



CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

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Welcome!

I would like to start off this month's newsletter by giving a huge and sincere thank you from all of those that attended, and the whole branch in general, to Len Evans for arranging a wonderfully enlightening and hands on visit to the Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum on 28 June. It was a superb evening and very much enjoyed by all, reminding us of what an excellent museum we have in our vicinity. If you weren't able to join us that evening, do make the effort to get along there at some point - you won't be disappointed!

I would like to give you another small reminder that our next meeting is a special one! Held as usual on the second Tuesday of the month (8 August) it will be a 'summer event' with the intention of allowing some socialising as well as some short and very interesting talks. The centre piece will be a barbeque run once again very kindly by Trevor Hek and his team, before which we shall have three short talks similar in

spirit to our December talks. There will also be a raffle and I hope a 'show and tell' table for anyone wishing to bring in any personal items that they would like to share with members, plus a 'bring and buy' table - the perfect opportunity for you to move on any Great War related books or items to members who may find them of interest. I would like to add that any donations for the raffle would be very gratefully received!

We have been told that a favourite cafe for visitors to the Western Front, the Old Blighty Tea Room at Ovillers-la-Boisselle is now closed. A statement on their Facebook page states: *After much thought we have taken the difficult decision that going forward the Tearoom will only be open by prior booking or to supply booked packed lunches.* However, there is an excellent Tea Room nearby at the Thiepval Memorial.

Peter

Future branch events

Tuesday, 8 August
Branch Summer Meeting
The Ed Shed at 7.30pm

A special evening to allow some greater social interaction than normal. There will be a couple of short talks by members along with a barbeque, raffle and an opportunity for members to bring along items for the interest of other members. Enjoy an evening with others sharing your interest in the Great War.



Tuesday, 12 September
Artillery Conquers : Infantry Occupies
Lieutenant Colonel Simon Shepherd
The Ed Shed at 7.30pm

Simon seeks to assess the performance of the BEF's artillery during the preparation for, and conduct of, the Third Battle of Ypres in 1917. To carry out this assessment, it uses a set of Principles of War published in the February 1916 edition of the RUSI Journal. These are often referenced as the start point for the way the British Army has subsequently developed its use of the Principles of War. The lecture will focus on the conduct of the artillery battles at Army, Corps and Divisional level for: Pilkem Ridge, 31 July - British Fifth Army; Menin Road Ridge, 20 September - British Second Army; Second Passchendaele, 26 October to 10 November - Canadian Corps.

Private Henry George Sheppard (5083) 1/6th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Henry George Sheppard was born in Quenington, the son of James and Mary Sheppard, and later lived in Bibury. The 1901 census shows the family as - James, 33, and Mary, 37, plus children Mary, 14; Fenella, 12; Henry, 9; James, 7; May, 4. After leaving school Henry initially worked as a carter on a farm.

Private Sheppard's army number - 5083 - indicates that he was a Regular soldier or a Reservist called back at the outbreak of the Great War. We can assume then that he went overseas with the battalion in March 1915. After a period of training in Essex, his 48th (South Midland) Division received orders to join the BEF in France, crossing from Folkestone to Boulogne on 30 March 1915. The battalion first went into the line near Ploegsteert attached to experienced 17th Brigade for instruction.

In late 1915 the battalion was on the Somme and was still there at the start of the July 1916 offensive. On 1 July 1916, 1/6th Battalion was in reserve and did not participate in the division's actions. On 19 July the division went into the line north-east of Ovillers-la-Boisselle and, a few days later, on 23 July, according to the Official History, when the leading platoons went 'over the top', the 1/6th Gloucestershire was mown down, only a few bombers succeeding in entering the German line.



The 1/6th Battalion returned for another spell on 21 August, and early in the morning the Germans made a counter-attack against their forward position. This was repulsed but between 5.30am and noon the battalion made three separate attempts to occupy enemy positions, and each time was bombed out.

We do not know the circumstances of Private Sheppard's death on 27 August 1916 but it is very likely that he had been wounded in the fighting a few days earlier and evacuated only as far as a Casualty Clearing Station. He

is buried in Puchevillers British Cemetery in plot III, row F, grave 6. Private Sheppard is listed on the Bibury war memorial.

Private Sheppard would have been entitled to the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. Post war, a bronze memorial plaque - still in possession of the family - was also sent to his next of kin.

His cousin, 6523 Private William Mayo, 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards, was killed in action on the Aisne in September 1914 and is buried in Chauny Communal Cemetery British Extension. He is commemorated on Lechlade war memorial.

Paul Cobb

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