



CHELtenham & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

Number 208

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Welcome!

Last month we enjoyed an excellent talk from Phil Watson on the lance v lance cavalry action at Le Moncel or for those that wish to find the correct battlefield Mortcel as it is now spelt. Phil used a host of different sources to talk us through the action and help to establish facts from the inevitable fictions that can be found in any single soured account of a battle. His talk was followed by some questions from the floor, and I was delighted that one of them even flummoxed Phi! I am sure that those that heard Phil talk will be delighted to know that we will be asking him to return in the future.

Armed Forces Day 28 June - Gloucester Docks

As a reminder the Branch will be supporting Armed Forces Day in Gloucester Docks on 28 June with a small stand handing out information about our activities and inviting people to join us. Despite my earlier suggestion that I had a very slightly better offer of a holiday in the South of France; domestic arrangements now mean that I will be back in time so, I will be manning the stand.

We will be manning our stand from 1215 to 1700 hrs. I plan to set up our stand at 1130 hrs (it is near the middle pedestrian entrance of Southgate Moorings carpark).

Although we have display stands and I can provide a table we do not own a gazebo. Would anyone be willing to lend the branch one for the day? I'm happy to collect it on the Friday beforehand.

So, what I am looking for now is some willing volunteers to keep me company! We will be handing out our speaker programme and explaining the role of our Branch and the wider WFA. It goes without saying that in doing so we will be encouraging people to come and join us at our next meeting!

I am not expecting volunteers to spend the whole afternoon on the stand but if you are willing to help for an hour or so that would be marvelous. If you are willing to help, please do let me know when you might be able to join me so that we can organise a suitable *roster*.

Summer BBQ

As no one has commented either for or against having a BBQ this year we have decided that we will not try and organise one. I and the committee will look at reintroduce one next year in line with our summer programme.

Simon

Future Branch Events

Tuesday 8 July

There Were No Neutrals In The Trenches



In this talk Michael will give an account of those American citizens who died fighting in the British Army during the Somme campaign from July to November 1916.

Michael O'Brien
7.30pm Ed Shed

Tuesday 12 August

Where The Money Went Roy Larkin



This fully illustrated talk looks at where the money was spent during the Great War. Intended to awaken the imagination & look at aspects of the war, rarely considered. Sometimes it is the size of the number, other times it is minimal with a nice back story.

Roy Larkin
7.30pm Ed Shed

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

6557 Private Fred George Skerton
1/14th Battalion, London Regiment (London Scottish)

Fred George Skerton was born at Bisley in 1892, one of eight sons born to Walter and Kate Skerton of Lypiatt Villa, Eastcombe, near Stroud. He followed his father into the carpentry trade and in 1911 was working at Bliss' Mill, Chalford.



On 10 December 1915 he attested for military service at Bexleyheath, Kent, near to his current address at Belvedere. He was placed in the Reserve until mobilised on 27 January 1916 and underwent training until 11 June 1916. On the following day he embarked from Southampton to join the BEF, linking up with the 1/14th Battalion, London Regiment on 23 June 1916.

On 1 July 1916 his battalion (part of 168th Brigade, 56th (London) Division) took part in the diversionary attack at Gommecourt. The plan was for 56th Division to envelope the village from the south, whilst 46th Division was to do something similar from the north. The 168th Brigade was on the right flank of 56th Division's attack and under cover of a smoke screen achieved its objective of capturing the German third line of trenches. However, in the face of German heavy artillery fire and counter attacks, the failure of 46th Division to make any progress and likewise the failure of 31st Division's attack on Serre, to the south, the gains had to be relinquished.

The 1/14th London's lost seven officers, and 213 other ranks killed in the attack, one of whom was Private Fred George Skerton: his time on the Western Front had lasted a mere eight days. His body was never recovered and he is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial and also on the Chalford War Memorial.

Graham Adams



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