



**Commemorating John Arsenault, First World War Canadian soldier
Odysée de la Culture Association
27th March 2017**

The Odysée de la Culture Association from Lens, France have asked Witley Parish Council to co-ordinate the Witley part of a three-country commemorative event by a group of French and Canadians to honour Private John Arsenault, a Canadian soldier in the 85th (Nova Scotia Highlanders) Canadian Infantry. John was trained at Witley Camp during 1916 and 1917 and killed at Vimy Ridge in April, 1917. The group will follow John's footsteps from his home in Nova Scotia through Witley, Folkestone and Northern France to Vimy Ridge for the 100th anniversary commemoration of The Battle of Vimy Ridge which will be attended by the Queen. Two of John's Canadian relatives will be in the group.

On 27th March there will be acts of remembrance and a walk arranged by The Ramblers passing through the site of Witley Camp and Milford Cemetery. Local businesses and organisations have been asked for support. Those providing support are Secrett's Farm, The Star, The White Hart, Rodborough School, Innovate Services Limited, King Edward's School, The National Trust, Milford Village Hall, The Meat and Fish Market, Waitrose, Surrey County Council Archaeological Unit, All Saints Witley and Saint John's Milford. There will be an exhibition arranged by The Odysée on 27th March at Godalming Museum which is opening from 10:00 until 16:00 especially for the event. The following day The Mayor of Waverley will visit the exhibition between 09:30 and 10:30.

The first act of remembrance will be at All Saints Witley at 09:30 followed by the walk at 10:00. John's battalion and three other Canadian battalions left their colours for safekeeping at All Saints when they embarked for France in 1917. The first part of the walk is six miles to The National Trust Witley Centre arriving around 13:30 where there will be a one hour break for lunch. After lunch, the walk continues to Milford Cemetery where there will be another act of remembrance around 15:00 arranged by St. John's Milford in the war graves section with senior pupils from Rodborough School attending. The walkers leave Milford around 15:30 and return to All Saints, arriving around 17:00.

You are welcome to join the services and the walk. If you would like to walk, please consider if you are able to complete the route, wear appropriate clothing and foot-wear and bring your own packed lunch. Please do not park in Church Lane; there is an open space on the right up the hill opposite The Jubilee Hall. If you are unable to attend the services or undertake the walk, please do visit the exhibition at Godalming Museum.