



Quarter Four – October 2015



Creeping Barrage

News & Notes
from the Herts &
Beds Branch

NEXT: A TWO-PART PRESENTATION - 'CYCLING IN THE GREAT WAR' AND 'ST. JOHN AMBULANCE IN THE GREAT WAR'

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

DATE AND TIME: FRIDAY, 9 OCTOBER 2015 AT 8:00PM

The originally scheduled talk, 'Public Schools and the Great War' by David Walsh has been postponed until next year.

Branch regular, **Charles Harvey**, is stepping into the breach and will offer us a unique double-bill of presentations: 'Cycling in the Great War' and 'St. John Ambulance in the Great War'. Charles will initially cover the development of the safety bicycle in the 1880s and its adoption by the military. He will give an account of the formation of the London Cyclist Battalion and the Army Cyclists Corps and their role until the disbandment of cycle units in the early 1920s. He will then go on to describe the role of St. John Ambulance [SJA] before and during the First World War. In particular he will cover the enormous SJA supplies organisation and the hospital it ran in Etaples.

Charles was Co-Chairman of the WFA London Branch and was previously its first Treasurer. He has spent most of his working life in the Careers Service but has also worked as teacher, a training officer and a school librarian.

DONATION AT THE DOOR £3.50

www.westernfrontassociation.com



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



A warm welcome to you all as we commence the autumn/winter programme with Charles Harvey providing us with a double-presentation: 'Cycling in the Great War' and 'St. John Ambulance in the Great War'. Much gratitude to Charles for substituting for the scheduled speaker, David Walsh, who will now visit us in November next year with his presentation, 'Public Schools and the Great War'.

And thank you too, to those members who attended our Annual General Meeting and Members' Evening last month. The Members' Evening was a successful one as it featured a DVD recording from 1984 of the wartime experiences of Private William Fisher. You can read more about this in Simon Goodwin's report later in *Creeping Barrage*.

The formal part of the evening covered the Annual General Meeting and the election of officers following which I shall be serving another year as Branch Chairman and Secretary; Clive Mead remains as Treasurer and your other Committee members continue to be Clive Mead and Ivor Webb.

Past Chairman, Andrew Gould, briefed the Meeting about the plans for a seminar, to be held in conjunction with the Milton Keynes Branch, on Sunday 23 October 2016 at the Cruck Barn, Milton Keynes. The speakers and subjects are yet to be confirmed but this will be progressed over the coming months. He also referred to the revenue implications of the event for the Branch in the context of an 'early bird' discount and stressed the need for a concerted advertising campaign to ensure that members were made aware of the event and were given every opportunity to attend.

The main theme that emerged from the AGM reports and discussions was the continuing decline in attendance and income. Simon articulated the problem very well: the two main costs incurred by the Branch (room hire and speakers' expenses) have remained relatively unchanged over the past three years, however, the income has dropped by 40% in that time. We saw from the Treasurer's Report that donations at the door were down from £1,275 per annum to just under £800, over the three year period with Gift Aid on

those donations reduced by a corresponding amount. Income from the bi-annual seminar with the Milton Keynes Branch also declined from an average of £250 per year to £150 this year.

It is clear that as each year passes the Branch's financial reserves (£2,147.55 as at 30 June 2015) are reducing as we use them to make up the shortfall between the declining income and the relatively static expenditure. At the current rate of falling attendances it is estimated that the Branch can only potentially continue to operate in its current form until about 2020.

Accounting Year	Average Attendance Per Meeting
2011/2012	31
2012/2013	28
2013/2014	22
2014/2015	21

The Committee will be meeting on 21 October, with an agenda to examine future options for the Branch. This will include the timing, frequency and location of meetings as well as the level of donations at the door and other possible finance raising exercises such as raffles etc. The Branch has a proud 30 year history; we shall need to adapt and re-focus to take it forward in these changing times. Ultimately, we want to ensure that we can offer our members the type of interest group that they want. It is your group, so please contact us if you have ideas and suggestions as to how we can improve and encourage all Herts & Beds members to attend our meetings.

My particular thanks go to Simon Goodwin for setting out the key themes following the AGM and I shall report back to you all once we have an agreed way forward following our meeting later this month. In the meantime, I thank you for your continuing support and I look forward to seeing you at one of our presentations very soon – the 2016 programme is now in place; please read further in *Creeping Barrage*.

SAVE THE DATE

**Joint Branch Seminar with Milton Keynes
23 October 2016**

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

Previously at Herts & Beds 11 September 2015

“The Life and Wartime Experiences of Private William Fisher (1890-1987)” - an Interview Recorded at St. Albans College in 1984.



Branch Committee Member, Simon Goodwin writes:

This was a real “coup” for the Committee and attending Branch members to be able to share this re-discovery with the Branch. The recording had been gathering dust in the back of a cupboard for the last thirty years but thanks to the efforts of William’s grandson, Jonathan Sinfield, the interview was transferred onto DVD and can now be viewed again.

William Samuel Fisher was born in the Thatched Cottage on the corner of Lower Luton Road, Batford, Harpenden, on the 9th September 1890.

On the day that war was declared he was making his way to Old Welwyn to take part in “Sports”. He was employed at the time at a Tomato Nursery in Harpenden.

William volunteered in Hertford, along with a friend of his called Tom Smith, but his workmate Sandy didn’t want to volunteer and chose instead to wait until he was conscripted later in the war (Sandy did eventually serve and was wounded)

William and Tom originally volunteered to join the Artillery but were sent to join the Cavalry, based in Hertford.

After six months’ training as a Cavalryman, at Colchester, under the instruction of the 20th Hussars, William was sent to Mesopotamia, via Egypt.

While in the Cavalry William passed his Marksman qualifications and was granted a badge to wear on his uniform bearing the two crossed rifles.

He was three years in the Middle East, serving with the 13th Cavalry Division, and did not come home at all during that time.

At one stage he was wounded by shellfire but survived despite his friends thinking he was dead. He later contracted a bad fever and had to be evacuated to hospital. This involved a journey of a couple of weeks by camels and ox-wagon as well as a 200 mile trip down the River Tigris by

barge to reach a hospital ship. The hospital ship took him from Basra to Karachi – a journey that took six days and he was then admitted to the Freeman Thomas Hospital in Bombay.

Later, while convalescing in India, he was also diagnosed as having a cataract in his left eye and he had to wait for a specialist eye surgeon from England to arrive in Karachi. The surgery took place but went wrong and he ended up losing the sight in his left eye. He eventually returned to Mesopotamia rejoining his old unit.

During the war he served with “D” Squadron of the Hertfordshire Yeomanry, part of the 13th (Western) Division. Other cavalry units served in the area including the Australian Light Horse, the 7th (Queen’s Own) Hussars and the 14th (King’s) Hussars.

At the end of the war, when the unit was based at Amara, all the horses (except those belonging to officers) had to be destroyed because it was not economical to take them back. He did, however, manage to bring back with him a Turkish officer’s pocketbook.

William returned to the United Kingdom on the 16th April 1919 and soon discovered that all the jobs and accommodation had already been taken up by the returning men of the BEF. He received no pension, at the end of the war, for having lost the vision in his left eye.

He married Elizabeth Oakley in 1922 and spent the rest of his working life as a gardener, including 16 years spent working at Rothamstead Experimental Station. He died on the 4th March 1987.

We thank Jonathan very much for sharing this interview with us and I know that many of those attending were deeply jealous of the fact that not only was his grandfather interviewed about his WW1 experiences in front of a video camera but also that the family had the foresight to keep a copy that can now be seen again almost thirty years after the death of William Fisher.

Coming-Up at Herts & Beds - Remaining Programme for 2015 13 November 2015 “The Battle Bus Project”

As part of the Centenary Commemorations, 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 2015 “Suicide Club to Butchers: The Palestine Brigade RFC/RAF 1917-1918”

Stuart Hadaway will conclude our programme for 2015 by describing 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 underpin aerial campaigns today.



The Broadside – 2016

Future presentations at St. George's School, Sun Lane (Sports Hall Room Sp101), Harpenden AL5 4TD

All meetings start @ 20:00. Tea, Coffee and Biscuits included. Donation at the door: £3.50 minimum.

15 January

'Goodbye Old Man' – The Artist Fortunino Matania's Vision of the Great War

Lucinda Gosling will present a survey of the body of work painted by Italian artist, Fortunino Matania, for *The Sphere* magazine – his techniques, working methods and anecdotes from his time spent at the Front as an intrepid 'special artist'. Lucinda Gosling studied history at the University of Liverpool and has worked in the picture library industry since 1993. She managed the magazine archive of the Illustrated London News before moving to work for historical specialist, Mary Evans Picture Library in 2007. With a wide interest in a number of historical subjects including royalty, costume, illustration and the Great War, Luci has contributed to variety of publications including History Today, Majesty and Illustration magazine.

19 February

Letter to an Unknown Soldier

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.



18 March

The Battle of Arras 1917 – 'Visting 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

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.....

Dunham Massey – Stamford Military Hospital ‘Sanctuary from the Trenches’

This National Trust property near Nantwich, Cheshire is well worth a visit before this first-class exhibition closes in November this year.



<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/dunham-massey>

“During the First World War, this Georgian house, set in a magnificent deer-park, was transformed into a military hospital, becoming a sanctuary from the trenches for almost 300 soldiers.

To mark the centenary we have turned the clock back. Discover what life was like for the patients and how members of the Grey family helped injured soldiers to recuperate. Spend time in the ward, nurses’ station, and operating theatre as you experience the Stamford Hospital as it once was. Dunham Massey has one of the North’s great gardens, with plenty to inspire throughout the year, including a stunning rose garden and one of Britain’s finest winter gardens. This season is the final chance for visitors to experience the house presented as the Stamford Hospital. Please note that we will be operating a timed token system and may have limited availability on tickets to the house and hospital during busy periods. We look forward to seeing you soon. **The Stamford Hospital is open Saturday - Wednesday until 11 November 2015”**

BRANCH CONTACTS

Chairman and Branch Secretary

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Treasurer

Clive Mead

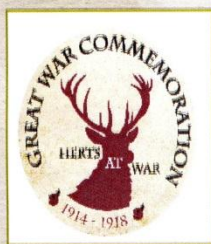
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Branch Committee Contact

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Issue 7 - Sept 2015



Herts At War Project: Research Reconnaissance

This newsletter is intended to keep our research helpers and volunteers informed of progress. It therefore only gives a one dimensional picture of what is happening with the project. It tends to ignore the many other elements of the project and does not seek to cover all the great work being done by other volunteers and project officers.

Content by Roll of Honour Research Coordinator: jontywild@hertsatwar.co.uk

www.hertsatwar.co.uk

Latest Research Statistics

	Now	Was
Total number of recorded locations	348	336
No. of locations with names added	161	145
No. of memorials confirmed	727	723
No. photographed or in progress	534	526
Total no. of men named on memorials	25423	24613
Number of unique names (estimated)	15262	15741
No. named who are on the website	9648	6359
No. named who are not on the location's memorial(s)	2135	1405
No. of profiles added	4183	3701

The last newsletter was in June so it is interesting to see what has changed, particularly as thought that my progress had slowed. The number of names and the number of profiles remains our key priority and in fact they have increased by 52% and 13% respectively and these represent about 38% and 27% of the total and I think that is pretty good. The number of locations with names added has increased by 11% to 47% of the total and that has got to be good.

In fact this rather underplays where we are because I have a lot of profiles which require 'just a bit more work' by me before they can be loaded - sorry Paul and Stuart (and others) yours will be next after I have checked for any that have been hanging round for longer! I sometimes struggle to keep up and sometimes other locations need to be given priority. I hope that our volunteers can understand it when this happens.

I am still fascinated by the fact that so many of the men named with a connection to a location - 22% do not appear on that memorial - of course they may appear on another somewhere else - we will find that out along the way.

Of course none of this would be possible without all of our volunteers - so a big thank you to all of you!

NEW HAWP EXHIBITION

You will all know the exhibition in Letchworth closed in August after completing its allotted time and receiving over 10,000 visitors. It could have gone on for much longer and we can all regard it as a great success, much of which is down to Dan Hill and all of the volunteers who helped and also to everyone who loaned the items for display that made it so unusual and interesting. As one door closes another opens, and the HAW exhibition has now moved to Sawbridgeworth. Actually moved is the wrong word as much of the Sawbridgeworth exhibition is completely new, so even if you went to Letchworth you should now plan to visit again. The exhibition is open now and runs to 31st December 2015 at Sayesbury Man-

or Cottage, Bell St, Sawbridgeworth CM21 9AN. Opening days are - Thursday by appointment, Friday 10-4 and Saturday 10-4. Anyone wishing to volunteer, book an appointment or requiring further information can visit www.hertsatwar.co.uk or contact Dan Hill - danhill@hertsatwar.co.uk.



VOLUNTEERS

One new area which I could do with help on is to add service numbers or rank to my spreadsheet for each location (by copy and paste). This will feed into a master spreadsheet which I am working on to help identify duplications between memorials, which will avoid unnecessary effort when researching locations and may help populated quite a few new profiles automatically. I currently do not have the time to take automation further (too much catching up to do!), but if there are any Word mail-merge wizards out there (Excel to Word) who would like to give it a go please get in touch.

We need to encourage people to put in the time they can and then, when they want a break, to take one and

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www.hertsatwar.co.uk

come back when they are ready, and so new and returning volunteers are always welcome. Get in touch as soon as you are ready.

Lots of research, of all types, is still required - from basic to advanced and from photography to confirming the existence (or otherwise) of memorials, but there are two areas which I am particularly keen to progress: firstly I would like to get as many missing photographs of memorials as possible before the weather deteriorates, so please view the requests at the end of this newsletter and those missing from the Research Log at www.hertsatwar.co.uk/researchlog and help if you can. Secondly we have some big memorials and it would brilliant if I can persuade a few of our volunteers to take on, say 25 to 50 names to progress these.

HIDDEN MEMORIALS

I think that there are a few 'hidden' memorials in Hertfordshire. These tend to be those not in public display, e.g. school memorials or those in buildings such as offices or town halls. If you know of any please let me know.

OTHER PROJECTS?

If you are aware of people, local groups etc. who have already done research, please let me know so that we can investigate sharing that information. Occasionally people are 'protective' of the work they have done, which is understandable, but more often than not they recognise we are all doing this for same reason, and that is to commemorate the men and ensure they are not forgotten and so are more than willing to help and be acknowledged for doing so.

HERTS AT WAR - BATTLEFIELD TOUR

Having been on all of them so far I am confident that everyone who has taken advantage of these to date has really enjoyed them, not least because of the expert guides, but also for their thought provoking interest and for the comradeship. Details for the next one are still being confirmed, but make a note of the 29th April - 1st May 2016 in your diary. The tour will follow in the footsteps of the 'Herts Guards' in the area south of Bethune before shifting focus to the fighting at the latter stages of the Battle of the Somme in 1916. The Hertfordshire's participation in the taking of the infamous 'Schwaben Redoubt' will feature as will their involvement in the 'Battle of the Ancre' in November 1916. Full details as they emerge can be viewed at www.battle-honours.eu/Herts-at-War-2016.



The following are particular targets for research help - can you help?

First are the more 'major' memorials for which we are still short of photographs of the memorials and the names appearing. Then the same for smaller locations and lastly locations where we still unsure if a memorial exists. For these we need to know if memorials exist and if so these too need photographs. If you can help in any way please get in touch, preferably before journeying so that I can confirm what we have or what is known to date.

Photographs needed	Hadham Ford	Beane	Cromer	Marshalswick	Ringshall
Barnet	Hadham Cross	Bedmond	Croydon	Micklefield Green	Roe Green
Bushey	Hadley	Bells Hill	Eastbury	Mill End	Roe Stock
Bushey Heath	Hadley Common	Belsize	Felden	Mill Green	Rush Green
Chipping Barnet	Hadley Wood	Bower Heath	Flamstead End (Nr Ches-	Moor Park	Sacombe Green
Goff's Oak	Hare Street	Bozen Green	hunt)	Napsbury	St Michael
Harpenden	Leavesden	Bragbury End	Garston	Napsbury Park	St Stephens
High Wych	Peter's Green	Breachwood Green (not	Gosmore	Nash Green	Shingay
Oxhey	Preston	Baptist Chapel)	Great Ashby	Nash Mills (not Dickin-	Sleapshyde
Potters Bar	Radwell	Brickendon Green	Great Berkhamsted	son)	Smallford
Oxhey	Nuthampstead (not Bark-	Bridens Camp	Green End	Nasty	Spellbrook
Tring	way Church)	Bulbourne	Green Tye (Nr Much Had-	New Marford	Standon Green End
Watford	Odsey	Burnham Green	ham)	New Mill	Tewin Water
Other Locations	Panshanger	Bury Green	Gubblecote	Oaklands	Tring Station
Astrove	Patchetts Green	Caldecote	Highfield	Odsey	Trowley Bottom (see
Batchworth	St Paul's Walden	Chandler's Cross	Hockerill	Old Hall Green	Flamstead?)
Berkhamsted Collegiate	Walkern	Chapmore End	Hormead Magna	Panshanger	Turnford
School	Wallington	Charlton	Hormead Parva	Patchetts Green	Two Waters
Bishop's Hatfield	Westwick Row	Cherry Green	How Green	Ponsbourne	Wadesmill
Brickendon	Wilstone	Chiswell Green	How Wood	Reed (not Church)	Warner's End
Bricket Wood	Woollensbrook	Cockernhoe	Kensworth	Ringshall	Water End
Clothall (not church)	Wormley	Coleman Green	Layston	Roe Green	Welham Green
Cockfosters	Do memorials exist?	Colney Street	Little Offley	Roe Stock	Well End
Cuffley	Allen's Green	Corey's Mill (nr Steve-	Long Marston	Oaklands	Wendy
Frithsden	Ballingdon Bottom	nage)	Loudwater	Old Hall Green	
Great Wymondley	Batfordbury	Cow Roast	Luffenhall	Radwell	