

Quarter Four - December 2016



Creeping
Barrage
News & Notes
from the Herts &
Beds Branch

NEXT PRESENTATION:

'THE GREAT WAR – ROTHAMSTED'S CONTRIBUTION'
PROFESSOR ROGER PLUMB
VENUE: ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL, SUN LANE (SPORTS HALL ROOM SP101),
HARPENDEN AL5 4TD

DATE AND TIME: FRIDAY, 16 DECEMBER 2016 at 8:00PM

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 organisation 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.

DONATION AT THE DOOR £3.50

www.wfahertsandbeds.btck.co.uk

www.westernfrontassociation.com



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



This month's presentation has a local theme with Professor Roger Plumb explaining the role of the Rothamsted Experimental Station in Harpenden during the Great War. This talk promises to fill in many gaps in local knowledge so please make the effort and come along to the meeting. http://www.bspp.org.uk/profiles/plumb.php

2016 has been a somewhat momentous year both in terms of the events that will be the history of the future and also in terms of the memorable commemorations in this third year of Great War centenaries. On a personal level I was fortunate enough to attend the ceremony at Thiepval on 1 July as well as visiting Scapa Flow at the time of the Jutland commemorations in late May and early June. And of course, there have been numerous exhibitions and media events and programmes which have reminded us of the events of 100 years' ago. I trust that you all have found something either locally or nationally in which to both participate and remember.

One exhibition that was top of my list and which continues until March 2017 is the Paul Nash retrospective at the Tate Britain. Nash is, of course, rightly well-known for his war themed works such as "The Menin Road" and "We Are Making A New World". Less well-known, at least to me, are his early illustrative works which he completed before 1914 and then his later surrealist output which covered both the inter-war period and the Second World War itself before his death in 1946. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/art/what-to-see/paul-nash-tate-britain-review-one-of-the-years-essential-exhibit/



I am sure that there will be much to look forward to in 2017, not least our quality programme of speakers covering, as always, a wide range of topics from stretcher bearers to munitions factories and air aces to blinded veterans. Visit pages 5-8 for the full schedule of events. Do come and listen and learn and enjoy – it is your Branch.

Thank you for your support during 2016 and best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Geoff Cunnington December 2016

Military and Naval Publications: A Good Home Needed

A recent clearout at home means that I have 20-30+ copies of each of the following which require re-housing free of charge:

Military History Monthly

WFA – Bulletin

WFA - Stand To!

Warships International Fleet Review

Interested? Please contact me by email or telephone (as below) to arrange collection/delivery.

Previously at Herts & Beds 11 November 2016 'Public Schools and the Great War' - David Walsh



On 11th November, a poignant date, David Walsh was welcomed to Harpenden to speak on the subject of "Public Schools in the Great War". The talk was based upon information researched by David and Anthony Selden for their 2013 book entitled "The Role of the Public School in the Great War".

David, a retired Deputy Headmaster at Tonbridge School sought to dispel the negative views held in some quarters with regards to bumbling ex-Public School Generals, miles from the Front, making a complete mess of the War, and young ex-Public School educated officers recklessly ruining the lives of all in their charge. This view, supported by TV series such as "Blackadder", and the 1960's production "Oh What a Lovely War" has more recently been challenged, and a more balanced view is now more widely held. To try to redress the balance David explained that over 70 General were Killed in Action, near the Front Line, during the War, and more than 300 were wounded

Generally there was a 10% (1 in 10) probability for a soldier in the ranks to be "Killed in Action", whereas for ex-Public Schoolboys the probability was 20% (1 in 5). The higher up the social scale, the greater was the probability of death. Those from the Public Schools were more likely to have volunteered earlier in the War for combat units, and would have been "Killed in Action" leading their men into battle.

One hundred and fourteen Public Schools were registered in the UK in 1914. They were generally fee paying and independent of State control. There had been great strides with the provision of education for the masses in Britain in the late nineteenth century. However, with a growing Middle and Upper Class, resulting from the Victorian age of prosperity, there grew a desire for a level of education greater than could be provided by the State system. The State system educated children to the age of 12. Public School pupils continued their education into their teens, and the system, based on the pillars of Duty, Service and Patriotism was replicated at schools throughout the British Empire. As a result a boy's character was set by their School. Twice daily religious services taught self-denial and sacrifice. The Spartan living conditions bred toughness. The Prefect System helped build leadership skills, and the emphasis on School Games added principles of Fair Play, and morality as well as developing fitness.

In most schools boys joined the Officer Training Corps (OTC). OTC's had been introduced as part of the Haldane Reforms of the Army in 1907, and each Corps was put under the direct control of the War Office. The objective of introducing the OTCs was to provide a ready supply of officers in time of War. When War was declared in August 1914, membership of the School OTC provided many ex-pupils a passport to an immediate commission into combat units in the Regular Army. In some schools Army Classes were set up to prepare boys to take and pass the entry exams for the Army Colleges at Sandhurst (Infantry,

Indian Army and Cavalry) and Woolwich (Royal Engineers and Artillery). On reflection the brighter boys went to Woolwich.

In the first seven months of the War, 25,000 officers were commissioned, and were mainly ex-Public Schoolboys with OTC experience. In fact it was difficult to become an officer in the first two years of the War without a Public School background, or without the social standing that could finance officer status. Throughout the War all of the senior ranks in the Army were held by ex-Public Schoolboys.

Ex-Public Schoolboys flocked to join the Army in the early days of the War. Suddenly, as Junior Officers, they found themselves in charge of around 30 men in a platoon, and usually the men were a lot older and more experienced. The Junior Officer had to set an example of courage, endurance and sacrifice. Often they had to often provide paternal support to the men in their unit, and induce a feeling of family amongst the group, and deal with their issues both at the Front and at home.

The War had a great impact on the Schools back in Britain. By 1915 there were food shortages and rationing. At Lancing School the Cross-Country course had to be shortened as it was realised that the boys' stamina had decreased. School work-shops took on War Work and an example was given that at one School shell cones were produced in some quantity. At some Schools buildings were hastily converted to become hospitals and nursing homes. Ever lengthening Casualty Lists depressed the morale of those coming through the Schools, and there was a fear and expectation that young officers went to the Front and died very soon afterwards. Boys suffered the personal loss of friends, former pupils and teaching staff. For some Schools the sheer number of casualties and deaths was enormous, especially when men from the same School served and were killed in the same battalion, when the battalion was decimated going "over the top". Over half of the Public School casualties were under 24 years old, and were mainly from combat officers in the Front Line. Eton School suffered the most casualties, but provided the greatest number of recruits.

It was not just the ex-pupils that joined up. School-masters, often ex-Public school-boys themselves, left their jobs and enlisted. Women school-teachers resigned and went to employment in "War Work" occupations. Twenty-five percent of the teaching staff were lost to the Services in 1914, and replacing them caused quite a problem. Unlike industry, where in many cases women replaced the men, this was not seen as a viable option. Headmasters were faced with how best to deal with the growing number of teachers who were reported "Missing in Action". Could their jobs be formally given to those who had temporarily filled the vacancies after they went off to War, until confirmation of death came later, sometimes up to a year after the event?

The legacy of the Great War is deeply embedded in the history of most of the Public Schools. The Schools remember the Great War and their tremendous loss of life in many ways. Harrow School built a complete War Memorial Building, whilst others chose more conventional memorials, plaques and statues. The negative views of the influence of Public Schools in compounding the suffering of War sustained until well after the 1960's, but now that we appreciate more about how the war was really conducted, it is now realised that for the most part the expupils were fighting for a cause and a country for which they believed.

David ended the evening by answering a selection of questions on a wide variety of topics associated with the training, school-life and service experiences of the soldiers from the Public Schools. On reflection it seems hard to see how the British Army could have functioned in the early War years without the officers that emerged from the many Officer Training Corps from the British and Empire Public Schools.



Roger Yapp, December 2016

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Coming-Up at Herts & Beds - Presentations for 2017

20 January 2017 'Unsung Heroes - The Stretcher Bearers of World War One' Emily Mayhew

An essential part of medical treatment in World War I was the teams of stretcher-bearers who were, for the first time, given basic first aid training and endorsement to give care to the injured. **Dr. Emily Mayhew** writes, that "the really important story was the idea of pushing medicine forward, towards the battle, so that you started to treat people as close to the front line, and as soon as they were wounded, as possible. Once I'd worked out that was happening it's very easy to see how that relates to the way that we treat causalities today." Emily argues that these stretcher bearers are direct ancestors of modern Combat Medical Technicians. Where once there would have been a team of stretcher bearers approaching a shell crater, there is now a Medical Emergency Response Team (MERT) flying out in helicopters to marines injured by IEDs or wounded in gunfire. The basic strategy remains the same.

Dr. Mayhew is a military medical historian specialising in the study of severe casualty, its infliction, treatment and long-term outcomes in 20th and 21st century warfare. She is historian in residence in the Department of Bioengineering, working primarily with the researchers and staff of The Royal British Legion Centre for Blast Injury Studies, and a Research Fellow in the Division of Surgery within the Department of Surgery and Cancer. She is based jointly in the Department of Bioengineering and at the Chelsea and Westminster campus.



24 February 2017

Nigel Crompton

Munitions Factories in the Great War and Rather a Big Bang

This presentation includes an introduction to Ministry of Munitions and details of local factories local and the role of women in the factories. The second half of the talk covers munitions factory explosions and matters of health and safety.

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



24 March 2017 Bill Fulton

Captain Albert Ball VC, RFC

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. Hi 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 is 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

Professor Mark Connelly

'Very Like England' - The 1920s and 1930s Commemorations of the Battle of the Somme

This talk will explore the key themes associated with the memory of the Battle of the Somme in the inter-war period, the controversy over the Thiepval memorial and how it came to have particular resonances for certain communities in Britain and the Empire.

Professor Mark Connelly was drawn into his History anorak lifestyle when, as a small boy, he became fascinated by ladybird history books. For him, the subject of History was all about castles, knights, Airfix kits (constructed with incredibly little skill and amazing amounts of glue) and Action Man Scorpion tanks. This obsession has been taken into adulthood and he now combines his interest in films, television and visual images with his interest in military history, this is reflected in many of his publications. Not content with keeping his interests to himself he now shares his passion for history with others, most notably his students and his family. As a result, he claims that his wife is now adept at spotting a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone or a war memorial in a misty churchyard from quite some distance away.

Tail Spin

Have a look at.....



Change of venue: We move to the 'large lecture theatre' (**next to Weston Auditorium**) de Havilland Campus, University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield, AL10 9EU. Please make a special effort to support us at the first few talks there to get us off to a good start. Details of the forthcoming talks (**with amended location link**) is attached, as is a location map, but this can also be found at www.herts.ac.uk/uhbow/your-visit/venues/the-weston-auditorium - please remember we are next to this auditorium.

IMPORTANT REMINDER:

- Check the locations against the tickets before travelling to avoid mistakes.
- FREE to attend, but there are costs so please donate to enable us to continue.
- All talks will commence at 7.30pm with arrival from 7pm.

For a 'quick link' to the tickets, Google "Eventbrite tickets xxx" (xxx = surname of speaker).

Wed 14th December 2016 - Jeremy Banning - La Boiselle - Underground War



Jeremy Banning is a military historian and researcher specialising in the underground warfare and The Battle of Arras. He has collaborated on a number of books with Peter Barton, as well as acting as principal researcher for other books, radio and television programmes. He appeared in the BBC's 'Who Do You Think You Are?' when he showed comedian and actor Hugh Dennis around the battlefields in France and Flanders.

Jeremy has also worked on episodes of the BBC Wales genealogy series 'Coming Home' as well as various Time Team Specials. Recent historical consultancy work includes the BBC's 'The Somme: Secret Tunnel Wars', 'War of Words: Soldier Poets of the Somme' and 'The Somme 1916: From Both Sides of the Wire'. Jeremy conducts specialist research for clients and guides bespoke battlefield trips. Previous clients include the National Trust, Historic England and the British Army. Jeremy is a founding member of the La Boisselle Study Group who spent three years conducting archaeology and tunnel exploration on the Somme. He lectures widely on a variety of military subjects.

<u>Talk Location</u>: Room N001 (large lecture theatre opposite the internal entrance to Weston Auditorium), de Havilland Campus, University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield, AL10 9EU. The talk will start at 7.30pm with doors open from 7pm. Book your FREE tickets/check details at:

https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/life-and-death-in-the-la-boiselle-sector-by-jeremy-banning-tickets-27215190367

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

And Finally.....

Naval Christmases on board Friedrich Carl and Emperor of India.



