

# **THE GREAT WAR**

## **Centenary Parade and British Expeditionary Force 1914-2014**

Monday 4th August 2014 will see 100 years to the day that Great Britain and her Empire entered the Great War. The date is of such significance in the annals of world history that it is being commemorated around the globe, and in Britain there will be events as diverse as members of the Royal Family attending church services throughout the country, to private commemorations in towns and villages where lives were changed forever by what followed during the war years 1914-1918.

In Central London a special Commemoration will take place as a result of the unique collaboration between The Imperial War Museum, Royal Hospital Chelsea and The Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Chelsea Pensioners, whose predecessors fought in the Great War, Officials and Dignitaries from Britain and Western Front towns in Belgium, will take part in "The Great War Centenary Parade", the aim of which is to bring together those who fought in, conducted, and have ever since been custodians of the Nation's conscience of the "War to End all Wars".

Nicholas Pellett, whose grandfather, a Private in the Bedfordshires, was killed in the Tank battle at Cambrai in 1917 has spent several years putting the London Commemoration together. "Having lived with our family history for so long, it was imperative that I honoured not only my Grandfather, but other families who were affected; my Grandmother was left a young widow to bring up two small children on her own. But neither she, who never remarried and lived well into her 90's or my own father, would ever talk about those days. Regrettably, it has only been since my own father's death that I have been able to piece all the details together."

"I approached the Veteran Car Club of Great Britain as the means of bringing all these institutions together, by asking the members to take all the participants between the venues in private motor vehicles that would have been on the streets of London at the time War broke out. I was overwhelmed by the response and as a result we have been able to create a unique Commemoration with the largest number of original Edwardian motor cars seen in London in recent times, driven by members from as far afield as America and New Zealand, which will also bring the flavour of the times to the Capital. The tone will be sombre; Chelsea Pensioners in official uniforms, campaign medals, and suits for civilians are the order of the day.

At 10.00am on **Monday 4th August** in excess of 40 Edwardian motor cars will depart from Royal Hospital Chelsea on a Parade route via Chelsea Embankment, the Houses of Parliament, Whitehall and The Cenotaph, for Lancaster House in The Mall. Operated by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and situated opposite Buckingham Palace, this Palace in all but name, and representing the strands of our democracy, the Crown, Parliament, the War and Foreign Offices will host an official reception for some 150 participants, who will also be able to see some important War paintings in the Government Art collection which are housed there and not on public view. One of the honoured guests will be the grandson of the Government's War artist.

At 12.30pm, after the Changing of the Guard ceremony has finished, the Great War Centenary Parade will depart for The Imperial War Museum in Southwark, via Horseguards Road, Parliament Square and Westminster Bridge. Here the motor cars will be displayed around the Museum's circular driveway whilst the participants visit the new Great War Galleries which will have reopened days earlier following many years refurbishment. At 4.30pm the GWCP will return to Chelsea via Westminster Bridge."

Later that afternoon the GWCP will make its way back to Weybridge, Surrey from where they left at 7.00am that morning for Chelsea.

On **Wednesday 6th August**, The GWCP departs for Belgium, where many towns on the Western Front will host "The British Expeditionary Force" as they take part in Commemorations across the Salient with our Belgian colleagues, to whose aid we came in 1914.

On **Sunday 3rd August** Brooklands Museum, Weybridge is hosting "Brooklands Great War 100" featuring displays of all forms of transport up to 1918; the GWCP cars will be on parade with we hope many others, whether commercial, military, private, racing or motorbikes.

*The public are welcome to come to London to view the GWCP from any vantage point on the route described above. As a mark of respect to the participants and organisers, we would ask that no persons attempt to follow the GWCP in either old or modern cars.*

*More information on [www.greatwarcentenaryparade.org](http://www.greatwarcentenaryparade.org)*