



## 'The shape of things to come': the Battle of Hamel, 4 July 1918

by Philip Dutton

2018-07-02 17:11:24

### *Prelude - a battle little known*

*Though hardly the immediate basis for a lasting 'special relationship?', a small and very successful battle took place on the Western Front on 4 July 1918 'exactly one hundred years ago' which marked the first time British and American forces fought together during the First World War. This attack represented the first stirrings of an offensive spirit which had been all but eclipsed by the demands of repeated German offensives, and one that displayed a number of novel and innovative features.*

'The shape of things to come' [\[1\]](#)

### **Background**

With but few notable exceptions[\[2\]](#), the history of British offensive operations on the Western Front up to the end of 1917 was not a happy one. Too often poor planning, inadequate resources and lack of surprise rendered the set-piece infantry assault a desperate and costly affair for those involved. Repeated attempts to take positions head-on resulted in grievous casualty figures. By the summer of 1918, and in the wake of successive German offensives, the British Army, though backed by massive industrial support, was strictly limited in terms of manpower. In consequence, principles emphasising infantry conservation were evolved and accepted as the only rational approach to subsequent fighting.

### **The Battle of Hamel**

It is sometimes overlooked that the German search for a war-winning breakthrough on the Western Front continued well into the summer of 1918. Five major offensives were made between March and July 1918 on various points of the front. But only a matter of weeks before the very last German onslaught took place[\[3\]](#), the British Army initiated a small-scale operation to the east of Amiens which had far reaching implications for the decisive fighting which would occur in the late summer and autumn of this the final year of the War.

The Battle of Hamel, which took place on the 4 July 1918, a date '*tactfully chosen?*[\[4\]](#) - American Independence Day - represented the occasion when British and American forces first saw action[\[5\]](#) together in the Great War. The attack, planned and led by Sir John Monash's Australian Corps, also saw the first ever attempts in the history of warfare to supply fighting troops on the ground by air.

### **Objectives, forces and planning:**

With the aim of improving Fourth Army's defensive lines on the Villers-Bretonneux plateau and gaining

observation up the Somme valley, Brigades of the 4<sup>th</sup> Australian Division, with four companies of American infantry[6], supported by 60 tanks, aircraft and precise artillery barrages, undertook a 2,500 yard advance to eliminate the awkward Hamel salient overlooking British positions. Careful and well-concealed preparations[7] underpinned operational success and extensive training programmes encouraged good relations between Australian infantry and British tank crews, who living and working together prior to the attack, developed a genuine camaraderie which did much to allay the Australian soldiers' mistrust of the tank operations stemming from their dispiriting experiences at Bullecourt in the spring of 1917. The mutual respect established between tank crews and infantry was exemplified by the new Mark V tanks going into the Hamel attack displaying, on their armour plating, nicknames chalked by the Australian footsloggers and the painted insignia of the Australian infantry companies they were supporting. Equally important, flying units were clearly instructed in their support role and additional artillery was allocated to the attack frontage. The vital element of surprise was retained by the gunners foregoing a preliminary bombardment, having accurately registered unobtrusively (by aerial observation, flash-spotting and sound-ranging) on their enemy targets beforehand.

## **The fighting**

Assault troops took up their positions during the two nights prior to the attack, and on the evening of 3 July the tanks, under the covering noise of low-flying Allied aeroplanes, were brought forward to their start lines.

At 3.10am the following morning, 4 July, infantry of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 11th Australian Brigades advanced with their supporting tanks behind the cover of a thick ground mist and devastating 'creeping barrage' the fearsome accuracy of which so impressed Captain Gale of the American Expeditionary Force: *'The barrage 'was most wonderful' the falling shells of the 18-pounders, exploding as they hit the ground, formed an almost straight line from the north edge of the action at the Somme to as far south as we could see.'*[8] Though a number of British shells fell short and difficulties with uncut barbed wire were encountered in front of Pear Trench, overall, the coordinated attack went exceedingly well. The more heavily defended enemy-held localities, Vaire and Hamel woods and Hamel village, were dealt with by special detachments, whilst the remaining attackers pressed on to their objectives.

## **A notable 'first': air-dropped supplies to forward troops**

During the assault aircraft from 8 Squadron (RAF) and 3 Squadron (Australian Flying Corps) flew low over enemy lines bombing infantry, guns and transport and 205 Squadron (RAF) bombed enemy dumps and bivouac areas. A notable first in the history of warfare occurred when 9 Squadron (RAF) dropped quantities of machine gun ammunition by parachutes - designed and manufactured by 3 Squadron AFC - to supply advanced Australian positions between Vaire and Accroche Woods. The following day the enemy copied this pioneering approach to supply when low-flying German machines threw out rations (without parachutes) to their beleaguered defending garrisons; several of these loads ended up in Australian hands.

## **A precise timetable**

According to Monash's original plan the battle should have been completed in 90 minutes; in fact it took a little longer. Defined objectives were gained in approximately 93 minutes, at a cost of around 1,400 Australian and American casualties.[9] German casualties were considerable and well over a thousand enemy prisoners, and much equipment, were taken.

Writing about the battle, Lieutenant-General Sir John Monash commented on how smoothly everything went, exactly to timetable (it took 93 minutes) and free from glitches. He called it *"the perfection of team work"*[10].

## **The precedent**

Though the total troop numbers involved (Australian, British and American) were not large, their conjunction in this minor enterprise resulted in a stunning Allied success and one achieved at small cost in lives. The action demonstrated that infantry manpower could be conserved by meticulous battle planning, painstaking training and the effective exploitation of new weapons and technologies. It has come to represent an ideal prototype of an 'all arms' assault, in which little was left to chance ' a model in which tanks and artillery were allocated pre-eminent roles in forging a way forward for the infantry. The academic historian C R M F Cruttwell, who had served on the Western Front as an infantry officer, perfectly summed up the significance of this largely unknown battle: *'This little action was the true begetter of the great attacks of the following months, for it taught most important lessons. It proved that really systematic co-operation between tanks and infantry economizes men to a surprising degree.'*<sup>[11]</sup>

A precedent had truly been set which would be followed successfully, and on a far grander scale, at the tide-turning **Battle of Amiens** the following month.

### **References:**

- *'The Australian Victories in France in 1918'*, Lieutenant-General Sir John Monash, Imperial War Museum & The Battery Press, Nashville, 1993 (originally published 1920)
- *'Military Operations'. France and Belgium, 1918'* (Volume III), Brig-Gen Sir James Edmonds, London, Macmillan, 1939
- *'The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918'*, Vol VI (The AIF in France: May 1918- The Armistice, C E W Bean, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1942
- *'Command on the Western Front. The Military Career of Sir Henry Rawlinson'*, Robin Prior & Trevor Wilson, Pen & Sword, 2004 (first published 1992 by Blackwell Publishers

### **Online references**

- Battle of Hamel chapter in the Australian Official History <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C1416794>
- 'Hamel ' the text-book victory? <https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/1918/battles/hamel>
- Photograph of supply drop parachute on the battlefield, 4 July 1918, Hamel <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C1319?image=2>
- Photo of an actual parachute dropped by 9 Squadron RAF at Hamel, 4 July 1918 <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C155083> Exhibit held by the Australian War Memorial

----- NOTES -----

[1] With due acknowledgement to the title of H G Wells' *'The Shape of Things to Come'*, Hutchinson & Co., London, 1933. Chapter 7 of the first section of this prophetic epic constitutes a distinctive analysis of *'The Great War of 1914-1918'*. See: [http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks03/0301391h.html#chap1\\_07](http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks03/0301391h.html#chap1_07)

[2] These would include: the dawn advance of 14 July 1916 (Bazentin Ridge) on the Somme; initial assaults at Arras in April 1917 (including Vimy), Messines in June and the early tank-led success at Cambrai in November 1917.

[3] Ludendorff's Reims-Soissons offensive ' the so-called 'Peace Offensive' ' was begun on 15 July 1918 as a last

desperate attempt to draw in Allied reserves, preparatory to the renewal of his Flanders' campaign

[4] By Fourth Army Commander, General Rawlinson: *'Military Operations'. France and Belgium, 1918'* (Volume III), Brig-Gen Sir James Edmonds, London, Macmillan, 1939, p.197.

[5] American troops first saw action on the Western Front working with the French Army, on 28 May 1918 when units of the 1st US Division, attacked at Cantigny, west of Montdidier.

[6] Four companies of the American 33<sup>rd</sup> Division were '*distributed by platoons among the troops of the three Australian Brigades who were to carry out the attack.*' Monash, p.52 Sir Douglas Haig had originally pressed for the inclusion of American troops and initial planning had been based on a ten company involvement. Last minute anxieties about the inexperience of his troops expressed by the C-in-C of the American Expeditionary Force, General John Pershing, resulted in a very late reduction of the American commitment from ten companies to four.

[7] Haig's admiration for Monash's powers of organization was evidenced by his diary entry for 1 July 1918 (after a visit to Australian Corps HQ): 'I spent an hour with Monash and went into every detail with him of an operation he is shortly to carry out with the Australian Corps. Monash is a most thorough and capable commander who thinks out every detail and leaves nothing to chance. I was greatly impressed with his arrangements.' *The Private Papers of Douglas Haig 1914-1919* edited by Robert Blake, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1952, p.316

[8] 'The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918?', Vol VI (The AIF in France: May 1918- The Armistice, C E W Bean, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1942, p.284

[9] 'The casualties of the Australians in the main operation were 51 officers and 724 other ranks; of the Americans, 6 officers and 128 other ranks. Five fighting tanks were disabled and put out of action; Five aeroplanes did not return,' *Military Operation. France and Belgium, 1918'* (Vol III), Brigadier-General Sir James Edmonds, London MacMillan, 1939, p.208

[10] 'The Australian Victories in France in 1918?', Lieutenant-General Sir John Monash, Imperial War Museum & The Battery Press, Nashville, 1993 (originally published 1920), p.56

[11] *A History of the Great War 1914-1918*, C R M F Cruttwell, Oxford, 1934, p.532

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## **Architecture, Memory and the Old Western Front**

**by Tim Fox-Godden**

**2016-08-09 08:25:36**

If we think about artistic responses to the First World War we are likely to conjure up images filled with vibrancy and movement: the works of Paul Nash, Percy Wyndham Lewis and Christopher Nevinson amongst many others. These visceral landscapes, whilst being stalked by death, capture so much life, too. Likewise, if we consider the poetry and literature of the war, we are confronted with the cutting satire of Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, by the gritty modernist visions of David Jones' trench and battle scenes and by the poignant,

elegiac writings of Rupert Brooke. In both forms of response we regard them as multi-layered representations of the experience and memory of war.

Now let us consider architecture. If we think of any architectural response it is likely to be one of these: a village war memorial, the seemingly endless names on the larger, national memorials, or rows and rows of white grave markers. As a result of this, concepts of war experience, memory and death within the architectural response have become inextricably entwined. There is no life in them. The architectural response to the war has come to represent only death.

Of course, most soldiers weren't poets or artists. Indeed, the involvement of mass civilian armies meant that for much of the war most soldiers weren't even soldiers. Most soldiers certainly weren't architects, but, for many, the most common creative experience of the war was an architectural one ' one defined by designing, building and living in trenches, and done so in the wider architectural setting of ruined villages, billets and blockhouses. Indeed, even the absence of architecture is noted in many a memoir. Strangely, despite these architectural memories serving as a framework for the veteran to hang the narrative of their own war experience upon, the architectural connection between war experience and the creative response to the war has not received the same academic attention as the poetic and artistic responses. It should not be forgotten that these 'architectural memories' (Chapman, 1933) were also the experiences of the nearly nine out of ten soldiers who returned, not just those commemorated in the cemeteries and memorials. My research considers architecture as both a reflection on war experience and a response to the war. It explores the relationship between experience, memory, and the architectural designs of the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC). More specifically, it seeks to understand the layers of memory, beyond the primacy of a death-centric narrative, designed into the cemetery architecture.

One of the central themes of my research is the role of the architecture of the war cemeteries in retaining aspects of memory that are as pertinent to those who survived the war and to those of us who still visit the former Western Front, as they are to those buried in them. The broader role of memory designed into the cemetery architecture can be split into two groups. First, the direct relationship between the architectural treatment of the cemeteries ' that constituting anything that forms part of the design, be it the entrances, perimeter walls, layout etc ' with the retaining or preserving of an aspect of the wartime landscape. Secondly, those aspects of design that do not literally preserve an element of the battlefield but use motifs of the landscape and the broader experience within the design, such as the architecturally inferred shell hole designed into the cemetery at Hedge Row Trench Cemetery.

An important additional concept is that of space and place; a space being a non-specific area and a place being geographically (or in this case metaphysically) locatable. In terms of a soldier's war experience, the passage of time turned the places of their memories into indistinct spaces with no relatable features. Their experiences became dislocated from the landscape - the home of these memories. Direct experience of these places and spaces was intrinsic to the design process enabled by the IWGC's policy to only employ ex-soldiers as Junior Architects. This decision ensured that the architecture of the cemeteries retained not just the identity of place, but also reconnected individual memories of the Junior Architects and communal memories of the returning veteran with the post-war landscape.

Until now it has been assumed that the cemeteries are arbitrary in both design and location. The received

wisdom is that the men are buried where they fell and the designs were purely practical. This approach has led to the dislocation of the cemeteries from the broader experience and memory-scape of the landscape they sit within. By placing the architectural designs into the context of the First World War landscape of the old Western Front, forgotten aspects of the design process that contain multiple layers of experience and memory are revealed. These revelations urge us to reconsider the architecture of the IWGC as important a response to the war as that of art and poetry. With the passing of the war from living memory, my research highlights the need for the cemetery architecture of the now Commonwealth War Graves Commission to truly be considered a memorial, not just to the dead of the war, but to the lives and experience of all who served.

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## **A Snap-Shot of WWI in 140 Signs - One Year On**

**by Mechthild Herzog**

**2015-03-10 17:56:33**

Battles rage on all over Europe. In Northern France, soldiers build 'living rooms' and 'tea parlours' in trenches, as the front lines cease to move in any direction for weeks at a time. Russian and Austro-Hungarian troops chase each other over the Carpathians. The British navy starts a military move on the Ottoman Empire at the Dardanelles ' being hampered less by the Turkish defence, but rather by bad weather. And in German kitchens, women try to make schnitzel out of potatoes?

Just over a year ago, the project [@RealTimeWW1](#) started to tweet about these kind of historical events and developments related to the Great War of 1914-1918. Masters students in European Contemporary History at the University of Luxembourg made it their task to give an impression of both general changes and personal stories that happened exactly 100 years ago (see more at: <http://ww1centenary.oucs.ox.ac.uk/teaching/every-day-another-history/>) Currently, the number of followers has climbed to almost 9000, with new people joining every day. However, this success story has not been without its challenges. For example, the database where future tweets are saved and then sent at a determined day and hour, has sometimes incurred a few mistakes which went unnoticed by the supervisory team. In one instance, a student tweeted about how a general, with a seemingly German name, promised his troops to be in Berlin at Christmas 1914. In actual fact, the general was Russian which lead to a whole new set of connotations and meant that corrections were needed!

There are also a number of temptations associated with the project which those involved have to be mindful of. One of the biggest being the temptation to tweet something only to attract a high numbers of clicks, re-tweets and new followers, positioning the content as second priority. Another temptation that strongly goes against the real-time principle of the project is to explain why a particular event is of key relevance: be it a final battle at one front, the highest number of casualties in the entire war or the last election that happens until the truce of 1918. The main idea behind @RealTimeWW1 is to offer its followers an impression of how people perceived the everyday life of war exactly 100 years ago. Events that are seen as crucial for the further development of the war today may for the people in 1915 just have been another war headline in the newspaper, just another battle that is lost or just some land that is given up but will surely be conquered again soon. Only it won't.



However, although problems can arise ' both technical and content-focused-none of them fundamentally endanger the project. After all, it is and remains an experiment: a work in progress led by students rather than professionals. The project evolves in exciting new ways constantly informed by its contact with the public ' including the dialogues that start with the discussion over a mistake.

This on-going work has led to some tangible outcomes already. The abovementioned database is now able to safely store and send, pictures, which was not possible in the beginning and the number of tweets contributed by the students has risen. The supervisory team has established a daily routine of controlling and filling potential gaps. Thus, not only is there a frequent flow of WW1 news ' the project has also achieved a balanced representation of fronts, countries and groups of people in the stories that are told: a mix of politics, economics and culture, of everyday life at the front and at home, of decision-makers and 'simple folks'.

The interaction with followers is very enriching. A constant exchange with the project's public has developed, though obviously all connected to the war events and developments. People ask for clarification, post additional information, draw lines to today's world, in which some developments seem to be so very similar to the situation 100 years ago e.g. the Ukraine crisis has been mentioned several times and the Cholera epidemic of 1914 has sometimes been compared to the Ebola outbreak.

While this exchange has mostly been with non-academics, there has also been significant interest among the academic community surrounding the project's Digital Humanities background, the pedagogy of teaching with such a format and, the benefits and limitations of publishing on a scientific level in social media with a mere 140 signs. To maintain and increase this exchange is one aim of the coming years ' next to the simple, but ever challenging ambition of continuing to tell the stories of the people living in times of the Great War in real time, only 100 years later.

To listen to a podcast by Mechthild Herzog about the project (with supporting slides), visit:  
<http://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/bringing-ww1-history-present-twitter>

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## **“Wyndham's War”: One Man's Account of Living in Ruhleben Internment Camp**

**by Derek Richards**

**2014-09-25 17:31:11**

My father, Wyndham Richards, was teaching in an elementary school in Cardiff in July 1914. As soon as the summer term ended, he took a train to Berlin in order to undergo a month's cramming course in German. When war broke out eleven days later, his four weeks turned into a nightmare four years. What he did, and how he survived, is told in the detailed diaries that he kept during his incarceration, firstly in Ruhleben, which was a Trotting Racecourse, then in a Berlin prison, and finally in a Military Camp for troublesome escapers. These diaries, which were found in the family house thirteen years after Wyndham's death in March 1966, have been interpreted and transcribed, and then published on July 24th 2014, exactly 100 years after the original sortie

into Berlin.

## **How the camp came about**

When Britain declared war on Germany on August 4th 1914, all of the British civilians living in Germany were, in the first instance, allowed to remain free as long as they registered each week at a designated Police station. However, on November 6th, everything changed. British civilians residing in Germany were rounded up and interned as an act of retaliation for the British action against German nationals in the U.K. No preparations had been made and the designated destination for the British civilians was a racecourse, with three grandstands and a series of horseboxes. The prisoners were marched in and placed six-to-a-box, until all the boxes were full, and the haylofts were filled up. There were men of all ages and backgrounds, as no-one had expected war, if it came, to have any effect on the civilian population. There was nothing for the prisoners except straw and a blanket each; the motley crew had to face a bitterly cold winter together.

Yet within days, a football tournament had been arranged and played, and after nine months, the prisoners had so organised themselves that they were able to persuade the German guards to withdraw from the camp, leaving the prisoners to run themselves. Moreover, they had football leagues, cricket leagues, a thriving school, a busy theatre, an orchestra of 70 musicians, an excellent camp magazine, a post office and a parcel post office, a police force - in fact they had a complete community - a British colony in the middle of Berlin.

## **Looking to escape**

But they were not free. Wyndham's diaries show all the frustrations caused by this loss of freedom, together with his own determination to escape. For well over two years, he worked in the Parcel Post Office, which at its peak was handling over 1,000 incoming parcels each day, and he was relentless in his pursuit of knowledge, attending classes in German, French and Spanish on a regular basis. His diaries only give hints about escaping. It was not until April 1914, when anote in his 1919 diary led to the discovery of two articles Wyndham wrote in the local newspaper on his repatriation in November 1918, that it was possible to find out how he got out of the camp. Of course, he later often left the camp regularly as a trustee, but the gentlemanly code of conduct operating at that time prevented any thought of escape arising on those occasions. His adventures after his final escape in October 1917, including his spell in the 'Dark cells' of the stadtvogtei in Berlin and his shocked arrival at Havelberg Military Camp, are all fully described.

## **Camp life**

There are many aspects of life in the camp that are covered in "Wyndham's War". For example:

*?British horse trainers were released because the Kaiser's horses need attention... A dangerous fire that broke out in July 1917 was extinguished by the prisoners while some of the guards did a bit of looting... A Ruhleben branch of the Royal Horticultural Society was set up... The first Christmas saw a production of 'The Messiah' with full orchestra and chorus... The Camp had international footballers and Davis Cup tennis players... Prisoners delivering parcels found some very obliging ladies in Berlin... Some people dropped out of escape plans because they were busy in a play.....?*



The diaries also address fascinating questions such as: How did prisoners get enough food, when Germany was starving? Who were the guards? Why were there so many German-speakers locked up in Ruhleben? How did they achieve such high standards in their schooling, music and theatre? How did many of the Ruhlebenites escape and how did they eventually get home? How did prisoners get any money to spend? and What happened in Germany in November 1918? There are just so many.

The diaries are, almost certainly the only ones of Ruhleben inmates that have been published. There are some unpublished diaries in the Liddle Collection in Leeds University Library, and many discussions have been held with Peter Liddle who has done a remarkable job in collecting memorabilia and recollections of the First World War veterans. Much of Wyndham's text was written in German script and much is actually in German. Some is unreadable and some unintelligible. But if it has been readable, it has been printed, warts and all.

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## Changing the Landscape: Mapping an Archive

by Sarah Kogan

2014-05-19 15:04:49

### The Project

*Changing the Landscape*, a multimedia arts project funded by the [Arts Council of England](#) and the [National Lottery](#), is a deeply personal exploration of the cataclysmic destruction wrought by The Battle of the Somme. The project interprets the unpublished correspondence of 150 illustrated letters and photographic postcards sent home by my great uncle, Rifleman Barney Griew, a furniture maker from Hoxton Square, London, who trained as a mapmaker and scout in spring 1916. The archive has been described by William Spencer, WW1 expert at [the National Archives](#), UK as 'unique' and by Luke Smith, digital lead at [IWM](#) as 'rich and fascinating'.

The project will culminate in an exhibition in London, 2016, the centenary year of The Battle of the Somme and Barney's death. It will bring together a mosaic of multiple image and text. This will include, for the first time, Barney's archive, a series of my own contemporary paintings and photographs, as well as a specially commissioned multi-screen video installation by independent filmmaker, [Jeremy Bubb](#). In addition, I will select relevant entries from the [British War Diaries](#) and feature a panoramic photograph shot from the trenches on the same day, in May 1916, that Barney and the London Rifle Brigade were assigned 'Yiddish Street' trench (so called because of the Hackney Jewish soldiers). This will be exhibited with my drawings, made within the National Archive UK Image Library. Barney's journey through France will be plotted with both archival and contemporary images on <http://www.historypin.com/> to coincide with the exhibition.

### Barney's Letters

I began researching the journey of Uncle Barney to The Somme having spent some years working on map-like aerial paintings of the obliteration of Passchendaele. These included strong photographic and sculptural references and focused on the psychological impact of the extreme changes in landscape wrought by constant bombardment. When I opened the box of Barney's letters for the first time, it was to discover his descriptions of crawling over No Man's Land to make maps, which echoed my own preoccupation, and the location of the

family furniture manufactory, just a stone's throw from my East End studio.

The project and exhibition will incorporate a multitude of media and references: abstract and figurative painting and drawing, photography, new technology, moving image, text and archival material designed to capture the multiplicity of viewpoint present in so many of Barney's daily letters and images. These are written to his brother Isaac, his sister (my grandmother) Fanny and his parents Solomon and Rebecca, who arrived in Hackney as part of the Russian and Lithuanian Jewish diaspora in the late 19th Century. Through his words and images we perceive the months preceding The Battle of the Somme as if through the monoscopic sight-lines of a rifle.

- To Fanny he sends multiple photographic postcards of places visited, using them to pinpoint his location (followed incongruously by drawings of French fashions).
  
- To Isaac, his confidante, he writes the horrific unvarnished truth: *'Isn't all honey dodging big shells etc. my pal, Middleton, sitting between Sam and myself was hit by a high explosive in the head and I hear he has died since. R.I.P.'*

It is to Isaac that he also reveals his terrible dilemma ' how best to protect his parents from the reality of war and the events he is witnessing. As the letters continue, we note Barney's decline, weeks before his death. His constant writing home, like daily modern day tweets, let us know again and again that he is still alive and breathing.

### **Tracing Barney's Footsteps**

In undoing the censor's pen, I have been able to visit each of the locations where Barney was billeted and bought the postcards. One of the more compelling areas of recent research has involved establishing links with the descendants of the community in The Somme who billeted and fed Barney and the troops. On my first trip I was approached by a farmer and shown a hospital in his dilapidated barn, complete with the British regimental coats of arms painted on the wall. He then revealed a roll of British secret military maps, hidden up a chimney by his grandmother for fear of discovery by the enemy.

The night before I left for my last research trip to The Somme, I discovered an order hidden amongst the War Diaries. It was dated 30th June 1916 and detailed Barney and his fellow battalion scouts' crawl through No Man's Land to ensure that the barbed wire be cut for the commencement of The Battle of the Somme the next morning. By focusing on the intimate nature of my relationship with Barney and allowing his drawings and words to breathe life into the historical material, the intent is that the universal will also be touched upon.

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