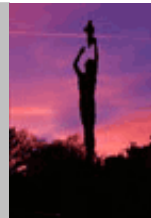


FROM THE FRONT



Issue 8

Winter 2011

The Newsletter of The Dover War Memorial Project

Patrons:

Dame Vera Lynn DBE, LL.D, M.Mus

Admiral the Lord Boyce, KG, GCB, OBE, DL

“WE REMEMBER”



Keeping the troops and supplies moving was essential during war-time; millions of journeys were by train. During the Great War over 100,000 Railway Royal Engineers constructed, maintained, and operated railways serving the front, and during the Second World War built, enhanced, and reconstructed vital supply routes such as the trans-Persian, the Bengal-Assam railway through Burma, Siam, and Malaya, and the track to Bremen after the D-Day landings.

Railway sappers trained on the Longmoor Military Railway in Hampshire. In 1956, six sappers were killed and nine injured when two trains collided there; amongst the fatalities was Dovorian James Bryant. In October 2011 many people travelled by steam train from Bridgenorth or Kidderminster to a memorial and dedication service at the Engine House, Highley Station, Shropshire (above), on the Severn Valley Railway.

Dedication at Highley

At Highley is the only remaining locomotive to be an official memorial. With a career covering six railways in three continents, Stanier 8F, No 48773 was dedicated on 27 September 1986 to British Military Railwaymen who lost their lives in World War II.

She is herself a veteran of that war. Built in 1940, she served with the Corps of Royal Engineers on the trans-Persian route taking vital supplies to Russian forces, and then for two years in Egypt before operating on the Longmoor Military Railway.

48773's working life ended in 1968 after eleven years service with British Railways, when she was bought and preserved by the Stanier 8F Society.

Commemorating the 25th anniversary of her dedication as a war memorial, the service and dedication saw the unveiling of information panels, further names on the Royal Engineers' Roll of Honour, and a plaque in honour of the fatal casualties of the Longmoor Military Railway Disaster.

Corporal James Bryant, above right, was 21, and an ex-Duke of York's Royal Military School boy.

His mother lived in Saxon Street, and James worked for three years on the Trinity House Pilots' cutters before joining the Royal Engineers in 1953. There he trained as a surveyor, seeing service in Egypt. Although known as quiet and reserved,



James was a keen sportsman and amongst other achievements represented the Royal Engineers in the Army Shooting Championships. James is now buried at St James Cemetery, Dover.

Victor Bowers, James Coates, Bryan Jones, William Lewis, and Albert Smith also died in the collision. Buried elsewhere, they are all commemorated on the Armed Forces Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum.

The plaque at Highley was presented by Ex-L/Corporal Brian Whitworth who heard the collision and became one of the stretcher-bearers. "It was a sight that will stay with me forever," he said.



Former Sapper Caleb Priestley, aged 93, who served during WWII in Persia with the Royal Engineers, lays a wreath at the dedication ceremony. Locomotive 48773 is to his right.

Cruise Terminal

The annual service of Remembrance is always beautiful, held as it is beneath the high canopies of the former Marine Station where so many servicemen from both World Wars returned home.



On 10 November 1920 the Unknown Warrior came home here too. The commemorations for the 90th anniversary of the Warrior's return, coordinated by partners The Dover War Memorial Project, City of Westminster Archives, and Westminster Abbey, included an exhibition and a stained-glass window, displayed on the station for the service.

Robert "Pom Pom" Whiting was one of the casualties featured in the commemorations; we were so pleased to welcome members of his family to the service and to lay a wreath at the Dover Society plaque commemorating the homecoming of the Unknown Warrior.



The memorial on the Marine Station was unveiled and dedicated on 28 October 1922. The centrepiece is the group of figures sculpted by William King; the names of the South Eastern and Chatham (SECR) railwaymen lost in the Great War are inscribed on a wall behind. A

corresponding plaque is at Victoria Station, London, the terminus of the SECR line.

At the base of the SECR memorial on the former Marine Station, a plaque records its subsequent dedication to 626 Southern Railway-men killed during World War II.



Frederick John Brookland, right, was one of the 556 SECR railwaymen who died in the Great War. His wife, Minnie, whom he had married in 1910, was widowed two days after Christmas, 1917.



Private Brookland and lost his life in Palestine, in an attempt to take the Zeitun Ridge.

We were delighted to welcome to Dover his granddaughter, Chris, and great-granddaughter, who laid a wreath at the service in his memory.

The DWMP Remembers



photo by Mike Webb

On Remembrance Sunday The Dover War Memorial Project wreath was laid at the Town Memorial by Joyce and Brian Banks (above). Meanwhile Maggie and Simon were in Bury St Edmunds, having installed the Unknown Warrior exhibition in the St Edmundsbury Cathedral for Remembrance there.

There were a number of Remembrance events in Bury St Edmunds, including on 10th November a service and the laying of wreaths at the Memorial in the Market Square for Suffolk Soldiers killed in the South African War.



Councillor Christopher Spicer, Mayor of St Edmundsbury, at the Memorial for the South African War

Armistice Day – 11/11/11



For the first time, Armistice Day fell on a palindromic date, itself constituted by repetition of the only even-digit palindromic prime, the number 11.

In Bury St Edmunds Maggie and Simon attended the service at the town memorial at Angel Hill, while in the nearby cathedral young people joined in an Act of Remembrance.

Meanwhile, in Dover, the special day was marked by a concert at the Town Hall, held by the Hellfire Corner Association.



photo by Barry Williams

The “Night to Remember” included bands and music from the Swingtime Sweethearts, the Clover Sisters, and Cody “Boogie Boy” Lee, along with the rare sight of Marines abseiling down the columns in the Town Hall!



photo by Elaine Mitchell

The Act of Remembrance culminated with poppies fluttering gently down on the audience.

The concert continues a tradition of Memorial events in the Town Hall. For some thirty years the Salvation Army held citizens' services, and in 1930 began the Festivals of Remembrance. Then, as this year, they included the hymn "Land of Hope and Glory" and musicians from the Duke of York's Royal Military School.



picture courtesy the Dover Express

Popular were the tableaux; the one above, entitled "Our Duty" is from 1934. Servicemen from all the forces stand protectively around a woman representing Peace.

Some of the festivals included displays of Highland dancing and comedy from Toc H and 7th Devonshire regiment. By 1937, however, despite medleys of popular songs and a rousing "Pack up Your Troubles", a shadow was falling. Rev Stockdale, Chaplain to the Forces, addressing the Festival, noted that "this year things were almost as bad as they were in 1914". Festivals of Remembrance were soon to give way to Khaki and Naval evenings and Ministry of Information films.

THE DWMP OUT AND ABOUT IN REMEMBRANCE

St Margaret of Antioch, Lower Halstow. Sittingbourne

Photographed by DWMP volunteer Dean Sumner while out visiting graves was this beautiful memorial window in the church (above right). It was dedicated in October 1920:

"To the glory of God and in loving memory of Harry Greensted BA and the men of this parish who fell in the war".

Mr Greensted, a solicitor who dedicated much time to voluntary civic work, died in Folkestone in June 1914. Plans for a memorial window to him had to be postponed, owing to the Great War, though funds continued to be raised. After the Armistice, the idea was revived, with the proviso that the window be dedicated also to the Fallen.



The design was for a Christmas card for 1917 from Brigadier General Roland Boys Bradford VC MC, who was then commanding the 9th battalion, Durham Light Infantry. It's intended to illustrate Bradford's favourite hymn, "Abide with Me", which was sung by the battalion at dusk every day and before they went into battle.

The card became a souvenir gift of parting, as B/G Bradford was sent to command elsewhere before Christmas 1917. Sadly, he did not see that Christmas, as he was killed on 30th November 1917.

With grateful thanks to Alan Swift for all his help and information

"The Rose"

The Rose is a new memorial, near Maggie and Simon's home in Buckinghamshire. The first of 140 pillars commemorating significant dates in history was dedicated on Armistice Day, 11/11/11. Right is an impression of the new pillar.

When completed the Rose will form a public space for emotional expression and gathering on national occasions

11 NOVEMBER 2011
 ARMISTICE DAY
 The men and women from Milton Keynes who died in wars. We will remember them.

and events, including Remembrance services. The pillars will be arranged in circles reminiscent of ancient monuments like Stonehenge.

“Stonehenge”

And on the right ... here it is! Or is it? Visited by DWMP volunteers Mike and Carole Webb, this is in fact a memorial to the Fallen of the Great War, at Maryhill, Klickitat County, Washington, USA. Begun in 1918 it took eleven years to build and was inspired when Quaker Sam Hill visited England between 1914-18.

He was told that Stonehenge, on Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire, was an ancient sacrificial temple, and



photo by Carole-Louise Piqué Webb

responded, “After all our civilisation the flower of humanity still is being sacrificed to the god of war on fields of battle.”

The memorial now incorporates commemorations for the Second World War, and for Korea, Vietnam, and Afghanistan.

Now and Then



F-15 about to take off at RAF Lakenheath;
photo by David Bisson, www.wildflight.co.uk

We visited RAF Lakenheath, used as a Royal Flying Corps airfield during the Great War. Though abandoned in 1918, the airfield came into operation again in 1940 as a decoy airfield for RAF Mildenhall, nearby. They are now the two main bases in the UK operated by the US Air Force.

A regular daytrip for US personnel from Mildenhall and Lakenheath is to Dover Castle. On

the site of an Iron Age hillfort, the area is layered in history, and became known through its role in defence as The Key to England. USAF visitors can today see the famous war-time tunnels, and even spot the plaque to the US Army AAA gun battalions controlled from here during the Second World War.

But will they spot bluebirds? That remains to be seen. 😊

Last Resting Places Nurse Edith Cavell

Nurse Edith Cavell, shot in Belgium in October 1915 by the enemy for treason, was one of the three unfortunates whose bodies traveled in luggage van 132 to their final resting places after repatriation through Dover.



Nurse Cavell returns home; photo courtesy Dover Express

We visited her grave at Norwich Cathedral, outside one of the gates of which is also a memorial to her. In Dover, as her body returned on 14 May 1919, a peal of 5040 Grandsire Triples, with the bells deeply-muffled, was rung at St Mary's church. Her body rested in Dover overnight before travelling to Westminster Abbey for a memorial service.



Bill Sparks, Cockleshell Hero



Bill Sparks was one of only two men who survived Operation Frankton, 1942. Twelve marines were detailed to raid the harbour of Bordeaux by rowing their collapsible canoes, named cockles, up the River Gironde. The aim was to render the harbour unusable to enemy merchant shipping and U-boats. It was considered a suicide mission.

Two marines were unable to proceed, after their canoe was damaged and of the ten remaining, two died in the water and four were captured and shot before reaching Bordeaux. The remaining four planted delayed-action limpet mines on merchant vessels in the harbour, an operation that took two to three hours. They escaped on the ebb tide, but two were later captured and shot.

Only Bill Sparks and his group commander, Major Hasler, remained. They spent Christmas 1942 in hiding in a French farm house. It took them fifteen weeks to reach the safety of Gibraltar - where Bill, having no identification, was promptly arrested!

Bill died just over three weeks before Christmas 2002, on the exact 60th anniversary of his setting out on Operation Frankton. He was 80, and is buried at Alfriston, East Sussex.

John McCrae

“In Flanders Fields the Poppies Grow” is the poem by Canadian doctor John McCrae which inspired the use of the poppy as a symbol of Remembrance.

Right, in a photo by Geert Declerck, is John McCrae’s grave in Wimereux cemetery, France; the gravestones lie flat owing to the sandy soil. A



veteran of the South African war, Dr McCrae died on 28 January 1918, from meningitis.

IN THE ANDERSON

Christmas Presents

A super surprise present, from a long-standing volunteer in Canada was a set of bound copies of Punch, from July 1915 to December 1915. The 8 December edition is renowned for having been the first place John McCrae’s poem “In Flanders Fields” was published. It isn’t credited in the text, but his name is in the index.



We’ve been discussing for some time the origin of the poppy as a symbol of Remembrance. Who knows – there may be an exhibition later next year on our findings!

Other kind presents from volunteers were a super set of first-day cover stamps, from the Channel Islands, featuring the Battle of Britain and the iconic “Face of the Few”, Dovorian Keith Gillman, and a framed set of pictures of Maggie, Simon, and Susannah visiting relatives’ graves in France on a backing of a headscarf given by Prime Minister of Canada Stephen Harper, at the 90th anniversary of Vimy Ridge in 2007.

Thank you, you super people! And thank you to everyone, who does so much in memory of our Fallen.

Exhibitions

Remember: Commemorating our Fallen

In Dover library the latest exhibition from The Dover War Memorial Project tells the story of “Wee Willie”, the figure of Youth on Dover Town War Memorial.



Sculpted by Richard Reginald Goulden, a Dovorian, who trained at the Dover College of Art, and unveiled in 1924, the figure represents youth overcoming the thorny problems of life, his eyes fixed on the rewards of the spirit.

Fascinatingly, this is but one version of the figure. Another is at Newhaven cemetery, where Richard Goulden and his wife are buried. There are at least another five in existence, including the original which was created in 1908 as a fountain in Pittencrieff Park, Dunfermline, Scotland. More information at Dover’s Virtual Memorial at www.doverwarmemorialproject.org.uk

The Unknown Warrior

The Unknown Warrior exhibition finished its official tour at the mediaeval village of Lavenham, being hosted by the parish church of St Peter and St Paul. It remains in much demand, and will be returning to Dover in the New Year for display at Astor College of the Arts.



The stained-glass window in Lavenham Church. A close look at the picture above reveals Maggie, unsuspectingly “doing a Hitchcock”!

With Thanks

At the DWMP we often receive kind remarks and thanks for the voluntary work we do. A selection of them is online, and will be updated in the New Year. In the meantime, here is just one of the lovely letters we’ve been sent.

Thank you so much. I have just visited your site and seen the marvellous tribute to 11 very brave men. I am so pleased that you have researched the details of Uncle's comrades, it is so right that they have full mention as they "went together".

To me, and my cousin, it is a relief to know that the story is now on record. I should think that a lot of local historians will be surprised to learn of the horrific events.

I think [Dover's Virtual Memorial] is wonderful. I have of course, just had to read all the latest news etc. It all just holds me and I can't explain the overwhelming compassion - if that is the right word - that overcomes me. It all makes me feel so humbled.

The work that you do is great. You are so talented and what a lasting legacy you are producing.

A very sincere thank you and all best wishes.

And thank you. We exist to serve, and if by doing so we can help others and ensure that the memory of our Fallen is preserved with honour, then that is all we ask.

Talk at the Dover Society

Maggie and Simon were privileged to give a talk to the Dover Society in November. Entitled “The Dover War Memorial Project” it told the story of the Project from the beginning, remembering many of the casualties commemorated on Dover’s Virtual Memorial. There are countless ways of ensuring our Fallen are never forgotten, and the talk ranged over the many activities undertaken by the DMWP over the years to ensure our Fallen are remembered, their families and friends helped, and our future generations enabled to learn about their forebears and educated in respect, self-sacrifice, and the significance of Remembrance.



photo by Mike Webb

Illustrated by a few of the many thousands of photographs Simon has in his archive, the talk also covered memories of war-time Dover, from the tragic to the frankly odd – such as why a penguin should be found wandering up the beach in 1940!

It was the tradition once to tell ghost stories on Christmas Eve, and Maggie recounted some of strange war-time occurrences in Dover – some of which continue to this day! Always in the frontline, our town also has a first in Christmas tradition – it's said that the first Yule Log cake in Dover (perhaps anywhere?) was baked at Holmes Morris, in Biggin Street. The baker, George Bates, became a casualty of the Great War in 1917.

At the end of the talk Maggie was presented with a lapel pin from Alan Taylor, volunteer for the DWMP and Forget-Me-Not War Graves. He said, *“The pin was given to me, for Maggie, by the Last Post Association, when I was in Belgium at the Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing on the 11/11/11. Maggie and Simon are well known throughout Belgium and France and many of my Canadian friends remember them from the rededication of the Vimy Memorial. Long may The Dover War Memorial Project help us to remember the sacrifice of our Fallen.”* We will!

IN SEASONAL MODE

The last quarter of the year brings various frolics, from bonfire night to the biggy of Christmas itself. And as for Hallowe-en ...



... here's Maggie, with a dancer from Wolfshead and Vixen Morris. We'll leave it to you, dear reader, to decide who is the more scary!

With neat syncretism, how's this, below, for super yet spooky Christmas lights? It's part of the Burnham House Veterinary Surgery display, in Castle Street.



So was it a sleigh or a broomstick delivering those goodies on Christmas Eve? We cannot say – but just watch out for those spiders, that's all!

***A Very Happy New Year
to You All!***

“From the Front”, the e-newsletters from The Dover War Memorial Project, are also available online at Dover's Virtual Memorial and in the Local Studies area at Dover Town Library. Previous issues are archived at the Library, available by request, or online at the Virtual Memorial.

Dover's Virtual Memorial

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This newsletter was created by Marilyn Stephenson-Knight. All photos, except where otherwise stated, are by Simon John Chambers. Issue 9 is due out on 31 March 2012

The Dover War Memorial Project works in the past, present, and future to remember with honour all those from our front-line town, Dover, Kent, England, who fell in the two World Wars. Work on the Project is entirely voluntary, and the Project itself is totally dependent on donations to survive. If we have helped you or you have enjoyed the newsletter, please consider a donation via PayPal or by cheque payable to The Dover War Memorial Project. Please help us remember those who gave all they could.