



CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

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Welcome!

As you know, we have had to make a number of changes to our programme this year but, thanks to Andy, it is now complete. The talk in October is entitled *Royal Garrison Artillery 1899-1923: Part 1: Port Defence* by Geoff Spring.

If you haven't managed to get over to the *Art of the Great War* exhibition in Broadway Museum yet I can strongly recommend it, and with the summer that we are having it is a lovely trip to make. It's an eclectic but excellent collection, many of the pieces being contemporary to the period or shortly after. Details can be found online here: www.broadwaymuseum.org.uk/event/world-war-one/

We have been invited as a branch to man a stand at Cheltenham Racecourse in the Centaur Suite on Sunday November 18 as part of their *Gloucestershire and Racing Remembers* event. If anyone would like to join me on the stand for any length of time please let me know; it would be great to have you there - primarily it would

just be to publicise and talk about the branch and our own events.

There is a Malvern Festival of Military History on the weekend of 5 to 7 October. The Festival will be held in the grounds of Severn End, Hanley Castle. Keynote speakers so far are Professor David Stevenson on *The Great War*, Sir Max Hastings on *Vietnam*, Nicholas Shakespeare and Andrew Roberts on *Churchill*, and Adam Zamoyski on *Napoleon*. They are expecting over 40 top speakers during the three days and you can view the programme on their website: www.enlightenmentevents.com.

And finally ... it is never too soon to talk about Christmas! So already I am on the scrounge for anyone who would like to give a ten minute talk to the branch for our December meeting. As usual we will be looking for four or five volunteers to entertain us, so if you feel so inclined please do put your name forward.

Peter

Future branch events

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 29th Division

Tuesday, 11 September

Sir John Monash
Paul Cobb

National Star College at 7.30pm

Sir John Monash was one of Australia's most celebrated military figures. Paul's talk covers a number of aspects of the life of Monash - family, education, militia, business career - then his service in the Great War and ending with his life in Victoria until his death.



A short study of the Battle of Le Hamel 1918 is given to demonstrate his approach to offensive operations as Corps Commander. The talk is well illustrated with photos and maps.

Private George Edward Excell (18644) 11th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment



George Excell was born at Wotton-under-Edge in 1896 and after leaving school found employment with a local boot maker. He enlisted soon after the outbreak of war and was posted to the 11th (Service) Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment.

After spending almost a year in training in Wiltshire, the Battalion landed at Boulogne on 21 September 1915. Over the next two years George was constantly in action and was wounded twice; once being hit above the knee by shrapnel when carrying rations up to the line.

He recovered from these wounds and continued to serve with the Battalion into 1918. In September 1918 the Battalion transferred to the Salonika Front, arriving on 30 September 1918, as part of 78th Brigade, 26th Division. Salonika was noted for being a particularly unhealthy front and George fell ill with pneumonia and died in a military hospital on 12 October 1918, age 22. He is buried in the Doiran Military Cemetery and commemorated on the Wotton-under-Edge-War Memorial.

(Taken from First World War Heroes of Wotton-under-Edge by Bill Griffiths)

Gloucestershire War Graves Project

For those not familiar with this on-going Branch project, its main aim is to ensure that, around the time of Armistice Day, annually, a remembrance poppy cross is placed on as many of the Great War-related war graves located in Gloucestershire, as is possible. Allied to this is the maintenance of a photographic record of each grave and the compilation of biographical details on each of those buried.

Placement of poppy crosses is carried out by a team of over fifty grave 'adopters', which include those who attend Branch meetings, others who have become associated with the project over the years and a number of Scout Groups in the Stroud area.

There are 712 known war graves in the county and newly discovered ones do appear from time to time and are added to the CWGC register. In about 150 instances it is known that the local council or RBL places a poppy cross and we do not seek to duplicate these. Just over 500 poppy crosses are placed by our project 'adopters', each cross bearing a sticker stating that the person buried is remembered by the Cheltenham &

Gloucester Branch of The Western Front Association.

The poppy crosses are acquired through the RBL Poppy Appeal and in return the Branch makes a substantial donation to the Appeal fund. This does require a significant allocation of Branch funds and we are grateful to the many adopters who kindly send us a donation to cover the costs of acquisition and distribution.

Poppy crosses are now placed on a county-wide basis. The only significant gap that we have is at Cheltenham Cemetery where, unlike Gloucester, there is no general placement of crosses on CWGC headstone marked graves. This year, to mark the 1918 Armistice, we are seeking to make a 'special effort' to ensure that all the Great War related war graves in Cheltenham do receive a poppy cross. For reasons relating to funding this is likely to be a 'one off' and nearer the date I shall put out an invitation to anyone within the Branch who would like to participate in planting the crosses, to mark this special year.

Graham Adams (Project Co-ordinator)

Contact details

Cheltenham & Gloucester Branch President

Professor Peter Simkins MBE FRHistS

Branch Chairman

Peter Gill

Lansdown House, Pittville Circus Road,
Cheltenham GL52 2QE

07702 253 638 • chairman@cgwfa.org.uk

Branch Treasurer & Newsletter Editor

Hilary Jennings

4 St Stephen's Road, Cheltenham GL51 3AA
01242 243 927 • newsletter@cgwfa.org.uk

Website

www.cgwfa.org.uk

Facebook

[Cheltenham & Gloucester Branch of
the Western Front Association](#)

Twitter

[@CGWFA](#)

The Western Front Association

BM Box 1914,
London WC1N 3XX
0207 118 1914

office@westernfrontassociation.com

www.westernfrontassociation.com



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