

My Two Grandfathers in WW1

by Jane Barry

Since Jane wrote this article in 2015, further records have been published that have identified her British grandfather's regiment as the 19th Battalion King's Liverpool (Service) Regiment. As a result, it has been possible, by accessing the battalion's War Diaries, to locate their daily positions and the operations of the unit on active service. This has been interpolated into Jane's article below (Jane's words are delineated by quotation marks) together with a vignette of her grandfather's experiences at the front. In April 2022, members of the Great War Forum translated Jane's Prussian grandfather's passbook. This has enabled the resolution of a question posed in 2014 when Jane's research began with the help of the Moseley Society History Group: 'Were the two grandfathers ever in direct combat on the Western Front'?

"I'm probably not unique in having had a grandfather on each side in the First World War. My English (paternal) grandfather Robert Harwood Hutton was a Yorkshire man from Otley, born in 1893. He was the son of Alfred Hutton, a clerk for a copper manufacturers and Ellen (née Jones, born in Portmadog, Caernarfon, Wales). By 1911, the family had moved to 54 Palatine Road, Northenden, Cheshire. Robert was noted on the census as a 'student for the teaching profession'. In 1912, he enlisted in one of the Manchester Territorial Regiments but, at the start of the First World War when the Territorial Forces were called up to reinforce the Regular Army abroad, he was not able to serve due to ill health." In 1916, by which time Robert had recovered, the Manchester Territorial Units had their full quotas of men and as a result Robert was sent to Liverpool where he joined the ranks of 19th Battalion King's Liverpool (Service) Regiment, service No. 52095. The 19th Battalion saw action in the Somme Offensive from July to November 1916. In February 1917, the battalion was based in the area around Arras in preparation for the Allied Spring Offensive, including the Battle of the Scarpe commencing 9th April. The battle led to the eventual strategic withdrawal of the Germans to the Hindenburg Line. In 1918 the Germans launched their own Spring Offensive on 21st March 1918, bolstered by their troops from the Eastern Front freed up after the Bolshevik Revolution. The German offensive broke through many of the British Front Lines before running out of steam. The last battle the battalion took part in was the Battle of the Scherpenberg on 19th April, part of the Battle of Lys or more commonly known now as the Fourth Battle of Ypres, where the Germans were finally repulsed.

"Robert achieved the rank of Lance Corporal before he was eventually discharged, as no longer 'physically fit for duty' for which he was awarded a Silver War Badge on 3rd June 1918. This was possibly due to his hearing being impaired by the noise of artillery action and shell shock."



Gerry cans containing water were taken up to the troops on the backs of mules

Like most men returning from the war, it was not a topic of conversation shared with the family, but just occasionally a vignette of his time with the battalion captured his experiences at the Front, for example, how the tea always had the tang of petrol because water was often transported in Gerry cans to the front line and how stubborn the mules were if not handled correctly.

"In 1920 Robert received the British War Medal and the Victory Medal for his services. By 1920, he had returned to the teaching profession and taught in several schools in Manchester before retiring to Anglesey. He died in 1970."

TEACHERS REGISTRATION COUNCIL

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION
(Established by Act of Parliament and Constituted by Orders in Council). JH.

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Register Entry concerning: **HUTTON, ROBERT HARWOOD.**

Date of Registration: **1st March, 1932.**

Register Number: **88270**

Professional Address: **Ross Place Municipal Boys' School,
Ardwick, MANCHESTER.**

Attainments:

Board of Education Certificate.

Training in Teaching: **Manchester Municipal Day Training College.**

Experience: **(War Service 1914-1918).**

Assistant Master -

St. Luke's C. of E. School, Miles Platting, Manchester.
1920-1928;

All Saints' C. of E. School, York Street, Manchester.
1928-1929;

**Nelson Street Evening Commercial School, Miles Platting,
Manchester.** 1925-1931;

Ross Place Municipal Boys' School, Ardwick, Manchester.
1930 -

Robert Harwood Hutton's Teachers Registration Council record

"I know a lot more about my German grandfather, Walter Blumenthal, although I never met him. I missed him by a few days: I was born on 18 February 1947 and he had died on the 10th, most likely as a result of the freezing weather. He collapsed on a bus in North Manchester at the age of 61 - according to his death certificate, from Acute Lobar Pneumonia. His small family of wife Emilie, and daughters Elisabeth and Marianne (my mother) were left very shocked at his sudden demise as he seems to have been a very lovable and humorous man."



Walter Blumenthal and his grandson Graham Brewerton (my cousin), 1945/6

"Walter was born in Westphalia, not far from Dortmund in the state of Prussia and also not too far from where the WW2 Dambusters raid was carried out. The family was Jewish," although his passbook records his religion as 'protestant'. "They lived in the small town of Herdecke, a pretty place with a lot of black and white buildings. I took this picture there not long ago (see below). It shows the building where Walter's father, Moritz, had his butcher's shop."



"There were five children, two daughters who founded a dressmaking firm, and then three sons, of whom Walter was the eldest. The family was well established in the area, and Moritz's extended family lived either there or nearby, on the southern bank of the River Ruhr. The two previous generations had both, amazingly, lived to celebrate their golden weddings, but Moritz and his wife Jakobine were not so lucky, as she died in 1910, while he lived on into the early part of the Nazi period, dying in 1935 at the age of 82."

"Walter studied at the local school but at some stage moved to Hamburg, which is much further north in a different province of Germany. The youngest brother, Max, of whom more later, moved to Berlin. Walter was a salesman and became quite prosperous, eventually. However, first of all there was the little matter of the Great War."

"Walter Blumenthal was a soldier with the Prussian Army in WW1. He was born in 1885 and died just after WW2, in 1947, having moved to England with his family in 1938 to escape the Nazis. His two brothers were also soldiers in WW1 and all three luckily escaped serious injury. He came from a place near Dortmund, and at the time this area was part of Prussia (Borussia Dortmund means Prussia Dortmund, for all you football fans)."



Walter in his Prussian uniform

"He was called up in July 1915 and is described in his military passbook as a Landsturmmann, a member of the reserve troops. This is him in his normal uniform, at home (before he set off for the army). On parade the troops had to wear a spiked helmet called a pickelhaube (see left). Poor Walter had to wear one of these when he got married in 1917. They were not much use and in battle, were replaced with more ordinary but stronger helmets after 1916."





"My grandparents' married in 1917 (see left). My grandmother looks quite thin - it was the 'turnip winter' - and poor Walter had to wear his spiked helmet for the occasion."

"All the soldiers were issued with a dog tag, just like the British soldiers. Walter's is shown below. It gives his date of birth, home address in Hamburg and a lot of code which would help the officials to work out his regiment if he was killed in action. The bottom half is the same, and could be broken off and given to his family as a grim sort of souvenir."

(Left) Walter wearing his pickelhaube when he married in 1917

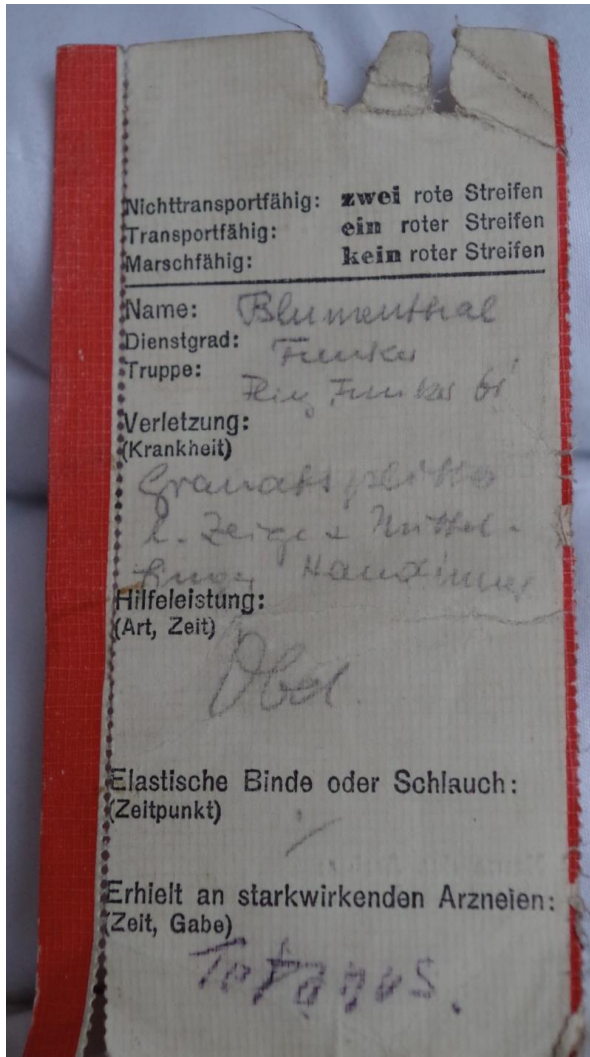
(Below) Walter's dog tag



"Walter was fond of music. On his first day as a soldier he was called out to the parade ground with the other recruits. The sergeant shouted: "Does anyone here like Beethoven?" Beethoven is a famous composer, but most of the other soldiers might not have heard of

"Below are two pages out of Walter's Pass Book. On the last page of his pass book (see top), which is dated 30.11.18, he gets a report, saying that his conduct is 'good', he has had no punishments, but also has not earned any medals or ribbons. He really did stay below the radar (only they hadn't invented radar in those days). Walter is described as a Funker, which means a radio operator. This was one of the safer jobs, and he nearly got through the war without any injuries."

2517 Flieger-Abteilung A 240 20.12.18	Datum 20.12.18	Zusatz (Abgaben und zu den Personalnotizen. Einberufungen, Führung, Strafen usw.)
30.11.18 18.12.18	Der Funker Walter Blumenthal war vom 14.7.18 bis 26.10.18, bei nebenst. Hflg. und wurde am 26.10.18. infolge Fernweisung dem Haupttrakt-plate Remerville überliefert Führung: gut Strafen: keine Beförderungen: keine Orden u Ehrenzeichen: keine Aufg. Bef. ab 14.7.18 - 26.10.18. dienstl. Fflg. für Fflg. Hflg. t. 240.	20.12.18 21.12.18 22.12.18 23.12.18 24.12.18 25.12.18 26.12.18 27.12.18 28.12.18 29.12.18 30.12.18 31.12.18 1.1.19 2.1.19 3.1.19 4.1.19 5.1.19 6.1.19 7.1.19 8.1.19 9.1.19 10.1.19 11.1.19 12.1.19 13.1.19 14.1.19 15.1.19 16.1.19 17.1.19 18.1.19 19.1.19 20.1.19 21.1.19 22.1.19 23.1.19 24.1.19 25.1.19 26.1.19 27.1.19 28.1.19 29.1.19 30.1.19 31.1.19 1.2.19 2.2.19 3.2.19 4.2.19 5.2.19 6.2.19 7.2.19 8.2.19 9.2.19 10.2.19 11.2.19 12.2.19 13.2.19 14.2.19 15.2.19 16.2.19 17.2.19 18.2.19 19.2.19 20.2.19 21.2.19 22.2.19 23.2.19 24.2.19 25.2.19 26.2.19 27.2.19 28.2.19 29.2.19 30.2.19 31.2.19 1.3.19 2.3.19 3.3.19 4.3.19 5.3.19 6.3.19 7.3.19 8.3.19 9.3.19 10.3.19 11.3.19 12.3.19 13.3.19 14.3.19 15.3.19 16.3.19 17.3.19 18.3.19 19.3.19 20.3.19 21.3.19 22.3.19 23.3.19 24.3.19 25.3.19 26.3.19 27.3.19 28.3.19 29.3.19 30.3.19 31.3.19 1.4.19 2.4.19 3.4.19 4.4.19 5.4.19 6.4.19 7.4.19 8.4.19 9.4.19 10.4.19 11.4.19 12.4.19 13.4.19 14.4.19 15.4.19 16.4.19 17.4.19 18.4.19 19.4.19 20.4.19 21.4.19 22.4.19 23.4.19 24.4.19 25.4.19 26.4.19 27.4.19 28.4.19 29.4.19 30.4.19 31.4.19 1.5.19 2.5.19 3.5.19 4.5.19 5.5.19 6.5.19 7.5.19 8.5.19 9.5.19 10.5.19 11.5.19 12.5.19 13.5.19 14.5.19 15.5.19 16.5.19 17.5.19 18.5.19 19.5.19 20.5.19 21.5.19 22.5.19 23.5.19 24.5.19 25.5.19 26.5.19 27.5.19 28.5.19 29.5.19 30.5.19 31.5.19 1.6.19 2.6.19 3.6.19 4.6.19 5.6.19 6.6.19 7.6.19 8.6.19 9.6.19 10.6.19 11.6.19 12.6.19 13.6.19 14.6.19 15.6.19 16.6.19 17.6.19 18.6.19 19.6.19 20.6.19 21.6.19 22.6.19 23.6.19 24.6.19 25.6.19 26.6.19 27.6.19 28.6.19 29.6.19 30.6.19 31.6.19 1.7.19 2.7.19 3.7.19 4.7.19 5.7.19 6.7.19 7.7.19 8.7.19 9.7.19 10.7.19 11.7.19 12.7.19 13.7.19 14.7.19 15.7.19 16.7.19 17.7.19 18.7.19 19.7.19 20.7.19 21.7.19 22.7.19 23.7.19 24.7.19 25.7.19 26.7.19 27.7.19 28.7.19 29.7.19 30.7.19 31.7.19 1.8.19 2.8.19 3.8.19 4.8.19 5.8.19 6.8.19 7.8.19 8.8.19 9.8.19 10.8.19 11.8.19 12.8.19 13.8.19 14.8.19 15.8.19 16.8.19 17.8.19 18.8.19 19.8.19 20.8.19 21.8.19 22.8.19 23.8.19 24.8.19 25.8.19 26.8.19 27.8.19 28.8.19 29.8.19 30.8.19 31.8.19 1.9.19 2.9.19 3.9.19 4.9.19 5.9.19 6.9.19 7.9.19 8.9.19 9.9.19 10.9.19 11.9.19 12.9.19 13.9.19 14.9.19 15.9.19 16.9.19 17.9.19 18.9.19 19.9.19 20.9.19 21.9.19 22.9.19 23.9.19 24.9.19 25.9.19 26.9.19 27.9.19 28.9.19 29.9.19 30.9.19 31.9.19 1.10.19 2.10.19 3.10.19 4.10.19 5.10.19 6.10.19 7.10.19 8.10.19 9.10.19 10.10.19 11.10.19 12.10.19 13.10.19 14.10.19 15.10.19 16.10.19 17.10.



"He didn't quite make it though, and in 1918 his index finger was injured by a grenade splinter. Pieces of linen like this one were used as records of the injuries soldiers received and showed very clearly how badly hurt they were, so that they could be sent off ASAP for the right kind of medical care. The linen is cream-coloured with a tear-off red strip down each side, and the doctor wrote down the soldier's name, his job and troop, and what was wrong with him. The red strips mean 'blood' or 'serious injury'. If you were very badly hurt the red strips were left down each side. If you were not badly hurt and were still able to march, both the red pieces would be torn off. As you see, Walter was in the middle - one red strip has been torn off to show that he was OK to be transported to the field hospital, but wasn't fit to march or to return to his duties. At the bottom you can see the word 'tetanus' which means he had an anti-tetanus injection. He lost part of his finger and was discharged from the army in November 1918."

A German Army injury tag, a rare artefact from WW1 that was kept by Walter.

"From 1933 onwards, the Nazis made the lives of Jewish families in Germany very difficult. They conveniently forgot that many soldiers who fought in WW1 were Jewish, like Walter and his two brothers. In 1938 Walter and his family moved to England and because he had a good job with an international firm, he was able also to bring over his sisters and one younger brother, who all settled in England. The youngest brother, Max, remained in Berlin. He was a Communist and being Jewish too, was doubly unwelcome to the Nazi authorities. Eventually he was rounded up with about 200 others after taking part in a protest in Berlin in May 1942. The participants were all shot and their partners (in Max's case, his wife Lilly) were deported to concentration camps from which they were unlikely to return."

Addendum

As part of the present-day determination not to forget the past, houses which were formerly occupied by Jewish citizens are being commemorated by a small brass plate, called a Stolpersteine (stumbling stone), set in the pavement in front of the door. It is the work of a German artist who has laid more than 70,000 stones, making them the largest decentralized monument to the Holocaust. In 1916, Jane and her husband, Bill, made the journey to Berlin to unveil Stolpersteins for her Uncle Max and Aunt Lilly. There was a big civic ceremony and Jane gallantly made two public speeches in German.





Were the two grandfathers ever in direct conflict?

The translation of Walter's pass book by members of the Great War Forum records that he was called up on 28th July 1915 and posted to Recruit Depot A of the Jager Battalion I, a Reserve Battalion. Walter was then posted to three training battalions, firstly with No.6 Infanterie Ersatz Battalion (XX 13) in Allenstein (present day Osztyń, NE Poland), followed by Garde Nachrichten Ersatz Abteilung, both information and news gathering units, and finally Nachrichten Abteilung of the Ersatz Abteilung Pascha II. This unit was to be among those used as relief for the troops to fight in the Near East, against Lawrence of Arabia and in Palestine, but Walter was redeployed instead to the Garde Nachrichten Ersatz Abteilung.

Walter was in Prussian Holland from 8th June 1917, with the Ersatz Battalion Infantry Regiment No 18 and then the Ersatz Abteilung 20 Signal Corps from 20th July.

On 6th December 1917, Walter was declared fit for active service and posted to the Funker Ersatz Kompanie, Nachrichten Ersatz Abteilung I, where he was employed in monitoring Allied radio messages.

From 14th July 1918 to 26th October 1918, Walter served with Flieger Abteilung A 240, an artillery co-operation squadron on the Western Front facing the French army positions. If the co-operation squadron was the equivalent to the RAF co-operation units, it would have

meant that Walter was picking up messages from a German pilot to improve the aim of the German artillery against the French Front Lines.

Walter's injury occurred on 26th October 1918. As a result he was admitted to the main Dressing Station at Renneville in the Ardenne, Northern France. After he had recovered Walter was posted to Hamburg on 20th December 1918 where he remained until he was discharged on 6th February 1919.

Based on the fact that Walter's posting to the Western Front was in a unit fighting the French and that by the time of Walter's posting, Robert Hutton had been out of Front Line action having received a Silver War Badge on 3rd June 1918, it is evident that they were not at any time in direct combat.

Did the two grandfathers ever meet?

MALE ENEMY ALIEN—EXEMPTION FROM INTERNMENT—REFUGEE		383
(1) Surname (block capitals)	BLUMENTHAL	
Forenames	Walther	B.W.
Alias	Walter	
(2) Date and place of birth	5.11.1885 Herdecke	
(3) Nationality	German	CCGP.
(4) Police Regn. Cert. No.	620168	4/85
Home Office reference, if known		
Special Procedure Card Number, if known		CCG.P.
(5) Address	439 Bury New Road, Broughton, Salford.	B310
(6) Normal occupation	Technical adviser	GA.
(7) Present Occupation	do	and GA.
(8) Name and address of employer	Manchester Oil Refinery Ltd., Twining Road, Barton, Lancs.	✓
(9) Decision of Tribunal	Exempt from internment	Date 16.11.39
(10) Whether exempted from Articles 6 (a) and 9 (a) (Yes or No)	Yes.	
(11) Whether desires to be repatriated (Yes or No)	No.	

25m 9/39 [7701] 31522/875 50m 10/39 4070 G & S 704 [OVER]

Walter came to England as a German refugee in 1939. A tribunal on 16th November 1939 exempted him from internment. As a result Walter was able to gain employment as a technical adviser at the Manchester oil Refinery, Twining Road, Barton, Lancashire. In 1944, Edward H Hutton, Robert's eldest son married Marianne Blumenthal, Walter's daughter, Jane's parents. Walter and Robert are captured on the family wedding photograph, shown below. Walter is third from the left on the back row, wearing glasses.



In memory of Jane Barry

18th February 1947 – 7th March 2022

With thanks to Bill Barry, Jane's husband