



The Spire Sentinel



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

**& Magazine
Chesterfield
Western
Association**



ISSUE 106 - December 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
October	1st	Ross Beadle. 'William Robertson: Architect of a Winning Strategy or merely Haig's "Man of Business in London"?
November	5th	Peter Hart Laugh or Fly: The Air War on the Western Front 1914 – 1918
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 191

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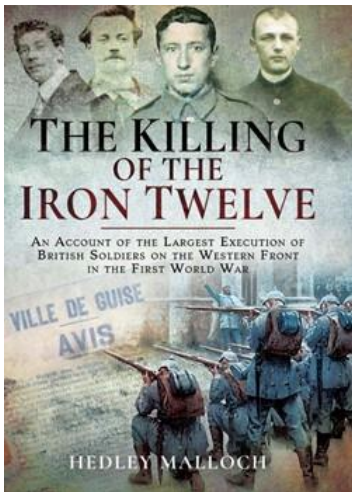
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December Meeting Speaker - Hedley Malloch



Many British soldiers were trapped behind enemy lines in occupied northern France or Belgium. Some were caught and shot, others ended up in a PoW camp, but some escaped back to Great Britain. In his talk he will tell some stories about their fates and of the French and Belgian people who helped them, often at great personal cost. These are tales of courage, endurance, betrayal and ingenuity. Hedley will explain how the Germans managed this problem, why some fugitives were shot, but others were spared. He

will cover the reaction of the Allies to these incidents, many of which were in violation of The Hague and Geneva Conventions.



About Hedley

A member of the WFA since 1990, he is a retired lecturer currently living in Nottinghamshire, having lived and worked in Lille, France for many years. Whilst living in Lille, he became interested in the fate of those soldiers left behind the lines, including the 11 British soldiers taken in by the village of Iron, Aisne, who were eventually betrayed and shot by the Germans at Guise Château on 25 February 1915. You can find out more information about them and the village villagers who helped them at the Iron Memorial website at <https://iron12.org>

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



Dear Members and Friends,

Welcome to issue 106 of our newsletter.

I'm putting together this newsletter trying not to move as much as possible having slipped and fallen on black ice yesterday - now my back hurts like hell!

Tuesday evening 3rd December sees Hedley Malloch making his debut as a speaker at Chesterfield Branch - he was scheduled to come

last year but had to call off with illness.

There will be a free buffet for all attending the December meeting - including free drink from the bar and all attending will be given a raffle ticket - each book on the table with a number which corresponds will be given free to the ticket holder. This is another way of the Branch saying 'thank you' to those who support the Branch.

Our first meeting of 2025 will be on Tuesday 7th January. The January meeting is also our Branch AGM and once we get that business of the evening out of the way, I will be doing a presentation on Britain's Worst Railway Disaster - Quintinshill 22nd May 1915 - which claimed the lives of over 200 men of the Royal Scots who were on their way to Liverpool to take ship to Gallipoli. I have researched this subject and have had an article published in a railway enthusiasts magazine - now I've turned that work into a full presentation.

Still got a few speakers' slots available for next year so there is still time to let me know your suggestions and I'll see what I can do to get the topics YOU want...it's YOUR branch...Jon-Paul, Jane and I all want to do the best for the Branch and will always try to accommodate the wishes of all of you. So let me know your thoughts - contact me by e mail...or give me a call - my number is below. Without giving too much away I have secured the services of one of the biggest names in Great War works - speaker, writer, lecturer - he's got it all. More info in the next issue.

John Wilson has kindly submitted a report on the 'Not the Western Front' Conference held on November 2nd at Wakefield and his report is included in this newsletter.

Best wishes,

Grant

Grant Cullen WFA Chesterfield Branch Secretary 07824628638

REMEMBRANCE 2024

For many Remembrancetide is a very busy period but none more so than that for Chesterfield WFA Branch member Rob Nash. On Remembrance Sunday morning, 10th November, Rob was Parade Marshal in Worksop. As soon as these duties were over it was back to Chesterfield where he carried out the same duties in his usual exemplary manner at his home town`s Remembrance Parade.

Then it was a dash to London to take charge as Parade Marshal for the Western Front association Parade to the Cenotaph in Whitehall on Armistice Day, November 11th

The first picture shows Rob escorting the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire, Alex Peace - Gadsby as she inspected the contingents before the parade moved off to Worksop`s War Memorial.



This picture shows Rob `On Parade` in Whitehall



Branch Chair, Jon-Paul Harding travelled to London to lay a wreath on behalf of the Branch at the Cenotaph. Here we see Rob and Jon-Paul



Branch Chair, Jon-Paul Harding with the wreath



The Cenotaph





Jon-Paul had previously laid a wreath on behalf of the Branch at the Remembrance Sunday Parade in Chesterfield.

Here`s Jon-Paul`s comments on Remembrance Weekend.... On Sunday 10th November as Chairman of the Chesterfield Branch of the WFA, I attended the remembrance service in Chesterfield at St. Mary and All Saints church (the Crooked Spire) which was a well-attended service by many ex-

service and serving men and women. Other groups there were the Royal British Legion, Air, Sea and Army cadet`s Scouts, Guides and school groups plus many more. After the service had finished everyone formed up outside the church where a parade led by the High Sheriff of Derbyshire and the Lord Mayor and Mayoress and other dignitaries marched through Chesterfield town centre to the Town Hall where wreaths were laid on the War Memorial, and the two minutes silence was observed.

Then on Monday 11th November I set off on a trip to London again on behalf of the Chesterfield Branch of the WFA to take part in the Ceremony and Act of Remembrance at the Cenotaph. Many WFA members, ex-service personnel, dignitaries, school children and many other wreath layers, formed up King James Street. The London Scottish pipes and drums led everyone out onto Whitehall to begin the proceedings. The two minutes of silence was observed then, the heads of the WFA started the wreath laying, including National Chairman (and former Chesterfield Branch Chair) Tony Bolton followed by relatives of 3 of the main leaders in the first world war. Wreaths were then laid by the school children followed by the WFA branches .Great respect was followed throughout, and not to mention a great job done by the parade marshal Rob Nash. After the ceremony had finished a service was held at the Guards Chapel where there was a special mention and

reading about Rose Coombes MBE. There were other readings by Retd Major Phil Watson, Professor Catriona Pennell and Joel Bassett Brasenose Collage Oxford. The lesson was read by Lady Lucy French. As always, a very well run and dignified act of remembrance at the Cenotaph in London held by the Western Front Association.

November Meeting

This saw Peter Hart making his annual pilgrimage to Chesterfield and Peter gave a near full house meeting an evening of entertainment - and education - which of all our speakers only Peter can do. No slides or other visuals by from Peter ,but , my, he had the room rocking with laughter.



From a Nurse`s Scrapbook



"Many are cold but few are frozen."

J.C. Greenfield

Lt. R.E.

16.4.16

Not the Western Front Conference 2nd November 2024

Wakefield....report by John Wilson



Not the Western Front Conference 2024

10.05	Adam Prime	Indians in defence of the Suez Canal 1915
11.15	Paul Knight	The Second Battle of Ramadi – the most perfectly fought battle of the war?
12:30	Lunch	
1:15	Louise Provan	Dunsterforce
2:30	Peter Hart	Rupert Brooke and the 'Glitterati' at Gallipoli

With some trepidation in late 2023 I thought wouldn't it be a good idea to have a WW1 conference by a) concentrating on things other than the western front and b) in Yorkshire. What could possibly go wrong!

A few months into the process I discovered that the Gallipoli association had a conference on the same day and also the Great War in Africa Association, however at this point it was considerably too late to change our date.

So judging by the feedback it was an all round great event.

We started the day with Dr Adam Prime talking about the Indians in defence of the Suez canal in 1915. Adam explained the significant geographical importance of the canal and the amount of time it trimmed off the journey to the Middle East and India.

Indian troops formed a significant part of the defence and a Division of Indian troops were used to dig the defences along the bank of the canal which became critical when reports of a significant Ottoman build up was reported in January 1915.

The Indian Troops successfully defended the canal during the ottoman attack in February 1915.



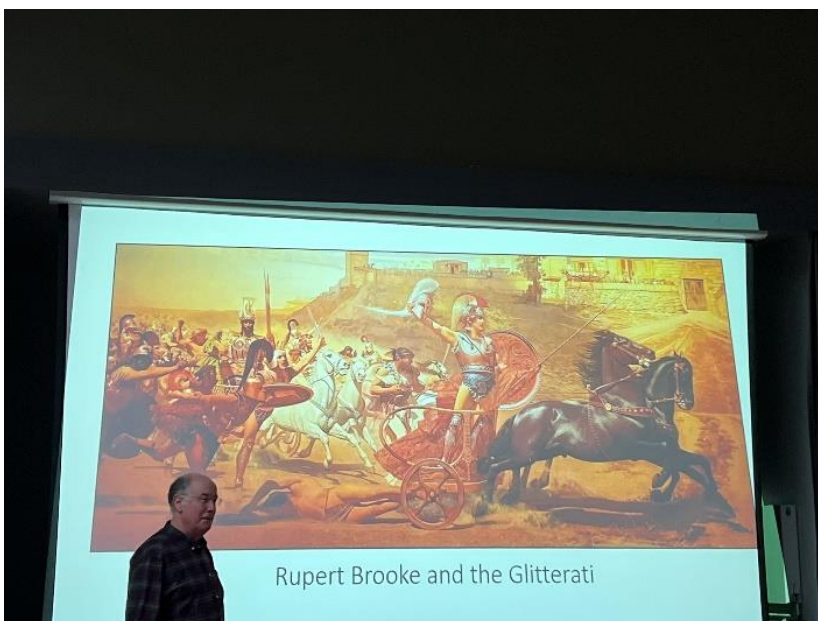
The next speaker was Paul Knight speaking about The Second Battle of Ramadi: The most perfectly fought battle of the war? The war in Mesopotamia is usually overshadowed by the infamous siege of Kut which resulted in the largest surrender of British troops until the Surrender of Singapore a quarter of a century later. Paul explained the issues of logistics in Mesopotamia where the supply lines were stretched to the limit and the significant use of new “vehicles” and aeroplanes.

The battle of Ramadi was in fact two battles the first that the British lost due to difficult terrain and over stretched communication and supply lines. The second one they won due to rectifying the communication and supply issues and the cunning use of a deception plan to make the Turks believe that the attack would fall on the right flank.

In the dreaded slot after lunch, Louise Provan gave a fascinating talk on Dunsterforce. Dunsterforce was created by Major General Dunsterville with the aim of preventing the Turks and Germans taking control of the oil in Baku. As the war progressed oil had assumed a much greater importance. The British were determined that this important resource should not fall into enemy hands in the critical final months of the war. Significantly outnumbered and with unsupportive local troops Dunsterforce was only able to hold Baku for a number of weeks but this was enough to keep them from enemy hands.



The final slot fell to Peter Hart talking about Rupert Brooke and the Glitterati in Gallipoli. This was made more entertaining by Peter's unusual and unexpected use of slides. The talk laid out how the RND had come about and then went on to explain the large number of well-known people who were drawn to join the RND including the musician Denis Browne, Patrick Shaw Stuart, Olympic athlete Frederick Kelly, Arthur Asquith, son of Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, Charles Lister and VC winner New Zealander Bernard Freyberg. Although many of these were not seen as promising material the action in Gallipoli and later saw many become brave and highly thought of officers.



So from an organisers perspective, the day was great fun and almost broke even (I was underwriting the event personally). People said they had enjoyed it and everybody was asking when is the next one. So having checked with a trustee of the Gallipoli Association to ensure there was no clash, the Not the Western Front Conference 2025 will take place on Saturday 25th October. The details of the

speakers should be announced sometime in December .

The undernoted was received recently from the CWGC

Dear Western Front Association,

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to warmly invite your organisation to a special Christmas Carol Service on Monday, 2nd December 2024, at 7 pm at The Royal Military Chapel (The Guards' Chapel) in London. I would like to apologise for sending this email via your memberships address, but I could not find a more generic inbox. Commemorations at Christmas is a heart-warming event that blends festive joy with moments of reflection, honouring those who sacrificed their lives in the two World Wars. It promises to be an unforgettable evening, featuring beautiful carols performed by the Choir of the Guards' Chapel and special guests.

This years' service is a fundraising event in support of the Commonwealth War Graves Foundation (CWGF). Since 2017, the CWGF has engaged and educated the public—particularly young people—about the work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the stories of the 1.7 million Commonwealth servicemen and women who died in the World Wars. Through a range of inspiring initiatives, the CWGF helps ensure these remarkable stories are not lost to time.

We are delighted to offer a group discount for bookings of five or more tickets. If your organisation would like to take advantage of this offer, please get in touch with us at supporters@cwgc.org.

COMMEMORATIONS AT CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE 2024

TICKETS ARE ON SALE FOR COMMEMORATIONS AT CHRISTMAS 2024



Get your tickets now for our very special Commemorations at Christmas carol service.

Join us in the stunning surroundings of the **Royal Military (Guards') Chapel, London** at **7 pm on Monday 2nd December** for an unmissable evening of music, commemoration and remembrance.

A memorable programme of performances and readings has been crafted for this year's service.

- Live performances from our very special guests Britain's Got Talent winner and veteran **Colin Thackery** and the exceptionally talented mezzo-soprano **Emma Brown**
- Readings by award-winning actor and writer **Joanna Scanlan**
- Well-known carols sung, plus our specially commissioned carol

This is a fundraising event for the Commonwealth War Graves Foundation, and we are very grateful to Jaguar Land Rover for generously sponsoring this year's service.

Buy your tickets

TICKET TYPES

Service Tickets

This ticket will give you entry into our magical Commemorations at Christmas carol service held at the beautiful Guards' Chapel (The Royal Military Chapel) in London, featuring a commemorative order of service, live performances from our very special guests, music, well-known carols, and more.

TICKET TYPES

- **Silver - £35** – Enjoy access to our magical service with a silver ticket offering seating in the rear half of the stunning Guards' chapel. Limited to 225 places.
- **Gold - £45** – Get closer to our wonderful performers with a gold ticket, giving you access to the service with seating in the front half of this historic chapel. Limited to 125 places
- **Reception ticket - £50** - Join our VIP guests and Commonwealth War Graves staff for canapes, mulled wine, and mince pies in the intimate setting of the Officers' Mess after the Carol Service. ***Please note: This is an additional charge. A silver or gold ticket must be purchased to access the Commemorations at Christmas service. 18+ only.***

Please ensure you have cookies enabled to view and use the ticket purchase pod below. Thank you for your cooperation.

BOOK YOUR TICKETS NOW

COMMEMORATIONS AT CHRISTMAS 2024: OUR VERY SPECIAL GUESTS



COLIN THACKERY

Colin is a veteran of the Korean War and is a Chelsea Pensioner having served for 25 years in the Royal Artillery.

Colin, 94, is still singing following his success in winning *Britain's Got Talent* in 2019. Since then, he starred on the BGT Jubilee tribute to HM Queen Elizabeth II, performed in Grantham and Lincoln Cathedral for ABF, and sang at Edinburgh Poppy Day and the Scottish Festival of Remembrance in Dundee.

Last year, he sang, in Korean, at two major events in South Korea during the 70th anniversary celebrations for the armistice of the Korean War as well as at the UK Festival of Remembrance.

2024 has been another busy year and Colin was particularly pleased to be asked to sing during the 75th anniversary of NATO Bond of Friendship commemorations and to be the face of the DDay80 Lamplight of Peace.



EMMA BROWN

Emma Brown is an English mezzo-soprano who sings internationally, focusing on oratorios, concerts, remembrance, and supporting NGOs.

She has performed in Mongolia and Vietnam with orphans and street children for the Christina Noble Children's Foundation, and in Nepal for the Gurkha Welfare Trust, as well as across Europe for remembrance ceremonies.

In 2019, Emma sang in the presence of King Charles and Queen Camilla at the seventy-fifth anniversary of D-Day in Normandy.

Last year she performed in the Guards' Chapel for our 2023 Carol Service, and this year she performed in ceremonies in Normandy to mark the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings.



JOANNA SCANLAN

BAFTA award-winning Joanna Scanlan is one of Britain's most versatile actresses. Seamlessly moving from comedy to drama in both television and feature films, Joanna carves some of the best character roles in the industry.

In June 2021, Joanna was seen in English-Pakistani filmmaker Aleem Khan's debut film feature *After Love*, as 'Mary Hussain.' Her extraordinary performance won her both the BAFTA Film Award and British Independent Film Award for Best Actress. Joanna recently joined the cast of the hugely popular Apple TV+ series *Slow Horses* and will soon be seen in the next instalment of the beloved *Bridget Jones* franchise, *Mad About The Boy*. We are delighted to welcome Joanna alongside our other very special guests to Commemorations at Christmas 2024.

DARKNESS INTO LIGHT

Marking the passing from occupation to liberation during war time, Commonwealth War Graves' iconic Torch of Commemoration will be present at this year's ceremony. Discover more about the Torch of Commemoration and its significance in [Lighting Their Legacy here](#).

Guests will also have the opportunity to have their photograph taken with the torch.



EVENT SPONSOR - JAGUAR LAND ROVER

One of our members is a member of the Society for Army Historical Research and sent in this for inclusion as it may be of interest to members.

SAHR Conference: Land Forces of the Crown, c. 1660-2000 (February 2025)

Dear Member,

The SAHR is pleased to announce that **tickets are now on sale** for our two-day research conference, which will take place at the University of Leeds on the weekend of **22 and 23 February 2025**. As befits the Society's broad remit, the theme of the event is 'Land Forces of the Crown, c.1660 to the Present'. In addition to two keynote lectures, we have a total of 33 speakers across 11 panels. Topics range from experiences of the British Civil Wars to the challenges of maternity in the modern army; from military engineering in the Seven Years War to peacekeeping in late-Victorian Crete; and from infantry NCOs on the Western Front to tactics and training in the Western Desert. A full programme and ticket purchase is available here:

<https://ahc.leeds.ac.uk/history/events/event/3159/conference-land-forces-of-the-crown-c-1660-c-2000>.

Building on the success of our Centenary Conference, which saw some excellent contributions from early career researchers, we will also be hosting a networking event for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars which will take place on Saturday morning before the main conference opens. The conference as a whole, however, is open to all and our speakers reflect the full range of the Society's target audience - Scholars, Enthusiasts, and Soldiers - and we very much hope to see all those groups represented in the audience too. Attendees will further benefit from discounts from publisher Boydell and Brewer.

For those unable to attend in person, ticketing includes a livestream option. All attendees (in-person and virtually) will also have limited-time access to recordings of the panels.

Any questions should be directed to: landforcesconference25@gmail.com

WFA 2025 Calendars



Statement from Branded Goods Trustee



On a par with last year Calendars were early and ready for purchase by Mid-September, at Branch Plus on the Website (eshop) or phone Maya or Lisa at the Office, I have already written to Branches giving them an update and the response was very positive. This routinely turns a profit, also it enables branches to gain some income through branch sales, as I say the calendars are already ready for purchase on the Eshop