



CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

Number 150

April 2019

Welcome!

Unfortunately we have had a couple of our advertised speakers pull out of talks later in the year. We are of course sourcing excellent replacements and will duly update the website and keep you informed in our email shots and this newsletter. Therefore please do regularly keep an eye on our website (www.cgwfa.org.uk) in particular and if you're not on our email list, do ensure that we have your email address to keep you updated.

Just a reminder that our next meeting will start at 7.15pm for two short presentations by pupils from Kingham Hill School - details below.

Branch member Fred Ashmore has placed remembrance poppy crosses on the eight Great War related war graves in Leckhampton (St Peter) Churchyard for as long as the project has been in existence. Having done sterling service, Fred now wishes to hand over to someone younger and we are looking for a volunteer to maintain continuity. All that is

involved is the placement of crosses (which the Branch supplies) annually, around the time of Armistice Day each November. If you are interested in becoming Fred's successor please speak to the project co-ordinator, Graham Adams, at a Branch meeting or contact him via wargraves@cgwfa.org.uk.

Searchlight Theatre Company present *Woodbine Willie: Poet & Padre* on Thursday 2 May at 7.30pm at Salem Church, St George's Road, Cheltenham GL50 3EQ. In 1917 Anglican priest, Studdert Kennedy, was awarded the Military Cross. This production shows his chaplaincy work on the battlefields of the Western Front through poems and Woodbine cigarettes. The show is suitable for 12+ and tickets are £10.50, and £5 for 12-18 year olds and students. You can book online at www.ticketsource.co.uk/christianartsfestival or telephone 0333 666 3366 (£1.75 fee for telephone booking).

Peter

Future branch events

Tuesday, 14 May

British Army Signals Intelligence 1914-1918

Jock Bruce

National Star College at 7.15pm

7.15pm: Two pupils from Kingham Hill School will each be making a five minute presentation on one of the fallen from their school war memorial.

7.30pm: The British Army started the war with no capability to intercept and analyse enemy communications - by the armistice it was producing Signals Intelligence on all operational fronts, at home in support of the air defence of Great Britain, and was reading the diplomatic ciphers of many enemy and neutral countries. But this has been largely overshadowed by the work of the Admiralty's 'Room 40'.

Jock's talk describes the who, what and where of army 'Sigint'; what value it was; and suggests some reasons why it has been overlooked.

Tuesday, 11 June

Ypres: Holy Ground of the British Empire

Professor Mark Connelly

National Star College at 7.30pm

Professor Connelly looks at the special place of Ypres in British commemoration 1914-39, the feelings of pilgrims, the role of the Ypres League and the rise of an Anglo-Belgian community as ex-service Imperial War Graves Commission gardeners married local women and started families.



Unveiling of the Menin Gate in July 1927

Private Charles Thomas Brain (13234) 10th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Charles was born in Campden on 26 July 1896, the second son of John and Mary Katharine Brain of Watery Lane, and was baptised at St James's Church on 6 September of that year. His father was an agricultural labourer.

At the age of 18 Charles enlisted in the Gloucestershire Regiment in September 1914. The next year was spent training in England before he arrived in France on 4 October 1915. He was posted to the 10th Battalion, which had just suffered heavy casualties during the Battle of Loos.

The battalion was still in the coal-mining region of northern France around Lens in June 1916 and the war diary remarks that the chief incident of note was when British miners exploded two mines under the German trenches in front of the battalion's lines. The second of these two mines formed a crater and the battalion occupied the near lip, which was shelled somewhat persistently by the enemy, causing a number of casualties. The end of the month was spent in reserve in preparation for a move south to the Somme.

The battalion arrived at Doullens by train and then marched to billets in Naours, arriving on 6 July. They rested all day in their billets before they marched at night to billets in Pierregot, beginning their gradual move to the front and the Somme battlefield. On the evening of 7 July they marched further forward to Baizieux Wood, where they bivouacked for the night. They arrived at billets in the town of Albert at midnight on 9 July. The next day they moved up to the front line at The Dingle, about one mile north of Fricourt. The ground occupied had only just been won from the Germans and was strewn with corpses, between four and five hundred of



which the battalion buried. The next few days they were mainly employed in improving existing defiance works and digging fresh communication trenches to Contalmaison, which had just been won from the enemy.

On 14 July the battalion arrived back in Albert before they moved forward to Becourt Wood. On 19 July trenches were occupied in the vicinity of Shelter Wood, one mile south of Contalmaison, and the next two days were spent providing working parties to dig a new front line in front of Bazetin-le-Petit Wood, which had just been captured from the enemy.

On 21 July the battalion moved up to the front line trenches opposite and due south of Martinpuich. That night was spent digging a new front line about 160 yards in front of the trench that had been dug the previous night. The next day was spent in improving the advanced front line, which was going to form the kicking-off point for the attack that the battalion had been ordered to make early on the morning of 23 July.

At 12.30am on 23 July they attacked a portion of the new German Switch Line in front of Martinpuich. They failed to take their objective but they did capture Point 17 and from this position it was possible to observe the enemy's line for the first time. During the attack the battalion lost 147 casualties, including Charles and his brother, William. Their bodies were never recovered after the war but their names are recorded on the Thiepval Memorial. Charles was 19 years old when he died and his name is recorded on two memorials in Campden: in St James's Church and in the High Street.

Extract from Campden 1914-18 by Paul R Hughes

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