



## CHELtenham & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

Number 203

January 2025

### Welcome!

It gives me great pleasure as the new Branch Chairman to write my first note for this newsletter.

I would like to start by thanking Peter for all his hard work in establishing this Branch 18 years ago and for nurturing it ever since. Throughout this time Peter has been ably supported by Hilary who has fulfilled the role of Treasurer, Secretary and Newsletter Editor: she is also standing down. Between them they are handing over a Branch that is in excellent health, full of friendly members, who are entertained by a varied and interesting programme of lectures.

Next, a little background about myself. I grew up sharing my bedroom with my father's collection of military history books although I did not pursue the subject academically until quite recently. Rather my career choice was to join the Army, first as a soldier, and then for most of my 40+ years' service as an officer. Following an Army Staff Ride to the Somme in 2016 I decided to undertake Prof. Gary Sheffield's MA course in Britain and the First World War at Wolverhampton University. Having caught the academic bug, I am seeking a second career as an author of military history.

I have been a member of the WFA since 2017 and a member of this Branch for two years, during which time I have delivered one full and one short lecture. It is therefore, with some trepidation, stepped into the rather large shoes of Peter!

Now to some Branch administration. As part of our hand over Peter and I reviewed the Branches' current finances and whilst they are sound, they do need some finessing if we are to remain financially secure over the next year.

To help us meet the increasing travel costs being face by our visiting lecturers it was agreed at the AGM to ask for a £5 door donation when you attend one of our lectures. Likewise, to meet the costs of maintaining our new website, producing this monthly newsletter and the four editions of *The Sentinel* each year it was also agreed that we would raise the Branch annual subscription to £10 (£15 for joint memberships).

Paul Haigh, our new Treasurer, and I will now look at how we implement the changes to our subscription charges. More to follow ....

Simon

### Future Branch Events

**Tuesday 11 February**  
**Mahatma Gandhi in WW1**  
Stephen Barker

**7.30pm Ed Shed**



In 1914 Mahatma Gandhi considered himself to be a patriotic British subject. As late as the summer of 1918, he supported the largest recruitment of Indian soldiers of the war, to fight on behalf of the Empire. Yet by the summer of 1919, he had become an implacable foe of the Raj aiming to undermine its endeavours at every turn.

**Tuesday 11 March**  
**Lieutenant Bill Haine VC MC & the 1st Battalion Honourable Artillery Company in the Great War**  
Michael Orr  
**7.30pm Ed Shed**



Lieutenant Hayne VC MC deployed with No 3 (C) Company, 1st Battalion, HAC to France on 18th September 1914. Hayne was awarded the VC for his actions at Gavrelle on 28/29th April 1917 during the Battle of Arras. He later served with the 35th Sikhs and was awarded an MC for his actions on the North West Frontier of India on 17th May 1919.

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

---

## Second Lieutenant Arnold Aldrich 1/8th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Arnold Aldrich was born at Diss, Norfolk in 1885. He was the seventh son and one of twelve children born to Robert Aldrich and his wife Jane Anne.

At the time of the 1901 census, aged 16, he was living in London as an apprentice to a furnishing company and in 1910 moved to Cheltenham, taking up a position as a cabinet salesman with local furnishers Messrs. John Lance & Co. In the following year he married a Norfolk girl and in 1912 the couple had a baby son. Arnold was a member and secretary of the United Methodist Church, Royal Well, Cheltenham. The electoral register for 1915 shows him living in Oakland Avenue, Cheltenham.

Arnold joined the Army in January 1917, initially posted to 28th Battalion, London Regiment (Artists' Rifles). That unit was known for being the entry point for men marked down for a commission and on 29th May 1917 he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Worcestershire Regiment. Initially he was posted to the 1st Battalion and thereafter attached to the 1/8th, a Territorial Force battalion.



This battalion was part of 144th Infantry Brigade within 48th (South Midland) Division. In November 1917 it was sent to the Italian front, as part of an Anglo-French force sent to bolster the Italian army, following its defeat at the hands of the Austro-Hungarians at the Battle of Caporetto.

On 1st May 1918 Second Lieutenant Aldrich was commanding a supply column making its way up a rough and rocky mountain road in the Asiago region. He was mounted on a quiet horse which unfortunately slipped off the side of the road and dropped down four feet. Arnold was thrown from the horse, and his head struck a rock, fracturing his skull. He was taken to a French casualty station but sadly died before regaining consciousness: he was aged 34.

Arnold Aldrich now lies in Granezza British Cemetery on the Asiago Plateau. At the time of his death his widow was living in Charlton Lane, Leckhampton and he is commemorated on the Leckhampton War Memorial as well as on the Roll of Honour inside St. Peter's Church.

Graham Adams

### Cheltenham & Gloucester Branch Contact Details

**President:** Professor Peter Simkins MBE FRHistS

**Chairman:**

Lieutenant Colonel (Retd) Simon Shephard MA

Email: [chairman@cgwfa.co.uk](mailto:chairman@cgwfa.co.uk)

Mobile: 07818 720156

Address: Awre House, Awre Road, BLAKENEY,  
GL15 4AA

**Newsletter Editor:** Adrian Smith

Email: [newsletter@cgwfa.co.uk](mailto:newsletter@cgwfa.co.uk)

Mobile: 07557 325656

**Website:** [www.cgwfa.co.uk](http://www.cgwfa.co.uk)

**X (Twitter):** @CGWFA

**Facebook:** Cheltenham & Gloucester Branch of  
the Western Front Association

**The Western Front Association**

BM Box 1914,  
London WC1N 3XX

0207 118 1914

[membership@westernfrontassociation.com](mailto:membership@westernfrontassociation.com)

[www.westernfrontassociation.com](http://www.westernfrontassociation.com)



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