

ON THE WIRE

NEWSLETTER OF THE GREAT WAR ASSOCIATION

No. 25 • Special Edition • September 2016



President's Message

All members of the GWA with a service record longer than 5 to 7 years know what the initials “*OtW*” stand for. **O**n **t**he **W**ire was the official newsletter of the Great War Association and thrived before social media took over with Facebook, etc. *OtW* was published before and after all events. It was the place to go to get all your information on the GWA; members of the Board would discuss issues, projects and accomplishments; event schedules; event after-action reports (Allied & CP); how-to-articles and WWI history articles donated by GWA members; questions & answers; historical photos and event photos; and even a copy of the coming event registration by snail mail for those PC challenged.

Over the last couple of years of its existence, the number of articles submitted by members dwindled, some Board members didn't want to make the effort to do their part, and a previous President did not think *OtW* was necessary anymore and dismissed the editor. The result was *OtW* died a sudden death. It was easier to just let it go then make an effort to keep it going. Fast forward 5 years and many of us lament the passing of *OtW* and believe a revived *OtW* has a place in the GWA. Our membership has grown to 500-600, which means we most likely have new, budding authors who have something to say about WWI. Updated how-to-articles and new historic photos have surfaced. Lots of folks take photos at our events that can be shared, and we have Board members willing to make contributions. Our original *OtW* editor, seeing the renewed support for *OtW*, is willing to take on the job again.

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Next Issue

The next *On the Wire* will be published in mid-October, and will include Fall event information.

Fall Tactical Event: **November 4-6**

I have told our editor we are not going to stress out this time around if we don't have a lot of material and there will be no pressure (because we still have the GWA Forum, Facebook, etc.) to produce an awesome *OtW* every time. If — for whatever reason — all we have by the deadline is a message from the president, an event schedule, and one how-to-article then that is what we will put out that time and try again for the next issue. I believe as many do that once rolling again, folks will want to contribute, whether it's a few photos or an article. And there is nothing wrong with digging through the old *OtW* archives republishing some of the articles that haven't seen the light of day in 10 years. They might need a little updating but should be as interesting for a new audience as they were when originally published.

I will start the first President's Message for the first new issue of *OtW* by discussing our current state of affairs and what we have in the works for projects this year. The spring 2016 event was a success for many reasons. We had over 500 in attendance for what is traditionally our lowest attended event. We had no injuries. We had no flare fires as all heeded the rules about not using illegal flares and making sure those flares fired were fired correctly and safely. We had no complaints from the company that provides our port-o-johns that folks were dumping cans/bottles in them or doing disgusting things to the interiors. At the end of the event we did not have units bringing the Board illegal projectiles being fired by our mortars or rifle grenades or thrown grenades. Some of the usual complaints about folks not taking hits but they were outweighed by the amount of combat Friday through the end of Saturday. The heat slowed things down a bit on Saturday but picked up noticeably as the sun started to go down and stayed active right up to the combat curfew.

I am sure all remember me admitting at the beginning of 2015 that I had gone a little bit overboard during 2014 spending more money than we had brought in for projects on the site. I didn't bankrupt the GWA but not a good idea to make a habit of spending more money than we bring in. So during 2015 we just maintained the site and did some "little" projects. That fiscal restraint and great turnouts for the November 2015 event and April 2016 event refilled our coffers to the point that our Board Treasurer informed me we have to spend some more money, because if November 2016 is another great event we will go over the limits allowed by our "Not for Profit" tax status with the IRS.

Here's what's in the works or been completed for 2016: Our road in No Man's Land has been changed in the south and instead of heading towards the farm house it now joins the lower road about halfway between the Allied and CP lines. The southern CP front trench has been re-dug so that the southern CP and French now face each other versus being at an oblique angle to each other and the old trench from the left of IR23 south will become the new CP secondary trench. We are exploring different materials to use to build a bombed building between the French and new southern CP trench. The Allied rear communication trenches were cleaned, widened and deepened by two

or three feet. A specific parking lot is being created for the antique vehicles and their trailers. It will not be part of the main parking lot because the trailers take up too much room. The site was sprayed in early May and again in September. A road was finished that specifically leads to the French sleeping bunkers. The Board parking lot behind the registration building is being expanded (it was cleared for cars originally) but most Board members drive trucks. It is the only “perk” allowed to elected members of the Board. Some clean up work was done in the CP north trenches to make them more playable and the lower Death Valley trench was finally completed connecting the north CP with the south CP. We removed trees that directly threatened the three French sleeping bunkers and the DRK. Work on a BEF project began the weekend of 17-18 Sept with the expectation of being completed before the event. Death Valley and the Berm have been dramatically changed and upgraded. Work will continue on the very back road behind the Allies that follows our property line so that rear area will be opened up to allow Allied units to build sleeping bunkers and have direct access by vehicle to build, unload and load as the need arises in 2017 and beyond. The farm house roof has sprung a leak or two, so that will be repaired (not replaced).

On the “what’s happening right now” front, the Cantina operated by Kim Wiser, just as you entered the battlefield on the right, has closed. With more units building on site and having unit cooks to feed the unit, and the great work done by the Salvation Army and DRK feeding and taking care of the troops, very few people were going to the Cantina any more. All of Kim’s help (son, mom and next door neighbor) have moved on and she can’t do it by herself. So the Cantina will not be available come the November 2016 event. The building will be removed, if not by November, then by the Spring 2017 event. Kim has arranged for two food wagons (burgers, etc) to set up on Friday in the parking lot so that we would still have an easy source of food and sodas for those in need of a burger fix on Friday before everything starts to roll and the unit cooks are cooking and the SA and DRK are ready to take care of the troops..

In closing, I encourage all units to come up to the site between now and our November event to clear weeds out of their trenches, and work on their trenches and sleeping bunkers. I hope you will enjoy the revival of *OtW* and want to make contributions. We have a lot of smart folks who know a lot about the Great War and here’s chance to share that knowledge with all of our members.



Skampi

aka: Tom Galleher

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German Training Weekend, Newville Sept. 30-Oct. 2, 2016



There will be a training weekend on September 30 – October 2, 2016 at Newville for any and all members of Central Powers line units.

We will have classes on topics such as:

- Properly preparing and actually using your assault pack in the field
- Converting your reproduction gasmask into a reasonably effective particulate filter (read into this smoke and “gas” clouds) and simple improvements to make it look more like a real WWI German gas mask.
- Trench assault techniques and effectively using the tools of the trade to accomplish the mission. We will discuss different formations to use to get us to the Allied trench, how to keep a trench bridgehead open, and how to successfully evacuate a formation from the Allied lines back into the CP lines.
- A familiarization class on basic rifle drill and formation movements. It is time to up our game and improve how we collectively look and act as WWI German soldiers.
- Simulated hand-to-hand combat and suggestions on making GWA approved

melee weapons. Followed by instruction on what should we do when we capture an Allied prisoner. It is all about playing the role.

- There will be a class for all unit NCOs covering topics on the tactical and administrative role of the NCO at GWA simulated combat events.
- There will be extensive hands on exercises to practice the techniques we discussed in our classes.

A preliminary list of items each participant should bring:

- Rifle
- Entrenching tool
- Gasmask and can or bag
- Mess kit
- Canteen or other container or bottle for water
- Zeltbahn, 2 or 3 blanket straps and breadbag strap, if you have them
- Equipment belt, buckle, and breadbag - optional

Uniforms are not needed for this weekend. Do bring a hat and some type of work gloves as we will be using barbed wire and jumping in and out of trenches.

Some meals may be provided. More info will be forthcoming.

There will be a social gathering on Saturday evening.

This event is open to every CP unit. From just one guy up to an entire unit's complement attending; any and all unit members are welcome to attend. We hope that many of our members will be able to attend.

Sponsored by:

Jason Griffith

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Joe Murray

FR90 & Central Powers Representative
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Contact either of the above for more info or to sign up.

NOTE: Allied units may also use the site that same weekend to do work on their trenches and bunkers

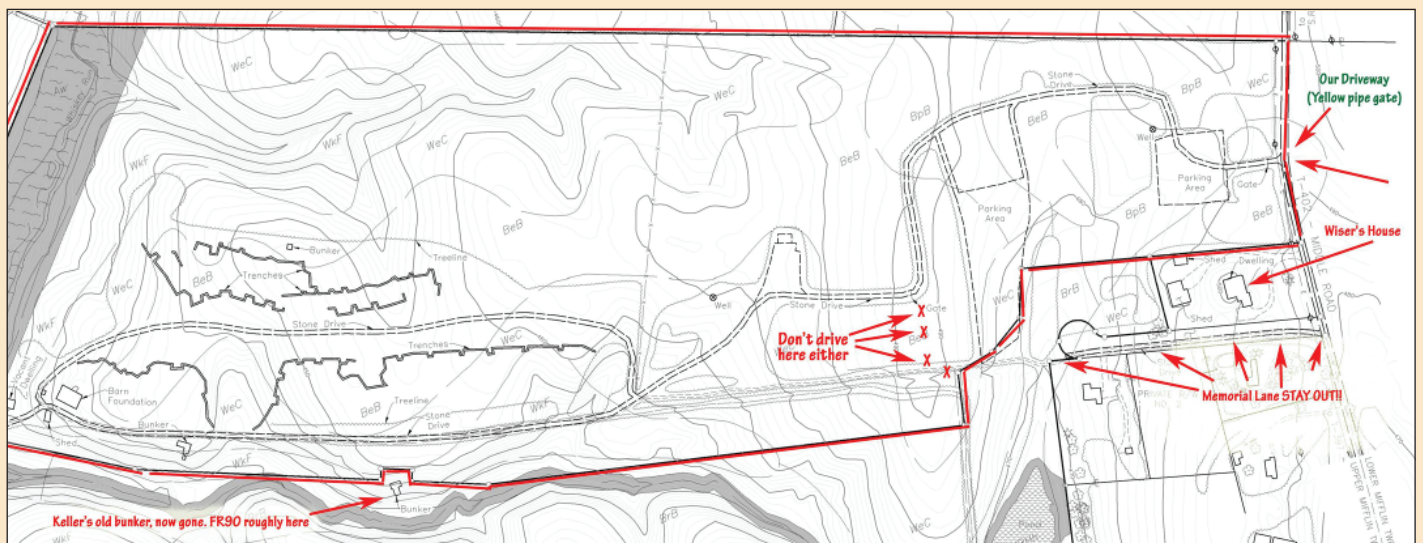
Memorial Lane and our Neighbors

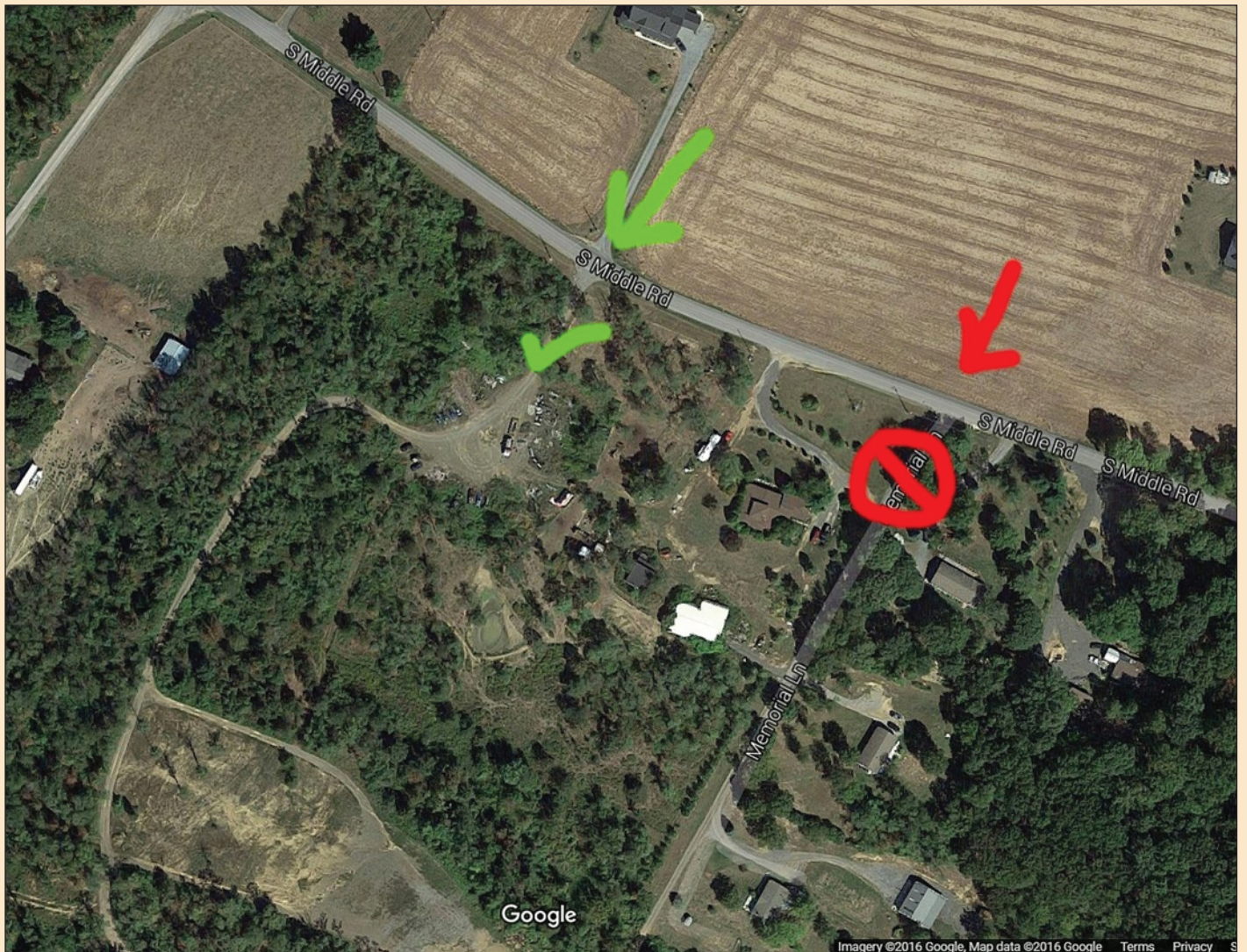
By Marsh Wise, GWA Secretary



This is important, especially for you new guys ... DO NOT drive on Memorial Lane at the our site off of Middle Rd. It cuts through Steve Wiser's property and causes him great angst. It has been posted numerous times over the years not to do this; yet every year, someone new thinks they've discovered the equivalent of sliced bread. Some members incorrectly believe that it's on our property, but Memorial drive is NOT. Please don't drive on it. Feel free to ask questions on this.

Wiser is not a bad guy (gasp, Marsh, have ya gone crazy?). The problem is twofold (look at Marshy get all jiggy with fancy terms): our members need to understand that he's not our "employee" and that he doesn't "have" to do things. If you need something done at the site, you really need to go through your Rep first, either Carter Bertone for the Allies or Joe Murray for us good guys :-P. If you want digging done, call your TRENCHMASTER first, don't be pestering Steve Wiser to do stuff for you. If he asks you (more likely tells you after you're the 36th guy to do it) to not drive on Memorial Lane, don't get all honked off and mad at this "redneck guy" telling you what to do on "our" property. You probably (especially if new) don't know all the boundaries of the site and the "why's" and "why nots" of our site/property. I have included some images showing where to go. One is a satellite photo with markings and the other is a survey map with things more cleanly identified. I am also thinking we will have these enlarged and displayed at the registration shed.





One other note: Steve, of course, needs to understand that our members a: do this for a hobby, b: are not rich, c: are not (all) stupid city boys. And that many just simply don't know all the ins and outs of the site. It's a sin of ignorance, not of malicious intent.

Signage

We need more signage—no, not a big skull and crossbones with “Trespassers will be shot” or “Poison gas in use” on them. Joe White of IR92 has volunteered to make us new signs!! Thanks Joe!

Another Thing to Help

It's my belief that the East end of the parking lot needs to be blocked off or gated — certainly during events! Same with the road that continues on when we turn at the gate/registration shed (thanks for fixing the gate Steve!). Last, where the road comes up past the CP authentic camp ground... That needs a visible, solid block. Guys need to respect Steve's (and other neighbor's) wishes and property rights. Do you really want to be a bad neighbor?


A note from Skampi, our President:

“The other neighbors who live off of Memorial Lane don’t like it either, when GWA members drive on it. This was a problem back in 2007/08 and we made it go away. New folks think they have discovered something new and all they are doing is pissing off our neighbors.”

Our Fault

New people, we’ve probably let you down in not defining things exactly. Please don’t assume just because you saw someone else do something that it’s okay ... If you have ANY questions as to the site, ask your Trenchmaster and the Reps.

As the GWA Secretary, I plan on improving communication and making things clearer. If you have a question, ASK, please don’t assume. There are no dumb questions in the GWA. If you feel someone will laugh at you, PM, call or e-mail ME. I will do my best to help you or get you an answer — certainly, I can help you get with the person who CAN help you..

And again, please understand that our relationship with Steve Wiser is a symbiotic one. Steve looks out for our site and ... he is a member — both he and his wife Kim joined the GWA. A lot of problems in the past have been due to assumptions and we all know what happens when we “assume,” right? 

AMERICA MOBILIZES 1917

June 16-18, 2017

The Virginia War Museum in conjunction with the Great War Association

Location: Historic Endview Plantation, Newport News, VA

Commemorating the entry of America into the War, this public living history will be an excellent opportunity to interact with visitors as well as training. This is primarily an AEF event, but limited numbers of BEF/Commonwealth and French will be participating as trainers. Event participants must be GWA members, and registration is free. Other nationalities with period correct civilian clothes and grooming will be allowed to participate as recruits being processed.

This event will be on the official US and Virginia Centennial calendar of events.

For more info contact Chris Garcia at: cgarcia@nnva.gov or 757.247.8523