



Quarter Four – December 2015



Creeping Barrage

News & Notes
from the Herts &
Beds Branch

DONATION AT THE DOOR £3.50

www.wfahertsandbeds.btck.co.uk

www.westernfrontassociation.com

**NEXT: 'SUICIDE CLUB TO BUTCHERS:
THE PALESTINE BRIGADE RFC/RAF 1917-1918'
VENUE: ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL, SUN LANE (SPORTS HALL ROOM SP101),
HARPENDEN AL5 4TD
DATE AND TIME: FRIDAY, 11 DECEMBER 2015 AT 8:00PM**

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for 2015 by describing how from 1914 until the summer of 1917, the RFC in Egypt and Palestine had struggled with outdated aircraft and inadequate resources against a German force that was smaller but much better equipped.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.



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



This month we are pleased to welcome, once again, Stuart Hadaway, a Senior Researcher to the official historians of the RAF at the Air Historical Branch (RAF). On this occasion Stuart will describe to us the little known area of the early RAF campaigns in the Middle East which will certainly resonant with us all at the present time given the RAF's latest missions in that part of the world.

And also this month I am very pleased and most proud to reveal to you the new Branch website. This is one of the Committee's initiatives following our meeting back in October and thanks to the efforts and expertise of Simon Goodwin the website at www.wfahertsandbeds.btck.co.uk is now up and running. It is obviously early days and suggestions for content and improvements are most welcome. We hope that the presence of a Branch website will increase the visibility of our activities to memenebrs and non-members alike as well as encouraging attendance at our presentations.

As an appetizer, I have pasted a simple screen print of the website home page below.



I am sure that you will agree that this is a most positive way in which to end 2015 – thank you Simon.

Thank you all for your support during 2015 and I wish you a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

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**

**Geoff Cunnington
December 2015**

Previously at Herts & Beds 13 November 2015 'The Battle Bus Project'



Branch Regular, Roger Yapp writes:

Tim Shields the Project Manager of the London Transport Museum Battle Bus Restoration Project was our Speaker in November. Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), the London Transport Museum and Transport for London Tim explained how a small group of enthusiasts restored a B-type bus, B2737 in time for the summer of 2014, and the 100th anniversary of when London buses were used in the Great War for the first time..

B-type buses brought together the best engine features and ideas of the many types of buses that had been developed in the early twentieth century. The B-type was developed by the London General Omnibus Company (LGOC) and became the first mass-produced bus utilising standardised components. It replaced horse-drawn buses and thirty-seven different designs of motorised buses when it first arrived in service on the streets of London in 1910. The B-type quickly became the standard design for motorised buses, and the interchangeability of parts across the standardised fleet made maintenance much easier. By 1913 there were 2,500 B-type buses in service. The B-type carried 34 passengers, 16 below and 18 on the upper deck. It was built at Walthamstow, and had a top speed of around 16-17 mph, although Police regulations limited it to just 12mph. Police regulations also prevented a roof being fitted as it was considered that the weight of a roof would make the vehicle top-heavy.

As early as 1908 the War Office realised that buses could be used to move troops quickly, and in 1908 they were used in manoeuvres effectively moving 500 men from Norfolk and Essex regiments. Soon afterwards a voluntary subsidising scheme was developed to assist Bus Companies to purchase new vehicles in partnership with the Government on the understanding that a proportion of vehicles would be commandeered in the event of War. At the outbreak of War, in August 1914, buses started to be commandeered for the war effort. In the first month of the War buses were sent to France and were used by the Royal Naval Division at the siege of Antwerp. Many drivers and mechanics joined the Army Service Corps (ASC) and converted the buses for war, and they were replaced by women, who also worked as conductresses to keep the London services running.

To prepare them for War service the buses were fitted with protective boarding and painted a shade of khaki green. Each bus could carry 25 soldiers, and apart from being used for troop transport buses were converted to be used as lorries, pigeon lofts, ambulances, gun carriers, mobile workshops and wireless bases.

In all 952 LGOC buses were used by the War Department. Most went to France and Belgium, but some got as far as Greece. 438 didn't return, and 33 were exported to Australia. By 1921 the B-types were being withdrawn from service, the last being withdrawn in October 1926.

Over the years artefacts from the B-type buses have survived and more recently three chassis were found with a private collector in North Yorkshire. With 2014 fast approaching a project was hastily put together, and a HLF Grant Aid applied for. The standardisation of design and the interchangeability of the components allowed one "new" chassis to be constructed from the three that had been found. Photographs from the Great War period provided great detail for the restoration, and eventually B2737 was reconstructed.

By August 2013 the engine had been rebuilt, and by January 2014 it was fitted to the chassis. The chassis was completed in March 2014, and between April and May the body reconstructed. On 11th June 2014 B2737 was handed over, painted in its original LGOC red livery and displaying reproductions of its original advertisements. Following a Press Launch on 12th June 2014 the bus resumed duties on the old Number 9 Route, from Barnes Bridge to Liverpool Street, carrying non-fare paying passengers. It also attended many charity events.

As the Anniversary of the start of the Great War approached B2737 was converted for Service. Using detailed photographs depicting the conversion process at the ASC depot at Grove Park, the bus was repainted khaki green, using mops – the original method used during the War time conversion. There was much discussion as to which shade of green should be used. Seats were repositioned and window glass replaced by rough sawn boards .

In September 2014 B2737 embarked on a short tour along the old Western Front, through Belgium and into France, and another trip is planned for 2016 to coincide with the anniversary of the Battle of the Somme.

The Project includes a community learning programme commemorating the centenary of the First World War, and the role of London's transport workers within it. It is expected that B2737 will remain in khaki green colours at least until 2018, when it is likely that it will take its place at the London Transport Museum restored to its original red livery.

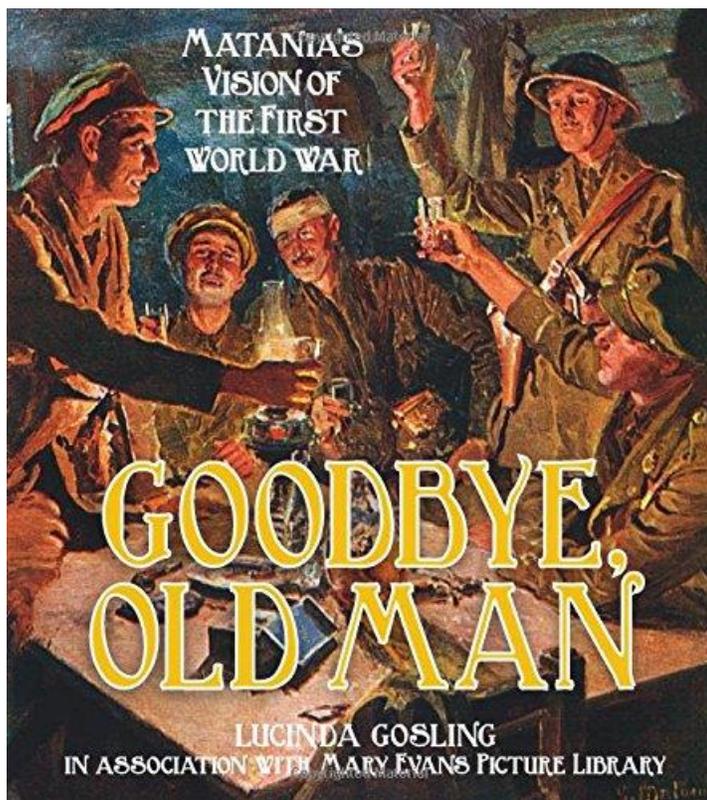
Coming-Up at Herts & Beds -First Presentation for 2016

15 January 2016

‘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.



BRANCH CONTACTS

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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.

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 – '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

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.....



THE WAR GRAVES PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECT

There will be very few readers who are not familiar with the work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC). It is not so well known that working in association with them is The War Graves Photographic Project (TWGPP), a voluntary group whose aim is to extend the work of the CWGC by photographing every war grave and memorial worldwide. This joint venture was formally announced in November 2007 with the TWGPP website going live in February 2008

The ethos of TWGPP is very simple: to enable families and researchers to obtain, via its website, a photograph of a grave or memorial which many cannot personally visit.

Initially the project's brief was confined to Commonwealth graves or memorials for WWI and WWII but the scope has now widened to include all nationalities and all conflicts providing the casualty died in service.

Currently the website contains well over a 1.8 million images from 23,000 cemeteries or memorials in over 150 countries. Photographing the beautifully maintained CWGC cemeteries is one thing, tramping through the undergrowth of often neglected churchyards or vast corporation cemeteries looking for a single - or scattered headstones - is another story altogether as volunteers can testify with many a frustrating or amusing story.

The project has over 1000 volunteers worldwide from all walks of life. All that was required was motivation, a digital camera and the CWGC location data supplied by the project's coordinators. It is probably a fair assessment to say that this is a project which owes its ultimate true worth to modern technology: the facility to download from camera to computer to website with comparative ease and speed.

Requests are dealt with on a daily basis by Project Request Co-ordinator Sandra Rogers; the success rate is high given the numbers in the archive and the numerous letters of thanks are both poignant, heartwarming and in many instances heartbreaking. These can be viewed on the sites 'Thanks' Tab <http://twgpp.org/thanks.php>

With the 100th Anniversary of major WWI events like Jutland and the Somme commencing in 2016, local societies and schools are utilising the facility to prepare exhibitions and local publications to remember the men and women that are commemorated on local memorials. It is hoped that many families will discover this vast archive and find relatives who may have faded into obscurity.

Adding images to the website is an ongoing task and revisits to many cemeteries are being conducted by new volunteers to update the archive. Ultimately, when complete, the archive will form a lasting record of all those who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

Further information about the project, can be viewed at www.twgpp.org