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On the Wire

Official Newsletter of the Great War Association

Winter 2024

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Over the past 20 years, I've watched the GWA grow into the premier reenacting organization in the world. The entire hobby took a hit with COVID-19, but momentum is starting to build again and we need to work on keeping that spirit going. A few things I continue to feel strongly about moving forward are safety, authenticity, and site improvements.



Safety is paramount! Together we need to stay focused on safety. One only has to look at the loss of reenacting at Ft. Indiantown Gap due to poor safety practices to realize how tentative our situation can be. Safety is just not a concern during tacticals; our trenches and bunkers must be safe and in good repair. I know firsthand the amount of maintenance these structures require, and am happy to work with units to help them maintain their structures in a safe and period-correct manner.

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NOVEMBER EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

The November Newville event was a huge success by most accounts. Attendance was the highest we've seen since prior to the COVID moratorium, the weather was ideal, and the Combat Commanders and their staffs planned and orchestrated authentic and immersive engagements spanning the world's biggest and best WWI playground. The following passages represent highlights

and reflections from the event, in the words of those who experienced them:

A note from the Guards Division:

To our erstwhile enemies across from us,

We appreciate the tradition that we have built and look forward to your demise in round 3 of this sacred tradition. By our count it's 1 and 1. Do bring out your best and we wish you the worst of luck and defeat in your endeavors.

(continued on p. 2)



Photo courtesy of Bradford Ireland

NOVEMBER EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

(cont'd from page 1)

A Note from IR129

The members of IR129 were extremely impressed by the French opposite us in the southern sector at this event. The assault they performed on us Saturday afternoon was a grand spectacle, for every man fell as they advanced on us. Every shot and grenade counted. We were also impressed by the savage bombardment of their mortar teams! We sincerely appreciate our friends on the opposite side of no man's land.

From an Allied Soldier

A quiet couple of minutes Friday night. I was standing in the lower trench, sipping lukewarm water. I was exhausted and sore. Flares going overhead made a traveling shadow of myself on the duck boards under my feet. Friendly mortars were also teasing the Germans with a few rounds overhead. That one moment just standing in the trench with my own

thoughts, with all the ambiance. Was as close to the real deal as we can possibly get.

As reported by Gefreiter Rheinhold Klein, IR92:

Friday night; Wire cutting duty. Two men and I went with elements of the other two IR92 Gruppen on a wire-cutting mission near the Italians. The goal was to take prisoners. However, a friendly mortar shell (we suspect from the Bavarians) landed among us and blew the whole patrol up, 10 yards from the Allied trenches. The Gruppe gave a good death and retired to our trench. One of our gefreiter captured an Italian who seemed lost in No Man's Land.

A Central Powers Perspective

Every soldier's worst enemy: boredom. Hours passed. With minimal rations. Poor sleep the night before. We were tired, hungry, and worst of all bored. We slowly began to tell jokes and stories. Pick up rocks and try to throw them in unsuspecting soldiers boots and hit their helmets. The camaraderie, comedy, and jokes were in full swing. Out of the blue the Guards were on top of us. We were caught by surprise and didn't stand a chance, barely even having time to get our gas masks on. I can't help but think of the humanity gained and lost in war. Mere kids. One moment making light and singing, and the next moments notice, laying with my face in the dirt as British Soldiers step over me. It's only here that we can give each other experiences that one cannot fathom to understand until they experience it. Thank you lads for giving me that.



Photo courtesy of Pete Lerro

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

(cont. from pg. 1)

Regarding authenticity: the one thing I've learned over the years is that the best way to improve the overall hobby is to improve your own impression while you help others hone their impression. If you have ideas on how to improve the hobby and safely raise the level of authenticity, I'm open for discussions.

The GWA is one of the only reenacting organizations that actually owns its event site. With that in mind, we need to find the best way to ensure our site benefits all of our members. We are the stewards of this great property and our goal should be constant focus on how to make permanent improvements that will provide a safe, authentic experience to our GWA members.

I look forward to working with the G-8 and the entire membership over the next two years, and encourage you to reach out to us with any concerns.

Your Most Humble Servant,

J.D. Boswell
President, GWA



FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK

First, I'd like to thank you for allowing me to serve you in the role of Secretary. As I expressed in my initial e-mail communication, if you voted for me, I won't let you down, and if you didn't, I'll do my very best to earn your trust.



Ours is a large organization whose members bring an impressive array of experience, in re-enacting, but more importantly, in the knowledge and skill sets our day jobs and real lives require - and looking to our members for input, opinions, and contributions is crucial and will serve the organization well.

I think it's also important to recognize that although we portray two opposing sides at events, once the event is over, we go back to our normal lives where we all work side by side, go to the same churches, have barbecues, cheer (and yell at the officials) at our kids' sporting events... We're the same people, fundamentally. Now, more than ever, we should endeavor to not lose sight of that, given that there are so many other divisive issues and situations out there in the world.

Lastly - moving forward, *On the Wire* is once again the Great War Association's official communication channel. The improved and upgraded GWA website, coming soon, will also be an official medium. Those of you that are Facebook aficionados, please feel free to continue using it for interpersonal communication and discussion if you like - but the Facebook page will **not** be utilized as an official means of outbound communication. Consequently, it's important that we have accurate e-mail addresses for all members - so if you aren't receiving e-mail from me periodically, and if you didn't receive this issue directly through e-mail, PLEASE advise me of your correct e-mail address so I can update the master list, or submit updated contact information via the following link: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/ca486b1d50414d3cb08836e2c7c771eb>.

Thank you! :-)

Erica Miller, Secretary
GreatWarSecretary@gmail.com



Photo courtesy of Scott Miller

FROM THE CP COMBAT COMMANDER

Reenactors of the Central Powers,
Meine Herren und Damen,

I'd like to thank all the German and Austro-Hungarian Soldaten who voted for me as your new commander. Before I get into business, I'd like to thank Jim Harter and all the hard work he's put into the GWA and Central Powers over the years to get here as well as allowing me to serve on his staff for the past two years as his adjutant.

I will start off by stating that I represent all German and Austro-Hungarian Soldaten, not just those who voted for me. I serve all equally and faithfully and will work diligently to ensure that everyone gets what they want out of our reenacting experience. I have an open door so please contact me for any issue you may have no matter how big or small. If I am wrong about something, please let me know and I will adapt if I'm proven wrong or I misunderstood something. I'm in no way an expert on everything and I ask for your help moving forward.

As I stated in my announcement, I am a results driven individual. I spoke with Brett Werner, the Entente Combat Commander, on the Fall Event's Saturday and we laid out the spring event already. We walked the ground we'll fight over and agreed to its conduct. At your level, not much will change as far as how you conduct the event, but at my level, the Allied Headquarters and the CP Hauptquartier will be working very closely to provide a great event for everyone. They support us and we support them. At the end of the day, we are all GWA members and we will work together for the betterment of both sides and for every individual. My focus will always be the highest advocate for the CP reenactors, but we are always GWA first.

I have delineated the structure we will move forward with - it'll be five Zuge (platoons) with two in the North (1st and 2nd) and two in the South (4th and 5th). The Stoßzug will be numbered 7th Zug. The 3rd and 6th Zuge are reserved for when we grow with 3rd to the North and 6th to the South. We will maintain a Kompagnie designation and I will retain my rank as Hauptmann. Zugführere will hold ranks from Feldwebel-Leutnant to Oberleutnant. Once we grow into the 3rd and 6th Zuge, we will designate 1-3 Zuge as 1st Kompagnie and 4-6 as 2nd Kompagnie, appoint

Kompagniechef, and we will become a Bataillon.

I've appointed and promoted some proven leaders from our units to command our Zuge. I will provide later the units which fall within these Zuge, but for the most part they are the same as two years ago.

However, there will be some minor changes to the North. Let's welcome the following commanders:

- 1 Zug - Duffy Bauer, IR 459 (Leutnant)
- 2 Zug - Bob Penix, IR 52 (Feldwebel-Leutnant)
- 4 Zug - Skampi, IR 92 (Feldwebel-Leutnant)
- 5 Zug - Bob Gräbe, Bayern Leib Regiment (Feldwebel-Leutnant)
- 7 Zug - Eric Cleveland, PB 14 (Leutnant)
(Charlie Smith, IR 124, will take command when capable due to his schedule)



The eventual goal is to train up younger leaders to eventually replace me and the other officers who will create the institutional aspects of the Central Powers structure. Our hobby is best served by young commanders who bring energy to the hobby and older mentors who provide the direction and assistance in training and developing them. As such, we will be conducting a WWI Kriegsschule starting in the spring for leaders and general training for all Landser. This is open to all interested Soldaten regardless of unit, time in the hobby, or billet within their unit. Think of it as a Division "Feld-Rekruten Depot" behind the front.

Feld-Rekruten Depot. Max Striebitz recommended using Thursday as a training day. This prevents anything messing with Friday; Saturday is always jam packed. We will conduct a tailored Landerschule for those who wish to attend and can make it with subjects related to how we can better represent WWI Soldaten. We will have periods of instruction on drill, leadership, general soldiering, and tactics. Time schedule is 1000-1600 so that we get good training done, but still give everyone time to get ready for Friday. It won't be physically taxing and we'll have time for Mittagessen.

(continued on pg. 5)

FROM THE CP COMBAT COMMANDER

(CONT'D)

We are in need of high demand, low density impressions such as staff members, runners, telephone operators, clerks, etc. to assist in operations. In my observations, German reenactors prefer combat roles and aren't very much interested in these roles, but as we get older, we need to expand to things that don't tax our bodies so hard and I'm more than happy to employ those of us who fit into those roles. Contact me with your desires and I'll do my best to put you where it suits you best - I try to get to yes as much as possible.

Again, I wish to thank you for the confidence you've displayed in electing me. I'm humbled by it and will do my very best to fulfill the highest expectations you place in me. All I ask is for each of you to give me your trust, even when it may seem that I'm asking the impossible or that my idea is crazy. It's been my job throughout my life to ask the seemingly impossible and always gain the best results.

We are embarking on an incredible time in the hobby and we are going to look back 10 years from now and you'll be proud to say that you were part of the men who transformed the hobby into what it will be then. As you hear the old hands today speak of the "Shimpstown Days" with a twinkle in their eyes, you too will say the very same thing with pride over how you brought the Central Powers to a higher level of reenacting. In college terms, I consider us in Reenacting 101 or 220, but I want us to get to doctorate level Reenacting - I believe we can get there together!

Await an operations type warning order somewhere after the New Year from me (sent to the commanders).

„Wir haben einen Willen; Sieg oder Todt!“

Hauptmann Otto Landrik

Mike Landree



Photo courtesy of Pete Lerro



Photo courtesy of Pete Lerro

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

2024 Spring Tactical

2024 Fall Tactical

2025 Spring Tactical

April 19-21

November 8-10

April 4-6, 2025

ADDITIONAL UNIT-SPONSORED EVENTS CAN BE FOUND ON THE WEB SITE:

[HTTP://WWW.GREATWARASSOCIATION.COM](http://www.GREATWARASSOCIATION.COM)

UNIT ROUNDUP: ALLIED

6th Marines, 78th Co., AEF

The 78th Company has seen significant growth in the last couple of years with both new members and the addition of the old cook shack across from the registration shed. Our main focus has been turning the shack into a French Barracks that the Marines used during the winter of 1917/18. The interior is nearly complete with the addition of a stove and bunks, but the outside has a ways to go. Over the next several years we will be adding a corrugated metal roof and fixing the exterior walls. We also have plans to revamp our section of the trench by digging out the existing pathways and Observation Posts, which have been deteriorating due to rain and heavy use. Lastly, we would like to thank all of the Marines and GWA members who stopped by our barracks on Saturday night of the November event to help celebrate the Marine Corps Birthday. We have always held a small field cake-cutting ceremony amongst our unit, but we were thrilled to see so many fellow Marines stop by to help us celebrate. We would like to continue inviting other GWA members to stop by during the November event, after combat has concluded on Saturday, for our field birthday ball.

Semper Fidelis.

Guards Division

We are currently in the process of vetting several new members for the unit. They will hopefully be in attendance for their first event in April. Additionally, we are in increasing our ability for troop sustainment in the field and revamping our QM section to better feed and support soldiers on the line during the event. We are currently in the infancy of planning for a building to house men and equipment, and if all comes together we should be building by mid to late spring.

113ème Régiment d'Infanterie Territoriale / VAD

The 113ème has been busy over the past few years, between attaining tax-exempt status as a non-profit organization, and substantial upgrades at the site. Improving bunker space and building Le Château de Grenouille gives us the ability to sleep 30 poilu. The wood-fired brick bread oven provides a constant supply of warm fresh bread and complements the field kitchen nicely; we eat well thanks to our beloved VAD contingent. At each event, Paymaster Tom Daly distributes the week's pay of 14 francs to the men, who can then spend it on food, sundries, and personal items from the unit's Cantine.



Photo courtesy of Pete Lerro

Summer 2023 brought trench revetments and reinforcement of our machine gun positions, as well as completion of the brick courtyard. We increased our weapons capability considerably with the addition of three mortars which proved remarkably effective in November, and are eagerly awaiting delivery of the fourth, which is in the final stages of production. We look forward to raining plenty of fake death and destruction onto our German counterparts across No Man's Land in April.



Photo courtesy of Esther Rea

UNIT ROUNDUP, ALLIED (CONTINUED)

Drake Battalion, RND

This year marks our tenth year in the GWA. We have enjoyed portraying this unique division through the years. But in the last year and a half we have experienced two exciting changes. First, we have experienced a virtual explosion in recruits. Our numbers have been modest through the years, maybe a dozen on the rolls and eight or so showing up to the events (and sometimes less than that). Then around the summer of 2022 recruits started coming out of the woodwork. I don't know if it was the higher pay for the Royal Navy over the Army, the fighting reputation of the Royal Naval Division, or stumbling into the Royal Navy Recruiting Offices and signing up before sobering up, but they came and are still coming. Here is an older picture that shows our traditional max turnout:



Then it seemed at every event we were sending recruits to the New Member Training.

Here is the unit last November (2023):



And we have had three more recruits contact us since the November event. We now have twenty-seven on the rolls, including recruits in various stages of being outfitted, not to mention a machine gun section (with a Lewis gun named "Lord Nelson").



It seems the large number of individuals falling in for the Friday New Member Training over the last two or three events indicates a noticeable growth in the GWA as a whole. We are very happy to contribute to that.

The second bit of news, made possible in part by this growth, is that 12th Platoon (Drakes,

Gordons, and the South Wales Borderers) have taken over a section of trench and will be turning that into a nice, defensible home. This is the section on the far left of the Allied lines.



It is amazing what you can do with new and young members. We did some cosmetic improvements in the fall, and we are drawing up plans to present to the Trench Master.

We certainly hope to increase the number of Royal Navy Jacks in the trenches of Newville, and we hope to be able to accomplish the trench construction we are planning. Stop by and say hello! You will be welcomed aboard!

Able Seaman Goldbrick



UNIT ROUNDUP, ALLIED (CONTINUED)

Canadian Army Medical Corps

From our humble beginnings of seven people the first time we turned out in 2011, our unit has grown and blossomed with the addition of dedicated and experienced historical re-enactors. At full contingent, we now number 26, plus three retired members who continue to advise, support, and give input to the unit and our endeavours.

We are actively recruiting for Stretcher Bearers. This is a role that is very different from that of the typical infantryman. Not only does it offer the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae (author of In Flanders Fields) and Captain Frederick Banting (co-discoverer of insulin treatment for diabetes and Nobel Prize winner), it provides the chance to move throughout all of the Allied lines, to familiarize yourself with all of the different weaponry used on the site, and to provide period care to the "wounded" from all nations as they come in to the Casualty Clearing Station. It's a whole other facet to re-enacting the



war, where your enemy is not facing you across the trenches but is, in fact, death itself.

One of our major projects for the coming year is the construction of a shed for storing some of our gear onsite. We transport, set up, and tear down the equivalent of an entire modern field hospital and living quarters for its staff for each event, which is an enormous undertaking. At present, we're trespassing on the generosity of the Salvation Army and the PPCLI to store some of our larger and heavier items onsite. Having our own shed will allow us to store not only those items but also additional pieces, which will be a huge relief to all concerned.

We're looking forward to the Spring Fling and we welcome you to drop by, wounded or not, to check out what we do. The kettle is always on!

Princess Pat's Canadian Light Infantry

The reenacted WW1 Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, (PPCLI), continues to grow. We have approximately 60 members, many of whom participate at the GWA Newville spring and fall events. We



regularly field 40 men between rank and file, a mortar team and MG sections. We also do a variety of smaller events in Canada, including the popular Camp Niagara in partnership with Historic Fort George.

Currently our HQ section is developing communications capabilities with phones, shortwave and signal lights.

We're all looking forward to the spring event.

See you out there!

89 Reggimento, Salerno Brigade

This was our second Newville we attended, and had a great turn out of 12 people! This was a huge feat for us, and something we hope to replicate in the future. We were placed on the French line, and conducted operations with our Russian counterparts. Every time there was a chance to go over the top, my guys were there and ready to volunteer. Many who stayed in the rear worked on beautification of their area, so Salerno was constantly at work.



UNIT ROUNDUP: CP

5. Sturm-Pionier-Bataillon

We are moving along with expanding "The Ponderosa" to accommodate the increase of members with St. Btl and the Leib. Improvements and repairs are happening within our trench lines with adding a new bunker position near the Tanzfläche "dance floor." The project and subsequent experiment with the new "Flamethrowers" worked out tremendously and we have since added a total of 4 flamethrowers, 2 CO2-powered and 2 Compressed Air. The latter will be moved into reserve service and training because the CO2 makes a better effect and report, making them clear to hear and see. We will be working with the G8 to make clear what smoke indicates Fire, as its still confusing to many that orange and black is being mistaken for gas. We are in work on adding a Minenwerfer 7.58cm by April's event, as per the Original St.Btl's TO&E and possibly a 7.7 haubitze by November's event. The intent is to get the unit to resemble what Rohr's unit did with organic, combined arms from 1916-1918. We have been working closely with PB14 now for 2.5 years to perfect the StossZug, much like what was done in 1917-1918. We've fabricated two portable bridging pieces to drop on wire to get the

Germans over the wire easier, of which two St.Btl members received E.K.IIs for when they were first used which resulted in one of the best assaults the Allied Forces claimed to have seen. We will continue to improve the unit and positions and we look forward to working with the new CP commander and his staff.

2./ Badisches Pi. Btw. Nr. 14

I am happy to say that PB14 is quickly growing in strength and is taking on a substantial number of recruits at time of writing! We are making plans on building a new unit bunker to accommodate the sudden growth in the unit and are aiming at breaking ground on it before the Spring Event. Member Chris Treichel has been hard at work translating the original unit history and songbook from 1914, I'd like to extend many thanks and appreciations to him for all the hard work he's put in to adding to the authenticity of our unit. We couldn't do what we do without the hours of work he puts into the unit and hobby. We can't wait to meet in the trenches again with the rest of the Stoßzug in April!

Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 92

From George Walters "Ranger": IR92 reports that the regiment

will continue having regular monthly work trips, March to October, to our site next year as we have done the last 14 years. We are lucky to have a number of members who live within 1-3 hours drive to the site and it is amazing what a small crew of 4-6 guys can accomplish over time. Most recently, we rebuilt a forward bunker and an alcove area for our Schuster to work on and repair boots for the CP forces, cleared vegetation in some of our rear areas that had been neglected for too long, as well as reworking our wire in NML. Our Stellung is in good shape overall, so the unit plans on doing mainly maintenance work this coming summer such as duckboard and step replacement, repair of bunker doors, continuing the never ending battle against the site vegetation, etc.

From Tom Galleher "Scampi": IR92 will continue to help sponsor the GWA Thursday evening Social with the help of the French who will now host the Social at the Chateau and courtyard. After 15 years on the CP side of NML, it will now be done on the Allied side. We had a pretty good turnout at the Nov. event with 60+ Allies and Germans attending. The hope is that the change in venue and getting the word out before the spring event, more members of the GWA will find time to come by and enjoy the beer, munchies and camaraderie.

UNIT ROUNDUP, CP (CONTINUED)

1. Infanterie-Regt. Nr. 23

Since this is the first OTW issue since the COVID Dark Age, I'd like to start off by giving an update on IR23's recent history. During the years between 2019 and 2021, IR23 experienced a death and rebirth. Skyler Zenisek and I took over leadership of the unit from Marsh Wise (peace be upon him), and immediately set about rebuilding. Only one other unit member, the esteemed Dr. Nick Bakris, stuck around to help by supporting recruitment and material authenticity. Having only joined the GWA in 2016, Skyler and I were presented with the challenge of inheriting a near-defunct unit with a dilapidated bunker and trenchworks. We set about sharing admin demands and dividing other labor, myself taking command and treasury, and Skyler taking over authenticity and research.

From the first, Skyler and I envisioned a unit which subsists on authenticity and humor. In short, have fun and look good doing it. We have seen that reenactment clubs without a strong culture rooted in relationships and good humor don't last long-term. We took advantage of IR23's foundations in the GWA to begin recruiting. The website and name recognition of IR23 helped us to get some recruits, while word of mouth and pulling guys in from

other reenactment events provided a few more. By 2022, we had a core group in the unit with enough investment to begin repairing our bunker and accelerate growth. I am happy to say that we've continued to grow without relaxing authenticity standards.

Beyond Newville, IR23 has been a regular attendee at small public events across the Midwest. These events include WWI Days and Christmas in the Trenches at Rockford, IL, Muster on the St Mary's in Fort Wayne, IN, and Military History Weekend in Lockport, IL. At these events, IR23 has shared our research in public engagement. We've also been fortunate to have most of our core members expanding their range with impressions from all years of the war. Notably, we have 5 members to field in high-standard 1914 German kit, which I consider a remarkable achievement. We hope to continue our activity at these local events.

This past November, we had 20 members register for the event, and of those, 14 were able to attend. Nevertheless, 14 members is a far cry from the 3 we had in 2020 and the 6 who attended April 2022. We hope to continue this pace of growth. Our authenticity focuses this event were blackening and greasing leather gear according to the September 1915 blackening order and sewing on the proper white-piped 45mm shoulder straps for our impression. Our

members have been remarkably collaborative and proactive about conforming their kit to high standards and reflecting original photographs. We strive to be a leading unit in terms of authenticity for the German impression.

Further, we were able to install a new floor in our bunker with the help of Will French and Russ Birkner, two of our members from Texas. We also enjoyed a lot of excavating and sandbagging on the frontline during the days of the event. A unit highlight of the event was cutting down a small pine sapling and decorating it in the bunker for some pre-emptive Christmas celebration, around which drinks were shared and songs were sung.

I'd like to thank 20MG for sharing some of their dinner with us on Saturday night as our rations ran short. Finally, we would like to thank Jim Harter for his years of leadership and to congratulate Mike Landree on his election to CP combat command.

IR23 is looking forward to more exciting and formative years. We appreciate all the help and collaboration we've had from other Central Powers units, the GWA and of course, our French fellows from across the field!

Von Winterfeldt voran!

-Ryan Hunneshagen / Uffzr
Gustav H.

UNIT ROUNDUP, CP (CONTINUED)

Infanterie-Regt. Nr. 52

IR52 officially moved into the trench position formerly occupied by FR92 for the 2023 Fall Tactical. We've already begun updating and improving the position to make it our own. On the Monday evening following the Fall Tactical, Bob Penix was promoted by Mike Landree to the rank of Luetnant der 2nd Zug. 1 and 4 Kompanie are looking forward to an amazing Spring Tactical.

11./Infanterie-Regt Nr. 129

We are working on trench lines in the next year, recruiting new members and working on our unit authenticity.



Photo courtesy of Pete Lerro



Photo courtesy of Alicia Blunt



Photo courtesy of Pete Lerro



Photo courtesy of Pete Lerro



Photo courtesy of E. Miller

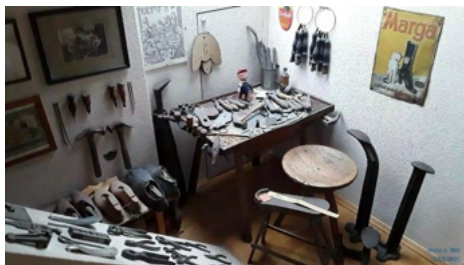
SCHUSTER IN RESIDENCE IN THE GERMAN LINE

by George Walters, IR92 (“Ranger”)

Braunschweig Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 92 is very fortunate to have an experienced Schuster in its ranks who uses tools of the period to perform boot repair work for IR92 and the Central Powers troops at the Newville events. Sean McCarthy (Gefreiter Hermann Berg), when not leading Gruppen in combat or leading regimental drill, has saved many a soldier whose boots gave out in NML or on the back roads of the site during a GWA event.

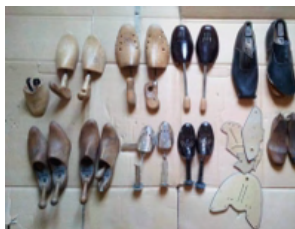


Sean got into boot and leather work at an early age: *“My father used to make prescription orthopedic shoes and inserts for work. With his help I started to learn about the modern aspects of the craft, while soon after I was offered a set of cobbler’s tools by a friend and mentor in my WW2 German unit. The tools used to be his father’s from the 1950s. I started to do repairs (in the field) around 2015.”*



(photo from eBay listing)

Two years ago, he spotted an auction for an “Old Shoe Maker Table, Chair, Tools” in Germany and won the auction with a bid of 222 Euros. *“In May of 2021 I won the eBay auction in Germany for the tools, paperwork and surviving workshop of Georg Kohlhepp who I was told by the owner worked from 1909 to 1949.”*



A photograph of Kohlhepp with workers in his shop was included in the lot and indicates that the table, stool, and tools were used during the Great War era. The sign in the background shows the dates 1909-1911.

But there was a glitch: the terms of the auction stated that shipping to the US was not included. Luckily, Gefreiter Berg was offered the help of one of our comrades in Germany, Manuel Wöller, who made it all possible by doing the local pickup and shipping over the workshop in parts. (Many GWA members know Manuel Wöller, one of our German guests who has flown over and attended several of the Newville events.)

Initially, Gefr. Berg performed his work near IR92’s Lager on the back road but in the Fall of 2022, the IR92 Pionier work crew renovated a forward bunker and built a recessed small alcove in the unit’s trenches, behind the front line, for Berg to do his work.

The original bunker walls were replaced, and one wall was moved in to allow for the alcove. Master carpenter Brian Matthews (Sgt. Bertram Zoellner) of IR92 carefully constructed the work niche. With Gefr. Berg’s work alcove in the trench, he can don his work apron or pick up his Gewehr in an instant, whichever need arises.

The stool, tools and boot lasts that he uses in the trench are original to the period and are the same items that can be seen in the photograph of Kohlhepp in his shop. Berg also displays some of the knick-knacks and toys that were in Kohlhepp’s shop in his work alcove. It’s like stepping back in time from a Schuster’s perspective.



SCHUSTER (cont. from p. 12)

Berg performs most types of boot repair work needed for German soldiers and can be found in IR92's trenches during the event.

"I am equipped to replace any parts that could fall off or break from a German boot. There are a few advanced repairs I can't do in the trenches, but the most common repairs you can see me in the field doing are reattaching half soles, replacing missing hobnails, dying leather, sewing, and replacing heel irons."

He has repaired many boots for IR92 as well as members of other units. Having this resource on site can be a valuable service, as any GWA member who has ever had his boots blown out during an event can attest. If any soldat has a need, look for him. He may ask a modest fee



depending on the work. *"My best working hours are Thursday evening, Friday morning and mid-day Saturday, since I'm active in the battles."* Berg also wanted to mention that *"if anyone is interested in learning how to do German boot repairs, I have an extra work apron."*

And how did he thank Manuel Wöller back in Germany for all his work to ship the workshop items from the Fatherland to the US? Well, Berg is a man of many talents, including metal working, making rubber trench fighting clubs and shovels, etc., and he is also a gifted artist. Some of his artwork is commissioned.

He drew and sent a large, framed sketch of a Württemberg soldier, that was taken from an original photograph, to Wöller who portrays a Württemberg soldier in his home country.

For any soldier in peril who needs a good Schuster during an event, you may be well advised to call on Hermann Berg in IR92.



CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

***On the Wire* Spring 2024 Issue Drops April 8.**

Please submit content for the Spring issue prior to April 1, including unit updates, feature stories, pictures, etc. Something you'd like to see? Please also feel free to pass along your ideas.

Send content / suggestions to GreatWarSecretary@gmail.com .



Photo courtesy of Pete Lerro