



## CHELtenham & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

Number 211

September 2025

### Welcome!

Unfortunately, I am unable to join you this month and so I am very grateful to Bob and the rest of the team for stepping in and covering for me ... again!



However please do not forget that there is an event being held by one of our fellow local groups – the Orders and Medals Research Society on Thursday 11 September at Swindon Village

Hall, Cheltenham; they are holding a meeting at which Clive Montellier from the Joint Medal Office at Imjin Barracks will be briefing them about the design and issue of new medals, something that has happened a lot in the last few years. He will also be covering the role of the DNA Investigation Team – The War Detectives of TV fame. If you are interested in attending, please could you let the organiser Len Evans know at [levans.consulting@gmail.com](mailto:levans.consulting@gmail.com)

I will be attending the WFA Chair's conference at the beginning of October so if there are any issues that you would like me to raise with the Association's national council, please do let me know.

The issues I will be raising on our behalf are funding for a branch laptop (given how often I forget mine) and whether the national council will also fund a replacement advertising banner and stands for us. Our banner was damaged beyond repair at the Armed Forces Day, and our display boards are in poor shape and could do with being replaced.

Additionally, I will hopefully be speaking to some of the Chairs of other West Country Branches with a view to seeing if there is any appetite for a combined battlefield tour to the Western Front using a commercial provider.

Finally, as a heads up we are due to hold our AGM before Christmas. I will look to publish an agenda with next month's newsletter and would therefore welcome any points that members wish to raise so that these may be included.

*Simon*

### Future Branch Events

**Tuesday 14 October**  
**The Palestine Campaign**  
**Dr John Peaty**



Following three battles to break into Palestine at Gaza, the capture of Jerusalem and a spectacular victory at Megiddo (Armageddon) which finally broke the enemy forces, the Holy Land was freed from Turkish rule.

**7.30pm Ed Shed**

**Tuesday 11 November**  
**Kitchener's Army revisited**  
**Peter Simkins**



In this talk our Branch President Peter Simkins will look at revisions to the ideas which he originally put forward in the 1980s – not to be missed!

**7.30pm Ed Shed**

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

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## 2801 Lance Corporal Harold Percy Gerald Brain 2/5th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Harold Percy Gerald Brain was one of eight children born to Percy and Harriett Matilda Brain and was their only son, being born in Gloucester in 1896. At the time of the Great War the family the family was living at High Street, Tredworth, Gloucester.

After completing basic education Harold attended Gloucester School of Art, where he learnt typography, which led him into an apprenticeship with the *Gloucester Journal* and *Citizen* newspapers. On 7 September 1914, aged 18, he left them to enlist in the Army and was posted to the 2/5th Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment. After training in Northampton and Chelmsford the battalion went to France on 25 May 1916, becoming part of 184 Brigade, 61 (Second South Midland) Division. Private Brain was promoted to Lance Corporal (unpaid) and managed the company signallers.



61st Division fought alongside the 5<sup>th</sup> Australian Division at the Battle of Fromelles (19-20 July 1916). This operation, intended to divert German troops from the Somme Offensive further south, was a disaster and both units took heavy casualties for little gain. The reputation of 61 Division was badly tarnished and for the remainder of 1916 it was only used in holding trench lines.

On 25 September 1916 the 2/5th Glosters were manning trenches at Mauquissart, northeast of Neuve Chapelle when at 7.15pm the Germans exploded a mine under the British lines. It resulted in the death of six Other Ranks, with another six wounded. Lance Corporal Brain, aged 20, was one of the dead.

A comrade wrote to his parents stating that Harold was 'buried as a result of an enemy mine close to our trenches, so that he must have suffered very little'. A chaplain wrote, 'I buried your son in a pretty little burial ground, not far from the trenches'.

The burial ground is now Pont-du-Hem Military Cemetery, situated off the La Bassee to Estairs road and about 3.5 kilometers from Mauquissart.



*Graham Adams*

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