

Press Release:

TheGenealogist launches the First World War issues of *The Sphere* newspaper

TheGenealogist has expanded its Newspaper and Magazine collection with the release of *The Sphere* that cover August 1914 to June 1919.

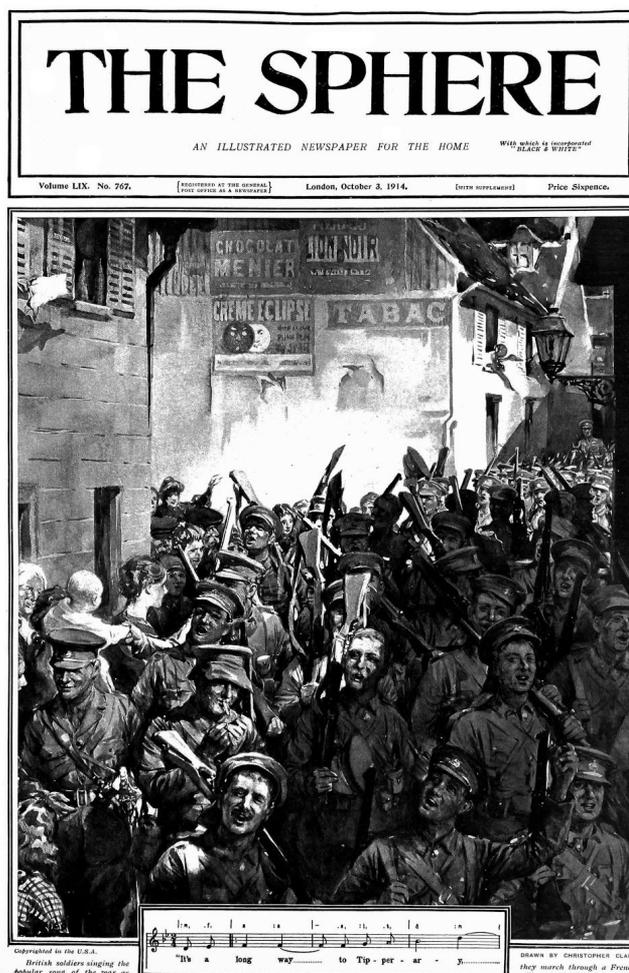
Using the Historical newspapers and magazines resource on TheGenealogist enables researchers to follow current affairs that may have affected or concerned our ancestors at the time. Because the articles were written as events were occurring, they provide contemporary accounts of the world that our ancestors lived in and can furnish us with great insights into opinions of the time. In the case of the First World War years, covered by this release of *The Sphere*, we can gain information about individuals or read about situations that are similar to ones that our ancestors may have found themselves in.

The Sphere was an illustrated paper founded by Clement Shorter (1857-1926) who was also responsible for establishing the *Tatler* and it covered general news stories from the UK and around the world.

War Memorials collection

Also being released at this time by TheGenealogist are another **116 War Memorials** containing **10,795 names**. Included in this batch are a number of Boer War memorials as well as those for the First World War. With this addition the total figure for memorials on TheGenealogist has now reached **1,540 with 363,838 names**.

To search these and many other records on TheGenealogist, go to: www.thegenealogist.co.uk



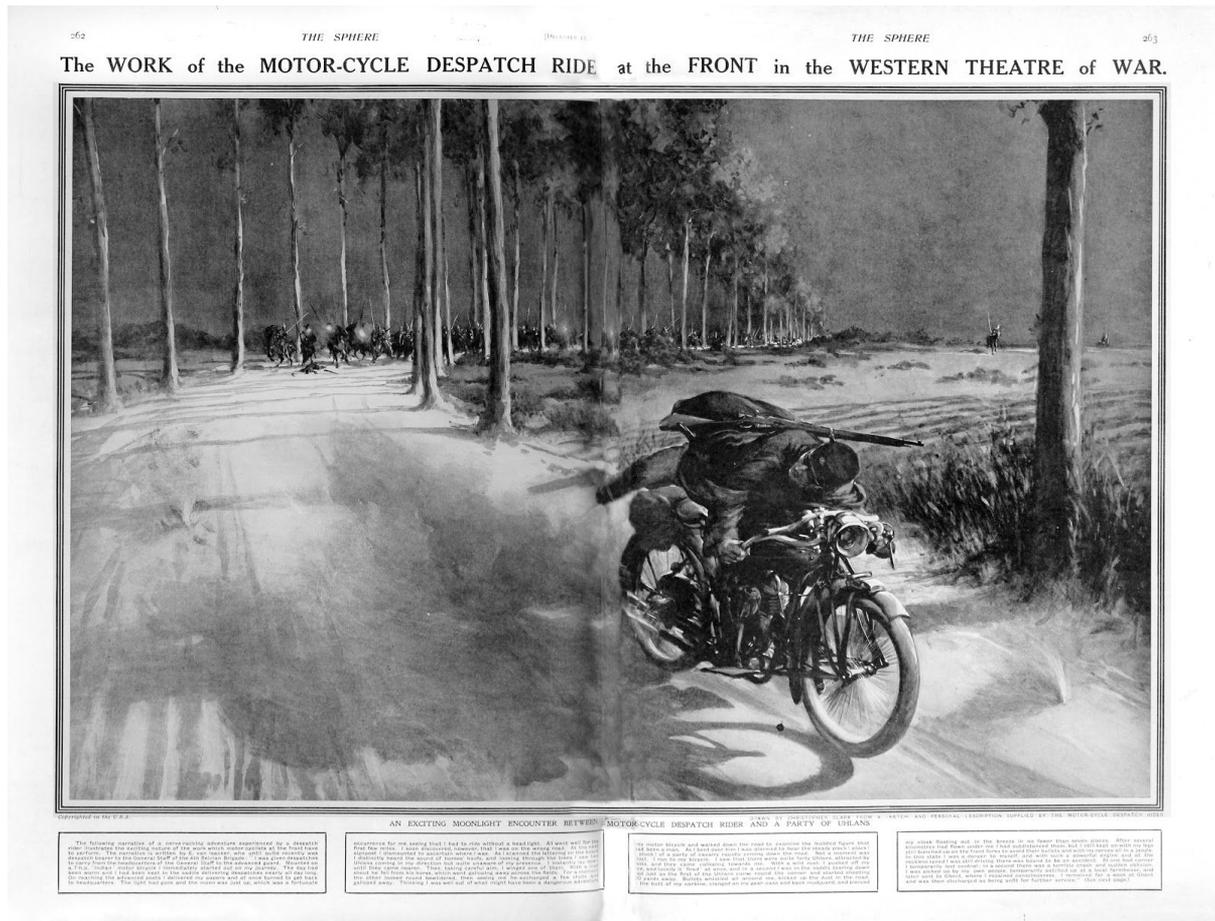
Copyrighted in the U.S.A.
British soldiers singing the popular song of the war as they march through a French village to the front

"IT'S A LONG, LONG WAY TO TIPPERARY"—THE BATTLE SONG OF THE BRITISH

The song, "It's a long, long way to Tipperary" (written and composed by Jack Judge and Harry Williams), is being sung by all the soldiers of our Expeditionary Force. There is nothing of the "Ragtime" nature about the song. It is simply a cheerful ditty concerning a young man in London whose heart is in Tipperary. The music of the chorus is in the mood of marching men (written along a French melody). Naturally one begins to hum, "It's a long, long way," and then the whole column takes it up. The beginning of the chorus is here reproduced by kind permission of the publishers, Messrs. Hutchinson and Co., Dublin, and those who have also been turning their attention to the music of their countrymen, "Swallowtail under the Stars" and "Whiskered on the Hillside" are the two successful titles.

The Sphere, providing insights into your ancestor's lives.

Nick Thorne uses the Newspaper and Magazines collection to better understand conditions in World War I



The Sphere December 12 1914

I have been looking a little closer into the war exploits of my step-grandfather. I knew that he had joined the Royal Engineers Special Reserve Motor Cyclist Division as a despatch rider but, like many of his generation that fought in the First World War, he didn't talk much about his experiences. What I did know was that he had found it 'quite exciting' to ride his despatches from headquarters to the front and back on a motorbike. He never expanded on this and certainly didn't tell us stories about his escapades, nor what it was like to be a soldier on two wheels.

With the recent release of copies of *The Sphere*, on TheGenealogist, I was thus fascinated to come across the December 12 1914 edition of the publication. Here was an article about motorcycle despatch riders from the early part of the war. This day's publication featured a double page evocative image of a motor-cycle despatch rider on his machine fleeing with the enemy on his tail. As I knew that my step-grandfather was in his late twenties at the time and a keen motorcycle rider I could imagine him reading pieces such as this and wanting to join up to the R.E. Motor Cyclists to 'do his bit'.

I know that Grandpa also served in the western theatre of war and so this image and the report that followed, resonated with me. I could now imagine him in similar situations as had been described and pictured in the newspaper. In this particular article from the newly released records, the rider telling his story suffers a whole lot of problems: *'On returning I take the wrong road and my machine gives trouble, and whilst repairing same I suddenly find myself surrounded by Uhlans.'* This narrator is captured, has his hands bound behind his back and he feigns illness. When his guard goes to fetch a doctor the British Tommy escapes by rolling into a ditch. This episode makes me realise that when my step-grandfather said it was 'quite exciting' this was probably a bit of an understatement. Their duties were certainly not a simple ride in the countryside.

The British Army in World War I would often use Douglas or Triumph Motorcycles for despatch riding duties which only had between 2 and 5 hp engines. Some riders, however, brought their own machines along when they joined up. These motorbikes would have to be inspected by the military to make sure that they were suitable for the purpose; but in the early days, when many of the men were volunteers, this would have meant that this section of the Royal Engineers Signals would have been up and running quickly. In my step-grandfather's case, however, looking at his attestation papers I can see that this part had been scored through - indicating that he would have had to be issued with an army bike.

Later in the First World War Grandpa was wounded and by reading other articles, such as that published on the 9th January 1915 about the RAMC work at the front, I got an understanding for how injured men were transferred in motorised omnibuses and ambulances that were also subject to breakdowns of their own.

Resources such as *The Sphere*, *The War Illustrated*, *The Great War*, *The Illustrated London News*, plus the other historical newspapers and magazines already found on TheGenealogist are great for building a picture of situations that our ancestors may have found themselves in. In some cases we may be lucky enough to find an ancestor actually named in a report - but even when that doesn't happen we can find write-ups that provide us with an understanding of the wider conditions in which our ancestors worked, played or went to war in.



The Despatch of Despatch-riders—A British Motorcyclist Exhibiting the Role Made Through his Hat by a French Soldier.



A British Motorcycle Despatch-ridee Waiting Home from near the Trenches in Northern France.



E. van Isacker
Motorcycle Despatch-ridee, lately attached to the British General Staff.

The DIARY of a DESPATCH-RIDER Attached to the Belgian General Staff.

I was at home at Huy-sur-Mer when an order for general mobilisation surprised me at work. Off to Huges, where I received my equipment for the campaign. The general of the 4th Brigade sent for me on August 7, and asked me to deliver a motor bicycle to the General Staff of the 1st Division. I was given a Scania motor bicycle of 21 hp. At midnight the bugle sounded the departure for the frontier. The transport had gone the previous day. At 1 a.m. we left barracks in a down-pour of rain. The band was playing the march of the General Staff, to which I was attached, followed. The town turned out to cheer to three cigarettes, cakes, money and the ladies were kissing every soldier. I was carried by friends for at least 200 yards; my bicycle also was carried triumphantly. Many trains waited as at Huges Station, and at 4.15 a.m. the special train for the staff took us to Vertrieck, near Tilmont, to which town the whole division marched. At 1 p.m. I was sent from Tilmont with the first despatcher to Hasselt, returning to Tilmont the same afternoon, where another despatch awaited me for Louvain, where I arrived at 6 p.m., and handed them to the burgomaster. Returned to Tilmont, and at 10 o'clock again off to Louvain, but on the way was stopped by the sentries, the password having been changed from the afternoon, when it was "—". Back to Tilmont to get new password, "—" and to Louvain. 11.20 a.m. Back at Tilmont, where I fell asleep from fatigue in the office. 4 a.m. next morning I was awakened by the bringing in of the first spy—his most German in a full hat, taken whilst cutting telegraph wires. His hands were tied, and away to the cells. Was shot two days after. To sleep again, 6 a.m. awakened again to do sentry-go while officers have breakfast—sent half for me at 7 a.m. Quiet till 9, when two spies brought in dressed as nuns. They were taken, brought for a whole batch of papers of information about the neighbourhood found pinned to the inside of their skirts and in a basket two pigeons. Shot next day. At 10 a.m. arrival of the king at Tilmont. Amidst great shouts and cheers he comes to the General Staff, where I am sentry. In ten minutes I am wanted for despatches to Grimblot. On my return, I lunch and am then set at a printing press to print the order for gear. Further spies are brought in, amongst them two dressed as Capuchin monks with Red Cross armbands. To the cells. Afternoon's further despatches to Haddockover and Corrich. Spies are being brought in all day—one man dressed as a nurse with a two-year-old baby. Nurse to the cells, baby—what nationality?

A soldier has a bright idea. A sausage on the end of a bayonet is offered to the baby, who takes and eats it with gusto. Loud shouts from all. "Uhlans!" Baby sent to Louvain. First Uhlans are seen in evening—shot at without effect. At 10 p.m. Further despatch for Corrich. Back to bed. At 4 a.m. on August 1 I am awakened. Despatches for Hallen. At 8 a.m. further despatches, Haddockover's and on returning we were at breakfast in the square when everybody started shouting, "La Mitrailleuse!" on the arrival of French batteries. Another Uhlans regiment, and a Belgian army corps gives chase, without result. The rest of the day I am given liberty. Next day the king again visits us. At midday whilst eating we are all called up and march off to Hautfont St. Marguerite, five kilometers away. The captain tends me to get about 15 good cigarettes as they may be the last he will smoke. About 4 p.m. we see the caissons arrive, and a whole mixed brigade. It is evident a battle is imminent, and we get what rest we can. At 5 p.m. Further despatches for a regiment at Grimblot, and on returning sideways and reverse we find, next morning, another despatch for Grimblot. I did not stop soon enough for a centinel and got his bayonet through my cloak. Transport called—the Germans are seen in the neighbourhood of Dint coming from plundering Hasselt. One advanced guard captures a band of Uhlans splendidly equipped but half starved. Despatches for Hallen. On returning I take the wrong road and my machine gives trouble, and whilst repairing same I suddenly find myself surrounded by two Uhlans. I am stripped and searched for papers, but have none—none wish to shoot me, but finally take me and my machine with them to an officers' who quarters us in French. I reply in German that I am innocent and am looking for my regiment. I am given in charge of a soldier and kept in a trench. My captor leaves me to fetch a doctor—my hands tied at my back. I fall into a ditch and make my way with water to my chin under the bushes far enough to lose sight of the Germans, then emerge and take to my heels. A peasant writes my hands. I arrive at night at the General Staff and am given a fine machine—7 hp. Hallen. I remain with the General Staff while the battles of Hallen, near Aersclot, and Tilmont are fought, and on the retreat from Eric, round 1 am sent with despatches to the advanced guard. It was here that my machine and I came to grief. (See illustration on preceding page).



A British Despatch-ridee Waiting Orders To his machine we strapped his 10 lbs and all his other necessary equipment.



In a Northern France Village British despatch-ridee on a machine and the carrying despatches in the fighting line.

Another use that we can make of this resource is where we have an ancestor who was unfortunate enough to have lost their lives, while serving as an officer in the First World War. In many editions of *The Sphere* Rolls of Honour were published. In these we are able to find a picture along with a few lines recording their loss. The Newspaper and Magazine collection is available to all Diamond subscribers of TheGenealogist.

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