

# WFA SUFFOLK BRANCH

## Branch Briefing

June 2024

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



## Tonight's talk

**John Peaty: Lawrence of Arabia**

### UNUSUAL HEADSTONE Dave Hedges

Whilst I was staying at the famous Avrils someone showed me this photo of a headstone with no less than fifteen lines of message. I have never seen more than three. In fact I use to spout knowledgeably whilst guiding that the CWGC only allows three lines max.



It reads :-

SERIOUSLY WOUNDED WHILE ADVANCING WITH HIS REGIMENT IN THE FIGHTING NEAR ST. JULIEN SAT. APRIL 24. 1915 HE WAS TAKEN TO THE FIELD HOSPITAL BUT WAS SO EAGER TO UPHOLD THE HONOUR OF HIS REGIMENT AND TO SERVE HIS COUNTRY THAT HE RETURNED NEXT DAY TO THE FIRING LINE AND REMAINED WITH HIS COMRADES UNTIL THEY WERE RELIEVED AND DIED ON APRIL 30TH COURAGEOUS TO THE END AND BELOVED BY ALL WHO KNEW HIM

The soldier is EDWARD RUST 4th Battn. Yorkshire Regt. He is buried in Hazebrouck Communal Cemetery. He died 30 April 1915 aged only 19.

## SUFFOLK CHURCHES WITH WW1 DISPLAYS Terry Lock

Continuing to look at WW1 friendly churches in Suffolk. This is Melton Old Church which is not always open.



### THE WOODEN CROSSES AT MELTON OLD CHURCH



*These wooden crosses were brought back from the battlefields of the 1914 - 1918 war.*

In most Parishes they would have been disposed of after War Memorials had been erected in villages but because Melton had two churches these were removed and retained at Melton Old Church.

A VISITOR FROM THE IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM WAS MOST SURPRISED TO SEE SO MANY ; IT WAS THE LARGEST COLLECTION HE HAD SEEN. HE TOOK A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE CROSSES AND THE CHURCH AND THAT IS NOW IN THE IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

## **THE STORY OF A SURVIVOR Kelvin Dakin**

### **CAPTAIN WILLIAM JOHN NAGLE, DSO, MC, 2<sup>nd</sup> BATTALION, SUFFOLK REGIMENT**

#### **EARLY LIFE**

William was born on the 19<sup>th</sup> December 1888 in Oldbury (West Midlands) – the son of Matthew and Mary Ann Nagle. In 1891 the family is living in Snettisham, Norfolk – Mary Ann’s birthplace. Mary Ann is described as married, but Matthew is not with the family. In 1881 Matthew Nagle, from Oldbury, is recorded as serving with the Grenadier Guards which may explain his absence and the various birth-places of the family. A daughter, Alice Ann was born in Silvertown, Essex in 1886 and a brother, Thomas Henry, was born in 1893 in Snettisham.

However, what happened to Matthew is a mystery as he doesn’t appear in any census with the household although Mary is described as “Married” up to 1911. When daughter, Alice Ann, married in 1916 her father is described as a “Labourer, deceased”.

In 1911 William is living with his mother and brother in Snettisham and he is working as a farm labourer.

#### **WAR SERVICE**

William crossed to France with the Army Cyclist Corps as Sergeant No 5135 on 31<sup>st</sup> August 1915 – probably with 24<sup>th</sup> Division Cyclist Company.

He was commissioned as a Temporary 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the Suffolk Regiment on the 29<sup>th</sup> May 1917 and joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion while they were at Fremicourt on the 16<sup>th</sup> July 1917.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1918, William was on leave in the UK and had married Florence Marion Williamson in the parish church at Snettisham.

#### **THE MILITARY CROSS**

William was “Gazetted” for a Military Cross on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1918:

T./2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. William John Nagle, Suff. R.

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty in continuing in command of his platoon, although twice buried by shell fire and badly shaken. After his objective was gained he reconnoitred the ground in front, and when a counter-attack was delivered inflicted very heavy casualties with controlled fire. Finally advancing to repel it with the bayonet.

A War Office report dated 26<sup>th</sup> June 1918 listed his entitlement to wear a wound stripe. The wound occurred during the battalion’s night attack on the 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> June at La Pannerie near Hinges. He remained at duty. He had been made “acting Captain while commanding a Company” on the 16<sup>th</sup> May 1918 (Supplement to the London Gazette, 11<sup>th</sup> July 1918)

#### **THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ORDER**

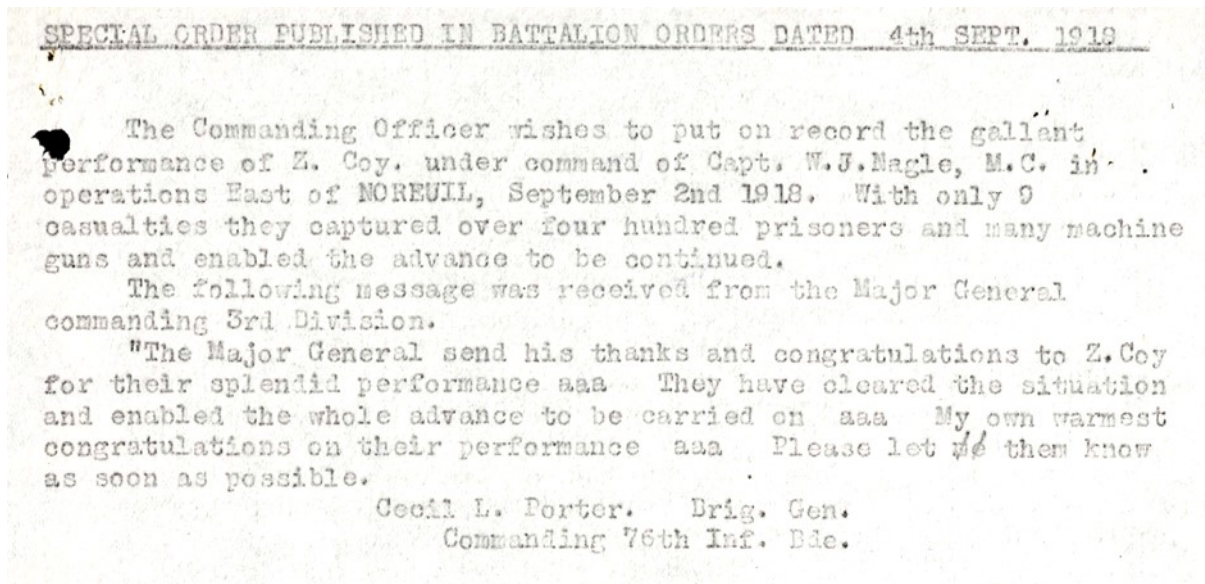
On 31<sup>st</sup> August 1918, the battalion was at rest in Mory Switch trench and the following day a message was received informing them of an advance to be made along the whole British front.

From *The History of the Suffolk Regiment 1914-1927 (Murphy)*:

(2<sup>nd</sup> September 1918)

Early in the morning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> the battalion moved forward, headquarters being established with that of the 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade. At 10am one company under Captain W J Nagle MC, having been placed at the disposal of the officer commanding KSLI was ordered to advance and clear up Vraucourt switch, Macaulay Avenue and the sunken roads. This was effected in a brilliant manner. With only nine casualties they captured over a mile of trench, 400\* prisoners and many machine guns. The divisional commander sent a message of congratulations on the gallant performance of Captain Nagles's company, published as a special order of the day.

(\*The War Diary report says 200 prisoners as does the citation. The special order issued by the Brigadier General states 400 prisoners - see below) - sorry for the faint reproduction



Captain Nagel was awarded the DSO for this action as described in the London Gazette, 10<sup>th</sup> January 1919:

T. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt (A/Capt.) William John Nagle, MC 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn Suff R

When ordered, during operations, to clear a trench area infested with machine guns and holding up an advance, he displayed the greatest courage and determination in leading his company. He cleared over a mile of trench and sunken roads and was responsible for the capture of over 200 prisoners and many machine guns. His utter disregard of danger and fine example were primarily responsible for the success of the operation.

#### MENTIONED IN DISPATCHES

A London Gazette entry for the 24<sup>th</sup> December 1918 lists 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant (Acting Captain) W J Nagle, Suffolk Regiment, as being "Mentioned In Dispatches" – Sir Douglas Haig's Dispatch of 8<sup>th</sup> November 1918.

## POST WAR

After the war William and Florence are living at 6 Coronation Road, Luton near Chatham and the birth of two children (William Thomas and Florence E M) are recorded in 1920 and 1921.

## A CENTENARIAN

By 1939 they are living at 440 Hucknall Road in Nottingham and William is an Engineer working for HM Borstal Institution. Florence died in 1955 age 59 and William died in 1993 in Scarborough age 104.

# First World War hero dies aged 104

ONE of Scarborough's oldest and bravest residents has died at the age of 104.

William Nagle risked his life as a young man when his bravery in the First World War trenches won him top medals. The war robbed him of many friends and colleagues, but he battled on to see the conflict out.

He then had a full and happy life during which he enjoyed such good health that he lived alone until he was 103.

His son, also William, said that Mr Nagle enlisted in the Norfolk Regiment at the outbreak of the war and obtained a commission in 1917 when he was transferred to the Suffolk Regiment.

His bravery won him two of the most coveted medals – the Military Cross and the Distinguished Service Order. He was also twice mentioned in dispatches for distinguished service in the field.

At one stage he and his men were surrounded by the enemy, and another time he and his troops captured more than a mile of trenches and took more than 400 prisoners.

His son said that his father considered himself a lucky man to have survived the war. "The losses were tremendous," he said.


Mr Nagle married his wife, Florence, in January 1918 and they had two children, one a girl who died as a young child.

After the war he joined the prison service as an engineer responsible for buildings. He retired from the service in 1946 and went to work for the Raleigh bike company in Nottingham. He left in 1956, a year after the death of his wife.

He moved to Scarborough in 1967 to be near his son and lived at Sandybed Court until last March when his health began to fail. He latterly lived at Holly Court, the Filey Road home for the elderly.

His son, of Stepney Road, said that he and his father had always been "good pals".

"He was a really lovely man," he said. "He was always cheerful and he kept his mind right until he died. To me, he was simply remarkable."



**SALUTE FROM AN OLD SOLDIER: William Nagle**

### Footnote:

William's brother, Thomas Henry Nagel, was killed in action on the 19<sup>th</sup> September 1918 while serving with the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Princess Charlotte's of Wales (Royal Berkshire) Regiment. He is commemorated on the Vis-en-Artois Memorial and on the Snettisham Village War Memorial.

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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.

26th June: Simon Jones - Underground Warfare 1914-18

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

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## **LEST WE FORGET** Kelvin Dakin

### **40466, Private Harry Leggett, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Suffolk Regiment**

Harry was born in Great Bealings in 1891, the son of John and Anna Leggett. In 1911 the family was living in Grundisburgh and Harry was working as a Grocer's Assistant.

After enlisting Harry served with the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Battalions before transfer to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion and was recorded as having been wounded in the War Office Daily List No 5468 dated 17<sup>th</sup> January 1918.

Harry was killed in action on the 1<sup>st</sup> June 1918 and is buried at the Sandpits British Cemetery, Fouquereuil.

He is commemorated on the Grundisburgh War Memorial



www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk  
Photo Adrian S Pye

His brother William died, of disease, in Cairo on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 1918 while serving with the 5<sup>th</sup> Royal Irish. He was previously Pte 40256 of 1<sup>st</sup> Suffolk.

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

### **Talk at the Norwich Branch Tuesday 2nd July**

**Rob Burkett and Andrew England :**  
“A Great War Miscellanea..... aspects, stories and encounters on the Western Front”.

### **Our next month's talk Wednesday 10th July**

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

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.