Henry Williamson: F.O.O. and the Battle of Loos

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Veterans' tribute – Loos, France:
About 500 British soldiers and veterans marked the 90th anniversary of the First World War Battle of Loos, in which 20,000 British troops died; 8,000 of them cut down in a single day by machinegun fire in a frontal charge on the German lines.

The Times, 26 September 2005

The German Barbarities go from bad to worse. I have heard officially that having repulsed one of our attacks they piled the dead and dying in a trench and bombed them till all were dead: doesn't induce us to take too many prisoners, does it?

Letter of Lieutenant Gordon Bartlett, October 1915,
quoted in *The Imperial War Museum Book of The Western Front,* M. Brown (Pan, 2001), 249

As a record of the suburban English social structure, lives and attitudes before the First World War Williamson's [Chronicle's] *broad sweep has never been bettered, and gives a far more accurate view of society, as it was, than any retrospective scholastic social history. More importantly, Williamson's later treatment of the horrors of war is more accurate in its portrayal of men's reactions than the more self-conscious and shocked reactions of the generally more upper class 'war poets', who had never experienced 'real life' or the rough brutalities of the workplace before they volunteered for the Front.*

Blindfold and Alone: British Military Executions in the Great War,
Cathryn Corns and John Hughes-Wilson (Cassell 2001)

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The battle of Loos, the largest battle fought by the British army in its history so far, took place from the late September into October 1915. The main fighting lasted a mere four days. Total British casualties numbered 59,247 with over 15,000 of them killed and missing: German casualties were under 20,000 of whom fewer than 5,000 were killed. The British dead in Chalk Pit included Lieutenant John, called Jack, Kipling of the Irish Guards, Rudyard's only son: he was 18: it was the first day of his first battle: he was shot through the mouth: his grave was not identified until 1992: now it has a new headstone bearing his name near Lone Tree. Rudyard Kipling was devastated by Jack's death and apparent disappearance. Rudyard was riddled with guilt because the young man had very poor eyesight and his father had had to pull hard on all sorts of strings merely to get the boy into uniform. (Kipling had already lost his daughter Josephine to pneumonia in 1899. Another daughter Elsie survived.)

The British dead also included six generals – George Thesinger, Tommy Capper, Frederick Wing (whose death is described in George Coppard's book *With a Machine Gun to Cambrai*, chapter 11), Wormald, Pollard, Nickalls. General Bruce was captured: General Pereira was wounded. It is a myth that leadership was not done in the front line. Fifty-eight generals died on the Western Front including Henry's 'Boy General' – Brigadier-General Roland Boys Bradford VC, MC, a victim, at the age of 25, of the Battle of Cambrai (November 1917). Over 300 were wounded. Far fewer British generals were killed in action in the Second World War.

At the battalion level senior officers demonstrated equal courage. Private 12768 John Jackson's recently published memoirs include evidence to this effect about Loos. His Cameron Highlanders assaulted Hill 70 for the fourth time on day one, the 25th. They were 'led by our brave old Colonel, bareheaded and with no other weapon than his walking stick. We made it to the top of Hill 70 . . . the white-haired old man who led us was shot dead'.[1] He was posthumously awarded the VC. Also at Loos the poet William Noel Hodgson won the MC. He was later killed on the Somme.

The British survivors at Loos included Robert Graves and Harold Macmillan. Macmillan spent an agonising 12 hours in a shell hole awaiting stretcher bearers: he occupied that awful period by reading Aeschylus. He was a volunteer in the Grenadier Guards and was fortunate to be alive, for over 8,000 of his fellow Kitchener reserves had become casualties in one hour on the second afternoon of the battle. As the late Alan Clark (a great lover of Henry's *Chronicle*, of course – though HW did not approve (with others) of Clark's own *Donkeys*) wrote 'these Kitchener men were volunteers. They were the flower of the richest, most powerful, nation on earth. Behind them stretched the ordered childhoods of Victorian Britain; decency, regularity, a Christian upbringing, a concept of chivalry and an over-riding faith in the inevitable triumph of right over wrong; such notions were imbued in them.'[2] This had been their first time in action, but, if these were the rules of the game, well then, they would conform. They said: 'We did not know what it was like. We will do all right next time.'

In *Tales of a Devon Village*: 'Cemetery or Burial Ground ...', Henry has Admiral Bamfylde remark of Loos 'It was delay in getting the right kind of shell that caused the tragic losses.' Henry comments 'He had evidently been reading Mr Winston Churchill's *World Crisis*, which I had lent him a week before . . .'

The reasons for the losses were, of course, far more complex than that, yet they absolutely did *not* include a failure by the generals to plan for the battle. That's another myth. Here is historian J. M. Bourne's account:

> *Haig brought to the battle's planning and preparation all the professional meticulousness on which he prided himself. Every aspect of battle was deliberated in detail. Assaulting troops were withdrawn to rear areas for special training. Attacks were thoroughly rehearsed. Tactical units were given specific objectives. Care was taken to ensure that each infantryman had a clear understanding of what was expected of him. Consideration was given to the vexed problem of infantry-artillery cooperation, and expedients devised. Advantage was taken of new developments . . . Chlorine gas was used at Loos. Despite the B.E.F.'s limited resources, overwhelming concentration of force at the point of assault was achieved. The result was failure.*[3]

In fact, as John Terraine (the World War One historian) states, 'Generalship found few opportunities of expressing itself on the field of battle; often it expressed itself only in the training of troops beforehand, and in careful preparation for the event.'[4] A soldier's radio, a 'wire-less' apparatus, small and light enough to be carried across shell-tilled ground, never became available during the conflict. 'Here was the Unsolved Problem of the Great War. How to find out what was happening after Zero hour. On the instant of advance, and in the absence of practicable field radio, fighting men became detached from their order-giving roots with a cut as sharp as a geological fault.'[5] For once the battle commenced it took on its own diabolical momentum, its own senseless friction – compounded by faulty staff work and confusion of command and by the lack of any reliable means of technical communication. Slender field telephone cables were invariably fractured. Pigeons were confused by smoke and explosions.

However, the Williamson book I am much more concerned with here is *A Fox Under My Cloak*, in which, as Anne Williamson remarks, there is a totally convincing description of the battle. We know that Henry himself never fought at Loos. By cleverly casting Phillip as Gas Officer, Henry could allow him to move freely at the Front and behind it and to climb the 'Tower' so that he could observe the battlefield and, for example, see the Guards' attack between Loos and Hulluch smashed up. Here's an example of Henry's vivid prose:

> *The gas was already rising into the air and forming into a rolling grey cloud. Showers of small chalk fell among the waiting men. The top layer of Hessian bags on the parapet was breaking, lifting ragged ears to the dull sky. Through the rolling thunder of the bombardment could be heard a shearing-of-glass noise as the air above the trench was torn across by machine-gun bullets. Distant rockets soared and broke into colours; down fell the German shells. The waiting men crouched.*[6]

We know that Henry used the relevant book of Edmonds' 14-volume official history as a source

but I firmly believe that he had another authority, hitherto unmentioned anywhere, a source especially relevant to the scaling of 'The Tower' or 'Tower Bridge' as the troops called it, or 'The Pylons' as in my freshly discovered source. 'Tower Bridge' was a tall lattice-like structure of iron and steel that stood at the end of the crassier, the slag heap, at the pitheads outside Loos village. What Henry had Phillip take part in and also observe compassionately from 'Tower Bridge' was a battle that should never have taken place in strictly military terms.

The Asquith Coalition government, through its War Minister Kitchener, compelled Sir John French, the Commander-in-Chief, and Haig and Rawlinson to fight because of the desperate state of the Russians in the east. They had lost Warsaw and their armies were retreating in disarray. This necessitated a relieving initiative in the west especially as the Dardanelles campaign (Gallipoli) was fizzling out and, above all, our French allies were insisting upon action. As historian Robin Neillands has written in his excellent book *The Great War Generals and the Western Front 1914-18*, 'The French will decide who the British attack, where they will attack, and when they will attack. All the British generals have to do is to work out how to do it.'

The Loos area was a dreary, melancholy coalfield, not a battlefield. When General Rawlinson saw it he remarked, 'My front is as flat as the palm of a hand. Hardly any cover anywhere. Attack will cost us dearly, and we shall not get very far.' Haig said 'The ground, for the most part bare and open, would be so swept by machine gun and rifle fire both from the German front trenches and from the numerous fortified villages immediately behind them, that a rapid advance would be impossible.' In fact, there were long open upwards slopes on which advancing infantry were likely to be mown down. The soil was chalk. Yet, unbelievably, Joffre the French commander whose word was law, asserted 'Your attack will find particularly favourable ground between Loos and La Bassée.'

Kitchener, with a successful career as a general behind him, and now trapped at the War Office (he was a great recruiting poster but not a great War Minister), urged 'even though we may suffer very heavy losses, we must act with all energy and do our utmost to help the French in this offensive.' The French were planning to attack simultaneously south of Loos and Lens in Artois. They were, ultimately, to fail as well. In fact, at Vimy, immediately south of Loos and Lens, on the 26th September (the second day of the battle), Joffre called off the French attack because the German guns had not been neutralised. Treacherously he gave orders that no word of this cancellation should reach the ears of the British.

So the ground was, to say the least, unfavourable. It was the Black Country of France with its crassiers (slagheaps), fosses (principal mines), puits (auxiliary shafts), corons (terraces of miners' cottages) and, to switch to German, their numbered Stutzpunken (strong points).

Commander-in-Chief Sir John French's pessimism about the outcome of the battle persisted but Haig's initial gloom characteristically became somewhat tempered, first, by his over-optimistic belief in the power of the British artillery; second, by his faith, very largely misplaced, in his new weapon: gas. A keen military innovator, he intended to use gas as his main bludgeon. Finally, Haig's gloom was mitigated by what he imagined, quite wrongly, would be his authority to use the British Reserves (Lieutenant-General Haking's IX Corps, the 21st and 24th Divisions and units of the Guards, including John Kipling and Harold Macmillan) exactly when he required them. I will deal with each of these phenomena, briefly, in turn.

First, artillery: there was a 4-day, 12-hour per day only, preliminary bombardment but it was not as intense as it ought to have been. Ammunition remained short and too many shells were faulty. So extensive swathes of wire were not cut and, of course, the ground over which the infantry were supposed to advance was churned up.

Second, gas: writing about Phillip as gas officer, Henry gives plenty of information on this. So does Robert Graves in *Goodbye To All That* (chapter 15). I will not repeat it save to say that over 5,000 cylinders of chlorine, each weighing 200lbs, theoretically, given the surprise and a favourable wind, had immense potential and could have compensated for the comparative scarcity of artillery. Where the light breeze was somewhat favourable in the south, Rawlinson's troops captured Loos and Hill 70 before being halted. To the north many of Gough's men swallowed their own gas, (although only seven died of this), made scant progress, and suffered severe casualties. In truth, gas was a double-edged weapon, best used as an ancillary on favourable days or in gas shells. It could never cut wire.

As for the Reserves, that is Kitchener's enthusiastic volunteers of the 21st and 24th Divisions, and units of the Guards, they were not available when required in the south to exploit the smoke and gas assisted successes there. And, ever since, there has been a bitter argument about whose responsibility this was – French's or Haig's. In my view, for what it's worth, it was French's fault that the reserves were not there when needed and Haig's direct responsibility for misusing them later when they finally appeared at the front, exhausted, hungry, thirsty. They were launched across 'No Man's Land' with no gas or significant artillery aid and slaughtered. The German (26th Infantry Regiment) Diary states: 'Ten columns of extended line could clearly be distinguished . . . offering such a target as had never been seen before . . . Never had the machine gunners such straightforward work . . . the effect was devastating . . . One machine gun alone fired 12,500 rounds that afternoon . . .' The Germans chivalrously stopped shooting these hapless young men once they began to retreat. This was on 26 September (the second main day). It has been argued that, even if these reserves had been used the day before, they were too raw and ill-trained to be effective. This may have been the reason why Sir John French kept them so far back from the Front Line. At any rate, French was axed at the end of the year and Haig became Commander-in-Chief. Here is Henry on Sir John French: 'Reflection can, with an ageing man who has suffered many strains, become rumination; and rumination, a vice . . . French had lived with grief: the flower of his army (the B.E.F.) had been destroyed. Anxiety gnawed him, a fox under his cloak.'[7] Henry was a Haig man, of course.

It was on 27 September (the third day) and again on the 28th that the reserve Guards' Brigades were thrown into the battle to fill the gap between the north and south forces that had developed, that is between Loos and Hulluch. At great cost the Guards stabilised the front, eventually digging trenches out of solid chalk. From 'Tower Bridge' Phillip observes one of these two separate Guards' attacks: Henry merely calls them 'The Foot Guards' and he does not give the exact date.

Now what I assume to be Henry's main authorial source describes a dangerous journey towards, and an ascent of, 'Tower Bridge' by a single one of the source's officers, his friend. Our source writer and his friend remain anonymous. Our author is merely F.O.O., Forward Observation Officer, Royal Artillery. His book, *With the Guns*, was published in 1916 and only reprinted in 2005[8] (revealing that F.O.O. was Captain C.J.C. Street, OBE, MC). F.O.O.'s nameless friend probably embarks on his dangerous mission on the 3rd or 4th day of the battle, that is the 27th or 28th September. We are not told.

Just like our anonymous source's friend, Phillip, you may remember, moves cautiously forward towards Loos and has the ultimate intention of scaling 'Tower Bridge' to observe. In this next section of my talk I juxtapose the F.O.O. and Henry Williamson texts, highly edited, to relate source and imaginative elaboration.

F.O.O. . . . *he was the only living person in the whole of the wide valley, and the sense of being under the observation of many pairs of eyes that were to him invisible produced in him a strangely nervous reaction . . . the watching eyes bent such burning rays upon him that he could feel them pierce him as he moved . . .*
H.W. *[the area] looked to be sinister, open to a thousand unseen eyes, so he kept to the protecting houses.*

F.O.O. *Close by, two horses bearing the brand of the broad arrow were quietly grazing on the rank grass that covered the fallow land, their broken harnesses still hanging on their backs, evidently the team of a shell-shattered wagon that lay near by. My friend was tempted to pause and investigate further, but a dozen bullets whizzed by and quickly convinced him that the locality was not healthy . . .*
H.W. *What was unusual was the sight of two light-draught horses, their harnesses hanging awry, waiting side by side near an up-turned G.S. wagon . . . Obviously the old cushy days of the transport were over, he was thinking, when, with howls ending in clanging cracks four woolly bears exploded.*

F.O.O. *"Woolly bears", the men call them, for they leave a curious cotton-wool-like wreath of smoke in the air for some seconds . . .*

Lance Corporal H. Foakes, 13 Royal Fusiliers describes 'Woolly Bears' for us:
A big shell, known to the troops as a 'Woolly Bear', burst with a fierce whipping 'crack' about 100 or 200 feet from the ground and rained down red-hot shrapnel and portions of burst shell case.

F.O.O. *His objective was the Pylons, easy enough to see, certainly, but unfortunately on the far side of an open square or market-place by the church, upon which the German gunners were making very pretty practice with field guns and light howitzers.*
H.W. *He plodded on past a cemetery with trenches; around and through broken crosses and bits of artificial marble-chip flowers. He made for the church, and found the empty square, or place . . . He went carefully, lying down when shells swooped to throw up red brick dust amidst dark fragments. He wanted to get to the Tower Bridge . . .*

F.O.O. *. . . he reached the foot of the winding stairs that rose up the centre of the towers . . .* [it] *was partly enclosed by sheets of boiler-plate . . . the next shell burst uncomfortably close and the fragments hit the boiler-plate with a sound that left no doubt in his mind of what his fate would have been had this shield not been there. Up the spiral stairway then – was there ever such an interminable flight? . . . those friendly steel sheets had been hit direct more than once at various times, leaving several turns of the stairway open, plain to everybody's view . . .*
H.W. *He stood up and saw an open iron door half hidden by scrap metal in between the feet of the towers... he saw an iron stairway leading upward, spiral and very narrow, enclosed by sheet iron. Shrapnel had struck it many times, hundreds of jagged holes were in the boiler-plate walls ... he climbed on, to rest again a dozen yards higher up, and to see large gaps in the boiler plates above him . . .*

F.O.O. *The gallery ... had once been glazed, but long ago every pane of glass had been shattered and the steel floor was thickly carpeted with the fragments. Once in the gallery one was fairly safe, for the floor and roof were of steel and so was the circular wall to the level of the glazing.*
H.W. *He found himself on an iron floor strewn with shell-splinters and broken glass. He was in a circular room, like a turret, with breast high windows all round it. Cold wind moved past him from the empty spaces, with their serrated glass edges . . .*

F.O.O. *He noticed the presence of German newspapers and a broken table with some scraps of paper upon it . . .*
H.W. *. . . at the far end was a table, with one leg fractured, leaning sideways. Below it was a small pile of newspapers apparently slidden off.*

Both heroes scan the landscape.

F.O.O. *. . . the trees, magnificent in their thick verdure, that clothe the banks of a little stream that flows past Hulluch . . .*
H.W. *. . . farther down the valley, into which the straight road dipped lay the brown cluster of Hulluch, and beyond it a stream in a green valley, with trees in full foliage just beginning to turn to the colours of autumn . . .*

F.O.O. *. . . the whole country lay spread as on a map . . .*
H.W. *. . . the county lay spread out before him . . . on the map-like scene little men in groups and files were moving, all one way, amidst the booming of cannon and the burst of shell . . .*

I will now read the rest of Henry Williamson's account, again edited. Phillip was observing through his 'single grey Zeiss glass' picked up earlier from the floor.

He peered out tremulously from his high place . . . The noise was greater now, the attack of the Foot Guards must be starting. He could see a row of dots, in perfect alignment, coming down from Lone Tree ridge into the shallow valley beyond the brown fracas of the village. Soon black spots of shrapnel found them; and woolly bears were breaking above them. Through the Zeiss glass he saw a tiny figure

fall; then another threw up its arms, and fell, and another, and another, while the line went on steadily. The air was solid with metal hammering. Was Bertie down there?

He felt fascination and excitement. The Foot Guards! He recalled the charge through the Nonne Bosschen before Ypres in November 1914. Oh, why wasn't he with them, and Cranmer, and Tommy Atkins? But this wasn't like that faraway charge, this was like a field day before the general, all correct in line and spacing. He began to swear as more and more figures in those straight lines dropped out. If the Guards failed, all was lost. Ought he to get down the tower? Would the Prussian Guard division counter-attack down the slopes, if the Foot Guards' attack was broken by the terrible hammering?

Then he saw thick black smoke rolling along from the direction of Hulluch, two miles away in the shallow openness of the valley. The wind was very slight, it brought it billowing forward so very slowly. Would it get up the slight slope in time, to hide the advancing lines? Even if it did, the fixed machine-guns would sweep through it, as before. Oh hell, hell, hell!

Trembling and taut, he turned away to the south and saw troops leaving the shelter of the houses immediately below, and making for the little plantation beside the road into Lens. From Hill 70 redoubt, a quarter of a mile away, came the hammering noise, while a few British shells burst upon the chalky flatness. As he moved his glass from figure to figure, taking the boiling feeling of each one upon himself, he gave a start: for in the retina of his right eye he saw a dark-blue movement, and with a rush of fear turned round prepared to see a German covering him with blued barrel of automatic.

To his relief he saw that it was a swallow, flying round and round inside the turret, crying with beak open above the tawny stain on its throat, crying inaudibly. Looking up, he saw a nest upon one of the roof girders, in a space where it was crossed by a lighter length of iron. There was the lip of grey mud, dry grasses showing, and shrunken marks of droppings on the floor.

He climbed on the table, and felt in the nest. It had young, a late brood, probably, he thought, coming from rich feeding on the flies which infested the battlefield. The swallows would be migrating soon; the little ones would be left behind. He thought of the tragedy of the parents, torn between love and the urge to migrate when the inner call came to leave. Would it be kinder to kill the nestlings, and so decide for the parents? Perhaps they might be able to feed their young in time for the flight down to the Mediterranean and across to Africa? After all, they had built there, and had been able to rear them so far during the war.

The hen bird slipped through the open window, and he saw her flying in the air, catching flies. He thought it wonderful, that in all the noise, she had carried on; but if a woolly bear were to burst near her –

The attack of the Guards had become a feeling of mourning. They moved so slowly, they were but figures walking on, with wider and wider gaps between each little fore-shortened figure. Only a ragged suggestion of a line reached the Chalk Pit and its trees; and when, after an interval, a few scattered figures appeared beyond the trees, in the terrible exposure of flat open country beside the narrow road, they withered away almost immediately: and looking through the glass, he saw that they were lying on the ground. About a dozen figures got up to run across the road, but they too, in ones and twos and threes, went down under the hammering.

He felt empty and weary. The afternoon light was going. He must try not to think as he went down the spiral stairs. He must go slowly, lest he become giddy. One last look at the nest on the rusty iron girder, bonne chance mes hirondelles!; and slinging haversack and water-bottle, he left the turret.[9]

Further fierce fighting followed on October 3, October 8 and October 13, with British infantry sustaining more heavy losses. The poet Captain Charles Sorley perished on that final date.

So, it must be asked, did anything positive come out of the Loos battle? Tentatively, yes:

extremely painful lessons were learned . . . British leaders and rank and file could begin to clamber up the slippery learning steps of the new warfare with its industrialised slaughter. It came to be realised that gas, if employed, must be used more intelligently; that far more shells, reliable and with specialist functions, must be produced together with guns to fire them: powerful artillery was fundamental to success in this new warfare – the wire blown away, the creeping barrage employed, sound ranging and flash spotting developed, and Victor Yeates-style aerial observation developed. Assaulting troops could then be massively protected. Also further war materials were quickly required – machine guns, grenades, mortars, smoke bombs: this was an industrial war, a total war . . . Tanks and planes likewise . . . And, of course, Reserves must be available when needed and properly trained, like all the men, in the new warfare.

As Haig stated in March 1916 to Kitchener:

> *I have not got an army in France really, but a collection of divisions untrained for the field. The actual fighting army will be survivors evolved from them.*

That 'collection' eventually contained, in differing proportions, survivors from the B.E.F., the Territorials, Kitchener's volunteers and conscripts. As historian Paddy Griffith has explained, it was the five-month Somme battle that provided the necessary lessons and experience, if little else. And, as historian Gordon Corrigan has also written,

> *Haig, far from being the 'butcher and bungler' of popular belief, was the man who took a tiny British army and expanded it, trained it and prepared it until it was the only Allied army capable of defeating the Germans militarily in 1918.*[10]

To return to Loos: some territory had been very expensively purchased, the Germans temporarily rattled and the superhuman courage and discipline of the British troops could never ever be in doubt. As the war correspondent Philip Gibbs wrote (albeit in flamboyant – and today considered not quite true – mode):

> *Never a battalion broke in mutiny against inevitable martyrdoms. Their discipline did not break. However profound was the despair of the individual, the mass moved as it was directed from one shambles to another with the same valour that prevailed and uplifted (at Loos).*[11]

What happened to 'Tower Bridge'? The German guns soon brought it down. It was rebuilt after the war and still stands.

Now, to end, here is F.O.O.'s utterly characteristic chapter end coda to the battle: it is excellently written, fully in the spirit of the war at that time: the book was published in 1916.

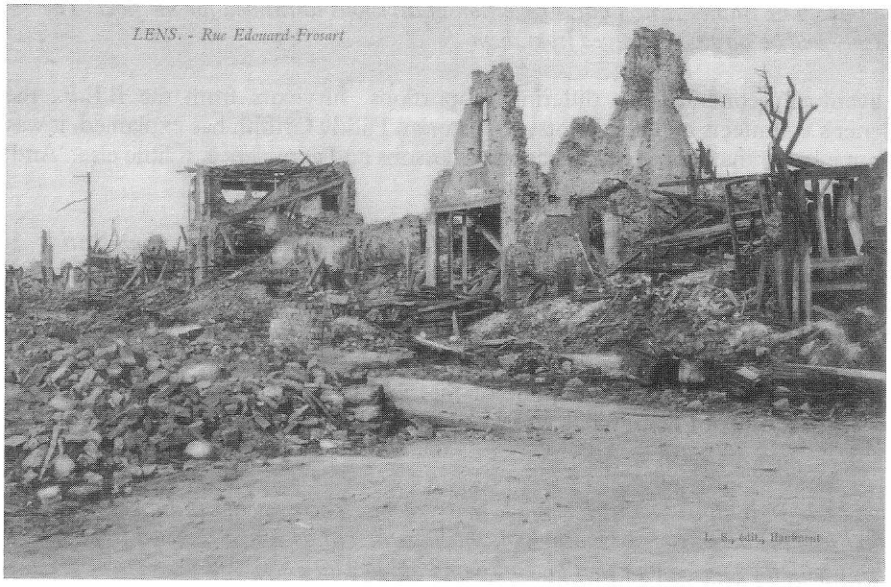
> *Loos, City of the Dead! If in years to come you are ever rebuilt, a task that to the observer of your utter destruction and desolation seems impossible, what strange and gruesome relics will your workmen find! Surely the Spirit of Carnage will for ever haunt those narrow streets and open wide-spread fields, surely your inhabitants of the future will wake in terror in the September nights to hear ghostly echoes of the then-forgotten struggle, the unceasing whistle and roar of the shells, the rushing footsteps of the charging men, the despairing cries of the bombed wretches in the cellars! And, if timid eyes dare lift the curtain to peep fearfully through the windows, will they not see a blood-red moon shining upon the streets through which pour the serried columns of the victors, and scent the night air tainted with a faint sickening odour of slaughter? But not alone shall Loos bear its burden of horror, for in how many towns and villages must these scenes be repeated before Peace comes again?"*[12]

Notes

1 John Jackson, *Private 12768, Memoir of a Tommy* (Tempus, 2005), 56.
2 Alan Clark, *The Donkeys* (Hutchinson, 1963), 174.
3 J.M. Bourne, *Britain and the Great War 1914-18* (Arnold, 1989), 38.
4 John Terraine, *To Win a War: 1918 Year of Victory* (Cassell, 2000), 173.

5 Denis Winter, *Death's Men, Soldiers of the Great War* (Penguin, 1979), 184.
6 Henry Williamson, *A Fox Under My Cloak* (Macdonald, 1962), 307.
7 Henry Williamson, op. cit., 338-9.
8 F.O.O. *With The Guns* (Eveleigh Nash, 1916): reprinted 2005 with author revealed as Captain C.J.C. Street OBE MC, following quoted selections from pp 118, 120, 122-3, 125-7.
9 Henry Williamson, op cit
10 Gordon Corrigan, *Mud, Blood and Poppycock* (Cassell, 2003) p 18
11 Philip Gibbs, *Realities of War* (Heinemann, 1920)
12 F.O.O., op cit. There is also a new edition of *F.O.O. With the Guns* by Captain C.J.C. Street, OBE, MC, available from The Naval and Military Press, Uckfield, Sussex TN22 5QE, £11.50, paperback, ISBN 1-843-42700-1.

Some of the raw material for the chapters on the Battle of Loos can be found in Henry Williamson Society *Journal* No. 34, p. 17-23 (Sept. 1998), 'A Selection of "Notes" about 1914 and 1915', facsimile reproduction of pages of HW's notes.



Above: *Postcard of Lens after battle* (from HW's archive).
Below: *Postcard showing the historical crater on the Lens-Béthune road (the Lens Road Redoubt)* (from HW's archive).