



# THE WAR GRAVES PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECT



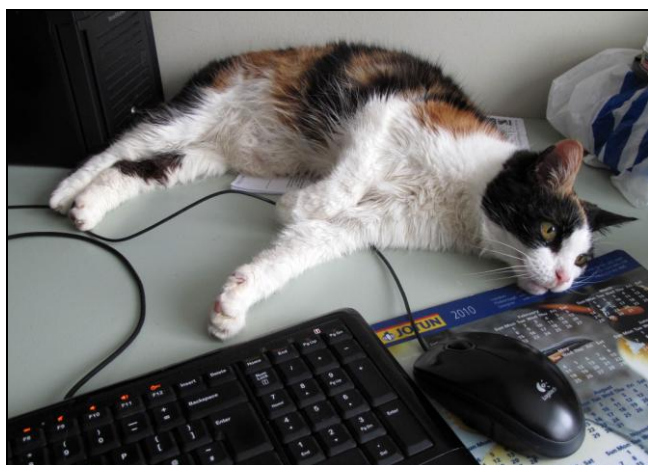
In Association  
with the CWGC



## News from the Front line

April 2013

I am a bit of a technophobe albeit having trained as an Engineer during my time in the Royal Navy but as things have got smaller and my eyes a bit baggier I have erred away from modern technology. Blackberries are what I still collect in the Autumn to have with apples in a pie, Samsung I thought was a Chinese dumpling, Note Books, complete with graphite pencil were just that and Tom Tom was a black and white TV kids programme which if I recall correctly the theme tune was 'A Walk in the Black Forest'. I succumbed recently and finally got the SATNAV version of the Tom Tom prior to a maiden voyage to Manchester to join the CWGC at an event. Fairly straightforward up but I did not fancy referring to my printed Google maps whilst driving in the city. I must say I was impressed. A little perturbed when it made a 'bing bong' sound like calling a steward on an aircraft but it was just telling me I was breaking the law having just gone over the speed limit. I had not sorted out the night time driving option to reduce the screen light (I left at 3 am) so found myself driving along the M40 at night with my sun glasses on as I could not be bothered to 'faff' around with the controls. I even beat the estimated time for arrival home by two minutes! I am now looking forward to using it to find 'off the beaten track' cemeteries once I sort out how to input Lat. and Long. as opposed to Post Code.



**Mabel stalking a mouse**

I know we can no longer do without PC's and I come out in a cold sweat when the various black boxes (getting smaller) that surround my PC sometimes 'Blink', 'Buzz' or generally fail to wake up once they have gone to sleep. I did have just one such incident back in January when my 8TB (8 Tera Byte (big)) storage facility did a 'Clunk click' and starting to flash red lights and alarm a bit like 'Das Boot' did on the movie when being discovered by a Catalina.

Unlike my cat Mabel, who has recently had a two stays of execution at the vet due to improvements in veterinary science so did not get put down, the 8TB box had lost the will to live and done it all by itself. Knowing that it was not that old I managed to find a receipt but had to go through the process of phoning the help line (in Holland) who were most helpful and put me through to another 'Help line' based in Ireland.

Now I have been to Ireland a couple of times and realise that the counties have their own accent but the chap I was talking to definitely sounded French. Turns out he was, as were many at the call centre, which intrigued me but apparently he could earn more in Ireland than France as an IT engineer. I digress. After about an hour on the phone with me practicing my 'Gracia, Si, and Non' it was determined that one of the drives was now well and truly dead so I had only lost about 400,000 images as opposed to the complete 1.7 million. Being of the 'old school' who wear a belt and braces I was not that worried as I am always prepared and have a back up. Not one of those 'Clouds' which seems to be the new way of storage (angels excluded) but another box of larger proportions dimensionally. However, these scares on my 'ticker' are not doing me any good so I have now taken the plunge to store the images on an external server (expensive vault!) as a Belt, Braces and Suspender option.

I have been able to upgrade the local 8TB box due to a very generous donation from Arjun and his family in America/London who we supplied a photo to in the past. This one allows me access from anywhere in the world providing I have an internet connection so saves me having to lug two smaller Tera Stations around and a laptop on holidays so that we can still fulfill requests.

That's providing the house does not burn down having left it switched on!

### Milsbeek and Ottersum Research – Paul Ten Broeke

Paul Ten Broeke, who you will have read about in previous Newsletters, searched for the relations of Private Harold Ewen whose grave at Milsbeek had been tended since WW2 by Mrs Thijssen. Paul is now trying to make contact with the relatives of other men buried at Milsbeek and Ottersum which are the two local cemeteries to where he lives in Gennep. The intention will be to publish a Roll of Honour in 2015. If you can help at all please visit his site:

<https://sites.google.com/site/rollofhonourmilsbeekottersum/>



### TWGPP volunteers take part in 'Voices of Volunteers' research project



Some of our Scottish volunteers, Alec Briggs and Chris and Jean Gosgrove, took part in a research project about volunteer experiences in unusual roles. The 3 were interviewed by Jana Flieshart who is currently completing an internship for Volunteer Development Scotland; an organisation that aims to improve the volunteer experience and modernise volunteering by discovering better ways of engaging people in a very broad range of volunteering opportunities.

To show Jana what it is like to volunteer for TWGPP, Alec Briggs took her to a cemetery for some active experience on gravestone hunting and photography. For an inside of the volunteer work that is concerned with planning and editing, Jana was invited to Chris and Jean's house. That way, the couple was able to show her what is involved before and after visiting the cemeteries.

Her project focuses on various organisations who offer unusual volunteer roles and, like we all know, TWGPP offers that. She tries to explore people's motivations for volunteering and wants to identify and understand the factors that contribute towards a positive volunteering experience.

Her interviews will help contribute towards improving volunteer experiences in Scotland and raise awareness of the many volunteer opportunities which are available by highlighting its diversity.

Jana reflects on her visits and says that *'it was incredible to experience what the volunteers do and how much passion and dedication they put into their work. I think it's extraordinary and moving what TWGPP has achieved for people all over the world.'*

The project will hopefully be concluded by late may and showcase the great work all of our volunteers do for TWGPP.

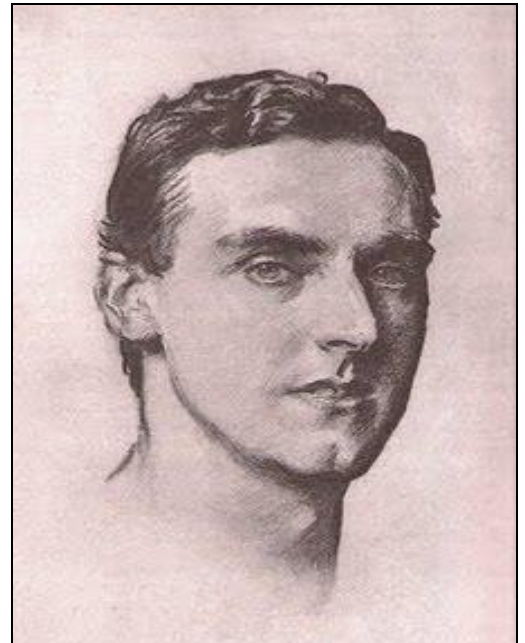


**Alec gets down to it to achieve the perfect shot**

## The Gallipoli Sonata – Ken Wright

When Sub Lieutenant Frederick Septimus Kelly, Royal Naval Division, wrote a beautiful violin sonata in G major during August 1915 in a trench on a Gallipoli beach, he could never have imagined the sonata would not only be played at his memorial service but would become a valuable piece of Australian history ninety five years later. The sonata was penned for Jelly D`Aranyi, a lovely young Hungarian female violinist in London that Kelly had met in 1909 when she was 16. Their common passion for music bound them together almost immediately and they regularly played music and performed on stage together. Kelly is reputed to have treated D`Aranyi more like a sister but over the next few years of their professional relationship, she fell madly in love with him.

Kelly was born in Australia and educated at Sydney Grammar School then went to England to study at Eton College. After graduating from Eton he was awarded a Lewis Nettleship musical scholarship at Oxford and attended Balliol College. During his time at Oxford he took up sculling and became an excellent oarsman, winning many prestigious competitions including Gold for England at the London Summer Olympics of 1908 as a member of the Leander crew in the Coxed eight. Also whilst at Oxford, Kelly became president of the university musical club and a leading spirit at the Sunday evening concerts at Balliol. Kelly had a natural flair for music and had learned to play the piano at an early age playing Mozart and Beethoven to a very high standard so, after leaving Oxford, Kelly entered into the world of music he was so passionate about and where his obvious talent could be expressed to the full. He made his formal debut as a pianist and composer with the London Symphony Orchestra in 1910.



He returned to Sydney in 1911 to play many of his own compositions then returned to London to give a series of concerts. Experts predicted a great future for this virtuoso composer and pianist but sadly, the dogs of war were about to be unleashed. On 28 June 1914, one of the darkest periods of modern history began when Arch Duke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne and his wife Sophie, the Duchess of Hohenberg were both assassinated at Sarajevo in Bosnia. War clouds gathered, the war dogs were let loose and Europe was plunged into a darkness that was World War One with various countries citing treaties and obligations declaring war on each other with Germany leading the charge.

When England declared war on Germany at 11pm on 4 August 1914 there was a surplus of about 20,000-30,000 men from the Royal Naval Reserve and the Royal Fleet Reserves who could not be assigned to a ship of war. The men were formed into the Royal Naval Division comprised of two Naval Brigades and a Brigade of Marines to fight on land not at sea. Called 'Winston's Little Army' after its founder Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, the RND comprised of eight naval battalions named after famous British naval commanders - Anson, Benbow, Collingwood, Drake, Hawke, Hood, Howe and Nelson plus the Royal Marine Brigade of four battalions from the Royal Marine depots at the ports of Deal, Chatham, Portsmouth and Plymouth. The naval character and unit compositions of the RND would change over the course of the war due to heavy casualties as more regular infantry battalions were included.

Kelly, like so many thousands in England and throughout the Commonwealth, volunteered for service for King and Country. Commissioned as a Sub Lieutenant in the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve he joined the Drake Battalion of the Royal Naval Division to begin training as an officer. Kelly's organisational skills came to the attention of higher command and was assigned, under protest, to the position of Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General to the battalion. The Ottoman Empire in Turkey had sided with Germany and the Turkish government had to be changed by force of arms. When rumours spread that the Naval Division was about to embark for the Dardanelles, Kelly, not wishing to be left behind, requested and was granted permission to go and was placed in charge of 5 platoon, Hood Division. The RND was part of the Gallipoli expedition that, with the possible exception of the Crimean War, was the most poorly mounted and ineptly controlled operation in British military history.

Allied forces comprising mainly of British, Australian, French, New Zealand and Indian troops began the invasion by landing on the beaches of Gallipoli 24 April 1915. Among the British forces at Cape Hellas were five divisions of the RND. They stood out from the rest of the British forces. Petty officers instead of sergeants, leading seamen for corporals, they could grow beards, had anchors stencilled on their equipment, attended sick bay instead of regimental aid post and were 'adrift' instead of absent without leave. Leaving these minor differences aside, they were a valuable contribution to the Gallipoli campaign. On 4 June during the third battle of Krithia, Kelly suffered a gunshot or shrapnel wound to his right heel. After a spell in hospital in Alexandria and promoted to Lieutenant, Kelly returned to Gallipoli and on 7 January 1916, was one of three men to remain at an observation post while the Allied troops went about their highly successful night evacuation from the Gallipoli Peninsula and were also the last to leave. Lieutenant Kelly [RND] Captain Weller, [RMLI] and Temp Lieutenant Riley [Royal Marines] were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for their service on the Gallipoli Peninsula. By the end of the disastrous Gallipoli campaign there were very few naval men left and the RND was redesignated the 63<sup>rd</sup> [Royal Naval] Division on 19 July 1916 and no longer under the authority of the Admiralty. The division moved next to the killing grounds of the Western Front and the battle of the Somme.



On 1 November Lieutenant Commander Kelly was mentioned in dispatches and on 13 September he went into action with the men of the 63<sup>rd</sup> Royal Naval Divisions with other elements of British and Canadian forces in the battle of Ancre [13-19 Nov] which was the final phase of the first Somme battle. Kelly was killed as he was leading Hood Battalion in a successful attack on a machine-gun emplacement which threatened to hold up the whole advance.

Lieutenant-Commander Frederick Septimus Kelly DSC, aged 35, Hood Battalion, Royal Navy Division, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve is the only Australian buried in the British Cemetery at Martinsart, not far from where he fell. Fortunately, his rich legacy of compositions to the world of music has been archived for posterity. Except, that is, the Gallipoli sonata.

With the passage of time interest in Frederick Kelly had faded into virtual obscurity until January 2009 when Chris Latham, a violinist and director of the Canberra International Music Festival in Australia read about the Gallipoli sonata in Kelly's recently discovered war diaries.

After some excellent detective work he found the violin sonata in Florence, Italy, with Jelly D'Aranyi's grandniece and brought a copy back to Australia. The Gallipoli sonata, thought to have been lost forever, has now taken its rightful place in the Australian music repertoire.

### Search for relatives of Coatbridge serviceman

Wesley Haex, in Holland, is renewing his quest to trace relatives of a World War II serviceman from Coatbridge in Scotland. Sergeant Alistair Campbell was just 20 when his plane was shot down in the town of Weert on September 22, 1944. He and his six comrades from the fateful flight are honoured at a monument 300 yards from the crash site, which was unveiled three years ago to mark the 65th anniversary of their deaths.

The monument was the work of Wesley who has spent more than five years researching the incident and the fallen crewmen. Wesley who has helped photograph graves for TWGPP in the past says "I'm still looking for any relatives of Sergeant Campbell and would be grateful if anyone can help.

"I haven't been able to find much about him – I only know that he was from Coatbridge, the names of his parents, William and Jessie, and that he was aged 20." Although I don't know what he looked like I found a picture in our council archives of his mother visiting his grave.

If you can help Wesley can be contacted on [a.haex@hotmail.nl](mailto:a.haex@hotmail.nl)

## Bud Hannam – Anne Edwards

My 'team' (hubby and brother) and I visited Basly, a small village near Caen in Normandy to photograph the only CWGC grave in the churchyard. Adjacent to the church was a library with a plaque on the entrance telling the story of a 19 year old Canadian medic after whom the square was named.



The inscription said "... *In this day, this very day which was so important for our freedom, he arrived in Basly and settled up in the village's elementary school which was transformed into a hospital. There, for 52 days, he will heal his comrades and war wounded civilians with devotion. .... Since June, 5<sup>th</sup> 2010, this library, former school of Basly, has been carrying the name of this good man whom we love and to whom we owe so much*".

Bud Hannam landed on D Day and after leaving Basly followed the troops through Belgium and Holland. He married a Belgian girl and they had a "fantastic" 55 year marriage before she died in 2001. In 2004 he visited Basly with Rosie, his new partner, to join in the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorations of D Day and show her the scenes of his war.

Outside the library, wearing his blazer and medals, he was approached by a 12 year old boy who asked if he knew that the building had been used in the war. Upon hearing Bud's reply he ran off to fetch his father. Bud recalled his most vivid memory:

*"A German fighter was returning from the beaches where it had strafed ships and troops, and was damaged by return fire. For whatever reason, the pilot stayed with the aircraft. In a field near Basly, two sisters, 13 and 15, were heading home with the cows. It was about 5 p.m. Milking time. The German pilot was on his way to his death and decided to kill somebody on his way. He strafed the cows and their herders with 20-millimetre cannon fire.*

*The 13-year-old had an arm blown off at the elbow, and a shell passed through her chest, front to back. Her sister was lightly wounded". Local residents, desperate for treatment for the girls, took them to a dressing station where 19-year-old Hannam was on duty. He was at a table working on the 13-year-old. It was a sucking chest wound. "The doctor sealed the chest wound, and we had to get an air seal on the wound on the back, too. We moved her to her side and I was holding a special bandage to the hole in her back. She was in shock and the doctor was trying to find a vein to start plasma. I felt her heart stop. ... I treated hundreds of wounds. They're all a blur. Not that one. I remember that one."*

In 2010 Bud received a call from Basly with an invitation to return for a special event during the D-Day celebrations. What he wasn't told until he got there was that the school had been closed and was being re-dedicated as a library. The Canadian was there to unveil the new plaque. It reads: "Bud Hannam Place. At a reception that followed, he was approached by an elderly woman with scars above an eye. She said she and her sister had been strafed by a dying German aircraft, and she knew Canadians had treated her sister, but she died. Ever since she had wondered how.



This story has an unusual ending for a war story, a happy one. In October 2010 Bud and Rosie returned to Basly to marry in the church before 150 locals. Rosie placed her bouquet on the grave of the young girl.



**Alwyne Powell**

On the 18th November 1943 my wife Christine's father, Sergeant Wilfred Harry Perry (Rear Gunner), and his crew departed from RAF Downham Market on a mission to Mannheim in Southern Germany. All went according to plan until caught in searchlights and a German fighter attacked from below causing terminal damage. The pilot had the aircraft, Stirling Bomber EE884, under control and decided to attempt a landing in a field near Bobstadt (six miles north of Mannheim). He shouted to the crew to abandon and Bomb Aimer Alwyne Powell parachuted from the door near the bomb bay. The aircraft unfortunately came into contact with electric pylon cables and a wheel was ripped off. This resulted in the aircraft crashing with the loss of the remaining six crew. The bodies were buried in the local cemetery and cared for by the villagers until moved to Durnbach War Cemetery Bavaria after the war ended.

Alwyne managed to avoid capture for a few days and travelled about forty miles before arrest and transfer to the Stalag.

Christine and I have been trying to trace the survivor Alwyne Powell for many years with no success. Steve Rogers was contacted by someone who wished to contact me regarding the sole survivor.

He had picked up on the TWGPP site's information and linked his relation with the details held on the TWGPP records with myself and Christine. From information given by Steve we telephoned this person who turned out to be the Grandson of Alwyne Powell who he had never met. He told us that Alwyne, after being released from Stalag Luft 3 in 1945, unfortunately passed away in 1956 after an illness carried from his time as a POW.

We were able to provide copies of a letter sent by Alwyne to Christine's mother after his release, detailing events in the air, and copies of other documents held by us. The Grandson was delighted to receive such information which the family knew little about. We are now aware of Alwyne's two daughters and son who were very young when he died and have very little memory of him.

To add to this, a number of years ago we managed to make contact with a German who was only 16 at the time of the crash and should have been in a shelter. But instead was watching from a vantage point at the stricken bomber and was able to provide information of what happened to the aircraft as it descended and ultimately crashed. He proved a photo of the crash site and a view of the entrance of the local cemetery in which the casualties were buried. A simple cross was erected with the words "Here lies six English flyers" We are still in contact with this German who is now well into his 80's, and we now, hopefully, will remain in contact with the Powell family.

## **Captain Fergus Bowes Lyon, 8th Black Watch - Peter Gillings**

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission has changed the commemoration for Captain Fergus Bowes-Lyon, an uncle of Her Majesty the Queen. Fergus died in France during the Battle of Loos in September 1915 and, until now, had been commemorated by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission on the Loos Memorial as he had no known grave.

His grandson wrote to the Commission in November 2011 after having visited Quarry Cemetery, Vermelles. He produced contemporary evidence that his grandfather had been buried in the quarry and that a grave marker with his name on it was still in place at the end of the war. *Continued over.*

The Commission's grave registration documents were found to record his burial in the cemetery in 1920, but these documents were superseded by the final grave registration forms, dating from 1925, which do not include Captain Bowes-Lyon's name. Under these circumstances the Commission has agreed that the evidence for Captain Bowes-Lyon being buried in the cemetery is sufficient to allow the erection of a named headstone within the cemetery. The special memorial headstone to Captain Bowes-Lyon is inscribed 'Buried near this spot' as there is no certainty about the precise location of his remains within the cemetery.



The majority of the headstones in Quarry Cemetery, Vermelles are, in fact, of this type as the cemetery remained in the front line after 1915 and suffered extensive shell damage before the end of the war. This made precise grave identification extremely problematic. The headstone was installed in the cemetery in 2012.

### Commemoration at British War Graves in Norway - Bodil Kristine Fagerthun

On March 15 there was a commemoration on the British war graves in Ballangen New Cemetery, where Captain Bernard Warburton-Lee is buried with 25 other British soldiers who died in the battles of Narvik in 1940. Most of these served in "HMS Hardy" and "HMS Hunter".

Captain Warburton-Lee commanded the British 2nd Destroyer Flotilla consisting of five destroyers (HMS Hardy, Havock, Hostile, Hotspur and Hunter) in a surprise attack on German destroyers and merchant ships in a blinding snowstorm in Ofotfjord in the First Battle of Narvik on 10 April 1940. This was successful and was almost immediately followed by an engagement with German destroyers during which Captain Warburton-Lee was mortally wounded by a shell which hit Hardy's bridge. For his exploits Captain Warburton-Lee was awarded Britain's highest decoration in combat, the Victoria cross, posthumously.



The Captain's grandson, John Warburton-Lee, his wife Louie and three sons Ned, Jamie and Kit honoured their grandfather/great grandfather with a memorial wreath on the grave. Afterwards a memorial wreath was laid on the sea on the spot where "HMS Hardy" was hit by a German destroyer. This was arranged by the leader of the War Museum in Narvik, Ulf E. Torgersen.

On the same day the Norwegian author Alf R. Jacobsen released volume two of his Narvik study *The Bitter Victory* (Volume One, *Attack at Dawn* was released in 2012), events concerning Narvik, between 10 April & 10 June 1940.

In *The Bitter Victory*, Jacobsen tells the full story for the first time of the conflict between Churchill and his men on the ground and how Hitler in the Reich Chancellery in Berlin and his besieged men at Narvik perceived the situation – all based on never before published diaries, letters and reports from most of the central characters on both sides.

## Revisit Programme – Steve Rogers

The 'Revisits' programme to update images held in the archive is going well. Many new volunteers are helping throughout UK whereas some 'Old Hands' are helping in Europe and more distant countries where work enables them to travel and have a bit of time off.

Dave and Kay Lovell were able to visit the cemeteries in and around Rome and found one of those 'Coals to Newcastle' scenarios. A chap called Hadrian once built a wall preventing the 'Geordies' from invading Scotland having learnt his trade in Rome. It stretched from Newcastle to Carlisle but here in Rome was a part of that wall having been transported back and now erected to commemorate the Cumbrian men that had died in WW2.



David Milborrow took the opportunity to visit Myanmar (Burma) now that the country has opened up to a bit more tourism. His Journal can be read as an appendix to this newsletter but he utilised his time to re photograph Rangoon memorial, which added another 24,000 names to the Project, and other cemeteries as an update.

Mike Rimmer has returned to Wahala in Togoland where **Lt. G M Thomson** was the first officer to be killed in WW1 on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1914. He was pleased to find that the sometimes neglected cemetery had received a face lift including the grave of Lt Thomson complete with new Plaque.

John Mynott has completed the last two plots at the large German cemetery at Neuville St. Vaast since our request for help to complete it. It would be good now to be able to get the data from VDK to help us get all 45,000 up to site!



## Revisiting Oman – Cynny Sharp

Cynny Sharp let us know that she was travelling to Oman and offered to revisit and photograph two very isolated cemeteries on the Muscat coastline. The cemeteries of Muscat Old and Muscat New are only accessible by boat so rarely get a visit. Cynny's report is copied below:

I arrived at the British Embassy in Muscat on the morning of Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2013 and was collected by an immaculate white 4x4, with two members of the Embassy staff and an Omani driver. We drove through Muscat and down to a very smart marina and after the men had changed into swimming shorts, boarded a small day motor boat with a canopy for shade. One of my companions shares the boat with a friend who had launched it from the slip and prepared it for us.







We whizzed out of the bay and up the coast with a spectacular wake, passing large formations of rock offshore jutting out of the sea and the occasional dhow. Vast rugged mountains (known as jebel) reached almost down to the water's edge and the narrow foreshore, many topped with small round crenelated watch towers. The whitewashed 19<sup>th</sup> century graves in the first site were tucked into a small bay and looked so peaceful and dignified. I could hardly believe I had actually arrived at last after all the emails and planning!

Our idea to swim ashore was swiftly changed as the clear turquoise water was literally teeming with thousands of jellyfish right up to the rocky beach. So, while I dispensed coffee from a thermos and delicious local dates provided by my companions one of them blew up a rubber donut with a foot pump and we prepared to paddle ashore. I was first onto the donut with one of my companions followed, once we had reached shore, by the second one kneeling on the donut and paddling with a small dustpan and a plank of wood! The jellyfish were swarming around the shoreline so the donut was heaved up the coral shore so that I didn't get stung!

Here were 20 or so graves dating back to the mid 1800's, soldiers and pioneers, British agents and missionaries buried in this private place in deference to the Omani religion. What a place. It was completely quiet and peaceful, apart from the vultures and swallows soaring high in the jebel overhead, and I took my photos. It was scorching hot. As the tide was out it was - just - possible to scramble over jagged and slippery rocks round a headland into the next small bay containing the more recent graves.



This we did, me following one companion and the other behind me as my wingman!

The next bay was very similar, the site flanked with small, whitewashed pillars and abutted with rocks to direct the flow of rainwater from the mountains above. Just as we rounded the corner to the second beach we saw three large black-tipped reef sharks right below us in the clear water, very unusual in the shallows I was told and which the men got very excited about and I was glad they too would have a story to tell. Two SAS wreaths had been laid fairly recently on a regimental member's grave and again I took many photographs. A gravestone broken into many pieces (in my photos from Steve in UK) had been replaced which was so good to see. It was very moving and I stood and reflected for some minutes.



In due course we returned to the boat, not before I fell on the rocks and gashed my foot quite badly, so one of my valiant companions gave me his sandals and continued barefoot on the slippery, jagged rocks. We saw a large green turtle swimming happily in the crystal clear water and many tiger fish. The return trip was hilarious....I lay on my tummy in the middle of the donut, with my two Embassy heroes lying either side of me, all in swimmys, them paddling hard with plank and dustpan!

We drove back through Muscat old town and I was eventually deposited outside the hugely opulent Hyatt Hotel looking somewhat unkempt and took a taxi home.

My companions were extremely kind and accommodating and I should like to formally thank the British Embassy in Muscat for all their assistance in this venture.

### 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of WW1 – new site page due

As we are now approaching 2014 and the anniversary of the start of WW1, this has provoked considerable interest from local societies to research their local memorials and identify where the men and women that were killed whilst serving are buried. Although the start of the war was August 1914 the anniversary will effectively stretch over the four year period (2014-2018) of the war with major battles, both on land and sea, being remembered. The likes of Jutland, Somme, Ypres, Arras being just a few. It is our intention to create a new page on our site to commemorate this anniversary with an area for 'It happened this month' which will be updated as required.

### How I "met" Uncle Jimmy. – Britta Pedersen

How did it happen that a man, serving in the RAF who was shot down over Denmark 60 years ago this month (1943) became so familiar to me? He was born in Scotland in 1919 and died 8 years before I was born? So how come? I will explain!

My name is Britta Pedersen and I was born in Denmark in 1951 I have always taken an interest in history and especially the history of World War II and the German occupation of Denmark along with the resistance movement (*Modstandsbevægelsen*) which couldn't have achieved much without help from the allied countries such as Great Britain and the RAF.



Only few years ago I became aware of the many, many airmen, who died when they were shot down over Danish territory and subsequently buried in Danish churchyards – if ever found. I started visiting these churchyards one of which was Reerslev Churchyard in Zealand. The cemetery there is quite big and includes three headstones commemorating five crew members from a Stirling Bomber shot down on the night of 29<sup>th</sup> April 1943. The other two crew members are buried in Copenhagen, Bispebjerg Churchyard.

I didn't know anything personal about these men only the story of how and when the Stirling was shot down over Taagerup.

On my second visit to the church I saw a display of photos of all the crew members and a wreath with a ribbon: "In Grateful Remembrance". It was obvious the wreath should be placed on the graveside but which family and to which airman I did not know, so I wrote a note: "To the English Family" telling about my interest for history and my way of paying respect for the fallen airmen.



And from then the story really began, it hasn't ended but a story has started to unfold about a young man who died ..... all too young. Five nephews of Pilot Officer James Mellon Traynor came to pay a visit to the graveside of their uncle who died before they were born but still a family member to them. The nephews and the nieces had grown up hearing stories about their uncle from their parents whose brother had joined the RAF during the war and the grandparents who had lost a son. It was a similar story in many families.

But how did I come "to know" James Mellon Traynor? After my note to the unknown family I received e mails from two of the nephews and after some correspondence was invited to visit Scotland to meet Tony and Sarah Griffin. Tony's mother had been the sister of James (Jimmy) the Pilot.

We went to a family gathering in James' home town in Shotts where a good part of the family still live and I was able to meet many of the current family including Mary Traynor aged 86 who had known Jimmy well as she had been married to his brother.

All the family members referred to him as "Uncle Jimmy", so of course to me the Pilot Officer J. M. Traynor became "Uncle Jimmy". It was so nice to hear the stories about uncle Jimmy, who in his time had been a good football player, dancer and singer with the choir in the local catholic church. The visit to Shotts included many landmarks from Jimmy's life and the local war memorial on which his name had been engraved. We also visited the local cemetery to see his parents grave and above it released a white dove in remembrance of all the RAF crews that had lost their lives for freedom and peace.



**Original gravesite marker details the 'English Flyer' crew**

Back at the family home after the talking and laughter there were some moving moments. I was thanked for caring for the gravesite of uncle Jimmy and researching all the other war graves in Denmark.

For my part I could only say "thank you" for the warm welcome and for the feeling that I was taking care of my family burial plot. I was very touched to receive a framed photo of a Stirling and also a smaller photo of Jimmy in front of his Stirling together with two crewmates.

So this is just a single story of all the many to be told but also a story about the bonds between Denmark and Scotland (and UK). A bond between families in two countries who come to know each other through the connection of a certain Royal Air Force Pilot - In Memory of James M. Traynor

**Articles for the next Newsletter, due in the Summer of 2013, should be sent via e mail to [steve@twgpp.org](mailto:steve@twgpp.org)**