

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

Edited by Trevor Frecknall, author of several Great War books

Great War Bulletin

No. 70...Newark...Monday 29 November 1915

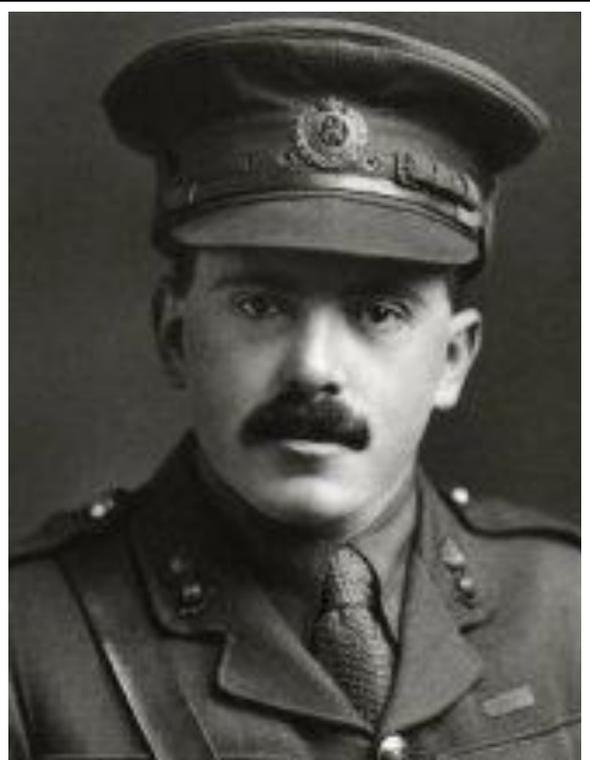
BUTCHER'S BOY SURVIVES SINKING OF *MERCIAN*

BUTCHER William Richards in Chain Lane, Newark, received last Wednesday a fantastic greeting dated 15 November, his son Arthur's 18th birthday.

It came in the form of a letter from Arthur saying that he escaped unscathed when the *Mercian* was torpedoed and is now on the way to his destination as a Trooper with the 1st Lincoln Yeomanry.

That is not the end of the Richards' concerns, though. Their eldest son, William, 21, is a Private with the 100th Hussars and has been on the Western Front in France since 11 January.

Newark fetes Victoria Cross winner



WITH NEWARK still reeling from the devastation wrought on its local men in the Battle of Loos, a rare glimmer of pleasure arose last Tuesday evening. Victoria Cross recipient Frederick Henry Johnson (pictured right) was feted by fellow Royal Engineers at Northgate House, where he is being billeted.

The diminutive Londoner, a Second Lieutenant with the 73rd Field Company, won the highest bravery honour in the attack on Hill 70 on 25 September.

Although wounded in the leg, he stuck to his duty throughout the attack, led several charges on the German redoubt, and at a very critical time, under very heavy fire, repeatedly rallied the men who were near him.

By his splendid example and cool courage he was mainly instrumental in saving the situation and in establishing firmly his part of the position which had been taken. He remained at his post until relieved in the evening.

At the dinner in Northgate House, Colonel Jerome CB, Commandant of the Royal Engineers based in Newark, proposed the health of Second Lieutenant Johnson VC, who responded modestly that he was pleased to have brought fresh distinction to the Corps.

After touring the country to raise morale, Fred returned to action – but was killed in action in November 1917 at Cambrai, aged 27.

BUT SOUTHWELL MOURNS A HERO

SOUTHWELL was stunned on Thursday to hear that one of its Distinguished Conduct Medal recipients, Arthur Sheppard, is dead.

The news came in a letter from Private Edwin 'Tich' Gilbert, a peacetime workmate in the local lace factory and a comrade in the 8th Battalion Sherwood Foresters. German shell fire blew down part of a parapet near Arthur – and machine gun fire killed him while he was striving to rebuild it.

As if his parents Arthur and Fanny Sheppard do not have enough grief at home in Waterloo House, their 21-year-old son is in hospital in Boulogne, wounded from his efforts with the RAMC. Sergeant 752 Sheppard DCM is remembered in the St. Vaast Post Military Cemetery, Richebourg L'Avoué between Bethune and Armentieres.

There will be dreadful news about 'Tich' Gilbert, too, in March 1916.

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Blaze damages

NEWARK Town Hall could have burnt down overnight on Thursday!

A lighted cigarette dropped through a radiator grating during the weekly whist drive on Thursday evening.

It smouldered for hours among the accumulated fluff and dust beneath the wooden floor.

The result was that Hall keeper (and market superintendent) Dennis Gabbittas Peet was startled to see flames darting up one side of the ballroom when he went to clean-up on Friday morning.

He rushed to grab some buckets of water from the kitchen to throw on the blaze, simultaneously calling to his 14-year-old son Dennis Joseph to contact the Fire Brigade Captain Harrison.

It was due in a great measure to the promptitude and energy of these two men that more serious damage is not done to the building.

That said, in probing for the seat of the fire, Mr Harrison almost fell through the floor into the Butter Market below.

Initial estimates put the damage at between £50 and £60.

Town Hall

MUNITIONS MEN ARE PRAISED BY MP

IN INSPIRING addresses on Friday to Newark munitions workers at Ransome's, Abbot's, Bradley's and Farfar's, the Member of Parliament for Wakefield, Mr Arthur H Marshall said (somewhat controversially) that they were doing a more valuable job than even the men at the battlefield.

He added that they must strain every effort to ensure maximum output.

This was music to the ears of the single men being criticised as shirkers for not enlisting.

It was not so welcome to those tasked with increasing the quantity of volunteers to replace the dead and wounded.

Farm worker loses eye

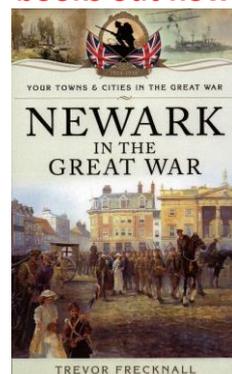
BRANT BROUGHTON'S Private Hubert Percival Cragg, 23, is recovering in the Wharcliffe War Hospital, Sheffield, after losing an eye and suffering a fractured skull while fighting with the 4th Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment at Ypres on 30 September.

The farm worker writes home: "The Germans were sending trench mortars and while I was dodging these, a whizzbang shell burst just above my head..."

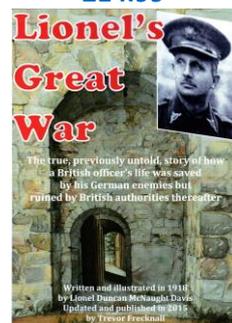
"I was taken out that night to a clearing hospital near Poperinge, and from there by train to the 25th General Hospital at Etaples. I was operated on there. I had a piece of bone taken from my head and my right eye removed.

"I was there three weeks and then came to England ... I'm getting on well now. The wound in my head is almost healed up but I shall have to wait some time before I can have an artificial eye put in. I expect I shall soon be going home ... I don't know what work the Army will put me on then."

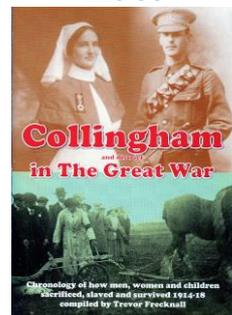
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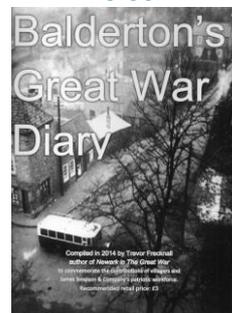
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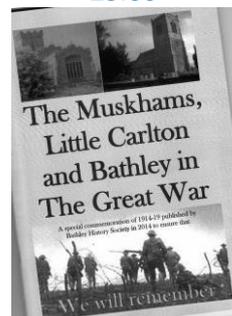
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Birth of a legend called

BECHER WORSE

THE SEVERELY wounded Major John Pickard Becher DSO has suffered a relapse in his struggle to recover from his suffering at the Hohenzollern Redoubt. His friends in Southwell and Newark are most concerned.

CHILD NEGLECT: MOTHER JAILED

SOLDIER'S WIDOW Louise Shaw of 22 Lindum Street, Newark, was sent to prison for two months, with hard labour, by the Borough Magistrates today for neglecting her four children.

Her 44-year-old husband, serving with the 3rd Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment, died on 31 May from pneumonia while on compassionate leave because she was ill; he was buried at Newark Cemetery. She proved incapable of tending the family.

The War Office agreed to pay the NSPCC 27 shillings (£1.35) a week to keep the shattered youngsters.

Timbertoes...

A VERY INTERESTING military ceremony took place in Newark Market Place on Sunday morning, after the church parade of the Royal Engineers. One of their number, Second Lieutenant Sydney Carlin had the Distinguished Conduct Medal pinned to his breast by Colonel Rotherham RE.

The award was for "conspicuous gallantry" on 18 May 1915 at Ypres. "Under heavy shell fire, although severely wounded, he refused to leave the firing line and kept the troops together in a very exposed position. With the trenches on both sides demolished, and after all his seniors had been killed, he gave a true example of courage and devotion to duty."

This will be but the start of the Yorkshireman's heroics. He will lose a leg in action next year, insist on fighting on with a wooden leg – earning him the nickname "Timbertoes" – join the Royal Flying Corps, become first a pilot and then an instructor. After the war, he will turn to farming in Kenya. But he will return in 1939, join the RAF, become a gunner in Wellington bombers but lose his life in anti-climactic circumstances when his unit's base at Wittering, Cambridgeshire, is bombed on 9 May 1941.

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