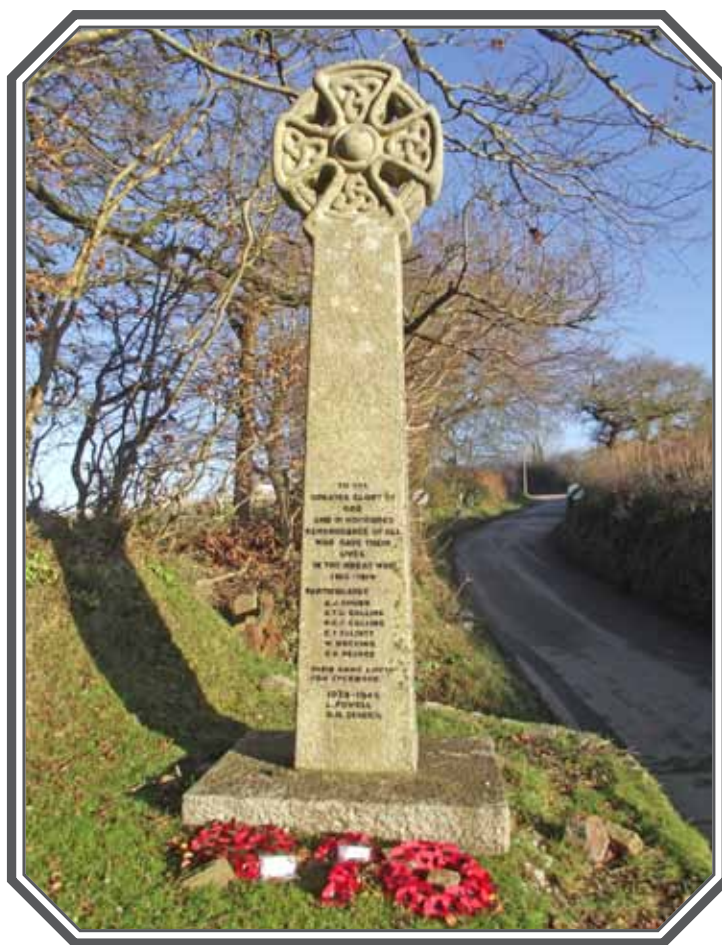


PILLATON AT WAR 1914 -1918



*A Tribute to the Men of Pillaton who fought and died
in The Great War*

By Don King

INTRODUCTION

This Memorial Booklet arose from some initial research into the men on the Pillaton War Memorial so that something about their lives could be read out at a special Church Service held on the Centenary on 4 August 2014 of the start of the First World War. There was some basic information in memorial plaques in St Odolph's church, but the first task was to properly identify all those named on the War Memorial.

Following the Centenary Service, the work began to build up as detailed a picture as possible of the men who gave their lives. The 1911 Census helped to find family connections, but few of the men had surviving relatives still in the area, and some of those had very little firm information about their ancestors. The army service records existed for some but these were often incomplete and many were destroyed by fire in WW2. There was detailed evidence on how some of the men died, but in other cases there is only a generalized location. It proved particularly difficult to find photographs of the men, and I would be grateful should anyone find relevant photos if they could pass them on to me to help complete the record. The result is that the coverage of these men in this booklet is very uneven and if there is a longer section on any individual it is simply because I found more information about them or that there was a story to be told. The men who fell are listed according to the dates of their deaths.

One of the dead is William John Higman whose name does not appear on the official memorial but is recorded on a memorial plaque in the church. I have included him, even though he is named on the Landrake Memorial, because he has a strong local connection with Pillaton families, relatives of whom are still living in the area. He also was the only married man of the seven who died. On the other hand, the two Collins brothers are also named on both the Pillaton and on the Newquay memorial where the family home was located, but the importance of their deaths to the future development of Pillaton would alone justify their inclusion.

I have added a section at the end on some of the men who went to war and survived. We have no easily available list of these men and although some local families have good family archives, most do not. The details in this section are often very sketchy and there is clearly scope for much more research on these men and their experiences both during and particularly after the war. My apologies for any inaccuracies that may be found.

Although I have read a great deal about this and other wars, finding out about these particular individuals in this way has made me understand much better the horrors that they must have experienced. They deserve an honoured memory and I hope that this slim booklet does them justice.

Don King, 2015

SUNLIGHT SOAP

**THE BRITISH LINE
IS FIRMLY HELD BY THE
CLEANEST FIGHTER
IN THE WORLD.**

THE clean, chivalrous, fighting instincts of our gallant Soldiers reflect the ideals of our business life. The same characteristics which stamp the British Tommy as *the Cleanest Fighter in the World*, have won equal repute for British Goods.

SUNLIGHT SOAP is typically British. It is acknowledged by experts to represent the highest standard of soap quality and efficiency. Tommy welcomes it in the Trenches just as you welcome it in the Home.

£1,000 Guarantee of Purity on every Bar.
The name Lever on Soap is a Guarantee of Purity and Excellence.

LEVER BROTHERS LIMITED, PORT SUNLIGHT.

An advertisement from the First World War, typical of the period.

PILLATON AT WAR 1914-1918

WILLIAM HOCKING

William Hocking (born 30 September 1892) was the first of Pillaton's serving men to die in this war.

He died on Good Friday, 21 April 1916, aged 23.

William was the second son of Richard Hocking who was rector at St Odulph's, Pillaton, from 1894 to 1944. Richard, born in 1857 in East Stonehouse, Plymouth is listed in the 1911 census as living in Pillaton Rectory with his wife, Frances E M Hocking (aged 52) whom he married in 1884, daughter Frances (26 years) and his second son, William (19 years), who is listed as an apprentice in the Mercantile Marine. Others in the household were Sophie Hocking (80 years) Richard's widowed mother and Annie Ough a servant. There were three other sons in the family, Richard, Hugh and Frederick, who were not living at home at the time.

William had decided on a career in the merchant navy and signed on as an apprentice at the age of 16. His first ship was the *Clan Graham*, a square rigged ship based in Glasgow, from 25 June 1908 to 25 March 1911 and then on the *SS Queen Maud* from 10 June 1911 to 27 July 1912. After this he served as Third Officer on the *Queen Maud* for two years until 18 January 1915. He was awarded a Certificate of Competency as Second Mate for foreign going steamships on 12 February 1915 and but for the war would probably have had a very successful career at sea.

Perhaps his experience at sea in the early years of the war of the threat to merchant ships from enemy submarines and mines led him to want to fight back, and he joined the Royal Naval Air Service on 7 November 1915 as a Flight Sub-Lieutenant. He gained his Aviator's Certificate in a Maurice Farman Biplane at the Royal Naval Air Station, Chingford, on 18 December 1915.



Maurice Farman, born in England but living all his life in France, was a successful designer and builder of early aircraft. In a famous flying meeting in Reims in 1909, a version of the Farman III Biplane flew 180 km in just over three hours to win the distance prize.

A Maurice Farman III Biplane. The pilot had to sit in a box at the front of the aircraft with the engine pushing the plane from behind his back. It was not fast, but it was stable and easy to fly and was a standard training aircraft for the military in the early days of aviation.



This is the photo of William Hocking attached to his Aviator's Certificate No. 2227 taken at the time of his flying test.

PILLATON AT WAR 1914-1918

The Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) was formed in 1914 when the Admiralty decided that it did not want its views on the military use of aircraft to be dominated by the army Royal Flying Corps (RFC) which had been established in 1912. There was often intense rivalry between the two units and early on the RNAS managed to get near exclusive access to the successful aircraft built by the Sopwith Aviation Company Ltd.



RNAS officer's cap badge

William Hocking continued to be based at Chingford until mid February 1916 when he was posted to Killingholme RNAS, the base on the South bank of the river Humber between Cleethorpes and Kingston upon Hull.

RNAS Station Killingholme had been commissioned by August 1914 but in September 1914 there were only 4 aircraft at the base intended for the defence of the nearby oil depot. By the end of 1914 there were several Sopwith Scout aircraft employed in anti-submarine duties as well as Sopwith Schneider, Baby and Short 827 seaplanes. At the peak there were 46 planes based there of various types. The site was probably initially chosen because the Immingham Navy balloon station was nearby.

Killingholme also operated as a Navy seaplane training centre, but was not ideal because of the strong tides in the Humber estuary. Flight training required that an RNAS pilot should be able to operate from both land and sea, and at first ships were adapted to carry seaplanes. One of these was *HMS Killingholme* which was originally built as a double-ended paddle steamer for the Great Central Railway in 1912. In February 1916 she was requisitioned as a fleet messenger and used as a seaplane carrier working closely with RNAS Killingholme. From March 1918 the air station became a US Navy seaplane base and Royal Navy use of the site ceased.

William seems to have started well at Killingholme. His service report says 'Good ability to command' and 'Good officer, in charge of motor boats' and his Merchant Navy experience would have been an advantage. In addition to these duties he would have been extending his flying training. It took a while, however, for RNAS and Royal Flying Corps (RFC) flight training in general to become rigorous and 'professional.' New pilots were sent into action often with very few air hours and very little training in air combat and the result was a very high accident rate among new pilots. More than half of the pilots that died in WW1 were killed during training. The early fighters were essentially a wooden framework, braced by wires, and covered with fabric stiffened by highly inflammable dope. The petrol engines often had dangerous exhausts, and the greatest fear of pilots was to be flying a machine that caught fire either accidentally or by enemy tracer bullets. The pilot sat in an open cockpit that was freezing cold at high altitudes, had no oxygen, no radio, and an unreliable compass. There were no brakes to help with landing, and if there was a major mechanical failure in the air or serious damage or fire from enemy action, there was no parachute. William Hocking had chosen a role that carried significantly more risks than being with the PBI (Poor Bloody Infantry). Unfortunately, William met a fate similar to that of many enthusiastic young fliers.

William is recorded on the Chatham Naval Memorial (Index No. M.R.1.18) as follows:

'Hocking, Flight Sub. Lieutenant, William RN. Killed as the result of an accident to his seaplane, 21st April 1916, Age 23. Son of Richard and Francis Elizabeth Hocking of the Rectory, Pillaton, St. Mellion, Cornwall'

PILLATON AT WAR 1914-1918

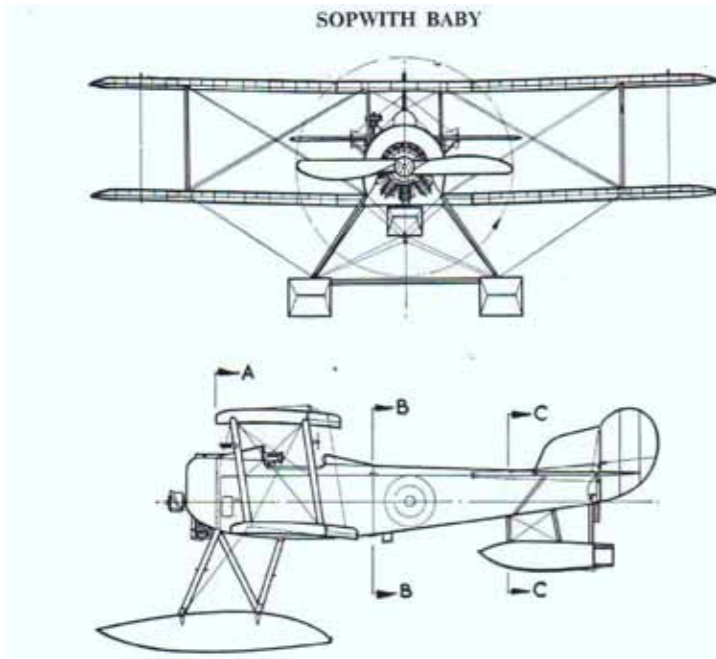
A telegram to Admiral Cunningham dated 21 April 1916 in William's file in the National Archives says:

'Seaplane Schneider Cup 8185 fell in Humber at 11.30am during flight from air station to seaplane carrier Killingholme. m/c completely wrecked, Pilot drowned. Body not yet recovered. Accident apparently caused by Pilot practising platoon diving, contrary to instructions, at an excessive angle of banking when at only 200 ft altitude. Total loss of machine.'

The meaning of a 'platoon dive' is not clear, and the curators of the Fleet Air Arm Museum and other Naval sources have not heard of the term, but the Museum says that the seaplane's serial number was 8155 and not 8185 (it is possible that both 'platoon' and the number were typing errors in the telegram). There is information on the 'Schneider' reference. A seaplane version of the Sopwith 'Tabloid' machine won the Schneider Trophy race for seaplanes in 1914 and soon after the start of the war, production models were ordered by the Admiralty for fast scouting use. These early aircraft were increasingly used for anti-submarine duties but launching them from standard warships proved to be difficult. Initially seaplane tenders (converted merchant vessels like HMS Killingholme) were used to carry a few planes and



The Sopwith Baby in this photo carries the number 8151 whereas the machine in which William crashed was 8155 so it seems certain that this is the same type and production batch.



Line Drawing of the Sopwith Baby

crane them into the sea, but the Schneider's floats tended to crumple in a choppy sea. By August 1915, a technique had been developed of launching the planes on a wheeled trolley from a short flight deck but they still had to be retrieved by crane from the sea, a difficult operation in anything other than a flat calm. Inevitably, pilots and machines were lost. It was not until the autumn of 1918 that a true aircraft carrier, HMS Argus, was built from which planes could both take off and land relatively safely.

The Schneider was modified by the fitting of a more powerful 110 hp Clerget rotary engine and a synchronized Lewis machine gun and this version became known as the Sopwith 'Baby' but the name Schneider was used loosely for both types.

William could have died a week later because on 28 April the *Killingholme* hit a mine and was severely damaged. Eighteen of her crew were killed, including two Flight Sub Lieutenant pilots. Such is the (ill) luck of war.

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MEMORIAL SERVICE AT PILLATON

After the heavy losses of 1916 local newspapers stopped publishing long lists of casualties because of their effect on morale although generalized reports of battles and ships lost at sea were regularly reported. In early 1916 however, reports and memorial items on men killed in action did appear, and an edition of the Cornish Times of 19 May 1916 carried the long report right. In addition to full details of the memorial service, a list of people attending is given which includes many names of families that have long been associated with the parish, for example, Coryton, Symons, Tucker, and Dolley. Other family names mentioned, such as Ball, Lucas, Barrett, Elliott and Pearce will re-appear in this booklet, some with sad stories attached.

FLIGHT-SUB LIEUT. W. HOCKING, R.N.

MEMORIAL SERVICE AT PILLATON.

A most impressive memorial service for the late Flight-Sub-Lieut. William Hocking, R.N., second son of the Rev. Richard and Mrs. Hocking, Pillaton Rectory, was held at the Parish Church on Friday last. In addition to the father and mother, the mourners were the Misses Hocking (three sisters), and Mr. F. R. Hocking (brother). Lieut. Richard Hocking, R.N.R., and Mr. Hugh Hocking, Canada (brothers), were prevented from attending. Mrs. Haygarth and Mrs. Hambly (aunts), and Mr. R. Robinson Rodd (uncle) wrote apologising for absence. The service was conducted by Rev. C. Square, rector of St. Dominic, and Rev. F. T. Wintle, rector of St. Mellion. The choir attended, and Mr. H. Wenmoth (organist) presided at the organ. Psalms 39 and 130 were chanted, and the hymns sung were "We are soldiers of Christ" (deceased's favourite hymn), "God of the living in whose eyes," and "On the resurrection morning." The Nunc Dimittis was also sung at the close of the service. Amongst the congregation the following were present: Revs. S. Gregory (Landulph), J. F. Forth (Quethiock), F. J. Behenna (Landrake), Mr. and Mrs. Coryton (Pentillie Castle), Mrs. Wintle (St. Mellion Rectory), Mrs. Hugh Symons (Hatt House), Mrs. Easterbrook (Saltash), Mr. W. Hawk, Mr. J. C. Hawk, Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Elliott, Misses Elliott (2), Mr. and Mrs. D. Fowell, Mr. and Mrs. G. Lucas, Mr. and Mrs. J. Tucker, Mr. S. C. Ball, Mr. and Mrs. W. Fowell, Mrs. Easterbrook, Mrs. W. Barrett, Mr. and Mrs. O. Dolley, Mr. and Mrs. S. Dolley, Mrs. Pearce, Mr. and Mrs. R. M. Drown, Miss M. Lucas, Miss O. Dolley, Misses A., F. and S. Pearce, Messrs. E. Cloke, A. Fowell, Miss Clarke, Mrs. Furze'and, Mr. Orocker. Rev. C. R. Gott, St. Germans, and Mr. Michael Loam, Moditonham, wrote regretting inability to be present. The tenor bell was tolled prior to the service, and a muffled peal rung after. The St. George's cross flag was hoisted at half mast on the tower. The deepest sympathy has been felt and expressed for the Rector and his wife and family in their bereavement. The deceased officer was 23 years of age, and was deservedly respected and popular in the parish. A brother officer writing of him says—"he was an exceptionally good Pilot and had a future before him."

PILLATON AT WAR 1914-1918

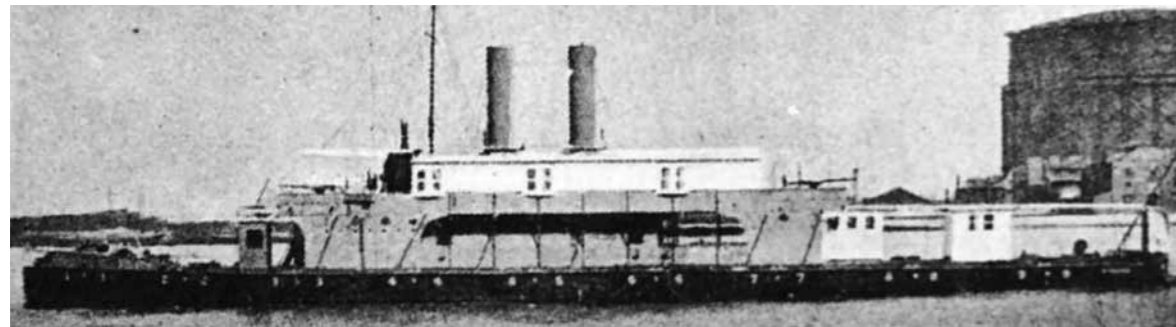
WILLIAM JOHN HIGMAN

William HIGMAN is not recorded on the Pillaton War Memorial because his family lived in Landrake and his name is recorded on the memorial there. He is included in this memorial booklet because he married into a Pillaton family and his wife had a memorial plaque placed in St Odulph's.

William's father, Tobias, was born in 1853 when his family was living in St Mellion. Tobias worked as a gardener/agricultural labourer and was also a Methodist lay preacher closely connected with Blunts Methodist Chapel. William's mother was Mary Higman. William was born in Quethiock in 1883 and by the time of the 1891 Census was living in Penquite near Landrake, where he was one of four children. William is listed as 8 years old and at school. By 1901, William (18) was working as a servant, carter and farm hand to the Downing family at Cuttivet Farm House.

William joined the Royal Navy on 28 May 1903 - his Service No. is given as Devonport 303992. On joining at 22 years, William was 5'8" tall, had light brown hair, blue eyes and a fresh complexion.

Initially based at *HMS Vivid II*, a Devonport training ship, he trained as a stoker and given a very good conduct record. He served in *HM Ships Blake* and *Leander* rising to the rank of Acting Leading Stoker. The *Leander* was an old 2nd class cruiser built in 1885 which, although steam powered, still had a square-rigged foremast. After more mechanical training in Devonport he was posted to the China Station in August 1910 and promoted to Stoker Petty Officer in *HMS Widgeon*. The *Widgeon* was a river gunboat on the upper Yangtse river based at Chungking.



HMS Widgeon

RIVER GUNBOAT SPECIFICATIONS

WIDGEON (1904), *TEAL*, *MOORHEN* (1901)

Built by Yarrows and re-erected in China.

Dimensions: 165 ft x 24½ ft x 2¼ ft. Displacement: 180 tons

Complement: 35

Armament: Two 6 pdr guns and 4 machine guns; bullet proof hulls

Machinery notes: HP 670; speed 13 kts

The log-book of *Widgeon* is available on line, and the work seemed to involve trips up and down the river showing the flag. Training took place regularly, including small arms practice, landings by armed shore parties and even cutlass practice, but much of the time was occupied with cleaning and maintenance of the ship.

William was back in Devonport in November 1912 for more training in *HMS Impregnable*, a training hulk in the Hamoaze.



Royal Navy petty officer's cap badge

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William married Alberta Stevens at St Germans in 1913; the picture right is believed to be their wedding photo.

'He married Alberta Kate Stephens on 28 April 1913 when he was 30. Alberta was 31. Their witnesses were Albert William Stephens and Alfred Reginald Stephens (Alberta's brothers). Alberta's father William Stephens, a butcher, of Rick Park farm, was already dead. Perhaps William and Alberta had lived at Rick Park after they were married. No doubt Alberta remained there while her husband was away in the navy.'

On 21 April 1914, a year after they were married, Alberta and William had a son (my father) who was also named William John. He was born at Rick Park.'

(Notes from Ruth Powell-Thomas, William's grand-daughter).



Alberta and William Higman

Alberta Stephens was one of the six children of William Stephens (born in Pillaton in 1837) and Elizabeth Moon Body. In the 1880s the family lived at Pillaton Mill and at the end of the 1890s at Rick Park Farm. One of Alberta's brothers was Alfred Henry Reginald Stephens (born 1884). Alfred had three sons, and one of them, William Henry (Harry) Reginald Stephens married Margaret Peters and they had a daughter well known in these parts, Shirley (Floyd), in 1951. This is one of the direct family links we still have in Pillaton with the men who served in the Great War. We will come across others later.

William was not home for the birth of his son, because by September 1913 he was a member of the crew of *HMS Berwick* serving on the North American and West Indies Station.

(Family photos courtesy of Ruth Powell-Thomas who thinks this photo of Alberta and her son, William John, may have been sent to William for Christmas 1914. This William John Higman was Ruth's father, and he also appears in the photo of the Pillaton Home Guard platoon shown at the end of this booklet).

HMS Berwick was a Kent class cruiser launched in September 1903, (9,800 tons, 14 x 6 inch guns), and which served in North American and West Indies waters for the duration of the war. While William was on board, the *Berwick* was cruising from Havana on 4 August 1914. In light winds from the south-west, the crew spent the morning rigging protective mats and splinter nets and generally preparing for war (tensions had been building for some days before). In the afternoon, the ship was cleared for action and exercised at General Quarters. At 11.00 pm a wireless message from *HMS Suffolk* was received 'to commence hostilities against Germany.'

On Thursday, 19 August, south of Barbados, at 3.37 pm, the *Berwick* stopped and made a prize of *SS Lorenzo* of New York, but chartered by Hamburg-American Line. Later, at 4.25 pm, a blank shot was fired at a steamer the *SS Spreewald*, which then hoisted a German Naval Reserve Colour. An armed party was sent over and the captain made a prisoner of war. Prize crews were put on both ships. This was William's introduction to war, but fortunately at that time without casualties.



Alberta Higman with her son William John

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William returned to *HMS Vivid II* at Devonport in November 1915 and we can assume that he was at last able to see his wife and two year old son. In February 1916 he was sent to the Mediterranean to serve on a recently launched ship, *HMS Nasturtium*.

William was killed in 1916. He is listed in the Plymouth Naval Memorial list 1916 as follows:

**HIGMAN. Sto. P.O. William John, 303992 RN, HMS Nasturtium.
Killed by mine explosion in Mediterranean 27th April 1916.
Age 33. Son of Tobias & Mary Higman of Landrake, St. Germans, Cornwall,
Husband of Alberta K Higman of Pillaton Mill, St. Mellion, Cornwall.**

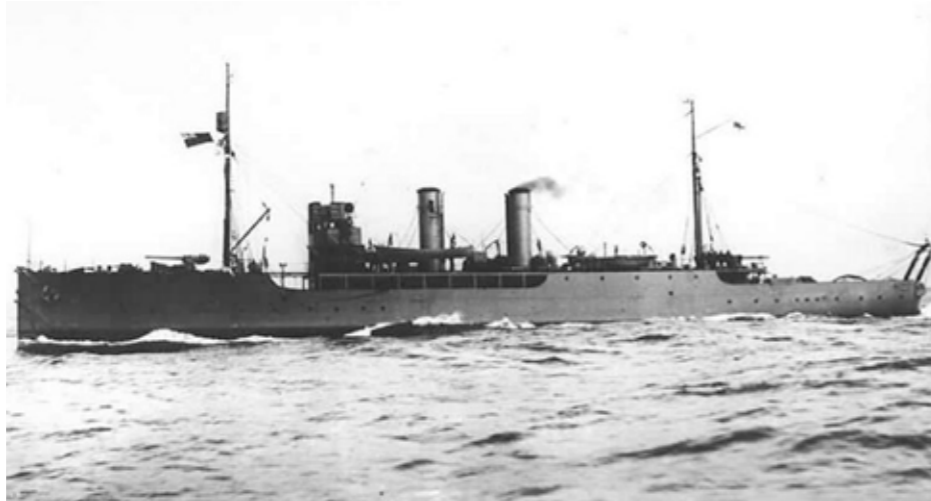
His name is on the east face of the Naval War Memorial on Plymouth Hoe.

A plaque in the Church reads:

**'William John Higman lost his life on board HMS Nasturtium, sunk by a mine in the Med
28 Apr 1916 aged 33. Duty nobly done. Tablet erected by his widow and son.'**

The Story of the Sinking of HMS Nasturtium

HMS Nasturtium was a minesweeper sloop of the Flower class (Arabis type) built by Archibald McMillan and Sons Ltd of Dumbarton in Scotland and launched in December 1915. She displaced 1,250 gross tons, was 81.7 metres long, and had one 4 cylinder triple expansion steam engine driving one screw at 17 knots. She was armed with two 4 inch guns and two 47mm anti-aircraft guns.



Flower Class (Arabis type) minesweeper sloop

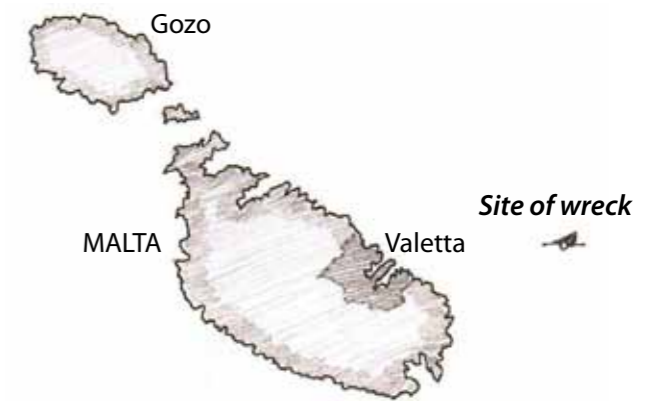
HMS Nasturtium sailed from Malta on 24 April 1916, but was ordered to return to join other ships searching for an enemy submarine reported to be close to the Maltese coast. Arriving back on the 27 April, *Nasturtium* was ordered to search for mines and submarines until dark in the areas where the submarine was last seen some three miles north east of Valletta. This submarine, U-73, commanded by Cdr Gustav Siess, was making its first operational patrol having left Heligoland on April 1st and on 27 April had laid a minefield of 22 mines outside the Grand Harbour of Valletta. Just after 8.00 pm, *Nasturtium* struck one of these mines.

HMS Sheldrake, also helping with the search, reported that *Nasturtium* was still afloat but had been badly holed seven feet below the waterline on the starboard side ahead of the foremost funnel. Both boiler rooms had flooded and tons of coal from the starboard bunkers had spilled out of the hole and caused the ship to list to port. It is likely that William Higman, as a Stoker PO, was at his station in one of the boiler rooms and was killed instantly by the mine explosion. *Sheldrake* began to tow *Nasturtium* back to Valletta and tugs were ordered to attend.

By 9.00 pm *Nasturtium* had developed a heavy list and the surviving crew members were taken off by boats from *Sheldrake*, *Wallflower* and *Aegusa* hampered by bad weather, darkness and a heavy

PILLATON AT WAR 1914-1918

swell. The *Aegusa* was originally Sir Thomas Lipton's yacht *Erin*, but had been taken over and armed by the Admiralty. A small fore-castle working party led by the *Nasturtium*'s Captain, Cdr R Lloyd, was left on board to assist with tow lines when the tugs arrived. By 9.40 pm however, *Nasturtium* was motionless with a 30 degree list to port. The danger of this situation was emphasized when *Aegusa* also hit a mine at 10.45 pm and her survivors, probably including some of *Nasturtium*'s crew, had to be picked up by *Sheldrake* and *Wallflower*. These bigger ships then got clear of the danger area and headed for Valletta. Captain T P Walker RNR, a retired Vice Admiral commanding *Aegusa*, with four of his crew, stood by in an 18 foot boat to rescue the men still on *Nasturtium* in case she sank before the tugs arrived. At about 2.00 am on the 28 April, with no tugs and the ship slowly settling in the water, the fore-castle crew was picked up by the *Aegusa*'s small boat. *Nasturtium*'s list increased and at 2.30 am she rolled gently over on her port side. Shortly after, her stern started to go under and she slowly sank five or six miles from the St Elmo light. *Aegusa*'s boat then headed back towards Malta.



The sinking of HMS Nasturtium off Malta

Seven men out of the crew of 97 lost their lives in the sinking of *Nasturtium*; Stokers John Adams, Frederick Harvie and Thomas Mercer, Stoker Petty Officers William Higman and Samuel Sluman, Able Seaman James Power and ship's boy Arthur Wells. The wreck still lies at a depth of 135 m and is now a popular diving location. Six men died on the *Aegusa* but the biggest loss took place later that day when *HMS Russell*, a pre-Dreadnought battleship, hit two of U-73's mines and sank with the loss of over 100 lives. U-73 suffered frequent mechanical problems while based in the Mediterranean but managed to sink a total of 18 ships including the three warships before she was scuttled at the end of October 1918 during the evacuation of the port of Cattaro.

Ruth Powell-Thomas writes:

'When William Snr was killed in 1916, my Grandmother was left a widow with a 2 year old baby son. She must have worried about how she would manage to bring up a son by herself. She moved to Pillaton Mill and started to run the water mill there. She was an enterprising lady with a good head for business. There is an entry in Kelly's directory referring to her as a Miller (water mill). She produced butter, cream and eggs, and would take the produce to Saltash by pony and trap. She managed to make a living, enough to send my father to Callington Grammar School. However, he left school at 14 in order to help his mother run the mill. I imagine that this was a reluctant decision since my Grandmother greatly valued education (in fact she taught me to read before I went to school!).'

'When my father married my mother, Alberta let Pillaton Mill and moved into Saltash to look after her older brother Albert (a widower). My father moved to Coomberow Farm and farmed there for several years.'

'William's name appears on the Landrake War Memorial and not on the Pillaton Memorial. My Grandmother must have felt that William needed to be remembered in Pillaton, the parish where she had always lived – hence the plaque in the Church.'

'I wish I had asked my father, when he was alive, more about his childhood. I do know that my Grandmother remained bitter about her loss, and, I think, mourned her husband until she died. She never remarried, and was fiercely independent. The more I find out about her, the more my admiration grows.'

References & Acknowledgements: Ruth Powell-Thomas (née Higman)

Devonport. 303992

Name in full } *William John Higman* Date of Birth *18 March 1891*
 Place of Birth *Liskeard Cornwall*
 Occupation *Labr.*

Date	Period of U.S. Engagements	Age	Height	Hair	Eyes	Complexion	Wounds, Scars, Marks, &c.
28 May 1903 - 12 yrs		16	5-7	Brn	Blue	Fresh	
28 May 1915 - 4 months		18	5-8 1/2	Brn	Brn		
Nov 1915 - 25 May 1915							

Ship	List and No.	Rating	Sub-ratings		Badges	Period of Service		Character	If Discharged, Whither, and for what Cause.
			Rating	From To		From To			
<i>Nivid II</i>	<i>1501</i>	<i>Stoker</i>			<i>9.25.11</i>	<i>28.5.11</i>	<i>28.5.11 to 28.5.12</i>		
<i>Nivid II</i>	<i>1501</i>	<i>Stoker</i>			<i>2</i>	<i>28.5.11</i>	<i>28.5.11 to 28.5.12</i>		
<i>Nivid II</i>	<i>1501</i>	<i>Stoker</i>				<i>28.5.11</i>	<i>28.5.11 to 28.5.12</i>		
<i>Blake</i>	<i>1254</i>	<i>Stoker</i>				<i>28.5.11</i>	<i>28.5.11 to 28.5.12</i>		
<i>Leander</i>	<i>1254</i>	<i>Stoker</i>				<i>28.5.11</i>	<i>28.5.11 to 28.5.12</i>		
<i>Nivid I</i>	<i>1501</i>	<i>Stoker</i>				<i>28.5.11</i>	<i>28.5.11 to 28.5.12</i>		
<i>Indus</i>	<i>1404</i>	<i>Stoker</i>				<i>28.5.11</i>	<i>28.5.11 to 28.5.12</i>		
<i>Nivid I</i>	<i>1501</i>	<i>Stoker</i>				<i>28.5.11</i>	<i>28.5.11 to 28.5.12</i>		
<i>Edgar</i>	<i>1501</i>	<i>Stoker</i>				<i>28.5.11</i>	<i>28.5.11 to 28.5.12</i>		
<i>Widgeon</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>Stoker</i>				<i>28.5.11</i>	<i>28.5.11 to 28.5.12</i>		
<i>Woodlark</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>Stoker</i>				<i>28.5.11</i>	<i>28.5.11 to 28.5.12</i>		
<i>Widgeon</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>Stoker</i>				<i>28.5.11</i>	<i>28.5.11 to 28.5.12</i>		
<i>Nivid II</i>	<i>1501</i>	<i>Stoker</i>				<i>28.5.11</i>	<i>28.5.11 to 28.5.12</i>		
<i>Impregnable</i>	<i>1501</i>	<i>Stoker</i>				<i>28.5.11</i>	<i>28.5.11 to 28.5.12</i>		
<i>Bowick</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>Stoker</i>				<i>28.5.11</i>	<i>28.5.11 to 28.5.12</i>		
<i>Nivid II</i>	<i>1501</i>	<i>Stoker</i>				<i>28.5.11</i>	<i>28.5.11 to 28.5.12</i>		
<i>Agmonth</i>	<i>1501</i>	<i>Stoker</i>				<i>28.5.11</i>	<i>28.5.11 to 28.5.12</i>		

Class for Conduct.

N.P. 206816
S.S. 27 April 16
When H.M.S. Nassau was mined

Clothing and Bedding Gratuities.	REMARKS.
<i>95-2</i> <i>25 lb. Mich. 03</i> <i>300 lb. B. & P.</i>	<i>101-Grat for raising } v. 69</i> <i>10-Grav. Exp. } Nivid 2, June 03</i> <i>1-Subsistence } June 03</i> <i>Rated lights in Nov. 1913</i> <i>correct & show date entry as act lights</i> <i>from 15.4.13. V. 1713213</i> <i>Passed educationally for Sto. P.O.</i> <i>on 5.11.09 at expiration of</i> <i>3 months M.T.O. N.P. 1146/10</i> <i>(1) N. 1529/11 Promotion allowed</i> <i>x Per Nivid II Sept</i>

GERALD THURSTAN COLE COLLINS

Gerald T C Collins was born on 8 September 1890 in St Columb Major, the eldest son of Thurstan and Ellen Maud Collins. In the 1901 census Gerald is listed as 10 years old and at a preparatory boarding school; The Mount House College in Wraxall with Thomas Spencer as Headmaster. In 1911 Thurstan Collins was living at 'Gluvian,' Newquay, a successful solicitor but now widowed. Gerald had joined the Royal Navy in 1908 but his two sisters, Violet (22 years) and Evelyn (15 years) were at home. Gerald's younger brother, Percival, was away at boarding school.



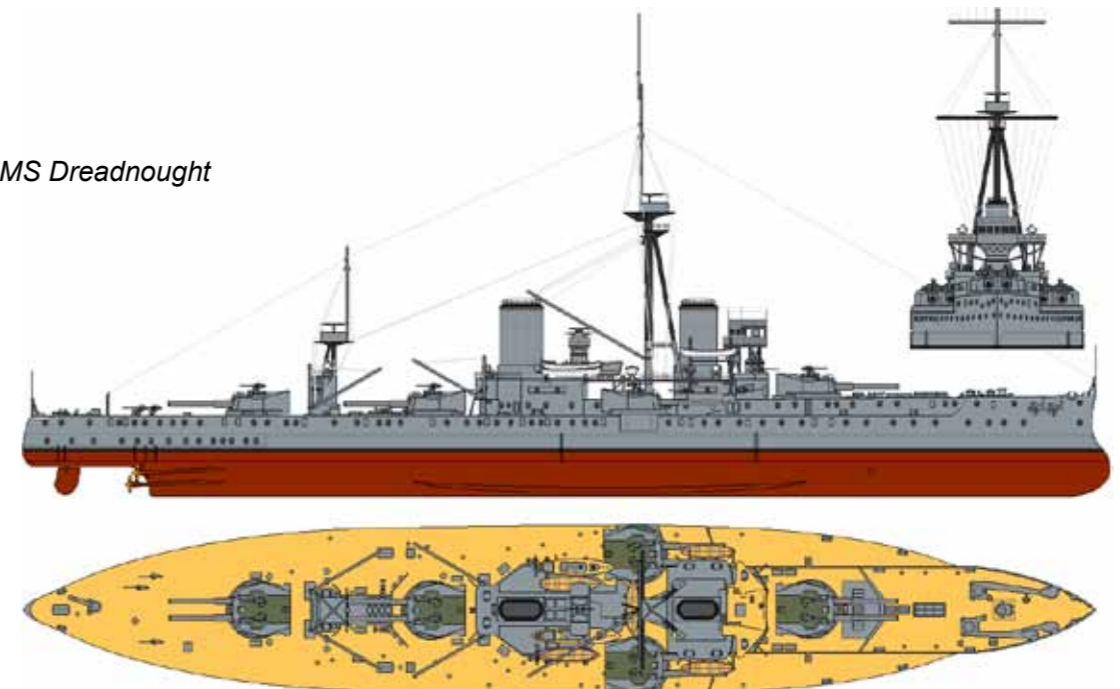
Gerald Collins as a Sub Lieutenant

Thurstan Collins inherited the Newton Ferrers estate and the manor of Pillaton from Mr Digby Collins. Digby Collins was a well known figure being Deputy Lieutenant of the County, Alderman of the County Council and Justice of the Peace, but he had no children and his estate was left to his distant cousin, Thurstan Collins, when Digby died on 25 January 1916.

Gerald began to build a promising career as a naval officer. His first ship as a midshipman was the famous HMS Dreadnought launched in 1906.

Under the guidance of the then First Sea Lord, Sir John Fisher, the Dreadnought was the first 'all big gun' warship with ten 12 inch guns, thick armour plating, and when launched was the fastest warship in the world with new Parsons steam turbine engines producing a then unprecedented speed of 21 knots. The strategy for fleet engagements now had to change to one of long-range salvos fired from out of the reach of torpedoes. Big warships built before her were immediately out-dated and were referred to as 'pre-Dreadnoughts.' Ironically, when the great confrontation with the German High Seas Fleet for which she and her successors were built took place Dreadnought was in dock for maintenance. Gerald served in her for a year until January 1909 and got the report that he 'should make a good officer.' He spent the rest of 1909 as midshipman

HMS Dreadnought



PILLATON AT WAR 1914-1918

in *HMS Duncan* (as a 'promising young officer') before three months in *HMS Cornwallis* where he 'worked well and improved'. *Duncan* and *Cornwallis* were pre-Dreadnought battleships with a mixed armament of large and small guns (*Cornwallis* was sunk in November 1917 by U.32 east of Malta). Most of 1910 and half of 1911 were spent in various training courses. Gerald was promoted to sub lieutenant on 15 April 1910 and then applied to be a Gunnery Officer. The 1911 Census shows him, now 20, listed with many other young naval officers in Greenwich.



Royal Navy officer's cap badge

From July 1911 to January 1912 he served in a smaller, newer ship, a Tribal class destroyer *HMS Viking*, launched in 1909, before sailing out to the China Station on the *Europa* to join *HMS Monmouth* as a lieutenant. The *Monmouth* was an armoured cruiser launched in the early 1900s. Gerald served in her until she returned home to join the reserve fleet in 1913. (Re-commissioned at the start of the war, she was sent to the Pacific and was sunk with all 735 hands at the Battle of Coronel on November 1st 1914). After more training in England, Gerald completed his specialist Gunnery course in May 1915 and was rated as 'Excellent.' After serving most of his time on big ships, he was allocated to various destroyer flotilla duties in December 1915 and on 28 April 1916 he was sent to join the destroyer *HMS Tipperary* as her gunnery officer, possibly the youngest gunnery officer in the Navy at the time and undoubtedly very keen. A month later he was killed in action at the Battle of Jutland. The fate of *Tipperary* was similar to that of many other ships in that great battle with Scheer bad luck and lack of information playing as much a part as strategy and tactics.

A plaque inside the church tells us:

'Gerald Thurstan Cole Collins died aged 25 years. Gunnery Lt. in Leading Destroyer HMS Tipperary, killed in action 31 May 1916 in Naval engagement with the German fleet off coast of Jutland.'

Unusually, Gerald and his brother Percival are also recorded on the Newquay War Memorial and on a brass plaque in St Michael's Church in that town. The timing of their father's inheritance means that the boys had much closer links to Newquay than to Pillaton.

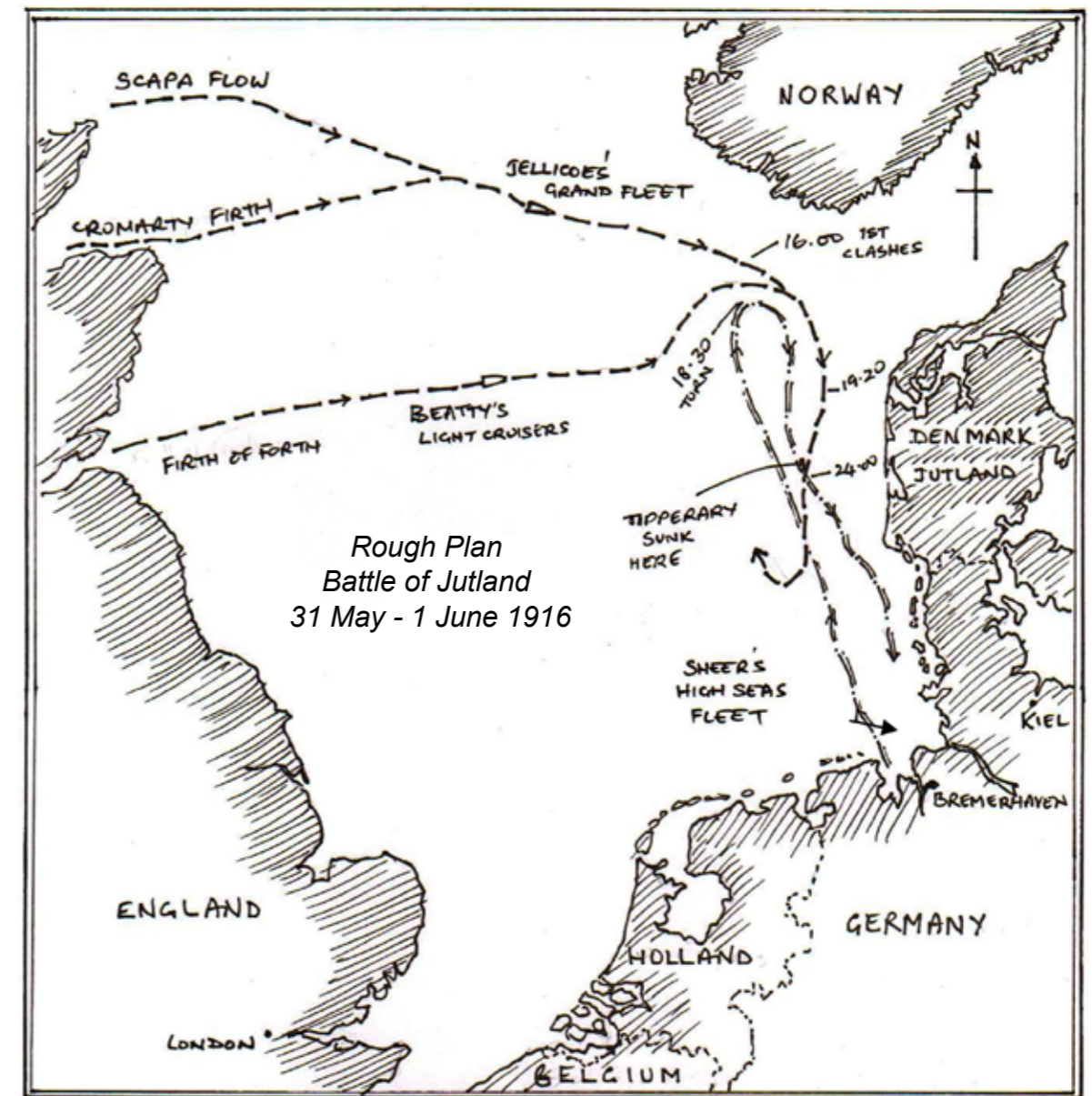
The Battle of Jutland

The arms race between Britain and Germany at the start of the 20th Century had concentrated on the construction of enough powerful warships to dominate the oceans. Britain's surprise launch of the Dreadnought caught the Germans on the hop and although they stepped up the building of similar great battleships, Britain still had a significant numerical advantage at the outbreak of World War I. On the other hand, the new German battleships and cruisers were of advanced design, were more heavily armoured than most of the British fleet and were often technically superior, for example in the design of range finders.

The British Navy wanted the opportunity to confront and destroy the German High Seas Fleet in a great and decisive sea battle. The German High Command, led by Admirals Scheer and Hipper, planned to try and catch isolated sections of the Grand Fleet off guard and so weaken British strength as to even up the odds of victory. The Battle of the Dogger Bank on 24 January 1915 was an early example of this strategy when Admiral Hipper led a raid on British fishing boats hoping to disrupt alleged spying and at the same time try to lure part of the British fleet into a trap. Britain won this battle but Scheer and Hipper learned valuable lessons such as the importance of avoiding an all-out confrontation. This battle also demonstrated that German gunnery was more accurate and signal communications more reliable than Britain's. The German Fleet did not take such risks again for a year and a half and in the interim concentrated on their increasingly effective submarine warfare.

PILLATON AT WAR 1914-1918

The Battle of Jutland was the first and only time that the British Grand Fleet and the German High Seas Fleet were fully engaged. Early on 31 May 1916, the German fleet, some 99 strong, left its base near Wilhelmshaven in an attempt to disrupt shipping off Norway and to entice Admiral Beatty's battlecruiser fleet into a trap. Admiral Jellicoe, acting on information from de-coded German radio messages that the High Seas Fleet was about to sail, had already set sail with the bulk of the British Grand Fleet from Scapa Flow, while Admiral Beatty's battlecruisers were on their way to intercept the Germans, a total of 149 ships. A very general idea of how the great fleets manoeuvred is given in the chart below.



Beatty's cruisers duly met the van of the German fleet and a fierce exchange of fire followed, lasting from 4.00 pm to 6.30 pm. In this first major clash the British suffered a number of losses including three battlecruisers and over 3,300 men. The British had not learned the lessons of Dogger Bank that a direct hit on a gun turret can cause an explosion in the ships magazine if proper inter lock door protection is not provided and associated safety procedures are not closely followed, that accurate range-finding and salvo concentration is more important than a rapid rate of fire, and that heavily armoured decks greatly reduce the penetration of plunging shells. Having punished Beatty's battlecruisers, Scheer was not willing to risk facing Jellicoe's much bigger Grand Fleet and its Dreadnought big ships, so he made

PILLATON AT WAR 1914-1918

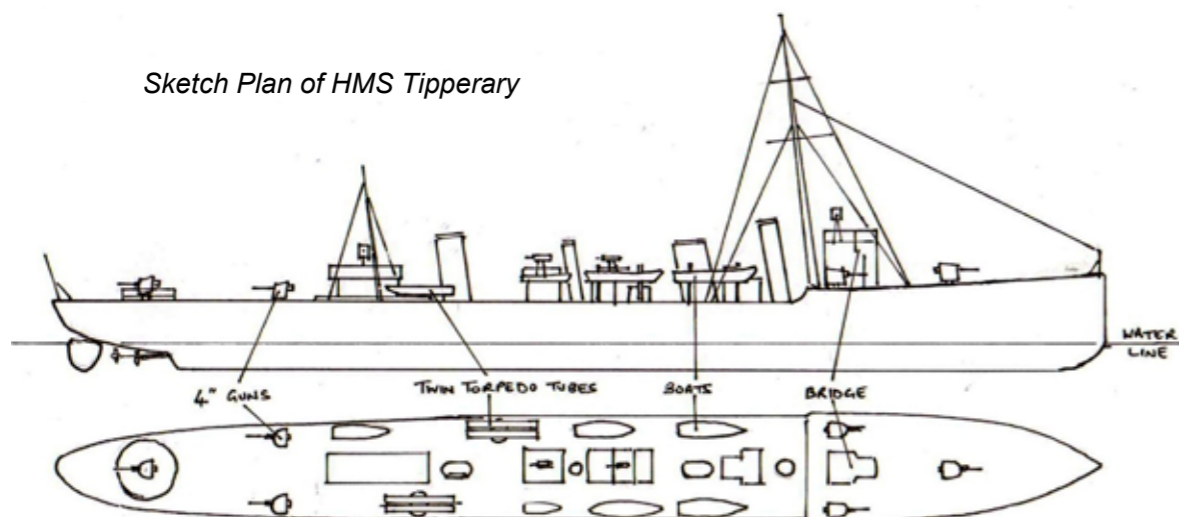
a sharp turn away from the British line in an attempt to return to base in the fading light. By 7.30 pm, the German fleet was heading for home protected by heavy smoke screens and destroyer launched torpedo attacks. The two great fleets separated and lost touch with each other. Many crews were now looking forward to a quiet night after hours of heavy bombardments.

Admiral Jellicoe, 'the great trainer,' had however not taken preparation for night fighting very seriously, it being Royal Navy policy to avoid such actions if possible. The Germans, understanding that their overall weaker numbers made it important to make the most of any situation were much better organized in terms of radio messages, night identification signals and the use of star shells. In addition, German searchlights were fitted with iris type shutters allowing them to be worked up to full power before opening and the light could also be shut down suddenly and completely. British shutterless searchlights took time to warm up and glowed when turned off. Gerald Collins and many other sailors were to suffer as a result of such deficiencies.

As dusk descended into night Admiral Scheer sent his destroyers to find and harry the British Grand Fleet. Fortunately they searched in the wrong direction and made no significant contact. With neither side knowing exactly where they or their opponents were, both main fleets were heading roughly Southwards with the British heading SSW and the Germans to the SSE and roughly side by side. Between 9.00 and 10.00 pm both sides got glimpses of the enemy and torpedoes and shots were exchanged although there was a constant fear of accidentally hitting friendly ships. About 10.30 pm a group of German and British light cruisers suddenly found themselves sailing parallel courses only some 1,000 metres apart. A fierce exchange of fire ensued at short ranges not seen since Nelson's time. German ships seemed to be deliberately targeting the bridge areas of the British ships effectively taking out senior officers, gun control points and crews. No one quite knew it but the situation at about 11.15 pm was that the rear section of the British fleet was crossing through the main German fleet thus leading to sudden and dangerous encounters.

The British 4th Destroyer flotilla commanded by Captain Charles John Wintour in *HMS Tipperary* was in the rear of the British Grand Fleet. *Tipperary* was leading a line of 12 destroyers, *Spitfire*, *Sparrowhawk*, *Garland*, *Contest*, *Broke*, *Achates*, *Ambuscade*, *Ardent*, *Fortune*, *Porpoise* and *Unity*, and Gerald Collins was no doubt very proud to be the Gunnery Officer of the flotilla leader but at the same time anxious that his ship should play its part successfully

Tipperary was a 'Faulkner' class destroyer of 1,700 tons launched in March 1915. Her steam turbines and three screws produced a maximum speed of 32 knots. She was armed with six 4 inch guns and two twin torpedo tubes. Gerald Collins was in charge of the three forward guns, one on the forecastle and one each side of the bridge (see diagram). These guns were not enclosed in a turret like those in the big ships but had a protective shield at the front and were open at the rear.



PILLATON AT WAR 1914-1918

As the two streams of ships converged in the dark, it was the fourth in the line of British destroyers, the *Garland*, that first gave the alarm as a row of shadowy cruisers appeared as a faint blur on her starboard bow. These ships were in fact light cruisers followed by the long line of the German High Seas Fleet. Captain Wintour was totally unaware of his dangerous location nor did he know the whereabouts of the main British fleet. These unknown ships could be British. What if he were to order an immediate torpedo attack (his flotilla was well placed to launch a very effective attack) only to find that



HMS Tipperary at speed

he was sinking friendly ships? At about 11.30 pm, with the two lines of ships getting ever closer, he felt he had no alternative but to make a challenge and the British recognition signals were hoisted. It is possible that the Germans were also uncertain of the identity of the approaching destroyers because they responded immediately to the challenge. The gloom of the night was split by the glare of many German searchlights that quickly focused on the bridge area of the unfortunate *Tipperary*. This was quickly followed by the concentrated salvos of the light cruisers backed up by the big 5.9 inch guns of the van of the column of German battleships. Sub Lt Newton William-Powlett was at his control station for *Tipperary's* three aft 4 inch guns when the blinding lights of the German cruisers snapped on followed by intense fire which seemed to him to be from high above his position indicating how close (some 600 yards) the bigger German ships were. The first German salvo at point blank range shook *Tipperary* violently as the shells hammered into the fore part of the ship, killing Captain Wintour and most of those on the bridge and the crews manning the forward guns. It is most likely that Gerald Collins was killed along with his Captain at this moment. Sub Lt William-Powlett's three guns opened fire and both starboard torpedoes were fired, but *Tipperary* was crippled and fell out of the line with her fore-part burning fiercely.

Now all the other captains of the 4th Flotilla had to make quick decisions, with those towards the rear still not certain that they were dealing with the enemy. The destroyers towards the front reacted quickly and fired torpedoes as they turned sharply to port away from the cruisers. As some German cruisers fell out of line to avoid the torpedoes there was a period of chaos and the light cruiser *Elbig* was rammed by the battleship *Posen* and badly damaged. The destroyer next in line to *Tipperary*, the *Spitfire*, took several hits but turned back to assist *Tipperary* which was lit up by the fire blazing round her bridge. Suddenly, *Spitfire* (935 tons) saw a big German ship (in fact the 20,000 ton battleship *Nassau*) bearing down on her out of the dark. The *Spitfire's* Captain just had time to turn to meet the collision head on to avoid being cut in half, and the two ships met port bow to port bow at a combined speed of over 40 knots. As if this was not bad enough, two German shells hit *Spitfire's* bridge killing nearly everyone there, although the Captain had a lucky escape. The *Nassau* ploughed on, leaving 20 feet of her armour plating wedged in *Spitfire's* forecastle.

The leader of the 4th Flotilla's second section, *Broke*, hastily gathered the flotilla's survivors to organize a second attack. Like *Tipperary*, *Broke* soon found herself in the glare of German searchlights from the battleship *Westfalen*, and was battered by 5.9 inch shells aimed at the bridge area from a range of some 150 yards. Although overwhelmed, *Broke* fired back, but as her quartermaster died and fell he pulled the wheel hard over and *Broke* turned sharply to port and crashed into *Sparrowhawk*. Already suffering from heavy German fire, the collision put both destroyers out of action. As the confusion reigned, another British destroyer, the *Contest*, hit *Sparrowhawk's* stern and carried away some 6 feet of steel plating and jammed the rudder. The remnants of the 4th Flotilla reformed under the lead of *Achates*,

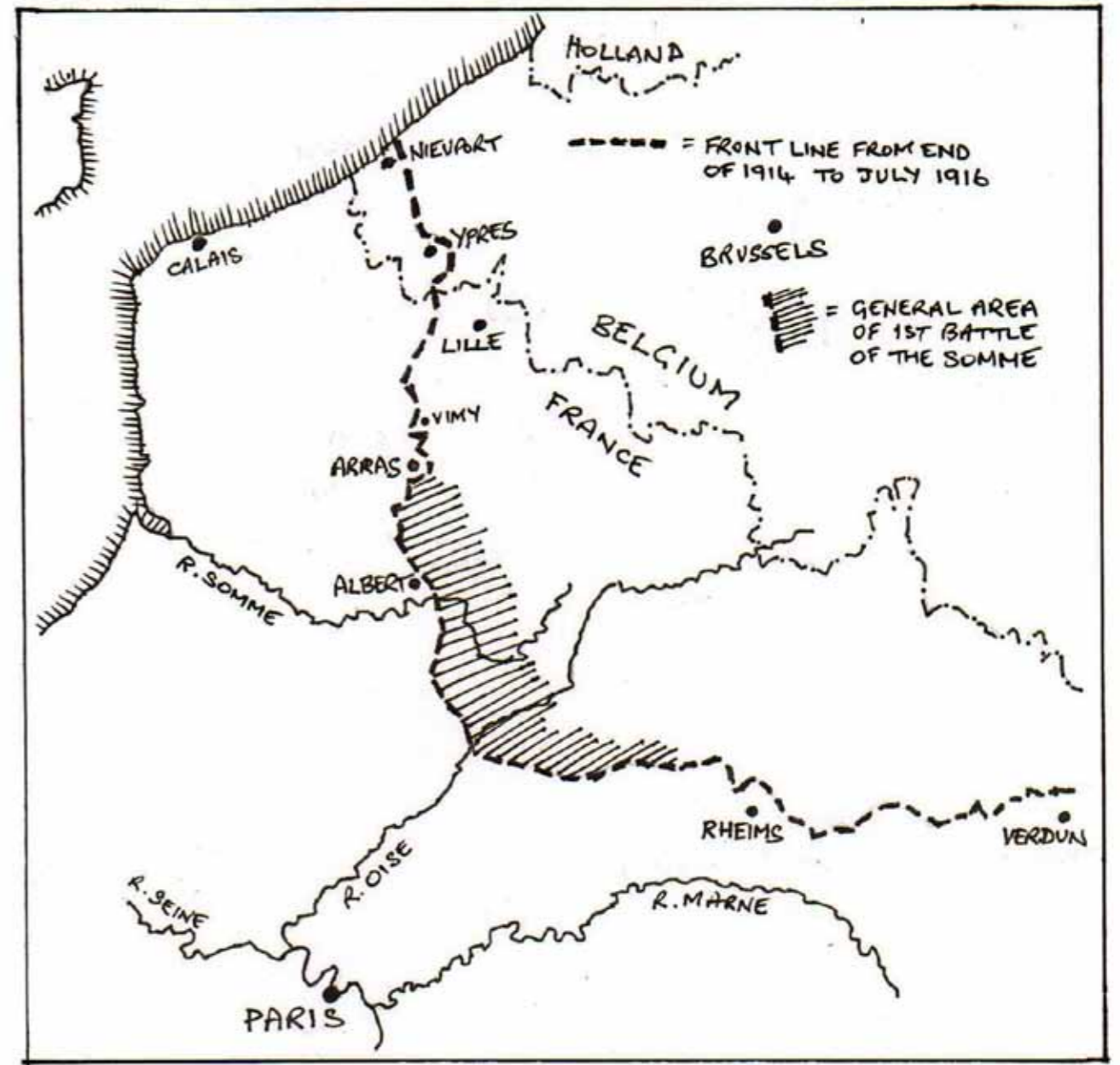
but it was not long before both *Fortune* and *Ardent* were sunk after brief but gallant engagements with much heavier German ships. By half past midnight, the 4th Flotilla had ceased to be an effective fighting force. As the night wore on, there were other fatal clashes in the dark with ships lost on both sides, but by 3.30 am on 1 June the main body of the High Seas Fleet had reached safe waters.

In the meantime, the *Tipperary* was in a desperate state. The fire had spread from the bridge area to her coal bunkers and the whole front of the ship was blazing and impossible to reach with ammunition for the forward guns exploding at intervals. The flames attracted passing visits by more than one German destroyer but they decided not to waste ammunition on a clearly doomed ship. The surviving crew could do no more than try to rescue the wounded and prepare to throw all signal and other confidential books overboard. Constantly in their minds was the fear that the fire would reach the forward magazines and blow the ship to pieces. After some two and a half hours of struggle, it became clear that *Tipperary* was going under, and the First Lieutenant ordered 'Everyone for themselves.' All the ship's boats were wrecked but two Carley life rafts were intact and some of the crew got into them, but most just had time to jump into the sea. *Tipperary's* stern rose high in the air and then she slid down into the waves. Apart from those in the raft there were more than thirty men in the icy water, one of them being Sub Lt William-Powlett. He had given up at first, but then, as he got colder, he decided to try to swim to the larger and just visible raft. The raft was floating about a foot under water so those on board were constantly soaked by the waves. Powlett reached the raft and was hauled on board to join the twenty two men already there. The men sang popular songs to stay awake and to raise morale, but exhaustion and the cold were taking an inevitable toll. At dawn, a destroyer was seen steaming round in circles. This was the *Sparrowhawk* trying but failing to manoeuvre with a smashed rudder and so when the raft was sighted she was unable to sail towards it. *Tipperary's* men had to paddle the half mile across confused seas to reach the damaged destroyer. As the raft drew slowly closer, *Sparrowhawk's* crew heard the men singing 'It's a long way to *Tipperary*' and so were identified. It had taken an exhausting one and a half hours to reach *Sparrowhawk*, and when the *Tipperary* men were hauled aboard it was found that out of the 23 three picked up, three were already dead, five died on the rescuer's deck and eight were deeply unconscious. The only officer to survive was Gerald Collins's lucky gunnery assistant, Sub Lt William-Powlett. Two ratings and the ship's surgeon assistant were picked up by a German boat and made prisoners of war. Eventually, *Sparrowhawk* was sighted by an undamaged British destroyer, the *Marksman*, which took all the men on board and sank *Sparrowhawk* with shell fire when attempts to tow her to safety failed. On that day *Marksman* also rescued the only two survivors of the *Ardent* and two raft loads of men from the *Fortune*.

This was the biggest naval action of WW1 and both sides claimed victory. In terms of losses, the British came off worst with three battle cruisers, three armoured cruisers and eight destroyers sunk and many others badly damaged. The Germans lost two battlecruisers, four light cruisers and five destroyers. British casualties were also greater, with 7,800 killed or wounded as against 3,921 Germans. *Tipperary* lost all, but about eight of her 197 crew. The British Grand Fleet had suffered a major shock to its confidence, but the German High Command realised that Britain's mighty Dreadnoughts were all still intact and they never tried a breakout of their High Seas Fleet again. All round, a very expensive draw – a German tactical victory but a British strategic success.

The Battle of the Somme

In 1914 the rapid German advance through Belgium had eventually been stopped within 30 miles of Paris and then pushed back painfully for 30 miles until the line stabilized. Both sides then tried to outflank the other in a 'Race to the Sea' until the opposing armies became dug in on a line of trenches from near Nieuport on the French coast to Verdun in the East.



Sketch map of the front line on the Western Front from the end of 1914 to July 1916

There followed a year and a half of sporadic battles and incursions as the opponents tested the strength of the line. The centre of these lines near the town of Albert was however relatively quiet. At the end of December 1915, the French Commander in Chief, General Joffre, proposed a massive attack by combined French and British forces in the area where the two allies were side by side, that is the central area on the River Somme. The newly appointed British Commander in Chief, General Sir Douglas Haig, eventually, though reluctantly, agreed and a provisional date was set for June/July 1916. In February 1916 however, the Germans mounted a major attack on the French fortress of Verdun and soon a deadly battle of attrition took place that absorbed more and more of France's men and materials. The planned offensive on the Somme would help the French, but would mean that Britain would have to bear the bulk of the burden.

Military conscription was introduced by Britain in January 1916, but the men who fought in the first stages of the coming battle were largely volunteers newly formed into the Fourth Army some half a million strong. Soon the roads and railways leading to the front were full of transport taking ammunition, stores and men to holding positions behind the line. It was obvious to the new arrivals that something big was being prepared. The offensive was to begin with a huge bombardment by the artillery starting on 24 June 1916 and lasting several days and nights. The British High Command was convinced that such a bombardment would effectively wipe out all the enemy in the front line trenches and so destroy the barbed wire that their soldiers could advance steadily and generally unhindered, walking in line abreast, carrying extra equipment and stores for the occupation of the German trenches. Not everyone was so convinced it would be that easy because it was widely known by men and junior officers that the Germans had well prepared and deep dugouts to shelter in.

The horror of 1 July, the first day of the Battle of the Somme, is well known. The day ended with 35,500 British wounded and 19,240 killed for limited ground gained. Although such dreadful numbers were never repeated, losses continued at a terrifying level for the rest of this battle which was to drag on until November. Two Pillaton men were to give their lives in this epic struggle, the first being Arthur John Chubb.



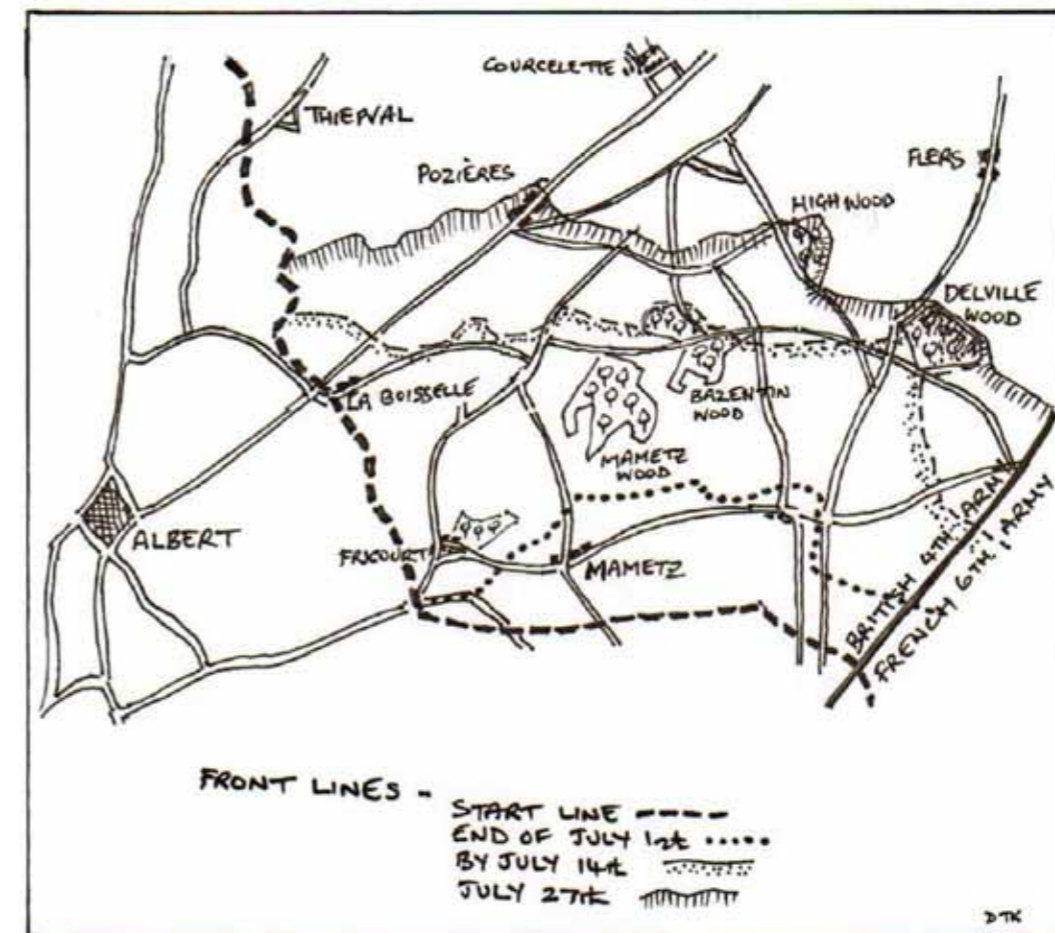
British troops going 'over the top' at the Battle of the Somme in July 1916

ARTHUR JOHN CHUBB

Arthur Chubb was born in South Hill in about 1898, the eldest son of George Chubb, a farm waggoner and cattleman born in Linkinhorne and Elizabeth Chubb from Calstock. At the time of the 1911 Census, the family was living at High Kernick in St Mellion. The family might well have moved around a bit because although their older children were born in South Hill, the youngest were born at Stockadon, High Kernick or Bush Cottage. It was a big family, with at least seven children living at home in 1911. Arthur, then aged 13, was still at school as was his younger brother Victor. Unfortunately we do not have much information about Arthur's life. John Tucker in his book 'A Cornish Farmer's Boy' (1993) says Arthur had worked at Trewashford Farm after leaving school before enlisting in the army and that he had lied about his age to be able to join up. Arthur's army service record does not seem to have survived the fire that destroyed most of the WW1 records as a result of German bombing in WW2 so the story cannot be verified. He enlisted in Lifton but given his age is unlikely to have joined up before 1915.

On enlistment he joined the 1st Battalion of the Devonshire regiment as a private; Service No 15652. The 1st Devonshires were assigned to the 5th Division, 95th Brigade of the new 4th Army in January 1916 and in March 1916 were operating south of the Vimy ridge in front of Arras. The Battalion was engaged in trench raids, sniping and mining activities before going into a short period of rest and refit. It was then moved to the Somme in preparation for the July offensive. Arthur could well have been serving with the Battalion since the start of the year.

The third phase of the Battle of the Somme began on 14 July with an unusual and initially successful night attack on a 14 mile front between two German strongholds, the woods of Bazentin le Petit on the left to Delville Wood on the right, with High Wood, which the Germans had heavily fortified, on the ridge to the centre.

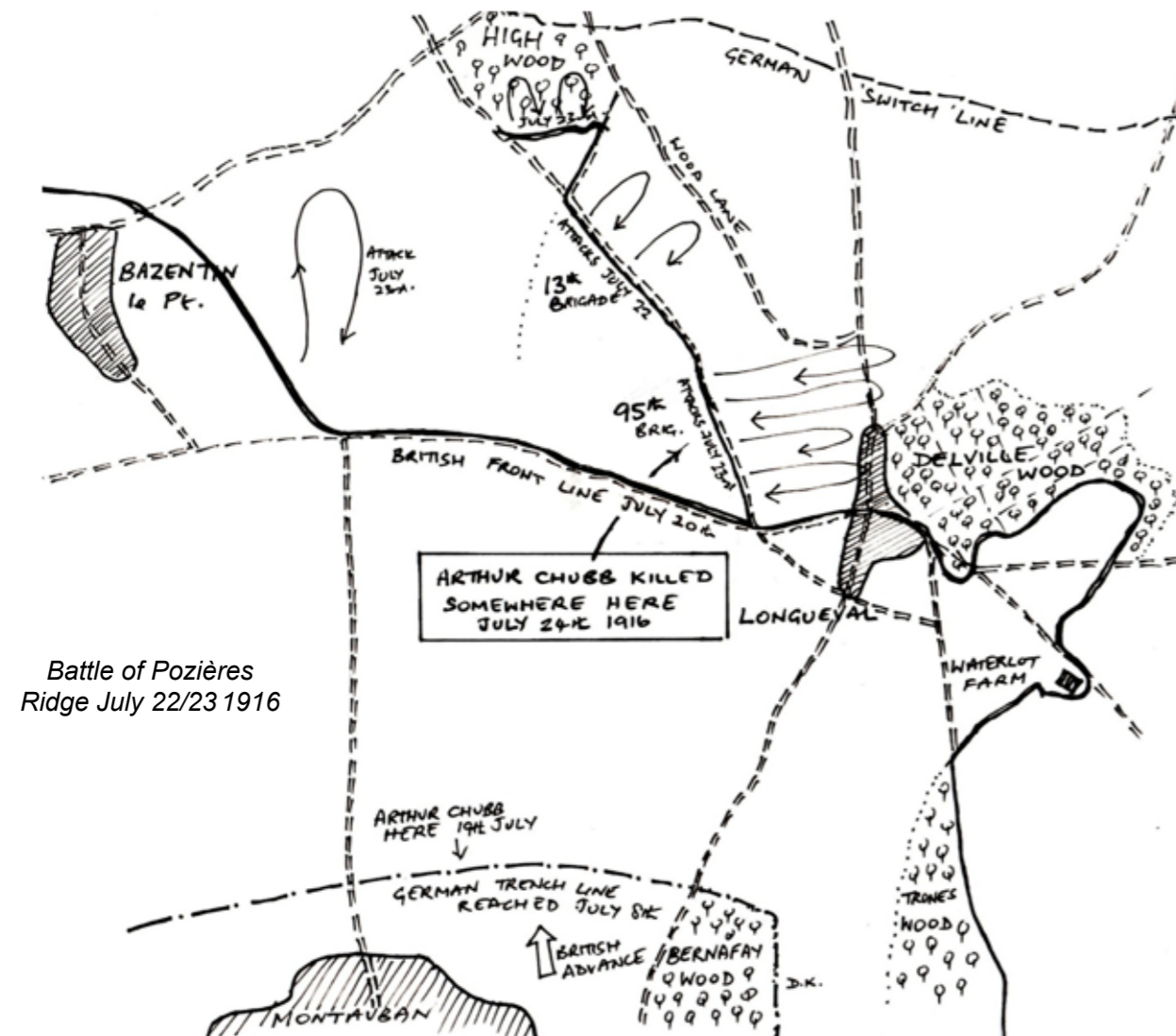


Plan of the ground gained in the July 1916 attacks towards Pozières, High Wood and Delville Wood.



Devonshire Regiment cap badge

On 20 July, Arthur Chubb with the 1st Devons marched to Montauban where they occupied an old German line and became the Brigade Reserve. On the same day, a series of attacks were launched on High Wood with the 8th Devons of the 5th Division advancing with the 2nd Gordons in the dark at 3.00 am. They made good progress at first, with the rest of the 5th Division filling in behind until they were blocked by heavy German machine gun fire and forced to pull back. During this attack, the 1st Devonshires suffered intermittent long-range shelling but with light casualties. The poet Robert Graves was wounded by shell fire on the same day in the area of Bazentin Wood. The battle for High Wood would go on for many weeks yet, and the emphasis now switched to the nearby Pozières Ridge to the West and Delville Wood to the east. The 1st Australian Division, the ANZACS, began their historic attack on Pozières on 23 July and the Devonshires, with the rest of the 5th Division, focused on the areas between High Wood and Delville Wood.



Battle of Pozières Ridge July 22/23 1916

At 11.00 am on 23 July, the 1st Devonshires were moved forward into trenches closer to the front line where the shelling was more intense. Sunday, 23 July was overcast but the temperature was to reach 68°F. The 13th and 95th Brigades were tasked with the capture of the Switch Line to the east of High Wood (see sketch map). Attacks by the 14th Royal Warwicks and 1 Royal West Kents had been launched at 10.00 pm on the 22 July, but were spotted crossing the crest of the Pozières Ridge and caught in enemy machine gun fire from the east corner of High Wood and forced back. A later attempt by the 15th Royal Warwicks of the 5th Division was also beaten back. These attacks cost casualties of over 1,000 men.

The following day, 24 July, the battalion remained in the trenches which were shelled intermittently. The Battalion's War Diary for 24 July says: 'Between 8.00 pm and 10.00 pm, the Germans bombarded the front line trenches and attempted to leave their own trenches to attack under cover of smoke. All attacks were driven off by our fire. Killed in action 3 other ranks.' It is likely that Arthur Chubb was one of these three and probably killed by the shell fire since his body was never recovered. He died aged 18. He is commemorated along with 73,000 others on the huge British, French and colonial war memorial at Thiepval.

The Cornish Times for Friday, 11 August 1916, in the Births & Deaths Column page 5, Column F, simply says:

'Arthur Chubb eldest son Geo. & Elizabeth; aged 18'

AMORE R. E.	MARTIN J.	BLAYNEY A. T.	GREEN J.
BERNILL G.	MAY T. H.	BOARD S. I.	SERVED AS
OND. LIEUT.	MOON J. P.	BREMNER R.	BOLTON W.
EY L. A.	MORRISSEY H. J.	BRINKLEY C. W. I.	GREENBANK A.
VER C. S. D.	PENWARN J. H.	BRITAIN M. T.	GREENSLADE F.
	PROTHERO A.	BROWN E.	GREGORY S. A.
S. L. S. R.	RICHARDS W. E.	BURBERRY W. J.	GRIFFITHS D. D.
WELLS F. B.	LEE SERJEANT	BURGE F. S.	GRIGG W. G.
BETT H.		BURN H. J.	HALE H. J.
E. A.	BANKS J.	BURNETT W.	HAM T.
E. R. H. O'N.	HARRIS J. H.	BURRELL J. H.	HANLYN H. T.
LD E. M.	RUGG J.	BURT W. J. J.	HANNAFORD A.
INGWORTH L.	CORPORAL	BURTON A.	HARDING A.
S. E. C.	ALLEN A. E.	BUTLER H.	HARMAN J. A.
E. A.	BALL E. R. D. C. M.	BUTT O.	HARRIS W.
PH. H.	BARRETT W. J.	CANN F.	HARRIS W. J.
MYER F. G.	BENNEY E. H.	CARDER L. G.	HARTNELL A.
WAN J. S.	BOWDEN W.	CARNEY F.	HARVEY F.
ISH T. T.	CROSBY W. J.	CARPENTER H.	HAWKES S. J.
		CARPENTER W.	HAWKES W.
STON J. H.	CRUICK P.	CARTER C.	HAWKINS R. E.
C. B.	DAVEY E. J.	9674	HAYWARD F.
IT MAJOR	DAVEY E.	CARTER C.	HEALE W.
R. M.	FOX M. W.	3872	HEATH J. B.
	FOXWELL J.	CARTER C.	HEATH T. E.
JEANT	HAWKINS W. H.	17554	HEDGES J. A.
LEY C.	MAY T. R.	CHALLIS W. G.	HELSDON A.
DYNE J. H.	MURRAY B. R. M. M.	CHAMBERS J.	HENLEY W.
AND J. L.	MURRAY E. J.	CHERITON F.	HERD H.
NG W. A.	NORTHCOTT F.	CHUBB A. J.	HEXT S.
M. M.	PEARS A. R.	CLARK W. A. S.	HEYWORTH E.
IN E. J.	REED W.	CLARKE T.	HIBBERD T.
	ROWE T. A.	CLATWORTHY W.	HILL H.

Names including that of Arthur Chubb engraved on the Thiepval Memorial

PERCIVAL GEORGE FENWICK COLLINS

The second son of Thurstan Collins, Percival George Fenwick Collins, was born on 18 September 1892.

By 1911 the family was living in their new house, 'Gluvian,' in Newquay's Edgcumbe Gardens. Thurstan was a solicitor and by then 53 and widowed. His wife Ellen had died in 1907 aged 47 and they had been married for nineteen years. Living with him were daughters Violet (22 years and single), and Evelyn aged 15. There were three servants. The boys were away from home, Gerald serving in the Royal Navy and Percival a boarder at Rugby School. In 1914 Percival was completing his studies at St. John's College, Oxford University. He is reported as being a good player in his college lawn tennis team. He appears to have been intending to join the Indian Civil Service, but on 28 August 1914, less than a month after war was declared, Percival applied for a temporary commission in the army.

While waiting to hear whether he was successful, he joined up as a private (No 131121) in the elite Coldstream Guards on 8 October and was sent to Caterham Camp for training. Now aged 22, he was 5'10" tall, had blue eyes and black hair, a 38½" chest and weighed 152 pounds and had a large brown stain on his left cheek. He did not spend long as a private in the Guards before receiving his commission as a 2nd lieutenant in the 6th Battalion of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry (DCLI) on 19 November 1914.



Lt Percival George Fenwick Collins of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry

The 6th Battalion was formed at Bodmin in August 1914 and put under the command of 43rd Brigade in the 14th (Light) Division – a largely volunteer Division. Percival would have been undergoing officer training when the Battalion was sent to Witley Camp in November and then moved to Aldershot in February 1915. On 22 May 1915, the Battalion landed at Boulogne to begin its service in Flanders and France, a move delayed by a shortage of rifle and artillery ammunition. The summer of 1915 was spent in routine trench warfare but on 29 July 1915, the 14th Division was in action to try to capture a huge mine crater at Hoge and was to experience the first use of flamethrowers by the Germans.

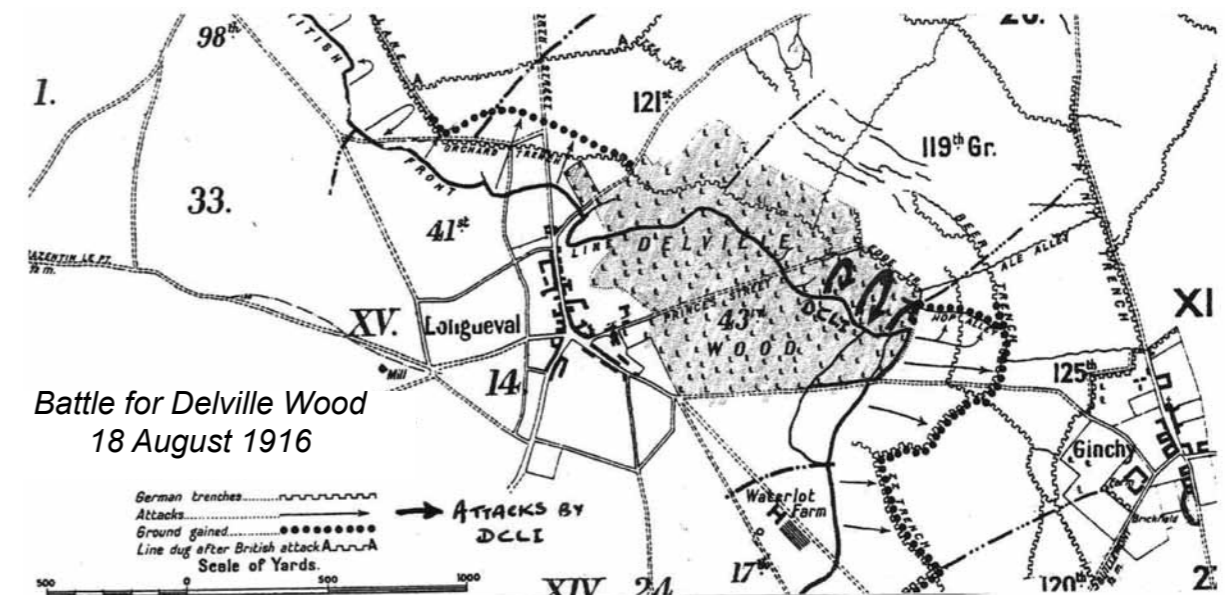
In August 1916 the Battalion was moved to Albert on the Somme and then on 12 August marched to Montauban and held in reserve. On 15 August, the battalion relieved the 6th Somerset Light Infantry in forward trenches in Delville Wood. Two days later, the CO and Company Commanders were being briefed for an attack on 18 August.



Cap badge of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry

The Battle for Delville Wood

Delville Wood (or Devil's Wood as it was known to the British) lay alongside the flattened remains of the village of Langueval, 9 miles east of the town of Albert. The German strongholds of High Wood and Delville Wood were to be fought over many times in attacks and counter-attacks at a great cost in lost lives, including as we have already seen that of Pillaton's Arthur Chubb the month before. By 18 August, the British held most of the east and south part of Delville Wood and the 6th DCLI was given the objective of capturing the north-east of the wood. The following account of this attack is from the official War Diary of the DCLI, courtesy of Major Hugo White of the DCLI Museum, Bodmin.



'The Battalion was assembled on a frontage of two companies (B with one platoon of A Company on the right, D Company on the left: three platoons of A were in immediate support) in two parallel trenches. For two hours previous to zero hour they were subjected to a fairly heavy hostile bombardment. At 2.30 pm, a quarter of an hour before zero time, the second parallel trench was heavily trench-mortared. This was reported as being our own. Before going over the top the casualties in the previous hour were 40.

The Battalion advanced in two waves at about 100 yards distance. After going a short distance they appeared to march into a barrage, as there were considerable casualties within 100 yards of our trenches. The men, however, continued most gallantly through the barrage which became well defined in the wood by the falling of trees etc. The sap at S.18.b.2.2 (a point along Princes Street and about 200 yards from the eastern edge of the Wood) was strongly held. This was engaged by bombers and one company and cleared with heavy loss to both sides. Two companies engaged the trench S.18b.6.10 to S.18.b.10.7 (a trench on the north-eastern edge of the Wood) and charged. The Germans continued to throw bombs till our men came up to short range and then 'hands up.' Some ran out of the trench in retreat. Quite a number of these were accounted for by our rifle-fire. One platoon attacked this bit between this trench and Hop Alley with their bombers. They drove them out, causing heavy loss, and held it. Many prisoners here ran through our attack with their hands up and headed for our lines. The number who surrendered at this corner approximated at 150.

At this time the attack on the sap was only half-through when a bombing counter-attack started down the northern end of the trench on to our flank. This caused a retirement on the left, but our bombers met this and drove it back. But a gap was here made in our centre. Our left company later reached the join of the sap and the trench, finding it unoccupied. This company was now reduced to one officer and about 20 men. They also shortly retired, after reporting the capture of their objective. Ale Alley was

PILLATON AT WAR 1914-1918



Delville Wood

also occupied by a bombing post. The final position occupied and held was the junction of Hop Ally and Wood and Devil's Trench, the Battalion being reduced to 150.'

Percival Collins was one of seven officers of the Battalion killed during this day's battle, along with 69 soldiers killed, seven officers and 233 soldiers wounded and 50 others missing, probably dead, in all some 70% of the Battalion's strength. The Battalion, along with the 6th Somerset Light Infantry, paraded before the Brigade Commander on August 21 who according to the hand-written war diary, 'expressed his pleasure at the Battalion's achievements and stated that they had done brilliantly.' The Battalion was then stood down for a major refit.

The men fighting in the Delville, High and Mametz Woods found the experience particularly unpleasant. One officer wrote how years of neglect had turned the woods into a tangled barrier and whereas heavy shelling had beaten down some of the undergrowth it had also thrown trees and large branches into a near impassable barricade. Equipment, ammunition, rolls of barbed wire, tins of food, gas helmets and rifles were lying about everywhere and more corpses could be seen than men. But worse was the sight of shattered limbs and mutilated trunks hanging from branches making splashes of red against the green leaves.

Weeks of artillery bombardment by both sides gradually reduced these woods to a barren waste of stripped trees, tangled branches and the human and material debris of war. The photo above shows what Delville Wood would have looked like by September 1916.

Percival's body was never recovered and he is commemorated on the Thiepval memorial along with Arthur Chubb.

There is a memorial plaque in the church reading:

'Percival George Fenwick Collins Lt in 6th Battalion DCLI, killed in action 18 August 1916 in France aged 23'

He is also remembered, with his brother, on the Newquay War Memorial.

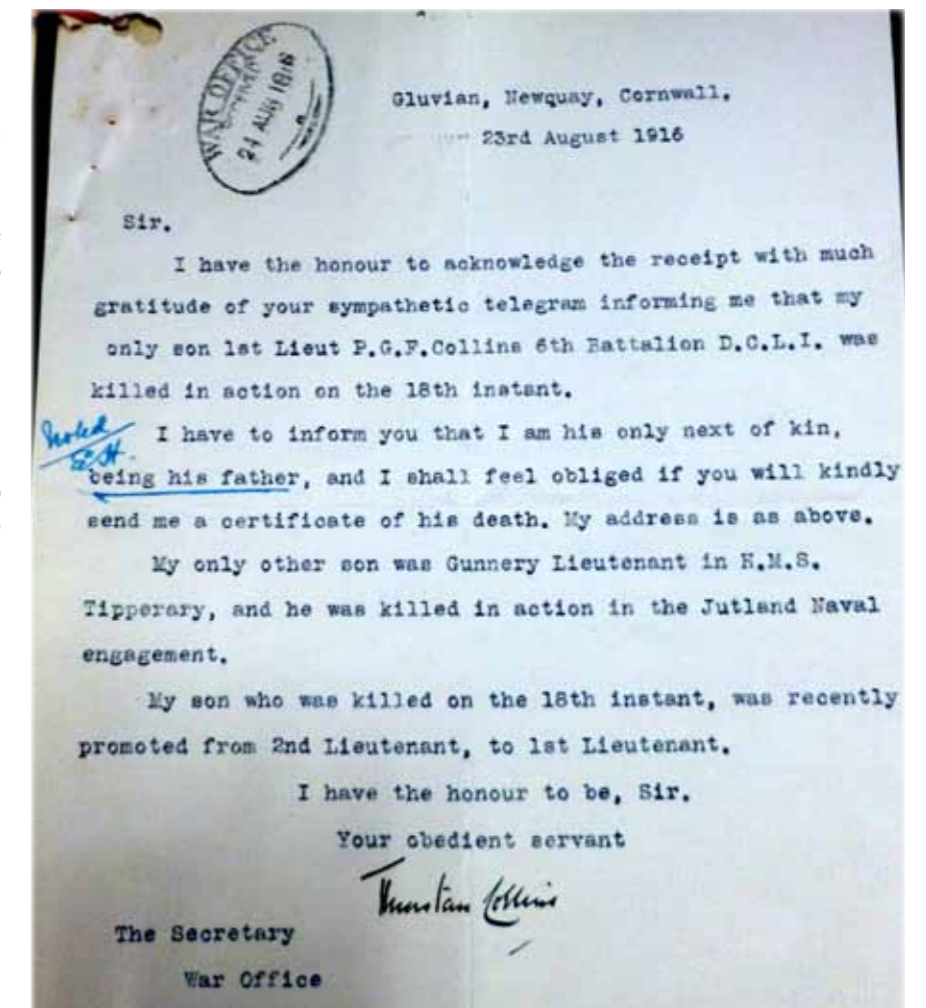
PILLATON AT WAR 1914-1918



The Thiepval Memorial for the fallen with no known grave

A copy of a sad letter from Thurstan Collins, contained in Percival's Service Record, is pictured right in which he records the loss of both his sons within three months in 1916.

Mr Thurstan Collins died in May 1924 and the Newton Ferrers Estate was sold off, there being no male heirs to continue the line. His estate was valued at £85,148 0s 9d for probate.



EUSTACE TREHANE ELLIOTT

Eustace Trehane Elliott was born in Pillaton on 15 June 1884. His father was James Edward Elliott, also born in Pillaton in about 1853, and his mother was Catherine (née Trehane, born in Linkinhorne in about 1850). They lived at Smeaton Farm, St Mellion, but Eustace, their only son, was sent to the Hoe Preparatory School in Plymouth rather than to a local school. Eustace later studied at the Devon County School of Agriculture in Ashburton. By the time of the 1911 Census, Eustace was 26 years old and single. He was helping to run Smeaton Farm with his father, and his sisters Mary, Annie and Emily (all in their 20s and unmarried) who worked in the farm's dairy and helped their mother with domestic duties. The household also employed three 16 year olds as farm labourers and servants.

When war was declared in 1914, Eustace was among the first to volunteer. On his attestation on 16th September, he is described as being 5'10" tall and weighed 160 lbs. He joined the 2/4th Battalion of the DCLI and then began a remarkable rise through the ranks. Within two weeks he was promoted corporal and by December he was Acting Temporary Company Quartermaster Sergeant. The Battalion had hardly time to complete basic training before being embarked on the SS *Caledonia* on 12 December bound for India arriving at Karachi on 9 January 1915. This hurried departure for India was also experienced by Courtney Lucas and Arthur Ball (see below) and probably was because there was an urgent need to replace the large number of troops of the regular Indian Army that were already on their way to France and Mesopotamia in October 1914.

Eustace clearly continued to impress his senior officers because on 24 July 1915, while based at Quetter, he applied for a temporary commission in the DCLI. He was given a good moral character reference by his commanding officer Lt Col Rogers, and Mr Digby Collins of Newton Ferrers wrote confirming that Eustace had 'a good standard of education.' A third referee was James Mortimer BA, of the Devon Agricultural School. With this support and a medical confirmation that his eyesight was 6/6 in each eye 'with glasses,' Eustace in due course got his request accepted and was sent back to England in December 1915. On 28 December 1915 he was gazetted as a 2nd lieutenant, not in the DCLI but in the 9th (Reserve) Battalion of the East Yorkshire Regiment. This Battalion was in camp at Rugely Camp, Cannock Chase, and that is probably where Eustace did much of his further training. At some point however, Eustace was attached to the 8th (Service) Battalion, probably on 25 August 1916 and sent to France to join them.

The 8th Battalion of the East Yorkshires was formed at Beverley in September 1914, but did not arrive in France until 9 September 1915 shortly after which it was assigned to the 8th Brigade of the 3rd Division of the British Expeditionary Force. Eustace arrived in the middle of the great Somme offensive launched on 1 July 1916. The 8th East Yorks were involved in the initial attack on Fricourt and then in a dawn attack on the Bazentin Ridge on 14 July. The 3rd Division was involved in the attack on Delville Wood on 22 July (the day before Arthur Chubb was killed in the same area). On Friday, 18 August, the Battalion was part of a failed attack on Guillemont (Percival Collins was killed in Delville Wood nearby on the same day). Eustace arrived on the scene just too late to have come across Chubb or Collins during switches between lines and trenches but Pillaton was well represented in this dreadful series of attacks in the summer of 1916. Eustace would have been present towards the end of the battle of the Somme when the 8th East Yorks were still fighting in the area.



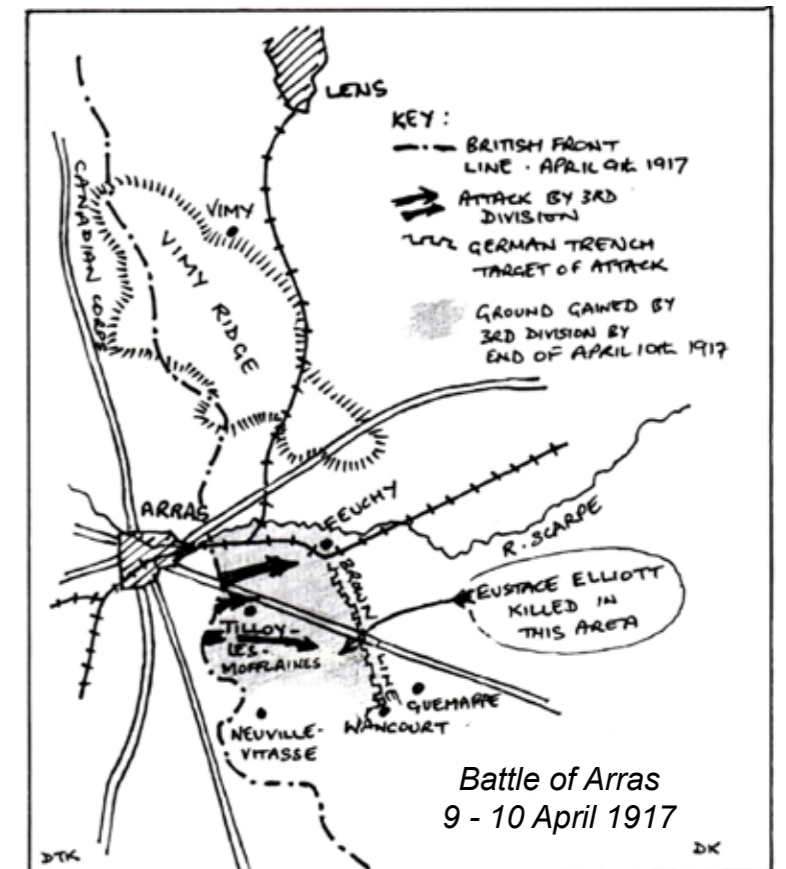
East Yorkshire Regiment
cap badge

On the 13 November they were in the second wave of an attack on Serre, a small town north of Beaumont Hamel. This advance over sodden and blasted ground was soon bogged down in waist-deep mud. Confusion in some units and a general loss of direction of the attack caused the whole attack to be abandoned. Five days later the first battle of the Somme had ended.

Eustace Elliott will have experienced most of the horrors of trench warfare, but his Battalion had been involved in deadly skirmishes rather than great all-out assaults and he would probably have been feeling lucky to have survived. The 8th Battalion would have spent the winter of 1916/17 in cycles of trench defence, rest in reserve areas and spells of further training behind the lines. In March 1917, the German armies of the Somme began a withdrawal to carefully prepared and powerful defensive positions to the north, the Hindenburg Line. The British High Command decided to test these defences and try to create a breakthrough that would bring the war to a swift end (more wishful thinking?). Two major parallel offensives were to be mounted, one fronted by the Canadians to capture the Vimy Ridge and another immediately to the south where the 3rd British Army under General Allenby was to break through to the east and south of Arras along the valley of the River Scarpe.

On 9 April 1917, the 12th Division led the main assault east of Arras. The 3rd Division, including the 8th East Yorks, attacked Tilloy-les-Mofflaines with the object of reaching a trench, labelled 'The Brown Line' running between Wancourt and Feuchy.

Tilloy was captured unopposed and the nearby Bois de Beufs and the Harp trench system were captured by 9.30 am. At 10.30 am the 8th East Yorks went forward but were hit by heavy shelling. Many prisoners were taken, but by late afternoon, the Brown Line was not taken. A further attack by the 8th Yorks was halted by machine gun fire from Feuchy. Many casualties including three officers were sustained. At 11.15 am on the 10 April the British artillery opened up on the target trench and at 12.00 noon the infantry attacked the Brown Line. By 12.30 pm the position was captured. Eustace Elliott was killed in this attack along with another officer who died of his wounds later. As the attack moved on during 11 April, the 8th East Yorks lost two more officers wounded and the battalion had only three officers left. Guemappe was attacked and occupied on 12 April.



On April 14, three British Generals protested to General Haig about the scale of the casualties. The day after, Haig called the offensive off. Ground had been gained, notably by the Canadian Division which captured Vimy at great cost, but routine trench warfare returned and the planned breakthrough failed.

Eustace's army record has a note that, 'we have no record of the recovery of this officer's body' and so he is commemorated on the Arras Memorial at Fanbourg d'Amiens Cemetery (Bay 4-5) along with 35,928 others with no known grave.

The Fanbourg d'Amiens Cemetery Book of Remembrance reads:

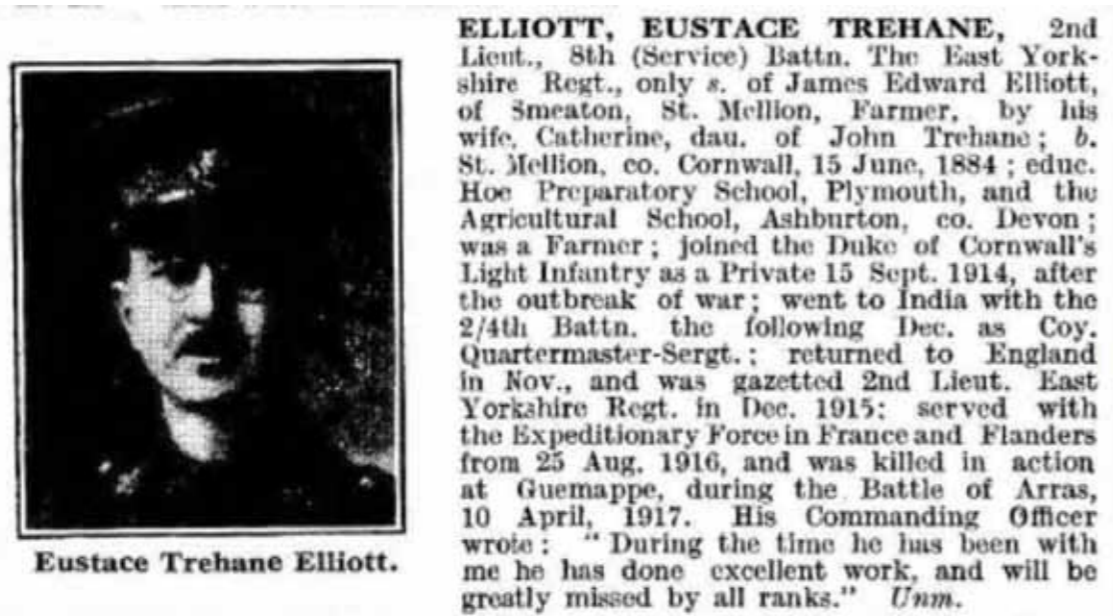
'Elliott, 2nd Lt. Eustace Trehane, 9th Bn East Yorkshire Regt., attd. 8th Bn. 10th April 1917, Age 32, Son of James Edward and Catherine Elliott, 17 Tavistock Rd, Callington, Cornwall.'

Note that by the time that the memorial was built, Eustace's family had moved from Smeaton Farm.

A Memorial stone in St Odulph's church reads:

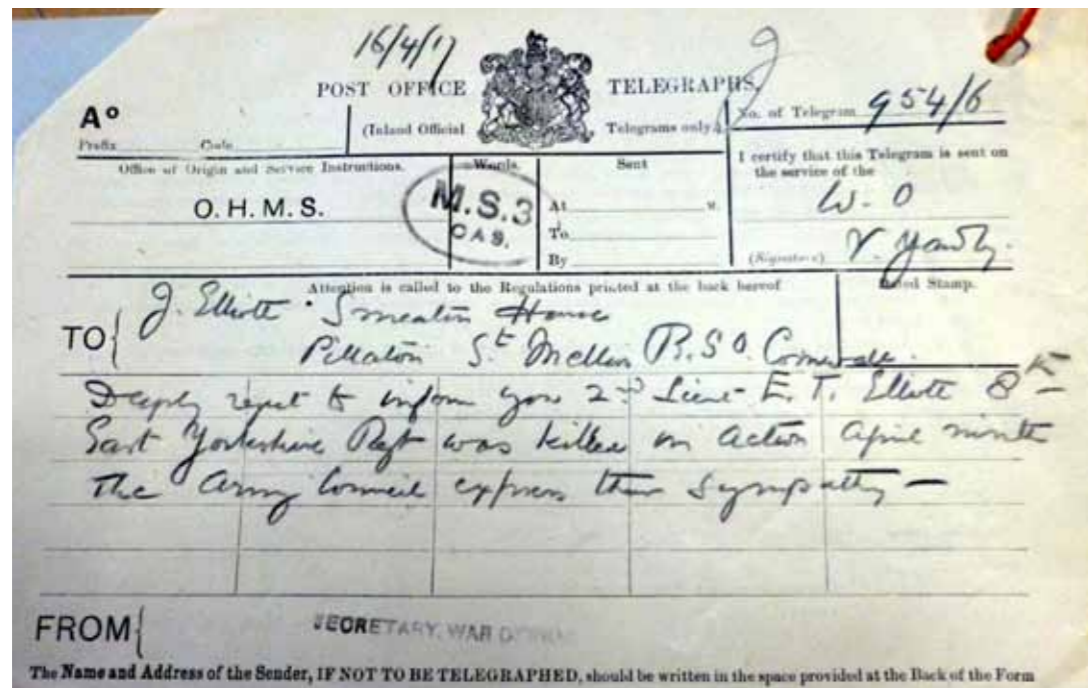
'Eustace Trehane Elliott 2nd Lt E Yorks Regt. Born Smeaton 15/6/1884. Killed in action Nr Arras 10 April 1917.'

Eustace's death was also reported in the Cornish Times Friday, 27 April 1917 Page 5, Col. A. Alone of all the Pillaton Men, Eustace was recorded in De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour, 1914-1924 and this includes the only photo of him that we have traced.



Extract from De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour; note the commendation by his commanding officer.

Eustace's service records include this copy of the telegram informing his family of his death – it chills the imagination still.



CHARLES AMBROSE PEARCE

In the 1911 Census there were four families called Pearce living in the Pillaton/St Mellion area. One was headed by William Pearce (69 years), a prominent farmer and the innkeeper of the Royal Oak pub (now the Weary Friar). Another was Voisey Pearce, a 71 year old widowed farm labourer living with his son George (48 years) a traction engine driver, in Pillaton village. All four of the Pearce heads of household had been born in Pillaton, but the family that particularly concerns us here is that of Charles Pearce (55 years). Charles farmed at Rowse, St Mellion, with his wife Eliza Ann and their three sons and three daughters. The eldest son was Voisey Charles, suggesting a family link with the above widowed Voisey Pearce. Charles's youngest son was Charles Ambrose Pearce, born at Rowse in about 1896, and who was working for his father as a farm labourer.

As in the case of Arthur Chubb, we have been unable to trace Charles Ambrose's army service record so we do not know when he enlisted, but it was in Callington. It has been suggested that a comparison of his service number with other men could mean he attested at the end of December 1915 and was called up by April 1916. He was initially assigned with the number of 20894 to the 8th Battalion of the DCLI which was formed at Bodmin in September 1914. This Battalion was sent to France in September 1915 but two months later embarked for Salonika where it spent the rest of the war. Heavy casualties as a result of the Battle of Loos in September meant that some regiments desperately needed replacements and it is possible that Charles was transferred to the Queen's Own Royal West Kent at this time as a new arrival in France. What really happened to Charles is unknown until the events of 1917, but if he really did join the 8th Battalion of the Queen's Own Royal West Kent regiment in 1915, he was in for a very tough time.

The 8th Battalion of the Royal West Kents (RWK) was formed at Maidstone in September 1914. Some 800 men then assembled at Shoreham, and were trained in this area apart from a spell at Aldershot. The rush to recruit volunteers to Kitchener's Army was such that the Battalion suffered from a shortage of blankets and equipment and even pots to cook in. It was not issued with service rifles until July 1915, not long before it was sent to France in August to join the 72nd Brigade of the 24th Division.

The 1st Battalion of the RWKs (all regulars) had arrived in France within two weeks of the Declaration of War in August 1914 and rushed by forced marches to a defensive position on the south bank of the Mons-Condé canal where they dug in to withstand the hitherto inexorable German advance across Belgium. The Battle of Mons was the first major engagement of the war for the British Expeditionary Force, but the sheer weight of German numbers forced repeated and hard fought retreats until the advance was stopped at the River Marne and then driven back to the Aisne river where it turned into the relatively static trench warfare that was to characterize most of the war. The BEF was immediately moved to the west to defend Flanders and the coast, and the 1st Battalion was again involved in fierce fighting at La Bassée and Neuve Chapelle. After nearly two months of continuous fighting, the 1st Battalion was down to only 300 effective men and two officers, with close to half of the Battalion killed or wounded. The loss of so many regular and experienced men was to throw the weight of future conflict on the new volunteer units and armies such as the 8th Battalion.



Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment cap badge

The Battles of Loos and the Somme: After arriving in France the 8th RWKs spent 3 weeks in camp near Montreuil on Divisional exercises before being moved up to the front on 21 September 1915. Their target was to try to break through the German positions between La Bassée and Lens and reach Loos. As was to be the case so often in the early years of this war, the Battalion had to advance across open country suffering heavy losses only to find that the German barbed wire had not been destroyed by the opening British barrage. Men were forced to lie down and try to fire back and eventually crawl back to their lines often in the dark. In their first experience of war, the 800 men and 24 officers of the 8th Battalion that went into the attack were reduced to an effective force of one officer and 250 men. The Battalion had to withdraw and be reconstructed, and this may be when Charles Ambrose Pearce was drafted into the regiment.

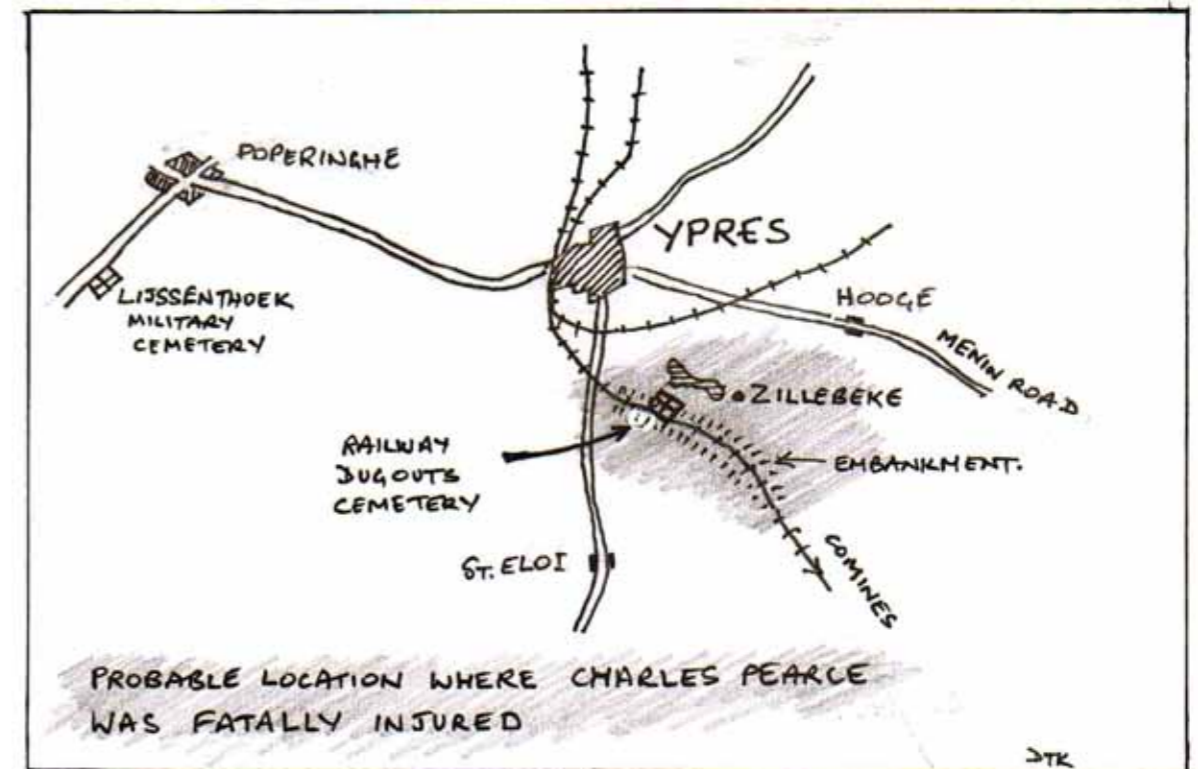
From the end of 1915 to January 1916, the 8th Battalion rested near St Omer but was then sent into the trenches at Ypres, Berther and Ploegsteert. By the middle of July 1916 the 8th was on its way to the Somme where it went into trenches east of Trones Wood and facing Guillemont. Although not involved in major offensives on the Somme, the Battalion was on 30 August ordered to the defence of Delville Wood, now a tangle of blasted trees and debris. Here the RWKs defended their ground stoutly against very determined German attacks, but by 5 September, when it went into reserve, the Battalion had suffered over 300 casualties, a third of them killed. So Percival Collins, Arthur Chubb, Eustace Elliott and Charles Ambrose were all involved at some point in the prolonged struggle for this by now devastated piece of France. The 8th would again need to be reconstituted.

Lens & Ypres: After the Somme, the 8th Battalion was brought up to strength. The loss of experienced officers and NCOs had been so severe that a policy was adopted of keeping a core of such staff safe behind the lines so that in the event of future casualties on the scale suffered by the 8th there were enough survivors to organize the rebuilding of the Battalion. Only very few of the men who landed in France in 1915 were still combatants. The 8th was put back in the line in October 1916 where it had been the previous September, i.e. an area west of the Lens and La Bassée road. Four months were spent on a routine of six days in the line, six days in support, six days in the line and then six days in reserve. It was a relatively quiet time until April 1917 when the major attacks on Vimy Ridge and Arras were launched in which Eustace Elliott died.

On 12 April, the 8th RWKs, with other members of the 24th Division and the Canadians, launched an advance on the Souchez river. On 13 and 14 April the 8th conducted forward patrols to consolidate the line between Lens and Cité St Pierre to the west. Nine officers and 60 men were hit during these manoeuvres with over 10 killed. This explains the entry in Charles Pearce's Book of Remembrance entry, 'Was with the 24th Division in successful operations from April 12th to 17th, 1917.' The Battle of Arras was then called off, and the 8th left to spend three weeks resting and training in pleasant countryside round Delette.

In mid-May, the 8th moved up to Ypres and had a tough time in the trenches to the east of the salient, just south of Hooze. Here it experienced 'an exceptionally violent bombardment which almost obliterated its trenches, though it very fortunately escaped with no more than 40 casualties.' ('The Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment 1914-1919' by Capt C T Atkinson, page 262). The official web-site for the RWK regiment has a list of all its men killed in WWI together with the date of death and where they are buried. There is a cluster of 10 names for 23 and 24 May including Charles Ambrose Pearce. Most of these men were buried close by in the Railway Dugouts Burial Ground which is 2 kms SE of Ypres town centre on the Ypres to Komen (or Comines) Road and 2 kms west of Zillebeke Village. The Regiment's War Diary confirms that one company of the RWK was in the Zillebeke dugouts at the time. This is a location where a railway embankment provided shelter for dugouts, many of which were used as Advanced Dressing Stations.

Charles Pearce died of wounds on 24 May 1917. He was probably caught in the shelling referred to above and taken to a field hospital near Poperinge to the west of Ypres, but was too badly injured to survive. He is buried in Plot XII, B 16, of the Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, Poperinge.



Map of area near Ypres in West Flanders where Charles Pearce was fatally injured.



British troops in trenches at Zillebeke near Ypres in 1917.

PILLATON AT WAR 1914-1918

The Remembrance Book entry for Charles Pearce reads:

'8th Btn Queen's Own (R West Kent Reg). Died of wounds 24th May 1917. Son of Charles and Eliza Ann Pearce of Rowse Farm, Pillaton, St Mellion, Cornwall. Was with the 24th Division in successful operations from April 12th-17th 1917'

Charles is listed in 'Soldiers Died in the Great War 1914-1919 as:

**Charles Ambrose PEARCE, born Pillaton, Cornwall
Died: 24th May 1917 in France/Flanders, of wounds
Enlisted: Callington
Rank: Private No. 9/23873
Reg: Queen's Own (Royal West Kent) formerly 20894, DCLI, 8th Battalion'**



The Cornish Times entry for 8 June 1917, Page 5 Col. F reads:

'PEARCE – died of shell wounds in France, May 24th 1917, Charles Ambrose Pearce, Royal West Kents; dearly loved son of Mr & Mrs Pearce, Rowse Farm Pillaton, aged 21 years – At Rest.'

***On the Resurrection morning,
All the Graves their dead restore;
Father, mother, brothers, sisters,
Meet once more'***

Charles Pearce's grave at Poperinge in West Flanders

Foot Note:

A relative of Charles has shown great interest in this project. Mrs Anita Matthews became aware of this project through a visit to ring the bells at St Odulph's. One of Charles Ambrose Pearce's sisters, Emily Rosina Pearce (born in Pillaton in 1885), married William John Kestell Came in St Odulph's in September 1909. Their first child, William John H Came, was born in 1910 and is listed as being at Rowse farm with his mother in the 1911 census. One of his three brothers, Charles S G Came, appears in the 1940/41 photo of the Pillaton Home Guard platoon outside the Royal Oak pub, now the Weary Friar (see page 44). The youngest of William John Came's brothers, Ambrose Came, married Avril Brown in 1939 and one of their daughters, Anita Elizabeth Came married a farmer, Ernest Matthews in 1981. Mrs Matthews lives on a farm at Wotton-under-Edge in Gloucestershire and, along with other members of her family, has been most supportive of this project.

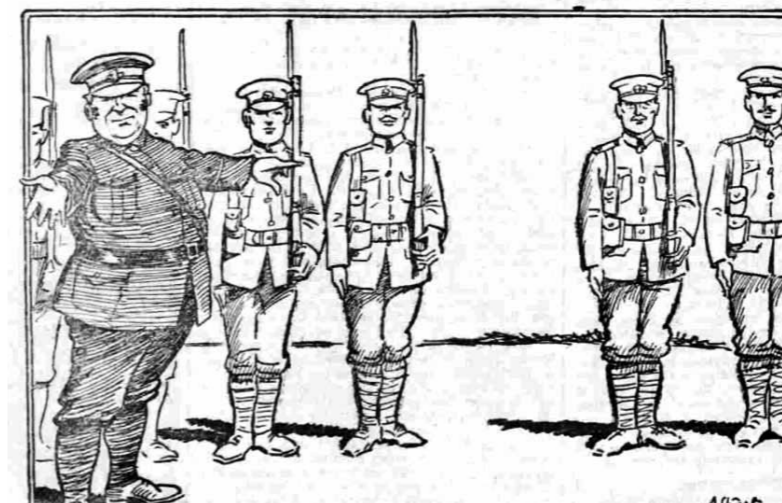
PILLATON AT WAR 1914-1918

SOME NOTES ON THE PILLATON MEN WHO WENT TO WAR AND RETURNED

In commemorating WW1 attention is naturally drawn to the memorials recording the men who served and died for their country, but the experiences of the many others who also served but survived are sometimes neglected. The names of the dead are recorded in a number of ways, but there is no accessible list of those who came back. It is a great help if surviving family members can be traced but often the present generation knows little about their ancestors. Some of these Pillaton men have been traced, but the information on them is very patchy as will be seen below.

The pattern of enlistment was different in Cornwall from most of the UK. There was not the same patriotic fervour that typified many urban areas of the country. By November 1914 only 2.7% of Cornish men of military age had volunteered as compared with 4.5% in Devon and 10% across the UK in general. Farmers were not usually keen on their sons going to war while their farm labourers often did not see why they should go if their bosses' sons were not going. However, in the summer of 1914, William Higman and Gerald Collins were already embarked on a career in the Royal Navy. Percival Collins was probably the first Pillaton man to volunteer after war was declared in August 1914, followed by Eustace Elliott in September. Unfortunately, none of these men came back. The next to volunteer that we have managed to trace were two good friends, both sons of local farmers, Messrs Lucas and Ball.

THERE'S A VACANT PLACE FOR YOU MY LAD!



YOUR KING AND COUNTRY NEED YOU

Lord Kitchener has obtained 900,000 recruits, and only 100,000 are needed to make up the first million. So take your place in the ranks, young man, at once, and enlist at the nearest recruiting office, for the sake of your King and Country.

Recruiting posters from *The Cornishman* newspaper
November 1914 (left) and April 1915 (right)

APPEAL TO THE MEN OF CORNWALL

DO YOU KNOW WHY your farms and your homes are not burned; why your wives and sisters are safe from outrage?

First, you owe it to the brave little **Belgian Nation**, who, at the cost of all they had, held back the first rush of the German invaders.

In the next place you owe it to the **little British Army**, who in the terrible but glorious retreat from Mons stemmed the onrush of the finest of the German troops who outnumbered them five to one, until, at last, aided by reinforcements from our French allies, they drove them back almost to their own frontier, where they have since held them, through the snows and floods of winter, in a grip of steel.

One of the most distinguished among those to whom you owe your safety is your own County Regiment.

The Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry.

For more than two hundred years this splendid corps has won ever increasing glory in almost every war in which the British arms have been engaged; at Dettingen and Dominica, on the hard fought fields of the Peninsula, at Waterloo and in the Indian Mutiny, they have ever added to their laurels; and in our own time in Egypt and South Africa they showed that their old reputation was safe in the keeping of the younger generation.

In the present war ask General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien what he thinks of the behaviour of your Regiment? Distinctions too numerous to mention, from the Victoria Cross downwards, have been won by officers, non-commissioned officers and men.

Young Men of Cornwall, are you going to let these men defend your homes and your dear ones alone, while you hang back ingloriously doing nothing to help? **It is your duty** to join your County Regiment now, and so ensure that for a lifetime at least your country will be free from danger of invasion, and that those who have suffered for you will have their land cleared of the brutal hordes who have laid it waste.

Mothers of Cornwall, will you hold your sons back? Will you by your selfish weakness mark your son for life with the brand of shame, as one who would not come forward in his country's need?

Fathers of Cornwall, will you keep your sons with you because they help you in your business, or on your farm?

If other parents had not sacrificed something to let their sons go for your defence, where would your business or your farm be now?

Come along then lads! Your comrades in the **Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry** have done wonders.

They call on you to make sure that their labours are not in vain.

Go to the nearest Recruiting Office, or send a card to the Recruiting Office at Bodmin, who will give you any information you require.

God Save the King!

COURTNEY OLVER LUCAS AND ARTHUR JOHN BALL

Arthur John Ball was born in St Ives in 1891 and was the older of the two friends. In 1911, his father, Samuel Ball, was a farmer and dairyman at Bush Farm, Hatt and Arthur helped to run the business (but on enlistment in 1914 he gives his address as Skinham Farm, Saltash). Courtney Olver Lucas was born in Pillaton at Leigh Farm on 21 February 1896. His father, George, was also born in Pillaton and his mother Florence was from Landulph. Courtney had an older brother and sister also living at Leigh farm in 1911.

The two friends, Arthur Ball (aged 23 years & 9 months) and Courtney Lucas (aged 18 years & 10 months) enlisted together at Callington on 4 December 1914. Their enlistment numbers were 1446 and 1449 while their regimental numbers were just as close, 865759 and 865762. The young men were of similar build as well because Ball was 5'5" tall, weighed 118 lbs and had a 34" chest while Lucas was 5'6", 119 lbs and 34" chest measurement. Both were declared as in 'very good physical condition.'

The two men were destined for the Royal Field Artillery – Arthur was assigned as a gunner in 'C' section of the 3rd Devon Battery, 4th Wessex Brigade, and Courtney, who had a great love of horses, was allocated as a driver in the 2nd/3rd Devon Battery of the 8th Wessex Brigade. The pair were sent to Exmouth but within days, Arthur Ball was writing to his father: 'Dear Dad, I have just had orders to get ready to go off tomorrow... Don't worry about it we shall be alright we are not troubled about it a bit, but it has been an awful rush tonight getting all our gear ready... I don't know what they are sending us off so quickly for but I suppose they know best... I have had my photo taken I hope you will like it....We have joined for India so we must put up with it now.' (Arthur would not have known that a large part of the regular Indian Army had sailed for France and Mesopotamia in October and urgent replacements were needed in India).

This could well be the photo Arthur refers to (left).

They were embarked on a passenger ship, the SS *Saturnia*, along with four other batteries, 140 men to each battery, and the journey was something of an adventure which Arthur recorded in a diary and in letters home. By 20 December 1914, the ship was near Malta having stopped briefly at Gibraltar where a collision with a schooner at 5.00 am gave the men a fright, 'You should have seen the chaps spring out of their hammocks and run up the stairs we all thought it was a mine.' Otherwise, apart from some discomfort caused by inoculations, it seems to have been like a holiday cruise with Arthur comparing the lights of Algiers with Devonport all lit up at night.

Christmas day was spent at Port Said where Arthur bought a lot of oranges from the small boats that clustered round the ship, 'you get 16 for one shilling – big ones you would have paid two pence each for at home.'



Arthur Ball



The passenger ship, SS *Saturnia*, in which Arthur Ball and Courtney Lucas travelled to India.

By 3 January, they were past Aden and getting their second inoculation and their first gun drill. Two days out from Bombay where they arrived on 8 January, the men were issued with their full clothing for India having been given their sun helmets earlier. Arthur writes, 'They say we are going to Bangalore in the south of India but I have heard it is a very healthy place ... We have had lectures all about the drills, etc... There is an enormous lot to learn. The machinery of the guns are very intricate...' We must assume that the battery was going to have to train its men from scratch.

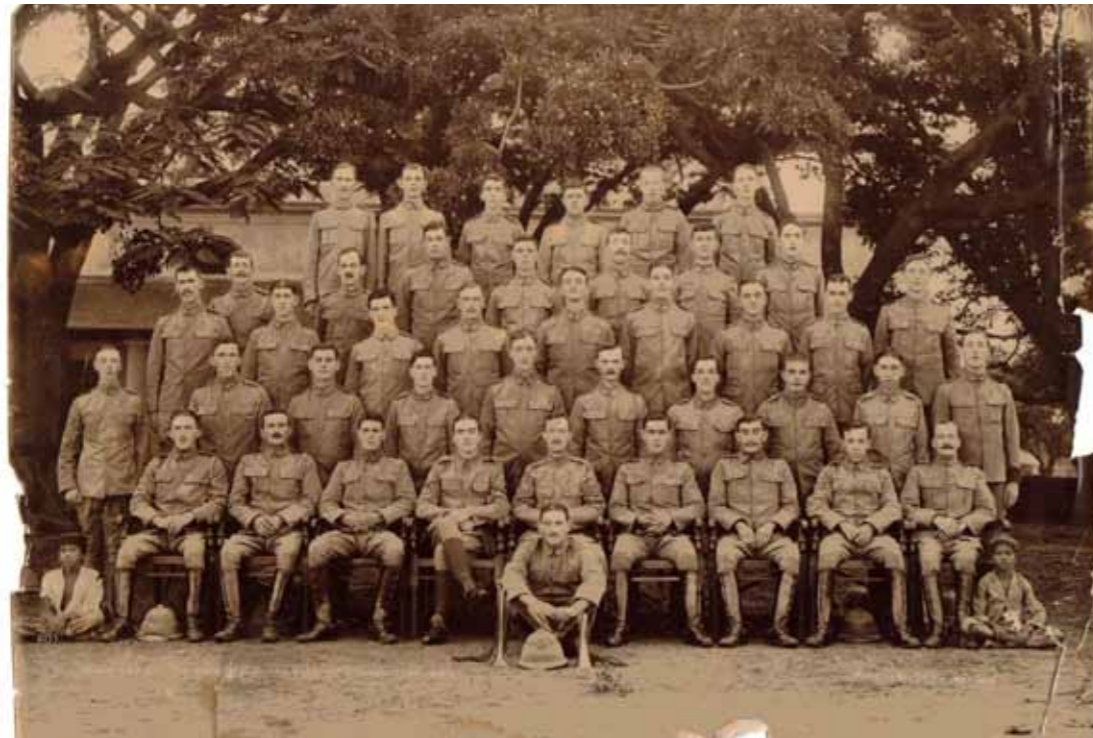
The battery was indeed bound for Bangalore, and after unloading the guns and ammunition in the Alexandra Docks at Bombay they got to Bangalore on 13 January 1915.

Courtney's grandson, Colin Lucas of Ashton Farm, has preserved a number of relics of his grandfather including a number of photos of the two friends during their service in India.



Courtney Lucas in his tropical uniform

We have no details of the activities of the Battery while in India other than an entry in Arthur's diary that they went to Jhansi nearly 1,000 miles to the north, in March 1915 arriving back in Bangalore towards the end of April with 38 fresh horses. The battery also travelled up through India over the next three years, because there are other photos from Hyderabad and Peshawar up on the North West Frontier which is now in Pakistan. Given the distances, they must have travelled mostly by train. Unfortunately there are no entries in the diary after December 1915 and no further letters have survived. Both men had bouts of sickness at various times, with Courtney suffering from malaria, and Arthur from pyorrhea at the end of 1917 following which he was supplied with artificial dentures.



C & D Sections 3rd Devon Battery 2nd/4th Wessex Bde RFA, Bangalore. Courtney is 2nd man in from left, 3rd row up (distinctive centre hair parting) and Arthur is behind him, top row far left.

The photo below shows one of the gun trains of the battery. Each gun was drawn by 6 horses with a driver riding the nearside horse of each pair (Courtney may be one of these men), the gunners (nine were needed to serve the gun) rode on the gun carriage, the ammunition limber and the ammunition wagon which all had drivers. The sergeant (seen on the far right) rode his own horse. There would be six guns in each battery. This was very much a team effort with the drivers responsible for managing the horses and the gunners for firing the guns.



Royal Field Artillery Gun Train

The friends were sent home on leave in June 1918 after 31/2 years abroad. The photo right is of the two of them in their 'Blues', now with moustaches and looking older, date uncertain.

Courtney arrived in France in July 1918, but was sent back to England with an outbreak of malaria in mid-August to spend time in St George's Hospital. He was back at Le Havre by the end of September and posted to the 12th Divisional Ammunition Column (DAC). The war was soon to end, and Courtney was assigned as a driver to the 62nd Brigade RFA on 15 November 1918. Back in England in January 1919, he was finally demobbed on 22 February 1919 after over four year's service.

Arthur Ball was back in England in July 1918 enjoying two weeks leave but was sent to France in mid-August. We have no information on what he did in France, but like Courtney, he was demobbed in February 1919.

Courtney Lucas left some notes about his life before he died (more people should do this - if it is not written down it will be lost).

He married Alice Hicks in 1922 and took over Leigh Farm from his father. He helped set up the Pillaton Gymkhana which took place regularly until quite recently, and served as Churchwarden for 40 years retiring in 1970. His other public service included Chairman of the Parish Council, member of St Germans Rural District Council and school governor of St Mellion CofE School.



Courtney Lucas and Arthur Ball

His continuing interest in horses led him to be committee member and later Chairman of the East Cornwall Heavy Horse Society until it closed down in 1943 when tractors had taken over from horses.

His military experience proved valuable in WW2 when Courtney served as the Lieutenant commanding the Botus Fleming Home Guard (see photo page 45). He later represented Duchy Farmers at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. His son George took over the farm in 1960 when he retired. By 1972 Courtney had two children, and five grandchildren, one of whom is Colin Lucas of Ashton Farm who has kindly supplied us with photographs and other material.

Arthur Ball married Catherine Sturtridge in 1920, a year after leaving the army. His grandson, John Ball, made photographs and samples of Arthur's letters and other documents available for this booklet.



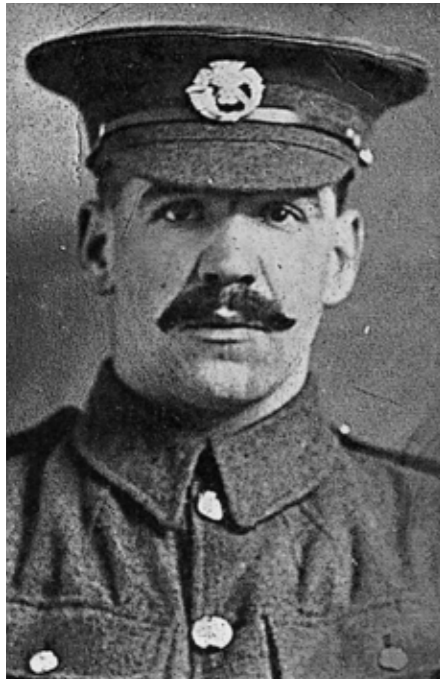
Arthur Ball wedding photograph

WILLIAM JOHN CRAGO AND JAMES WESTINGTON

By the Spring of 1915 it was becoming clear that voluntary recruitment to replenish the early losses of 1914 had not reached the hoped for level and the Government began to worry about whether to move to conscription. Two men with Pillaton links did respond however, enlisting at Callington on 15 May 1915.

The Crago family lived in New House, St Mellion in 1911. Thomas Crago, a farmer, was from St Pinnock and his wife Bessie was from St Dominic. At that time they had four sons and two daughters and they had been living in St Mellion for at least 10 years. They had family links with the Tamblyn family in Pillaton. The eldest son was William John Crago born in about 1895. On Attestation in May 1915, William was 20 years old and employed as an engine driver (he could have been driving a steam traction engine used in agriculture). His skills were recognised and he joined the Royal Engineers (Reg No 99974). Two months after enlistment he was sent to France to join the 85th Field Company but we have no information about his war experiences. He was awarded a Good Conduct medal in May 1917 and was treated for an injury to his right arm from barbed wire in June 1918. William served in France until March 1919 when he was demobbed.

The other man who enlisted in May 1915 was James Westington. He was born in Devonport in 1890, but since leaving school he had regularly worked for William Tucker at Trewashford Farm and lived there as if one of the family. John Tucker writes about him in his book 'A Cornish Farmer's Boy', calling him 'Jimmy West.' James was 25 years old when he attested for the DCLI and he was reported as being quite short at 5'3" tall. He joined the regiment on 21 May 1915 and after training in England, he was embarked for Salonika (now called Thessalonika) in January 1916. The photo below of James was sent to the Tucker family at Christmas 1915.



James Westington

There were two Battalions of the DCLI serving in Salonika, the 2nd and the 8th, both sent from France in November 1915. James was probably sent out to help bring them up to strength. As part of the British Salonika Force, James probably spent the first part of 1916 building defensive positions around the city, and a great bastion about 8 miles to the north known as 'the Birdcage' because of the huge amount of barbed wire used to encircle it. In July 1916, the Bulgarians tried to invade Greece but were repulsed by an allied force reinforced by Serbian, Russian and Italian troops. The heat and the mosquitoes made fighting here as unpleasant as in the mud of Flanders but the conflict was not as intense until September 1918 when the British army launched a series of disastrous battles against the Bulgarians just as the war was ending. On 23 December 1918, James was aboard ship back to England. He was re-allocated to the Labour Corps and was demobbed in January 1919. His discharge certificate says that he was sober but not entirely reliable. John Tucker's book is not entirely reliable either since he says that James served in Mesopotamia.

John Tucker also tells a story that a dairy maid at Trewashford was frightened in the summer of 1919 by seeing a 'scraggy, unkempt dishevelled soldier' come out of the hayloft who was soon recognised as James, having come home the night before (Is the season right, and if so what had he been doing since January?). Tucker compared this poor chap with the strong, healthy young man who had left to go to war. James later developed asthma and was often ill. When the Tuckers left Trewashford in 1925, James is said to have stayed in Pillaton to marry Maude Dolley of Washing Place, Pillaton, and they later had two sons. John Tucker says that James died of cancer at the age of 55 (about 1945) and that it was a shame that men like James who had clearly suffered from the conditions of war often received no compensation.

WILLIAM LYNNE STEPHENS

The Rick Park Farm branch of the Stephens family was involved in the story of William Higman who was killed in *HMS Nasturtium*, and in this case it is the Stephens of Pillaton Mill that concern us. Harold Stephens was born at Pillaton Mill back in 1868 and by 1911 he was running the mill with his wife, Louisa Jane (née Skinnard). They had three sons and two daughters, all born at Pillaton Mill. The eldest son, Harold Henry, helped run the business and the youngest, William Lynne, was still at school in 1911 aged 13.

By the summer of 1916 military conscription was in force, and that meant that men had to serve if they were aged 18 to 40 years old unless they were unfit or in a reserved occupation. William Lynne Stephens was enlisted at the age of 18 years and 6 months on 7 August 1916 at Saltash into the Royal Artillery (Service No. 85705). He was posted to France in April 1917 but we have no information about his activities there. He was promoted to corporal in the Machine Gun Corps at the end of September 1918 just before the end of the war and stayed in France until he was demobbed in February 1919. William seemed to have enjoyed army life because he decided to stay on in the RA, serving in No. 33 Battery until the end of March 1922, by which time he was living at Cliff's Farm, Tor Point.



Machine Gun Corps cap badge

SYDNEY GEORGE HIGMAN DOLLEY

There were four families named Dolley living in the Pillaton area in the 1911 Census – at Pillaton Mill, Washing Place and two at Kernock, but Sydney's mother was called Georgina and must be from another branch. Sydney joined up at Callington on December 9th 1915, giving his address as The Post Office, St Mellion. He was 21 years old and gave his occupation as a carpenter and wheelwright, joining the Royal Field Artillery (Reg No 177826) which needed such skilled men. He passed as a skilled wheelwright in June 1917 at Woolwich and joined the expeditionary Force in France later that year. He started as a driver but became a gunner in October 1917 with the 41st London Division. From the end of 1917 until 1918 he was serving in Italy before being demobbed on January 1919. He was reported to be living at Polborder in 1934.



Royal Field Artillery cap badge

ERNEST EDWARD JANE

In the 1911 Census, William Lewis Jane, a 65 year old widower, was living in two rooms at Howton with his daughter Beatrice. William was a quarry worker at the time, but the family had been a big one with 10 children, and they seem to have moved a number of times. One son, Ernest Edward Jane, was born in St Cleer in 1882 and had worked as a mason's labourer before joining the Army Service Corps in 1900. He was killed in action on 31 May 1917 while serving in the Rifle Brigade leaving a widow and 13 year old son. Ernest is remembered on the Callington War Memorial.

EDDIE BARRETT

Three families named Barrett lived in Pillaton village in 1911. One was headed by Nun Barrett, a blacksmith who had become sub-postmaster at the St. Mellion post office by 1914. Another headed by Richard Barrett whose father had been sexton of the Parish for over 50 years (and buried at St Odolph's). The third was made up of Peter Barrett, a farm labourer, and his wife Emma and their son Eddie who was aged 16 and working as a blacksmith. Both father and son were born in Pillaton.

Eddie was attested at Callington on 11 December 1915 a couple of days after Sydney Dolley. Voluntary enlistment ended on 15 December 1915, so they probably hoped that they would have some choice as to which regiment they were to join. At 21 years, Eddie is described as 5'8" tall with a 36" chest and a 3" chest expansion (but had 'defective teeth') so was bigger than many recruits of the time. He was classed A1 and put into the Army Reserve in the Royal Engineers (No 238145). He was attached to Group 26 (Blacksmiths) first as a driver in February 1917, but later sent for training to the Haynes Park Depot in May 1917 for training as a skilled shoeing and carriage smith. However, in September 1918 he failed a trade test for the Army Service Corps Mechanical Transport Unit. With the war soon over, without apparently seeing any service abroad, he transferred to a Labour Company (611st Bodmin) and then in April 1919 to 445 Agricultural Company before being finally released on 24 April 1919.

John Tucker tells the story that Eddie came, in uniform, to Pillaton School to say goodbye to his girlfriend, Clara Dolley (of Pillaton Mill) who was an assistant at the school. Sadly, for Eddie, Clara later married a certain Albert Proctor and they moved to Yealmpton around 1924.

THE UNVEILING OF THE PILLATON WAR MEMORIAL

The Western Morning News and Mercury for Monday, 21 August 1922 reported the unveiling of the memorial on the previous day in an article headed 'Six Men Who Fell – Pillaton's Tribute to her Heroes'.

It opened as follows, 'With simple reverence the Cornish Cross which has been raised in the churchyard by the roadside at Pillaton 'in honoured remembrance' of the six men of the village who gave their lives in the Great War was unveiled yesterday by Lt Col Drury and dedicated by the rector (Reverend Richard Hocking). There was a large gathering on the hilly road when the procession wended its way through the churchyard headed by the rural dean (Reverend W T Wintle, rector of St Mellion).'



Dedication of the Pillaton War Memorial - 21 August 1922

Mr William Hawk of Kernock Farm, who was Chairman of Pillaton Parish Council and Chairman of Cornwall County Council (standing on the left of the photo) said that Pillaton was a small parish, and sparsely populated and the names on the memorial were few, but it would be difficult to get a more representative list since it included men from the Navy, the Army and the Air Force. Lt Col Drury (standing by the memorial with the Reverend Hocking) said that, 'had it not been for their sacrifice, England today would have been an enslaved province of the savage Power which tore Belgian women from their homes and families and sang hymns of hate over the drowning children of the *Lusitania*.' He went on to criticize the failures of the League of Nations and the weakening of British defences. He warned that although Germany had been badly crippled, she was so far from being harmless that, 'she is already nursing hidden forces which we cannot doubt are intended to be employed again one day against us.' It was a strong (but prophetic) statement in a controversial speech that generated a critical article in a later edition of the paper written by Isaac Foot (father of Michael Foot MP, the future leader of the Labour Party).

POSTSCRIPT : Pillaton At War in 1940/41

Eighteen years after the memorial was set up, Lt Col Drury's prediction was fulfilled and Britain was again at war with Germany. There were thankfully only two names to add to the memorial to record yet more sacrifices in WW2. The reason for including the final two photographs is that they include men who are mentioned in the above story and others who are not included but perhaps should have been. We have the names of the men in the photo of the Pillaton platoon of the Home Guard but of only one in what is believed to be the Botus Fleming platoon, which also included some Pillaton men. Many of these men represent families well known in Pillaton in 1914. A close look at the photos reveals that a number of them are wearing medal ribbons which are likely to be from WW1. Some day it would be nice to not only identify all the men but also find out more about those who served in the Great War but about whom I have no information.



Home Guard, Pillaton Platoon

Back Row:

Kim MILDREN, Gordon DOLLEY, Edwin FOWELL, Fred WEST, Charles CAME, George DOLLEY, William HIGMAN, Frank POOLE, William DONEY, Sidney PEARCE

Centre Row:

Landlord Royal Oak Mr SEARCH, Tom STEPHENS, Charles STEPHENS, Charles DOLLEY, Harry STEPHENS, Albert MORRISH, Tom DOLLEY, Cecil GREENAWAY, William SEARLE, ? GOULD.

Front Row:

Cpl. Roy WARNE, Cpl Eric MOORE, Sgt. 'Skip' TOM, Lt. A James RENFREE, Cpl S M GOULD, Cpl. Samuel PETERS, Cpl. Cecil FRANTOM, ? BLATCHFORD

Note: William Higman in the back row is the son of the William Higman who was killed in HMS Nasturtium.



The Botus Fleming Home Guard Platoon

*Centre front row : Commanding Officer, Courtney O. Lucas
Names of the other men unknown.*

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Lt Cdr Robin Dwane RN has found valuable information in contemporary newspaper articles and war diaries and designed the layout of this booklet.

The internet has been invaluable, especially websites such as those of ancestry.co.uk and the National Archives, as well as various naval and regimental sites.

Errors and omissions are down to me.

