

# FROM THE FRONT



Issue 2

Summer 2010

## The Newsletter of the Dover War Memorial Project

### “70 YEARS ON” – THE EVACUATION OF OUR CHILDREN

“The Battle of France is over...The Battle of Britain is about to begin.” So said Winston Churchill. From Dunkirk the “miracle” of the little ships brought home over 300,000 weary, wounded troops. “The Few” - brave, intelligent, young men, amongst them Dovorians like Keith Gillman and David Kirton, were about to take to the skies in their Hurricanes and Spitfires. And in front-line Dover, on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1940, 3,000 schoolchildren and their teachers were evacuated for safety to South Wales.



*John Lockyer, interviewed by the BBC at St Mary's, Dover, during the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the evacuation*

“It was a long journey,” says former evacuee John Lockyer, then 12. “Over fourteen hours on the trains. My youngest sister was only five.” John still remembers his last glimpse of their mother, in her lilac-and-white knitted jumper.

“All the way to Paddington,” says Duncan, also

then 12, “we saw trains and stations full of soldiers from Dunkirk, and the Women’s Voluntary Service giving them cups of tea.”

It was dark when the children arrived at Blaenavon. “A babble of voices – “poor little dabs, poor little dabs”, they said - and hands reaching out to take us home – that’s all we knew.” John found it all a big adventure, and remembers with great affection the family who took him in. Duncan went to a strict, religious family. “Very respectable they were, too, and they looked after me very well. Their daughter was like a sister to me, and I’m still friends with their granddaughter.”

But times were hard, and many of the host families had little enough to go round. “The man of the family worked in a biscuit factory,” says Ron, evacuated to Cwmbran. “I’d have to pinch the broken biscuits because I was starved.” Betty, then 9, remembers, “They took my ration and anything I was sent. My jellies I had to cut up and roll in sugar, and then the family sold them as sweets.”

“We didn’t get much schooling, just sat around mostly, and talked,” remembers Ron. In Blaenavon there wasn’t enough room in the schools for all the extra children. “One week the evacuees would go in the mornings, and the Welsh children in the afternoons. The next week we’d swap round.”

The evacuees went to several different schools as their numbers grew; Blaenavon took in children from many of the London districts as well as Kent, and as late as July 1944, 450 people, including mothers with tiny children, arrived in Blaenavon, and over 400 children in Cwmbran.



*Church service at St Mary's, 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary*

commemorative event. Evacuees do not forget their time in Wales; Wales has never forgotten its adopted children.

*Cream teas at the Town Hall, 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary*



## **A CORNER OF WALES THAT IS FOREVER ENGLAND**

Joan and Georgina Thomas are buried at Undy, and another little evacuee, Rosetta Lockyer, 8, who died in a road accident, is at Mamhilad, near Pontypool. We'll return to visit their graves, and to try to find the grave of John Skelton, 6, who drowned at Cwmbran.

In February we visited the grave of Lt Rupert Morrison, who died aged 32 on 24 May 1918. He is buried at St Tanwg, Harlech,

Beguiled by road signs, we took the scenic route to his grave! On the beach near Harlech is the fabulous little church of St Tanwg. Picturesque it is indeed, and certainly worth a visit, but with its churchyard partially engulfed by great dunes of sand, it isn't the easiest place to find one of our Fallen.

But safety could not always be assured. On 14 August 1940 Blaenavon's iron works was bombarded by 250 incendiaries. In April 1941 four evacuees were amongst the 27 people killed at Cwmbran during a raid. Several evacuees died in accidents, including Georgina Thomas, 11, and her sister Joan, 9, staying in Undy. On 9 July 1940 while on their way to school, they were killed by a train at a level crossing.

By December 1943 over 2,000 Dover children had returned home. But some, like John, stayed till 1945, and others fell in love with Wales, and remained there the rest of their lives. "Mr Carter, our teacher, took me down to the station and got me my first job," says Duncan. "I married a local girl, and we brought up our family here. There are still two or three evacuees in this town, but I'm now the only one left from Dover."

On 6<sup>th</sup> June 2010 John Lockyer organised a commemoration for the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the evacuation. We were privileged to join in with some 200 of those 3,000 at a special service at St Mary's church, Cannon Street, followed by refreshments in St Mary's Hall. Later on, at the Town Hall, we all enjoyed cream teas and war-time music on the piano.

As John said, "There won't be many more of these events." How glad we were to be able to join this one. Thank you, John.

Footnote: just before the commemoration, the DWMP went to South Wales, to revisit many of the places where Dover and District children stayed, also achieving a long-held ambition of Maggie's to visit the place her Uncle was billeted. We received a very warm welcome. Councillors in Blaenavon are enthusiastic about arranging a joint



below – Lt Morrison’s grave

above - Old St Tanwg



It also isn’t the *right* place! After much puzzlement and head-scratching we returned to Harlech, to discover the new church of St Tanwg there, next to the war memorial. Lt Morrison lies up the hill to the left of the gate, his headstone still proudly proclaiming his origins



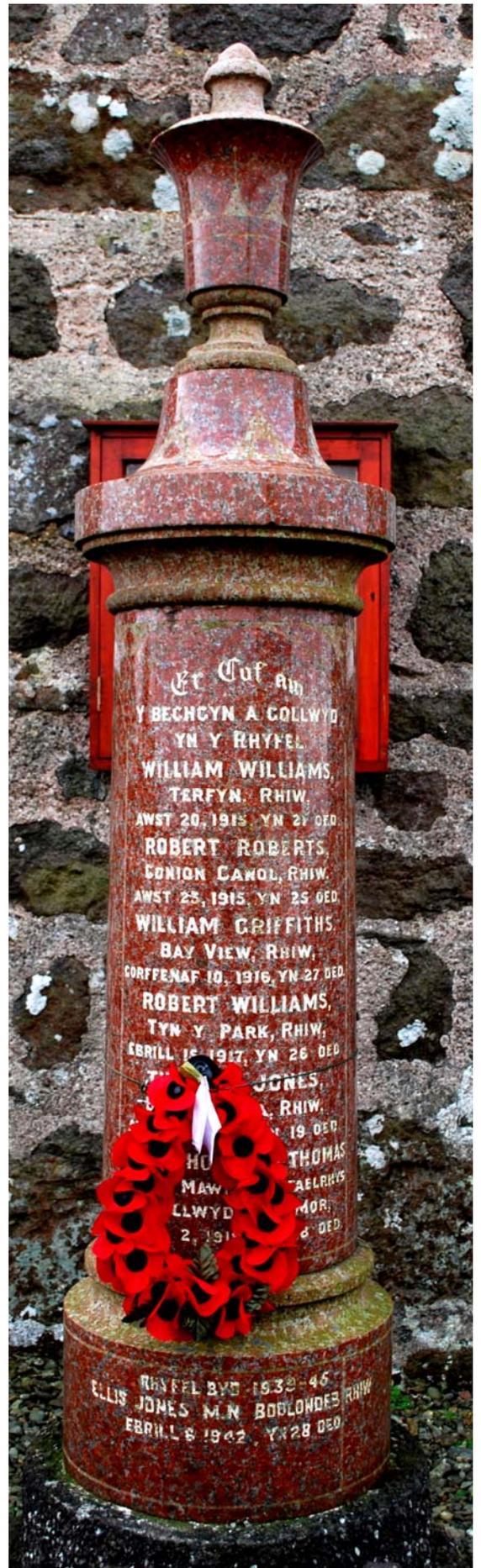
“Of Dover”, detail on Lt Morrison’s gravestone

## SIMON’S MEMORIALS

It’s always a bit of a busman’s holiday when we go away - we like to visit as many memorials as possible. Simon found many in Wales to add to his collection of memorial photographs.

The memorial on the right is at Pwllheli. We found several beautiful small village memorials like this, standing around five feet high. They give not only the names of the Fallen, but their ages, homes, and dates of death too.

No matter how small and remote was the community, the Great War had long fingers.



Pwllheli, Gwynedd, memorial,

## AT HOME IN THE ANDERSON



*Anderson Shelter at Dover Transport Museum*

We love to hear from you all, and we often do! Letters, emails, and calls come in from around the world. We've given advice ranging from eligibility for inclusion on a War Memorial to what sort of refreshments might be appropriate for a memorial reception.



One touching and unusual call came from Johannesburg. An intending visitor to Dover wanted advice on a good place to stand on our beach, and to find the grave of William Traynor VC.

Those of us who have tried to locate graves in the cemeteries know how difficult it can be – even if one has the plot number! So it wasn't a surprise when a second call came a few days later from Dover – the grave was elusive, and, to make it worse, our British weather was thoroughly traditional.

But the DWMP is a little like the Mounties. We can't claim always to get our man – but we nearly always get our grave! Thank you very much to Joyce and Brian Banks, who, umbrellas unfurled, harnessed the horsepower and galloped up



to Charlton cemetery after we relayed the problem. Rain and dripping dense undergrowth are no match for our dynamic duo! Result? Damp but happy South Africans, mission accomplished, and off to their next challenge.

That was to read aloud the poem "Dover Beach" by Matthew Arnold, actually on Dover Beach. The beach isn't so elusive, and many years after he had first studied the poem, our caller was at last able to

"... hear the grating roar  
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,  
At their return, up the high strand,  
Begin, and cease, and then again begin."

## IN THE BANK

The new plaque for Dover Town Memorial is scheduled for dedication in November 2012. If you wish to remember your loved one this way, please do let us know (tel 07876 240701)



*Raymond Brett*

One in the bank, in more ways than one, is the delightful Raymond Brett. A Sergeant in the RAFVR, he, aged 20, and six of his crew sadly lost their lives on 22 June 1944 during a raid on an oil plant near Cologne.

For nearly two years an employee of the Westminster Bank, Raymond is commemorated in the NatWest at the Market Square at Dover. Passionate about planes, he became member

number 3 of the Dover (Hell's Corner) Spotters Club. At their first meeting in August 1941, he passed the preliminary plane identification test with 100%.



*One of Raymond's drawings, courtesy Rosie Bolton*

Amongst his effects are a series of beautifully drawn aircraft, sketched in his bedroom at home. One can imagine his delight when he was accepted for the RAFVR.

## “WE’LL MEET AGAIN”

...  
One of the wonderful legacies of our Fallen is that though they lost their lives in conflict, so many people are brought together in their memory.

One email we received stated, “I noticed on your website that Mr X has supplied information about the death of his grandfather. Could you please pass on to him my sincere thanks as he mentions my great-grandfather; we were very pleased to find out this information, particularly as we are travelling to France in June with our 11 year old son to see my great-grandfather’s grave. If it is acceptable to Mr X, we would like to place some flowers on his grandfather’s grave.”

We were glad to put them in touch. Their grandfathers died on the same sad day, and we hear that now they have exchanged photographs and information, and hope to meet soon.

“My great great granddad is Y”, said another email sent to us. “I learnt this because of all your hard works and commitment. Thank you so much. This has altered my life in ways that can't be measured and helped to heal long old wounds in my family – or we are getting there. Thank you.”

Thank you to you, and thank you to everyone who helps us remember our Fallen. It's a privilege to do so, and to ensure lost loved ones are never forgotten. They lost their lives in the most terrible of times, and yet, even from those times, good may come. We are grateful for what they did – we are grateful for what their sacrifice continues to do

## THE WISHING-WELL

We are also indebted to those wonderful people who support us by financial donations. Although Maggie and Simon contribute personally to the expenses of running the DWMP, without donations from all our well-wishers we wouldn't be able financially to keep the DWMP running. (Well-wishers are wel-come!)

We thank very much a viewer in Canada, and casualty relatives in the USA and Australia, for their generous help. We also thank the Deal, Dover, Sandwich, and District branch of CAMRA,, for their splendid donation from the proceeds of the White Cliffs Beer Festival in February.

It was presented at a buffet reception at the Royal Cinque Ports Yacht Club, giving Maggie, in her thank- you speech, time to muse on why CAMRA and the DWMP fit together.

“A glance at our Virtual Memorial website shows how many of our Fallen were associated with public houses in Dover, some of them the family of publicans, like Lewis Kennedy. His parents ran



*Maggie with Dave Green of CAMRA*

the Gate Inn on Crabble Hill, and lost their son in December 1941 after HMS Galatea was sunk. Or for more connections, read the sad story of the Admiral Harvey public house, in Bridge Street, Dover.

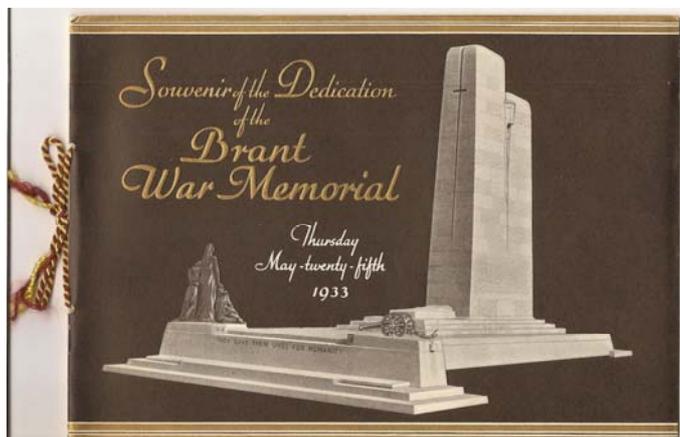
“As well, both CAMRA and the DWMP have values in common – tradition, heritage, community and quality, and the worth of the individual. The DWMP remembers our Fallen, not as statistics or military campaigns, nor even as lists of names on memorials. Instead we remember them as the unique and precious individuals they once were, members of our local community, who walked the streets we do now, and whose families still mourn their loss to this day.”

With tongue in cheek, though, Maggie suggested that the Other Half of the Dover War Memorial Project also was a link. Simon is a huge fan of real ales – so as much as CAMRA support the DWMP, Simon is always reading and willing to support CAMRA!

## THE DWMP “MUSEUM”

Stored in Dover we have a collection of artefacts relating to our Fallen and to our town in war-time.

Many Dovorians served in Canadian troops, and we were absolutely delighted when one of our Canadian friends sent us commemorative brochure for the dedication in 1933 of the Brant, Ontario, War Memorial. Here, amongst the 701 names, are inscribed two of our Fallen; Thomas Claringbould, from Heathfield Avenue, who died at Brant on Christmas Eve, 1919 from illness owing to his war wounds, and Edward King. From Cliff Court, east



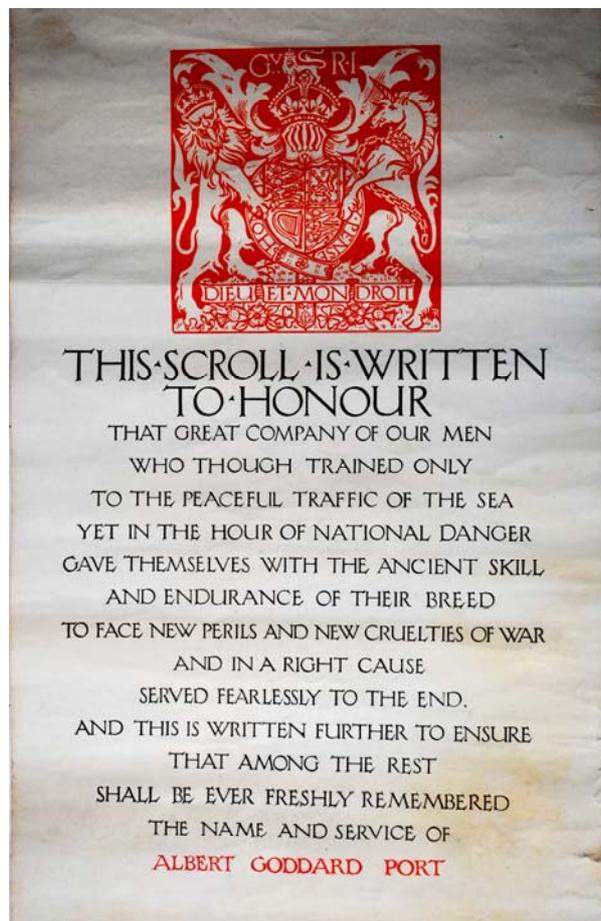
*The Brant Memorial dedication booklet*

Dover, Corporal King was awarded the Military Medal before losing his life at Passchendaele on 2 November 1917.



*Albert Port's Death Plaque*

Recently we were also kindly given the death plaque and the memorial scroll for Albert Goddard Port. A mercantile marine employee of the South



*Albert Port's Memorial Scroll*

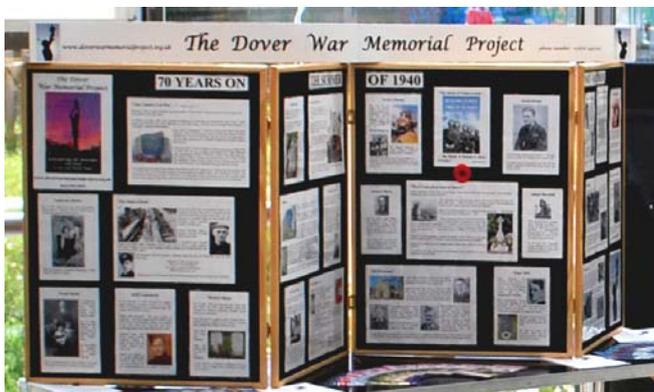
Eastern and Chatham Railway, he died on 24 March 1917 when SS Achille Adam was sunk 31 miles off Beachy Head en route between St Valery and Newhaven. Albert was 29, and amongst the other four who died with him were Bertie Gilham, 15, the youngest commemorated on our Town Memorial, and Daniel Wyborn, 63, the oldest.

Thank you to those who so kindly donate artefacts, or who ask us to record their memories. We would love one day to have a dedicated museum; in the meantime we show items from the collection whenever we can. Our last display was at the recent Hellfire Corner Association's 1940s weekend at Pencester Gardens, Dover. Along with our new exhibition it included the Brant commemorative booklet and Albert Port's plaque and scroll.

## “70 YEARS ON” (2)

There are lots of things in planning for Autumn this year – so, as they say, watch this space!

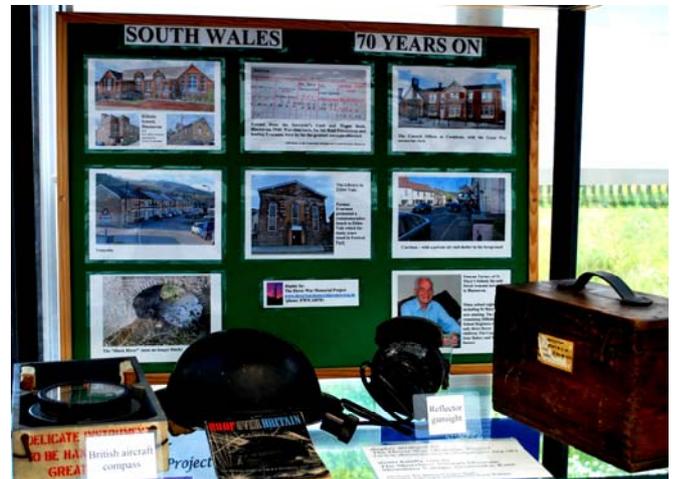
In the meantime, our new exhibition “70 Years On – The Summer of 1940” has moved to Dover Library, where it will be until the end of August.



*The new DWMP display “70 Years On-The Summer of 1940”*

Always associated with that long-ago summer is the Battle of Britain. Children who stayed in

Dover remember sitting on the downs or on the fences at Aycliffe, watching the dog-fights overhead. Several of the Battle of Britain Few to whom, as Churchill said, we many owed so much, were associated with Dover.



*Part of the Shoreham/DWMP display*

So we're so pleased that our friends at Shoreham Aircraft Museum, Sevenoaks, have very kindly lent some items from their collection for display at Dover Library. They include a veteran of one of those overhead battles - a clock-with-a-story.

To discover what – and more about our Fallen - do pop into the library. For information and to visit Shoreham Aircraft Museum (and their yummy tea-room!) - [www.shoreham-aircraft-museum.co.uk](http://www.shoreham-aircraft-museum.co.uk)

## AND FINALLY ...

Maggie has become a mother-in-law again (scary!) and a grandmother for the first time.

Congratulations to Emily and Luke, on the birth of Sophie Grace on 4 May, and congratulations to Helena and Alistair, who celebrated their marriage on 24 April.

*Best wishes to you all! Maggie*

This newsletter was created by Marilyn Stephenson-Knight. The photographs are by Simon John Chambers

The publication date for “From the Front” Issue 3 is 30 September 2010. If there is anything you would like included, please let us know.

### Contact us:

by 'phone - 07876 240701

by e-mail:

[maggiesk\(AT\)doverwarmemorialproject.org.uk](mailto:maggiesk(AT)doverwarmemorialproject.org.uk)

[www.doverwarmemorialproject.org.uk](http://www.doverwarmemorialproject.org.uk)

**The Dover War Memorial Project** remembers 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, please consider making a donation via PayPal or by cheque payable to The Dover War Memorial Project. Please help us remember those who gave all they could.