



CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

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Welcome!

Hopefully you will be aware that we are welcoming Richard van Emden to the branch for our November meeting. Because of the anticipated extra interest in this talk we have booked the theatre space at the Star College - this is easy to find, go to the college foyer as usual and there will be someone there to guide you. We have also taken the decision to make this a ticketed event as there is limited (albeit much greater than normal) seating in the theatre. The tickets are £6 and will be available at tonight's meeting, and also at the October meeting - seating on the night will be allocated on your ticket number (smaller numbers being closer to the front). We will also be holding a raffle on the night so any donations of prizes will be gratefully received.

On 25 October at 7.30pm there is a performance of *This Evil Thing* at the Bear Pit Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon. *This Evil Thing* is the compelling, shocking and inspiring story of the men who said no to war; a rarely told story

involving a dizzying journey from a chapel in Yorkshire to the House of Commons; from an English country garden to a quarry in Aberdeen; from a cell in Richmond Castle to a firing squad in France. Tickets for this performance are £12 (£10 concessions). Further details and to book tickets please visit www.rsc.org.uk.

The WFA Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph and in the Guards Chapel on Saturday 11 November is open to all WFA members. Attendees must assemble in King Charles Street behind the archway no later than 10.20am for a briefing at 10.30am and March Out at 10.40am.

We received this message from Andy Prada the Event Organiser of **Loos Big Walk 2018** which is scheduled for the weekend of 22-23 September 2018. "*We're not looking for anything other than interest at this stage but we would invite you and your branch members to visit the website: www.loosbigwalk2018.net to find out a bit more about what we are proposing.*"

Peter

Future events

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. From the first British casualty of the war, an elderly language teacher mortally wounded as he attempted to

leave Germany, to the account of the only British prisoner temporarily released by the Kaiser to visit his dying mother, Richard has unearthed remarkable human stories of two peoples divided by war. From the story of how British prisoners of war were sent to work in the Russian snow, to the raising of the 'Kaiser's Own', two British battalions of English born children of German extraction, Richard touches on stories that have never been told before.

Richard spent over twenty years interviewing more than 270 veterans of the First World War. With Harry Patch he wrote *The Last fighting Tommy*. His other books include *Meeting the Enemy*, *Boy Soldiers of the Great War* and *The Quick and the Dead*. Richard's latest book, *The Somme: The Epic Battle in Soldiers' Words and Photographs* was published in May 2016. Richard has appeared on over 30 television documentaries and has acted as historical consultant for programmes on both BBC and Channel Four.

Please note the change of venue for this meeting.

6446 Private Lewis Richard Hopkins 1st Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Lewis Hopkins was born at Longborough in 1883, the son of Richard and Hannah Hopkins. Richard senior appears to have spent some of his life as a farmer, a sub-postmaster and latterly as a roadman with the local council. According to the 1911 Census the couple had ten children, of whom nine were living at the time of the census.

The 1901 Census shows Lewis as a carter on a farm, living in the local post office but by 1911 he had become a 'general dealer', living in Condicote with a male lodger. He had joined the Army in 1902 and had served with the 1st Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment. He was posted to South Africa just before the end of the Boer War and did not participate in any fighting. Having transferred to the Reserve he was recalled to the Army on 5 August 1914 and went to France with the 1st Glosters on 31 August 1914.

The *Gloucestershire Echo* of 16 March 1915 reported his death on 12 March. It stated that he was wounded in the head during the Battle of the Aisne on 24 October 1914 and spent a month in hospital in Boulogne before being transferred to St Bartholomew's Hospital, Rochester, where he died in the presence of his friend, Frank Malings, of Condicote. He was 32 years of age. Evidently what was a severe head wound eventually turned into an abscess on the brain.



This report is not entirely accurate with regard to the location of the wounding. On 23 October (according to the *Gloucestershire Regiment in the War 1914-18*) the 1st Glosters were located in the Ypres Salient resisting a German advance attempt to outflank the left of the Allied line at Koekuit, north of Langemark and did not take part in any fighting on the 24th, upon the night of which they were relieved. It is probable that Private Hopkins was actually wounded in the 23rd action. In publishing his photograph the *Cheltenham & Gloucestershire Graphic* states that he was wounded in Belgium.

Having died in the UK, Private Hopkins' remains were brought to Condicote for burial in the parish churchyard on 16 March 1915 and originally a stone Latin Cross marked his grave. It is likely that the inscription on this deteriorated over the years and in recent times the CWGC has put in place one of its own headstones. His name appears on the Condicote War Memorial and, rather oddly, was once present on the Le Touret Memorial to the Missing, which commemorated those who fell, with no known grave in the area covered by the early 1915 battles at La Bassee, Neuve Chapelle, Aubers Ridge and Festubert.

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

Cheltenham Literature Festival

The full programme for this year's festival is now available. On Thursday 12 October there is a talk by art historian David Boyd Haycock on *Paul Nash: Visions of War*; Allan Mallinson on

The Great War: Passchendaele and Richard Dannat talks to Allan Mallinson about the British Army of yesterday, today and tomorrow. www.cheltenhamfestivals.com/literature

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