



THE WAR GRAVES PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECT



In Association
with the CWGC



News from the Front line

October 2011

I hope that you have all had a good Summer as we in Northern Hemisphere move into our Autumn. I have taken a week's leave to get on top of those odd jobs around the house before light fades and now find I should be basking on the beach with temperatures in the late 20's (last week in September). However, the Newsletter needs to be processed so the Bar B will have to wait.

The most important acquisition we have received in the last quarter are the images of Basra memorial in Iraq. TWGPP have been waiting for some years now to obtain pictures of the panels which commemorate 40,700 men who died during the Mesopotamia Campaign between the Autumn of 1914 and August 1921 and whose graves are unknown. This memorial was originally erected on the main quay of the naval dockyard at Maqil on the west bank of the Shatt-al-Arab, about 8 kilometres north of Basra. In 1997 the Memorial was moved by presidential decree to a position in the desert located 32 kilometres along the road to Nasiriyah, in the middle of what was a major battleground during the first Gulf War.

Although re-erected in its entirety the panels have not been maintained since and are now showing signs of neglect and damage with at least one panel in sections on the ground. However, with thanks to Sergeant Ian Forsyth, RLC, of the Army Media & Communications HQ in Andover and Sergeant Ben Osman who was our initial contact we now have images in high resolution of all the panels.

I was surprised to find that considering that there are over 40,700 commemorated that there were so few panels but during the processing of the images it was noted that for Indian forces individuals were not named but engraved as '48 Indian soldiers', albeit individual names are now recorded on site.



Access to the memorial is still very much restricted so Ian's trip required an armed convoy and guard whilst the pictures were taken.

Obviously with access to anywhere in Iraq still quite difficult the men are currently officially commemorated in two Rolls of Honour for all casualties buried and commemorated in Iraq. These volumes are on display at the CWGC Head Office in Maidenhead and are available for the public to view. The Commission continues to monitor the situation in Iraq and once the political climate has improved to an acceptable level the Commission will commence a major rehabilitation project for its cemeteries and commemorations



Guarding the Panels



As a bonus to this contact with the Army Media and Communications HQ we have been supplied with all the named panels which were originally erected in Basra Garrison that commemorated those that died on Operations in the recent conflicts. Since the British withdrawal this memorial has been dismantled and re-erected at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. This will allow families and friends the opportunity to visit the memorial as it was in Iraq.

Basra Memorial wall

From the Sea of Marmara to the North Gate of Baghdad - The Story of Four HMAS AE2 Crew Members - By Colonel Marcus Fielding, Australian Army

The story of HM Australian Submarine *AE2* in the Dardanelles campaign typically ends on April 30, 1915 when the stricken submarine, after penetrating the Narrows and 'running amok' against the Turkish warships was severely damaged and forced to surface. The valiant crew abandoned ship before scuttling it in the Sea of Marmara. The vessel itself has been the subject of searches and debate ever since its discovery in 1998, but as the brave crew was taken into captivity by the Turks another less known chapter of the story was set to unfold. A chapter that for three members of the crew would curiously end in northern Baghdad.

AE2 crew member Able Seaman Albert Knaggs kept a diary and from this account and other sources it is possible to partly reconstruct their experiences in captivity.

The Turkish torpedo boat *Sultan Hisar* took the 32 crew members on board and proceeded to Gelibolu (Gallipoli). They made fast alongside a hospital ship and were interviewed by General Otto Liman von Sanders who was the German General in command of the Ottoman Army. At 8 p.m. they proceeded on the *Sultan Hisar* to Constantinople where they arrived the next morning on May 1, 1915.

Able Seaman Knaggs' diary provides a detailed account of the crew's experiences on arrival in Constantinople after what appears to have been an uncomfortable trip.

“After being nearly eaten alive with bugs and lice which this country is noted for. Before leaving the boat we were supplied with soldier suits, overcoats, slippers and red fezzes to march through the streets of Constantinople to prison. The officers rode in a carriage. On arrival we were put into a small room in the basement and food brought in which was not fit for pigs. Some of us were taken out one by one to be interviewed by an officer who spoke English for information regarding our movements while in the Sea of Marmara and questions about the boat, but he didn't learn anything good for him. So about 10 of us were interviewed out of the crew, but we were not allowed back into the same room. As each man finished he was marched into another room and we were not allowed to see or speak to the remainder. That evening we were served out with Turkish sailor suits and a pair of socks. We had nothing to sleep on but the bare floor and our overcoats to cover us.”

The crew traded the dark confines of their submarine to the dark confines of small rooms and cells. The next day they each had their hair shorn close. On May 3 they were assembled on a parade ground and photographed individually and as a group.

On 5 May the crew departed Constantinople and was transported by train over the next three days to a POW camp at Afyon Kara Hisar in the central highlands of Anatolia. There they met Russian merchant sailors and the crew of the French submarine *Saphir*, as well as the surviving crew members of HM Submarine *E12* who had been captured at the southern end of the Dardanelles on April 17, 1915.

The camp at Afyon Kara Hisar was the clearing and distribution centre for all other Turkish POW camps. Living and sanitary conditions at the camp were poor and the POWs were largely confined to cramped buildings. Only after two months of confinement were they allowed out for two hours exercise each day.



HMAS AE2 Crew Members - December 1915

In early June 1915, as the weather warmed, the POWs were put to work constructing roads. Long days of manual labour were followed by cold nights camped in tents. When food was not provided by their Turkish masters the group refused to work. In late July they returned to the camp at Afyon Kara Hisar where they discovered an outbreak of typhoid amongst the Russians. In order to stem the outbreak the POWs were inoculated and given new clothes. Accommodation blocks were disinfected washed with lime and new hay filled mattresses were issued.

In early August Knaggs recorded a visit to the camp by the U.S. Ambassador. The Ambassador inspected their living conditions and listened to their complaints. He also brought them soap, pipes, tobacco, underclothes and a quantity of insect powder.

Knaggs also notes that they received some Turkish money, which may have been part of a disbursement arrangement set up by Chief Petty Officer Harry Abbot.

In late August 1915 they recommenced work constructing the roads, but a few days later stopped due another typhoid outbreak. They were placed in quarantine for two weeks and undertook more whitewashing and disinfecting in an effort to stamp out the disease.

Knaggs' diary picks up again in early October when the ratings were moved by horse van to Angora (Ankara) about 200 kilometres east of Afyon Kara Hisar. The three HMAS *AE2* officers remained at Afyon Kara Hisar. Staying temporarily in a prison at Angora the crew met up with other French and British POWs including the crew of HM Submarine *E7*. On October 14, 274 allied POWs began a four day 80 kilometre long march to Cankiri north east of Angora. Knaggs recorded *“Many of the prisoners were suffering from wounds, not having been long out of hospital and the march being on bread and water.”*

Many of the best amongst us fell out with some of them to help along the way.” At Cankiri the POWs occupied an old training barracks which Knaggs found to be “very acceptable, but cold and draughty and full of vermin, lice etc. as usual. The barracks had one water tap in the yard for all hands to wash, no soap being provided and no working clothes.” That night they gratefully found beds and quilts to lie on.

At the end of November a heavy snow fell. On December 22, 1915 a representative of Red Crescent Society visited the camp to find out what clothes were needed and to hear all complaints. During Christmas the Muslim Turks were clearly prepared to let their Christian prisoners celebrate. Knaggs recorded that...

“Christmas Day was made as bright as possible by our Turkish officers who gave us permission to play football outside in a field. We played a match Navy versus Army in which Army won 4 goals to 1. A concert was held amongst ourselves in the evening. On Boxing Day another football match took place between AE2 versus E7 which ended in a drawn game. On New Year’s Day the Commandant visited us and wished us a Happy New Year and hoped we would soon be home with our families. The Australians played rugby against the Scottish Borderers, and the Australians won 6 points to 3. In the evening another concert was held. On January 4 we received £1 from Camp Commandant and also received Xmas puddings, sweets and cigarettes from the Red Cross Society.”

On January 6, 1916, Knaggs records news that British and French forces had evacuated the Gallipoli Peninsula. Given that the withdrawal of the ANZACs was only completed on December 20, 1915 and Cape Helles remained occupied until January 9, 1916 it seems that the Turks must have been quick to relay this news to the POWs. After such news morale within the camps POW community must have sunk pretty low.

After only a couple of months at Cankiri the POWs began a march back along snow covered roads to Angora on January 17, 1916. A week later in the evening they were marched down to the train station and began a three day journey to the town of Pozanti standing at the entrance of a pass across the Toros (Taurus) Mountains in southern Anadolu (Anatolia). Knaggs records, “Here we are under German and Swiss engineers for work and receive 8 piastres per day for food which we buy our own doing away with the Turkish food. We are allowed plenty of Liberty no sentries are allowed to interfere with us as long as things run smooth. The work here consists of drilling and blasting tunnels, navvying [laboring], clerks, carpenters, electricians etc and odd jobs, extra money being paid monthly according to abilities at work. The name of the place being Belededik.”

On April 10 Knaggs recorded a rumour that Lieutenant Commander Stoker (the AE2’s Captain) and two other officers escaped from Afyon Kara Hisar. On May 8 Knaggs notes word that had been recaptured. On Easter Monday, April 24 Knaggs records that he managed to get “plenty drunk”. On April 30 he notes the anniversary of their capture and his wife Annie’s birthday.

Over the months Knaggs records a steady stream of deaths from illness and accidents on the worksites. Welfare packages are received sporadically from the Red Cross Society, the U.S. Ambassador, the Ladies Emergency League, as well as from his wife. Pay days are regular and there appears to have been the opportunity to buy and sell goods.

His diary entries regularly record the war news and rumours that were passing through the POW population. In hindsight we can recognise that much of the information that was circulating was grossly inaccurate. Germany apparently surrendered on two occasions in the course of 1916. In April 1916 Knaggs records that “*five English warships are in the Sea of Marmara, and England has given Turkey 10 days to consider what she is going to do, or Constantinople will be bombarded. Great excitement in the camp.*” Knaggs records a rumour that America declared war on Germany a full year before it actually occurred.

To his credit, Knaggs caveats his later entries with “*rumour has it...*” and regularly commentates that some rumours just seem fanciful. But it must have been difficult for them to discern fact from rumour as other news was uncannily accurate and arrived relatively quickly after the event. For example, on April 29, 1916 the Allied forces besieged at Kut in Iraq surrendered and 8,000 soldiers were taken prisoner. The news of this event and the same figure of captives reached the camp only five weeks later on June 9 - quite possibly directly from Allied prisoners captured at Kut.

Arduous and dangerous work, poor diet and disease associated with communal living in rough conditions were all features of their experience in captivity. Unfortunately, some weren't able to survive. On September 18, 1916, Chief Stoker Charles Varcoe died of meningitis at age 38. He was buried at the Christian Cemetery in Belemedik.

In the later part of summer in 1916, typhoid and malaria swept through the camp at Belemedik. On October 9, 1916, Petty Officer Stephen Gilbert died of malaria and typhoid aged 39. On October 22, 1916, Able Seaman Albert Knaggs died of malaria and typhoid aged 34. Knaggs' diary entries end three months earlier on July 18 which might indicate that he suffered a prolonged illness. Both Gilbert and Knaggs were also buried at the Christian Cemetery in Belemedik.

Stoker Michael Williams died on September 29, 1916. The exact cause of his death is not known, but it is recorded that he was buried in Pozanti, likely because there was a hospital there where he may have received treatment.

Following the Armistice, after three and half years in captivity, the remaining 28 crew members of HMAS AE2 were repatriated in December 1918.

After the war, the Imperial War Graves Commission considered that it was impractical to look after the many isolated graves of British and Commonwealth servicemen buried in several locations across Turkey, so their remains were disinterred and reburied in selected cemeteries. One of those selected cemeteries was in Baghdad.

In 1922, Gilbert's, Varcoe's and Knaggs' remains were reburied in the Baghdad North Gate War Cemetery where they remain to this day. For reasons unknown, Stoker Michael Williams was not reinterred in Baghdad, but he is listed on the Pozanti memorial in the Baghdad North Gate War Cemetery.

Eighty seven years later I came across the graves of these three brave sailors who had endured so much hardship and made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of our nation. On behalf of all Australians I thanked them for their service.



Chief Stoker Varcoe

Able Seaman Knaggs

Petty Officer Gilbert

Baghdad North Gate Cemetery

Further to the article written by Colonel Marcus Fielding about the Submarine AE2, he also supplied us with a number of images that were taken in Baghdad North Gate cemetery during his visits to track down the Australian submariners. These show that there are a considerable number of headstones still standing which, with the assistance of Marcus, we are hoping to be able to get photographs of in due course.

Marcus is also in the process of writing a book about his tour of duty in Iraq with the Australian forces. We will give details when published.



Armed guard – Not often required in Europe!



Marcus Fielding

Correction to the Summer Newsletter - Repatriation

I might have guessed that within hours of the Summer edition going out Terry Denham (In from the Cold Project) corrected an article we ran on the body of Private Horsefall being repatriated to UK even though he died in a Hospital at Rouen or so the family story went. Terry, quite rightly, informed us that these events were so rare that it was most unlikely that this did actually take place and was able to confirm this with copies of Private Horsefall's service certificates. These did in fact show that he died of wounds in Hospital in London from where his family were able to recover his body for burial at home. Unfortunately another family story laid to rest after nearly 100 years.

Higher Profile needed! – Steve Rogers

Thank you to all of you who contacted me on Thursday 29th September to inform me that Jeremy Vine on Radio 2 was going to conduct an article on 'Visiting Grandad's war grave'. Unfortunately due to a boiler being installed in the Rogers household and the mandatory requirements to 'wash hair' in the evening I could not drop tools and listen to it live but with the wonders of 'I Player' available I was able to listen to it later in the day. That was not before a knock on the door about 30 minutes after the show finished with a chap asking if the house is where TWGPP is based! Like many he was imagining plush offices like the CWGC has! He had listened to the article and decided to try and find information on his dad again who had died during the battles around El Alamein in WW2.

Our web hoster www.webok.co.uk had informed me a while back that a robotic device was downloading our thumbnail images and page information between 0100 and 0300 in the morning every night which, although probably not malicious, was using up our bandwidth and hence costing us funds to support. It was recommended that we stop this action to save costs by preventing this particular

Robot achieving the downloads. It would appear that it may have been part of Google's way of getting greater hits by trawling through various websites and extracting searchable information. The chap at the door had put into Google his father's name and a few details and the first hit was the page on TWGPP. In his words he was 'Gob smacked' that there was a picture of his Dads' grave that he had been looking for for years and available just up the road from where he lived. We were then able to supply it to him and, needless to say, it was a very emotional moment for him seeing the grave for the first time especially as he was named on the stone as his son.

Back to R2 and Jeremy Vine. I listened to the article which mentioned the emotion experienced when seeing a grave or memorial for the first time, interviewing a number of people who have visited the cemeteries in France. The CWGC web site was mentioned a number of times but not the slightest indication of the existence of TWGPP.

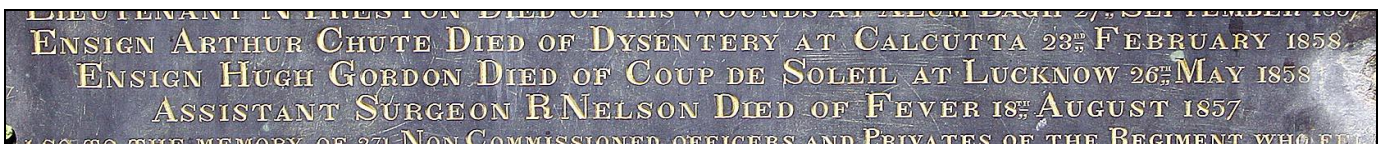
At a recent family history fair I attended we were able to provide, there and then, to an elderly lady a picture of her brother's grave in Germany which, again, was a very emotional moment for her. She commented on the fact that if the service provided by TWGPP is available to everyone why had she never heard of TWGPP before as it is a 'Godsend' to those like her who have never had the opportunity to visit or see the grave of a loved one.

Now I know a few of you out there promote the project at every opportunity which is wonderful but I do feel that there is a large audience of those that would dearly love to get a picture of a grave who have no idea that we exist. Genealogy is a wonderful hobby but there is a generation who went through the war who do not necessarily conduct research but are blissfully unaware of us - but time moves on. Just review our thanks page (<http://twgpp.org/thanks.php>) and the comments about elderly relatives being pleased to see the images for the first time.

Advertising our work is an option but an expensive one at around £350-£500 a quarter page in a magazine but that can be a one off hit. Last year we had our biggest site hits from a small article in The Guardian Newspaper around Nov 11th. This was written by a freelance journalist who believed in the importance of our work so had the right 'Contacts'. I will endeavor to write to the editorial staff on National newspapers again (no joy last year) but if any of you reading this know of routes to the press that might be able to advertise our work then pointers would be appreciated.

Thank you letters are always nice to receive but I'd like to reduce the numbers stating that parents or grandparents would have loved to have seen the images but died recently so will never be able to see the grave they so wanted to for years.

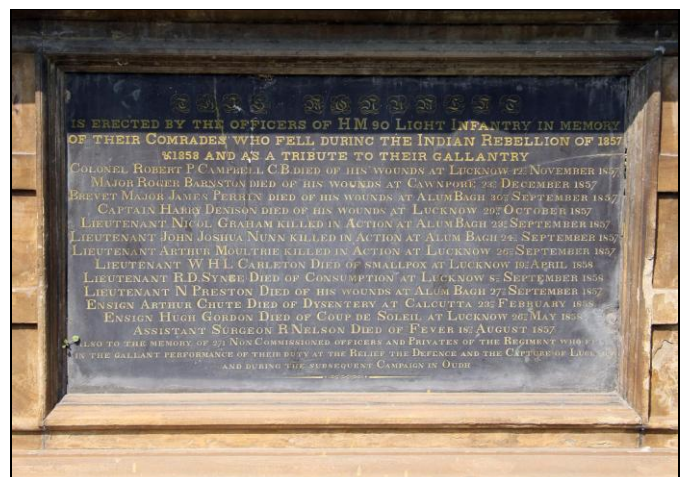
Eurospeak for Sunburn?



LIEUTENANT N PRESTON DIED OF HIS WOUNDS AT ALUM BAGH 27th SEPTEMBER 1857
ENSIGN ARTHUR CHUTE DIED OF DYSENTERY AT CALCUTTA 23rd FEBRUARY 1858
ENSIGN HUGH GORDON DIED OF COUP DE SOLEIL AT LUCKNOW 26th MAY 1858
ASSISTANT SURGEON R NELSON DIED OF FEVER 18th AUGUST 1857
BY ORDER OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE MEMORIAL OF THE 90th LIGHT INFANTRY

Now that we have been capturing war graves from earlier conflicts the images raise new terms that we have yet to encounter as to the cause of Death. The Memorial to the Officers and men serving in the 90th Light infantry in Lucknow in 1857/8 range from Killed in action, Died of wounds - smallpox - dysentery - fever, all of which are quite common in records even in WW1. However, Ensign Hugh Gordon succumbed to 'Coup de Soleil' which is probably Eurospeak for 'sever sunburn'.

Picture by David Milborrow



Reunited with his crew - Tail Gunner BM Cassidy

Alex Morris has been updating the archive by visiting a number of sites, old and new, in the Netherlands. With a list of those needed in Zulichem he noticed one missing from the list but on further investigation found the odd one to be that of Flying officer BM (Mike) Cassidy, Tail Gunner RCAF who had died on 17th March 2005 aged 81. His epitaph read 'United at last'.

Mike Cassidy was 20 years old when his plane was shot down by artillery fire with the loss of the rest of the crew. After the war he returned to visit the graves of his friends many times with a last wish that he too could be buried alongside them when the time came. This wish was fulfilled when his wife and daughter were able to bury his urn of ashes in an adjacent plot.

Tail Gunner Mike Cassidy aged 81



Visiting their mates resting place – George Nagle



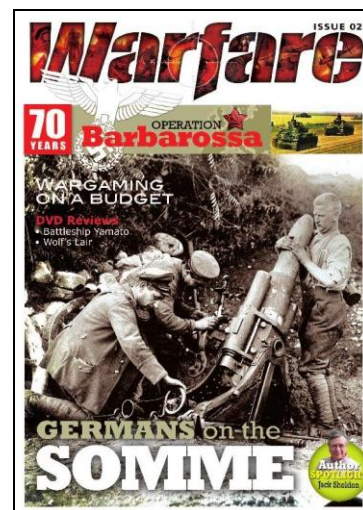
In the Spring 2011 Newsletter we mentioned the fact that Private George Nagle, an Irish National who had been killed in action whilst serving with the 9th Royal Australian Regiment in Vietnam, was missing from the association website. At that time Declan Rapple visited the cemetery at Clonmel to obtain a picture of the grave which we sent to David and Jan Stacey. In June of this year the Secretary of the 9th RAR association was visiting Ireland and arranged a Remembrance ceremony at George's gravesite which included personnel from the Irish Defence Forces and members of the 9th RAR association as well as George's family. Good to see him being remembered by those who travel from the other side of the world to be at the event.

Free online magazine - WARFARE by Pen and Sword

Pen and Sword, the military book publishers, are now offering an online magazine to those that wish to sign up for it. The magazine entitled 'WARFARE' includes historical articles and all aspects of warfare including Naval, Army and Airborne subjects as well as new book releases and articles about very good websites. Take a glimpse of these at :-

<http://www.warfaremagazine.co.uk/newsletters/20110802/index.htm>

Click on the front page once at the link to get access to the PDF pages. Pages 52-54 are particularly good!



Two graves at Leeds Lawnswood cemetery – Geoff and Marsha Thorndike

On November 13th 1942 the Japanese torpedoed and sunk the light cruiser SS Juneau. On board were the five Sullivan brothers. They had enlisted in January of that year with the stipulation that they served together. Tragically they died together. Their deaths resulted in the US War Department adopting the 'Sole Survivor Policy'.

There can be very few people who have not seen the film 'Saving Private Ryan', a film inspired by the real life case of the four Niland brothers. It was thought that Fritz Niland, serving in Europe, was the only surviving brother of the four who were serving with the US armed forces. He was located, moved away from the action and posted to the safety of New York for the remainder of the war. Steven Spielberg brings to the screen the fictional story of the perilous but successful mission to bring the fourth Ryan son safely back from the front line after his three brothers have been killed

A headstone at Lawnswood cemetery brings to mind the true case of the Sullivan brothers and Spielberg's fictional account of Private Ryan. However, unlike the film there was no happy ending. The headstone inscriptions tell of five years of grief for the Stewart family.



Many families suffered great loss and unimaginable heartbreak during WW1 but few can have suffered more than Jim and Ada Stewart. Inscribed on the memorial to the Stewart family are the names of five brothers, sons of Jim and Ada. All went off to fight in the Great War. They all perished.

Private William Arthur Stewart was the first to die. He was 29 and serving with the 8th Bn. West Riding Regiment when he was killed at Gallipoli on the 24th October 1915. He has no known grave but is remembered on the Helles Memorial in Turkey.

The second to die was 32 year old Second Lieutenant Charles Edward Stewart, killed on the Somme on the 10th September 1916 while serving with the Manchester Regiment. Already mentioned in dispatches in 1915 he was shot in the head while leading his men. He died in hospital in Abbeville and is buried in Abbeville Communal Cemetery.

Private Leonard Stewart serving with the West Yorkshire Regiment was the next son to die. Badly wounded he had been sent home to recuperate but then returned to the trenches. There he contracted pleurisy, was again returned home where he died in a Manchester hospital on June 26th 1917 age 21. He is the only brother actually buried in the grave shown and is also remembered on Panel 15 on the Screen Wall.

Alfred was a Lance Corporal in the York and Lancaster Regiment, married, and the proud father of one year old Elsie. He was 29 when he was killed in Belgium on April 13th 1918. He is remembered at Ploegsteert Memorial as he has no known grave.

The war ended that year and the Stewarts, having lost four sons in four years must have thought that at least their son Walter would return safely home. He was a mechanic with the Army Service Corps and serving in East Africa. Tragically he did not survive the long journey home and was buried at sea on March 10th 1919.

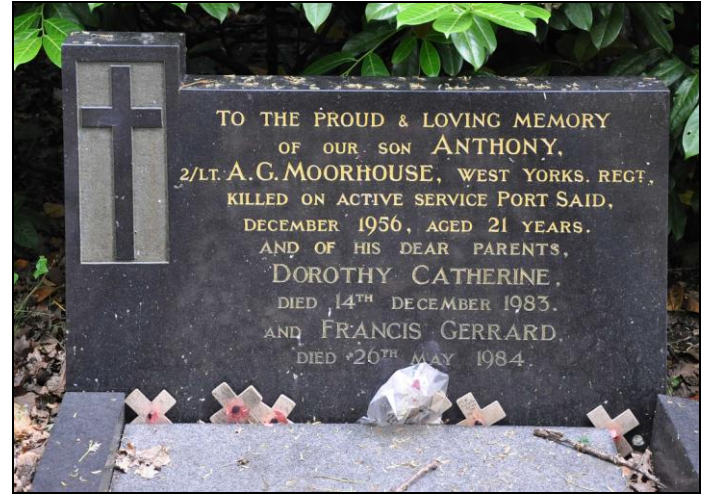
Thirty eight years after the death of Walter Stewart another headstone was erected at Lawnswood in memory of a further casualty of war.

1956 was the year of the Suez Crisis. In November of that year Anglo-French forces had attacked and occupied the Canal Zone in Egypt. In military terms the campaign had been a brilliant success but politically a humiliating failure.

A ceasefire was in place within days and UN forces had taken over. By December British troops were being withdrawn.

21 year old Second Lieutenant Anthony Moorhouse was a National Serviceman serving with the 1st Bn. West Yorkshire Regiment in the Canal Zone and in a letter to his father, a prosperous jam manufacturer of Leeds, he wrote, “ - - - I wish something exciting would happen.” His wish was granted in a tragic way which made national headlines. On the morning of 11th December he had gone into the back streets of Port Said, alone and unauthorised, in an open Land Rover. And there he had been kidnapped. House to house search parties found no trace of him.

The Tory M.P. Colonel Cyril Banks, a good friend of both the Moorhouse family and President Nasser of Egypt, was asked to intervene. He flew to Cairo and met Nasser on 24th of December. The news was bad. Nasser informed him that Lieutenant Moorhouse had died of suffocation whilst being held captive. Many however thought that he had been executed. On 4th January the U.N. intervened and arranged for the casualty to be flown to Naples where it was confirmed that the body was indeed that of Anthony Gerald Moorhouse. He was flown back to Yorkshire two days later.



On 10th January 1957 much of Leeds came to a standstill as Lieutenant Moorhouse's body was borne on a gun carriage the four miles from Leeds Roman Catholic Cathedral to Lawnswood Cemetery. There he was laid to rest with full military honours.

Lawnswood Cemetery is situated 4 miles NE of Leeds city centre, on the left of the A660 Otley Road. The CWGC refer to the cemetery as Leeds (Lawns Wood) Cemetery. It opened in 1875, was extended in 1919 and 1965, and purchased by Leeds City Council in 1972. The Stewart grave is located in section W number 1138 and the Moorhouse grave in section F. Help, along with a plan, can be obtained from the cemetery office. The cemetery is well worth a visit as it contains some spectacular early twentieth century monuments.

In pursuance of that elusive headstone



Of course we cannot condone it but when needs must, a sign stating the obvious might just get overlooked when SATNAV co-ordinates confirm that there is a headstone in that thicket waiting to be cleared for the first time in many years. Private Ryder sees the light of day once again!

Disguised as a Gendarme – The one that got away – Alan Jackson

My father joined the RAF in March 1941 just 3 days before his 19th birthday. A butcher by trade he served at a number of bases in the UK and overseas in Iceland as a cook. In late 1943 he was accepted for air gunner training and, after postings to training and conversion units he was posted to 75 (New Zealand) Squadron as tail gunner in May 1944.



During the training and conversion he saw some action in various types of aircraft including the Wellington and Shorts Stirling. Once at Mepal however, he found himself flying in his beloved Lancaster. On the night of June 10 Lancaster HK 553, along with over 400 other aircraft took off from Mepal and other bases in the UK bound for the railway marshalling yards at Dreux south west of Paris. Dreux at this stage of the war was heavily defended with both anti aircraft batteries and night fighters

My father recalled the heavy flak over the target and remembered seeing the silhouette of an ME110 night fighter (with its distinctive rear twin tail planes) at the same moment that the Lancaster was hit, the aircraft immediately caught fire and entered a steep dive. My father bailed out of the stricken aircraft and landed safely in a corn field on the out skirts of Tillieres Sur Avre. He buried his parachute and was then able to make early contact with a farmer who arranged contact with the local resistance. Father spent the night hidden in a tree and local people then escorted him across the busy N12 trunk road disguised as women. This was done at great risk to all concerned as the road was frequently used by the German army.



My father spent a number of weeks with a local family. He was given clothing and a French name, Yves Le Barse, and taught basic French, enough to get him by and on occasions he even drank in the local bar and played cards with German soldiers, who were none the wiser. As part of his disguise he was even dressed as a gendarme (see photo left).

In August he was able to join an American infantry unit, travelled north to the coast and then back to England. He recalled travelling through the Falaise gap and saw first hand the destruction wrought by the allied forces on the Germans. None of the remaining crew survived the crash. Their bodies were removed to a communal grave site in Tillieres Sur Avre where they have remained to this day.

Post war my father was able to revisit the grave and the people who helped him. In 2007 he attended a memorial held at Tillieres organised by the town's people and the Forced Landing association.

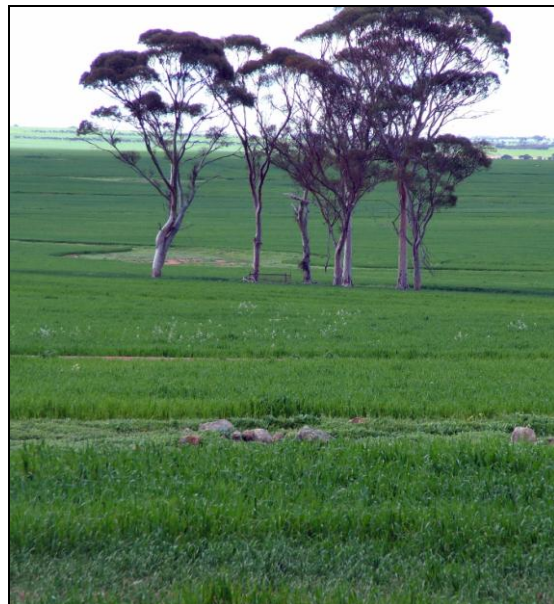


Now that is isolated! – Peter Beckett

Not often described as such in UK but in Australia, due to the vast expanses of open space, a number of sites are described as 'Isolated graves'. It would appear these are instances when the casualties have been brought home for burial on farmsteads miles from major towns where there might be a local cemetery. One such case is at Mendiga Siding where Peter Beckett had the task of finding the site.

"Well, what a story of searching today. We started at 11 am and finished at the grave at 3 pm. We found the site of the Mandiga Siding near the town of Bencubbin. I spent over an hour of searching with no luck and a passing local suggested we contact Annie at the Bencubbin Post Office as she knew everything about the district, so we drove into the town only to find Annie was out for lunch. However, the Postmaster and her husband drew a mudmap of 2 isolated graves that they knew about. They also contacted a local historian who gave us map grid references where the grave actually was. We were then directed to contact a lady at the local Shire Offices as the grave was on their farm. She suggested contacting her husband but he was not answering his mobile or the farm phone.

The lone plot beneath some gum trees



At this point we decided to go to the local cafe and get a coffee and try to work out our next moves. Surprise, surprise! Annie was having lunch there and the farmer was her son. The next moment her son pulled up at the cafe and we told him the story of the grave (for about the fifth time). He said follow him and he would take us to the grave so caravan in tow, we took off. He stopped about 10kms along a dirt road called Breakell Rd and showed us a group of trees about 750m in the field. He then told us the farm was originally owned by the Collins family (he now owns it) and showed us to where an old stone cottage was about 1km west of the trees and that was where James Freeman lived. He also said he could remember reading the name Freeman on the grave but someone had smashed the headstone. So we went down there, took photos and also the gps reading. "

..and finally from 'Billy No Mates'

Thank you to all who have sent me e mails via Facebook, Twitter and other 'Social Networking' sites in order for me to sign up as a friend or acquaintance. I did try one but found that I too had to open up an 'account' so I am afraid the contact ended there as I literally do not have the time to go on to these sites. Therefore, if you think I am ignoring you and don't want to be a 'friend', this is a long way from the truth. I consider everyone helping with the project a friend even though I have not met the majority of you. However, if you are in my area and want to buy me a beer now I could find the time for that !..
Steve Rogers (aka Billy no mates).

The next newsletter will be out in January 2012.

Anyone wishing to contribute should contact Steve on steve@twgpp.org



THE WAR GRAVES
PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECT