

OX & BUCKS BRANCH

NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2026



@WFAOxBucks Ox & Bucks WFA www.westernfrontassociation.com

COMMENT

Welcome to the June Branch Newsletter. I hope that those of you who use social media are following the branch X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook accounts. Also, please read Nigel's piece about the Armed Force's Day event on 25th June and help out, if you are able to do so. Unfortunately, I will not be able to be at the meeting on 20th, but that is not an excuse for you not to attend! Hopefully many of you will be able to attend, despite the many sporting and other summer distractions; I am sure that Anne's talk will be very interesting, as always.

- David Adamson

Future Meetings 2026

20th June Dr Anne Samson "The Indian Army in East Africa 1914"

18th July Phil Tomaselli "MI5 and the struggle against German Espionage" **August NO MEETING, AS USUAL**

19th Sept. Ian Castle "Gotha Terror"

17th Oct. Nigel Atter "The 2nd Leicesters in Mesopotamia"

21st Nov. Charles Fair "Balkan Purgatory - the 60th (London) Division in Salonika - December 1916 - June 1917"

12th Dec. Alan Leakey "Anti-Tank Gun Hunters"

Serviceman Remembered:

1st Class Air Mechanic Herbert Tring Sapsed, RNAS, Wooburn, 20th June 1918.

Herbert Tring Sapsed was born in Wooburn Green on 18th September 1889, the eldest of eight children of William, a coachman, and Florence (née Tring). He was a valet on enlistment into the Royal Naval Air Service on 30th July 1915 and must have previously been a policeman. He spent time on HMS Ark Royal and then at Calshot



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Airplane Base on the Solent where he was struck on the head by a seaplane propeller. He died of his injury at Hasler Naval Hospital and was buried at Leavesden (All Saints) Churchyard, Hertfordshire. William was survived by his wife of five months, Ethel Annie, neé Kipping and is commemorated on the Wooburn War Memorial and the Aylesbury Crown Court memorial to former members of the Buckinghamshire Constabulary.

Report of Meeting of 16th May:

Peter Caddick Adams "The Italian Front 25th May 1915 – 4th November 1918"

Peter presented a very clear overview of the Italian Campaign including the involvement of British and other allied troops. After initially being neutral, Italy joined the Allies in May 1915 as they believed that they would benefit more from an Allied victory rather than one for the Central Powers. The Italian Front was formed along the border between Italy and the Austro-Hungarian and included a large mountainous area. The latter led to amazing feats of engineering and logistics with trenches and tunnels dug into the rock and guns hauled onto mountain peaks.

The Italian army was led by the severe disciplinarian General Luigi Cadorna who reinstated the punishment of decimation, where one in ten members of a disgraced unit was killed. In all, over 1,000 men were executed in this way. He was unpleasant and shifted the blame onto others rather than accepting it himself. There were 12 battles on the Isonzo River which resulted in over one million casualties, including civilians and no breakthrough. The last of these is also known as the Battle of Caporetto (24th October to 19th November 1917) was a defeat for Italy, resulting in a retreat of 150km to the Piave River. For this battle, the Germans lent their Alpen Korps, of nine battalions in three brigades, to the Austro-Hungarians. Among those involved was Lieutenant Erwin Rommel of the Royal Wurttemberg Mountain Battalion. For his prominent part in the battle he was awarded the Pour Le Merit.

This defeat at Caporetto led to the sacking of Cadorna and the appointment of General Armando Diaz in his place. The British and French also sent troops to Italy to support their ally, with five British divisions eventually fighting there: 5th, 7th, 23rd, 41st and 48th divisions commanded by the 10th Earl of Cavan. On 15th to 16th June 1918 the British were caught by surprise at the Battle of Asiago but held the Austro Hungarians and started to push them north off the plateau.

Elsewhere that month, the allies crossed the Piave and made visible progress. The final battle of the war on the Italian front was at Vittorio Veneto between 23rd October and 4th November 1918, leading to the armistice with Austro-Hungary coming into force on 4th November.



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A patrol of Austro-Hungarian mountain troops climbing in the Alps, 1916. ©

IWM HU 89191 (<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205215222>)

Armed Forces event on Thursday 25th June

The Branch have accepted an invitation to attend an Armed Forces event in Oxfordshire on Thursday 25th June. We will take display boards and a few artefacts. Starting at 12, the event closes around 2pm. Being organised in conjunction with His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, bands, vintage military vehicles, etc. will be in there. Held most year's, the 2026 event will take place on the grassed area to the front of HMP Bullingdon, Bicester.



The address of HMP Bullingdon is Patrick Haugh Road, Bicester, OX25-1PZ and the event will be sign posted. We are seeking assistance on the day to man the stand, cover for toilet breaks, etc. Light refreshments are going to be available and there will be ample car parking. If you're able to help, please contact our Deputy Chair, Nigel, on n-crompton@sky.com who can answer any questions. If you're in the Bicester area on the 25th please consider popping along even if it is only for 15/20 minutes to support the branch but more importantly the event.

Nigel Crompton

Committee

Chairman & Newsletter Editor - David Adamson

**Deputy Chairman - Nigel Crompton, Treasurer – Lance Hale, Speaker Liaison – Bob Swayne,
Simon Cains, Paul Bennett**

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

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