

# Great War Bulletin

No. 17...Newark...Monday 23 November 1914

## Septimus killed on first night

PRIVATE Septimus G Backhouse, aged 30, of Newark was killed last Tuesday on his first night in the trenches with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Sherwood Foresters, a victim of the Battle of La Bassee. His sacrifice is immortalised on Le Touret Memorial, which will commemorate no fewer than 13,400 British soldiers by the end of the War. Septimus was born in 1884, the fifth of six sons of coachman John and Margaret Backhouse, of Newark Road, Coddington. His siblings are Frederick (born 1874), Percy (1877), Thomas (1879), Frank (1881) and Digby (1889).

# God knows how I wasn't killed

## Clerk, 19, in ruins of Lille, Armentieres

PRIVATE Charles Richmond Dobbs, only 19 and clerk to the overseer of the poor before he enlisted in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Sherwood Foresters, writes home to his parents William (a brewery clerk) and Martha at 24 Lovers' Lane from Nottingham Hospital:

"I have been doing my bit at a village between Lille and Armentieres; or rather, I ought to say what was once a village because it is now ruins. The first time I was under fire was when our Company had been relieved from the trenches. We got onto the high road and then the Germans let us have it. They started rapid firing and greeted us with 'Jack Johnsons' and machine guns for an hour and a half.

"By then no doubt they thought they had finished off 150, which was all the Company. But when the roll was called, we were all present and not one of us wounded.

"We had to lie in a dyke which was six inches deep in mud and water so you can guess what we looked like when we reached our billets. But it would have been all up with us had not our artillery spoken. I have much more news to tell you, but will leave it until I see you all."

THE horrors of war are brought home by Lance Corporal George Grosse of the 1<sup>st</sup> Leicestershire Regiment, son of Mr and Mrs James Grosse of 2 Water Lane Square.

He writes from a Portsmouth Hospital to his aunt, Mrs Mary Wheatley, at 16 Water Lane:

"I have been so bad – all but kicking the bucket. God knows how I missed being killed on the spot. We had run out of ammunition and they were letting us have it like rain.

"My chum Lance-Corporal Bob Hough and me volunteered to go for it (the ammunition). We only had about 300 yards to go; it was at headquarters. We got there all right, and back to the edge of the trench, but they (the Germans) were waiting for us – and we got it!

"We dropped the ammunition and fell. They pulled us into the trench and dressed my wounds but poor old Bob died two minutes after. There I had to lay until night as it was impossible to get us away. About half past five they retired.

"I was under an archway out of the way. All at once I heard a scuffle. I turned my head and could see the Germans running for their lives.

"How I got away, goodness knows. Shot and shell were flying all around me. I could hear someone else on the other side of the railway but didn't know whether they were our men or Germans.

"I crawled under the trucks and just as I got under, a shell burst in the truck and blew the end out. It was getting too hot so I started off again. I was about done when I recognised our sergeant's voice. I called to him, and he heard me and came

## NEWARK HERO'S CHILLING TALE:

**'I was done  
through loss of  
blood ... I  
thought I was  
left for good'**

back. He carried me on his back until I could not hold any longer.

"I was done through loss of blood and he laid me down. I thought I was left for good but he came back with another fellow. They started off again with me, and the next thing I remember I was in a temporary hospital. I was put on a train the same night for Boulogne, where I laid for 11 days, and then I was sent home [to England]. It was like being in a new world to be out of the hearing of those mighty guns of theirs, which are doing so much damage to our troops ... Will tell you some horrible things when I come home." The *Forces Reunited* website records that Lance-Cpl Robert Frank Hough was 22 when he died on 24 October 1914; his parents lived in Leicester.

## Latest news from the battlefronts

TRENCHES have now been established along the entire Western Front, it was announced yesterday. The British entered Basra in the Middle East, securing vital oil to supply most of the Royal Navy.

Follow Newark's trauma in The Great War as it happened 100 years ago this week

# Ex-Mount lad is 'blown a dozen yards in air' by shell

MOUNT School old boy George Smith, a Lance-Corporal in the North Staffordshire Regiment, is in the 2<sup>nd</sup> West General Hospital, Manchester, recovering from wounds suffered on the Belgian frontier – but writes optimistically to his Uncle Joseph at the Wing Tavern:

"I was blown about a dozen yards in the air by one of those great shrapnel shells. I received a wound straight through the calf of my right leg. The bullet has fractured a bone, which makes it all the more painful. Wound No.2 is a piece about as big as a man's fist, taken clean out just above my left knee. Wound No.3 is a piece about the size of a walnut, taken out just below my left shoulder.

"In addition to this little lot, I received a severe shaking-up, my back and right side being badly bruised internally, which

makes it rather difficult for me to breathe properly. But for all that, I am getting on famously and, thank goodness, I can smoke, which is a great solace, I can assure you.

"I am afraid it will be a long job 'mending'. I suppose I shall have to stick to it, like a Briton.

**"In any case, I am proud to think I have done my little share for my country and ready to do it again, if able, when I am better..."**

"In front of our trenches, which my Regiment held, just before I was hit, there were dozens of dead Germans and the stench was getting a bit awful. But, still, our chaps stick all this without a murmur."

George's father is about to return to the Army as a Lieutenant-Quartermaster in the North Staffordshire Regiment. Young George will recover sufficiently to fight again – but is destined to be killed in action on 21 February 1915.

## Road rage death at Kelham

EDWARD STORY, aged 62, a butcher and farmer, was killed while riding his horse and cart home to Upton from Newark Market on Wednesday.

Having been overtaken by farmer Frederick William Davenport from Knaphorpe, he tried to take the lead again.

But before he could complete the daring manoeuvre at Kelham, he came into a most violent collision with a motor car travelling in the opposite direction.

Mr Story, who was born at Halam, left a wife Fanny (born 1854, Kneasall) and four children who had been born when they lived at Caunton – Matthew (1886), who is working as a groom; Florence (1890), William (1892), also a groom; and Amy (1895).

## Poacher gaoled

WILLIAM FLETCHER of Nottingham was imprisoned for a month with hard labour by Southwell Magistrates on Friday for night poaching on the Winkburn Hall land of retired Colonel Edward Strelley Pegge Burnell, aged 78.

Historian W P W Phillimore recorded that the retired officer was squire "by virtue of his direct male ancestor having married a lady in 1768 whose ancestor had married a lady in 1662 whose ancestor had married a Burnell in 1603."

## No more for poor

The Newark Board of Guardians of the Poor decided on Thursday not to follow the Mansfield Guardians in increasing relief in line with the increased cost of provisions caused by the War.

Just over £40 a week "out relief" goes to Newark people not living in the Workhouse but unable to fend for themselves.

## Beer price up!

BEER and stout went up in price on Saturday for the first time in living memory – because the Government introduced a tax of a halfpenny on half a pint and a full 1d on a pint for the duration of the war.

The Association of Licensed Victuallers of Newark accepted the increases were inevitable.

The town's leading brewers James Hole and Warwick's & Richardson's agreed.

# Health fears: We need an Isolation Hospital now!

SERIOUS health fears have surfaced at this month's main local council meetings – sparking calls for the area to have an Isolation Hospital.

The drama began last Tuesday when Newark Rural District Council called for an urgent inquiry into the source of an outbreak of diphtheria in Balderton.

The Medical Officer of Health, Dr Frank Broadbent, reported there had been five more cases in the village in the last month, and feared the local school may be to blame.

He advised: "You want an Isolation Hospital in which to locate all the cases of infectious disease."

And at the Newark Town Council meeting

this evening, members agonised over whether to allow the Medical Officer of Health, Dr Poole, to join the Forces.

He has been invited to take a Commission in the Notts and Derbyshire Field Ambulance Brigade but Alderman Priestley proposed that the best interests of the public health of the town make it undesirable that he should join up until there is a greater crisis.

The Alderman reasons that towns always experience a rise in the amount of disease during and after a war and believes Newark's needs are greater than the Army's.

His motion is carried – and so Dr Poole's enlistment is among many delayed in 'Town versus Nation' dilemmas.

## Cemetery entrance smartened

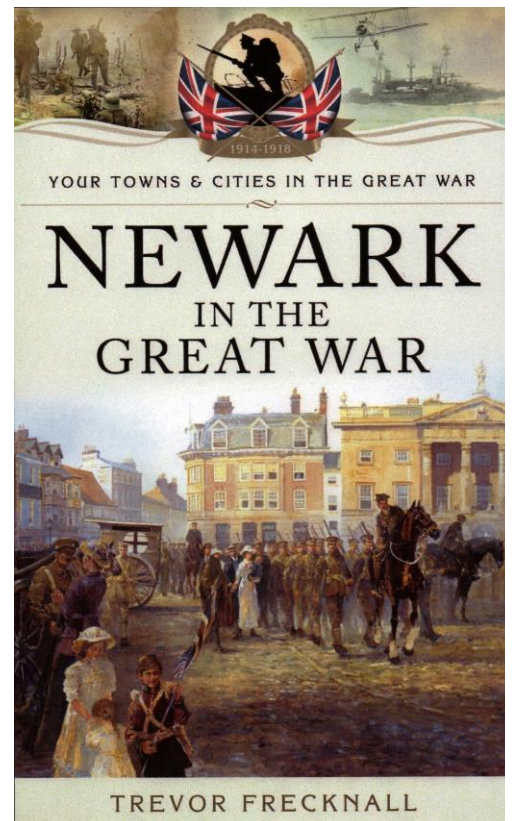
MEMBERS of the Newark Burial Board held a special meeting at the Cemetery and solemnly passed a resolution "that the ten trees in recess of the Cemetery entrance be taken down as they are mostly half-dead, decayed and cracked, disfiguring the entrance of the Cemetery and injuring the young lime trees to the road frontage, and also the trees inside the Cemetery approach."

## Church work sale

THE annual sale of work in aid of Newark Parish Church was restricted to one day, rather than the usual two, last week.

Parcels, fancies, fruit, sweets, refreshments and linen were all on sale in the Town Hall.

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