

# RICHBOROUGH THE SECRET PORT

DR. MARTIN WATTS

CENTRE FOR RESEARCH IN KENT HISTORY  
& ARCHAEOLOGY

# CONTEXT

- SPEED & SCALE OF CONSTRUCTION- COST CONTROL?
- NECESSITY FOR REINFORCEMENTS, MUNITIONS & SUPPLIES TO BOLSTER DEFENCE AT AMIENS THEN FINAL ADVANCE – THE 100 DAYS
- REPATRIATION OF WOUNDED
- RETURN OF SCRAP & SALVAGE
- BARGES & RO-RO – THE LATTER FROM MARCH 1918

# BARGES





# BARGES



# RO-RO-TRAIN FERRY





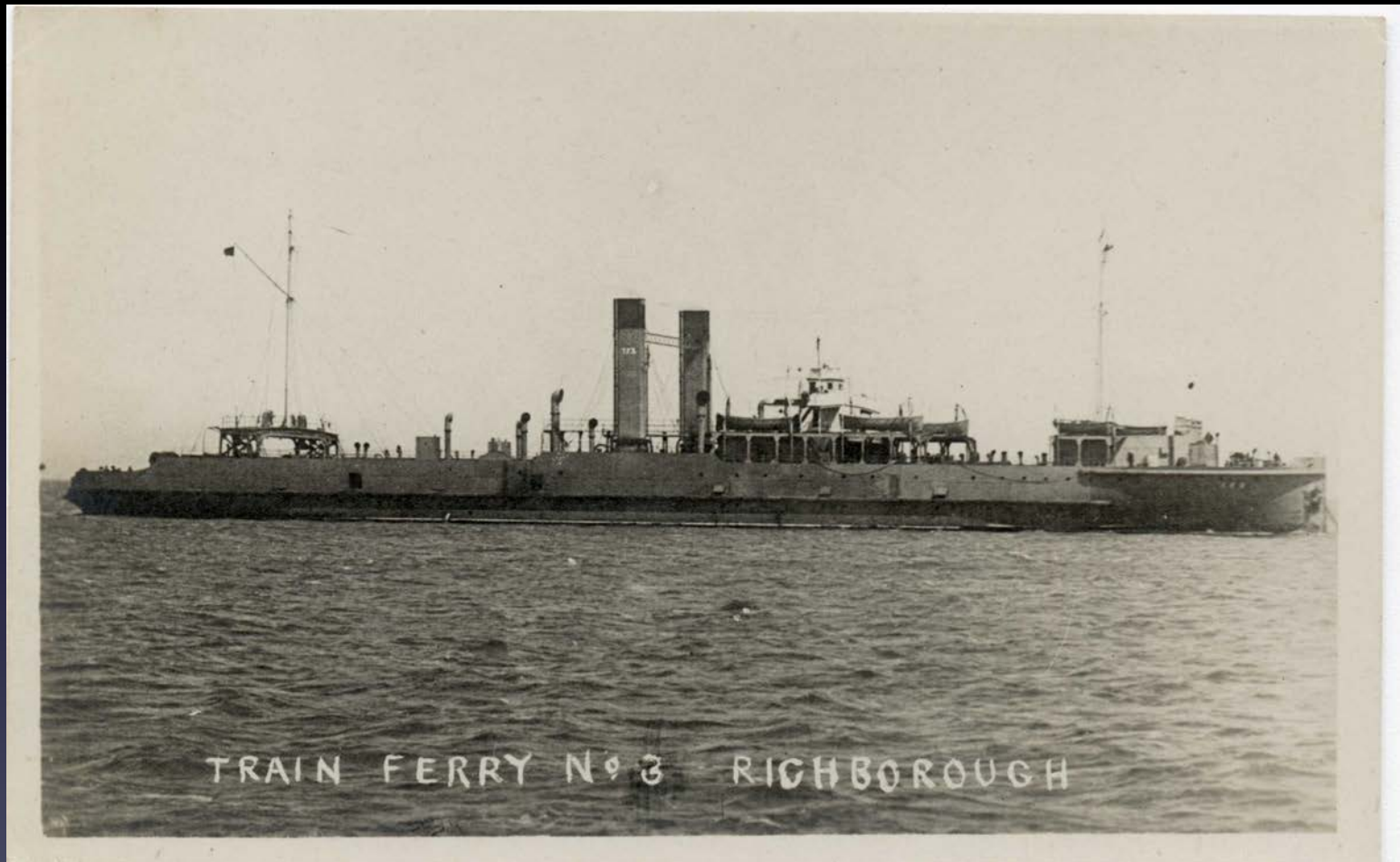
# RO RO TRAIN FERRY



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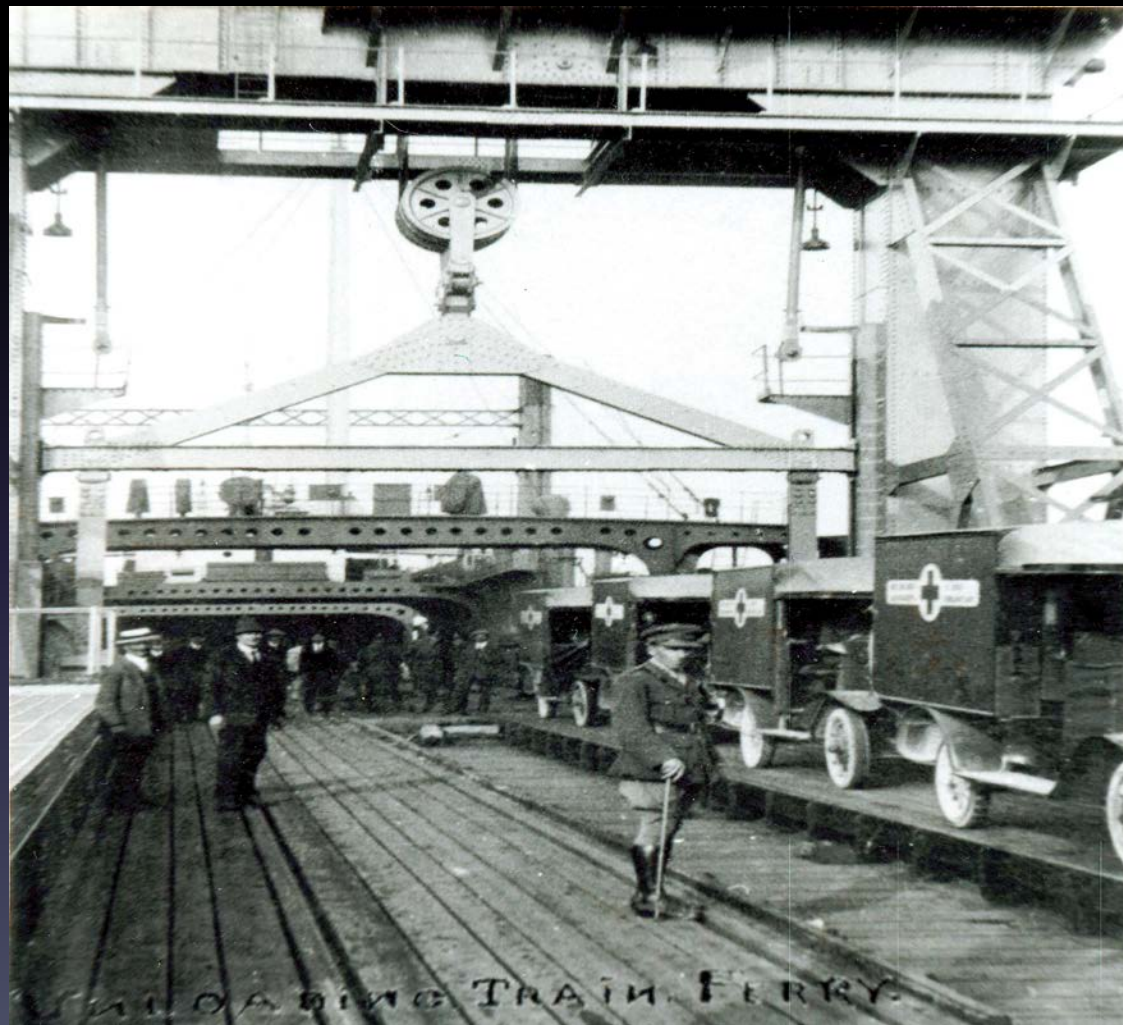


# RO RO TRAIN FERRY





# RO RO TRAIN FERRY



# HORACE & HENRY COOK

THIS IS PROPERTY OF  
H. K. COOK. "THE BUFFS"  
1937 - 1947.



HORACE COOK. R.E. 1912 - 1920

HENRY  
SKIPPER

COOK. R.E. 1914 - 1916  
PILOT AT SANDWICH  
BARRIES AT  
SANDWICH

# RE IWT FOOTBALL TEAM





# COMMAND

- WHO COMMANDS? WAR OFFICE OR EASTERN COMMAND?
- WAR CABINET SHIPPING PRIORITY FOR VESSELS TO CARRY US TROOPS & SUPPLIES
- INLAND WATERWAYS & DOCKS (ROYAL ENGINEERS)– DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF IWD BRIG. ALLEN-WILLIAMS FROM 5 JUNE 1917
- COL W.H.BRIGGS REGULAR STAFF OFFICER LATE DLI RESERVES APPOINTED BY EASTERN COMMAND TO INVESTIGATE PORT - SEPTEMBER 1918

# COL BRIGGS & BRIG ALLEN-WILLIAMS



# INITIAL JUDGEMENT SEPTEMBER 1918

SIR MAURICE FITZMAURICE, SIR R ELLIOTT COOPER & BASIL  
MOTT – INSTITUTION OF CIVIL ENGINEERS

‘AS A WAR UNDERTAKING THE SERVICES RENDERED AT  
RICHBOROUGH ARE OF GREAT NATIONAL VALUE; THERE  
HAS BEEN NO UNDUE EXTRAVAGANCE OR WASTE OF  
PUBLIC MONEY....’



# THE BRIGGS REPORT - OFFICIAL

- REPORT COVERS PERIOD 9 SEPTEMBER – 16 OCTOBER 1918
- ACKNOWLEDGES QUICK, EFFECTIVE CONSTRUCTION
- DESCRIBES OBSTRUCTION FROM INCUMBENTS, & ANOMALIES IN PAY & CLASSIFICATION
- MAKES DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EFFICIENCY, TRAINING & REORGANISATION – REFLECTING STAFF COLLEGE (1912) BACKGROUND
- NOTES 'LUXURY' WORK AS IF BASE TO BE PERMANENT RATHER THAN TEMPORARY
- THE OBJECTIVE IS TO COMB OUT OFFICERS & MEN FOR FRANCE

# THE BRIGGS REPORT - CONFIDENTIAL

- GIVES HISTORY & COMMENTS ON THE LAVISHINGS & ANOMALIES
- WO ROLE IN ALLOCATING MORE & DIVERSE TASKS TO IWD
- NOTE RECRUITMENT OF NEW ARMY TECHNICAL OFFICERS FOR CONSTRUCTION, WHO ARE RETAINED AFTER COMPLETION
- 'OFFICERS SEEM TO HAVE A DIRECT LINE OVER THEIR CO'S HEAD TO THE WO AND THIS IS BAD FOR DISCIPLINE.'
- MANY JUNIOR OFFICERS ARE EITHER SURPLUS OR NS (NOT SATISFACTORY)
- THE MAIN OBJECTIVE IS TO COMB OUT OFFICERS & MEN FOR FRANCE

# THE BRIGGS REPORT - AFTERMATH

- BRIGGS SUDDENLY POSTED TO IRELAND OCTOBER 16<sup>TH</sup> 1918 BEFORE REPORT FULLY COMPLETED
- SUMMARY SENT TO SECRETARY OF STATE AT WO 3 NOVEMBER 1918 WITH COVERING LETTER FROM EASTERN COMMAND ARGUING FOR REMOVAL OF COMMAND AMBIGUITY
- WO MEMO TO BRIGGS – BASICALLY NOT INTERESTED ‘NOBODY BELONGING THERETO HAS ANY CONCERN WITH THE MYSTERIOUS WORK WHICH WAS BEING CARRIED OUT BEHIND THE CONCRETE WALL THAT HID IT FROM PUBLIC VIEW’
- ARTHUR JOHN ALLEN-WILLIAMS MADE KBE (CIVIL DIVISION) 5 JUNE 1920 FOR ‘WORK IN CONNECTION WITH MILITARY TRANSPORT AT THE PORT OF RICHBOROUGH’



# DISPOSAL

- PARLIAMENT SELECT COMMITTEE AGREED TO KEEP RO-RO TRAIN FERRY WITH 10 YEAR TRANSITION PERIOD TO BE MANAGED BY SECR
- 1919 RICHBOROUGH RO-ROs CARRIED 50% MORE IN 1918
- DECEMBER 1919 PORT TRANSFERRED FROM WO TO MINISTRY OF MUNITIONS & PUT UP FOR SALE
- GOVERNMENT OWNED BUILDINGS AND ALL BUT 205 ACRES OF LAND OWNED BY INDEPENDENT LAND OWNERS
- WITH NO BUYERS PORT OFFERED IN PARTS & AGREEMENT REACHED WITH QUEENBOROUGH CO. (SANDWICH HAVEN) 24 MARCH 1921. DEAL COLLAPSES IN 1922

# THE SHIPS

- THREE TRAIN FERRIES – TF1 TF2 & TF3
- LAID UP IN 1922 PURCHASED BY GREAT EASTERN 1923 AND SET ON HARWICH – ZEEBRUGGE ROUTE
- 1939- REQUISITIONED BY RN – TF2 SENT TO ST VALERY EN CAUX FOR HD BUT WAS SUNK BY SHELLING LOSING 50% CREW
- TF1 AND TF3 CONVERTED TO LANDING CRAFT CARRIERS AS HMS IRIS AND HMS DAFFODIL TAKING PART IN D DAY
- DAFFODIL LOST TO A MINE IRIS REFITTED IN 1946 AND CONTINUED ON THE HARWICH – ZEEBRUGGE ROUTE AS TSS ESSEX FERRY UNTIL SCRAPPED IN 1957 – A 40 YEAR CAREER.