



# The Monte Cassino Society

Furthering an interest in the Italian Campaign 1943—1945

photograph courtesy of the Imperial War Museum, London, England

## Welcome to the Summer 2023 newsletter.

Every May brings another anniversary of the battles for Monte Cassino, and while plans are well under way for our 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary visit to Cassino next year, our Hon. Secretary Lesley Teasdale and MCS member Michael Wilson were also busy arranging the two events commemorating the 79<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, each of a different character, which took place in May 2023.

The first of these, at the Society's Monte Cassino memorial in the National Memorial Arboretum was attended by 24 members who enjoyed a simple and dignified service for the 79<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The second commemoration was a more formal service held a week later at Blackhall St Columba's Church in Edinburgh, to dedicate the Monte Cassino memorial bench which was made possible by donations from Society members.

The handsome bench is now installed by the War memorial in the church grounds. There are full reports of both services in this issue, and once again we are indebted to the Rev. Fergus Cook and his congregation, along with Lesley and Michael for all their hard work and dedication involved in making contact with the representatives of so many nations and organisations, and making it all happen so successfully. Thanks are also due to Jez Teasdale, our Monte Cassino Society Standard Bearer for both commemorations.



Sadly, we report the loss of four more of our veterans and widows of veterans, but we continue to welcome new members, some of whom will be joining us for the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary commemoration in Cassino. Reasons for membership change as time goes by. At its formation, the Society's membership comprised many veterans, and much of the emphasis for them and the Society was on the commemoration of shared experience and sacrifice, and fellowship.

Now that most of the veterans of the Italian campaign have left us, it is their descendants and others who develop an interest, maybe awakened by a TV programme or the discovery of long-forgotten letters, in finding out what happened all those years ago. While never forgetting the importance of commemoration, we must also look forward as the Monte Cassino Society to meeting this need and furthering that interest. With this in mind, the visit to Cassino in May 2024 has been planned to both fulfil the need for remembrance and the desire to learn and inform.

I am so grateful to those members who continue to send me personal accounts of the Italian campaign, some more of which are in this issue. The newsletter would not be the same without them, so please keep sending them in, along with any articles, comments, book recommendations or other suggestions you may have.

I wish you happy reading,

Helen James, Editor

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## **VISIT TO CASSINO TO COMMEMORATE THE 80<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLES FOR CASSINO.**

### **12-16 MAY 2024 – BATTLEFIELD STUDY & 16-19 MAY 2024 – COMMEMORATION**

Details of the Society's visit to Cassino in May 2024 to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the battles for Monte Cassino were given in the Winter 2022 newsletter, and are available from Lesley Teasdale, Helen James (see contacts, page 16), or Frank de Planta ([www.cassinobattlefields.co.uk](http://www.cassinobattlefields.co.uk))

The week's itinerary comprises two parts: a four-day guided tour by Frank de Planta on 12-16 May 2024 and the Commemoration of the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on 16-19 May 2024. The Commemoration will include optional events in and around Cassino.

Places are still available, so for those members who would still like to join the group, please let us know **as soon as possible**, as accommodation for this important international event is at a premium and may be difficult to secure nearer to the anniversary.

## **The Gathering to Commemorate the 79<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Monte Cassino - National Memorial Arboretum: 13<sup>th</sup> May 2023.**

The sun was shining brightly at the National Memorial Arboretum as 24 members, family and friends gathered for the Society's annual Service of Commemoration on the 13<sup>th</sup> May 2023, although unfortunately some members were unable to attend on the day due to the rail strike. Though we were without the Pipe band this year, the Reverend Victor M Van den Bergh took the service, with Dr Michael Wilson reading the lesson and one of our Veterans, Antony Pittaccio (who's story was published in the Winter 2022 Newsletter) laying the wreath, before the Last Post and Reveille from the bugler - Antonio Socci. A moment of reflection while we listened to 'Dear Lord and Father', by the band and singers of the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, followed by a rousing rendition of 'God Save the King' accompanied by the Band of the Scots Guards (both pieces of music being provided via MP3) closed proceedings.

On completion of the service, Tommy McGeever, Chair of the Scarborough branch of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffalos (RAOB) presented an extremely generous donation to our Honourable Secretary, Lesley Teasdale for the Society, before we all retired to the Cafe Terrace for a well earned cup of tea and a catch up.

Lesley Teasdale





## The Monte Cassino Service of Remembrance, and Dedication of Memorial Bench – Blackhall St Columba’s Church, Edinburgh: 20<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

As previously reported in this newsletter, members of the society have been raising funds for a Memorial bench to mark the link between the Society and Blackhall St Columba’s Parish Church, Edinburgh formed by the Monte Cassino Cross which the church holds.



The bench has now been manufactured and installed, and to celebrate this a Service of Remembrance and Dedication was held by the Reverend Fergus Cook on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2023.



Joining members of the Society and the Church’s congregation were the local Consuls from Canada, India, New Zealand and Poland, along with representatives from the Royal British Legion (Scotland), The Seaforth Highlanders, The Queen’s Own Cameron Highlanders, The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) and General Sikorski’s Memorial House (Glasgow), along with a piper from the Edinburgh Garrison – Pipe Major Mark Macrae.

In addition, the Service was live-streamed on YouTube, so that members, friends and family from around the country were able to join the service live, or watch it later. The Service itself was beautifully put together, with

Fergus taking the opportunity to recount the story of the Monte Cassino Cross and how it came to be at Blackhall St Columba’s. This was blended into a superb mix of hymns, readings, prayers and music, to produce what (I’m sure those who viewed online would agree) was an eminently suitable way to mark both the 79<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle and the presentation of the bench by the Society to the Church.







To accommodate the live stream, the Last Post (played by bugler Tony Laidlaw, a member of St Columba's congregation), two minutes' silence, Reveille and wreath laying all took place within the Church, before the Piper led the Society's Standard, dignitaries, regimental representatives and the congregation out of the church and around to the front, where the wreath laying was repeated at the church's War Memorial, next to the new bench and looking out on to the main Queensferry Road. A wreath was laid on behalf of the Society by Dr Michael Wilson, who also made the 'Act of Gift' for the bench to the Church during the Service.

On completion of the service, the Church then hosted the Society members, dignitaries and representatives for refreshments kindly provided by members of the Congregation.

For both services there was a real buzz of enthusiasm and a great opportunity to meet.

Lesley Teasdale



## Following Dad's Footsteps – Part 2

By Sue Hughes

The sound of wheels trundling across Italy nowadays heralds an ongoing tourist invasion rather than tanks, wheeled carry-ons, but very few are heading up obscure mountain roads.

MCS member Helen James and I found that for much of the campaign after Cassino and subsequent fall of Rome in June 1944, our fathers were separated by just a few hillsides. My father, Captain Wilfrid Potter (1922-2003), was a British officer in charge of Indian troops who served with the 3rd Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment (3/8 Punjabis), part of 19 Indian Infantry Brigade at the time of the Fourth Battle of Cassino in May 1944. Helen's father served in 75th (Shropshire Yeomanry) Medium Regiment Royal Artillery, part of 6 Army Group Royal Artillery.



Captain Wilfrid Potter

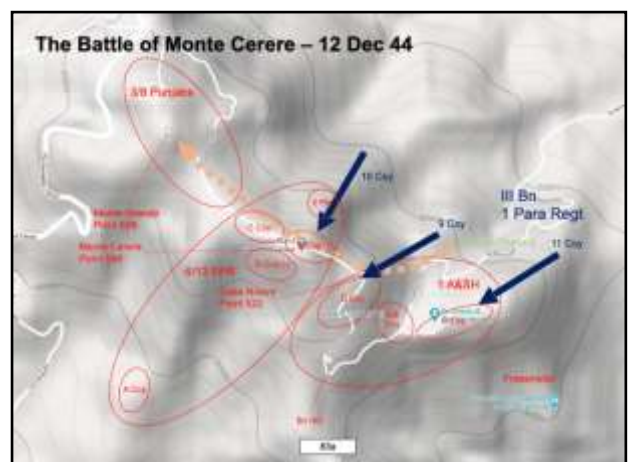
That 'greatest generation' is dying, which is why their stories need to be told; in 2015, historian and guide Frank de Planta sent me the War Diaries for the 3/8 Punjabis and in one evening I learned more about Dad's war years than in my then 52! It was fascinating to see 'WH Potter' handwritten or typed on lists and read about conditions in 1944.

I planned to save my poppy to take to Cassino in 2016, but at Frank's suggestion, I acquired 22 to place on all 3/8 Punjabis buried at Cassino Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery. I have been back to Cassino in 2019 and 2022 and broadened my understanding of the Italian Campaign with studies to Anzio, Salerno, and Gothic Line/Rimini.

Going down to the River Gari one evening, where the 3/8 Punjabis lost so many men on 11-12 May 1944 during Operation HONKER as they attempted to cross the river under fire, was overwhelming. Now pristine farmland, those fields would have

been churned up mud and the fast-flowing river would have been at the epicentre of intense shellfire.

Dad 'never really spoke much about the war', but Frank's research has allowed me to follow in his footsteps, literally, accompanied by my younger son, Will. Reading the War Diary entries aloud, in situ on the Gari's riverbank in warm evening sunshine, we learned how 1944 conditions were unimaginable – one tiny crossing, one man's regiment; the overall scale of every mile fought for as the Eighth Army and our Allies retook Italy is mind-boggling.



Battle of Monte Cerere, map courtesy of Frank de Planta, [cassinobattlefields.co.uk](http://cassinobattlefields.co.uk)



The Boston Byway

Last October was a highly anticipated opportunity to conclude Dad's story – in Italy at least – from Rome to Bologna, an attempt to find an obscure mountain memorial featuring a specific tribute to his battalion, which I knew about from a photo. We planned to overlook the honeyed hilltop town of Orvieto, view Florence, assess the importance of Faenza, gasp in awe at the monstrous Senio flood banks, slip into the Argenta Gap and pass through the Po valley – all fascinating, but would we find that grid reference on Monte Grande/Monte Cerere and the monument to 3/8 Punjabis?

Piecing together War Diaries' info, my father, as a young Lieutenant was, at times, Motor Transport Officer (despite lifelong mechanical incompetence!), Brigade Logistics Officer and sent on a lot of Intelligence Officer courses. As we approached Monte Grande from the south, on tracks cut out by Allied engineers, Frank worked out Wilfrid Potter would have headed up the Boston Byway (as named by the US Fifth Army in December 1944) to get vital supplies to troops hunkered down during an unusually grim winter and involved in defensive actions on Monte Grande/Monte Cerere, alongside 1st Battalion Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders.

Major Michael Vaughan's History of the 3/8 Punjab Regiment states: "During the 19 days at Monte Grande all were living in sodden trenches. Food, water and ammo had to be brought up on very muddy tracks. No one was sorry to be withdrawn for a rest in time for Christmas. Mud hardly been scraped off and faces and clothes washed when orders were received to be on the move again." After finding an historic board describing fighting along the Gothic Line (erected by Castel San Pietro Terme) and a bone-numbing drive up a farm track with a wooden sign saying 'Boston Byway' still in place, we found the spot with my stone memorial detailing an attack repulsed by 19 Indian Infantry Brigade on December 12, 1944. There it was, job done. Will and I left a card to commemorate all who fought there and I took a picture with a poppy and Dad's regimental badge propped up, the distinctive 8th Punjab chinthe which we seek out when visiting any CWGC cemetery in Italy.



Monte Grande information board

A proud highpoint in an incredible trip, or so I thought until, a day or so later, whilst standing in Forli CWGC cemetery, Frank shouted 'Sue, one of yours, over here, never seen this before...'. At the time, I was





The Monte Grande/Monte Cerere Memorial

reading the column inscribed with 3/8 names, including Major Sujan Singh, VCO, OC D Coy, a friend’s name highlighted in notes Dad left.

Frank found a man we did not know about from the 3/8 Punjabis’ lists; Ghulum Haidar, Wine Waiter, 8th Punjabs, died April 11, 1945, aged 19. Wine Waiter – we’ve never seen that on a stone before – and he died on Will’s birthdate. I wondered, as Will and I placed a poppy on his grave, what the young man was like and whether Dad remembered him because of Will’s birthday. Frank said, ‘This chap would have served your Dad in the Officers’ Mess every day for years and died just weeks before the war ended.’

Major Vaughan’s history describes ‘the battalion being taken out of the line for a six week rest, the longest uninterrupted since landing at Taranto’ (1943) and brings our Wine Waiter to life: “On the afternoon of 11th April, the battalion was heavily shelled. Battalion HQ had accommodated itself in a house which received two direct hits, causing it to collapse.

Casualties were incurred. Lt Abdul Malik Khan was killed, so also Ghulum Haidar, the cheerful young boy who was the mess wine waiter and had been with the battalion from the start.”

No man is forgotten with our family Christmas toast to ‘Absent Friends’. I have two sons and a grandson, generations who appreciate and will learn what my father fought for and about the men of all ages, ranks and nationalities, who were beside him.

What’s next? Well my father landed at Taranto in September 1943 in the company of another friend, Captain Denis Stewart, buried at River Sangro CWGC after being killed in action at the crossings on 23 November 1943. I already know a little about him from letters which match photos, but I’d like to pay my respects. Time to trundle off with my wheelie once more...



Forli CWGC Cemetery

*MCS member Deborah Hogan sent this piece written during the battle for Cassino by her father, Major David Robertson Galloway MC (1919 – 1994). Deborah discovered the papers while clearing her loft of the accumulated contents of 40 years. Her father’s words beautifully illustrate the capacity for human empathy and kindness in the bleakest of circumstances.*

### The Mule

If thou art rich, thou’rt poor,  
For like an ass whose back with ingots bows,  
Thou bears’t thy heavy riches but a journey,  
And death unloads thee.

(Measure for Measure, 111.i. 25-28)

Every evening at dusk the mules came. They were nearing the end of their seven-mile journey from San Michele across the swollen valley of the River Rapido. They stopped with rations and ammunitions at Battalion Headquarters in a ruined farmhouse. Then they went on up the rocky, muddy track to another ruined farmhouse, the Regimental Aid Post, where the medical officer and his stretcher-bearers lived. There the rest of the rations were unloaded in the dark, for in the daylight the ruined farmhouse was in full view of the Germans on Point 593 - the last obstacle, so we thought, before the monastery itself.

After a few days, a ruined farmhouse, a wet sangar, a cave in a hillside were home. We had been there forever. Sometimes, we looked for freedom in the skies, but the skies were often full of rain, and clouds gripped the hills and shut out the heavens.

The mules were a line of stumbling, shambling, phlegmatic beasts, but they were life. They brought tins of bully beef and stew, dry hard biscuits, tea, and occasionally letters from home; they reminded us that there was a world elsewhere; they also brought bullets, mortar bombs and grenades.

After I had greeted the mule train for a few evenings, I



noticed one mule. When the rations were being unloaded he raised his head. It was lighter and tawnier than the other heads, which were bent impassively towards the ground. I took to stroking his ears, and the breath from his nostrils was warm and comforting to my hand. I called him George and gave him biscuits, and he raised his head and opened his mouth when he saw me coming. I felt guilty about not feeding the other mules, but they just looked at the ground, and I was glad that I did not have to face them.

The voice of reason tells me that I knew George for ten days, but I had known him for twenty years - ever since my first ride on a seaside donkey at the age of three.

One evening, when the valleys were dark and the gray light of a drizzly twilight still haunted the hills, I heard the whine of shells and the echo of explosions farther down the track.

The mules were half an hour late when I went out to greet them.

"Sorry," said Bob McKenzie, upon whom necessity had thrust the job of chief, temporary muleteer, "we're a bit late; we lost three mules."

George was not there. I thrust my biscuit at another mule who ignored it, and stumbled down the track.

I found George. He had a gash two feet long in his side, and blood bubbled from his nostrils, its heavy sweet smell a prelude to the sour sweet smell of death. He tried to raise his head, and I stroked him between the ears where the warm sweat was cooling in the dampness of the misty rain.

I was helpless. There was no hospital for mules in the wind-grieved mountains.

Then I looked up and saw the Ghurka. The light was dim but his shape was unmistakeable. He had come over the seas from mountains much higher than these. His hand stroked the handle of the kukri in his belt.

"I can make it quick, sahib."

I looked at George and nodded.

I saw the dim, bronze glimmer of the curved blade and heard the thud. George's head lolled from his shoulders.

Two more Ghurkas appeared.

"We can push him off the path, sahib, into the valley."

"Thanks," I said, and walked slowly up the track.

As I came into Battalion Headquarters, I wiped my eyes, and was glad that it had been raining.

*Written by Major D.R.Galloway M.C.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders*

*The following lines are taken from Major Galloway's obituary:*

Born in Kilmarnock, when war broke out, David Galloway was reading history at Selwyn College, Cambridge. He volunteered for military service and in August 1942 was granted an Emergency Commission in The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders. He joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Liverpool Scottish and was then posted to the 4<sup>th</sup> Camerons, which in December 1942 was redesignated as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders. He served with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Camerons in Shetland, Egypt, Italy and Greece.



Back row (left to right)—Lieut. A.L. Anderson, R.D. Roberts, J.A. Ellis, M.C. (U.D.F.), G.A. Dorman, J.B. Baskinham, Captain J.S. Mackay, Lieut. W.K.F. MacGillivray, D.R. Galloway, M.C., E.H.J. Patherrill (U.D.F.), Captain R.C.H. Olliver, M.C.  
Middle row (left to right)—Captain the Rev. D.E.S. Dick, M.C., Captain J.U. Gow, Lieut. H.T. McKenzie, Lieut. P.J. Langhorne, Lieut. and Q.M. G.G. Fosson, Lieut. A. MacNab, Lieut. W.F. Hobbs, Lieut. G.L. Tennel, Lieut. H.L. Gibson, Captain P.L.C. Cole (R.A.M.C.).  
Front row (left to right)—Captain H.H. Hall, Captain J. Malcolm, Major C.A. Cameron, Major E.A. Cameron, M.C., Major C. Kerr, Lieut. Colonel A.J. Noble, M.C., Captain A.M. Mackintosh, Major J.A. Cochrane, D.S.O., M.C., Major J.M. Underwood, Captain B. Stark, Captain H. Waring.

Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders,  
Major Galloway is back row, third from right.

During the Italian campaign he played a valuable part as Intelligence Officer and Assistant Adjutant, and was awarded the Military Cross as IO for bravery during the fighting on the Gothic Line\*. His meticulous War Diary of the Battalion was later used

as the basis for the Historical Records of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Camerons when they were written up after the war. He was posted from the Battalion in Trieste in late 1946, and released as Honorary Captain in January 1947.

He later served in the Canadian Reserve forces with the rank of Major.

After the war, he returned to Cambridge where he completed his MA. He was appointed Assistant Professor of English at the University of New Brunswick, later becoming Associate Professor in 1952. Specialising in English, he became an expert on Shakespeare, a subject on which he broadcast frequently on the BBC and CBC, and was the author of many other scholarly articles and works.

*\*Here the obituary is incorrect. It mentions that he was awarded the Military Cross for action on the Gothic Line. It was in fact given for courage on Snakeshead Ridge at Cassino, when the battalion was there in Mar 44, and at Arielle in the Apennines on the right of the Cassino front.*

The citation for Major Galloway's M.C. reads;

During the period 3<sup>rd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> March 1944, on the hills North of Cassino, and from 18<sup>th</sup> April 44 to 5<sup>th</sup> May 44 in front of Arielle, this officer showed great courage and devotion to duty while acting as Battalion Intelligence Officer.

At Cassino the forward companies were in position about one thousand yards ahead of Battalion Headquarters. The greater part of the distance was fully exposed to enemy view and subject to intense enemy M.G., mortar and shell fire at all times both by day and night.

In order to get an accurate picture of our own dispositions, and first hand information about the enemy, Lieut. Galloway, with no thought for his own personal safety, repeatedly visited the forward coys. In addition he carried out reconnaissances by day under most difficult conditions, under fire in order to obtain the best possible O. Ps.

Again at Arielle, though under less trying conditions, Lieut. Galloway worked tirelessly to obtain accurate information of the enemy dispositions.

There is no doubt that through his zeal and coolness under fire and sometimes under heavy fire Lieut. Galloway set a very firm example to the men of his Intelligence Section who, as a result, carried out their duties under very trying conditions in a most praiseworthy manner.

*Ed. Note:*

*A sterile hybrid, the mule combines the strength of its male horse father and the intelligence, sure-footedness and endurance of its female donkey mother. The mule's hide and hooves are tougher than those of the horse, it is better suited to hot conditions, can carry heavier loads for longer distances, and eats a third less than the horse while doing the same work.*



*Despite their reputation for stubbornness, it is no surprise that mules became essential as pack animals during the*





*Italian campaign, where troops soon found the steep, muddy, and rocky mountainous terrain was totally unsuited to wheeled vehicles. Mules were used for every transport role, from supplies of food, guns and ammunition, to delivering the wounded away from the battlefield, and were therefore required in huge numbers, with one infantry battalion in Italy requiring 167 animals per day.*

*Major Galloway describes George as being "lighter and tawnier" than the other mules, and this makes an interesting point. The purchase of light-coloured mules was discouraged because they could be seen more readily by the enemy, making a mule-train more vulnerable to attack. Light-coloured animals were therefore often sprayed with a solution of potassium permanganate to darken the coat, a treatment which lasted for about two months.*

*Thousands of mules died horrible deaths on active service, and replacements came from a variety of sources, including those bred and imported by the US army, and requisitions and confiscations from local farmers and captured enemy troops. Looked after by dedicated muleteers, they came to be loved and respected by the troops they served, for their companionship and the vital role they played in the Italian campaign.*

#### **Project to record Veterans' stories of the Italian campaign.**

*Sam Miller contacted the Society for help in making contact with veterans or their family members, with this message:*

My grandad served in Italy from '43-'44 in the RAMC and rumours have it that he was at Monte Cassino, so from growing up as a child I have been fascinated by the Italian campaign, which has led me to meet many Italy Star vets and a lot of research.

I have been researching WW2 for 20 years and have met 100s of British veterans who served in Italy, N Africa, NWE and the Far East.

I am currently undergoing a project to record the stories of our last WW2 "Italy Star" veterans with the hope of making a book of accounts of the veterans' time during the war in Italy.

I am also hoping to open a display of veterans' stories, to educate the public on the people and battles in Italy.

This is a personal project with no funding and looking for no profit. I want to carry on the remembrance for the future generation and share the stories of the men and women who served. I have a lot of experience with talking to WW2 veterans, so despite their now old age it shouldn't be much of a problem.

Please could you contact any veterans and families to ask if they would like to help me with my project. I am based in Canterbury, Kent but willing to travel the country to meet our veterans.

*Sam can be contacted at [Sam.miller91@hotmail.com](mailto:Sam.miller91@hotmail.com) or phone 07383 845761*

## Snippets

*Received from MCS member Richard O'Sullivan:*

We were able to "finish" our filming project from Florence to the Po (to publish in the spring) and also visit former 2 London Irish Rifleman Sgt Charles Ward on his 104th birthday in December.

I attach a photo from Charles's 104th birthday.

Our filming project has to date published 6 episodes on You Tube, two in Tunisia (Nov '42 to May '43), one in Sicily (Jul/Aug '43), one on the Adriatic coast (Oct to Dec '43), one at Cassino (Apr/May '44) and one for Trasimeno (Jun '44), Part 7 will be the Apennines north of Florence (Oct '44 to Mar '45) and the final part will be the Argenta Gap advance to the River Po and into Austria (Apr /May '45).

Luckily, my dear old Dad made it all the way from Algiers to the River Po with the London Irish Rifles (via Sicily and Cassino and all points north, east, west and south).



You can find the films here: <https://www.youtube.com/@thesecondworldwarhistorych206>

Members of the MCS might be interested in a conference that my brother and I are co-hosting in Catania on 7th/8th July 2023 to mark the 80th anniversary of Operation Husky - of course, the 78th (Battleaxe) Infantry Division were heavily involved in Sicily (as well as at Cassino in 1944).

Details of our conference can be found in the link below and, as well as formal events at the Catania Museum, we shall be holding remembrance services at the CWGC cemetery and on the beaches in southern Sicily. It should be an excellent few day of contemplative reflection.

<https://www.irishbrigade.co.uk/the-sicily-1943-peace-security-prosperity-conference/>

*Received from George Cowie:*

Something of interest. The 4th Division memorials can now be seen on Google Earth Satellite view, though not as yet, on street view.

## Ensign in Italy – A Platoon's Commander's Story . Book review by Gary Tankard.



'Ensign in Italy – A Platoon's Commander's Story' is a memoir by Philip Brutton, who served as a platoon commander with 3 Welsh Guards in Italy from 1944-45. It is part memoir interspersed with extracts from his diary and letters sent home.

In 1943, at the age of eighteen, he volunteered for the Welsh Guards. In the spring 1944, he was sent to Italy and joined the 3rd Battalion at the end of April. The battalion was out of the line training, but within two weeks, at the age of nineteen, he found himself leading the advance party into Cassino town in order to co-ordinate taking over the positions at the castle on Point 193. Brutton gives a good description of the conditions and small unit operations in the town during this period.

The next operation his battalion was engaged in was the advance up Route 6 to Rome, in particular the attack on the small town of Acre with the rest of 1 Guards Brigade. The Brigade suffered heavy casualties during this operation, with the Welsh guards losing 112 men alone. Brutton gives a detailed and sometimes harrowing account of the operation, some of which does not seem to have been particularly well planned or executed.

June and July see Brutton and the Welsh Guards advancing to Florence and being constantly delayed by German rearguards, leading to some sharp small unit actions which caused a steady stream of casualties. Brutton is Mentioned in Dispatches for his actions in one of these encounters. He is then hospitalised with malaria at the end of June and doesn't rejoin his battalion until early September.

The autumn and winter of 1944/45 found the battalion in the mountains of the Apennines, fighting a largely static and attritional battle against the weather as much as the Germans. Brutton captures this largely forgotten part of the Italian campaign well.

The final part of the book records the Welsh Guards' final battles on the Senio and the Po in April 1945, followed by the advance to the Austrian border. The end of the war found them in Austria, where they had the unpleasant task of sending thousands of Croatian soldiers and civilians back to Tito's communists in Yugoslavia weeks after the cessation of hostilities, something that did not sit well with Brutton.

Memoirs such as these play a vital part in adding personal context, drama and detail to events that are sometimes very dry in original war diaries and official histories. In this particular case the book rounds out the 3 Welsh Guards experience in Italy; politely put, their war diary is very succinct and does not give any hint of the dramas that were unfolding. Brutton gives personality to officers and men under his command, who would otherwise just be faceless names in a war diary. There is a stark contrast from recounting humorous anecdotes to providing the circumstances of the deaths of his comrades.

The book was published in 1992 and is out of print but it can be picked up on Amazon, eBay or Abebooks.co.uk for a few pounds. At less than two hundred pages it is a quick and easy read. It is well written and the inclusion of contemporary extracts within the narrative works well and gives a platoon commander's view of the type of fighting experienced in Italy.



If you have a personal or historical interest in 3 Welsh Guards, 1 Guards Brigade or 6 Armoured Division this book is a must. It is also highly recommended if you have any interest in the Italian campaign.



The gathering to commemorate the 79th Anniversary of the Battle for Monte Cassino, National Memorial Arboretum 13 May 2023.

## **November Ceremonies 2023**

### **Remembrance Sunday at the Cenotaph – Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2023.**

Planning for this year's gathering at the Cenotaph are already underway by the Royal British Legion, therefore would any member of the Society who wishes to be on Horse Guards Parade in November please complete the enclosed form and send it to Liz Longman so that it arrives by the 5<sup>th</sup> August 2023. Please note that due to the wider security issues, we can only apply for tickets on behalf of current Members of the Society

### **Westminster Abbey Fields of Remembrance – Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2023.**

Would anyone who wishes to attend please let Lesley Teasdale know by 5<sup>th</sup> August 2023. Tickets for this event are extremely limited and there are no guarantees, but she will request tickets for any current Members of the Society who would like to attend.

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

If anyone would like a dedication placed on one of the crosses which the Society places in the Monte Cassino plot at the Field of Remembrance, please send the details to Lesley Teasdale, who will collate them ready for November.

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



**In Memoriam**

**Joan Pearce**, Widow of William Harold Pearce, Royal Artillery

**Francis Goodey**, Veteran. 2nd Battalion, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry

**Betty Rybarczyk**, Widow of 2nd Lt Julian Rybarczyk, 2nd Infantry Brigade, 3rd Carpathian Division, 2nd Polish Corps

**John Dudley**, Veteran 1/6 Battalion, East Surrey Regiment

**New members**

**Jenny Czernik**, Daughter of Martin Czernik, 2<sup>nd</sup> Carpathian Field Ambulance, 3<sup>rd</sup> Carpathian Rifle Division, 2<sup>nd</sup> Polish Corps

**Phillipa 'Pip' Firth**, Daughter of 1st Lt Derek Crowther, 1/6 Battalion East Surrey Regiment

**Kenneth Rybarczyk**, Son of 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Julian Rybarczyk, 2nd Infantry Brigade, 3<sup>rd</sup> Carpathian Rifle Division, 2<sup>nd</sup> Polish Corps

**Gary Tankard**, Grandson of Sergeant Norman Owen, LAD 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion Cheshire Regiment, Machine Gun Battalion for 56<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

**Mark Smith MA**, Military Historian and Television Presenter. A general interest in all campaigns of World War Two.

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Lesley Teasdale, Sue Hughes, Gary Tankard, Blackhall St Columba's Church, Richard O'Sullivan, Des James, Regimental History of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders