



WFA SUFFOLK BRANCH

Branch Briefing

December 2022

Our Website : www.suffolk-wfa.org

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



Cameos followed by AGM



Merry Christmas One and All !!

WELCOME TO THIS EVENING'S MEETING Dave Hedges

We will hold the AGM after the three 'Cameos' ie three twenty minute talks from our own members

Julian Whippy : 'Annus Horribilis' (A romp through 1915).

Nigel Crisp : 'Small Town Duty'

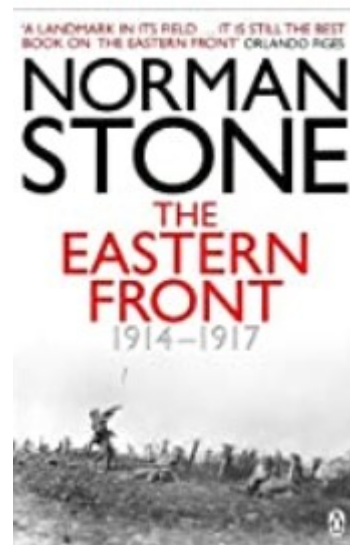
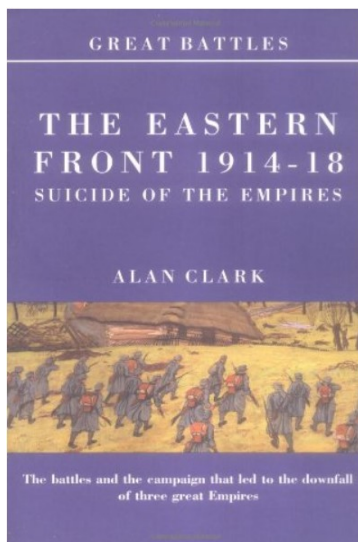
Ed Erbes : 'The siege of Przemysl'

I hope most will stay for the AGM. If we use the time efficiently it should not take too long.

WW1 IN THE EAST Stephen Lustig

Inspired by the cameo for the siege of Przemysl, I must confess I'm as much an 'Easterner' as a 'Westerner'. Should any of our colleagues fancy a bit of research on the subject I recommend Alan Clark's book An excellent (and thin!) overview of the War in the East.

Another good book (A bit thicker) on a knotty subject is Norman Stone's book.



“GOOSEBERRIES FOR CHRISTMAS DAY” Kelvin Dakin

An extract from the War Diary of the 2nd Battalion, Suffolk Regiment.

The Battalion relieved the 1st Gordon Highlanders in the front line on the 22nd December 1917 - they then had two quiet days leading up to Christmas Day.

“25th December 1917

6am Our TM Batteries carried out some fairly heavy firing on enemy positions on left of Bn Sector.

10am The enemy retaliated. For remainder of the day, he shelled with varying violence distributing his fire over the whole area but principally on our right – GORDON SUPPORT etc. About 2pm he shelled our main CT, BULLECOURT AVENUE.

2-3 inches snow fell. Work was mainly in clearing front line and repairing damage due to weather. Gooseberries made up and put out. Wiring of support positions continued.”*

*GOOSEBERRY. Barbed wire entanglement or reel, from the prickly nature of the gooseberry bush.

(Battlefield Colloquialisms of World War I (1914-1918) David Tuffley)

After another quiet, but snow-covered, Boxing Day they were relieved on the 27th by the 20th Middlesex and marched to camp at Mory (described as “*bad*” with some men sleeping in tents) and then on to Rest Camp at Blairville - where the huts are described as “*cold and draughty – the floor in most cases covered with snow.*”

The closing days of 1917 were spent improving the huts but on January 1st 1918:

“Observed as a general holiday. Owing to extreme cold and frost-bound state of ground nothing ambitious in the way of organised games was possible. Men had their Christmas dinner with free issues of beer and cigarettes.”

*An oblique aerial view of Bullecourt dating to 1918. AWM image A00664
(Reproduced from The Long Long Trail website)*



The operational order for the relief shows their disposition in the trench system in front of the village of Bullecourt.

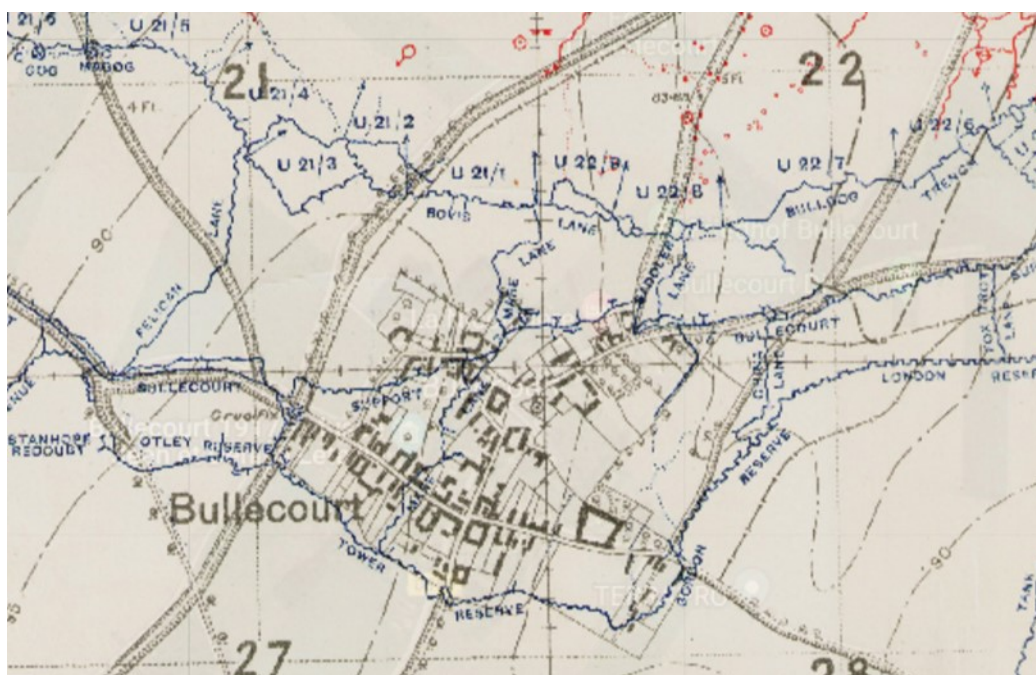
Operation Order 38. - Bn. The Suffolk Regt.

1. The Battalion will relieve the 1st. Gordon Highlanders in the BULLECOURT left subsector tomorrow.
2. Dispositions.
 - Z Coy. 2 platoons in BOVIS relieving 2 platoons A Coy.
2 platoons in JOYRIDE Right
 - X Coy. 2 -- in TUNNEL relieving 2 platoons D Coy.
2 -- in TUNNEL SUPPORT
 - Y Coy. 2 -- in JOYRIDE Left relieving 2 platoons C Coy.
2 -- in TOWER SUPPORT B Coy.
 - W Coy. 2 -- in TOWER REDOUBT B Coy.
2 -- in STATION REDOUBT C Coy.
3. Guides will be at RAILWAY DUMP at 5.30 p.m. for Z Coy.
~~1 per platoon for Z Coy.~~
1 guide per platoon for X Coy. at junction of PELICAN & NEW PELICAN at 6 p.m.
There will be no guides for Y & W Coys.
- Z Coy. will move at 5 p.m. the remaining 3 Companies at 5.30 p.m.
4. Transport for all Companies will come to RAILWAY DUMP. Companies will arrange for their own ration & water parties this tour.
Cooking arrangements will be as usual.
5. One N.C.O. per company & 1 for Bn. H.Q. will go up in advance and take over stores in daylight.
6. 'Relief complete' will be reported by hammer.
7. Acknowledge.

21/12/14.

R. Russell
Adjutant - Bn. Suffolk Regt.

Extract from 51B SW4 1:10000 Bullecourt 5A. Trenches corrected to 10 December 1917 (WFA Trenchmapper)



MORE CONTRIBUTORS WANTED FOR THE FUTURE BRIEFINGS !!

LEST WE FORGET Kelvin Dakin

17141, Private William Walter "Willie" Bannister MM, 11th Battalion, Suffolk Regiment



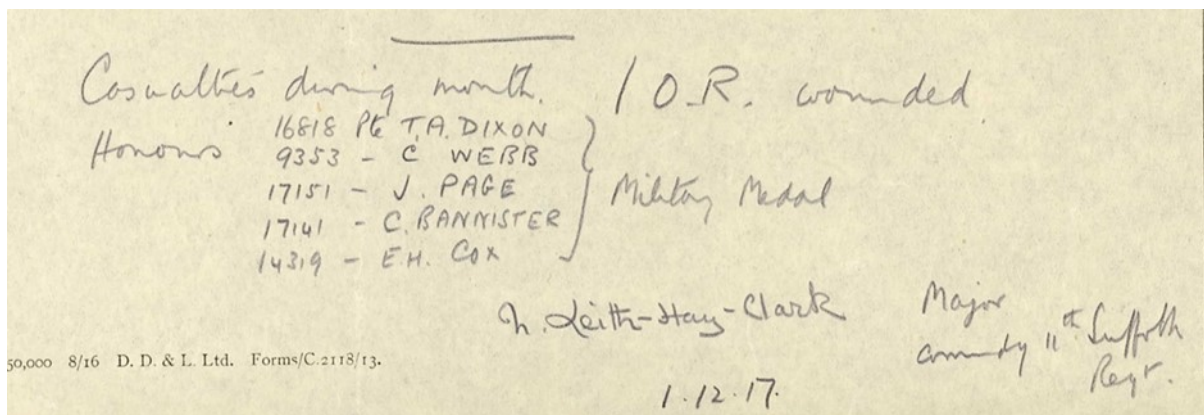
William was born in Barnadiston, Suffolk, in 1896, the son of Walter and Emily Bannister. By 1911 the family was living at Burgoyns Cottages, Church End, Trumpington, Cambs. William was age 15 and working as a farm labourer.

He enlisted in Cambridge in December 1914 and crossed to France in 1916.

On the 6th August 1916 he was reported as having been wounded and entitled to a wound stripe.

(Photo: roll-of-honour.com)

The award of his Military Medal was recorded in the Battalion War Diary in November 1917 but as "C" Bannister in error.



William was evacuated to the UK and he died at the First Eastern General Hospital in Cambridge on the 4th December 1917 and was later buried in Hildersham churchyard.

HILDERSHAM.

PTE. W. W. BANNISTER.—We regret to announce that Pte. W. W. Bannister, of the Suffolk Regt., the son of Mrs. Bannister, of Hildersham, died on December 4th at the 1st Eastern General Hospital. Pte. Bannister won the Military Medal for bravery in the field.

His headstone was provided without recording his MM but in 2017 this was corrected by the CWGC after the error was highlighted by a local researcher.

The newspaper report of this can be seen online:

<https://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/news/medal-award-added-great-war-12473137>



(Photo: findagrave.com)

One error that seems to have gone un-noticed though, is his service number. The CWGC online database has his correct number of “17141” but their original archive documents have “17144” as was inscribed on the headstone. War Diary entry, medal and other records confirm “17141” as being correct. (At the time of writing -15/11/22- the CWGC have confirmed that this will be corrected)



Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regt. No.
BANNISTER	Suff R.	Pvt.	17141.
William W.			

An “In Memorium” notice appeared in the Cambridge Independent Press - Friday 6th December 1918 – confirming that William died of a “short but painful illness”.

He is also commemorated on the village war memorial in the parish church.

THEY SHALL GROW NOT OLD ...

**Talk at the Norwich Branch
Tuesday 10th January
Geoff Caulton — ‘Munitions Girls’**

**Our next month’s talk
Wednesday 11th January**

Kevin Patience : Two sets of medals - A unique award for a unique man.

Please send any contributions for the *Branch Briefing* to:
David Hedges, 99 Cliff Road, Felixstowe, Suffolk, IP11 9SA
telephone: 01394 272677 and email: david.j.hedges@btopenworld.com
Next Committee meeting: tba
Approach a committee member if you want any issue raised.

2022 AGM

Suffolk WFA AGM. Wednesday 14th December 2022.

Venue: RBL Stowmarket

Agenda

1. Apologies.
2. Chairman's Report
3. Secretary's Report.
4. Treasurer's Report.
5. Speaker Secretary's Report.
6. Battlefield Tours.
7. Election of Officers.
8. AOB.