

FROM THE FRONT



Issue 3

Autumn 2010

The Newsletter of the Dover War Memorial Project

THE SEASON OF REMEMBRANCE



THE HOMECOMING: WOOTTON BASSETT

On 20th July the Dover War Memorial Project paid respects as four fallen soldiers were brought home from Afghanistan. Formerly stationed at Shorncliffe Barracks, Folkestone, Major James

Bowman, Lieutenant Neal Turkington and Corporal Arjun Purja Pun of the Royal Gurkha Rifles, were killed in Helmand Province on 13th July. They were repatriated with Matthew Harrison, from 40 Commando Royal Marines killed on the same day.

We all waited two hours in the warm sun for the cortege to arrive. Thousands of people lined the street, parked behind them were rows of motorcycles from the Riders' branch of the Royal British Legion. One of the Riders quietly advised families where to stand. The Mayor walked along the road, greeting the mourners, speaking softly to the bereaved families.

Then the police told us the roadblocks were on, and the traffic that had been thundering past, died into silence. The standard bearers moved to the front of the crowd. As the bell of St Bartholomew's tolled, all faces turned towards the west.

Friends and family put their arms about each other or held hands as the hearses appeared, a man walking before. The silence was absolute as they stopped by the town war memorial.

Slowly mourners stepped forward, to lay their flowers on the roofs and bonnets of the hearses. Behind us a lady began whispering over and over the name of her friend's dead son. A little girl was lifted up to lay a rose on her father's hearse. A lad, in a wheelchair, his right leg blasted away by a landmine in Afghanistan, waited patiently until he was helped to stand and lay his flowers.

Five minutes the procession paused by the memorial, until all the flowers were laid. The Ghurka ladies placed flowers on every hearse. It was much appreciated.

Not so appreciated was the newspaper photographer who took, rather loudly, a call on his mobile just before the cortege arrived. The media were everywhere, microwave links mushrooming on telescopic poles, denimed press photographers up stepladders, and elegant tv reporters speaking to camera. We see the news reports of casualties brought home, but it is so very different to be there. It was silent, solemn, dignified, unhurried, and absolutely harrowing.

Since the beginning of the year, World War I soldiers from the mass grave at Fromelles have been reburied with honour in new military cemetery. The Fallen from Afghanistan came home on the 94th anniversary of that battle. It was

the day after the last soldier from Fromelles was reburied – a casualty of the “war to end all wars”.



After At Leysdown on the Isle of Sheppey, is a final farewell to Daniel Holkham. Aged 19, he was killed in Afghanistan on 27th March 2010.

His brothers are still serving...

MEMORIAL SERVICES IN DOVER

Battle of Britain. On 12th September 2010, Dover Town Council organised a memorial service to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Britain. It was led by Fr Colin Johnson, chaplain to the 354 (Dover) Squadron, Air Training Corps, and held at SS Peter and Paul, Charlton, Dover. The church itself is no stranger to aerial bombardment; a massive explosion nearby in September 1944 lifted the last north-west column supporting the roof, and to this day it remains displaced slightly off-centre on its base.



Readings at the service included “Remembrance” written by Burma Star veteran, Albert Bennett, now 97 years (*above*), “Our Wall” by BoB veteran William Walker, unveiled on 11 July 2010 at the Battle of Britain memorial during their Remembrance commemorations, and the haunting “High Flight” by John Gillespie Magee

Speakers included The Right Worshipful The Town Mayor of Dover, Cllr Sue Jones, and Marilyn (“Maggie”) Stephenson-Knight, from the DWMP.

Maggie spoke of the connections between our frontline town and the airmen of the Battle of Britain. In their honour we have created (and are still adding to) a new section on Dover’s Virtual Memorial website, entitled “**Dover’s Few**” We offer grateful thanks to Dean Sumner, a volunteer at Shoreham Aircraft Museum, near Sevenoaks, for all his “ace” work on this section.

Merchant Navy Day 3rd September marked the annual service of Remembrance for the role of the Merchant Navy. Previously known as the Mercantile Marine, they were honoured as the fourth service by King George V, and granted the title in recognition of their vital work in support and supply, and the dangers they ran during the Great War. Over 17,000 merchant seamen had been lost, and over 3,000 vessels.



The first part of the memorial service was held in the Town Hall (*above*) followed by tea and biscuits – and the traditional tot of rum!

Suitably restored, the congregation then went to the sea front, to be joined by others for a wreath-laying service at the new Merchant Navy memorial, on the sea front.

THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR



Every woman’s husband, every mother’s son, of all those who fell in the Great War the Unknown Warrior is the symbol. He came home through Dover on 10th November 1920; this year marks the 90th anniversary of his return to be laid to rest (*above*) amongst kings at Westminster Abbey.

We’ll be announcing soon news on how we will be remembering him and the Fallen for whom he stands.



REMEMBRANCE DATES

The Unknown Warrior’s coffin was carried by railway from the Marine Station, Dover, to Victoria, London. On 9th November at 10.00 will be held the annual memorial service at the Station (now the Cruise Terminal), including laying a wreath at the Unknown Warrior’s plaque.

The Remembrance Sunday service takes place at Dover Town Memorial (*left*), outside Maison Dieu House, Biggin Street, on 14th November, at 10.30.

AT HOME IN THE ANDERSON



In the last months we've helped bring more people together. One very happy reunion was a daughter with the father she had not seen for many years. Another was a lady who had very happy memories of her time billeted in Dover during World War II; she hoped to find again the family with whom she lived.

We're so pleased to say that she did, the son of the family with whom she had stayed remembered her well. Very sadly, just a few weeks after they had regained contact, one of them died. We're so thankful, however, they were able to renew their friendship, and talk over happy memories, before it was too late.

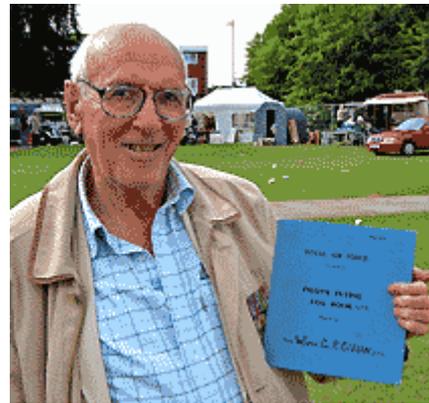
We're often cited in books and articles, and were pleased to be able to help when Family Tree magazine contacted us. They were featuring an article about the Bartram family; the author had used some of the research of the DWMP.

Harry Brocklesby Bartram was a casualty of the Great War. Having survived the battles of Cambrai and Mons, he fell ill on 30th August 1914 with gastritis. His father, the vicar of St Mary's, blamed "privations in the field". Compounding his illness, it took nine days to bring Captain Bartram from the Front to the channel ports. He died on 16th September, and is buried at St Mary's cemetery.

Simon was able to supply pictures of Captain

Bartram's grave and of the Town Memorial for the article. He's been much in demand these last few months, and has supplied pictures to several publications and for some of our local VIPs.

One sad request, though, was for a picture of Reg Levy (*below*). He died on 1st August, and his obituary appeared in several of the national newspapers. We had the privilege of meeting Reg at the annual 1940s weekend in Dover. Trained to fly in the USA during World War II, Reg became afterwards a civilian pilot. When his Sabena plane was hijacked in 1972, he was fêted for having saved the lives of 100 passengers. With some 27,000 air miles behind him, Reg retired to Dover. He maintained his love of flying, being a popular member of the Professional Pilots' Forum online.



Sadly, we have also learnt that four relatives of our war-time casualties have died.

We remember Ethel Lewis, cousin of Great War casualty Walter Tull, Ena Hopper, daughter of civilian casualty William Champion, Elsie Bones, sister of Bobby Morris, killed in June 1941 in an air collision, and Charles Sisley, brother of Robert Sisley, lost in April 1944.

May they rest in peace, safe in the knowledge that we will not forget their loved ones.

OLD DOVER

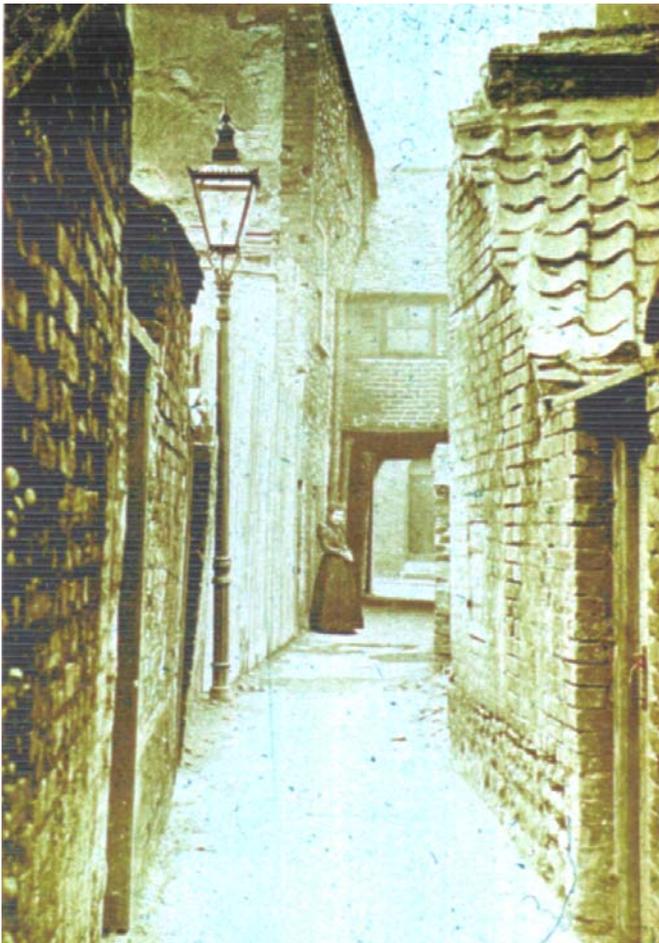


We were delighted to meet recently Colin Ackehurst, (*far left, with Simon Chambers*) from Australia. He is the nephew of

Arthur William Ackehurst, who sadly was killed on 2nd February 1918 in France. His parents lived at Edgar Road, Buckland. They would later give their newborn son the middle name of "Jeancourt",

after the place where lay the brother he could never know.

Both being keen family historians, Maggie and Colin were soon swapping information; it transpired that their ancestors lived close to each other in Round Tower Lane (*below*) and in Oxenden Street in the old Pier District of Dover. Who knows – perhaps Colin and Maggie will one day discover they are distant cousins!



We often hear from people in Canada, who have family roots in Dover. One very kindly sent us extracts of letters written by his great-uncle, Frederick Peters, a rifleman who lost his life on 9th May 1915. He had sent letters home from the time he enlisted in 1910 until a few days before he died. He was born in Folkestone and is commemorated on the memorial there, but between 1900 and 1910 his family had lived at Hillside Road, Dover,

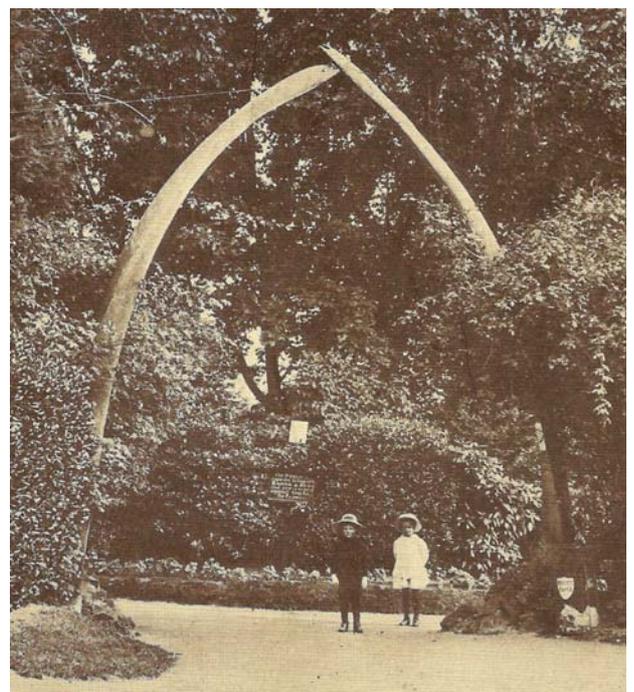
Fred Peters mentions in his letters “Fatty” Ahern; and the DWMP could confirm that this was Dover casualty Leonard Ahern, killed in March 1915. There are fascinating glimpses of everyday life in the barracks in 1912; one of which mentions

“Fatty” bringing in the Dover paper, in which was reported the death of Edward Barlow.

As manager of the Buckland paper mill, Mr Barlow was known to both. The two expansions of the mill he oversaw – to 400 employees by 1912 – were credited with the expansion of Buckland. Mr Barlow was a magistrate, and a former Chairman of the Kent County Cricket Club and Vice-Commodore of the Royal Cinque Ports Yacht Club. Said to have been most generous to those in need, he died at the early age of 57 after a chronic illness, and is buried in River churchyard, Dover.

Amongst the collection of letters is a cutting from a newspaper in Stratford, Ontario. Fred’s sister, Mrs Stockwell, left England for Canada in 1919, but remembers well her early days. “We had King Edward’s Coronation treat upon Northfall Meadow, and “the big pageant in the College grounds. It was the week President Loubet of France visited England. How beautifully they decorated Dover up!”

She adds, “You could sure take some swell walks. How about away out Folkestone Road to the Fair. What a gay time!” Other walks were to the castle through Connaught Park, passing under the whale’s jawbone archway (*below*), and up the “quite spooky” Grand Shaft steps, where nearby cliff falls “had done away with some of the cliff-dwellers’ places”.



During the Great War, Mrs Stockwell lived in Folkestone. “We were at the Harbour when they brought a lot of the Belgian refugees over. It was a terrible sight! They just came as they were. We had some terrible scares and one bad raid. It was on the evening of 25th May 1917. It took a great many lives”.

Mrs Stockwell “left England for Canada in 1919”, and had lived in Stratford ever since.

A PUB CRAWL

Yep, behind the scenes it’s a tough life at the DWMP But it’s all in the line of duty – and the reason why we so often consult Paul Skelton’s “Pubs of Dover” website. Honestly!

It’s an interesting fact that a number of our casualties were connected with Dover pubs. Joseph Brann’s mother, for example, worked at the Terminus in Lord Warden Square, and at the Boar’s Head in Eaton Road. Cecil Bromley’s grandparents were licensees of The Liberty in Adrian Street.

Sometimes, more sadly, lives were lost in Dover pubs in war time. Harry Sladden died in an air raid on the Red Lion in St James’ Street in January 1916; The Admiral Harvey has the melancholy distinction of four casualties. Barmaid Lucy Wall was fatally injured in 1917 by a bomb, landlord Frank Rogers was killed by a shell in September 1940. His son, Charles had been killed three months before in a naval battle, and Cyril Harper, the son of the next landlord, was killed in November 1941 in Egypt.



there is nothing left, except a few discarded bricks,

Despite hits in both wars, The Admiral Harvey survived. But of The Three Horseshoes off Doctor’s Lane, Church Hougham, bombed in World War II,

all covered with grass. It stood directly opposite the footpath that leads across West Down to Stepping Down (“Plum Pudding”), ending at Church Road, Dover.

Even drier is the Black Swan, West Hougham. Struggling to get back to Hawkinge aerodrome, Battle of Britain casualty Howard Perry Hill crashed here in flames on 20th September 1940. But where was the Black Swan?

Nearby are the Black Swan cottages and estate, but the only pub references we’ve found nearby are for The Chequers, and for the old King’s Head. If anyone knows the crash site – do tell us!

Our last pub -- The Cat and Custard Pot at Paddlesworth - is said to be the highest in Kent, and was frequented by World War airmen from nearby Hawkinge. In their memory, we spent a couple of hours there with indefatigable volunteers and friends Joyce and Brian Banks.

We sat beneath the picture of Dovorian Keith Gillman, iconic Face of the Few. Aged 19, he lost his life over the Channel on 25th August 1940. His parents presented to Dover Lifeguards a memorial cup (*below*) for open-water swimming races.



“GIVE PEACE A CHANCE”



While they mourned their losses, people at the ends of the wars also celebrated the renewal of their lives and looked forward to the future.



Above is the Peace Tea in August 1919, held by Church Road, residents Dover. Dollie Stoker, younger sister of Edith, who was killed during a raid on 19th March 1916 is in the second row, seventh from right.

The commemorative peace medal, above left, was owned by Frederick and Edith Hall, the

parents of Frederick Stephen Hall who died in France on 28th September 1918, just eight weeks before the end of the Great War.

LEST WE FORGET

We recently received this email:

“I wish to thank you for your work so far with the war memorial project. Whilst researching my relative, ... I chanced upon your website. It makes me very pleased that these young men are being remembered in this way.

“As a serving soldier I have been lucky enough to visit his grave in Gibraltar to pay my respects but it was saddening that he lies so far from home, At least your work means that he will not be forgotten as easily. Thank you again for your work.”

Thank you!

Maggie Stephenson-Knight
September 2010

This newsletter was created by Marilyn Stephenson-Knight. The picture of Round Tower Lane is by courtesy of Dover Museum, the picture of the whale's jawbone is from the postcard collection of Maggie S-K. All other pictures are by Simon John Chambers.

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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.