



# DESPATCHES

the magazine of the International Guild of Battlefield Guides



**IN THIS ISSUE:**  
Tunnels and Vietnam  
A Volunteer Guide  
VC CASEstudy Kenya

**PLUS**  
The Guild AGM Weekend  
**AND**  
The History Process

# FIELDguides

Our cover image: Rob Deere working with CCF Cadets at Juno Beach



Tim Saunders with a British Army group studying the Battle of the Bulge. This derelict house in the Village of Manarch, just off Skyline Drive, had recently been used by a film company.



When not being our Validation Secretary, Tim Stoneman squeezes some guiding in with the UK Govt FWW Programme for schools.

# Contents



- |        |  |        |   |
|--------|--|--------|---|
| P2     | FIELDguides  | P18-20 | CASEstudy<br><i>Researching Lt Wilbur Dartnell VC</i> |
| P5-9   | TUNNELS AND VIETNAM<br><i>Digging into history</i>   | P21    | FIELDguides<br>EVENTguide 2016                        |
| P10-11 | THE GUILD AGM WEEKEND<br><i>at Naseby</i>            | P22-23 | THE HISTORY PROCESS<br><i>A Personal Reflection</i>   |
| P12-15 | A VOLUNTEER GUIDE<br><i>A year in the life of...</i> | P24-25 | HOLIDAYguide<br><i>A French holiday with extras</i>   |
| P16    | FIELDguides  | P26-27 | GUIDEbooks  |

## TVguide...

Paul Oldfield has been assisting in the filming of a documentary, *'The Somme: The First 24 Hours'* to be screened next June/July on the Documentary Channel. Sir Tony Robinson is the presenter. The other man is the director, Jeremy Freeston.

The documentary will tell the story of one pals battalion's experience leading up to and during 1st July 1916. The battalion is 12th York & Lancaster (Sheffield City Battalion) and it is no coincidence that both Jeremy and Paul are from the city. "It was a pleasure working with the whole team, particularly Sir Tony who is very personable and professional and Jeremy who has a great mind for telling a story.

Don't be fooled by the bright sunlight streaming through the trees in John Copse at Serre. A few minutes previously it had been proper infantry weather, similar to that experienced a few days before the opening of the offensive. The only difficulty encountered was a local farmer (M. Legrand?), who kept popping up to interfere at any opportunity. Other guides may have encountered him. Avril's face was a picture when Sir Tony breezed in for lunch."



# OPENINGshot:

## THE CHAIRMAN'S VIEW



Hello fellow Members, Guild Partners and Supporters, welcome to the Spring Issue of Despatches. We have a really good mix of articles for you as well as an array of book reviews and an updated Guild Events Guide. You will have noticed that there was no Winter Despatches, this was entirely due to the volume of work generated during the run up to the AGM weekend, we are now back on stream and I hope you enjoy this issue. Before you delve into the tunnels of Vietnam or roam the Kenyan Bush, I would like to raise a serious issue that affects us all.

As we go to print the world's media is focussed on the atrocities committed in the heart of Brussels. The Brussels attack was awful in itself but when considered alongside similar events in Istanbul and Paris we must accept that terrorism is part of our daily lives. The repercussions of the attacks in Paris had an almost immediate and tangible affect on battlefield tourism in Belgium and France. Many Tour Operators suffered an immediate downturn in bookings; this was especially evident in the Schools Market as Education Authorities were advised not to travel during the ensuing state of emergency. Recent reports from Turkey indicate a 50% downturn in tourist bookings, whether the same percentage will fall away from Gallipoli remains to be seen. Sadly, as Battlefield Guides we must all now look beyond the routine considerations of client road safety, distraction crime and problems with Refugees/Immigrants. Part of our pre-tour planning and client briefing now has to consider the potential threat of terrorism.

That said I do not think that we should be intimidated nor should we shy away from doing what we most enjoy, that is leading people on battlefield

visits and tours. As professionals we must adapt to circumstances and do what we all do best, take people to the battlefields that they want to see and experience. I use the word professional advisedly, almost all of us begin our careers as Battlefield Guides as enthusiastic amateurs. The lucky ones amongst us manage to turn what was a hobby into a second career as a full-time guide. Wherever we all sit in the guiding spectrum we must all strive to maintain professional standards. I often talk to guides who are making the transition from guiding as a hobby, perhaps taking a group of mates in a car, to organising a minibus full of paying customers.

This is a natural progression but often the practicalities and sometimes, legalities of this exciting adventure are overlooked. The current security threat highlights the need to look beyond the historical detail that we all love and a need for sound administration and pre-tour planning. The simple fact is that if things go wrong on tour and your mates or clients are injured, nobody will care how good your knowledge of history is...they will however want to know whether you are insured to do what you are doing. My point is that we must all periodically review what we are doing and ensure that our administration both personal and commercial matches our enthusiasm and historical knowledge. So if you haven't thought about this to date, I urge you to do so. All of that said, enjoy the coming months, 2016 promises to be another busy year on the battlefields. Look out for fellow members and say hello, we all share the same passion for our subject and there has never been a better time to be a Battlefield Guide!

**Mike Peters**

## FIRSTcontact:

 <https://www.facebook.com/battleguide>

 <https://twitter.com/GuildofBG> - Twitter

Guild Chairman  
Mike Peters

Ascot House  
Norwich Road  
Little Stonham  
Ipswich  
Suffolk IP14 5DL  
United Kingdom

chairman@gbg-  
international.com

Guild Secretary  
Tony Smith

Trenanton  
Shutta Road  
Looe  
Cornwall PL13 1HP  
United Kingdom

+44 (0) 1503 269301  
secretary@gbg-  
international.com

Guild Membership  
Secretary  
Jo Hook

Quince Cottage  
5 West Church Street  
Kenninghall  
Norfolk  
United Kingdom

mbr.sec@gbg-  
international.com

Material for publication on the Summer edition of Despatches must be with the Editor no later than 1 July 16.

This is a deadline and submissions should be sent as far in advance as possible.

All material should be sent via Guild Secretary Tony Smith at:  
secretary@gbg-international.com

# TUNNELS AND VIETNAM: DIGGING INTO HISTORY

Paul Rowe

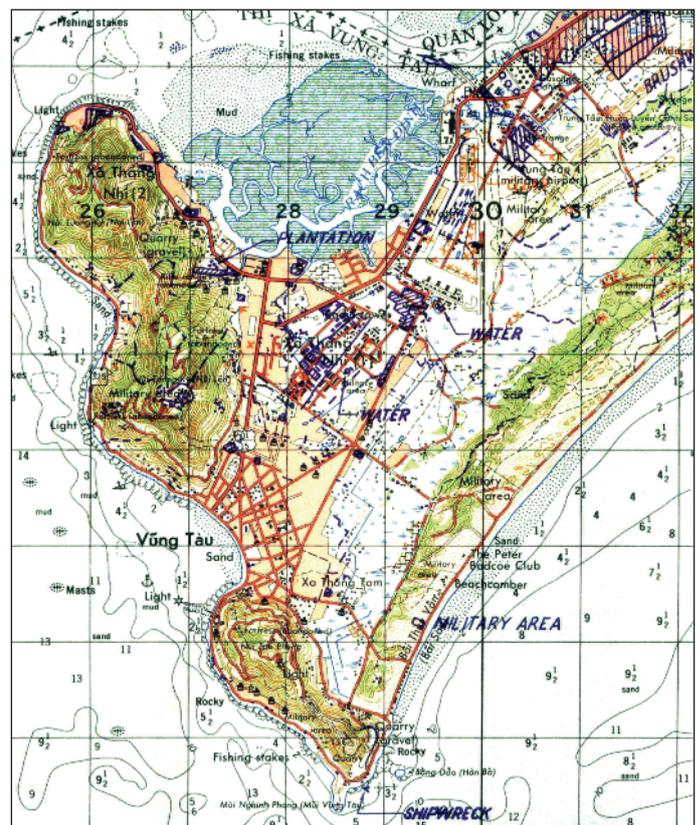
I have a long connection with Viet Nam; this includes a bloodline that goes back to the Dinh Dynasty (968-980 AD). While living in Viet Nam I have been captivated by the histories, myths, legends and personal stories I have been privy to. After years of tertiary studies, a lot of reading, a considerable amount of exploring and my natural ability to be nosy, it has been possible to accrue a lot of information about this complex country, its people and its history. Recently I realized that across the decades I have also been informally collecting a lot of information via relatives, friends, pub conversations, urban myths, and rumours on some topics. One of these informally 'studied' topics is tunnels; military tunnels. I have decided to spend some time focusing solely on military tunnels, and record what I learn. This article is the first stage of this record.

Please do not mistake me for an expert in this area. When reflecting on the Indochina wars, I have always linked tunnels with guerilla warfare. A major component of successful guerilla warfare is the element of surprise. Tunnels are hidden, secret facilities, which expedite surprise. So tunnels and guerilla tactics go hand-in-hand. Guerilla fighters using tunnels is not a modern military tactic. The distinguished Roman senator Sextus Julius Frontinus (c. 40 – 103 AD) mentioned the use of military tunnels in *Strategemata*.<sup>1</sup>

*The oldest known sources about employing tunnels and trenches for guerrilla-like warfare are Roman. After the uprising in Germania the insurgent tribes soon started to change defence from only local strongholds into utilising the advantage of wider terrain. Hidden trenches to assemble for surprise attacks were ... connected via tunnels for secure fallback.*<sup>2</sup>

Readers who are of my vintage may once have known Vung Tau as Cape Saint Jacques, a French colonial resort and military base. It is located at the mouth of the Sai Gon River and is dead flat except for two mountains. Vung Tau has no rivers but it does have a chain of spring-fed fresh-water ponds. On a map it looks like it is located on the end of a peninsula, if you look close enough you discover that Vung Tau is actually an island.

In the early days of my exploration of Vung Tau I came across the entrance to a tunnel on Small Mountain (Nui Nho) which runs from an old French



lighthouse to the large Jesus statue (Fondly known as Big Jesus). This tunnel runs along the saddleback that connects the highest part of Small Mountain to a bluff nearly at the beach one kilometer away. The entrance nearest the lighthouse is guarded by a thick-walled, circular military pillbox. Inside the pillbox is a cement-lined, one-metre wide, vertical shaft that takes up most of the floor space.

<sup>1</sup> Sextus Julius Frontinus. *Strategemata: De Constituendo Statu Belli III.*/10. The English language version, [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Frontinus/Strategemata/1\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Frontinus/Strategemata/1*.html) (accessed 14 August, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tunnel\\_warfare](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tunnel_warfare)

*The cement pillbox is of high quality workmanship; this leads me to think that this tunnel was built by the French. I have no evidence for this so far. A consistent Vung Tau pub rumour says that the lighthouse tunnel extends past Big Jesus right down to the beach. I have no evidence for this either. A trip to the Nationale Bibliotheque in Paris to find out more about the lighthouse tunnel proved futile (and as is often the case in researching, more questions were raised than answered).*

*For many years access to the top of the tunnel was easy. The iron, bullet-hole ridden door to the pillbox was always open. I once entered the pillbox and photographed the shaft; however I have never climbed down the ladder into the dark tunnel. My friend Dang, who was born in Vung Tau, told me that when he was a boy scout, his scoutmaster took him through the tunnel. I was eager to check out the tunnel and Dang was eager to help. Dang arranged to have the scoutmaster (yes, the same scoutmaster 40 years on!) assist us with this. However, on the morning of our planned expedition we found the pillbox door was locked with a very small, unofficial looking padlock. The scoutmaster assured us that by the next week he would have access to the tunnel. The following week we turned up to find the metal pillbox door welded shut! I had missed my opportunity to enter the tunnel by a few days. Years later the door is still welded shut.*

A friend enticed me to start leading battlefield tours. These tours focused more on the history of the countryside north of Vung Tau and the Australian involvement in the Second Indochina War. This meant that I put my historical research of Vung Tau on the back burner for some time. The battlefield tours included a visit to the Long Phuoc tunnels. The Long Phuoc tunnels were used by the locals to fight the French in that area. When the Australian Army moved into Phuc Thuy Province (what is now Baria-Vung Tau Province) during Operation Enoggera, they blew up the tunnel network.<sup>3</sup> So the Long Phuoc tunnels of today are a reconstruction for the tourist industry, the new tunnels are larger in diameter than the originals to cater to the larger-sized tourists. To me the Long Phuoc tunnels seemed a little too artificial to be of any interest. However, the small museum attached to the tunnels has a very informative scale-model of a Vietnamese versus French battle using the Long Phuoc tunnels.

During the 2014 Tet festival season, I was attending one of Vung Tau's many parties and the hostess realised that I was an author who wrote about Vung Tau and Viet Nam, so during dinner she made a point of revealing a great deal about what it

was like to live in Vung Tau during and after the American War. Everything she revealed was fascinating. I was riveted. Of all the things the hostess talked about, there was one thing that captivated me above all else; she mentioned a tunnel in Vung Tau. It was this conversation which kick-started my interests in tunnels in the Vung Tau area. She knew about the tunnel because she had been a student at the school on the Le Loi Street inside the French Military complex. In the event of an attack the students had been drilled to run to the school canteen. A tunnel under the canteen would take them to the old French Catholic School.

The hostess suggested that I interview her mother about that period. Through her son, Hieu, she arranged a meeting for an interview. Hieu would be the interpreter. Though, when Hieu's grandmother told her story, the tunnel started at the canteen but exited on the beach at the foot of Big Jesus. It was a different story. I was ecstatic! Sure, it was a different story, but it confirmed the entrance of the canteen tunnel, and gave substance to the pub rumour of the lighthouse tunnel having an extension through to the



*Paul leading guests down into one of the many war-time caves found on this mountain.*

beach. So Vung Tau instead of having one tunnel now has two tunnels, with a possible third tunnel. Having said that though, I almost immediately dismissed the idea of a tunnel running all the way from the canteen to the beach near Big Jesus (2.5 kilometres). It would have to run right under Vung Tau and I know that the water table is very high at this point. In fact, many private houses have their own fresh water well. But, this exciting information suggested the possibility of three tunnels in Vung Tau.

Grandmother, who seemed to know everyone in Vung Tau, suggested that Hieu and myself head off to question the caretaker at the Naval Center on Ha Long

<sup>3</sup> [http://vietnam-war.commemoration.gov.au/phuoc-tuy-province/nui-dat\\_settling.php](http://vietnam-war.commemoration.gov.au/phuoc-tuy-province/nui-dat_settling.php)

Road. He would be able to confirm the position of the tunnel exit at the beach. So the next day (9 February

9:30 Interview with caretaker from Naval Centre. He tells us to talk to people at Nam Hai Chua [temple] next door.

9:45 Nam Hai staff (nuns who look too young to recall the era and too young to be nuns) initially said they know nothing. They locate the Chua's owner for us. The owner recalls nothing of this, but knows he built on vacant land. A group of people have now gathered; some recall a pagoda a bit further along (closer to Big Jesus) was built around a military blockhouse! The blockhouse is now a storage shed.

Initial thoughts: A couple of times people mention the tunnel and two French guns. At the base of Big Jesus are two French cannons. Are the two guns they refer to the two Jesus cannons? If the two cannons are at the exit of a tunnel with a beach entrance, then we have found the rumoured tunnel. If the cannons are at the entrance of a tunnel going to the beach, we have gone nowhere!

2014) my notebook looked like this (but messier).

In Viet Nam during Tet festival it is essential that families accrue luck to ensure the family's safety and prosperity throughout the up-coming year. So my family and relatives decided to visit a very lucky temple in the back blocks of Baria-Vung Tau. The large SUV was packed to the roof with happy kids and adults. The driver, my brother-in-law, happened to mention that the temple we were going to visit was a Buddhist Army training base at one time. During the war he had sneaked in to this place to pinch chooks and fish. By the end of my visit to the temple including its large museum, I had discovered the whereabouts of an underground weapons and munitions cache in Vung Tau. So I now know that Vung Tau has two tunnels (possibly three) and an underground munitions cache. This topic was exploding (excuse the pun) into something much bigger. I have been to the cache site. I have not been inside it, and I am sure I never will. I don't know where the entrance to the cache is and I don't really have any over-riding need to know. My asking to be shown the secret entrance would be akin to me knocking on the door of Albemarle Barracks in Northumberland and asking to be shown through the munitions depot. I am not going to reveal the cache's position, but in hindsight maybe I could have made a reasonable guess. Such a military position would need to be on a very lucky site. It is. There is also an historical allegiance spelt out in the location.

Would it make sense to use tunnels to connect a cache to military establishments in the vicinity? I hypothesized that this could be a possibility. Might there be even more tunnels under Vung Tau? A couple of months ago Damian, an Aussie who regularly visits Vung Tau, and a good friend to go exploring with, excitedly told me of a little known tunnel system he had just visited. Damian knows of my interest in tunnels and was keen to show me what he had found. These tunnels are known as the Kim Long tunnels located in the town of Kim Long about 45 minutes motorbike ride passed Baria; at the extreme north-west section of Baria- Vung Tau Province. I had never heard of such a tunnel system so I was keen to visit. Damian's keen sense of direction and his GPS app took us to a truly beautiful part of the province. Even in the height of the dry season it was breathtakingly picturesque. The cashew nut orchards were heavily sweetened with ripe fruit. The tunnels were eventually found, just off the town's main road, under yet another delightful cashew nut orchard. The trench, bunkers (complete with rifle firing slots) and tunnels we went through were only a small segment of the whole complex. We had free access to this whole area (apart from those areas guarded by hordes of mosquitoes!)<sup>4</sup>. After our recce of the area Damian and I bought a coffee from the woman who lived in the humble farmhouse directly above the tunnels. At this time it became apparent that this site would be best explored by returning with an interpreter. That woman could have told us so much. Last month I visited the Cu Chi tunnels, arguably the most famous military tunnel system in Viet Nam and maybe the world. The Cu Chi tunnels are about 40 kilometers northwest of Ho Chi Minh City. I have read many accounts of these famous tunnels. (Since visiting the tunnels I have also met Sandy MacGregor, the Australian army officer who cleared and mapped a segment of the tunnels. He led the original Tunnel Rats.)<sup>5</sup> I had high expectations of this tour. I was a little disappointed when the tunnel we went through was no more than 10 or 15 meters long. However, the tour guide, Mr. Long, quickly redeemed himself with *two pieces of information that have changed the way I now view the topic of tunnels in Viet Nam*.

First; apparently the Cu Chi tunnel system was a network of private tunnels. Originally they were tunnels built by individual families for family protection from the French. **So all tunnels in Viet Nam were not necessarily military facilities.** This information was a break through. However, I felt there was still something missing from all the information I had collected about tunnels. I felt as if I had forgotten something very important. I had. The

<sup>4</sup> I made a small video of my exploratory efforts at Kim Long tunnels so far. <http://youtu.be/zL0oC9dHgw4cx>

<sup>5</sup> Thomson, J. with MacGregor, S., Tunnel Rats, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2011.



*Deep inside Long Phuoc Tunnels*

second piece of information from the tour guide was simply a demonstration by the guide. Mr. Long picked up a stick and drew a circle in the dirt that encompassed him. It was only inches wider than his shoulders. He said that family members would dig this circle into a vertical shaft just long enough to take one person. A camouflaged lid was made for the bolt-hole. These tiny bolt-holes, according to the tour guide, were originally used to escape the tyrannical French tax collectors. Then it hit me! Decades ago, during my University studies, I had read of bolt holes being used by tax dodgers in Viet Nam, during the time of the Emperors (pre-French era). Viet Nam has a long history of bolt holes (and tax dodging).

A Eurocentric perspective of Asian history tends to focus westerners on 'our' involvement in the making of the history of the country we are in. We write about it as if it is our history and we overlook the fact that 'others' even live in that country. This sounds a brash, feisty statement to make. Here is an example; last year I was in Southampton, England, visiting my daughter. I had some time to spare so I went into the local library. I thought I would read something on Viet Nam. Under 'V' for Vietnam I found only two books, *The Lonely Planet* and a Vietnamese recipe book. I consulted with the librarian. She said the

books on Viet Nam could be found under 'A' for American History. And they were! My Eurocentric thinking had given me a very narrow view of tunnels in Viet Nam. I needed to be thinking beyond military facilities and well before the French period.

But back to the Cu Chi tunnels tour guide. He pointed out that individual bolt-holes were sufficiently devious to escape the angry French tax collectors. However, when the French Indochina War started, the Vietnamese found themselves up against bombs. The compression force of a bomb was sufficient to kill a person hiding in any shallow underground shelter. The locals needed to get away from the falling bombs. They extended their bolt-holes into tunnels that took them to a rice field or the jungle or a friend's house. Families found they could then join up with neighbours' shelters and tunnels. It was soon discovered that a blast in a tunnel with many openings was less deadly than in a blast near a bolt-hole. Over time, private bolt-holes became communal tunnels. During times of war, local guerilla fighters used the tunnels, in Viet Nam during times of war, private and communal space became shared military space.

This revelation prompted another hypothesis. Tunnels in Viet Nam are not rare and unexpected; they are most likely commonplace. It makes perfect

sense that there will be tunnels in virtually every village and town across Viet Nam. Probably, simple bolt-holes in places less affected by the war but more elaborate tunnel systems in places where fighting was more intense. I now see tunnels in Viet Nam very differently and there are so many tunnels to explore but such little time to do it in.

**To summarise**, where am I with my tunnels project now? **The lighthouse tunnel:** An attempt last month to find the other end of the tunnel (the exit at the base of the Jesus statue) ended nowhere. ‘Nowhere’ is not totally true. It was actually ‘somewhere’ but that ‘somewhere’ was in the middle of an army facility. Of course it would be. The tunnel is a military asset. I will need an awful lot of local clout to gain access to either end of this tunnel. **The canteen tunnel:** I can get access to this building, so it will be a case of tracking down and questioning the caretaker. The suggested tunnel exit at the Catholic school: I know many Catholics who can introduce me to the relevant priest or congregational member. The rumoured tunnel exit at the beach near the big Jesus statue: Hieu and I will talk to the pagoda owner who built his pagoda on land that included an old blockhouse. This sounds hopeful.

**The Kim Long tunnels:** I will head back to these tunnels with an interpreter and a video crew, to carry out some in-depth exploring, recording and mapping as soon as possible.

**The Long Phuoc tunnels:** After visiting the Kim Long tunnels and after researching more about how tunnels in Viet Nam originated and morphed across time, I have had a change of mind regarding these tunnels. The Long Phuoc tunnels represent private

tunnels utilized by locals to evade the French. There is a lot of history to be extrapolated from such places *and the people who live around these tunnels*. The tunnels (all tunnels) themselves will tell very little history, the people around the tunnels will be living archives on this topic.

**The suggested Long Tan bunker and tunnel system:** As soon as my old relative gets better, I need to confirm his story. If this doesn’t pan out, then I will take an interpreter to D445 Battalion headquarters and try to locate the battalion’s historian.

**To conclude**, this article was written with the intent of focusing my studies for a while on one specific topic; military tunnels of Viet Nam. The article is intended to be the first stage of a record of this topic. It will also provide some future direction to my ‘tunnels of Viet Nam’ project. As a direct result of working towards a concrete direction, I have been able to form the following very exciting hypothesis. I am convinced that I can now go almost anywhere in Viet Nam and expect to find tunnels or some history of tunnels. I used an old writers’/ researchers’ trick of moving from a broad topic to a specific topic, to discover more knowledge. The new knowledge is then added to the writer’s knowledge base, which again broadens the knowledge of the writer. Battlefield tour guides who wish to broaden some aspect of their tour can use this sound academic tactic. As an inquisitive tour guide I moved from a broad study of pre-French era and both Indochina Wars, to a specific study of tunnels. This has broadened my future exploration opportunities, which will broaden my battlefield tour guide repertoire.



Paul Rowe with tour guests on a Long Son Island Tour using a timeline to place events across three wars into some sort of order

# THE GUILD AGM WEEKEND AT NASEBY



*Pictures of a memorable weekend among friends*

Mike Peters

*Paul Oldfield receives the Will Townend Award from the Patron.*

*The Award commemorates Will Townend's selfless attitude to Battlefield Guiding and his willingness to share his knowledge and experience with fellow guides.*

*The award winner is selected annually by the membership on a one member – one vote basis. Congratulations Paul!*



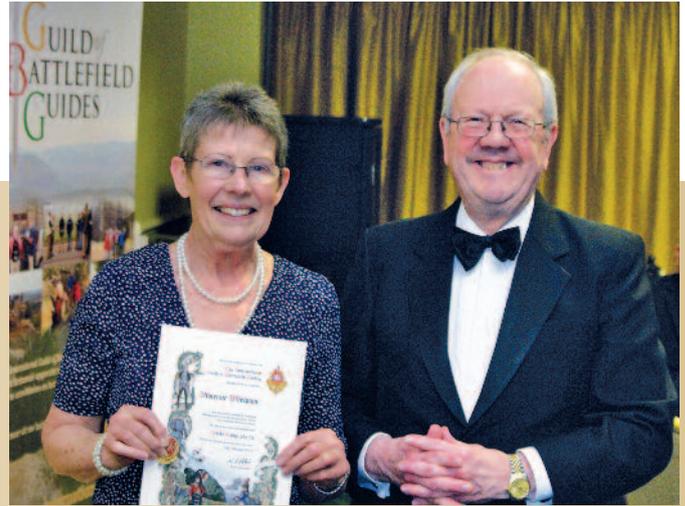
*The David Chandler Award for the best Assignment 6 of 2015 was presented to Anthony Rich.*

*He has done his best to raise the profile of English Civil War battlefields with anybody who will listen!*





*Sole Trader - Steve Cocks receiving his Guiding Badge, flying the flag for the small but perfectly formed independent battlefield tour companies.*



*Viv Whelpton - Receives Validation Certificate and her Guiding Badge.*

*Our Patron, Lord Faulkner joined us for the weekend and gave the Guild an update on current UK Gov't FWW Centenary activity as well as some insight into the workings of the All Party War Heritage Committee. He also counted the ballots during the AGM and Presented Awards at the dinner...working Peer?*



*In response to requests for a battlefield venue for our annual gathering we settled on an ideal hotel a short march away from the field of Naseby. We are very grateful to our own Chris Scott and Anthony Rich for kicking the weekend off with an interesting (but rain sodden) battlefield tour.*



*Cooper & Kliejin - sounds like a Detective TV series... well perhaps Anglo - Dutch battlefield detectives?*

# A YEAR AS A VOLUNTEER GUIDE



Anthony Rich

As you probably know the Battlefields Trust is the national charity that exists to better preserve, research and present battlefields, principally in England. The Trust has strong links to the Guild and each year runs a series of battlefield walks, led by unpaid volunteers. The aim is to help local communities (and others) better understand the fascinating and valuable battlefield heritage on their doorstep and mobilise local opinion to preserve it. We don't charge participants, though we invite non-members of the Trust to make a voluntary donation of £5 per adult per walk or, better still, to join the Trust, a snip at £28 per year, reductions available).

All my guiding, apart from social trips for family and friends, is for the Trust and associated local battlefield societies. And wonderful fun it is too! But we need more guides and activists to help us in this vital work, work which Guild members, badged or unbadged, are uniquely placed to support.

So when the editor's call for photos of members in action came round I thought a collection of photos and recollections over the year might demonstrate the enjoyment of volunteer guiding (and the opportunity it offers to develop guiding craftsmanship).

## CROPREDY BRIDGE 1644

All right, this photo is a cheat, as it was taken last year, but I visited and toured here many times this year. It shows me at the Red Lion in Cropredy. I am holding a cannon ball that was found in the garden a couple of doors up which can be borrowed and passed round the tour group on prior notice and for the price of the pint.

The pub itself is a survivor of the 1644 battle, and this is a favourite destination (both pub and battlefield). The building was probably used as the C17 Parliamentarian equivalent of a Dressing Station. Skeletons were found under the floorboards and I doubt they were the victims of an excess of ale or of Quiz Night.



Photo: Author



Photo: Author

The battlefield is particularly stunning in the Spring, when I took the next picture. It shows the **Wardington Ash**, planted in the same spot as an earlier ash tree that marked the Royalist HQ. King Charles declined an invitation to lunch here during the battle, claiming he was too busy, but you can stop here for a lovely picnic with a view.

## WORCESTER 1651



Photo: Author

Spring also saw the **Worcester Living History Festival**. Worcester is a fascinating place to guide (I did it several times this year). One moment you are passing the church where Shakespeare slipped off to get married discreetly (and well clear of the wagging tongues of Stratford) to his heavily pregnant bride (sheds new light on Romeo and Juliet, eh?). The next you are in the High Street where the doomed made one of, if not the, last cavalry charges in England to buy time for Charles II to escape (and hide up his Oak Tree).

A local on my tour told me a battlefield legend I had not heard before. There is a street just outside the old city walls called Losemore Road. The story runs that as Charles and his valet fled that way (as they probably did), pursued by roundhead soldiery the valet threw coins from the money bags he was carrying to distract the pursuers. As they continued to gain on the fugitive pair Charles shouted to his servant "Lose More, Lose More!" The valet did and Charles escaped, if poorer.

But to return to our living history weekend the re-enactors were a diverse bunch from ancient Greek hoplites via Vikings and Napoleonic soldiers to WW2 GIs. A problem not yet discussed on Assignment 5: try guiding for this lot!

## MORTIMERS CROSS 1461

This major battlefield of the Wars of the Roses in darkest Herefordshire has one major drawback: no one is completely sure where the battle was fought. There are two rival sites within a mile of each other. As the site is not securely enough identified, English Heritage (now Historic England) will not register it. A major part of my work on behalf of the Trust this year has been to get a project team together and working to obtain more evidence to fix the site more securely.

First off we needed to capture the local oral history and traditions. This meant getting the locals interested and supportive. We set up an event for them in April. Although only advertised locally we were so successful that we had to turn some people away and run catch up events for them.

But it got the project off to a firm start and we are building up local goodwill, oral history and tradition and the momentum is building as we start to build a clearer picture of the local C15 landscape.

The pictures show some of us in the field, and more of us at the **Monument of 1799**, erected near the possible Southern battlefield site.

The follow up visits were interesting too. An archaeologist friend immediately identified the odd



Photos: Gregg Archer



shapes in the ground as being the outlines of a Roman marching camp.

Another great moment was when on another tour the chef in the pub, intrigued by our work and herself a culinary historian, researched and served us a 1461 dish for lunch.

Another unusual moment came when guiding the High Sheriff and his wife. She had an interesting background: her father was the late Sir Carol Mather MP, a founding father of UK Special Forces during WW2. But even more interesting was her husband's family history. Perhaps inevitably, rural Herefordshire remaining rural Herefordshire, he proved to be a scion of the Mortimer family, Marcher Lords since time immemorial. Thus he was related to Edward Earl of March, also a Mortimer through the female line, the future King Edward IV. Edward was the victor of the battle and his success here led him to the Crown. We all get relatives of combatants on tour, but a time gap of around 555 years between the victorious general and the Guide's tour member must be something of a record. Especially when the battle meant the fighting forbear became King of England as a result of the battle!



Photo: Patricia Potbecary

With the High Sheriff and Mrs Harley (nee Mather) on the right.

## NORTHAMPTON 1460

The battlefield at Northampton has long been under threat and the local battlefield society, supported by the Trust, has been fighting hard and long to protect it.

My role, in addition to guiding when needed, has been to help research the archives, including the wonderful documents in Italian archives proving that the Papal representative, the slippery Cardinal Coppini, who watched the battle was in fact a Milanese secret agent. His task was to promote a Yorkist success so as to help restart the 100 Years War and so distract the French from interfering in Northern Italian affairs. Most Machiavellian and jolly useful for Assignment 6!

2015 saw the rediscovery of a cannon ball, the

oldest ever found in the UK, fired during the battle (at least according to the forensic report), It was wonderful to be able to handle an artefact this ancient and this significant, and to pass it round others.

Next to handling the cannon ball the happiest memory of several trips was guiding a tour at the annual commemoration, escorted by Wars of the Roses re-enactors from **The Harrington Company**.

*"And Your Point Is?" Author's Anniversary Tour of The Battle of Northampton, assisted by members of The Harrington Company*



Photos: Northampton Battlefields Society

Of Course the Golf Course wasn't here in 1460. It was over there!

## NASEBY 1645

Another high point of the year was guiding for the **Naseby Project** on the 370th Anniversary of the battle. What an event with several thousand re-enactors on the field. Never mind ignite the cordite, you could smell it a mile off!

And it gave me my very own ghost story. On the Sunday there was a well-attended drumhead service on the village green outside the church. This included a two minute silence, to be ended by a ripple of cannon fire from near the battlefield area a mile away. Two minutes duly passed: Nothing. Organisers looking worried and glancing at watches. Then some, but not all, of the assembled crowd (including the

Vicar) heard a ripple of small arms shots from the direction of the battlefield. We assumed that was the planned fire and carried on. Then a little later the definite, much louder, sound of the planned cannon fire was heard. But the Sealed Knot had no musketeers on the battlefield and had issued no powder other than to the cannons. A farmer hunting (though no other shots were heard), if you like? But I prefer to think of it as The New Model and Astley's boys putting aside their differences to either return compliments to us, or, more likely, tell us what they thought of our efforts!



## OTHER PLACES: AD 9-1945

Of course there have been many other tours and reces, often with small groups or with the family. The oldest site was the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest (AD 9), the most recent Arnhem (1944) and a visit to one of the last surviving WW2 U-boats (1945).

That is the joy of volunteer guiding, you choose how much (or how little) you want to do, and which campaigns or battles interest you.

You will always be coming across the interesting, or quirky, or plain comic. Like my last tour: The Battle of Lincoln (1217) which I provided to professional colleagues the morning after our annual Association Dinner. Doing the recce I found the Ermine Street Guard encamped in the castle, itself part of the old legionary fortress that was there.

Fair enough, the 1217 battle did involve "the greatest knight that ever lived," William the Marshal, aided and abetted by the battling Bishop of Winchester, Peter des Roches, in storming a Roman gateway. William could then set about evicting the French invaders whilst the Bishop and his boys sacked and looted the cathedral treasury. Like I said, there is always something unusual to find out about!



Photo: Author

"Sorry the transport was a bit held up, lads. Been waiting long?"  
Roman troops on the site of their former fortress (and also part of the site of the Second Battle of Lincoln, 1217)

## CONCLUSION

So it has been great fun guiding battlefields covering two millennia of conflict. Even more enjoyable when accompanied by and learning with and from friendly, like minded, enthusiasts.

Plans for 2016 include revisiting old favourites and developing new walks across fresh sites. Care to join me and the others in the Trust? Or, better still, how about leading one or two walks for the Trust yourself? You'll be among friends!

And if, like me, you are working your way through the Validation process it is all useful experience. As this picture, taken at the 800th Anniversary of the Battle of Evesham event, shows: Author preparing for Assignment 5: Solving Problems on Tour (or to face the Validators)!



# FIELD*guides*



Guild Partners, Battle Honours had a busy year in the Dardanelles, they fielded an international team of Guild Members this summer. L-R Peter Sweeney (Australia), Baris Yesildag (Turkey), Rory Stephens (Wales), Steve Chambers and Mike Peters (England).



(Photo Jo Hook)

Chief Validator, Chris Finn presents Glenn Hearnden with Badge No.73 on successful completion of his final assignment at Bosworth in September.



John Harris using a Folder of A3 images to illustrate his account of the fighting in Delville Wood.

## ANCIENT*guides*



It's every Battlefield Guide's intention to try and get clients to understand a battle from the inside-out. Well we did that literally during the AGM weekend at Naseby! David (call me Maximus) Harvey, ably assisted by his loyal Centurion Robertus Brunsdon put the membership through some basic Roman battle drills.

It was interesting to experience the reality of moving as a formation and to consider the practicalities of the Testudo in battle.

# CASEstudy: researching...

## LIEUTENANT WILBUR DARTNELL VC

Stewart Kinloch

Research inspired by Mr James Willson, member of the International Guild of Battlefield Guides and Author of *The Guerrillas of Tsavo* – [www.GuerrillasofTsavo.com](http://www.GuerrillasofTsavo.com)

'Legwork' by Paul 'Tommo' Thompson, Australian and Stewart Kinloch, British.

Thanks to Kenya Wildlife Service for assistance rendered:

- Peter Njoroge, Assistant Warden
- Peter Nyanga, Ranger
- Joseph Mbeta, Customer Service



Courtesy Australian War Memorial-awm.gov.au

### Ground:

The ground that we are researching is located in Kenya. Specifically around a small town near the present day Kenya / Tanzania border called Maktau. The terrain is largely undulating savannah with open grasslands and large patches of forest / dense bush / thorn bush. To the north some 18 Km stands Fusilier Hill. Just North of Maktau is Maktau hill, sometimes referred to as Picket Hill. To the East lie the Taita Hills. Far to the West and out of sight unless you climb Maktau Hill, lies Salaita Hill on the approach to Taveta.

### Situation:

Maktau today is a small and relatively unimportant town today but in 1915, it housed a significant garrison that grew to accommodate over 20,000 troops, 15,000 porters and over 100,000 horses/mules during the build up to the 1915 Salaita Hill battle in February 1916. The garrison's mission was to help curtail the activities of German lead forces from German East Africa, which, in September 1915 included regular attempts to disrupt the narrow gauge railway running from Voi to Maktau and West, and the Uganda Railway eventually in 1916 to Taveta.

Following one such attack on 3 September 1915, a 67 strong force of European Mounted Infantry (Loyal North Lancashire and Royal Fusiliers) was sent to cut off the German force's line of retreat. During an early afternoon skirmish, the German

forces succeeded in forcing the British troops to retire leaving behind a number of wounded.

One of the wounded, who could have escaped on his mule, was a Lt ("Lieutenant") Wilbur Dartnell, an Australian serving in the 25th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers. Dartnell, wounded in the leg, knew that the German Askari (African Soldiers) had a reputation for killing prisoners and volunteered to stay behind in the hope of saving the other wounded from this fate. This was not to be and he and the other wounded were murdered at the scene. In due course, the British corpses were recovered and interred in the Military cemetery in Maktau. Later they were re-interred in Voi Military cemetery. Dartnell was awarded the Victoria Cross for his bravery.

Over time the exact location of the action in which Dartnell perished has been lost and we decided to try to find it.

### Mission:

The mission that we set ourselves was to:

1. Research what we could from available sources,
2. Follow in the footsteps of Lt. Dartnell (Or, more specifically to follow in his mule's hoof-prints!), and
3. To attempt to find the location of his last action, this location to hopefully comply with 3 conditions:

- a. To fit with the directions and distances from Maktau camp,
- b. To fit the terrain descriptions, and
- c. Ideally we hoped to find some tangible evidence of conflict at the site. (Perhaps, spent brass cases, buttons etc.)

## Execution:

We were in possession of a number of reports obtained by James Willson from the Public Record Office in Kew.

Brief extracts from relevant patrol reports:

1. Report of the O.C. ("Officer Commanding") M.I. ("Mounted Infantry") Coy ("Company").  
"Left camp by West gate, marching on a bearing of 210°. We proceeded all the way out at a canter."
2. Report of the O.C. special patrol (In support); Lt Wildman. 130 Baluchis.  
10:45am – "Reached a point 5½ miles bearing 210° from camp."  
Noon – "Heard firing South (Afterwards estimated to be about 1½ miles distant)"
3. Report of the O.C. Column (Major Robinson, Loyal North Lancers.)  
a. "Moved on a bearing of 200°"  
b. "4:20 pm reached ridge 5½ miles from camp... Lt. Wildman being 2 miles further on."
4. Report of the O.C. Maktau on the action 7 miles SSW ("South South West" 210°) of Maktau on the 3rd September 1915.

## Summary:

**Bearing:** 200° to 210°.

**Distance:** 7 to 7½ miles.



## Analysis of the extracts from patrol reports.

Using a compass requires skill and this is doubly true if you are mounted and / or in expectation of action. Therefore it is unlikely that bearings or distances are 100% accurate.

It is also unlikely that a contact was on a direct bearing of 200° or 210°. In a patrol report, 200° is likely to be "shorthand" for a direction greater than 195° but less than 210°.

Similarly with distance, 7 miles is likely to be shorthand for a distance greater than 6½ miles and less than 7½ miles.

We can then conclude that the bearing is likely to be between 195° and 215° with distance between 6½ miles and 8 miles.

### In metric terms if:

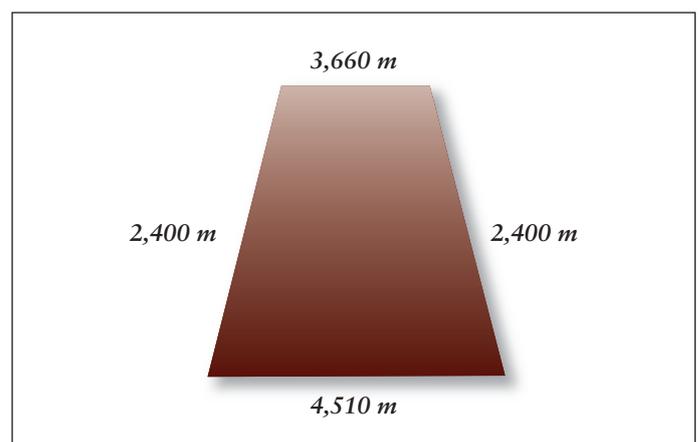
**Bearing:**  $\pi = \approx 3.141592 \therefore 360^\circ = \approx 6,283$  mils.  
One mil being the angle that subtends one meter at a distance of one kilometer.

**Distance:** 1 mile =  $\approx 1,609.34$  m ("meters").

Then 20° =  $\approx 350$  mils and 1 ½ miles =  $\approx 2,400$  m.  
At a distance of 6½ miles or 10,460 m, 350 mils =  $\approx 3.66$  Km.

At a distance of 8 miles or 12,875 m, 350 mils =  $\approx 4.51$  Km.

This equates to a search area of approximately 9.8 square kilometres.



## Start point:

The start point for the patrol reports was the West Gate of Maktau camp. This gate has long since gone and so we had to approximate our start. An aerial photograph from 1915 assisted with this.

## Maps:

There is a distinct shortage of modern maps and we had to make do. Our main map was a 1:50,000 produced circa 1950.



## Method:

Whilst we had access to GPS, we thought that it would be more in keeping with the spirit of our enterprise to mount the expedition using map, compass, protractor and a solid sense of humour, all of which were available in 1915!

To allow for compass error and magnetic variation, our first task was to calibrate our prismatic marching compass. We did this using the North West corner of Maktau Military cemetery and sighting up to Maktau hill. With the compass deviation established we set off through the Maktau Southern gate of Tsavo West National Park.

We were joined by Peter Nyanga, a very capable park Ranger, as an armed guard was mandatory in the park when on foot. We trekked on a Bearing of 200° to a distance of 7 miles from our estimated start position of Maktau camp West gate. From this point, we took to the 4x4 and made a number of “box pattern” sweeps of the area. In terms of distance we went plus and minus 500m on a bearing of 200° and in terms of bearing, we went 500m East South East and 3Km West North West.

We were aware from the patrol reports that we were looking for a “position facing East on a wooded ridge

overlooking the thorn bush country”. The position would have to be of sufficient size to accommodate the 67 strong Mounted Infantry Company split into 3 Troops. We did not pay much attention to the requirement that the ridge be wooded as the elephant population is extensive and may well have eliminated a wood over the past 100 years.

There was no position that we felt was an obvious candidate. There were however, a number of positions where we felt encouraged enough to get out our metal detector and survey the ground.

## Result:

Unfortunately, we did not find any evidence of the action which cost Dartnell and his colleagues their lives. This is not totally unexpected given the size of the search area and our limitations in terms of time to search.

We may well return for another try. If we do, then enlisting the assistance of a micro-light aircraft may help to establish likely features within our search area.

Until then, it would be nice to think that other amateur detectives might be interested enough to go looking.

What we can say is that there is no evidence that we came across to point to Fusilier hill as the scene of the action.

# FIELD*guides*



Keith Kiddie explaining the Mulberry Harbours and their role in the Normandy campaign to fellow Fusiliers.

## EVENT*guide* 2016

- 19 Aug - Guild Golf Championship (John O'Gaunt) - Graeme Cooper
- 20 Aug - Badged Guides Dinner (London) - Graeme Cooper
- 16-18 Sep - Dyle to the Escault 1940 (Belgium) - John Cotterill & Chris Finn
- 29 Sep - NAM London Visit - Council
- 21-23 Oct - Great War Training Weekend (Staffordshire) - John Cotterill
- 14-16 Oct - Whiskey & War 1 (Scotland) - Rob Deere
- 2 Dec - Guild Christmas Lunch (London) - Andy Thompson
- 13-15 Jan 2017 - Guild AGM (Naseby) - Council

# THE HISTORY PROCESS A PERSONAL REFLECTION

*A common question we face as guides is how do we know what we are saying is true?*

Dr. Chris Scott and Dr. Lesley Prince

Well, most of us use books to research our trips but that begs the further question how do historians know the things they write or talk about? The simple answer is we don't know; we only choose to believe. We believe something when the evidence for it is sufficient in quality or quantity to make its likelihood of being accurate high. However, all historians, us included, frequently use words like 'probably', 'supposedly' or 'reputedly', plus phrase such as "thought to have...", "local tradition says..." or "it is believed that..."; this is because historians are always the victims of bias, distortion and mistakes, and although we try to give as accurate a picture as we can, we are always constrained by the number and quality of the primary sources available, and by our own perception and understanding of military matters in ages before film and video. In addition to that, all our theories, opinions and beliefs can be turned upside down at any minute by the discovery of new evidence!

Over the last 100 years History has moved academic camps from being an Art to now being regarded as a Science. In the past it has been wrongly aligned with Literature because it seeks to tell stories and often uses books as its medium. As a Science, the stories told in History purport to be the communication of a body of objective knowledge that is 'true'. However, writing impartial, objective history is impossible and understanding of the past is filtered through our prejudices - race, religion, nationalism, politics, social class, etc. many of which are ingrained and held subconsciously. Historians have to strive against prejudice, not only in themselves but also their sources.

History is the science of people in time, and, as such, is its greatest limitation and its lifeblood! Each

generation sees things differently from the preceding one, and asks new questions, and, as people, historians cannot avoid making moral judgements, such as inferring 'who' and 'what' should be labelled 'good' or 'bad'. These judgements vary from age to age and historians should try to base them on the standards of the age they are studying. We are also in the dangerous position of being able to deploy 'hindsight'. Knowing the result of events we study, we can be tempted to think it was implicit in its beginnings - such as seeing the English Civil Wars as the struggle to end royal prerogative and institute parliamentary democracy.

Much of early history is little more than legend committed later to written record, whilst medieval chroniclers wrote a lot of unashamed political propaganda. Renaissance and later writers often revised these 'tales' in the light of the new learning and growing secularism. However, despite their period context they all (even the Victorian historians) had a touching faith in men's ability to accurately transpose oral accounts. As recent as the first part of the 20th century sources were seldom noted and the deposition of single sources accepted without question; in addition to which there often existed an almost cavalier attitude to historical documents.

These days we study written records with more reverence and a much more critical approach, highly prizing primary source research and cross-reference confirmation. We even have printed guides to sources:

*Sources and Literature of English History to About 1485* by Charles Gross,

*The Bibliography of British History 1485 - 1603* by Conyers Read, and even

*Nagler's Napoleonic Source Book* etc...

These are indispensable aids to historians. For the

purposes of historical criticism, written sources have been divided into two categories: **Chronicles & Histories** – these are literary works written for posterity through which we try to understand the thoughts and mental attitudes of earlier times. The authors say what they think about people and events and can be violently partisan. Literary sources need careful scrutiny and historians need to know everything possible about their authors to allow for personal distortion. **Records & Archives** – these are amassed material generated by the function of private and public administration. The great advantage of this material is that its compilers had no thought of the future and they seem to afford a vast storehouse of facts, free from bias and incontrovertible, such as financial accounts and lists of stores etc.

The study of History has been transformed by the universities from the hobby of antiquarians to a profession by breaking the monopoly of the Latin and Greek literary classics and instilling an emphasis upon Records & Archives. This has led to a rejection of blind acceptance of past works no matter the degree of academic respect accorded the author. Upon close examination many Chronicles and Histories have been found to be full of gross misstatements of simple facts and misinterpretations greatly swayed by personal prejudice; and their evidence is now frequently deemed to be suspect. Regrettably those who advocate this investigative approach which demands exact date and provenance of evidence are still branded as new, young, ‘revisionists’ intent upon destroying the reputations of great establishment men despite their methodology being expounded by Lord Acton in the late 1800s!

Historians now realise that even Records & Archives are seldom free of influence, rarely tell the whole truth and can, at times, be utterly bogus because fabricating documents and letters is not an invention of modern man. Why should past governments be less adept at misrepresentation in its papers? Political spin, lies and abuse of trust is not

the prerogative of Thatcher, Blair or newspaper editors. Records as evidence have to be subject to scrutiny for the materials behind them and the impression they were intended to create and their intended use. Most records have a bias of their own and seek to control or conceal truth or part of it. Military historians can also fall prey to reading only things derived from their own nation and are sometimes adept at ignoring enemy sources whilst regimental histories, no matter the nationality, seldom include actions in which the regiment performed poorly or ignobly.

Prudent historians pay attention to both Chronicles & Histories and to Records & Archives and treat those two impostors just the same. We cannot write history from Records & Archives alone, as they disguise the feelings and thoughts both of their makers and their time. Still less can we put our sole trust in Chronicles & Histories, which though rarely quite wrong, are never quite right. The two forms of evidence, which at first sight often conflict, have somehow to be reconciled by the historian.

Recent historians use other disciplines to aid their work. Palaeography has thrown light on many documents, for by handwriting alone we can date manuscripts within half a century, and in early periods so great are the local variations that we can generally learn something of a document’s provenance or place of origin. Etymology too can be very useful in this field and similar deductions can also be drawn from the study of printing, seals and administrative organisation. Other branches of knowledge: Heraldry, Genealogy, Geography, Architecture, Archaeology, Demography, Economics and Psychology all help throw light upon the past. New technologies have helped even further; including metal detection, aerial photography, chronology, carbon-dating, photogrammetry, computer analysis of statistics and databases as well as geophysics, and satellite location plotting. History is now really exciting!



# HOLIDAY *guide*

## Adam Williams

**My wife and family wanted a summer holiday in Europe to escape the oppressive heat that comes with living in the Middle East. She didn't mind where we went so I suggested France. 'Somewhere romantic, close to a wood so that I can hear the dawn chorus and with great views' she said, 'but please don't make it another Battlefield Tour holiday' she stated. 'Leave it to me darling, I know just the place' I replied. So I duly booked 9 Parachute Battalion's HQ near Breville.**

The activities of 9 Para's are well known with regards to the Merville Battery but I am unsure if many guides venture to Amfreville, Breville and the Bois du Monts.

The latter was fought over, quite viciously, for 5 days from 8th-12th June 1944 with 9 Para and the 5th Black Watch. The Germans were intent on taking this vital piece of high ground back and launched wave after wave of assaults over the period. Elements of 711 and 716 Division, with tank support, ensured the Para's were kept on their toes, yet one could very easily walk or drive along this peaceful lane and not see even one telltale sign of battle.

The Gites/HQ is located within private woods and off the main drag so-to-speak. It sleeps ten and so the whole family was comfortably located in the various rooms. The bungalow served as Lt Col Otway's (9 Para CO) HQ during this time. He moved into the woods with what was left of the battalion after the Merville Battery Assault, positioned his troops and dug in. The various buildings were all very quickly utilized. A Main Dressing Station (MDS) was located in the toolshed about 30 yards away from the bungalow. A Coy were located in an old barn and the kitchen in the bungalow became the operating theatre as part of the RAP.

As the battle raged for over 5 days, more and more casualties were brought in to either the RAP or MDS. At one stage, the story goes, blood was being brushed out of the kitchen and living room. In this 5-day period, hundreds of casualties were treated, 183 wounded were recorded on the final day of fighting. Those that were killed were buried outside the bungalow on the lawn during the heat of battle. After the war, they were reinterred at CWGC Ranville.

The bungalow has been extended somewhat but the original character still

remains, the current owners have done a wonderful job in maintaining the original feel of the buildings. The woods have been thinned out a little since the war but if you stop and look closely, there is ample evidence of battle to see.



All the sides of the woods were defended by dug-in troops. Some trenches were quite deep where others were nothing more than shell scrapes. The trenches are still visible but have been cleverly masked to prevent any unwanted treasure seekers. No matter how deep the trenches were, the effect of the incoming mortars hitting the trees took its toll on the troops. The trees would generally splinter when hit, truly a miserable experience for those close by. Many of the older trees within the woods still bear the scars of the battle with branches torn off and unusually twisted bark along their length.



*On one of the sides of the woods, there are bullet strike marks on both sides of the tree!*

During quieter periods, time was spent consolidating the trenches and cleaning weapons. Once this was complete, one individual even found time to carve 'Devon Airborne 1944' into the tree next to their trench! Whilst this was more than likely not 9 Para, it may well have been 12 Para sometime in June/July 1944.



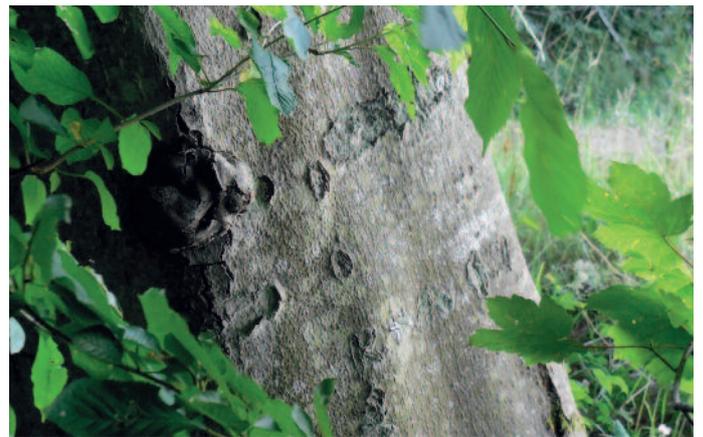
*Their initials can be clearly seen 'BMJ' to the left of the vine.*

Close to the Bois du Monts, one trench that housed one of the Vickers Machine Guns attracted its fair share of incoming fire from the Germans. Fortunately this trench was sited in a natural ditch, nevertheless much time was spent in making it deeper. German Snipers were hidden away up in the trees near the chateau; the height of their positions provided an excellent overview of the Para positions.

Consequently a momentary lapse in concentration or poor field craft frequently added to the casualty list. This included Corporal Fred Wingrove who was killed by a sniper when in desperate need of a comfort break, he left his trench during a quiet spell. This particular sniper was causing some concern and had to be flushed out.

Sergeant Woodcraft:

*"I positioned the Bren Gunner and our sniper and ordered them to fire at any likely place. I then tied a mess tin to a stick and waved it backwards and forwards in front of a tree. I was on the point of giving up when 'smack', a bullet hole appeared in the tree trunk just above our heads. Each time he fired I carried out strict butt marking drill; I signaled bulls, inners, magpies and outers, each time marking the strike of the shot by placing the mess tin on the trunk and once, just to stop him getting big-headed, I signalled a miss by waving an aircraft recognition panel. All the time the Bren gunner and sniper were firing into the trees opposite<sup>1</sup>."*

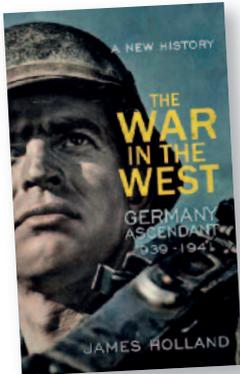


*Bullet strikes from the German sniper. The bullet strike marks are still very clearly visible*

I learnt a lot during my stay, one of the most striking lessons was that there is so much archeology that can be missed when doing our stands – I really benefitted from exploring the battlefield in slow time, without an audience. I felt that I had gained a deeper and more complete understanding of the battle. I have lost count of the amount of times I have been at this stand with a group, but after spending a week in the bungalow/gites, I have discovered so much more. (I have been deliberately vague in describing exactly where these trees are; they are all on private property and permission must be sought beforehand).

<sup>1</sup> *'The Day the Devils Dropped In'* by Neil Barber

# GUIDEbooks:



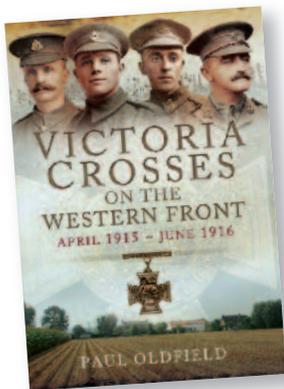
## THE WAR IN THE WEST Germany Ascendant 1939 - 1941

By James Holland

This is the first in a multi-volume series that has been widely advertised as a new and groundbreaking history.

In fact I think it is better than that, this is the most refreshing and engaging Second World War history I have read in a long time. The absorbing narrative is laced with a passion and enthusiasm that reminded me of my childhood years when I was gripped by the iconic TV documentary series, *The World at War*. In every respect this book stands a head and shoulders above the current crop of popular WW2 histories. Difficult to find fault - My book of the year

Published by Bantam Press  
RRP £25.00  
hardback, pp692



## VICTORIA CROSSES ON THE WESTERN FRONT

April 1915 – June 1916

By Paul Oldfield

The Victoria Cross has probably had more written about it than any other military medal in history. It is difficult to imagine

that there can be any new angles on the medal itself or the men who have been awarded this iconic decoration. I think this comprehensive tome of VC information reinforces my previous statement – this all-encompassing series on First World War VC actions puts everything else in the shade. It is an unrivalled combination of narrative, maps, photographs, citations and biographies. Its only drawback? It is man-portable in the same sense as a PIAT! 9/10.

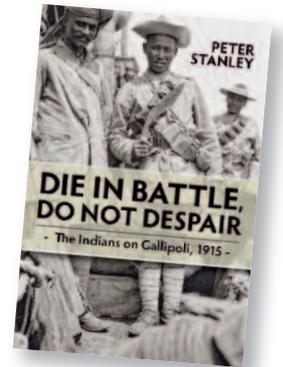
Published by Pen & Sword  
RRP £30.00  
paperback, pp476

## DIE IN BATTLE, DO NOT DESPAIR The Indians on Gallipoli, 1915

By Peter Stanley

Almost every week we hear of the publication of a new FWW history that highlights the role of a forgotten, or lost regiment, or perhaps even a nationality and its role in the War. Usually the said regiment or formation is nothing of the sort, it's history is in fact well documented. That said this particular title does break new ground, recording in exhaustive detail the not insignificant role of the Indian Army during the Gallipoli campaign. Combining research from Indian, Turkish, Australian and British sources, this is the best book on the subject by a country mile. Certainly no need to hunt for any other source material on the subject if you own a copy.

Published by Helion  
RRP £25.00  
hardback, pp383

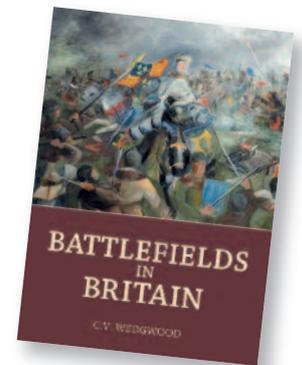


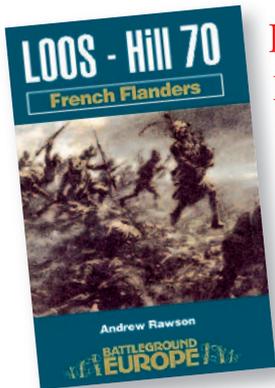
## BATTLEFIELDS IN BRITAIN

By C V Wedgwood

If you are looking for some light reading or escapism this reprint of a 1944 original is an enjoyable read. The narrative in the book is very much of its time as are the maps and the more modern (1971) cover art. Although it is far from being a comprehensive battlefield guide I quite enjoyed its overall retro feel and its concise explanations of some of the UK's most notable battlefields. So in summary, this title is more for personal pleasure than for business. .

Published by Uniform Press Ltd  
RRP £8.99  
hardback, pp144





## LOOS - HILL 70 French Flanders

By Andrew Rawson

This book offers all that we have come to expect from the Battleground Europe Series. Full of maps, images and descriptions of the area surrounding Loos on the IV Corps front in September 1915. It is a must have for anyone

studying or considering touring the area due to the comparative lack of other available histories. Car and walking tours give ideas of the way in which a tour could be arranged taking in the key sites and giving an excellent overview of a forgotten area of France, Hill 70 itself now covered by a retail park.

Published by Pen & Sword Military  
RRP £10.99  
paperback, pp192

Emma White

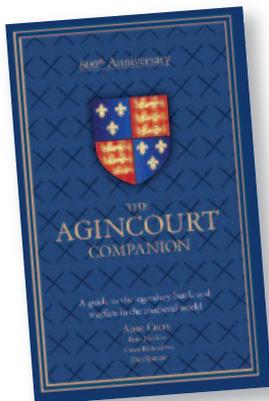


## SNOW & STEEL Battle of the Bulge 1944-45

By Peter Caddick-Adams

The German Ardennes offensive of December 1944 is surrounded by myth and hollywood cliché, the true story of what the Sir Winston Churchill described as 'an ever famous American victory' is even more remarkable. This latest history of Hitler's last desperate assault against the Western Allies strips away the myth and misconception from beginning to end. It is an all encompassing masterpiece that I was absorbed in from the first page. It is quite clear that the author knows the history and critically the ground intimately. The result is a history that guides the reader through the chronology of the Battle of the Bulge viewing events at every level from Hitler's map table to the point of the bayonet on the snow covered battlefield of December 1944-45.

Published by Arrow Books  
RRP £12.99  
paperback, pp872



## THE AGINCOURT COMPANION

A guide to the legendary  
battle and warfare in the  
Medieval world

By Anne Curry, Peter Hoskins,  
Thom Richardson and Dan Spencer

The Agincourt 600  
commemorations certainly raised

public awareness of what was one of the biggest victories in British (I know English & Welsh) military history. This excellent pocket guide is described as a companion and it certainly has that feel. The presentation and binding gives it the look and feel of a Bradshaw style guidebook of yesteryear. The contents are comprehensive in their historic narrative and a pleasure to read – Sadly, there is however what I consider to be an unforgivable oversight in a book of this nature, a total lack of maps of the battlefield or any illustrations that explain the chronology of the battle. That said, I will still be taking my copy with me the next time I walk Agincourt.

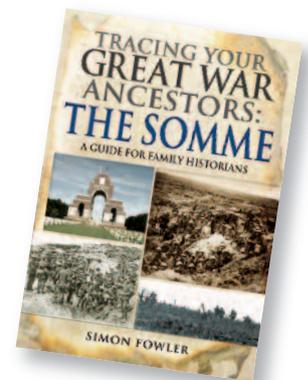
Published by Andre Deutsch  
RRP £9.99  
hardback, pp160

## TRACING YOUR GREAT WAR ANCESTORS: THE SOMME A Guide for Family Historians

By Simon Fowler

For any researcher looking to focus their research on a particular area of the Western Front, this book is a good place to start. Guidance on military and genealogical sources about individuals and units is well considered and presented. Chapters on the war in the air, women, casualties and dominion troops are also included and the book is interspersed with firsthand accounts. Overall a good book to use as point of reference and also one to guide any prospective researchers found on tours who are looking to find out more.

Published by Pen & Sword Family History  
ISBN 1473823692  
RRP £12.99  
paperback, pp145



Emma White

# 10 Questions:

Name: Susan Cocks

Age: 66

Nationality: British

Home Location: South Wales

Tour Company: Sole Trader –  
Guided Battlefield Tours

Validating: No



In each edition of Despatches, we will be introducing a member of the Guild. In this edition, it is Susan Cocks.

**1. How long have you been interested in battlefields and what was it that initially attracted your interest?**

On a holiday in France about 15 years ago, my husband, Steve, left me shivering on the site of a World War One battlefield while he ‘explored’ oblivious to my protests! Fortunately for our marriage, my love of history meant that gradually I became fascinated and began to read around the subject. Eventually, I completed the WW1 MA at Birmingham.

**2. Have any experiences stood out?** I think the most important event that ‘converted’ me to becoming a Battlefield Historian was my first visit to the Devonshire Cemetery. When I heard about the events that took place there, the enormity of the First World War and its impact on a generation fell into place. Because of this, it will always be a location with which I feel a special link.

**3. What do you enjoy the most about battlefield guiding?** Having studied social history at university, I find that the personal stories of individual soldiers give a wider perspective to the military history that is essential to guiding. Many of our guests have a wealth of information about their relatives who fought in the war and I have found that this widens one’s own area of research. It also makes a tour more personal as guests are interested in one another’s stories and in this way, the atmosphere within the group becomes more positive.

**4. What is your favourite stand, location or battlefield and why?** What a difficult question! How does one choose? I think it has to be the Leipzig Redoubt. I remember the first time I walked up Campbell Avenue. I was alone with two guests who wanted to visit the Lonsdale Cemetery. As we walked along, I stopped when I saw the breath-taking view of the Thiepval Memorial; seen from this direction, the dominating nature of the German positions is so evident. I have never forgotten this moment. This is now something

we incorporate into our walking tours as it is possible to give guests a clear idea of the battlefield. People like to walk along the Campbell Avenue and see where the HLI began their attack. They can see the grave of Sgt Turnbull VC at the cemetery before seeing where the action which led to his posthumous award. On the Leipzig Redoubt they can understand the power of the German defence from the Wundtwerk and the Schwaben Redoubt before walking on to the Thiepval Memorial and Visitors’ Centre where the coach meets us. I recommend this for active adults as well as school groups. The stand adapts well to all ages.

**5. Which battlefield would you like to visit in the future?** Trieste, Italy. This is where my father was wounded.

**6. What have you enjoyed the most about being a member of the Guild?** The most important aspect of the Guild to me, is the wide resource of knowledge that other members have. There is a generosity within the membership of sharing ideas and knowledge that is special.

**7. If there was a fire and you could only save one battlefield-related book or prop, what would you save and why?** My father’s World War Two pay book. Inside is the sheet of paper outlining his release from hospital after he suffered head injuries during an incident in which he was the sole survivor.

**8. What type of group do you think is the most challenging to lead on a tour?** Generally, I think it is often a social group that includes people who are not necessarily interested in the history of the war. Steve and I once took such a group in the first year of running our company. We were most disappointed when the women in the group descended into the preserved trenches at Notre Dame de Lorette and proceeded with a Tiller girl routine. I am not sure which was worse, the disrespect or the ungainly attempt at dancing.

**9. What’s the best tip, story or nugget of information you have been given by a fellow battlefield guide?** It is very easy when talking at a stand to talk for too long. People often find it difficult to absorb too much information and clarity is essential. Following a tip, I now limit each stand to three or four main points. It helps to focus everyone’s attention to outline what the main points are at the beginning of the stand. I then introduce point one developing the ideas, then introduce point two and so on.

**10. What is the funniest or most dramatic thing you have seen on tour?** Unfortunately, I have a somewhat childish sense of humour. On one tour there was an elderly woman suffered from flatulence. Her timing was faultless; on one occasion I was standing at the grave of Edward Thomas describing his final leave taking of his family when she let rip loudly and unashamedly. It was a struggle to carry on in an appropriate manner. I believe I was professional throughout but the memory still amuses me.

## NEWmembers:

New members who have been welcomed to the Guild between August 2015 and the date of publication.

Andrea Barbato  
Marc Yates  
Nigel Stevens  
Stuart Robertson  
Keith Bowen  
Simon Andrews  
James Aitchison  
Martin Heighway

Philippee Maree  
Jeroen Niels  
Nick Saunders  
Lars Wistedt  
George Calder  
David Cashman  
John Corbett  
Steven Cottam

Gareth Davies  
Andrew Warren  
Jan Van Heese  
Stewart Kinloch  
Darren Sheerin  
Mike Selcon  
Peter Nunwa  
Mark Offord

Wayne Dixon  
Peter Edwards  
Martin Green  
Desmond Haley  
Dirk Hoekenduk  
Paul Marsh