

A BIG THANK YOU JOHN AND FRANCES BARROW

The Charity now has a number of individuals out and about in the United Kingdom laying ANZAC crosses on the graves of New Zealand and Australian WW2 aviators.

John and Frances Barrow who divide time between their home in England and their retreat in the beautiful Dordogne region of France, have currently been laying crosses in Kent and Hampshire. When laying their crosses, they spend a moment beside the graveside, say aloud the name of the aviator and admire the surroundings in which they are interred and cared for by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

An extract of their reports has included...

MAIDSTONE CEMETERY, KENT

We visited the vast and exceptionally maintained Maidstone Cemetery on the 1st July to discover the beautiful Commonwealth War Graves plot with many airmen's graves from all over the Commonwealth, and even a number of German graves as well. Each of the memorials was framed with delicate roses and other flowers, all planted with great care and affection.

RAAF Air Gunner Harold Lagor Beach – age 23



ST. MARY CRAY CEMETERY, KENT

On the 1st July, we found the Star Lane Cemetery tucked away behind Orpington, with its little chapel and numerous exuberant gypsy and travellers' memorials. Right in the middle is the Commonwealth War Graves plot, a stunning reminder of the part that these heroes played in securing peace for all of us.

St. Mary Cray Chapel



RNZAF Pilot F.J.Shears - 21



LEYSDOWN CEMETERY, SHEERNESS, KENT

We made an expedition to the Isle of Sheppey on the 1st July, and visited the Leysdown Cemetery under the vast windswept sky and broad marshes, to find Wallace George Lewis amongst some friends' graves, some of whom were just cadets, very sad.

RAAF Flt Sgt Wallace Lewis age 22



WOOTTON ST. LAWRENCE CHURCHYARD, HAMPSHIRE

We were able to visit the stunning knapped flint church of Wootton St Lawrence near Basingstoke on the 9th July. Sheltered by ancient yew trees, his memorial was set in a family plot in this tranquil place, with the tinkling voices of young children in the nursery school nearby. Local people greeted us as we wandered around their village church on a glorious sunny day.

The Churchyard



RAAF Flt.Lt. J.A. Falkiner - 24



ST. PETER CHURCHYARD – OVER WALLOP, HAMPSHIRE

We passed by The Wallops, and the famous military base and air museum on the 9th July, and discovered the stunning knapped flint church of St Peter in Over Wallop. Hitchcock's grave was set on a gentle rise, right in front of this majestic church, looking out over the little valley below. It was a heart-warming scene on a glorious sunny day.

Flying Officer R.B. Hitchcock – 25



St. Peter in Over Wallop



A SMALL DEVIATION!

Whilst on their cross-laying expedition their trail also led them to the Church of St. Mary The Virgin in Upwaltham. They had often wanted to visit the church but had always driven past. Their quest encouraged them this time to stop! John reported...

Yes, I have driven past this church for decades on my way to the Solent, and its distinctive 4-nation flag always intrigued me. We stopped this time because we discovered that the crash site was nearby. It's only a few miles from Tangmere. The Lancaster was on its way back from a mission in France, stopping near Arun for refuelling, and then taking off towards its home base in Lincolnshire only to encounter thick fog over the South Downs, where it inexplicably crashed despite the vast experience of the crew.



On board Lancaster DV382 that crashed on 13 February 1942 was Pilot Officer 412218 John Irvine Gordon DFC. John was born in Cessnock, New South Wales on the 26th February 1912. He enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force on 25 May 1941 and eventually was assigned to 617 Squadron based at RAF Woodhall Spa in Lincolnshire. Awarded the DFC on 10 December 1943, John is buried in Coningsby Cemetery, Lincolnshire. He was 31 years old.

Pilot Officer John Gordon DFC



A SMALL HITCH ALONG THE WAY

Sometimes things can be a little tricky when attempting to lay crosses around the various cemeteries and churchyards around the country. Sometimes graves can be located in a CWGC section located in an extension to the cemetery which may be the other side of a wall or even outside of the main cemetery. John and Frances sent me an email a couple of weeks ago, expressing their dismay when attempting to lay crosses at Thorney Island. They wrote...

“Well, we attempted to access St Nicholas Church on West Thorney Island today 14th July, but we were stopped by armed officers at the gateway to what is an Active Military Base! The whole island, including the church, is within the prohibited area. Therefore, we will need a high-level authorisation to enable us to enter the site and to book a meeting with the security officer in charge. We will await further instructions!

Not to be put off and with the help of one of our Trustees, we were able to secure entry to Thorney Island John and Frances completed the necessary forms and duly laid crosses for Flight Sergeant James Graeme Heers, Pilot Officer Cedric Herbert Owen Priest & Flying Officer Ian Douglas Sheekey

