



Quarter Two – April 2015



Creeping Barrage

News & Notes
from the Herts &
Beds Branch

NEXT PRESENTATION:

“DOMESTIC WOMEN ON THE HOME FRONT”

**AN ILLUSTRATED TALK BY PROFESSOR MAGGIE ANDREWS OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF WORCESTER AT ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL, SUN LANE
(SPORTS HALL ROOM SP101), HARPENDEN AL5 4TD**

FRIDAY, 24 APRIL 2015 AT 8:00PM

Professor **Maggie Andrews** will focus on how the war caused shifts in the role of women looking at changes in domestic responsibilities, the impact of food shortages, letter writing, gardening and charity work which facilitated the more well-known areas of women's wartime contribution such as nursing and working in munitions. She is Professor of Cultural History at the University of Worcester whose work covers the social and cultural history of twentieth century Britain and the representation of that history within popular culture. A key focus of her research is domesticity and femininity. She is the author of a range of publications including a feminist history of the Women's Institute movement and an exploration of the history of the inter-relationship of broadcasting, femininity and domesticity in twentieth century Britain. Her current work relates to domesticity and the Home Front in World War One and Two; she is currently writing a monograph on Women and Evacuation in the Second World War to be published by Bloomsbury Academic.

DONATION AT THE DOOR £3.50

www.westernfrontassociation.com



Zone Call - Notes from Geoff Cunnington, Acting Chairman and Branch Secretary



A very warm welcome to the Q2 April 2015 edition of 'Creeping Barrage'.

Committee member and roving reporter, Simon Goodwin, has been out-and-about during March attending a special commemorative event in Tring to honour the achievements of Private Edward Barber VC. This is Simon's report:

On Thursday, 12th March, I had the pleasure to represent the Beds & Herts Branch of the Western Front Association at a WW1 commemorative event in Tring. The Branch had been invited, by Councillor Mrs Roxanne Ransley, the Deputy Mayor of Tring, to send a representative to the unveiling of a memorial plaque commemorating the winning of a Victoria Cross, during WW1, by local man Private Edward Barber.

On the 12th March 1915 (exactly 100 years to the day before the ceremony) Private Barber, during the Battle of Neuve Chappelle, "ran speedily in front of a Grenade Company to which he belonged and threw bombs on the enemy with such effect that a very great number of them at once surrendered. When the grenade party reached Private Barber they found him quite alone and unsupported, with the enemy surrendering all about him."

Private Barber was awarded the Victoria Cross for conspicuous gallantry for his actions that day. Sadly, only two days later, he was officially reported missing and his body later found by Lance Corporal Fuller from the same company. He found a letter in Edward's pocket addressed to a cousin living in Slough. Fuller wrote to the cousin explaining "while doing his duty he was picked off by a German sniper. The bullet penetrated his brain, death being instantaneous Your cousin feared nothing and he was the finest man we had, both in wit and courage."

Edward Barber was born in 1893, the son of William and Sarah Ann Barber. He began his working life as a bricklayer's labourer and enlisted in the Army in October 1911. After three years' service he was due to be transferred to the Reserve and was considering leaving to join the Police but the outbreak of war put paid to any career change.



15518 Private Edward Barber VC 1st Bn Grenadier Guards is named on the Le Touret Memorial.

After his death his Mother was interviewed by the press. She said; "Of course, we are very proud, but I can't bear to lose my boy. What is the Victoria Cross to the loss of my son?" This year's centenary ceremony took place in Church Square, Tring, near to the War Memorial. During the service a plaque was unveiled; one of a series of special paving stones currently being laid in the home towns of UK born soldiers awarded the Victoria Cross during the conflict.

Tring was one of the first towns to erect a war memorial, only 16 days after the Armistice. It was unveiled on 27th November 1918 by General Sir William Robertson, DSO. The Inns of Court, who were based at nearby Berkhamsted, made up the guard of honour, and also provided a band. Because, at this early date it was impossible to be sure that all the names that should be included were known, the names were not added until a year later.

The Mayor of Tring, Councillor Stephen Hearn, was part of a group, organised by Tring High Street Baptist Church, who were conducting a memorial service at Neuve Chappelle on the same day.

Sources of Information

Invitation Letter from Tring Town Council (20th February 2015)

Order of Service – Tring Church 12th March 2015

<http://www.hertfordshire-genealogy.co.uk/data/places/places-t/tring/tring-war-memorial.htm>

March has indeed been a busy month. At the Branch meeting on 20 March we were privileged to present the prizes to this year's winners of the Year 9 St. George's School Trench Diary Competition. The Committee judges had difficulty in separating the top four entrants and made the awards as follows:

Joint 1st Prize: Sophie Roberts writing as "George Roberts" and Carys Stephens writing as "Billy Campbell".

Joint 3rd Prize: Alice Kitchen writing as "Edward John Brown" and Jacob Warner writing as "Corporal John Williams".



And the winners proudly display their certificates.



On a more sombre note, we have learnt of the death on Friday 27 March of long-time Branch member, Terry Young after a short illness. The Branch sends its condolences to Terry's family and friends.

This month we welcome Professor Maggie Andrews who will give us her perspective on the domestic role of women during the Great War. This should be an informative and interesting talk. Do try and make it to this event – it is your Branch and your support is greatly appreciated. I look forward to seeing you on Friday 24 April.

Geoff Cunningham, April 2015

Previously at Herts & Beds 20 March 2015 “Espionage during the First World War” - Gill Bennett



Branch Regular, Roger Yapp writes:

This talk was given by Gill Bennett the former Chief Historian at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Her presentation covered the background to espionage services, as well as some stories of people associated with spying and espionage during the Great War.

British intelligence services started way back in history, well before the Great War, but the prospect of a European War, and most probably with Germany, led the Foreign Office to realise that it needed better intelligence and counter espionage capabilities.

In 1909 the Secret Service Bureau (SSB) was set up by the War Office as a reaction to a concern about foreign spies operating in Britain, but also to recruit and organise people overseas to spy for Britain.

The SSB was divided into two sections. Firstly Military Intelligence 5 (to become MI5), run by the Navy under the leadership of Commander Mansfield Cumming, was responsible for tracking down German spies, and where possible turning them into Double Agents; controlling the ports; censorship; observing enemy aliens, penetrating foreign agencies, and through its Imperial Intelligence wing protecting India and the Empire, through several overseas missions. Secondly MI1C, which later became known as SIS, run by the Army under the leadership of Colonel Vernon Kell, specialised in recruiting and training agents for overseas service; evaluating and distributing intelligence reports; developing codes and secret inks and the development of clandestine equipment; liaising with the Military and Britain's Allies; and identifying, supervising and paying civilian agents in foreign countries. Throughout the Great War MI1C enlisted over 800 civilians in occupied Belgium, creating the La Dame Blanche network. In some areas whole families were engaged in watching the German transport movements on the Belgian railways and sending the details to MI1C.

Two other groups grew rapidly throughout the War. The first was the better known Admiralty Room 40, and the second, War Office MO5 which was also known as MI1B. Collectively these groups formed Signals Intelligence of "SigInt", and specialised in intercepting and decrypting communications, and tracking enemy submarines. Probably the most significant interception was what became known as the "Zimmerman Telegram" which Room 40 intercepted,

deciphered and forwarded to the government of the USA in January 1917. The information contained in the telegram played a major part in bringing the USA into the War on the side of the Allies.

Gill continued to explain how a number of characters became involved with espionage during the Great War. The better known stories of Mati Hari and Edith Cavell were followed by the lesser known exploits of Sidney Reilly, by birth a Russian, who was portrayed in the adventures of "Reilly, Ace of Spies" in the 1970's TV Series, and Paul Dukes, a talented musician who travelled back and forth to Russia collecting very reliable information, and who was knighted at the end of the War.

Turning to spies in the world of fiction, Gill recounted that Arthur Ransome ("Swallows and Amazons") had spied for Britain whilst living in Moscow and St Petersburg, and both Erskine Childers ("Riddle of the Sands") and John Buchan ("39 Steps") had worked for Naval Intelligence and the spying services respectively. Somerset Maugham had volunteered for an Ambulance Unit during the War and was introduced to the world of espionage by a member of the Indian Intelligence Service and subsequently ran secret operations in France and Switzerland. These exploits formed the basis for his Ashenden Short Stories.

To end the Talk Gill explained that Compton Mackenzie, an accomplished writer at the outbreak of War, had served in the Dardenelles, but was invalided out of the services, and re-joined as a spy. The Intelligence Bureau sent him to the Eastern Mediterranean where he set about observing German Agents in the area.

War is always a good catalyst for developing espionage and intelligence, and the Great War, provided many of the foundations of the modern Secret Service. The techniques for turning German spies into double agents; decoding and deciphering; and the development of communications interception were all further exploited in the Second World War and the subsequent Cold War. To close the evening Gill expertly and enthusiastically answered Members' questions.

Roger Yapp, March 2015



Coming-Up at Herts & Beds 22 May 2015 “The Camps at Cannock Chase”

Stephen Dean is a Principal Archaeologist at Staffordshire County Council. His presentation will review the two divisional-sized Great War camps constructed on Cannock Chase during late 1914/early 1915, their infrastructure and the range of services provided by the camps. Discussion will also focus on the recent excavation of the Messines terrain model, built by the New Zealand Rifle Brigade with the assistance of German PoWs in early 1918. This model is thought to be unique to the United Kingdom for this period and is one of only a handful known from the Western Front.

http://www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/site/custom_scripts/HeritageTrail/visitor_centre2.html

<http://www.staffspasttrack.org.uk/exhibit/chasecamps/hut.htm>

THE BIG PUSH 2015 – ON THE HORIZON

FUTURE BRANCH PRESENTATIONS AT ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL, SUN LANE (SPORTS HALL ROOM SP101), HARPENDEN AL5 4TD. ALL MEETINGS START AT 8.00PM. TEA, COFFEE & BISCUITS INCLUDED IN £3.50 MINIMUM DONATION ON THE DOOR.



26 June

The Angels of Pervyse: Elsie Knocker and Mairi Chisholm

Elsie Knocker and Mairi Chisholm spent most of the War saving hundreds of soldiers' lives by giving basic first aid just a hundred yards from the German trenches at Pervyse. They received 17 medals for their bravery and became known as the 'Madonnas' and 'Angels of Pervyse': they are two of the iconic women of the Great War in the company of Edith Cavell and Mata Hari. A project is underway with the aim to unveil a statue to mark the centenary of the arrival of the women in the village. This talk by **Diane Atkinson** will describe their lives, their works and the project to commemorate them. Diane taught history at secondary schools in London before moving to the Museum of London, where she worked as a lecturer and curator, specialising in women's history.

11 September

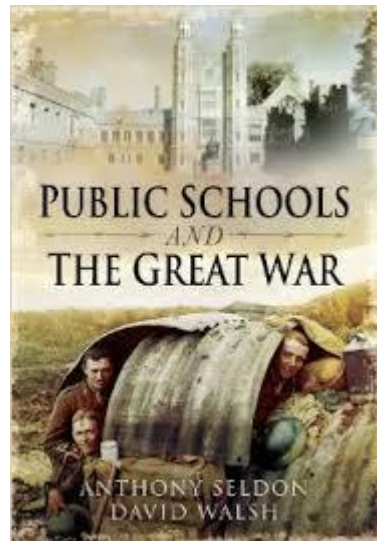
Branch AGM and Members' Evening

As a Branch regular, this is **your** evening. Describe your area of knowledge and expertise on a Great War topic. Take 15 or 20 minutes or even a full half-an-hour. Maybe some images of a battlefield visit you have undertaken or an obscure field of endeavour and interest that has caught your attention. Come and tell us.

9 October

Public Schools and the Great War

David Walsh will analyse the contribution of British public schools and their alumni to the war effort and examine the effect of the war on those institutions during the war itself and subsequently. David Walsh taught history at Tonbridge School in Kent, retiring as Deputy Head in 2009. He has subsequently written two books - 'A Duty to Serve: Tonbridge School and the 1939-45 War' (TMI 2011) and 'Public Schools and the Great War: A Generation Lost' (Pen and Sword 2013) with Anthony Seldon. He is a member of the WFA and occasionally takes groups of friends on battlefield trips.



13 November

The Battle Bus Project

A 100-year-old London bus has been converted into a First World War 'battle bus' for a commemorative tour of Western Front locations in Belgium and France. During the Great War, more than 1,000 London buses played a vital role transporting troops to and from the front lines, removing the wounded and those due rest periods, and bringing in new soldiers. They would often travel at night, in convoys of more than 70 vehicles, and many of the drivers were the same men who had driven them in London. Before the breakout of war, the 'battle bus' served on route nine from Mortlake garage in south west London, and took passengers from Barnes to Liverpool Street. **Tim Shields**, project manager of the restoration project, will describe the conversion of the bus which was made possible by a Heritage Lottery Fund grant; additional funding was provided by the London Transport Museum Friends and public donations.

11 December

'Suicide Club' to 'Butchers': The Palestine Brigade RFC/RAF 1917-18

Stuart Hadaway will describe how from 1914 until the summer of 1917, the RFC in Egypt and Palestine had struggled with outdated aircraft and inadequate resources against a German force that was smaller but much better equipped. In the summer of 1917 this all changed, as an infusion of modern aircraft allowed them to turn the tables on the German Air Forces even as they too were reinforced. The RFC would play an important role in the 3rd Battle of Gaza from October to December 1917, and would then grow over the following year until it was able to become a decisive element in the Battle of Megiddo in September 1918. In the process, they developed principles and techniques that still under-pin aerial campaigns today.

Tail Spin - You Might be Interested In.....

Royal Air Force Museum – London First World War in the Air

This is a recently opened exhibition at the RAF Museum at Hendon. Release your inner Biggles - it is well worth a visit featuring, as it does, a number of interesting artefacts and images together with several notable machines such as the *Sopwith Triplane* (pictured below), *SE5a*, *Bristol Fighter* and *Sopwith Dolphin*.

<http://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/london/things-to-see-and-do/hangars/grahame-white-factory.aspx>



Bateman's – Kipling's Home at Burwash, East Sussex Special Exhibition about John Kipling

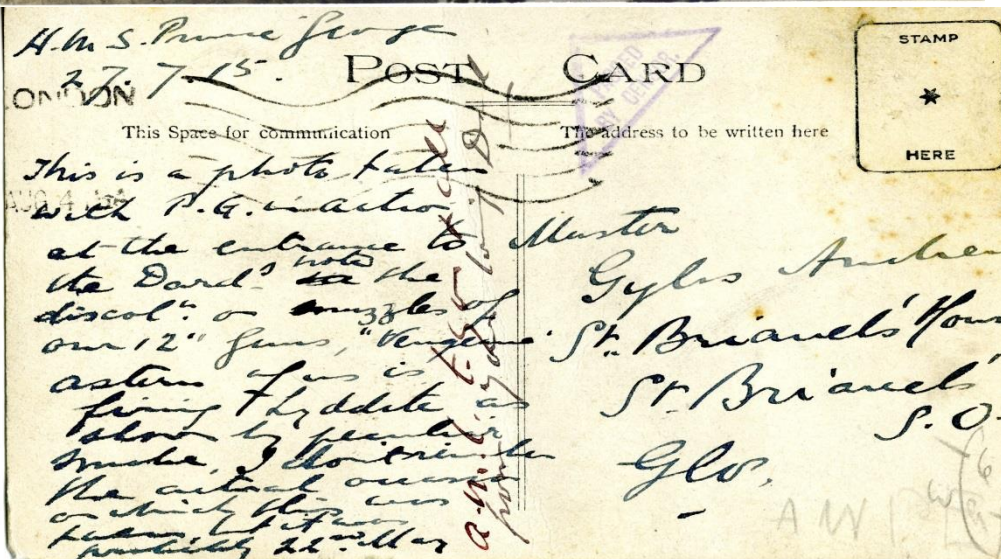
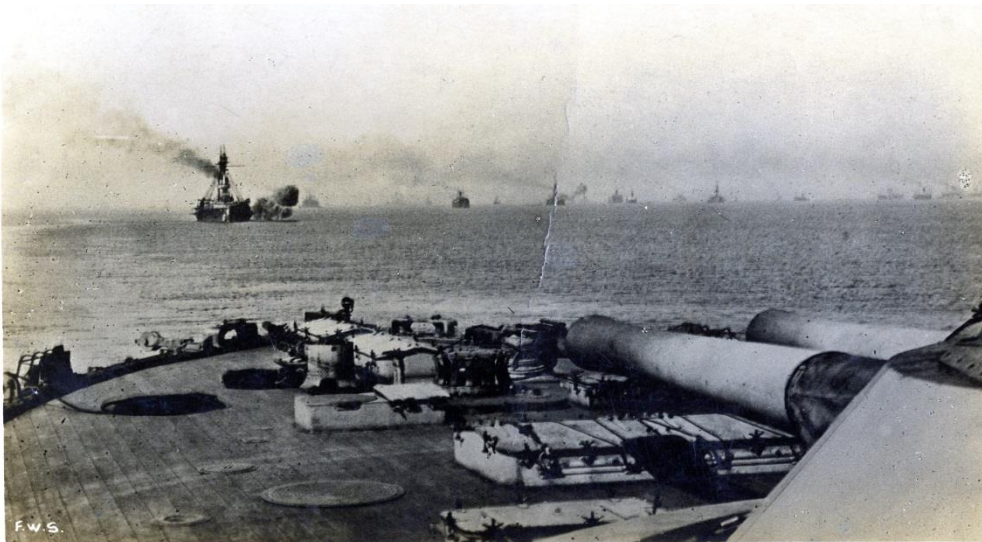


If you are out and about near East Grinstead then this is well worth a detour. The house is presented as it was at the time of Rudyard Kipling's death in 1936 and there is an integrated exhibition about his son John's (Jack's) life and death – he fell at Loos in 1915.

<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/batemans>

See also: <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Boy-Jack-DVD-Daniel-Radcliffe/dp/B000VA3JGQ>

As we commemorate the Gallipoli campaign of 1915, the images below provide an insight to the role of the Royal Navy.



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