



The Monte Cassino Society

Furthering an interest in the Italian Campaign 1943—

NA15141

Winter/Spring 2017

Welcome

Welcome to our Winter/Spring 2017 newsletter.

Like me you must be wondering where the past year has gone, one minute we are planning for Christmas, which has now been and gone, the next it's Easter and our two main events in the Society's year is upon us.

The first of these of course, is our annual get together at the National Memorial Arboretum on Saturday 20th May. As in previous years, we will all meet from noon onwards for tea and coffee, followed by a short service, then afternoon tea and our unofficial A.G.M, which went down quite well last year. (This is your opportunity to ask questions of your committee). As was the feeling of the membership last year, we will charge a set amount of £15 per person to cover the cost of the afternoon tea. All other costs will be covered by the Society.

A couple of weeks ago myself and Doreen Belcher had a meeting with the management at the Arboretum to make final arrangements and to see if we could

reduce costs but with no wish to change the format, there was little room for manoeuvre.

The second is, of course, the trip to Italy. Unfortunately Lyn and I are unable to go as Lyn has had a complete new knee replacement. Judith has done sterling work in obtaining funding for the trip. This will be a sad visit as we have lost a number of our old soldiers in the past twelve months, but no doubt they are now with their comrades having a drink in the nearest mess.

“They will be remembered on the 20th and at Monte Cassino”

Just a quick mention of Italy 2019. This will be the 75th anniversary of the Battles for Monte Cassino and the last time the Government will support any commemorations, so please put 2019 on your notice board as this may well be our last trip as a Society.

See you on the 20th

*Mike Anslow
Son of the late D.E..H. Anslow (Sgt)
2nd Battalion Grenadier Guards*

Aim

To remember and further an interest in the experiences of all who took part in the Italian Campaign.

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News

Memorial Service at the National Memorial arboretum, 20th May

Just to reiterate the information Mike has given in his welcome letter, we will be serving tea and coffee from 12.00 noon in the Marquee. Please arrive by 2.00 pm when we will march to the Memorial for the service. Many who have to stay overnight use Lichfield City Centre Premier Inn. A room has been booked for us at the Bowling Green pub for a meal in the evening (at our own expense). We have been there for the past two years and have found the food to be very good.

News (cont)

Having been successful in getting funding for veterans to return to Italy, we are presently negotiating to get some funding for veterans travelling to the Arboretum. The Not Forgotten Association have said they would consider paying for overnight accommodation but we are still trying to get a grant for all veterans. We were successful in getting a substantial amount for the Italy trip and if there is funding for a visit to the Arboretum for the Memorial Service, we will again be submitting a joint application.

Please complete and return the enclosed Pro Forma giving numbers attending and return to Judith asap. All are welcome but we need to know numbers intending to stay for afternoon tea. Thank you.



PIPES AND DRUMS OF THE STOKE ON TRENT BLACK WATCH ASSOCIATION BY THE MEMORIAL WITH OUR DEAR FRIEND, PIPE MAJOR THE LATE ARTHUR SIMMONDS

Pilgrimage to Cassino 24th to 30th May

Flights will be from Heathrow to Rome, and, like last year, we will be staying at the Edra Palace Hotel on half board basis. As in previous years, we will be using Leabus for all our coach travel.

Our Itinerary is as follows -

Thursday 25th A service at Cassino Commonwealth War Cemetery, followed by lunch at Settimo Cielo (which translates as Seventh Heaven). After lunch a visit to the Abbey and, if we can get permission, up to Point 593 and the area beyond

Friday 26th A visit to Caserta Palace and Gardens

Saturday 27th Castle Hill, a tour of the Liri valley and a visit to San Pietro Infine

Sunday 28th A service at Sangro River Commonwealth War Cemetery on the east coast

Monday 29th Picinisco

These are the trips we intend doing but we may have to do them in a different order. The Liri Valley tour depends on which day our Italian friend Damiano, a member of the Gustav Line Association, is available to guide us; and Picinisco depends on which day suits the school. The Cassino service will not change as the Military Attache from our Rome Embassy will be joining us, his only free day during the time we will be in Cassino. Those of you who have been before will know, but for those new to Italy with us, please bring some sweets for the school children at Picinisco.

Just one final reminder, we will be having a raffle each evening with fantastic (not really) prizes to be won, so bring plenty of euros!!

I look forward to seeing you at the Arboretum, or in Cassino (or both)!!

Phil Soady

*Son of the late Gerald Soady, 91st LAA Royal Artillery,
4th British Infantry Division*



REMEMBRANCE SERVICE IN CASSINO WAR CEMETERY MAY 2016

Crosses

If you would like a cross placed on the grave of a loved one, please let us know on the enclosed pro forma, together with a (limited) dedication.

In Memoriam

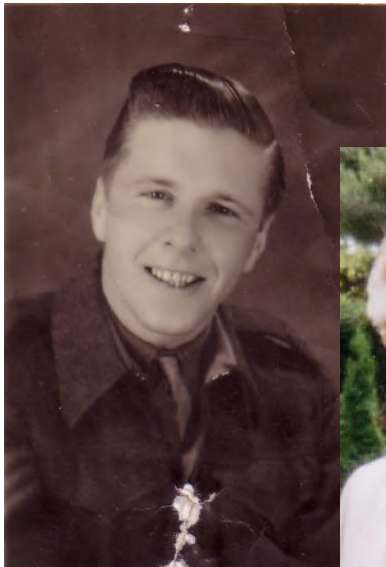
Mrs Nellie Brown, widow of Dennis Brown, The Beds & Herts Regiment
Ivor Gaskill, 2/4 The Hampshire Regiment

Mr J. Hoan, 149 A/T Regiment attached to 4th Indian Division

Robert (Bob) Lamplough, 2nd Battalion The Beds & Herts Regiment

James Moran, 6th Battalion The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers

Mrs Marion Robinson, daughter of Richard Ashbridge, 3rd Field Regiment, Royal Artillery



TWO PHOTOS OF
BOB LAMPLOUGH



MARION ROBINSON

Marion Robinson's Father was killed in action and is buried in Cassino War Cemetery. Marion attended the first service at the Cemetery, the unveiling of The Cassino Memorial, on 30th September 1956. The cover and list of dignitaries taken from the Order of Ceremony is on page 4.

Sadly we continue to lose our members and it isn't always possible to mention them in the In Memoriam column as newsletters are returned to me marked 'addressee unknown' and there is little I can do about it.

I have deliberately listed our new members at this point to illustrate we are still growing and continue with our original aim to **remember and further an interest in the experiences of all who took part in the Italian Campaign.**

New Members

Alan Dowley, remembering Douglas Forrester, 2nd Battalion, Royal Fusiliers (City of London) Regiment

Susan Dowley-Walker, remembering Douglas Forrester, as above

Maj (Rtd) Fred Greenhow MBE, friend of the Society

Carol Nathanson, daughter of Lionel Nathanson, Royal Corps of Signals

Frank Pleszak, son of Mikolaj Pleszak, Polish 2 Corps, Warsaw Armoured Brigade

Vivienne Thornhill, daughter of Douglas Munt, B Squadron, Herts & Beds, 56th Reconnaissance Regiment



ORDER OF CEREMONY

AT THE

UNVEILING OF

THE CASSINO MEMORIAL

TO OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE
ARMIES OF THE COMMONWEALTH

BY

FIELD MARSHAL THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE EARL ALEXANDER OF TUNIS
K.G., G.C.B., G.C.M.G., C.S.I., D.S.O., M.C.SUNDAY, 30TH SEPTEMBER, 1956, AT 12.00 NOONFIELD MARSHAL
THE EARL ALEXANDER OF TUNIS*will lay a wreath, followed by :—*

The Prime Minister of Italy.
 The Mayor of Cassino.
 The Chief of the Imperial General Staff, on behalf of the Armies of
 The Commonwealth.
 The Canadian Ambassador.
 The British Ambassador.
 The South African Ambassador.
 The Indian Ambassador.
 The Pakistan Ambassador.
 The Australian Minister.
 The Ceylon Minister.
 The High Commissioner for New Zealand in London.
 The Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, representing the Board
 of Admiralty.
 The Air Officer Commanding, Malta G.C., representing the Air
 Council.
 The Chairman, Imperial War Graves Commission.

During the laying of wreaths pipers will play :—

LAMENT

"The Flowers of the Forest"

Letters

Dear Judith,

Please forgive the email out of the blue but I was given your address via Phil Soady, who suggested I get in touch. Dan Snow and I, along with a growing army of volunteers, have set up a project called 'War Generation.' The idea is to get people around the country – and in fact, around the world – to interview veterans of the war before it is too late and their memories are lost forever. The plan is to create a network of people to help achieve this – we learn about a veteran living in, say, Melton Mowbray, then we check our list of registered interviewers, contact the relevant one and they head off and talk to him or her, recording what the veteran says in whatever way suits them best, be it iPhone, voice recorder, camera and so on. Then the transcribed interviews are posted on the website for anyone in the world to see and use and learn from. That's the essence of it, at any rate.

I was filming around Cassino last week, which prompted one of our more brilliant and dedicated volunteers, Shane Greer, to suggest getting in touch with the Monte Cassino Society. Phil Soady then suggested we email you to see whether you could put us in touch with any Cassino veterans or if you'd be willing to help in any way.

Incidentally, I saw various local historians/enthusiasts out in Cassino, including the indefatigable Michele di Linardo, Robert Molle and the boys from the Linea Gustav Association. They were all mentioning 2019 and the 75th anniversary and bemoaning the lack of interest from the local government. I suggested they all pull together but obviously that'll never happen – honestly, they need their collective heads knocking together! Anyway, I offered to help and it would certainly be good to get something sorted although no doubt you've already got that in hand.

Anyway, many thanks and I much look forward to hearing from you. It would certainly be terrific to have you on board in any way, shape or form.

All best,

James

I replied saying I would copy his letter in the newsletter and get back to him with any volunteers

Anyone interested in taking part please contact Judith (contact details on page 8)

Accounts

The following appeared in Jim Morgan's local paper, The Glamorgan Gem. Jim served with the Royal Corps of Signals, attached to 4th Indian Division



The town of Llantwit Major saw a little more activity than usual on October 21, when local businessman Ian Hunt, Mayor Sally Hanks, local RBL president Ian Colston, chairman Roger Elliott, World War 2 veteran Jim Morgan, RAF Sergeant Collins, RBL volunteers Heather and Mo were all having their photo taken in brilliant sunshine—at a new memorial plaque.

*It will be displayed on the wall owned by Mr Hunt in the centre of town and commemorates—
"all those who have suffered from conflict throughout the world today.*



Sergeant Collins of the RAF Regiment with WWII veteran Jim Morgan.

Jim is also pictured above at the launch of Llantwit Major annual Poppy Appeal

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND DONATIONS

We would like to thank everyone for their continued support. In addition to the many subscriptions we have received donations, large and small. Mike's "turn £5 into £50" has proved successful; likewise the cards made and donated by Maureen Stringer. Our bugler Garth Wright has again been fundraising and we have had a substantial cheque from The Federation of Plymouth and District Ex Services Associations (prompted I suspect by Garth)!

We are only able to continue with the help and support of our members—thank you

Books

GEORGE by Mike Lennon



Chelsea Pensioner—A Greatly Maligned Soldier

Soldiers who fought in the Italian campaigns of WWII were greatly maligned by the title “D-Day Dodgers”, the myth was far removed from fact.

Mike visited George Bayliss, 95 a former D-Day Dodger of The Beds & Herts Regiment now a Chelsea Pensioner at The Royal Hospital, London where he presented a copy of his book “George”. George began reading immediately, looked up at Mike and said, “I am going to enjoy this”.

First time novelist Mike Lemmon, reveals the true events in his book; George: Hero, Deserter, Lover in the campaign at Monte Cassino Italy, which became, one of the hardest fought and bloodiest battles of WWII. The book is a gritty tale of war, romance and the rebuilding of shattered lives; it envelopes the reader in the war-time relationships and the indomitability of the human spirit.

The idea for the book came to Mike while researching his father’s military history; he has dedicated ‘George’ in remembrance of those that lost their lives in Monte Cassino. He said: “I began to realise that very few people actually know about the Italian campaigns during World War II. Yet so many men from all over the world were killed in those bitter conflicts.”

The novel is a tragic and deeply moving account of George, a Royal Fusilier in the 1st Battalion City of London Regiment. He is deployed from 1936 to 1939 to India – the exotic setting a stark contrast to the East End of London where George has come from. It is in Monte Cassino however, where George sees comrades he has known from the age of 18 dismembered before his eyes in gut-wrenching bombardments. Shattered by what he has seen, George deserts the war-torn hillside, desperate to get away from the sight of the battle in Monte Cassino, where 55,000 men would lose their lives.

Romance and tranquillity finds George in a vineyard in the green hills of Italy and he is welcomed by Italians, opening his eyes to another potential life.

Will George return to the tranquil hills of Italy and Margaretta or remain in London with Amy – his sweetheart who he had to leave behind when he was recalled to the war.

Fate is not kind and deals George yet another devastating blow – one which he will need to battle hard to recover from.

‘George’ is out now and is available from Amazon Bookstore either in e-book format or in paperback.

Enter the full title: George; Hero Deserter Lover, for a speedy download.

Call Mike Lemmon on 07799814838 for further information .

My name is Frank Pleszak and I am writing a book on the history of the Polish 2nd Corps. I live near Manchester in England with my wife and family and am an IT professional by trade.

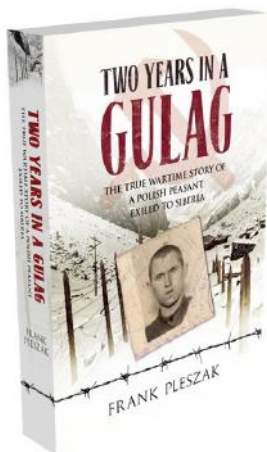
A little more on my background. My father was from near Vilnius and was one of those exiled to Siberia in 1939. After his release he eventually joined the Polish Army in Russia and served throughout the Italian campaign. He was awarded the Monte Cassino Medal number 31744. Interestingly, my uncle on my mother's side was also at Monte Cassino with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.

Sadly, like so many others my father spoke very little about his early life, but after he died I became fascinated by not only his story but the almost unbelievable story of the injustice of the Polish people. I am embarrassed that I knew so little about this period but was amazed how little known it was by the general public.

I have already had a book published on my father's journey from Vilnius to Manchester entitled "**Two Years in a Gulag**". I regularly give talks on the history of the Polish 2nd Corps and the battles of Monte Cassino, the next being in Manchester in May. I have created an overview presentation of the history of the Polish 2nd Corps and uploaded it to YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoXPcaErLVw>. I have written several articles on the Polish involvement at Monte Cassino that were published at www.itshistorypodcasts.com both in their blog and for their online magazine and including **From the Steppes of Russia to Monte Cassino—the brave history of the Polish 2nd Corps** and **Reflections of the Battle of Monte Cassino**

I have also recorded some memories of some of the soldiers that were at Monte Cassino and uploaded extracts to YouTube together with some old cine films I found on ebay that showed the funeral of General Anders.

Two Years in a GULag



At the onset of the Second World war, my father, aged nineteen, was forcibly removed from his family in Poland by the Russian secret police and exiled to the harshest of the Siberian labour camps, the dreaded Soviet GULags of Kolyma. He spoke very little about it. Only very occasionally would his painful memories allow him to give a little snippet of information. After his death I became intrigued and began researching his early life. As I discovered more and more, I became amazed and shocked at the ordeals he'd endured. When Germany invaded Russia, he was freed from Kolyma but still had many trials to face. He survived GULags, torture and the war, but was never allowed to return home. I traced his footsteps on a journey of 40,000 kilometres, through places most of us have never heard of, a journey through despair, fear, hope and disappointment, and in these pages I recount his journey. This is a true story occurred during a largely unknown and poorly documented period of modern history that has been denied by successive Russian Governments and media. I believe it is a valuable insight into not only my father's story but the store of a whole Polish Nation.

Available from http://www.amazon.co.uk/Two-Years-Gulag-Wartime-Peasant/dp/144560177X/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1361627773&sr=8-1



Polish II Army Corps

The unbelievable WW11 story of the short lived Polish army, born in the frozen steppes of Stalin's Siberian GULags which fought side by side with the allies for their freedom in the bloody battles of Italy, but were never to return to their homes in Poland.

(Available soon)



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