



CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

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Welcome!

Just over 18 years ago I was on a guided walking tour of the Western Front with battlefield guide Clive Harris, during a conversation he planted the idea in my head of forming a Gloucestershire branch of the Western Front Association. I later mentioned this idea to Hilary who I was teaching the piano at the time and who I knew shared my interest in the Great War, she immediately said that she was happy to help make the project happen. In October 2006 we held our first meeting at the Prince Michael Hall at Dean Close School and since that time to this the branch has been a major part of my life. We have enjoyed dozens of fabulous talks, organised trips both in this country and abroad, survived Covid and made permanent homes at three different venues. We have a strong branch and have been blessed by a succession of energetic committee members that have made it what it is, however, without any doubt the branch is indebted most for its longevity and professionalism to the unceasing work of Hilary who has acted as secretary, treasurer, newsletter editor, Sentinel editor and a host of other unidentified titles. When Hilary

stands down from her roles at the end of this year myself and the branch will owe her a great debt of gratitude and I am sure you will join with me in thanking her for all the service she has unselfishly given.

As I stand down from my position of chair it is in the knowledge that it is not before time. Fresh energy and ideas are required and I am delighted that Simon Shephard volunteered to take over the role, I am in no doubt that he can offer the branch far more than I ever could with his wealth of knowledge and experience. Hilary's multitude of roles will be partially taken over by Paul Haigh as treasurer, Adrian Smith as newsletter editor and Dave Gargett as Sentinel editor, however there are still jobs unattached to a committee member, so please volunteer if you are at all able to offer some time.

I leave my position with a wealth of treasured memories and a host of wonderful friendships. Thank you all for your support over the past 18 years, please raise a glass for the next 18.

Peter

Future branch events

Tuesday, 14 January

*The Explosion in Halifax, Nova Scotia,
December 1917*

John Stanyard

The Ed Shed at 7.30pm

This talk examines the collision between the SS *Imo* and the SS *Mont Blanc* and the resulting explosion of three kilotonnes of TNT, guncotton etc. With at least 2000 dead and 9000 injured, it was the biggest man-made explosion the world would see until the atomic bomb.



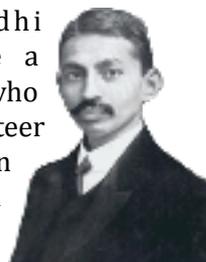
Tuesday, 11 February

Mahatma Gandhi in WW1

Stephen Barker

The Ed Shed at 7.30pm

In 1914, Mahatma Gandhi considered himself to be a patriotic British Subject, one who would form the Indian Volunteer Ambulance Corps that year in support of those fighting on the Western Front. As late as the summer of 1918, Gandhi supported the largest recruitment of Indian soldiers of the war, to fight on behalf of the Empire. Yet by the summer of the following year he had become an implacable foe of the Raj, aiming to undermine its endeavours at every turn. Why was that?



Captain Ivan Richard Gibbs 10th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Ivan Richard Gibbs was born in Cheltenham on 6 July 1891. He was one of seven children born to William Henry Gibbs and his wife Harriet.

He was educated at Cheltenham Grammar School and obtained an Open Scholarship to Jesus College, Oxford, where he was awarded a BA. After Oxford he became an Assistant Demonstrator in Science at Imperial College of Science & Technology, South Kensington (part of the University of London). During this time, he joined the Inns of Court Officer Training Corps. He was a good all-round sportsman, excelling in athletics, football and cricket.

Following the outbreak of war, he was commissioned on 19 September 1914 into the 10th Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment as a Second Lieutenant and promotion to Lieutenant followed on 3 November. He spent much of the winter of 1914/15 in billets at Cheltenham, before finalising training on Salisbury Plain, prior to the battalion departing for France on 9 August 1915. On 6 July he had been promoted to Captain assuming command of No 1 Company.

Once in France the 10 Glosters became one of the 'New Army' units in 1 Brigade, 1 Division and spent time in training at Bethune and nearby



Ferfay. On 21 September the battalion moved to Vermelles and then into the front line on 24 September, in battle positions at 7.30am.

The following day was the opening of the Battle of Loos and the 10 Glosters attacked at 6.30am, under the cover of gas and smoke. Unfortunately, the anticipated wind which was due to carry the gas over the German lines dropped and in places blew back, causing casualties in the advancing troops. The advance was subjected to machine gun fire from the small copse known as Bois Carre but this was neutralised and despite a heavy concentration of wire the German front line was taken. The Glosters managed to get into the second and third German lines, despite heavy resistance but it came at tremendous cost. Only sixty men remained from those who went 'over the top' and out of twenty-one officers only five came through unscathed, with eight killed: the latter included Captain Gibbs.

Captain Gibbs' body was recovered and he is buried in St Mary's Advance Dressing Station Cemetery, Haisnes. He is commemorated on the Cheltenham War Memorial and memorials inside Cheltenham Grammar School and St Philip & St James Church.

Graham Adams

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