

People News



Phil at the Somme



Gunner Robert Bonner's grave in Easebourne

Volunteer highlights stories of war grave soldiers in the area

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The Commonwealth War Graves Commission commemorates more than 300,000 British and Commonwealth service personnel at more than 12,000 locations. For the first time it is running war graves week from May 21 to 28.

Phil Stringer is a member of the Midhurst Society and volunteers for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's (CWGC) Eyes On Hands On project.

He said: "The project was conceived to help ensure that

scattered graves are inspected more frequently and where needed, receive attention.

"Every grave is a piece of history and as part of the project, the CWGC hope that volunteers will find out more about the person whose name is carved on the headstone."

There are a number of war graves in Easebourne, Midhurst and West Lavington.

Including that of Robert Bonner, Gunner, 48963, who died at the age of 43 at home of malaria on April 3, 1919. He was born in Shirburn, Oxfordshire. In 1901 he was a market gardener in Worthing and described as a jobbing gardener in the 1911 census.

He married RoseAnn Collins, known as Annie who was born in Midhurst, in 1898 and they had three children. He became a Gunner in the Royal Field Artillery as part of 6 "B" Reserve Brigade.

Phil said: "Having retired a couple of years ago and being an ex-serviceman where there is a culture of respect and remembrance to those who have fallen in war, I have been pleased to be able to volunteer for the project in this part of Sussex.

"I have been aware of the distinctive war grave headstones in the churchyards and cemeteries and always wondered about

the stories behind the individual casualties."

During lockdown Phil has inspected the war graves during his daily exercise walks, and conducted much of his research online.

He said: "Some of the research is built on contemporary newspaper reporting, other elements taken from war diaries and other records, but there is still much to find out."

The Midhurst Society will include information on the graves in the area, at: www.midhurstsociety.co.uk

To share any stories, email: chair@midhurstsociety.org.uk



Easebourne War Memorial



'God's Acre' in Easebourne churchyard



Grave in Midhurst cemetery of Sergeant Cornelius Balchin