

ON THE WIRE

NEWSLETTER OF THE GREAT WAR ASSOCIATION



OTW Mini Version

Folks,

OTW will be brief this go around, mostly business with an article or two to chew on. We considered not even bothering, so if you really want OTW to continue, we'll need folks to start writing historical or reenacting how-to type articles to help fill it out twice per year. The registration forms have been posted online pretty much year round now, so hopefully folks aren't waiting for OTW to register for the events!

Next year will be a big year for the GWA as well. In addition to the site improvements that are ongoing, the GWA Mortgage will be paid in 2011, allowing us to really accelerate our site improvement. Then we'll have something to write about.

Fall Combat Event Schedule

November 5-7, 2010

Friday, November 5

1:00–6:00pm

Registration shed open

5:30pm

Modern vehicles must be moved from all areas beyond the registration shed gate(including the battlefield, roads, rear areas, camps) before 5:30 pm and parked in the parking lots. The registration shed gate will be locked until 6am Sunday.

6:30pm

Safety briefing at the Memorial

7:30pm

Stand To. Combat begins.

11:00pm

Combat ceases.

11:00 pm to ?

Living history as unit appropriate.

No combat.

Saturday, November 6

9:00am

Safety briefing at the Memorial (mandatory attendance)

9:00–9:50am

Registration shed open

10:00am

Stand To. Combat begins.

11:00pm

Combat ends.

Sunday, November 7

6:00am

Gate at registration shed opened. Modern vehicles may access roads to battlefield.

7:00

Battlefield cleanup commences

8:00–9:00am

G-8 meeting at Farmhouse

In the next year you can expect:

- Death Valley to finally undergo development;
- Continued improved of CP trench area started last year (don't worry Allies, in 2012 the funding stream finally turns back your way!)
- A revision of GWA Bylaws to help keep us on track for the future;
- Elections. Nominations will be in the Spring and a new President will be in place by the end of 2011 (Hurray!).

Many will note we've seen many new facets to our events in the last few years and there will be more to come. The CP is in a growth phase which is helping correct the imbalance we've had for the last 7 years or so. Planes, trains and automobiles (well no trains yet, but some folks have actually been investigating the feasibility of a narrow gage line). With new members comes new expertise, while hopefully we don't lose expertise with outgoing members.

One thing we must be vigilant about is any backsliding or erosion of our standards. Growth or expansion can be a good thing, but uncontrolled can be equally damaging. Those of us with long term experience in other larger eras have seen this firsthand. New members coming in without the visions of quality or indoctrination into the higher standards normally associated with the GWA can begin to undermine what has set the Great War era of living history apart and above other eras. Many of our past and current members came to Great War because of the quality of the GWA, not just because GW is "cooler". High quality living historians, fleeing the circus that other eras have generally become with their own expansion, have historically come into GW because we've generally held the line on quality. We must continue to do so; we can't let expedience or zeal for rapid growth compromise our principles. We're different; we're better; we don't take the easy way out at the expense of doing what is right not just for ourselves, but for our organization. We don't go cheap because it is expedient or less costly. We've been better

because we go that extra yard. Getting into GW has never been as easy as other eras; through arguably it is easier now than ever before. GW has never been "comfortable" to do, though our static situation does lend itself to some authentic creature comforts. Our more stringent standards, our requiring going that extra yard has acted as something of a yahoo filter for us; this has, by and large, kept only the more dedicated living historians coming into our era. And this has resulted in consistently good events and an organization moving forward at a slow but steady pace.

We must as individuals, units and as an organization hold ourselves to the principles that have gotten the GWA to where it is now; we must view changes we make with an eye not just to ourselves, but to our fellow GWA members, as nothing in our situation happens in a vacuum. And we must keep ourselves going that extra yard, not taking the easy way out. For doing so is the path to our demise. I've seen it happen before; we can't let it happen here. Enough pontificating for now.

Don't forget to get some workers out to the site to help defoliate your areas. A number of units have been busy with various projects and many parts of the site are in great shape. But some still need a lot of work.

Remember the speed limit on site is 15 MPH.

See you all in less than two weeks.

Jim Kidd
President, GWA



"The Adrian Helmet"

John Bracken

As the French army's casualties rapidly mounted in the summer and fall of 1914, it became evident that head wounds would be a defining injury of the conflict. Most often these had been inflicted by shrapnel, shell fragments or other flying debris. To help reduce the number of head wounds, Quartermaster General Louis Adrian proposed in December 1914 the production of protective headgear. The first initiative was rudimentary in the extreme: a steel bowl called the *cervelière* (quite literally, "brain-pan"). The idea originated with reports of the soldiers' mess-tins being struck by shrapnel balls but had not been punctured. At first, the *Grand Quartier Général* (G.Q.G.) remained reticent about the brain-pan. The belief was that the war would be over before the helmets could be produced and distributed to the troops. Yet after further convincing from General Adrian, G.Q.G. signed-off on production of the economized form of head protection. The brain-pan was a stamped steel skull-cap intended to be worn under the kepi. In actual use, the troops took to wearing them on top for

comfort. It was .5 mm thick, semi-spherical in shape, and had two holes drilled into either side allowing it to be hung by a cord while not in use. French troops also found another use for the brain-pans. They made for good cooking receptacles or even, when in need, as chamber pots. Between December 1914 and February 1915, 700,000 brain-pans were made, with 200,000 actually being issued to the ranks. Yet they offered only mediocre protection against small shell fragments, shrapnel and stones. Something far better was needed.

Though the brain-pan produced only marginally positive results, its use still led to a decrease in the number of casualties. This caught General Joffre's attention, and by the end of February 1915 he was convinced of the need for head protection. He ordered that a more suitable helmet be produced and Adrian jumped to work. His idea was to create a helmet that both offered both increased protection and comfort. It had to weigh as little as possible yet be strong and easy to manufacture in large quantities. His design was largely based off preexisting helmets employed by the light-cavalry, which in turn had been inspired by the *Bourgoignotte* helmet of the medieval times. In March and April 1915, manufacturers were given the prototype of the infantry helmet. These producers had previously been making the more complicated and ornate pre-war helmet for light-cavalry, as well as those employed by the Paris fire brigade. Adrian submitted his design to the French authorities for final approval at the end of April 1915, with production beginning immediately. The helmet was 7 mm thick and weighed roughly 1.8 pounds. It was composed of four pieces: a shell, a visor, a neck guard and a crest. On the crown, a badge was attached in the form of a flaming grenade and embossed with the letters "RF" (*République Française*). The color used in painting was a light grey-blue, which was sprayed on. Once fired in the kiln, the paint darkened to a glossy slate-blue. The helmet liners were originally made of sheepskin but would later be changed to the more resilient goatskin. The first model liner was cut from one piece, with the leather being blackened and varnished. Beginning in the fall of 1915, a second model would be used consisting of two pieces sewn together, the leather being left natural. The liner was mounted on a strip of recycled wool (madder or dark-blue), which was itself lined with four strips of corrugated aluminum. These strips secured to the shell of the helmet via the use of hooks soldered to the shell. The chinstrap was similarly made of first sheepskin (blackened) and then goatskin (natural) and could be tightened using a

black-lacquered iron buckle. The helmet was manufactured in three sizes A, B and C, each being subdivided into three inner lining sizes. The result was nine sizes of head circumference, from 54-62 cm.

Of the roughly fifty manufactures initially called upon to put out the helmet, only fifteen are retained: two to produce the steel sheet metal, five to produce the head pieces and chinstraps, eight to manufacture and incorporate the paint and position the head piece and chinstrap. The stamping equipment was particularly delicate and complex. It required some fifty tools to create the exploding bomb insignia attached to the crown. It took a good month for production to become regular and to conform to the standards that Adrian originally set. For example, the Japy facility was contracted to have produced 529,000 helmets by 1 August 1915 but had only made 141,000 by that time. Yet Adrian remained optimistic as manufacturers steadily increased production levels. At the end of August, 52,000 helmets were being turned out daily. By the start of the Champagne offensive on 15 September 1915, 1,600,000 Adrian helmets had been distributed to the army. By the end of the year, this number was over 3 million. The price of manufacturing each was only 3.35 francs. In comparison, a regulation kepi cost 3.80 francs each. And when compared to the price that British manufacturers were asking for each of their helmets-15.65 to 18.75 francs-this was a real bargain. Meanwhile, French industrialists, steel manufacturers and those who had declined to participate in the production of quartermaster helmets, fashioned for their personal profit a model close to the official Adrian. These commercial helmets were sold at a price of 20 to 25 francs and were of a much inferior quality. The metal used in its construction proved too rigid and when struck by a projectile tended to fracture into splinters, only adding to the trauma of the wound. At the end of September, Joffre prohibited the production and use of these commercial helmets in the zone of armies.

The appearance of the Adrian as standard equipment of the soldier showed an immediate decrease in the number and severity of head wounds. The helmets, at first designated to just the infantry, are soon distributed to all the branches of service. The only distinguishing characteristic on the helmet between each of the branches was in the badge mounted on the crown. For the infantry and cavalry, it was the flaming grenade; for light-infantry, a horn; foreign marksmen and zouaves, a crescent moon; artillery, two crossed canons surmounted by a flaming grenade; colonial troops, an anchor surmounted

by a flaming grenade. For the non-fighting wings, the badge was, for the engineers, a cuirass and helmet; for medical, a caduceus entwined by a serpent surrounded by oak and laurel branches; for quartermaster, a fascine with a backdrop of flags and laurel wreaths. Officers often had specialized badges made, which typically incorporated rank insignia. The chinstrap was often replaced with one of higher-quality make, such as woven leather. The only serious flaw with the design process was discovered in the field and it came down to paint. Specifically, the glossy finish reflected sunlight too easily, making for an easily identified target even at long distances. As a short-term measure, cloth helmet covers were distributed in light blue and natural white beginning in the winter of 1915-16. Commonly, in the absence of a helmet cover soldiers camouflaged their helmet with mud. An unintended side effect of both this practice and the cloth covers was an increased rate of infection, as mud and cloth particles were blasted into the wound.

In June 1916, more permanent efforts were made to reduce the visibility of the helmets by reducing the glossiness of the paint. It was found that if the helmet was fired for an extra period of time in the kilns, the result was a darker tint that had a matte grey-blue appearance. On 8 July, distribution of these less visible helmets began. Helmets distributed before the new painting process began were either reclaimed and repainted, or were painted over at the local echelon using a matte dark-gray or dark-blue. In the latter case, the paint was applied using a brush. In October, the practice of camouflaging the helmet using mud was prohibited. As distribution of the new helmets increased, the helmet cover was taken out of service. Meanwhile, distribution had soared to 7 million by the end of 1916. That year, France began selling the Adrian to foreign armies at the price of 6 francs each. Italy bought 1,600,000; Russia, 340,000; Belgium, 208,000; Serbia, 123,000; Romania, 90,000; Holland, 10,000. By war's end, a total of over 20 million Adrians had been made. On 18 December 1918, a decree is made awarding a helmet to each officer or soldier having belonged to an army formation. This helmet is provided with a plaque, a brass souvenir covering over the visor and bearing the inscription "*Soldat de la Grande Guerre 1914-1918*" ("Soldier of the Great War 1914-1918"). These ceremonial helmets are sent out on the 16 April 1916. The Adrian remained the standard military issue in the French army until after World War II, and was also used by the French police up to the

1970s.

Sources:

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 Berrafato, Laurent. "Le Fantassin de la Grande Guerre, 1914/18." *Gazette des Uniformes*. Series No. 3, 1994.
 Mirouze, Laurent and Stéphane Dekerle. *The French Army in the First World War: Vol. 2: 1914-1918*. Verlag Militaria, Vienna: 2008.
 Verney, Jean-Pierre. "Adrian, un grand servant de l'État." 14-18: Le magazine de la Grande Guerre. No. 11, Dec./Jan. 2003.



NOTE: PAPER COPIES OF OTW WILL BE MAILED ONLY TO THOSE INDIVIDUALS WHO REQUEST THEM. GWA members are requested to download the newsletter from the website, www.greatwar-assoc.org. **This will help reduce unnecessary costs and administrative burdens. Send requests for hard copies to the GWA Registrar.**

☐ Check this box if you have changed your address since the last event or this is your first event

☐ Check this box if you are a unit commander

Print first letter of your
last name in this box

FALL 2010 REGISTRATION

GWA Membership and Registration Form for the Fall Combat Event, November 5-7, 2010 Caesar Krauss Great War Memorial Site, Newville, PA

Part I — Member Information — Please Print Legibly

Last Name: _____ First Name _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Postal Code: _____

Country: _____ Phone: _____ e-mail: _____

Unit Commander: _____

Emergency Contact: _____

I certify that I am 18 years of age or older _____
You must be at least 18 to register. You may be asked for proof of age. (Sign here)

Part II — Unit Affiliation

This box must be filled out, using the units and abbreviations on the back of this form. If you do not belong to one of these units, you are an independent.

Part III — Dues and Event Fees

A. 2009 dues (Annual dues are due at the Spring Event each year) **\$25.00**

B. Fall 2009 Event fee if pre-registered (see below) **\$25.00**

C. Optional site development donation

\$

D. Pre-registration subtotal (A+B+C as applicable)

\$

E. Gate registration fee

(PAY ONLY IF NOT PRE-REGISTERING)

\$15.00

F. Gate registration total (D+E) \$

\$

Pre-registration: Members are encouraged to pre-register to save the gate fee. If you pre-register but are unable to attend, your event fee (only) will be returned within two weeks. All pre-registrations must be received by the Registrar on or before Nov 1, 2010. If your pre-registration is not received by this date, you must pay at the event — including the \$15 gate fee. Your original mail pre-registration will be returned unopened.

Make checks to “Great War Association.” Send form and check to:

Chris Garcia, GWA Registrar
418 Chinaberry Ct, Virginia
Beach, VA 23454

(757) 631-0661 e-mail: cristomiceal@aol.com

Register Online with PayPal

You can now register and pay online by using PayPal (www.paypal.com). Dues and the event fee are \$26 each (\$52 if paying both) to cover the costs of this service. Payments should be sent to the GWA Treasurer at GWAtreas@comcast.net. Please include all information normally entered in Part I & II of this form in the notes box of the PayPal form. Registration payments without this information included will not be accepted.

GWA Unit List (use abbreviations only when filling out registration form)

American

26AEF 26th Div., (Yankee Div.), AEF
27AEF 27th Div., 107th Inf. AEF
109AEF 28th Div., 109th Inf. Co. L., AEF
116AEF 29th Div., 116th Inf., Hdqtrs. Co., AEF
33AEF 33rd Div., (Prairie Div.), AEF
80AEF 80th Div., 318th Inf. AEF
372AEF 93rd Div., 372nd Inf. AEF
49CO 5th Marines, 49th Co., AEF
67CO 5th Marines, 67th Co., AEF

British

2SRFC No. 2 Squadron, Royal Flying Corps
6BWBEF 6th Btn., Black Watch, BEF
BRBEF The Border Regiment, BEF
BUFF 6th Buffs Rgt., BEF
IRISHGD Irish Guards No. 3 Co., 1st Btn.
ROYENG Royal Engineers

Commonwealth

5AIF 5th Btn. Australia/New Zealand Army Corps
PPCLI Princess Pat's Canadian Light Infantry
42BNCEF 42nd BN, Black Watch, CEF

French

8BCP 8 Btn. Chasseurs à Pied
18RL 18ème Régiment d'Infanterie (Régiment de Gâtinais)
151RL 151ème Régiment d'Infanterie de Ligne

Russian

RL Légion Russe

Non-Military

DRK Deutsches Rotes Kreuz
INDP Independent (non-combat only)
SA Salvation Army

Austrian

63KUK 63rd KuK

German

1LR Königliche Bayerische Leib Regiment
5SB 5.Sturm-Pionier-Bataillon "Rohr"
8KUR 3. Feldesk., Kürassier Regt. Nr. 8 (Rheinisches)
12MWK 12. Minenwerfer Komp. 12 Division
13PB 13. Pionierbataillon (*probationary*)
20MG 20. Maschinengewehr-Scharfschützen-Bataillon
23JR Infanterie-Regt Nr. 23 (2. Oberschlesisches)(*probationary*)
63JR 3. Komp., Infanterie-Regt. Nr. 63 (4. Oberschlesisches)
73FR Füsilier-Regiment Nr. 73 (Hanoversches)
90FR 10.Komp., Füsilier-Regiment Nr. 90 (Mecklenburgisches)
92JR Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 92 (1. Braunschweigisches)
120JR 5. Komp., Infanterie-Regt. Nr. 120 (2. Württembergisches)
124JR 3.Komp., Infanterie-Regt. Nr.124 (6.Württembergisches)
129JR Infanterie-Regt Nr. 129 (*probationary*)
459JR 8.Komp., Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 459 (Rhein.Westf.)
236RIR 5. Komp., Reserve Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 236(*probationary*)

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