



## CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

Number 140

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### Welcome!

There seem to be a lot of varied events of great interest being organised this summer in relation to the Great War in one way or another. For information about the Hardwicke RBL Club Open Day on Sunday June 24 please have a chat to David Gargett - all are welcome!

Broadway Arts Festival are hosting an exhibition at the Broadway Museum and Art Gallery entitled *Art of the Great War 1914-1918* until 12 September. Details are available tonight or you can visit their website: [www.broadwaymuseum.org.uk](http://www.broadwaymuseum.org.uk). The Festival is also presenting a Great War themed talk on Wednesday June 13 at 5.30pm also in the museum so you could 'kill two birds with one stone'!

Chris Auken-Howlett is organising and promoting a number of centenary commemoration events in Gloucester called GLOS100. Full details are on his website:

[www.gloscomnet.org/glos100/](http://www.gloscomnet.org/glos100/) and there are a few copies of the calendar available tonight.

We have received an update on the archaeological dig at Hill 80 near Wijschate in Belgium. During the First World War the site was a fortified headquarters of the Germans and remained virtually untouched after the end of the war. The dig began in mid-April, and has yielded more than expected. The archaeologists hoped to find trench systems and foundations of an old mill, but now they have discovered very well preserved cellars. In the first 24 days out of a total of 60 excavation days, 67 bodies and 1,500 objects have already been found. The bodies of the Belgian soldiers will be buried in the Belgian Military Cemetery in De Panne on 4 July. You can follow the archaeologists' progress on their website: [www.hill80.com](http://www.hill80.com).

*Peter*

### Future branch events

**Tuesday, 10 July**

*The Destruction of the 13<sup>th</sup> Gloucesters, 1918*  
Sam Eedle

**National Star College at 7.30pm**

The 13th Gloucesters were a Pioneer battalion that had been serving on the Western Front since early 1916. On 21 March 1918 they were preparing fortifications behind the lines near Templeux-la-Fosse when the long-expected German 'Kaiserschlacht' attack broke. They were right in its path. Over the course of ten days, as the British Fifth Army pulled back, the Battalion dug scratch fortifications, fought desperate rearguard actions and withdrew over thirty miles, suffering over 300 killed, wounded and missing.

After the remnants, stragglers and lightly wounded were collected together for 'Rest', they were sent as part of a 'Composite' battalion to Ypres. On 26 April, they were cut off by an early morning German attack in the mist. Just 67 men returned to Battalion HQ. Sam tells their story.

**Tuesday, 14 August**

*Treading the Duckboards - Military Concert Parties*  
Kate Wills

**National Star College at 7.30pm**

An established part of military and civilian life, concert parties thrived on active service, creating mirth and music amidst the horrors of war.



*The Diamond Troupe of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division*

## Private Edward Stephen Earle (268036) 10th Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Edward was born at 77 Bisley Old Road, Stroud in 1893, one of eight children to James and Ellen Earle.

The 1911 census shows Edward was a general labourer. In 1912 Edward married Florence Emily Pitt, they had four children; James and Rose who both died within weeks of being born, Minnie who died in 1925, aged only 12, and Horace who died in 2004.

In December 1914 Edward joined the Cheshire Bantam Regiment, at Birkenhead. Edward's records show that he was 5 feet 2 inches tall, weighed 108 pounds, and had a chest measurement of 25 inches but his vision was only 6/9 in both eyes, and due to this defective vision he was discharged from the army in February 1915.

In May 1916 Edward was recalled and was passed "A" class, and fit for active service at Horsfield Barracks, Bristol. Edward joined the Gloucester Training Battalion, before transferring to the Royal Warwickshire Regiment in October 1916, and finally to the 10th Warwickshires in April 1918.

While in France Edward had several spells in



hospital suffering with eczema of the scalp, which can be caused by stress.

Early in June the 10th Warwickshires were in the front line in the vicinity of Bligny, near Rhiems, on the Champagne front. On the 4th of June 1918 the battalion diary notes several casualties due to shelling. This could possibly be when Edward received the injuries that led to his death, as his records report that he died of wounds on the 7th of June 1918.

Edward was originally laid to rest at Chichey Military Cemetery, just outside Sezanne, but during the 1920s he was reburied at Terlincthun British Cemetery, Wimille, just north of Boulogne.

Edward is remembered on the Stroud War Memorial and also in St Laurence Church in Stroud.

**Dave & Helen Earle**

*Footnotes:*

*In the summer of 1995 after extensive research by Dave and Helen Earle [Edward's great nephew and niece] Edward's son Horace visited the grave of his father who he had never met.*

*The photo of Edward's grave was taken exactly 100 years to the date of his death.*

## Cheltenham Remembers

The play, *Regeneration*, adapted from the novel by Pat Barker, will be performed on Saturday 28 July at 7.30pm as part of Bacon Theatre's Open Air Festival at the Tuckwell Amphitheatre (GL51 6HE). In 1917, as patients at Craiglockhart Military Hospital in Edinburgh, Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen forged a bond rooted in the poetry that continues to haunt readers today. As their psychiatrist, W H R Rivers, wrestles with how to treat his shell-shocked patients humanely only to send them

back to the front to die, the men struggle to find some meaning amongst the madness of the First World War. Tickets are £15 or £13 concession. Full details are on the Bacon Theatre website: [www.bacontheatre.co.uk](http://www.bacontheatre.co.uk).

There are many events and projects taking place throughout the year as part of *Cheltenham Remembers*. Full details are on their website: [www.cheltenhamremembers.org.uk](http://www.cheltenhamremembers.org.uk) and there are some booklets showing their programme for the year available tonight.

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