

THE POPPY



THE NORFOLK BRANCH NEWSLETTER

Western Front Association

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CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

No Chair remarks this edition as Paul has been in France a long report required for the next Poppy!

FROM THE EDITORS

Please let us have any items for consideration for inclusion in the Poppy by the 20th June by post to Mrs J Berry, 8 Fairstead Rd, Norwich NR7 8XQ or by email jackie.berry3@btinternet.com, items can also be given at meetings.

MEETING REPORTS

The talk by Major Phil Watson on Le Moncel - Lance verses Lance was excellent. Made me smile thinking about the pace he delivered his talk, just like a horse galloping into battle... the story of this battle on 7th September 1914 at Le Moncel would be depicted in paint - but with a bit of poetic licence, bits added that were not there such as a church and wall.....

Now known as La Montcel little has changed since WW1. As for the Lancers this battle back then would in reality be the end of Lancers fighting each other, horses took a lot of work and men to look after them, if men dismounted to fight, another man was needed to hold the horses, they needed shoeing and more machinery was beginning to take the place of horses. Saying that horses still are in military units but more for ceremonial events than anything else, they did take part in WW2 in places more suitable for them than transport units.

A few facts which I had not thought about were not all Lancers carried lances in British units, while the Germans all did. Even if you were left-handed (something that was not allowed back then in schools, etc) you had to hold your lance on the right, for looking good and so you did not cause problems. Swords for thrusting, never a sabre for slashing and Cavalry horses are highly strung creatures at the best of times.....

An enjoyable presentation.

Having watched the horror of the recent incident in London when the Cavalry horses got spooked and badly injured in a couple of cases, it brought to life what we learned about horses being highly strung....

A return visit by Jeremy Gordon-Smith with a talk on Ypres - ruin to restoration. An interesting talk of how Ypres returned to a normal life following the war, using pictures taken by his relative

Corporal Ivan Bawtree. It was amazing to see the ruins return to life in a short period of time with the make do and mend approach of its former residents and how they returned to rebuild their lives in anyway they could. They did this by setting up cafes and hotels for the booming tourist market with family members coming to see where loved ones died, or served, and in many cases were buried and old soldiers coming to see or find locations where they fought, and old mates who did not return home.

We have all heard the story of how Churchill thought Ypres should remain as a great memorial with not a thought for the former residents. It was also good to see they rebuilt it in its original style, to become the charming place we see today.

FUTURE PROGRAMME

On the 4th June we have the well known duo of Rob Burkett and Andrew England talking about their travels to the Western Front over a long number of years, with a talk titled "A Great War Miscellanea..... aspects, stories and encounters on the Western Front". Should be interesting!

On July 2nd we have a return visit from Jonathan Dutton, a local historian who will be talking on Working for the War.

SUFFOLK WFA

Meetings held at the RBL Club, Tavern St, Stowmarket IP14 1PH 7.30pm

May 8th Peter Hart - Rupert Brook and the glitterati of Gallipoli

June 12th John Peaty - Lawrence of Arabia

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

In June it will be the commemorations of 80 years since D-Day with lots of events to mark this. I often wonder how many men who had fought in the first war went through this event and how many of them managed to serve in this war too.

March 22nd marked 80 years since Roger's uncle was killed at Monte Cassino and no mention of that battle at all on TV, seems nothing has change since the time back then when the men who fought and died in Italy were called the D-Day Dodgers by those in France....

DARTMOOR PRISON & CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

Many of us will have seen on trips to Dartmoor, the very bleak (especially on a dull/wet day) prison at Princetown. But what did we know of its role in WW1 I wonder.

Recently something came up on Facebook about a plaque that can be seen on a rock near to the prison with the words Conchie Road - This road was built by Conscientious Objectors held at Dartmoor Prison during the First World War 1917-1919.

So what is the story behind this, well when the war began and conscription was introduced in 1916 the prisoners were moved out to make way for CO's or Conscientious Objectors who refused to fight or do any work to support the war efforts such as making shells, etc. While some CO's went to the battlefields as medical staff or non combat workers, the prison would hold those who

refused to do anything linked to war.

Many former inmates of the prison would go on to fight at the Front line, some winning medals for brave acts, others would be moved to other prisons.

The prison became known as the Princetown Work Centre in 1917 and some 1000 or so men were sent there and many remained there till 1919. Dartmoor was not the only site CO's were sent to, there were others. Two men would die during this time at Dartmoor.

Dartmoor prison stands on Duchy of Cornwall land and the scheme being run at the prison was run by the Brace Committee, the aim to make these men suffer as much as men at the Front. The result of this was a very straight road across the moors ending nowhere in the end.

Also there was a plan that moorland would be turned into land to grow food but that never seems to have got that far either. The field is known as Conchie field to this day and a wall built around it, Conchie wall!

Pneumonia took its toll on the men, the two who died at Princetown both dying from it. The first died in early 1918 and all went well in getting him away to Plymouth by train for burial, the second man died in the latter part of 1918 just weeks after arrival, his coffin was stoned by locals on the way to the station, who had never been happy having these men in the area.

When the war ended the CO's were some of the last to be returned to normal life in 1919, and for many getting a job was almost impossible as the question was usually asked "what did you do in the war", men had to live with this stigma for the rest of their lives.

Other prisons used to house CO's included Richmond Castle, Wakefield, Wandsworth and Wormwood Scrubs. Conditions varied within all these locations, while some at Dartmoor felt they had been mistreated others felt they had been treated okay. All these prisons hold stories of mistreatment, threats of being shot but for many of the men involved little or no sympathy.

A surprise regarding one of the so called Richmond 16, a group of CO's held at Richmond Castle in Yorkshire was that reading more, one of men came from Smallburgh here in Norfolk. These 16 men were taken to France where they were considered to be on active service and then asked to do work involving unloading supplies. They refused which meant they could then be told to attend a court martial hearing, here they would be sentenced to death, which was then turned to 10 years hard labour. Robert Armstrong Lown was listed as a book seller from Ely, but he was born in Smallburgh in 1882 and on his release from prison returned to live in the village of his birth, with a family called Sandell. He became a grocery manager at the start of WW2 and died in 1954.

BANDEATH MUNITIONS DEPOT

Recently I read about a place we must have passed near to hundreds of times over the years on our way to Aviemore and the Highlands. Once the M9 was built going by Stirling, we tended to whizz past on to the A9 without going to the city and surrounding area very often, hence it was a surprise to learn of a WW1 site that still can be seen to this day, but perhaps for not much longer. Situated by the banks of the River Forth is the remains of the Bandeath Naval munitions depot, even into the 1950's this was possibly only known to a few locals. Of the place only 37 buildings remain along with the wooden wharf and the shell of its old loading crane. The buildings were once covered with earth as a safety measure but now these blocks are exposed.

So called Clyde Puffers, the small Scottish built ships, would load up at the wharf with munitions and take these out to ships at sea. As for workers, it seems there was a POW camp nearby so these men may well have done some work at the depot, they may have originally been men who were living in the UK when war broke out, but later would have been men taken prisoner during battles.

CAPTAIN JOHN CURRIE LAUDER & SIR HARRY LAUDER

John Lauder was the only son of the famous Scottish entertainer Harry and his wife Ann. John was shot by a sniper and is buried in the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders at Ovillers following his death on 28th December 1916, aged 25.

His father Harry was in Australia at the start of the war, as was John it seems. But Harry went on to promote recruitment into the forces and did concerts for troops at home and overseas. When John died in December 1916, Harry threw himself into charity fundraising work and arranging entertainment for the men at the various Fronts, travelling to other places such as Canada raising funds. He set up the Harry Lauder Million Pound Fund to help wounded Scottish soldiers and sailors return to civilian life. But apparently a mystery comes along, in that - was he killed by a German or a disgruntled Scot who may have resented his father..... This comes about due to the release of a book in the 90's called Empty Footsteps, a novel - but..... With all the information on the internet I will leave you to decide.

WORLINGHAM CHURCH CWGC GRAVES

Due to roadworks affecting our usual route out of Beccles, we had to take a different road and drove past Worlingham church where we saw the commonwealth war graves sign but did not have time to stop, so will visit next time we head that way. Looking up the details one of the four listed was a Royal Naval Reserve lost from H M Drifter Pelagia, but it was the others that were interesting in that they were all of the Denbighshire Yeomanry two dying on February 5th 1915 and the other on the 18th September 1915. These Yeomanry men were also known as Hussars and were using cycles rather than horses

The fact that these men were here meant they must have had a base nearby which it appears they did around the period September 1914 to March 1916. Ingate house seems to feature in this story.

ARCHIBALD BELANEY AKA GREY OWL

Born to a middle class family here in Britain in the latter part of the 1800's, Archie had strong interest in Native Americans, as did many boys at that time. In the early 1900's he moved to Canada working as a fur trapper, he would marry a native woman presumably of the Ojibwe Tribe in Northern Ontario who he became involved with.

With 1st World War he joined the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force in 1915 and served with the Canadian Black Watch, 13th Royal Highlanders of Canada, but hiding the fact he was really British. He served in France was shot a couple of times but the shot to his foot never fully healed, he lost a toe and pain would plague him for the rest of his life. After a stay in the Canadian Military hospital in Hastings, his true home town, he returned to Canada in 1917. By the 1920's he became Grey Owl and did work in relation to conservation - something he was well ahead of for those times. Books, papers and early wildlife films took him around the world giving lectures and performances.

He died just before the start of the 2nd World War and it was then discovered that he was really an English man and liked a drink, hence his death before he was 50. He had also married in England whilst still married to his Native wife, fathered children by other women, married another Native woman, so all in all a real scoundrel but when it came to wildlife and conservation he was way ahead of his time.

REDEDICATION AT BRAUNTON, DEVON

A rededication service was held in the Methodist Chapel grave yard in Braunton, Devon for a Private George Aubrey Manaton. This man worked as a reporter for the Times newspaper in Northern France and sadly died of TB in July 1918., which he was found to be suffering from when he joined the Inns of Court Officer Training Corp. Discharged from the army, he returned to Devon and continued to do journalism roles until his death.

Despite having siblings, no family could be found to attend this service, where a special shaped stone was placed by his family grave.

He had a brother killed on the Somme according to some bits of information I read, but either his name was spelt wrong or the regiment he was said to be with was wrong. I found him on a NatWest Group remembers site as having worked in the National Provincial Bank of England in various branches in Devon who left to join up in 1914 going to Gallipoli and Egypt before heading to France where he died of wounds on the Somme. It says he is buried in Puchevillers British Cemetery but I can't locate him via CWGC what ever info I put in, he is Frederick Haslam Manaton, no 20168, 9th West Yorkshire Regiment died 17/9/1916.....

A LONG LOST POEM

A poem written by an Irish soldier during WW1 was found in an attic in Cumbria a few years ago when a man was clearing the house of his late mother, hidden in amongst a pile of papers. Written by a relative born in County Cork, Cornelius O'Mahoney, it was penned to honour the memory of the men who died from the 1st Royal Munster Fusiliers who he fought with in the Dardanelles in April 1915.

'They are gone, they are gone
Yet their memory shall cherish
Our brave boys who perished
And crossed over the bar
O'er their graves now the wild hawk
Doth mournfully hover
In that lone weary jungle
Of wild Seddul-Bahr
In the highest of spirits they
Went through the Dardanelles
And scattered their rifles
O'er the hills afar
Not knowing their days
On this Earth they were numbered
When the regiment arrived
In wild Seddul-Bahr
Shot down in their gloom
And the pride of their manhood
But God's will be done
'Tis the fortune of war
With no fond mother's words
To console their last moments
Far, far from their homesteads
In wild Seddul-Bahr.

May they rest, may they rest
Unhallowed in story
Tho' their graves they are cold
Neath that lone Turkish star
Yet their presence is missed
From the ranks of the Munsters
Our heroes who slumber
In wild Seddul-Bahr.'

After the disastrous campaign in Gallipoli the Munsters were sent to the Western Front. O'Mahoney survived the war and with the issues in Ireland post war, many of the family moved to England. Cornelius died in County Cork towards the end of the 50's.

And Finally

LOCAL CHURCH VISIT

One of our branch members has been busy visiting a couple of churches locally, one is the Church of St Peter's at Spexhall near to Halesworth, the other Swardeston and the home of Edith Cavell ..Here is kept a piece of wood possibly from one of the crosses erected on her grave in Brussels prior to her body returning to Norfolk. Crosses are thought to have been replaced several times in the three and a half years her body laid in Belgium. The wood came to the village in the 1920's but no one is sure about this. A slip of paper sealed to the plank is now hard to read and apparently can not be linked to the clearance of the execution and burial site when cleared post war.

As for Spexhall, here he was able, via the churchwarden who happened to be there, to see a relic from WW1. From the front its just another crucifix, but the back tells how it came to be in the church. On the reverse it tells in marker pen that it was "Bought at Amiens. Posted and sent by Ralph. Arrived March 29 Good Friday 1918."

Also a small newspaper clipping from the time, tells a bit about Amiens.

The Ralph referred to is Ralph Dutton Calvert of the RASC, he along with his brother Lt John Dutton Calvert are listed on the church Roll of Honour but sadly John has RIP by his name.





Bought at
Amiens -
Packed and
sent off by
Ralph

IN THE BATTLE MAP.
Amiens 28. 1918
Amiens, a small industrial town on the bank of the
Aisne stream, a mile or two above its junction with
the Somme. It is 11 miles southwest of Bapaume.
In the retreat of the Germans after the battle of the
Marne the enemy lines were drawn two miles east
of Albert, which was one of the British advanced
bases during the battle of the Somme last year.

Arrived
on March 27
Good Friday
1918