

WFA SUFFOLK BRANCH

Branch Briefing

January 2023

Our Website : www.suffolk-wfa.org

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

WFASuffolk

Tonight's talk

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



Happy New Year to all

Attached to this Briefing for attendees at this Branch meeting are the minutes of the 2022 AGM, thanks to John Booty

The most important news is that, after many years our Chairman, Taff Gillingham has decided to stand down. Taff has lead this Branch to place us as one of the most successful in the country and we thank him for his contribution. Fortunately we have an able replacement in Colin Woods and a very able committee to support him.

The committee consists of :-

John Booty	Secretary
Keith Cooper	RBL liaison / Big Coach organiser
Brian Davies	Treasurer
Terry Groom	Raffle / non exec
David Hedges	non exec / Briefing editor
Jean Licence	Door entry control
Tom Mudd	Speaker Finder
Colin Woods	Chairman / Spring Walk organiser

There are number of items we wish to record, resulting from the AGM and a committee meeting held last week :-

1. We have decided to raise the suggested donation for attending a Branch meeting from the current £4 to £5. As our treasurer Brian reported, the Branch ran at a loss last year, fortunately offset by costs recovered from the cancelled Spring Walk during the pandemic. The cost of our buffet has understandably risen and we need to break even on a monthly cash basis. The donation has stood at £4 for many years so hopefully this increase will be supported. It was agreed by members that attended the AGM.

Brian wants to supplement our income by applying for Gift Aid for the money received as a donation to attend the branch meeting. So if you are a taxpayer and want to help please fill in the form that Brian can give you.

2. We want to build a list of email addresses of members that attend Branch meetings. If you are willing, please give us your email address. John Booty is leading for us on this.

3. As well as a generous financial legacy the late Doug Potts also donated many books to the Branch. These have been stored upstairs for some years and we have decided to display them on a side table for members to purchase by making a donation.

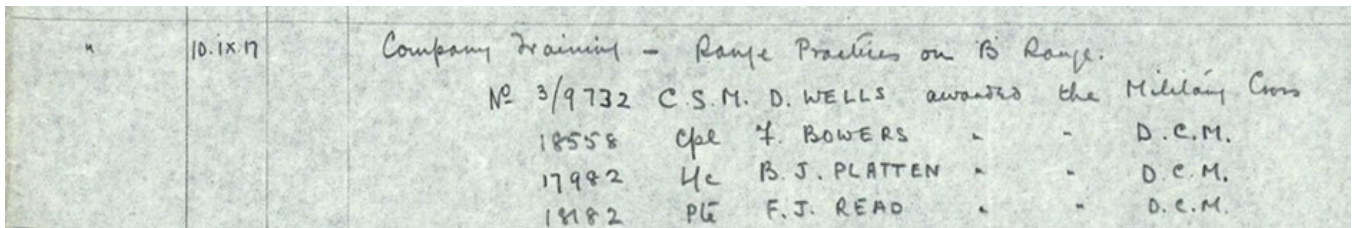
4. We are looking for a volunteer to run our website and help us communicate to all WFA members in East Anglia by using MailChimp or similar.

5. Tom Mudd will introduce the speaker at future meetings.

Three DCMs Kelvin Dakin

The 8th Battalion's War Diary of 9th September 1917 records the following awards which included three Distinguished Conduct Medals:

At Rubrouck Belgium



"	10. IX. 17	Company Training - Range Practices on B Range.		
		No 3/9732 C.S.M. D. WELLS awarded the Military Cross		
		18558	Cpl F. BOWERS	- - D.C.M.
		17982	Lt B. J. PLATTEN	- - D.C.M.
		19182	Plt F. J. READ	- - D.C.M.

18558, Corporal Frederick Harry Bowers DCM (later 619967, Sergeant, Labour Corps)

Born 3rd December 1892 in Great Waldingfield he was the son of Harry Whymark and Esther Bowers. (Harry and Esther went on to marry in 1894 and had at least 7 more children). In 1911 he is living with his parents at Tyne Went Corner, Edwardstone under the surname Whymark. In army records his address is given as Lovelace Green, Edwardstone.

Frederick enlisted in Sudbury on the 16th February 1915 and crossed to France on the 24th August 1915. He was wounded twice in 1916.

He had been made Acting Sergeant on the 31st July 1917 - and promoted to Sergeant on 7th August 1917 - after the Battalion withdrew from the front line following their part in the first day of the Third Battle of Ypres.

The citation for his DCM:

18558 Cpl. (A/Sjt.) F.H. BOWERS
(Edwardstone, Suffolk)

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. Having voluntarily gone forward and reconnoitred an enemy strong point in the face of heavy machine gun and rifle fire, he took a prominent part in the assault upon it, personally killed six of the enemy, and destroyed the machine gun. Later, when his Officer and Serjeant were killed and wounded, he took command of his Platoon, and handled it with an ability and determination that greatly inspired all ranks. (26.1.18)

The 8th Battalion was disbanded in February 1918 and Frederick was one of a draft that joined 2nd Suffolk. He was wounded again on the 21st March 1918 at Arras - the nature of his wound on this occasion seeing his eventual transfer to the Labour Corps.

From Army Form Z 22 - Statement as to disability - Medical Examination 9th February 1919:

GSW, bullet, lower lip & shoulder left clavicle fractured. Bullet entered left lip passed out left cheek over lower jaw and then entered above left clavicle fracturing same. Bullet stated to be still embedded. Does not appear to cause any inconvenience but cannot say it may not later.

He was assessed as having less than 20% disablement and discharged from 665 Agricultural Company, Labour Corps, on 20th April 1919.

He married Mary E Keeble in 1920 but she died in 1926 – Fred remarried later in the year to Violet M Hale in Sudbury. In the 1939 the couple, and their children, are living in Brettenham - Fred is working as a Horseman. He died in 1988.

17982, Lance Corporal Bertie James Platten DCM



Born in Oulton Broad on the 10th October 1890 he was the son of James and Lillian Platten.

In 1911 Bertie was living with his family in Mill Road, Oulton Broad and working as a General Labourer. He went to France after 1915 and joined the 8th Battalion.

On disbandment of the 8th Battalion he was transferred to the 4th Battalion where he was wounded in August 1918. (War Office Casualty list 15th August 1918)

In 1921 he married Maud Brown and by 1939 he and his family were living in Holly Lane, Blofield, Norfolk. Bertie was working as a Shipyard labourer.

He died in 1970 and is buried in St Laurence's churchyard, Brundall – his gravestone is inscribed "Bert James Platten DCM"

(Picture from Alexander Family Tree – *Ancestry*)

The citation for his DCM:

17982 L/Cpl. B.J. PLATTEN (Oulton Broad)
For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. When his company was held up by machine-gun fire, he and a comrade went forward on their own initiative, knocked out the gun, and killed the entire team, in spite of heavy machine-gun and rifle fire. This gallant act enabled the advance to continue and secure ground of vital importance. Throughout the operation the gallantry and determination of these two men set a splendid example to all ranks.
(26.1.18)

18182, Private Frederick John Read DCM

Believed to be Frederick John Read, born about 1891, in Laxfield – the son of Edward and Eliza Read.

Fred went to France to join the 7th Battalion on the 4th October 1915. He was treated for influenza at the end of November that year but returned to duty after 14 days treatment.

He was reported as being "Wounded: shock, shell" in a War Office casualty list dated 24th August 1916. It was probably after this that he was transferred to the 8th Battalion.

Fred's DCM Citation:

18182 Pte. F.J. READ (nr. Framlingham)
For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. When his company was held up by machine-gun fire he and a comrade went forward on their own initiative, knocked out the gun and killed the entire team in spite of heavy machine-gun and rifle fire. This gallant act enabled the advance to continue and secure ground of vital importance. Throughout the operation the gallantry and determination of these two men set a splendid example to all ranks. (26.1.18)

Private Read's exploits were recorded in an "A" Company report of the 31st July action:

Nos.2 and 4 Platoons under 2nd.Lieut.MASTIN were now ordered to advance by sections and make good the ridge S.E. of SURBITON VILLAS, these platoons were followed by Nos.1 & 3 under 2nd.Lieut.WHEELER. Good progress was made for about 300 yards when the line was held up by M.G.Fire from the right. No.18182.Pte.READ.F. and a few other men put this gun out of action & killed the team on their own initiative & this allowed the advance to again continue to the ridge in question. Progress was however slow throughout owing to heavy M.G. & Rifle Fire which necessitated the advances being carried out from shell hole to shell hole.

Fred was transferred to the 4th Battalion alongside his comrade Bertie Platten, where he also was reported wounded in August 1918. (War Office Casualty list 15th August 1918)

Fred was discharged "Class Z" on the 9th April 1919.

The Treaty of Lausanne - 24th July 1923 - The End of the First World War?

John McCarthy



The Great fire of Smyrna September 1922

THE BRITISH EMPIRE, FRANCE, ITALY, JAPAN, GREECE, ROUMANIA and the SERB-CROAT-SLOVENE STATE of the one part, and TURKEY, of the other part; Being united in the desire to bring to a final close the state of war which has existed in the East since 1914...

Part of the preamble to The Treaty of Lausanne (1923)

The outbreak of the First World War can fairly be traced to the crisis of July and August 1914, but its conclusion is far harder to pinpoint. The ratification by Turkey of the Treaty of Lausanne on 24th July 1923 might legitimately be regarded as marking the conclusion of the First World War. This is four years, eight months and thirteen days after the Armistice signed at Compiegne, which came into effect on the 11th November 1918, a date popularly regarded as marking the end of the Great War.

Only in hindsight can the Armistice of 11th November 1918 be regarded as the end of the Great War. If the terms of the Armistice had been breached by Germany, hostilities could theoretically have resumed. In the event the guns did fall silent and fighting did not resume on the Western Front. However this was not the case everywhere. My wife's grandfather was serving aboard *HMS Phaeton* in the Baltic when it was involved in the bombardment of German forces mounting an attack on troops of the fledgling Latvian state defending the port of Libau (modern Liepaja) in November 1919, a year after the Armistice and over four months after the conclusion of peace with Germany at Versailles.

The 11th November Armistice was the last of four armistices concluded between the victorious Allies (Associated Powers) and the Central Powers. The first, the Armistice of Salonica, between the Allies and Bulgaria came into force on 29th September. This was followed a month later by the Mudros Armistice with the Ottoman Empire (30th October) and then the Armistice of Villa Gusti ending hostilities with Austria-Hungary on 3rd November. However, for the sake of completeness, maybe we should take into account the Armistice signed between Romania and the Central Powers at Focşani on 9th December 1917 and the one with Russia at Brest-Litovsk on 15th December. This would suggest that taking Armistices as the benchmark for conclusion of the First World War, the Great War ended on the Eastern and Caucasus Fronts in 1917, about ten to eleven months prior to its conclusion on the other Fronts from Flanders to Mesopotamia. Does this imply that events in the East after December 1917 were not part of the Great War? A fly or two in the ointment of this interpretation is Romania's re-declaration of war on the Central Powers on 10th November 1918, a day prior to the Compiegne Armistice, reconnecting the war in both East and West if only for a single day. In addition there is the repudiation by the victors of the Treaties of Brest-Litovsk (3rd March 1918) and Bucharest (7th May 1918) imposed by the Central Powers in the East at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.

For the purposes of the Suffolk WFA Centenary seminar programme the signing of The Treaty of Versailles in the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles on 28th June 1919 was taken as being the conclusion of the Great War. However this was only the peace treaty concluded with Germany. Peace had not been concluded with the other four Central Powers (the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire creating two new enemy successor states out of one), Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary and the Ottoman Empire. The Treaty of St. Germain signed on 10th September 1919 concluded peace with the new Austrian Republic and the treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine (27th November 1919) with Bulgaria. It was not until 4th June 1920 that the new Kingdom of Hungary had a sufficiently stable government to sign the treaty of Trianon.

The short lived and extremely punitive treaty of Sevres was eventually signed by representatives of the Ottoman Empire in the boardroom of the famous porcelain factory on 10th August 1920. The treaty dismembered not just the North African and Middle Eastern territories of the Empire but also its Anatolian heartland. This immediately provoked repudiation of the treaty by the Turkish nationalists under Kemal Ataturk and called into question whether the agreement could be enforced on the ground.

Fighting quickly broke out between Greek and Turk as Greece attempted to assert her territorial rights under the treaty, in Asia Minor. In the summer of 1922 the Turkish army finally gained the upper hand against over-extended Greek forces, deep in the Anatolian hinterland, and had pushed them back to the port of Smyrna (modern Izmir) by September. Here tragic scenes were enacted as Greek soldiers and civilians were evacuated from the overcrowded waterfront against a backdrop of the city burning. Soon after, between September and October 1922, the British forces occupying the Dardanelles came to the brink of war with the Turkish nationalists in what became known as the Chanak Crisis. The reckless nature of the handling of this crisis by British Prime Minister David Lloyd George brought about the collapse of the wartime Liberal – Conservative coalition and another triumph for the new Turkish Republic.

With the Treaty of Sevres in tatters, on 20th November 1922 a delegation from the new Republic of Turkey, successor to the defunct Ottoman Empire, arrived in Lausanne to negotiate, or more correctly renegotiate, the peace agreement with the former Allied Powers of the Great War. After eight months of negotiation the borders and status of the modern Turkish state were agreed and peace concluded.

So where does this leave us? 1923 is something of a watershed year with the conclusion of fighting across much of Eastern Europe and the Near East. Some conflicts had grown directly out of the Great War such as the Polish Ukrainian War (1918 - 1919) and the Greco-Turkish War (1919 – 1922). Others seem merely to have coincided with it, such as the string of conflicts growing out the Dublin Easter Rising, in Ireland, of 1916, namely the War of Independence (1919-1921) and the Civil War (1921 – 23). But does this really constitute the end of the First World War? The armistices of 1917 and 1918 appears to represent the period in which the clash between the world's great Empires; Germany, Great Britain, France, Russia, Austria-Hungary, Italy and the Ottoman Turkey is supplanted by a series of localised national struggles between smaller successor states with only peripheral participation by the remaining Great Powers. What do you think?

LEST WE FORGET Kelvin Dakin

1987, Pte Edward Berridge, 7th Battalion, Suffolk Regiment

Born 1896 in Thorney, Cambs, he was the son of Edward and Levillah Berridge.

In 1911 he is at home with his parents living at Abrahams Row, Eye Green, Peterborough.

He originally enlisted as No 12134 on the 24th August 1914 – his occupation at the time was “Horsekeeper” and at age 18, he weighed 12 stone and was 5 feet 10 inches tall.

Posted to the 7th Battalion he went to France with them on the 30th May 1915 but returned to the UK on the 12th January 1916

Edward was discharged as “no longer physically fit for war service” on the 31st March 1916

His character was given as “Very Good – Honest and sober”.

A page from his Pension record indicates the reason for his discharge:

Adm. to Pension 6.2.16
Rank Private
Regimental No. 12134
Chelsea Number 68620
Name Edward Berridge
Pension District War Office
Regiment Suffolk Depot
BOARD'S DECISION (Pension per week) 15/- 6 months cond. of board.
Date of Discharge 31.3.16
Age on commencement of Pension 20
Trade Horse Keeper
Address The Rising Sun, Trubbygate St, Bury St. Edmunds
Character V. Good
Medals
Place of Birth
Children's Allowance per week

Names of Children	Dates of Birth of Children

Separation Allowance paid to
Foreign Service

	T.	M.
India		
France		
Mediterranean Expeditionary Force		
Egypt		
South Africa		

Service

Service	Former Grade	Class for Pension.					Total
		WL	I.	II.	III.	IV.	
	Cpls.						1 1/2

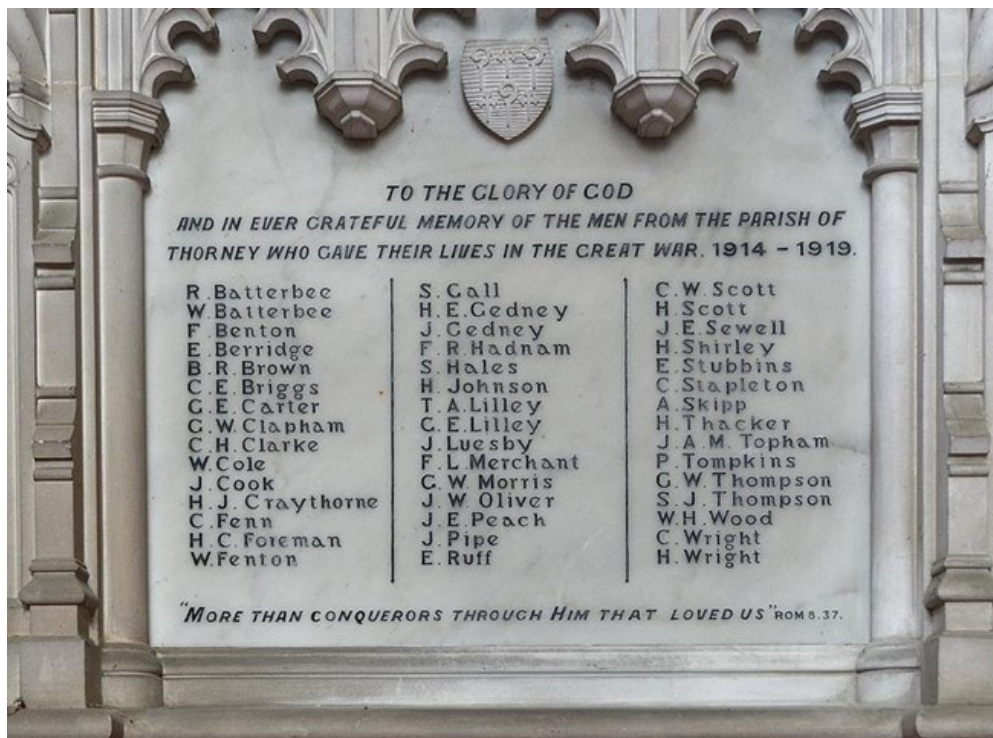
Date of Enlistment 24.8.14
Date of Mobilisation
Cause of Discharge Diabetes
Report of Medical Board (dated 5.3.16)
 Originated in France. Oct. 1915. Present weight 10 st. 1 1/2 lbs. existing weight 11 stone. Large amount of sugar in urine. Down to five pints of urine passed in the 12 hours. Med. Board. Result of Active Service. nervous strain in action permanent. prevents total at present. D.D.M.S. no evidence that service caused disability - D.G.A.M.S. Present condition aggravated by service since declaration of war. Prevents 3/4.
 Expires 30.9.16.
 (10,911) W1,972-24, 50,000 (P) 4/28. 6p.12M. A.S.R.V. (10,198) .. 12,200-24, 50,000 (P) 7/28.

However, Edward re-enlisted on the 2nd November 1916 as Private No 19877, Suffolk Regiment, but was discharged again in January 1917.

According to CWGC records he had then served in the Labour Corps as Private No 207332.

No record of a Silver War Badge award has been found.

Edward died on the 2nd January 1918 and is buried in the churchyard of Thorney Abbey. He is commemorated on the village war memorial there.



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THEY SHALL GROW NOT OLD

**Talk at the Norwich Branch
Tuesday 7th February
*Steve Smith : Zeppelins over Norfolk'***

**Our next month's talk
Wednesday 8th February
Rob Thompson:
*Secret and lies "Operation Llandoverly Castle and the secret move of
the Canadian Corps August 1918***

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.

Suffolk WFA AGM. Wednesday 14th December 2022

Venue: RBL Stowmarket

Agenda

1. Apologies.
2. Minutes of the 2021 Meeting.
3. Matters arising.
4. Chairman's Report
5. Secretary's Report.
6. Treasurer's Report.
7. Speaker Secretary's Report.
8. Battlefield Tours.
9. Election of Officers.
10. AOB

Minutes of the 2022 AGM- Suffolk Western Front Association Wednesday 4th December 2021

The AGM commenced at 9.20pm

Apologies Kim Smith Trevor Smith

Minutes of the 2021 AGM

The notes as presented were confirmed. No matters arising

Chairman's Report

Taff reported that attendance at all WFA Branch Meetings remained down by 25% following the pandemic, however the Suffolk Branch remained well attended and he was hopeful that attendance would return to pre-pandemic levels within the next year.

Taff then confirmed he was standing down as Chair. Colin Woods was proposed and seconded as Chair, there being no other nominees, Colin took the Chair. Colin thanked Taff for all his work over the years.

Secretary's Report John had nothing to Report

Treasurer's Report

Copies of the Report and Financial Statement had been distributed. Brian Davies pointed out that the "real" deficit for 21/22 was £625.92, but this was reduced by receipt of a refund of £582 in respect of the cancelled (pandemic) 2020 Spring Walk. Brian proposed increasing the Voluntary Contribution at Meetings from £4 to £5 – this was unanimously accepted.

Speakers Secretary's Report

From January 2023, Tom Mudd will take over from Keith Cooper. Tom was looking forward to arranging a selection of interesting speakers.

Battlefield Tours

The issue of Minibus Licencing and Insurance given the age of Members continued to be a problem. Hire companies do not like Drivers over 70 – particularly when going abroad.

Big Coach Trip went ahead successfully, the 2023 Coach Trip will be 7-11 September to the Reims area. Battle Honours are doing a great job!

Election of Officers

There being only one candidate for each post, the nominees/current post-holders were all (re)elected as follows:

Chairman:	Colin Woods
Deputy Chairman:	Post not filled
Treasurer to the Trustees:	Brian Davies
Clerk to the Trustees (Secretary)	John Booty
Speakers Secretary:	Tom Mudd

The meeting closed at 9.53 pm