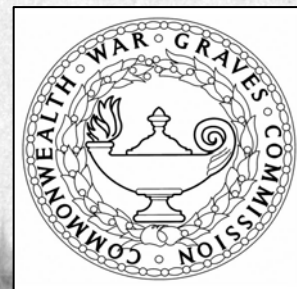


# The War Graves Photographic Project

In association with  
The CWGC  
[www.twgpp.org](http://www.twgpp.org)



## News from the Front line

September 2008

### Steve Rogers, Project Co-ordinator

The summer months have not gone quite to plan for me which has had it's pro's and con's. For those attending the Market Garden trip they will recall me hobbling around a bit and although just turned 50, I was walking in manner more appropriate for more senior years. A third visit to the doctor on return confirmed what I had known for two months before in that I had snapped my Achilles tendon (long story!). The 2cm gap in it had to be repaired so I found myself in hospital and laid up for 12 weeks in plaster and a rigid boot towards the end (still not there yet!).

The benefit of this was that at least I could get in front of the PC and update the Project but the major downside was that my insurers would not cover me for a 'known defect' for the Gallipoli trip taking place in September. The chances of doing further damage and having to pay my own way to stay in a Turkish hospital and flight home was prohibitive so whilst I am enthusiastic for those still going in a couple of weeks that 'Green envy goblin' sits firmly on my shoulder.

What has amazed me though about this enforced period at home is the time I have had to work on project, which runs into many hours. Normally starting early in the morning to last thing at night, this has not really bitten into the backlog of getting images uploaded to site. It was the intention to try and get as many UK counties up over this period but sheer volume has prevented this. For example it took all day just to get the large cemeteries in Birmingham uploaded. With Derek working on his counties including France and Belgium he has got all images in Belgium up and now working on France. Vernon assisted on Dorset and I have been jumping around (not literally) all over the world.

Volume of images being received throughout the summer has been enormous so we are trying (successfully) to get these images up immediately to prevent further backlog but if not at least the default picture is loaded up with the listing to show that these are available.

Really too many to mention to list all those that have sent CD's, DVD's & Memory sticks in to us but all are appreciated especially those now being forwarded by the CWGC and Australian DVA offices world wide. Volunteers in the Netherlands have been 'getting on their bikes' whilst others are spending much of their 'quality family time' on holiday at the local war cemetery !

The total of images available on site at the time of writing this stands at 927000 but by the time we get to November 11<sup>th</sup> this year and Remembrance Day I believe we will have cracked the 1 million figure which is all down to the continued support all our volunteers give. Thank you.



Yes this is the 'Office' and not a plush City venue as some people think we have! (the Cushion is not mine!)

## A last request from Australia

The concept of starting our project, as we know, was to enable families to obtain a photo of a loved ones grave where the years and distance have prevented a personal visit. As we have seen from the many 'thank you' letters, recipients are always most grateful for the work being carried out by our team. However, we do on occasions try to go that extra mile when we do not hold an image and the following article describes one such case.

*"This is a photo of my grandmother Isabella Lindsay. She has asked for one last request before she dies– she is turning 99 in November - born in 1909. Her only regret is that she has never been able to see her father's grave - he died when she was 9 or 10 in France and we live in Australia. She has lived for 90 years without seeing his grave. She is not one to ask for much. She is a survivor, lost her father, her family home burnt down in Scotland, emigrating to Australia when she was 11 with her mother and four sisters, had no education, she had to care for her younger ill brother, she lived with little and has given so much – I would like to give something back. It is Bella's last request that she can see her father's grave. It would help her get some closure. Can you help ?? Or do you know who I can contact for the information?? Many thanks. Leonie Sinclair.*



Petty Officer WILLIAM LINDSAY of Drake Battalion Royal Naval Division died on 14<sup>th</sup> October 1918. He was the husband of Mrs W Lindsay who lived at 47 South Street, Lochgelly in Fife and was buried in St. Pol British Cemetery at St Pol Sur Ternois, France.

For those that know the area St Pol is a bit off the beaten track and not a location that people tend to travel through on the way to the battlefields of the Somme. TWGPP had not completed the cemetery and the nearest volunteer (away on hols) was probably in Arras. We did have another volunteer, not exactly local but 300km away but Laurence did volunteer to drive the distance to get the picture requested. There had to be an easier way so Laurence contacted two local newspapers as it was considered newsworthy that here was a lady of 99 years that would like to see her fathers' grave from WW1.

After a few e mails Claire COUILLEZ-BROUET, a journalist of LA VOIX DU NORD said that she would like to do an article so it was arranged via Laurence that we would fund some flowers to be laid on Williams grave on Bella's' behalf.

All went to plan and within a few days we were able to forward the pictures as requested. Obviously Bella was most happy to see the pictures albeit a sad occasion for her as well.

Thanks to Laurence for organising and acting as interpreter.





## Editorial – Pauline Pedersen

Jim & I have had an embarrassment of holidays so far this year: the Lake District, Spain, canal narrow boat, Greece and France. Regrettably though, not many headstones to photograph as we were either in the wrong place or they had been 'mopped up' in that location. Commenting on this to the offspring they said 'Hold on, what about Holland, and Gallipoli to come?' 'Those are not holidays, those are work', we replied. 'Not so!' was their response. Maybe they have a point!

So, continuing this theme, we're featuring a number of stories from volunteers who have also managed to combine so-called work with pleasure during their holidays. Each one most definitely proves that 'persistence pays off'.

Elsewhere in the Newsletter there will be the usual batch of 'Thank You' messages which have come to Steve. In addition I thought I would pass on this rather nice comment which came my way from someone who read the Operation Market Garden Supplement - '*Your group do see the world with good purpose.*'

Don't forget this year's annual meeting: Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> November: venue Royal Air Force Museum, Cosford, Shifnal, Shropshire. Booking Form attached with the Newsletter. See you there, hopefully.

## A Holiday to Remember - Anne Edwards



"Oh" was the usual reply accompanied by raised eyebrows. "You are going on holiday to photograph headstones?". I could understand this initial response from anyone who was not aware of the wonderful job being done by The War Graves Photographic Project. I happened upon the site two years ago and as I knew how much it means to see where a loved one lies and was also grateful for the sacrifices made by previous generations it was an ideal way to give something back.

This was my second such trip along with my husband Tony (driver) and brother Les (admin) and we chose Calvados in Normandy, France. As I was the only photographer it was a better use of our time to seek out the remote spots with only a few graves so we picked out 29 sites. I enjoyed sorting these into manageable groups and downloading information from the CWGC site so that we could locate them. Routes were planned and maps printed.

We then had a fantastic week driving through the French countryside, getting lost at times; hardly seeing a soul and picnicking in areas well off the beaten track. Most of the graves were in village churchyards with a few in Communal Cemeteries. They were well tended and most had flowers and tributes from the grateful locals. We left a Remembrance Cross on each. All but a few sites had only one grave and it was moving to see the young men buried alongside the people that they had come to liberate. We had harboured doubts that we could achieve the task we had set ourselves and at times when we were lost those doubts seemed well founded. Dad was a commando though and giving up was not an option, anyway we owed it to each of the families to let them see their particular corner of France.



There was a great sense of achievement at a job well done and satisfaction in knowing that the photos are on the website if they are requested.

If you are thinking of volunteering but are not sure then I urge you to have a go. Without the project we would not have seen the areas that we did and the planning and navigating added to the enjoyment. There is plentiful help and support available from the organisers if needed. It was not all work either, the scenery and local produce contributed to the holiday.

## A visit to Figueras and Barcelona, Spain - Trevor and Jocelyn Bridge

After recently completing our first assignment for TWGPP, a mini-expedition to south-east France to photograph the war graves in the Aude, Aveyron and Herault departments, we realised that our forthcoming short holiday in Spain might provide an opportunity to visit cemeteries there. As we suspected there are few Commonwealth burials in Spain, but upon looking at the spreadsheet we found two cemeteries reasonably close to where we were travelling through; we live in the Charente department of south-west France and were visiting Cataluña.

We agreed to go to Figueras Municipal Cemetery and Barcelona (Montjuich) Cemetery.

Figueras Cemetery was found relatively easily and, using the CWGC location information, we soon came across the war grave which is set in a traditional Spanish niche. It is the burial place of Brigadier Reginald Miles CBE DSO and Bar MC, Mentioned in Despatches. He was a WW2 casualty, aged 50, who also served in WW1. As with the parts of south-east France that we had recently visited, Spain is an area with relatively few war graves and it makes one think about why members of the armed forces came to be in such areas remote from the major theatres of war and what had happened to them.



The CWGC recommends that due to its very large size, the **Barcelona Municipal Cemetery** authority should be contacted prior to visiting as help is required in finding the grave. It was only upon arrival at the cemetery that we realised the importance of this advice – it is absolutely immense and situated on different levels of a hill. Left to our own devices we would probably have spent days trying to locate the grave.

I found a great deal of information about the cemetery on the internet and through the Barcelona City Council website I found details of the *Cementiris de Barcelona SA*. Whilst I live in France, and speak reasonable French, my Spanish is virtually non-existent; it enables me to say little more than please, thank you and to order a beer. It was therefore with some trepidation that I picked up the telephone and dialled the number of the cemetery authority. I was, however, quickly put through to someone who spoke good English and who was also extremely helpful when I explained the reason for our visit.

A day or two later we received a letter of authority allowing us to photograph the grave, written in English, which we showed to the receptionist at the cemetery administrative building upon our arrival. Using the CWGC location details they quickly located the grave by computer. Then, after hearing that we had arrived by taxi and so were unable to drive around the cemetery, to our utter amazement, the receptionist summoned an employee who led us out to a car, drove us over to the Protestant Section and then walked us down to the grave. We were given a most interesting running commentary on this immense and historic cemetery during the drive and were also kindly offered a lift back, which we declined; we felt they had done more than enough to help and did not want to take advantage of their generosity.

The grave here is of Private Charles Hill who died on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1941. His brother John also died on service fourteen days earlier and is buried in Cervera Cemetery, also in Spain.

After taking our photographs we returned and thanked the people in the administration building for what we thought was an exceptional service; it can't be very often that a cemetery provides a personal car and chauffeur to visit a grave!



## It's not all for profit – Norman Smith

During a 'revisit' to Egglecliffe St. John the Baptist church in County Durham Norman Smith, who has covered a large proportion of the North East cemeteries, eventually found one of the 'Not founds' commemorating 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant A Braithwaite RFC. Although not a CWGC pattern stone it had lain broken and flat on its face for a number of years. Turning it over (taking correct lifting precautions!) it revealed an elaborate stone that was in danger of being thrown into a skip as the church was being restored and the builders were on site. Norman took the initiative and enquired about saving the stone somehow rather than it being discarded as part of the restoration rubble.

To his surprise the builders on site actually offered to repair the stone by inserting two steel pins into the base which was still in situ then using a resin type 'glue' stuck the two halves together after drilling the top portion to accept the pins. The job was completed over a two day period to allow the bond to set and now Norman is very proud having initiated the repair and not being asked to pay for it!



*By Steve – I'd give the builders a mention but don't know the name!*



## Repatriation? 90 Years On - John Sutherland

For some time now I have had close links with the leper (99 Ypres) area of Belgium, having spent a lot of time and effort raising the money to have a memorial raised to all of Scots descent who fought in Flanders in WW1. This came to a conclusion in August 2007 when a large Celtic Cross was unveiled on the Frezenberg between leper and Zonnebeke. Whilst involved in this project I noticed that there was one Belgian grave in the cemetery at Fulford here in York, and both my wife and I occasionally visited to put a cross or poppy on the grave to ensure that he was not forgotten. About a year ago I noticed that the stone was very badly cracked, and if it went through a bad winter, would surely disintegrate. I e mailed one of my Belgian friends, and was soon put in touch with the person responsible for Belgian war graves. Fortunately one of my acquaintances in Belgium is curator of the Passchendaele 1917 Museum in Zonnebeke, who upon hearing that the gravestone was in danger of collapse and urgently needed replacement very quickly let me know that he wanted it for the museum.

Towards the end of last summer, the CWGC replaced the headstone, and very kindly conveyed the old one from York to Zonnebeke, so just shortly before the 90th Anniversary of his death, the original headstone of Soldat Georges G Pieters 10/08/1893 -25/02/1917 made its way back to Belgium, and is now on display in the museum.





## Volunteering in Northamptonshire & Norfolk - Lizbeth & Kevin Crow

As part of the project's remit to revisit cemeteries some volunteers have been out and about trying to 'fill the gaps'. Not always successful but with secateurs in hand some of the elusive gravestones can be found albeit trying to hide behind vegetation. Here are Liz and Kevin Crow's experiences -

Sometimes things get very difficult for the County volunteers. I've been trying to put the finishing touches to Northamptonshire over the summer months. It seemed a simple enough task- 'just a few to get in the Peterborough area' according to my regional co-ordinator. Hubby and I found the cemetery in Peterborough relatively easily as it was **huge**. We had wondered why another volunteer had taken photos of some of the headstones but not of others?



It's in here somewhere!



After a bit of effort and with Kevin holding back the brambles we had another ticked off. Needless to say, there are still some headstones to be located at this particular cemetery- any volunteers?????!!

'Any cemeteries left in Norfolk?' seemed a simple enough question! Kevin and I fancied long summer drives and thought this county was well in our reach for a day run. 'How many do you want?' was the reply. We settled for a few scattered along the western edge and set out to take photos. We had the whole day so should find loads.....that is if you don't have to get out of your car and walk miles down footpaths to find the church on a private estate.....that is if you don't get lost and find only a toad to ask for directions...

...that is if you can find Stowe Bardolph at all or when you do, you then find the Holy Trinity Churchyard instead of St Peters which is on the spreadsheet.....that is if you can find anyone in this remote area to ask if there are two churches...or two Stowe Bardolphs... that is if it is Stowe Bardolph at all as there is a St Peters in Stow Bridge... Is that dusk falling? Well, here's to another day!

RAIN. Never mind it might be dry by the time we get to Norfolk...More RAIN. Well there are 25 headstones in Marham cemetery so we will get out the broly and go hunting... It is good to have some success in a day.

I'm sure the name Thorburn rings a bell-yes. I'd previously found this guy in Longthorpe, Northamptonshire as well!

What are the chances of a volunteer living in Northamptonshire finding the same person in Norfolk when cemeteries are given at random? Spooky.



## I've Just Got To Have One More Go ... Louise Butler

In June I returned from my holiday in the Camargue and my mission to locate and photograph the graves in St Remy de Provence and Senas in the Bouches de Rhone.

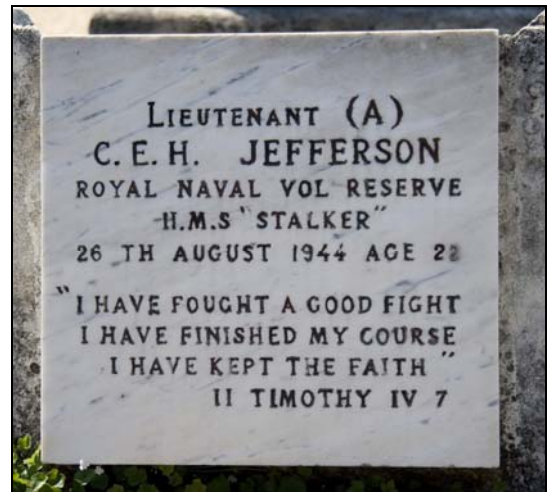
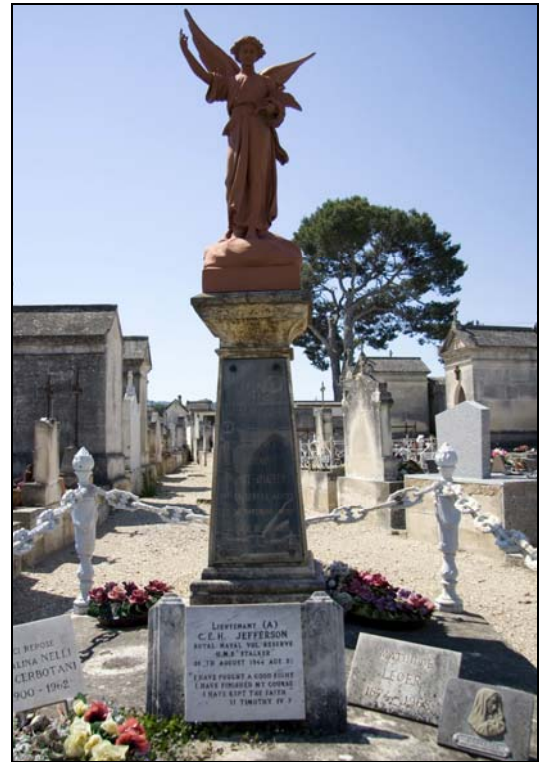
We set off from the coast at 9 in the morning and by 10 am the temperature was already pushing 100 degrees. I spent a very hot and sticky half hour searching without success for the graveyard at Senas while my two year old son had a tantrum! I found some friendly locals and explained my task and enlisted their help in finding the grave of Edmond Delteil as the grave was not on the south boundary as suggested on the CWGC site. They directed me to the oldest area of the cemetery and I, my husband, two grumpy children, two elderly French ladies and one elderly French man set off on the hunt.

I spotted it quickly and the elderly ladies were overjoyed! The grave is a huge family one with a special plaque dedicated to Edmond Delteil, including a small photograph of him which is badly weather worn. Edmond is mentioned twice on the grave; the plaque translates as "To our son, Edmond Delteil, Lieutenant Pilot, killed doing his duty, 27th October 1918, age 19 years".

Having been waved off and wished good luck by my lovely French helpers we drove on to St Remy de Provence, where a huge art market was in full swing on the main streets - complete chaos! We found the tourist information office and were directed to the cemetery which was close by. I got out of the car and peered into the first cemetery I came to. "Oh, my god, you have got to be kidding!" I said to no-one in particular. This place was enormous and there were four cemeteries in total and I didn't know which one Charles Jefferson was in. My husband attempted to amuse the children by the car while I traipsed off in the searing heat in the vain hope of striking lucky. But I didn't. Up and down the rows I went but I realised that I could spend the whole day looking and probably put myself in hospital with heatstroke, not to mention my husband filing for divorce for neglect!

I tried to find the cemetery concierge; his office was open but he was nowhere to be found. I had to eventually admit defeat due to the heat. I got back in the car and we drove off. I was so upset. Five minutes later I said to my husband, "Turn the car round, I've got to just have one more go - a ten minute search and I promise that's it". So, back we went. I said, "Just pull up next to that far entrance and I'll give that section a go". I walked up and down scanning row after row of enormous family tombs then I spotted a beautiful russet coloured statue of an angel almost ten feet up in the air above one of the tombs. I looked down, and there he was - Charles Jefferson. His plaque was at the base of the angel. I couldn't believe my luck. I yelled to my husband who was also searching frantically, "I'VE FOUND IT" ! Probably not the correct and dignified behaviour for a graveyard but I was elated.

Charles Jefferson was a pilot with the Royal Navy, 809 Squadron, and he was killed in an air crash during the aerial reconnaissance for Operation Dragoon - the allied invasion of the South of France. As it is very unusual for a British airman to be buried in a seemingly unrelated family's grave there must be an interesting story behind this. I assume that he possibly crashed and was found by a member of the Leger family and for some reason his remains are with that family rather than being repatriated to the UK. I am hoping I may be able to uncover more information, maybe even contact members of the Leger family who will be able to tell me the story. Who knows..?





## Thank you – Excerpts from the mail box

Thank you so much . It means a great deal. It was very emotional seeing the picture, and I know my Mum back in the UK will be equally moved. To all of you at the TWGPP, a huge thank you for the wonderful work that you do keeping the memories of the fallen alive for the families and generations to come. Warmest Regards, Sandy Meyer, Canada

Receipt of all items gratefully acknowledged and much surprised at swiftness ! I applaud you and all involved in your great project. George Hendry

What wonderful work. Thank you so much. I am sure you have heard stories like this before, this is my Mother's brother. She died 2 years ago, she dreamed her whole life of seeing his grave. I wish I had found your website sooner. God bless you. Carolyn Seals

Good morning. I could never thank you enough, This means so much to my mum and myself .Again....thank you. Jackie

**Thanks again . Like I said earlier...you guys are the best. I really do appreciate the effort put forth. Could you kindly pass my thanks on to the photographer. And I'll be in touch. Salutations, Ron Frigo**

Thanks a mill for the photo. The Family haven't known where the grave was located for very long so it is so wonderful to finally be able to see it. Hopefully soon we can get the Family together long enough to organise a visit there. It's an amazing service you guys provide, Keep up all the great work. Thanks again. Tara

I would like to thank you very much, for sending me the photo of my great uncle Anthony Carr's name on the Thiepval memorial. It quite knocked me sick in a strange way. I have that 'passed on' deep sadness via my mother of my grandmother's deep mourning for her beloved brother. There mustn't have been a family in the land who wasn't affected by the loss of a relative back then. All a sad waste. I have shown the photos to my family and they are pretty impressed too. I have enclosed a photo of Anthony just to put a face to a name. he was a gentle Durham coal miner but son of a grocery family in Quarrington Hill Durham. Thanks again, I shall recommend your service to others in the line of family research. Regards from Carol Rogan.

Thank you for these truly beautiful images, they mean so much to me.

I have just received the photo of Charles Glover's grave. Thank you so much. I just wish my mother was still around to see it. They were sweetheart's when she was in the WAAFS.I still have her photographs of him, what a handsome chap he was too. Anyway I just want to say what a wonderful job this is what you do. It can put a final closure on a tragedy for most people. So once again, thank you. June.

## Where am I – where should I be ?



We have all had that experience of “am I in the right place”. In my early days I went to the village of Compton in Sussex in search of one gravestone that was required and after spending a good hour in the churchyard was feeling defeated. One of the churchgoers clearing a grave asked me who I was a looking for, a name unknown in the village and suggested that I should have been in Compton ‘Hampshire’.

To alleviate minor deviations like mine the CWGC are now in the process of plotting the locations of all its cemeteries using Global Positioning or SATNAV (Satellite Navigation). When this is fully implemented and providing you have a hand held display unit or one fitted in your car you can be confident that when you arrive at Gallipoli Cemetery in Italy you weren't meant to be in Gallipoli Turkey.

To help the CWGC in compiling the data, if you have the facility to record GPS at a cemetery please do so and forward the information via Steve at TWGPP. Every little helps!

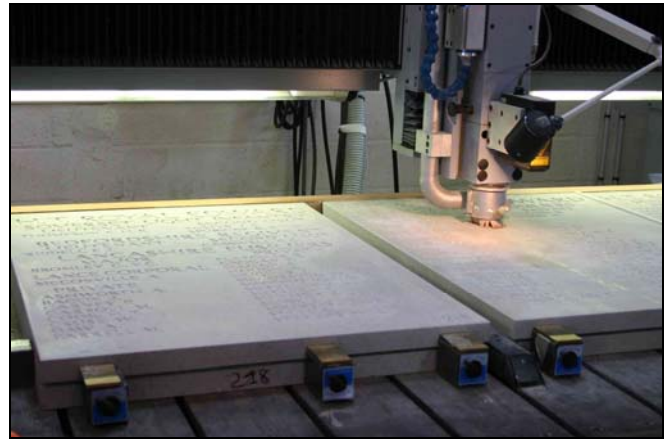


## A visit to Beaurains – Andrew Waldron

As a volunteer photographer covering Finistère in Brittany for TWGPP, I was overjoyed when a close member of my family announced that he was going to work for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in France. Quite a coincidence! As soon as I had the chance, I drove the 700 kilometres from the western-most point of France to Arras in the Nord-Pas de Calais to see how he was getting on but before leaving, I thought it would be an ideal opportunity to find out a bit more about the work of the Commission. I have always been intrigued to see even isolated graves so well cared-for, not to mention the architectural and horticultural beauty of the CWGC cemeteries I had often visited in Normandy. So I looked up the Commission's website : <http://www.cwgc.org>

**“For Eternity”** - All CWGC sites are “lasting and dignified tributes” to the Commonwealth soldiers who gave their lives during the First and Second World Wars. The Commission maintains throughout the world over a million war graves as well as hundreds of memorials honouring the 750,000 war dead who have no known grave.

**“Dedication”** - The headstones, memorials, buildings and gardens are kept in pristine condition by regular maintenance and only top quality materials and experienced craftsmen are used. The Commission employs specialist builders, masons and gardeners and runs its own workshops where many of the replacement headstones are made. Everyone I met during my visit was proud to be part of such a dedicated team.



The French headquarters of the CWGC at Beaurains in Arras are particularly important given that 30% of all British and Commonwealth war graves are in France. Arras is a logical choice as there is a huge concentration of cemeteries and memorials in the region, with literally hundreds of sites, mostly commemorating First World War casualties. So I was really looking forward to the visit.

Not only is Arras the administration centre for France, but it is also a centre for maintenance and repair with workshops for iron-work, stone engraving, sign-making and carpentry. To my surprise, I discovered that the CWGC in Arras supplies the headstones and signposts to cemeteries worldwide. I was also impressed by the scale of the operation : with over 700 employees in France, the Commission cares for 1491 cemeteries and 18 memorials !



There is also a permanent programme to replace headstones – my guide during the visit pointed out that it would be helpful if TWGPP volunteers could inform the CWGC of any degradation ( wear, deterioration or vandalism) they notice during their photographic assignments.

So now the reason for my visit : Peter Metcalfe, my brother-in-law, was recently appointed as Area Works Supervisor for the Nord Pas de Calais and Somme areas. He will take over from Daniel Dumont, a former engineer in the French army, when Daniel retires later this year.

A Senior NCO in the Royal Engineers, Peter moved on to become a clerk of works in local government and on MOD building projects. His biggest challenge with the CWGC ? Being proud of his work and making sure that *“there’s only the best for our boys”*.

Peter’s responsibilities include surveying and maintaining all the CWGC sites in his area (checking the fabric and structure of buildings and walls of all CWGC cemeteries and memorials).

His job also includes assistance at military funerals (at the time of writing this article, the remains of 2 Gloucester Regiment servicemen will be laid to rest in Somme cemeteries).

With special thanks to Mr Alan Jarvis (Works Manager) and Mr Roger Bird (Deputy Works Manager) and the staff of the CWGC Arras for making this visit possible.



Peter Metcalf (left) with Daniel Dumont



The War Graves Photographic Project is a voluntary organisation and can only achieve its aim of photographing all of the war graves around the world by voluntary action. If you feel that you would like to help us in this task, please contact us at:

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