



WFA SUFFOLK BRANCH

Branch Briefing

December 2023

Our Website : www.suffolk-wfa.org.uk

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

David Hedges -- "Radar was invented in my back bedroom" -- a passing mention of WW1 but almost off-subject, but it is Christmas

Ed Erbes -- "Haber & Bosch"

Roger Mason -- "From Douglas the Dummy to Charles the butcher" (Oh What a Lovely War)?" all about Roger's grandfather

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

OUR SPEAKER PROGRAMME FOR 2024 Tom Mudd

10/01/2024	The Flying Sikh	Stephen Barker
14/02/2024	Redan Ridge 1917	Andrew Lock
13/03/2024	A foot soldiers memoir of WW1 1918-1919 spring offensive and Pow	Phil Sutcliffe
10/04/2024	Daring Deeds of the Dardanelles	Clive Harris
8/05/2024	Subject TBC	Peter Hart
12/06/2024	Lawrence of Arabia	John Peaty
10/07/2024	WW1 told in dusted down artefacts that have so far survived over 100 years.	Dave Empson
14/08/2024	Norfolk Regiment on the Western Front	Steve Smith
11/09/2024	Deserters of the First World War - The Home Front	Andrea Hetherington
9/10/2024	Irish recruitment to the British Armed Forces 1914-1918	Timothy Bowman
13/11/2024	Cambrai	Ross Beadle
11/12/2024	AGM and Cameos	

SUMMER TOUR !!! —> Looking Great —>- see the next page

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

David Hedges : - Keith and I have been working up a tour with Clive Harris. We think it's got all the ingredients of a great tour. I hope you will want to join us. We can adapt the tour stands to the interests of those joining us. Here are the details. 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



OUR WEBSITE John Burns

The Suffolk branch of the WFA has a new website address following a failure of the old address earlier this year. This is now <https://suffolk-wfa.org.uk/>. Note the addition of “.uk” at the end.

The site is a replica of the old site that was retrieved from archives although uses a modern web page builder system to allow for future development and is designed to be responsive i.e. works just as well on a desktop as it does a mobile phone. It is quite simplistic but does rely on members input to keep it up to date. As can be seen from the site it is based around four main areas of meetings in Stowmarket, battlefield tours, an archive of Branch Briefings that Dave Hedges produces every month, and a contact page. If any member has anything they want added to the site please contact John Burns at jxbhome@btinternet.com or use the Contact form on the website.

HOW THE 4TH SUFFOLKS SPENT CHRISTMAS. Kelvin Dakin

From the newspaper archive - Ipswich Evening Star 31 December 1914

A private of the 4th Battalion Suffolk Regiment writes home as to how they spent the Christmas holidays in France. On December 23rd, he says, the battalion marched to a place about -----*, where we earned an excellent name from -----*, where some good work was done by the battalion. On the 24th we, in our section, considered how best to prepare for the Christmas Day. Our Lance-Corporal, having got an advance from the Captain, went with some men to different farms round about to buy the Christmas duck or chickens to supplement the piece of beef that had been issued. No duck or chicken was, unfortunately, to be had, but a chum and myself went out and got as many cabbages as we could carry. Our Lance-Corporal bought some potatoes, and nuts, oranges, wine, and beer were purchased with the money left. The boys also had plum puddings, rum, tobacco, fags, matches, etc., and we finished up at night with a concert, including a mouth-organ band. On Christmas morning we had for breakfast ham, jam, tea, cheese, and bread, and at 10 am we had a church parade, greetings being read out from Bury St. Edmund's. At 11.30 we adjourned for sports, which were carried out well under the control of the officers, who presented the prizes, after which we returned to dinner, which was thoroughly enjoyed. In the afternoon presents were distributed, those sent by the King and Queen and other private gifts. In the evening a concert was held, when nuts, oranges, wine, rum, and beer was on the table, and with songs and dancing, in which the French people joined, we spent a most enjoyable evening.

*Left blank in the original report for obvious reasons the *History of The Suffolk Regiment (1914-1927)* tells us that, following their part in the defence of Givenchy (20th December 1914), they returned to billets in Beuvry on the 22nd December and then onto Allouange where they spent Christmas.

The efforts of “B” Company in helping to regain the village alongside the 1st Manchesters were mentioned in Sir John French's despatches.

NEW YEARS RESOLUTION David Hedges

I need more contributors to this newsletter !!

All of you must have a story of a relative in the war - or a favourite topic you have studied -- or a request for help in researching something - so please make a resolution to write us a contribution in 2024.

THE ART OF WAR Kim Smith

Some of the best-known paintings of World War One are now on permanent display at the Imperial War Museum's new Blavatnik Art, Film and Photography Gallery.

Among them are John Singer Sargent's monumental *Gassed*, which has gone on show for the first time since undergoing significant conservation work. Sargent, an American, travelled to France in July 1918 with a brief to capture Anglo-US cooperation and initially struggled to find inspiration. However, after witnessing the aftermath of a mustard gas attack, he found an image that summed up a union of sorts: the union of wounded men supporting each other.



Works by brothers Paul and John Nash also feature. Paul, the older of the two, was commissioned by the Ministry of Information to create a canvas on the scale of a Renaissance painting. He produced *The Menin Road*, concentrating on an area known by the troops as "Tower Hamlets", and described it as "*perhaps the most dreaded and disastrous locality in any of the theatres of war*".



John, who lived for some years in Wormingford on the Essex/Suffolk border, was a passionate observer of the natural world. He created *Oppy Wood*, 1917, which lays bare the devastation of battle on the landscape and has been described as one of the defining images of the Great War.



Stanley Spencer, who was stationed with an ambulance unit on the overlooked Salonika Front, contributed *Travoyes Arriving with Wounded at a Dressing Station at Smoi, Macedonia, September 1916*. Not exactly a snappy title, but it does what it says on the tin, depicting casualties drawn on sledges – or travoyes – to a medical post in an old church. The wounded, he wrote, “passed in a never-ending stream”.



Three other canvases illustrate life on the Home Front. *Indian Army Wounded in Hospital in the Dome, Brighton*, by Douglas Fox-Pitt, shows the Royal Pavilion after its conversion into a hospital in 1914. As the building partly emulated South Asian design, it was felt Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims would feel at home there. However, the decoration was a European fantasy by craftsmen who had never visited the continent.

One side fact of note is that Sophia Duleep Singh, the Indian princess who was brought up at Elveden Hall in north Suffolk, volunteered as a nurse there.



The Postal Censorship, Strand House, by AJ Bryce shines a spotlight on the little-known postal censorship department in London. It expanded from just one person in 1914 to 4,200 by 1917. Most examiners were women and not just because they were more readily available, but because they were deemed more efficient!



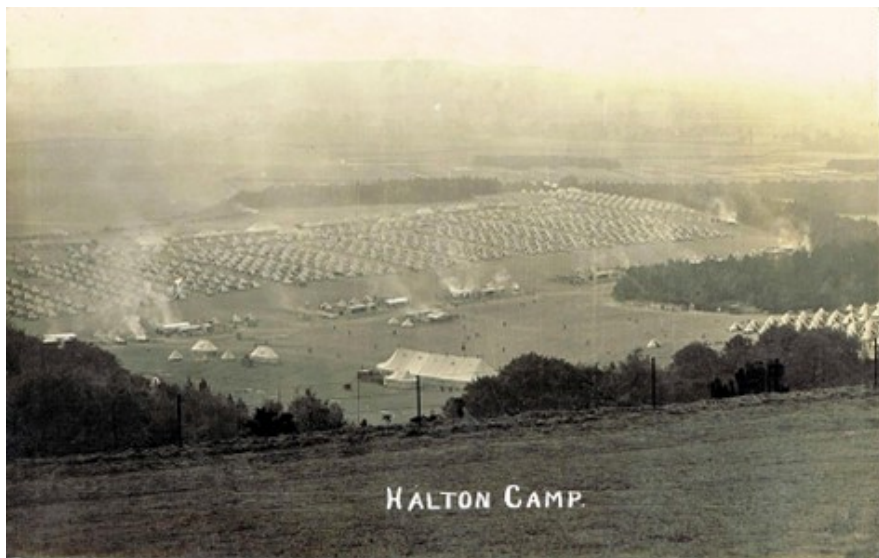
Finally, John Lavery's *Armistice Day* captures the chaos in Grosvenor Place, London. Poignantly, it features Red Cross ambulances, presumably bringing the wounded back from the Front.



The gallery is free to enter at the IWM London Museum, which proudly boasts that it has been collecting and commissioning art since its inception in 1917.

3810, Sidney Isaac Henry Creasey 3/4th Battalion, Suffolk Regiment

Sidney was born in 1897 and lived with his grandparents in Main Road, Henley. By the time of the 1911 Census, he was working as a farm labourer, aged 14. He enlisted on the 16th November 1915 in Ipswich and joined the Battalion at Halton Camp, Tring, Hertfordshire.



(Picture from: www.hertfordshire-genealogy.co.uk)

He was admitted to hospital (Ashridge Park*), for acute rheumatism on the 1st July 1916. His medical report stated that he had suffered rheumatic fever four years previously but concluded that his current condition was not caused by, or aggravated by, his military service. He was discharged on the 18th August 1916 as no longer physically fit for service.

Sidney died on the 28th December 1919 of rheumatic fever and heart disease, and is buried in the churchyard of St Peter's Henley. He is not commemorated on the village war memorial.

*Ashridge was a large country house owned by the Bridgewater family - it served as a military hospital in both world wars.

THEY SHALL GROW NOT OLD

**Talk at the Norwich Branch
Tuesday 9 January 2024
David Griffiths: 'The Guards Division at War 1915-17'.**

**Our next month's talk
Wednesday 10th January 2024
Stephen Barker - The Flying Sikh**

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.