



e: MeophamPlayers@gmail.com

Meopham Players Newsletter

June 2016/issue 22



NEWS IN BRIEF

PLANNING for January 2017 PANTO

The next monthly get-together on 6 July will be a joint Panto planning meeting with Act 1 for a show in Jan 2017. Please make every effort to attend



URGENT COMMITTEE NOTICE

A willing and able volunteer for the post of Secretary needed – contact Terri Horton to ask about the role or Sylvia Stickings to express interest.

The Battle of Britain Memorial Trust

The National Memorial to the Few at Capel-le-Ferne, on the famous white cliffs between Dover and Folkestone in Kent, occupies a special place in the hearts and minds of all those who have visited this moving site. For further information: <http://www.battleofbritainmemorial.org/visit/>

I went there recently with my daughter and grandson, writes **Terry Fairhead**, not having visited since around 1993 when there was just the sculpture of a fighter pilot looking out to sea. Since that time they have built the museum which is in the shape of a Spitfire wing within which is a video exhibition of what they call the Scramble Experience. I found it a quite extraordinary sensation as I'm sure many other people would.

The Memorial itself inspires quiet reflection on the bravery and sacrifice shown by the aircrew – fewer than 3,000 men – who flew, fought and sometimes died in probably the most crucial battle fought by this country in the whole of the 20th century.

The Memorial, though is about the future as well as the past. Plans have been approved for The Wing, an important new visitor centre planned for the Memorial site. This high-tech exhibition and



learning centre is designed to keep the memory of the veterans alive for many years to come.

Terry has offered to organise a coach trip in the Summer - subject to support. The proposed trip is open to all members and readers of the *Newsletter* but will only go ahead dependent on interest.

Are you interested in a coach trip to visit Chapel le Ferne in the Summer? This event is open to members and all our readers but will only go ahead if there is sufficient support. So register your interest with Terry Fairhead as soon as possible by email:

meophamplayers@aol.com

The cost will be dependent on numbers.



5K RACE FOR LIFE

Terri Horton, Players' stalwart is doing the 5k Race for Life in Worthing on Sunday 19 June to raise money for cancer research. She will be jogging with her sister in memory of their cousin who died from cancer earlier this year. If anyone feels able to support her, she would be very grateful and the easiest way is via her justgiving page at: www.justgiving.com/terrihorton



Battle of the Somme Centenary 1 July 2016

The 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme will be commemorated by communities throughout Britain on the 1 July 2016, as well as being marked by international ceremonies. The *Newsletter* received this moving tribute from Kate Chivers, who lost her father in the first world war, which we are pleased to publish.

REMEMORARI

Do larks still fly above the fields
Where young men died
And poets wrote of love and loss?
Do poppies grow beside the hedge
Where soldiers lay
Their life's blood mingled with the mud?
All is now quiet,
Where the wind once raced across
the sullen swamp
Scouring ashen faces,
And the terrible rain fell.
Does the wind carry still the distant voices
Of a generation lost to war?
Stay and listen; you may hear them
In the silence
And in the quiet breathing.

Karen Chivers, April 2016.

The Somme Offensive:

141 days of horror

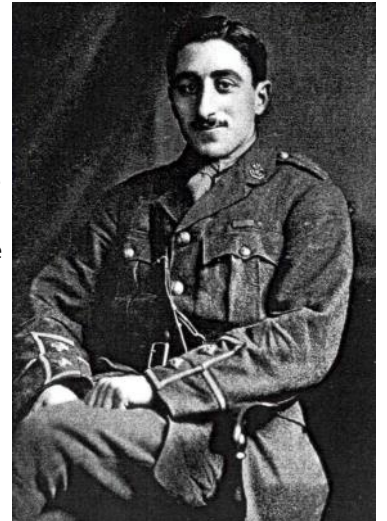
The Battle of the Somme, fought in northern France, was one of the bloodiest of World War One and raged from 1 July to 18 November 1916. For five months the British and French armies engaged the Germans in a brutal battle of attrition on a 15-mile front.

The aims of the battle were to relieve the French Army fighting at Verdun and to weaken the German Army. However, the Allies were unable to break through German lines. In total, there were over one million dead and wounded on all sides making it the largest battle of WW I on the Western Front and one of the bloodiest in human history.

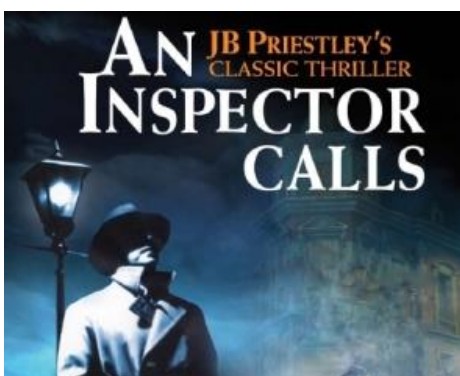
There were 32 British recipients of the Victoria Cross at the Somme; with a further 17 being awarded to Commonwealth and Irish citizens. Gabriel George Coury was born on 13 June 1896, in Croxteth, Liverpool. The son of a wealthy Armenian-Lebanese father and a French mother, he was commissioned into the South Lancashire Regiment, which was serving as a pioneer battalion in the 55th Division. In August 1916, during the Battle of the Somme, the 55th Division was ordered to attack the German-held village of Guillemont. On 8 August 2 Lt Coury was in command of a half-company of pioneers attached to the 1/4th Battalion, Kings Own (Royal Lancaster) Regiment. Lt Coury is the grandfather of another of our illustrious readers.

The dry, official language of the citation for his Victoria Cross outlines the basics of what happened:

"For most conspicuous bravery. During an advance (2nd Lieutenant Coury) was in command of two platoons ordered to dig a communication trench from the firing line to the position won. By his fine example and utter contempt of danger he kept up the spirits of his men and completed his task under intense fire. Later, after his battalion had suffered severe casualties and the Commanding Officer had been wounded, he went out in front of the advanced position in broad daylight and in full view of the enemy found his Commanding Officer, and brought him back to the new advanced trench over ground swept by machine-gun fire. He not only carried out his original tasks and saved his Commanding Officer, but also assisted in rallying the attacking troops when they were shaken and in leading them forward."



Gabriel Coury, English recipient of the VC



JB Priestley wrote *An Inspector Calls* after the First World War and like much of his work contains controversial, politically charged messages. When the WW1 broke out, Priestley joined the infantry but he was invalided out of the trenches just before the Battle of the Somme. Priestley's social conscience was awakened by growing social inequalities in the 1930s, which he outlined in his travelogue *English Journey*. *An Inspector Calls* combined his fascination with the nature of time with his ideas about society. He achieved the peak of his fame in his BBC broadcasts (1940) where he raged at the treatment of veterans. He called for social change after WW2, so the mistakes made after the previous one and the poor treatment of the returning soldiers would not be repeated.

The next *Players'* production is *An Inspector Calls* on 27, 28 & 29 October



Summer, One Morning

Casting aside the warmth of bedclothes
Which caress like a cotton skin
I roll like a hippo in shallow water
And drop my feet onto the floor

Beyond the glass, beyond the curtains
Lies the garden
Shimmering gently,
A silent breeze ruffling the bushes and
The tree tops

I open the window, give the breeze access to the bedroom
And stand with eyes shut for a moment
As the warmth tickles my skin
And a few hairs are lifted from my forehead
To drop back desultorily

Too far to smell the dog rose
I imagine its fragrance
I remember on a walk long ago among sand dunes
I knelt down to run finger tips through
and through A pink carpet on which no one had
ever walked

I open my eyes again
And smile
It is a beautiful day

by David Alexander

What to see, what to do...



Ima Starstruck

Our Showbiz Correspondent with her ear to the keyhole & iphone on her pulse

July

Monthly Meeting - Wed 6 July

Joint meeting with Act 1 - see page 1

Taming of the Shrew - Sat 30 Jul

Players' & Friends go to the Globe.

September

Annual General Meeting on the 7 Sep.

October

5 Oct -Confirmed Paul Doust Acting Workshop. FOH house volunteer needed, please contact Lesley Boycott.

December 2016

Christmas Social Meal at Three Daws-date tbc

January 2017

Panto - Jan 2017

May 2017

Director needed for May production

News from local Societies

Act One Drama Group is presenting a fun, complex and brilliantly clever comedy, *A Bolt From the Blue* by David Tristram. The play will be performed at New Ash Green Village Hall on 14-16 July. Tickets are available from www.actonedrama.info

Act One Presents
A Bolt From The Blue
By David Tristram
14th-16th July 2016
A brilliantly clever comedy
Doors Open 7.30pm - 8pm start
New Ash Green Village Hall
Tickets £8 Available from
www.actonedrama.info or 07795 363 807
An amateur performance by permission of Samuel French Ltd

Meopham Players

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PIECES OF EIGHT

My life in eight pieces, by **Geoff Sullivan** Player's newest member and soon to make his Meopham debut in **An Inspector Calls**, the next Players' production on 27, 28 & 29 October

Geoff in an Ernie moment ponders the book, not the play, 'Wot I Wrote'



An IT Project Manager by profession, Geoff is looking forward to rekindling his amateur dramatic embers as it has been a few years since he played a Russian Spy in an obscure murder mystery. His hobbies include, writing, football, his beloved AFC Wimbledon, and travelling as much as he possibly can. Married to Claire, they have four children in total.

1. AFC Wimbledon Scarf.

Following the very controversial move of Wimbledon Football Club to Buckinghamshire, Wimbledon FC being a team that I had supported since a boy, I, like other fans, joined the phoenix club AFC Wimbledon, a club that was formed just a few weeks later as a fan-owned club. I am now a regular volunteer at the club, working as part of the turnstile team on match days.

2. My writing laptop.

I started writing novels around ten years ago, none of which are published yet I should add, and this the rather old Dell laptop I use as my writing platform. I write whenever I can am just completing the draft of my fourth effort. The laptop and I spend hours together at a time!

3. Milan Kundera

The Unbearable Lightness of Being was the book that inspired me to write. I read the whole book in one session, taking time out only to eat and drink. I blame Mr Kundera for my addiction to writing.

4. My guitars.

I play as much as I can, although my ability is questionable. I find it a great way of de-stressing after a long day at work or a lengthy evening of fun on the M25 / QE2 Bridge.

5. Russian Spinning Wheel.

I bought this in a small second-hand shop in Moscow when I was living / working there. It has been well used and dates back to the period of the last Czar, allegedly!

6. My Channel Tunnel Hard Hat

I worked on the Channel Tunnel Project from the time of it's construction until the handover to Eurotunnel.

7. Amber

I spent around a year and a half living and working in Eastern Europe, just after the collapse of the Soviet Bloc. The team I worked with in Latvia gave me this piece of amber when I completed a project there.

8. Albums

Cream's Disraeli Gears and Bowie's Diamond Dogs LPs – Two of my favourite albums of that period. I constantly played these on a Pye Record Player in my bedroom, until yelled at to 'turn that racket down!' by my father. For some reason he didn't appreciate my musical tastes.

Where's Meopham?

Terry Fairhead



Meopham Players History Project - 3
Village Apathy

During my searches through the Gravesend Reporter for 1940 trying to find when the very first play was performed by Meopham Players, I have really been rather surprised at the lack of news relating to Meopham generally. There is a section of the paper which publishes items about the surrounding villages and places like Longfield, Cobham and Hartley are regularly covered. Meopham though only rarely features when something is sent in by the Women's Institute. But then I have only got as far as April. Maybe things will pick up after that.

They certainly did in the wider world for April 1940 was at the end of a period dubbed by the American press as the *Phoney War*. As a nation we'd hardly been touched, a fact emphasized by the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain when he said in a speech to the whole country that Hitler had "missed the bus". That speech was made at the beginning of April. By the



The Chairs, a taxing metaphor by Eugene Ionesco or a sign of apathy?

end of May, the first British troops were arriving back in this country from Dunkirk.

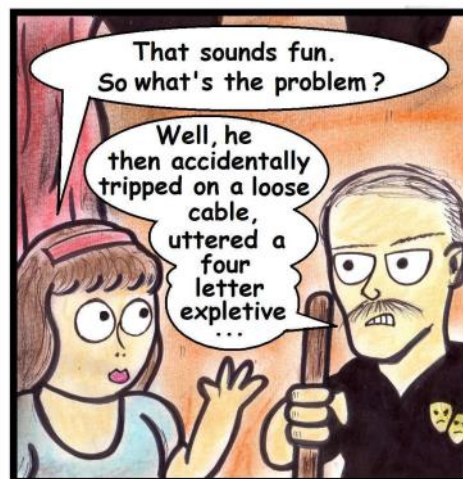
Whether any of this is reflected in the local news I have yet to discover but I suspect it will hardly rates a mention. More likely there will be something mundane like the report of the Meopham annual Parish Assembly held in early April 1940. Just prior to this, members of the Parish Council held a meeting in the "Reading Room" of the Village Hall which was hastily concluded in order to greet the Assembly at 8pm in the main hall where the caretaker had set out one hundred chairs. When the Council members entered the hall none of the chairs were occupied.

A lesser chairman might have been dismayed but the incumbent at the time Mr.

F.J. Scott took it all in his stride and considered the absence of any villagers as a good sign in that clearly no one had any complaints. The assembly then proceeded with its business of going through the various activities the village had involved itself in over the previous 12 months such as the organisation of air raid wardens and the accommodation of evacuees. There was some disappointment expressed that so far no applications for allotments had been received and the meeting concluded with the Chairman congratulating the Council on covering its expenses for the whole year with just a penny rate.

It is not recorded if the Chairman received a standing ovation from his audience of six – all Council members.

Pottham Regional Amateur Theatre Society By Matt Dallas



Matt Dallas 2016