



CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

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Welcome!

It is with great sadness that I report the passing of our dear friend Fred Ashmore in May. Fred was a staunch supporter of the branch having attended our very first meeting. He contributed several articles to the branch newsletter *The Sentinel* and acted as a proof-reader for that publication for many years. Although he had been unable to attend meetings recently he will be sorely missed by all those that had the pleasure of knowing him and our deepest condolences go to his widow Anne.

Kevin Piggott has kindly informed me that there will be a commemoration day at Gheluvelt Park in Worcester to mark its 100th anniversary and its reopening. The date is this coming Saturday - 18 June and the Worcester Branch of the WFA will have a stall at the event. All are welcome to attend.

The WFA continues their online talks with *The foreign fields that are forever England - the CWGC around the world* by Mike St Maur Sheil on 20 June at 8pm.

The CWGC was conceived in 1915 and today it is a truly multi-national operation, working in over 160 countries around the world. In 2012 Mike was assigned by the CWGC to photograph their WW1 centenary book, *For the Fallen*, and commenced on a 20,000 mile odyssey visiting over 400 cemeteries.

In his illustrated talk Mike will be talking about his experiences and some of the stories he encountered as well as considering how the work of the CWGC over the past 100 years has become one of the most significant factors in the way in which we remember the history of two world wars. For further details and to register for the talk please visit the WFA website.

And finally, please watch this space regarding our proposed barbecue. We are keeping a keen eye on the progress of the building work at the Ed Shed and are hoping to organise the small event once the work has been completed.

Peter

Future branch events

Tuesday, 12 July
Not Quite Fitting the Mould
Professor Peter Simkins
The Ed Shed at 7.30pm

A fresh look at some brigade and battalion commanders on the Western Front 1916-1918.

Always in the vanguard of revisionism, Peter has studied the developing effectiveness of the BEF from the mid-war offensives to the final battles of 1918.

The delegation of tactical responsibility driven down the ranks from High Command to junior officers and beyond ultimately, with new technologies and methods, led to the successful warfare of the 'Hundred Days'. Nowhere was this more important than in the middle ranks of brigade and battalion command.

Tuesday, 9 August
Ernst Jünger
Mike McCarthy
The Ed Shed at 7.30pm

Ernst Jünger volunteered in 1914 and fought throughout the conflict on the Western Front recording his experiences in several books, foremost of which, *In Stahlgewittern* (Storm of Steel) provided a detailed picture of the realities of combat in an industrialised war. His writing provides a fascinating counterpart to many of the contemporary British accounts. Never convinced by Naziism, Jünger survived WW2 and continued his career as an author becoming a de facto ambassador for the ordinary German soldier. Mike follows Germany's war hero by tracing, examining and validating his actions in battle in his words, and tests the veracity of his accounts.

Private Ernest Frederick Ledbetter (1001193) 27th Battalion (Manitoba), Canadian Infantry

Ernest Frederick Ledbetter was born at Blockley on 26 October 1887.

On 30 April 1908, at the age of 20, he emigrated to Canada, eventually ending up in Birtle, Manitoba, where he found work as an agricultural labourer.

He enlisted into the Canadian Army at Birtle on 1 April 1916 and was initially posted to 226th Overseas Battalion. He sailed from Halifax, Nova Scotia on 15 December, on board the troopship RMS *Olympic* (a sister ship of the ill-fated *Titanic*) and arrived at Liverpool on 28 December. He transferred with his unit to Bramshott Camp, on the Hampshire and Surrey border and on 1 February 1917 he was appointed an acting Lance Corporal. On 26 March he was posted to 14th (Reserve) Battalion. On 31 May he reverted to the rank of Private, at his own request, prior to posting to France. He arrived in France on 1 June and joined the 27th (Manitoba) Battalion, sometimes known as 'City of Winnipeg', in the field on 7 June. It was part of 6th Infantry Brigade, 2nd Canadian Division. Having spent the first two weeks of February 1918 on leave, he was awarded a Good Conduct Badge on 1 April.

On 27 August he suffered a gunshot wound to his left ankle, causing a fracture at the lower end of the fibula and tibia. This was probably in the Arras area, during the Battle of the Scarpe (26 to 30 August 1918) one of the actions in the late summer/early autumn attempts to break the



Hindenburg Line. After an initial operation a No 7 Casualty Clearing Station, he was sent to 55 General Hospital, Boulogne and on 31 August sent to England, on board the HS *Cambria*.

He was admitted to Alder Hey Military Hospital, West Derby, Liverpool (which specialised in the treatment of orthopaedic cases) on 1 September and on the 21st underwent an operation to remove pieces of bone still present in the wounded area. Evidently his wound had practically healed when he died, suddenly, on

12 November. The cause of death was discovered to be angina pectoris, a heart condition.

Following his death his remains were taken to his birthplace in Blockley, where he was buried in the churchyard, where a CWGC headstone now marks his grave.

His headstone also commemorates Ernest's step-brother, 148484 Sergeant George Readman, also of the Canadian Army, who had joined him in Canada in 1913. George had worked on a farm at Hayfield, Manitoba and enlisted into the Canadian Army at Winnipeg, Manitoba on 22 November 1915. He was posted to the 78th (Manitoba) Battalion, which was part of 12th Infantry Brigade, 4th Canadian Division. He died from a shrapnel wound to the back on 8 August 1918 and is buried at Caix British Cemetery, in the Somme region of France.

Graham Adams

(Gloucestershire War Graves Project biographical archive)

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