Chapter 7: Famous People:

In the first of Lionel's letters in the wartime collection – he makes references to no less than three of his personal acquaintances who made their mark on him and history. All are representative of the left wing and revolutionary liberal intelligencia of the late Victorian and early 20th Century period.

I liked to have the account of your busy day. You certainly manage to get a lot in. So you have finished the EC book. Thank you for the few extracts. With regards to Grayson, it was I who introduced him to Carpenter. Didn't I ever tell you about my friendship with him. I found him at the Hamilton Road Mission in Liverpool when I went and we soon became very friendly, though he was quite ready (before he knew me) to pull me to pieces !

We used to have great discussions at the Debating Society, and he was in my Sunday class of elder scholars. At that time he was just commencing to prepare for the Unitarian Ministry and I coached him in Latin and Greek. At the same time he was doing a lot of public speaking for the Socialists. He never went to M.C.O, (Manchester College Oxford) but for one session, I think, to the H.M.C. (Harris Manchester College) and then gave up the idea.

The only time after my leaving Liverpool that I saw much of him was when I proposed his name to Tchertkoff as a companion and kind of tutor to T's son Dina. We had a great time together at Tuckton, but he and I didn't come to an agreement.

I saw him various times later after he had been in Parliament but gradually we drifted apart. 04/11/15 44

EC is Carpenter, that is Edward Carpenter. Tchertkoff (sic) was the mentee of Leo Tolstoy the author and whilst we will come to each in turn – perhaps the most interesting historical character is the main subject of the extract – Victor Grayson MP.


Victor Grayson

Grayson was born in Liverpool in 1881. He was an apprentice engineer in Bootle, but cut his teeth as a public speaker at the Domestic Non Conformist Mission that Lionel was running after 1902 and his Masters at Oxford.

In 1906 a senior Labour Party member said: "*Victor Grayson has a deep rich voice, just made for the open-air and he gave his audience plain, strong, and richly-defined Socialism. Nothing petty or mean, no appeal to unworthy motives, or even the misery of things, but an uplifting, elevating, manly propaganda speech, addressed to the crowd as men. In Victor Grayson, student and orator, the Manchester men have found a prize indeed, and Socialism has gained another valuable asset".*

And no less than Lenin described him *as "a very fiery socialist but one not strong in principles and given to phrase-mongering".*

After his time in Liverpool with Lionel, in January 1907, the Independent Labour Party in Colne Valley, West Yorkshire selected Grayson as their parliamentary candidate. In the past, there had been an arrangement where the Labour movement supported the Liberal Party candidate in return for help in winning seats elsewhere for ILP candidates. The executive of the Labour Party therefore decided not to endorse him as their candidate. But, the Colne Valley ILP refused to back down and in the by-election held in July, 1907, Grayson stood and won as an Independent Socialist candidate.

The ILP was committed to the parliamentary road to socialism but Grayson's independent route to the Commons allowed him to conduct his campaign advocating revolution. In his election address he wrote "I do not believe that we are divinely destined to be drudges. We must break the rules of the rich and take our destinies into our own hands." He used his skills as an orator to create a wave of emotion across the constituency that prompted 88% of the electorate to vote and gave him a 153 majority over the Liberal candidate.

Grayson believed this was a victory "for pure revolutionary socialism" and The Daily Express reported his success under the headline, "The Menace Of Socialism".(plus ca change !) This exaggerated the threat Grayson posed to the ruling elite, but he was to prove a nuisance to them on more than one occasion.

After his election, the Liberals had the biggest majority in their history. There were also 30 Labour MPs, half claiming to be socialists, and Grayson was asked to join the Labour group but he refused.

His maiden speech in 1907 was not the usual apolitical fair. The government had moved a motion to grant £50,000 to Lord Cromer for his services in Egypt. Grayson irreverently stated, "We find ministers… making a grant to an Egyptian official while outside the four walls of this building people are dying of starvation."

Later in November 1908, the House of Commons was debating a Licensing Bill but Grayson moved an adjournment for the House to discuss unemployment instead.

He refused to stay silent, stating that “the people are starving in the streets; they demand the immediate attention of this House”.

He was ejected from the chamber and as he left he shouted across to the Labour benches, “You are traitors! Traitors to your class.” The following day he was suspended from the House for a further protest, calling the Commons “a House of murderers” on his way out !

Grayson rarely visited the House after this. At first his constituents were happy with an MP that spoke up for the unemployed. However, they became less impressed with stories of a luxurious life-style and heavy drinking and by the time of the 1910 General Election he was easily defeated by the Liberal candidate.

Without a seat, Grayson attempted to make a living from lecture tours. Still drinking, his health began to deteriorate and in 1913 he had a mental breakdown. He took a break, gave up alcohol and began to recover – later to start a lecture tour in America. But he started drinking again and returned to Britain an alcoholic. He became so drunk at public meetings in Bradford and Glasgow that he could not speak and had to be carried off the stage.

At the time of Lionel’s letter in 1915 Grayson had adopted an unlikely position in favour of Imperialism and he was defending the British Empire and supporting the War. He gave several recruiting speeches and wrote articles urging young men to join up. However, he opposed conscription as it began to loom and became bitter at the fact that those who profited from the war received political honours at the expense of those who served. In 1915 he therefore travelled to New Zealand where he had been offered work as an actor. However, this was not a success and he joined the New Zealand army. He was then sent to the Western Front and in October 1917 was badly wounded.

After the War he returned to England with hopes of reviving his political career, but without the backing of any of the major political parties, Grayson found it impossible to become a parliamentary candidate. He returned to the lecture circuit and at a meeting in Liverpool he accused Lloyd George, then Prime Minister, of corruption.

Grayson claimed that Lloyd George was selling political honours for between £10,000 and £40,000. Grayson declared: "This sale of honours is a national scandal. It can be traced right down to 10 Downing Street, and to a monocled dandy with offices in Whitehall. I know this man, and one day I will name him."

The monocled dandy was Arthur Maundy Gregory, an MI5 agent and a close friend of David Lloyd George.

Arthur Maundy Gregory

For several months Gregory had been employed by the Head of the Special Branch, to spy on Grayson, but the subject found out and decided to do some spying of his own on Gregory. With the help of some important friends, Grayson then discovered how Lloyd George was using Gregory to sell honours.

At the beginning of September 1920, Grayson was beaten up in the Strand. This was probably an attempt to frighten him but he continued to make speeches about the selling of honours and again threatened to name the man behind this corrupt system.

On the 28th September Grayson was drinking with friends when he received a telephone message. He told his friends that he had to go to Queen's Hotel in Leicester Square and would be back shortly.

Later that night, the artist George Flemwell was painting a picture of the Thames, when he saw Grayson entering a house on the river bank. Flemwell knew Grayson as he had painted his portrait before the war. Flemwell did not realise the significance of this at the time because Grayson was not reported missing until several months later. An investigation carried out in the 1960s revealed that the house that Grayson entered was owned by Arthur Maundy Gregory.

Grayson was never seen alive again. It is believed he was murdered but his body was never found. After his disappearance, Gregory continued to sell honours for the next twelve years and was involved in the scandal of the forged Zinoviev Letter and its publication that helped defeat the Labour Party in the 1924 General Election.

To finish the story, in 1932 Gregory attempted to sell a knighthood to a Lieutenant Commander Edward Leake. Leake pretended he was interested but then reported the matter to Scotland Yard. Once arrested Gregory turned things to his advantage as he was now able to blackmail famous people into

paying him money in return for not being named in court. Gregory pleaded guilty and therefore did not give evidence. He was sentenced to two months' imprisonment and a fine of £50. On leaving prison he was persuaded to leave the country and move “out of the way” to Paris where he lived on a substantial pension of £2,000 a year paid by the Conservative Party for the rest of his life!

So through Lionel’s letter we can see how his values brushed with the corridors of power and intrigue and the radical socialism that he connected with – but it is interesting to see that this was with another soul who found it difficult to find a place for his mix of beliefs at the time.

The letter that opens this chapter also refers to the fact that it was Lionel who introduced Grayson to Edward Carpenter, a controversial author and thinker who wrote of him:

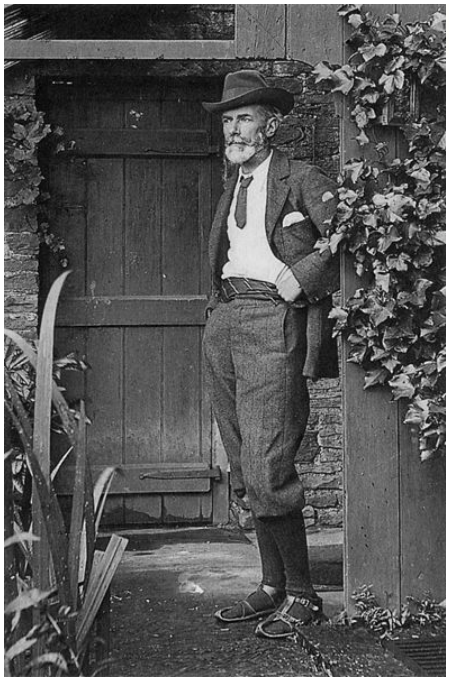
> *Victor Grayson was a most humorous creature. His fund of anecdotes was inexhaustible, and rarely could a supper party of which he was a member got to bed before three in the morning. On the platform for detailed or constructive argument he was no good, but for criticism of the enemy he was inimitable - the shafts of his wit played like lightening round him, and with his big mouth and flexible upper lip he seemed to be simply browsing off his opponents and eating them up. His disappearance from public life has been quite a loss. (My Days and Dreams (1916))*

So who was this Edward Carpenter that Lionel knew so well and refers to again in 1918 ?

In your last letter – of the 15th – you talk about spending 2 or 3 days with Alice and Rachel, and though it’s true I said I should be quite contented to stay this leave at King’s Norton and Alvechurch, yet it’s equally true that, once you have suggested it, it strikes me as a very happy idea, seeing as you say, that the journey is not a long one. By the bye isn’t their place somewhere not very far from Edward Carpenter’s home ? I should love to take you to see him !
22/12/18 230

As a young man, Edward Carpenter abandoned a comfortable social position to adopt a thoroughly sceptical view of society’s values and conventions. His life’s work was pursued through a series of overlapping circles and causes – socialism, anarchism, sex reform, female emancipation, environmentalism, vegetarianism, nudism and animal rights(!) – but despite the prominence he achieved by the Edwardian period he never really became the leader of anything.

He managed to get away with a lifetime of subversion, by Victorian standards, without seeking formal political influence – and without being prosecuted for his views or activity.



Edward Carpenter and George Merrill

Somewhat like Lionel, Carpenter was a man of connections rather than institutions. As a boy growing up in a middle-class Brighton family Carpenter realized at an early age “a friendly attraction towards my own sex”. At Cambridge he proved to be a first-class mathematician, and was awarded a clerical fellowship.

But in 1874, he abandoned Cambridge to go North and settled near Sheffield. By 1881, he acquired a cottage and seven acres at Millthorpe where he combined manual labour with writing for the rest of his life. The remoteness of the cottage allowed Carpenter to indulge in nudism and began to cultivate a philosophy which argued for a radical simplification of life, focusing on the need for the open air, rational dress and a healthy diet based on "fruits, nuts, tubers, grains, eggs, etc... and milk in its various forms". It is also perhaps this seclusion that allowed Millthorpe to become a focal-point for socialists, humanitarians, intellectuals and writers from Britain and abroad

In Yorkshire he realised his desire to find “a powerful, strongly built man of my own age or rather younger – preferably of the working class” in one George Merrill – a Sheffield scythe riveter !

He wrote openly and publicly about his homosexuality and sexual freedom for much of the rest of his life. How did he get away with it? Partly because his relationships were enveloped in an alternative community involved in market gardening, sandal-making and vegetarianism which may have been mildly eccentric but was perfectly recognizable to conventional Victorians. The class system also helped, in that the working-class residents of Millthorpe like Merrill could be passed off as servants employed by the gentlemanly Carpenter. However, in “Love’s Coming of Age” in 1896,he made the case for legalization of homosexuality on the basis that it was congenital, that private

behaviour should be beyond the province of the law, and that legal regulation was impractical and encouraged blackmail. He came within inches of being prosecuted for indecency but his celebrity and contacts protected him.

(Sunday Times January 2009)

Given the dates, Lionel's letter would suggest that Hilda's two sisters Rachel and Alice were based in West Yorkshire, near Millthorpe where Rachel would have been working as a nurse. The letters do not reveal whether Lionel and Hilda actually made the journey – nor whether Hilda was introduced to Carpenter – but the fact that both were considering it reveals much of their joint liberal views. It would have been an interesting meeting!

Next we turn to the third person mentioned in Lionel's early letter, and to whom he was an even closer friend and confidant as several letters make clear. Lionel starts his note to Hilda with an imaginary stroll together:

I took you in the same direction Gurney and I went the other day, through the same wood, along the leaf-carpeted track (beech leaves mainly. At one fine beech tree (he and I) paused and cut our initials in the bark – at least we were doing it when someone else came along, and feeling shy at being discovered in such an occupation we left it incomplete. Perhaps we'll have a chance to finish it another time.

We emerged from the wood on to the open fields, stretching away, hedgeless and brown, except where the green leaves of roots, still unharvested, alternated with stubble. Numerous little round ricks stood out against the sky, breaking the long sweeping line of the higher ground some way ahead, and when I got level with them, there was a good view all around for some miles – no high hills, but just billowy country. 14/11/16

Ivor Gurney

Lionel's fellow vandal on this walk was Ivor Gurney, composer, songwriter and now recognized as a talented War poet on a par with Brooke and Sassoon.

Ivor Gurney was born in Gloucester in 1890 so was thirteen years Lionel's junior. The city and the surrounding countryside, were to be a major influence on his life. He was educated at King's School in Gloucester Cathedral as a chorister and organist. In 1911 he studied at the Royal College of Music under Sir Charles Stanford.

It is not clear when Lionel and Gurney first met but they were good friends by the time Gurney tried to enlist at the outbreak of war, but he was rejected due to poor eyesight. He eventually joined on the 9th February, 1915, as a private with the 2nd/5th Gloucesters at roughly the same time as Lionel. He was injured in early 1917, and later during the Battle of Passchendaele he was caught in a gas attack and invalided home.

Lionel was close at hand at the time of his first injury.

It will probably be no news to you that Gurney was wounded in the arm and stayed a few hours in our camp, where I had half an hour's chat with him.

He was so relieved to be out of it for a while – not so much to be away from the danger as from the beastliness of it all. He hankers to be back at his music all the time. And apropos of that, he told me he had had a great success with two of his songs at one of the Royal College of Music concerts, where a number of big pots (sic) were present.

I'll enclose you the programme which he gave me. Sir Hubert Parry said of one of the two – Masefields words – that it was the most tragic thing in music that he knew ! The writer of the other words, Harvey, is a friend of Gurney's and was an officer in the same battalion, but was taken prisoner some months ago.14.4.17.

Whilst on active service, and without access to the instruments and peace required for his music, Gurney began to concentrate on his poetry. Lionel was party to this creative process and was prophetic about the man's talents..

The village and neighbourhood are full of troops, and Gurney's Battalion came in a day or two after us.

I met Milum the day before, and he told me that Gurney was back from the base, so I looked him up as soon as I could, and found him looking ever so much better in health and very buoyant and optimistic about the war. I've been two good walks with him in the evenings. It's a pity that our concerts will put a stop to any more unless we can manage one on Sunday.

Tomorrow night there's to be a meeting of the old Pickwick Club, Milum in the Chair (Doesn't all this sound like war time ?!) Gurney is coming to that and I shall be free too, fortunately.

(A Pickwick Club was a lighthearted gathering of “gentlemen” popular from the early 1900’s where over a drink discussion attempted to solve the problems of the world.

On initiation a member is given a name taken from the ‘Pickwick Papers’ and he keeps this whilst being a member. A chairman is appointed and assumes the name of Mr Pickwick whilst overseeing discussion of the Papers, World Affairs, Health, Injustice and anything that takes their fancy.)

Those were interesting walks with him. Besides the inevitable talk on the war, I enjoyed myself listening to much that he had to say on poetry and music. I am pretty well mum on these things, but I dare say he enjoyed having a good listener. He quoted a lot of fine stuff from some of the young English poets – among whom, by the bye, he will shortly have a right to be numbered. A little book of them will be published before long, and you will be able to judge of their merit.

Personally, I was much struck by those I heard. Sir Robert Bridges has seen them, and said he read them with great pleasure and interest – which is something to get from the Poet Laureate. 83 14/06/17.

(Bridges was Poet Laureate 1913 to 1930)

Later in 1917 this first book “Severn and Somme” was published, and then a further collection in 1919 –War’s Embers. The titles of the two collections are important and prophetic. First, as is demonstrated in many of his war poems, his love of the Gloucestershire countryside and his desire to return there from the devastation he witnessed on the Western Front is constantly evident.

Lionel’s last reference to Gurney is late in 1918 and probably after the gas wound and he doesn’t seem to be aware of his later difficulties.

That reminds me – I have got a corporal belonging to the same battalion that Gurney was in, working as a “general duty” man in the ward where I am.
He is one of the comparatively few one meets nowadays who came out with the battalion and who knew him well.

We had quite an interesting chat about him this evening, but he doesn’t know any more than I do what has become of him and is very doubtful of the likelihood of his having taken a commission. It is a shame that I have never written to him. It would be too bad to lose sight of him altogether. 12/09/18 203

Lionel learns something more of Gurney a little later.

I met a man in the street here this morning who used to be in the Pickwick Club and was a friend of Gurney’s. He asked me if I had heard anything of him, but he knew more than I did, for he told me the disturbing news that he had had a bad nervous breakdown and had been pretty well out of his mind, but that lately he had been getting on much better again. Poor chap, I do hope

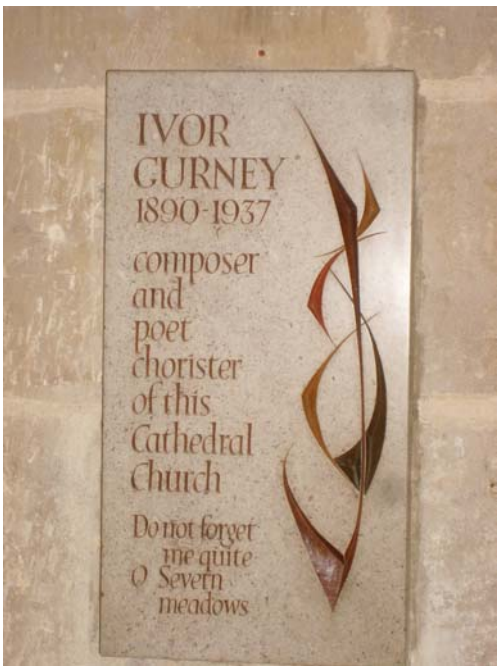
he will get well over it. Funny, it was only 4 or 5 days ago that I was dressing an officer of his old battalion who turned out to have been one of his friends, but he had no recent knowledge of him. 30/10/18 (3rd Nov 1918) 216

As Lionel hints Gurney was a sensitive and troubled man and in this bout of illness he attempted suicide. Many people have assumed that Gurney was a victim of shell-hock but it is generally accepted now that his illness pre-dates the War although his gas injuries might have worsened his condition.

Whether Lionel did re-connect with Gurney is not known but after returning from war service Gurney attempted to pick up his studies at the Royal College of Music, but found it too difficult. His behaviour became more extreme and in 1922 he was sent to an Asylum in Gloucester, and later to the City of London Mental Hospital remaining there until his death in 1937.

His work and achievements are celebrated by a plaque in Gloucester Cathedral. And a Gurney Society still exists that preserves his works and memory. Their publications include this tribute:

"Gurney has a gift of producing incredible textures. "'The White Cascade', his unpublished setting of a WH Davies poem, seems to me to evoke the sound of Rachmaninov: it's the same kind of aesthetic, the same sound world... I have no doubt that Gurney is an important song composer. Not in the sense that he set a benchmark for others to follow, although I think that he and [Gerald] Finzi had a lot in common. But Gurney achieved so much in the expression of English texts, setting so many of his contemporary poets. His songs are individual to an incredible degree. He has the gift of setting English song instinctively, much as [Benjamin] Britten did."



Plaque at Gloucester Cathedral

"OF GRANDCOURT"

Through miles of mud we travelled, and by sick valleys –
The Valley of Death at last – most evil alleys,
To Grandcourt trenches reserve – and the hell's name it did deserve.
Rain there was – tired and weak I was, glad for an end.
But one spoke to me – one I liked well as a friend –
"Let's volunteer for the Front Line – many others won't.
I'll volunteer, it's better there than here."
But I had seen too many ditches and stood too long
Feeling my feet freeze, and my shoulders ache with the strong
Pull of equipment – and too much use of pain and strain.
Besides he was Lance Corporal and might be full Corporal
Before the next straw resting might come again,
Before the next billet should hum with talk and song.
Stars looked as well from second as from first line holes.
There were fatigues for change, and a thought less danger –
But five or six there were followed Army with their souls –
Took five days dripping rain without let or finish again –
With dysentery and bodies of heroic ghouls,
Till at last their hearts feared nothing of the brazen anger,
(Perhaps of death little) but once more again to drop on straw bed-serving,
And to have heaven of dry feeling after the damps and fouls.

Ivor Gurney

In one of the early Gurney letters Lionel refers to "Milum" – and the name appears on several further occasions throughout his chats with Hilda.

Now I have only half an hour before a service held by Milum in the field next where I am sitting and I want to be present at it as I was this morning. It is seldom one has a chance out here of hearing anything good. The last time was at Berneville when we were resting behind Arras and when I had so much opportunity of seeing Gurney.

Now the battalion to which Milum is attached – one from the West Country – is billeted in the same camp as ourselves. After service I shall go on writing and if it's too dark, I shall just get into bed and write by candle light.

Even now I am being badly hindered ! Five men from Gurney's battalion were strolling by, coming to the service and one of them recognised me, so that all 5 have now dumped down beside me in the grass and are talking hard ! One has just jumped up and said "Come on ! This chap can't write with us gabbling here ! So of course I told him it was all right – I was just going to the service myself. So they remain. 23/09/17 109

The Rev Partum Milum was Padre to the 2nd /5th Glosters, Gurney's Battalion. The Battalion record by AF Barnes says:

Few battalions had as good a Padre, no one had better. He carried out his special duties with fervour and yet without ostentation, and he realised what many failed to understand, that to the man under fire a touch of human compassion is worth more than outward forms. His relations with the RC Padre, Buggins, were excellent and reflected that he was true disciple of the Shavian doctrine that there is only one religion in the world, though there are many versions of it.

This would have endeared him to Lionel and his "Christian anarchist" perspective. The Battallion record continues:

Thus Padre Milum was to be found in the front-line trenches, in the support lines, at the aid post – anywhere, everywhere in fact where he could be of service to his fellow men. Associating, as he did, so intimately with all ranks, he could share in their humours too, without ever cheapening his calling.

Services were held at various times when they were possible, and were made to suit the convenience of the men.

Many were his experiences while on duty at Aid Posts: men who were slightly wounded and glad to be alive; others shell shocked with their minds wandering; others knowing they were dying, giving some messages to send to their homes, and asking him to pray with them; others again so far gone as to be beyond the power of recognition. Padre Milum fulfilled his mission worthily, for he brought a touch of friendliness and good cheer to both officers and men wherever he went.

A story relating to Milum cross references to a Christmas card of 1916 sent by Lionel. Milum finds some graffiti in his travels:

On a beam in a dugout he visited were the names of the German signallers who had previously occupied it before being driven out. The names ran thus: "Hans Fritz Dec 1914, Karl Jung, June 1915, Oskar Klatz, Dec 1916" One of the victors had added below:

"Na Pooh, fini. Buzzy off. April 1917".

The phrase "Na Poo !" quoted by the German boar in the Christmas postcard of 1916 (See Christmas) seems to have been a popular British trench expletive that might be translated as " Stuff that!" . Now lost to the English language !

The fact that Milum was not one to avoid the dangers of his flock are confirmed by Lionel in August 1918.

I'm sorry to say that the Milum whose name Hd (Harold) noticed in the casualty list is our Mr Milum. I had heard of it only the day before receiving the cutting from you. There's a very nice little "padre" who comes here – recently attached to the division, and he told us that Milum was at a base town during

an air raid, and was blown up 40 feet by a bomb, but it was hoped he would recover. 22/08/18 198

Another military church man who greatly impressed Lionel at the end of the War was later to make a very significant contribution to the memory of the sacrifices of 1914-1918.

By the time you get this, you will of course know what has been happening. For us, today has been peaceful enough. We have again shifted into private billets and have been busy setting up house and doing a certain amount of fatigue work, besides, in my own case, attending two services held by a chaplain of another division, a man who appealed to me and to the others immensely, though he was C of E ! really the finest C of E padre we've come across out here.

In the morning we had an excellent orchestra playing and most of the men were of the other divisions, but tonight we had just about 20 of us in a small room and George Goode to play a piano. The padre whose name is Railton, gave us some real good stuff. He was just as broad as you could possibly wish a man to be and so sincere and deep. Quite a young fellow, with the Military Cross. 20/10/18 213

After the Armistice, as the plans were set for the unveiling of the Cenotaph on 11th November 1920, a proposal was put forward that the body of an unknown soldier should be honoured at the same time.

The instigator of the proposal was an ex-military padre: the vicar of Margate, the Reverend David Railton MC.

One night during the War, having led a funeral in the field, Railton returned to his billet where a single grave had been dug in the garden. A wooden cross had been raised above the grave stating quite simply that it belonged to an unknown British Soldier of the Black Watch.

The memory stuck in Railton's mind and in August 1920 he wrote to the Dean of Westminster Abbey, suggesting the idea of bringing home one such unknown soldier for burial in the Abbey to represent those who had died and in particular, all those who had no known grave.

The Dean consulted David Lloyd George who was equally enthusiastic and convinced the King of the idea. Orders were sent out to France and Belgium for the recovery of one British soldier who could not be identified from each of the main battlefields: the Aisne, Arras, the Somme and Ypres.

On the 7th November 1920 the four bodies were placed on stretchers and each covered by a Union Flag, that night Brigadier General L J Wyatt (Commanding the forces in France and Belgium) entered the chapel and after solemn reflection placed his hand on one of the bodies.

This one selected was placed in a simple coffin whilst the other three were removed for re-burial in the local military cemetery. The coffin spent its last night on Continental soil surrounded by a Guard of Honour and at noon on the 9th the body was placed in an oak coffin, made from a tree of the Royal Palace at Hampton Court and bound in iron bands. A crusader-style sword presented by the King from his own collection was passed through one of the bands and to the lid the words: “A British Warrior who fell in the Great War” were added.

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Finally the coffin was draped in the flag that David Railton had used as an altar cloth during the War. (Known as the Padre's Flag - it now hangs in St George's Chapel, Ypres.) The coffin was then transported by destroyer to London and laid to rest in the Abbey on the first Armistice Day 1920.

Whilst Lionel’s connection to Railton is only tangential – it is characteristic of him to recognise the padre’s qualities that were to emerge more publicly after the War.

After hostilities Lionel remained in France for several months and it is during this time the name of Charles Holden crops up.

I’m just going to send a line to C . Holden to see if we can arrange to meet some day at Abbeville. I despair of being able to get right to his place at Hesdin. 02/02/19 235

No word, so far, from C Holden. I wish had something more interesting to write about. I don’t want to leave you, dear heart, O for a sight of you ! 08/02/19 240(2)

And then:

Two of your dear letters came to me just after dinner, one written at Blackwell and the other at Bromsgrove. Also by the same post one from Charlie Holden, saying that he hopes, if possible to call here one day when he has to go to Le Treport, and take me with him.

It will be a long way out of his way if he does but I hope he will manage it. The unfortunate thing is that they have much greater difficulty in getting cars now than they used to have. I must just send him a line back to say that I shall probably be able to get away all right if he does call for me. He says that it is possible he may be demobilized very shortly, but be kept on a half time at his present work, which will give him the chance of picking up the threads of his own practice. 10/02/19 241

Charles Holden is now best known for his wonderful London Underground station architecture but between the years of 1918 and 1928, he also designed no fewer than 67 military cemeteries and some of the most eloquent memorials to the WW1 dead.

Holden was a retiring, teetotal, vegetarian Quaker draper's son born in Bolton in 1875. He was later a partner in the Adams, Holden and Pearson Partnership, one of the most prolific and successful firms in Britain. Over the course of his long career Holden designed buildings both in Britain and abroad.

Holden believed architecture should be a collaborative effort, which explains why he declined a Knighthood, twice. A highly modest man, who was yet able to exercise such an influence that he was near hero-worshipped by his colleagues.

How Lionel got to know Charles Holden is not known but it seems that his family might have been Lickey End neighbours before the War – because a photograph of 1913 shows Hilda with Mrs Margaret Holden, Charles mother.

Hilda with Mrs Holden 1913


Charles Holden after and before WW1.

Just nine days later – Lionel tells Hilda his story of the meeting with Holden

Well I know you will be keen to hear about my day out with Charlie Holden. I had written him saying I had no doubt I should be able to get off when he called for me - and on Sunday I had a little note to the effect that he hoped to go to Le Treport during this week. All the same, it came as a surprise when the very next morning, soon after 10.o'clock, one of the fellows from the Orderly Room came to me and said "The O.C. wants you. He's with another officer".

I guessed at once it was C.H., and sure enough, as soon as I got sight of the road, there he was, with his car - though it was only when I got quite close that I could recognise in this officer without a beard - our old friend !

He told me he had spoken to the OC and it was all right - in fact he had said I might stop the night at Le Treport if I liked.

I wasn't long in making my preparations and off we went. He couldn't have fixed on a better day for the excursion - for the sun was shining and it was warm as mid-spring.

We travelled along pleasant by-roads, with innumerable twistings and turnings - really much more interesting than the straight, tree lined main roads which cut in a bee-line across the country and miss most of the villages.

About midday we came to a place called Lamaches and thought we would get lunch there, so stopped at a "Hotel de Commerce" and asked for "dejeuner", and were supplied with an elaborate 6 course meal.

We took our time, having much to talk about and I for one, was thoroughly enjoying myself. Charlie described to me all his work which is decidedly interesting, but they have been finding the usual drawbacks of army conditions - red tape and hopeless delays in getting things done by various departments on whom they are largely dependent. Also, he is unfortunate in having an O.C. of that irritating kind that is constantly complaining of the slowness with which things are being done - without realising the difficulties they have to cope with, and succeeds in putting everyone's back up.

Charlie has not hesitated to speak out very plainly, with the result that there is no love lost between them. He has recently applied for permission to spend half his time in London, and half in France so that he may have an opportunity of pulling his own practice together, but he says that his OC has a friend, at present under Charlie himself, to whom he would like to give Charlie's job and he thinks it likely that he will work for Charlie's demobilisation altogether, or else, as an alternative, he will have to recommend him for promotion.

Charlie's position out here is that of chief architect in France, but there are three men in London who have a superior standing. A short time ago, Charlie was recommended for one of these posts - Head Architects they are called, but this OC apparently out of spite, turned it down. Now, however, to get his friend into Charlie's place, he would like to endorse the recommendation - but doesn't know how to go back on his previous action!

All this and much more we talked about over our meal, and then started off again. We stopped at a place called Ele (sp ?) and went into a beautiful old church there - most of it 11th and 12th Centuries.

Then on to Le Treport, a pleasant little port at the mouth of the Bresle (sp ?).

A clean little harbour with red sailed fishing boats reminding me of Brixham and one or two little tramp steamers. On each side of the estuary - a mile or two wide - great chalk cliffs rise sheer up to a height of 300 or 400 feet - a fine sight.

We went up to inspect a small cemetery - the first on which constructional work has been actually begun and then after just driving on to the "plage" to have a look around, we crossed the harbour and visited a little experimental headstone factory which they have started there.

It is in charge of a man called Berrington who conceived of the idea of getting the inscriptions on to the stones by means of an etching process - ie biting in with acids. He has been experimenting a lot in a little laboratory and has just lately been producing his first complete results. Every stone will be a plain slab - uniform size - with the regimental badge above the inscription, and a cross.

The process is very ingenious and will be an immense saving of labour if adopted finally, which is not yet certain.

After being shown all there was to be seen, we went with this man and another officer to their hut for tea and finally left for our return journey as it was getting dusk. I got Charlie to put me down in Abbeville, as it was no use taking him right out of his way to Buigny and besides, I rather looked forward to the walk.

And so ended a very enjoyable day. 19/02/19 249.

Charles Holden is still acknowledged as one of Britain's best architects and this letter provides an insight into the very early preparations that were being made to commemorate the fallen. The account immediately above has been shared with the Holden Society that continues to mark his achievements.

Lionel's letters make several references to his time at university and he entertains Hilda with some character sketches of a number of his professors and academic contacts.

How curious that Mrs Morris should be Nancy too. I suppose it is a pretty common name, but none the worse for that, and it has the advantage that we shall be able to sing her the song, "All my fancy dwells upon Nancy, and I'll sing Tally Ho !" Do you know it ?

I always remember Professor Raleigh singing that at some dinner we had in the old days at Liverpool – I think it was the "Sphinx" dinner. He was very charming. He was a tall, dark man, with the scholars stoop and a very gentle and pleasant smile. When he got up, he trembled all over like a man with the palsy, and leaning forward with his big – jointed quivering fingers resting on the table, he sang the song in a voice that quavered to match, verse after verse dropping from him, or should I say trickling from him ? I can't quite find the word that suits. But anyhow it was so simple and ingenious, one could only just sit and smile broadly and be charmed !

12/09/18 203

Well, now I am hot from reading the latest of your dear talks, I'll talk to you about it right away. And first a very curious coincidence. I was looking at that old Smoker programme and close to me was one of the patients, a young fellow of 19, just getting convalescent and engaged in wiping up the supply bowls. I knew he came from Liverpool having already talked to him about it, so I showed him the old programme as a curiosity and to my surprise and his we found we both belonged to the same University, he having just completed his first year on the chemical side when he was called up for the army last year ! He was greatly interested and we compared notes a bit, he telling me the names of some of the professors and lecturers, a few of whom were there in my time. The very first he mentioned was Prof Carey (mathematics) whose wife was an old friend of my sister May's. I remember him well as a little man with a black pointed beard. He described him as "a very old man" ! The Sphinx still exists and he has copies of it at his unit, but not with him unfortunately.

It's curious that B.M. Ward's name should figure on that programme. Not many of the others belong to men with whom I had much to do, though Pooley, the man responsible for the jokes, was more or less one of our set, and a great admirer of Annie B Jones.

A pleasant topic is Riss and your jolly time with her. It was good to hear about.

Thank you dear for the promise of those songs of Kipling's. We can't expect all songs to be as good as "Sea Songs". It was interesting that Riss should know about Gurney. Does she know anything of his ? As a matter of fact, I don't think many of his songs, if any, are published at present. Possibly those that were sung at the R.C of M concert have been. 21/9/18 206

I was much interested in all you had to tell me about Capt. Morris. One thing I don't fancy you told me and that was what school he is teaching at. It is curious that he should have been a frequenter of Manchester College Chapel and in the years when I was there. I wonder if he possesses or has seen that book of sketches of Wadham by Edwin Glasgow which I have. It's amongst my books somewhere. Glasgow was an Arts man at Liverpool in my time and was at Wadham too while I was at M'chester College, though I think for only one year. We were pretty friendly. 21/9/18 206

The references to "Nancy" and Kipling in these extracts are more relevant when one understands that Hilda's immediate elder sister Anne or "Nance" was governess to Rudyard Kipling's children. She travelled with them to South Africa where she met her husband to be Alfred Brett who had gold mining interests out there.

Nance Brett (nee Hankinson)

A further contact of Lionel's from the past who further reflects his social and political interests crops up in a 1918 letter.

Dearie, if you have seen my letter to mother, you will have read what I said about having noticed a review of Mr Jupp's "Wayfarings", by Philip Wickstead in the Inquirer, and of my wishing to get it with part of AF's 10/-. Will you get it for me ? And probably you would like to read it for yourself and I'm sure Mother would, after which I should like to have it sent out. I can always send back a book that I really want to keep. I wonder where Mr Jupp lives now. I feel I should awfully like to write to him again after all these years. But alas ! you know what my writing is ! 28/9/18 207

William J.Jupps book "Wayfarings:" had the sub title " A Record of Adventure and Liberation in the Life of the Spirit" a title that would have chimed with Lionel's interests and values and a subject that he obviously corresponded with Jupp about. It was published in 1918 soon before Lionel refers to it.

It is a spiritual autobiography that explains the influence of Whitman, among others, upon the writer. Whitman has not only "a vigorous realism," "full-blooded sensuousness," and broad comradeship, but also perception of the spiritual significance of life, with which he strengthens religious feeling. Through his war work and his poems' impassioned words, his personality becomes a living presence. He and his poems are like nature. He is compared with Thoreau and Edward Carpenter (who is described as no mere imitator of Whitman). Ajup states that Whitman calls for more from his readers than they can always give.

Jupp explained that his generation adopted the ideal of "an organic social communion" because "as we learn that God is not alien to any of us … it begins to appear highly absurd that we should be alien or indifferent to one another.

Another name that crops up in passing in a couple of Lionel's letters and Hilda's writings is Stephen Reynolds – author, writer, social explorer, politician, administrator and propagandist for working people generally. Lionel refers to his loss during the Spanish flu immediately after the War

What a pity about Stephen Reynolds ! That wretched pneumonia again ! I happened to catch sight of the notice of his death in the "Times" before you mentioned it. (22/02/19 252)

Whilst there is no direct evidence that he and Lionel knew one another – it is highly likely – and Reynolds again reflects the type of intellectual connections that Lionel cherished.

Reynolds had read Science at Manchester and then went to study in Paris. Whilst there he began his literary career. The family were implacably opposed to his embarking on writing and their opposition put an intolerable strain on this sensitive man. As a 22 year old and homosexual, he suffered a serious nervous breakdown and sought refuge in Devizes where he arrived a "total

wreck" at the door of his former schoolmistress, Ada Bennett. Thanks to her ministrations, a year later he was sufficiently recovered to set off on a walking holiday in Devon. There he met two brothers who were destined to have a profound effect on his life and work.

The Woolley brothers were fishermen in Sidmouth and they invited Stephen to lodge with them, which he did. Lodging with poor fisher-folk was totally outside the scope of Reynolds experience and altered his perspective including convincing himself of his gifts as a writer.

The Woolleys effectively adopted this diffident, bespectacled dropout as one of their own. They gave him a determination to succeed in his chosen career.

His best known book is,"A Poor Man's House" blending the real, from his time living with the Woolleys, and the invented as a background to the dramatic spiritual experience forming the book's core. The book was much acclaimed as Reynolds knew the problems and dangers of the working classes first hand. This gave him considerable influence which lasted for the rest of his life. He was appointed a member of the Committee of Inquiry into Devon and Cornwall Fisheries (1912), and as a recognised authority on the subject and a channel of communication between fishermen and the Government he was responsible for many of the major reforms in fishing laws during the period he held office

The connection with Stephen Reynolds is less tenuous than might be assumed from his only reference in Lionel's letters – because of a reference in a letter of 1940 sent from Hilda's sister Jessie when she returns Hilda's copy of the diary of the time spent on their honeymoon.

Hilda's diary of the wedding leave includes Lionel reading Reynolds to her at the Old Garden House. (The House was owned by Jessie and her husband and popular author of the twenties and thirties - Francis Brett Young).

Lionel makes a number of references to Francis's writings in his letters but perhaps this is the most specific on his writings rather than his place in the family.

By the bye, I've just finished the last of the books you sent me. The Seton Merriman was no good, but I enjoyed each of the others. Aylwin was the last, I felt something of you in Winnie Wynne !

What about Francis's "Ancient Moon" ? Have you read it ? I wish all his things weren't so dear, because I want to read them. How can I boast about my literary brother in law when I've only read one of his books ?! I must have missed his poem – The Leaning Elm – in the New Statesman recently. (27/07/18 191)

In 1908 Francis, a young GP married Jessie Hankinson whom he had met when she was a student at Rhoda Anstey's Physical Training College with Hilda, at the Leasowes, Hales Owen . Jessie became a solo pianist of some repute and appeared in Henry Wood's Promenade Concerts. After their marriage Francis and Jessie settled in Brixham, Devon, where he had his practice and where the Old Garden House was.

Francis Brett Young

At the outbreak of the war, Brett Young volunteered his services as a doctor. In 1916 he was posted to German East Africa with the rank of Captain, also in the Royal Army Medical Corps. Serving under General Smuts, he was in charge of a field ambulance unit and recorded his exploits in "Marching on

Tanga". The war also inspired the writing of two collections of poetry – "Five Degrees South" and "Poems 1916-1918".

The rigours of the East African campaign severely affected his health and after the war he decided to abandon his medical career, settle in a warmer climate and devote his time to writing. Consequently in 1919 he and Jessie moved to Capri, where he began a series of novels with a Midlands setting.

Although writing throughout this time, Francis did not achieve popular success until he was awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize in 1927 for "Portrait of Clare". Financial success and an improvement in health enabled the couple to return to England.

Arriving back in 1929, they stayed for a while in the Lake District before settling at Craycombe House in Worcestershire in 1932. During this period Francis was at the height of his fame and his annually produced novels were eagerly awaited.

There is a letter from Jessie to Hilda sent in 1940 after Hilda has shared the diary of her honeymoon at The Old Garden House.

Friday Feb 16/40. Talland Hous. Looe

Dear Hilda

Very many thanks for letting me have the Brixham diary. I simply loved it. And when I read of your first arrival there and the description of all our precious and beloved things like the piano and the blue curtains and the Worcester china – it made me cry. Because you see, I too had some ecstatically happy days there – and then some most unhappy ones, when F was away and when he returned so ill. And of course Jane was apeach, always.

When Stephen Reynolds came to stay with us there – she put his bedroom ready – then called me to say "Where shall I put the "fairy" – which side do you think he do come ?"

The "fairy" , of course, meaning the what-not under the bed. Well I didn't really know which side he would like it, so I left it to her !!

It was very nice of you to let me read all these old documents – and I loved every single word of them. Then I read them aloud to Francis, who had just finished a long days writing (just nearing the end of a new book).

We sat over a log fire and read and read till 20 – 8 pm and then it was too late to have his usual bath and we sat down to a simple meal and talked of The Old Garden House, and the Sunday post delivery which we had quite forgotten, and those lovely fishing boats with their brown sails – alas no more!

And I enjoyed remembering the "Golden Wedding", (See Golden Wedding photograph, 1915 – "Family") *much of which I had forgotten and how father*

lifted the music away from me when I was playing for him and how we all laughed.

Now it is 20 – 9 pm, and I must pack this up so that the postman can take it tomorrow morning at 8.30 am, and then you will get your book back quickly. I would advise you to have a second copy made of them, as you are likely to lose sight of one only.

Please let me have the manuscript of F's Bridges sons, as we haven't even a copy of the book.

I'm always sorry that we never saw John Small again. Your Jessica .

After WW2 and following a further breakdown in his health, Francis and Jessie moved to South Africa where he died in 1954. His ashes were brought back to this country and are interred in Worcester Cathedral.

Finally, a chapter on Lionel's connections would be incomplete without reference to Count Vladimir Grigoryevich Tchertkoff. Although Lionel's direct connections with Tchertkoff were probably over by the time of the start of the War – his influence and name crop up regularly.

Tchertkov – by Ilya Repin c 1896

While he was at Manchester College, Oxford, Leo had heard Count Vladimir Grigoryevich Tchertkoff speaking about famine in Russia amongst the persecuted non-conformist Dhoukobor communities, and Lionel's deep humanitarian leanings led to intense interest in Tolstoyan ideals.

In 1903 he got in touch with Tchertkoff whilst he was at the Mission in Liverpool (where he had met Grayson). Subsequently, in a letter held by the family, Tchertkoff invited Lionel to assist with horticulture and secretarial work at Christchurch, Hants. where Tchertkoff, with his wife and son Dima were living.

Although Tchertkoff was a friend of Alexander III of Russia, his anti-government views, and help to the Doukhobor, as a persecuted religious sect, resulted in his banishment from Russia in 1897. He came to England where his anglophile mother, Countess Tchertkoff, owned the 'Slavanka', ('Place of Glory') estate and established a Tolstoian community.

When Lionel joined the community he worked at Tuckton House and in adjacent property which had earlier been a water-works pumping station. This building was well suited for the installation of some quite large printing presses and Tchertkoff set up the Free Age Press there.

The Water Pumping Station – home to the Free Age Press

As literary executor to his close friend Tolstoy, Tchertcoff led the Press in translating and publishing cheap non-copyright editions of Tolstoy's works for distribution in Europe alongside other radical, socialist and liberal works that included some by Edward Carpenter.

Tchertkoff with Tolstoy.

Under Lionel's guidance, much of the land at Tuckton was put to good use to produce the food needed by the colony of some thirty or so exiles who had joined Tchertkoff from Russia and other European countries. Comprising largely of professors, journalists, doctors and university students, they all lived and worked together in accordance with virtually communist principles.

Countess Tchertkoff's sister Olga had married Tolstoy's son Andrei, but left him and her home at Toptikovo Tula on account of his infidelity. It was to this estate at Toptikovo that Lionel went in May 1904 on a visit to the Countess's brother, Josia Dieterichs, who was managing the estate for his sister.

Although this visit was ostensibly to help with English ideas of horticulture - it was really to visit Yasnaya Polyana the home of Tolstoy, and to get information regarding his wishes for the rights of publication of his works after his death There was also the opportunity to meet certain other Russian publishers of the time.

This had to be done in secrecy, because of the Tsarist regime's difficulties with the socialist writings of Tolstoy. The secrecy required extended to some documents needing to be sewn into Lionel's clothing to avoid observation by the military 'inspections' at the frontier, where many books and other

documents (particularly if the name Tolstoy appeared in them) were liable to arbitrary seizure.

In May 1905 Lionel again visited Russia. This time he accompanied Tchertkoff, who had permission to return to Russia for a short visit of about three weeks. This was a strange situation in which the senior General responsible for seeing that exiles were expelled was a longstanding and close friend of Tchertkoff, and so could grant him permission to return for a short visit, during which time they had several friendly encounters.

The detail of these two journeys are recorded in a further collection of letters from Lionel that need further research.

Tchertkoff was eventually allowed to return to Russia permanently in 1908. Lionel continued to concentrate on intensive horticulture in England. In 1913 he took these skills with him to teach in New Brunswick, Canada – perhaps in connection with one of the exiled Dhoukobor communities that had established there in 1899. But as we have seen, after a brief visit to New York from Canada in 1915 he returned to England to join up.

The old water works on Iford Lane, Bournemouth where the Free Age Press operated is now a home – but Tchertkoff's activity there is recorded on a blue plaque.