



# THE WAR GRAVES PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECT



In Association  
with the CWGC



## News from the Front line

Summer 2010

Just as well I do not 'do' football having just watched our exit from the World Cup so I have decided to make a start on this Summers newsletter to cheer me up! As we all know the weather has been great over the past couple of weeks so many of you have been out and about in UK conducting revisits to some of the cemeteries we need photographed again to update the archive. This will be an ongoing evolution utilising mainly new volunteers who want to help, where we have otherwise completed sites, but also 'old hands' wanting to try out new cameras. If you are interested in this aspect please get in touch.

A downside to of visiting some of our country churches during the Summer is the fact that many have now become wildlife havens and to encourage flora and fauna many of the grave stones can no longer be seen because of the height of the grass.

On the subject of wildlife, I was most surprised to find a Chameleon taking a stroll around Malta (Cappucini) Cemetery back in April during a so called quick visit. Having served in the RN for some 32 years I never managed to set foot on the island so always had it as one of those places to go. Most of the cemeteries had been completed beforehand so Sandra and I went to round up the strays and see



some history. With the help of Mark Fitzgerald the CWGC manager on the island and Denis Darmanin, a local historian, we were privileged to see the parts others don't! All was going well on the 3 day break until a certain ash cloud put the return plans in jeopardy. Emails from Marian and Nic photographing war graves in Italy hinted that there might be problems as they could not get home. We found out the next day that we were in the same position but, not having the leave to take, decided to seek other options that were quite limited. A credit card, flight to Rome , hire car to Caen, ferry to Portsmouth and 5 days later we were home again. Unfortunately without knowing it Marian and Nic were in the same Italian town as we were overnight waiting for other means of transport. Needless to say we did not stop over to find missing graves on the journey through Italy and France.

On site we have now added the new tab for Cemetery locations. This option has been made available by the hard work of Dave Ruddlesden, that we mentioned in the last Newsletter, who has painstakingly plotted CWGC sites onto Google earth. This process is very much ongoing and will be updated as the files become available and can be downloaded to view. Dave has also provided location details for these countries that can be programmed into SATNAV/GPS systems. If required please contact me (Steve).

Enjoy the summer (those this side of the equator) and we hope the winter is not too harsh for those down under.

**Steve**

## A link to Fromelles – by Tony & Sue Wege

In our work for The War Graves Photographic Project here in the state of South Australia, we see tiny snippets of some of the history of the Great War events that shook the globe in the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In terms of location, Australia (and South Australia) was a very long way removed from these shattering events. But in terms of the Australian society of the time, the nation was intimately involved. Several hundred thousand Australian soldiers served overseas during WW1 in defence of Britain and the Empire - over fifty thousand of them never returned.

In our searches of South Australian cemeteries looking for CWGC graves, Office of Australian War Graves internments (OAWG) and family memorials to lost soldiers, we simply do not see the big picture unfolding before us as may be the case in the vast war cemeteries in and near the old battlefields of Europe, the Gallipoli Peninsula or in Palestine. No such historical battlefields exist in Australia. The few large WW1 CWGC cemeteries here are in state capital cities and often located near to ex-military hospitals. But what we often see here, certainly in South Australia, are apart from the larger suburban cemeteries in metropolitan Adelaide, little cemeteries near small rural towns scattered across the wide brown lands of the state sometimes containing isolated graves and/or memorials to these men. When found, we see individual family commemorations and/or CWGC/OAWG graves but with little or no reference to the historical context of the soldier whose name appears on the grave or memorial. The casual observer usually has no idea about the history of the soldier whose name is before them. One such example of lost history concerns the disaster at the Battle of Fromelles, 19<sup>th</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> July 1916. South Australian soldiers fought, died, were wounded and even survived the battle. But our work here for TWGPP thus far has never revealed a word about it in the cemeteries we have visited.

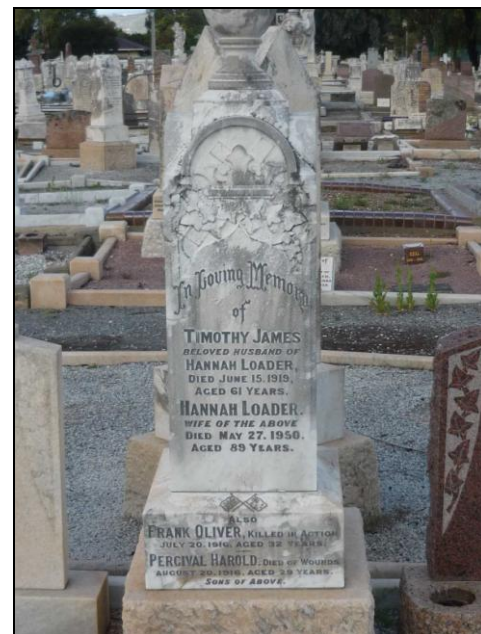


This battle fought by Australian (5<sup>th</sup> Division) and British (61<sup>st</sup> Division) troops against their German enemies near this French village, has never been commemorated to any extent at all in Australia. Up until now it has been long forgotten. Yet it was the worst single day of Australian battle casualties (5,533 casualties) in the entire nation's history, right up to this present day. South Australian soldiers were amongst the 5<sup>th</sup> Division's brigades embroiled in the killing fields of Fromelles. The South and Western Australian raised 32 Battalion suffered 718 soldiers killed, wounded and missing in this battle that lasted less than a day. But as of now, we have never seen the word "Fromelles" appearing on any family memorial or grave amongst the more than two thousand graves we have searched thus far in South Australia. We frequently see "Pozieres" or "Dardanelles" or "Palestine" on family headstones when families remembered their fallen South Australian soldiers from WW1 because either that is where they died or where their relatives thought they died. These battlefields are impressed into the Australian psyche to this day. But not once thus far in SA have we seen "Fromelles" on any family memorial even though the soldier was actually killed there. Society here seemingly was not then and never has been informed to any real extent about what actually happened at this battle. The probability is that at the time, the families were not given any official idea about this catastrophe and that legacy of official ignorance has gone on to this present time.

The name did not then and has not since, featured at all in the wider population. The nation is only now being awakened to the event, 93 years after it happened. One such and very clear example of the 32 Battalion's "lost" history at Fromelles, is that of 22 year old Corporal Gordon Llewellyn Crossman, killed in action in that battle on the afternoon of 19<sup>th</sup> July 1916, his body never being found. We located his name as a memorial on a family grave in the Hindmarsh cemetery, a suburb very close to the CBD of the city of Adelaide. On reading the inscription, it was noted that the family had the name "Pozieres" inscribed on the headstone of the family member as the place where Crossman fell. He was definitely killed at Fromelles but the family never knew it. "Pozieres" was known; "Fromelles" 80 kilometres further to the north, was not. History in that family, lost.

Another 32 Battalion soldier who died at Fromelles, this time on the morning of 20<sup>th</sup> July 1916, was Private Frank Oliver Loader. His body was never found after the battle either. However, his identity disks were returned by the Germans in 1917. He is in fact one of the soldiers whose remains were buried in a mass grave by the Germans in 1916 and exhumed, identified and reburied at the new CWGC cemetery at Fromelles in 2009-2010. His death was simply mentioned on the grave of his family members at the time, not the place. The grave is located in the Payneham cemetery, a suburb of Adelaide, where Frank was born.

At the time, the family would have had no idea where he fell on the Western Front. He left his family here in Adelaide and went off to war in 1915. He never returned. The family simply recorded his death on the grave of his parents. The only hint to the casual observer on the memorial that he fought at Fromelles, lies in his date of death.



But some 32 Battalion soldiers at Fromelles did return. Corporal Harold William Waltke, at the time a 20 year old blacksmith from the farming town of Hamley Bridge 70 kilometres north of Adelaide and whose close ethnic origins were Silesian German, was shot through the shoulder during the afternoon of the 19<sup>th</sup> July. He was captured by the Germans when trapped and partially disabled whilst in the German forward trenches next morning, the 20<sup>th</sup> July 1916. He was taken prisoner and held in Germany before being repatriated via Holland in 1918. He died relatively young and was buried at the public Cheltenham cemetery, Port Adelaide in 1946. An OAWG headstone marks his grave. The only indicator that he could be a Fromelles veteran is his low military number (420) showing that he was an original member of his 32 Battalion and thus, if the visitor knew the history, it was possible that he had to have participated in the battle.

A final example of lost history lies in the tiny cemetery at Spalding, a small town in the wheat belt of SA 150 kilometres north of Adelaide.



Here a more modern OAWG plaque rests on the grave of Private Roderick McAskill. This original 32 Battalion soldier, then a 26 year old farmer from Spalding, (military number 568 and who sailed to Europe with Harold Waltke) was shot through the thigh at Fromelles during the afternoon of the 19<sup>th</sup> July 1916. He was lucky and was rescued from the battlefield by his mates. He recovered from the wound but in 1917 he was severely hurt in an incident near the Front. He eventually came home from the war with lasting injuries but went on to live a long life. On his death in 1973 he was quietly buried in the town in which he was born. Once again there is no indication at all that he fought at Fromelles unless his battalion (32) and low military number (568) are recognised and give possibility to that fact.



After nearly a century the battle at Fromelles, an absolute disaster for the Australian and British units who fought there, is slowly emerging from the deep historical hole in which it has been metaphorically buried in South Australia. Here bits of its history do actually exist however esoteric.

We are pleased to be able to continue to do something to help make the catastrophe at Fromelles more widely known and its history preserved.

*Tony and Sue Wege  
Nuriootpa South Australia*

**A scene so often played out no doubt.**

Steve,

*I checked the database and the name of my Uncle who died of wounds in 1918 is contained there and I wonder does that mean you have a picture of his grave? His name is Private Arden Roy Hallett and he is buried at Hollybrook Cemetery, Southampton. I would be so appreciative to view such a photograph.*

*Arden was my father's older brother and while, of course, I never knew him, in a sense I did. When the family would gather long ago while his generation still survived, my Aunt Anna Lee Hallett would play the piano and we would gather around and sing. She could play anything you could hum, after only a minute or so. Eventually, she would pause her playing and then resume to play Danny Boy for Ard, who had once sung it in a rich baritone once upon a time. There would not be a dry eye from the kids (including me) to the elders who had known and had loved him. My Dad had barely known Ard, for he was only 7 when Ard went to war. After the telegram came in 1918, about 2 weeks later, a letter arrived for my grandparents and my father collected it at the post office and ran the two miles up the hill to the big old house thinking that he held proof of a terrible mistake. It was from the English lady who had written Ard's prior several letters for him, to send her condolences. Her husband had been a patient in the next bed. Ard had seemed in his usual state of recuperation when she left for the day and was gone the next day when she returned. I have the letter my father ran home with and she had clearly been very shocked and distressed. It had been so kind of her to write for Ard and again extremely thoughtful of her to send her sympathies. But, sadly, the War Department had not erred. A picture of his eternal resting place would be wonderful to put with his uniform picture and a portrait I have of him as a civilian taken before the war. I am in disbelief to imagine that it is nearly a hundred years since he went off to fight for King and Country in 1914.*



*It is an incredible project and you are good and caring people. More than a million graves and each with people who have personal memories or those that share the memories of those who had them first hand. It is hard to believe that there are many millions of people around the globe who will finally, when done, have been given a piece of the past to share with the future. God bless you all. It is a very meaningful undertaking. Janet Hallett Gardner*

*Thank-you for any assistance you can give me and also for the opportunity to walk down memory lane this Saturday afternoon and think of a time passed and of people all now gone.*

*Sincerely,*

*Janet (Hallett) Gardiner*

**Post script on receipt of pictures:**

*Sometimes there are human endeavors that effect so many in a very positive way and there is not the feedback to say how much that effort has meant. I would like to have all those who have contributed and continue to contribute to this vast project know how meaningful their time and labor has been.*

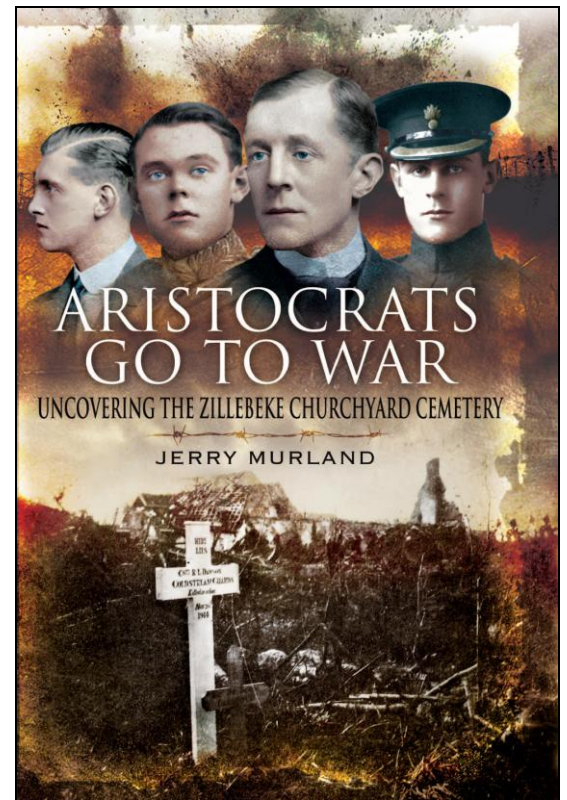
*Thank-you TWGPP on my Uncle's behalf, on my own and for Connie Hallett Frizzell, William Arden Hallett and Carlton Hallett for providing this visual documentation to us, his brothers' children.*

**ARDEN ROY HALLETT  
Died 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1918  
Buried in Southampton (Hollybrook)  
Cemetery**

## Aristocrats go to War

Jerry Murland has been a volunteer with TWGPP for some time now but has spent the last two years researching into the officers and men buried and commemorated at the Zillebeke Churchyard Cemetery. This is the first book that deals with a specific cemetery and consequently may be of interest to TWGPP volunteers.

*Aristocrats Go To War* is the account of eighteen officers and men who fought principally with 4<sup>th</sup> Guards Brigade, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment and the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade during the final months of 1914 and are buried in the small churchyard cemetery at Zillebeke, near Ypres. The cemetery, often referred to as the 'Aristocrat's Cemetery', is noted for the high proportion of individuals from the families of the aristocracy and landed gentry who are buried and commemorated therein.



These men were part of a regular army that had evolved from nearly a century of reform and reorganization. Some had fought in South Africa in the second Boer War and most were typical of the Edwardian officer corps in their social origins and outlook. The book traces the historical and political processes that saw the British Army emerge from being the plaything of the aristocracy to the professional organization it became in the early twentieth century. It takes the reader to France with the British Expeditionary Force in early August 1914 and concludes with the first Battle of Ypres. It was at Ypres these men made the final sacrifice in a battle that, in many ways, determined the outcome of the First World War. This is their story.

The book is unique in that it is about a cemetery and the men buried and commemorated there and is about the personal lives of a small number of the men who went to war in 1914, it is an attempt to put a human face on the awfulness of war and provide a story for each of the headstones in the Zillebeke churchyard cemetery. Jerry has painstakingly researched all eighteen of the officers and men who were killed in 1914 and provided biographical detail of the nine other named individuals who were killed in action during 1915-16. 'Aristocrats Go to War' and is to be published by Pen and Sword in July 2010.

## Repatriated but still remembered



Kjersti Meyer is co-ordinating the completion of Norway and during a recent visit to ARENDAL HOGENDAL Cemetery armed with the CWGC listing was surprised to find Flying officer LJ Dejace, a Belgian National not mentioned at all on the list. As most of us know there are slight errors in some of the listings that we report back to Maidenhead HQ for referral. This grave is still tended by the locals of Arendal who had recently planted Violas in the border. They might be a little surprised to find that FO Dejace was actually repatriated to Belgium in the 1960's and at that time the stone was removed to a caretaker's shed. He is correctly noted on the CWGC site as being buried in the family plot at LIEGE ROBERMONT CEMETERY, BELGIUM. It would appear that the stone never got destroyed and a well-meaning gardener reinstated it believing that it had perhaps toppled and there it has remained for another 40 plus years! Seems a pity to remove it now!

## Awards

Mary Randles has been a volunteer with the project for some time, having received a photograph of her uncle Albert Wedge who is buried in Khayat Beach Cemetery in Israel. Just recently Albert has been awarded the Elizabeth Cross that is now presented to those that have lost their lives in service since WW2. The Award was presented by the Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire at Fulwood Barracks in Lancashire on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April, along with others, for personnel from Northern Ireland, Iraq, Afghanistan and two more from Palestine, one who was killed just 10 days after Albert in 1947.



**Albert & The Elizabeth Cross he was awarded with**



In Australia Tony Wege, a volunteer who has travelled extensively with his wife Sue for the project, has been awarded the "Australian Fire Services Medal" by the Governor-General of Australia which was announced in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. It is for 30 years of service to the South Australia Country Fire Service and is the highest level service medal that can be awarded in the Australian fire services. He will actually receive the medal at a formal investiture at Government House in September. Well done Tony.

## Submissions to site

With just about 1.53 million names now on site the world is now becoming a smaller place for the Project with fewer numbers to get. Help has been offered in various countries over the past year so if anyone has images to send in then please do so as we are now trying to consolidate our position and allocate the remaining sites. We appreciate that in some cases those that have found they do not have quite so much time to free up for the project may have prevented completion of some sites. If this is the case, a quick e mail to advise Steve would be appreciated so that, if needs be, we can look towards others offering to help. Peter Francis at the CWGC is endeavoring to get smaller sites completed for us where access is limited due to local security situations.

The good news is that the whole of the North African coastal countries should be complete by the end of the year, along with Italy, with just a few of the smaller sites yet to get. Greece and Turkey now complete so just the Eastern end of the Mediterranean with Israel, Lebanon and Syria needing work.

Areas further afield with outstanding sites include Mid to South Africa, although tentative plans are being made for SA and Indonesia, India and Pakistan. Anyone going to Korea? These are areas where volunteers are thin on the ground.

Additional revisits by new volunteers are always appreciated to keep the archive up to date, so if you are off on holiday, or lucky enough for business to take you to exotic locations, a quick email to Steve to check on progress will normally result in a 'Yes please'!

## A HALIFAX MONUMENT IN OEGSTGEEST, THE NETHERLANDS - *Dik Winkelman*

24 May 1943 saw an attack by 826 bombers on the city of Dortmund in the Ruhr, Germany. The raid consisted of Lancaster's, Halifax's, Wellingtons, Stirling's and Mosquito's. Thirty eight of the planes involved would not return to England after the raid

One of them was Halifax B/GR II series I, number HR 836 of 51 Squadron, based at RAF Snaith. It was a new plane and also the first operational flight for all of the crew who consisted of:

Sergeant Alastair Milner Hood BLACK	Flight Engineer	Age 25
Flight Sergeant Henry Graham FREEMAN	Navigator	Age 24 (Canadian)
Sergeant Henry John GIBBS	Air Gunner	Age 18
Flying Officer Thomas Herbert GREEN	Air Bomber	Age 25
Flying Officer John Edward RIGBY	Pilot	Age 21
Sergeant Aubrey Edgar Perrin ROCHESTER	Wireless Op/Air Gunner	Age 33
Flight Sergeant Merton Earl ZAPFE	Air Gunner	Age 20 (Canadian)

During the return flight home and flying over the Netherlands, things went wrong when the Halifax was not flying according to the planned route. German Radar traced the plane and a Nachtjäger (night fighter) of the type ME-110 was sent to intercept it as it flew close to Leiden in the mid west of the Netherlands.

Oberfeldwebel Heinz Vinke was flying the ME-110 and succeeded in shooting down the Halifax. It crashed in the Morsebelpolder next to the village of Oegstgeest at 02.24 local time. None of the crew members survived. The back part of the fuselage was above ground and could be recovered but even today the rest of the plane is still underground at the crash site. The remains of Zapfe, Green, Black and Rochester were soon recovered and buried in the churchyard of the Groene Kerkje on 27 May 1943. It was more difficult to recover Freeman, Gibbs and Rigby and only a part of their remains are buried together in one grave. Most of their remains still rest deep underground at the Kleyn Proffijntlaan in the neighbourhood of Haaswijk (the former Morsebelpolder). Shortly after the war the RAF tried to recover the remains but they did not succeed, apparently because they were digging at the wrong place. The German pilot Heinz Vinke did not survive the war either - he was killed 26 February 1944.



Flt Sgt Steve Ayre at the new Memorial

On May 4<sup>th</sup> 2009 an new memorial was unveiled at the crash site attended by several relatives of the crew members, amongst them a sister of Flight Sergeant Zapfe, a sister of Flying Officer Rigby and a son of Sergeant Rochester. The Royal Air Force was represented by Group Captain David Paton (a former commanding officer of 51 Squadron), Wing Commander Richard Matthews (current commanding officer of 51 Squadron), Flight Sergeant Steve Ayre, Flight Lieutenant Dave McRitchie and SAC Matt Baker. Group Captain Paton recited the Exhortation.

A sad postscript is the fact that the urns of the parents of Alastair Black were buried in the grave of their son; in 1960 and in 1989.

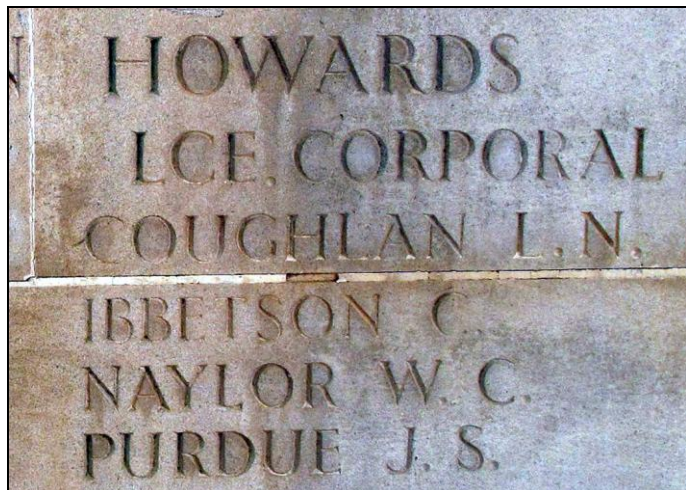
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## Grim Determination – An Autobiography

Paul Cheall has been researching his father's autobiography – **Grim Determination** – 'When Bill Cheall joined the territorial army in April 1939 he could not possibly have imagined the trauma, destruction and violence (yet amazing rewards) that would be unleashed upon his world over the next six years during World War Two, whilst he served as a Green Howard in Montgomery's Eighth Army.'

During his research Paul contacted TWGPP as a chapter within the book is set in Tunisia and the fierce fighting that went on around Enfidaville and Sfax. With these two cemeteries recently completed, TWGPP were able to supply photographs of the graves of some of the men mentioned in these chapters. Paul has kindly let us reproduce an extract below:-



**Coughlans name on Medjez memorial**

*"The Wadi Akarit - a dried-up river bed - was about five thousand yards long, running inland from the sea. My section moved along the top of the Wadi, advancing further into the hills, then making for higher ground on the right of us, when we were suddenly fired upon from across the valley and one boy was killed as we froze to the ground. We were now attacking as platoons and sections and our section, led by L/Cpl Coughlan, bending low to the ground, moved to the right and we had to tread warily because we were very often overlooked. We must have advanced about two hundred yards, not realising that we were being observed, when suddenly a single shot rang out and Coughlan, who was next to me on my right, dropped dead - in an instant. It was an awful experience seeing poor Coughlan's life being ended so suddenly."*

After the battle the troops had some rest – *"After the meal, another boy and myself were detailed to go and bury one of our lads who had been killed - it was too hot to leave bodies lying around and the stretcher bearers were busy taking care of the wounded - so off we went with our entrenching tools. Although I had seen a good many dead soldiers, I had never been called upon to bury one. Unfortunately, there was no body as such, but only the gruesome remains....never before had I seen anything like it and I found it very difficult to contain myself.*

*We dug a shallow grave in the stony ground and put the torn limbs into it. I then found the identity discs and, to my horror, I found the dead boy to be Arthur Oxley, one of my pals on the Queen Mary.*

*We looked around for any other things belonging to Arthur and found half of a Green Howard cap badge. It was twisted by the blast and I still have it as a memory of my pal. I don't know how I contained my emotions at that moment. Together we made a cairn of stones on the grave, hoping that it would be found. It was such a lovely hillside, though I did not think it would be discovered, but we had left one identity disc with the body, the other we took back to our officer to whom we explained what we had done. How strange it was that despite the trauma of such events these things were, of necessity, put to the back of my mind.*

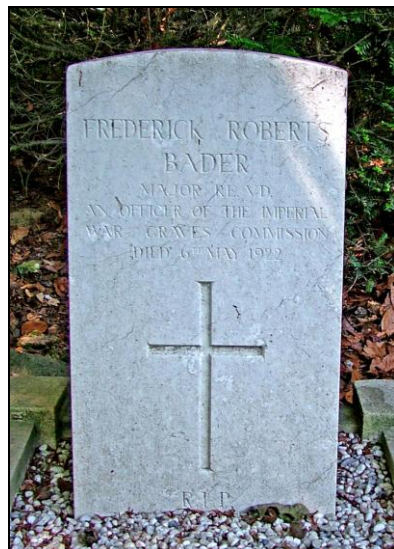
*The enemy had fled, leaving many bodies and weapons lying around. It had been one hell of an experience. All next day I could not forget how a human body could be so violated as was Arthur Oxley's. I was certain the body would not be found but nevertheless I later wrote to the War Graves Commission and was informed that the body had been recovered and buried in Grave no 26, Plot 2, Row D at the Sfax war cemetery in Tunisia."*



**Arthur Oxley's grave in Sfax War Cemetery**



## Did you know?



We have all heard about the exploits of one of the most famous airmen of World War 2, namely Group Captain Douglas Bader CBE, DSO & Bar, DFC & Bar, FRAeS, DL whose story was made into the film 'Reach For the Sky'. However, there would have been no story if it was not for his father, Frederick Robert Bader, who had been a Major in Royal Engineers and who, after retirement from the Army, became an Officer in the Imperial War Graves Commission. Frederick's grave was recently found by John Sutherland in Brussels Town cemetery.

Group Captain Bader had spent much of his war based at RAF Tangmere in Sussex. Another lesser known link to this well known Battle of Britain Air Station is the death of Pilot officer William Meade Lindsley "Billy" Fiske III.

Billy had been an American Olympic Bobsled champion but joined the RAF in 1940 as one of 10 USA Airmen who were to fly in the Battle of Britain. On 16 August 1940 No. 601 Sqn (Hurricanes) was scrambled to intercept a squadron of German aircraft. They destroyed eight Stukas but, after just 15 minutes of flight, a German gunner put a bullet through Fiske's fuel tank. With his aircraft badly damaged and badly burnt on his hands, Fiske nursed his Hurricane fighter home, gliding over a hedgerow to the airfield. Although Fiske landed his aircraft safely back at Tangmere he had to be extracted from the aircraft by ambulance crew. Shortly after his fuel tank exploded. Fiske was taken to Royal West Sussex Hospital in Chichester for treatment but he died 48 hours later from shock. He was 29 years old.

Pilot Officer Fiske was buried in St. Mary and St. Blaise Churchyard at Boxgrove in Sussex, just a short distance from RAF Tangmere.



## ANZAC Bridge - Adele Pentony-Graham

With the forthcoming dedication of Fromelles Cemetery this month the term 'ANZAC' is being seen more frequently now in the news and in Australia and New Zealand the history of this brave group of men has taken on new interest with generations of today.

To that end, memorials erected in Australia and New Zealand are now being looked at again with the view to preservation for future generations.

An example of this is a unique bridge built to commemorate ANZAC soldiers at Kaiparoro next to State Highway 2, which has finally been listed with New Zealand Historic Places Trust. The bridge has several enlarged replicas of WW1 Medals and commemorates men from the area. First built in 1922, traffic used to use this bridge until a new one was built to take the heavier loads



## Sgt. George Kesten R.A.F.V.R – Leonard Jackson

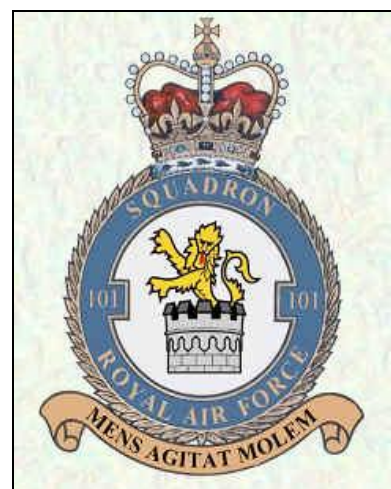
George and I trained together as aircrew for 13 months and we became close friends. Shortly after we were promoted to Sergeants, in late September 1944, George volunteered for “special duties” and simply disappeared out of my life. We were serving at No. 4 Radio School, R.A.F. Madley near Hereford, at the time waiting to be posted to an Operational Training Unit, when a staff car arrived to whisk him away. Nobody knew where he went, not even our C.O. George didn't know where he was going either and he wasn't encouraged to ask questions, but the volunteers were required to speak fluent German

George certainly spoke fluent German because he was a Polish Jew, born in Berlin. He also spoke fluent French and English, but it was not until sixty-four years later that I discovered where he had gone and what had happened to him.

He had been taken to join 101 Squadron at Ludford Magna in Lincolnshire as a Specialist Operator in Radio Counter Measures, using a complex system known as “Airborne Cigar” (or ABC). This had been devised by the British Telecommunications Research Establishment at Malvern, in response to an urgent need to reduce considerably the loss of Allied bombers to German fighters who were being guided on to our aircraft by their ground controllers.

The Squadron operated specially adapted Lancasters and carried eight crew members instead of the usual seven, the extra man being a German-speaking Operator whose task was to identify German VHF frequencies and speech channels and jam them. He would either introduce a constantly varying loud note into the speech channel or, in German, put out conflicting instructions to those the German fighters were receiving from their controllers.

It was highly complex (and highly dangerous) work and casualties for the Squadron were horrendous. Only three Squadrons in Bomber Command lost more men and aircraft than 101 and, as the Germans began to detect more accurately the jamming transmissions, the losses rose even higher.



On 4 November 1944, there was a huge raid on Bochum in the Rhur Valley and 101 Squadron sent 25 ABC-fitted Lancasters to join a massive force of 749 bombers. The industrial area was severely damaged, including an important steelworks. The centre of Bochum was also badly hit, with more than 4,000 buildings being seriously damaged or destroyed.

On that night, in Lancaster ME865, all eight crew members were shot down and killed, including my friend George. They are all buried together in a collective grave in Rheinberg War Cemetery. One of the crew was a young Pilot Officer just 19 years of age – such is the futility of war.

Although George died in 1944, I did not find out what had happened to him until sixty-four years later when I wrote to the C.W.G.C. asking if they could trace him.

I had first met him when we joined up together in London on the last Saturday in August 1943, just two months after he and his family had been driven from their home in Berlin. Mother and father had fled out of the back door and George and his sister out of the front door, just before the Gestapo smashed it down. His sister was eventually traced by the Red Cross to Switzerland, but his mother and father died in the Holocaust in Poland. George was not able to contact his sister before he died and he never knew what had happened to his mother and father. George Kesten sacrificed his life for us, as did all 55,000 Bomber Command aircrew who were killed during the Second World War. They were incredibly brave men – I was one of the lucky ones.



*You can read the full story of Sergeant George Kesten in the June 2010 issue of the aviation magazine “Flypast”.*

## Points from the Post

I am sitting here with tears in my eyes, looking at the grave site of my great uncle Frank. Thank you so very much for this, it's going to mean the world to my family!! thank you thank you thank you! i cant say it enough!! wow! my grandad- my great uncles brother would have a big smile on his face seeing this from where ever he is- if only he was here to see this too?! i am sure he helped this. thank you from my heart & from my family! Always Carissa Neal Australia.

...thanks very much indeed... That will be more than enough, after all one does not usually want a huge photo of a grave, more a discrete one for album or wallet. This will cause a tear to be shed by an elderly aunt who has never seen the grave but remembered being told in the 1930's that it was at Rouen. You are doing a very worthwhile job. May the angels hold your hand. sincere regards Malcolm.

Many thanks the photos arrived safely yesterday...they are wonderful and was so surprised to find how lovely they are presented. Congratulations on your sterling work and the TWGPP website...it is an amazing achievement. Many thanks again. Kindest regards Linda.

Hi! I received the photos of my uncle's grave today. I must say I was moved to tears by them . I just had to write and say how much I appreciate that you have undertaken to make these photos available to all of us who would never be able to visit in person. My thanks to you and all who participated in this project . I am so grateful to have the photos. Sincerely, Donna Coughlin ( Canada)

Many thanks for my latest photos. I would dearly love to be able to visit these family sites but I am unable to fly so I do really appreciate your work with the War Graves. Thanks again Regards Chris in Melbourne

Thank you so much for these photos. They have meant an awful lot to my Mum, who's mum was devastated to lose her father at the end of WW1. Sadly her mum has now passed away, but my mum is extremely grateful for these photos. Kind regards Gill

Thank you so much for the photographs of my grandfather's grave and also the view of the cemetery. I was very moved. Thank you for the great service you have done in helping families see their relatives' last resting place. I only wish the photographs were available years ago so that my late father could have seen his father's grave. I will pass them on to my brother and sister. Kindest regards. Wilma

Hello, I just wanted to say how wonderful it is that you have been able to provide me with a picture of my great grandfathers grave. You cannot imagine how astounded I was to find this on the internet! I know virtually nothing about my great grandfather, but knowing now where his grave is and having a tangible link to him has really spurred me on to find out more. Thank you so very much. Best wishes Sandra Shanahan

Thank you and your colleagues for the photos from Fayid cemetery in Egypt. The work that you do on behalf of the CWGC and the services that you provide are underrated and provide some peace for our relatives who are buried overseas. Many thanks, Stephen O'Connell.

Thank you so much for the photos. I was home last weekend and presented my dad with 2 enlargements of the ones that were already on the web site. He was thrilled and through tears said that he couldn't have received a more special gift. I'm sure that you have heard this before but I want to tell you that your work and the entire project means so much to the families that remain. I really can't thank you and your group enough. Sincerely, Joanne Falconer

Wow. Thank You what an incredibly quick service if only everything was like that. Thanks for the great job you do.

I can't thank you enough for the work you are doing. I was reduced to tears on receipt of the photographs. Our family member was lost for so long and we were pleased to have discovered where he was laid to rest but you have given us something very, very special in addition to that. Thank you and God bless. Sue B.

Many thanks for your rapid response. I and my mother are absolutely delighted with the photo, the first time anyone in the family has ever seen his. Very many thanks for your fantastic, fantastic service and project. Regards John Doyle

Thank you for the photos We are really pleased to have found it, my wife's grandmother is 100 in August and was the deceased young widow. Thanks again. Andrew

## Next Issue

The next Newsletter will be out in the first week of October 2010. If you have anything to report that might be of interest to other volunteers please send it in to Steve. Articles should be anything up to two pages long (A4) but snippets are welcome. Please include a few pictures to illustrate.

Please ensure that if extracting information from other sources to supplement the article permissions to reprint are gained.

The 'Gallery' is still on site and could do with some new pictures!! Anything with a war grave theme will be considered, even 'arty' shots like below.



### 'Over the top' at Pont Remy – by Alec Briggs



..or this one of a world famous Gunner which does not quite qualify as a war grave but spotted by Terry Denham in Winchelsea, Sussex. It is the grave of **Spike Milligan** who wrote a number of books about his experience as a Gunner during WW2.

It was erected in 2004 , 2 years after his death and bears the now famous quote in Gaelic "Duir me leat go raibh me breoite" translated "**I told you I was ill**"