



CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

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Welcome!

Tonight we mix a little bit of Great War interest through three short talks with an opportunity to spend some sociable time together and enjoy the fruits of Trevor Hek and his team's labours at the barbeque. It was always the intention especially of this branch, that in addition to offering informative, enlightening and entertaining lectures on Great War subjects each month, that a community of those with a shared interest should be encouraged. Sometimes I fear that we don't take enough time within our meetings to socialise and chat with one another either before lectures or after so I hope tonight goes some way to alleviate that failure. Personally I can honestly say that although I appreciate each and every talk we are privileged to be given what I cherish more about our branch and meetings are the precious friendships I have made over the years. So, to spend a little extra time with friends is something that I for one am looking forward to.

On 12 August the Fusilier Museum Warwick and the Warwickshire Yeomanry Museum, in conjunction with the Gallipoli Association, are holding a series of events. In addition to Peter Hart's talk about the Gallipoli campaign in The Court House, Warwick at 11am, there will be exhibitions of Gallipoli material. The Fusilier Museum Warwick will be hosting the 1914-18 Warwicks re-enactors group and WW1-themed family events throughout the day. At 3pm there is a Gallipoli-themed walking tour of Warwick. Tickets are £6 per event and available from Eventbrite.

The u3a Cheltenham has a Military History Group which meets on the last Thursday of the month (except for July and August) from 10am to 12pm in the Club Room at Cheltenham Bowling Club in Suffolk Square, Cheltenham. Further details can be found on their website: www.cheltenhamu3a.org.uk.

Peter

Future branch events

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.

Tuesday, 10 October

Birdie - more than 'Soul of Anzac'
Richard Farrimond
The Ed Shed at 7.30pm

Field Marshal Lord Birdwood of Anzac and Totnes was given the accolade 'Soul of Anzac' in General Hamilton's second despatches from Gallipoli. Birdwood was one of a very few who left those shores with his reputation intact, perhaps even enhanced. He took his beloved Anzacs to the Western Front where he became the ninth longest serving Corps Commander before finishing the war as one of Haig's five army commanders. This talk looks at Birdwood's distinguished life of service - personal, military and political.



Corporal Albert George Bridges (2301) 2nd Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Albert George Bridges was born on 19 January 1896 at Ascott-under-Wychwood, Oxfordshire. He was the eldest of four children born to Edward William Bridges and his wife Elizabeth.

By the time of the 1911 Census the family had moved to Station Cottage at Gotherington and George (he appears to have been known by his second name) was employed as a mason in the building trade.

According to a report in the *Gloucestershire Echo* he enlisted in the Army from Cavendish House, Cheltenham at the start of the war. It is not clear if he was an employee of that well-known retail store. He was posted to the 2nd Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment. His Medal Roll Index Card states his rank as Lance Corporal, rising to Corporal, so he may have had some form of military experience prior to the war but in the absence of a service record this cannot be ascertained.

He was sent to France on 12 March 1915, as part of a draft of 113 men, who joined up with the 2nd Glosters at Dickebusch a few days later. It was reported that he received a slight wound during the Battle of Second Ypres the following month.

The 2nd Glosters arrived in Salonika on 12 December 1915. As part of 81 Brigade, 27 Division, they joined an Anglo-French force resisting the Bulgarian advance in Northern Greece.

Little action was seen by the battalion until the end of September 1916. On 30 September it was



deployed to the north east of Salonika, along the left bank of the River Struma facing Bulgarian positions in the villages of Karajakoi Bala and Karajakoi Zir. An operation was mounted to clear these villages and the Glosters, along with the 2nd Cameron Highlanders, was assigned to the capture of the former. The attack went in at 5.30am and by 9am the objective had been taken and consolidation was undertaken. During the night of 30 September/1 October the Bulgarians mounted counterattacks using artillery and heavy rifle fire but were repulsed. The operation had cost the 2nd Glosters fifty five casualties amongst other ranks.

George Bridges was one of these. Reports vary as to whether he was killed in action or died of wounds but it would appear likely that it was the latter, as his date of death is recorded as 1 October 1916 and he came to be buried in Lahana Military Cemetery, which served burials from the Struma sector and in particular No 27 Casualty Clearing Station. His headstone has an unusual inscription *Mizpah Gen. 31.49*: 'mizpah' is Hebrew for 'watchtower' and (part of) the reference to a passage from the Book of Genesis reads 'May the Lord keep watch between you and me when we are away from each other'. He is commemorated on the Gotherington War Memorial.

Graham Adams

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