



Quarter One – February 2017



NEXT PRESENTATION:

**'MUNITIONS FACTORIES IN THE GREAT WAR AND A RATHER BIG BANG' -
NIGEL CROMPTON**

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

DATE AND TIME: FRIDAY, 24 FEBRUARY AT 8:00PM

This presentation by Nigel Crompton includes an introduction to the Ministry of Munitions and details of local factories and the role of women in those establishments. The second half of the talk will look at explosions at munitions factories together with aspects of contemporary health and safety.

Nigel Crompton is a past chairman of Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire WFA, and spent much of his working life in the Fire Service.

*Creeping
Barrage*
News & Notes
Herts & Beds
Branch

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www.westernfrontassociation.com



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, Nigel Crompton, who will be giving us some insights and comments about life in munitions factories in the Great War with a particular emphasis on local establishments. I am sure that this will prove to be both a fascinating and informative evening so I urge you to support your Branch and to attend.

Our meeting on 20 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 with the prizes being awarded as follows:

First	Helena TAGG	<i>Daniel Luke Tagg</i>
Second	Caroline SHERLOCK	<i>James Walker</i>
Joint Third	Megan BARTLEY	<i>David Bailey</i>
Joint Third	Stephanie MOUNTAIN	<i>Alfred Jackson</i>
Joint Third	Patrick KING	<i>John Andrew Smith</i>

Congratulations to all the students who took part in this competition – well done, indeed. And the winner, Helena Tagg, is pictured below with Dr. Emily Mayhew who kindly agreed to present the prizes.



As 2017 progresses, I encourage you all to continue to monitor forthcoming events and commemorations at the Centenary News website <http://www.centenarynews.com>.

And thank you as always to Simon Goodwin for furnishing details of a number of the items which appear in the *Tail Spin* section of *Creeping Barrage*.

Thank you for your interest in the Branch and I look forward to welcoming you at a meeting very soon. A warm welcome is always assured – we are not individual experts, just individuals with a wide range of interests covering the Great War.

Best wishes,

Geoff Cunnington

February 2017

Previously at Herts & Beds 20 January 2017 'Unsung Heroes - The Stretcher Bearers of World War One' - Dr Emily Mayhew

Former Branch Chairman, **Andrew Gould**, writes:

The evening started with the presentation of prizes for the St George's School trench diary project. These had been selected from the ten best put forward to our committee by the history department. This was attended by the prize winners and their parents. The presentations were made by our guest speaker.

Dr Emily Mayhew of Imperial College, London, is a researcher into military medical history in the Department of Bioengineering, and gave us an excellent talk on stretcher bearers in WW1. The formation of a stretcher bearers corps saw a transformation in the way that battlefield casualties were dealt with, and Dr Mayhew made it clear that the bearers were more than just porters. Although at first the bearers were recruited by virtue of being big, or too stupid for anything else, or being bandmen, the basic medical training that these people were given enabled them to render vital aid to the wounded, which ensured that so many survived their injuries. Indeed, the bearers can be seen as direct ancestors of the modern combat medical technicians. As a result of their efforts, death rates from femoral fractures came down sharply.

Gradually, more men were recruited from heavy industry or mining, their strength being so vital in carrying the wounded over difficult ground. Dr Mayhew pointed out that very little by way of statistics or

other information has survived, so she has been dependent on personal testimonies in diaries and other sources.

Another source of recruits was conscientious objectors, who made up about 30% of the corps, as bearers were not usually armed. Stretcher bearing was certainly not without its dangers. They were likely to be shot at, as they made a tempting target. Dr Mayhew pointed out in fairness that we did the same! Bearers were often required to attend military executions to deal with the corpses. All of this added up to great strain on the bearers, and Dr Mayhew illustrated this with the story of one such whom, on returning home to greet his family, promptly shot himself. Another suffered for the rest of his life with bad hands, caused by the chafing of the stretcher handles. It was not surprising to learn that 13 VCs were awarded to bearers, as well as many MCs and MMs.

Dr Mayhew is a published author. "Wounded" came out a couple of years ago, and her new book, "A Heavy Reckoning", is due out this May 2017.

Andrew Gould, January 2017

Mopping Up

Dr Emily Mayhew is also a key contributor to this highly recommended exhibition at the Science Museum in Kensington.

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Science Museum website. The address bar shows the URL: sciencemuseum.org.uk/visitmuseum/Plan_your_visit/exhibitions/wounded. The page features the Science Museum logo, navigation links (Home, Visit us, Online science, Educators, Shop online, About us), and a search bar. The main content area is titled "Wounded: Conflict, Casualties and Care" and includes a video player with a play button. To the right of the video, there is a text box with the following information:

Wounded: Conflict, Casualties and Care
Learn about the huge medical and human impact of wounding during and beyond the First World War

Floor:	G
Open:	From 29/06/2016
	To 15/01/2018

The bottom of the screenshot shows a Windows taskbar with various application icons and a system tray displaying the time as 10:15 AM on 18-Feb-17.

Coming-Up at Herts & Beds - Presentations for 2017

24 March 2017

'Captain Albert Ball VC RFC'

Bill Fulton

Albert Ball was Britain's first air ace of the Great War. His loss in May 1917 was a huge blow to public morale.

Captain Albert Ball VC, DSO & two Bars, MC (14 August 1896 to 7 May 1917), was at the time of his death the UK's leading flying ace with 44 victories. Ball was raised in Nottingham and he joined the Sherwood Foresters on the outbreak of the First World War, being commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant in October 1914. In 1915 he transferred to the RFC, joining No 13 Squadron in 1916. He was the first flying ace to become a British popular hero. In his relatively short fighting career he shot down 44 enemy aircraft. Ball died during the evening of 7 May 1917 during a dogfight in failing visibility; some mystery surrounds his death. Cecil Arthur Lewis was a participant in the action and describes it in his memoir 'Sagittarius Rising'.

Bill Fulton considers the service career of the 'baby faced killer' and will explain why there is some controversy and mystery surrounding his death.



28 April 2017

Dr. Jonathan Black

Charles Sargeant Jagger

Dr. Jonathan Black will relate the career of Charles Sargeant Jagger MC (1885-1934) including his Western Front experiences and those related to war memorials (including the one for Bedford in 1922). He was a First Lieutenant with the 2nd Worcesters, October 1917-April 1918 and took part in Third Ypres and Battle of Neuve Eglise (12-14 April 1918); it was for commanding a company during later that he was later awarded the MC and in the battle he was hit by a German machine gun bullet in the chest. In early autumn 1918 the Ministry of Info commissioned him to make low-relief *The First Battle of Ypres – The Worcesters at Gheluvelt* (ref to the battle in October 1914). Into 1919 on his own initiative he made low-relief *No-Man's-Land* inspired by his memories of Passchendaele. 1919-30: he made sculpture for a dozen war memorials in the UK and abroad for the Imperial War Graves Commission and nearly all reference the Western Front in some way.



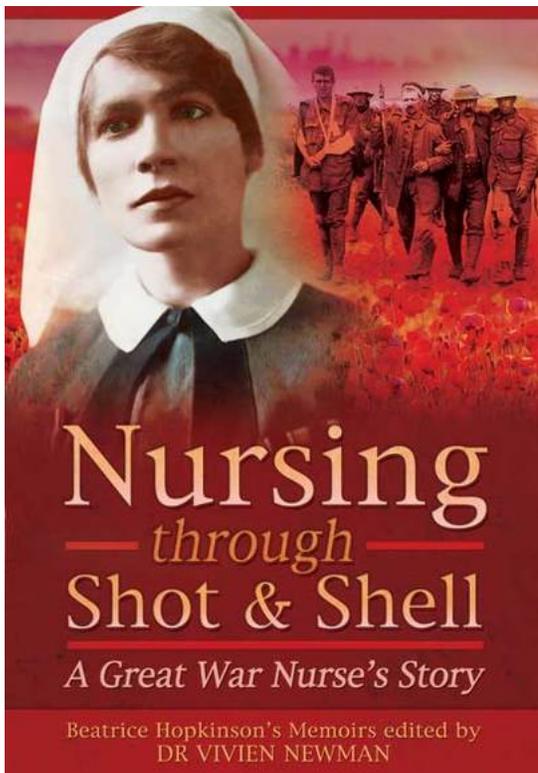
Jonathan Black read History with History of Art at the University of Cambridge. Between 1997 and 2003, he obtained an MA and Ph.D. in History of Art from University College, London. His MA focused on the English Futurism of CRW Nevinson (1913-1916) while his Ph.D. explored the image of the British soldier, or 'Tommy', in the First World War Art of C.R.W. Nevinson, Eric Kennington, and Charles Sargeant Jagger. c 1915-1925. Jonathan has curated several exhibitions and his 2011 monograph, *The Face of Courage: Eric Kennington, Portraiture and the Second World War*, coincided with the opening of an exhibition with the same title at the Royal Air Force Museum. This exhibition comprised of 40 of Kennington's Second World War pastel drawings and lithographic prints. He is currently Senior Research Fellow in History of Art at Kingston University.

19 May 2017

Dr. Viv Newman

Nursing through shot, shell and shell-shock: medical women at the Front

Seeking to correct the myth that those who nursed overseas were all well-bred VADs, 'Nursing through Shot, Shell and Shell-shock' looks instead at the dedicated service of professional nurses and doctors as well as the volunteers. Historian and author, **Dr. Viv Newman** will focus on women who worked in some of the most horrific conditions in all theatres to succour the wounded and in so doing put their own lives, health and indeed mental health at significant risk. The first evacuation of a traumatised QAIMNS Staff Nurse occurred in early 1915; in the 1920s a TFNS matron was diagnosed as suffering from 'war nerves', yet few people today are aware that both professional and volunteer nurses also cracked under the strain of their service and that, to quote terminology used in one nurse's papers, 'the cause of her transport was shell-shock'. This talk focuses on a few of the War's many unsung nursing and medical heroines and explores the physical and emotional cost of their service.



Dr. Newman has taught women's war poetry in both academic and non-academic settings and speaks widely at history conferences (both national and international). She gives talks to a variety of audiences ranging from First World War devotees of organisations such as the Western Front Association as well as to Rotarians, Women's Institutes and U3A. Her work at the University of Essex includes supporting Humanities students with their academic writing.

23 June 2017

Julie Moore and Maggy Douglas

The St. Albans City Military Service Tribunal: Conscription, Conscience and Commerce

At more than 100 sittings, the city's tribunal considered applications for exemption from conscription from 1,050 men. Using the tribunal minute books and registers together with extensive reports in the local newspaper, this talk assesses how the tribunal dealt with the controversy of the city's 23 conscientious objectors as well as the hundreds of applications made by the city's large businesses. In particular it investigates the effect of the tribunal's decisions on the staple trades of the straw hat manufacturers, boot and shoe makers as well the large printing companies.

Julie Moore and **Maggy Douglas** are both members of the Home Front Research Group of the St Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society. The 21-strong group was formed in 2013 to consider the effects of the First World War on the social and economic development of St Albans. Their findings were published in 2016 by Hertfordshire Publications in [*St Albans: Life on the Home Front, 1914-1918*](#).

Julie is a member of the University of Hertfordshire's History Department and their 'Everyday Lives in War' First World War Engagement Centre. The Centre supports individuals, schools, community groups and local history societies uncover some of the less well-known stories from the First World War. She has a particular interest in the areas of food and farming, and has recently begun to research the experiences of conscientious objectors working on farms in Hertfordshire. Maggy was born and brought up in St Albans. She graduated in Business Studies and spent most of her working life in the City. She currently works part-time for the Hertfordshire library service in Harpenden and volunteers for other local organisations, such as the Abbey Theatre and Health Walks. Having served in the Territorial Army in her younger days, Maggy has enjoyed in particular investigating the development of the St Albans Volunteer Training Corps and its relationship with the City Tribunal.

22 September 2017

Members' Evening and Annual General Meeting

20 October 2017

Gary Haines

John Singer Sargent's 'Gassed' and Popular Perceptions of Blinded Veterans

This talk investigates the representation of blinded veterans of the First World War in England. Two key works of literature - DH Lawrence's 'The Blind Man' and Vera Brittain's 'Testament of Youth' - will be discussed in relation to John Singer Sargent's famous oil painting 'Gassed', 1919.

Sargent's depiction of the sightless soldier shaped popular perceptions of those blinded in battle. 'Gassed' is a painting that has evolved into more than oil on canvas. It has become an icon of suffering. The work of St Dunstan's, now Blind Veterans UK, forms the conclusion of this discussion. They fought against misconceptions surrounding those blinded in war and enabled the blind to lead more self-sufficient lives.

Gary Haines is a freelance archivist, teacher, writer and curator. For the last three years, he has been performing research at Birkbeck College into cultural perceptions of the blinded British soldier.



17 November 2017

Steve Head

The Work of the Shorncliffe Trust: A Light in the Darkest Hour, WW1 Commemorations 2014-2018 and Beyond

The old training grounds at Shorncliffe in Kent encompass over 200 years of military, social and cultural history. The Shorncliffe Trust intends to tell the story of Shorncliffe (and the men and women who trained and lived there) from its earliest days defending Britain against invasion, to its role in the birth of the modern army through the role of Sir John Moore, its extension through the Victorian period to the Edwardian and the First and Second World war and beyond to the modern day role of The Brigade of Gurkhas. They aim to mark the centenary of the First World War, by securing the Shorncliffe Redoubt and begin the task of regenerating the site into a world class heritage and education centre. **Steve Head** will tell the story so far with particular emphasis on the Great War period and the special programme of remembrance which took place in 2016.

<http://shorncliffe-trust.org.uk/trust.html>

Steve Head's role within the Shorncliffe Trust, as both Lead for Education and a Trustee, is to develop, promote and deliver the educational objectives of the charity which involves work closely with national and international education establishments, societies, charities, museums, historians and other interested parties. He has a particular interest in World War One having extensively researched several ancestors. During the day he teaches in the offender learning environment having gained his CertEd in 2011 and is currently studying part time for a BA in History at Birkbeck University of London.

15 December 2017

To Be Confirmed

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Tail Spin Have a look at.....

NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL nam.ac.uk/new-museum/museum-news/venue/director-general-announces-museum-opening-date. The page title is "Director General Announces Museum Opening Date", last updated on 27 January 2017. The article text reads: "We are excited to announce the new National Army Museum will be opening its doors to the public on 30 March 2017. It will feature five new state-of-the-art galleries, a new early learning facility called Play Base, and much more. Here Director General Janice Murray gives an overview of what's to come." Below the text is a photograph of a modern, multi-level atrium with colorful hanging lights and people walking. A caption below the photo reads: "A visualisation of the Museum's atrium, looking out to the galleries". At the bottom of the article, it says: "After almost three years, I'm excited to announce the new National Army Museum will open on 30 March 2017. We look forward to welcoming visitors to". The browser's taskbar shows the time as 6:18 PM on 12-Feb-17.

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL herts.ac.uk/about-us/news/2017/february/funding-boost-for-hertfordshires-first-world-war-centre#.WKLjH8nVB4.email. The page features the University of Hertfordshire logo and navigation menus for Courses, International, Schools of Study, Apply, Research, About us, University life, Business Services, and Contact us. The main article is titled "Funding boost for Hertfordshire's First World War Centre" and is dated February 2017. The breadcrumb trail is "Home > About us > News > 2017 > February > Funding boost for Hertfordshire's First World War Centre". A large photograph of a modern building is shown. On the right, there is a "Contact" section for the Press Office with the email news@herts.ac.uk and phone number [+44 \(0\)1707 285 770](tel:+44(0)1707285770). The browser's taskbar shows the time as 10:10 AM on 18-Feb-17.

Somme Battlefield Tour 2017

12-14 May 2017

Latymerians, **Taylor Downing** and **Jim Nicolson** (both 1971) will be taking a third group on their very popular three-day Tour of the Somme Battlefields from Friday 12 May, returning on the evening of Sunday 14 May 2017.

Taylor Downing is a best-selling historian and award winning television producer whose recent book *Breakdown: The Crisis of Shell Shock on the Somme* (Little, Brown 2016) received superb reviews. He regularly broadcasts on topics relating to the two world wars.

Jim Nicolson has been taking tour groups around the Somme for thirty years and knows every inch of the battlefield. His stories bring alive what many of those who fought in the battle had to live through. He runs the Hertfordshire Constabulary Great War Society.

As well as providing an overview of the Battle, the Tour takes in many points at which Latymerians fought and died on the Somme. Please email us at latymeriansnetwork@latymer-upper.org if you are interested.

Tour Details

The final cost of the Tour will depend upon the exact number taking part but the cost will include ferry travel, two nights bed and breakfast at the Holiday Inn Express in Arras, all transport to and from London in a luxury coach. Snack lunches and dinners in Arras are not included. A £20 per person contribution to the Latymer Upper School Bursary Fund will be included in the cost.

Estimated costs per person sharing a double room:

£280-£320

Per person in a single room:

£380-£420

Comments from Previous Tours

Taylor and Jim were ideal guides on this short but immensely interesting trip around the Somme battlefield. They put into context and then brought to life some of the extraordinary events that took place there in the summer and autumn of 1916. They were both very knowledgeable, and their insights were complementary. Taylor gave the strategic overview and historical background to the battle, whilst Jim shared his close topographical knowledge of the battlefield to bring to life what actually happened to the soldiers in specific actions. The result was a fascinating tour - informative, at times poignant, always sympathetic, full of anecdote and individual detail. And they were great company throughout. I commend the tour unreservedly.

Peter Winter, Headmaster at Latymer (2002-12)

On the Tour in April 2014

Six months have passed since our tour of the Somme but the profound impressions that it made upon us remain as clearly etched in our minds as ever. Taylor's erudite talks from the history of the battle itself to fascinating topics such as battlefield medicine and photography combined powerfully with Jim's graveside accounts of the movingly personal stories of the men and boys who fell there. Couple that with readings of poetry and letters penned by those same men moments before their death, while skylarks sing overhead just as they did one hundred years ago amidst the horrors of the battlefield and you have a deeply moving experience in some corner of a foreign field that is forever England. Least we forget. Vaut le voyage.

William Audland

On the Tour in April 2016

I was one of the fortunate number who went on the Somme tour in April 2016 led by Taylor Downing and Jim Nicolson, both ex-Latymerians and distinguished experts on the Great War. With Taylor's and Jim's expert commentaries we could visualise the battle lines and the men's movements superimposed over what is now lush farmland and neat woodland. Taylor provided the overview and context with mini-lectures in the bus and on the battlefield, telling us about the Pals brigades, for example, and Jim gave details of points of the battle on the ground. He would lead us into one of the many graveyards, take us to a grave, pull out a photograph and tell us the story of that man, who he was, and how he came to be there. The battle in 1916 was actually filmed, so confident were the powers that be of a great victory. Taylor showed us an extract with the men nervously hiding in the 'sunken lane' near Beaumont Hamel, ready to go through the trees and advance down the slope towards the machine guns. The bus stopped and we were there – the same spot, and then a walk down the lane through the trees, with the counterpoint of going into the graveyard where many of those men are now buried.

This was history brought to life and a trip which will resonate with me forever.

Alan Denney

On the April 2016 Tour

The Herts at War Project Needs You



CAN YOU HELP Commemorate Our Men?

We need help to:

- To find & photograph Hertfordshire war memorials?
- Research names provided, then copy & paste information into our Profile sheets?*1
- Research & add information from other sources such as databases or the census?*1

Help with any or all!

Lots of help available to get you started.

For more information & details see

www.hertsatwar.co.uk/researchoverview

& contact:

jontywild@hertsatwar.co.uk

*1 Needs Internet access

ARSENAL EXCAVATIONS

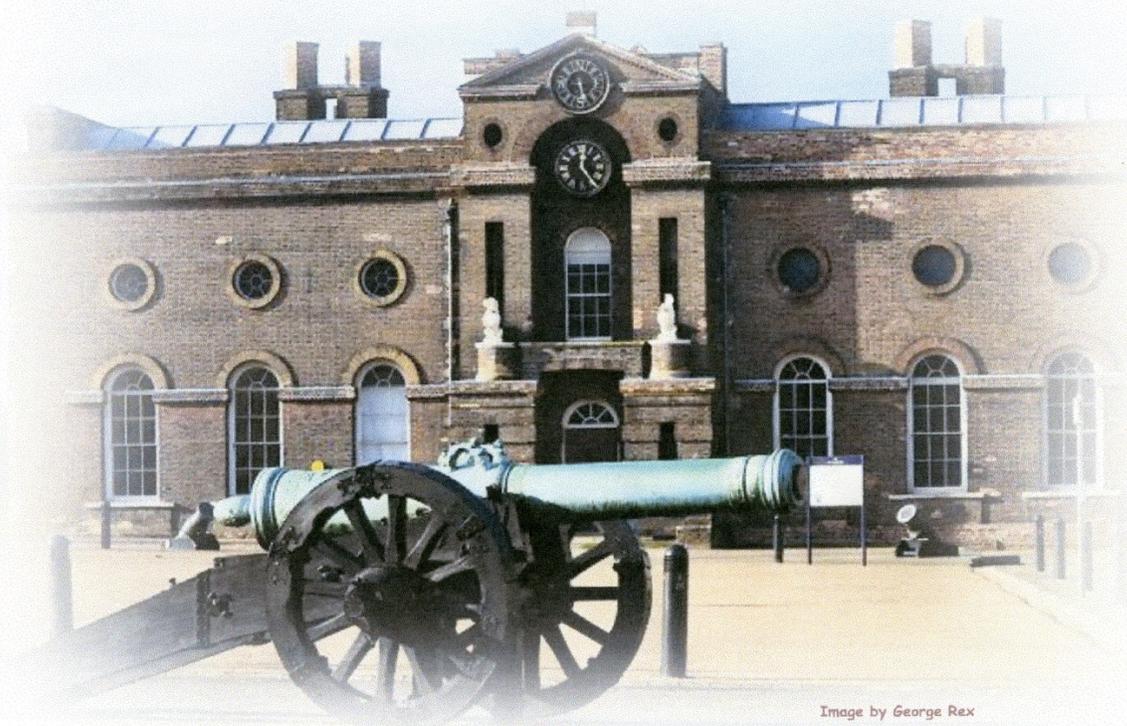


Image by George Rex

**A talk by Mark Stevenson from Historic England
on their latest findings at the ongoing excavations
of the historic Royal Woolwich Arsenal site**

Tuesday 21st February at 8.00pm

**Letchworth Free Church Hall, Gernon Rd, SG6 3HS.
Non-members £4 admission.**



North Hertfordshire Archaeological Society
www.nharchsoc.org



And Finally.....100 Years' Ago

