

Great War Bulletin

No. 34...Newark...Monday 22 March 1915

Court Clerk now a Major

THE MANY friends of Captain John Pickard Becher were pleased to learn last week that he had been gazetted a Major in the 8th Battalion Sherwood Foresters.

The solicitor is now with his regiment in France ... and on his way to becoming a warrior legend in Southwell, where he lives with his wife Veronica, and in legal circles in Newark, where he acts as clerk to the County Magistrates.

Over the next few months, Mr and Mrs Becher will experience all of the emotions of The Great War...

LORD OF MANOR

Southwell family's devastation

DAIRYMAN Frank Wilkins and his wife Martha of King Street, Southwell, received the devastating news on Sunday that their 25-year-old son Harry had been killed in the Sherwood Foresters' terrific fighting around Neuve Chapelle on 11 March.

If only British soldiers had helmets like the Germans! ... It transpired that Harry was shot through the head and died instantly.

The news arrived from Sergeant Blanchard, the Quartermaster Sergeant of Harry's Company, who described him as a brave lad who died gallantly.

Much sympathy is felt in the town for his parents, who are well-known and greatly esteemed.

Private Wilkins is remembered on Le Touret Memorial on the main road between Bethune and Armentieres.

Arthur impaled on his own bayonet

PRIVATE ARTHUR ANDREW, 22, home at his parents' inn in Lincoln Road, Newark, on a short furlough, has survived some hair-raising experiences with the 1st Battalion Sherwood Foresters.

He was wounded at La Bassée and the circumstances have leaked out despite his reluctance to talk. The Foresters were subjected to terrific shelling and one shrapnel shell burst close to Arthur and his comrades, killing quite a number.

He was thrown rooftop high by the explosion – and landed impaled on his own bayonet. He was repaired at a base hospital in France and returned to the front, where severe frost bite in both feet incapacitated him again.

He was sent to Cambridge Hospital; and has now been allowed home briefly.

KILLED

CARLTON-ON-TRENT residents were stunned on Wednesday to learn that their 47-year-old Lord of the Manor, Lieutenant-Colonel George Brenton Laurie had been killed in action at Neuve Chapelle

He had commanded the Royal Irish Rifles since 1912; and had seen action in Egypt and South Africa.

His widow, the former Miss Florence Clementina Vere, granddaughter of the 10th Viscount Masserene and Ferrard, was not at home at Carlton-on-Trent Hall when the dreaded telegram arrived on the night of 16 March.

She was spending a week on nursing duty at Nottingham and the sad news had to be transmitted to her there.

She would eventually reveal that his final three letters from the area round Neuve Chapelle were...

To his son:

"My dear little Hal,

I am enclosing one of the coat badges which I wore in S. Africa and in this war until this morning, when I received another coat from my tailor, so I thought you would like it to keep.

I hope you are a good boy and working very hard, and are a help to Mummy.

Your affectionate Daddie.

9 March."

To his daughter:

"My dear little Blanche,

I am also sending you one of my coat badges.

This morning I received from my tailor a much warmer coat, I am glad to say, for I find it terribly cold being out all night in mud and ice-cold water.

I am sure you are trying to be a very good girl and learning your lessons well.

Your loving Daddie.

9 March."

To his wife:

"IN TRENCHES. VERY MUCH!

11 March.

I have had some very hard

Continued on next page

Collingham wife's desperation

MRS MARY ALISSIMON BERRY at Collingham is desperate to discover how her 34-year-old husband is.

All she has been told is that Thomas Letts Berry was shot above the heart. The information came from one of his comrades in the 3rd Battalion Sherwood Foresters.

His pal wrote that Thomas had the satisfaction of knowing he had bowled over six Germans before being hit himself; and he was "very cheerful" when he was carried away.

But Mrs Berry was concerned that she had had no official indication of the seriousness of the wound and hoped that further particulars might soon arrive. A century on, official records reveal Corporal 17480 Berry had passed away on 13 March. He is remembered at the Estaires Communal Cemetery, 11km west of Armentieres.

RE's prepare to leave town

The RE's who have been training in Newark have been warned to hold themselves in readiness for transfer to a large camp in the south of England. Much regret will be experienced when they go. They have made many friends (and spent a lot of money). Their behaviour has been exemplary. About the zest and keenness of the men for their training there can be no two opinions. The marked improvement in their soldierly bearing and appreciation of their duties has been affected in an extraordinarily short time. Lt-Col Bland and the officers in his command have worked wonders without haste or fuss, but with incredible celerity. The familiar work of the mules and transport in our streets will be missed when they are departed.

And Rangers are off 'somewhere'...

Thursday 18 March 1915: Mr Godfrey Tallents of Coddington let it be known he had visited the Sherwood Rangers undergoing training at Sheringham in Norfolk to see his son, Captain Hugh Tallents, and son-in-law, Major Harold Thorpe of Coddington. He found the Rangers in "excellent" condition and expecting to move off "somewhere" at any moment.

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

In praise of Muskham's 'Hyena Lady'

'The idle rich' and disappearance of class distinction...

ADJACENT to the story about Mrs Cogan, *The Gentlewoman* insists in another article that "the idle rich" are doing their share of the country's work:

"Certain critics of our national life and character have for years been prone to sneer at our cultured and leisured classes, and have sought with some success to broaden the gulf that lies between one class of the community and another. Like many other popular and one-sided beliefs, certain people – mostly self-seeking demagogues – have generally regarded the nobleman and his wife as being of a lazy, lackadaisical, pleasure- and pomp-loving class, who live on the ill-distribution of wealth and the money earned through the labour of others. Beyond that they were not credited with the performance of anything with a tendency of being at all useful to the public, except in a few isolated cases...

"Peers are now serving their country in this War. Many of them, brave men all, have seen fighting in other climes and now gladly and nobly take up the gauntlet once again to defend the Empire from the oppressors of liberty and honour...

"They are among those whom the nation holds responsible for its success in this great War. And they are burdened with a double task. They are in a far more exposed and precarious position than their men, and because of that the sacrifice is greater. To them the regiment looks for leadership, for courage and inspiration...

"Looking ahead, beyond the gloom of the present, a new ideal can be seen, a new power gradually moulding itself into shape. It is one that will have a tremendous influence on our national thought and character. Out of this great human medley will arise a freer, bolder and more intimate relationship between the communities. Classes will merge and disappear, only to give place to a feeling of universal comradeship, and the barrier that has for years stood in the way of the cultured, leisured and lower classes will cease to exist. Snobbishness, let us hope, will go by the board."

Lord of Manor killed ... continued from previous page fighting since I wrote to you. Of course I knew it was coming off, but could not tell you exactly... We lost a certain amount

I am too busy, though, to write much, and I am out in the open feeling very cold, and will be in the mud all night, where, by the bye, I've been for the past three nights. A few of my officers have been killed, I regret to say, whilst the total of killed and wounded for my regiment alone has been three times the number of my father's house in P— Terrace [total number, 141]. Can you imagine me charging down with the Regiment shortly after dawn into Neuve Chapelle?

I will write more about it all if I am spared. There is heavy fighting before us. Yours ever..."
The next missive announced his death.

ILLUSTRATED by several photographs, an appreciation of Mrs Violet Cogan of Muskham Grange and her work for wounded soldiers appeared in *The Gentlewoman* magazine last Monday under the title 'How Gentlewomen of England Help the Wounded'.

Her staff consists of the matron, Miss J Torrance, lately of a famous Scottish Hospital; Mrs Worsley; two Red Cross nurses as required in addition to Mrs Cogan, who is a Red Cross nurse; and the RAMC officer at Newark.

A surgery has been fitted up where minor operations are performed.

The splendidly enthusiastic Mrs Cogan says: "The patients we have had here comprise all ranks of society from a student at Louvain University and a professor of music to the artisan and agricultural peasant class; and also the owner of the largest flax mill in Ghent, whose father is held hostage by the Germans.

"All have been happy and friendly together and it is a pleasure to be with them. Some of them have experienced terrible instances of German *kultur* and one of the patients we had here has given evidence to the Commission appointed to investigate the atrocities committed by the Hun.

"Another, a grenadier, actually saw women and children driven before the Kaiser's warriors as shields."

Mrs Cogan is the widow of the late Colonel Michael Cogan, RAMC, of Glen-Rocky, Gibraltar – and the daughter of Mr L S Leslie of Feltermar House, Aberdeenshire, and Hassop Hall, Derbyshire (27th Baron of Balquhain).

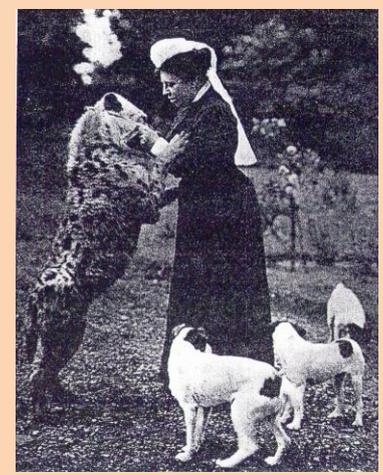
She has two sons in the fighting forces: her eldest, Captain Francis J L Cogan, 33, is now Flight Commander in the Royal Flying Corps; and her second, Captain Charles T S Cogan, 29, of the Northumberland Fusiliers, was reported killed in action at the Battle of the Marne.

Mrs Cogan received a telegram conveying the news along with Lord Kitchener's sympathy on 15 September.

And on the following day she received "a most gracious and sympathetic message" from the King and Queen.

For five days, she mourned the loss of her son. And then came the glad news that he was alive and on his way home, wounded.

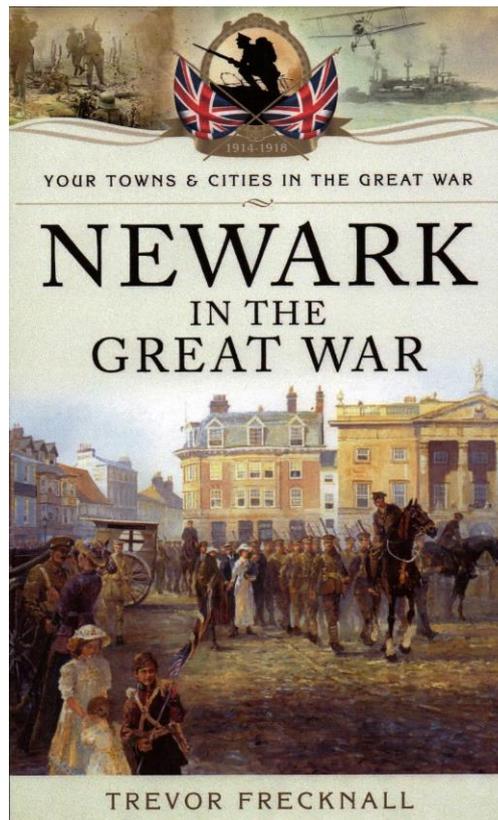
Violet Winnifred Cogan (nee Leslie, born 25 August 1856) not only survived her wartime battles as well as her sons; she reached the age of 98 before she died in London in November 1954.



Guardians of the Poor

NEWARK Town Council appointed overseers of the poor: Henry Harold Cubley, gentleman, of 80 Millgate; William Selby, butcher, 10 Barnbygate; Thomas Henry Smith, timber merchant, 46 London Road; and Sidney Charles Harston, painter, 23 Lombard Street.

Now read the full dramatic account of...



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