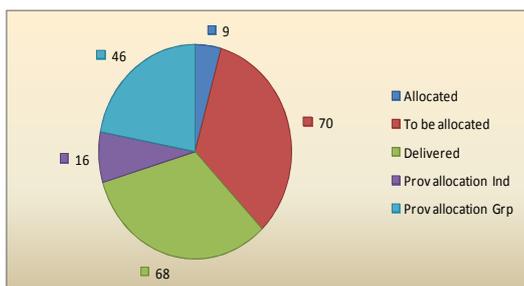




How are we doing?

18 crosses were delivered last month and 13 this month so we thought it may be time to show how we are doing. *Brilliantly is the answer.* Most of the "Group" allocation is for the Battlefield tour in October and so by the end of the year we will have passed half way.

There are still some difficult destinations to cover so do let us know if anyone from Thame is going to North Africa or the Middle East. There are also opportunities to deliver crosses within UK. We hope soon to have a mapping feature on the website to make it easier to check against your travel plans.



Crosses Recently Delivered

22 April 2015

Cpl John Merrick Rudge
Royal Signals

John Thomson
Busan UN Cemetery, Korea

12 May 2015

Pte Frank Chowns
Kings Royal Rifle Corps

Brett Chowns,
Le Touret Memorial, France

Cpl John Clare Hoadley
Royal Engineers

Neil Davies
Sailly-au-Bois Cemetery, France.

Private Ralph W Stone
Royal Fusiliers

John Cooke
Forenville Cemetery, France

19 May 2015

Sgt William Boiling
Royal Berkshire Regiment

Sonja Francis
Aire Cemetery, Pas de Calais,
France

Cpl Stephen J Roberts
Royal Garrison Artillery

Sonja Francis
Philosophe Cemetery, Pas de Calais,
France

20 May 2015

Pte William A Wallington
Oxf & Bucks Light Infantry

Andrew Reid
Talana Farm Cemetery, Ypres,
Belgium

Pte Richard John Green
Royal Sussex Regiment

Joan Reid
Harlebeke Cemetery, Belgium

Corporal Ernest Edward House

Report from Nigel Champken-Woods

We were given the task, or perhaps that should be the honour, of placing a Thame Remembers cross on the Grave of Cpl Ernest House of the 14th Bttn Royal Montreal Regiment, Canadian Expeditionary Force who died aged 23 and is buried in La Plus Douve Farm Cemetery near the small town of Mesen in Belgium. He was born at Oakley Nr Chinnor but later moved, with his parents, to Thame and then emigrated to Canada in 1912.



I was accompanied by my wife Alison and her sister Christine and we staying in Lille for the weekend, placing the cross on Sunday 24th May 2015. We set off for La Plus Douve on a beautiful sunny morning and using instructions from the CWGC web site found the Cemetery with ease. It is in a beautiful spot amongst the smoothly rolling hills of Hainaut region, behind some large farm buildings and a tranquil large farm pond surrounded by weeping willows. I cannot think of a nicer place to lie in peace.

We soon found Ernest's grave in amongst other colleagues from the Canadian Infantry.

As requested in the instructions we

23 May 2015

Private Harry Arnott

Highland Light Infantry

Kristian Winslade

St Charles de Percy Cemetery

Calvados, France

L/Cpl Kenneth Sellwood

Highland Light Infantry

Jenny Manger

St Charles de Percy Cemetery

Calvados, France

24 May 2015

Cpl Ernest E House

Canadian Infantry

Nigel Champken-Woods

La Plus Douve Cemetery,

Hainaut, Belgium

24 May 2015

Pte Harry Phillips

Manchester Regiment

Yvonne Maxwell

Arezzo War Cemetery, Italy

Gunner Stanley Allen

Royal Artillery

Steve Bannister

Florence War Cemetery, Italy.

were given, I placed the cross in the centre of the grave and stood and recited the words 'They shall grow not old, etc' with great difficulty, having a huge lump in my throat, and both Alison and Christine struggled to answer 'We will remember them'. I think we were all surprised by how emotional it was. Here was a man we had never known, who died 100 years ago. All we had was a faded photograph of a young man in a kilt and yet we were all moved almost to tears.

We then went on to the small Belgian town of Poperinge to visit Talbot House, set up by The Rev Tubby Clayton in 1915 as a refuge for Commonwealth Troops. What a haven of peace that would have been. I would recommend anyone who is in the area placing a cross to visit. The tea and biscuits are super and included in the entrance fee. It is the spiritual home of Toc H.

From there we went to Ypres and the Menin Gate Memorial, which lists the names of 54,896 Commonwealth Soldiers who died in the Salient but have no known grave. We returned to Lille having had a very interesting, enjoyable, but emotional day.

Lord Williams's School

We are continuing our connections with Lord Williams's School. Having presented the project to each and every pupil, they are now taking crosses for delivery in Normandy during June.

This is part of their annual Battlefield Trip which this year is to the Normandy beaches and cemeteries. This fits in perfectly with our challenge.

They will be visiting Brouay and Banneville-la-Campagne Cemeteries in Calvados, France to deliver crosses to the graves of two men from Thame who died in 1944. Both Oxford & Bucks Light Infantry.



A Moving Target

We told you last month how our target was at 196. Thanks to our research the target is now at 209 and some of the new discoveries have fascinating stories. The additions are:

Private George Crick (1870-1915) born in Moreton, died Egypt.

Capt Philip Hewetson (1893-1918) son of the Vicar of Thame 1898-05.

Corporal William James Lewis (1886 - 1917) apprenticed to F G Hawkins.

Private William Newitt (1888-1917) worked at 4 Horse Shoes Thame.

Sapper George Payne (1866-1919) born & lived Thame prior to marriage.

Boy 1st Class Frank Tickner (1900-1917) native of Thame, died age 17.

Sgt Charles F Bristow GM (1899-1942) lived and married in Thame

Sub Lt Henry B Cook (1921-1943) worked Lord Chancellor's off, Thame.

L/Sgt Alfred Thomas Heley (1915 - 1941) employed at Holland printers.

Private Charles S Kiddy (1918-1940) attended C of E school in Thame.

Private Louis H Plested (1919-1940) employed at Holland printers.

Capt Sidney C Maskell-Dicker (1910-1944) son of C M Dicker died WW1

Cpl Thomas J Tims (1912 - 1944) ran a fish and chip shop in North St.

No doubt some, if not all, these names will merit adding to Thame War Memorial in good time. We currently have fifteen names from WW1 and twelve from WW2 that could be added.

Cuff Links and Stick Pins

The small cross badges that we sold last year proved very popular and so this year we also have stick pins and cuff links for sale.

Stick Pins are £2.50 each & Cuff Links are £7.50 pair



Visit to Korea by John and Hilary Thomson

John Thomson, a Thame resident and himself a Korean War Veteran, returned to Korea in April 2015 at the invitation of the Korean Government and, during his visit, placed a Thame Remembers Cross at the grave of John Merrick Rudge. John has been so kind as to share the diary of his visit, which we reproduce here.

It is a long journey to Korea from the UK, taking eleven and a half hours by plane. The visit was heavily subsidised by the Korean Government because they want as many veterans as possible to return as often as possible so that they can thank them for saving their country.

They have a Government Department called the Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs who are very active in promoting visits, and everywhere we went we were made very welcome and given a present at every venue.

Day One : Wreath laying and incense offering at the Seoul National Cemetery. This involved some 83 Veterans and their families and was made up of thirty five from the UK, thirty Canadians, and the balance from Australia and New Zealand. Also present was a detachment of the British Regular Army. A march through the Korean Guard of Honour and then wreaths were laid and incense burned. Wreath laying at the War Memorial of Korea which also has lists of all the fallen during the war. We also attended a brief ceremony with the Irish Ambassador for those from Ireland who had fallen.

In the evening a thank you banquet at which Bill Speakman VC presented his medals, which were numerous, to the Korean Government. He made a short speech and was heavily applauded for his enormous contribution. Eight of us were presented with the Peace Medal. As we went into the building we walked through a Korean Army Guard of Honour.

Day Two : Visit to Busan / Pusan by KTX train which took two and a half hours. When we arrived at Busan station and walked down to the coaches a crowd of well-wishers waving flags met us and gave us a small present. We then proceeded to the Convention Hall for lunch where we were met by a Korean Army band, another Guard of Honour, and many school children who ran up to us and wrapped a scarf around our necks, all very moving.

We then moved on to the United Nations Memorial Cemetery. Firstly a RSM from the Regular Army tried to get the veterans in some sort of order to march to the Commonwealth Tribute Ceremony. We then marched to the area where there was a band and many dignitaries including

four Commonwealth Ambassadors. Once seated the ceremony took place which included a message from her Majesty the Queen, and at the end the Last Post and Reveille were sounded. The British Veterans and families then went to an area where the British dead are buried behind a statue of a lion. We had a short service led by an



Visit to Korea (continued)

Army Chaplain, again with the Last Post, a two minute silence, and Reveille at the end. We were then free to find any graves which had some significance to us. We found the grave of John Merrick Rudge and I placed the Thame Remembers Cross in front of the grave and we had a few moments of silence. A number of photos were taken to commemorate the occasion. I then went to find other graves which had some memories for me before we returned to Seoul, a rather sad and weary crowd.

Day Three : We started with a trip to the battle area of the Imjin Valley where the Gloucesters held out for three days against the overwhelming force of Chinese. Again there was an army band and the veterans were marched into the area. The veterans have sponsored a school in this area and the children from the school were there, and again many photos were taken and gifts exchanged. We were lined up, each opposite a school pupil, and presented them with their exam certificates. A service of remembrance also took place, and my wife and I were interviewed by some of the school children later.

We then proceeded to the DMZ (Demilitarised Zone) to be given a tour of this highly charged area, unchanged since the peace was signed in 1953. There are still some 27,000 US troops in South Korea, which still has a two year conscription.

Day Four : We had a ceremony at the Commonwealth Monument in Seoul and in the evening were invited to the Ambassador's Residence for dinner. The Ambassador was very welcoming and again read out a message from the Queen. He had attended every ceremony during the week.

Day Five : We attended a dawn Anzac Day service at the Korean War Memorial and had a USA breakfast, before the long return trip back home.



The outstanding memory will be how welcoming the Korean people were to us. There can't be many war zones in the world where veterans would be made so welcome.

Many thanks to John for his diary, and for visiting the grave of Cpl John Merrick Rudge on behalf of Thame Remembers, and whilst we are busy commemorating our war dead we should not forget that there are still amongst us some of the brave men who have served their country in conflicts around the world.

"Lofty" Rudge during his time in Hong Kong courtesy of Jim Love (Ex Royal Signals)

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.