



Belton Camp
Grantham
No. 8



Y.M.C.A. No. 2 Hut, Belton Park.



Belton Remembers

A Teacher's Resource Pack



National
Trust

Introduction

Introduction:

Belton Deer Park has been witness to much over the years, but maybe one of the more important roles that the parkland has had over the last 300 years is being home to the base depot and HQ of the Machine Gun Corps.

Within the parkland, now owned by the National Trust, the location of the camp is accessible and some remains are still visible (e.g. the water towers). How the parkland is managed by the Trust has also ensured the survival of many aspects of its archaeology.

The exact number of families who have a connection to this First World War site is unknown. Thousands of men came through the camp to train, whilst thousands more convalesced in the military hospital. New information comes to light about the stories of men stationed here each month.



This pack has been designed as a series of short case studies that you can use together as a local history study or as individual examples of an aspect of life on the Home Front during the First World War.

Each section provides information taken from soldiers' memoirs; letters and contemporary media, with family members of those highlighted sharing their personal stories with us. At the back of this pack are also ideas of lines of enquiry for each person's story.

Fred Hunt

Fred's Hunt was a member of a large family from Kirton Lindsey, Lincolnshire. He joined the Territorial Army as Grenadier in 1914. Fred just 16 1/2 per day this private wasn't even given any uniform to start with.



For our first fortnight in France we were in a trench with other soldiers and carried out our usual duties. Every morning we had to do our daily marching drill for training and guard duty.

A year later Fred left for France, and in late September 1915 he was caught in a mustard gas attack (an accident of 'friendly fire') at the Battle of Loos. This gas has a highly toxic effect on the lungs and for a short time with a pneumonia in England for a short time. Fred was sent back to England with a severe cough.

Fred was re-trained after his arms healed and passed out on a first class sea here given and was offered the chance to join the newly formed Machine Gun Corps at Grantham.

Reporting to Harroby Camp he began training at the MG Co. did a week with other corporals and sergeants from many different regiments.

It was a tough life all the officers and sergeants had been trained from the 18th of August and worked their own routes through the trenches.

With intensive training and rigorous discipline, Fred was trained to train and lead his men. A lot of work came in gun handling, drumming and maintaining machine guns over when the attack followed. Long hours engineering, leaving the straps of the decked back of guns in attack and defence, and even the use of enemy guns captured in battle, completed his training.

During the 19 week course a 3,000 man militia had no immediately out of hand for inspection by the command and sergeants in writing. The whole course still up. Fred when they entered the tent, it was being set up as a change before the company commander. The highest order of the day in holding and for food and general duties during morning periods led to similar action against the hospital.

After training, he was posted to No. 209 Machine Gun Company in Belton Park. The company was a mixed batch of some 200 men with Fred being one of the eight corporals. Fred experienced the morning that they left Belton for France.

We and animal brought there were six times for officer's use, night watches and night watches for gas, ammunition and equipment. The company moved out of Belton one cold morning before dawn. As we marched through positions in the morning, it was apparent that our equipment was not all that great. A number of local animal owners had set up gas canisters and traps for us. And all sorts passed for a cup of tea. Here our animals in use for Lady Brownlie. We used and delighted lady of Belton since.

Adelaide, Countess Brownlow

Adelaide, Countess Brownlow went herself out with her war work which had seriously on her health according to the report on her funeral in March 1927.

There were flowers from the MG Co, Belton Park Military Hospital, HQ Staff and all other men quartered in Belton Park. The 16th Manchester also sent flowers on behalf of their comrades. Park Church was full of local residents, convalesced soldiers and representatives from each Battalion at Belton and Harroby Camps.

Lady Adelaide spent about 30 years at Belton House and was very much a well loved member of the local community. She was 72 years old when she was declared and continued to work locally for the local residents and the soldiers in the parkland.

One of the Lincolnshire Branch of the Red Cross, Lady Adelaide was influential in the raising of funds and gifts for wounded men. She was present at Grantham and Harroby camps on 'Our Day' and 'Wagon Day' events. She was also a member of the Women's War Committee, opening the Women's War Hospital at Grantham Station and Stores and from Recreation and Welfare at Belton and Harroby.



Death of Countess Brownlow Peaceful End of a Beneficent Life

Three Associations telegraphed condolence (Friday) at 11.45pm. "The Countess Brownlow died at 8.30pm". Brownlow was lying in her room at 11.45pm. Her condition was peaceful but her death was very much worse. Her last words were to her daughter-in-law, Lady Evelyn, who was the daughter of 18th Earl of Derbyshire. She died at 11.45pm. Her death was peaceful and she was buried in the local cemetery. Her death was a great loss to the community.

William Bulstrode

William was a private in the army, and a much to be told, we know very little about him. He served in the British Expeditionary Force on the Front in France with the Machine Gun Corps.



William left Belton for France on Thursday 7th November 1914 among these early days before the Armistice was announced.

Monday (Nov 15) 3.45pm. Fred goes by carriage. And Friday 16th 11.45pm. The...

In December 1918, he was discharged and returned to work at the London & South Western Railway as a clerk. This was the same job that he had had before the war.

Belton House and the Brownlows

The Earl and Countess Brownlow were entertaining a friend for afternoon tea one day. The telephone rang and their friend had to go back to London on urgent business. The next day War was declared. The friend? Well that was Lord Kitchener...

War has already touched our family.

It's 1914 and Adelbert, 3rd Earl Brownlow and his wife Adelaide, Countess Brownlow are both 70 years old. Adelbert had inherited Belton House when he was only 23 years old. By the time we meet the Brownlows in 1914 they had restored the House and you will see their work if you visit.

Adelbert and Adelaide were prominent in the life of the local community and the welfare of those who worked for them or lived in nearby Grantham. Adelbert was also active in politics and for three years had served as the Under-Secretary of State for War.

Therefore it should be of no surprise to anyone that shortly after war was declared Adelbert talked to the War Office, where he had worked when younger. He already allowed the Lincolnshire Yeomanry to train in the parkland so why not donate the use of it to the War Office?



Soldiers became a regular fixture in the parkland from September 1914. Starting in bell tents, new wooden huts were soon erected. A small town was created for around 20,000 men complete with a 670 bed military hospital, churches, YMCA huts and even it's own railway line. A year later, towards the end of 1915, the Manchester and Liverpool 'pals' regiments left Belton and in October 1915 the camp became a depot and

Head Quarters for the war-raised Machine Gun Corps. They would remain here until 1920 when the camp was starting to be closed down, just before Adelbert's death.

During the War both Adelbert and Adelaide did much for the soldiers billeted at Belton. They worked tirelessly for the war effort from providing solace for soldiers in their gardens to raising funds and donations for the hospital to handing out warming drinks in the middle of the night to soldiers departing from Grantham railway station to go to the front.



“We are the boys of the MGC”

A new type of war had arrived, one of trenches and the rat-tat-tat of the machine gun across No Man's Land. The Generals found out very quickly how important the machine gun was going to be in the War.

By order of the King, the Machine Gun Corps (MGC) was born in October 1915, with a training centre opened at Belton Park in that same month.

Brigadier General Henry Cecil de la Mantague Hill, CB CMG, took command of the camp on 18th October 1915 and by November he had 230 officers, 163 guns, 4 wagons 60 cooks and 3,123 men.



“Almost at once thousands of men began to pour into the wooden huts which rapidly spread themselves over Lord Brownlow's parklands at Belton Park. Thousands of horses, mules, and vehicles appeared; and, within two weeks of wintry rain, the park was submerged beneath a sea of mud. The task of sorting and re-equipping all conditions of men, in every kind of uniform, some holding the rank of sergeant and corporal, from the various New (Kitchener) Army battalions from which they had been drafted, other regulars and reserve soldiers from regimental depots with much machine gun experience, would have tried the patience of Job.” Hutchinson, 1937.

1

We're the Corps born yesterday
We're the Corps that's come to stay
(and there'll be the devil to pay)
We're the MGC

2

We know no fear or favour
We're not given to palaver
We're never known to waver
We're the MGC

3

We're in the van of the attack
And, when things are looking black
We're in the rear to hold them back
We're the MGC

4

You should hear the bullets zip
When our guns are on the rip
And we smite them thigh and hip
We're the MGC

5

We are always on the spot
Where'er the fight is hot
Till all the team is shot
We're the MGC

6

We're the Corps born yesterday
We're the Corps that's come to stay
We're the Corps that earns our pay
We're the MGC

F L Shaw 1915



There were several 'schools' in the camp from the Machine Gun School to Signalling and even a Cooks School. Here the men were taught the mathematics of the machine gun, firing, map reading and the use of semaphore flags.

Between 1915 and 1922 around 170,500 officers and men served with the MGC, each man spending a minimum of 5 weeks in training before being posted to frontlines around the world.

100,000 men served at the Western Front

10,000 men served in Egypt and Palestine (modern day Israel)

6,000 men served in Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq)

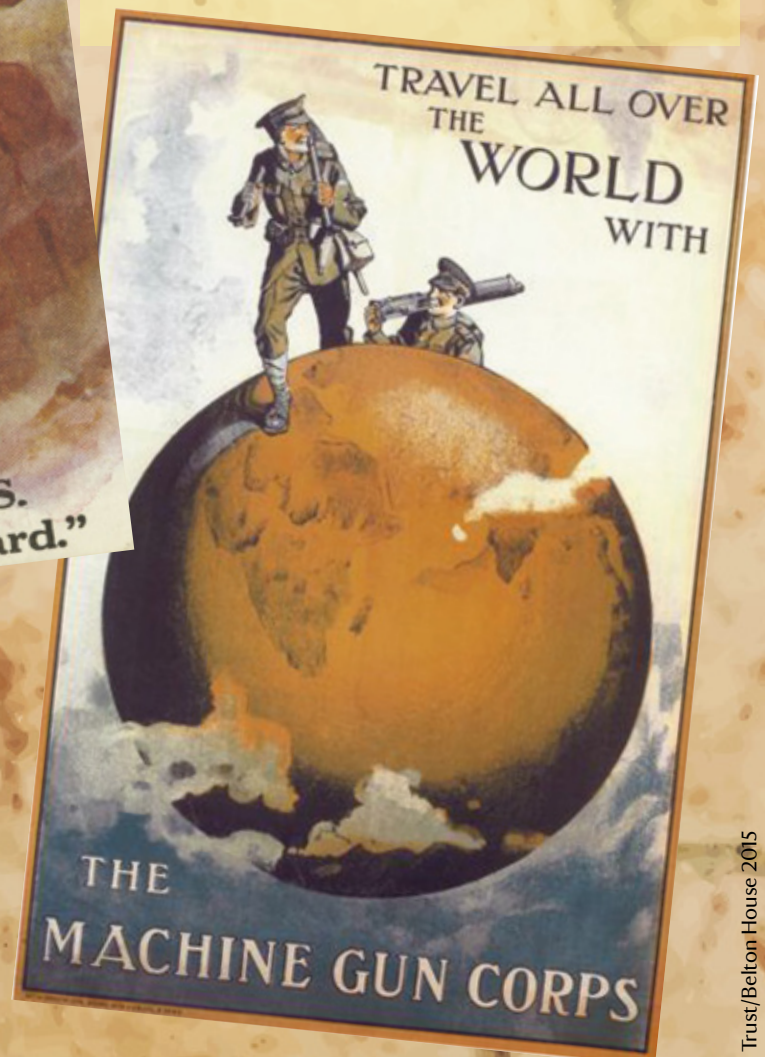
5,000 men served in Greece

4,000 men served in India

2,500 men served in Italy

1,500 men served in North Russia

400 men served in East Africa



So you want to be a machine gunner...



This role will suit someone who

- Can work as part of a team
- Can march for hours and find their way
- Can clean and fire a gun in all conditions
- Can communicate well no matter how loud it gets
- Can carry heavy objects over long distances

No previous experience needed as full training will be given.

The Machine Gun Training Centre at Belton Park and Harrowby Camps had several schools including the Officers' School, NCO's School, Drill School, Machine Gun School, Artificers' School, Range Takers' School, Bombers' School and the Signallers' School.

Each School had its own course and instructors.

Each rank had to attend several different schools, including the officers, and all 6 men of the Gun Team had to be able to do all the jobs needed to fire and care for the machine gun.

... Sufficient to say that like all arrivals from the Front, I felt scornful of the theoretical teachers at the Training Centre, where I was put through a refresher M.G. course. Some of the teachers had never been to the front, others not since 1914, and we, fresh from the Front, felt, quite incorrectly, that we were the last word in machine gunnery.

Major General Wimberly, about his experiences at Belton Camp in Summer 1916.

The physical standard required for a man in the MGC is shown below, and no man should be appointed who does not attain this standard.

- General Physique.** The all-round standard required for a machine gunner is far higher than that necessary for an infantry soldier. To be well developed and sufficiently strongly built to enable him to work with, and carry, a machine gun / similar weight under adverse conditions, and if necessary, to double or crawl with it. He must have no physical defects, which would interfere with this work.
- Age.** Not less than 19 years, not over 35 years, but the actual age is not so important as the general physical condition of the individual.
- Height.** Not less than 5 ft 3 ins except in exceptional cases.
- Chest Measurement.** Range of expansion not be less than 3 ins, but 3 ins is sufficient for untrained recruits.
- Eyesight.** Without glasses V=6/9 with at least one eye.
- Teeth, inoculations and vaccinations** attended to before arrival at the Machine Gun Corps Training Centre.

Army Council Instructions, No 1589, dated 14 August 1916

What could you learn at School?

A machine gunner had to learn a lot at the schools over a short period of time. They needed to be able to fire the Vickers Machine Gun accurately and keep it in good condition in the Artificers' and Machine Gun Schools. Learning Range Finding (how far away and where the target is) and recognising enemy aircraft were essential as was soldering, welding and rough carpentry skills as you never knew where you might need to make repairs.

Being able to get to a position in the field quickly and following orders were equally important so map reading and signalling with large and small flags, lamps, heliograph, buzzer and telephone had to be learnt, as well as physical training.

This War brought a new enemy to the battlefield - Gas - so soldiers were drilled for Tear and Poison Gas attacks.

It was a busy time at camp.



A typical day at Belton Park Camp

6.30am Reveille is sounded - get dressed, shave if necessary, roll up blankets, all before breakfast at

7.30am stew, bread with margarine - occasionally sausages, tripe or salmon for a change.

After breakfast - clean boots, get ready for parade.

8.45am "Fall in" sounded and those to go on parade "fall out" in front of huts - marched to parade ground and form lines for inspection by an officer.

Continue training - before leaving Belton have to go through a course of firing, bomb throwing, pass gun examination and a test with a gas helmet - 6 weeks to complete.

12.15pm dinner - stew, vegetables bread and margarine and occasionally roast beef and pudding.

1.45pm "Fall in" and repeat morning procedure until 4.15pm

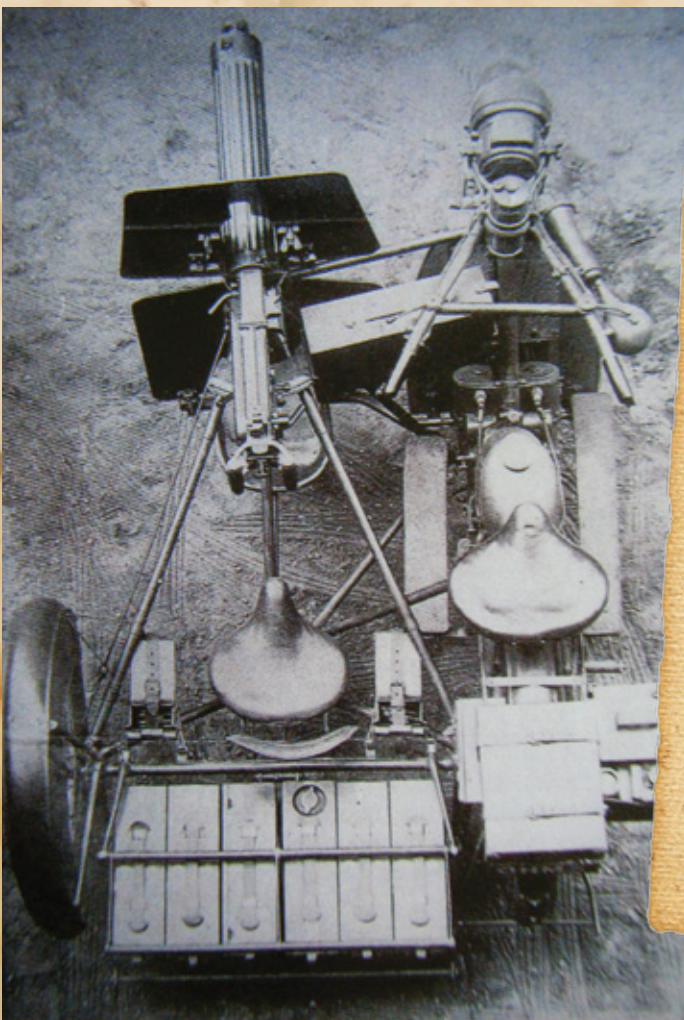
4.45pm tea - bread and margarine and sometimes jam or syrup.

After tea - open camp - some go into Grantham.

9.30pm supposed to be back in huts, but officers not strict!

10.15pm Lights out.

Taken from a letter from Private W. Milgate to his mother in New Zealand.
March 1917



Mud or splendour?

With thousands of men parading, relaxing and living in such a camp as this – what was the reality of the conditions?



It would be impossible, I should imagine, to find a worse camp, during the winter at all events. The thousands of troops who had passed through the camp had churned the ground up until it was like a huge mudpool, and to step off the duckboard meant to drop in mud to the boot tops... We had several nice places in the camp for recreation, including a billiard hall which held 16 full size tables, and there were the usual huts provided by different religious bodies...

There was not much pleasure at Belton Park. Short rations, and those not of the best, always left one feeling just on the verge of starvation. This was amply proved by watching the men as soon as meals were over. It was a race to see who could get to the canteen first to fill up the empty spaces.

H I Minchin, Memoirs written in the 1920s (IWM)



"BELTON" in the Mud.
 THERE'S an isolated, desolated spot I'd like to mention,
 Where all you hear is "Stand at Ease," "Slope Arms,"
 "Quick March," "Attention,"
 It's miles away from anywhere, by Gad, it is a rum'un,
 A chap lived there for fifty years and never saw a woman.
 There's only two lamps in the place, so tell it to your mother,
 The postman carries one, and the policeman has the other,
 And if you want a jolly night, and do not care a jot,
 You take a ride upon the car, the car they haven't got.
 There are lots of little huts, all dotted here and there,
 For those who have to live inside, I've offered many a prayer,
 Inside the huts, there's RATS as big as any Nanny Goat,
 Last night a soldier saw One Fitting on his Overcoat.
 For Breakfast every morning, just like Old Mother Hubbard,
 You Double round the bloomin' Hut and jump up at the cupboard
 Sometimes you get bacon, and sometimes "lively" cheese,
 That forms Platoon upon your plate, Orders Arms and Stands
 at Ease.
 It's sludge up to the eyebrows, you get it in your ears,
 But into it you've got to go without a sign of fear,
 And when you've had a bath of sludge, you just set to and groom,
 And get cleaned up for next Parade, or else it's "Orderly Room,"
 Week in, week out, from morn till night, with full Pack and a rifle,
 Like Jack and Jill, you climb the hills, of course that's just a trifle,
 "Slope Arms," "Fix Bayonets," then "Present" they fairly put
 you through it.
 And as you stagger to your hut, the Sergeant shouts "Jump to it."
 There's another kind of drill, especially invented for the Army,
 I think they call it Swedish, and it nearly drives you barmy;
 This blinking drill it does you good, it makes your bones so tender
 You can coil yourself up like a snake and crawl beneath the fender.
 With tunics, boots and putties off, you quickly get the habit,
 You gallop up and down the hills just like a blooming rabbit,
 "Heads Backward Bend," "Arms Upward Stretch," "Heels
 Raise," then "Kinks Change Places,"
 And later on they make you put your kneecaps where your face is.
 Now when this War is over and we've captured Kaiser Billy,
 To shoot him would be merciful and absolutely silly,
 Just send him down to "BELTON," among the rats and clay,
 And I'll bet it won't be long before he droops and fades away
 BUT WE'RE STILL "MERRY AND BRIGHT."
 From _____ (All rights reserved.)

Just a word about the camp. It's a wonder of comfort, cleanliness & organisation...

G.A. Wilkinson in a letter to his mother,
 20th Nov 1917 (IWM)

... Was very large hutted camp, bit bleak, no windows on huts or doors. So much mud they walked around with sandbags on their boots...

George John Jiggins, Oral History interview 1984 (IWM)

Taken to new camp which had been formed at Belton. Very nice place, new and comfortable huts...

Sibbald Stewart, Oral History interview 1987 (IWM)

So far I'm still at B, which is quite a comfortable place bearing in mind its situation.

Graham Musson in a letter to his sister,
 1st August 1917

*"When the War is over, and we've captured Kaiser Billy,
 To shoot him would be merciful and absolutely silly.
 Just send him down to Belton, amongst the mud and clay
 And let the Crown Prince watch him as he slowly fades away"*

The last verse of a popular soldier's song

Belton Park Military Hospital

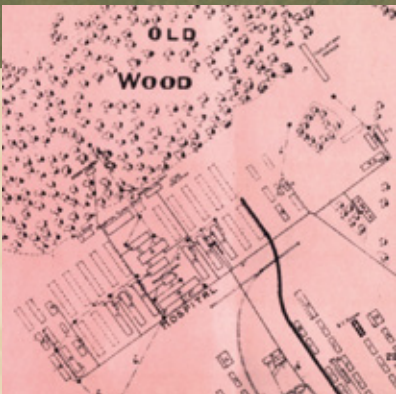
The Hospital at Belton Park Camp was started very early in the War, and by December 1914 several wards were nearly completed. Run by doctors and nurses of the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC), it could hold up to 670 patients at any time.

How do we know how big the Hospital was?

Left – aerial photograph of the site of the Hospital today

Bottom left – part of the plan of the camp at Belton Park, 1915

Bottom right – aerial photograph of the camp from the First World War



From the plans we know that there were operating rooms, a mortuary, isolation wards and a special ward for shell shock patients.

The injured soldiers were well cared for by members of the Queen Alexandra Imperial Military Nursing Services (QAIMNS) and volunteers from the Red Cross, Voluntary Aid Detachment nurses and private residents. Other soldiers in the Camp also had a part to play.

"Guard Duty in ward in hospital looking after shell shocked patient – at night were given an easy chair near the stove."

A soldier's diary

"...from the very first the hospital (Belton Park) has been fortunate in having many friends who have worked untiringly as visitors and collectors... many others who have maintained a steady stream of contributions..."

Letter from G H Younge, Lieut-Col RAMC Officer in Charge of Hospital and H C Hare, Matron QAIMNS Military Hospital thanking the people of Grantham and neighbourhood dated 29/12/16.



Festivities at Belton Park Hospital

On 2 occasions this week the nursing staff and patients have engaged in entertainment for the benefit of themselves and also those not well enough to join in. On Tuesday evening the nursing staff joined in a fancy dress carnival and the following evening about 150 patients staged a rival carnival with prizes and visits to the wards to those confined to bed.

Grantham Journal 4/11/1916

Wounded Soldiers Arrive at Grantham. Splendid Work by Volunteers Corps.

A Unique Spectacle: Most interesting yet most pathetic feature of war – on Tues afternoon 200 wounded soldiers from the Battlefield of France arrived by train and were transferred to the Military Hospital at Belton Camp. The horrors of war were brought home to local people who are used to large numbers of troops leaving for the various centres of hostilities and also to the many in our midst who have suffered and come here for quiet recuperation. However, this event was unique so far as Grantham is concerned.

A fully equipped Red Cross Train arrived at 3.45pm and for 2 hours, military ambulances and 36 private motor cars lent by local people followed each other in quick succession bearing the wounded warriors. 169 surgical and 31 medical cases, no deaths either on board ship or train. The passage of the wounded through town was “thrillingly impressive” and large numbers lining the street will never forget it.

Grantham Journal 29/07/15

Christmas at Belton Park Military Hospital

Wards tastefully decorated by the men and Grantham people subscribed generously. Matron invites people to visit any afternoon during Christmas week except Tuesday. There will be Christmas tea and entertainment for inmates on Boxing Day at 4pm.

Grantham Journal 23/12/16

Arrival of Wounded Soldiers: Smart work by the VAD

Local VAD and Volunteer Corps helped remove a number of overseas wounded soldiers from the railway station to the Military Hospital at Belton. At 9pm Saturday, Mr. J W Lee, the Commandant, received notification from military authorities that a convoy of 120 cot cases and 40 sitting cases would arrive 1.30pm Sunday. Mr. J H Hopkins of the Motor Volunteer Transport saw to it that 26 private motor cars and drivers were arranged and waiting. The train arrived at the military platform and docked at 2.42pm. Immediately the transfer of wounded began and the first motor left for Belton at 2.55pm. Some cars made 3 separate journeys and at 5.20pm the whole of the patients had been removed. In many of the cot cases the wounds were of a very serious character, but each was carefully handled and the whole of the hospital staff were ready to receive them. The ladies of the Springfield VAD again provided refreshments for the helpers. Commandant Lee received a letter of thanks from Lieut-Col G H Younge RAMC, Officer Commanding at Belton Military Hospital, on Monday.

Grantham Journal 18/08/17

Australian Soldier's Gratitude Letter to Editor

Thanks to Hospital staff and people of Grantham for kindness shown ...
“An Australian Soldier”

Grantham Journal 12/08/16

Successful Events at Belton Hospital

Two comedies and a short play produced by medical officers, sisters and nurses for the entertainment of patients and staff. Orchestra included friends from MGC

Grantham Journal 20/01/17

Belton Military Hospital An Appeal from Matron

An appeal for small gifts such as cakes, fruit, stationery and wash-bag items.

Signed H Hare, Matron, Military Hospital, Belton Park

Grantham Journal 19/08/16

An Early Morning Scene:

Early hours of Weds morning whilst still dark, another batch of wounded soldiers were expeditiously removed from Grantham Station to the Military Hospital at Belton. The second contingent to arrive here. A special Red Cross Train arrived from London at 2.30am and within an hour, 84 wounded warriors were transferred: 53 cot-cases and the rest able to sit up. Local residents again voluntarily loaned and drove their own cars of which there were 26, as well as the Military Red Cross cars.

Grantham Journal 9/09/1916

The YMCA

The Greatest Pleasure I've had in Camp has been the sight of the Y.M.C.A. Tent. One large tent full of men writing letters, and the other full of men, happy-looking and enjoying a good entertainment. The best work in the whole camp and one for the good of the men.

Surgeon-Lieut. Taylor, 1916



The YMCA was a constant feature of the recreational side of army life during the First World. Whether a tent, hut or local hall the YMCA were found at Home and Abroad, with some being only 3 miles behind the trenches.

The leader of each centre was described as needing to be "a man accustomed to dealing with men; of bright and happy disposition...". He would then need a host of volunteers who could lead the different parts of their work.

Weekly sing-alongs and other entertainments were provided for the men. With the Camp and Community Song Books that fitted into a tunic pocket, there was no excuse not to know the words of 'God Save Our Gracious King', popular songs such as 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary' and hymns like 'Onward Christian Soldiers' and 'Abide with Me'. There were also comic sketches, variety acts and competitions to keep the men entertained.

Games were also available with draughts universally played, bean bag throwing, ping-pong, Halma and cards. Gambling was frowned upon as "it was not unusual for a new recruit to find that he'd lost his wages within 24 hours of arriving at the camp."

Refreshments were available with hot tea and coffee and dolly cakes, the latter were smaller versions of cakes.

A packing case without a top acted as a pillar box in the Post Office, with as many as 1500 letters posted in one day. No charge was made for the notepaper or the envelopes, to encourage letters home.

In every camp the day would end with Family Prayers that included a hymn, a brief bible reading and a prayer.

FROM BELTON PARK CAMP P.O.

EVERY WEEKDAY

At 8am, 11.45am, 6pm, and 8pm

ON SUNDAYS ETC At 6pm

North's Almanac for Grantham

Ladies can render most acceptable service in the following amongst other ways: By undertaking the management of the coffee bar, post office, stationary counter, etc.; by organizing mending, darning, laundry, and hot baths for the troops; by providing flowers and helping to keep the room tidy and bright; by exercising personal influence; by conducting classes in French, First Aid etc.; by providing socks, shirts, Balaclava helmets, Cardigan jackets etc., for those who need them, and who are to be found in almost every regiment.

It will be readily understood that to make the most efficient use of the help of ladies, it is essential to prepare a plan in advance, allotting definite hours and duties to each one, the Camp Leader being in all instances chief in authority.

YMCA Active Service Diary 1916

ANOTHER Y.M.C.A. PAVILION

At a very early date, a third YMCA Pavilion is to be erected in Belton Park, this for the benefit of the 111th (Manchester) Infantry Brigade. It will be considerably larger than either of the existing two, but constructed on somewhat similar lines. The site chosen is between the Army Service Store depot near the Villa Pond and the 18th Manchester's lines, and there is no doubt that a rendezvous for recreation could not be placed in a more convenient situation.

Belton Park Camp News, early 1915



Record Postal Business of YMCA Hut:
arrival of 4 Manchester Battalions
– 4,128 letters and postcards
written and posted at YMCA Pavilion
close to the Military Hospital;
3,600 halfpenny and 1,200 penny
stamps disposed of.

Grantham Journal

*A pottery shard found
at the location of No. 2
Hut, Belton Camp.*



Books for Wounded Soldiers

The Librarian, YMCA Hut No. 3, Belton Park (Mrs. Sheehan) would be grateful for gifts of books for the library. Novels especially welcome.

Grantham Journal
16/06/1917

YMCA work at Belton

Staffing levels of the Huts now very small so unable to carry on without help. Free conveyance to and from Camp.

Grantham Journal
03/03/17

Clifford Salvucci

Clifford told the recruiting officers that he was 19 years old the day he signed up. Even though he was younger than this, he joined the army only a few weeks after War had been declared.

He came to Belton Park to train to be a soldier before leaving for the front lines.

Clifford was chosen to train to ride a motorbike for the Machine Gun Corps. On his side-car they mounted a machine gun, with a tripod stowed behind the seat. There were only 18 of these motorbikes with sidecars in the whole army.



"Our camp site was in the grounds of Belton House. It was old and beautiful. I loved to walk there in the early morning beside the stream..."

He was posted to Camiers, France, in 1915.

"Camiers was peaceful, the sun shone, the sand dunes sparkled, it seemed a long way from the war. I spoke a little French, so I was chosen to go into the village and get extra food."

Clifford found life in the trenches gruelling, but when he was given 4 days leave and visited his family in London, he felt restless and missed the comradeship of his friends in the trenches.

3rd June 1915

3rd Battery Motor Machine Gun Services
British Expeditionary Force
France

Dearest Ma,

Hello, how are you? I am in the pink, everything is A.1. out here. We are at present resting. We hear plenty of gunfire, but of course, up till now we have not been in any of it. Everybody seems to be very decent, we have some fun trying to make ourselves understood by the people round here, and the beer is not so bad for 1p a glass and wine is about the same. We get plenty to eat for all round here there are people living in the houses as usual; you would not think there is a war on.

I got your telegram before we left. When you write the above address will find us alright.

The boys, although they have been out here for about six months, speak well about things in general, so I don't think there is much to worry about.

Did you receive my card?

You should have seen us cooking some steak on a fire of sticks, in our Billy cans, just like one big picnic, for we are as jolly a lot as you could find. One of them has got a flute so we have some music. Remember me to the clients at the "Charlton" and hope to see them again soon. We are just going to have tea now; we are in a decent place for a camp.

With fondest love,

Cliff

One day, when Clifford was on patrol, he was caught in crossfire and his leg was badly injured. Taken by hospital train he started his recuperation in a tent ward of the 20th General Hospital in France.

"when the sun was shining the side flaps of the tent were raised, I was sure I could smell the sea."

By October 1918, he was back at Belton Park, this time convalescing in the military hospital.

"Eventually I learnt to walk beside the stream in the grounds, finding solace alone with my thoughts and I found more time to write poems."

11th November 1918

My God, how lonely, lonely am I
In this great big city of ours
Not a welcome nod or a smile,
From one of the thousand souls in joy
For peace at last has come,
The terrors of war have flown
I feel as a stranger in a foreign land,
No one extends a welcome hand
For me, with a soul filled with tears,
For the brave men who paid for
this peace.
Yet I am one of a million men
Who fought to keep this, our freedom.
O laughing, joyous crowd set free
Thy war bounds joys and stifled fears,
Yet not a hand or a smile for me.
How lonely, my God, how lonely am I.
The birds and the flowers of
the countryside
Are more friends to me,
Where one can hear sweet nature's call
That rouses the soul to
higher thoughts,
And gives good welcome to such as me.
This city of ours, with all its life,
Its greatness and millions of souls,
To a stranger that walks your streets
Thine hearts are forever cold.

Clifford Salvucci

29th November 1918

To the stream in Belton House Grounds, Belton Park, Grantham

There's a wonderful spot of peace
In a beautiful glen I know
Where I roam, alone with my thoughts,
As by the stream I go.

The fairies that dance on the stream
To the music as the waters fall,
Flashing with sunshine and life,
Here, I'm not weary at all.

When in need of sweet rest
From the toils of the day,
Alone, will you find me there
For often I stroll that way.

In fancy dreams, sweet heart,
You have been to my beautiful spot.
Many a happy hour I've spent
Just content, to bear my lot.

Fairies and all, are my friends,
For a smile, in this world of strife,
Away from all worries and cares
To the peaceful side of life.

In this storm tossed world of ours,
When all is dull and dreary,
By the stream near Belton House,
It's heaven when one is weary.

Clifford Salvucci

Soon after this Clifford was demobbed and the army gave him an "out of work donation policy" in case he couldn't find any work. He had 2 weeks food rations and £2 12s 6d (approx. £115 today) to buy a suit as he went home on the train to London. From his letters, diaries and poems, it seems that he found it hard going home to his family. His sense of sadness over his experiences and the friends he had lost seemed to continue until he met Nellie, who he eventually married.

Quotes are taken from the autobiography of Clifford Salvucci written by his daughter, using his diaries, poems, notes and letters.

Graham Musson

Graham was a fun loving local Grantham boy, known as "Gray". He'd started work when he was 14 years old at the iron works, Hornsby & Sons Ltd., at Spitalgate with his father and older brother, Gilbert.

Gray and Gilbert had already enlisted in the Lincolnshire Yeomanry three years before War was declared. So in September 1914 they and all the other Yeomanry troops went through

intensive training before being sent to the front lines.

Gray's regiment set sail on 27th October 1915 to the Dardanelles and Salonica on board the SS Mercian. It was the first time he had ever been away from home. He was taken to hospital injured on 3rd November, after the ship had been struck by shellfire. He re-joined his regiment 5 months later in Egypt.

Gray returned to Grantham on 22nd December 1916 to start his training at Belton Park with the Machine Gun Corps He would train to be part of a 6 man team as it took that many to manage and fire a machine gun. Commissioned as a Second Lieutenant, he was sent to France on 27th July 1917, where he wrote to his sister, Edith.

France
August 1st 1917

*My dearest Edith,
So far I am still at B, which is quite a comfortable place bearing in mind its situation. When I got here last Sunday night I found some of my fellows still here who left Clipstone the week previous but my old tent pal Leech had gone. I was sorry, but no doubt we shall run across each other again sometime.*

During a few of the spare hours I have had this week I have written a few letters and one I sent to Mrs Leech in reply to her kind letter which I received at Clipstone. I have also sent a few lines to dear old Bib as I know he will be interested in my movements.

Well my dear girl, I hope you and all have a happy time during Dad's short holiday. I was sorry that my rush home came at such a time - I cannot tell you how great is my appreciation for the love and attention shown during the four brief hours I was able to spend with you. I could not help leaving with a good heart to take up my place on the active zone again. France fills many people with nothing but gloom, but my dear Edith don't let such be the case with you at home. Think of the happy times we have been privileged to have in the past. So face the future with a courage based on the thoughts of these.

I have always believed that our destinies are meted out by God, & wherever we are when the time comes we have to go, so there is no greater peril for me than elsewhere. I don't wish to make this letter in any way dismal but to comfort and cheer you if you understand me right.

George will be on his holiday now and I hope he enjoys it, as I know he needs the change. I seem to have a lot to say but as usual when writing I cannot word it.

How's Ralph, tell him I hope his next exam is a success for him. I shall write as often as I can and your letters will always be looked for with eagerness and pleasure.

Much love and constant thought

Your brother

Gray

Could you send me a pad & a few envelopes sometime.



Gray came home on leave in December 1917 and had a short visit with his family before returning to the Front Line on Christmas night.

On a wet and foggy Monday, Gray and his team tried to hold their position on a Somme crossing. He was killed in action that day, 25th March 1918. He was 27 years old.

He'd told Edith in one of his letters that he had seen too many dreadful things during the war, and he only wanted to be an artist so he could paint "the lovely English countryside".

Rosemarie Musson spoke about why she thought that Graham joined the MGC.

"We were often told how Graham would entertain his mates playing the piano and telling jokes. He was a jovial man and everyone enjoyed his company. We wondered why he joined the MGC while his older brother Gilbert stayed with the Yeomanry in Egypt. Apparently Graham was badly injured after the ship he was on was torpedoed by a German submarine. He was sent to Algeria and then home to recuperate in England before returning to his regiment in Egypt. He would have seen many of his comrades killed and even his own horse, so the idea of volunteering for the MGC and training at Grantham was a good opportunity to get home for a while and train to be an officer in a new fighting force."

Fred Hunt

Frederick Hunt was a member of a large family from Kirton Lindsey, Lincolnshire. He joined the Territorial Army at Grimsby a month before his 18th birthday in 1914. Paid just 1s 3d per day this private wasn't even given any uniform to start with.



For our first fortnight as soldiers we as recruits wore civilian clothes and carried nothing more lethal than heavy walking sticks for training and guard duty.

A year later Fred left for France, and in late September 1915 he was caught in a mustard gas attack (an accident of 'friendly fire') at the Battle of Loos. This got him a Blighty Ticket to convalesce in England for a short time. With a promotion to corporal he returned to the Front, but was soon back in England with a sceptic arm.

Fred was re-trained after his arm healed and passed out as a first-class machine gunner and was offered the chance to join the newly formed Machine Gun Corps at Grantham.

Reporting to Harrowby Camp he began training at the MGC drill school with other corporals and sergeants from many different regiments.

It was a tough life: all the officers and sergeant instructors had been seconded from the Brigade of Guards and imposed their own ruthless brand of discipline.

With intensive training and rigorous discipline, Fred was trained to train and lead his men. A five week course in gun handling, dismantling and maintaining machine guns even when blindfolded followed. Long hours map reading, learning the strategy of the deployment of guns in attack and defence, and even the use of enemy guns captured in battle, completed his training.

During the 5 week course a 5.30 am reveille had us immediately out of bed for inspection by the sergeant and corporal in waiting. Woe betide anyone still in bed when they entered the hut; it meant being up on a charge before the company commander. The slightest crease or fault in bedding and kit laid out Guards-fashion during morning parades led to similar action against the transgressor.

After training, he was posted to No. 203 Machine Gun Company at Belton Park. The company was a mixed bunch of some 200 men, with Fred being one of the eight corporals. Fred remembered the morning that they left Belton for France.

We used animal transport; there were six horses for officer's use, eight mules and eight limber wagons for guns, ammunition and equipment. The company moved out of Belton one cold morning before dawn. As we marched through Grantham's main street to the railway station it was apparent that our movement was not all that secret. A number of local women volunteers had set up gas boilers and trestle tables... And all ranks paused for a cup of tea. Mine was handed to me by Lady Brownlow, the aged and dignified lady of Belton House.

After time at the front, a promotion to sergeant and being in charge of two gun positions at the Battle of Paschendaele, Fred was sent back to Belton in late 1917. With his extensive experience in the field and another five weeks of training he returned as acting sergeant-major with the No. 8 Machine Gun Training Company to train the new recruits.

Training continued with fresh batches of soldiers from infantry regiments and Machine Gun Corps men who had returned wounded or ill after service overseas. Then in the middle of 1918 the 'flu came to Belton Park Camp.

Nothing had changed at Grantham. Discipline was still as rigorous and regimental as ever. After five weeks we were sent on to the Machine Gun school where discipline was more relaxed but weapon training thorough and dedicated, and we were put through every element once again, as if we were raw recruits not first-class machine gunners, senior NCO's and battle scarred veterans.

Almost every day a funeral procession accompanied by a military band playing the Dead March in Saul passed through the camp hospital to the town's cemetery.

William Bulstrode

William was a private in the army, and truth be told, we know very little about him. He served in the British Expeditionary Force on the Front Lines before joining the Machine Gun Corps.

Our story begins in August 1918 as William starts his training in Belton Camp. He kept a meticulous diary that tells us much about life in the camp, but nothing about his own feelings.



*11th Sunday of Trinity (Aug 11) Got up 6.55am
7.45am Breakfast Paraded 9.25am on Battn Pde
Gnd [Battalion Parade Ground] for Divine Service
in RCO Theatre, "M" Lines C of E Hut for Holy
Communion 10.40 and came out 11.20am 12.30pm
Dinner Got Ready 2.0pm Walked to Park Gates and
took car to Grantham. Went-Brook St., High St. to
Westgate Hall and had tea up Westgate, Wharf
Rd., High St. Tea in Baptist Soldiers' Home. Went in
YMCA up Harlaxton Rd., High St Went to 6.30pm
Evensong at Grantham Parish Church. Came out
7.40pm Supper in Cong. Tea Room. Retd by bus
8.15pm to Park Gates Wesleyan Soldiers' Home Arr
Camp 8.40pm 9.20pm went into New theatre and
saw concert til 10.30pm. Bed 10.45pm.*

William left Belton for France on Thursday
7th November 1918 arriving there only days
before the Armistice was announced.

*Monday (Nov 11) 3.45pm News given by CO of
Germany's submission to armistice, cheerings,
band playing etc. 4.15pm Tea Raining Hard*

*Tuesday (Aug 13) Got up 6.10am. 7.20 Breakfast.
Paraded 8.30am Marched to Alma Woods Range.
Put up targets. Instruction in Revolver Aiming
Fired with Revolvers. Right Stand (i) Grouping
(ii) Continuous—Left Stand (i) Grouping—Snap
shooting with Right hand. Rtd to Camp Arr 12.20
12.30pm Dinner 1.45 P.T and Games til 3.0pm
3.15pm Loading Positions—4.30pm Tea in YMCA
"K" Lines Walked up avenue to Belton House. Entd
Gardens & saw same Inc.:- palm house, fountains,
lily ponds, tennis lawns etc. Saw Belton Church
saw round old gds. Retd down avenue to "K" Lines
YMCA Bed 9.30pm*

In December 1918, he was de-mobbed and
returned to work at the London & South
Western Railway as a clerk. This was the
same job that he had had before the war.

Keeping 'the home fires burning'

What did this look like in Grantham during the First World War?

Overall at least one million women were formally added to the British workforce between 1914 and 1918. From Munitionettes and Police Women to washerwomen and volunteers, the women of Grantham did their bit.

Munitionettes

R. Hornsby and Sons Ltd. in Spitalgate, Grantham, was one of many engineering firms in Lincolnshire who started to make ammunition during the War. The problem was that most of the men had signed up. The solution - more women in the factories.

Nicknamed 'Munitionettes', the work of these women was hard with long hours and low pay.

In June 1917 it was estimated that around 80% of all weapons and shells used on the Front Lines were made by women.



The Women's Police Service

Margaret Damer Dawson was one of the founders of the Women Police Service. Women volunteered to train as members of the police, initially in London. Grantham was the first provincial town to form a Branch.

Miss. Mary Allen and Miss. Ellen Harburn arrived at Grantham railway station on 27th November 1914 with vague instructions to "keep an eye on alleys, courts, yards and passages". They had little power compared to members of the police force.

Miss. Allen and Miss. Harburn were soon sent elsewhere and in May 1915, Mrs. Edith Smith was sent to Grantham. By Christmas 1915, Mrs. Smith had become a full member of the Grantham Police Force with a weekly wage. She was the first woman to be given the power of arrest in Great Britain.



I understand that there is some idea of removing the two members of the Women Police Volunteers now stationed here.

I trust this is not the case. The services of the two ladies in question have proved of great value. They have removed sources of trouble to the troops in a manner that the military police could not attempt. Moreover, I have no doubt whatever that the work of these ladies, in an official capacity, is a great safeguard to the moral welfare of young girls in the town.

Major General F. Hammersley
Commanding Officer of the 11th Division to the
Chief Officer, Women Police Volunteers

14th January 1915.

Washerwomen

The soldiers' clothes needed to be washed and mended when they were training at Belton Camp. At the beginning of the War, the Grantham Labour Exchange worked out that 500 washerwomen would be needed. Each woman would take about twenty-four sets of washing per week (4 garments from each man) and she would earn 7s per week. There weren't enough as only 325 women were employed as washerwomen. By April 1916, the Grantham Journal was calling for "Volunteer helpers urgently needed ... All mending materials provided."

Volunteers

Eggs for Belton Hospital

Since the start of the special collection of eggs for Belton Military Hospital by Mrs. Ellison, Elm House, 6 months ago, a total of 4,982 have been received from various villages and persons interested in the welfare of this institution, working out at around 226 per week.

Grantham Journal
22/01/1916

The Women's Legion

The members of the Military Cookery Section of the Women's Legion who are rendering invaluable service to the Military Services, took part in a large entertainment event which raised nearly £50 for the MGC Fund.

Grantham Journal
24/03/1917

An Urgent Appeal to Women

More help wanted for Military Hospitals. Demands cannot be met with existing supplies.

Grantham Journal
29/07/16

Books for Wounded Soldiers

The Librarian, YMCA Hut No. 3, Belton Park (Mrs. Sheehan) would be grateful for gifts of books for the library. Novels especially welcome.

Grantham Journal
16/06/1917

YMCA work at Belton

Staffing levels of the Huts now very small so unable to carry on without help. Free conveyance to and from Camp.

Grantham Journal
03/03/17

... Well known in this district as a frequent visitor to Belton House and having worked for some time with the late Lady Brownlow in local YMCA Huts, Miss. Talbot has since been doing valuable canteen work, also on behalf of Lady Brownlow, and has now received the official appointment of Chief Inspector of the Army and Navy Canteen Board for the Lincs Coast.

Grantham Journal
22/09/1917

Two young ladies begun a weekly collection for comforts for sick and wounded at Belton Park Military Hospital. So far it's been spent on cake, fruit, tobacco, cigarettes, matches, soap, etc and delivered weekly to the hospital.

Grantham Journal
21/10/1916

Advert for the Machine Gun Comforts Fund - Workrooms to be opened at Elsham House, Avenue Road, from Monday next, Oct 15th daily 9.30-1pm for the purpose of making warm articles of clothing for the troops at the various fronts. All materials found. Volunteer helpers will be cordially welcomed. All subscriptions in money or kind will be gratefully received and acknowledged by Mrs. Cumming.

Grantham Journal
13/10/1917

Adelaide, Countess Brownlow

Adelaide, Countess Brownlow 'wore herself out with her war work which told seriously on her health' according to the report on her funeral in March 1917.

There were flowers from the MGC, Belton Park Military Hospital, HQ Staff and all other men quartered in Belton Park. The 16th Manchester Regiment who had been at the camp in 1914/15 also sent flowers on behalf of their comrades in the field. For her memorial service Grantham Parish Church was full of local residents, wounded soldiers and representatives from each Battalion at Belton and Harrowby Camps.

Lady Adelaide spent almost 50 years at Belton House and was very much a well loved member of the local community. She was 70 years old when War was declared and continued to work tirelessly for the local residents and the soldiers based in the parkland.

President of the Lincolnshire Branch of the Red Cross Society, Lady Adelaide was influential in the raising of funds and gifts for wounded soldiers like those quartered at Grantham and Belton Park especially on "Our Day" and "Happy Thought Day" events. She was also a member of the Local Women's War Committee, opening Soldiers' Rest Homes at Grantham Station and in Chapel Street and two Recreation and Refreshment Huts in Belton and Harrowby Camp.



Death of Countess Brownlow Peaceful End of a Benificent Life

Press Association telephoned yesterday (Friday) at 9.45pm "The Countess Brownlow died at 6.30pm". It had been known for some days that Lady Brownlow was lying dangerously ill at 8, Carlton House Terrace, London, SW. Yesterday morning her condition was reported as grave, and early in evening a telegraphic message stated her Ladyship was very much worse. Third and youngest daughter of 18th Earl Shrewsbury, married Lord Brownlow on 22nd June 1868. First living at Ashridge, they came to Belton on 15th December 1868. Ever since, she has shown a deep and sincere interest in local residents. Enjoyed gardening and had a kind and sympathetic nature. In July 1893, celebrated Silver Wedding at Belton. During 1910-11 (during Coronation year of King George V) Earl Brownlow was Mayor and Countess Mayoress of Borough when, during many events, connected with community. An irreparable loss. Lincolnshire Nursing Association and British Red Cross Society particularly but all good and charitable causes Lady Brownlow was a generous supporter. During days of war showed unabounded consideration for welfare of soldiers.

Grantham Journal 17/03/17

Lady Adelaide's many kindnesses were reported regularly in the local newspaper including:

- Providing, at her own expense, refreshments of hot coffee / tea and a substantial meat pie (and a prayer book) to each man leaving Grantham to go to the Front and when possible helping with the distribution.
- Opening the Gardens in the afternoons for local residents and soldiers to enjoy.
- Donating all the crockery for one of the Soldiers' Rest Homes in town.
- Working in the YMCA Huts as a volunteer, with her niece Miss. Louise Talbot.
- Furthering the work of nurses and women patrols through her role with the Red Cross.

"... and left Belton Park at about 6pm to march down to goods station at Grantham where Mrs. Brownlow and Lord Brownlow's daughters gave them packet of 10 woodbines each, thought it was very good of them since it was getting late."

A soldier's memories

The company moved out of Belton one cold morning before dawn. As we marched through Grantham's main street to the railway station it was apparent that our movement was not all that secret. A number of local women volunteers had set up gas boilers and trestle table... And all ranks paused for a cup of tea. Mine was handed to me by Lady Brownlow, the aged and dignified lady of Belton House

Frederick Hunt

Described by a friend as having 'a long life of unceasing usefulness and care for others' she was not satisfied unless she knew personally every soul in every one of her husband's villages, their characters and peculiarities, their troubles and difficulties. Lady Adelaide then set herself to know as many as she could of the thousands of constantly changing men encamped on her husband's park. The end of this tribute finished with the words 'of the many hundreds who followed her to the grave not one but feels that his or her special friend has gone, and that they have lost their wisest and kindest advisor'.

Edith Smith

The situation in the town of Grantham was causing great anxiety to the authorities because of the nearby military camp at Belton Park. The Chief Constable gave his permission for two Women Police Volunteers to start work in the town. On 27th November 1914 Miss. Mary Allen and Miss. Ellen Harburn, arrived at Grantham railway station accompanied by their chief, Miss. Dawson. It was not long before the work of these policewomen was acknowledged as a success and in May 1915 they were moved on to Hull. They were replaced by Miss. Teed and Mrs. Edith Smith, both of whom had undertaken training in London.

Edith Smith was 38 years old, and a widow with four children when she came to Grantham. She had had a varied career from being a Sub-Postmistress at Oxton in Cheshire to training as a midwife in London after the death of her husband when she was aged just 30. One of her training officers in the Women Police Service described Mrs. Smith as 'a woman of outstanding personality, fearless, motherly and adaptable'.

Mrs. Edith Smith, and her colleague Miss. Teed, continued the work with women in Grantham of visiting the homes of women and girls to encourage them to stay away from the military camps; lending a hand with drunken women who got into difficulties with groups of soldiers; assisting the military authorities in searches for missing soldiers and looking for missing girls. All this they did for no salary!

In November 1915 a meeting was held under the chairmanship of the Bishop of Grantham, and attended by many influential people. Miss. Dawson read a report of the activities of the two women police, and the decision was made that 'the policewomen should be granted official status for their arduous and unenviable duties' and receive a salary. Edith and Miss. Teed were then paid 28s per week which was made up to £2 by the Women's Central Committee. As the policewomen were now accepted as members of the Grantham Borough Police, they were formally sworn-in by the Magistrates. Edith's Warrant Card was dated 17th December 1915.

And so Mrs. Edith Smith and Miss. Teed became the first official policewomen in the country with the same powers as their male colleagues, namely the power of arrest. However from June 1916, Edith worked alone in the town.

Edith got a pay rise in April 1917 to £2 10s per week, which was more than the oldest male constable in Grantham was being paid. The arguments for the pay increase were recorded in the Grantham



Journal in May 1917 stating that Mrs Smith 'did more work' than her male colleagues and 'it was of a different class'. She was expected to work all hours of the day or night as required, she had no days off, and received no overtime or pension. The newspaper report quoted:

'Mrs Smith did an entirely different work to the men. Her duties were most onerous. When they engaged her, her work was to be particularly amongst the women and children. She was also doing rescue work among the girls, and looking after troublesome homes, saving many cases from coming into the police court; she was the healer of many breaches. She was a very intelligent woman, and gave wise counsel; and perhaps it was unknown to the members of the Council that her front room was quite a consulting-room for the womenfolk of the town, who sought her advice and instruction. Being a fully qualified nurse, she was able to render very valuable service. Altogether her work was outside, really, that of an ordinary police constable, and therefore she did not want to rank as the same practically... She was contented and satisfied; her whole heart was in her work; and in Mrs Smith they had a very faithful policewoman.'

Alderman Lee, in the Grantham Journal,
5th May 1917

Edith resigned her post on 4th January 1918 after working for two and a half years in Grantham as a policewoman. She was very proud of her status as the first warranted policewoman. 'War time' she said 'has created another opening for such women as are specially suited to the work. There is no question as to their usefulness on the Force, given the right woman and a good training, consisting of drill, police law and etiquette, combined with previous proficiency in one or more of the following subjects: type writing, first aid, midwifery, nursing or experience of district work as health visitor, school teacher or inspector.'

Possible lines of enquiry

“Belton House and the Brownlows”

- Did the Earl and Countess Brownlow have to be involved with the War effort? Think about:
 - They were 70 years old
 - They had no children – so no son was fighting
- Look at the plans for the camp and its location in the parkland – they couldn’t see it from the house.
- How much did their work matter to the soldiers?
- How much did their work affect the War effort?
- What did other local and national land owners do? (see ‘The Country House at War’ book by the National Trust for examples of how other properties were used during the First World War).

“We are the boys of the MGC”,

“Mud or Splendour?” &

“So you want to be a machine gunner...”

- How were the men selected for the Machine Gun Corps?
- Where did they come from?
- What kind of backgrounds did the men have?
- What would it have been like to arrive at Belton with thousands of other men from different battalions?
- Was the MGC song by F. L. Shaw written by the men or was it commissioned to bring the men together? [the answer to this question isn’t known]
- Many of the men who came to the MGC had already seen action on the Front – how might they feel to be back in England?
- What was life like for soldiers training at Belton?
- Why might there be a difference in sentiment between descriptions of the camp in the letters home and the memories recorded after the war?
- Was it all mud or were there areas of camp better than others? [look at the individual soldiers’ case studies as well]
- Were all machine gunners over 19 years old? Watch the BBC clip <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-dorset-24914335>
- Have a look at <http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=xxf3fU9UJhQ> from The Manchester Regiment Museum and then think about how much training had to be done to get it perfect.
- Watch the BBC clip <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01rj84n>
- Were there any skills that the men would learn at these schools that could be used after the War?
- Reading Major General Wimberly’s words – did the training increase their skills in using a machine gun?

William Bulstrode

- Read William’s first diary entry – he visited 4 different Christian denominations throughout the day. What does this tell us about William? Is he a devout Christian or a man looking for faith and reasons for the War?
- Why might he only write factual accounts?
- How might he have felt when Armistice was announced, after only just finishing his MGC training and returning to the Front?
- We know that he kept the same job for the rest of his life and didn’t marry – might this be because of what he witnessed during the War?

Graham Musson

- Graham was born and brought up in Grantham so he knew the town well. What changes would he have seen when he returned in December 1916 to train with the MGC at Belton Camp?
- How would the soldiers have coped with life at Belton and in the Trenches? How could someone with Graham’s personality have helped his comrades?
- Read Graham’s letter to his sister Edith. What are the most important things in the letter that Gray wanted to tell her? How would she have felt when she had read it?
- Imagine Edith is writing a reply to the letter. What sort of things might she tell Gray about? Is there anything she might want to ask him? How might Gray feel when he received her letter?
- Graham told Edith in another letter that when the war was over all he wanted to do was to be an artist so he could paint the lovely English countryside. Find out about war artists and other artists who lived through the war years. What impact did the War have on their work? (e.g. Paul & John Nash, Paul Klee, Stanley Spencer).
- Like many soldiers who lost their lives during the War, Graham has no grave. In what ways might his family remember him? How many different ways of ‘remembrance’ might have helped them to come to terms with his death?
- Graham is commemorated at the Pozieres Memorial and his name is also inscribed on the MGC memorial in both St. Wulfrum’s Church and St. Anne’s Church in Grantham. Research First World War memorials and Remembrance ceremonies.

Clifford Salvucci

- Clifford had trained as part of the MGC at Belton Camp early on in the War. Would he have noticed any differences in the camp from when he trained there to when he returned at the end of the War?
- Clifford rode one of eight motorbikes in the MGC. How might this have made him feel?
- How might Clifford have felt returning to Belton as a wounded man? Read his poem "To the stream in Belton House Grounds..." – How important might the parkland have been in his recuperation? What do you think he was feeling when he wrote this poem?
- Read the poem he wrote on Armistice Day. How do his sentiments in this poem reflect his personal conflict on this day?
- Compare his poetry to other war poets of the day (e.g. Siegfried Sassoon, Rupert Graves and Wilfred Owen). Are there any similarities and differences in tone and sentiment?
- Why might Clifford have found it difficult to re-adjust to life after the War?

Fred Hunt

- How intensive was the training at Belton?
- How might the 'send off' from Grantham Station have affected the troops?
- How significant was it to Fred that Lady Brownlow handed him his hot drink?
- How might Fred have felt to return from the Front and be trained in every element again '...as if we were raw recruits not first-class machine gunners, senior NCOs and battle scarred veterans.'
- What effect on the troops' morale might the 'flu epidemic have had?

Belton Park Military Hospital

- How might the soldiers training in the Camp have been affected by wounded soldiers being sent to this hospital? How would a soldier feel having to do guard duty on the Shell Shock Ward?
- How important was the support of local residents to the Hospital?
- The wounded arrived by Hospital Trains at Grantham Station and then were transferred by private vehicles to the Military Hospital
 - What might that have been like for residents to see who had loved ones serving overseas and for the soldiers training to witness?
 - Investigate Hospital Trains. What were they really like?
- How did the convalescing soldiers entertain themselves?
- How important were the entertainments provided to the morale of the wounded soldiers?

The YMCA

- How important were organisations like the YMCA during the War?
- Find out about communication during the War e.g. opportunities for letter writing; postal services on and off Camp; the censorship of letters sent home; how important would letters be to the soldiers and families?
- What types of entertainment were held in the YMCA Huts?
- What games were played?
- Why might gambling be frowned upon?
- What songs would be sung at camp? (Investigate popular songs of the time; Do we still know them today?)
- Write a comic sketch, variety act or design a competition for your fellow soldiers – what would you do and include?
- How important was Christianity and faith to the British Tommy?

Keeping the Home Fires Burning

- How important were women for the War Effort?
- How did women support the Home Front in Grantham?
- Investigate women of the time: How did the War really effect the Suffrage Movement?

Adelaide, Countess Brownlow

- How important were the Countess' actions during the War?
- What would you do to raise money on a 'Happy Thoughts Day'?
- How do we know that the soldiers' appreciated the Countess' hard work?
- What happened at her funeral?
- How were her actions described by others?
- Did her War work contribute to her death in 1917?

Edith Smith

- Why was Mrs. Smith's work different from that of male Police Officers?
- What type of work did Mrs. Smith do?
- How significant was the appointment of Mrs. Smith and Miss. Teed to the local police force and their gaining the same powers as male Police Officers?
- Was Mrs. Smith right in her thoughts that women needed 'previous proficiency ...' in certain subjects and professions?
- How likely was it that a woman would have these previous skills?