



# CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

Number 189

November 2023

## Welcome!

On Thursday we are holding our AGM and once again Paul Haigh has kindly offered his home in Hatherley Court Road, Cheltenham as a venue. All are of course welcome and encouraged to attend; please just let me know of your intentions so that we can prepare accordingly. I would stress that without committee members and responsibilities being taken on no organisation can survive. I feel that we are heading to a situation where too many jobs are being done by too few people and the survival of our branch is actually in danger. This is despite being financially buoyant. So do consider if you are able and interested to throw some energy into the operation of the branch.

In a similar vein, we are now desperate for articles for our branch publication, *The Sentinel*, if you have anything that you could offer to be printed then do please get in touch with Hilary.

On Saturday, 25 November Peter Simkins will be the keynote speaker at a Great War conference being held in Birmingham by Helion

books. Peter was planning to travel to the conference with his wife Jane by train, but Helion books have offered a pair of tickets to the event to anyone who could offer a lift. If you can please contact Peter directly by email: [bixhouse@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:bixhouse@hotmail.co.uk).

The CWGC's Commemorations at Christmas Carol Service will be held on 29 November at 7pm in The Guard's Chapel, London. Tickets at £25 are available from their website. All profits will be used to support the Commonwealth War Graves Foundation.

Finally, next month is, of course, our Christmas meeting. For this we shall be having three very short presentations from star pupils of Kingham Hill School on Great War topics that they have researched, also a couple of short talks from our own members. Plus of course a raffle and perhaps a mince pie or two, so I shall look forward to seeing you then - any donations for the raffle, very gratefully accepted!

*Peter*

## Future branch events

**Thursday, 16 November**

Cheltenham & Gloucester Branch AGM  
22 Hatherley Court Road, Cheltenham GL51 3AG  
at 7.30pm

**Tuesday, 9 January**

Starting from Rock Bottom:  
*the Staff of the New Army Divisions*  
Dr Paul Harris  
The Ed Shed at 7.30pm

**Tuesday, 12 December**  
*Members' Evening*  
The Ed Shed at 7.30pm

For our December meeting we draw on the expertise and knowledge of our branch members. We will have a small selection of ten-minute length presentations on a Great War related subject of their choice.

After the presentations we hope you will stay to enjoy a glass of wine and a mince pie. Also, we will have our Christmas raffle and any prizes you can donate will be very welcome.

Despite their inauspicious beginnings, by the war's end many New Army divisions had proved their worth and demonstrated that an Allied victory would not have been achieved without them. It was a remarkable transformation but how was it achieved?



## Serjeant Frederick George Smith (12271) 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Frederick George Smith was born in Gloucester on 24 October 1890. He was the only child of John and Rhoda Smith, who lived in Hartington Road in the Linden district of Gloucester.

Frederick's early schooling was spent in Gloucester and at the age of 13 he became a 'pupil teacher', as part of an apprenticeship system for aspirant teachers, who, over a typically five year period, learned the art of teaching whilst continuing their own school education. He attended teacher training college between 1909 and 1911 and in 1912 was appointed as an Assistant Teacher at Widden Street Council School in Gloucester. He was a popular teacher, with a great interest in sport and was given a great send off by his students when he left for military training on 1 September 1914, having enlisted and been posted to the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment.

His abilities were soon recognised and by 12 October 1914 he had risen to the rank of Serjeant. Following training, on 19 June 1915 he sailed with his battalion from Avonmouth for the Dardanelles. The 7<sup>th</sup> Glosters (part of 39 Brigade, 13 Division) landed at Y Beach on the Gallipoli Peninsular on 11 July. On 7/8 August the battalion took part in a major but abortive attempt to capture the heights of Chanak Bair, in support of the New Zealanders. For the battalion it was an extremely costly attack, with 11 officers and 350 Other Ranks, killed,



wounded or missing. According to the War Diary this included all the battalion's CSMs and CQMSs. It is not known if Serjeant Smith took part in the attack but he appears to have been promoted to Acting CQMS shortly after.

By 20 August the battalion had been withdrawn to a trench line in front of 39 Brigade's HQ. Frederick Smith was killed in action the next day. The circumstances of his death are uncertain. There is no mention of casualties in the War Diary and *Soldiers Died* shows him as the only member of the battalion killed in action that day. A letter to his widow from a comrade says he was 'shot through the head', a common euphemism; possibly he was the victim of a stray shell or sniper. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Helles Memorial to the Missing of the Gallipoli campaign. He is also commemorated on the Gloucester War Memorial.

Frederick Smith left a widow and two very young children. At their first autumn meeting of 1915 the Gloucester Education Committee paid tribute to him 'as a most esteemed and valued Assistant Master'.

**Graham Adams**

### Contact details

#### Cheltenham & Gloucester Branch President

Professor Peter Simkins MBE FRHistS

#### Branch Chairman

Peter Gill

Pen Y Bryn, Bull's Hill, Walford,

Ross-on-Wye HR9 5RH

07702 253 638 • [chairman@cgwfa.org.uk](mailto:chairman@cgwfa.org.uk)

#### Branch Treasurer & Newsletter Editor

Hilary Jennings

4 St Stephen's Road, Cheltenham GL51 3AA

01242 243 927 • [newsletter@cgwfa.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@cgwfa.org.uk)

#### Website

[www.cgwfa.org.uk](http://www.cgwfa.org.uk)

#### Facebook

[Cheltenham & Gloucester Branch of the Western Front Association](#)

#### Twitter

[@CGWFA](#)

#### The Western Front Association

BM Box 1914,

London WC1N 3XX

0207 118 1914

[membership@westernfrontassociation.com](mailto:membership@westernfrontassociation.com)

[www.westernfrontassociation.com](http://www.westernfrontassociation.com)



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