



THE WAR GRAVES

PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECT

Spring 2017 Newsletter



It takes me all week to get through the Saturday edition of Daily Telegraph so by today (Thursday) I finally got through to the travel supplement. It beats me why you have to have a whole supplement on the purchase of expensive watches but perhaps I am not in the wage bracket of other Telegraph readers. Anyway, having scanned through the travel section, skipping the cruises as I had spent enough time at sea on the 'Grey Funnel line', it was nice to see a centre page spread all about Arras, in France, and the forthcoming 100th anniversary of the Battle of Arras and Vimy Ridge.

Throughout the night of 8th April the weather had been atrocious with wind, rain and snow falling on the 350,000 troops who were deployed on the Third Army front around Arras and the 30,000 Canadians in trenches in front of Vimy Ridge. Not a good start for the day of battle on the 9th. The fact that this had happened a mere 41 years before the day I was born puts it all into perspective for me.

One can only imagine what thoughts were going through the minds of the troops and what they had to endure in such conditions as well as fighting uphill to the ridge at Vimy in the case of the Canadian Divisions.

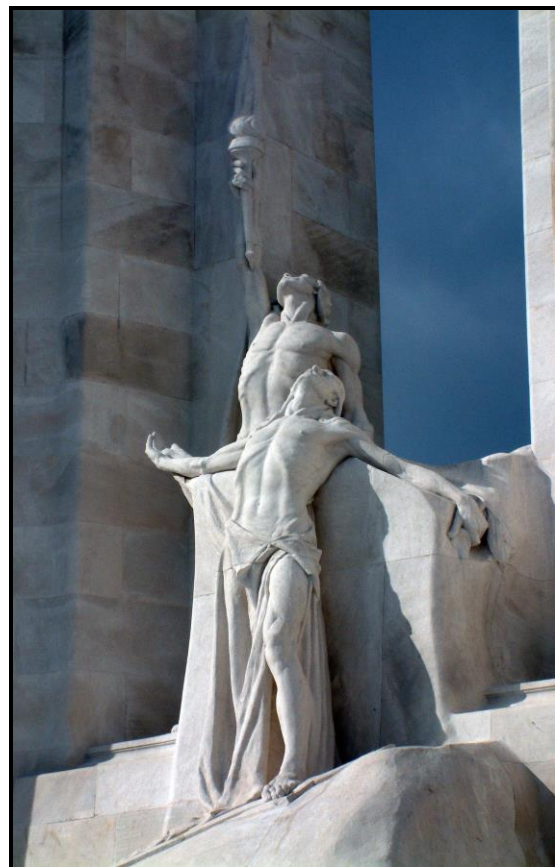
On this year's 100th anniversary of the Battle it is only right that the Canadians take 'centre stage' for their participation and victory at Vimy Ridge on which stands their memorial to the missing. Let it not be forgotten though, that many of those who fought and died in those Canadian Battalions came from Great Britain, and other countries, having emigrated to Canada before the war and signing up to do their bit.

Men like my relation Walter William Rogers, from Andover in Hampshire, whose name I have often touched when visiting the named walls of Vimy memorial.

The Telegraph supplement guides visitors around the area to places such as Wellington Quarry (underground tunnels), the trench network, mines and memorial at Vimy, and even the very large German cemetery at Neuville St. Vaast whose 44,000 war dead are included within our website. The article mentions that pupils from a Bridgenorth school had recently visited and laid a poppy cross with the lines from a Wilfred Owen poem altered to suit the visit in these times of reconciliation *"You are the enemy I killed, my friend"*.

I am not personally aware of anyone attending the ceremony at Vimy on the 9th April but like the one at Thiepval in July last year, security will be very tight and roads around the memorial closed for a couple of days beforehand.

Well worth a visit if you have not been beforehand. For those unable to visit, we do have all the names on the memorial within our archive.



Recognition from down under



In the last newsletter I mentioned about Australian requests appearing to drop off but this has taken a turn in the other direction now. The Government sponsored Australian War Memorial at Canberra <https://www.awm.gov.au/> hold a ceremony at the end of each day, commencing at 4.55 pm when the Memorial bids farewell to visitors with its moving Last Post Ceremony. The ceremony begins with the singing of the Australian National Anthem, followed by the poignant strains of a lament, played by a piper.

Visitors are invited to lay wreaths and floral tributes beside the Pool of Reflection. The Roll of Honour in the Cloisters lists the names of more than 102,000 Australians who have given their lives in war and other operations over more than a century. At each ceremony the story behind one of these names is told. Families can provide a photograph of the grave, if held, and this is displayed in A3 size at the ceremony. If none held an Australian flag folded on a plinth is displayed.

The AWM appreciate that to have a headstone to display is more poignant and have approached TWGPP to supply these images for each casualty they commemorate at this event.

It has been recognised that we supply high quality images that have been modified via photographic software for best presentation and not just a low resolution, poor quality image that can be downloaded from other sites. I think you should all be proud that our images are being utilized in such a manner.

Whilst on the subject of Australia, the Victorian Association of Jewish Ex & Servicemen and Women of Australia have also recently used our services to obtain images for their ongoing research into Victoria State Jewish casualties.

The meaning of Heroism ?

I shall be going to the 'Flicks' in July to see the new 'Dunkirk' film. This will most probably be a family affair as we will be remembering my grandfather Frederick Barter who played his part in the evacuation of allied forces from the beachhead there.

In recent times there has, in my opinion, been a complete watering down of the term 'Hero'. Nowadays, it is often used to describe someone that has kicked an inflated pigs bladder between two posts and got paid many thousands of pounds to do it. Or it may be a 'heroic' attempt to get a batter to rise when baking a cake! As I said, the term nowadays has little meaning when used on a number of occasions.

I am pleased to say that my grandfather Fred can be termed as 'Heroic' in the true sense. As a volunteer on board 'Ankh', an inshore patrol craft, (as a civilian) he, along with the small crew found themselves off the sand dunes at Bray, near Dunkirk, on the morning of 31st May 1940. He would have been looking at the troops lining the shore who were trying to get off and embarked onto the ships that could not get inshore.

It was here that Captain Howson RN transferred from a shore party to the motor boat 'Ankh' which he used as his HQ for the rest of the day. Of the nine yachts that went from Portsmouth, he ordered four to the beach at La Panne whilst the remainder were to remain at Bray to assist in the evacuation.

Because of the deep draft of the yachts and their inability to get closer inshore, the yachts motor boats were launched so that the troops could be ferried from the beachhead to the waiting craft. Fred Barter and Frank Lunn took charge of one of these boats and ferried men, 20 at a time instead of the normal 8, to the yachts and other craft lying off shore. During one of the return journeys to the yachts, with a full load of men, his launch was sunk by a near miss bomb leaving the soldiers in full kit floundering in the water. Fred and Frank then swam back to the 'Ankh' under heavy fire to free another boat and to proceed to rescue the men in the water and continue to transfer other members of the B.E.F. to the yachts. In total, Fred and his crewmate Frank were able to save more than 400 men that day.





For this action of putting their own lives at risk to save others, Fred and Frank were awarded the Distinguished Service Medal 'For Services in the Withdrawal of the Allied Armies from the beaches at Dunkirk' from King George on 16th July 1940 at Buckingham Palace.

Fred (2nd Right) and Frank (far right) with the crew of the Motor Yacht 'Ankh'

I never knew any of this until I started researching my family history after Fred had died. Fred had never mentioned it to me when I was younger nor did any of the family who probably did not know much about it either. It was not until I was talking to one of his surviving friends did I get the story to piece together from newspaper cuttings of the time. The family of Frank Lunn, who accompanied Fred in the launch, said that he returned from Dunkirk with white hair having been dark beforehand!

The friend I spoke to had to laugh when he told me that Field Marshall Viscount Gort, VC, The Commander in Chief of the British Expeditionary Force on the beach had tried to jump the queue to Fred's launch so Fred told him to "**** off" and get to the back. Ok, I do not know how true that was and I cannot find anything in the official histories of the time but as we used to say when I was serving in the RN "why spoil a good dit with the truth!"

There was no PTSD in those days and those affected by any memories of that period in time just had to bear a stiff upper lip and get on with it. Fred died in the 70's of liver failure brought on by alcoholism.

Why do I add this to the Newsletter? Well, many of my daughter's generation know nothing about Dunkirk but a 'star' of this new film is a young chap by the name of Harry Styles. Worth about £55 Million now, according to the Sunday papers, as part of the boy band 'One Direction' (or '1D' for those in the know). At first I was dismayed to hear that this was going to be his film debut but if it brings thousands of young girls accompanied by their boyfriends to see a film about true heroes then it has got to be a good thing. One or two may even wonder if their great grandparents were involved in the war and start conducting some research. Who knows, this may lead them to TWGPP and eventual journey to France?

The **Distinguished Service Medal** was a military decoration awarded to personnel of the Royal Navy and members of the other services, and formerly also to personnel of other Commonwealth countries, up to and including the rank of Chief Petty Officer, for bravery and resourcefulness on active service at sea.



Stitching 'Where poppies blow'

Anyone viewing the casualty pages on our site will no doubt have seen Jean and Chris Cosgrove's names being credited with a large number of the images. They have been volunteers now for many years and have travelled hundreds, if not thousands, of miles visiting and revisiting cemeteries throughout France and Belgium. Chris is no stranger to driving many miles having been a long distance HGV driver before retirement. Jean on the other hand combines her visits to cemeteries with her love of cross stitching.

Last year Jean presented TWGPP with a cross stitched picture representing a Cross of Sacrifice, headstones and poppies along with the poem 'In Flanders Fields'. This now hangs in pride of place in our 'Office'. The Cross stitch took Jean over 5 years to complete, in between doing smaller projects, and was recently featured in 'World of Cross Stitching' in a special article. Well done Jean!

Reader Story

Stitching where the poppies blow

Francophile Jean wowed friends and fellow volunteers with her impressive stitched masterpiece

We all love the sense of achievement that comes with completing a big project, but for stitcher Jean Cosgrove it felt extra-special as she finished the final stitch on her five-year WIP (Work-in-Progress), 'In Flanders Field'.

"This pattern was designed and sold exclusively in aid of The Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal – and when I saw it I knew I just had to do it," says Jean. "My maternal grandfather survived both the Boer War and World War I, and my father was in the RAF at the start of World War II and lost a leg in France."

In the five years it took Jean to stitch 'In Flanders Field', she also completed an impressive 21 other projects, as well as lots of cards. "I love stitching presents for special occasions," she says. "My favourite thing about cross stitching is starting a new project and seeing it grow – and the most challenging thing is knowing when to stop and take a break!"

But cross stitching wasn't the only thing keeping Jean busy during those five years – she and her husband, Chris, are volunteers for The War Graves Photographic Project, which records photographs of war graves and memorials around the world, so that there is a visual record of the final resting places of soldiers. Jean and Chris go on holiday to France twice a year, where they take photos of individual named gravestones in cemeteries near to where they stay.

It was during a holiday in northern France, very close to the Flanders Fields area of Belgium, that Jean finally finished her big project. "Once I started stitching the poem, I couldn't stop until I'd finished!" she says. "My shoulders were aching but it was definitely worth it."

One of the best bits was other people's reactions to the piece. Jean's framer was so impressed with her project that she displayed it in her shop until Jean came to collect it! Her friends were also amazed – and as for the Project Coordinator of The War Graves Photographic Project, he was utterly delighted and it's now hanging in pride of place in his office.

So what's next for this intrepid stitcher? Between all the volunteering and card-making, at the moment Jean is finishing off a classic-style map of France stitched on evenweave. "I've no other definite projects in mind – but I have a few cross stitch shops in Bruges, so if we go there I may find something which shouts out, 'Stitch me!'"

Delivered to the cosgrove Jean finds time to stitch in between photographing war graves in French cemeteries

46 The World of Cross Stitching

www.cross-stitching.com



Religious Denomination



We have, in the past, received a number of complaints that the headstones we display are not showing the correct religious denomination. These, in the majority, are those that display the Christian cross when they should, in fact, be the Star of David denoting that the casualty is of the Jewish faith.

We had supplied an image of Private Valentine Frederick Idstien to a family in Australia on whose headstone is a prominent Star of David. I suppose someone may have just assumed he was of the Jewish faith given the surname ending in '..stein'.

However, he was not. The complaint was redirected to the appropriate quarter and we have now had a letter stating that a new headstone has been erected, this time displaying the Christian cross. Given the amount of effort and 18 month wait to get the headstone changed, one might have thought that a few seconds more framing a photo (see right) in the camera viewfinder to send to the family might have been more appropriate. *This was not provided by TWGPP but during our next revisit we have promised to send a better image.*



A UNIQUE MEMORIAL – Peter Butt



That is, unique as far as The War Graves Photographic Project is concerned.

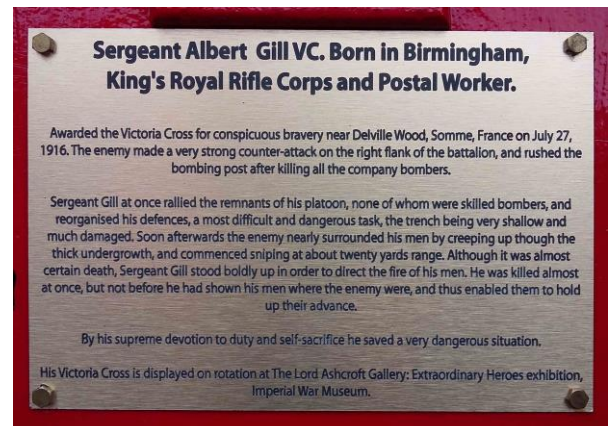
The Royal Mail as part of its commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the First World War is dedicating a letter box to each of the four post-office workers who volunteered and subsequently were awarded the Victoria Cross: For Valour. The dedication being on the anniversary of their act of bravery and takes the form of a tablet attached to a local letter box inscribed with their rank and name, regiment, and the citation that appeared in the London and Edinburgh Gazettes. Of the four, only one was killed during the war. Hence, the letter box dedicated to Serjeant Albert Gill VC, of the 1st Battalion, King's Royal Rifle Corps will be unique amongst the projects photographs.

Serjeant Albert Gill's letter box, B18 214, is at the Dudley Road Hospital, Winson Green, Birmingham, which is a VR [Victoria Regina] wall letter box manufactured by W.T. Allen and Co. between 1882 and 1892, whose foundry was in Mansfield. See Photo 1, taken by Deb Jones of the Letter Box Study Group who first published it in their 2017 Spring Newsletter.

It is interesting to note that both the London and Edinburgh Gazette's of the time, October 1916, spelt his rank as Serjeant as it does for all those of this rank and his CWGC entry uses the same spelling. All the present day citations however seem to use: Sergeant.

The tablet, reads: "*Sergeant Albert Gill VC. Born in Birmingham. King's Royal Rifle Corps and Postal Worker.*"

Awarded the Victoria Cross for conspicuous bravery near Delville Wood, Somme, France on July 27, 1916. The enemy made a very strong counter- attack on the right flank of the battalion, and rushed the bombing post after killing all the company bombers.



Sergeant Gill at once rallied the remnants of his platoon, none of whom were skilled bombers, and reorganised his defences, a most difficult and dangerous task, the trench being very shallow and much damaged. Soon afterwards the enemy nearly surrounded his men by creeping up through the thick undergrowth, and commenced sniping at about twenty yards' range. Although it was almost certain death, Sergeant Gill stood boldly up in order to direct the fire of his men. He was killed almost at once, but not before he had shown his men where the enemy were, and thus enabled them to hold up their advance. By his supreme devotion to duty and self-sacrifice he saved a very dangerous situation."

His Victoria Cross is displayed on rotation at The Lord Ashcroft Gallery, Extraordinary Heroes Gallery exhibition, Imperial War Museum, London

Lives Remembered – Peter Martin



PRIVATE 7110 THOMAS FITZHENRY, IRISH GUARDS.

On 18th August 1918, Private Thomas Fitzhenry, aged 22, drowned in the Thuner See, a lake near Interlaken in Switzerland close to Murren where he was interned as a wounded prisoner of war; he is buried in the CWGC cemetery at L'Eglise St. Martin in Vevey, Vaud, Switzerland.

This brief statement reveals little but detailed research has shown that Tommy Fitzhenry's story is sad and simple. Born in Wexford in 1898, Fitzhenry enlisted in the Irish Guards in 1914 and served with the 2nd Battalion in Belgium and France.

Fitzhenry was badly wounded by a grenade in a minor and seemingly hopeless daylight bombing and prisoner-taking raid against a well defended trench line in the Ypres Salient on 2nd July 1916, critically reported in the second volume of Rudyard Kipling's magisterial account "The Irish Guards in the Great War". Much of this is based on post-war interviews with survivors. Fitzhenry was taken prisoner and hospitalised in a PoW camp in Germany. The post action report of the engagement and the minutely detailed orders preceding it are also to be found in the war diary held by The National Archives in files WO 95-1220. 1.1 and WO 95-1220.1.2.

In May 1916, as a result of the humanitarian intervention of the International Committee of the Red Cross, he was, with thousands of other wounded and sick PoW's from all the combatant nations, interned and hospitalised in Switzerland. We know from his ICRC record card that he was wounded in the head, chest, arm, and leg but no medical records have survived.

On 18th August 1918, Fitzhenry went for, as we must assume, a recreational swim in the Thuner See not far from his camp at Murren. How he travelled or with whom, we do not know. He was simply reported in a Swiss local newspaper on 20th August 1918 as having drowned and the entry against his name in the CWGC records and in the cemetery list at Vevey confirms this. He was first buried at Unterseen, near Interlaken, Switzerland, and later reinterred at Vevey after this cemetery opened in 1922. The cemetery, also contains the remains of other WW1 and some WW2 war dead, principally those who died during WWI internment from wounds and disease.



Thyborøn Memorial Park (Jutland)- Jude Parsons



SMS WEISBADEN MEMORIAL

The aim of the Thyborøn Memorial Park is to literally bring this event to the surface and create one of Europe's largest war memorials on the west coast of Denmark, next to the site where the battle took place.

The Memorial Park consists of a large number of sculptures; 26 granite stones of up to 3.5 metres in height, one for each of the ships lost in the Battle of Jutland.

The granite stones symbolise the stern of the wrecked ships just before they sank into the depths. They have been erected in the formation in which the ships lie at the bottom of the North Sea. Each stone is engraved with the ships name.

Around the large granite sterns, there are figures cast in concrete to a height of 1.2 metres to represent those who perished when the ship went down with the total number of casualties on each ship engraved on the granite stones. These spread across the park act as a moving display of the huge loss of life in this one sea battle.



HMS QUEEN MARY MEMORIAL

The Memorial Park does not distinguish between British and German seamen in its design. The idea of the project is to erect a memorial to the fallen seamen on neutral ground; one sculpture for each person who died in the Battle of Jutland.

If you find yourself travelling up the coast of Jutland this site is a must see.

Lost now found in Sarawak

In our centenary edition of the Newsletter (August 2014) we mentioned that a local girl by the name of Karen Liew living in the town of Miri in Sarawak had discovered a mass grave of Malaysian casualties from the Japanese occupation in WWII. However, on the memorial stone that had been erected was also mentioned a 'Mr' Bodestyne amongst other English sounding names. Karen had heard that an Australian was trying to find out where her father, by the name of Bodestyne, had been buried as he was commemorated on Singapore memorial as someone with no known grave. Karen's search for the 'Australian lady' to let her know of the probable burial site proved fruitless. Until recently that is!

Lost and perhaps Found? – Karen Liew



I'm hoping you can help me with my query as I've tried writing to the CWGC (generic response and no option for follow-up) and the British Legion (referred me back to the CWGC) without success. There is a mass grave in my hometown, Miri (Sarawak, Malaysia) located next to St Columba School near the Gymkhana Club. Buried in it are prisoners executed by the Japanese during the war.

I believe at least one Australian soldier is buried here as I had read in the Singapore papers years ago that an Australian lady was looking for her father's remains in Singapore and Malaysia as those were his last known locations.

She was unsuccessful in her search at Labuan and Kranji, but I noted in the report that he had been posted in Sarawak. I then checked the grave at the churchyard and found someone bearing his surname (Bodestyne) - I emailed the lady to inform her but I never heard back from her either.



I've attached photographs of the grave for your reference - one bearing the names of the buried (my grand-uncle was among the executed and his name is the first Chinese name on the top left). As you can see, "Bodestyne" is listed in the middle row, right side of the names listed in English alphabets.

I am trying any means I can think of to confirm that the individuals buried there are listed in the relevant registers and that their families are aware of where they are. I hope you can assist as I'm not sure how else to go about this. Thank you.

By Steve – A Private John Stephen Bodestyne, 7532680 of No 1 Malayan Field Ambulance RAMC is commemorated as one of the missing of the Far East Campaign on Singapore Memorial. He was the husband of Chrystla Bodestyne of Singapore. Karen returned to the memorial to take better pictures only to find the bronze plaque had been stolen – sounds familiar! Should anyone be aware of a Bodestyne family in Australia searching for lost relatives please contact Steve.

Karen had written "As far as I can make out, the individuals buried there were executed towards the end of WW2 just before the Japanese pulled out. According to stories told by my grandmother, this was the first of a planned series of executions (my grandfather's name was found in one of the execution lists) but the rest were not carried out because the Australian soldiers arrived earlier than expected. Sadly, when I visited yesterday, (2014) the plate bearing the names of the buried was gone - I've notified the authorities and they're trying to determine whether it was removed legitimately or stolen. Quite distressing."

Sandra Lynn Jaya-Bodestyne has recently found the article and wrote to us to say that the Australian lady mentioned in the article is her Grandaunt Linda Bodestyne Fluhart and she would love to get more information regarding the location of Mr Bodestyne's grave.

Of course, we sent her the images that we held and she was very pleased to see them and realise the fact that her father is actually recorded as being buried at Miri albeit in a mass grave. We recently had a postcard from Linda to say that she is now accompanying her grandniece to Miri and will lay flowers at the plot in May this year.

Unfortunately because it cannot be proven that her father, Private John Stephen Bodestyne of No 1 Malayan Field Ambulance RAMC, lies in this mass grave he continues to be officially commemorated on Singapore Memorial as one with no known grave. However, I am sure Linda and Sandra will find it comforting to be in the spot where he is 'unofficially' recorded as being buried.

AIRMAIL

Stamp 60c

SINGAPORE
5 OCT 2016
C2
SINGPOST

DEAR STEVE,
THANK YOU FOR YOUR
REPLY TO MY GRANDNIECE
SANDRA. I HAD WRITTEN
TO ENGLAND MANY YEARS
CWGC. THEY TOLD ME MY
FATHER DIDN'T HAVE A
GRAVE I KNOW HE IS IN
MIRI. PLEASE KEEP IN
TOUCH WITH ME LINDA
FLUHART. 3-8 FLORENCE
ICE ROGEWATER, 5013
ADELAIDE, S. AUSTRALIA
GOD BLESS LINDA BODESTYNE FLUHART

STEVE ROGERS
THE W.G.P.P.
11 FALCON RD
HORNDEAN, HANTS
PO8 9BY
U.K.

8 1888498 174445 1

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Rare Military Funeral photos



Back in 2012 Dave and Svetlana Smith, who are helping TWGPP photograph German war graves, sent in some photographs they found on E Bay. They showed a German burial party paying full military honours to RAF Flight Sergeant Percy Edmund Sproston whilst he was buried at Emden Cemetery near to where he crashed. The photograph translation described Ft. Sgt. Sproston as having died during a dogfight over Emden in Germany.

Five years on and Ft. Sgt. Sprostons' nephew found him on our website and was amazed to see the burial photos for the first time which we had displayed on site as additional photos. Percy had been reburied into Sage War Cemetery, along with other casualties buried in Emden, after the war and although the family had visited the grave in the past they had no idea he had received such a funeral. - What are the chances of finding those!!

Outstanding cemeteries being captured for TWGPP

Since the last newsletter we have had another four cemeteries come in which we had been waiting some time for. These tend to be in areas which are difficult to access.

Caroline Isaac-Hamdan & Ruth Moucharafieh have sent in SIDON WAR CEMETERY in Lebanon which completes that country for the project.

Shard Fernando, a good friend of volunteer Clive Smith (Spain) has completed KUPPIYAWATTE MUSLIM CEMETERY and JAAWATTE MUSLIM CEMETERY in Sri Lanka. We have just three casualties left in Kandy Civil Cemetery to complete that country.

Catherine Chatham (currently Nigeria) used her worldwide contacts to obtain the assistance of Bishop Charles Allieu Matthew Campbell who is the Bishop of the Island of Bo. The island lies off the coast of Sierra Leone near the capital city of Freetown. During the rounds of his Parish the Very Reverend Campbell detoured to Bonthe Cemetery to photograph the grave of Chief Officer Edwin Douglas Ashford, who died 1st October 1944 whilst serving in M.V. Mary Kingsley (Liverpool), MN.



Chief Officer Douglas was Son of Edward William and Alice Ashford; husband of Margaret Myfanwy Ashford, of Parbold, Lancashire.

Back in 2013 Edwin's granddaughter was searching for information about him on Rootsweb as his daughter, then aged 70, had never met him or knew anything about the circumstances of his death. We have since made contact with the granddaughter and sent the images of the lone grave which were very much appreciated by Edwin's Daughter. That completes Sierra Leone!

Catherine is now pursuing access to a military site in Abuja to photograph the recently erected ABUJA MEMORIAL which commemorates over 2000 Nigerians who died during WWI and WWII. These used to be commemorated on two memorials in Lagos but these were dismantled to make way for an airport runway.

A British Monument in a Polish Forest - Jan Teofil Jasion

A few years ago while strolling through the woods near the town of Piła in northern Poland I came across the remains of a very large cemetery. It turned out to be a military cemetery of many nationalities. Between the trees and bushes appeared row upon row of simple crosses, Gothic monuments of brick, stone, and metal, even monuments with the crescent moon carved on them. There were inscriptions in Hebrew, Arabic, Polish, German, Lithuanian, and other languages. It was peacefully quiet in those woods, the only sound was the rustles of leaves from the swaying birches and the only witness to my explorations was a solitary deer standing among the grave markers in one of the forest clearings.



In 1914, during WWI, the Germans established a large POW camp in the forests outside the town of Schniedemühl in the eastern part of Germany. Here they held first Russian, and the allied soldiers captured on both the Western and the Eastern Fronts. There are few histories of the German POW camps and none about the camp at Schniedemühl. However, information about conditions exists on the Internet forums, *Great War Forum* and *Dawna.Pila.Pl*. A detailed description of the whole cemetery is available in Polish in the Wikipedia article *Cmentarz jeniecki w Pile-Leszkowie*, which also contains a gallery of photographs of the various monuments. It is known that generally the conditions at the camps were wretched. The prisoners suffered from bad food, very poor hygiene, overcrowding and disease. The large number of deaths grouped around the beginning of 1915 suggest an epidemic which was very probably cholera or typhus.

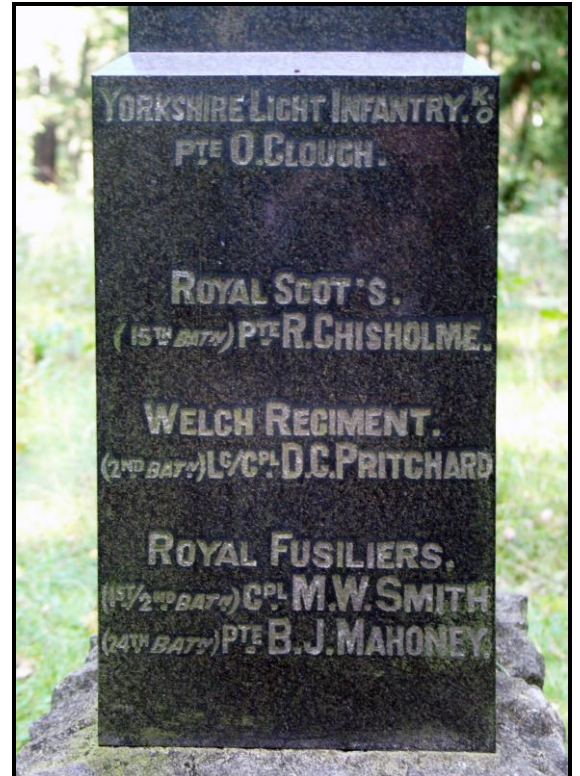
Perhaps the same cholera epidemic that decimated the Russian prisoners.

Schniedemühl is now called Piła and is located about an hour and half north of the city of Poznań. The location of the cemetery is called Piła Laskowa. All that remains of the camp is the cemetery now partially reclaimed by the forest. A large sign in Polish declares that this is "Cmentarz Wojenny z lat 1914-1918" [Military cemetery from the years 1914-1918]. It further states in Polish "*Here are buried Allied soldiers in the German prison of war camp in Piła. Here lie the remains of over 3,000 Russians, Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians, Belgians, British and Jewish soldiers, representing the Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Roman Catholic, Islamic and Jewish faiths. They are united in common. Honour this place.*"

Actually there are three cemeteries in this location. A Russian POW cemetery for the victims of a cholera epidemic, the main camp cemetery and across the road a military cemetery from World War II containing the graves of Soviet soldiers and Polish civilians. The total area of the WWI cemeteries is about 1.38 hectares and the total number of graves is approximately 2,650.

Other than the occasional mushroom pickers and the deer, there are few visitors to these sites.

In the main cemetery there are the remains of many different monuments. Apparently each nationality had the right to design their own. Some are obviously group monuments, others for individuals. Of the group monuments the one that interests us is the one to British POWs.



It is located at the edge of a large field and is in a small chained off area. It is a black obelisk about two and half meters high. It commemorates thirty three British soldiers that were once buried here. The memorial is in excellent condition and the inscriptions are not worn out. The inscription on the front face states:

**ERECTED
IN MEMORY OF
BRITISH SOLDIERS
WHO DIED IN CAPTIVITY
THEY DID THEIR DUTY
R. I. P.
THIS MEMORIAL
WAS PLACED HERE BY COMRADES, JULY 1ST, 1916
SCHNEIDEMÜL**

This is followed by the names of the soldiers.

The face of the monument is also inscribed with a large military decoration, which appears to be an amalgamation of several regimental badges.

The engraver of the names was Pte. William Oscar Davies (1877-1961) of Caerphilly, Wales.

The remains of the British soldiers were removed in two waves to other CWGC cemeteries. The first was in 1923-4 when a number were removed to the Berlin South-Western Cemetery and the second move was in 1962 when the remaining soldiers were moved to the Poznań Old Garrison Cemetery.

The cemetery was a victim of vandalism in past years when metal ornaments, gates, chains, etc. were stolen, and the maintenance is limited to clearing the undergrowth every few years. There are plans to renovate some of the larger monuments. It should be noted that these cemeteries are listed by the Polish government as historical monuments and therefore under legal protection. It should comfort the relatives of those soldiers listed on the monument to know that the author observed the remains of candles and cut flowers at the foot of the monument, indicating that the local people still come and pay homage to the memory of these soldiers.

Not all of the British soldiers that died and were originally interned in this cemetery are remembered on the monument. The notes from the CWGC website indicate that the remains of another forty-five soldiers from the United Kingdom, three from Guernsey, five from Australia, and one from Canada were moved from Schniedemühl to the Berlin cemetery. That these are not mentioned on the monument probably means that they are the ones that died after the official conclusion of hostilities.

The photographs are courtesy of the conservator of historical monuments for Piła, Mr Roman Chwaliszewski.

TWGPP have extracted all the names on this memorial and each one is displayed on our website as an additional commemoration.

Website updates

We have been doing some additional work on the website the results of which are not always evident to the user but can make things a bit easier here in the back room office!

Since the switch to the new site and a cheaper server, to reduce costs, we have been quite limited in image upload. We had wanted to clear the back log of UK images to be displayed on site throughout the winter months but found that the software would timeout when trying to upload more than 20 images at a time. To that end you can imagine how long it took to upload larger cemeteries with hundreds in. We have at last addressed this problem with additional work on the software so things should speed up a bit. We can now update the Gallery and Volunteer details so if you wish to send in images for the gallery or update your volunteer details and add a photo just send these through to Steve.

The drop down menu of countries has been sorted in alphabetical listing.

I have been asked if we can have a Cemetery search function so that you can see who is buried in each cemetery instead of having to put in a surname so this will be coming soon.

Being on Facebook now has improved our circulation to a wider audience around the world. I do copy news straight away on there so some of what you see in this newsletter may be a duplicate version but larger articles have to wait for the next edition of the Newsletter.

Due to the size of the newsletter I will no longer be sending it out as an attachment as G Mail hates multiple addressees with attachments so I get a lot bounce back. I will now link straight to the 'News' section of the website so that you can read the PDF version from there. I'll also link to Facebook so if any of you wish to 'share' please feel free to do so.

Quits?

I am sure the majority of you have heard the following joke that has been going around in various forms for a number of years now.

"An elderly British gentleman of 83 arrived in Paris by plane. At the French immigration desk, the man took a few minutes to locate his passport in his carry-on bag.

"You have been to France before, Monsieur?" the Immigration officer asked, sarcastically.

The elderly gentleman admitted he had been to France previously.

"Then you should know well enough to have your passport ready."

The British gentleman says, *"The last time I was here, I didn't have to show it."*

"Impossible. The British always have to show their passports on arrival in France!"

The elderly gentleman gave the French Immigration Officer a long hard look. Then he quietly explained:

"Well, the last time I was here, I came ashore on Sword Beach on D-Day in June 1944, and I couldn't find any Frenchmen to show it to."



I still smile at it and have often been at passport control and wish that I could be that spontaneous but nowadays it would probably result in being taken to a small room and hearing the twang of rubber gloves.

It prompted me to think about the latest news on our (The Brits) 'Brexit' having sent the 'Decree Nisi' documents over the Channel in preparation of our 'divorce' in the next two years. Apparently we are now being asked for a lump sum of between 50 and 60 Billion Euros as a settlement.

The Brits will always be a part of Europe no matter what anyone says or reads into 'Brexit'. We cannot pull out entirely as we are part of the earth in all European countries. There are thousands of our war dead lying in cemeteries throughout Europe who now lie in 'Silent cities'. Sacrificing their lives to ensure Europeans gained their freedom from the tyranny of the Nazi regime, which has been maintained ever since.

These 'Silent' cities could be called Glasgow, London, Newcastle, Cardiff and many others given the number of men from 'Pals' or local battalions that now lie there. Many do take on the name of the local battalions like 'London Cemetery', Lancashire Landing Cemetery or 'Knightsbridge Cemetery' to name but a few.

I am sure I will be corrected within days of this newsletter going out but although I am aware of reparations that were paid out by Germany after the war, I am not aware of any being paid to British or other Commonwealth forces from the liberated European countries in reparation for the many, many thousands of war dead that now lie in France, Belgium, Netherlands, Norway, Italy, Greece, Denmark, Luxembourg etc. etc. In all honesty what was given then was actually priceless and no amount could recompense the families for what they lost.

So, perhaps one could say that the 'divorce bill' has already been paid in kind and that we should call it 'Quits'. However, 50 Billion Euros is actually a drop in the ocean (where many more war dead lie) and cannot possibly be an equal sum to the sacrifice given. Reparation that families have never asked for.

During the referendum there were many quotes about 'Remain' being good for the young and that the 'Old Gits' should not always look back in history to remember the war. Perhaps some of the '1D' generation, the next time they are on holiday in Europe, no matter which country, should take some time out and visit the local war cemetery. There will be one. They might actually realise that what these men gave was priceless and if not for these men and women, there would have been no tomorrow for the young of today.



Next Newsletter

Thank you for submitting articles in order for me to compile this latest newsletter. Anyone wishing to forward something to be included in the Summer edition please forward to me.

In an effort to publicise our work I am going to link this edition to our Facebook page. If you are using this 'social media' it would be appreciated if you could 'share' the Newsletter. Enjoy the Spring! - **Steve Rogers**



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