



# The Spire Sentinel



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



**& Magazine  
Chesterfield  
Western  
Association**

**ISSUE 100 - June 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 | <b><i>Nobody Of Any Importance: A Foot Soldier's Memoir Of World War 1</i></b> by Phil Sutcliffe - "How his dad, Sam Sutcliffe, survived his frontline WW1 - in his own Memoir's words".  |
| March     | 5th | <b><i>Murphy's Law on the Somme</i></b> 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 | <b>1<sup>st</sup> Battalion the Wiltshire Regiment in WW1 by Edwin Astill</b>   |
| July      | 2nd | <b>Legend of the Pilgrimages - Wilfred Pointon, Sherwood Foresters</b><br>By Bill Bryan   |
| August    | 6th | Roy Larkin - <b>The Invisible Corps</b> 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 ' <b>Project Fast Dog</b> ' - from Mark IV to Whippet'   |
| October   | 1st | Paul Burkitt - Barlborough and Clowne - Villages at War   |
| November  | 5th | <b>Peter Hart</b> topic to be advised   |
| December  | 3rd | Hedley Malloch <b><i>Left Behind</i></b> - the fate of British soldiers trapped behind German lines in Belgium and France after the Retreat of 1914   |

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### **June Meeting – Edwin Astill**



Edwin really needs no introduction to the regulars at Chesterfield Branch as he rarely misses a meeting - and is always one of the first to raise his hand when it comes to the post presentation Q & A session with our speakers. Edwin comes from a military family, who settled in Wiltshire after his father became 'time expired'. Attended St Luke's College, Exeter, and subsequently received a degree from Exeter University. Edwin became Interested in the Great War through his grandfather who was an 'Old Contemptible'. First published an analysis of the War Diary of the 1st Wiltshire Regiment, published by the Regimental Museum. Edited the diaries of Brig. Gen Alexander Johnston (Pen & Sword 2007) and Lt. Col. Allen Whitty ("A Quartermaster at the Front" Reveille 2011). Edwin has been a member of the Chesterfield branch of the WFA since its inception. Edwin`s talk is based on the 1st

Wiltshire's war diary, looking not only at the actions it was involved in but also some of the personalities in the battalion and the insights the war diary gives to various aspects of life in an infantry battalion during the Great War.

*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.*

## Secretary`s Scribbles



Dear Members and Friends,

Welcome to issue no. 100 of our Branch Newsletter.

Yes...issue no 100...where has all the time gone...amazing...that we have reached this landmark. But to achieve this it would not have been possible without the continued support of our members. My thanks to all of you - and I include those who , for reasons of illness or

infirmity can no longer come in person...I still say `thanks`...I hope the newsletter still makes you feel as though your with us in spirit - if not always in person.

On Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> May, I attended, accompanied by Branch Chair, Jon-Paul Harding and regular branch attendees Bill Bryan and Phil Goodall, the funeral of WFA member and branch stalwart, Roger Avill. The chapel at Babworth Crematorium near Retford was packed, indeed Jon-Paul and I, who were part of the Honour Guard which lined up to receive the hearse, had to stand at the back as all the seats were taken. 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. I really miss him.

Our next Branch meeting is on Tuesday 4th June, the speaker is no stranger to the Branch - rarely misses a meeting - Edwin Astill who will discuss the First Battalion the Wiltshire Regiment - a topic Edwin has researched for many years. Please come along and support `one of our own`...Edwin is a founder member of the Branch

Best wishes, Grant



Grant Cullen WFA Chesterfield Branch Secretary 07824628638

Our Branch Chair, Jon-Paul Harding was recently a guest at the Chesterfield Civic Dinner and Civic Service. This is his report.

As chairman of the Chesterfield WFA Branch, I was fortunate enough to be invited to attend the Mayoral Dinner on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2024 hosted by her worship the Mayor Councilor Jenny Flood. The evening was very enjoyable with over one hundred guests in attendance. The meal was prepared by the catering students at Chesterfield College.

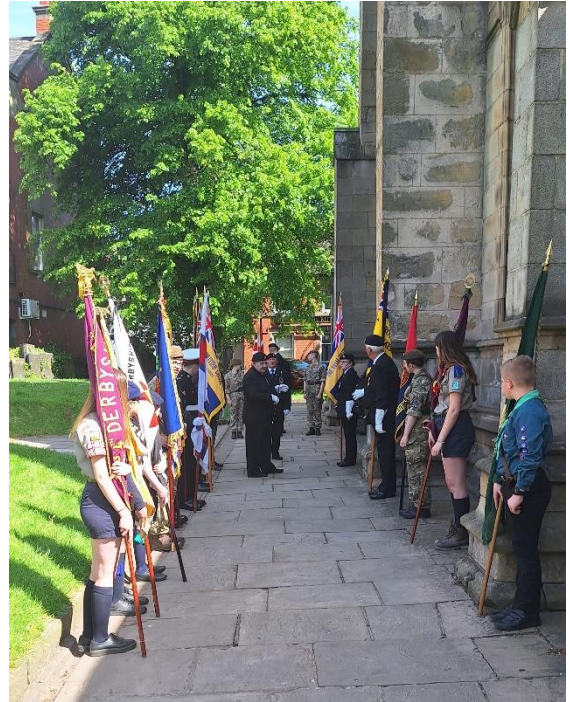




|  <h1>SEATING PLAN</h1> <p>MAYORAL CIVIC DINNER<br/>WEDNESDAY 8 MAY 2024</p>   |  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
| TABLE 1  |  | TABLE 3   |  |
| KEITH FALCONER<br>LIZ FREAR<br>CLLR KATHERINE HOLLINGWORTH<br>HELEN BAGLEY<br>LISA HAYTHORNE<br>HANNAH HAYTHORNE<br>RACHAEL PRIEST<br>MATT BROWN<br>CLLR STUART YATES<br>SARAH YATES<br>CHARLOTTE WINTERBOTTOM<br>PAULA DEALTRY<br>ALAN RAMSEY<br>GEMMA LANCASTER<br>JON-PAUL HARDING<br>DONNA SMITHURST-HARDING<br>MARK HILL<br>LISA HILL<br>NATASHA HILL | CLLR GLENYS FALCONER<br>CLLR MAUREEN DAVENPORT<br>CLLR MAGGIE KELMAN<br>CLLR TOM SNOWDON<br>STEPHEN HAYTHORNE<br>NIKKI TUGBY<br>SHARON CHALLANDS<br>TOM FLETCHER<br>CODIE WHITWORTH<br>CLLR DEBBIE WHELDON<br>JOHN SPEAKMAN<br>LUKE BODEN<br>NICOLE EVANS<br>CLLR LUDWIG RAMSEY<br>JANE LAWTHOR<br>SANDRA NICHOLSON<br>PATRICIA LAW<br>KIN KWONG | DR HUW BOWEN<br>JONATHAN BLOOD<br>SUSAN SPANSHAW<br>KEITH SPANSHAW<br>HER WORSHIP THE MAYOR<br>THE MAYORESS<br>STEPHEN BEARDSMORE<br>DEPUTY MAYOR<br>DEPUTY MAYORESS<br>THERESA FELTER DE<br>MARGARET MWAILU<br>NOELINE WILKINS<br>CLLR KEITH MILES<br>CLLR LISA BLAKEMORE<br>SARAH BLAKEMORE<br>GRACE WRIGHT<br>TIM DUNCAN | MAHMUD NAWAZ<br>KARLIE THOMPSON<br>RICHARD FOSTER<br>CLLR TRICIA GILBY<br>DR NATHAN FLOOD<br>M T HOPKINSON<br>CAROLE CLARKE<br>TOBY PERKINS MP<br>AMANDA COLLISHINE<br>CLLR AMANDA SIBBEANT<br>VENERABLE KARIN RAMBLIN<br>JANE BENTLEY<br>GEORGE BENTLEY<br>SHARON FRECKINGHAM<br>BILLY BELFITT<br>DANNY HESMAN<br>JENNY CROSS |
| TABLE 2  |  | TABLE 4   |  |
| CHAIR OF NEDDC<br>CHAIR OF DCC<br>CHAIR OF DDCC<br>ALDERMAN STEPHEN BRUNT<br>CLLR MICK BRADY<br>STEPHEN WRIGHT<br>KEITH JACKSON<br>JULIE RICHARDS<br>MICHAELA GREAVES<br>CLLR KATE SARVENT<br>JIM SARVENT<br>CLLR JONATHAN DAVIES<br>DAVID MILLS<br>PARKSIDE GUEST<br>MARGARET MEENEY<br>SHARON BERESFORD  | CONSORT OF NEDDC<br>CONSORT OF DCC<br>CONSORT OF DDCC<br>JILL MANNION-BRUNT<br>CLLR SUZIE PERKINS<br>JOHN CROFT<br>LYNN ROOTH<br>ROZ NORMAN<br>CLLR JUDY STATION<br>CLLR KATE CAULFIELD<br>CLLR DAVE ALLEN<br>JENNIFER ALLEN<br>PETER SHEPHERD<br>SANDRA BRIDGE<br>JOHN PARKER<br>GILL PARKER  | ALBERT BELFITT<br>EMMA BELFITT<br>CLARE MOORE<br>CHRISTOPHER MOORE<br>JAMIE MILES<br>JIM HOPKINSON<br>JACK BEARDSMORE<br>ERIC NICHOLAS<br>VERA NICHOLAS<br>NICHOLAS MCCARTHY<br>JANE MCCARTHY<br>RICHARD DOUGHTY<br>MANDY CHAMBERS<br>HAYLEY BARNETT<br>WENDY BLUNT<br>BETHANY FLETCHER<br>CARLY CHURCH                     | ROBERT BELFITT<br>MARGARET MADDEN<br>BETHANY CARBINGTON<br>STEPHEN CARBINGTON<br>LEANNE MILES<br>SARAH MILES<br>EMMA BEARDSMORE<br>LACRUE WEAITH<br>SIMON WEAITH<br>JOSEPHINE SPANSHAW<br>CATHERINE DACE<br>REBECCA DOUGHTY<br>PEARL GREENALL<br>TONY STACEY<br>KATHLEEN STOCKS<br>LEE BAYLESS<br>LAUREN FRETWELL              |

The speaker Mr. Mahmud Nawaz (chief executive of Chesterfield Royal Hospital) gave a moving speech about how his wife had passed away and how her wish was to be an organ donor and she saved the lives of three people and then he went on to say what the future plans for the hospital were alongside fund raising with the mayors' charitable partners. There was entertainment throughout the evening provided by a young choir a young female singer and a pianist all from the chesterfield area. Finally Jenny Flood gave her speech and talked about what she planned to achieve during her time as mayor.

Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> May was the mayor's parade and civic service in the Chesterfield St Mary's and All Saints Church. Everyone attending formed up at the town hall for 10.30 to receive the mayor and her guests and the Queens Colours were marched around, and the parade began marching through the town centre to the Church for the service with the brass band playing.



The Queens Colours were received by the vicar and hymns were sung before the Mayor's Chaplain Jonathan Hood gave a speech and a small group of primary school children sang an anthem. Then Jenny Flood reaffirmed the commitment to the borough of Chesterfield. After the conclusion of the service the parade then reformed outside the church and then marched back through the town to the town hall where the parade was dismissed. Mayor Flood later held a civic reception in the town hall which refreshments and buffet were provided and gave people an opportunity to mingle and talk.





## May Meeting

Branch Chair Jon-Paul Harding opened the meeting in front of another healthy attendance. Before introducing our guest speaker, Branch Secretary, Grant Cullen informed all of the passing on April, 15<sup>th</sup>, after a short illness, of Roger Avill, who up until recently rarely missed a meeting.

Jon-Paul then introduced our speaker for the evening – a first time visitor to the Branch

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.

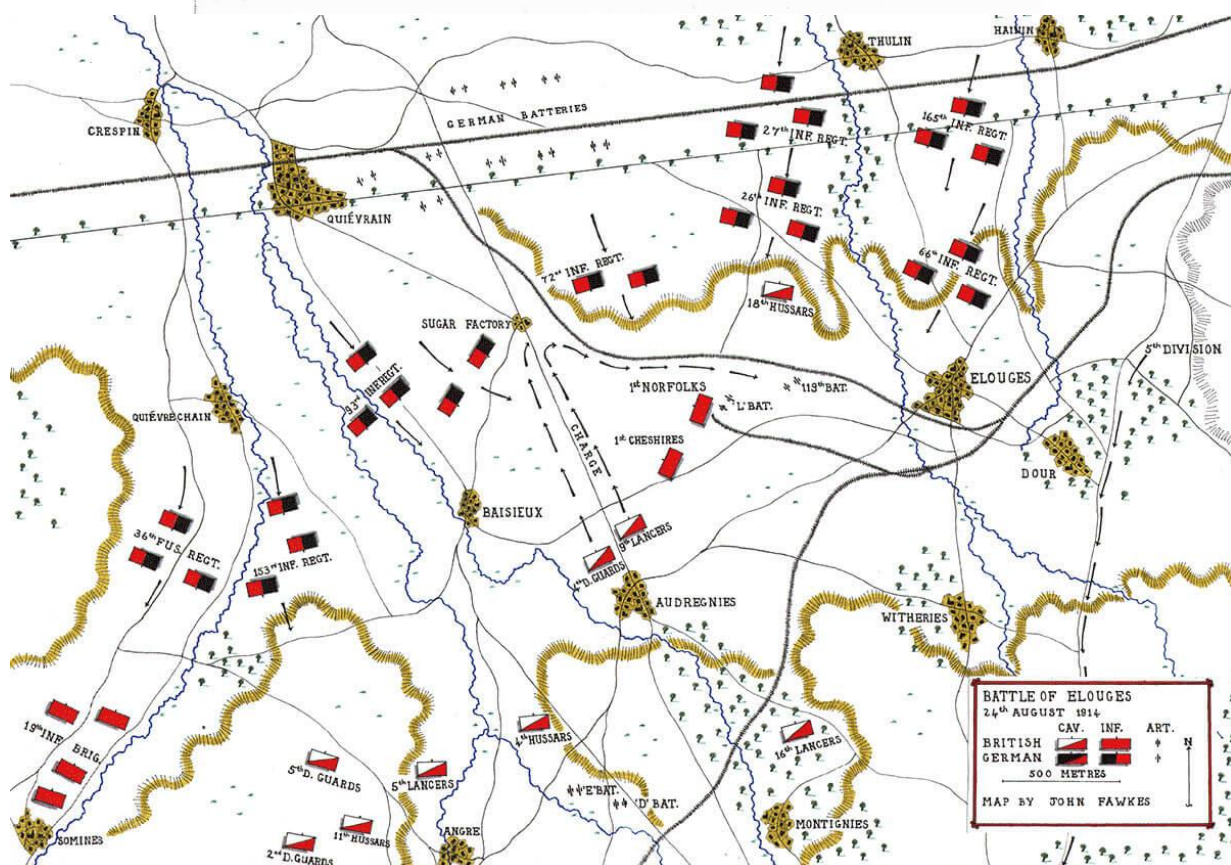
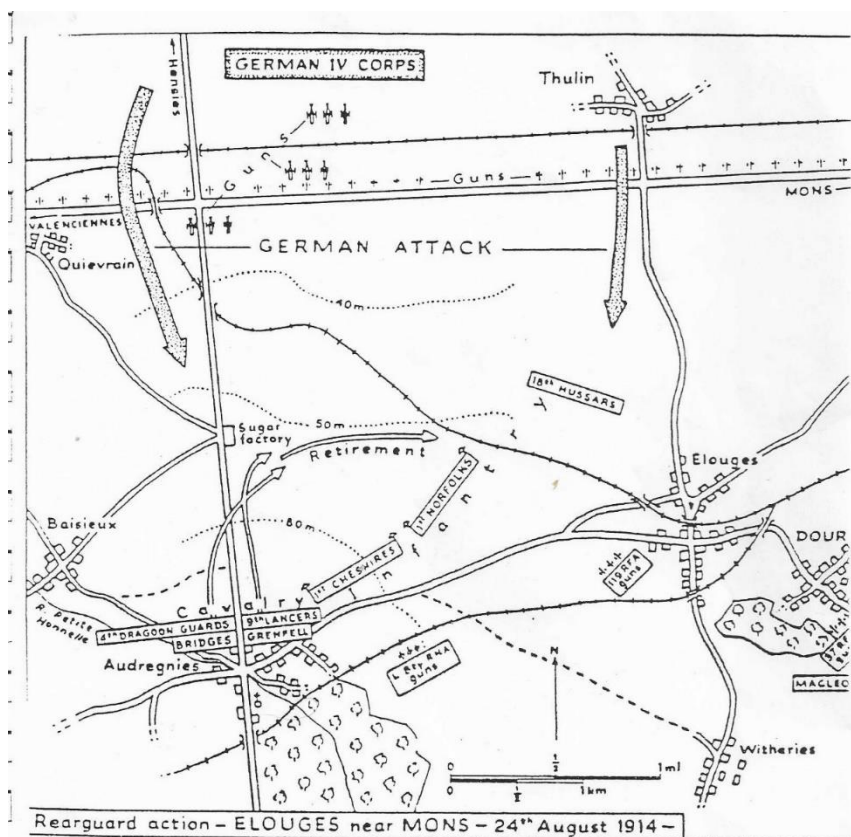


After leaving regimental duty he fulfilled a series of staff appointments at Chilwell, Bovington and Northwood, before returning to regiment duty to command Headquarters Squadron. He left the 9/12L in 2012 after 35 years-service and joined HHQ 9/12L. He became interested in regimental history during 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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 began his talk by showing the map, from the Official History of where this action took place on 24<sup>th</sup> August, pointing out the key areas.



Then he put up a painting purporting to show Captain Francis Grenfell, 9th Lancers, the first VC of World War I to be gazetted, winning the VC at Audregnies, Belgium, 24th August 1914 and which is now in the National Army Museum.

Phil then discussed the historical inaccuracies of that picture....this was to be a key part of his talk...challenging the narrative by being consistent on facts. He also showed a clip from Richard Holmes seminal series War Walks

Following the withdrawal of the BEF II Corps during the night of 23<sup>rd</sup>/24<sup>th</sup> August 1914, following the German assault on the Mons Canal line, the BEF occupied a line about 17 miles long facing north east about 3 miles south of Mons.

The positions of the components of the BEF were:

I Corps:

1<sup>st</sup> Division around Grand Reng, Hoveroy and Givry.

2<sup>nd</sup> Division: 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade at Harveng, 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade at Paturages and 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade at Harvigny. 2<sup>nd</sup> Connaught Rangers were at Bournies.

II Corps:

3<sup>rd</sup> Division: 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade at Ciple, 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade and 9<sup>th</sup> Brigades at Nouvelles.

5<sup>th</sup> Division: 1<sup>st</sup> Bedfords at Ciple, 13<sup>th</sup> Brigade at Wasmes, 1<sup>st</sup> Dorsets at Wasmes, 14<sup>th</sup> Brigade at Hornu, 15<sup>th</sup> Brigade at Champ des Sarts and Hornu.

19<sup>th</sup> Brigade at Thulin and the neighbouring towns.

Cavalry Division at Thulin, Elouges, Audregnies and Quivérain.

5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade around Givry.

Much of the BEF was exhausted, after a long day in action on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1914 in the case of II Corps, and in marching considerable distances to come up in support in the case of I Corps.

At about 1am on the morning of 24<sup>th</sup> August 1914, the Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Sir John French, summoned the senior staff officers of I and II Corps and the Cavalry Division and informed them that the BEF was to withdraw to a line based on the town of Bavai, to comply with the French Fifth Army of General Lanrezac, retreating on the British right. Later in the morning the two corps commanders, Generals Haig and Smith-Dorrien, met to co-ordinate the withdrawal of their Corps.

In the meantime General Haig, commanding I Corps, formed a special rear guard, commanded by Brigadier-General Horne and comprising the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade, J Battery RHA, 2 brigades of field artillery and the 4<sup>th</sup> Guards Brigade. The task of this rear-guard was to concentrate at Bonnet and engage the Germans, while the 2 divisions of the I Corps withdrew to their new positions.

At 4am on 24<sup>th</sup> August the 1<sup>st</sup> Division marched off, heading for the new positions between Feignies and Bavai, while the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division moved out at around 4.15am. The Germans shelled both divisions but inflicted little loss.

Horne's rear-guard fell back behind I Corps, the 4<sup>th</sup> Guards Brigade withdrawing from Harveng and Bognies to positions between Quévy le Petit and Genly, with the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade moving on its left flank. As it fell back the force was subjected to artillery fire which caused it little difficulty.

I Corps reached its new positions in the line, stretching from Feignies to La Longueville and then to Bavai, at around 10pm. The troops were exhausted, having in some cases marched nearly 60 miles in 64 hours, although few units of I Corps had been in action against the advancing Germans, other than by way of harassing artillery fire.

Matters were otherwise for II Corps on the left flank of the BEF, where the German First Army of General von Kluck was concentrating its efforts to envelope the western flank of the BEF.

At around 4am General Smith-Dorrien's II Corps prepared to defend the area to which it had withdrawn during the evening of the 23<sup>rd</sup> August after the battle along the Canal Line. This area was essentially the line of rising slopes to the south of the



railway and road between Mons and Valenciennes, from Ciple in the east to Hornu in the west. This defence would precede the withdrawal of the Corps which could only begin once the roads in its rear areas were cleared of the transport columns. In the meantime II Corps would hold the positions it had occupied on the previous evening, while on its right I Corps fell back to the new line.



The initial German move was to open an extensive barrage against the right of II Corps, followed by an infantry attack to spread along the Corps front from east to west by 5.15am.

The initial German infantry assaults fell on the 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade around Cipley and the 9<sup>th</sup> Brigade around Frameries.

109<sup>th</sup> Battery supported the 9<sup>th</sup> Brigade with a heavy fire and all the German attacks were repelled with heavy losses inflicted by infantry rifle and machine gun fire and the artillery barrage. This success enabled the 9<sup>th</sup> Brigade to fall back through Frameries in good order at around 9am and begin its march to Sars la Bruyere.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade remained in place for longer, until it fell back towards Genly. This delay caused the brigade to suffer significantly heavier losses than the 9<sup>th</sup>, one of its battalions, the 2<sup>nd</sup> South Lancashires, suffering around 250 casualties through machine gun fire from German guns moved up to the slag heaps around Frameries.

On the afternoon of Aug 24th 1914 the 119th Battery formed part of the flank guard under Lt Colonel Balland, Norfolk Regt. Near ELOUGES. One section under Lieut. C.O.D. PRESTON was detached about 500 yards on the right of the other 2 sections. After the remainder of the 5th Division had retired the Germans worked round the right and took this section in rear. It was ordered to retire. Lieut. Preston was wounded. The section moved by a road in front of the other two sections towards the left. While moving along the road it was caught up by a Cavalry Brigade retiring at a fast pace and carried along by them. They were under very heavy shell fire. One of the lead horses was shot and Sgt. McCartney dismounted and cut it out. After going for about half a mile Lieut Preston halted his section and brought it into action against German Cavalry. Afterwards he took on German Infantry and Machine Guns until they got within 800 yards of the guns. He then sent one gun out of action & was again wounded. Sgt McCartney took his gun under cover and then rode back to assist Lt Preston to get the other away. The wagon of this sub-section was found not to be following the gun and Lieut Preston went back to try to get it away, but was unable to do so as most of the horses were killed. Altogether he was wounded 4 times twice severely. He was put in an Ambulance & Sgt McCartney brought the section away. The other 4 guns remained in action longer. When they were ordered to retire it was necessary to run back by hand under cover owing to the heavy fire. Captain Grenfell, 9th Lancers asked if he could assist in anyway. He was asked if he could help running the guns back by hand as owing to heavy casualties few men were available. One gun was run back by the men of the Battery & then the men of 9th Lancers assisted in running back the remainder of most of the guns & most of the wagons. After that the Battery retired. Captain Grenfell was wounded before and again while assisting the 119th, but he still continued to help. The conduct of the 9th Lancers was splendid as at least 3 German Batteries were concentrated on the 119th (one on its right flank) there was considerable infantry fire brought on the men at the same time, by German infantry on the mining dumps 4 to 600 yds away. While retiring one wagon & a limber were hit by shells and had to be abandoned. 2 officers and 48 men in the Battery were killed & wounded and 4 missing. 43 horses were killed and several wounded.

### **The action at Elouges and Audregnies:**

By 2pm the British 13<sup>th</sup> Brigade was in Warquinies on its way to St Waast and the 14<sup>th</sup> Brigade was at Blaugnies on its way to Eth, both destinations lying to the west of Bavai.

As the brigades moved south-west from these initial destinations, it became clear to the GOC of the 5<sup>th</sup> Division, Sir Charles Ferguson, that the British Cavalry Division and the 19<sup>th</sup> Brigade were too far to the south and that the 5<sup>th</sup> Division was threatened from the west by large bodies of German cavalry advancing against its open flank.

At 11.45am Ferguson sent a message to the Cavalry Division requesting assistance. At the same time Ferguson ordered the 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Norfolk Regiment and the 1<sup>st</sup> Cheshires with 119<sup>th</sup> Battery RFA, the force commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel CR Ballard of the Norfolks, to move forward from Dour, where these units were in the Divisional Reserve, and counter-attack the advancing Germans. As Ballard's 2 battalions and the guns moved up, they were diverted further west to take position along the Elouges-Audregnies-Angre road.



The Sugar Beet factory (on right of Roman Road)

Receiving Ferguson's request for support at around midday, Allenby ordered the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Brigades to turn back to the area of Audregnies, where they were



within 2 miles of Ballard's force. The 18<sup>th</sup> Hussars returned to their positions in Elouges and the 9<sup>th</sup> Lancers took up position with L Battery RHA to the west of the village.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards remained to the south of Elouges. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Brigade occupied a position on the high ground to the west of Audregnies.

The area to the south of the Mons to Valenciennes highway sloped gently up to the Elouges-Audregnies road, where the British rear-guard was in position. Across this area ran the main railway from east to west with, to the south, a smaller railway for carrying newly dug coal. Across the middle of the area ran the old Roman road from Audregnies. Immediately to the east of the Roman road at Quiévrain stood a sugar factory and a cluster of slagheaps.

Colonel Ballard's force of Norfolks, Cheshires and the 119<sup>th</sup> Battery formed a line from the Elouges-Quiévrain railway to the outskirts of Audregnies. At around 12.30 pm firing presaged a heavy German attack from Quiévrain and Baisieux towards Audregnies.

Brigadier-General de Lisle, GOC 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Brigade, ordered Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell of the 9<sup>th</sup> Lancers to deliver a mounted charge into the right flank of the attacking Germans, if the opportunity arose. L Battery RHA took up position behind the railway line to the east of Audregnies. The 9<sup>th</sup> Lancers with 2 troops of 4<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards advanced at the gallop and crossed the Baisieux-Elouges road. The force of cavalry found themselves in an area crossed by hedges, fences and ditches.



The location of the wire fence which held up the cavalry with the mineral railway embankment in the background

The charge was brought up short by a wire fence and the squadrons came under heavy artillery fire. The 9<sup>th</sup> Lancers split up, one group dismounted and took up positions around the sugar factory, another retired to the mineral railway line, where they joined the 18<sup>th</sup> Hussars and a third headed back to Audregnies.

A squadron of the 4<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards galloped down a lane heading for Quiévrain and occupied a cottage, losing significant numbers to rifle and artillery fire.

During this episode the commanding officer of the 9<sup>th</sup> Lancers, Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell, rode across the open ground under heavy fire to obtain further orders, leaving his regiment under the command of Captain Lucas-Tooth. Lucas-Tooth organised his men around the sugar factory and subjected the advancing German infantry to a heavy fire.

Distracted by the activity of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Brigade, the Germans faltered in their advance, enabling Ballard's 2 battalions to consolidate their positions and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Brigade to provide further support for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Brigade with D and E Batteries RHA firing across the valley.

Further dense columns of German infantry advanced out of Quiévrain and from the area between Quiévrain and Baisieux towards the British line. L Battery RHA came into action from behind the railway line, firing shrapnel low over the German formations and inflicting significant casualties. L Battery's fire brought the German attack to a standstill. 3 German batteries attempted to silence the RHA guns, but were unable to do so.

From their lines, Ballard's force fired on the German infantry attempting to advance up the slope to their positions, while 119<sup>th</sup> Battery RFA, on the right to the south of Elouges, added its fire against the German infantry and guns.

At about 2.30pm it became clear to Ballard that the position of his 2 battalions and 119<sup>th</sup> Battery were becoming untenable, as large masses of German infantry could be seen moving south from the area of Quarouble, to the south west of his positions, threatening the rear of his force. The German troops were the 36<sup>th</sup> Regiment from the IV Corps. To Ballard's east, the German 7<sup>th</sup> Division was pressing hard.

Ballard ordered his troops to retire in compliance with the general rearward movement by all 3 divisions in contact with the Germans; 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and the Cavalry Divisions.

## **The Rescue of 119th Battery, Royal Field Artillery:**

119<sup>th</sup> Battery fired on the advancing German infantry until they were around 900 yards away. The German artillery fire was inflicting heavy losses on the gunners of 119<sup>th</sup> Battery. When the order to retire was received the German fire was so heavy that the horse teams could not be brought up to the guns. Major Alexander, the battery commander, directed his men to push the guns into cover, but found that there were insufficient unwounded gunners left to perform this task.

Major Francis Grenfell of the 9<sup>th</sup> Lancers, whose squadron was positioned nearby, offered to assist Alexander's battery and led a team of volunteers from his regiment in pushing the guns out of the line of fire. Once moved, the guns were limbered up and driven away. Alexander and Grenfell received the Victoria Cross.

Again, there was considerable difficulty in communicating with the units in contact with the Germans. None of the 3 messages to retire sent by Ballard reached the Cheshires. L Battery also failed to receive the initial order to withdraw. The brigade major of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Brigade rode forward and personally ordered the battery to retire. As with 119<sup>th</sup> Battery, the guns of L Battery had to be run back into cover, before the gun teams could be brought forward, one at a time, and the guns extracted. The Cheshires, with a party of Norfolks, were left engaging the advancing German infantry, unaware that there was a general retirement in progress. The battalion, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Boger, until he was wounded, fell back to the Audregnies road, where a counter-attack drove back the advancing German infantry. After a lull the Germans resumed the assault and at around 7pm, with their ammunition largely exhausted and the battalion broken up into small groups, the Cheshires were overwhelmed and the survivors surrendered.

Part of the Cheshires reserve company in Audregnies was ordered to retire by a staff officer, who specifically forbade any attempt by these troops to re-join their battalion. Another party managed to fall back from Audregnies. These were the only Cheshires to survive the battle. Once these men reached Ath, they were found to number around 100, out of a battalion that had previously comprised 1,000 all ranks. The final retreat of the flank guard of the 5<sup>th</sup> Division and the Cavalry Division reached the area of St Waast at around 9pm, covered by artillery fire from the 5<sup>th</sup> Division batteries along the line from Blaugies to Houdain.





The old Roman road looking south towards Audregnies



Looking east from the Roman Road

## Can you help Jane.....????

WFA Member Jane Ainsworth is trying to trace some information on her Great Uncle - Charles Harry Dearling

I hope that you can help me please. The attached photos are of my great uncle Charles Harry Dearling (1879 - 1966) bank clerk, who served in WW1 but I have been unable to discover in what capacity. He married in 1911 and their first son was born in 1912; the second was born at the end of 1918. He was always known as `Harry`

I would have assumed he was in the Royal Navy – his two sons served in RN in WW2, Ralph being lost at sea on HMS Anking. Years ago I exchanged emails with John Keeling, who was extremely helpful about several of my relations who served in different wars in RN. At the time he told me he did not recognize Harry's uniform. Since then, doing more research but finding nothing in relation to this, I've tried to find examples of RN uniforms and cap badges to compare. My inexpert opinion is that the cap badge looks odd – almost like a 3D composite – but has similarities. Unfortunately, the photo isn't good enough to see what is on the buttons.

Assuming that his Service Records have not survived, but I would appreciate any views about the uniform.



I recently found the record for a kitchen assistant that seems to fit, although you would think they could have found a banker a more fitting admin role on land if unsuitable as a sailor.

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Roll:- CANTEEN STAFF.

20000000 0150/131 Wt & Sons Ltd 7120/7180 603

| Name | Rank or Rating | No. | Medals, &c., earned | How Issued or disposed of |
|------|----------------|-----|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1    | 2              | 3   | 4                   | 5                         |

|                    |          |                       |  |  |  |   |   |   |
|--------------------|----------|-----------------------|--|--|--|---|---|---|
| DEARLING, Chas. H. | Ctn.Ast. | "EMPEROR<br>of INDIA" |  |  |  | V | B | S |
|--------------------|----------|-----------------------|--|--|--|---|---|---|



John Keeling was an archivist at Historic Dockyard Chatham at least 10 years ago but Jane hasn't been able to get any response recently from HDC.

Can any of you experts out there help Jane ?...if you can let me know and I'll put you in direct contact.



From a Great War Nurse`s Album.....



Scotty stroked my fevered head

Scotty plugged me when I bled

Scotty made my little bed

Here's my Gratitude -

A. Hewitt. Bayne Capt  
Royal Fusiliers  
25/5/15.



## Brothers in Arms



Brothers-in-Arms: the man behind the striking monument

Brothers-in-Arms is perhaps the most moving monument on the Western Front. While the story about what the monument represents is relatively well known in Australia, the story about the man who inspired it is less so.

In 2006, just outside of Polygon Wood, a road construction crew uncovered human remains beneath a road. The construction manager called battlefield archaeologist and historian Johan Vanderwalle and asked for his help. Over three days, Johan and his team found and painstakingly exhumed five bodies. One set of well-preserved remains caught the team's attention - the soldier had been carefully wrapped in a groundsheet with his arms neatly folded across his chest.

DNA sampling confirmed the soldier's identity as Jack Hunter. The Hunter family then confirmed that Jack's younger brother, Jim, had buried him.

In 1919 a grief-stricken Jim had returned to Belgium to properly rebury Jack, but he couldn't find his makeshift grave. The story so deeply moved Johan and his friends that they decided to create a memorial park in Zonnebeke to honour the brothers.

The centrepiece would be a sculpture of Jim holding Jack in his arms. The Brothers-in-Arms Memorial Project was established, and funding secured from an Australian philanthropist. An Australian sculptor created the life-size work based upon family photos, that weighed 800kg and cost 160,000 Euros.

On 25 September 2022 the sculpture was placed on the memorial's concrete pedestal—105 years since the Battle of Polygon Wood and 16 years after John's body had been discovered. The monument is adjacent to Johan's Café Taverne de Dreve. Johan's museum above his café is perhaps the most authentic you will ever see. It reflects a lifetime of collecting relics - as a child he had played on the old battlefields, and often stumbled upon bunkers, dugouts and remains of trenches. And more recently Johan has lovingly engineered two large interlocking brass rings from shell casings that symbolise the brothers forever as one. This work now complements the sculpture.

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### ***Captain Jack Oliver Cooper***

Jack was born in Surbiton, Surrey. His father was a tea merchant.

He joined the Royal Flying Corps and gained his Royal Aero Club Aviators' Certificate on 29th January 1915.

After a period on Home Establishment he was posted to 12 Squadron at St Omer, France on 30th September 1915.

He was transferred to 16 Squadron on 8th November 1915.

On 23rd January 1916 he was transferred to 21 Squadron.

On 21st July 1916 the Squadron sent six RE7 aircraft to bomb the rail junction and bridge at Aubigny-au-Bac. The formation was escorted by aircraft from 23 Squadron. The raid was attacked by enemy aircraft but the escort drove them off shooting down two.

As the formation reached the target it encountered heavy and accurate anti-aircraft fire. Jack's aircraft (RE7 2388) was hit and brought down. Lieutenant Oliver-Jones (the observer) was killed and Jack was severely injured in the crash. He died two days later on 23rd July.

Both men are commemorated on the Arras Flying Services Memorial. Captain Jack Cooper was 20 years old.



**Joe Clough** was born in Jamaica in 1887. Orphaned at a young age, he found himself in the employ of a local doctor, a Scotsman, Dr. White who gave Joe the job of looking after his polo ponies. One particular evening, the two had a conversation that was to change Joe's life forever. Dr White asked Joe, "How would you like to go to England?" Joe's reply....." I'd like that very much." He was 18 years old.

So in the winter of 1906, Joe found himself stepping onto the soil of Bristol, with one of his first questions "why are there so many dead trees?" The trees weren't dead he was told, just that the leaves came off in the winter, something Joe had never seen on the lush trees of Jamaica.

Not long after his arrival, the doctor took Joe to London, where Joe happily drove the Dr. around in a horse and carriage, but not for long, as the Dr. bought himself one of

those newfangled motorcars. Joe, never one to be defeated, taught himself to drive and became the Doctor's chauffeur.

In 1910, Joe applied to be a driver on the buses of the London General Omnibus Company and, initially employed as a spare driver, it wasn't long before he was given his own route, a very proud Jamaican man driving the number 11 bus, all the way from Liverpool St to Wormwood Scrubs.

So, Joe is officially the first black man to have driven a London bus.

He went on to marry Margaret, have children, two daughters, Margaret and Grace, and then signed up to do his bit for king and country. During WW1, he drove a field ambulance for four years on the front line.

Joe lived a fantastic life and died in 1976, age 89. What an adventurous life he had