



# The Monte Cassino Society

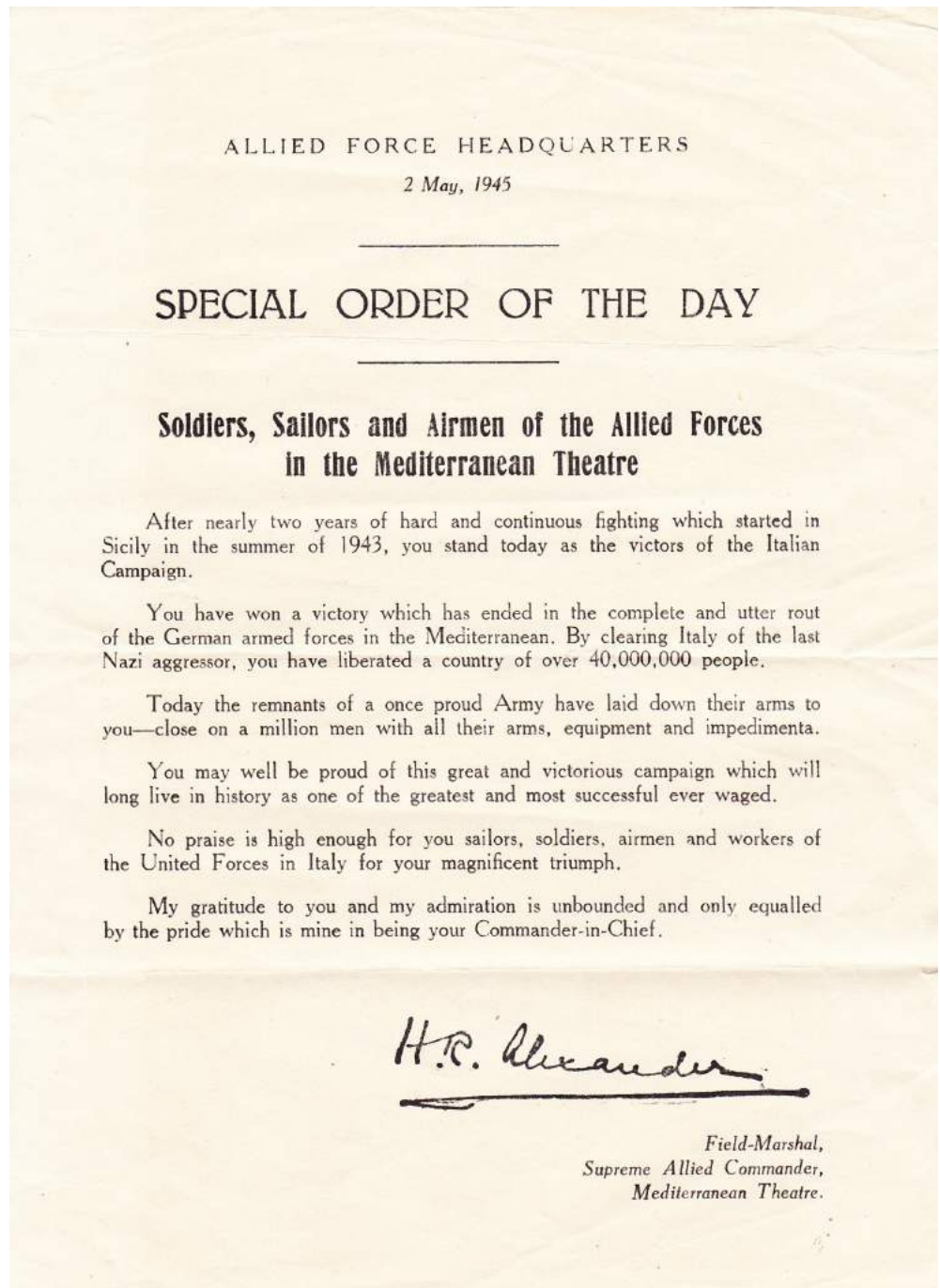
Furthering an interest in the Italian Campaign 1943—1945

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## Summer 2020 newsletter

### Aim

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



ALLIED FORCE HEADQUARTERS

2 May, 1945

## SPECIAL ORDER OF THE DAY

### Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Forces in the Mediterranean Theatre

After nearly two years of hard and continuous fighting which started in Sicily in the summer of 1943, you stand today as the victors of the Italian Campaign.

You have won a victory which has ended in the complete and utter rout of the German armed forces in the Mediterranean. By clearing Italy of the last Nazi aggressor, you have liberated a country of over 40,000,000 people.

Today the remnants of a once proud Army have laid down their arms to you—close on a million men with all their arms, equipment and impedimenta.

You may well be proud of this great and victorious campaign which will long live in history as one of the greatest and most successful ever waged.

No praise is high enough for you sailors, soldiers, airmen and workers of the United Forces in Italy for your magnificent triumph.

My gratitude to you and my admiration is unbounded and only equalled by the pride which is mine in being your Commander-in-Chief.

*H.R. Alexander*

Field-Marshal,  
Supreme Allied Commander,  
Mediterranean Theatre.

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Welcome to the Spring/Summer 2020 issue of the newsletter.

We are living through such strange times that I am tempted to call this our “Covid 19 Lockdown” issue, and the current pandemic certainly scuppered all the Commemoration plans we had for the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the end of the Italian campaign on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, and VE Day on 8<sup>th</sup> May.

It was with great regret that we had to bow to the inevitable, and cancelled our meeting at the National Memorial Arboretum on 2<sup>nd</sup> May. It is such a significant anniversary, and would have been a very special occasion for veterans and members alike.

In the normal course of events had we met at the Arboretum, I would have been writing a report and an update of news from the day, but when this opportunity was denied it was with a degree of desperation that I sent out the recent appeal to members for some personal stories about the end of the war in Italy and VE Day. I need not have worried, and here I want to say a very sincere “Thank you” to all who responded, because I have received some fascinating mail from several of you - enough for two newsletters, so don't worry if you do not see your contribution in this issue, as it may well be in the next. Please keep sending in your stories. They are all unique and worth telling.

Some of your submissions have been so comprehensive that I have only been able to use selected extracts, but in the case of these the documents will be posted in our “Recollections” archive section of the website, where they can easily be accessed and read in full. It is clear that some of you have taken the opportunity of extra time enabled by the enforced stay at home, to delve into parental wartime archives, and you have come up with some remarkable accounts as a result.

My special thanks go to those of our Veterans who have taken the time and trouble to send in their personal accounts, and I am indebted to Rosemary Hayward for the document reproduced on our front cover, which she found among her father's papers, and which I read with tears in my eyes. I guess it sums up why organisations like the Monte Cassino Society still exist.

Enough said. It only leaves for me to wish you happy reading, good health, and all the very best until we are able to meet again. A certain well-known Vera Lynn song comes to mind.....

Helen James, May 2020

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## **November Ceremonies 2020**

### **Remembrance Sunday at the Cenotaph – 8<sup>th</sup> November 2020.**

Notwithstanding the extraordinary events we've all been through over the last few months, currently the Royal British Legion continue to plan on the basis that the November Ceremonies will still take place (although in what form it remains to be seen). To that end, can everyone who wishes to be on Horse Guards Parade in November (if we are able) please fill in the enclosed form and send it to Liz Longman so that it arrives by the 31<sup>st</sup> July. She will then update all those who've expressed an interest as and when more information is forthcoming.

## **Westminster Abbey Fields of Remembrance – 5<sup>th</sup> November 2020.**

As for Remembrance Sunday, planning for the Poppy Fields is also continuing, so could anyone who would like to be involved in this please let Lesley Teasdale know by 31<sup>st</sup> July. It should be understood that tickets for this event are extremely limited, but should it go ahead then we would all want the Society to be fully represented

## **Westminster Abbey Fields of Remembrance – Dedications.**

If anyone would like a dedication placed on one of the Crosses which the Society place in the Monte Cassino plot at the Field of Remembrance, then if they send the details to Lesley Teasdale she will collate them ready for November. Even if the more formal elements of the weekend are unable to take place, there is a strong possibility that we will still be able to place the crosses and conduct our own individual acts of Remembrance.

For Lesley's contact details please see contacts at the end of the newsletter.

For Liz's contact details please see the enclosed form

Thank you ,

Lesley & Liz

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Avril Robertson wrote of the wartime experience of her mother and grandmother:

You asked for photos or stories about VE Day and as a small child at that time, I have no memory of any celebratory events to share with you. However, of course it wasn't a celebration for many bereaved families, some of whom had lost more than one dearly loved family member.

My grandmother lost her husband in the London blitz; he was a volunteer fireman, killed whilst on duty. Less than three years later her son (my father) was killed in the first battle at Monte Cassino.

I have always thought of myself as a true Londoner, but was in fact born in Hitchin Hertfordshire. Before I was born, my mother received all her antenatal care at the London Hospital, Whitechapel, but because of the London bombings, the authorities didn't want babies born there. Just before I was due to be born, my mother was taken to a so-called annexe of the London Hospital at Hitchin. We returned to Bethnal Green, east London soon afterwards. It was the beginning of 1942.

Virtually every child in east London had been evacuated at the beginning of the war and when I was about a year old, my mother was directed to take me to Arundel, West Sussex. Because my father was serving in the British Army, her train fares were paid for by the government. She went with her cousin, who also had a baby. They were allowed to return home periodically, for which their fares were paid.

In early 1944 my mother received a telegram telling her that my father was 'reported missing'. We returned to London, where she took the telegram to the War Office who told her it was the most hopeful of the three categories, the other two being 'missing presumed dead' and 'killed in action'. She later told me that she heard on the radio that 'the hill stunk of dead men' at Monte Cassino following the first onslaught. Days later she received the heart-breaking telegram....

After some time, fearful for my safety in London, my mother went (with her cousin) to the train station to get her rail ticket enabling us to return to Arundel. Her ticket wasn't there. Her cousin's was though. Mum was eventually asked if she'd had any change of circumstances. Yes, she was now a war widow and that was the answer. Once your husband was no longer serving, your 'perks' were stopped. Unbelievable. However, everyone accepted so-called authority in those days, and she paid her own fare

without question. Her cousin, whose husband had a 'so-called' safe billet in the Scottish islands, continued to travel freely until the war ended.

My mother never remarried and remained a war widow for fifty-five years, until her death in 1999. The war widow's pension was initially pitiful and, despite being a single parent, my mother had no choice but to work full time for the next thirty years. It was not until Margaret Thatcher was in power in the 1980s that the war widows' sacrifice was finally recognised, and those who were still living were awarded a huge increase in their pensions.

My grandmother was never able to speak of her losses and I was actually a mother myself before I learned that my grandfather had been only 58 when he died in the blitz. I'd somehow thought he was an old man.

So tragically, not everyone was able to rejoice on VE Day.

Hopefully you'll get some happier stories Helen, but the hardship suffered then somehow brings our current problems into perspective.

John Rye wrote to us about his father, Sapper F. L. Rye (Fred), who served with 220 Field Company RE from April 1939 until December 1945:

He landed at Salerno with 167 Brigade 56th Div., crossed the Garigliano, and spent some time near Camino and Cassino before being sent to Anzio as part of the reinforcements.

Following rest in the Middle East and leave, he returned with the 56th in August / Sept to the Gothic Line, crossing the Po to the Argenta Gap, and ended the war in Trieste, with a spell in Innsbruck with malaria.

Consequently, I am grateful he survived with the rank of Corporal, a few minor injuries, and certainly what we now call PTSD.

According to the war diary, and after having three CO's since Christmas 1944, VE week 75 years ago was quiet for 220 Field Company. That period in May seems to have been an anti-climax following all the previous hard years in Italy. Previously the war diary mentions lots of celebrations following the crossing of the Po.

Having been constantly on the move since Argenta, they were finally billeted in Ronchi, not far from what is now Trieste airport. They spent most of their time short of petrol, and guarding everything against "friendly" partisans and Marshal Tito's army.

The diary for the 8th May does not mention VE day, the company having just arrived at Ronchi.

For the 9th there was lots of swimming in nearby lakes, followed by a Victory Night "Fiesta" including singing and dancing with the locals.

On the 12th petrol rationing was introduced curtailing all local trips, fuel only being used for essentials. On the 19th a potential stand-off with local partisans who were attempting to search their billets, was narrowly avoided.

It is only recently that I have come to learn more about the war in North Africa and Italy and the part dad played. He liked to reminisce about good times with pals but never mentioned how dangerous it must have been in any real detail. Unfortunately his greatest souvenir, a partially burnt German army manual of land mines and anti-personnel mines has been lost; he could not read German, but the diagrams must have saved his life and others.



Sapper Fred Rye

Veteran Jim Morgan sent me a wonderful account of his time during the war, from being a member of an L.D.V. Vickers Gun crew defending Cardiff and Penarth docks, through service from 1942 as a Signals Operator in North Africa and Italy, where he took part in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> battles of Cassino. Jim was deployed in Greece from December 1944, as part of the force tasked with quelling unrest in that area.

The full document is available to view in the "Recollections" archive section of the Monte Cassino Society website, but here is an extract from his diary which covers the time when Jim, working the night shift, received the news of the German surrender.

Early December 1944: We sailed (from Taranto) on smallest troop ship yet, S.S. Worcestershire. "Rough seas for five-day voyage, and seldom out of sight of land, mostly islands. Where now? We spend most of time on deck during the day to avoid sea sickness. Salt spray burns face so grow a moustache. Still have it today". We arrived at Salonika in the dead of night, and were billeted in another school - this time the German School on the main road, with trams still running. "Told not to venture outside and to avoid contact with civilians. Apparently, we are here to quell a civil war and to establish a democratic government in the face of armed Communist opposition. Whatever happened to the real war? As signals, it is our role to set up communications throughout Northern Greece and to thwart any attempt by Russians to take over the country. What a hope. We already have one enemy".

May 1945: "A few days after our arrival I am seated at about 3 am, alone in a small compartment behind the driver's cabin of a large specially equipped Signal Office Truck, which serves as Allied Communication H.Q. Northern Greece. We operators do two hours watch on and four off. We are manning a magnificent telephone switchboard with cords, plugs, dials, and buzzers. It was never like this in Italy. I am on duty from 2am to 4am, and am not expecting any calls at this ungodly hour. We are using an instrument called a Fullerphone, which transmits and receives Morse using Morse, and which can only be intercepted by a similar instrument. I have eaten the egg and fried bread which I cooked in my mess tin on the Paraffin stove, with only its fumes and my own cigarette smoke for company. I am startled when a buzzer informs me that someone wants to send me a message. I acknowledge my readiness to receive and take down as far as I can remember the following words":

ALL COORDINATED RESISTANCE BY GERMAN FORCES IN EUROPE HAS NOW CEASED

"I read it and re-read it with disbelief until the sender demands an acknowledgement before he can close the circuit. What does it mean? Is the war over? I felt I should do something - but what? Should I wake the duty sergeant? He is asleep in the building behind which we are parked. I decide to discuss the matter with my relief who will take over at 4 am. He reads the message with the same incredulity. He is of no help. Can my 5½ years of war have finished that simply? Have the formidable Germans actually packed it in? By daybreak the whole unit is aware of the message, but like us no one is really able to take it in".

"A week or so later the surrender document is signed, and this is the real VE Day. At home the celebrations begin, and there is dancing in the streets. We are not aware of this as TV has yet to be developed. Here there is nothing, no-one is dancing in the streets, climbing lamp posts or holding street parties. And why not? The citizens of every town and city have endured bombing, the blackout and rationing for years. Freedom at last. But here there is nothing except a strange feeling that we no longer have a purpose. In the Far East lads are still dying".

Now it is the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day, which although it marked the end of the war, never happened for many of us.

Jim Morgan (2601189 Signalman Morgan A.J.) 4<sup>th</sup> Indian Infantry Division.

Kate Goldsmith sent this account written by her mother Patsy John, who was born in 1938, with her memory of VE Day and other experiences:

Friday, May 8, 2020. The 75th anniversary of victory in Europe and it seems only right that we should spend a little time with our memories. Some will be able to recall their own; others remembering stories their families have told them as they were, as yet, unborn. Stories of courage, hardship, pain, humour, and of the ultimate sacrifice which so many families had to bear. And for some of our children, and particularly our grandchildren and great grandchildren, this is just a period of our country's history. Soon will come a time when there will be no one living to tell the tales and the stories will come from books and, more and more, from their screens.

Age 7, my Shirley Temple ringlets were tied in bunches with red, white and blue ribbon which I imagine my mother had been saving for just such an occasion. We rode on an old clanging tram, the tramlines crisscrossing the streets through Herne Hill, South London, close to Dulwich where we had spent the entire war through the blitz, the doodlebugs and anything else Herr Hitler had chosen to throw at us. People sang on that tram, clasped hands - we weren't the hugging society of today - and some shed tears. I, who had only known war, was as I remember, quite bemused by it all.



Patsy John aged 7

Outside our house, as many others, flags were flying. But one flag planted upright, as yet unfurled. My grandparents, with whom I lived had, among their big family, three sons and three sons-in-law serving in various branches of the armed forces. The unfurled flag stood awaiting the news of the end of hostilities in the Far East where the youngest of them all, who had lied about his age to join the marines, was still fighting in Burma.

It is strange what you remember as a child. For instance, I remember many times seeing my Nan prone on the floor in a deep faint. I became quite accustomed to the sight. It was only many years later that I came to realise that she only suffered this way during the war years. And, then again, even later when I thought more deeply about it and came to the realisation that with six young men away fighting for their country, an unexpected knock on the front door might mean opening it to find the young telegraph boy holding out his dreaded message. In fact, as a family, we were significantly lucky as they all came home, albeit with one minus a leg.

Dwelling on one story will often go on to produce another memory. Many years later, I, my children, my Mum, and a few other family members went on holiday to Majorca. The party included my uncle with his now false leg. One morning, we all went down to the hotel pool and sat close to a German family. The man, around the same age as my one-legged uncle, was sporting a false arm. Came the time when suddenly both men decided to take a swim. Off came the strapping of my Uncle's false leg. Nearby the German fellow was unscrewing his false arm. No words were exchanged then or at any other time of our holiday but just before diving into the pool a slight but acknowledged salute was exchanged. Two men,



who no more than 20 years of age all those years ago had, at the behest of their country, answered the call to arms.

Spring forward to the early years of the 21st century. My grandchildren at primary school. Two of them involved in a grand celebration of some of the decades of the previous century. It was a glorious occasion. Each year of the classes were given the decade they were to be involved in. My grandson, the 40s, obviously including the war years. (My granddaughter got the 60s. That was fine, I had, to her dismay, plenty of stories to cover her time-period too!) Outfits had to be made, songs of the period to be learned. The school came together for the big day, which luckily dawned brightly as the celebration was held outside. The staff too were suitably attired to match their year's decade.

As each decade opened, suitable music was played over the loudspeakers as each group of children marched onto the playing fields towards the watching crowd of family members. I found it indescribably emotional as the time came when the emotive strains of Glenn Miller's Moonlight Serenade began and the head of year in suit and trilby, carrying his gas mask walked ahead of a group of young evacuees, their labels strung around their necks along with their gas masks and carrying small cases.

Standing with a group of young mothers, I explained to them that the group of 'young evacuees' they were seeing would be around the age of many of those who had been sent off around the country at that time. Many with families not knowing where they would be going, or with whom they would be staying. In the end some of them, looking at their own children, were in tears as they hadn't really thought about it. Then followed the land girls, turbaned and carrying a basket of veg. Then the armed services, among them our Jack. We had struggled with part of the uniform and, in the end, had got hold of a 'Krispy Kreme doughnuts' cap which was a white cardboard forage cap. Painted a khaki colour and put together with the rest of his uniform he had the look of a handsome G.I. The group performed their dance of the era: in their case a jive. Jack, then aged around 9, was upset he had to jive with a land girl and not with his mate Tommy. It was so embarrassing to be dancing with a girl he said. Now aged 22, he and Tommy are still best mates but no longer plan on jiving together!

Again, it was emotional as these young children sang the chosen song for the era. What was it? Well I don't have to tell you, do I? "We'll Meet Again". The poignant words of that song and others like it, together with the words from the war poets and the speeches of Winston Churchill, bring home to us, young and old, how important words are to us all. And at this present time in our history how vital it is to maintain contact with family and friends. We may not be able to physically be in contact with loved ones, but we can support each other with words.

Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.

Patsy John,

Nan to Jack and Elle Goldsmith; Grandchildren of Gunner William John (Jack) Goldsmith 884740 31st Field Regiment, Royal Artillery

Some post-war memories:

Veteran Mr K W J Bartlett wrote from his home in Bristol; "I left the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, the Hampshire Regiment in Italy, in late June of 1944 and was transferred to the Royal Engineers, Artisan and Works Company; we were later sent to Germany to join the British Army BAOR (British Army of the Rhine) at Hamburg. My background as an apprentice carpenter and joiner before the war made it a natural progress of my military service".

### River Sangro

Everyone who was in the group who visited the Sangro River Cemetery last year, will remember our lunch at the farm, where we were warmly welcomed and served by Luigi and his family. Luigi sent Judith these pictures:

The beginning of the reconstruction of the bridge at the mouth of the River Sangro by the Allies, after it was destroyed by the Germans in retreat on the Gustav line.



Sangro Bridge being built by Africans  
and Italians



The same bridge (?) being opened  
by General Bernard Montgomery

Unfortunately, we don't have much information to go with the pictures, but if anyone can help please let us know.



## Trieste

Whilst there were celebrations at home on 8th May 1945, there was tension and conflict in Trieste. After Germany had surrendered, British, New Zealand and American troops had been sent to that area to maintain the peace. The conflict was not with the Germans, but between the Italians and the Yugoslavs. British veteran, Jack Watson once said to me it was the most frightening part of his war, and that included Monte Cassino; "The Yugoslav partisans were rough, surly and armed to the teeth - and that was just the women!"



To understand the situation, you have to know a bit about the history of the area. Before 1918, Trieste, although independent, was the major port for Austria and was very prosperous. There were both Italians and Yugoslavs living there, although Yugoslavs were in the majority. After the end of World War 1, Italy was given control of Trieste as a reward for supporting the Allies. This pleased the Italians living there but not the Yugoslavs.

At the end of World War 2, two armies arrived in Trieste at almost the same time. On 1 May Allied members of the Yugoslav Partisans' 8th Dalmatian Corps took over most of the city, except for the castle of San Giusto, where the German garrisons refused to surrender to anyone other than New Zealanders. (The Yugoslavs had a reputation for shooting German and Italian prisoners). The New Zealand 2<sup>nd</sup> Division under General Freyberg advanced towards Trieste along Route 14. The Germans surrendered to the New Zealanders on 2 May but were then handed over to the Yugoslavs.

The Yugoslavs held full control of the city until 12 June, a period known to the Italians as the "forty days of Trieste". During this period, hundreds of local Italians and anti-Communist Slovenes were arrested by the Yugoslav authorities, and many of them were never seen again.

After an agreement between the Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito and Field Marshal Alexander, the Yugoslav forces withdrew from Trieste, which came under a joint British-U.S. military administration until September 1947 when the Paris Peace Treaty established the Free Territory of Trieste. So, some British troops were kept occupied in Italy for 2 years after VE day. In 1954 Trieste officially became part of Italy.



Des James

Chris Bright wrote asking for information:

I have attached a picture of my dad with two friends in Italy (it looks like Venice). I believe they went there after the fighting at Cassino was over.

Dad was in the R.A.S.C as a driver and was part of the 8th Army. He is on the right of the picture. His name was Henry Bright but was known as Harry. When he was alive, he was always keen to meet up with the other two but as this was pre social media he never managed to find them. I believe one of them lived either on the Welsh border or in Wales (I think he is the one in the centre of the picture).

Dad's brother was in the Police in Pembrokeshire and whenever we went to Wales, he would often mention his friend and say how he wished he knew where he lived.



It would be nice if you could publish the picture in case anyone knows who the other two in the picture are. Dad said very little about his time in the 8th Army, but several things he mentioned are also mentioned in Alan Whicker's book "Whicker's War", which covers the Italian campaign. One was the discovery of a large amount of alcohol that the Italians had hidden, which the 8th Army liberated. The other was how he was part of a large convoy that did not stop en route, but when they got to their destination most of the goods in all the lorries had been stolen.

I also have several Afrika Corp badges and medals etc. plus several magazines which were printed while the 8th Army were in the desert. These are all items dad brought back from the war.

If you can help, please contact Chris on [c.s.bright@btinternet.com](mailto:c.s.bright@btinternet.com)

Dr. Stephen Ankier would like more information on his distant relative, Jonas Ankier;

Jonas Ankier was a decorated Monte Cassino veteran (Bombardier with 1<sup>st</sup> Light Artillery Regiment, 3<sup>rd</sup> Carpathian Infantry Regiment, II Polish Corps) and I am doing further research on his wartime activities during late 1944 and in 1945. I have two photos taken at the time and wonder if any readers recognise anyone. If so, please make contact with me at [sia@medreslaw.com](mailto:sia@medreslaw.com)



Randy Fitzgerald writes from the United States with a request for information about his father, Paul E Fitzgerald. Paul served as a Staff Sergeant in the Naples-Foggia campaign and at Monte Cassino. If you can help, Randy can be contacted either by email at [jrfesq2@aol.com](mailto:jrfesq2@aol.com) or phone (001) 214-460-7060.



Dad and Mom

Although most of my father's military records were destroyed by a fire at the govt records facility, his separation papers clearly indicate he was involved in the Naples-Foggia Campaign, was deployed on Sept. 2, 1943 and returned to the States on June 14, 1944. In addition, my uncle clearly remembers my mother mentioning that my father was involved in fighting at "Cassino."

My father was in the artillery, and my research indicates that the two infantry

units that were deployed to Italy were the 36 Infantry Division and the 45th Infantry Division. However, his wedding picture two weeks before he deployed showed a 3rd Army patch, and the 3rd Army was NOT dispatched to Italy during the Naples-Foggia Campaign and on to Monte Cassino.

So, I can only conclude that he was detached from the 3rd Army to either the 36th Infantry Division or the 45th Infantry Division.

I would like to hear from anyone who might know more about how my father, assigned to the 3rd Army, was dispatched to either the 36th or 45th.



Paul Fitzgerald with medals and patch with insignia

We have received this message from Rishi Sharma:

### Trying to Honour the WWII Italian Campaign Veterans With the History Channel

My name is Rishi Sharma and I run a non-profit organization called Heroes of the Second World War ([www.heroesofthesecondworldwar.org](http://www.heroesofthesecondworldwar.org)). I am on a mission to film and interview all the WWII combat veterans in the USA, UK, Canada, and Australia. There is no commercial aspect involved and I put each veteran's interview on a DVD and mail it to them free of charge! I have interviewed over 1,000 WWII combat veterans so far. I am just trying to meet and learn from my heroes and preserve their important experiences for future generations.

My phone number is (001) 202-315-8743



### Correction: Beds and Herts Memorial and Amazon Bridge

Frank de Planta has contacted me to make a correction to the article we published in the Summer 2019 issue of the newsletter, which stated *"..... the 2nd Battalion Beds and Herts memorial near the River Rapido, (which was then Point 36, a German strongpoint and where the first tanks to cross Amazon bridge headed for). The site of Amazon Bridge can be seen from this point. The assembled group included sons, daughters and grandchildren of the sappers of 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade Division, 7, 59 and 225 Field Companies RE, who built the bridge"*.

Frank has pointed out that the memorial does in fact stand at the furthest point that the Battalion reached on the morning of 13th May 44. Point 36 is in the trees to the left rear of the memorial - about 350 yards away from it. A house is built on it. Point 36 was in 1/6 Surreys' area of responsibility. The Division was the 4th British Infantry Division rather than the 4th Brigade Division. It should read "the sappers of 7, 59 and 225 Field Companies who supported the 4th Infantry Division throughout their time in Italy."

Richard O'Sullivan wrote to me recently with the following message, giving details and links to the website that he and his brother have set up in memory of their father, CQMS Edmund O'Sullivan, who served with the 2nd Bn London Irish Rifles as part of the Irish Brigade from Algiers to Austria during the period from Nov '42 to May '45:

There are quite a few previously unpublished personal accounts of the Italian campaign on it that members may have some interest in, including my father's memoirs.

<https://www.irishbrigade.co.uk/>



We have also started to film the story of my father's journey, and the first four parts covering Tunisia, Sicily and the Adriatic have been published on YouTube and via our website. I attach a link to Part 4 of the film series here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4i90Ti7ysWI>

Here is the link to Part 5 of our film series, published in May 2020 - this one covers Cassino, necessarily focused on 78th Div./38th (Irish) Brigade, but it should also provide an overview of the wider campaign.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bx3dUPHETSI>

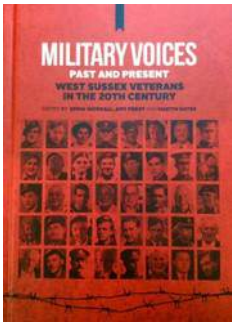
While we were filming in Italy in May (2019), we attended the 75th anniversary commemorations at Cassino and met up with my father's mate Sgt Charles Ward who laid a poppy cross at the final resting place of Sgt Eddie Mayo MM who was killed on 16th May 1944.. Charles, Eddie, and my father all joined the army on 18th Oct 1939. Charles will be attending the VE commemorations in London in May - still going strong at 101 years of age.

best wishes

Richard O'Sullivan



Mike Lemmon sent in this piece about the book “Military Voices”, for which he helped to interview veterans of WW2:



This book was produced with Lottery Funding and West Sussex County Library Service in 2017. The interviews were carried out by volunteers, of which I was one. I managed to meet James Kerridge, who was at Cassino (he was known as Ben). He died in June 2016, before the book was published.

The interview I had with him was an off the record account of his time in Cassino; the official version was published, and the interview was carried out by two other volunteers. His son who was present when I met Ben, said that he had not opened up like that with anyone else. Perhaps because I mentioned that my father was also classified as a D- Day Dodger.

The book covers a number of accounts from our fighting men from all the conflicts in the world. It is available from WS Libraries for £10 or it can be taken out as a library book. We also took video and audio of our interviews, and the ‘Sound Booth’ was available to tour the schools of WS.

Michael has sent us an account of his interview with Ben, which will be published in the Winter issue of the newsletter.

I recently read Eric Newby’s biographical story “Love and War in the Apennines”, telling the story of his time in Italy during the war. It is a great read, and made me think we could perhaps have a “Recommended Book” section in the newsletter, especially as many of us may have a bit more time on our hands for reading in present circumstances.

Here are a few titles I have gleaned from your correspondence, and which some members may find of interest. Please send in any you may like to recommend, for inclusion in future issues.

“Love and War in the Apennines” by Eric Newby

“A Farewell to Arms” (Italy in WW1) by Ernest Hemmingway

“Whicker’s War” by Alan Whicker

“The Road to Grantchester” by James Runcie

“Come Back to Portofino – Through Italy with the 6<sup>th</sup> South African Armoured Division” by James Bourhill 2011

“The Battles for Cassino, then and Now” by Jeffrey Plowman & Perry Rowe

“Military Voices”, West Sussex County Library Service

“Monte Cassino, Ten armies in Hell” by Peter Caddick-Adams, Arrow books, ISBN 978-0-099-56867-4

“Cassino, The Hollow Victory, the battle for Rome, January – June 1944” by John Ellis, Aurum Press, ISBN 1-85410-916-2

“Monte Cassino, the story of the hardest fought battle of WW2” by Matthew Parker

### **Membership Form and General Data Protection Regulations:**

One of the reasons for sending out an updated Membership Form with the winter Newsletter was to ensure that the Society complies with the law regarding the membership details we hold. Many thanks to all of you who have already returned them, but can I please request that the few members who haven't yet done so, send them to me as soon as possible. If you have mislaid the original form, let me know and I will send you another one. Additionally, by completing the form it gives the Society the opportunity to ensure that the information we hold for everyone is accurate and up to date, which is actually another requirement of the Rules.

Thank you with your help in this matter,

Lesley

Hon Secretary

### **NEW MEMBERS**

**May Allan**, daughter of James Arthur Allan, R.A.M.C

**George Berry**, son of WOII Sidney Berry, R.A.

**Bob Davies**, brother of Hayden 'Theo' Davies, The Queens Own Royal West Kents

**Paul Griffin**, son of WOII Eric Griffin, R.A.M.C

**Vincent Jones**, son of Norman Jones, 2nd Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers

**David Mills**, son of WOII Frank Mills, 17th/21st Lancers and then 2nd Lothian's and Border Horse (Tanks)

**June Seaward**, daughter of Leslie John Shirley, Royal Fusiliers



## **IN MEMORIAM**

**Jim Aston**, 51 Construction Unit, Royal Signals

**Raymond Ward Lawton**, 132 (Welsh) Field Regiment, Royal Artillery

Ray was 100 years old when he died on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2020, and was still playing bowls until last August.



Raymond Ward Lawton



Raymond Ward Lawton

**Leslie Shirley**, Royal Fusiliers

Leslie, who fought with the 8th Army at Cassino, died peacefully in his sleep on the 4th March 2020. He had been due to attend the 75th anniversary celebrations out in Italy last year, but suffered a mild stroke shortly before and was unable to travel. Although he had made a good recovery from the stroke, he was not well enough to return home and therefore ended his days in Bloomfield, a residential home in Swansea. His daughter, June and family are helping to preserve his memory by becoming members of the Society, and we look forward to meeting them at one of our future events."



Leslie Shirley

Jim, Ray and Leslie were all great supporters of the Society and will be sadly missed.

**IN MEMORIAM (continued)****Helen Mary Cruse, wife of veteran Gordon Cruse**

Helen sadly died recently following a fall, at the age of 101. Their daughter Stephanie writes that Gordon and Helen were married as he was called up, and they had 3 weeks or so together before he was shipped with others to Africa and on to Italy. They did not see each other again for 2/3 years, and while Gordon was away Helen worked in the factory at Highpost on Salisbury Plain, drawing plans in the office where the factory developed flares, rockets, and other wartime incendiaries. They were married for 76 years. Many members will be familiar with Gordon, who has travelled to Cassino several times with the Society, and we send our sincere condolences to him and the family.



Gordon &amp; Helen Cruse

**Contact us:**

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