



## DEATH AND SERVICE NEWSLETTER

The long hot summer continues, and as the crops ripen and the grass browns, the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of two of the main battles of the First World War – Jutland and the Somme - have been commemorated. Local talks have focused on the two events, and you can learn about them – and about the art of camouflage – in this issue.

I continue my journey around the compass, by looking at the most westerly of the graves I have researched, in Ballintoy, Northern Ireland.

You can also learn of some of the finds I have come across while visiting burial grounds around the country, including the theft of some brass memorial plaques in Kent.

Until next time.

*Richard*

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Keep in touch:

Website:

<https://deathandservice.co.uk/>

Facebook: [@deathandservice](#)

Instagram: [@deathandservice](#)

YouTube: [@deathandservice](#)

Email:

[deathandservice@outlook.com](mailto:deathandservice@outlook.com)

**Death and Service:**  
**Volumes 1-3** are available in  
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# A TRIO OF TALKS

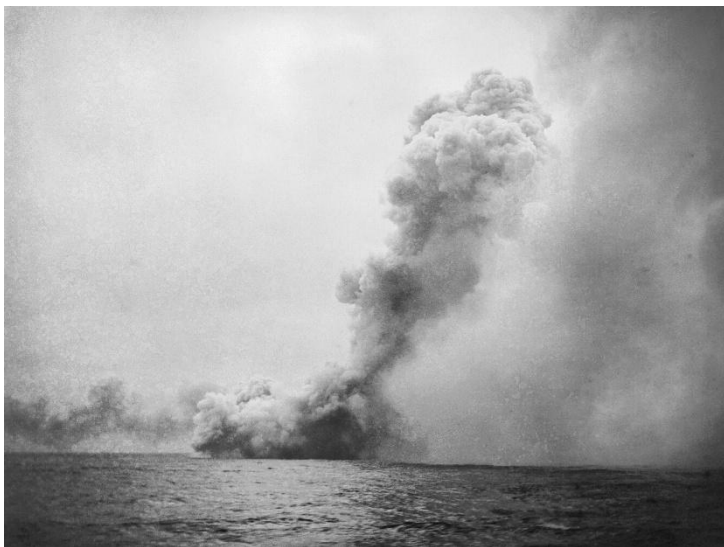
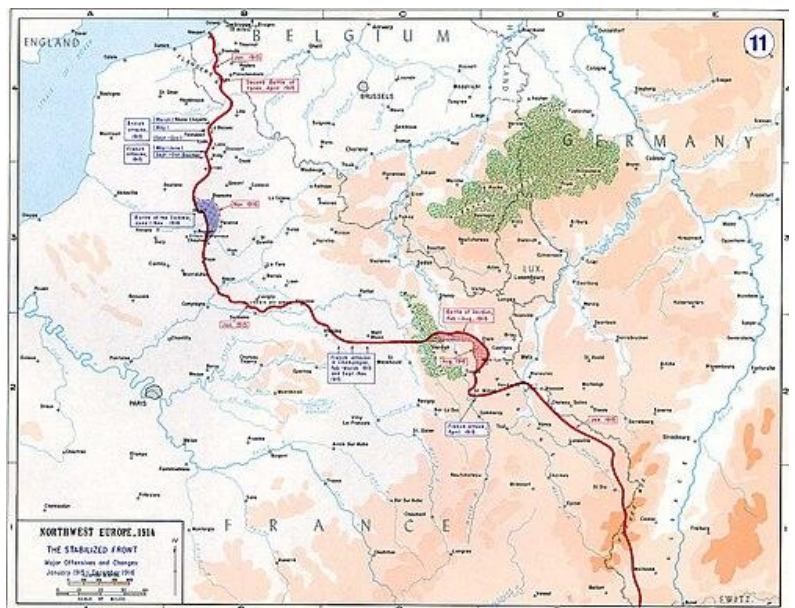
Over the past month, I have had the opportunity to attend three fascinating talks exploring different aspects of the First World War and its wider legacy. While each presentation focused on a distinct element of the conflict, together they offered a rich and thought-provoking perspective on the many dimensions of warfare during the period.

From the devastation of the Western Front, to the crucial naval operations at sea, and the evolution of the art of concealment, each talk highlighted a different theatre of war and the unique challenges faced by those involved.

Collectively, the three speakers provided a deeper appreciation of the complexity of the conflict and demonstrated how events on land, at sea and in the air were all interconnected in shaping the course and outcome of the war.

At the monthly meeting of the Somerset Western Front Association, noted author and historian Dr Rodney Atwood gave a fascinating overview of the Battle of the Somme. He brought life to the months of fighting, breaking down the stalemate of trench warfare with technical precision.

The sheer volume of casualties remains incomprehensible more than a century on. On the first day, more than 57,000 British troops were killed or wounded. By the end of the battle, the number was 600,000 Allied troops and 450,000 German by the end of the battle. We were left with the question of who actually won in the end.



The annual Somerton Music & Arts Festival included a double presentation. The first half was an overview of the Battle of Jutland, from [Historigraph](#) founder and videographer Josh Bassett.

Interestingly, the view of “who won?” was revisited in the talk, which focused on the only major battle of the war to involve the full naval fleets of Britain and Germany. Through a series of errors and misunderstandings, it is clear that the at any point, either side could have claimed a decisive victory.

Jutland proved to be as much a battle of egos as it was a battle of naval empires.



The third talk – the second half of the Somerton evening – was presented by David Morris, Curator of Aircraft at the Fleet Air Arm Museum. Entitled *Now You See Me, Now You Don't*, it gave an interesting insight into camouflage, from the birth of the aircraft to the present day.

In amongst the olive greens, greys, blues and pinks (yes, pinks!) of ships and jet fighters, David also explored more extreme examples of 'hiding in plain sight'. He gave the example of the Boeing factory in Seattle. In the aftermath of Pearl Harbour there was genuine uncertainty about whether the Japanese would launch an attack on the US mainland.

To disguise the factory's immense hangars, Boeing employed Hollywood set designers to construct a fake neighbourhood on the roofs. The result is breathtaking to say the least, and contemporary photographs of the towns are, even by today's standards, impressive.



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### ***Did you know?***

*During the Battle of Jutland, the British had a bigger navy. However, the Germans, who had 52 fewer ships, sank 117,000 tons of British ships, while the 63,000 tons of German ships were lost. The British lost just over 6,000 crew; the Germans just over 2,500 souls.*

*The surviving German vessels were badly damaged, and of less technological strength than their British counterparts. The British fleet were able to maintain a presence at sea, while the German fleet took months to repair their ships, let alone rebuild what it had lost.*

*One of the key outcomes of Jutland is that Germany turned to submarine warfare, knowing it was unlikely to be able to match its ships against the stronger British Navy. Thus, the Battle of Jutland was the only time the two fleets met each other in conflict.*

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## GRAVE OF THE MONTH



### Grave Location:

Ballintoy Church of Ireland  
18 Harbour Road  
Ballintoy  
Northern Ireland  
BT54 6NA

**Name:** Hewett, Ernest

**Rank:** Boy 1<sup>st</sup> Class

**Regiment:** Royal Navy

**Date of death:** 13<sup>th</sup> January 1915

**Age at time of death:** 16

**Cause of death:** Drowned

Ernest Roye Hewett was born on 18th April 1898 and was the third of twelve children to Alfred and Ada. Alfred was a coachman and groom and, while both he and Ada were born in Cornwall, it was in Budleigh Salterton, Devon, that the family were born and raised.

When he finished his schooling, Ernest found work as a butcher's boy, but when sought bigger and better things. His oldest brother, Ralph, had enlisted in the army by the time of the 1911 census and, by that October, his next oldest brother, Leslie, had enlisted in the Royal Navy. Ernest felt a career in the military was his destiny and, on 12th September 1913, he also joined the navy.

As he was under age at this point, he was given the rank of Boy 2nd Class, and sent to HMS Impregnable, the training establishment in Devonport, for his induction. His service records show that he was 5ft 2.5ins (1.59m) tall, with brown hair, hazel eyes and a fresh complexion.

Ernest spent nine months training, moving from Impregnable to HMS Powerful, and gaining a promotion to Boy 1st Class in the process. In June 1914, he was assigned to the cruiser HMS Edgar, remaining on board for six months, by which point war had broken out.

On 18th December 1914, Lance Corporal Ralph Hewett was killed in action, aged just 20 years old. Attached to the 2nd Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment, he was caught in fighting in Northern France, and is commemorated on the Le Touret Memorial.

Ernest, by this point, had been assigned to another ship, the armed merchant cruiser HMS Viknor. Patrolling the seas off Scotland, towards the end of the month, she was tasked with locating and detaining the Norwegian ship Bergensfjord, on board which was a suspected German spy.

The vessel was located and escorted to Kirkwall in the Orkneys, and the suspect and a number of other prisoners, were taken on board the Viknor to be transported to Liverpool. The ship and crew were never to reach their destination. On 13th January 1915, she sank in heavy seas off the Irish Coast: no distress signal was made and all hands were lost.

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*BODY WASHED ASHORE - Another body has been washed ashore at Palintoy Port, about six miles from Ballycastle. The body was that of a man of about 5ft 10in. in height. He was dressed in a blue jacket, and wore a service blue webbed belt, on which was the name E. F. Hewett. In the pocket of the trousers was a boatswain's whistle.*

*[Freeman's Journal: 24th February 1915]*

Already in mourning for Ralph, Alfred and Ada were unable to bring 16-year-old Ernest Roye Hewett back home. Instead, he was laid to rest in Ballintoy parish church, County Antrim.

The heartbreak was to continue for the Hewett family. Leslie's career had gone from strength to strength and, by the time of his older brother's death, he had been promoted to Able Seaman. In the summer of 1915, he was assigned to the cruiser HMS Europa, remaining aboard for the next year as it patrolled the Mediterranean. In July 1916 he fell ill, having contracted malaria. This was to prove his undoing: he passed away from the condition on 21st July, at 20 years old.

Able Seaman Leslie Hewett was laid to rest in the Mikra British Cemetery in Greece. His parents had now lost their three oldest sons, and had no way to reach their final resting places.

The [Centre of Excellence](#) is one of numerous organisations to offer accredited online courses across a wide and diverse range of subjects, including a course on the First World War.

Spanning eleven modules, it explores the origins of the conflict, trench warfare, the Eastern and Western Fronts, and the roles of women and propaganda.

Designed to present these topics in an accessible way, the course provides a solid foundation while helping learners develop a deeper understanding of the war.

The courses are affordable, but it is always worth seeking out a discount code to lower the price even more!





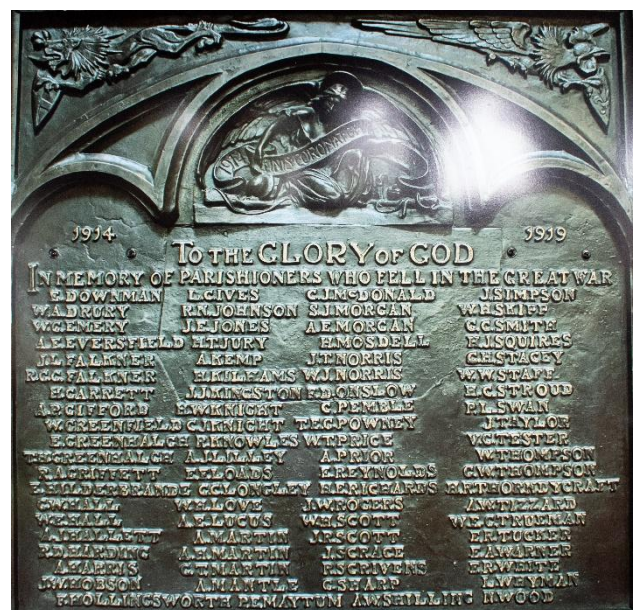
## CHURCH FINDS

My continual wanders around churches and graveyards often uncover hidden gems, unexpected to the newcomer, and overlooked by the regular visitor.

The plaque top left can be found in St Peter's Church, Pimperne, Dorset. Commemorating two men from the village – Francis Old and Arthur McKenzie – what is intriguing is the inclusion of their death plaques below it.

The village of Dorney, Buckinghamshire, retains its tranquil nature, despite being sandwiched between Windsor and the M4. The cemetery is a short walk from the parish church – St James the Less – and had a beautiful brick arch as its entrance.

Christ Church, Luton, Kent, is a 1980s structure that was build to replace its Victorian predecessor. The original church included two brass memorials (below) to those in the parish who had lost their lives during the First World War. When the new church was consecrated, the plaques were relocated to the lychgate. Sadly, the plaques were stolen in 2025, and were evetually recovered in two Essex scrapyards. Photographic representations of the memorials were installed in their place.





## UPCOMING EVENTS (CLICK ON THE POSTER TO LEARN MORE)



Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2026 7:30pm

# Death and Service:

## The Commonwealth War Graves of Somerset

There are more than 800 First World War graves in over 240 cemeteries and churchyards across Somerset.

Each of the names on those gravestones has a story connected to it, a story of family and of tragedy, a story of life on the battlefield and of love on the home front.

The **Death and Service** series of books aim to shed light on the servicemen and women behind the names on these headstones, to bring the long-forgotten names to life again, more than a century after they were lost.

Wellington Museum & Local History Society,  
Wellington Prep School TA21 8NT

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2026 7:30pm

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Pensford Local History Group  
Pensford Memorial Hall BS39 4HW

Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2026 7:30pm

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Radstock Museum, Chilcompton Village Hall BA3 4EX