

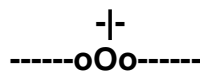
Branch Newsletter – July 2023

September Meeting – please note the revised date of Saturday 16th and make a note in your diaries.

Next Meeting:

Will be on Saturday 8th July at St Peter's Collegiate School, Compton Park, Compton Rd. West, Wolverhampton WV3 9DU. 2.00pm for a 2.30 kick-off.

Our speaker today is our old friend Spencer Jones, who will be talking to us about Lawrence of Arabia.



Nick Baker has produced another fascinating piece of original research for our delectation:

I Don't Know Much About Art But....
By Nick Baker

“As admirers of the late, great, Ken Russell know, just because a woman is depicted wearing nun's clothing doesn't mean to say things will stay that way.

On March 1st Adam's Auctioneers in Dublin sold a portrait of a nun entitled 'Sister X' by the Irish born artist Sir William Orpen (1879-1931). Orpen served on the Western Front as an official war artist between 1917 and 1919. During this he became decidedly and unofficially - how can we put it - distracted. The cause was Yvonne Aupicq, who was the model for 'Sister X' and, as even a cautious Google search will demonstrate, could easily be persuaded to discard a nun's habit for less restricting garb, or indeed no garb at all (well, maybe a sock). She was not a real nun. Neither was she a German spy. Although she was a bit of a French one. And if that sounds confusing you have to read on.

Orpen was something of a 'enfant terrible' (albeit a grown up one) in the world of war artists. A well-connected and renowned society portraitist before the war, he was granted rank, access and facilities far in excess of the average. His subjects ranged from portraits of generals including Haig; and an arresting one of Wilson in which his celebrated ugliness is captured to a tee. He produced two famous (even if you have never heard of him, you will know them) depictions of the peace conference at Versailles. As well as conventional portraiture Orpen also developed a style where he depicted battlefield landscapes and soldiers with a flat 'washed out' appearance of striking modernity. Again, even if you have no knowledge of Orpen, these paintings are extremely well known. His 'Blown-Up – Mad' is used as an iconic illustration of shell shock.

Orpen was relaxed about military protocols and procedures – he never attended an army training course. Appointed a Major in the ASC (most artists were temporary Second Lieutenants), he was notoriously happy to appeal directly to those of higher rank, whom he knew personally, if he felt anyone above him was standing in his way. As Douglas Haig was an acquaintance, and highly sympathetic to him, this approach seldom failed. Having said that, Orpen was nevertheless a great supporter, and painter, of the ordinary Tommy and moved easily between those of the highest and lowest rank.

Back to 'Sister X'. Orpen met Yvonne Aupicq, then aged 21 and eighteen years his junior, when she was assisting at a hospital in Lille. Orpen was being treated for a bout of 'blood poisoning' his euphemism for syphilis. Yvonne became Orpen's mistress (one of several) and he began to paint her in a series of guises. One of these portraits was 'Sister X'.



Another he called 'The Spy'. This latter was to get him into considerable trouble. Not everybody fell for Orpen's Irish charm, and Lt-Col. Arthur Lee of Military Intelligence was one. Responsible for censoring war artist's work Lee summoned Orpen to the War Office to explain exactly who this 'spy' was. Orpen, apparently amused rather than worried, concocted a story that she was French and had been captured and shot by them. He added, just for good measure, that as she was about to be executed, she had stepped out of her coat to stand naked in front of the firing squad. Lee was less than amused and forced Orpen to retract this nonsense, possibly under threat of court martial. Orpen only managed to return to France by pulling his usual strings. In fact, later on Lee and Orpen later became good friends. The difficulties over 'The Spy' probably having been amplified due to the recent very real (and controversial) execution by the French of Margretta Greetuida MacLeod – better

known as 'Mata Hari'. Nevertheless, the episode reveals Orpen's cavalier attitude towards the military process, seeing himself as an observer of, rather than a participant in, the war. His memoir reflects this, entitled, 'An Onlooker in France'.

There is a great deal more to Orpen and Yvonne. He died in 1931, whilst she married Orpen's chauffeur, William Grover in 1929. Grover was a racing driver and later a (very real) SOE spy, being executed by the Nazis. Yvonne was also involved in low level WW2 undercover activities but managed to stay out of the Gestapo's clutches. She died in 1973. Meanwhile Orpen has been 'rehabilitated and reclaimed' in Eire an Irish artist rather than a traitor to the English. A good book (although by no means the only one) for anyone who wants to know more about this fascinating couple is a revised version of Orpen's, 'An Onlooker in France' with a biography, notes and lots of pictures (although already coloured in I am afraid) produced by Paul Holberton Publishing in 2008.

Oh yes, I nearly forgot, the painting 'Sister X' was estimated at 30,000 to 50,000 Euros' (this being Ireland an' all) but went under the hammer for 125,000. That's 110,393.75 (at the time of writing) of His Majesties Pounds. Only people from Tipton could afford that much!"

Thanks to Richard Pursehouse for supplying this fine example of commercial opportunism:

The advertisement shows a commendable knowledge of the relevant exclusions of a standard Fire Insurance contract.

Order Your
"Weekly Dispatch"
NOW.

The Evening News

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 26, 1914.

Read Blatchford
IN PHOTOGRAPHS
"Weekly Dispatch."

BOMBARDMENT!

Damage by Fire from Acts of War are NOT Covered by an Ordinary Fire Policy

The BRITISH DOMINIONS GENERAL INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED ARE NOW ISSUING A

COMPREHENSIVE POLICY

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Bombardment—Invasion—Aircraft—Explosions—Bombs—Shot—Fire—Riots—Civil Commotion—Burglary—Etc., Etc.

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EAST COAST—25/- per £100 per ann. ON FULL VALUE.
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SPECIAL PRIVILEGES: The above provision is made in all domestic policies for the benefit of insured persons, but the public should note that in no case is any amount payable under the policy in respect of damage caused by fire, explosion, or other cause, unless the policy is specifically worded to cover such damage. The Company's terms and conditions of insurance are printed in full in the policy and should be read carefully before the policy is issued.

INSURE TO-DAY.

The BRITISH DOMINIONS GENERAL INSURANCE COMPANY

LTD.

1, Royal Exchange Avenue, LONDON, E.C.

TELEPHONE: London, WAT 0225. TELEGRAMS: Domestic Trade, London.

Authorised Capital £600,000 Subscribed Capital £400,000 Paid-up Capital £300,000 Reserve " £207,000 Annual Income £264,500	Insurances may be effected at the Head Office or through any of the Branches or Agents of the Company. Applications for Agencies invited.	The British Dominions General Insurance Co., Ltd., 1, Royal Exchange Avenue, London, E.C. Please send for Prospectus of your Company's Policy. Name Address
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SPECIAL PRIVILEGES: The above provision is made in all domestic policies for the benefit of insured persons, but the public should note that in no case is any amount payable under the policy in respect of damage caused by fire, explosion, or other cause, unless the policy is specifically worded to cover such damage. The Company's terms and conditions of insurance are printed in full in the policy and should be read carefully before the policy is issued.

I am obliged to Ron Cullen for this story of a Scots soldier laid to rest after one hundred years:

[Click HERE for the story](#)

Stafford's Link to the Legend of the Leaning Virgin Richard Pursehouse and Ben Cunliffe:

“In a small church just outside Stafford a replica of a French statue resides, surrounded by folklore and tragedy. The figure is that of the Virgin Mary, holding outstretched the infant Jesus.

The statue forms part of a very ornate war memorial to an individual – Second Lieutenant Richard William Byrd Levett, who was killed during the Great War. The monument is of the deceased officer lying on top of an ornately decorated sarcophagus. On the wall above the marble head, a small plinth supports the statue of Mary and Jesus. The sarcophagus never contained a body – and the little statue above gives a clue to Second Lieutenant Levett's resting place. It also connects Walton with one of the more unusual stories to emerge from the horrors of the trenches.



Second Lieutenant R.W.B. Levett was the son of Captain William Swynnerton Byrd Levett and his wife Sophia, who resided at Milford Hall, between Walton and Milford. Aged 18 in 1915 he left his studies at Oxford University to join the 1st Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps as an officer. One year later, he was on the Somme sector of the Western Front, scene of horrific fighting between July and November 1916.

In the middle of the Somme battlefields stood Albert, a small industrial settlement drawing Catholic pilgrims since the 11th Century to see a miraculous statue in the parish church. Known as 'Our Lady of the Ewes', the statue was said to have been found buried by a shepherd and was associated with a number of miracles.

The legends surrounding the statue grew and so too did the church that housed it, replaced in 1897 by an imposing new edifice - the Basilica of Our Lady of Brebières. This grand structure, was topped by a large, glittering new statue - the Golden Virgin. The statue, designed by sculptor Albert Roze, showed the Virgin Mary holding out the infant Jesus to the sky in her upwardly stretched arms. The statue so impressed Pope Leo XIII when he dedicated the new basilica, that he described Albert as the 'Lourdes of the North'.



For the next 17 years, the Golden Virgin kept a peaceful watch over Albert and its surrounding landscape. With the outbreak of war in 1914, the invading German Army suspected there were French observation posts in the bell tower of the basilica and shelled the dome. Defiantly, the Golden Virgin continued to hold her child high aloft above the basilica as the shells whizzed by. In January 1915 the dome was destroyed; an unlucky shot struck the base of the statue and sent the Golden Virgin and her child toppling forward. Yet, by some

miracle – perhaps worked by Our Lady of the Ewes – the statue remained attached to the dome, tilting at an alarming angle.

French engineers attached the statue to the dome with cables, the Golden Virgin became known as the 'Leaning Virgin'. She continued to cling to her precarious perch 'by her toes' (as one soldier put it), despite the rest of Albert lying in ruins. The partially-toppled statue gained an entire folklore of its own.

Inhabitants of Albert whispered that if the statue fell, the war would end. British and German soldiers added to the superstition - whichever side sent the 'Leaning Virgin' crashing to the ground would lose the war.

Because of the Virgin's prominent location, she became a symbol to soldiers from their trenches surrounding the town. Soldiers remarked how the 'Leaning Virgin' was keeping the

infant Jesus from falling.

British and Dominion soldiers marching through Albert on their way to and from the frontline trenches would pass under the 'Leaning Virgin', and she became the hopeful symbol of deliverance and protection. Australian troops named her 'Fanny Durack' after the Australian gold medal swimmer at the 1912 Olympics. Soldiers wrote about the figure in diaries and letters. Postcards showing the 'Leaning Virgin' were sold to soldiers to send home. Young Second Lieutenant Richard Levett saw the statue and mentioned it one letter home: 'The Blessed Virgin is holding our Lord in her arms and in the present position of the figure, it looks as if He were blessing the passers-by'.

Unfortunately for Levett, he did not receive enough of a blessing – he was killed on 10 March 1917 during an attack on German positions at Bapaume north of Albert. He was buried with full military honours at the Albert Communal Cemetery Extension, in the shadow of the 'Leaning Virgin'.

His senior officers wrote to his parents:

Had he been spared he had a great future before him. He had the greatest of all gifts knowing exactly how to handle his men - not an easy matter out here when they are often absolutely dead beat. He was right under our barrage when was killed, and there no doubt that keeping his men forward prevented the enemy machine guns coming into action, and thus saved many casualties. In consequence, the attack was a brilliant success. We advanced over half a mile, took 110 prisoners, three machine guns, and three trench mortars, and the whole loss in killed and wounded was only 43. Dick fell gallantly at the head his men, upholding the best traditions of the regiment.

Unable to bring their son's body home, Levett's parents commissioned the life-sized effigy with Bridgeman Stonemasons, Lichfield, within weeks. By November 1917 it was installed at St Thomas's church in Walton-on-the-Hill, to the left of the Levett family pews. It comprises a recumbent figure of the late Second Lieutenant Levett in full uniform, lying on a block of alabaster incorporating the family coat-of-arms.

Remembering his comment in his letter about the golden symbol of Mary and Jesus at Albert's basilica, at Walton the family included the Madonna and Child in bronze above, bending over with arms outstretched. As their son lay within the shadow of the 'Leaning Virgin' in Albert, so too does his effigy in Walton, although the little replica showed the Holy Mother and Child upright, reflecting more peaceful times.

Time too, was about to run out for the 'Leaning Virgin'. In April 1918, Albert was captured during the 'Kaiserschlacht', the 1918 German Spring Offensives. Attempting to recapture the town, the British bombarded the ruins – and in doing so, brought the remains of the basilica crashing down. According to legend, an Australian gunner brought down the 'Leaning Virgin' – perhaps he thought 'Fanny Durack' should take one final dive!

The war did not end immediately – nor did the Allies instantly lose the war. By September 1918 the Germans had been driven from Albert. The legend was amended that when the 'Leaning Virgin' finally fell, all luck had deserted the Germans.

A year later, the war over, Richard Levett's mother Sophia and his sister Dyonèse travelled from Milford Hall to Albert to visit his grave. Sophia noted that Albert 'was a hopeless mass of ruins' and that mysteriously 'the Cathedral is now a heap of bricks and rubble, with no

sign left of the statue'. They found Richard Levett's overgrown grave with some difficulty. Slowly, Albert regenerated into the little industrial town it was before. Between 1927 and 1931, the son of the basilica's original architect rebuilt the church, and in 1929, Albert Roze recast the statue of the Golden Virgin. It was debated whether the statue should be fixed on top of the dome in its wartime 'Leaning Virgin' position, but it was decided to restore her to her original upright status.

The cemetery where Richard Levett rests fell under the care of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and today he lies beneath the standard white headstone that replaced his temporary wooden cross – that cross has survived and is displayed in the church at Walton-on-the-Hill on a wall adjacent to his alabaster memorial.

The inscription on Levett's headstone is almost identical to that on his memorial in Walton – 'So passed a brave soldier, a gallant gentleman and a radiant soul'. The replacement Golden Virgin can be seen today, holding the infant Jesus high above her head atop the basilica at Albert. She looks out across the little town and the now-peaceful rolling countryside. Above Levett's effigy at Walton-on-the-Hill, her smaller sister has maintained her watch for over a hundred years Richard."

Our worthy Secretary, Bill Pinfold adds:

"I was interested to see the article on Richard Levett. I gave a talk about him on the May 2015 Branch tour near the site of his death by Grevilliers Trench near the village of Pys. We drove over a dusty track through an old WW2 airfield to get there.

Levett's nephew, also called Richard, was a member of Wolverhampton WFA, last attending a meeting around 2007.

I went to Walton church to see the monument but it is kept locked and you have to make an appointment through the parish office to get in.

Bill"

It's still my Turn:

For the background to these ramblings, I would refer you to my piece in the June Newsletter. I felt I could not bore you with the details of all the seven men from Dudley uncommemorated by the CWGC in one article. I now furnish the details of another three men who I have submitted to the CWGC for consideration.

- i. Pte 27050 Sidney Pitt Packwood of the 9th Worcesters.** Unfortunately this man's Service Record did not survive the 1940 fire at the Army's records warehouse, but I believe the Death Certificate which attributes the cause of his death on 22nd September 1919 to be Dysentery (contracted on Active Service) is sufficient evidence.

Registration District DUDLEY.									
1919 DEATHS in the Sub-District of DUDLEY in the Counties of DUDLEY C.B., &c.									
No.	When and Where Died.	Name and Surname.	Sex.	Age.	Rank or Profession.	Cause of Death.	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant.	When Registered.	Signature of Registrar.
391	Twentieth September 1919 85 St. James Road Kates Hill D.	Sidney Pitt Packwood	Male	24 Years	Freighter Warehouseman Army Sensitizer	W. Deputery (Contracted on active service) Dysenteric pneumonia Contracted in India Certified by M. Smith S. R. C. S.	J. S. Packwood Brother In Attendance 85 St. James Road Kates Hill Dudley	Twentieth September 1919	Hollows Registrar.

Discharged under the provisions of KR Para 392(xvi) – Sickness on 31st July 1919, he was dead within two months of leaving the Army. Had the Death Certificate not stated that his illness had been contracted during his service there would have been no point in submitting his name for consideration. Alas, his place of burial is unknown.

ii. Pte T4/129404 Howard Henry Johnson of the Army Service Corps.

Like Sidney Packwood above, he did not live long after leaving the Army – he collapsed and died at home within days after Discharge.

In his case his papers survive, and there is, I hope, compelling evidence which should mean that the CWGC accept him as an official casualty of the Great War. The document hereunder states that his V.D.H. – Valvular Disease of the Heart – was 100% attributable to his service.

Valvular Disease of the Heart was stated as the cause of death on his Death Certificate.

His papers survive and can be read on a popular genealogical website and make an interesting read. He can fairly be described as one of the King's hard bargains. In his youth he had volunteered for the Staffordshire Yeomanry, and had completed his period of engagement. In November

Award Sheet.—First Award.

Code Number T.D. 7340

Surname Johnson Christian Names Howard Henry

Regiment Royal Army Service Corps Rank Pte Regt. No. 54/129404

Date of Discharge 10.1.19

Cause of Discharge as on Army Form B. 255 Physically unfit
Maythorne, Hemble Rd. Dudley

SERVICE.	FOREIGN SERVICE.
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Opinion of D.M.S. = 100% bus. attrib.

<p>322x² not sent</p> <p>A.P. W. 105A</p> <p>L.C. 7, &c., to man</p> <p>Notification to L.O. (Card and D. 400)</p> <p>A.P. to N.H.I.C.</p> <p>A.P. to W.P.O.</p> <p>Record Card Completed</p> <p>Entered on S.E. 1</p> <p>Entered on Conditional List</p>	Init.	Date.	<p><u>PAK</u></p> <p><u>HW</u></p> <p><u>1</u></p> <p><u>1</u></p> <p><u>1</u></p> <p><u>1</u></p> <p><u>1</u></p> <p><u>1</u></p> <p><u>1</u></p> <p><u>1</u></p> <p><u>1</u></p>
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Examined by F. Branch

AWARD.

Proposer's Signature and Date P. Maurice 31.1.19.

Approver's Signature and Date R. Heston 31.1.19.

Awarders' Instructions.

Particulars of any Pension or Gratuity awarded in respect of previous service.

To be left blank for award of Service pension by the Chelsea Commissioners.

Pension Expires— 15.7.19.

FORM 90. (1917A)—A.

1913, aged 30, he decided to join the Special Reserve of the ASC; this required a 12-month engagement, with a Reserve commitment afterwards. By this time he had moved to No. 11 Park Rd West, Wolverhampton and was working for Messrs A A Hadley & Co Ltd, automobile engineers of Darlington St, Wolverhampton. He enlisted as a Motor Driver, and was mobilised on 6th August 1914 and was in France within the week, attached to the 5th Divisional Supply Column. Service with other units followed until 15th August 1915, when his engagement was about to end.

The Army took the opportunity to address his shortcomings, as he had been reported as being inefficient as a Driver; *"This man has been employed only as an assistant on a lorry – he is not capable of taking charge of a vehicle, and I do not think he will ever become an efficient Driver."* The Colonel i/c ASC went so far as to say: *"In view of this man's inefficiency he cannot be allowed to continue for the duration of the war"* when writing to 3rd Echelon BEF.

This is perhaps not surprising, as his previous driving experience had been with motor cars and not lorries. This should not have come as a surprise to the Army, as the Reference supplied by his employers in 1913 explicitly stated that his experience was with private motor cars only! He was told that, if he wished to extend his period of service, he would have to re-enlist as a Loader, at a lower rate of pay; he agreed, even though his pay halved from 6/- to 3/- daily. Accordingly, he enlisted in the New Army and his Regimental Number changed from CMT2045 to T4/129404. Apart from a few periods of home leave, he served in France until 21st December 1918.

He reported sick on 8th December 1918 suffering from chest pains and shortness of breath. Examined at Bermondsey Military Hospital, Ladywell, London he was diagnosed with "Valvular Disease of the Heart", attributable to his war service. He was recommended for discharge, which followed on 10th. Returning home to his family at No. 100 Himley Rd, he unexpectedly died on 19th January 1919.

Hopefully the CWGC will accept him.

SAD DEATH OF A DUDLEY SOLDIER.

On Tuesday there passed away very suddenly at his mother's house in Himley Road, Dudley—Mr. Howard H. Johnson—eldest son of the late Mr. Thomas Johnson, and a member of a well-known Dudley family.

Mr. Johnson served in the army from the outbreak of war. He gave up his civil employment in London to join and he was with the British Forces during the Mons retreat and the difficult times which followed that historical action. He received the Mons Star and one red and four blue service stripes. He was invalided to this country on the 21st ult. with valvular disease of the heart and was sent to the Lewisham Military Hospital, where the kindest treatment was accorded to him. Having apparently made satisfactory progress, he came home on Friday last only to die under tragic circumstances on the following Tuesday. The funeral takes place at St. James's Church at 12.45 on Sunday afternoon next, and will be of a private character.

- iii. **Pte 201688 George Hadley of the 2nd/7th Worcesters.** The last of the seven names I have submitted to the CWGC. Born in Dudley, the 1911 Census finds him living with his wife and children in Church St; he was working in a pottery works. The Police Court Report in the pages of the Dudley Chronicle finds him and his wife in trouble with the Police on several occasions in the early years of the century.

His service papers survive, and he volunteered on 6th May 1915. Arriving in France on 25th May 1916, within a week he was in the care of No. 7 CCS where he spent three weeks suffering from scabies. In January 1917 he was admitted to the 2nd/3rd South Midland Field Ambulance with a suppurating infection of his middle ear. He was transferred to No. 10 General Hospital where he was operated upon; facial paralysis resulted and he was evacuated to England. The operation in France had not been successful, and he underwent surgery again at the 2nd Western General Hospital, Manchester where he spent five months, finally leaving on 4th July 1917.

The official diagnosis of his condition was Otitis media mastoiditis. A Medical Board on 14th September 1917 deemed his illness to have been as a "Result of Army Service".

Discharge from the Army followed on 5th October 1917 as permanently unfit for further military service; it was acknowledged that further medical treatment would be required in civilian life. A Silver War Badge was awarded. It is significant that his file was annotated that he was "not to be compulsorily tested for service under the Military Service (Review of Exceptions) Act 1917", his condition being so severe. He died at home in Dudley on 10th July 1918 suffering from TB and is buried in Dudley Borough Cemetery.

The state of his jaw must have been so terrible that this was stated as the principal cause of death.

Registration District DUDLEY.									
1918. DEATHS in the Sub-District of DUDLEY in the County of DUDLEY C.B., &c.									
Columns —									
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	
No.	When and Where Died.	Name and Surname.	Sex.	Age.	Rank or Profession.	Cause of Death.	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant.	When Registered.	Signature of Registrar.
306	10th July 1918 33½ Prunition House No. 2.	George Hadley	Male	44 years	Redstead Jackee. Ex Private 7 th Worcester Regiment. Army Pensioner	(1) Wound of jaw (2) Construction of Oesophagus Pulmonary Tuberculosis Certified by H. Smith C. R. C. S.	Mary Brown Sister In Attendance 20 West 3 Stifford Street Dudley	10th July 1918	H. Bellows Registrar.

His suffering can only be imagined.

Thanks to Andy Johnson for drawing this story to my attention:

ECO CONSCIOUS TIPTON VOLUNTEER RECEIVES AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING WORK

A man from Tipton has been praised for his outstanding volunteering work recording details and cleaning war heroes' headstones and has received a prestigious award from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC).

Charlie Smith volunteers for the CWGC and was given a Spotlight Award and received a letter of congratulation from CWGC's Director General, Claire Horton.

Mr Smith is an Eyes On, Hands On volunteer, so he visits seven cemeteries across the West Midlands and takes photos to document the graves condition and hand cleans them if required. His images will soon be uploaded to the CWGC website, so people all around the world can research and see a grave even if they cannot visit. In May, he supported War Graves Week, the annual opportunity to shine a spotlight on the graves and memorials of Commonwealth service personnel around the world.

Charlie is committed to CWGC's sustainability values and is so eco minded he travels to his locations with his trusty bucket, scrubbing brush and clippers by public transport, fully utilizing his bus pass.

Mr Smith said: *"Winning the Spotlight Award was very special to me, as in my mind it meant that what I am doing is appreciated, and that I am making a difference. The best thing about volunteering is when all the jobs are done, you can walk around the site and just look at these stones that look well-kept and clean and think that that's how the parents of these hero's would have wanted them to look."*



[Full story from CWGC HERE](#)

Dates for your Diary

- i. **Saturday 22nd July – The Rob Thompson memorial Conference (organised by the Great War Group).**
Venue: Tally Ho! Centre, Pershore Road, Birmingham B5 7RN 9.45-16.30 approx
Tickets £42 inc. Lunch available [HERE](#)

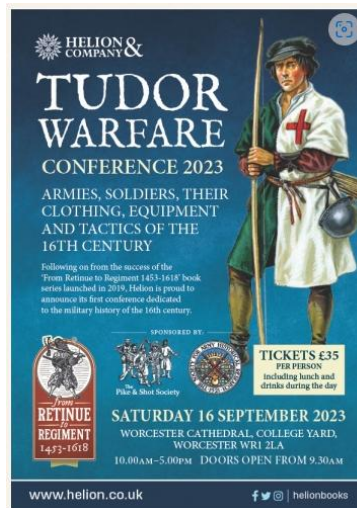
“The late Rob Thompson was, in his own words, an “accidental military historian”. But, in the opinion of others, he was “a true scholar ... with a new way of looking at the Great War” and “an off the wall character with rock star charisma”. This conference celebrates his lifetime achievements - in historical research, critical interpretation and public speaking - by reflecting Rob's interests and passions. Speaker updates will be released when finalised.”



- ii. **Thursday 7th September – Saragarhi: The True Story by Jay Singh Sohal.** On 12 September 1897, 21 Sikh soldiers fought against 10,000 Afghani tribesmen to bravely defend the Saragarhi outpost. This is their story. **A Museum of South Staffs & Wolverhampton Trust presentation.**

Venue: Wolverhampton Cricket Club, Danescourt Road, Tettenhall WV6 9BJ. This event will be a screening of Jay's documentary-drama, 'Saragarhi: The True Story', followed by a Q&A with the man himself. £5.00
Click [HERE](#) for details.

- iii. **Saturday 16th September – Tudor Warfare Conference 2023** by Helion Books. Venue: Worcester Cathedral Learning Centre. £35.00 inc lunch.



Further details and how to buy tickets [HERE](#)

- iv. **Saturday 11th October – “The Home Front 1914-1918”** by David Vaux and Paul Jacques. Industries across Birmingham and the Black Country geared up for the huge demand for munitions; in particular, production of heavy guns at Avery in Smethwick and tank production in Oldbury and

Wednesbury. Because the efficient evacuation of wounded from The Western Front resulted in high demand on hospitals, a number of wealthy people allowed their homes, including Lightwoods house, to be used for the recuperation of wounded soldiers.

A Smethwick Local History Society event.

Venue: Lightwoods House, Lightwoods Park, Adkins Lane, Smethwick, B67 5DP 2.00pm start. £3 charge

- v. **Saturday 2nd December – The Royal Warwickshire Regt 14/18 in books & cartoons** by Paul Jacques and David Vaux. **A Midland Ancestors event.**

Venue: Birmingham & Midland Institute, 9 Margaret St, Birmingham B3 3BS. Free to attend.

Details [HERE](#)



Programme of Talks 2023

Lyppard Grange Community Centre, Ankerage Green, Worcester WR4 0DZ

Saturday 15th July 2023

**Interactive Presentation by Simon Bendry –
The On-Going Work to Recover and Identify the
Missing of the First World War**

13.30 for 14.00 start. An introduction to the historic and modern-day work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Recovery and Commemorations Teams. Using an educational resource you have the opportunity to work in small teams to try and identify the (virtual) remains of a First World War Casualty. **Friends £3**

Non-Friends - £5 Light refreshments included.

Tuesday 19th July 2023

Talk by Rosie Barron

19.30 for 20.00 start. A talk about the work of the MOD War Detectives and their work to identify the missing of the First and Second World Wars, from discovery of human remains, to their full military burial. The talk will follow the case of Serjeant William Clay Cubberly, of 2nd Battalion The Worcestershire Regiment, whose remains were discovered in Belgium in 2012.

Friends £3 Non-Friends - £5 Light refreshments included.

30th September 2023

Talk by Paul Handford

13.30 for 14.00 start.

In 2012 Paul purchased a group of WW1 medals

for Herbert Mowle Kendal, a British civilian volunteer ambulance driver who was purported to have been '**Killed in Action**' in **May 1918** whilst driving his ambulance in support of the French Army. His body was never recovered. However, research revealed that his death was not recorded or indeed recognised by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. His death seemed to have been forgotten! By translating French War Diaries, examining records contained at the International Red Cross (Geneva) and other research material and retracing Mr Kendal's movements on the day

of his death, a large dossier of evidence was submitted to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The case was scrutinised by the National Army Museum (NAM) and the CWGC accepted Paul's findings. Mr Kendal is now the **first ever WW1 British civilian casualty** to be commemorated on a CWGC War Memorial (Soissons). **Friends £3 Non-Friends - £5 Light refreshments included.**

21st October 2023

Nursing in the Falklands War on HMHS Uganda
by Liz Omerod

13.30 for 14.00 start.

Liz's talk is from a personal perspective and includes the practicalities of turning a cruise liner into a hospital ship. It is illustrated with slides

including those “before and after” views of the clinical and other areas. Liz joined the QARNNS in May 1972 at the Royal Naval Hospital in Gosport. She worked in several different clinical areas including 3 years in the A & E department. Following a 6 month course in Cardiac nursing in London, Liz returned to the joint Intensive & Coronary Care Unit at the Naval Hospital in Plymouth. Following service on the Uganda where she was Senior Nursing Officer on Intensive Care Liz returned to the Plymouth Naval hospital to complete her commission. Leaving QARNNS in 1985 she became a Palliative Clinical Nurse Specialist with the Macmillan Service in Cornwall and later in West Berkshire. Now retired Liz has done some work as a volunteer at the hospice in Hereford and has delivered many talks on her experiences in the Falklands. **Friends £3 Non-Friends - £5 Light refreshments included.**

Contact Sandra Taylor: friendsoftheworcesters@gmail.com 07919 522840

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

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