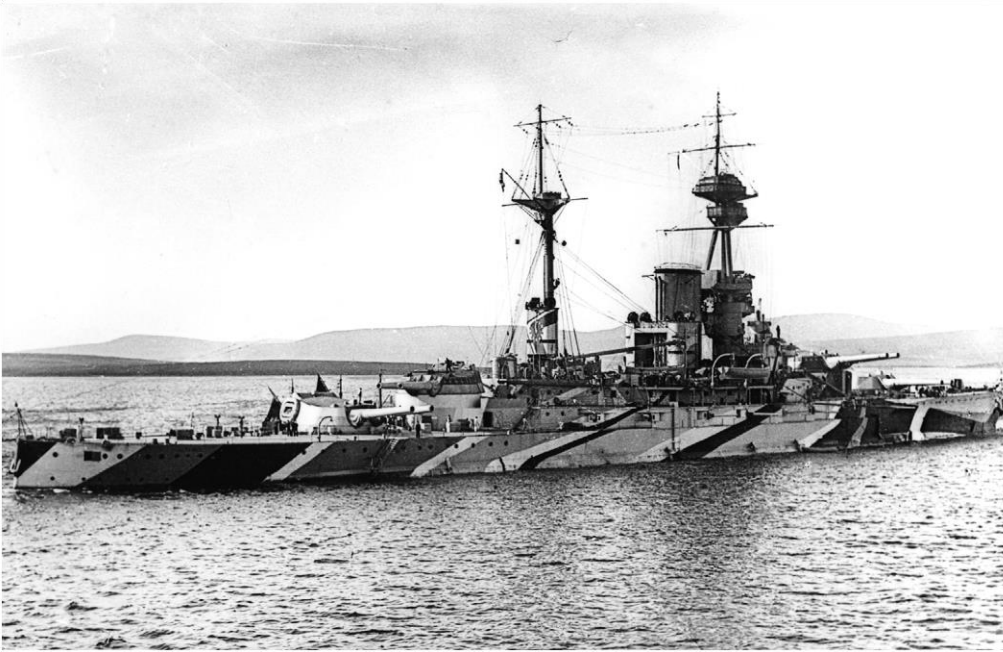




Quarter One – January 2015



*Creeping
Barrage*
News & Notes
from the Herts &
Beds Branch
Best Wishes For
2015

NEXT PRESENTATION:

“THE ART OF DAZZLE PAINTING”

**AN ILLUSTRATED TALK BY CULTURAL HISTORIAN, ROBERT HEWISON
ST. GEORGE’S SCHOOL, SUN LANE (SPORTS HALL ROOM SP101),
HARPENDEN AL5 4TD**

FRIDAY, 9 JANUARY 2015 AT 8:00PM

Robert Hewison is a critic and cultural historian who has published widely on aspects of 19th and 20th century British culture. In this talk he will explore the history of naval camouflage in the Great War and its connection to avant-garde art.



DONATION AT THE DOOR £3.50

www.westernfrontassociation.com

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



A very warm welcome to the January Q1 2015 edition of 'Creeping Barrage' and best wishes to you all for New Year. There is an exciting and interesting year of presentations and commemorations ahead both at our Branch and over a wider local area too with the "Herts At War" project and other initiatives. I encourage you to join us and to participate in these events. The latest WFA enewsletter also brings us up-to-date with some thoughts and observations about the Christmas Truce.

The link is here: <http://us2.campaign-archive1.com/?u=b727059489ecdacccf6340260&id=a9d8a52a0e&e=f88af2786d>

This month we welcome Robert Hewison who will reveal to us the seemingly bizarre world of naval camouflage. Those of you who travel to London regularly may have noticed the unusual appearance of *HMS President* at her permanent home by Blackfriars pier. She has exchanged her normal livery for that of a special centenary dazzle makeover in celebration of that art form. It is well worth a visit.



I look forward to seeing you at the next meeting.

Geoff Cunnington, January 2015

BRANCH CONTACTS

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Previously at Herts & Beds 12th December 2014 “Pyramids & Fleshpots: Middle East Campaigns 1914-1916” - Stuart Hadaway



Committee Member, Simon Goodwin writes:

Stuart Hadaway is a Senior Researcher at the Air Historical Branch (RAF). His previous publications include “Missing Believed Killed: RAF Casualty Policy” and the “Search for Missing Aircrew, 1939–52” as well as over sixty articles for various magazines.

His talk covered his latest book “Pyramids & Fleshpots: Middle East Campaigns 1914 -16”. This is a subject that he has had an interest in since he worked as a Curator at the Worcestershire Regimental Museum and read of the service in that campaign of one unit of the local Yeomanry and one of the Regular Army.

Egypt was a part of the Ottoman Empire in 1914 but it was effectively run by the British who were in charge of the government and the army. At the outbreak of the war Germany sought to ally itself with the Ottomans and hoped that they would launch a Jihad against the British in Egypt. A Jihad was announced, in November 1914, but it actually had little long term effect. Prior to this the Germans had tried to suck the Ottomans into the conflict by signing a treaty with them that if Russia were to attack Germany then the Ottomans would enter the conflict on the Germans side. But Germany actually invaded Russia and the Ottomans used that as a means to delay entering the war until October.

On the 18th December the British declared martial law in Egypt and made the country a British Protectorate. There were about 5,000 British troops based in the country at that time who were needed in France and Belgium but, at the same time, it was imperative that the Suez Canal be kept in British hands to allow the transit of ships carrying men and supplies from around the world.

A balance was found when the 9th Brigade of the Indian Army, en route to France, was held back in Egypt and the 42nd (East Lancashire) Division, a territorial unit, arrived. This meant that the regular troops could leave Egypt for the Western Front. Defences were dug on the west bank of the canal, which was not an entirely easy task given the shifting sands, and enemy ships were ordered out of the canal and were then captured and interred.

In December, the 10th and 11th Indian Divisions arrived in Egypt which meant that the 9th Brigade could now rejoin the troops already sent to France. Barely trained Anzac troops, who had only just joined the Army, also began to arrive and these were put into camps around Cairo. Discipline immediately became a problem due to a lack of ways to keep the men busy and it wasn't long before Cairo and Alexandria became a hotbed of drinking (often badly made local beer), prostitutes and rioting.

On the 14th January 1915 the Ottomans had gathered a force of 10,000 men which they split into three columns to attack the Suez

Canal from the east. Fortunately for the defenders information gained from friendly Bedouins and reconnaissance seaplanes meant that there could be no element of surprise. 30,000 British, Indian and Egyptian troops were supported by 40,000 Anzacs and the British 42nd Division and to further aid the defenders some areas adjacent to the Canal were flooded. On the 2nd February they successfully fought off an attack in which the Ottomans tried using boats to cross the Canal. The task was made easier by the fact that many of the Ottoman troops ululated before making their attack, something their officers had specifically ordered them not to as it gave away their positions.

A little later the Egyptian garrison began to have new problems in that a large number of men were requisitioned for service at Gallipoli and at one stage the size of the force defending Egypt was down to as little as 15,000 men.

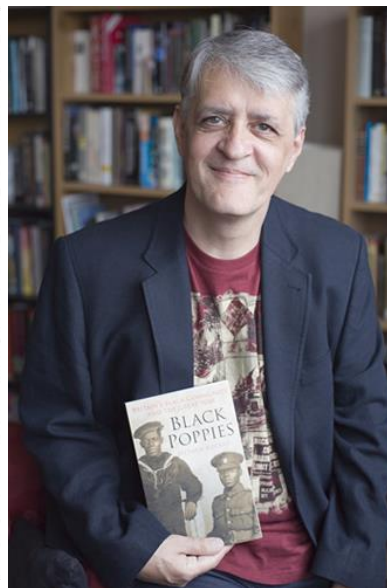
Two major disturbances, both within Cairo, stand out at about this time and these later became known as the First and Second Battles of Waza. In the first of these, dated 2nd April 1915, Anzac troops burned down a Brothel after they believed they had been overcharged, shots were fired and rioting took place. In the second “battle”, similar things happened on the 31st July of the same year.

Sexually transmitted diseases became a major problem with 1,400 of the Egyptian force in hospital with venereal disease (VD) at one time in 1916. That was 7.5% of the army in the country – this compared to a figure of “only” 1.8% on the Western Front. Front line units were further depleted when it became clear that some military police units needed to be manned by Anzac troops because the rioting Anzac troops responded slightly better to them than to their British counterparts.

Wounded men would most often be evacuated to Mudros but would travel to India or Malta if their injuries were considered serious enough. Many men, who were recovering in convalescent homes, had so little to occupy themselves that they too became regulars in the local bars and brothels.

A further enemy military threat arose in late 1915 when the Senussi, a Sufi order and tribe based in Libya, were encouraged by German gold and military advisors to attack Egypt from the west but, with the help of troops returning from Gallipoli, these were repulsed and pushed back to Libya.

The final military action during this period took place on the 4th August 1916 when at Ottoman force attacked a British one at Romani. In a text book battle the Ottomans were repulsed and then, over the following months, were chased back east out of Egypt.



Coming-Up at Herts & Beds 20th February 2015 “Black Poppies; Britain’s Black Community and the First World War”

Author **Stephen Bourne** lectures about the black soldiers who fought in the Great War, conscripts who signed up in Africa, the Caribbean or at local British recruitment centres. Sometimes they were allocated separate regiments such as the British West Indies Regiment, or they were integrated. Sometimes they were allowed to fight on the front line, other times they were given ancillary roles. Bourne tells us that black recruits were allowed in all branches of the armed services although not as officers. Footballer, Walter Tull, commissioned as a second lieutenant, was the only black man to break the colour bar, and then only because of his fame. He was killed in action in France in 1918.

<http://www.stephenbourne.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.



20 March

Espionage during the First World War

Secret intelligence was a growth industry during the Great War, in Britain and other countries. Between 1914 and 1918 both military and civil authorities deployed agents throughout the world to gather information (and spread disinformation) that might help to win the war. Some of these are famous, like Mata Hari (above) or Lawrence of Arabia, some less so; sometimes it was the less famous who were most effective. In addition, thousands of civilians put their lives at risk in order to collect intelligence for the war effort. Former Chief Historian of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, **Gill Bennett's** talk will cover both the major organisational and technical developments that took place during the war, and some of the extraordinary personal stories of spies professional and amateur, invaluable and inept, working alone or together; as well as their portrayal in literature by the many writers, from John Buchan to Somerset

Maugham, who were involved in secret intelligence themselves.

24 April

Domestic Women on the Home Front

Professor **Maggie Andrews** will focus on how the war caused shifts in the role of women looking at changes in domestic responsibilities, the impact of food shortages, letter writing, gardening and charity work which facilitated the more well-known areas of women's wartime contribution such as nursing and working in munitions.

22 May

The Camps at Cannock Chase

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.

26 June

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.

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

To Be Confirmed

Tail Spin - You Might be Interested In.....

More about the Herts at War Project as advised by Research Coordinator, Jonty Wild.

Herts at War Talks Series 2015 – Dates for your Diaries

We are very pleased to announce a new series of talks in conjunction with our project partners at Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, St Christopher School and David's Bookshop Letchworth.

We have a great range of speakers and the talks are suitable for those with a general interest and those with a more in depth knowledge. They will provide an enjoyable, interesting and sometimes challenging experience.

These events take place on the 2nd Thursday of each month throughout 2015 at St Christopher School Letchworth. They commence at 7.30pm (prompt), with entry from 7pm onwards. They are FREE, but advanced booking is required.

Tickets can be reserved at the Herts at War Exhibition - 12/14, The Arcade, Letchworth, David's Bookshop - Eastcheap, Letchworth or at the Letchworth Tourist Information Centre on Station Road.

Alternatively you can reserve you space for one of our talks online at eventbrite here: <http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/herts-at-war-7819264370>. For further information on our series of talks please contact us via info@hertsatwar.co.uk or visit www.hertsatwar.co.uk/talks.

8/1/2015 - Clive Harris - 'The Greater Game'

Historian Clive Harris will join us to discuss 'The Greater Game', the story of famous sportsmen in The Great War. Clive is an established name in the field of military history, owner of Battle Honours Ltd and also working as a full-time Battlefield Guide around the world as well as authoring several books including one on tonight's subject.

12/2/2015 - Peter Hart - 'Gallipoli 1915'

Tonight we will be joined by renowned author and historian Peter Hart. Peter's extensive knowledge on all things Great War has made him a leading name in the field of military history. Peter's passionate and engaging style make his talks a 'must see' for anyone with an interest in 20th century conflict.

12/3/2015 - Professor Richard Grayson - 'Neuve Chapelle 1915'

Richard Grayson is the Professor of 20th Century History at Goldsmiths, University of London and tonight he will be speaking about the infamous battle of Neuve Chapelle in 1915 and in particular the impact of Irish units in the conflict. A Hertfordshire native, Richard has an incredible knowledge and résumé of work relating to 20th Century History and has kindly agreed to join us for the evening.

9/4/2015 - Terry Cox - Herts Police in The Great War

Herts at War's fourth guest speaker Terry Cox who will speak about the experiences of Hertfordshire Police Force on the home front during the Great War. A retired Police Officer, Terry's knowledge and enthusiasm for a fascinating and largely unknown topic make this talk a real gem in our series. Terry has been involved in the highly successful 'On The Beat' Project and brings a wealth of little-known tales and incidents that highlight the unique role Hertfordshire played at home during the Great War - "*An unusual, interesting and amusing talk.*"

14/5/2015 - Chris Baker - 'Blood Money - Britain fights the economic war'

Of Britain's foremost military researchers and historians in Chris Baker for our talk on 14th May. Chris' talk entitled 'Blood Money - Britain fights the economic war' will explore and question many of the aspects of The Great War that we often take for granted. As a published author and founder of both the Great War Forum and the Long, Long, Trail website, Chris has probably undertaken more individual First World War research projects than any other individual and his knowledge excels accordingly. This is certainly not one to miss!

11/6/2015 - Taff Gillingham - Remembrance and The Great War - A very British view

Taff Gillingham is a military historian who has spent the past 20 years advising film, television and theatre productions. He has been collecting British and Commonwealth militaria since he was six years old and has built up a vast knowledge of the life of the British soldier in The Great War. He was a founder member of The Khaki Chums. He is a co-director of Khaki Devil Limited; a company specialising in accurate uniforms, equipment, weapons and props for the film, television and theatre industry. The company owns a trench system which is used for filming productions such as the recent Sainsbury's Christmas advert. Taff is also a former Trustee of The Suffolk Regiment Museum, Chairman of The Friends of The Suffolk Regiment and Chairman of the Suffolk Branch of The Western Front Association.

9/7/20015 - Dan Hill - 'The Herts Guards'

Herts at War Project Officer and military history researcher Dan Hill will lead July's talk with an in-depth look at the Hertfordshire Regiment in the Great War; from their arrival on the Western Front in November 1914 to the Armistice. Dan is a founder member of the Herts at War Project and has worked as a historical researcher, writer and outreach officer before his current role. Introducing much previously unseen material from personal and public archives, this talk promises to be an interesting account of the Herts Guards in The Great War.