

## Branch Newsletter – September 2023

### Next Meeting:

Will be on **Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> September** at St Peter's Collegiate School, Compton Park, Compton Rd. West, Wolverhampton WV3 9DU. 2.00pm for a 2.30 kick-off.

### Please note the revised date!

Our speaker today is Marrietta Crichton-Stuart, with a talk entitled *“Two Weeks in the Life of a Welsh Battalion on the Western Front”*.

A snapshot of life in the 6th Battalion Welsh Regiment in the weeks before the Battle of Loos, it covers their role in the battle and Marrietta's grandfather who commanded the battalion.



## **Free to a good home – Pete Langford:**

No, not the man himself... We were gifted a run of Stand To! Magazines by our friends the Badseys. If anyone would like issues 1 to 107 have a word with Pete at the next meeting when you buy your raffle ticket.

## **Work is proceeding on the extension to Loos British Cemetery:**



(Photo: Lorre Decoutiere)

## **The sea gives up another of its secrets:**

[\*Wreck of UC-55 found\*](#)

**Staying with a naval theme, I am grateful to Richard Pursehouse for this story about the wrecks off Orkney:**

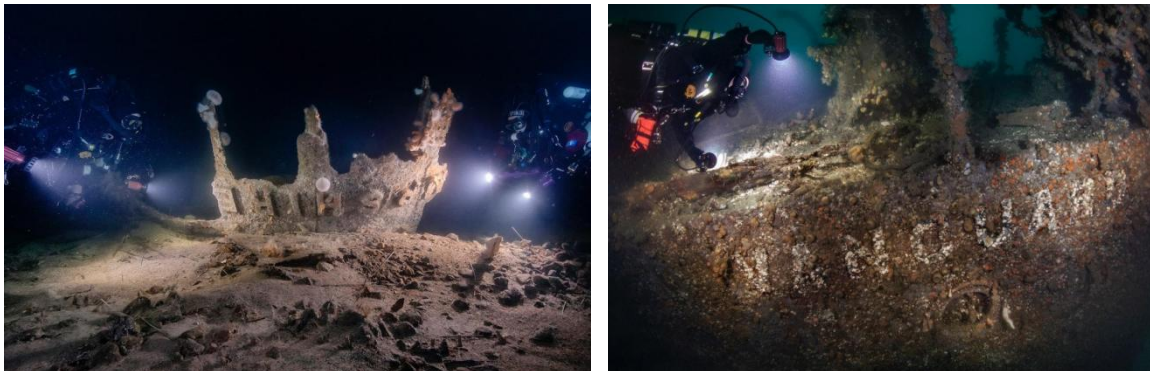
*Images of two Great War shipwrecks that claimed the lives of 1,580 men have been captured by Orkney divers, offering a fresh glimpse of the vessels.*

*“HMS Hampshire sank after striking a German mine in June 1916, killing Lord Kitchener - the face of the “Your country needs you!” wartime advertising campaign and arguably the most famous recruitment poster ever produced.*

*The ships fought in the Battle of Jutland, the largest naval battle of the Great War, with the British and German naval fleets both claiming victory. More than 6,000 British and 2,500 Germans killed.*

*A week after the battle, Kitchener boarded HMS Hampshire on a diplomatic mission to Russia to discuss military strategy with Tsar Nicholas II.*

*Videos, photographs and data were retrieved from the wreckage by divers working with Orkney’s Scapa Flow Museum, with support from the National Museum of the Royal Navy (NMRN), which is based in Portsmouth.*



*The images will be used to update and enhance digital 3D models of the wreck sites in Scapa Flow Museum.*

*Kitchener became a national hero after his reoccupation of Sudan in the late 19th century and his pivotal role in the Boer War. Prime Minister Herbert Asquith appointed him the Secretary of State for War in 1914.*

*He was among 737 men to die on HMS Hampshire, rendering him the highest-ranking British officer to be killed in action during the Great War. Only twelve crew survived the shipwreck. HMS Vanguard sank in Scapa Flow in July 1917. A series of magazine explosions sank the ship, killing 843 crew.*

*Both wrecks are now protected as official war graves and public access is not allowed. HMS Vanguard sank in Scapa Flow in July 1917 with the loss of 843 lives.”*

**Ken Wright provides us with an interesting piece:**

**Espionage Alarmists in France**

*“While on holiday in France recently, I bought from an antiques shop this small “KUB” tin (see photo). Why?? I hear you all exclaim, and what has it to do with espionage?”*

*The makers of “KUB” (a derivation of the word “cube”) during the early part of the War, found themselves to be targets of rumours linking them to German spies.*

*At around this time, KUB – manufacturers of a type of stock for adding to food dishes similar to our OXO – were increasing their publicity by erecting or replacing older signs with new metal enamel signs, sharing a logo as depicted on the tin, on the walls of shops that sold the product.*

*Rumours started to circulate that on the back of the signs were the names and addresses of willing collaborators and the addition of secret messages. It was rumoured that in the event of invasion, the enemy by removing the sign would gain valuable information of potential local informers and locations. The rumours were, of course, totally baseless, but spread quickly as tensions grew about the fear of the enemy within.*

*The most likely explanation for the cause of this hysteria was that the writing on the back of the signs was no more than instructions to the contractors as to where to fix them!*



***Kenneth Wright***

## **The opening ceremony of the Thiepval memorial in 1932:**



## Best to have a few cups of Espresso standing by:

[Everything you ever wanted to know about Dreadnought gunnery...](#)

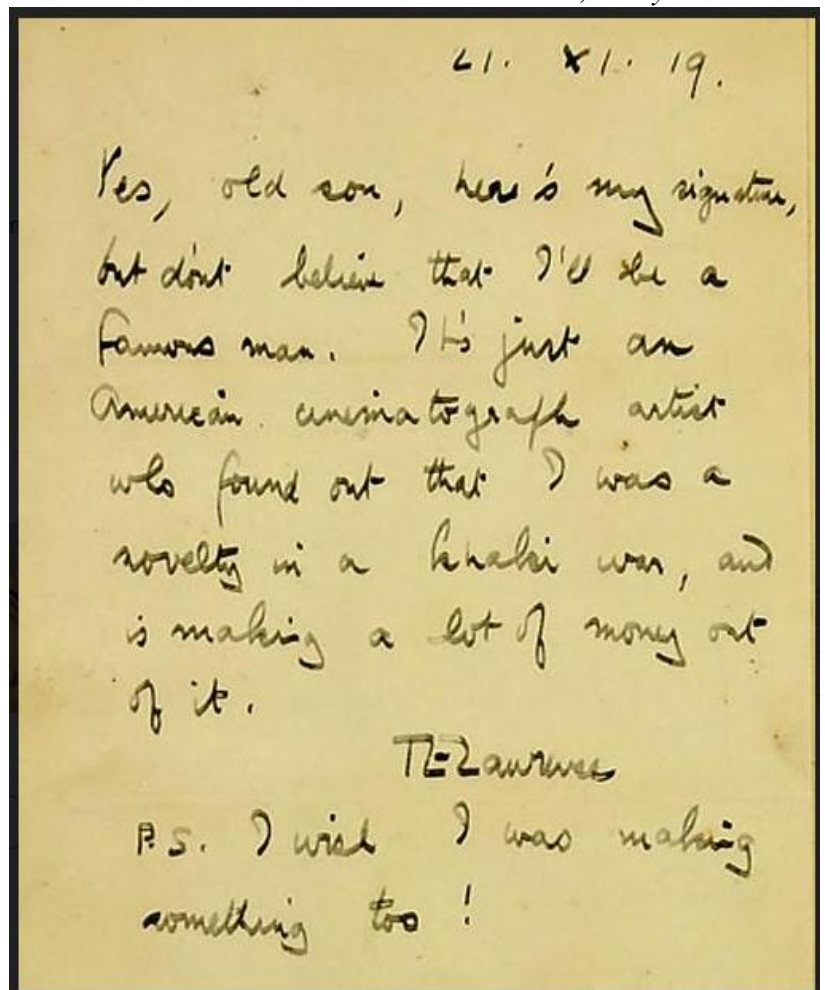
Including the Dreyer Fire Control table.

## An interesting angle on Spencer Jones' talk on Lawrence of Arabia (and a few other auction items) by Nick Baker:

### *Auction Room Antics* By Nick Baker

#### *Arabian Writes.*

As those of us who attended Spencer Jones' lecture about Lawrence of Arabia on July 8<sup>th</sup> will know research into T.E. Lawrence is an ongoing subject. Spencer, particularly by examining Lawrence's early life brings yet more complexity to an already complicated character where the interface between myth and reality is inexorably, and possibly impossibly, entwined. Spencer describes Lawrence as a 'hero' in the classical sense, a character as tormented and flawed as he was famous and successful. A recent sale at Canterbury Auction Galleries offered a letter from Lawrence written in November 1919 which adds a fascinating detail to a crucial period in Lawrence's life. The letter was written to one Archibald Gibson, a boy who wrote to Lawrence as part of an autograph collecting project shortly after the war. His intention was to gather the signatures of, 'Men who had done something' (this was a long time ago ladies). Gibson was careful to be both polite and point out he was a Boy Scout, a formula that seemed to coax a reply from even the crustiest of old generals. Lawrence was in fact quite forthcoming. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of November he wrote, 'Yes, old son, here's my signature, but don't believe that I'll be a famous man. It's just an American cinematograph artist who found out that I was a novelty in a khaki war, and is making a lot of money out of it. I wish I was making something too!' By declaring he would not become famous Lawrence was possibly making the understatement of the century, and although he wasn't that famous at this time, the letter also disguises



21. 11. 19.

Yes, old son, here's my signature,  
but don't believe that I'll be a  
famous man. It's just an  
American cinematograph artist  
who found out that I was a  
novelty in a khaki war, and  
is making a lot of money out  
of it.

T.E. Lawrence

P.S. I wish I was making  
something too!

*the fact he knew full well who the American Cinematographer was. This was Lowell Thomas, an American journalist who, impressed by reports of Lawrence's exploits, had turned up in the Middle East to film them. Shortly after the war Thomas put together an innovative 'multi-media experience' incorporating spoken narrative, projected still and moving images, 'eastern' music and exotic dancers which he titled 'With Allenby in Palestine and Lawrence in Arabia'. Playing at prestigious theatres across the world it did, indeed, make money. Lawrence's cynicism in his letter should therefore be tempered by Thomas' statement that Lawrence 'Had a genius for backing into the limelight', an indication that his self-effacement was actually an artefact of his egotism – a typical Lawrencian paradox if ever there was one. Nevertheless the 1919 film of Lawrence and the desert Arabs was well received, setting the scene both for Lawrence's own publications and for David Lean's masterpiece 'Lawrence of Arabia' some forty years later. By then Lawrence, like all exemplary heroes, had died an early and tragic death, in his case after a high-speed crash on a motorbike. Meanwhile Liddell Thomas went on to successfully invent and define many of the techniques of twentieth century western newscasting. The juxtaposition in this letter of Lawrence's apparent false modesty and mention of Thomas' 'go-getting' marketing adds a fascinating detail to the enigma that is 'Lawrence of Arabia'. Other contributors to the Boy Scout's project included the famously taciturn Sir Douglas Haig who provided only his signature and the date, but this was at least written on GHQ headed notepaper. Robert Baden Powel went so far as to wish him 'good camping'. Other contributors include Rudyard Kipling, David Lloyd George, Arthur Balfour, and Herbert Asquith, together with a number of Victoria Cross recipients. Brought to auction by a descendant of Archibald Gibson the collection was estimated at £4,000 to £6,000 and sold for £3,800.*

### ***Medals Pitched.***

*A recent auction by Graham Budd of Wellingborough provided an interesting connection between football and the First World War. This was a sale of medals and memorabilia once owned by Tommy Wilson (1896 – 1948) who was awarded honours in both. Wilson was a native of Seaham in County Durham who, after working at and playing for Seaham Colliery, was signed by Sunderland in 1914. Records are scanty, but his playing career was interrupted by the war which, as a former miner, he seems to have spent partially down the pit and partially on active service. He achieved the rank of Sergeant in the 1/5 West Yorkshire's and served in France, being gazetted MM in July 1919. Immediately after his discharge in 1919 Tommy was signed by Second Division Huddersfield Town. Over the next twelve seasons he was to play in a side that became one of the greats of English football. When he joined Huddersfield, the club was on the cusp of financial collapse but rallied both on and off the field to stay in business and win promotion to the top flight in 1920. Under the inspired managership of Herbert Chapman, and with full-back Wilson as Captain, Huddersfield were losing FA Cup finalists in 1920. They won the trophy, their first ever, in 1922, followed by three consecutive league titles in 1924, 1925 and 1926, the first team ever to do so (a feat equalled but never bettered, we must all hope and pray it stays this way in 2024). They followed this with two consecutive second place finishes in 1927 and 1928, the latter a 'wrong double year' as they were also losing FA Cup Finalists. Another lost FA Cup final in 1930 (to Arsenal whom Herbert Chapman now managed) saw Huddersfield's, and Tommy Wilson's, glory days come to an end. He retired in 1932. Wilson was renowned as a 'Gentleman'. He even put his name to a newspaper article requesting both players and supporters show more respect towards referees. How he squared this with a sending off against Derby in April 1930 (which almost cost him his place in the Cup Final) when he disputed a last-minute goal, we don't know. Presumably the ref, whom Tommy sadly felt*

*compelled to manhandle, must have made a very, very, wrong decision and consented to a thumping by way of contrition. Tommy Wilson's MM was gazetted in July 1919. As members will be aware most MM 'citations' are drawn from local newspaper accounts and it may be that Tommy, having moved from Durham to Yorkshire wasn't sufficiently 'local' in either location to warrant an immediate mention in the press. John Sheehan's, 'Harrogate Terriers', a comprehensive history of the 1/5th West Yorkshires, which includes several biographies, only lists 'T. Wilson' in its appendices. Fortunately, Alex Jackson's excellent 'Football's Great War' comes to the rescue with an extract from 'Thomson's Weekly News' dated May 1928 where Tommy himself stated, 'It was in 1918 at Cambrai that I won my MM. There were others in the company equally deserving of the distinction, but the boys all thought it should be given to me, because of the part I played in carrying rations...under heavy fire.' Tommy, who died in 1948 aged just 51, kept his war decorations alongside his footballing ones and they remained in his family until the sale. The football medals are all of the traditional 'watch fob' design in 9 carat gold, relatively small, intricately crafted and far superior to the modern made-for-telly 'chocolate coin' bling we see today. The sale comprised 42 lots, encompassing all Wilson's medals including those from minor competitions and an amount of memorabilia including his single England cap (England 1, Scotland 5, Wembley 1928). Naturally, attention focussed on the FA Cup and three League winners' medals. The former went for £20,000 and latter for £20,000, £15,000 and £12,000. All four medals went to a single private buyer with Huddersfield connections. His three service medals (MM plus Victory and British War) brought £2,800, several times the otherwise reasonable estimate of £500 - £700 and demonstrating how a name can affect a value. It isn't known if these went to the same buyer, but it would be nice to think so.*



### **Silver Soldier**



*A recent sale brought to mind the fact that weapon design can be aesthetic as well as practical, when a silver table lighter in the shape of a Mills Bomb was offered for sale at Gerrards, Lytham St. Annes. The Mills Bomb was one of the most ubiquitous mass-produced British made objects in the First World War, with an estimated seventy-five million (give or a take a few million) made between 1915 and 1918. Compare this to around ten million shovels and the scale of production can be appreciated. Of course, not every Mills Bomb survived, indeed the whole idea was that they wouldn't (along with the people they were thrown at) but enough fragments endure, particularly the fairly indestructible stamped base plugs, to make this a specialised, and cheap,*

area of collecting. At the other end of the scale are these solid silver model bombs which began to find their way into the shops in 1916, around six months after the real ones were introduced. They were, naturally, only ever decorative (unless you factor in the dangers of smoking) and were made as table lighters, probably for the officer's mess where the idea of regimental silver was, and remains, an important military tradition. Most military table silver was, of course, packed away for the duration but the appearance of these high-quality items during the war itself demonstrates how after-dinner smoking and the presence of even a small amount of silverware remained important, possibly even in the dugout. Indeed, the possibilities presented by Private Baldrick being put in charge of the Mills Bomb table lighter offer up a 'Blackadder' scenario that clearly passed the writers by.... Like their prosaic and explosive counterpart, the silver facsimiles were produced by a variety of manufacturers, and in more or less the same places. The back street component manufacturers supplying Birmingham's Hockley and London's Hatton Garden jewelry firms were ideally suited to switching production to Mills Bomb parts (Mills was after all Birmingham firm), and it follows their inventive and highly skilled workforce would copy the design as a novelty item if they thought there was a profit in it. Indeed, taking a wider view (a subject possibly worth pursuing) it is interesting to note just how much luxury precious metal manufacturing continued throughout the war. The 'bomb' offered by Gerrards was hall-marked for the Goldsmith and Silversmith Co, London, 1916, and was estimated at £200 to £300. It sold for £3,100 (plus 20% buyer's premium). This disparity between the estimate and the sale price, although never an embarrassment to an auction house, is difficult to explain (unless it was done to encourage interest of course), with a previous example of the same type sold in 2016 for £4,000. The record for such an object is a 1917 Birmingham example that once belonged to the Earl Mountbatten of Burma which achieved £12,000 in 2021.

## **Dates for your Diary**

- i. **Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> 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.
  
- ii. **Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> September – Open day at Bournville War Memorial Room. (Part of Birmingham Heritage Week)**

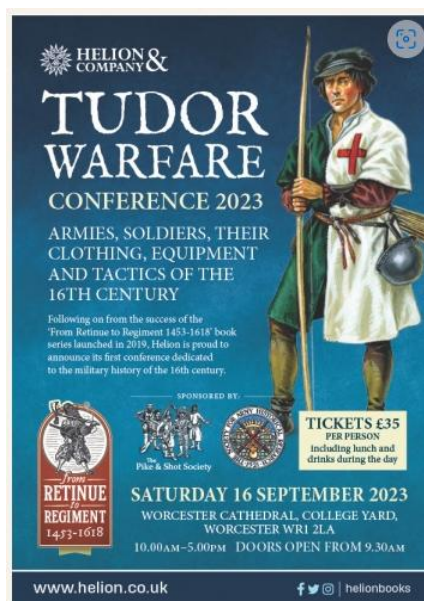


The War Memorial room contains a collection of company and departmental memorials to Cadbury employees who died in both World Wars. The World War I Memorial features photographs of the 218 men who fell in action or died on active service, beneath a large painting of the Malvern Hills by Margaret Field of the Birmingham School of Art.



[Booking NOT required - details HERE](#)

- iii. **Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> September – Tudor Warfare Conference 2023** by Helion Books. Venue: Birmingham & Midland Institute, 9 Margaret St, Birmingham **(Note change of venue)** £35.00 inc lunch.



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

- iv. **Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> September – The Attack on Amiens Prison, 1944.** The story of Operation Jericho, then 3 squadrons of Mosquitos attacked Amiens jail in February 1944 to free French resistance fighters. An RAES talk. Venue: RAF Cosford Cold War Museum lecture theatre. 19.00hrs. Admission charge for non-members
- v. **Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October – Perton Library Local History Fair**



**Perton Library  
History Fair**

**Saturday 7th October 10:00am-3:00pm**

**Come along and enjoy a fantastic day celebrating our  
history and heritage!**

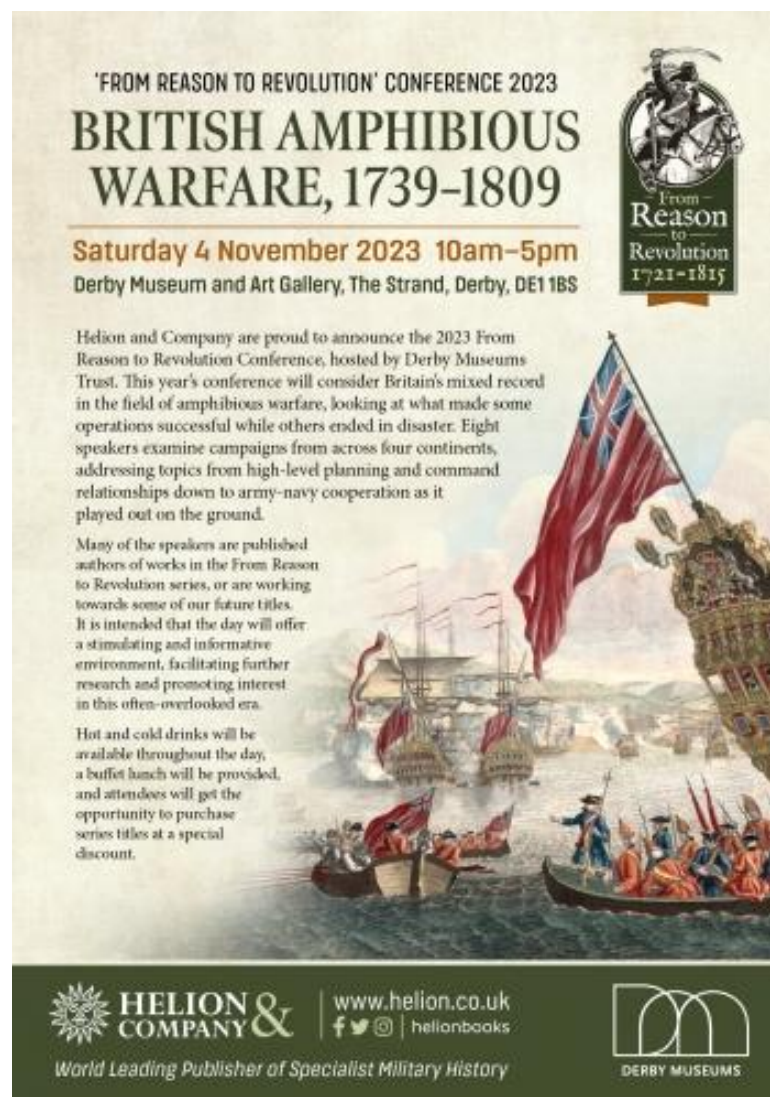
**Lots to see and do for all the family**

**All events FREE to attend**

STAFFORDSHIRE  
HISTORY FESTIVAL

- vi. **Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> 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
- [Programme – SMETHWICK LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY](#)

- vii. **Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> October – Wolverhampton City Archives Local History Fair.**  
 Venue: Molineux Hotel, Withymoor Hill, Wolverhampton. 10.00 – 16.00hrs.  
 Excellent cakes available in the Wrekin View Cafe on the top floor – almost as good as ours!
- viii. **Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> November – “British Amphibious Warfare 1739-1809”** by Helion Books.  
 Venue: Derby Museum & Art Gallery, The Strand, Derby. £35 inc. Lunch.  
 Tickets and further information [HERE](#)



- ix. **Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2023 – Helion & Co Great War Conference.**  
 Venue: Birmingham & Midland Institute, 9 Margaret St, Birmingham. £35

inc. lunch. Tickets and further details [HERE](#)



HELION & COMPANY

# GREAT WAR CONFERENCE

## The BEF on the Western Front 1914-18, Themes and Reflections

Helion are delighted to announce our first dedicated Great War conference. On the day we will be examining a variety of aspects of the British Expeditionary Force on the Western Front 1914-18, with an exciting line-up of speakers and a stimulating range of papers. We will also have a large book stand with an extensive selection of our titles, all available at discounted prices. A number of authors will also be present signing books. It promises to be a rewarding and fascinating day.

**Speaking at the event** *(subject to change)*

**Peter Simkins:** keynote speaker, opening and closing remarks

**Lucy Betteridge-Dyson:** 'Why do only Mules and Horses work?' Equines in BEF transport services on the Western Front

**Charles Fair & Richard Hendry:** The London Territorials in the BEF

**Spencer Jones:** Hubert Gough and Fifth Army in 1918

**Michael LoCicero:** The Dunes Disaster: Unternehmen Strandfest, 10 July 1917 and the Maritime Dimension of the Third Ypres Campaign

Birmingham & Midland Institute,  
9 Margaret St, Birmingham B3 3BS

**Saturday 25 November 2023**  
10am-5pm



**TICKETS £35**  
per person, including lunch,  
and drinks during the day

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events page at [www.helion.co.uk](http://www.helion.co.uk)



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World-leading Publisher of Specialist Military History

- x. **Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> 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](#)



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## **Programme of Talks 2023**

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

**30<sup>th</sup> 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.**

**21<sup>st</sup> 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](mailto: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](mailto: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**