



THE WAR GRAVES PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECT



In Association
with the CWGC



News from the Front line

December 2014

With the anniversary of WW1 commencing on August 4th we assumed we had experienced our busiest day fulfilling requests since the project started. The extended publicity on TV over the day must have focussed a lot of people's attention to relatives, some known about others not, who fought and perhaps died during WWI. However, that was eclipsed over the Remembrance weekend in November which again was down to the publicity surrounding events around the world and the poppy field at the Tower of London.

On August 4th I recorded much of the daytime service at Glasgow Cathedral to watch in the evening as I was at work. We did have representative at the service having had an invite from Glasgow City council to whom we supplied a number of images for their commemorative website. Alec Briggs attended on our behalf and you can read his report later on in the newsletter.

During the evening's ceremony at St. Symphorien, which I thought was very well presented, the programme was interspersed with articles relating to WW1. I did glimpse one of our volunteers and had one of those Déjà vu moments when a chap comes on TV and you think 'I know him' and then realised it was James Day who I had met for the first time a few weeks before at our event at the NMA. He was telling the story of one of his relations, a nurse, who died in WWI and his report can be read later.

From the views of the cemetery in St. Symphorien it appeared that all of the headstones had been replaced with newly engraved ones including those of the German casualties in the same cemetery. I guess that this will be one location that many will visit during pilgrimages to the area by those now moved to visit the battlefields of France and Flanders.



Durnbach War Cemetery, Germany by Paul Willing-CWGC

With Christmas just around the corner and the anniversary of the iconic truce of 1914 on Christmas Day many will think of those soldiers, including Sainsbury's!

On my 'wants' list from Santa (apart from world peace) is the latest book available from the CWGC 'For the Fallen'. A selection of high quality images of cemeteries around the world. Photography I always aspire to yet never manage.

At this time of year may I wish you and your families a Very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year. With best wishes.

Steve Rogers

Two Graves on the Somme - Cecil Ballantine

People of my age were born when WWI was still called "The Great War" and as well as reading and re-reading my father's collection of war magazines I was well-schooled in the tales of the part that my family had played in the conflict - in France, Gallipoli, Egypt and Italy. My mother was one of six children and both she and my father had lost brothers in action and two more members of the same generation of the family had fought and survived. I was familiar with the large photograph of a soldier wearing a Gunners' bandolier that hung over the fire-place in the front room of my grand-parents' house in south London and even when I was quite small I understood the significance of the poppy fixed to its frame. We lived near enough to Hyde Park to hear the rumble of the salute from the guns on Armistice Day and I knew that my mother's brother Bert had served with an artillery unit. He had been born in 1898 and was killed in action with 30th Divisional Artillery in a Medium Mortar Battery on 15 May 1918. He and a bombardier were manning a Stokes mortar somewhere in the Albert area when a direct hit from a German shell killed them both.

In the years immediately after the War relatives began to visit the war cemeteries, often under the auspices of the St Barnabas Society and other charities. My mother and an older sister were the only family members to go to France between the wars. She visited her brother's grave in the early 1920s and we have a photo of her as a teenager of the period with her hand resting on his wooden cross which, I believe was then in a French communal cemetery. She said little about the trip apart from the fact that she disliked French food and frequently disparaged Albert which she said was 'a dirty place.' and there were no more family visits for nearly seventy years.

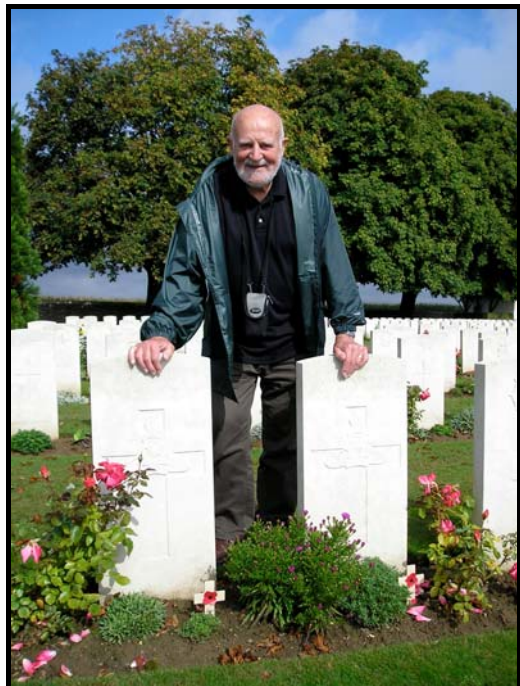
Bert, however was not forgotten. My mother had another elder sister, Catherine Victoria (known to us as Aunty Kate). She had been born in 1899 and was 19 when her brother Bert was killed. After the war she married an ex-soldier from the Queen's Westminster Rifles who had survived the war although he had been "silver badged" in 1917. They had one son, my cousin Donald; and in 1979, when she was approaching her 80th birthday, he was working for a British company in Paris and commuting there and back from Monday to Friday. He had a small flat in the city and suggested that for her birthday he would take her out with him for the week.



On their outward journey along the motorway from Calais she asked him if they had time to make the short detour to the north to the British Cemetery at Cabaret Rouge in Souchez where her brother had been finally laid to rest when it became a concentration cemetery. They arrived at the spot early in the afternoon. Kate went to her brother's grave and Don walked around this large cemetery taking an interest in the other graves and in the idiosyncratic architecture of the arch over the entrance which was originally designed for an Indian war cemetery and is renowned for this even today. It is also the only British war cemetery named after a house of ill-repute. The original graves were laid in a patch of ground made noticeable by the red-roofed building that stood there before German artillery finally demolished it and which gives the cemetery its highly individual name - The Red Cabaret!

After a short while Don returned to Bert's grave and found his mother in tears. He comforted her and remarked that it was, after all, more than sixty years ago that his uncle had been killed; but was surprised by her response that it was not her brother's grave that had so disturbed her but the grave next to it - that of the bombardier who had been killed by the same shell. They had lain side-by-side since their original interment and one can say, truly, that "In death they were not divided". "You ought to know", she said, "that he was my boy-friend. He stopped writing and I thought that he had got himself a French girl-friend or something - but I have never forgotten him".

Edgar Taylor who lies in that grave was born in 1893, in Siddal, near Halifax. He was single, a Territorial and had been mobilised in 1914. He had served with Bert since they joined the Mortar Battery. Apparently he had come on leave with Bert and had met Kate at her parents' home in Clapham and they had become very close. Edgar had given no next-of-kin when he had been mobilised and she had not confided in anyone else in her family. So Bert was the only one who knew the situation and there was, then, no-one left to write to her to inform her about his death.



My cousin says that although his mother and father had a happy marriage he often felt that she had memories that she did not divulge to anyone else and he doubts if even her husband knew about Edgar. However, it has now become part of our family's memories of the War. Since 1979 we have visited Cabaret Rouge to remember Bert and to leave poppy crosses for him and for Edgar. On my last visit, three years ago, I was very moved by the opportunity to tell the story to fellow members of this Group's September trip to the Western Front as we stood by the two graves.

As we approach the centenary of the outbreak of war in 1914 we shall be urged to take note of many facts, issues and feelings. The personal history that I have related, and other incidents like it, are what many people remember most about "The Great War" and they still move us. Oncoming generations will take them up and they become part of the pattern of memories that are put together when we remember the War.

It is, of course, important that we continue to discuss whether Haig was right or wrong; whether Churchill should have gone ahead with the landings at Gallipoli and whether the First Day of the Somme was a great tragedy or a strategic victory. But we also need to call to mind that across the WFA badge is that one word REMEMBRANCE and despite our interest in war history, strategy and diplomacy it is human emotion that continues to remind us of individual experiences that have taken place on our battlefields over the years. And, for my family, and for others who have heard it, we will remember the story of Bert, Edgar and Aunty Kate.

The article, provided by Cecil, appeared in The Sentinel, the journal of the Cheltenham and Gloucester Branch of the Western Front Association in June 2014.

In the Public Eye – Steve Rogers

In our last Newsletter I raised the question of publicity and have had offers by volunteers to conduct presentations with various local groups. I have presented the project to a number of Women's Institutes in the Hampshire area now (the word gets around!) with more to follow. The expanding waistline could be a result of the amount of cake I have to eat at the end of these presentations.

Michael Stonehewer has had article in the Society of Genealogist's magazine and Bernard Warden got a letter published in the RBL 'Legion' Magazine promoting our work. In New Zealand Denis Boggs has had an article raised in the Returned Service League Magazine. Nick Hare (based in France) is friends with Marion McGivern, the Editor of 'Peoples Friend' and managed to get a centre spread in the October 18th edition with the possibility of another article in 'The Scotsman'.

Getting noticed in the Public Eye prompts letters like the one reproduced here received a few weeks ago.

Dear Steve,

I am a teacher at a school in Suffolk and as part of a joint project between ourselves (ICT) and the History department we are researching our local war memorials for the WW1 Centenary.

Whilst doing our research I came across your website and was staggered by the amount of effort you and you team have done, even more so by the fact you are volunteers.

Reading the 'thank you' page made both my wife and myself very emotional which is good going for a 'grumpy 47 old teacher'. It is clear by peoples comments how much comfort you bring to people who have lost loved ones.

In this day and age of 'reality show heroes' I just wanted to take time to say a huge thank you to you and your team for a such a fantastic and worthwhile project you are doing.

Kind regards - Nigel Dadge

Stanley 'Ginger' Moore - Sage cemetery, Germany

A recent request from Staff Sergeant Allan Ross of the Canadian Royal Mounted Police has shed some light on the circumstances of the death of Pilot Officer (Engineer) Stanley Moore buried in Sage Cemetery, Germany.

The Pilot of the Halifax (NP999) aircraft was Vincent Brimicombe of the Royal Canadian Air Force and on the night of 5/6 January 1945 the crew were on a bombing mission over Hanover, Germany. Vince has since written to TWGPP recounting his memories of the night 'Ginger' died.

'Ginger'

Hello Steve,

I have a copy of Allan Ross' e-mail to you on Oct 19th, 2014 regarding your project on war graves of WWII. He suggested that I drop you a note about our fateful night of January 5th 1945. Your excellent pictures of Stanley Moore's grave have renewed so many memories of those years. Only two of our crew are still alive today. (George Hutton, tail gunner, living just north of Toronto, and myself, pilot, living outside Vancouver) so the research you are doing today is very important work and records the history of those years during WWII.



As Allan told you in his e-mail, I never knew what happened to Stanley (we knew him as Ginger!) except that he was killed by cannon fire from the German fighter ME110 who shot us down. Knowing that his body was recovered from our Halifax and has been properly remembered in the Sage War Cemetery helps restore my peace of mind.

We were a crew of seven from R.C.A.F. 425 (Alouette) Squadron, based in Tholthorpe, England. Ginger was our flight engineer (R.A.F.) On January 5th, 1945 we were returning from a raid on Hannover. Our aircraft was a Halifax III - W-William (Willie the Wolf). This was our 23rd bombing raid on Germany and one of our longest. There was heavy action with lots of "flak" and enemy night fighters. We were just starting to relax after dropping our bombs on Pathfinder sky markers when a German ME110 attacked from below. There was instant chaos amongst the crew on the flight deck of our Halifax when the incendiary cannon fire ripped thru the belly of the aircraft. The exploding cannon shells also wrecked the inner starboard engine and the whole right wing. The interior of the aircraft became a raging inferno. Ginger was standing beside me adjusting the instruments and was hit by the incendiary bullets. He probably never knew what happened! The aircraft was now out of control so I gave the order to bail out. I tried to raise Ginger's body but with the raging fire and upheaval of the spinning aircraft, I could do nothing.



Vincent

The rest of the crew parachuted to safety and were captured near the town of Halle, Germany. By the time I exited the burning aircraft I too was on fire about my face and arms. I landed outside the town and managed to avoid capture for 3 days en route back to the western front. Hungry at this point, I was discovered milking a cow by a local farmer and turned over to the German police. At the interrogation camp in Frankfurt I was reunited with the rest of my crew. We became prisoners of war in Stalag 1, Barth, Germany until liberated by the Russians in May 1945.

Ginger was a good flight engineer and a good friend. He was the youngest of our crew (19 years old). He was from Bradford, England... the only Brit in the group, but fitted in well with the Canadian crew.



I visited his family when I was repatriated from POW camp in May 1945 and met them for the first time. His father thought Ginger might still be alive. I of course had to explain to the family how he was killed. It was most difficult. I have had no contact with Stanley's family since that time. I would appreciate any contact information (address?) for the family if you have it in your records.

By Steve – I have tried to find any surviving family but with no luck – Should any reader have links to the Bolton area and could endeavor to see if any relatives of 'Ginger' still survive, I can pass on details to Vincent.

Vincent Brimicombe now aged 93

New Cemeteries for the Project

It is quite rare for us to be able to get a cemetery submitted which has not been completed before as most lie in areas where conflict is ongoing or the FCO advice not going there! However, since the last newsletter I am pleased to say that a previously unrecorded site for TWGPP has now been photographed in Ethiopia. Rosemary Burke attended a wreath laying by Princess Anne at a lone gravesite about 1Km from the village of Gambela in Ethiopia

The Princess Royal laid a wreath on the grave of Major Lesslie who is buried in the compound of Mekane Yesus Church on 30th September 2014. The Princess Royal was in Gambela in her role as Patron of Save the Children and had earlier visited the refugee camps for those South Sudanese who have come over the border recently. The British Military attaché gave HRH a summary of the WW2 Allied action in the west of Ethiopia to explain how Major Lesslie had come to be in Gambela and then, because she was interested, a quick summary of the Allied action in the Horn of Africa.

Serena Davidsson is currently based in Bahrain and completed the OLD CHRISTIAN CEMETERY at Manama. Serena took the opportunity to photograph the family memorials there including 'service dependents'. The children and wives of servicemen who died whilst stationed abroad were not repatriated which must have been quite emotional for those returning home to UK after their deployment.



In Pakistan, Saif Ul Islam and his cousin Hammad have been photographing the graves in Karachi War Cemetery for us. Saif found TWGPP whilst looking for his relation buried in Forli, Italy and volunteered to help us locally.

Access to Karachi is a little more difficult than most so we provided letters of authenticity to confirm that Saif and his cousin were volunteers so these eased the path to access via the armed guards!

The Tragedy of the Cwmyoy Prisoner - by Cecil Granville

Very early in the Great War, a very young German prisoner of war named Heinrich Harrcatta was sent to work on farms and at the saw mill in the remote Llanthony valley. It has been suggested that this young man could have been a merchant seaman whose boat happened to be in Newport docks at the time war was declared and the crew interned. Although great hatred was built up against the Germans during the war, in that remote area of Cwmyoy no hatred was shown towards Heinrich and, indeed, as he went about his work, people in the district became very fond of him.

As the war drew to its close and the young prisoner's thoughts began to turn towards home, he was caught in the belt of a circular saw at Tredunnow Mill and killed. The local community was greatly saddened and great respect was shown at his funeral. A committee was set up to arrange rotas for placing flowers on the grave in Cwmyoy churchyard and for its general care. It became one of the best kept graves in the churchyard. Sometime after the war ended, a letter arrived in the village from Heinrich's parents. It contained a small amount of money to be used to put flowers on the grave on his birthday. Mrs. Molyneux, who lived at Trewyn, and was on the committee, was able to convey a message back that this would be done. The grave was always lovingly cared for and flowers regularly placed on it.

Through the years, the letter and money duly arrived when Heinrich's birthday came around. Then, in 1939, when war broke out again, all correspondence with Germany stopped and no more letters came. By this time, many older residents had died or moved away and very few were left to tend the grave. Eventually, it appears, only Mrs. Molyneux and a local man who acted as caretaker to the churchyard remained.

One day, Mrs. Molyneux received an urgent telephone message from the caretaker to come quickly to Cwmyoy church as an officer had come with a few soldiers to take away Heinrich's remains. Mrs. Molyneux jumped into her car and drove to the church. The officer explained that a new law had come into operation whereby all alien prisoners who had died or been killed during the wars were to be buried at a military cemetery at Cannock Chase, Staffordshire. Mrs. Molyneux refused to allow the body to be disinterred. No warning had been received, Heinrich had died in Cwmyoy and was going to rest in peace in Cwmyoy! After much debate, the officer and his men withdrew. Mrs. Molyneux then contacted many influential people and the military authorities but, sadly, in the end, the body was taken to Cannock Chase.



The following Sunday, Mrs. Molyneux was amazed to see just bare earth where the grave had been. Again, she contacted the military authorities, asking where was the headstone? It had been smashed and buried no headstones were allowed where there was no body. In the late 1940s, the old gentleman who had tended the churchyard was taken ill and went for a short time to stay with his daughter who lived in Gloucestershire. During the time he was away, his son-in-law (who knew nothing about Heinrich's grave or that the body had been removed) came to Cwmyoy to do a few jobs around the churchyard. One lovely evening, as he cut the grass, he heard a car coming up the hill. It was a taxi and, as it stopped near the church, a very old couple alighted. They were Heinrich's parents and, with some difficulty, they explained that they had come to see their son's grave. The churchyard was searched in vain and they departed broken-hearted. When the father-in-law returned and was told the sad story, he informed Mrs. Molyneux who, in turn, contacted the military authorities. They informed the German military authorities who assured them that Heinrich's parents would be contacted and an apology given.

Some six months later, Mrs. Molyneux received a letter stating that, despite a thorough search and wide advertising, Heinrich's parents could not be traced.

Mrs. Molyneux died in 1980, aged 88, and is buried in Cwmyoy churchyard.

Submitted by Rhe Probert , previously published in Gwent Local History Magazine in 1993

On a more uplifting note – A message from Germany



'I was watching the service to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the start of WW1 and started thinking about my German Great Grandfather. All I knew from my Gran (now deceased) is that he was called Friedrich Burmeister and that he died in France in 1918. I initially asked at a German website which led me to you. My mother and I are very grateful to you and feel quite emotional about finding where he is buried – seeing a photograph was another big bonus and surprise. Thank you so much. My mums father died in WWII Karl-Heinz Biemann and we have found out that he is buried in a mass (anonymous) grave somewhere in the Ukraine.

Thank you so much for all the good work you do and please thank the person who took this photograph – it is very much appreciated.'

Angela Oglesby

CWGC ST SYMPHORIEN OPEN DAY – Norman Brice

The 23rd of August 2014 was the 100th anniversary of the first major European battle of the Great War between British and German forces which took place at Mons and to commemorate this, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission held an "Open Day" at their St Symphorien War Cemetery.

St Symphorien had already hosted a VIP event on 4th August 2014, the 100th anniversary of the declaration of war, attended by Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, the Prime Minister and others, including foreign Heads of State and dignitaries but the Open Day was intended for the public at large to see the CWGC's work at first hand.

The choice of St Symphorien was perhaps intended to be symbolic – British and German soldiers lying side by side in a cemetery built by the German Army during the conflict – and perhaps also because it contains the graves of the first and last British and Commonwealth soldiers to have died in action on the Western Front. In addition, St Symphorien is very different from the vast majority of CWGC cemeteries, with their regimented straight rows of headstones. Instead, the cemetery was designed by the German Army to conform to the contours of the landscape so it has circles of headstone, British and German, with trees and curving woodland paths.



The main purpose of the Open Day was to educate the public about the work of the CWGC in general and also to demonstrate the various skills needed to maintain the cemeteries in the excellent condition we always find. Arriving at the site, one was greeted by a bank of poppies and a CWGC tent containing a large display board explaining the Battle of Mons. Displays of the various trades included: lawn cutting machines, tree lopping and metal work but perhaps most impressive of all was the headstone carving. One factory south of Paris produces every headstone used by CWGC world-wide and 12 stonemasons each carve 6 headstones per day, using high-tech cutting machines. The pattern book of regimental and other badges to be engraved runs to somewhere near 2,000 including rarities such as dozens of unknown Indian Army regiments, and the NAAFI.

Pioneer Woman Aviator Returned Home to North Carolina – Keith Harrison

Mary Webb Nicholson was born in 1905 in Greensboro, North Carolina. She learned to fly in 1928 in Portsmouth, Ohio, receiving free tuition by doing office work and making parachute jumps for a flying school. In 1929 she became the first woman licensed pilot in North Carolina and later on first woman commercial and transport pilot. In 1931 she set a light aircraft altitude record for North Carolina of 15,200 feet.



In 1942 Mary became part of a group of American women pilots who joined the British Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) and received further flying training in Canada. Although the ATA had a small transport role the principal job was to deliver newly manufactured and repaired aircraft from the factories to air force bases, flying anything from trainers to fighters and heavy bombers, and often with minimal or no experience in the type being flown. In May 1943 Mary was based in Maidenhead in Berkshire and had been promoted to Second Officer. While flying a Miles Master over Worcestershire her engine developed an oil leak, seized, and the propeller flew off. While attempting an emergency landing in a field she hit a farm building and the aircraft burst into flames, killing Mary.

Mary was cremated and her ashes returned to North Carolina where she lies in her family plot in the New Friends Garden Cemetery in Greensboro. Beside her is her brother who served in the US Air Force in WW2 and ultimately became a commercial pilot. The cemetery is adjacent to Guilford College where Mary had studied music.

Over 1300 pilots flew with the ATA, of which around 166 were women. More than 170 perished, including 16 women. Another famous woman pilot to die while serving with the ATA was the pioneer aviator Amy Johnson who drowned in the Thames in January 1941 after an air accident. In 1930 she had become the first woman to fly solo from England to Australia. The largest group of ATA graves is at All Saints cemetery in Maidenhead where 17 men and women from six nations lie.

Shigella Flexneri - otherwise known as NCTC1

Dr. Naomi Lee, the Web Editor of 'The Lancet' magazine, the world's leading general medical journal contacted us for permission to use an image in the latest web edition of the Magazine. This editorial was usually 'taken' and read by what we used to call 'Sickbay Rangers' to determine more ways to get categorised 'P7R' (Naval term for going sick and so not go to sea) . However, Naomi wanted to use a photo of Private E Cable of the 2nd East Surrey Regiment who died on 13th March 1915. Cable is buried in Wimereux Communal cemetery having been the first recorded case of someone dying of Dysentery which is caused by the strain of bacteria Shigella Flexneri known as NCTC1. Believe it or not the 'live culture' taken from him is still being used to find ways to combat the disease today.

<http://www.thelancet.com/multimedia>

see legacy of 1914-18 clip



HIBISCUS STEPHEN By Virginia Locke

Last year Steve assigned me to conduct a revisit to Rookwood Cemetery in Sydney, now the largest cemetery in the world with over 2 million burials.

One of those on my list was the name Hibiscus Stephen. I assumed the name was a typo and the correct name must be Stephen Hibiscus., after all, who would call their son Hibiscus?? I began a very long search for him. I almost gave up after not being able to find the section on any of my maps and having asked numerous office personnel and gardeners, none of whom knew the whereabouts of the section in which my fellow was laid to rest. After five visits and hours of wandering, I found the section. The gardeners warned me to beware of snakes, but in I went.

After two hours of bush bashing, I literally stumbled over the grave. After removing the dead tree and cleaning up the headstone it was finally legible and his name was indeed Hibiscus Stephen. Intrigued about him, I researched Hibiscus.



Hibiscus was 24 years of age when he enlisted in Sydney on 12 August 1915. He was an assistant stock keeper, single and living with his mother in Redfern, one of the inner suburbs of Sydney. Hibiscus, Service Number 3936, was allotted to 9th Reinforcements 17th Battalion and disembarked at Marseilles on 3 April 1916, taken on strength 3 August 1916. Three days later, on 6 August 1916, possibly at Pozieres, Hibiscus received a gunshot wound to his right thigh and leg and was transferred back to the Lord Derby Hospital, Warrington, England. On 20 June 1917, the Medical Report of an Invalid Form states his disability as "*Painful spasms of the right leg and foot present. Six operations performed on the sciatic nerve and one on the right posterior tibial to relieve this without result....External paralysis, inversion of foot, intermittent pain in foot, no evidence of any improvement yet....*"

On the 14 September 1917 notes on the form advise that the right leg has been amputated at the knee joint so Hibiscus was returned to Australia on 23 August 1917, on the No.2 Australian Hospital Ship, *Kanowna*.

I then located newspaper articles of Hibiscus' untimely, tragic death. *The Sydney Morning Herald* of 21 April 1919 reports that Hibiscus was found in his room bleeding profusely from a razor wound to the throat. He was conveyed to Sydney Hospital where life was pronounced extinct.

Another article of the day reported by the *Singleton Argus* on 24 April 1919, states that Hibiscus had been suffering from insomnia and influenza in the weeks leading to his death. The tragic futility of war and its consequences are evident in the life of death of this man. It was a privilege to photograph his grave and to perpetuate his memory. We honour you Hibiscus Stephen and thank you for your service to King and country.

AGUSTIV KINSMAN PEARCE 4823 – Michael Hollyman

Christened Gustave – Gus; as he was always known was born in Lauriston, Victoria Australia in 1896 – today Lauriston is just a dot on the map that represents 4 houses. In 1896 coming to the end of the mining boom Lauriston was the site of a large mine and its myriad employees and attendant apparatus. Gus was the last born of the children of John and Ellen Pearce and their third son. In the same year Gus was born his young 3 year old brother Earnest died. Earnest; playing with older boys who had ground up bottles into “sugar” - Earnest was induced to eat the “sugar” cocktail which cost him his life. Father; John Trenerry Pearce passed from mining induced lung disease - silicosis in 1909 and the Pearce family had to struggle through life without their major provider and bread winner. In June 1914 Gus was involved with cadets and in a court summons initiated by his Commanding Officer: Lt. Dettmann his squad was found guilty of not attending compulsory drills and there were also breaches of discipline. Gus was fined, for repeated offences – apparently some of the cause was being forced to parade in heavy uniforms for prolonged periods in hot weather. Gus’ attestation papers indicated he served 3 years in senior cadets and 3 years in Citizens Forces



'Gus' Pearce

Gus attestation papers indicate he enlisted and wrote his name as Augustive but his later attestation paper and acceptance shows he has varied this Agustiv – later challenged in his pay records but never adjusted for his commemorative plaque.

Gus was considered fit for active service on 17 January 1916. Around this time he had completed an apprenticeship as a printer for The Advocate; a newspaper in Ballarat and also fancied himself as a reporter of sorts. A close friend, Edward Dillon Floody who went to war in 1915 was repatriated to Australia after being wounded also fancied himself as a reporter and we retain a breadth of long diary type articles of their life and times via their mutual correspondence.

Arriving in Egypt the fight against the Turks was largely over and the boys were held in camp in Egypt before their fate was decided and they were identified for transit to Rolleston Camp on Salisbury Plain for further training prior to assignment. Gus was a signaller. During this time Gus was a prodigious letter writer home and his colourful accounts of what he got up to whilst on leave in London and his summary of the night the German airships first bombed London made good reading.

By 1917 Gus was at the front and on a fine sunny day – 21 Sept 1917 – whilst sheltering in a crater from a German barrage at Polygon Wood Gus; with two mates – David Culton and George Thomson were killed by a direct hit. Red Cross eye witness accounts indicate their fate. Gus now lies in Poecapelle British Cemetery in Belgium. For almost 100 years we had no images or much knowledge of Uncle Gus but his correspondence to his Mum just recently came into our hands. Apart from his physical description derived from his attestation / enlistment papers we are able to pay our respects to his service and commitment to our country with a number of photos and many diaries and letters.

Two decades out – Traci Ryland

We are often questioned about discrepancies on the engraving of headstones, predominantly the spelling of names but more often than not the date of death. Many of the family memorials we photograph here in UK have quite different dates than on the Commission headstone. The CWGC have now put a direct link on their site for families to submit proposed changes which is very useful to us as we can now just send the link.

Traci Rylands, in Carolina, USA sent us the headstone of Herman Wollacotte who was serving on HMS York in 1936 when he committed suicide whilst the ship was alongside in St Andrews. Unfortunately his headstone was engraved 1956, 20 years out. We have sent this one to the MoD to address.



How to survive being filmed for television – James Day

While you were watching the BBC coverage of the events and services on 4th August, commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the outbreak of the First War, you will have seen a short film slotted between the events in Belgium and Westminster Abbey. It briefly told the story of a VAD nurse, Una Duncanson, who was drowned off Alexandria in 1917 and whose name is on the panels of the Memorial Screen in York Minster, dedicated to the Women of WWI who died in the services.

This story was included owing to the suggestion and researches of James Day, one of our volunteer photographers. He is a Great Nephew of Una and has discovered a lot about her. This is how it happened

During my career in the BBC, I covered a lot of State and National Ceremonial occasions, including Trooping the Colour, The State Opening of Parliament, the Festival of Remembrance and many memorial events and anniversary services, from cathedrals and abbeys across the land and foreign fields too, like Thiepval, Bayeux and Arranches. I came to know the production teams that produce this excellent coverage and count them as my friends and colleagues.

The events of 4th August found me looking after the cameras in Glasgow Cathedral for the main Commonwealth Memorial service, to be held there in the late morning, after the end of the Commonwealth games the night before. As part of the planning for this, I was up there on a recce. in early June with the production team. As we relaxed with tea and cake after a lengthy meeting with the cathedral and local authority representatives, I casually suggested to Julie, the executive producer, that if ever she needed a short story for a filmed insert, there was always my Great Aunt Una! Hesitant initially, she asked me to send her all I knew.

So I sent off Una's life story; her volunteering as a VAD, initially as an assistant cook and bottle washer, then as a nurse; details of her train journey across war torn France and Italy to Taranto and then her untimely death by drowning aged 25, when her troopship hit a mine outside Alexandria on 31st Dec 1917. These came from a diary kept by Doris, her best friend, fellow VAD volunteer and travel companion, whose great nephew I had discovered via the internet. Several photos of her, her brothers Roy and Ian who were in the Army and had also been killed by then and of her grave and headstone in Hadra Cemetery in Egypt also went.



Julie was hooked and a researcher and producer were given the job of making the film. Many emails later, at least 51, it had been decided that they would film a piece with me in York Minster, early in the morning of 18th July. So tickets were provided for me to travel up by train the day before and we met in a hotel near the Minster for a drink and a short chat to finalise what would happen the next morning. We had to be in early before the Minster opened to the public, so Simon the cameraman shot the exteriors from 07:00 and at 08:00 we all met inside.

A shot of me walking up the centre aisle was first. Take 1 was good! Another travelling shot as I crossed the North Transept to the Screens was also Take 1! I should know what they want after a lifetime behind the camera I suppose. Then close ups of the names on the screens and various shots of me with them, pointing and so on. Then the tricky bit, where I was the subject, and questions were going to be asked. Lucid and intelligent answers were expected. I knew it was coming. I had thought of suitable words to expected questions, but somehow that all sort of vanishes and you make it up at the time. Most of it was suitable. A couple of short retakes to make me look less foolish and it was done.

Over the next two weeks further emails told me the editing was looking good and I had come across very well.

On the day of transmission, I was in Glasgow and because the only plane back to Gatwick that suited me was in the evening, I was still in the air when the story went out. I knew this would probably happen, but could not set the recorder as the actual time was unknown till too late. So eventually I watched myself on You tube! I was happy with my own contribution, but more importantly I was very pleased that we had done Una justice in our telling of her story. Many people have since told me they saw it and complimented me on a moving tribute to Una.

The main presenter of that day's programmes was Huw Edwards and his main guest was Shirley Williams. She loved the piece and Huw said it was his favorite film insert of the day.

Now I am tempting them with the follow up stories of Una's brothers; Roy who died at the Somme and Ian at Passchendaele. The BBC has programmes planned for both anniversaries!

A Pier Head Jump! – (short notice call of duty) – Alec Briggs

From: steve@twgpp.org
To: ma****88@hotmail.com; A** .*****n@glasgow.gov.uk
CC: ajbriggs50@hotmail.com
Subject: RE: Cathedral Invitees
Date: Tue, 29 Jul 2014 19:41:25 +0100

*"Alec, I received an invite today to attend a ceremony in Glasgow cathedral on Monday. At this short notice I cannot make it but was wondering if you might like to go and represent TWGPP. A*** needs your address and DoB by tomorrow if you can make it?"*

Centenary of the First World War - Glasgow Cathedral - Service for the Commonwealth

So no rush then, this was a message I received from Steve on the Tuesday evening prior to Monday 4th August. HM Government taking advantage of the Heads of the Commonwealth being in Glasgow for the Games were to hold the above service at 10:00 Monday 4th August.

Steve had, typically, done more than was asked of him in helping the organisers from Glasgow City Council who were researching the commemoration, in return he had been included in their guest list in recognition of TWGPP efforts. Due to Central Government clearance for all the attendees the invitations did not get posted until the very last minute. Every Cloud as they say!!!

To say I felt privileged is an understatement, it was an honour to be asked to go and represent TWGPP. We had Wednesday, Thursday and Friday to communicate the relevant information, get clearance, produce the invites, post them and have them delivered to Inveraray. Now Inveraray is not the end of the world.... But the post does sometimes take a back seat to landslides, fires and unexploded bombs. (only because the postman is deputy chief at the Fire Station). So I gave all the information as requested and we agreed I would collect the invitation in person from the Glasgow City Chambers on the Friday.

The instructions for attending were lengthy, detailed and as one would be subjected to a high level of security, combined with the road closures, no available parking, a clear recommendation not to drive into Glasgow on Monday 4th, and strict timetable were not something for the faint hearted.



Service Timetable

08:00-08:30 Arrival of Guests at St Mungo's Museum for security screening

09:30 All congregation in Cathedral

10:00 Service begins

10:50 Service concludes

11:00 Guests leave from Cathedral

Inveraray to Glasgow is approx. 65 miles, to be there for 8:00am, where to park etc etc . So I left home at 6:15 and drove into the centre of Glasgow on the clearest roads I have ever experienced, drove straight into the Buchanan Galleries car park which was empty and walked along Cathedral Street to St Mungo's.....07:35!!



Sorry sir you can't come in until 08:00, at which point a group of old soldiers arrived , some with walking sticks some quite infirm, so I said to the young uniformed lad on the door, "you can't ask these guys to stand out here for 15 minutes" at which point a more senior uniformed official appeared and waved everyone inside. The options were coffee or security, which in theory didn't open for another 20 minutes. I chose security and found myself stood outside the Cathedral in the courtyard with the advice someone will meet you and show you where to go at 07:50!!!

After a couple of minutes a lady came up to me and asked where we should be going as she had been given the same advice. We talked for a couple of minutes introduced ourselves and realised it was not the warmest of mornings.

My new acquaintance Isabel and I wandered down to the side entrance to the Cathedral to be met by one of the Cathedral staff who said "come in find a seat, yes you can sit anywhere which doesn't have a reserve sign" " really anywhere"?..... so Isabel and I sat in the front row in the seats next to the Commonwealth Choir. Time 07:55. Isabel kept wondering whether someone would come and ask us to move, I said relax, they don't know who we are, they won't ask.



We chatted about TWGPP and why I was there, we chatted about her two great uncles lost in WW1, about how the youngest one, when marching away to war, had broken rank to get a last love from his mum, slipped in the cobbles and was yanked back in line, never getting a last love from his mum.

We talked about the other one who had been killed and never found. We talked about Isabel's mum being at the 50 year Service at the same Cathedral. Isabel was on the invite list as both her great uncles are on the Cathedral Roll of Honour. She was fascinated that we volunteers at TWGPP spend our time photographing the final resting places of so many loved ones. At 08:53 four young women serving with the Navy in Edinburgh arrived and asked if it was Ok to sit next to us, we of course agreed and at long last Isabel started to relax.

We spent the next 30 minutes spotting famous and not so famous faces arriving, proceeding past us through to the nave. Funny how some politicians look smaller than you expect. Cameron, Clegg, Milliband, Salmond, etc. Heads of Commonwealth countries we tried to guess from their national dress. HRH Prince Imran, President of the Commonwealth Games Federation, the guy who struggled with the torch at the opening ceremony. Isabel recognised him, smiled and said hello, like ladies of a certain age and confidence do, she was rewarded by a huge smile and hello. Finally Prince Charles, Duke of Rothesay arrived and we were nearly ready to start.

No sermon - Prayers, Hymns sung with great vigour.

Trevor McDonald was MC, readings from Sadie Docherty, Lord Lieutenant of Glasgow, Gordon Campbell High Commissioner of Canada, Captain Edward J Howell, and Private Dillon Rae - Royal Regiment of Scotland, Ranjan Mathai High Commissioner of India, Kate Adie, David Cameron, Sir Peter Cosgrove Governor General of Australia, Sir Jerry Mateparae Governor General of New Zealand, Mr Kamallesh Sharma Commonwealth Secretary General.

Then came a moving reading by a young woman from the Royal Conservatoire Scotland, Joanne Thomson, reading of a piece by Helen Thomas about the last night together with her husband, poet Edward Thomas.

In handing over to today's youth the Minister Rev. Dr Laurence Whitley, introduced another young woman from Dunbar Grammar School, Kirsten Fell.



She moved the entire Cathedral, more than anyone else, with a piece she had written herself following a visit to Poelcappelle Cemetery the previous year as a 15 year old. She told us of the 81% of the thousands who lay there are "known unto god", about how they had been told to stand in front of a grave of their choice and imagine their soldier, give him a name, an appearance and a personality. She told us how she still thinks of her soldier lying in Poelcappelle Cemetery, her life has never been the same since, but she did it for his loved ones who had never been able to visit.

I felt Isabel holding back her emotions, I thought about the first time I'd taken photographs for our project and started photographing "A soldier of the great war" in the middle of a row, after the third it dawned on me that, they were all the same and a picture wasn't going to help anyone, I felt stupid at the time. I realised how the teacher at Dunbar Grammar School had done something for a lost soldier which had meant so much to Kirsten Fell.

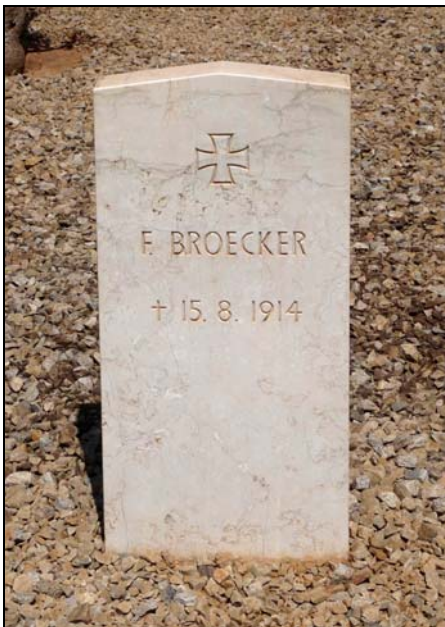
A minutes silent reflection.

We sat and watched the dignitaries leave, I walked Isabel across to the lunch reception held for Cathedral attendees, and she said I think it's a wonderful thing you and your friends are doing, I don't know where one of my uncles died and I nearly lost it when that young girl was speaking, but thank you for looking after me I've really enjoyed this morning.

I really enjoyed it too and although we can't do anything for those "known unto god" we can all be proud of what we do to help those looking for their long lost loved ones.

The outbreak of the First World War was declared in Britain on 4 August 1914 but the first the settlers in the colony of British East Africa now Kenya knew about it was the following day when the Governor Sir Henry Belfield made a proclamation in the local newspaper, stating '*I do hereby declare that war has broken out between England and Germany*'. The news spread rapidly around the colony and it wasn't long before dozens of settlers arrived in Nairobi anxious to take on the '*Hun next door*' as German East Africa now Tanzania, was the neighbouring colony sharing a common border running from Lake Victoria to the east African coast.

Nairobi was ill-prepared for war and a state of chaos existed in the capital and settlers resorted to raising the roof at various well known watering holes. However in this state of gung ho euphoria it was decided that the Uganda Railway, lifeline of the colony, needed protection and settlers formed themselves into groups with interesting names such as Bowker's Horse and Cole's Scouts. Despite the disorganisation these groups of men performed admirably and were later amalgamated to become the East African Mounted Rifles.



Nothing war like occurred until the early hours of the 15 August 1914 when a German patrol of around 200 Schutztruppe (Colonial Protection Force) composed of European and African troops crossed the border heading for the small township of Taveta. Shots fired during the initial skirmish at the border post alerted the British commissioner La Fontaine who leaned out the police post window and fired the opening shots of the war in East Africa wounding the first German European soldier Friedrich Broecker. Broecker died later that day and his grave lies in the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery at Taveta.

La Fontaine hurriedly evacuated the township with his small force and marched twenty miles through the bush back to Maktau, a small British outpost.

With the abandonment of Taveta a substantial amount of British territory was lost to the Germans who under the command of Colonel Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck began to dig in and reinforce their gains and it was not long before they began to attack the main railway from Mombasa to Nairobi.

They were extremely successful and attacked the line fifty-six times in six months, derailing trains and causing serious delays. Following the disastrous seaborne landing at the port of Tanga in German East Africa in November 1914, the Allied command drew up plans for a land invasion of the enemy colony. In February 1915 Lord Kitchener sanctioned construction of a metre gauge railway from Voi towards Taveta. Voi was a major town a hundred miles inland from Mombasa and here thousands of tons of railway material and military supplies were stock piled for the thrust towards the German border. One of the main reasons for a railway were the monsoon rains which quickly turned a dry dusty track into a virtually impassable morass. The line progressed slowly eventually reaching Maktau in June 1915. The small outpost rapidly grew to be one of the largest military camps in East Africa.

The Germans had meanwhile advanced further into British territory from Taveta and established a major vantage point on top of Salaita Hill and further on at Mbuyuni, where they dug hundreds of yards of trenches and defences.

They were now less than a day's ride from Maktau. A pitched battle occurred here in July 1915, which the Allies lost. To help with patrolling the line, four Rolls Royce armoured cars were brought to the railhead. Their habit of rushing through the bush with Vickers machine gun blazing unnerved the German askari who nicknamed them *Kifaru* or Rhinoceros in Swahili. The Germans continued their attacks on the railway and one of these incursions led to an action in which Lt. Dartnell was subsequently awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross. (See *Britain at War No.6, May 2012. An East African V.C.*)

The campaign moved into German East Africa in March 1916 and later into Portuguese East Africa and dragged on until November 1918 when Lettow-Vorbeck surrendered on the 25 November, fourteen days after the Armistice. He had been unaware of the wars ending until notified by letter from the commanding officer of the Allied force.

After the war the military line from Voi to Taveta fell into disuse and it wasn't until the 1920s that the line became part of the railway system. Over the years the site of the camps and battles were overgrown and forgotten. In the 1970s and 80s the author made a number of trips to the area and located large amounts of battlefield debris and fortifications. Others followed including long term friend James Willson, who explored and recorded the military sites. His findings produced an excellent book published this year entitled '*Guerillas of Tsavo*'.



It was through James's efforts that the local Taita-Taveta district council members realised the potential of attracting visitors to the area to see the sites of conflicts long ago. To mark the First World War centenary a number of events were planned in the area including a commemoration of the first shots fired in the campaign on 15 August 2014. A cemetery information plaque provided by the War Graves Commission was unveiled by the Deputy Governor of the Taita-Taveta region Her Excellency Mary Ndigho assisted by Mr Rod Carkett, the CWGC regional manager.

The Taveta ceremony was well attended by local dignitaries, tribal elders, the town's people and the Kenya Regiment Association members. The latter was the last colonial regiment formed in 1937 and disbanded on Kenya's independence in 1963. The members held an initial remembrance at Voi CWG cemetery where a wreath was laid at the Cross of Sacrifice and the grave of Lt. Wilbur Dartnell V.C. Also in attendance was the cemetery curator Wanchira who at 93 is the longest serving employee of this illustrious organisation who still tends the graves of the fallen.

Testament of Youth – Film release January 2015

At the time of writing the newsletter I have not checked out the Christmas viewing on TV but as I am not into baking, moving house, dancing (except the 'Matelot two step shuffle'), skating, or anything that is prefixed with the word 'Celebrity', I guess I'll not be watching much? Perhaps I'll get some film tokens and can treat Sandra to a 'Weepy' and extortionate priced popcorn?



Articles for the next newsletter, due in April 2015, should be sent via e mail to steve@twgpp.org



THE WAR GRAVES
PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECT