

OX & BUCKS BRANCH

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2020



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COMMENT

Welcome to the February Newsletter, I hope that you have not been affected by the stormy weather. As well as the usual write up of last month's talk, I have given some details of some interesting personnel records that I have been researching at the National Army Museum recently (bumping into one of our members at lunch time!). On another purely personal note, I found a Service Record of a relative on Ancestry.com that I had not seen there before, which I discovered when found his Pension Record. So if you are looking for an elusive record it is worth looking again.

The photograph to illustrate one aspect of Nigel's talk from last month is of a Royal Navy launch towing a cutter full of refugees to an awaiting ship in Smyrna harbour during the evacuation © IWM (HU 89250).



- David Adamson

Future Meetings and Events

February 15th - Ross Beadle – “Sir William Robertson: Architect of Victory”

March 21st - Geoff Spring – “Royal Garrison Artillery - Part Three”

April 18th - AGM meeting - Ian Castle – “The Zeppelin Menace”

Soldiers Remembered –Private Arthur John Honour- RFC – 15th February 1917

Private Arthur John Honour who died, killed in action 15th February 1917 aged 33. He had served with O&BLI and whilst serving with the 75th Battalion Machine Gun Corps was attached to 34 Squadron RFC. On 15th February his plane crashed and both Arthur and the pilot suffered fatal injuries. He was buried in Crucifix Corner Cemetery, Villers Bretonneux. Arthur's family lived on the High Street in Bierton whilst Arthur worked in the local CO-OP shop. He is remembered on the war memorial at St James the Great, Bierton.



Reports of Meetings

January 18th - Nigel Crompton – “The Allied Occupation of Constantinople”

After the various Armistices between September (with Bulgaria) and November (Germany) British 22nd and 26th Divisions in Salonika were earmarked to occupy Constantinople, however they were sent to Baku in modern day Azerbaijan to counter the Russians. Instead, it was the 28th Division that went to the, then, Turkish capital and was to remain there until 1923. The first British commander was Admiral Sir Somerset Gough-Calthorpe who signed the treaty with the Ottomans on board HMS Agamemnon, but excluded the French from the proceedings. He served between November 1918 and March 1920 when he was replaced by General George Milne until December that year replaced by General Charles Harrington. Harrington remained until October 1923.

Other Allied forces present in Constantinople were Greek, Italian, Japanese (Navy), Americans (visiting) and Spanish (visiting). The two former German warships the Goeben and the Breslau were laid up in the harbour under the terms of the Armistice but these only took a month to put to sea after Mustapha Kemal (“Ataturk”) and the ‘Young Turks’ took power in 1923. Mustapha Kemal had left Constantinople as he fell out with the older Turkish leadership and he started building a power base in Ankara which was chosen for its remote location. Unknown to the British and French, the Italians were in negotiations with the Young Turks which led to the Turks getting 8,000 rifles and machine guns from an arms dump.

The occupying powers had various sub-committees: Disarmament, Gendarmerie, Censorship, Requisitions, Saluting (!) and Travel. One of the decisions of the Saluting Sub-Committee was that Turkish Officers had to salute occupying troops but the troops did not have to salute back. This annoyed the Turks so they stopped wearing uniforms but still carried arms. This was stopped by the Allies which resulted in about 400, 000 armed Turkish troops joining Ataturk in Ankara.

In the British area of occupation, they had five prisons whereas the French only had one. However, they still did not have enough troops to guard it so they used Greek troops. The French kept order with Gendarmes, the Italian used Carabinieri but the British used Regimental Police and Military Police. There were military courts but civil cases were handled by Turkish courts. Allied troops were stationed at railway stations, docks and other major hubs. At this time the Turkish railways were still being run by Germans. One of the biggest tasks was keeping lorries running and there was a large MT Depot and Turks were trained to do the work. A legacy of this was in the Fire Service where the Turks inherited some Dennis fire engines from the British.

In 1919 the Greeks started sabre-rattling and send a large number of troops to Smyrna on the Turkish coast, which had a mainly Greek population at that time. This led to the Greco-Turkish War of 1920 – 21 as the Greeks tried to incorporate all of Turkey as far as Ankara into Greece. The Greeks won a series of intense battles, conducting a scorched earth policy, but underestimated the logistical problems and had to retreat.

With the Greeks back to Smyrna the Turks decided to destroy the city and its inhabitants (largely Greeks and Armenians). After the Greek troops were evacuated, the Greek and Turkish areas were set on fire, but the flames spread indiscriminately. Many drowned in the sea as they tried to escape the fire. Allied ships off the coast were ordered not to get involved, but one British and one American ship did rescue people and took them to Greece. Casualty figures were: Turkey 11,500 dead, 31,000 wounded and 17,000 POWs; Greece 27,000 dead, 49,000 wounded and 18,000 POWs. Civilian figures were not recorded, but in Smyrna it is likely that between 28,000 and 34,000 died. At the end of the war a large movement of ethnic Greeks and Turks moved between the two countries and many also when to other countries such as the USA.



Research Suggestions – Middlesex Regiment 1920

I have recently had some success at the Templer Study Centre at the National Army Museum (NAM). They have the lists of all members of the Middlesex Regiment in the latter part of 1920 when all soldiers received Army rather than regimental numbers. These Enlistment Books are in 48 volumes (2006-11020-1 to 48) and start in August of that year. Unfortunately, I think that my grand-father was discharged earlier in that year, but I did find a great-uncle (see March 2019 Newsletter). I knew that he had served in the band of the 3rd Battalion but now know that he enlisted in January 1915 and was discharged in September 1922. As well as his dates of service, the records also give details of next of kin, trade on enlistment, address on discharge etc.. Interestingly, it does not cross refer to his Regimental number. The NAM also has Discharge Books for the Middlesex Regiment (2006-11-44 1 to 7) which, according to the online catalogue, start in 1920 but actually start in 1921 and finish in 1927. There is a book of Deaths in Service from 1920 to 1930.

- David Adamson

2019-2020 Committee

Chairman & Newsletter Editor - David Adamson (adtm@btinternet.com)

Deputy Chairman - Nigel Crompton

Treasurer – Lance Hale

Committee Members – Norman Bonney, Val Crompton & Bob Swayne

Meetings: The Guide Centre, School Lane, **Chalfont St. Giles.** HP8 4JJ
Usually on the third Saturday of the month, Starting at 2:30

