ISSUE 21 - October 2026

LASTPOST

Newsletter of the Leicester City, County & Rutland At Risk War Memorials Project



Welcome



Welcome to Issue 21. We have some fascinating articles for you as well as news of our activities. It has been a busy period so far but looking at my diary, thanks to our efforts at ***"spreading the word"***, we also have a very busy autumn of talks, events and exhibitions, in addition to our participation in **Remembrance** events.

On **P4** Nicola Brown, one of our hard-working researchers intrigued to see a woman's name on a WW1 war memorial, decided to explore. Read about Constance Eleanor Johnson's brief but fulfilled life.

On **P6** Robin Jenkins writes about the life of ***"The Human Atom"*** aka Alf Burrows.

We welcome Niko Van Kerckhoven from Antwerp, Belgium who tells us on **P10** what he is determined to do to honour Allied dead in a nearby cemetery.

On **P12** Matthew Kenyon, living in The Netherlands, recounts a tale of international power politics affecting a war memorial in one of Holland's off-shore islands.

On **P13** Jan de Jager, one of our growing number of European correspondents, describes the lengths to which Dutch citizens go to honour Allied war dead at the Commemoration of the valiant but ultimately doomed ***"Operation Market Garden"***. Do look at the links he gives.

Lastly, I would like to thank all my hard working colleagues, contributors to LAST **POST** and in particular by name, Steven Peachey, Assistant Curator of De Montfort University Museum, who has the skill to transform my standard Word documents into the smart layout that we see in LAST **POST**

Denis Kenyon
Project co-founder



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COVER IMAGE:

1st Leicestershire Regiment Signallers, Glen Coe, South Africa. Sept. 1899

The Leicester City, County & Rutland At Risk Memorials Project welcomes any information which can help or promote their work. If you have any details of any War Memorial you feel is at risk, or can help in any way, please contact us on:

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News

Open Day Saturday 25th July

By popular demand, Robin gave his two combined talks twice. The subject, the sinking of the three cruisers Aboukir, Hogue and Cressy on 22nd September 1914 and how one of the drowned seamen, AB Waudby makes the connection to ARWMP..

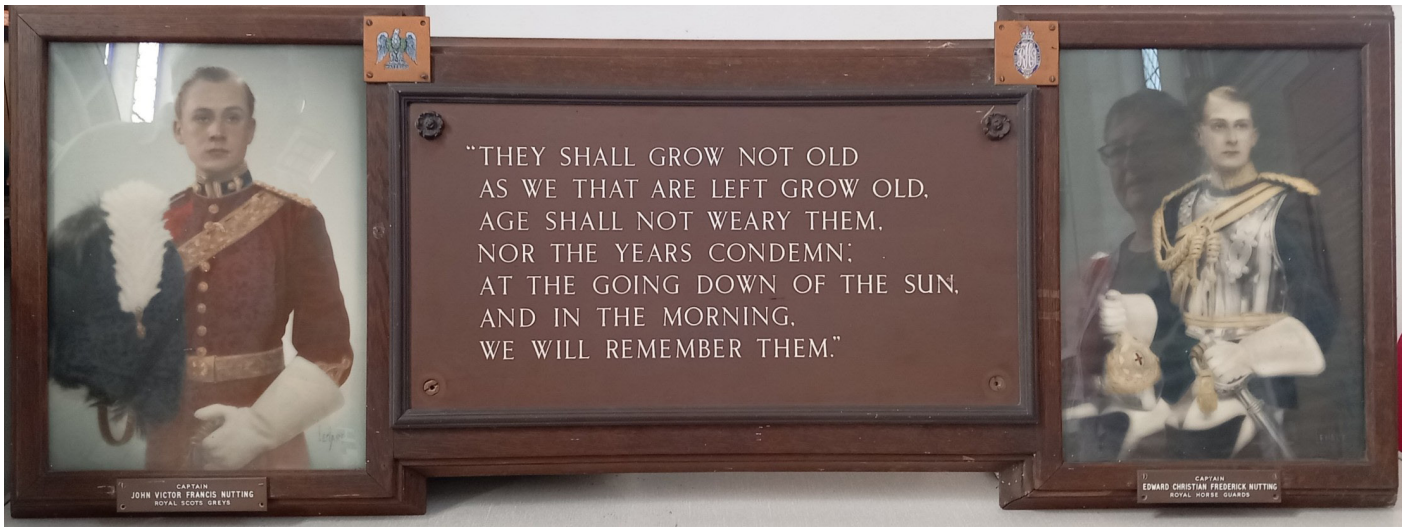
Braunstone WMC

We were alerted to the sad fate of Braunston WMC and asked about the possibility of a memorial there.
It was started in 1931 so obviously no WW1 but we have not had a definitive answer about a WW2 memorial. If anyone knows, please advise.
Neil Crutchley kindly sent me this splendid painting by Clive Upton of the Club's Concert Hall. It was commissioned by Whitbreads's Brewery in 1949 for a book they published in 1950 called ***"Your Club"***. Does anyone know where it is now?.



A most unusual memorial

The Nutting brothers, both died in WW2. In their full ceremonial uniforms of the Royal Scots Greys and The Royal Horse Guards. It is on loan from the Thurmaston Branch of RBL and originally it was in the Friday Street County Branch HQ.
It is a curiosity in that that their name plates and regimental crests are fixed by three screws – the fourth hole hanging in space!



Our Dutch correspondent Jan de Jager

In early june my wife and I travelled to The Hague to stay with our son and daughter-in-law. We took the opportunity to meet our Dutch correspondent at Hartenstein Airborne Museum near Arnem. See his article on **P14**
I also encourage you to look at the links in particular No.4. See how the Dutch honour Allied liberators' war dead.



Leicester & Rutland Family History Society Event Monday 14th September

Robin and I barely had time to draw breath, when we had a small stand at Age UK Clarence House, previously City Boy's School. It was a most valuable occasion, as thanks to Sue Lester, our Dutch and Belgian correspondents can have access to their considerable research on WW2 mainly Air Force casualties, some of whom are buried in those two countries, and whose graves they tend with real love and care.
We were delighted to see the City Boy's School WW1 and WW2 war memorials beautifully restored thanks to Old Boy, Brian Screaton and others.

G. Stibbe Ltd Great Centrl Street

This famous knitting machine builder closed in 1976. We have been informed that there was a large war memorial in the entrance hall. Does anyone one know of someone who worked there who could confirm this?

Move to the Botanic Gardens

We have been informed that a meeting of key university management is now scheduled to take place in September.

Heritage Open Days 12th/13th September

What an enjoyable two days we had. 53 visitors, all of whom came specially.
The two talks by me, "Why & How ARWMP started." and "A Tiger in the snows of Russia 1918-1919" appeared to be well received.
Many useful ideas for the future when we eventually get to the Botanic Gardens were noted. We signed up another six people to receive LAST **POST**.
Albina, our extremely hard-working social media expert supporter, took many photos and will be posting on our Face Book page.
We are most grateful for her efforts.

Open Days		
14th November	Iain Smith: *"Three Indian Divisions in Italy 1943-1945"*	12:00pm

Western Front Association Meeting

19th October	Mark Gamble	Argentina and The Great War
16th November	David Humberston	Crowns in Conflict - Queen Victoria, European Royalty and the Tragedy of World War One, 1817-1918
21st December	David Humberston	On Sticky Wickets - The Life of Hon. Lionel Hallam Tennyson
18th January	Grant Cullen	Steaming to the Front – Britain's Railways and The Great War
15th February	Nigel Atter	177th Brigade at Passchendaele, 1917
15th March	Phil Watson	Teacher or Tyrant- Haig and his Corps Commanders

Monday, 7:30pm, Council Chamber, Braunstone Town Council, Braunstone Civic Centre, Kingsway, Braunstone Town, LEICESTER, LE3 2PP

Constance Eleanor Johnson

Nicola Brown recounts the life of Constance Eleanor Johnson, from her Leicester family background and wartime VAD service to the memorials that preserve her memory.



Above: **Constantce Eleanor Johnson. Image courtesy of IWM Lives of the First World War.**

Constance's farther Frank Johnson born in 1866, was a farmer's son in Oxfordshire, he was orphaned from a very young age, his mother died in 1872 aged 39, his father died in 1874 aged 35 following a very bad accident on his farm, The 1881 census shows that Franks sisters were living with their grandparents, whereas as a scholar aged 14 Frank was living at the Crown Inn in Banbury.

Frank went on to be a Cigar Manufacturer in Leicester. Webb & Johnson Cigar & Tobacco Manufacturers were based at 63 Charles Street. In April 1891 the census shows he was a visitor of another farming family. The Campion family which included Eleanor Campion, owned a 200 acre farm in Banbury. Later that year on 15th July Frank and Eleanor married at Wardington Church and the Couple moved to Leicester.

Constance known as Connie was born in 1893 while the family were living at Highfield Street, she was baptised at St Peters Church on 6th October. Two more daughters were to follow, Doris born in 1897 and Hilda in 1900, also living with them was a Cook and a Domestic Nurse.

By 1911, the family had moved to 116 Regent Road with Constance assisting at home, her two younger sisters were still at school. The household also included Mary Cook who was a Domestic Servant. Later that year Frank Johnson took over another Cigar Company following the death of the owner William Sykes. W Sykes and Son Cigar Phoenix Works Factory which was in Fosse Road North was moved to 45/47 Charles Street.

Three months later at the end of November 1911 in the early hours of the morning the Charles Street factory caught fire causing over £4000 worth of damage. Although the building survived the company lost all its stock, which was exceptionally large at the time due to it coming up to Christmas.

The newspaper reported due to the stock being Cigars the fire had charged the air with an aroma more pleasant than the usual accompaniment for a big fire. Following the fire over 80 people were temporarily out of work.

Following the start of the war in 1914, Constance joined the Voluntary Aid Detachment, VAD, a voluntary unit of civilians providing care for military personal, by February 1916 she was working full time as a clerk dealing with Administration work, at the 5th Northern General Hospital. Now Leicester University in Victoria Road, the building was originally the County Asylum, was empty at the start of the war was given rent free to be a hospital for the duration of the war and eventually had 1748 beds.

Constance became ill in May 1916 and died at her home in Regent Road on May 22nd, she died of Ulcerative Endocarditis, a severe heart condition that is treatable today, she was only 22. A few days later the funeral was held it the Holy Trinity Church in Regent Road and she was buried at Welford Road Cemetery.

Constance Eleanor Johnson

After the end of the war on 30th November 1919 a memorial service for the Leicestershire men and women members of the St John Ambulance Brigade who died during the war was held at the Cathedral, the names of 21 men and 4 women including Constance Johnson were read out by the Rev F B Macduff. The service included the special hymn previously sung at St Margarets church in Westminster for the King and Queen as well of the members of Parliament. Rev Macduff said that he has often wondered how the girls of the V.A.D and the nurses could stick it out and yet they did it with courage and cheeriness and splendid spirit.

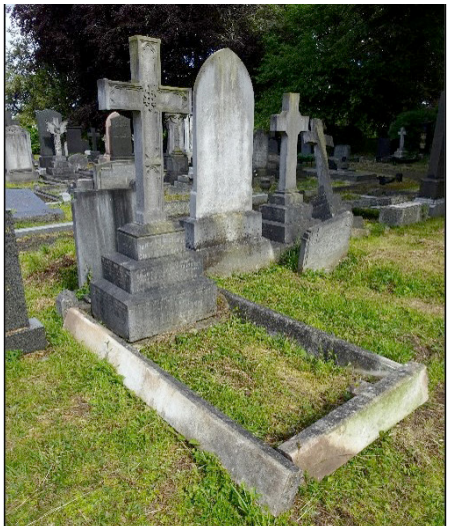
By 1921 the family had moved to Sunnyside in Narborough, Doris was working as a Teacher of Music at Wyggeston Girls School. Frank was fishing at Gumley Hall when he was taken ill, he was later taken to the Royal Infirmary where he died on 8th March 1935, he was buried with Constance at Welford Road.

As well as his family Frank left money to eleven employees and £1000 to a number of Leicester Charities including the RSPCA, Leicester Guild for the Crippled and £300 to the Royal Infirmary. Some years before Frank and Eleanor had endowed a cot in the Lady Wright ward of the Children's Hospital at the Infirmary in memory of their daughter Constance, in 1945 A bed was dedicated to Frank in the Langham Ward, the unveiling was performed by Eleanor who after the service together with the guests visited the cot previously dedicated to Constance.

As well as appearing on the Holy Trinity Church War Memorial, Constance also appears on the St John Ambulance Brigade memorial in Leicester Cathedral and the Women of the Empire Screen in York Minister.

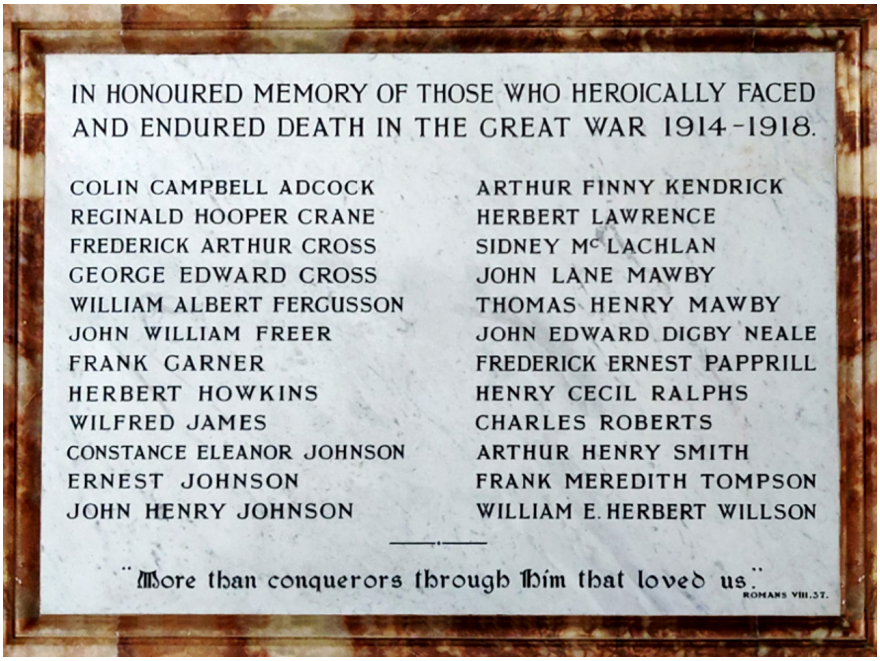
Constance's name was accepted by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to be added to their WW1 War Dead Roll in August 2018.

Her younger sister Hilda who never married died in 1961, like her father before her she left money to various Leicester charities including £500 to the parish church of Kirby Muxloe to be used or applied towards the cost of erecting a church at Leicester Forest East. St Andrew's Church was built in 1966 and today proudly shows the WW1 silhouette on the wall outside

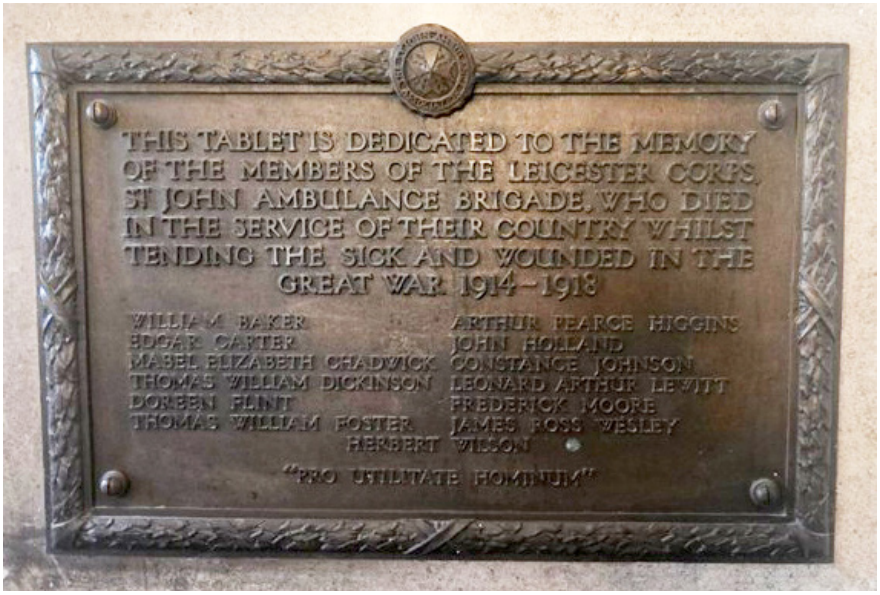




Left: **Constantce Eleanor Johnson's grave, Welford Road Cemetery.** Right: **WW1 silhouette St Andrew's Church.**



Above: **Holy Trinity war memorial featuring Constantce Eleanor Johnson.**



Above: **St John Ambulance Brigade memorial in Leicester Cathedral.**

"One of the human atoms"

The life and military service of Alfred Burrows

Robin Jenkins *recounts the remarkable life and military service of Alfred Burrows, whose letters offer a rare and vivid account of the soldier's experience from the South African War to the Somme.*

Compulsory education from the 1870s meant that, for the first time, Britain's wars, from the late 1880s (including the South African War and Great War) were recorded by literate participants in the lower ranks. Few chroniclers were, however, as charismatic, thoughtful, or observant as Alfred Burrows. As Alfred himself noted, with characteristic modesty:

"...unfortunately, the men who make history can rarely write it, for fighting and literary ambition seldom go hand in hand. Still, what poor efforts I make, I know you will appreciate them...Any description I may give must of necessity be rather disjointed, an incident here & there; a view... as seen through the eyes of one of the human atoms who formed part of that rather unfortunate army..."

Alfred was born in Leicester on 19 November 1876. He was educated at Elbow Lane School and presumably some form of night school, as he claimed an ability to write shorthand. He worked as a shoe pressman and spent some of his leisure with the Leicestershire Regiment's 3rd Battalion (the old militia). On 27 June 1893, claiming an age of 18 years and 2 months, Burrows joined the regular army. He was a typical Leicester recruit, with brown hair, brown eyes and a sallow



Left: **British Army signallers using heliograph in 2nd Boer War, October, 1899.**

complexion. He weighed 124 pounds, could inflate his chest to 36 inches and stood 5 feet 5 ¾ inches in height.

Burrows trained at Chatham before being posted in 1895 to the Leicestershire Regiment's 1st Battalion, in South Africa. Number 3771 Private Alfred Burrows served throughout the South African War of 1899-1902, as a signaller with 'D' Company. From at least September 1900 Burrows wrote home to his aunt and uncle in Leicester. His fifty-seven letters record not only the war through the eyes of an 'human atom' but also the opinions, tastes and doings of 'Thomas Atkins' – a persona readily adopted by Burrows.

The earliest letter, in a neat signaller's script is from September 1900, when the first phase of the Boer War was giving way to the guerilla warfare of 'sweeps' and garrisoned stop-lines. Alfred's uncle was eager for details of earlier fighting and he did his best to comply:

'I could... set before you the many sidelights of war as the private soldier sees it – not as the historian or the war correspondent sees it – but as the man who does the work sees it & feels it. I might picture "Tommy" & his many moods under different circumstances; on the veldt; on the march, or in the fighting line. But unfortunately, the men who make history can rarely write it, for fighting and literary ambition seldom go hand in hand. Still, what poor efforts I make, I know you will appreciate them...'

The accounts of the *'fighting line'* that Burrows gave his uncle varied from descriptions of minor incidents personally witnessed, to appreciations of *'the big picture'.*

As we have seen, Burrows' viewpoint is that of his 'human atom', for whom the battlefield is a shambles of isolated, personal incidents. Often this picture of confusion on the veldt can seem more revealing than loftier analyses. Of the defeat at Lombard's Kop, that led to the beleaguerment of 12,000 British troops in Ladysmith, Burrows makes no comment on faulty strategy but relates instead a curious meeting with a rifleman:

'...we were retiring. I found myself accompanied by a man of the Rifle Brigade, who probably wanted company, as he didn't seem particularly happy with himself, & no wonder, for he looked a perfect wreck, & as he had an utter disregard as to how he negotiated skylines, I ventured the remark, punctuated with pieces of rock, that if he really wanted to be shot I should perform the operation & save him the trouble of dodging about... I hadn't gone a dozen yards down the ridge, when he gave a screech like a broken down engine, clapped his hand to his cheek, & came down the slope as if the whole Boer army was chasing him!... He flashed past me like a whirlwind... I found afterwards that he had been shot through the cheek.'



Above: **Post card of Tower Hospital, Leicester.**

By the end of November 1901, Burrows' battalion was strung-out, garrisoning a line of blockhouses, between Standerton and Ermelo in the Transvaal. Life was clearly dull. ***'You are quite right'***, Burrows told his aunt on 7 January 1902, ***'the troops in the blockhouses are having a dreary time of it, day after day, week after week, & month after month they look upon the world, represented to them by the four walls of the blockhouse & a bare ridge in front.'***

Burrows was kept busy by his work as a signaller.

There was also the constant threat of a visit from the enemy. *'The sniping propensities of Brother Boer'* were a source of concern, as was the apparent carelessness of Burrows' comrades: ***'To my knowledge 7 of our Regt. have been captured since we have been occupying this line, at different times. The last being a sergeant & a private from the blockhouse next to ours. I wonder there have not been more, for I never saw a lot of such reckless fellows as some of ours are, in wandering out for miles in a country literally swarming with Boers.'***

Despite what Burrows called the ***'promiscuous shooting'*** and monotony (***'no amusements... no little luxuries such as a drop of extra tea or... milk, such as we are able to get in towns'***) Burrows preferred *'the weary waiting'* to the *'wearying march'*; ***'because we have a little cover from the weather here, & there is no "sore foot" to trouble one'.***

Burrows was aware of much discontent by the last year of the war. On 29 November 1901, the strain came to the surface whilst the Leicesters were engaged on the construction of their part of the blockhouse line: ***'...it is an awful job. Our Regt. has been served too badly. They came in from a 3 months' trek at the end of April, went out again shortly afterwards and fought hard & marched hard. They came in a short time ago to Standerton, & after 3 days rest, were sent out on this fort building... a spirit of discontent pervades the whole Regt...'***

Much to their disgust, the Regiment was kept in South Africa until the bitter end. Burrows finally sailed for home in August 1902; having been kept by the army a full year longer than he had signed on for. His view of the Army is made clear in a note sent home to his young nephew: ***"be a good boy and take up with a good profession. But Albert, never go for a soldier. If you do you will regret it as long as you live."***

Alfred Burrows settled into civilian life, gaining a position (with the aid of a reference from his old company commander, Major C G Blackader) as a nurse at the Borough mental hospital in Leicester. He married Annie Gamble, sister to his Aunt Emily, and had two sons; Frank in 1905 and William in 1913.

This happy existence was ended by the coming of war in August 1914. Early in 1915, possibly disconcerted by the vast recruiting banner across the Town Hall in Leicester, Burrows re-enlisted. Burrows was not in the best of health. He was nearly forty and concerned for his family.

Unusually, Alfred gives an insight into his



Above: **Photo of Acting Sergeant Alfred Burrows, the 9th Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment.**

motives. He wrote to his wife explaining:

'I... hope that you do not reproach me for taking this step and bringing this misery upon us all, but I saw my duty, & I could not bear that others should think me a coward for having failed in that duty & I am pleased that my children will grow up & will not have to hide their heads in shame because their father had not the courage to go, at whatever cost in peace of mind to him & others. I know you love me dearest, & I know & feel extraordinarily proud that you willingly allowed me to go."

As an old soldier, Burrows was a valuable recruit and promoted to corporal. He was posted to a training battalion at Barnard Castle but found the duties hard - *'I'm getting too old & not as spry for this game – the marching part of it at any rate.'* and seems to have been constantly concerned about his wife's nervous state: *"try not to worry so much... no one can tell who will be taken at the last moment... So don't worry dearest – you know I would do anything in my power to keep you from doing that, but the fact that I shall certainly be going before long has got to be faced. It is for your sake, dear, & for the sake of our children, as much as it is for anything or anybody else, & there is always a certain pride to think of going into danger & overcoming it & you must also let pride take the place of worry – pride in the fact that your man was "not among the first to go, but he went, Thank God, he went" I think that is what the poet says."*

From Barnard Castle the battalion moved to Rugeley Camp on Cannock Chase. Corporal Burrows wrote home, resting his paper on the floor of a hut:

"In this Company... the Non Coms have a very busy time of it. They are on from morning till night, & when we go out at night we go out to stay till about 3 in the morning & then carry on with the next days work as usual. I don't wonder at the men saying they would 10 times sooner be at the front than this... Well, you will think this is a very grumbling letter, but I assure you that I am not saying it to make you worry, because the work won't hurt me. The weather is fearfully cold up here – enough to turn you blue. I cannot get warm most of the time, & the nights are a special torment to me... I got inoculated for the second time last Friday, & was Orderly sergeant all last week, & as I hadn't got anybody to hand it over to I had to do it myself, so I got no rest this time with my inoculation – not a minute... Still, I am living & that is what matters, isn't it?"

Life on Cannock chase was hard and basic. There were few facilities and fewer



Left: **British troops in reserve trenches, Battle of Morval, 25th Septermber, 1916 IWM.**

opportunities for leave, although Leicester was only sixty miles away. Cannock Chase is still scarred with the concrete footings of the camps and vast rifle butts, as well as zig-zagging practice trenches. Alfred wrote home on the last day of 1915:

"... yesterday we had to go on night operations, & we went up [to our] knees in mud & water, it has been raining heavily all the time, so you can guess what a state we are all in – it is horrible. Sometimes I feel I could chuck the whole thing up & go mad for a bit. All the enthusiasm which possessed me at first to join again has been knocked out of me & everyone else by the conditions under which we are doing our bit, & by the dragging monotony of it all. I feel now that I should like to get by my own fireside & spend my days in peace with you & our children. It is not that I mind doing my share of the country's work, but I feel I have had too much of this sort of thing, & I am commencing to feel too far gone in years for all this running about. But far & above all is that I care for you & our children so much... I am beginning to turn my thoughts more towards peace, than war."

It was a nerve-wracking time for soldiers waiting to be posted. He wrote home again in July 1916: *"Of course, I shall let you know directly I get to hear anything... I don't want Willie nor Frank ever to forget their Dad, but I hope they won't fret much. I trust that if anything should happen to me, they will grow up to be a real help & comfort to you in the future years, & a consolation for all you may lose. ... Kiss them for me & give them a good hug."*

Within days Alfred Burrows, now Acting Sergeant, was posted to 'C' Company of the Leicesters' 9th Battalion on the Somme. Before moving up to the front-line he met with an old comrade from South Africa, Jack Linthwaite, who was serving with the battalion's transport. As Linthwaite recalled: *"We had drunk together – I believe it was champagne. It was very cheap at the time as we were in that part of the country. He was very depressed as he had a foreboding that he would not come back... "*

On 24 September 1916, the 9th Leicesters' War Diary records: *"Battalion moved up to ASSEMBLY TRENCHES in front of Guedecourt at 6pm... The attack was to be carried out on a two platoon frontage, and in eight waves, at 250 yards interval. 'C' and 'D' Coys forming front line – 'D' Coy on left – 'C' Coy on right."*

The progress of Burrow's company can be followed only too well.

"12.37 pm. Advance commenced... Enemy immediately commenced an extremely intense and deep barrage...

12.45 pm. 'C' Company reached GIRD TRENCH , but owing to machine Gun fire from the right... the party were all killed or wounded... Captain Webb wheeled 3rd and 4th waves of 'C' Company and formed a defensive flank down Sunken Road...

1pm. Captain Webb wounded – C.S.M. Rhodes killed. 'C' Company suffered extremely heavy casualties from Machine Gun fir...

2.35 pm. Advance hung up on account of M.G. fire and rifle fire. Enemy still occupying GIRD TRENCH on right of SUNKEN ROAD... "



Above: **Memorial plaque housed in Tower Hospital, Leicester.**

The neighbouring 8th Leicester's view of the attack is instructive. Their War Diary described an assault *"launched with splendid heroism, the first objective was gained in about ¾ of an hour. The men then stopped a short time to consolidate their gain and to allow the artillery barrage to lift. They then pressed on to their second objective which was the village of Gueudecourt. By the time they reached the village their ranks were sadly thinned, by the tremendous artillery barrage the enemy put up, and by machine guns which wrought terrible havoc. Nevertheless with dauntless gallantry they pressed on, reaching the village and engaging the enemy in hand-to-hand fighting, which took place all night."*

Many years later, Jack Linthwaite told Alf Burrows's son what he had heard of his old friend's fate: *"they were in a shell hole. [Alf] had at that time a blighty having been wounded in the shoulder but all had got into in the shell hole as a little cover from shellfire (these people you must understand were under a very hot sun without food or water - all were exhausted) & as it was getting dark they made an attempt to get back to their own lines but were under shell fire & the Jerries had all the no-mans land ranged to a few yards. Had your dad waited until darkness had set in properly then they might have had a chance [but] you must remember that the day had been awful the heat was overpowering & [being] without water is a terrible ordeal. That is why they made a break for it. Also there was some badly wounded men in that shell hole & their cries & groans for water was terrible, preying on each other's minds... "*

Sergeant Burrows's body must have been recovered because Jack Linthwaite also told his son that *"the Jerries came over in the darkness that night [and] even took your dads boots from his feet & his buttons from his coat, his watch from his wrist & everything he had in his pockets... "*

Sadly, Burrows's grave was later lost and so his name appears on the Thiepval Memorial as well as on the Towers Hospital war memorial. Perhaps the best memorial, however, to No. 20251 Acting Sergeant Alfred Burrows is the priceless collection of his letters, so generously preserved in our county record office by his son, William.

News from Antwerp:
Grammar Men Remembered

Denis Kenyon writes: *yet again the biographies of The Gateway Grammar men who died in WW2 has created a new contact for us in a new country. This time Belgium. His name is Niko Van Kerckhoven, a local amateur historian from Antwerp, Belgium, and we are delighted to have made contact. Niko writes: -*

A few years ago, the City of Antwerp contacted me in connection with the major project Antwerp Remembers. I contributed to the exhibition, which is still running at the MAS museum, and I am also an active volunteer with the Names Monument, which is being installed on the quays near the Port Authority building, bearing the names of more than 23000 war victims.

This brought me regularly to Schoonselhof, Antwerp's main municipal cemetery. What is less well known are the large military plots located here, which are rarely visited. There are several plots containing around 1,000 Belgian servicemen, as well as several dozen French, Italian, Romanian, Portuguese, Polish and Russian servicemen. The largest section, however, consists of the five large plots containing British graves, all maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Here lie 1,557 fallen servicemen who fought in the Allied forces during the First and Second World Wars.

About three years ago, I started looking for a photograph of each of these men - a long-term project. In the meantime, I have managed to find photographs of 54% of them, meaning that I now have a photograph for one grave in every two.

As I have also learned a great deal about their personal stories and the circumstances of their deaths, the City of Antwerp regularly contacts me to organise guided tours. I have already guided Canadian SHAPE officers, as well as the Prime Ministers of Tasmania, Canada and Belgium.

At first, photographs came fairly quickly. If you know where to look, there is a great deal of information readily available online, for example through the Canadian Virtual War Memorial. But slowly and surely, the online sources began to dry up. Nowadays, we are lucky if we find one new face a week. Fortunately, a few British researchers have joined me in my quest. They each have a different approach, searching newspaper archives, military files at The National Archives



Above: **Headstones at the CWGC cemetery Schoonselhof, Hoboken, Antwerp**

and other local sources. We maintain a large Excel file, which we continuously update with any additional information we uncover.

At the time of writing, I am still searching for photographs of at least three casualties from the Leicester area:

Sergeant (Air Gunner) William John Throsby – 83 Squadron, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve – killed near Antwerp on 11 April 1944. He was born on 13 August 1924 and lived at 348 Braunstone Road, Braunstone, Leicester. He was a pupil at Gateway Grammar School and is mentioned on their war memorial.

Private Albert Hibbert – Pioneer Corps, 86 Company. He died in Antwerp on 22 March 1946, aged 24. He was the son of Joseph and Priscilla Hibbert, of Shepshed, Leicestershire.

Private Charles Henry Percival – 1st Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment. He died in Antwerp on 1 November 1944, aged 25. He was the son of Charles Henry and Lilian Percival.

A good example is Sergeant (Air Gunner) William John Throsby from Leicester. So far, we have not been able to find a photograph of him or his crew. The entire Lancaster crew perished when the aircraft crashed at Merksplas, north of Antwerp. There is a small memorial at the site.

We therefore checked the obvious sources, such as Bomber Command casualty lists, CWGC reburial reports and so on, but without any positive results. Online newspaper archives did not produce a photograph either. We then started "peeling the history onion" one layer further and began researching local sources.

The Leicester Museum referred us to the Leicester Regiment — which, of course, does not have a list of RAF casualties. So we tried to find his school or college, and discovered that William is mentioned on a memorial to the war dead of Gateway Grammar School. Unfortunately, the school no longer exists.

My next step was to search online for information about the school and try to locate the memorial. That was when I stumbled upon this incredible and beautiful project!

It has been a long journey, and it can be very frustrating at times, but the beautiful part is that along the way I have come to know so many good people: researchers, families, fellow enthusiasts, and many others. So, although this project started with the great tragedy of the Second World War, at least it has brought people together.



Above: **Crucifix monument at the CWGC cemetery Schoonselhof, Hoboken, Antwerp**



Above: **Headstones at the CWGC cemetery Schoonselhof, Hoboken, Antwerp**

Texel Memorial and Political Symbolism

Matthew Kenyon *tells the story of how geo-politics tangled with memorialisation in one of The Netherlands many offshore islands..*

Take a walk to the highest point on the Dutch island of Texel. It is called the Hoge Berg, which literally means 'High Mountain'. It's only 15 metres above sea level, but the views are excellent.

In a wooded area not far from the top lies a cemetery, the last resting place of hundreds of men who were killed in the final battle of the European theatre in the 2nd World War.

Part of the occupying force on Texel was a large group of soldiers from what was then the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia. They had been captured on the Eastern front and forced (or chose) to join the German Army.

Aware that the war was ending and mindful of the likely reception were they to be returned to the Soviet Union, the Georgians rose up against the Germans and attempted to take control of the island.

A vicious, week's long fight followed in which nearly 1500 people lost their lives. The Georgians who died are buried here.

At the head of the cemetery is a memorial, which has become a focal point for the contested history around these events.

It seems clear that one of the motivations for the uprising was fear of what would await the men if they were forced to return to the Soviet Union. Some may have joined the Germans on the promise of support for Georgian independence.

But they had originally served in the Soviet army, and that is how they were remembered when the memorial was raised in 1953. There is, incongruously in the North Holland countryside, a Hammer and Sickle symbol on the low wall that forms the memorial, alongside the Texel coat of arms.

The Soviet ambassador used to visit each year to commemorate the uprising, and locals often spoke of the 'Russian War', their name for the revolt.

But the Soviet Union no longer exists, Georgia is independent and its relationship with Russia is deeply complicated. Which is why, the last time I visited, it was no longer possible to see the original Hammer and Sickle.

It hadn't been removed. Instead, it had been obscured by a new stone, which carried images of the Georgian flag and the Dutch flag.

It had been placed there (with permission) by a Georgian entrepreneur who founded the Georgian Cultural Centre in the Netherlands. The logo of the centre is also on the stone, which stands only a few inches from the original memorial, directly in front of it.

It is a move designed to rebrand the history of the uprising, to make it Georgian rather than Soviet or Russian, and to place it in the context of the present day. Remember that Russia and Georgia fought a brief war only in 2008, and that relations between the two are the subject of deep controversy within Georgia itself.

When the new stone was unveiled on the 80th anniversary of the end of the war, the entrepreneur behind the initiative, Tika Svanidze Vancko, told the local broadcaster that there was no intention to 'erase history'. Instead, she said, it was designed to show Georgian gratitude to the Dutch which preserving the original memorial.

But many locals were deeply upset by the change, and there have been persistent calls for the new stone to be moved. That hadn't happened the last time I was there.

You can read more about the uprising, the controversies about it, and the dispute around the changes to the memorial in this article from Dutch News.

Click this link or paste into your browser: **https://www.dutchnews.nl/2025/05/europes-last-battlefield-remembering-texels-georgian-uprising/?**



Above: **The original Soviet Memorial.**



Above: **New Georgian Memorial neatly obscures the Soviet one.** Below: **Location of Texel Island. Image by Ignacio López Moreno.**





The Market Garden commemorations

Oosterbeek and the surrounding area

Denis Kenyon *writes - Jan de Jager, our correspondent in The Netherlands has sent this report concerning the magnificent way the Dutch remember with gratitude, the sacrifice the Allies made in 1944 to liberate The Netherlands. (All contemporary photos by Arjan de Vries)*

Every year from the end of August, the streets of Oosterbeek turn Maroon Red. During this month of remembrance, many residents and business owners respond to the call to fly the dark red flag bearing the Pegasus emblem, thereby demonstrating their solidarity with the Airborne troops. These flags can be seen not only in Oosterbeek but also in Arnhem and the surrounding municipalities.

This tradition demonstrates just how strong the bond between the Airborne troops and the people of Arnhem and Oosterbeek still is, 82 years after the battle, and how very much the memory of it is still alive.

That bond was forged immediately after the war, when British veterans were already present at the first commemorations. Furthermore, in 1946, around 200 British veterans returned to the places where they had fought – which were still largely in ruins at the time – for the filming of the movie 'Theirs is the Glory'. In the years that followed, the veterans and their families continued to return to Arnhem and Oosterbeek, and bonds of friendship were forged that endure to this day. This bond may be explained by the fact that the soldiers and civilians experienced the intense fighting in September 1944 together, both inside and outside the perimeter. The soldiers faced the enemy head-on, whilst the civilians of Oosterbeek were hidden away in cellars and other shelters.

Apart from the Airborne Cemetery and the Hotel Hartenstein – then General Urquhart's headquarters and now the Airborne Museum – numerous monuments, information boards and memorials in the Arnhem and Oosterbeek region serve as reminders of those days. Traces of the fighting can also still be seen on the walls of many houses and buildings.

The victims of Operation Market Garden have been commemorated annually ever since 1945. This first took place at the Airborne



Above: ***'Flower Children'*** **laying flowers on the graves of Allied soldiers at the Arnhem Oosterbeek War Cemetery.**

Cemetery on Sunday 25 September 1945, when 600 schoolchildren laid a flower on the grave of every fallen soldier. Since then, the flower laying has become a tradition and is for families and inhabitants the emotional highlight of the commemoration. Veterans of the battle of Arnhem, gave the children the honour name ***'Flower Children'***.

The Airborne Commemorations Foundation is responsible for all commemorations and events organised each year around the third week of September, most of which follow a set tradition. It should be noted, however, that the programme also includes some innovations. For example, since 2014, the annual 'Bridge to Liberation' commemorative concert has been organised at the bridge. In addition to a solemn section and music from that era, this event also features a variety of modern visual elements. It is gratifying to note that interest amongst both British and Dutch people in all parts of the programme remains as strong as ever. As well as the events north of the Rhine, the programme also includes a commemoration at the Polish monument in Driel on the opposite bank of the river.

In the final days of August, the commemorations will, figuratively speaking, get underway. From then on, numerous gatherings and events will take place, including the Airborne Walk, which will be held for the 79th time in 2026. This commemorative walk takes place every year on the first Saturday in September in Oosterbeek. The walk pays tribute to the more than 1,700 British and Polish soldiers who lost their lives in the Battle of Arnhem and are buried at the Airborne Cemetery in Oosterbeek. The walk offers four route distances: 10, 15, 25 and 40 kilometres, passing landmarks that commemorate the events that took place in Arnhem and the surrounding area during the Second World War. With an average of over 35,000 walkers, this is the largest one-day commemorative walk in the world. The proceeds from the walk were originally intended to enable veterans and their surviving relatives to attend the commemorations. Now that most veterans have passed away, donations are also made to other causes that are in keeping with the spirit of the walk.

The official commemoration programme begins every year on 17 September at 9.00 am with a ceremony and wreath-laying at the 'De Naald' (Needle) monument. This monument,

approximately 11 metres high and situated in the open field in front of Hotel Hartenstein, was the first to be unveiled after the battle. The funds for this memorial were raised by the people of Oosterbeek, and despite the shortage of building materials at the time, General Urquhart laid the foundation stone as early as 25 September 1945.

On that day, and in the days that followed, commemorations took place at numerous monuments – both official events and those organised on the initiative of members of the public and/or relatives of veterans. The commemoration and wreath-laying ceremony at the monument on Airborneplein, situated by the bridge, is also always very well attended. This 'Bridge too Far' was named after John Frost in 1978. The monument stands at the heart of the area that was defended between 17 and 20 September 1944 by Frost's 2nd Parachute Battalion and other units that happened to be there. The monument consists of a war-damaged column from the former Palace of Justice, which was completely destroyed.

On Saturday, the hugely popular parachute drop takes place on the Ginkelse Heide near Ede. At this former Drop Zone Y, there are then several jumps by paratroopers from 11 NATO countries, including, of course, British troops and soldiers from the Dutch Airmobile Brigade. In keeping with British tradition, they also wear the red beret. A small group of paratroopers, dressed in Second World War uniforms, will make a ceremonial jump from a C-47 Dakota. The mass jump, comprising several hundred paratroopers, will take place from modern military aircraft.

Sunday – traditionally the final day of the official commemorations – begins with an Anglican church service in the Oude Kerk in Oosterbeek-Laag. This church, situated within the former perimeter, was directly in the line of fire at the time and served as an emergency hospital. This is followed at 11.00 am by the main commemoration at the cemetery. This commemoration, attended by, amongst others, British, Polish and Dutch military personnel, clergy and ambassadors, is a solemn and sombre affair and attracts a huge crowd. In every anniversary year, the commemoration is also attended by members of the British and Dutch Royal Families. Following the official wreath-laying ceremonies at the Cross of Sacrifice, around 800 children lay flowers on each grave. The commemoration concludes with the reading of the Order of Remembrance, the playing of the Last Post, a minute's silence, the pronouncement of a blessing, and the playing of the British, Polish and Dutch national anthems.

All this is just a selection of the many commemorations and activities that demonstrate how much the history of that time is still alive. This article focuses exclusively on the Arnhem and Oosterbeek region; the Market Garden operation naturally extended over a wider area. Commemorations also take place south of the Rhine and the Waal. There, too, there are sombre commemorations at the cemeteries, but considerable attention is also paid to the American contribution to the operation. Moreover, for the south, Market-Garden meant liberation, whilst for the residents of Arnhem and Oosterbeek it meant evacuation, only to find their homes destroyed or looted when they returned in May–June 1945



Above: **Airborne Monument known as *De Naald* or "The Needle", Oosterbeek.**



Above: **Airborne Memorial Service held at the Arnhem Oosterbeek War Cemetery.**

Interesting websites:

1. The full programme of commemorations can be found at:
www.airborne-herdenkingen.nl/programma/2026/SAH_ACF-commemorations_programme-2026w.pdf
2. This site give an idea of what there is to see in the Oosterbeek area relating to Market-Garden:
www.tracesofwar.com/sights/Oosterbeek.htm?provinceid=5
3. Report on the commemoration at the cemetery in 2025:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqaRwx2lYeU
4. Report on the parachute jump on the Ginkelse Heide in 2025:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=QVpbT0lurmY&t=3600s

Restored to Glory

Over the years we have assisted with the cleaning and restoration of 16 war memorials in situ. This assistance has taken the form of financial help, physical assistance and making the necessary contacts and arrangement for the work to take place.

We will feature them from time to time as space allows. One early one and among the most splendid was St Peter's, Storer Road, Loughborough. The church built between 1910 and1912, replacing a Tin Tabernacle mission church erected in 1889 to serve the fast-expanding town.

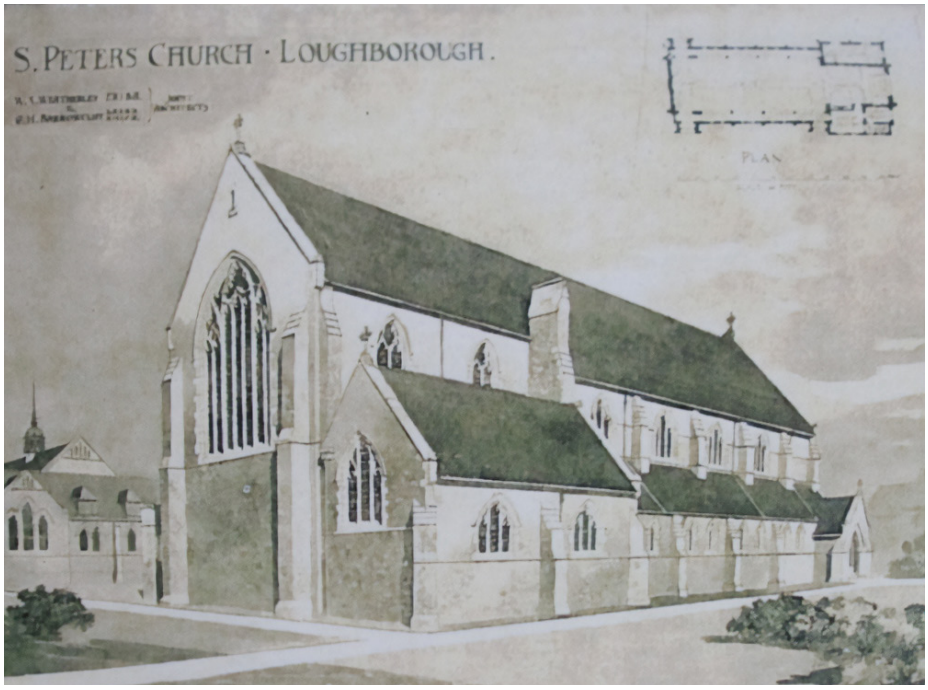
It was closed by the Church of England in 2006, bought by the Elim Pentecostal Church and after extensive alterations re-opened in 2013.

Within, it had an absolute gem of a war memorial lavishly decorated triptych, immensely heavy and when the doors were open 9ft x 9ft.

Chris Stephens and I got word that it was down and was to be stored in a cupboard, because there was no where convenient to have it in the reconstructed building. We contacted the Pastor, who could not have been more helpful. We looked all round and every wall had a niche, door or window. Almost in despair, we found the perfect spot – next to the new plate glass entrance doors which had been made at the East end beneath the large window.

We cleaned it up. The Pastor arranged a Rededication Service to which about 18 people, some descendants of the men named on the triptych were present. It was a very moving little service.

We are so pleased that our efforts have ensured that another memorial remains in place where it should be.



Above: **Drawing of St Peter's Church, 1912. Photo credit: Lynne Dyer - lynneaboutloughborough.blogspot.com**.





Above: **The top of the triptych being cleaned. Depicted in relief wood carving is Saint George and the Dragon.**
Left: **The triptych hanging in its new home at the east end of St Peter's church after the Rededication Service.**



The Leicester City, County & Rutland At Risk Memorials Project welcomes any information which can help or promote their work. If you have any details of any War Memorial you feel is at risk, or can help in any way, please contact us on:

mail@atriskwarmemorials.co.uk

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Highcross Street, LEICESTER
LE1 4PH