whole regiments to keep their positions (their 57<sup>th</sup> Regiment name no longer exists in honour of this sacrifice), and day 1 allied casualties ranged from 60-70% commonly, and often up to 90% or more, often with the elimination of the entire officer contingent, it is not hard to see why the attack stalled. D-day casualty rates were considerably lower, even on Omaha.



*In reserve on Gallipoli.*

Communications at the very least would have been difficult and whatever the valour available it is far from clear that throwing more men and munitions at it would have achieved any more.

It is likely that Frank Wootton was involved in the action to break the stalemate on the Helles front in the second battle of Krithia on 5-7<sup>th</sup> May. Some Anzac success on the other beachhead allowed the Australians to be redeployed here too. Facing heavy small arms resistance, a force of 20k troops attacked Krithia gaining 600 yards at the cost of 1000 men, one of whom was Frank. With depleted munitions, they had no option but to dig in.



It was an important position. Even though the (small) town had not been taken; when the Turks sought to retake it they lost 13000 men. But that's the point; the Turks chose to afford such massive losses. Here the shocked Allies are castigated, not the profligate Turks.

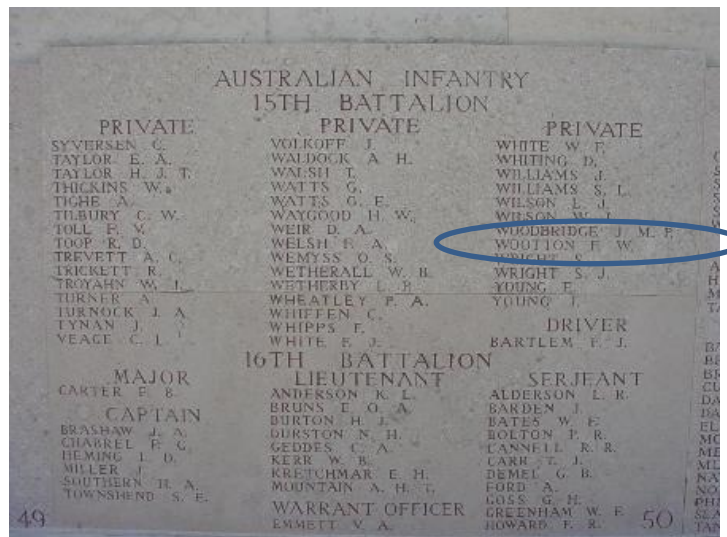
By January 1916 the Allies had taken the last man off the Turkish beaches. One Hinton lad would stay behind; another sailed to Alexandria (but that's another story).

*[The Lone Pine memorial bears the name of Frank.]*

They learned some hard lessons. Don't throw soldiers into a battle you've lost at sea. Don't underestimate your opponent. Always over-resource sea borne invasions. And more...

Hinton's émigré probably had no idea that he would not be carving out a life butchering sheep in Queensland for long. He played a key role in one of the events that gave momentum to the Australian independence movement, however.

He also took part in a campaign which got a certain Winston Churchill demoted from First Lord of the Admiralty (characteristically he resigned and headed for the command of an infantry batallion of the Royal Scots Fusilers active on the Western Front). The same Churchill would have been known to another of Hinton's fighting men. The Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars had a patron: the family resident in Blenheim. They looked on the QOOH as their own; Winston was a Major in it. The Oxford troop would be lucky enough not only to have Private Trinder and Sergeant North in their ranks, but also John Willoughby Scott commanding. Frank was in good company.



## Joseph ELLARD

*Private, 1st Battalion, The Northamptonshire Regiment, 1 Brigade, 2nd Division. Army no. 7937*

*He was killed in action during the battle of the Somme on 17 August 1916. He was 28.*

*He was the son of the late John and of Eunice E Ellard of Hinton-in-the-Hedges.*

*He is buried in Sp Mem A 3 Bazentin le Petit Communal Cemetery Extension, near Pozières.*

Getting into the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of a regiment is no mean feat; this is a fit and able lad in a family with no doubt some 'pull' in military circles. Answering the call for early recruits, he will have been at the front of the queue for what became known as the Kitchener battalions (Kitchener had a hunch this would not be over by Christmas). The medal roll below shows that he landed in the theatre of war on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1914. He was awarded the 14 Star accordingly, although later the clasp to the 14/15 Star was limited to those who technically were regulars at the outbreak of war, known as the 'Old Contemptibles'. The K/1 notation below shows him to be one of the Kitchener battalions serving in the western front (the '1', or first 'theatre').

He arrived in France during the 'race to the sea', a critical time when the final attempts to outflank the British position led to a dozen or more smaller and quite mobile actions from Arras to Zeebrugge. A Christmas of shovelling was a head of him, although he would get a tan in 1915. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion embarked at Liverpool for Suvla Bay in the Gallipoli campaign arriving on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1915 in time for the 'final push'. The unit was evacuated on 19<sup>th</sup> December to Alexandria (some of the first to be withdrawn), and this may explain how he ended up with Anzac and Commonwealth troop detachments on the Western Front in 1916.





There were many battles within 'the Somme' of which Pozierres and Flers-Courcelette were some of the most significant. Largely Anzac and Canadian units on this part of the front advanced 2-3km along a front of 11km (which was as good as it got in terms of Somme victories). Many think of Cambrai as the first tank battle now, but mark 1 tanks were evident here, and frankly a bit rubbish; horrible to work in, usually painfully slow, and artillery and machine gun magnets - their impact was a morale one more than tactical then, and largely throughout the war.

Possibly from wounds received at Pozieres (or possibly just through bad luck in between the

battles) Joseph died effectively in the thick of some of the hardest Somme fighting. He was fighting alongside the battle hardened troops from New Zealand that he'd shared the horrors of Gallipoli with. Once again traditional commentaries make much of the British commanders seeing the 'colonials' as needing professional (ie English) support ; but this is not borne out by the unit level commentaries where respect for the Anzacs and Canadians was very high. Joseph's story is more common and more realistic in that following losses, units would combine and reform several times over and mixed units and leadership became more common progressively (especially after Gallipoli). Canadians and Anzac units performed especially well in the Somme; Joseph would rightly have considered himself lucky to be with them.



Name	Corps	Rank	Regt. No.																
ELLARD Joseph	2nd Division R.	Pte	4934																
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Metal</th> <th>Roll</th> <th>Page</th> <th>Honour</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>VICTORY</td> <td>K/1/101 B<sup>th</sup></td> <td>1880</td> <td>K. in F.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>BRITISH</td> <td>-th-</td> <td>-th-</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>1st STAR</td> <td>K/1/1</td> <td>30</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Metal	Roll	Page	Honour	VICTORY	K/1/101 B <sup>th</sup>	1880	K. in F.	BRITISH	-th-	-th-		1st STAR	K/1/1	30	
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When you see the pictures of mangled tree stumps beside wrecked roads and cratered wire-strewn mud, this is usually a picture of the scene at Flers. It was a pivotal strategic position which threatened to turn the German flank; as such it was heavily counterattacked repeatedly and it would have been one of these engagements that caught Joseph out.

Another Hinton lad in a pivotal strategic position, giving his all. He was famous in the Hinton 1914 tug of war picture as a very dapper young gentleman. There was nothing dapper about where he fought or died, but he will have cut a dash with his colleagues from the other side of the world across two continents. Co-incidentally, another from Hinton had also faced the Turks that year. Sadly Frank had died 2 months before Jo set sail, and we'll never know if Jo had known of that or not, although it is highly unlikely. He would probably not have known either that just over 2 weeks later another Hinton chum would meet the same fate just up the road.

## Charlie Tom HAGRAM

**Private, 2nd Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, 22 Brigade, 7th Division (again, a regular army Division, not one of the Kitchener recruited divisions). Army no. 10419. He was killed in action during the Battle of Guillemont on 3 September 1916. He was 18. He was the son of Charles Henry and Emma J Hagram. He is remembered on pier and face 9A, 9B & 10B of the Thiepval Memorial.**



The 2<sup>nd</sup> Warwickshires were part of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 7<sup>th</sup> Division and first landed at Zeebrugge on 6<sup>th</sup> October 1914. A solid line unit headed by the Grenadier Guards, they were in good company alongside the Scots Guards, Gordon Highlanders, Cameron Highlanders and a raft of second battalion English units.

The medal records show he served in France and on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1915 he was awarded the 1915 Star medal (not the 14/15 Star). The Warwickshires had not covered themselves in glory at the outset of the war, two senior officers being cashiered for attempting to surrender at St Quentin in the chaotic retreat from Mons, but they more than made up for that (understandable if still inexcusable) slur subsequently. The stalwart efforts of John Harman and the Royal Field Artillery (above) were more typical of the actions then.

Name	Rank	Regt	Dist	Regt No.
HAGRAM	Private	R. Warw. R.	1915	10419
Local: 4104 B 14 305 Remarks: Selected from 1914-15 list of 1915 Star Date of entry: 27-5-15				

The medal records make it highly unlikely that Charlie was involved in the 1914 actions. In 1915, however, his unit took part in the battles of Neuve Chapelle, Aubers, Festubert, Givenchy (2), and Loos; followed in 1916 by the battles of Albert, Bazentin, Delville Wood and Guillemont; unusually busy, even for a line regiment. The picture of the exhausted Royal Warwickshire troops snatching some kip when they could speaks volumes. The regiment was to move to the Italian front in 1917, but sadly Charlie was not to see that.



The battle of the Somme was several months old when Charlie had the misfortune to be part of what was noted in the official history as 'the best performance of the war by the German army on the Western Front'. The devastation of Guillemont village is clear from the picture below and



any gains were met with ferocious and sustained counterattacks, not least as the Germans had been well dug in and their extensive dug-outs contained a divisional HQ. Throughout August the position had resisted British attempts to take the village and heavy rain in late August had turned the ground to the mess that is the familiar picture of Somme battlefields. Following a successful dawn attack, Charlie's unit would have been sent up around noon into 'difficult fighting' around the



quarry and the station. While overall the Division failed to take its objective they did in some areas break into the German second line position. In practice this important action at the join of the French and British armies was only to lead to more fractious inch by inch work, notably in less than two weeks time just up the road in Flers-Courcelette.

On the last day of this 3 day battle, no doubt exhausted and low on ammunition, Charlie met his end.

The Thiepval cemetery where Charlie is memorialised is one of the most iconic of the many WW1 sites throughout the Somme battlefields. It carries the names of almost 10% of the fallen. It is of monumental scale and poignancy, especially for the many whose bodies could not be found in such unrelenting conditions.



## John Willoughby SCOTT

DSO and 3 x MiD

*Lieutenant Colonel, The Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars, commanding 8th Battalion, Prince Albert's (Somerset Light Infantry), 63 Brigade, 37th Division.*

*He was killed in action on 23 April 1917. He was 38. He was the son of Sir John Scott, KCMG, DCL and Lady Scott and the husband of Madeline E Scott, Tudor Cottage, Overthorpe. He is buried in grave XV G 11 Cabaret-Rouge British Cemetery, Souchez.*

*Probate shows his address as Goldsmith Buildings, The Temple, London.*

There are several very endearing testimonies to John Scott. He was clearly an engaging man and mentioned three times in despatches he also had a DSO (Distinguished Service Order). A professional soldier, he was commissioned from the Royal Military Academy on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1897. He saw active service first in the Boer war with the royal artillery. Retiring to seek a judicial career as a recorder, he 'kept his hand in' by taking a commission as a Captain in the QOOH.

Hinton would have been his home had he survived and he married the vicar of Evenley's daughter while his parents lived in Overthorpe. One tale of his exploits comes from the early days in the retreat from Mons. The QOOH could not believe their luck in having an experienced veteran leading them and he was to rise through the ranks due to a mixture of élan, political



shrewdness, practical soldiering and leadership. It could all have been so much different. A young lieutenant 'blooded' in the Boer war, a student of the art of war, and also now a recently married man. Despite the fact that he would have been put among the cavalry to put some artillery lead in the yeomanry pencil, this story remains typical of a 'Hoozar':

*'By way of recreation the men got a good deal of football, while the officers went for rides and walks in the country... We still had our motor cars, and a few officers went for what they called 'joy-rides' up to the front... The party was driving gaily down the Menin Road in search of some particular unit of the front line, when they*

*came on a few British infantrymen busily digging themselves in. Stopping to ask how far it was to the front line, they received the startling answer that This Was the front Line. A moment later came the order for the infantry to retire. Another few hundred yards and three of our best officers would have spent the rest of the war looking through barbed wire [Major Scott, Captain Hermon-Hodge and Lieutenant Gill.]'*

In 1915 John Scott did 'great work, first as a squadron leader, and then as second in Command at HQ. Scott was promoted in January 1916 to command of the 8<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion of the Somerset Light Infantry and was a popular and successful commander of a unit facing many pressing engagements (despite their Service 'tag'). On the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1917 while in Laurel trench they faced heavy gas shell bombardment from 12.05am to 4 am and 'desultory' shelling until 6am. The exhaustion of the two (Black Watch) stretcher bearer's above says it all really; the attacks were exhausting. Alongside the Black Watch and supported by the Lincolns, they were to attack in the Second battle of Scarpe (a matter of days after the first battle of Scarpe), a key part of the Arras offensive, and front line duty for a 'service' battalion. Famous also for the Vimy Ridge assaults, this was a major offensive. The attack on Greenland Hill was central to the strong gains made on the first day of this key offensive in the Spring of 1917. The German defensive system failed at first but they rallied and the Somersets held on under vicious counter bombardment. It was on the cessation of this that Lieutenant Colonel Scott was in the front ranks of the units scouting the retreats by the German forces, when a sniper caught him peering into the 'vacated' woods.

He was sorely missed by both the Hussars and the 'Bleeders' (the Somersets too had a nickname).

This picture of the Greenland Hill terrain below shows the objective, but in contemporary peaceful times. Not unlike the views from Rosamund's Bower or Rainsborough Camp. A soldier's soldier, Colonel Scott would have felt at home, while always prepared to take the extra risk that he wouldn't ask of his men.

*That there are more detailed accounts of his exploits and adventures than survive for other ranks is welcome, but it remains a sad fact of the times that only officers' activities were routinely recorded officially. Even NCOs and often even junior officers were referred to only by rank rather than name. It frustrates attempts to be more precise about who was where and doing what, but it is entirely likely that John's enterprise was mirrored in the others commemorated here also.*



## Levi TRINDER

*No record has been found of this name in military records.*

*George and Martha Trinder lived in Hinton in the Hedges and they did have a son Levi who was born in Stanton Harcourt in 1880. Military records offer just one possibility:*

*Edwin Akers Trinder*

*Private, 2nd/1st Battalion, The Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, 184 Brigade, 61st Division. Army no. 203347. He was formerly Private, Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars. He was killed in action in the Battle of Ypres on 22 August 1917.*

*He is remembered on panel 96 to 98 of the Tyne Cot Memorial.*



Trinder is not a common name, but still 46 Trinders died in the First World War. Familiar names can be misleading with sticklers for 'given names' in the forces records, but it seems Levi may have decamped from the QOOH (the Hinton-in-the-Hedges regiment of choice) to join other Trinders in the light infantry. As regiments go among the light infantry the Oxs and Bucks are among the best known and most respected and many who joined the QOOH did transfer to them – it was the nature of Yeomanry units to be the feeder pool for the line regiments, and many would have seen it as a way of getting closer to the real action (especially from 1916 onwards). Again, joining the 2<sup>nd</sup>/1<sup>st</sup> Battalion means he would have joined up early and been in active service from 1916 and in some of the hottest contests.

The pivotal nature of the Ypres salient is well known and it was the logical pressure point for the Germans to focus on if they wanted to drive the British back into the sea and split the Allied forces on the Western front. In an attritional war where the German strategy of fixing an opponent and deliberately trying to 'bleed them white' was considered sound, this explains why so many British and Commonwealth lives were lost here in particular. A similar epic struggle for the French was on-going at Verdun too. While Levi would not have known of these matters of Grand Strategy, it does take some explaining nowadays, as for so long these deaths have been portrayed as senseless and even wasteful. The picture opposite shows the devastation of the battle with a before and after view of the village of Passchendaele from the air; this was ground which could not be lost. The picture above is the QOOH in the trenches in 1915 so in switching to the light infantry, Levi would operationally not be making much of a change.

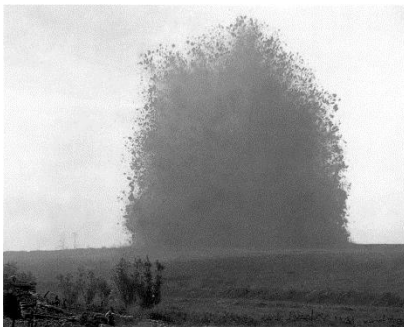
The Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry have good detailed regimental and foot soldier diaries and the action in which Levi died can be pinpointed quite accurately. The strategic reasons behind Passchendaele are harsh. In mid-1917 the

Russians were looking very flaky and the threat of millions of German troops coming to the West was looming very



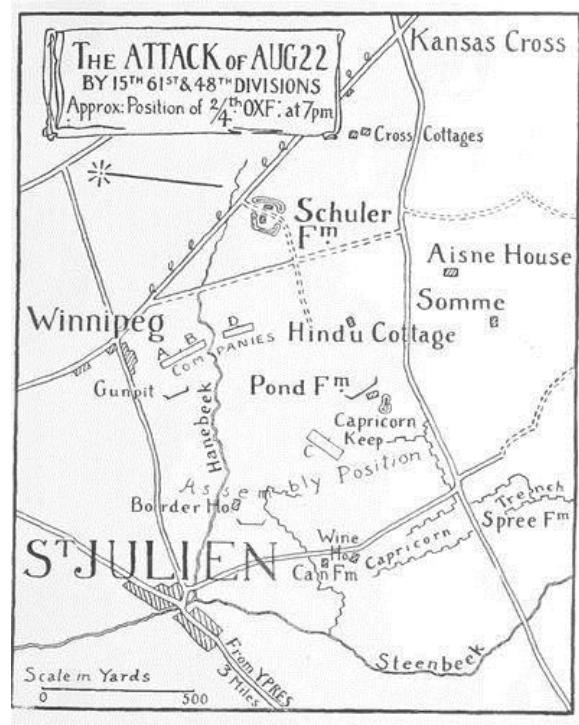
large. At the same time the naval, and especially submarine warfare, was threatening to starve Britain in a very real sense; food shortages were looming. After the Verdun battles in 1916 the French compounded massive losses there with ineffectual campaigns on the Aisne at the end of May, and in June over 30,000 French troops downed arms and more than half of the divisions of the French army were in open revolt. In June/July there were over 3400 courts martial. The Italians were equally flaky (and would effectively be knocked out of the war for the Allies when they did lose heavily at Caporetto in October 1917 requiring 5 divisions of Brits to be sent there in 1918). The Germans had just made a strategic retreat to the Hindenburg line, an intentionally reinforced and more defensible position in early 1917 as well; but this was an elephant trap that military strategists would be well aware of; it was no sign of weakness, but equally the new strengths and position had to be tested.

Effectively the Brits had to do something in what was almost the darkest hour of the war so far. The third offensive at Ypres, now known as Passchendaele was the result. Lloyd George grandstanded by publicly disclosing his disagreement with the military plan to tackle a known hard target, but this is primarily because he genuinely had no alternative to offer. There was simply no viable answer in mid-1917 to the 'if not this then what?' question while the imperatives for action were stacking up alarmingly.



Ultimately over 300,000 British troops died on this offensive for minimal gains in territory, but that was only part of the story. Time had been bought for the French to regroup. Cold comfort for Levi and the Oxs and Bucks units, however, although they would have been impressed initially by the

new approach taken. On the 7<sup>th</sup> June 19 massive mines were exploded on the Messines ridge, not a new tactic but a new scale of its use and early results were welcome in removing the Germans from the high ground. Throughout the Spring the Oxs and Bucks had been operating in tandem with Australian units and in August they were tasked with taking heavily defended positions near St Julien. The regimental history shows: *"Throughout the 22nd no actual counter-attack nor organised bombardment by the enemy took place, but much sniping and machine-gun fire continued, making it almost impossible to move about. Our loss in Lewis-gunners was particularly heavy."*



This is probably the engagement where Levi Trinder died.

Something of the conditions they saw in the summer are depicted below in a cartoon from an artist in the regiment, the units being bivouacked only 2-3 days before. Sadly Trinder is listed only as one of 44 missing, 3 of whom were prisoners, but the nature of such a hotly contested piece of land meant that bodies were often not easily or sometimes ever recovered.



## William ISHAM

**Gunner, 4th Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery. Army no. 25811**

**He was killed in action during the Battle of Passchendaele on 14 September 1917. This battle is also known as the Third Battle of Ypres. He was 43. He was the son of William Henry and Harriet Isham.**

**He is buried in grave I D 14 Divisional Collecting Post Cemetery and Extension near Ypres**

These guys were the heavy hitters of the war. Big guns with industrial strength ordnance. The 4th Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery normally tasked with manning the (southern section) guns at Gibraltar, went to France on the 17th of September 1914 with the BEF. Ultimately there would be over 250 batteries deployed with this heavy capability, but the 4th was a professional outfit, and being 40 at the outbreak of the war means William was probably again a professional soldier. His citation for the 14 Star is dated 17th September 1914, so he was one of the first of the contingents over the sea to fight in the chaotic retreat from Mons. His Hinton colleague in the much more mobile field artillery did not survive; William was to see another 3 years.

The Siege Batteries were deployed behind the front line, tasked with destroying enemy artillery, supply routes, railways and stores. The batteries were equipped with heavy Howitzer guns firing large calibre 6, 8 or 9.2 inch shells in a high trajectory and in a few instances they used 12 inch rail mounted howitzers.

On the 17th September 1917 the garrison artillery were supporting the Australians at Passchendaele and the picture of Polygon wood taken on that day opposite shows the results of their efforts.

Campaign :-				(A) Where decoration was earned.
1914				(B) Present situation.
Name	Corps	Rank	Reg. No.	Roll on which included (if any)
(A) ISHAM	H.S.B. RGA	GNR	25811	MEDAL VICTORY RGA 108 B 426
(B) William	-	-	-	BRITISH - do - do 14 STAR RGA 1914
Action taken				
THEATRE OF WAR.				
QUALIFYING DATE. 17. 9. 14				
(6 34 46) W234-HP5590 500,000 4/19 HWV(P240) K608				



Isham's unit and no doubt many other batteries too would have been supporting the creeping barrages that the Oxs and Bucks infantry advanced under some weeks before when another Hinton man died, and again here Isham's efforts were supporting advancing Australian units.

Once again horses would have played a significant part in their efforts, and while not William, the picture opposite is of an RGA sergeant mounted on one of their typically heavy horses.

Despite the popular view of walking towards machine guns being the main cause of death, in reality 80% of WW1 deaths were due to artillery fire. The historical nomenclature of Siege artillery is a throwback, but in reality it referred simply to the fact that these were the heavy gun specialists. Deaths



were common among even these long distance shooters and particularly in the battles for the Menin Road Bridge and others in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ypres where German counter attacks were often very effective, counter battery fire would have been as likely a cause of death as operator error. In the week before William's

death, the first multi-aircraft raid on southern England by the Germans had bombed London and Kent. Aircraft were getting both more numerous and more effective and progressively even the long range units were the target for aerial shelling or more commonly spotting for the air and counterbattery fire.



## Lionel NORTH

*Sergeant, 1st Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars, 2 Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division. Army no. 285180*

*He died on 24 November 1918. He was 22.*

*He is buried in Étaples which was a major hospital centre. It is therefore probable that he died of the Spanish Flu pandemic which was such a problem at that time and especially serious around Étaples. He was the son of Thomas and Jane North, Manor Farm, Hinton in the Hedges*

*He is buried in grave LI B 3 Étaples Military Cemetery.*

As fashionable a yeomanry unit as could be found, the QOOH had been in existence since 1794 and was at least assured of a sound quality of horsemanship given its patronage and location. The group picture below is of the NCOs who would have preceded Lionel, who in common with John Bower had been born in France. The picture opposite is of the 18 year old tug-of-war winner in his uniform before heading off in 1914.

The QOOH were one of the first 'yeomanry' units to engage the Germans, deployed in Messines on October 31<sup>st</sup>. Their remaining participation in the war was varied and very far from the misguided impression that many have of cavalry units sitting in useless isolation behind the lines. One unit even converted to a cyclist brigade in July 1916 and a division was deployed throughout in Dublin (given the, sadly all too often borne out threat of Irish unrest). As a member of the 1<sup>st</sup> QOOH he would probably have served mostly on the western front and the unit would have performed a variety of active support roles.

The majority of their work was as part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry brigade of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division (from





November 1914. The BEF and especially cavalry units had taken such heavy losses in the rear-guard actions from Mons to the Marne that many units were amalgamated and reformed. Under the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade they saw action in Ypres, Arras, Cambrai, the Somme and played significant roles in the more open war fare of mid-1918 when, truth be told, after a German advance the Allies beat the Germans head to head.

The assumption that cavalry were redundant is misguided. They remained the most effective rapid mobile force on the battlefield throughout the war and far from being competitors with the tanks or cyclists (or indeed the RFC), the cavalry often co-operated actively and provided many of the men to these emerging units. Tanks, even at Cambrai and in early 1918 were still being outrun by foot soldiers, let alone cyclists and mounted men. The primary role of the mounted soldier was more correctly that of a dragoon, or a rifleman who could get to a position quickly, and then fight on foot. There were a handful of mounted charges, but largely for distraction purposes and never in the reckless manner ascribed to them by ill-informed commentators. As dragoons cavalrymen took their rotas in the trenches like the rest, they played active roles in many major campaigns and had the added duties of looking after ten times more 'kit' than a regular soldier throughout.

The QOOH (ably supported by the 4DG's MGC unit) served at Armentiers, Ypres 1; Neuve Chappelle, St Julien/Ypres2; Bellewaarde Ridge; Scarpe, Cambrai/Bourlon Wood, St Quentin, Hazebrouk, Amiens, Somme2, Bapaume, Hindenburg Line, Sambre and the recapture of Mons. Like the 4<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards, who had the honour to lead the victory parade, the QOOH were the advance screen for the 4<sup>th</sup> Army advancing into Germany.



The date for Sergeant North's death is particularly poignant. He survived the war's end by only 13 days. That he died of flu is not surprising, many more died from illness than shells throughout the war. That he survived actions throughout the western front for 3-4 years is surprising, particularly as he rose to the rank of Sergeant. Another WW1 myth that the lions were led by donkeys really doesn't bear scrutiny (any more than much else from the Alan Clark stable of fantasy). The ratio of NCO and officer deaths to rank and file ones on the Hinton board is not untypical: 3 officers and NCOs to 5 privates; the ratio should

more properly be 1:8. Every death is lamentable, but the officer class, commissioned and non-commissioned, bore a disproportionate proportion of the casualties. The price of leadership was high. The majority of those pictured below with stripes on their arms would not come home at all. It does them a disservice to lampoon them with 20:20 hindsight. They were brave men all; not least as to wear such outrageous moustaches really takes some cojones.

Hard by where Lionel is buried there are some poignant graves of nurses too. The German Big Bertha and train mounted guns had developed ranges that could hit dozens of miles behind the lines, and even hospitals like those at Etaples were shelled. These nurses had been killed in such an attack. Warriors were dying of flue while nurses died from shrapnel. Etaples is one of the largest cemeteries. Not surprising being close to a main hospital. Its scale is daunting and a memorial in itself.



## Context

Someone has done the hard yards in putting the regimental details around each of the names on the wall (I suspect David Evison - for which many thanks). It begs as many questions as it answers, however. What was a 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant in the Field Artillery doing in France less than 2 weeks after the war was declared? Was the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion of the Northamptonshire regiment significant? Some were as young as 18, many were not spring chickens, one was 43; how so? Why did so many join the Hussars and not the infantry? How did a man from Hinton end up with the Australian units in Gallipoli?

What is clear, is that from a purely military history perspective, this group of men were involved in and took very active roles in some of the most pivotal and important engagements of the war. (The same seems to be the case with the WW2 men, but that's another story.) They all did 'proper soldiering'.

## Being Frank

My grandfather served throughout WW1, and the lists of regiments, divisions, canals, rivers and crucial spinneys with esoteric French names that chart the exploits of Hinton's finest would have meant a lot to him. For us it has faded. For my grandfather, for example, the beautiful French word 'Fleur' struck fear and loathing into him. He was a guard cavalryman through and through, who had enlisted before the war, but he spent the first war in MGC(C), the Machine Gun Corp detachment of the cavalry, serving with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division from '14-18. His was the first of two squadrons in February 1916 taken from Cavalry Brigades to form the MGC(C). A squadron would be 8 officers and 203 rankers with 299 horses, 18 limbers divided into 6 two gun sections each with a subaltern, 33 men and 46 horses. Ultimately there were 27 squadrons (over 5,500 men in all). I thought it typical of the Army that they would take one of their best jockeys and stick him behind a machine gun, probably peering out from several feet of concrete. He disabused me; nothing could be farther from the truth. *[The picture above is him in 1918 on R&R looking every bit twice the age of his 21 years; 4 years' service and a head wound took its toll. The picture below is possibly his unit in action in the Somme in 1916 being deployed from HQ.]*



As a good jockey he would be lead reining 2-4 horses or mules heavily laden across everything from open fields and hedgerows to heavily churned shelled mud, at pace, often under artillery fire, never on roads and always on a collapsing deadline – and when they got to the often gas filled front 'line', they had to set up and return fire, sharpish. Their day job did include covering their rota in the trenches, like the others in the MGC, but the rest of the time the MGC(C) were the 'flying squad' or reserve, thrown in when the line broke or needed bolstering. Their engagements were frequent and

'hot', but never being the line regiments in place, rarely reported as such. Like many in this role he was on borrowed time, and he knew better than most the character of the 'outfits' he was supporting. He spoke to me (his young grandson) of it occasionally; to his wife, son and immediate family; never. The discipline of that generation was tremendous.

It was a co-incidence that made me pause and reappraise the names. My grandfather was an old contemptible; a young 4<sup>th</sup> Royal Irish Inniskilling Dragoon Guardsman (4DG); a regular, a rough-rider, however, and a lad who'd grown up in the saddle as kennel man to an Antrim stag hunt. He was training other regimental recruits to ride within months of joining up. The back-up regiment (to the soon heavily depleted 4<sup>th</sup> DG) was a yeomanry unit known as the Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars (QOOH); 3 of whom came from Hinton.



There is much snobbery - and what my granddad called 'thruppence looking down on tuppence' - among regiments. The 4<sup>th</sup> consider themselves the highest ranking mounted Guards regiment outside the Household Division (The Queen's Bays probably disagree). But any line regiment would look down their nose at the amateurs in yeoman or 'part-time' units. The QOOH were different. An ably led and experienced unit, being attached to a senior Guards unit was a complement to them (both); one the affectionately known 'Queer Objects on Horseback' (QOOH) would have relished. (Army nicknames are often ironic; there's only one thing worse than a nickname though, however insulting: not having one.) And so it was that Lionel North, a farmer and no doubt an experienced jockey from the borders of North Oxfordshire and Northants, would have been running the horse lines alongside a cocky young jockey from Antrim. I don't know if they met; if they argued, competed for equipment, women or drinks; it matters not, although they would undoubtedly have shared an NCOs mess on occasion. It added an immediacy, relevance and intimacy to the names on the board that had been missing for me. It made me wonder



what else the names had achieved. For some reason after the initial engagements in 1914, the 4DG's machine guns were attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division, while the rest remained with the 1<sup>st</sup>. Over 4 years, even if only sharing farriers' tales, they would undoubtedly have certainly shared many of the same engagements, trials and tribulations. NCOs were especially valuable and exposed throughout this war.

My grandfather (Frank) was wounded in the Spring offensive of 1918 and he was trepanned on the docks in Southampton before recuperating in Alnwick. He then went on to serve until 1923 on the Northwest Frontier in Afghan (plus ca change). He will, however, have been grateful for the time bought by John Harman, he supported Joseph and the 'Steelbacks (1<sup>st</sup> Northamptonshires)' and Charlie and the Warwicks on the Somme. Will and Levi would have been glad of him at Ypres/Paschaendale, and no doubt he'd have enjoyed some regimental rivalry with Lionel and possibly even Colonel Scott, another 'regular'.

So forgive me for outlining a little more of the background for each name. If it brings some of the characters to life so be it. Sadly Lionel North died of the flu epidemic that swept through the ranks at the end of 1918. My grandfather had been invalided back to blighty with head wounds before returning to active duty facing unruly Afghans (in between winning regimental prizes for tent pegging). Had my grandfather not been shipped home he may very well have faced the same ignominious end as poor Lionel; but both served ably and well throughout the 4 years of mud in Flanders fields.

A role the Guard Cavalry performed and which they found most troubling at an individual level was that of policing. He executed deserters and mutineers when ordered to do so. 'Til his dying day he was adamant that everyone who got their boots wet in France was a brother and a hero, whether they died of wounds, flue, gas or otherwise. He was a difficult man; getting shot in the head will do that to you; and he never set foot on a horse after '23 (the '20's victory or peace dividend was badly managed, especially for western front veterans). He would undoubtedly have been immensely proud of all the names on both boards in Hinton, however they served or suffered.

As should we.