



SOKE MILITARY SOCIETY

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Website www.sokemilitarysociety.co.uk

Monthly Meeting

The next meeting is on Wednesday, 14 June 2006 when Alistair Goodrum will give a talk—No Place for Chivalry – Night Fighter Squadrons from the Wittering and Digby Sectors.

Website

There is now an opportunity for Members to buy and sell through the site.

Also it will be changed as regularly as possible. However if you have any suggestions that you think will improve it please let David and Roger know in whatever format is easiest.

The Churchill Museum

The Cabinet War Rooms have created the first ever museum dedicated to the complete life and times of Winston Churchill

The museum forms the core of the Churchill Project, a major restoration and expansion programme at this once secret underground wartime headquarters. This £13.5 million project has already seen restoration of the Churchills' private living accommodation within the War Rooms.

Looking at Churchill's life, work and achievements, the Museum is the final component in the expansion and development of the Cabinet War Rooms, the scene of his historic wartime leadership.

This is the first national museum dedicated to

Winston Churchill. It creates an intimate and multifaceted portrait of him, one that reveals the private as well as the public man, his talents and flaws.

The Cabinet War Rooms has received £2 million from the National Heritage Memorial Fund towards the Churchill Project. We are seeking to raise £11.5 million through fundraising in order to complete the full restoration and expansion project. £6 million of this is required to establish The Churchill Museum and ensure that this great world statesman receives a fitting tribute.

The exhibition runs to the 1 October 2006.

Threat to the 'Glory Hole', La Boisselle, Somme

(thanks to Ernie Rusdale)

Those who have visited La Boisselle this year will have seen construction work at the eastern edge of the Glory Hole. Notices at the western end around the British lines also announced the imminent construction of another house. The intense mine warfare which has left a legacy of deep craters and multi-level tunnel systems below ground has up to now has preserved this area from development.

Hundreds of French soldiers gave their lives attempting to re-take the village during 1914-15 and it acquired a sacred reputation far exceeding its military value. The French clung to the village

cemetery and an area known as the Ilôt and mining converted No-Man's-Land into a mass of deep craters. When the British took over in late July 1915, 179th Tunnelling Company RE was posted to the sector. Aided for a couple of months by 185th Tunnelling Company, and using ever larger mine charges and deeper tunnels, they gradually gained ascendancy over the German miners. Driving long attack galleries to outflank the German mine system, they placed two large charges at the 'Y' Sap and Lochnagar, which were blown on 1 July 1916 when the 34th Division attacked. The remains of about two dozen British tunnellers lie in galleries beneath what came to be called the 'Glory Hole'.

Richard Dunning pointed out in the April Newsletter of the Friends of Lochnagar that he tried to buy the plot in 1980 but was assured by the owners that it would never be built on and was safe for perpetuity. However, in January of this year construction site notices appeared marking a plot for development. The signs were dated 22 November 2005 but had apparently only just been erected. The Conseil Général de la Somme was immediately alerted to the heritage importance of the land and also of the potential hazard. A response came on 17 February from the Préfecture asking for plans of the tunnels and for a representative to attend a meeting the following week. At this meeting it was learned that the time for objections had expired and that planning permission could be overturned only on the grounds of danger. Evidence was provided of tunnels and the possible presence of unexploded mine charges. It also transpired that planning permission appeared to have been issued with a disclaimer in respect of subsidence and that this was potentially illegal.

On 24 January a letter was sent on behalf of the All Party Parliamentary War Graves and Battlefields Heritage Group to the Conseil Général stressing the importance of the site and of drawing up a list of sites for protection. A letter followed on 27 January to the French Ambassador. On 28 February the Préfecture issued an immediate prohibition notice to stop work and on 15 March withdrew the building permit. By this time excavation work on the foundations had already begun and several metres of earth had been removed.

This is not the end of the matter, however. The purchasers of the eastern plot sold their previous house to fund the new development and are appealing against the decision, having been left homeless. If the Préfet's decision is upheld by the Tribunal, the State will apparently have to pay an

indemnity but if the Préfet's decision is set aside, building can proceed over the whole area. The matter is to be raised at the next meeting of the All Party Group at the end of April.

The speed of building development on the Somme is now so rapid that key areas should be identified now with the French authorities and if necessary purchased for safeguarding. My wish is that a trust can purchase the Glory Hole and thus also help the unfortunate French purchasers of the plot who appear to have done so in good faith. The Conseil Général is not necessarily able to acquire land for the purpose of preservation and the WFA has already played its part elsewhere. I have become involved because of research for a book on mining at La Boisselle.

Anyone with suggestions for fund-raising should please contact Simon Jones at simon.jones87@virgin.net

Tyne Cot Cemetery

If you are to visit Tyne Cot Cemetery this year the hassle of parking at the front has changed with the creation of a new car park at the back of the Cemetery.

Daily Mirror Headlines: The Battle of Jutland, Published 3 June 1916

Germans on Day and Night Fight

Amsterdam, Friday: The following official account of the North Sea battle was issued in Berlin today.

During an enterprise, directed towards the north, our High Sea Fleet on Wednesday last met a considerably superior main portion of the British Battle Fleet. In the course of the afternoon, between the Skagerack and the Horns' Reef, a number of severe, and for us, successful engagements developed and continued all night.

In these engagements, as far as is at present ascertained, we destroyed the great battleship *Warspite*, the battlecruisers *Queen Mary* and *Indefatigable*, two armoured cruisers of the Achilles class, one small cruiser and the new destroyer leaders *Turbulent*, *Restor* and *Alcaster*.

According to trustworthy evidence a great number of British battleships suffered heavy damage from the artillery of our vessels and the attacks of our torpedo-boat flotillas during the day battle and during the night. Among others, the great battleship *Marlborough* was hit by a torpedo, as is confirmed by the statements of prisoners.

A portion of the crews of the British vessels that were sunk were picked up by our vessels. Among them are two sole survivors of the *Indefatigable*. On our side the small cruiser *Wiesbaden* was sunk by the enemy's artillery in the course of the day battle, and during the night the *Pommern* by a torpedo.

Regarding the fate of the *Frauenlob*, which is missing, and some torpedo-boats, which have not returned up to the present, nothing is known.

The High Sea Fleet returned to our harbours in the course of today. (Signed Chief of the Naval General Staff; Reuters)

[Note: it should not be forgotten that the British official statement points out that NO British battleships or light cruisers were sunk.]

Foe Admiral's Version of Battle

Amsterdam, Friday. The Director of the Naval Department (Rear Admiral Hebbinghaus) declared in the Reichstag that, according to the latest information, the whole of the German battle fleet, under the command of Vice Admiral Scheer, found itself on the afternoon of May 31 faced by the British Battle Fleet, including 34 big modern units. The battle lasted until 9pm, being followed by a series of reciprocal attacks during the night between cruisers and torpedo boats.

'The result of the fighting is a significant success for our forces against a much stronger adversary,' said the Rear Admiral, amid cheers. He went on to report on the British losses as already known and added that nine or ten destroyers were destroyed, six of them being accounted for by the battleship *Westfalen*.

It was evident that some of the German ships had been considerably damaged, but the major portion of the fleet had returned to harbour. (Central News)

90th Anniversary of The Battle of the Somme

An exhibition on The Battle of the Somme opens at the National Army Museum on 1st July to mark the 90th anniversary of one of history's bloodiest battles.

On 1st July 1916 the British Army suffered the highest battle casualties ever inflicted on it in a single day. In total 57,270 men were killed, wounded or missing. It was the beginning of a five-month campaign that would achieve an uncertain 'victory' at a cost many then, and since, believed

too high.

The Somme exhibition has been planned to mark the anniversary with an exploration of the many ways in which the Somme has been viewed, at the time and since. It aims to present the facts about the battle – why and how it was fought, how the public at home saw the campaign, and what the thousands of British soldiers involved felt and experienced.

"Today, the Battle of the Somme is associated with extreme suffering, wasted lives and incompetent generals", explained Andrew Robertshaw, leading the exhibition team. "But much of what has been seen as 'fact' is simply one of many historians' interpretation of events. This exhibition aims to separate the two, present multiple perspectives on the battle, place it in the wider context of the First World War, and allow visitors to make up their own minds."

The exhibition opening is the leading event the London museum has planned or supported to mark the 90th anniversary. Andrew Robertshaw and other staff of the National Army Museum are taking part in a 5 day memorial march along the Somme front line in the week preceding the anniversary, and the exhibition launch is followed by an event weekend on 8th - 9th July, where members of the public will be able to listen to a staged interview with Field Marshal Haig.*

The Somme opens to the public at 10.00am on Saturday 1 July. Admission is free.

The Gallipoli Map Collection

The Australian War Memorial holds over 300 maps from the Gallipoli campaign. The collection includes maps used at the landing of Australian and New Zealand forces at ANZAC Cove on 25 April 1915, Turkish maps made during and immediately after the campaign, trench maps, operational maps, artillery maps, and ANZAC cemetery plans.

Turkish Maps

In anticipation of an invasion of the Gallipoli peninsula, the Turks began producing a series of 1:25,000 maps of the area. But they were not ready in time for the landing of allied troops on 25 April 1915 and the commanders of the Turkish forces generally had small-scale maps.

Within the first few weeks of the campaign, however, the Turks began to distribute 1:25,000 maps to their officers. Early in the campaign, a few of these new maps were captured by the allies.

The first map of the ANZAC area was captured on 19 May, found on the body of a mortally wounded Turkish officer on the parapet at the Nek. A map of the Cape Helles area was captured by the British around the same time. It covered the area from the tip of Helles to the Kilitbahir plateau. Further maps at a scale of 1:25,000 were produced throughout the campaign.

In celebration of the victory over the allies at Gallipoli, the Ottoman Turks compiled a set of maps showing the battlefield as it was at the end of the campaign in 1916. The Turkish Mapping Directorate, under Brigadier General Mehmet Şevki Paşa, completed a set of 43 maps, including an index and key. They enlarged the 1:25,000 maps used during the campaign to 1:5,000 scale and added surveys completed during 1916 throughout the campaign.

War Office Press Bureau

In August 1914 the British government established the War Office Press Bureau under F. E. Smith. The idea was this organisation would censor news and telegraphic reports from the British Army and then issue it to the press. Lord Kitchener decided to appoint Colonel Ernest Swinton to become the British Army's official journalist on the Western Front. Using the pseudonym, Eyewitness, Swinton was instructed to write articles about what was happening on the front-line. Swinton's reports were first censored at G.H.Q. in France and then personally vetted by Kitchener before being released to the press.

Later in 1914, Henry Major Tomlinson, a journalist working for the Daily News, was also recruited by the British Army as an official war correspondent. Swinton and Tomlinson worked to strict guidelines. They were not allowed to mention place names or soldiers' battalions, brigades and divisions. The men were told that no article could be passed for publication if it indicated that they had seen what they had written about. Swinton and Tomlinson were also instructed to write in terms of what they thought was true and not what they knew to be true.

After complaints from the USA the British government decided to look again at how the war was reported. After a Cabinet meeting on the subject in January, 1915, the government decided to change its policy and to allow selected journalists to report the war. Five men were chosen: Philip Gibbs (Daily Chronicle and the Daily Telegraph), Percival Philips (Daily Express and the Morning Post), William Beach Thomas (Daily Mail and the Daily Mirror) Henry Perry Robinson (The Times and the Daily News) and Herbert Russell (Reuters News Agency). Before their reports could be sent back to England, they had to be submitted to C. E. Montague, the former leader writer of the Manchester Guardian.

Over the next three years other journalists such as John Buchan, Valentine Williams, Hamilton Fyfe and Henry Nevinson, became accredited war correspondents. To remain on the Western Front, these journalists had to accept government control over what they wrote.

Annual Exhibition

A date to now put in your diary.

The Annual Exhibition has been arranged for the week-end of the 14 and 15 October 2006.

Further details will be announced nearer the time.

Notices

Teas and coffees are on sale at the Meeting each month at a cost of 25p a cup.

Please send any articles/notices as soon as possible and in any case before the 7th of each month, for inclusion in the following month's newsletter.

Secretary: Roger Negus 01778 349270
Treasurer: Ted Gray 01733 769434
Newsletter Derek Lea 01733 572245 email: dereklea@ntlworld.com
Address: 10 Thornton Close, Peterborough, PE4 7UH