



CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

Number 194

April 2024

Welcome!

A little while ago I asked whether there was any interest in another branch trip to the Western Front. I had quite a favourable response which encouraged me to make some enquiries and follow up some suggestions. I rather feel that I should keep you in the loop rather than you think that nothing has been done or is being done. Many of you will know or recall Gareth Williams who brought some of his students to talk to us at the December meeting. Gareth has been a longstanding supporter of the branch and is also himself a tour guide. He is currently putting together a proposal for us which I hope will be in my hands very shortly - as soon as it is, I shall distribute in the hope that we can indeed get another trip arranged in the not too distant future.

In a similar desire to keep you updated, work is being constantly done on our new website as we move across from www.cgwfa.org.uk to www.cgwfa.co.uk. Again it is a long process and in fairness to our webmaster I am the one slowing the process down as much as anything, though my intentions are absolutely otherwise.

In due course, however, I shall be putting out a request for volunteers to help with the uploading of the personal information we have on our war graves project. This is a mammoth task and one that I feel I can't achieve on my own. So as and when, if you feel you can help, do let me know.

There is a reading by Matthew Hollis from his award winning book *Now All Roads Lead to France: The Last Years of Edward Thomas* at the Friends Meeting House, Warwick Place, Cheltenham GL52 2NP on Saturday 27 April from 11am to 12.15pm. The entry is £10. The talk centres on Thomas's extraordinary friendship with Robert Frost and Thomas's decision, in 1915, to enlist in the army and fight in France.

The Cotswold Branch of the Orders and Medals Research Society meet every second Thursday of the month, except August, at Swindon Village Hall. On 11 April there are three short talks - *Brushes With Royalty* by Rev Paul Roberts; *Africa* by Jim Carver and *Welsh Guards* by Dave Martin.

Peter

Future branch events

Tuesday, 14 May
The Invisible Corps
Roy Larkin
The Ed Shed at 7.30pm

Roy's talk looks at the vital part that the Army Service Corps played during the Great War through the use of mechanical transport. A story of growth, evolution, inter-service rivalry and meddling civilians. The talk is brought to life with numerous period photographs.



Tuesday, 11 June
Escapers All
Richard Lloyd
The Ed Shed at 7.30pm

Richard tells the stories of officers and men who escaped from German captivity 1914-18. He will cover the preparation and planning of escapes, the consequences of failure, the escaping 'experience' and those who completed 'home runs'.



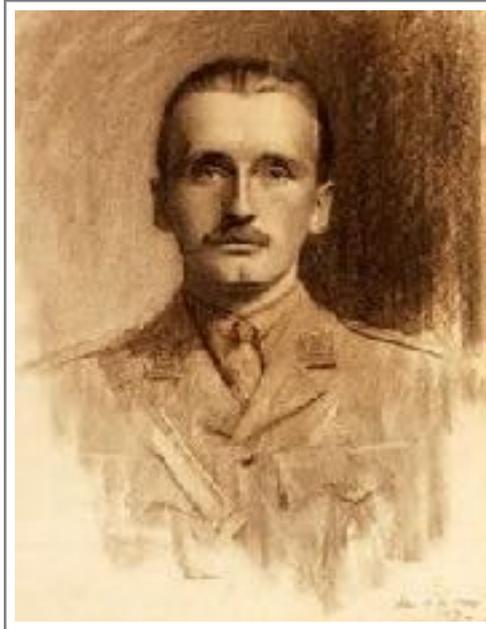
**Exposed tunnel at
Holzminden POW camp**

Major Henry Francis Clifford

'B' Squadron, 1/1st Battalion, Gloucestershire Yeomanry

Henry Francis Clifford was the only son of Henry James Clifford and his wife Annie of Frampton Court, Frampton-on-Severn. The Frampton Court estate had been in the Clifford family since the 11th century.

Born on 19 August 1871 Henry was educated at Haileybury College and Christ Church, Oxford. He enlisted into the Gloucestershire Imperial Yeomanry and served in the South African War of 1899 – 1902, where he was wounded and commissioned in the field.



His father died shortly after the end of the war and Henry took over the running of the estate. In November 1913 he married and was to have one daughter born three months after his death.

When war was declared he rejoined the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars (RGH). With the rank of Major, commanding 'B' Squadron, 1/1 Battalion, his initial deployment was in East Anglia, where the battalion was tasked with guarding against a possible German invasion. A transfer to Egypt followed in April 1915. Major Clifford remained there, in charge of the horses, whilst the bulk of the RGH went to Gallipoli in the August to fight as dismounted troops.

The RGH returned to Egypt in December 1915 and in the following January became part of 5th Mounted Brigade. On 23 April it saw significant action when a large Turkish force attacked Katia, in the Sinai Desert, about 25 miles from the Suez Canal.

By January 1917 the Turks had retreated north and an action was planned to eliminate a Turkish garrison of about 2,000 at El Magruntein, south west of Rafa (Rafah) on the border of Egypt and the 'Gaza Strip'. A force of about 5,000 comprising the 5th Mounted Brigade (which included the RGH), the Australian Mounted Division (less one Light Horse Brigade), the Imperial Camel Corps and a battery of the Honourable Artillery Company marched through the night of the 8th/9th and attacked at 7am. Ten hours of intense fighting followed

before a well sited and strongly held Turkish position was overcome. The Turks lost 250 dead and 1,600 prisoners were taken before the British withdrew, as planned, to El Arish. British losses were 72 killed or missing and 415 wounded. Major Clifford was one of those killed.

Initially he was buried at Rafa but later re-interred at Kantara War Memorial Cemetery, Egypt. He is commemorated on the Frampton-on-Severn War Memorial and inside the parish church and on war memorials at Haileybury College and Christ Church, Oxford.

The Frampton Court Estate was inherited by his wife and latterly by the daughter Henry never saw. Upon her marriage her husband changed his surname to Clifford to perpetuate the connection of that name with the Frampton Estate.

Graham Adams

Contact details

Cheltenham & Gloucester Branch President

Professor Peter Simkins MBE FRHistS

Branch Chairman

Peter Gill

Pen Y Bryn, Bull's Hill, Walford,

Ross-on-Wye HR9 5RH

07702 253 638 • chairman@cgwfa.org.uk

Branch Treasurer & Newsletter Editor

Hilary Jennings

4 St Stephen's Road, Cheltenham GL51 3AA

01242 243 927 • newsletter@cgwfa.org.uk

Website

www.cgwfa.org.uk

Facebook

[Cheltenham & Gloucester Branch of the Western Front Association](#)

Twitter

[@CGWFA](#)

The Western Front Association

BM Box 1914,

London WC1N 3XX

0207 118 1914

membership@westernfrontassociation.com

www.westernfrontassociation.com



"When you go home, tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow, we gave our today."