



Quarter Two – June 2016



## Creeping Barrage

News & Notes  
from the Herts &  
Beds Branch

### NEXT PRESENTATION:

**“THOSE WHO SERVED: REMEMBERING FIRST WORLD WAR NURSES” BY  
DIANNE YARWOOD**

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

**DATE AND TIME: FRIDAY, 24 JUNE 2016 AT 8:00PM**

**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](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.

DONATION AT THE DOOR £3.50

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



This month we welcome Dianne Yarwood, who will bring us the often overlooked story of the role of nurses in the First World War. It promises to be an illuminating and fascinating evening – I encourage you to attend.

Our May presentation focused on the figurative sculpture found in many British war memorials. You can read Simon's report of the evening on the next page. I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to visit the Orkneys last month at the time of the Jutland commemorations. Below is an image of the war memorial in Kirkwall which shows us a simple, yet dramatic, example. The wreaths are those laid by the dignitaries as part of the service at the adjacent St. Magnus Cathedral earlier that day, 31 May.



This June meeting is the last before our summer break. We return in September with the AGM and members' evening. You will find further details on page 4. As Chairman, I am well aware that if the Branch is to continue and to potentially flourish then we must have more involvement from you, the members. We need new ideas and new people who can commit to helping the Branch in any way that best suits their skills and interests. If you are interested in being a Committee member or assisting in the arrangements for meetings then please let me know.

Do remember to keep up with what is going on at the Centenary News website which gives all the up-to-date information on events over the coming months <http://www.centenarynews.com/>

And don't forget our main event at Milton Keynes later in the year. Book now to avoid disappointment.

**SAVE THE DATE – BOOKING NOW AVAILABLE SEE PAGE 5**

**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**  
**June 2016**

## Previously at Herts & Beds 20 May 2016

### 'The Glorious Dead: Figurative Sculpture of British First World War Memorials' - Geoff Archer



#### Branch Committee Member, Simon Goodwin, writes:

We were joined, on the evening of 20 May 2016, by Geoff Archer, who had travelled down from Macclesfield in Cheshire, to share with us his talk on figurative sculpture seen on WW1 British War Memorials. Geoff was the author of "The Glorious Dead", a 2009 publication which represents the first comprehensive analysis of this subject.

There are thousands of War Memorials in towns and villages throughout the United Kingdom, but only a few hundred of these include figurative sculpture. Despite the numbers, this still formed the greatest project of public sculpture in the history of this country.

It was realised, before the War ended, that there would be a demand for public memorials to the men who lost their lives in the conflict and this led, in 1919, to two major exhibitions of sculpture suitable to adorn War Memorials. In July 1919 an exhibition was held at the Victoria & Albert Museum and, three months later, another was held at the Royal Academy. It was hoped that these would help those planning commemorative sculpture to see what was possible and to establish contact with available sculptors able to undertake commissions. Sculptors were also picked because of their location or on the basis of recommendations. Competitions were also quite frequent with multiple plans being submitted for the work by different sculptors – for example there were three rival plans put forward for the Luton War Memorial. Some of the larger commissions, such as that at the Canadian National Memorial in Ottawa, attracted 127 entries of which 25 were from Great Britain. Sculptors would also often report to the Architect on the project.

Geoff demonstrated, with the use of photographs, how some particular statue figures were used in multiple locations. For example the same statue can be seen on the Colchester, Leeds, Burton on Trent and Portadown (N. Ireland) War Memorials with only minor changes. The same is also true of the character depicted in the Memorials at Crewe, Morley (Yorkshire) and Troon (Scotland).

Moving on to look at individual Memorials, Geoff highlighted the Wolds Wagoners Memorial at Sledmere in Yorkshire. This, quite unique Memorial, shows a tableau of soldiers experiences from receiving their call up papers through to fighting on the front line and is carved in a very "naïve" style.

For sheer scale, Geoff highlighted the "Commercial's" Memorial in Newcastle.

At Port Sunlight, on Merseyside, Geoff told us was one of the most impressive Memorials he had seen on his travels. The sculpture on the Memorial shows men, armed with rifles and bayonets, defending women and children, possibly signifying the belief that men who go to fight are defending their country against German aggression as well as the fact they are also seen defending the Cross, possibly also signifying a religious dimension to the conflict.

When it comes to soldiers with rifles and bayonets, the vast majority of statues show men in a defensive or watchful stance rather than an aggressive one. Furthermore, it is very rare to see the enemy portrayed on a British War Memorial.

What is certain is that War Memorials were widely recognised as being primarily a memorial for the wives, mothers and children of men who had lost their lives in the conflict – this can be seen in the Memorials in Macclesfield and Liverpool. In addition some Memorials showed injured or wounded servicemen and a few even showed dead soldiers' bodies. Those showing dead bodies were often criticised by the local media when the plans were revealed – with the possible exception of Memorials inside churches, where the dead body created far less of a furore.

Many Memorials show a Soldier and a Christian Cross – signifying the idea of the War being a Christian struggle for salvation. Some also show symbols of Victory or Jubilation to signify what was won.

On some Memorials there is some fairly straight forward symbology to denote the British defeating the Germans. This can be seen at Rickmansworth, where a British Lion holds a pinned German Eagle on the ground, or at a host of sites where St George is spearing and killing the German Dragon. In some, unusual circumstances, the symbology is far more basic and at Bambridge, in Northern Ireland, one of the panels shows the act of a British soldier actually bayonetting a German soldier

Geoff told us that the most common type of sculptured War Memorial showed a Crucifix and that the second most popular showed a Soldier.

There were also, at the end of the Great War, a small number of Private Memorials made and included in these was that of Private Haron Baronian, killed in Mesopotamia in 1917. The life size bronze statue was made by William Hamo Thorneycroft R.A. (the same sculptor who worked on Luton War Memorial) and was kept by his family in the gardens of a private house in Knutsford until 1977. Since 1977 it has been located in the grounds of Knutsford War Memorial Cottage Hospital. What appears certain is that few people who view it today will (a) realise it is sculpted to represent one unique individual and (b) realise that it was not originally designed as a public Memorial to the town's missing.

Figurative sculpture continues to be in demand as new projects, especially now we are in the WW1 centenary period, go ahead. For example in Houghton Regis, the National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas, and Chorley where a gate way into the Park was the primary site of commemoration.

Geoff rounded off the evening by answering questions from the floor and the meeting showed its appreciation by applauding him and his talk at the end of the meeting.

## Coming-Up at Herts & Beds - Future Presentations

### 16 September 2016 Annual General Meeting and Members' Evening

This evening is your evening and it falls into two distinct parts. The first part is the Annual General Meeting at which point the Chairman and the Committee provide a review of the year and the activities of the Branch followed by a presentation of the Branch income and expenditure for the year ended 30 June 2016. The members are asked to approve the statement of accounts and to elect and/or re-elect Branch officers (Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer and Committee members).

The second part of the evening is for Branch members, regulars and those who attend less often, to present to the Branch on an item of interest about the Great War which has captured their imagination and which perhaps drives their interest in that period of history. Presentations need be for only 15 to 20 minutes – this really is a 'show and tell' opportunity. Describe a recent battlefield trip or an interesting discovery which perhaps took your interest to a new level with plenty of photos and illustrations too, please. Do come and tell us what makes your interest tick. Contact Geoff Cunnington before 5 September 2016 if you are interested in taking part.

### 14 October 2016 'The Angels of Pervyse: Elsie and Mairi Go To War' - Diane Atkinson



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.

## Booking Details for the Regional Seminar, 23 October 2016

*The Western Front Association  
Milton Keynes and Herts & Beds Branches*

**REGIONAL SEMINAR**

Sunday 23rd October 2016 9.30am – 4.30pm  
The Cruck Barn, City Discovery Centre, Bradwell Abbey, Milton Keynes, MK13 9AP



**SPEAKERS:**

**Colin Ellender**  
**“Verdun”**

Colin served for 35 years in the RAF and became interested in military history early in his service. At the age of 17 he was living in a 16 man room next to a 43 year old gentleman who had done the whole 6 years of the war serving in the Army. “Most of the people in the room ignored him, I found him very interesting.”

Verdun was the longest battle of the war (10 months) and produced 800,000 casualties. The C-in-C deliberately handicapped his Army commander by not informing him of his real intention. This talk reveals which one!

**Phil Tomaselli**  
**“British Spies Behind German Lines”**

Phil Tomaselli is a researcher and writer on military subjects, in particular the secret services and has been researching WW1 spies for over 20 years.

As well as the brave French and Belgian agents who reported on train and troop movements the talk looks at agents who worked out of neutral countries to obtain information from Germany itself. The gathering and use of intelligence is another one of the differences between WW1 and all previous conflicts.

**Pete Starling**  
**“War is the Only Proper School of the Surgeon”**

Pete Starling is a retired officer of the Royal Army Medical Corps and for 20 years was Director of the Army Medical Services Museum. He retired from that post in March 2014. Pete’s great interest is in the Crimean War and WW1, particularly the medical aspects of both wars.

Despite reforms of the Army Medical Services after the Boer War, by 1914 army surgeons were still very restricted in what they were prepared to carry out. Many cases were left to “let nature take its course” and surgeons were not prepared for the level of wound infection encountered. But young eager surgeons became willing to carry out operations that normally had a low success rate. This lecture will focus on this progress, including ground breaking work in the treatment of facial injuries.

**John Chester**  
**“Prisoners of the Japanese”**

John served 26 years in the RAF as an Air Traffic Controller, before leaving the RAF to become a professional gardener and then a mental nurse. He has a lifelong interest in military history and started the WFA Spalding & South Lincolnshire Branch in 1994. John was chairman for 10 years then stood down to serve on the National Executive Committee.

This talk takes a look at the prison camps in Japan where the garrison of the German colony of Tsingtao were held after their surrender in November 1914 until their repatriation in 1919/20. It looks at differences in the treatment of prisoners of war to that of the British 20 years later.

**TICKET: £25.00.** Ticket includes a buffet lunch (vegetarians catered for), plus tea/coffee on arrival and during breaks. Full directions and a map will be sent with ticket. Non-WFA members welcome. The venue has free parking, and excellent facilities for people with disabilities. Booksellers and stallholders who wish to attend are asked to call Jane Backhouse on 01234 750695.

**FROM:** Andrew Gould, 1 Drovers Way, Newton Longville, Milton Keynes, MK17 0HR. Please include booking form below with a **stamped addressed envelope** and cheque payable to **WFA Milton Keynes**. Queries, preferably by email, to [andrewgould1@btinternet.com](mailto:andrewgould1@btinternet.com) or telephone 01908 643669.

**BOOKING FORM – WFA SEMINAR SUNDAY 23rd OCTOBER 2016**

Please send . . . . .ticket(s). I enclose a cheque to **WFA Milton Keynes** for £ . . . . . and **SAE**.

Name . . . . .

Tel.no. (home or mobile) . . . . . Email . . . . .

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