



CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

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Welcome!

As you know, each month we remember one of Gloucestershire's Fallen from the Great War. Our 'stock' of researched men is becoming very depleted, so if by any chance you can help with a few words and a picture (could just be a headstone) on one of the fallen, it would be greatly appreciated. In a similar vein we are very much in need of articles for the next edition of *The Sentinel*. These can be long or short, with illustrations or not, and cover any aspect of the Great War - it doesn't have to be limited to Gloucestershire interest or indeed the Western Front.

A reminder that our Branch Trip this year will be to the Somme from 14 to 17 September. If you are interested in joining the tour, please let Bob Brunson know - www.trips@cgwfa.org.uk.

The Anzac Day service and parade takes place on Sunday 23 April at Leighterton. The parade will muster at 2.15pm at Leighterton Primary School and the service is at 3pm. We are grateful to Helen and Dave Earle who will lay a poppy wreath on behalf of the branch.

I was approached recently by Martin Middlebrook with a request for me to advertise a very special book offer that he has for all WFA members. Martin has now retired from giving his talks, but he still has copies of his books available that he would like to offer at a discounted price. There was a link to this offer on the email I sent out this month, but if you didn't get that or were unable to download the file, but are interested in seeing what he has to offer, please drop me an email or have a word and I'll send it to you.

The National Army Museum has re-opened after a three-year, £23.75m redevelopment and has been hailed as "...a thought-provoking triumph". The Museum is located on the Royal Hospital Road in Chelsea. Further information about their collections, events and opening times can be found on www.nam.ac.uk.

Apologies that I am not here with you this evening but I shall look forward to seeing you in May.

Peter

Future events

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
National Star College at 7:30pm

Bob's presentation commemorates the county's association with the Battle of the Somme through the stories of individual soldiers from the county who fought there, both on the First Day and in subsequent operations.

Through their experiences, we will also examine the role of various battalions of the Gloucestershire Regiment in this long and historic battle, not least that of the 8th Battalion under the leadership of the charismatic Adrian Carton de Wiart.

Tuesday, 11 July

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

G/96705 Private Roland Innocent 1/19th London Regiment

Roland Innocent was a member of a well-known local family that lived in Sherborne House and ran the auctioneer business Innocent & Son that exists today as Moore, Allen and Innocent. He was born on 21 October 1899 and attended prep school at Southsea and then Shaftesbury Grammar School. He originally served as 100328 Royal Flying Corps, enlisting at South Farnborough in October/November 1917, before being transferred, along with other surplus men, to an infantry battalion.

A number of his letters from France survive and he mentioned that he was *"in the Lewis gun section and we are all having a good time... I have seen a lot of captured machine guns, tanks etc, also two anti-tank rifles"*.

On 1 September 1/19th (County of London) Battalion (St Pancras), was involved in the attack by 47th (2nd London) Division when it took Bouchavesnes, losing some twenty or so other ranks many of whom were buried near the village in Aldershot Cemetery but Private Innocent was not among them.

His parents received Army Form B 104-83 reporting that that Roland was *"missing"*. A letter from Lieutenant H E Davis of B Coy informed Mr and Mrs Innocent that *"I am very much afraid that there is little likelihood of his being a prisoner"*.



Remarkably his body was found on the battlefield in 1925 so Roland was finally given a proper burial in Saily-Saillisel British Cemetery (plot III, row J, grave 6). He is commemorated on the war memorial in St Lawrence Church, Lechlade, and on a brass plaque to the right of the rail: *In memory of Roland G Innocent killed in the Great War 1918 aged 18. This altar rail was erected by his parents.*

A further memorial is an inscription on the side of the base of the cross on his parents' grave in Lechlade cemetery. It reads: *Also in unforgotten memory of Roland elder son of Bentley and Fanny Innocent killed in the Great War 1918 aged 18.*

Paul Cobb

Other news

Ian Hislop and Nick Newman's *The Wipers Times* is on at the Arts Theatre, London until 13 May. It tells the true and extraordinary story of the satirical newspaper created in the mud and mayhem of the Somme. In a bombed out building during the First World War in the Belgian town of Ypres (mis-pronounced Wipers by British soldiers), two officers discover a printing press and create a newspaper for the troops. Defying both authority and gas attacks, it proves a huge success with the troops on the Western Front.

If you miss the play in London it has just been announced that it will be at the Everyman Theatre in Cheltenham from 13-18 November and tickets are on sale now: www.everymantheatre.org.uk.

A reminder that the WFA's 2017 Spring Conference and AGM is on Saturday 6 May at the University of Northumbria. This is a free event with a charge if you would like a buffet lunch. Please confirm attendance on 207 118 1914. You will find full details on the WFA website: www.westernfrontassociation.com.

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