

## 2. Gainsborough's War Story - by Roy Thornhill

I met Peter Bradshaw one November Remembrance Day at the Coxhill Cemetery Gainsborough. Peter is a retired school teacher who does much to record and preserve the events and memories of the First World War and in particular Gainsborough's involvement.

He has just published a book, "Gainsborough's War Story, The Early Years 1914-mid 1915". Anyone interested could obtain a copy from the Gainsborough Heritage Centre.

Peter has also done much to bring about the restoration of war graves in the Coxhill Cemetery. Among the graves are those of the WW1 aviators of 33 Squadron, an RFC squadron which had connections with Brattleby, see Jerry Scott's article.

<http://www.friendsofthegeneralcemetery.com>

Click on the above link and select "WW1 War Graves" then "Royal Flying Corps".

There you will find a booklet, in PDF format, produced by Peter Bradshaw which provides details of four young airman from Canada, South Africa and Argentina all of whom perished in flying accidents. One airman, Canadian Bernard "Don" Brophy wrote:

***"Some of best men in the Flying corps have been brought back and engaged as Zep chasers, so I feel proud of myself at times."***

***"If I ever get close to a Zep you can bet that I won't fumble it."***

From one of his last letters home, written on 21st December 1916.

Bernard "Don" Brophy died on Christmas Eve 1916.

For personal reasons I am interested in the history of the 5<sup>th</sup> Lincolnshire Regiment, particularly the 1915 to 1916 period. The accounts given by the late Commander of the Battalion Colonel T.E. Sandall tell of tragic early encounters such as: Hell's Kitchen, Hohenzollern Redoubt. See the link below:

<http://www.5thlincs.investigationsofadog.co.uk/>

These events are also covered in more intimate detail in Peter Bradshaw's book.

I have chosen a happier extract, Colonel Sandall's description of the regiment being transported by French cattle railway trucks from the bleak Belgium trenches to sunny Marseilles and onwards to Egypt, it must have been a vivid experience!:

*"The journey of the Battalion from the N. to the S. of France is difficult to describe, and still more so to appreciate correctly. The immediate future was very obscure; rumour said the Battalion was bound for Serbia! The journey was as thoroughly uncomfortable in every small detail as the disorganised railway service of France could make it. But as the murkiness and mud of the North gave place to the brilliant sunshine, dazzling white roofs, and olives of the South, the spirits of all defied uncertainty, and rose against reason. During the first day the men huddled together*

*for warmth in their cattle-trucks, and peered through the mist at the shell-stricken villages they passed; on the second they lounged at the open doorways; on the third they sat on the roofs in their shirt sleeves, reduced to silence in their appreciation of the turbulent Rhone in the foreground on the right, and the snow clad Alps seen over a long vista of terraced vineyards on the left”.*

Finally, a visit to “The In Flanders Field Museum, Cloth Hall, Leper (Ypres)”  
Here you will find a most comprehensive account of The Great War:

<http://www.inflandersfields.be/en/educational-activities/worksheets>

A piece from: “Eye–Witness Accounts of the Great War”, a booklet from the museum:

***“And then things happened, plenty of things, which it is not easy to talk about now, because people today no longer understand them anymore.”***