

# THE ROYAL PARKS IN THE GREAT WAR

1914

REVEALING THEIR PART IN THE CONFLICT

1919



PUBLISHED AND PRESENTED BY THE ROYAL PARKS GUILD

Compiled, written and edited by David Ivison, except where credited, with research and editorial assistance from Claire Ivison and Louise Clare. Many thanks to Peter Scott for generously sponsoring this publication and Mike Fitt for his advice and encouragement during the project.

© David Ivison / The Royal Parks Guild, 2017

The Royal Parks Guild is a member of the First World War Centenary Partnership.

Images sourced from the following copyright holders (credited photographs):

The Imperial War Museums and The National Archives (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/>); The Postal Museum; Getty Images; Illustrated London News Ltd / Mary Evans Picture Library; Mirropix Photo Archives; US National Archives and Records Administration; and Australian War Memorial.

With thanks to:

Daniel Hearsom of the Hearsom Collection, for the right to use images from the collection; Stephen Crisp, for the right to use his photograph of St Katharine's Hospital; Ken Howe, for the right to use his images of the Canadian Hospital in Bushy Park; Simon Fenwick of the Forces Postal History Society for use of material and images from *The Postal Dump*; and Carol Meacher for the photograph of her grandfather, Arthur Berry. These cannot be reproduced without their permission.

Design: Ian Vickers – Eureka! Design Consultants Printing: Streamline Press

Quotations sourced from (where not credited in the text):

*The Times*, National Library of New Zealand and National Library of Australia.

Our partners in this project:

The London Parks and Gardens Trust: Sophie Seifalian and Sarah Joiner

The Postal Museum: Chris Taft

The Royal Parks: Toni Assirati

The Postal Museum is a new national attraction for Central London. The attraction will showcase Britain's social, cultural and communications history as seen through the eyes of the globally recognisable postal service, revealing many unknown stories to the public, including the General Post Office's vital role in the First World War. To find out more about The Postal Museum's exciting plans please visit [www.postalmuseum.org](http://www.postalmuseum.org)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a system or transmitted, in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the necessary prior permission of the publisher.

While every effort has been made to contact and obtain permission from holders of copyright, if any involuntary infringement of copyright has occurred, sincere apologies are offered and the owner of the copyright is requested to contact The Royal Parks Guild at [chairman@trpg.org.uk](mailto:chairman@trpg.org.uk)

Cover image: *Army recruits at drill in Hyde Park, London, 1914 (detail)* © IWM (Q81785)

# THE ROYAL PARKS IN THE GREAT WAR

1914

REVEALING THEIR PART IN THE CONFLICT

1919





# CONTENTS

---

5	FOREWORD
7	PREFACE
9	INTRODUCTION
11	THE BEGINNING
14	ST JAMES'S PARK AND THE GREEN PARK
19	HYDE PARK
28	KENSINGTON GARDENS
32	THE REGENT'S PARK
43	RICHMOND PARK
53	BUSHY PARK AND THE PLEASURE GARDENS, HAMPTON COURT
57	CULTIVATING THE LAND
64	THE DEFENCE OF LONDON
68	VICTORY
79	WE BAND OF BROTHERS



*Bishop Winnington-Ingram of London addressing the crowd  
at the Hyde Park war shrine, August 1918 © Mirropix*

# FOREWORD



I am delighted to be able to provide a foreword for this lovingly produced book on the role of the nine Royal Parks during the Great War. The centenary commemorations of the 1914-18 conflict have inspired many researchers and historians to tell the story of that momentous conflict through cameos of the lives of individuals and the events as they made an impact on the Home Front, enabling a fresh understanding of what the First World War was really like. David Ivison and his team bring to life the diverse uses to which the Parks were put, from the Army Postal Home Depot to Kensington Gardens' School of Camouflage. Richmond Park was home to balloons and basic training, while from St James's Park was controlled "the shipping of the wide world" from a building erected on the bed of the drained lake!

More poignantly, we hear the stories in detail of the 24 park keepers, gardeners and labourers who left their jobs in the Royal Parks and gave their lives, mostly on the Western Front, in the War to end all Wars. The memorial to this "Band of Brothers" is in the Treasury Building adjacent to St James's Park. Of course, the precursor to so many memorials was the shrine culture that began in 1918, which included the Great Shrine in Hyde Park, dedicated by the Bishop of London of the day, the redoubtable Arthur Winnington-Ingram. It's a pleasure, as the caretaker looking after the See of London for its next occupant, to commend this splendid piece of local and national living history and to hope that its readers will see the present tranquillity of the great Royal Parks through new eyes.

*The Rt Revd Peter Broadbent  
Acting Bishop of London*

---

*The Royal Parks in the Great War is an important and interesting contribution to the history of the Royal Parks as well as a moving tribute to the many park staff whose skill and sacrifice made such a contribution to Britain's war effort.*

*Loyd Grossman CBE  
Chairman, The Royal Parks*

# PREFACE



For over 1,000 years the Crown Lands, now known as London's Royal Parks, have, in some form or another, been associated with the unfolding history of Great Britain with untold stories yet to be discovered. This is none more so than the forgotten role of the Royal Parks during the First World War.

The Royal Parks Guild, a membership body supporting the Royal Parks, felt that, as part of the 100th anniversary commemorating the First World War, the role played by the parks during the war should be explored and explained. Taking up this challenge a group of volunteers, led by Guild Vice Chairman David Ivison, began to delve into this period of Royal Parks history and uncovered a wealth of information on how the individual parks were utilised in supporting the war effort including, in some cases, the stories of the people involved.

This publication is a result of that research and, 100 years on, brings to life aspects of military history and the Home Front not previously brought together. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I did; congratulations to David and his team for compiling such an interesting and fascinating document.

*Michael Fitt OBE*  
*Chairman, The Royal Parks Guild*



*Captured German guns on display along The Mall, 1918 (detail)*  
© IWM (Q 31244)

# INTRODUCTION

---

During the First World War, sometimes called The Great War, The Royal Parks consisted of nine parks within London; Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens, The Green Park, St James's Park, The Regent's Park (with Primrose Hill), Richmond Park, Bushy Park, Hampton Court (including Home Park) and Greenwich Park; and Osborne House on the Isle of Wight and Brompton Cemetery in Chelsea. As hostilities with Germany were becoming inevitable the British Government began to take steps to prepare itself for war. The parks were immediately utilised for recruitment rallies, transport staging posts, aerial defence and temporary accommodation. Throughout the war more and more demands were placed upon the parks. This led to questions being raised in the House of Commons about the amount of land being used for military activity, to the detriment of the public enjoyment. Even at the end of the war the parks continued to host a legacy of temporary buildings and allotments well into the 1920s, much to the annoyance of local Members of Parliament who pressed hard for a return to parkland.

The Royal Parks were administered by His Majesty's Office of Works, hereafter called Office of Works, a government department headed by Sir Lionel Earle GCVO KCB, its Permanent Secretary from 1912 until 1933. The political head of the Office of Works was the First Commissioner of Works. During the war this post was held by Lord Emmott from 1914 to 1915, Lewis Vernon Harcourt from 1915 to 1916 and Sir Alfred Mond Bt from 1916 to 1921. Most of these gentlemen are referred to in the text with varying titles that were taken from the records made at the time.

This publication predominantly covers the period from the outbreak of the war in August 1914 until the burial of the Unknown Warrior at Westminster Abbey in November 1920. It gives a glimpse into how the parks were used in the war and how they played their part in the conflict.



*Commandeered vehicles in Hyde Park in August 1914 (detail)*

By kind permission of the Hearsum Collection

# THE BEGINNING

---

During the summer of 1914, the Government, fearing war was imminent, prepared for mobilisation. Under notice of the Army Act of 1881, private motorists and large firms that owned commercial vehicles were required, when asked, to surrender them to the authorities. On the declaration of war with Germany on 4 August 1914 the Chief Metropolitan Police Magistrate, Sir John Dickenson, signed warrants all the next day for *“the commandeering of not only motor vehicles but of horses, petrol and other things required by the Government for national defence”*. As each warrant was signed it was taken away by two soldiers and a sergeant of police to be served on unsuspecting owners. One of the sites chosen for storing commandeered vehicles was Hyde Park. Many forms of transport were also donated to the authorities. The Royal Automobile Club supplied *“several thousand motor cars”* for use by British authorities and stationed a fleet of them in St James’s Park *“for use in both day and night”*.

At the same time as every piece of transport was being requisitioned all territorial troops were given orders to report to their regiment. On 12 August the *Daily Telegraph* wrote about the London Regiment’s Territorial call-to-parade in Hyde Park; *“scattered all over the greensward were squads of recruits, readily undergoing the first phase of military drill in order to fit them for service of their country in her hour of stress ... They seemed to be splendid young fellows, drawn from the middle or upper middle class of the community, obviously well-to-do, to judge by their dress and general appearance”*. The Regiment were taken from the park in some of the requisitioned London buses with troops on the upper decks and ammunition from the park’s Magazine, together with the soldiers’ kit, on the lower decks. Mr Stevens, a visiting resident of Singapore, noted in correspondence the *“daily scene of the parks – the drilling of recruits. Many thousands of men they number, Regent’s Park and*



*Volunteers in transit at Hyde Park 1914* © IWM (Q 53268)

*Hyde Park being the biggest drill grounds*". Recruits at The Regent's Park were called-to-arms with the slogan, "*St Marylebone to Arms – your country needs you*"; this was the call to all who attended the mass rally in support of the war at Cumberland Green on a rainy Saturday 19 September in 1914. The march started at Baker Street and ended in The Regent's Park with rousing speeches and a recruitment drive.

## ALFRED EDWIN GURR

Alfred Edwin Gurr was one of those who rallied to the call-to-arms. He was a Park Keeper in The Regent's Park when, on 22 October 1914, he signed up at the Marylebone recruiting office. Alfred was 40 years and 134 days old at that time and he lived with his wife Mary Ann and their two daughters at 123 Albany Street, Marylebone. He was no stranger to the army having previously served with The Rifle Brigade prior to working with the Office of Works as a labourer and then as a Park Keeper. He was immediately posted to 6th (Reserve) Battalion, The Rifle Brigade, who were based at Sheerness in Kent as part of the Thames and Medway Garrison. On 1 March 1916, he was transferred to their 9th (Service) Battalion who were in France as part of the British Expeditionary Force.

Whilst serving with this battalion Alfred would have taken part in some of the bloodiest battles of the war including Delville Wood in 1916 and Arras in 1917. On 21 March 1918, the Germans launched their massive spring offensive in the Saint Quentin area of France, called Operation Michael. The allied forces were overwhelmed in this action and lost many men, stores and equipment. During the first three days of the battle the battalion was in



*Volunteers being recruited in The Regent's Park 1914 © IWM (Q 53298)*

continuous action and had to fall back, and at the same time cover the allied retreat. On 24 March, they were relieved from the front and retired to the church at Sermaize, 25 miles to the south west of Saint Quentin, where they counted their losses; these were 24 killed, 66 wounded and 195 missing. Rifleman S/5114 Alfred Edwin Gurr was reported missing in that action and in the official list of killed, wounded and missing servicemen produced for the Office of Works on 19 November 1918, he was still officially regarded as missing. It was not until after the war that Alfred was reported to have been taken as a prisoner of war and was being held in a camp of 12,000 men at Limburg, 75 miles south west of Cologne. He was brought back to Britain on 3 January 1919 and demobilised on 3 April. Alfred died in St Pancras in 1931 aged 56.

# ST JAMES'S PARK AND THE GREEN PARK

---

At the start of the war in August 1914 most of the parks were taken up with *“canvas, groups of lorries, motor cars, wagons [and] transport reserves”*. In St James's Park, *“there is a touch of light relief”*, said one reporter in September, *“yesterday a number of horses were picketed in the middle of an enclosure where there still stood a board announcing ‘This ground is for children only’. A fine spectacle was provided by troops who were going through sword exercise”*. Horses commandeered for war work were also *“mustered in Green Park, and sometimes present curious contrasts, such as a big hefty cart-horse alongside a fine thoroughbred racer”*.

On 22 October 1915 the army's Chief Engineer, London District, was directed by the General Officer Commanding to approach the Office of Works with a proposal to exhibit 24 captured German guns on Horse Guards Parade. This was amended later to include aeroplanes, torpedoes, mines and a large naval gun, weighing nearly two tons, from the German cruiser *Emden*, which was beached after a sea battle near the Cocos Islands in the Indian Ocean on 9 November 1914. Sir Lionel Earle commented that it was *“an excellent idea. Everything should be done to popularize the war”*. Whilst the enclosures on Horse Guards Parade were being made ready, many of the exhibits were held in St James's Park's store yard. By 12 November all the exhibits were in place.

During the early months of the war there was great concern about possible air raids over the capital and the lake in St James's Park was identified by the authorities as a prominent feature that could be seen clearly by air raiders on moonlit nights. Immediately the War Office ordered the Office of Works to drain the lake. Taking such action was not a burden as for the previous five years the Office of Works had been having trouble with water quality in the Queen Victoria Memorial Fountain and St James's Park's lake, and were planning



War Office Buildings, St James's Park © IWM (Q 31301)

to drain the lake anyway to clear away the algae that continually grew there. One nearby resident at the time described the area as being *"quite offensive in smell"*. To remedy this the Office of Works hoped to take the opportunity to re-line the lake bed and re-model the bank edges. However, in January 1915 the proposed works were stopped for lack of funds.

In March 1915, *The Times* reported, *"The war has begun to lay its hand upon St James's Park"*. The triangular piece of land at the north-eastern end of the park and leading to the bridge marked "for children only" had its turf stripped and heaps of drainage pipes and timber were deposited for the construction of temporary offices, making it look like a *"partially excavated Roman Camp"*. At the time these buildings were considered adequate for the demand. However, a year later it was found *"necessary to poach again on St James's Park"* with *"A new hamlet of offices at right angles with the ones first completed"*. So urgent was the construction of the buildings that workmen were engaged in day and night shifts to complete them. Also in March 1915, much interest was caused with the appearance of *"a number of little huts"* in The Green Park between Piccadilly and Buckingham Palace. Local people thought troops were to be billeted in the park, however they were erected as a War Office test of a new type of shelter. Each hut provided *"ample space for six men, or for many more in an emergency"*. Men of the Grenadiers, who were testing them, spoke highly of the new huts *"compared with the old bell tents"*.

By this time St James's Park had become *"transmogrified"*. Described in the Australian press as *"the smallest and the most sylvan of London parks, it has become a crowded hamlet of wooden shanties, at most two stories high"*. By July 1917, the First Commissioner of Works announced that a stop had been placed on further building in the parks since there was *"no more timber"*



*Birdcage House, St James's Park* © IWM (Q 28711)

*nor any labour for the purpose*". Although aiding the war effort, not everyone was in favour of the number of buildings that were appearing in the park. Sir John Boyton, MP for Marylebone East, said in the House of Commons on 18 April 1918, *"You wreck Regent's Park and St James's Park, but except for a few trenches over by Kensington Gardens, you have done nothing in Hyde Park. Give Hyde Park a turn, and take your attention from some of the other places"*. Sir Alfred Mond, the First Commissioner of Works, replied; it *"is because the offices there are in close touch with the Government offices in Whitehall. There is a building at Storey's Gate for the Headquarters Staff of the Admiralty, and the Admiralty claim, with a good deal of force, that it is vitally important that this staff should be close to headquarters. Then there is the Shipping Controller. One of the buildings is an annex to his office, and he is connected intimately with the Inter-Allied Maritime Council. On the other hand, there is the War Trade Intelligence Department, which is closely linked to the Board of Trade and the Foreign Office"*.

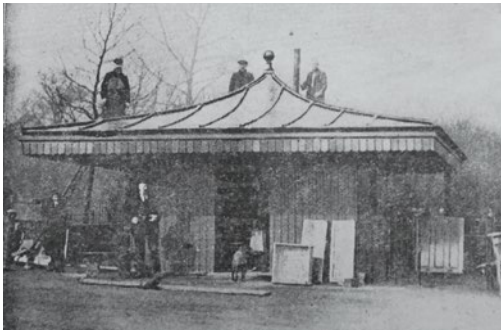
Harold Begbie wrote in March 1918, *"It is a picturesque part of war's topsyturveydom that the shipping of the wide world should be controlled from a hut in St James's Park"*. The Ministry of Shipping was originally hoping to be allotted the Automobile Club for their offices, but the proposal was deliberately turned down by the Government. They instead were allotted the Lake Building in St James's Park, a large block and plaster two-storey office built on the dried-up lake bed, which *"served admirably"* as foundations. There, *"in a roomy, well lighted, and comfortably warm apartment, with plane trees swinging their smoke-stained branches a few inches from the windows"* was the office of Sir Joseph Maclay, Minister for Shipping. It was reported on the buildings at the time that, *"it is a noteworthy sign of altered times that with a few exceptions the new Government clerks are women"* and *"the passer-by observes that they are chiefly engaged in typewriting"*. Having so many office workers in the park raised the issue of shelter for staff during air raids as the buildings had no *"subterranean*



Lake Buildings, St James's Park © IWM (Q 28709)

*accommodation available*". Mr Alexander, from the Ministry of Shipping, wrote to the Office of Works demanding that the *"arrangements for the protection of the staff working in this building rests primarily with the Office of Works. The proposal that we should instruct the male staff to go into the park and take shelter behind trees is one we cannot adopt"*. At some time, the Office of Works must have relented and agreed to provide shelter in the cellars of the Office of Works' headquarters building in Storey's Gate and in *"dug outs for offices"* that were constructed in the park.

By the end of the war, there were seven building complexes in the park: Admiralty Buildings in The Mall (250 feet by 104 feet); War Office Buildings in The Mall (300 feet by 150 feet); Ministry of Shipping Canteen (130 feet by 90 feet); Ministry of Shipping, Lake Buildings (900 feet by 130 feet); Passport Office (300 feet by 250 feet); and Swan Lake Buildings (180 feet by 50 feet). The seventh building, called Birdcage House, was subject to a contractual dispute over its demolition and removal of the debris in 1922.



Mrs Orford's refreshment stall being built in 1905  
© Crown Copyright

Near the corner of Horse Guards Parade and Birdcage Walk was situated a kiosk run by Mrs Orford. Her forebears were given rights by King Charles II to run a refreshment stall, which later became known as the 'cow stalls', that provided fresh milk from a cow kept in the park. The original buildings were demolished in 1905 to make way for the remodelling of the road and a new kiosk for Mrs Orford was erected opposite Horse Guards Parade, where the Guards

Memorial now stands. In January 1917, Mrs Orford wrote to Sir Lionel Earle asking for permission to sell refreshments to the new Lake Buildings being erected on the drained lake bed. She complained that a baker from Prince's Street had been given permission to supply the Lake Buildings saying, *"they not only serve the occupants of the buildings but intercept my luncheon customers"*. It is not known if permission was granted, but Sir Lionel was not minded to give any concessions, terming her in 1915, *"that tiresome woman"* who ran a concession rent free in the park. Following her request Park Keeper No 37, Walter Badford, wrote a report to his Inspector on the number of vendors selling refreshments to the new office buildings in the park. He went about his business in plain clothes and noticed four sellers entering the park. They were: B Lloyd, Bakers and Confectioners of Old Queen Street who entered Storey's Gate daily; Squires and Baxter of Jermyn Street

who entered Marlborough Gate daily with a box tricycle to sell pastries; Bert Heasy of 41 Marsham Street SW who entered Storey's Gate daily with a barrow of fruit; and a boy from Dilley's Dairy of Old Queen Street who arrived daily to deliver milk and butter. Further investigation by Park Keeper Badford found that *"there is an order to the effect that the employees of the Park Buildings are forbidden to purchase anything from anyone offering anything for sale in the Mall. Anyone disobeying the order are severely dealt with"*. Mrs Orford continued to have a strained relationship with the Office of Works and on 30 November 1922 Sir Lionel Earle wrote that he was *"very anxious to demolish the old tin shanty [used by Mrs Orford] at the earliest possible moment as it is an eyesore"*. Shortly afterwards the kiosk was removed and the site used to lay the foundations for the proposed Guards Memorial.

In early 1917 the *Weekly Times* in Melbourne reported on a *"handsome black pug"* seen every morning wandering about Whitehall and St James's Park. *"He is a very self-possessed dog; he is not scared by traffic, nor does he dream of chasing a motor car. He has a well-defined area for his leisurely strolls. He seldom leaves what may be described as the official region extending from Whitehall to Buckingham Palace. Few people are aware that on his collar he bears the name of his master, 'H. H. Asquith.' His morning walk over, he returns to No 10"*.

On 12 June 1918, Mr Ward of Wilbraham Place, Sloane Street wrote to Sir Lionel Earle suggesting *"that it would be a great source of pleasure to the wounded soldiers who wander about the streets"* to have some seats placed in The Mall between the trees saying that, *"it would be a very cheerful spot for them to rest their weary limbs"*. Sir Lionel wrote back the next day in full sympathy towards his suggestion. Before re-construction of The Mall there had been a few cast iron seats with no backs, but they were considered so uncomfortable that they were not replaced. Apparently they were *"much used by women of an undesirable class, by tramps, and also a playing place for children"*. He suggested that they go into St James's Park or Green Park either side of The Mall where the chair contractor had *"very patriotically"* allowed all wounded soldiers to occupy chairs without payment. In fact, it was in September 1917, when letters first appeared in the London press claiming that wounded soldiers were being asked to pay for the privilege of sitting down on the chairs in the Royal Parks *"when they take the air there"*. However, this suggestion was refuted by the chair licensee of the Royal Parks, Mr MW Shanley, who told the *Evening News*, *"that all wounded soldiers are expected to take seats in the parks without paying the usual fee"*.

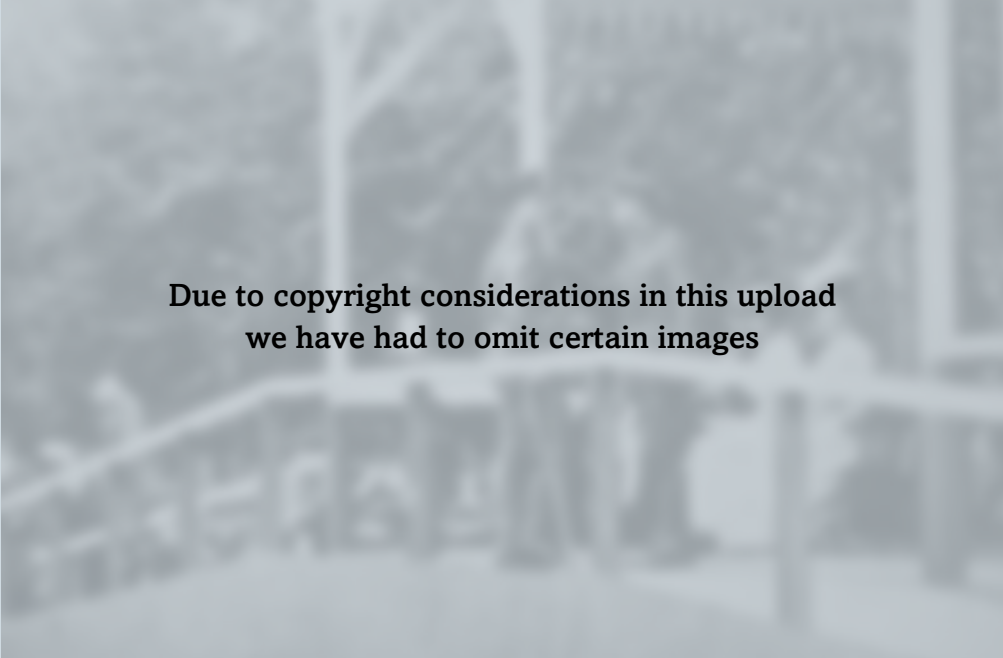
# HYDE PARK

From the start of the war the military had an increased presence in the park, with the Guards at Knightsbridge Barracks utilising nearby areas for drilling, trench digging and sports. On 23 December 1914, the Privy Purse Office wrote to Sir Lionel Earle, asking if it was possible to allow the men quartered there to play football on the grass area at the front of the barracks. By this time the ground had already been “*cut up by horses and drilling*”. On 5 January 1915, The Privy Purse again wrote to Earle saying, “*The King thinks that now the grass has been entirely ruined, there would be no objection to football being played*”.



A Women Patrol © IWM (Q 31089)

On 13 November 1915, the *Daily Telegraph* reported on Women Patrols in London parks including Hyde Park, St James’s Park and The Regent’s Park. These were set up by the Women’s Patrol Committee and organised by the National Union of Women Workers in response to concern about billeted soldiers corrupting local girls. From the outset “*the enterprise enjoyed the highest official sanction*” from Lord Kitchener himself. The patrols would seek “*women behaving in ways they considered immoral or inappropriate (such as intimate physical contact with a man)*” and then appeal to them that they should refrain from their actions or be



**Due to copyright considerations in this upload  
we have had to omit certain images**

*Private Thomas Hughes receiving his Victoria Cross* © Illustrated London News Ltd / Mary Evans Picture Library

forcibly taken home. An interview with a member of the Women Patrol described her duty as, *“A special duty from the very first was to turn girls and lads out of the deep doorways and shop entrances. This is a job the police constable did not care to do, owing to the amount of abuse he got. But we never have any difficulty. Indeed the rule now is that as soon as we appear, out they come of their own accord, some sheepishly touching their caps with the remark: ‘All right, Miss’. And yet we have not said a word”*.

During the early months of 1917 Britain was in the grip of *“a real winter”*, wrote Arthur Mason. He reported that the Serpentine in Hyde Park, the Round Pond in Kensington Gardens and the lake in The Regent’s Park had all frozen over. This attracted skaters *“by the thousand all day long and far into the moonlit nights. Serpentine experts wheel in figures of eight, and ice contortionists go whirling and gliding upon all the known and imaginable curvings and twistings of the acrobatics of the ice”*. Unfortunately, the cold weather did not last and a report on 20 February stated, *“Hundreds of people walked on the ice on the Serpentine, in Hyde Park, London, today ignoring the thaw. A portion broke and many were immersed. A woman was drowned”*.

On 2 June 1917, King George V, Queen Mary, Princess Mary, Dowager Queen Alexandra and several other princesses attended a special public investiture, on the site opposite Knightsbridge Barracks where the Great Exhibition had been, to decorate 350 men, including seven Victoria Cross recipients, in which there were four posthumous Victoria Crosses given to next-of-kin. It was noted at the time that, *“A notable innovation is printed programmes which attach a number to each recipient’s name, and a card will be displayed on the dais enabling the public to identify the heroes”*. Official overseas representatives and wounded officers and men were also present, and all were entertained by the musicians of the



*The investiture held on the Exhibition Grounds, Hyde Park in June 1915* By kind permission of the Hearsam Collection

*Volunteers in Hyde Park. The review was the outward and visible sign of the fuller recognition of the Force by the War Office. Being a very fine summer's day, a vast crowd was attracted to Hyde Park. The Central London Regiment did not turn out so well as some of the other London regiments, and the parade state of the United Arts showed only 374 men on parade, but the Battalion came through a trying ordeal very well".* Their duties included guarding the anti-aircraft depot and manning the Lewis machine guns at Hyde Park Corner.

Guards Division. A squadron of aircraft from the Royal Flying Corps flew "speck like" overhead in case of a surprise air attack.

In 1920, Lt Edward Potton of 1st Battalion (United Arts Rifles) County of London Volunteer Regiment, a force made up from members of the dramatic, musical, literary and artistic professions who were unable to join the active or Territorial Forces, wrote of one parade in Hyde Park, "On 17th June, 1916, Lord French inspected about 10,000 London



*The Church Army hut for injured military personnel in Hyde Park* By kind permission of the Hearsam Collection

Regular military-style exercises were carried out to ensure the volunteers were "ready for action". Lt Potton went on to say, "With Hyde Park close at hand, we had an admirable training ground. I hesitate to say how often we defended and attacked the bridge over the Serpentine. We generally arranged with another Company to put up a fight. In those days we never considered the odds; artillery had no fears for us. Whatever the slaughter on one night, the dead were always ready to volunteer for a fresh venture on the next. The umpire, however, had the deuce of a time, as both sides invariably claimed the victory".

To cater for injured military personnel a building, called the Church Army Lord Kitchener Recreation Hut, was erected just inside the park on the right hand side of the main entrance at Marble Arch. This proved to be an "immensely popular centre" where wounded men organised billiard tournaments and whist drives for prizes, and provided music and games that "kept everyone happy".

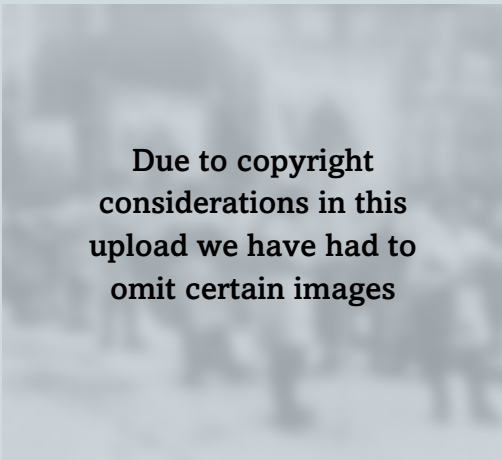
## RALLIES, REVIEWS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

Hyde Park had been used for many years as a place of rallies, public speaking and gatherings. Apart from military parades and drilling, the park was used as a focal point for organisations to gain publicity.

Under the title 'Men Advised Not to Join the Army' it was reported in August 1915 that Leslie Heath, 29, a cellar man *"was charged with using insulting words and behaviour whereby a breach of the peace might have been occasioned, and by word of mouth likely to prejudice recruiting"*. Heath was observed by Constable Lawrie who heard him in Hyde Park telling a soldier in the crowd *"I ... say you are a fool to be in that uniform"*. At the police station he said, *"I often speak and enter into discussions in the Marble Arch, and air my feelings pretty freely. I can say what I feel – can't I?"* He was taken to court where he stated that he was misunderstood; he had to pay 40 shillings or, alternatively, serve 21 days' imprisonment.

There was, however, enthusiasm for the war as shown by *"a great and enthusiastic"* demonstration held by the British League of Workers in Hyde Park in May 1917. It was addressed *"by members of the House of Commons and leading Labourites, and by acclamation it was resolved to send fraternal greetings to the Allied peoples, particularly in the United States and Russia. The resolution expressed the fixed determination of all patriotic Britons in the United Kingdom and the Dominions beyond the seas to continue the war to a victorious finish"*. Not all sections of London society were in agreement with the national call-up in 1917. On 27 July 10,000 East-End Russian Jews held a procession in Hyde Park as a protest against *"an order of the Government that all Russians of military age in Britain must join the British or Russian armies"*. The War Office were completing the arrangements for the formation of a Jewish regiment of infantry with *"experienced British officers filling the higher appointments"*. Jews already serving in British regiments, and who had a knowledge of the Yiddish or Russian language, were transferred to the new unit. The regimental badge was a representation of King David's shield and they were stationed in Palestine.

On 20 April 1918, the Women's Land Army, including members of the Women's Forestry Section, held a large rally in the park to display their range of activities and aid their purpose of recruiting 30,000 more women. As Michael Macdonagh, a journalist for *The Times* newspaper, said at the time, *"They had a recruiting procession in London and a meeting in Hyde Park. The stretch of grass in Hyde Park where the meeting was held was like a farmyard there were so many pens with lambs, pigs, ducks and hens"*. And again on 24 August he reported on several thousand people attending a demonstration with speeches



**Due to copyright considerations in this upload we have had to omit certain images**

*The Women's Forestry Section on their way to Hyde Park*  
© Illustrated London News Ltd / Mary Evans Picture Library



*American troops march past the Victoria Memorial* © National Archives of America

being conducted from five platforms and a petition being displayed in the park with the plan to deliver “A monster petition to the Government forthwith to intern every enemy alien without distinction of any kind, and take drastic steps to eradicate all German influence in Government circles and society, was adopted at a meeting in Hyde Park this afternoon, which I reported, and was brought to 10 Downing Street, the Prime Minister’s house. The petition had 1,250,000 signatures. It was over two miles in length. Rolled up like a big drum it was carried from Hyde Park to Downing Street in a lorry decorated with the Union Jack, the Stars and Stripes, the French Tricolour and the flags of other allied nations”. Unfortunately the demonstrators “expressed their dismay” at the news that the Prime Minister, Mr Lloyd George, was not able to receive the deputation and petition as he was not in residence.



*American troops in The Green Park* © IWM (Q 66153)

## THE AMERICANS ARE COMING

In April 1917, the United States of America declared war on Germany and rushed troops across the Atlantic to join the Western Front in Europe. On 15 August, American troops from Engineer Regiments took part in a parade through London. Their route took them from Waterloo Station to Wellington Barracks, where they had breakfast.



*American baseball in Hyde Park* © National Archives of America

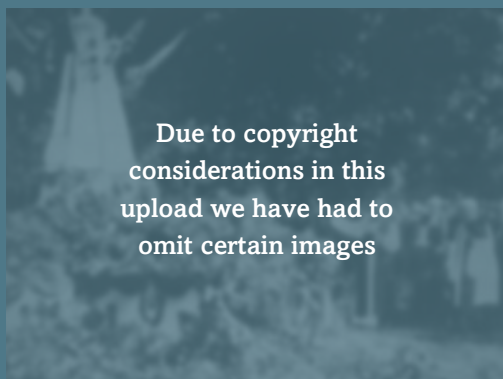
They later paraded down Horse Guards Road across Horse Guards Parade to Whitehall and on to the American Embassy at Grosvenor Gardens. From there the parade headed for Buckingham Palace where the King took the salute as they marched by. The troops then filed into Green Park where they were treated to lunch “*complete with linen table cloths*”. After an hour, the troops marched back to Waterloo station.

The following year on 4 July 1918 American troops held an ‘American Sports Demonstration’ in the park. All sorts of athletic events, including a Wild West Show, were included in the exhibition. American troops also took part in regular sports practice. On 17 July 1918, it was reported in *The Times*, that the Lord Mayor of London attended the first baseball match in Hyde Park played by American soldiers at a dedicated ground set aside near the Prince of Wales Gate. The British army was “*well represented by officers and private soldiers. Two bands were in attendance; The Royal Horse Guards and the private and particular band of one of the baseball sides*”. The umpire was “*Mr D. C. Macandrew, formerly one of the best known half-backs in American football, and still known as ‘The Indian’*”. Four baseball teams, that included American and some British troops, were established at Knightsbridge Barracks and soon they formed a league of their own. They played their matches in Hyde Park every Wednesday and were watched each week by spectators ranging in age from young children to “*grey haired, elderly men and women*”.

During November 1918 two American football teams from the American navy and army, that included former United States university ‘stars’ and coached by a former Yale University coach, practised in the park prior to their charity event at Chelsea Football Club’s ground.

## THE GREAT WAR SHRINE, HYDE PARK

Each anniversary of Britain's entry into the war on 4 August 1914 was commemorated as Remembrance Day, until 1919 when it was superseded by 11 November. Open air rallies were conducted throughout the country to promote enthusiasm and support for the war effort, and as the war progressed to pay tribute to the fallen. Town councils began to publicly commemorate local recruits with rolls of honour in prominent places with the names of those serving and the dead. In the same way, the Anglican clergy organised and encouraged their congregations to compile lists of men serving in the forces and to erect shrines. The shrines were simply made of wood and paper, decorated with the Union Jack and other flags, sometimes with photographs of national or local heroes, or with a religious or sentimental print cut from a magazine, and with a shelf to hold donations of flowers. Created mostly in working class parishes, and often in the care of local women, short services of remembrance were held at the shrines before processing through the streets. The first street shrine was put up in Palace Street, South Hackney in mid-1916 and, following encouragement by the *London Evening News* and Selfridges department store, over 250 were erected in the London area alone by mid-October. After the well-publicised visit by Queen Mary in August 1916 to five of South Hackney's shrines, a nationwide street shrine movement was soon established. The shrines were particularly favoured by crusading churchmen, such as the Bishop of London, Arthur Winnington-Ingram, who saw the war as a sacred and just cause, declaring, "*Mobilise the nation for a holy war!*". There was controversy however. Some felt that the shrines encouraged Catholic religious practices, and others were concerned that they inspired idolatry or superstition. Overall, however, the shrines united people, were popular and were treated with great respect. They supported the wartime effort by helping to keep up home-front morale. The involvement of the whole community and the focus of attention on the ordinary servicemen at the front, allowed the anxious and bereaved a release of feelings, as far as that was possible. Letters from men at the front also showed how much they too appreciated the mindfulness which the shrines represented.



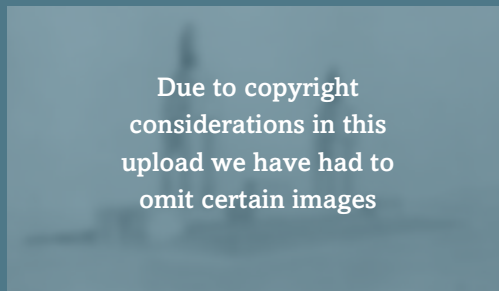
**Due to copyright considerations in this upload we have had to omit certain images**

*Bishop Winnington-Ingram of London blessing the shrine*  
© Illustrated London News Ltd / Mary Evans Picture Library

In August 1918, a large flower shrine was erected in Hyde Park near Marble Arch, where on Remembrance Day Bishop Winnington-Ingram led a commemoration service in memory of the fallen. Twenty thousand people were reported to have attended the service and witnessed the blessing of "*a great quantity*" of flowers which had been brought by the public and placed on the shrine by the London Volunteer Rifles. The shrine was built in the shape of a large Maltese cross with a spire 24 feet high, draped in white and purple cloth. The spire, a tapering octagonal timber structure, was topped with a Union Jack surrounded by the flags

of the allies. Within a week it was reported that 100,000 people had visited, and by 15 August the organisers declared that 200,000 people had laid flowers on the shrine. *The Times* reported that Queen Alexandra had also dedicated a simple bunch of carnations and gladioli as a tribute to the dead.

The event had been organised by the Bishop of London with the support of the Lord Mayor of London and the advertising entrepreneur Charles Higham, and paid for by Sir Samuel Waring of the firm Waring and Gillows. Within a few days of the event Waring offered to pay for a more durable but temporary shrine in the same Hyde Park location to a design by Sir Edwin Lutyens. The non-denominational design, 70 feet in length, consisted of a simple altar with a shelf for floral offerings, set on a platform approached by steps. At either end was a pylon surmounted by a pine cone as a symbol of eternity. It was to be constructed of timber, clad in plaster and painted white to look like stone. Although the strong public desire for a shrine where flowers and tributes could be laid was recognised, the design was unacceptable to the King, as Ranger of the Park, and Lutyens was asked to produce an alternative design. A fresh design, eliminating the pylons, was approved, but the project was ultimately cancelled due to funding. Meanwhile the original shrine remained in the park, becoming unsightly and dilapidated as the months advanced, although the Office of Works was cautious to remove the shrine which was revered so greatly by the public; and park staff were instructed to renovate and maintain it as best they could. The shrine was finally removed by October 1919.



*The temporary war shrine designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens*  
© Country Life

Lutyens designed the Cenotaph in Whitehall for the London Peace Day Parade that took place on 19 July 1919 which marked the formal end of the war. Its parallel with the Hyde Park shrine is striking. It immediately became a place of pilgrimage, a place to remember and mourn the dead. Just as in Hyde Park people came in their thousands to lay floral tributes. It was also a temporary structure of wood and plaster (using the same construction methods as envisaged for the war shrine in Hyde Park). Within days there was a successful movement in Parliament and the press for a permanent structure to the same design and in the same location. This was unveiled by King George V on Armistice Day, 11 November 1920 and is now designated as the United Kingdom's primary national war memorial.

*Sophie Seifalian, London Parks and Gardens Trust*

*Opposite: The unveiling of the Shrine* © Australian War Memorial C04215



# KENSINGTON GARDENS

---

Following the initial stages of the war it was realised that trench warfare was going to form an important part of the conflict. In November 1914, Lord Hamilton of Dalzell, Officer Commanding Brigade of Guards, wrote to Lord Emmott, First Commissioner of Works, requesting an area of ground adjacent to the Long Water on Buck Hill “*to practise digging trenches*”. Lord Emmott agreed rapidly and Lord Hamilton expressed his thanks at the prompt action taken and went on to say, “*A soldier who goes to war these days without knowing how to dig trenches has about as much chance as a rabbit who is born without the instinct of going to ground*”. The troops were met at 6.00 pm every evening at Victoria Gate by an official of the park’s staff who was there to supervise the extent of the excavations. This training extended for several months. In February 1915, over-zealous digging had damaged tree roots, at which an order had to be given to restrict digging within 25 feet of a tree, and a telephone line to the Hyde Park Magazine had been cut which telephone engineers had to be called out to re-connect.

A report in the *West London Gazette* dated 27 February 1915 highlighted the shadier side of the area. An article headed ‘Hyde Park Murder’ went on to say, “*The London police are looking for the murderer of a woman, Alice Jarman, whose body was found in a ditch bordering Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens*”. This ditch was in fact a ha-ha (a hidden ditch) that was used to divide the two parks, and remnants are still visible today. At the inquest a plan was produced to show the scene of the tragedy. Jarman was described by her housemate as “*leading an irregular life, and used to frequent the park. She carried on with soldiers sometimes. She was never drunk but was rather weak minded and childish*”. No one was ever charged with her murder, though suspicion did fall on the troops stationed in the park as the murder weapon used was thought to be a bayonet.



*Part of the network of trenches dug on Buck Hill © IWM (Q95944)*

On Saturday 8 May 1915, the Engineering Unit of The National Guard, a volunteer force made up of those who could not join the regular army, were parading with the Post Office Volunteer Training Corps near Lancaster Gate and marched to the Magazine at Kensington Gardens. Their platoon commander, Twelvetrees, *“made a survey for the construction of a trestle bridge to be erected for use by the Post Office Corps, and subsequently acted as an attacking party whose object was to pursue and capture one of the field telegraph companies operating in Hyde Park”*. The bridge was constructed on Saturday 5 June and *“measured about 24ft. long from end to end, and 8ft. wide. It spanned the sunk fence [the ha-ha] separating Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, and was of strength sufficient to carry with perfect safety a column of infantry marching at the double four abreast without breaking step”*.

On 8 March 1917, the Army Council wrote to the Ministry of Munitions to say that it had been decided to establish a School of Special Works in Kensington Gardens *“where experiments will be made and instruction given in the art of disguising trenches, gun emplacements, observation posts, etc. in the Field”*. They stressed that it would be desirable that there would be little delay and asked that the Ministry should put the school in contact with the *“Comptroller of Munitions Inventions”* to ensure supplies could be arranged. The idea of a school arose out of an Exhibition of Camouflage in Kensington Gardens arranged by the War Office in conjunction with the Ministry of Munitions. The exhibition was attended by the King and Queen, and the Army Council amongst others, and was so successful that it was decided to keep it as a permanent school.



*Aerial view of the Camouflage School on Buck Hill © IWM (Q 95936)*

## THE CAMOUFLAGE SCHOOL

Kensington Gardens, in the heart of elegant London and home to members of the Royal Family, was not immune from the privations being felt in other parks in the capital during the war years. Invalided officers from those regiments in which Princess Louise held the honorary title of Colonel in Chief were entertained to tea in the splendid drawing rooms at Kensington Palace. As in other parks and open spaces, troops were encamped and allotments dug. The inevitable destruction was bewailed by local residents.

Hidden at Buck Hill, close by the Italian Fountains at the north east corner of the park, the emerging science of camouflage was being tested to its limits. Techniques honed in the secrecy of this remote area of Kensington Gardens were implemented at the Front, linking Kensington Gardens directly with the British troops fighting for victory.

Solomon J Solomon, a noted society painter of the time and member of the Royal Academy, had long been intrigued by camouflage used by the French since the days of Waterloo. His suggestions were initially dismissed by British top brass but he persevered to have his ideas taken seriously. Privately producing and testing camouflage netting in his own garden, he eventually persuaded the Army to take a small batch for use on the Western Front. The netting proved successful enough to convince the Army to expand Solomon's work on camouflage. A diary kept by Winifred Mottershead, a young woman who worked at the school, has given us an exciting insight into the techniques tested at Buck Hill.



*Henry Poole and CE Webster at the Camouflage School © IWM (Q 17679)*

As the work progressed, trenches, pits, ponds and mud-filled dug outs brought destruction and havoc to the site. But it was all worthwhile; Solomon's ground-breaking work, quite literally on this occasion, trained hundreds of soldiers of all ranks and most importantly contributed to saving a great number of lives during the war.

*Sarah Joiner, London Parks and Gardens Trust*



*A dummy gun on Buck Hill © IWM (Q 95943)*

Following pressure from local politicians and residents, this area of Buck Hill was reopened to the public on 1 June 1919. This was much to the dismay of the army authorities who, fearing petty looting from the remaining buildings, had asked that access to the area be delayed until they had been sold and removed.

# THE REGENT'S PARK

---

New regulations under the Alien Restrictions Act 1914, which came into effect on 1 September, imposed draconian measures on the movement of foreigners living in Britain. One of the prohibitions was the keeping of carrier or homing pigeons by foreigners without a police permit. In his book *The Spy who Painted the Queen* (2015), Phil Tomaselli wrote of an occurrence on Primrose Hill during August 1914, “Mrs Lockwood, wife of a former army officer, reported a suspicious German on Primrose Hill whom she had seen walking his dog. When she turned to look at him, she saw ‘a pigeon on a level with his head about three yards in front flying away . . . though she did not actually see the pigeon leave his hand, she considered it must have come from him [and] she noticed a little white paper under the pigeon’s wing’. Peter Duhn, aged 28, described as a well-dressed German living in Charlotte Crescent, Regent’s Park, had quite correctly registered himself with the police as required, but was charged with not notifying them that he owned a pigeon (though no evidence apart from that of Mrs Lockwood seems to have been presented that he did). He was convicted and sentenced [on 2 September] to six months”.

On 29 June 1915, the National Rose Society held its summer exhibition at The Regent’s Park and despite the distractions of the war it “was largely attended”. According to *The Field*, “there is no suitable place in London or anywhere else for a show of this kind than these spacious gardens, with their excellent lawns, fine trees and central position”. However, as the war progressed the need for economies in park management grew. In spring 1916 The Regent’s Park, “which in normal times sets an example to the other pleasure gardens as regards the brilliance and variety of its display, will this year present perfectly bare beds throughout the season, with the exception of the herbaceous borders, which will be cultivated as usual. A large number of the flower beds are to be grassed over, and the many ornamental vases will not bear a single bloom”. Most of the bulbs that were to be used in the park were distributed to various hospitals.



*Parcels at the Home Depot*

© Royal Mail Group Ltd 2016, courtesy of The Postal Museum



*The arrival platform at the Gloucester Green complex*

© Royal Mail Group Ltd 2016, courtesy of The Postal Museum

In the latter part of 1915 there was frenetic activity on Cumberland Green where, within 10 weeks, a wooden building costing £50,000 and covering four acres was erected to house the Home Depot, a sorting office for the Royal Engineers Postal Service (REPS). Even this size was not large enough to cope with the number of letters and parcels being sent to and returned from soldiers serving on the Western Front. In the run up to Christmas 1916 an Australian officer commented in early December, *“To see this heap of bags piled up [numbering 19,960 for the Australian contingent] and to know that the contents have all to be tested and distributed before Christmas nearly drives you silly”*. To deal with this there was, *“an enormous marquee erected in Regent’s Park”* to hold the vast number of parcels being sent to France. It was not just for the sorting of mail. There was a censors’ office and a section dealing with broken packaging and misaddressed mail that was described as *“a regular ‘hospital’ for derelict comforts”*. All outward-bound mail

*was “duly passed by Quartermaster-Sergeant Camp, who has seen fifty-three years of Army service, [before] the lorry chugs off to Victoria or Waterloo” stations. All mail was carried by a fleet of three-ton lorries belonging to 620 Company, Mechanical Transport, Army Service Corps, which was formed on 28 December 1915 and based in The Regent’s Park. The National Guard, who were responsible for organising the transport of forces personnel between London train termini, tried in vain to utilise the returning empty trucks to the park; “Less than half a pint of petrol and not more than twenty minutes’ delay would have sufficed to load them with forty men on their return journey and deliver them at Euston, etc., and thence to Regent’s Park empty, - but the powers that be said ‘No’”.*

It was said that the Home Depot contained the largest wooden building in the world at the time, a claim validated as it *“seemed to have been allowed even by a gentleman from the USA in whose hearing it was made”*. To cope with the ever-increasing demand for the service, further work was carried out on the depot that increased its area by a third. Despite extensive searches, no plans have been found showing the layout or exact extent of the depot. However, from research it has been possible to deduce that the main part of the depot was on Cumberland Green with an associated group of similar buildings on Gloucester Green.



*Sorting mail in the Home Depot* © IWM (Q 54267)

## THE POSTAL HOME DEPOT

During the war, postal communication was the only effective way for people separated by war to stay in contact. The telephone was still in its infancy and the telegraph was only for short, instant messages and priority was given to military uses. As war spread around the world, so too did the job of the postal service to get mail to all these theatres of war. The British Post Office and its sister Army Post Office had experience from earlier conflicts of sending mail to troops abroad, but the war was to expand this need in ways not initially imagined.

In times of peace, mail – like mail today – was simply addressed to the person at their location, stating a building name, street name and town. In times of war however, when troops were moving around regularly, this was not possible. Whilst today we perhaps think of the war as being static, it certainly was not for the troops and they would often move not only from one sector to another but to different parts of the world. Soldiers and sailors were instructed not to reveal their locations to friends and family to prevent military information getting into enemy hands. Alternative means of addressing were therefore needed. People writing to troops would have to address their correspondence to the person's military rank and name and their unit at the General Post Office (GPO) London.

The Post Office was then responsible for sorting the mail to the relevant military unit, and was privy to the position of troops and would then dispatch the mail to the relevant theatre of war. Upon arrival abroad it was then handed to the Army Post Office who further sorted the item to the particular sector for where it was destined.



*Home Depot loading bay parallel to the Broad Walk, The Regent's Park © IWM (Q 28720)*

Upon arrival at the Advanced Base Post Office in Calais, for example, the Army Post Office would then load mail onto trains to be taken to any one of a number of different Rail Head Post Offices. From here it was divided further and sent, usually by lorry, to the relevant battalion headquarters before being sorted further and then delivered by postal orderlies to the particular sector where the troops were based. As the war moved around so too did these Field Post Offices; the British Post Office's job was therefore an important one to ensure mail was correctly sorted so it would arrive at the relevant sector.

Letters were so important to the troops and families at home; they were a life-line and essential to morale. Many soldiers were regular writers and, by later in the war, volumes of mail passing through the Home Depot reached a peak of 12 million items a week.

Today very little of the Home Depot survives: all traces of where it once stood in The Regent's Park are now gone. Even within the Royal Mail Archive there are only a few references and some photographs. It is nevertheless clear that despite this, the building, and more importantly the people who staffed it, played a vital role in Britain's war effort.

*Chris Taft, Head of Collections at The Postal Museum (this edited version was first produced for the British Postal Museum & Archive Newsletter October 2014)*

## MRS CHRISTINA LAMOND HOWIE

On the other side of the Broad Walk from the existing Chester Road Café in The Regent's Park was another lodge, which served as the canteen for the Home Depot. This was managed by Mrs Howie, the "Lady Superintendent". During the war, she was widely praised for her work at the canteen.

*The Postal Dump*, a magazine of the time published by the Postal Section, read, "the canteen is the 'ever-open-door' to all members of the Allied Military Forces, and the crowded rooms are sufficient evidence of her excellent catering combined with bed-rock prices. So hats off to these large-hearted ladies! When the Great War is but a memory, thoughts of Mrs. Howie's 'jammy buns' will still linger with us".

Also erected in late 1915 on Cumberland Green between Cumberland Gate and Chester Gate was an Army Ordnance Depot (AOD), consisting of wooden huts and a number of tents. Soon after the establishment of the depot in June 1916, the Chief Ordnance Officer was so concerned about theft of equipment that he had the Chief Engineer write to his HQ in London saying, "I have some thousand pounds worth of ordnance stores there, and there is nothing to prevent people from the Park entering the AOD when the small ordnance staff employed there are on the other side of the compound". The request was for gates and fencing to be planned and erected by the Office of Works. Not all went to plan; the fencing contractor Hill and Smith of Staffordshire complained that the ground was full of "brick ends and rubbish" and requested extra over-payments on the contract. Further demands from the war effort meant that the Army Ordnance Depot was extended at the end of 1917.

As the use of aircraft became more widespread in the war, there came a need for storage of parts. In 1915, a new Royal Air Force Stores Depot comprising mainly concrete sheds for the storage of aircraft parts including engines, carburettors, magnetos, ball bearings and propellers was constructed on Marylebone Green. Male personnel from the depot were accommodated in nearby empty houses, with women in a hostel at 45 Gloucester Place. As the war progressed, this depot too was extended to accommodate the spare parts required. At the end of the war, the depot covered 14 acres with 300,000 square feet of shed storage. The 70,000 tons of now-redundant material was estimated to take 2,500 to 3,000 lorry trips to clear, but this was not the end of the matter. Instead of selling for scrap where there could be a large loss of money, the government in 1920



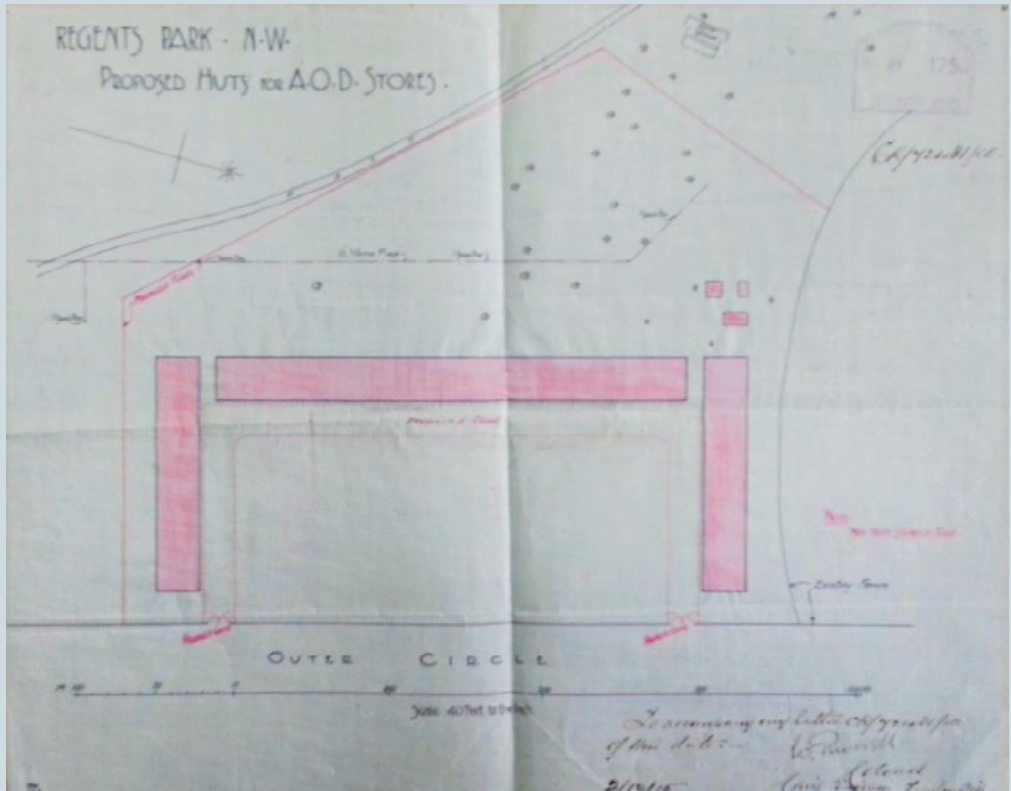
*Mrs Christina Lamond Howie*

By kind permission of the Forces Postal History Society



*The Home Depot canteen*

By kind permission of the Forces Postal History Society



Layout of the Ordnance Depot, Cumberland Green © Crown Copyright



The Aircraft Stores Depot on Marylebone Green, The Regent's Park © IWM (Q 28717)



*St Katharine's Hospital, The Regent's Park* By kind permission of Stephen Crisp

sold the whole of the inventory and leased the land to a private concern called the Aircraft Disposal Company. To have a private company running a business in The Regent's Park and the land not being available for public use caused uproar. There were letters to the national press and questions were asked in Parliament about when the park would be vacated. Mr Jowett MP, who became First Commissioner in Labour's first government, confirmed that the demolition work on the buildings that used to hold the aircraft stores was started in April 1924.

The park was also used extensively for recuperation by wounded soldiers. There were several hospitals adjacent to and within the park grounds, including St Katharine's Lodge, 32 Albert Road, St John's Lodge and Sussex Lodge. In 1915, a house called St Dunstan's (now Winfield House) that was owned by Otto Kahn, a New York banker, was given over by him entirely free of charge for the duration of the war to house a Blinded Soldiers' and Sailors' Hostel. Workshops were constructed, walks arranged around the park and boating carried out on the lake. Some of these were well-organised affairs. On 15 May 1918, there was a Blinded Soldiers' and Sailors' regatta held on the lake. *The London Sportsman* reported on the second day of the event, "*an interesting spectator was Ernest Barry, the champion sculler, who was wounded in France. ... [he] hopes to devote some of his time to assisting in teaching the art of oarsmanship to our heroes who have been blinded in the war*".

In the winter of 1916 to 1917 Britain experienced one of the worst winters for many years, which resulted in heavy snowfalls and freezing conditions. Members of the forces and the public took this opportunity to use the park's lake for skating. *The Bundaberg Mail and*



*Blinded soldiers rowing on the lake in The Regent's Park © IWM (Q 54560)*

*Barnett Advertiser* of Australia reported on 30 March 1917 of some Canadians who, “were experts in skating and ... one wounded man from Montreal gave a good exhibition of figure skating. Afterwards he tried to teach a Queenslander. Both were in full hospital kit, and their blue and scarlet ties made an effective note of colour”. Reservations could be made at the rink set aside for the Skating Club at the park where the ice was “in perfect condition. Numbers of distinguished people were gliding about, amongst them Princess Patricia of Connaught, who is adept, as she was devoted to this winter sport in Canada. Lord Ludlow was another, while Lady Alice Vivian was chatting to friends, and Mrs Loeffler was skating”. To some of the soldiers this was their first experience of snow. The reporter was “amused at a group of Antipodean soldiers who were having a snow fight, real old fashioned English snowballing. They remarked to a passer-by that it was the first they had ever seen snow”.

## BENJAMIN VERRALL

Benjamin Verrall worked as a gardener in The Regent's Park and lived with his wife, four sons and two daughters at 30 Cochrane Street, St John's Wood when he was called up for service in November 1915. Benjamin was born on 15 November 1875 at 10 East Street, Marylebone to Joseph, a gardener, and Eleanor Verrall. By the time he was 15 he was also working as a gardener and the family was living with two other families at 24 Frederick Street, St John's Wood. On 11 July 1897 Benjamin married Alice Maud Mary Berke at St Stephen the Martyr, Marylebone. He continued to be employed as a gardener and, in 1911, was described as working for the “Government – Royal Park” and living at 2 New Street, St John's Wood.



*Skating on The Regent's Park lake, 1917* By kind permission of the Hearsam Collection

On 19 November 1915 Benjamin swore allegiance to the monarch and was formally accepted into service as a member of the armed forces. In his attestation documents, he does state that he had previously spent four years with the army in 5th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers. On the same day, he attended the medical board and being 40 years old, 5 feet 4 inches tall and just over 8 stones in weight he was classed as B1, which categorised him as *"Free from serious organic diseases, able to stand service on lines of communication in France, or in garrisons in the tropics"*; he also suffered from flat feet. The next day he was posted into the Army Reserve. It was not until 21 September 1916 that Private 40423 Benjamin Verrall was posted to 14th (Home Service) Battalion, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, which at that time was based at Bedford and from May 1917 at Ipswich. The battalion formed part of 72 Division that was responsible for the defence of the East Coast from the River Deben to Orford Ness in Suffolk. On 29 June 1917 Benjamin was taken to 305th South Midland Field Hospital at Foxhall Heath near Ipswich with *"impetigo"* – a contagious skin infection, usually of children, that is caused by bacteria and is marked by superficial pustules and thick yellow crusts, commonly on the face. After nearly a month in hospital Benjamin returned to his battalion. In the spring of 1918 14th (Home Service) Battalion was disbanded and on 9 March he was transferred to 18th Battalion Yorkshire Regiment based in Margate, on the north Kent coast. Following the cessation of hostilities Benjamin was again transferred on 12 December 1918 to 3rd Battalion Yorkshire Regiment at West Hartlepool, County Durham. He was demobilised on 1 March 1919 and was allocated into Class Z Army Reserve. This was a contingent of the British Army consisting of previously enlisted soldiers, now discharged, and held in reserve in case there were any violations of the armistice with Germany. No records were found to say that Benjamin had served other than on home service. He died in 1964 at the age of 88.



*Blinded Belgian soldiers taking lessons in Braille at St Dunstan's Hostel, The Regent's Park, 1917 © IWM Q 53979*

## ST DUNSTAN'S HOSTEL, THE REGENT'S PARK

When wounded servicemen began to arrive back in England in great numbers, the British Red Cross and other organisations established auxiliary hospitals in private houses in London and elsewhere to ease the pressure on the large military hospitals. The American financier Otto Kahn placed St Dunstan's Villa, his villa in The Regent's Park, with its 15 acres of ground at the disposal of the Blinded Soldiers' and Sailors' Care Committee. The committee had set up a hostel in Bayswater in February 1915, but almost immediately it was too small to accommodate the number of blinded men, and in March 1915, the hostel moved to St Dunstan's with 16 men to care for.

The hostel was the brainchild of Arthur Pearson (from July 1916, Pearson, 1st Baronet of St Dunstan's). Pearson was a newspaper proprietor: he founded *Pearson's Weekly* and *Daily Express* among other publications and later bought *The Standard* and the *Evening Standard*. He had begun to lose his sight due to glaucoma a few years before the outbreak of war. By 1914 he was completely blind, forcing him to establish new life challenges for himself. With customary zeal, he became President of the National Institute for the Blind and developed the idea of a hostel for blinded service men where 'they could learn to be blind', and receive training to lead independent and productive lives. St Dunstan's met all his requirements for an ideal hostel, with plenty of room to move about in, large and beautiful surroundings, and located in a central part of London. It was offered not only completely free of charge, but also with *carte blanche* to erect any buildings and effect any alterations that were needed.

Soon after opening St Dunstan's became officially recognised as the centre for the care and training of the blinded soldiers and sailors. It was decided after much discussion and the revolutionary ideas of Pearson himself, to teach eight trades and occupations: massage, shorthand writing, telephone operating, poultry farming and gardening, joinery, mat making, boot repairing and basketry; according to Pearson *"the most practical openings for the sightless man who desires profitable work"*. Netting was later added to the list, as a much-needed break from the difficult task of learning Braille. Soon the beautiful gardens were almost covered with workshops, classrooms, offices, storehouses, chapels, recreation rooms and additions to the house on all sides, as well as a vast building covering a whole field called Bungalow Annex. Before the end of 1918 there were over 1,500 names on the books of St Dunstan's in London and at centres in the provinces. At The Regent's Park, additional accommodation was taken at Regent's Park College in Holford House, in Cornwall Terrace, and in Sussex Place a house was used exclusively for men learning massage.

Pearson described it as the biggest individual business that he had ever conducted. There were over 800 people engaged in the welfare of the men, including 595 women: matrons, Voluntary Aid Detachment nurses, bursars, teachers and regular voluntary visitors. Male staff numbered 293: doctors, chaplains, workshop teachers, poultry farm instructors, accountants, walkers, masseurs, chauffeurs, porters, gardeners, scouts and other orderlies.

Play and recreation were considered important, and a succession of events was organised to help the men enjoy life again. All sorts of other sports were encouraged such as tandem cycling, tug-of-war, swimming and athletics. Dancing became one of the more popular diversions. During the summer, dances were held on the lawns in front of the house with visitors who had come to dance with the men. Music was provided by the band of the Royal Horse Guards or some other military band which played in the shade of a giant mulberry tree. There were also plays and concerts, lectures and tea with friends. Many romances arose from the friendships which were made at the dances, or during outings on the lake or walks. Even before the end of the war, more than 300 of the men had found themselves a wife, often someone who had helped them during their time at St Dunstan's.

When the period of training was complete, the Settlement Department assisted with rehabilitation into civilian life. Each man was given a complete set of tools to carry on his trade, and married men received a weekly allowance for one year. Ian Fraser who had been blinded by a bullet at the Somme was in charge of the After-Care work, and later, on the death of Pearson, he became Chairman of St Dunstan's.

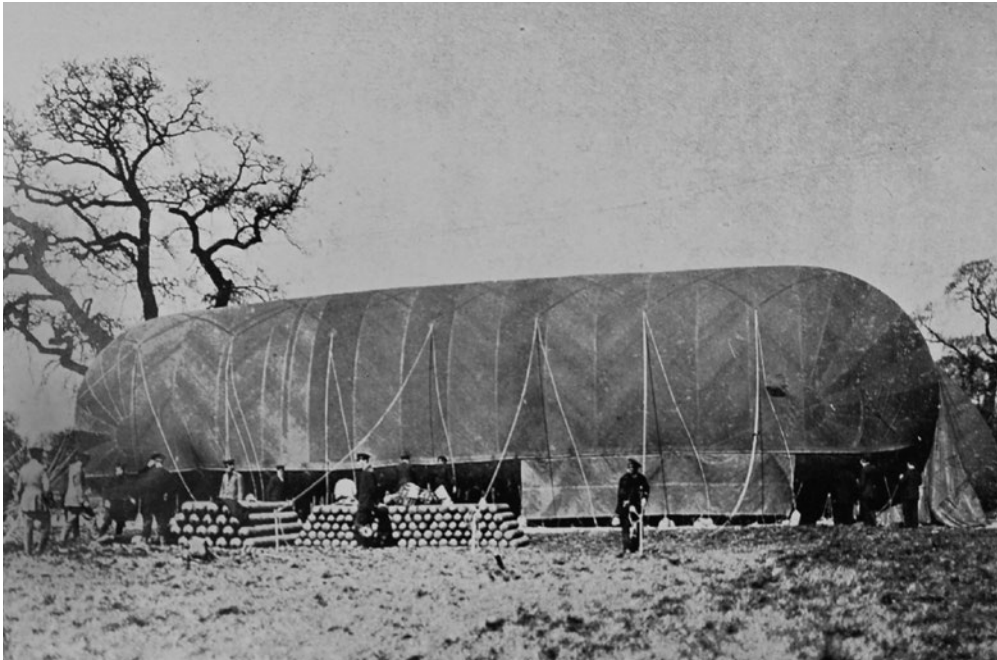
At the end of 1920 Otto Kahn requested the return of his villa, and the charity moved its headquarters to St John's Lodge in The Regent's Park. St Dunstan's Villa was demolished in 1936. Winfield House was built on the site, and is now the American Ambassador's residence in London.

*Sophie Seifalian, London Parks and Gardens Trust*

# RICHMOND PARK

---

This is the largest Royal Park and was used extensively by military forces during the war. With its wide-open spaces and woodland, full use was made of the ground for training, depots, hospitals and warfare experiments. At the beginning of the war, the British Government was anxious to invent and develop any device that would help the war effort. The government offered £25,000 to anyone who came up with an invention that could change the course of the war. This interested Harry Grindell Matthews who contacted the Admiralty and put forward a proposal for a ray that could remotely control an unmanned craft and detonate explosives from a distance. In the autumn of 1915, after testing his invention on Edgbaston Reservoir near Birmingham, he demonstrated it to Lord Fisher, First Sea Lord; Mr Balfour, First Lord of the Admiralty; Mr McKenna, Chancellor of the Exchequer; and other officials at Richmond Park's Pen Pond. Following an agreement between Lord Fisher and Matthews it "*was arranged that a certain sum was to be paid*", rumoured to be the £25,000, the following morning, with further sums made subject to the invention fulfilling certain tests that would be imposed by Sir Joseph John Thomson, an eminent physicist. Sir Joseph's report concluded that the invention did indeed fulfill the agreement and that Matthews would receive another £1,000, plus salaried positions for his employees. Although the system had been demonstrated on the pond there were continuing doubts about whether it worked and the idea was never taken up by the Admiralty. Two years later a Committee of Enquiry was set up to investigate fraudulent demonstrations carried out by Harry Grindell Matthews and it was decided on 27 November "*that it was undesirable that Grindell Matthews should carry out experiments or research on behalf of, or be associated in any way with any Admiralty Department*".



*A kite balloon tied down* © Crown Copyright

Aerial reconnaissance was a key asset in identifying and understanding enemy positions, especially in static warfare. Balloons were therefore of primary importance in carrying this out. The Royal Naval Air Station at Upper Grove House, Roehampton was used specifically for balloon training and research. Airmen and balloons from there were regularly marched into the park for training. To serve this establishment, a Balloon Testing Station was set up in the park alongside the boundary between Ladderstile Gate and Robin Hood Gate, south east of Isabella Plantation.

Training and testing were going on at such a pace that, in August 1916, the Office of Works had to write to the War Office demanding an explanation of why the Royal Flying Corps deposited “*girders and other building materials*” beside the road alongside Beverley Brook between Roehampton Gate and Robin Hood Gate. The War Office replied “*to express the regret of the Army Council that military exigencies did not allow for prior application to the First Commissioner for the use of this land*”. The material was soon erected to form a hangar for a kite balloon and a hut for stores. This was increased in September to include accommodation for a “*small detachment of men, about 8 Non-Commissioned Officers and 42 men, together with minor additional technical buildings*”. Approval was granted so long as the engineers erected a five-foot high fence to protect the camp from cattle and deer. Whilst the depot was being built, the men camped out in tents erected to the south of the site. By the beginning of 1917 a request was made to enlarge the depot to 21 acres, and the number of hangars increased to four and the complement increased to 150 men.



*Queen's Westminster Camp, Richmond Park* By kind permission of the Hearsam Collection

For many years, territorial troops had assembled and used the park for military training. *The Times* reported on 5 May 1915, “with the advent of May a great military camp is springing into being in Richmond Park, just by Roehampton Gate”. At that stage there were 8,000 soldiers in the camp whose days consisted of frequent training, with evening drills, shooting and skirmishing. Throughout the war there were 12 battalions of the London Regiment stationed at various times within the park, including, among others, 2nd Battalion the Artists Rifles, 28th Battalion London Scottish and 25th County of London Cyclist Battalion. Famous people who carried out their training here were Basil Rathbone and Ronald Colman, who both went on to Hollywood fame, and Raymond Asquith, the then Prime Minister’s eldest son, who commented in May 1915, “We are trying very hard

*to fit ourselves in the shortest possible time to kill the largest numbers of Germans”.*

A young recruit wrote to his friend, “To day we have been to Richmond Park for a field day. The operations were to have been extensive, but all the other contingents scratched because of the weather. We had a good deal of rain, and had to march and fight in our greatcoats. Ammunition was very scarce, and we only had about three rounds per man. Each section commander, however, had a rattle, which can be made to represent either slow fire, rapid, or machine gun. The ground



*Men of 1st Battalion, 1st County of London Yeomanry take cover behind a tree during training in Richmond Park*

© IWM (Q 53638)



Royal Army Service Corps camp, Roehampton Gate © IWM (Q 53926)

was very muddy, as it has rained every day for the last two months, and the cavalry which is always manoeuvring there cut up the ground a good deal". Blank firing during manoeuvres was allowed in the park following application to the park superintendent. The park's diary mentions many occasions where permission was requested. In 1915 Sergeant Morley of the London Scottish was granted specific permission to fire a trench mortar into the Rifle Range Paddock, which was situated adjacent to Richmond Cemetery. To serve all of the military activity within the park there were detachments of the Royal Army Medical Corps and London Field Ambulance Corps; the 2nd London Division of the Army Service Corps, who were stationed near Roehampton Gate, where the car park is now; and the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, who were stationed due south of Roehampton Gate, along what was then the track to Robin Hood Gate.

In 1914, Lady Moore-Guggisberg, the English singer and actress known as Decimer Moore and also a strong supporter of the women's suffrage movement, founded the Women's Emergency Corps, made up of women from the higher classes. This was the forerunner to the Women's Volunteer Reserve, a uniformed group who carried out a number of initiatives to involve women in the war. One of these was to set up the Lady Instructors Signal Company, to train recruits in the art of signalling. In 1917, the group contacted the Parks Board asking permission to "*practise signalling with flags and field telephone during one year*"; permission was duly given.

Training did not just refer to above ground tactics. A letter to *The Times* dated 15 December 1914 queried why the park was being used for various training purposes, but not for trench digging. The correspondent offered a view that, "*The only possible objection is that it might spoil the amenity of the park*" and went on to say, "*I can assert most positively that trench-digging would spoil*

*nothing and interfere with nobody*". In the summer of 1916, the General Officer Commanding, London, thanked the park for granting permission to dig a series of trenches and wire entanglements close to White Lodge, and confirmed the War Department's liability to reinstate the area on cessation of hostilities, a matter they fulfilled in early 1920.

During the war, Latchmere, a private Victorian mansion near Ham Gate, was taken over by Lord Knutsford's Red Cross Committee for establishing hospitals for shell-shocked officers. It opened in November 1915 as a Special Hospital for (Army) Officers. In 1916 it was agreed with the Parks Board that *"two men employed, possibly reduced to one in winter"* would be sent from Richmond Park to look after the grounds for the sum of £200 per year. However, the Bailiff of The Royal Parks did remark that he didn't intend to spend that amount *"or maintain the garden in the state proposed"* and that all they could do *"is send one of our own staff there, with perhaps a boy to help – if we can get one and to make the place a little more respectable"*.

As trench warfare on the Western Front developed into stalemate, it proved a great challenge for the allies to supply stores and munitions from the railhead to the front line without being exposed to enemy fire or travelling across devastated ground, which by 1917 was eight miles wide. Several methods to overcome this problem were tested without any real success. One such experiment given in the History of the Ministry of Munitions stated, *"About July, 1917, projects were set on foot for the use of an aerial ropeway for this purpose"*. It was HG Wells, author of *War of the Worlds*, who wrote in his autobiography in 1934, *"I was lying snug in bed one night and I could not sleep. My window was open and the rain was pouring down outside and suddenly in an imaginative flash I saw the communication trenches swamped and swimming in mud and a miserable procession of overloaded Tommies struggling up to the front line along the wet planks ... Suddenly I saw that this was an entirely avoidable strain. I tumbled out of bed and spent the rest of the night planning a mobile telpherage [aerial ropeway] system"*.

Wells was able to put this idea of an aerial ropeway to transport supplies to the then Minister of Munitions, Winston Churchill, whom he was meeting for lunch in St John's Wood and it was he who put him in touch with *"capable men"* who would be able to bring his idea to fruition. On 11 September, the Trench Warfare Department received instructions from Winston Churchill to design and erect various experimental aerial ropeways. This team was led by Captain JA Leeming of the Army's Royal Engineers, and it was he who worked through all the technical details of design and practical testing. Initial trials were started at the experimental grounds on Clapham Common, but were transferred to the new grounds set up in Richmond Park in 1917, where Captain Leeming was commanding the Ministry of Munitions' 150 acre bombing and experimental ground.

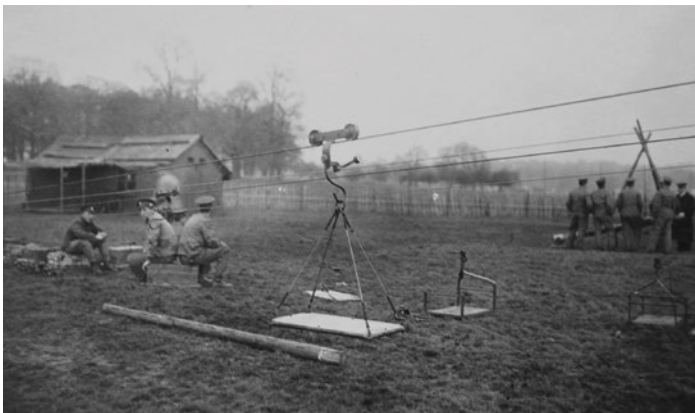
There were three types of ropeway installed: one of 230 yards with single pole standards running from the compound to the bombing ground; the second was of a newer type and stretched for 1,000 yards; and a third of a different standard consisting of self-contained cross framed pylons covering a length of 200 yards. One local contributor to the experiments was Park Gate Garage, East Sheen. Following these tests Captain Leeming and other officers in the Outside Engineering Branch took out provisional patents on the ropeway. A report by HG Wells and GS Coleman, dated 26 November 1917 and called the 'Leeming Portable



*The aerial ropeway pylon* © Crown Copyright



*The aerial ropeway being tested in Richmond Park*  
© Crown Copyright



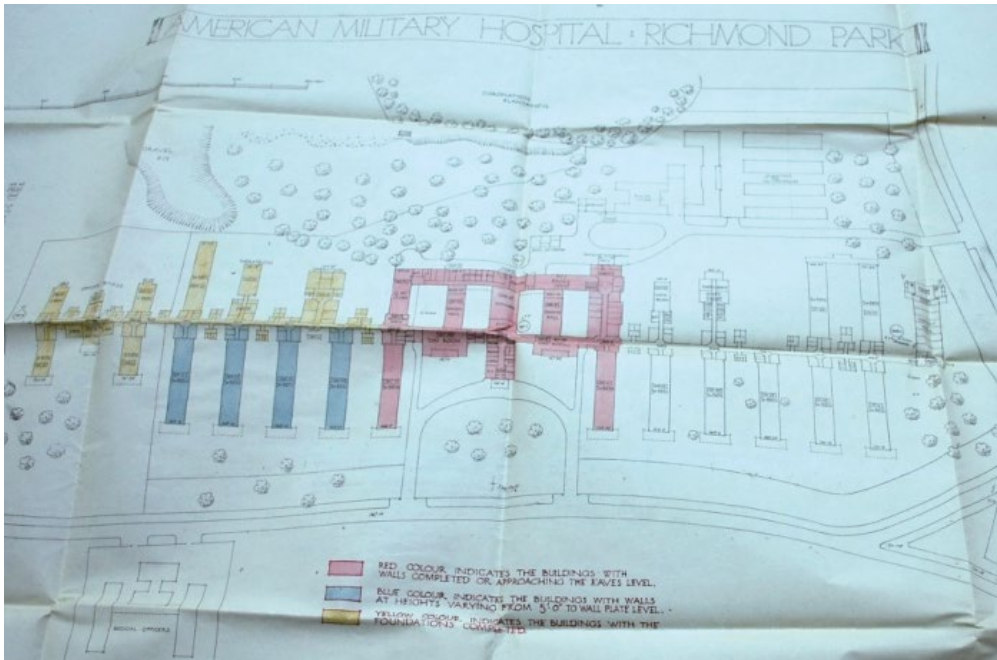
*Testing the pulleys*  
© Crown Copyright



*The South African Military Hospital* By kind permission of the Hearsam Collection

and Collapsible Aerial Ropeway', was presented to the Outside Engineering Branch for their consideration and implementation. All designs were inspected by the Minister of Munitions, Winston Churchill, in the park and the design consisting of the cross framed pylons was chosen for development and further testing at Longmoor Camp in Hampshire. The system was considered useful only for use over ground *"under more favourable conditions"*. A formal order for 50 miles of ropeway was placed in November 1917 for trench warfare work, *"but supply was considerably delayed and comparatively little use was made of the units that were issued before the close of hostilities"*. However, in the summer of 1918 the manufacture of ropeways was *"hastened with a special view to facilitate the transport of chemical warfare stores"*.

On 30 October 1915, it was agreed that a military hospital could be built in Richmond Park and a letter was sent to the Secretary of the South African Hospital Committee informing them that Sir Lionel Earle, the First Commissioner, had agreed to the proposed site adjacent to Kidney Wood. However, a letter was received on the same date by Sir Lionel, from Buckingham Palace, pointing out that the proposed site was *"about 500 yards from Pembroke Lodge"*, which was a concern to some. This meant Sir Lionel had to visit the site personally the next day along with military medical officers to overcome the problem. The conclusion of the meeting was that the site be moved away from the vicinity of Pembroke Lodge. Sir Lionel wrote back to Lord Stamfordham, the King's Private Secretary at Buckingham Palace, stating on the change *"I thought you might like to know of this in case you had any qualms of criticism from Lady Dudley as regards to the original site"*. The use of the land was approved by the King and in 1916 building work began in the park comprising of a hutted complex covering three acres in a 12 acre compound between Conduit Wood and Bishop's Lodge. There were to be two vehicle access roads; one turning off the Richmond Hill Gate to Holly Lodge Road, and the other through the entrance at Cambrian



Layout of the American Military Hospital © Crown Copyright

Gate. To create a vehicle access through this gate Mrs Margaret Porteous of 3 Chisholm Road was asked to give up her license to the freeboard, an area of land owned by the Crown, but leased to the householder. As the Office of Works wrote at the time *"Her consent is hardly likely to be withheld, but if she will not agree we could revoke her license"*. On 16 June 1916, the hospital was officially opened by Princess Helena, who was at one-time President of the Royal British Nurses' Association. On 8 July, King George V and Queen Mary made a surprise visit to the hospital. In February 1917, the hospital was extended from 300 to 500 beds, some of the funds for which were raised by South African school children. At the beginning of 1918, it was recommended that the hospital merge with the Richmond Military Hospital that was adjacent to the park in Grove Road; the combined hospitals became The South African Military Hospital. To assist in moving between the two hospitals, the Office of Works on 31 August wrote, *"I am directed by the First Commissioner of HM Works to inform you that, in the exceptional circumstances, the Board are prepared to sanction a doorway being made from the Poor Law Institution of the Richmond Union [then the new military hospital] into Richmond Park for the use of wounded soldiers subject to the conditions that the work be carried out by this department, that the door be closed up when the institution building ceases to be used as a military hospital, and that the cost of making the doorway and of its removal be recoverable from the Union"*. There is no longer any sign of this gate.

On 4 July 1918, Sir Arthur Stanley, Chairman of the British Red Cross, wrote to Sir Lionel Earle, the Secretary of the Office of Works, requesting on behalf of the American Red Cross for a *"certain area of land"* in Richmond Park near Thatched House Lodge for a 500 bed American Red Cross Military Hospital. This appeared to be an embarrassing moment for the authorities as the original plan was to build a hospital in Windsor Great Park on an area donated personally by the King, but this was deemed unsuitable by the military medical authorities.



*A Caquot balloon apron like that tested in the park* © IWM (Q 61156)

Sir Lionel replied *“I saw the King yesterday on this matter and have obtained His Majesty’s gracious consent”* for the land to be used at Richmond Park. To serve the hospital, a new link road was proposed in the plans to run from Ladderstile Gate, and until that was completed, wounded soldiers would be sent from Norbiton Station through Kingston Gate along the existing roads. The cost of the construction and ancillary works was put at £94,500, to be paid for by the British Red Cross. Work was started on the buildings, and soon footings and walls were rising out of the ground. It was on 21 November 1918 that Sir Arthur Stanley wrote to Sir Lionel to tell him *“that we have decided not to proceed with the erection of the hospital in Richmond Park and to ask to give instructions for its demolition and for the clearance of the ground”*. This came about due to the American Military Authorities deciding to stop work on all their temporary hospitals under construction in England. The British Red Cross had pledged £100,000 towards the cost, of which nearly £20,000 had to be put towards aborted works.

In July 1917, the Balloon Training Wing moved from the naval station at Roehampton to Richmond Park and the Free Balloon Section already in the park transferred to the Oval, near Vauxhall in south London. Almost immediately, complaints from the station were received by the Office of Works of damage being caused by cattle to their boundary fence. In January 1918, the fencing was still in a state of disrepair and the Office of Works had to remind the authorities that 100 head of cattle were soon to be turned out on the surrounding pasture and they would have to take measures to prevent any further damage.

Following failed experiments carried out by the Italians in 1912 of a balloon ‘apron’ that intended to protect their northern Austro-Hungarian border from aerial attack, a *“certain officer in the Kite Balloon Section of the Royal Air Force was sent to Italy on special duty and while there had*

*the scheme explained to him*". He realised that protecting a whole border was impractical and "it struck him that, although a gigantic undertaking to curtain a frontier, the idea of protecting a town or any limited area by means of balloon nets was very feasible". His idea was that if a balloon barrage consisting of several balloons of the Caquot type were connected together by a cable with weighted wire streamers (with sand bags) it would form an 'apron' across the flight path of aerial bombers. The scheme was put forward on 5 September 1917 by Major General Ashmore, General Officer Commanding, London Air Defence Area and trials of the system consisting of five balloons joined together took place at Richmond Park. Unfortunately, during these trials the balloons broke away from their moorings carrying off two operators. These trials were so secret that at the inquest into the deaths, reported by *The Herald* on 29 September, Second Lieutenant Andrew Edward Lowrie stated, that he "did not want to say anything, but that the experiment was of a confidential matter". It was confirmed that one fatality, Henry Edward James of the Royal Flying Corps, fell 800 feet into Richmond Park and the other fell at South Norwood, ten miles away. Further trials with just three balloons proved very successful and by February 1918 "the plan had become more or less perfect, and aerial aprons became a standing feature of London's defences" to the east of London.

The station took part in many balloon experiments in the park, including the testing of different types of winches and the evaluation of 'closed' and 'open' parachutes, by carrying out a series of flights and jumps. Even after the ending of hostilities the park was used for "thrilling parachute experiments". On 28 February 1919 Miss Sylva Boyden became the first woman to make a descent from a balloon with a 'packed' parachute of the 'Guardian Angel' type. Other previous descents made by women had been made with a type of parachute that was already 'open' for immediate release beneath the balloon basket. "I did not feel in the least bit nervous," said Miss Boyden, "I sat on the edge of the basket, and could see the people like ants beneath me in the park".



*Miss Sylva Boyden  
parachuting in Richmond Park*  
By kind permission of the Hearsurn Collection

# BUSHY PARK AND THE PLEASURE GARDENS, HAMPTON COURT

In 1915 *“the Manor House and buildings appurtenant thereto, together with the lodge and grounds known as Upper Lodge”*, situated not far from Hampton Hill Gate, were loaned by the Crown for hospital purposes to the Canadian Red Cross Society. On 27 December, the hospital opened for the reception of patients and became the King’s Red Cross Convalescent Hospital, starting with just 30 beds donated from the Duchess of Connaught Canadian Convalescent Hospital at Taplow. Her Majesty Queen Mary visited the hospital on 22 December 1915, the

day the furniture arrived. By April 1916 the main Manor House had been refurbished and could accommodate office administration and billeting of staff. As the personnel began to increase in strength, additional accommodation was provided by the pitching of tents in one of the paddocks close by. Further buildings were erected within the grounds to service the increasing number of patients. A billiard room (given over to a ward soon after), a gymnasium and a concert and recreation room, which was donated by Mrs Robert Gooderham of Toronto, were soon added. On 16 March 1916, they were honoured by a visit from King George V and Queen Mary. *“As the motor car in which they rode approached the Main Gateway to the Hospital grounds, its wheels became embedded in the mud, and it was necessary for Their Majesties to complete their journeys on foot, which they did in the best of good humour over their misfortune”*.



*The Canadian Red Cross Hospital, Upper Lodge, Bushy Park*  
By kind permission of Ken Howe



*Buildings of the Canadian Red Cross Hospital, Upper Lodge* By kind permission of Ken Howe

Many hospitals received visits and gifts from high society. In the *Richmond and Twickenham Times*, dated 15 September 1917, they reported, “Lady Wolseley has purchased from the Office of Works 210 lbs of grapes grown on the great vine at Hampton Court” and had them distributed to the wounded at local hospitals, including the Canadian Military Hospital. At the cessation of hostilities in November 1918, the hospital had 300 beds and a medical unit of 110 doctors, nurses and auxiliaries. On 29 May 1919, the hospital was cleared and refurbishment started on the buildings to prepare for the handover to London County Council.

In 1914 Dr Richard Glazebrook, Director of the National Physical Laboratory (NPL) that lies adjacent to Bushy Park, and a Mr Duddell were undertaking experimental work on behalf of the Royal Society Committee, which was formed to assist the Admiralty in determining the direction of long wave radio signals and therefore the position of enemy shipping. On 23 December, the General Post Office, at the request of the Admiralty, gave authority for the use at the NPL “of such aerials and receiving apparatus as may be necessary for the experiments in question”. The Admiralty also requested permission from the Office of Works to erect a small building and a 60 feet high mast in the paddock to the east of Bushy House, which at the time was part of Bushy Park. The Admiralty stated that “My Lords would therefore be obliged if the permission asked for be accorded as soon as possible”. This was granted in a letter from Sir Lionel Earle, the Permanent Secretary to the Office of Works, to Dr Glazebrook. One caveat was “It is desirable that the pole and hut be fenced off, as cattle may be grazed in this meadow”. On 30 March 1915, Dr Glazebrook was able to report to the Admiralty that “we have arranged an aerial .... which is suspended at a height of 30 feet, and with this have received signals from a number of stations .... determining the direction of the sending station in each case”.

The pleasure gardens at Hampton Court were primarily used for people's enjoyment during the war. Press reports describe how troops from all nations were driven to Hampton Court and Bushy Park from hospitals around London or taken by train to the local Hampton Court station. In April 1915, it was reported how *"visitors to Hampton Court nowadays must be particularly struck by the numbers of French and Belgians who find their way here"*. These were no doubt refugees who had fled to England and had relocated to the Twickenham area. A month later an article in *The Field* magazine, a paper for country gentlemen, stated, *"The crowds who visited Hampton Court on Sunday 15 May were rewarded with a display of horse chestnuts in Bushey [sic] Park, which were at their very best, and by a perfect feast of flowers in the Court Gardens"*. Views like this drew large numbers of visitors. One such visit was reported on 7 August 1915; *"one-day last week a party of about 30 men was entertained at Hampton Court by Lady Wolesley and Lady French. They drove in motor char-a-bancs provided by the Hon. Mrs Graham Murray, to the most picturesque of ancient English palaces"*. Lady Wolesley personally showed them around the gardens and the great vine. Another report in September of that year showed how popular Hampton Court was. The London Branch of the Australian Natives Association had arranged a Saturday afternoon picnic for wounded Australian soldiers by special motor buses where, *"There were many 'coo-es' when the heroes of the Dardanelles found themselves 'bushed' in the famous maze"*. The party then travelled to Bushy House, at the National Physical Laboratory, and were made welcome by Mr and Mrs Glazebrook who had arranged the dining, musical performances by their daughters and a *"ramble through the extensive gardens"*.

In October 1914, *The Times* reported on an initiative by *"His Majesty's Works and Public Buildings"* to distribute *"this autumn amongst the working classes and the poor inhabitants of London the surplus bedding out plants in Hyde Park, The Regent's Park, Greenwich Park and the Pleasure Gardens, Hampton Court. The clergy, school committees, and others interested should make application to the superintendent of the park nearest to their respective parishes"*. However, as the war drew on and with economies having to be made, and resources dwindling, the condition of the parks deteriorated. In answer to a question to an official on duty in Hampton Court in May 1916, a visitor was told, *"It is a wilderness lady, but we need men and money for killing people – not for growing flowers"*. In May 1918, it was reported that, *"The park authorities are spending very little this year"*, and on Hampton Court went on to say, *"Nearly all of the gardeners at Hampton Court have gone to the war, and so the beautiful border has been left to run wild. Couch and thistle grow freely among the old plants. Some of the side beds have been turned into potato beds"*.

## EDWIN HENRY CLIFFIN

Edwin Henry Cliffin was a garden labourer working for the Office of Works at Hampton Court when war was declared in August 1914. In 1911 he was living in the Royal Mews at Hampton Court with his widowed mother, Sarah, and his brother and sister.

At the outset of war Edwin applied for the army and on 10 September 1914 he was appointed into 2/8th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment, which had just been formed at Hampton Court as a second line unit. On 1 February 1915, the battalion left for Gibraltar and arrived there one week later. Edwin must have shown some leadership

and organisational skills as he was promoted to corporal by the end of February. Their stay in Gibraltar was short lived; in August, the battalion was mobilised and moved to Alexandria in Egypt, where they arrived at the end of the month. They served as part of the Western Frontier Force that was set up to deal with the Senussi Uprising. The Senussi were a religious sect residing in Libya and Egypt who were courted by the Ottoman Empire to disrupt the region and divert British forces away from the Suez Canal. The battalion took part in the Battle of Agagia in March 1916 which led to the recapture of the coast and the suppression of the rebellion. On 9 May, the battalion embarked for France and arrived in Marseilles on the 15th where they were quarantined as the result of a typhus scare.


The battalion then moved to Rouen, where it was disbanded and Edwin was transferred for a short while to 1/8th Battalion. They then took part in the diversionary attack at Gommecourt on the first day of the Battle of the Somme on 1 July 1916. At the beginning of September Sergeant 3152 Edwin Henry Cliffin transferred to 1/16th Battalion, London Regiment (Queen's Westminster Rifles) and moved to Bullencourt, south east of Arras, where the battalion had just moved into the front line. On 10 September, the battalion were "*burying and collecting dead men and horses*" when Edwin was injured with a gunshot wound to the right thigh. Following treatment Edwin was transferred home for recuperation. It appears that Edwin did rejoin his battalion in France on 10 June 1918 and served with them until 24 February 1919 when he was demobilised. He did return to Hampton Court as a gardener and on 4 April 1951 Edwin Henry Cliffin of 2 Barge Walk, Hampton Wick, died at the Memorial Hospital in Teddington, aged 61.

# CULTIVATING THE LAND

---

In the House of Commons on 19 December 1916, the Prime Minister made a very grave statement to the effect that *“every available square yard must be made to produce food”*. At that time the Government thought it was advisable to give a good example to other landowners and encourage them to turn grasslands over to crop growing. Members of Parliament suggested that Hyde Park and The Regent’s Park be ploughed up for potatoes. Sir Alfred Mond, the First Commissioner of Works, immediately took steps to consult Mr EJ Russell, Director of Rothamsted Research Station, to advise on the possibility of growing crops in the parks. His report highlighted that cultivation of land in the central parks would *“not yield good crops. It is heavy clay land, and, moreover, the soot and acidity in the atmosphere are not favourable to the growth of plants”*. After careful consideration, and with the King’s permission, it was decided to cultivate *“several hundred acres”* of Richmond Park and Bushy Park. Before the decision was made to go ahead with the plan *“full consideration was given to the primary objects of the parks as places of recreation and fresh air for the people”*. Immediately motor ploughs were secured for the work, some from private sources.

Unfortunately for Mr James Prewett, a dairy farmer of 55 High Street, Hampton Hill, his license dated 31 August 1916 for *“the exclusive right of depasturing cattle upon and over about fifty-six acres of grass land in Bushy Park”* was cancelled by agreement on 22 March 1917, presumably to make way for this cultivation. In all, 79 acres of land at Bushy Park were sown with oats, and 75 acres in Richmond Park, which had last been cultivated for corn during the Crimean War, were soon sown with oats and four acres planted with potatoes. All the seed was provided *“to the nation by a generous donor”*. Not everyone was convinced of its worth as it was reported in January 1917, *“From the point of view of real help, these ‘several hundreds of acres’, will make about as much difference as the casting of a bucket of water into the Serpentine to raise its level”*.

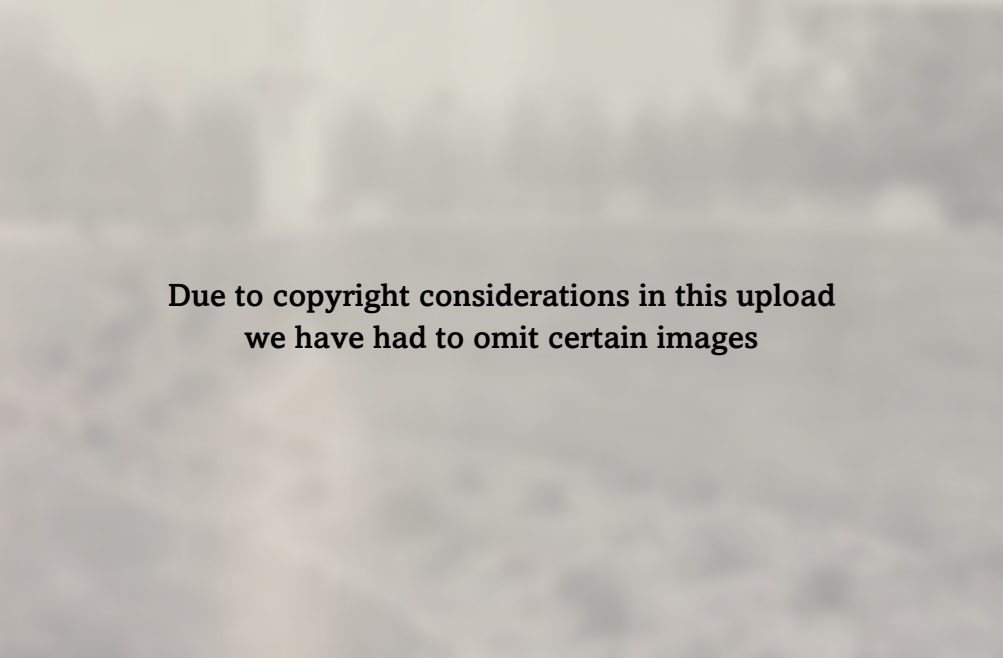


**Due to copyright considerations in this upload  
we have had to omit certain images**

*Ploughing the ground at Richmond Park in April 1917* © Topical Press Agency / Hulton Archive / Getty Images

To publicise the cultivating campaign, the press was invited to view the work and British Pathé produced a film of the tractor ploughing up the grassland near Sheen Gate in Richmond Park. Unfortunately, unsuitable ground and weather conditions during preparation meant the following crop yield was poor. This led Viscount Chaplin, who took an interest in agricultural questions, to report in the House of Lords on 8 August that he *“never saw such a ghastly fiasco in my life. I recommend the noble Earl (the Government’s Lord Privy Seal) to go and see it for himself. I doubt whether it will ever pay for harvesting, or ever be cut, for that matter; but the production, in any case, will be of the smallest description ever obtained for the money spent”*. Viscount Chaplin reported that he doubted if the yield for oats would be *“much more than a quarter to the acre”*, which is approximately 40 pounds in weight. Septimus Pullman, the Park Superintendent at the time, was quoted in the *Richmond and Twickenham Times* as saying, *“the bad weather has variously interfered this week with the harvest operation in Richmond Park ... he expected the oats to yield about five quarters per acre, but in other parts the crop was a complete failure”*. Two weeks later the crop was gathered in and Mr Pullman confirmed that the cropping rate from Richmond Park had been *“disappointing, but at Bushy Park it had been splendid, and expected to yield a profit after payment of the heavy initial expense”*.

Following the poor performance of this ‘experimental’ phase, the areas were again put to use later in 1917. This was not enough to silence the critics. The press at the time said, *“The records of the previous attempt showed that the results from cultivation were too poor to warrant the action, which was, it must be confessed, little more than a piece of shop-window dressing”*. At Richmond Park in October, 21 acres were sown with wheat, and in the spring of 1918 this was supplemented with 33½ acres of oats, 10½ acres of beans and 9½ acres of potatoes. In Bushy Park, 27 acres were put to wheat, 30 acres to oats, seven acres to beans and five acres to potatoes.



**Due to copyright considerations in this upload  
we have had to omit certain images**

*Buckingham Palace 'geranium beds' planted with potatoes* © Illustrated London News Ltd / Mary Evans Picture Library

Sir Lionel Earle, the First Commissioner of Works, decided *“on the grounds of public economy that the beds around the Queen Victoria Memorial [outside Buckingham Palace] should remain empty for the period of the war”*. This raised the question of what to do with them and so on 28 April 1917, Sir Lionel wrote to Lord Stamfordham, the King’s Private Secretary, asking if he would allow potatoes to be grown in them. The King responded quickly and on 29 April the Secretary replied saying, *“the King entirely approves of potatoes being grown ... in fact this suggestion was mentioned by Their Majesties some little time ago”*. However, the following year the beds were left bare as the planting of potatoes the previous spring *“was not a success”*. A plan to plant rhododendrons was drawn up, but the King *“had no wish that rhododendrons or other flowers should be planted there”*. The same request was put to the King for planting of potatoes at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, which was managed by The Royal Parks. The King approved the planting in *“all vacant ground in the garden”*.



*Allotments in front of Kensington Palace* © IWM (Art.IWM ART 1127)

## ALLOTMENTS

Allotments are small pieces of ground rented to individuals for the purpose of growing food. The number of allotments in London and around the country increased dramatically during the war, as a response to severe food shortages. From the end of 1916, the campaign to get vacant land, parks and gardens into cultivation was stepped up. The concept of allotments on unused parcels of land in urban areas was not new. The Vacant Land Cultivation Society of Great Britain was founded by American philanthropist Joseph Fels in 1907 to obtain free use of land from public authorities and private owners for cultivation by the unemployed. Initially the response of landowners was lukewarm and little progress was made, but the Cultivation of Lands Act 1916 gave the authorities the powers to take possession of unoccupied land for cultivation. From the beginning of 1917, allotment fever spread across the country, humorously called 'allotmentitis', and allotment societies were bombarded by a flood of prospective plot holders anxious to join the big adventure. By mid-summer of 1917 'war plots' had produced an abundant supply of produce, significantly easing the food crisis. Food shortages were further ameliorated by the introduction of food rationing in 1918.

In the Royal Parks, war allotments were created at Kensington Gardens, Primrose Hill, The Regent's Park, Bushy Park, Richmond Park and Greenwich Park. However, the Royal Parks were a national rather than a local resource and much used for all kinds of Government purposes, from temporary office accommodation to the training of troops. The need to provide space for recreation and relaxation for London's population was also considered an important function of the parks, despite the economies of wartime



Due to copyright considerations in this upload we have had to omit certain images

*Spraying potatoes at the model allotments in Kensington Gardens*

© Illustrated London News Ltd / Mary Evans Picture Library

reducing the flower displays in the parks. The Royal Parks decided to support the burgeoning numbers of novice allotment holders by setting up model allotments with an experienced gardener in attendance to educate groups of school children and the public in how a limited area could provide a succession of fresh vegetables throughout the year.

Model allotments were created in The Regent's Park, at the Broad Walk by the park entrance to London Zoo, where about half an acre of ground was enclosed. It was divided into four plots of 16 rods each, which was considered an ample size for the ordinary labourer's garden. In Kensington Gardens there were also four demonstration plots of similar size created to the east of the Albert Memorial. One plot consisted of six rods of potatoes, two rods of cabbages, one rod each of turnips, beans, onions, parsnips and carrots, and half a rod each of leeks, marrows, lettuce and rhubarb. The other three plots had larger quantities in greater variety, to demonstrate the kinds of vegetables that could easily be grown in London. Some varieties that were grown in those model allotments are still grown today. Others have fallen out of use and efforts are being made to track them down in order to create a wartime allotment once more.

*Sophie Seifalian, London Parks and Gardens Trust*

In February 1917, parks employees applied to cultivate areas of land within the parks in the form of allotments. It was then decided as a war measure, and in view of the food shortage, to grant land in the Royal Parks for the purpose of allotments, "*but that this grant should be made to local authorities rather than to private parties*". This would be subject to suitable conditions of tenure and payment of appropriate rent, and, if possible, reinstatement would be borne by the local councils. There was reluctance on the part of the Office of Works to provide land for allotments as they believed the parks were already being used extensively for the war effort. However, due to political pressure, allotments were allowed in five parks. Some Members of Parliament asked in the House of Commons whether the removal of public land to military and war use should be shared more evenly among all the parks. Sir Alfred Mond, the First Commissioner of Works, answered, "*There has been a question recently about allotments in Hyde Park for a certain number of enthusiasts who wanted to dig and delve and produce food there, but the military authorities most sternly opposed, for military reasons, the details of which it would not be proper for me to disclose*".

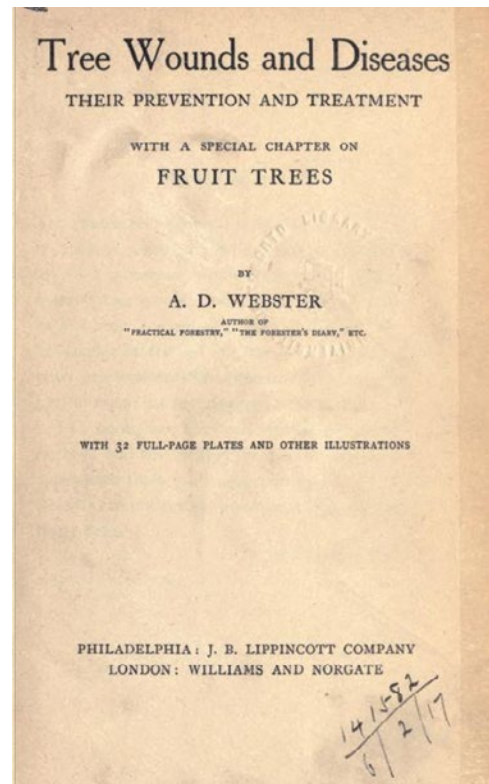
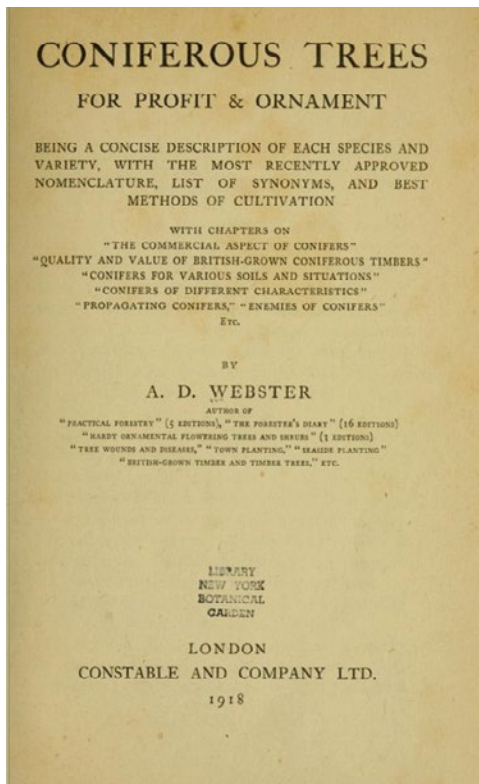
By 1920, The Royal Parks were letting allotments to eight organisations: Teddington Urban District Council (Bushy Park) 18¼ acres; Hampton Urban District Council (Bushy Park) 9 acres; Greenwich Royal Hospital School (Greenwich Park) 1¼ acres; Greenwich Borough Council (Greenwich Park) 7½ acres; Hampstead Joint War Food Production Committee (Primrose Hill) 5¾ acres; St Pancras Borough Council (Primrose Hill) 6 acres; Kensington Borough Council (Kensington Gardens) 4½ acres and Richmond Borough Council (Richmond Park) 4 acres.

## ANGUS DUNCAN WEBSTER

Angus Duncan Webster was born in Balmoral, Scotland on 24 July 1855 to John and Grace Webster. He followed his father in being a forester by profession and travelled widely in Britain gaining experience on large estates. He passed his Civil Service Commissioners' Entrance Certificate on 31 March 1897 and joined the Parks Division of the Office of Works as Superintendent at Greenwich Park two weeks later on a starting salary of £125 5s 6d per year. On 18 February 1903, he was promoted to Superintendent of The Regent's Park and Primrose Hill earning £175 7s 6d with an allowance of £7 per annum made in respect of gas consumed at his residence. In 1911 he lived with his wife, Mary, three of their five children and their servant at the Superintendent's Lodge on the Inner Circle, The Regent's Park.

During the war, Angus was very much involved with the military needs within the park and the challenges of managing the gardens in times of austerity. Throughout his working life, he was a prolific author of forestry and gardening books. Between 1914 and 1919 he published several books including; *Tree Wounds and Diseases* (1916), *British Grown Timber and Timber Trees* (1916), *Practical Forestry* (1917), *Coniferous Trees for Profit and Ornament* (1918) and *National Afforestation* (1919). In his preface to his book called *Tree Wounds and Diseases* he apologised for the book's "*non-appearance three years ago, as arranged. Unforeseen*

*circumstances, however, prevented this being done*". This is not surprising considering the military activity that was going on in the park up to 1916. In his book, he promoted the pruning of diseased trees and how *"the old Spanish chestnut trees in Greenwich Park, the oaks in Richmond, or the elms in Kensington Gardens and Regent's Park are excellent object-lessons of how diseased and dangerous trees may be rejuvenated for a time at least by a well-ordered system of pruning"*. Angus retired on 24 July 1920 on a pension of £100 12s 6d per annum and moved to 11 Crawford Mansions, Crawford Place, St Marylebone, where he lived until his death on 8 September 1931, aged 76. His books continue to be found in esteemed libraries and book sellers all over the world.



*Title pages from the books of AD Webster*

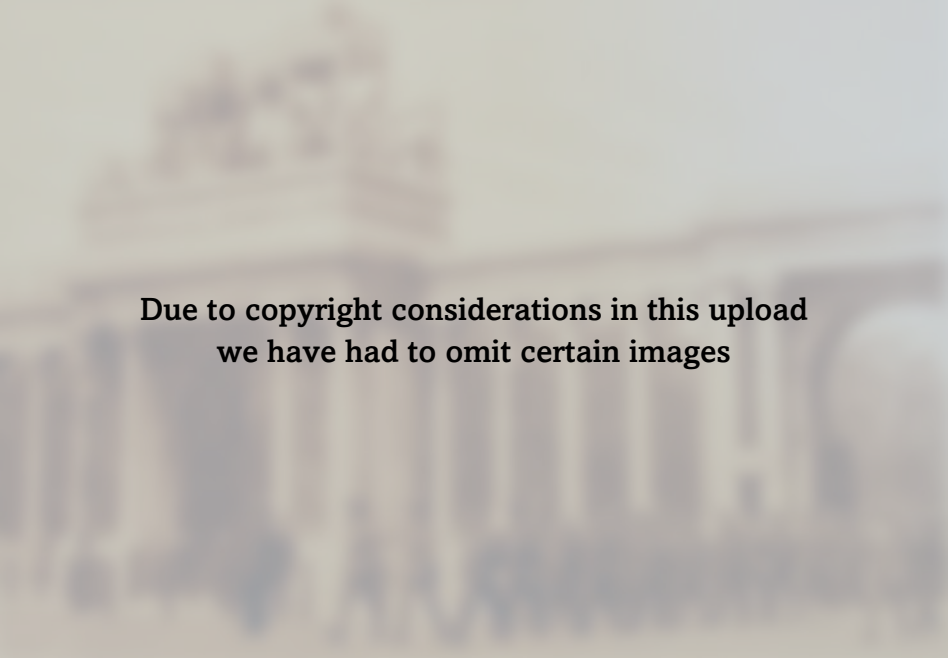
# THE DEFENCE OF LONDON

---

As early as July 1914, arrangements were being made for the defence of London from attack by air. The Office of Works was contacted by the War Office to make urgent arrangements for the positioning of three one-pounder anti-aircraft guns on the top of Admiralty Arch. Measures were taken “*as far as possible to conceal the gun from public observation*” so it was covered with a canvas until used. To aid the guns, a searchlight manned by Special Constables was installed in September at Hyde Park Corner. By December, a further three-inch gun was placed in The Green Park. Proposals were also put forward to station a flight of aircraft in Hyde Park, but this was declined in favour of a site at Hendon, to the north of London.

By the spring of 1915 the authorities were taking precautions to protect national art treasures held in museums and national galleries. Not all items could be protected and this left some critics condemning the selective nature of protection. One reporter on finding out that “*superb national treasures*” were “*still on view*” in museums commented, “*On the other hand, the Albert Memorial, in Hyde Park, which many people of artistic susceptibilities would like to see destroyed by a bomb, because, in their opinion, it exemplifies all that is worst in mid-Victorian art, has been most carefully boarded up*”.

By May 1915, two three-pounder guns had each been installed in The Regent’s Park and Hyde Park. The London Regiment Volunteer Battalion carried out guard duties and manned machine guns on top of the arch at Hyde Park Corner. They also operated two machine guns in The Regent’s Park where “*on top of a flat-roofed one storey building in the RAF Reception Park [the Royal Air Force Stores Depot] west of the Broad Walk, we had two guns and some Hampstead Volunteers too*”. The protection of Buckingham Palace and The Ritz was left to the Guards in their sandbagged Green Park machine-gun pits.



**Due to copyright considerations in this upload  
we have had to omit certain images**

*The searchlight station, Hyde Park Corner* © Illustrated London News Ltd / Mary Evans Picture Library

Michael Macdonagh, a reporter for *The Times*, wrote in his diary on 13 October 1915: “I was in the Reporter’s Gallery, House of Commons, at half past nine o’clock this evening when the debate on the second reading of the Finance Bill was interrupted by the noise of explosions which came in through the open windows of the Chamber. A low cry of ‘Zeppelins! Zeppelins!’ passed round, and immediately there was a rush of Members and journalists out into New Palace Yard, where they were joined by several Peers from the House of Lords. ... In a southerly direction, over the Thames, I could see a long, black object so high up that it seemed to be moving among the stars. For a few minutes the airship, crossing the Thames in a north-easterly course and passing almost directly over New Palace Yard, was then played upon by two search-lights, and in their radiance she looked a thing of silvery beauty sailing serenely through the night, indifferent to the big gun roaring at her from The Green Park, whose shells seem to burst just below her”.

He also wrote on 7 August 1916: “Hyde Park has two anti-aircraft guns screened in extensive hutments and a searchlight over the gates at Hyde Park Corner – but no flowers. The beds that used to be bright with the colours in masses of the daffodil, the hyacinth, the narcissus, the tulip, the geranium, the dahlia – all processionally in their due seasons – are grass-grown. The Office of Works, which has charge of the Royal Parks, has suspended gardening for the duration of the war”. The New Zealand press described the searchlight station in November 1914 as, “They have built a strong support up on the stonework, and they have pointed a shadowy arm into the sky”. To try and protect the potential targets of aerial bombardment in the capital, London was told to “dim its lights” by order of the War Office. They went on to say that, “In Hyde Park, too, a curious metamorphosis disturbs us. Hyde Park used to be beautiful lighted throughout its whole great expanse. Half its lamps are out, and at intervals along the grass lie small tanks of acetylene gas, with jets attached”.

During the devastating 'Harvest Moon' raids by Gotha bombers between 24 September and 1 October 1917, London suffered severe damage. The anti-aircraft defences proved to be ineffective, and inadvertently caused more injuries and damage on the ground by shrapnel falling from the barrage put up by the guns. As a result, some Londoners sought refuge and travelled to Richmond Park for sleep and shelter. One other form of defence was the barrage balloon. The main line of defence was two balloon screens placed east of London in Essex, but there were also balloon stations set up in The Regent's Park, Kensington Gardens and St James's Park to deter low flying Zeppelins and aircraft.



*The searchlight station at night*  
© Charles Bryant, National Library of Australia

It was realised that London's air defence required strengthening to counter the threat of Zeppelin and Gotha bombers, which seemed to raid London without hindrance; so defensive rings of anti-aircraft guns, balloons and searchlights were established. One of the sections on the inner ring was based in Richmond Park. A detachment of anti-aircraft guns and an electric height finder were based near the Rifle Range by Sheen Gate and a second electric height finder was based to the north east of Spankers Hill Wood. A 'fighting searchlight' was also placed in the park, but its location has yet to be identified. Bushy Park formed part of the outer defensive ring. The installation was situated near Hampton Hill Gate and is likely to have consisted of an anti-aircraft gun, a 'fighting searchlight' and several huts. After the war, the gun and searchlight were removed but the huts remained. In 1920, the buildings that used to serve the unit had become so dilapidated that the Inspector of Nuisances from Hampton Urban District Council wrote to "*HM Ministry of Works*" on 19 March, "*I beg to call your attention to the unsanitary condition prevailing at Bushy Park, Hampton Hill recently used as an Anti-Aircraft Gun Station. The whole of the buildings are becoming dilapidated and parts are being used as latrines and should such continue will give rise to a serious nuisance to the general public with the advent of warmer weather*". The General Officer Commanding, Eastern Command was able to reply that the buildings in both Bushy and Richmond Parks were being put up for sale by the Disposal Board on 16 April 1920.

In an extract from a letter from Miss Smith of Lewisham to a friend, she wrote about her experience following a trip to Greenwich Park in September 1915. She explained that she and Dorothy Purvis had just left the park and were met by a soldier who told them that the Zeppelin raid was now over. This was to their surprise as they did not know that there had been one the night before. The soldier asked them if they would like to follow him to the guard room, where his Sergeant would show them one of the bombs that had been picked up following the raid. She wrote, "*the bomb was brought out for our inspection. It was an incendiary type ... it was conical in shape and heavy to hold. Six altogether fell in the park*". At the end of the war, police reports were issued to the press stating where the aerial

bombing raids had taken place over London. His Majesty's Office of Works suffered damage to six properties; The Regent's Park, St James's Park (3 times), Horse Guards Parade, Hyde Park, Greenwich Park and Westminster. Reports mentioned that on Whit Sunday 19 May 1918, the last major attack on London, bombs were dropped in The Regent's Park. There was also a separate report that mentioned the dropping of an aerial torpedo, "*which are about 18 feet long and 18 inches in diameter*", into The Green Park shattering windows in The Ritz and Wimborne House, where Winston Churchill was at the time. If the bomb had dropped a second earlier "*it would certainly have killed the Minister of Munitions*". One correspondent reported that, "*he won't forget the terrific explosions in a hurry*".

## JOHN THOMAS MARS

John Thomas Mars worked for the Office of Works as a gardener at Greenwich Park when, in 1915, he decided to enlist into the army. On 29 May he signed up, aged 39 years and 164 days, at Deptford and was appointed into 11th (Service) Battalion (Lewisham), The Royal West Kent Regiment, a unit that was formed by the local Mayor and a local committee. At that time, he was living at 10 Woodland Street, East Greenwich with his wife Eva, their two children, Alice Eva and William John, his widowed mother and his sister.

Following training at Catford the battalion moved to Aldershot from where, on 3 May 1916, John was posted with the battalion to France as part of the British Expeditionary Force. They were soon in action at Ploegsteert Wood in Flanders and at the beginning of September 1916 the battalion was preparing to take part in the capture of a village called Eaucourt L'Abbaye, an action that formed part of the Battle of the Somme. On 9 September after nine days of bitter fighting, John's battalion was sent to reinforce Switch Trench near High Wood, which had just been taken from the enemy and was being strongly counterattacked. On that day, Private 8191 John Thomas Mars received a gunshot wound to the face and, as a consequence of that injury, was sent back to Britain three days later. On 19 January 1917 John was posted to the Command Depot at Tipperary, Ireland. Command Depots were set up around Britain for the rehabilitative training of soldiers too fit for convalescent camp, but not yet fit enough to be returned to their unit. The camp at Tipperary had a compliment of 4,000 troops.

John remained in Ireland until September 1917 when he was posted to No 2 Service Company, 1st (Reserve) Garrison Battalion, The Suffolk Regiment based at Tilbury. Unlike other garrison reserve units that were normally British-based this battalion did, where required, send Company troops overseas in non-combat roles. This happened to John who ended the war in the Italian theatre of war having served on lines of communication in the Mediterranean area. On 29 April 1919, he returned to Britain and was discharged on 29 May, aged 42, with a medical condition that meant he was only capable of serving in non-combat roles. He attributed his condition to the head wound he received which, his records indicate, gave him a nervous disability. He left the army with a weekly pension of five shillings and sixpence plus an allowance of two shillings and fourpence for his children. John died in Greenwich in 1970, aged 93.

# VICTORY

On 25 October 1918, the Director of Artillery at the War Office wrote to Sir Lionel Earle with a proposal to hold an exhibition in Hyde Park of 600 to 700 guns captured during the war *“and that the Prime Minister, who has interested himself in this matter, desires that it should be organised at an early a date as possible”*. At first the Parade Ground in Hyde Park near Marble Arch was proposed, but then changed, over fears of congestion, to the Exhibition site opposite Knightsbridge Barracks. In the end it was decided to line the guns on both sides of The Mall and half way up Constitution Hill

to symbolise the success of the troops in the field. Large crowds visited the spectacle. Lieutenant Colonel Charles à Court Repington CMG who was visiting commented, *“The saddest sight was two blind Australian soldiers brought up by their pals to feel the guns which they had captured. They felt them and patted them all over. Such fine fellows too!”* Fighting on the Western Front in France and Belgium ended at 11.00 am on 11 November 1918. Crowds of around 100,000 were estimated to have taken to the streets around Westminster and the West End to celebrate the Armistice. On 13 November, a number of German guns went missing. According to the *Daily Express* *“one gun was taken for a riotous joyride on a great motor lorry”* and disappeared along The Strand while others were pulled by hand into Trafalgar Square. Just before midnight the gates of Admiralty Arch were closed to prevent further unauthorised departures.



*Captured German guns on display along The Mall*  
© IWM (Q 31245)



*The balloon section on Buck Hill, Kensington Gardens © IWM (Q 95976)*

On 17 February 1919, the Air Ministry handed over the sites of the balloon stations based in Kensington Gardens and St James's Park to the Office of Works. The men based in the park were relieved of their duties and *"only a party of an officer, 1 NCO and 8 men have been retained at St James's Park for the purposes of guarding the enemy aeroplanes on show there"*. Horse Guards Parade had been used extensively for exhibiting captured tanks, guns, planes and naval equipment at various exhibitions since October 1915. The store yard in St James's Park was used to store pieces of equipment whilst setting up shows. In later years, a First World War German Herz (sea mine) horn (the percussion spike on the mine) was discovered on Duck Island, St James's Park, perhaps left there following one such exhibition.



*The Imperial Choir directed by Dr Charles Harriss*  
By kind permission of the Hearsurn Collection

As a celebration of victory and peace a concert was held on Empire Day, 24 May 1919, by a 10,000 strong Imperial Choir, under the direction of Dr Charles Harriss. The concert took place at 5.30 pm in Hyde Park between Marble Arch and Kensington Gardens. *The Register* newspaper of Australia reported, *"In the natural amphitheatre which surrounds the dip where the choir and the massed bands of the*

*Guards were placed there must have been nearly a quarter of a million people. They were all kinds, and came from all ends of the earth"*. The choir was *"certainly the largest concert London has ever seen"* and was made up *"from the hundreds of choirs in London, from the big choral societies down to the small church choirs"*. Such was the merriment that some of the crowd provided their own

entertainment. On the lower slopes of the Dip, “many thousands were more interested in the acrobatic feats of a sailor who planted a large Union Jack on one of the tall electric standards, and finally hoisted a civilian up to share his perch. He was a first-rate comedian too, to judge by the roars of laughter he caused, even while the music was going on”.

At the height of the festivities the King and Queen, Prince Albert and Princess Mary made a surprise visit to the event “without the surroundings of State, save for an escort of one or two mounted policemen”. The crowd closely surrounded their Majesties’ open carriage as it drove through the park and they “were received with wild enthusiasm”. *The Times* later reported that, “It was evident, from remarks often overheard, that the sight of the King and Queen had been to a large number an experience as pleasant as it was unanticipated”.



A group of women in a march past at the Empire Day parade  
State Library of South Australia [PRG 280/1/18/228]

Trooping the Colour on 3 June 1919 took place on the Parade Ground in Hyde Park due, presumably, to Horse Guards Parade still being used for the placement of temporary war buildings. This was, and still is, the largest ‘trooping’ parade ever held, with King George V, the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Connaught taking the salute from 11 Guards Battalions that had served in the war. Instead of their bearskins and red tunics, the guards were dressed in khaki service uniforms.

Throughout the war thousands of pounds were raised for hospitals by the sale of roses on Alexandra Rose Day, organised by a charity set up by Alexandra, the Queen Mother. *Flight Magazine* reported on 3 July 1919, that one of the many gifts she received on Rose Day, and which gave her great pleasure, was a bouquet of Alexandra roses brought to her in a decorated car from Hyde Park, where it had been dropped by means of a Guardian Angel parachute, from a Handley Page bomber. Her Private Secretary sent a telegram to Handley Page stating, “Queen Alexandra wishes me to thank you for the beautiful bouquet of roses ... [she] ... was pleased to see the splendid aeroplane circling round Marlborough House this morning”.

**Due to copyright considerations in this upload  
we have had to omit certain images**

*The New Army of the Rhine being reviewed by King George V along with Lt-Gen Sir CL Woollcombe in Hyde Park on 1 March 1919* © Illustrated London News Ltd / Mary Evans Picture Library



*Part of the Royal Navy camp in Kensington Gardens* By kind permission of the Hearsam Collection

## THE PEACE CELEBRATIONS

Although hostilities ended in November 1918, it was the Treaty of Versailles signed on 28 June 1919 that formalised the peace settlement. To mark the occasion, the War Cabinet set up a Peace Committee to oversee celebrations and they decided to hold a day of festivities on Saturday 19 July consisting of a military procession, a pageant and a firework display.

During preparations, a huge military camp estimated to cost £3,530 was formed in Kensington Gardens, consisting of service men and women from Britain, the Empire and its allies from all around the world. On 11 July, Sir Alfred Mond, the First Commissioner of Works, at the request of General Sir Geoffrey Fielding authorised the closing of Kensington Gardens to the public from Thursday night 17 to Monday morning 21 July to allow for preparations and billeting. This was not a popular decision and the Bailiff of the Royal Parks made representations to Sir Geoffrey explaining *“the great inconvenience to which the Public generally would be put, especially the children, if the gardens were to be closed for three days”*. It was agreed between them that the park would remain open to the public *“though some inconvenience might be caused to the Troops”*.

However, on 14 July General Sir Geoffrey Fielding had cause to write to Sir Lionel Earle, the Permanent Secretary, about *“a serious situation as to the camps”* having arisen during the previous weekend. During construction of the camp for 18,000 men and gathering together the necessary supplies, the public took advantage of the situation. As Sir Geoffrey explained, *“the whole of Kensington Gardens was absolute pandemonium. Both adults and children were going through all the camps pulling down many of the tents which had only just been put up, carrying off the mallets and other stores from the tents. The canteen tents, which are large marquees, were constantly*

raided by big crowds of people. In one or two of the tents they cut holes some six feet in length through the walls, on account of the doors being guarded, and they entered some of the tents and broke all of the tables and chairs". He again urgently asked for Kensington Gardens to be closed to the public altogether "only allowing those gates that are near the tea kiosks" to remain open for refreshment. Only "Soldiers, Sailors and personnel of the NACB [National Army Catering Board] stationed in the camp and for civilians with passes" were allowed through the guarded gates.

*The Sphere*, a popular British magazine of the time, reported on 26 July 1919, "The shores of the Round Pond were for the time being occupied by contingents furnished from the Women's War Services and the Boy Scouts, the women's camp being enclosed by a canvas palisade. Nearby a canvas street of large tents stretched away in which a scene of the greatest activity prevailed in this arboreal camp; thousands of dishes, gigantic tea-pots, zinc baths, and all of the paraphernalia of a colossal tea picnic were being received and distributed by parties of very active boy scouts and orderlies". The camp even had its own post office established on the site. One naval rating, based at Southend, wrote, "We were put through our paces with rifle drill and marching, then the gunnery officer selected about a hundred men who were to take part in the Victory Parade in London. I was lucky enough to be chosen. We went in special trains up to 'The Smoke' where we lived in tents in Kensington Gardens for one week and had a marvellous time".

The parade and march past of 20,000 servicemen and women from all the allied nations followed a seven mile route "from Hyde Park, past Albert Gate, Belgrave Square, Buckingham Palace road, across Vauxhall Bridge, Kennington road, Lambeth road, across Westminster Bridge, up Whitehall, the approach to the Admiralty Arch, and the front of Buckingham Palace, where the King took the salute; thence along Constitution Hill and back to Hyde Park". Hundreds of thousands of people lined the route of the procession. It was reported that, "It was a magnificent sight to see the ordered lines of the procession advance from the Admiralty archway along the Mall. The leafy trees of St James's Park acted as a frame to the living picture that moved westward". Miss MC Campbell, of Glencoe, wrote to a friend in Australia about her experience on the day of the parade, "We witnessed the Peace Procession and it was a magnificent spectacle. We left home at 6.30 am; took the bus to Knightsbridge; walked through thousands of people to Hyde Park, where we found a good place under the lovely shady trees. Got some chairs, for which we paid sixpence, and sat there in



*Staff of the Army and Navy Canteen Board at work*  
By kind permission of the Hearsam Collection



*The military camp in Kensington Gardens*  
By kind permission of the Hearsam Collection

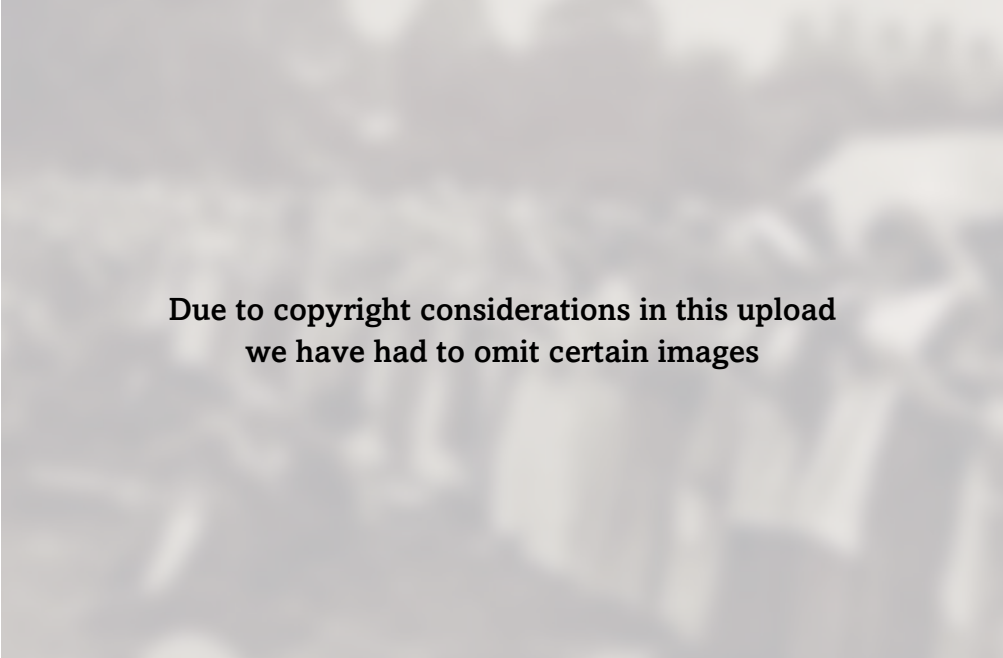


*Voluntary Aid Detachment nurses and personnel march down The Mall* © IWM (Art.IWM ART 4037)

*perfect comfort and watched the troops file past. They were so close that we could almost have touched them”.*

Originally the procession was due to be held on 4 August, but it was brought forward. This meant that 1,500 specially selected British and Indian troops, dispatched from Bombay, representing each unit of the Indian Army were not able to arrive in time at the special camp set up for them in Home Park, Hampton Court. There were efforts to bring Indian troops over from France for the evening of the 18th, but influenza broke out aboard the ships and they were not allowed to sail. Another 200 Indian troops were dispatched from Egypt via France in order to arrive on the eve of the parade. However, they did not arrive until 6.00 pm on the afternoon of the Peace Procession and thus missed the march. Once arrived at camp, the 1,800 Indian troops were taken by special train from Hampton Court on 2 August 1919 and marched, headed by the combined bands of the Guards’ Brigades, from Waterloo station to Buckingham Palace grounds where they were received by the King.

Following the procession the Peace Committee planned a series of festivities to be held in Hyde Park, The Regent’s Park, The Green Park, St James’s Park and Greenwich Park. Hyde Park was chosen as the place to hold the main activities and these included a grand concert under the direction of Dr Charles Harriss, dancing for children and a huge firework display. Sir Alfred Mond was sure of *“the hearty co-operation on the Police in securing the comfort and safety of the crowds”*. The League of Arts for National and Civic Ceremony, who were asked to organise the entertainment, were able to arrange those in The Regent’s Park, The Green Park and St James’s Park, but found *“Greenwich is the difficulty”*. Mr Leslie, Vice




**Due to copyright considerations in this upload  
we have had to omit certain images**

*Part of the Imperial Choir at the peace celebrations* © Illustrated London News Ltd / Mary Evans Picture Library

Chairman of Lloyds, agreed to organise these arrangements “*and wishes to be provided with one or two cottage pianos and five megaphones*” to be supplied from Greenwich Hospital. Unfortunately, Mr Leslie had to withdraw his offer as the “*Borough of Greenwich are giving numerous entertainments in the park*”.

Three ‘stands’ were proposed for the various activities in Hyde Park: by Coalbrookdale Gate in a roped enclosure 150 yards by 100 yards at the western extremity of the 1851 Exhibition ground for a concert and a demonstration of country dancing between 3.00 pm and 6.00 pm; in the Dip about 250 yards south west of Victoria Gate (off Bayswater Road) in an enclosure 30 yards by 30 yards, in the centre of the slope including the bank, for fairy scenes from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and a demonstration of country dancing at 3.00 pm, 4.00 pm and 5.00 pm; and in the fireworks enclosure that ran parallel to Park Lane. At The Regent’s Park there were also three ‘stands’: 100 yards north east of the Boat House for Shakespeare plays and children’s ballet; before the bandstand for the League of Arts choir; and 100 yards south of the western extremity of the London Zoo for a Shakespeare play performed by the London (Royal Free Hospital) School of Medicine for Women. Music, singing and dancing were held on Horse Guards Parade in St James’s Park, and a choir and band entertained on the bandstand in The Green Park. For the convenience of the public four additional refreshment rooms were erected in Hyde Park, one in Kensington Gardens and one in The Regent’s Park.

On the events, *The Times* reported that “*a beautiful natural amphitheatre had been selected*” for the children’s afternoon in Hyde Park and “*a carpet of green turf with mighty trees in the background and far off in the distance the waters of the Serpentine formed a perfect setting*”. The children presented fairy scenes from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and were so charming that

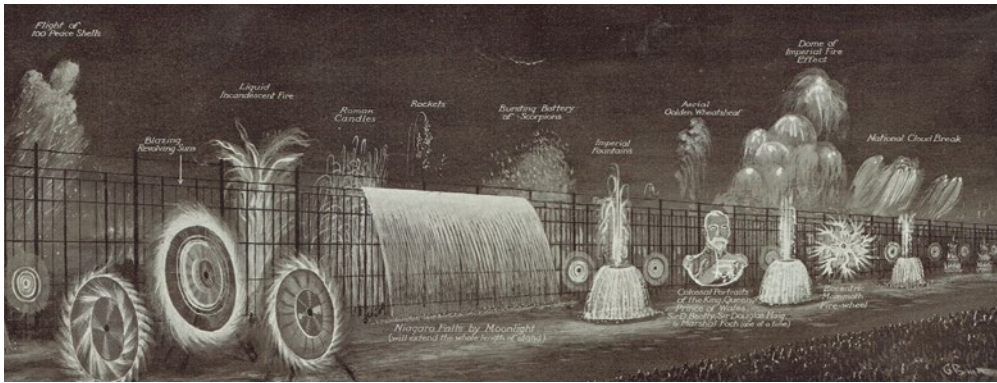


**Due to copyright considerations in this upload  
we have had to omit certain images**

*Their Majesties watching children dance at the celebrations* © Mirrorpix

*“The fairies might almost have been friends of Peter Pan, whom the military invasion had driven out of Kensington Gardens”. Soon after 5.00 pm King George V and Queen Mary, visited in their open carriage and “immediately people from all parts of the park flocked towards it”. They then went on to visit all three parts of the park where the League of Arts had organised entertainments. They also attended a show of morris dancing for children where, “They watched with great interest the children’s revels arranged by the Folk Song and Dance Society”. Just before they left the park, “the good natured crowd insisted upon dancing for the entertainment of the Royal party. According to one account the carriage was surrounded, and gaily decked girls, some of them real East-Enders, danced and jumped about with tremendous vigour ... the Queen laughed outright, and the King was unable to disguise his enjoyment”. Soon after they left the rain “started in real earnest” and the Imperial choir of 10,000 voices conducted by Dr Harriss had to make the best of the conditions. “Beyond the enclosure as far as the eye could see were nothing but umbrellas ... But though they hid the people they did not disguise the enthusiasm”. It was reported that, “two incidents [thousands of people dancing and cheering around their Majesties’ open carriage, and Dr Harriss conducting in the rain] will live long in the memory of all those who took part in the great celebrations in the Royal Parks”.*

In preparation for the firework display to be held in Hyde Park, the Office of Works constructed near Grosvenor Gate “an enclosure for 200, a platform 60’ x 20’ and 200 chairs” for special guests. However, with the large number of people milling around on the day, things did not go as planned. The public, seeing the empty enclosure, took occupation “at an early hour” and the police in Hyde Park stated that “without the use of force which certainly would have been resisted and probably have led to a riot, it would be impossible to keep it clear”. It led Sir Lionel Earle to write, “It seems to be most undesirable to attempt to reserve [the] enclosure



A pictorial view of the firework display in the park By kind permission of the Hearsam Collection

for privileged spectators at a popular gathering on ground regarded by the public as devoted to their enjoyment". At 9.45 pm a lavish and spectacular firework display costing £10,000 and described by *The Times* as, "the greatest display of fireworks in London's history", was started by CT Brock & Co. Miss MC Campbell, of Glencoe, wrote, "They were gorgeous, but the rain spoiled their splendour somewhat. Last of all at 11.00 pm, the whole of London was lit up by huge bonfires all-round the city. They were all lit simultaneously, so the effect was grand". This referred to the 10,000 Admiralty deck flares set off in a co-ordinated way all over the country. A letter from the Ministry of Munitions to the organisers stated that "These flares burn with an extremely powerful white light for several minutes and illuminate a considerable area of country". One was set off in each of Hyde Park and St James's Park, and two in each of The Regent's Park and Greenwich Park. It was said that, "Every hill for many miles around London was tipped with a point of light". However, following the conclusion of the display CT Brock claimed that the crowd in Hyde Park, "broke through all restraint and threw on the bonfire all the woodwork" used by the company to frame their fireworks. The company soon retracted this statement and clarified the situation saying, "the first report of the damage done by the crowd was exaggerated, and that not all of the poles and other woodwork was destroyed". Having checked their inventory, they prepared a detailed statement and sent it to the Office of Works on 26 July claiming for the loss of tools, ropes and wood to the value of £750. The Office of Works accepted that it was impossible to prevent damage as "the police authorities were entirely unable to cope with the crowd". Upon investigation by the Office of Works the claim was reduced to £579 14s 2d and a meeting was arranged to discuss the matter. Mr Barrett, representing the Office of Works, met with Mr Alan Brock on 12 August and offered, as "an act of grace", a sum of £250 which was put to the company's directors, who "decided to accept it".

## THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR

In 1916, the Reverend David Railton, a padre based on the Western Front in France, suggested the idea of having the body of one soldier, unknown in name or rank, to represent all who had died during the war. Initially this idea did not appeal to senior officers and so, after protracted debate, he informed Herbert Ryle, the Dean of Westminster, who then passed on his suggestion to Buckingham Palace. King George V did not want to bring national grief to the fore; however, David Lloyd George, the Prime Minister, persuaded him to agree to the proposal.

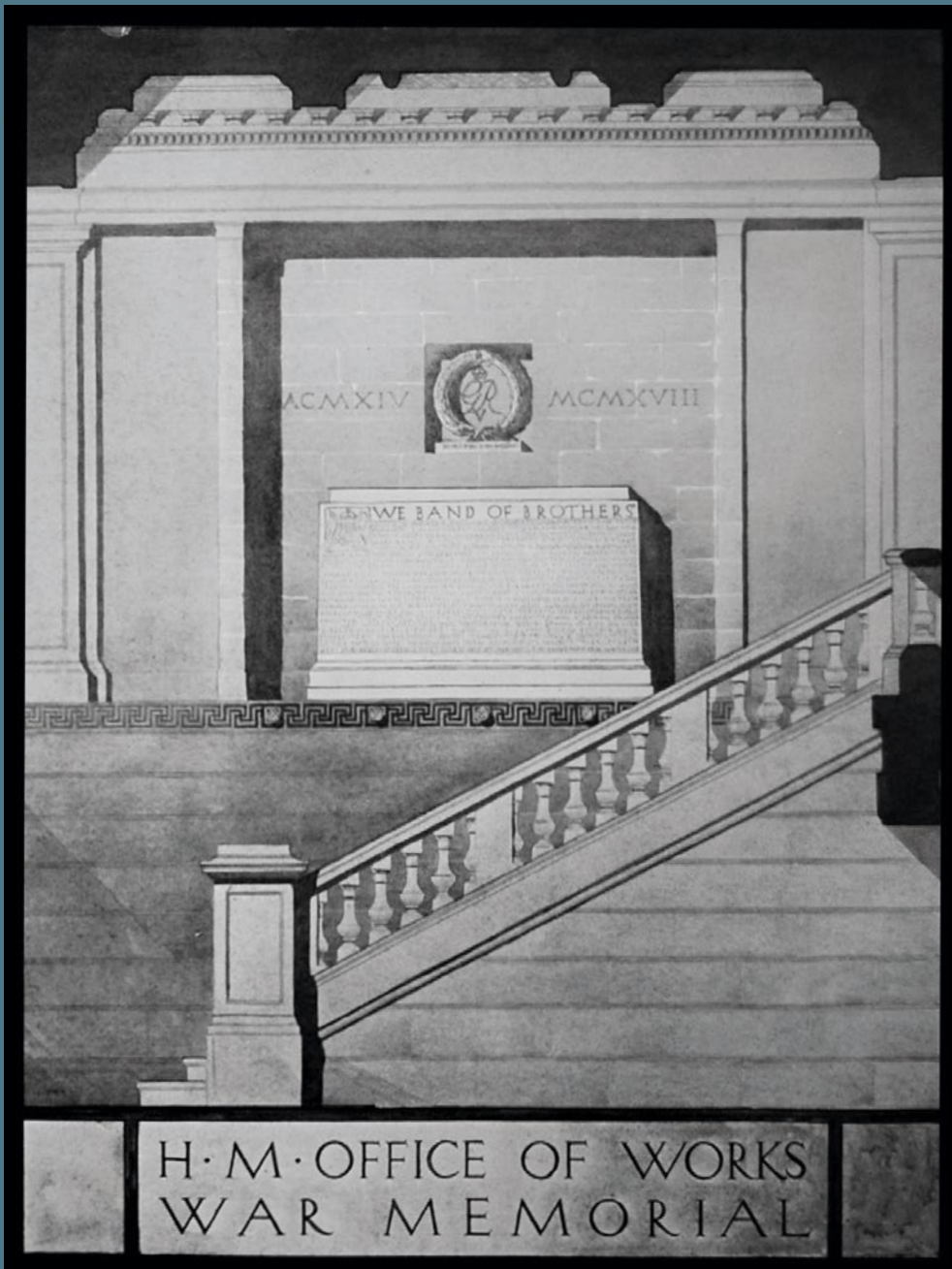
Later, a fallen soldier was chosen at random and was placed in a simple wooden coffin made from an oak tree cut down in Home Park, at Hampton Court, specifically for the occasion. The body was then transported back to England and arrived at Victoria Station on 10 November 1920. On 11 November, the procession, including the coffin placed on a gun carriage and drawn by six black stallions, set off to Hyde Park Corner and then into The Mall and on past the Cenotaph in Whitehall. At 9.40 am 'N' Battery, Royal Horse Artillery fired a Salute of 19 Minute Guns in Hyde Park. At Westminster Abbey, the body was interred, and on 18 November covered with a stone with the inscription *"A British warrior who fell in the Great War 1914-1918 for King and Country. Greater love hath no man than this"*.



*The coffin of the Unknown Warrior* © IWM (Q 31492)



*The coffin passing the Cenotaph*



*A drawing of the memorial taken from the Order of Service booklet.  
The memorial still stands in the St James's Park entrance to the  
Treasury Building. © Crown Copyright*

# WE BAND OF BROTHERS

Following the cessation of hostilities, the number of casualties from those men who joined the military forces was calculated and arrangements were made to honour their memory.

During the war 245 men from The Royal Parks joined the military and of them 24 were killed, died or were missing; 23 were wounded. At Hampton Court, there were 23 men who joined the army; out of those five were killed and five were wounded, whilst at Bushy Park 10 men served and there were no casualties. In the Central Parks 109 men served and seven were killed, two died of their wounds or were missing, three men died of sickness and nine men were wounded.

On 7 February 1923, the Office of Works held a dedication service and unveiled a memorial in their headquarters at Storey's Gate to all their employees who died during the war. The memorial is still in its original location in what is now known as the Treasury Building at 1 Horse Guards Road, Westminster. There are 102 names inscribed on the stone and of those 24 were employed in The Royal Parks. On the memorial are the words "WE BAND OF BROTHERS". This is the record of who those parks people were, their family history and their war record.

## WILLIAM CHARLES GOULD 1860 - 1915

William was born on 18 February 1860 in Bidford-on-Avon, Warwickshire, to Charles Gould, an agricultural labourer, and Mary, a charwoman. In his twenties, William joined the Royal Horse Artillery serving in St John's Wood, Aldershot, Ambala (India) and Woolwich. Whilst there he rose in the ranks to become a 'Rough Rider', a term used to signify that he was an assistant instructor in equitation. In 1885 William married Mercy Ridgeway in Hampstead, north London; by 1911 they had five children. Following service in the Boer War in South Africa, William left the army after 22 years' service and started as a Park Keeper in St James's Park on 7 April 1902. At that time, William and Mercy were living at 13 Smith Terrace, Chelsea.

In 1914, at the beginning of the war, William re-enlisted and joined 65 (Howitzer) Brigade, Royal Field Artillery at Shorncliffe, Kent where the unit was preparing to join the British Expeditionary Force in France. Whilst in Kent, Sergeant 87964 William Charles Gould contracted pneumonia and died in Shorncliffe Hospital on 26 January 1915. He is buried in grave number N172859 in Brompton Cemetery, Chelsea.

## CHARLES WILLIAM EDGERTON JOINER 1868 - 1915

Charles William Edgerton Joiner was born on 5 July 1868 whilst his father was serving with the army in Murree, India. Charles also established a career in the army and by 1901 had become a Colour Sergeant, probably with the East Surrey Regiment based at the regimental depot at the Barracks, Kingston upon Thames. Together with his wife Annie, their four children and his grandmother they lived at 8 Windham Road, Kingston upon Thames. By 1907 Charles had left the army with an army pension and on 1 March he joined the Office of Works as a Park Keeper based at St James's Park on a salary of 26 shillings per week, plus uniform. By 1911 the family had grown with the addition of a daughter and were living at 170 Tachbrook Street, Pimlico.

During the war, Charles served with 9th Battalion, East Surrey Regiment. Evidence suggests that this was Charles' original regiment and that he re-joined in Kingston upon Thames at the beginning of the war. It was not until 28 August 1915 that the battalion was put on readiness to move overseas and by 1 September they were in a rest camp at Ostrohove near Boulogne. The following day at 4.15 am they left Boulogne and proceeded by train and on foot to their billets headquartered at Humbert, where they stayed to practise trenching and tactics. Between 23 and 24 September, the battalion moved up to the front line and on the next day proceeded to advance into Vermelles. This was the start of the Battle of Loos, which was the first battle where the British used chlorine gas in an offensive. Soon after 4.00 am on the 26th the men were sheltering in the German support trenches taken the day earlier. Efforts were made to bring up rations for the men but enemy shellfire prevented

## ALBERT EDWARD SMITH 1882 - 1915

this. At 11.00 am the battalion started the next advance *“and was carried out right up to the enemy’s trenches but the wire not being cut it was impossible to get through the enemy’s lines. ... The casualties were very heavy at this point chiefly owing to some machine guns which placed a heavy crossfire on our men”*. The battalion casualties during that day were 14 officers and 438 men; one of them being Company Sergeant Major 663 Charles William Edgerton Joiner. His body lies in Cabaret-Rouge British Cemetery, Souchez, France in plot XI.E.4.



*The Crater Trench, Hooze, September 1915* © IWM (Q49390)

Albert Edward Smith was born in Bentley, Hampshire in 1882 to Arthur and Sarah Fanny Smith. In 1891 Arthur was listed as a wheelwright and his family were living at The Pollards, Bentley. By 1901 Albert had moved from the family home and was employed as a domestic gardener, lodging with Henry Mulcock and family at Clare Cottage, High Street, Thames Ditton in Surrey. Ten years later Albert had changed lodgings and was living with George Morris and his family at 23 Windsor Road, Teddington, Middlesex. He had also changed jobs and was now working for the Office of Works as a gardener at Hampton Court.

Albert enlisted into the army at Hampton Hill and subsequently was posted with the British Expeditionary Force to the Western Front with 4th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers. On 23 September 1915, the battalion were camped at Ouderdom to the west of Ypres, for rest and training when orders came through that they were to form the reserve for the next attack. On 25 September, they arrived at Kruisstraat, approximately 7 miles south of Ypres, to take up positions. The next day they left their billet at 7.00 pm and moved up to the front line to relieve the Wiltshire Regiment. At 8.40 pm as they reached Hooze Crater they came under heavy shelling by the enemy *“from all sides by Whiz Bangs [light or field artillery] and heavy crumps from Hill 60. The latter causing the most damage”*. During this operation, the battalion lost one officer and had 30 ordinary ranks killed or wounded. Corporal G6969 Albert Edward Smith was one of those killed on that day. His grave can be found at Brandhoek Military Cemetery, Belgium with a grave reference of I.G.6. Inscribed on the headstone is *“In loving memory of dear Bert, from Dad and brothers”*.

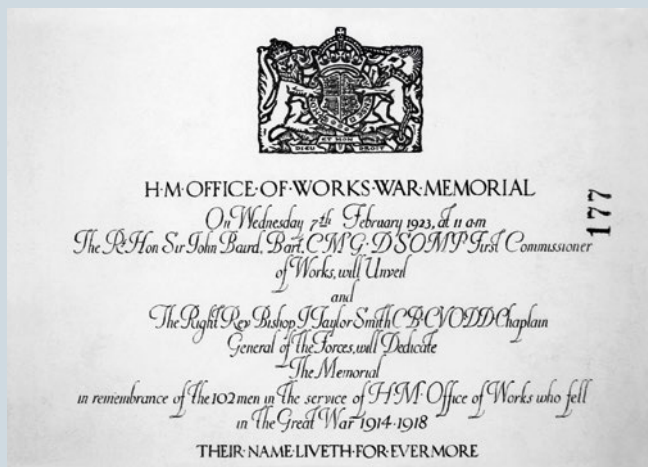
## ALBERT MARSH

1891 - 1915

Albert was born in 1891 at Pineham, Whitfield in Kent to George, a hay trusser, and Anne Marsh. In 1911 Albert was living at Pineham Farm and was employed as a waggoner by William Castle, the farmer. It was following this that Albert must have travelled to London and gained employment with the Office of Works as a gardener in The Regent's Park.

On 27 November 1914, at the age of 23 years and 11 months, Albert volunteered at the Dover Recruiting Office to join the Royal Garrison Artillery (RGA) as a Gunner. On New Year's Day 1915 he was posted to 22 Company RGA who were based at Lower Twydall Redoubt, Sheerness that formed part of the Eastern Coast Defences. He was then posted, on 9 June 1915, to the infantry as a Private in 3rd Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment. This only lasted a month and on 23 July, Albert was posted to Blackdown near Aldershot to join 8th Battalion, East Kent Regiment, The Buffs. On 1 September, they were

mobilised for war and sent to join the British Expeditionary Force on the Western Front via Boulogne to take part in the forthcoming Battle of Loos, which started on 25 September 1915. The battalion's war diary for 26 September states, "*the advance was carried forward rapidly by 11.30 am the leading line of The Buffs had moved to within 25 yards of the German barbed wire. No gaps could be observed in the wire entanglements. During the advance a heavy fire from machine guns on both flanks was encountered. ... The enemy's fire especially from our left flank became heavier and very considerable losses occurred*". Private 8168 Albert Marsh was injured that day and was probably treated at Etaples military hospital. He died of his wounds at 2.40 pm on 30 September 1915 having only served 31 days with the British Expeditionary Force in France. His body is buried at Etaples Military Cemetery, grave reference IV.H.8A.



*Invitation to the unveiling, on 7 February 1923, of His Majesty's Office of Works War Memorial. © Crown Copyright*

## WALTER ARTHUR SKEMER 1880 - 1915

Walter was born in 1880 in Sudbury, Suffolk to Thomas, an agricultural labourer, and Jane Skemer. At one-year-old Walter was living at Chapel Street, Cavendish, Suffolk with his parents, brother and three sisters. In 1906 Walter married Kate Christiana Taylor at Paddington and in 1911 they were living at 9 Stanley Street, Paddington. By then Walter was employed as a contractor's carman and had two children; Dennis Berthold and Mabel. Between then and 1915 Walter joined the Office of Works in the Central Parks as a labourer and was living at 97 Earl Street, Marylebone.

No trace can be found of Walter's military records. However, it is known he was serving with D/182nd (Howitzer) Battery, 57th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery, which was made up of four, four-gun batteries named A, B, C and D; Walter was attached to D Battery. This battery was formed as part of Kitchener's New Army early in 1915 and was attached to 10th (Irish) Division. At 5.00 pm on 30 July A and D Brigades received orders to be ready to embark for operations in the Mediterranean. Two days later they left Cowshot Camp near

Brookwood, Surrey and boarded trains at Aldershot sidings for Southampton Docks. The route took them across the channel to Le Havre and then by train to Marseilles where they embarked on the P&O liner SS Kalyan for the Gallipoli campaign. D Battery landed at Suvla Bay, which is located on the opposite side of the peninsula from the Dardanelles strait, on 17 August. Once landed it took 70 men all night on each gun to haul the battery up the hill and into position. At 7.30 am on 28 August D Battery fired its first salvo of the campaign. Although the Allies' occupation of the beaches of Gallipoli lasted barely nine months, it included the malaria season of 1915 and the Gallipoli Campaign was particularly noted for its high number of malaria cases along with other tropical diseases. Of the 480,000 Allied troops on Gallipoli, 90,000 were evacuated due to sickness, many due to malaria. It was probably here that Corporal 34708 Walter Arthur Skemer contracted malaria and was transported back to Britain. On 14 December 1915 Walter died and was buried at Kensal Green (All Souls') Cemetery with a reference 213.7.8 (screen wall).



*A 4.5-inch howitzer near Y Beach, Gallipoli, 1915 © IWM (Q14833)*

## HERBERT FOSTER 1883 - 1916

Herbert was born in 1883 at Duddington, Northamptonshire to George, an agricultural labourer, and Eliza Foster. In 1901, then aged 17, Herbert had taken up employment as a farm worker and was still living at Duddington with his widowed mother and three younger siblings. On 23 October 1907 Herbert, then of 8 Berwick Street, Victoria, married Jessie Warn of 69 Headstone Road, Harrow at St John the Baptist church in Harrow. In 1911 Herbert and Jessie were living at 2 Pimlico Road, London with their daughter Doris, aged 2. At that time, he was employed as a domestic gardener, but prior to joining the army he was employed by the Office of Works as a labourer in the Central Parks.

Private 2781 Herbert Foster was in 1/2nd Battalion, London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers) when on 1 July 1916 his battalion was involved in the attack against the northern flank of the German lines on the Gommecourt Salient, which was the start of the Somme battles. Most of the objectives set out in the battle plans were made during the first hours of the action. However, German artillery and machine guns placed an intense barrage onto no man's land they had already walked across, preventing any reinforcements reaching the forward troops. The war diary states that, *"three times attempted to advance, but that the artillery and machine gun fire was too hot"*. At the same time the Germans launched *"vigorous counter attacks"* that forced the retreating British troops into the barrage in no man's land. Fighting was very hard and the London Regiment lost most of its officers and over 4,000 casualties on that day. Herbert was one of these casualties; his body was never found and his name is carved on the Thiepval Memorial at the Somme; pier 9D and face 16B.

## CHARLES MEW 1867 - 1916

Charles Mew was born in 1867 to John, a stone mason, and Esther Mew and was baptised in All Saints, Ryde, Isle of Wight on 24 November. By 1871 John and Esther had two children; Charles, 4, and Esther, 2, and were living at 15 Princes Street, Ryde. John died later in 1871 and Esther married his brother Frank, a carman, in 1877. By 1881 the family were living at 20 George Street, Ryde with Charles employed as an errand boy. On 5 May 1886, aged 18, Charles attested for the Royal Engineers (RE) at Fort Rowner at Gosport. During the early part of the 1890s he married Fanny Grist who was also born in Ryde. They went on to have three children whilst he was in army service. John Charles was born in 1892, Esther Ellen on 16 October 1895 at Kildare whilst Charles was serving at Curragh Camp, and Hugh Benjamin on 9 April 1897 at Chatham whilst he was serving at the Royal Engineers' main depot. Whilst Charles was on service in the Boer War in South Africa Fanny and her two younger children are shown, in 1901, to be living in the military complex at Aldershot, Hampshire.

Charles distinguished himself in the Boer War and the following is from a footnote to a medal sale notice on 15 December 2011, by the auctioneers Dix Noonan Webb of Mayfair: *"He served in 3 Field Troop, RE, which was formed from No 2 Balloon Section after the relief of Ladysmith, and in No 3 Balloon Section, until the end of hostilities, and was twice mentioned in despatches - by Sir Redvers Buller in his despatch dated 9 November 1900 'as particularly deserving' (London Gazette 8 February 1901), and by Lord Kitchener in his despatch dated 8 July 1901 (London Gazette 20 August 1901), this last after being specially brought to notice by the Adjutant-General,*

*Pretoria, for 'good service in Eastern Transvaal during Lieutenant-General French's operations in February-April 1901', which distinction appeared in Lord Kitchener's despatch dated 8 July 1901 (London Gazette 20 August 1901).*

*For his services in South Africa he was awarded the Queen's medal with six clasps and the King's medal with two. He was awarded the LS & GC [Long Service and Good Conduct] Medal with gratuity in 1904. Mew attained the rank of Company Sergeant-Major in November 1905 and was discharged on the termination of his second period of engagement on 4 May 1907".*

He was also recommended for the Distinguished Conduct Medal. Following his return to civilian life on an army pension Charles, on 6 May 1907, passed the Civil Service Commissioner's Certificate and he was appointed, on 31 May, to the Office of Works as a park keeper in St James's Park on a salary of 26 shillings per week. In 1911 he was transferred to Richmond Park "on account of ill health to wife".

Shortly after the outbreak of war, on 24 September 1914, Charles, then aged 46 years and 11 months, applied to rejoin the army at Kingston upon Thames. There he was attested and was placed into the Army Reserve for one year's service. With his previous military service behind him he was soon noticed and the next day was promoted to acting Company Sergeant-Major, and became an instructor in the Royal Engineers' 17th Signal Company. Six months later his post was made substantive and he was transferred to 121st Field Company, Royal Engineers and was assigned to general services. Having volunteered for active service overseas Charles accompanied his Company to France on 4 October 1915.

On 17 March 1916 Charles was admitted to 108th Field Hospital where he was treated for a shell wound on his scalp. This was not serious and he was back on duty the next day. Three months later, on 30 June he was again promoted to Regimental Sergeant-Major, the highest rank for a non-commissioned officer. On 5 July 1916, Regimental Sergeant-Major 52926 Mew was killed on the Somme. The Major of his Company gave the following particulars of his death to his wife Fanny: "The Company was billeted in some shelters behind a railway bank about half-mile from the front line, when about 2 o'clock in the morning, a shell entered the shelter where Sergt.-Major Mew, with five other men, was sheltering. He and another man were wounded severely, and two of the others were killed. The wounded men were at once taken by field ambulance and then sent to hospital in a motor ambulance. Sergt.-Major Mew, however, succumbed to his wounds shortly after, and was buried in the soldiers' cemetery at Forceville". The Major added: "It may be a little comfort to you to know that he was much esteemed and loved by all the officers and men of the Company. A thorough soldier, he was just and fair to everybody. He has been my right-hand man since he joined us in Ireland. It will be impossible to fill his place".

Charles is buried at Forceville Communal Cemetery and Extension, Somme, Picardie, France; grave reference Plot 2, Row C, Grave 13.

## WILLIAM BENJAMIN PEARCE 1871 - 1916

William Benjamin Pearce was born on 26 July 1871 in Maidstone, Kent, to Joseph, a paper maker, and Ellen Pearce. In 1881 they were living at 10 Mill Cottage, Sundridge, Sevenoaks, with William and their daughters Ada and Ellen. By 1891 the family had moved to the parish of St Cuthbert Out, Wells in Somerset where Joseph, who remained a paper maker, and Ellen had a further two sons, George and Joseph. William, now 19, was working as a general labourer in the paper mill. It was soon after this that William married Anne, who was from Lytham St Anne's in Lancashire. They set up home there and went on to have a son and a daughter who were both born in the town. It was also the time when William enlisted into the army, presumably into one of the Lancashire regiments. In 1911 the family were at 4 Northfield Terrace, Uppingham in Rutland and he was employed as a Drill Instructor in the Territorial Army. Following his army career William joined the Office of Works, on 6 March 1913, as a Park Keeper in St James's Park on a salary of 26 shillings a week plus uniform. His last known address was 25 Newlands Terrace, Battersea.

William, an army reservist, was drafted to France in 1915 as a Regimental Sergeant Major in 10th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers and he fought at Ypres and the Somme. At some point, he transferred into, what was probably his old regiment, the Loyal North Lancashire and joined its 10th Battalion. On 11 August 1916, his battalion was tasked with assaulting an enemy position east of Pozières. At 2.00 am they attacked what was called the Intermediate Line. One Company ran along the top of the enemy trench *"throwing bombs as they went"* whilst another *"charged along the top of the trench and jumped in – bayonetting and bombing all Germans within view"*; by 2.50 am the objective had been accomplished. The enemy counterattacked three times during the early hours and by 7.00 am the fighting died down with the enemy trenches still held by the allied forces. The rest of the day *"passed quite quietly"*, but the action had cost the lives of 20 ordinary ranks; among them was Sergeant Major 23649 William Pearce. His grave can be seen at Bazentin-le-Petit Communal Cemetery, Somme, France, grave reference 2. In the National Roll of the Great War his private notation reads, *"Nobly striving. He nobly fell, that we might live"*.



*View of the battlefield at Pozières,  
August 1916 © IWM (Q4078)*

## CHARLES MEAD 1875 - 1916

Charles Mead was born in Kensington, London in 1875 to Charles, a gardener, and Harriet Mead. In 1891, aged 16, Charles's profession was given as a gardener and he was living with his mother, father, two sisters and one brother at 2 Virginia Place, Kensington. In 1900 Charles married Ada Mayhew at St Clement, Notting Hill and in 1911 they were living at 9 Virginia Place, Kensington with four sons and one daughter. By this time, Charles was employed by the Office of Works as a gardener in Kensington Gardens. Charles and Ada went on to have two more children before he went to war.

On the morning of 3 September 1916, Charles was serving with 8th Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment awaiting the attack on High Wood, which formed part of the Battles of the Somme that started on 1 July. Since early August, the 178th Tunnelling Company had worked to dig down 25 feet, and then construct a gallery 310 feet long below the enemy trenches. They placed 3,000 lbs of ammonal explosive below the enemy machine-gun position, and 30 seconds before the infantry attack the mine was blown. The advance of the British troops along the line was only partially successful with some of the objectives set in the battle plan not being achieved due to the high casualty rate in the ranks. At 1.30 pm the enemy counterattacked in force and drove the British forces back to their original starting lines. During the day losses were heavy with the battalion losing seven officers and 100 ordinary ranks as casualties. Private 18500 Charles Mead was one of those casualties. He is remembered at Thistle Dump Cemetery, High Wood, Longueval, France in grave reference Special Memorial 4.

## HENRY ALFRED COLLINS 1883 - 1916

Henry Alfred Collins was born on 25 February 1883 to William, a labourer, and Emily Collins of Mortlake. In 1901 the family, including their five children, were living at Hampton Square in Mortlake and Henry, then aged 18, was working as a carter. On 25 December 1902 Henry married Emily Edith Harwood in the parish church in Mortlake. In 1911 he was living in Waldeck Cottage, Waldeck Terrace, Mortlake with his wife and two children. At that time, he was employed as a carter for the Office of Works at Richmond Park. By the beginning of the war Henry and Emily had three children; Henry, William and Alfred.

Henry volunteered for the army, aged 31, on 25 August 1914 at Richmond, Surrey. By the end of the month he had been transferred to the Southern Cavalry Depot in Bristol and then at the beginning of September he was posted to 9th Reserve Cavalry based at Shorncliffe in Kent. The following June in 1915, he had transferred to 5th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment and, by the end of the month, then on to its 2nd Battalion. Over the next year, Henry's battalion took part in several major battles. One of those was the attempt on 1 July 1916 to capture Ovillers, which was part of the Battle of Albert, the first phase of the Somme battles. On 23 October 1916 at 2.30 pm Henry's battalion attacked the German held Spectrum Trench, near Lesboeuf. The battalion's war diary states that the attack was "*entirely successful*" and the Brigadier complimented them on their success. Casualties in the battalion numbered three officers and 62 other ranks killed and 47 missing. On that day, Henry was presumed killed in action; his body was not found and his name is carved into the Thiepval Memorial; pier 12D and face 13B.

## WILLIAM WINDRIDGE 1867 - 1916

William Windridge was born in 1867 at Wilnecote in Staffordshire to William, an agricultural labourer, and Eliza Windridge. By 1881 the family had moved to Gorse House, Weeford, Litchfield. William senior was still an agricultural labourer and William junior was employed, aged 13, as a farm boy. Seven years later William married Anne M'Calister in Newry, Ireland. Why William was in Ireland is unknown, though it can be presumed that he joined, in 1885 or 1886, the army's newly formed Military Foot Police (MFP). The MFP at that time had an establishment of one sergeant-major, 13 sergeants, 17 corporals and 59 privates. In 1891, Lance Corporal Windridge was living with Annie at 6 Manor Street, Woolwich where the MFP had a depot.

William served in the South African Campaign (Boer War) 1899 to 1902, where he was presented with the Queen's South Africa Medal with six clasps and King Edward's Medal with two clasps. In 1905 he left the army after gaining his Long Service and Good Conduct Medal, which is given after 18 years of irreproachable service, and on 16 March joined the Office of Works as a Park Keeper in the Central Parks. In 1911 William and his wife, Annie, were living at 52 Sussex Street, Pimlico. William joined up again in the First World War with the Military Provost Staff Corps, the successor to the MFP. He was posted to the military prisoner of war camp at Rouen, not far from the French port of Le Havre. It was here that acting Sergeant Major W1591 William Windridge died of malaria on 20 December 1916, possibly contracted many years before whilst with the MFP on active service in Egypt. His body lies in St Sever Cemetery Extension, Rouen with a grave reference of O.III.H.5.

## CHARLES BAKER HAWXWELL 1881 - 1917

Charles Baker Hawxwell was born in 1881 to Philip, an assistant bookseller, and Sarah Jane Hawxwell who were living at 26 Eversleigh Road, Battersea. By 1891 the family moved to West Croydon and then on to Thornton Heath and eventually, in 1911, were at 27 Princess Road, South Norwood. Charles was living with his parents, three sisters and two brothers; a lodger was also residing in the property. At that time, Charles was working as a florist although ten years earlier his occupation was stated as a gardener. When he enlisted he was employed by the Office of Works as a gardener in the Central Parks.

On 1 May 1917, Charles was serving with 12th Battalion, London Regiment with the British Expeditionary Force in France. They were resting at Camp Chippewa at Reninghelst to the south-west of Ypres when, on the morning of 2 May, the battalion was called up to relieve the troops approximately 7 miles away at Dickebusch near St Eloi (Sint-Elooi). That night the Germans let off gas and the strombus, which was an air horn used in the trenches to indicate a gas alarm, sounded to the left of the battalion positions. On 3 May, the battalion's position had deteriorated and it reported that the *"enemy's recent raid has left the centre of our front line in a very bad condition. Wire around mine shaft and No 1 Crater has been badly damaged. No 1 Crater [which was being used as a forward post] is no longer to be used by day, owing to its altered condition"*. On that day, Private G/28924 Charles Baker Hawxwell was killed. His name is carved on the Arras Memorial in Bay 7, meaning that his body was either unable to be identified or was not found.

## EDGAR GEORGE ARCHER 1889 - 1917

Edgar was born in 1889 at Corsham, Wiltshire to George, a farm labourer, and his wife Mary Archer. By 1901 George, now a stockman on a farm, had moved to Sedgemore, Finchley in Middlesex with his wife and two children, Edgar and Bessie. In 1911 Edgar had taken up employment as a domestic gardener and was boarding at 46 Sulina Road, Brixton. In 1915, he married Gertrude Mary Dollamore in West Ham and in 1916 they had a son called Stanley WG Archer.

Edgar worked for the Office of Works in The Regent's Park as a labourer before being called up into 2/2nd (City of London) Battalion the London Regiment. At 2.50 am on 15 June 1917 Edgar's battalion attacked the Hindenburg Line, near Bullecourt as part of the Arras Offensive. Its initial objectives were soon achieved and they pushed forward further than anticipated into the enemy's support line where they "*suffered very heavy casualties from our own standing barrage*". During the day, several enemy counterattacks were repulsed and the line was held. The next day orders were given to form a defensive flank and at 3.45 am men of the battalion advanced under machine gun and artillery fire and established themselves in the enemy's support line. However, men of the battalion had overrun their objective set in the battle plan and found themselves being heavily counterattacked and at 7.30 am the situation became critical; after a day of fighting and reinforcing the line held. The enemy then ceased attacking and "*contented himself with Rifle and Machine Gun fire*" until at dusk "*a most intense bombardment of the HUMP [their military objective set out in the battle plan] took place and the enemy made an attempt to advance*". Following this action Private 233793 Edgar George Archer was reported missing, presumed dead, on 16 June 1917. His body was never found and his name appears on the Arras Memorial (Bay 9).

## FREDERICK DICKENSON 1889 - 1917

Frederick was born at Sydenham in 1889 and brought up in Peckham, south London by his father William, a navvy, and his mother, Martha. By 1901 the family had moved to 54 Daniels Road, Peckham; Frederick remained the only child. Frederick married Ada Harriet Hughes at Croydon in 1908 and in 1911 he was termed as a general labourer living at 41 Melon Road, Peckham with Ada and their 11-month-old baby called Ruby. In 1913, they had another child called Violet. Prior to the war, he was working for the Office of Works as a labourer in the Central Parks and the family were living at 6 Brymer Road, Albany Road, Camberwell.

It has not been possible to find details of Frederick's war record but, it is known that he was serving as Sergeant L/21067 Frederick Dickenson, C Battery, 93 Brigade, Royal Field Artillery. He was awarded the 1914-15 Star campaign medal that was given to men who had served in any theatre of the First World War. In this case Frederick was serving in France where he was injured and taken to the General Hospital at Boulogne; he died of his wounds on 18 July 1917. He is buried at Wimereux Communal Cemetery; grave reference 11.O.3.

## ELLIS JAMES GRAY

1888 - 1917

Ellis James Gray was born in 1888 at Marlesford, Suffolk to Leonard, a coal carter, and Eliza Gray. In 1901, at the age of 13, Ellis had become a bookstall boy living at Campsea Ash, Suffolk along with his mother, father, who had changed profession and become a plate layer with the Great Eastern Railway, his brother and two sisters. In 1911 he was working as a gardener assistant (domestic) at Balls Park, Hertford, a mid-17th century house set in 63 acres of land. Sometime before the outbreak of war Ellis joined the Office of Works and was working in the Central Parks as a labourer.

In August 1917 Ellis was serving in 13th Kensington Battalion, London Regiment near Ypres, Belgium as part of the Battle of Passchendaele. In the afternoon of the 15th

his regiment was ordered to move up to the "Halfway House", an area just behind the front line to the east of Ypres. At 2.00 am on the 16th they reached their objective and *"settled in ... although gas and rather heavy shelling was encountered on the way up"*. At 10.00 am the battalion was ordered to advance through Chateau Wood and they fought their way forward, although they were heavily counterattacked. During the afternoon shelling was exceedingly heavy on their positions with three direct hits being received on the battalion. Private 491614 Ellis James Gray was one of 72 ordinary ranks in the battalion who were killed that day. He is buried in grave number I.G.14, Perth Cemetery (China Wall), Belgium.



*Troops walk through the remains of Chateau Wood, October 1917* © IWM (E(AUS)1220)

## HENRY WILLIAM SHEPPARD 1877 - 1917

Henry William Sheppard was born on 9 April 1877 to Elizabeth Sheppard in Kensington, Middlesex and on 29 April 1877 he was baptised at St Clement, Notting Hill. On 1 August 1897 Henry, then of 7 Tobin Square, married Genta Taylor, of 22 Mary Place, in St Clement, Notting Hill. By 1911 Henry was employed by the Office of Works as a gardener at Kensington Gardens and was living with his family of wife and four sons at 10 Tobin Street, North Kensington. By the time Henry was called up a fifth son had been born.

Henry was attested into the army on 12 December 1915 and was immediately put into the army reserve. It was not until 1 September 1916 that Henry was mobilised and posted to 2/5th Battalion, Royal

West Kent Regiment's depot, probably at Canterbury. He was only there two weeks before being posted on again to the British Expeditionary Force at Etaples in France via Folkestone and Boulogne. On 16 September Henry was posted to 1st Battalion, Royal West Kent Regiment who were at the time based at Berlencourt for rest and training. Two days later, the regimental war diary recorded on the 18th, "*a draft of 248 OR's [Other Ranks] arrived, bringing up the fighting strength of the Bn to 828 OR's*". On the night of 2/3 October 1917, the battalion was billeted at Bedford House, south of Ypres and was being prepared for moving to the front line at Observatory Ridge. On 4 October at 5.30 am the battalion was ready for an assault

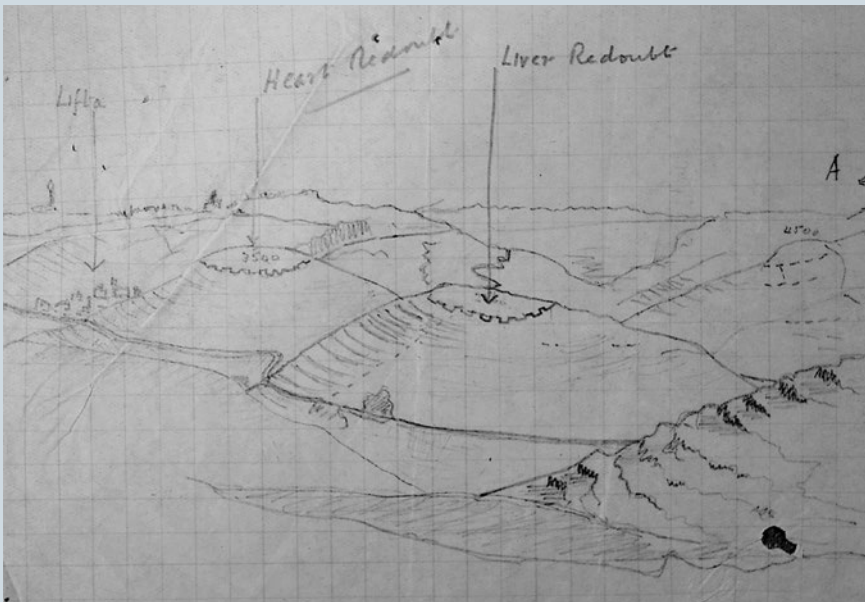


*The ruins of Bedford House, near Ypres, where the Royal West Kent Regiment was billeted* © IWM (Q61611)

## HORI TRIBE 1877 - 1917

on the enemy. At 6.00 am the attack began and by 07.45 am they had achieved their objectives set out in the battle plan, but there were reports of *“very severe casualties. This and the additional fact that right flank was exposed made the situation appear very grave”*. By the end of the day the battalion had suffered 450 ordinary rank casualties. Private 241651 Henry William Sheppard was one of these. His grave is located at Hooze Crater Cemetery, Belgium; grave reference VII.L.4.

Hori Tribe was born in 1877 to Hori, a farm carter, and Harriett Louisa Tribe in East Meon, near Petersfield in Hampshire. At age 14 Hori was employed as a game keeper's help and still living with his mother, father, elder brother, four younger brothers and three younger sisters at Mare Pond, East Meon. On 20 October 1900 Hori married Bessie Eva Williams at East Meon. In 1901 Hori, now a labourer in a nursery, and Bessie had moved to 7 Old Road, Lee, London with his elder brother William, a labourer at the Royal Arsenal, and younger brother Arthur, also a labourer in a nursery, as boarders. In 1911 Hori had moved jobs and was working for the Office of Works in Greenwich Park as a propagator. By the time Hori had signed up for the army he and Bessie had seven children one of whom sadly died in 1907.



*Sketch of Heart and Liver Redoubts from 2/18th Battalion war diary © Crown Copyright*

## ERNEST OWEN JOHNSON 1875 - 1917

Hori joined the army and was posted to 2/18th (County of London) Battalion, London Irish Rifles, London Regiment. This battalion was posted first to France in June 1916 and then on to Salonika, Greece in November. The following July they embarked for Alexandria, Egypt and the offensive against the Turks in Palestine. On 6 December 1917, the battalion received orders that they were to take part in the attack to take Jerusalem from Turkish forces. At 12.15 am on 8 December the battalion was taking up positions when they came under considerable machine gun fire and some shelling. The men *“advanced with splendid dash and enthusiasm”* with the result that their first objective, Liver Redoubt, was captured at 5.45 am and their second objective, Heart Redoubt, at 6.05 am. During the day, the battalion continued advancing along the Jerusalem Road. At 3.45 pm parts of the battalion took part in a charge on a ridge stronghold and, *“in spite of very heavy machine gun, rifle fire and shrapnel the ridge was carried in magnificent style under the eyes of the Corps and Divisional Commanders who have signified their high appreciation”*. During the day’s fighting the battalion suffered two officers and 36 ordinary ranks killed in action. Rifleman 593993 Hori Tribe was one of those casualties; his grave can be found at the Jerusalem War Cemetery, with the reference T29.

Ernest Owen Johnson was born on 25 September 1875 to Alfred, a dairyman, and Emily Johnson. In 1881 they were living at Beech House in Arreton on the Isle of Wight. Ten years later Ernest was employed as an agricultural farm servant to William Cheverton at Staplers, Durton Farm, Arreton. On 10 August 1898 Ernest married Caroline Plumbley at Ryde and in 1901 they were living at Whippingham with their two children, Ernest George and Harry Alfred. The village became the centre of the royal estate supporting Osborne House and Barton Manor. The farms, school, almshouses, forge and cottages were rebuilt when they became part of the Queen’s estate and Prince Albert had a ‘model farm’ built at Barton. Queen Victoria took a close interest in ‘her people’ in Whippingham, providing for them in sickness and in health. By this time, Ernest was employed as a cattleman, possibly at Barton Manor. In 1911 Ernest, his wife and six children were living at Queen’s Cottages, East Cowes and he was working as a garden labourer for the Office of Works at Osborne House.

On 17 August 1916 Ernest, who was only 5 feet 3½ inches tall, was drafted into the Royal Naval Division (RND), which was originally made up of Royal Naval Reservists who could not be found a ship to serve on, and a couple of days later attached to A Reserve Battalion at Blandford Camp in Dorset. On 19 March 1917 Ernest embarked for France to join 63rd (Royal Naval) Division’s Base Depot (by then transferred from the Royal Navy to British Army control) at Calais and was subsequently drafted into Drake Battalion on 11 April. Throughout the summer, Ernest suffered with a contagious bacterial infection to his legs that meant

## FRANK ROBERT PARKER 1889 - 1918

several trips to hospital and the Base Depot for recuperation. He was finally back in his battalion on 10 November 1917 at the end of the Second Battle of Passchendaele. From 20 November, there began the Battle of Cambrai. The 63rd Naval Division held its front with all three brigades, the 188th were on the right, the 189th in the centre and the 190th on the left. Official reports stated that, *“At 6.30 a.m. on the 30th December the 63rd Division’s front was heavily bombarded for fifteen minutes followed by an infantry attack, with Flammenwerfer [flame thrower] detachments. British fire took toll of the Germans, but at many points he entered the forward trenches, where the defenders had suffered heavily from the German bombardment. Corner Trench, Welsh Trench and Welsh Support were lost by the 188th Bde. The 189th Bde. had both flanks penetrated, with the Germans entering Ostrich Lane on its right and Battery Lane on its left, where the 7/Royal Fus. of the 190th were driven in losing Eagle Avenue. At 8 a.m. the Germans advanced up a sunken road into the northern side of the salient pressing back the 1/4/K.S.L.I., the left battalion of the 190th Bde. Counter-attacks by the 188th & 189th Bdes failed to regain their part of the line”*. Drake Battalion did suffer during the barrage and subsequent action; their war diary records that *“no signs of our “A” Coy have been seen since morning of attack”*. Able Seaman R/42 Ernest Owen Johnson died that day and his remains are buried at Flesquières Hill British Cemetery, Cambrai, France, in grave V.C.13.

Frank Robert Parker was born in 1889 to William, a gardener, and Jane Parker. In 1891 they were living at 6 John Street, St John’s Wood, with their four sons and three daughters. Frank grew up in St John’s Wood and by 1901 was living with his mother, father and family at 45 Townshend Cottage, St John’s Wood Terrace. On 30 August 1909, he married Gertrude Maud Watkins at Marylebone Register Office. By 1911 Frank was employed by the Office of Works as a labourer at The Regent’s Park and was living with his wife at 114 Albert Street, Camden Town with their son Reginald aged one. Before the outbreak of war Frank and Gertrude went on to have a daughter, Violet Gertrude.

In November 1915 Frank, then living at 124 Bravington Road, Paddington received his call up papers and was attested on 10 November and moved to the Army Reserve. On 5 May 1916, he was posted to 14th Battalion, The Rifle Brigade. This was a reserve battalion based at that time firstly at Purfleet and then a month later at Belhus Park, both in Essex. On 28 August 1916, Frank was posted to France to the regiment’s Base Depot at Le Havre and from there one week later to 16th Battalion, King’s Royal Rifle Corps (The Churchmen’s Battalion). Frank stayed with this battalion during 1917 fighting in the Battles of Pilkem Ridge and of the Menin Road Ridge. On 22 February 1918, the battalion took over positions near Seine and Thames, just to the north east of Zonnebeke, Belgium. The battalion continued to hold these positions under regular shell and gas attack with occasional rest periods in Ypres. Records

## ERNEST FRANK GOODALL 1899 - 1918

from 32 Casualty Clearing Station, 89 miles due south of Zonnebeke, show that Rifleman 18229 Frank Robert Parker "*died of wounds received in action*" on 21 March. The battalion war diary for this period describes only one reference to a wounded casualty with gunshot wounds. This was recorded on 26 February when a member of a working party was wounded by machine gun fire. His body is interred at Roye New British Cemetery, with a grave reference of Marcheopot British Cemetery Mem III.

Ernest Frank Goodall was born in 1899 in Kingston upon Thames to Frank, a gardener, and Margaret Ann Goodall of Gomer Road, Teddington, Middlesex. In 1911 his father was shown working for the Office of Works as a gardener and living with his family of six children at 18 Warfield Road, Hampton. By 1918 the family were living in Home Park, Hampton Court. Ernest followed his father's profession and was working for the Office of Works at Hampton Court as a gardener when war broke out.

The date when Ernest enlisted into the army is unknown. However, it is known that he joined 11th Battalion, Queen's (Royal West Surrey) Regiment and went to serve in France and Belgium. In August 1918, his battalion had been resting from the front line at Lappe, south west of Ypres, Belgium when on the 11th they were joined by 107th Regiment from the United States Army to form a unit strength of 50% British and 50% United States personnel. On 10 August, the battalion took up positions in the front line near La Clytte between the Scherpenberg and Kermoy Farm. Over the next 12 days the battalion was kept under intermittent shellfire and they continued to send out working parties to maintain their defences; the battalion war diaries term these as "*quiet days*". It was on 22 August at 10.00 pm that the German artillery carried out "*slight shelling of Redoubt Line*" one of the trenches occupied by the battalion. It was in this barrage that Private 67993 Ernest Frank Goodall was killed; he was one of only two ordinary ranks killed that night by the shelling. His body lies in the Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, Belgium; grave reference XXV.C.26A.

## WILLIAM HIGGS 1892 - 1918

William Higgs was born in 1892 to William Higgs, an agricultural labourer, and his wife Rose in Amersham, Buckinghamshire. William, the father, died in 1892 and Rose married again to James Barnes, a general labourer and publican, in 1897. In 1901 they were employed as publicans and lived in the Portobello Arms in Chartridge, Buckinghamshire, along with William and his two brothers, three sisters and one half-sister. Also at the same address was his half-brother, Bertie C Wells, who Rose, née Wells, gave birth to in 1878 before her two marriages. In 1911 William, aged 19, was working for the Office of Works in Richmond Park as a labourer and boarding with his uncle, Benjamin Wells, the assistant superintendent of Richmond Park, who lived in White Ash Lodge.

From 21 August until 3 September 1918 the Second Battles of the Somme took place to recapture ground taken by the enemy earlier in the year. William was part of 22nd Battalion, London Regiment and on 1 September was billeted at Aderlu Wood approximately four miles from the front line. On that evening his battalion was given orders to form up the following morning at Bouchavesnes and prepare to take Monaster Trench. Half an hour before the attack, scheduled for 5.30 am, the *“enemy put down a heavy barrage; evidently he had seen our troops forming up. Strong opposition was met and casualties heavy”*. That day, 2 September, 22nd Battalion suffered five officers and 150 ordinary ranks either killed, wounded or missing. Private 738080 William Higgs was one of those who was killed in action that day. His body is laid to rest at Fins New British Cemetery, Sorel-le-Grand, France in plot VII.D.24.

## ARTHUR WALTER SMITH 1885 - 1918

Arthur Walter Smith was born in 1885 to James, a labourer, and Sarah Smith then living at 109 Royal Hill, Greenwich. At age 16 Arthur was working for the Office of Works in Greenwich Park as a park labourer with his father, now a “Crown Park Constable”. Arthur was then living at 14 John Street, Greenwich with his mother, father, his elder brother and two younger sisters. On 12 September 1908 Arthur, then of 46 Winforton Street, married Maud Alice Parks, of 3 Dutton Street, in Holy Trinity Church, Blackheath Hill. In 1911 Arthur was still working as a gardener in Greenwich Park, and he and Maud were living at 71 Dutton Street with their daughter, Mildred. By the time Arthur joined the army they were living at 58 Blissett Street with three daughters.

On 30 December 1914 Arthur signed up to join the army at the recruiting office in Greenwich. He was placed into the National Reserve Territorials and put into 20th (County of London) Battalion, London Regiment based at Holly Hedge House in Blackheath, which was used to guard railways and other vulnerable points. On 5 November 1915, he was transferred to 18th (London) Battalion, The Rifle Brigade and on the 24th was sent with the battalion to India and arrived in Rangoon, then part of India, on 5 January 1916 to take up garrison duties. In August 1918 Arthur was promoted on a temporary basis to corporal and travelled to the Middle East where he was attached to the South Persia Rifles in their mechanical transport section. On a journey from Saidabad to Aliabad Arthur, *“having been careless about some tea in Aliabad”* was admitted, on 3 September, to the station hospital in Kerman complaining of sickness and diarrhoea. A case of cholera was soon

## ARTHUR WILLIAM BERRY 1882 - 1918

diagnosed and Arthur spent the next few days under treatment. Three days later the symptoms of cholera had *“long since ceased”*, but he became *“progressively more drowsy”* and did not improve. The next day Rifleman 200425 Arthur Walter Smith lost consciousness completely and at 3.00 pm on 8 September 1918 died of haemorrhage of the brain as a result of the cholera. He was buried at Kerman Cemetery and then exhumed and moved to Naibund Cemetery in 1925. His name appears in the addendum panel on the Tehran Memorial.



*Arthur William Berry in uniform*

By kind permission of Carol Meacher and family

Arthur William Berry was born in Wade's Mill, Ware, Hertfordshire on 15 January 1882 to Thomas and Emma Berry. In 1901 he was employed as a domestic gardener to Sir Richard Trevithick Tangye, a famous electrical and mechanical engineer whose equipment helped launch Brunel's steamship the Great Eastern, and he lived in the Coombe Ridge Estate's Bothy on Kingston Hill. On 5 August 1905, he married Jane Pattenden in Kingston upon Thames. In 1911 he was working for the Office of Works at Hampton Court as a gardener and living with his wife and three children at 2 Elizabeth Cottages, Hurst Lane, East Molesey.

On 8 November 1915 Arthur enlisted at the recruiting office in Whitehall and was posted to 10 Company, Royal Garrison Artillery that was based at Queenstown Harbour, Cork as part of the South Irish Sea Defences. After three months, he was posted to 78 Company based at the Straits Settlement at Singapore and spent a year there before returning to Britain to be posted to 173 Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery. Their firepower consisted of six-inch howitzers that were most often employed in destroying or neutralising enemy artillery, as well as putting destructive fire down on strongpoints, dumps, stores, roads and railways behind enemy lines. Having taken part in the Second Battle of the Somme, that ended on 3 September 1918, Arthur was killed in an air raid on his battery on 25 September 1918; he is buried at the British cemetery at Bertincourt Chateau; grave reference C3.

## FRANCIS WALSH

1885 - 1918

Francis Walsh was born on 7 August 1885 to Michael, a gardener, and Ellen who were living at 8 Field Road, Hammersmith. In 1901 Francis was living at 36 Rainville Road, Fulham with his parents, two brothers and one sister. In 1908 Francis married Amelia Jane Carter in Fulham, and in 1911 they were living with their one-year-old son Francis Joseph, at 23E Kingswood Road, Fulham and he was working as a nurseryman gardener. In the same year, his father Michael, now working for the Office of Works as a gardener, and his new wife of two years, Emily, were living at 7A Emu Road, Battersea. By 1915 Francis was also working for the Office of Works as a labourer in the Central Parks.

Francis Walsh joined the army at Hounslow on 5 July 1915 aged 31 years and 120 days and was immediately posted to 40th Division, Army Cyclist Corps. The primary roles of the cyclists were reconnaissance and communications (message taking). They were armed as infantry and could provide mobile firepower if required. Francis remained in

Britain until he was posted with his unit to join the British Expeditionary Force in France. He embarked at Southampton on 4 July 1916 as part of the newly formed IX Cyclists Corps Battalion and disembarked at Le Havre on 5 July. War records could not be found of his unit; all we know is that Francis was granted two weeks' leave to the United Kingdom on 3 November 1917 and re-joined his battalion "in the field" on 18 November. On 7 June 1918, he was appointed acting Lance Corporal in the same unit. On 5 October, acting Lance Corporal Francis Walsh was wounded in action and later that same day died of his wounds.

His personal effects consisting of a "silver football medal, a silver watch (broken), telescope, hairbrush, snuff box, mirror and letters" were left to his wife who, by December 1918, had married again to Richard J Harley and was living in Southend on Sea, Essex. Francis was buried in Montbrehain British Cemetery situated north-west of Saint Quentin, France, in grave reference A.20.



*The Army Cyclists Corps training in Richmond Park, 1915*

© IWM (Q53678)

**Due to copyright considerations in this upload  
we have had to omit certain images**



David Ivison started his horticultural career as a Royal Parks apprentice with the Central Parks in 1969 and was employed in Kensington Gardens, Hyde Park and Buckingham Palace. He then worked in the tree team before moving to The Regent's Park as a charge-hand gardener in 1974.

In 1975, David transferred from The Royal Parks to the Department of the Environment's Property Services Agency. For the next 15 years he managed the grounds of central government and Ministry of Defence estates, the final three years being based in West Germany advising on landscape and arboricultural matters to the Royal Air Force and Army bases in the Rhineland, Holland and Belgium. In 1990, he transferred to the Department of Transport's Construction Programme Division as Regional Horticultural Officer for the South East of England.

In 1995, David moved to private industry to carry out consultant and managerial roles in project management, environmental assessment, landscape maintenance, arboricultural survey and ecological monitoring. David's training covered horticulture, countryside management and arboriculture. He holds a Master's degree in Arboriculture and Community Woodland Management and a Post Graduate Diploma in Countryside Management.

David is now retired and offers his time to support The Royal Parks Guild and the Friends of Bushy and Home Parks.

This publication is dedicated to the employees of The Royal Parks Division  
of His Majesty's Office of Works who gave their lives in service to their  
country during The Great War 1914 – 1918

# WE BAND OF BROTHERS

Archer E G	Labourer	The Regent's Park
Berry A W	Gardener	Hampton Court
Collins H A	Labourer	Richmond Park
Dickenson F	Labourer	Central Parks
Foster H	Labourer	Central Parks
Goodall E F	Labourer	Hampton Court
Gould W C	Park Keeper	Central Parks
Gray E J	Labourer	Central Parks
Hawxwell C B	Labourer	Central Parks
Higgs W	Labourer	Richmond Park
Johnson E O	Labourer	Osborne Gardens
Joiner C W E	Park Keeper	Central Parks
Marsh A	Labourer	The Regent's Park
Mead C	Gardener	Central Parks
Mew C	Park Keeper	Richmond Park
Parker F R	Labourer	The Regent's Park
Pearce W	Park Keeper	Central Parks
Sheppard H W	Gardener	Central Parks
Skemer W A	Labourer	Central Parks
Smith A E	Gardener	Hampton Court
Smith A W	Gardener	Greenwich Park
Tribe H	Propagator	Greenwich Park
Walsh F	Labourer	Central Parks
Windridge W	Park Keeper	Central Parks