Battledress Times

The General Newsletter of the Herts at War Project

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November 2026

Sorry it has been a while since the last newsletter (April), my excuse is that I have been very busy with the St Albans Diocese records – see that heading below. In this issue I will keep content short, but, as always, if anyone wishes for more details just ask and they will be given in a reply and I will add that information to the next newsletter.



Jonty Wild

HAW 2027 St Julien Commemoration Tour

So far the support given to this Tour, which will commemorate the 110th Anniversary of the Hertfordshire Regiment's 'Blackest Day' is brilliant. We have 37 confirmed travellers, so we are only 3 off being able to apply the extra discount. We have relatives of those killed travelling, plus quite a few first time battlefield tourers and a good mix of couples, friends and individuals, so it looks like a really friendly sociable group of people. Do join us if you can, we still have spaces left and you will have a great time whether travelling as a couple, with friends or as an individual. Full details are ***here***.

HAW Talks

I have to mention the talks, obviously the Project is very grateful to the team that organises these and Paul is already well on the way to filling next year's program (see HAW events ***here***.

We and the talk team are all grateful to you the audience for turning up to make the effort worthwhile, we know that you enjoy them, but we should also say that we appreciate your donations. Not only are they usually covering our costs (hall, speakers, refreshments etc.) but they are now often making a contribution to help us with the running costs of the Project (website, database etc.) So thank you.

Membership

November is the peak time for renewal of our members who pay annually to support the project financially. Many of you have been supporting us since the start and your contribution has been, and is, vital, giving us confidence that we can meet our unavoidable costs and carry on, so a BIG THANK YOU to you.



If anyone else would like to support us in this way, please have a look at the membership details ***here***.

St Albans Diocese Records

Although I was aware that the St Albans Abbey held some Great War commemoration records, i.e. the Hertfordshire Yeomanry, a number of commemorations to individuals and records held in book form in a display case. The latter for a good reason, i.e. the label, I thought just held the names relating to the St Albans street memorials, however the book actually contains the Diocese records. Now, bearing in mind that we currently hold about 13,000 names, I found that the Diocese book contained about 12,000 names listed against Hertfordshire parishes. Obviously most will already be in our database, but they all have to be checked, and the 'book' memorial added. . . . . .



Wait though that is not the worst of it – they have two similar but not identical books, so both have to be checked (24,000 records) and both 'book' memorials added . . . . . but wait, even that isn't the worst of it! I had no idea that the St Albans Diocese covers quite a lot of parishes in Bedfordshire and so I estimate each book contains another 6,000 similar but not identical names.

Ordinarily, the Bedfordshire names would not be relevant to Hertfordshire, but one of our rules for inclusion is if a man is memorialised in Hertfordshire but has no other connection, we include them, and the Diocese records are held in Hertfordshire. So what do I do with them?

To be honest, at present, I am just thinking about that while I deal with the Hertfordshire names. The good news is that they mostly contain names we are already aware of and in some cases they have helped us to positively identify a man, and in other cases they have added new names. It is the integration of those names and the memorial listings that is a huge amount of work. I have spent several weeks of spare time, so far, and I reckon I am about 30% of the way through the process. I am consulting our researchers for their views (any others would be welcome too), but I don't think we want to add another 6,000 names for full biography research. Currently, I am thinking about treating them like the pupils we have found on memorials in the Hertfordshire boarding schools. For most of those they were schooled here but usually have no other Hertfordshire connection, when this is the case we give basic information, e.g. the CWGC information, but don't usually proceed to a more detailed biography, but it will still be many, many hours of work to include them. Any thoughts anyone?

HAW and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

I recently had the need to contact the CWGC, and as normal with this type of correspondence, I start by giving a little explanation about our project and offering more information via links to our website. I have to say it was really gratifying that the response to one contact was: "*Thank you for your message and for outlining the important work you are doing with the Herts At War Project—it's a truly valuable initiative*." and to the next: "*We are well acquainted with the Herts at War project here at the CWGC - this is certainly an impressive body of research . . .*"

The most recent contact was intended to start discussion for our mutual benefit, relating to two aspects of our research:

1. Corrections:

Sometimes the impressive work by our volunteers reveals errors in the CWGC records. They are willing to make corrections, or even add new names, provided good and sufficient evidence is provided. Our researchers have already done this on a number of occasions with individual submissions using the formal online process that the CWGC have. However, and understandably, their procedure is built around the usual contact, i.e. the submission online by an individual for an amendment to an individual name and attaching each individual peace of supporting evidence one at a time, but this process is really cumbersome for projects such as ours and we now have a backlog of such requests.

I am hoping that they will allow one or two approved HAW nominated people, to have direct email access to their team who review the evidence for possible amendments. This would speed up the process fous submitting evidence for review enormously – I will let you know if we are successful.

2. CWGC 'For Evermore – Stories of the Fallen'

This is the CWGC initiative allowing people to submit and expand the information on the men and women held in their records. They are in the early stages of this initiative and, for (I presume) both world wars, only have



about 1,900 such records – I believe these are processed by their volunteers. I am really hoping that I haven't scared them off by offering to discuss the possibility of sharing our 7,836 grade 3 and above biographies. For this to be in any way practical we would need to have a bulk upload process – which I don't think would be as complicated as it first sounds – and I would need to discuss the idea with our current researchers to make sure they are happy. However, I see this is a great way for us to share our project's work, help the CWGC, and another way to help preserve the hard work of our volunteers, forever – again I will let you know if we are successful.

Mystery Photographs - Resolved

You may remember that in the last newsletter I asked for help to identify two mystery memorials – photographs I had without knowing where they were from. With help from Brenda Palmer they have both been found. One (the slate one) was found to be Canadian and the other was Australian, and both contain the name of a Hertfordshire related man. Hence why someone sent them to me.



