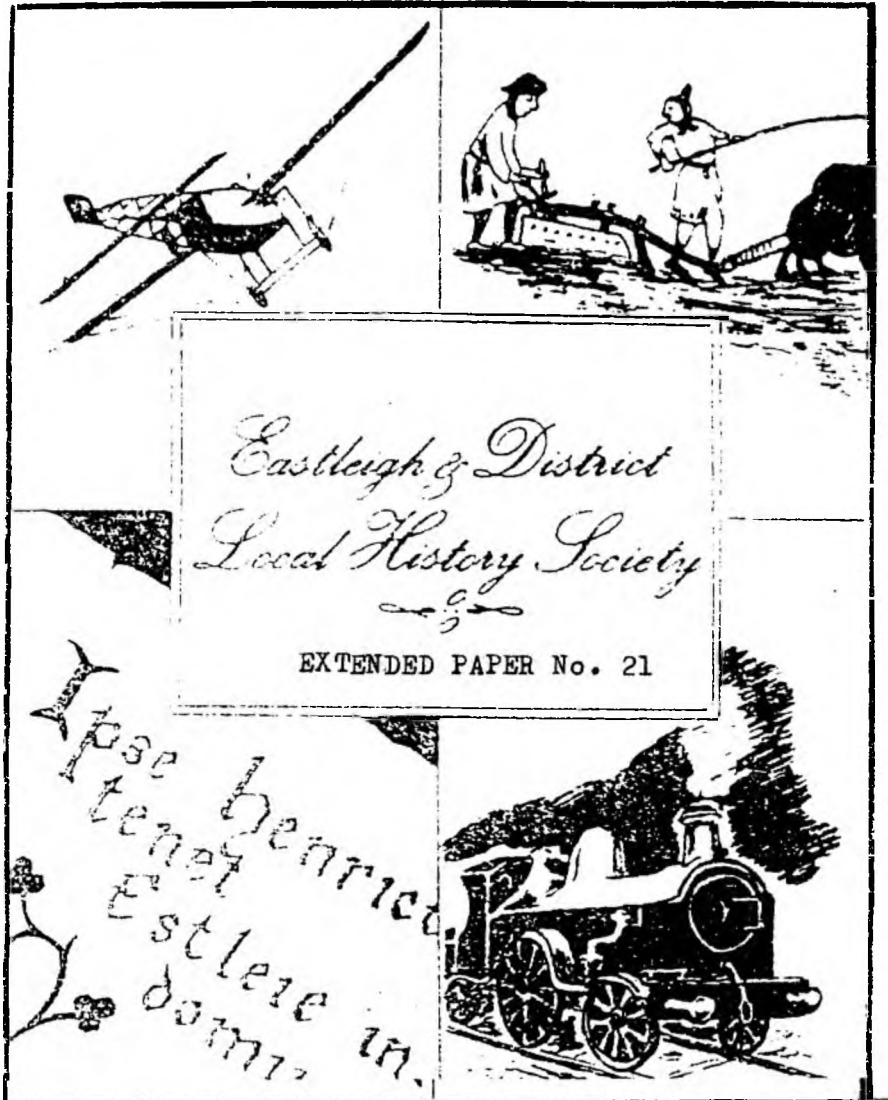


THOMAS GIBSON AUSTIN 1879-1931





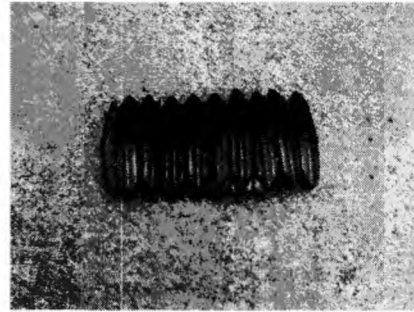
Thomas Gibson Austin was born 11th July 1879 at 26 Peckham Grove, Camberwell in London. By 2003 that house had been demolished and replaced. His father was Thomas Justice Austin, a landscape gardener born in London Place, Manchester on November 1st 1838 and his mother Anne Gibson Agnew was born 5th April 1847 in Congleton. She was a schoolteacher who had qualified in 1869. His parents were cousins as his grandmothers were sisters, daughters of Thomas & Ann Gibson of Somerford Booths near Eaton in Cheshire.



Thomas Justice Austin

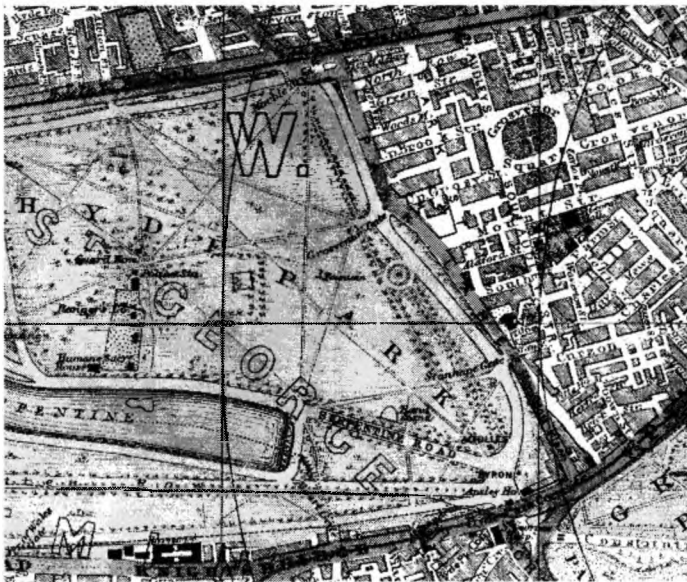


Annie Gibson (Agnew) Austin



I think that this photograph is of his mother Annie when she was younger because the necklace and bracelet she is wearing were passed down to us. Much to my annoyance my mother gave the necklace to one of her pupils but I managed to keep the bracelet carved from pieces of jet.

When Thomas was just over a year old on the 18th December 1880, his father, who was freemason, died in mysterious circumstances, expiring in a carriage on the way to hospital having been found suffering from prussic acid poisoning in Grantham Place, a backstreet just off Park Lane, near Hyde Park. Coroners' records for that place and date have not survived.



Some years ago I found Grantham Place and I think it was in the vicinity of the white square I have marked on the map.



98 Lambeth Road, almost opposite Bedlam, now the Imperial War Museum.

In 1881 his mother's parents George and Elizabeth Agnew lived at number 98 Lambeth Road, as did her aunt and uncle Samuel and Mary (Minnie) Jackson who later emigrated to Australia. This impressive terrace of houses now bears a blue plaque as the house next door at No. 100 had been the home of Captain Bligh of the *Bounty*.



The houses at 98 and 100 Lambeth Road with the blue plaque.



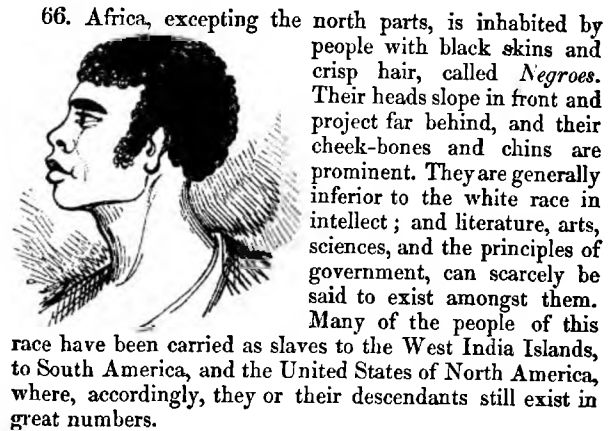
Two photographs of George Agnew, taken in Edinburgh, probably during visits to his sister Eliza.

George Agnew her father who had been born in Congleton in Cheshire and christened in St. Peter's Church there on 8th June 1817 [birthday probably 29th May]. His parents are recorded as William & Martha Agnew. William was a cotton spinner who had been born in Middlesex. George had an elder brother Philip who had been born at Ross on Wye in Herefordshire and christened there on 20th September 1813. He also had two sisters.

Philip was an interesting character, who lost an arm in a mill-accident as a child, was ordained and became a prison chaplain to convicts in Australia. Some of his diaries and a book of his sermons which are really short stories based on his experiences have survived. He was shipwrecked on his return to England for a visit, where he had stormy encounters with Archbishop Tate, and he was unable to raise sufficient money to return to his family in Australia.

At the time of the 1881 Census Annie Gibson Austin had her father-in-law (and uncle) John Austin staying with her. He died on the 22nd September 1882 at 31 Corunna Road, Battersea which was the home of his son John Henry Austin, a bank messenger. Another son Edward Austin was a photographer of Leyton in Essex, and yet another William G. Austin was a musician living in Southwark. I know nothing about any contact Thomas had with his cousins on his father's side because his father died 18th December 1880 when Thomas was only a year old, and Thomas himself died eight years before I was born. There are many anonymous photographs which could well be of Austin cousins. None could be identified as of John and Martha Austin, because I met no one who had ever seen them.

Thomas Justice Austin, though born in Manchester, was educated at Henbury School in Congleton - I have one of his school books - a textbook of geography - an extract shows how different things were from today:



Information about Thomas's mother's family is better recorded as she (Annie Gibson Agnew) was born at Congleton on 5th April 1847 and lived until 18th September 1918. She stayed for a while with my grandparents in Eastleigh, therefore my grandmother was able to tell me something about her family

In 1886 Annie Gibson Austin, Thomas's mother, married Thomas Nettlefold, a widower, with two daughters.

Thomas Gibson Austin then assumed the name Thomas Gibson Nettlefold, probably to avoid explanations, and often used this name long after the death of his step-father on 16th June 1897

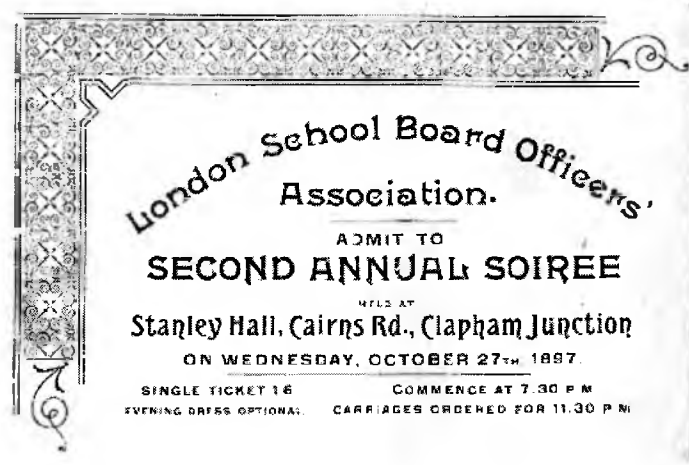
Annie had been a schoolteacher Her teaching certificate still exists. Unlike today the certificate was regularly updated by the inspectorate. All certificates were first issued as fourth class and higher grades awarded by the inspectorate. Her certificate was issued on 9th December 1869, after completing an engagement as a pupil teacher for nearly four years in Wrecclesham National School in Surrey. She was still there in 1874 for her fourth inspection. Her fifth inspection in 1876 took place in Camberwell School, Gloucester Road.

She must have had to resign upon her marriage, but when she was widowed she was allowed to return.

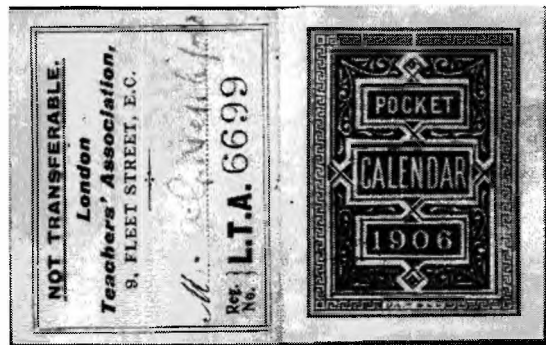
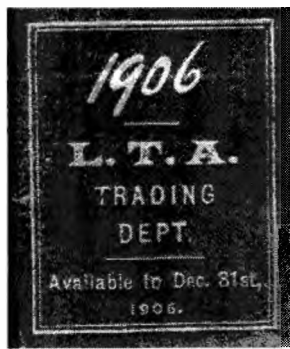
After her tenth inspection in April 1881 her certificate was raised to the First Class. This was the last inspection recorded on the certificate and took place at the same school.



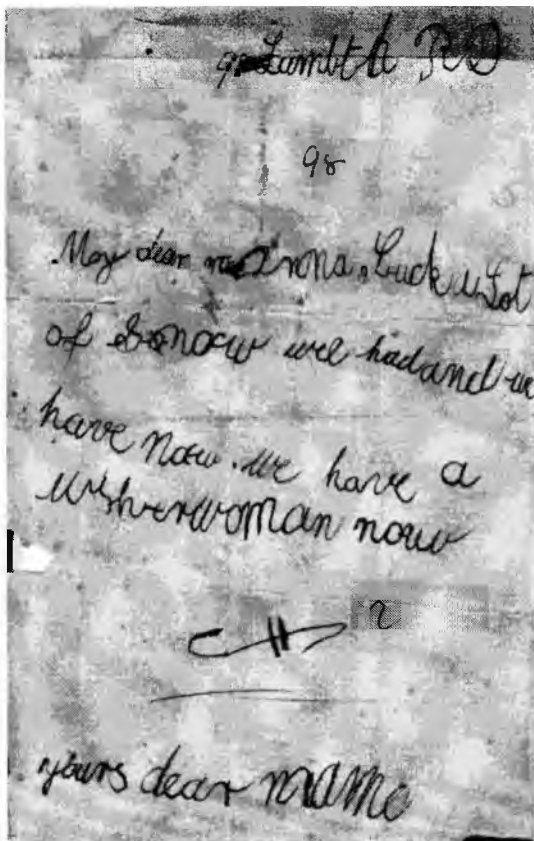
She would have had to resign again when she remarried, but presumably resumed teaching when her second husband died, as this ticket for a London School Board Officers Association Soirée at Clapham Junction in 1897 demonstrates.




This little booklet (about an inch wide) suggests that she continued teaching until at least 1906 when her grand-daughter was born.



Annie kept the first letter that her son wrote when of infant-school age, and there is a photograph of him dressed for riding on his pony.



Details of his early education are unknown but I was told that as further education he attended a blue-coat school whereas in fact it was St. Giles' Greencoat School of Manual Instruction in Camberwell Green. He was only there for a few months when he attended the Wesleyan Training College in Westminster and was given a Testimonial when he left.


 S. Giles
 Greencoat School of Manual Instruction

Dear Sir

With reference to your application of the 24th 1892 I am pleased to be able to inform you that your son has been granted a scholarship at the above school.

He will be required to attend on Tues days.....
 from 6.15 to 8.15.....

I am
 Yours faithfully
 Arthur Rogoie
 Head Master.

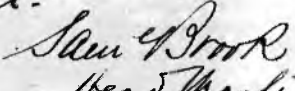
Thos. Nettlefold

Wesleyan Training College Westminster S.W.

Dec 13th 1893

Testimonial.

I have much pleasure in stating that Thos Nettlefold is a cheerful gentlemanly youth, truthful & upright in word and act. During his attendance here we were perfectly satisfied with his conduct. He is willing and intelligent.


 Head Master

Thomas married Caroline Frederica Dunbar at St. John's Church Clapham on 29th January 1899 when he was 19 and she was 23.



Those in the wedding photograph, left to right are Annie Gibson Nettlefold the bridegroom's mother; Frances Dunn one of the bride's sisters; Thomas Gibson Austin, the bridegroom; Caroline Frederica Austin, the bride; John Gordon Dunbar, the bride's father; Jeanette Dunbar another of the bride's sisters; Arthur Dunn husband of the bride's sister Frances; and Frances Ellen Dunbar the bride's mother.

We always thought it odd that the bride was photographed with her face veiled.

I have not gone into much detail about his wife, Caroline Frederica Dunbar, (even though almost all the information I have used came from her), as she and her family are mentioned at length in a book about the Theatre in Eastleigh, during the First World War.

In 1901 Thomas was a confectioner's clerk but he soon became a clerk working for the London and South Western Railway and lived in the Walthamstow and Tooting areas, moving fairly frequently. His eldest son Alan Gordon Austin was born at Walthamstow on 30th November 1899 and died 26th October 1973. His second son Cecil Franklin Austin was born on 14th March 1903. His daughter Freda was born at 81 Longley Road, Tooting, on the 3rd May 1906. In 1908 the family moved to 26 Trevelyan Road, Tooting.

When the locomotive works was transferred to Eastleigh in 1910, he came on ahead to look for accommodation and stayed with the Lowton family at 6, Barton Road. Soon his own family joined him and for a few weeks stayed in a very sub-standard house just opposite Eastleigh Station. Then they moved to No. 15 Archers Road.

At about this time Thomas's mother came to stay and she seemed to get on well with his wife. Annie Gibson Nettlefold was still a schoolteacher and she walked all the way to Allbrook each day to teach in Allbrook School. She made her presence felt in the household, and as a strict disciplinarian insisted that her son always had a strap by his side at meal times to be used to punish any of the children who should step out of line. It was never used but my mother was always terrified in case her middle brother, who was rather independent-minded, would see this as a challenge and engineer a confrontation. However, it was not the threat of the belt which ensured compliance, but the presence of their formidable grandmother. Eventually she returned to London and I believe took up residence in some Licensed Victuallers' Almshouses where she died on the 18th September 1918.

When Thomas first came to Eastleigh he joined the choir of the Parish Church, but he fell out with the vicar when he was accused of immorally living with a married woman with three young children. Having had a stepfather with the name Nettlefold he had often been known as Thomas Nettlefold himself, and when his mother, Annie Nettlefold, came to Eastleigh she became involved with the church and made some of the lace for the altar cloths as she was an expert lace-maker. Someone reported to the vicar that Mr Nettlefold was co-habiting with a Mrs Austin, and the matter was not dealt with discreetly.

Within a short time of arriving in Eastleigh in 1910, Thomas and his sons Alan and Cecil took part in Eastleigh and Bishopstoke Carnivals, held on 31st August and 14th September 1910 respectively



Cecil and Alan Austin are at the front and their father is the little one in the back row with a moustache impossible to disguise. 1910 - "The original Troupe of Golliwog Dancers. from the New Loco' Works."

He again took part in 1911.



Eastleigh Carnival. 4th October 1911. "The Comical Troops of the Standard Bred Race Horses,"
Mr. Austin is fifth from the right, in front of the tree-trunk..

"The Comical Troops of the Standard Bred Race Horses,"
Illustrating the Race for the Ass Caught Cold Cup
which had been presented by a friend.

The following took part:-

<i>Mount</i>	<i>Weight</i>	<i>Jockey</i>
Never Behind	1 ton 2 ozs.	F. Halfpenny
Market Street Pride	3 ton 2 cwt	T. Nettlefold
Bachelors Trouble	2 cwt. 1 qr.	F. Sweet.
Slippery II	3 ton 1 oz.	E. Millar
Auto Go	4 pts. 2 qts.	E. Thomas
Air Ball	1 ton 6 cwt	F. Young
Henry XVIII.	9 ton 6 lbs.	W. Lewis
Never Say Die	2 lbs. 1 oz.	F. Francis
Done Swiftly	1 qt. 2 pts.	G. Chappel
Also Ran	1 ton 6 lbs.	B. Holland
Scarlet Walker	2 cwt 1 qr.	H. Howe
Poor Boy	9 lbs. ½ oz.	R. Tomlin
Pet of the "Crown"	6 qts. 4 gals.	B. Martin
Vedrine I.	1 ton 6 ozs..	J. Edgar
Very Hot	2 cwt 3 qrs.	B. Haynes
Allways Is	1 qt. 2 pts.	F. Lashley

*Note: T. Nettlefold is Mr. Austin. I think F. Halfpenny was the man (or perhaps father of the man) who later started the cycle shop at the road junction just beyond Swaythling Station. Freda appeared to know him personally when we went there.

I have not found a photograph of his entry in the Carnivals of 27th August and 3rd September 1913 which is described as follows: Walking tableau, - "Nettlefold and Halfpenny's Troupe of Masks and Faces" From the Loco' Works.

'Another peculiar but amusing party was "Nettlefold and Halfpenny's Troupe of Masks and Faces," and many were deceived by the back appearance, each having duplicate faces and hands, which caused much merriment.' At the Bishopstoke Carnival on 3rd September 1913 the same group was called "Austin and Halfpenny's Troupe of Masks and Faces."

Mr. Austin was a member of the Carnival Ball Committee that year. He is occasionally recorded in the Eastleigh Weekly News for acting as Master of Ceremonies at dances or for entertaining as a singer.

As a member of the Territorial Army he went away for a period of training each year and was a sergeant by the time the War broke out in August 1914. Although a member of the Royal Army Medical Corps at first he was involved in recruiting.



A recruitment gathering in the R.S.A. drill-hall in Eastleigh, during the First World War.
(At the time of writing this is about to be demolished to make way for a block of flats.)

This is detail from the photograph showing Thomas Austin and Caroline, his wife.



Thomas sang at a number of concerts held in Eastleigh by the 3rd Wessex R.A.M.C. Concert Party. His section of the 3rd Wessex left Eastleigh for the New Forest in July 1915.

In 1912 the family had moved from No. 15 to No. 71 Archers Road and in 1915 they started to let rooms to the Theatrical Artists visiting the town, but this is another story.



Training in the New Forest or on Salisbury Plain - Thomas Austin is on the right in both photographs.



Thomas Austin was known to perform monologues at parties - one, in which he came on covered in bandages, began." I had a little motor-car, but I haven't got it now."

There is a programme of a performance by the 3rd Wessex R.A.M.C. Dramatic and Variety Society, held at the Liberal Hall Branksome on March 29th 1916 in which Sergeant Austin sang the song "Only for you."



Will Ladies kindly remove their Hats.

PROGRAMME.

NATIONAL ANTHEM.

SELECTION Pte. Morris.

FIRST HALF.

1 PIANOFORTE DUET Miss Reveley and Pte. Morris
 2 SONG "Only for you" Sergt. Austin
 3 MONOLOGUE "V.C." Miss E. Welch
 4 COMEDY AND BALANCING ACT—
 "A Lively Time at the Ritz"
 Ptes. Dash, Smallbone and Phillips.

5 **COMEDIETTA—**
"A Quiet Family."
 In One Scene By W. STER.
 SCENE . . . Interior of Mr. Bibbs's Home.

CAST.

BENJAMIN BIBBS Pte. Ouston
 BARNABY BIBBS Pte. Craigdallie
 Mrs. BENJAMIN BIBBS Miss Montgomery
 Mrs. BARNABY BIBBS Mrs. Montgomery
 Miss SELINA SUMMERS Miss Deaching
 SNARLEY Miss Littlewood
 PETER PARKER Pte. Walker

INTERVAL OF TEN MINUTES.

SECOND HALF.

1 CORNET SOLO Pte. Green
 2 SONG "Bandalero" Lieut. Lewis, R.A.M.C.
 3 Ptes. Nyles and White "THE CHATTERBOXES"
 4 **FARICAL ABSURDITY—**
"On the Brain."

SCENE . . Interior—Modern Suburban Retreat.

FRANK Pte. E. Ouston
 GREEN Pte. Calloway
 LUCY Miss Montgomery
 JANE Mrs. Montgomery
 JAGGS JONES Pte. Craigdallie

"GOD SAVE THE KING"

Bus Manager . . Pte E. Ouston.
 Stage Manager . . Pte. H. Craigdallie.
 Electrician . . . Pte Walker.
 Scenery kindly lent by Holder & Sons.

I was told that one day, when travelling on a train, a young man put his head out of the window and unfortunately had it chopped off by a train going the other way. Grandfather, with his wartime experience retrieved the head, and wrote to the father of the unfortunate individual. I always suspected that the story had been invented to warn me not to put my own head out of a train window. I have a letter inviting grandfather, who was on compassionate leave following the death of his mother, to meet a barrister (Ernest M. Pollock) at his Chambers in the Temple. There is no mention of any accident in this and my memories of the anecdotes are rather hazy. but it is possible that this meeting was to do with a soldier who had died in France in 1918.

1 Kings Bench Walk.
 Temple. EC.

Oct 9. 1918

Dear Mr Austin,

Thank you for your letter - I am sorry to say that I shall not be in town on Thursday - Could you call on Friday at say 11^{1/2} at my chambers as above.

in the Temple?

Yours sincerely
 Ernest M. Pollock

I am sorry to hear of your loss.

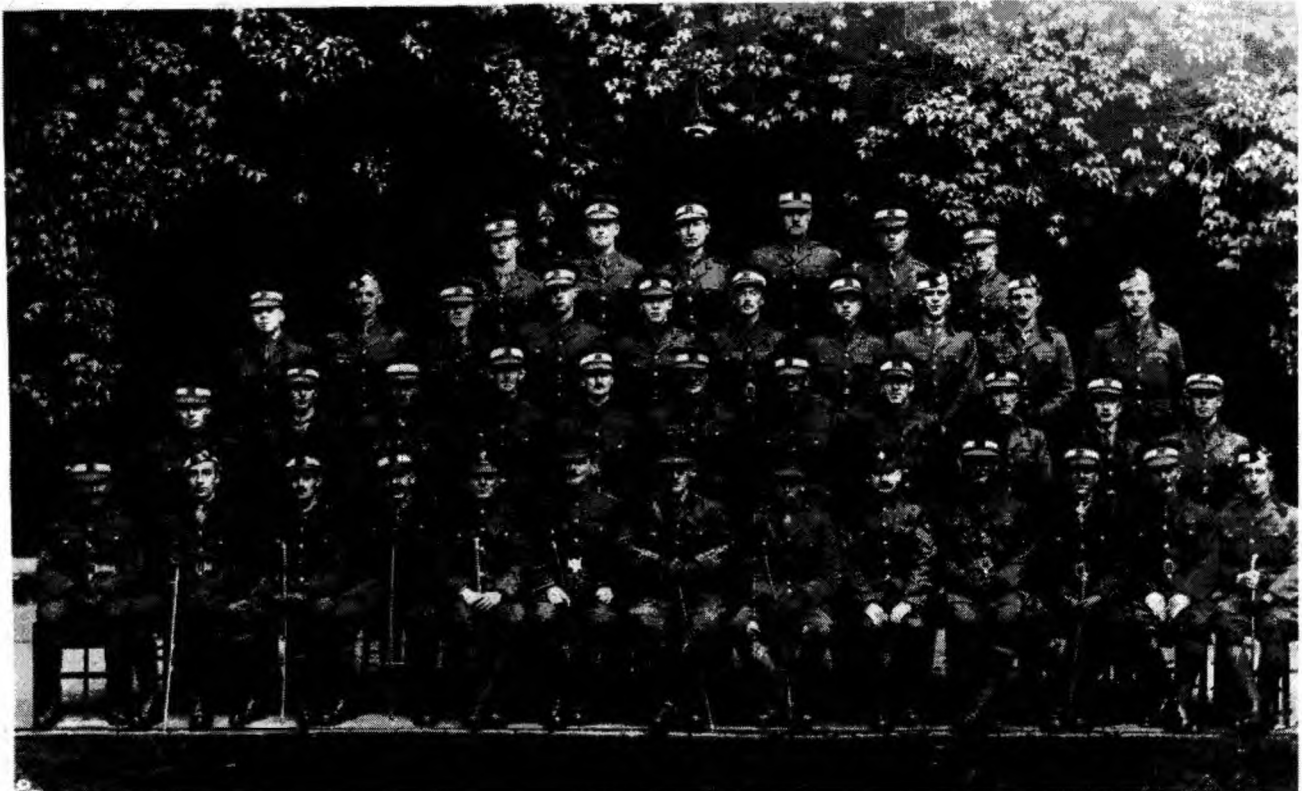
Lieut. T. Austin

Whilst he was stationed at Standon near Winchester he left the 3rd Wessex for further training . At some stage he was stationed in Devon, but became a member of the East Anglian Field Ambulance Unit.

This is a mystery photograph.



Thomas Austin is on the right hand end of the back row. - but where was the church?



In Cambridge in 1917 - Thomas Austin is at the left hand end of the front row.

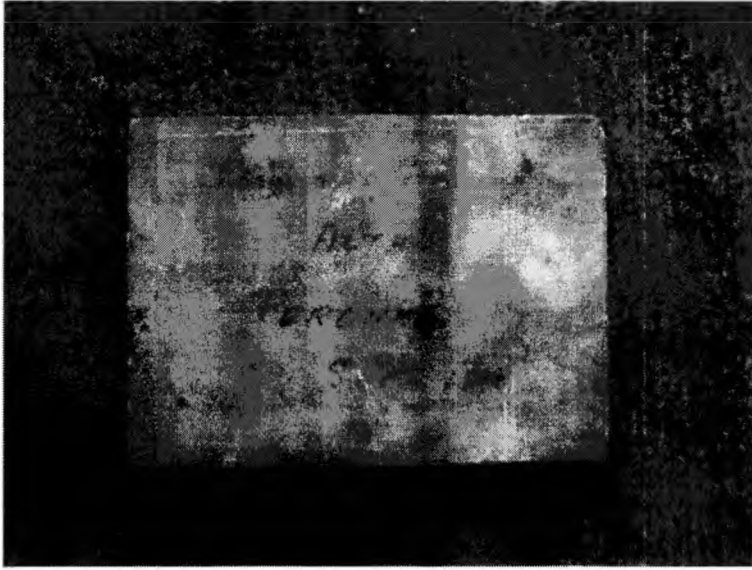
His training completed, he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant whereupon he joined the newly formed Labour Corps ready for service abroad.



Lieutenant T. G. Austin

He was sent to France and Belgium where he seems to have had the task of tending the wounded and retrieving and identifying pieces of dead bodies from the battlefields. He was particularly good at writing letters and I believe he often wrote to the bereaved. In 1918, on his way home, he collected a woven tapestry picture, now sadly faded, which must have been magnificent in its original bright colours and a small block of marble on which he wrote "from the High Altar Peronne Sept. 1918". St John's Church in Peronne was destroyed during the war.





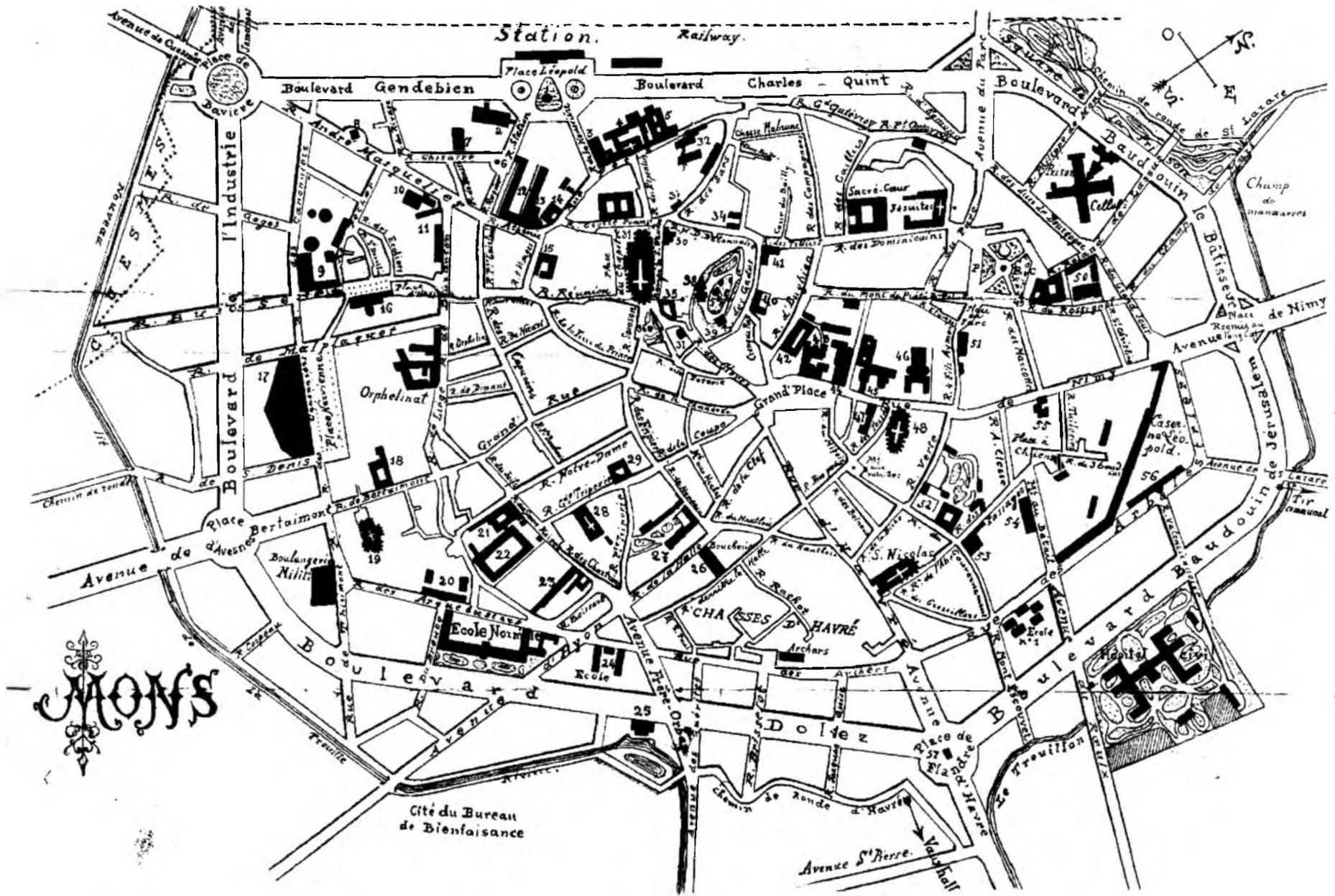
FROM THE HIGH
ALTAR
PERONNE
SEPT. 1918

I suspect that he had been to Mons in Belgium as he possessed a map of Mons.

All soldiers carried fibre identification tags during the war. Thomas had a round red tag marked 333 E.A.F.AMB bearing his number 486003 also marked CE and a grey octagonal one for the RAMC bearing the same number and mark. He also had an oval metal tag on a wrist chain - this is engraved 2 Lt. T. G. Austin, Labour Corps. C.E. Presumably the C.E. stands for Church of England.

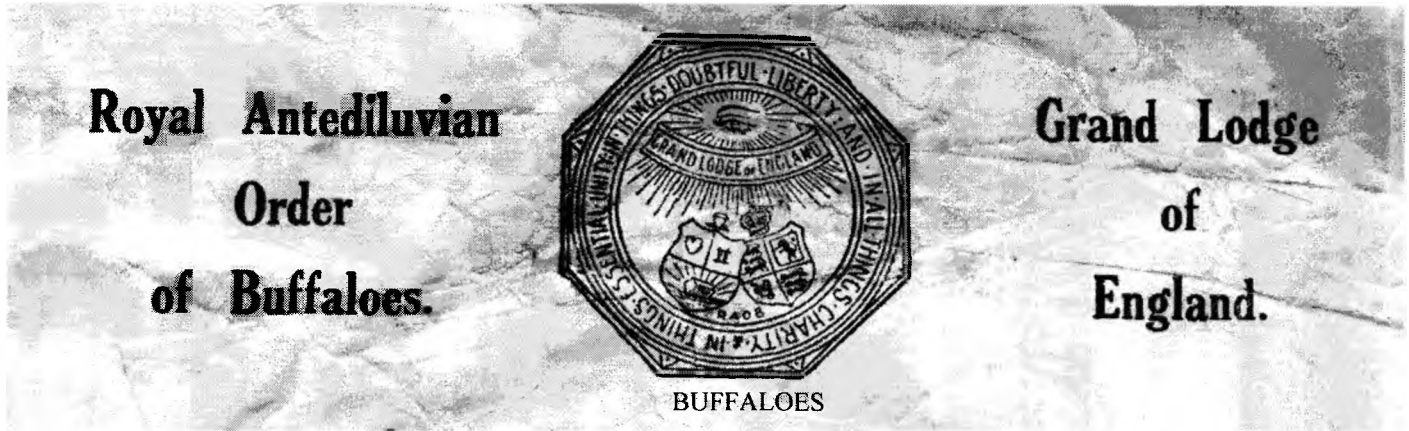


Librairie V^m Pierre SCATTENS, rue de la Petite-Guirlande, 27, Mons.



1. Statue de Léopold I^{er}. 2. Salle et Théâtre de l'Éden Bourne. 3. Banque Nationale. 4. Couvent des Ursulines. 5. Couvent des Carmélites. 6. Monument Houzeau. 7. Loge Maçonnique. 8. Tour du Val des Froides. 9. Établissement du Gaz. 10. Couvent des Capucins. 11. Hôpital Militaire. 12. Athénée Royal. 13. École primaire payante. 14. École Moyenne pour Garçons. 15. Académie des Beaux-Arts. 16. Hôpital et Chapelle du Beuraucage. 17. Casernes - Casernes. 18. Couvent des Pauvres Sœurs. 19. Église Saint-Nicolas en Berchemont. 20. Abbatiale. 21. Couvent des Sœurs Noires. 22. Caserne Guillaume. 23. Hôpital des Chartiers. 24. École primaire communale. 25. Bâtiment de la distribution d'eau. 26. Grande Binchène. 27. École des Filles. 28. Couvent des Bénédictines. 29. B. rue de Saint-Jacques. 30. Hôtel militaire en ruine. 31. Église Saint-Waudru. 32. Caserne de la Manufacture. 33. Hôpital des Frères. 34. École chrétienne. 35. Institution Sainte-Waudru. 36. Monument Leliez. 37. Château de Mons. 38. Tour du Château. 39. Tour du Château. 40. Bibliothèque publique. 41. École Moyenne pour Filles. 42. Direction des Contributions. 43. Concertiste. 44. Théâtre. 45. Conservatoire de Musique. 46. Palais de Justice. 47. Hôtel des Postes. 48. Église Sainte-Elizabeth. 49. Musée de Peinture. 50. Casernes. 51. École primaire communale. 52. Gouvernement provincial. 53. Commission des Hospices Civils. 54. Manège de Cavalerie. 55. Hospice Tétrazee. 56. Tour Valenciennaise. 57. Statue Baudouin de Constantinople.

When he left the army he returned to his job as a clerk in the boiler-shop at the Locomotive Works. As he was a clever letter writer and was good at socialising he became Secretary of the Comrades Club in Eastleigh and was a member of the 'Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes'.



Thomas was good with his hands, owned many old books which were unfortunately given to the library when he died, and had many interests, such as photography. He dabbled with things like the radio, building his own crystal-set in the very early days, and to his embarrassment achieving the honour of being one of the first people in Eastleigh to be fined for not having a wireless licence. He even modified his Edison Gem phonograph to record his voice. The recording has not survived.

I think he was familiar with most of the Public Houses in Eastleigh and the surrounding area, as my mother used to joke that he did not like to pass a Public House without going in to prove that he could still exercise his drinking arm.

One of his work colleagues, Tom Parsons, who he had known from the time when they lived in London and was probably the Stores-clerk in the Locomotive Works, came to live in Swaythling when the Works moved to Eastleigh. He too liked a drink but apparently did not like paying for it and seems to have been a butt of many practical jokes. Presumably as a leg-pull, and not for publication, in about 1926, grandfather wrote a satirical booklet about Mr. Parsons. It was the story of TO-MAS, son of PAH. Although illustrated by cartoons it was written in an exaggerated Old Testament style. The humour in the booklet would have been appreciated by his mates in the boiler shop and fellow club-members as they would remember the incidents, people and places alluded to. I could appreciate the piece about Swaythling as some of the landmarks still exist. I do not know whether Mr. Parsons ever read it. He may have done as I suspect it just repeats episodes he had spoken of.



The cover of TO-MAS son of PAH.



Probably a photograph taken on a Works Outing up the River Thames from Reading. Thomas Austin is 7th from the left.

Thomas Gibson Austin died of a cerebral haemorrhage on 5th June 1931 at the early age of 52. The following appeared in the Eastleigh Weekly News at the time.

THE LATE MR. T. G. AUSTIN Funeral of Well-known Eastleigh Clubman

A prominent member of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, and well-known in Eastleigh club life, the death occurred suddenly, at the age of fifty two years, of Mr. Thomas Gibson Austin, of 45, Arnold Road, Eastleigh.

Mr. Austin, who was a clerk in the Boiler Shop at the Southern Railway Locomotive Works at Eastleigh, was the late secretary of the "Prince of Wales" Lodge, R.A.O.B., and a K.O.M. of the Order. He was a former secretary of the Eastleigh Comrades Club and secretary of the slate club at the Comrades Club at the time of his death, having held office since its inception.

Prior to settling in Eastleigh, Mr Austin was associated with the 3rd London Rifle Volunteers, and he joined the 3rd Wessex Field Ambulance (Territorial) holding the rank of sergeant at the outbreak of war in 1914. He took an active part in the training of recruits in the units of this branch of the service raised in Eastleigh, and subsequently was given the rank of lieutenant in the Labour Corps, with which he did service in France.

THE FUNERAL

There was a considerable congregation at the funeral service at Eastleigh Parish Church, on Tuesday afternoon, conducted by the Rev H. T. Bennett (curate), who also officiated at the interment at Eastleigh Cemetery.

The family mourners were - the widow; Mr. A. and C. Austin (sons); Miss F. Austin (daughter); Mrs. Batt (sister); Mr. F. Dunbar (brother-in-law); Mr. H. Woods; Mr. and Mrs. Massey and Mr. W. Lowings.

Among those also present were - Councillor C. A. Soar, foreman of the Boiler Shop, and deceased's workmates; Mr. F. Fern (secretary), and Messrs. A. Bliss, B. Youatt, Purchase, Englefield, J. Roberts and J. Lewis (Comrades' Club); Mr. J. Elliott (President, Unity Club), Mr. W. Smith (secretary); Mr. T. W. Green, P.G. P. G. Batt, K.O.M. and Bros, H. Ridout, K.O.M., T. Rumney, K.O.M. J. Oakley, K.O.M., E. H. Hayward, C. P., - Gray, C. P., and other members of the Provincial Grand, "Prince of Wales," "Sir Richard Brown" Lodges, R.A.O.B., and other local lodges P.G. P. Batt conducted the Buffaloe funeral ritual

The wreaths included those from the widow, Al, Cecil, Freda, Ethel and Bertha; Midge, Gert and Bert; Marion and Ted. and Bob and George; Mr. and Mrs. Chinchin and Norman, Mr. and Mrs. B. Youatt, Edie and Mr. R. Dollin, Mr. and Mrs. Wolland, Boilermakers' Society (Eastleigh branch); Boiler Shop Benevolent fund members; colleagues of the clerical staff; officers and members, Old Comrades' Club; officers and members, Unity Club; "Prince of Wales" Lodge, R.A.O.B., and a Few Neighbours