



*Quarter One – February 2016*



## *Creeping Barrage*

News & Notes  
from the Herts &  
Beds Branch

DONATION AT THE DOOR £3.50

[www.wfahertsandbeds.btck.co.uk](http://www.wfahertsandbeds.btck.co.uk)

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

**NEXT PRESENTATION: 'LETTER TO AN UNKNOWN SOLDIER'**

**VENUE: ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL, SUN LANE (SPORTS HALL ROOM SP101),  
HARPENDEN AL5 4TD**

**DATE AND TIME: FRIDAY, 19 FEBRUARY 2016 AT 8:00PM**

On Platform One of Paddington Station in London, there is a statue of an unknown soldier; he's reading a letter. On the hundredth anniversary of the declaration of war everyone in the country was invited to take a moment and write that letter. **Angela McSherry**, the project's producer, will tell the story of this fascinating enterprise and will tell us how a selection of those letters contributed to a new kind of war memorial – one made only of words.



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



A very warm welcome to the February edition of 'Creeping Barrage' and to our speaker, Angela McSherry, who will be telling us about 'Letter to an Unknown Soldier' - a centenary project which asked everyone to imagine their own version of the content of the letter depicted in the hands of the statue of the soldier at Paddington Station. Angela's insights and comments on this project should be most interesting so I urge you all to attend.

Our meeting on 15 January saw the presentation of the prizes for the Year 9 St. George's School Trench Diary Competition. As always, the standard was very high and the winners shown below (from left to right) are: Maddie Evans (Third Prize, writing as 'Margery Cooper'); Louise Burrett (First Prize, writing as 'James Palmer'); and Oliver Norman (Second Prize, writing as 'Walter Nixon'). Congratulations to all the students who took part in this competition – well done, indeed.



As we move into February, the diary for 2016 is already filling-up with a number of Great War events in and around our area. Please take time to read the flyers and to visit the websites of the events listed at the end of this month's newsletter. And a special thanks to Simon Goodwin for bringing these items to my attention.

Some sad news received this week from former Chairman, Steve Wall. He advises that one of our members, Brenda Field, has passed away. She used to attend all the Branch meetings and, in Steve's words, was "remembered as the lady who sat on the door collecting the money and selling raffle tickets". Apparently Brenda had a great interest in horse charities which stemmed from her father who served with the Queens Bays during the Great War and saw action at Nery. Funeral arrangements have not been announced at the time of going to press. Our thoughts are with Brenda's family at this difficult time.

**SAVE THE DATE – BOOKING NOW AVAILABLE SEE PAGE 10**

**Joint Branch Seminar with Milton Keynes**

**23 October 2016**

**The Cruck Barn, Milton Keynes City Discovery Centre, Alston Drive, Bradwell Abbey MK13 9AP**

Harpenden resident Ronald Austen has been in touch with the Branch to offer a copy (2 volumes) of *Lloyd George's War Memoirs* which are no longer required. If any member has an interest in this unique figure of the war years and his personal recollections as the 'Welsh Wizard', then please contact Ronald: [ronaldausten@virginmedia.com](mailto:ronaldausten@virginmedia.com).

If you are visiting North Wales, I can thoroughly recommend the Lloyd George Museum at Llanystumdwy, Criccieth - below. It is a comprehensive exhibition of his life and times with many artefacts on display at his childhood home. Lloyd George is buried in the grounds overlooking the river.



Please continue to support your Branch. I look forward to seeing you all soon.

**Geoff Cunnington**  
February 2016

#### BRANCH CONTACTS

##### **Chairman and Branch Secretary**

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## Previously at Herts & Beds 15 January 2016 'Art & Reality - The Artist Fortunino Matania's Vision of the Great War'



### Branch Regular, Roger Yapp writes:

One hundred years later Fortunino Matania is a relatively unknown Great War artist. However at the time his work was widely viewed in the Sphere magazine, where he worked as the War Artist.

Lucinda Gosling's talk was enthusiastically and expertly given, and explained how she had come across the artist. She recounted his career from a child prodigy, through his time during the Great War, through to the latter days of his career. Lucinda has worked in the Picture Library industry since 1993, and from 2003 she managed the archives of the Illustrated London News, which included the "Sphere" magazine. It was through this publication she became familiar with the work of Matania. The archive also included several of Matania's original works, mainly from the time of the Great War, but these have now been sold or auctioned.

Fortunino Matania was born in Naples in 1881 into a family of illustrators. His father Eduardo worked for the top magazine in Italy, and Fortunino learned his skills at his father's studio. He was a child prodigy and produced some amazing pictures at a very early age. By the age of 9 he had published his first advertisement, for a soap company, and by 11 was displaying paintings at the Academy in Naples. At the age of 14 he was employed by "L'illustrazione" magazine in Italy, and soon moved to Paris to work on the leading French magazine "L'illustration".

In 1904 Clement Shorter, from the "Sphere" Magazine saw Matania's drawings of action from the Russo-Japanese War, and invited him to join the magazine. Matania was assigned to provide illustrations of Royal and High Society occasions and to illustrate major events as they happened.

Matania worked as an illustrator, as opposed to a fine artist, often working in black and white pen and ink and watercolour mediums, sketching events and producing a final picture incredibly quickly to meet the publication deadlines. His pictures include incredible detail and accuracy, and he used a wide range of techniques to create pictures that could easily be mistaken for a photographic images.

In 1912, the "Sphere" published an article about the sinking of the Titanic. Matania interviewed a Steward from the ship who had survived the catastrophe, and gleaned much detail about the event, and those involved, which enabled him to create two pictures for the magazine. He used the same technique to capture Captain Scott's fated journey to the South Pole. In 1913 he was commissioned to illustrate the wedding of the Kaiser's daughter, Princess Victoria-Louise, and returned a year

later, in 1914, just months before War broke out to illustrate the christening of the Princess' first child.

When War broke out the "Sphere" was keen to record the action, but it was seven months before Matania was allowed to get to the Front. He used his interview technique to help him produce pictures, often visiting wounded soldiers in hospital to get all of the details. In April 1915 Matania visited the Front, and not only produced drawings first hand, but wrote an excellent series of articles as he travelled along the Western Front. Each week Matania's pictures from the Front and the Home Front were published in the "Sphere", as he magnificently and accurately captured all of the action, emotions and events of the time, working at frenetic speed to meet publication deadlines.

In September 1916 he was back at his home in Potters Bar when Zeppelin L21 was shot down in the vicinity. He immediately rushed to the crash site. His eye-witness account and pictures appeared in the "Sphere". Perhaps his most famous and popular picture was "Good-bye Old Man", a picture which showed Royal Artillery Driver tending his dying horse. The "Sphere" continued to sell reproductions of this picture through to the 1930's. In 1917 Matania visited the Italian Front, and was later back on the Western Front producing pictures through to the end of the War.

He continued to take commissions for War topics in the years following the War, but after the excitement of the trenches, he reverted to his previous duties, drawing Royal occasions and Society events. However it was at this time that Matania started to create drawings of events from Ancient History. He visited archaeological sites and either bought junk from Caledonian Market, or created his own statues and artefacts to include in these drawings.

Later in his career he began to produce pictures for a new Women's magazine "Britannia and Eve", and wrote and painted until the 1950's. However by this time his work was becoming less and less popular, and as photographic technology developed, so the work of an illustrator became of less importance.

Fortunino Matania was a unique talent. He died in 1963 in London, and although nearly everyone with an interest in the Great War will have seen his work, he is not a well-known War Artist. To see some of the pictures that Lucinda used to illustrate her excellent talk, visit the following web site or just Google - Matania Images.

<http://blog.maryevans.com/2014/07/fortunino-matania-the-great-war-artist-enjoying-a-revival-.html>

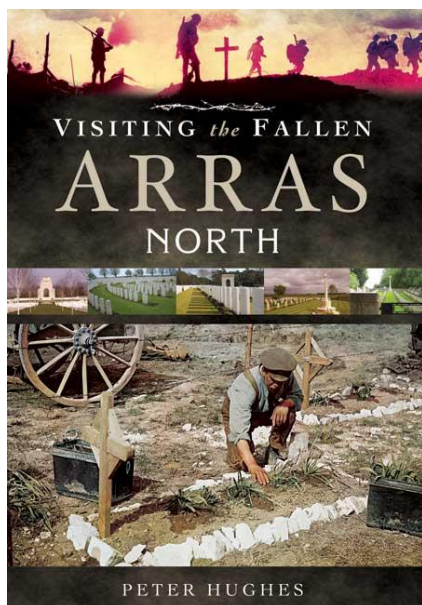
Roger Yapp, January 2016

## Coming-Up at Herts & Beds - Future Presentations

18 March 2016

### ‘The Battle of Arras 1917 - Visiting the Fallen’

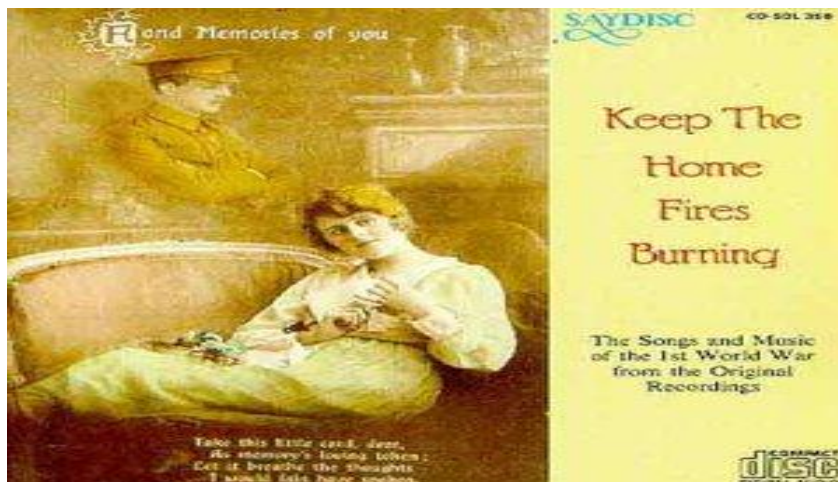
**Peter Hughes** has recently written three books under the generic title: "Visiting the Fallen". All three books are on Arras - 'Arras North', 'Arras South' and 'Arras Memorials'. There is a website to complement the publication of these books: <http://visitingthefallen.co.uk>. The site gives a good idea of what the books are about and these will form the basis of Peter's presentation which will comprise an overview of the Battle of Arras in 1917 coupled with a sort of 'Who's Who' of those buried in the CWGC cemeteries in and around Arras, or commemorated on the four main memorials in that area.



22 April

### ‘Keep the Home Fires Burning’

**Valerie Fry** from *Wind & Words* will present a clarinet and poetry programme based on the First World War, being a recital of World War 1 poetry interspersed with music from the time played on clarinet – a combination of classic well-known poems and original verse.



20 May

**'The Glorious Dead': Figurative Sculpture of British First World War Memorials**

After the First World War many thousands of memorials were produced in the United Kingdom. Hundreds featured figurative imagery, the largest project of public sculpture the country has ever seen. In this talk, **Geoff Archer** will explain how, why, by whom, and for whom, memorials were produced. The greatest sculptors of the 1920s were called upon to render in marble and bronze the nation's remembrance and grief: George Frampton, Albert Toft, Goscombe John, C.S. Jagger, Gilbert Ledward, Derwent Wood, Alexander Carrick, Walter Marsden, Louis Roslyn and many more. After nine decades their work can now be viewed in a new light and their contributions to the history of 20th century British sculpture rightfully restored to centre stage.

Geoff Archer's 2009 publication, *The Glorious Dead*, is the first comprehensive analysis of this subject. Lavishly illustrated with the author's own photographs of soldiers and sailors, allegories of Peace, Grief, Victory and Death and images of women, workers, horses and biplanes, it concludes with lists of figurative memorials by date, design, location and sculptor.

24 June

**Those Who Served: Remembering First World War Nurses**

**Dianne Yarwood** will describe how the personal letters, documents and reports collected for a 2015 exhibition at the Royal College of Nursing in London tell a story of dedication and loyalty to nursing in the Great War. Whilst the desire to serve is complex and driven by many different causes, the stories of RCN members illustrate a strong, personal commitment to professional nursing. A commitment that, according to the British Journal of Nursing in 1921, lost 150 nurses their lives. Read more:

[https://www.rcn.org.uk/development/library\\_and.../those-who-served](https://www.rcn.org.uk/development/library_and.../those-who-served)

Dianne Yarwood is a retired nurse educationalist; most recently associate dean at City University London in the then St Bartholomew School of Nursing & Midwifery. Dianne has been an RCN member since she was a student during the 1960s and has been a member of the RCN History of Nursing Society since its inception. She is currently secretary of the London & South East history of nursing group and is actively involved in an oral history project for the Charing Cross Hospital Nurses League.

16 September

**Members' Evening and Annual General Meeting**

14 October

**The Angels of Pervyse: Elsie and Mairi Go To War**

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. 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.

At three o'clock in the afternoon of 22nd of November 2014, a life-size bronze sculpture of Elsie Knocker and Mairi Chisholm, and their little dog Shot, was unveiled in the garden of the Hotel Ariane in Ypres, a hundred years to the day since they started giving 'golden hour' treatment to Belgian soldiers in their dug-out in Pervyse ten miles away. Read more: <http://www.dianeatkinson.co.uk/>

11 November

**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.

16 December

**The Great War – Rothamsted's Contribution**

**Professor Roger Plumb** will describe the impact of the Great War on the work and the staff of Rothamsted Experimental Station in Harpenden. Rothamsted was well-positioned in 1914 to progress its research activities with the Board of Agriculture when war broke out and changed the dynamics of the organization as staff volunteered to serve and to adapt to changing wartime requirements. Professor Plumb will take us through all these events in some detail culminating in the notable Zeppelin raid of September 1916.



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

# A CALL TO ARMS

Exploring the amateur military  
tradition in Hertfordshire

Saturday 27 February

2.00 - 4.30pm tickets £5



**Professor Ian Beckett, Honorary Professor of Military History,  
University of Kent:** *An overview of the amateur military tradition  
in Hertfordshire*

**Dan Hill, Project Officer, Hertfordshire at War:** *The experiences  
and contribution of the Herts Yeomanry and Regiment in the Great  
War*

**Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies:** *An introduction to  
related records held at Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies*

**Refreshments will be served**

**Venue:** The Council Chamber, County Hall, Pegs Lane,  
Hertford, SG13 8EJ

**How to book:** visit [www.hertsdirect.org/hals](http://www.hertsdirect.org/hals) or telephone  
0300 123 4049



And This.....

## “Meeting in No Man’s Land’ - Call for Participants

**If you have within your family memories and history passed down to you from parents, grandparents or other family members who lived through or died during the First World War - if you can share either that experience or the legacy of how the war affected your family subsequently then please read on.....**

Age Exchange the leading UK charity working in Reminiscence is looking for 12 British participants who can share their family history of the First World War, to travel with Age Exchange to Germany and spend 4 days meeting and exchanging family First World War histories with German participants who themselves carry their family history of the War. The exchange of histories and participants reflections on the legacy of the First World War will result in a documentary film to be screened in the UK and Germany, and also an educational programme for schools in the UK.

**If you are interested in joining us and meeting German descendants to exchange your family story from the First World War** then email David Savill, Artistic Director of Age Exchange at [david.savill@age-exchange.org.uk](mailto:david.savill@age-exchange.org.uk) or write to him at Age Exchange, 11 Blackheath Village, London SE3 9LA with an expression of interest and brief family background relating to The First World War, he will then contact you.

**The visit to Rosenheim and Munich in Bavaria will take place between the 8-12 April 2016. We welcome your interest, but will have to choose only 12 from those who wish to take part. There will be other activities back here in the UK which you may also wish to take part in.**

(The visit to Germany includes FREE flights, travel in Germany, and accommodation, as well as a daily catering allowance)

Project background and press release with Heritage Lottery Fund [http://www.eyesociation.org/MiNML\\_press/MiNML\\_pressreleaseJan2016.pdf](http://www.eyesociation.org/MiNML_press/MiNML_pressreleaseJan2016.pdf)

Follow the project on twitter @NoMansLand2016 and [www.age-exchange.org.uk](http://www.age-exchange.org.uk)



Jonty Wild of the Herts at War Project says.....

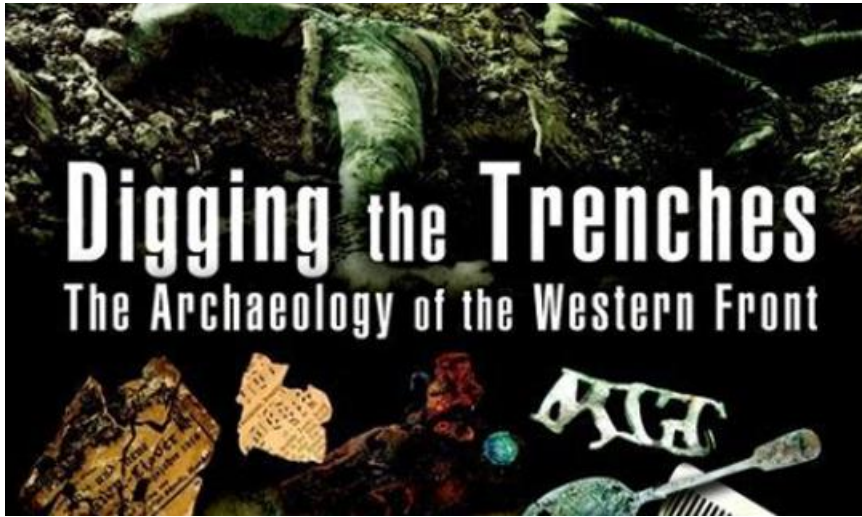
“...the Herts at War 1916 Battlefield Tour is looking healthy, but we can still take a few more people.

It is hard to imagine that you could find a better, more specifically tailored trip (to the Hertfordshires 1916) and yet including great general WW1 interest or one more expertly guided than this one. So if you are interested visit [www.battle-honours.eu/Herts-at-War-2016](http://www.battle-honours.eu/Herts-at-War-2016) and get your booking in. Roll of Honour Research Coordinator [jontywild@hertsatwar.co.uk](mailto:jontywild@hertsatwar.co.uk), [www.hertsatwar.co.uk](http://www.hertsatwar.co.uk)”





And This.....



## Digging the Trenches: The Archaeology of the Western Front

Andy Robertshaw

25 February 2016, 7.00pm

Hosted by the Army & Navy Club  
[36-39 Pall Mall, London, SW1Y 5JN](#)

As the centenaries of Verdun and the Somme approach, battlefield archaeologist and broadcaster Andy Robertshaw will speak about the results of 30 archaeological projects in France and Belgium over the past 15 years.

During this time Andy's projects have faced many challenges, from discovering unstable munitions and charged gas cylinders, to sites being raided by illegal metal detectorists. They have also led to the identification of five of the 'missing' and allowed them to have the honoured burial they deserved.

In this talk, Andy will also touch upon the phenomenon of 'dark tourism', and the draw of First World War battlefield sites to tourists and visitors.

There will be a Q&A with the audience and Andy will be signing books following the talk.

Andy Robertshaw is a historian and broadcaster who is a regular consultant and on-screen expert for a number of TV and radio shows, including 'Time Team', 'The Trench Detectives' and 'Who Do You Think You Are?' He was also lead historical consultant for Steven Spielberg's film adaptation of 'War Horse', which he also appeared in. Andy is currently filming a new documentary on the Somme. <http://www.nam.ac.uk/events/evening-series>

## And Finally.....Booking Details for the Regional Seminar, 23 October 2016

*The Western Front Association*

*Milton Keynes and Herts & Beds Branches*

### REGIONAL SEMINAR

Sunday 23rd October 2016 9.30am – 4.30pm

The Cruck Barn, City Discovery Centre, Bradwell Abbey, Milton Keynes, MK13 9AP



### SPEAKERS:

**Colin Ellender**

#### **"Verdun"**

Colin served for 35 years in the RAF and became interested in military history early in his service. At the age of 17 he was living in a 16 man room next to a 43 year old gentleman who had done the whole 6 years of the war serving in the Army. "Most of the people in the room ignored him, I found him very interesting."

Verdun was the longest battle of the war (10 months) and produced 800,000 casualties. The C-in-C deliberately handicapped his Army commander by not informing him of his real intention. This talk reveals which one!

**Phil Tomaselli**

#### **"British Spies Behind German Lines"**

Phil Tomaselli is a researcher and writer on military subjects, in particular the secret services and has been researching WW1 spies for over 20 years.

As well as the brave French and Belgian agents who reported on train and troop movements the talk looks at agents who worked out of neutral countries to obtain information from Germany itself. The gathering and use of intelligence is another one of the differences between WW1 and all previous conflicts.

**Pete Starling**

#### **"War is the Only Proper School of the Surgeon"**

Pete Starling is a retired officer of the Royal Army Medical Corps and for 20 years was Director of the Army Medical Services Museum. He retired from that post in March 2014. Pete's great interest is in the Crimean War and WW1, particularly the medical aspects of both wars.

Despite reforms of the Army Medical Services after the Boer War, by 1914 army surgeons were still very restricted in what they were prepared to carry out. Many cases were left to "let nature take its course" and surgeons were not prepared for the level of wound infection encountered. But young eager surgeons became willing to carry out operations that normally had a low success rate. This lecture will focus on this progress, including ground breaking work in the treatment of facial injuries.

**John Chester**

#### **"Prisoners of the Japanese"**

John served 26 years in the RAF as an Air Traffic Controller, before leaving the RAF to become a professional gardener and then a mental nurse. He has a lifelong interest in military history and started the WFA Spalding & South Lincolnshire Branch in 1994. John was chairman for 10 years then stood down to serve on the National Executive Committee.

This talk takes a look at the prison camps in Japan where the garrison of the German colony of Tsingtao were held after their surrender in November 1914 until their repatriation in 1919/20. It looks at differences in the treatment of prisoners of war to that of the British 20 years later.

**TICKET: £25.00.** Ticket includes a buffet lunch (vegetarians catered for), plus tea/coffee on arrival and during breaks. Full directions and a map will be sent with ticket. Non-WFA members welcome. The venue has free parking, and excellent facilities for people with disabilities. Booksellers and stallholders who wish to attend are asked to call Jane Backhouse on 01234 750695.

**FROM:** Andrew Gould, 1 Drovers Way, Newton Longville, Milton Keynes, MK17 0HR. Please include booking form below with a **stamped addressed envelope** and cheque payable to **WFA Milton Keynes**. Queries, preferably by email, to [andrewgould1@btinternet.com](mailto:andrewgould1@btinternet.com) or telephone 01908 643669.

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### **BOOKING FORM – WFA SEMINAR SUNDAY 23rd OCTOBER 2016**

Please send .....ticket(s). I enclose a cheque to **WFA Milton Keynes** for £ ..... and **SAE**.

Name .....

Tel.no. (home or mobile) ..... Email .....