

## The Kipling Motoring Diaries

May 1922

*In May 1922, Kipling and Carrie spent six days in Flanders at the time of the King's 'pilgrimage' to the battlefields of the Salient and the British and Empire memorials to the fallen. Kipling had been involved in the planning, as a member of the Imperial War Graves Commission. Today it is named the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and still performs the same tasks, but with the addition of all the war graves from World War II, and the myriad other lesser wars and campaigns of the inter-war years and since 1945.*

### May 10th. 1922

Left Bateman's 8.50, arr. Dover 10.40. Embarked car on steamer without trouble. Took Cabin No. 9 (woman who had drunk spirits was sick outside door). Grey cold with E wind and smears of sunshine: slight lop. [*The transcription says "slight top" which doesn't make sense. "slight lop", to describe the sea state, as a slight swell, does.*] Arr. CALAIS 2.10 (Left Dover nominally 12.50). Lunched at Hotel Terminus – very decent sole and chicken. Sent kit up to Room 3 (with bath) and at 3.15 went out to Crédit du Nord bank to cash remaining £75 of Spanish letter of credit. Cold wind: sent extortionate fiacre back from bank and did usual prowl up Blvd. (*Boulevard*) Jacquart buying ham and butter for tomorrow but did not find small aluminium box for butter. Bought also for 3 francs the usual butter-spreading knife. Back to hotel at 5.5 after long and interesting loaf. Saw 4-masted barque *Onde* in dock being chipped. Telephoned to Bellevue Hotel, Lille, for tomorrow's accommodation. C unpacked – not without curses at the arrangements of Ada who put all my things atop of hers.

*The four-masted barque Onde (Wave) would have been in dry-dock having her steel hull chipped by dockyard workers with 'chipping hammers' to remove the old paint prior to being re-painted. Ada was presumably a Bateman's maid.*

### May 11<sup>th</sup>

Went out after P. Déj. (*petit déjeuner – breakfast*) to buy bread. Also small aluminium bucketing for butter. Larkin arrived punc. (*punctually*) at 12 by boat and we were away at 12.40 after lunch at hotel – Coolish day with NE wind but sunshine through it. St. Omer, Cassel to Steenworde and Azeele.

L(*arkin*). a man over 70, with white hair and waxed end to moustache, wholly uninterested in Cemeteries which, he said, made him sad. No sense of fun either – a most earnest liberal.



*Peter Charles Larkin*

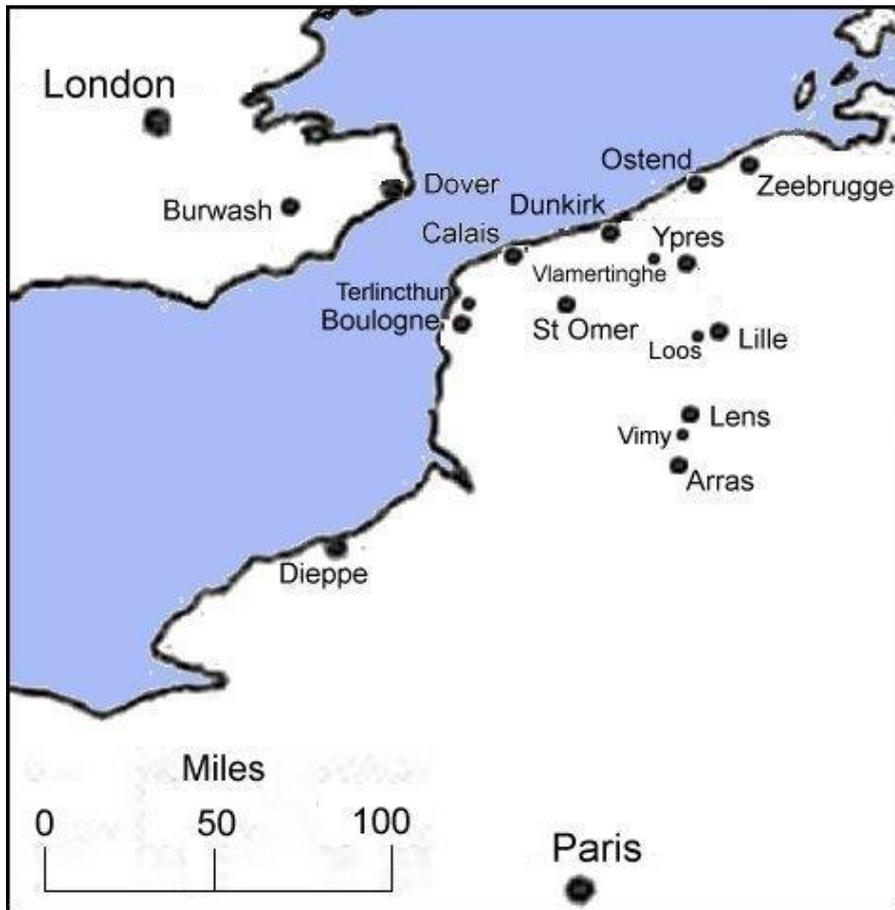
*Hon. Peter C. Larkin (1855-1930) the newly appointed Canadian High Commissioner in London.*

Got out to have a look at Lyssenhoek cemetery just outside Pop(*eringhe*). Tremendously improved and turfed for the King's inspection with a few flags and a mayor or two with sash and young bemedalled gardeners hanging about. So through Pop. along Ypres road into Vlamertinghe. Amazed by house and field developments in past two years – specially the houses. The back-landscapes do not yet seem tackled. Vlamertinghe is practically rebuilt in every detail. Found E at cemetery at 3.30. Small crowd in road, mainly children, herded by two Belgian soldiers in tin hats with fixed bayonets. Also Mayors, again in sashes and some gardeners from nearby cemeteries. Then came Binney and an officer who showed me my name down with L(*arkin*)'s for this end of show. Did a lightning change into blacks and a white shirt in bedroom of cottage lent by old lady (not a mirror or a chamber (*pot*) visible: simply two wooden boxes for beds and shutters outside in lieu of curtains.)

C got Taylor to extract trunk (T. never turned a hair) and she extracted kit requisite. K(*ing*) arrived 4.10 and seemed really moved by the graves themselves.

Also discoursed with Larkin. Very well primed by staff. Spoke to me about Sat's speech, too. Noted that the hired R(*olls*)R(*oyce*)s were nothing very splendid.

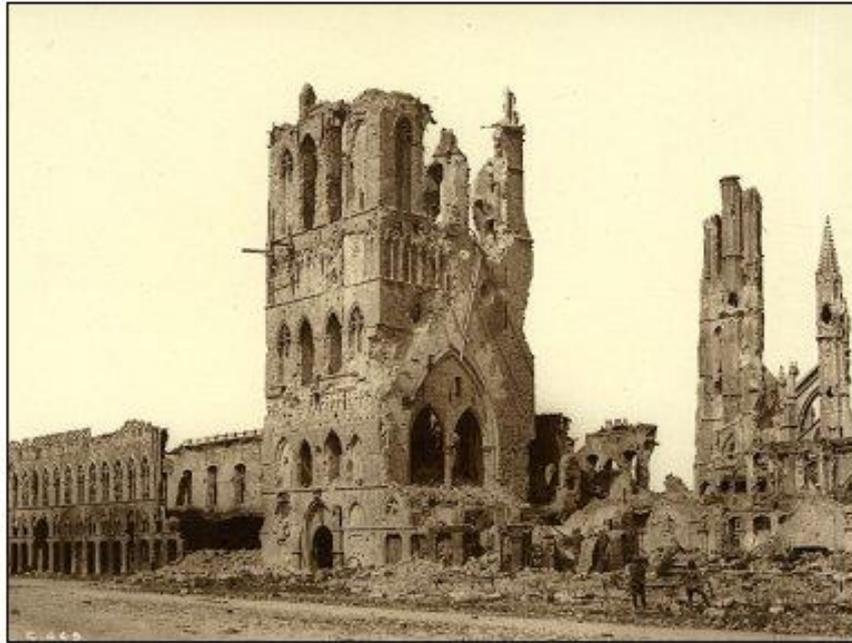
The Mayor of V(*lamertinghe*) could not be restrained from breaking into French speech of two or three minutes. His daughter brought a purple wreath which he laid on a grave – the nearest – and not on the Cross. Had to be corrected. K. walked up and down for at least seven minutes.



Went off in state after half an hour from first to last. We to Ypres where Taylor lost himself (in the re-built city) by the Cloth Tower. Rebuilt Ypres is absolutely ghastly.

Along Menin Road to Menin – stopped at Birr cemetery and crater. Very little really done to ‘em after all. Held up at Menin Douane for the most searching, insolent and designedly uncomfy douane search I’ve ever dreamed of. Lasted at least an hour in the street under the auspices of one solemnly slightly drunk soldier and a grey-bearded parrot-like individual who seemed to be the head devil. It was all wholly inexplicable and annoyed Larkin as well as us. Lille was reached at 6.45 in consequence. Went by mistake to Royal and not Bellevue – just as good. Dined at 7.30 in rest.

And Larkin talked about Can(*adian*) cattle embargo till 9.30 when we went for a walk and to bed.



*The Ypres Cloth Hall in 1918*

*The great 13<sup>th</sup> Century Ypres Cloth Hall was destroyed by artillery fire during the Great War. It was meticulously restored in the 1930s.*

*Azeele is almost certainly Herzelee, all these place names are of towns and communes in France, close to the Belgian border, between Calais and Ypres. We are not sure of the identity of E., probably Elsie, although she had not accompanied them across the Channel.*

*But a letter from Kipling to Andrew Macphail dated 30 April notes: “We have left Elsie on a visit to Paris . . .”, suggesting that Elsie was on the continent and they had probably arranged to meet up with her.*

*(PINNEY, **Letters**, Vol.5, pp 118-20) Notes 1 and 2 to this letter, by Professor Pinney, give an excellent account of the formalities on this tour. A tricouleur sash was the badge of office of a mayor, worn on formal occasions. ‘Binney’ was William B. Binney (1886-1963), then the Assistant Architect for the Imperial War Graves Commission, working in France and Belgium who designed many fine memorials in various IWGC cemeteries.*

*The speech for Saturday, which the King was to deliver, was the one which Kipling had been working on while they were at Algeciras, six weeks earlier – see Carrie’s diary for 4 April and **April 4**.*

*They had crossed into Belgium to go to Ypres and Vlamertinghe, and had to cross the border back into France to reach their hotel in Lille. It was, presumably, the French Customs (Douane) which were being tiresomely particular.*

*The Canadian Cattle Embargo was a hot political issue at this time. Britain had embargoed the import of live Canadian cattle for many years, to prevent the import of disease, and the Canadians were pressing for the embargo to be lifted (which it was, later this year).*

May 12<sup>th</sup>

Left Lille at 9 for La Bassée in grey cold weather with East wind like February. Showed Larkin brick-stacks at Givenchy now being rapidly demolished by Polish labour. All the landscape mushrooming with new red-tiled houses. L. much interested in the reclamation of land and the coils of wire – an old brush-handle grenade and a Mauser cartridge which I found for him which last he took away as souvenir. But he does not realize things at all. Turned back from La Bassée and took him 6 km or so to see the Neuve Chapelle plain and Richebourg l'Avoué. Houses here too, at every corner and the land being reduced to use by stark hand work. Then back again through La B. to Lens – a most awful stretch of road and the countryside so altered that we passed where John had disappeared. Red House, Chalk Pit wood and all smoothed out. Showed L. Hill 70 which he, knowing naught, told us was where the Canadians meant to put their memorial (wind all this time like razors).

Then through Lens – altogether changed and full of the fecund dust of reconstruction – same as La Bassée – for Vimy. Showed him Vimy, Petit Vimy and Thélus cemeteries. Upon sight of Ridge he changed his Liberal mind, and said that the Ridge should be the only place for the Canadian memorial (*where, indeed, it was built, and remains*). Shot up ridge – saw Memorials to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Div. Canadians and some others and got into ARRAS (Hotel du Commerce) 11.45 none too early for déj. French population only. Note: had seen, en route, Canadian cemetery at Vimy and learned that the King was with the French at Notre Dame de Lorette. Nothing much had been done to the Hotel du Commerce. Seemed to be kept as war souvenir for tourists.

Weather began to cloud up more and spit with rain as we pulled out of Arras and to the D.I.G. area office enquiring road to Alette, a rather fine setting for the desolation of the Edge of the Somme which I specially desired L. to see. Ran the line by Achiet le Petit, through Puisieux, beginning at Boiry Ste Rictrude (dead), Bucquoy (dead), Serre: between Hébuterne and B(eaumont)-Hamel through Beaufort, Mailly-Maillet, into Doullens road at Forceville, Hédauville below Forceville. There a good plump of rain and to our horror the King's party evidently inspecting Cem. We tucked up our heels and ran – saw crowd waiting in the rain at Louvencourt also and so held on straight through Doullens to Freven: Hesdin where we broke bread by the car a few km up the road to Abbeville, instead of Montreuil. Turned back after meal, ran to Montreuil, St. Omer and Boulogne.

Found all the Commissioners almost at Hotel Folkestone just come in by boat. We very tired after 150 mile car and trying to make L. see that the Germans really had done some evil (I think he is almost beginning to see this). He insisted on champagne at dinner (Me – wise me! – Whiskey) but Mum out of politeness took a very small glass which, being tired, became to her a violent poison and she had a bad go of indigestion and heartburn. To bed early where these things diversified the night.

*The Hotel du Commerce would have been the hotel in Arras where all the commercial travellers would have stayed, and where they would have had a single long table for lunch in the middle of the day, with an excellent table d'hôte menu.*

*The morning was spent ranging over the northern section of the line, in particular the battlefield of Loos, where John Kipling had lost his life, while after lunch they moved to the northern part of the Somme battlefield through many small communes which had been battered to bits during the war, but which were resurrected afterwards. The Commissioners found at Boulogne, were the Commissioners of the Imperial War Graves Commission.*

May 13<sup>th</sup>.

Slept till 8.30: my car conveying L. and Sir S. Bowring and Gosling (N.F.L), who had a nephew buried in that cemetery, to Étaples where, praise Allah, I was not wanted. F. Ware warned me to attend at Meerut Cem. 1130. (Hotel bristling with all Commissioners save Walton who was at Geneva, so to make sure I fled out with Atkinson (A.T.O.) in his car and found it and came back.. Wrote my name in his cigarette case. He wanted to have it engraved. On return my car took along pale General Cobbe, who has had pneumonia, to Meerut. Arthur Brown hounding us up there long before the time. Met also ex-Colonel or major of 47 Sikhs. Was introduced to Mayor of Boulogne with whom talked a lot in cem. while waiting for King – 20 mins late – Cemetery austere and dignified – in spite of bakehouse-like crematorium where Hindus had been burned. All sorts buried here inside stone wall, spaced with what should be dignified evergreens (like Cypresses) in years to come. Got out of wind, in sun under shelter of wall. King with party arrived 11.50. Went round graves, spoke to gardeners, etc, etc. I saw grave of Gunga Din, dooly bearer.

Thence with Cobbe to quick special lunch and at 12.50 with J.F and Larkin to big show at Terlincthun – under shadow of Napoleon's column. Fine day, brilliant light but good air. All were lined up and presented to K. & Q.

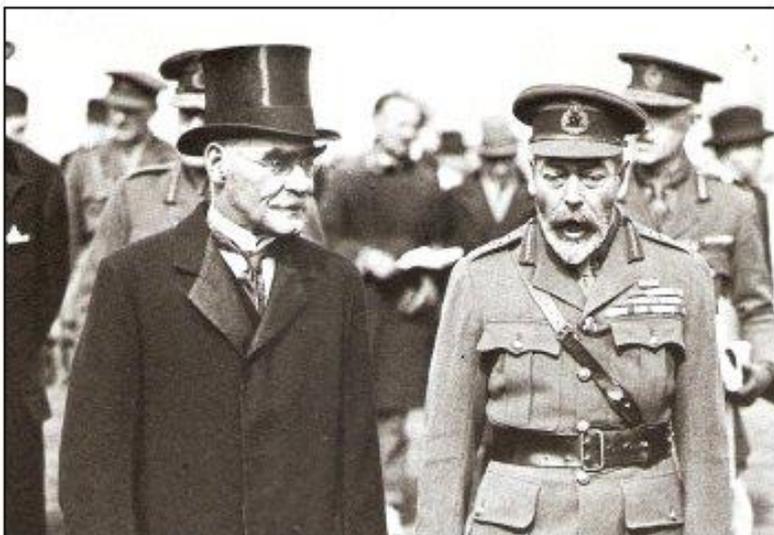
*'Napoleon's Column' was erected near Boulogne to commemorate the Grande Armée which Napoleon assembled there in 1804 to invade England. However, it became clear that the invasion was not feasible because the Royal Navy commanded the sea.*

*Napoleon then marched eastwards to defeat the Austrians and Russians at Austerlitz. The column was completed in 1821, the year of his death in exile.*



*The column of the Grande Armée*

Then K. and Q. to Cross of Sacrifice where he made his speech, with splendid delivery, and dignified bearing - Castelnau replied, resplendent in red breeches (soyez pacifistes comme nous – mais, etc, etc.) (*May you be pacifists, like us – but, etc, etc.*) Then Q. up central aisle to Stone of Remembrance where she laid wreath. Last Post played. K. spoke to Mum at the railings under Goodland's care and about John. Mum's curtsies nice to behold. Then they moved off. Was sent for and K. said to me what was seemly.



*Kipling and King George V*

He spoke about politicians (Note: the look in his eye of a decent man who suspects he is being carted. Rather like a frightened horse.) L. and Bowring flee to Calais to catch earlier boat. We take back Macdonogh, A.G. and Sir James Allen, N.Z. to hotel. Ceremony went without any hitch. All Commissioners – specially Ware – much bucked. We went for walk together up Rue Faidherbe where we had brioche and chocolate. Bought an aluminium box – or rather, two – for butter and Mum. A red comb for E. Then to hotel where Commission were getting ready to go for steamer. They drifted off. We talking to ‘em all – Goodlands, Branch and his French wife – Herbert Baker, Admiral Singer and the rest. Then along quay to see Paris boat train come in and to see them off. Then home in time for 7.20 dinner and talk after to Rutherford (Larkin’s secretary) who had lost boy at Villers-au-Bois whither he goes tomorrow in an IWGC car. Then to our room, very tired, but well content, with the success of the little game at 9.15 p.m.



*Meerut Military Cemetery, St. Martin-Boulogne*

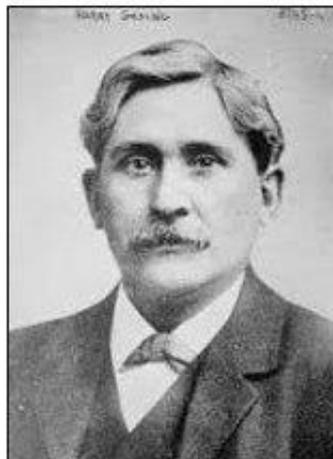
*The Meerut Cemetery is named after the Meerut Hospital, established for casualties from the Indian Corps which served in France, 1914-5. (Meerut is an ancient city in Uttar Pradesh in northern India.) Etaples, close to Boulogne, had been the site of a huge British base during the war, and also of many Base Hospitals: consequently, and sadly, there were a large number of cemeteries in the vicinity. We have not been able to identify Sir S. Bowring nor have we been able to identify Atkinson, nor do we know what A.T.O. signified. But Gosling was Harry Gosling 1861-1930, a trade unionist and member of the IWGC. He had been made one of the first Companions of Honour when King George instituted the award.*

*General Cobbe was Lieutenant-General Sir Alexander Cobbe, VC, (1870-1931) at this time Military Secretary in the India Office, who had served in France with the Indian Division, 1914-16. He was clearly not a well man, and this account of this morning's ceremony at the Meerut cemetery is matched by the account which Kipling puts into the mouth of the former soldier, now a convict, in 'The Debt' (Limits and Renewals) (see Carrington, p. 457, and our NRG notes by John McGivering).*

*'47 Sikhs' means the 47<sup>th</sup> (Sikh) Regiment of the Indian Army's infantry. Because of his friend Colonel ('Stalky') Dunsterville's command of a battalion of Sikhs, Kipling took a particular interest in the Sikhs.*



*General Castelneau*



*Harry Gosling*

*Castelneau, who replied on behalf of the French Government, was General Castelneau (1851-1944), one of the more successful French generals of World War I.*

*Kipling's comments on the King's appearance are revealing. King George's words about politicians were probably induced by the shenanigans which had been going on about Lloyd-George's dissolution Honours list of four months earlier which caused a major political scandal at this time.*

*The names mentioned were virtually all Commissioners of the IWGC or High Commissioners. Macdonogh, A.G. was Lieutenant-General Sir George Macdonogh (1865-1942), then the Adjutant General.*



*Sir Herbert Baker*



*Sir Morgan Singer*



*Sir George Macdonogh*

*Herbert Baker was their long-standing architect friend, while Admiral Singer was the Admiralty representative on the IWGC, Vice-Admiral, (later Admiral) Sir Morgan Singer (1864-1938). He remained the Admiralty's representative on the IWGC and a member of its finance committee after his retirement from the Active List until his final illness in 1937.*

*Villers-au-Bois is about seven miles NW of Arras, and Google Earth shows the IWGC cemetery about one km NW of the village.*

#### May 14<sup>th</sup>

Fine and with less wind. Took the day to ourselves and set out, in brilliant sun, to Zeebrugge at 10.30 via Calais. First time we had done this stretch to our great pleasure. Big bold hills and the spring visibly more forward than a fortnight ago. Got through Calais on a straight outside road but held up on far side by a triple funeral at local Cemetery. They save their dead for Sundays – road very worn and needing repairs: dotted with Sunday foot and bike traffic. Pitched down into the dead flat below the Boulogne-Calais hills. Came to the bewitched town of Gravelines which is worse to get through than Arles – as all signs cease and the road spills itself among old fortifications and canals. Then Loos and the long stretch of pavé – very good – into Dunkirk where lie all the barges in France on the canal that parallels road from D. smack into Nieuport. All dead flat with dunes to right and all rebuilt houses after German destruction. Passed Adinkerke douane (Le Drapeau Belge) where we were warned that it would be shut at 6.30. Then Furnes, slightly bewitched, on account of canal, and so to Nieuport which was as smashed up as any French town in the devastated area; but ferociously rebuilding itself in bricks and dust and holed streets. All the coast apparently one chain of seaside residences and hotels and small farms in the hinterland. Noticed a regular crop of small foals beside their mothers. German gun-emplacements to the left among the sands. Road getting better.

Ostende at 11.15 for lunch at the Hotel de l'Océan – Carlton Restaurant – which was just restored. Manager and concierge immensely attentive; a few couples lunching. Pale sands and almost Biarritz-like sea-front but no blue in the sea which was dotted with fishing craft. Fat monks and soldiers walking in sunshine outside big restaurants windows – the season evidently just beginning. Away at 2.15 and found superb tarred road through the dunes by side of the tram to Zeebrugge. Took liberties with it and worked to 40-47. Heard car thump badly once or twice and then she seemed to list to the right. Took no notice. Zeebrugge at 3: drove car out to end of Mole – saw wrecks of the ships in the fairway and was invited to local historic “Museum”. German guns on wall of Mole, exploded and opened like flowers as to muzzle. Returned at 3.30.

*Zeebrugge had been the scene of a daring naval raid by the British on 23 April 1918, at the height of the German spring offensive. The operation was extremely dangerous, the Mole (the massive harbour pier) being very heavily defended, and many deeds of great gallantry were performed. Nearly a third of the men who took part were killed or wounded. The wrecks which the Kiplings saw were the remains of the three blockships which had been scuttled in the mouth of the canal.*

*The 'Loos' between Gravelines and Dunkirk must have been Loon-Plage. Loos, near Lille, was where John Kipling lost his life in his first battle.*



*British graves at Zeebrugge*

Car still listing, with occasional thump. Found no one at Adinkerke Douane to complete definite discharge of car: he had “gone away”. They went to seek him on bicycle. This was 4.40. Delay of 20 min. which I am to report to A.A. Only fair seeing what penalties result from non-compliance with Belgian discharge-of-car formalities.

Then on, behind a bicycle race on the road. All Belgium and France bicycle on Sundays. Gravelines bewitched us again. It ought to be posted properly. Just outside Calais proper, an idiot leaped out from a tram under our nose and was saved by the skin of his teeth. Were cursed for this by disinterested stranger when we, too, stopped to see if we had hurt our wheel in taking the kerb. The nearest thing I ever knew. Stand-easy between Calais in God’s own evening light. We went and walked up a rise and she overtook us. Boulogne at 7.20 as near as might be, wholly content after 193 miles of perfect going.

Then Taylor to speak to me at dinner. Our right rear spring had smashed all five leaves, somewhere or other in course of day. Miracle how we had managed to hold on. (We thought of the bumps at Blankenbergh en route to Zeebrugge.) He sure it must have happened last thing coming into Boulogne. So she is crippled. Wired Cricklewood to send mechanic to meet her at Dover with new spring, etc. Changed all our arrangements and we go to London direct in boat train and we spend tomorrow night there. Infernal nuisance but we took it with calm. Mum had a good night. Mem. Even R.Rs not perfect.

*This was a day’s jaunt for their own pleasure. They had been in France 20-27 April, travelling back by train after their short stay in Spain in March/April, hence the comment on spring being now more forward. The “bewitched” town of Gravelines was the place off which the Spanish Armada had anchored in 1588, to embark Parma’s troops for the invasion of England and, effectively, where the defeat of the Armada was encompassed by the English fleet.*

*Nieuport, some 10km inside Belgium was the last Belgian town on that coast to remain in Belgian hands throughout the war – the trench line which stretched from the Swiss border in the south east reached the Channel coast a few kilometres north east of Nieuport, leaving about 600 sq.km of Belgium unoccupied by the Germans*

*The tram between Ostende and Zeebrugge was really an inter-urban railway, with sizable trains.*

May 16<sup>th</sup>

Went to London direct by train while car was repairing temp'ry at Dover and it did not reach London till about midnight. After which it went to Cricklewood.

*The diary ends there. There is a discrepancy between this diary and both Carrington and Rees extracts of Carrie's, which say that they travelled home, presumably to London, not Burwash, on 15 May. The date discrepancy may well be a mis-reading by the original transcriber of this motoring diary; while the "Went to London" is probably correct, since Carrie's diaries for the succeeding days list a series of meetings and events, many of which can only have occurred in London, until May 30.*

*In the meantime, Taylor and the Rolls-Royce mechanic would have made running repairs to the Duchess, and then taken her to the Rolls-Royce facility at Cricklewood in north-west London for a full repair to be made.*

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