



# THE WAR GRAVES PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECT



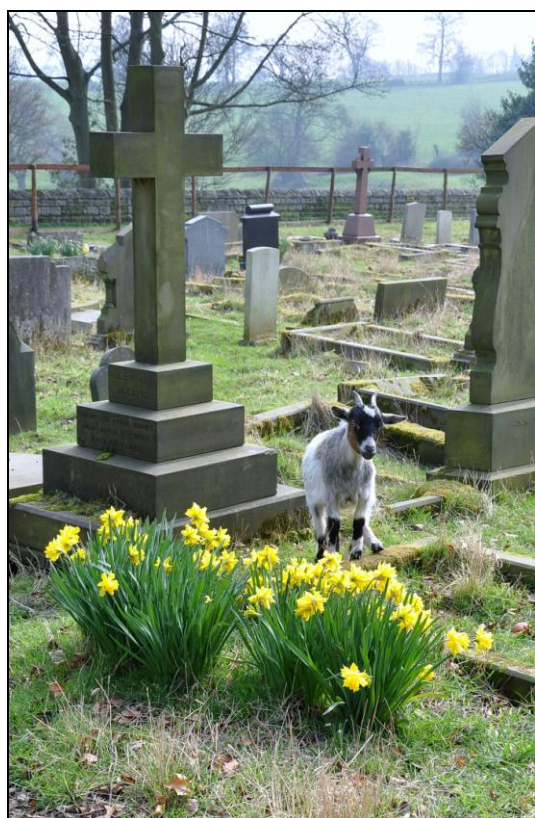
In Association  
with the CWGC



## News from the Front line

April 2011

With the clocks going forward and the lighter evenings it certainly feels like Spring has sprung. I took a day's leave from work today awaiting the arrival of my new garden shed, hoping to erect it before sunset, but here I am at 18:30 and no sign of it even though a telephone call at 15:00 informed me that it is on its way. Having done the ground work with little more to do I have decided to crack on with this Spring newsletter so not all is wasted.



**Spring has Sprung at St Wilfreds  
by Geoff Thorndike**

As I get older (but not necessarily wiser) it does concern me how time flies. My social diary for the project seems to be getting full up to the end of the year. We have already completed the Who Do You Think You Are Exhibition in February. We have got ANZAC events coming up including Dave Lovell being interviewed about our work in France by Australian Channel 7 TV station. I have been asked to present the Project to three Western Front Association groups along with other organisations throughout the year. Fortunately it is not just me as Martin Harvey, Geoff and Marsha Thorndike, David Ayling, Barbara Murray and Tony Wege, down under, have either completed or are preparing for presentations to publicise our work.

Consider this time last year (another one gone) and I was in Tunisia photographing the War Cemeteries in the East of the country. David Milborrow had completed Libya and Egypt just beforehand, Consul Staff in Yemen had completed all sites there so given the civil unrest in these countries at the moment, I think we are fortunate to have completed them as the chances of access now in some places are definitely very limited.

I am pleased to say that David Milborrow has just returned safely from a three week tour of India to finish off all the sites we have there.

He also managed to photograph many hundreds of additional military graves and memorials in the various churches and cemeteries dotted throughout the country. His 'Journal' of the trip will be on site in due course.

I am allowed to go on Holiday this year but have been banned from anywhere there is a cemetery so have opted for Venice for a romantic break. Anyone been to 'Isola di San Michele' which I managed to find on the Internet? Apparently it's an island in the lagoon where all the Venetians are buried!

A nice Polish chap has just arrived with my shed (19:28).

Enjoy the Spring sunshine – **Steve Rogers**

## Post war graves

Our volunteers have always kept their eyes open for the Post War graves that can be found in many local cemeteries. It is a sad fact of life that there are more of these nowadays given the ongoing conflicts that our service personnel are engaged in. Not all are due to conflict though and we do include all of those that have died whilst serving.

We recently received this letter, copied below, from a brother of one such soldier who appreciates that his brother is included within our Project.



*I write regarding the inclusion of my brother Roy's name onto the photographic records of the War Graves Photographic Project.*

*Roy tragically died during a sport diving expedition in Switzerland near to Locarno. Roy was an experienced diver and had dived with the Army in various places around the world, having just recently come back from the Florida Keys. Tragically there were a number of safety failings which ultimately lead to his death at such a young age. This was a terrible loss to my parents as their first born son and to me who had lost a "hero" older brother, Roy being 11 years senior to me and such an important role model to me whilst I was a child.*

*Roy's accident occurred whilst I was at CTCRM [Royal Marine training]. Fortunately I was granted weekend leave which coincided with a training course which Roy was undertaking at SEME and we as a family shared a very happy Saturday night together three weeks prior to the accident. I was very proud to be awarded my green beret in the September of 1988. My only wish was that Roy could have been there with me. My parents have never got over our loss, nor have I and we always remember him. I feel he walks with me during the times I have experienced conflict and danger.*

*Since my father passed away Roy's name has been included on the "wall" at the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas. Mum and I have visited the wall it and gave us both great comfort in knowing that his name is recorded there for eternity.*

*Mum and I visit our family plot every week, and knowing Roy is resting home in Wyke Regis having spent so much of his adult life with R.E.M.E abroad is a great comfort to us both.*

*Thank you for including Roy on the photographic record and although Roy's loss was through a sport he loved, he was serving his country and as a family we are very, very proud of him.*

*Thank you again.*

*Simon and Margaret Beare.  
Wyke Regis.*

## Photo manipulation – Steve Rogers



Without advertising a particular brand of software I find that I'd be lost without some form of photo manipulation software. Most of the requests that go out either in glossy or e mailed do undergo a slight change or enhancement. My most common tools are Auto levels, Smart Sharpen and best of all 'Transform Perspective' which can convert the strangest shape gravestone into a quite upstanding variety. I am not that expert yet to even attempt to try some of the other tools available but I am sure there are a myriad of things that can be done given the time and inclination to learn it all.

I am not sure though that even an expert in the field could actually produce a 'Virtual' gravestone and then 'engrave' the wording set it in a dusty cemetery with a blue cloudless sky. Having fulfilled a request recently with one 'perfect' headstone that needed no adjustment due to sharpness of quality I was thus accused of producing a 'Virtual' headstone as it was too good to be real! Can't win them all!

### Putting it into perspective!

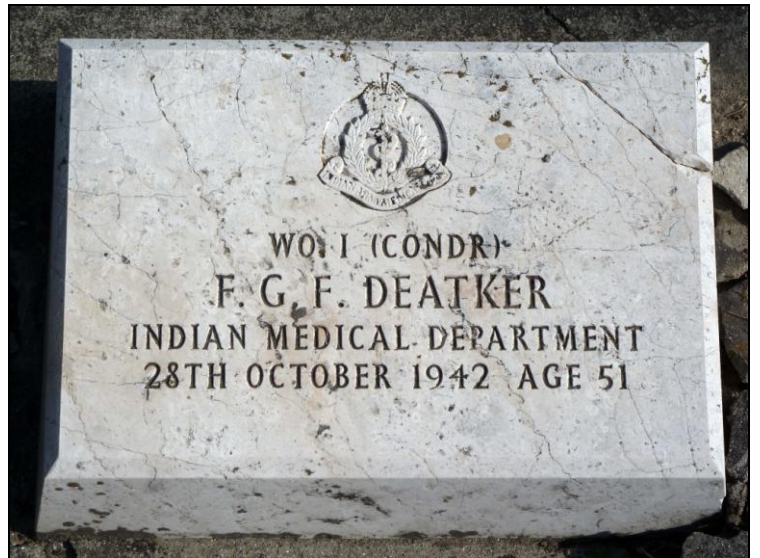
## Exotic locations

Now that we are on the downward slope of the hill with regards to completing CWGC cemeteries we audited sites held against listings produced by the CWGC and found a number of smaller sites in perhaps exotic locations that we had not even attempted to look at getting volunteers for.

Places like The Seychelles, Belize, Cameroon, Cuba, Equatorial Guinea, Fiji and even Monaco to name but a few.

Catherine Chatham is well travelled and has made many contacts via The British Council where she worked and has completed many sites herself .

Within a couple of days of receiving the list she was able to get the least expected one into the archive that being of Warrant Officer Francis Deatker who is buried in **Katamandu British Cemetery** in far off Nepal who was photographed by Robert Monroe.



Although we hold Baku memorial which commemorates those 47 soldiers -- out of a total of 92 who were killed in the Azerbaijani capital 93 years ago, we were not aware that the local cemetery at **Baku** held over 180 'Azeri' soldiers. These died during WW2 after fighting for the Russians so Steve Hollier, who has helped us in the past in Namibia, and is now based in Baku has recently submitted these to the project.

Soon after came the very first British Officer to be killed in WW1, Lt George Masterman Thompson of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Royal Scots. He was killed on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1914 whilst commanding a battalion of French soldiers in Togo, Africa. Mike Rimmer spent some time based in **Wahala** where he is buried and regularly attended remembrance services there and ensured the grave was maintained but sadly since leaving it appears to have fallen into disrepair again.



In other areas of the world Paul Wonnacott has been painstakingly photographing each separate block of names on Kranji memorial in Singapore. We already hold larger panel pictures but Paul is currently getting close ups and sending them to us as he completes each panel.

India can now be considered complete and more! David Milborrow has spent three weeks touring the country rounding up those that were not already allocated and conducting revisits in some places to update the archive. His full illustrated report (*see extract below*) will be attached to the next newsletter but he also managed to visit most large cathedrals and churches to photograph the memorial plaques within. This has added approximately another 500 names to those we needed to get in India. There may actually be more to get in due course as the 'grapevine' has it that the Cantonment cemeteries, where service personnel were originally buried, may be up for restoration. Most of the men buried in these (approx 130 sites) are alternatively commemorated on the various large memorials in India.

*....'Single digit temperatures after the mid thirties do come as a shock to the system! But porridge and eggs – no curry in sight – is going to help. Set off after breakfast for the Old Cemetery; the distance is a little farther than I realised, but reach it eventually, only to find a series of steep terraces and I'm below the bottom one! Slowly make my way to the top, but even then the graves have only reached about 1900, and I need 1941! 'There's another cemetery up the road.', but this one's the Old Cemetery.*



*Then discover there are more graves spilling down the hillside the other side of the road, and there, sure enough, poorly whitewashed and relatively surrounded by rubbish, is the object of my mission. Since I can hardly tell Steve on my return that I only managed one grave all day, after the obligatory visit to the zoo I take a taxi back to the Gurkha Memorial. Entrance fee 7p, and I then find the Memorial is roped off with prominent No Entry signs displayed. A visiting group realise my plight and chat the gardener into allowing me a couple of minutes 'very quick, very quick.' Sorry if some of the images are below par, but it's another 150 or so names in the bag'.....*

## Community Project

In a more frosty location Darryl Klassen, who is serving with Canadian Forces but based in Germany has volunteered to revisit Rheinberg and Reichswald war cemeteries along with his daughters Paula and Lauren. The girls have been helping as part of their school Community Commitment scheme. Lauren actually spent several hours at Rheinberg cemetery on her 18th birthday.

She was initially reluctant to spend the day that way but afterwards she told her father that it was a great way to assist families who can't make a visit in person. She was also quite moved whenever she was photographing a grave of someone her age. Darryl said – "I don't think she'll forget that day".



**Lauren on a frosty morning at Rheinberg**

## WDYTIA



Once again, this year, we were invited to attend the Who Do You Think You Are Exhibition at Olympia and work alongside the CWGC on their stand within the Military section.

Marian, Nic, Peter and Alec helped out over the three day event which proved quite exhausting but very satisfying knowing that we could help in family research. Again, things did get quite emotional at times when seeing a gravestone for the first time albeit just the image but with tissues to hand we had it covered. It was nice getting visitors just coming along to say 'Thank You' for images they had received from us in the past and wishing us good luck for the future.

There was much interaction between the various stands including that of the Western Front Association so a well worn path across the concourse

It was good to work alongside the team from CWGC again and we certainly appreciate being invited. On this occasion we were able to take the opportunity to be able to say hello to the new Director General Mr Alan Pateman Jones who spent some time on the stand chatting to visitors.

With over 1.6 million graves and memorials within the archive we were able to fulfill all but two requests over the three day event. Our leaflets proved very popular with many being taken which did result in an influx of requests over the following two weeks so that took a bit of managing to ensure the recipients received them as soon as possible.

With yet another resounding success the CWGC are now considering attending a similar even in Dublin later on in the year where there might be a possibility of TWGPP participating as well. Watch this space.



## ANZAC DAY – 25<sup>th</sup> April

With the ANZAC day anniversary taking place in a couple of weeks we always like to make a special presentation of articles relating to those forces of the commonwealth who played such a big part at time of conflict.

TWGPP have now got the majority of Australian and New Zealand casualties up on site which always proves very popular at this time of year when thoughts go to those that have died at time of war.

One such war that is not often thought of outside of Australia though is that of Vietnam. David and Jan Stacey from Strathalbyn, South Australia have been researching the 9th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment who fought in the conflict and have started their own website to commemorate these men. In total there were 478 Australians killed in Vietnam. Many were repatriated back to Australia, 23 are buried in Terendak Military Cemetery, Malaysia, while ashes for two others were sent to Scotland.



### Colours of Australia

One that was missing from David and Jans website until recently was that of **Rifleman George Nagle** of Clonmel in the Republic of Ireland. He served in the 9th Battalion and was killed when a remote operated claymore mine was detonated nearby on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1969. His body was repatriated to Clonmel where he now lies. TWGPP were unaware of this grave, it being post war and Australian forces, but with the information from David and Jan one of our volunteers, Declan Rapple, visited the cemetery to obtain this picture.



### The Dar..Dar..Dardanelles and Darby Macnamara By Mike Rimmer

Some of the English-speaking world's best known and best loved poems were inspired by the First World War. Most were written by British soldiers who fought on the Western Front but one that has recently come to light is the work of an Australian who served with the Anzacs on Gallipoli. It's called *the Dar... Dar... Dardanelles* and it's absolutely marvellous!

The circumstances surrounding the poem's creation are shrouded in mystery but it was preserved by a North Queensland miner called Darby Macnamara. He served in the 5<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment and saw action on Gallipoli. He claims to have been present when the poem was written and for many years he'd recite it at the annual Anzac Day ceremony in Mt Molloy (a former mining town situated 100km or so north-west of Cairns). Darby Macnamara was born in 1890 in Montalbion. It too was once a North Queensland mining town. When the ore body was discovered great things were expected but it soon became apparent that developing it had been a monumental blunder. The enterprise was doomed from the start and the town was quickly abandoned. It's a story that has echoes of the Gallipoli Campaign!

Darby spent the greater part of his life in dusty mining towns - in particular Mt Carbine and Mt Molloy – doing a variety of odd jobs. Shortly before the outbreak of the First World War he became friendly with a young man who was destined to become one of Australia's most prolific authors .

His name was Ion Idriess and Darby is mentioned in two of his books – *Men of the Jungle* and *The Desert Column*. In 1914 Darby and Idriess joined the Australian Army and they trained together in Enogerra Barracks in Brisbane. They both saw action on Gallipoli and Idriess later participated in the Egypt and Palestine Campaigns.

### **The Dar.. Dar.. Dardanelles**

*The Aussie found it sultry, when he went to fight the Turk but hot with indignation he soon warmed unto his work.*

*At first he shed his khaki coat and then he shed his vest and getting down to nature's worth, he showed his manly chest.*

*He seldom wore his boots at all — bare-footed he would go.*

*He said he wasn't mending socks —He'd give them to the foe.*

*His trousers he cut down to shorts and nearly naked then, the Turks looked on the Aussies and saw that they were men.*

*They're handy with a rifle and the big guns that drop the shells.*

*They could do a lot of spadework —in the knells of the Dardanelles.*

*And the Turk he shakes his solemn head, and to his brother tells, he wished those big Australians, hadn't come into the knells, with its shells and yells and little hells,*

*Of the Dar ... Dar ... Dardanelles.*



*Now the Aussie has a brother, who's the big New Zealand kid, he came to help the contract —Turkey's sorry that he did.*

*He arrived without a welcome and they wished he'd go away, but he plonked his foot down on the shore and said he'd come to stay.*

*He's got a mighty fist on him Lord help the Turk he biffed.*

*They tried to push him back again, But found he wouldn't shift.*

*His feet they don't turn back — To a rout he's never gone, the more they try to push him back, the more he pushes on.*

*He says he doesn't like the Turk —He's nasty and he smells.*

*There'd be sweeter air without him in the knells of the Dardanelles, and so he hunts the vermin in the cliffs and in the dells in time with gentle Lizzie's voice that screeches from the knells*

*For its shells and yells and little hells, in the Dar ... Dar ... Dardanelles.*

***You put the two together, as a couple they're a treat hard as nails and tough as leather,  
Two deuces hard to beat.***

***They've settled down in Turkey, and with steel have pegged a claim, they've christened their  
new country and ANZAC is its name.***

***Which stands for that Australian, and that New Zealand chap, a name they made up in their  
heads It wasn't on the map.***

***But now by cripes, It's written there in blood, and will e'er remain.***

***A new name printed deep no Turk will e'er erase again.***

***So, let us remember ANZAC And the glorious tale it tells, now Britain from the overseas, came  
to the Dardanelles, with its shells and yells and little hells, Of the Dar ... Dar ... Dardanelles.***

In memory of Darby, one of the original ANZACs

### **It's good to 'korero' – Dennis Boggs**

My task in The War Graves Photographic Project is the photographing of 39 headstones in 32 cemeteries in the far North region of New Zealand. Initially I thought "This won't take long" but after studying the maps and noting the remoteness of some of the cemeteries I realised the distances to be covered, frequently on gravel roads, for often just one photo. However, the programme rolls along and we have met some interesting people on the way and seen many parts of our country we would otherwise never have visited. Many of these headstones in my region are for Maori soldiers the original people of Aotearoa, New Zealand. All are for men who died of wounds or illness back home in New Zealand either still during overseas hostilities or within the specified post-hostilities cut-off date for an official War Grave. These are usually in cemeteries adjacent to a small country church or a marae, communal land enclosing a whare runanga which is a meeting house or hall and is the social and formal meeting place of the local Hapu or sub-tribe.

Sometimes tiny remote cemeteries are for just an extended family and these are usually located on a hill, often overlooking the sea. For obvious reasons it is necessary to obtain permission to enter and photograph a headstone in these private cemeteries. In earlier times a stranger arriving could mean one of two things. He could be a visitor requiring hospitality, or a potentially deadly enemy. Over centuries an elaborate protocol evolved to determine "friend or foe". This involved a warrior's formal challenge which required the appropriate response from the stranger which declared his intentions. Word of honour played a big part in this. If a friend, the stranger was formally welcomed and from then on could re-enter without formal challenge, provided of course that honour was maintained.

Today the protocols are still observed as a formal greeting for first time visitors to events such as weddings, Tangi (funerals) or a visit by dignitaries. However, seeking permission to photograph a headstone is hardly a formal occasion, but never the less does require the honourable intentions of the visitor to be well and truly established. So it was in January when accompanied by my wife Ngaire and a guest from Holland, we made our way over to Northland's West coast to pay our respects to Tane Mahuta and Te Matua Ngahere, two enormous Kauri trees (*Agathis Australis*) which are possibly the oldest living organisms on the planet, being mature trees when Jesus walked in the holyland. Te Matua is over 16 meters (53 feet) girth at breast high and it is an awe inspiring experience just to sit and look at him. Most adult visitors I observe, react as people do when entering some magnificent European cathedral, and "Oh my God" is a typical response to the first view. Tane Mahuta is taller but has not the majesty of Te Matua Ngahere to my eyes.





Part 2 of the trip was of course to photograph as many of the required headstones in the listed cemeteries as we could do in the one day trip. One of these was in a private cemetery belonging to one of the local Hapu (sub-tribe).

Working blind we asked at a house near where we believed the cemetery to be, for permission. We were directed to another person who it was believed would be able to give permission and was offered the use of the telephone to save mileage and time. The person we were directed to was unable to grant approval but referred us to someone who could. This was repeated several times, on one occasion back to someone we had already spoken to and I was beginning to despair of reaching someone of authority within daylight hours. Finally I spoke to Ben Morunga who told me that he was a Kaumatua (Elder) of Te Hikutu Hapu and to “come on up to see me” and proceeded to give me directions to find him.

Consider the scene from Ben’s perspective. He receives a telephone request out of the blue from an unknown Pakeha (fair skinned stranger) for permission to take photographs in the family cemetery. He would certainly want to meet this Pakeha and make his own assessment of the character and motives behind the request. I walked up the hill to Ben’s house and introduced myself and was told to go back and bring the family up for a cool drink and korero (talk). As is custom, the conversation went all round the compass before it felt the time was appropriate to raise the subject of our visit. We learned that his Te Hikutu people claim descent from Kupe the navigator who first discovered Aotearoa (New Zealand) 25 generations before the great migration which is believed to have occurred between 5 and 7 hundred years ago.



**Ben, Dennis and families**

In response to our formal request Ben advised us that there was a “no photos” policy in their cemetery! Much more korero! Ben suggested that as it was such a tiny cemetery we may be able to take our photos from outside the fence, thus achieving our needs without technically breaching standing protocols. After showing Ben some example photos he realised the impossibility of using that approach to the problem. More korero! Finally, speaking as only one of the Kaumatua, Ben declared his full support for the project and there and then phoned the close relatives of the soldier whose grave photo we required, and on our behalf asked for their approval back to the cemetery.

This was granted but of course required another face to face meeting on our way.

This man gave his ready approval and in the course of conversation he told me that he was trying to research the service history of an ancestor who was killed in Crete during the German airborne invasion in 1941. He was Captain H.W. Leaf M.C. Capt. Leaf must have been a warrior of the old school, as at age 51 he was on active service with a very famous force, the 28th (Maori) Battalion and although I have not yet had the opportunity of reading the citation for his Military Cross, we know full well that such a decoration was not handed out just for attendance! He would have been leading his men from the front and sadly paid the ultimate price. Steve Rogers has since provided me with Capt. Leaf’s details and photos of his name on the memorial wall and an overview of the cemeteries in Suda Bay, Crete and Athens in Greece. Capt. Leaf went missing in action in Crete on 22nd of May 1941. The photos have been printed out and sent to the family as thanks for their help and as a perfect example of the purpose for T.W.G.P.P.

The group photo is of Ben, his daughter & grand children, my wife Ngaire and our guest from Holland. It is days such as this one which makes being a part of the project so satisfying.

## Remembering my great uncle, a New Zealand Officer By Pip Grant-Taylor

Pip Grant-Taylor recently made contact and offered TWGPP information about her great uncle Second Lieutenant Kenneth Ambrose of No 3 Company, New Zealand Machine Gun Corps.

Kenneth enlisted on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1915 and embarked for Egypt on 13<sup>th</sup> November 1915 and finally got to the Western Front 1916 where his unit was to see action during the September engagements in the Battle of the Somme.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> September 1916 the Battle of Flers-Courcellete commenced, made famous because this was the first battle where tanks were to be used. This was to be his last.

France

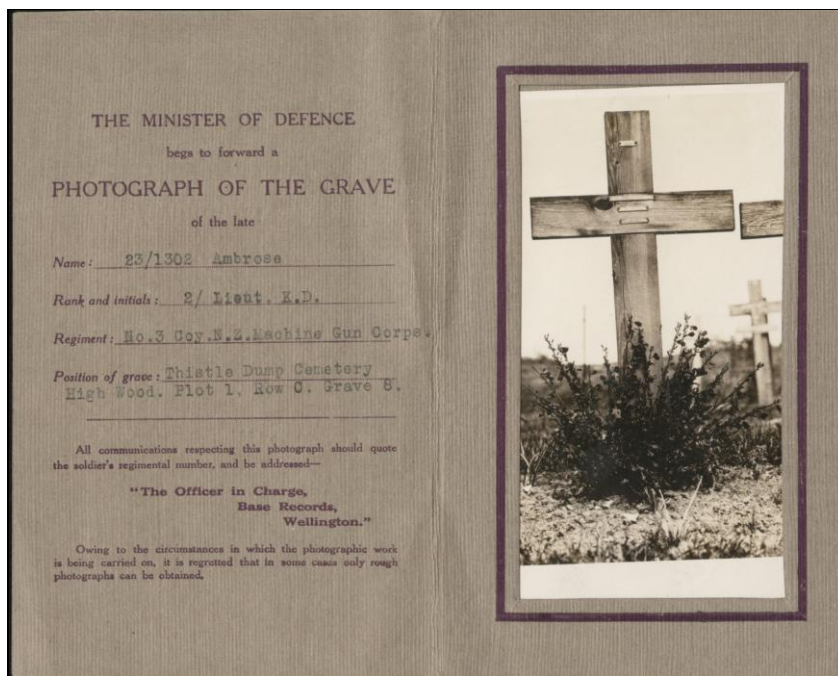
23 August 1917

*My Dear Mr Ambrose*

*Capt Cimino showed me your letter to him of 17<sup>th</sup> June: I regret excessively that I have not written you! Directly we got clear of that awful Battle of the Somme, I received leave to England, but apparently the privations onboard ships of those 23 days had affected me more than I realised, for one night in England I became very ill - was removed at once to a hospital to have what turned out to be a gangrous appendix removed. I made a very good recovery & returned to France in January; I thought then that I would not open old sores by writing you - not knowing, of course, that you were almost completely in the dark as to the circumstances of the death of your gallant son. Forgive me please - I should have known that at any time you would love to have the heart felt tribute of your son's commanding officer. Altho' nearly a year has passed since his death, he's still fresh in my thoughts. You need not be told of his kind & thoughtful disposition, but the fact that that disposition remained with him on active service, endearing him to his brother officers and his men, will be a bright and happy recollection to you and your wife and family in years to come:*

*I will give you as full details as I can of the last days of your son: We arrived in the Somme Battle area on the 10<sup>th</sup> September: Held the line for 36 hours, and then were withdrawn to organise for the great attack, which took place on the morning of 15<sup>th</sup> September: Well I remember as we bivouacked on the hill alongside JERICOURT, Ken writing what must have been his 1st letter to you: He seemed to make it his masterpiece for he read out several portions, which described the situation as it looked on a glorious autumn evening: The heavy artillery thundering all round, and troops thickly massed, some already moving up to assemble: On the night 14/15 September we moved to BAZENTIN LE GRAND - here we loaded our equipment from the lumbars, rested awhile: then moved up to our position of assembly: The guns Ken commanded formed part of a group of 8 which were to be in support to those that went forward with the assaulting waves: At about 6:25 am the Battle opened: the place where Ken's guns were was heavily shelled, and about an hour after, he was caught by a shell: I am not quite clear how long he lived: It must have been an hour or two; for he was spoken to while lying on a stretcher: Altho' badly wounded he suffered no pain; & from what I learned death came to him very peacefully: - The personal things you mention in your letter should have been with him: I am certain that his glasses, pocket book, & wrist watch were with him! I saw the officer in charge of the burying party a few days later told me that he had taken a number of things from him, which in the ordinary course of events are sewn into a bag and posted to base, from which place they are sent on to the next of kin. I remember distinctly the officer mentioning that he had also taken Ken's badges, and include them with the other things; (this officer was killed a few days later) The exact place that Ken was killed was on the HIGH WOOD, DELVILLE WOOD, ridge, about 500 yards south east of the South Eastern corner of High Wood. On the morning of the 4<sup>th</sup> of October, when we were finally withdrawn, I rode around to find his grave and saw it, neatly marked with a cross, with his name on it. The place is about 500 yards in front of BAZENTIN LE GRAND; the spot was called THISTLE DUMP, and was almost alongside the THISTLE DUMP, DRESSING STATION. If possible I will procure a map of that area, and mark the places for you! This may be impossible, but I will try. I was relieved when I read of the German withdrawals to the Hindenburg line, leaving the area of the Somme Battlefield miles behind. After our big advance on the 15<sup>th</sup> September, the forward slopes of the ridge, right down past Flers was in the full view of the enemy, and so prevented its being cleared. The toll of the Huns had been dreadful. I don't think I am exaggerating when I say it looked as if a Hun had been killed every square yard.*





*I will write my wife to send you a copy of a paper which I believe is published a very long letter I wrote from hospital, of this Battle. It will be of interest to you because it gives the impressions of one of your late son's unit, of the Battle in which your son gave his life to the great cause.*

*This year has been most strenuous, and the Hun is still unbeaten, altho' badly shaken. But he will be, we are all confident. It was a lucky happening for him that the affairs of the Russian gave him the chance to use all his power against our offensives on this front. The Battle of Messines was another epic for the New Zealanders. I was wounded early, and spent weeks in England recovering.*

*I today we have come out of the line after 21 days – the first tortnight nearly equaled the Somme. Capt Cimino is the only one of Ken's contemporaries still with me. I don't know if Ken told you that I had recommended him for promotion a week or two before his death.*

*Rest assured, he never once failed in his duty, he performed every duty faithfully and well, his manner of living during the whole period I had the privilege to be his C.O. was an example to all; his strength of character enabled him to withstand the temptations of Egypt and this country. May this war soon end, and enable us to return to our loved ones. I have two little sons, one I have not seen so you will realize how happy I will be when we have finished this job successfully. With kindest regards to you and your family.*

*Yours very sincerely*

*J H Luxford, MAJOR*

*Commanding 3<sup>rd</sup> NZ .M.G. Coy*

This is a fragment of a letter sent by a soldier / comrade in arms of Kenneth Ambrose.

*.... Well if you ever write to Mrs Ambrose tell her that he was killed in the morning of the fifteenth of September, just ahead of Blackwatch trench, between High wood and Delville (I think that is the way it is spelt) Wood and is buried at the back of High Wood.*

*We moved up on the night of the 14<sup>th</sup> or the morning of the 15<sup>th</sup>, I think it was the morning about three o'clock, into Blackwatch trench, there to wait until six o'clock or thereabout, for the attack to start. The guns had been going for days, but working up all the time until the zero time arrived, then see, thousands joined into the song, and our first waves went over, also the tanks, the first time they had been seen or used. We, that is Ambrose, self and others, all in the Eight Guns, were to move to the crest of the hill, which was till then, the front line trench of the Germans. Switch Trench. D--- them. After our third wave or line had gone over and down the other side to what was called Brown Line. Well Blackwatch Trench was not very far from it, Switch Trench and Fritz was very angry, se we were in the way of many shells, things were moving fast by about Eight o'clock and Dad (Ambrose) kept coming wanting to know when we were going to move. Well it was near or past the time we should move and things as I say, were going some, I was not in command of the Eight Guns, but Dad always looked to me I suppose being his oldest friend. Anyway it was decided to stay a little longer, as things were too thick ahead. So out went Dad with his guns, about one hundred yards and opened fire (Indirect). Gee, he was fine that day. You would think he was out for fun that day. Well it was about ten that a shell caught him – missed one or two of his gun team, "oh, it's all right, I'll be right in a minute", - just as bight as ever, but the poor old boy died in ten minutes, still smiling and not in pain. So Mum, I lost a very good friend, one of the cleanest I ever knew, and while too He died as he lived – a man.*

## Yes, we do sometime make mistakes!

When dealing with thousands of images and processing them to go up to site, dare I admit it, we do sometimes make mistakes. This is normally as a result of a number of men in the same cemetery having the same surname and even initial. We try to cover ourselves by ensuring the last three digits of the official number are included on the naming process so that we can distinguish who is who but inevitably some slip through the net. Therefore once in a while we will get an e mail stating that the image shown on site is not that of the person in the details but this is normally rectified within 24 hours.

A recent example was for a photograph of **George Fitzsimmons**, Merchant Navy in Maala cemetery in Yemen. We had a request from a lady whose father, George, died when she was just 10 years old in 1951 and since 2006 she had been trying to find the means of getting a photograph of his grave and therefore quite overwhelmed that she found his name on our site.



George had been taken off his ship through illness. His wife had tried to reach him but got to Cairo and was told he had died. The padre who was helping her was stabbed in the back because it was a time of riots in Cairo and she was advised to return home, which she did and never managed to visit his grave. The family did receive a small black and white picture in later years showing the headstone under a carpet of seashells.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office had completed this cemetery for us in 2009 and all images were up on site along with his name George Mills Fitzsimmons. Imagine my horror when I opened up the archive folder and could not find Fitzsimmons anywhere. It turned out that his named line had mistakenly had another photo lined up against it and we did not hold it.

After apologising profusely we contacted the FCO again and fortunately the original staff were still there so knew the cemetery well. Within 48 hours his grave was found (private memorial) tidied up, fresh flowers laid on it and pictures forwarded

*“Please pass on my sincere thanks to the person who took the photos for me. I can't find the words to say how grateful I am to see flowers on my father's grave. I have always wondered if there were any seashells left, and now I know.” Lynette.*

## Points from the Post

‘Points from the Post’ will, in future, be pasted onto the web site under the ‘Thanks’ Tab . This page will display the previous quarters comments from those receiving images from us but also allows us to show the image and cemetery as requested. Please take the time to read some of these comments which show that the work you do as volunteers, photographing the graves, is appreciated.

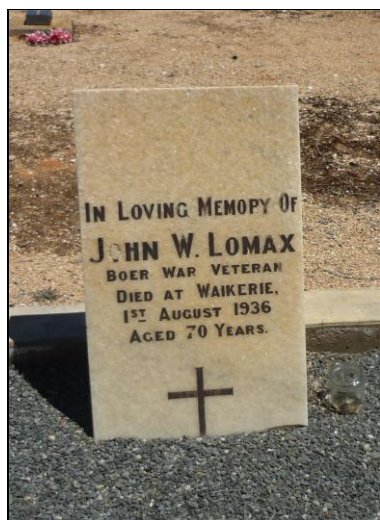
<http://twgpp.org/thanks.php>

## What's in a Cemetery? – by Tony and Sue Wege

Dumb question really. It elicits an obvious answer. But there is more than the startlingly obvious. Cemeteries, one way or the other, record history. In the case of us two here in South Australia photographing for the TWGPP, our photography often records a small aspect of local military history. To the casual visitor, this history is usually not evident on the mute headstones that can be seen. But with a just a little research, sometimes aspects of a community's past emerge from the shadows of time. One small example of this we found in a recent visit to the Waikerie cemetery looking for headstones to photograph for the Project.

Waikerie is a South Australian town of about 4000 people situated on the River Murray 180 kilometres north east of Adelaide. The town is at the centre of a large irrigation area which produces vast quantities of citrus fruits, grapes for wine, almonds and melons. Most of these fruits find their way into the export market, whether as fresh fruit, juice concentrates, wine or sealed packages of nuts. The region where Waikerie is located, is quite arid and in the summer time, very hot. In fact the climate can be described as semi desert. Water from the river is absolutely essential for the economy of the town. After the end of the First World War, dozens of ex-servicemen and their families began to establish their fruit blocks in the red sandy soils bordering the river. They were tough people working in tough conditions. Then and since, the people of the Waikerie district are resilient, resourceful and very determined. They have always had a fundamental and underlying sense of service to their community and to the nation. This can be seen in the cemetery of the town if a little history is studied.

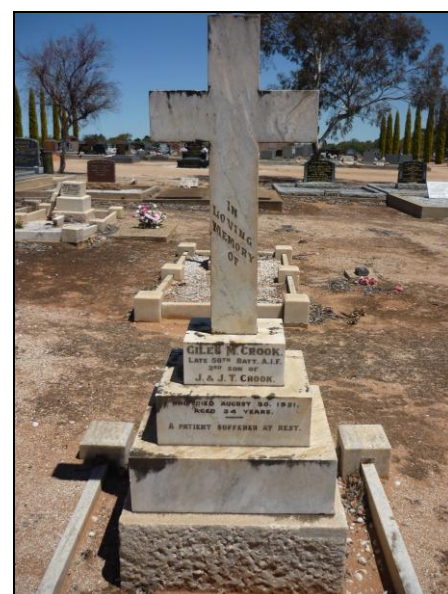
We went to Waikerie to photograph for TWGPP just one CWGC grave, a naval serviceman of WW2. Unlike the vast CWGC cemeteries in Europe, it is the only CWGC grave in the cemetery. But Waikerie cemetery, like most Antipodean cemeteries, tells an underlying tale of national service via what is inscribed on some headstones as memorials to lost sons. Waikerie cemetery in many ways is a microcosm of Australia's military history. Some of these men's graves or memorials are commemorated via the CWGC in some form or have Office of Australian War Graves plaques on their graves. Other men are buried with no official military recognition at all. We photographed 24 graves and family memorials of servicemen buried or commemorated at Waikerie cemetery for TWGPP besides the one listed CWGC burial. Here are just a few.



**John Lomax** (left) was a Boer War veteran. He survived and later lived in the town until his death in 1936. The local ex-servicemen's group provided his headstone. Private **Giles Crook** (below), a Western Front veteran of the 50<sup>th</sup> Battalion, met an unfortunate and premature end. He was wounded and later contracted tuberculosis when in France in 1918. He managed to get home but died of the effects of his war service in 1921. His grave has no official CWGC or OAWG plaque on it. An evocative epitaph which tells much adorns his now dilapidated grave: "*A patient sufferer at rest*"

World War Two saw men leave Australia to fight overseas just as they did 25 years before. Thousands remain there in graves known or lost

But many have family memorials here. One family memorial is particularly poignant. It is not on a grave. It is a memorial tablet only. Warrant Officer R R Donaldson of 454 (Baltimore bomber) Squadron RAAF was shot down over the Aegean Sea in 1943 and was never found. Private Alexander Matschoss of the 2/27<sup>th</sup> Battalion was killed in action on the Kokoda Track, Papua New Guinea in September 1942. His body has never been found either. Vera M Matschoss waiting home in Waikerie must have had a very upsetting time. She has left a permanent marker to these two men who were so close to her.



Sergeant Vivian Lewis of 201 (Sunderland) Squadron RAF was tragically lost over the Atlantic when his plane was accidentally shot down by ships of the Royal Navy. His family have commemorated him on the grave of his parents. **Private Walter Maskell** an army transport driver was taken prisoner of war by the Japanese in 1942 when Singapore fell. He suffered horrendously in their hands for three and a half years but survived only to die relatively young in 1966. An OAWG plaque marks his grave.



Post WW2 saw men away on active service yet again. One naval serviceman buried at Waikerie served on board the aircraft carrier HMAS Sydney during the Korean War. He was Leading Aircraft Mechanic **Keith Hartmann**, a weapons technician. An OAWG plaque marks his grave.

Waikerie cemetery although rural and relatively small, reflects much about Australia's military past. Its burials and memorials range from the Boer War through to the Korean conflict.

It includes men who served in iconic campaigns in foreign lands such as Gallipoli, Western Front and Palestine in WW1; at Tobruk, the Kokoda Track and the South West Pacific in WW2. They fought and died over the North Atlantic, the Mediterranean, in France and Belgium, the Pacific and other places so far away from their homeland besides two who died in Waikerie so soon after the conflict ended but are not CWGC or OAWG listed at all. All these memorials and headstones offer to us today just a tiny glimmer of service to the nation in past times which in the general scheme of things are all but forgotten today.

But in that lays the great value of The War Graves Photographic Project. These men's names chiselled in stone or on brass plaques in remote and to Europeans far distant and unknown cemeteries like Waikerie, even today are seen by so very few people and even fewer would understand. Now with the advent of TWGPP, these men and their service and sacrifice will have an unlimited audience. And that is good.



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The next newsletter will be out in July 2011.

Anyone wishing to contribute should contact Steve on [steve@twgpp.org](mailto:steve@twgpp.org)



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