THE POPPY



THE NORFOLK BRANCH NEWSLETTER

Western Front Association

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CHAIRMAN REPORT - NOVEMBER

It is that time again when Remembrance Day will be marked, as every year, with recital of the Ode of Remembrance. As WFA members we remember on a monthly basis and I for one am glad and honoured that we do.

If I am at work I pause for a few minutes of reflection at 11am. More senior people in age will probably stop in our local Sainsbury store as the tannoy speaker announces that time whilst young folk will continue looking for bargains. The Embarrassed will hover not sure what to do.

That simple central stanza of Laurence Binyon's poem, first published in the Times newspaper 21 September 1914 sums up our need and duty to remember those lost to conflict.

If only people remembered the phrase from the 1955 Pete Seeger song, "When Will They Ever Learn" the world might be in a better place.

Kindest regards,
Chairman Rob

FROM THE EDITORS

Please let us have any items for consideration for inclusion in the Poppy by the 20th December by post to Mrs J Berry, 8 Fairstead Rd, Norwich NR7 8XQ or by email to jackie.berry3@btinternet.com, items can also be given at meetings.

MEETING REPORTS

September saw Simon Shepherd talking on the Breaking of the Hindenburg Line with J F C Fuller's explaining of the Principles of War as laid out in an article in the Journal of the Royal United Services Institute in 1909. Simon's presentation examined whether or not they were used to good effect back in September 1918 by the 46th Division when trying to cross the St Quentin Canal and break the Hindenburg Line. This battle would be in many minds the fight that Wilfred Owen was killed in. But a blocked canal, sealed off at each end by the Germans who had barges inside, a bridge rigged with explosives and lots of barbed wire to make the Allies work very hard to cross turned into a victory.
British, Australian and American soldiers took part in this battle during the Hundred Days Offensive, many men would die so near the war's end but this became an Allied success. Tunnel

and bridge taken and one of the war's most famous pictures of the mass of men on the steep canal bank.

October was a return visit from Nic Chapman, a CWGC volunteer, who talked about the CWGC archives, what they hold, or don't hold for various reasons. He spoke about the beginnings and issues that had to be addressed. He is passionate about the work the CWGC is doing to honour the hundreds of men who have no name, Africans, Indians etc often buried in mass graves, but which at last the CWGC are trying to rectify with memorials etc. there was mention of of a WW1 Indian cemetery in Berlin that would eventually end up in the Russian sector. Mention also that in the beginning the Red Cross paid for all the wooden crosses before the headstones we all know, came about. Dog tags got a mention. The 100th anniversary of the Menin Gate to take place next year was mentioned, also how more bodies are found and named and how their names are removed from places such a Thiepval and Menin Gate. Then a few stories about men in our local CWGC cemetery in Earlham. Very interesting evening.

OLD ISSUES OF STAND TO!

We hold four bound volumes of early "Stand To!" magazines covering in total number 7 (Summer 1986) to number 57 (January 2000) which are surplus to requirements.

If anyone would like them please contact our secretary Bob Kerry (01508 558674 or bob.kerry@btopenworld.com).

If I don't here anything they will go to the Honesty charity bookshop in Castle Quarter.

NORFOLK RECORDS OFFICE

This winter the records office has a selection of talks starting with Consent and dissent: First World War Military Appeal Tribunals. You need to book for online or to attend in person, Free of charge and taking place on Wednesday 11th November between 1 and 2pm. Below is what the Records Office says-

When conscription was introduced in 1916, hundreds of thousands of men appealed their call-up to the army. Contrary to popular belief, only around 2 per cent of these applicants were conscientious objectors. Most were ordinary men seeking exemptions so they could continue to support their families, run businesses, or carry out work considered vital to the war effort. These Military Service Tribunals played a crucial role in British society during the First World War, yet their story has largely been forgotten. In 1921, the government ordered the destruction of most tribunal records, leaving historians with only scattered survivors.

In this talk, Dr Angus Wallace explores the history of the tribunals, the men who appeared before them, and what the surviving records reveal about conscription, family life, employment, and local communities during the First World War. Drawing on his work with the Grounds of Appeal project, he also considers how historians are beginning to recover the stories hidden within these remarkable records.

See their web site for details on this and other Norfolk based subjects.

FREE TALK IN DOWNHAM MARKET

Downham Market Library is holding a talk on Friday 6th November at 2pm. Local historian Jim McNeill will talk on the subject of anti war efforts in Norfolk during WW1. This is a free event, part of a series of the Hidden History of Norfolk series.
Further details on 07811 469 639 or email jjjmcneill@gmail.com.

FUTURE PROGRAMME

1st December - I'm out: Escape from German POW camps 1914-18 – Peter Hart.

IN THE NEWS

Former BBC Northern Ireland reporter Stephen Walker died recently, although not so well known to many of us in England he was also an author of a couple of books on the 1st WW. One was the Forgotten Soldiers – The Irishmen shot at Dawn and the other Ireland's Call – Sporting hero's who died in the Great War.
The first title covers what is also covered in Julian Putkowski's Shot at dawn, but highlighting in this case, the 20 plus Irish men, or men serving in Irish Regiments, who were shot including the well known story of James Crozier.
The second book covers some 40 Irish sports men from the world of football, rugby, Gaelic sports, golf etc, all men with potential to go far in the sports world but were killed in fighting. One man, Frank Browning, was killed leading a unit in the Easter Rising, while another, Jasper Brett, killed himself.

Francis Browning, known as Frank was an Irish cricketer as well as President of the Irish Rugby Union in 1912. He was a Barrister and commanded the Irish Rugby Football Union Volunteer Training Corps, he also commanded a part time Volunteer Training Corps, a form of Home Guard it seems. They were on a training exercise on Easter Monday up in the mountains around Dublin when they were called back to the city only to be fired upon by Irish Volunteers killing or wounding 7 men four of whom died in the coming days, including Browning, he was 47.

Jasper Brett – Irish rugby international winning a cap against Wales in 1914. having suffered the horrors of Gallipoli and Salonika he suffered Shell shock and ended up in a psychiatric hospital. Two days before he was to return to the front he placed his head on a railway line near Dublin and was decapitated by a train. He was 21 years old and is listed as being the 10th youngest rugby international player for Ireland.

For those with an interest in rugby there is a list of international rugby players killed in WW1 on Wikipedia. My type of thing, learning of the stories of those who never got the chance of a long life.

Both books mentioned can be purchased online.

Did you know Major General William Henry Muir Lowe who took the surrender in the Irish uprising, was said to have lived at Burlingham House, no longer standing, near Lingwood. He and his

wife had a son John who fought at Gallipoli joining up as a 2nd Lt in March 1915 and also served on the Somme, as well as being in Ireland with his father for the Irish surrender, he was taken prisoner by the Germans in March 1918. John would go on to be an actor in Hollywood and was married to Hedy Lamarr for a few years.

A Guildford soldier missing for over 100 years has had a grave rededicated to him. 2Lt Frank Fleming was found to be in the Voormezeele Encloserue No3 in Ypres. Frank died near Hollebeke, Belgium in April 1918, leading an attack on the Germans. For over 100years his name has been on the Tyne Cot memorial. It seems his body was moved from its original burial and somehow mislaid.

6 Scottish soldiers have been reburied in the Pont-du-jour Cemetery near Athies. 2 were fully identified, Private George Fleming Brock and Private Percy Todd of the 11th Batt Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, 2 were found with artefacts suggesting Gordon Highlanders and 2 unidentified.

SUFFOLK WFA
Meetings held at the RBL Club, Tavern St, Stowmarket IP14 1PH 7.30pm

HARRY WILLIAM CARRITT MC

A recent clearance session by members of the Friends of Rosary Cemetery led to the discovery of a monument to mother and son Harriet Carritt who died in 1887 and her son Harry who was killed on the Somme in 1916. Research by one of the Friends discovered the story behind the family.
Harry was born on 23rd August 1887 at Trowse Newton, his father being a minister at one of the churches in the village, and his wife Harriet. Sadly Harriet died 4 days after Harry's birth of a deep veined thrombosis. Harry was brought up by his father, who moved around quite a bit, remarried and then died in 1928. Harry would go on the become a missionary in China, returning to England to attend university in Bristol. He planned to return to China at some point.
In 1915 after becoming a cadet in the university OTC unit Harry was commissioned into the 3rd Batt Northamptonshire Regiment as a temporary Lieutenant and sent to France. Later with the 2nd Batt he served from April 1915 till his death some 14 months later. In March 1916 he was promoted to Captain. On the 8th July the 2nd Northamptons attacked at Contalmaison, while running forward Harry and a fellow officer were out in front when a shell burst and a piece of it struck Harry in the head killing him instantly. For this Harry won the Military Medal but his body was not found and his name is on the Thiepval memorial.

THE BRAZIER BROTHERS

A recent stay in Hanbury on the Worcestershire/Warwickshire border. saw us looking at the local war memorial, (in need of a good clean!) right by where we were staying. We could see, just about, four men with the same name who died in WW1. In its self not uncommon as relatives lived locally back then. It was only checking things out on the internet that we found out they were brothers.
Henry (who died shortly before the war started) and Ann Brazier had 8 sons at The Stews, Broughton Green, with 6 joining up in August 1914, 4 of that 6 died in action or died of wounds. The two that remained, George served in the ASC and James in the RFA at some point. 2 of the orignal 6 Albert Edward and Charles Vivian came home although Charles had been badly injured.

Pte William Henry, North Staffordshire Reg, died April 1915, buried Erquinghem-Lys churchyard extension. age31
Pte Henry, Worcestershire Reg, KIA, March 1917, age18, on Thiepval memorial.
L/c Walter, North Staffordshire Reg, died April 1915, age 24, buried Bailleul Communal Cemetery.
L/c Edward John, Worcestershire Reg, KIA March 21st 1918, age30. On Arras Memorial

AFTER HOURS DRINKING ISSUES IN WW1

During WW1 the landlady of the Black Horse on Wensum Street here in Norwich was charged with serving drinks to soldiers after hours. Lydia Curson was found by police serving a group of soldiers after the allowed war time opening hours as permitted by DORA – Defence of the Realm Act and liquor control board, passed in August 1914 and amended by 1915 to make it illegal to buy a "round". This was brought in to combat soldiers and munitions workers and others from being drunk when they should have been at work. Landladies were often charged with the offence of serving after hours and heavy fines issued. Landlords and owners of such venues were often away fighting. There was mention of this in the EDP recently as part of an event at Norwich Cathedral.

REYDON WW1 PILLBOX SUFFOLK

For over a 100 years this WW1 pillbox on Mights Road, Southwold, later it was vandalised and in a really bad way. By 2023 threats were made to demolish it. The community rescued and rebuilt it to make a "living history" centre Blocks had been thrown into the creek and new blocks had to be recreated and the box totally rebuilt on new foundations. It is a round box which is unusual but now has a viewing window with toughened glass and steel doors. Visitors will be able to look out towards the sea as people did when on duty watching for possible Germans invasions. It will be part of a local history trail, with a church, lost village and marshes etc. All works should be completed by spring 2027.

NURSE JANET MARY GREATOREX

A Derbyshire born nurse who started her career in 1911 as a nursing sister in Bolton and called up in 1914 into the Territorial Nursing service. Janet caught TB or phyhisis as it was known then, while treating soldiers who were in hospital in Birmingham. She was discharge from service in June 1915 and died in April 1916 in Warwick where her sister lived, she was 38 years old.
Like may nurses she died from catching a disease brought in with wounded or ill men from the front. They were also victims of war, so her grave is military one, it is in Warwick Cemetery.

And finally.
Why have we never seen the statue in Edinburgh know as The Call 1914? We've been in the city several times over the years….
Next year in September it will be 100 years since it was unveiled, it is a tribute to the Scots who served in WW1 from Scottish-Americans.
It carries the words from a poem called "A Creed" "if it be life that waits, I shall live forever unconquered. If death, I shall die at last, strong in my pride and free".