



## CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

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### Welcome!

It's that time of year again when I start appealing for Christmas Speakers! As you know we open up our December meeting to our members to make short presentations to us. These presentations need to be no longer than ten minutes in length and can be on any subject Great War related (or loosely related). If you feel inclined to offer your services please drop me a line or have a word - we are looking for four or five volunteers, so please don't be shy.

Another request for your assistance. We are constantly looking for articles for our branch publication - *The Sentinel*. If you have an article that you feel would suit, or perhaps an idea that you could put into writing, then we would love to hear from you; perhaps it would be some research that you have done, or a write up on a recent trip, a book review or a speaker review - the more varied, the better!

We received the following appeal from Valerie Jacques, Secretary of the Leicestershire & Rutland Branch and a Trustee of the Friends of St George's Memorial Church, Ypres: "You

*may already be aware that a display of knitted, crocheted or felt poppies is being organised to decorate St George's Memorial Church, Ypres, for Armistice Day. The plan is for any individuals and/or groups to make poppies in order that a work of art may be created and exhibited either inside or outside the Church. I ask our WFA members to please support this project in any way they can as it is a wonderful opportunity to raise the profile of St George's Memorial Church (the largest memorial in Ypres apart from the Menin Gate) and a fitting way, as 2018 draws to a close, to honour the memory of all those who served in the Great War."* Full details and patterns can be found at this website: [www.stgeorgesmemorialchurchypres.com](http://www.stgeorgesmemorialchurchypres.com).

The WFA 2019 Calendar is now on sale from the WFA Shop on their website. It contains beautiful photography for each month and key events of the Great War featured on particular days. The calendar will be dispatched in early September.

*Peter*

### Future branch events

**Tuesday, 9 October**

*Royal Garrison Artillery 1899-1923*

*Part 1: Port Defence*

Geoff Spring

**National Star College at 7.30pm**

Geoff's talk describes one of the Royal Garrison Artillery's roles defending the British Empire's Naval Bases and commercial ports. The talk includes a brief history of the Royal Artillery; why the Royal Artillery, in 1899, split into two Corps, the Royal Field Artillery and the Royal Garrison Artillery, and the impact of technology on the threats from enemy navies attacking the Royal Navy in ports; the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese War; the British State's Policy for defending the British Empire's ports; assets used to defend the British Empire's ports and the German Navy's raid on Hartlepool on 16 December 1914.

**RGA**

**Tuesday, 13 November**

*Are We There Yet?*

*Some thoughts on the Centenary of 1918*

Professor Peter Simkins

**National Star College at 7.30pm**

In this talk, our President, Professor Peter Simkins, will discuss how far our collective views and interpretations of the Great War have changed during his fifty-six years as a military historian. He will also look at the varied experiences of a small number of middle-ranking commanders in 1918.



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## Lance Corporal William Bendall (16156) 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment

William Bendall was born in Berkeley in 1889, the son of Sharpness dock worker William and his wife Mary. William (junior) followed his father into dock work and married Mary Malpass in 1908.

Unfortunately no Army Service Record has survived for William but such information that is available shows him joining the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment in France on 19 January 1915 and it seems likely that he had at least some form of military training prior to the outbreak of war.

It is also probable that he saw action with the battalion at the Battles of Aubers Ridge and Loos in 1915. On 6 July 1916 the 1<sup>st</sup> Glosters joined



the Somme Offensive near Contalmaison and on 8 September took part in an attack on the south west face of High Wood. The battalion suffered over 200 casualties that day, many from the British barrage falling short on their assembly trenches.

Lance Corporal William Bendall was almost certainly one of the casualties from that day and was transported to a base hospital on the French coast, prior to evacuation to the UK. On 14 September 1916 he died, whilst crossing the Channel aboard the Hospital Ship *Aberdonian*.

William was brought home to Berkeley for burial in the town cemetery.  
*(Graham Adams – for Gloucestershire War Graves Project)*

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## Great War musical plays

*On the Mend* is a musical, romantic play about the nurses and patients who spent time in Cheltenham's Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) hospitals during the First World War. Presented by the Everyman Theatre, it features professional actors alongside a number of local performers. The play will be staged over five nights at, or close to, sites of the original VAD hospitals to create a truly authentic experience. It will be at Cheltenham Racecourse on 23<sup>rd</sup> October at 7pm; Gloucester Road Primary School on the 24<sup>th</sup> (by invitation of the school only); University of Gloucestershire Park Campus on the 25<sup>th</sup> at 8pm; Leckhampton Village Hall on the 26<sup>th</sup> at 7pm and Cheltenham Ladies' College Parabola Arts Centre on the 27<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. Tickets are free and available from

the Everyman Box Office on 01242 572573 or via their website [www.everymantheatre.org.uk](http://www.everymantheatre.org.uk).

A new musical called *Keep the Home Fires Burning* is at the Bacon Theatre on Thursday 25 October at 7.30pm. Based on real events, join the men on their journey through the battlefields of France and remember the melodies of World War One, including *Pack Up Your Troubles*, *Hush Here Comes a Whizzbang!*, *Oh It's a Lovely War* and *Long Way to Tipperary*. This show commemorates the resilience and bravery of the people involved, remembering the ultimate sacrifice that was given by so many. Tickets at £18 are available from the theatre's box office on 01242 258802 or via their website [www.bacontheatre.co.uk](http://www.bacontheatre.co.uk).

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