

Autumn 2019

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# DESPATCHES

the magazine of the International Guild of Battlefield Guides



## IN THIS ISSUE:

Battlefield Echoes

The Battle of Britain - A Tour?

The Battlefield Bike Ride 2019

D Day 75 - A Guide's Perspective

## PLUS

Meet Our New President

## AND

Female Field Guides

# FIELDguides

Cover image: The Passchendaele Memorial Park has a magnificent centre piece in the shape of a British 8 inch Howitzer inevitably triggering debate about the preservation and maintenance of historical artefacts like this in an outdoor environment. (Picture MP)



Eugenie Brooks demonstrating her ability to cross age gaps at Pegasus Bridge, linking a group of WW2 Veterans to a group of curious UK Students.



Accredited Member and renowned Literature Guide, Viv Whelpton at the grave of Welsh Bard, Hedd Wynn in the Ypres Salient. (Picture Battle Honours)

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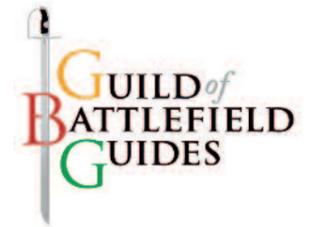
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Material for publication in the Spring edition of Despatches must be with the Editor no later than 1st January 2020.

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

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Time spent on reconnaissance...  
seldom wasted.  
Mike Sheil out and about.

# OPENINGshot:

or, WHAT HAVE THE ROMANS EVER DONE FOR US?

Welcome fellow members and Guild Partners to the Autumn 2019 edition of your magazine, 'Despatches'. As I completed this issue the feeding frenzy of Arnhem 75 was finally receding into our metaphoric rear-view mirror and as Jon Snow would say, 'Winter is Coming'. Time to hibernate, review marketing plans, research for Dunkirk 80 or the Battle of Britain...or even get validating!

This is a longer than usual opening shot from me, as an organisation we have taken some flak on Social Media about our ethos, professionalism and our demographics. Rather like real flak, much of it is noisy, ineffective and often wildly inaccurate. In fact, it is more for the morale of the person blasting away and the reassurance of those cocooned in the same Echo Chamber than to actually hit the target of the perpetrator's bile. That said we cannot allow ourselves to be an easy nor passive target, if we do not correct false accusation robustly, the fake news will be accepted as truth. There is a large uninformed audience out there beyond our industry who have no idea who we the GBG are, or what our aims and values actually are.

With this in mind I have a few things to say and I hope that you will all 'rally to the call' and that we can collectively counter the corrosive sniping of what is actually a small but vocal minority who are also members of the Battlefield Guiding community to which we all enjoy belonging. I have challenged some individuals who regularly trot out the tired out perennial accusations about our membership demographics and even the way a few of our members like to dress. The irony is of course that the same individuals purport to be liberal in their mindset... and yet, single out individuals that wear a certain colour of trousers or a particular style of jacket. This hackneyed and jaundiced view of the GBG as an all-military and all male club for ex-Army Officers is not just discriminative against a person of that background, it is also wildly inaccurate. The ratio of civilian members to military is heavily in favour of the former, when the facts are pointed out to our accusers, they are ignored as inconvenient. We must however continue to do all that we can to challenge those that snipe and attempt to undermine us as a group. We can all do this politely and with restraint, in the end the fact is that our numbers are rising, and we are growing stronger as a collective voice. The ultimate irony of this particular clique's view is that they consistently talk affectionately about 'The Boys' or 'The Lads' when referring to the soldiers of their chosen period of interest...and yet are actively gunning for those with arguably the closest affinity to 'The Lads', ex-military guides!

The other equally serious charge levelled against us is that of being a misogynous organisation with few female members. Take a look through the pages of this issue and you will see just some of our female members working on the battlefields, writing military history and also featured as our Ten Questions Subject. When you have a moment, take a look at the websites of the leading Tour Operators and do your own demographic survey, white Anglo-Saxon Males are certainly to the fore. We can always improve but I don't think that we in the GBG are doing too badly in comparison to the wider industry. When all is said and done, military history has been a male dominated sphere

for decades – but that is steadily changing and I think, for the better. The hard fact is that there aren't many of us who are Guides and even fewer are female. We will continue to do our best to encourage more female members to join the GBG and become fully fledged Battlefield Guides.

This is almost a 'What have the Romans ever done for us' moment, there are so many benefits both social and practical to GBG membership. The most obvious is a shared desire to learn and to pool our knowledge and experience for the greater good. We remain a welcoming association of Guides or Aspirant Guides open to all. One of the main supporting columns that underpin our aims is that of Self-Improvement by Validation and Accreditation. Essentially an almost cost-free method of improving your Guiding Skills, no other professional body offers this level of assessment, mentoring and encouragement. Many of our detractors set themselves above any need for assessment by fellow Guides or structured self-improvement, I think that says more about them than us.

I had a call last month from a very happy Freelance Guide who had just saved over £300 UKP on Public Liability Insurance by joining our Group Scheme, adding that to the 50% discount on car parking at Maidstone Services, that individual had saved almost £600 UKP this year already – a very real and tangible benefit to maintaining an Annual GBG Subscription. There are other practical benefits to membership, the ETOA Card scheme can be entered with sponsorship from the GBG, Legal Support, advice and discounts when visiting Museums in the EU are well worth having. In addition, Membership gives us all access to an international network of over 300+ Battlefield Guides, Tour Operators and Academics. We are connected by an array of Social Media channels, our own dedicated magazine, an excellent Website and a useful weekly bulletin. The new system whereby potential clients can contact Accredited Members directly from their respective biography page is working well – another practical reason to validate. There are numerous other positives to GBG membership, I ask you to firstly make use of them, and secondly, defend the GBG by telling people why it is so good.

Finally – I hope to see many of you at the GBG Christmas Lunch in London and our Annual Conference in Maidstone. I am especially looking forward to seeing those of you who have completed validation and are newly Accredited. I hope you will enjoy this issue of Despatches and share it far and wide. Take a look at the Event Guide and think about coming along to meet your fellow members, friendship is one of the greatest attributes of the GBG.

Wherever you all are in the world of Battlefield Touring, I hope you are all enjoying your guiding. Please make it your business to tell people about the benefits of joining the GBG. Whichever battlefields you tread and if you meet a fellow member take the time to say hello and share your knowledge and experience – That is after all, what your GBG is all about!

**Mike Peters**  
Chairman



# BATTLEFIELD ECHOES

John Cotterill

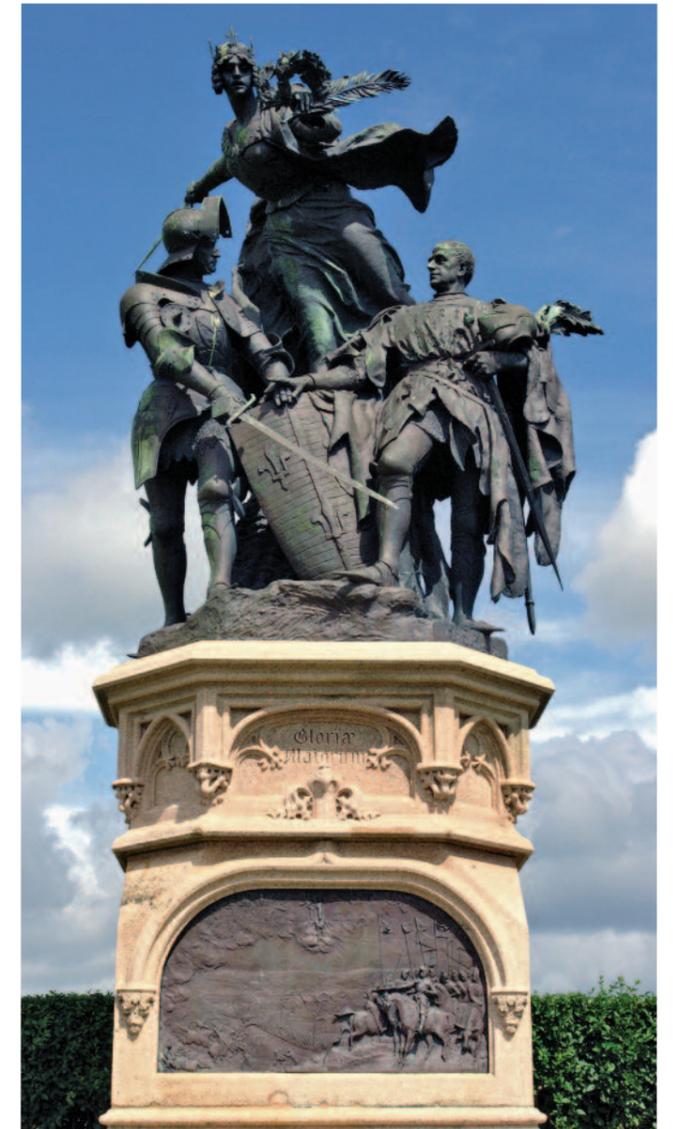
**The more time one spends as a battlefield guide, the more one realises that few battlefields have only been fought over once. Sometimes a memorial sits on a much used route but does not form part of the story that one is on that route to tell.**

One of the best known is the Formigny Memorial, right on the D517, the main approach route to OMAHA Beach from Route Nationale 13 in Normandy. Almost every battlefield tour group visiting OMAHA drives straight past it. Some guides realise its significance and are able to tell their clients that it marks the site of the Battle of Formigny which, on 15 April 1450, spelt the end of British ambitions in Normandy in the Hundred Years War.

Other battlefield echoes are unmarked such as the site of the final defeat of the slave rebellion led by Spartacus on the River Sele in 71 BC. This is the same River Sele that marked the boundary between the British and American landings in the Bay of Salerno 2014 years later. The question for guides is; to what degree is mention of other conflicts, on the battlefield being guided, practical, useful, vital or just plain confusing?

Perhaps the critical factor is the reason why more than one battle, or perhaps many battles, have been fought on or near the same piece of ground (or water Tim!). Research often leads to the conclusion that the reason is normally the strategic significance of the particular piece of ground. It usually falls into one of two categories. The first is a good, or at least practicable, route for an army. This can be a gap between forests or mountains, a bridging or fording site over a river, a high, dry, ridge clear of obstacles or a convenient harbour or landing beach. The second is a political, religious or economic target which has attracted armies looking for plunder, supplies or the seat of power. This second reason explains why there have been twelve Battles of Constantinople between 532 and 1912, ten Battles of Jerusalem between 586 BC and 1967 and nine Battles of Rome between 387 BC and 1849 (or eleven if you count the failed Italian attempt to eject the Germans in 1943 and the Liberation of Rome in 1944).

All guides probably have their favourite examples of multi-battle sites from Charleston in South Carolina (1777, 1780 and 1863) to the Garigliano River in Italy (1503 and 1943). As an example of what is available, I will use the British withdrawal from the River Dyle to Dunkirk in 1940.



*Battle of Formigny Memorial (1450) on the road to OMAHA Beach.*

If one wants to include the German airborne assault on Fort Eben Emael and the Maastricht Bridges on 10 May 1940 as a precursor, the Fort is within a mile of the battlefield of Lauffeld (sometimes spelt Lawfeldt) where a British and Austrian force under Cumberland defeated the French under Marshal Saxe in 1747. In a fiercely

fought battle the village of Val changed hands six times and the 36th Regiment of Foot (later the 2nd Worcesters) acquired the motto 'Firm'. As 2 Infantry Division withdrew from the River Dyle Line on 15-16 May 1940 the following units, whose forbear regiments had fought there in 1815, crossed the field of Waterloo: 1 Royal Scots, 1 Cameron Highlanders, 1 Royal Welch Fusiliers, 12th Lancers and 13/18th Hussars. The VC actions of L/Cpl Harry Nicholls at Poplar Ridge on the River Escaut Line on 21 May 1940 are part of a Grenadier Guards continuum of bravery on that river. 15 miles down the river the 1st Foot Guards fought under Marlborough in his most hazardous battle at Oudenaarde in 1708. 8 miles up the river the 1st Foot Guards defeated the French and Swiss Guards at Fontenoy in 1745. The start point for both attack columns in the Arras counter attack on 21 May 1940 (west column of 7 Royal Tank Regiment and 8 Durham Light Infantry and east column of 4 Royal Tank Regiment and 6 Durham Light Infantry) was Vimy Ridge. It was no less a dominant feature in 1940 than it had been in 1917.

On 27 May 1940, on the La Basse Canal Line, a snapshot of British dispositions forms a roll call of Great War battles: 7 Worcesters were in Givenchy, 2

Dorsets in Festubert, 8 Lancashire Fusiliers at Le Touret, HQ 50 Division were at the Plugstreet Memorial, 2 Foresters were being attacked by the Luftwaffe crossing the Messines Ridge, 3 Grenadier Guards in Plugstreet Wood, 2 Cameronians east of Oostaverne, 2 Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers in Hollebeke and 2 Royal Scots Fusiliers at Verbrandmolen.

The Bergues-Furnes canal line, the evacuation beaches and Dunkirk, where the end of the campaign was played out from 29 May to 4 June 1940, is an area particularly rich in military history. British soldiers have fought on many occasions on this flat, wet littoral during the past 700 years, sometimes for the Crown and sometimes as mercenaries in Flemish, Dutch, French or Spanish pay. At the Battle of the Dunes, fought on the sand dunes behind Malo les Bains in 1658, a French Army that included 6,000 English Parliamentarians defeated a Spanish Army that included 3,000 English, Scots and Irish Royalists. In 1793 a British army besieging Dunkirk were forced to lift their siege and withdraw, abandoning their guns, by Lazare Carnot's French Revolutionary army when Freytag's allied German screen collapsed in the Wormhoudt-Hondeschoote area. Of the units evacuated from Dunkirk and

surrounding beaches in 1940, antecedents of the following units had fought at Dunkirk under the Duke of York in 1793: Grenadier Guards, Coldstream Guards, Hampshire Regiment, Border Regiment and Kings Shropshire Light Infantry. The Grenadiers had also mounted a sacrificial last stand under Don John of Austria at the Battle of the Dunes in 1658.

In the Great War there were 19 allied airfields between Dunkirk and Poperinge and on 6 July 1917 Rawlinson's 4th Army HQ moved into Malo les Bains in preparation for Operation HUSH, the British amphibious attack that was aborted after the Operation STRANDEFEST German spoiling attack at Nieuport four days later. And finally, whilst covering Operation DYNAMO in 1940, one might wish to be aware of the siege of Dunkirk conducted by the allies in 1944-45. The Canadians tried to capture 'Fortress Dunkirk' from 5 September 1944 onwards but their failure led to a decision on 17 September just to mask Dunkirk. The German defences ran through Mardyck, Loon Plage, Spycker, Bergues and Bray Dunes and were commanded by General Wolfgang von Kluge, younger brother of the Field Marshal. Bergues, which played such a pivotal role in 1940, was attacked by the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry on 15 September 1944 and the Queens Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada took Bray Dunes. The 'masking' from September 1944 until the end of the war, against a very active German defence, was mainly carried out by the Free Czech Armoured Brigade and the Free French Forces of the Interior.

I hope my example from the 1940 battlefields may inspire guides to look for 'echoes' on their own battlefields. Here are four of my other favourites, which have allowed me to show clients another aspect of a battlefield, perhaps sparking an unexpected interest in a client or client's partner less focussed on the period under study. It is not known exactly which modern river corresponds with the River Rubicon, famously crossed by Caesar in 49 BC, but it is certainly one of the 'Seven Rivers' that the British army had to assault across in October and November 1944 in their attempts to turn the east flank of the Gothic Line and break out into the Po Valley. The graves of many British and French soldiers, killed during the Siege of Sevastopol from 1854 to 1856 were damaged and destroyed by Manstein's artillery as he besieged Sevastopol in



*The Liberation of Arnhem during Op ANGER in April 1945.*

1941-42 and by Russian artillery when they besieged Sevastopol in 1943-44. Apart from the great Black Sea port itself, the other British Crimean battlefields of the Alma, Inkerman and Balaclava were all much fought over in the Great Patriotic War. As 10th Indian Division pursued the Germans north from Rome up the valley of the River Tiber in the summer of 1944 they traversed the battlefield of Lake Trasimene where Hannibal annihilated a Roman army in 217 BC. The first soldiers killed in Malta in the Second World War were six men of the Royal Malta Artillery, killed by Italian bombs on 11 June 1940 whilst manning positions on the cavalier of Fort St Elmo. They died on the same ramparts defended with such grim persistence by the Knights Hospitaller and their Maltese allies during the previous Great Siege of 1565.

As my last article in 'Despatches' about the (careful) use of fiction by battlefield guides led to fellow Guild members recommending several excellent books, previously unknown to me, I hope these few random shots will lead to similar recommendations of battlefield echoes. Of course, when one is guiding Operation MARKET GARDEN, it is always worth concluding by moving east from the John Frost Bridge to look at the Liberation of Arnhem by the assault river crossing by 49th Infantry Division ('Polar Bears') and 5th Canadian Armoured Brigade in Operation ANGER in April 1945.



*Sevastopol. The Sapoun Heights. Lord Raglans position during the Battle of Balaclava in October 1854 being stormed by Soviet forces in May 1944.*

## GUILDreport: FROM OUR NEW PRESIDENT

It was with great pleasure and gratitude that I accepted the post of Honorary President of the Guild of Battlefield Guides earlier this year. The importance of battlefield study cannot be overemphasised. Very early in my academic career the late Dr Paddy Griffith offered some of his sage wisdom when he said: “No historian of architecture would write about a city without visiting it, and no historian of warfare should write about a battle without visiting the battlefield.” It was excellent advice that I have endeavoured to follow, and to inculcate to my own students.

Battlefield study is an ancient art. The first recorded battlefield tours were carried out by the ancient Greeks, who turned famous battlefields such as Marathon and Thermopylae into places of pilgrimage. The Romans took this further still and organised tours to the battlefields of Alexander the Great, the Punic Wars and many others besides. Although the practice seems to have fallen from favour in the west during the medieval period it was revived during the Renaissance and became incorporated into the ‘Grand Tours’ undertaken by young aristocrats of the age. It has remained an important part of serious military study ever since.

Yet battlefield touring is not merely a military affair and has always carried a strong element of remembrance. Veterans are often among the first to revisit a battlefield, and this may then extend to their descendants for many generations. As the years roll by the battlefield itself may provide the only tangible link to a bygone age, and how different generations perceive it offers an insight into the nature of remembrance. Beyond the movements of armies and soldiers, the way interested groups and governments chose (or chose not) to preserve and memorialise battlefields is a subject in itself. Battlefields have something to teach any student of history no matter their specialism. They are essential locations which are

worthy of preservation and respect.

Given this importance it is essential that battlefield guiding is taken seriously by practitioners and participants. One of the reasons

I was so honoured to accept this post is my belief that the Guild of Battlefield Guides fulfils this objective in both principle and practice. A good guide is an exceptional enhancement to any battlefield tour and the Badge system of the Guild offers a unique opportunity to promote and recognise professional expertise.

I myself cannot claim to be an expert guide, but I am at least an experienced one! Since entering the field of military history, I have visited innumerable battlefields and had the good fortune to accompany many tours, sometimes as a guest and sometimes as a commentator. These have included battlefields of the American Civil War in the United States; the Anglo-Zulu and Anglo-Boer War in South Africa, and the First and Second World Wars in Europe. Even when revisiting battlefields which I have walked many times I still find the opportunity to discover something new.

My association with the Guild of Battlefield Guides began in 2012 when I accompanied a ‘Retreat from Mons’ recce led by Dudley Giles. Although not the first time I had been to Mons this was the first time I had covered the entire retreat. In particular, I remember it for a ‘light bulb’ moment at Audrenghies when the notorious charge of 2nd Cavalry Brigade suddenly made sense; and for a close encounter near the Suffolk Memorial at Le Cateau when I attracted the notice of a large herd of cows – a constant peril when touring northern France! The recce provided food for thought and many of the findings were embodied in my edited book *Stemming the Tide: Officers and Leadership in the British Expeditionary Force 1914* (Helion, 2013) which went on to be runner up for the Society for Army Historical Research Templer Medal: a clear indication of the value of seeing the ground for yourself.

After this positive start I hope that my time as Honorary President continues this happy tradition. I look forward to being involved and supporting the Guild throughout my tenure.



Dr Spencer Jones  
University of Wolverhampton



# THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN A BATTLEFIELD TOUR?

Steve Smith

**I have often heard others state that battles are fought on the ground and air and sea battles cannot be included into this equation. When I first stood up to do Assignment 1 in 2003 I was asked by one of my peers, “How are you going to tell me about a battle that was fought in the air?” It was an interesting question which I was able to evidence because I passed the assignment! But due to many commitments after that I was not able to physically put that question to the test on the battlefield until I led a group on a tour of the Battle of Britain in October 2018.**

Eastern England still carries the scars of the battle. It still has silent, disused airfields waiting to be awoken to defend this island once again. They stand as silent sentinels reminding us of a forgotten time. There are many museums dedicated to keeping the memory alive and sources from that momentous time are readily available. If you take a little piece of each and put them all together and mix that with a little imagination, especially when it comes to describing the great aerial battles that were fought, then you have a battlefield tour, you can smell the AVTUR as opposed to the cordite, although I can tell you that a lot of that was thrown around as well!

Each of my visitors had a guide book which covered in detail the phases of the campaign which were:

- 26th June – 16th July ‘Storangriffe’ - (Nuisance Raids)
- 27th June – 12th August ‘Kanalkampf’ - (Channel Battle)
- 13th August – 6th September ‘Adlerangriff’ - (Eagle Attack), the first day was known as ‘Adler Tag’ (Eagle Day)
- 7th September – 2nd October - The Blitz begins on London
- 3rd – 31st October - Continued night bombing raids against London and the end of the campaign

This allowed me to centre on two specific days within the battle.

### The Hardest Day 18th August 1940

On this day the Luftwaffe would launch 3 massive raids after intelligence suggested to their High Command that the RAF was on its last legs and that it only had 300 combat ready fighters for the whole of the country. Four powerful assaults on 4 major

airfields were ordered and other targets of importance were also chosen. Included in these targets were the Sector Stations of RAF Biggin Hill and RAF Kenley.

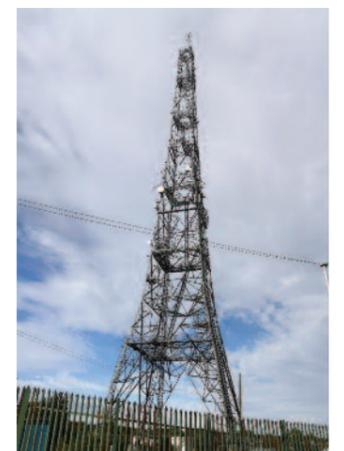
### Battle of Britain Day 15th September 1940

The main air battle was finally played out on the 15th September 1940 when the RAF and Luftwaffe threw everything they had at each other. Churchill, who was visiting RAF Uxbridge at the time, asked Air Vice Marshall Keith Park, the AOC of 11 Group, ‘How many reserve squadrons did he have available?’ The answer came back ‘None Sir’.

The itinerary followed this format.

### Day One

Started with a visit to an original RDF tower which still exists at Dunkirk. We then moved onto the old Battle of Britain airfield at Manston, many squadrons used Manston as a forward air base. Between 12th and 24th August 1940 Manston was attacked by the Luftwaffe five times and this nearly destroyed the base. The damage was so severe that the base had to be downgraded to an emergency landing ground only. Today there is an excellent museum situated on the site. The visit then ended with a stop at Margate Cemetery where a number of RAF and Luftwaffe airmen now lie.



An original RDF mast at Dunkirk in Kent, one of the first Chain Home sites to be built.



A Hurricane IIc, part of the Spitfire & Hurricane Memorial Museum collection at Manston.

**Day Two**

Started at St Mary Cray cemetery and then moved onto Biggin Hill and Kenley. The raid on Kenley led to heavy damage and photographs of this attack appeared in the Der Adler magazine. We looked at this raid and studied how RAF Biggin Hill escaped further bombing raids. We also discussed the contribution and bravery of WAAF personnel and finished up at Whyteleafe cemetery to visit 18th August 1940 casualties.

**Day Three**

RAF Hawkinge played a major part during the Battle of Britain. No other major fighter base was as near to occupied Europe than Hawkinge and many fighter squadrons used Hawkinge as a forward base so that they could get to the Luftwaffe as soon as radar detected enemy aeroplanes approaching southeast England.

Part of the old base now houses one of the leading museums dedicated to the battle. It is crammed full of relics from the campaign and also has static replicas of aircraft that flew in the battle.

We also paid our respects to fallen British and German airmen at Hawkinge Cemetery and visited the Battle of Britain memorial at Capel Le Ferne.



The Leaves Green Dornier from the 9th Staffel which was shot down on 18th August 1940.



Towerfields at Keston, this site was used as the Operations Room for RAF Biggin Hill when the station was seriously damaged after a series of Luftwaffe raids.



RAF Kenley under attack by 9 Dorniers from the 9th Staffel on 18th August 1940 (above). My group exploring the same dispersal seen in the original black and white photo.



The same site at Leaves Green in October 2018



The site of the hangar at Biggin Hill which was blown up by the Station Commander Dickie Grice. This stopped further raids by the Luftwaffe!

**Day Four**

The No.11 (Fighter) Group Operations Room, housed in what is now known as the Battle of Britain Bunker on the former site of RAF Uxbridge, was responsible for planning and co ordinating the air defence of London and South East England during the campaign.

It is now an excellent museum and the bunker is shown exactly as it was on the day on which Winston Churchill visited and there are guided tours of the bunker where the final major air battle was played out on 15th September 1940.



The Battle of Britain memorial at Capel le Ferne.



The memorial to the 'Few' at Capel le Ferne.



The Jackdaw Pub at Denton where scenes from the Battle of Britain were filmed.



The 11 Group bunker at Uxbridge



The grave of Sgt Peter Walley at Whyteleafe Cemetery, lost on 18th August 1940.



Hawkinge Cemetery which holds the remains of both RAF and Luftwaffe airmen!

In essence this tour was designed to look at the sustained attacks on RAF Fighter Command, how strategy and intelligence changed the course of the campaign, the importance of radar and the Dowding System and how both sides fared against each other. If followed properly you can compare both days and conclude that the Luftwaffe were in fact on the back foot as far back as 18th August 1940. What my tour was not reliant on was hopping from one museum and memorial to another. My research and experience took my visitors to sites of interest much like I would if I was guiding a group to the Somme. That, to me, is the secret to a good battlefield tour.

# 2019 HELP FOR HEROES THE BIG BATTLEFIELD BIKE RIDE

John Cotterill



As most Guild members will be aware, since the inception of the H4H Big Battlefield Bike Ride in 2008, guides have been provided every year by the Guild. The team of four guides leapfrog by car, in two pairs, to get to the battlefield stands ahead of the fastest cyclists, having left the previous stand after the slowest cyclists.



The cyclists arrive at Les Invalides.

The guide team was led originally by Dudley Giles, then Paul Oldfield and, for the first time in 2019, by John Cotterill.

Since the end of active campaigning in Afghanistan support for H4H has inevitably fallen. The Ride used to see 300 cyclists covering about 350 miles in 5 days via between 20 and 30 battlefield stands on different routes every year. The number of cyclists has now fallen to about 150, but as each must raise over 3000

pounds, and many raise much more than that, a worthwhile amount of money is still raised every year. This is needed because soldiers wounded 5, 10 or 15 years ago still have complex medical, psychological and employability needs that H4H help to meet. Their selection, training and administration of the British teams for the Invictus Games is perhaps just the most high profile of their ongoing support to our wounded.



The ride reaches the River Dives bridges.

The 2019 Big Battlefield Bike Ride was from Cherbourg to Paris and the main theme was the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Normandy. The guides this year were John Cotterill (Badge 10), Terry Webb (Badge 41), Andy Johnson (Badge 52) and David Harvey (Badge 63). After an overnight in Cherbourg the riders were bussed to the ride start point at the Iron Mike Memorial west of St Mere Eglise.

On the first day's ride to Bayeux our battlefield stands were:

- US landings on UTAH Beach
- US Airborne versus German Airborne at Carentan
- Le Cambe German War Cemetery
- British recces and US Landings on OMAHA Beach
- Colleville US War Cemetery
- 47 Commando at Port en Bessin

Unfortunately we had to abandon our Pointe de Hoc stand due to torrential rain. On our Bayeux to Caen day our stands were:

- Bayeux CWGC Cemetery
- German Battery at Longues sur Mer
- British landings on GOLD Beach
- CSM Hollis VC action at Crepon
- 'Hobart's Funnies' at Graye sur Mer
- The 'Beam War' at Douvres Radar Museum
- Keiffer's French Commandos at Ouistreham Casino
- Suffolk's assault on HILLMAN Bunker

On our Caen to Lisieux Day our stands were:

- Op DEADSTICK at Pegasus Bridge
- 9 Para capture of Merville Battery
- 8 Para and RE capture of River Dives bridge near Troarn
- St Desir CWGC Cemetery and German War Cemetery



Cotterill tells how the Wessex Wyverns crossed the Seine at Vernon.



Harvey on 'Bloody Omaha'.

The ride was completed by a very sporting ride round the Arc de Triomphe and down the Champs Elysee followed by the traditional final dinner in Paris. The cyclists then returned to UK by Eurostar and the guides drove via Calais.

Planning is now underway for the 2020 ride from Etretat to Dunkirk which has the main theme of the Op DYNAMO 80th Anniversary.



Andy Johnson briefs on Operation MARGIN in Beaumont Le Roger Communal Cemetery.

As we left Normandy the Guide's workload lessened, On our Lisieux to Evreux Day our stands were:

- Air Operations, SOE Operations and Rommel's wounding at Bernay Airfield
- SAS Op TRUEFORM at Fontaine L'Abbe
- RAF Op MARGIN at Beaumont le Roger Communal Cemetery

The last day was a long ride from Evreux to Paris. The stands were:

- 43 Wessex Division Op NEPTUNE at Vernon
- Rommel's army Group B HQ and SAS Op GAFF at La Roche Guyon
- A final stand that included the liberation of Paris in the courtyard at Les Invalides



The four Guild guides relaxing at the final dinner in Paris. Terry Webb, David Harvey, John Cotterill and Andy Johnson.

# ZEPPELINS, BOMBERS & ROCKETS – BLITZ WALKING WITH THE FOUNTAIN CLUB

Steve Hunnisett



The Fountain Club Group at Barts Fountain

The seeds were sown for this walk a couple of years ago at the Guild Christmas Lunch at the Union Jack Club, when I was approached by fellow Guild member John Richardson, who asked whether I could put together a wartime-themed guided walk in the City of London for the members of the Fountain Club at Bart's Hospital, of which John was to be Master in 2019. The answer, of course was in the positive and once the effects of the lunch had worn off, I began to think about the route of the walk.

I had eighteen months to plan the walk and there was no problem with content – in fact, if anything there was perhaps rather too much to fill a 2 hour 30 minute walk, so I decided on a roughly circular walk starting and finishing at the famous Bart's Fountain in which we would look at incidents from both World Wars, covering bombs dropped from Zeppelins and conventional aircraft, as well as the V-Weapons of 1944-45. As always, the work and organisation of the Civil Defence services would also be covered.



*Smithfield after V-2 attack*

The date was fixed for 6 July 2019, which proved to be a pleasantly warm Saturday morning in the City as the fourteen intrepid walkers gathered.

Our first port of call was just outside the main gate of the hospital in West Smithfield, where there is still considerable splinter damage to be seen marking the boundary wall. The whole area, including the famous meat market was bombed heavily during the Blitz, most notably on the night of 10/11 May 1941 and was also subjected to one of the final V-2 rocket attacks to affect the centre of London, which also happened to be one of the worst. This occurred on Thursday 8 March 1945, when the market was packed with shoppers, many of whom were accompanied by children, lured by the word that a consignment of rabbit meat had been received. The missile struck at 11:30 with predictably awful results; 110 were killed, with 123 seriously injured and almost 250 walking wounded. Many of the injured were taken to Bart's, where four surgical teams worked at



*Bartholomew Close*

full stretch for over 24 hours to deal with the backlog of casualties. Despite their heroic efforts, Bart's was simply overwhelmed with injured and many were sent to neighbouring hospitals, notably the Royal Free, UCH and Great Ormond Street, which dealt with many of the children involved.

From this melancholy scene, we walked a few paces further to pause at the Tudor St Bartholomew's Gatehouse and stepped back in time thirty years from the closing stages of the Second World War, to the beginning of the First. On the night of 8/9 September 1915, the Zeppelin L.13, commanded by Kapitanleutnant Heinrich Mathy became the first airship to drop bombs on central London. The first two incendiary bombs dropped in the area fell harmlessly in the road but the third penetrated the roof of the 'Lock & Key' public house (now called 'The Butcher's Hook & Cleaver') and trapped the landlady, Alice Jane Freeman and her family in the upper rooms of the burning building. Fortunately, a group of railwaymen from the nearby GWR goods depot were quickly on the scene and not only rescued the trapped family but managed to extinguish the fire before the arrival of the Fire Brigade. For their prompt action and bravery, the men received a commendation and a gratuity from the GWR.

We then proceeded through the arch and past the ancient church of St Bartholomew The Great before we entered Bartholomew Close, which has to be a contender for the unluckiest road in London, being the recipient of German bombs in 1915, 1941 and rounded off with a V-1 flying bomb in 1944. We halted in the centre of the Close and began the stand by looking at the next stage of Mathy's 1915 raid. After the incendiary bombs on West Smithfield, the Zeppelin commander next decided to unleash his single 300 kg high explosive bomb, the first of this size to be dropped on Britain. Nicknamed the 'Liebsgabe' or 'Love Gift' the bomb fell in the centre of the Close, actually hitting a drinking fountain, which was obliterated in the explosion. The blast affected all of the tightly packed buildings here and killed two men who had unwisely chosen to exit the 'Admiral Carter' public house at this time in order to investigate the commotion going on outside. The now-rebuilt area was again widely bombed during the Blitz, most notably on the night of 10/11 May 1941 and to compound the agony, the Butchers' Hall was struck and partially demolished by a V-1 on the night of 31 July 1944, causing thirty three people to be hospitalised.

After walking through the pleasant haven that is Postman's Park, which contains the quirky memorial to 'Heroic Self-Sacrifice' instigated by the Victorian artist GF Watts in 1887, we arrived at the bell tower of the former church of St Alban, Wood Street. This

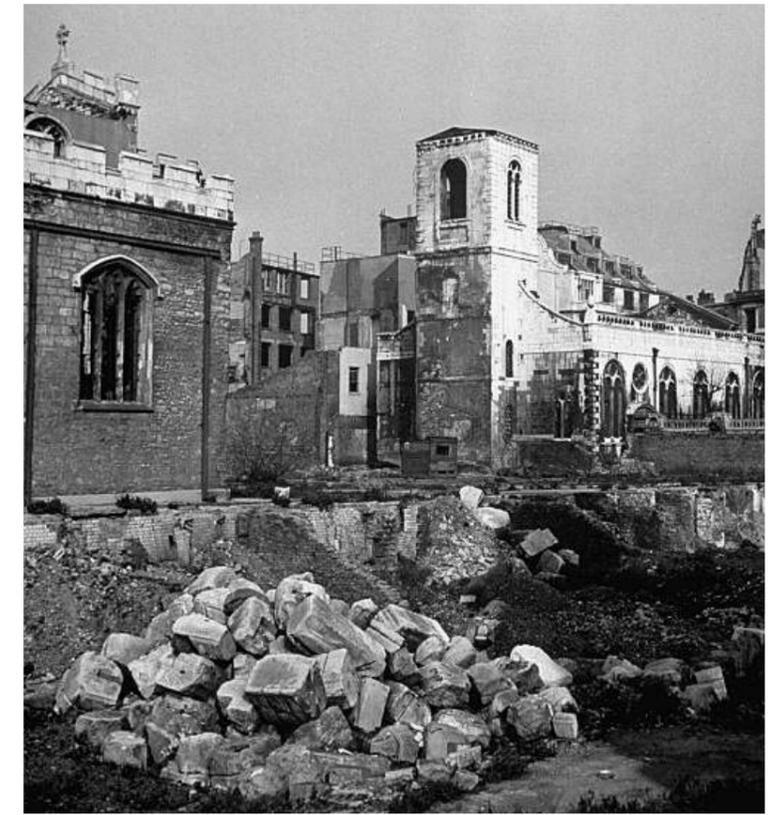


*Butchers' Hall, partially demolished by a V-1, 31 July 1944.*

is the only surviving part of this Wren church, completed in 1685 but destroyed on the night of 29/30 December 1940. The ruins were cleared post war and the tower converted into a private residence, presumably for someone who likes stairs, for there is no lift to reach the top floors!

We next visited another bombed-out church, or rather the footprint of the former St Mary's Church, Aldermanbury. There had been a church here since 1148, rebuilt in the fifteenth century but destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666. It was rebuilt by Wren in 1677 and amongst those interred here, perhaps the most famous, or infamous, is the notorious Judge Jeffreys, who achieved notoriety at the 'Bloody Assizes' of 1685. All traces of his grave were lost following the church's destruction on the night of 29/30 December 1940 but the ruined church would itself become one of the more unusual memorials to the Second World War in 1966, when it was dismantled stone-by-stone and shipped across the Atlantic to Fulton, Missouri, where it was rebuilt on the campus of Westminster College as a tribute to Sir Winston Churchill, who had died the previous year and who had delivered his famous 'Sinews of Peace' speech at the college in 1946 at the invitation of President Harry S Truman, whose home town this was.

We then arrived at the Guildhall, where we discussed the work of the Air Raid Wardens, with several members of the group trying on the Warden's



*St Mary's Church, Aldermanbury after bombing (above) and, St Mary's as it is now (below).*

steel helmet for size. We also learned of the destruction by fire of the Guildhall and its library on the night of 29/30 December 1940, when some 25,000 books were lost, many of which were irreplaceable. The church of St Lawrence Jewry was also destroyed at the same time and it was indeed the embers from the burning roof of the Wren church which started the fires in the Guildhall.

After meandering our way through the quiet City back streets, we found ourselves emerging back on more beaten paths and paused at Bank Station, outside the former Royal Exchange building, now a shopping mall. The road junction, beneath which lies the ticket hall for the Underground Station received a direct hit on the night of 11 January 1941, killing



John Richardson, ARP



many people who were queuing to use the lavatories in the station before descending the escalators to settle down for the night to shelter on the tube platforms below. The blast collapsed the escalators and killed many shelterers, even blowing some poor unfortunates off the platform into the path of a train that had been entering the station at the time. Some fifty six people were killed here on the site of what became known as ‘London’s largest crater’ over which a large temporary bridge was erected whilst repair work was carried out.

From here, we continued to Lombard Street and paid a fleeting visit to the church of St Edmund, King and Martyr. The current Wren church dates from 1679 and although no longer used for regular worship, is still a consecrated building. It was struck by a German bomb on 7 July 1917, during the second daylight raid on London by Gotha bombers. The bomb failed to explode fully and today, several large fragments of the bomb are on display beneath the altar, with the entry point of the bomb in the roof converted into an unusual window. This is probably the only instance in London at least, where fragments of a bomb are on display inside the building on which the bomb was dropped!

A short walk to Cannon Street Station followed, where we heard of the heroism of four railway workers on the night of 10/11 May 1941, who removed their trains from the burning terminus to save them from a similar fate. One of the trains was then hit by a bomb whilst parked on the bridge over the Thames but incredibly, the crew survived, having just jumped off the footplate in the nick of time. One of the crew, Driver Leslie



Bank Station crater (above) and Baily bridge (below) with the Memorial plaque remembering the lost.



Stainer later said “It was just as if Hell had been let loose.”

We then returned westwards towards St. Paul’s Cathedral and paused opposite the former Church of St Augustine and St Faith on the way, where we learned of the story of Faith, the church cat, who returned into the church after being rescued by firemen but emerged moments later from the burning building carrying her kitten – everyone likes a cute animal story!



Steve Hunnisett with a replica bomb.

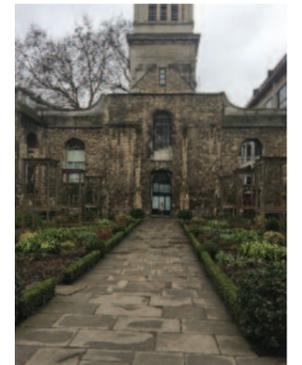
Our next stand was at the National Firefighters’ Memorial opposite St Paul’s and looked at the work of the Auxiliary Fire Service in particular, as well as looking at the efforts of the Royal Engineers bomb disposal team under the command of Lieutenant Robert Davies, who was awarded the George Cross, along with Sapper George Wylie for their work in removing and disposing of a 1,000 kg bomb which had failed to explode beneath the main steps to the cathedral on 12 September 1940. We also heard how an incendiary bomb had lodged in the thin lead skin of the Dome on the night of 29 December 1940 but after starting to burn, had dislodged itself and fallen to the Stone Gallery, where it was quickly extinguished by



The church of St Edmund, King and Martyr, fragments of the bomb and the entry point (right).

members of the St Paul’s Watch, the cathedral’s own firewatchers.

We then transited Paternoster Square and learned of the destruction of London’s book industry on the night of 29 December, when some four million books were destroyed by fire at various premises



Christ Church walled garden.

surrounding the square. This represented the entire stocks of several publishing houses based in the area and included the manual cataloguing systems of many publishers.

Our final port of call was perhaps fittingly, at another bombed-out church. Christ Church, Newgate was an impressive Wren structure dating from 1687, which was closely associated with the school of Christ’s Hospital, which moved to Horsham in 1902. The church itself was never rebuilt following its destruction on the night of 29 December 1940 but was instead turned into a beautiful walled garden, a haven of peace in a busy commercial centre and it seemed fitting that our walk should end here before we repaired to a nearby hostelry for an enjoyable pub lunch.

## NEWmembers:

New members who have been welcomed to the Guild between Spring 2019 and the date of publication.

Gary Bain  
Lesley Baird  
Dave Behan  
Terry Berry  
Phil Bourner  
David Croxford  
Ian Doyle

Simon Evetts  
Randal Gaulke  
Nick Gunnell  
Simon Lash  
Andrew Moorhouse  
Andrew Mullen  
Richard Myers

Christopher Pointon  
Jonathan Robinson  
Susan Rotherforth  
Ian Rutherford  
Michael Salmon  
Rick Smith  
Charles Thomas

Colin Tickner  
Andrew Tilby-Baxter  
Christopher Lawrence  
Jonathan Williams  
Robert Yuill

## FIELDguides



Weather Girls -The Dynamic CGT Duo, Paula Kitching and Eugenie Brooks chilling out on a snow covered Hill 60.



Jo Hook on the Anzac Trail working for Australian Tour Operator, Mat McLachlan Tours.



New GBG Member Susie Rotherforth making good use of the 8 inch Howitzer in the Passchendaele Memorial Park for her stand on the Royal Artillery during the Third Battle of Ypres.

# VOICES OF LIBERATION: PRESERVING MEMORIES OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Peter Francis, Media and PR Executive

To mark the 75-year anniversaries of some of the most significant moments in world history, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) has created a crowdsourced sound archive to capture people's reflections on the Second World War and CWGC sites of remembrance across the world. CWGC is asking Guild members to help add to this unique project.



**CWGC**  
Commonwealth War Graves Commission

*Voices of Liberation* focuses on the events of the penultimate year of the Second World War, highlighting the sacrifices required to liberate the world from Nazi Germany and Japan. The CWGC's project encompasses historical milestones from The Great Escape, to Imphal and Kohima, to Monte Cassino, Normandy and Arnhem – exploring and capturing the connections visitors and veterans have to the cemeteries and memorials that are, in many cases, the last physical reminder of these momentous events.

Today, the CWGC's iconic cemeteries and memorials remain places of pilgrimage for veterans and descendants, tended by our gardeners and treasured by local communities. Their stories interweave with those of the dead, making these unique and poignant sites of memory and mourning.

As any Guild member knows, CWGC sites are best experienced when visited. CWGC are encouraging new visitors to engage with the cemeteries and memorials and experience the poignancy of them. Guild members have a unique perspective on the Commission's work and are often first-hand witnesses to the power and emotion the graves, cemeteries and memorials convey. Several Guild members have either contributed directly to the archive or encouraged others to do so, but more help would be welcome. In particular, CWGC are keen to broaden the contributions to include more female voices and voices from the wider Commonwealth and Allies – thus reflecting the diverse make-up and sacrifice of the forces that took part in these actions.

To date more than fifty contributors – from distinguished veterans, to descendants of those who died to liberate Europe from Nazi oppression; from local people who live with CWGC's cemeteries and



Ken Hay tell his story.

memorials on their doorstep; to those who resisted, often at great personal courage, their occupiers – have shared their remarkable and often deeply moving stories. Stories like that of Ken Hay.

Second World War veteran Ken Hay, now a sprightly 93, survived an encounter with the Waffen SS and a forced 1,000-mile march across Europe. Ken was 14 when war broke out in 1939. As soon as he turned 17 he volunteered for service in the same unit as his older brother. Ken fought in Normandy as a Private soldier in the Essex Regiment for just a few days before being captured by the Nazis. For *Voices* Ken recalled one particular patrol in Normandy...

*"I was wandering up this road by myself, and there was this line of chaps all laying on the side of the road – all asleep! And I called out "what are you doing!" And then I realised the one at the front only had half a body... It was quite vicious... That was a battlefield."*

Ken was captured by 12th SS Panzer Division shortly after and was sent to Poland where he was put to work in a coal mine. During the final months of the war, as the Allies closed in on Nazi-held territories, Ken was forced to march through the winter snow by his captors. The March became known as the '1000-mile death march.' Tens of thousands of Allied PoWs were force-marched westward across Poland and Germany in appalling winter conditions. Ken was one of the lucky ones to survive but only thanks to the intervention of his friends:

*"We set out on an early morning, bitterly cold... There was a lot of snow on the ground... I have heard references to the fact that it was minus 25 degrees. All I know, it was very cold. And we set out and we marched all day, – no food, no nothing – and all night... We had a rest day every 5 or 6 days, but otherwise we marched every day. You just hoped and prayed you were going to stop..."*

*"I was having trouble with my leg and ... I fell out in the snow and just laid down. All I wanted to do was sleep. I was too past caring and just laid down in the snow. It's no exaggeration to say I would have frozen to death but my pal Jimmy Jarvy who was a Canadian found me and lifted me up and away we*

*went... talking about strawberry shortcake, maple syrup on waffles. In the army, you talk about women, you know... In Stalag, you talk about food... So anyway, they carried me until I realised I was being a burden. And I said "it's okay, I'll carry on" and "thanks" and away we went."*

Ken's story is typical of those captured to date. They don't always make easy listening. Quite often there's not a dry eye in the CWGC Head Office when a veteran or descendant reveals how much they value the cemeteries and memorials in the Commission's care – which, of course, to them are deeply personal places that commemorate friends, comrades or family. More broadly, the stories are encouraging people to visit these places and to discover some of the stories that exist at each location for themselves.

Some of the voices have also been used to create a visitor experience, through what can only be described as a talking bench! Using a Lutyens (one of three principal architects for CWGC after the First World War) inspired design, the specially commissioned bench plays short segments of selected stories when sat upon. Two benches have been created, moving between several CWGC sites – from Portsmouth to Bayeux to Brookwood, and in September, Arnhem.



Frances Storey (holding photo of uncle, Royal Marine Commando Frank Sturmey), Ron Cross MBE (D-Day veteran, 98), Bob Jones (D-Day veteran, 94). Back Row: PO Jenny Smith, RNP Simon Hayes, Sub lieutenant Rich Field, LSAWW Martin Griggs, RNP Ben Coomber.



D-Day veterans (back row Richard (Dicky) Forrester and front row Peter Joseph Kent, Albert Holmshaw, Roy Maxwell, Douglas Baldwin and CWGC Interns experience the 'talking bench' as part of the D-Day 75 commemorations at Bayeux War Cemetery, Normandy.

The public's response to this unusual addition to a CWGC site has been remarkable – many listening to the stories over and over again in complete silence.

CWGC would welcome the help of Guild members in capturing further stories. Whether you have served, know someone who did, or have simply visited any of the Commission's Second World War cemeteries and memorials, CWGC would love to hear from you and those whom you take to these places. All you need to do is use your phone to record the story and then either send it to CWGC or upload it to our specially created website yourself.

Guild Members can contribute to 'Voices of Liberation' and listen to the existing stories at [liberation.cwgc.org](http://liberation.cwgc.org)

Alongside the archive, CWGC has launched its new podcast series 'Legacy of Liberation', the six-part series explores the key moments of the Second World War conflict, and the historic cemeteries and memorials which commemorate those who fought and died. CWGC historian Dr Glyn Pryor and Interpretation Officer Dr Lucy Kellett explore the unique experience of visiting these sites of memory and mourning, taking a fresh look at events which have become almost legendary,

and examining the artistic, architectural and social legacies of these iconic places. The podcast is available from the CWGC website, Spotify, iTunes and Soundcloud.



D-Day Veterans Ron Cross MBE (centre) and Bob Jones listen to their stories on the CWGC talking bench ahead of the D-Day 75 commemorations in Portsmouth together with RNP Ben Coomber. Both Bob and Ron are members of Blind Veterans UK.

# MANNING MISCONCEPTIONS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Alison Hine

**As Guides, we are frequently confronted by clients who have picked up various misconceptions about the soldiers of the First World War. Some of these stem from misinterpreting family history research but others are often culled from poorly researched television programmes and books. What follows are just some of these misconceptions.**

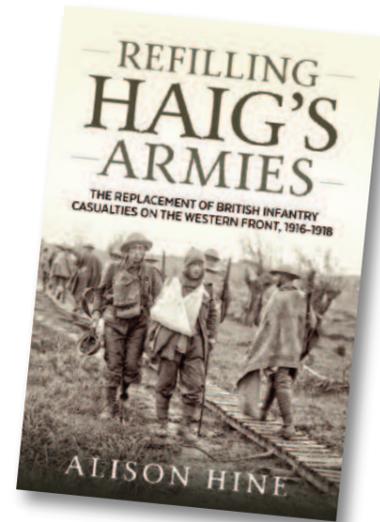
A not uncommon view relating to the volunteers of 1914 is that they all joined the Service battalions of 'Kitchener's New Army' and would not see action until, untrained and inexperienced, they would arrive on the Somme in July 1916. Examination of newspaper accounts, however, shows that a large number of the early volunteers joined the existing Reserve battalions, destined to replace casualties in the Line battalions as soon as they were needed. In late August 1914, for example, out of 950 men enlisting in Chester for normal Army service, some 600 joined the 3rd (Special Reserve) Cheshire battalion whilst only 350 enlisted specifically for the 'Service Battalion, Cheshire Regiment for Lord Kitchener's army'. Those that joined the newly forming Service battalions would experience almost a year's training before going to France. By the time the Somme started, most of these Service battalions would already have been in France for several months, in some cases more than a year, and have already seen action at places such as Hooze and Loos. They were not all the untrained and 'unblooded' battalions of common fable.

The steadily decreasing flood of volunteers during 1915 led to the introduction of conscription in early 1916. From this it has frequently been extrapolated that every man enlisting after January 1916 was conscripted and that therefore, simplistically, half the men joining between 1914-18 were all conscripts. The effective date for the introduction of conscription was in fact 2 March 1916 but it continued to be possible throughout the war to volunteer in advance of being called up. Even those who had volunteered under the Derby scheme, between October 1915 and 1 March 1916, would not necessarily be called up for some months and

even years. Due to the way in which enlistment figures were collected, it is actually impossible to say with any certainty the exact numbers of those who volunteered and those who were conscripted.

It is often claimed that the introduction of the Training Reserve in late 1916 marked a deliberate move towards the destruction of Regimental identities. The Instruction that created the new organisation, however, specifically stipulated that the main Regimental reserves, namely the Special, Extra and Territorial Force reserves, were to be kept filled up by recruits gained from the Regimental recruiting areas. Only once all the regimental reserves of the parent Command were full would surplus recruits be diverted to Training Reserve battalions affiliated to it. Casualty replacements for battalions would continue to be drawn from the reserves of their parent regiments. Only if these could not be provided would they be drawn from the Training Reserve battalions. Inevitably, the system would creak when confronted by the huge losses of Third Ypres and the German Spring Offensive, but even late in the war it remains possible to see the majority of reinforcements being drawn, if not from the Regimental recruiting areas, then from the parent Home Command.

By mid-August 1918, the perception in Third Army was that at least 50 percent of its Infantry were 'boys'. Detailed analysis shows that the average percentage of 18- and 19-year olds in selected battalions of this Army was in fact roughly 25 percent, even by the end of the 100 Days. Most of those killed were aged 21-29, then considered to be



the best fighting age in terms of physical strength and maturity. Also shown by this analysis is that many who died even at that late stage of the war had been volunteers, some even pre-war Regular soldiers who had made it through almost to the end.

The study of manpower during the First World War admittedly does not attract the attention of those more interested in tales of Regimental exploits. However, it was the availability of reinforcements that dictated how battalions and divisions were used. Throughout the war, it was BEF policy to withdraw divisions from the front line so that their battalions might be refilled and reorganized. That was the reason for divisions seeming to yo-yo backwards and forwards between Armies. For example, the 18th Division was in the line on the Somme from 1-17 July 1916, by which time it had lost almost 5,500 all ranks. It was then transferred north to Second Army to be refilled, returning to the Somme in late September for further front line service between 26

September-31 October 1916. It also was not just battle casualties that could affect the use of a division: an outbreak of flu in First Army in mid-1918 caused the postponement of an attack by 29th Division against La Becque. It can thus be seen that, in common with the requirements for logistics, the availability of manpower dictated to a very large extent the course of many actions during the First World War.

A former Army Officer and Accredited Guide no 36, Alison Hine gained her PhD from the University of Birmingham in 2015. Her research has now been published by Helion as 'Refilling Haig's Armies', which gained third place in the Society of Army Historical Research Best First Book of 1918 competition.

## FIELDguides



Our resident Lady in the Ypres Salient, Geneva Charsley doing what she does best - educating young and old on the Western Front.



Kay Neagle on a walking tour in her old hometown of Thurles in Tipperary, speaking about John Cunningham the VC winner.

# THE 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE D DAY LANDINGS

## A PERSONAL REFLECTION

Rhydian Vaughan MBE  
www.battlefieldtours.co

Last year, I was invited to assist the World War II Museum of New Orleans in a major tour to Normandy with 400 Americans. Daunting, but with three good GBG companions (Frank Baldwin, Tim Pritchard-Barrett and James Scott-Clarke) included in the Historian/Guide contingent of 10, this was not an opportunity to miss.

The ship we were to join was the Seaborne Ovation, the like of which I have never been on before. A year old, she was quite breath-taking in her splendour. We joined the ship at Dunkirk, an important part of the overall history. If we hadn't salvaged what we did with that pending disaster in 1940 we wouldn't have needed the Americans in 1944 as we would have lost the war then.

From there we went to Dieppe. The 1942 raid was another milestone along the route. This ill thought-out and disastrous raid given to the Canadians and two British Commandos however would save many lives on D Day two years later. The raid proved that it was nigh on impossible to capture a port from the sea and was the birth of the brilliant concept of the Mulberry harbour.

Le Havre is not the prettiest place in France but a good base to then go to the British and Canadian actions – Pegasus Bridge, scenes of derring do by the British 6th Airborne, Juno and Gold beach, Mulberry Harbour and the Longue costal battery. We had 10 coaches at our disposal and the transport movements were very slick and well judged. Back to the ship most days by late afternoon, there was always plenty to do on board.



Seaborne Ovation cruise liner.

Our American guests were quite delightful, almost all from California and the Southern States – as one of them commented “not a Yankee in sight”. Dining and chatting with them I often felt like an extra out of *'Gone with the Wind'* and there were many who in their day would have challenged Scarlet O'Hara. There were Normandy veterans also on board who were fascinating to chat with and to hear their experiences for real. One said to me “Rhydian, you're very good but I had a much better guide when I was last here – General George Patton!”

An overnight sail to Cherbourg put us in an ideal position to do our own assaults on the American scenes of action. Omaha beach, scenes of terrible loss of life, Pointe du Hoc, so bravely captured by the 2nd Rangers early in the morning, Utah beach, the lightest casualties on the day and the American Airborne deeds around the town of St Mere Église.

The 6th June dawned with mounting excitement. Our convoy of 10 coaches sped from Cherbourg to the Omaha Cemetery escorted by 12 police outriders sweeping all before them – shades of CW McCall's 'Convoy' – for those of a certain age.



'Iron Mike'



US Airborne Memorial at La Fiere bridge, Juno Beach



US cemetery Omaha



Some of the 12,000 guests at the US cemetery, 6th June

Through extraordinary security we joined 12,000 others for a most moving day.

Presidents Trump and Macron were on fine form, the two greatest National Anthems in the world challenged the bottom lip not to wobble and flypasts filled the sky. My goodness, when the Americans do it big, they can do it well.

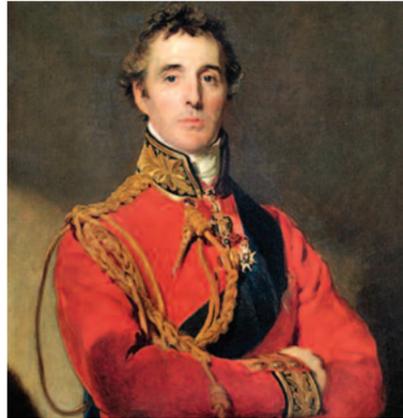
We docked in Dover the following morning and said our farewells. Experiences come and go but that week will stay with me for a long time to come- tales of courage and sacrifice are always humbling and I am grateful to have been able to tell the story to those who travelled with us.

# PRIMARY SOURCE NORMANDY

## IN FACT & FICTION

From 'Sand and Steel: Liberating France, 1944: Chapter Six'

Peter Caddick-Adams



*"When other Generals make mistakes their armies are beaten; when I get into a hole, my men pull me out of it."*

Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, after Waterloo

The British Liberation Army waiting to invade France were still a class-conscious lot, as the cartoons of *Punch* magazine and the *Daily Express* were ever-willing to suggest; 'you still had an upper class and people were used to obeying [them],' thought one Tommy. 'I think this was instilled in us. Any spark of rebellion was stamped out during primary training. So I think we were more ready to accept discipline than today. The class structure had a lot to do with it'.<sup>1</sup> A left-leaning officer in 27 Armoured Brigade was convinced that it was actually the class structure that kept the army together: 'the stability, order, and enterprise of the Army was with the sergeants - kind, hardened, versatile and careful older men, working-class fathers, mostly. It was they who sustained the patrols and found their way about the chaotic battlefield, supporting and standing by the subalterns, with their pistols and maps. They gave the fighting community a family strength. The bravery of the young officers was made possible by the devotion and reliability of the sergeants and corporals. The best sergeants were fathers to their young leaders'.<sup>2</sup>

Somewhere in the middle of this class structure lurked many self-important veteran officers of an earlier war. Lt. Sidney Jary of the 4th Somerset Light Infantry encountered one when attending a pre-D-Day talk by a Home Guard officer who had served in 1914-18; the idea being to acclimatise the young officers to the realities of war. Jary asked a searching question but was immediately reprimanded by the guest speaker simply because he had omitted to address him as 'Sir'.<sup>3</sup> Near the top of that structure - though he himself would have been too bashful to admit it - strode the young artist, Rex Whistler. With

a Haileybury, Royal Academy and Slade background, he had rapidly become one of the 'Bright Young Things' of the inter-war era, a sought-after society artist, creating theatre sets, book illustrations, murals and trompe-l'oeil paintings in some of England's great country houses. Unsurprisingly, the 2nd Welsh Guards (Guards Armoured Division) snapped him up when war broke out, and in Normandy, Whistler commissioned a local blacksmith to forge a box onto his Cromwell tank, enabling him to carry a campaign set of brushes, paints and small canvasses.

Striding a similar stage, though from a more modest background, was the writer and poet Keith Douglas, who was studying History and English at Merton College, Oxford, when war was declared. Commissioned and posted to the Middle East in July 1941 with the Nottinghamshire (Sherwood Rangers) Yeomanry, he fought at Alamein and in Tunisia, writing a sparkling memoir of the campaign, *Alamein to Zem Zem*, illustrated with his own drawings.<sup>4</sup> He accompanied his regiment to Normandy, landing on Gold beach as part of 8 Armoured Brigade. Alas, neither he nor Whistler were destined to survive, both separately killed by mortar blasts outside their tanks, but we are undoubtedly richer for the writings and illustrations they left behind. It was Padre Leslie Skinner who buried Douglas - as he noted in his diary on 10 June 1944: 'Spent day touring all medical units in beach area in search of regimental casualties. News of death of Capt. Keith Douglas on forward slopes of Pt.102. Forward on foot and found bodies of Douglas and Lt. Pepler. Buried separately near to where each lay. Occasional rifle fire while digging graves'.<sup>5</sup>

Three other writers of note did survive Normandy, whose novels offer great insights into the British soldier of the era, before and during the campaign in France. Alec Bernstein, a Jewish soldier in the Pioneer Corps and veteran of the Sicilian campaign, fought attached to the 5th Wiltshires (43rd Wessex Division), landing in France in the last week of June 1944. Writing as Alexander Baron his first novel, *From the City, From the Plough*, was published in 1948; it followed the 'Poor Bloody Infantry' of the fictional '5th Battalion of the Wessex Regt.' from the weeks leading up to D-Day and during the Normandy campaign. Appearing within a mere five years of the events it portrayed, to achieve credibility the author had to be highly accurate; Bernstein/Baron dwelt on the medley of personalities amongst the farmer's boys and city sons who made up his battalion, both in training and combat. His background was in the Hackney district of North East London, where as a young Communist he had battled with Moseley's Fascist blackshirts in the 1930s; he was a 'friendly alien' initially welcome only in the Pioneer Corps.

David Holbrook was a Cambridge-educated, left-leaning student whose comfortable university life was interrupted by the war in 1942. He was called up for military service and commissioned as an officer with the East Riding Yeomanry (27 Armoured Brigade), landing on D-Day at Sword beach. His 1966 novel *Flesh Wounds*, also his first work, recounted the military life of Holbrook's very thinly-disguised self, Paul Grimmer, through his officer training, service as a tank commander in France, wounding on D+14 and return to Blighty.

John Vernon Bain came from a poor background and had neither the money, nor opportunity for university. Aged eighteen, he joined the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in 1940 going to war in North Africa with 51st Highland Division. In Tunisia he deserted from the forward lines, was caught and spent six months in a military prison in Alexandria before being posted to fight with the 1st Gordon Highlanders (151 Brigade) in Normandy. PTSD clearly affected him from both campaigns and in 1945 Bain deserted army life again and supported himself as a boxer before settling down to write, adopting the pseudonym Vernon Scannell. The war haunted his poetry and he came to be regarded as a Second World War counterpart to Wilfrid Owen. In 1971 he wrote a cryptic autobiography dealing with his war years, *The Tiger and the Rose*, following this up with a far more revealing and incisive autobiographical novel *An Argument of Kings* in 1987, which followed his fictional self through Normandy until wounded on patrol. Considered highly authentic, veterans and literary critics have acclaimed all three novels (in reality, accurate autobiographies) as observant and thoughtful testimonies of the 1944 Tommy.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Interview, Len Bennett, cited in Longden, *To the Victor*, op cit., p.187

<sup>2</sup> Holbrook, *Flesh Wounds*, op cit., p.114

<sup>3</sup> Interview, Sidney Jary, during battlefield tour to Reichswald, 1999

<sup>4</sup> Keith Douglas, *Alamein to Zem Zem* (Editions Poetry, 1946). *Zem Zem* is in Tunisia, where Douglas' narrative ceases

<sup>5</sup> Patrick Sawyer, 'A Padre's Tale: How an Army Chaplain's Diary Throws New Light on the Anniversary of D-Day' *Daily Telegraph*, 31 May, 2014; see also Leslie F. Skinner, *The Man Who Worked on Sundays: War Diary of Revd. Leslie Skinner* (1991)

<sup>6</sup> Baron, *From The City, From The Plough*, op cit.; Holbrook, *Flesh Wounds*, op cit.; Vernon Scannell, *Argument of Kings* (Robson Books, 1987)

## EVENTguide 2019-20

2 Nov - Validation Day, Army Flying Museum, Middle Wallop - Tim Stoneman

TBC - Richard Holmes Memorial Lecture, London - John Harris

6 Dec - Guild Christmas Lunch, UJC London - Andy Thompson

31 Jan - 2 Feb 2020 - Annual Conference, Maidstone - John Harris

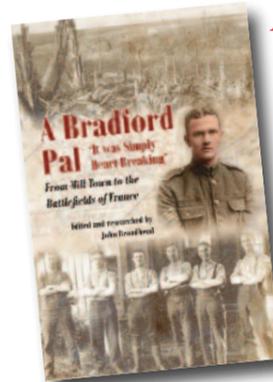
Spring 2020 - Wellington's Portugal - Graeme Cooper (dates to be set)

April 2020 - Staffordshire Weekend, including WW1, English Civil War & National Arboretum) - Chris John

September 2020 - Thermopylae and Artemesium Recce - Greece - David Harvey

October 2020 - Portsmouth Recce - Tim Stoneman

# GUIDEbooks:



## A BRADFORD PAL From Mill Town to the Battlefields of France

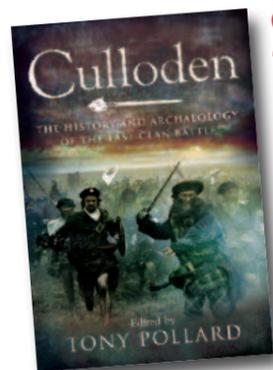
Edited and Researched by John Broadhead

This is a personal narrative of a young man serving with the 18th Bn The West Yorkshire Regiment in the 31st Division. This book provides an excellent insight into the 31st Division and does not

solely fixate on 1 July 1916. There are a couple of minor historical errors, but on the whole a very readable narrative. The book is scattered with snippets of anecdotes within the wider context of the First World War. Photographs are well placed throughout the chapters and the maps are excellent. Recommended read.

Review by Jo Hook

Published by Uniform Press  
RRP £9.99  
hardback, pp201



## CULLODEN The History & Archaeology of the Last Clan Battle

Edited by Tony Pollard

If you have outline knowledge of Culloden and would like to add some real depth to your understanding of not just the battle but also the ground it was fought over and the combatants, then this is an excellent source to

start with. I found the narrative accessible, informative and given the names that have contributed, balanced and therefore authoritative. There are plenty of illustrations, maps and pictures to support what is an exceptionally useful book on the much-mythologised battle that marks a significant milestone in British history.

Published by Pen & Sword Ltd  
RRP £25.00  
paperback, pp378

## HITLER'S PARATROOPERS IN NORMANDY The German II Parachute Corps in the Battle for France

By Gilberto Villahermosa

This is the pick of the bunch of recently released Normandy titles for me. I start my reviews with a quick foray through the bibliography and a scan of the maps, pictures and references, all of which in this case are comprehensive and of the highest quality. This really would be a valuable addition to any core library on Normandy, accurately detailed, impressive in its level of research and above all, extremely well written. Highly recommended!.

Published by Frontline Books  
RRP £25.00  
hardback, pp303

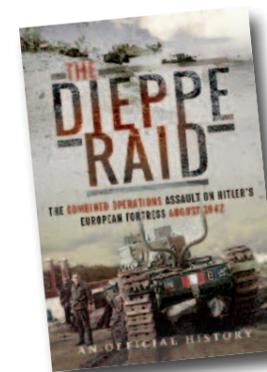
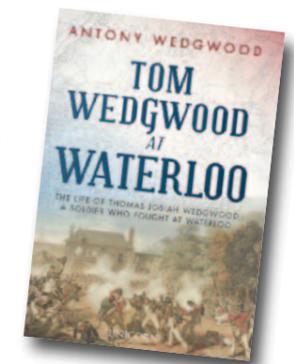


## TOM WEDGWOOD AT WATERLOO The Life of Thomas Josiah Wedgwood, a Soldier who fought at Waterloo

By Anthony Wedgwood

It is difficult to find anything new on Waterloo, this latest title is therefore quite refreshing and also, concise. Based on family historical records and the correspondence of the subject it is a multi-faceted vignette of life in the British Army of 1815 and beyond. Thomas Wedgwood was a member of the Wedgwood family, a grandson of Josiah Wedgwood. He served as an Ensign with the 3rd Foot Guards from the age of 16, he was not yet 18 when he joined the garrison at Hougoumont on the eve of battle. This compilation of letters placed in historical context with an informative and personal narrative is an enjoyable read for the Napoleonic buff.

Published by Uniform Press  
RRP £15.00  
paperback, pp326



## THE DIEPPE RAID The Combined Operations Assault on Hitler's European Fortress August 1942

By Carole McEntee-Taylor

This is a reprint of the 1958 update to Battle Summary No 33, which was originally compiled in the wake of Op Jubilee in October 1942. This is as the title suggests the official version of events and therefore is extremely useful, packed with data, accounts and maps. It does of course need to be used carefully in conjunction with German reports and more recent historical research to draw maximum value. This is an ideal standalone Anglo/Canadian commentary, ideal for Dieppe Guides, It should however be considered alongside similar reports from Operations Torch, Husky, Slapstick, Avalanche and Shingle before linking it to the planning for Normandy!

Published by Frontline Books  
RRP £25.00  
hardback, pp314



## THE BATTLE OF THE PEAKS AND LONG STOP HILL Tunisia, April-May 1943

By Ian Mitchell

I have been waiting for this book for what seems like a long, long time and I have to say that it was well worth the wait. GBG Member Ian Mitchell has produced what can only be described as a Divisional campaign history of the highest quality. Right from the front cover through to the bibliography this book is top class. The maps, the narrative and numerous photographs really do the 78th 'Battle Axe' Division and the men who wore its emblem proud. As a first book this is outstanding, let's hope we don't have to wait too long for the next!

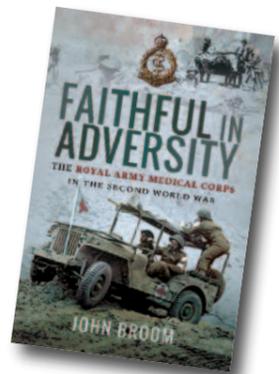
Published by Helion & Company Ltd  
RRP £35.00  
hardback, pp352

## FAITHFUL IN ADVERSITY The Royal Army Medical Corps in the Second World War

By John Broom

The RAMC supported every operation in WW2, Doctors and Medics were present during almost every evacuation, raid, landing, armoured battle and of course also went into captivity with their fellow soldiers. Therefore, this is a massive and potentially complex story to set out to tell. If you are looking for a highly detailed history, then this book is not that. It is closer to style of the popular forgotten voices series. What it lacks in maps and data is made up for by numerous eyewitness accounts from the Doctors and Medics along with insightful commentary on medical techniques, RAMC organisation and the human experience of being a medic during WW2.

Published by Pen & Sword Ltd  
RRP £25.00  
hardback, pp339

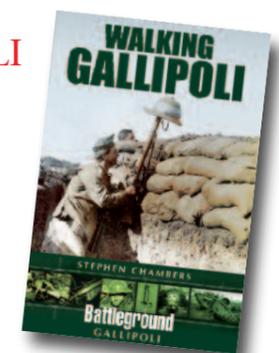


## WALKING GALLIPOLI

By Stephen Chambers

The latest addition to the Pen & Sword Walking Guides Series will no doubt be a welcome one, the Dardanelles feature on the bucket list of most GBG Members. There are few Gallipoli Historians with comparable first-hand experience and knowledge to Steve Chambers of the Gallipoli Peninsula beyond the usual tarmac accessed, well-trodden tourist hotspots. This new guide successfully distils that intimate and comprehensive knowledge into a readily accessible format that is ideal for the minimum realistic visit of 3 full days on the ground. As you would expect plenty of maps, images and anecdotal accounts to support your walking tour. Certainly, a good investment for your first visit and beyond.

Battleground Series Published by Pen & Sword Ltd  
RRP £15.99  
paperback, pp258



# 10 Questions:

Name: Lucy Betteridge-Dyson

Age: 31

Nationality: British

Home Location: Burwash,  
East Sussex

Tour Company: Independent

Validating: Intending



In each edition of Despatches, we will be introducing a member of the Guild. In this edition, it is Lucy Betteridge-Dyson.

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

In 2005 my Grandad, Ted Syms, helped to arrange a pilgrimage back to Burma for a group of veterans who had fought there some 60 years previously. He was incredibly active in the veteran community, and I was lucky enough to join him at several Commando Association meets when I was younger, though he never really discussed his time in 44 Cdo. The determination of this group of Octogenarians to overcome the climate and other difficult conditions in order to reach these remote areas of Burma (even scaling Hill 170) was awe inspiring to me, and the emotional effect that visiting these battlefields had on my Grandad and my Mum (who accompanied him, not quite knowing what to expect!) was profound. Ted passed away not long after this trip which devastated me, but through this I was keen to somehow carry on his active involvement in remembrance. Having always been interested in military history I volunteered for the RBL and later SSAFA and rapidly fell down the rabbit hole of FWW literature. Later, when an opportunity arose to visit the Somme with ABF (who had helped my Husband out some years previously) I jumped at the chance. I think it's fair to say that I left a part of myself in the fields of Picardy on that trip, and the Old Front Line has not stopped calling me back ever since!

**2. Have any experiences stood out?** Each time I visit the Western Front it brings something new to my life on some level, whether that is from a purely academic perspective or a more reflective, spiritual one - I am always learning and the experiences continue to shape my interests and view of not just the Great War but also of life in general. A particular moment that comes to mind was on an Armistice tour last year, when walking to the Menin Gate after speaking about the individual nuances and history of 'remembrance', a lady from my coach took my hand and cried, telling me that in those moments she thinks not of the war itself, but of her Husband who had passed away on Armistice day some years before. For her, visiting the battlefields was not about the FWW directly, but through her pilgrimages she felt she was honouring her Husband's passion. This really connected with my interest in the healing power of the battlefields and

how the events of the past and their emotional impact, can resonate with people today in matters quite unconnected with the war itself.

**3. What do you enjoy the most about battlefield guiding?** I'm pretty new to this, having only started guiding last year, but it simply means the world to me to share my perspective with others and I'm keen to inspire young women in particular into the field. When I can provide a way of looking at the events that took place over 100 years ago, in a slightly different context that makes someone say 'Oh I haven't thought about that before' - that gives me the greatest satisfaction.

**4. What is your favourite stand, location or battlefield and why?** I've always felt more connected with Flanders than any other area on the Western Front. Ploegsteert Woods is a great place to reflect on the impact of nature on war (and war on nature!) and indulge a passion of mine - discussing the importance of horses and mules. I also love Poperinge as a place to look at cultural impact of the war and the area around the New Zealand Division Memorial at Messines.

**5. Which battlefield would you like to visit in the future?** Verdun, Gallipoli and the Arakan region in Burma

**6. What have you enjoyed the most about being a member of the Guild?** The recent trip to visit the CWGC Experience was thoroughly enjoyable. I have only been a member of the Guild for a few months but have already met many friendly and supportive people, eager to share their knowledge and experience with me, which is fab!

**7. If there was a fire and you could only save one battlefield-related book or prop, what would you save and why?** I am going to assume my iPad with Linesman on is not in this fictional burning environment, because that would be a pretty boring answer, so I will say my copy of 'Silent Cities' by Sidney C Hurst. Simply because I am fascinated by the history of the CWGC cemeteries and Rudyard Kipling's 'The King's Pilgrimage' is printed in the front, which is a poem that I think beautifully interprets the battlefields of France and Belgium.

**8. What type of group do you think is the most challenging to lead on a tour?** This is tricky for me to answer, simply because I haven't led that many tours! I had a big group of what can only be described as 'lads, lads, lads' on a coach last year which was quite challenging, mainly because they insisted I stay up till 3am in the bar with them despite a 6am start.

**9. What's the best tip, story or nugget of information you have been given by a fellow battlefield guide?** Don't be afraid to admit when you don't know the answer to a question!

**10. What is the funniest or most dramatic thing you have seen on tour?** I expect this isn't as uncommon as one would like to think, but an amorous couple parked up by the side of the road on the outskirts of Ypres, rolling around on the old German front line. Pretty niche, but it takes all sorts I suppose!