



# CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

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## Welcome!

As I announced at our AGM last November, I will be standing down as branch chairman at the end of this year. I will have been chairman for 18 years and I feel that it is not before time that someone with fresh ideas takes over the mantle. It is neither an onerous, difficult or time consuming role and I have been proud to hold the position for so many years. Unfortunately, however, as yet, no-one has put their name forward to take it on. There is of course still plenty of time, but to secure a smooth transition it would be helpful if prospective candidates popped their heads above the parapet sooner rather than later. I shall of course be on hand for the next chair to help in any way needed, but I would also like to assure them that I shall step away from branch meetings for at least the first six months of 2025 to allow the branch to move on freely.

If you could consider becoming the next chair, then please speak to a committee member about the possibility.

If you haven't yet taken a look at our new website - [www.cgwfa.co.uk](http://www.cgwfa.co.uk) - then please do so. Although it's not fully finished, and won't be for a little while yet due to the content that we are adding, it is coming on really well and is a massive step up from our previous website. It will certainly be a wonderful portal to our branch and a fine research tool, I would even go so far as to say that it could become the best branch website.

A *D-Day 80* exhibition opened at the Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum on Saturday, 1 June. Entry to the exhibition is free with paid museum entry. Eighty years ago over 150,000 troops landed in Normandy to free Europe from Nazi domination. Amongst them were many men from Gloucestershire, including the 2nd Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment. The exhibition will tell the wider story of the operations and also highlights the personal stories of those from our county who took part.

*Peter*

## Future branch events

**Tuesday, 9 July**

*The Last Naval Hero*

Lieutenant Commander Roy Smart

**The Ed Shed at 7.30pm**

The extraordinary story of David, 1st Earl Beatty. Blessed with the Nelson touch, a matinee-idol image, and a ruthless and charismatic personality, Beatty rose with meteoric speed from Cadet to First Sea Lord and to Statesman.

This talk discusses his rapidly increasing fame and fortune, his marriage to an opulent, hedonistic American socialite, Ethel, and his role as a national hero. It examines his central and controversial part in the greatest naval battle (Jutland) and, later, the greatest naval surrender (Der Tag) as well as his 'Downton Abbey' life-style of marital strife and scandal.

**Tuesday, 13 August**

*Branch Summer Meeting*

**The Ed Shed at 7.30pm**

A special evening to allow some greater social interaction than normal. There will be a couple of short talks by members along with a barbeque, raffle and an opportunity for members to bring along items for the interest of other members.

Enjoy an evening with others sharing your interest in the Great War.

**Tuesday, 10 September**

*Morris Meredith Williams,*

*an Artist on the Western Front*

Phyllida Shaw

**The Ed Shed at 7.30pm**

## Private George William Milner (183594) 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion, (Nova Scotia Rifles), Canadian Infantry

George William Milner was born in Addingham, Yorkshire on 29 October 1888, one of four children born to Henry Robert Milner (a pharmacist) and his wife Mary. By 1901 the family had moved to Gloucester and George was educated at the Crypt School.

In 1903 (or thereabouts) he emigrated to Canada and went into farming on a large ranch near Calgary, Alberta. Upon the outbreak of war, he immediately answered the call for recruits to fight for 'the old country'. After a period of training, he was sent back to the ranch for a year to grow wheat, eventually enlisting in Calgary on 17 November 1915. After about six months training he embarked from Halifax, Nova Scotia on 2 June 1916, arriving at Liverpool on 8 June. He had trained with 89<sup>th</sup> Battalion, made up of Albertan recruits but upon arrival in the UK was assigned to a reserve battalion, with a view to providing reinforcements for units in France and Flanders. In the same month he was sent for machine gun training.

On 6 December 1916 he joined the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Canadian Infantry in the field. At around Christmas he suffered gas poisoning and spent over two months receiving



treatment, before returning to his unit on 18 March 1917.

The 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion was part of 5 Brigade, 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division. On 9 April 1917 all four Canadian Divisions were part of the British First Army, attacking Vimy Ridge, as part of the Arras Offensive. The battalion was deployed in the centre of the attack, setting off from east of Neuville St Vaast towards the village of Thelus and Hill 135. Despite the swirling snow storm the attack was very successful; 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion achieved all its

objectives and captured 390 prisoners plus four machine guns.

Despite the tremendous success of the Canadian Divisions in capturing Vimy Ridge, casualties were still high. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division recorded about 800 killed in April 1917. Private Milner was one of the unfortunate ones, being badly wounded on the 9 April. He was taken to No 18 Casualty Clearing Station at Lapugnoy, near Bethune but there was nothing that could be done to save him. Private Milner died on 11 April, aged 28 and was buried in the nearby Lapugnoy Military Cemetery. He is commemorated on the Gloucester War Memorial.

*Graham Adams*

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