



## CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION



Number 217

March 2026

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

### Welcome!

Well, what another great turn-out we had last month – thank you all so much for supporting the Branch.

I need to highlight a change in our parking arrangements. As a number of us discovered after last month's meeting the Council had, unbeknown to us all, decided to impose parking charges on the Gloucester Health Access Centre carpark from 8pm onwards. As a result, we had all been fined. Although we have successfully appealed those fines we have been informed that the charges will remain in place. Additionally, the Council has stated that it is not permissible to use that carpark before 8pm without a permit. We, therefore, are recommending that if you do choose to attend one of our meetings you park in the **Westgate Street Car and Coach Park (GL1 2TU)** which is free from 6pm onwards. (see updated maps below).

If anyone has not had their fine quashed or paid before the decision to do so was announced by Gloucester Council, please could they let me know?

Despite my best efforts to confuse not only the membership but our guest speaker I am delighted to say that we all enjoyed David Keable-Elliot's

excellent talk on General Sir Smith-Dorien and the Mons campaign of 1914. David based his talk on his extensive research from over 120 War Dairies covering the action. Ranging from the very lowest levels completed by hard-pressed adjutants in dugouts to those filled in by equally hard-pressed staff officers in perhaps somewhat more salubrious surroundings, David was able to paint a very vivid picture of the events of those tumultuous months.

As regards to the cleansing of our membership email addresses I would like to take this opportunity to thank Joe and Paul who are doing sterling work between them to sort out our database.

As a Branch we have again been asked to provide a research stand as part of Gloucester History Month on either the 23rd or 30th of May between 10 am and 2 pm. If anyone is available to help, please can I ask you to let myself and Adrian know.

Finally we all rely on Adrian to open up for us each month. It would be really helpful if someone was willing to act as a reserve so that should he not be available we can still get in!

*Simon*

#### **Tuesday 14 April** **Three Days in the Great War** **Dr Derek Clayton**

This talk examines the performance of the 49th Division in set piece attacks on 3 September 1916 at Thiepval, 9 October 1917 at Poelcapelle and on 1 November 1918 at Valenciennes.



**7.30pm Ed Shed**

#### **Tuesday 12 May** **Mobilization 1914** **Phil Watson**

From the declaration of war to deployment, the critical phase was the mobilization and the production of the Western Front Plan (the War Book) which for the most part has been credited to General Henry Wilson. Phil takes a detailed look at the BEF's mobilisation plan & the truth behind the men who wrote the War Book and the names forgotten by history.



**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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**12071 Private Victor James Roberts  
8th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment**



Victor James Roberts was born on 26 November 1895 in Gloucester, one of four children born to Arthur and Gertrude Roberts.

After completing his education Victor trained as a printing compositor with *The Citizen* newspaper before joining the Great Western Railway in January 1913. He was working in the railway sheds at Gloucester when war broke out. He soon enlisted and was posted to the 8th Battalion of the Glosters.

After spending the winter and early part of 1915 training in Wiltshire he went to the Western Front on 18 July 1915, where the 8th Glosters became part of 57th Brigade, 19 (Western) Division. Prior to his deployment abroad Victor had married Amelia Alice Loys at Gloucester in early 1915.

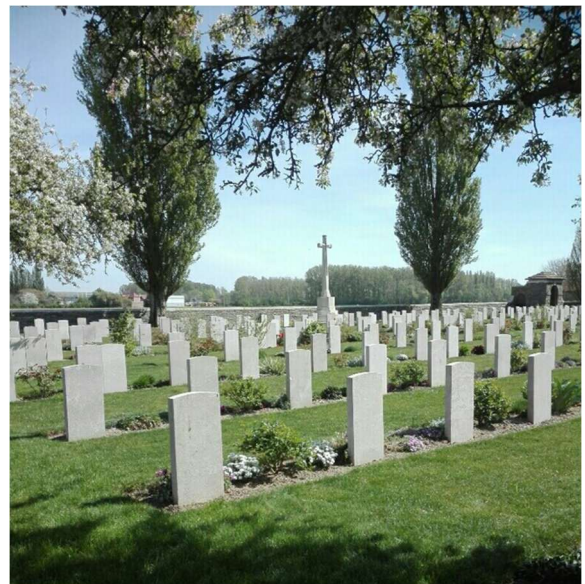
On 2 March 1916 the 8th Glosters were in the line near Laventie, between Sign Post Lane and Moated Grange Street. According to his company commander Victor had been specially chosen as one of two company snipers and had, in past weeks, accounted for several of the enemy, including one that morning. Whilst performing his duty that

afternoon he was shot in the head by a German counterpart and died within ten minutes of receiving his fatal wound.

The battalion war diary records: *German snipers very active this morning, two men being killed: the other man was 2166 Private Alfred Ballinger of Cheltenham.*

Private Roberts was buried in Rue-du-Bacquerot No 1 Military Cemetery, Laventie, alongside his comrade Alfred Ballinger.

The *Gloucester Journal* of 11 March 1916 carried a heading *Gloucester sniper's death: Mother succumbs to shock.* Upon receiving official notification of his death Victor's wife broke the news to his mother, who, already in poor health, suffered from shock and died within the hour, aged 42.



*Graham Adams*

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