



Thame Remembers

News

**March
2015
No 7**

Cross Deliverers Needed

At last we can throw off the miseries of a cold winter and look forward to warmer days ahead. Days of course that will be well suited to visiting far off cemeteries and delivering Thame Remembers Crosses.

The clocks are changing and the holiday season is getting under way, so do think about where you are going this summer and whether there may be a grave or memorial that you could visit on behalf of Thame Remembers.

Even if its not you, your neighbour or friends may be going somewhere where we need a cross delivered.

Surprisingly not everyone in Thame is aware of our project yet, so we really do need to get the message out there. A full list is available on our website at www.thameremembers.org/roll-of-honour/ and click on Casualties by Location.



Peter Lawrence lays a wreath at Kranji, Singapore in December on a business trip

Battlefield Trip

Our Battlefield Tour has been confirmed for 29 Oct – 2 Nov 2015 and is nearly sold out, with only a few places left.

The trip is organised in association with Spear Travels (formerly Tickets Anywhere) in Greyhound Walk, Thame, through Leger Holidays. Over the weekend we will be based at a hotel just outside Lille. The trip is guided throughout and we will be visiting the main sites of Ypres, Arras and the Somme to deliver Thame Remembers wreaths as well as some smaller cemeteries to deliver crosses and some cemeteries requested by the guests.

The cost of the trip is £275 per person on B&B basis of two people sharing a room. Please contact David on 215178 for more information and to book a place.



Tyne Cot cemetery and Memorial Wall. Nr Ypres Belgium

Crosses Recently Delivered

6 March 2015

Major Donald P Shaw DSO
Dorset Regiment
Derek Turner
West Norwood Cemetery
London.

19 March 2015

Bombardier
Herbert Edward Jones
Royal Artillery

David Wybron,
Matthew Walker, Emily Keogh
St Leonard's Church,
Watlington, Oxon.

24 March 2015

Corporal William Bowler
Oxf & Bucks Light Infantry
Jill & David Gregory
Awoingt British Cemetery,
Nord, France.

The Memoire of a Bomb Disposal Expert



Ian Jones, one of our steering group members, will be talking about his memories in Bomb Disposal. The talk is at Thame Museum on Thursday 9th April and promises to be a very enjoyable and informative evening.

The talk starts at 7.30pm. Tickets are £5 per person (£3 for Museum Members) and are available from Museum reception. Thame Museum is open Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday from 10 to 4 and Sunday 12 to 4, and is open Easter Saturday and Sunday.

Researching Herbert Jones

I am neither a historian nor a researcher ! Though I have been closely involved with Thame Remembers from the very inception of the idea, my skills have been better applied to fund raising, publicity and awareness, administration, and event organisation rather than the painstaking task of seeking out the background to all of our casualties.

I am in awe of those who have the diligence and patience to wade through the web and visit the various archives, and I have been fascinated by what they uncover through their dogged determination, but I have neither the discipline nor the attention span to apply myself in that way.



David Wybron delivers the cross in Watlington

Then I became fascinated by a particular story and, as I got drawn further in, realised that there are many other ways to help take such research forward and that contacts, networks, direct approaches for assistance, and just asking the right questions of the right people, can also be a powerful addition to research methodology. Let's face it – it's odds on that somebody has already done the work before, or has a short cut to the information required, so why re-invent the wheel?

So it turned out with Bombardier Herbert Edward Jones. We started out simply with his name on the Lord

Williams's School Honours Board and the scant amount of information on the CWGC web site, so we knew that he was in the Royal Artillery and that his grave is in Watlington, but

where do you go from there?

Allan Hickman came up with the first hit, finding details of his parents and siblings, so we learned that the family originally came from Oswestry, via Bristol, and then to Watlington a year before Herbert was born; also that his father was a railway engine driver, and that Herbert's death was registered in Warwickshire. Why Warwickshire? Was he perhaps invalided home? Best to request a copy of the death certificate.

Allan also happened across someone who had been doing web searches and who knew little about Herbert but could provide further information about the family, including a living relative in Norwich. I also followed up with St Leonard's Church in Watlington, and with the Watlington British Legion, who had no new information but were very supportive and helpful as we moved forward.

Then the Death Certificate arrived. Herbert Edward Jones had died from 'a gunshot wound to the head, self-inflicted whilst the balance of his mind was disturbed'. Following this lead David Bretherton gets busy and finds an article in the Royal Leamington Spa Courier from 18 December 1942 with a detailed report from the inquest.

As usual, each new piece of information actually poses more questions than it answers, so we branched off in different directions. Allan looked further into the family and, amongst other things, found a full employment record for his father's time working on the railways; Derek Turner set to work in the school archives and learned a lot about Herbert's school career, subsequent college, and early teaching career; and I took a couple of long shots by contacting the Leamington Spa Historical Society and the Warwickshire British Legion, who were able to provide more

ROYAL LEAMINGTON SPA COURIER DEC 18, 1942

to be stopped," he said.

LOST CONFIDENCE
Tragic Suicide of Young Soldier

NOT FIT FOR ACTIVE SERVICE

There is a very popular Artillery unit stationed at a village not far removed from the centre of Warwickshire, but the cheery demeanour of the soldiers who are held in esteem by the residents of the adjacent village, was rudely shattered by a tragic event which occurred early on Saturday morn-

information about the anti-aircraft gun emplacements in the area in 1942. I also took the chance of writing directly to the last known address of Herbert's living nephew and received a most gracious and supportive response leading to further correspondence.



A LAA Regt Bofors gun emplacement

We still have some details to follow up but have now established a fairly full picture of Herbert's life and will be writing up a detailed report in due course, which we will then share with all those who have contributed, or registered an interest in our findings. Many different people have contributed snippets of information and I have learned that historical research does not have to be a lonely vigil but can be a truly collaborative effort, in which even an amateur like me can play a useful part in piecing together a story.

Mike Dyer – Thame Remembers

Anyone who is interested in getting involved in research should please contact us through our web site. Amateurs and newcomers to the field are all welcome and our more experienced researchers will be happy to guide and assist. Or maybe you have information on one of our casualties that we are not aware of.

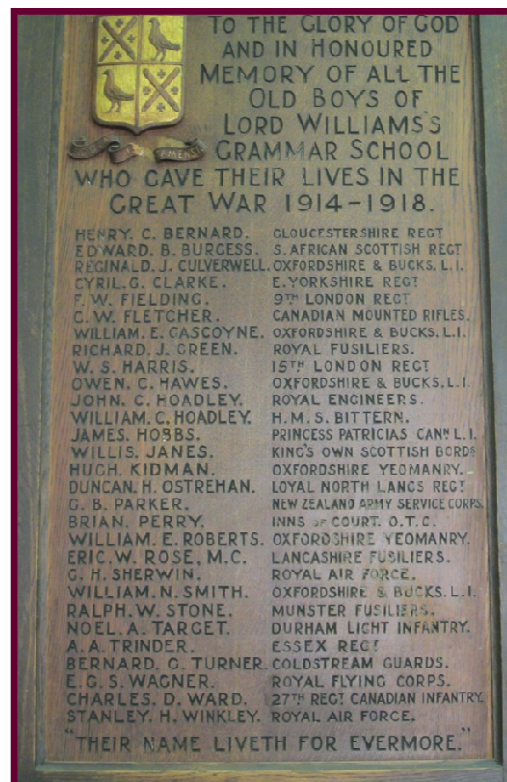
School Presentations

With a great deal of support and thanks to the staff Mike and I have now completed our presentations to Lord Williams's School, reaching out to more than 1700 students in total. We started with the year groups at the Lower School, filling the sports hall each time, and then moved up to the Leisure Centre for the Upper School years, finally addressing the Lower Sixth in early March.

Each presentation started with a playing of our video, with no introduction for maximum effect. This was very well received and on one occasion we had spontaneous applause. We then explained about the project and the challenge ahead; but the highlight of each presentation was the poem "In Flanders Field" read by Dominic Kelsey, a sixth former, wearing full 1st World War uniform compete with original Lee Enfield rifle. He thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

The feed back has been superb with full backing for our project from pupils and staff. We have included the War Memorials at the School in our project and so we were able to bring home the effect of the casualties to the school.

You will see elsewhere in the newsletter that the Headmaster accompanied by the head boy and head girl, laid a cross at the grave of one of their former pupils in Watlington. We are now working with the Head of History Dave Rogerson and teacher/tour leader Danny Cuell for two crosses to be delivered during the school trip to the Normandy beaches this summer. One will be at the main Bayeux Cemetery.



We still need to reach out to all sections of the community and will be pleased to deliver our presentation as and when requested.

A Visit to West Norwood Cemetery

A link between Thame and West Norwood in South London seems unlikely, but it exists because the cemetery there is the last resting place of Donald Patrick Shaw, brought up in Thame, educated at Lord Williams's Grammar School and the last of those on the school's memorial board to die – in 1924 from his war wounds.

On a sunny spring day in early March I visited the cemetery to lay the cross at the foot of Shaw's gravestone and to honour his memory. It may seem inappropriate for a solemn occasion to record that I greatly enjoyed my visit but that is the truth as the whole experience was rewarding not only as a duty fulfilled but also as a memorable historical and aesthetic experience.

West Norwood cemetery is very different from those maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in Flanders. It is not a military



cemetery, but it does contain over a 100 World War 1 graves, not grouped together but scattered amongst the others. Some of the war graves have the standard CWGC head stones but many, including Shaw's, do not. He is buried there, through the choice of his widow Maud, in what was and remains a private cemetery for mainly well known and well off families living and dying in the southern part of Greater London. Maud and their son Donald John Edward, killed in Palestine in 1947 are also commemorated on the stone.

Shaw's grave is a relatively modest 'emerging stone' of granite, overshadowed by many imposing monuments dedicated to late Victorians and Edwardians of note, several of whom have both WW1 and German connections. They include the grave of Sir Hiram Maxim, inventor of the machine gun, and a memorial for Gustav Adolph Kaye of the Black Watch, killed at Cambrai, the only son of Gustav and Helen Koenigsfeld, having changed his surname to avoid embarrassment when he enlisted in the British army. The most remarkable CWGC grave is for Private Wilkinson who, as a conscientious objector, spent the whole of his service after being conscripted in 1916 in a British military prison in France where he died in January 1919 of the 'Spanish' 'flu. Despite never wearing a military uniform his grave records his regiment, Royal West Kent, and service number.

All this fascinating information and much more was provided by an enthusiastic member of the Friends of West Norwood cemetery, who has written several pamphlets on WW1 graves and was kind enough to give me a guided tour of a small part of this vast cemetery, notable not only for being a treasure trove of 19th and early 20th century history but also as the first English cemetery in the Gothic style with some fine buildings including a Gothic obelisk. The cemetery narrowly escaped demolition by Lambeth Council in the later 20th century, but was rescued thanks to a campaign to save it launched by English Heritage, the Victorian Society and others. In a complete reversal of policy the council is now investing a quarter of a million pounds to restore and refurbish it!

Report by: Derek Turner

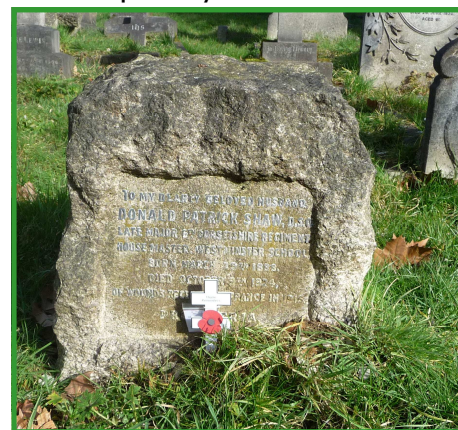


This newsletter is printed and published by Thame Museum Trust and distributed free to all.

This paper is intended as a digest of news items about the Thame Remembers project to keep the people of Thame up to date with what is happening.

Thame Remembers
79 High Street
Thame
OX9 3AE

01844 212801
www.thamere remembers.org



Thame Remembers is a project of Thame, Oxfordshire to commemorate the centenary of World War One by researching those from Thame who fell in all conflicts worldwide, and remembering them by placing a Thame Cross on their grave or memorial wherever in the world that may be. If you feel that you can help please contact Dave on 01844 21 5178.