



January 2019

## Editor's Notes

This special supplement is here to remember and commemorate the First World War as near as we can get to the 100th anniversary of the end of that conflict.



We concentrate on some extracts from the County Archive at around the time of the Armistice in which we find little or no mention of staff contributions to the conflict, a survivors tale and a sad reflection of our treatment of war horses in Great Yarmouth. We also have Clare Marshall's story of her visit to Ypres for the 100th Anniversary of the Armistice. We hope you will find it an interesting read.

Jim Porter  
Editor.

### "FROM THE ARCHIVE".

#### PAY

##### from Local Govt. Board Minutes, 2/8/1914

"The Board think that it is competent to grant leave of absence to persons in the employment who have been called out for active service as members of the Army Reserve or Territorial Forces, and to make reasonable payment of their wages or salaries to persons authorised by them. Payment will be at full civil pay less a deduction on account of Navy or Army pay. For all ranks below Commissioned Officer this deduction will be seven shillings a week added to the actual amount of any separation allowance paid to the family of a married man. As regards a Commissioned Officer, the deduction will be equal to his active service pay [allowances being neglected.]

The Civil posts of these men will not be permanently filled during their absence on military service and that service will count to civil pension and for increments in civil salary".

#### POWs

##### from Public Health minutes, 25/2/18

Report from Dr. Nash re visit to German POW camp at Kenninghall following an outbreak of dysentery: "There have been 36 cases and two deaths after drinking water from a well used for washing purposes, the pump of the drinking water well having broken down."

#### Norfolk War Hospital

This was St Andrew's Hospital at Thorpe which was commandeered in 1915 formerly having been an asylum. It returned to being an asylum in 1919. There were 37,000 patients in all from April 1915 to November 1918. 35,000 were discharged in that time, 262 died and 2007 remained as at November 1918.

#### Salaries in 1919.

Health Visitor £110 pa rising to £120 pa on added qualification and £150 pa with experience.

Assistant Secretary and Accountant (2 posts) - £500 pa

Medical Officer of Health - £800 pa.

Clerks did not receive a War Bonus but had their salaries increased by between £5 and £20 pa.

The total salary bill in 1918-19 was £231,110.

#### Declaration of Peace.

At its meeting in July 1919 the Council passed a resolution which praised the work and inspirational example of the Royal Family, especially George V, praised the work of the Armed Forces and hoped that the terrible shedding of blood would not happen again at least for a while. Again, no mention of the contribution of County Council staff and no record, as far as we can find, of those who were lost or injured in conflict.

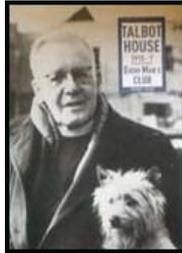


## VISIT TO YPRES - ARMISTICE 2018.

In 2015 my friend Jane and I were staying in Flanders when we decided that we wanted to be there on Armistice day 2018.

This time we stayed at Talbot House in Poperinge, a 7 mile journey from Ypres and 12 minutes on the train. In the Great War, Poperinge was behind allied lines and only rarely did a German shell reach that far. Here too were the railway sidings from which troops left for Ypres and the front.

Talbot House was rented from a Hop merchant for the duration of the war and a chaplain, Tubby Clayton, opened it as a social club for soldiers. It was the first Toc H house. There were indoor games, entertainment and copious amounts of tea. There was also a beautiful 'English' garden and at the very top of the house, a chapel.



It was closed towards the end of the war when the town fell within German shelling range. Today there remains a map the soldiers used to orientate themselves, heavily worn in places by fingers marking the spot and also a message board where soldiers left messages for each other. Soldiers are looking for brothers or fellow countrymen, and in places in the margins someone else has added comments such as 'back in Blighty, wounded'

On the Friday afternoon went into Ypres. On this first day there we walked into the town along the ramparts. This is a much longer way in but there is one of our War Grave cemeteries en route. I suspect those buried here died at a Casualty clearing station as there are many regiments represented including two soldiers who served with the Norfolks. Jane and I split the cemeteries we visit so that all graves can be visited on a 'walk past' to show our respect and in case no one else has ever visited that grave. It can be a lengthy process. The Rampart's cemetery looks out over the water and is a peaceful spot.

The footpath eventually leads to the roof of the Menin Gate and here were hundreds and hundreds of poppies placed in rows with messages written on the piece of wood at the back. Some were commemorating Grandfathers and Great Uncles. Some just read 'Thank you'. This display had been organised by the British Legion.

It brought a lump to the throat. Later that evening we attended the Menin Gate ceremony which takes place at 8 every night to commemorate the missing fallen. Buglers attend from Ypres Fire Service. The gate comprises almost 55,000 names and in the end was still too small to accommodate the names of all the missing.

On Saturday we revisited two of the cemeteries in Poperinge. In the Old Military Cemetery is a section by itself where 'Old Contemptible's' are buried. These men were regular Army and the first to be sent when War was declared. They all died in 1914 very early in the War.

In the New Military Cemetery are buried alongside many others, 17 soldiers of the Commonwealth executed for Desertion during the war. The graves are not distinguishable from the others. Some spent their last night in the cells at Poperinge town Hall and were shot at dawn in the courtyard there. It was pouring with rain by now and we trudged home via the execution cells in time to attend a service at Talbot House. This began in the hall with a piper playing a Scottish lament, 'Battles Over' and then we moved to the upper room for the rest of the service which was An Act of Remembrance, Thanksgiving and Commitment marking the Centenary of the end of the First World War. This was conducted by Ken Madden who is a minister at Bath Abbey and a Talbot House warden. The service included the Toc H ceremony of the lamp conducted in both Flemish and English.

On Sunday we caught an early train into Ypres in time for the Belgian ceremony at Ypres War memorial beside the Cloth Hall. Then began a march to the Menin Gate; Pipe bands, Brass bands, Tommies, British Policemen in their helmets, Fire Brigades from the UK, Cadets from all the services, a Regiment from the Belgian army and bringing up the rear, a large contingent of Sikhs whose drumming was amazing. 20% of the British army were Sikhs despite being less than 2% of the Indian population. 83,005 Sikhs were killed serving in both World Wars and 109,045 were injured. Every 6<sup>th</sup> soldier in the British Army was from the Indian sub-continent. They deserved their place in the procession. We watched the service at the Menin Gate from a large screen in the square. The dignitaries present were mainly Belgian and representatives from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Wreaths were laid, Prayers said, the buglers gave their calls.

One Belgian speaker reminded us that the Centenary should not be a reason for the War to begin to fade from our minds and said that we must never forget. You could have heard a pin drop in the square. We spent much of that day talking to people who had come from all over the world to be in Ypres on that day. We were also able to direct the Sikhs back to Ypres station! They had come that morning from France. After that we spent some time in the Flanders Field museum where ironically and sadly they had an extra exhibition showing Nagasaki and Hiroshima before and after the atomic bombs were dropped in the next war. We went to St George's church where the school I once taught in has a plaque to remember their dead.

On the Monday we went into Ypres to see 'Journey's End' a play by RC Sherriff. He fought on the Western Front until he was wounded in August 1917. The play is set on the eve of the last German offensive on the Somme in March 1918. Both sides had been expecting this onslaught for weeks and the anticipation was torture. It was performed by the Mesh theatre company and when we were talking to them afterwards I learnt that the man playing Osborne, the Officer killed in the shockingly reckless raid which takes place, hails from Norfolk and before turning professional, trod the boards at the Maddermarket. I have seen the play twice before but this performance was the best ever and left me drained.

Our last day there was spent on a tour with Andre who owns 'Over the Top,' a shop and small tour business based on the street leading to the Menin gate. He took us to The Essex Farm bunkers, a medical aid post where gas victims of the second battle of Ypres were buried. A monument commemorates Doctor John McCrae who wrote the poem 'In Flanders Field' here. From there we went to Vancouver corner to see the Brooding Soldier, a 10 metre high granite monument representing a grieving Canadian soldier, erected in memory of the 2,000 soldiers who died in 1915 as a result of the gas attack and buried at Essex Farm. We then stopped at a local farm where various items from the war have been found.



Andre told us that last year 120 tons of WW1 unexploded munitions were found in Flanders. Farmers leave them at the corner of the field and the Belgian Army collect them. The last casualty of WW1 was a few months ago when a farmer took a shell into his shed and tried to dismantle it himself with fatal consequences. From the farm we went to Passchendaele and from the ridge held by the Germans could see only too clearly why so many of our soldiers were lost in 1917 as they advanced through open land without any cover other than shell holes. 38,000 Australian soldiers were killed, wounded or went missing during this battle along with other Commonwealth troops. We went on to Tyne Cot, the largest Commonwealth cemetery in the world containing almost 12,000 graves and 35,000 names of missing British and New Zealand soldiers carved onto the semi-circular wall at the back. This wall continued on from the Menin Gate memorial when it was full. Most of the graves in this cemetery have only the epitaph, 'A soldier of ... known unto God'.

From Tyne Cot we went to Langemark German cemetery containing 44,000 German soldiers of whom 25,000 were unknown. Many here were very young and inexperienced soldiers which is why it is also known as the student's cemetery. German cemeteries are very different from the Commonwealth cemeteries but have their own dignity and are peaceful places. We finished our tour at Hill 62 better known as Sanctuary Wood where there is a museum and trenches to walk in.

I shall continue to visit the Salient and the Somme and hope to make it to Gallipoli next year.

Lest we forget.

Clare Marshall

**"FROM THE ARCHIVE".  
Poor Law Reform**

Does anything ever change in our County Council? In April 1919 in response to a circular from the County Councils Association on reform of the Poor Law the Council resolved thus:-  
" That this Council does not consider that there is evidence of any desire to do away with the existing Poor Law and that this County Council does not desire to undertake the duties now satisfactorily performed by the Boards of Guardians".

## A SURVIVOR

In our August 2014 Great War Supplement we told the story of one local lad who went off to war and did not come back; James Fisk who's ship was sunk by a mine off Malta.

Across the other side of the world his Australian cousin, also named James Fisk was one who did return. Readers will be familiar with the cinema and TV film *Gallipoli*, which highlighted the boys of the Victorian Light Horse. James was one of those young men.



He did not enlist until 1916 so thankfully did not see Gallipoli, but ended up in Egypt and the Sinai. He was a blacksmith, so he qualified as a Farrier Sergeant before going overseas.

As the battle order only required so many Sgt's he was promoted to a Shoeing Smith when needed and when the bulk of the Light Horse was sent to France he was transferred to 4<sup>th</sup> Signal Troop, 4<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Brigade (He went over with 8<sup>th</sup> Light Horse / 21<sup>st</sup> Reinforcements.) and was retrained in the Signals Troop.

## Village War Memorials

Over 12000 Norfolk men did not return from the Great War, and are remembered in the 740+ villages and towns they left. This memorial is by the church of Repps with Bastwick, near Potter Heigham, and records the names of those men from the scattered local houses.



## WAR HORSES

One estimate puts the number of horses that served in the Great War at around six million.

Few returned home after the war. Fred Long, who owned Long's Dairys in Yarmouth was happy to see some of those that did return spend time recovering on his marshland around Breydon, as he declared that *they had served their country just as the men had done.*



Sadly, the young boys of the area would creep up on the horses and bang together dustbin lids just to see the shell-shocked horses run away in terror.

## COUNTY HALL REMEMBRANCE DAY CEREMONY

Last year's ceremony was, as would have been expected, special given that it was the 100th anniversary of the armistice. The array of guests included General the Lord Dannat who, of course is a Norfolk resident now and he joined Margaret Stone, Chair of the Council amongst those paying their respects to those who contributed to the conflict. Of course the ceremony takes account of all other conflicts since then.

Serious efforts were made to make the event special including an excellent sequence where poppies were seen to fall down the marble map and there was a series of old film material to add to the atmosphere of the occasion. In addition to the usual exhortations and epitaphs, wreaths were laid by Margaret Stone for the County Council, David Ashworth of the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service on behalf of uniformed civilians and James Porter on behalf of the staff of the Council. David Button also gave a reading from Lloyd George on the cost of war. David Ashworth also read a poem by Philip Larkin on innocence. The service was led by Revd. Dr Liviu Bibi the County Hall Chaplin.

This was very well attended and there were a good number of retired members present.