



DESPATCHES

the magazine of the International Guild of Battlefield Guides



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A Stand Alone

Bradley's Normandy Breakout

PLUS

Czech Odyssey

AND

First World War BC

BATTLEFIELD*guides*: IN ACTION



All in a days work! Our cover image shows Allan Wood delivering a stand at Le Cateau undeterred by the elements, this picture of Allan was taken on the same day at Elouges/Audregnies. Proof, if ever it was needed, that battlefield touring is an outdoor sport!



The tunnel, which goes down for nearly 1km inside the mountain, is the original Italian mine tunnel (blown in 1916) causing the Austrian trenches on the top of the peak to collapse. The Italian mine was filled with about 25,000 kgs of explosives. Inside the tunnel many features have been recreated with original materials, tunnelling equipment, living quarters and store areas etc. It takes about 45 minutes to descend to the stand after a two hour climb.

Carlo Larosa pictured with a group from the WFA Netherlands, including our own Rob Lemmens in red, just outside the entry of the Lagazuoi Tunnel.

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Mother Canada looks out over the battlefields of Vimy (Picture by Guild member, Simon Gregor)

OPENINGshot:

THE CHAIRMAN'S VIEW



Welcome fellow members, Guild Partners, and Supporters to your winter edition of Despatches, the house magazine of the Guild. A year ago when we launched Despatches, my opening shot column focused on the rapidly approaching First World War Centenary. In my narrative I speculated as to what it may entail. Well, a year on the centenary is well and truly underway. My unscientific metric of gauging enthusiasm by estimating crowd numbers at the Menin Gate has already proved inadequate, it has had to be adapted, I am now counting the number of coaches parked up during the Last Post ceremony. The numbers of people and coaches continue to rise. Although these large numbers create logistic and practical on-site difficulties we as guides must not lose sight of the fact that for decades many of us have bemoaned the apathy of the public with regard to the FWW. Things have changed, the public is definitely engaged, they are now on the battlefields in ever increasing numbers – there is no better time to be a Battlefield Guide.

Looking ahead into 2015, it looks like the current momentum will continue - I for one am really looking forward to the new guiding season and all that it promises. I am certain that the FWW Centenary will continue to dominate both our industry and the media landscape. No doubt Gallipoli will be centre stage, but lets hope that the media and the battlefield tour operators will take the opportunity to look

beyond that campaign and expose the public to some of the less well-known battles and campaigns of what was after all, a dramatic year in the FWW timeline.

One thing that we are assured of next year is that there will be something for all of us. The range of impending 'milestone anniversaries' is exciting. As well as the 1915 commemorations we can all look forward to Agincourt 600, Waterloo 200, Battle of Britain 75 and the 70th anniversary of the crossing of the Rhine in March 1945. We can also be sure that the VE and VJ Day anniversaries will generate some attention. The commemoration of these very significant battles and campaigns is spread right throughout the coming year. I hope that their diversity will keep the general public engaged, spurring more people on to visiting their chosen battlefields with a professional Battlefield Guide.

Your Winter Despatches reflects the varied interests of Guild Members and I must thank everybody who has contributed material. I hope that you will enjoy reading it and that it may inspire you all to contribute and share your knowledge with your fellow guides. It's been a busy year for most of us and it isn't over yet. Wherever you are please look out for fellow members, take the time to say hello and share your knowledge and experience. Have a great winter and spring everybody, above all, stay safe and enjoy your guiding!

Mike Peters

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Material for publication on the March edition of Despatches must be with the Editor no later than 28 Feb 15.

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:
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RESEARCHING A BATTLE

Adam Williams

Sadly we were subjected to local skirmishes on the day of arrival, with the theft of all our passports, and I spent the next fortnight and a considerable amount of money making a tactical withdrawal to Dubai, via Qatar, London and the inevitable bureaucracy, before regrouping and planning a re-attack

Not to be beaten, this gave me time to carry out further research before returning. Having read several personal accounts of the action that took place, I noted they were all very similar and in some cases, very detailed. Unfortunately for me, all the battlefield locations have been typically referred to using military code words, rather than local names or grids, and it was proving difficult to pinpoint exact positions. Indeed, on asking one of the SAS veterans where the locations were, his response that "We climbed up a bloody big hill and turned left", left me scratching my head! After cross-referencing all the material and studying Google Earth, the final piece of the Jigsaw came in the form of a magazine for the Sultan of Oman's Armed Forces produced by Col (Retd) Ian Buttenshaw. This magazine included many photographs of the action along with photographs of the Objectives. Bingo! Back to Google Earth for the coordinates for the faithful GPS and on with more detailed planning!

The Jebel Akhdar (Green Mountain) rises up to 10,000ft in places – but the various battles and

skirmishes took place between 4000ft and 8000ft. (For a brief history of events see Edition 1 of Despatches).

The story begins with the arrival of D Sqn, 22 Regt SAS at the coastal town of Bait al Falaj (Muscat) on 18 November 1958, once ashore they spent a few days acclimatising from the jungles of Malaya. It was decided that the Squadron would split into two, with 16 & 17 Troop climbing the mountain from the North and HQ, 18 & 19 Troop moving to the south of the Jebel, to a village called Tanuf. To gain some idea of numbers – each troop at this stage numbered about ten. Under cover of darkness 16 & 17 Troop climbed the Jebel via a small, unmarked track. They took enough ammo and rations to last four days. Due to the weight of all the equipment, donkeys were purchased to assist them. In typical British Government fashion, instead of purchasing the robust, local donkeys – Somali donkeys were purchased abroad and shipped over, as they were much cheaper! Sadly, they were smaller, carried less and were not acclimatised to the altitude or conditioned to local feed.

On the 26 November, both 16 & 17 Troop arrived on Objective Cassino without a single shot being fired. Observation Posts (OPs) were set up and the main Adoo cave was located 4kms away on a feature affectionately known as 'Sabrina' – after a well-known

I last wrote in Despatches of my planned Spring 2013 visit to the Jebel Akhdar in Oman, to explore the small 'Secret' war of 1958/59.

bustly actress of the time. The SAS got to work straight away, 18 & 19 Troop mounting aggressive patrols in the south, with 19 Troop having their first contact with the Adoo on the 26 November. Unfortunately, the first SAS soldier to be KIA during this campaign, Cpl 'Duke' Swindells, was killed during this contact. During one of these patrols, a cave was spotted that obviously housed several hostile Adoo. As a result, 19 Troop descended off the mountain to plan an assault on the cave.

There are some great first-hand accounts of the assault by 18 & 19 Troop, and I thought it would be good to identify and locate this cave? I threw myself into the research once more and became absorbed in one of the two photographs (of the same person) – 'Tanky' Smith lying down in a firing position observing the cave prior to the assault. I asked Col Buttenshaw if he knew the location of the cave, he responded "No one has ever found it since the battle but I think it's towards the east of the area." He had looked with Roger Woodiwiss, Tony Dean-Drummond and even Sir Peter De La Billiere (DLB) – all SAS legends. Despite many hours of trudging over the Tanuf mountain in search of it, none could find the cave they had assaulted in 1958.

What a challenge!

So putting my battlefield detective head on – I once more read everything again. All the



View of Aadoo cave from 18 Troop's position

personal accounts refer to the Tanuf Slab. This is a slab of rock at about a 40° angle that ascends right up to about 6000ft. So if they have walked all over this mountain in search of the cave and could not find it, were they looking in the right area? Records suggest that 18 & 19 Troop climbed the mountain at night having left Tanuf at 1930 on the 30 November. They got into position to assault the cave. DLB¹ wrote that the sun came up roughly behind them and that they were facing approximately north. Back to the photograph, I looked at the angle and direction of 'Tanky's' gun and calculated that the cave should be on the eastern side of the Tanuf mountain and that the SAS must have climbed up an adjacent mountain in order to attack it

I then compared the photograph I had of 'Tanky' in his firing position and spent quite a lot of time on Google Earth looking for the distinctive wadi (valley) that is in the picture. I used all the tools available on Google Earth – zooming in, setting the angles/rotation etc. After several hours, I located what I thought was the approximate area of the OP. I plotted the coordinates and duly loaded them into the old faithful. With the GPS fully loaded, maps printed, gang briefed and passports secured we set off for the Jebel Akhdar from Dubai. The

journey taking about 6 hours in total; – the aim was to get to the border as early as possible. Unfortunately, we had to stay at the same hotel where our passports were stolen – due to there only being one hotel on the Jebel!

As some of the group were not mountain goats, it was decided to have Day one as a rest day to help acclimatise at 6000ft. Perfect, the ideal opportunity to search for DLB's cave. We drove off the mountain to Tanuf area, parked up and began the long slog up the mountain. There are so many false crests on the Jebel and it did get a little soul destroying after a while. The temperatures at the bottom were a mild 37 degrees and that was at 0830. The sun was behind us all the way up and walking on sun-soaked rock slab ensured that we weren't going to get cold. We travelled light, only wearing Camel-baks and bumbags. Staying light was essential and so the main contents we carried were fluids, sugary sweets and of course, passports. After two hours we were just below the crest – the altitude was 4000ft. On reaching the top of the ridge, I expected to see the cave off to my left, across the wadi. I hoped that all my calculations were correct. Those last few strides to the crest were made so enthusiastically.....I

looked to the left, and there it was! A small cave on a near vertical face on the eastern side of the Tanuf Mountain. It was little wonder that they could not see the cave from the Tanuf Mountain itself.

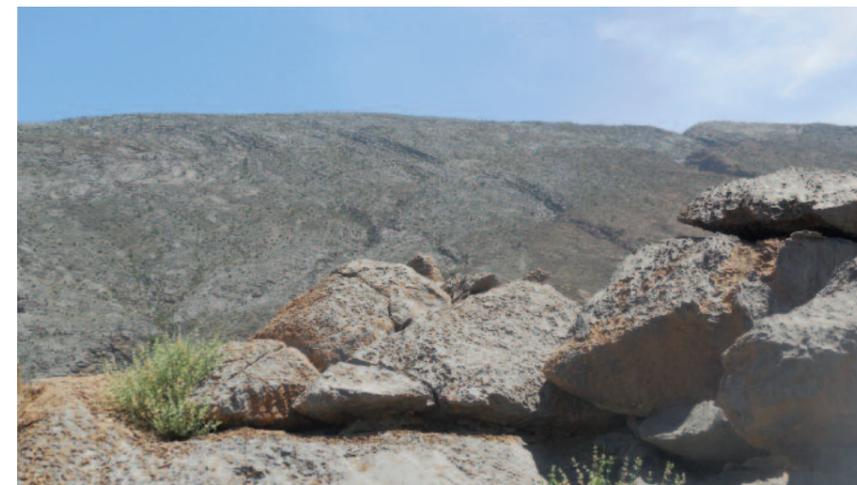
We were so pleased to find the cave, as the cave had apparently not been located since the war. It must be remembered that the climb was then made at night and both 18 & 19 Troop had to withdraw under fire down the hill to safety after the assault. On the 1 December 1958 at 0530, on arrival just below the crest, DLB positioned 18 Troop forward, lower down on the ridge and closer to the cave and 19 Troop, along with 'Tanky' Smith with his .30 Browning, providing Fire Support from further up the ridge. 18 Troop were positioned in a line facing the cave (see photo above). After the long slog up the mountain, the men started to shiver in the cool dawn air having sweated profusely on the way up.

The battle was described by DLB² in his book:

"The sky paled. Light stole onto the mountain. Now at last I could see the black mouth of the main cave, with smaller openings beside it. The air was absolutely still. The cold bit more fiercely than ever. My watch said 0610... ..0615....0620. At last a white-robed figure appeared in the cave-mouth. The Arab looked round, yawned and stretched. When he spat, we heard him as clearly as if we had been in the same room. He moved off to one side to urinate. Another man appeared, then another. I looked to right and left. Everyone was poised for action. The rocket launcher crew, Troopers Goodman and Bennett, were on their feet behind a rock with their weapon levelled. I waited until four or five Arabs were in view together, and then at last gave the signal.



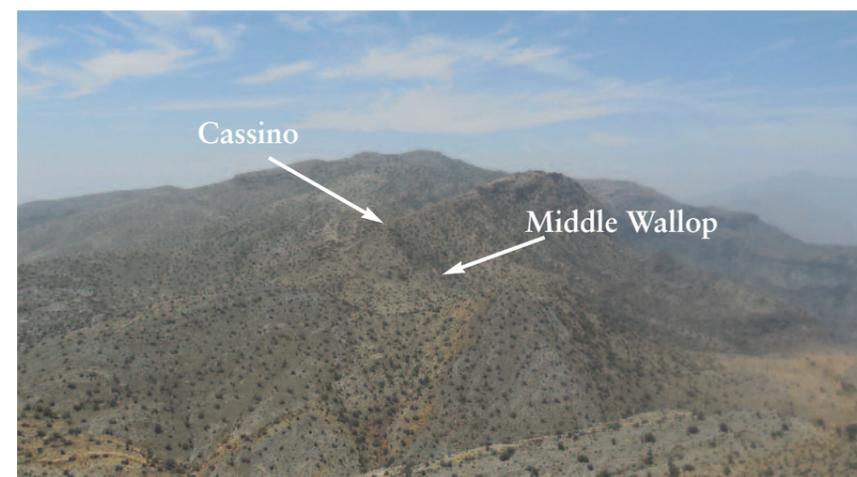
View of 'Tanky Smith' and the .30 Browning 1958



Same view as above in 2014

Pandemonium erupted. With a whoosh the first rocket flew straight into the cave. A flash lit up the entrance, and the boom of a heavy explosion came back at us. The rattle of our small

arms fire echoed harshly round the rock walls. Several Arabs fell, and for a few seconds we had things to ourselves. Then suddenly the whole mountain came to life as shots began to



View from Aadoo cave on 'Sabrina'

crack out from above us on both sides. What we had not realized was that other caves high in the rock faces were also inhabited."

It was clearly evident that there had been a battle on the ridge, with splinters of metal all over the place. However, it wasn't enough for me to be 100% convinced that this was their cave. I needed to identify the exact spot in the photo where 'Tanky Smith' and the gun crew lay. After pacing up and down the ridge in blistering hot sunshine with the photo in one hand and Google Earth image in the other, I eventually found it.

Back in the north of the area on 'Cassino', 16 & 17 Troop were carrying out aggressive patrolling too. On the same day as the Tanuf cave assault, one of their positions, manned by 'Herbie' Hawkins and his 6 man patrol – was attacked by up to 30-40 Aadoo. Due to their very isolated position, they had to wait until the Aadoo were about 150 yards away before they engaged them.

The main plan was to launch an attack on the main Aadoo stronghold. Objective 'Sabrina', consisted of two large peaks and contained many caves, it was located approximately 4kms east of 'Cassino'. In between 'Cassino' and 'Sabrina' was a large ridge – providing an excellent platform to set up an OP and observe the Aadoo activity. This ridge was given the name 'Middle Wallop'.

On 24th December 1958, 16 & 17 Troop, under Captain 'Red Rory' Walker, moved out of 'Cassino' to 'Middle Wallop'.

Christmas Day '58, was spent in the OP on Middle Wallop observing the Aadoo on 'Sabrina'. After several days of reconnaissance, the attack was planned for the 27 December. The plan was to leave 'Middle Wallop' at night, descend into the wadi and lie up 600 yards from 'Sabrina' during the day ready for the attack at 1715hrs.

Fortunately, the LUP was in dead

¹ Looking for Trouble by General Sir Peter Del La Billiere ² P.141 Looking for Trouble

ground. Reconnaissance confirmed that the main cave was located on the right-hand peak. 16 Troop were to lead the assault with 17 Troop providing a diversion from the northwest. It was pitch black and a struggle for the Troops to see. At the designated time, 17 Troop provided diversionary fire from the northwest whilst 16 Troop attacked the caves from the south. Initially 16 Troop had difficulty climbing the cliffs to assault the right hand peak, with Captain Walker reportedly lobbing hand grenades over the top as he was climbing up the rope!

The right hand peak contains many caves and Adoo firing positions, which were quite easy to spot. Our group drove initially to the village of Ar Ruus, the closest point you can drive to, to walk to 'Sabrina'. On our arrival at Ar Ruus, in typical Omani fashion, a villager appeared in no time; - pleased to have visitors, and invited us all in for 'Ghawha' (coffee) and dates. Fortunately, one of our group could speak Arabic and told them we would love to accept the invitation on return. The walk to 'Sabrina' took

about 3 hours and involved walking up and down a few wadis. Even though the altitude is about 7000ft, temperatures in the wadis can be as high as +30 degrees. Again, we travelled relatively light with stacks of water and enough packets of Jelly Babies to sustain our energy needs!

On approaching 'Sabrina', there were ever increasing signs of battle. Rockets, casings, shrapnel and belt link clips were dotted all over the place. On arrival at the peak, it was time to rest the group and issue another reminder on safety. I was surprised how many caves there were and how well hidden they were. It wasn't a clean battlefield at all. The youth in me wanted to get inside the caves and start exploring - but the first cave had puma prints in it - a timely reminder and something that I didn't fully consider! A smaller cave was spotted facing towards 'Middle Wallop' and 'Cassino'. Looking around it, it was clearly evident that this had been an area of intense fighting. I had read that 16 Troop had attacked a cave on their right and wondered if this had been it.

There were bullet strike marks in all the rocks surrounding it and even rocket strikes. Further down the hill in the direction of the assault, further damage could be seen in the boulders.

It is worth remembering that further assaults took place on 'Sabrina'. Notably one of the large assaults, possibly the main assault, took place on 26 January 1959 with A Squadron 22 SAS, led by Maj Johnny Cooper. After some fierce fighting, in which Major General Tony Jeapes won the MC, the objective was secured. The plan was to persuade the Adoo into thinking that the main assault onto the Saiq plateau would be from this direction. Meanwhile, one Troop was left to hold 'Sabrina' whilst the remaining three Troops would join D Sqn for the main assault onto the Saiq plateau from the south. The small 'secret' war for the SAS lasted 6 months. Sheikh Sulieman bin Hamyar, Imam Ghalib bin Ali and his brother Talib had left the green mountain and withdrew to Saudi Arabia to a hero's welcome. The Jebel Akhdar had been cleared of the Adoo but at the cost of three members of the SAS KIA.

Their graves are hidden away in Muscat but can be located with a little research. Troopers Carter and Bembridge are located in a Christian cemetery in the Ruwi district of Muscat bizarrely enough, a stone's throw away from where they arrived in Bait Al Falaj in 1958. Although not a CWGC cemetery, the graves are looked after well. Cpl 'Duke' Swindells, killed on Tanuf, is buried in a very nice cemetery that can really only be approached by boat. It is located at Eastern Cove behind Al Alams Royal Palace. Very sadly, this small cemetery has been vandalised and the CWGC (Portland Stone) headstones destroyed. To that end, new, sturdy headstones have been replaced that will hopefully be resistant to these attacks.

So overall, this was a very successful tour. The phrase *'Time spent in reconnaissance is seldom wasted'* proved most appropriate. Many hours were spent on Google Earth and cross referencing - but it goes to show, that it is possible to positively identify an exact position and battlefield from limited sources some 56 years afterwards.

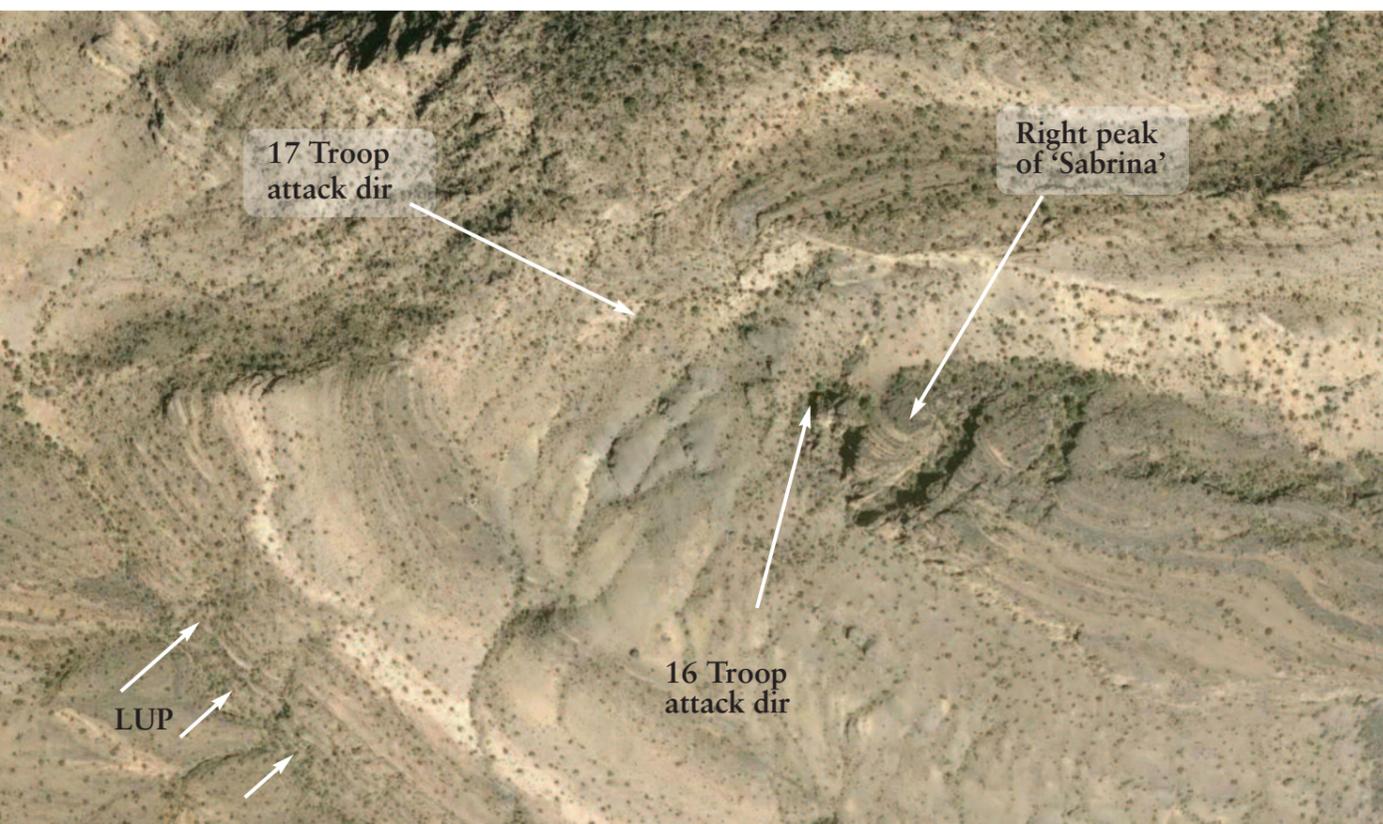
Adam Williams
Badge No 56



View of Adoo cave on 'Sabrina' from 17 Troop's assault direction



Bullet strike marks on boulders 50 yards from cave



Dukes view



CZECH ODYSSEY

Chris Lock

Pte Naplava's original 'Honour Stone' identified for replacement in Tyne Cot CWGC cemetery has started its long journey to his homeland. The stone has been gifted by the CWGC on an agreed loan basis and will be dedicated with military honours at the Military Institute of Prague for public display.

According to the CWGC, this is the only CWGC installed stone in the world to have been engraved with a personal epitaph in the Czech language which may also be seen on his brand new Italian Boticino material replacement stone recently erected in Tyne Cot CWGC cemetery. The attached images show Christine Connerty of the CWGC Ypres office and staff placing the gravestone, encased in its dedicated protective packing, into the care of receiving Czech military personnel, Colonel Loeffler, Major Plescher, Warrant Officer Krejca and Milena before its long journey to Prague. Milena has been invited to the dedication ceremony to take place over the Armistice commemorations in Prague and for myself, I am to support her, but most of all I am simply delighted to know that her long hard work has finally borne fruit, so to speak.

On behalf of Pte Dominique Naplava, his comrades in arms today, his family, the Czech nation and the CWGC, well done Milena! On behalf of all who assisted Milena or who were involved in any shape or form, I confirm your efforts were and are very much appreciated by Milena and she thanks you most graciously!

An amazing journey of personal commemoration originally identified and achieved by Milena Kolarikova, Director and owner of Lest We Forget Battlefield Tours (Flanders), concluded by the CWGC, the Military Institute in Prague Czech Republic and the family of Pte Dominique Naplava who fell in action on the Passchendaele Ridge during WW1.



BATTLEFIELDguides: IN ACTION

Problems on tour



Tim Saunders: "Our driver was turning around while I was doing a stand on Scimitar Hill and got his rear end stuck as seen in the pictures.

The driver, Turkish minder and the locals were astounded when instead of 'bleating like sheep' as normal tourists they deal with would have done, the army and farmers all got stuck in to dig the thing out without tools.

A great time was had by all! One of the exercise aims was bonding a new HQ staff – mission accomplished!"



John Cotterill working at the Menin Gate with cadets from the Derbyshire Army Cadet Force



Television Guides, some of the BHTV Crew for the recent 1914 series of films pictured at St Symphorien CWGC are Tom Dormer, Tim Saunders, Andrew Duff, Paul Oldfield and Mike Peters.



Chris Preston leading a private pilgrimage over his favourite stomping ground, the fields of Bullecourt.

STAND ALONE - CAN THE BATTLE OF LOOS BE COVERED FROM ONE STAND?

Paul Oldfield

Many guides know the Loos battlefield, but how many give a second thought to the looming spoil heaps that now cover the Double Crassier? They can be seen from just about anywhere on the Loos battlefield and beyond, Vimy Ridge for example. I always assumed they were fenced off and 'out of bounds', until this summer when I was taking pictures in the area and noticed lots of ants running around on the top of one of them. Through binoculars, the ants became a party of children on some form of summer holiday activity. Rather than being off limits, the spoil heaps are actually in a landscaped post-industrial park.

To reach the park, leave the centre of Loos on the D165 heading southwest. About 300m before it reaches the N43 (the road passing Dud Corner), turn left onto a minor road. Cross the N43 and go over the A21 towards Lievin. Pass under a green footbridge (remember it). Pass a car park and café on the right and continue with a high wall on the left. When the wall ends, turn immediate left into 'Base 11/19'. It doesn't matter if you miss this turning as the next left goes to the same place.



The prominent spoil heaps at Loos on top of the Double Crassier, resembling a horizontal Madonna, of 'Like a Virgin' fame, in the 1980s. Taken from near 'Lone Tree'. The winding towers at 'Base 11/19' are to the left.



From the top of the northeast spoil heap looking down on 'Base 11/19'. Approach from Loos on the road in the centre left foreground. Having parked near the old mine buildings, cross the footbridge to reach the track leading to the start of the old tramway.

'Base 11/19' consists of preserved mining buildings (Fosse 11). Park and find your way to the green footbridge. Cross the bridge towards the two enormous spoil heaps. Bear left with the track to join a metalled roadway. Follow it round to the right between the spoil heaps until you see the remains of the tramway climbing the heap on the right, i.e. northeast. For the best view, follow the tramway to the top; it is easier walking to the side of the sleepers.

The view from the top encompasses the whole Loos battlefield. Those who prefer the Dress Circle to the Gods should continue along the metalled road until it emerges onto a plateau. Head for the northern edge, to overlook the battlefield. The view is not as spectacular, but worth the effort. The southwest spoil heap has an easier climb, but the northeast heap obscures part of the battlefield.

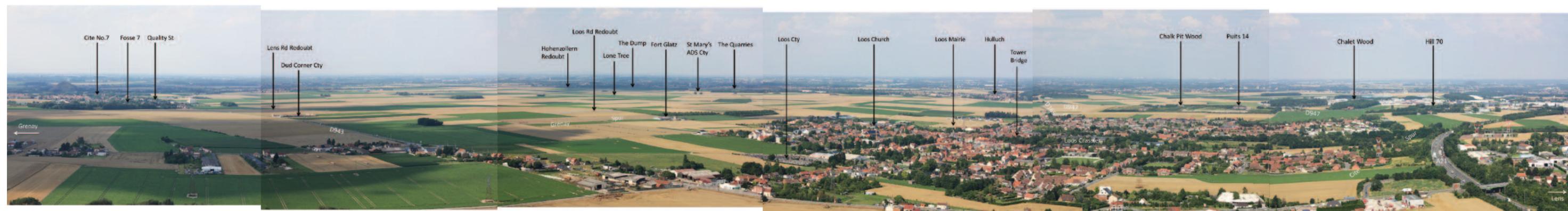


Stairway to heaven. The old tramway leading to the top of the northeast spoil heap. It looks more daunting than it actually is (honestly). The start is a bit rough due to erosion, but thereafter it's just a case of one foot in front of the other to the top. It takes 5-10 minutes to climb, depending on fitness. Don't knock it until you've tried it!

So, the whole of the Loos battlefield can be covered from one stand, but there are a few prerequisites before launching forth:

- Only go on a clear day to avoid being lynched by your group.
- You need a fairly good set of lungs and a matching pair of legs.
- A bit of determination and a sense of humour help.
- Don't forget the maps, binos and camera.

The panorama from the top of the spoil heap covers the whole battlefield.



BRADLEY'S FIRST ARMY AND THE BREAKOUT- NORMANDY RECCE 2013

Ian Mitchell

On a lovely sunny autumn last October a group of 13 Guild members and wives met at the car park at Crisbecq battery and museum in Normandy to commence a battlefield recce.

This Guild event covered the operations of the US Army in Normandy in 1944. Several GBG members had already met up during a pleasant crossing on Brittany ferries from Poole to Cherbourg and the remaining five joined us in Normandy. The trip was planned, organised and led by our very own Guild Secretary Tony Smith and his sidekick and another keen student of the US Army – Ian Mitchell. In the spirit of Bob Darby type recces however everyone had to sing for their supper and thus individuals were usually required to lead the group to and explain various stands. In contrast to other recce events in Normandy this one was split into two parts – the initial four days from 4th -8th and then for those who wished a two day extended event from the 9th -10th October 2013.

Ian and Tony's desired objectives for this event were in order of priority

- To run an enjoyable and interesting social event that brought together members of the Guild and helped them share knowledge and experiences.
- To enable guides who are not familiar with Normandy to navigate to key stands on and beyond the beaches in the US sector i.e. the Cotentin peninsula.

c) To improve knowledge and awareness among guild members of the scope and scale of US Army operations on the beaches, hedgerows and swamps of the Cotentin peninsula in June - July 1944. Based on feedback received now almost a year later - it seems apparent that to some degree or another- these 3 objectives were achieved - however just like the actual landings and subsequent campaign not everything went to plan and lessons were learned, but more about that later.

The group based itself initially out of the small but very welcoming Hotel Vauban in Carentan and then later out of the modern though slightly less welcoming Ibis Hotel in St Lo. The recce commenced with a short talk and visits (led by Hugh Jenner) to the Crisbecq and Azzeville batteries which formed part of the much publicised but essentially porous Atlantic wall. Both visits proved interesting but the consensus was that you, if pushed for time, would take your group to Azzeville. Another



Hugh Jenner (on the right of the group) opening the recce at the Crisbecq Battery



Derek Young in full flow on top of WN 62 on Omaha Beach

option available is to take your group to the Maisy battery just west of Omaha beach but time pressures precluded such an event.

Our next morning was devoted to a tour of key locations covering the drop of the 101st Airborne Division – the ‘Screaming Eagles’ under the able tutelage of Mike Jarman. Like the 101st's actual drop the stands are dispersed and often in places that you could only access with a small group. Although rain later greeted the group just after lunch when John Greene had delivered his stand at the Pointe Du Hoc memorial – the sun later shone brightly across the whole length of Omaha beach.

On Omaha, Derek Young surpassed his excellent performance during last year's event with an absolute tour de force describing via 6 stands along the beach and numerous vignettes the events of that terrible day. Our only disappointment on Omaha was that due to the political antics of the US Congress we were not able to visit the St Laurent Cemetery to pay our respects as it was closed. Next morning our group split into two – one following Tony Smith as he took them through the 29th Infantry Divisions advance inland from Omaha towards St Lo. The 2nd group led by Ian Mitchell

visited sites associated with the 82nd ‘All American’ Airborne Division experience on and just after D day. This included stands at Neuville au Plan, in Saint Mere Eglise and at Manoir de la Fiere.

The group's experience during the first 3 days of the recce highlighted a few guidelines and factors relevant for planning battlefield tours in the US sector. These were:

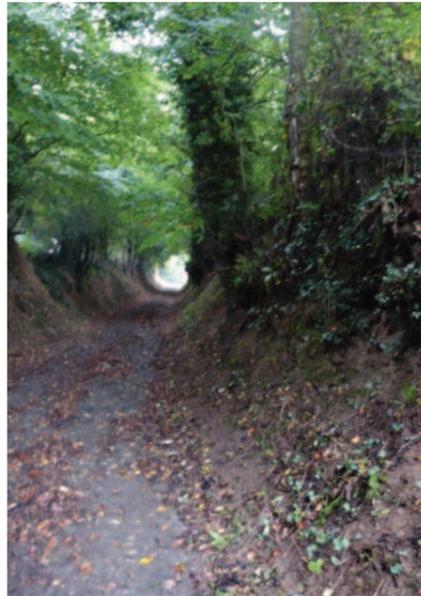
- Off the beaten track in the Cotentin Peninsula, lanes and roads are narrow and can present safety issues for even small groups when they stop.
- As the Americans themselves found back in 1944 – navigating along the back country roads to different stands takes a lot more time and attention than is apparent from maps. You need to set aside time for contingencies.
- Many key historical stands associated with the fighting in the hedgerows and swamps are sadly not well suited for large bus groups. Though it should be feasible to take parties of 8-10 in a small bus.

Most of those attending this event were unfamiliar with the US Army and appropriate stands. Therefore

they sensibly followed Ian Mitchell's guidance and turned in the first instance to existing guide books e.g. the Battle-Zone Normandy (1) and Battleground Europe series (2) or the now rather dated Stand where they Fought Guidebook (3). Although guide books from both the above series proved valuable, our group experience was that not all the stands selected for inclusion in these books were of equal usefulness and merit as informative stands when conducting a group tour.

The afternoon session on the 2nd was led by Bob Brunson and covered the 2nd Infantry ‘Indian head’ Division's two attacks on the eastern flank of German defence of St Lo. Bob took the opportunity to not only present at the stands but also explain his methodology in preparing for the stand using some very professional Google Earth based hand-outs to illustrate the process. Although no one would question the need for actually seeing the ground and recce- all attending agreed with Bob that initial virtual recce using tools like Google Earth has major benefits. The importance of physical recce was however in any case shown during the walk up to and down from Hill 192 – as it revealed excellent examples of classic bocage sunken tracks (see photograph). Such examples are rapidly disappearing in Normandy and knowing where they are is important for guides.

The 4th day of the recce commenced with a rather rainy morning and began with a presentation by John Greene on the plan for Operation Cobra and the subsequent bombing by the 8th and 9th Air Forces of American troops. This took place during our visit to Marigny German cemetery. By the time we had completed a visit here the sun came out and stayed out for the rest of the day. Robin Burrows - Ellis then took over responsibility for guiding the group through the breakout by US Armoured Divisions



Classic Bocage Country – sunken Trail leading to Hill 192

after a pleasant picnic lunch in the town square and a short visit to a new Operation Cobra museum that has opened in Marigny.

The rest of the recce that afternoon retraced the rapid advance of the armoured units and covered a lot of ground and some excellent stands and this part of the recce finished at Pontaubault Bridge, just south of Avranches. Robin demonstrated well that any tour that covers the armoured breakout on Operation Cobra will require most of a day. The first and last stands are some 45 miles apart, and the routes followed require a lot of additional travel on the back roads. Many key locations are either quite remote or in busy villages or towns. Ian Mitchell led the group on the final day of Phase 1 of the recce and after a few hiccups (we mentioned the trip didn't always go to plan) led the group to four stands associated with the Battle for Monte Castre, a key part of the German Mahlmann line.

The group was then guided by John Hamill to sunny Utah beach and John combined a useful presentation on what he has learned as a guide with a presentation on the Utah operation

on the beach. In one of those interesting coincidences the group then watched Graham Holland and Jules Vernon – fellow members of the Guild arrive with their clients and take up positions on our left and right flanks! After John's stand we had a brief chance to talk to both Graham and Jules before two of our party left to catch the Cherbourg ferry. The rest of the group investigated additional 101st Airborne Division stands visiting Angouville (where we again met Graham Holland coming out of the church!) and the Bloody Gulch area south of Carentan among other locations.

The 2nd phase of the event began the following morning and was designed to be slightly less frenetic and offer time to study some locations in more detail. Tony Smith led the revised group to a series of stands connected with the 29th 'Lets Go' Division attack on to and down the Martinville ridge and into St Lo. Our experience on this rather wet morning further confirmed the group consensus that only some of the stands covered in the book *Battle Zone Normandy – St Lo* were of real value as battlefield stands for groups. However a short walk down to the track from the la Heperie stand did reveal an excellent example of bocage country. Tony finished his St Lo tour in the centre of the town which enabled the group to enjoy some rather nice hot sausage baguettes and Normandy lemon tarts. The group had the afternoon off to pursue individual interests, such as seeing the airborne museum at St Mere Eglise while Ian Mitchell led others to visit

sites to the west of the Vire, including three stands associated with the counter attack by the Panzer Lehr Division in July 1944.

The 2nd and final day of the event was devoted to the US VII Corps advance on Cherbourg and the capture of the city itself. Bob Brunsdon led the morning session and got the group involved in identifying and then evaluating some potential stands. The last event of the recce was led by Nigel Dunkerley who took us to visit Fort Roule and discussed the final battle for Cherbourg with the aid of the marvellous panoramic view you get at the entrance to Fort Roule of the port, fortresses and outer harbour. A limitation here is that it would probably not be feasible to get a large coach up the hill although a minibus will make it. The group then had plenty of time before the ferry left at 18.30 to do some leisurely shopping in the big mall and hypermarket which now inhabits one of the old, large dry docks.

Other key lessons learned on the event were:

- a) Using two hotels in Carentan and St Lo enabled the group to see a wide range and number of stands in a relatively short time and works well.
- b) Travelling to Normandy on the Poole -Cherbourg route cuts time



Mike Jarmain, John Greene and Hugh Jenner enjoy a picnic lunch in Marigny



Bob Brunsdon conducting his tutorial on stands for a 47th Infantry Regiment action near Cherbourg



Just one part of the panoramic view of Cherbourg from Fort Du Roule

on the ferry and gets the group more rapidly to the US sector than using the Portsmouth – Ouistreham ferry. It has the added advantage that the group can study the Cherbourg battle as the last event before boarding the ferry early evening.

- c) A two-phase event provided people with flexibility to study some sites in more detail but it is certainly true that some of those attending the 2nd phase were beginning to flag a little, thus the rest on the afternoon was welcome.
- d) There is a good case to be made,

that if it is intensive, a recce should be limited to a maximum of four days.

- e) Google Earth is an excellent means of conducting 360 degree virtual recces of locations before doing the real thing for those stands accessible by roads. However nothing can beat actually walking the ground.
- f) There is case to be made that future recces should require everyone to create a short one page summary for each stand which can be made available both to those who attended and also to the Guild as a reference source.

Some little vignettes of the trip for the author include:

- The tendency of certain guides (who shall remain anonymous) to turn a battlefield recce into a patisserie recce.
- Constantly shifting position to avoid sinking into the sand at low tide on Omaha while Derek Young expanded with verve on the problems faced by US troops crossing the beach with 60 pounds of kit.
- Listening to Hugh Jenner highlight the problems of relying on first hand veteran accounts based on his experience at Goose Green.
- Hearing the banter between John Hamill and Derek Young in the back of our car was like seeing a comic act in progress.
- Enjoying the company of everyone who attended but it was especially nice to see both Elke and Fiona gracing us with their presence.
- Getting on the wrong auto-route out of St Lo (yes that was the reason why Mr Smith and Mr Mitchell were late at Monte Castre!)

No account of the trip would be complete without offering thanks to John and Derek for running the Commissariat during the first part of the tour and ensuring we had excellent picnic lunches and also Fiona and Adrian for taking on this task during the final phase. The author would like to thank everyone who attended and contributed to the recce for their input and support and most of all Tony Smith for all his hard work.

Notes

1. Battle-Zone Normandy series edited by Simon Trew includes among others: P Yates - Battle for St Lo, S Badsey - Utah Beach, C Pugsley - Omaha Beach and R Havers - the Battle for Cherbourg
2. The well-known *Battleground Europe* series produced by Pen and Sword.
3. *Stand Where They fought* - Carlton Joyce. Author House 2006.

GUILD PARTNERS EQUITY TRAVEL



Andy Johnson one of the Guild's Badged Guides involved in the scheme bringing the Somme battlefield to life for a group British students and teachers.

GUIDE COLLABORATION IN GOVERNMENT FUNDED FIRST WORLD WAR TOURS

When the Institute of Education (IOE) and school tour operator Equity won the government bid to send one teacher and two students of every state-funded secondary school in England out to the First World War battlefields of Ypres and the Somme as part of Centenary commemorations, there was no doubt that the partnership wanted the Guild of Battlefield Guides to be involved from the outset.

The tours, which officially began in May this year, and have now seen over 350 schools participate, combine a unique mix of battlefield guiding, educational input from the IOE, first-hand modern

day experiences from a serving soldier from the British Army and teacher-led activities.

This alternative approach to battlefield guiding has required detailed briefings and some on-site mentoring with those guides involved in delivering the Programme in terms of positioning, audience and content. "The ethos of the Programme is based upon enquiry-based learning", explains Simon Bendry, National Education Co-ordinator for the IOE and Guild member. "We set a key enquiry question each day for the group to consider, with sub questions at each site designed to help them investigate that overall

question. The role of the guide therefore, is to set the scene and orientate the group, helping them to understand the site and also to think about the enquiry question, before allowing the group time to explore the sites further and draw their own conclusions."

Two such sites where teachers and students are challenged to think and discuss between themselves are at Tyne Cot and Langemark Cemetery. At the start of the programme tour, each school researches a 'local soldier' – identifying who they were, where they lived; which regiment they fought for; when they died and who they left behind. These personal stories help make the connection with a generation 100 years on and really bring home the scale of the loss. Each group then has the opportunity to visit their 'local soldier' at Tyne Cot either in the cemetery or on the memorial.

This is then contrasted with a visit to the German Cemetery at Langemark. The key question gets the groups to focus on 'How do the German people remember their war dead?' The Guide sets the scene, providing the context for the site before school groups are given the opportunity to explore a number of personal stories, before coming back together to

compare similarities and differences between the two sites and discussing how the different approaches reflect on remembrance today. This approach allows the teachers and students to develop their own ideas and questions before coming back to the guide for additional support and discussion.

"We have been really impressed with how the Guides have adapted their style to suit the needs of the Programme" explains Simon. "Our collective role is not only to impart knowledge about the sites we visit, but to empower the teachers to think differently about how they teach the First World War both on the battlefields and also back in their classrooms. The Guides play a very important part in facilitating this through clear, thought-provoking explanations that brings each location 'to life' and then supporting the groups through their own investigation of the enquiry questions."

If you are a GBG Badged Guide and interested in becoming involved in this ground-breaking Programme, contact Simon Bendry (a speaker at the AGM or s.bendry@ioe.ac.uk) or email Gillian Ruff at school tour operator Equity at gillian.ruff@inspiring-learning.com



Our own Secretary, Tony Smith is one of the badged guides working on the programme.

Eventguide 2015

- 30 Jan - Somme Validation Day – Validation Team
- 20-22 Mar - 'Dyle to the Escault 1940' - Chris Finn
- 17-19 Apr - Dublin Weekend – Kathleen Neagle
- 12-17 Jun - Ardennes Recce – Ian Mitchell
- Aug - Badged Guides Dinner – Graeme Cooper
- 8-11 Oct - Arnhem Weekend – Wybo Boesma
- 20-22 Nov - Guild AGM - Council

THE FIRST WORLD WAR?

David Harvey

TWO MAJOR BATTLES WERE FOUGHT, ONE ON LAND AND ONE AT SEA, THAT SIGNALLED A SEVERE DECLINE IN ANCIENT CIVILISATION. THESE FIRST CONFLICTS ARE RECORDED BY IMAGES OF FIGHTING ON WALL RELIEFS IN EGYPTIAN TEMPLES AND IN TEXTS FOUND IN EGYPT, SYRIA AND TURKEY. THIS ARTICLE FOCUSSES ON THE LAND BATTLE, THE NAVAL ENGAGEMENT APPEARS IN THE NEXT EDITION.

The protagonists of the land warfare were the two super-powers of the Bronze Age, Hatti and Egypt. The majority of the information we have on the war comes from Egyptian texts and relief drawings therefore we are forced to interpret allowing for a biased view of events.

The battle of Qadesh, dated to between 1274 and 1285 BC, is the earliest battle in recorded history for which texts and images exist. It was also probably the largest chariot battle ever fought, involving perhaps 5,000–6,000 chariots. It took place outside the city on the banks of the River Orontes near modern Aleppo in Syria. It is therefore a site beyond the reach of battlefield guides during the current Syrian civil war.

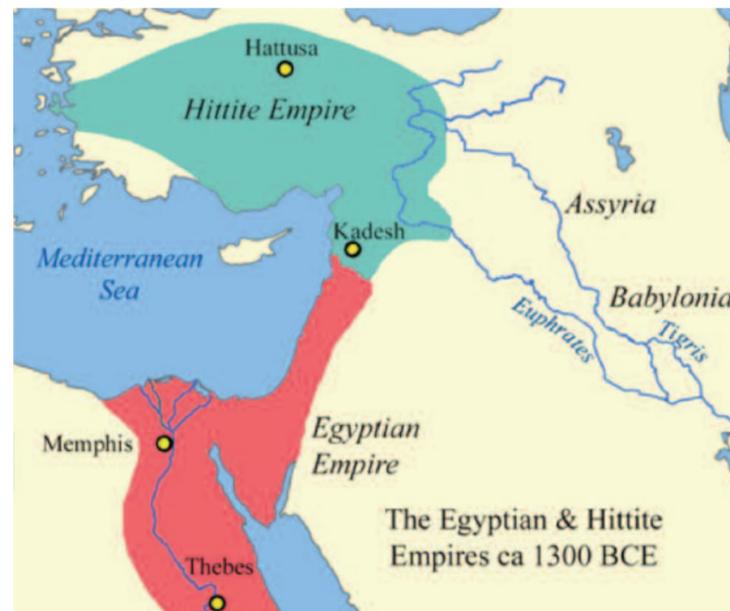
Ramesses II's arrival on the battlefield is preceded by the capture and interrogation of two Hittite spies; When they had been brought before Pharaoh, His Majesty asked, "Who are you?" They replied "We belong to the king of Hatti. He has sent us to spy on you." Then His Majesty said to them, "Where is he, the enemy from Hatti? I had heard that he was in the land of Khaleb, to the north." They replied to His Majesty, "Lo, the king of Hatti has already arrived, together with the many countries who are supporting him... They are armed with their infantry and their chariots. They have their weapons of war at the ready. They are more numerous than the grains of sand on the beach. Behold, they stand equipped and ready for battle behind the old city of Qadesh."

It has been suggested that, despite this information, Pharaoh made a tactical error, dividing his army in hurrying to capture Qadesh. As his advance guard crossed the River Orontes they were attacked by the Hittites already in full battle array. Complete disaster was only avoided through speedy support from divisions on the other side of the River. In the chaos

some Egyptian forces fled the battlefield with Hittite chariots in pursuit.

In the Egyptian account Ramesses describes himself as being deserted and surrounded by enemies, but also claims to have pushed the Hittites back from his camp and caused some to drown in the river. The Egyptian counter-attack must have been successful as both armies stay on the field of battle to re-engage the next day. Similarly, it seems the second battle was inconclusive as eventually Pharaoh withdraws, leaving the field and Qadesh in Hittite hands.

Whilst the text and wall reliefs in Ramesses II's temples show only a decisive Egyptian win, Hittite records tell of their victory and Egyptian retreat. The most likely outcome is for a stalemate. After further



Territory of Egypt (green) & Hittites (red) c.1300 BC

IT SEEMS LIKELY THE FIRST WORLD WAR WAS NOT FOUGHT AT THE START OF THE 20TH CENTURY BUT AT THE END OF THE BRONZE AGE, OVER THREE THOUSAND YEARS AGO.

Relief at Abydos made shortly after the battle. Egyptian foot-soldiers are facing Hittite chariots. To the right, a Shardana foreign mercenary armed with round shield and short sword is severing the hand of a Hittite.



A copy of the first recorded international Peace Treaty in 1258 has been found on a Hittite clay tablet and in an Egyptian Papyrus on display in the United Nations, New York shown below.



Battle scene on the walls of the Ramesseum, Thebes. On the left the Egyptian chariots are attacking in line of battle, each with two men, one shooting a bow the other holding a shield. On the right the Hittite forces are in disarray; horses and men are falling wounded by arrows.



campaigns the two superpowers agreed a peace treaty in 1258. Copies of this first recorded international Peace Treaty have been found on a Hittite clay tablet and in an Egyptian Papyrus. A copy of the tablet is on display in the United Nations, New York.

This battle appears to signal significant changes taking place in military technology and of states becoming increasingly dependent on allies and mercenaries. The Egyptians used lighter, faster, two-man chariots, able to out run and manoeuvre three-

man Hittite chariots. Mercenaries are used by both armies, some of which are equipped with the latest iron long-swords. Some of these new arrivals prove to be less than loyal in the long-term and would play an increasingly significant role in Late Bronze Age history.

One post-war question remains unanswered, what catastrophe befell the Hittites that virtually wiped their civilisation from history? This puzzling outcome is explored in the next edition of dispatches which focusses on the first battle of the Nile.

GALLIPOLI SNIPER

Billy Sing, nicknamed 'The Murderer' was a World War 1 hero, once known around the world.

By the time he died in 1943, alone and almost penniless, he had all but been forgotten. Billy was born in 1886 in Clermont, QLD to a Chinese father from Shanghai and an Englishwoman. This son of a Chinaman rose above the racist attitudes and laws of the time and was a likeable young bloke admired for his sporting prowess, particularly with the rifle. While still a boy, the story went, he could shoot the tail off a piglet at 25 paces with a .22 rifle.

From the age of 15, Billy worked as a station hand, ringer and horse drover further cultivating his childhood bush skills, including hunting. He honed his shooting skills at the Clermont Rifle Club, and later at the rifle club in Proserpine. A regular winner of shooting prizes, he was also a good cricketer. Sing was in his prime when he journeyed to Brisbane to join the 5th Light Horse (LH) Regiment in 1914. The 5th LH was in Egypt when the ANZACs landed at Gallipoli. Leaving their horses behind, Billy's regiment deployed in May 1915 as Infantry to Turkey's Gallipoli Peninsula. Trooper 355, Billy Sing became "probably the most dangerous sniper in any army throughout the war", wrote Ion Idriess. Idriess sailed to war on the same boat as Billy and became a popular author after the war. He was also an experienced bushman and at times was Billy's spotter.

'Abdul the Terrible', as the Allies called him, was the decorated Turkish sniper bought to Gallipoli to stop Sing! He methodically studied the Australian's handiwork – up to nine kills per day. Having finally located Sing's specially constructed 'posse', Abdul prepared to take down his prey – only to be shot between the eyes by Sing. Abdul was one of Sing's 201 confirmed Gallipoli kills, though he probably took the lives of many more Turks – there was not always a spotter to verify kills, and it was sometimes difficult to determine if targets that had been hit and fallen into trenches had actually been killed. Though bringing grief to Turkey, Sing's exploits saved Allied lives and was perfect propaganda – he was Mentioned in Despatches, awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and lauded

in newspapers from Sydney to San Francisco. But it didn't go all Sing's way. He was wounded in August 1915, when a Turkish sniper hit the telescope of his spotter, who was badly wounded before the bullet finally came to rest in Billy's shoulder. As the weather deteriorated, Billy succumbed to the cold, wet weather and the appalling conditions in the trenches and was evacuated to Malta just weeks before the Allies withdrew from the Gallipoli peninsula. Bouts of illness kept Billy in England for some time before he was deployed to the Western Front in January 1917 with the 31st Australian Infantry Battalion, where soon after he was wounded and sent back to England to recuperate. He wrote home, "We had an awful time in France this winter; it was the coldest they've had for years. It would break your heart to see the dead bodies lying around unburied." Following his discharge from hospital he was given leave. Sing headed to Edinburgh, where he had a whirlwind romance with a waitress Elizabeth Stewart. On 29 June they were married. A month later Billy was back in the trenches! Private Sing was awarded the Belgian Croix de Guerre in early 1918, for his role in leading a patrol, killing several German snipers at Polygon Wood in September 1917. Over his period of service he contracted influenza, rheumatism, mumps, had been gassed, shot on two occasions, sustained shrapnel wounds to both legs and his back, spending quite some time in and out of hospitals, eventually causing his medical discharge. The mustard gas caused lifelong lung disease for Billy and it signalled the end of his military career when in July 1918 he was shipped home. Despite having been wounded, gassed and ill several times he was declared fit and able to work when discharged in Brisbane.

For a time Billy was buoyed by an enthusiastic welcome in both Proserpine and later Clermont but that soon faded. He set out to be a sheep farmer like so many other soldiers on blocks donated to returned servicemen by the Federal Government, but his land was poor like many of the blocks in this flawed scheme. Almost a third of the soldiers turned



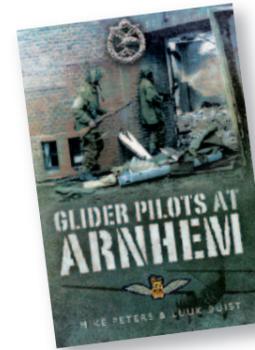
farmers walked off the land – including Billy Sing. There's no indication that Billy's wife was ever part of his new life. There is correspondence showing that he applied for Elizabeth to have free passage from Britain, it doesn't seem to have eventuated.

Though hampered by illness and his wounds, the failed sheep farmer still had to make a living. He turned to gold prospecting and did well enough to go on weekend sprees with his mining mates. He also got a reputation for heavy drinking and a bad attitude. When the gold ran out, Billy turned to labouring in Brisbane where he continued to work hard although complaining of pains in his heart, chest and back. On May 19, 1943, Billy was found dead in his boarding house bedroom. Five shillings were also found but no sign of his war medals.

As his humble grave marker in the Lutwyche War Cemetery weathered away, Billy Sing was all but forgotten. 50 years after his death a newspaper article revived interest in 'this ace Australian sniper'. A plaque was erected on the site where he died and in 1995, a statue of Sing was unveiled with full military honours in his hometown of Clermont. In 2004 Australian Army snipers named their Baghdad post the 'Billy Sing Bar & Grill'. Last year, on the 66th anniversary of his death, wreaths were laid at Sing's grave during a ceremony attended by various dignitaries, including the Chinese Consul-General.

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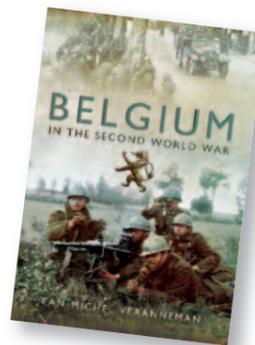


GLIDER PILOTS AT ARNHEM

By Mike Peters & Luuk Buist

Following on from two print runs in hardback, Pen & Sword Ltd has just released *Glider Pilots at Arnhem* in digital (Kindle) and paperback format. As well as being cheaper than the hardback version, the new paperback incorporates a number of amendments and updates to its very detailed appendices. The inclusion of this new information enhances what was already a comprehensive stand alone source of information on Operation Market Garden and the role of the GPR in the airborne landings of September 1944. The new size and lighter weight also make it an ideal companion for those Guild members who regularly wander the landing zones around Nijmegen and Arnhem.

Published by Pen & Sword Ltd
RRP £16.99
paperback, pp214



BELGIUM IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

By Jean-Michel Veranneman

This is a long overdue account of Belgium's role in World War Two. Long-standing Guild Member Jean-Michel Veranneman has really gone beyond the usual account of the storm Blitzkrieg ravaging neutral Belgium.

He gives a detailed account of the 18-day resistance offered by the outnumbered and outgunned Belgian military. Equally interesting are the chapters on the realities of the occupation, the overseas contingents that fought on after capitulation and the Belgians that fought for the Nazi regime later in the war. Fascinating stuff, I look forward to the next volume on Belgium in the First World War.

Published by Pen & Sword Ltd
RRP £19.99
hardback, pp205

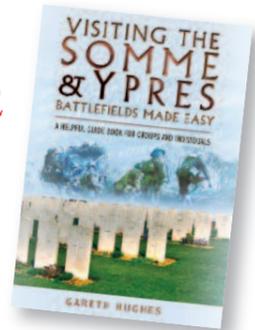
VISITING THE SOMME & YPRES BATTLEFIELDS MADE EASY

A Helpful Guide For Groups and Individuals

By Gareth Hughes

Written by a senior History Teacher with experience of numerous battlefield tours on the Western Front, this guide is firmly aimed at the novice group leader or individual. It does what it says on the tin, introducing the reader to the nuances of planning an itinerary for the Somme or the Ypres Salient. The chapters include some fairly standard core itineraries, stand notes, a chronological timeline and background on CWGC ethos. There are also some outline itineraries for Mons, Arras, Loos and Fromelles. It is a comprehensive beginner's guide but probably of limited appeal to Guild members.

Published by Pen & Sword Ltd
RRP £12.99
paperback, pp164

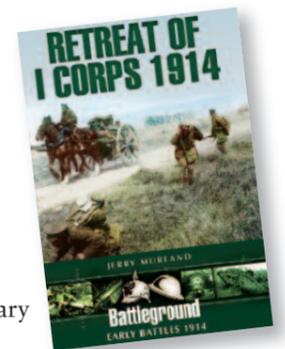


RETREAT OF 1 CORPS 1914

By Jerry Murland

This is a new addition to the battleground series released to coincide with the FWW Centenary and the renewed interest in the dynamic campaigns of 1914. Written by a Guild member it is the ideal balance of maps, photographs and first-hand accounts, all linked by a knowledgeable and engaging narrative. It also includes some helpful data appendices including daily rates of march, orders of battle etc. – for those technical questions from clients. Some of the latest battlegrounds have verged on being full-blown historical accounts that are too lengthy and ponderous for use while touring, not so with this concise and informative guide. This is a well-balanced and useful guidebook that I will certainly be taking on future tours.

Published by Pen & Sword Ltd
RRP £12.99
paperback, pp139



10 Questions:

Name: Joël Stoppels
Age: 29
Nationality: Dutch
Home Location: Groningen,
Netherlands
Tour Company: Sole Trader
Validating: Yes



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

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

I loved history as a child, at school; I always got high marks in history. My grandparents told me a lot about WW2 so I became more interested. I started collecting everything that had to do with WW2. As a result, I started reading more about the Second World War. Eventually I started my own company, Battlefield Tours.

2. Have any experiences stood out? Currently I run a lot of Battlefield Tours for students. On my tours I try to pass the history on to younger people. Students often reflect on the things that they hear during the tours and this provokes more questions. I try to make them appreciate the sacrifice of those that fought to liberate Holland and secured their freedom. I strive to make the story and the legacy tangible for my groups.

3. What do you enjoy the most about battlefield guiding? Battlefield touring creates links between people. Most people who come along share similar interests. It is common for participants after each tour to exchange addresses so that they can keep in touch. I think the most memorable moments are when I take veterans on tour with me. To hear them talking about their experiences is priceless. Allied to this is the opportunity I have to assist clients to visit cemeteries and memorials to find their relatives resting place.

4. What is your favourite stand, location or battlefield and why? My favourite place is Delfzijl, a large port with a promenade dominated by huge bunkers. From the beachfront there is a wonderful view of Germany and you normally see several sailing ships. The port has a tremendous history, during WW2 there was heavy fighting in Delfzijl and its surroundings. It was the last place in the Netherlands that was liberated on May 2, 1945. In fact, the last bombs on Dutch territory fell there.

5. Which battlefield would you like to visit in the future? I'd like to go to Stalingrad. There is so much history at Stalingrad, as a WW2 Battlefield Guide I think that I must see Stalingrad (Wolvograd) for myself. I personally think that you need a few days to explore the area with a group. Walking the ground in where the combat took place adds a new dimension to battlefield visits and enables you to see locations well off the beaten track.

6. What have you enjoyed the most about being a member of the Guild? The validation program of the Guild allows you to develop as a guide. I am glad that I am participating in the validation program. I have learned to reflect on my guiding skills and my level of knowledge. Since joining the Guild I have made many new friends with people who share similar interests and to whom you can turn for advice and help with projects or ventures.

7. If there was a fire and you could only save one battlefield-related book or prop, what would you save and why? I would prefer to save my entire collection but I think this is certainly not possible. In my collection I have two Canadian uniforms from WW2, including the uniform of a Canadian soldier fought to liberate my hometown. The veteran himself gave it to me, because he felt that it had to end up in good hands. I also possess a secret radio that is used by the resistance in Groningen. This radio is made in a book so the Germans could not discover it.

8. What type of group do you think is the most challenging to lead on a tour? During tours, you have various experts along. Some are well read and know what they are talking about. For me the hardest thing is being younger than my clients, I am often challenged by the occasional older 'Know all'.

9. What's the best tip, story or nugget of information you have been given by a fellow battlefield guide? It is nerve-racking and scary to stand up in front of large groups of people and speak. It does get easier though and eventually you learn to improvise and add in a few of your own stories and extra bits of information. You are just talking and if you think about the commentary as though you are just speaking to a group of your friends, it makes you relax and you gain confidence.

10. What is the funniest or most dramatic thing you have seen on tour? A while ago a bachelor party booked a tour with me. During the tour they drank constantly until the entire group was very drunk. Eventually, after trying to shorten the tour, I ended up with the whole group in a pub in the centre of Groningen. It was therefore, the end point of the tour – I left the group to their drinking.

NEWmembers: New members who have been welcomed to the Guild between August 2014 and the date of publication.

Agamba Arambam
Nigel Atter
Martin Chandler
Ray Chesworth
Richard Clay

Bryn Dolan
Oliver Green
Giles Guthrie
Dan Hill
Ross Knox-Holmes

Paul Johnson
John Marr
Andrew Morgan
Jim Maynard
Neil Pudney

Anthony Rich
Nick Robson
Paul Stevenson
Richard Sullivan
Peter Sweeney
Peter White