



# THE MONTE CASSINO SOCIETY

Furthering an interest in the Italian Campaign 1943–1945

NA15141

Winter/Spring 2015

## Aim

To remember and further an interest in the experiences of all who took part in the Italian Campaign.

## Welcome

2014 proved to be a busy year for the Society. As well as our main commemoration of the 70th Anniversary - our Pilgrimage to Cassino and the individual members who travelled to our memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum to lay wreaths –there were other events to which we were invited and which our members attended.

We were invited to and represented at the dinner 'To Honour the Soldier at Cassino' at the Staff College in Shrivenham, Wiltshire. A small party attended the Buckingham Palace Garden Party hosted by the Not Forgotten Association with HM the Queen and the Duke of York in Attendance. Another event hosted by the Not Forgotten Association was Women's Final Day at Wimbledon. One of our members with his family attended a Commemoration Service and Recital at the Polish Embassy in London.

We mounted and staffed a display, in conjunction with the Italy Star Association,

at the War and Peace Revival weekend at RAF Westenhanger near Folkestone.

As in previous years we were again represented at the Field of Remembrance in Westminster and the Cenotaph Service and Parade as part of the National Remembrance Weekend. Additionally this year we were invited to parade our Standard at the British Legion Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall. This honour was ably undertaken with pride by Mike Anslow our Standard Bearer.

We do not have a 'back room' filled with professionals and up to date technical equipment. What we do have is a small, committed band of veterans' sons and daughters—Doreen, Judith, Suzanne, John, Mike, Paul, Phil, Stan—who give of their time and resources and strive to meet the aims of the Society—*To remember and further an interest in the experiences of all who took part in the Italian Campaign.*

Judith Coote

Daughter of the late Gerald Soady  
91st LAA Royal Artillery, 4th British Division

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## News

### Monte Cassino Society Ties & Scarves

We have still to find someone willing to supply scarves to our design in numbers we would be able to sell. We do not have sufficient reserves to warrant the initial outlay, but we have not given up on the idea.

To date we have received the invoice for the ties but so far no ties!! We hope to receive them in the very near future and when we do we will be contacting those who have placed an order.

### Service of Dedication of Standard

The service on Saturday 23rd May at the National Memorial Arboretum takes place in the afternoon but we have arranged for tea and coffee to be available in our designated marquee from 12.00 noon. This gives a little more flexibility for travelling and also gives an opportunity to look around the site—weather permitting!

We hope as many as are able will join us as it will be the only opportunity this year to meet together. The NMA in Alrewas is on the A38 midway between Burton on Trent and Lichfield.

## News (continued)

For those requiring overnight accommodation we are recommending the Premier Inn in Lichfield City Centre. (There are two Premier Inns in Lichfield, the City Centre is the larger, newer one). We were unsuccessful in booking an hotel in the area where we could have bed and breakfast and a meal together on Saturday night. Hotels able to take our numbers are not 'elderly friendly' - no lift and insufficient ground floor rooms.

Thank you to those who have spent considerable time and effort to find us suitable accommodation.

### Have Standard, Will Travel

At the time of publication Mike writes -

"I have attended three events with our standard. The main one, of course, was

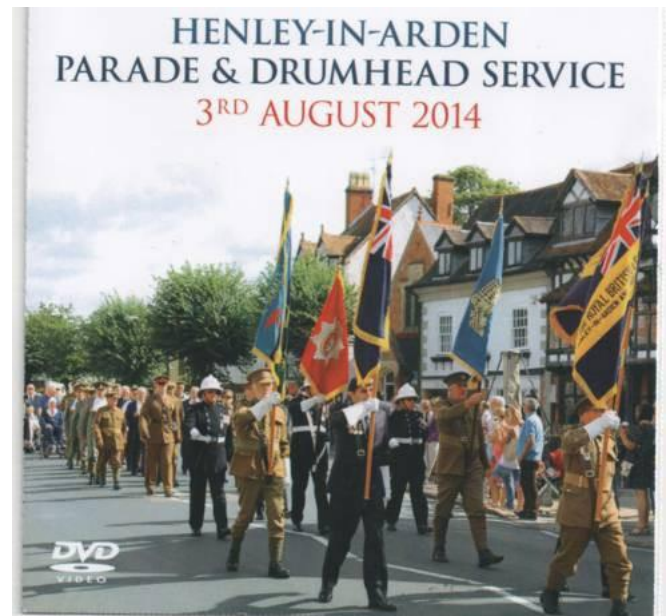
at the Royal Albert Hall, which I found very nerve wracking but memorable. To represent the MCS in front of Her Majesty and millions on TV was a great honour and gave the Society a good amount of publicity. Sadly, I attended the funerals of Bill Clarke, Alan Ashfield and Arthur Simmonds and have also made myself available for the funeral of Lewis Renshaw in Nottingham."

Mike is prepared to consider any request for the Standard and if at all possible will attend.

We are very grateful to him for the long journeys he has undertaken to represent the Society at parades, services and to the funerals and thanksgiving services of our members .

MIKE REPRESENTED US AT THE FIRST WORLD WAR CEREMONIES IN HENLEY IN ARDEN ON 3RD AUGUST 2014 AND TOOK PART IN THE MEMORIAL PARADE AND DRUMHEAD SERVICE.

THIS PHOTO HAS BEEN SCANNED FROM THE COVER OF A DVD MADE TO COMMEMORATE THE OCCASION AND MIKE CAN CLEARLY BE SEEN SECOND RIGHT



## In Memoriam

Alan Ashfield—Good friend of the Society and ardent supporter  
 William A. Chamberlain MM—242 Coy, Royal Army Service Corps  
 Lewis N. Renshaw— 155 LAA, Royal Artillery  
 Kenneth Southwell—2nd Btn Lancashire Fusiliers

## In Memoriam

**Bill (Nobby) Clarke, a founder member and keen supporter of the Society passed away in the Summer. Below an extract of his life story provided by his family**

Bill was born in Seaford, the eldest of five boys. On leaving school he joined the Post Office as a telegram boy and as part of his remuneration this included free healthcare which in those days meant a lot.

The clouds of war gathered and in 1939 Bill sadly had to start delivering telegrams to parents of boys who he went to school with saying they wouldn't be returning home—a tough job for someone so young. Fire watching in Seaford soon followed due to the devastation of the war, then at the age of seventeen and a half the call up papers landed on the doormat and Bill was soon on his way to Stirling, Scotland to train where he also learned to drive.

His Dad's advice was to try not to be in the Infantry as he had been in the Royal Sussex himself in World War One, so Bill in his wisdom told the three enrolment officers he did not want to be in the Infantry, not something taken lightly, and he ended up in the Royal Artillery, 132nd 78th division, 1st Army in North Africa which joined up with Monte's men in the 8th Army. This led them on to the invasion of Italy and Monte Cassino, a hard fought, forgotten, bloody battle. Bill spent his 21st birthday jumping into



icy filled slit trenches, keeping his head down. During the rare times when they could enjoy a concert, Bill would be told to sit at the front and laugh at Harry Secombe's jokes—Harry said Bill's laugh was so infectious it made everyone laugh even though the jokes were not always that funny!

Bill ended up in the army of occupation in Austria and Germany and finally in late 1946 he was demobbed and came home, back to work for the Post Office as a Postman which he did for 36 years, a friendly face that people of Seaford constantly recognised.

Bill was married to Jean, they had three children. Bill and Jean loved to travel - camping trips with the children to Italy, Austria and France and visits to Canada to visit family and Australia to visit their son Peter and the grandchildren.

This year, in May, he was not in the best of health but he had already arranged to go on the 70th anniversary trip to Monte Cassino with his sons Chris, Peter and brother Geoff. It was an important trip arranged by the Monte Cassino Society and after a family chat it was decided he should go. The trip was amazing, he was filmed by the BBC for the local news, he visited places where he had fought and he paid his last respects to those who he had lost. He met and chatted with His Royal Highness Prince Harry—not bad for someone aged 91. Bill enjoyed being part of the Monte Cassino Society, he loved the trips, meeting up with old chums and chatting about old times, he looked forward to the return trips to Italy very much.

Bill was an amazing man, you couldn't help but like him, a wonderful Husband, Dad, Grandad, Great Grandad and good all round bloke. He will be sadly missed by us all.

The Clarke Family

# Accounts

## ANNUAL REMEMBRANCE SERVICES

Once again we were represented by our members in Services across the country

### Field of Remembrance, Westminster, Thursday 6th November 2014



Unfortunately this year the Royal British Legion restricted the allocation of tickets for this event and we received less than we required. However, a small group attended including veteran member John Hodgson (South African 6th Armoured Division, The Royal Natal Carabineers) who travelled from South Africa to act as our Plot Master. Fortunately HRH Prince Harry did stop and have a word with John when he toured the Field following the opening service.



OUR FAITHFUL BAND OF SUPPORTERS WELL WRAPPED UP AGAINST THE COLD



VETERAN JOHN HODGSON AND JUDITH COOTE

HRH PRINCE HARRY STOPS FOR A WORD WITH JOHN



### Remembrance Service at Swansea

As in earlier years, veteran Theo Davies (6th Btn The Queens Own Royal West Kents) braved the weather to attend the Remembrance Service at the seafront cenotaph and laid a wreath on behalf of the Society.



VETERAN THEO DAVIES 3RD FROM LEFT FRONT ROW

Cutting from the local paper

## Accounts (cont)

### London Cenotaph Service and Parade

This year the largest contingent to date met in Horse Guards Parade for the annual service and march past. Our wreath was laid at the cenotaph by veteran John Hodgson. Sons, daughters, nieces, nephews and one grandchild joined the few hardy veterans on parade. It does involve much standing around but the weather was kind— bright and dry. We very much appreciate those who attended, many travelling some distance to be there.



### Remembrance Service at Chislehurst

*As in previous years, Dave Mann (son of the late Harold Mann, 31st Field Regiment, Royal Artillery) represented the Society at the service in Chislehurst. Dave is a member of the Meridian Chapter. The following is Dave's account of the day:*

After a wet and miserable night the rain finally stopped at 07:50 here at home, just in time to get going and ride into Chislehurst for Breakfast. Although still wet from the heavy overnight rain the roads were clear providing a nice ride up in the early morning light, eventually arriving to and amazing sunrise across Chislehurst pond.

The forecourt of 'The Queens Head' quickly filled up with bikes from Meridian Chapter members, we were also joined by members from the RBL Kent Riders Branch, Kent Branch Honda Owners Club and The Sun-beam Fellowship. The Queens Head pub kindly opened up just after 08:00 again this year to allow bikers the use of their premises as a helmet park and also serve teas and coffees to those looking for a 'lighter' start to the day. The Pub forecourt also served as a gathering point for the rest of local community groups including Cubs and Scouts who had their usual range of cakes and refreshments for sale in order to raise some additional funds.



## Accounts (cont'd)

It was not long before the centre of Chislehurst was full of people from the locality wishing to join the parade for this significant commemorative Remembrance year – in all an estimated 600 people attended.

Parade Marshall Fred Blunden and Standard Bearer Graham Allen were assisted by a visiting Colour Sergeant in gathering the parade into order and marching the group up to the Chislehurst Cenotaph to the sound of Piper Roberto Pagliari from Chislehurst 5<sup>th</sup> Scout Group playing 'Amazing Grace and 'Flowers of the Forest' - were we joined at this point by local dignitaries and members local Church who conducted the service.

The Poem 'The Man he killed' by Thomas Hardy was read out followed by the act of Remembrance and last post – At this significant point and by some coincidence, a single Spitfire appeared above and flew across the skies above us as the two minutes silence was observed, this proved to be a very emotional moment for many.

Meridian Chapter members Nick Vosper and Steve Uffindell laid wreaths from the Chapter remembering those who gave in the 1914 – 1918 War and also on behalf of 'The Monte Cassino Society'

This part of the ceremony was followed by another poem by Keith Gardner read by his Daughter and local resident Elizabeth Millard –another significant and moving moment.

My Daddy was a soldier	He told us all about them	My daddy was a soldier
My Daddy went to war	Exactly what they meant	Who when the war was won
He won lots of medals	They were just reminders	Came home again to live in peace
Which we hadn't seen before	Of a very sad event	His army days were done

My Daddy was a soldier	He told us to remember
And he remembers well	With all the love we share
That in the heat of battle	To those who gave their lives
Many soldiers fell	We really, really care.....
	Lest we forget

DEDICATION ON WREATH READS  
REMEMBERING THOSE WHO FELL  
THE MONTE CASSINO SOCIETY



At the end of the service the parade reformed and marched back to the Queens head where Meridian Chapter members and community groups mingled and chatted for about an hour and by 12:45 around 35 Chapter members were donning red T shirts ready for our final act of respect and ride off to the Ring of Red on the M25.

By now the sun was shining and the roads dry – this was as good as it gets and after a short ride brief we headed off to the M25 to join riders from other parts of the Country who were taking part. It was a steady and dignified pace that took us as far as the main RV point at Cobham services where we were greeted to a mass of Red colour.

In all a fantastic and moving day that provided the opportunity to catch up with people young and old from the local community, chat and just enjoy the company of others in the warm sunshine and of course to take time for quiet reflection and show respect for those who gave so much....We will Remember them!

Dave Mann

Assistant Director and Charter Member

## Accounts (cont'd)



MEMBERS OF THE MERIDIAN CHAPTER

David Gaskin (uncle in 4th Btn, Royal West Kents—KIA) represented and laid a wreath for the Society at the Remembrance Service on Plymouth Hoe. Sorry we do not have a photograph.

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## Subscriptions/Donations

May we remind you that subscriptions are now due for 2015. If you are a family member or friend the yearly subscription remains at £12. There is no subscription for veterans though donations are always gratefully received.

Income covers the cost of printing and post of newsletters and all costs related to remembrance—wreaths, our plot at the Field of Remembrance in Westminster and making good any shortfall in the cost of putting on a service at the Arboretum. Other specific projects undertaken are funded by separate donation.

Please make cheques payable to **The Monte Cassino Society** and send to Judith Coote, White Horses, Meadway, Looe, PL13 1JT.

Apologies to those who have already paid or new members who have paid very recently.

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## Shiny 7 Association tour to Cassino May 2015

The tour we are running 10-14 May 2015 is exclusively for soldiers of the present day units and families of the men who built Amazon, Blackwater and Congo bridges in May 1944. The tour will visit the sites where they bivouacked, trained and prepared the routes to the bridges in the two weeks prior to the bridging. We would like as many family members as possible to join us.

Interested families can contact me by e.mail:

[shiny7trail@gmail.com](mailto:shiny7trail@gmail.com).

George Cowie

## Accounts (cont)

As Mike mentioned earlier, he was proud to parade our standard at the Royal British Legion's Festival of Remembrance in the Albert Hall. The following was published in the Stratford-upon-Avon Herald on 6th November 2014



# REMEMBRANCE

'It'll certainly be a day I won't forget'

# Soldier's son set for Royal appointment

MICHAEL Anslow's father, Donald, served with the Grenadier Guards during the Second World War.

He survived the brutal Battles of Monte Cassino — four costly assaults by the Allies as they attempted to breakthrough to Rome.

Between them, they lasted over 100 days, from January to May of 1944, with huge losses on both sides.

Fast forward 70 years, and his son, who lives in Aston Cantlow, will represent the Monte Cassino Society at the Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall on Saturday.

He has been invited by the Royal British Legion to carry the society's Standard during the two services.

It is only the third time the Standard has been paraded since the society took delivery of it in May. The first time was in Monte Cassino itself in the presence of Prince Harry.

Mr Anslow will also be at the Cenotaph in London on Sunday morning for the Remembrance Day

By CHRIS SMITH  
[csmith@stratford-herald.com](mailto:csmith@stratford-herald.com)

service. The society marks the 70th anniversary of the battles this year and is one of six organisations, representing soldiers who fought on the Italian front, to be involved in Saturday's services.

"There will be 6,000 inside the Royal Albert Hall and many more watching on television, so I am nervous to say the least, but it'll certainly be a day I won't forget," said Mr Anslow, a former Stratford policeman, who has been a member of the society for six years and sits on its national committee.

Mr Anslow's dad was a member of the 5th Battalion of the Grenadier Guards whom he enlisted to in July 1942, aged just 18.

He remained in England until 1944 when he was posted to Italy where he was involved in the Battles of Anzio and Gully.

From there he went to Naples, on to

San Pietro and Vastogiradi, and then Cassino and finally Rome. He returned home in August of 1945 and served in various parts of the world with the 1st and 3rd Battalions before being released from the army in 1949.

He died in 1986, aged 65, having talked very little about the war.

The annual Festival of Remembrance commemorates and honours all those who have lost their lives in conflicts.

There is a service in the afternoon and evening with the latter due to be attended by the Queen and other members of the Royal Family.

It will also be shown on BBC One at 9.10pm.

*Services of Remembrance will take place across the district on Sunday while Armistice Day, which marks the end of hostilities between the Allied forces and the Germans during the First World War, falls on Tuesday this year.*



(Those of us fortunate enough to be at the Festival of Remembrance were proud of Mike who, after hours of practice, was absolutely superb)



### FREEDOMS

It is the soldier, not the minister  
Who has given us freedom of religion.

It is the soldier, not the reporter  
Who has given us freedom of the  
press.

It is the soldier, not the poet  
Who has given us freedom of speech.

It is the soldier not the campus  
organiser  
Who has given us freedom to  
demonstrate.

It is the soldier, not the lawyer  
Who has given us the right to a fair  
trial.

It is the soldier who salutes the flag  
Who serves under the flag  
And whose coffin is draped in the flag  
Who allows the protester to burn  
the flag.

## Letters

### From veteran Mike Moore, 88th City of London Regiment, Royal Artillery

To all members of the Society

I really appreciate the news and realize how much effort and time goes into the publication.

The photo of the Welsh lads ( ? ) brought back memories—in the period 1940/41 my regiment was stationed at Llantwit Major and the locals thought that we had a new electric gun to use against the bombers—this was our first AA radar set. We were forbidden to talk about it and graded us wireless operators to hide our real function.

The locals were very good to us, offering hospitality in the form of hot baths, it was freezing and we were in tents, 16 to a tent. We also served at Newport before leaving the UK for Egypt in June 1941 to join the 8th Army.

We travelled to Sicily in LCIs and after a month crossed from Messina to Reggio and then up the Adriatic coast. Later we moved near to Rome and Civitavecchia and were very impressed by the difficulty of climbing Mt Cassino even without opposition. The Gurkhas of the 4th Indian Division were involved there but it was not possible to resupply them so were withdrawn.

In 1944 I joined a specialist counter mortar radar unit, the 1st Field Radar Squadron and trained with GIs from 5th army. This is when I learnt the difference between us, if things went awry the US called it a SNAFU—situation normal all fouled up. The British version was SAMFU—self adjusting military f\*\*\*\*\* up, much more to the point.

Thanks again  
( signed ) A Moore ( Mike )

### From Mr. Anthony Day

Dear Madam

I do hope that you or one of the other members may be able to assist me.

My late Father was wounded at Monte Cassino, and I am trying to get some specific information regarding this incident.

My Father's name was **Reginald Ernest DAY**, he was a sergeant in the Army Film and Photographic Unit, or commonly referred to as **AFPU**. His unit was no 2 AFPU. The unit worked in sections of 2 Sergeant Cameramen. (1 Cine & 1 Stills), a Jeep and Driver. My Father's jeep was hit by German shellfire on either the **19th or 20th May 1944**. The two sergeants received shrapnel wounds and unfortunately the driver was killed outright. This is how I understand it, and as my late Father related it. My Father was treated in Italy and then returned to the UK and later medically discharged from the army. I am aware that this unit did contain two people of the same name both sergeants, and regrettably the other similar named sergeant Day was killed in Italy.

I have researched my Father's War/Army Records and have read the No 2 AFPU war diary for the period in question (at National Archives Kew). I have also been in touch with Professor Fred McGlade who has written a book on the AFPU.

However, alas none of these have been able to give me the information I want. What I am seeking is the names of the other two people in the jeep on that day, the driver and the second wounded AFPU sergeant.

Yours sincerely

(signed) Anthony John Day

***(Anyone able to help Anthony, or any of the following requests for information, please contact me and I will make the necessary introductions)*** Judith

## Letters (cont)

### From Eliza Shaw

Hello

I'm desperately hoping you can help me; My mother's father died at Monte Cassino, and my mother only saw him once, she was born in 1941. He was a barrister but joined the Royal Artillery to fight in the war. We visited his grave in Rimini a few years ago. I noticed the Monte Cassino Society were marching past the Cenotaph, and I am very much hoping there might be someone who fought with my grandfather, and even better knew him. His name was **Jocelyn Edward Hodge, aka Tim**. I very much hope to hear from you.

Kind regards, Eliza

### From Edward James

I hope someone may be able to help me with finding out a bit about one of my relatives that was killed in action at Monte Cassino in 1944. As a result of watching the last Remembrance Sunday I was made aware of the Monte Cassino Society and I hope that there may be survivors out there who may have known and served with my Great Uncle.

Please would you be able to pass this information around to your members in the hope that someone remembers him?

**Private Leslie James**, 787916, 6th Battalion Queens Own Royal West Kents—K.I.A. 21/03/1944. Leslie came from Brighton, East Sussex.

Thank you for your help, Edward James

## New Members

Mr. George W Albert, veteran—E Troop 91/100th Bty, 23 Rgt Royal Artillery

Jane Bainbridge—daughter of George H. Strutt, Royal Northumberland Fusiliers/Royal Warwickshires

Sandra Chilvers—daughter of John Allen, 2nd Battalion Royal Fusiliers

Antony J Day—son of Reginald E Day, No 2 Army Film and Photographic Unit

Rev. Tom Gibson, veteran—The Royal Natal Carabineer

Pat Harris—daughter of George E. Lance, Grenadier Guards

Thomas W Jennings, veteran—Princess Louis/Kensington, 78 Division, 36th Brigade

Howard Pearson—great nephew of Stanley B Smith, Queens Own Royal West Kents (killed at Cassino)

Simon Pearson—great nephew of Stanley B Smith, Queens Own Royal West Kents (Killed at Cassino)

Michael Ralph—son of Capt. Norman M Ralph, 1st Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment

Julian Rybarczyk, veteran—3rd Carpathian Division, 2nd Brigade, 5th Battalion, 2nd Company

Edward E Smith, veteran—6th Battalion, C Company Royal West Kents

\*\*\*\*

### And finally

On a personal note, may I take this opportunity to thank all the many friends and colleagues who have shown great kindness and sympathy following my surgery and recuperation. Your support and prayers, get well wishes, phone calls, cards and flowers helped me, Geoff, and the family, through a very traumatic and worrying time.

Judith



THE MONTE CASSINO SOCIETY

NA15141

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