



The Spire Sentinel



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



**& Magazine
Chesterfield
Western
Association**

Branch Newsletter 128 - October 2026

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



Western Front Association Chesterfield Branch – Meetings 2026

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

January	6th	. AGM + Tim Lynch - “Huns on the Run” Tim explores the often overlooked experiences of German POWs held in Britain during and immediately after the First World War
February	3rd	Ross Beadle - Sarajevo 1914 This talk examines the sequence of chance events of the preceding 36 years and, even, on the day of the killing.
March	3rd	Andy Rawson - Malta...Nurse of the Mediterranean against the Germans and Italians during WWII. However, over 125,000 casualties from the 1915 Gallipoli and 1916 Salonika campaigns were cared for on the island during WWI.
April	7th	Mick Byrne - Shot at Dawn Between 1914 and 1920, more than 3,000 British soldiers were sentenced to death by courts martial arms, However, only 346 were executed with 37 of these having committed capital crimes such as murder. The remainder become the centrepiece of our talk.
May	5th	Christina Holstein - Verdun. What was the plan behind the German offensive of February 1916? A thundering opening bombardment brought early success but the German advance soon slowed and the French refused to give up.
June	2nd	Scott Lindgren The Admiralty dispatched two dreadnought battlecruisers to the South Atlantic to eliminate the threat of the German East Asia cruiser squadron. This talk explains the events and consequences of the Falklands battle, along with some of the strategic and tactical lessons.
July	7th	John Wilson The action at Sheikh Sa'id November 1914. The opposed landing that nobody has ever heard about! .
August	4th	Ian Castle - Gotha Raids. The talk traces the sequence of raids made by the deadly Gotha and massive 'Giant' bombers, and the development of the world's first in depth, integrated aerial defence system. Based on his book London 1917-18: The Bomber Blitz
September	1st	Roy Larkin - Where the Money Went. Following the success of the original 'Where the Money Went', the Sequel explores the financial costs of the Great War. Fully illustrated
October	6th	Peter Hart Welsh Warrior at Ypres, 1914: The thrilling memories of Captain Hubert Rees who ended up in command of the 2nd Welsh Regiment during the fighting at Gheluvelt.
November	3rd	John Horner 'In the care of St Dunstons : Private Richard Horner's story'
December	1st	Neil Taylor...."Winston`s Little Army...Aspects of the Royal Naval Division"

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Chairman`s Ramblings



I hope this finds everyone well. Thank you to everyone that comes along to the branch meetings it's great to see the support you give to your branch both new and old faces. September's talk was interesting and well researched by Roy Larkin it is incredible just knowing where the money was spent and just how much. October's talk is The Welsh Warrior at Ypres 1914 by Peter Hart I am sure it will be

different and some good questions to Peter at the end of his presentation. Hope some of you will be interested in the branch trip on Friday 27th November to the Fusilier`s Museum at Bury near Manchester it would be great to have a good turn-out for an interesting day. Looking forward to the branch meeting in October even though the nights are drawing in, it will be great to see everyone who attends. Thank you again to the committee who do a great job behind the scenes to keep the branch running so well.

Branch Chair Jon-Paul

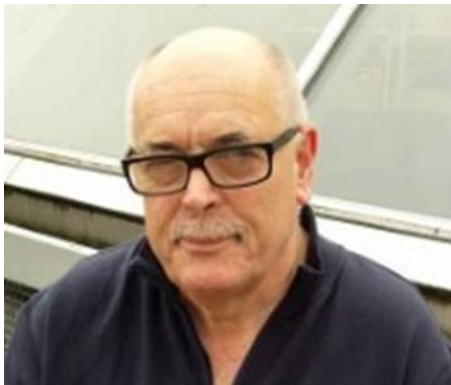
October Presentation - Peter Hart



Peter needs little introduction as his annual visit has been a highlight of the branch calendar since the earliest days of its existence. Here we see him in full flow on his visit last year. This year`s talk is entitled Welsh Warrior at Ypres, 1914: The thrilling

memories of Captain Hubert Rees who ended up in command of the 2nd Welsh Regiment during the fighting at Gheluvelt.

Secretary`s Scribbles.....



Dear Members and Friends,

Welcome to the October 2026 edition of the Branch Newsletter and magazine - number 128

Autumn is now well underway, leaves falling and its getting darker in the evenings.

As always I`m looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible on

Tuesday. For those not been before to a meeting , we have free, off street parking, access to the Chesterfield Labour Club bar, before and after the meeting. There is a stair lift up to our first floor meeting room for anyone with mobility issues. We ask for a modest donation (suggested £3) from everyone who attends to cover the cost of the room hire and any fees or expenses requested by our speakers - some - like Peter Hart on Tuesday come a long way to entertain and educate us.

Mid October sees me busy, out and about, giving my presentations and talks - indeed one of them is actually here in Chesterfield.

Here`s the list

Saturday 17th October. Friends of Nottingham Museums meeting at Nottingham Castle. "William Henry Johnson VC" Bill Johnson is the only man from Worksop to win the Victoria Cross which he did 108 years ago in WW1. Their venue is Learning Space 3 at Nottingham Castle and is accessed just inside the glass door entrance to the ducal palace or via the Robin Hood Gallery, taking the lift to the ground floor. There is a £3 charge for attendees. Meeting starts 2pm prompt.

The two days later I`m again off on my travels to a meeting at 7pm of the Friends of Cromford Canal at Anvil Club Casson St Ironville NG16 5NN where I`ll be talking about "*Commemoration & Remembrance of The Great War 1914-1918*"

The next morning (October 20th) I`m back in Chesterfield at a group called Thom`s Blokes who meet at 10am at St Thomas Church, Chatsworth Road, Chesterfield S40 3AW. This time I`m speaking about the role of Britain`s Railways in WW1.

I`m sure you would be made welcome at any of these meetings

I am reprinting a letter of request from a WFA member in Colchester asking if someone could go along and obtain a photograph of a memorial in a church in the village of King`s Langley in the amber Valley. I really hope that we can help Douglas in his quest. Sadly, for personal reasons Douglas cannot travel up himself, so, again, I`m hoping one of our members could help him.

Hi Grant - as one fellow WFA Member to another may I ask if you can help me with my research. I have, unsuccessfully so far, been trying to obtain a photograph of a Brass War Memorial Plaque in St Michael's Church in the village of Kirk Langley in the Amber Valley. The BWMP hangs in the Meynell Chapel inside the church and is dedicated to Major RAYMOND ENGLAND RFA from his widow. Raymond was KiA 26th August 1914 at Le Cateau.

I already know the dedication on the Plaque and am simply trying to obtain a photo of the Plaque itself to add to me write-up and not the details of the dedication on it.

Does anyone who attends your meetings in Chesterfield live near Kirk Langley, or anyone be prepared to travel to take a photo for me? I would be prepared to reimburse any expenses met by the photographer. Copy of photo could be e'mailed or sent as hard copy to DOUGLAS ROWE, 14 WHITTAKER WAY, WEST MERSEA, COLCHESTER, ESSEX, CO5 8LB E mail rowed14@talktalk.net

Fingers crossed you know someone who can help me. Regards - Doug

Next month, one of our regular attendees, John Horner will be making his debut as a speaker. John travels all the way up to Chesterfield from Burton on Trent for all our meetingsI try to get him back to the station in time for his train, hence me dashing off after our meeting concludes. If John misses the 9.10pm train he has a long wait for the next one. John`s talk is a bit of his family`s history “**In the care of St Dunstons : Private Richard Horners story**”. St Dunstons was the famous WW1 hospital & rehabilitation centre for servicemen who had lost their sight in the conflict. Please do come along and give John your support.

The WFA 2027 Calendar which Mark Macartney does so much each year to make this a successful publication is available now...remember branches selling the calendars get a share of the income.

Tony Bolton has just flagged tis up as potential interest to members...Mesopot is of course a particular part of the war that is Tony`s special interest.

<https://www.westernfrontassociation.com/world-war-i-articles/2026/october/the-mesopotamia-commission-report/>

As Jon-Paul has mentioned we intend to organise a branch outing to the Fusiliers` Museum in Bury on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> November. It is intended to car share for transport. More details at Tuesday`s meeting and by a separate notice. Information about the museum can be found here... www.fusiliermuseum.com All aboard for Tuesday`s meeting.

Best wishes, Grant,

grantcullen@hotmail.com / tgcullen1952@gmail.com

07824628638

When was the last time that you had a look at The WFA shop? There are some wonderful items to purchase and the profits help support the Association.

Go to the home page of the website and click on the 'About the WFA' menu and you will see the 'Branded Goods' option



Record Bag



Shoulder Bag



Messenger Bag



Cap



Coffee Mug



Mousemat



Classic Tie



Fridge Tile Magnet



WFA Fridge Magnet



WFA Bookmark



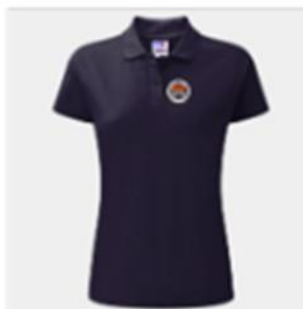
Lapel Badge



Despatch Bag



UNISEX POLO SHIRT WITH LOGO 563M



LADIES POLO SHIRT WITH LOGO 539F



UNISEX SHORT SLEEVE OXFORD SHIRT WITH LOGO 8309



LADIES SHORT SLEEVE OXFORD SHIRT 8701



UNISEX SWEATSHIRT WITH LOGO 762M



LADIES SWEATSHIRT WITH LOGO 3H030F



UNISEX T-SHIRT WITH LOGO 180M



LADIES T-SHIRT WITH LOGO 180F



UNISEX RUGBY SHIRT WITH LOGO FR100



LADIES RUGBY SHIRT WITH LOGO FR101



UNISEX BREATHABLE JACKET WITH LOGO 510M



LADIES WATERPROOF INSULATED JACKET 81043

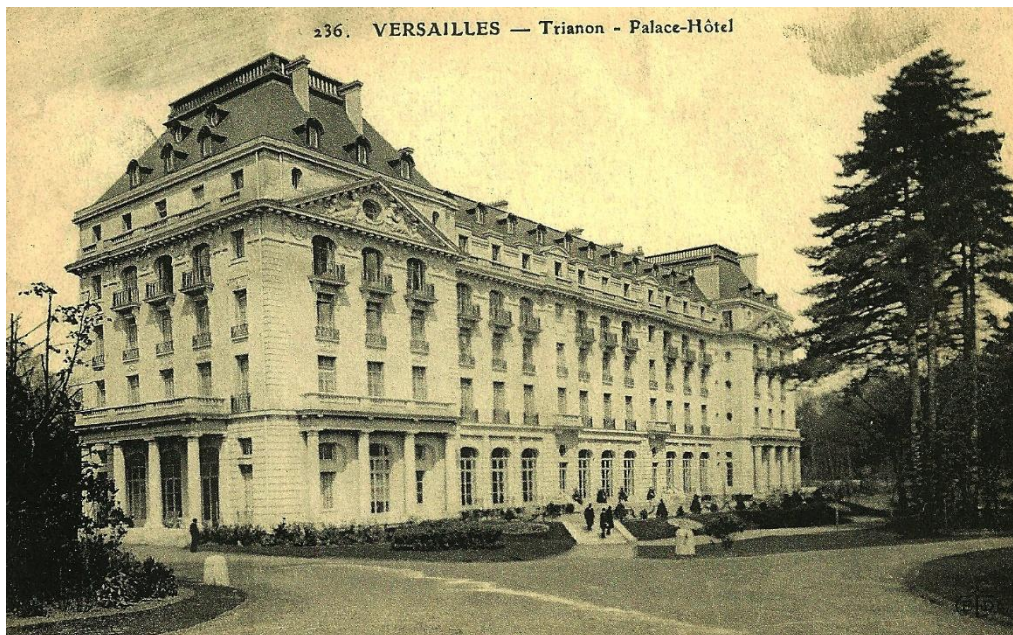


UNISEX FLEECE WITH LOGO 81022



LADIES FLEECE WITH LOGO 81023

September Meeting - Roy Larkin - costs of the war....here`s a selection of Roy`s slides

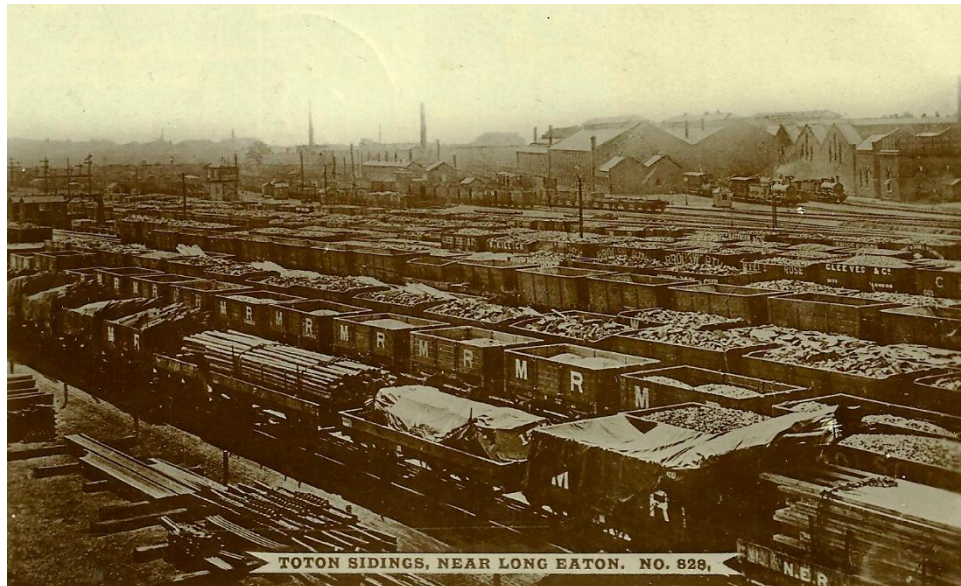


Hotel Trianon, requisitioned by the French authorities on behalf of the British to become No.4 General Hospital. It opened in November 1914 and was closed in December 1915. Too far from the Line of Communication to be serviced by the BEF, all the supplies from food to medical needs were sourced locally at cost of £650 [£65,450 in 2026] per week. A rarely considered cost to hospitals, or the BEF in general was the laundry cost of 2d per piece. With 4 General Hospital alone producing 4,000 pieces every week, that amounted to £33.40 [£3,363] every week.



Sandbags, used in their millions, by 1918 the Western Front was absorbing 1,000,000 per day, mostly imported from India. They accounted for 8,500 tons of freight and cost £27,083 [£1,374,740] per month. Used for the obvious trench walls, they were also essential at Ammunition Parks between rows of munitions in an attempt to stop any accidental explosions destroying the entire park. Buildings were protected by walls of sandbags built around the building. Shell holes in roads were filled with

sandbags before the top course of roadstone as a quick and efficient means of repairing huge bomb craters and shellholes.



Railway wagons cost £0.3.6d [£18.00] per week to hire, a cost that escalated to £0.15.00 [£45.30] by 1917. The cause was organised crime groups. Criminals bulk hiring and creating shortages to push the prices higher. The gangs also operated within the surplus and worn out railway stock such as locos and even rails. Rails too worn for mainline use were still valuable for sidings into munitions factories. This criminal forcing costs up was stopped in 1918 by the Railway Materials Licences Department, formed to regulate second hand prices of railway materials. It became illegal to sell or deal in any railway material without a licence and resulted in the cost of hiring wagons dropping to £0.07.03 [£17.90] in 1918. Maybe railway truck hire seems insignificant at first glance but it needs considering that the South Wales coal mining industry alone hired 550,000 wagons every year to haul the 185,000,000 tons of coal they produced annually.

Too often, what seems an insignificant cost, escalates quickly into huge amounts when the scale of the First World War is considered. Hopefully this presentation achieved its aim of pointing minds in directions rarely considered.

Celebrate The Proms

Remember the Fallen



Dronfield Band

Proms to Poppies Concert

★ Saturday 10th October @ 2.30pm ★

Calow Community Centre

Allpits Road
Calow
S44 5AT

Classical
Favourites



Wartime
Songs



Stage
& Film



Proms Highlights

Tickets £15 Each - Including Afternoon Tea
To Book Contact - 01246 201366



Band Bookings:
Joanne Wood 07475052647
dronfieldband@gmail.com



How it all Began: “The Image of a Veteran Project”

By Michael and Elizabeth Szarelis

This project is one of several remembrance projects which we have run, involving local school students and the wider community, since 2018.

The three remembrance maps record the locations of 316 veterans. Of these, 245 casualties are recorded with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and buried or remembered in these three locations and across the sites of the Commission in the world. Of this number, the 148 casualties who are buried or remembered on family memorials in these locations are First World War casualties and 97 who are buried or remembered on family memorials in these locations are Second World War casualties.

In 2018, my daughter, Elizabeth, and I created a hand-drawn map of some of the Great War graves of servicemen in Retford cemetery. We used this to give a guided walk and talk about local veterans buried in Retford Cemetery to a group of year 6 students from St Josephs primary school.

From that experience with these young students who were full of enthusiasm for local history, the subject came up between myself and my daughter about a creating a map of veterans in Retford Cemetery for future generations of both students and the general public to use. This is when the new remembrance map started to take shape.

Over the coming months we had a meeting onsite in Retford Cemetery with Tony and Judith Goodall, local military historians. Their initial guidance on how to locate and research the local military casualties in the cemetery was extremely helpful.

Each section of the cemetery was visited and checked, grave-by-grave, for First and Second World War casualties. Family graves were also checked for any mention of a loved one killed in service while in the armed forces.

On the map we decided that any such graves would be marked as private memorials and included on the map.

A map was designed and a display cabinet to house the map in the cemetery was fabricated. This display cabinet was made of aluminium, to prevent rusting, and sprayed black. It was designed with a removable clear Perspex screen, which could be changed in years to come as the Perspex deteriorated. Most importantly, we designed the cabinet so that the front cover could be removed and the map could be replaced if needed. This may be due to age and colour fading of the map due to UV. Also, in the future, if new graves or memorials¹² were discovered in the cemetery, we could update the map and replace it.



Through 2020 and 2021, the map slowly began to take shape.

Following several zoom meetings and emails sent off to raise funds for the map, we also received a request for us to work on a similar map of remembrance for All Hallows Churchyard, Ordsall.

We took on this project as well and used the experience from Retford Cemetery in All Hallows Churchyard. We learned who to speak to in the Bassetlaw Council and parish council of All Hallows regarding planning permission for the cabinets to be installed in locations. We had some amazing support and guidance in this from Stephen Brown and Sid Lusby for the Retford Cemetery locations.

Following a period of communications over the design of the map and cabinets, location, and fundraising of the £3500 needed for the project, and having to deal with the Covid pandemic restrictions, all three maps were installed in 2021, with two map cabinets in Retford cemetery in March of that year and one map cabinet in all Hallows Churchyard, Ordsall in June 2022.

Two local primary schools, St Josephs in Retford, and All Hallow's in Ordsall, were involved in the unveiling of the map and cabinets in March and June 2021.

Local Councillors, RBL branch, Organisations and the public were invited to support these young students in this activity.

Also, as the project was developed over the years, and Facebook posts went out, the local community became interested and started to ask questions regarding family members who did not die in the World Wars and if they could be included. So, we expanded the criteria and included veterans who served outside the world wars and died in military service and also those who had served and then became a civilian and died later on.

In August 2022, we started working on the remembrance project in Worksop Cemetery, Retford Road, to locate casualties' graves and memorials, photograph them and collect research on the casualties.

Over the next couple of years, we gathered all the information to design and produce a remembrance map and cabinet, and a booklet to accompany the map.



The unveiled map in Retford Road Cemetery, Worksop.

We raised funds of over £4,000 to pay for the map and cabinet from local councillors, Bassetlaw Freemasons, Tesco, and private donations.

In June 2025, the map cabinet was unveiled by Primary students from Holy Family Catholic school and Prospect Hill Junior School.

Local Councillors, RBL branch, Organisations and the public were invited to support these young students in this unveiling of the map and cabinet.

When we created the remembrance maps, we also produced simple booklets for Worksop and Retford Remembrance Projects. These included photographs of the graves or memorials, basic information on the veterans, and the location of them on the maps. The basic information would allow a young student or member of the public to get started and research a veteran. Booklets were distributed to local schools and libraries.

All the information and veterans' photographs which we discovered from the three projects was then used for a new project to get local school students involved in remembrance in their local cemetery.

The aim of the "Image of a Veteran Project" was to encourage local schools to get involved twice a year and to form a connection with the casualties with the use of a personal photograph.

The project involved students placing the photographs of veterans which we had located when researching the project, on their graves or memorials.

On the back of their photographs, we included a small amount of information about them.

We hope to continue with the schools and their students involvement of Remembrance of military veterans, not just in November, but throughout the year.

These military veterans images will remain in location for the duration from VE Day on the 8th May, and War Graves Week (which is the celebration of the work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission at home and around the world). War Graves Week will run from 16th to 24th May 2026.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission commemorate 1.7M men and women of the Commonwealth that died during the First & Second World Wars.

We will remove them after the 6th June and the anniversary of the D Day Landings in Normandy.

After which we will store the images ready for installation in October for Remembrance Week.



The veterans' photographs in Retford Road Cemetery, Worksop.

The Royal British Legion Poppy appeal starts on the 22nd October this year. We have arranged for 138 veterans images to be placed across three sites in Worksop and Retford. This number of images 138 may increase if we are given new photographic images of the veterans when we advertise this event on Facebook and local media or locate veterans' photographs for this project while carrying out further research. We have already had photographs shared with us by members of the public.

In Worksop Cemetery, 30 students from Holy Family Catholic Primary School will be installing 70 veterans' photographs across the cemetery. This will be on Wednesday morning 14th October starting around 10am.

In All Hallows Churchyard Ordsall, we have Ordsall Primary School students installing 23 veterans' images. This will take place on Friday 16th October at 11:30am.

In Retford Cemetery, we have St Joseph's Catholic Primary School students installing 45 veterans' images. This will take place on Monday 12th October at 1:30pm. The school students will also hopefully be joined this year by some students from Rampton Primary School.

Students, teachers and the public can scan a QR code on the Remembrance Maps in the display cabinets to gain access to the Nottinghamshire Roll of Honour website and a wealth of information on the First or Second World War casualties whom the students are placing on the graves or memorials. There is also a link to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission record for these casualties.

At the moment, the 'Image of a Veteran Project' is self-funded. We hope to be able to gain funding to create more weather-resistant images and holders.



The veterans' photographs in All Hallows' Cemetery, Ordsall

Without the Community and younger generations being encouraged and inspired to remember and honour these men and women from our community who made the ultimate sacrifice, we will lose a part of, not only our local history, but also our national history.

And, like the weathered and eroded headstones and memorials in our cemeteries, whose names have been removed from all living memory, we may never find them again...

These servicemen and women would then only be "KNOWN UNTO GOD", as they are described on the many Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstones on the battlefields of conflicts in many countries around the world

Michael and Elizabeth Szarelis



NOT THE WESTERN FRONT CONFERENCE

Saturday 31st October 2026
Cluntergate Centre, Horbury, WF4 5DA



Peter Hart - "The French at Gallipoli"



Tom Isitt - "The Vertical War"



Alan Wakefield - "Salonika"



Nigel Atter - "Tigers on the Tigris"

£29 including lunch (earlybird until 31st May £25)

<https://www.trybooking.com/uk/FPHV>