



CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

Number 164

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Welcome!

Well, the influence of Covid-19 rages on I'm afraid - our booked speaker for this evening, Dr Jane Orr, is self-isolating having tested positive late last week. Ordinarily a late cancellation like this would render most associations' meetings defunct, however, we are blessed in having Andrew Hinks as our speaker secretary who instantly went into action to source a replacement, and equally blessed to have our very own Ross Beadle able to step up to the plate at the last hour. Our sincere thanks must go out to the two of them.

We have now scheduled our AGM as Tuesday 2 November and all branch members are welcome and encouraged to attend. The exact location is yet to be finalised but shall be known shortly. If you are interested in joining us then please let me know so that we have an idea of

numbers and can cater accordingly - contact me either by email (petergill@live.co.uk) or telephone (07702 253638). Items that shall particularly be addressed will be the suitability of the Ed Shed as a continued venue for our meetings, the post of Treasurer - after 15 years of fantastic service Hilary has decided to stand down as Treasurer - and the post of Membership Secretary - after almost six years of valued service Helen Earle is standing down as Membership Secretary, so we are looking for volunteers to take over the roles. I very much hope you would like to attend!

Finally, a reminder that we are on the lookout for volunteers to deliver short presentations for our December Meeting. I have some lined up but another one or two would be perfect!

Peter

Future branch events

Tuesday, 2 November
Cheltenham & Gloucester Branch AGM
Venue: TBC at 7.30pm

Tuesday, 9 November
Cheltenham in the Great War
Neela Mann
The Ed Shed at 7.30pm

Almost 1,000 Cheltenham women left by train every day for munitions work, hundreds made airplanes in the Winter Gardens, many were nurses and most former suffragettes joined the WVR. Why did two schools do double shifts and for what did the townspeople raise £186,000 in one week in 1918? How did Cheltenham cope with 7,250 soldiers billeted in the town and khaki fever?

This talk gives an insight into the lives of different social classes in Cheltenham including stories of remarkable women and how their war was fought on the Home Front.

Tuesday, 14 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.

2022
Tuesday, 11 January
Clearing the Dead 1919-1939
Peter Hodgkinson

Tuesday, 8 February
Gloucester and the cities' reaction to the Armistice in 1918
Tony Conder

Tuesday, 8 March
London Omnibuses on the Western Front
Roy Larkin

Serjeant Albert Harry Heath (31001) 'A' Battery, 76th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery

Albert Harry Heath, known as Harry, was the son of Albert, the licensee of the Crown Inn, Long Street, Dursley and Anne Heath, who worked in the local telephone exchange. He was born in Dursley in 1890 and before the war had worked at R A Lister & Co in the town.

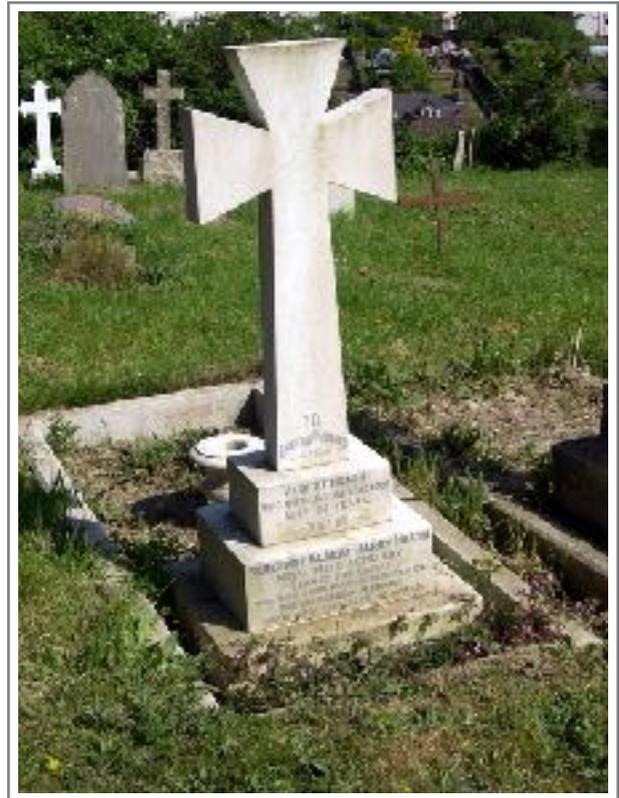
Harry was described as a genial fellow, having many friends. He was a footballer and had belonged to the Territorials. He had also been a member of Dursley Cricket Club, good as a wicket keeper and a batsman 'of the dashing type' who could be relied on to make runs.

In the summer of 1914 he had moved to the Kilburn area of London.

In November 1914 he enlisted in the Royal Horse Artillery in London but may have transferred to the 76th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery shortly after, as from December 1914 to September 1915 he was stationed at Cork in Ireland. The Brigade had been attached to the 16th (Irish) Division.

On 2 September 1915 the Brigade embarked for France, where it transferred from 16th Division to the Guards Division and fired its guns in anger on the 10th of that month near Haverskerque.

In April 1916 Serjeant Heath was severely wounded in his right eye and shoulder by shrapnel and evacuated to hospital in Boulogne. He was repatriated to England and sent to the 2nd War Hospital in Northfields, Birmingham. A specialist was called from London and it was found necessary to remove the eye and a one and a half inch metal fragment was taken from his throat. The *Cheltenham Chronicle* of 6 May 1916 reported that his first words following the



operation were: 'Is the gun safe?'. Sadly, he failed to recover from his wounds and the operation, and died in hospital on 27 April 1916, aged 26.

As an Army man Harry was said to have been brave and fearless, one of the best non-commissioned officers.

Serjeant Heath's last resting place is in Woodmancote (St Mark's) Churchyard, where a stone cross marks his grave; his parents are buried in the same plot. He is commemorated on the Dursley War Memorial.

(Taken from *Dursley 1914-18 - a study of a small town at war* by David Evans and *The Long, Long Trail* website)

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