



# CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

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## Welcome!

I would very much like to thank everyone for their support in our fundraising endeavours. I am delighted to say that following our recent auctions, raffles and the performance last month at Cheltenham's Playhouse our branch funds are in a much healthier position than they were towards the end of last year. Not only does this ensure our immediate future as a branch, enabling us to pay our venue charges and to encourage speakers from far and wide, but it also means that we have funds to press on and increase our War Graves Adoption Project - something that I personally consider a very important part of our branch identity.

However, funds don't survive for ever so please continue to support the branch in whatever way you can - simply attending meetings is hugely significant, but also by spreading the word and encouraging others to come to meetings, and providing raffle and auction items all helps. We are fortunate to be a strong and stable branch, but we don't want to take it for granted and to maintain it as such, we really do need everyone's help and support.

We have been made aware of this important information if you are intending to travel to France by car. The French are introducing emission charges for vehicles in city centres. A new colour-coded car emissions sticker system has come into force in Paris and if you don't have the correct one you face fines of between £58 and £117.

The Crit'Air scheme requires all vehicles to display a round sticker, or vignette, on the windscreen that confirms which emissions group the vehicle fits into by the colour of the badge. Cars registered abroad will only be allowed to drive into the centre of Paris without one until 31 March.

As well as Paris, Grenoble and Lyon have already introduced the Crit'Air scheme and a further 22 towns are planning to do so. You can find more information at [www.certificat-air.gouv.fr/en](http://www.certificat-air.gouv.fr/en). There are links on this website to apply for a sticker which costs €3.70 or €4.80 including postage.

*Peter*

## Future events

**Tuesday, 11 April**

*Remembering Bungo - An appreciation of the life and career of Field Marshal Lord Byng of Vimy*  
William Franklin

**National Star College at 7:30pm**

Field Marshal Lord Byng of Vimy is a largely forgotten figure of the First World War and frustratingly for historians, he had his private papers destroyed after his death in 1935. This talk is intended to raise awareness of this commander. It will examine Byng's major involvement in the battles of Vimy Ridge and Cambrai in 1917 and his response to the Ludendorff Offensive, and 100 Days campaign in 1918. His background and early life will be looked at and there will be reference to his formidable record of public service from 1918 until his death. Lord Byng should not remain forgotten any longer, especially as in April 2017 we commemorate his greatest military achievement, the victory of his Canadian Corps at the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

**Tuesday, 9 May**

*The Artillery of British Expeditionary Force 1918*  
*Ground-Based Air Defence*  
Geoff Spring

**National Star College at 7:30pm**

Geoff's presentation describes the threat to the BEF from German air attacks and the weapons, anti-aircraft guns and searchlights used to deter, damage or destroy enemy aircraft. The talk concludes with the defeat of the night bomber and the last flight of the Red Baron.

**Tuesday, 13 June**

*Gloucestershire and the Somme*

Bob Brunson

**Tuesday, 11 July**

*A Moonlight Massacre: The night operation on the Passchendaele Ridge, 2 December 1917*

Michael LoCicero

**Tuesday, 8 August**

*British Forces in Italy 1917-1918*

Dale Hjort

## Able Seaman William Henry Parsons (Wales/Z/2966)



William Henry Parsons was born in 1886. He was the son of Walter and Jane Parsons of 5 Station Terrace, Cinderford. After leaving Double View Secondary School in Cinderford he worked at one of the local collieries before moving to Penarth to work as an engine driver in a cement works. He joined the Royal Navy in 1916.

Able Seaman William Henry Parsons was a member of the crew of a merchant ship *SS Cyrene* when she was torpedoed and sunk by UC31, 15 miles north of Bardsey Island in Caernarvon Bay in the Irish Sea on 5 April 1918. Twenty-four of the crew were lost including Able Seaman Parsons.

He has no known grave but the sea, and is commemorated on Plymouth Naval Memorial. He is also remembered on Cinderford Town War Memorial.

**Eric Nicholls**

### WFA events

**Saturday, 6 May - 2017 Spring Conference and AGM** at the University of Northumbria, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 1XE.

- 9.30am Doors open
- 10.15am Welcome by the Chairman
- 10.20am *British casualty evacuation from the Somme, July 1916: success or failure?* by Jeremy Higgins
- 11.20am *Winning with Laughter: Cartoonists at War* by Luci Gosling
- 12.20pm Buffet lunch
- 1.20pm *Politics and Command: Conflict and Crisis 1917* by John Derry
- 2.20pm Teas/coffees
- 2.45pm AGM (Finishing at 4.30pm)

This is a free event with a charge for buffet lunch. Please confirm attendance on 0207 118 1914.

**Saturday, 3 June - The 6<sup>th</sup> Western Front Association President's Conference** at the Tally Ho Conference & Banqueting Centre, Pershore Road, Birmingham B5 7RN. Doors open at 9am and the conference starts at 9.45am.

*An Army of Brigadiers: British Commanders at the Battle of Arras 1917* by Trevor Harvey / *Arras 1917 - The Lost Opportunity* by Jim Smithson / *Messines 1917 - The Zenith of Siege Warfare* by Lieutenant Colonel Alex Turner / *Fritz von Lossberg and German flexible defence 1917* by Jack Sheldon.

**Saturday, 8 July - The Western Front Association York Conference** at the Manor Academy, York YO 6AP. Doors open at 9am and the conference starts at 9.45am.

*The Wider War in 1917* by Professor Hew Strachan / *British Propaganda and the Third Battle of Ypres* by Professor Stephen Badsey / *If we do this, we do it properly: The Canadian Corps at Passchendaele 1917* by Rob Thompson / *An equal and opposite reaction: The BEF's response to the German counter-attack and the final days of the Battle of Cambria 1917* by Dr Bryn Hammond.

The booking details for Birmingham and York: £30 for each conference, which includes buffet lunch plus tea/coffee, or £50 combined fee for both conferences. To book please contact the WFA Office.

### Contact details

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