



# frontline.

The newsletter of the MK WFA, May 2024.



On May 17<sup>th</sup> is our next talk entitled 'Now the War is Over' by Dr Daniel Weinbren. How did Britain respond to the momentous events of 1919 and 1920 as it adjusted to peace after four years of war? How did the British people cope with the massive changes and challenges that confronted them? Dr Weinbren will answer these questions, explain what happened in every sphere of life and show that even today we are still dealing with the consequences of those years of transition. Across Europe were revolutions, a war for independence in Ireland, and widespread race riots in Britain. Most servicemen simply wanted to come home to a land fit for heroes, to their families and a secure job, but for most that didn't happen. There was to be no return to the old days, too much had been lost. Dr Weinbren will give us a fascinating insight into how the First World War changed the direction of the nation. Don't miss this unusual and important aspect of the Great War.

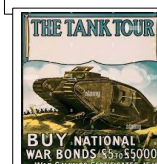


The Western Front  
Association  
Milton Keynes Branch

## Milton Keynes WFA Seminar 2024.



Don't Miss It!



**October 19th** (9.30am - 4.30pm)

Expert speakers presenting fascinating aspects of the Great War -

Major Charlie Barratt: 'Q Ships - The Ships that Didn't Exist.'

Peter Hart, Gary Bain: 'Laugh or Cry: Life or Death in the Trenches.'

Nigel Crompton: 'The Women's Police Service in the Great War.'

Helen Frost: 'When the Landships Came to Town.'

The Great War Society: 'British and German Infantry.'

Buffet lunch included, plus tea, coffee and biscuits throughout the day.  
Militaria and branch displays, plus second-hand book stall (cash please).

Bletchley Masonic Centre 263 Queensway, Bletchley, MK2 2BZ

Tickets available soon. [Enquiries: wfa.miltonkeynes@gmail.com](mailto:Enquiries:wfa.miltonkeynes@gmail.com)



MAY



*Richard Rawson (butcher) and his wife*

**Trooper Richard (Dick) Francis Rawson (Household Cavalry)**  
**Killed in Action 13<sup>th</sup> May 1917 aged 26**  
**(Great-uncle of Anne McIntyre)**

Born in Burnley in 1889, son of Frank and Betty Rawson of 21 Plumbe St, Burnley, he was one of nine children. His brother, Frank, (No 379115) was a Private with the Signals RE.

Richard married Nellie (nee Parker) on 9<sup>th</sup> Nov 1915 at Holy Trinity Church, Burnley and they lived at 110 Burns St, Stoneyholme, Burnley.

Dick landed in France on 9th November 1916 (on his first wedding anniversary). By April 1917, the regiment was fighting in the Battle of Arras, the deadliest battlefield of the

War, and was in the centre of the First Battle of the Scarpe to capture Vimy Ridge. The attack on Vimy Ridge was one of the best planned British offensives of the war. The terrain over which they were about to fight consisted of rolling hills with a few villages in the river valleys. The area was wide open fields with few trees. Running eastwards out of Arras the River Scarpe was a collection of ponds and marshes connected by a stream along this stretch. The problem was how to move a large number of troops to the front without attracting attention.

Twelve tunnels were built leading up to the frontline through which 24000 men crawled to come up directly in front of the German front line without having to face the deadly machine gun fire of no man's



land. The soldiers had to spend prolonged periods in the tunnels and so the latter were equipped with kitchens, water supplies from the mains or wells, and electric lighting throughout. The British Army also installed a hospital capable of treating 700 wounded.



As Arras town was well within the firing range of the German artillery it was not a particularly safe place in which to billet troops. Beneath the two great squares in Arras there were a system of cellars and these were requisitioned and turned into accommodation for 13 000 men.

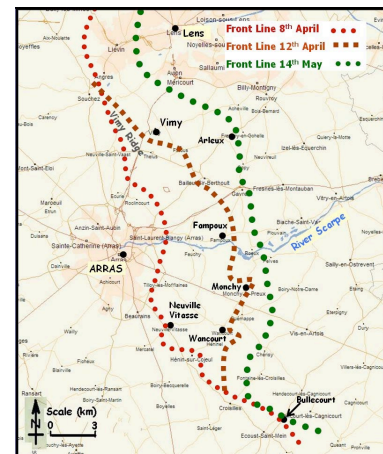
To the east and south east there were a number of caves that had been tunnelled out as chalk quarries and it was decided that these should also be cleared and used to shelter a further 11 000 men. Tunnels were built from the town to the caves.

After a 5 day preliminary bombardment, The First Battle of the Scarpe started at 5.30am on Easter Monday 9<sup>th</sup> April in sleet and snow.

The spectacular capture of Vimy Ridge by four Canadian divisions overshadowed the equally impressive achievements made by British divisions of Allenby's Third Army when the British lines moved 3 kilometres forward.



Three days of heavy snowfall brought action to a halt.



In another attempt to advance (Third Battle of the Scarpe) on the 3rd May, twin attacks were launched along the Scarpe River in the centre and Bullecourt in the south. Dick's division was in the advance along the river and here Dick was killed in action. His body was never recovered and he is commemorated on the Arras memorial at Faubourg d'Amiens Cemetery in Arras.





## Mentioned in Despatches



### The U-boat War 1914 - 1918.

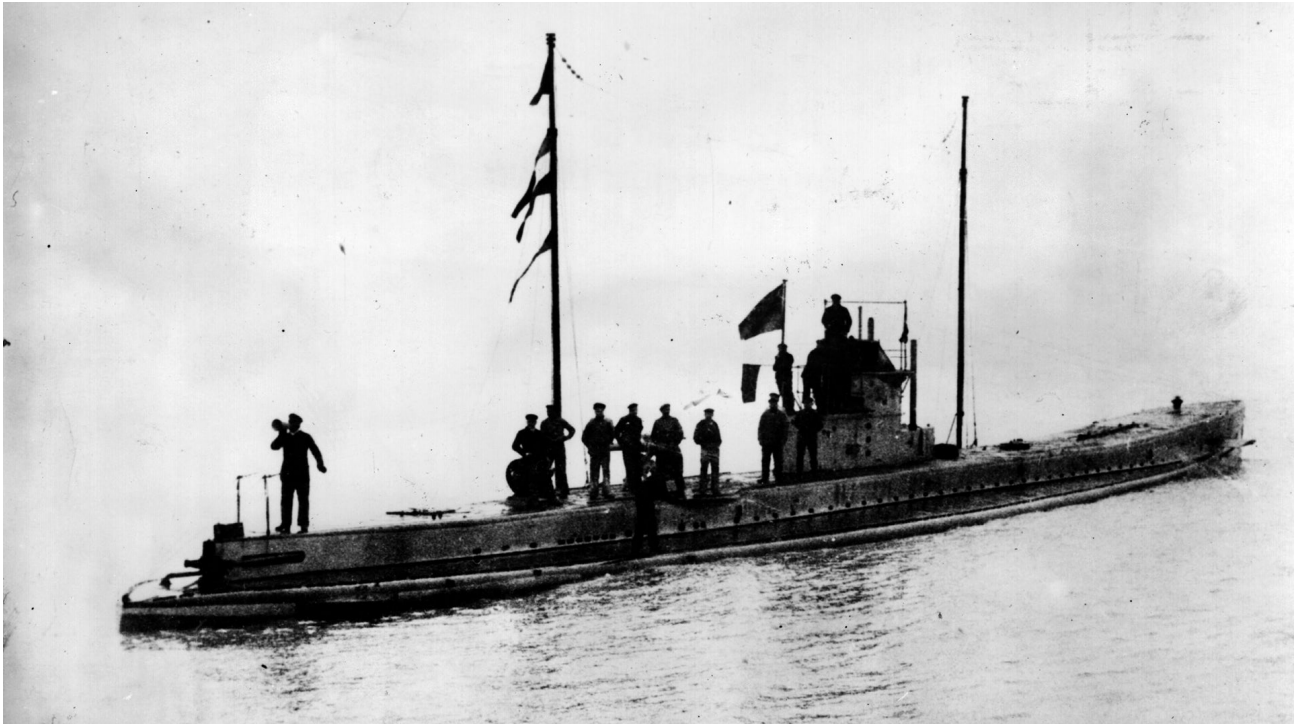
Dr Graeme Kemp gave us a fascinating talk on April 19th. For the second time in a row we had some new visitors attend, hopefully they will be inspired enough to return in the future. Dr Kemp split his talk into three main parts; What is a U-boat, the U-boat campaign, and the U-boat crews. The torpedo had already evolved into an effective munition, and Germany was already using torpedo boats, fast and streamlined. The first U-boats (unterseeboot) were in effect torpedo boats that could hide beneath the waves, and 'fly' like an underwater bird. This underwater capability was achieved not by ballast tanks but external wings, like horizontal rudders, turned by huge wheels inside the craft to make the submarine dive or climb. The U-boat was streamlined enough to achieve up to 20 knots on the surface, but this was reduced to a much slower 6-8 knots underwater.



Kapitanleutnant Lothar Von Anauld de la Periere was the greatest U-boat ace of the Great War.



He was responsible for sinking 224 merchant ships of over 500,000 tons, but only fired 6 torpedos in 17 patrols. The U-boat tactic was to sink merchant shipping by surfacing and using their gun that was mounted on the forward deck, covered in tallow to protect it from the ravages of sea water, and a vast majority of the 11 million tons of shipping sunk by U-boats in WW1 met their end in this way.



The early U-boats were quite small and very cramped inside. About 200 feet in length, the hundred-man crew were denied any comforts or privacy. 'Hot bunking' was the norm, and only the captain's 'cabin' had a curtain! Germany employed several different designs of U-boat, from the tiny UB boats, only 200 tons, that operated from Zeebrugge in the English Channel to the much larger U cruisers that were built to carry essential cargoes to avoid the British blockade, importing dye, rubber, etc into Germany from then neutral America. These were later converted into warships when America entered the war. U C boats were minelayers, mines can sink anything so very useful as U-boats were slow underwater and found it difficult to get into a position to sink warships.

The Germans started the Klein Krieg (little war) to equalise the two fleets by targeting dreadnoughts. They sank one, HMS Audacious. The British created a replica at Scarpa Flow to convince the Germans that they hadn't sunk it! It a bit of a black day for the Royal Navy when U9 sank HMS Aboukir, Hogue and Cressy. The three ships were going slowly, the U-boat torpedoed and sank one, then sank the other two as they stopped to pick up survivors. Britain thought it was too dangerous to go for a close blockade so blockaded the North Sea, mainly using cruisers, the pride of the Royal Navy. The early U-boats had short periscopes, so if spotted were easy to ram, and any damage from gunfire was usually the end of a U-boat.

The first merchant ship sunk by a U-boat was the SS Glitra on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1914, by U17 under Capt. Feldkirchener, who halted the ship and put charges on board. This was the original strategy for a U-boat, surface alongside a merchant vessel, ascertain the cargo, and sink the ship by charges or shelling. If the ship had a wireless cabin aboard, that would be taken out first by cannon or machine gun fire. Important ports for the Germans such as Rotterdam were neutral and therefore blockade was not an option, so Britain mined the approaches instead. This was a risky policy, what would happen if neutral ships were sunk, especially American ones? Therefore the British declared the North Sea a war zone, forcing neutral shipping into Dover to ascertain where the minefields were, and subsequently being searched by the British authorities. Germany by now was feeling the effects or

the blockade, many goods were in short supply and bread was rationed by 1915. To retaliate, Germany declared any British waters to be a war zone, difficult to enforce, but the U-boat was up to the job. Consequently, Germany started unrestricted submarine warfare, sinking any ships without warning. In March 1915 Britain put out a reprisals order, cutting all supplies to Germany, in and out. This was total warfare, targeting civilians and especially women and children. Then came the Lusitania, steaming unescorted to Britain and crossing the path of U 20, the only U-boat in the area. U 20 had just finished its patrol and was about to head home when the Lusitania steamed slowly out of the mist in front of it. As the huge liner turned across U 20's path the U-boat fired the only torpedo it had left on board. A large explosion occurred, followed 20 minutes later by a second explosion (possibly caused by munitions that the ship was supposed, or not, to be carrying) that sent it to the bottom.

After the massive outcry and publicity caused by the sinking the German's realised that their policy of sinking everything was not doing them any good and they took liners off their target list. Soon afterwards the Germans captured a British ship where they discovered a letter from Winston Churchill declaring that U-boat crews were to be treated as pirates.

The Jutland campaign was Germany's plan to persuade neutral countries to keep up their support for Germany. Trying to draw the British fleet out the Germans shelled Great Yarmouth. U-boats and zeppelins were used for spotting. The Germans attempted to draw elements of the Grand Fleet onto their High Seas fleet, but British intelligence thwarted their plans and placed a superior British force at Jutland. With the German navy severely compromised, the Germans reverted back to submarine warfare. The British then formed the 10<sup>th</sup> cruiser squadron, 9 old cruisers to enhance the blockade. Neutral ships were prepared to make a deal with the Admiralty by refusing to take German goods and therefore avoiding the costly business of being stopped and searched by the Royal Navy. These cruisers were eventually replaced by armed merchantmen, but the overall effect was working. Germany had been denied over 170 million tons of supplies, there were butter riots in Germany, and the egg ration was one egg per person per month. There was a vast increase in stealing and other crimes, and the black market prospered. Germany was starving, and by 1916 the German authorities realised the war was lost. Britain was also losing enormous numbers of its young men into the hell of the Somme and Passchendaele and were borrowing 50 million pounds per week for the privilege, so were also keen to find a resolution to the conflict. Peace talks were proposed, but America, chosen to be the mediators, failed in their task, and so the war went on, with the U-boats still in full swing. Jellico and the Admiralty concentrated their efforts in finding ways to defeat the U-boats. Putting guns on merchant ships was one idea that was counterproductive as that made them classed as warships, which the Germans could sink without warning. The Germans countered with a rather stupid and ill-conceived plan - if they could sink 600,000 tons of shipping, including neutrals, a month, Britain would be forced out of the war in 6 months. If America joined the allies because of this policy no matter, by the time they mobilised and got involved the war would be over. Despite the obvious pitfalls of this plan the German army, and especially the civilian population, were all for it. Germany was starving, and they wanted the British to starve as well. Gott strafe England was on everyone's lips. It was a bad plan. American ships were sunk in March, and they entered the war in April.

At sea the tables were being turned on the U-boat. The newly invented convoy system, with their escort of destroyers, made life very dangerous for the U-boat crews, they went hunting single ships instead and sinkings dropped. The secret Room 40 in the Admiralty intercepted and broke German navel codes. Britain converted itself into an arable nation, turning 4 million acres of pasture into food production. Aircraft were increasingly used against the U-boats, either sinking them or forcing them underwater and limiting their speed and efficiency. War is about logistics, and now America was

there to bankroll it. In Germany 739,000 civilians died from malnutrition, to the extent that British women set up Save the Children to help starving German children.

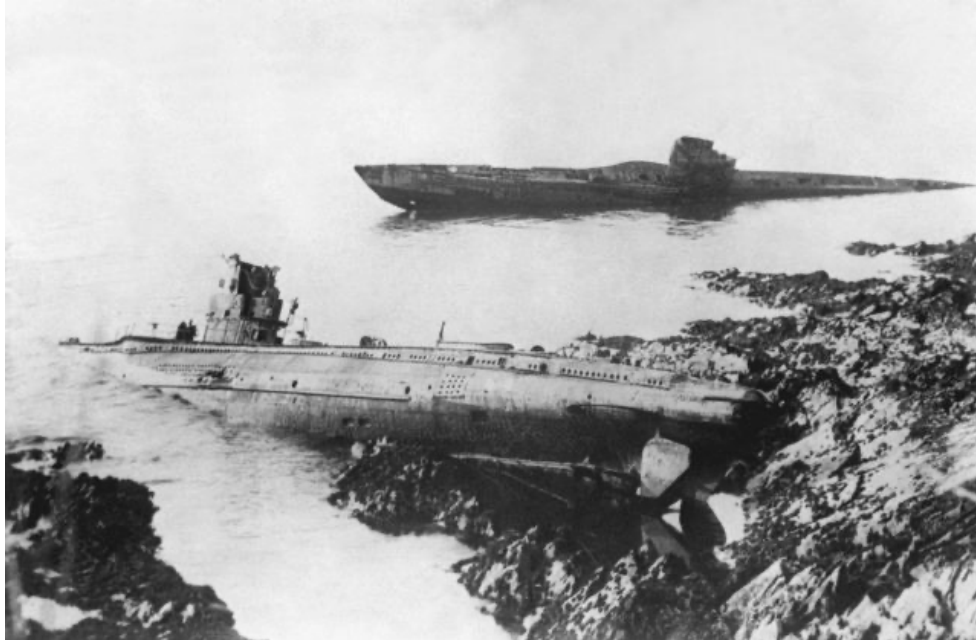
Dr Kemp then moved on to the third part of his talk, describing the experiences of the U-boat crews. He had already mentioned the cramped conditions, on the small U boats the captain and lookout sat on the conning tower, not in it. Underwater it was quiet and smooth. The U-boat would sit on the bottom for the crew to sleep, with two sailors on guard to monitor the carbon dioxide levels. If they fell asleep as well the consequences could be disastrous, U118 was washed up after the war with a dead crew and no damage, and 33 U-boats went missing. The crews formed a tight unit, and often showed great resourcefulness, when a bearing failed on one U-boat the mechanic cast a new one using the German wartime bread as a mould! There was great camaraderie on board, which helped to counter the massive stress the crews were under, and the danger. Usually if something went wrong the whole crew would perish, survivors were rare. The average age of U-boat crews was 18, for the commanders 30 years was considered old, even though they often had grey hair by then. Special rest hospitals were set up for U-boat commanders.

The war at sea was often dirty for both sides. U-boat Commander Oberleutnant Patzig of U86 sank 32 ships over a 2-year period but then by mistake sank the hospital ship Llandovery Castle. He tried to cover up by ordering his crew below, ramming the lifeboats and machine-gunning the survivors, including Canadian nurses, in the water. After the war Patzig avoided trial by leaving the country but returned to serve in U-boats in WW11. British trawlers were also guilty of machine-gunning U-boat survivors in the water. The official line seemed to be - 'there are no war crimes in wartime.' It was not always so grim. One British barque, a small sailing ship, boarded by Germans was allowed to continue on its way in return for a map of the minefields. The Germans also swapped schnapps for biscuits! (Not surprised considering what their bread was like!) Dr Kemp finished his talk with the tale of Kapitanleutnant Werner Furbringer who had quite an adventure returning home after the engine of UB2 broke down in the channel.





As you can see in the photo above, UB 2 had eyes painted on the bows. When its engine failed, the U-boat was forced to the surface. Kapitanleutnant Werner Furbringer tried to improvise a sail which wasn't successful, so he ordered his crew to try rowing, also without success. Finally he let the tide take UB 2 home in several 'hops', remaining on the bottom for 6 hours to recharge the batteries. On the final leg he saw a periscope coming towards him on an attack approach. It was another U-boat which had aborted its attack when they recognised the eye painted on the front and knew who he was.



U-boats being scrapped at Falmouth

At the war's end the surviving U-boats were handed over and nearly all were scrapped. One commander, Dönitz, took command of U-boat UB-68 in 1918. His time as a submarine captain did not last long, however. While operating in the Mediterranean, his submarine suffered technical malfunctions that forced it to the surface. Rather than let the U-boat fall into enemy hands, Dönitz scuttled the vessel and surrendered to the British, spending the rest of the war as a POW. He was left nurturing an idea that would cost the Allies dear in the next war - the 'wolf pack.' Many thanks to Dr Kemp for such a riveting and informative talk.

### **Twinning News.**

A visit to a major cemetery near Ypres is being planned in for the return journey. There are some spare places still not taken up, so anyone, plus family and friends, who would like to go on the trip and has not yet registered an interest, please contact George, our Wolverton Town Council liaison, at [ggmabey45@gmail.com](mailto:ggmabey45@gmail.com) or Chris direct at [Community@wolvertonandgreenleystowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:Community@wolvertonandgreenleystowncouncil.gov.uk) asap.



**Twinning Trip - Don't Miss It!**

## CWGC War Graves Week tours.

Don't forget Mike Chapman's CWGC War Graves Week tours in May. He is running -

- Bletchley (Manor Road) Cemetery - Thu 16 May + Sat 18 May  
- <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/cwgc-war-graves-week-2024-bletchley-manor-road-cemetery-tickets-758602118357>
- Cranfield (St Peter & St Paul) Churchyard - Sun 12 May  
- <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/cwgc-war-graves-week-2024-cranfield-st-peter-and-paul-churchyard-tickets-760266998057>
- Halton (St Michael) Churchyard - Mon 13 May + Sun 19 May  
- <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/cwgc-war-graves-week-2024-halton-st-michael-churchyard-tickets-878028004397>



Following on from the success of last year's seminar,  
Milton Keynes Branch is hosting a 2024 event

## “A Great War Miscellany”

on 19<sup>th</sup> October 9.30am – 4.30pm

There is an excellent line up of professional speakers on a wide variety of topics :

Major Charlie Barrett "The Story of the Q-Ships"

Nigel Crompton “Women’s Police Service in the Great War

Helen Frost "When the Land Ships came to Town"

Peter Hart and Gary Bain "Fly or Cry" (Dark humour in the Navy)

Additionally, there will be short talks and demonstrations by The Great War Society



Ticket includes excellent buffet lunch and free tea and coffee will be available throughout the day. Static displays and second-hand book stall (cash please). Venue : Bletchley Masonic Centre 263 Queensway, Bletchley, MK2 2BZ (Free car park) Book Early to avoid disappointment.

Tickets available priced £30 each by emailing [wfa.miltonkeynes@gmail.com](mailto:wfa.miltonkeynes@gmail.com)



## 'It was in fact pure murder' - War Artist John Nash.

When I was a lot younger, I was very aware, with my interest in the Battle of Britain, of war artist Paul Nash's evocative painting of that event, an English landscape and above it a vast blue sky, streaked with a balletic pattern of vapour trails left by the aircraft of the RAF and Luftwaffe as they engaged in mortal combat almost unseen, high above the fields of Kent.

What I didn't realise until much later was that Paul Nash was a prolific artist in the First World War, and I didn't realise either that he had a brother who was also engaged effectively on the same task.



Oppy Wood 1917. Evening by John Nash

Paul was part of the renowned Slade School of Art, but his younger brother John had no formal art training. When war was declared in August 1914 both brothers decided to join the Artists' Rifles. The Artists' Rifles was one of 26 volunteer battalions that formed the London Regiment. It was a popular unit for volunteers, attracting recruits from public schools and universities. Early in 1915, selected Artists officers and NCOs were transferred to run a separate Officers Training Corps, in which poet Wilfred Owen trained before posting to the Manchester Regiment. Over fifteen thousand men passed through the battalion during the war, more than ten thousand of them becoming officers. The battalion eventually saw battle in France in 1917 and 1918. Casualties suffered by members of this battalion and amongst officers who had trained with The Artists' Rifles before being posted to other regiments were 2,003 killed, 3,250 wounded, 533 missing and 286 prisoners of war. Paul was accepted immediately, staying with the Artists' Rifles until he took a commission in the Hampshire Regiment. However, John was rejected on health grounds, becoming a special Constable and working in a factory in Royal Park making bell tents. He then became a clerk in the Ministry of



Community, painting as much as possible in his spare time. His girlfriend, and wife to be, Christine, had been a student at the Slade and was a very fine painter herself. In November 1916 John decided that, as conscription was coming, he would have another go at joining the Artists' Rifles and this time he was accepted. Joining as a private he worked his way up to sergeant and was involved in the Battles of Passchendaele and Cambria.



His most famous, and chilling, painting is 'Over the Top' (oil on canvas, 79.4 x 107.3 cm), now hanging in the Imperial War Museum. It depicts the counterattack at Welsh Ridge on 30 December 1917, during which the 1st Battalion Artists left their trenches and pushed towards Marcoing near Cambrai. It captures a moment in time, as the troops, already leaving behind their dead sprawled in the trench and on the parapet, walk forward stoically to their fate. A few seconds later the men depicted in the painting were mown down by machine gun fire. Of the eighty men, sixty-eight were killed or wounded during the first few minutes. Nash was one of the twelve spared by the shelling and gunfire and painted this picture three months later.

Now working in oils, gaining advice from prominent artists, and following in the footsteps of his older brother, John became an official war artist in 1918. After a 15-month stint in France John was granted home leave for two weeks. During his leave he sent the following communication to the Ministry of Information. It still survives in the Imperial War Museum archives, and it is a 'to whom it may concern letter' addressed to the Ministry of Information, stating 'and I hear you're about to appoint war artists. Could you please consider me?' I've been in the front line for 15 months. (I know stuff). And I will do authentic work.' They did appoint him as an official War artist ... but that appointment coincided with the German Spring Offensive and as a result War artists were no longer being sent back to France. John had to create his work in a 'studio' in a shed in Chalfont St Peter, but he had to do it all by recall as drawing in the trenches had been forbidden. Consequently he had no sketch books or works in progress from his time in the front line. All he had was a few marginal drawings in letters, and of course a wealth of images seared into his brain. This was all he needed to

create some amazing paintings of the First World War, and these are the jewels in the crown of the first world war art collection for the UK.

John's and Christine's only child, William, was born in 1930; he died when he fell out of the back of a moving car in 1935, aged 4. At the beginning of WW2 John Nash served in the Observer Corps, moving to the Admiralty in 1940 as an official war artist with the rank of Captain in the Royal Marines. He was promoted acting Major in 1943 and relinquished his commission in November 1944. Nash suffered from severe arthritis in later years. His wife died in 1976; they had been married for over 58 years. Nash died on 23 September 1977, in Colchester. They are both buried at St Andrew's, Wormingford Essex.



'Stand to before Dawn,' 1918, by John Nash.

#### Bibliography

<https://arthistoryunstuffed.com/john-nash-the-soldiers-war/>

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-powerful-western-front-paintings-of-the-nash-brothers>

<https://www.westernfrontassociation.com/the-latest-wwi-podcast/ep-223a-artist-john-nash-during-the-great-war-andy-friend/>

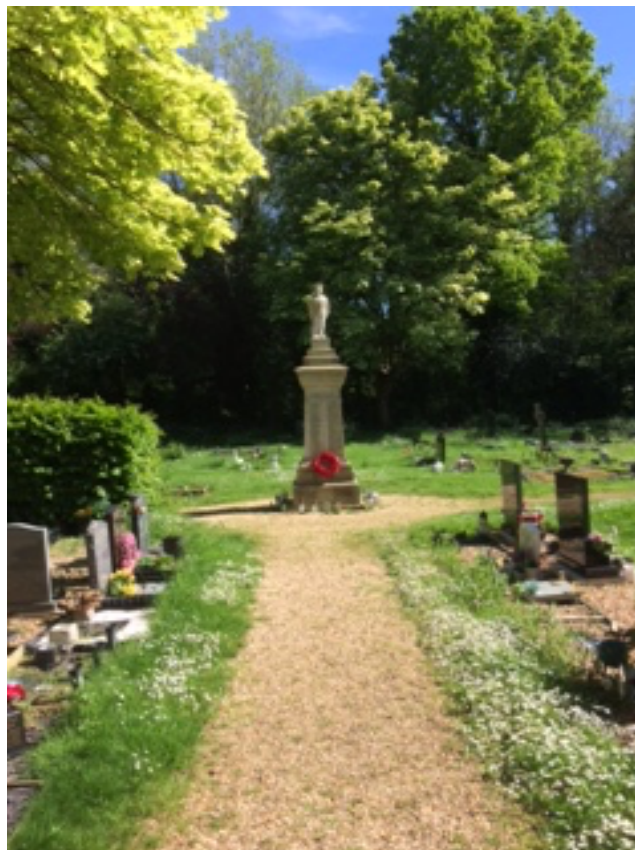
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Nash\\_\(artist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Nash_(artist))



## A Corner of a Friendly Field -, New Bradwell Cemetery. (St. James, Bradwell part 2.)

Not all those who fell in the Great War are buried in a corner of a foreign field that is forever England - to quote those famous and evocative lines from Rupert Brook's poem, 'The Soldier'. Many of the fallen, perishing in accidents or from disease, or succumbing to their injuries whilst at a military hospital at home, rest in quiet churchyards across the United Kingdom. Other reminders of the Great War and its impact also abound, memorials of many kinds, to one person or sadly to many, some old, some quite modern, often also in churches or in some central public place.

New Bradwell Cemetery is on the same road as St James. Carry on out of New Bradwell towards Newport Pagnell and up to the big new traffic lights. You will see the cemetery over the junction to your right. Immediately after the junction you will see the tall wooden Lychgate entrance to the cemetery, the entrance for cars is a few yards beyond. (If you miss it you can carry on past the cemetery and before the next set of lights turn into the Stonepits car park. You can either circle back to the entrance or leave your car here and walk back along the pathway that shadows the road back to the cemetery. When I walked along this path the meadows were yellow with cowslips and buttercups.) If you turn into the cemetery, turn immediately right into the parking space there. However you approach, you need to make your way to the wooden gateway, where you will be facing the War Memorial.



Before you head to the memorial you need to turn to your right. I imagine that the cemetery opened up around the end of the war as the old churchyard at St James was full, and to the right are the oldest graves in the cemetery, and the three graves we have come to visit are found here. Close to you is a CWGC headstone set in a wide marble edged plot. This is Aircraftman 1<sup>st</sup> class S Wells 89828, Royal Air Force. Died on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> April 1919, age 20.





The inscription on the surround reads 'In loving memory of Sidney Wells, the dearly beloved son of A & J Wells, who died in Clevedon Hospital, April 9<sup>th</sup> 1919 after long suffering patiently borne. Now at rest. Aged 20yrs.'

Sidney was born in New Bradwell, and lived at 10, Caledonian Road, New Bradwell.

Carry on past this grave and veer to the right by the fence next to the road. Here you will find, not a first war grave, but one I suspect could well be connected.



The inscription on this family gravestone also includes the following 'Also Lieut. W C Pakes A E C R (Army Education Corps - R for Reserve?) Died at Millbank Hospital March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1923 Aged 41 years.' Apart from the three listed graves and one other, this was the only grave I could find with a possible WW1 connection, although research has drawn a blank. The passing of time has rendered many of the inscriptions hard to read, or the stones have tumbled or become overgrown, so there may be others, but if there are, I could not find them. Head back to the path and towards the War Memorial. The memorial takes the form of a Private of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry standing to attention with his rifle on a square plinth with a three stepped base. There are 87 names listed for World War 1 on the front, and 15 for World War 2 on the back.



Turn right at the memorial. Ahead of you is a CWGC headstone in a large granite surrounded family plot. This is to Private 1798 A. Plant Army Cyclist Corps, died 18<sup>th</sup> April 1919 aged 24. Born in Bletchley on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1895, the son of Jesse Thomas and Annie Plant he later lived at 43 St Giles Street, New Bradwell, with his widowed mother and his brother Harold and sister Gladys Mabel.





Private Plant contracted malaria whilst serving in Salonica and was invalided home where he worked at the Wolverton Co-op Bakery. He died at Bradwell on Friday 18th April 1919 from 'recurrent malarial fever brought on by an accident on 9th April'. The Inquest concluded he died because of malaria rather than the accident at the bakery. Just to your left and slightly behind is a tall cross on a two plinth stand. Although the inscriptions on this family grave are very weathered and somewhat hard to decipher they include two brothers, James and John Stallard.



James was born in Birmingham in 1886, and his brother followed a year later. They were the sons of James and Florence Stallard, who later moved to 67 St Mary Street, New Bradwell, where James the father worked as a railway lamp maker. Both boys joined the army before WW1 and are listed as serving in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Ox and Bucks Light Infantry in Nilgiris, India. However the 2nd Battalion was back in Britain by the outbreak of the First World War where it deployed straight to the Western Front, one of the first divisions of the BEF to arrive in France, and where it remained throughout the conflict. The 2nd Battalion fought at Mons and took part in the retreat before halting the German advance at the First Battle of the Marne. The 2nd Ox and Bucks later took part in all the subsidiary battles of the First Battle of Ypres (19 October - 22 November) that saw the heart ripped out of the old Regular Army, with 54,000 casualties being sustained. The 2nd Ox and Bucks first

engagement with the enemy was on 20 October in an attack on the Passchendaele ridge. The battalion had heavy casualties: four officers killed, five wounded and 143 other ranks killed or wounded.





2nd Ox and Bucks defeating the Prussian Guard at Nonne Bosschen. Painting by William Barnes Wollen (1857-1936).

On 31 October the Germans launched a large-scale attack at Ypres which commenced with a heavy bombardment followed by a mass infantry attack; two companies of the 2nd Ox and Bucks took part in the defence and subsequent counterattack which forced the enemy back to their front line. On 11 November the Germans made another attempt to capture Ypres, sending the élite Prussian Guard against the British forces. The 2nd Battalion counter-attacked them at Nonne Bosschen wood, preventing their advance and then routing them; James and John were both tragically killed in action on this day. Both were missing in action and are commemorated on the Menin Gate Memorial at Ypres. First Ypres was the last major battle of 1914. The 2nd Ox and Bucks sustained 632 casualties during the first five months of the war and by 1915 it was a very different battalion from that which had arrived on the Western Front at the start of the war.

Regain the path and just past Private Plant's headstone, but on the other side, is a low, pink,



granite edged grave with no headstone. Quite overgrown, this is the last grave we have come to visit, and, like all the others, it implies a hidden story of heartache and loss. The inscription on one side reads 'My dear husband Charles H A Gurnett, died August 28 1921 aged 30 yrs.' Sapper Charles Herbert Arthur Gurnett WR/274226 was in the Royal Engineers. Born in Swanbourne Bucks in 1891, the son of William and Eliza Gurnett, he joined the Royal Engineers in 1921. What happened to him remains to be discovered. On the other side of the surround is another inscription, which reads 'Also of Hilda Mary, his wife died Aug 30<sup>th</sup>, 1926, aged 34 yrs.' She passed away only 5 years after her husband, still young.

If you look further up the path and to the right you might spot two further CWGC headstones. If you make your way over you will find two RAF graves from WW2, Aircraftsman Mosely 1229364, 819 Sqn RAVR, died 29<sup>th</sup> December 1941 aged 32, and air gunner Sergeant Maurice Cooke, 1170027, RAVR died 19<sup>th</sup> July 1942, aged 20.

## GRAVES REGISTRATION REPORT FORM.

Bly 12653

Name of Cemetery WOLVERTON (NEW Bradwell) CemeteryReport Number 651Parish BRADWELL

Certified Correct and Complete.

Schedule Number 1County Bucks.Signature T. Chum Area Insp'r Ld'n.Category of Graves D

Unit	Regtl. No.	Name	Rank and Initials	Date of Death	Number or letter of			Type of Memorial	Type of Grave	Remarks
					Plot	Row	Grave			
R.A.F.	29828	WELLS	am/2. S	9.4.19.	7		7	P.P.	Pr	Perm.
A.C.G.	1798	PLANT	Pte A	18.4.19	1		23	"	"	"
R.E.	W2/274226	GURNETT	C.H.	28.8.21	7		47	"	"	26/35826

Certified that no plan  
is required

Area Insp'r Ld'n.



No. of Contract.....dated.....

IMPERIAL WAR GRAVES COMMISSION.

SCHEDULE "B" PAGE 1.

Name and address of Firm.

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT (B) HEADSTONE PERSONAL INSCRIPTIONS NAME OF CEMETERY.

to be read in conjunction with WOLVERTON (NEW BRADWELL) CEM. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT (A) HEADSTONE MILITARY INSCRIPTIONS

together with

TWO STANDARD LAYOUTS (the layouts to be used are quoted on the badge design.)

Badge Design No. and Layout	Head- stone	T E X T				No. of letters in Text
		Line 1.	Line 2.	Line 3.	Line 4.	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	1					
	2		(Mrs. A. Wells, 10 Caledonian Rd, New Bradbury, Bucks.)			
	3		(Mrs. E. Owen, Old School House, Swanbourne, Wenslow, Bucks.)			
Names and Addresses of Next of Kin are shown in brackets, and will not appear on the Headstone.						

Bibliography

CWGC

Buckinghamshire Remembers

Wikipedia

Roll of Honour - Buckinghamshire - New Bradwell [www.roll-of-honour.com](http://www.roll-of-honour.com)





## 'Repairs and maintenance on the Western Front' - Roy Larkin

At the start of the great war the British Army relied mainly on horsepower and had only a handful of motorised vehicles. From just 200 motor vehicles in 1914 to over 120,000 by 1918 was incredible expansion at any time. In the early days of vehicle manufacture and ownership it was an incredible achievement. Just as incredible was the repair and maintenance industry that had to grow to cope with the demand for repairs. More than simply another war story, Roy's presentation, fully illustrated with period images, tells the story of how the growing number of motor vehicles were kept roadworthy and working during the Great War, one of the great unsung achievements behind the lines during WW1.

**May 17<sup>th</sup>** 'Now the War is Over' - Dr Daniel Weinbren

**June 14<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup>** Twinning Trip to Belgium

**June 15<sup>th</sup>** Albert French Commemoration at MK Rose.

**June 21<sup>st</sup>** 'Repairs and maintenance on the Western Front' - Roy Larkin

**July 12<sup>th</sup>** 10th Anniversary of MK Rose, including MK WFA commemorating Albert French.

**July 19<sup>th</sup>** India's Great War - Adam Prime.

**August** - no meeting. Summer Break.

**Meetings are 7.30 - 9.30.at Wolverton Working Men's Social Club, 49 - 50, Stratford Road MK12 5LS**

**Committee members are...**

Stuart Macfarlan - Chairman (macfarlan87@gmail.com)

Anne McIntyre - Secretary/historical events co-ordinator (annefmmcintyre@gmail.com)

Ian Wright - Talks organiser

Caroline Wright - Treasurer

Jim Barrett - Seminar and visits co-ordinator

George Maby - Wolverton Town Council liaison (Twining and Albert French commemoration)

Gary Short - Social Media co-ordinator.