

# ***WFA SUFFOLK BRANCH***

***Branch Briefing***

***February 2024***

***Our Website :<https://suffolk-wfa.org.uk>***

***Our Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/WFASuffolk>***



**Tonight's talk**

**Andrew Lock : Redan Ridge 1917**

## **FRED HODGSON**

Sorry to advise of the passing of **Fred Hodgson**. Fred, along with Stuart Bufton were the founding pair of our Branch and Fred was our first Treasurer. At the time Stuart was the Vice Chairman of the WFA and first met Fred at a WFA Conference in London. They decided to form a Suffolk Branch. The first meeting was in the upstairs room of the British Legion and the BL has been our home ever since. A great enthusiast of railways who present could forget his lecture on the railway system in WW1 where his knowledge of gauge systems and rolling stock must be unequalled. Unfortunately Fred had to stop attending when dementia took hold. We send our sympathy to Angela and the wider family. Fred's funeral was this very afternoon in Bury St Edmunds, well attended by the Branch veterans from those early times. So goodbye Fred and thank you for us all for being our Founding Father.

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Also the passing of **Martin Middlebrook** has been announced and his funeral is this week in Cheltenham. Martin, alongside Rose Coombes, were pioneers in writing about the War and together were a major influence on the revival of interest post WW2, and especially rekindling interest in WW1 battlefield tours. He attended our Branch a few times not too long ago. Although not an academic, just about every WW1 enthusiast has one or more of his books on their shelves.



## SUFFOLK BRANCH BIG COACH TOUR 2024 Keith Cooper and David Hedges

It is very encouraging that we are approaching a full coach for this trip so I hope you will join us. Please contact Keith on keith-cooper@hotmail.co.uk or David Hedges on david.j.hedges@btopenworld.com.



### Suffolk WFA – Twenty things you haven't seen in Picardy

Saturday 29 June to Tuesday 2 July

Limited to 20 Spaces

£710:00 - £150 Single Supplement

Tour inclusive of

- 29 seat coach & driver throughout
- Return channel crossing
- Clive Harris as guide
- 3 nights Amiens Centre Hotel Moxy B&B
- All museum and fort entry fees

Saturday 29 June – Collect from Suffolk 29 seat coach and driver – Crossing to Calais, stop at Flixecourt on route to Amiens to visit the site of the BEF Camouflage Factory and the location of the Fourth Army Battle School as mentioned by Siegfried Sassoon in *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*  
*Overnight Hotel Moxy Central Amiens*

Sunday 30 June – 1916 Day – passing the RFC base for Somme Operations at Longeau and General Rawlinson's HQ at Querrieu, we then visit the site of the Grandstand where the general staff watched the attack go in on the 1st July, we will follow the Suffolk Regiment attacks at Orvillers (2nd July), Guedecourt (October) & Boom Ravine (February 1917) before ending with a visit to the Thiepval Memorial to hear of a couple of lesser known stories of individuals commemorated on its walls.  
*Overnight Hotel Moxy Central Amiens*

Monday 1 July – 1918 Day - Morning visit to Villers Bretonneux to study the British & Australian defence in April 1918, then we follow the incredible journey whippet tank 'Musical Box' in August 1918 before ending the day with a visit to the Cantigny Battlefield, 28 May 1918 and the US 1st Divisions first offensive of the war. A walk around Amiens town that evening including a visit to the famous Salon Godbert ends our day.  
*Overnight Hotel Moxy Central Amiens*

Tuesday 2 July – Depart Amiens for Calais via a relaxed visit to explore Montreuil, GHQ for the BEF and the recently restored equestrian statue of Sir Douglas Haig as well as his forward Headquarters at Beauquesne



**A CHALLENGE** Terry Lock

I have been wondering which Suffolk church might be called the most WW1 friendly.

One suggestion would be Theberton which has the marvellous stained glass window of Charles Doughty -Wylie who was a Theberton man and was killed at Gallipoli. Also there are parts of the Zeppelin shot down nearby, together with further pictures and the initial grave of crew members before they were transferred.

Another candidate would be Melton Old church with the collection of grave markers.

Does anyone else have any ideas ?



## AN IPSWICH MAN'S DCM AT LE CATEAU Kelvin Dakin

Edward John Stroulger was born in Ipswich on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 1889, the son of William and Emma. In 1901 the family was living in Eustace Road, Ipswich, and Edward, age 12, was working as an errand boy.

Edward's service number indicates that he enlisted in 1907 and in 1911 he is in Aden with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Lincolnshire Regiment.

He crossed to France on the 13<sup>th</sup> August 1914 with the Battalion and was mentioned in Sir John French's Despatches (London Gazette 19<sup>th</sup> October 1914) following the Battles of Mons and Le Cateau.

He was later awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (London Gazette 17<sup>th</sup> December 1914)



8200 Pte. E. STROULGER 1st Bn.  
At Le Cateau he gallantry drove machine  
gun limber under heavy fire, and picked  
up 3 wounded men. (17.12.14)

(Picture of Private Edward Stroulger DCM, MM from an Ancestry Family Tree. Edward appears in family trees as having been married but this is thought to be a case of mistaken identity with another man of similar name.)

### **Extracts from the *History of the Lincolnshire Regiment 1914 – 1918* :-**

#### **The Retreat - August 24<sup>th</sup> 1914**

*Whilst in action our machine-guns did great execution; but in such a cramped position it was inevitable that they should be quickly located and knocked out. They were fought to the last by Lieutenant Holmes, a most gallant and capable officer, whose death was a very serious loss to the battalion. **Private Stroulger** very gallantly drove his machine-gun limber close up to the position and took away some of the wounded. He was later awarded the D.C.M.*

#### **Visit of HM The King – 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1914**

*A Guard of Honour of fifty NCO's and men, under Captain E. Tatchell, proceeded to Locre, where His Majesty presented medals to NCO's and men of the Brigade. **Private Stroulger** was our only representative owing to all the other NCO's and men who had been awarded medals being killed or wounded.*

#### **East Anglian Daily Times, Saturday, December 19, 1914**

An account of a presentation ceremony at Ipswich Town Hall described how a local businessman, Thomas Curtis, had offered a sum of £100 of which £50 was to go to the first VC awarded to an Ipswich resident, and the rest to be divided amongst those awarded either a DSO or DCM. However, the prize was given to Drummer Spencer John Bent VC (1<sup>st</sup> East Lancs), a resident of Stowmarket "...though he had been brought up by his uncle and aunt in Winesham. But Mr Curtis had decided that for the time being the boundaries of the Borough should be extended and that Bent should be the recipient."

Private Stroulger was mentioned in the article among the DCM awards:

*“...Major Stuart then proceeded to hand over to representatives three other cheques which had been presented by Mr. Curtis. The first was to Prvt. T. B. Joslin, of the 12th Battery, R.F.A., but his representative was not present. The next was to **Prvt. E. J. Stroulger, 1st Lincolnshires**, which cheque was received by his sister; and lastly, **Sergt.-Major W. Curtis\***, 2nd Battalion Suffolk Regiment, which cheque was received by his mother. These cheques were for the winning of the Distinguished Conduct Medal. A vote of thanks to the Mayor concluded the proceedings and the meeting broke up with the singing of the National Anthem. As the meeting broke up a large proportion of the assembly crowded round Drummer Bent, who was busily occupied for a long time in shaking hands.”*

Edward was later also awarded the Military Medal (London Gazette 16th July 1918).

He survived the war and is recorded as still serving in the army in the 1921 Census.

In the 1939 Register there is a record for Edward J Stroulger, born 1st March 1889, living at 67 Hutland Road, Ipswich with Mr & Mrs Eaglestone – probably as a lodger. Edward is working as a builder’s labourer and is recorded as being single (see note below).

The death of the same man is recorded in West Norwich Hospital on the 20<sup>th</sup> July 1963. His address was given as 20 Freehold Road, Ipswich and the informant for the registration was “T M Eaglestone” of the same address. From information obtained from the Ipswich Borough Council Cemeteries records Edward was buried in a public or “paupers” grave in Ipswich Old Cemetery.

Footnotes:

\*No record that CQMS W Curtis was given the DCM – he was however mentioned in despatches for taking command of part of the battalion at Mons, after his superior officer was disabled, and brought back 200 men to safety. He was commissioned into the 1<sup>st</sup> Bn, Manchester Regiment in December 1914 as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant, but killed in action at Neuve Chapelle on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 1915. He is not related to Thomas Curtis. See [www.ipswichwarmemorial.co.uk/william-curtis/](http://www.ipswichwarmemorial.co.uk/william-curtis/)

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**LEST WE FORGET** Kelvin Dakin

**8093, Private Charles Willam Nunn, 1st Battalion, Suffolk Regiment**

**7759, Private William Nunn, 1st Battalion, Suffolk Regiment**

The brothers were born in Barrow, Suffolk, the sons of Samuel and Laura Jane Nunn - the family lived in the hamlet of Burthorpe – part of the parish of Barrow.

Their father, Samuel, had previously served in the Militia before joining the regular army in 1880. He had served with the 1st Battalion, Suffolk Regiment from 1882 to 1892 –the last 5 years and 244 days in the Reserve. He married Laura in 1888.

The couple had a total of thirteen children, but Samuel died in 1909 so in 1911 Laura was at home with eight of her children ranging from 1 to 14 years. Charles and William had followed their father into the Regiment – William enlisting around 1909, aged about 15, and Charles about a year later, aged about 18.

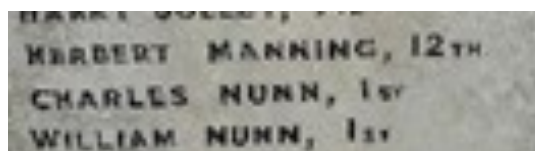
The brothers crossed to France on the 16th/17th January 1915 with the Battalion, arriving at the Ypres Salient in February. From The History of The Suffolk Regiment 1914-1927:

*“On the night of February 4-5 the battalion was to relieve the 2nd Cheshire Regiment in the trenches between the Ypres-Comines Canal and Hill 60 inclusive. A report, however, having been received that part of the 83rd Brigade had been driven out of their front line trenches, “C” and “D” Companies under Captain F S Cooper, were moved as soon as darkness permitted to Blauwe Poort Farm with orders to clear up the situation. No action being required of them, the two companies eventually moved up in relief of the 2nd Cheshire Regiment, the remainder of the battalion arriving from Ypres and carrying out the original order. The relief was completed before daybreak, battalion headquarters being situated in Verbrandenmolen. During the night Pte Palfrey was wounded; but the first man in the 1st Battalion to give his life in the great war was Pte W Nunn, who was shot through the head while cooking breakfast early in the morning of the 5th February.”*

The following article appeared in the Stowmarket Weekly Post on the 25th February.



Charles, initially listed as missing, was presumed to have “died on or since 15/2/15” according to an entry on his Medal Index Card. The Battalion was involved in the fighting following a German attack on the 15th. Both men are commemorated on the village war memorial and on the Menin Gate.



(Picture of Barrow War Memorial – from War Memorials Online by Adrian S Pye)

**THEY SHALL GROW NOT OLD ....**

**Talk at the Norwich Branch  
Tuesday 5th March**

**Major Phil Watson: 'Le Moncel - Lance verses Lance'.**

**Our next month's talk  
Wednesday 13th March**

**Phil Sutcliffe : A foot soldiers memoir of WW1 1918 –1919  
Spring Offensive and POW**

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.