



CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

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Welcome!

As the year, and hence the centenary of the ceasing of hostilities on the Western Front, draws to a close there are yet more events, books, films and the like descending upon us.

I'm sure that you are aware of Peter Jackson's *They Shall Not Grow Old*. Original footage from the IWM Archives has been colourised, converted to 3D and transformed with modern production techniques to present never before seen detail. From the trailers it looks stunning and there is a live cinema screening to be held on 16 October, with BBC 1 showing it in November. For details of local screenings please visit: www.theyshallnotgrowold.film.

The Leckhampton Players are performing their own tribute to the fallen in music, songs and words from 9-13 October at Leckhampton Village Hall. Performances start at 7.30pm with tickets available from their box office (07867 884985).

Alan Wakefield is giving a talk entitled *Mountains, Mules and Malaria - Soldiering with the British Salonika Force* on 27 October at St Andrew's Church, Cheltenham at 7.30pm. His talk is linked to the exhibition at the Holst Birthplace Museum *Gustav Holst's WW1: With*

the Salonika Force. The exhibition runs until 15 December.

Christ Church (located in Malvern Road, Cheltenham) warmly invites you to attend their *There but not There* Remembrance service being held on Sunday 11 November at 10.30am. To mark the centenary of the end of the first world war, a special installation will commemorate the spirits of those who died for their country then and in subsequent wars throughout the 20th century. A retiring collection will be taken for armed forces charities. Other installations will also be in place around the country.

There is a new publication out this month written by Patrick Stevens entitled *College Echoes*. The book, which is over 400 pages, is a tribute to the 675 Old Cheltonians (Cheltenham College) who lost their lives in the Great War. The price is £35 and it can be ordered from the author on 01424 848813 or by email p.stevens@cheltenhamcollege.org.

Finally, we are having our AGM on Monday 19 November (venue to be confirmed). All are welcome but please just let me know if you would like to attend.

Peter

Future branch events

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.



Tuesday, 11 December
Members' Evening
Venue to be confirmed at 7.30pm

Please join us for our Christmas meeting when we draw on the expertise and knowledge of our members who will give ten-minute presentations during the evening. We are still looking for speakers, so please let Peter know if you would like to take part.

We will have our usual Christmas raffle and all contributions for prizes would be gratefully received.

Our first talk of 2019 will be *The Work of the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre* by Nicola Nash.

Gunner Percy William Barnes (3739) 213th Anti-Aircraft Section, Royal Garrison Artillery

Percy William Barnes was the son of Lambert Barnes, landlord of the *Odessa Inn* near Tewkesbury from 1917-1923. He was born in Cheltenham in 1897, but in 1901 he was a patient in the Home for Sick Children, Winchcombe Street, Cheltenham. In 1911, however, he was back with the family of 10 children, when his father was landlord of *The Grapes Inn*, Gloucester Place, Cheltenham.

Percy volunteered in August 1914 at the age of 17 and was posted to the 3rd (Reserve) Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment. He was subsequently transferred to the Royal Field Artillery as a Driver and then to the Royal Garrison Artillery as a Gunner in the 213th Anti-Aircraft Section, an arm of the artillery which had not existed at the outbreak of the war and which evolved progressively to address a new menace of warfare – aircraft. The 213th Anti-Aircraft Section was part of the organisation known as the 'Lines of Communication' and its role was to defend key locations on the supply lines such as bridges, railways, depots and the like from attack by enemy aircraft. The Section was a unit of some 40 men with two 3" anti-aircraft guns under



their control and they operated within the Southern Group AA Area in the Somme.

According to the *Tewkesbury Register*, Percy was killed by a bomb dropped from an enemy aircraft on 21 March 1918 since when he had been posted as missing. However, this report was incorrect; the casualty records confirm that he died of wounds in Abbeville on 18 May although it is quite likely that he was wounded on 21 March (the opening day of the German Spring Offensive which started in the Somme sector) and then transported to Abbeville, the natural evacuation point from the Somme battlefields. For much

of the war, Abbeville was headquarters of the Commonwealth Lines of Communication and a number of hospitals were stationed there.

Gunner Percy William Barnes did not recover from his wounds and is buried in the adjoining Abbeville Communal Cemetery Extension. He is commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey, and in Cheltenham on the Borough Memorial and in All Saints Church.

Extracted from a biography in 'A Noble Band of Heroes' published by the Tewkesbury Historical Society.

Cheltenham Remembers

Cheltenham Remembers is organising a WW1 Memorial March on November 10th to remember the servicemen and women named on the Cheltenham War Memorial. The march will follow a route through the town, passing the war memorial and culminating in Montpellier Gardens where there will be a short service of remembrance. Each participant will carry the name of one of the casualties on the memorial.

Please visit www.cheltenhamremembers.org.uk for more information and to register to take part. They are also looking for any stories, images or articles relating to Cheltenham during the First World War.

The following day (November 11th) they are hosting a special projection onto the Municipal Offices in the evening from around 5pm. Again they invite people to come along to this event.

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