

The War Graves Photographic Project

In association with
The CWGC



News from the Front line

December 2007

Steve Rogers, Project Co-ordinator

It was not the intention to produce another newsletter quite so soon, as the previous one went out in November, but things are moving forward with a meeting last week with the CWGC to 'dot the I's and cross the T's' with regard to what we are going to display on the search facility of the website. With these slight changes that need to be implemented we are moving the launch of the site to January to take into account the Christmas break but in the meantime will put a 'holding page' up on the web address www.thewargravesproject.org.uk and points of contact.

We have good news in that we can now announce that we have hit our Million mark now. Thanks to ongoing work by volunteers around the world recent submissions from Africa, Belgium, France and Italy and the completion of Runnymede Air Force and Ploegsteert memorials to the missing have added a further 31,000+ to the total.

Having now got to the end of this year it is time to consolidate our master lists which means that for locations that were allocated but not completed, for whatever reason, we need to know if they are still required. To that end, if you have been allocated a cemetery, large or small, can you let us know if you intend to complete it in 2008. If we do not hear from you then we will assume that you can no longer manage to complete it, which gives us the chance to allocate it to the new volunteers that are out there willing to help!

That just leaves me to thank you all for your continued support this year and wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and Peaceful New Year.



**Shall we not lay our holly wreath
Here at the foot of this High cross?
We do not know, perhaps a breath
Of our remembering may come
To them at least where they are
sleeping,
They are quiet, they are dumb
No more of mirth, no more of
weeping,
Silent Christmas they are keeping
Ours the sorrow, ours the loss.**

Diana Gurney c 1918



The 'Project' at Canada House

Trafalgar Square - 14th November 2007

Vernon (Canadian Co-ord) and Steve (Project Co-ord) were invited to Canada House in Trafalgar Square on 14th November to represent The War Graves Photographic Project at the unveiling of a Plaque to commemorate the National Historic significance of the Canadian presence in Britain during the Second World War.

"The Second World War was one of the defining events of the 20th century" said High Commissioner James R. Wright. "Thousands of Canadian men and women proudly served in the United Kingdom during the war and these soldiers became part of the historical landscapes in both our nations. Commemorating this common history is important to Canadians and Britons today, and for future generations".

The plaque commemorates Canada's military, civilian and diplomatic contribution to the war effort in Britain. In addition to the presence of the Canadian Army, the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), and the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) and Merchant Marine in Britain, Canadian Civilians also served there in many capacities, including fire-fighters, stenographers, foresters and diplomats.

Canada's three military services were a vital part of Britain's first line of defence. In all a quarter of a million soldiers made Britain their home until, starting in July 1943, they went off to fight in sustained operations in Italy and other parts of the continent. By the time Britain became the springboard for the allied offensive, the numbers of Canadians there had grown to more than one half million - one twentieth of Canada's entire population.

Steve and Vernon were able to chat about The War Graves Photographic Project to Brian Hanrahan of the BBC, "*I counted them all out and I counted them all back*" and Gerald Howarth the Shadow Defence Minister, amongst other distinguished guests and veterans of that period.



Vernon, Brian Hanrahan and Steve at the reception in Canada House

Bretteville-Sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery

16th November 2007



In continuation of our remembering the war dead of Canada and her contribution to the war effort Vernon Masterman, Terry Jamieson and Steve Rogers utilised a cheap day ticket to Caen from Portsmouth in order to photograph the 2,872 Canadian and allied graves in Bretteville-Sur-Laize Cemetery.

This cemetery lies on the west side of the main road from Caen to Falaise (route N158) about 14 kilometres south of Caen and just north of the village of Cintheaux.



Bretteville-Sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery Continued.

A early morning start saw them at the cemetery for sunrise.

The Allied offensive in north-western Europe began with the Normandy landings of 6 June 1944. For the most part, those buried at Bretteville-Sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery died during the later stages of the battle of Normandy, the capture of Caen and the thrust southwards - led initially by the 4th Canadian and 1st Polish Armoured Divisions - to close the Falaise Gap. Almost every unit of the Canadian 2nd Corps is represented in the cemetery which contains 2,957 Second World War burials, the majority Canadian, and 87 of them unidentified.

On completion of Bretteville the team moved on to complete Banneville and Ranville giving a total for the day in excess of 6,000 graves for the project!

Canada and Canadian Co-ordinator - Vernon Masterman

At 5.45 one November morning I leave home and start walking down the back roads of Bournemouth (only one Street in the town) and begin to think 'why I am heading for the coach station to board a coach for London'? After attending the Bletchley Park inaugural meeting of the TWGPP I had found that Royal Mail had delivered an invitation to attend an unveiling ceremony of a plaque at Canada House in Trafalgar Square to mark the presence of Canadian Forces in the United Kingdom during World War Two.

My interest in war memorials must stem from my infant school days as there was a tablet on the wall of St Clements School commemorating Reginald Noble who was awarded the Victoria Cross at Neuve Chapelle .He had been a former pupil of the school and this image has always remained in my memory. As I walk past the site of a former bakery, memories come flooding back of the troops collecting lorry loads of bread on the build up to D-Day . We youngsters always reckoned the Canadians gave us better candy than the GIs and we never went short of bread due to their generosity .

Probably the two most distinctive days I can remember during the war was firstly on the 23rd May 1943 when I saw twelve Heinkels approaching at low level on a bombing run. I came to, buried under the house next door with my mother, two of my neighbours killed, further down the flight path forty one servicemen were killed and many more civilians. My other memory was waking up on 6th June 1944 and looking up at the sky full of aircraft towing gliders crossing the coast heading for Normandy and then the returning aircraft without the gliders.

On leaving school I served an apprenticeship as Carpenter and Joiner and on completion I was invited to join the 'Aldershot Cement Company' (Army Catering Corps) for a two year contract (National Service) with board and clothes thrown in and advice given to me in rather loud voices when walking about.



After six weeks my seniors sent me to a Cookery Instruction Centre at Blandford but I only ever went into the cookhouse to eat! After returning to 'Civvy' Street I resumed my original career taking semi retirement in my mid fifties and then becoming an Occupational Therapist in a Psychiatric Hospital before retiring at sixty five.

It was at this point the reason for my journey started: having purchased a digital camera a year earlier and also computer I found a site where volunteers photographed war graves. I started photographing my local cemeteries around Bournemouth, completing them quite quickly, then expanding my searches to surrounding counties and taking on the coordinating of Somerset County. Living near the sea meant that I was restricted to a 180 degree arc. I then did the unthinkable and volunteered to do some naming and sorting some spreadsheets, one of which was Canada. As I had done considerable work on that one I suggested that I looked after it, hence I became Canadian Coordinator.

It was an honour to accept the invitation to attend the unveiling ceremony at Canada House as a representative of The War Graves Photographic Project in recognition of the efforts of all our volunteers. At the following reception Steve and I managed to spread the word of the project to several prominent people who were in attendance. Time soon flew by, then it was time for a brisk walk back down The Mall to catch my returning coach and reflect on the day and what lay ahead the following day when three of us were taking a day trip to France photographing Bretteville-Sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery where over 2,800 Canadians lay, after the battle for Caen. A fitting end to the week.

Meet the CWGC – Carls Liversage, Regional Supervisor (South East)

By David Ayling

Carl Liversage is the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Regional Supervisor for the south east of the UK and I met with him at Brookwood Military Cemetery recently.

The extremely helpful and knowledgeable Carl has been with the CWGC for twenty two years now and is responsible for an area of England taking in Hampshire, West & East Sussex, Surrey, Kent and the Isle of Wight. This is one of ten CWGC regions in the UK and contains over 12,000 sites across the area, the largest being Brookwood Military Cemetery down to churchyards which contain just a single grave, all of which require the same care and maintenance. In total Carl's patch has 1182 sites with 95,000 casualties including 27,000 known marked graves.

Carl said that his role "was to ensure that the casualties in each cemetery or churchyard are adequately commemorated.

The criteria being that on each headstone or memorial each name is legible". He will also liaise with local councils, church authorities and other parties. When a name on a headstone is no longer legible then that stone will be replaced with a new one. This costs around £350 per stone for the quarrying, engraving and re-siting. There is, of course, the beautiful horticulture in the CWGC maintained sites and Carl has a team of seventeen people at Brookwood and other sites, dedicated to the care and maintenance of the graves and memorials. Much of the stone for the replacements is quarried either in Portland in Dorset, or in France near Arras, which is handily placed for the replacement of the headstones in the main concentration of the CWGCs cemeteries in Northern France and Belgium. Carl pointed out that the CWGC are trialling a new stone from Pierre de Lens in France, which although similar to Portland stone, has greater erosion withstanding properties, particularly to salt, which will be of great use in coastal cemeteries.





Carl also showed me the method of ensuring that the headstones when placed in the ground remain both upright and at a constant height. This is achieved by use of an underground bracket with a slot (one is seen in the photo), something that is taken for granted, but when there are many headstones in rows it is of vital importance in maintaining the precise straight and regular lines in the larger cemeteries.

Finally on the role of TWGPP in conjunction with the CWGC Carl was pleased to say that "This will be very useful now for linking the casualty with a photograph of each grave or memorial. Visitors to the CWGC's website will benefit, especially if they are from locations remote to the casualty."

Whilst I was at Brookwood I also spoke to Bryan Smith who after 39 years with the CWGC has been made a MBE and was arranging his trip to Buckingham Palace to be presented the award by the Queen. He has been awarded this for his outstanding service to the CWGC together with his extra-curricular work attached to his main role. One of Bryan's "other activities" is to conduct the tours of Brookwood Military Cemetery and he told me knowledgeably of many of the graves in his care.



As part of a programme of revisits David Ayling and Steve Rogers ventured to Brookwood Military cemetery in Surrey, the largest in the UK, and in glorious sunshine photographed all of the Commonwealth nations and others. These included Canadians, Australians, South African, NZ and Australian as well as smaller plots of Indian, Czech, Belgium and Polish. Another visit is planned to complete all of those buried within the 'civil' plots of Brookwood cemetery which covers an area of some 500 acres.

The War Graves Photographic Project Team – Part 2



Paul & Lynn Clark
London, Middlesex
Surrey



Tony Duncombe
Staffordshire



Paul Wonnacott
Singapore



Tim Todd
Devon

WATSON WADE – From Salternstall to Ypres

By Nigel R Wade

Back in 1989 I sent a letter to twenty potential Wade relatives in Halifax, West Yorkshire from whom I received about seven polite replies. One from a Frank and Doreen who said, 'We are only slightly interested in our family history but our daughter Julie is most enthusiastic'.

Julie and I had a couple of telephone chats and she revealed that her great uncle Watson Wade had been a waiter in Canada before the First World War.

One year on, during one of my many forages into Halifax graveyards, I came across a stone cross on a four-tier plinth, the resting place of William and Margaret Wade, five children died in infancy and Watson of the P.P.G.L.I. son of the above who was killed in action at Ypres, 4th June 1916 age 43.



Andy & Nigel Wade at the Menin Gate

A bit old for a soldier, I thought, but Watson being an unusual name amongst the Johns and Thomas's... a good chance this was him, but what of the initials?

My brothers Andy, Philip and I had searched through parish records and graveyards to compile a list of over one hundred direct relatives; sadly Watson was found not to be ours (yet!) though all the indications for a possible match are there if only we could find the parents of Charles Wade of Haworth born 1794. However, Watson is a Wade so he's ours! (Don't you agree that once you start to get details of someone a certain attachment or bond forms?)

Seventeen years on, patient and biding time, Andy and I though it would be great if at least we could discover what the 'initials' meant with a view to finding out where Watson fell in our research. A Google search provided nothing...damn it...what now? Upon studying the photo of the initials it hit me...it's a C NOT a G! Seconds later good old Google found it...Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. Reading up on the Patricia's history I found that on 2nd June 1916 (two days before Watson's death) they were involved in the battle for Mount Sorrel; the Canadian infantry suffered an almost 90% casualty toll. This battle saw the end of the infamous Ross rifle which the Canadian Minister for Militia, Sir Sam Hughes, had insisted upon; it was deemed prone to jamming up in wet weather trench warfare. The total loss for that battle -8,000 Canadian and 5,600 German. Rest in Peace.

Sitting on the coach on the Ypres Op. Tribute trip in May, trying to take everything in, the very interesting dits from Steve, Mick, Phil and Harry, I suddenly wondered, where was Mount Sorrel and did we pass it? I said aloud, 'Where's Mount Sorrel anyone?' John, our driver, said 'Oh! Good job you asked now, it's just up here and I need to turn round by there anyway'. Excusing ourselves from the planned photo stop Andy and I stayed on the coach to the turning point. There at the top of the hill was a Canadian Memorial, no head stones; quiet, peaceful, just a few birds chirruping.

Returning at the end of the day's travels Andy and I visited the Menin Gate to look through the 'W' index ... there he was on Panel 10, W. Wade died 4th June, 1916 for the P.P.C.L.I. along with 55,000 other lost, brave men, and providing an end to only one of the many stories that help keep their memories from fading. I will be getting in touch with Julie, enthusiastic daughter of Frank and Doreen. I just hope after seventeen years she still has the same phone number (and enthusiasm), if not, well, that's what we do isn't it, find people and bring back their memories?

A big thanks from both Andy and I for all the help everyone on the trip gave in shouting 'WADE' when coming across one of 'our men', especially Marsha [Thorndike] for looking through the indexes at the cemeteries for us.

Combined Operations in the Republic of Ireland

By Mick Dolan

My name is Mick Dolan. I'm 46, married with three grown up children and one grandson. I live in Rosegreen, a village near Cashel in South Tipperary, Ireland. I'm an NCO in the Irish Army with 22 years service. I've been a volunteer with TWGPP since March 2006 and help because of my interest in local history. I have collected the names of most of the casualties of the two World Wars in my locality, although I've discovered quite a few more in my work for the project.



I had also photographed many of the war graves in my area prior to joining although most of these had already been assigned so Derek Mountjoy offered me those in the neighbouring county of Waterford and Kilkenny where there were 56 sites to be visited and Co. Cork, all within a 60 mile radius of my home. Visiting some sites can involve a substantial round trip plus a bit of exploring to find them. Many graves are located in old graveyards in out of the way spots so photographing them can be a lonely task and I sometimes have to suspend operations while a burial takes place. Ironically two of the hardest places to find were cemeteries in the middle of Kilkenny and Waterford City. These involved a series of e-mail enquiries to the local authorities and Kilkenny Heritage Centre to locate.

The most interesting and largest site I have visited, with 123 CWGC burials, is Cobh Old Church Cemetery in Co. Cork. The cemetery is the resting place of many victims of the sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915. who were buried in three mass graves, the locations of which are marked by plaques mounted on large boulders. The cemetery also holds the graves of three other maritime disasters-the casualties resulting from a gun turret explosion on *HMS Mars* in 1902, an explosion aboard *HM Submarine A5* in 1905 and a dysentery epidemic on *HMS Lapwing* in 1805.

This leads me to another bonus of travelling the country for The War Graves Photographic Project. In my travels I have come across many Irish war memorials and burials relating to the two World Wars, the Irish War of Independence, the Civil War, the 1798 Rebellion, the Boer War, United Nations missions, two casualties of the Vietnam War and even one commemoration of a Tipperary man killed fighting the Russians in Afghanistan in the 1980s. These monuments I record for the Irish War Memorial project.



Mick Dolan – South Tipperary

The Irish project leans more towards the village-type memorial of which, as far as I know, no list exists. So I have the privilege of contributing to the War Graves Photographic Project and in helping compile a record of the War Memorial / Commemorations in this country.

In common with every volunteer, I suppose, I contribute to the project as an expression of gratitude to the men and women who sacrificed so much for our freedom. In addition I hope my work might also help highlight the contribution of Irish men and women in both world wars. Hopefully the descendants of casualties buried in Ireland, who have not managed to visit their relative's grave, can be brought that little closer by a photograph of his or her headstone. With those ends in mind, I look forward to contributing many more photos to The War Graves Photographic Project.

Editorial – Pauline Pedersen

There hasn't been a lot of fieldwork from the Pedersen's these past few months. The weather notwithstanding, Jim had a bit of a blip with his health mid-summer and was 'grounded' for six weeks. Happily he has made a full recovery. Shortly after that my brother was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer so we have spent a lot of time with him and the family in Yorkshire.

Thank goodness for the laptop though; we haven't been idle! Jim has his New Zealanders to deal with, whilst I've been finalising arrangements for next year's Op.Tributes to Holland and Gallipoli. The Booking Form for Holland is attached and for anyone who may still be uncertain whether one of our trips is for them or not, perhaps the article in this issue by Nigel Wade will help them make up their minds. We work hard and play hard!



Accommodation for the Gallipoli trip is limited and we already have provisional bookings for this. I will be contacting those people very shortly but meanwhile if you want to add your name to the waiting list please let me know.

I have received two suggestions for venues for the 2008 annual meeting so I will follow these up early in the new year: either would be interesting - The RAF Museum, Cosford, Shropshire and the National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas, Staffordshire.

Jim & I send you many good wishes for Christmas and the New Year and we hope to see you somewhere, sometime.

Stop press!

You never know who might request a picture you have taken. In the case of Howard Wootton, a long time volunteer, it just so happens that the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Helen Clark has, via the CWGC, requested a picture of her relation, Pte H Clark, of the New Zealand Medical Corps, now buried in Tidworth Military Cemetery which Howard has recently submitted now that we are covering all nations. Well done Howard!



The War Graves Photographic Project is a voluntary organisation and can only achieve its aim of photographing all of the war graves around the world by voluntary action. If you feel that you would like to help us in this task, please contact us at:

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