OX & BUCKS BRANCH

NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2026

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COMMENT



Welcome to the November Branch Newsletter, as promised last month, I have made the deadline this month! As you will see below, Nigel and Paul represented the branch at three Remembrance Services and I would like to thank them for doing so. Despite the colder weather, hopefully many of you will be able to join us next week to hear about the warmer climes of Salonika.

- David Adamson

Future Meetings 2026 - 2027

21st Nov.	**Chares Fair**	**"Balkan Purgatory - the 60th (London) Division in Salonika - December 1916 - June 1917"**
12th Dec.	**Alan Leakey**	**"Anti-Tank Gun Hunters"**
16th Jan.	**Ross Beadle**	**"The rocky road to trench warfare: Why was the First World War fought the way it was?"**
20th Feb.	**Wendy Moore**	**"The Suffragette Surgeons of Endell Street"**
20th Mar.	**Anne Samson**	**"South West Africa Rebellion - Who do we Fight?"**

Serviceman Remembered:
Pte. Laurence George, Chesham, 21st November 1917

Laurence John Edward George was born in Chesham Bois in 1895, the third of five children of John Thomas, a wood worker, and Agnes Dowdeswell (neé Spencer) George. In 1911 he was an apprentice blacksmith living with his parents in Alton, Hampshire, but they subsequently moved to Chesham, with his parents living at 18, Sunnyside Road in 1918. Laurence enlisted in 1st/1st Royal Bucks Hussars, almost certainly in D Squadron. In the second half of 1917, the Royal Bucks were in 6 Mounted Brigade, Yeomanry Mounted Division fighting in Palestine. They took part in the Battle of Nabi Sanweil between 17th and 24th of November. It was on 21st that Laurence was killed in action. He is buried in Jerusalem War Cemetery and is commemorated on Chesham War Memorial.

Report of Meeting of 17th October:
Peter Hart - "The Battle of Omdurman 2.9.1898"

Peter returned for his second talk of the year (see March Newsletter), this time about the Battle of Omdurman and the involvement of many who would become well known in the Great War. The battle was fought during the Anglo-Egyptian conquest of the Mahdist state of Sudan, ruled by the Khalifah. The Commander-in-Chief, or Sirdar, of the attackers was Sir Herbert Kitchener. He was a control freak who only had a small staff who, as Capt Henry Rawlinson said "keeps all intelligence in his own hands" and was "an absolute autocrat". He was excellent at logistics but left tactics to Maj. Gen Sir Archibald Hunter.

Starting in July 1898, the force moved up the Nile, constructing the Sudan Military Railway as they went as the rapids on the river made river transport very difficult. There were two brigades comprising eight British battalions and an Egyptian division; the latter with British officers and NCOs. Kitchener's force arrived at Omdurman the Mahdist capital, near Khartoum on 1st September. The Sirdar was anxious to avoid street fighting in the town so he sent 2,500 tribesmen and a howitzer battery under Edward Stuart-Wortly east to seal off Omdurman and to bombard the Khalifah's palace. The main Anglo-Egyptian force had its back to the Nile with hills on both flanks. The Mahdist forces, known to Europeans as Dervishes but called themselves Ansar, but halted in the late afternoon leading to the expectation of a night attack, however this did not materialise. The next morning a patrol of 21st Lancers, including Lt Winston Churchill, patrolled to the left and saw thousands of Dervishes one and a half miles south of the hills.

Maj Horace Smith-Dorrien had been given command of the 13th Sudanese Battalion and his men fired from trenches on the attacking Dervishes who had no cover at all. British cavalry on the right included Capt Douglas Haig who saw Dervish horsemen attacking who then pursued the British northwards. The situation was resolved by Kitchener ordering gunboats to fire on the pursuers. Maj Ivor Maxse, at the HQ of 2nd Egyptian Brigade was impressed by the bravery of the Dervishes advancing into shrapnel and machine gun fire.

The British were armed with Lee-Metford rifles and were ordered by Gen William Gatacre to file off the noses of the bullets to make Dum Dum rounds. This was because he felt that the standard rounds did not have enough stopping power. The Egyptians had Martini-Henry rifles.

The second phase of the battle involved real courage but what Peter described as a "complete cockup". To find out what the Dervishes were doing to the south, Kitchener order the 21st Lancers to reconnoitre in that direction. However their CO, Col Rowland Martin, decided to charge not realising that it was a trap as there was an unknown dry water course, or Khor, in which were hidden 2-3,000 warriors. Churchill had armed himself with a revolver rather than the regulation sword and used this in the charge. The Dervishes fought prodigiously but survivors of the charge reached the other side of the Khor. Capt Kenna, Lt De Montmorency and Pte Byrne were all awarded the VC for going back into the Khor to rescue wounded comrades. The Anglo-Egyptian brigade then

advanced. Both sides killed wounded opponents but, equally, wounded Dervishes would get up and attack troops who had gone past them.

In the third phase of the battle, Hector MacDonald of 1st Egyptian Brigade was the hero of the day. He was attacked from several directions by the Dervishes who has previously chased the cavalry earlier in the day but he held out allowing Kitchener to send support to relieve him. The cavalry then reappeared and chased the enemy away. By 11:30p.m. all the Dervish army was in retreat. The British reorganised and then advanced on the town of Omdurman. The 13th Sudanese under Smith-Dorrien arrived first, with three of the first five men killed as they entered. The Dervishes surrendered but the Khalifah escaped. Haig was critical of Kitchener because of the spread of his forces but Maxse was more tolerant saying he had to run risks to win victory.

Remembrance 2026

This year the Branch was represented at three Remembrance services, by Nigel and Paul. The following is based on their notes and photographs.

Chalfont St Giles

The poppies were sown by many different groups within the parish and flowed from the bell tower down. This year saw the largest number of people attending and also in the parade for many years. For the first time, the six graves in the churchyard were individually blessed and commemorated. The Union Jack was carried by a young member of 2313 Squadron Air Training Corps, Rickmansworth and Chalfonts. The flag bearer was flanked by Royal British Legion and ex service personnel. During the blessing of the war graves, the Union Jack was exchanged for the local RBL flag.







- Nigel Crompton

Bullingdon Prison and Oakley

Thank you for asking me to lay a wreath at the Bullingdon Prison Remembrance Day Service on behalf of the WFA. It was a privilege to do so.

On arriving I had a chat about what was going to happen and where the wreaths were to be laid which was by a flag pole at the front of the prison. I mentioned about a memorial plaque to Prison Officers that had been killed during WW1 that was moved from Oxford Prison, when it was closed, to Bullingdon. But they were unaware of its existence. The service went ahead and the wreaths were laid as planned

Later that day my wife and I were driving past Bullingdon so we went to see the wreaths on display where they had been laid. Unfortunately everything had been cleared

away, all the wreaths had gone.... apart from ours that is. I was told that basically everything got cleared away because they didn't want anything to get stolen. After further discussion I decided to collect our wreath and to lay it somewhere more appropriate. Therefore I laid it on Oakley village war memorial during their Remembrance Day Service, on 8th, on the memorial by the VC stone for CSM Edward Brooks [see Newsletter for May 2017 for a report of the unveiling of the stone].









- Paul Bennett

Committee

Chairman & Newsletter Editor - David Adamson (adtm@btinternet.com)
Deputy Chairman - Nigel Crompton, Treasurer – Lance Hale, Speaker Liaison – Bob Swayne, Simon Cains, Paul Bennett

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