



THE MONTE CASSINO SOCIETY

Furthering an interest in the Italian Campaign 1943–1945

NA15141

Spring 2018

Welcome

Welcome to our Spring newsletter.

My father, Sergeant John Pearson, was killed in 1944 and is buried at the Cassino War Cemetery. Between 2002 and 2007 I carried out some research to determine exactly how and where my father was killed. An account of my research is available on our website - www.montecassinociety.co.uk. However, if anyone would like a copy, I would be happy to send it to them—my contact details are on the back of this Newsletter.

My mother, 'Peggy' died three years ago. However, before she died she left a sum of money and requested that I use it to take her husband's grandchildren and great grandchildren to visit his grave.

In 2015 I took my eldest daughter, her husband and her two sons to visit their grandfather's grave. They found it an emotional experience and intend to return. In May of this year I will be taking my son, his wife and two sons to visit their grandfather/great grandfather's grave.

If anyone would like me to photograph a grave or place a poppy on a grave in Cassino War Cemetery please let me know.



*Stan Pearson
Son of the late Sergeant John Pearson*

Aim

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

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News

Annual Memorial Service at National Memorial Arboretum on 19th May 2018

The arrangements for this year's Reunion at the Arboretum are well under way. The tried and trusted format we have used in the past will be in place. The only item out of our control is the cost. The Society will fund the event but, as in previous years, we will be grateful for a donation of £15 per person to cover the cost of afternoon tea.

Tea/coffee and biscuits will be available in the Marquee from 12 noon and the

Service will take place by our Memorial, at 2.30 p.m.

We have obtained limited funding for veterans to help with the cost of travel—£100 per veteran and £100 for one carer. We hope to see as many veterans as are able to attend.

Will you please complete the enclosed pro forma and return to Judith Coote— together with donations (cheques made payable to Monte Cassino Society) please.

Contact details on page 8.

News (continued)

75th Anniversary 2019

There are two dates to put in your diary -

Saturday, 11th May 2019

This has been penciled in for a Remembrance Service to be held at the National Memorial Arboretum, and will be lead by the Royal British Legion with our Society taking a major roll.

I am due to attend a meeting in London in the near future and, of course, will update you with all the relevant details..

Saturday 18th May 2019

This will be the major event at the Cassino War Cemetery in Italy, with many countries taking part. More detail and information on our proposed trip to Italy for the 75th will be in the next newsletter.

So, it looks as though 2019 will be a very busy year for the Society.

*Mike Anslow
Son of Sgt. DEH Anslow
5th Btn. The Grenadier Guards*

Letters

(Letter received in answer to our request for funding for those attending our Memorial Service on 19th May at the National Memorial Arboretum)

D-DAY REVISITED
The Armoury Building
Hawarden Aviation Park
Flint Road
Chester
CH4 0GZ

9th March 2018

LIBOR FUNDING APPLICATION

Dear Mrs. Coote,

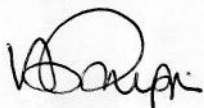
We are very pleased to tell you that your application for LIBOR funding for your remembrance service memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum in May has been successful. As directed by the Chancellor during the 70th anniversary commemorations in 2014, this money is to be distributed amongst veterans of the Second World War wishing to pay their respects to fallen comrades. We feel it is worth noting this is not charity. Instead and at last it is financial support from the Government; funds willingly provided from a grateful nation.

"It is fitting that the money paid in fines by people who have demonstrated the worst kind of values is being used to help and support those who without doubt have demonstrated the very best."

- George Osborne, June 2014

Accordingly please find a cheque enclosed which we trust will assist you with your forthcoming event.

Yours truly,



Victoria Phipps
Secretary - D-Day Revisited
01244 531 765

Letters Continued

Taken by Sheila Wurr outside the Edra Palace Hotel in Cassino when we were there in May last year. D Day Revisited funded veterans and carers for this visit and has funding available for our 75th anniversary visit next year



THE LIKELY LADS

DENIS CURRY: JIM ASTON: GORDON CRUSE: DAMIANO PARRAVANO (THE GUSTAV LINE ASSOCIATION):

JIM KNOX: GARTH WRIGHT: KEN SEAGER

***We received the following via the website from Lisa Lansdowne-Higgins.
Lisa wishes to keep in contact and is willing to be our contact in Canada if it is possible to arrange it.***

It's been an interesting journey to find my Grandfather. Having only known he was killed in action it took some time to find where he was buried and learn what we could of him and his experience.

In my research we found he was buried in the Villanova Canadian War Cemetery. My family and I made the pilgrimage a number of years ago to find and claim him as ours. An emotional journey of love and testimony to the sacrifice of so many.

I continue to discover more as I explore and found a book Hell and High Water written by Lance Goddard. At the end of the book I noted your society. I don't know what I can contribute except to say thank you. He was an important figure in our family and although I've never had the privilege of meeting him, he is never far from my heart and when I need courage in my life I pray to him for help.

Wanting only to connect.
Lisa Lansdowne-Higgins
Canada.

Accounts

Following the Cenotaph Service and March, Rosemary Hayward, Ron Evans and Jim Knox were interviewed by the BBC. Rosemary subsequently received the following from Kat Mace from the BBC.

Dear Rosemary

Thank you once again for being a part of the BBC Remembrance Sunday broadcast. It was a great privilege to hear from you.

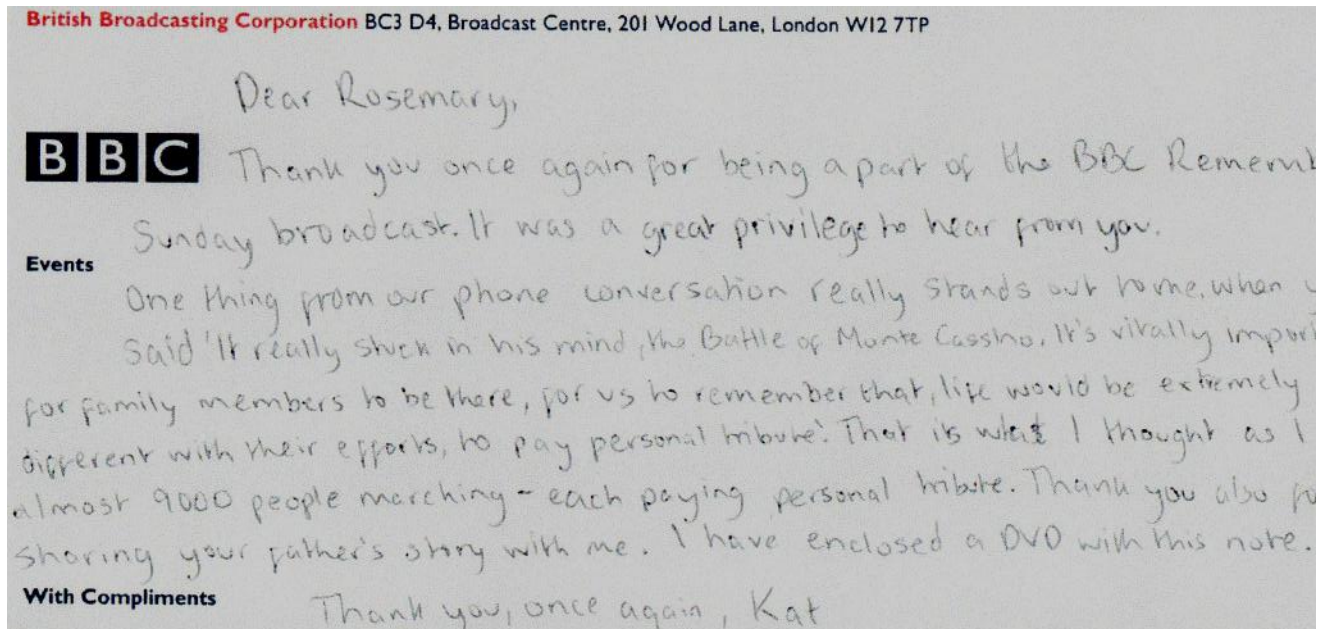
One thing from our phone conversation really stands out to me, when you said 'It really stuck in his mind the Battle of Monte Cassino'. It's vitally important for family members to be there, for us to remember that, life would be extremely different without their effort, to pay personal tribute". That is what I thought as I saw almost 9000 people marching—each paying personal tribute. Thank you also for sharing your father's story with me. I have enclosed a DVD with this note.

Thank you once again, Kat



ROSEMARY WITH HER HUSBAND KEITH AND DAUGHTER JESSICA

British Broadcasting Corporation BC3 D4, Broadcast Centre, 201 Wood Lane, London W12 7TP



New Members

Alan Bramley, Veteran, Royal Signals

Jim Bramley, Son of Alan Bramley, Royal Signals

Norman Martin, veteran, 6th Battalion East Surreys, 4th British Division

Stanislav Matowicz, son of the late Stanislav Matowicz, Polish Forces

Thanks to Deborah Hogan (daughter of the late David Galloway, 1st Battalion The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders) - the following appeared in a recent copy of the International Police Association Magazine 'Police World'. Deborah is one of our founder members.

Memories of my Father

Glyn Bull Leicestershire Branch

During my teenage years I badgered my father to know what he did during World War II. It was with great reluctance that he eventually told me that he had been a member of 46 Reconnaissance Regiment captured at Monte Cassino, Italy in December 1943. In spite of many requests from me over the years my father would not revisit Italy but thanks to tremendous help from the Umbria delegation of the IPA I was able to visit Italy and retrace many of my father's footsteps.

After approaching the Italian IPA, I was contacted by Pasquale Murchese, IPA Secretary Perugia Delegation and had a truly unforgettable experience for which I shall be forever indebted.

Having been captured by German forces prior to the battle for Monte Cassino, my father was taken to a holding prison camp and subsequently to Prison camp 54 in an area known as Fara in Sabina, north east of Rome, before being loaded onto a train for transporting to Germany together with eleven hundred allied prisoners.

On 28th January 1944, as the train travelled north approaching Alleron, Umbria, it came under fire from the American air force whose mission was to destroy the rail line and with it the main communications line between Germany and southern Italy. The bombardment was so intense that four box cars were blown off the bridge into the river below and resulted in the loss of more than four hundred allied prisoners whilst another hundred casualties were admitted to local hospitals. My father was lucky enough to escape without injury and spent several months being sheltered by local farmers before returning to the U.K. the following year.

I met with Pasqual and several members of the Umbria IPA, including Paolo Rossi, IPA Umbria President and Maggiore (Chief Constable) Marco Rovaldi who led me on a fascinating expedition. First stop was at a memorial commemorating the lives lost, where I laid flowers as a mark of respect. We were joined by Fabio Roncello, mayor of Montegabbione, an authority on the bombardment of Alleron and Signor Gioubattista, a published author on the subject from whom I learned so much about the villages affected by

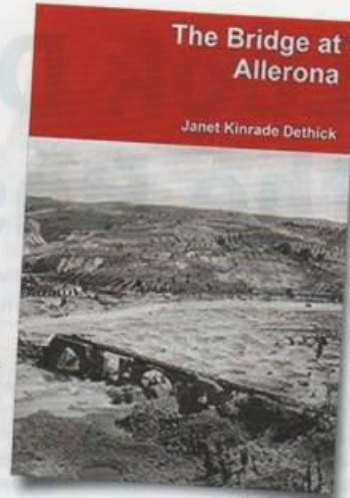
the American bombing campaign, the consequent medical assistance given to those injured and the subsequent searches by German forces for those lucky enough to escape from the train.

Our next stop, the British war graves cemetery at Alleron, was for me a very humbling and poignant experience, particularly so, as many of the head stones contained not only the name of the deceased but of wives and families, which emphasised for me a far greater sense of loss than each individual grave ever could.

Saving the best until last our final visit of the day was to meet with 94 year old Giovanni Muccifora who remembers his parents taking in and hiding escaped allied soldiers following the bombing. He explained that his large kitchen cum living room had not always been that size and that one end of the room had been a cattle shed in which soldiers had slept. As this was being explained I remembered my father telling me of the nights he spent in a cattle shed, laying alongside the animals in search of any heat from them. For me the question remains, was I present in the farm in which my father took shelter all those years ago?....

Following my visit to Italy, I have an arrangement with Pasqual, that I will meet him in 'The Bull' in Bedford when he next revisits relatives.

Note : For those with more than a passing interest in the American Air Force mission to destroy the bridge in one of the worst instances of friendly fire in World War 2, the incident is well documented in 'The Bridge at Alleron' by Janet Kinrade Dethick ISBN 978-1-291-11052-4.



Mr Alan Bramley, Royal Corps of Signals, wonders if anyone recognizes the motor cyclists below. According to his diary, he thinks they were sent south to Portenza for a short while to re-arm.



JOE TYLER: ERIC MERCER: JACK HAYNES: BILL COLLYER: WALLY TAYLOR: JOCK LAING

Dear Judith

Monte Cassino Society

I thought that you and the members of the Monte Cassino Society may be interested in a film I have made about the Battle of Monte Natale and the crossing of the Garigliano in January 1944. It is a personal contribution and can be seen on my Youtube channel at <https://youtu.be/qXGCNMohrDg>

With best wishes and the compliments of the season.

Yours sincerely

John Stafford
John E. Stafford

John is the son of the late Ernest Stafford, York & Lancaster Regiment

Poem by Padre, 6th Para Regiment at Cassino

THE MAD MILE

A long road, swept by wind and rain
Where it twisted round about and again
'Til you come to the mad mile

Two thousand yards where you looked right down
On the valley that rose to the enemy town
This was the mad mile

A mile of road where mortar and shell
Moaned through the air and fell and fell
On the length of the mad mile

On through the village the mad way ran
To the little church where the homes began
At the end of the mad mile

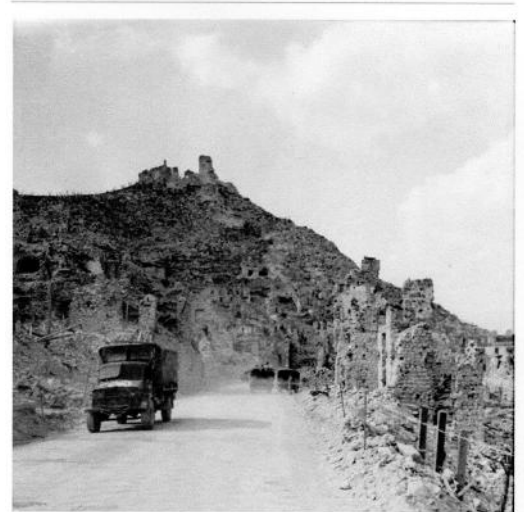
With statue and altar, roof and bell
And window broken by mortar and shell
As they beat on the mad mile

No call rings now where the bell was hung
No mass at the altar now is sung
In the wrath of the mad mile

But the cars race, dodging mortar and shell
By the church on the crazy piece of hell
Which was the mad mile

And a crazy world is racing past
On the crazy road of hell to the last
Mad yard of the mad mile

But the bell will call one day again
To the world to redeem by its unsalved pain
The curse of the mad mile



View from Highway Six of what was left of the town of Cassino.

Photo courtesy of the National Archives of Canada

Thanks to Alex Sutton, (6RW Para Regiment, 2nd Para Brigade) for the copy of this poem

In Memoriam

Gordon Dobson, Royal Army Service Corps

Frank Dorrington, The Middlesex Regiment

Frank Horn, 6th Battalion Royal West Kents

Norman Mitchell, Grenadier Guards

James Woolgar, 5th Battalion. East Kent Regiment



Monte Cassino Abbey from the Polish Cemetery



T H E M O N T E C A S S I N O S O C I E T Y

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