

PICTURES THAT TELL A STORY

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I have been a collector of photographic postcards of soldiers, sailors, and airmen for the best part of 26 years, specializing in images of the Liverpool or Wirral Pals battalion's (17th, 18th, 19th, and 20th Bn's King's (Liverpool) Regiment, and 13th Bn. Cheshire Regiment). Amongst my collection of Liverpool Pals is this gem of a card.

The photograph was taken in a studio in Corbie, France, in April, 1916, and is a portrait of 21868 Lance Corporal Thomas Stewart Edwards, Stretcher Bearer, 18th (2nd City) Bn. King's (Liverpool) Regiment. He was born in Birkenhead, on 27th March, 1894, the son of Charles S. and Mary Ann Edwards, and lived with his family at 104, Grange Road, Birkenhead. On 14th November 1914, Thomas Stewart Edwards and his brother, James Logan Edwards (regtl. No. 21867), presented themselves for enlisting at St. George's Hall, Liverpool, into the newly raised Liverpool Pal's battalions. They were enlisted into 6th Platoon, 2nd Company, 18th Bn. King's (Liverpool) Regiment, and trained with their battalion at Knowsley, Grantham (Belton Park), and Lark Hill, Salisbury Plain. Young Thomas trained as a Battalion Stretcher Bearer, and on 7th November, 1915, sailed to France, from Folkestone, on board the S.S. *Invicta*. During the Battle of the Somme, in 1916, he was seriously wounded in action, and was eventually invalided back to England, and was sent to convalesce at Morelands Hospital, Peebles.

On recovery, Lance Corporal Edwards was sent back to France, but, instead of being posted back to his old battalion, he was posted to 10 Platoon, "C" Coy., 13th Bn. King's (Liverpool) Regiment. He continued to serve with this battalion until he was posted as missing/killed in action on 28th March, 1918, the day after his 24th birthday. His body was never recovered and identified from the battlefield, and is therefore commemorated by name only on Bay 3, The Arras Memorial, France

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I had this fine postcard of a young officer of the South Wales Borderers in my collection for many years without knowing who he was. Then, a couple of years ago, I was at a friend's house doing some research on the 13th (Wirral) Bn. Cheshire Regiment (the Wirral Pals), when he pulled out from an A4 sized envelope, a large amount of photocopied newspaper articles about men who had served with this battalion. Without a word of a lie, one article fell on my mate's desk, and printed on the article was a black and white image of the above picture. I exclaimed to my friend, Tony, that I had that photograph, but did not know who the officer was. Tony told me that the officer was none other than George Percival Moss. Confused, I looked questioningly at him, and he told me that George Percival Moss was a former member of the Wirral Pals, and that he had his medals!

George Percival Moss was born in Hoylake, Wirral, on 29th May, 1897, the only son of George Percival Moss (Master Mariner), and Emily Moss. In later life the Moss family moved to 13, Burns Avenue, Liscard, Wirral, where the young George was educated at Riverside Schools. On leaving school, Goerge Percival Moss went into the timber trade. On 7th September, 1914, he enlisted into the ranks of the newly raised 13th (Wirral) Bn. Cheshire Regiment (Regtl. No. W/1047), serving with No.2 Company. He was inoculated for overseas service on 23rd February, 1915, and during the time he spent with his battalion in England, he trained with it at Codford St. Mary, Wiltshire, Bournemouth, and Aldershot, prior to embarking on board the troopship S.S. *Victorian*, at Folkestone, on 25th September, 1915. He went on to serve with his battalion at Le Touquet Salient, Zouave Valley (Vimy Ridge), and during the Battle of the Somme. In late 1916, he returned home to train for a commission, and was gazetted Second Lieutenant, South Wales Borderers, on 4th March, 1917. Two months later he was drafted back out to France, and was posted to the 12th Bn South Wales Borderers, on 13th May, 1917. He was seriously wounded in action in late 1917, and was evacuated to No.20 Casualty Clearing Station, Ficheux, where he died as a result of his wounds on 22nd December, 1917. He is buried in Bucquoy Road British Cemetery, Ficheux, France.

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This dramatic photograph was taken on 6th February, 1917, off the coast of Cape Agulhas, South Africa, when the Ocean Steamship Company (Blue Funnel Line) ship, S.S. *Tyndareus* (Built 1915; 11, 347 Grt.) had struck a mine. The mines had been laid by the German raider *Wolf*, on 16th January, 1917. At the time she was transporting troops of the 25th Bn. Middlesex Regiment, and as she was going down by the head, the troops were transferred over to the Hospital Ship *Oxfordshire*, and another Blue Funnel ship called the S.S. *Eumaeus*. A line was fixed to the *Tyndareus*, and just when it looked like all was lost, she was towed into Cape Town for repair.

The *Tyndareus* went on to survive this war, and during the “China Affair” of 1927, was pressed into military service again, and was used as a troop and horse transport ship. Shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War, she was yet again requisitioned for war service, as a troop and supply ship. She was fortunate to survive this war, and in 1949, she was converted into a Pilgrim ship. From 1950 – 1960, she carried pilgrims from Indonesia to Mecca. She was sold to be broken up at the ripe old age of 44, at Hong Kong, and arrived at the breakers yard on 9th September, 1960.



This photo is of the S.S. *Tyndareus* loading or unloading timber in the 1920's Or 1930's.

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In this photograph, anchored off the coast of the island of St. Vincent, which is situated off the north west coast of Africa, is the Armed Merchant Cruiser and former White Star Liner, H.M.S. *Laurentic*. In this photograph she is taking on provisions, and it was probably taken in mid-late 1916, when she had been placed on gold runs from South Africa to the United Kingdom, and then onto the U.S.A. Two of her eight guns can be seen in the photograph. The first is to the left of the fore mast, and the second is to the left of the rear mast.

The *Laurentic* was built in 1909, by Harland & Wolff, of Belfast, in the same yard as that of the ill-fated *Titanic*, and weighed 14,892 Grt. On the outbreak of the Great War, in August, 1914, she was in Canada, and was requisitioned by the Canadian Government, and was used as part of a huge convoy to bring over the first contingent of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. On her return to England, she was requisitioned by the Admiralty, and was converted into an Armed Merchant Cruiser, being commissioned into the Royal Navy in November, 1914. One of her first duties was to pick up soldiers of the West African Regiment and take them round to Durban. Then she took part in the action to sink the German cruiser *Keonigsburg*. After the completion of this operation, she spent a long time patrolling around the South China Sea, where she caused a diplomatic row! One of her specific duties was to check ships for any German or Axis nationals, and on this particular occasion, she stopped the American ship *China*, by putting shots across her bows. Then a party of sailors were put aboard, and they in turn arrested a number of German and

Bulgarian nationals. Complaints were filed to the American government, and the story even reached the press. In mid-1916, the *Laurentic* was placed on gold transporting duties, from South Africa – United Kingdom – U.S.A. On 23rd January, 1917, she loaded up with one such cargo of gold, totalling in value £5,000,000. On the evening of 24th January, she was sailing around Malin Head, Northern Ireland, when she received a warning to say that U-Boats were operating in the area. Throwing caution to the wind, she sailed into Lough Swilly, and anchored off the boom at Bunrana, where a Royal Navy station was situated. She sailed on the evening tide of 25th January, 1917, and as she was reaching the mouth of the Lough, she darkened ship and took on a zig-zag course. Sadly, during the time the *Laurentic* had spent sheltering in Lough Swilly, the German U-Boat, *U.80*, had laid a minefield. At approximately 5.45 p.m., as a force nine gale was blowing, *Laurentic* struck one mine, which went off abreast her foremast, and then, as she reversed engines to try and get out of the minefield, she struck a second mine, which went off abreast the engine room. Signal's were sent off to the Fanad Head lighthouse, but to no avail, Captain Norton, R.N., sent an officer and one of his Chief Stewards (Porter) below decks to ascertain casualties and damage. When they returned and told him that anybody that had been in the engine room who had not got out, was almost certainly dead, and that subsequent deck coming up from there were now flooded, he made the decision to abandon ship. *Laurentic* had had a crew of approximately 475 officers and men. Of this number, 347 men died as a direct result of the sinking, most of these had died as a result of exposure in the lifeboats. The majority of the bodies that could be recovered, were buried in a mass grave at the Upper Fahan Church of Ireland Churchyard, Bunrana.



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Two old soldiers of the South Lancashire Regiment, sit outside a tent and pose for a camp photographer. The gentleman on the right of the photograph is a veteran of the Boer War (1899-1902), wearing the ribbon of the Queens South African Medal. He is a Territorial Force soldier of the 1/4th or 1/5th Bn, and has the rank of Colour Sergeant on his arms.

The gentleman on the left of the photograph, is a Sergeant Major (Warrant Officer Class 2), and is also a veteran of a number of campaign's, including the Boer War. The interesting thing about him is that he has the crossed pick and rifle on his tunic collars, denoting that he is from a Pioneer battalion of the South Lancashire Regiment. Within this regiment, this can be narrowed down to two battalions. The 1/4th (Territorial) Bn., which did not become a Pioneer battalion until 12th October, 1915, had been serving in France since 13th February, 1915, as part of 7th Brigade, 3rd Division. The other option is the 11th (St. Helens Pioneers) Bn. This battalion was formed at St. Helens, in effect as a Pal's battalion, on 1st September, 1914, and by May, 1915, had joined the 30th Division at Grantham, Lincolnshire, and went on to serve alongside the Liverpool and Manchester Pal's throughout their bloodiest campaigns in France and Belgium. The St. Helens Pioneers went on to survive the Great War, unlike so many other Kitchener battalion's who were disbanded in early 1918.

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This excellent group photograph came into position of the author a few years ago, and at first glance, appears to be a group of men from the East Lancashire Regiment. Most of them are wearing the emergency blue serge uniform, predominantly issued to the men of the Kitchener battalion's (although the author has examples of units like the Royal Engineers wearing the same), and proudly holding the obsolete Lee Metford rifle. The man sitting down on the floor in the front row, wearing his khaki uniform, is a Corporal, and probably a former soldier. The age range on these men is also noticeably varied.

So, how can we identify what battalion of the East Lancashire Regiment these men are from? The process of elimination begins with clues that partially lie in the actual photograph. As previously mentioned, the majority of units that were issued with the emergency blue serge uniform were the men of the Kitchener battalion's, or "Service" battalion's to give them their formal title. From diligent research one can ascertain that the East Lancashire Regiment only had six "Service" battalion's, which were the 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 11th, and 13th. There are no obvious indications as to which "Service" battalion these men belong to, until, on the actual photograph, one looks to the left border (off the photograph in this image), where, vertically impressed on it's edge is "*Bijou Studios, Seaside Road, Eastbourne*". The only battalion in the whole of the East Lancashire Regiment to have ever been billeted in and around Eastbourne, was the 9th Battalion. Not actually being dated on the reverse side, but now knowing which battalion these men come from, where the photograph was

taken, and the fact that all of the men have not been issued with their new khaki uniform, I am confident that it was taken between November – December, 1914 (probably at Lewes).

The 9th (Service) Bn. East Lancashire Regiment was raised at Preston, in September, 1914, and was sent to a camp at Lewes, where it came under the auspices of 65th Brigade, 22nd Division. In November, 1914, the battalion was sent to Seaford, and in December, to billets in Eastbourne. It remained here until April, 1915, when it returned to Seaford, before being moved again, to Aldershot, in June, 1915. At Aldershot, it was stationed at Tweseldown and the Televera Barracks. On 5th September, 1915, the 9th Bn. East Lancashire Regiment sailed for France, and was landed at Boulogne. It remained in France for nearly two months, during which time the battalion only lost one man who died of wounds, 17816 Pte. Joseph Howarth (died 26th September, 1915), and then it was transported to the port of Marseilles, on 28th October, 1915, where it embarked on board a troopship, which took them to Salonika. The 9th Bn. East Lancashire Regiment landed at Salonika on 5th November, 1915, and remained here until 30th September, 1918, when it was moved to Macedonia, and ended the war north west of Lake Doiran.

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This rare photograph shows two officers of the 1/10th (Liverpool Scottish) Bn. King's (Liverpool) Regiment, in part of a trench system in late 1914, early 1915. The officer with his hand resting on top of his binocular case is Captain Cecil Polglase James, of the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders. He was born in March, 1879, the son of a

Colonel, and as a young man initially served with a Scottish militia. In 1900 he was gazetted to the Argyles, and was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant in 1904. Further promotion, to the rank of Captain, came in 1913, when he was attached to the 1/10th (Liverpool Scottish) Bn. King's (Liverpool) Regiment, as their Adjutant. He accompanied the first contingent of this battalion to France, on 1st November, 1914, and was wounded in action on 16th June, 1915, during the Liverpool Scottish's charge at Hooge. Captain James made a full recovery, and in April, 1916, he took over command of the 1/5th (Territorial) Bn. South Lancashire Regiment. On 1st January, 1917, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order, and subsequently a bar to this medal in November, 1917. At the end of the same month, he was taken prisoner-of-war during a German counter attack on his battalion's positions, and was repatriated a year later. During his service in the army he was Mentioned in Despatches no less than three times, and in January, 1918, he given a brevet of Lieutenant Colonel. He retired from the army in 1932, and died in 1943.

The man standing to Captain James' left is none other than Captain Noel Godfrey Chavasse, V.C. & Bar. Captain Chavasse was born in Oxford, on 9th November, 1884, a twin son of the Rev. Francis James Chavasse and Edith Chavasse. The family moved to Liverpool in 1900, where his father became the Bishop of Liverpool. Noel was educated at Magdalen College School, and Liverpool College, before gaining a position at Trinity College, Oxford, to study medicine. In September, 1913, he enlisted into the Royal Army Medical Corps, and was attached to the 1/10th (Liverpool Scottish) Bn. King's (Liverpool) Regiment, and he was drafted to France with this battalion's first contingent, on 1st November, 1914, serving as their Medical Officer. History now dictates that Noel became only one of three men ever to win the Victoria Cross twice. The first award was earned during the battle for Guillemont, on the Somme, in August, 1916, for attending to wounded under very heavy shell-fire, and the second, which was earned posthumously almost exactly a year later, in July, 1917. He died of wounds on 4th August, 1917, and is buried in Brandhoek New Military Cemetery, Belgium.



Captain Noel Godfrey Chavasse, V.C. & Bar, was, without any shadow of doubt, an exceptionally brave officer and soldier, but some of the modern visitor's to the battlefields of Belgium, single him out for visitation. Not to detract away from Captain Chavasse's bravery, I personally feel that the men that are buried in the war graves that surround Noel, who have also died of their wounds received in battle at Third Ypres, were equally brave, and deserve just as much a visit as this brave officer. On the Merseyside W.F.A. Branch trip to the old Western Front in April, 2008, we visited Brandhoek New Military Cemetery, and as we walked down the path to the cemetery, an English couple just leaving informed us that "*the double V.C. is buried on the right by the Cross of Sacrifice*". Shortly afterwards, an English school party came in, and again, singled out Noel's grave. The W.F.A. members of the Merseyside Branch were not so ignorant as to not to pay our respects to Captain Chavasse, but made a point of walking around the rest of the cemetery, placing memorial crosses on various graves, and not just the one.

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This portrait photograph is of Private Charles Barber, 3/8th Bn. Lancashire Fusiliers. He served at Gallipoli until he was wounded in the thigh. The postcard was posted on

12th July, 1915, so this would indicate that he was probably wounded in action during the 1/8th (Territorial) Bn. Lancashire Fusilier's attack to the east of The Vineyard, in the Krithia Nullah sector of the Gallipoli Peninsula, on 4th June, 1915, as this was the only large scale action which his battalion took part in that month. Private Barber was invalided eventually back to England, and sent to a convalescence home in Southport, and was posted to the 3/8th (Reserve) Bn. There is no record of Private Barber having been killed during the Great War, and so it must be assumed that he survived its ravages.

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At a casual look at the above image, one would think that it was just another photograph of another Kitchener mob, prior to their issue of obsolete Lee Metford rifles. The men pictured actually belong to the 1st Dockers Battalion, King's (Liverpool) Regiment, and the photograph was taken on the Liverpool docks. The battalion was raised in August, 1915, and in effect became a battalion of stevedores, working throughout the Great War on the Liverpool docks system, unloading war materials. A second battalion was raised later in the war.

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Posing for the camera in this image is the crew of "F" Class Destroyer H.M.S. *Zulu*, photographed on 3rd April, 1915. The *Zulu* (1,027 tons) was built by Hawthorn Leslie Shipbuilders, and was launched on 16th September, 1909, being completed in March, 1910. She had an armament of 2 x 4inch guns and two torpedo tubes. She went on to perform her normal naval duties until 27th October, 1916, when she was patrolling in the Dover Straits, and hit a mine. The mine explosion completely wrecked her stern end, but she was eventually brought safely back to port. Her life took a most bizarre turn following this incident. On the same day that she hit the mine which virtually destroyed her stern, a sister ship, the destroyer H.M.S. *Nubian* was torpedoed by a German destroyer, and crippled. Both ship's were taken to the Chatham naval docks, Kent, and the stern of the *Nubian* was joined to the bow end of the *Zulu* in 1917. Once the two pieces of the two ship's had been joined, she was officially renamed H.M.S. *Zubian*. She continued in the service of the Royal Navy until she was sold to Fryer ship breakers yard, in Sunderland, for scrapping.

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Sitting at a table, at what looks like a tea party, holding a walking stick, is one of the last Victoria Cross winners to be awarded that bravery award at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle. He is Company Sergeant Major Harry Daniels, 2nd Bn. The Rifle Brigade. This brave soldier had taken part in a joint attack with the 1st Bn. Royal Irish Rifles, in Neuve Chapelle's southern sector, which began at 5.15 p.m. of 12th March, 1915. The attack failed miserably, with men being cut down as they left their trenches. Orders then came through for "C" and "D" Company, 2nd Bn. Rifle Brigade to make a second attempt to assault the German positions was made, but this attack was also held up by murderously heavy machine-gun fire and thick barbed wire. C.S.M. Daniels, and his close friend, Corporal Reginald Noble, volunteered to go forward and cut a path through the wire. At first progress seemed to be made, but then, as both men were working their way up from the bottom strands, C.S.M. Daniels was hit by a bullet in the thigh, followed very quickly by Cpl. Noble, who was mortally wounded by a bullet to the chest. Both men were recovered from the battlefield, but Cpl. Noble sadly died at a hospital near St. Omer. He was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross. C.S.M. Daniels was eventually invalided back to England, and subsequently made a full recovery. This enables us to roughly date the photograph to mid-late 1915, with a tea party probably being held in his honour. C.S.M. Daniels made a full recovery, and continued his career in the army, gaining a commission.

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This photograph, like so many in my collection, was bought at a military antiques fair, and, like so many, is un-named. The curious thing about it is the central figure in the trio has penned across his chest "*Killed 1917*". My heart sank when, realising that the photograph had no names inked or pencilled on the back, that the task of actually putting an identification to any of the men was going to be virtually impossible. That is until I obtained a roll of honour book called "*Craven's Part in The Great War*". Flicking through it's pages, I came across the above image within it's pages, and, above all else, the name to the man in the centre of the photograph.

266853 Private Robert Hardisty, 1st/6th (Territorial) Bn. Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, is the central figure in the photograph. He was born in Skipton, Yorkshire, in 1881, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hardisty His battalion was stationed at their barracks in Skipton-in-Craven, Yorkshire, when the Great War broke out, having been ordered back from their annual camp near to the village of Marske, on the Yorkshire coast. Once mobilized, the 1/6th Duke of Wellington's spent a short period of about a week guarding Immingham Docks, and then were moved to Healing, near Grimsby, in mid August, 1914. In the following September, it was sent to a camp at Riby Park, and in October, 1914, it was sent to Billets in Doncaster. On 12th/13th April, 1915, the battalion was embarked at Southampton, and landed at Havre and Boulogne. Private Hardisty served with his battalion until he was badly wounded when his battalion was in the most western part of the line, in positions in the village of Lombaerzyde, directly opposite Nieuport. He was probably wounded

when his battalion took part in a trench raid in early August, 1917, and then evacuated to a hospital in Dunkirk, France, where he succumbed on 2nd December, 1917. Private Hardisty is buried in Plot 2, Row A, Grave 8, Dunkirk Town Cemetery.

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This photograph was pretty hard to identify and put a name to a unit. However, the chap on the far right of the photograph, wearing what looks like a rather large fob watch, has a cloth badge of an anchor sewn on the sleeve of his left arm (more clear on the original). This, without any shadow of doubt, identifies these men as being from one of the battalion's of the Royal Naval Division, they being the Anson, Benbow, Collingwood, Drake, Hawke, Hood, Howe, and Nelson. Given that the men on the photograph are all wearing pith helmets, it is most likely that they are very shortly to depart for the landings at Gallipoli. The building behind these six men is probably part of the newly constructed Blandford Camp, at Blandford Forum, Dorset. They are all wearing brand new and stiff looking issued webbing, and old obsolete Lee Metford rifles. Again, as is so often with these old photograph's, one can't help but wonder how many of these sailor-soldiers survived the Great War, or do they lie within the ranks of war graves in the cemeteries that scatter the dusty plains of the Gallipoli peninsula?

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This magnificent study of a Liverpool Pal, is that of 17122 Private William (Bill) Gregory, 18th (2nd City) Bn. King's (Liverpool) Regiment, taken at Knowsley Park Camp, Liverpool. Upon his left sleeve he wears the brass badge of a Drummer, and on his shoulder he wears the oval shaped brass shoulder title unique to the four Liverpool Pals battalions. On the upper part of the shoulder title is "CITY BATn." In the middle is the battalion number – i.e. 1,2,3, or 4 (17th, 18th, 19th, 20th Battalion's), and then below this is "THE KINGS ". Private Gregory has a number 2. The drum bears the coat of arms adopted as the Liverpool Pal's cap badge, which is the family crest of Lord Derby's family, as does Private Gregory's cap.

Bill Gregory's army career was relatively short, but was very diverse. He had enlisted into the 18th King's in late 1914. He trained with his battalion at Hooton Race Course

(Wirral); Knowsley Park Camp (Liverpool); Belton Park Camp (Grantham, Lincolnshire); and Larkhill Camp (Salisbury Plain), and embarked on board the former South Eastern & Chatham Railway steamer *Invicta*, at Folkestone, on 7th November, 1915.

In early 1916, having been in the line near Carnoy, on the Somme, in water-logged trenches for some time, Bill contracted trench feet. As he was making his way out of the line, his colonel, Lt. Col. E.H. Trotter, D.S.O., seeing that Private Gregory could not walk, lifted him up onto his horse and carried the unfortunate soldier back to a casualty clearing station. Bill was given the following day off duties. Lt. Col. Trotter was to be killed when a shell landed directly inside his command post on 8th July, 1916. Having recovered from his bad feet, Bill Gregory returned to duty, and went on to serve through the hell that was the opening day of the Battle of The Somme, on 1st July, 1916, during which he had a very lucky escape when a piece of shrapnel struck his entrenching tool. This piece of equipment had been fastened to his front to protect his manhood! His luck ran out on 18th October, 1916, during Bill Gregory's battalion's night attack on the village of Ligny-Thillois, near Flers, when he was wounded by a bullet in the left arm. At the time, he had been sheltering in a shallow trench behind an old tank. Bill was only too happy to get out of the line, and had to walk about five miles back to a railhead. He was patched up and initially sent to Rouen, before being invalided back to England. In December, 1916, he was at Staveleigh Hospital, Blackburn, convalescing from his wounds.

On recovery from his wounds, Bill Gregory transferred to the Royal Flying Corps, and was just about to gain his pilot's wings when the Armistice was signed. Instead of continuing with his flying training, he demobbed, but when he returned to Liverpool, he became very disillusioned. He knew nobody, as most of his friends were now lying under the fields of France and Belgium, having been killed in action. Bill also missed the camaraderie of being in the army with his friends, and could not settle down in civilian life. He re-enlisted into the army, and became a Trench Mortar Battery sergeant with either the 45th or 46th battalion of the Royal Fusiliers, and went on to see yet more active service in Russia, fighting Bolsheviks. At the end of this tour of duty, any thoughts Bill Gregory had of staying in the military had completely gone, and this time, he was only too happy to be demobilized.

Bill was haunted by his experiences during the Great War, right up until he died in the late 1980's/90's. On one occasion, in the mid-1980's, having been interviewed by Graham Maddocks at his home in Liverpool, Bill went to bed. During the course of that night, a thunder storm broke out, and he found himself entangled in his bed springs underneath his bed. He had had a nightmare about being back on the Somme battlefields, and thought he had come under a barrage and was trying to shelter from it!

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Pictured on a very muddy tented camp, are these recruits of the 13th (Wirral Pal's) Bn. Cheshire Regiment. Their uniforms are the emergency issue blue serge, and the rifles with which they are posing with are the obsolete Lee Metford rifles. The peak caps were donated by the Boys Brigade, and as one will observe, only one soldier is wearing the Cheshire Regiment cap badge (front row, centre). The camp is situated at Codford St. Mary, Wiltshire. Initially, the Wirral Pals were situated in Sherringham Camp, which was tented, until the camp at Codford was completed.

The 13th Bn. Cheshire Regiment had been moved to the Codford St. Mary area direct from the Chester, after it had officially been handed over to the War Office and formed up for the first time as a battalion, on 7th September, 1914. From Codford, the battalion went to billets in Bournemouth, and then moved to Malplaquet Barracks, Aldershot, where it remained until it embarked for France, on 25th September, 1915. Within three days of landing in France, the battalion was put in the line at Le Touquet Salient, on the border of France and Belgium, just to the south of Ploegsteert Wood. It's first Distinguished Conduct Medal was won by W/639 Sergeant John Joseph Bell, within the first week of being in the line. The battalion was then moved down to the Vimy Ridge sector, and took up positions at Zouave Valley, where they were heavily involved with fighting to capture mine craters. Then the 13th Cheshires were moved further south to the Somme sector, where it took part in major actions at Ovillers, Grandcourt, before moving up to Belgium, where it

was initially involved in actions on the edge of Ploegsteert Wood. During the Third Battle of Ypres, it took part in a very successful attack on the German positions at Messines. The battalion was disbanded on 16th February, 1918, near Achiet – le-Grand, France, and it's personel were absorbed mostly into the 10th and 11th Bn.'s Cheshire Regiment.

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Ever since I was a little boy, I constantly asked my parents about my family forebears, and when I asked my father about his father, William Threlfall, he told me that he had served in the navy at 16 years of age, during the "14-18 War". He went on to tell me that for many years there was always a photograph of him in uniform on the mantelpiece at their home at 46, George Street, Birkenhead. On further questioning by myself, dad told me that he didn't have a clue where it had gone, but thought that maybe one of his older brothers or sisters had it. Questions were asked in and around many relatives, but all seemed to fall on deaf ears. Eventually, at a ruby wedding anniversary function for my uncle Frank (an elder brother of dad's), I got talking to one of dad's younger sister's, Joan, and I asked her about the missing photo. To my utter joy, she told me that she knew of the photo, and at one stage owned it. When I realised that she was now talking in the past tense, my heart sank. Then she told me that my dad's youngest sister, Dot, now had it.....my heart sank

further, as I was not quite seeing eye-to-eye with Dot, because she had not been invited to my wedding. To cut a long story short, the two sisters went “to powder their noses”, and when they returned, Dot snarled at me, saying, “I believe you want to see the photo of my dad?” When I acknowledged her, she cut me dead and said that I could not! I then knew what was coming.....a barrage of question’s as to the why’s and wherefores as to her not being invited to the wedding! I fended them off as best as I could, and in the end I gave up and told her to forget it! As the evening progressed, and more alcohol was consumed (she was an alcoholic), she eventually warmed to the idea. The result being, the next day I paid her a visit, and she loaned me the photograph, in its very much dilapidated form. I took it into town and got a number of copies done, and as a thank you to her, I bought an imitation tortoise shell frame and an oval in-lay, and put one of the copies into the frame. Dot was so overjoyed with it, she phoned me up the next day and told me that I could have the original!

Now for the hard work to begin of trying to decipher what was on grandfather’s cap tally. As one can see as you look at the photograph, through the various cracks, the name of the ship is somewhat blurred. However, all was not lost. Casting my mind back to when my grandmother lived with me, she told me that my granddad had served on board a ship called the *Manturia*. I looked up this ship, but found out that it could not have been any of the ship’s with that name for one reason or other. Then I looked a little closer at the cap tally again. On closer examination, the tally actually reads “ H.M.S. *Mantua*”. The mystery now solved, my job was easier to find out about this mystery ship.

The S.S. *Mantua* (10,885 tons) was launched on 10th February, 1909, having been built by Caird & Co. Ltd., of Greenock, and had been built for P & O Line, on their London – Australia, or London – India mail services. Following the outbreak of the Great War, she was requisitioned by the Admiralty, and was converted into an Armed Merchant Cruiser. Subsequently becoming part of 10th Cruiser Squadron, she patrolled in the North Sea area and the Atlantic Ocean, between Scotland and Iceland. Her normal wartime complement was 3 Royal Navy officers, 40 Royal Naval Reserve officers, 1 Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve officer, and 320 ratings. I do not know when my grandfather joined the crew of H.M.S. *Mantua*, but at least I now know what ship he definitely served on.



Above are two images of the *Mantua* in peacetime P&O livery, and as an Armed Merchant Cruiser. She was sold to Chinese ship breakers in September, 1935.

PICTURES THAT TELL A STORY

18



Standing with his swagger stick under his arm, behind a friend from his battalion, is 14770 Corporal Arthur Oulton Gerrard, of the 10th (Service) Bn. Cheshire Regiment. He was born on 12th December, 1893, at Moore, near Warrington, Cheshire, the son of William and Martha Gerrard. The family later settled in the village of Cuddington, near Northwich. Young Arthur received his education in the village, and on leaving school he became a Gardener for Mr. H.E. Wilbraham, of Delamere House, working under the supervision of Mr. J. Thompson. In 1911, he went to work for Col. Pilkington, at Norley Bank.

On 2nd September, 1914, Arthur Gerrard enlisted at Chester, into the 10th (Service) Bn. Cheshire Regiment, and went on to train with this battalion at Codford St. Mary (Wiltshire), Bournemouth, and Aldershot, before embarking for France, on 26th September, 1915. He served with his battalion

