



CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

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Welcome!

We have had a polite reminder from the Star College to please respect the marked disabled bays and only park there if displaying a disabled blue badge; all other marked parking bays (except for the three bays marked for staff car sharing) in the visitor and adjacent car parks are available for evening parking.

Our stock of books for Ken to sell on behalf of branch funds is running low. If you have any unwanted books please bring them along - all contributions are welcome!

For anyone researching the Chemin des Dames area there is a virtual memorial which has created a place of memory to thousands of combatants from all countries who died at the Chemin des Dames whether their bodies rest in the Aisne or not. The link is [www. memorial-chemindesdames.fr](http://www.memorial-chemindesdames.fr).

An exhibition marking the Centenary of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission has opened, until November, at Brookwood Military Cemetery near Woking. The cemetery is the largest Commonwealth war cemetery in the UK,

covering 37 acres. In addition to the CWGC there is an American WW1 cemetery administered by the American Battlefield Memorial Commission with many headstones and a memorial to those American servicemen lost at sea around the UK.

The National Archives are holding an Open House Day on Saturday 16 September from 10am to 4pm. Discover what goes on inside The National Archives, South West London's hidden Brutalist masterpiece which has been their home in Kew since 1977. There will be tours to explore the lesser-visited areas, talks on 1977 and their building, or you can simply soak up the atmosphere on the day. Booking is not essential but advised to guarantee your place on the tours and talks. For more information visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk.

And finally, just an early heads up for our December meeting - we are already putting the line-up together for 'ten minute' speakers. If you would like to make a short presentation please let me know - we're on the lookout!

Peter

Future events

Tuesday, 12 September
The New Crusaders:
The Americans at the Meuse-Argonne
David Williams
National Star College at 7:30pm

The Battle of the Meuse-Argonne remains the single largest and bloodiest battle ever fought by the American Army. The Americans suffered around 122,000 casualties, a figure increasingly challenged as a very conservative estimate, with a disproportionate loss rate in the first eight days.

With the bulk of American divisions never having seen action before, the men of President Wilson's 'Great Crusade' launched an offensive hampered by rudimentary training, faulty doctrine and inexperience in the 'All Arms' battle, over terrain that provided formidable natural defences.

This talk examines the American performance that resulted in a costly but important victory.

Tuesday, 10 October
Take Three Girls
Helen Earle
National Star College at 7:30pm

Along with photos, Helen will give accounts of three girls from very different backgrounds, who acted out their vital part during the Great War, in their own particular way.

Tuesday, 14 November
Meeting the enemy :
The human face of the Great War
Richard Van Emden
Star Theatre, National Star College at 7:30pm

Richard tells the story of what happened when Britain and Germany - nations with long-established ties of culture and friendship - clashed on both the Western and the Home Fronts during the Great War.

Please note the change of venue for this meeting.

Second Lieutenant Charles Francis Hutchings MM

Royal Garrison Artillery

Charles Hutchings was born at Redditch, Worcestershire on 24 June 1883. His parents were Ion John and Hannah Sarah Hutchings (née Sloman) and he had four sisters - Ethel Lavinia, born 1885; Alice Mabel (1887); Annie Elizabeth (1893) and Louisa (1878). Charles received his education at Board Schools at Redditch and Ashchurch. On 26 March 1910 Charles married Annie Elizabeth Charlotte Collard at Bristol and the couple had two children, Mabel Beatrice, born in 1911 and Victor Charles in 1913.



The census of 1891 shows Charles to be living at Aston, near Tewkesbury, that of 1901 has him at Ashchurch, Tewkesbury and at the one taken in 1911 he and his wife were living at 37 Saxon Road, St Werburghs, Bristol.

After leaving school Charles had become a Police Constable, serving in Bristol and it was there that he attested for military service on 26 April 1915 – his medical record indicates a height of 6 feet 2 inches, which was significantly over the average height of the time.

He joined the Royal Garrison Artillery (RGA) and was initially given a number of 62 but this soon became 291609. He saw rapid promotion. After joining as a Gunner, he became a Bombardier on 27 May, a Corporal on 6 July and a Serjeant on 10 August 1915. For some reason he reverted to Corporal at his own request on 4 February 1916. His posting was to 129 (Heavy Battery), whose role was to operate 60 pounder (or 5 inch) guns in counter-battery fire or the shelling of enemy targets to the rear of the front line.

On 27 March 1916 Charles went with 129 (Heavy Battery) to join the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in France. On 15 November he was promoted to Acting Serjeant and back to full Serjeant on 11 January 1917. On 17 September 1917 the *London Gazette* announced that he had been awarded the Military Medal.

He remained in France until 12 October 1917, when he was back in the UK for a posting to No 2 Depot, RGA at Fort Brockhurst, Gosport. On 2 January 1918 he was accepted for admission to

No 2 RGA Officer Cadet School at Maresfield Park, Uckfield, Sussex and this eventually led to him being commissioned as a Temporary Second Lieutenant on 4 August 1918.

The *Western Daily Press* of 22 August 1918 reported that he had been *presented with a sword by the Chief Constable, Bristol at Bridewell Street (Police Station), upon being commissioned previously as a Constable in 'A' Division.*

It would appear that upon returning to the front he was wounded and that he subsequently died of wounds at Beaufort War Hospital, Bristol on 15 January 1919. He returned to be buried at Ashchurch in the north Gloucestershire area, where he spent much of his early life. A CWGC headstone now marks his grave in Ashchurch (St Nicholas) Churchyard, where he is the sole Great War casualty buried.

His widow may have re-married in Bristol in 1921.

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

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