



The Spire Sentinel



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



**& Magazine
Chesterfield
Western
Association**

ISSUE 107 - January 2025

Our aims are 'Remembrance and Sharing the History of the Great War'.



Western Front Association Chesterfield Branch – Meetings 2025

Meetings start at 7.30pm and take place at the Labour Club, Unity House, Saltergate, Chesterfield S40 1NF

January	9th	. AGM + <i>'Quintinshill 22nd May 1915 - Britain`s Worst Railway Disaster'</i> Grant Cullen
February	6th	<i>Villages at War - Clowne and Barlborough in World War 1</i> by Pau Burkitt.
March	5th	Presenter to be confirmed
April	2nd	<i>The Enemy Within</i> by Tim Lynch looks at German military and civilian prisoners in Britain during WW1 and about how immigrants of German descent coped when war broke out.
May	7th	<i>"Combat motivation and morale in British Empire armies in the two world wars"</i> by Prof. Gary Sheffield
June	4th	<i>The Zeppelin Raids on Sheffield and Nottingham</i> by Ian Castle
July	2nd	<i>Jutland - Clash of Titans</i> by Scott Lindgren
August	6th	Roy Larkin - topic to be confirmed
September	3rd	<i>'Motorcycle Despatch Riders In 1914'</i> by Nick Shelley. Nick describes the motorcyclists' contribution to the 1914 campaign, using their own words and their own previously unpublished photographs.
October	1st	<i>After Kut - What ?</i> . Tony Bolton
November	5th	Peter Hart topic to be confirmed
December	3rd	<i>An Historians Wrongful Assumption ?</i> - a short look at Sniping and how it developed in World War One. By Morris Charlton

Issue 107 list of contents

- 2 Branch Meetings Calendar 2025
- 3 Contents Page & WFA Webinars
- 4 WFA Webinars (continued)
- 5 -6 Secretary`s Scribbles
- 6-7 WFA Calendars 2025
- 7 Steve and Jill Brunt. Menin Gate, Ypres, 7th December 2024 9
- 8 - 21 December Meeting
- 21 From a Nurse`s Scrapbook
- 22 - 25 Medals of WWI flying ace and double agent go on sale.

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

From Jill Stewart at The Western Front Association

Dear All,

We are delighted to announce an increased number of webinars for the first weeks of 2025. Whilst we have previously looked to undertake these fortnightly, we have aimed for a weekly schedule for the start of the New Year. Details of the WFA 'Monday evening webinar' schedule is below.

Note: All these commence at 8pm UK time.

Monday 13 January

"Morale and Sensemaking on the Western Front" by Alex Mayhew

Whilst the trenches of the Western Front have come to symbolise the futility and hopelessness of the Great War, Alex will demonstrate that British (particularly English) infantrymen rarely interpreted their experiences in this way. In doing so, he will reveal the ways in which they sought to survive, navigated the crises that confronted them, and crafted meaningful narratives about their service.

Click here to register

[Morale and Sensemaking on the Western Front by Alex Mayhew](#)

Monday 20 January

"Loyal to Empire - The Life of General Sir Charles Monro 1860-1929" by Patrick Crowley

General Sir Charles Monro is perhaps the least known of all the senior commanders of the First World War, yet he commanded at divisional, corps and army level on the Western Front. He was also partly responsible for the high standards of shooting achieved by the British Army in 1914 and was the general who said that the British should withdraw from Gallipoli. In addition, he was commander-in-chief of India at a critical time.

Click here to register

[Loyal to Empire - The Life of General Sir Charles Monro 1860-1929 by Patrick Crowley](#)

Monday 27 January

"Exploring the estate: teasing out the meanings of the architecture and horticulture of the Imperial War Graves Commission" by Prof Mark Connelly

The architecture and horticulture of the Imperial (now Commonwealth) War Graves Commission inspires awe and wonder at its beauty. In this talk by Prof Mark Connelly, the design details inherent in the 'house style' of the Commission are explored with particular reference to the signature facets of both the Principal and Assistant Architects, and the cultural inheritance they brought to their work for the Commission.

Click here to register

[Exploring the estate](#)

Monday 3 February

"The British Way in Warfare - Salonika, 1915-1918" by Alan Wakefield

This talk examines the way in which the British Salonika Force (BSF) under Lt General Sir George Milne conducted operations in Greece and Serbia during the First World War. The focus is on the way in which local factors such as terrain, climate and the threat of disease combined with the BSF's internal weaknesses resulted in very different military experiences for British soldiers serving on the four main sectors of the British front in Macedonia.

Click here to register

[The British Way in Warfare - Salonika, 1915-1918](#)

Monday 10 February

"Turning Points 1915" by Dr Spencer Jones.

From the first use of poison gas at Ypres to the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign and the shifting dynamics on the Eastern Front, this lecture delves into the events that shaped the trajectory of the First World War. Learn more about the decisions, innovations, and missed opportunities that could have altered history, and consider how the course of the conflict - and the world - might have been dramatically different. This presentation, by Dr Spencer Jones follows on from the highly successful 'Turning Points 1914' which Spencer presented in 2024. We hope this will become a series that will develop for each year of the war.

Click here to register

[Turning Points 1915](#)

As ever, please keep your eye on the WFA website in order book early and therefore get a good seat at our forthcoming events !!!

Happy New Year!

Jill



Dear Members and Friends,

Best Wishes to One and All for New Year 2025 and welcome to issue 107 of our newsletter.

As you know I missed the last meeting of 2024 having suffered the after effects of a fall on black ice at the end of November - that and an adverse reaction to statin medication prescribed by my GP made early December a miserable time for me.

Anyway I'm nearly back to normal - still a few

aches and pains - putting these down to an age thing...not getting any younger!

A word of thanks to our Branch Treasurer Jane Lovatt for arranging the 'Thank You' buffet at our December meeting...just a way of the Branch showing its appreciation to those who give their support month after month.

Our meeting on Tuesday (January 7th) will as usual in our first meeting of a new year will commence with our Branch AGM. Jane will talk briefly about our finances and this will be followed by election of Office Bearers for 2025. As we enter 2025 the Branch finances are in robust strength - despite significant expenditure, for example the new laptop computer for showing Powerpoint presentations and the trips to Cannock and Cambridge. On the down side attendance figures are a bit down, sadly the passing of members - Roger Avill notably, and the serious illness of others have impacted our numbers.

When this business is out of the way I will give a talk on ***"Quinitinshill May 22nd 1915 - Britain's Worst Railway Disaster"***. This talk is based upon part 4 of a series of articles I am writing on the Caledonian Railway in The Great War for the Caledonian Railway Association magazine 'The True Line'. I'm anticipating that this series will run to ten parts. Previous to that series I wrote a six part history of The North British Railway in The Great War for the North British Railway Study Group Journal. Both these publications 'The True Line' and 'Journal' are high quality publications issued free to members of the respective organisation.

Also included in this newsletter is the latest list of webinars being put on - free to access - by the Western Front Association. Some interesting presentations listed. Please do register and connect if interested.

Next month we will have a visit and talk by Paul Birkitt with a bit of a local flavour - 'Villages at War - Clowne and Barlborough in The Great War'

The programme of talks for 2025 is almost complete - just waiting on one speaker confirming. In May we will have Western Front Association President, Professor Gary Sheffield coming along to give a presentation - thanks to Tony Bolton for facilitating this visit.

Best wishes,

Grant

Grant Cullen WFA Chesterfield Branch Secretary 07824628638

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

XX

Chesterfield Borough Alderman Steve Brunt and his wife Jill (former Councillor, and Mayoress of the Borough) were delighted to lay a wreath at the daily service of remembrance at the Menin Gate in Ypres on Saturday evening of the 7th December 2024. The wreath was laid on behalf of the Chesterfield Association of the Old Contemptibles and was made possible by the Last Post Association, who organise the daily service of remembrance in the Town of Ypres in memory of the thousands of British and Commonwealth troops who perished in the Great War, in what was known as the Ypres Salient in WW1. Steve and Jill are both members of WFA Chesterfield Branch and in the past have made presentations to members. David Nightingale Chairperson of the local branch of the Chesterfield Association of Old Contemptibles added "We are extremely grateful to Steve and Jill for performing this task for us at this time and in such an iconic venue. And information, the wreath laid at Ypres on Saturday evening was first laid at Christ Church in November of this year. Christ Church at Stone grvels is proud to deliver annually a special Old Contemptible's service each year on remembrance Sunday, and the local congregation is joined on this special evening by the Mayor of Chesterfield and other civic dignitaries".

Steve and Jill Brunt. Menin Gate, Ypres, 7th December 2024

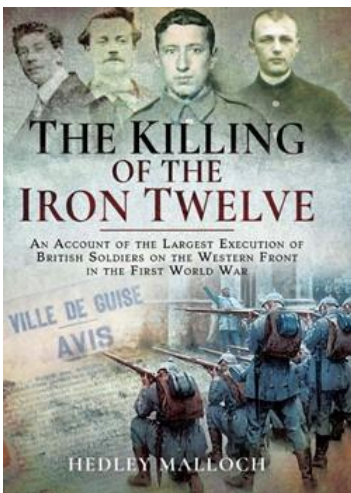


December Meeting - Behind The Lines by Hedley Malloch



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 explained how the Germans managed this problem,

why some fugitives were shot, but others were spared. He covered the reaction of the Allies to these incidents, many of which were in violation of The Hague and Geneva Conventions.



Hedley has been a member of the WFA since 1990, and 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>



BEHIND THE LINES

A TALK TO CHESTERFIELD WFA, TUESDAY 3 DECEMBER 2024,
CHESTERFIELD LABOUR CLUB

British Soldiers Caught on the Run and Executed by the Germans Listed by Date of Execution

Surname	First Name	Rank	No.	Regiment	Age	Death	Buried	Birthplace
Buckley	George	Private	10665	1/East Lancashire Regt.	NK	15/01/1915	Ugny-en-Cambresis Communal, Nord	Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, Ireland
Carnell	Richard John	Serjeant	10516	1/East Lancashire Regt.	23	15/01/1915	Ugny-en-Cambresis Communal, Nord	Kensington, London
Haggitt	Robert	Private	10622	1/East Lancashire Regt.	22	15/01/1915	Ugny-en-Cambresis Communal, Nord	Islington, London
Cowgill	Harold	Private	9856	1/East Lancashire Regt.	26	15/01/1915	Ugny-en-Cambresis Communal, Nord	Holloway, London
THE IRON ELEVEN								
Buckley	Denis	Private	6240	2/Royal Munster Fusiliers	24	25/02/1915	Guise Communal Cemetery, Aisne	St. Ann's, Cork City, Ireland
Horgan	Daniel	Private	9852	2/Royal Munster Fusiliers	17	25/02/1915	Guise Communal Cemetery, Aisne	St. Ann's, Cork City, Ireland
Howard	George	Private	9381	2/Connaught Rangers	28	25/02/1915	Guise Communal Cemetery, Aisne	Sheffield
Innocent	Frederick	Private	7845	2/Royal Munster Fusiliers	27	25/02/1915	Guise Communal Cemetery, Aisne	Radford, Nottingham
Moffatt	James	L/Cpl	7925	2/Royal Munster Fusiliers	30	25/02/1915	Guise Communal Cemetery, Aisne	Birkenhead, Cheshire
Murphy	Terence	Private	8713	2/Connaught Rangers	29	25/02/1915	Guise Communal Cemetery, Aisne	Ballisodare, Co. Sligo, Ireland
Nash	John	Private	10084	2/Royal Munster Fusiliers	21	25/02/1915	Guise Communal Cemetery, Aisne	Sneem, Co. Kerry, Ireland
Stent	John William	L/Cpl	6943	15th (The King's) Hussars	21	25/02/1915	Guise Communal Cemetery, Aisne	Bickley, Bromley, Kent
Thompson	William	Private	9472	2/Connaught Rangers	24	25/02/1915	Guise Communal Cemetery, Aisne	Sheffield
Walsh	John	Private	6594	2/Connaught Rangers	33	25/02/1915	Guise Communal Cemetery, Aisne	Tullamore, King's Co. Ireland
Wilson	Matthew	Private	7010	2/Connaught Rangers	36	25/02/1915	Guise Communal Cemetery, Aisne	Ahascragh, Co. Galway, Ireland
Hands	Thomas	Private	10825	1/King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment)	21	08/03/1915	St. Quentin Northern Communal Cemetery	Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Hughes	John	Rifeman	10234	2/Royal Irish Rifles	20	08/03/1915	St. Quentin Northern Communal Cemetery	Fermoy, Co. Cork, Ireland
Lay	George	Private	9968	1/Royal Berkshire Fusiliers	22	28/04/1915	Etretx Communal Cemetery, Aisne	Bucklebury, Berkshire
Murray	D. E.	Corporal	10844	1/East Lancashire Regt.	NK	13/05/1915	Fontaine au Pire Communal, Nord	Wavertree, Lancashire
Hull	Herbert	Corporal	6389	11th (Prince Albert's Own) Hussars	32	21/10/1915	Caudry Old Communal, Nord	Upton, London
Martin	David	Private	7636	1/Royal Irish Fusiliers	28	27/05/1916	Le Catalet Churchyard, Aisne	Belfast, Ireland
Donahoe	Thomas	Private	8537	1/Royal Irish Fusiliers	32	27/05/1916	Le Catalet Churchyard, Aisne	Killybandrick, Co. Cavan, Ireland
Thorpe	William	Private	8561	1/King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment)	36	27/05/1916	Le Catalet Churchyard, Aisne	Liverpool
Digby	Robert	Private	9368	1/Hampshire Regiment	31	30/05/1916	Le Catalet Churchyard, Aisne	Totton, Hants



INTEREST AND IMPORTANCE

- EVERY 'FRONT' HAS A REAR – BUT WHAT HAPPENED THERE?
- LITTLE KNOWN
- THE STORIES OF TRAPPED SOLDIERS ARE DRAMATIC
 - THOSE WHO WERE CAUGHT & SHOT
 - THOSE WHO ESCAPED
- THEY SHED LIGHT ON THE GERMAN CONDUCT OF THE WAR
- MANY OF THE SITES HAVE SURVIVED
- THE FIRST OF WW1'S TERROR WEAPONS – THE ELECTRIC FENCE

1

THE 24 BRITISH SOLDIERS CAUGHT BEHIND THE LINES AND EXECUTED

- KILLINGS OCCUR BETWEEN JANUARY 1915 AND MAY 1916
- NO OFFICERS
- RECRUITMENT INTO THE EDWARDIAN ARMY:

		BORN	
		IRELAND	ENGLAND
REGIMENT	IRISH	9	4
	ENGLISH	1	11

- ALL EXECUTIONS IN ONE GERMAN REAR-ZONE AREA IN FRANCE



1

THE DOCTRINE OF *AUFTRAGSTAKTIK*

- DISCRETION GIVEN TO LOCAL COMMANDERS
- WIDE VARIATIONS IN BEHAVIOUR
- EXCESSIVE BEHAVIOUR
- POCKETS OF CRUELTY



1

ETAPPE No. 2: KRIEGSGERICHTSRAT Dr. ALFRED FRIEDMANN

- VON NIEBER'S LEGAL ADVISER
- A CIVILIAN
- A FRANCOPHOBE
- A HARD LINE ON OCCUPATION LAW
- VAIN
- INVOLVED IN ALL CAPITAL CASES
- CONVICTED MANY FRENCH CIVILIANS
- A NARROW LEGAL FUNCTIONARY – 'THE BANALITY OF EVIL'?

1

ETAPPE No. 2: ETAPPEN-INSPEKTEUR LIEUTENANT-GENERAL STEPHAN von NEIBER

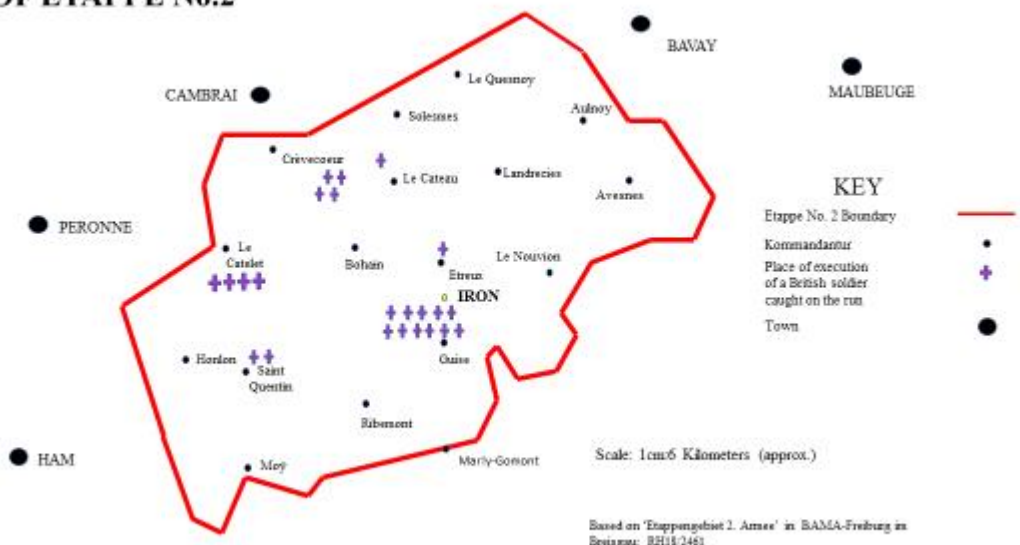


- A devotee of *Auftragstaktik*
- A graduate of the German General Staff
- An engineer
- A pioneer of European civil aviation
- Socially well connected
- A Francophile
- Von Bülow's enforcer in Belgium & France
- No combat experience



1

MAP OF ETAPPE No.2



1

THE CULTURE OF THE GERMAN ARMY



HISTORY

- 1870-71
- 1903-4 HERERO WARS

ORGANISATION

- NO POLITICAL CONTROL
- NO CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT
- THE ZABERN AFFAIR

TRAINING & MANUALS

- IGNORE CONVENTIONS
- HIGHLY SPECIALISED TRAINING
- TAKE RESPONSIBILITY
- NO ETHICS TRAINING

- Remember 1871
- War feeds war
- Be cruel to be kind
- The Hague rules do not apply
- Military expedience first
- Aggression welcomed
- Action is better than inaction
- Germany is where the German army is.

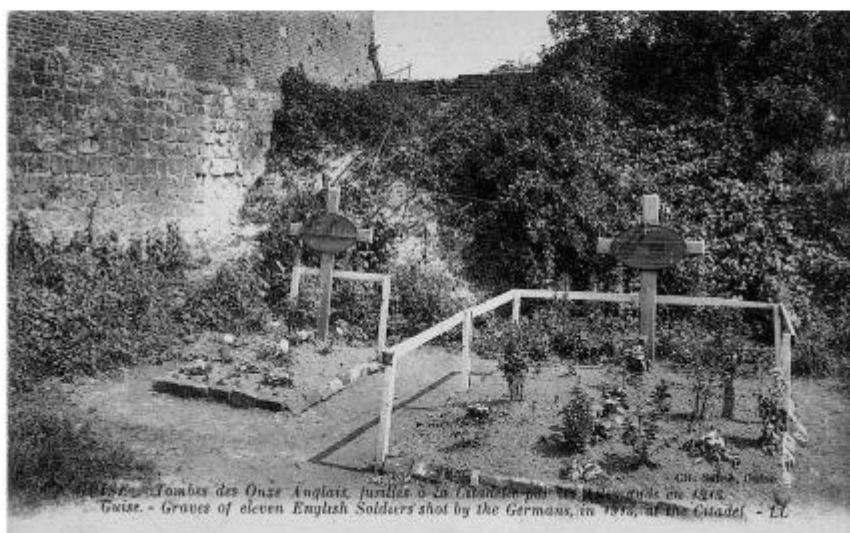
1

THE FIRST
HIDING PLACE
OF THE IRON 12:
THE LOGEZ MILL
IN IRON



1

THE EXECUTION SITE: GUISE CHATEAU



THREE REASONS WHY THE EXECUTIONS STOPPED

1. GERMAN OFFICER RESISTANCE – THE CASES OF HUGHES AND HANDS?

2. THE EXECUTIONS COMPROMISED THE FORMATION OF CASEMENT'S IRISH BRIGADE

3. VON BÜLOW, THE GERMAN SECOND ARMY AND THE UPCOMING BATTLE OF THE SOMME?



NOTES of Officers 3rd Brigade in Euzenat, Germany in 1918. From left: Col Peter Bellamy, Sgt Major Smith, Col O'Donoghue, Sgt Daniel John Butler (John Bennett), Sergeant John Bennett, Col Bennett, Sgt O'Donoghue, Sgt H. Quinn (MS1802).



THOSE WHO
GOT AWAY:
PRIVATE FRANCIS
JAMESON,
2/CONNAUGHT
RANGERS



1



THE WANDERINGS OF PRIVATE
FRANCES JAMESON, 2/CONNAUGHT
RANGERS AND HIS PARTY
AUGUST 1914 – MAY 1915

1



WHERE JAMESON MET THE FRENCH 'NURSE': THE PONTOON BRIDGE AT CATILLON-sur-SAMBRE

1914



TODAY



1

THE RAILWAY CROSSING AT HACHETTE



2

Béatrice Mailliard



**The Mailliard Agro-Industrial Complex
in Maroilles**



**ROSHEIM WAR
MEMORIAL,
ALSACE**



BELLIGNIES CHATEAU: HUB OF THE CROÏ ESCAPE NETWORK

THE TOWER WITH
THE HIDDEN
CIRCULAR STAIR IS
ON THE LEFT



1



THE WIRE OF DEATH



1

HOW TO AVOID DETECTION

- BEHAVE LIKE A LOCAL - DO NOT ATTRACT ATTENTION
- WALKING, DRESS – LANGUAGE LESS IMPORTANT
- AVOID THE GIVE-AWAYS (BOOTS, INOCULATION MARKS)
- FRIENDLY LOCAL OFFICIALS
- SPECIALIST SUPPORT (PHOTOGRAPHERS, FORGERS, CHEMISTS)
- IMPROVISATION SKILLS
- SMALL NUMBERS
- LUCK – AND LOTS OF IT.



HOW TO AVOID DETECTION ... ACCORDING TO PHELAN

***'IF YOU CAN SPEAK FRENCH YOU CAN DECEIVE THE GERMANS. IF YOU
CAN KEEP AWAY FROM BAD FRENCHWOMEN YOU ARE IN NO DANGER.
THEY WOULD SELL YOU'***

TNA WO 161/100/620: Committee on the Treatment of Prisoners of War: Interviews and Reports,
Report no.1126

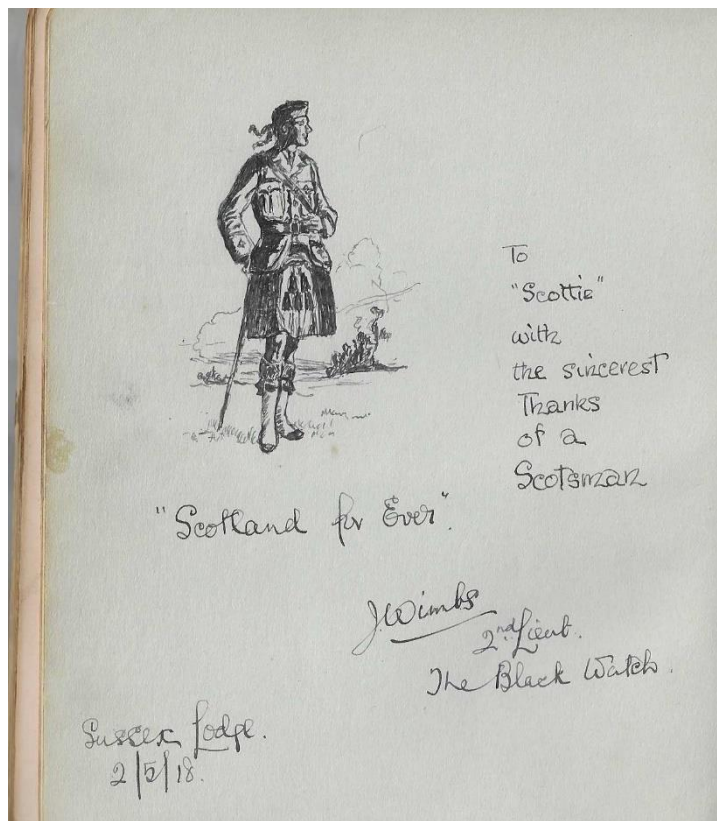


MEMORIALS TO THE IRON TWELVE: IRON, AISNE



XX

From a Nurse`s Scrapbook.....



Medals of WWI flying ace and double agent go on sale

Christopher Draper, dubbed the 'Mad Major' for flying under London bridges, spied on Nazis for four years



Major Christopher Draper flying under London Bridge in a protest for veterans' rights Credit: BNPS

The medals of a First World War flying ace who spied on the Nazis for four years have gone on sale.

[Major Christopher Draper](#) shot down nine German aircraft and balloons during the war.

The airman later got the nickname of "Mad Major" when he flew under 14 of London's bridges in a bizarre protest for veterans' rights.

He was a stunt pilot for films in the 1930s before becoming a double agent for MI6.

After a chance meeting with [Adolf Hitler](#) at a 1932 air show, he was approached by the Nazis to see if he would spy on Britain.

Draper informed MI6, which suggested he spy on the enemy instead and he worked as a double agent for four years.



Major Draper was the only person to command a squadron in both the First and Second World Wars Credit: BNPS



Major Draper flying through Tower Bridge in London Credit: BNPS

At the start of the [Second World War](#), he returned to the RAF and became the only person to command a squadron in both wars.

Draper's medal group, including a prestigious Distinguished Service Cross, is tipped to fetch £4,500 at London-based auctioneers Morton & Eden.

James Morton, specialist at Morton & Eden, said: "This award is important and has a fantastic double agent story behind it.

"We are delighted to be able to include it in our December sale."



The medal set awarded to Major Draper includes the Distinguished Service Cross (left) Credit: BNPS

Draper was born in Bebington, Liverpool, in 1892 and learnt to fly in 1913 before joining the Royal Naval Air Service the year after.

During the First World War he duelled with enemy Fokkers before he was given command of No 8 Naval Squadron in October 1917. He claimed his final victory in a DWF reconnaissance aircraft in May 1918.

He became a commercial pilot in 1919 but was seriously injured in a crash at Hendon Aerodrome in March 1920.

Draper then had a career change, becoming a stage actor, while leading protests against the government's treatment of RAF veterans.

In September 1931, he was arrested after flying a Puss Moth under Tower Bridge and Westminster Bridge to raise awareness of the cause.

In 1932, he met Hitler at an air show which led to the [Nazis](#) "approaching" him about providing information on British airfields.

Draper informed the authorities and for the next four years passed on false information fed to him by MI6 to the Germans.

The enemy finally realised they were being misled in 1936 and stopped contacting him.



Major Draper at Elstree Airport in 1962 Credit: Geoffrey Day/Mirrorpix/Getty Images

In the Second World War, Draper returned to the RAF as a squadron leader in West Africa and the Far East in 777 Fleet Air Arm Squadron.

In 1953, in another protest against the treatment of RAF veterans, he flew an Auster Autocrat under 15 of the 18 Thames bridges between Blackfriars and Kew, earning the nickname the “Mad Major”.

His high-profile stunt saw him arrested again and fined 10 guineas for flying at under 1,000ft in a built-up area.

