



# CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

Number 108

October 2015

## Welcome

With Remembrance Sunday almost upon us I would like to make the annual invitation to anyone who would like to take our branch wreath and place it at a local Gloucestershire memorial on November 8 (or even Wednesday 11 if preferred). You don't have to be a branch member and any village or town memorial is fine - but we would like it to remain in the county.

Our AGM this year will be on Thursday 19 November and everyone is welcome. If you would like to attend, please let me know. We do need to have an idea of numbers to book a suitable venue.

Also, another call please for ten-minute speakers for our Christmas Meeting - new faces giving presentations are particularly welcome and appreciated!

We now have a supply of WFA lapel badges. The cost of the badge is £2.50, £1 of which will

be donated to our Gloucestershire War Graves Project.

The Gloucester City Branch of the Royal British Legion will promote a *Festival of Remembrance* in Gloucester Leisure Centre, Bruton Way on Sunday 1 November commencing at 5pm. The evening is broadly based on that held annually in the Royal Albert Hall, with the Muster, Demonstrations, Community Singing and an inter-denominational Service of Remembrance. Tickets are £7; children under 16 free. All profits will be given to the Poppy Appeal. Tickets are available from the Gloucester Tourist Information Centre or by post to the RBL Branch Secretary, RBL Gloucester City Branch, Trinity Centre, Norbury Avenue, Gloucester GL4 6AG. Postal applications are cheque with order plus £1.50 to cover administration and postage costs. Cheques should be made payable to *The Royal British Legion, Gloucester City*.

**Peter**

## Future meetings

**Tuesday, 10 November 2015**  
*Twenty One Miles of Open Sea:  
The RFC goes to War, August 1914*  
Dave Rowland  
**National Star College at 7:30pm**

When the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) crossed to France in August 1914 to take its place alongside the BEF, the military authorities mainly saw the aeroplane as a platform for reconnaissance. In itself that was something of a 'visionary' step forward from the 1910 statement by the then professional head of the army who said that military aviation was 'a useless and expensive fad'.

As they flew their flimsy, unreliable, unarmed and unforgiving machines from these shores, the men of the RFC were about to open a whole new chapter in the history of the British at war.

This talk looks at the formation of the RFC, only a short while before hostilities started, and then a more detailed description of the people and aircraft that went to France in the summer of 1914, as part of this new 'Aerial Service'.

**Tuesday, 8 December 2015**  
*Members' Evening*  
**National Star College at 7:30pm**

For our December meeting we will draw on the expertise and knowledge of our branch members. We aim to have five ten-minute presentations and if you would like to take part, please let Peter know as soon as possible.

There will also be a Christmas Raffle so if you have a prize you would like to donate it would be greatly appreciated.

### **2016 Programme**

Our programme of talks for 2016 is now complete and a full list will be available at the December meeting.

Our thanks to Brian Ward and Andy Hinks who have once again put together an interesting programme with a great mix of topics. The January speaker is our very own Graham Adams and his talk is entitled *Captured by the Germans: Prisoners of War in the Great War*.

# Lieutenant Harold Courtney Woollcombe-Boyce

## Royal Navy, *HMS Gurkha*

Harold Woollcombe-Boyce was born on 30 March 1887. Both his parents died within a week of one another in January 1892 and he was brought up by his grandfather, the Rev W F R Woollcombe-Boyce, who taught mathematics at Cheltenham College for 37 years, and his aunt, with whom he lived at Oriel Road, Cheltenham.

Harold was educated at Brandon House, Painswick Road from where he entered *HMS Britannia*, Dartmouth, as a Naval Cadet in September 1903. Appointed Midshipman in October 1903, he was made Sub-Lieutenant in 1906 and Lieutenant in 1909. He was then serving in *HMS Cambrian* on the Australian station and took part in the landings of a punitive party in



the South Sea Islands. In July 1914 he was given command of *HMS Gurkha*, an 880 ton destroyer, built in 1907.

On the 8 February 1917, the vessel was on patrol four miles south of Dungeness buoy when she struck a mine and sank within a few minutes. Of her complement of 80, only five were saved. All the officers on board were lost.

Harold Woollcombe-Boyce has no known grave and is commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial, Cheltenham Borough War Memorial and in All Saints' Church.

*(Taken from Leaving All that was Dear - Cheltenham and the Great War by J Devereux and G Sacker)*

## WFA news

The Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph and in the Guards Chapel on 11 November is open to all Western Front members. The parade will assemble in King Charles Street behind the archway no later than 10.30am. If you wish to lay a wreath instructions will be given by Barbara Taylor between 10.10 and 10.20am on the day. A Service of Remembrance will be held in the Guards Chapel after the ceremony at the Cenotaph.

After the service a carvery will be available at Peelers Restaurant, New Scotland Yard at the cost of £26 per person. The closing date for bookings is 27 October and will be taken on a first-come, first-served basis. Full details and a booking form for the lunch can be found on the WFA website.

The WFA 2016 calendar is now available. The calendar includes high-quality, modern images of scenes from the Western Front. The images are specially selected from the work of a number of superb Western Front photographers. A4 in size when folded, it opens out to A3 when hung on the wall. The cost is £10, which includes postage and packing, and can be ordered online on the WFA website.

A reminder that the WFA conferences taking place this month are :

- 17 October: *1915-100 Years On*. A day-long conference in Worcester run by the Worcestershire & Herefordshire Branch.
- 31 October: *Tunnelling in the Great War*. A day-long conference with a range of speakers at the Army & Navy Club, London.

### Contact details



**The Western Front Association**  
BM Box 1914  
London  
WC1N 3XX

0207 118 1914

[office@westernfrontassociation.com](mailto:office@westernfrontassociation.com)

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

### Cheltenham & Gloucester Branch President

Professor Peter Simkins MBE FRHistS

### Branch Chairman

Peter Gill

2 Queensholme, Pittville Circus Road, Cheltenham GL52 2QE

01242 587 776 • [chairman@cgwfa.org.uk](mailto:chairman@cgwfa.org.uk)

### Branch Treasurer & Newsletter Editor

Hilary Jennings

4 St Stephen's Road, Cheltenham GL51 3AA

01242 243 927 • [newsletter@cgwfa.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@cgwfa.org.uk)

### Branch Website

[www.cgwfa.org.uk](http://www.cgwfa.org.uk)

*"When you go home, tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow, we gave our today."*