

# OX & BUCKS BRANCH

## NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2026



@WFAOxBucks



Ox & Bucks WFA

[www.westernfrontassociation.com](http://www.westernfrontassociation.com)



## COMMENT

Welcome to the February branch Newsletter. As well as our usual content, we have received a press release from the Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum about a forthcoming exhibition, which may be of interest to you. This month we are very much looking forwards to Peter Hart's visit and hope that many of you will be able to join us.  
- David Adamson

### Future Meetings 2026

21 <sup>st</sup> February	Peter Hart	"Jutland 1916"
21 <sup>st</sup> March	Jonathon Rodell	"David Lloyd George: The Man Who Won The War?"
18 <sup>th</sup> April	Wenlan Peng	"The Chinese Labour Corps" & <u>Branch AGM</u>
16 <sup>th</sup> May	Peter Caddick Adams	"The Italian Front 1915-1918"
20 June	Dr Anne Samson	"The Indian Army in East Africa 1914"

### Serviceman Remembered:

L/Cpl William Amos Green, 11<sup>th</sup> Royal Fusiliers, Iver, Bucks.

William Amos Green was the eldest of ten siblings of James, a labourer, and Sophia Green of Iver, Buckinghamshire and was born in 1877. He and his seven brothers either worked the railways or for local nurseries; in his case for the Metropolitan Railway. He enlisted a year into the war and joined the 11<sup>th</sup> Royal Fusiliers, married Edith Rogers in 1916 and they had a son Arthur. His battalion was part of 54 Brigade, 18<sup>th</sup> (Eastern) Division and was involved in the attack at Miramont on the 12<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> February 1917. William was probably wounded in this action as he died on 21<sup>st</sup> February in one of the hospitals in Boulogne and was buried in Boulogne Eastern Cemetery. All of his brothers served in the army and featured in an article in their local paper. The youngest, Walter,



having an appeal against conscription rejected by the tribunal in Slough. Walter was killed in action on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1917 and is commemorated at Tyne Cot. Another brother, Ernest died of wounds in Salonika on 21<sup>st</sup> August, the same year; all three brothers are recorded in the Iver War Memorial.

### **Report of Meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> January : Andy Stuart “The Allied Intervention in Russia and the North Russian Relief Force”**

Andy’s interest in the intervention of the Allies in Russia stems from his maternal grandfather’s involvement where he “went to train Whites”.

After the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 the Russians continued to fight until the treaty of Best-Litovsk on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1918. The remaining Allies were concerned that Germans based in Finland (allied to Germany) would push east and capture supplies that had been shipped to the port of Murmansk. The British therefore set up the North Russia Expeditionary Force (NREF) under Maj-Gen Charles Maynard. This arrived in Murmansk in June 1918 and there were also French, Serb and Italian troops. At the time the rail workers on the key Murmansk to Petrograd railway were on strike and Maynard negotiated for them to be paid and go back to work.

General Edmund Ironside (the supposed inspiration for John Buchan’s Richard Hanney) arrived in September of that year, as did 5,000 US troops. The 6<sup>th</sup> Yorks (Green Howards) embarked for Russia on a “secret mission” on 16<sup>th</sup> October, after a tea seller on York Station asked them about their trip to Russia! Their ship proved to be unseaworthy so that had to pull into Orkney on 10<sup>th</sup> November. However, they finally arrive at Murmansk on 27<sup>th</sup> where they built wooden shelters. In March 1919 they marched 730 miles to Archangel in temperatures down to -30°C. They then had a further 90-mile march to Seletskoe where they refused to obey orders. The two ringleaders were former pay sergeants, who had spent their whole war in Le Havre, were court marshalled and found guilty. However, after 11<sup>th</sup> November all executions were commuted.

Discontent spread, as did mission-creep. The fight was no longer with the Germans; the anti-Bolshevik Churchill saw it as an opportunity to undermine the revolution. White Russians were recruited and trained by “Dyer’s Battalion” led by former sergeant Capt Royce Dyer DCM MM & Bar. The Slavo-British Legion was set up using released prisoners but also a lot of Bolsheviks and anarchists; with British, Australian and Canadian officers. These men were classified as “bads”, “less bads” and “probably harmless”, of which there were ~300 of the latter. One member was a girl who had previously been in the Russian women’s Battalion of Death. Over the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> July 1919, men in Dyer’s Battalion mutinied, killing five officers. Fifty men were tried and 12 executed by men of their unit using Lewis Guns.

In January 1919, Lloyd George estimated that 500,000 men would be needed to have an effect. Italy & Japan both supported the intervention and Japan sent 70,000 men to Eastern Russia, to further their imperial ambitions. In April, Churchill decided that a rescue mission of the NREF was required and the North Russia Relief Force was formed. Volunteers were requested both from men who had recently been demobilised and those who were still with the colours; one of the motivating factors being 50%



more pay than the rest of the British Army. Thirteen VC winners volunteered, as did a disproportionate number of decorated men.

Churchill's strategy was to push out of Archangel and push east to meet with the White Russians under Kolcak in Serbia. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Hampshires under Lt-Col John Sherwood Kelly VC CMG DSO were to attack villages on Dvina River in conjunction with a White Russian force. One of the White Russians defected and gave away the plans after a 35 mile recce carried out in 17 hours on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1919. An attack went on 19<sup>th</sup> at 4a.m. However, Sherwood Kelly refused to attack because of the marshy approach route, stiff resistance and the danger of being encircled. Ironside wanted to court martial him but, as he was South African, Ironside could not do so.

Why did the intervention fail? There were a number of reasons for this, including the conflicting and changing war aims and the lack of commitment from some allied powers, such as the USA. The Bolsheviki, under Trotsky, improved as a fighting force and Russian resolve improved under what was seen as a foreign invasion.

### **Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum tells the story of the county's military heritage through 50 objects in new exhibition**

- **New exhibition displays 50 key objects which tell the story of the county's military heritage**
- **Objects on display illustrate Oxfordshire stories from the Napoleonic Wars to the Second World War**
- **Insights into wartime life in the county, and the history of the two county regiments, The Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry and Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars**
- **Alongside the exhibition, the museum will be offering 50 Objects outreach talks, bringing their collections to you**

Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum, the county's military history museum based in Woodstock, will open a brand-new exhibition entitled *Oxfordshire's Military Heritage in 50 Objects* from 21 March to 30 April 2026.

The collection of objects going into the exhibition combine highlights from the museum's permanent displays from the past 10 years with recently donated items on show for the first time. Museum Director, Ursula Corcoran, said; "50 Objects brings many objects out of the archive and into the public gaze for the first time. We hope visitors will be inspired by the county's military heritage and even think of the family stories and treasures they hold themselves".

The objects have been selected from the 14,500 items preserved in the collection of SOFO Museum to give a glimpse into the story of Oxfordshire's military heritage. These objects tell the stories of residents of the county and the soldiers of Oxfordshire's regiments who have been impacted by, and influenced, conflict across the centuries.

Oxfordshire's military story stretches back nearly 2000 years, from the earliest named soldier in the county, Lucius Valerius Geminus, a veteran of the Second Augustan Legion who was buried at Alcester in 79AD. The county's regiments played roles in shaping the most significant conflicts of the last 200 years, from Waterloo to pivotal battles of the First and Second World Wars.



Throughout history, Oxfordshire soldiers have led the charge, at the forefront of world-changing events. A 19<sup>th</sup> century shako cap and Waterloo Medal highlight the 52<sup>nd</sup> (Oxfordshire) Regiment of Foot's role in Napoleon's defeat at the battle and encounter with his Imperial Guard.

A signed sketch and set of binoculars are used to illustrate their descendants' famous role during D-Day, 1944. 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry were some of the first British troops to land in Normandy, leading the capture of two vital bridges over the Orne River and Caen canal in the early hours of the morning. The sketch of a Horsa glider, signed by the men who took part in the capture of what would become known as Pegasus Bridge, includes a note from one of the glider pilots, SSgt Wallwork, who wrote; 'On 5-6<sup>th</sup> June '44 I carried the best troops (Ox & Bucks & Engineers) in both Airborne Divisions (but don't tell t'others).'

**The exhibition will include a collection of objects first uncovered by a French farmer in 2013, alongside the remains of an unidentified officer. Scraps of a uniform, badges, buttons, a pocket watch (pictured) and trench whistle provided some clues which helped museum volunteers narrow down his identity to one of a small number of candidates, including Osmond Bartle Wordsworth, a collateral descendant of the famous poet, William Wordsworth. However, it was a chance encounter with a visitor to the museum, who knew another descendant that enabled DNA testing, through the Ministry of Defence, Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), which finally confirmed his identity.**



**In 2022, 9 years from when he was discovered, and 105 years since he fell during the Battle of Arras, his grave was rededicated in his name, no longer an unknown casualty of war. Ingram Murray, one of the volunteers involved with the research that helped identify Lt. Wordsworth, explains;**

**“After prolonged research with another volunteer using a wide range of sources, we successfully established that**

**the remains were of Lieutenant Osmond Wordsworth, who had transferred to the Machine Gun Corps before being killed in action”.**

One of the most recently donated objects that will go on display for the first time at the museum is incredibly local – a set of beautifully decorated blackout curtains that came from a house on Park Street, Woodstock, just doors down from the museum.

Discovered while clearing a loft, the curtains had belonged to Joan Mary Shelmadine, one of the founders of the Samson press, which operated out of Woodstock from 1937. Dated 1941, the curtains had been used throughout the Second World War, then remained in the house in Woodstock ever since.

Alongside the exhibition, the museum will be expanding its outreach programme by taking a package of talks themed around *50 Objects* on the road, offering to bring selections of objects with an expert speaker to clubs, societies and organisations across the county. Talks and speakers are now bookable by contacting the museum or visiting the website.



Alongside its many volunteers that have contributed to and made this exhibition possible, the museum would like to thank the Greening Lambourne Trust for supporting the development of this new exhibition and outreach programme.

### **Branch Facebook Account**

Please remember the branch Facebook account where we are aiming at posting at least once every week, but more often coming up to a meeting. If you are on Facebook, please follow us at Ox & Bucks WFA.

### **Committee**

---

**Chairman & Newsletter Editor - David Adamson**

**Deputy Chairman - Nigel Crompton, Treasurer – Lance Hale, Speaker Liaison – Bob Swayne**

---

Meetings: The Guide Centre, School Lane, **Chalfont St. Giles**. HP8 4JJ  
*Usually* on the third Saturday of the month, starting at 2:30

---

