



Quarter Two – May 2015



Creeping Barrage

News & Notes
from the Herts &
Beds Branch

NEXT PRESENTATION:

"THE CAMPS AT CANNOCK CHASE"

**AN ILLUSTRATED TALK BY STEPHEN DEAN, PRINCIPAL ARCHAEOLOGIST
AT STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL AT ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL, SUN
LANE (SPORTS HALL ROOM SP101), HARPENDEN AL5 4TD
FRIDAY, 22 MAY 2015 AT 8:00PM**

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>

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 May 2015 edition of 'Creeping Barrage'.

Once again, I am pleased to be able to open these notes with a further piece from **Simon Goodwin** who is fast becoming our roving reporter on local items of interest to Branch members. Here is what he has to say about a recent commemoration in St. Albans.

On the afternoon of Friday 1st May 2015 I attended, on behalf of the Beds & Herts Branch of the Western Front Association, a special commemorative event, organised by the St. Albans' Mayor's Office, to commemorate the centenary of the action in which local soldier, Private Edward Warner, won the Victoria Cross.

The event was well attended and there were representatives there from the Police, the Army, the County and a number of other local history organisations, including another of our Branch Members, Gareth Hughes, who was representing the St. Albans Architectural and Archeological Society. Perhaps most significantly, a number of members of Private Warner's family had been traced, by the City Council, to be living in the West Country and some of these also attended on the day.



Having been to a similar event in Tring only two months ago, recognising the bravery and sacrifice of another Hertfordshire soldier who was awarded a posthumous VC in 1915, it would be easy to start thinking that these medals were handed out in large numbers but it is the individual stories that remind us that each man's actions were unique and yet, at the same time, they were unified in that they both deserved, and posthumously received, the highest award for valour in the British Army.

Edward Warner, known as Ted to his family and friends, was born in St. Albans in November 1883. He lived with his parents in Cannon Street, less than half a mile from the War Memorial that now bears his name. In 1903 he left his job as a Straw Hat Stiffener to join the Bedfordshire Regiment with whom he went to serve in India. He was a Reservist when war broke out and he soon re-joined his Regiment.

The 1st Bn Bedfordshires were amongst the first wave of British troops to arrive on the Western Front, on the 16th August 1914, and they saw action at Mons and Ypres. The Battle of Ypres saw the German Army use gas as a weapon for the first time and, early on the morning of the 1st May, they attacked Private Warner's position with gas and artillery. It was after demonstrating exceptional bravery during this action that Private Warner both won his VC and received the wounds that would lead to his death later that day.

Private Warner's VC citation, published in the London Gazette on 29th June 1915, reads ... *"No. 7602 Private Edward Warner, 1st Battalion, the Bedfordshire Regiment. For most conspicuous bravery near "Hill 60" on 1st May 1915. After Trench 46 had been vacated by our troops, consequent on a gas attack, Private Warner entered it single handed in order to prevent the enemy taking possession. Reinforcements were sent to Private Warner, but could not reach him owing to the gas. He then came back and brought up more men, by which time he was completely exhausted, but the trench was held until the enemy's attack ceased. This very gallant soldier died shortly afterwards from the effects of gas poisoning."*

Poems, an overview of the life of Private Warner and his citation were all read by children from the Aboyne Lodge Primary School, close to where Private Warner and his family had lived, and by family members. The unique memorial stone was unveiled by members of the 6 Regiment Army Air Corps. The stone was "tamped down" by members of Private Warner's family and wreaths were laid and the Last Post and Reveille sounded after a two minutes' silence.

Along with thousands of other servicemen his body was lost and he is now commemorated on the Menin Gate in Ypres. If, at a future date, you visit the City War Memorial on St Peter's Street in St Albans - look out for the paving stone, lying below the front face of the Memorial, commemorating this brave individual.

Thank you, Simon.

This month we welcome archaeologist Stephen Dean who has undertaken extensive work on the military camps which covered the Cannock Chase area in Staffordshire for much of the war. This is a very different perspective on what happened on the Home Front and how important training and the supporting infrastructure became as the war developed. As always, do try and make it to this event – it is your Branch and your support is greatly appreciated.

And finally – an early reminder. Friday 11 September is the Branch Members' evening where you are encouraged to present on any Great War subject of your choice. It can be obscure or mainstream as you want. Maybe about a site or monument visit you have made or just an avenue of interest which occupies your mind. Do let me know as soon as possible so that we can put together an interesting and entertaining programme.

And let us not forget that 11 September is also the Branch AGM. Committee members and officers are required. As things stand at present, I would be pleased to continue as Chairman which means that it would be really helpful if someone could take on the duties of Branch Secretary. The principal duty is to select and engage the speakers which is always most interesting and fulfilling. Get in touch if you think you might be interested.

I look forward to seeing you on Friday 22 May.

Geoff Cunnington, May 2015



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Previously at Herts & Beds 24 April 2015
“Domestic Women on the Home Front” - Maggie Andrews



Branch Regular, Roger Yapp writes:

“Wasn't World War One was partly fought to protect women and children?” was the question posed at the start of Professor Andrews' talk. In December 1914 the German Navy brought the War to the Home Front when shelling of Whitby and Scarborough killed 78 women and children and wounded 228 others.

To counter the threat the women of Britain turned to knitting, and hundreds of thousands, if not millions of mittens, socks, balaclavas and scarves, of all sorts of shapes and sizes were produced. There were Communal “Knit-ins” and social Knitting Parties. Some men received so many socks that they threw them away, whilst others received nothing. In addition to knitting, Sewing Parties began, and in many parishes collections and donations allowed sewing machines to be purchased. Domestic skills were being harnessed to help the War Effort.

Writing became the War Work for women. Millions of letters were to the Men away from home. Practical advice and emotional support was provided, and the frequent arrival of letters and parcels from home reminded the men that they were not forgotten. Adverts appeared in the local and national press to encourage women to write to men at the Front.

Throughout the War women continued to participate in charitable work, and 18,000 new charities were set up in the course of the War – one charity each 100 injured soldiers. Wealthy women turned their houses into convalescent homes and hospitals, which were supported by the local community, raising funds and organising jumble sales. Local women would provide board for wives and relations visiting men at the local hospitals, or look after families whilst the mother went visiting their men in hospital both in the UK and France.

As more and more men entered the services their places were taken by women. In 1915-16 many munitions factories opened, providing employment for many thousands of women. Women worked on the railways and drove trams, and filled administrative vacancies in national and local government. 1.5 million women joined the work-force during the War, but the majority of women were still considered House-wives, and throughout the War the biggest single employer of female labour was Domestic Service.

In the countryside women took over the production of food. It was hard, physical work, and required learning new skills – slaughtering animals, master baking. More and more women worked in the fields, and in 1917 the Land Army was formed. Wounded servicemen, Irish girls, students and Prisoners of War all joined the work on the land. The Women's Institute organisation was formed to help advise women in continuing to provide meals as ingredients such as flour and sugar became increasingly more scarce. There were food shortages and long queues and the Government moved to a strategy of compelling the public to conserve food and eventually to rationing in 1918. Flour for bread was in short supply as it was mainly imported and steps were taken to reduce bread consumption. Additives were added to bread to make it look greyer and less attractive, and the public were encouraged to cut the slices more thinly.

At the outset of the War the men in the Services were mainly single. Through volunteers and conscripts joining up the proportion of married men grew considerably, and the Government had to step in to devise and formalise methods to pay separation allowances and pensions which were being paid in an ad hoc way by various charities, or not at all. In 1916 the Ministry of Pensions was established and gradually the situation changed.

It became harder and harder for the women at home, coping with organising family life, spending long hours at work, and dealing with the anxiety of their loved ones serving at the Front. When the men returned, often injured, disabled and mentally scarred, life did not improve. Their wives and families were not well supported. Modest pensions were provided but life became very hard.

The talk concluded with a lively and extended period of questions where Professor Andrews enthusiastically demonstrated an extensive knowledge of the Home Front during the Great War – unmarried wives; widows' suicides; separation allowances; and venereal disease were all covered.

Roger Yapp, April 2015



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Coming-Up at Herts & Beds

26 June 2015 “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.

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/>

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.

11 September

Branch AGM and Members' Evening

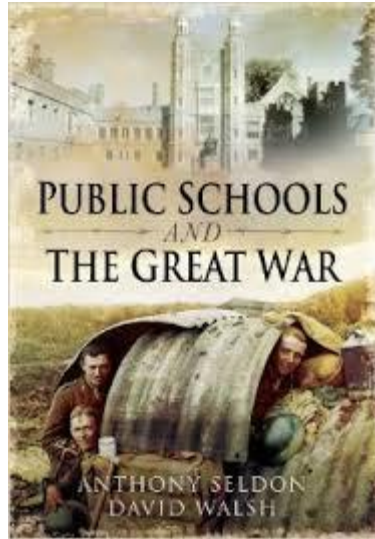
As a Branch regular, this is **your** evening. Describe your area of knowledge and expertise on a Great War topic. Take 15 or 20 minutes or even a full half-an-hour. Maybe some images of a battlefield visit you have undertaken or an obscure field of endeavour and interest that has caught your attention.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

The latest edition of 'Trench Lines'

<http://us2.campaign-archive2.com/?u=b727059489ecdacccf6340260&id=e115be9116&e=f88af2786d>

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And from the Archives.....

Following on from last month's presentation on the role of women on the Home Front, here is another reminder of their life of working and waiting.....



5. 7. 1916.

Dear Sid. I forgot to put these papers in the letter I thought they would interest you I hope you are alright & having a good trip get the time seems long when you are away. We are still working at night I would like to have a month's holiday but I will wait till you come home. It is raining here cold enough to freeze you. Well I think this is all at present write as soon as you can I am always thinking of you wondering how you are getting on love from & Alice

Printed by the H. M. S. TRIUMPH

And 100 years' ago, *H.M.S. Triumph*, originally built for the Chilean navy but purchased by the Royal Navy in 1903, was stationed in the Dardanelles from February to May 1915. She took part on the attack on the entrance forts on 18 to 19 February. Then there was the quiet before the storm.



IN THE DARDANELLES.
OFFICERS OF H.M. S. TRIUMPH,
APRIL, 1915.

On 25 April, she supported the main landings of the Anzacs at Gaba Tepe, coming under heavy Turkish gunfire on 19 May. On 25 May 1915, while under way engaging the enemy positions off Gaba Tepe, *Triumph* was torpedoed by U21.



The loss is described by R.A. Burt in *British Battleships 1889 to 1904* as follows:

"The ship's torpedo nets were out [see pre-war photograph above], guns manned and most watertight doors shut. 'Submarine alarm' was sounded and the crew went to action stations (all water-tight doors now shut). Steaming west, a periscope was seen at approximately 12:30 about 300 to 400 yards off the starboard beam. Firing commenced, but almost immediately *Triumph* was hit by a torpedo on the starboard side abreast No.2 boiler room.....the torpedo sliced through the nets as if they were paper and struck the ship with maximum force.

A tremendous explosion almost lifted the ship out of the water. A heavy shower of coal and debris fell back to the deck after the blast. Within minutes the ship had heeled 10 degrees to starboard and then stopped. Five minutes later she had listed almost 30 degrees and it was obvious that she was going to turn over. She did not capsize for about ten minutes and, the order to abandon having been given, many of the crew were rescued. *Triumph* then turned turtle, but remained afloat for about half an hour. She then sank slowly by the bows, and there was another large explosion inside the ship. She went down in about 30 fathoms of water with the loss of three officers and 75 ratings.

At the Court of Inquiry, the loss of the ship was attributed to two main causes:

- (1) The complete failure of the anti-torpedo nets, and no one was to blame for this.
- (2) There was inadequate destroyer protection at the time.

Operating off Gaba Tepe at this stage was known to be hazardous, but it was necessary, and, because of this, no blame was put on the Captain or the officers of the *Triumph*."