



# THE WAR GRAVES PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECT



In Association  
with the CWGC



## News from the Front line

Autumn 2010

The last three months seems as though it has been a summer of The Battle of Britain Anniversary with Spitfires and Hurricanes droning through the summer skies here in the South of England. The Battle of Britain Flight must have had an extremely busy year with numerous engagements and even for someone who was not born during WW2 the sound of the Merlin engine still sends a shiver down the spine. We attended one such event at Tangmere and took the opportunity to re-shoot the graves of the airmen in the local church, including those German airmen who had perished. Unusually there have been far more requests for German Airmen's graves from the project than Commonwealth forces. This has obviously been down to the fact that more research is being conducted on raids in the UK where the Luftwaffe has received casualties. Just this week we have had one in from USA, via Ralph Bowles, for the complete crew of a Dornier aircraft. A nephew of one the crew was unaware of TWGPP so it was good to be able to supply the image. An article will be forthcoming about how the Dornier was in collision with a Spitfire over Kent which makes interesting reading.



If the CWGC are busy then that normally means TWGPP will be as well. Website Statistics for the week of the Fromelles dedication soared peaking at 1096 on one day alone. Fortunately for us we always have a volunteer close at hand so were able to put the pictures of the graves from Fromelles on site within a day of the dedication, along with those this month of the newly erected Indian Memorial at Patcham Down in Sussex.

Although we have been 'live' for over three years now there are still many who are blissfully unaware that TWGPP exists and are often most surprised to find that those using this service can actually get a picture of a grave or memorial rather than just details of where the grave is. We are helped immensely in spreading the word by articles that are now a regular feature of magazines like Family Tree, Family History and Who Do you think You Are. Over the last three months the Project has been voted best site for pictures (WDYTYA) and also amongst those that 'save you money' (FT). A recent presentation to Hampshire Genealogists has brought in a few more engagements for next year where we can promote our work.

Steve Rogers

## Chinese graves in France -Anne Edwards

My first site for the project was, on reflection, probably the most difficult that I – along with my driver and admin (otherwise known as my husband and brother) could have found in Normandy.

We arrived at St.Etienne au Mont to photograph 163 Chinese graves to find that, not unreasonably, the inscriptions were in Chinese. Fortunately the service numbers were western numerals and after 4 hours of painstaking work the photos were 'in the can' and the knees were aching.

I was intrigued to know why so many Chinese casualties were buried in CWGC graves so far away from home and in particular why almost all had died in the latter half of 1918 and even as late as December 1919. The answer was found on the CWGC website ([www.cwgc.org/adminfiles/cwgc\\_c/c.pdf](http://www.cwgc.org/adminfiles/cwgc_c/c.pdf)).



**Cemetery at St. Etienne au Mort**

By autumn 1916 practically every able bodied serviceman was needed for fighting and skilled and unskilled labour to support the army was recruited from the Empire and beyond.

The British approached the then neutral Chinese government with a plan that would lead to the formation of the Chinese Labour Corps. The Corps was to be non-combatant but part of the British army and subject to military control.

The rewards offered were tempting enough to encourage thousands of men, mainly poor peasants from the northern provinces of Shantung and Chihli, to offer themselves for three years' service in an unknown country on the other side of the world.

In addition to a daily rate of pay, much higher than most were used to, food, clothing, housing and medical support would be provided, and the labourer's family would receive a regular separation payment until his return. After a route which took them across the Pacific to Vancouver; a week long train journey across Canada then by ship to Liverpool they finally reached France.

Conditions of work for the Chinese Labour Corps on the Western Front were rather onerous even for the time, with contracts stipulating a seven-day working week of 10-hour days. Daily rates of pay for the coolies ranged from 1 to 3 French Francs, with 5 French Francs for supervisors and interpreters.

Many of the Chinese Labour Force stayed on after the armistice to participate in the clear up and recovery operations and to collect the remains of bodies and bury them in graves. They sustained many further casualties from unexploded munitions and the like. Many more died in the influenza epidemic that swept Europe in 1918-19.

The labourers who died were classified as war casualties and great pains were taken to mark their graves in an appropriate way. All headstones, which are of the Commission's standard war pattern shape, bear inscriptions in English and Chinese characters and were carved by men of the Labour Corps who stayed behind in France on the expiry of their terms for this task.

In addition to the labourer's name and date of death, each of the headstones in St Etienne Au Mont carries in English one of four standard dedicatory inscriptions.

*A Good Reputation Endures Forever - Though Dead He Still Liveth - Faithful Unto Death - A Noble Duty Bravelly Done*

A strange footnote is that the headstone of Cheng Shan Kung who died on 23 July 1918 lies in the middle of the rows of graves and bears the inscription *A Good Reputation Endures Forever*. He was executed for the murder of a fellow member of the Labour Corps –i.e. Shot at Dawn.



## 'A' Level Geography ? – Steve Rogers

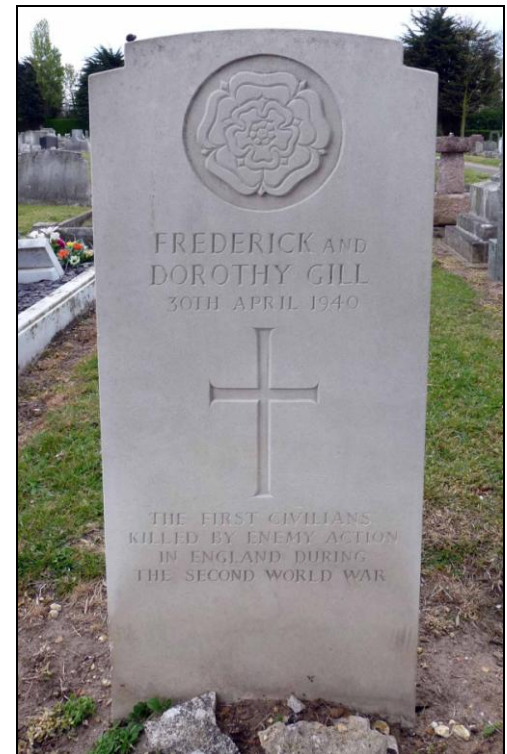
One of the benefits of allocating cemeteries around the world is the increased awareness of the local geography. During my time in the Royal Navy most places anywhere south of Portsmouth were referred to as a block item. 'The Med' covered every country that lines the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. The 'Far Flung' was anywhere west of 'The Med'. 'Down South' anywhere below the equator and finally 'The State's' seemed to include North and South America along with Canada so inevitably the answer to any question like "where are you off to now" was replied to with one of four locations. Easy!

Through the project I now know where exotic places like Gweru, DRC, Churkin, Tabarka and Widnes are! At least the Euro and Dollar have overcome our problems of spending either 'Spondoolies', 'Shackles', 'Shrapnel' or 'Dib-dobs'. Would I now get an 'A' Level or Degree with this increased knowledge I wonder?

On a more serious note I'd like to thank those of you that will visit a cemetery that has yet to be completed to fulfil a special request. I normally feedback the thanks, which is always appreciated. (See later article 'Norway')

### Britain's first civilian casualties remembered

On April 30, 1940, anti-aircraft fire shot down a German Heinkel 111 bomber while on a mine laying sortie off the east coast of England. The bomber crashed on to a house in Upper Victoria Road in Clacton-on-Sea in Essex killing the occupants, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Gill. They became the first civilians, of more than 60,000, killed in England during the war. Frederick and Dorothy Gill were buried in an unmarked grave in the Burrs Road Cemetery. In 1994, the gravesite was discovered and a proper Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone was erected and dedicated on the 59th anniversary of their deaths. The German aircraft was actually on a mine laying operation over the North Sea, but the crew became disorientated due to heavy fog. Flying blindly until just before midnight the Heinkel crossed the coast near the radar station at Bawdsey in Suffolk. Anti-aircraft batteries along the coast at Bawdsey, Felixstowe and Harwich opened fire on the bomber. Ironically the Heinkel did not receive a direct hit, but it is thought that exploding shells underneath the aircraft caused considerable damage to the aircraft controls. Eyewitnesses have said that it does appear that the pilot tried desperately to find a landing area because the pilot released flares as it circled Clacton and Holland-on-Sea before flying out to sea again, then returning at a considerable lower altitude. The German bomber hit the chimneys of a number of houses before crashing into the house occupied by the Gill family.



After the bomber crashed the live mine that it was carrying exploded and this is what caused the widespread damage. The third civilian killed in an air raid on Britain was twenty-seven year old James Isbister during a German raid on Scapa Flow in the Orkney's on July 24, 1940.



On a previous raid on November 13, 1939, during an attack on the Shetland's, all that resulted was a large bomb crater in the countryside and the only fatality was a rabbit, which gave rise to the marching song 'Run Rabbit, Run' There is some speculation that the 'Rabbit' was actually purchased from a local butcher and placed in the crater for effect ... or a laugh! But this must be the world's most famous dead rabbit.

## 158 Squadron Bomber Command memorial – Paul Clarke

The village of Lissett is situated just off the main A165 Bridlington to Hull road some 7 miles south of Bridlington on the East Yorkshire coast. Lissett today is a small community consisting of a couple of farms, a number of private dwellings, a small industrial area and a village church.

Lissett was, and indeed still is, one of those “Blink and you’ll miss it” type of villages, the mainstay of which has always been agriculture. From the outbreak of World War 2 there were a number of RAF Bomber Command stations dotted around the area further inland, the sight and sound of bombers passing over the village would have been quite common,

However, as was the case with many small communities, life in the village took a somewhat more drastic turn when, in 1942, construction began on a new operational airfield for Bomber Command. In addition to the construction of 3 runways and associated airfield buildings, various other buildings were constructed at seven sites around the village, including accommodation for around 1,800 people (350 of whom were members of the Women’s Auxiliary Air Force W.A.A.F.). For a small community the impact of such a large influx must have been quite substantial



Having existed for a short time during World War 1, 158 Squadron was reformed in February 1942 and based in Yorkshire. When RAF Lissett was formally opened on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1943 it became the new home of 158 Squadron, part of Number 4 Group Bomber Command - the Squadron originally flew Wellington bombers before converting to the Halifax.

Sitting less than 2 miles from the North Sea coast RAF Lissett was the nearest Bomber Command airfield to Germany.

26 bombers operated from the base at any one time, with 4 aircraft in reserve. During its time at Lissett 158 Squadron flew approximately 250 operations and 144 of the Squadron’s Halifax bombers failed to return from operations or were destroyed in operational crashes. During the war 158 Squadron lost a total of 851 members. The final operation from Lissett was flown on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1945.

One of the Squadron’s Halifax bombers, LV907 named “Friday 13<sup>th</sup>”, flew on a total of 128 operations between March 1943 and April 1945 (a record unsurpassed by any other Bomber Command Halifax) and survived the war. In addition to members of the Royal Air Force the Squadron also included crews from the Royal Australian, Canadian and New Zealand Air Forces.

After 158 left Lissett for the final time on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1945 the base was abandoned and over the years the airfield area reverted once again to farmland. Passing along the main road today, as most people do, there is nothing to the casual observer to indicate the role the village of Lissett played during World War 2, even on closer examination few clues remain. The occasional former airfield building still standing and used as a farm store, or small industrial unit, is about as much as will be found.

Until recently the only recognition of the time spent at Lissett by 158 could be found when visiting the village church, St. James of Compostella. A memorial stone at the entrance to the churchyard commemorates 158 Squadron and a window in the church bears the squadron’s emblem.



Novera Energy, a leading renewable energy company, subsequently acquired the former airfield site. An application was submitted to allow the construction on the site of 12 wind turbines. In 2007 permission was granted and construction of the turbines began. Electricity generation at Lissett began in February 2009; the 12 turbines each standing 125 metres (410 feet) high can generate enough electricity to power over 13,000 homes.

Given the history of the site, Novera Energy agreed to include in the plans the provision of a memorial to recognise the sacrifice made by the 851 members of 158 Squadron. It was decided that a competition be held and proposed designs for the memorial were invited. A local artist, Peter Naylor of Beverley, designed the winning entry.

The memorial erected on the edge of the former airbase is constructed of weathering steel (the same material used for the Angel of the North) and depicts 7 figures (the crew of a Halifax bomber) in silhouette. On approaching the memorial the impression is given that the crew is walking towards the viewer, the memorial itself stands 8 feet high and 15 feet across. Etched into the front and rear faces of the memorial are all 851 names of those serving with 158 Squadron who were killed or lost in action during World War 2.

Unlike most memorials the names on the 158 Squadron memorial are placed in random order rather than in alphabetical or rank order. The apparent reasoning behind this is that no name can be considered more important than another and it better reflects the random nature of deaths in war and removes the impression that identical surnames may be related. The memorial was unveiled on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2009 when a dedication service was held led by the Archbishop of York, Dr. John Sentamu.



As a further tribute to 158 Squadron, 11 of the 12 wind turbines at the site bear the names of aircraft flown by 158 out of Lissett. At the suggestion of members of the 158 Squadron Association, the twelfth turbine carries the names of 6 members of the 158 ground crew who were killed at the base on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1943 when a 1,000 pound bomb exploded without warning.

The role played in World War 2 by Bomber Command should not be underestimated, 125,000 airmen joined, of these 55,573 were killed, 8,403 were injured and 9,838 became prisoners of war, in excess of 44% of those who served were confirmed killed or missing in action. The average age of Bomber Command crew members was 22 years; all of those who served with Bomber Command were volunteers.

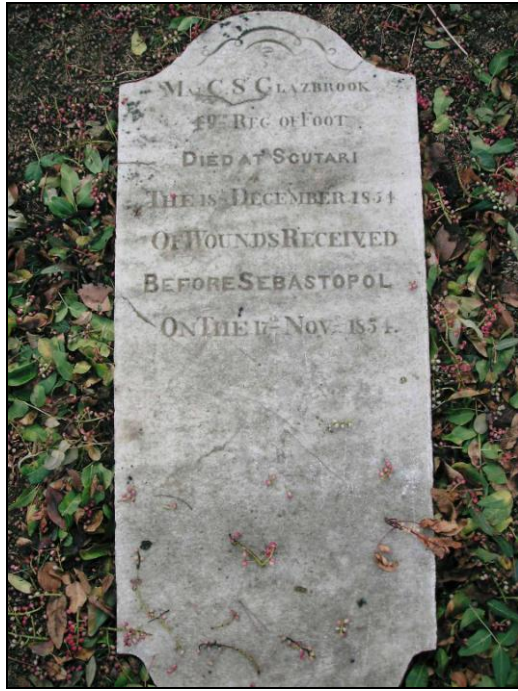
The memorial is situated on Gransmoor Road, Lissett, East Yorkshire, just past the entrance to Monument Farm and it is approximately ½ mile distance from the main A165 Bridlington to Hull road. The memorial is a fitting tribute to all those who served in 158 Squadron.

Source material:

Novera Energy Company  
158 Squadron Association  
East Riding of Yorkshire Council Local Studies Centre  
Peter Naylor (Artist) website

[www.noveraenergy.com](http://www.noveraenergy.com)  
[www.158squadron.co.uk](http://www.158squadron.co.uk)  
[www.eastriding.gov.uk](http://www.eastriding.gov.uk)  
[www.peternaylor.co.uk](http://www.peternaylor.co.uk)

## Expanding our horizons



The home page of the website now mentions the fact that we are going to include the graves and memorials of Pre WW1 service personnel who were killed in earlier conflicts or just died in service whilst stationed around the British Empire as it was. We had already held many of these in the archive but due to the amount of work involved in processing WW1 and WW2 images have left this on hold. As we are now nudging completion of the world wars we have decided now to capture earlier casualties on site. One of the reasons for this is because the programme of revisits enables new volunteers and existing to look out for these earlier graves which are predominantly in Garrison towns or Naval ports within UK or anywhere in the world that the British Empire was stationed.

Examples are Malta (complete) Turkey (Crimean war). South Africa (Anglo South African War) and India. During the 1800's British forces were based throughout the world so it is these we are now trying to capture before the gravestones fall into total disrepair or are removed to make way for development (Bangalore).

## Your Allocation

We appreciate that all our lives are busy and that circumstances may prevent you completing a certain allocation that you have received from TWGPP. If this is the case and you feel that after 6 months (normally a Summer!) you will not be able to complete an allocation and wish to retain it for the following 6 months then we would appreciate being told. Revisits for new volunteers are now being programmed but with a few sites in UK still outstanding, some going back to over two years, then there may be others locally who could complete a site within a couple of weeks.

Therefore we would ask that if you wish to retain sites allocated to you into 2011 that you let us know by December 2010. If nothing is heard we will assume that you can no longer manage these and it will allow us to re-allocate. Thank you.

## That 'Come in handy' folder – Peter Maguire

Quite a few years ago, while looking through some old documents my mother had kept after her mother had died, I found an old creased piece of paper. Upon opening it up and reading it I discovered that it was my grandfather's discharge paper from the army after the First World War. It was dated 1919 and he had been discharged in Edinburgh. He had served with the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Iniskilling Fusiliers. He had lived in Donegal in the northwest corner of the Republic of Ireland and had died in 1945.

I am a natural hoarder and had the document for a few years before I got a computer and became part of the online community. I had developed an interest in World War Two history due to my father's service. We had my father's service medals and I asked my mother about her father's medals. She told me that she had never seen any at home while she was a child.

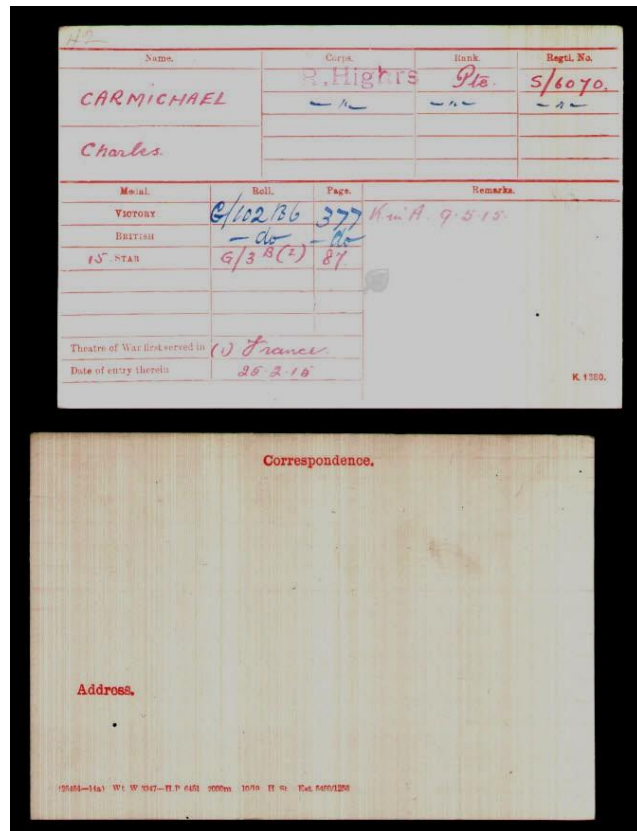
I eventually saw an article about the National Archives and I went online looking at their site and signed up for their newsletter. Then one month there was an article in the newsletter stating that the First World War medal Roll cards were available to view online. I had my grandfather's regimental number, battalion and regiment so it was a relatively easy job to find his card, which showed he had been awarded three medals - The Victory Medal, British War Medal and the 1915 Star. The article gave the address of the Government Department one could write to if there were any queries.



I wrote to them saying I had found the record card and that my mother had said she had never seen any medals. I asked if they had ever been issued and, if not, could they be issued now. The reply came back saying that if there was a medal card this indicated that the medals had been issued and that they were unable to issue duplicates. That I thought was the end of the matter.

Some years later while looking at the National Archives web site again I came across an article which told you how to interpret the medal roll cards. One of the things it advised was that sometimes in the Remarks section of the card you would get the abbreviation *Retd.* with some other characters following which indicated that some, or all, of the medals had been returned for some reason. I went back to look at the copy I had of my grandfather's card and lo and behold in the remarks box was the *Retd.*

I did not follow this up at the time and it was only at the beginning of August this year, when I was looking for some information to take with me on a visit to Ireland to see one of my late mother's cousins, that I decided to take the copy of the discharge paper with me as it was her uncle.



**Example Medal Roll Cards**

On my return I found a handout I had picked up from the Imperial War Museum North on tracing army ancestry and it gave a new address for medal queries. I wrote to them enclosing a copy of the record card pointing out the *Retd.* in the remarks box and told them that my mother had said she had never seen the medals and I asked if they could now be reissued to me if they had been returned.

Three days later I had a reply from them, which repeated a lot of the information I had previously received in that they did not provide duplicates and that the medals had been issued and sent out by registered post. They did say however that the card indicated that the 1915 Star had been returned. They could not give me any reason for this but advised me that they would consider the reissue of the medal to me if I would complete the enclosed Certificate of Kinship and provide proof of death after the war. I am now awaiting a copy of my grandfather's death certificate from Ireland and will send this off as soon as I receive it and will hopefully receive the medal soon after.

As far as I am concerned this vindicates my keeping all the "rubbish" in my attic.



**Never too late to take the picture**

Having been given access to the CWGC Inspection database we can now return to cemeteries to find the 'not founds' and can see why we may have missed the grave in the first instance. This is normally because the families had opted to erect a private memorial rather than have a standard Commission headstone. Pictured is the grave of Major Frank Teesdale of the Indian Cavalry who died in 1916. He is buried in Walton on the Hill churchyard in Surrey. It seems such a pity that the original grave which would have originally had intricately carved oak panels is now in such a state of disrepair with much of the wood rotted away. The picture has now been captured by David Ayling but, given another year, will probably disintegrate totally.

## Help in Norway

With a considerable volunteer network now around the world it is comforting to know that TWGPP can pull out the stops when trying to fulfil a recent request in Norway. Kjersti Meyer co-ordinates the picture taking so, after a request from Shaun O'Hara in America for an image we did not hold, Kjersti managed to find Hans-Jørgen Wallin Weihe at the University of Stavangar in Norway who went to the cemetery to take the pictures required.



The response from Shaun is reproduced below:

*I want to thank all of you for your generous kindness. The only way I can tell how much this means is to tell you a short story.*

*My mother is now 88 years old and lived in Ireland during WWII. She met Flight Officer Ricketts in Newbridge, Co. Kildare, after he was rescued and sent there to recover from his injuries. He was released back to the Royal Air Force in December 1944 but was killed a few months later in Operation Varsity. My mother never talked much about Bill Ricketts but all my life I remember her having a RAF winged pin in her jewelry box. She eventually told me the story and I can only assume they were very close. Bill's mother, who never met my mother, contacted her from England when Bill was posted as Missing in Action. Later she contacted my mother again when Bill was confirmed killed and at that point sent Bill's RAF wings to my mother. So for the past 65 years my mother has remembered Bill Ricketts and I guess things would have been very different if Bill had not been killed. My mother left Ireland and came to the USA where she met my father and they have been married for 58 years. My mother will never be able to visit his grave but through your efforts and kindness she will now know the place where Bill rests.*

*Thank you very much and hopefully I will be able to visit Bill's grave.*

*Sincerely,  
Shaun M. O'Hara*

## New Director General of CWGC

For those of you that receive the CWGC newsletter you will have seen that the current Director General, Richard Kellaway, is now retiring and making way for Mr Alan Pateman-Jones as the new Director General. It was with Richard Kellaway and his team that a meeting was held to propose the joint venture to allow the association between CWGC and TWGPP to be formalised. The team at TWGPP would like to forward our best wishes to Richard Kellaway on his retirement and look forward to working with the CWGC under the auspices of Alan in the future.



## Thorne's WW2 Memorial – David Milborrow

It may be that those of us who visit numbers of sites, and see perhaps thousands of graves, become a little hardened to such memorials and sometimes cease to be moved by what they represent. Yet from time to time one comes across a memorial which is so outstanding, unusual, artistic, perhaps beautiful, that one has to be moved and is forced to stop and absorb some of the emotion with which the creator has endued his work. For me the statue of the 'boy soldier' in Burnley Cemetery is one. Another is the World War 2 Memorial in St. Nicholas Parish Church, Thorne. No photograph of mine can do it justice. I submit my 'best effort'. No words of mine can describe it as effectively as those of the little guidebook available from the church – here is a long excerpt, used with consent.

*'The verse on the sculpture was written by Leo Marks. It was used by Violette Szabo the British Resistance heroine as a code poem as she worked during the last war in France. She was eventually shot at Ravensbruck Concentration Camp and her story was made famous by the film and book 'Carve Her Name With Pride'.*

*You may have noticed the name 'HMS Hood' on the Naval cap. While some have pointed out that ships' names would not have been on caps in the War years the Sculptor wanted to make a link with this ship which, though it was thought to be invincible, was so tragically lost at the beginning of the war. It is upside down and sinking, as if into the waves of the side pack.*

*The jacket is typical of the period and would have been worn by many service personnel, both men and women.*

*It bears the badge of the Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry which was a well known local regiment, whose Battalions saw active service in many theatres of war, and served with honour.*

*Behind the jacket is part of the webbing from a parachute harness. Another allusion to the role of the Royal Air Force is the string resting on the blanket which is reminiscent of the shape of vapour trails from aerial dog fights during the Battle of Britain.'*

*'The theme of the sculpture is "A life lost..., a life given", the bronze forms the shape of a letter L in reverse, and the verse on the Memorial conveys this idea: "The life that I have... The love that I have... The peace... is yours and yours and yours." The jacket is sculpted to have, as it were, life in its lapels, up at the top; but down the sculpture, life ebbs away. The sleeve hangs empty and limp, the jacket is left as if discarded against a wall. The Naval cap is sinking and the RAF cap is doing a nose dive. The side pack is empty and incomplete, its buckle is broken; it has been used and is expended. The blanket, so often used to cover the dead, hangs limp. Life has ebbed away. Resting on the blanket there is some string, a knot unfinished and incomplete; portraying all that could have been but was left undone. The potential of lives that were cut off in their prime. The breast pocket of the jacket, with its button undone or missing, is crumpled and distorted. But when it was worn this pocket would have been over the heart. And the pocket is very much the heart of the sculpture, with so many lines pointing towards it. Now, if you look, you can make out within the folds and creases of the pocket, the form of a cross - there at the heart. But stand and look at the sculpture, and you will see reflections in the dark polished stone. One in particular, in daylight, is the window above the Altar which depicts the Resurrection. Jesus Christ gave his life. He allowed it to be given, yet He died not in defeat, but in victory. That was proven, by His rising again. When you stand looking at the sculpture, you will see other reflections in the Memorial and in the plaques of names. You will see your own reflection and, maybe, those who stand with you. We do not spectate from a distance, for we are all caught up with decisions that affect our future. We all decide whether or not to allow God to guide and direct us in the way that we live. These decisions: Are ours, and ours, and ours.*



By kind permission of Rev Murray Brown, a former vicar of Thorne.

## It's in the post!

In the Summer Newsletter we asked for potential articles for the next issues and like a bus they all came in at once. This is great for the project to vary the articles but we are fully aware that some of you still cannot be connected to Broadband so a 5Mb attachment, or larger, to an Email may not get through. To that end we have decided to put the newsletter directly on site and send out the link to this which, with one click, you can then read. This should prevent your 'In Tray' being full and enable those that have written to us saying they cannot download the Newsletter to Outlook to see the finished article.

Please keep sending potential articles in. If not used in the next edition we can always use in others.

## Jewish burials in Lorraine, France – Chris Cosgrove



In the course of planning a trip to France in July this year, Derek Mountjoy tasked Jean and myself with finding the grave of a soldier of the British Army's Jewish Brigade buried in Metz Jewish Cemetery in 1945. As the cemetery is marked as a private one, we contacted the Rabbi of Metz for permission to access the cemetery.

Rabbi Fizon could not have been more helpful, in fact giving us a guided tour of a fascinating 300 year old cemetery. Among other unusual gravestones are those of Jewish soldiers of the Imperial German Army who died in the period before WW1, each with an Iron Cross carved on the gravestone. However, his help came with a price!

For pastoral reasons he wishes to know if there are any more British and Commonwealth soldiers of the Jewish faith buried in Lorraine. I know that without access to individual records the only indication of religious affiliation is the Cross or the Star of David carved on a gravestone. I have checked our collection of photos and we have no other Jewish burials. But we have not photographed every British and

Commonwealth burial in Lorraine. I would like to ask those of you who have photographed cemeteries in this area to check your records and e-mail me the details of any such photos you may have – please E-mail to: [trainscpc@aol.com](mailto:trainscpc@aol.com)

## Story behind the stone

TWGPP have access to information with regard to certain headstones that commemorate otherwise unknown casualties. VC winners are quite well documented so we will, over each forthcoming newsletter, bring to the fore others that have a certain amount of interest to those photographing the graves. Elsewhere in this newsletter are the first civilians killed during WW2 but this next photograph is of Sapper Browning of the Royal Engineers. Nothing particularly special about the stone itself but Bernard Browning was killed by the first V2 fired to London on 8th September 1944.

It was launched from Wassenaar, a Dutch village, close to where Otto Van Gent lives who has researched the circumstances. Bernard was on leave and walking to the Chiswick train station from his family's house on Elmwood Road to visit his girlfriend. When he crossed Staveley Road he was killed by the explosion of the V2 which came down in the middle of the road in the early evening of 8th September. Due to the fact that the V2 travelled 3 times faster than the speed of sound, he would never have heard it coming. It was just bad luck. Three others were killed and ten seriously injured.





## Merci Nomandie – Les Pragnell

For the past 16 years I have visited Commonwealth War Graves in cemeteries and churchyards in Normandy and also memorials to both individuals and groups located in areas from large towns to remote rural spots.

A fact not often commented upon is the respect and care given by the residents to the war graves located in their area. The pristine conditions of the large cemeteries are apparent from newsreel and films but the same care has been given to each single grave in churchyards far off the beaten track.



The CWGC of course does a good job with the upkeep of all graves in its care and I have chatted to a number of their gardeners. In addition though, at many of the smaller locations where the casualties lie amongst the locals, there are plaques and tributes and signs that they have received the same care as their family graves.

Of particular interest to me is the Commando Memorial at Amfreville and my family and I call there whenever we are in the area. As we arrive the place is deserted but, without fail, one of the locals appear. They never obviously check up on us but pass by with a “bonjour”, making sure that our intentions are honourable.

It is reassuring to know that the sacrifices made are appreciated in such a positive way.

### Private 'Jeff' Doherty - Parachute Regiment

With Ministry of Defence graves we often have to keep our eyes peeled in order to find the locations, so it made a pleasant change for TWGPP to be contacted recently by Kara Deakin, a family friend of the Doherty family, whose son Jeff was killed in Afghanistan in 2008. Kara mentioned that the family had expressed a wish that Jeff's place of burial and a picture of him be included on site along with all the other service men and women that we remember.

Pte Jeff Sean Doherty (known as 'JJ' to his family and known as 'Doc' by his friends in The Parachute Regiment) was born in Coventry on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1988, and he was killed in action by enemy fire on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2008 in Afghanistan, just two days after his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. Much loved and missed son of Jeff and Joyce Doherty, brother to Sarah, Shanna, Fintan and Honey.



Jeff is buried in the grounds of St. James Church, Southam in Warwickshire but is also remembered on the War Memorial in the grounds of the church and on a memorial plaque in Kabul, Afghanistan, also on a memorial plaque at Memorial Park, Coventry. His death left a huge void in the lives of his family and friends - he will never be forgotten!

A charity has been set up by the family of Pte Jeff Doherty. JJ's Memorial Fund (registered charity number 1128222) supports injured paratroopers and the families of those fatally injured. Details can be found at [www.jjsmemorialfund.org](http://www.jjsmemorialfund.org)

Thank you so much for the picture of Roy Dring's grave. He was my Grandma's cousin and his sister is still alive (aged 101) and although she is blind she will be pleased to hear the description of what his grave and the cemetery looks like. Many thanks again. Joanne

Thank you very much for the nice pictures that you sent to My Family and I .We really appreciate them and we will cherish them for ever, like my Aunt said we can now put our heads to rest knowing that he is really buried there. It is a wonderful job that you are all doing by taking those pictures. Thank you so much once again for the nice photos .Yours truly Glen Akerley

Brilliant thank you so much – I've just shown it to my wife and she's sitting down having a good cry – her whole family new nothing about great grandfather Joseph until recently when I found his war records, no pictures exist of the man, so this means a great deal to her – I can't thank you enough. All the best Lee

Heartfelt thanks for such a quick response. Jack (as my aunt called him) died before I was born but he was spoken of so kindly and it's only now I've retired that I have had the chance to start the family tree. I must admit to shedding tears of joy and sadness upon seeing his memorial and this would not have been possible but for the likes of yourself.Thank you so much Carol Burbage

Many thanks for your prompt response - we had been looking for him for a very long time! Both my father (80) and Aunt (95) will be thrilled to see that we have found their Uncle. He was the only boy in the family never to come back - and missed still. Thanks again Sarah

Please pass on my thanks to all those people who make it possible to have a photograph of a final resting place. I now live in Canada (since 2005), and have been researching my family tree (and extended family tree) for the last twenty years, when I discovered my Great Great Uncles name on the CWGC I was disappointed that I probably will not get to visit his grave, however when I was viewing the Fromelles project I happened to glimpse the video from the "Who do you think you are" exhibition at Olympia and saw the work that you guys undertake - I was lucky in that my GGUncles grave had been photographed, and the speed in which you had the photograph sent was amazing. I had no idea that I would feel such emotions when opening the picture of a relative of whom a few months earlier I did not even realise existed. Congratulations on a most worthy undertaking. Regards Lesley Clark

Thank you very much you don't know what seeing this grave means to me and my family, I am not able to visit myself so you and your volunteers are doing a wonderful thing for every body like me who is unable to visit the graves in person thank you once again regards Carol.

Thanks to you and the CWGC for the most incredible work and service that you all provide – without you my father (now 92) would never have known the whereabouts of his father. My father was born one month after my grandfather died in Belgium, and my father has nothing of his father's, no photos, no paperwork nothing – all got lost many years ago - he certainly had no idea where his father was buried. Thanks for having made all this possible. Joan Reynolds, Canada

Thank you once again for your work. This has made the fallen airman's sister and niece very happy indeed. Until this day they knew almost nothing about what happened to him and now they have completion. Kind regards,Will

I cannot thank you enough for this image. You cannot image what it means to me and my mom. Private A (Arthur) Jones is my moms dad who died when she was only five. She had no details about where he was buried, and it will mean so much to her to be able to see his final resting place. As we know very few other details about him, this photo is priceless .Many thanks Mrs Liza Pickstock

Just wanted to thank you and tell you how pleased I was when my photo arrived this morning! Thank you so much. The quality and delivery was superb it is great to have a visual to go with all the info I have found about my relative. Once again thank you so much Dawn Robertshaw X

Thank you so much for the photograph, just received. I am delighted. After a lot of searching for my great uncle & now to have a photograph of where he is buried is just amazing!!!! Thanks also for the prompt service. Keep up this most important work! THANKS AGAIN, Lindsay

How can I put this from an Australian perspective, you bloody ripper! Great service, thanks very much. It is the little things that you might take for granted in your position that have a massive impact on some families. Great Job. Regards Barry James



## Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery Inauguration - 19 July 2010

Many of us, have closely followed the developments at Fromelles after several mass graves containing the bodies of around 250 soldiers from WWI were found in May 2008. Following their exhumation the decision was made to build the first new Commonwealth War Cemetery for over 50 years near the site of the mass graves. Of the soldiers exhumed 96 have been identified using standard identification techniques and also using DNA matching from relatives who had come forward. The DNA matching will continue over the next few years in the hope that more remains can be identified.

I visited Fromelles in May 2010 hoping to view the cemetery but was surprised to find it still very much a 'work in progress' with building site hoardings surrounding the entire site and only a small information area with some Perspex viewing screens to show progress. Rather touchingly the community had chosen to decorate the hoardings with local school childrens' drawing and messages, often incorporating Australian symbols such as kangaroos and images of being 'Down Under'.



The demand for tickets I thought would be over-subscribed so was pleasantly surprised when I was able to secure a ticket for the ceremony and on the specially chartered Eurostar to Lille with a shuttle bus to Fromelles at the other end, returning later that same day. The earlier association with Australia was reflected wider on the day as on arrival in the village - complete with police escort all the way from Lille train station! - many houses had the three flags of the nations concerned - Australia, Britain and France.

In addition to those invited relatives within the cemetery itself, I would estimate there were probably 3,000-4,000 others in a special viewing area. The ceremony began with some of the relatives of some of the named soldiers reading letters and diary entries leading up to the battle 94 years earlier. It was good to see a sizeable Australian contingent present and also many locals and, of course, Brits. As usual the stories and accounts of the men, knowing that they were facing certain death, were as touching and harrowing as usual. For many it was their first and last experience of battle as the Germans had been left relatively untouched by the pre-battle bombardment and the men literally walked into a 'wall of lead'.

249 of the 250 had already been buried by the time of the inauguration with one single body of an unknown soldier held back for burial on the day. He was brought to the cemetery on a WWI gun carriage which processed through the village from the site of the mass graves where he had fallen and was originally buried. HRH Prince Charles and Australian and French representatives walked behind the gun carriage for the last few hundred yards through the village before taking up their positions for the burial and dedication. The Duchess of Cornwall was present and, of course, the Duke of Kent in his role as President of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The Duke opened the ceremony and said: "It is right and fitting that these men – comrades, Allies and even two brothers – lie side by side in this beautiful cemetery – the first new war cemetery to be built by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in fifty years. They are lost no longer and are here, at last, at peace."



Australia was represented by the Governor-General of Australia, Ms Quentin Bryce. The ceremony also included many accounts from relatives of those who died at Fromelles, reading out diary entries and letters written in the weeks leading up to the battle. The actual funeral itself took place with the usual military honours and proceedings.

Although easily recognisable as a CWGC cemetery there were subtle signs that told you this was a new build: this is the first CWGC cemetery I have seen of this size with a car park and disabled ramp access, an obvious concession to modern access requirements.

The Australians lost over 5,500 men in one night at Fromelles, the British lost over 1,500 over the same period and is often cited as one of the classic blunders of WWI with no material gain and even the objective of the attack was not achieved - to create a diversion at the northern end of the Battle of the Somme. The final dignity bestowed on the 250 men who had lain unfound and unacknowledged certainly seemed to have brought closure for many who attended the ceremony.

One final point; I read that a then 27 year old Adolf Hitler was among the German soldiers at the battle of Fromelles and may well have been one of those who buried the 250 men found in Pheasant Wood. An unusual connection from one World War to another.

**Gary Bond**



## THE WAR GRAVES PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECT

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