



CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

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Welcome!

It is with great sadness that I report the passing of David Timms. David had been ill for some time and unable to attend meetings regularly and yet he very graciously donated his Great War book collection to the branch to raise funds for meetings and speakers. Through this generosity and the enthusiasm of our members for his collection we have indeed been able to fund the speakers for this year and will hope to continue to do so into 2022. All of our thoughts naturally go out to David's family at this sad time.

The branch has also very recently been given another collection of Great War books, these were donated by Lin Kilbey whose husband Peter was a First World War enthusiast and she felt that he would wish his much loved tomes to go to similar enthusiasts. Therefore, please take a look at the books here tonight and should you

find anything to your taste feel free to take away with you for the cost of a donation of your choice - all raised funds go towards keeping the branch functioning.

Our meeting next month will be our usual mixture of short talks by our members. 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.

Finally, last week we held our AGM which proved to be very positive and constructive with many exciting suggestions and plans set for the year ahead. Minutes of the meeting will be posted on our Facebook page and on our website shortly so do keep a look out and also keep an eye out for news of our plans for the year ahead.

Peter

Future branch events

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
The Ed Shed at 7.30pm

There is currently considerable interest in battlefield archaeology. Between the wars, however, a process similar to modern archaeology was carried out to attempt to unearth the missing and bury them properly in IWGC cemeteries. How was this done? Who did it? What were their experiences?

Tuesday, 8 February
Gloucester and the city's reaction to the Armistice in 1918
Tony Conder
The Ed Shed at 7.30pm

Tony's talk covers the immediate days after the Armistice and then the next couple of years to look at how civilian life and the returning troops inter-related. It looks at homes fit for heroes, how the immediate Armistice was celebrated and the lack of harmony between the civil authority and those who had fought.



Private William Henry Davis (18008) 11th Company, Machine Gun Corps

William Henry Davis was born at Eastcombe, near Stroud in 1886; he was one of a family of nine children, who lived at Hill House, Bussage.

He joined the Army before the Great War (probably around 1906) and the 1911 census confirms that he was a Rifleman with the 2nd Battalion, Rifle Brigade, based in India. His number was 1584.

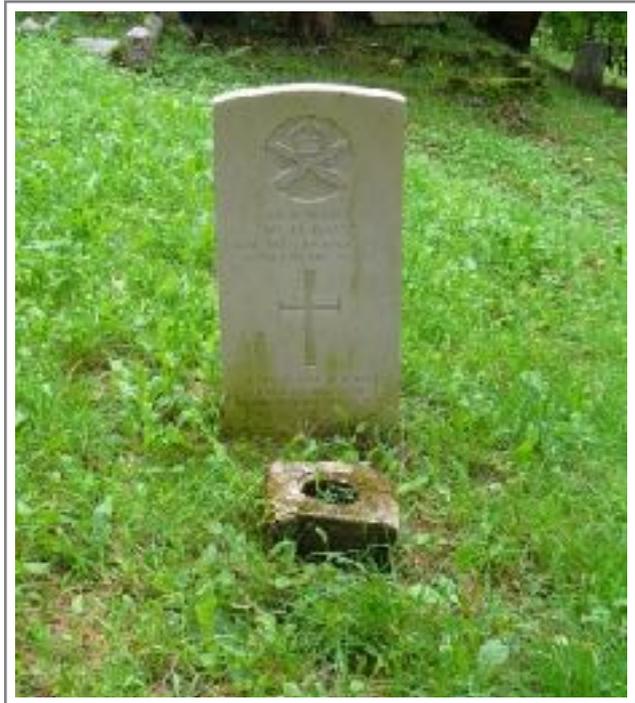
Following the outbreak of war, the 2nd Battalion, Rifle Brigade returned to the UK arriving at Liverpool on 22 October 1914. They were sent to Hursley Park, Winchester, to join the 25th Brigade of 8th Division and sailed to Le Havre on 7 November 1914.

The unit was soon in action participating in the Moated Grange attack at Neuve Chapelle before fighting died down for the winter. They were in action several times during 1915: in March at Neuve Chapelle; in May at Fromelles and in September at Bois Grenier.

It appears likely that Rifleman Davis was a member of one of the two machine gun sections within his battalion. In October 1915 the Machine Gun Corps (MGC) was formed and men and guns were taken from their battalions and regiments and placed into Companies within the newly formed Corps. On 1 January 1916 Davis was one of 25 men of the 1st and 2nd Rifle Brigade who transferred, whilst in France, into 11th Company, MGC, within 4th Division. He was given a new number of 18008.

On 1 July 1916, 4th Division went into action over the hilly ground between the villages of Serre and Beaumont Hamel. No ground was gained and it suffered 4,692 casualties killed, wounded and missing.

William Davis almost certainly received a shrapnel wound to his right knee in this action.



He was then sent back to the UK for treatment at a hospital in the Portsmouth area. Such was the severity of the lacerations it was necessary to amputate one of his legs and shortly after the operation he died, on 10 July 1916, aged 30.

Originally the Davis family paid for a private headstone. Over the years this deteriorated and in 2006, although not obliged to do so, the CWGC commissioned one of their standard headstones to be placed on the grave to ensure proper commemoration.

Graham Adams

(for the Gloucestershire War Graves Project)

(Thanks go to Graham Sacker for the bulk of the research – also certain information obtained from They Answered their Country's Call - The War Dead of Bisley, Eastcombe & Oakridge by Nick Thornicroft, as published in The Great War Magazine January 2015.)

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