



THE WAR GRAVES PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECT



In Association
with the CWGC



News from the Front line

December 2012

First of all, let me wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I am sure 2013 will be a busy year for TWGPP with many organisations, large and small, starting to plan for the 100th Anniversary of WW1 with just one year to go. It will not be a one off event either with four years of commemorations of major events in the history of the Commonwealth. The likes of The Somme, Gallipoli and Jutland are just a few names which are known through generations of families and will quite rightly be brought to the forefront of everyone's mind in the coming years. Already schools and villages are making contact as they prepare to celebrate the lives (albeit short) of their men and women who paid the ultimate sacrifice during WW1

TWGPP has signed up to the Imperial War Museums 'Centenary Partnership Programme' in order to be aware of any events that we may be able to attend. Local Libraries are getting involved preparing displays but it was an early wake up call to receive an Email from Claire Back of CILIP Information Services Group, (The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals) who works in association with Libraries throughout the UK.



Chartered Institute of
Library and Information
Professionals

I quite often get what's known as 'Spoo' or Spam mail from quite a few of you that have got Hotmail accounts. These normally take the form that you have been mugged in some other country, wallet stolen, no money to phone home and can I send you some on the promise you will give it back when returning to UK. They all get what I call 'a good ignoring' as do the others that mention "I have won a lottery prize", "new lease of life" etc. so when I received this one saying that we had won an award I initially took that as 'spoo' as well and very nearly deleted it.

Unbeknown to me CILIP ISG presents annual awards within the Libraries and Publishing industry normally to promote the higher quality book production to publishers. This year its Board Members decided to propose an award for best genealogical website which, to my surprise, was awarded to TWGPP according to this e mail! Clare was pleased to inform us that The War Graves Photographic Project was the unanimous winner in that category !



I did manage to make it to London for the award ceremony, which was presented at the City Business Library, Guildhall on 18th October, but during the preamble for other awards I was beginning to believe I was there under false pretences given the standard of awards being presented. On first entering I was asked if I was representing the War Graves Commission, which did not bode well as I thought that perhaps it should be CWGC attending for their updated website and perhaps I had been asked along by mistake. In my mind I was rapidly changing my acceptance speech, if required, to that of accepting the award on behalf of CWGC. Too late to give them a call to come along !

Anyway, with the main awards having been presented Jane Weller of the ISG National Committee stood up to read the citation.

ISG Special Category Award 2012 Information for Genealogists

This year the ISG Committee decided to create a Special Category Award, which will change topic every year. For this inaugural year, the theme chosen was "Information for Genealogists". Genealogy / family history research has become a huge subject of interest in recent years, and it is an area where reference and information sources are vital in providing both help and accurate data. This data can come in print form, or of course increasingly in electronic formats, but there was no restriction placed on the type of nominations for this Award.

In fact the short-list this time consisted solely of electronic resources. In addition to the obvious general coverage "big hitters" – such as the paying sites of Ancestry and The Genealogist - there were other, more specific resources, including the winner.

The War Graves Photographic Project was begun in late 2007, as a scheme run by volunteers, with the wonderful aim of photographing as many Commonwealth War Graves as possible, and publishing the photographs on a not-for-profit website, as befits the subject matter. So successful, and professional, has this project been that it is now fully recognised by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and their equivalents in Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and to date 1.7 million named graves and memorials have been added.

The website is clear, well organised and searchable, and with some extremely useful features. For example a search can be done, the simplest way, by surname but can be refined to cover branches of the Armed Forces, locations and even cemetery names, where known. Conversely, a search can be done just by country and/or city, to retrieve the graves of all those known in that location. We also liked the "extras" on this site, such as the pdf copies of the newsletters, with essays and articles on many related topics. However, as reference librarians, we would like to suggest the addition of a subject index, as beneficial to all!

There are volunteers throughout the world looking for and photographing the Commonwealth War Graves and submitting them to the Project, and the site is completely free to search, view and download the data, which includes a photo of the grave/cemetery involved. The only costs, and these are extremely reasonable, occur if a higher quality copy of the photo is requested.

To give just two examples: Our colleague Elizabeth Melrose, in evaluating the site, said: "I really liked the War Graves Commission Photographic Project, not only because of the Essay re graves in India, but because it flipped up my great-uncle Robert Bruce (!!) Holmes ex-Edinburgh, Scotland from the Canadian Expeditionary Force with his memorial at the Menin Gate in Belgium. It did this in a flash and the information is correct."

The other example is that on a recent trip to Venice I had the unexpected opportunity to visit the island cemetery of San Michele, the city's civilian burial ground. During this visit I noticed three British War Graves, so I recorded all the details and took photos. However, on checking later, I discovered that the Italy based team of volunteers had already added them to the website, along with a further three graves. Being able to search in advance of a visit to a cemetery is clearly one of the major advantages for family historians, relatives and researchers alike, and the many comments on the web pages reflect how valuable that service has been to many people.

This resource provides a unique service, it is superbly presented, is almost totally free, and completely fulfils the criteria for a reference resource for "Information for Genealogists". It is with great pleasure that the ISG Special Category Award 2012 goes to the Winner:

The War Graves Photographic Project

Citation by Jane Weller, ISG National Committee

Visiting my namesake in Baghdad - Colonel Mary Proffit, US Army

Several years ago I was deployed to Iraq when serving with the US Forces. One of my ancestors, Lieutenant George Craigie Proffit, is buried at the Baghdad North Gate War Cemetery. I had the good fortune of being able to get to the cemetery and take photographs of his headstone.

Lt George Proffit was born on October 20th 1889 the son of William Craigie Proffit of Castle Neynoe, Co Sligo, Ireland. He was educated at Fettes college and entered the Cadet College at Wellington, India. He was fortunate to have survived the sinking of 'City of Birmingham' which was torpedoed in the Mediterranean on his way to India.

George had been sent to Mesopotamia (latter day Iraq) as part of the force to accept the surrender of the Turkish Sixth Army at Mosul in October 1918. He was noted in the Regimental history as having been praised for the way in which his men had gallantly saved the lives of men and mules that were swept away by the strong currents of the River Tigris whilst crossing it on the way to Mosul.



George obtained his first Commission on June 18th 1917 and was appointed to the 1st Battalion Indian Army in June 1917 and remained with them during the whole of his service. He was specially selected as ADC to Major General Cassels, Commanding 18th Infantry Division and afterwards as Camp Comandant to Major General T Fraser of the same Division. It was whilst in that appointment that he was suddenly taken ill and died of cerebro-spinal meningitis on December 10th 1920 and died at Mosul.

By Steve – Mary contacted TWGPP offering assistance in getting the remaining headstones in Baghdad photographed for the project via contacts in Baghdad. The cemetery appears to be under the jurisdiction of the British Embassy at the moment without whose permission we cannot get access. To date, there has been no response to correspondence requesting that permission so although we do have a willing volunteer 'on site' this cemetery remains extant.

Lance Sergeant Robert Boyle HLI – by Eddie Smith

A friend of mine, Tricia Easdon, told to me the story about her uncle 14607842 L/Sgt Robert Paul Boyle, Highland Light Infantry and how he was killed in action while charging an enemy machine gun post and was awarded the Military Medal for it. The action had me curious for some reason so I decided to dig a bit deeper and find the citation. I had no luck until I contacted the Highland Light Infantry museum in Glasgow where Sandy Leishman, a researcher, found it and sent me a copy, an entirely different story from the family version.

On the morning of the 22 September 44, 14607842 L/Sgt. Boyle was a member of No. 8 Platoon "A" Company which was detailed to assault and capture a part of Middle Beers. As the Platoon Commander with a scout passed a house they were fired upon at close range. L/Cpl Boyle on seeing the danger to his platoon rushed forward with complete disregard of his own personal safety, but in doing so dropped his weapon. Regardless of this he continued into the enemy post, tackled an armed German and overpowered him, taking him prisoner; the rest of the German post ran away. Continuing with the advance L/Cpl. Boyle continued to render invaluable assistance to his Pl Comd. twice exposing himself deliberately so as to bring destructive fire on the enemy. Throughout the action he showed a high degree of coolness and initiative never failing to take the offensive whenever the opportunity arose. His Platoon Commander was a witness of his actions and cannot speak too highly of him. The award of the Military Medal was sanctioned by the Commander, Second Army B.L.Montgomery.

L/Sgt. R.P. BOYLE was killed in action on the 24th April 1945 and is interred in Becklingen War cemetery.

His brother Paddy Boyle was with the Royal Engineers repairing a bridge at the front and only found out his brother had been killed when he met a fellow Paisley man coming back from the front who was in the same Highland Light Infantry unit as Robert.

A photograph of Robert's headstone was given to his brother shortly before he passed away, it was the first time he had seen it and his niece Tricia was grateful to the project for supplying it. Sadly Robert's Medal has been lost.



Who will replace the headstone ? – an update

Since mentioning in the Autumn Newsletter the fact that CWGC are looking at replacement headstones, I have had a couple of replies to clarify the situation from CWGC HQ. I have amalgamated the answers below:

Further to your article "Who will replace the headstone?" in the October issue of the TWGPP newsletter, I would comment as follows as your article suggests we cannot replace a private memorial (PM) with a Commission headstone (CH) unless we have the Next of Kin (NOK) permission. This is not strictly accurate.

In the UK, Commonwealth war burials were often commemorated by the family of the casualty who chose to mark the war grave with a PM. Where these memorials provide adequate commemoration of the war casualty they have been adopted by the Commission. However, over time the condition of some of these memorials has deteriorated and in such circumstances the Commission must consider how to ensure appropriate commemoration. Sometimes it is possible to add a CH commemoration to the existing private memorial, but on occasion the replacement of a dilapidated memorial is the best option.

When our Regional Supervisors have identified a PM not adequately commemorating a casualty we look to replace the PM with a CH. It is in fact the burial rights (BR) owner who can decide on what is placed on top of the grave. This is not necessarily the same person as the NOK. In some instances we ourselves are the BR owner. However, in all cases we appeal for the NOK as a courtesy as they are the one's usually affected most deeply by any change to a grave. It is usually possible to obtain the permission of the relevant burial authority, but contacting the grave owner or casualty's next of kin can often be more challenging.



A new 'Gallipoli' style headstone being erected in some UK Cemeteries

We are now using the method of advertising for contact on our website. If contact is made from anyone reporting to be NOK we then take up communication with them on the replacement of the headstone. If we do not receive contact, we will pursue replacement of the PM with the local authority/church authority responsible for the site and ask their permission to replace the PM. If they are in agreement, we proceed with the replacement, usually with a proviso that should there be objections at some future point from the grave owner, the Commission would seek to resolve the situation whilst ensuring the casualty's appropriate commemoration.

New Zealand's First Soldier Lost In a Foreign War – Keith Harrison



To the south of the Coromandel Peninsula on the North Island of New Zealand, on the Hauraki Plains, sits the small provincial town of Paeroa. The town is dominated by Primrose Hill upon which sits an imposing white cenotaph remembering local soldiers lost in war and listing conflicts from World War II to Bosnia in 1992. Adjacent to it is a smaller monument, originally a fountain, known as the Paeroa South African War Memorial which is functionally a memorial to one soldier, Trooper George Roland Bradford. The memorial is of note in that it remembers the first New Zealand soldier killed in a foreign war. Trooper Bradford, said on the plaque to hold the rank of Sergeant Major, was a member of the first contingent of troops to leave Wellington in New Zealand on October 21, 1899. He died on December 28 in a field hospital near Rensberg Siding of meningitis after being wounded in battle ten days earlier near Arundel. He was initially buried at Rensberg but was later transferred to Colesburg.

Trooper Bradford was born in Sussex, England in 1870 and at some stage served in the Grenadier Guards before emigrating to New Zealand, presumably in search of gold since he is recorded as having been a miner on the Ohinemuri goldfields at the time of volunteering.

The plaque makes one further claim which I have been unable to substantiate – that “he was the first of any of the colonial contingents to give his life for the Empire”.

Reference: Auckland War Memorial Museum Cenotaph Database.

An accidental death near Karachi

TWGPP recently received a request from Arjun Runganadhan, a retired Indian Air Force Wing Commander now settled in America for a picture of his fathers' grave in Karachi War Cemetery.

Flight Lieutenant Henry Runganadhan hailed from a very distinguished family and trained in the UK proving to be a terrific aerobatic flyer. He was appointed Flight Commander of No 3 Squadron Indian Air Force before being appointed to No 1 Squadron to succeed Squadron Leader Mukerjee in October 1942 based in Jodhpur. However, his stint with No.1 Squadron did not last long. Henry Runganadhan died while traveling as a passenger in a Lockheed Hudson.

Having dropped-off an aircraft, Henry was returning to base from Karachi so got a lift in a Hudson flown by an RAF pilot. The Hudson was flying over the desert on a long cross country leg being escorted by four Hurricanes.



Hurricanes had no navigational facilities, no High Frequency Range Finders, no useable instruments until it came within the Radio Range of the airfield. Quite a few airfields did not even have the homing beacons. So, as in this case, a smaller aircraft follows the bigger aircraft, which have the navigational facilities.

The "Operations Record Book" states that the Hudson Mark 111 serial No FH289 was providing the escort for four Hurricane aircraft of 1 Squadron Indian Air Force from the Air Reinforcement Centre at Karrachi to Jodhpur. One of the Hurricanes, AG 137, lost its position in the formation and the propeller of the Hurricane completely severed the tail of the Hudson, which then spun to the ground. The collision occurred at a height of only 1800 feet. Lawrence, plus a crew of three together with two high ranking defence force passengers were all killed.



The younger pilot's Hurricane was also damaged badly. His blades were gone and he came back and made a belly landing. This pilot could not recall anything about the collision but went on to become an Air Commodore.

The crew and passengers of the Hudson were initially buried in Hyderabad cemetery before being re-interred to Karachi Cemetery at a later date.

P/O Beaufort Petter and Ldg Aircraftsman Lawrence T Moore who also died in the crash

ARIDO at the 70th Anniversary of El Alamein

The team from ARIDO, led by Andreas Mariotti, who recently discovered the remains of the Dennis Copping's Kittyhawk aircraft in the desert attended the 70 anniversary commemorations at El Alamein this year.

On October 20th we woke as usual at sunrise and after breakfast quickly unriggered the large camp and secured the items to our vehicles. The humidity experienced last night, was an indication that today will be a hot one, certainly exceeding 30 degrees even though we are now at the end of October.

At about 09.15 we left Tell El Aqaiq, where we spent the night, and headed to El Alamein. After a short stop to refuel the vehicles we arrived at the Commonwealth Cemetery where the international ceremony for the 70th of the battle of El Alamein would take place.



Our special guest, the Italian veteran of El Alamein, Santo Pelliccia who set out with us on the 16th was particularly keen to get to the ceremony and as we head towards the main entrance many people stop to talk to Santo and ask us about our association to discover abandoned cemeteries across the deserts of North Africa.

There was particular interest from Commonwealth ex servicemen once they recognised that we were the group that found the P40 Kittyhawk in the Egyptian Desert. An English TV team interviews us and Santo, who had a fair command of the English language, acted as spokesman.

As we went down to the main entrance of the cemetery Santo continued to get applause and admiration with his light khaki coloured uniform and proceeded straight through the crowd of veterans and Commonwealth authorities. He was escorted by the Vice President and Director of ARIDO Egypt, Andrea Mariotti and the founders Flaminio Coen and Franco Del Monte who managed to keep up with him at all times. We proceeded through the crowd of service men and civilians beginning to take place in the shaded area whilst Santo continued to greet and embrace all people, veterans and family members, thanking those that greeted him.

Suddenly we are stopped by an Italian TV crew, RAI, whose headquarters are in Cairo. They interview us and ask about our work to discover old war cemeteries and Santo of his memories of the time served in the desert.

The ceremony begins with the prayers speeches and the laying of wreaths. As time was short a group of us left this ceremony to go to prepare everything for the one at the Italian Cemetery which was being conducted afterwards. We get there just after it had started so we enter the Shrine in small groups to watch and listen to the words of the priest and the authorities who have travelled from Italy on this special occasion.

After the ceremony, which was conducted inside the Italian memorial, the group of officials moved outside to attend another inauguration along the Bresciani track and descended to the Libyans cemetery.



Nearby there is the monument to the Knight of the Italian Republic, Abd El Rasoul Aghila. It stands now as perpetual thanks for the effort and commitment that this tireless desert man did all his life as guardian of the Italian fallen soldiers in the battles of El Alamein.



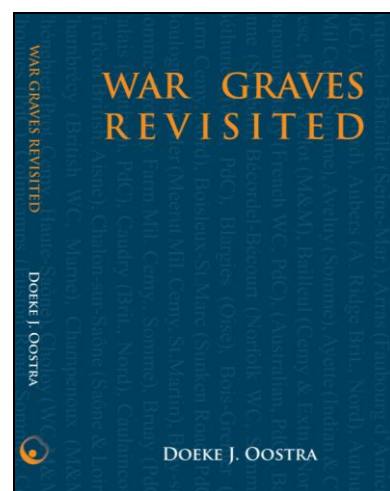
The group stopped and we all lined up next to the beautiful monument in white marble for a short ceremony. Here, representatives of ARIDO and the descendents of Abd El Rasoul Aghila were thanked by Italian Minister Gianfranco Fini whilst the Italian Ambassador explained to him the purpose of our work. He explained that ARIDO is now at the forefront of researching the historical perspective to the events of the war in North Africa, thus making official our presence at the monument and inside the Italian Shrine of El Alamein.

War Graves Revisited – Doeke J. Oostra

Doeke J Oostra has been assisting TWGPP by photographing Dutch Nationals in The Netherlands. Many of these are within public cemeteries and covered by family memorials making them a little more difficult to find but Doeke has already completed provinces surrounding the areas where he lives. Doeke made contact after writing a book about visiting Cemeteries in Europe which has recently been published.

A decade of research went into this comprehensive guidebook, which will give the reader access to an unparalleled amount of information on a subject barely touched upon by war books in general, and to a depth only equaled in local or regional publications.

Separate chapters describe British and Commonwealth war cemeteries in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany, preceded by an extensive chapter on Commonwealth war graves in general. The same method has been followed with regard to United States war cemeteries in the Low Countries, war graves and cemeteries of the Netherlands, and German war cemeteries. Separate chapters have also been devoted to Soviet-Russian, French and Belgian war graves and cemeteries, and to Polish and Czechoslovakian war graves, all within the Netherlands, Belgium and North-Western Germany. We have largely refrained from retreading the well-known paths along the Great War cemeteries and battlefields in France and Belgium. To order a copy please contact Doeke on xata75nl@hetnet.nl



The forgotten grave of a Royal Marine by Kevin Patience

While in Mombasa recently researching the Royal Navy's activities on the East African coast in the late 1800s, I came across a faded photograph of an unusual large steel cross grave marker with the barely legible name *Chowne R.M.L.I. 2 Nov 1895*. From previous visits to local cemeteries in Mombasa looking for naval casualties this was not a local burial. A check in the records for the Royal Navy's Mwele expedition in 1895 to the south of Mombasa showed no R.M. casualties, which meant the casualty probably occurred during an expedition to the north of Mombasa. A likely possibility was the cemetery at the mission station of Rabai some ten miles inland. Rabai was the site of the first Christian church in East Africa established by the Rev. Ludwig Krapf of the Church Missionary Society in 1847 and who became the first European to see Mount Kilimanjaro.



A visit to this cemetery showed only graves of missionaries who had succumbed to malaria and other fevers over a century ago. However the local parish priest recognised the cross and indicated its location a mile away in the bush at an abandoned cemetery of an earlier mission now in ruins. A brisk walk armed with a panga, water and a guide soon located the partly overgrown site. The cross was the largest marker in the small plot and was made from two pieces of steel plate back to back with the name cut in the front piece. It read '*In memory of C Chowne, R.M.L.I. H.M.S. Phoebe, Killed at Chengoni, 2 November 1895*'.

This called for further investigation and a visit to the National Archives in London for the relative documents on naval activities in East Africa. The Admiralty file for operations in the East Indies, as this area was known in the 19th century, showed an interesting little story about a minor insurrection on the coast at Bomani, a small village north of Mombasa.

In mid 1895 a local Arab, Hamisi Kombo, the chief of the local district was disobeying British Government directives and had gathered a crowd of followers at the village of Bomani between Mombasa and Kilifi. The Royal Navy was summoned and the cruiser H.M.S. Phoebe arrived in Mombasa from Zanzibar. On 31 October a punitive expedition of sixty sailors and Royal Marines armed with a 7 pounder gun, rockets and maxim machine guns sailed up the old harbour to the top of Tudor Creek then marched to the village of Ribe arriving shortly before midnight. Early next morning a force of fifty Zanzibari troops under Captain Harrison arrived to supplement the naval force. That afternoon they all set off for Bomani and camped four miles from the village.

At midnight they were joined by Lt. Wake and twenty-five men from the gunboat H.M.S. Swallow that had also arrived in Mombasa that day. At four in the morning, the rebels attacked, firing briskly and Lance Corporal Charles Henry Chowne CH4813 was shot in the head. Chowne was carried back to the mission cemetery where he was buried with full military honours shortly after dawn. The remainder continued on to Bomani with some opposition before attacking the stockaded village and burning it to the ground. By mid morning it was all over and the party returned to Rabai, where they learnt the mission had come under attack from another rebel group. The missionaries and followers had defended the place with bows and arrows and killed twenty-five attackers before they withdrew. The party returned to the ship on the evening of 3 November having used four 7 pounder shells and five-hundred rounds of ammunition. Chowne's enlistment papers also in the Archives, showed he had been born in London on 6 June 1870 and enlisted into the Royal Marines at Walmer on his eighteenth birthday.



He went on to serve at Chatham and Pembroke before joining his first ship H.M.S. Mohawk on 16 December 1890. After a further spell ashore he joined H.M.S. Phoebe on 26 November 1894 and was discharged dead on 4 November 1895.

Burial of KL654/R Flight Crew at Cheras Road Cemetery, Malaya By David May – Photos by Shaharom Ahmad

The remains of eight crew members of RAF flight KL654-R were permanently laid to rest on 18 October 2012 in a burial service with full military honours at the Cheras Road Cemetery, Kuala Lumpur, some 67 years after their B-24 Liberator crashed on 23rd August 1945.

The crew had taken off from their base at Brown's West Island airstrip in the Cocos (Keeling) Islands in the Indian Ocean around 1,000 km south of Sumatra along with four other B-24s from Squadron 356. Sadly KL654 never returned and is believed to have clipped a tree before crashing into dense jungle on Gunung Telapak Buruk (a 1193m high mountain in Negeri Sembilan, Malaya) with no survivors. The War had officially ended eight days earlier and their mission had been to drop supplies of food and medicine for Allied POWs, still imprisoned and in poor health, in a camp at Kampung Langkap not far from the crash site. They may also have been dropping leaflets announcing the end of the war because although Emperor Hirohito had, on 15th August, instructed his forces to lay down their arms, surrender in Malaya did not occur until 13th September. This was mainly because there were no allied troops on the ground to surrender to, apart from the tiny numbers of special forces in Force 136 who were emerging from their jungle hideouts along with units of the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army.



It is thought that the crash site was first discovered in the 1950s by *orang asli* tribesmen who reported it to the British Army. However no action was taken at the time as the Malayan Emergency was in full swing and the army feared a trap by communist insurgents.

Later efforts to search for the wreck were thwarted by lack of funding and initial reluctance by the UK Ministry of Defence to support recovery of the remains.

In 2006 the Malaya Historical Group (MHG), following two expeditions to the wreck site, positively identified it as belonging to KL654.

In 2007 MHG organized another trip with involvement of the Malaysian Army and two British participants, former Apache pilot and author Ed Macy and police detective Clayton Ford, and found various personal belongings of the crew such as rings, a gold bracelet, dagger, dog tag, coins, a tiny doll, spectacles and a water canteen. Some 80 bone fragments were recovered over the following years which have since been DNA tested to confirm their identities.

The remains of the 8 crew members were buried in one coffin but have individual headstones. Their names are:

Flying Officer J.T. Bromfield, 166369 from Cheam, Surrey. Flight Sergeant A. Turner, 1621393 from Dewsbury, Yorkshire. Flight Sergeant William Ross, 2213814 from Gateshead, Durham. Flight Sergeant Jack Blakey, 1582692, from Boston, Lincolnshire. Flight Sergeant Raymond Arthur Towell, 1624252, from Wellingborough, Northants. Flight Lieutenant John Selwyn Watts, 158017, from Crofton, Yorkshire. Flying Officer Edward Donald Mason, 166082 from Sheffield, Yorkshire. Flying Officer William Kenneth Dovey, 166352 from Ludlow, Salop



The commemorative service, conducted by The Reverend (Wing Commander) Jonathan Beach RAF, was dignified and respectful. There were readings from the British Defence Adviser in Malaysia, Captain Kenneth Taylor RN, Wing Commander John Dunne RAF and Warrant Officer Class II Paul Cross. Pall bearers were from the RAF Regiment and a Gurkha bugler provided the Last Post and the Reveille. Members of the Malaysian Armed Forces and the British High Commissioner were also present. Around twenty relatives of the deceased had been flown out from UK for the occasion at the expense of the Government (making up for the MOD's earlier reluctance to search for the remains). The closest relations in attendance I believe were the younger brothers of Flying Officer Dovey, now of course well advanced in years. It was clear that all the family members found the service moving and beautiful and an appropriate honour for the valour and sacrifice made by their relatives' generation.

The Quest for Harold Ewen's family – Paul Ten Broeke

In the Spring edition of the newsletter we mentioned the quest taken on by Paul Ten Broeke to find the relatives of Harold Ewen's family. His grave had been lovingly tended by Mrs Thijssen and she wanted any surviving family to know that he was being looked after – Here is an update by Paul.



It started on the 24th of December 2011. I had just taken the last photo of the Milsbeek War Cemetery when I meet Mrs Thijssen and her daughter-in-law. We started talking since it is rare to meet anybody at this cemetery, being small and unknown to many. She told me she had taking care of a grave since 1948 and she visits his grave at least 3 times per year and that day was she visiting Harold Ewen's grave for Christmas.

She then asks me the all-important question: "Would it be possible to find any relatives. Not for me, but to tell them that the grave of their family member is visited and taken care off".

We later asked ourselves why she didn't ask this question before. She just felt it was the right time and moment to do so. She never sought any publicity, nobody outside her family knew about her adoption. How much this would change....

It all started with a report in this newsletter in the spring of 2012. And we have come a long way since then . With the help of many volunteers, amongst them those from TWGPP, we have been able to compile a family tree and we soon found out that his brother, William Ewen, died in Singapore in 1942, his mother died in 1943 and his father in 1945. Therefore no direct relatives have been found, yet..... So it became even more important that Mrs Thijssen and her family visited Harold's grave since there were no family to do so. With this new information, when she visited Harold's grave on last All Souls day she took her sons and daughter because it was like she buried Harold for real as a special family member. We have had a lot of support from local newspapers, a beautiful report on BBC Scotland, and radio interviews in our quest to find relatives of Harold.

So we have been able to spread the news that the graves are still looked after and that we didn't forget those who gave their lives for our freedom in the area that Operation Veritable took place.

It is also important that we have been able to make people aware of the existence of war cemeteries, the need to remember the fallen, and to tell the British public that their son's grave are still visited and that their graves and cemetery are more than a patch of grass in a foreign land.

It all led to a booklet which I have been able to present to Mrs Thijssen and also to Ms Graham in Dunscore, who went to school with Harold. Now I'd like to distribute this booklet to anybody interested in this subject. The digital version is for free distribution. For a paper version I ask a small contribution. You can find this booklet this www.paultenbroeke.nl Also via this link you can look at the reports made and some extra photo's.



A Prisoner of the Turks – Brian and Mari Walker

When photographing for TWGPP in Australia the occasional headstone reveals the always poignant, but sometimes intriguing, inscription.

Herbert George MAY (Herb to his family) enlisted on 27th November 1914 in Adelaide. He was 29 years old, occupation given as labourer and denomination Church of England. He was assigned to the 9th Light Horse Regiment 5th Reinforcement which embarked from South Australia on the HMAT A59 Botanist on 2nd June 1915.

A notation on his service record states him reported missing 30/3/17 and a later note on 12/6/1917, confirmed as P.O.W. Anatolia. No record could be found regarding how and where in the Middle East he was captured. His mother received a postcard from him in August 1917.

‘August 9th, 1917. Dear Mother Just a few lines hoping to find you in the best of health as it leaves me at present. I wish this war was over so we could go home again. With kind regards to all. From Herb’

Information given by Private Campbell 445, 2nd Light Horse Field Ambulance, to Red Cross 4/1/19 after repatriation: *“I left him at Baghtche about September. He died at Ngde Hospital at Bov, he had fever then dysentery, he was always thin and wiry. Ndge is a big centre. He was not buried with Military Honours nor can his grave be identified. He did not write much to his people in South Australia. He had a brother on the ‘Parramatta’.”*

Information from A Tiernay 941 Imperial Camel Corps at Red Cross 4/1/19: *“I was in hospital with May when he died in Sept. 1917, also later at the end of November or early December when Angus, Jefferys, Kimber and Sgt. Saville died.”*

Information certified to by letter received from L. Doughty-Wyle, for D.A.D.G.R. & E.* Constantinople, 27-12-19: *“9th Light Horse, Pte. H.G. May 933, Died 20/9/17. The above named soldier is not buried at Bor. There are only two prisoners graves in that town, both identified. The big prisoners cemetery is at Ngde, the next town, where the Hospital is situated. Unfortunately the Hospital register is lost and the cemetery authorities never kept one, but the local Christians told me that all our people who died anywhere in the district were buried in the Ngde Cemetery, with the two exceptions already mentioned.”*

* D.A.D.G.R. & E. is: Deputy Assistant Director of Graves Registration and Enquiries

Although Herb May died in September 1917 this information had not reached his family who had hope that he was still alive. His sister sent the following letter to the authorities dated 25th December 1918.

“Dear Sir, I am writing on behalf of my mother. I would like to know if you could give me any information about my brother No 933 Trooper H. G. May 9th Light Horse he was one of the ten Australians that was released from Turkey it is fifteen months since we have had a letter from him and I would like if you could give me but a little information about him if you could do this for me I am sure I would be very much obliged as my poor mother has been awfully worried about him.

I am Yours Sincerely, Mrs W. Douglas, No 8 Melbourne St, St Leonards, Glenelg”

The Australian Imperial Force Base Records Office replied a week or so later on 2/1/1919:

*“AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE, Base Records Office
Victoria Barracks, MELBOURNE. 2nd January 1919*

Dear Madam, I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 25th ultimo and to state no advice has been received that your brother No. 933 Private H.G. May, 9th Light Horse Regiment, who was presumed to be a prisoner of War in Turkey has been released.

If you have authentic documentary evidence at Variance with official records you should forward some to this office, when, if it is decided such action is warranted, inquiries will be instituted, and the result communicated to next-of-kin shown as mother.

Yours faithfully, (Sgd) J.M. Lean, Major. OFFICER IN CHARGE, BASE RECORDS.



In Loving Memory of
George
The dearly beloved husband of
Mary May
Died Aug. 1902, aged 41 years
Also
Trooper H. G. May
9th Light Horse
son of the above
Died in Turkey whilst a Prisoner
of War
26th Sept. 1917 aged 32 years

.....

All hope was extinguished when Herb's mother received the following communication from the Australian Red Cross in March 1919:

"Dear Madam, re Pts H.G. MAY, No. 933 9th L. Horse

A returned soldier, Flight Sgt. J.M. Sloss, No. 11, Flying Corps, private address Nyora Street, Malvern, on the 28th February made the following statement in regard to the above named soldier who is stated Prisoner of War.

"He was a man about 5 ft 9 ins. Slightly built, dark complexion, dark moustache. I met Casualty in a prison compound at Borre about August 1917. I made his acquaintance through his drawing rations and sometimes I used to speak to him. He never spoke of his people at home to me so I do not know anything about them. He was taken from Borre to Negle Hospital suffering with dysentery. I left Borre and was taken to Derindge and I heard there that he had died while in hospital."

Flight Sgt. Sloss was a prisoner of war in Turkey for a considerable time, and has recently been repatriated and as you are stated as the next of kin of Pte May we thought you would be interested to receive the above report."

The grimy weathered headstone lying on a family grave in an Adelaide Cemetery records few details about Herb May. When the lease expires, the headstone will be removed and broken up to make way for a new burial, no passerby will be able to read that Trooper H.G. May 933 died of disease as a Prisoner of the Turk in 1917.

Private Colin Spencer CAMPBELL 445

Private Campbell, a Railway employee enlisted on the 10th November 1914 in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. He was single, 20 years of age and denomination stated was Presbyterian. He had spent time in the army cadets. His unit, the 2nd Light Horse Field Ambulance, embarked from Brisbane on board HMAT A30 'Borda' on the 15th December 1914. He was reported missing, believed prisoner of war, on the 25th March 1917.

The following report by Campbell dated 4th January 1919 details the circumstances of his capture.

"On the evening of 26-3-17 our two ambulance sections were camped some distance from the main body. I was sent with a message to the 7th Light Horse Regt. To ask if they wanted the ambulances brought up at once. I reached their lines and reported to the Medical Officer, Captain Anderson. I had picked out my route for the return journey but the Medical Officer gave me a wounded man to take back on horseback and through moving round to pick him up I lost my original bearings. I got directions but after going some distance discovered I was not going right. I left my mate with the wounded man to ask the direction from the signallers. When I returned to the spot where I had left them they had gone. I made the best of my way back and early in the morning though I saw the two men I was looking for. I made towards them but found people had evacuated their position and while looking for them was taken capture by a Turkish patrol.

I was stripped and searched, but my clothing was returned. I was taken to Turkish Headquarters in Gaza, then I was out into a prison where there were some Britishers. Here our boots and other clothing were taken. After some days here we were marched 15 miles with bare feet to Tel-el-asrai, near Jaffa. We were here for two days and then went on to Jerusalem. We went by stages to Bagtche, where we were put to work on the railway line. I remained there from early in April till the end of August.

Here we had to pay for our food out of the 8 piastres or so that we were supposed to be paid. But the pay was irregular and the prices so high, that we barely had enough for the necessities of life.

The discipline here was harsh. It was difficult to see a doctor when sick unless one took a risk of breaking leave and getting flogged across the soles of the feet as a punishment.

At the end of August I was sent to Jarbaschi, another working camp, where I was taken on by a German geologist as his "off side". I had a fairly decent time with him.

About October 6, I went to Bore convalescent camp, being bad with malaria. An English doctor attended to me there. I was in Bore till November 18, 1918 when we left via Constantinople through Bulgaria to Salonika. We crossed to Italy and entrained for Cherbourg finally arriving at Southampton on 31-12-18.

(Sgd) C.E. Campbell

Witness.

(Sgd) 517. A.G. Fane. L/C"

While in prison Private Campbell was privy to the death of Trooper Herb May.

He embarked from London on the 27th March 1920 on H.T. *Zealandia* arriving home on the 14th May with his English wife to start their married life in Queensland. A certified extract of their marriage certificate shows that Temp Corporal Campbell, 26 years, residing at 29 Lorn Road, Brixton, married Margaret Lucy Wallace, 28 years, grocer's shop assistant, of 244 High Street, Tottenham, on the 9th September 1919.

War Memorials Online - Ms Frances Moreton, Director

In November, a new initiative 'War Memorials Online' brought together, for the first time, information on the UK's war memorials held by the leading experts. War Memorials Online is a collaborative project between War Memorials Trust, IWM's War Memorials Archive and English Heritage. Working with the public, it is the ambition of War Memorials Online to create the UK's most comprehensive understanding of war memorials.

War Memorials Online was launched on 12th November 2012, with a call to the public to participate by checking their local war memorials, uploading memorial locations, photos and condition information. The content collected and uploaded will help to plan for the conservation of war memorials and to record the important history each memorial contains and represents.

War Memorials Online will help create a complete picture of all war memorials across the United Kingdom. The public's help is vital to ensure there are records for all of the UK's war memorials and to ensure at risk memorials can be found before it is too late to save them.

Anyone and everyone can get involved in discovering and registering war memorials for future generations at www.warmemorials.org.uk.

When is a House not a Home – Carol Rutter

Or Lost in Translation – Carol Rutter based in Gibraltar has been photographing the early gravestones in the now disused cemetery of Withams. Many of the headstones are illegible but had been transcribed before so by using the records in the Gibraltar archives and comparing the photographs Carol has produced a comprehensive list. Such an exercise highlights discrepancies where a headstone commemorating the death of Sir John **Home** Bartholemew R.N. is recorded as Sir John **House** Bartholemew. Hopefully the written transcription is wrong as opposed to the engraving on the stone!



German ceremony for an English Pilot – Dave Smith



Dave and Svetlana Smith who live in Germany and have been assisting TWGPP in photographing German nationals has sent in this picture. It was seen on sale on E Bay and depicts, along with another four others, the burial party for Flight Sergeant Percy Edmund Boyce Sproston who was killed on 29th September 1939.

The translation reads '*Burying the English Flight Sergeant Sproston a.m 2nd October 1939 in Emden – Fallen into Luftkampf at Baltrum*'.

Flight Sergeant Sproston now lies in Sage War Cemetery Oldenburg, Niedersachsen in Germany.