



# CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

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## Welcome

I hope you had a wonderful Christmas and may I wish you a very Happy New Year! And what an important and exciting year this should be - important of course as we remember and commemorate the centenary of the Somme Offensive (not just July 1<sup>st</sup> which, I daresay the general media will solely be fixated on, but the whole, long battle) and exciting as we shall be celebrating the branch's tenth anniversary in October.

Once again we have a stunning line-up of talks for the year - but what better way than to kick off with a presentation from one of our own, Graham Adams. It's a perfect start as far as I am concerned.

We have been invited to take part in a free War Memorials Workshop organised by Civic Voice with the support of Gloucester Diocese. It takes place on Saturday 16 January at St Paul's Church, Cheltenham from 10am to 3pm.

Find out how to locate your local war memorials, record their condition and play your

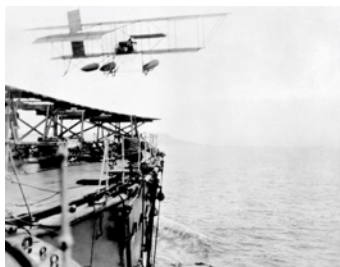
part in ensuring they are a fitting tribute to those who gave their lives. The project covers war memorials of all ages and all types and Civic Voice looks for volunteers to record those that are in good, as well as poor condition and enter the relevant information on to the War Memorials Online website. The process is fairly simple and does not require any detailed expertise. Where a memorial is judged to need some repair or tidying up, the information is picked up by War Memorials Trust who will get in touch with whichever body is the custodian of the memorial and indicate that there is an opportunity to apply for funds to support work that may be needed.

To reserve your place, follow this link: [www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/war-memorials-workshop-cheltenham-tickets-19740709995](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/war-memorials-workshop-cheltenham-tickets-19740709995). For further information contact [info@civicvoice.org.uk](mailto:info@civicvoice.org.uk) or phone 0151 707 4319. Refreshments and a buffet lunch are included.

*Peter*

## Future meetings

**Tuesday, 9 February 2016**  
*The Royal Naval Air Service*  
Phil Tomaselli  
**National Star College at 7:30pm**



This talk is about the early Royal Naval Air Service pioneers who first flew off ships, developed the first proper bombers, shot down the first Zeppelin, hunted German cruisers in East Africa and flew fighters over the trenches alongside the Royal Flying Corps.

Phil has written extensively on military and family history and he has made a special study of the Western Front. He has published many articles on aspects of army and air force history.

**Tuesday, 8 March 2016**  
*Dogs in the First World War*  
Emma White  
**National Star College at 7:30pm**



The role of dogs during the First World War is often overlooked, or is only thought of in relation to mascots. This illustrated talk will show how the British Army settled on a dog service, chose its commander, trained its troops and successfully employed them on the Western Front. The use of dogs in other armies will also be discussed briefly.

## Corporal John Edward Avenell (G/2050) 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment)

John Avenell was born in Gloucester on 26 September 1876. His parents farmed near Wotton-under-Edge and he attended the Ozleworth School and the Blue Coat School at Wotton.

Early in the war he enlisted, at Guildford, into The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment) and having gained promotion to Corporal was sent to France on 31 August 1915, serving with the 7<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion of The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment), who were part of 55 Brigade, 18<sup>th</sup> (Eastern) Division.

He was severely wounded in July 1916 on the Somme and spent a whole year recovering from his injuries, partly in England.



He rejoined his battalion in Belgium in August 1917 and on 21 October he was killed in action in the area of Poelcappelle.

The Battalion War Diary states that the battalion was holding the line, so it is likely that John was killed either by shell fire or a sniper. He was aged 41 and one of the oldest servicemen from Wotton to die in the War.

His remains were not found until 1919 and were buried at New Irish Farm Cemetery, Ypres. He is commemorated on a tablet at St Nicholas' Church, Ozleworth and on the Wotton-under-Edge War Memorial.

(From *First World War Heroes of Wotton-under-Edge* by Bill Griffiths)

### A Noble Band of Heroes

Tewkesbury Historical Society has produced a superb book to commemorate the sacrifice made by the residents of Tewkesbury during World War One. This book has been thoughtfully planned and produced, with commendable attention to detail.

It is lavishly illustrated with maps and locations; it describes the battles in which the men of Tewkesbury were involved. The text is accompanied by a large number of photographs, bringing to life the difficulties and privations endured during the conflict.

The book is divided into five sections, beginning with an excellent introduction to the Great War. This is followed by reference to Tewkesbury's many War Memorials. It then moves on to the conflict itself, as seen through the eyes of the combatants and those left behind.

A useful glossary for those unfamiliar with military terms is also included.

The final section, most movingly, provides a biography of each soldier who paid the ultimate price. His contribution to the war is covered in great detail, with a photograph where possible. An illustration of his regimental cap badge and the cemetery in which he is buried completes this tribute.

This book has been well researched and its authors and editorial team are to be congratulated on a fine piece of work. For anyone from the county, or elsewhere, with an interest in WW1, this book is thoroughly recommended. Copies can be obtained from Alison's Bookshop, 139 High Street, Tewkesbury or at [www.ths.freeuk.com](http://www.ths.freeuk.com); the price is £15.

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