

Summer 2016

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DESPATCHES

the magazine of the International Guild of Battlefield Guides



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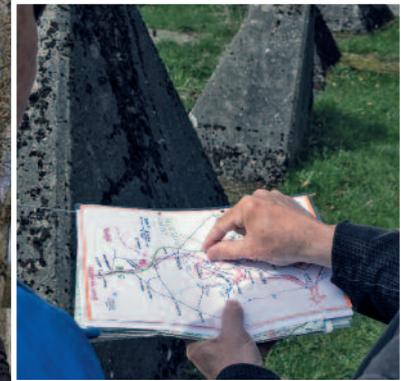
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Our cover image: Dr John Greenacre brushing up on the facts at the Sittang River, Myanmar.



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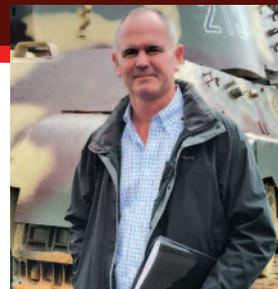
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Under The Devil's Eye, newly joined Associate Member, Alan Wakefield explaining the intricacies of The Birdcage Line outside Thessaloniki. (Picture StaffRideUK)



OPENINGshot:

THE CHAIRMAN'S VIEW

Welcome fellow members, Guild Partners, and Supporters to the Summer 2016 edition of Despatches, the house magazine of the Guild.

The year so far has been dominated by FWW commemorative events marking the centenaries of Jutland, Verdun and the Somme. Recent weeks have seen the predominantly Australian ceremonies at Fromelles and Pozieres. Guild members have been prominent at almost all of these ceremonies and it was pleasing to see so many Guild badges on show. In fact one of the highlights of the Anzac summer for me was noting the number of Associate and Accredited Members I saw leading hordes of eager Aussies around the Western Front. It was even more satisfying to see those same members willingly sharing information and tips during the lulls between ceremonies and events – the essence of what the Guild is all about.

In recent editorials I have focused on individual professionalism, the need for insurance and the terrorist threat to clients. All of these issues remain very much live and it has been consistently evident when talking to members out on the battlefields that everybody is very aware of the challenges that we all face. The general mood is one of increasing professionalism, a trend that increasingly isolates the less professional Tour Operator or Battlefield Guide. So, in spite of an increasingly challenging and competitive market place for the major battlefield tour operator and sole trader alike, the overall trend is

positive. The cream will rise to the top and those at the fore of our trade will take those that want to raise their individual and collective standards with them. These interesting times offer great opportunities for the Guild. Our validation programme is an ideal vehicle for those seeking self-improvement and, coupled with our shared aims, encourages the raising of collective standards. It can only have a positive influence.

If evidence was needed that there is a world for Battlefield Guides beyond Europe and the trenches of the Western Front then a glance through this issue will hopefully reassure you. We have some great features and articles that demonstrate the breadth of expertise and knowledge that we all share as a collective body. Thank you to our contributors. We now need a good set of articles for the winter edition, so if you are holding back that article that you always wanted to write, please write it and send it in! Those of you who pledged that you would be collecting your Badge at the AGM next January, now is the time for an honest self-appraisal – What is left to do? Now is the time for the final push on those remaining assignments, you could be accredited by January.

Finally, let's all hope that the recent terrorist atrocities across the world do not do permanent damage to some of our favourite battlefield destinations or harm the people we work with there. Above all, have a great autumn season everybody, stay safe, hone your skills and enjoy your guiding!

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

an opportunity grasped: **GUIDING** *with* **HELP FOR** **HEROES** *in* **THAILAND** *and* **MYANMAR**

Dr John Greenacre

In 2008, as a relatively new and unaccredited member of the Guild I was lucky to be chosen as a member of the team to guide on the first Help For Heroes Big Battlefield Bike Ride (BBBR). During the week of the ride I was fortunate to be able to observe and learn from Dudley Giles, John Cotterill and Peter Caddick-Adams as 300 cyclists made their way between First and Second World War sites from Le Havre to Dunkirk. I enjoyed the experience so much I volunteered to work as guide on the following three BBBRs. And so I had an inkling of what to expect when, in 2015, our secretary distributed a request from Help For Heroes for a guide to accompany yet another bike ride, although this one would be rather different. First the location; the ride would be starting in Bangkok in Thailand and covering stages to Yangon (formerly Rangoon) in Myanmar (formerly Burma), it is not an area many of us get to guide and there would be no chance of a recce. Second, whoever volunteered to guide on the trip would also be expected to cycle with the other participants.

With a degree of trepidation I decided to grasp the opportunity and volunteered and with increasing trepidation I was accepted by Help For Heroes as the guide for the event; the Burma Bike Ride. Over the next few months, through meetings with Help For Heroes and Discover Adventure, the bike ride organisers, I got to grips with the route and the stands I would be expected to deliver. Around forty cyclists, including Help For Heroes co-founders Bryn and Emma Parry and fashion model Jodie Kidd, were to cycle five stages each of approximately fifty miles. Beginning in Bangkok and initially following the route of the Burma Railway the ride would then transfer to Myanmar and head up the coast north, following the Japanese invasion route, to finish in Yangon. As the event got closer I had two concerns. First, would I be up to the bike ride? I had cycled a longer ride along the entire length of the Western Front with fellow Anglia guides in 2014 but that was not in the forty degrees of heat and one hundred percent humidity that we would experience in Thailand and Myanmar. Second, would I have the requisite knowledge to deliver the stands on the ground? I had a good background knowledge on the Far East Campaign and concentrated on reading relevant secondary sources to improve it. I also made several trips to the National Archives to get hold of primary sources that would expand on the stands I knew I would have to cover. I

prepared a series of background talks on the war in the Far East that I could deliver in the accommodation in the evenings if required. Finally I created two large scale maps, each on half a bedsheet, one of Burma and the surrounding countries during the Second World War and another of the Burma Railway. Still the understandable lack of a recce and any decent modern mapping was a niggling concern.

Early in the morning of 11 March 2016 the entire team met at Heathrow. Eleven hours later we stepped out into the heat and humidity of early morning Bangkok. A transfer to the hotel, a chance to shake down and then out again to meet our local cycle guides and fit our bikes. On returning to the hotel there was a chance to sample what the city had to offer and to sit down and check the itinerary and arrangements with the organisers. One thing I had learned working on previous BBBRs is that a degree of flexibility is required as the original plan and itinerary seldom survive in their intended form. The more we discussed the ride ahead the more I realised that flexibility was going to be an even more prominent feature of this event due to the vagaries of the local situation and support, particularly once we crossed into Myanmar.

The following morning, after the proverbial 'one night in Bangkok' the entire team, some a little worse for wear, were driven by coach to the outskirts of the city as I gave a talk on the microphone on the

background to the war in the Far East. We were reunited with our bicycles and an hour later we were off. My initial fears on my cycling ability were allayed as we settled into a comfortable pace to accommodate the wide range of cycling experience and fitness within the group. The route was relatively flat as we cruised through largely agricultural land and small villages, passing numerous pagodas and stupas. The gentle pace was just as well as we reached lunchtime and the temperature was heading above forty degrees. At the first water stop after lunch I was relieved of my cycling duties, transferred to a pick-up and moved forward to the first stands. And what stands they were. First the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) cemetery at Kanchanaburi followed quickly by the iconic bridge over the River Kwai. I had a couple of hours to orientate myself to the two stands with the material I had taken with me and then the cyclists arrived at the cemetery; time to go to work.



The author conducts a stand about the Burma Railway in Kanchanaburi War Cemetery

Kanchanaburi War Cemetery is one of three CWGC cemeteries along the route of the Burma Railway that were concentrated from the sixty-one that existed in 1945. There are now 5,085 Commonwealth casualties of the Second World War buried or commemorated in Kanchanaburi along with a further 1,897 Dutch war graves. The Kanchanaburi memorial is situated in the entrance building to the cemetery and records the names of eleven Indian soldiers buried in Muslim cemeteries in Thailand, where their graves could not be maintained. The group relaxed in the shade of a large

tree as I explained the purpose and statistics linked with the building of the Burma Railway, which linked Bangkok with Rangoon. It became vital to the Japanese to save men and logistics having to make the two thousand mile sea journey between the two cities through the Malacca Strait, particularly after their defeat at Midway. The building of the railway was begun by separate groups working inwards from each end starting in earnest in October 1942. The 424 kilometres (265 Miles) of track was completed by December 1943; Kanchanaburi is at Kilometre 50, measured from the Bangkok end. Around 60,000 Allied prisoners of war were employed on the construction, of which nearly 13,000 were killed or died from disease and malnutrition. Possibly around 180,000 South East Asian forced labourers, known as Romusha were also employed of which perhaps nearly 100,000 died in the process. After a short wreath laying ceremony, as the group took the time to look round the cemetery, I leapt back in the truck to cover the short distance to the bridge over the River Kwai.

Arriving on the northeast bank of the river at the site of the bridge can be viewed as a disappointment depending on your preconceptions. The area immediately adjacent to the northeast end of the bridge has become something of a tourist trap with dozens of stalls and shops selling fast food and tacky souvenirs and is flooded by people wanting to see the iconic bridge. The bridge however, which is still in use by Thai railways, is not the bridge immortalised in the 1957 film based on Pierre Bouelle's novel. It is however the bridge that appears among the closing scenes of the 2014 film *'The Railway Man'*, based on Eric Lomax's first-hand account.

The wooden structure that Alec Guinness tried desperately to save was built by prisoners of war and completed in February 1943 but has long since disappeared. About 300 metres upstream the current bridge, on which Colin Firth contemplates life, was built by Japanese engineers with prisoner of war labour and was completed in June 1943. The bridge was bombed by the USAAF and RAF several times in 1945 and the two central spans are post-war replacements, provided by Japanese reparations. 'Bridge 277' stands at Kilometre 56 and spans 346 metres. The river that flows below it is actually the Kwaie Yai; Kwai is a



John delivering a stand to the cyclists at the Bridge over the River Kwai

common European mispronunciation meaning Buffalo. When the bridge was constructed the river was neither the Kwai or the Kwaie. The river was originally the Mae Klong but it caused such confusion after the film was released that in 1960 it was renamed the Kwaie Yai (big tributary). Tourists can walk across the bridge and do so in large numbers even though trains still pass across it, which creates a novel health and safety risk for future tours. Having dodged the trains I and the group retired to a nearby hotel.

The following day the cycling got a little tougher and the temperature got much hotter; one cycle computer recorded a temperature of 50.2 degrees centigrade in the early afternoon. At the end of the ride through rubber plantations, following the route of the River Kwaie Yai and Kwaie Noi (small tributary) we climbed gratefully onto the coach for the drive to the Hellfire Pass Museum. Hellfire Pass also featured in 'The Railway Man' and is a cutting in the Sai Yok National Park that the Burma Railway once passed through. The museum at the site is very good but unfortunately closes at 4.00 pm each day so we didn't have much time to view it properly. The museum (actually more of an interpretation centre) was built largely with Australian money and opened in 1998.

The Pass itself is a thirty minute walk down a steep path and steps from the museum and given the exertions of the day many of the group elected not to make the clamber down. For those of us that did make the hike it was well worth it. I briefly explained the facts of the site. The 600 metre cutting is in two sections and is around eight metres deep, cut by hand through solid rock. The work took twelve weeks and was completed on 25 April 1943. At least sixty-nine prisoners were beaten to death as they worked at the site and an unrecorded number died from disease or exhaustion. The advantage for our group of having arrived late in the day was that the Pass was deserted. In the quiet and the oppressive heat between the close rock walls, with some of the original sleepers still in place underfoot, it was just possible to begin to imagine the relentless suffering experienced by Allied prisoners of war and the Romusha.

Day 3 involved no cycling and no battlefield sites. Instead we travelled by coach to a remote Thai/Myanmar border crossing point. The border control post seldom saw western tourists and it was likely to take a time to get into Myanmar despite preliminary work to prepare the customs and immigration officials for our arrival. It took three

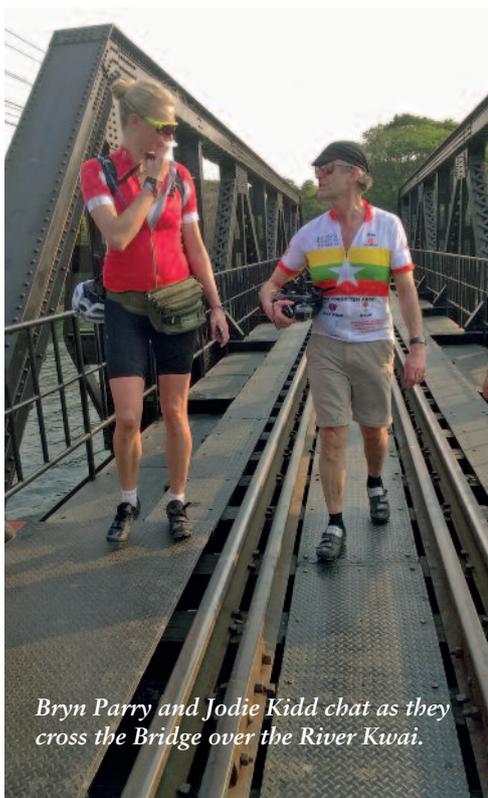
hours to get into Myanmar, transfer into two fairly basic coaches and meet our Burmese guides. Sai, the main guide climbed into our coach in a very cheerful mood, explaining that Myanmar had just that instant voted in its first democratically elected president, Htin Kyaw, in over fifty years; a historic moment. Our own excitement was dampened by the thought of an impending seven hour coach ride, mostly through hills on un-tarmacked roads. Once over the border it was clear we were 'not in Kansas anymore'. Our route roughly followed the Japanese invasion by their 55th Division over the Tenasserim Hills. At dusk we reached our hotel on a beach on the Indian Ocean close to Dawei. The town, formerly known as Tavoy, with its vital airfield was attacked by the Japanese 143rd Infantry Regiment on 18 January 1942. The defenders, the 3rd and 6th battalions of the Burma Rifles, were overwhelmed and forced to evacuate the town in disorder.

The following day everyone was keen to get back on the bikes. Due to the potential issues with the temperature the day was rearranged; we would start cycling at 7 am, continue until after lunchtime, transfer to the coaches, drive to the CWGC Cemetery at Thanbyuzayat for a stand and then on to the hotel. The differences between Thailand and Myanmar, which has only been fully open to tourism for a few years, were obvious. We did not see another western face all day (or for the following two days); we found we were the attraction as we paused in villages and the entire population came out to point and take photographs of us; cars were fewer on the road although there were a plethora of improvised vehicles; roadside food or rest

stops were practically non-existent. By the time we reached the end of the cycle the temperature was high enough to melt the tarmac on the roads. After transferring to the coaches some of the other idiosyncrasies of Myanmar came to the fore. We stopped in the town of Ye for a short break at the end of which we were told one of the coaches was now broken. It would take thirty minutes to source a new 'coach' so I delivered an impromptu stand in a vehicle shed. Using my bedsheets maps I updated the group on the Japanese advance north through Ye pushing the 1st Burma Division in front of it. I also pulled out one of my prepared evening talks (which had not been required up to this point) and talked about the relationship between the British, Americans and Chinese during the Burma Campaign. While this was going on the Discover Adventure leader was in deep discussion with our Burmese guide, Sai and another 'Burmarism' intervened. The estimation of time and distance in the country is, at best, vague and it became clear that the expected three hour drive to Thanbyuzayat was more like six hours and therefore we would not reach the cemetery before dark. Reluctantly the visit to Thanbyuzayat, the only CWGC at the northwest end of the Burma Railway, was abandoned in favour of getting to the accommodation. There followed a hair-raising journey on tarmac and unmade roads that got far worse as it got dark and it became clear that headlights were considered optional and either side of the road was acceptable. We all gazed on forlornly as we passed the sign for Thanbyuzayat in the darkness.

After what seemed like an eternity of peril we arrived in Mawlamyine for a much required beer or three and bed. In the morning a quick piece of history for the group before we departed. Mawlamyine used to be called Moulmein and I was reminded of Kipling's opening lines of *Mandalay*: "By the old Moulmein pagoda, lookin' lazy at the sea, There's a Burma girl a-settin', and I know she thinks o' me".

I'm not sure about the 'Burma girl' but the golden Moulmein pagoda (Kyaik Than Lan) sat glinting in the sun on a nearby hill as we emerged from the hotel. On 25 January 1942 16th Indian Brigade arrived in Moulmein. The Brigade, part of 17th



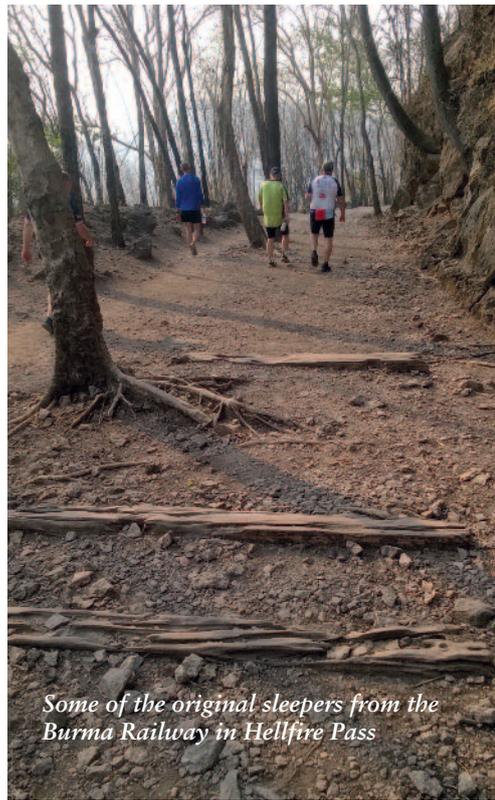
Bryn Parry and Jodie Kidd chat as they cross the Bridge over the River Kwai.



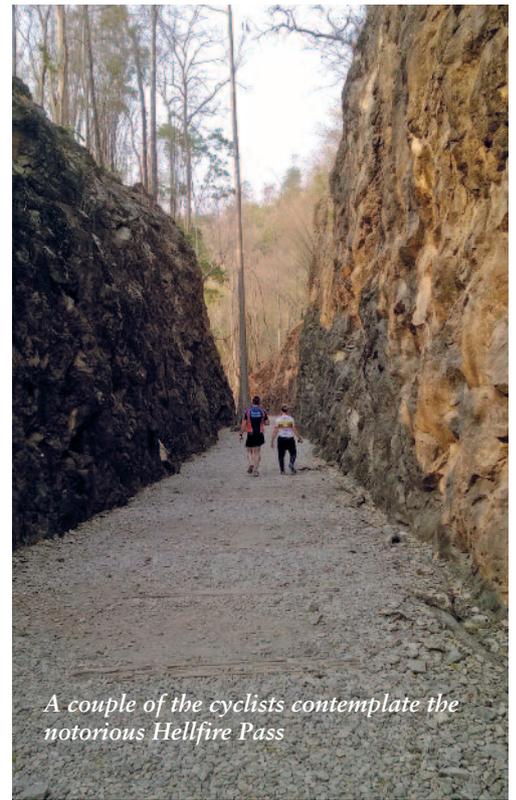
Not much separation between trains and public on the Bridge.

Indian Division had been routed at the Kawkaik Pass by the Japanese 55th Division and crossed the River Salween by ferry at Moulmein to take up defensive positions well to the north. The defence of Moulmein was entrusted to 2nd Burma Brigade, which set up its headquarters in the pagoda on the hill and attempted to prevent the Japanese from using the ferries to cross the Salween. No such obstructions for us as we crossed the broad river using the modern bridge and headed north towards our next destination Kyaikto, the same objective that 17th Indian Division was heading for seventy-four years before. The cycle ride was long, hot and not the most exciting we had experienced on flat, straight roads through endless paddy fields. On arrival, however we did find our hotel in Kyaikto had the added bonus of incorporating a zoo.

In 1942, as the Japanese pushed towards Rangoon the fighting became more intense. Moulmein, once the British capital in Burma fell on 31 January. Thereafter, the British, with their Indian and Burmese allies attempted to stall the Japanese advance on Rangoon along a series of river obstacles. First was the Bilin



Some of the original sleepers from the Burma Railway in Hellfire Pass



A couple of the cyclists contemplate the notorious Hellfire Pass

River, which we had crossed just before arrival in Kyaikto. Major General John Smyth VC, the commander of 17th Indian Division described the Bilin saying “at that time of year was only a ditch, but a good coordinating line.” The river held for just two days and Smyth had to withdraw again, fifty kilometres northwest to the Sittang River, also our objective for the final day of cycling.

No cycling for me though as I departed the hotel/zoo the following day by truck along with my room-mate

A view from the saddle of some of the countryside in Myanmar





The group pause from cycling in a young rubber plantation



The cyclists pause in a typical Burmese village



Bryn Parry (far right) describes his fathers MC action at the Pegu rail bridge (in the distance)



Some of the group explore the Pegu rail bridge

and Help For Heroes challenge coordinator Shaun Pickford. It was going to be a big day, the last day of cycling, with two important stands so we wanted to get ahead and sort everything that could be sorted. First we headed for the Sittang River, now known as the Sittaung. On reaching the cyclists crossing point the river looked hugely impressive, with its far bank shrouded in mist several hundred metres away to our east. Where we planned to conduct the stand on the east bank there were a series of abandoned trenches and weapon pits, not from the Second World War but for internal security and the protection of the immense bridge in the 1970s and 1980s. As the temperature began to rise we found a shady spot from which to deliver the stand and I revised my notes as we waited for the cyclists to arrive.

When they did and had a moment to compose themselves I described 17th Indian Division's defence of the Sittang, the last serious obstacle before Rangoon. Smyth placed two of his brigades, 16th and 46th east of the river to delay the Japanese. 48th Brigade was given the task of defending the main crossing, preparing for a Japanese parachute coup de main and preparing the bridge for demolition. With mounting pressure from the Japanese 33rd Division Smyth's bridge was blown at around 4 am on 23 February 1942 with 16th and 46th Brigades and a portion of 48th Brigade still on the enemy bank. It was the turning point of the campaign and made the fall of Rangoon almost inevitable and is an incident that has been wreathed in controversy ever since. The officer who made the decision to fire the demolition, Lieutenant Bashir Ahmed Khan of the Malerkotla Sappers and Miners, did so for logical and sensible tactical reasons. The finger of blame, however was pointed at Smyth who was not only dismissed from his command but also forcibly retired from the Army despite being under doctor's orders to take sick leave at the time of the incident. The stand was completed by a short wreath laying ceremony and then the group ceremonially cycled across the bridge to the finish line, which had been hastily set up by Shaun and I with several enthusiastic locals drafted in as a rent-a-crowd.

Celebratory beers all round and then on to the coaches for a drive to one last, important stand. Bryn and Emma Parry, the co-founders of Help For Heroes were on the Burma Bike Ride along with their daughter Sophie. Bryn's father, Robin had fought during the withdrawal towards Rangoon in 1942 as a temporary Captain with the 2/5th Battalion Royal Gurkha Rifles and had won the Military Cross during the next major action

after Sittang at Pegu (now known as Bago). There was only one problem, we didn't really know where the location was. I had a sketch map from the Battalion war diary showing where Captain Parry's C Company was situated during the battle on a rail bridge over what is now the Bago River but Myanmar has produced no detailed, publicly available maps for over fifty years. Our local guide Sai phoned ahead, explained to a local scooter-taxi driver what we were looking for and asked him to guide us in. The man on the scooter duly met us on the outskirts of Bago, which has sprawled hugely compared to what was there in 1942. The guide led us down gradually narrowing, residential, unpaved streets until, inevitably, the road became too narrow for the coach to go forward or turn round. We de-bussed and a heated discussion in Burmese ensued between Sai and the man on the scooter who assured him we were not far away but he was not sure exactly where the bridge was. I took a long shot and was relieved to find that Sai not only had an internet connection on his phone (none of our group had managed to get a connection since we entered Myanmar) but also had Google Maps. As we stood in the very narrow street, steadily attracting more local attention, Sai and I compared the 1942 sketch map to his phone, while Bryn looked on and I reckoned the bridge was about 400 metres away. I assured Bryn I would be back directly, set off on foot and was mightily relieved to find the rail bridge over the river. Returning, I brought the group to the location on foot, leaving the coaches to sort themselves out.

The effort and the trouble was worth it. From a shady patch about a hundred metres to the east with the bridge in view I was able to point out most of the features on the battalion sketch map to Bryn. I then described the action there to the group. The battle at Pegu was little more than a demonstration. The British command in Burma had already decided to evacuate Rangoon but wanted to convince the Japanese that they were going to fight hard to defend the city. 2/5th, 1/4th and 1/3rd Royal Gurkha Rifles were the units selected to create this deception, while the rest of 17th Indian Division withdrew to the north of Rangoon. Bryn described his father and read two citations for his Military Cross. The first, probably written on the spot, was on rice paper and described Captain Parry charging from cover firing a Bren from the hip. The young captain had appended his own hand written comment to the document; "What a man!" The official citation was rather more subdued and cited Captain Parry for his prolonged leadership and example under fire. It was an emotional moment for Bryn, whose father had died when he was still an infant. The group walked onto the bridge, conscious of the fact that the railway was still in use. When the

heat got too much we retired to the coaches, which had miraculously extricated themselves and turned round and we headed the short distance to our final hotel. It had been a very satisfying moment.

That evening the Burma Bike Ride formally ended with the traditional rather raucous Help For Heroes prize giving dinner. Bryn officiated and over the course of the dinner many prizes of varying degrees of seriousness were awarded. I had decided to donate my two bedsheets as prizes, which may not have been worth anything in themselves but had featured during the event and now had Jodie Kidd's signature emblazoned on them. To my surprise Bryn decided to auction them off and to my even greater surprise, between them they made nearly \$US 4,000. The following day some sore heads climbed on the coaches and we set off for Yangon. We stopped at the hugely impressive CWGC Taukkyan War Cemetery, which now contains 6,374 Commonwealth burials and the Rangoon Memorial bearing the names of almost 27,000 men of the Commonwealth land forces who died during the campaigns in Burma and who have no known grave. This was followed by a guided tour of the 'blingtastic' Shwedagon Pagoda in sweltering heat before heading to the airport.

On the long flight home I reflected on my experience of the past week to see if I could learn any fresh lessons. In fact most of them turned out to be age old lessons that apply to battlefield guides whether they are in Burma, Belgium or Bosworth. Thorough preparation is the key and a deeper understanding of the background of a campaign will greatly assist putting each stand into context. Be flexible and expect the unexpected: don't let a forced change of itinerary derail your entire tour. Always have something up your sleeve: my evening talks were not required (the bar was more attractive) but they became invaluable when the coach broke down in Ye. I have become a convert to bedsheet (or pillowcase or tea-towel) maps; cheap and easy to carry, even on a bike and worth a surprisingly large amount of money in the right circumstances. Maintain a sense of humour, even when facing certain death on unlit Burmese roads at night or when being served curried rice for breakfast and for the fifteenth meal in a row. Always go to the primary sources: without having gone to 2/5th Gurkha's war diary I would not have had the sketch map that allowed us to find the stand in Pegu, one of the highlights of the tour. Finally the Fall of Rangoon is a fascinating and overlooked episode in the Burma Campaign, nevertheless I think it will need a few more years of democracy and infrastructure improvements before many of us find ourselves guiding it regularly.

The trip had once again proved my guiding maxim; "Never fail to grasp an opportunity".

A TALE OF TWO TOURS

Chris Gravestock

Having just completed two tours of the Ardennes and the Battle of the Bulge battlefields, an area that until August last year I knew little about, I thought Guild members might be interested in the highs and lows of these two, very different, tours.

I should say at the outset that I am not a professional guide. I evolved into guiding as a hobbyist, who, for the last 15 years or so has taken groups of family, friends, acquaintances and other interested parties around battlefields all over Europe. As time has gone on, these trips have become more focussed, more detailed and structured as my knowledge and experience has increased. This Spring has been particularly interesting as two groups showed an interest in visiting the Ardennes, which meant building the tours from scratch as I had little previous experience of the area to go on. One trip was to be based around a walking tour, whilst taking in battlefield related sites; the other was a motorcycle tour for 12 bikers - same areas to explore, very different approaches.

How did this come about? Well, in August last year I was fortunate enough to get a seat on Malcolm Davies' mini-bus for the trip to Belgium organised and hosted by Philippe Maree of the Belgian Tourist Board. This excellent trip took Guild members to various fascinating sites in French speaking Belgium, including the Ardennes. For me this was a great eye-opener, and when two of the groups I am involved with were looking for ideas for trips in 2016 it was an obvious choice to propose the Ardennes.

That, of course, was when the hard work started. I began buying up books and maps just before Christmas and started to research and plan.

The Ardennes presents a number of challenges for the casual, long weekend battlefield visitor, especially if you have to weave in other interests, such as walking or motorcycling. It might be stating the obvious, but, like Normandy, it's a big battlefield, and actually it consists of a series of battlefields and actions that make up the whole. Covering hundreds of square miles in a couple of days, with groups with varying degrees of interest in the subject, takes careful planning to pick out the highlights, give overall context and keep the story flowing.

Bearing in mind that I had only seen part of the area once before (the August trip only covered the Northern Shoulder, so didn't touch Bastogne for



The walkers in a substantial US Dugout just a few hundred yards from the Westwall near Rollbahn A

example) in many respects I was flying blind. For example, for the walkers, I had to find an area with attractive accessible scenery that also had a tale to tell about the battle. I knew also that both groups would want to see the 'Band of Brothers' related sites around Bastogne. And the motorcyclists would want to ride roads that were enjoyable to ride, so preferably avoiding motorways, towns etc. I soon realised that whilst the historical detail of the battle was falling into place (Jean Paul Pallud's *Battle of the Bulge Then and Now* is a mighty tome, but full of detail and masses of interesting pictures!) I was struggling to piece the whole picture together, partly because I couldn't visualise what I had never seen.

So remembering how helpful he had been in August, I reached out to Philippe Maree with the intention of simply picking his brains. At Phil's invitation we met up in London at the tourist board's offices and straight away he sprang into action. Now, as I have said before, I am not a professional guide, so I really did not want to burden Philippe with my problems beyond picking up some tips and I had told him this at the outset. But Phil has an extraordinary capacity to be helpful, and he had already picked up the ball and started running with it. When we met he had already



The view over Hogan's exploits. Marcouray is on the hillside opposite

spoken to some of his contacts in the Ardennes – Michel Baert who had guided the group in August and Olivier Lefèvre who is the Director of Tourism in La Roche en Ardennes. They suggested that I go over to Belgium to do a recce in advance. That was a great idea, but I had to weigh up the fact that I work full time and have limited time off (and can't spend all my leave tramping round battlefields to be fair to my wife who isn't particularly interested!). So I explained this to Philippe and suggested that at best I could go over the Easter weekend. To my surprise he was fine with that and so it was that, on Good Friday, we picked up Michael near La Roche en Ardennes, and set off on a 150 mile circuit that eventually ended up in Noville, just outside Bastogne.

Knowing the kind of things my groups are interested in, I was keen to pick out sites where the signs of battle remain, that are a little off the beaten tracks of the main coach stops, and where there are interesting stories to relate. By the end of the day I had a good collection of new 'holes in the ground', dragon's teeth, Easy Company sites and relics to add to those we had seen in August.

All I needed now was the right place to walk. Michael had suggested a loop through the woods starting at the Westwall near Hollerath, following Rollbahn A where the 277th VG followed by 12th SS Hitler Jugend had launched their assault against the inexperienced US 99th Division 'Battle Babes', across

to the twin villages of Krinkelt/Rocherath, a scene of heavy fighting during the battle. But this would be mainly in dense forest and involve a return leg that would offer little new by way of scenery or history – so I was unsure that this would be the right answer.

Then, on the Saturday morning, we met up with Olivier, who had come up with an alternative walk starting from La Roche and passing through Marcouray – which happened to be where he lives and was also the location of the exploits of Lt Colonel Hogan's task force in 1944. Looping around the north-east of La Roche, following the hills either side of the L'Ourthe river valley, this proved to be an ideal mixture of open and forested countryside, made all the more interesting by being able to follow loosely in Hogan's footsteps.

With a few more weeks to weave together what I had seen on the ground with the written histories and maps, I felt in reasonable shape when the first group, the walkers, set off in mid April.

It takes most of the day to get down to the Ardennes. We stopped in Mons for lunch and took in some of the WW1 sites there before arriving at the Hotel in La Roche en Ardennes. La Roche is a cracking little town in a spectacular setting. It has a medieval castle, a Bulge museum, is partly pedestrianised and is overlooked by an Achilles tank destroyer. The town was virtually destroyed in the battle, but has been rebuilt more sympathetically than, say, Bastogne. It

also has a Sherman on display, and was significant for British interest in the battle as this was where the 51st Highland Division joined up with the Americans during the counterattack on 11 Jan 1945.

We stayed at the Hotel Les Genets, which is small and comfortable, and set in a stunning location on the side of a hill overlooking the town. For larger groups, the Floreal Hotel just outside town is fairly basic accommodation-wise, but offers good facilities on-site as it caters for families and parties of cyclists etc. They will also offer deals for guides accompanying groups if you call direct and speak to Christel Bultot, the commercial manager.

On the first day in the Ardennes we did a driving tour that took in mainly the central and northern part of the battlefield. We spent time exploring dragon's teeth, fox-holes and dug-outs in the woods near Hollerath and the Hasselpath (where both US and German dug-outs are preserved alongside each other). We then broadly followed the path of Pieper's Kampfgruppe, using pictures taken at the time as reference points, from Lanzerath across to the magnificent King Tiger at La Gleize. From there we went via Neufmoulin across to Grandmenil and Manhay where a Panther marks the site of some of the heaviest tank on tank actions, including Ernst Barkmann's mad charge in his Panther.

On the second day we did the walk from the Hotel as Olivier had suggested. Using Hogan's own account of his exploits for reference we were able to get a sense of the ground he had covered and see where, for example, two German half tracks had been able to drive into Marcouray, right past a Sherman that was unable to stop them because its turret traverse had frozen up and couldn't move... It was easy to imagine Hogan's surprise as he stepped out of his HQ to see the two half tracks cross the road in front of him. The walk then took us across the Ourthe and up to a Hermitage on top of the hill on the opposite side of the valley from Marcourey. The view back across the valley is superb and the whole area of the battlefield lies open in front of you.

Having walked for 14 miles in all, we got back to La Roche at about 6 pm and a few glasses of the local La Schouffe beer soon soothed the aching joints.

The next morning we went down to Bastogne and visited a number of sites, mostly 'Band of Brothers' related, including ...the Mardasson, Bois Jacques, Foy, and Noville before heading back to Calais in the afternoon. A great trip that went without a hitch.

A month later the aim was to do something broadly similar with 12 motorcyclists. Similar in overall structure, but guiding on motorcycles introduces a number of unique challenges.

Firstly, you cannot communicate with one another once on the move (unless you have an intercom



The King Tiger at La Gleize

system, which we didn't), so there is a heavy dependency on the leader to set the direction, and on everyone else to keep in touch with the person in front. You would be surprised how many people turn up for these tours without a map or sat nav, or means of viewing a map if one is provided (you have to be able to secure the map in front of you in such a way that it doesn't blow away or get wet if it rains, and positioned so you can actually read it).

Secondly, there has to be greater thought given to where and how often you stop on the tour as you can only speak when people are off the bikes with their helmets off. It can also get very tiring to keep taking kit on and off, especially if it is hot; and if it is raining, people very quickly lose interest.

Thirdly, you are often influenced by how frequently the bikes need refuelling and where fuel is available. The best riding is usually away from towns and busy roads, and with some bikes needing to fill up every 100 miles or so, this becomes an important consideration for bike tours of battlefields.

With this tour I elected to stay in Bastogne itself, partly because the group was quite diverse and I knew some would want to see the museums associated with 101st Airborne, and partly because I thought that Bastogne, being a bigger town, might offer a little more variety in the evenings than La Roche. We stayed at the Hotel Leo, which turned out to be a good choice as they gave us a locked garage for the bikes, and it had a decent restaurant and comfortable rooms.

We had some problems on the way down to the Ardennes with the group getting separated, and also my Sat Nav had packed up. Nothing too serious, but enough to focus the mind. So when we set off for the first full day of the tour of Ardennes sites, basically a re-run of the loop of the Northern Shoulder I'd travelled previously, I was taking extra care to keep everyone together and on track. Because the roads tend to be good, we rode up to first stop through



The offending 'Petrol' pump and the consequences of not understanding German!



Luxembourg via Clervaux, and stopped for our first formal stand at Lanzerath.

It was here that things started to go very wrong! Some of the bikes were getting low on fuel. Being somewhat out in the sticks and not wanting to take any chances we followed the directions on one of the group member's Sat Navs to the nearest available fuel a few miles up the road. This turned out to be an automated station in an isolated and unattended yard. There were two pumps selling various fuels, lots of instructions in German (that none of us could read), a credit card reader and one pump with a very clear sign saying 'Petrol'. We had already seen a car filling up with diesel, and that had seemed normal enough; the idea of an unmanned petrol pump in an otherwise empty yard we put down to local custom... I suppose the first clue we had that all was not as it seemed was when someone observed that it had cost about half the usual price to fill up. It was only after some of the bikes started to cough and splutter (which only began to occur after 10 had filled their tanks) that alarm bells began ringing. At the same time, another car turned up to use the diesel pump, and the driver started to wave his arms and said "Nein, Nein, is not Benzene.....is Kerosene!!! No good for motorcycles". At which point the spluttering bikes stopped completely. Apparently, it turns out that Paraffin in German is 'Petrol'!

So there we were, in a deserted yard in the middle of nowhere on the Belgian/German border, no-one around who could speak English and 10 motorcycles full of Paraffin.

Four and half hours later, after much siphoning, scrounging up a bucket and a plastic tube, ferrying to the nearest proper garage with a Jerry can of real petrol, and the aid of an old sock we finally got the last bike running again. Huge relief all round – not least because the official 'rescue' people (an RAC equivalent) refused to come to a 'misfueling' error! But this had shot a mighty hole in my planned tour.

A rethink was needed. Having got so far up to the



A 'Stand' delivered as a 'Walk' after losing much of the day to the fuelling disaster



Part of the Westwall near Hollerath. Rollbahn A starts in the trees at the top of the picture.

north-east corner of the bulge, we carried on to the start point of Rollbahn A and the Westwall. I then delivered much of my context talk, and edited highlights of what we were originally going to see as we walked in the woods. Afterwards, most of the



Outside the church in Noville. Inside is a small exhibition of photos and an interesting video delivered by Major (later General) William Desobry who commanded Team Desobry in defence of this village during the battle

group decided they'd had enough drama for one day, and headed back to Bastogne. But 3 diehards wanted to do more of the route and see the King Tiger, so we rode via Honsfeld and Malmedy to La Gleize. At various key points, I pointed out landmarks as we rode past and then talked about each one once we were off the bikes at La Gleize. We finally got back to Bastogne about 8pm thoroughly exhausted.

The next day, we did the Band of Brothers sites around Bastogne, finishing up at Noville. We then rode to La Roche for lunch before heading back to Bastogne via country roads to catch the 101st Airborne museum before it closed.

Despite the paraffin problem everyone agreed they had had a great weekend, and they had seen sufficient of the Bulge sites to satisfy curiosity about the battle.

So there you have it – two very different tours to the same battlefields, both thoroughly enjoyable and interesting, and some valuable lessons learned! And once again I must thank Philippe and his colleagues for the assistance they gave me and for opening my eyes to what a fascinating battlefield the Ardennes is. I look forward to returning soon!



An Easy Company foxhole overlooking Foy



The motorcyclists in Bastogne

FIELD*guides*



Associate Member and Sole Trader extraordinaire, Andy Thompson talking to St Cats School, Bramley at Essex Farm ADS



June 2016 - An early start for HQ, 104 Log Bde personnel, beginning a day of Battlefield Study of the Salonika Campaign 1915-18 (Picture StaffRide UK)

TESTING THE TESTUDO



David Harvey

THE TESTUDO WAS A ROMAN TACTICAL DEPLOYMENT OF MULTIPLE INTERLOCKING LEGIONARY SHIELDS TO PROTECT ADVANCING SOLDIERS FROM MISSILES. THE NAME TESTUDO - LATIN FOR TORTOISE - RELATES TO ITS APPEARANCE, WITH SHIELDS HELD TOGETHER TO FORM A PROTECTIVE SHELL



There are few images of this tactic in use, but the most famous is that sculptured onto Trajan's Column, Rome, in AD113, depicting an assault during battle. The whole column visually depicts Emperor Trajan's successful conquest of Dacia (approximately modern Romania). An image of the testudo on Trajan's Column is shown above.

What is obvious is the great care taken by the stone masons in giving detail to the pictures. For example, historians are happy with the correct depiction of Legionaries equipment. Therefore it is generally assumed the images are reliably informing us of the past.



On Saturday 30th January twenty-one 'would be' Roman Legionaries reported for duty at Highgate House, Northamptonshire. Looking for fun and adventure, they formed up on the tennis court watched and encouraged by their fellow GBG members. *What was going on and why?*

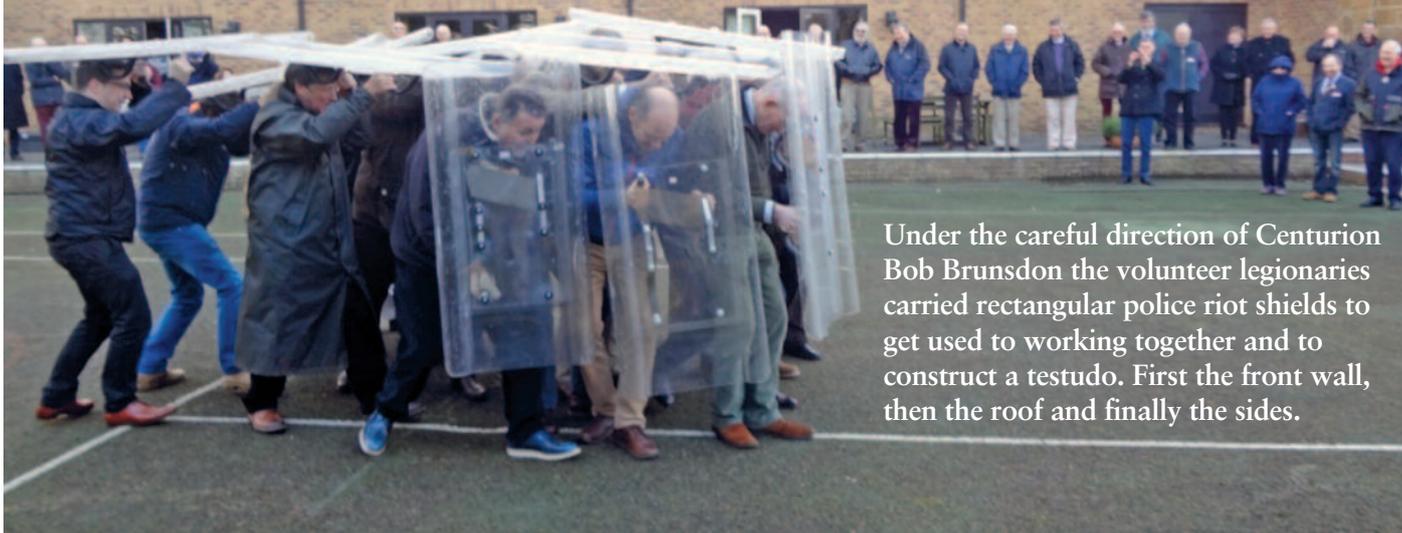
The testudo has been modelled in modern re-enactments. An example of a 32 shield testudo is shown to be a practical deployment in a photograph, below. The drawing, alongside, of a 27 shield testudo is a more accurate copy of Trajan's Column, as it shows side walls of shields to protect the flanks of the advancing column. This latter arrangement has yet to be shown to be practicable in a re-enactment.

Testing the validity of 'Trajan's Testudo' is important for historical accuracy in the use of this

martial tactic and for appropriate use of Trajan's Column as a battlefield guiding resource. Experimenting by Guild guides was entirely apt, fitting well with our purpose - to analyse, develop and raise the understanding and practice of battlefield guiding, to provide an environment to meet fellow guides and to share information, expertise and knowledge.



So at the Guild AGM, volunteers attempted to recreate Trajan's testudo, to evidence whether such a model was possible or practicable.



Under the careful direction of Centurion Bob Brunsdon the volunteer legionaries carried rectangular police riot shields to get used to working together and to construct a testudo. First the front wall, then the roof and finally the sides.

Straight away we discovered that it's a lot harder than it looks! Some reorganising of legionaries by height made it easier to get the front level and the roof on. Now came the really tricky bit – getting the sides on. There didn't seem to be any room for an extra person.....

After several trials and a lot of 'friendliness' it came together as a box shaped testudo. Hurrah! But would it be possible to advance? Drawing on his extensive service with the Sealed Knot, Chris Scott advised how to shuffle feet in step to the rhythm of

his shout. Slowly the column advanced as Bob and David Harvey tried to impede progress a little with jabs of baseball bats into the shields.

After about half an hour's practice, we had achieved our aims. Yes, with lots of rehearsal, Trajan's form of testudo can be constructed and it can advance. Therefore all the fun had a very useful outcome – the Trajan's Column reliefs do seem to be reliable images for the real testudo and worthy of adoption as a source of information on this tactic. Another Guild success!



FIELDguides



Andrew Duff, before the anniversary, helping me, Tim Saunders, put up an information panel to go alongside the Dorset Memorial. It's on the road between Lonsdale Cemetery and Leipzig Salient. He had all the tools and knowledge and did most of the work - result! He did, however, tell me not to let the R Anglians know!



Accredited Member and our Membership Secretary, Jo Hook surrounded by Medical Reservists during a Battlefield Study of Op Market Garden.

VERDUN: THE LONGEST BATTLE

François Wicart



Aerial photograph of the city of Verdun in 1916

The city of Verdun lies on both banks of the Meuse river in north-eastern France.

After the rapid fall of the Belgian forts in 1914 and the great need of artillery for the French army, GHQ had decided that forts were of no great use.

In 1916 the fortress of Verdun was stripped of its guns and the forts manned only by token crews. This made Verdun an almost ideal target, even more so because the trenches there were in a poor state or in some cases nonexistent.

Von Falkenhayn claims in his memoirs that he attacked at Verdun with the end in mind of bleeding the French army dry. To many historians this seems a justification for his failure to break through the French front and reduce the Verdun salient.

In fact the whole organisation of the offensive led some historians to think that it was done with the breakthrough in mind. It is probably when Falkenhayn realised that it was impossible that he thought of turning the battle into a battle of attrition.

The French in February could have given up the right bank of the river Meuse to reorganise a more convenient line of defence on the other side of the river leaving the city of Verdun under German fire. It would have been a serious reversal nevertheless acceptable at that point in time. But soon with all the sacrifices it became impossible to give up the fight. Joffre, the commander in chief, was stuck there as it would have become too great a moral defeat with far reaching international consequences. And it was in total contradiction with the French ethos of not giving up an inch of French sacred soil to the enemy. Diktat

that cost the French army many futile casualties everywhere on the western front.

Pétain, a Colonel in 1914 and near retirement had by 1916 been appointed as an army general due to being the only successful general in the failed offensives of 1915. Pétain was also successful in his gallant offensives. So it was in an hotel near the Paris North railway station that his batman found him to tell him about his new job.

His batman found Pétain's room as in front of the door a rather large pair of military ankle boots were lovingly laid alongside a much smaller very feminine pair waiting to be polished.

Field Marshal Falkenhayn had found his match. Pétain was for the soldier a very reassuring figure. He was a very intelligent organiser, looking after his men, sparing their blood. He was probably the best French general of World War One. His dry sense of humour wasn't always appreciated by politicians and had in the past held him back from promotion. Haig had said of him that he was a very un-French general.

At 00 hours on the 26th February 1916 Pétain



French map showing their own positions around Verdun as of 8th July 1916.

Douaumont, which was in German hands at the time, can be seen in the north east.

took command So as soon as the troops learned that Pétain was in charge morale rose. They knew they were in good hands."

Verdun was the longest battle of WWI running from the 21st February 1916 to December 1916 – a total of 10 months.

The Battle:

There are four discernible phases to the battle:

1. February 16th - the initial onslaught
2. March-April 1916 - the attack on the flanks
3. May-September 1916 - the war of attrition
4. October-December 1916 - the French counter attacks

The whole battle was an unprecedented slaughter.

Statistics differ as usual but we can reckon on for both sides at least a total of 714,000 losses (killed, wounded and missing) 377,000 French; 337,000 Germans.

German Fieldmarshal Hindenburg recognized this fact in his memoirs saying that "this battle exhausted our forces like a wound that wouldn't heal".

The work of the engineers

I have chosen two lesser known stories to illustrate this battle. Both show the work of the engineer corps. They are taken from a lecture given by General de Division Jean François Caloni

from the engineer corps on the 25th December 1925 at the University of the Sorbonne.

General Caloni commanded the engineers of General Charles Mangin's Army group from June till December 1916 ; that is to say the eastern part of the battlefield. And I will finish with the creation and maintenance of the main artery feeding the battle field, the road going from Bar le Duc to Verdun now known to all as the Voie Sacrée. Caloni's words have been translated here from the French as he describes the work done by his units.

"The front line of trenches were dug by the divisions when there was a lull in the battle. A second position was being created between Froideterre and the slopes at the back of Souville Fort. It was the engineers of the army corps that had two companies of pioneers and several battalions of territorials that was in charge of this second position. Every evening the officers of the pioneer companies came up to the line to prepare the work for the following day. Every evening guides from those companies arrived to pick up the battalions coming from Verdun and led them to the working site. Work lasted the whole night. At dawn troops returned to their barracks. One can imagine the difficulty of working under constant bombardment and often in the middle of clouds of gas being sent over from the German



lines. Nevertheless our French territorial troops carried on and got the job done.

The River Meuse skirted the rear of the battlefield and it would have been a pity not to use a navigable river and its canal. So from the very start of the battle shipping was organised.

We started with ammunition. Supplies were loaded upstream of Verdun and carried by barges near the batteries located alongside the River Meuse. They were unloaded and passed on to the gunners who in turn passed back the empty shells.

We shipped an average of 50 tons of ammunition per day. It was an important effort that helped the artillery.

We also organised the transportation of the sick and wounded from the area of Bras who were initially attended to in a first aid post near la Folie. To evacuate them by road was difficult and dangerous; during daylight it was impossible and at night it was rather difficult as the roads were watched by the German and shelling made them impassable.

This mode of transport worked perfectly well during the whole of the battle of Verdun. We never had any casualties. The only incident was created when a shell exploded near a barge opening a hole in the hull. The barge started to sink but thanks to our pontonniers the wounded were safely transferred onto another boat.

In addition to these works we had to maintain the roads between the Meuse river and the front lines. Up as far as the Meuse maintenance was the job of the Army. From the Meuse up to the front line it was the engineers of the army corps that was in charge. All the roads were inspected and repaired according to need. I can't say that the roads were like the avenues of the Bois de Boulogne but we had serviceable roads.

20th July - 20th September

This period saw the reorganisation of the sector and its reinforcement. We dug communication trenches, deepened the trenches and improved the roads going to Belleville and Saint Michel ridge. We couldn't work any further as we were in full view of the Douaumont observatory, held by the Germans. During the day it was impossible to show ourselves further forward than the front line at Saint-Michel without being shelled.

The organisation of the front lines was very difficult because of the terrain, being churned up, the ground collapsing beneath our feet and springs appearing on the highest points. Water was everywhere on the ridges.

In many places it was difficult to dig trenches and it was impossible to lay barbed wire networks in front of the trenches. There additional defences were made of improvised structures made from barbed wire and these were called hedgehogs or Easter's eggs or using light trestles that were thrown in shell craters. Above those improvised structures and portable wire entanglements we were throwing lengths of 3,6,8,10m of barbed wire. These intermingled lengths of barbed wire and pinned to the ground with nails were extremely useful obstacles."

The Voie Sacrée

There were only two means of access to Verdun: the narrow gauge railroad known as the Petit Meusien, that served as a transportation link for food supplies and some military matériel; and the road from Bar-le-Duc. This road was later to go down in history as the Voie Sacrée. General Pétain took charge of this road and turned it into a lifeline between the front and the behind-the-lines supply sources. Thirteen battalions of Senegalese territorials were pressed into service as a road maintenance crew. Nearby stone quarries were reopened and a steady stream of stones from them spread 24 hours per day under the wheels of the arriving trucks,

which acted as steam rollers for filling the ruts in the road. An endless line of convoys drove over the road to Verdun day and night.

It was called the Noria System: every week, 90,000 men and 500,000 tons of matériel were carried over the road by 35,000 trucks, plus every other known type of vehicle – Paris buses, private cars, etc. Goods were delivered for every speciality: engineering, artillery, aviation, radiotelegraph, postal and photography.

By 1 July 1916, 65 out of the total 95 French infantry divisions had passed over the Voie Sacrée via the Noria System, up to the front lines and back again.

Towards the end of 1916 the German army being embroiled in the battle of the Somme, having had huge losses at Verdun and having lost the supremacy of the artillery fire were pushed back by several counter offensives. Pétain enormously annoyed Joffre by constant requests for more troops and artillery for Verdun. So Joffre kicked him up stairs making him an army group commander (army group centre) in charge of the central part of the French western front including Verdun. But thanks to these reinforcements on 22 October Douaumont is retaken by the French,



in November it is Fort Vaux. Unluckily this celebrated good work of Nivelle now in command of the 2nd army and Mangin in charge of a group of 5 Infantry divisions will soon turn into a Pyrrhic victory.

If you can only afford a short stay in Verdun the most essential stops are: Fort Douaumont, the Memorial Museum where some ground of the battlefield has been recreated.



Trucks on the Voie Sacrée in Souilly where Pétain had his HQ 1916

The visitor of today can't really imagine the battlefield as the whole ground has been reforested. A visit to the Ossuary helps to realise the size of the slaughter, and the fort of the citadel where the unknown soldier now resting under the arch of triumph in Paris was chosen is worth a visit. Until 2015 it was possible to spend a last lunch, dinner or a night at the Hotel restaurant of the Coq Hardi where officers and generals used to stay during the battle but regrettably it has now closed.

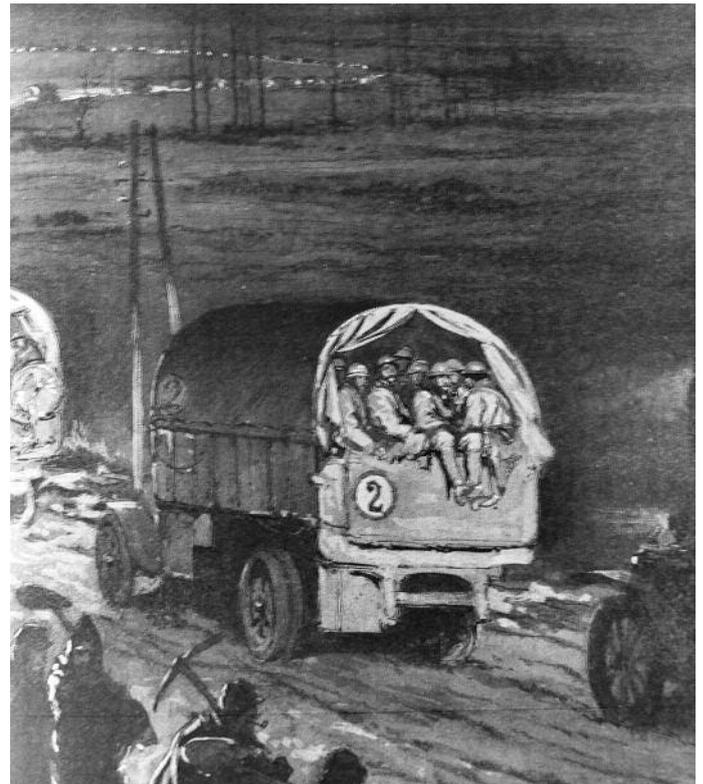


Illustration by Scott of works on the Voie Sacrée

EVENTguide 2016-17

16-18 Sep - Dyle to the Escault 1940 (Belgium) - John Cotterill & Chris Finn

21-23 Oct - Great War Training Weekend (Staffordshire) - John Cotterill

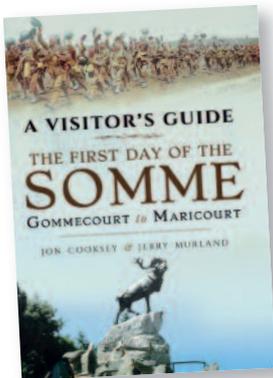
14-16 Oct - Whiskey & War 1 (Scotland) - Duncan Cook

15 Nov - The Richard Holmes Memorial Lecture - RCDS London

2 Dec - Guild Christmas Lunch (London) - Andy Thompson

13-15 Jan 2017 - Guild AGM (Naseby) - Council

GUIDEbooks:

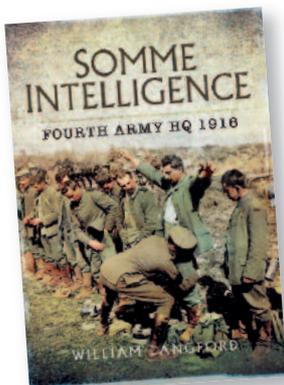


A Visitors Guide THE FIRST DAY OF THE SOMME Gommecourt to Maricourt

By John Cooksey & Jerry Murland

The original edition of this guidebook was among the first battlefield related books that I amassed when I first started out as a Guide. It was very much ahead of its time in its content and its style of presentation. The unique selling point of this guidebook is however not its high standard of presentation, it is the range of military history it captures. As you would expect the Somme's First World War battlefields are examined in detail but it is the inclusion of the 1346 Crecy campaign and the 1940 Blitzkrieg that make this such a useful book. An ideal starting point if you are planning a technology themed Battlefield Study. 4/5

Published by Pen & Sword
RRP £14.99
paperback, pp233



SOMME INTELLIGENCE Fourth Army HQ 1916

By William Langford

This summer we have been inundated with a bewildering array of new (and not so new) Somme titles, few of them offer

any new insight or fresh information. This book however does offer the Somme Guide the opportunity to get inside the thinking of Haig and his staff. Packed with examples of the intelligence gained from POWs, captured letters, diaries and documents it provides an array of useful snapshots of German morale and the British analysis of the intelligence gained.

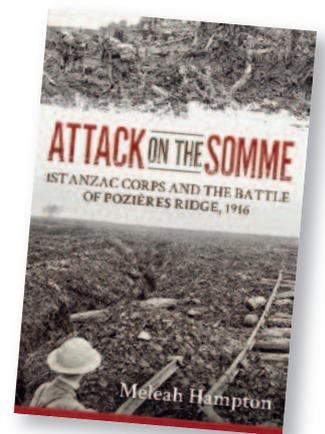
Published by Pen & Sword
RRP £19.99
hardback, pp160

ATTACK ON THE SOMME 1st Anzac Corps and the Battle of Pozieres Ridge, 1916

By Meleah Hampton

Is this book an example of the revisionist trend gaining momentum in Australian academic circles, or is it just simply an example of top quality historical research and analysis? Having read it, I place this work firmly in the latter category – it is a forensic account of the debut of 1st ANZAC on the Somme. The combination of hard fact, excellent maps and incisive narrative will not go down well with the leading exponents of 'Anzackery'. Most of all it places the Australian efforts in context with the wider campaign – not often achieved in Australian histories. Excellent!

Published by Helion
RRP £25.00
hardback, pp230



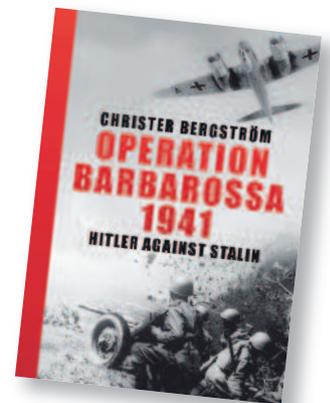
OPERATION BARBAROSSA 1941

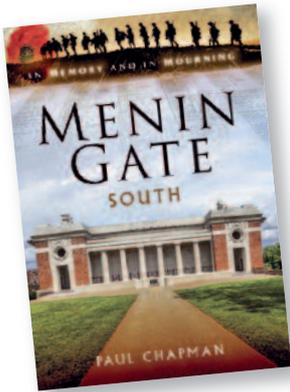
Hitler Against Stalin

By Christer Bergström

The scale and ferocity of the fighting on the Eastern Front can sometimes be difficult to follow. This book examines the first 12 months of the ill-fated German invasion of Stalin's Russia in some detail. Barbarossa was a huge and complex operation launched in the summer of 1941. Using a wealth of photographs and maps this book delivers an informative and easy to follow account of the titanic and desperate struggle that ensued. It is quite an expensive buy but worth it if you are interested in the Eastern Front. 4/5

Published by Casemate UK
RRP £35.00
hardback, pp324





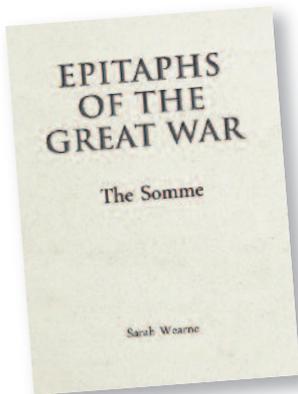
MENIN GATE SOUTH

By Paul Chapman

I have to admit that I was a little confused about the purpose of this hefty volume at first; it seemed to be neither one thing nor the other. One thing is

certain; the author has put a significant amount of work into collating the information within. Essentially a list of all of the names on panels 2 – 60, some with a few sentences of bio information, a small number with longer entries - Probably useful for pre-tour research but only portable in electronic format.

Published by Pen & Sword
RRP £30.00
hardback, pp397



EPITAPHS OF THE GREAT WAR

The Somme

By Sarah Wearne

As Battlefield Guides we do spend a lot of our working day escorting clients around cemeteries and war memorials.

The cliché that every headstone tells an individual story is certainly true and we all do our best to learn as many of those stories as we can. This fascinating collection of epitaphs goes beyond the mainstream narrative that most guides rely on. As such it is a real treasure trove, containing some of the family stories behind the choice of some of the most moving epitaphs on the Somme battlefields. Certainly worth acquiring a copy!

Published by Uniform Press Ltd
RRP £10.99
hardback, pp132

KITCHENER WANTS YOU

The Man, the Poster and the Legacy

By Martyn Thatcher & Anthony Quinn



In the centenary year of the Battle of the Somme the iconic image of Lord Kitchener's recruiting poster will receive even more exposure than ever. It is an image that most battlefield visitors are familiar with. This compact book examines the history of the poster itself in some detail. A logical sequence of chapters places the poster in context, examine its design, its impact and the artist behind it. An ideal addition to any Battlefield Guides reference library that will enhance your knowledge of one of those peripheral subjects that is often discussed on tour.

Published by Uniform Press Ltd
RRP £14.99
paperback, pp166

OPERATION MARKET GARDEN

The Campaign for the Low Countries Autumn 1944: Seventy Years On

Edited by John Buckley & Peter Preston-Hough



This book consists of a series of separate chapters each written by one of an international array of military historians, our own John Greenacre included. Each of the contributing historians takes a different aspect of the ill-fated operation and re-evaluates it using the latest historical sources. The result is a very useful collection of essays that bring the reader up to date with the latest academic thinking on Market Garden. Certainly worth the price if you specialise in Arnhem or take a wider view of September 1944 in the Netherlands.

Published by Casemate UK
RRP £29.95
paperback, pp312

10 Questions:

Name: Emma White

Age: 29

Nationality: British

● Home Location: West Sussex

Tour Company: Sole Trader –
Guided Battlefield Tours

Validating: Yes



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

- 1. How long have you been interested in battlefields and what was it that initially attracted your interest?**
I have always had an interest in history, specifically the Great War so it has been a natural progression for me to start looking into guiding.
- 2. Have any experiences stood out?** I managed a tour for Guided Battlefield Tours and the reaction and mostly jealousy to the morning and afternoon tea and cake provision from other coaches and their drivers/ guides has provided some funny conversations.
- 3. What do you enjoy the most about battlefield guiding?** Taking individuals to a place previously unknown to them and being able to share my enthusiasm and knowledge with them.
- 4. What is your favourite stand, location or battlefield and why?** Verdun and the Meuse Argonne are my favourite areas as they are still so true to how they were left after the war and really do show the what it was like.
- 5. Which battlefield would you like to visit in the future?** The first thing on my guiding wish list is to plan a tour from France through to Germany following my grandfather's journey in the Second World War, so D-Day beaches, Arnhem, Nijmegen will all be places I hope to visit.
- 6. What have you enjoyed the most about being a member of the Guild?** In the four years I have been in the Guild, the thing I have been most surprised and endeared by is the openness of other members to share information and further battlefield guiding. Many have helped me not only to begin my validation but also personally.
- 7. If there was a fire and you could only save one battlefield-related book or prop, what would you save and why?**
My first edition Michelin guide to the Somme.
- 8. What type of group do you think is the most challenging to lead on a tour?** Those that have no respect for timings!
- 9. What's the best tip, story or nugget of information you have been given by a fellow battlefield guide?**
To be enthusiastic about what you are taking about. If you can share that with your group you are doing a good job.
- 10. What is the funniest or most dramatic thing you have seen on tour?** I was making tea, complete with teapot when an American tour parked up along side. They were very curious and then one lady approached and I expected her to ask for a drink, but instead she asked if she could take a photograph of the teapot for her collection.

NEWmembers:

New members who have been welcomed to the Guild between April 2016 and the date of publication.

Chris Adams
Paul Colbourne
Chris Copson
Brian Dolby
Richard Goddard

Duncan Holland
John Mathieson
Rob McKie
Jerome Neil
Stephen James Price

Tony Otton
Peter Richardson
Glenn Stennes
Nigel Stevens
Alan Wakefield

Lawrence Waller
Baris Yesildag