



## CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

Number 181

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### Welcome!

Hello and welcome!

I am delighted to say that Gloucester's delightful little Sherborne Cinema in Kingsholm is showing the award winning film *All Quiet On The Western Front* this month. This is a critically acclaimed adaptation of Erich Maria Remarque's extraordinary novel which was based on his own experiences in the Great War. All showings are at 8.30 p.m. and the dates are 17, 18, 20, 22 and 23. This is a lovely little cinema with all tickets just £7 and tea @ £1 and coffee @ £1.50 - for further information check out their website [www.sherbornecinema.co.uk](http://www.sherbornecinema.co.uk).

Please note a change in the talk that Ross Beadle is giving to the branch on May 9. Ross will now be presenting: *Who Killed Captain Duncan Martin? 20th Brigade on 1st July 1916*. This talk revisits the attack of 20th Brigade on the first day of the Somme and includes some fascinating overlay pictures by Jonathan Porter and will, I am sure, be another memorable and popular talk by Ross.

There are a series of evening talks throughout the year at the Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum. On 5 April at 7pm - *From Soldier to Artist* with Simon McCouaig and on 3 May at 7pm - *The Glosters in Burma: The Story of the 1st and 10th Battalions in WWII* with Lieutenant Colonel Robert Dixon. Tickets are £2 for members and £5 for non-members and are available at the museum or online at [www.soldiersofglos.com](http://www.soldiersofglos.com). Details of talks later in the year will be in future newsletters.

The local branch of The Orders and Medals Research Society (OMRS) meet monthly, apart from August, on the second Thursday of the month at Swindon Village Hall, Church Road, Swindon Village, Cheltenham GL51 9QS. They are actively looking for new members who either collect medals or do the research for medal recipients and then discuss their findings. You will find further details on their website: [www.omrs.org](http://www.omrs.org).

**Peter**

### Future branch events

**Tuesday, 11 April**

*The Indian Army during the First World War:  
An Ox & Bucks Perspective*  
Stephen Barker  
**The Ed Shed at 7.30pm**

During 1914-18, the 1st Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry (OBLI) fought in Iraq as part of the British Indian Army. Many of the soldiers who died in the campaign are commemorated on war memorials across Oxfordshire. This presentation highlights a project run by the University of Oxford in partnership with the Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum and highlights the part the OBLI played in the campaign and also the role played by Indian soldiers during the war. The talk is fully illustrated, includes a ten-minute film and details of the related exhibition currently touring Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

**Tuesday, 9 May**

*Who Killed Captain Duncan Martin?*  
Ross Beadle  
**The Ed Shed at 7.30pm**



Plasticine models, poets, 'lions led by donkeys' ... and all of that. This talk revisits the attack of 20th Brigade on the first day of the Somme and includes some fascinating overlay pictures by Jonathan Porter.

# Able Seaman Norman James Ridler (J/28078)

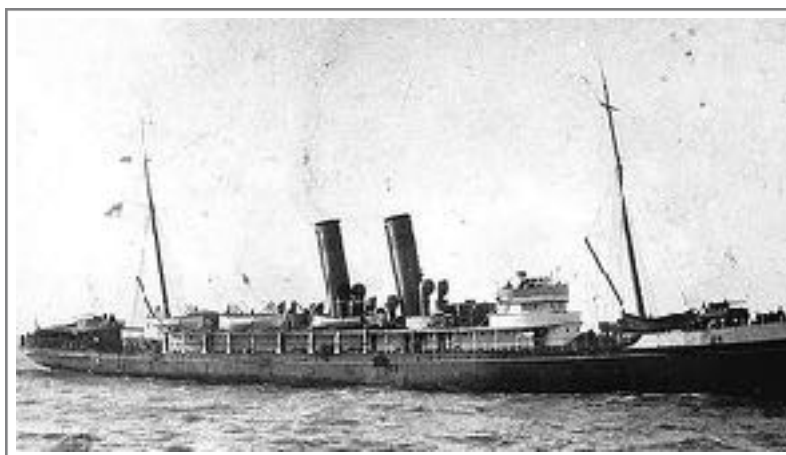
## Royal Navy - HMS Louvain

Norman James Ridler was born at Stroud on 26 March 1898, one of four children born to Henry James and Esther L Ridler.

After completing his elementary education, he lived at the family home in Painswick and worked in a pin factory before joining the Royal Navy as a Boy entrant in October 1913, when aged 15. He was posted to the pre-dreadnought battleship, HMS *Albion*, in October 1915, as an Ordinary Seaman. Upon reaching the age of 18, in March 1916, he signed on for twelve years' service and was promoted to Able Seaman in September of that year, when serving aboard another pre-dreadnought battleship, HMS *Lord Nelson*. Following the closure of the Gallipoli campaign the latter became the flagship of the Eastern Mediterranean (later Aegean) Squadron, supporting Allied operations in the area, notably the Salonika front and the blockade of the Dardanelles.

He appears to have been transferred to the strength of a shore establishment from September to 31 December 1917, which may have reflected a period of home leave or leave in Malta. From 1 January 1918 he was posted to HMS *Europa*, which had become the flagship of the Royal Navy presence at Mudros, an island in the Aegean off the Gallipoli Peninsular. He was never destined to join the ship's company.

HMS *Louvain* was formerly the SS *Dresden*, a Great Eastern Railway ferry, which operated in the North Sea between Harwich and Antwerp. It was taken over by the Admiralty in 1915 and converted into an armed steamer and was being



**HMS Louvain**

used as a vessel to carry men and mail from Malta to Mudros. On 20 January 1918 it was passing through the Kelos Strait, which is located between the tip of the peninsular to the south-east of Athens and the island of Tzia. On board, beside the ship's company, were men designated for other ships in the Aegean Squadron, Able Seaman Ridler being one.

The *Louvain* was torpedoed by the German submarine EC-22, which had been on patrol in the area, principally mine laying. The ship sank quickly and an escort was only able to pick up sixteen survivors of the two hundred and forty on board. Included in those lost were seventy Maltese naval ratings, making this the worst single loss of life Malta suffered in the Great War.

Norman James Ridler was aged 19 when he died and is commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial, on the War Memorials at Nailsworth and Painswick, and also on the Roll of Honour inside St George's Church, Nailsworth.

**Graham Adams**

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