

Issue No 1 Autumn 2022

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The Newsletter of the Halifax Military History Society

Editor's Notes

Welcome to the first edition of our newsletter under the guise of our new title of 'The Halifax Military History Society'.

I write this editorial shortly after the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Her death was announced just before the start of our most recent meeting and those attending paid their respects with a minutes silence before an excellent talk was given by Peter Walls about Paris in WW1.

Whatever your views on the monarchy Queen Elizabeth was a constant figure giving reassurance to many during times of strife and turbulence, particularly during recent years. The rendering of 'God Save the King' still does not sound right to my ears but I am sure we will all eventually become accustomed to it.

At our recent AGM the motion to change the focus of our society away from the Great War to military history from all periods was passed with a substantial majority. It was felt that with the end of the Great War centenary period the spotlight had moved away and the society should move with the times. Although we will now cover the full period of military history of this country the emphasis will, wherever possible, be on the effect this had on Calderdale and its people.

The articles in this edition still focus mainly on WW1 with an article about the English Civil War as an introduction to the October talk which will be given by Elaine Beach.

Rob Hamilton

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What's in a Name

Rob Hamilton

As some of you know I am an avid collector of British Campaign Medals. It is not the intrinsic value of the medals themselves which interest me but the stories behind the campaigns for which they were awarded and the individuals they were awarded to.

Although most medals awarded for gallantry are well beyond my financial means the pride of place in my collection was, until 2019, a Military Medal awarded to Siddal man, Fred Perry. Whilst serving in Italy with the West Riding Regiment Sgt Perry was awarded the medal for his leadership and bravery during a raid on the Austrian trenches in June 1918. Purely by chance I struck up a conversation with a man during the Great War Film Festival which the society organised with Square Chapel in October 2019 and it turned out that Fred Perry was his grandfather and I was pleased to return the medal to its rightful place, with the family.

This of course meant there was now a gap in my collection so I kept my eyes open to try and find a replacement. However, Military Medals awarded to local men do not often come onto the market and it wasn't until 2021 that a Military Medal, British War Medal and Victory Medal appeared on eBay which might possibly have fitted the bill. The medals had been awarded to Private 306908 W B Baron of the 2/7th West Riding Regiment. Perhaps I should explain here that the awards of all gallantry medals are listed in a publication called the London Gazette. The listing gives very few details other than the person's name,

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rank, service number, regiment and place of residence, in this case Bark Island. I have come across this before and on that occasion it was a misspelling of the local village Barkisland, so I took a chance and decided to purchase the medals.

SUPPLEMENT TO THE LONDON GAZETTE, 13 MARCH, 1918. 3227	
17,1548 Pte. W. Banford, R.I. Rifles (Downpatrick).	90014 Pte. E. Bell, R.A.M.C. (Luton).
5/27386 Pte. E. H. Banks, R. Bde. (Chat-ham).	47037 Q.M.Sjt. (A./S.M.) H. C. Bell, R.A.M.C. (Belfast).
241816 L./C. H. Banks, Y. & L. Rgt. (Leeds).	11307 Pte. S. D. Bell, W. York. R. (Seaton Delaval).
58842 Spr. A. L. Barber, R.E. (Kingston-on-Thames).	12124 Pte. T. W. Bell, S. Gds. (Cricklewood).
166702 Spr. H. Bardner, R.E. (Dunfermline).	21309 Bomdr. (Cpl.) E. Benfield, R.F.A. (Gloucester).
486945 Spr. J. Barker, R.E. (Smethwick).	241211 Pte. W. Benn, W. York. R. (Bradford).
405142 Pte. S. Barker, R.A.M.C. (Sheffield).	74767 Pte. W. E. Bennellick, R.A.M.C. (Cam-borne).
266240 Pte. W. W. Barker, W. York. R. (Leeds).	D.M.2/180185 Pte. (A./L./C.) C. F. Bennett, A.S.C. (Dover).
136886 Pte. L. Barlow, A.S.C. (Attleboro').	512556 Pte. J. A. C. Bennett, R.A.M.C. (Beckenham).
10823 Pte. A. Barnes, Hamps. R. (Eltham).	R/17846 Pte. (L./C.) R. Bennett, K.R.R.C. (Peckham, S.E.).
513493 Pte. R. J. Barnes, Lond. R. (Rodmill, near Lewes).	1999 Gnr. A. Benson, M.G. Corps (Belling-ham).
M1/06284 Pte. R. J. Barnes, A.S.C. (Not-tingham).	73432 Pte. J. Benson, M.G. Corps (Fartown).
283813 Pte. B. M. J. Barnett, Lond. R. (St. John's Wood).	6218 Sjt. J. K. Benson, R. Fus. (Darlington).
51042 Pte. F. W. Barnett, M.G. Corps (Salop).	19935 L./C. A. Berriss, R. Berks. R. (Henley-on-Thames).
74206 Spr. H. E. Barnwell, R.E. (Saltley).	93116 2nd Cpl. (A./Cpl.) J. Berry, R.E. (Ayr).
306908 Pte. W. B. Baron, W. Rid. R. (Bark Island).	243312 Pte. (L./C.) J. Berry, N. Lan. R. (Chorley).
8178 L./C. T. Barr, R.I. Rifles (Belfast).	556371 Spr. L. Berry, R.E. (Burton-on-Trent).
486089 2nd Cpl. A. F. Barrett, R.E. (Smeth-wick).	S/12093 Cpl. J. W. Best, A. & S. Highrs.
4956 Pte. I. R. Barrett, Lancs. (Rainham).	
25978 Pte. J. Barrett, Welsh R. (Clydach Vale).	

Extract from the London Gazette March 1918

My initial research bore immediate results and from his Medal Index Card, a record of the campaign medals he received during the Great War, I was able to discover that his Christian name was Wilfred. I then searched for his army service record without success. This is not unusual as only approximately 30% of those records survived German bombing during the Blitz on London but it became rather frustrating when I was unable to find any record of a man of his name living in Barkisland or anywhere in the Calderdale area from the Census records or any other records. A search of the indexed news files for the Halifax

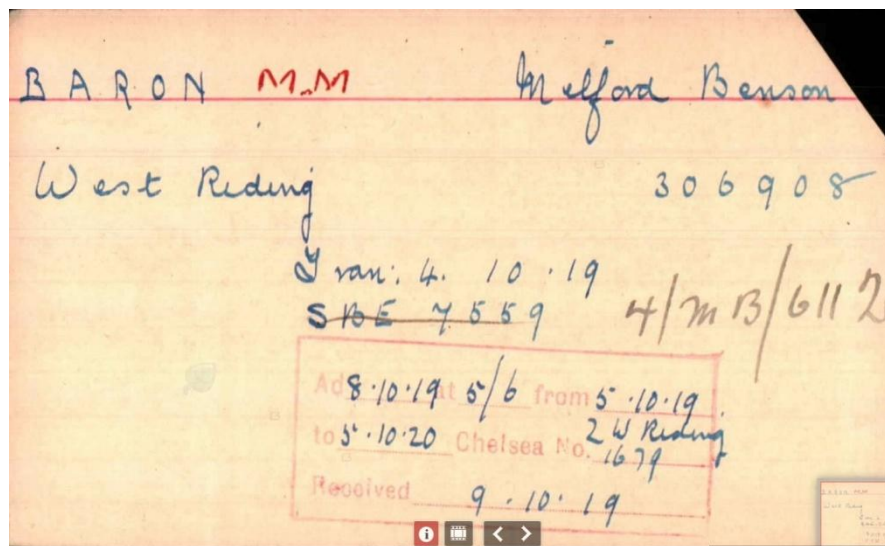
Courier also produced no result, I had hit a frustrating dead end. I then wondered if Bark Island was in fact an island somewhere off the coast in a remote part of the British Isles but a search on Google found no such place. I was stumped, not for the first time I might add. It is surprising how many soldiers of the Great War exist only as a name and number and it proves impossible to find very little if anything else about them.

Name.		Corps.	Rank.	Regt. No.
BARON Wilfred		W Rtd R	Pte.	306908
Medal.	Bell.	Page.	Remarks.	
VICTORY	0/2/01	25. 4382		
BRITISH	do	do		
STAR				
Theatre of War first served in				
Date of entry therein				

K. 1890

The Medal Index Card Showing the Incorrect Name

As a last resort, after several months of frustration, I subscribed to an additional online genealogy site, Fold 3, which has copies of British Army pension records from the Great War, and a search for Private 306908 Baron produced two pension records, both for a Milford Benson Baron. I had found my man at last. Now I had the correct name I was able to build up a comprehensive picture of his life.



Pension Record for Milford Baron 1

He was born in Stainland on 30th June 1894 to Thomas and Sophia. By the time of the 1901 Census the family were living at Barsey Green Farm, Barkisland where it appears they lived for a number of years as it is where Milford gave his address on his pension record from 1919. He married Annie Jowett of Westgate Hill, Barkisland on 3rd January 1924, at the time he was a farmer still living at Barsey Green Farm. In 1939 he was living in Stockport, working as a dairyman and he remained there until his death on 9th May 1977.

Although I was able to find out much about Milford's personal life his activities in the army remain a mystery. There are no newspaper reports or official records of what he did to win the Military Medal and one can only wonder why almost all of the official army records that remain, stubbornly refer to him as Wilfred and not his correct Christian name. We can only imagine his struggle to get the army to recognise his real name, perhaps he gave up in pure frustration in the end.

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Mytholmroyd Urban District Council War Memorial Centenary Commemoration

Mytholmroyd's war memorial was unveiled on 2nd July 1922 by Gilbert Hartley, a soldier who had lost both his legs in the Great War. To mark the 100 year anniversary a service and an exhibition was organised by Mytholmroyd Historical Society on Saturday July 2nd 2022.

The service was conducted at the war memorial by Rev. Daniel Miles and was attended by over a hundred people. The Last Post and Reveille was played by Holly from Hebden Bridge Junior Band and additional music was provided by the S'Majic Childrens Choir. The Royal British Legion was represented by Paul Tait from Central Halifax branch, the branch standard bearer.



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Following the service an exhibition of the history of the memorial and men and women represented by it was held in the church hall. Biographies and pictures of those killed in both world wars were on display along with notable survivors of the Great War including Ernest Farrar who was the uncle of Poet Laureate Ted Hughes who was born in Mytholmroyd. Ernest was the subject of some of Hughes' war poems which included "Under High Wood" and "My Uncle's Wound." Photos of local sports teams pre 1914 were displayed. Sadly, many of the members pictured on them were destined to appear on the numerous memorials created in the village. These were also on display. In the church hall was Rob Hamilton from the Halifax Military History Society who was on hand to run his expert eye over military artefacts brought in by members of the public.



In the churchyard there are over 20 family memorials to servicemen killed in both world wars inscribed on family graves and at least three WW1 burials of those who died of illness or wounds connected to their war service. One of the men,

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Thomas Henry Hitchen was the subject of an enquiry with the CWGC to see if he was a soldier “missed” by them and whether he qualified for a CWGC headstone. The enquiry found that he had indeed been missed and he should get a headstone in the future.

Overall the event was deemed a success and drew a large number of visitors. This included Barbara Jeffrey, the daughter of Gilbert Hartley, and her family which was a very poignant connection back to 1922. Gilbert is also buried in St Michael’s churchyard and his grave was also marked on the day with his story.

Wayne Ogden

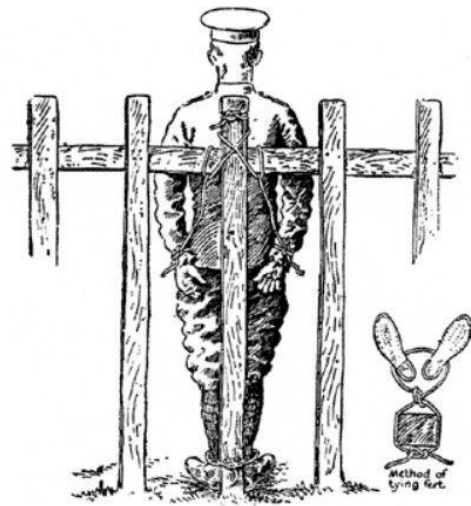
Captain Robert Graves and Private “Tottie” Fahy

During the spells of lock down over the last two years I have been researching the lives of the Conscientious Objectors who lived in Calderdale when conscription was introduced. I also read “Goodbye to All That” by Robert Graves, along with other books which I had been wanting to read for some time. Graves, who was a Captain in the Welch Fusiliers, describes Private Fahy, known as Tottie Fay, as an admirable servant and the only trained one left in his battalion. Two things drew my attention to Fahy, one was that he had suffered Field Punishment No1 and secondly Graves hoped that Tottie was still alive (his book was published in 1929). I decided I would try to find if Fahy was still alive in 1929 and my research of the Calderdale CO’s had turned up two men who had suffered Field Punishment No1.

Private Patrick Fahy was known as Tottie Fay after the famous and notorious Victorian actress who was in and out of prison many times over a period from 1879 to 1892, for larceny and drunkenness. Her antics in court and on the streets were reported widely by the newspapers at the time so she became a bit of a personality nationally. Tragically she was declared insane in 1892 and spent time in several asylums including Broadmoor and Horton where she died in 1908 at the age of 58 and was interred in the asylum’s cemetery.



The demon drink also led to "Tottie" - Private Fahy suffering the indignity and shame of Field Punishment No1. He had returned from leave and met an old boozing chum from his time spent in India in the army before the war. They celebrated their reunion with a few too many drinks and Tottie was put on a charge resulting in a 28 day sentence of Field Punishment No1. The punishment was introduced into the British Army in 1881 when flogging was abolished. The convicted man was restrained by tying



the arms and legs to a fixed object such as a gun wheel or fence post for up to 2 hours every day for the period of the sentence. The punishment was known as "crucifixion" because sometimes the man was tied with his arms outstretched. In fact Tottie was tied, spread-eagled to the wheel of a limber, by his ankles and wrists in the form of an X. (A limber is a two wheeled cart designed to support the rear of an artillery gun in transit). Graves was not aware of Fahy's predicament until the following morning when he found his buttons unpolished and no warm water for shaving. When Graves discovered Fahy tied to the wheel he said he could never forget the look that his quiet, respectful, devoted Tottie gave him. "He wanted to tell me he regretted having let me down, and his immediate reaction was an attempt to salute. I could see him vainly trying to lift his hand to his forehead, and bring his heels together." It was said that the punishment was more uncomfortable than painful, it had more of impact on the man's pride and self respect.

Fahy was married before the war and had a son and two daughters. In June 1916 his term of engagement as a reservist expired so he was discharged but would be called up under the Military Service Act. However he found work of national importance so his war was over. So when Graves was hoping that Tottie was still alive he was, but was to die seven years later at the relatively young age of 55. Graves would have

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been pleased to know that Tottie, a Park Attendant, was still alive when his eldest daughter was married a year before he died.

Graham Bradshaw

The English Civil War – An Introduction

When an appeal was made for speakers for our monthly meetings I volunteered to look at the English Civil War Halifax and the Calder Valley, in keeping with our group's intention of studying the local effects of the war. I realised that I knew very little. Basically, that the King, Charles 1, had a feud with Parliament and a guy called Oliver Cromwell which turned to war. Charles was captured and condemned to death and was executed and Parliament governed the country for the next few years.

Unfortunately the Halifax Courier was not around at this time. I also realised that I should not assume that other people's ignorance was the same as mine. I spoke with the military expert, Rob, and he confessed he knew little. I got the same response from others in the group. So - here is some basic background.

Parliament thought that they should be in charge of everything and that the King should do as they said. The King thought that he had Divine Right to rule his country and that Parliament should do as he decreed. There were also religious differences. The King was in favour of increasing religious tolerance - not persecuting Roman Catholics. Parliament encouraged the Puritan cause.

Meanwhile in Scotland there was greater controversy. Charles wanted to reform the church - all services to be as the Church of England. This was not well received either by Puritans or Roman Catholics. He also intended to claim back land that had been taken from the Catholic Church after the Reformation. Sale of this would finance his future



Charles I

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intentions in England. This infuriated both the Gentry and other land holders.

Side note – In England and Scotland if you were gentry and a landowner you had to supply, when requested, men to serve as soldiers. Non gentry who were prosperous had to pay taxes. This just added to the differences of opinion.

In Scotland the Puritan supporters were known as Covenanters. Charles decided to deal with the Scottish problem by going to war. He travelled to York to lead his own army and demanded that his nobles accompany him. Most had no experience of war and had to bring their own troops. The shortage of fighters led to the demand for the presence of the Trained Bands of the Northern Counties. I didn't think Black Dyke or Brighthouse and Rastrick were around that early. Trained Bands were part time militia who were supposed to drill on a regular basis but rarely did so. Because of lack of finance those from the Northern Counties were poorly armed and many had only bows and arrows.

In March 1639 the King marched from York and at the same time the Marquis of Hamilton's fleet set sail from Yarmouth to the Firth of Forth with 5,000 men. Unfortunately the Scottish controlled that area so it was impossible to land. Other tactics and advances were tried but all came to nothing.

In mid May the King announced he would not invade Scotland until the Covenanters' problems were solved as long as they kept 10 miles away from the border. There were rumours abounding that the Scottish army vastly outnumbered the English. Charles retreated to Berwick. Here he was followed by Scottish leaders to discuss Church and Parliamentary issues. Both sides agreed to disband their armies but there was a great deal of resentment on both sides. A Treaty was signed in June 1639 but wrangling continued. The King eventually left Berwick in July 1639.

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Lord Strafford of Wentworth

Charles was not going to let things go. He commissioned one of his Lords, Strafford of Wentworth, who was in Ireland to coerce the Irish Government to finance an army to campaign against the Scots. He tried to persuade Parliament to finance a force and when they refused he appealed for money, through his wife, to the French and even to the Pope. All this came to nothing so he was financially on his own. The Northern forces were disbanded and a levy was put on the southern Counties.

These were men supplied by the gentry and were on the whole untrained and ill disciplined as well as being poorly armed, unpaid and unfed. As they moved north there were reports of violence from all of the places through which they passed. The Irish Army was not yet ready.

Meanwhile the Scottish Parliament was preparing itself. The Royalist Gordon Clan were attacked in their home area around Aberdeen and a group were dispatched to pillage and burn the lands of Royalist clans of the Highlands. Dumbarton, on the River Clyde, NW of Glasgow was besieged in case the Irish Army should try to invade.

In early August 1640 the Scottish had amassed 20,000 troops with 60 artillery guns along the English border. The English were grouped in central Yorkshire awaiting the King and in and around Northumberland. The local commander concentrated on building up the defences of Berwick and seemingly was not aware of the organisation of the Covenanters.

Because it would have been extremely expensive to maintain the troops on the border the Scots decided to invade England. They marched southwards and on the 20th August they crossed the River Tweed,

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avoided the well defended area of Berwick and advanced towards Newcastle. They arrived on 27th August. Instead of attacking the well defended city the Scots decided to cross the River Tyne at Newburn, the only place it was fordable, and then surround the city. A battle commenced here, with the Scots placing guns in the church tower and surrounding area which completely dominated the English positions. The raw recruits and inexperienced men fled the area. The army captain managed to organise the rest of the troops and retreated in good order. Surprisingly, to the Scots, it was decided that Newcastle could not be defended and the Commander in charge retreated to Durham. The Scots entered Newcastle unopposed on 30th August 1640.

The English were completely demoralised and the King called a Council of Peers which met in York. They advised the King to negotiate a truce with the Scots and to recall Parliament. The two sides met at Ripon and a Treaty was signed in December. It was agreed that the Scots would occupy Northumberland and Durham and would receive money to pay for their expenses. A High price was demanded. The Scottish Commissioners arrived in London to continue the negotiations and several agreements were made. There was a great deal of unrest in London and in Parliament which was not helped by the trial and conviction of Wentworth who had been sent by the King to Ireland many years before. He was the one who was asked to raise an army to send to Scotland. The family home was Wentworth Woodhouse and he had held many roles in Yorkshire and the North. The Treaty of London was signed on 10th August 1641.

Elaine Beach

Spies & Saboteurs Part 2

The Three Musketeers

To insulate himself and the embassy from any knowledge of the attacks, which would inevitably happen, the German ambassador, Johann von Bernstorff, decided to establish the operational base away from Washington, in New York.

The first to move his office was Heinrich ALBERT, the embassy's commercial attaché who would act as paymaster. For three years this shrewd and dedicated man developed a mutually beneficial working relationship with an impressive list of bankers. The network had someone who quickly became familiar with the exacting ways to fund a secret army. He opened accounts in various banks and transferred money in a bewildering succession of deposits. It would be later estimated that in the first year alone he distributed \$30 million to various agents to fuel their dubious operations.



His actions and his complete lack of security unnerved the whole network on a sweltering day in July 1915. He left his briefcase containing top secret documents and papers on the Harlem Elevated train. The papers detailed a number of scams including one to set up a company to buy up all available raw materials and explosives to prevent the manufacture of bullets and shells. Unfortunately for him he was being followed by an American secret service agent who disappeared with the briefcase and its contents.

Captain Karl BOY-ED the naval attaché followed. He was responsible for, as his title suggests, naval matters in North America, mainly intelligence gathering. Through his many contacts he became very familiar with America's naval strategies and coastal defences. He was determined to use all the information which America openly gave for operational use.



The last of the 'three musketeers', was Franz von PAPEN, (full title - Captain Franz Joseph Hermann Michael Maria von Papen), the military attaché. In 1913 when von Papen found he had been assigned as the military attaché to the American embassy he was disappointed to say the least. America was at the time a backwater and in his mind he was a man more suited for a brilliant military career. But he saw his road to glory when the ambassador assigned him to recruit and direct an army of spies and saboteurs in undercover attacks against America and Canada.



Now based in New York, von Papen realised that President Wilson's neutrality policy, created the most effective sources of manpower. According to the President's strict interpretation, neutrality meant that any ship docked in the US at the outbreak of war would not be allowed to join the hostilities. The East coast ports were filled with German vessels for the duration of the war and with the interned ships came masses of German sailors many of whom remained loyal sons of the Fatherland eager to find any opportunity to get back to the fighting. Von Papen could also get the backing of the thousands of Irish immigrant workers who were also against the British.

At first von Bernstorff, perhaps out of caution, perhaps out of a well-bred reluctance to strike against the hospitable country that had been his home for the past six years, hesitated. The Battle of the Marne meant

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that a long protracted war was a certainty and America's strategic importance intensified; they held the key to victory. The side that had access to the American marketplace would have a significant advantage. The warships of the British navy made it impossible for Germany to receive shipments of food, munitions, explosives and other vital supplies. Von Bernstorff's network would have to make sure that Germany's enemies also could not obtain shipments from America.

A flurry of flash-coded cables from Nicolai in Berlin kept arriving in von Bernstorff's in-tray. They instructed him 'to recruit agents to organise explosions on ships sailing to enemy countries, in order to cause delays in the loading, the departure, and unloading of these ships.' He was 'to find agents among the anarchist labour organisations who could sabotage factory output from within.' Another cable read, 'Secret. General staff desires energetic action in regard to proposed destruction of the Canadian Pacific Railroad at several points, with a view to complete and protracted interruption of travel.' With this persistent barrage of cables from the Foreign Office in Berlin on his mind, von Bernstorff had no choice but to go to war.

Von Papen, eager to make a name for himself, desperately wanted to mount an operation which would attract the high command's attention. He devised a bold plan which, he thought would favourably influence the course of the war and recruited a freelance soldier of fortune, Horst Von der Golz to lead a team on a special mission. Top of von Papen's list was an idea to cripple the principal grain elevators in America which would destroy one of Britain's chief sources of food. The best way to do that was to sabotage the main waterway between America and Canada - the Welland Canal.

Von der Golz recruited three volunteers who were basically all talk, especially after a night's drinking. He soon realised they had no guts to be saboteurs but he would have to go through with the operation. They collected one hundred pounds of dynamite and after a few days spent drinking and discussing strategy they proceeded to their base in Niagara.

After scouting the canal they found the banks and locks heavily guarded with armed soldiers. The recruits panicked complaining that it was 'mission impossible'. Goltz agreed but would hire an airplane to find an unguarded stretch where they could do some damage. The men were told to sit tight and wait. Goltz returned a few days later to find the hotel room deserted. The only thing left was the hotel bill. He returned to New York to face the full force of von Papen's anger who immediately cabled Berlin to recall the would be saboteur.

In April 1916, a United States federal grand jury issued an indictment against von Papen for a plot to blow up Canada's Welland Canal; he remained under indictment until he became Chancellor of Germany in 1932, at which time the charges were dropped.

It was a pathetic ending to the network's first attempt at sabotage. Von Papen needed to show that he could organise a network of saboteurs and his second chance came with a cable from Nicolai which ordered von Bernstorff to launch a new operation.

In the first six months Germany had suffered 800,000 dead and wounded - nearly half the army that had initially marched off into the field; the army needed more foot soldiers. The German foreign office saw a solution. The consulates in North and South America reported that thousands of reserve soldiers were wanting to return to their units. They couldn't cope with the demand so a practical decision was taken to assist only officers, who would receive funds to finance their journey to Europe. However, there was a major problem for Germany. Britain and France shouted foul and urged the US to change its passport requirements. Before the fighting had started, getting an American passport was a simple procedure, all you had to do was ask. Now they wanted a US birth certificate, the names of countries to be visited, and worst of all, a photograph. On clearance the application would be forwarded to the secretary of state for his signature.

So, after a long meeting with von Papen and Boy-Ed, von Bernstorff set in motion to commit a crime on a scale unprecedented in American history - the mass forgery of US passports.

In the Next Episode

Von Papen handpicks someone to set up and run the great passport conspiracy. But is he the right man for the job?

John A Sunderland