

# Slaughter: body density map



Body Density Map taken after the Battle of the Somme, recording the number of dead Allied soldiers found on the ground. Each of the smallest squares represents  $500 \times 500$  yards ( $457 \times 457$  metres). This is equivalent to a square from the rear of Hallaton School to Crow Alley off Eastgate, and from the bottom of the Bewicke Arms car park up to North End. Some of these small squares have over 800 bodies recorded and that takes no account of those bodies blown to pieces or just missing; or of the German dead. The four squares making up S4 (High Wood) were left blank, as there were too many to count and there was too much ordnance lying about.



# Hallaton: the pre-war village

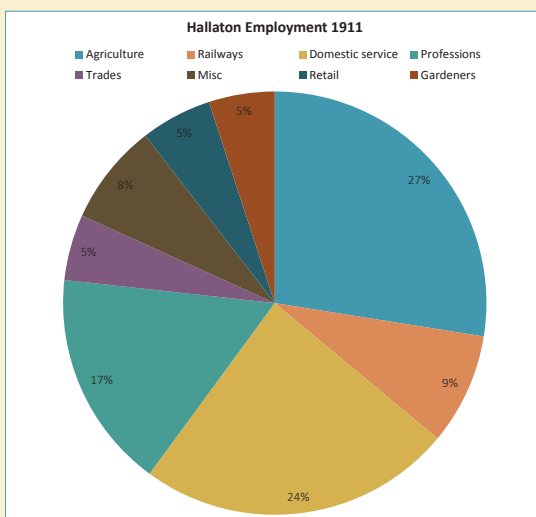
In 1913 Hallaton was a village of around 570 people with a 50:50 split between men and women. Most people worked in agriculture. Domestic service and the railway were the other main sources of employment. A farm worker earned around 15 shillings per week, a porter at Hallaton Station 19 shillings per week, and the Station Master £120 per year.

The village was almost self-sufficient, having bakers, butchers, grocers and a variety of tradesmen. There were allotments and many people grew their own vegetables. There was no electricity and streets were lit by gas lamps during the winter months only. Roads were not paved. A small house in the village would cost around £200, so most houses were rented and often in poor condition.



*Above: The Cross, © F. C. Hawke*

*Below: High Street and butcher's shop, © F. C. Hawke*



Entertainment was almost exclusively self-generated. There were village football and cricket teams. Every Easter there was the Bottle Kicking. Evening entertainment included whist drives and musical soirées. The school and choir often combined to put on performances and shows, which took place in the school. There were three pubs, probably used mainly by men. The church and non-conformist chapel were an integral part of the social fabric of the village and the two 'big' houses, The Hall and The Manor House, and their occupants, were still influential.



Life was hard for many. Life expectancy was around 50 for men and 53 for women. The school provided children with a basic education, but most left between the ages of 12 and 14 to find work.

*Left: Performers in the village production of 'Princess Ju-Ju', Hallaton 1906, © F. C. Hawke*

# Hallaton: 1914–1916

Hallaton's annual Flower and Produce Show took place on the August bank holiday. The next day, Tuesday 4th August, saw war declared.

Life initially carried on as usual. The Parish Council still met, the school opened, and church and chapel services went on as normal. Farmers continued to farm, though minus those horses requisitioned by the army. Food prices were soon on the increase.



Hallaton did its bit to help out Belgian refugees, taking in three families from Ostend. Slowly, changes in life occurred. Pubs were forced to close early and beer was watered down. Not enough to stop old Tom Ward receiving a fine for being drunk and disorderly!

1915 saw a national registration scheme for those over 18, recording details of employment, age and address. The local Volunteer Training Corps, a precursor to the Home Guard, was formed. Though the annual Bottle Kicking continued, other pastimes, such as the local whist league, ceased. Children helped raise funds to send parcels to soldiers and collected eggs for the wounded recovering locally.



*Above: National Registration card for Jos Van Puyenbroeck*

*Below: Hallaton Country Lad, The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News, September 1915*



*Above: Hallaton Volunteer Training Corps outside Hallaton Manor*

*Top: Empire Day certificate awarded to Eric Butteriss*

In 1916 the lights in Hallaton went out. Homes were blacked out at night and the Parish Council was forced to turn off the street lights. The autumn weather was poor and crops badly affected. There was good news as May McTurk and her Old English Sheepdog, Hallaton Country Lad, took the dog world by storm, winning every event they entered. He became the only Hallaton resident of the time to appear in the famous *Tatler* magazine.



# Hallaton: 1917–1919

For much of 1917 and early 1918 the home front was at its lowest ebb. Food was in short supply and people were encouraged to eat less, use less petrol and burn less coal. George Barnett, the village baker, had to replace wheat with potatoes in his loaves. Nettles and dandelion leaves were commonly added to meals. The Parish Council became involved in the drive to grow more potatoes and sought more allotments. In 1917 the Hallaton branch of the Women's Institute and a Mutual Improvement Society were formed. The former provided soup kitchens; the latter shows, talks and debates.



*The Plowrights' shop on High Street*

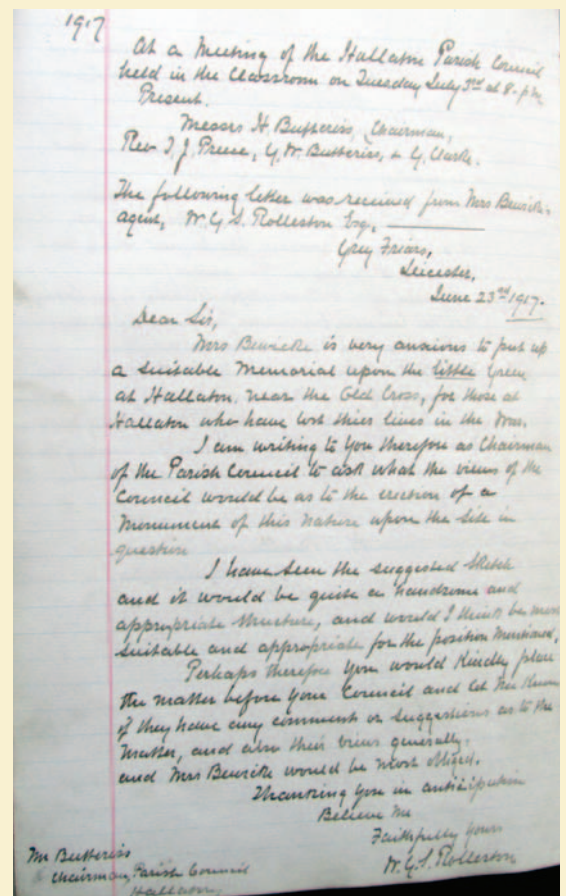


*John Eaton's beer order form*

On 3rd April 1918 the war memorial was dedicated. Later that year most Hallaton women had the vote for the first time and the men started to return home in 1919. But to what? Tractors were replacing horses in the fields, but society was still class based and housing still poor. Some did not stay long, the need for work forcing them away. Largely, the village was the same as it had been in that glorious long hot summer of 1914.



March 1918 was the grimmest month of the war for the village. Two Hallaton lads were killed on the same day and three taken prisoner. The same month Mrs Dwyer, the cook at the Hall, succumbed after swallowing her false teeth. Food rationing was in place, and the price of beer and food was rocketing. The Bottle Kicking continued but with vastly diminished crowds.



*Above: Parish Council minutes discussing Hallaton's war memorial*

*Left: Dedication of Hallaton's war memorial*



# The Munitionettes

As the scale and duration of the First World War escalated, in Britain a Ministry of Munitions was created and the role of women became invaluable. Employed in factories where the work was dirty and dangerous, these women were known as Munitionettes.

In Banbury, Oxfordshire, more than 1,500 people worked in the National Filling Factory No. 9. Many of them were women, and they became known as the 'Canaries' when their skin became tainted by touching chemicals in the TNT powder they poured into bombs. Very often their children were born with yellow skin.



*Above: Munition workers seal shells, Banbury, © IWM (Q70663)*

*Top right: Ministry of Munitions recruitment poster, 1916, © IWM (Art IWM PST 0402)*



One such 'Canary Girl' was Phillis Hawke (née Collins), who married Edwin Hawke from Hallaton and lived in the village for 60 years. She is seen here in her munition worker's uniform at National Filling Factory No. 9, Banbury. She went on to work at White & Poppe in Coventry, and was finally promoted to Woolwich as a Fuse Examiner.

The highly skilled and dangerous work done by women during the war was probably the greatest factor in the granting of the vote to women, and in 1918 'respectable' ladies over 30 years old who were householders, or married to householders, were given the vote.



*Above: Women workers in the Fuse Shop, Royal Arsenal, Woolwich, May 1918, © IWM (Q27861)*

*Left: Phillis Hawke in her uniform at National Filling Factory No. 9*

# Service: Hallaton's women at war

Marjorie Fletcher joined the Red Cross and became an ambulance driver in France. In July 1917 she was based at the coastal town of Étretat transporting the wounded from the station to hospital. She also worked at the British army base at Étaples. The job was stressful and hard work and the women were expected to repair the vehicles themselves. There was also danger as the coastal towns were often bombed by the Germans. She remained in France until April 1919 and is the only Hallaton woman known to have received the British War and Victory Medals.



*Above: VAD motor driver, © IWM (Art 3824)*



*Left: VAD ambulance crew and nurses at Étretat*

Milly Grocock became a Sister at the 5th General Hospital in Leicester, helping to deal with the 50,000 plus patients the hospital treated during the war. She served there throughout the entire war and witnessed terrible sights on a daily basis.

*"One boy has two fractured legs with gaping wounds... another has a gash from the mouth along the jaw down the neck and onto his shoulder. It is sewn up as far as the jaw and then all the length of the jaw is an open dirty gash. Another has been gassed. It is hellish. His body literally scorched nearly black all over whilst some parts are a mass of blisters as from burns."*



*Above: Interior of ward, 5th General Hospital, Leicester*

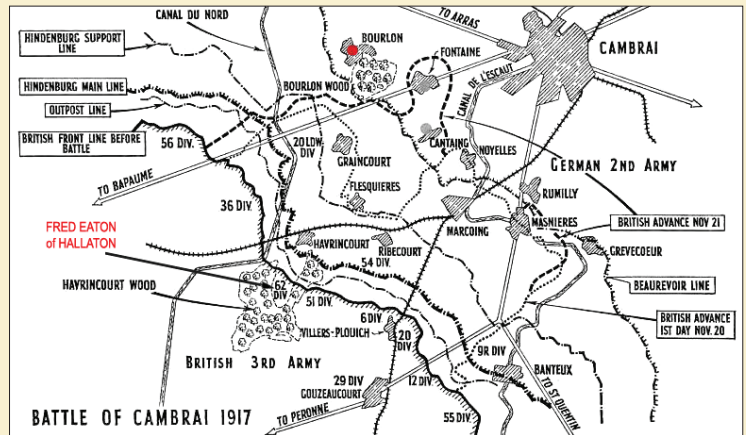
*Left: Milly Grocock, Christmas 1914*



# Slaughter: Cambrai – winter 1917

20th November–7th December 1917

At 6.20 am on the morning of 20th November 1917, over 350 British tanks crashed through the German wire and front lines, supported by thousands of troops and a 1000 gun ferocious barrage aimed at the Hindenburg Line. The Germans were caught completely by surprise. Such was the success church bells were rung in Britain and the attack was continued over the following days.



*A Mark IV tank and men of 1st Battalion Leicestershire Regiment, © IWM (Q6432)*



*Men of 1st Battalion Leicestershire Regiment in a captured trench, © IWM (Q6729)*

The joy was premature. Heavy fighting continued, especially in Bourlon Wood. Then the weather turned and it began to snow. At 7.30 am on 30th November the Germans, moving fast with lightly armed storm troops, launched their biggest assault against the British for over two years. Many British troops, effectively cut off, were forced into a desperate rear guard action lasting several days. The command structure broke down and a headlong retreat became a rout, eventually stemmed by a brave counter-attack by the Guards Division, including James Horsley and Carl Gray from Hallaton.



After its initial success the British attack had failed at the expense of over 44,000 casualties, including 6000 prisoners. The battle illustrated what massed tanks could achieve alongside a simultaneous artillery bombardment, but also gave the Germans the opportunity to try out their own new attack tactics, which they would use to devastating effect at places like Épehy the following spring.

At least 20 men from Hallaton were involved in the Battle of Cambrai.

*Little girl rescued by British soldier, © IWM (Q3209)*

# Slaughter: Épehy – death of a village

## Nine Hallaton men in one battle

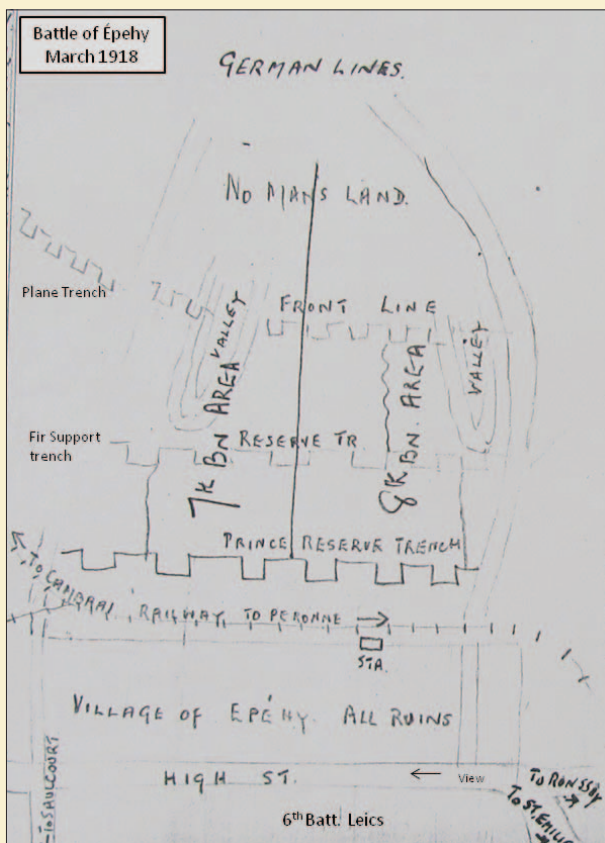
This is the story of the total destruction of a pretty rural French village and of the defeat of three Battalions of the Leicestershire Regiment, and of the nine Hallaton men who fought there.

Épehy was strategically important. Situated on high ground it gave a commanding view of the surrounding countryside and the German positions. However, it was just one small sector in what became known as the Battle of Saint-Quentin.

The nine Hallaton men were in the 6th, 7th and 8th Battalions of the Leicestershire Regiment.

*Above right: charming Épehy before the war. La Grande Rue (High St) from La Place de l'Église, looking north-west towards Pozzières*

*Right: La Grande Rue, Épehy, in ruins after 1918*



In the spring of 1918 the Germans launched a massive offensive all along the Somme Front and in the early morning of 21st March they attacked Épehy.

At exactly 4.30 am the Germans unleashed a ferocious bombardment of gas and heavy explosives lasting five hours. Then, hidden by the early morning mist and smoke, thousands of Germans swarmed into and around the defensive trenches. Deadly machine gun fire and vicious hand to hand fighting with bayonet and grenade lasted for ten hours, with the Leicestershire lads relentlessly killed, captured or driven back, trench by trench.

Of the Hallaton men, William Fox and Arthur Plowright were killed, Leonard Cort and Ernest Kitchen were taken prisoner, and the other five escaped to fight another day.



# Slaughter: Somme

## 1st July–18th November 1916

Even 100 years later the words ‘Battle of the Somme’ still conjure up images of horrendous slaughter. 20,000 British dead on the first day and 40,000 wounded. By the time it was over British casualties numbered 420,000, French 195,000 and German 650,000 — all for very little gain.

The objective had been to gain the higher ground, which the Germans held, by a concerted push along the whole of the Allied front line.

Over 20 Hallaton men were involved at one time or another and eight died (see brochure). One man for whom we have detailed accounts will illustrate the horror:

Lieutenant C. G. Bewicke, 1st Battalion Welsh Regiment (shown below).



The Battalion attack was launched at 04.00 hours on 16th July and was immediately held up by deadly machine gun fire — 10 killed and 49 wounded. Another attack took place at midnight — 21 killed, 18 missing and 51 wounded.

On 26th July an attack was made on Munster Alley near Pozières. All day the battle swayed back and forth and the objective finally won with assistance from the Australians. The cost in lives was horrendous — two officers and 113 other ranks killed or wounded.

To quote his Company Commander:

*“...Young Bewicke is at a bend in the trench ... it is a great relief to hear his Lewis gun open out. Without his dashing work... I doubt whether the men would have recovered... He died at his gun after he had done his bit.”*

He was 19 years old and epitomised the raw courage and stoicism of that generation who endured untold horrors.



*“That's How it Was, Mametz Wood, 10th July 1916”, by Jack Sullivan, © Butetown History & Arts Centre*



# Sand: Mesopotamia

*The scorching desert of Mesopotamia  
— site of the Garden of Eden and graveyard of an army*

*Sand in your boots. Sand in your hair. Sand in your eyes. Sand in your food.  
SAND! SAND! SAND! Damned sand everywhere!*

Called to the colours in November 1915 as Private no. 25676 and posted to 2nd Battalion Leicestershire Regiment, Tom Neale was already a war hardened veteran, having fought in the Boer War with the Imperial Yeomanry.

Britain needed oil and the Allies wanted to open another front to divert German forces from the Western Front. Mesopotamia, now Iraq, and part of the Turkish Ottoman Empire, fitted the bill.

After a successful beginning in late 1914, the British advance up the Tigris River had stalled and the main army was besieged in Kut Al Amara from 7th December 1915. The weather was awful — scorching hot then freezing rain, and sickness was rife. The supply arrangements were chaotic, with insufficient craft to ship ammunition and supplies upstream, and even worse arrangements to ferry the wounded downriver to the hospital in Basra. The British garrison of 11,800 men surrendered on 29th April 1916. It was a disaster.



Landing in Basra in September 1916, Tom was in the slow and painful advance upriver to retake Kut from the Turks. To the British soldiers, the Turks may have appeared exotic and unusual, but they were tough and resourceful fighters.

*Left: Turkish soldiers resting in their camp © IWM (Q86381)*

*Below: No. 3 Base General Hospital, Basra*

Tom was badly wounded on 28th November. It took ten days, in awful conditions, to be shipped downriver. He lingered on, but eventually died of his wounds on 8th February 1917 at No. 3 Base General Hospital, Basra.

Two of his Hallaton comrades, both of the Leicestershire Regiment, also died — Walter Tyrrell and Frederick Palmer.

*The Garden of Eden this was not!*





# Snow: Russia 1918–1919

On 11th November 1918, 2nd Lieutenant Walter George Butteriss, from Hallaton, was on Orkney, waiting to travel with his Battalion to North Russia. There, allied forces were giving support to the White Russian troops in their struggle against the Bolsheviks. It was Winston Churchill's plan to "strangle at birth the Bolshevik state."

He spent the winter in Murmansk, with temperatures plummeting to  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$  and daylight restricted to three hours a day. Walter was trained in winter survival techniques by Ernest Shackleton and his team.



*Top right: Walter's Battalion on Orkney, © The Green Howards Museum*

*Above left: Murmansk, February 1919, © IWM (Q16631)*

*Above right: Sledge convoy in Archangel, © IWM (Q16137)*

In February 1919, moving on skis or in convoys of horse or reindeer drawn sledges, they trekked hundreds of miles south to Seletskoe. There, Walter fought in a major battle against the Bolshevik troops. Conditions were terrible, with waist deep snow and many men suffering bad frostbite. On 23rd March Walter led his troops with distinction and was awarded the Military Cross.

The campaign was unpopular with the men and talk of mutiny was never far away. Walter returned home in June 1919.

Walter George Butteriss was one of Hallaton's most decorated soldiers. He was awarded the 15 Star, British War and Victory Medals, the Military Medal, the Military Cross and the Russian Order of St Anne 3rd Class, with swords and ribbon.

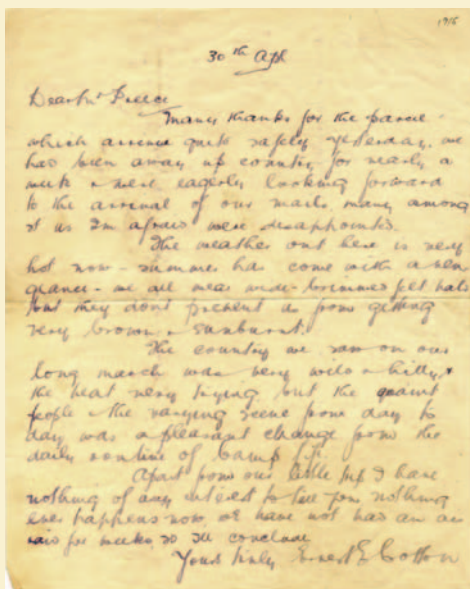


# Sun: Salonika 1915–1918

Salonika is a forgotten theatre of the war. Yet 600,000 allied soldiers were deployed there, including at least eight Hallaton men.

Troops started to arrive in October 1915. They spent much of the following 18 months in and around the city, turning the area into a vast military camp, which became known as 'The Birdcage' due to the huge amount of dense thickets of barbed wire.

The main enemy were the Bulgarians. In April 1917 British forces attacked them in the hills around Doiran. They failed, with heavy losses, and the front became stagnated for over 12 months. On 18th September 1918 they tried again and eventually succeeded in forcing the Bulgarians to surrender on 29th September.



Above left: British military camp, Salonika, © IWM (Q31865)

Above: Salonika street after the fire, 1917

Left: Letter to Reverend Preece of Hallaton from Ernest Cotton

Conditions were tough. The winters could be very cold and wet, yet the scorching sun made the summers unbearably hot. Salonika, though there were comforts and entertainment available, was not an appealing city and was much destroyed by fire in 1917. But worst of all, the area was very unhealthy. Disease was rife, mosquitoes plentiful and malaria endemic. The 20,000 battle casualties were dwarfed by the 480,000 cases of disease.

On his return to Hallaton, Jesse Hawke recalled not only fighting the Bulgarians with hand grenades, but also shortages of ammunition and food, and the daily allocation of three sheets of toilet paper per man.

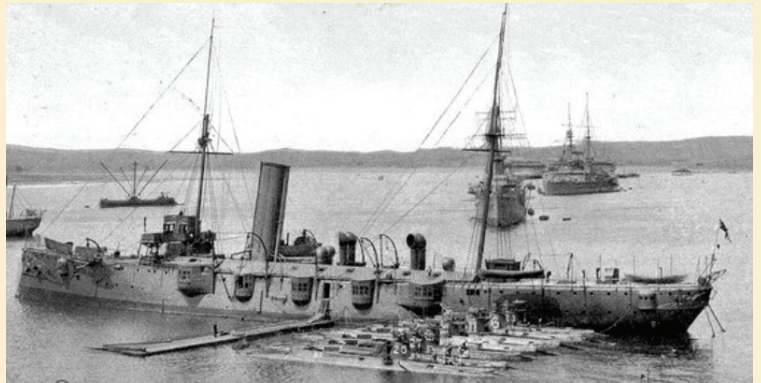


# Submarines: an extraordinary tale

## Hallaton's submariner and HM Submarine E24

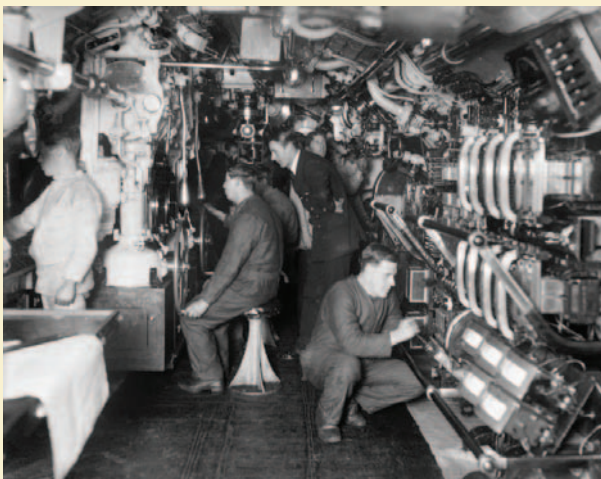
In November 1906, Walter Hubert Hawke, aged 16 years, swapped his life as a baker's assistant in Hallaton, signing on in the Royal Navy's Training Establishment, HMS Ganges.

For six years he served on nine different ships before transferring to HMS Forth in October 1912, which was part of the newly formed Submarine Branch of the service.



*Above: HMS Forth*

*Below left: Interior of E class submarine, © IWM (Q18650)*



During the war he served as a Leading Seaman on the E class submarines and on E24 in particular. Conditions were cramped, uncomfortable and dangerous.

On the morning of 21st March 1916, E24, with her crew of 30, left Harwich to lay mines in the Heligoland Bight. They entered the Bight in darkness and on the surface. They would not return home. On 27th March, E24 struck a mine and sank and all hands were lost, including Walter.

In 1974 the story took a bizarre twist. The German navy, attempting to recover diamonds and jewels from a sunken U boat, located what they thought was the correct vessel and towed it back, under water, in secrecy, to Cuxhaven where they raised her to the surface. To their surprise and horror she was not the jewel laden U boat but E24. Instead of diamonds they found the bodies of 25 British sailors. Their remains were quietly reburied in Ohlsdorf Cemetery, Hamburg.



*E24 wreck hanging in hawsers, 1974, © Royal Naval Submarine Museum*



# Swords: 14th July 1916

## The Hell of High Wood

Hallaton is rightly proud of their Private Emer Coleman Driver of the elite 7th Dragoon Guards, who took part in the daring and historic cavalry charge on High Wood on 14th July as part of the Battle of the Somme.

Almost unprecedented in modern warfare, the 7th Dragoon Guards and the 20th Deccan Horse, 700 in all, drew their sabres and lances and from Bazentin-le-Grand, charged at full speed, uphill towards the German position at High Wood and the adjoining fields of Delville Wood.



Above: Cavalry assembling prior to the charge on High Wood, © IWM (Q821)

Below: Lancers of the 20th Deccan Horse, © IWM (Q823)

Under this ferocious assault Private Driver and the other surviving cavalymen were forced to dismount and dig in. They held this position against withering heavy machine gun fire until the early hours of the morning, when under the cover of darkness they withdrew.

Although Private Driver survived the action, he was seriously wounded a few days later, and died on 1st August 1916.

It was a rousing sight, with the thunder of horses' hooves and the battle cries of the cavalry. The audacity of horses charging against machine guns took the Germans by surprise for a moment, but quickly a hail of bullets did their terrible work on man and horse. The charge would go down in folklore and was remembered by many veterans, not always 100% accurately:

*"It was an incredible sight, an unbelievable sight, they galloped up with their lances and with pennants flying, up the slope to High Wood and straight into it ... They simply galloped on through all that and horses and men were dropping on the ground, with no hope against the machine guns, because the Germans up on the ridge were firing down into the valley where the soldiers were. It was an absolute rout. A magnificent sight. Tragic."*



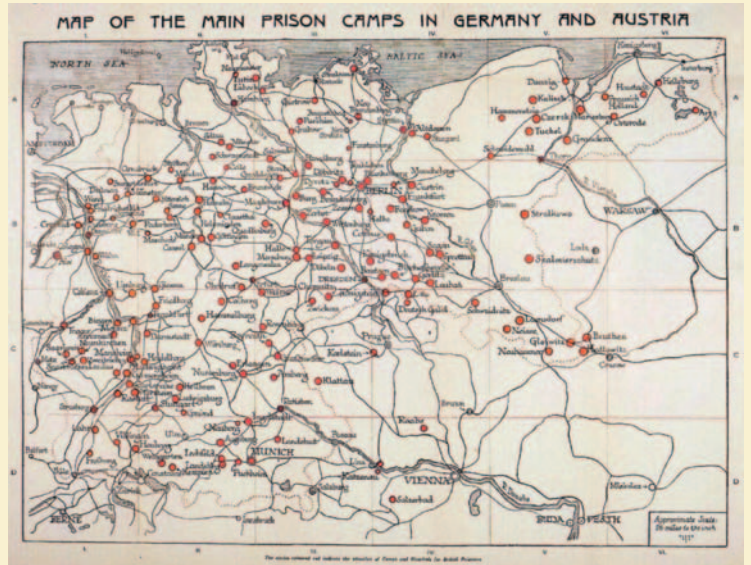


# Prisoners of War

## The plight of Hallaton's 'lost men'

British POWs are said to be ‘the lost men’ of the Great War — those whose suffering has been lost to our collective memory. However, the plight of Hallaton’s six POWs, all of whom survived, deserves to be remembered. They were George and Leonard Cort, Ernest Kitchen, John and Thomas Lount and John Waudby.

There were 164 POW camps in Germany and many more transit and labour camps. They contained around 170,000 British servicemen, 12,000 of whom died in captivity.



Hallaton's POWs, like most, were shunted around numerous camps. Two camps illustrate the range of conditions they would have encountered:

## Güstrow Camp

Three Hallaton men were imprisoned here, alongside around 25,000 others. Their accommodation was bleak, cold and sparsely equipped. Their starvation diet was desperately poor — their bread made from potatoes and sawdust, and their coffee from burnt barley and acorns. Their staple meal, potato soup, was made from maize and mangelwurzel (animal fodder) with occasional bits of scavenged fish or horsemeat.

				28 DEC 1939	P.A. 42877
1	2	3	4	5	6
Ep. Nr.	a) Familienname b) Name (nur bei Namen) c) nur bei Rufnamen Vorname des Dates	Dienst- grad	a) Trossen b) tit c) Komp.	<i>Dahmen</i> a) Gefangenschaft b) (Ort und Tag) c) vorhergehender Auf- enthaltort	<i>COPIE</i> a) Geburtsort und - Zeit b) Abstieg des nächsten c) Derzeitiger <i>Lebensort</i>
a)	396 Kennedy,	Lt Col	Arroll	20.9.18.	Glasgow, 12.10.22.
b)	John, 11865.		Glasgow	Villars, Neuchâ- tel. Jenumont.	20.-21.11.22. Wil- liams. Glasgow.
a)	396 Kennedy,	Pte.	W. Boyd	Malinscourt, 6.10.18.	Grosou, 10.1.19.
b)	John, 0990.		Rushall Fusili.	No.	No. 1. 1922. 10.0.
c)				Jenumont.	Mrs. J. Kennedy, Harrington, Har- low.
a)	459 Kilpatrick,	Pte.	W. Boyd	Carvillars, 17.8.18.	St. 1. 1922. 10.0.
b)	Blaine, 2055235.		Rushall Fusili.	No.	Mrs. J. Kennedy, Harrington, Har- low.
c)				Jenumont.	Box 2 Williams - Harrington, Har- low.
a)	493 Kirk,	Pte.	W. Boyd	22.9.18.	Littleton, 1925.
b)	Charles, 205540.		Rushall Fusili.	No.	St. 1. 1922. 10.0.
c)				Jenumont.	
a)	494 Kirkwood,	Pte.	W. Boyd	Goussiercourt,	Glasgow, 3.3.22.
b)	James, 205555.		Rushall Fusili.	No.	St. 1. 1922. 10.0.
c)				Jenumont.	Mrs. J. Kennedy, Harrington, Har- low.
a)	501 Kitchin,	Cpl.	G. G. G. G. G.	22.9.18.	Manchester, 21.1.19.
b)	Robert, 10974.		Rushall Fusili.	No.	St. 1. 1922. 10.0.
c)				Jenumont.	Harrington, Har- low.
a)	503 Konies,	Pte.	L. G. G. G.	Goussiercourt, 22.9.18.	Grosou, 10.1.19.
b)	John, 33734.		Rushall Fusili.	No.	St. 1. 1922. 10.0.
c)				Jenumont.	Mrs. J. Kennedy, Harrington, Har- low.
a)	504 Konies,	Pte.	L. G. G. G.	Goussiercourt, 22.9.18.	Grosou, 10.1.19.
b)	John, 33734.		Rushall Fusili.	No.	St. 1. 1922. 10.0.
c)				Jenumont.	Mrs. J. Kennedy, Harrington, Har- low.
a)	506 Lach,	Pte.	W. Boyd	Houary, 17.10.18.	St. 1. 1922. 10.0.
b)	William, 104160.		Rushall Fusili.	No.	Mrs. J. Kennedy, Harrington, Har- low.
c)				Jenumont.	



## Jeumont Camp

Only one Hallatonian, Ernest Kitchen, was interned in this notorious hell-hole. The mattresses on the three-tier bunk beds were stuffed with wood shavings — swarming with lice and fleas. The meals were often inedible or non-existent. Disease was rife. Dysentery was prevalent. Newspapers stated that of 416 British POWs incarcerated here, only 75 survived.

In these variously deprived, inhumane and tragic conditions, the Red Cross was a magnificent force for good. They acted as a conduit for parcels and news from home, which were critical to ward off starvation and maintain morale.

*Above: Ernest Kitchen's POW record, © Red Cross*

*Above right: The huge Güstrow POW Camp, North Germany*



# HALLATON SERVICE MEN & WOMEN IN THE THEATRES OF WAR

