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Silver War Badge

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The photograph on the front cover was taken by the Editor on the 2019 Branch Battlefield Tour
It shows the bridge over the River Aisne at Venizel crossed by 11th Brigade on 13th September 1914

From the Chairman

We have had another full season of speakers, talking about many diverse subjects and I very much hope that the regular attendees have found something to interest them. I hope too, that the upcoming programme will 'pull in the crowds' as it were!

We have been very fortunate to be able to book Professor Peter Stanley for the November meeting, who is visiting Great Britain on a six-month sabbatical from his Australian university. Peter and some of his colleagues run the Canberra branch of our association. I do hope that as many of you as possible will be able to attend not only this meeting, but many more. Please note that this has necessitated a change to the programme of speakers.

This brings me onto attendance at meetings, which is something that has of late been bothering the committee. The trend is, in general, taking a downturn. This is not just our branch; I have had reports from other branches saying that they are having similar issues. There are many reasons for this and I think that in many respects this is to be expected as the membership is getting older and I know that some of our members no longer attend because they are no longer comfortable with driving in the evening for instance.

Our worst attendance was the January meeting, which can be directly attributable to the fact the weather forecast was bad and so it is not surprising that many felt unable to come along and is perfectly understandable. The following two meetings made up for this with the visits of the two professors; Simkins and Sheffield! Nevertheless, the trend is downwards.

To that end, we have decided to propose, as an experiment, to book a 'big name' speaker for one meeting per season. This, however, will be costly as some require a fee that it is beyond our finances to afford ordinarily, and we would therefore have to request a larger donation for that meeting. I am going to take a 'straw poll' on this at the September meeting to gauge enthusiasm for this plan. I would also welcome email responses after you have read this.

Our annual branch tour was a great success. We had decided to re-visit the Aisne battlefield, but we had some earlier concerns due to some sporting thing or other that had made finding a hotel with enough rooms for us all an issue, mostly because of the journeys we needed to do every day to get there from Compiègne, where we ended up staying. We needn't have worried; Compiègne was a delightful place to stay with much to offer and enabled us to visit the Armistice museum, where I for one, had never been before! The full report should be later in this issue.

As a regular attendee/contributor at our Armistice Day Cenotaph/Guards Chapel service I was informed by the association chairman, Colin Wagstaff, that the Met had warned the EC that they may not be able to police the event. However, the Met have now informed the WFA that in fact we can go ahead as usual. I know that this will be good news to those branch members who usually join me in London. It is a moving and enjoyable event with the lunch afterwards and I would welcome seeing other members there!

I hope to see as many of you as possible at meetings throughout the upcoming season!

Barbara Taylor

John Sharpey-Schafer RN 1881-1918

Chris Nash

Malacca on the west coast of Malaysia is a port city full of history with interesting remnants of early Portuguese, Dutch and British settlements. Malacca is strategically situated at the head of the Malacca Straits on the West coast of Malaysia



Christ Church Malacca

opposite the island of Sumatra. From early days it controlled the key spice and tea trading route between India and China and today with Singapore at the southern end it is still one of the world's busiest shipping routes. In 1824 the port was ceded by the Dutch to the East India Company; in 1867 Malacca was integrated into the Straits Settlements, British Crown Colony territories in the region. In 1957 Malacca became part of independent Malaya.

Palm-oil and rubber tree plantations were introduced by the British in the 1870s and these industries rapidly became the major contributor to



the Malayan economy. In recent times palm-oil has become the dominant force in the country. However in the early 1900s rubber plantations created the most important export and this activity was controlled by large British-owned enterprises such as the Dunlop Rubber Co. which employed young men from Britain to manage the



HMS Bonaventure on the China Station

plantations. A WW1 Memorial in Christ Church Malacca has a number of names of British planters who served in the war. One name in particular, that of **John Sharpey—Schafer**, came from a distinguished family and makes for an interesting research subject.

Eldest son of Sir Edward Albert Sharpey-Schafer FRS, distinguished professor of medicine at St Thomas' Hospital and professor of physiology who first described the functions of the endocrine glands and also developed the artificial resuscitation process.

The eldest of two sons, John completed tough junior officer training on HMS Britannia moored in Dartmouth.

He then transferred to serve as a Midshipman on 'HMS Bonaventure' on the China Station, where he took part in the operations connected with the Boxer Rebellion in 1899-1901, being awarded the China Medal.

After that he served as Sub-Lieutenant in home waters, and then as a Lieutenant on the Indian Station, where he was engaged in various expeditions connected with the suppression of the slave trade and the illicit importation of arms on the Somaliland coast and in the Persian Gulf.

He was appointed Naval Assistant in the Hydrographic Department of the Admiralty in March 1907 and, at his own request, was placed

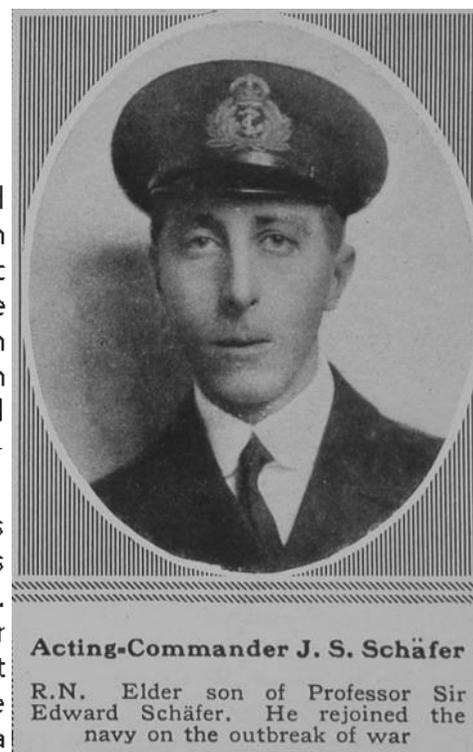
on the Retired List as a Lieut.-Commander in 1912.

Sharpey-Schafer then worked as the manager of the Devon Estates rubber plantation in Malacca. At the outbreak of the Great War John 'Jack' Schafer was first appointed to the Staff of the Admiral in command of the China Station at Singapore; and in Jan. 1915 he was appointed to H.M.S. King George V, Flagship of the 2nd Battle Squadron and was present at the Battle of Jutland on 31 May, 1916.

In November 1917, he was selected for special surveying service in connection with the establishment of the Great Northern Barrage Minefield between Scotland and Norway, and, with the rank of Acting Commander, was appointed in command of H.M.S. Gaillardia, a Flower Class sloop, for that purpose. On 22nd March 1918, in the North Sea, off the Orkney Islands, she was carrying out buoying operations in the newly-laid Northern Barrage, which was intended to interrupt the passage of U-boats into the North Atlantic between Scotland and Norway, when she was blown up and sunk by one of the barrage mines. There were no survivors from the 93 crew.

John Sharpey-Schafer is commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial and on the Singapore Cenotaph.

John's brother Thomas Sydney (24) after taking a degree at Caius College, Cambridge, studied medicine at University College in 1914 he enlisted in the Army (Northumberland Fusiliers) and was killed at Loos on 26 September 1915 whilst working with the Australian Field Hospital (Caius College, Cambridge lost nine men in the first two days of the Battle of Loos). His remains were not found and he is com-



memorated on the Loos Memorial at Dud Corner.

Sir Edward Sharpey-Schafer therefore lost both his talented sons, with neither body being recovered.

Stow-Maries Aerodrome Visit

5th August 2019

Stowe Maries (now Grade II Listed) is Europe's largest surviving First World War Aerodrome. It has survived with many of its original buildings, as for many years they were used by a local farmer for his animals. The buildings are now gradually being restored by the charitable trust that owns it, and they have big plans!

The aerodrome was commissioned in 1916, as the base for a Home Defence Squadron to protect the capital and the home front. The threat from Zeppelins soon turned into the threat of German Gotha and Giant bombers and in 1917 37 (Home Defence) 'A' squadron was posted to the aerodrome to meet the challenges they presented. By 1918 the Headquarters flight of 37 squadron was also at Stowe Maries and there were 16 aircraft with 219 personnel.

In August, Thames Valley branch treasurer Nigel and chairperson Barbara took a carload of eager aviation fans to visit. Visitors are encouraged to start their day in the very atmospheric original building of the Airman's mess (which has great carrot cake for the visitor who has endured the M25).

The tour of the aerodrome begins with the parade ground, where there is a memorial to all the men and women of 37 Defence Squadron. The visitor enters the pilots' "ready room", where the pilots waited for take-off orders, with displays, panoramas and details of the original pilots.



Replica 1915 Morane-Saulnier Type N at Stow Maries

More original buildings include the technical stores, the ambulance shed (with vehicles). The fuel store, and the blacksmith's shed, the airman's latrines, barrack blocks, and the senior NCOs' accommodation, but not all these are open for inside inspection as their restoration is still in progress.

Unfortunately, the original wooden hangars have not yet been rebuilt, but it is possible to see their outline on the ground. In two modern hangars the visitor can view several replicas of First World War planes including a Fokker Ell, a Nieuport 17, and a F.E.2G.

The museum section is exceptionally informative, with displays on the mechanics of First World War Aviation, the air defence of Britain and the narrative of the air attacks endured by those in range of the German bombers.

It is a great day out, with expert guides, informative displays and good food. We recommend an outing to one of their flying days' next year when the still operational aerodrome is host to some historic aeroplanes that fly!



HMS Gaillardia of the Aubretia Class

A late portrait of Sir Edward Sharpey-Schafer (1850-1935) by William Walls (1860-1942) which may show the effects of his loss



Branch Battlefield Tour 2019

A slight drop in participants for the 2019 Battlefield Tour in June meant that, instead of the usual two minibuses, the 18 members used one minibus and two cars. Another change was brought about as a result of the Women's Football World Cup, as there were no hotel rooms available in the Reims area, necessitating a stay in Compiègne, which resulted in a significant drive on most days to reach the area we wanted to cover, the 1917 French battles on the Chemin des Dames, and the 1914 and 1918 battles on the Aisne, including the Second Battle of the Marne.

Our journey to Compiègne included a stop at Cantigny to consider the first solely American action of the War on 30th May 1918, but on the Monday morning we moved back in time to 1914 and looked at four of the places where the BEF crossed the River Aisne in September 1914, including that at Venizel which can be seen on the front of this Poppy.

That afternoon we visited three of the four cemeteries at Soupir, including the large Italian one from 1918, where we heard about the Italian contribution to the battles on the Western Front. That afternoon we visited three of the four cemeteries at Soupir, including the large Italian one from 1918, where we heard about the Italian contribution to the battles on the Western Front.

On Tuesday morning we continued our exploration of the 1914 battles with a visit to Bourg-et-Comin, where the Irish Dragoon Guards

crossed the Aisne on 13th September 1914, and also to Longueval-Barbonval where 19 of the 9th Lancers were killed by enemy shellfire whilst preparing to leave their billets, as well as hearing about two VC actions near Vendresse, and the so-called 'white flag' incident near Troyon.



The Group in front of the French tank at Choléra Crossroads

That afternoon we moved to the Chemin des Dames to see the precipitous Tranchee du Balcon assaulted by the French 201st Regiment on the first day of the 1917 Nivelle Offensive, before visiting the Basques Monument and the adjoining Rugbymen Memorial, where Linda Parker also told us about French Army chaplains. Wednesday was mainly spent considering French actions around the Chemin des Dames.

In the morning Brian Sowerby told us about an action in January 1915 on the heights overlooking Soissons before we moved to the Moulin de Laffaux where we looked at the considerable number of French memorials that were relocated there in recent years whilst Brian told us about the French actions there during the 1917 Nivelle Offensive.

The afternoon began at Choléra Crossroads to look at the site of the first French tank action of the war, and to view the tank memorial and the Schneider tank displayed there. After that we moved to Bois de Buttes by way of the memorial in Ville-aux-Bois that commemorates the sacrificial action of the 2nd Battalion of the Devonshires on the first day the German assault known as Operation Blücher, May 27th, 1918. At Bois de Buttes we heard about the Franco-Polish poet Guillaume Apollinaire and Charles de Gaulle, both of whom served there in 1915, as well as the Devonshire's action. Wednesday ended at the bridge over the Canal Lateral à l'Aisne at

Concevreux in order to see the site of the action of the 6th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers between 25th and 28th May 1918, during which their Chaplain was killed.

The morning of Thursday, our last complete day, was spent walking around Fismes, the site of fierce street fighting by the U.S. 28th and 32nd Divisions and others, following their advance from the River Ourcq, and their failed attempts to cross the River Vesle at Fismes and also at nearby Bazoches.



During Thursday afternoon we continued to follow the Americans, although logistics dictated that we did it in the reverse directions. Having visited the locations of the 15th (Scottish) Division actions at Buzancy (where 255 members of the 8th Battalion Seaforth Highlanders are buried) and Taux, following that Division taking over from the exhausted Americans, we moved to the edge of the ravine at Missy-au-Bois, where we heard about the combined assault by the U.S. 1st Division (Big Red One) and the French and Moroccan divisions on either side of them, and the problems caused by the four small but deep ravines, heavily defended by the Germans, that ran across the route of their advance. To end Thursday, we moved to Dommiers and St. Pierre-Aigle to see where the French Renault FT-17 tanks of the 1st Moroccan Division formed up and then commenced their counter-attack on Chaudun on 31st May 1918.

On the morning of our final day we visited a number of sites local to Compiègne. Starting with the memorial to the French fighter ace Georges Guynemer, who lived in Compiègne as a child, we then stopped outside his childhood home in Rue Saint-Lazaire.



French Schneider CA1 tank

A Second World War site followed, when we stopped at the location of the last train to leave Compiègne for Buchenwald, in August 1944, where Don Farr read us a truly horrific description of the journey.

Our final stop before heading for England was the Clairière de l'Armistice in the Forest of Compiègne where both the 1918 Armistice and the 1940 Surrender of France were signed in a railway carriage. The original vehicle was destroyed towards the end of the Second World War, but an identical carriage is on display in the museum at the site.

It was the usual excellent tour with well-researched presentations by Brian Sowerby, Don Farr, Linda Parker, Barbara Taylor, Trevor Hancock, Niall Ferguson, and a new participant, Andrew Mullen, and to our minibuses and car drivers.

In 2020 we intend to cover the parts of the Second Battle of the Marne that were too far to reach this time.



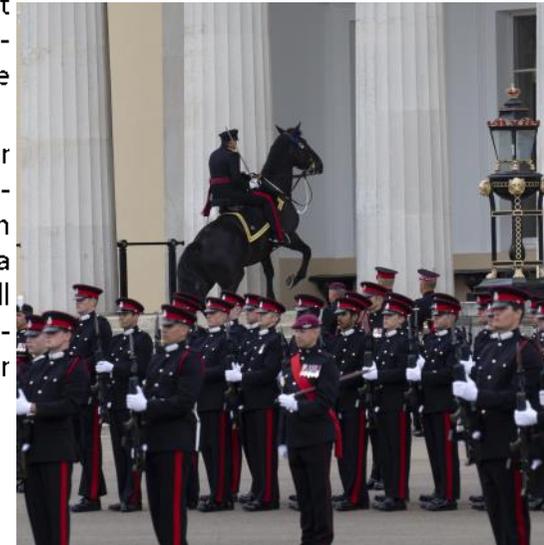
French FT-17 Tank at the Clairière de l'Armistice

Commandant's Parade, RMA

7th August 2019: Barbara Taylor

Thanks to the fact that I have a friend who works in the HQ at Sandhurst, I was able to arrange attendance at a Sandhurst Parade. This was the Commandant's Parade, which is held two days before the Sovereign's Parade. In all other aspects it is conducted in the same way.

A small number took up the invitation, including the chairman of Middlesex branch, as I had extended the invite to our neighbouring branches.



The Adjutant ascending the steps of Old College on horseback at the end of the parade.

Those who joined me were really pleased to have been able to come to witness the band and the precision of the marching, including seeing the adjutant ride his horse up the steps and into Old College!

Further to that, thanks to one of the colonels that my friend Sue works with, I was able to offer a tour of Old College, as her husband conducts tours for the Sandhurst Trust. So I had two more very happy bunnies who have enthused to me about it all ever since!

Since our editor was one of those present, I daresay he will illustrate my report with one of his excellent photos!

[As I have done—the origin of this tradition is unknown]

Dedications

As a mark of respect to all those who perished during the Great War the meetings last season were dedicated to the memory of a local man who died on that date during 1914–1918. If during your travels you happen to be near to where any of these soldiers are buried or commemorated kindly pay a visit.

31st January 2019

The dedication for this month was to two brothers named **Blackwell**, one of whom survived the war, whilst the other didn't.

Bertie Cyril Blackwell, Lance Corporal 742582

London Cyclist Battalion was the son of the late Mr Robert and Mrs Emma Blackwell, of 81, York Road, Reading. Bertie's father, Robert Blackwell, was already dead by the time of the 1911 census. The Standard 7th Nov. 1914 – published the picture of Lance Corporal Bert Blackwell that you can see here. At the time he was serving in the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry. The report states that he had been wounded and had lain in a ditch for 3 hours before being found but there were no other details.

Private Blackwell died on 4th February 1919. A report giving details of his death was published in the Reading Standard Feb. 15th 1919. He died at No.5 Southern General Hospital, Southsea, very suddenly, of double pneumonia. By this time he was a Sergeant and attached to H.Q. A.C.C. Bertie is buried in the Reading Cemetery, Cemetery Junction, Reading.

His is a registered war grave with a CWGC war pattern headstone. He was aged 24.

The second picture refers to a Private R. Blackwell, *'The soldier on the extreme right,'* with a number of soldiers of different nations.



Lce.-Corpl. BERT BLACKWELL, 81, Edg-hill Street, Reading.—Wounded.

Bertie was one of seven children, he had three brothers and three sisters.

Most of the family worked in the printing industry although Bertie was an apprentice carpenter in 1911.

(Editor's note—double pneumonia is a curious term much loved by newspapers in the past. It may mean that he had pneumonia involving both lungs, or that he had both lobar and bronchopneumonia—two related but different forms of acute lung infection).



UNITED NATIONS—The soldier on the extreme right is Pte. R. Blackwell, Army Service Corps, Mechanical Transport, of 81, Edg-hill Street, Reading.

Lewis William and Beatrice Grant.

22nd February

The dedication for the month of February was to **Albert Walter Grant Pioneer 231037 Carrier Pigeon Service Royal Engineers**

Albert Grant, known as Bert, was brought up at Battle Farm, Oxford Road, Reading. He was the son of

His wife Bertha Florence came from the Midlands to work in the farm dairy and there she met and fell in love with Bert. Albert Walter Grant's story is one which is particularly tragic but, in its day, not uncommon.

He had served two years in France and returned home after demobilisation on the 17 February 1919.

His grave is a registered war grave although the headstone is a private family memorial which reveals that both his daughter and wife lie with him in the same grave.

On his return home Bert was immediately struck down with influenza which developed into pneumonia. He passed the influenza on to his 2½ year old daughter, Phyllis Mary. Neither father nor daughter survived. Albert died on the 28 February 1919 and Phyllis on the 5 March 1919.

The Reading Standard of 8 March 1919 carried an account of the funeral.

"The deceased who was only 31 years of age, joined up in Jan 1917 and went to France a month later in the RE Pigeon Service Section. After serving just over two years he returned from France on February 17 last and took to his bed, from which he never again rose. Unfortunately his little daughter was stricken with the dread disease, with fatal results, and both were buried together. Before joining up Mr. Grant was a well-known figure in Reading, having been connected with dairy business from his youth. His one hobby was pigeon racing, and to this he devoted much of his spare time. He was a member of local pigeon clubs and had won several prizes for the excellence and swiftness of flight of his birds."

28th March 2019

**Herbert Hussey Private 39772
1st Battalion Somerset Light Infantry**

Herbert Hussey was the son of Mrs H. Hussey of 32, Northumberland Avenue, Reading. He is commemorated on the headstone of the grave of his mother and sisters in Division 21 of the Reading Cemetery.

We are told on the caption to his photograph that he died in Aden on his way home from India. Notification of his death was published in the Reading Standard April 5th 1919.

Herbert Hussey had served for 3 years 4 months in the Army. Prior to the outbreak of war he had spent several years in France and Germany. He joined up as a volunteer a year after the outbreak of war and belonged to the 1st Somerset Battalion attached to the Hampshire Regiment.

He was sent to France but invalided home in July 1917. He recovered and was sent to India in December 1918 with the Somerset Light Infantry. He started his return home on 24th February 1919 but died on the 17th March 1919.

Herbert Hussey is buried in Maala Cemetery, Yemen. The Grave Location is G. 6. There is only the minimum of detail in the CWGC register. It has not been possible to find out his age or cause of death.

A Well-known Reading Musician.



Pte. HERBERT HUSSEY, Somerset L.I., 32, Northumberland Avenue, Reading.—Died at Aden on his way home from India.

By profession Herbert Hussey was a schoolmaster. He had trained at Culham College and taught for some time at Grovelands School.

He was the Assistant organist at All Saint's Church and organist and choirmaster at St. George's Church. He was a member of the Choral Society of University College Reading and a well-known concert performer.

25th April 2019

**Sidney Herbert Baverstock
Driver T4/084595 Royal Army Service Corps**

Sidney Herbert Baverstock was born in Andover in 1878.

It is not known when he came to Reading but he was married in Reading in the fourth quarter of 1900. Sidney was the husband of Annie Marie Baverstock née Bush.

The 1901 and the 1911 census have him living with his family at 116, Rupert Street, Reading. The 1911 census showed that he was father

to three children, Dorothy then aged 9, Herbert aged 8 and Mary 4 years. His occupation was given as a biscuit mixer at Huntley and Palmers.

Sidney's medical and pension records are available. He was posted for service on 31 March 1915. Sidney served in France as a Driver in the ASC from 13 July 1916 until November 1917. He was unwell throughout the rest of 1917 and into 1918.

On 1 August 1918 he was admitted to hospital with scabies and bronchitis, where he spent the whole month. He was readmitted on 7 December 1918 with pains in his chest and night sweats.

He was described in the medical record as pale and thin, with a high temperature and husky voice. TB was present in his sputum.

Sidney was finally discharged from the Army on 21st January 1919 as permanently physically unfit. He commented upon his medical form that the lung trouble started just before he left

France and that it was caused by 'having to rough it'. The reason given for his discharge was tuberculosis, which was 100% attributed to his war service. Sidney's pension was to be paid until the 22 July 1919.

Sidney was awarded the Silver War Badge (shown on Page 2). The badge, sometimes known as the "Discharge Badge", the "Wound Badge" or "Services Rendered Badge" was awarded to service personnel who had been honourably discharged due to wounds or sickness from military service.

According to The CWGC register Sidney Baverstock died of wounds (gas) on the 25 April 1919; although there is no reference to gas poisoning in the Medical Records. He is buried in the Reading Cemetery. He was 40 years old at the time of his death.



**Sidney Baverstock's Grave
in Reading Cemetery**

27th June 2019

Charles Frederick Hunt
Staff Sergeant 158072
155th Heavy Battery
Royal Garrison Artillery

Charles Frederick Hunt was the son of James and Amy Hunt, of Reading. He was born in Stonebroom, Derbyshire in 1880. He was the eldest of six children but was the only one born in Derbyshire, his siblings were all born in Reading. It is believed that his parents moved to Reading sometime between his birth and the birth of a brother in 1883. He had two brothers and three sisters. James Hunt worked at Huntley and Palmers Biscuit factory but it is not known in what capacity.

Charles married his wife Mary in April 1910. The couple made their home in Windsor where Charles worked.

Charles Hunt died of wounds in Genoa Hospital, on 21 June 1918 aged 38 and is buried in Staglieno Cemetery Genoa, location I.B.15.

He is commemorated on his parent's grave, number 17522, in the Reading Cemetery.

The Reading Standard 6 July 1918 published an obituary:

"Charles Hunt had been educated at Newtown Board School. After which he was apprenticed as a fitter to Messrs. Adams, De Beauvoir Road, Reading.



The late Fitter Staff-Sergt. C. F. HUNT, Donnington Road, Reading.— Died of wounds.

For the last ten years he was working for Messrs. Wellman Bros. Windsor. He used to sing in St. Bartholomew's Church choir and was one of the earliest members of the St. Panera's Guild, taking an active part in the annual amateur theatricals and cricket. Staff Sergeant Hunt left England for France in June 1917 and in the following November proceeded to Italy. For some weeks he had been Acting Quartermaster and expected to obtain leave within a few days. He leaves a widow and one daughter."



Charles Hunt's parents' grave in Reading

The Tranchée du Balcon

Niall Ferguson

During this year's Battlefield Tour we visited the Tranchée du Balcon, near Craonne, objective of the French 1st Infantry Division. In a ravine running up the incredibly steep slope that they had to mount was a small building, and in that the 5th Battalion set up a first aid post at about midday on 16th April. It was so cramped that the wounded had to stand to gain its shelter.

So exposed was it to German fire that the Chief Medical Officer was killed there. Father Achille Liénart, chaplain of the 201st RI, recounted in his journal what it was like. The walking wounded made their way, as best they could, to their jumping off trenches. Some of the more seriously wounded were brought back during the night of 16/17th April. But a lack of stretcher bearers (20 were missing out of a total of 42) meant that most remained where they had fallen. Fr. Liénart and Pastor Henry Nick tried to assist them.

Evacuation took place on April 17th in difficult conditions. When the 201st was relieved on the night of April 17/18th by the 33rd RI their casualties had reached 459 killed, wounded and missing "After two sleepless nights, Fr. Liénart fell asleep at the first aid post in Craonnelle, and said that he could not do anything the day of the 18th, or that of the 19th. On the battlefield, the Germans still held the top of the Jutland salient". On April 21st, the chaplain and two volunteers roamed the "unnamed ravine" to identify comrades, who were buried the next day in big shell holes with their names written on tickets placed in bottles left in their clothing.

Liénart survived the war and became Bishop of Lille and then a Cardinal.

Annual Branch Photographic Competition

The Annual Branch Photographic Competition was somewhat delayed this year, but eventually took place. The three top-scoring photographs, voted for by those attending the meeting, were:



**First Place: Canberra War Memorial
Ian Fenne**



**Second Place: Pargny CWGC Cemetery,
near Peronne – Niall Ferguson**



**Third Place: Scottow War Memorial,
Norfolk : Mike Lawson**

Proposed 2020 Branch Battlefield Tour

For 2020 it is proposed that we base ourselves in the area of Reims or Epernay (there being no Women's World Cup in 2020 to fill the hotels). We will then be able to consider the actions in that area that were too far to reach in 2019, including those of both the 1918 Second Battle of the Marne and the First Battle in 1914, and nearby actions, such as that at Marfaux. The provisional date for the tour is Sunday 14th to Friday 19th June 2020, but that is still under review and Sunday 7th to Friday 12th June is also possible. Towards the end of this year a further communication will be circulated giving more information and asking for expressions of interest, with an initial deposit requested early in the New Year.



Programme for the coming months

Details of the speakers for the first half of our 2019–20 season are set out below and offers a variety of different subjects to meet most interests. Should you have any comments on the programme or suggestions for future topics and speakers please let us know. This programme is also available for viewing on: www.westernfrontassociation.com/thames-valley. For a description of the talk just double click on the talk title.

All meetings are held at the Berkshire Sports and Social Club, Sonning Lane, Reading on the last Thursday of each month from September to June inclusive (except December when it is on a different Thursday) commencing at 8.00 p.m.

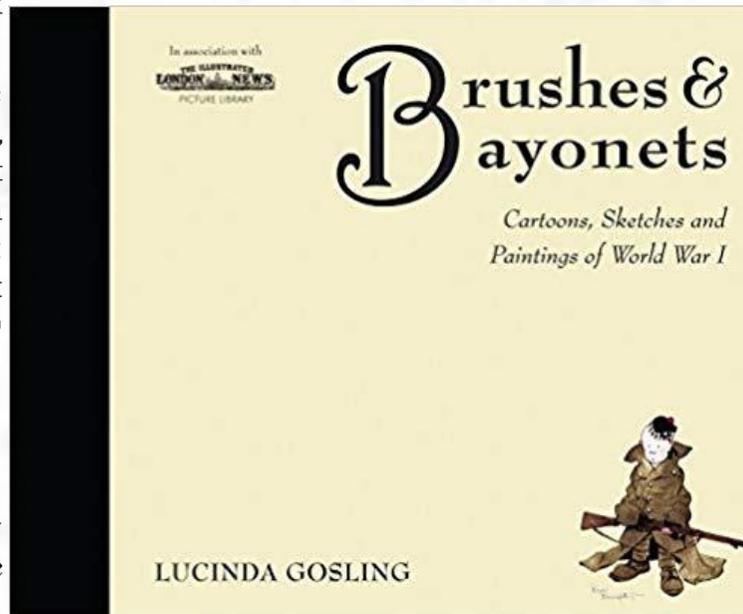
26th September 2019 – Luci Gosling

Winning with Laughter: How Britain's cartoonists helped win the First World War.

Born in Co. Durham, Luci studied Ancient & Medieval History at the University of Liverpool before a career in the picture library industry. Formerly manager of the Illustrated London News archive, she has been part of the team at historical specialist, Mary Evans Picture Library for the past eight years while also writing on a freelance basis.

With an interest in a number of historical areas, Luci specialises in the social history of the First World War, 19th and 20th century royalty, high society and illustration. She has contributed to a wide variety of publications including History Today, Majesty Magazine, Tatler, Illustration, Stand To! and BBC News Online.

This is the talk that Luci gave to the WFA AGM at Hendon in 2014.

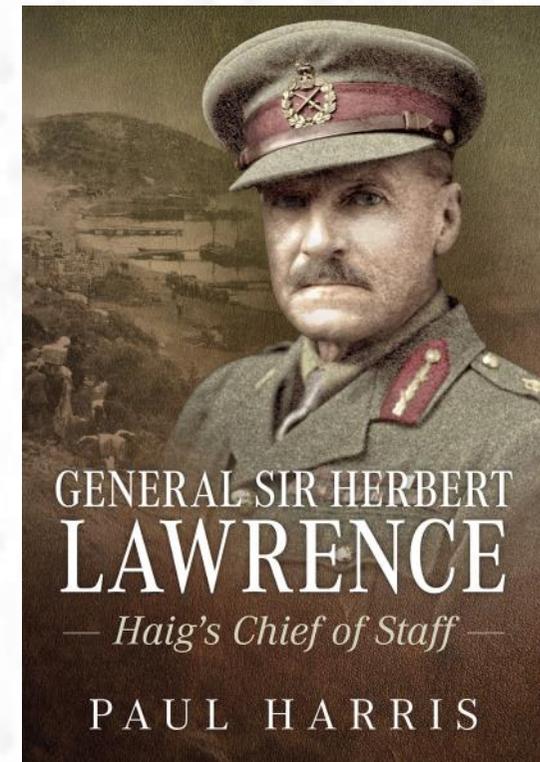


31st October 2019 – Dr Paul Harris
Soldier/Banker: Lt-Gen Sir Herbert Lawrence

Paul Harris works as a writer and lecturer. His first book, *The Men Who Planned the War* (2016) was a study of the staff of the British army on the Western Front from 1914-1918. A second book on General Sir Herbert Lawrence was published last year and in paperback this year.

Paul completed a PhD about the Staff of the British army at the Department of War Studies, King's College London in 2013. Prior to that he worked in the financial markets in the City of London. He is a member of the British Commission for Military History and serves on the committee of the Douglas Haig Fellowship.

Lieutenant-General Sir Herbert Lawrence, Chief of Staff of the British army in 1918, remains one of the forgotten figures of the First World War. This presentation will argue that Lawrence made a major contribution to Allied victory.



It will draw upon new research to shed light on the role and character of the man described by the Commander-in-Chief Sir Douglas Haig as his 'right arm'.

28th November 2019 – **Change of Speaker**

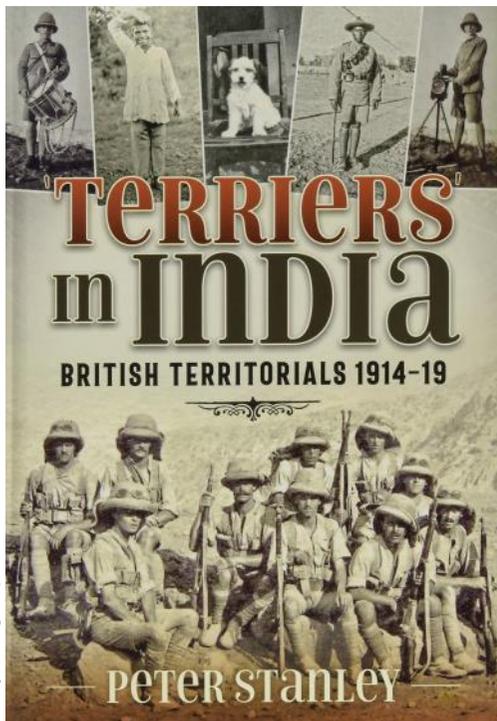
Professor Peter Stanley

'Terriers' in India: British Territorials 1914-19.

Prof. Peter Stanley is in Britain in the second half of 2019 on sabbatical leave, researching books on the Santal rebellion of 1855 and the Falklands/Malvinas war of 1982, and we are truly fortunate in having come to speak to us.

Peter is a Research Professor at the University of NSW Canberra. Formerly Principal Historian of the Australian War Memorial, where he worked from 1980 to 2007, Peter is one of Australia's most active military-social historians. He has published over 30 books, many on the Great War, including *Quinn's Post*, *Anzac*, *Gallipoli*; *Men of Mont St Quentin*; *The Crying Years*; *Die in Battle*; *Do not Despair: the Indians on Gallipoli, 1915* and *Bad Characters: Sex, Crime, Mutiny, Murder and the Australian Imperial Force*, which was awarded the Prime Minister's Prize for Australian History in 2011.

In 1914 three divisions of Territorials volunteered to go to India to allow its regular garrison to go to the Western Front and Gallipoli. The 'Terriers' believed that Lord Kitchener had 'promised' that they would return to fight the Germans. In fact, many of them remained in India until late 1919, and many went from India to fight the Turks in Aden, Mesopotamia and Palestine - and to fight on India's North-West Frontier.



The service of these 50,000 Territorials was little-known at the time and soon forgotten, even by their own regimental histories. Astonishingly, in the century since, only one book has comprehensively revealed who these men

were and what they did - Peter's 'Terriers' in India, published earlier this year. The story that emerges from county archives, regimental records and above all from their own letters, diaries, memoirs and photograph albums is a rich one.

This talk will be illustrated by many of the Terriers' own photographs of their Indian service.

**19th December 2019 -
Note Date Change for
Christmas**

Dr John Greenacre

"I Consider an Example Should Be Made":
The Trial of Private Benjamin Hart, Suffolk
Regiment.

John Greenacre spent twenty-four years in the British Army as a helicopter pilot and staff officer before retiring in 2011. He was awarded his PhD in history by the University of Leeds in 2009.

John now lectures in history at the University of Suffolk in Ipswich and is a busy battlefield tour guide, working across Europe with schools, civilian and military groups.

Private Benjamin Hart was the only soldier from the Suffolk Regiment executed during the First World War. A close examination of his trial using the original documents helps to dispel some of the myths and assist our understanding of this emotive subject.



Suzanne Military Cemetery No.3, where Benjamin Hart is buried.

30th January 2020 – Professor Gary Sheffield
Amateur soldiers in Britain and the Empire
1912– 1920

Branch member, President of the WFA, and Professor of War Studies at the University of Wolverhampton, Gary will give his customary lecture on his latest area of research—not to be missed on any account.

27th February 2020 – Gerry White

The Last General Absolution of the Munsters at Rue du Bois

Gerry White is the author of a number of books on Irish military history in the period before and after the Great War. He is a founder member of the WFA Cork Branch and its chair since 2010. Gerry served in the Irish Defence Forces for forty-three years and represented Ireland at the Somme Centenary Commemoration in 2016. He has recently been appointed as the WFA Island of Ireland Trustee. Included among his publications are: *The Barracks, a History of Victoria/Collins Barracks, Cork For Their Country – The Great War Dead of Christ Church Parish,*



Fortunino Matania's Painting of the events

Cork. Together with Brendan O'Shea, he published The Irish Volunteer Soldier 1913-1916 and edited A Great Sacrifice - Cork Servicemen who died in the Great War.

The artwork bearing the same name as the talk was painted by Fortunino Matania and depicts events on the Rue du Bois (near Neuve Chapelle) on 8th May 1915. The next morning the Munsters took part in the Battle of Aubers Ridge, suffering heavy casualties, including the death of their C.O. Lt.-Colonel Victor Richard.

Richmond Poppy Factory Visit

17th April 2019

The Poppy Factory is a gem of a place to visit, tucked away on Petersham Road in Richmond. What a delight! Our group, which included some members from London Branch and a few friends, was given a big welcome, with tea, coffee and biscuits. We were given a potted history of the war and how using the poppy as a symbol of Remembrance came about. The history for visitors like us who know a bit about the war was quite basic.

The history of the Poppy Factory itself was a different matter and very much an eye-opener on the work they undertake today, which came as a surprise to many of us.

The Factory was founded in 1922 by Major George Howson MC, who had won his Military Cross in 1917. George Howson's vision for the charity was to provide employment for veterans injured during the First World War. The original factory was in the Old Kent Road and within three years had outgrown the premises. Using funds that Major Howson raised, the site in Richmond was purchased. The factory employed more than 300 veterans and the site had four acres of land allowing room for expansion, housing for workers and space for relaxation and rehabilitation. Major Howson was particularly keen for disabled veterans to be able to have employment and a simple device was invented to enable one-armed men to make poppies, which is used to this day.



Poppy-making Kit

We were taken into the factory and shown how all their different products are made. We all had to make our own poppy, using Major Howson's invention. Very difficult not to use both hands but this wooden device is ingenious in its simplicity!

First you put the stem in, then the leaf, then the poppy and finally the black middle, which clips it all together. They make all the poppy variations, including the 'specials' that the queen and other

members of the royal family wear.

We were shown all the products they make, including copies of royal wreaths and the poppies that surround the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior. The poppies themselves are stamped out of huge rolls of red paper. They have only one customer; The Royal British Legion, who come to

collect the products at least twice a week, because the Richmond site has very little storage space. None of that came as a surprise. The real eye-opener is the work they do to help returning veterans who have been injured physically and/or mentally in finding a meaningful place in society and the workplace, and in providing homes. The Poppy Factory is in the process of building more flats for ex-service men and women that need help. I thought they made poppies – end of!

It was a great pity that so few members were able to make the trip, but anybody can book a visit. I recommend it to you all.

Barbara Taylor