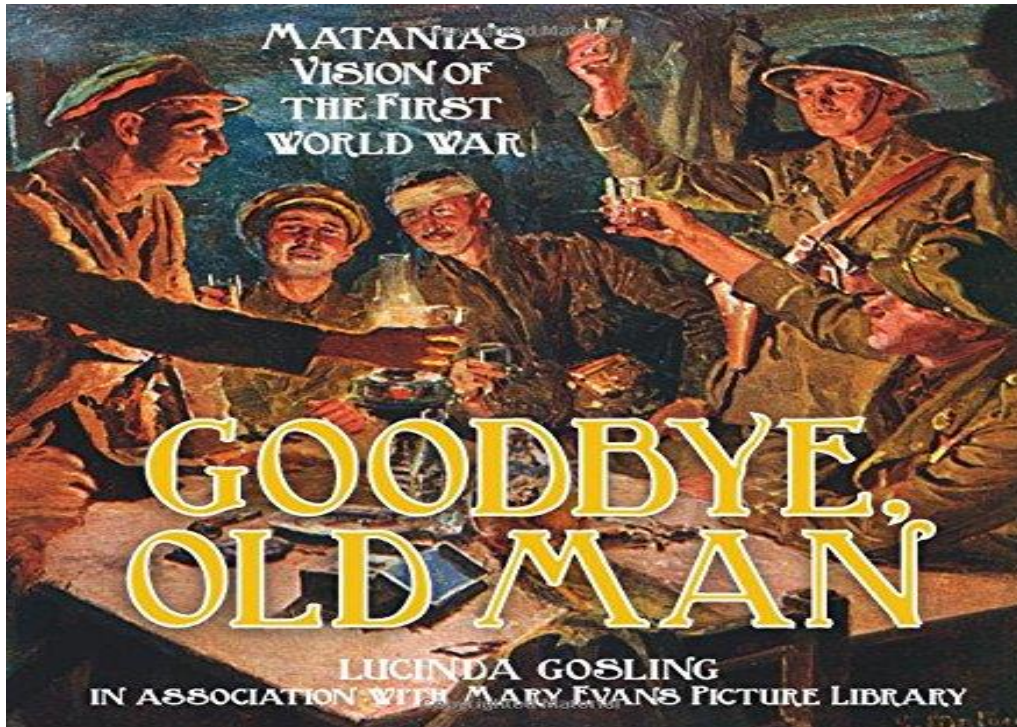




Quarter One – January 2016



*Creeping
Barrage*
News & Notes
from the Herts &
Beds Branch

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www.westernfrontassociation.com

NEXT: 'GOODBYE OLD MAN – THE ARTIST FORTUNINO MATANIA'S VISION OF THE GREAT WAR'

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

DATE AND TIME: FRIDAY, 15 JANUARY 2016 AT 8:00PM

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, Lucinda has contributed to variety of publications including *History Today*, *Majesty* and *Illustration* magazine.



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



A Happy New Year to you all and welcome to our rich and varied programme for 2016. As usual, we try and explore the less travelled avenues of the Great War and this month is no exception as we welcome Lucinda Gosling to Harpenden. Fortunino Matania is one of those war artists whose work is often widely recognized but about whom little is generally known. Lucinda will aim to set that right with what should be an interesting and informative presentation.

This month we also take time to present the prizes to the winners of the St.George's School Trench Diary Competition. In the Christmas Term, all Year 9 students were encouraged to write a diary based on their chosen fictitious character's experiences during the First World War. The top ten (listed below with their characters' names) were selected by the Year 9 history teachers and passed to the Branch's judging committee for final evaluation with the first three being eligible for a prize.

Sam Apsey	'R. Brent'	Oliver Norman	'Walter Nixon'
Elsbeth Bailey	'John Godfrey'	Jack O'Kelly	'Frank Mason'
Louise Burrett	'James Palmer'	Harry Tallantire	'Thomas Barrett'
Maddie Evans	'Margery Cooper'	Freya Wilcox	'John Adams'
Sofie Kwiatkowski	'Arthur Barraclough'		
Joe Middleton	'George Roberts'		

The winners will be announced before the evening's talk begins on Friday 15 January. This year's selection of trench diaries is shown below.



Please join me in congratulating all of the finalists and in welcoming the winners to the presentation when they will receive their prizes.

Thank you all for your continuing support and I look forward to what will be a busy year for the Branch as we continue with our programme during a big year for the centenary commemorations which for us sees fruition with our involvement with the Joint Branch Seminar with Milton Keynes in October. I expect that Andrew Gould will keep us up-to-date with the prospective speakers and other matters as the months progress.

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
January 2016

Previously at Herts & Beds 11 December 2015 'Suicide Club to Butchers: the Palestine Brigade RFC/RAF 1917-1918'



Committee Member, Simon Goodwin writes:

On the evening of Friday, 11th December, we were joined at our final WFA Branch Meeting of 2015 by Stuart Hadaway, a Senior Researcher to the RAF's official historians at the Air Historical Branch. Stuart had kindly agreed to come along and speak to us about the experiences of the Royal Flying Corps (RFC), and later the Royal Air Force (RAF), in Egypt and Palestine during the First World War.

On the 4th November 1914 the British Expeditionary Air Unit (BEAU) was sent to Egypt, comprising of three obsolete Maurice Farman aircraft and a further two obsolete aircraft which they purchased in Italy on the way to Egypt. By the 17th November they were in Ismailia and created the first ever airfield in Egypt. These aircraft were useful because their main role was to help guard the Suez Canal and, from a height of 4,000 feet, they could see all 50 miles of the canal from a single vantage point. Unfortunately, the range of these aircraft was only 60 to 70 miles and so a number of new remote airfields had to be set up to increase the area they could cover.

Their arrival "in Theatre" was timely as between January and February 1915 the Ottomans launched a major attack towards the Suez Canal but they were spotted while they were still crossing the desert by Seaplanes from the coast and the BEAU. This gave commanders on the ground time to marshal their defences to counter the attacks. A month later the BEAU was renamed as No. 30 Squadron RFC.

At this stage of the war, there was no Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) involvement in the Middle East – their units were kept closer to home in Britain. What the British did do, however, was identify that the French had five Nieuport seaplanes in the Mediterranean and borrowed these, along with their ground crews, to form the Port Said Seaplane Squadron. Whilst nominally based at Port Said, these aircraft moved around mounted on naval ships, including two captured German Merchantmen, the *Aenne Rickmers* (*HMS Anne*) and the *Rabenfels* (*HMS Raven*).

Unfortunately, the width of the wings on the Nieuport seaplanes and the positioning of the cockpits made camera work almost impossible and so the planes Observers were often left to sketch pictures of enemy positions and return to base with these. In addition, a wireless set of the time weighed about 50 kilograms and so many pilots were left with a choice of whether to take up an Observer OR a radio. Some planes were lost because of reliability issues and there were other problems around the availability of spare parts but, generally speaking, things went reasonably well.

By early 1916 the RNAS began to arrive from Gallipoli and, at the same time, there was a reorganisation of RFC units when Nos. 14 and 17 Squadrons, armed with BE2's, arrived to form the 5th Wing, and No. 30 Squadron was pulled out to Mesopotamia. It was also at this time that

the Senussi, a religious sect in Libya and Egypt, were encouraged by the Ottomans to rise up against the British forces and Nos. 14 and 17 Squadrons were heavily involved in scouting missions to spot groups of Senussi so that ground forces could be dispatched to attack them. Elsewhere, problems were also had with Dervish groups and "C" flight of No. 17 Squadron were despatched to locate them and to work with ground forces to eradicate them.

RNAS units in the area now include three ships *HMS Ben My Chree*, *HMS Empress* and, briefly, *HMS Ark Royal*. Also, in April 1916, the French Seaplane units were re-called as they were needed for anti-submarine duties and, at the same time, new German air units arrived and proved to be much more effective. Amongst these was the Fliegerabteilung 300 who were equipped with six Rumpier C1s and 2 Faust E2s.

It was soon realised that the German Aircraft were now superior to the British planes and this was demonstrated when the German's bombed Port Said twice, from their base at Beersheba, in early May 1916 and the British were forced to move No. 14 Squadron to the city to defend the town.

Soon thereafter, No. 1 Australian Field Squadron (also known as No. 67 Squadron RFC) arrived in the area from Australia and the Middle East Brigade of three squadrons (Nos. 14, 17 and 67) was formed. Not only were combat and scouting missions undertaken in the area, but over 1,500 RFC pilots were actually trained during the course of war in Egypt for service in other "theatres".

With a technical inferiority in terms of planes the casualty rates in combat for Allied pilots were high – however, the sheer scale of the terrain that was covered meant that actual air to air combat was far less frequent than it would have been over the Western Front.

In the summer of 1916 events on the ground led to changes in the way the squadrons were now used, as Allied forces began to advance to attack the Ottomans. Indeed, by the end of that year British troops were pushing through the Sinai and a regular tactic was for the RFC crews to spot the location of Ottoman troops and then the cavalry would be sent in to encircle and attack them. At this time a few German Albatross D3s were arriving in the area – these were soon established as the best individual planes in the combat zone.

The first four months of 1917 saw heavy losses amongst RFC crews on the Western Front and all new planes were sent there – meaning that the squadrons in the Middle East continued to have to manage with old aircraft.

Since 1915 the use of grid lines on maps, to identify precise locations, had been a regular feature for RFC pilots on the Western Front,

however, it was not until 1917 that it was adopted in the Middle East. This was a great help to the British pilots who were now engaged in photography and bombing missions as part of the Battle of Gaza. Other ingenious ways of using the aeroplane were also being discovered as, in a famous incident, a German pilot flew out and landed by a remote British railway and pipeline and blew up both using explosives he had carried in his cockpit, before returning safely to base. The tide now changed again and new British Aircraft began to arrive in the shape of the Bristol M1C, the Vickers Bullet and the DH2. On the back of this General Allenby ordered that two new squadrons be formed from pilots currently serving with the local Training Units and the RFC Palestine Brigade was formed, comprising:

5th Wing	No. 14 Squadron	16 aircraft – BE2s
	No. 113 Squadron	13 aircraft – BE2s and RE5s
'B' Flight		8 BE2 aircraft (dedicated to ground attack roles)
40th Wing	No. 111 Squadron	17 aircraft – various types
	No. 67 (Australian) Squadron	18 aircraft – BE2s and RE5s
No. 21 Balloon Company		

These forces were now used for artillery spotting (sometimes for naval guns when the target was near to the coast), Mapping and Bombing. This latter role became especially important as the British troops advanced and quite often discovered that their own artillery could not keep up.

By December the winter rains kicked in and flights became much fewer and weather problems continued into the spring of 1918 when British forces were attacking through the Jordan Valley.

The weather wasn't the only problem for the RFC units because, at about this time, five new German Squadron (totalling 56 aircraft) arrived in the area. These were Fliegerabteilung 301, 302, 303, 304 and 305 and they flew a mixture of AEG C4's and Albatross D3's.

Other new roles for aircraft developed and, on occasion, the planes were used to drop, mainly medical, supplies to front line troops. By May, the RFC and the RNAS had been merged and now formed the RAF and three new Squadrons were formed in the area, Nos. 142 (armed with RE8's), No. 144 (armed with DH9's) and No. 145 (armed with SE5's). These aircraft helped wrest control of the skies back from the Germans and the British were soon flying "Standing Patrols" over German Airfields to keep German planes on the ground to prevent them spotting British troop movements.

On the 1st October the British took Damascus, two weeks later they took Homs and on the 25th they captured Aleppo. Following this the Ottomans sued for peace.

Such was the aerial superiority that No. 14 and 144 Squadrons had already been "crated up" to go to Salonika and these units were very happy when they discovered this meant they could be amongst the first to return back home at the end of the war.

Stuart had shown us, through the development of new plane types and tactics, how the pendulum had swung on a number of occasions between the two competing air forces and how in the end the men of the RAF had truly changed from being a Suicide Club into the aggressors.

Simon Goodwin, December 2015

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Coming-Up at Herts & Beds - Next Presentation

19 February 2016

'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.



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.

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.

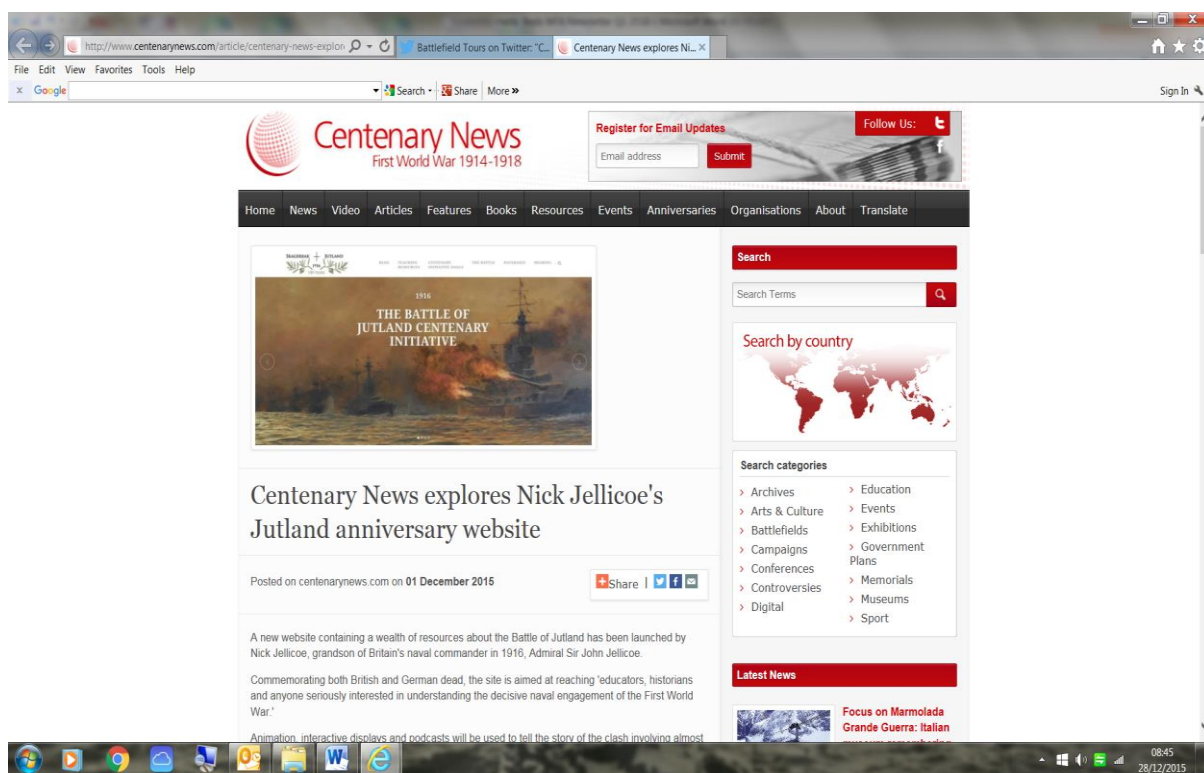
16 December

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.....

With the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Jutland on the horizon, keep yourself up-to-date with this website.



And Finally.....

Season's Greetings from the men of *HMS Dreadnought*.

This is probably a pre-war image but is entertaining nevertheless particularly if you look carefully for an early example of product placement.

