



THE WAR GRAVES PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECT



In Association
with the CWGC



News from the Front line

July 2012

Its' been a few weeks of celebrations and commemorations over the Summer period. I suppose we should celebrate the fact that the reservoirs are now topped up as it seems to have rained persistently since the drought was announced and I installed a large rain butt in my garden for the bathwater. I was one of those that braved the rain and damp conditions along the Thames for the Jubilee pageant and discovered that the Commonwealth was still alive and kicking with the amount of, dare I say, 'Colonials' lining the embankment cheering the queen as she passed in the Royal barge. Not quite sure when the Americans joined but there seemed ample of them dressed in Union colours as opposed to Stars and stripes. The last I heard was in 1976 when I was in the States celebrating a Bicentennial of Independence!



To me one of the most significant commemorations of late was the unveiling of the new Bomber Command Memorial at Green Park in London that took place on June 28th. Yet again Commonwealth Forces were well represented along with other allied forces who were involved in the Bombing campaigns of WW2 that seemed to be left out of any official recognition since the war. It has taken some time for these men to be commemorated but having been to the unveiling, the memorial is quite fitting and well worth a visit. It was great to see so many airmen able to attend and I know that there were many thinking of their mates as a Lancaster flew overhead and dropped thousands of poppies over London.

One of our volunteers, James (Jim) Foulds, was able to attend along with Mrs Elizabeth Gibb who was remembering her uncle Billy McConnell, an Air Gunner who died on his second sortie to Cologne on the 4th July 1943. They had recently travelled to the War Cemetery at Rheinberg in Germany to visit his actual grave.

Accounts of these bombing raids detail what the allied air forces endured with losses that would just not be accepted these days. They make incredible reading (*I'm currently on Martin Middlebrooks 'The Berlin Raids'*) and shocking to learn how many actually died during take off or on the return to England where fog covered many of the airfields during the autumn and winter months.

If you can make the journey to London please visit the memorial. You will not be disappointed.



Steve

A lost Airman found? - Flight Sergeant Dennis Copping By Andrea Mariotti

Whilst on the subject of Airmen, some of you may have read recent articles about the discovery of an abandoned P-40 Kittyhawk aircraft in the desert of Egypt. It was in remarkable condition and was discovered by Andrea Mariotti of Association of Independent Researchers Western Desert (ARIDO). Andrea's team were mentioned in the last newsletter having found the original cemetery of Greek forces. He has since sent in two reports about the discovery and additional 'search and find' expedition conducted just a couple of weeks ago that is reproduced here:-

"In early February 2012 we were returning from an expedition in which we had travelled from northwest to southeast of the Grand Sand Sea in order to map two or three possible routes on the trail of the exploring British groups during the Second World War in North Africa, which were framed in the Long Range Desert Groups.

We had driven the track we familiarly call the "main route" and we went again to the wreck of one of the vehicles that were abandoned by the LRDG, probably due to a mechanical failure. After only 20 miles we stopped for the night and during the evening briefing we took the decision to take a chance on the next day and make a long range reconnaissance to locate the point where an acquaintance of ours, who lives in El Alamein, had told us that perhaps we could find an unidentified fighter plane still in good condition.

It could be a free interpretation of the infinite fantasy of our Bedouin friend but it was worth the chance, even if, in the past, we have used this sort of information which has proven, in most cases, not to be true.

The next day at dawn, divided into three groups of two cars each, we began the search climbing and descending the plateaus that form the natural boundary of the "new valley" as it is called today, in the Egyptian Western Desert. At the end of many attempts and many tens of miles we found it.



The aircraft is on a plateau almost impassable by the vehicles and still in excellent condition. We shot many pictures, took some measurements and left the aircraft after a few hours.

On the same day (12th Feb) we were asked to keep the finding secret and not report anything on the internet which might identify the location. This was to prevent souvenir hunters finding the site and desecrating it. The police were informed and we were tasked to lead an expedition of the army and police up to the P40 on a date to be agreed.

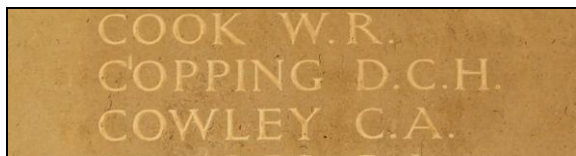
Since that date, despite our constant requests, we did not receive any information until the end of April 2012 when we were told that a group of soldiers were there to remove munitions and weapons from the aircraft.

We organized a second expedition immediately and on May 2nd, 3rd, 4th 2012 we were back at the place of our discovery.

Meanwhile, the same soldiers who went on site to remove weapons and ammunitions from the P40 had begun to put online the photos taken with mobile phones. These were accompanied by the pictures and information sold to a well known press agency by an employee of an oil company, who reached the wreck later on. When we arrived there for the second time we found that the P40 had been damaged and some parts had been stolen.

The real problem is that plunderers and looters are the new owners of the wreck and this is what is happening to the P40, so far, because of the bureaucratic delays and inaction of the authorities who should already have taken action to protect such a wonderfully preserved piece of history that is already becoming illegal property of individuals without scruples or conscience.

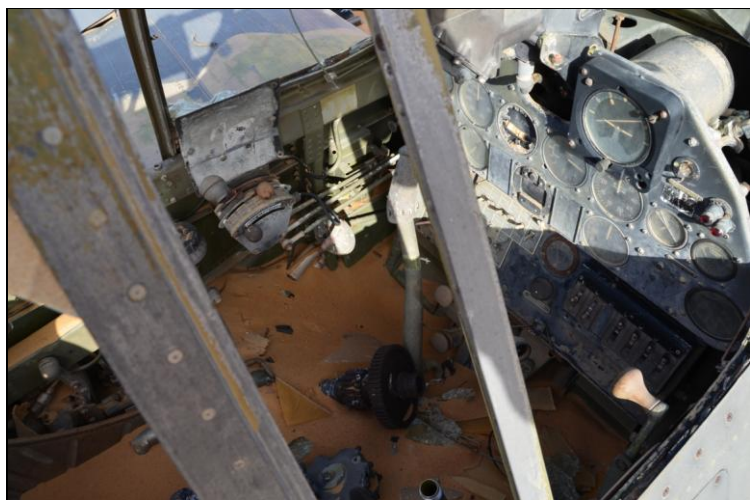
From June 14th to 18th 2012, the researchers of ARIDO will go on a new expedition (the third one in few months) to the P40 in order to gather the necessary information to permit the British authorities to understand what happened to the aircraft and to its pilot Dennis C. Copping (noted as missing in the Commonwealth War Memorial at El Alamein)”.



Part 2 Dated June 2012

“We started out from Cairo on the afternoon of June 14, 2012, along the way to the oasis, to reach Baharyia meeting point with our Egyptian partner Mohamed Abdel Aziz of Siwa Paradise Expeditions (deep desert expeditions). We stopped in Baharyia long enough for us to find the border police officer who would accompany us during our expedition and we started heading south to the oasis of Farafra. After crossing the white desert having slashed the tyres of our cars for extra traction in the soft sand, we pointed directly at the Wady Obeyed, and to the point from which our path begins to climb to the plane which lies on the plateau at about 400 meters high.

We arrived on site and immediately began our surveys, measurements and photographs. It was exciting to be there after 70 years to try to understand what really happened to Sergeant Copping and his aircraft.



Many new facts immediately come to light but the most important was that, unlike what was stated by the ‘wingman’ of Copping and transcribed by the British authorities, the landing wheels of the plane had not locked in open position, but Copping had landed on the ‘belly of the plane’:

There was still one of the two wheels perfectly in its place inside the wing and the other that 'was snatched from under the' wing during landing is ruined and lies on the side where the plane has been damaged on the rocky terrain. However, all the details and further news' will be published on www.arido.eu and www.gattara.it.

On the morning of June 16th 2012, we started at dawn to try and find the remains of the pilot in the direction Copping may have followed according to reports, texts and testimonies of the time.

At 07.00 am, the temperature is already above 30 degrees and goes up quickly. We split into 5 teams supported also by local people and began to move towards the south east (towards Farafra). We had satellite phones, radios medium-range, acoustic signals, signal flares, mirrors and lots of water. After about two hours of walking, Riccardo advised us, via the radio, of a discovery in the middle of nowhere. It was probably a shirt button imprinted with the date of 1939. An hour passed by when Daniele, by the mirror and Morse alphabet, reported the discovery of a metal plate. Unfortunately his radio had a fault and could not communicate. This is a plate produced by Elliot of Birmingham which is a company still in business that processes scrap metal and during the war had supplied the RAF.





Hours passed by and the unbearable heat at about Midday exceeds 45 degrees, our rest stops are more frequent, the water that we brought is almost undrinkable because of the temperature. Watching all around with binoculars (10 x 50) I could not see a single square meter of shade. We continued walking whilst I went up on every hill or ridge on my way until after another hour I saw with binoculars from a distance of 300 meters something white in a small area of shadow. Alerting others of my find I asked Riccardo to join me. The heat was unbearable.

We arrived on site to find the others had arrived and found a piece of white material stuck between the rocks beneath them and in a small area of shade of perhaps two square meters there were some remains which seemed to be some vertebrae, ribs, collarbone and some smaller bones. (*Blacked out in picture below*)

Daniele is a hospital doctor of Bologna and was sure they were human bones. The piece of cloth found was later identified as a piece of parachute silk.

We immediately informed the policeman by radio (he was at our base camp) and by satellite phone the English authorities in Cairo by satellite phone, putting ourselves at the disposal of the British and Egyptian authorities to organize the recovery.

We photographed and mapped it all, leaving the human remains in the place where we found them (as instructed). We took with us only the metallic objects to show to the Egyptian authorities.



We don't know yet who human remains found in the desert on June 16, 2012 belong to but if after the necessary investigations they be proved to belong to Sergeant Dennis Copping, then we are proud to have collaborated with the authorities, using our experience, local knowledge and organization. This will hopefully enable a proper burial after seventy years, in a consecrated ground, the remains of the pilot of the P40 Kittyhawk, Sergeant Dennis Charles Copping.



On June 29 2012, 70 years and one day after Sergeant Copping's disappearance ARIDO has been invited to hold a speech and interview, with pictures of the discovery, the story of DC Copping video and further material by an Italian Local TV. In October we have been invited to hold another speech and interview on Italian National TV.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OWPg5FLh8o>

Andrea and the ARIDO Team at the crash site

Our Vanishing History - Gozo

I am pleased that we started to include Casualties that predate WW1 as we are increasingly being informed of old military cemeteries that are now looking the worse for wear, if not totally abandoned. This has highlighted the fact that there are a number of historical sites that could be preserved but many are unaware of these. However, through the efforts of our volunteers in photographing them there may be action to preserve in future.

A couple of years ago I was in Malta and visited an old cemetery known as Msida Bastion Cemetery that had been overgrown for years. This had been cleared by volunteers and now turned into an historic garden with the original Gravestones still in place and well worth a visit should you ever be in Malta.

<http://www.mydestination.com/malta/sights/164072/msida-bastion-historic-garden>

Recently it has come to light that on the adjacent island of Gozo a development is taking place to refurbish Fort Chambray which was occupied by the British Army during the second half of the 19th Century and part of the 20th Century. It was even used as a Military Hospital during WW1.



Within the ramparts moat was a military cemetery, now destroyed, and most of the headstones currently are piled in a heap on one of the parapets. The memory of the likes of Corporal James Scott of 'C' Company, 1st Battalion Gordon highlanders who died on 15th January 1888 still linger but for how much longer? It would be good if these now misplaced headstones could be at least recorded by the likes of TWGPP even if the actual burial spot is now under development. Anyone holidaying in Gozo this year?

Hearts of Oak



Carol Rutter who lives in Gibraltar has, over the past year, completed the photographic recording of all military graves in Gibraltar's Trafalgar Cemetery for TWGPP. Carol's interest began when conducting a revisit to the North Front cemetery which is one of the only flat pieces of land on Gibraltar adjacent to the Spanish Border. Having completed this she then started to investigate other sites on the 'Rock' knowing that TWGPP had an interest in older cemeteries that formed part of the Empire.

Gibraltar has always been steeped in Naval history and the Superintendent of North Front, Alfred Ryan, was a goldmine of information and helped Carol in her investigations. He also held the key to a long forgotten cemetery known locally as 'Withams'.

Withams is situated just outside the Dockyard wall between some modern buildings but has not been maintained for some years. Fortunately, there has been some recent publicity which has encouraged environmental and heritage groups to start the process of restoring and, hopefully, the restoration of this site.

The Trafalgar cemetery is well known on Gibraltar and although being initially consecrated for burials from 1798, at that time it was known as South Ditch cemetery. It had a name change well after the battle of Trafalgar and only actually contains the burials of two men who were killed in the actual battle as it was normal practice to bury Seamen at sea. However, a number of those that succumbed to wounds in the battle having been landed at Gibraltar are buried here and the extended section north of the Charles V wall.

Other casualties buried here include those from the Battle of Algeciras of 1801 and other actions around Cadiz and Malaga in 1810 and 1812 as well as others from the Napoleonic War.



Locations of CWGC Cemeteries on site

In many organisations there are those that beaver away in the background conducting very important work that would normally go unrecognized. This is even more so in organisations that are dependant on volunteer work. One such person is Dave Ruddlesden who, in his spare time, has now just about completed updating our Google Earth cemetery locations page http://twgpp.org/cemetery_locations.php

Dave has now positively located 21,785 out of 23,563 CWGC sites having 'visited' over 22,400 sites on Google Earth to allow him to plot these. There are still some to complete in Canada and South Africa but many in South Africa are lone burials on farmsteads miles from anywhere so difficult to pinpoint on Google Earth. Dave prides himself on the accuracy of his KMZ files and pinpoints the cemetery access as opposed to rough area where at all possible.

Dave is now assisting the CWGC in updating their files as he noted that in some cases the location details were incorrect and in June forwarded roughly 430 corrections which will be updated on a four monthly cycle.

For those using the location facility on our site please note that although Dave has detailed those cemeteries complete for TWGPP we are encouraging revisits to be conducted to update the archive.

Dutch and Norwegian Forces



Doeke Oostra who lives in the Netherlands has recently joined us and is currently assisting TWGPP in transcribing details of Dutch and Norwegian forces to enable us to make up the spreadsheets to get the images up on site. Both of these countries were occupied during WW2 and many of the locals joined Resistance movements to fight against the occupying forces.

In the Netherlands these were known as 'Nederlandse Binnenlandse Strijdkrachten' or translated to 'Netherlands Forces of the Interior' and recognised as war graves within the Netherlands. Therefore Doeke has already started to photograph these which tend not to be in military cemeteries but local municipal ones making them a little more difficult to find as they do not normally have a standard Netherlands War Graves Foundation (Oorlogsgravenstichting) headstone.

In a small Commonwealth War Grave Cemetery in Voi, a hundred miles inland from the port of Mombasa on the Kenya coast, stands a headstone engraved with a Victoria Cross. This is the grave of Lieutenant Wilbur Dartnell, killed in action with seven others near Maktau on 3 September 1915, during a defensive action against German African Askaris.

Dartnell who was Australian by birth had arrived in British East Africa now Kenya in May 1915 with the 25th Royal Fusiliers as part of an allied force preparing to invade the neighbouring colony of German East Africa now Tanzania. The two colonies shared a common border running from Lake Victoria around the north side of Mount Kilimanjaro to the coast. Two weeks after the declaration of war German troops (Schutztruppe) led by General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck captured the border town of Taveta in the lee of Kilimanjaro and set about attacking the Uganda Railway linking Mombasa to Nairobi, lifeline of the colony. After the heavy seasonal rains had turned the dry dusty bush into a swamp it was realized the only way to invade German East Africa was by building a railway. This was sanctioned by Lord Kitchener and construction began from Voi a small township on the railway in February 1915 and by 23 June had reached Maktau, a small village in the lee of a useful observation hill.



Here a large camp was set up covering some 600 acres to stock pile supplies for the invasion. The Germans had meanwhile advanced further into British territory from Taveta and established a second outpost at Mbuyuni. Here they dug hundreds of yards of trenches and defences and were now less than a day's ride from Maktau.

Every drop of drinking water had to be railed in from the wells at Voi and later piped from the nearby hills at Bura. Despite stringent precautions casualties from water and food poisoning were high. It was said that for every man who died in action at least four died of Blackwater Fever, enteritis or malaria. As the line progressed towards the border the Germans switched their attention from the main Mombasa - Nairobi line to the new construction. They began attacking the rail head and to combat this, mounted armed men patrolled the bush around the railway.

On 3 September a report received by Lt. Col. Price commanding Maktau, showed a train had been fired on close by and the enemy strength was estimated at forty men. Price immediately ordered a mounted patrol of three officers and sixty men including Lt. Dartnell, to intercept the enemy some seven miles south of the camp. An hour later the troops halted on a ridge and took up positions in the bush with piquets posted. At about 11.30 someone accidentally fired a shot and within half an hour around ninety of the enemy closed on the troops. A fierce fire fight took place in the thick bush at close range and a number fell wounded. The C.O. Captain Woodruffe who had also been severely wounded ordered a retirement before they were surrounded and began organizing the withdrawal.

Lt. Dartnell had been wounded in the knee and requested he be left behind in the hope that as an officer he might prevent the other wounded from being killed when the position was overrun. By the time the company had been evacuated the enemy was only twenty five yards away. A Schutztruppe bugle call was heard followed by more shots. Another patrol came across the stripped bodies of Dartnell and seven others shortly afterwards. On receiving details Lt. Col. Price dispatched a larger party under a Major Robinson to recover the bodies.



In his report he stated they had all been shot or bayoneted at close range, after being either dead or wounded. The following day the funeral of the eight men was held in the camp cemetery. That afternoon a Court of Enquiry was convened to take down the evidence. It was noted the accidental rifle shot may well have alerted the enemy and the ambush was incorrectly set up in thick bush, giving little protection while hindering the line of fire. The patrol should also have moved to a new position following the accidental shot.

The report of Dartnell's bravery in the face of certain death based on Captain Woodruffe's report led to the award of the Victoria Cross being published in the London Gazette on 23 December 1915. His citation reads: *'For the most conspicuous bravery near Maktau (East Africa) on 3rd September 1915. During a mounted infantry engagement, the enemy got within a few yards of our men and it was found impossible to get the more severely wounded away. Lt. Dartnell who was himself wounded in the leg, seeing the situation and knowing the enemy's black troops murdered the wounded, insisted on staying behind in the hope of being able to save the lives of other wounded men. He gave his life in a gallant attempt to save others.'*

The Victoria Cross was presented to Dartnell's widow Elizabeth by Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson, Governor-General of Australia, at Government House, Melbourne, on 7 October 1916. After the war the remains of Dartnell together with the seven casualties and others killed in the Maktau area were exhumed by the Army Graves Service, fore runner of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and reburied in the military cemetery at Voi where their graves can be seen today.

Abridged from an article supplied to 'Britain at War' by Kevin Patience.



The Secret in the Stone – Tony and Sue Wege

When searching cemeteries for The War Graves Photography Project we all see the occasional headstone that elicits in us a significant level of interest. Here in South Australia we do not have the vast military cemeteries found so frequently in Europe, North Africa and in other places like at Bomana, New Guinea. Just under half of the 740 CWGC war dead who succumbed whilst in South Australia during WW1 and WW2, lie in several hundred widely dispersed rural cemeteries across the state. The other half are found mainly in two large public cemeteries in Adelaide. But what we do see many more of in almost every cemetery we visit, are family memorials. There is much history in these memorials. There must be many thousands of them. Our search continues.



When an Australian soldier died on active service overseas and buried there, as almost all of them were up until the Vietnam War, the family often remembered them here by carving their name and details on the headstone of their relatives. We have seen and photographed hundreds of these family memorials in cemeteries across South Australia and lodged them with TWGPP. But few have stood out like the Bell family headstone found in the Quorn cemetery.

The small town of Quorn (population 2000) lies in the southern region of the arid, stark but beautifully rugged Flinders Ranges about 340 kilometres north of Adelaide, South Australia.

Quorn is now a sleepy residential and tourist town. As well it still services the needs of the scattered sheep stations and a few wheat farms that occupy much of the dry, rolling country of the eastern part of the Southern Flinders as it always has done. The people of Quorn and in the pastoral districts further north, far from the state's capital Adelaide, were in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries tough, resourceful, loyal and fiercely freedom loving people, honed in the hot and dry rough rangelands that generally lay all around them. They could easily be described as "frontiersmen". Quorn's cemetery reflects this culture. There are many headstones there that hint at the sturdiness of the town, district and its people. One such headstone is on the grave of William Wallace Bell, his wife Elizabeth and their daughter Jessie. Listed on the headstone as can be seen, are five former military men spread over three generations; from grandfather William who was the only one to see old age, his son, to three grandsons. These four were all to be killed in wars overseas for "King and Country".

Grandfather William Bell obviously served the British army in the Zulu Wars of 1879 in South Africa. He must have come to South Australia after that and made his home in Quorn. His son Pte. Alfred James Bell died whilst fighting at Messines in Belgium in August 1917. Three of William's grandsons were to die in WW2: airman Sgt Leonard Alfred Easter on an aircraft training flight near Edmonton in Canada, infantryman Cpl Alfred Napier Bell at Shaggy Ridge northern New Guinea, and airman Ft-Lt John Napier Bell in France doing something secret. They are all buried in CWGC managed graves overseas.

The one we wish to highlight here is Flt-Lt J N Bell who, as can be seen from the headstone, died on a "secret mission". Needless to say we were greatly intrigued by this when we first saw it and we soon settled in to do the research to find out what and where.

John Napier Bell in his youth lived with his family in Farina (where he is commemorated on the recently restored Farina war memorial) some 280 kilometres to the north of Quorn. Farina, now only a smattering of ruins, is out on the hot and very arid pastoral lands in northern SA. Making a living there, beyond the edge of the frontier, was very hard work. In 1935 at the age of 19, John Bell joined the RAAF.

He trained as a pilot and was sent to England in January 1940. He was posted to 10 Squadron (Sunderland flying boats), the first Australian squadron formed in the UK in WW2.



In June 1940 as is well known, the German forces had broken the allies and were rapidly fanning out across northern France. French army general, Charles De Gaulle, wishing to avoid capture and continue the fight, not only escaped the German push through France, he was able to fly to England on the 17th June thus avoiding capture. But he had left his family behind. Immediately on arrival in London, De Gaulle met Winston Churchill and asked that a plane be immediately sent to rescue his wife and children who at the time were believed to be still in France. Churchill agreed and highly secret and urgent arrangements were made to send a rather out dated Walrus amphibian aircraft to France to find and pick them up then fly them to England. 10 Squadron RAAF got the job. The three airmen in the crew were selected by lot. The fourth man was a secret agent of the still forming Special Operations Executive (SOE) of the British government. The pilot of the Walrus was Flt-Lt John Napier Bell of Farina, South Australia.

The plane took off about 0300 on the 18th June 1940 from RAF Mount Batten near Plymouth and made the French coast just before dawn. Just after crossing the coast, the plane was hit by gunfire. There is some confusion as to who the gunners were, French or German, but the damaged plane, attempting to land near Ploudaniel in Brittany, crashed, overturned and burnt. All four crewmen died. They were Sgt C W Harris RAAF, Cpl B F Nowell RAF, Capt N E Hope Intelligence Corps and Flt-Lt J N Bell RAAF. They are buried side by side in the Ploudaniel churchyard, France. Flt-Lt Bell and Sgt Harris were the first RAAF deaths caused by enemy action in WW2.



At Quorn the probability is that when the headstone shown in the photo was carved for the family, most likely on the death of William Bell in 1947, all the wider family knew about John Napier Bell's death was that he was an airman and he died on a secret mission in France during the war. They simply commemorated him on his grandparents' headstone. They would have known little about the mystery and intrigue surrounding the death.

Although Flt-Lt Bell's flight tragically failed, the overall mission was achieved. The De Gaulle family was rescued by the Royal Navy and the family was re-united in England.

General De Gaulle did go on to greater things during the war; he did become the President of France; and subsequent world history went the way it has with him playing a very significant part in it.

But a young pilot from a very remote and tiny outback community on the harsh, deserts northern plains beyond permanent settlement in South Australia, died amid that drama on the other side of the globe from his family's home. He lies with his comrades in a French churchyard all but forgotten, and the casual visitor here at Quorn who ambles past the headstone and reads it all he knows is that this man died somewhere in France, sometime, on a secret mission. He leaves none the wiser. It doesn't seem right - does it?

Tony and Sue Wege - Nuriootpa, South Australia April 2012

(Significant details of the history of this incident comes from the internet including: www.aircrewremembrancesociety.com and www.awm.gov.au)

New Home Page on TWGPP Website

Regular users of our website may have noticed that there is now a 'Deutsch' flag situated to the right of our 'Welcome' message.

If selected this will take the user to a German language page describing the purpose of the website .

We now have many thousands of German graves in the archive waiting to go up to site and regular numbers coming in from volunteers both in Germany and others in countries where we have completed the Commonwealth cemeteries.

One of the requirements to get the images up to site is the need of an Excel spreadsheet on which the details are inserted. These are available to us via the CWGC for all Commonwealth and non Commonwealth buried within CWGC cemeteries but need to be made up for other nations by extracting the information from the photographs. A time consuming job that takes longer to do than taking the pictures. If anyone would like to help in this process please contact Steve.



THE WAR GRAVES PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECT





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English 

Willkommen bei unserem Kriegsgräber-Fotoprojekt

Ursprüngliches Ziel war es, jedes Kriegsgrab, jede individuelle Gedächtnisstätte, jede offizielle Gedenkstätte und jedes Kriegerdenkmal für Armee-Angehörige vom Ersten Weltkrieg an beginnend bis heute zu fotografieren und zu dokumentieren. Wegen des immer größer werdenden öffentlichen Interesses haben wir nun das Projekt erweitert und sämtliche Nationalitäten und militärischen Auseinandersetzungen mit einbezogen und in einer Datenbank zu Verfügung gestellt.



In einem Joint Venture mit der Commonwealth War Grave Commission und mit Unterstützung des Office of Australian War Graves, der Canadian Veterans Affairs und des New Zealand Ministry of Heritage and Culture verhelfen wir jetzt Familien, Wissenschaftlern und Forschern zu Fotografien von Gräbern und Gedenkstätten, die selbst aufzusuchen wegen der weiten Entfernungen oft nicht möglich sind.

Dieser umfassende Service konnte nur durch das persönliche Engagement vieler ehrenamtlicher Mitarbeiter möglich gemacht werden. Diese Freiwilligen aus allen Bereichen des Lebens fühlen die Notwendigkeit, sich derer zu erinnern, die mit ihrem eigenen Leben das letzte Opfer gebracht haben. Den Angehörigen eröffnet sich damit die Möglichkeit, selbst zu sehen, wo ihre Lieben eine letzte Ruhestätte gefunden haben oder wo man ihrer ehrend gedenkt - "zu ewigem Angedenken", so wie es dem Geist der CWGC* entspricht.



Bitte nutzen Sie die Suchfunktion, um festzustellen, ob ein bestimmtes Foto verfügbar ist. Wenn nicht, nehmen Sie bitte Kontakt mit uns auf.

*Commonwealth War Grave Commission

Murdered and Executed



Sneddon

Obviously a number of researchers use the TWGPP facility to augment their research by using our images to illustrate articles and as stated in an earlier article in this newsletter every grave must have its own story.

Phil Duggan, a medal collector, thought readers might be interested in the history of these two headstones.

Private Arthur Dale (right) of the 13th Royal Scots had been drinking heavily on the 8th February 1916 at a local bar when Lance Corporal Sneddon, a member of the same platoon, told him to leave as he had been drinking too much.



Dale

They both returned to the billet but witnesses recall seeing Dale climbing into the loft of the billet with a rifle slung over his shoulder and heard a shot ring out which left Sneddon mortally wounded. Dale was brought to trial on 20th February 1916 and witnesses and police confirmed that he had been drunk and incoherent when found. No allowances were made to his inebriated condition at the time of the murder and he was executed at an abattoir in Mazingarbe on 3rd March and now lies in Mazingarbe Communal Cemetery. Sneddon lies in Choques Military Cemetery.

Foot note by Steve: I had always assumed that the Shot at Dawn Memorial at the National Arboretum included all of those 'Shot at Dawn'. It appears not as I cannot find Dale amongst our images of the individual firing posts!

A case of mistaken identity

A recent request from Australia has highlighted a case of mistaken identity but in this case the awarding of a Military Medal (MM).

Private Alfred Gant of the 43rd Australian Infantry was killed in action on 24th April 1918 and now lies in Bonnay Communal cemetery. On his headstone can be read the inscription MM (Military Medal). Alfred had a brother, Stanley who also served in the same Regiment who had in fact been awarded the medal for his actions but it had mistakenly been given to Alfred. The mistake was not realised until some years later and the War Office had to ask the family of Arthur, who had been awarded the medal posthumously, to return it so that it could be awarded to Stanley.

Steven Brook (a relation) still has copies of the paperwork which indicated that the headstone inscription would be changed to remove the MM but it would appear that this has never been completed.



Stanley was later shot in action, sent back to England to recuperate and returned to France where he was caught in a gas attack which caused him to be retired from active service due to a tubercule on the lung. He returned to Adelaide only to die a few years later on 28th April 1928 aged 31. He is now buried in Adelaide West Terrace Cemetery with the MM inscription on his headstone. His brother Alfred is also remembered on his gravestone.

An incredible Journey! – By Michael Beattie.

Like Medal collectors, many family historians use our services and often feed back 'thank yous' and interesting tales of their research whilst looking for their military ancestors. One such example is copied here from Michael Beattie who lives in California.

"Dear Sandra,

Last Christmas I emailed my cousin in South Africa to find out if she (or her mother, my Aunt Sheelagh) had any more information about our Uncle Michael Maughan-Taylor (whom I was named after) who died in WWII. I only knew that he was a 'rear gunner' and something about my grandmother in a 'pencil skirt' on a motorcycle. This is the response I got:-"



"Hi again Michael and all. Asked mum about Uncle Michael.

When Michael left school he wanted to get into the Air Force as his step father was a Medical Officer (MO) in the RAF but failed the entrance exam. He then tried to get into the Indian Police but was also unsuccessful so then entered the Palestine Police. After a couple of years there he succumbed to Rheumatic fever after a spell as a Prison Officer at Haifa Jail. He was nursed back to health by Rivka whom he later married. (She was disowned by her Jewish Rabbi father for marrying Michael)

When the second world war broke out Michael was desperate to get into the Air Force. His Step father (MO in RAF) trekked up from Nigeria, where he was posted, through the Sahara to Egypt where he put pressure on through his connections as an officer to get Michael into the Air Force. Michael was accepted and sent to Heany (outside Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia) for pilot training. After an unsuccessful attempt to become a pilot (apparently his depth perception was not good and he managed to crash at least two planes on landing....) Michael was made the rear gunner on a Wellington bomber. He was then sent with his squadron to Naples.

In the meantime Rivka travelled from Palestine to Devon and turned up on Grandmother's doorstep. Although she was a trained nurse she was not allowed to nurse in England. Gran (who was also a nurse) got her enrolled in a teaching hospital and she spent 4 years there to become a qualified SRN. Mum does not know what happened to her after that.

In 1943 Michael's plane was returning to Naples after a bombing mission to Milan and collided with another RAF plane on its way up to Milan. All the men in both crews were killed.



The Canadian pilot had tried to land their plane in a field but no one survived. The crew were buried by the locals near the banks of the River Po. When the Allied troops took over Italy their bodies were disinterred and buried in a military cemetery outside Milan.

Many years later our grandmother travelled to Milan to find Michael's grave. As she did not drive she took a bus to the cemetery which was located beyond the outskirts of Milan. It took her a long time to find the grave but she did in the end. It had become very late in the afternoon and by the time she returned to the bus stop she had missed that last bus of the day so she decided to hitch hike back into the city. After a long while the only vehicle to pass was a motorbike. The man stopped and Granny had to hitch up her pencil skirt and ride pillion holding onto this local Italian - something which she never forgot.

"Wow! what a great response! I also found out his full name was : **Douglas Michael Maughan-Taylor**. I googled the name and ended up on your website!

Unmarked graves in UK

Whilst researching the possibilities of working in conjunction with the German authorities to photograph graves so that German Nationals could also benefit from the service TWGPP provides I was surprised to find out that there are still German graves within UK that remain unmarked. I must admit that I was under the impression that those not maintained in British Churchyards or cemeteries like the large one at Cannock Chase had been repatriated to Germany. It appears this is not the case!

Details

**National Association
German War Graves Commission**

Horst von der Groeben

Horst von der Groeben has not yet been transferred to a military cemetery established by the National Association.

According to our information, his grave is still at the following location: Whitstable Cemetery / Kent

The People's Alliance is trying to find a basis of war graves agreement, the graves of German soldiers and give them time to secure resting places. We hope to find in the not too distant future, the grave of Horst von der Groeben and transfer the remains to a cemetery to.

Name and personal data of the above, are also listed in the memorial book of the war cemetery. You can enjoy an excerpt from our order:

Please note possible that at some cemeteries ausliegt not the current version, hence the name of your relatives have not yet included in it if necessary.

Last name:
of the Groeben

First name:
Horst

Rank:
First lieutenant

Date of Birth:
02/05/1916

Place of Birth:
Freiburg

Todes-/Vermisstendatum:
08/13/1940

Todes-/Vermisstentort:
Whitstable area



1st Lieutenant Horst Von Der Groben and 1st Lieutenant Gerhard Muller who both died on 13th August 1940 having crashed in the Whitstable area are both buried in Whitstable Cemetery in Kent.

Neither have a marked grave but someone must know they are there as a Remembrance Cross is placed on the grass plot once a year.

It does seem a pity that given the millions of Euros that Germany provide to bail out the Eurozone that a few cannot be found to commemorate these two and possibly others that still lie in UK un-commemorated.

Lone Norwegian in Reichswald

“Good morning Steve,

Very many thanks for your prompt reply and for the attached photographs of the grave of Finn Bakke. My request for the photograph is on behalf of our 89 year old neighbour Kate, who worked in the control room of Fighter Command and who features on many clips of film from that time depicting the plotting table. She got to know Finn on his move to England and they were engaged to be married. It is only recently that we were able to discover that Finn was not shot down over the English Channel as Kate believed, but in fact was brought down in a mission over northern Germany. Your help and support is very much appreciated in allowing Kate some form of closure after all these years.

With grateful thanks, Eddie Woodnutt”

By Steve -A pity it has taken so long for Kate to find out that Finn was found and buried rather than being lost in the sea.



The next newsletter will be out in October 2012

Anyone wishing to contribute should contact Steve on steve@twgpp.org



**THE WAR GRAVES
PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECT**