

	CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BRANCH of THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION	
	Number 219 May 2026	www.cgwfa.co.uk

Welcome!

Although April's numbers were slightly down on the last few months, perhaps a result of the lighter evenings offering alternative opportunities, we nevertheless enjoyed an excellent presentation from Dr Derek Clayton. What a delight it was having him back talking to us again.

Using extensive research Derek took us through the organisation of the 49th (West Riding) Division before addressing its performance across three major battles in which the division performed set piece attacks. Using high quality mapping mixed with his own photography of the actual ground fought over, Derek brought to life these three attacks whilst highlighting how the Division's performance changed over time. Of particular note was the impact that artillery, or the lack of it, had on the 49th's ability to secure its objectives.

This month will see the Branch taking part in the Gloucester Local History Month with a stand at the Heritage Centre, St Michael's Tower. We will

be there from 10 am to 2 pm on Saturday 30 May offering advice to passersby on how to study their military ancestors – most notably regarding service in the First World War but I'm sure we can help more broadly if asked.

We will be making use of our new banners and display boards as well as handing out leaflets about our Branch and the Western Front Association. We will also take the opportunity to sell some of our second-hand books to raise funds for the Branch. If you are in town do, please, pop along and say 'Hi!'

Given that we are moving into the summer months and lighter evenings I wondered if a different start time to our meetings – either at 7 pm or pushed back to 8 pm might make them more attractive? Please do have a think about it and feel free to let me know your views.

Simon

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	Tuesday 14 July Most of the Work, Most of the Blame, None of the Credit – Platoon Commanders in the Great War Fraser Skirrow Great War subalterns were mocked and satirised, then and now, as enthusiastic and patriotic but naïve and ignorant public-school boys. They led gallantly from the front, looking after their men, but with few tactical responsibilities and little autonomy. Later, the platoon became the key tactical attack unit, a flexible group of specialists with battlefield autonomy and decision-making. So how did the Young Gentlemen of 1914/15 change into the pivotal battlefield managers of 1917/18?  7.30pm Ed Shed
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“When you go home, tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow, we gave our today”

Private Frederick Charles Ravenhill (21603) 14th Battalion, Gloucestershire

Frederick Charles Ravenhill was born at Sandhurst, Gloucester on 18 May 1899. He was the son of William Charles Ravenhill and his wife Adela Fanny and was one of eight children, of whom six were alive at the time of the 1911 Census. William Ravenhill had seen service with the Glosters and enlisted again in August 1914, aged almost forty, but was discharged as being unfit for service after twenty-nine days.

Frederick's Army service record has not survived but according to an obituary in the *Gloucestershire Journal* he enlisted in June 1915, at the age of sixteen. He must have overstated his age, as seventeen was the minimum for enlistment and nineteen for service abroad. At the time the family home was in Sherbourne Street, Gloucester.

After about six months training on Salisbury Plain with the 14th Battalion of the Glosters, Frederick went with them to France on 30 January 1916. The battalion was part of 105 Brigade, in the 35th (Bantam) Division. July 1916 saw the battalion located in the Somme sector.

On 15 July his battalion was in the support trenches at the brickworks aside the Maricourt to Montauban road and on the following day it relieved the 16th Cheshires in the front line at the northern end of Trones Wood. The wood was subjected to several German counter attacks and the Glosters suffered significant casualties, losing two officers killed and four wounded. In Other Ranks there were twenty-three killed, seventy wounded and ten missing.

Private Ravenhill, aged just seventeen, was one of the missing: his remains were never recovered, and he is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial and the Gloucester City War Memorial. He is probably one of the youngest of 'Gloucestershire's Fallen'.



Graham Adams

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