

Great War Bulletin

No. 26...Newark...Monday 25 January 1915

Kelham farm boy, 18, killed

NEWS reached Kelham on Thursday that 18-year-old Wilfred Handley had been killed in action. He worked on Edward Tomlinson's farm before joining the Army just before War broke out, and was attached to No.4 Company 1st Battalion Grenadier Guards.

Private 16910 Handley had been killed in action on 9 January, one of 123 comrades who lost their lives in furious fighting around the village of Fleurbaix. His final resting place is Le Trou Aid Post Cemetery between Armentieres and Lille.

Newark teacher on killer Zeppelin raid

A SCHOOL TEACHER from Newark has written home with a graphic account of the first airborne attack on British soil.

It happened on Tuesday night: Zeppelins bombed the towns of Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn, killing five civilians.

On Saturday widow Mrs Mary Fitchett of Lime Grove, Newark, received a letter from her daughter Betty, only 25 but the head mistress of St James' Council School in King's Lynn.

It brought welcome confirmation that she survived the raid – but gave a vivid account of the fear generated:

"We all feel so wibberly wobbly today and cannot settle to anything definite.

"Well, the old Germans and their bombs have arrived and gone, I hope never to return. Nobody feels like settling to another night's rest after last night.

"I had just gone to bed when on the stroke of 11 I heard the approach of what seemed at first to be a motor cycle... But this noise came nearer and nearer and grew ever so loud. It must have been a most powerful engine and had the whirr peculiar to an aeroplane. I sprang up in bed but it was not until one or two bright flashes had occurred that it dawned on me what might be taking place.

**'WE ALL FEEL SO
WIBBERLY
WOBBELY'**



Rescuers search through the ruins of a bombed house – one of the victims of the Zeppelin raid on King's Lynn.

"Then after hearing explosions and collapse of buildings, there was no doubt that the Germans had really arrived. We had joked about it so often but when they did come it was far from a joke.

"I haven't done trembling yet and if I live to be 150 I shall not forget it.

"We made the best of our way downstairs but by that time the bombs were falling quite near and we expected the place to go any time, and doors and windows were rattling away as fast as they could go.

"The thing must have circled round

us two or three times. It seemed endless and even when we heard it going away, we were not relieved to any great extent, but expected it or another one over again soon.

"Of course, the town was plunged in entire darkness as soon as the danger was upon us but that precaution should have been taken before.

"There were people in Lynn who knew the airships were over Yarmouth at 8.30.

"The special constables were called out by the fire alarm after the airship had gone, but no attempt at firing was made at the time.

"The thing went on its own way unhindered...

"I think seven or eight bombs were dropped over Lynn but from accounts fortunately very little life was lost.

"A house was shattered within a few yards of where I live, and every house round had windows and doors blown out...

"The sights are dreadful: streets and streets of houses with every window smashed.

"My school had three windows smashed, and the explosion was some distance from there.

"One bomb cut through a house but did not explode and another buried itself in a garden, making a hole big enough to hold a horse and cart...

"I suppose we must prepare for a bombardment next and if that starts I shall surely flee, for the worry is too awful.

"I do hope we have nothing like it again. Perhaps they will take more

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

Farndon's gentle Jim is killed

A BRUTALLY brief telegram was delivered to Mr and Mrs John McNaught-Davis at Farndon on Wednesday.

It was from the War Office and stated: "Deeply regret to inform you that Lieutenant J W F McNaught Davis, 1st South Wales Borderers, was killed on 17 January. Lord Kitchener expresses his sympathy."

Jim Walden Fortune McNaught-Davis, only 21, had spent three years at Cambridge University and had leanings towards taking Holy Orders before the military instincts he inherited from his family proved too strong with the onset of The Great War.

His father had been a Regimental Sergeant Major before retiring and becoming initially the manager of the Ram Hotel on Castlegate and, as his family of 11 grew, a commercial traveller selling whiskey.

Young Jim – ninth of the brood to arrive – had been home on leave until 13 January and impressed all with his "fine physique and his modest but soldierly bearing".

His regiment has suffered severely in this conflict: in further defiance of the censors, it becomes known that, of about 1,400 who went into action, there are now only two officers and 200 men left.

This is merely the start of a year of grief for the McNaught Davis family. Indeed, their full story will fill a book, which is due to be published later this year.



Teacher on Zeppelin raid

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precautions in future...

Crowds of people have thronged the streets ever since ... soldiers with fixed bayonets guard the worst ruins...

"The streets are in entire darkness tonight; I am writing this by candle light..."

"I hope you are prepared at Newark, for the utmost precautions ought to be taken everywhere."

Even as Miss Fitchett's letter made its way to Lime Grove, Newark's civic leaders and military advisers were holding a series of meetings in an effort to ensure there could never be a surprise attack here.

Wounded Collingham postman home safe

FIVE DAYS after his letter reached the village vicar [see last week's *Bulletin*], Corporal Albert Powell got his wish of a furlough at home with his wife Florence and eight-year-old son Albert in Besthorpe Road, Collingham.

And he returned home with souvenirs ... a huge brass eagle helmet badge, a French rifle and bayonet and a German bayonet. The helmet badge belonged to a sniper who was killed by a tree – felled by an exploding shell – as he knelt and prepared to fire at Albert...

Albert told an *Advertiser* reporter that he and his fellow Royal Engineers had to advance to within 200 yards of enemy lines to repair a bridge that had been rocked to its foundations by artillery fire.

They tried to build a replacement of barrel piers but were driven back by machine gun fire.

Then they spent three days felling trees to create a log crossing.

While Albert was working in a blacksmith's shop on ties for the logs, a shell skimmed its roof off yet he escaped unscathed.

Other shells ruined the village church, hit a makeshift hospital, killed four horses in a field – and killed two of his comrades. Several shells landed so close to him, Albert revealed: "They took my breath away."

His last stint in the trenches began on 21 November and lasted until he was allowed home.

Nurses cut censors' red tape

STRICTER censorship of military matters – introduced after the criticism of the Army for allowing officers to take Christmas breaks from the Western Front, with the result that the men called a temporary truce in the trenches – got off to a sticky start so far as Newark was concerned.

Local St John Ambulance Brigade members Sergeant Henry Reed, Corporal H Trollope plus Privates R Mottram and G Cottam enjoyed a short furlough during which they are under orders to tell not even relatives what they have been doing.

But word mysteriously reached the *Newark Advertiser* that they had been on No.7

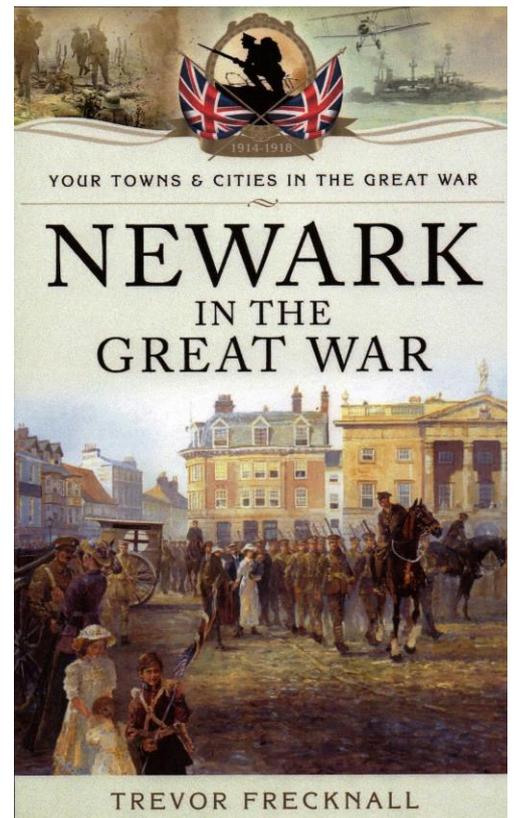
Hospital Ship *The Delta* on the China station in the vicinity of the siege of Tsing Tau, which was wrested from the Germans by the Japanese.

All but Sergeant Reed returned to their Chatham base last Monday.

In a variation on the 'physician heal thyself' theme, Reed was in Newark Hospital having badly injured a hand when he fell on a saw in a workshop in St Mark's Lane which was used by his father George, a picture frame-maker.

It was feared that he would lose the use of at least two fingers – not good news for a 22-year-old being groomed to take over the family business.

Now read the full dramatic account of...



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