



Battledress Times

The General Newsletter of the Herts at War Project

Comments & copy to (jontywild@hertsatwar.co.uk)

November 2025

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First My Apologies

May I apologise to anyone waiting for correspondence, research information from me or to be added to the email circulation list, but for over 10 weeks (at the time of writing) I have had virtually no internet connection. I have been promised a new fibre connection, but frustratingly the first installation date was cancelled and, as yet, I have no new date. Although emails come and go (eventually), I often have to go online in order to reply properly and I just can't. Of course this also means that I am struggling to use or update the website and database - I will do so as soon as I am able.

Now My Thanks

November is when most people's attention turns to remembrance, and for HAW it is also when most of our paying members renew. I would like to thank all of those paying members, both personally and on behalf of the Herts At War Project. As one of our few income sources, this is a vital part of our project and helps fund the inevitable and unavoidable costs of running the website and database etc. If anyone else would like to consider becoming a paying member and supporter of the project (from only £20), please visit [HAW Membership](#), where you can find more information. Alternatively, a 'one off' donation of any amount can be made via [Donation](#) or just give a bit extra at one of our talks.

Our Talks

Thanks to Paul Johnson and his team, we now have many of next year's dates planned. These will appear on the website (eventually) but for now they are:

20-Nov-25	Kate Wills	Treading the Duckboards
18-Dec-25	Paul Johnson	Lone Wolf - The Life & Court Martial of Captain Jack William Lee - 2 S.A.S.
15-Jan-26	James Carter	Royal Naval Air Service Operations 1918 -1945
19-Mar-26	Andrew Wheale	Wilfred Owen's Last Battle - Forcing of the Sambre-Oise Canal, 4/11/18
21-May-26	Andy Stuart	WW1 in the Far East. China, Japan and Russia
18-Jun-26	Ian Castle	The Air War 1914-1918
20-Aug-26	David Nicholson	Dodgy Military Equipment
17-Sep-26	Damien O'Dell	Bedfordshire's War

More will follow. We would all like to thank everyone who attends. and especially those who donate, for helping make the talks such a success.

The Talk Team

Pictured with recent speaker Andy Robertshaw
left to right

Stuart Osborne - Andy Robertshaw
Paul Johnson - Andy Palmer





Herts St Juliaan Memorial

While on our last battlefield tour in September we had the opportunity to once again visit the memorial we erected in 2017. That was the second largest group from Hertfordshire to be on that spot since the Hertfordshire Regiment attacked on 31st July 1917 – obviously the next largest is when we unveiled the memorial on that date in 2017. [More information](#). It was really pleasing to see that a wreath was already in place, obviously laid earlier in the year, before we laid ours. I must admit to feeling very proud. Overall it is still in great condition, but I did notice a couple of (very) minor issues. So I hope to visit again next spring with a tube of sealant.

Help The Project?

We would always encourage people to get involved, especially at the talks, photographing memorials or in some element of the research. Some of the latter can be done with just access to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website, which is free, or you could simply add information from newspaper cuttings. If you have access to Ancestry or FindMyPast then much more can be done. We can tailor tasks to your experience or time available, and any help needed would be given. An example of one of the simpler tasks would be just adding a man's medal allocation to his biography. Do get in touch if you would like to help (jontywild@hertsatwar.co.uk).



Paul Johnson and Jonty Wild

Research Report

Without getting online I am struggling to analyse progress, but I can say that all of our longstanding researchers continue to provide outstanding contributions to our project (if you would like to join them and do a little research (or a lot!) please contact Jonty Wild.

Using a fairly recent download, I can give the following information, which I believe represents more great steps forward.

Totals:

We are now researching an estimated 12,668 Hertfordshire related individuals. We roughly grade the quality of the biographies 0 to 5. These grades represent:

0. No biography (yet), i.e. name only and no information from CWGC or
1. Basic biography, e.g. CWGC information only, but man uniquely identified.
2. Better than 1, but could easily be improved, e.g. by adding research.
3. Good biography, but can probably be improved further, relatively easily (*but not always*).
4. Very good biography.
5. An excellent biography.

Grades 3 or 4 is what we aim for. In July 2024 we only had 6,069 graded, now I can report :

Grade	Current
0	839
1	2,907
2	1,447
3	1,957
4	5,250
5	99
?-(need-checking)	169
Totals	12,668



Images

We are keen to include a personalised image to as many of the biographies as possible. In order of preference that is usually: 1) a photograph of the person, 2) their headstone or name on their memorial abroad, 3) a UK headstone (often an inscription on a family grave), 4) a related newspaper cutting. We (Paul Johnson, Stuart Osborne and I) spent a lot of time, while abroad, photographing headstones and this, along with the contributions from many individuals, means that 3,668 (29%) now have a personalised image, which is excellent, but of with progress this task does get harder.

Hertfordshire Memorial Coverage & Research

We know of about 1,020 memorials in Hertfordshire – there are probably more - we have looked at 862, the rest probably lack a photograph. The following figures are rough, but I will work on improving them. Of the 12,668 men we have in our database, about 2,614 do not seem to be memorialised in Hertfordshire at all. The other 10,054 are recorded in 5,911 locations – this probably needs more explanation, so here goes:

Fairly obviously, it is common for individuals to appear on several memorials in a location, e.g. the village memorial and maybe the church and school memorials, etc. and the above numbers do not reflect this. What is perhaps less understood is that it is common for individuals to appear in different locations. So, the 10,054 men are on at least one memorial in a Hertfordshire location. The following table breaks this down, which even if inaccurate at this stage, I find fascinating – remember these are locations not memorials.

At least 1 memorial in 1 Herts location	4,143	32.70%
In 2 locations	3,951	31.20%
In 3 locations	1,422	11.20%
In 4 locations	424	3.30%
In 5 locations	104	0.80%
In 6 locations	7	>1% (0.06%)
In 7 locations	3	>0.5% (0.02%)
On no memorial in any Herts location	2614	21%

We also believe that we have identified 1,539 men who are memorialised but who also have a connection to another Herts location where they are not, e.g. they were born there but are not on one of its memorials.

Some gratifying correspondence the Project had received, thanks to our researchers:

"Hi there, I am reaching out because I am currently researching my husband's family history (and therefore my daughter's too). Because of your research I have been delighted to find more information about my husband's great-grandad John Shortland who sadly died in WW1. He didn't even know anything about him, and it was incredibly emotional seeing a photo for the first time! I found the information here <http://www.hertsatwar.co.uk/biographies/986909/john-shortland>. . ."

Questions:

If anyone has any question or would like to explain any aspect of the project in a future newsletter, please do get in touch.