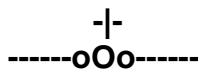


Branch Newsletter – July 2022

Next Meeting:

Will be on Saturday 9th July at St Peter's Collegiate School, Compton Park, Compton Rd. West, Wolverhampton WV3 9DU. 2.00pm for a 2.30 kick-off.

The speaker this month; no, wait - we have two speakers! Our very own Chairman, Alan Angell and Treasurer, Andy Johnson. A Wolves v Albion Derby! Alan's is "The German Ace, Werner Voss" and Andy's "I want my boy home" - The IWGC Repatriation policy.



I know what I like, and I like a local connection.

By Nick Baker

Now, I don't know much about art, but I identified the location of this painting straight away. Lines of soldiers stretching across sand dunes, a town burning on the horizon....it's Dunkirk in 'it. And indeed it is, except instead of depicting Operation Dynamo in 1940 this shows the lesser known bombardment of Dunkirk in March 1918 as part of the German 'Kaiserschlacht' offensive. Bombarding Dunkirk was nothing new; the German Army first aimed long distance guns at it in 1915 and maintained an indiscriminate and haphazard fire from then on. The 1918 offensive brought an increase in this activity in an attempt to keep heads down on the Allies' extreme left flank. This resulted in a chaotic evacuation by both military and civilians into the surrounding sand dunes. The painting depicts the scene in great detail, and a closer look reveals French 'Poulu' in their characteristic blue uniforms alongside civilians and evacuation paraphernalia including a number of dogs.

The artist was Ernest Procter (1886-1935) and the painting, imaginative entitled, 'The Long Range Bombardment of Dunkirk', was sold by Lyon and Turnbull in London in April. Procter was an important 20th Century English artist with connections to the famous Newlyn School. This work, which had disappeared for many years, was researched by the auctioneer's specialists before the sale. The results are still available at <https://www.lyonandturnbull.com/news/article/ernest-procter/> although if you want to look at this be quick as the item has now been sold and the pages will

no doubt soon be taken down. The company stated the most difficult part of the research was identifying the location because it 'might have been Ypres'. Those of us with a 'full anorak' in Ypres may beg to differ as this is clearly not Ypres. Although I have to admit my immediate attribution of the Dunkirk location was based on some very similar Second World War works – particularly one by John Spencer Churchill, Winston's nephew, 'Dunkirk from the Bray Dunes, May 29, 1940', which it spookily (kind-of, I do have an Art O level you know) resembles. Nonetheless, this peanut from the monkey gallery aside, Lyon and Turnbull's research is well worth reading as the work of Procter is discussed in detail and his service with a Friends Ambulance Unit in and around Dunkirk outlined. Procter, a Quaker, was a conscientious objector and although his conscience apparently wasn't too severely pricked until 1916, he did spend the latter part of the war in France. Whatever the case, as an artist Procter drew what he saw in front of him and there is a collection of his First World War work in the Imperial War Museum. In late 1918 he was granted an informal War Artist status (facilities, no funding) to record the work of the Red Cross and Ambulance services, whilst continuing with his Ambulance employment.



One fascinating and unexpected connection with our bit of the West Midlands is that Procter became friends with Constance Mary Shaw-Hellier Evans who was born at 'Green House' Tettenhall in 1890. This still stands a few yards from where Wolverhampton Branch meets at St. Peter's School. Known as 'Molly', she began VAD nursing in 1914 at Studley Court in Stourbridge not far from the then family home at 'The Lawns' in Pedmore. Molly belonged to a group of upper middle class women who formed the first cohort of Studley Court nurses under Lady Catherine Grey. Unlike most of her contemporaries at Studley Court, Molly moved on, serving in several large hospitals and in France. Here she met Procter and he gave her several drawings. For more information on Molly Evans look at the very excellent <https://www.morganfourman.com/> web site (go to 'Index of Names' and search for 'Molly

Evans'). Molly's brother, Charles Wilmot Evans MC, a regular officer attached to the 1/6 South Staffs was a first day 46th Division Somme casualty at Gommecourt. He is commemorated at Thiepval, Hagley and in Worcester Cathedral.

In their sales literature the auctioneers quote from Molly Evan's diary about the bombardment and evacuation of Dunkirk, '...unending stream of sorting people, carrying bedsteads, personal belongings, mixed up. Glorious sunny day. Queer scene. Frenchmen, lunatics, Chinese carrying things on bamboo sticks, nuns, English sisters, patients, officers, orderlies, all collecting 'goods', a procession of Chinese carrying 7 coffins through it all. Crashing shells at intervals. A weary & never-to-be-forgotten day.'

Ernest Procter made sketches and notes at the same time Molly was writing her diary. He worked these up after the war into the painting we see today – probably whilst living in Newlyn. The painting was certainly completed before April 1919 when it was featured, in colour reproduction, in the high quality 'Colour' magazine. The painting then 'disappeared' into a private family collection where it remained for three generation until offered for sale this year.

So, as they say on the 'Antiques Roadshow', "This is the Antiques Roadshow so I have to give an estimate." Well, OK, this isn't the Antiques Roadshow, but, hey, I can do better than an estimate and give an actual price. Estimated at £10,000 to £15,000 it sold for....£92,000. That's right, say it slowly, ninety two thousand pounds.

One for Alan:

In May 1918 a German aircraft was shot down at Villers-Bretonneux. The pilot was killed. When his body was recovered by Australian troops, witnesses noted the pilot looked very young and it was discovered he had an artificial right leg. He was originally buried near the front line, but the next day his body was removed by the Australian Flying Corps and reburied.



His artificial leg was collected before his initial burial and donated to the Australian War Records Section as evidence of the reduction in age and fitness standards of the German armed forces to maintain the numbers needed for their war effort.

The job isn't complete until the paperwork is done:



And nary a PC nor Microfiche viewer in sight...

An outstanding organisation in the First World War was the Base Records Office where each and every soldier who served in the Australian Imperial Force, would see their service documents recorded, updated and families notified of anything that may had occurred to them while serving. This would mean treating hundreds of thousands of files and over a million communications.

These records are now kept at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra and available digitally on the National Archives of Australia website: <https://www.naa.gov.au/>.

Today, thanks to meticulous work of Base Records Office over one hundred years ago, these records give valuable information for families wanting to learn more about their relatives who served in the First World War.

Please read our article to learn more:

[HERE](#)

Half a century of undetected crime:



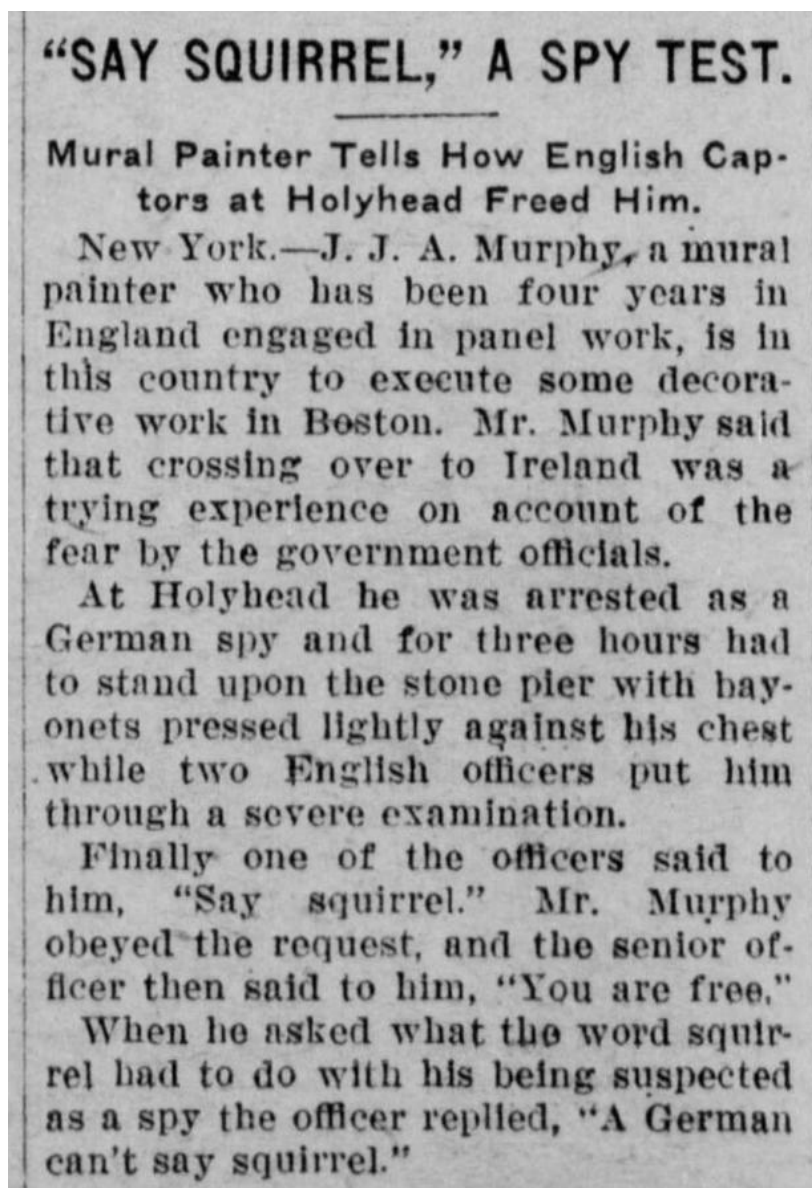
Arthur 'Nick' Carter was the oldest serving soldier in the British Army when he retired in 1951. Photo was taken in 1948. Private Carter served for 50 years & saw active service in both the Boer War and the Great War.

Private Arthur (Nick) Carter served in the KSLI for 50 years from 1901-1951. He saw active service during the Boer War in South Africa and also in France during the First World War. On his left arm he is wearing ten good conduct stripes, the most ever awarded to anyone in the British Army. When he was discharged in 1951 he was the oldest serving soldier and had

remained a private soldier from his own choice. Talking to Private Carter is the Earl of Powis, who was Lord Lieutenant of Shropshire. To his left is Major General Grover, and on the far right is Lt. Col. Shaw-Ball. After Private Carter was discharged, he lived in a rented room opposite his old Barracks.

Private Arthur 'Nick' Carter enlisted with the King's Shropshire Light Infantry in 1901 and actively served in the Second Boer War (1899–1902) and World War One (1914–1918).

Shamelessly lifted from North Wales WFA's Facebook page:



(Via Holyhead Maritime Museum)

Dates for your Diary

- i. **Tuesday 5th July – The 2nd Worcesters at Kohima 1944** by Hugh Richards. Organised by the Friends of the Mercian Regiment Museum. Venue: Lyppard Grange Community Centre, Ankerage Green, Worcester WR4 0DZ 19.00 for 19.30 start. £3 inc. Tea & Coffee

In April 1944 the Japanese advance on India was blocked only by a small garrison at Kohima. Outnumbered by 10 to 1, the garrison held out for two weeks until relieved. The battle was the turning point of the war. This talk looks at the battle through the eyes of two soldiers from Worcestershire - one in the garrison and one in the relieving force.

- ii. **Saturday 16th July – Orders Medals Research Society Mini Convention**



The Orders Medals Research Society

Cotswold Branch

Proudly presents

'A mini convention'

At Swindon Village Hall, Cheltenham, GL51 9QP

Saturday 16th July 2022

Doors open **11am** and close at **4pm**

Exhibitions of Medals, Militaria and Memorabilia

Finger buffet food £6 per person plus tea and coffee available

Pay bar available

Entry is free but donations are welcome

For further information please contact:

Len Evans on **07801472396**

or email levans.consulting@gmail.com

If you know of any other relevant events that our members may be interested in, don't be shy – let me know and I'll put it in the Newsletter.

Future Newsletters:

Please send any items you would like to be included to me at my official e-mail address: wfawtoneditor@gmail.com

Many, many thanks to those members who have provided items for the Newsletter; you know who you are, and your reward shall be in Heaven...

**John Hale
Branch Newsletter Editor**