

PILGRIMAGE TAKES FAMILY AND SOCIETY TO THE SCENE OF VC SOLDIER'S LAST BATTLE



FAMILY VIGIL: Alex Cotter, great-nephew of Cpl William Cotter VC, with a scroll of honour, by the grave of his great-uncle at the Lillers military cemetery where wreaths were laid

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Tribute at brave hero's graveside

RELATIVES of a First World War hero travelled to France to see the spot where his courage won him the highest praise, the Victoria Cross.

In an emotional ceremony at the battlefield near Bethune, the Sandgate Society and 11 family members of Cpl William Cotter paid tribute to his valour.

The Rev John Botting, the military historian, described the truly remarkable actions of a man in the thick of battle in 1916.

Cpl Cotter, who was from Sandgate, fought back an enemy attack as both sides hurled hand-held bombs at one another.

The corporal fought on despite having his leg blown off and both

arms seriously injured.

He died eight days later, having been told he was to receive the Army's highest bravery honour.

His nephew Sidney Cotter, 78, his nearest surviving relative brought back a-recently-dug-up shell case. Mr Cotter says he will polish it and keep it as a permanent reminder of his uncle's bravery.

The party later gathered around Cpl Cotter's grave in the war cemetery at Lillers where a brief service was conducted by Mr Botting.

Poppy wreaths were laid by great-nephew Alex Cotter and Lt Col John Gladstone of the Sandgate British Legion. Mr Botting presented a replica VC to be displayed at the Old Fire Station.



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

1st February, 1917.

It is a matter of sincere regret to me that the death of Lance Corporal William Richard Cotter deprived me of the pride of personally conferring upon him the Victoria Cross, the greatest of all rewards for valour and devotion to duty.

George R. J.

Richard Cotter, Esq.,
2 Barton Cottages,
Wilberforce Road,
Sandgate, Kent.



The late Corporal COTTER, V.C. (with shade over his eye), his two brothers, and his brother-in-law (in civilian clothes).

80 years on, a hero is honoured

A CEREMONY more than eight decades late has finally paid homage to a World War One hero who died in action before getting his medal.

In a sunlit wheatfield near Bethune, France, members of the Sandgate Society and the Cotter family took part in an evocative re-enactment of the battle in which Corporal William Cotter of Sandgate won the Victoria Cross.

The Rev John Botting, military historian of Hythe, described how Corporal Cotter's leadership repulsed a German attack during which both sides were hurling hand-held bombs at one another.

Cotter fought on despite having a leg blown off and being wounded in both arms.

He died later, but not before being told by a General that he had been recommended for the Victoria Cross.

By JANE SULSH

Sidney Cotter, 78, from Cheriton and a nephew of William's was among nine members of the family who joined the tribute on Friday. (July 21)

He was able to bring home a shell case recently ploughed up and lying in a nearby farmyard.

Later, with the party gathered around Cpl Cotter's grave in a war cemetery at Lillers.

The Sandgate Society's Millennium Salute was completed with a brief service conducted by Rev Botting.

Poppy wreaths were laid by Alex Cotter, great-nephew, and Lt-Col John Gladstone, President of the Sandgate British Legion.

Rev Botting presented Conrad Hughes, Chairman of the Sandgate Society and Rob Hudson, Chairman of Sandgate Heritage, with a VC replica for display in the Old Fire Station.



HERO'S WELCOME: Alex Cotter with the replica Victoria Cross

WORKING HARD: Mark Stamford



PRUNING: Tanya Threlfal

SUNSHINE: Staff at Elham Valley work in the fine weather

CHEERS TO LOCAL VINO

By CLARE TAPP

THOUGHTS of my return to Kent after spending a year in France brought tears to my eyes at the thought of paying through the nose for a bad quality 'Chateau Plonk'.

Real ales sufficed my appetite tem-

For all you wine enthusiasts out there are 29 vineyards dotted around the South East. Here is a list of those to be found in Kent for a great wine tasting spree:

'Steer

Frederick Henry Holmes



Frederick Holmes, aged 24, was one of the first local casualties of the war. He was killed 5th September 1914 when HMS Pathfinder was torpedoed and sunk off Firth of Forth. Born in 1890 Frederick attended Sandgate National School at the bottom of Sandgate Hill and on leaving school he became a fishmonger's porter. In January 1913 he joined the Royal Navy, as a stoker, for a term of 12 years.

He was the son of Susan Anderson (formerly Holmes) of 1 Wilberforce Road Sandgate and the cousin of William Cotter, VC also of Sandgate.



ECHOES OF WAR: Sidney Cotter, 78, second left, with members of his family and the Sandgate Society on the battlefield at Bethune

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...arning could benefit from expansion within the European Union.

House raided

JEWELLERY worth more than £2,000 has been stolen from a house in Horn Street, Seabrook.

Among the stolen property is a round school badge with a griffin figure in filigree. Cartons of cigarettes were also taken.

Any information to PC John Stammers, phone 01303 289030.

Nappies line

A ROOM for mothers and children has been provided at Folkestone Central railway station.

It was officially opened last week by Shepway's head of transport George Bunting.

The comfortable converted storeroom has a place to change nappies and a play area

Robbie fan ring pull o

SCHOOLGIRL Lucie Hodges' devotion to pop idol Robbie Williams nearly killed her.

She accidentally swallowed a ring pull she needed to claim one of the star's CDs.

It lodged in her oesophagus, just above the entrance to her lungs.

Despite a series of tests, X-rays and a CAT scan, doctors were unable to find the metal object jammed in 15-year-old Lucie's gullet.

"The ring pull fell into the

by **Simon Finlay**

can and I thought it would sink to the bottom, but I took a swig, and I felt something in my throat," she said.

"I didn't say anything at first but, then, it was pretty obvious that I was in discomfort.

"Eventually, I told them what had happened, and I was taken to hospital. Where the ring pull was lodged could have been very serious."

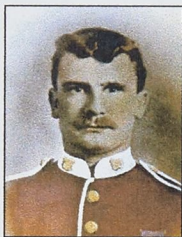
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THE SANDGATE SOCIETY
A MILLENIUM TRIBUTE

to

Corporal
WILLIAM R. COTTER, VC

6th Bn. The Buffs (East Kent Regiment)
who died aged 33 on Tuesday, 14th March, 1916.



Friday, 21st July 2000

The Sandgate Society, The Old Fire Station,
51a Sandgate High Street, Sandgate, Kent, CT21 3AH

W. Cotter's Record of Service

William Cotter was the eldest of six sons of Mr & Mrs R Cotter of 2 Barton Cottages, Sandgate. In October 1901, at the age of twenty, he enlisted in the 1st Battalion of the Buffs (The East Kent Regiment). He served in India, Aden and at home until he joined the Army Reserve in 1914.



He rejoined his Battalion on the 5th August and served in France until invalided home in May 1915. He joined the 6th Buffs in October that year and, promoted to the rank of Lance-Corporal, returned to France where, in February 1916 he was made Acting Corporal.

He was severely wounded in action at the Hohenzollern Redoubt, near Loos, on the 6th March 1916 and he died in Hospital at Lillers eight days later, on 14th March. It was as a result of his courage and leadership during this action that he was recommended for the Victoria Cross.

Mr & Mrs Cotter were presented with the Decoration at Buckingham Palace by King George V, who expressed sorrow that it had not been possible to confer it personally on their son.

Recommendation of Cpl. W. Cotter for the Victoria Cross

In the attack made by the 6th Bn. The Buffs along the Northern Trench of Triangle Crater, on the night of 6th March, the party led by Cpl. Cotter was cut off owing to casualties in the centre. He returned under heavy bomb fire, reported the matter and then took back bombs to his party, so enabling them to fight their way back to No. 2 Crater. While directing this latter operation his right leg was blown off close below the knee and he was wounded in both arms. He made his way unaided along 50 yards of trench in order to reach No. 2 Crater. While doing so he came upon a junior N.C.O. (L/Cpl. Newman) who with his section was bombing toward the right.



Cpl. Cotter, appreciating where help was most needed, directed him to bomb towards the left. He reached No. 2 Crater and by this time the Germans had developed a violent and rapid counter-attack. Matters became somewhat disorganised as the garrison of the Crater was throwing bombs and firing wildly, whilst they were suffering heavy casualties from the enemy's bombs. Cpl. Cotter then from a position on the side of the Crater, although suffering great pain, steadied the men, issued orders, controlled their fire and then altered their dispositions to meet their attack on his side of the crater.

He also directed and controlled the supply of bombs and small arms ammunition. He remained in this position for about two hours and only after the attack had been repelled and matters had quietened down a little would he permit his wounds to be roughly dressed.

It was not possible to evacuate him until 14 hours later and during this time he had a cheery word for all who passed by the entrance of the dug-out where he was placed. Undoubtedly, the fine example he showed to all by his endurance under suffering, coolness under fire, and keen sense of duty, helped greatly to save what might have become a very critical situation.

During the time he has been with the 6th Bn. The Buffs, he has always proved himself a fine soldier. In the trenches his activities lay chiefly in sniping and scouting, and in this connection he has rendered valuable service. He was always ready to volunteer for such work as patrols, wiring, etc., and never considered a task too dangerous or disagreeable for him.

Signed R.O.C. Ward, Captain.
6th Bn. The Buffs.

(Sd.) A.E.B. Cator, Brigadier-General.
Commanding 37th Inf. Bde.

AN ACT OF COMMEMORATION

In the presence of eleven members of the Cotter Family.

Led by the Rev. John Botting.

Reading, Prayer and commemoration.

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass
against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil:
for Thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Closing prayer

The President of the Sandgate Society, Reginald Turnill, will invite Alex Cotter to lay a British Legion wreath on Corporal Cotter's grave.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old: age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them.

Response: We will remember them.

After a few moments of silence a framed replica Victoria Cross will be presented to the Chairman of the Sandgate Society, Conrad Hughes, as a permanent reminder of Corporal Cotter's courage and as a memento of this Millenium Visit to his grave.

Benediction.

This Commemorative Brochure has been produced by J.F.A. Botting

No. 6707 Lance-Corporal (Acting Corporal)
William Richard Coffer, 6th Battalion, East
Kent Regiment.

For most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty. When his right leg had been blown off at the knee, and he had also been wounded in both arms, he made his way unaided for fifty yards to a crater, steadied the men who were holding it, controlled their fire, issued orders, and altered the dispositions of his men to meet a fresh counter-attack by the enemy.

For two hours he held his position, and only allowed his wounds to be roughly dressed when the attack had quieted down.

He could not be moved back for fourteen hours, and during all this time had a cheery word for all who passed him. There is no doubt that his magnificent courage helped greatly to save a critical situation.

He died of wounds in hospital in France on 14th March 1916 aged 33.

The Victoria Cross was presented to his parents by King George V at Buckingham Palace on 29th November 1916. The posthumous award of the V.C. was recorded in The London Gazette.

Cpl Cotter was buried in Lillers Communal Cemetery
On March 15th 1916



Corporal Cotter was the eldest son of Mr & Mrs Richard Cotter of 2 Barton Cottages Wilberforce Road, Sandgate. Of four sons who served in The Buffs, two died in France and one in South Africa (in 1905). Another son served in the Navy in two world wars.

William Cotter was born in Folkestone and attended the Roman Catholic school in the town. He joined The Buffs in the early 1900's and served in India and elsewhere, losing an eye in an accident at Dover. He took his discharge in 1913 but stayed on the reserve and re-joined the Colours in 1914.

Lance-Corporal (acting Corporal) William Richard Cotter 6th Battalion The Buffs (East Kent Regiment), won the Victoria Cross in the First World War for "magnificent courage" in fighting on the Western Front near the Hohenzollern Redoubt, on March 6th 1916.