

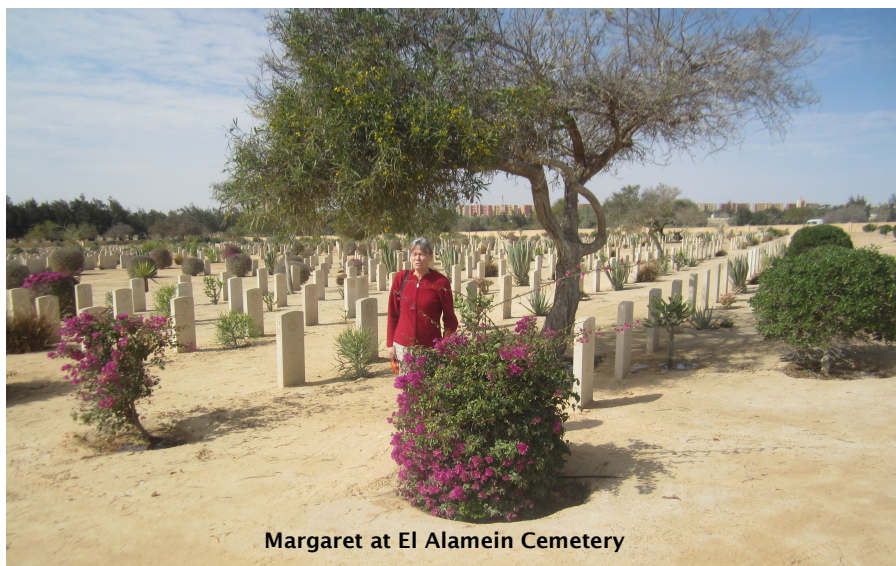


## Egypt Trip

Despite concerns expressed by some the intrepid trio of Mike, David and Margaret took the plunge last month and travelled to Egypt to visit the war cemeteries there. We were aided and encouraged by Alan Garrett, vicar at St Mary's, who also put us in touch with the wife of the British Ambassador (Kathryn Casson) who worships at St Mary's when in England. She was most helpful in advising us on elements of our trip, helping us to make travel arrangements within Egypt and introducing us to Sally Soliman, a local guide whose knowledge, enthusiasm and good company were invaluable.

We stayed in central Cairo and experienced the culture and traffic chaos of a Middle Eastern city which can only be described as an enigma, its rich history, splendid mosques and busy markets contrasting with economic decline and palpable state presence in every aspect of daily life. The skyline peppered with minarets and the sound of the evening call to prayer, were quite ethereal.

Our first objective, four hour's drive from Cairo, was to visit El Alamein where Montgomery's Eighth Army finally defeated Rommel's Afrika Corps and began to turn the tide of World War Two in the



Margaret at El Alamein Cemetery



The Italian and German Mausoleums



## Crosses Recently Delivered

**10 February 2018**

**Sergeant**

**Alfred Robert Howland**

Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry

**Geoffrey Walker**

Brandhoek Cemetery, Ypres, Belgium

**Private Frederick Neale**

Royal Berkshire Regiment

**Stephen Boyson**

Harlebeke Cemetery, Ypres, Belgium

**Gunner Harry Howland**

Royal Garrison Artillery

**Michael Hutson**

The Hut Cemetery, Ypres, Belgium

**19 February 2018**

**Sergeant Douglas Rolfe**

Royal Air Force

**Mike Dyer**

Alamein Cemetery, Egypt

**Lance Sergeant**

**Alfred Thomas Heley**

Coldstream Guards

**Gunner**

**Gordon Eric Smith**

Royal Artillery

**Sergeant**

**Maurice Horatio Howlett**

Coldstream Guards

**Sergeant**

**Henry William Little**

Royal Air Force

**Signalman**

**Peter George Campion**

Royal Corps of Signals

**David Bretherton**

Alamein Memorial, Egypt

**21 February 2018**

**Flying Officer**

**Douglas Beaumont Neale**

Royal Air Force

**Margaret Bretherton**

Suez War Memorial Cemetery, Egypt



Allies favour. One man from Thame is buried at El Alamein, and another five are remembered on the Memorial within the cemetery grounds. The cemetery is kept immaculate by a team of gardeners but, with sand underfoot instead of grass it felt very different to the more familiar war cemeteries in Europe.

Whilst at Alamein we took the opportunity to visit the local museum and the memorials to the German and Italian soldiers, both of which were more like mausoleums than cemeteries and in each case we had to rouse the Bedouin caretaker to let us in. Especially fascinating was the original railway halt, featured in so many films, through which incoming supplies from Alexandria sustained the allied forces.

Our second objective - Suez - was quite different.. It was a shorter two hour drive to get there and this time a much smaller cemetery with graves from both WW1 and WW2, but this time with grass.

The gardener came out to greet us with the register, beaming with pleasure that someone had come to appreciate his efforts. He is



**The Gardener at Suez Cemetery**

there everyday but we were the first visitors since October 2017 and the first Brits for over a year.

At Suez Margaret laid a Thame Remembers cross at the grave of Douglas Neale and then, exploring further, we encountered two other firsts; the first woman we have seen with a grave in a CWGC

cemetery and the first overseas Merchant Navy graves. We completed our time in Suez with a quick detour to get a view of the entrance to the Suez Canal.

Of course, we couldn't visit Egypt without fitting in a little sight-seeing and Sally introduced us to Cairo Museum, with its amazing Tut AnkAmun relics, and a trip to Giza to see the Pyramids (they are huge) and the Sphinx. We also took in the stepped pyramid at Sakkara and the old capital Memphis, as well as some splendid mosques and a traditional souk. One the highlights of our trip was afternoon tea with Kathryn at the Ambassador's Residence, a classical Victorian building in the middle of Cairo. A very worthwhile and enjoyable trip, both on behalf of the Thame Remembers project and as a personal experience. Next stop Gallipoli in June.



**Grave stone for Hilda Mary French WRAF who died in 1945**



**Clipped shoulders of Non-combatant Merchant Navy Graves**



**Tea at the Ambassador's Residence**



# Visit to National Memorial Arboretum

As briefly mentioned in our last newsletter we are planning a coach trip to the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas in Staffordshire on **Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> July** and we are now open for bookings to join us for a fascinating day out.

The NMA officially opened in 2001 and is the UK's Centre of Remembrance. It is described as a spiritually uplifting place which honours the fallen, recognises service and sacrifice, and fosters pride in our nation. Established on a donated reclaimed site of earlier gravel workings alongside the banks of the River Tame (coincidence!) it is now a 150 acre site, beautifully landscaped with over 40,000 maturing trees and a wide diversity of wildlife.



Within the site are more than 350 individual memorials many of which relate to specific regiments or theatres of conflict, examples being memorials to the Dunkirk Veterans, Civil Defence, Gallipoli, Russian Convoys, Polish Forces, War Widows and the striking Shot at Dawn Memorial.

A central reason for our visit is to complete the Thame Remembers project before the centenary of the Armistice, and the end of our Project, in November. We know that we will not get access to Iraq or Libya to lay crosses at graves of men from Thame so we will seek to honour them at other memorials which are appropriate to their circumstances. We also have two men remembered in Thame but of whom their fate is unknown to us. Despite our best efforts over the coming months, there may be a few others where we are unable to place a cross.

There will also be ample time during our visit to explore individually, perhaps to locate memorials which are relevant to your own family history or simply to enjoy a packed lunch in a wooded copse or by the river. There is of course a cafe on site for the less adventurous.

Entrance to the NMA is free and Thame Remembers will be subsidising the travel so we are able to keep the cost down to £10 per person, departing from the Town Hall at 8.30am and returning around 6.15pm.

This is a large area but for those who cannot walk too far there is a Road Train that travels around the site, although there is a charge to use it.



## How to Book

Please contact:

Mike 07973440229 or  
David 01844 215178.

You may pay by cash £10 each or by cheque.

Cheques should be made payable to:

Thame Museum.

**This trip is open to all so please book early.**



## Mike's Belgium Trip

Michal Hutson, who has been the driver on our Recce trips to France and Belgium, wanted to introduce the project to a couple of his friends and persuaded them that a quick dash to Belgium was needed. They left early one Saturday and were in Ypres by 11am, delivered three crosses and dashed back home on Sunday. They also managed a visit to a private museum in Belgium where they camped overnight in the snow. That's dedication for you.

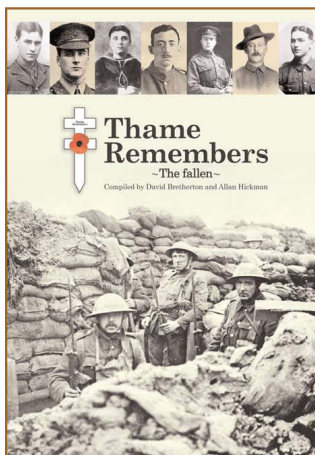


Steve Boyson laying his cross

## The Book

Our work on the book is progressing well with most of the words now committed to paper (PC Screen). Obviously entering the details of the coming deliveries will wait until after they are done but we have completed each man's story. Allan and David are now reviewing each story to check for accuracy and up to date information; as more records are released more info becomes available.

We are also very pleased that an experienced proof reader, Carole Underwood has volunteered to help and she is now working her way through chapter by chapter as we complete the work. We are on course for a launch at TAL in October.



## Project Update

This is the final stretch but a busy one: Private visits are planned this year to Gallipoli, Southern Belgium, Eastern France and Italy, all to deliver a cross or a wreath

There are a number outstanding for which we are still seeking offers of visits to lay a cross: Lemvig (Denmark), Karachi, Jerusalem, Basra (Iraq) and Tunisia. We also have one of the Boer War tributes still not taken up; at Edward Brooks Barracks, Abingdon.

**#Thame**  
museum

*This newsletter is printed  
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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.

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## Diary dates

22 July 2018  
Arboretum Coach Trip

11 Aug to 19 Dec '18  
Thame Remembers  
Exhibition  
Thame Museum

11 to 15 Sep 2018  
'O What a Lovely War'  
Players Theatre  
Tickets from the  
Theatre

20/21 Oct 2018  
Thame Remembers  
Book Launch

9 & 10 Nov 2018  
Thame Remembers  
'Ten Tommies from  
Thame'  
Players Theatre  
Tickets TBA

11 Nov 2018  
Remembrance Sunday  
11am  
Remembrance Service  
7pm  
Beacon Lighting

*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.*