

WFA SUFFOLK BRANCH

**Branch Briefing
April 2023**

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**Tonight's talk
Simon Keable-Elliott**

**Utterly immoral WW1 Chaplain
and author Robert Keable**

Very sad to hear Rob Thompson passed away on the 20th March. Rob was a very respected and knowledgeable historian. His speciality was centred on logistics, not a subject that attracts many historians and yet a vital element for understanding the start, progress and outcome of any battle.

He will be greatly missed

THE YOUNGEST OFFICER TO DIE IN WW1 ? Colin Woods

Colin thinks he has found details of what might be the youngest officer to be killed in WW1

2nd Lt Cyril Anthony Hudson-Hillier was born in 1897 and was killed on 26 Feb 1915 at the age of just 17

He is buried in New Stow Cemetery, Stowmarket Plot T97

He was wounded 7 January 1915 at Ploegsteert, Belgium, transferred back to England, where he succumbed to chest wounds. He is buried with a family headstone not CWGC

He was the son of Dr Sidney and Mary Ethel Hillier.



Tour Proposal -The Battlefields of Champagne 7-11 September 2023

Julian Whippy and Keith Cooper

This often-overlooked campaign lasted through the Summer of 1918 but commenced on 27 May with the 'shock and awe' of the German Blücher offensive, one that almost destroying three British divisions on the Chemin des Dames. The German advance to the Marne, directly threatened Paris but was held at Chateau Thierry by a mixed force of US Infantry and Marines, the first major intervention by the AEF on the Western Front.

What followed saw the 'Rock of the Marne' and the Mangin offensive, both of which events were acknowledged by the Germans as the turn of the tide of war, weeks before the 8 August attack to the north by BEF. Our tour will enable us study if that was in fact the case by exploring the British, French, Italian and American contribution to the Allied campaign. Based in Reims, there will also be chance to explore the Champagne Houses and vineyards, many of which had direct links to the Battle of the Marne.

7 September *Travel Day* Pick-up in Suffolk and Ebbsfleet for onward travel to Reims, a stop on-route on the Chemin des Dames to look at the opening phases of the battle and provide some context to the tour. – Overnight Reims

8 September *Chateau Thierry and Belleau Wood* - A morning study of the battle for Belleau Wood including the advance into the wood, visits to a number of associated sites and the nearby ABMC and German Cemeteries. After lunch we look at one of the great what ifs of the war, the Battle of Chateau Thierry and the unmanned bridge spanning the town. We also visit the US Memorial and Visitors Centre that stands guard over the river Marne and offer commanding views of the battlefield. We end the day by studying the Rock of the Marne a true symbol of American resistance in 1918

9 September *The British in the Ardre Valley* - The day is spent touring the nearby Ardre Valley where the British fought two actions in the summer of 1918. Firstly, the defensive battle fought by the 19th (Western) Division that slows the German advance as they attempt to encircle Reims. We then consider the offensive actions of the 51st (Highland) and 62nd (West Riding) Divisions over the same ground as they fought their way through the dense forests and rolling vineyards before reaching the commanding Montagne de Bligny at the conclusion of an intense 9-day battle. We end the day in Epernay and tour the Avenue de Champagne, the mile long thoroughfare offers an unbroken boulevard of champagne houses and bars.

10 September *The battlefields of Reims* - We start the day with a visit to the nearby Fort de la Pompelle to consider the French battlefields prior to the British arrival in July 1918, after visiting a number of sites connected to the French fighting between 1915 and 1917, we end with a visit to a Reims Champagne House for a cellar tour & tasting.

11 September 2023 *Travel Day* – after some free-time in Reims to visit its magnificent Cathedral, we head home via Calais and to Suffolk.

Price- £710 per person £180 Single supplement. This includes Coach, Ferry, Guide and 4 nights in Hotel on B&B basis. This is based on minimum of 18 people booking. £100 deposit.

To register your interest please email Keith Cooper keith-cooper@hotmail.co.uk

FREDERICK JAMES ADAMS – ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY – 34TH DIV. AMMUNITION COLUMN Geoffrey Robinson

Minty Farm Cemetery was a completely unplanned stop on our private 2016 Ypres trip. My navigational skills had been left behind in Wipers as we found ourselves somewhere in the midst of the former battlefield of Third Ypres! But we decided to have a brief wander around this small cemetery and, as always, have a quick scan of the Visitor's Book. Someone had written in the comments section that one of the burials, Frederick J. Adams, was "born in Monewden, Suffolk" which seemed like an unusual thing to write. I decided to investigate further and I found that Fred was not mentioned on the Monewden war memorial. After making contact with that family member, determined efforts were made to try to persuade the Monewden hierarchy that Fred's name needed to go onto the memorial but those efforts proved to be fruitless. A great shame. But at least, with the help of Fred's great grandson, I can now tell the full story of another Suffolk boy who served his country.

Frederick James Adams was born in the spring of 1873 in the parish of Monewden, Suffolk. His father Mark was a labourer and he and his family were nomadic, moving from place to place wherever work was to be found. When Fred began school, the family had moved to Brandeston and thence to Burgh where Fred began his own working life as a young labourer on a farm.

Fred was one of many Suffolk agricultural workers who began travelling to Burton upon Trent to work in the malting and brewery industries when the farm work in Suffolk petered out during the winter months. He met his wife Elizabeth Bailey there and they married in 1896. Their eldest son Frederick was born in Burton upon Trent in 1897 but their second child Elizabeth was born in the village of Farcet in Huntingdonshire. In the 1901 census, Fred was described as a brickyard labourer there.

Why did the Adams family move to this tiny parish a mile or two south of Peterborough? We may never know but it was here that Fred picked up an interest in the Salvation Army. A small Salvation Army church still exists in Farcet to this day. After a two year stay in Farcet, the family returned to Burton on Trent where four more children were born. Then Fred moved with his wife and six children to Wakefield where he began working in the local colliery as a coal miner, a reserved occupation.

By 1914, the whole family were involved musically with the Salvation Army. Fred played the clarinet and had become the local bandleader. But, against family wishes, he decided to go to war. Others from the same SA branch joined up as well. Fred joined the Royal Field Artillery possibly because they recruited a battery in Wakefield but also because his uncle was involved with the RFA. His uncle was a sergeant major who served in many places including India and Ireland. Fred rose to become a Corporal, having had a spell with trench mortars. He was a horseman and one of the oldest serving with the 32nd Div. Ammunition Column. Perhaps he ought to have had a gallantry award because the Salvation Army records tell us that he had given up his horse to another soldier who was wounded and unable to walk. That story is remembered by the family because, after the War when the Salvation Army had one of their New Years Eve parties in the Bull Ring, Wakefield, the fellow he saved came up and told them all about it and they all sang a special hymn in remembrance of Fred. Apparently the two of them were shelled and the other chap's horse was killed. Fred gave him his horse and walked, only to be seriously injured later and sadly he died of his wounds in a field hospital on October 30th 1917. Fred was 44 years old.



As already mentioned, Fred is not remembered in Monewden nor is he listed in Farcet or Burton upon Trent. It was not immediately clear what form any war memorial(s) took in Wakefield but a little extra research revealed that Fred's name was written into the town's Book of Remembrance which serves as one of their war memorials.

And so through an inadvertent drive down a narrow country lane to a rarely-visited CWGC cemetery, we can at least take some satisfaction in recording the story of Corporal Frederick James Adams of the Royal Field Artillery in this briefing and include two images of Fred which was not available during the recent Big Coach Tour visit to Minty Farm Cemetery.

I am indebted to Fred's great grandson Graham for the details of Fred's life and his death in Flanders Fields. In 2016, we said that we would probably never visit Minty Farm again but, thanks to Clive Harris and Julian Whippy, just how wrong would we be. So many thanks, chaps!



8131, Sergeant Charles William Blinco, DCM, 12th Battalion Suffolk Regiment



From *The History of the Suffolk Regiment 1914- 1927* - Lt Col CRR Murphy:
12th Battalion Suffolk Regiment - 1917

“On September 25 at dusk, after artillery preparation, two companies, under Captains Schiff and Redding respectively set out upon a raid at Gonnellieu, sappers co-operating with smoke screens and thermite. The lynx-eyed enemy, having observed these companies getting out of the trenches, put down a barrage five minutes ahead of theirs. As the party advanced in the moonlight they were followed across by this barrage but in spite of these difficulties succeeded in reaching their objective. Besides killing many Germans in the trenches they bombed several dugouts, blowing in the entrance of those which the enemy refused to come out and returning at the end of the hour with five prisoners and a machine gun.”

The raiding party suffered nearly one hundred casualties but among the awards given for the action was a DCM for Sgt Blinco as reported in the Cambridge Press on the 9th November 1917:

The official citation reads:

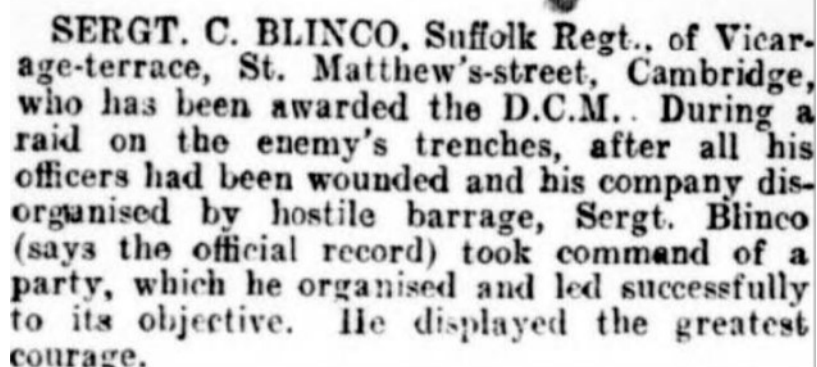
8131 Sjt. C. BLINCO (Cambridge)
For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty in a raid on the enemy's trenches. When all his officers were wounded and the company disorganised by a hostile barrage he took command, reorganised his men, and led them successfully to the objective. Later, he made several journeys, bringing back the wounded under heavy fire. He showed the greatest initiative and courage throughout. (6.2.18)

Charles was born in 1888, the son of Dennis and Caroline Blinco of Swaffham Bulbeck. He enlisted in 1910 and in 1911 he is with the 2nd Battalion, Suffolk Regiment at Aldershot. Later in that year he married Clara Mary Long in Cambridge.

He crossed to France on the 17th February 1915 to join the 2nd Battalion, later serving in the 9th and then the 12th Battalions.

Charles died of wounds on the 19th April 1918 and is buried at Wimereux Communal Cemetery. He is commemorated on the St Matthews Church Memorial in Cambridge.

His widow lived at 13 Vicarage Terrace, Cambridge until she died in 1962.



SERGT. C. BLINCO, Suffolk Regt., of Vicarage-terrace, St. Matthew's-street, Cambridge, who has been awarded the D.C.M.. During a raid on the enemy's trenches, after all his officers had been wounded and his company disorganised by hostile barrage, Sergt. Blinco (says the official record) took command of a party, which he organised and led successfully to its objective. He displayed the greatest courage.

THEY SHALL GROW NOT OLD

**Talk at the Norwich Branch
Tuesday 2nd May**

JOHN CHESTER. 'EIGHT WOMEN AND A BOY - SERBIA IN THE GREAT WAR

**Our next month's talk
Wednesday 10th May**

Ross Beadle : 10 decisions that decided the Battle of the Marne

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.