



CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

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Welcome!

Our Branch Tour is nearly full so if you would like to join us this year please complete an application form as soon as possible - there are some forms available here tonight. The tour runs from 14 to 17 September and will explore associations between Gloucestershire and the 1916 Battle of the Somme.

A reminder that the WFA York Conference takes place on Saturday, 8 July at the Manor Academy, York YO26 6PA. The speakers are Professor Hew Strachan, Professor Stephen Badsey, Jon Cooksey, Rob Thompson and Dr Bryn Hammond. Full details can be found on the WFA website.

To commemorate the centenary of the Great War, Belsize Opera is bringing a moving opera double bill to Cheltenham Playhouse on 12 July. Set in a Belgian trench during the Great War, two British soldiers tell their story of love, loss and conflict on the front line. Louis Mander's lyrical score evokes all of the painful reality and bittersweet camaraderie of two young men in 1917. Ivor Gurney's song cycle *Ludlow and Teme* is used to dramatic effect in the concluding half

of this double bill. Tickets are £12 and are available from the Playhouse Box Office on 01242 522852 or online at www.cheltplayhouse.org.uk.

We have been sent a link to an on-line exhibition organised by the Carrière Wellington, Arras, which gives brief details and photographs of 120 men who fought at Arras. The link is: www.regardsdesoldats.com.

We have also been told of an interesting piece which appears on *The Long, Long Trail* website. It is widely known that the majority of British soldiers' army service records from the Great War were destroyed by smoke (and water from the fire brigade) when the War Office warehouse at Arnside Street was hit by a German incendiary bomb in an air raid on 7-8 September 1940. However, many other invaluable documents were also destroyed. You will find a five page summary of those records relevant to the Great War at www.longlongtrail.co.uk/the-1940-fire-at-arnside-street. For those interested in researching the Great War it makes sad reading!

Peter

Future events

Tuesday, 11 July

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

Michael LoCicero

National Star College at 7:30pm

Popularly known as 'Passchendaele', the infamous Third Battle of Ypres was the British Empire's major military effort for 1917. Launched in Belgium on 31 July of that year, the great offensive was terminated by the British high command in mid-November after three and one-half months of fierce fighting. However, one more large-scale attack, ignored in most of the related literature, was sanctioned for early December with tragic consequences.



Tuesday, 8 August

British Forces in Italy 1917-1918

Dale Hjort

National Star College at 7:30pm

Dale's talk describes how Italy's war with Austro-Hungary led to British deployment, the challenging conditions of the Alpine front, the defensive action of Asiago on 15 June 1918, crossing the Piave River and the final victory at the Battle of Vittorio Veneto, and the 48th Division advance through mountains.



5640/201997 Private Augustus Frederick Gibbons 2/4 Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Augustus Gibbons was the son of Frederick and Sarah Gibbons, who lived at 80 Upper Bath Road, Cheltenham. He was born in about 1881. According to the 1911 Census his occupation was a greengrocer's assistant, which was his occupation on attestation.

On 11 December 1915 he attested into the Gloucestershire Regiment and was posted to the 3/4 (Reserve) Battalion. He was mobilised on 24 March 1916, posted to 2/4 Glosters and on 2 September he was posted to France.

On 28 November 1916, during one of the final actions of the Somme Offensive, he suffered a bullet wound to his right leg just below the knee. On the same day he was also struck by shrapnel on the hands, legs and thighs.

His wounds were sufficiently severe for him to be evacuated to England and on 30 November 1916 he was admitted to hospital at Mill Road Infirmary, Liverpool, where he stayed until 1 August 1917, when he was transferred to the Beaufort War Hospital in Bristol, remaining



there until 11 September. It would appear that he spent the period 22 to 29 September in Co Cork, Ireland. During his recovery from his wounds he complained of giddiness and breathlessness and pains in the cardiac area. He was subsequently diagnosed as having a weak heart.

This led to his discharge from the Army on 23 November 1917 and he was awarded a Silver War Badge and granted a 50% disability pension, as his condition was deemed to have been aggravated by war service.

He died at 80 Bath Road, Cheltenham on 11 July 1918 and was buried in Cheltenham Cemetery, where a standard CWGC headstone marks his grave. He is remembered on the Cheltenham Town Memorial and that in St Philip & St James' Church, Grafton Road. His photo had appeared in the 'Graphic' of 4 May 1918.

(GWGP research - some information taken from *Leaving all that was Dear – Cheltenham in the Great War* by Joe Devereux and Graham Sacker)

The Midlands and the Great War

On Saturday 17 June there will be a conference which takes a fresh look at how the war was experienced in the Midlands, focusing on working-class attitudes, religious values, the mobilization of manufacturing industry and remembrance.

It takes place from 10am to 5.15pm at the Lord Knight's Suite, Tally Ho Conference and Banqueting Centre, 331 Pershore Road, Birmingham B5 7RN. The cost is £25 per person which includes tea, coffee and a buffet lunch.

The speakers are Dr Paul Fantom - *Working class attitudes to the Great War: Some reflections concerning the Home Front in the Black Country*; Dr Wayne Osborne - *Midlands manufacturing during the Great War*; Rev Dr Stuart Bell - *United We Stand: The response of the churches of the East Midlands to the Great War*; Claire Jones - *Rolls of Honour, Street Shrines and the Little's Lane Memorial, Wolverhampton*.

Full details and an application form can be found on the WFA website.

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