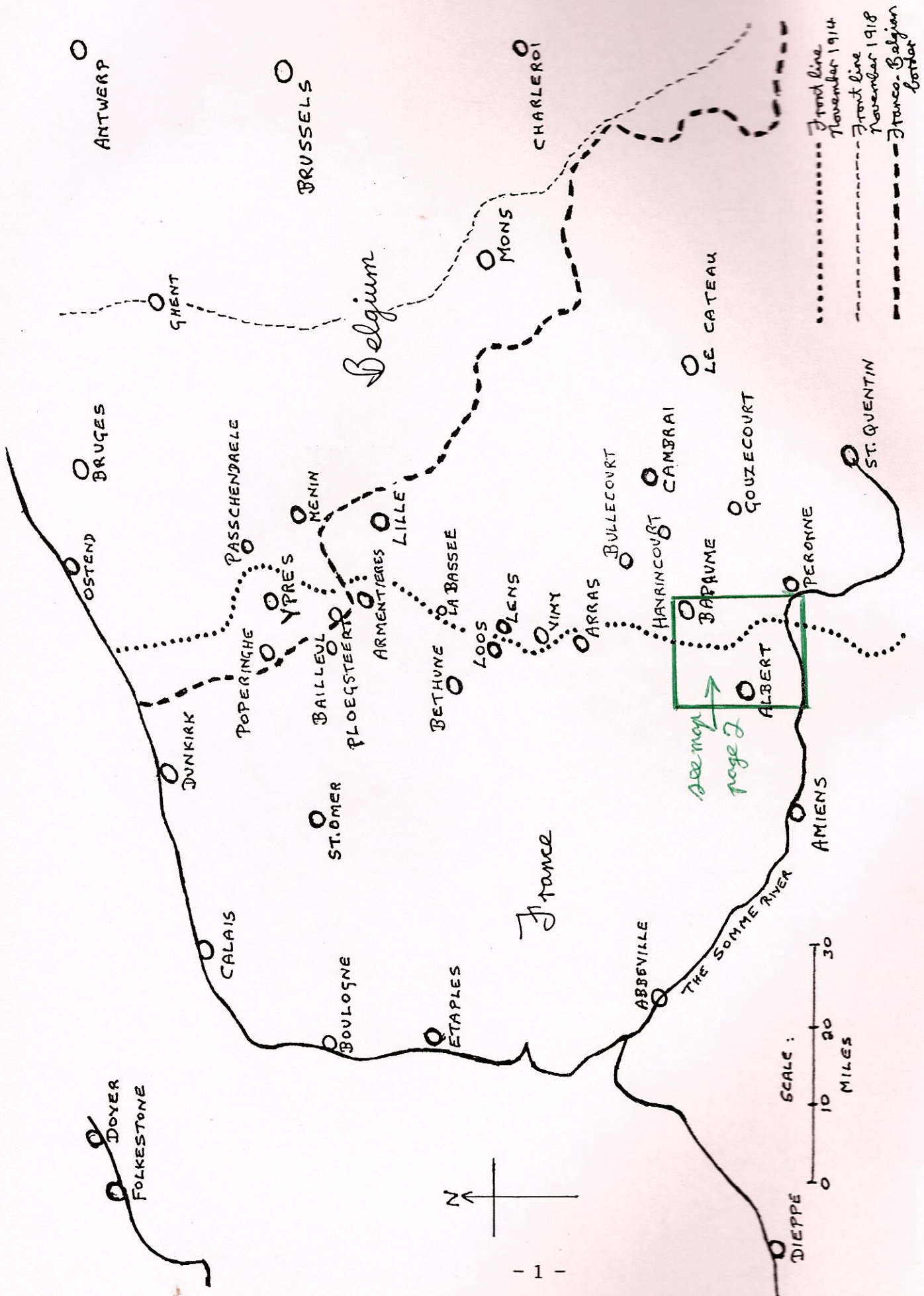
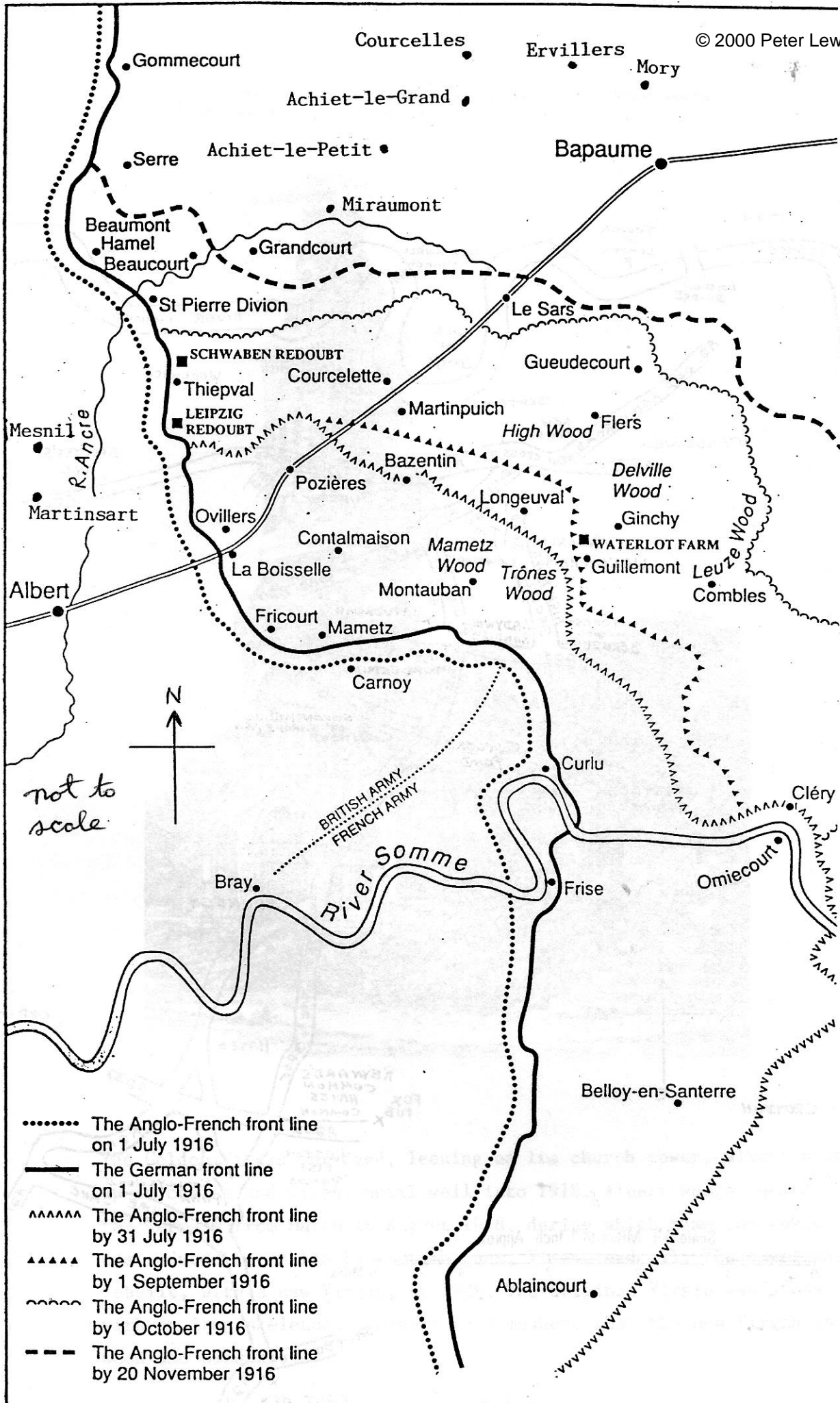


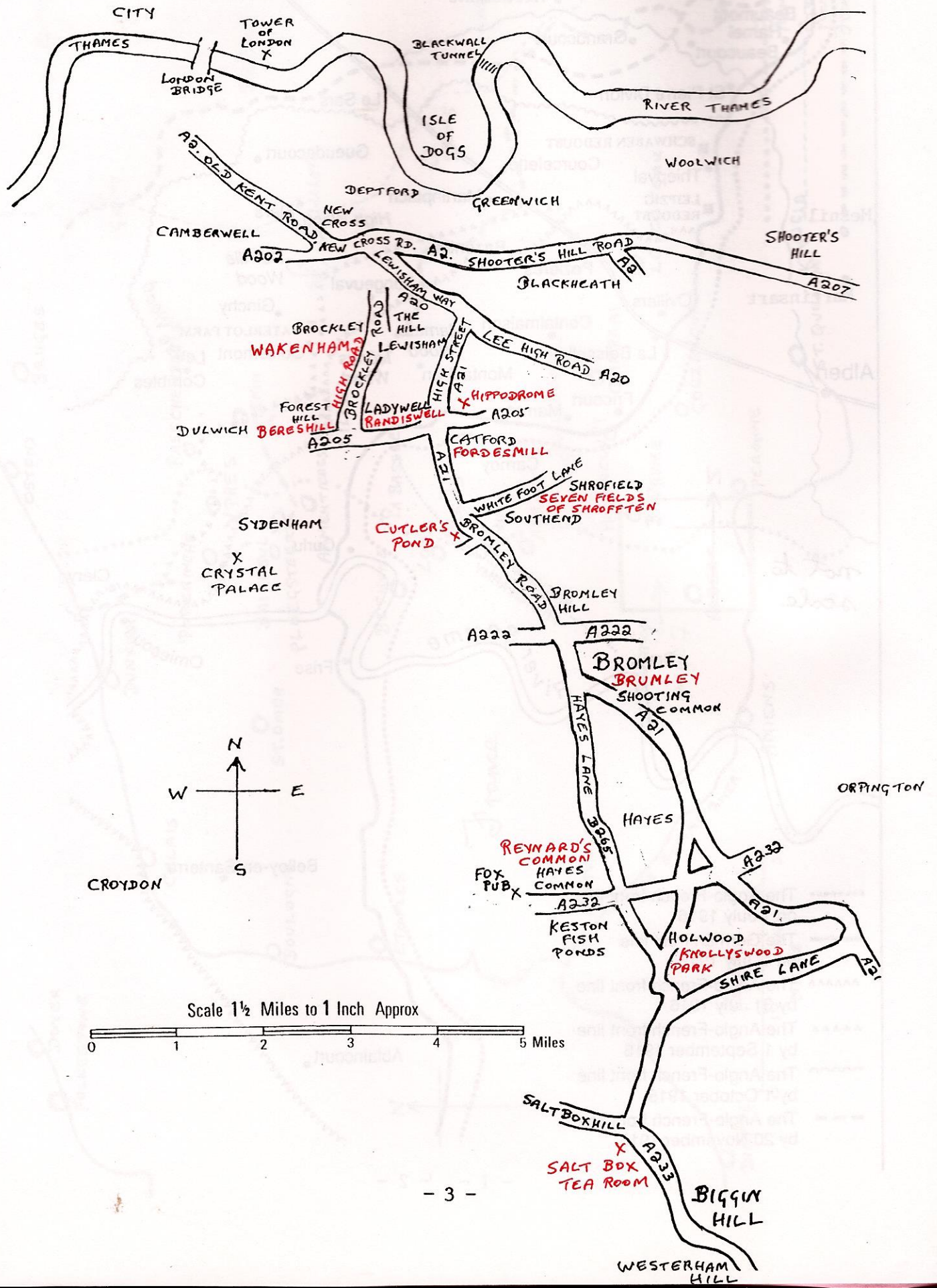
THE GOLDEN VIRGIN

AN INDEX

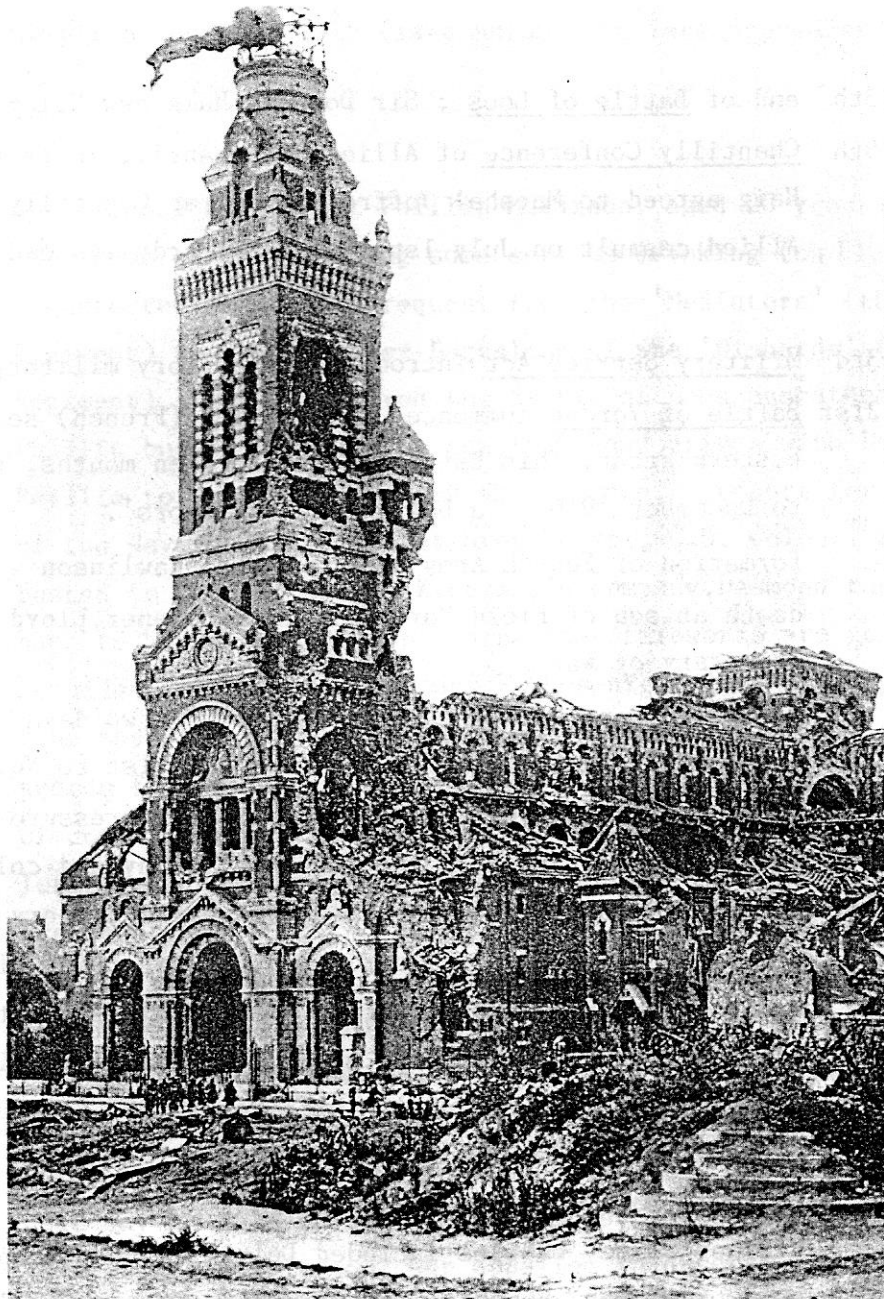








'When the Golden Virgin falls, the war will end.' The basilica of Albert, 1916, showing the famous statue.



The Golden Virgin survived, leaning on its church tower, albeit held up by chains and wires, until well into 1918. Albert was occupied by the Germans from March to August 1918, during which time the tower was reduced to rubble by British guns, Virgin and all. The tower was rebuilt, with a new Virgin, by 1929. The original Virgin was stone, with an iron skeleton. I have read somewhere that the new Virgin is wood and plaster.

A 'Western Front' chronology for the period covered by The Golden Virgin
(Late autumn of 1915 to late September 1916)

1915

- October 13th end of Battle of Loos ; Sir Douglas Haig new C.in-C.
December 5th Chantilly Conference of Allies. Reluctantly, in February 1916,
Haig agreed to Marshal Joffre's plans at Chantilly for a major
Allied assault on July 1st 1916 in Picardy instead of Flanders

1916

- February 3rd Military Service Act introduced compulsory military service
February 21st Battle of Verdun commences in southern (French) sector of the
Western Front. This battle lasted for ten months, from February
to December 1916 - 'a battle of no victors'.
March 1st formation of Fourth Army under General Rawlinson
June 5th death at sea of Field Marshal Lord Kitchener. Lloyd George new
Secretary of War
July 1st so-called Battle of the Somme commenced (two days late). Actually,
a series of battles in Picardy from July 1st to November 18th
1916. A major objective was the relief of pressure at Verdun on
the French Army then on the verge of mutiny and collapse.
The battle commenced with a week's heavy artillery bombardment,
starting June 24th, culminating in the explosion of ten huge
mines under the German trenches immediately prior to the attack
by eleven British divisions at 7.30 a.m. July 1st. On this
day alone British casualties exceeded 50,000 (accounts vary),
with more than 20,000 dead. (One seriously wounded officer was
'Phillip Maddison', whose creator was safe at home in Blighty.)
Further 'Somme' battles included Delville Wood, Longueval, High
Wood, Pozieres, Bazentin, Flers, Courcelette, Guillemont, Ginchy,
Thiepval, Combles, Martinpuich. The final conflict on the Somme
was the Battle of the Ancre, November 11th - 18th, when rain
stopped play.
September 15th first premature and unsuccessful use of tanks in war (32, of
which only 9 were of any use), on the Somme at Flers
September 16th construction of the Hindenburg Line (Siegfried Stellung)
began 25 miles behind the German lines (completed March 1917).

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The Golden Virgin (1957)

covering period October 1915 (late autumn) to late September 1916

A Chronology

1915

October, late, Second Lieutenant Phillip Maddison, aged 20 yrs 6 mos, is at home on leave, doing some serious drinking (ch 1), having been transferred at his own request from the 'Mediators' (the Gaultshire Regiment) to the 'Navvies Battalion of the 'Diehards' (Middlesex Regiment). He has survived the Battle of Loos unscathed.

November, early, Phillip buys a Swift motor car, (p 36) and drives with Desmond Neville to Hornchurch, north-east London, to report for duty to H.Q. of the Navvies Battalion at Grey Towers, C.O. Colonel Broad, and is posted to Captain Jasper Kingsman's company. Desmond takes the car back to Wakenham. Phillip learns that fireworks are to be strictly forbidden on the imminent Guy Fawkes night (Nov 5th), and is glad to find that the task of the Navvies Battalion is mainly to provide guards for bridges and factories, P.O.W.'s, escort duties^{etc} i.e. 'lines of communication' in Blighty. (pp 48-49) He re-reads his grandfather's letter which strongly advises him to give up drink and other 'indiscretions'.

Phillip takes Captain Kingsman in the Swift to his residence, Tollemere Park, Chelmsford, giving a lift into Southend-on-Sea to Lieuts Cox and Wigg. (ch 3) At Tollemere Park he meets Father Aloysius (real name Llewellyn Vaughan-Herbert (p 362) 'Lulu' (p 68) and reads Grenfell's poem 'Into Battle' aloud to his hosts.

Next day he is Orderly Officer. He is considerate to prisoner Pte Pimm in the guard-room, but appalled to observe the drunken behaviour of the navvies - a rag-time battalion, he thinks. Lieut Wigg takes him in the Swift to Town and he meets up with Frances and Alice, mannequins-about-town. (ch 5) Unknown to Wigg and Phillip Frances is 'Spectre' West's cousin (Westy is in hospital at Southampton recovering from another series of frightful injuries). The four drive to Piccadilly for dinner, but Wigg suddenly leaves them. (p 88) They go on to the Cafe Royal where they spot the 'Lion of Chelsea' (Augustus John). They visit a cinema to see a Chaplin film. Phillip kisses Alice and asks her to write to him at Grey Towers. Soon, all return to the West End occasionally, with Captain Bason instead of Wigg.

1915

- November (cont'd) Phillip and Bason are posted to a new battalion at Northampton, C.O. Major Gleeson, Captain Kingsman second-in-command, H.Q. in an empty Mission Hall in the High Street. Phillip, with Wigg, Paul and Flagg survey their new patch. (ch 6) Phillip picks up a girl and buys her an overcoat.
- December 4th (p 104) Phillip writes to Westy, remembering Loos, and mentioning Frances, Westy's cousin. Frances and Alice visit Northampton to see Phillip and Bason. (p 105-109) Phillip attends a course on the Lewis gun, his room-mate a Lieut. Lord, at a large un-named camp.
- Dec 24th Phillip passes a (drinking) test (p 111) for promotion to first lieutenant. He intends to take Alice to dinner at the Apex House in Piccadilly, then to a show at the Coliseum. But Alice is with her friend Commander 'Timmy', so Phillip offers her ticket for the show to the Lion of Chelsea (politely declined) at the Cafe Royal, and goes alone to the show.
- Xmas Day Christmas Dinner in camp - Phillip sick

1916

- New Year Phillip, at home over the New Year, receives a letter from cousin Willie (p 115) recently evacuated from Gallipoli to France. (My comment - this is extremely unlikely, as all surviving troops on Gallipoli were evacuated in December and January to Egypt, going on from there to Palestine and Mesopotamia. Two of my grandfather's brothers served in Gallipoli - one was killed there in November 1915; the other was killed at Jerusalem in March 1918.)
- January, early, Phillip posted to Machine Gun Training Centre at Grantham, Lincs. (p 116), to train on the Vickers Mk.10 gun. He learns that he will soon have to learn to ride a horse.
- March, early - after two months' instruction, including Riding School (p 118) Phillip moves out of camp and kits himself out with new cavalry-type uniform, and spurs. At home, his motor-cycle and Swift car have still not been sold. He drives up to Grantham, calling in at Beau Brickhill to have his wicked way with cousin Polly Pickering. (pp 125-129) At Grantham he reports sick and receives 7 days' sick leave, and goes back home.
- April there he meets Lily Cornford, a laundry worker, for the first time. (p 132) Lily is Desmond's girl-friend, it seems, or so Desmond thinks. Phillip calls in at the Moon Fire Office, then at Eugene's place of work, a corset factory in Houndsditch. This is just before his 21st

1916

April (cont'd) birthday. He receives a signet ring and a cigarette case, paid for by Grandpa Turney. He 'walks out' with Lily. Suffering from a hangover, he visits Dr Dashwood (p 171) and is sent for examination to Millbank Military Hospital. Conditions of anaemia and phthisis are found, and he is kept in hospital although he visits Freddy's bar from there. After a Medical Board at Caxton Hall he is surprised to receive two months' convalescent leave, and obtains a railway warrant to Lynton, never used.

May, second week of - Phillip resumes his liaison with Lily, taking her on his motor-cycle to the Fish Ponds at Keston, but he falls out with the jealous Desmond. Phillip is summoned back to the Training Centre at Grantham (p 200) and is passed fit for active service. (p 202)

May 31st Hearing the ships' guns of the Battle of Jutland (p 205) Phillip arrives at Boulogne and entrains south for Etaples for drill and instruction, thence to Querrieu (Querrieux) to rejoin his battalion. (ch 13) 'Thus begins one of the most pleasant periods of Phillip's military life, brief as it was.' (p 215)

June 4/5/6th Phillip writes to Lily, Polly and Mrs Rolls. At the front, between Albert and Ovillers, Phillip leads a small raiding party into the German lines and returns with a (useless) prisoner to interrogate. Captain Bason tells Phillip that he is going to recommend him for a Military Cross for this exploit. During the raid Phillip notices that the German trenches and dug-outs were much deeper than suspected, and informs the new C.O., 'Spectre' West, no less, accordingly - this information, thought to be vital, is passed on to Brigade. 'Spectre' West receives no thanks, and in fact is replaced as C.O. by his deputy, Major Kingsman. (ch 16)

June 27th Phillip writes to his parents, while waiting for Z-day. (p 256) He has been appointed battalion Pigeon Officer and promptly passes this onerous responsibility on to Pte Pimm.

June 30th Phillip marches his platoon towards Albert, prepared for battle. (ch 18) 'He quivers with terror of death.' (p 271) He sees the Golden Virgin leaning atop the church basilica. Fourteen British infantry divisions move into the 20 miles of line, from Gommecourt in the northern sector down to the Somme river in the south. It is thought that the massive preliminary artillery bombardment has destroyed the German wire and trenches. Not so.

1916

July 1st The infantry assault begins at 7.30 ack emma. Phillip, opposite Ovillers on the Albert-Bapaume Road, followed by Pte Pimm with his basket of pigeons, leads his men over the top towards the German lines, Sgt Jones carrying the Lewis gun, Pte Howells the phosphorous bombs.

At home, Richard Maddison, out early on the Hill, hears the sounds of the huge mines exploding at Y-Sap and 'Lochnager'. The Big Push is on, he tells Hetty. (p 288)

Pte Howells is hit, his gear on fire. He runs towards Phillip who tries to knock off burning phosphorous from the screaming man.

Sgt Jones is hit and drops the Lewis gun which Phillip picks up and carries forward. Then he himself is struck by a bullet in the upper thigh, and he collapses. (p 289) Father Aloysius arrives to comfort him. In the afternoon Phillip is able to crawl back to the First Aid Post, after receiving another bullet wound, in his left foot. Carried by stretcher to the Advanced Dressing Station he spots the Lion of Chelsea calmly painting a picture. (p 294) Father Aloysius helps to get him seen to, and he is taken by ambulance to the Casualty Clearing Station (C.C.S.) at Heilly. He learns that Captain Jasper Kingsman has been killed, with many others, including the Brigadier, among the 57,470 British casualties on that first day. (p 303)

At Heilly he first meets the preposterous Lieut. Piston. (p 300)

Phillip is sent by train to Rouen where he receives further medical treatment, thence by ship down the river Seine, then on to London to the Royal Free Hospital.

July 8th Lily Cornford visits Richard on his allotment and asks after Phillip. Richard is much impressed. (p 320) Lily then visits Mrs Neville who is also much taken with her - ('Here, give us a kiss, ducks, I am as soppy as you,' she shrieks. (p 327)

July, late Hilary Maddison seeks divorce from Aunt Bee - infidelity is proven. Theodora works among soldiers' dependents in the East End. Richard labours on in his allotment. (ch 21) We find Desmond Neville in Bognor Military Hospital. (p 378)

In hospital Phillip receives letters from Westy in the Duke's hospital in Gaultshire and from cousin Willie in St George's Hospital, Lancaster Gate. He is visited by Hetty, Dora and Doris, Mrs Neville and her crony Mrs Hudson, and Uncle Hilary.

1916

July, late, (cont'd) Phillip's promotion to First Lieutenant is gazetted - a nurse adds a pip to his uniform cuffs.(p 337) He is allowed to visit Hillside Road (by taxi), and he visits the Moon Fire Office and also Eugene at work in the corset factory. At the Medical Board, Caxton Hall, he receives six weeks' convalescent leave,(p 339) which he spends at Lynton, Devon (after listening to a lecture from Mrs Neville),staying at Hollerday House with Willie. (My note - the real Hollerday House was burned to the ground in 1913.) Staying at Aunt Dora's cottage in Lynmouth we find Phillip's sisters and cousins Percy and Polly Pickering.(ch 23) (A slip of the pen at this point, perhaps, reveals the real name of Colonel 'Strawballs' of the old Cant^uvellaunians as Heycock.(p 345)) Meanwhile Richard's allotment is vandalised, and Mrs 'Lower' Low dies. (p 349)

August Staying at Hollerday House with Phillip and Willie is the amazing Lieut Piston.(ch 24) Phillip gets together with Polly (again)(p 376) and helps to put out the fire at Hollerday House started by Piston. He is passed fit for Garrison Duty, and has a further three weeks' leave at home. (p 378) He asks to be posted back to the Training Centre at Grantham as a transport officer. Polly thinks she is pregnant.(p 382) Phillip visits the Rolls family at Turret House, taking his gramophone with him, and later plays tennis with Helena and Joe Milton and his sister Cherry.(ch 26) At the tennis club dance he gets a swift kiss from Helena (p 396), just engaged to Joe, and more kisses from Cherry. A good night. And Polly's fears are unfounded after all.(p 410)

September Lily Cornford now works at the London Hospital in Whitechapel. (p 403) Phillip, after a pint or two with Tom Cundall in Freddy's bar, visits Lily's mum at Nightingale Grove, and arranges to meet Lily on Sept 23rd.(p 406)

Hetty, Doris, Polly and Phillip enjoy a picnic at the Fish Ponds.

September 15th Percy Pickering killed at Flers.(p 412) Polly goes home.

Phillip goes to Buckingham Palace to see Spectre West presented with his D.S.O. (pp413-416) Colonel 'Nosey' Orlebar and his wife turn up - 'she is quite old, over thirty'. So does Brigadier Mowbray.

1916

September Phillip visits Lily at Nightingale Grove. (pp 420-426) She tells (cont'd) him that she loves him - he gives her his signet ring. Her last words to him are 'You are my child.' (p 426)

Phillip, Desmond and Eugene join up at the Piccadilly Hotel. Desmond tells them how he had been blown up at La Boisselle. They move to the 'Monkey House' for coffee, then to Freddy's bar back home.

Zeppelins are about. (p 431) Desmond and Phillip, on the Hill, patch up their differences over Lily, although Desmond tells Phillip that he has just proposed to Lily and has been turned down, due, he says, to her 'obsession' with Phillip. They watch a Zeppelin approach in the night sky, and hear a bomb fall.

The bomb falls in Nightingale Grove, killing Lily and her mother. Richard, special constable on duty there, is blown over and covered in powdered glass, concussed, taken to hospital. (pp 440-442)

Dr Dashwood, recognises the ring on Lily's finger and returns it to Phillip. P 444)

Next day Phillip attends a service in the Roman Catholic church (St Saviour's) - too early to be a funeral service, clearly. He and Desmond drive down to Great Burstead (p 446) to view the wreckage of a downed Zeppelin, and, later, Phillip attends the mass funeral of the crew.

Soon Phillip will be back in France as a transport officer.
