



The Spire Sentinel



**The Newsletter
of The
Branch of The
Front**



**& Magazine
Chesterfield
Western
Association**

ISSUE 99 - May 2024

Our aims are 'Remembrance and Sharing the History of the
Great War'.



Western Front Association Chesterfield Branch – Meetings 2024

Meetings start at 7.30pm and take place at the Labour Club, Unity House, Saltergate, Chesterfield S40 1NF

January	9th	. AGM + `Finding My Roots` Jon-Paul Harding. ..tracing his Great Grandfathers in The Great War
February	6th	<i>Nobody Of Any Importance: A Foot Soldier's Memoir Of World War 1</i> by Phil Sutcliffe - "How his dad, Sam Sutcliffe, survived his frontline WW1 - in his own Memoir's words".
March	5th	<i>Murphy's Law on the Somme</i> by Andy Rawson. The talk covers the details of the learning process during the campaign and how what could go wrong, did go wrong. We look at the problems encountered and the solutions which were used to try and solve them.
April	2nd	'From Gaza to Jerusalem: the southern Palestine campaigns of 1917" by Stuart Haddaway
May	7th	"Audregnies Flank Guard Action 1914 " by Phil Watson
June	4th	1st Battalion the Wiltshire Regiment in WW1 by Edwin Astill
July	2nd	Legend of the Pilgrimages - Wilfred Pointon, Sherwood Foresters By Bill Bryan
August	6th	Roy Larkin - The Invisible Corps takes a brief look at the Army Service Corps during WW1 through the use of mechanical transport. A story of growth, evolution, inter-service rivalry and meddling civilians.
September	3rd	Kevin Jepson ' Project Fast Dog ' - from Mark IV to Whippet'
October	1st	Paul Burkitt - Barlborough and Clowne - Villages at War
November	5th	Peter Hart topic to be advised
December	3rd	Hedley Malloch <i>Left Behind</i> - the fate of British soldiers trapped behind German lines in Belgium and France after the Retreat of 1914

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May Meeting - 7th May 7.30pm



Audregnies: The Flank Guard Action and the First Cavalry Charge of the Great War, 24 August 1914.

Major (Retd) Phil Watson joined the Army in October 1976 at JLR RAC as a boy soldier, and on joining the 9/12L served with the regiment in Cyprus, Bosnia, Northern Ireland, and the Gulf War. During this period, he also served away from the regiment conducting two tours at the RAC Signal School as an instructor. In 1998, he was commissioned from the ranks, and was appointed the regiment's first Regimental Career Management Officer.

After leaving regimental duty he fulfilled a series of staff appointments at Chilwell, Bovington and Northwood, before returning to regiment duty to command Headquarters Squadron. He left the 9/12L in 2012 after 35 years-service and joined HHQ 9/12L. He became interested in regimental history during his time in the WOs' and Sgts' Mess having been responsible for the silver or chattels for the whole period he was in the mess. His main area of interest was the detail around the Regimental Day; Mons/Moy, which commemorated the last two mounted lance actions of the regiment during the Retreat from Mons. After accumulating a wealth of information over 19 years, his first book *The Last Charges* was published by the regimental trustees in 2016. He has published two further books, *Audregnies* (the subject of the talk tonight), and his latest work is on the 12th Lancers at Dunkirk in 1940 – *Their Greatest Hour*.

On leaving the Army after 35 years, assumed the appointment of Assistant Regimental Secretary, providing welfare support to Lancers in need. He is an adult volunteer with Lincolnshire ACF, after completing three years as the commandant for Leicestershire, Northampton, and Rutland. In addition to his volunteer role with the

ACF he is the Chairman of SSAFA Leicestershire and Rutland. Currently completed his MA at Wolverhampton University under the tutelage of Professor Gary Sheffield and Dr Spencer Jones, and he is back there at the moment doing his PhD with Spencer.

Phil's presentation starts at the point the Germany army crosses the Belgium border and follows the individual stories of the key characters, Field Marshals and soldiers alike, military and civilian, German, Belgique and French of those who were to be intimately involved in the 'flank guard action at Élouges and the cavalry action of the 2nd Cavalry Brigade.

The talk benefits from a series of high-quality maps which help to explain the complexity of the action at Audrenghies and Élouges, and Phil will bring the story to life and humanises an action which has become known as a faceless casualty list for its perceived success or failure.

Phil has drawn together many un-published diary accounts from all the regiment's involved in an attempt to show the interactions all between the units concerned and has avoided telling the story from a single-unit perspective. The analysis and critique is solely based around the actions of the units involved and has avoided some of the much repeated 'sound bites' which are not relevant to his story.

Further analysis is based around the instructions given to Field Marshal French by Lord Kitchener before he left and how the commanders implemented the tactics which had been articulated in their own specific to arms publications and the Field Service Manual 1909.

Secretary's Scribbles



Dear Members and Friends,

Welcome to issue no. 99 of our Branch Newsletter.

Sadly, I have to report the passing, after a short illness, of Branch Member and regular attendee at meetings, Roger Avill on April 15th. Roger, a retired surgeon, graduated MA in British Military History from Wolverhampton a few years ago and was my companion on our journeys to and from our meetings for many years. His funeral will be

held Thursday 9th May at 11am at Babworth Crematorium near Retford. Roger was also an enthusiastic member of The Royal British Legion and Worksop Branch RBL will accord him an Honour Guard as he makes his Final Journey. I will, of course, be attending and invite any members and friends to do likewise.

The Branch outing to the WW1 sites at Cannock proved to be a big success and our Branch Treasurer Jane Lovatt is to be thanked for organising. An excellent report by member Andy Grainger is included in this Newsletter. It is hoped to have another outing later in the year to the National Memorial Arboretum.

Our next Branch meeting is on Tuesday 7th May, the speaker is a first time visitor, Phil Watson who will give us a talk on the cavalry action at Audregnies, August 1914. Full details about Phil and his talk are elsewhere in this Newsletter.

You know the old saying `You can't please everyone` ...well that was true when I received a very abrupt - verging on rude - e mail from a WFA member who is designated in our `catchment` area by the hard working staff at WFA HQ. Said member threatened legal action if I did not desist from sending him communications.... Obviously never heard of the delete button!!

You will see in this Newsletter a note about fundraising for the `Shot at Dawn Memorial` at the National Memorial Arboretum. This was sent in by member Jane Ainsworth. Jane cannot manage to many meetings now but nevertheless remains committed to the WFA in general and this Branch in particular. Thanks for drawing our attention to this Jane.

Next month`s meeting - June 4th will see one of our `regulars` Edwin Astill deliver a talk pet subject of his....the 1st Battalion The Wiltshire Regiment in WW1



And finally....Branch Chair Jon-Paul Harding all ready for action at Cannock during the trip.

Best wishes,

Grant

Grant Cullen

WFA Chesterfield Branch Secretary

07824628638

Any opinions expressed in this Newsletter / Magazine are not necessarily those of the Western Front Association, Chesterfield Branch, in particular, or the Western Front Association in general.

Branch Treasurer, Jane Lovatt organised a trip to the WW1 sites on Cannock Chase. The outing left from our meeting venue , Chesterfield Labour Club - thank you to them for allowing parking for those travelling on the bus hired for the occasion. Several other members travelled independently and met up with the bus party at Cannock.

I am indebted to member Andy Grainger for putting together the undernoted report on what was undoubtedly a highly successful day out. Thanks to Jane for organising and for members enthusiastically participating. We are already planning another Branch trip, possibly late summer or early autumn.

Branch trip to Cannock Chase

Sunday 21st April

Andy Grainger

On behalf of the dozen or so Members who attended this excellent trip, I would like to offer my thanks to Jane Lovatt, our Treasurer for organising it. I had heard of Cannock Chase but never visited it and certainly knew nothing of its military role in the two wars.

We visited a restored Great War Hut, the German and CWGC cemeteries on the Chase and concluded at the Museum of the Staffordshire Regiment near Lichfield. Note that these are my personal impressions but I have included website links and some photos for the benefit of others.

My SatNav estimated 40 minutes to get to the Labour Club from my house in Nottingham. I arrived just in time at 8.25 after an 80+ mph drive on the M1 and with no traffic on that early Saturday morning. My suspicion of SatNavs was reinforced!

So about a dozen of us set off to Cannock Chase courtesy of a Naylor's coach. Not an area of the country I know at all but a scenic drive across rolling countryside under a sunny sky. Once we arrived we could see that the tracks across the Chase were lined with parked cars. It is obviously very popular with Dog Walkers, Cyclists, Hikers etc, a bit like Sherwood Pines but on steroids. We parked at the Visitor Centre just before 10.00 - cold despite the sun but also a welcome toilet stop. Here we met up with another five members who had made their own way so we were eighteen in total. Nearby was a black painted wooden Army Hut, similar to many that I had stayed in on Salisbury Plain and elsewhere several decades ago.



Image from: <https://www.enjoystaffordshire.com/whats-on/great-war-hut-open-days-p1654171> and https://www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/custom/HeritageTrail/great_war.html

The Great War Hut

Mike Price of the Hut project was our guide and arranged for us to have some private access before the Hut opened to the public. Despite the sun it was chilly and we were glad to get inside where Mike introduced Ned and, if memory serves me correctly, Eileen.

Ned explained that the Hut was moved here about ten years ago having done duty as a village hall until 2006. It now stands as a representative of the hundreds of such huts forming two big camps on Cannock Chase in the Great War, each holding up to 20,000 men and located on ridges either side of the Sherbrook stream . In those days the Chase was exposed heathland and must have been pretty inhospitable.



Brocton Camp 1916-1918 - the area does not look like this now!!

Image from <https://www.staffordshiregreatwar.com/great-war-story/cannock-chase-training-camps/>

Due to Forestry Commission planting much of the heathland has been replaced by grassland - from my former professional standpoint the Countryside Agency (or whatever it is called this year) will have regretted that development as heathland habitats are fast diminishing. Trevor used a very good diorama of the area to explain the location of the camps which were serviced by a light railway, now a walking track. The camps are all gone now but traces remain on the ground - the footings of the brick water towers, practice trenches, one of the rifle ranges and so on. Large numbers of New Zealanders received Basic and other Training here and recent archaeology discovered a plaster model of the Messines Ridge made for planning the attack in 1917, ironically constructed by POWs. After excavation and recording this had then to be covered over.

A Trust has restored the interior of the Hut showing beds, a table, benches and mess kits for eating. Eileen (and I do apologise if I have misremembered her name) explained the kit layouts and I was taken aback to see a canvas and leather grip identical to one I have at home. She explained that they were awaiting identification and said that it was quite possible that they dated from WW2. I was also puzzled by the WW1 brown boots - she explained that these were replicas. Issue boots were brown but they were issued with black boot polish. These replica boots seemed lightweight to me - nothing like the ammunition boot of the Second War - so I looked them up on the net when I got home <https://williamlennon.co.uk/shop/world-war-1-replica-boot/> . You can buy your own pair for £227!

J R R Tolkien did some of his training at the camp and there was a booklet about him <https://www.staffordshiregreatwar.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Tolkien-Trail-Booklet1.pdf>

At the end of the hut was a mannequin dressed in a sniper suit. Apart from standard rifle ranges there was a sniper school here with facility for shooting up to 1,000 yards.



Hut Interior



A sniper in his ghillie suit. Many snipers were former gamekeepers and made their own clothing. I believe that even today snipers are required to make their own ghillie suits.

I found this detailed website on the Cannock Chase camps:

<https://www.staffspasttrack.org.uk/exhibit/chasecamps/default.htm>

There was also an airfield though this acquired greater significance in the Second War when it was known as RAF Hednesford <https://www.cannock-chase.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Cannock-Chase-Military-History-compressed.pdf>

This was a fascinating visit offering a view of a world that every WW1 soldier would have inhabited at some point in their careers and which, I suspect, most of us do not think about very much.

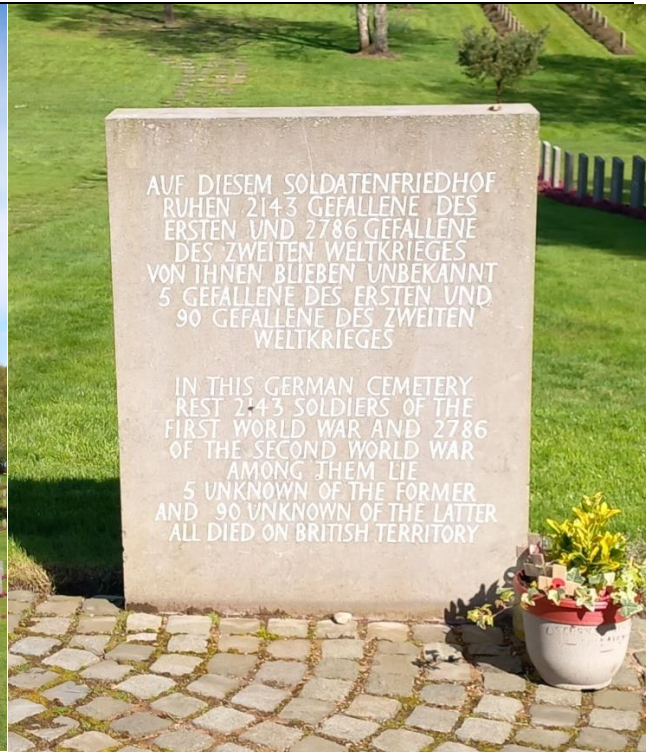
The CWGC and German Cemeteries

From the Hut we boarded the bus again together with Mike for the short journey to the Commonwealth and German cemeteries. The CWGC cemetery is actually quite small and most of the graves are of German soldiers and also internees. Most of these died of wounds, illness or of influenza in 1918 and subsequent years. Death struck in many ways. We saw the grave of a New Zealander who had enlisted at the age of 16 and died of septicaemia in WW1. At the other end of the age range in WW2 is a 58 year-old aircraftman from the RAF who was run over by a bus during the

blackout. The German cemetery was opened only in 1967 when the graves of German service personnel scattered across the UK were brought together. These included four Zeppelin crews including the first one shot down by Leefe Robinson https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leefe_Robinson . A beautiful setting designed to look like the North German plain which, with its gentle slopes and heathers in flower, it does.



The German Cemetery



Description

The Cemetery contains 2143 graves from the First War and 2786 from the Second. Of these 5 are Unidentified from the First War and 90 from the Second. They include internees from both wars and foreign ‘volunteers’ such as Ukrainians from the Second.

Cemeteries: <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/german-military-cemetery-cannock-chase>

More information about Cannock Chase can be found here https://www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/custom/HeritageTrail/visitor_centre2.html#

Staffordshire Regiment Museum

Then the 30 minute journey to the Staffordshire Regiment Museum just east of Lichfield. This covers the North and South Staffordshire Regiments, formerly 38th, 64th, 80th and 98th. <https://staffordshireregimentmuseum.com/> . It is well laid out with a good range of artefacts. From a Great War perspective the most intriguing exhibit is the WW1 trench that has been constructed outside. Here is a link to the

Great War Forum which illustrates it better than I can

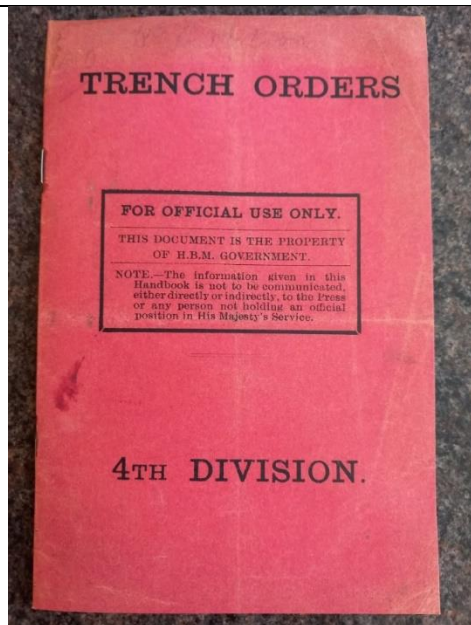
<https://www.greatwarforum.org/topic/219724-the-coltman-trench-well-worth-a-visit/> .

From our Guide, Paul, a local Brummie I inferred that the commentary is primarily aimed at school parties. Further, for reasons of maintenance the trench is far more robust (and drier) than any original. Nevertheless it is helpful in giving an indication of life in the trenches and commencing wider discussions about the Great War. For example, all this corrugated iron, the angle iron and wood had to be carried into the line at night under very difficult conditions. Extracts from the opening of that otherwise highly dubious film *1917* might offer visual insights. For adults use could be made of the booklet *Trench Notes* at the Reception desk to show how units organised themselves in the Trenches.

A lot of members also spent time with volunteers who demonstrated some of the weapons in the Collection.

This website has a lot of information about the places we went to and much more besides.

<https://www.staffordshiregreatwar.com/great-war-story/cannock-chase-training-camps/>



Resident Brummie, Paul, takes us around the Coltman Trench. Trench Notes. We left the Museum by 2.30pm to make the journey back to Chesterfield.

I found it a very stimulating day and am most grateful to Jane Lovatt (Branch Treasurer) and her team for organising it.

Dedication of the Birdholme WW1 Roll of Honour

A Roll of Honour containing the names of 72 men from the Birdholme area of Chesterfield, who gave their lives during WW1 was dedicated by the Bishop of Repton at St Augustine Church Saturday 27th April 2024. Birdholme is a relatively small area covering an area that today goes from the Hornsbridge Roundabout along Derby Road to Storforth Lane. Like so many locations the loss of 72 young men must have been devastating.

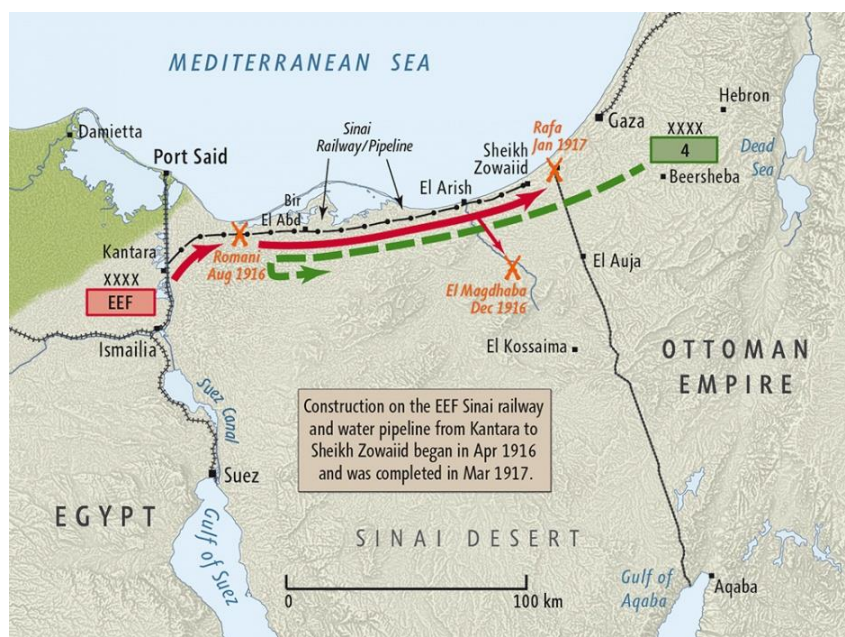
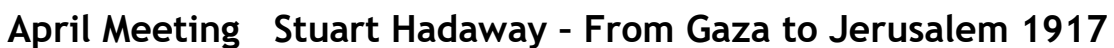


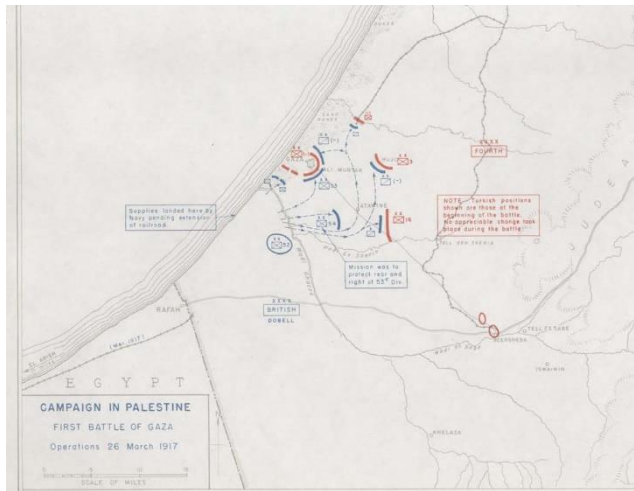
**Bishop of Repton, Vicar of St Augustine Church & Honour Guard
with the Roll of Honour**

The majority of the 72 men were Sherwood Foresters who have 42 names on the roll. The remainder are a cross section of regiments and corps, plus two Royal Navy sailors. Three of the men were awarded the military cross, 2 from the Sherwood Foresters and 1 from the Machine Gun Corps.

This Roll of Honour is a replacement for the original that was lost sometime between WW1 and WW2 when the current church was built to replace an older building. No one knows what happened to the original Roll of Honour, but somehow it was removed for safe storage and never returned. Local Historian Michael Orme researching for his book on the 72 men of Birdholme started the ball rolling and undertook fund raising for the new Roll of Honour that has been produced to match

Rob Nash

[illegible]



The **First Battle of Gaza** was fought on 26 March 1917 during the first attempt by the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF), which was a British Empire military formation, formed on 10 March 1916 under the command of General Archibald Murray (pictured) from the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force and the Force in Egypt (1914-15), at the beginning of the Sinai and Palestine Campaign of the First World War.



Fighting took place in and around the town of Gaza on the Mediterranean coast when infantry and mounted infantry from the Desert Column, a component of the Eastern Force, attacked the town. Late in the afternoon, on the verge of capturing Gaza, the Desert Column was withdrawn due to concerns about the approaching darkness and large Ottoman reinforcements. This British defeat was followed a few weeks later by the even more emphatic defeat of the Eastern Force at the Second Battle of Gaza in April 1917.

In August 1916, the EEF victory at Romani ended the possibility of land-based attacks on the Suez Canal, first threatened in February 1915 by the Ottoman Raid on the Suez Canal. In December 1916, the newly created Desert Column's victory at the Battle of Magdhaba secured the Mediterranean port of El Arish and the supply route, water pipeline and railway stretching eastwards across the Sinai Peninsula. In January 1917, the victory of the Desert Column at the Battle of Rafa completed the capture of the Sinai Peninsula and brought the EEF within striking distance of Gaza.

Two months later, in March 1917, Gaza was attacked by Eastern Force infantry from the 52nd (Lowland) Division reinforced by an infantry brigade. This attack was protected from the threat of Ottoman reinforcements by the Anzac Mounted Division and a screen from the Imperial Mounted Division. The infantry attack from the south and southeast on the Ottoman garrison in and around Gaza was strongly resisted. While the Imperial Mounted Division continued to hold off threatening Ottoman reinforcements, the Anzac Mounted Division attacked Gaza from the north.

They succeeded in entering the town from the north, while a joint infantry and mounted infantry attack on Ali Muntar captured the position. However, the lateness of the hour, the determination of the Ottoman defenders, and the threat from the large Ottoman reinforcements approaching from the north and north east resulted in the decision by the Eastern Force to retreat. It has been suggested that this move snatched defeat from the jaws of victory.

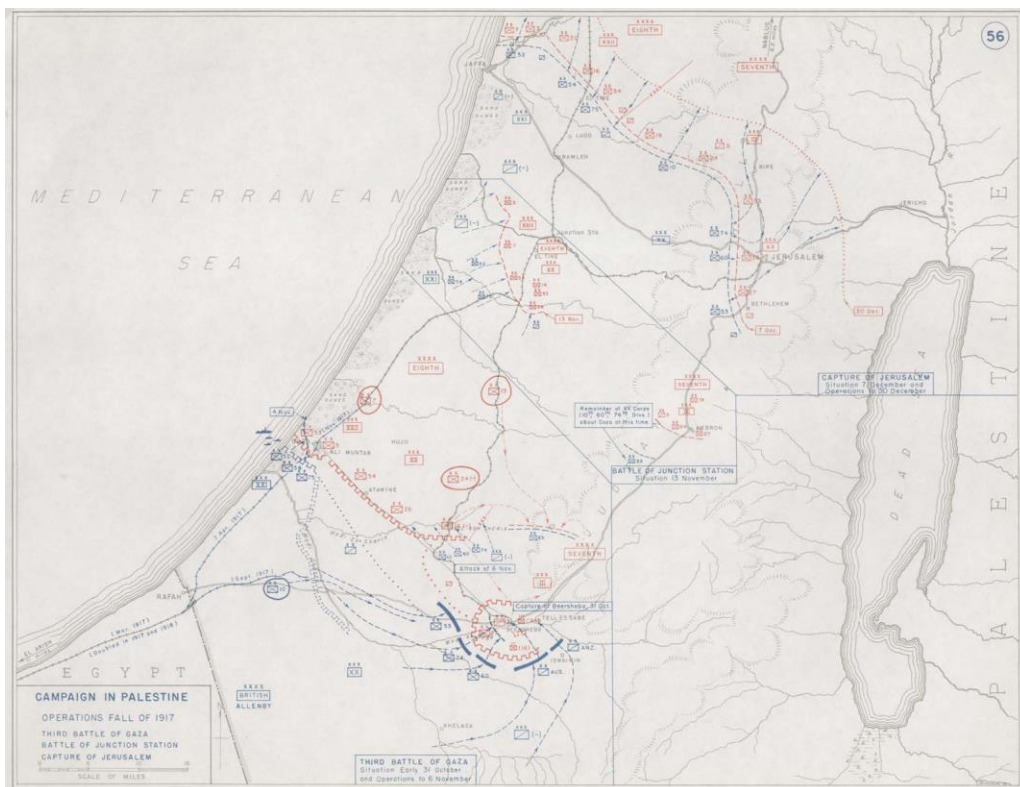
As the Allied operations in the Middle East were secondary to the Western Front campaign, reinforcements requested by General Sir Archibald Murray, commander of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF), were denied. Further, on 11 January 1917, the War Cabinet informed Murray that large scale operations in Palestine were to be deferred until September, and he was informed by Field Marshal William Robertson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, that he should be ready to send possibly two infantry divisions to France. One week later, Murray received a request for the first infantry division and dispatched the 42nd (East Lancashire) Division. He was assured that none of his mounted units would be transferred from the EEF, and was told "that there was no intention of curtailing such activities as he considered justified by his resources." Murray repeated his estimate that five infantry divisions, in addition to the mounted units, were needed for offensive operations.

After 26 February 1917, when an Anglo-French Congress at Calais decided on a spring offensive, Murray received strong encouragement. The decision by the Supreme War Council was given increased impetus for "Allied activity" on 8 March when the Russian Revolution began. By 11 March Baghdad in Mesopotamia had been occupied by British Empire forces, and an offensive in Macedonia had been launched. In April the Battle of Arras was launched by the British, and the French launched the Nivelle offensive. Britain's three major war objectives now were to maintain maritime supremacy in the Mediterranean Sea, while preserving the balance of power in Europe and the security of Egypt, India, and the Persian Gulf. The latter could be secured by an advance into Palestine and the capture of Jerusalem. A further advance would ultimately cut off the Ottoman forces in Mesopotamia from those on the Arabian Peninsula and secure the region.

By 5 February the water pipeline from the Egyptian Sweet Water Canal, which carried water from the Nile, had reached El Arish, while the railway line was being laid well to the east of that place. The creation of this infrastructure enabled a strong defensive position and a forward base to be established at El Arish. There were now two possible directions for an advance towards Jerusalem by Eastern Force to take: through Rafa on the coast, or inland through Hafir El Auja, on the Ottoman railway. Lieutenant General Charles Macpherson Dobell, commanding Eastern Force, thought that an advance along the coast could force the Ottoman Army to withdraw their inland forces, as they became outflanked and subject to attack by the EEF from the rear. He proposed keeping two divisions at El Arish, moving his headquarters there, while his mounted division would advance to reoccupy Rafa (captured by the Desert Column on 9 January during the Battle of Rafa).

With the 11 January War Cabinet decision reversed by the 26 February Congress, the EEF was now required to capture the stronghold of Gaza as a first step towards the capture of Jerusalem. The town was one of the most ancient cities in the world, being one of five cities of the Palestine Alliance, which had been fought over many times during its 4,000-year history. By 1917 Gaza had an important depot for cereals with a German steam mill. In the area barley, wheat, olives, vineyards, orange groves, and wood for fuel were grown, as well as the grazing of many goats. Barley was exported to England for brewing into beer. Maize, millet, beans, and watermelon were cultivated in most of the surrounding localities, and harvested in early autumn.

The **Second Battle of Gaza** was fought on 17-19 April 1917, following the defeat of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) at the First Battle of Gaza in March, during the Sinai and Palestine Campaign of the First World War. Gaza was defended by the strongly entrenched Ottoman Army garrison, which had been reinforced after the first battle by substantial forces. They manned the town's defences and a line of strong redoubts which extended eastwards along the road from Gaza to Beersheba. The defenders were attacked by the Eastern Force's three infantry divisions, supported by two mounted divisions, but the strength of the defenders, their entrenchments & supporting artillery decimated the attackers.



As a result of the EEF victories at the Battle of Romani, the Battle of Magdhaba, and the Battle of Rafa, fought from August 1916 to January 1917, the EEF had pushed

the defeated Ottoman Army eastwards. The EEF reoccupied the Egyptian territory of the Sinai Peninsula and crossed over into the Ottoman Empire territory of southern Palestine. However, the result of the First Battle of Gaza had been as close to a British Empire victory as a defeat could get. In the three weeks between the two battles, the Gaza defences were strongly reinforced against a frontal attack. The strong entrenchments and fortifications proved unassailable during the disastrous frontal attacks, and EEF casualties approached, and in some cases exceeded, 50% for only slight gains.

The **Third Battle of Gaza** was fought on the night of 1-2 November 1917 between British and Ottoman forces during the Sinai and Palestine Campaign of World War I and came after the British Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) victory at the Battle of Beersheba had ended the Stalemate in Southern Palestine. The fighting occurred at the beginning of the Southern Palestine Offensive, and, together with attacks on Hareira and Sheria on 6-7 November and the continuing Battle of Tel el Khuweilfe, which had been launched by General Edmund Allenby on 1 November, it eventually broke the Gaza-to-Beersheba line defended by the Yildirim Army Group. Despite having held this line since March 1917, the Ottoman Army was forced to evacuate Gaza and Tel el Khuweilfe during the night of 6-7 November. Only Sheria held out for most of 7 November before it too was captured. Following British defeats at the First and Second battles of Gaza in March and April 1917.



Lieutenant General Philip Chetwode (left) commanding the EEF's Eastern Force and Kress von Kressenstein's Ottoman Empire force had each adopted a defensive posture and a stalemate had developed in Southern Palestine. Entrenched defences approximately on the lines held at the end of the second battle were strengthened, and both sides undertook regular mounted reconnaissances into the open eastern flank. In late June, Allenby replaced General Archibald Murray as commander of the EEF, which he quickly reorganised. At about the same time, the Ottoman Fourth Army was also restructured. As the stalemate continued in terrible conditions through the summer, reinforcements began to arrive to replace the large number of

casualties suffered by the EEF during the previous fighting for Gaza, while several additional divisions also arrived. The Ottoman defenders were also reinforced at this time, and both sides carried out training while manning the front lines and monitoring the open eastern flank. By mid-October, as the Battle of Passchendaele continued on the Western Front, the last of the British reinforcements arrived as Allenby's preparations to commence a campaign of manoeuvre neared completion.

Prior to the Second Battle of Gaza, the town had been developed into a strong modern fortress, with entrenchments, wire entanglements and a glacis on its south and south-eastern edges. A series of field works, mutually supported by artillery, machine guns and rifles, extended from Gaza eastwards to within 4 miles (6.4 km) of Beersheba. Beginning on 27 October, the EEF began a heavy and almost continuous bombardment of Gaza. During this time, the EEF's XXI Corps, holding the Gaza section of the line, had been mostly passive until the night of 1/2 November, when a series of determined night-time assaults were mounted against the Gaza defences. Yet these attacks were only partially successful due to the strength of the garrison. The bombardment of Gaza intensified on 6 November and during the night of 6/7 November successful attacks were launched on several trench systems. On the morning of 7 November, Gaza was found to have been evacuated during the night. The Gaza to Beersheba line subsequently collapsed and the Ottoman Seventh and Eighth Armies were forced into retreat. Following several battles during the pursuit, the EEF captured Jerusalem on 9 December 1917.

Gaza was "a strong modern fortress, well entrenched and wired, with good observation and a glacis on its southern and south-eastern face." These defences which were too strong for a daytime attack were extended



Allenby entering Jerusalem

The **Battle of Jerusalem** occurred during the British Empire's "Jerusalem Operations" against the Ottoman Empire, in World War I, when fighting for the city developed from 17 November, continuing after the surrender until 30 December 1917, to secure the final objective of the Southern Palestine Offensive during the Sinai and Palestine Campaign of World War I. Before Jerusalem could be secured, two battles were recognised by the British as being fought in the Judean Hills to the north and east of the Hebron-Junction Station line. These were the Battle of Nebi Samwill from 17 to 24 November and the Defence of Jerusalem from 26 to 30 December 1917. They also recognised within these

Jerusalem Operations, the successful second attempt on 21 and 22 December 1917 to advance across the Nahr el Auja, as the Battle of Jaffa, although Jaffa had been occupied as a consequence of the Battle of Mughar Ridge on 16 November.

This series of battles was successfully fought by the British Empire's XX Corps, XXI Corps, and the Desert Mounted Corps against strong opposition from the Yildirim Army Group's Seventh Army in the Judean Hills and the Eighth Army north of Jaffa on the Mediterranean coast. The loss of Jaffa and Jerusalem, together with the loss of 50 mi (80 km) of territory during the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) advance from Gaza, after the capture of Beersheba, Gaza, Hareira and Sheria, Tel el

Khuweilfe and the Battle of Mughar Ridge, constituted a grave setback for the Ottoman Army and the Ottoman Empire.

As a result of these victories, British Empire forces captured Jerusalem and established a new strategically strong fortified line. This line ran from well to the north of Jaffa on the maritime plain, across the Judean Hills to Bireh north of Jerusalem, and continued eastwards of the Mount of Olives. With the capture of the road from Beersheba to Jerusalem via Hebron and Bethlehem, together with substantial Ottoman territory south of Jerusalem, the city was secured.



On 11 December, General Edmund Allenby (left) entered the Old City on foot through the Jaffa Gate instead of horse or vehicles to show respect for the holy city. He was the first Christian in many centuries to control Jerusalem, a city held holy by three great religions.

The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, David Lloyd George, described the capture as "a Christmas present for the British."

An excellent presentation by Stuart who is an acknowledged expert in these campaigns. Once again a thorough Q & A session concluded the meeting.

The Shot at Dawn Memorial Restoration



The Shot at Dawn Memorial commemorates 309 British and Commonwealth soldiers who were shot for desertion, cowardice, striking a senior officer, disobeying a lawful order, casting away arms, mutiny and sleeping at post during the First World War. Most of them were sentenced after a short trial at which no real opportunity for defence was allowed.

Today, it is recognised that some were underage when they volunteered and that many of them were suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which was not recognised as a medical condition until 1980. In 2006 they were officially pardoned by the British Government. Deliberately located at the most easterly part of the Arboretum where the sun rises first, Shot at Dawn, first dedicated in 2001, is now showing its age, exacerbated by repeated winter flooding from the adjacent River Tame. A suggested donation of £50 represents the replacement of one of the 309 water damaged posts and name tag representing each soldier as part of the overall £45,000 campaign target to fully restore the memorial and create a future maintenance fund to ensure that the memorial will be preserved for future generations.

The 309 replacement posts will be made from durable, recycled material and will no longer need to be replaced every 4-7 years. Works will also focus on improving drainage, access and new interpretation boards to improve the visitor experience.

Here`s the link to donate..... <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/shotatdawn>

From a Nurse`s Scrapbook.....

Scottie came from Scotland,
Scottie went to "Guy's",
Scottie came to Sussex Lodge,
An angel in disguise.

Scottie had a maiden aunt,
(or so she would pretend)
Scottie used to stay with her
Every week-end.

Scottie was a humorist,
(Two to Camden Town)
Scottie had bright eyes,
She soon forgot to frown.

A.R. Garrod Lieut.
Leicestershire Regt.



Mary Reid: a Grieving Mother's Untold Story

Reverend Langley walked from his St Mary's vicarage to an unfamiliar address in Elsternwick. He opened the picket-fence gate, walked up the path, and knocked on the door. Widow Mary Reid answered. Langley guided Mary into a room, sat her down, and shared the 'sad tidings' that her son Lindsay had died on Gallipoli.

Reverend Langley offered Mary words of comfort, but she would have no memory of them, and would not recall how long he stayed or when he left. The news of Lindsay's death overwhelmed Mary. Everything seemed swept away by the hand of fate. She struggled to

comprehend how, in her declining years, she would cope without Lindsay's much-needed financial support.

In Mary's grief she drew the curtains and took to bed. Reverend Langley attempted to nurse Mary through her grief with soon-to-be familiar rhetoric about a noble sacrifice. Mary understood that Victorian sensibilities meant that displays of emotion in public were frowned upon.

Mary sent a letter to the 'military authorities' that explained her dilemma: 'I depended upon my poor boy to support me during my declining years — am I not entitled to a pension?' Mary duly applied for a pension. After months of silence, the claims office advised Mary that her application had been rejected because an investigation showed 'the claimant was not dependent on the deceased soldier'.

In her last letter to Base Records, in 1932, 82-year-old Mary sought financial support for her growing medical needs. Base Records curtly advised that her request had been passed on to another department, 'who will no doubt communicate with you in due course'.

Mary died in 1942.