



# WFA SUFFOLK BRANCH

## Branch Briefing

July 2024

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



## Tonight's talk



**Dave Empson : WW1 told in dusted down artefacts that have so far survived over 100 years.**

### LONG-LOST FAMILY Kim Smith

### How the WFA trip to Picardy reunited at least three members of Suffolk WFA with relatives



The WFA group on the site of the first British/German tank battle of the war at Cachy, near Amiens



Clive in full flow outside Chateau St Flixecourt on the first day

It has become a cliché, but the personal stories of those involved really are what bring history to life. Such was the case on Suffolk WFA's *20 Things You Haven't Seen in Picardy* trip to France from June 29 to July 2.

When the group, led by Battle Honours' guide Clive Harris, made an unscheduled stop at the huge Serre Road No 2 Cemetery, Martin Rose gave everybody cause to gasp. Visibly moved, he told Clive that it was the last resting place of a relative who died on the opening day of the Battle of the Somme and this was the first time anybody from the family had visited his grave. The casualty in question was 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Archibald Milne Middleditch from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Essex, who was killed aged just 19.



Giving Martin space to pay his respects, Clive then outlined the 2<sup>nd</sup> Essex's action on the day. They were tasked with attempting to take enemy trenches on the Grandcourt Pusieux Ridge, but came under heavy fire from both artillery and machine guns as soon as they embarked. Although advances were made, those gains later had to be abandoned.

Of the 24 officers and 606 other ranks that went over the top, only two officers and 192 other ranks were left able to fight another day. "Archie" Middleditch, who is related to Martin on his mother's side, was one of the lost officers.

Another unscheduled addition to the tour saw Kim Smith discovering the wood near Amiens where her paternal grandfather's war was ended by a shrapnel wound that hospitalised him for four months.

Private John Treasurer had emigrated with his grandparents to Canada early in 1914 and added two years to his age to enlist in the 52<sup>nd</sup> (New Ontario) Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force in April 1915. Born illegitimate in Glasgow in August 1897 and brought up by his grandparents in Aberdeen, he landed in France on February 21 1916, trained as a signaller and saw his first action at Mount Sorrel on the Ypres Salient in June, then went on with the Third Canadian Division to fight in the later stages of the Somme, Flers-Courcelette, Ancre Heights, Ypres 1917, Passchendaele and finally Amiens.

On August 15 1918, the 52<sup>nd</sup> Battalion were clearing Damery Wood of Germans when he was injured. It is unclear whether the offending shrapnel came from the enemy or friendly fire.

John was shipped to Cardiff to recover and then back to Canada in 1919, where he was demobbed in March. He returned to Scotland and settled back in Aberdeen, where he married in 1921 and had three children with his first wife, included Kim's father.

After his first wife died aged only 26, he remarried and had another eight children. As somebody wryly commented, there was one bit of his anatomy that was clearly undamaged! Joining the Merchant Navy, John served on the Atlantic Convoys throughout World War Two. He died in 1969.



Damery Wood, where Kim's grandfather Private John Treasurer was badly wounded



Private John Treasurer in 1921, two years after he was demobbed from the 52<sup>nd</sup> (New Ontario) Battalion

The third member of the group to pass on stories of his family's WW1 experiences was Roger Mason. Five served and three were killed on the first day of the Somme. One who survived managed to unmask a German spy in WW2. He parachuted into Cambridgeshire and strolled into Roger's relative's post office, raising the alarm when he asked to buy a wristwatch, something that Brits would know wasn't stocked.

Highlights of the rest of the trip ranged from the BEF Camouflage Factory and the Fourth Army Battle School in Flixecourt; the site of the first tank battle between the Allies and Germans on April 24 1918 (the German tanks being described as “armoured tortoises”); the Villers Bretonneux Australian National Memorial; and the newly-restored statue of General Douglas Haig in Montreuil.



2) The chateau was used as the Fourth Army Battle School by officers including Siegfried Sassoon



the splendid statue of General Haig atop his horse at Montreuil, GHQ for the BEF



A close-up of the tank battle marker erected by the local community



A giant poppy brings colour to the bottom of Lochnagar Crater



A newly-laid wreath in memory of Pte “Billy” Disbrey of the 11<sup>th</sup> Suffolks at Lochnagar



Another wreath pays tribute to the Germans who died, including Soldat Otto Glockner

Dave Hedges is asking for ideas for next year’s trip. Don’t hesitate to speak to him as Battle Honours are already heavily booked in 2025.

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## HUTTED HISTORIES — UPCOMING TALKS

Pinched from Taff’s latest Great War Huts newsletter, here is their speaker programme held on the 4th Wednesday of every month at Brook Farm Camp.

- 24th July: Dr Meghan Kelleher - Commemoration & Care of the First World War Dead
- 28th August: Andrew Thornton - The Old Contemptibles
- 25th September: Roy Larkin - London Buses at the Front
- 16th October: Tim Godden - Understanding British War Cemeteries
- 27th November: Helen Frost - Women's Land Army

# PRIVATE P H WARD, 3RD BATTALION AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE

K Dakin

FROM THE NEWSPAPER ARCHIVES

East Anglian Daily Times, 1st December 1915

## **IPSWICH DCM AN OLD POTTERY STREET SCOUT**

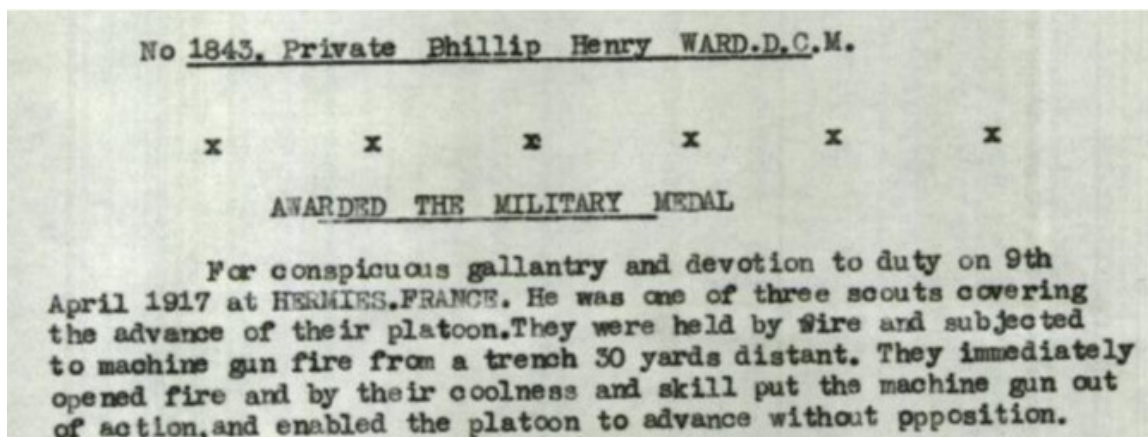
*1843 Prvt P H Ward, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Australian Imp. Force.*

*For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1915, at Lone Pine (Dardanelles). During a strong counter-attack by the enemy, he, with the greatest coolness and bravery, mounted the parapet under heavy and continued fire in order to bring more effective fire on the enemy. His gallant conduct set a fine example and materially contributed to encourage the men of his section in repelling the attack.*

The above announcement in the list of the latest recipients of the DCM published on Tuesday morning refers to an Ipswich lad. Ward's mother, Mrs Naylor, at present resides at 19 Pottery Street. He was one of the first boys to join the Scout Troop formed in connection with the Pottery Street Boy's Club, then known as the 14<sup>th</sup> Troop (now 5<sup>th</sup>). In March 1914 he left for Australia and on the formation of the Australian Contingent he immediately joined. He was one of the first to land in the fighting in the Dardanelles, and so far has escaped all harm. At present there are 107 other old boys of the Club serving the King, much to the satisfaction of the Scoutmaster Mr Walter Osborne.

Philip Henry Ward was born in Stowmarket on the 13th August 1895 but by 1911 he was living with his mother, stepfather and siblings in Pottery Street, Ipswich. He was working as a lift attendant.

He had enlisted on the 29th January 1915 in Sydney and was wounded twice in France (27th July 1916 – severe gunshot wound to the chest and 9 August 1918 – gunshot wound to left knee and severe wound to right arm). He was awarded the Military Medal in 1917:



(Service record - National Archives of Australia)

Philip was promoted to Corporal on 24th April 1917, Lance Sergeant on 18th July 1917, and Sergeant on 27th September 1917. He returned to Australia in December 1918 and was discharged on the 9th April 1919.

(Picture of Philip Ward from Gallipoli Association Facebook page)

## **LEST WE FORGET** Kelvin Dakin

### **12950, Corporal, Albert Edward Grimwood, MM, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Suffolk Regiment**

Albert was born in Stanton in 1895. In 1911 the family are living at Elder House Farm, Thorpe Morieux. Albert (recorded in the census as “Edward”) is working for his father, Christopher, who is running the farm. There are six siblings and his mother, Eliza, in the household.

Albert enlisted in Bury St Edmunds and crossed to France on the 27<sup>th</sup> July 1915 as a Private, joining the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion. He received a gunshot wound to the right foot on the 17<sup>th</sup> August 1916 but quickly returned to duty.

His MM was Gazetted on the 14<sup>th</sup> November 1916 – at the time he was a Lance Corporal.

Albert died of wounds on the 4<sup>th</sup> July 1918 and is buried in Pernes British Cemetery. CWGC records have a post-war address for his parents in Cockfield but Albert does not appear to be commemorated locally, either in Cockfield or Thorpe Morieux.

(Gravestone picture from Find-a-grave website)



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

**Talk at the Norwich Branch  
Tuesday 6th August**

**Jo Costin: Cambridgeshire Kitcheners**

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

**Steve Smith: Norfolk Regiment on the Western Front**

Please send any contributions for the **Branch Briefing** to:  
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Next Committee meeting: tba  
Approach a committee member if you want any issue raised.