



WFA SUFFOLK BRANCH

Branch Briefing

April 2024

**Our Website :<https://suffolk-wfa.org.uk>
Our Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/WFASuffolk>**



Tonight's talk

Clive Harris

Daring Deeds of the Dardanelles

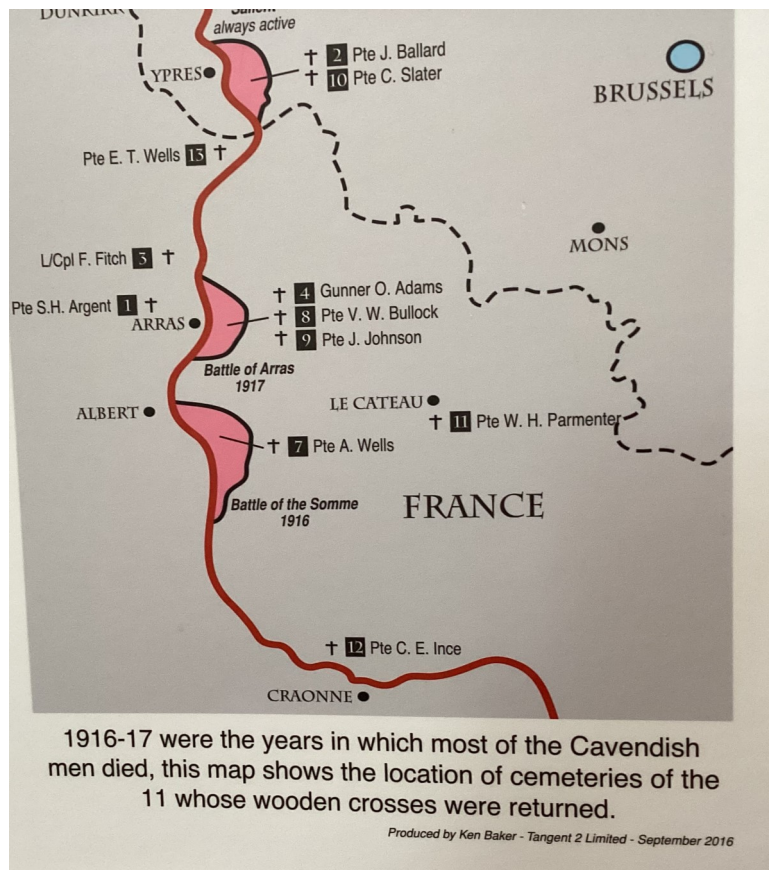
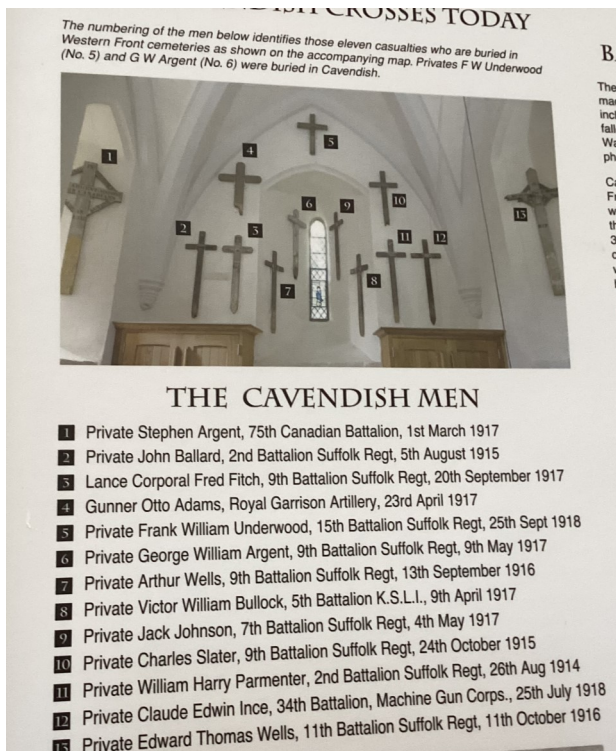
ANDREW LOCK

Proud dad Terry is delighted to announce that son Andrew has been awarded his PhD

ORIGINAL GRAVE MARKERS IN LOCAL CHURCHES Terry Lock

There are several churches with collections of grave markers. A couple of Branch members suggested Monks Eleigh but there are none there, Cavendish the best collection in that direction. They are in a group under the Tower behind glass which caused the reflections. It is a brilliant exhibition, with details of the men and a map showing their location. Apparently the vicar persuaded locals to apply for the crosses when they became available after the war. More to follow.



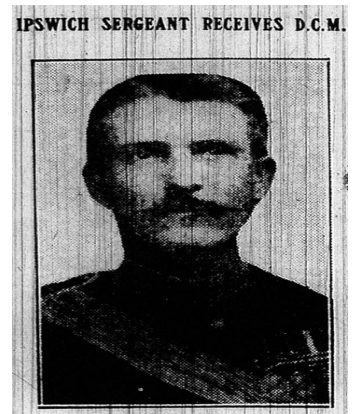


SERGT H BRAGG Kelvin Dakin

Suffolk Chronicle and Mercury 9th June 1916

On Sunday, May 14th last, at Felixstowe, Brigadier-General C Curry, CB, DSO, presented the Distinguished Conduct Medal to No 4142 Sergt H Bragg, 2nd Battalion, Suffolk Regiment. Sergt Bragg was awarded the DCM for conspicuous gallantry on the 22nd January 1916 when the enemy exploded a mine burying him and his platoon; he extricated himself and hearing cries rushed to where four men were buried, dug them out under hot fire, brought one in and assisted the other three into the crater. He then manned the crater and held it all day.

Sergt Bragg has over 21 years service with the colours enlisting in the Suffolk Regiment on the 17th January 1895 and served in Malta, Egypt and South Africa during the Boer War for which he has the Queens and Kings South African Medals and five clasps, also the medal for long service and good conduct. When the present war broke out, he was serving in Egypt with the 1st Battalion and proceeded to France with that battalion on the 16th January 1915; was wounded 16th February and invalided home¹. After recovering from his wound, he was drafted to the 2nd Battalion² where he gained the honour bestowed on him. Sergt Bragg is the second son of the late John Bragg of Hintlesham near Ipswich³. He is a married man⁴, his wife and six children now residing at 20 Hayhill Road Ipswich.



Henry was discharged, age 41, time expired, and with a Silver War Badge, on the 16th February 1917. In 1939 he and his family were living at 193 Cemetery Road, Ipswich. Henry was working part-time as an undertaker's assistant. He died in Ipswich in 1965.

Footnotes:

1. Shrapnel wound to the right thigh.
2. Returned to France 7th December 1915 to 24th February 1916.
3. Harry (Henry) Bragg was born on the 2nd November 1876 in Hintlesham.
4. He married Ruth Eleanor Wade in Bury St Edmunds in 1904.

The Major General Commanding the 3rd, Division wishes to place on record the behaviour of the 2nd, Battalion Suffolk Regiment, under the following circumstances:-

About 2 a.m. on the 22nd, January, 1916 the Germans exploded a mine under the trenches held by this battalion in front of the Bluff close to the Ypres-Comines Canal causing fresh damage and a considerable number of casualties. The charge in the mine is estimated to have been between 6 and 7 tons of gunpowder, which formed a crater measuring roughly 60 by 40 yards and 40 feet in depth. Nearly 100 men were killed, buried alive or injured by the explosion, the damage from which extended to several hundred yards in all directions. In spite of the unexpected nature of the occurrence and the hour at which the mine was exploded, the troops maintained their coolness, quickly occupied the crater and prepared to meet an attack, which, however, the enemy did not think fit to make. Major Crosfield commanding the battalion quickly appreciated the situation and organised the defences while the enemy kept up rifle fire which caused several casualties.

Several Officers and N.C.Os and Men of the battalion were conspicuous by their coolness and some behaved with gallantry rescuing their comrades. The conduct of the battalion under these trying circumstances, was excellent, all ranks behaving in a soldier-like manner, so held the position, which might easily have become serious, was never in danger.

Renninghelst .
31st, January, 1916.

R. Haldane Major General,
Commanding 3rd, Division.

20655, PRIVATE, HENRY GEORGE CHAMBERLAIN DCM, 2ND BATTALION, SUFFOLK REGT. Kelvin Dakin

Born in Pirton, near Hitchin, Herts in 1878, he appears to be the illegitimate son of Rose Chamberlain. Rose died in 1895 and by 1911 Henry is living with his widowed aunt, Elizabeth Gazeley, in Pirton. Henry is working as a farm labourer.

In October 1914, Henry was prosecuted for assault - as recorded in a family tree on the Geneant website

“ *‘Exciting night scenes at Pirton’ read the Hitchin newspaper headline in October 1914. Appearing at the Hitchin sessions, a Pirton man was found guilty of hitting two Pirton special constables outside the White Horse and later that night of assaulting Ellen Hubbard after she sprang to the defence of her husband. ‘A most serious charge’ said the chairman of the court.*”

This court proceedings were also covered in the Herts & Cambs Reporter & Royston Crow of Friday 16th October 1914.

Total fines of over £3 were imposed on Henry with an alternative of imprisonment – which path he took is unknown.

Henry enlisted in Hitchin, and initially served with the 12th Battalion, Suffolk Regiment who were in France from 6th June 1916. According to medal records he also served with 11th and 9th Suffolk before transferring to the 2nd Battalion.

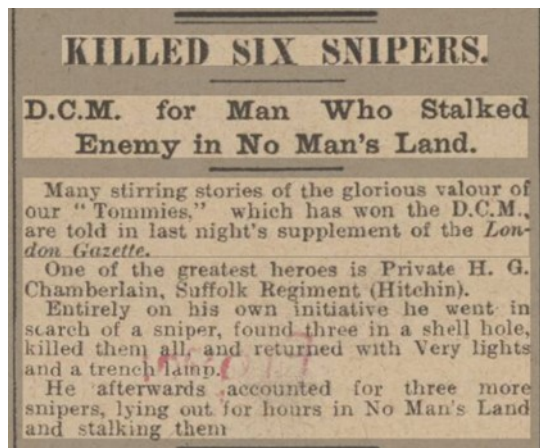
The same Geneant website entry offers the information that he was wounded in early 1917 requiring evacuation to England for treatment and recuperation but returning to the front in July that year. A further quote from the website references his award of the DCM in the Pirton Parish Magazine:

“We congratulate Private Henry Chamberlain on having won the D.C.M. in Flanders. The G.O.C. praised him for his gallant conduct and splendid pluck. R M Stevenson, Staff Captain, November 3, 1917, wrote: ‘The General Officer commanding ---Brigade sends you hearty congratulations on winning the DCM for your very gallant conduct at Zonnebeke. You earned it well by your pluck.’”

(Right: The official citation)

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| 20655 Pte. H.G. CHAMBERLAIN (Hitchin) For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. During operations an enemy aeroplane flew low over our lines and fired a white light, which was answered by a hostile sniper near by. Entirely on his own initiative he went in search of the sniper, found three in a shell-hole, killed them all, and returned with Very lights and a trench lamp. He afterwards accounted for three more snipers lying out for hours in No Man's Land, and stalking them when they declared themselves. (6.2.18) |
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In addition, the website article tells us that: “*He also entered a German pill-box and killed twelve more Germans single handed. He also bayoneted several Germans who feigned death.*” Following publication of the official citation, the story was taken up by the Daily Mirror (9th February 1918).



No specific mention of Henry's exploits has been found in the War Diary but there are some references to the circumstances referred to in the citation and the quoted Parish Magazine.

Written following the 2nd Battalion's part in the attack by V Corps towards Zonnebeke, a *Report on Operations 25th – 29th September 1917* by the Commanding Officer, Lt Col Likeman, mentions that “*A number of the enemy feigned dead but on no occasion did they have any opportunity of doing damage.*” and “*Enemy snipers appeared to be connected by buzzer to machine gun posts and at night machine guns always fired in the direction indicated by a forward sniper shooting Very lights.*”

An account of the action in *The History of the Suffolk Regiment 1914 – 1927* also mentions the sniping activity and low flying enemy aircraft.

On 11th April 1918, 2nd Suffolk had taken up positions at Hinges, reinforcing the trench lines on the La Bassée Canal. It was here, most likely, that Henry was wounded and evacuated to a Casualty Clearing Station at Pernes where he died on the 20th April 1918. He is buried in the British Cemetery there and commemorated on the Pirton village war memorial.

(Picture from Find-A-Grave website)



THEY SHALL GROW NOT OLD

**Talk at the Norwich Branch
Tuesday 7th May**

Dr Peter Hodgkinson 'Fear and courage in the trenches'

**Our next month's talk
Wednesday 8th May
Peter Hart: To be advised**

Please send any contributions for the *Branch Briefing* to:
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telephone: 01394 272677 and email: david.j.hedges@btopenworld.com
Next Committee meeting: tba
Approach a committee member if you want any issue raised.