



frontline.

The newsletter of the MK WFA, August 2024.



I hope everyone has had an excellent summer holiday, and hopefully some of you will have made it to the seaside. During the Great War a visit to the seaside was considered essential for wounded personnel to regain their strength, sea air has always been considered healthy. (Probably not including the usual British bank holiday rain, cold and wind.) The photo above shows three of the vast number of soldiers, and occasionally civilians, who lost their sight during the war. Some injuries were immediate, such as shrapnel wounds, and others could be diagnosed long after the conflict, with blindness caused by mustard gas being reported 20 years after the war's end. In 1914 St. Dunstan's Hostel for Blind Soldiers and Sailors was founded by Sir Arthur Pearson, author of 'Victory Over Blindness'. A year later it moved to a property in Regent's Park. The idea was to provide a hostel where ex-servicemen would go after they had received hospital treatment to 'learn to be blind', and, as the caption says, very often the first step taken with blinded soldiers was to send them to a seaside home to get fully strong before taking up their training.

The legacy of the war meant that in 1921 men were still waiting to be accommodated, with 57 men awaiting admission to St Dunstan's. By 1929 there were still two thousand men in their care. The intake included 103 colonial ex-servicemen who were trained during their time at St Dunstan's. As you know, St Dunstan's are still carrying on their important work today.

Seminar update. You will see from the latest poster that we have found two quality speakers to replace Peter Hart and Major Barrett, who have become unavailable. They are Alan Wakefield with 'Twisting the Dragon's Tail - The Zeebrugge Raid.' and Jerry Porter, with 'Good night darling - God bless you - Heaps of love, Mother'. This talk tells the story of a mother (the speaker's great grandmother) who lost a son, his and his brother's time in the trenches, her own experience of coming under enemy attack, and her visits to France in the early 1920s to visit her son's grave. An intensely personal account, it nevertheless gives universal insights into war, family and loss.

October 19th 'A Great War Miscellany',
Our seminar, tickets on sale now, see poster inside for details.



August

Private Stephen Cranborne Sharples 6th Bn The Loyal North Lancs Killed in Action on Monday 9th August 1915 aged 29. (Anne's relative.)



Stephen Sharples was born at Calvert's Houses, Walton-le-Dale on the 28th October 1885 to John and Mary Ann (née Anderton), the second of nine children. Stephen's father was a weaver as were his father and his father before him.

By 1901, Stephen and his brothers, Alfred and Frederick, were living with their paternal grandmother Mary Sharples at 144, Victoria Rd, Walton le Dale. His parents and 5 other siblings were at 79 Victoria Rd. It looks like grandmother, widowed and now on her own is an overflow house for grandchildren!

Stephen is described as a hooker in the dye works.

In 1904 Stephen married Mary Bradley in St Leonard's Church, Walton-le-Dale and they quickly had two children – Alice born in 1904 and John born in 1906 who died soon after birth. In 1910 another daughter, Margaret Ann was born followed two years later by another son, Stephen and in 1914, a daughter, May, (she died, aged 3, in 1918).

On enlisting, Stephen went into the 6th Bn Loyal North Lancs Regiment, a Service Battalion that was formed in Preston at the outbreak of war. It joined the 38th Brigade of the 13th Division based in Tidworth (Wiltshire) moving to Blackdown Camp in Surrey in February 1915. Like many soldiers, this is likely the furthest Stephen had ever been from home. On 14/15 June 1915, the regiment left Frimley and boarded HMT 'Braemar Castle' in Avonmouth, arriving in Malta on the 26th.

The next day they set sail again, arriving in Alexandria on the 30th. On 2nd July, the 'SS Japanese Prince' took them to Mudros, on the island of Lemnos, where they marched to bivouacs about one mile from Mudros Harbour. There were no tents and the men had to camp on hard rough ground. No transport was available and all stores and baggage had to be man-handled. A rough start to Stephen's first trip abroad.

They then sailed on 'River Clyde' to Gallipoli landing at Cape Helles on 6 July 1915. It was here they gained essential combat experience in the Eski Line against Turkish troops in support and then in front line trenches. However, even while resting in reserve on Gully Beach, they were a target for enemy shelling.



Troops landing at Cape Helles from HMT River Clyde

The battalion returned to Mudros 31 July-1 August. Mudros harbour was used as a staging area for the upcoming fresh invasion near Anzac Cove. They returned to Gallipoli on 4th August on HMT 'Osmanieh' in preparation for the August Offensive (Battle of Sari Bair) launched on 6 August. Landings were conducted at night in an attempt to conceal the build-up to the planned offensive from the Turks. The plan was that for three successive moonless nights about 20,000 men were to be secretly landed at North Beach (next to Anzac Cove) and somehow hidden from enemy observation and shelling.



Battle of Sari Bair

The Sari Bair offensive was timed to coincide with a further major Allied landing of troop reinforcements at Suvla Bay on the Aegean coastline north of Anzac Cove.

The great ridge of Sari Bair rises from the sea coast to a height of nearly a thousand feet. From this crest line the sides of the mountain run steeply downward to the sea broken up into deep gullies with prominent intervening spurs. Gullies and spurs alike are rocky and precipitous, partially covered with low scrub. In April 1915, the Anzacs had fought their way up the south-western slopes of this mountain and had established a position halfway up the slope.

The objectives at Sari Bair were to capture the three key points of high ground on Sari Bair ridge - Chunuk Bair, Hill Q and Hill 971 coming on the Turks from the rear.

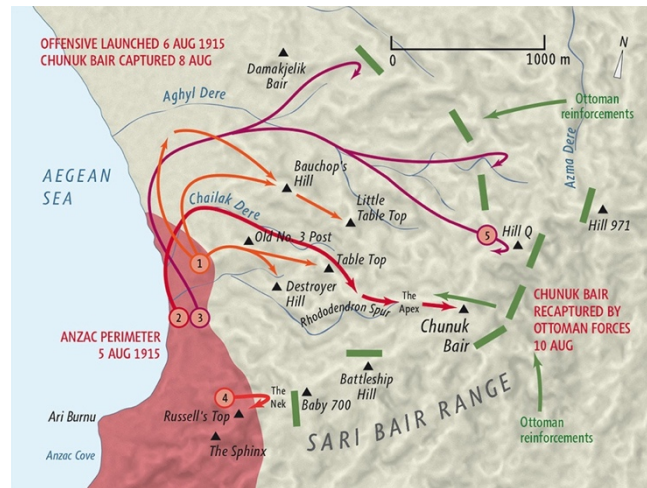
At dusk on the 6th August, the units on the beach formed into two columns and moved out in total darkness.

The aim was that the left column would eventually split and the Australians would capture Hill 971 while the 29th Indian Brigade would capture Hill Q. The right-hand column would split much earlier in their march—the NZ Mounted Rifles would clear the enemy from the four low hills of Beauchops,

Table Top, Little Table Top and Destroyer, the 1st NZ Brigade would capture Rhododendron Spur and with support from the 38th and 39th Brigades drive the enemy from Chunuk Bair. All this to happen by noon the next day.

Problems were immediately apparent and just kept on coming. There was nowhere near enough space at North Beach to accommodate the Sari Bair attack force, with the result that the element of surprise was lost and also that the sequence of advance went off-course.

Initially in reserve to the main advance ANZAC units, the 38th (including Stephen's 6th LNL) and 39th Brigades were quickly sent in as reinforcements. The 38th formed part of No 3 Column whose objective was Hill "Q" attacking from the south-west and moving on the eastern side of an area known as The Farm. This column was to make the main attack, and the other columns were ordered to co-operate with it.



Having bivouacked at the foot of Chailak Dere on the 7th, the combined Australian, British and Indian force started off at 5.30am northwards up the Chailak Dere to secure Damakjelik Bair, Hill 971 and Hill Q (indicated by the purple arrows from no. 3) but their initial progress was slow. Then taking an unexplored route, they got lost amid the ridges and gullies of Aghyl Dere following the disastrous decision to follow the Aghyl Dere route as the straightest and shortest on the map instead of following the New Zealanders up the Chailak Dere on an already well-established route.

Further delays were caused by the routes being clogged with the wounded trying to get to the beach and many passages were very narrow and entirely blocked by mules and native drivers. The effects of the heat and ongoing dysentery also exacted its toll upon the men. Consequently the force found themselves disastrously short of their first day's objectives by close of daylight and had failed to rendezvous with the column on the right (indicated by the red arrow from no. 2) at Rhododendron Spur. They only advanced half a mile up Chailak Dere before a halt was called until evening.

At 8pm the 6th LNL were detached from 38th Bde to get to the apex Chailak Dere to reinforce the New Zealanders. They left without even being able to get their water ration.

By the early morning of the 9th, the remaining force was arriving just short of The Farm on a small plateau. By the time that the 38th brigade had arrived there, the linked flanking attacks on the Sari Bair ridge had already gone in and had been repulsed by the Turks. Without the flanking attacks, the main attempt to capture Hill Q also failed. Having failed to be in position on time they spent the day encamped at The Farm.

A lone Gurkha battalion did reach the top of Hill Q (indicated by no. 5) on 9th August, but was unable to consolidate its position and were shelled by Royal Navy ships offshore who thought they were Turks.

On the right, the New Zealanders were to assault the southern shoulder of Chunuk Bair and extend their line towards Battleship Hill. This had two purposes - one to deflect attention from the main assault and secondly to prevent the Turks from attacking the flank of the troops in the north. During 6th and 7th August they had succeeded in seizing Old No. 3 Post, Table Top, Destroyer Hill, Bauchop's

Hill and Little Table Top (indicated by the orange arrows from no. 1) and by the 8th were holding out at Chunuk Bair awaiting the central column which had lost its way and never materialised. The 6th LNL arrived to find the line under heavy fire. There was little cover here - the trenches on Chunuk Bair were shallow, and the rearmost full of wounded. Owing to open country and exposure to hostile machine guns and artillery fire, only half the men were able to reach the trenches. During the early hours of the 10th, the enemy approached and men occupying the observation posts were immediately shot down.

From the 6th LNL War Diary :

"At 3.45am the enemy commenced throwing bombs into our trenches to which we replied. This continued until daylight when the trenches were shelled by hostile artillery, one of our own shells also dropping into the trenches.

At about 4.45am the enemy attacked in force. It was impossible to form an idea of the numbers attacking owing to bad siting of the trenches and with no provision for lookout posts. Turks attacked in lines. The first two lines were mown down by our fire. The third line reached our trenches when hand to hand fighting took place.

Although our losses were very heavy the enemy's must have been greater.

Those whoever able to retire in any sort of order joined in with Captain Mather's company in the second line where another stubborn resistance was made but the enemy were too strong and although losing heavily they soon overcame the second line by sheer force of numbers. The Battalion made a gallant resistance especially Captain Mather's Company which kept a continued fire on the hostile masses and charged three times with the bayonet until overcome.

The Battalion did everything possible to repel the hostile attack. The position was an impossible one from the start.

*Casualties: Officers missing 12; Other Ranks Killed 3 Wounded 80 **Missing 445**"*

The Turkish counter-attack consisted of 30,000 men personally led by Mustafa Kemal. It overwhelmed the allies and Chunuk Bair was lost. **It was during that night that Stephen Sharples was killed** (he was initially one of the 445 missing men and was last seen on 9th August 1915). The onslaught of Turks carried on to The Farm where they wiped out the remainder of the brigade. In the attack around 3000 men on Chunuk Bair and at The Farm were decimated.

The Sari Bair Offensive had failed. By September 1915, the 13th Division had suffered nearly 6,000 killed, wounded, or missing out of its original strength of 10,500.

Stephen is commemorated on the Helles memorial in Gallipoli :



And, along with his brother Frederick, on the war memorial at Lostock Hall :
He was posthumously awarded the 14/15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal.



Cornelius Seed	14 October 1916	
William E. Seed	12 December 1918	
Robert Shackleton DCM	25 October 1918	242016
Clifford Sharples	2 September 1916	20972
Frederick Sharples	14 August 1916	1201
Jack C. Sharples	3 May 1917	1614
James Sharples	25 September 1915	18996
James H. Sharples	26 August 1916	23580
Stephen C. Sharples	9 August 1915	17417
Henry Shaw	5 June 1916	12420

His pension was awarded to his mother. Oddly, it did not go to his widow - though she did receive his outstanding wages.

Stephen's widow, Mary, married in 1918, James Sullivan and had three more children.

Of Stephen and Mary's three surviving children -

Alice married Charles Horam when already pregnant with their first child, conceived soon after her half-brother James was born. They had two sons. Charles and Alice divorced and Alice re-married and died in 1981 in Preston.

Margaret Ann married William Noblett. They had a son, David.

Stephen married Edith Hamer - they had 3 children.

(Anne McIntyre)

4783 Private James Ross Duperouzel, 51st Battalion, AIF KIA 14/16 August 1916 (Bill's uncle)

James Ross Duperouzel was born in July 1897 and grew up on the family farm in Western Australia. In December 1915, he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force at Perth. Due to his young age, he got his parents' consent to enlist for active service overseas. On 1 April 1916, Duperouzel embarked from the port of Fremantle on board the troopship Ulysses. He disembarked in Egypt, and after training he sailed for France and arrived at Marseilles in June. Here Duperouzel joined the 51st Battalion, and during July, his battalion trained and marched toward the Somme front. Duperouzel's battalion was



part of the 1st Anzac Corps and was given the task of breaking through the German lines and driving a wedge behind the German salient there. Their objective was taking Mouquet Farm, at Pozieres. On the night of 13 August 1916, Jim's battalion moved into position to the east of Mouquet Farm. The following day, despite a heavy Allied artillery barrage, four German machine-guns were still firing when the first men leapt out of the trenches and into no man's land. The Germans shelled the Australian lines heavily. At some point between 14 and 16 August 1916, Duperouzel was killed in action. He was 19 years old. Duperouzel's remains were never identified. His name is inscribed on the Australian National Memorial at Villers - Bretonneux Military Cemetery in France.



Mentioned in Despatches



India's Great War - Adam Prime.

On Friday 19th July we had our long-awaited talk on 'India's Great War' by Adam Prime.

Adam started his talk by describing the Indian Memorial at Neuve Chapelle, which commemorates over 4,700 Indian soldiers and labourers who lost their lives on the Western Front during the First World War and have no known graves. The location of the memorial was specially chosen as it was at Neuve Chapelle in March 1915 that the Indian Corps fought its first major action as a single unit. The memorial takes the form of a sanctuary enclosed within a circular wall after the manner of the enclosing railings of early Indian shrines. The column in the foreground of the enclosure stands almost 15 feet high and was inspired by the famous inscribed columns erected by the Emperor Ashoka throughout India in the 3rd century BC. The column is surmounted with a Lotus capital, the Imperial British Crown and the Star of India. Two tigers are carved on either side of the column guarding the temple of the dead. On the lower part of the column the words 'God is One, He is the Victory' are inscribed in English, with similar texts in Arabic, Hindi, and Gurmukhi.



The memorial was designed by the celebrated British architect, Sir Herbert Baker, and unveiled by the Earl of Birkenhead on 7 October 1927. Lord Birkenhead, then Secretary of State for India, had

served as a staff officer with the Indian Corps during the war. The ceremony was also attended by the Maharaja of Karputhala, Marshal Ferdinand Foch, Rudyard Kipling, and a large contingent of Indian veterans. (CWGC)

Although the part Indian troops played in the Great War has received greater attention in the past couple of decades, a lot of their exploits remain 'forgotten'. Indian troops fought all over the conflict zones and garrisoned parts of Burma and Pakistan. Adam harked back to the Indian Mutiny and the famous 'pig fat' cartridge story, evidently these were never issued to Indian troops. After the rebellion the Northwest frontier became the emphasis, the mountainous terrain requiring the attention of 240,000 soldiers, including their British officers and British troops, the ratio being three Indians to every British. Then came the Third Anglo-Afghan war, and then WW1. Originally the Indian troops were on garrison duty in Egypt, and it came as a great surprise to most people when they were deployed to the Western Front.

The majority of the Indian troops originated from Northern India, the 'Martial Races' i.e. Sikhs and Gurkhas. Their officers came from Sandhurst, with a year in a British regiment in India to try and learn at least one of the main languages, although predictably mistakes were often made. Many senior staff such as Auchinleck had served, and seen action, with the Indian Army, by 1914 they had already fought several small wars. Lord Curzon and Kitchener set about modernising the Indian Army, for example they still were using breach loading Martini Henry rifles with black powder cartridges, the limitations of which had been hard learned in the Boer War. This modernisation had been to counter the Russian threat, which lessened somewhat after the Russia was defeated by Japan. At the beginning of the Great War Haig prepared a plan for the Indian Expeditionary Force. Adam then gave us some of the figures; 1.3 million Indian troops served, with 1.1 million of them overseas. They were awarded 9,200 decorations, including 18 VCs. 60,000 gave their lives.

At the start of the war many experienced Indian Army officers were 'pinched' for the British Army. (254 were on leave in England and were immediately commandeered, being replaced by 39 spare officers who had a command of Hindustani or Gujrati). In September 1914 the first Indian troops were in action at Ypres, they held the line (33%) at 1st Ypres despite the lack of warm uniforms and overwhelming German artillery. Sir James Willcocks was in command, a soldier-general who mixed with his troops. However, he soon fell out with Haig, who was the polar opposite, as Wilcox tried to protect his troops. At the start there were a large number of SIWs. Originally a wounded Indian soldier would be sent home with a pension, but Willcocks changed that to sending them to an aid station and then back to the front. Willcocks then hanged a couple, and the problem was solved, but that didn't prevent him being eventually sacked by Haig.

At Neuve Chappelle half the attacking force were Indian. They suffered badly in the gas attack at Loos. Support from England came from the London based Indian Soldiers Fund, who sent them, amongst other things, warm clothing. Aware of censorship, a soldier would often use coded or euphemistic language in their letters home. Black and red pepper were often mentioned, black pepper being Indian troops, and red, British. The large number of casualties led many Indians to believe that they were being used as 'cannon fodder', an opinion which they also disguised in their letters. Indian artillery and cavalry were in action at Fleur, Cambrai. The War Office had from the outset tried to look after the Indian troops, although there was always an amount of racism involved. They chose Brighton Pavilion, because of its appearance, as a hospital for Indian troops, including nine separate kitchens to accommodate the different religions. Other hospitals were set up in the New Forest. The King visited, obviously good for propaganda, but also for Indian morale.

Indian troops also were in action in East Africa, where the Germans were trying to draw British troops away from the Western Front. Despite difficult relations with the South African troops also involved, the Indians gave a good account of themselves. Other troops went to Burma, and the Suez Canal, where the Ottomans were trying to halt supplies to the Western Front. The defence involved Indian troops supported by Egyptian and British artillery. Some Muslim troops attempted to change sides, but when the Ottoman forces did cross the canal they were repulsed by an Indian bayonet charge. 16,000 Indian troops were at Gallipoli, especially at Anzac Cove. The 14th Sikhs were cut to ribbons but held their ground, and their fighting qualities and devotion were duly praised.

A setback occurred on the 15th February 1915 when the 5th Native Light Infantry mutinied at Singapore, releasing the crew of the Emden from their POW camp. This anti-British feeling in Singapore was stirred up by local activists, but also by other grievances. Not all the Indian troops took part, but for ten days the mutineers shot any Europeans they came across, until martial law was declared, and the rebellion put down by British troops and the crews from ships. Forty-one of the mutineers were hanged or shot, the rest imprisoned.

In the Middle East the British, including 6th Indian division, under Sir Charles Townsend moved into Mesopotamia to deny the Axis forces oil. They were forced to retreat and were surrounded by the Ottomans at Kut. Running out of supplies, the Indian troops refused to eat horsemeat, weakening them even further. Kut fell, the worst British defeat of the War.

In Palestine 1917 - 18 Allenby captured Jerusalem with Anzac cavalry and Indian Infantry, what Winston Churchill referred to as 'A Christmas present for the English people' Allenby had done very well with the green troops he commanded. The 3rd Sepoys sent as re-enforcements had never even handled a rifle, so Allenby quickly established a training regime that proved very effective.

In India the Ottomans had called for a Muslim Jihad. Kitchener wanted to move all British troops to the Western Front, but General Duff, Commander in Chief, India, wanted these same troops to hold back the Afghans. A few British troops were left in India and territorial Battalions were sent over for training. Austen Chamberlin, the secretary of state for India was worried that the fall of Kut would encourage the Afghans to attack. India itself was attacked by the Emden which shelled oil tanks, helpfully painted white with red stripes for an excellent target! Several million pounds worth of damage was caused, and thousands fled, causing further chaos. Adam finished his fascinating talk with the story of Sepoy Chatta Singh who was awarded the VC by leaving cover to rescue his commanding officer under heavy fire, a stirring example of Indian bravery and commitment.

John Nichols. Last Remembrance Day, Jim and I listened to an evocative and moving address given by the historian John Nichols at the service at the Guard's Chapel. Just recently John has contacted WFA chairs with details of his new book on the Unknown Warrior, details below, and an invitation to his accompanying lecture tour. You will see that the nearest one to us is on the **4th November at the Royal and Derngate at Northampton**, which I shall certainly try to attend. (He is also at The Grove Theatre Dunstable on 27th October)

THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR - A Personal Journey of Discovery and Remembrance is published on the 26th September and accompanied by John's nationwide theatre show (from the 4th October) where the story will be brought to life with haunting visuals and an arousing sound scape. Full details and theatre venue/tickets available at: www.JohnNicholLive.com

In an emotional quest, the RAF veteran and Gulf War prisoner-of-war's new book explores the Unknown Warrior's journey from the First World War battlefields to his final resting place in

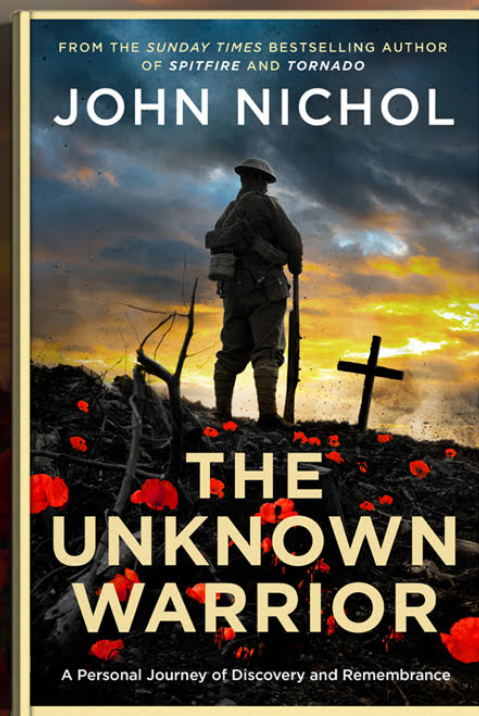
Westminster Abbey. Shining light on the 100-year-old story, John interviews relatives of those involved, and seeks out modern experts in battlefield trauma, recovery of the dead, and the complexities of organising grand ceremonial occasions. And exploring the ongoing concept of loss and remembrance, he speaks to those who lost loved ones in more modern conflicts, where the bodies were never located.

Prof Peter Doyle wrote: *"The Unknown Warrior's shrine has been a focal point for those who have lost loved ones in conflict for over a century - as relevant today as it was in the aftermath of the Great War. John Nichol's wonderful and eminently readable book is the story behind this remarkable tomb, told by one who has seen war at first hand"*

And historian **Dr Robert Lyman** says: *"I was very moved by John Nichol's THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR; it is a beautiful, compassionate, emotional book. Utterly fabulous; an astonishing achievement"*.

'It is rare to find a tale so strange, intimate and human yet at the same time so enormous, so global in its importance. Yet again John Nichol impresses us with his ability to weave together the little details and the grand narrative'

**DAN SNOW,
HISTORIAN**



THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR

Over one million British Empire soldiers died during the First World War. More than a century later, over half still have no known grave. In 1920, one body was buried in Westminster Abbey to represent all of the nation's missing.

Tornado Navigator and prisoner-of-war John Nichol retraces the Unknown Warrior's journey home from the battlefields of Northern France to Westminster Abbey.

In this remarkable and highly emotive theatrical experience, brought to life with haunting visuals, and an arousing sound scape, the audience will be taken back to these explosive times and experience, the fervour of those that have gone before us.



Fri 4 Oct
Stourbridge Town Hall
 Stourbridge boroughhalls.co.uk

Sat 5 Oct
Elgiv Chesham elgiva.com

Sun 6 Oct
Pavillion Theatre
 Worthing wtm.uk

Mon 7 Oct
City Varieties Music Hall
 Leeds leedsheritagetheatres.com

Wed 9 Oct
The Atkinson Southport
theatkinson.co.uk

Thu 10 Oct
Royal Spa Centre
 Leamington Spa
warwickdc.gov.uk/royalspacentre

Fri 11 Oct
Redgrave Theatre Bristol
redgravetheatre.com

Sun 13 Oct
New Theatre Royal Portsmouth
newtheatreroyal.com

Mon 14 Oct
Exeter Northcott Theatre
 Exeter exeternorthcott.co.uk

Tue 15 Oct
Epsom Playhouse Epsom
epsomplayhouse.co.uk

Wed 16 Oct
The Alban Arena St Albans
alban-arena.co.uk

Thu 17 Oct
Courtyard Theatre Hereford
courtyard.org.uk

Tue 22 Oct
Westlands Yeovil
westlandseyovil.co.uk

Wed 23 Oct
Swan Theatre Worcester
worcestertheatres.co.uk

Thu 24 Oct
Devonshire Park Theatre
 Eastbourne
eastbournetheatres.co.uk

Fri 25 Oct
Theatre Royal Winchester
 Winchester
theatreroyalwinchester.co.uk

Sat 26 Oct
The Riverfront Newport
newportlive.co.uk/riverfront

Sun 27 Oct
Grove Theatre Dunstable
grovetheatre.co.uk

Mon 28 Oct
Buxton Opera House Buxton
buxtonoperahouse.org.uk

Tue 29 Oct
The Hawth Crawley
hawth.co.uk

Wed 30 Oct
New Theatre Peterborough
newtheatre-peterborough.com

Sat 2 Nov
Lighthouse Poole
lighthousepoole.co.uk

Sun 3 Nov
Theatre Severn Shrewsbury
theatresevern.co.uk

Mon 4 Nov
Royal & Derngate Northampton
royalndderngate.co.uk

Tue 5 Nov
The Fire Station Sunderland
thefirestation.org.uk

Thu 7 Nov
Storyhouse Chester
storyhouse.com

JohnNicholLive.com

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The Herts Constabulary Great War Society trip to Ypres.

The Herts Constabulary Great War Society have asked if any of our members would be interested in joining them on their trip executive coach trip to the Ypres Salient. The trip starts on Friday 5th September 2025 and includes 3 days and 2 nights at the Novotel Ypres Centre. The closing dates for deposits, which are refundable, has been extended to 1st November 2024.

Here is their trip information etc....

Due to the unprecedented hike in the cost of Eurotunnel we will be using the DFDS Ferry which includes a meal voucher for each passenger on both crossings. However please bring with you a packed lunch should you require food between your onboard breakfast and your evening meal.

You must have a valid Passport with at least six months remaining.

It is intended that our trip will include visits to the following: -

Day 1 - Friday 5 September

05.30 from HQ (Welwyn Garden City) 06.50 from Ebbsfleet International Station

DFDS Ferry (Dover to Calais)

Lijssenhoek cemetery

Poperinghe (Toc H, Condemned Cell and Ginger's statue)

Essex Farm Cemetery,

19.30 Group participation at the Menin Gate wreath laying

Day 2 - Saturday 6 September

Passchendaele Ridge (Tyne Cot Cemetery)

St Julien (Herts War Memorial)

Langemark German Cemetery

Harry Patch Corner plus Welsh memorial.

Lunch at Hooge crater café and museum (included in tour price) visit to cemetery across the road

After lunch a walk along the Ramparts from the newly refurbished Menin Gate finishing at The Kazmatten microbrewery, located in one of the Ramparts casemates used during World War One. Evening at Leisure.

Day 3 - Sunday 7 September

Messines Ridge taking in the football memorial and New Zealand soldier statue,

Irish Peace Tower, Prowse Point Cemetery and trenches

Berks memorial and cemetery, Ploegsteert 14 - 18 museum

Lunch at L'Auberge (Ploegsteert) included in tour price.

Return Ferry crossing DFDS and drop offs as above.

It is hoped to provide this trip at

£450 Per person sharing Twin or Double **£550** Per person in a single room

To secure your place on this wonderful trip please complete the below booking form and send a £50 **refundable** deposit via bank transfer details as shown on the booking form which can be found on the buttons below.

If you have any problems with the buttons please email us at hertsgreatwar@virginmedia.com

Best wishes, Colin



[Booking form as a Word document \(DOCX\)](#)

[Booking form as a PDF](#)

Sudden Death - The development of combat sniping in the Trenches 1914 - 18 (Part three).



Source 48 American snipers training 1917 - 18 in ghillie suits.

[www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4338200/Kit-Allied-sharpshooters-used-pick-enemy-targets]

Some snipers used early versions of ghillie suits made from hessian sacks, burlap, and other materials, which were covered in natural materials like twigs, leaves, and grass to create a camouflage effect that helped them blend into their surroundings more effectively. A stationary sniper could remain unseen even within a distance of a few feet. When full body cover was not needed snipers wore a camouflaged hood with an eye slit covered with gauze making the snipers face virtually invisible.



Source 49 Sniper hood [IBID]

The illustrations in 'Sniping in France' show how effective sniper camouflage could be. They show clearly how much an army cap was visible. So much so that it is referred to as 'the Fatal cap'. Hesketh

- Prichard explained the danger: 'Any flat surface worn on the top of the head is certain to catch every bit of light and the flash of light means movement and draws the observers telescope as magnet draws metal' Source50 [Sniping in France <https://archive.org>] The sniper in the same photograph is difficult to discern even at the distance of 8 yards.



Source 51 The fatal cap and the sniper. [Sniping in France <https://archive.org>]



Source 52 Snipers robe [IBID] When taking a shot, snipers used very low-profile firing positions, often lying flat on the ground or using a rest to stabilize their rifles. This minimized the chance of being seen.

Training also emphasised how important it was for snipers to utilise shade which to blend into the battlefield environment.

Snipers used a variety of innovative methods to conceal themselves such as fake trees and 'dead animals' These were extremely effective for both observation and sniping.

Dead animals were a common sight in on and near the front lines, so these artificial hides fitted naturally with the surroundings. They were constructed from papier-mâché, wood, and metal frameworks covered with fabric and painted to look realistic. They were positioned in areas where



FIRST ARMY SCHOOL S.O.S.
Showing effects and importance of light and shade.

[To face p. 156.]

Source 53Light and shade [IBID]

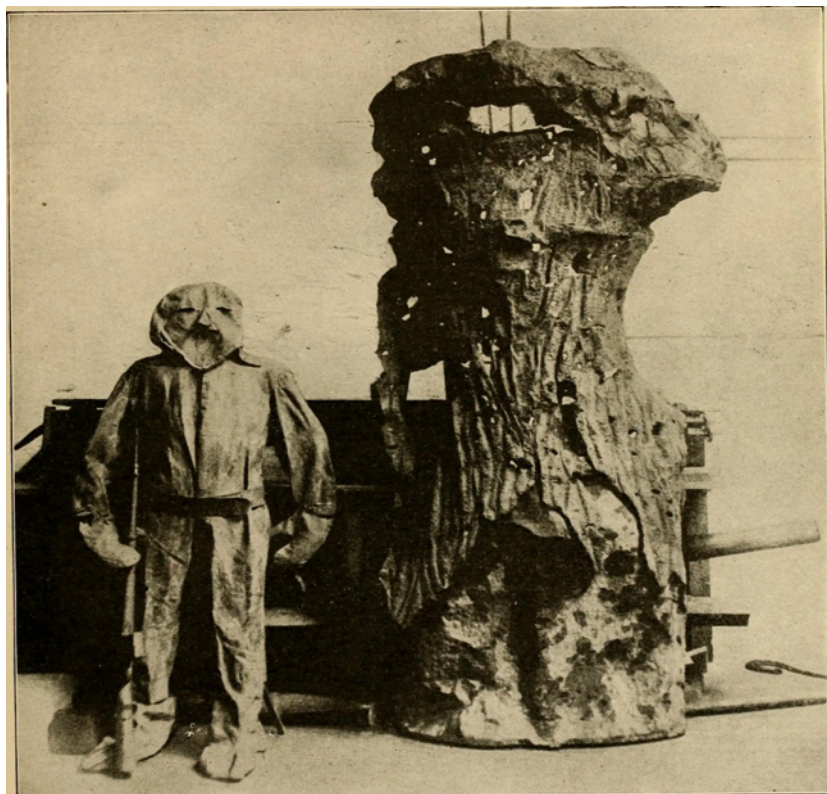
dead animals would naturally be found, such as near destroyed artillery positions or amidst rubble. Snipers and observers hid inside the hollowed-out fake animal or beneath it, using the carcass as a cover.



Source 54 'Dead animal hide' [Histoire des SNIPERS: des origines à 1918

Le Feu aux Poudres You tube documentary]

Fake trees were used on the Western Front in forests woodlands and were constructed to replicate the local tree types in the area. Both the British and the Germans used fake tree on the Somme 1916. The fakes were made from a metal frame covered with bark and branches. Inside there was sufficient space for the sniper or the observer to fit. There were slits through which the sniper could see and fire.



Source 55 German sniper and fake tree [IBID]



Source 56 Demonstration photograph of a Fake tree [IBID]

Sniper teams were organised in pairs- a sniper and an observer, using binoculars or a telescope. After about 30 minutes using binoculars there is eye strain and vision deteriorates so they could swap roles to maintain efficiency.



Source 57 Sniper team [IBIB]



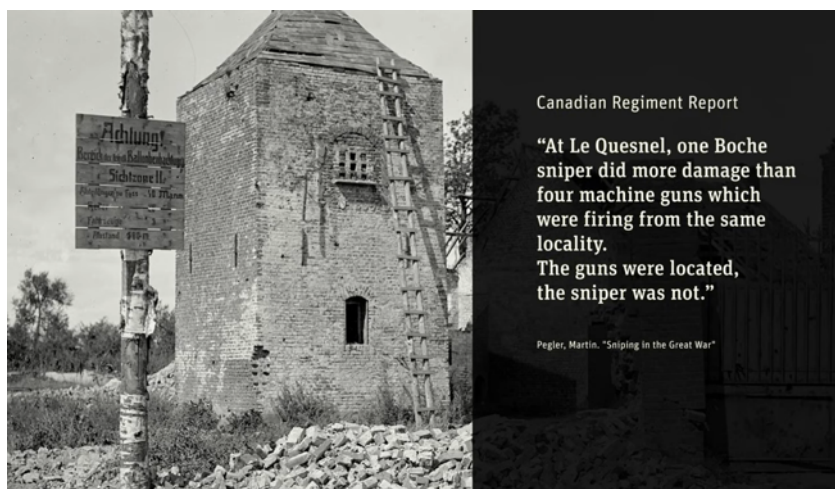
Source 58 Sniper and observer from the roof of Antons farm near Ploegsteert Wood 1915[
<https://www.iwm.org.uk>]



Source 59 Sniper team Gallipoli 1915[<https://www.iwm.org.uk>]

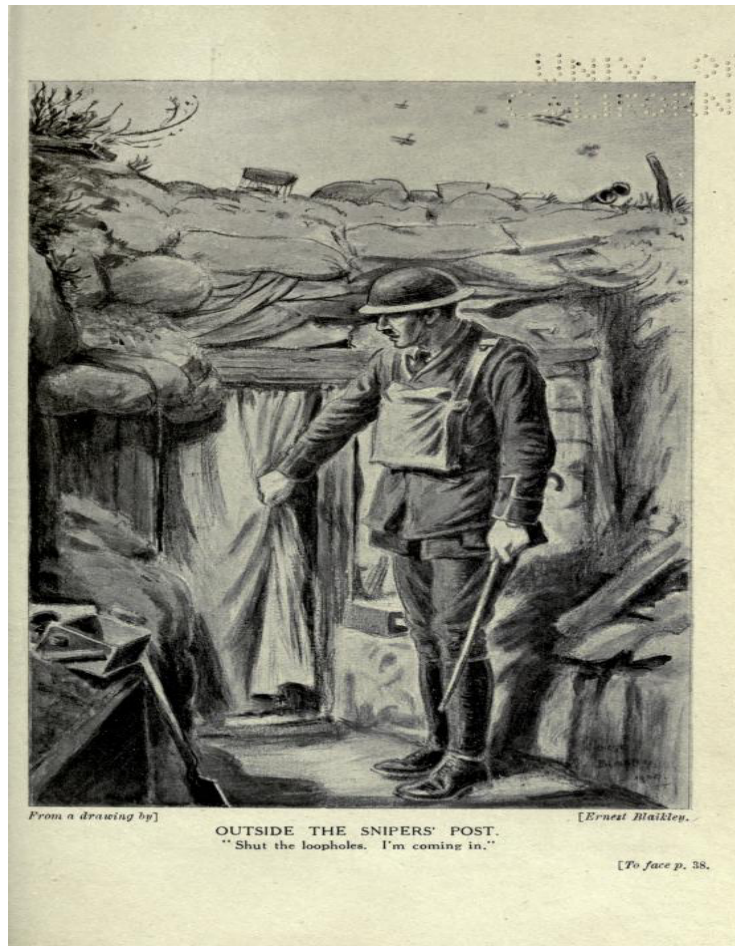
Observers would wrap telescopes in sandbag material to stop light refraction movement, but it must be kept clean. Hesketh Prichard states 'great care must be taken to ascertain that such disguise is kept free of dust or grit'. 53 [Sniping in France <https://archive.org>]

Snipers operated in three main areas- buildings and positions behind the Line , in the Frontline trench and sometimes within No Mans Land.



Source 60 Sniper position in buildings behind the lines['Sharpshooters and snipers in World War One' [You tube Documentary]

Snipers would position themselves in buildings slightly behind the front lines. These positions provided a broader view of the battlefield but if spotted these positions attracted heavy fire .Sometimes snipers moved forward to advanced observation posts situated in No Man's Land. Often shell holes or purpose-built hides being very close to the enemy positions. Hesketh Prichard called them 'The Wild Boys' source 61[Sniping in France <https://archive.org>]**It** was extremely dangerous, movement was difficult and only one shot could be taken from such an exposed position. Most experienced snipers a short distance back from the frontline trenches where they would have a series of prepared hides so they could move between shots which made it much more difficult to be spotted.



Source 62 Gagging the loophole and heavy curtain to block the light. [IBID]

In the frontline trench snipers operated from loopholes in a jumble of sandbags and dug outs. In these positions it was essential to keep the loophole plugged with a piece of rag and a heavy cloth curtain was hung at the entrance to prevent any light giving the position away.

During the war several snipers gained fame for their exceptional marksmanship and skill



Source 63 <https://www.thefirearmblog.com/blog/2016/07/21/the-best-sniper-from-the-great-war-francis-pegahmagabow/>

Francis Pegahmagabow served in the 1st Canadian Infantry Battalion. He is credited with 378 sniper kills. He was awarded the Military Medal for his bravery. His skill and courage made him a legendary figure in Canadian military history, and he is honoured today as a prominent Indigenous war hero.



Source 64 Francis Pegahmagabow Memorial Parry Sound, Photo Credit Tim Laye, Ontario War Memorials [<https://cefrg.ca/blog/francis-pegahmagabow/>]



Source 65 William 'Billy' Sing ['Sharpshooters and snipers in World War One' [You tube Documentary]

'Billy' Sing is known as the "Gallipoli Sniper," He served with the Australian 5th Light Horse Regiment. He credited with over 150 confirmed kills during the Gallipoli Campaign. His contributions were crucial during the Gallipoli Campaign. He was awarded the British Distinguished Conduct Medal in 1916 for '

'Conspicuous gallantry from May to September 1915 at Anzac as a sniper. His courage and skill were most marked, and he was responsible for a very large number of casualties among the enemy, no risk being too great for him to take.' Source 66 [Alistair Kennedy, Chinese Anzacs: Australians of Chinese Descent in the Defence Forces 1885-1919]

Billy also served on the Western Front. In 1917 he saw action leading an anti-sniper fighting patrol at Polygon Wood, Belgium. He was Mentioned in Dispatches for gallantry, and in 1918, awarded the Belgian Croix de Guerre.



Source 67 The memorial of William (Billy) Edward Sing

[<https://monumentaustralia.org.au/themes/people/military/display/91125-billy-sing-memorial>]

Billy returned to Australia suffering from PTSD. The war had scarred him with both physically, emotionally and he became a heavy drinker. His health declined and he died of heart failure aged 57 in 1943.



Source 68 Billy Sing's last known surviving relative Don Smith at the memorial in Lutwyche Cemetery. [<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-05-19/qld-sniper-billy-sing-honoured-with-cemetery-memorial/6481240>]

Clearly, the psychological impact of sniping undoubtedly had a corrosive effect on some. T Durst said:

'For years after the war I used to wake up in the early hours and go walking to forget some of the things I'd seen and done. I never told anyone I had been a sniper, not even my wife. They wouldn't have understood' Source 69 [Interview quoted in Sniping in the Great War -Martin Pegler]

Others were torn by the moral question of killing by sniping but remembered it was their job. Victor Ricketts says 'It's not too pleasant to have a fellow human in one's sights with such clarity as to almost be able to see the colour of his eyes and have knowledge that in a matter of seconds another life will meet an untimely death. However, one had to be callous after all it was an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth' Source 70 [Interview from Sniper: One on One Adrian Gilbert]

Yet others had no qualms about killing. H W McBride an American sniper states 'What the Devil are we here for? A Summer picnic? To me it was a great game' Source 71 [IBID]

Often the soldiers in the Frontline trenches saw the snipers as a mixed blessing. They acted against enemy snipers and shot out observation periscopes. However their actions could incur retaliation by enemy fire with artillery and mortars, but the snipers had long since moved their position leaving the remaining soldiers to take casualties. Private A E Sparks remembers: 'I never liked them [snipers] They would shoot some poor Hun and then bugger off and we'd get it in the neck. Our Officer used to chase them out, telling them to ply their murderous bloody trade somewhere else' Source 72 [Quoted in Sniping in the Great War Martin Pegler]

In a podcast interview Martin Pegler explains the attitude towards snipers. He states that it 'wasn't unknown for them to be killed on the spot' Source 73 [<https://kensingtons.org.uk/podcast/sniping-in-the-great-war-martin-pegler/>] He also summarises the attitude of ordinary soldiers who believed it was necessary but not proper war and 'rather ungentlemanly'. Pegler says, 'There is always this dichotomy between their own men wanting them to take o the Germans and beat them but at the same time not really liking them very much" Source 74 [IBID]

Leaving aside the morality , one can conclude, the development of methods and technology of snipers was an important element in the static war in the trenches. Snipers' ability to strike with accuracy without warning from concealed positions instilled a constant sense of anxiety, fear, and vulnerability among enemy troops.

Additionally, snipers played a crucial role in intelligence gathering, providing critical reconnaissance that informed broader military planning for operations.

Finally, snipers marked one new facet of the changing nature of industrial, large-scale warfare. They became vital components of the military strategy, significantly impacting the tactics and psychology of modern war.

Paul Salver

(Many thanks for this fascinating article Paul.)

World War One in Objects, 19. Helles Lighthouse trench Art



This trench art ashtray comes from Kevin's collection and was made at Helles, Gallipoli. A cottage industry of trench art ashtrays made from the copper of the Helles lighthouse dome appears to have been established by a member of the 29th (British) Division, with several ashtrays with similar inscriptions being produced. Engraved entries identified the maker of most of them as Battery Sergeant E H Cleall, 14th Siege Battery, 29 Division. M.E.F., and that he was based in the vicinity of the remains of the lighthouse. The lighthouse had been shelled and destroyed by the British destroyers HMS 'Prince of Wales' and 'London' on Easter Sunday, 1915.

The buyers of the ashtrays were able to have them personalised, for a small additional fee, by the addition of their name and unit details. These appear to have been added using professional steel punches, owing to the accuracy, depth and precision of the lettering on the examples examined.

Kevin reports that Battery Sergeant Cleall was drowned when the troop transport he was on was sunk. The liner Transylvania was completed just before the outbreak of the First World War and was taken over for service as a troop transport on completion with her capacity of 200 officers and 2,860 men plus her crew. On 3 May 1917 she left Marseilles for Alexandria with an escort of two Japanese destroyers, the Matsu and the Sakaki.

At 10 am on the 4th the Transylvania was struck in the port engine room by a torpedo from a German submarine the U-63 whilst on a zig-zag course at a speed of 14 knots. At the time she was South of Cape Vado in the Gulf of Genoa. The Matsu came alongside to take off the troops, whilst the Sakaki manouvered to keep the submarine submerged. Twenty minutes later a second torpedo was seen coming straight for the destroyer alongside, which saved herself by going astern at full speed. The torpedo then struck the Transylvania and she sank very quickly, less than an hour having elapsed since she was first hit.

(<https://www.westernfrontassociation.com/world-war-i-articles/the-loss-of-the-hmt-transylvania-4-may-1917/>)



Barry Kitchener's talk, 'The Forgotten Germans,' throws a spotlight on a little known and rarely mentioned aspect of the Great War. During the First World War the British government wanted to utilize the symbolic power that the Tower of London had become by executing eleven German spies convicted of espionage within the same walls that saw the deaths of prisoners such as Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Thomas More, and Queen Anne Boleyn. Barry will reveal the fascinating story of the German spies executed in the Tower of London: who they were, their activities, their capture, their imprisonment, their execution, and the often-unexpected fallout. Many of the spies became martyrs to the German cause and public relations disasters were all too common. A great story, thought provoking and not to be missed.

September 14/15/16th MK WFA at MK Museum Heritage event.

September 20th 'The Forgotten Germans'- Barry Kitchener

October 19th SEMINAR 'A Great War Miscellany' at the Old Bathhouse, Wolverton

November 4th John Nichols at the Royal and Derngate Northampton,

November 15th 'The Lost Battalion' - Jim Nicolson (with fish and chip supper!)

December 20th Christmas review, slide show and quiz, plus festive fare.

Meetings are 7.30 - 9.30 at Wolverton Working Men's Social Club, 49 - 50, Stratford Road MK12 5LS

Committee members are...

Stuart Macfarlan - Chairman (macfarlan87@gmail.com)

Anne McIntyre - Secretary/historical events co-ordinator (annefmmcintyre@gmail.com)

Ian Wright - Talks organiser

Caroline Wright - Treasurer

Jim Barrett - Seminar and visits co-ordinator

George Maby - Wolverton Town Council liaison (Twinning and Albert French commemoration)

Gary Short - Social Media co-ordinator.



THE WESTERN FRONT
ASSOCIATION

Following on from the success of last year's seminar,
Milton Keynes Branch is hosting a 2024 event

"A Great War Miscellany"

on 19th October 9.30am – 4.30pm



There is an excellent line up of professional speakers on a wide variety of topics :

Major Charlie Barrett - *"The Story of the Q-Ships"*

Nigel Crompton - *"Women's Police Service in the Great War"*

Helen Frost - *"When the Land Ships came to Town"*

Peter Hart & Gary Bain - *"Fly or Cry" (Dark humour in the RFC)*



Additionally, there will be short talks and
demonstrations by

The Great War Society

Ticket includes an excellent buffet lunch, and free tea & coffee will be available throughout the day.

Static displays and second-hand book stall (cash please).

Venue: The Old Bath House, Wolverton

205 Stratford Rd, MK12 5RL (Free car park, 4min from station.)

Book early to avoid disappointment. Tickets available priced £30 each by emailing wfa.miltonkeynes@gmail.com