



# CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

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## Welcome!

I have to say that I am thrilled to once again be writing some words of introduction to our branch newsletter.

It has for all of us been an interminably long time but this feels, tentatively, like a new beginning all round, let's hope that it continues.

We are of course in an excellent new venue, where we shall remain until at least the end of the year. However, this is very much a 'suck it and see' location, so feedback from all attendees will be greatly appreciated so that we can decide whether it is a good long term prospect.

For the time being, for everyone's safety and peace of mind, we request that personal Covid measures are taken - if you are able, please wear a mask whilst in the Ed Shed and try to keep a reasonable distance between each other whilst sat down for the talk.

Here's to the rebirth, it is such a pleasure to see you!

*Peter*

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## Future branch events

**Tuesday, 14 September**

*Priming the Fuse: Origins of the Great War*  
Roger Penny

**The Ed Shed at 7.30pm**

The Great War began with an assassination that had its roots deep in the turmoil of Southern Europe and the Balkans, which had suffered almost a century of revolts and wars of national independence, identity and colonial expansion. The build up to general war begins with the Italo-Ottoman War of 1911-12, which triggered the First Balkan War of 1912-13 which in turn led to the Second Balkan War of 1913, ending less than a year before the Great War began.

Roger's talk covers these three conflicts, the involvement of the Great Powers and the ways in which these three wars served as test beds for the tactics, techniques and technology of the Great War, as well as the political and diplomatic fall-out which influenced the Austrian decision to go to war with Serbia.

Roger has spent most of his working life in the defence industry, involved in land, sea and air systems. Since retiring he pursues his interests in military history and archaeology.

**Tuesday, 12 October**

*The 'Spanish Flu' Pandemic 1917-19*  
Dr Jane Orr

**The Ed Shed at 7.30pm**

An explanation of the epidemiology of the pandemic and a discussion of its effect on the progress of the war effort in 1918, especially from the German point of view.

**Tuesday, 9 November**

*Leading at the Front : Battalion and Brigade  
Command in the BEF in 1918*  
(Preliminary title)

Professor Peter Simkins MBE FRHistS

**The Ed Shed at 7.30pm**

**Tuesday, 14 December**

Members' Evening

**The Ed Shed at 7.30pm**

For our December meeting we draw on the expertise and knowledge of our branch members. We will have a small selection of ten-minute length presentations on a Great War related subject of their choice.

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## Corporal William Henry Hawkins (7886) 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

**William Henry Hawkins** was born in Sheepscombe, Gloucestershire in 1887.

Prior to enlistment in the Army he was a mill hand, who had served time in the Gloucestershire Regiment Militia. On 19 January 1905, aged 18, he signed on for eight years, with a further nine in the Reserve.

Following initial training he joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Glosters on 22 May 1905. Between 1907 and the completion of his initial eight years 'with the colours' he saw service in India and Malta.

As a Reservist he was mobilised on 5 August 1914 and was posted to the 1<sup>st</sup> Glosters. On 13 August he was in France with the BEF and took part in the 'Retreat from Mons'. On the 26 August he received a gun shot wound in his calf at Le Favril, near Landrecies. He was sent to No 2 General Hospital at Le Havre before being re-patriated and admitted to Cambridge Hospital, Aldershot on 30 August. He stayed in hospital until 11 September and upon discharge remained in the UK until 22 November 1914.

On 23 November 1914 he returned to the Western Front and rejoined the 1<sup>st</sup> Glosters, now located near Langemark. On 30 December he was treated in a field ambulance for an abscess on his foot. His condition was sufficiently serious for his repatriation to the UK on 3 January 1915.

On 18 May 1915 he was back in the Ypres Salient, this time with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Glosters. At the end of May the battalion was withdrawn to the quieter Armentieres sector and on 25 November 1915 sailed from Marseilles for Salonika, arriving on 12 December. Whilst on the voyage he was promoted to Corporal. Whilst in Salonika



he was diagnosed with pulmonary tuberculosis and was sent to Cairo and thence to England on 17 January 1916.

A medical board found him to be 'no longer fit for military service' and he was discharged from the Army on 27 February 1916. At that time treatment for tuberculosis was very limited and eventually it was responsible for his death on 1 November 1918, aged 31.

He was buried in Painswick Cemetery, where a privately erected stone cross marks his grave. He is commemorated on the Painswick War Memorial.

*(Research by Graham Adams for the Branch's Gloucestershire War Graves Project)*

### Contact details

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