

# Shifting of the Nerves: The Evolution of Shell Shock and its Treatment in Great Britain

By: Dylan Cumbo



# Prior Understanding

- Early records
  - Epizelus at Marathon
  - Swiss physician Johannes Hofer
- First medical articulation
  - Called "neurasthenia"
- Initial understanding in Great Britain
  - Reverse modern interpretation

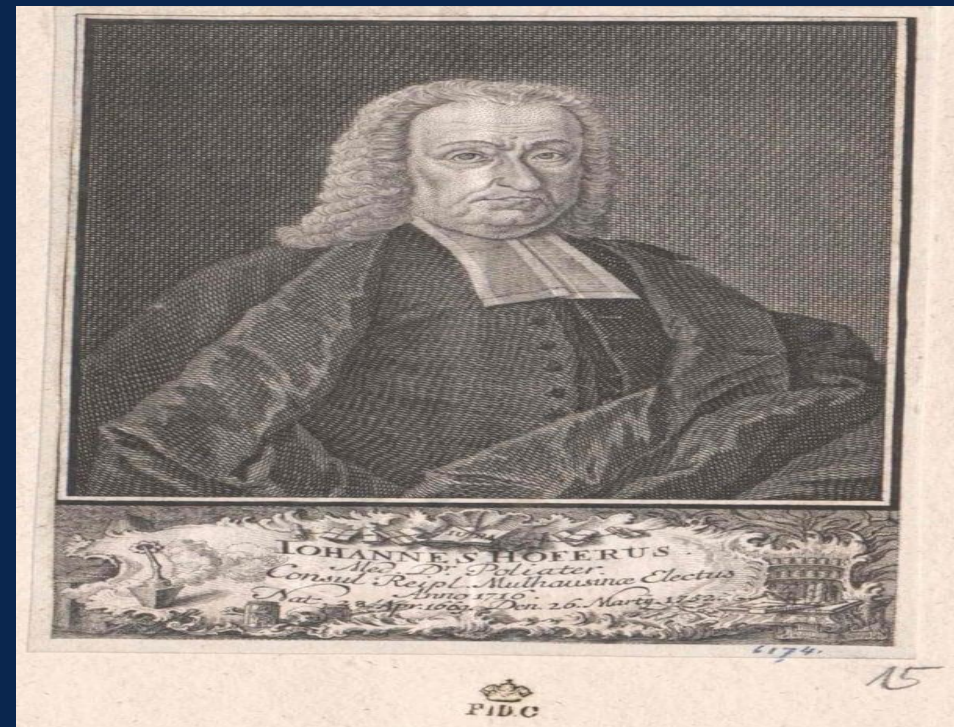


Image 1: "Hofer, Johannes." <https://garystockbridge617.getarchive.net/amp/media/hofer-johann-463c13>.



# Initial Encounters

- First sighting
  - Officer: October 28, 1914
  - Corporal A. Birtwhistle: December 10, 1914
- Immense quantity
  - 10% of officers
  - 4% of average soldiers
- Symptoms
  - Varied with commonalities
- Support previous understanding
  - Corporal George Garnell
  - J. Milner



Figure 2: "Shell Shock." [https://www.flickr.com/photos/ali\\_ba-ba/4021307637/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/ali_ba-ba/4021307637/).





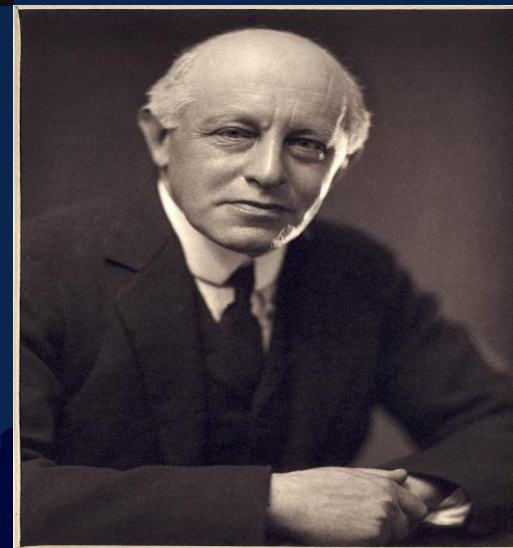
# Growing Understanding and Initial Treatments

- Studies into origin
  - Myer's speculation
  - Mott's examination
  - Soldiers lacking physical explanation
- Treatment
  - Standard and mundane
  - Location treatment
  - Electric currents
  - Hypnosis & Suggestion
  - Rapid recoveries



Figure 3: "Sir Fredrick Walker Mott."  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sir\\_Frederick\\_Walker\\_Mott\\_Photograph\\_by\\_J\\_Russell\\_%26\\_Sons\\_-\\_Wellcome\\_V0026885.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sir_Frederick_Walker_Mott_Photograph_by_J_Russell_%26_Sons_-_Wellcome_V0026885.jpg)

Figure 4: "Charles Samuel Myers."  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Charles\\_Samuel\\_Myers\\_fo\\_under\\_of\\_the\\_National\\_Institute\\_of\\_I\\_Wellcome\\_L0022237.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Charles_Samuel_Myers_fo_under_of_the_National_Institute_of_I_Wellcome_L0022237.jpg)



# Complications

- Difficulty in Differentiation
  - Brain Lesions
  - Similar to other conditions
  - Easy in mimicking
- War necessities
  - Manpower difficulties
- Cowardice
  - New labels
  - Hidden from public
  - Trials and executions



Figure 5: "The Literary Digest Liberty Map of the Western Front of the Great World War." <https://garystockbridge617.getarchive.net/media/the-literary-digest-liberty-map-of-the-western-front-of-the-great-world-war-71a9f6>.



# Advanced Treatment and Modern Psychology

- Greater understanding
  - Active patient involvement
  - Calm environment
  - Personal discipline
- Solidification of old treatments
- Psychoanalysis
  - Most effective
  - Focus on individuals
  - Deals with underlying



Figure 6: "Shell Shock Patients Having a Happy Time Fishing under the Wall of the Old Chateau."  
<https://loc.getarchive.net/media/shell-shock-patients-having-a-happy-time-fishing-under-the-wall-of-the-old-a15540>.





# Legacy

- Civilian perspective
  - Protest over treatment
  - Increasing belief in legitimacy
  - Unparalleled interest
- Military Concern
- War Office Examination
  - Reiteration of pre-war values
  - Acknowledges lack of psychological attention



Figure 7: "Shot at Dawn." <https://www.flickr.com/photos/bs0u10e0/5567766133>.



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