

	CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION	
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Welcome!

Before I talk about routine business, I would like to inform all members of the Branch that our President's wife, Jane Simkins, sadly pass away last month. I am sure you will all join me in passing on our heartfelt condolences to Peter and his family for their loss

I know some of you are already aware and have been in touch with Peter. I have informed the WFA Executive Committee of Jane's passing, and they have been in touch with Peter, and I know many of his friends have done likewise.

In terms of Branch business, I'm pleased to say that most members were aware of our parking issues in February and as a result had identified alternative arrangements last month. The one or two who had not got the message were advised to move their cars which they did. To the best of my knowledge no more fines need to highlight a change in our parking arrangements.

Once again last month's meeting was well attended, and we all listened intently to Robin Goldsmith's

presentation. He took us from man's first faltering flights, through the pre-war development of both civil and military aviation before taking us through the rapidly developing 'arms race' between the Allies and the Germans. Each side was seeking to gain an advantage over the other be it through increased engine power, better airframes, or more effective armaments. These later innovations took us from firing pistols and rifles at each other to interrupter gears which enable the use of forward firing machine guns. Robin ended his story in 1915 and will hopefully be back next year to take us forward into 1916.

Following my request for volunteers for help with a stand at Gloucester History Festival we have now been able to confirm that we will be doing so on Saturday 30 May. I am now endeavouring to ensure we have our new pop-up banners and display board ready for the event.

Simon

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

Tuesday 9 June **Kaiser Bill: the Man behind the image** **Sue Woolmans**

Wilhelm II - the last emperor of Germany – was pilloried by the British press & castigated for his role at the start of WW1. Sue sets out a more rounded view of the man who was the grandson of Queen Victoria, the first cousin of King George V, a British Field Marshall and Admiral of the Fleet. She explores his love/hate relationship with the British Imperial family, looks at his relationships with Europe's other ruling houses & weighs his ultimate fate.



7.30pm Ed Shed

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

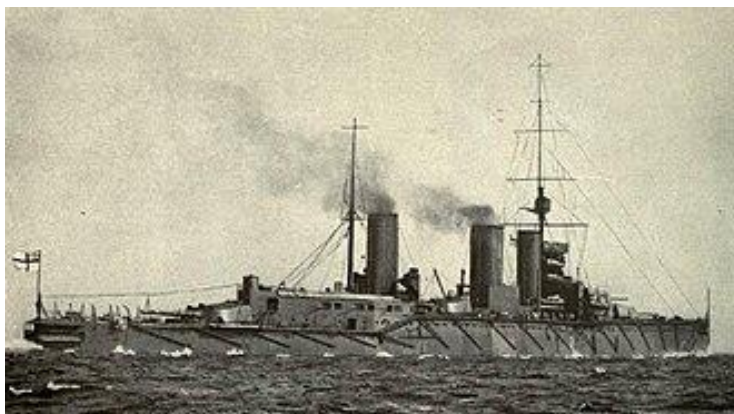
269291 CHIEF ENGINE ROOM ARTIFICER 1ST CLASS ARTHUR CASTLE

ROYAL NAVY – HMS *QUEEN MARY*

Arthur Castle was born in Gloucester on 27 September 1876, the youngest son of William & Annie Castle, who lived in Ryecroft Street, Gloucester. Upon leaving school he took up an engineering apprenticeship with a local firm, Messrs Summers & Scott. In 1897 there was a six-month nationwide strike of engineers over the length of the working day & when it was over Arthur decided to offer his engineering skills to the Royal Navy, as an engine room artificer. He enlisted, for a twelve-year term, on 7 February 1898, which in due course was extended. He saw service on ships in the Mediterranean, Australia, South Africa & was part of the ship's company of the cruiser HMS *St. George* when it was an escort for the future King George V & Queen Mary's visit to the Antipodes in 1901.

In 1906 he married and in 1908 was promoted to CERA 2nd Class. From 1911 to 1913 he was a technical instructor at the Naval School, Portsmouth on the use of fuel oil.

Upon the commissioning of the battlecruiser HMS *Queen Mary* in 1913 he was promoted to Chief Petty Officer, as a CERA 1st Class, joining the ship on 4 September that year. HMS *Queen Mary* was the last battlecruiser to be built prior to the Great War and was a powerful ship, the main armament being eight 13.5-inch guns.



On the 31 May 1916 in the opening phase of the Battle of Jutland, the 1st Battlecruiser Squadron commanded by Admiral Beatty fought a running battle with battlecruisers of the German High Seas Fleet.

Queen Mary exchanged fire with the SMS *Seydlitz*, both ships receiving hits. She also came under fire from the SMS *Derfflinger* and was struck twice with devastating effect. It is believed that at least one of the magazines serving her forward four-inch guns ignited causing a violent explosion and the ship to break in two near the foremast. There was a further explosion aft and the ship disappeared in a

cloud of grey smoke. Only twenty of the ship's company of 1,286 survived; Arthur Castle was not one of them.

Chief Engine Room Artificer 1st Class Arthur Castle is commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial and on the Gloucester War Memorial.

(Arthur Castle's photo taken from the Gloucester Journal of 10 June 1916)

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
Mobile: 07818 720156
Address: Awre House, Awre Road, BLAKENEY,
GL15 4AA
Newsletter Editor: Adrian Smith
Email: newsletter@cgwfa.co.uk
Mobile: 07557 325656

Website: 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

www.westernfrontassociation.com



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