

# Lexden History Group



- LHG Archive Exhibition
- Britannia Motor Cars – Made in Colchester
- WW1 – Life at Reed Hall and Buffalo Bill
  - REMEMBRANCE

**Newsletter No 55 – December 2019**

**Website [www.lexdenhistory.org.uk](http://www.lexdenhistory.org.uk)**

## Cover Picture

### LHG Archive Exhibition 4/5 October 2019 - Lexden Church Hall

Our exhibition was very successful and attended by many people who were



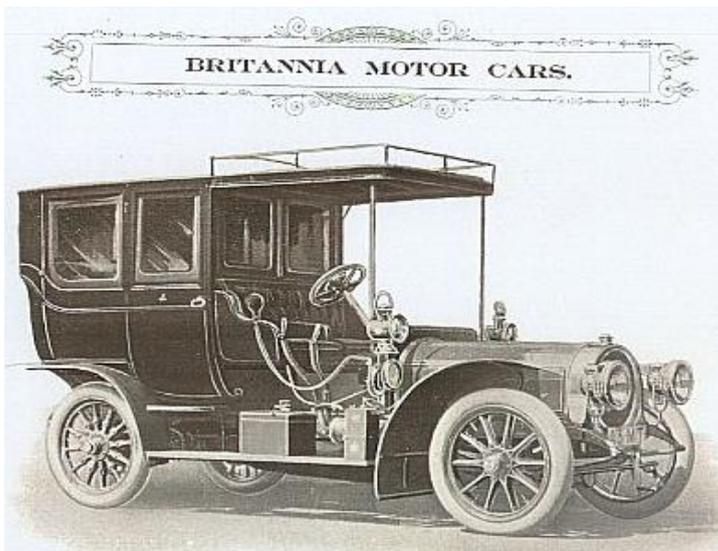
interested in the archives that we were displaying including old documents, newspapers, photographs and booklets about any subject connected with Lexden over the previous centuries. Thirty one children from St Teresa's Primary School came on Friday afternoon and were fascinated by the displays - especially the quickly

assembled tables of Victorian items (*left*), and in particular a wooden solitaire board with small marbles. They were amazed by the papier maché baby's bath, copper warming pan and stone hotwater bottle, not to mention the manicure set. They asked why scissors were included - "Didn't they have clippers?"

The Friday evening preview reception was attended by the colourful Town Watch, opened by the Mayor of Colchester, Cllr Nick Cope and enjoyed by many. Thanks go to Sonia and her helpers for providing the tempting plates of food which they also served. Thanks must, of course, go to Bernard Polley who keeps our archives in such good condition and readily available. They are so interesting!



In the 1880s Thomas Mayhew Bear owned the *Britannia Engineering Company* situated between St Botolph's Station and the Priory. He was an engineer and made industrial lathes, oil engines and also treadle drills for dentists. By 1898 Bear was in poor health and although the company was experimenting with an "oil-engined" car, the business was in financial difficulties. James Paxman made an unsuccessful bid for the company but rescue came in 1903 when the Nicholson brothers - Victor, a mechanical engineer; Hugh, an electrical engineer and Percy, a civil engineer, bought out the business continuing the work Bear had been doing at the factory.



The brothers were very aware of the increasing demand for cars and a year later they put into production a more conventional design powered by a petrol engine. The motor cars which they named '*Britannia*' had two models 18/24 hp and 24/40hp with various specifications. The standard side entrance four-cylinder model (*above right*) was £500 but for another £8 a fixed glass windscreen could be fitted. There were three other models in this range but the more powerful six-cylinder model, the Standard Limousine (*above left*) was £850.



The width of the less powerful model was 32 inches and the other 35 inches. They were both similar in many ways both having pressed steel frames but the more powerful car had a four, not a three speed gear box, with reverse. The petrol tanks were under the seat for gravity feed and there was a petrol filter in the supply pipe. The radiator was a circular honeycomb with an improved fan on ball bearings and eccentric adjustment. The automatic carburettor was fitted with a double throttle, one operated by the clutch pedal and the other by control on the steering wheel. The foot brake was powerful and the hand brake had a lever to take out the clutch.

and the other by control on the steering wheel. The foot brake was powerful and the hand brake had a lever to take out the clutch.

The company now traded under the changed name *The British Motor Carriage Co.*

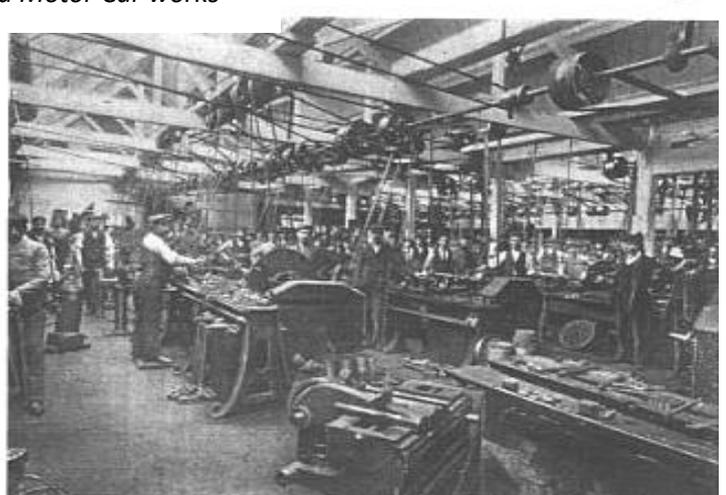
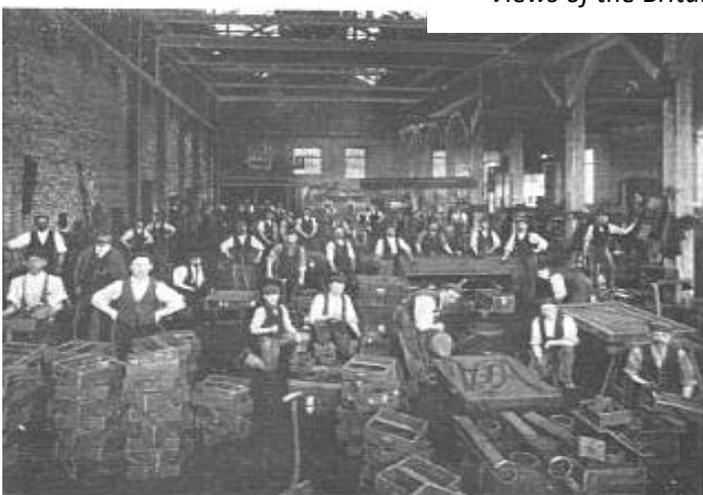
*Ltd'* with the directors Victor, Hugh and Percy Nicholson. Although their catalogue contained glowing testimonials from satisfied customers, few models were made and they were not always reliable. There was also a guarantee 'to replace in our Factory, Free of Charge, . . . any part manufactured and supplied by us, found within six months after delivery to be defective in material and workmanship'. However, Nicholson had to call on local motor bus proprietor, Arthur Berry of Port Lane, to re-bore many of the cars' cylinders.

Sales had been placed in the hands of the Victoria Carriage Works Ltd in rented showroom premises in Long Acre in the west end of London to display the cars, but as the price range of the models was between £500 and £850 (very expensive in the early 1900s) sales were somewhat limited in spite of hire purchase arrangements being available. The cars were not a great success and coupled with a limited market and stiff competition from new manufacturers in the Midlands, the *Britannia* cars ceased being made in 1908.

The Nicholson brothers continued in business but without making cars and moved into producing oil engines and metal-turning lathes. The company also offered a 4-inch standard lathe at £34. In 1912 the Britannia business closed down and the site remained unused until 1914 when, with the Nicholsons still in ownership, the factory was put to use manufacturing munitions and war supplies.



*Views of the Britannia Motor Car works*



Today all signs of the former Britannia enterprise have disappeared and now there is a car park on the site (*opposite*) where once motor cars were made. On a brick

wall at St Botolph's, the home of the Britannia works, there is a plaque recording the days when the factory was in operation, including a mention of the cars.

The Nicholson brothers had been born in Cork, Ireland; Hugh Godfrey in 1876, Victor Ralph in 1878 and Percy Claude in 1879 and by 1901 both Hugh and Victor were boarding in St Isaac's Walk in Colchester. They appeared to be very close, living together for much of their later adult life although at one time Victor is recorded as living at 4 The Avenue, Lexden. Hugh, known as Godfrey, had been educated at the Royal Naval College in Kent and then at the Royal University of Ireland. He passed with honours the City of Guilds examinations in London and was a premium pupil with General Electric Company at Peel Works in Salford where he remained for over five years. He then returned to Cork to help construct the tramways. Later the two brothers moved together to Sunbury on Thames, Surrey, and are recorded in the 1939 Register as, respectively, Electrical and Mechanical engineers. Hugh died a wealthy man in November 1946 leaving over £31,000 and is buried in St Mary's churchyard at Sunbury. Victor was educated at Hart House School in Cornwall and died in a nursing home in Weybridge in November 1953. Neither was married.



Percy Claude Nicholson remained in the Colchester area and in 1911 he is recorded as a visitor at Glen Mervyn in Lexden Road, his occupation given as a civil engineer, employer. The house belonged to Henry Goody, a local solicitor, but also in the household is Percy's future wife, Muriel Evelyn Mary Goody, daughter of Henry. Glen Mervyn later became the home of St Mary's School for Girls. Over the years Percy lived in different parts of north east Essex and for several years lived at Glengariff, Cambridge Road. He then moved to Frinton and in the 1939 Register is recorded as a retired machine tool expert living in Thorpe-le-Soken with his wife, Muriel. He died in Clacton in August 1948 and is buried in Cork. Muriel died at Essex County Hospital in 1966.

## **WW1 - Life at Reed Hall and Buffalo Bill**

**- Trish Terry**

We have all heard of Buffalo Bill (*right in 1903*) but did you know that he brought his Wild West Show to Colchester in September 1903? The show took place at Reed Hall which was later purchased by the army together with Abbey Fields and the area used extensively during the First World War.

In Victorian times Reed Hall was used for various events: in August 1885 a grand military display took place including mounted and dismounted combats and displays, tent pegging, lemon cutting, sword versus lance, sword versus bayonet, physical drill, quarter staff, bayonet and gymnastic display, officers' gymkhana races, maypole and quadrille drill. Three military bands were in also attendance.

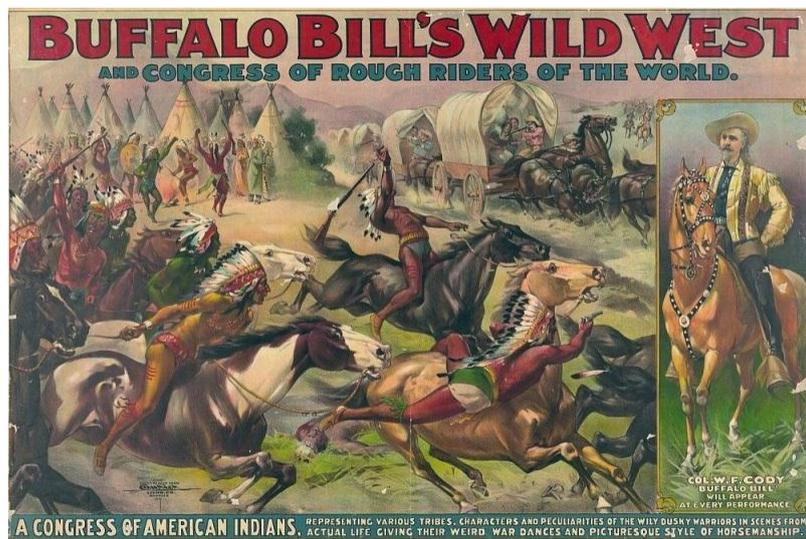


## **WW1 - Life at Reed Hall and Buffalo Bill**

**- continued**

Whitsun 1892 saw a Volunteer Fete with a showman, clown, music hall, vocalists, swing boats, weighing machines, numerous stalls and a firework display.

In 1889 Reed Hall became Colchester's Race Course! Colchester had held race meetings since 1<sup>st</sup> October 1754 although races at that time consisted mainly of matches and were held at Middlewick Farm despite the land being owned by the government. The course had 6 fences and a brook for a water jump and also a grandstand. Reed Hall was a left hand course with a circumference of one and a half miles but was rather heavy going when it rained. Racing continued there for 15 years until Monday 4<sup>th</sup> April 1904 when the land was bought by the army.



However back to Buffalo Bill - William Cody - who was the greatest showman of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He was a fighter, army scout, buffalo hunter and Pony Express rider and began touring the UK in 1887 making three visits. On 9<sup>th</sup> May that year the American Exhibition opened at Earls Court in London and even with admission set at one guinea the Times estimated the number of spectators to be about 28,000. The Americans

were eager to present their latest inventions together with agricultural, mechanical and textile products, but these were eclipsed by Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show.

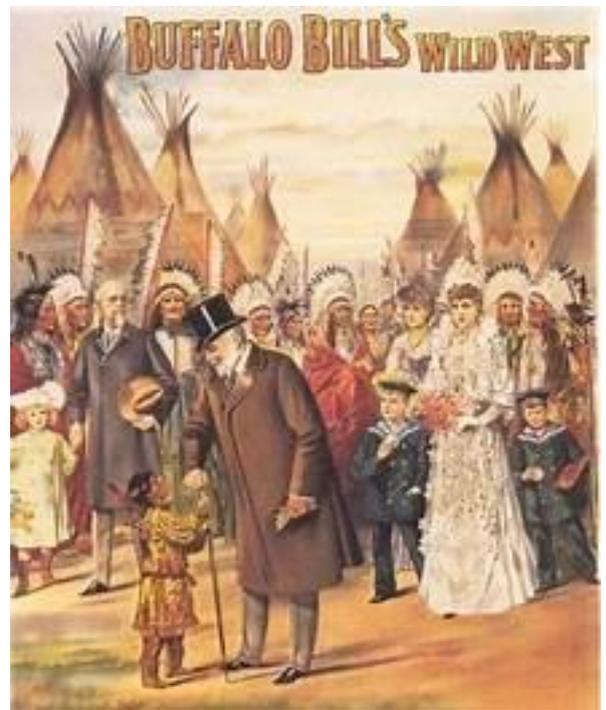
The exhibition coincided with the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria and the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII, requested a private preview of the performance and determined to arrange a Command performance for his mother. Two days later the Queen visited the exhibition and enjoyed the show, meeting the performers. This was quite remarkable as the Queen did not attend events having them come to her at Windsor but the show was too big to take to Windsor Castle and as the Wild West could not go to the Queen, the Queen had to go to the Wild West. On 20<sup>th</sup> June 1887 there was another command performance for the Queen's Jubilee guests with royalty from all over Europe attending, including the future Kaiser Wilhelm II and the future King George V. This royal support was seen to endorse Buffalo Bill's Wild West and such publicity ensured its success.

The show returned to Europe in May 1889 as part of the Exposition Universelle in Paris, which commemorated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Storming of the Bastille and featured the new Eiffel Tower. The tour continued to the South of France, Barcelona and then to Italy where in Rome Pope Leo XIII received a delegation from the show. Buffalo Bill was disappointed that the condition of the Colosseum did not allow the show to be held there but in Verona they performed in the Roman amphitheatre and the tour continued through Austria-Hungary, finishing in Germany. In the Sudstadt Quarter of Karlsruhe the inhabitants are still nicknamed Indianer (German for "American Indians") and the most accepted theory is that this is due to Buffalo Bill's show.

**WW1 - Life at Reed Hall and Buffalo Bill**

**- continued**

Cody depended on his staff to manage the tours for the large and complex show. The show's 1892 British tour finished with a six month run in London and Queen Victoria attended another command performance. Buffalo Bill's Wild West was away from Europe for ten years and on its return in 1902 there was a fourteen week run in London visited by Edward VII (*right*) and the future George V. It travelled throughout Great Britain for the next three years performing in nearly every large town or city that was able to support it, then returned to Europe for its final tour, closing in 1906.



There was great excitement in Colchester when it was discovered in 1903 that Buffalo Bill was coming here. Colchester Schools were closed for the day so that thousands of children could attend. The show (never called a circus) included 800 performers and over 500 horses. The men and women who took part had often been in the incidents they portrayed - the cowboys had ridden the range, the cavalry-men were real veterans and the Indians were real Indians.



They arrived at North Station early in the morning of 4th September 1903 in three specially hired trains and thousands lined the streets as they paraded to the show ground at Reed Hall "and a procession of Indians going up North Hill caused great excitement". There were Sioux Indians, cowboys, Russian Cossacks, an 8ft 2in Egyptian and a tiny 2ft Princess Nouma-Hawa (*left*). The roads to Reed Hall were chock-a-block with carriages, cyclists and pedestrians and by mid-day a spacious arena had been erected with under cover seating for 10,000.

In the afternoon the town almost ground to a halt as many shops and businesses closed early to allow staff to attend and the local audience watched an exciting display of horsemanship by Cossacks, Mexicans, Arabs, gauchos and Indians, shooting, a cowboy band, artillery drill and culminated in what was advertised as the greatest of living dramas "The attack on the Deadwood Stage". There were twenty scenes and the programme lasted two hours. Buffalo Bill thrilled the crowd by shooting from horse back at glass balls thrown in the air by another cowboy while they galloped around the arena. It is interesting to note that he was 57 years old at the time and wore glasses! The programme was repeated in the evening when, despite a severe thunder storm, over 8,000 people attended. By midnight, the entire camp had been dismantled and Buffalo Bill was on his way to his next venue.

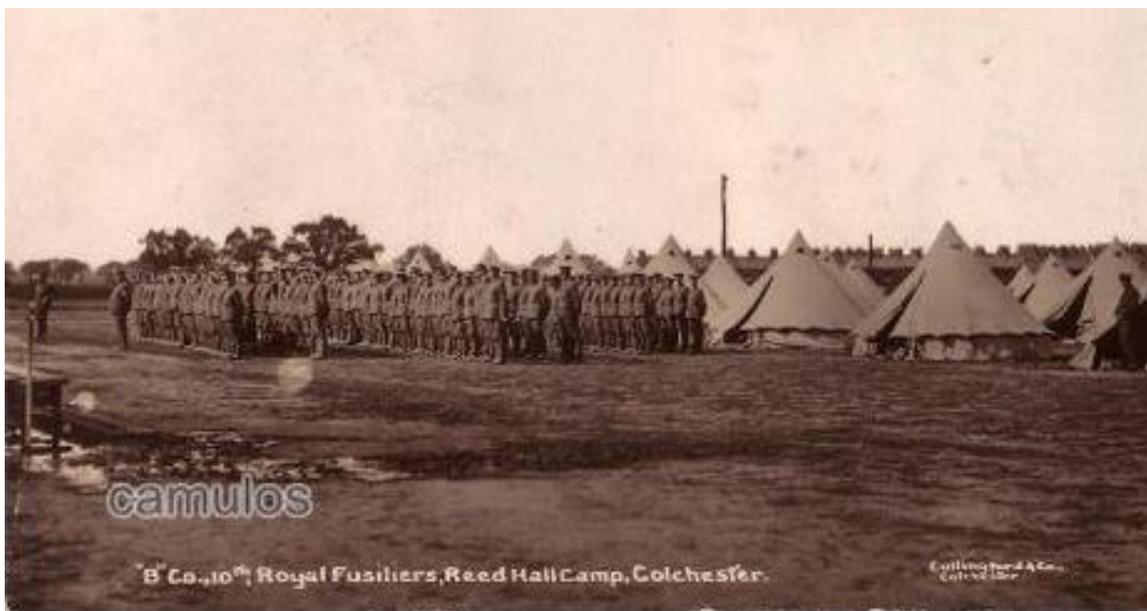
**WW1 - Life at Reed Hall and Buffalo Bill**

**- continued**

It was reported that when the show visited Essex the 800 performers and staff were said eat 1,400 lbs of meat a day, 7 cwt of potatoes, 450 lbs of bread and 30 cwt of other vegetables in the 2,100 meals served each day by 10 cooks and 60 waiters.

That is one surprising account of Reed Hall but in 1904 the government bought 785 acres south-west of the garrison including Reed Hall and Bee Hive Farms.

Ten years later when between 30,000 and 40,000 men were in training in Colchester, wooden huts were put up at Reed Hall and during the 1930s Kirkee and McMunn barracks were built there. (right)



While looking into the history of Reed Hall I have come across letters written from there in 1915 from Hugh Salvin Calverley. He was born in Chelsea in August 1893 and spent his childhood in South Africa where his father worked as a librarian and

archivist. In 1912 the family moved to Canada to start a new life as farmers in Ontario but at the start of the war in 1914, Hugh, his father and younger brother, Osbert, returned to England to join the military. Hugh joined the Essex Regiment and was later transferred to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion. Meanwhile, his mother compiled a comprehensive scrapbook (left) containing letters and memorabilia from the family's experiences during World War 1. The scrapbook is a "handmade affair with odd pages, odd paper, and bits of canvas sewn and glued together. The collection of Hugh's activities during the First World War is not chronological but happily stuck and stitched in a fascinating manner" and I have concentrated on his time at Reed Hall.



As a young man, Hugh joined the Signal Corps and describes both his training and battlefield experiences. His letters give some idea of his life at Reed Hall.

**WW1 - Life at Reed Hall and Buffalo Bill - continued**



June 11 1915  
12<sup>th</sup> Essex Regt. Colchester  
(Reed Hall)

Here are some pics (left) I took of the kiddies at the side of the road on a route march and at lunch time. It was a sweltering hot day. About a hundred and twenty fell out. You know what 88 in the shade and dust is like in the Essex lanes.

I am still in charge of the Signallers. We do map reading, morse, semaphore,

buzze and then march out and do moving station work. I am with Alle White, a very nice straight fellow, Seale's type only different.

Your loving Hugh

June 21 1915  
12<sup>th</sup> Essex, Reed Hall

Dear Mum

I expect you are picking berries. Dad is very fit and is still unravelling the much tangled mess accounts which were allowed to sit for a couple or three months.

I went to Flora's for lunch. Frank was there, a Devon B Company Captain, and a Major Liggitt, quite nice, and one of the Tufnel girls and the Garrison Adjutant. Flora is most amiable these days. They make her out to be quite different. I budded some briars in this garden with 3 Carmine Pillars, 2 Bulhrosene (sic) and 1 tea rambler. I will have some more films soon.

I went to one of Goddard's cousins with Robertson to tea, then back to the mess very quickly. I was given the job of looking after the mess flowers and the gardens, which takes quite a bit of time.

We had a field day at night with 2 lamps of the new sort, a telephone and 2 small lamps, starting at 9 and finishing at 1.15. Then we had cocoa, bread and cheese biscuits, a most enjoyable meal to hungry people. The Signallers are working up for an exam at present, which is quite hard work.

Our band is playing its nightly (7.00) retreat ditties "Here we are again", and classics of the drum and fife. I go to the hospital quite often. There are some Canadians there, also our Adjutant with a strained knee from riding. I am going to ride as soon as I can borrow an animal. There is no bathing in Colchester. One day I'm going to Claxton (sic) to swim.

Hugh

**WW1 - Life at Reed Hall and Buffalo Bill**

**- continued**

Saturday July 24 1915  
12<sup>th</sup> Essex, Colchester

Dear Mum via Gran and Viola

*It's pouring. A draft is going out soon and so everybody is very cross. I have been sat on for a week for everything under the sun by everybody. I have been having trouble with the Scouts to start with as they sent me all the tough necks, also an officer's class has been trying. The Bde Signaller jumped on me for not attending his revision, the Adjutant because I sent in a return wrong. Robertson because I borrowed his tyre without asking him, Alle White because he's been gambling, the Quartermaster because I buckled the back wheel of his bike, the company commanders for ordering them about, and the Adjutant told the Colonel I made him miss his supper. Wherefore the C.O railed at me at lunch asking how many bikes I had destroyed, and its pouring!*

*I like being on the staff, (as Dad is) have to train a super-numerary before I am allowed out. My super has been wafted off to Felixstowe and I will have to start again and train another. I am wondering if there is any hope in the Bde-Maj saying "Are you going back to the Canadians?" I answered at the time. "I will do as I am told Sir" at which he was very pleased. "Very good answer, very good answer" and rode away. Next time he comes and tackles me I ask if I can get back again, and may he come soon!*

*The scouts were a trial to start with. They argued on parade and I had to crime a man. He got 7 days C.B. (confined to barracks). Another didn't turn up and I had to report it. He got 21 days detention (prison) from the C.O. Now they are fairly peaceable and getting to do what they are told quicker. At first they crawled at all times.*

*I started them on semaphore and they can read slowly. Also I took them and the officers together in a buzzer which was difficult, as they glared at each other. The Scouts were noisy and the others at first blasé. The buzzer (morse) kept on buzzing and couldn't be turned off! After a bit, when they managed to get hold of \*EISHTMO they listened so hard you could hear a pin drop (one went fast asleep in the corner). The buzzer kept on buzzing da-da N, de-de I, da-da-da M, da-da O, till they could pick up them so quickly. The class was rather large, about thirty and large classes are hard for two hours on a wet day.*

*We are sending 140 men off to the Dardanelles and 5 officers; Sgt. Aistle Straight, Capt Brown, Lt. Moore and Alle White. They mayn't go for a fortnight or perhaps they may go at an hour's notice.*

*Thank you ever so much for your dog and Gran's and your letter. I showed the dog to Dad at breakfast. "One of my Wirehairs, you know, thorbred both sides", he said to the C.O "and they made it stand on its legs". I hope you liked the photos I sent you of me. (Right - Hugh on right, friend Seale on*



**WW1 - Life at Reed Hall and Buffalo Bill**

**- continued**

left) They were done when I was most fed up (or rather it looks like that doesn't it).

Dick Reade came today. He was wounded again and has got over it. He is going out for a third time in September." What he and the C.O don't know about the army isn't worth knowing" said the orderly room Sergt. MacKenzie. He is a most powerful person, boss of the orderly room.

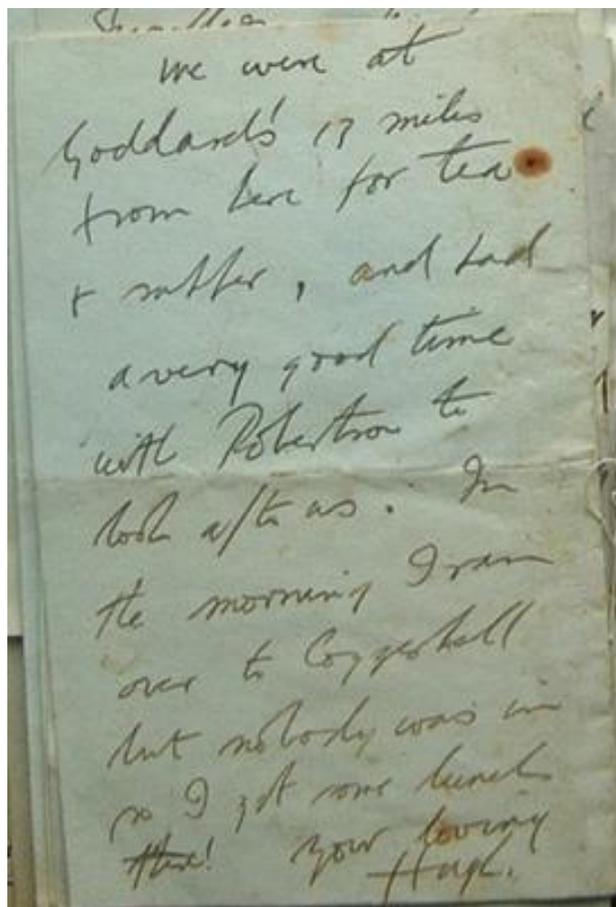
Moseley's girl has come to stay at Claxton with his Pa and Ma. He is younger than I am. He spends an hour curling his moustache and trimming his eyelashes etc. every morning! Robertson peers at him every morning regularly and has done so far for the last six.....

N.B \*EISHTMO refers to the instruction used to learn the Morse code.

I am twenty-one-August 30 1915, 12.15am 12<sup>th</sup> Essex

Dear Mum

I am twenty-one and have been so for a quarter of an hour. Never to be twenty no more! I went to Early so as to start well. Have now come to the conclusion that that is the only thing that will tide me over the rest of the time. There were lots of First Communion men who were confirmed last Friday by the Chaplain-General here. There were five or six from the 12<sup>th</sup> in it. One of them was in 16 Platoon before he formed the band. A very nice boy called Croucher. There were 4 12 Essex Officers there, which is a record. There are a gross of them.



Ch.../11/15  
We were at  
Goddard's 17 miles  
from here for tea  
& supper, and had  
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with Robertson to  
look after us. In  
the morning I ran  
over to Coggeshall  
but nobody was in  
so I got some lunch  
there! Your loving  
Hugh.

We are at Goddard's 17 miles from here (letter left), for tea and supper, and had a good time with Robertson to look after us. In the morning I ran over to Coggeshall but nobody was in, so I got some lunch there! Your loving Hugh

As a Temporary Captain in the 1st Bn Essex Regiment serving in Gallipoli Hugh Salvin Calverley was awarded the Military Cross in August 1917 "For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. Although wounded in the leg and suffering from loss of blood, he remained on duty for six hours during an attack, supervising the placing of his guns and assisting to alleviate the sufferings of the wounded. He did not retire to the dressing station until ordered to do so by his company commander." In April 1919 the London Gazette announced that he had been awarded a bar to the MC. That year he returned to

Canada, where he became a farmer and married in 1923. He died in Oakville, Ontario, in March 1971.

**REMEMBRANCE**

It is that time of year when we remember those lost in the First and Second World Wars and other wars in different parts of the world. It is easily forgotten that many thousands of non-British people also died in these wars and it is interesting to see how their dead are remembered.

The British were able to commission well-known architects such as Sir Edwin Lutyens to design enduring monuments in Britain, Europe and the Commonwealth. In stark contrast to the huge memorials and white individual gravestones of British cemeteries, German cemeteries are smaller, simpler and understated with symbols set directly into the ground, crosses and minimal borders, blending quietly with the landscape. Several groups of three basalt-lava crosses reflect the motif used by the VDK (German War Graves Commission) since the 1920s, although the original motif consisted of five crosses. There are only four German First World War cemeteries in Flanders and 13 First and Second World War



cemeteries in Belgium including Neuville-St-Vasst (near Arras, France), and Fricourt (the main German cemetery for the Somme).

The Langemark cemetery (*left*) was begun in 1915 with a small group of German graves and, during the following war years, burials there increased on the orders of the German military directorate in Ghent. The village was originally known as Langemarck but later the "c" was dropped. The cemeteries in Flanders were renovated from the mid 1920s by the private Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge (VDK) (German War

Graves Commission) and the newly established Official German Burial Service in Belgium. The cemetery at that time was named "Langemarck-Nord" to distinguish it from other burial sites in the area. The VDK secured sponsorship to carry out major work on two cemeteries in Flanders, Langemarck-Nord (10,143 war dead) and Roeselare de Ruyter (2,806 war dead). Usually eight soldiers, identified and unidentified, were placed in each plot and their identities given a grave number. There are also two Commonwealth burials at Langemark. A few years later oak trees, the national trees of Germany, were planted and now dominate the cemetery. It was officially inaugurated on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1932.

In 1940 it was reported that Adolf Hitler spent two days visiting the Ypres Salient area, including Ypres and the Langemark cemetery. He had served in WW1 with the Bavarian Reserve-Infantry-Regiment 16 seeing action at Wytschaete, south of Ypres. A local boy later recalled seeing a convoy of black cars near his family's farmhouse and then seeing Hitler walking with other officers in grey uniforms.

In the years after the First World War and also since the Second World War it was agreed that certain British War Cemeteries would be amalgamated and in 1954 a similar agreement was established to ease the maintenance of many smaller

**REMEMBRANCE**

**- continued**

German cemeteries. Nearly 9,500 German soldiers were moved to Langemark from 18 other nearby cemeteries including two cemeteries in Passchendaele and five in Poelcappelle. It was decided that the thousands of unidentified Germans found in fields and isolated burial sites when the battlefields were cleared would be moved to Langemark as there was space to create a mass grave. This was called the "Kameraden Grab", the Comrades Grave (above) holding the remains of 24,917 men and is marked "I have called you by name; you are mine"



Also at Langemark are four bronze figures (left) the Statue of the Mourning Soldiers, which mourn silently over the 44,000 graves. The slightly larger than life figures stand solemnly watching over many thousands of German casualties of war and immediately capture the eye on entering the cemetery through the gatehouse building. The statue, originally located near the cemetery entrance, was later moved to the western

boundary. The statue, said to stand guard over the fallen, was created by Munich sculptor Professor Emil Krieger and added in 1956.

His inspiration was a photograph (right) taken in 1918 of German soldiers from the Reserve Infanterie-Regiment 238 mourning at the funeral of a comrade in 1918. The man second from the right was killed two days later.



The sculptor, Emil Krieger, was born in 1902 at Kaiserslautern and died in Munich in 1979. He studied woodcarving at the Meisterschule and in 1921 attended the Kunstgewerbschule in Munich. He was an



artist and sculptor who used bronze, wood, stone and terracotta and by 1928 had his first exhibition. He also created the bust of Richard Wagner at the Bayerisches Nationaltheater and taught at the Munich Academy for over thirty years.

Bavarian War Memorial (left) in the Hofgarten, Munich was built in 1924/5 to commemorate 13,000 Munich men. It lies in a sunken plaza in front of the

## REMEMBRANCE

- continued

Bayerische Staatskanzlei, a government building formerly an army museum, and the design and colouring of the limestone slab that rests on the memorial makes it very low key.



It was originally topped by a marble sculpture "The Sleeping Soldier" (*left*) by Bernhard Bleeker and the names of the 13,000 Munich soldiers lost in WW1 together with expressionist carvings by Karl Knappe. However, Munich experienced heavy Allied bombing during the Second World War, and while Bleeker's soldier and his crypt were largely spared, the plates bearing the names of the dead soldiers were

destroyed. After the war, the American military government initially forbade Bleeker (a Nazi Party member since 1932) to renovate his work and while the memorial did reopen in 1948, the names of the dead were never restored. The figure is now in the Feldherrnhalle, Munich.

At Roggevelde Cemetery near Vladslo in Belgium are two statues "Die Eltern" (The Parents), (*right*) grieving for their lost son. They were designed by Kathe Kollwitz whose son, Peter, died not far from Langemark two months after the First World War started. She did not begin work on the statues until 11 years after her son's death, taking nearly six years to complete them.



Russian Memorials are generally huge and rather overwhelming and the country spent a great deal on creating them. It is little understood that during the Second World War Russia lost about 11 million soldiers. The four bronze figures (*left: photo www.moscow-driver.com*) at the War Memorial in Moscow represents soldiers of Britain, France, the Soviets and America who stood against the Nazis, who also lost huge numbers of men - about three quarters of their army against Russia alone.

At the Soviet Memorial in Berlin Mother Russia looms over the whole area and nearby is a Russian soldier buried at attention. Large carved stones either side of a central memorial lead to the mausoleum (*right*) and vast numbers of Russian soldiers are buried and remembered here. When seen in 1974 when that part of Berlin was behind the Iron Curtain, the whole atmosphere was very intimidating but it seems to have mellowed now. Large statues dominate Russian cities and other parts of the Eastern Bloc.



**REMEMBRANCE**

**- continued**



A colossal memorial complex, *The Motherland Calls*, was created to commemorate the Battle of Stalingrad (July 1942-February 1943) when over a million Russians were killed, sick or captured. In 1959 construction began on a hill, that had been a key point in the battle, to build a statue of a winged female holding up a sword. (left - Alamy Stock Photo) The highest point is 280 feet above the ground. The hill and statue dominate the city, now called Volgograd. Also commemorated here is Vasily Chuikov, later a Marshal of the Soviet Union who led the Soviet attack on Berlin.

Polish memorials are not so obvious, overtaken by Soviet memorials in that country. One, the Wola Massacre Memorial, records the deaths of nearly 50,000 inhabitants of the district in early August 1944 - exact numbers are difficult to determine. As a result of the Warsaw Uprising, German troops had been sent on orders of Adolf Hitler to suppress the rebels and organised mass executions, regardless of age or sex, between 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> August. The greatest number of victims were killed on 5 August (known as "Black Saturday"). There are, however, many memorials in UK commemorating Polish airmen, including one at Ruislip on the A40. (Left: photo Romazur)



After the Second World War many war memorials were built by the Soviet government throughout the Eastern Bloc including Warsaw, Berlin and Vienna, often before they erected such memorials in Russia. Then local authorities frequently wanted to express their gratitude for their liberation from the Nazis and also to commit to brotherhood with the Soviets. Now, two generations removed these countries are keen to remove any connection with the country now seen as their oppressor and such monuments have been moved, demolished or vandalised since the fall of the Soviet Union - many countries wishing to prove their "decommunisation". In Poland this was accelerated by a law that was introduced in October 2017 allowing local authorities to dispose of up to 230 Soviet war memorials within the following year after which such decisions had to be made by regional authorities.

An interesting variant of defacing Soviet memorials took place in the Czech Republic where the inscription on a monument honouring a prominent Soviet Marshal was rewritten to highlight the role that same Marshal took in suppressing the Prague Spring of 1968.

Remembrance and monuments have their own histories and the more they are examined the more fascinating they become!

**Meetings are held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month at 7.45pm in St Leonard's Church Hall, Lexden, except August when there is no meeting. Entry £1 for members, £3 for non-members, refreshments included. Annual membership £15 for single person; £20 for a family living at the same**

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## FORTHCOMING SPEAKERS

**Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

***Geoff Pettit Memorial Lecture***

**Anthony Roberts – St Mary's Church  
(Colchester Arts Centre)**

**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2020**

**David Whittle – Harwich Train Ferry 1917-1987**

**Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

**Patrick Denney – A Portrait of Victorian Colchester**