

The War Graves Photographic Project

In association with
The CWGC



News from the Front line

Steve Rogers, Project Co-ordinator

Remembrance Day Issue



Welcome to the start of a Project that combines the talents and skills of a loyal band of volunteers alongside the kudos of the much admired Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

This 'working in association with the CWGC' has only come about after extensive talks with the CWGC and volunteers who were concerned that their images may be utilised on the more commercial sites that abound the Internet now.

Family history has become extremely popular and a recent news article in the Daily Mail highlighted the fact that the largest online family history business 'The Generations Network (TGN)' was bought in a £370 million deal. TGN, who are behind Ancestry.co.uk, were generating £73 million a year. A spokesman for Ancestry states that they have had a 500% increase in turnover since it started in 2004.

I, too, could be considered a genealogist, albeit in an amateur sort of way, and in the past have spent many hours transcribing census returns for family history societies. I now find that many of these transcriptions are available to purchase at somewhat inflated costs so someone is making a good deal from my many hours of work!

To that end it was felt that the CWGC is the 'proper' place for an archive of War Graves photographs to be deposited and at least be made available either via their website or our new one. As neither organisations are in the 'for profit' business this has been applauded by many and we hope that you agree.

The Launch

Pauline Pedersen – Events and Tours



The inaugural meeting of the 'Clan' took place on Saturday 3rd November at Bletchley Park Codes Centre near Milton Keynes. A wonderful turnout of 65 volunteers and other interested parties doubled our expectations so by the time all were accounted for we had to shift location to the 'Ballroom' and organise additional guided tours of the Codes Centre on completion of the presentation.

It was good to see old friends again plus many new faces arrive for coffee at 10am before the proceedings began and get the chance to chat with Peter Francis (Media and Publicity) who attended on behalf of the CWGC to show their endorsement of the new project.

The formal presentation was started by Steve who thanked everyone for turning up with many travelling considerable distances from Belgium, The Netherlands and Scotland.

In order to set the scene we were shown a short montage of scenes from Steve's 32-year Royal Naval career travelling around the globe on the 'Grey Funnel line' visiting a number of cemeteries including the German cemetery in Montevideo where he and his shipmates were the first RN ships crew to lay a wreath of remembrance on the graves of the Graff Spee crew that were killed during the battle of the River Plate

The emphasis of this short display was to establish Steve's empathy, having served through periods of conflict, towards the men and women who were not able to make it home.

Like all good seamen he ended this interval with 'Trust me, I'm a Sailor' (albeit ex!)

The audience were then told about the aims of this new project:



- **Formed, in association with the CWGC, to enable families and friends to obtain photographs of their loved ones' graves or memorials.**
- **The archive, when complete, will form a lasting record of all those that have paid the ultimate sacrifice and be deposited with the organisation where it belongs.**
- **It enables the loyal volunteer force to continue to provide these images as a practical form of remembrance knowing that they will not be utilised for profit.**

The Launch - continued



We then heard how the talks with the CWGC came to fruition which effectively gave our project the go ahead. By working closely with the CWGC and acting on their behalf as their preferred request service we will, in due course be linked to their individual Casualty Pages. A long term aspiration being that our images will be displayed on the actual page. This is of course dependant on significant IT changes so will not happen overnight. In the meantime our site will be built to provide this service (more later).

Staff at the CWGC enquiries section will continue to forward requests as normal.

With a total of named personnel handed to the CWGC last month amounting to over 820000 the team were informed that the new site would continue to include photographs of the family type memorials and MoD (post-war) graves along with other Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth nations. We are also considering putting on Anglo-South African (Boer) War graves as these have been submitted by Colyn Brookes in South Africa and the CWGC now have an interest in them.



We were then shown slides of the relevant co-ordinators and introduced to their 'domains'. All of the original co-ordinators have moved to the new project except the one covering Leics, Nott's and Derbys but these areas will continue to be monitored by the Midlands Regional Representative John Roberts. Dave Docherty has had to stand down as the Northern Regional Representative due to other commitments and a vote of thanks was taken for all of Dave's efforts in the past which were very much appreciated and he is wished well for the future.

To ensure we cover the CWGC requirement to provide other Commonwealth forces requests we were also introduced to the Commonwealth Co-ordinators:

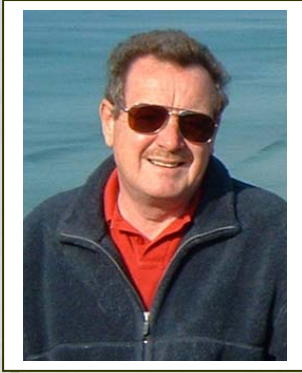


New Stamp

A new stamp is being issued by Royal Mail on November 8th to commemorate to 90th anniversary of the Battle of Passchendaele

It depicts a poppy head but the dark center is made up from the silhouette of soldiers emerging from shattered woodland

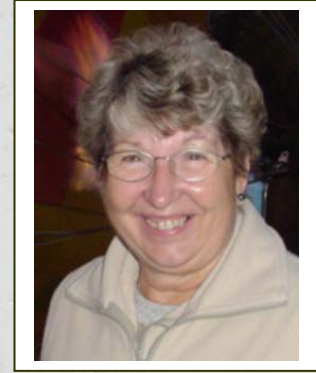
**The War Graves Photographic Project
Team – Part 1**



**Derek
Mountjoy
Cornwall, SE
&
International**



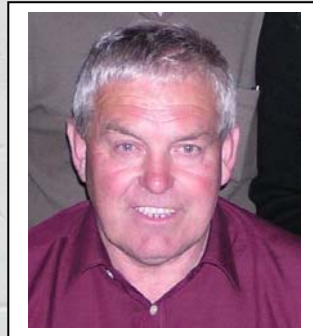
**Steve Rogers
Project
Co-ordinator**



**Pauline
Pedersen
Events and
Tours**



**Tony Wheeler
Wales
South Africans
Germans**



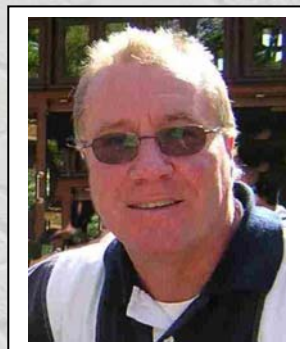
**Vernon
Masterman
Scotland,
Canadians**



**Jim Pedersen
New
Zealanders**



**Duncan
Andrews
Australians**



**Paul Hamilton
Research
John Roberts
Midlands Regional Rep**



**Geoff
Thorndike
Northern
Regional Rep**

**Part 2 will follow in the next newsletter and will
include all County and Country Co-ordinators**

After an update about the new website (see separate article) those attending were kept informed as to how the project will move forward.

Organisation - A more formal society or not-for-profit organisation will be formed which will be suitable for both the CWGC and Project needs. This has not been rushed into as there are 'for's and against's' in all options available so more thought has to be given to determine the best option.

Collect photographs - We will continue to collect images from the volunteers dispersed throughout the world and these have been coming in regularly even without a visible website. Trips to the Netherlands in May next year and Gallipoli in September are still going ahead to increase the number of images; very shortly the Vimy memorial will be photographed in total since its refurbishment. Runnymede Memorial has recently been completed since having the names highlighted.

Archive the Archive - As we are now working in association with the CWGC we have to 'archive the archive'; basically, check what they hold so that we do not duplicate effort.

Plan Revisits - To allow new volunteers to get involved there will be a programme of 'revisits'. In the early days digital cameras were not necessarily wonderful so some photographs are not of the best quality. If a new volunteer comes along and is happy to conduct a revisit the images will be processed to allow our records to be updated and the CWGC to have the most up to date photographs on site. In the case of a revisit the photographs will be acknowledged to both photographers.

Sponsorship - We will continue to look for appropriate sponsorship. Although the CWGC will help towards site development and server costs, monies still have to be found to maintain IT equipment, software, stationary, photo development costs, DVD/CD's, postage, broadband and a plethora of other outgoings. If donations cover these costs all well and good but experience in the past indicates that donations cannot be counted on.

And finally Steve presented a hard drive of an additional 3000+ photographs that have been collected since the initial batch was donated last month. Peter Francis accepted these on behalf of the CWGC and said a few words about the 'thank you' letters he has received in the past from recipients of photographs which mean so much. He reinstated the CWGC pleasure at being able to work with us and so provide this on going facility.

**Peter Francis CWGC & Pauline Pedersen
TWGPP cut the 'Birthday Cake'**



Updates on the web site

Derek Mountjoy

The new website for the Project is currently being built by 'Web of Knowledge' based in Horndean, Hampshire. It was felt that although a number of volunteers had come forward to help in the production of a site, which was very much appreciated, it would be better for all parties if a 'bona fide' company was utilised to prevent any problems of access or updates in the future.

The proposals for the new site have been agreed and the design function is under way. The site will include the usual pages of Home, Contact Us, Volunteering and the all important Search facility and Submit Request forms. The CWGC have agreed to help towards the costs of development and a proportion of the server costs which is very much appreciated. They have also allowed us to use similar colours to their current site so this will show the allegiance between the two organisations.

It is envisaged that the site will be 'live' in December and at that point will be populated with existing data and, in due time, the actual images that will be watermarked thumbnails. Web of Knowledge are providing software to enable us to reduce the image size to thumbnails in block numbers as this will decrease the 'bandwidth required', thereby reducing costs.

At least three people will have access to all areas of the site to enable on-going updates and prevent backlogs.

We may, if suitable, apply a sponsor's logo on the site but there will be no commercial advertising as such.



One of the Few

Steve Rogers

While searching for the grave of a long deceased 'Tommy' at Mells in Somerset Tommy, David Millborrow came face to face with a living one –

Harry Patch, aged 109, is now the only man left alive who fought in the British army on the Western Front – the last British survivor of the trenches.

Although there are still several men living who served in the British armed forces in WW1, only Harry actually fought in the British Army in the trenches.

While we search for the graves of those who died, it is good to remember the few, the very few, who still survive David said.

Questions arising from the meeting

Q. I still have copies of photographs that I had previously sent to other projects. Do you require these?

A. Yes please, we will be fulfilling requests on behalf of the CWGC for all Commonwealth nationalities so forward via CD if possible.

Q. Are we still photographing 'family' headstones?

A. Yes, providing they are commemorating someone that died whilst serving between WWI and now. This includes church plaques to individuals.

Q. Will Co-ords have their own designated e mail addresses?

A. Yes, once the site goes live.

Q. Will we be required to photograph civilians that are mentioned on the CWGC website.?

A. No, if we extend the Project remit to include civilian casualties that would open up the floodgates and make the project unmanageable.

Q. Can we confirm that our images will not find their way onto a commercial organisations website like Ancestry. co.?

A. Assurances from the CWGC, who the images will be donated to regularly, are that the images will not be 'sold off'.

Q. Is it possible to get some form of 'ID card' to show what we are doing as often I get funny looks walking around cemeteries?

A. Yes, send in a passport type photo (digital) and a S.A.E and one will be forwarded.

Q. Can the project confirm numbers of current volunteers?

A. The project has received 576 (to date) responses to e mails asking to be retained on the volunteer list and offering support. This includes 18 Regional Representatives and Area Co-ordinators.

Q. I sent images in but have never seen them displayed. Have you still got them?

A. On going audits will be carried out to determine current status. We are finding that some images from a 3 or 4 years ago are missing and may need to be resubmitted. If you still retain copies it would be a good idea to send an e mail with the list of cemeteries so that the archive can be checked.

Q. What happened to the NZ project?

A. Good question well asked. Any NZ photographs in our possession are now with the CWGC. We will continue to collect these along with other Commonwealth forces.

Q. Are we likely to expand the projects remit to other Wars given the new title.

A. Currently there is no intention to expand apart from including the Anglo-South African War. However, if images from other wars are forwarded we will archive them in case we run out of things to do!!

A Bridge too far?

Pauline Pedersen

HOLLAND –Operation Market Garden - Saturday 24th- Tuesday 27th May 2008

We will be based in Nijmegen which will give us access to the graves and memorials we plan to photograph and allow for visits to the war museums in the vicinity. Our itinerary will also include a trip across the border to the war cemeteries of Reichswald Forest and possibly Rheinberg, Germany. It will be a full schedule but as always there will be time for socialising and exchange of information. There is always plenty of chat on the coach and once the photographic sessions have begun, 'downloading' becomes the buzz word!

Based in Nijmegen

Bed & Breakfast

Luxury coach: Eurotunnel crossing, Folkestone to Calais

Cost: £325 per person based on two sharing and includes group meal first evening.

Single supplement £52 per person.

Travel insurance if required £17 pp.

We need 25 volunteers to make it a viable proposition (though we can take more, of course) so please register your interest now. A booking form will be included with the December Newsletter.

GALLIPOLI 2008

Sunday 21st – Sunday 28th September 2008

Somewhat more ambitious than our previous Tours, to The Somme and Ypres, this one has been greeted with enthusiasm and we already have a list of interested volunteers.

We plan to spend four days on the Peninsula photographing war graves and memorials with a further one, possibly two days in Istanbul for sightseeing.

Accommodation is booked at The Gallipoli Houses, Kocadere, a village within the boundaries of The Gallipoli National Park, run by Eric and Ozlem Goossens. (Bed, breakfast and evening meal.)

There is accommodation for 20 people and we already have this much provisional interest, but we are starting a reserve list.

Flight from UK to Istanbul. Coach journey to Kocadere.

Daily coach tour with guide to cemeteries for photography.

Sightseeing in Istanbul on return journey.

Cost in the region of £870 (awaiting confirmation of flight times and fares).

A deposit will be required by mid-January.

If you would like your name to be added to the reserve list for this trip or book for the Holland trip please contact Pauline on: Pauline@thewargravesproject.org.uk

The War Graves Photographic Project is a voluntary organisation and can only achieve its aim of photographing all of the war graves around the world by voluntary action. If you feel that you would like to help us in this task, please contact us at:

The War Graves Photographic Project

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UNITED KINGDOM

email

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or

Derek@thewargravesproject.org.uk

For articles to be included in future newsletters

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Wear your poppy with pride this week.

