

Winter 2017

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# DESPATCHES

the magazine of the International Guild of Battlefield Guides



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## PLUS

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Photos of guides  
in action!

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Cover image: Treptower Park, Berlin - One of the most iconic Soviet statues in the city, a Russian Soldier in a Knight-like pose suggesting Chivalry, a Crusade and Reverence to the fallen. (Pic - Mike Peters)



Israel, October this year - The Australian Light Horse Association reenactment of the Charge at Beersheba stirred up a significant amount of dust and debate about the Palestine Campaign of 1917-18. (Pic Mike Peters)



Poppies at Suvla Bay.

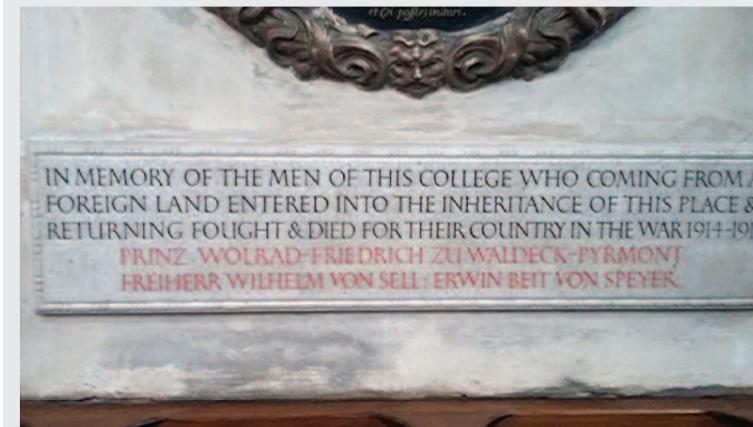
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## THEY ALSO SERVED THEIR COUNTRY

Tim Stoneman



It's often easier to take a somewhat one-sided view of battles – from the British side – not least because access to information, records, photographs and the like is easier (and that's before considering the language problem for those who don't speak or read French/German/Spanish/... (delete according to the opponents in question)).

To counter this, I'm sure many who guide tours of twentieth-century battlefields in Northern Europe

try to counterbalance this by visiting cemeteries such as La Cambe, Fricourt or Langemarck – or, in UK, the German war cemetery at Cannock Chase – or other sites where “the view from the other side of the hill” (to paraphrase Wellington) can be discussed. On a non-battlefield trip recently, however, I came across another UK site where German soldiers are remembered – and a different form of memorial to those most of us are used to.

The Chapel of New College of Oxford University contains this memorial to three Rhodes Scholars who, after graduation, returned to their native land, took up arms for their country in the Great War and paid the ultimate price – the memorial is placed adjacent to one remembering a much larger number of former New College students who fought and died on the opposite side in the same conflict.

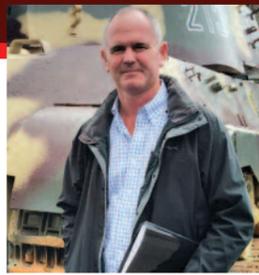
# OPENINGshot:

## THE CHAIRMAN'S VIEW

Welcome fellow Members and Guild Partners to the Winter 2017 edition of Despatches, the House Magazine of our Guild. Before I introduce this issue I would like to recount an incident that happened at the Beersheba 100 Commemorative Ceremony. Last month I was fortunate enough to lead a group of 30 Australians to Israel on a tour focused on the Australian Light Horse and its role in the Palestine campaign of 1917-18. While waiting to get into the ceremony, things were getting a little chaotic, security was tight and the temperature was rising steadily... some individuals were becoming concerned that they may miss the official ceremony. A young Australian woman began to push her way through the waiting queue informing all within earshot of her VIP status and priority for entrance. Many looked on with disdain and then an Australian ex-serviceman carrying a wreath responded with one of the best put down lines I have heard... 'The VIPs are buried inside, wait your turn like the rest of us'. Silence was followed by a red-faced shuffle and we all waited patiently.

As another year of touring draws to a close in the Northern Hemisphere we take stock and look forward to our Annual Conference and the New Year ahead. The coming year poses some interesting challenges and some big questions, not least, how will we conclude the First World War Centenary and what will follow in its wake? I have spoken to numerous Guides and Tour Operators on my recent travels and these questions are certainly prominent in their minds. It will be interesting to look back 12 months from now and consider both the impact of the centenary commemorations and what legacy remains. Let us all hope that the opportunities that the commemorations presented have not been squandered and battlefield visitor numbers remain healthy beyond 2018.

I will report more fully on the Guild's activities at the Annual Conference, suffice to say, we are in great shape



and we have had another good year. The tireless Validation Team have been kept busy, and we have successfully integrated opportunities into the Events Programme wherever practicable. I look forward to the list of Accredited Guides extending further over the conference weekend in Mons. I mentioned events, as we all know, they don't happen on their own. We have had excellent events in the Netherlands, Badged Guides all at Sea in London, Whiskey & War in the Highlands, an engaging weekend at the National Army Museum and there are still more events to come before year end! If you have not attended a Guild Event yet, please make the effort, it is what the Guild is all about and not only are you not getting your money's worth if you don't meet other members, you are missing out! Well done from me to everybody who has organised our events this year, thank you all on behalf of the membership.

While I am thanking people, thank you to all of the members that responded to my plea for more articles for Despatches. As you will see once you read into this issue, we have had some great contributions. The Spring issue is already coming together, so please keep your thoughts, articles and pictures coming in, we are developing the magazine into a really useful publication that shares guiding knowledge and experience across the Guild. Our new website will also soon be online, providing a 24/7 portal for us all to use alongside our Facebook page and our twitter account. All you have to do now is use all or some of these media channels to complement your Guiding activity.

I hope that you have all had a successful and enjoyable year of Guiding and that you will enjoy whatever respite you may have. Rest well, recharge your batteries and look forward to a fruitful and productive 2018. I hope to see lots of you at the Annual Conference in February!

Mike Peters

# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE GUILD'S ACCREDITATION PROCESS

Christopher Finn MPhil FRAeS FHEA  
Director of Validation

As the way by which a Guild member can gain the Guild Badge, and hence Accredited Member status, the Accreditation Programme is at the heart of the Guild's activities. However, to avoid confusion we will still retain the internally well-understood terms of Validation, Validators etc when discussing the process by which Accreditation and the award of the Guild Badge is achieved.



Details of the Validation Programme are contained in the Accreditation Manual which is available to all Guild members on the Guild website. However, this means that it is not available to potential members or to the broader Guiding industry. So, this article is intended as a broad introduction to the Guild's Validation Programme, what it entails and what skills a guide will have demonstrated during their progress to Accreditation.

To kill a couple of common misconceptions it is worth explaining what the Validation Programme is not. Firstly, it is not some arcane filtering process by which the Guild decides who is, or is not, fit to join its august ranks! More seriously, it is not an examination, or testing, at the end of an education or training process.

To qualify to start the Guild's Accreditation Programme candidates need to satisfy the Guild that they are established and practicing guides with some years' experience of battlefield guiding. So, there is an expectation that all candidates have a basic understanding of battlefield guiding theory and practice. Validation is, therefore, a form of Peer Review by experienced guides and of experienced guides. Consequently, the term Validation is used rather than testing or examination.

The Programme focuses on what the Guild considers to be the core responsibilities of a guide, which are:

**Knowledge:** of the relevant history; of the historical, topographical and archaeological perspectives of the battlefield; and the contextualisation of that material.

**Presentation:** the use of appropriate communication skills and styles.

**Duty of Care:** in the educational, personal and administrative senses.

**Business:** including marketing and planning.

Each of these headings then gives rise to a number of specific skills such as:

**K2** – An in-depth knowledge of a chosen period of warfare and battles, including relevant terminology.

## FIRSTcontact:

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Material for publication in the Spring edition of Despatches must be with the Editor no later than 28 February 2018.

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](mailto:secretary@gbg-international.com)

**P1** – The ability to communicate in an engaging and entertaining manner.

**C5** – Support for the operator’s safety and security policy.

**B2** – The ability to set clear and achievable objectives.

The Validation Process comprises nine Assignments. Three of these (1, 5 & 6) are “live” ones and the other six are written submissions. Assignment 1 has to be passed before the other assignments can be attempted, but there is no specified order in which this is then done.

The Assignments are as follows:

Assignment	Task
1	Give a talk on a battle (or phase of a battle) of your choice to a group of people of varying expertise and take questions.
2A	Produce a series of maps and/or diagrams showing the course of a battle (or part thereof).
OR	
2B	Produce up to six pages of pre-visit reading aimed at giving people a basic understanding of warfare in your period and familiarising them with how historians work.
3A	List the types of audiences who may be encountered on a battlefield and make bullet-point notes on how your presentation style and content would vary to suit each type.
OR	
3B	Produce a pre-tour briefing of no more than six pages or a short film on a DVD covering administrative points and matters of practical advice and interest for visitors to a specific battlefield.
4	Design a feedback questionnaire that invites people to comment upon the quality of their experience on one of your tours.
5	Answer questions put to you by one or two Validators about practical and Duty of Care problems you might encounter on tour.
6	Gather copies of at least three sources for a battle (or part thereof) to demonstrate your understanding of sources and their uses.
7	Produce a timed itinerary for one day of a battlefield tour of your choice with bullet-points stating to what you would draw attention at each stand.
8A	Produce an example of promotional literature using one of a number of media.
OR	
8B	Produce a marketing plan, of no more than eight pages, focused on your battlefield tour business to cover the next three years.
OR	
8C	Explain, in no more than eight pages, the process of planning an overseas tour, that includes travel and overnight accommodation, from concept to conduct.
9	Produce a bullet point analysis of no more than 8 pages of what you consider to be the ingredients and the practical steps that combine to make a good tour.

#### Each assignment comprises the following:

- **A TASK** - A statement of what the candidate is required to do.
- **OUTCOMES** - These comprise:
  - **SKILLS** - A list of the skills the candidate is required to demonstrate in that assignment.
  - **CRITERIA** - A statement of the evidence BY which the candidate should demonstrate those skills.
- **LEVEL** - Except where explicitly stated the level of skill required is **COMPETENT**. That is: the submission is understandable; the evidence required has been clearly demonstrated; and the solutions and material presented would work “on the ground”.
- **ADVICE** - This is assignment-specific advice and includes some aspects of process for some assignments.

Each assignment is assessed by one or more Validators against the stated **OUTCOMES** who grade it as a ‘Pass’ or a ‘Referral’. A referral should not be considered as failure; rather it is an invitation to reconsider and try again later. The “first-time pass rate” is a consistent 60% across the assignments. And the most common reason for Referral is that the candidate quite simply hasn’t done what the assignment asks them to do !

For each live assignment there is a Lead Validator who conducts the validation, verbally debriefs the candidate afterwards and then completes a Feedback Form which is emailed to the candidate within 48 hrs. The Feedback Form lists the Outcomes for that particular assignment, the Lead Validator makes a yes or no decision as to whether or not a particular skill has been demonstrated and adds comments to explain the reason(s) for that decision. There is also usually a Second Validator (who may be being mentored) who shares in the assessment process. There is always a Verifier (who is an experienced Validator) who monitors the Validators’ performance to ensure the assessment is impartial and follows the specified processes.

Written assignments are assessed by a single Validator but all of them are Verified by the Chief Validator who is also responsible for validator standards and training.

We plan to run four events per year in the UK (including the AGM) at which candidates can undertake the live assignments. However, Guild membership and accreditation is not limited to those living in UK. We have an active membership in the Netherlands who conduct both live and written validations in their own language. We also have the ability for candidates from outside Western Europe to undertake the live assignments using Skype and an Australian candidate was recently the first member to be accredited by this route.

Now all this is fairly dry but hopefully gives the reader an overview of an up-to-date accreditation process specifically focused on the needs of the

modern guiding industry. Four years ago the process was assessed by the Government-sponsored First World War Centenary Battlefield Tour Programme. The outcome was that they decided to use only Badged Guides (now Accredited Guides) of the Guild to support their programme. To date fourteen Accredited Guides have been involved in delivering 142 tours to 4607 teachers and students from 1436 schools. The Guides’ performance has consistently been assessed as Excellent by the teachers attending the tours. In the broader guiding industry a number of Guild Partner companies are using Accredited Guides for their tours and are encouraging those non-accredited guides to become so. One company does this by paying their Accredited Guides a higher rate of pay. Finally, the Royal College of Defence Studies uses only Accredited Guides to deliver their Annual Staff Ride. All of this points to the Guild’s Accreditation Process being increasingly viewed as a bench-mark for guiding standards.

Whilst the Guild does not provide training it would be a very rare candidate who did not learn something whilst undertaking Validation. Guides come from a wide variety of backgrounds and guide in a diverse industry. It is for this reason that all the assignments comprise generic tasks and the candidate is free to choose the battle or subject they use in each assignment. There is one exception to this, Assignment 5, where the validators ask questions to elicit evidence of the stated skills. But looking at the list of Tasks above most candidates, and all the Validators and Accredited Guides were initially candidates, will find that some tasks play to their strengths, some will be more challenging, and one or two may require some serious study or research. However, the vast majority of Accredited Members (or Badged Guides) will admit that the Validation Process made them critically examine at least some aspects of their own guiding practices and that they are a better guide for it. Some may even admit they actually enjoyed parts of it !



Somme Associate Members out among the poppies learning the ground. L-R John Atkinson, John Carey, Tony Otton, Mark Allen, Chris Netherclift & Glenn Stennes.

# HELP FOR HEROES THE BIG BATTLEFIELD BIKE RIDE

## A BRIDGE TOO FAR

### 10 - 16 SEPT 2017

Paul Oldfield



This year's ride started near Lille and ended at Arnhem, taking in Waterloo and aspects of the 1940 campaign on the Dyle Line, before setting off up the Market-Garden corridor from Leopoldsburg. Once again the ride proved that guides undertaking this tour have to be infinitely flexible and able to find rapid solutions to problems.



Terry Webb speaks to a group of cyclists at Joe's Bridge on the third day of the ride. Amongst his audience are Tom Newton-Dunn (journalist and current political editor of the Sun), Johnny Mercer (Conservative MP for Plymouth Moor View) and Francie Clarkson (daughter of Major Robert Cain VC). David Harvey looks on top right.



Andy Johnson speaking to the riders at lunchtime in Oosterbeek on the final day. This was a rare period of sunshine and warmth. Much of the rest of the week was heavy showers and cold head winds. Similar to soldiers in WW2 always coming up against Tiger tanks, cyclists on the Big Battlefield Ride only ever encounter head winds!



Francie Clarkson stealing the show at Paul Oldfield's stand at Oosterbeek church.

She talked about her father, Robert Cain VC, as the man rather than the war hero. She gave a very moving but also highly amusing account of his life. This included caring for an abandoned family pet rabbit in Oosterbeek during lulls in the fighting. That is until the day he turned up to feed the rabbit to find one of his soldiers carrying it away with its neck wrung for a meal. Robert didn't have the heart to rebuke the hungry soldier. After Robert Cain had been to the Palace for the VC investiture, he and a number of comrades had a party in a pub in Whitehall. Far too much beer was quaffed before Robert headed home. Next morning he realised he had left the VC on the bar in a pool of stale beer, but went back to collect it. Years later when Francie visited the Staffordshire Regiment Museum she was allowed to hold the medal but only if she wore white gloves. She didn't have the heart to tell the staff that it was soaked in beer.

Assignment 5 issues encountered on this year's ride (in addition to the usual), included:

After the recce the organisers changed our three stands at Waterloo to a single location at the base of the Lion Mound, promising that everything could be seen from it. In reality we couldn't see most of the right half of the battlefield, including a little place named Hougomont.

One team was confused by there being two underpasses at the north end of Nijmegen bridge, due to the recent construction of the second waterway. They arrived in a downpour with almost zero visibility and set up at the northern underpass instead of the Sgt Robertson one closer to the Waal. So you could say that they, er ..... went a Bridge Too Far.

The other group set up their guides flag for a stand outside Oosterbeek church .... where it remained fluttering in the breeze until well after everyone returned to UK. Wybo Boersma came to the rescue and recovered it.

Arnhem on anniversary weekend was, as usual, overrun by the Walter Mitty Parachute Brigade (Heavy Drop). At Oosterbeek church they blocked the roads and made lots of gratuitous noise, but fortunately moved on just before the guides had to get sergeant-majorish.

One of the Walter's set off a number of blanks with his 75mm Howitzer behind Oosterbeek church. The unexpected noise and shock was enough to send one of the PTSD sufferers into meltdown in the bushes.

The organisers changed the Friday lunch stop from the Hartenstein to a hall nearby, without telling the guides, who had a stand there.

At the Arnhem bridge stand a music concert necessitating the stand being moved 400m to the east.



*The riders commencing their final leg on the approaches to John Frost Bridge. The rain returned just as they set off, a familiar theme to the week!*

*The scene that greeted David Harvey under John Frost Bridge as he arrived to set up the final stand. The clutter is clear. What cannot be replicated in this picture is the deafening noise from the concert that was in full swing. He moved the stand 400m eastwards along the river. A case of time spent in reconnaissance the previous January being totally wasted.*



*The four guides about to board the school bus before the celebratory dinner. No further comment is required!*



In Eindhoven the guides were completely lost in the one-way system trying to find the Philips factory. Suddenly seeing it off to a flank they turned onto what appeared to be a perfectly good road .... which was actually a well camouflaged tram track. So they pulled off onto a one-way road and parked, but realising that they were facing the wrong way managed to turn it round on the cycle path without killing anyone. Having set up the stand one guide went back to the car, realised it was in a restricted parking area outside the main city police station and beat a hasty retreat. So far no tickets have arrived.



# OP HOUNDSWORTH - MORVAN

Adam Williams

For those that have not visited this area of France – it is most certainly worth a visit. The countryside easily lends itself to walking/cycling/running and makes for an ideal holiday location. Operation Houndsworth, involving A Sqn SAS under Major Bill Fraser MC, took place between 6th June and 6th September 1944. As is well known, the Allied Forces were landing in Normandy on the 6th June and the plan was to keep the Germans occupied in the area west of Dijon so that any reinforcements being sent to oppose the Allied invasion were delayed.

Just over 140 members of A Sqn, 1st SAS jumped in at night to support the French Resistance Fighters – called the Maquis (Maquisards). The translation into French literally means ‘thicket’ – the type of undergrowth that the Freedom Fighters were used to operating in. There were over 22 groups/cells of Maquis within the Houndsworth area – A Sqn working very closely with the Maquis Bernard and Maquis Jean. The Maquis generally were not either well trained or well equipped. But the SAS would go on to provide training and frequent air drops would provide much needed weapons.

I recently purchased a copy of the SAS War Diary from the Second World War. Not only is it an informative read – but it provides a multitude of facts and figures of the Regiment’s action throughout the war. Op Houndsworth has its own section and is covered in depth. Thankfully, there are many grid references so it is easy to plot accurate locations. Naturally you will need to get hold of the 100,000 scale maps of the period if you don’t want to end up on a wild goose chase. With these plotted into the GPS, I persuaded my family to go on a walking holiday in France....

There are many places to stay in the Morvan region. Most are self-catering Gites, which can be a bit hit and miss. The Gite we committed to looked fabulous on the website. But after two nights of sharing the Gite with rats – we decided to move to a Chateau near Saint-Martin-Du-Puy. The hills are not too mountainous and there are so many established cycle tracks and walks – you really are spoiled for choice. One particular route, takes you through the heart of A Sqn’s area of operations. The routes are generally very well sign posted and have a multitude of information for the passerby. If you wanted to explore more, then the GPS loaded up with accurate grids will take you off-piste.

It is fair to say that there were many engagements and ambushes throughout the area in the summer of



1944. To list them all would make for a lengthy article. But one ambush that springs to mind, and is very easy to walk over – is that of the ambush by the Maquis Bernard and members of A Sqn in the woods of the Montsauche.

These woods were vast and naturally, the Germans were very wary of entering them. The Maquis Bernard were hidden away quite nicely. Their camp was well established and consisted of a number of log cabins, cookhouses and even limited medical facilities. With a little research, it is still possible to locate these old sites.



Old oil drums used for target practice.

Obviously, not all units were co-located. A Sqn were located about one km away but still within the same woods. Each 'camp' was sited close to a water supply and off the beaten track. Although it was common practice to move location frequently, each camp was well-defended and guards appointed as lookouts. There are many archeological finds within these camps. The Maquis were very resourceful; you can see from the picture left that oil drums were used for both target practice and barbeques. Old cabins have long since rotted away but their foundations are still present. Geographical evidence never changes and so old trench positions can still be found.

The Maquis Bernard within these woods were not particularly well-armed. Prior to the SAS arrival, they had only three MGs and about 40 of their hundred odd men were armed. Although the Maquis were keen as mustard, they were not well disciplined. Air drops from the UK onto well positioned Drop Zones would supply them with much-needed weapons and equipment. The SAS would assist with their training. Food was quite scarce and there were often days where only cheese and bread were available. It's fair to say that the lads were starving most of the time.

A Sqn were located about a km away to the southeast but still deep within the Montsauche woods. They would call their camp "Maquis Anglais"! The tracks have not changed since 1944



A Sqn SAS Ammo Dump in Quarry.



Ambush positions in woods to left. Convoy ambushed on full length of this road.

but there has been a lot of tree felling. Sadly, the A Sqn woods have all been felled but there is an information board that explains their presence. However, all the ammunition was secured across the track in a very small quarry. Again, geographical evidence never changes and the quarry is very easy to identify and provides an excellent stop for a brew and baguette.

Any local intelligence on the German's movements would soon be fed back to the Maquis and then onto the SAS. On the 24th June, local intelligence delivered the news that the Germans were located in the village of Montsauche. They were not expected to stay there too long before they departed to the main garrison town of Chateau Chinon some 20km to the south west.

The Maquis were to send about 15 of their men to ambush the Germans on their drive south. An ideal ambush position was soon identified and orders given (in French) by Col Dubois using the end of a pencil and an old envelope. It was decided to not throw everyone at this ambush. It must be remembered that not all of A Sqn were located within the Montsauche woods at the Maquis Anglais site. As far as is understood, the following members of A Sqn were involved in the

ambush; Capt Alex Muirhead, Lt Johnny Cooper, Lt Ian Wellsted, Sgt Zelic, Sgt 'Nobby' Noble, Cpl 'Silvo' Sylvester and Tpr Middleton.

The enemy convoy that would be departing Montsauche would be practicing their own 'ambush drills' rather ironically. It was thought to consist of two large lorries, a number of small cars and a motorcycle. The site that was identified for the ambush was perfect. The vehicles would emerge out of the woods and onto a slow inclined hill. To the west of the long straight road was the Montsauche woods – which provided excellent cover and well within range for all weapons. There was 500m of clear straight road before the ambush site, which provided excellent views of the convoy. Both the Maquis and SAS were in position by 6pm and camouflaged well within the woods all on the western side of the road. The SAS were given the head of the convoy as their responsibility while the Maquis dealt with the rear.

Sat side by side to cover the head of the convoy with the two Brens, were Johnny Cooper, Sgt Zelic and Nobby Noble and Tpr Middleton. To ensure the motorcycle outriders riding at the head of the convoy did not go onto Chateau Chinon and raise the alarm,



Google Earth image of the SAS camp and ambush site.

Ian Wellsted and Silvo were placed around the corner of the road and out of sight from the main convoy/ambush site. They had strung wires out across the road between trees at handlebar height. As soon as the lead truck went past a pile of logs, and with the motorcycles out of sight, the Maquis would lob their plastic Gammon Bombs to signal the start of the ambush.

The news came through that the convoy had departed – everyone was in position and now it was just a case of waiting. Morale was good and now it was time for payback.

Just before 10pm, the motorcyclist appeared on the long, slow incline. Then the convoy of vehicles appeared one by one and they too, started the drive up the hill in low gear. For Ian and Silvo, they could only rely on their ears for the sound of vehicles approaching. The lead vehicle approached the pile of the logs and immediately, several of the Maquis members lobbed their bombs to devastating effect.

This initial explosion triggered the ambush. Ian and Silvo never got to see their motorcyclist – as soon as the truck went up, he turned around and then sped back to Montsauche.

The relative quiet of the countryside soon erupted into total chaos. The Brens opened up along with various small arms from the eastern edge of the woods. The Germans, along with numerous Grey Russians (Russian Army PoWs that chose to fight with the Germans), spilled out of the back of the lorries and tried to return fire. The Brens were very effective and after a short time, there was only sporadic fire returning from the hedgerows. The vehicles were well spaced out but as soon as an additional lorry appeared on the corner half way up the hill, it too was engaged. Ian and Silvo returned to the main ambush position to join in the activity. Once the initial threat had passed, both the Maquis and SAS moved closer in to the vehicles and engaged any targets at quite a close range.

When all the firing had died down, 30+ German/Grey Russians were killed, a small number of injured taken prisoner, four trucks and a number of cars were destroyed. The motorcyclist was caught by the French not too far away from the ambush site. Sadly, one member of the Maquis was KIA. All weapons were seized and the Maquis helped themselves to decent footwear that was no longer required. The Germans had been totally caught out.

But whilst this may have been a huge success to the Maquis and SAS – the Germans vented their anger at the local population. The village of Montsauche was hit hard, about 13 members of the village – including the local Mayor, were all piled into the church and then burnt to death. For each and every successful ambush, a local village was visited by the Germans. Their cowardly attacks on innocent villagers would only serve to increase the Maquis/SAS aggression behind every ambush.

At the centre of this ambush site and right next to the main road – is an information board dedicated to the Maquis and SAS. It gives clear details of what happened and when.

Not far from this ambush site and very close to the Maquis Bernard/SAS camp – is the site of the Maquis

Bernard Cemetery. It is a beautiful cemetery again, located within the woods. It contains 21 known members of the local Maquis, one unknown Maquis member, seven RAF aircrew who crashed nearby on 11th Aug 1944. Towards the rear of the cemetery are the ashes of Frederick ‘Chalky’ White DCM MM, Alexander Desmond Muirhead MC, the Very Reverend Fraser McLuskey MC and Arthur ‘Chippy’ Wood. Those that have visited this cemetery, I am sure would agree that it is one of the most peaceful and beautiful cemeteries to be found.

The entire walk over this area takes about 5 hours with time to explore through the woods. The ground is relatively flat and easy going. There are plenty of parking opportunities and it is possible to drive quite close to the cemetery. Indeed, there are many walks and places to visit in this area that will take you over the ground where both the SAS and Maquis fought on Op Houndsworth. We stayed for a week and covered most of the sites.

If any members are keen to visit the area and need GPS coordinates and further details, please do not hesitate to get in touch via the Secretary.



My son Harry, laying a cross in the Maquis Bernard Cemetery.

# MILITARY HISTORY PRESENTATIONS OR 'ANOTHER STRING TO OUR BOWS'

Allan Wood

**In August 2014 I took a deep breath and gave up my second career in teaching to see if I could make a go of being a working Battlefield Guide. Having guided many tours over some ten years I reasoned that if I could guide over fifteen tours a year that would keep me busy enough and so justify my decision. For the record, I guided plenty more than that but what I did not reckon on was an additional activity once people found out what I was doing. The activity I am referring to is speaking on Military History. Many of us, I know, deliver presentations but those of us who do not should perhaps consider doing so. What follows, I hope, is both encouragement to have a go plus some tips I have learned in the process of giving many talks.**

I have now had the privilege to talk about Military History to a wide variety of groups and organisations. I have spoken on subjects and to audiences that have varied from telling the story of one of my county's Yeomanry battles to a local village lunch group to an overview of the Middle East Campaign 1940 to 1942 to an audience that included a Prince of the Realm and nine serving or retired generals with over 20 'stars'. I have enjoyed every talk whoever the group and each is a different experience and challenge. Every talk I have prepared I have learned something, entirely new subjects in some cases. Sometimes you may have months to prepare but then there are those that come from 'left field'. These requests can arrive in your inbox, often from someone you have given talks for previously because people know what you can do with just hours to prepare! Whilst this may be a challenge, preparing and delivering under pressure can also be very rewarding. Thank heaven for that well-known PC presentation application but only up to a 'point'. More about this later. But firstly, I would like to give my thoughts on why I believe giving presentations on Military History is an important additional aspect of being a Battlefield Guide.

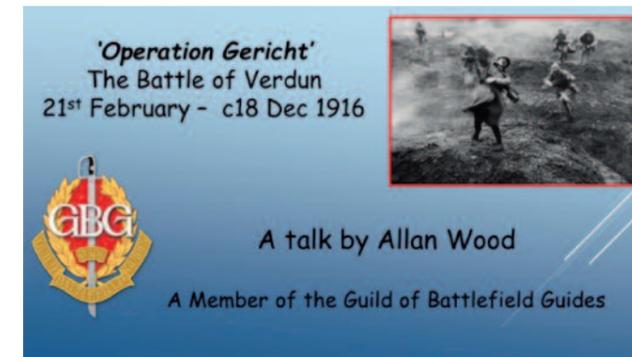
I was told at the end of my Assignment 1 that as guides we are story tellers. Our craft is to tell stories on the battlefields for those who are fortunate to be with us but what of those who cannot travel to the battlefields? I would suggest that telling those same stories to people who cannot visit the battlefields is as much our purpose as leading tours on the ground. Perhaps giving talks to the wider public may even encourage some of them to take the next step and go on a tour. I believe it is in our interest as Battlefield Guides to deliver such talks and importantly be effective at presenting them. What follows are just a few of my humble thoughts and suggestions that might help or indeed encourage others to deliver talks on Military History. You might be surprised

who asks you to give a talk once you start.

The easiest thing to say now would be that we should all be good at giving presentations, for after all, is that not what we do on the battlefield? Perhaps it is not as simple as that. The reason I say this is because in most cases on a tour, even a short one, you will have more than an hour, or hour and a half to tell your story. On the ground you will have the battlefield or memorial there to help you tell that story. For a talk in a hall, library or even a tent you are limited by what pictures, maps or other images you can put into the presentation you have prepared. One tip is to try, as you would on a tour, to engage the audience by starting with something they are familiar with. An example of this could be, if you were talking about Verdun, unfamiliar to many, start with something on the British Sector of the Western Front such as one of the CWGC Memorials. This allows the audience to have something they can relate to before moving onto new information.

Before that however, once you have a subject for your talk, think carefully about the content of your presentation. Whilst this may seem blindingly obvious I have attended talks expecting to hear about a specific battle only for the speaker to talk for most of the time about the wider campaign in which the battle was fought leaving almost no time for the battle itself. All very interesting but not what the audience expected. Context is one thing but not touching the subject of your talk until three-quarters of the way through is something you should try to avoid. The title slide is also the one to tell everyone who you are and the opportunity to tell them that you are a Member of the Guild of Battlefield Guides. That matters in my book! Having said avoiding getting away from the specific subject, it is important for the audience to at least know where a battle might have happened, so maps are very important.

Maps can quickly allow you to set the context of a battle within the campaign it was fought. Be careful not to over complicate a map with too many arrows,



circles and other overlays as these can detract from the 'slide' you are showing. There is a fine line between key information and a map that confuses audiences. Often the perplexed look in the audience you are delivering a talk to will be the sign you have overdone this aspect of the presentation. Despite this danger I believe that maps are an essential part of almost any talk about Military History.

The 'slides'. Now of course, we rarely mean slides that we slot in and out of a carousel on a projector but those we produce as part of a presentation system on our laptops or tablets. These are easily edited, can be of all colours and designs. But a warning here - too colourful or too complicated a design will quickly detract from your presentation. The slides are not just there for your audience, they are there to help you. Another word of caution. The slides should be your prompts not your 'script'. Just as on the battlefields you must know your subject and not be 'reading' the slide. You would rarely read your notes on a battlefield word for word. The slides, as your notes, are there to help. Many, if not most of us will have been to presentations where the speaker reads exactly what is on the screen. Nothing is more likely to quickly switch off your audience. That is one example of poor use of the technology available but equally you can overdo the technical wizardry.

Those familiar with the various presentation systems will know that there are an enormous number of ways of simply putting a photograph or other information onto a screen. Not only can you have a map or photograph appear in a huge variety of ways, fade in, fly in from almost any angle on the slide, appear as a star or disappear and reappear are just some. Plus, you can add sound effects and much more. The latter can be imported or already on the system you are using. Using the technology to bring pictures and captions onto a slide in the right order with perhaps a simple sound effect is one thing. But having photographs and captions spinning all over the place and lengthy sound effects downloaded from the Net or wherever can quickly detract from what you are talking about. Often the principle of 'Keeping It Simple Stupid' is the one to adhere to. The more technology that you use the chances that more could go wrong. If technological factors start to go awry your 'time' suddenly starts slipping away and you

could find yourself under real pressure to fit everything into the time you have been allocated.

Time is important. This is another skill that we can transfer from guiding. We must keep to timings on tours for all manner of reasons. The same applies when giving talks. Not least you may be in a warm room on an evening and if you talk for too long you will have some of the audience losing interest. You will soon notice if their eyes start closing! Try to talk with good lighting, although this may not be possible if your screen cannot be seen unless it is dark. Few people volunteer to give talks on subjects they do not like or enjoy talking about, but on occasions you may find yourself following somebody else whose delivery skills are perhaps less well developed as your own. The challenge is then to re-engage the audience with your skill, knowledge and enthusiasm. Success in this situation can be enormously rewarding. We are, if nothing else, enthusiastic about Military History. That enthusiasm for which we are often commended during tours should be evident in our talks. My view is that if I cannot be on the battlefield then the next best thing is talking about battles!

This article has been in no way intended to teach anybody's grandmother to 'suck eggs'. I know that many Guides deliver talks on Military History on a regular basis. The Guild series of talks at the Union Jack Club just one example of this. Nor is this article about putting people off giving talks. I hope the opposite. These are just some simple tips to help anyone who is considering starting to give talks. I enjoy giving talks and have met some amazing people through doing this. To name one, at a village lunch club talk I met a Holocaust survivor! There is no little satisfaction from the immediate feedback that the audience have learned something new, even if the subject is one of the more well-known battles. Maybe particularly so in these cases! But I think one of the most important reasons for Battlefield Guides giving talks is what you learn whilst preparing a presentation, especially if the subject of your talk is something you are not so familiar with.

With those thoughts in mind, if you are thinking about giving talks then my advice is not to wait, give it go. Who knows, you may even have people ask you to take them on a tour to the places you have just told them about and result in even more time on the battlefields!

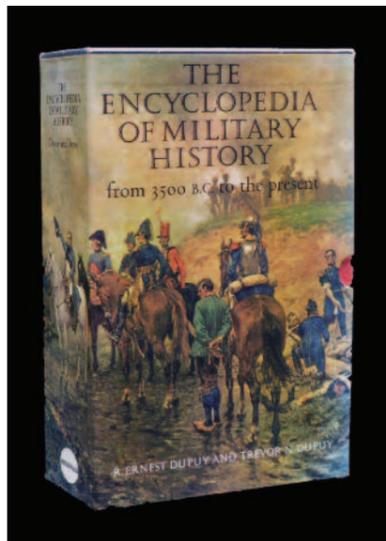


# THE GENESIS OF MODERN BATTLEFIELD TOURING PART TWO

Tonie & Valmai Holt

## Nothing to Copy

In putting together this Genesis of modern Battlefield Touring we have delved into spidered corners, damp packets of old photos taken on cameras that used 'film' (look it up!) and those of our 'Tour Books' that we still have. It has surprised us how little we remembered of those early days and how we managed to learn\*\* as we went along. There was nothing to copy so we were free to create.



Dupuy & Dupuy, the 'Must-Have' Military History book.

It had all started mid 1970s when we began to arrange visits to UK military sites and events (RAF bases, military museums etc), for members of Purnell's Military Book Club, which we did for a couple of years before we began the battlefield tours. Clearly the people who came on the visits (just one coach per trip)

were firmly interested in 'war' (though in many different ways) and very soon they were asking for visits to the areas that they were reading about.

By 1980, following suggestions by our travellers, we had added to our simple 'just across the Channel' Western Front coach tours (Ypres, Vimy, Somme, Normandy), the battles of Verdun, the Bulge and Arnhem plus more specialist destinations such as German Atlantic Wall defences at Battery Todt and the V2 bunker at Eperlecques. We even flew to Munich to study the rise of National Socialism, a subject we had written about in our book 'Germany Awake'.

At about that time air travel was becoming a highly competitive business and air lines were looking to concentrate on finding specialised markets as target customers. British Airways created the Arts

and Adventure Club and somehow (can't remember how) we met the chap who was running it and suggested a very new specialised market that could be included – 'Military Tours'. Surprisingly he agreed, and we were both appointed 'Military Tours Consultants'. He wanted something as soon as possible that promoted BA American services and in 1980 we ran our first tour to the USA, to the battlefields of the American Civil War (more of that in future articles) a subject that Tonie had studied at Staff College.

But for another American tour we felt we needed a hook - so we rushed to Dupuy and Dupuy. Who?

## Any Anniversaries?

Over the years we have studied many wars and battles, and of course have referred to countless books, including encyclopedias, and in our opinion the one that every battlefield tour guide should have on their shelves is that by father and son, Dupuy and Dupuy, first published in 1970 by Macdonald. It covers in concise forensic detail all significant combats from 3500 BC to 1965 and most of all has full indexes of both Wars and Battles, using 1,400 pages to do so. How detailed is it? Well, le Cateau (not well up in the hierarchy of world battles), is included – plus a sketch of the German Advance to the Marne. The second edition, which covers the



A pre 'Major & Mrs ...' business card.



A panoramic view of the battlefield – the actual field of 1781. Note the smoke from the cannons of which there were many.

Iran-Iraq war and the Falklands, is available on Amazon, and is rather expensive, but we can assure you that it is worth every penny whatever your specialisation.

With our joint background in marketing, we looked in Dupuy for an Anniversary upon which we could hang a hook that would give potential travellers a reason to get onto a BA flight to America. We found one – the 200th Anniversary of the battle of Yorktown. But Yorktown? It rang a muffled bell, and Dupuy cleared it up completely. The American Revolution and the defeat of the British! How truly British it would be to go to an American Celebration of our defeat. So we went.

## Yorktown 1781 & 1981

Here, courtesy of the Dupuys, is a little re-fresher on Yorktown for those whose neurons do not instantly offer the details:

The British forces in Virginia, commanded by Cornwallis, were besieged at Yorktown by the Americans under Washington, and when it became clear to Cornwallis that, despite his formidable defensive redoubts, he would be overwhelmed, he negotiated a surrender – over two days and in writing!



A drum-head hanging, done exactly by the book with drums and priest.

It was on this 1981 trip that we discovered 're-enactors' (now well-known here, but in the UK at that time probably only the Sealed Knot had any public presence – an organisation founded by Brigadier Peter Young, one of the few 3D soldiers, whom we later accompanied to the first Dieppe Anniversary). On this 200th Anniversary there were more than a thousand on the original battlefield, all in costume representing both the British and the American forces – though none of the 'British' were actually British! There were cannon, cavalry, camp followers and 'soldiers' from every state as well as a sprinkling of Indians and Frontiersmen, re-enacting disciplined actions over four days. It had taken the National Parks Service, which looks after American battlefields, two years to plan. In fact, as far as we could see, our small group of around 20 people (including Rose Coombs) were the only Brits there at all.

The dedication to the accuracy of costume and tactics, weapons and commands, was remarkable and would have been admired by the Khaki Chums. They even staged the hanging of a deserter which was rehearsed over the four days – we are pleased to say that it was with the same chap each time! It was such an extraordinary event that we hope that it justifies the use of our poor picture.

We also learned how to 'brown bag' which is being so carefully carried out here by Valmai on the slope of one of the Redoubts. As most will know, the Americans are particularly sensitive about where and when alcohol can be consumed (well they were in 1981 and probably still are) but our American friends pointed out to us that many of the spectators were carrying brown bags – those strong brown paper bags used by American supermarkets. We had assumed that they contained the makings of a picnic lunch – not necessarily so it was explained, and in any case most would hide some form of alcohol, since drinking alcohol in the area was not allowed. The particular skill that allowed one to have a tippie during the long day was to open the alcohol inside the bag, to pour the drink into a container inside the bag and then to quaff. A skill that all our party developed remarkably quickly.



Superb brown bagging.

## The President and the American Spirit

On the fourth and final day President Reagan arrived in one of four limos, but for security no-one knew which one! A search on Google for the 200th Anniversary brings up a number of interesting sites including a fuzzy U Tube of the 225th Anniversary in 2006 which gives the flavour of the event. See [www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6TiooNqPmE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6TiooNqPmE) for the former.

On that last day the true spirit of American individualism was perfectly displayed but in a gentle way. During the years of what was still Napoleonic

warfare, at the surrender of one side to another it was customary to allow the defeated troops to march out between lines of their conquerors while still bearing their arms, but before the formal surrender they were supposed to lay them down. Once that was done it had been usual to allow the defeated to march out between lines of their enemy's but behind their band playing their own music. Washington commanded otherwise. He refused to allow the British to carry arms or to play their own choice of music and insisted that they played 'The World Turned Upside Down', which on the occasion itself was the ultimate humiliation, but on the 200th the American 'Brits' refused to lay down their arms! Consternation all around. Do listen to [www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-N0ckzU1mI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-N0ckzU1mI) which is how the tune probably sounded in 1781.

A marvellous evocation of the Americans' route to independence has been done by Ronald Reagan on a 12 inch vinyl originally issued by Decca in 1967, DL7-4943. It can be found for about £10 and we recommend it highly. We made much use of what one might call 'non-military' material throughout all of our tours which we will expand upon in another article.

The US media were astonished by our presence and we were invited to appear on television when half of the studio crew turned up dressed as Redcoats. It seemed that, as over here, re-enactors have a predilection for the enemy's uniform.

## Surprise and early Lessons

Here we must flash back to our beginnings, when just the two of us ran the whole business from the dining table in our small house in Edgware – the research, the detailed planning of the tours, the recess, the travel arrangements, the bookings, the PR, the conducting of the tours ...

The first group battlefield tour that we conducted was in 1977 to Ypres via the Somme to Normandy - from which we learned a huge lesson - that if one was trying to create a contemporary 'time-travel' atmosphere it was unwise to 'mix wars'. We also learned that there was a strong demand for such tours. It was a complete surprise to us and we realised that if we were to meet that demand (after all no-one else was around that could do it) we had to start running things as a business, and so *Major and Mrs Holts Battlefield Tours* was born.

A major sea change started when we moved to our house in Woodnesborough near Sandwich. It had been a pub and soon we converted the old stable into a tiny office. As we started to expand we took on one lady assistant, Renee, who typed letters and took bookings. But help was at hand in the forms of Col Piers Storie-Pugh in 1981 (son of the famous Colditz escapee, Col Peter Storie-Pugh) and Lt-Col Mike



Some of the very early team at the Golden Key circa 1984.

Martin (who commanded the Hampshires), who joined in 1982. Piers who was then a TA officer joined part-time, Mike, with his wife Pat, became our first full time guides – note that BOTH of the pair took an active part in the guiding. We had conducted all of our tours together and shared the commentaries, hence Major and Mrs Holt's Battlefield Tours (what it says on the tin), and that format was followed by Mike and Pat.

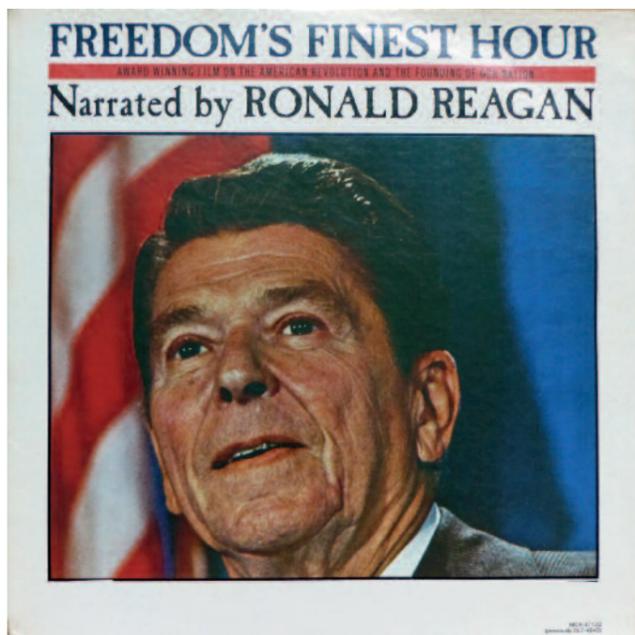
The next major step was to move to the quaint Golden Key building in Sandwich, with plenty of space to expand. The Martins were joined by other ex-service couples – Lt-Col Howard and Jill Holroyd, Capt Paul and Barbara Snook and former RM Colonel David Storrie and his wife Linda. No 'professional' travel people were involved at all. There were no Tour Managers. And we did all of our training in-house both of husbands and wives.

There was plenty to train for because over the parapet ahead were at least two more major anniversaries – the 40th of D-Day and the 125th of Gettysburg; the taking over of the RBL Pilgrimages; working closely with the CWGC and the IWM; developing tours for local newspapers, regimental associations, student groups ... with some demanding life lessons and challenges to come. It makes us feel tired even now to think about it.

## Yorktown Re-Enactment 1981



This is a small collection of many pictures that we took. The event was extraordinary and the link to the 225th Anniversary leads you to these images in motion. It is some time ago and we no longer have our notes etc from then so we cannot tell you which regiments are in the frame – maybe another Member can? Do look into the details of the photos – notice the wives and children, who lived on the battlefield in tents and in costume for the whole time. No-one was allowed in the re-enactment area in modern clothes. You can see the drummer boys, the discipline of the marching soldiers – it was some event!



Cover of Ronald Reagan's record.

# WITH OLYMPIANS ON THE SOMME

David Wilson

In January 2017 I received an out of the blue phone call from a fellow asking if I would like to be a member of a team writing the biography of Cecil Healy, one of Australia's greatest, but probably least known sportsmen. The caller was one John Devitt and his colleague was author Larry Writer. John had been given my name by a member of the Healy family whom I had met through my involvement in writing "Fighting Nineteenth" the history of the 19th Battalion AIF, published in 2011. I had written about Healy in the book, as he was serving with the 19th when he was killed in the opening phase of the Battle of Mont St Quentin. Healy is the only Australian Olympic champion to be killed in in any war.

The names of both the project's principals were vaguely familiar, so I Googled them to find out more. John Devitt is none other than an Olympic swimming champ – gold and silver medals at the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games; gold and bronze at the 1960 Rome Games, plus three gold at the 1958 Empire & Commonwealth Games in Cardiff. Larry Writer is a long-standing author on Australian sport, history and crime, having written or contributed chapters to more than twenty books of those genres. He is the author of "Dangerous Games" (2015) the story of the thirty-three Australian athletes who witnessed Adolf Hitler's Nazi-inspired 1936 Berlin Olympic Games. Larry had interviewed all the surviving members of that team to record their experiences.

John Devitt's vision is to give Cecil Healy the overdue recognition he deserves, not just as an Olympic swimming icon, but for the various other sporting activities with which he was associated, including surf life-saving, boxing and rowing.

They were seeking my input on Cecil Healy's military service in the AIF between 1915 and 1918. We met several times to plot out a battlefield tour of the Somme to trace Healy's last weeks and the place where he was killed – ground over which I had walked on several previous tours. It was too good an



opportunity to miss. The Somme visit would form the middle section of a three-stage European research tour to trace various aspects of Healy's life. Firstly, Larry, John and his daughter Carmel would go to the UK to visit the Imperial War Museum, the Royal London Hospital and then the WW1 archives of Trinity College at Cambridge, which included the officer cadets' journal 'Blunderbuss' for the 1917-18 period. In the second stage, I joined them as the battlefield guide to follow the route between Amiens and Mont St Quentin above Péronne, covering the time Healy served as a platoon commander in the 19th Battalion. In the third stage, the team went to Lausanne in Switzerland to see Healy's records at the Olympic Museum and Study Centre.

Without stealing any of the book's thunder, it is useful to have a very brief history of Healy's military service. Cecil Patrick Healy was born in 1881 and enlisted into the Army Service Corps of the AIF on 15 September 1915. Given his maturity and business experience as a commercial traveller, he was immediately appointed as a CQMS. Healy worked as both a CQMS and then RQMS in the Australian 2nd Division Base Depots in Egypt and then at Etaples and Le Havre in France. He told his colleagues he wanted to serve in the front line, so he applied for and attended an officer commissioning course at Cambridge, commencing in December 1917. While at Cambridge he is known to have participated in swimming competitions, boxing and rowing. But Cecil's enduring legend from his time at Trinity College was the daily early morning swims in the icy Cam River. This soon attracted the attention of curious fellow cadets and staff who would rise early and, snug in their British 'warms', trek up and down the riverbank to encourage him to up the pace. Sadly, though, all the onlookers declined the invitation to join him in this endeavour.

Cecil completed his course in May 1918 and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the AIF on 1 June 1918. He proceeded to France and joined the 19th Battalion at Rivery, Amiens at the end of June. In July and August he attended the infantry officers' basic course at Rue in Northern France, re-joining the battalion on 17 August. 2Lt Cecil Healy was killed in action by machine-gun fire early on the morning of 29 August 1918. He was leading his platoon from 'C' Company against German delaying positions near Ticker Copse and Sword Wood during the advance to the Somme River. Three of his men were killed in the same engagement and all four were buried together in the field where they fell. They now rest side by side in the Assevillers New British Cemetery, about 10 km west of Péronne.

Our tour in September 2017 lasted five days which I divided into two blocks which we loosely called "AIF Background" sites and "Healy Trail" sites. The weather was generally kind to us, although on several occasions we experienced in Australian terms Melbourne weather, i.e. four seasons in a day. The Background visits included the Australian National Memorial near Villers-Bretonneux, Hangard Wood, the Australian Corps Memorial at Le Hamel, Mont St Quentin and various sites in Pozières, including the not-to-be-missed experience of Tommy's Café and Trench Museum in the main street. We also had side visits to Amiens, Thiepval, Lochnagar Crater and the Historial Museum in Péronne.

On the Healy Trail, we were accompanied on the first morning in the field by a journalist and cameraman from the ABC's London bureau who were making a documentary on John and Larry's quest, having filmed them earlier in the UK. This was later to be broadcast in early October on our national current affairs program "7.30" as a seven-minute segment. The camera crew were with us for three stands at the Assevillers cemetery, at Sword Wood

above Biaches where Healy and his men were killed and then at Mont St Quentin for a broader view of the battlefield. On other days we traced the locations of the 19th Battalion's advance towards the Somme from Rivery eastwards through Daours, Corbie, Fouilloy, Morcourt, Chuignolles, Cappy, Eclusier Quarry and then to Frise, following the route towards the Somme and Healy's last fatal engagement.

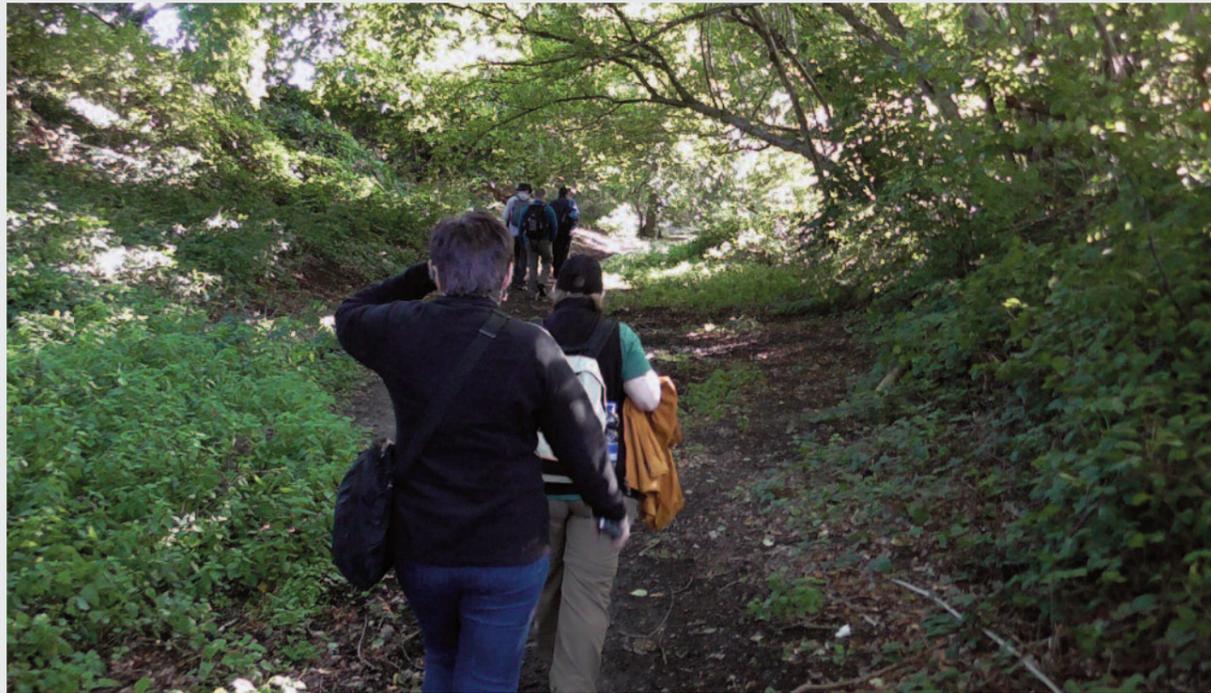
At several points along this route we touched upon the Somme Canal. We know from unit and formation war diaries that Cecil participated in swimming carnivals at three places along the Canal. These were at Rivery, Daours, and Fouilloy – swim meets were an important part of the recreational activities conducted by units when they were out of the front line resting and reorganising. Despite our gentle urgings for John to don his Speedos again for a re-enactment and photo opportunity, he graciously declined.

As I write this, Healy's biography does not yet have an official title. This is yet to be confirmed, but the book will be published by Stoke Hill Press mid-year 2018 in time for the centenary of Cecil's death. It will be a worthy acknowledgement of Cecil's life as a scholar, a gentleman, a sportsman in the true sense of the word and a leader of men. In addition, a triathlon event and memorial service are being planned by French authorities for the first week of September 2018, centred on the village of Assevillers. These will be a sub-set of the larger commemorative activities being organised to celebrate the Liberation of Péronne.

For my part, the opportunities to run a bespoke tour such as this for a small, focused group are few and far between. We had a great tour and I am still involved in providing support to the authors with various details on Cecil Healy's military service. There are already a number of books available on noted sportsmen who have served in war, so I will use the Guild's weekly newsletter to let everyone know when this volume is published.



## FIELDguides



Walking through Decline Copse, Passchendaele, the site of Capt. Jeffries fatal attack.

## EVENTguide 2017-18

- 7 Nov 2017 - Richard Holmes - Lecture - Regional Event (tbc)
- 17-19 Nov 2017 - Operation Michael - CPD Recce Tour
- 1 Dec 2017 - Christmas Lunch - UJC London
- 1-4 Feb 2018 - Annual Conference in Mons & Validation - Tony Smith
- 2-4 Mar 2018 - Core Weekend & Validation in Shropshire - Anthony Rich
- 3 Aug 2018 - Badged Guides Dinner in London - Graeme Cooper
- 7-9 Sept 2018 - SW Regional Event in Amesbury - Paul Oldfield
- 22 Sept 2018 - Validation Event at Middle Wallop - Chris Finn
- 19-21 Oct 2018 - Verdun Recce - Simon Worrall & Francois Wicart
- Nov 2018 - The Richard Holmes Memorial Lecture in London - Tony Smith
- 2-4 Nov 2018 - Battle of Britain Event & Validation in London - Chris Finn
- Dec 2018 - Christmas Lunch in London - Andy Thompson

# GOING FOR THE BADGE

Ewan Carmichael

So, you're wondering whether to embark on the Guild's accreditation process, but are teetering on the brink, weighing up the potential time and effort involved. At first sight the list of assignments looks daunting.



Having just gone through the Guild's badging process, I shared your fears and anxieties. For too long I put off committing myself, something I now regret in hindsight. I think another reason for putting off facing the challenge was fear of failing and embarrassment. Why do I regret that delay? Because the validation team could not have been fairer, coupled with the satisfaction that I have measured myself against a quality standard which I respect.

So here are a few reflections to stiffen your resolve. These are my thoughts and, therefore, rather subjective. It may be that the Chief Validator will choose in future to correct me or amplify my points.

### Thought Number One

'Top Tip': Answer the Question! As a very experienced veteran badged guide once said to me about an assignment on which he had been referred, 'I gave the answer I wanted to give, rather than the one the questioners were looking for'. The validators have set out the requirements to be met, so read the question and the supporting advice thoroughly. 'Top Tip - ATFQ'!!!

### Thought Number Two

How much Time and Effort is Involved? We're all different in terms of how much time and effort we can devote to the tasks. Some of us have a wealth of material already in the starting blocks. Others will need to do a considerable amount of research. However, to give an impression of my own timeframe, I took just over a year to complete all of the necessary assignments. For each individual assignment, I did my background study and gathered the ingredients. Actually pulling it together would take about one to two weeks, with an average of 3 days of solid writing and editing.

### Thought Number Three

Read the Rules. The rules are clearly set out. Pay particular attention to the 'no brainer pass/refer' criteria: if the assignment states that there is a time or

page limit and you exceed it, you've immediately shot yourself in the foot.

### Thought Number Four

The assignments are all valuable. The assignments are relevant and designed to stretch you, to raise your game. They encourage you to think carefully about the impact you will have on clients. My suggestion would be that, to get the most value out of a task, use it for a genuine tour which you may run in the future. That way, the material you produce has a genuine utility.

### Thought Number Five

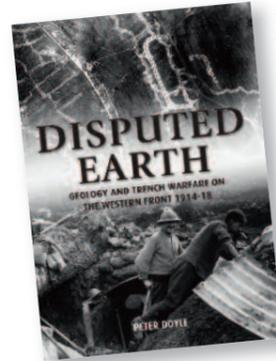
Don't be Content with Tired Old Material. OK, so you've led that walk, or given that talk, a dozen times. Don't take it for granted that your material is good enough. Look at it with fresh eyes, and from the perspective of your clients.

### Thought Number Six

Referral. I thought I was cruising along quite nicely, two thirds of the way through, with three straightforward assignments remaining, when I fell into the trap of ignoring my own advice on Thoughts One and Three. Aaargh – referral on an assignment which should have been a walk-over. In actual fact, I'm really glad I went through this because it also caused me to revisit Thought Five. To the gentlemen who referred me (and you know who you are), many thanks for forcing me out of complacency. Having been referred now makes me value the badge all the more. I look forward to standing for the toast of the Referred Club.

So there you have it. The process is genuinely testing but, to be worthwhile, there has to be quality control. However, it is also certainly achievable and has been hugely satisfying. Thank you to all the validators who give up their valuable time to support this task.

# GUIDEbooks:



## DISPUTED EARTH

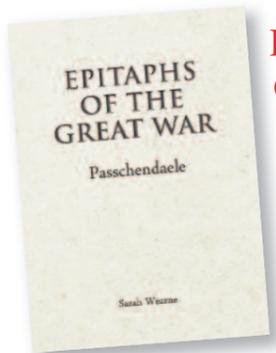
Geology and Trench Warfare on The Western Front 1914-18

By Peter Doyle

Most Battlefield Guides who work on the Western Front can tell you a little about the clay beneath the Ypres Salient or the chalky soil below the Somme.

They can also usually give a good account of the tunnelling and mining operations beneath their chosen battlefield. This excellent book exposes just how rudimentary that narrative is, and broadens the readers understanding of battlefield geology, its effect on the fighting above and below the ground. If you are serious about your WF guiding, this superbly produced book is essential reading.

Published by Uniform Press  
RRP £24.00  
paperback, pp285



## EPITAPHS OF THE GREAT WAR

Passchendaele

By Sarah Wearne

Another in the series produced in association with the CWGC, this new volume is as rich in useful content as the previous Somme edition. The format is ideal for

the Battlefield Guide preparing to go on a tour of the Salient, or equally, when already touring and looking for a vignette at a CWGC cemetery. Each epitaph is supported with biographical information on the individual casualty concerned. Certainly worth adding to your Ypres library.

Published by Unicorn Publishing  
RRP £10.99  
hardback, pp132

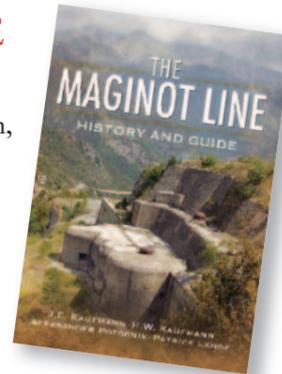
## THE MAGINOT LINE

History and Guide

By J.E. Kaufmann, H.W. Kaufmann, A. Jankovic-Potocnik & P. Lang

The Maginot Line, surely the most ambitious and complex system of static defence ever built? Also, an increasingly popular destination for battlefield tourists. Well, you could do worse than to take this detailed guide along with you if you are planning to go and view the remains of the French line. Although lacking colour images, it is truly packed with detail, maps, photographs and diagrams. There must be other guides out there but I won't be looking for an alternative!

Published by Pen & Sword Ltd  
RRP £16.99  
paperback, pp308

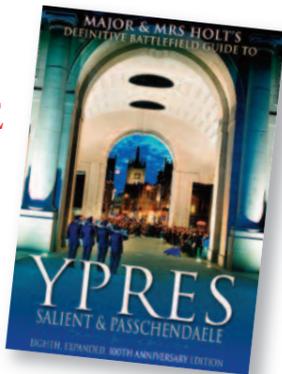


## MAJOR & MRS HOLT'S DEFINITIVE BATTLEFIELD GUIDE TO YPRES SALIENT & PASSCHENDAELE

By Major & Mrs Holt

If imitation is an indication of quality, then we can be sure that the Holt's series of guide books are the bench mark for success. The Holt's format has been copied many times but never equalled. This latest Ypres Salient Guide is described by it's authors as the definitive battlefield guide, it is a description that is difficult to challenge. Forty years of touring experience in the Salient have been distilled into a single volume, add maps, pictures, historical narrative and even GPS coordinates and you have an unrivalled resource for Battlefield Guide and Tourist alike!

Published by Pen & Sword Ltd  
RRP £16.99  
paperback, pp346



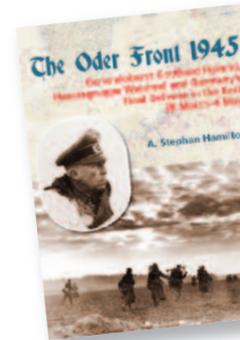
## OBJECTIVE SAINT-LÔ

7 June 1944 – 18 July 1944

By Georges Bernage

UK interest in the US Sector of the Normandy campaign continue to increase as do the number of tours going beyond the American beaches and into the bocage. This new book narrates the experiences of the US 29th Division through 42 days of fighting centered on Saint-Lo. Lavishly illustrated with sketch maps, then and now images and numerous personal accounts from US and German sources, this is an excellent campaign overview, ideal for tour planning.

Published by Pen & Sword  
RRP £25.00  
hardback, pp232



## THE ODER FRONT 1945

Generaloberst Gotthard Heinrici, Heeresgruppe Weichsel and Germany's Final Defense in the East 20 March-4 May

By A. Stephen Hamilton

Most Battlefield Guides spend a significant amount of their time researching their subject in great depth - pulling together a mix of maps, War Diary entries, personal accounts and images. Well, if you are about to do that for a tour of the 1945 Oder Front, look no further than this excellent volume. Its all here in one place in a format ideally suited to building a tour. Recommended!

Published by Helion  
RRP £45.00  
paperback, pp334 (large pages)

## INSTRUMENTS OF BATTLE

The Fighting Drummers & Buglers of the British Army from the Late 17th Century to the Present Day

By James Tanner

We all think we know a little about drummers and buglers and their role in our own favoured period of history, but how much of that knowledge is based on fact? This book from our own Jim Tanner links all those periods together, broadens the readers overall understanding of the changing role of the drum and bugle in barracks, and on the battlefield. It also challenges a few myths along the way, recommended reading for the multi-period Guides among us.

Published by Casemate  
RRP £25.00 (hardback)  
pp366



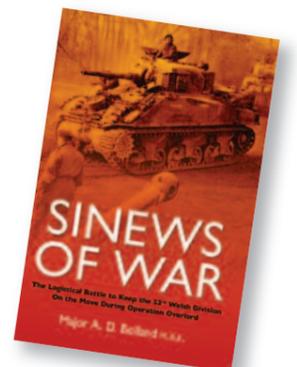
## SINEWS OF WAR

The Logistical Battle to Keep the 53rd Welsh Division On the Move During Operation Overlord

By Major A D Bolland MBE

Essentially a summary of the division's Post Operational Report for operations in 1944, this compact book was originally published in 1946. Originally produced as a record of the Logistic Support that sustained the division it is packed with raw data on every facet of that support, mail, casualties, pay and ammunition expended to name but a few. In guiding terms, this is gold dust for the WW2.

Published by Pen & Sword  
RRP £9.99  
paperback, pp97



# 10 Questions:

Name: Ewan Carmichael

Age: 57

Nationality: British

Home Location: SE London

Tour Company: open to persuasion

Validating: Accredited – Badge No. 84



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

- 1. How long have you been interested in battlefields and what was it that initially attracted your interest?** I became interested in soldiers when I was about six - I was given a box of Britain's Swoppet American War of Independence British Grenadiers. Later, my father took me to see the film 'Waterloo' and I was hooked. Battlefields then became more realistic for me when, at the age of about 12, I learned that there had been a minor Covenanter skirmish about 5 miles from my house. I walked it. The one account I found of it was thin so, while I tried to soak up the atmosphere, it wasn't possible to relate troops to terrain.
- 2. Have any experiences stood out?** Hearing some of the 'greats' on top form. Richard Holmes' whimsical turn of phrase always tickled me: 'coracles of Serbs paddling up the Thames to blow up Parliament'; 'Frenchmen in rather jaunty kepis' etc. also love what a restaurateur might describe as the 'terroir' of a battlefield – not just the history and the ground, but the local food and drink, the architecture and so forth.
- 3. What do you enjoy the most about battlefield guiding?** I enjoy the chance to raise an audience's game, particularly if they've been worn down by what I call the 'Michael Morpurgo view of war'. If, at the end of a tour, my audience understands what was at stake, and starts thinking about Time and Space, I am happy.
- 4. What is your favourite stand, location or battlefield and why?** Minden and Waterloo are particular favourites but they get pipped at the post by Pegasus Bridge. The feat of navigation by NCO pilots was superb.
- 5. Which battlefield would you like to visit in the future?** Ohhh, it would be a toss-up between the Peninsula or Gallipoli. Or perhaps Leuthen. But then again, Sedan is tempting. Monte Cassino? I haven't been to Blenheim yet...
- 6. What have you enjoyed the most about being a member of the Guild?** Most definitely the friendly and supportive tone of the Guild. I have learned lots from other members who have been generous with their time and material.
- 7. If there was a fire and you could only save one battlefield-related book or prop, what would you save and why?** I'm going to cheat a bit here, because I have a small box of antique Napoleonic memorabilia which I would grab. It contains a shako plate, buttons and musket balls. As to books, well it would be impossible to pick just one, so I'd go for one author: George MacDonald Fraser. I love him on soldiering and leadership. If you haven't read his McAuslan trilogy, or 'Quartered Safe Out Here', you've missed something very special.
- 8. What type of group do you think is the most challenging to lead on a tour?** I think all groups bring their own challenges. However, my fellow Guides may recognise the following: the selfish, always late, admin-nightmare; the on another planet, distracted, love-struck teenagers; and the irrepressible, ill-informed 'smart-Alec'. Deep joy!!!
- 9. What's the best tip, story or nugget of information you have been given by a fellow battlefield guide?** Look at your audience to assess their level of engagement. If they appear to be cold, wet and bored they possibly are.
- 10. What is the funniest or most dramatic thing you have seen on tour?** At an hotel near Merville Battery, on the evening before our tour, my group encountered a veteran from 9 PARA with his glamorous new 'niece'. We got him chatting over a few Trou Normands and he agreed to talk to our party at the Battery on the following morning. Madame, clearly unused to not being the centre of attention, withdrew to their room. At about two in the morning, and after many sherbets, when we had all retired to our own rooms, we could hear him pleading to be let in. The next morning, he was on parade at the Battery, immaculate in his Regimental blazer. The lady had been placated somehow (perhaps our bouquet of flowers helped) and his account of the action was truly first class.

## NEWmembers:

New members who have been welcomed to the Guild between August 2017 and the date of publication.

John Andrews  
John Atkinson  
Peter Bryant

Bob Cook  
Crista Drew  
Gareth Glover

Jeremy Higgins  
Dean Hollands  
Tim Kilvert-Jones

Ray Pentland  
Robert Pocock  
Charles Sharman