

**THE POCKET BOOK OF WILLIAM HENRY WHITAKER**  
**ARMY SERVICE CORPS**



**EDITED BY JONATHAN D'HOOGHE MA**



William's pocket book contains an assortment of information including a diary of events, names of colleagues or acquaintances, mathematical working out, technical information appertaining to his army role with the ASC and general comments about the passage of the war.

After 100 years, some of the writing is barely legible and some is difficult to read, however, using my knowledge and a little guess work, I have done my best to transcribe the contents and at the foot of each page, I have used a footnote by way of explanation.

### **INSIDE FRONT COVER**

W Whittaker (with 2 t's) 190246, 168 Garrioch Rd, Glasgow.<sup>3</sup>

B Lincs??

MTASC<sup>4</sup>

G Batt MMGC<sup>5</sup>

There are various mathematical workings out. The easiest one to decipher is;

4. 1. 0

2. 13. 3

1. 7. 9<sup>6</sup>

### **PAGE 2**

A name has been crossed out. T Stokoe. 207491. 32 Gill Street, Benwell On Tyne<sup>7</sup>

Paid at Bulford to 17 May.<sup>8</sup>

### **PAGE 3**

Another crossed out name. W Oakley 190234.<sup>9</sup>

Glycerine Tannic Acid For Throat.<sup>10</sup>

Anti-toxins? Serg't Wilkinson tore the lorry sheet on the 10/6/17 at the wine s??<sup>11</sup>

The next mathematical sum is the division of 645 by 27 (see page 4)

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<sup>3</sup> His name followed by his service number. 168 Garrioch Road, Glasgow is a tenement block that still exists today and can be seen clearly on Google Street Scene. I assume that this was William's address.

<sup>4</sup> Motor Transport Army Service Corps

<sup>5</sup> G Battery Motor Machine Gun Corps. It is unusual to see the letter G. MMG batteries were numbered.

<sup>6</sup> Four pounds one shilling take away two pounds, thirteen shillings and threepence leaves a sum of one pound seven shillings and ninepence.

<sup>7</sup> Looking at the records I found Thomas Stokoe DM2/207491 serving in the ASC. Gill Street, Benwell still exists in Newcastle on Tyne.

<sup>8</sup> A note to self that he had been paid. Bulford Camp was on Salisbury Plain.

<sup>9</sup> I was unable to identify an Oakley with that service number.

<sup>10</sup> A search on the internet finds this remedy still in use today to treat Pharyngitis.

<sup>11</sup> William, presumably not looking to get into trouble, has noted that a Sergeant Wilkinson tore the lorry sheet on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1917 at the wire or wine ????

**PAGE 4**

This page contains a list of sums of money in both Pounds and Francs.

£104 Canadian Reserve  
£46 Pioneers  
615 Francs to July 1/7/18  
645 Francs to July 26/18  
770 Francs 2/8/18  
250 Francs 12/8/18   £ s d  
                  17/8/18   9.0.0 <sup>12</sup>

Strike commenced Sept 27/1919 finished on the <sup>13</sup>

**PAGE 5**

Contains a list of birthdates and a wedding date.

Married on the 28/3/14  
Mother's birthday 27 March  
Jill C Dick's Birthday 5/4/15  
Little Sonnie born 13/4/17 Still at isolation hospital  
Bessie Birthday 28<sup>th</sup> Feb <sup>14</sup>

**PAGE 6 (torn)**

A W Phillips  
23 Albert Street  
Chesterton Rd  
Cambridge

**PAGE 7**

Pte P F Verril 2995  
B Company  
13 J (or T) B  
No. 4 Camp  
Codford <sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> A list of money but for what purpose? It is interesting that the sum of 645 Francs is the same figure being divided by 27 on page 3. There were 25 French Francs to the Pound during the war.

<sup>13</sup> This is a reference to the National Rail strike. Although William has not written in the end date, the strike lasted 9 days and resulted in the Government backing down on its plans to reduce pay on the railways.

<sup>14</sup> I am not 100% sure of Jill's surname. Do the other names ring a bell?

<sup>15</sup> I cannot find any reference to this man, which suggests he didn't serve overseas. Codford is adjacent to Salisbury Plain and had 15 camps – one of which catered for men who were not fit for front line duty.

Pte W Hinningham 2874  
No.2 Remount Base Depot  
France <sup>16</sup>

57154 Pte J W Thompson  
RAMC  
43 Ambulance Train  
IEF  
Italy <sup>17</sup>

**PAGE 8**

Passed Final Test  
Grove Park Nov 21<sup>st</sup> 16 ? <sup>18</sup>

First pay after final test  
A Shortlands Friday Nov 24<sup>th</sup> 7.6  
Paid last ??? Dec 3<sup>rd</sup> 8.0 <sup>19</sup>

Ruptured Dec 13<sup>th</sup> 1916  
?????????  
At Larkhill Camp

Measured for truss  
Mon Dec 18/16 at No. 2  
Camp Larkhill <sup>20</sup>

**PAGE 9 (torn)**

Is obviously written in France as it refers to Francs, including 465 Self  
23/5/18 560 Francs  
14/6/18 20  
1/7/18 30

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<sup>16</sup> This is a spelling mistake by William. Private RTS/2874 William Hinnigan served with the ASC. (RTS = Remount Specials)

<sup>17</sup> Records reveal Private John W Thompson Royal Army Medical Corps. Arrived in France September 1915 but when William met him, he was with the IEF = Italian Expeditionary Force. 6 Divisions of British Infantry plus their support units were sent to Italy in late 1917 to bolster the Italian army.

<sup>18</sup> I assume this is the date of him passing his mechanical test. See later entries.

<sup>19</sup> William is noting when he is paid and is probably owed seven shillings and sixpence by A Shortlands. A search of the records reveals Private T/16878 Albert Shortlands ASC. T=Horse transport.

<sup>20</sup> William suffers a rupture in December 1916 and is fitted with a truss. Larkhill Camp was also on Salisbury Plain.

**PAGE 10**

Contains a list of personal items

1 Shirt  
1 Pair pants  
1 Under shirt  
5 Hands (Handkerchiefs?)  
4 Pair Socks  
1 Towel

**PAGE 11**

Mrs Rogers  
70 Swan Bank  
Perry  
Nr Wolverhampton  
Staffs <sup>21</sup>

J Mumm ?  
Pen Y Coed Farm  
Llangollen  
New ??  
N Wales <sup>22</sup>

Mr A Brownhill  
King's Arms  
High Bullen  
Wednesbury  
Staffs <sup>23</sup>

**PAGE 12**

Miss L? V Cole  
62 New Street  
Wednesfield  
Staffs <sup>24</sup>

**PAGE 13**

Cpl Speakman 20509 <sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> I was unable to pin down Mrs Rogers with any accuracy.

<sup>22</sup> I was unable to identify with any certainty.

<sup>23</sup> In the 1911 Census, A Brownhill is the landlord of the King's Arms public house.

<sup>24</sup> In the 1911 Census May and Lily Cole live at 62 New Street aged 17 and 15 so would have been 22 and 20 in 1916.

<sup>25</sup> William made an error with the service number as records reveal that M/205209 is Private Austin W Speakman ASC. M=Mechanical Transport.

Dr. H Goostrey ASC (MT)  
096790  
108 AFAB -HQ  
(MT) Section BEF  
France <sup>26</sup>

**PAGE 14**

Major Wallace  
British Legion  
10 Leayes? Fr <sup>27</sup>

**PAGE 15**

Another list of personal items.  
2 Towels  
3 Pr Socks  
1 Hands  
1 Pants  
1 Shirt  
1 Vest

**PAGE 16**

Germans ?? to  
President Wilson's Terms  
On 13/10/18 <sup>28</sup>

**PAGE 17**

It appears that a Stewart Hutchins or Hutchinson wrote in William's book. The handwriting is difficult to decipher.

**PAGE 18**

W White & Co  
Dyson Sunbridge Rd  
Bradford <sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> DM/2096790 Driver Henry Goostrey ASC. He was attached to 108 Australian Field Artillery Brigade Headquarters – Motor Transport Section, British Expeditionary Force, France.

<sup>27</sup> I cannot identify this place name which appears to be in France or pin down Major Wallace.

<sup>28</sup> On October 4<sup>th</sup> 1918, the Germans telegraphed US President Wilson asking for an Armistice based on the 14 points he had set out in January 1918. On October 14<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, Wilson made it clear that the Allies would only negotiate with a democratic Germany. This ultimately led to the abdication of the Kaiser and the Armistice which came into effect on November 11<sup>th</sup>. William was obviously aware of the negotiations even as the fighting continued.

<sup>29</sup> In 1916 Wm White and Co were Chemists and Herbalists. Dyson Street and Sunbridge Road form a junction.

**PAGE 19**

Appears to be a railway timetable.

??? 7.57  
Edin(burgh)  
Newc(astle) 4.24  
??? 7.3  
8.0  
Arrives 9.42  
10.35

5 to 7 tomorrow move  
Central

**PAGE 20**

Continuation of a timetable.  
11.10 Central

H Cairns  
91 Ranelagh Rd  
Dublin  
Ireland <sup>30</sup>

**PAGE 21**

Diary entry.

Left Amiens on 9<sup>th</sup>/5/18  
For Vignacourt  
Left Vignacourt for 9/7/18  
Fresenville 8 Div MT  
Left eight Division 31/8/18  
For hospital <sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> There is a record of a Private H Cairns serving with the Royal Irish Rifles but I cannot be sure that this is him.

<sup>31</sup> Following the German Spring Offensive of March – June 1918, they pushed the British back to just east of Amiens and Villers Brettoneux. Amiens and Vignacourt were 8-12 miles behind the front line. William is with the 8<sup>th</sup> Division ASC train comprising of 42<sup>nd</sup>, 84<sup>th</sup>, 85<sup>th</sup> and 87<sup>th</sup> Companies



**PAGE 22**

J Thompson 20<sup>th</sup>  
Ambulance Train <sup>32</sup>

**PAGE 23**

Appears to be four verses that meant something to William.

Curses never pass  
The likes of those that  
Breathe them in the air

Have more than thou showest  
Speak less than thou knowest  
Lend less than thou owest

Every man will be thy friend  
Whilst thou hast wherewith to spend  
But if store of crowns be scant  
No man will supply thy want

He that in thy friend indeed  
He will help thrice in they need  
If thou sorrow he will weep  
If thou weep he cannot sleep <sup>33</sup>

**PAGE 24**

Appears to be William writing down a bet between P C Smith and H Weeks.

This is to certify  
That P C Smith <sup>34</sup>  
M2 177019  
Promised H Weeks <sup>35</sup>  
1£ if the war was  
Over by June 24<sup>th</sup> 1917  
Signed  
T E Small <sup>36</sup>  
Tom Ackworth <sup>37</sup>  
W Pontefract <sup>38</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Probably the same J Thompson mentioned on page 7.

<sup>33</sup> All of these are attributable to William Shakespeare.

<sup>34</sup> In reality records show that M2/177019 was Charles E Smith

<sup>35</sup> Records reveal 5 H Weeks in the ASC

<sup>36</sup> Difficult to decipher the initials. Records reveal a J T Small in the ASC.

<sup>37</sup> The only Thomas Ackworth is 311250 serving with the Royal Garrison Artillery. There are no John Ackworth's.

<sup>38</sup> There are two W Pontefract's with records. 25517 Wilfred Pontefract The Yorkshire Regiment and 40643 Wilfred Pontefract The Northumberland Fusiliers. This bet is likely to have taken place in an estaminet when soldiers of different units would meet up.

**PAGE 25**

William found a namesake

Pte W H Whitaker  
2/6 DLI  
Andover  
Hants <sup>39</sup>

**PAGE 26**

Is a continuation of William's diary entries. In the margin he has written the firing order of a four stroke petrol engine by cylinder – 1,3,4,2.

Went sick for rupture on  
31/8/18 at Villers Au Bois.  
Sent to CCS left on  
1<sup>st</sup> Sep for the Fourth General Hospital  
Left  
The Fourth on 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept went to  
Twentieth General. Left on  
The 4<sup>th</sup> Sept for Sixth convalescent  
Camp Etaples left on 17<sup>th</sup> Sept for  
56 General, left on the 18<sup>th</sup> Sept for  
Tonyeville for the 74 General  
Went to the 72 General  
Operation on the 23 Sept 18 by <sup>40</sup>

**PAGES 27 & 28**

Are William's notes from his mechanics training class of October 1916. They detail the workings of a 4 stroke petrol engine.

1<sup>st</sup> Stroke Suction

The piston travels down the cylinder  
With the inlet valve open and sucks  
In the gas through the induction pipe  
From the carburettor.

2<sup>nd</sup> Stroke Compression

The piston travels up the cylinder with  
Both valves closed and compresses the  
Gas into a small space at the top

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<sup>39</sup> Records reveal that this was 251833 Private William H Whitaker 2<sup>nd</sup> /6<sup>th</sup> Battalion Durham Light Infantry

<sup>40</sup> It would appear that the rupture of December 1916 had re-appeared in August 1918. Villers Au Bois is north west of Arras and indicates that he was following up the Allied advance which commenced on 8<sup>th</sup> August. CCS=Casualty Clearing Station. 4<sup>th</sup> General Hospital at Camiers on the coast south of Boulogne. 20<sup>th</sup> General Hospital also at Camiers. 56<sup>th</sup> General Hospital at Etaples south of Camiers. 72<sup>nd</sup> & 74<sup>th</sup> General Hospitals at Trouville not Tonyeville as William has written. Unfortunately, the next page appears to be missing.

Of the cylinder called the combustion chamber.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Stroke Firing or Power

The explosion of the compressed gas  
Caused by a spark forces the piston down  
With both valves remaining closed.

### 4<sup>th</sup> Stroke Exhaust

The piston travels up the cylinder with  
Exhaust valve open and pushes out  
The burnt gases through the exhaust  
Pipe into the silencer

13<sup>th</sup> Oct 1916

### **PAGES 29 & 30**

Both pages contain diagrams of the firing order of a four stroke petrol engine.  
ESFC – Exhaust, Stroke, Firing & Compression.

There are also many mathematical workings out.

### **PAGES 31-33**

Are a chronological diary of events between January and July 1917.

Received truss.

9<sup>th</sup> Jan/17 Fargo Hospital <sup>41</sup>

?? J E Mallin Lt. RAMC <sup>42</sup>

Went into Fargo Hospital

With bad throat Mar. 4/17

Transferred to Salisbury

Isolated Hospital 14/3/17

With Diptheria [sic] throat <sup>43</sup>

Went to Burford Camp 2/5/17

Discharged from Isolation Hospital

21/4/17 Went on leave 24<sup>th</sup> for

5 days. Drew ? 1.10.0. Received

First pay Burford May 3/5/17

9/- <sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Fargo Military Hospital was on Salisbury Plain.

<sup>42</sup> Temporary Lieutenant J E Mallin was twice Mentioned in Despatches, May and December 1917.

<sup>43</sup> Diphtheria

<sup>44</sup> Presumably £1. 10 shillings and 9 shillings.

Went with lorry to  
Southampton Docks 5/14/17  
Left Southampton on 5/15/17  
On the Huntscraft arrived <sup>45</sup>  
At Le Havre 5/16/17  
Stopped at Rest Camp  
Left on the 5/18/17 stayed  
All night at Saint Sains <sup>46</sup>

19<sup>th</sup> went to Abbeville  
Stayed night.

20<sup>th</sup> to Merville  
22<sup>nd</sup> to Estaires May  
Left Estaires 2<sup>nd</sup> June  
For La Basse Road.  
Tunnelling Co. [mpany]  
Left on the 9/6/17  
Back to Estaires

Left Estaires on 17/6/17 for  
La Basse Road. Left La  
Basse on the 22<sup>nd</sup> for  
Oost Dunkirk. Left Dunkirk  
For La Basse 23<sup>rd</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>  
Went to Oost Dunkirk left  
On the 26<sup>th</sup> for Estaires, 27<sup>th</sup>  
Went to Armentieres. 28<sup>th</sup> to  
La Croix Du Bac. 30<sup>th</sup>  
To workshops. 5<sup>th</sup> July went  
To La Basse Road from  
To Levantie, La Rouge Croix to  
Filliers, to Hinges, to Bailleul. <sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> HMS Huntscraft was built in Sunderland and launched in 1913. It belonged to a German company and was captured en-route to Hamburg by HMS Black Prince in the Red Sea. It was requisitioned by the UK military authorities and renamed HMS Huntscraft. It served as a Royal Fleet Auxiliary store carrier.

<sup>46</sup> For some reason, William adopted the American style of writing dates, putting the month before the day.

<sup>47</sup> William has readopted the date method of putting the day before the month. Estaires, Merville, Bailleul, Croix Du bac etc. are all behind British lines S.W of Ypres in Belgium. Armentieres was nearer the front S of Ypres. The La Basse that he refers to is actually La Bassee due S from Neuve Chappelle. Dunkirk was a main supply port on the coast. William would have been employed at this time in the preparations for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele) which opened on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1917.