



CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION



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www.cgwfa.co.uk

Welcome!

Having been in the chair for a year now I thought I would use this opportunity to reflect. Twelve months ago, it seemed a rather daunting task to take over from Peter whilst at the same time Hilary also stepped down. They were going to be two big sets of shoes to fill.

I need not have worried; they had both left the Branch in 'good order.' In particularly the decisions they helped the Branch make at the last AGM have ensured we are on a firm financial footing with a robust management structure. As a result, both myself and Paul, who has taken on the treasurer's post, have been able to ease into our roles.

The committee they had gathered around them has largely remained intact and continues to deliver, what I am sure you will all agree is, an excellent service to the Branch.

Adrian has worked tirelessly throughout the year to produce our newsletters, to seek out opportunities to broaden the Branch's engagement with the local community and most importantly to ensure the availability of the Ed Shed for our meetings. He is routinely one of the first here and the last to leave!

Simon, as you know continues to oversee our War Graves Project whilst Ken does sterling work selling

our books, the supply of which seems never ending thanks to Len's efforts.

Dave, who we will hear more from tonight, looks after our social media content and our page on the WFA website. He also edits *The Sentinel* – a task which is made all the easier when we provide him with content!

Graham has continued to provide us with our monthly recollections of one of Gloucestershire's fallen. And, I am delighted to say he will be rejoining us as a regular member having just moved back to the county

As we all know the purpose of the Branch is to meet and further our understanding of the First World War. In this respect Andy has delivered another excellent programme of speakers this year. Having seen next year's programme there is something for everyone and I know the lectures will be well worth attending.

I will finish by wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year – I look forward to seeing you all on the 13 January!

Simon

Tuesday 13 January 2026

**Tommy's Trench Humour in the Great War
Stephen Barker**



Soldiers often turned to humour to alleviate the stress of life in the trenches. Jokes, puns, and satirical songs were a part of the soldiers' oral culture. Much of the humour was lost on those outside the soldiers' group, but it resonated with the soldiers and allowed them to cope with the strain of service and combat.

7.30pm Ed Shed

Tuesday 10 February

**Smith Dorian and the Mons Campaign
David Keable-Elliott**



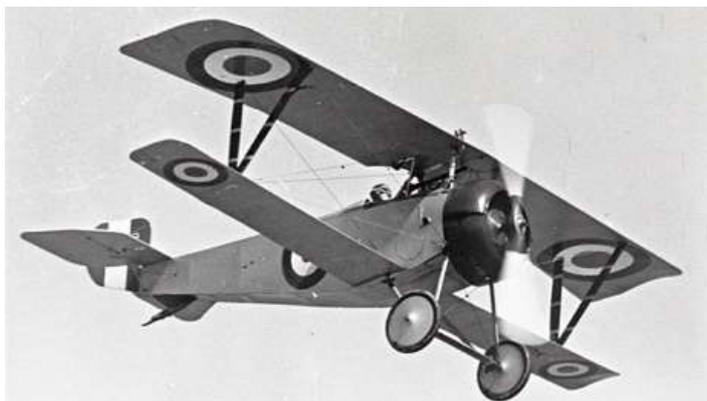
Based on a fresh operational analysis, with reference to war diaries from GHQ to battalion level, Horace Smith Dorian's coolness and rapidity of thought, under the competent direction of Sir John French, is revealed as the key to the remarkable survival of II Corps at both Mons and Le Cateau.

7.30pm Ed Shed

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

Second Lieutenant Maxwell Gerard Cole No 1 Squadron, Royal Flying Corps

Maxwell Gerard Cole was born at Cirencester in 1898. He was the youngest son and one of seven children born to William Henry Cole and his wife Catherine Martha. Three of their children would die in the Great War. The family home, at the time of the Great War, was Bourne House, Brimscombe.



by an enemy fighter or ground fire. He was flying a Nieuport 17 – see picture - from Bailleul (Asylum Ground) aerodrome.

Initially reported missing, his body was later found, and he is buried in Oostaverne Wood Cemetery in the Ypres Salient.

Maxwell Gerard Cole is commemorated on the Cirencester War Memorial inside the parish church and on the Roll of Honour at the town's Memorial Hospital.

He is also one of the three Cole brothers listed on the War Memorial, inside the Holy Trinity Church, Brimscombe; both of his brothers died whilst serving with the 5th Glosters.

Maxwell was aged eighteen when he received his commission into the Royal Flying Corps, upon leaving Marlborough College, in August 1916. He trained as a pilot before being posted to France in early February 1917 and joined No 1 Squadron. He had not long returned from leave before his final flight.

On 18 May 1917, Second Lieutenant Cole failed to return from a mission to attack a German balloon, presumably shot down



Graham Adams

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