

WFA SUFFOLK BRANCH

Branch Briefing

June 2023

Our Website :<https://suffolk-wfa.org.uk>

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

WFASuffolk

Tonight's talk

Peter Hart : Air War on the Western Front 1915



NEWS FROM THE COMMITTEE

John Burns, one of our regular attendees, has kindly agreed to update our website that we regret had become somewhat neglected. We have changed the address as shown above.

Sounds a bit early but we traditionally have Branch members give short talks at our December meeting, so if you have a talk in mind please mention it to Tom Mudd. Also, if you know anyone you think can give a good talk on a WW1 subject, let Tom know.

But the most important news to mention is the time is approaching when we must close the books on the 2023 Big Coach tour. Details are overleaf. If you think you or someone you know are interested than contact Keith Cooper by speaking to him tonight, or emailing him on keith-cooper@hotmail.co.uk, or calling him on 07850 260788.

There are really interesting contributions to this Branch Briefing this month but our pool of contributors is a bit shallow - and might even dry out one month ! - so we are looking for contributions from you all. I'm sure many of you have interesting stories regarding for example relatives who fought etc so please put fingers on the keyboard and send them in. Send to David Hedges, email is on the last page.



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

A FORCE OF NATURE AND OF MEN Kim Smith

Watching wave after wave crash and die on the face of a Cornish cliff is like a metaphor for the battalions who followed each other into battle during the First World War. Therefore it's not difficult to comprehend how such a spectacle could inspire the most enduring of all the conflict's poems, *For the Fallen*.

Clergyman's son Laurence Binyon was on holiday in the autumn of 1914 when he was moved to scribble his seven-stanza ode to the casualties of the Old Contemptibles among the grass and the samphire of Pentire Head. Although he was far removed from the slaughter in Belgium and France, news of the losses weighed heavily and he quickly submitted his work to *The Times* newspaper for public consumption.

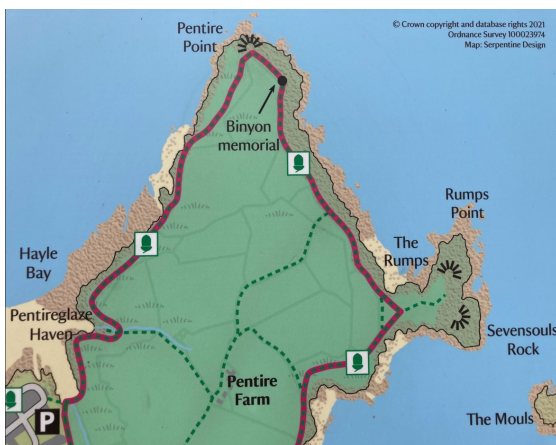


The rugged cliffs of Pentire Head in Cornwall,
where
Binyon holidayed in 1914

After *For the Fallen* was published on 21 September, the fourth verse in particular struck a chord with a fearful nation and enshrined it forever in our collective consciousness.

The unifying themes of grief, pride and remembrance still resonate today. Indeed we recite them every month at the beginning of our WFA meetings: *They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old; Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning, We will remember them.*

My husband and I were ourselves on a break in the West Country when we happened across a plaque marking the spot where this international anthem was composed. It was erected on a National Trust coastal path not far from Polzeath in 2003, but surprisingly the organisation does not flag it up in their handbook or waymark the location. In fact, no reference at all is made to it apart from a cursory mention on a map that just states Binyon Memorial without explanation. Very curious as it would undoubtedly attract more visitors.



The Ordnance Survey map displayed
on the
National Trust's café wall at Pentire



The For the Fallen memorial stands on the spot
where it was written

Our interest piqued, we set out to discover more about the enigmatic writer. Robert Laurence Binyon was a bookish child who came into this world in 1869. After graduating from Trinity College, Oxford, he took up a position at the British Museum, first in the department for printed books and then later in the prints and drawings department.

He stayed at the museum for many years, writing essays on subjects as diverse as the visual arts and oriental culture. Poetry was his passion, though, and he published a large number of volumes and eventually became Professor of Poetry at Harvard University from 1933 to 1934. In 1940 he was appointed to the University of Athens and narrowly escaped the German invasion in 1941. He died in Reading two years later, aged 73, leaving his historian wife Cicely Powell and their three daughters to mourn him.

Too old to serve in the Armed Forces, it was his inability to act that perhaps prompted *For the Fallen*. So he chose a route followed by others in the same position, volunteering for the Red Cross. By 1915 he was working as a hospital orderly in Arc-en-Barrois, Haute-Marne, France. The next year, he helped to treat frontline soldiers from Verdun. Many more poems followed, from *Fetching the Wounded* to *The Distant Guns*. He also penned an autobiography, *For Dauntless France*.

During the course of the war, Binyon lost several friends and his brother-in-law. This gave added poignancy to his own reading of *For the Fallen*, which can be heard on *Artists Rifles*, an audiobook released in 2004.

FOR THE FALLEN (full version)

*With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,
England mourns for her dead across the sea.
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,
Fallen in the cause of the free.*

*Solemn the drums thrill: Death august and royal
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres.
There is music in the midst of desolation
And a glory that shines upon our tears.*

*They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,
They fell with their faces to the foe.*

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.*

*They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;
They sit no more at familiar tables of home.
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;
They sleep beyond England's foam.*

*But where our desires are and our hopes profound,
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,
To the innermost heart of their own land they are
known,
As the stars are known to the night.*

*As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain.
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain.*



Laurence Binyon as a young man, as depicted by Scottish illustrator William Strang (NB: It is Strang, not Strange!)

THE CYPRUS PROBLEM; a long shadow cast by the First World War

John McCarthy

If you are looking for one of life's more bizarre experiences, try taking tea on the terrace of the *Palm Beach Hotel* in Famagusta, on the island of Cyprus, at sunset. You sit sipping your beverage looking along the beach front of a resort with high-rise hotels stretching off down the long curve of a sandy bay. As the sun disappears behind the buildings you notice that in the increasing gloom no lights are coming on, with the exception of a single light in a tower block in the middle distance. If you take a closer look you notice that the buildings have an air of dilapidation and there is no one about. This has been the case here for almost half a century. You are looking at the former Greek Cypriot holiday resort of Varosha which was captured by the Turkish Army in the closing stages of their invasion of the island in the summer of 1974. The single light in the tower block belongs to an observation post manned by a contingent of Slovak United Nations Peacekeepers. You are face to face with a physical manifestation of what is known as the Cyprus Problem, one of the most intractable disputes in international relations.



View from the terrace of the Palm Beach Hotel in Famagusta at sunset in December 1998

A hundred years ago on the 24th July 1923 a peace treaty was signed between the former Entente powers of the Great War and the Republic of Turkey, successor to the defunct Ottoman Empire, bringing to 'a final close the state of war' which had 'existed in the East since 1914'. Amongst the territorial clauses of the Treaty of Lausanne were two; Articles 20 and 21 which recognised British annexation of the island of Cyprus and the acquisition of British nationality by its predominantly Greek and Turkish Cypriot population. In the century that has followed the conflicting interests of Britain, Greece, Turkey and the two Cypriot communities have defied an enduring stable settlement.

The essence of the Problem is one of geography and demography. At 5,750 square miles Cyprus is the third largest island in the Mediterranean Sea. Situated at its eastern end, it is about forty miles off the south coast of Turkey and about 250 miles east of Rhodes, the nearest Greek territory. It is also some 300 miles north of Egypt and the northern entrance to the Suez Canal. About eighty percent of the population are Orthodox Christian Greek Cypriots and most of the remaining twenty percent are Muslim Turkish Cypriots. The principle interest of Britain, as a global power, in the island has been its geographical location at the crossroads of the Middle East, allowing it to monitor and if necessary intervene in the region. Both Greece and Turkey are growing rival regional powers with a range of conflicting interests, including Cyprus.



By 1914 Ottoman suzerainty over Cyprus had lasted almost three-hundred and fifty years, but the grasp of the ‘Sick Man of Europe’ was weakening. The British had managed to get their foot in the door in 1878, when they were ceded the administration of the island, as a reward for military and diplomatic support during the Russo-Turkish War (1877-78). Cyprus joined Gibraltar, Malta and Aden as a strategic stepping stone along the route to British India, via the Suez Canal. When the Ottoman Empire joined the Central Powers at the beginning of November 1914 Britain unilaterally annexed the island. For the next two and a half years, British and French diplomats dangled the prospect of ceding Cyprus to Greece as an alluring carrot to bring the reluctant Greeks into the war on the Allied side. In Greece pro-allied and pro-German factions grappled for control of foreign policy and it was not until April 1917 that the Greeks finally joined the Allies. By this time ministers in London had cooled to the idea of lavishly rewarding them for their belated participation in the war. Within Greece the prospect of extensive annexations after the war fanned the flames of an aggressive Greek nationalism known as Pan-Hellenism. Among its aims was the union of Cyprus with Greece, otherwise known as *Enosis*.

The defeated Ottomans sued for an armistice in October 1918 and in 1920 signed the humiliating Treaty of Sevres which dismembered its empire, leaving a small Turkish rump state. However a strong Turkish nationalist movement under the leadership of Mustapha Kemal ‘Atatürk’, the hero of Gallipoli, repudiated the agreement and spent the next three years making its provisions unworkable. In the autumn of 1922, after defeating a Greek Army sent to conquer Western Anatolia, in the cause of Pan-Hellenism, and facing down British forces occupying the Straits, representatives of the new Turkish Government began negotiations with Greece and the members of the wartime Entente at Lausanne, in Switzerland, with a view to drawing up a new Peace Treaty. In July 1923 the new treaty was ratified. Along with the provisions recognising of the borders of the new state of Turkey, was retrospective confirmation Britain’s annexation of Cyprus in 1914. Two years later Cyprus became a crown colony with no immediate prospect of union with Greece.

One strand of the negotiations between Turkey and Greece, at Lausanne, was the drafting of the *Convention concerning the exchange of Greek and Turkish populations*. Under this agreement 400,000 Turks living in Greece would be compulsorily exchanged for 1,200,000 Greeks living in Constantinople and Asia Minor. By the end of 1923 this exchange had been completed. Thus Britain’s new colony was the only place in the Eastern Mediterranean where Turks and Greeks still lived side by side.

For the next thirty five years the British imperial authorities managed relations between the two Cypriot communities. The mutual desire for *Enosis* between the Greek Cypriots and Greece was a constant worry to the colonial administration. This led them to rely on the Turkish community as a counter-weight, which had the effect of deepening inter-communal hostility. Between 1955 and 1958 the EOKA insurgency sponsored by members of the Greek military, aimed at *Enosis*, was successfully countered and defeated by British security forces. However, by the end of the decade the British Government could see the writing on the wall when it came to dealing with the increasingly fractured nature of Cypriot society and the external influence of, and increasing rivalry between, the two motherlands, Greece and Turkey. Independence negotiations began in 1959.



The Liberty Monument; this Nicosia landmark erected in 1973 is considered to be something of an embarrassment by the locals in light of the events of the following year. It depicts Liberty looking down on two EOKA fighters releasing figures representing the Cypriots from British imprisonment! (April 2023)

There is insufficient space here to go into the details of the 1960 constitution of the Republic of Cyprus and the Treaty of Guarantee. Needless to say it was a political compromise between the interested parties. The granting equal, rather than minority, rights to the Turkish Cypriots lay at the heart of the constitution. In the Treaty of Guarantee Britain, Turkey and Greece made themselves guarantors of that constitution, with a right to intervene if the provisions were deemed to have been breached. Under the agreement Britain was able to get out of Cyprus, whilst remaining in Cyprus, with the creation of two Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs). The SBAs Akrotiri, in the south, and Dhekelia, in the east, occupy about 98 square miles of the island and are legally as British as the Isle of Wight. This has enabled Britain and by extension NATO, to maintain an unchallenged military presence on the island alongside the Republic for the last six decades. The Republic of Cyprus has not enjoyed such an unchallenged existence! In 1963-64, after just three years, power-sharing collapsed in a wave of inter-communal violence, which drew in United Nations. The peacekeepers of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) have been on the island ever since. A decade of instability ensued in which calls for *Enosis* had to be balanced off against threats of intervention by Turkey. Matters came to a head in the summer of 1974 when the military junta, then in power, in Athens engineered a coup in Nicosia, with a view to achieving union with Greece. This triggered a full scale Turkish invasion of the island resulting in; the failure of the coup, the end of the Greek military junta and Turkish occupation of the north of the island. In the aftermath of the invasion a wave of what would, twenty years later, come to be called ‘ethnic cleansing’ swept the island. Refugees flowed both northwards and southwards across the ceasefire line held by the United Nations



The abandoned Turkish Cypriot village of Melandra; after being besieged and shelled in response to the Turkish invasion the remaining 169 villagers were evacuated under UNFICYP escort on 3rd September 1975 and transferred to the north. (April 2023)

Since 1974 the fractured political geography of the island has hardened. The island is divided into two official sovereignties and a third unofficial one. The first is the internationally recognised Republic of Cyprus, run by an exclusively Greek Cypriot government since 1964, which claims sovereignty over the entire island, with the exception of the area occupied by the second official sovereignty the SBAs. Though the government of the Republic of Cyprus aspires to govern the whole island, less the SBAs, it effectively controls less than 60% due to the existence of the third, unofficial political entity, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) run by the Turkish Cypriots under the protection of Turkey. The TRNC was created in 1983, nine years after the invasion, and is only recognised by the Government in Ankara.



The most striking feature of the divided island is the United Nations Buffer Zone, also known as the *Green Line* (after the colour of the pencil used on a map by a British officer to demarcate the buffer zone in Nicosia in 1964) or the *Attila Line* (the codename for the Turkish invasion). Since 1974 it has cut right across the island from Morphou Bay in the north-west to the east coast south of Famagusta. It occupies about 4% of the land area of the island and ranges in width from just 20 yards to over 4.5 miles. The buffer zone is manned by around 800 UN military peacekeepers drawn principally from the armed forces of Argentina, Britain and Slovakia, as well as a seventy strong international police contingent. In addition to keeping the two sides apart UNFICYP are engaged in programmes aimed at an eventual resolution to the conflict. As an indication of the tensions surrounding the buffer zone; each year the peacekeepers have to deal with about a thousand incidents ranging from name-calling, to illegal incursions and weapons fire. Talks are ongoing between the Cypriot communities and their respective motherlands under the auspices of both the UN and EU. The Turkish side emphasise the need for security; for both the Turkish Cypriots and the mainland, from any future hostile island-wide government. Security takes the form of, the very visible military presence of, 30,000 Turkish troops. They also labour under the disadvantages; of the TRNC Government not being internationally recognised and the poor human rights record of the Government in Ankara. Though the Greek Cypriot side have been recognised internationally as the Government of Cyprus they have not been able to effectively deploy their considerable influence to reunite the island. Any chance of a negotiated reunification will require them to relinquish any remaining dreams of a union with Greece.



The Turkish side of the Green Line in North Nicosia; the wall erected at the end of the street marks the end of Turkish controlled territory. The tower beyond the wall houses an UNFICYP observation post within the buffer zone. (April 2023)



A Turkish outpost opposite the Greek Cypriot town of Deryneia; the flying of flags is a feature of installations on each side of the buffer zone. In this case the flags of Turkey (left) and the TRNC (right). South of the line it is those of the Republic of Cyprus and Greece. (April 2023)

The Cyprus Problem remains intractable because all sides agree on some sort of confederation, but disagree about what form it should take. Added to this, are a number of side issues from the future status of the ‘ghost town’ of Varosha to the fate of ‘missing’ victims from the violent decade from 1964 to 1974. On our recent visit to Cyprus my wife and I whiled away many an hour discussing these seemingly insoluble problems. However negotiations have from time to time yielded small improvements in relations! For example when I first visited in 1998 movement from one side of the Green Line to the other was severely restricted through a single checkpoint at the Ledra Palace Hotel, just outside the walls of the old town, in Nicosia. In the run up to, and following, Cyprus’ accession to the EU in 2004 nine crossing points have been opened across the UN buffer zone facilitating ‘relatively’ unrestricted cross border movement. We tested this out, in April, by crossing the Green line, with a minimum of fuss, at the Ledra Street Crossing in Nicosia’s old town.



The Ledra Street Crossing; preparing to make the largely red tape free crossing of the Green Line to north Nicosia, almost exactly fifteen years after it was first opened in April 2008. (April 2023)

A century after the conclusion, in Lausanne, of the last peace treaty of the Great War, a settlement in respect of the territory disposed of in Articles 20 and 21 still remains elusive.

LEST WE FORGET Kelvin Dakin

**8378, Corporal Charles Henry Heeks, 2nd Battalion, Suffolk Regiment
Killed in action 15th June 1918**

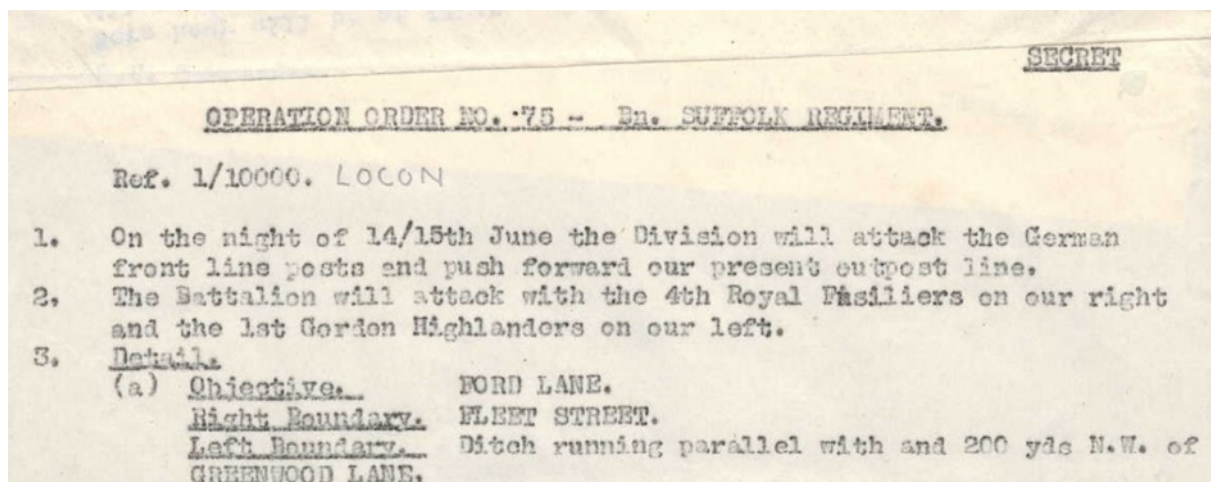
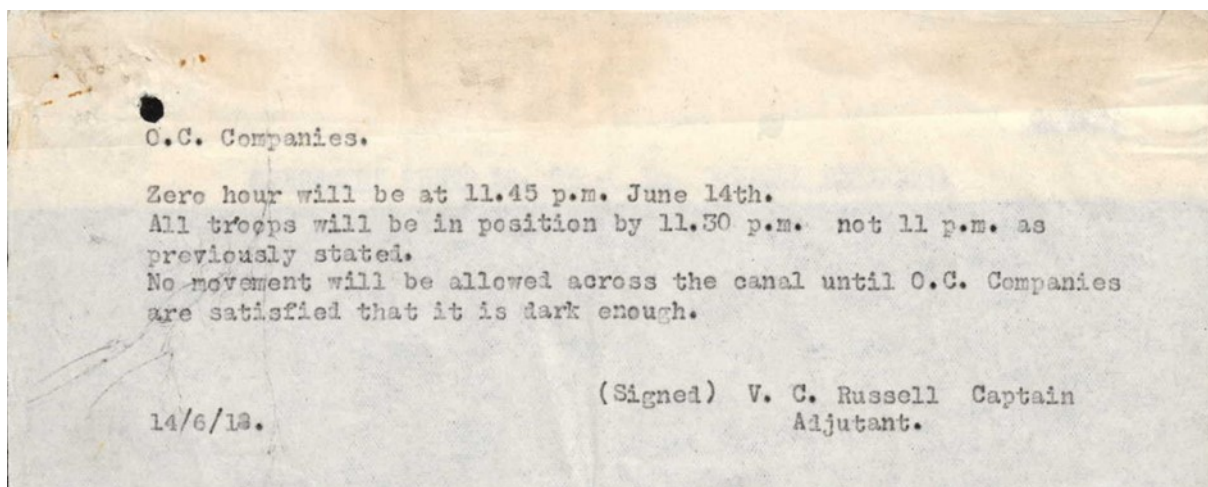
Charles was born in 1893 in Ipswich, the son of James and Susan Heeks. By 1901 the family had moved to 41 Prospect Row in Bury St Edmunds where James worked as a Wood Machinist.

In 1911 Charles is living and working as an Under Porter at the Suffolk General Hospital in Bury St Edmunds. He enlisted around 1911/12 in Bury St Edmunds and crossed to France with the 1st Battalion on the 16th January 1915. He later transferred to the 2nd Battalion. He married May Lillian Bass in the third quarter of 1915 in Bury St Edmunds – possibly while receiving treatment in hospital in the UK.

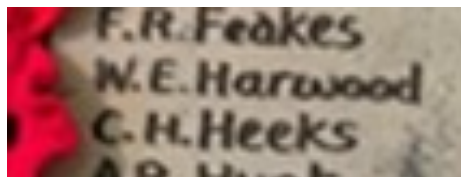
The History of the Suffolk Regiment – 1914 to 1927 (CRR Murphy) describes the build up to the attack in June 1918.

“...This period of comparative quiet was only the breathing space during which preparations were being made for the opening of the Allied counter-offensive. The turn of the tide was signalled by a series of minor attacks all along the line, showing that the British Army had recovered from the hard times of March and April and were ready to strike again. One of these occurred on June 14, the anniversary of the capture of Infantry Hill, the battalion taking part in a night attack on the German forward system at La Pannerie, near Hinges...”

Extracts from the Battalion War Diary:



The battalion suffered about a hundred casualties in the attack. Charles is buried in Chocques Military Cemetery. He is commemorated in the Book of Remembrance in the Cathedral at Bury St Edmunds* and on the memorial in Garland Street Baptist Church, Bury St Edmunds. (Picture from Garland Street Baptist Church Facebook page)



*The online record at <https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/name/1775054> incorrectly spells his surname as “Hecks”.

THEY SHALL GROW NOT OLD

**Talk at the Norwich Branch
Tuesday 6th July**

PETER HODGKINSON 'UNCOVERING THE DEAD 1919-39

**Our next month's talk
Wednesday 12th July**

John McCarthy—Brest - Litovsk

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.