



CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

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Welcome!

Once again my apologies to all those that turned up last month ... just a shame our speaker didn't make it! However, these things do inevitably happen and we have been blessed that it hasn't happened before in our 16 years of being. Because of this great inconvenience to you we are offering a complimentary burger (or similar) to those who wish to join us for our summer barbeque following immediately after our August speaker - so a double reason to join us next month.

Do remember that we have our own branch and that all are welcome to join! Single membership is £6 per year and £9 for dual membership. For this you actively help to support the branch and also receive our own publication *The Sentinel* three times a year. I have now taken over the role of Membership Secretary so contact me directly if you wish to join or pop along to our website www.cgwfa.org.uk to download a form or pick one up today on the books table.

We are constantly seeking additions to our committee, more so now than ever as positions

and responsibilities are being taken by a reducing number of individuals. If you feel that you can lend a hand in any way please let me know, the future health of the branch is reliant on workloads being spread around rather than with just two or three individuals.

Some events at the Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum this summer include: *Gloucester Goes Retro* on 27 August with a variety of military hardware on display surrounding the museum.

From 26 August to 21 September an exhibition *The Irish Soldier in the British Army* will look at the six Irish Regiments who served the Crown. This exhibition is free on entry.

Also, from 22 July to 4 September the museum has teamed up with National Waterways Museum to offer summer family tickets (up to two adults and three children). This will entitle a family entrance to both their museums (on the day of purchase only) for the cost of only £20 which results in huge savings.

Peter

Future branch events

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.

Tuesday, 13 September
The 10 decisions that decided the Battle of the Marne
Ross Beadle
The Ed Shed at 7.30pm

The First Battle of the Marne fought from 6 to 12 September 1914 resulted in an Allied victory against the German armies in the west.

By 9 September, the success of the Franco-British counteroffensive left the German 1st and 2nd Armies at risk of encirclement, and they were ordered to retreat to the Aisne River.

The German retreat brought to an end the Moltke-Schlieffen plan to crush the French Armies in the field and began the process of solidifying the Western Front. The decisions that brought about this turnaround in allied fortunes are examined in detail.

Leading Seaman Frederick Charles Grimes (162471)

Royal Navy – HMS Viknor

Frederick Charles Grimes was born on 5 September 1874 at St Paul's, Cheltenham and baptised in the local parish church on 27 December. His Navy service record states the year of birth incorrectly as 1875. He was the son of Isaac and Rose Hannah Grimes.

Upon leaving school he became a gardener before joining the Royal Navy, as a Boy entrant, in August 1891. He served on a variety of ships in Queen Victoria's navy and rose to the rank of Leading Seaman. He became a member of the ship's company of the Royal Yacht *Victoria & Albert*, when it was commissioned in 1901 and served on board until 1908. He joined the Royal Fleet Reserve in 1909.

Upon the outbreak of war, he re-joined the Royal Navy and became part of the crew of HMS *Viknor* on 12 December 1914. *Viknor* was the former Royal Mail ship RMS *Atrato* which had become a cruise liner (as SS *The Viking*) before being requisitioned by the Admiralty in December 1914 and converted into an armed merchant cruiser. It was assigned to the 10th Cruiser Squadron, who patrolled between Iceland and the north of Scotland, intercepting and inspecting neutral shipping suspected of carrying contraband war materials to Germany.

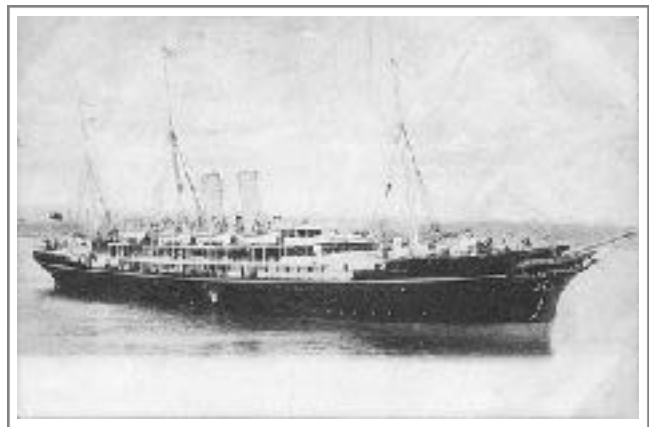
On 28 December 1914 *Viknor* sailed from the River Tyne and on 1 January 1915 joined up with a patrol off the north coast of Scotland. Orders had been received from the Admiralty for the patrol to locate, stop and search the



Norwegian America Line ship *Bergensfjord*, as it was believed that a German spy was aboard. The *Bergensfjord* was intercepted and escorted to Kirkwall, Orkney. The suspected spy and other prisoners were transferred to the *Viknor*, which sailed for Liverpool. It never arrived and sank in heavy seas near to Tory Island, off Co Donegal, Ireland on 13 January. No distress signal was received and the exact cause of the sinking has never been fully established but it is believed that the ship hit one of the two hundred mines recently laid by the Germans in that general area.

Leading Seaman Grimes was one of the 295 lives lost in the sinking. He is commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial and on the Cheltenham War Memorial.

Graham Adams



HMS Viknor

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