

An anniversary to relish

Welcome to the 75th anniversary edition of the Newsletter – or, more precisely, the 75th anniversary of the Italian Armistice, when so many of our fathers took the opportunity to escape, before the camps in Italy were overrun by German forces. I am glad that so many of you are able to join us at the former Camp PG49 in Fontanellato in September to celebrate the breakout (see page 12).

Appropriately enough, we have a very full edition for you this year, and I hope you will take a few minutes to read through some fascinating articles – and to appreciate the work our Editor does to bring it all together in such a polished format. You will find some great stories, and an update on all the routine work of the Trust – building up

our archive, welcoming ever more bursary students, working out how best to create more permanent memorials, keeping our website up to date and, indeed, formalising some of our policies and procedures, so that we comply with the ever-changing law relating to charities. It's not all Lunches and Celebrations, you know, for our hard-working trustees!

I would, however, like to mention one very special celebration – the launch of escaper Frank Unwin's book *Escaping has Ceased to be a Sport* (reviewed on page 4). This is a remarkable contribution to the growing genre of "Italian PoW stories": one of the best, in my view, and well worth a read. Frank is generously donating part of the proceeds from sales of the book to the Trust.

We were sad six months ago to say goodbye to our good friend, His Excellency Pasquale Terraciano and his wife Karen, as they moved on to new responsibilities at the Italian Embassy in Moscow. We are delighted, however, to have a new Ambassador in Grosvenor Square, His Excellency Raffaele Trombetta and his wife, and we look forward to welcoming him to the Trust soon.

Keith Killby, who founded the Monte San Martino Trust in 1989, celebrated his 102nd birthday on June 15th. Many congratulations, Keith!



**Ambassador Terracciano and Nick Young, MSMT Chairman,
at the Trust's annual luncheon in November 2017
(see page 10 for report).**

For me personally, this has been an incredibly moving and special year, as I finally undertook two journeys that I had been waiting for more than thirty years to complete: one, to follow in my father's footsteps down 400 miles of the Apennine chain to his final "home run" at Anzio, a couple of weeks after the Allied landings in January 1944; the other, to follow in his footsteps metaphorically, by writing a book soon. Certainly the best part of my trip was to meet up with three families who helped Dad on his way – and

to become lasting friends with all of them, seventy-five years later. Friendship really does know no boundaries, of either space or time.

The other success was the responses we have received to the “thank-you” letters, in Italian, that I and my wife Helen left in the villages Dad passed through on his way. Many people have responded to these letters – pinned up on church doors, in caf  s and bars, even on trees – and continue to do so nine months later. We even have a bursary student from one of the villages this year, and several more bursary enquiries.

Perhaps the most startling response was one that prompted me and Helen to drive 200 miles from Rome to call on Angiolina Bergamaschi (**pictured right, with me**) near Florence.

Now aged 89, Angiolina was a teenager when her sharecropper family took in Leslie Young for a night after he had become separated from his companion. She described how he arrived at their farm in October 1943 wet and dishevelled. They dried his clothes, fed him, and showed him the path the next morning after he had slept on a chair by the fire. “The poor man, we knew we had to help him, And now, here is his son come to thank us,” said Angiolina. Every now and again, she put her hand on my arm and peered into my face as if to check I was real and not some ghost from the past – which in a way I was.

The stories that are so familiar to us are still (relatively) little known or talked about in Italy, so the more we can each do to show individual Italian people and their communities how grateful we are, the better.



Nick Young, Chairman, MSMT

Nick’s travel blog can be read at <http://msmtrust.org.uk/nick-youngs-travel-blog/>

TREASURER’S REPORT

THIS year’s report covers the period from June 9th, 2017, to May 1st, 2018, to coincide with the publication of the annual newsletter.

The Trust’s financial position continues to strengthen as a result of donations and returns on investments. As at May 1st, the total assets were £1,914,159, comprising the Rathbones investment portfolio valued at £1,853,349 and cash in the Trust’s bank of £60,810. During this period the sum of £35,000 was added to the portfolio for investment. At the same time last year the total assets were £1,896,931.

During 2017, twenty-five Italian students came to the UK on MSMT bursaries, fewer than usual due to a number of drop-outs. Each student bursary costs the Trust approximately £2,200. We are well placed to continue providing these annual bursaries and we thank our trustees, our administrator and our volunteer meeters and greeters for their hard work. Among our other projects, we continue the work of digitising our archives.

The major part of the Trust’s annual expenditure of £70,833 relates to the provision of bursaries with costs met from a combination of donations and investment income. It remains the Trust’s long-term objective to increase the level of recurrent investment income to a point at which the total expenses of the Trust are covered from that source.

The investment objective of the trustees continues to be for capital growth with medium risk. Our investment advisers, Rathbones, have maintained a cautious stance, reflecting continuing political concerns, and they manage a portfolio designed to achieve long-term growth with a spread of investments both at home and overseas. Rathbones report that the total return of the Monte San Martino Trust’s investments during the year was 3.07 per cent.

It is especially important to monitor risk in our portfolio during times of volatility and uncertainty and maintain a careful approach to investments.

Once again, we greatly appreciate the kindness and loyalty of our generous supporters who provide the means to finance the bursaries to Italian students.

Justin de Meo

Mike the Forger

*In line with features on PoW artists in previous newsletters, this year **Patrick Goldingham** writes about his father, Lt. Michael John Dalrymple Goldingham, MC, of the 18th King Edward VII's Own Cavalry. A talented artist, Mike worked as a forger on behalf of escape committees at the camps where he was imprisoned.*

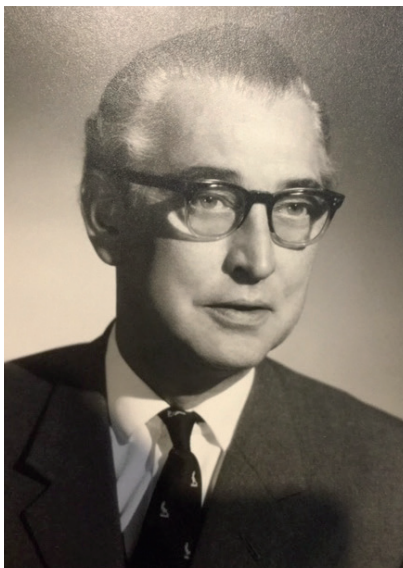
ON 27th May 1942, as part of the 3rd Indian Motor Brigade, Mike, as he was known, was captured by the Germans just south of Tobruk. After transit camps he was flown from Benghazi to Italy. Having spent two months in Bari, he was moved to PG21 at Chieti, and in April 1943 to Fontanellato, near Parma.



Left, one of many portraits that Mike made of fellow prisoners. On the right is Mike's self-portrait in later life, with a post-war photo of him below.

Mike considered PG49 the luxury camp of Italy, apart from the Generals' camp near Florence. It had spring beds, mattresses, furniture, a bar – vermouth and sometimes beer in the morning, vino in the evening – a black market, sizeable sports field and a good commandant. However, escape, was uppermost in the prisoners' minds. Although Mike did not talk about his experiences until later in life, he kept a wartime log recording camp experiences, his escape, and the people he met. Most pages included a small watercolour drawing. He painted many of his fellow prisoners and, while on the run, the *contadini*. Mike who was born in Great Missenden, Bucks, had strong family links with India and his talent for drawing owed something to one of his forbears, Captain George Andrew Goldingham (1835-1919), a highly regarded portrait painter in India. Mike enjoyed sketching during lulls in the fighting although art materials were hard to come by. As he had no watercolour with which to shade his drawings he developed a technique of ink stippling. Escape organisations had people who could make uniforms and civilian clothing, reproduce maps and many things but they lacked a camp forger. Mike spent most days sitting on his bed turning out false documents, Gestapo passes, banknotes, fake tickets, bread coupons, official letterheads and other items necessary to facilitate movement under wartime restrictions. He always had near him a half-finished painting or stipple drawing as cover in case of a raid on a dormitory.

Months passed at Fontanellato without him being detected. Then a cache of his forgeries was found by a search party. The fakes were linked to similar material found in the possession of several escapee British officers and production was traced to Mike. Shortly after this, on 8th September 1943, the Armistice was signed, the commandant opened the camp gates and the PoWs escaped.



Mike and three Indian Army friends – John Meares, Paddy Bruen and Andre Willis – headed for the hills above La Spezia and Genoa in case the Allies should land there. They ended up in a village called Villora, near Bardi, where Mike and John Meares were adopted by Marco Labadini, the village toper, who ran a small-holding with his wife Maria. Marco refused to go to church on Sundays, and used to lock them in his cellar with bread and cheese and force wine onto them until well after the services had ended. During the day they helped in the fields.

On October 27th they moved south in an attempt to reach the Allies, with the help of a small map. The distance to the front line near the River Sangro was 480 miles although they must have walked about 900 miles to get around the tricky bits and over the mountains. On December 15th, on the snow line and within hearing of the guns, they were captured by a German patrol on skis. They spent the rest of the war at Marich-Trubau in Sudetenland and then at Oflag 79 at Braunschweig in Germany, where Mike again worked as forger. After the war, Mike worked for an insurance firm, travelling widely. He died in Perth, Australia, aged 80. Looking back, he

realised how much he owed to the *contadini*, and after the war he revisited Villora. My brother Miles also visited Villora in 2003 and met Marco's son.

As for his art, Mike commented wryly: "Perhaps the highlight of all this was the 'compliment' paid me by the Italians. They staged an exhibition of my forgeries in Rome. It would have been fun to have heard the comments about the 'wicked British prisoners'".

An irresistible memoir

ACCOUNTS of incarceration as a PoW of war in Italy and Germany have had an important addition with the publication of a story of capture and escape by Frank Unwin, MBE, *writes John Simkins*.

Escaping Has Ceased To Be A Sport, which took Frank 25 years to complete with invaluable assistance by his daughter Betty Merrick, was launched at a party in the magnificent Library of London's Reform Club in April. Among those present in addition to family and friends were Frank's former colleagues from the Foreign Office, for which he worked after the Second World War, representatives from the Italian Embassy and the British-Italian Society, members of his church (Christ Church) and supporters of the Monte San Martino Trust. Frank, 98 years old on July 10th, has long been a stalwart Trust member.

Welcoming the guests, Peter Unwin, Frank's son, said that "escaping was in Frank's bones". The week before the book launch, Peter had rushed to hospital to find his father with blood pouring from a head wound following a fall. "Pete, I've got to get out of here by Tuesday," were Frank's opening words.

Frank, who now lives in Orpington but whose family home was in Liverpool, enlisted in the Territorial Army in 1939 and was mobilised the same year. He was first deployed to Egypt with the Royal Artillery before being sent to Greece to support the Greek Army. He was evacuated from mainland Greece to Crete and again a few weeks later from Crete to Alexandria. In June 1942 after the collapse of the Tobruk garrison he was captured by German forces and handed over to the Italians, still aged only 21. Transferred to mainland Italy,

'I have got to get out of here by Tuesday'

he was imprisoned at PG82 Laterina, in Tuscany, where he learned Italian by talking to the sentries. His first escape lasted one week before recapture. He then joined a tunnelling party but shortly before the tunnel was completed the Italians signed the Armistice and he was able to escape by cutting the barbed wire. This time he spent five months on the run in

the Tuscan hills, hunted by the Germans and Italian Fascists. He was sheltered by the people of Montebenichi and other villages. In his book he describes in graphic detail the lifestyle of these peasant farmers, the *contadini*, who risked their own lives by giving him refuge.

Knowing that their own families had had no word of them, Frank and two fellow PoWs set off to rejoin the Allied Lines but were recaptured and taken to a work camp in Germany. Hopes of an Allied victory grew when gunfire was heard in March 1945. The guards ordered them to leave the camp, whereupon they marched for several weeks before being rescued by American troops. Back home in Liverpool, he discovered that he weighed only six stone. At the book launch Frank and Betty described how Frank had decided, in his mid-70s, to write it after an Italian historian, Enzo Droandi, had asked him for an account of the escape tunnel at Laterina. Ten of the next 25 years were largely spent nursing Frank's wife Marjorie, who died in 2005.

Nick Young, MSMT chairman, said: "The book is right up there with the very best of the genre. It's a book of passion, of deprecating honesty and common sense, and of a love of Italy. This book told me that this man is indomitable and undaunted. Frank was constantly on the look-out to escape. And every page of this delightful book spells hope."

*** *Escaping Has Ceased To Be A Sport* is published by Pen and Sword, ISBN: 9781526714930, at £20. Post and packaging within UK £4.00.**



**Frank, Betty and Peter
at the Reform Club**



Rossella Ruggeri, second right, with the Trust's partners in Emilia-Romagna: from left, Elena Paoletti, Lorena Mussini and Giulia Ricci

'Road Map of Freedom'

THE collaboration with three branches of the Historical Institute in the Region of Emilia-Romagna is in its second year, and is fulfilling our hopes for a project intended to raise the Trust's profile within Italy.

This year we offered the Institute four of our one-month study bursaries in the UK. In return, it laid on for Italian students a programme of site visits and studies entitled Road Map of Freedom, concentrating on the Allied presence in Italy and the role of civilians in 1943-45 on the Gothic Line between Emilia and Romagna.

The participating branches of the Institute – known as the *Istituto per la Storia della Resistenza e l'età contemporanea* – are Forlì-Cesena, Modena and Bologna.

Initial doubts about continued funding for the course from the Region, and whether it would attract sufficient students, were soon dispelled. About 20 students completed the course and double that number were involved at some stage.

The first event was a visit to Tavollicci, in the province of Forlì, which was on the Gothic Line defended by German troops and was the site of a massacre on July 22nd 1944 by Germans and Italian Fascists aiming to clear the area of support for the partisans. The party also visited the *Casa dell'Eccidio di Tavollicci*, which houses a small museum providing an insight into the daily life of the *contadini* in remote areas such as this.

In December, a workshop took place at the Parri Institute in Bologna. Two of the four lectures focused on the PoWs' experiences, while the Gothic Line, massacres and escape lines were also covered. Work submitted by the students was of a high standard, making it difficult to select the four bursary winners. Eventually two were chosen from Bologna and one each from Forlì-Cesena and Modena. A fifth participant, from a school in Modena, was also accepted through the regular application procedure.

The Trust is extremely grateful to Elena Paoletti, of Forlì-Cesena, Lorena Mussini of Bologna and Giulia Ricci of Modena for their hard work. A big thank-you also goes to our Work Group member, Rossella Ruggeri, of Modena, who came up with the idea for the project and has closely followed its progress.

The Emilia-Romagna Region has rated the project as excellent, which secures its continuation in 2019.

OUR STUDENTS

A TOTAL of 39 Italian students have been awarded one-month study bursaries in the UK this year – the most the Trust has ever granted. There were more applications than previously as a result of efforts to reach out to areas of Italy connected to the PoW story with which we had lost touch. Four of the students selected came through our special project in Emilia-Romagna (see accompanying story).

The students, all aged 18-25, come mainly from le Marche, Emilia-Romagna, Abruzzo and Molise, where PoW camps were concentrated. A dozen come from families who were involved in sheltering PoWs and persecuted civilians (see below for examples).

Students are almost equally divided between frequenting the Central School of English, London, and CES-Oxford at Wheatley – both excellent language schools with a long connection to MSMT.

We are very grateful to our "regional champions" in Italy for maintaining contact with schools, and to Antonio Millozzi, our representative in Italy who handles applications before transferring them to London for the final choice. The successful students then liaise with Edward Gretton, our excellent student organiser.

The large number of arrivals this year is putting a strain on our loyal band of Greeters, who meet them at airports, take them to their homestay and are the "face" of MSMT. Please consider joining this group!

Cassandra Lori: her great grandfather, Alfonso, had worked in Berlin and pleaded successfully with a German officer to reprieve inhabitants of Montegallo, in le Marche, from a firing squad.

Chiara Narcisi: her 13-year-old grandmother, along with her Jewish family, fled from a German round-up into the countryside where they were hidden for 18 months by a partisan *contadino*.

Giada Ulisse: her grandmother recalls how her family rushed out to rescue a British pilot after his aircraft crashed in a field nearby. They hid him for a week in a cowshed and fed him – "he had a good appetite and particularly liked wine".

Giovanni Marrozzini: his great grandparents hid Robert Wade, of the RAF, and took him by night to the beach at Porto San Giovanni, where he boarded a boat manned by the Resistance.

PROGRESS on getting improved access to the 1.5 million documents held in the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in Washington is slow but sure.

First, some brief background: Immediately after the Second World War, the British set up the Allied Screening Commission (ASC), whose job it was to investigate and reward the acts of heroism performed by the Italian *contadini*. For about two years files were produced containing a huge range of documents.

These came from investigating officer reports; letters, photos and other documentation from the *contadini* themselves (or someone writing on their behalf); and letters from the Allied PoWs asking whether their Italian families had yet been compensated. Some of the documents seen so far provide personal insights into the relationships formed between PoWs and their Italian saviours.

The British were planning to destroy all these documents, but by good luck the Americans decided to preserve them and in due course they were all shipped off to Washington, where they have remained, hardly touched, for the past 70-odd years.

On a visit to Washington in June 2017, I met Greg Bradsher, Senior Archivist at NARA. He had already been alerted to this valuable archive and has done a good deal of work in opening it up. The Trust would like to see the Archive made far more accessible both to academics and to family historians from the USA, Italy, UK and else-where. It is a significant contribution towards recognition of a unique series of events best summed up by Iris Origo, speaking of a *contadino* on her Tuscan estate:

“Much has been said in these times (and not least by the Italians themselves) about Italian cowardice and Italian treachery. But here is a man (and there are hundreds of others like him) who has run the risk of being shot, who has shared his family’s food to the last crumb, and who has lodged, clothed and protected four strangers for over three months – and who now proposes to continue to do so, whilst perfectly aware of all the risks that he is running. What is this, if not courage and loyalty?” *War in Val d’Orcia*.

The best method of improving access would be to digitise the entire documentation so that it can become a fully searchable online database. The NARA’s estimate of the likely cost is \$160,000.

The next step is to consider how to raise the necessary funds. This may take the form of applications to relevant charitable foundations, contact with academic institutions in the UK, USA and Italy, and the relevant governments. My fellow-trustees have approved seed money to get the ball rolling, and I am very open to any ideas from the Trust’s wider base of supporters.

Anne Copley



Modesto Damiani: family home was raided

ALLIED SCREENING COMMISSION

Keys to a treasure trove

Courage in the modern day

Andrew Adams, the originator of the Trust’s Moral Courage Award, explains its objectives

THE Moral Courage Award is intended to honour present-day acts of collective and individual moral courage and leadership in Italy and to link them with the bravery of civilian Italians in 1943-45 in sheltering escapers and refugees. In this way we add another element to the “living memorial” that is the bursary programme and make Italians more aware of the Monte San Martino story among Italians.

This year’s project is a pilot, designed to test practicalities on a small scale. The Province of Lucca was chosen as the setting because of the enthusiastic support given to the idea by the Lucca Institute for the History of the Resistance and the Contemporary Era (ISREC), and by the Prefecture and the Provincial Government. The valley of the Serchio was a major route for Allied escapers moving south and the districts of Garfagnana and Versilia saw intense partisan and escaper activity in 1944-45.

The project was launched by a press conference on 21st February in the Ducal Palace at Lucca, attended by the local members of the panel of Assessors including ISREC, Luca Menesini, president of the Provincial Assembly, and Modesto

Damiani, an eyewitness to the events of 1943-45. Stefano Bucciarelli, director of ISREC, and Silvia Angelini, deputy director, lead the project and great support is being given by the Press Office of the Provincial Government, led by Adriano Scarmozzino. At the press launch, Modesto Damiani told the story of his father, who sheltered fourteen Allied escapers and of his own experience: he was present when the family home was raided by a Fascist and German patrol and a partisan was shot. The launch was carried in the two major newspapers of the Province – Il Tirreno and La Nazione (local edition) and online in five publications.

A subsequent, and assiduous, publicity programme has increased knowledge of the positive stories of 1943-45 and of the Monte San Martino Trust, with the monthly publication of press releases in a total of seven local online and print journals.

Unfortunately, no candidate for the Award has yet been put forward. We are reviewing the conditions of the Award and the design of the communications to see if they can be modified while staying true to the essence of the project.

MOVING THE MSMT ARCHIVE ONLINE: the story so far...

LITTLE did we realise that, when we set up a working group to transfer the treasure trove of paper-based escaper accounts onto the MSMT website, we were embarking on such a complex project! Having surmounted various technological problems, with the assistance of the Trust's IT consultant George Mitchell, we have now found our way through to editing documents in a way that will make them legible online and suitable for searching by key words.

There is still some way to go because we need to "translate" more than 160 documents to digital form. Each document will be visible simultaneously in its original form (including photographs and sketches) as well as in a new, easily readable format. This huge project will be greatly assisted by a team of volunteers led by Nicola Waddington, the MSMT Archivist.

Data will be uploaded gradually to the site and supporters will be kept informed of our progress. It is certainly thrilling to read these amazing accounts which bring back to life the courage and heroism of the period of history that the Trust was established to remember.

Christine English

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

Drive to protect data

SUPPORTERS will recently have found themselves being harried by any organisation to which they have given their personal details. This flurry of activity has been initiated by the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), which requires an individual's explicit consent to any organisation holding and using their personal data.

This has prompted a general review of the Trust's regulatory compliance and best-practice policies, and we are in the process of dealing with the various issues thrown up in that regard.

This will mean a bit of (hopefully not too onerous) admin, and you will all be receiving correspondence informing you of the personal data which the Trust holds on you; the use to which we may put it; and asking for your express consent for us to continue to do so.

For those for whom we hold an email address that should be a simple task involving little more than a tick box. Others will be contacted by letter. If you are not sure that the Trust has a copy of your email address, please drop us a line at info@msmtrust.org.uk. The more email addresses we possess, the easier it will be for us to contact supporters asking for consent.

Those who volunteer to meet students will undergo some further checks, likely to be no more onerous than receiving a copy of our Safeguarding Policy and providing us with a copy of their driving licence. Although we don't want to burden you with unnecessary paperwork, we hope you will agree that the Trust's observance of regulatory compliance and good governance is only what you would expect from such an august organisation!

Anne Copley



Anne Copley

Jenifer Landor, an MSMT work group member, explains why she started Live and Learn Italian, an immersive Italian language holiday, in a small town in Molise.

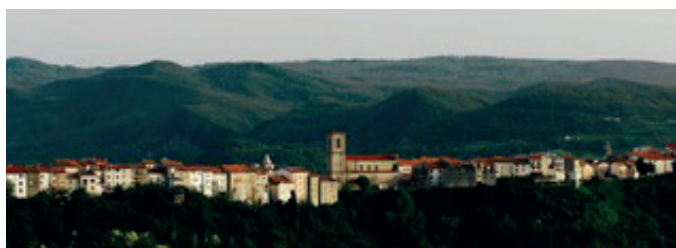


‘He who knows no foreign languages knows nothing of his own’ – Goethe

IN 2013, I welcomed my first group of mature Italian-language students to the region of Molise, home of my grandfather. I grew up in America and, when I first went to stay with cousins in Agnone, I spoke almost no Italian but recognised an opportunity to learn by being immersed in small-town life. Although there were no prisoner of war camps nearby, I became a supporter of the Monte San Martino Trust, recognising similar, deeply moving stories of resistance and generosity.

People get really passionate about learning a language, and Italian is one of the most popular. An active brain staves off dementia, helps fight depression, and enhances emotional wellbeing. Barriers come down, strong connections are formed, your mind broadened. As American journalist Flora Lewis observed, “Learning another language is not just learning different words, but another way to think about things.”

The key is to keep your exposure to the language frequent, every day. Talk to yourself, read out-loud ... offer a buongiorno to the barista. Everyone prefers to speak their mother tongue, so chat with one of the Italians living amongst you. Reinvent yourself – maybe you’re more playful in a second language, funnier even. Make mistakes. The more you try, the wider your comfort zone. Get away from tourists, and you’ll find myriad opportunities. That’s how I came to create the programme <https://www.liveandlearnitalian.com/> in a place where no English is spoken. It was pointless to be shy or worried about getting it wrong. The town became my teacher.



Skyline view of Agnone, with Jenifer Landor top left

These interactions have brought me a rich community: the family Di Nucci, making award-winning cheese for 12 generations; a young coppersmith working hard to keep productive so he can raise his family in the town of his birth; the baker, Tonino, not only a master of bread, but a poet and playwright, writing in the town’s ancient dialect; Marco, who abandoned a global career to come back to his land, reviving vines and orchards and raising animals; Nicola, director of the *biblioteca antica*, a keen horseman leading visitors along the ancient *tratturi* of the shepherds. Here, in the world’s oldest bell foundry, the 25th generation of my grandfather’s cousins still make artisan bells by hand. These are just a handful of the friends welcoming our guests, and connecting with them to learn the language.

This region is really undiscovered, and such a delight that we now offer a separate programme for non-language learners <https://www.liveandlearnitalian.com/what-to-expect-on-our-5-night-italian-cultural-and-culinary-programme/>. Whether learning Italian or not, you can come share in the daily lives of a traditional community – to cook with them, hear their history and traditions – and explore the slow life.

OBITUARY: Charles de Chassiron

WE were very sad indeed to hear of the recent death of Charles de Chassiron, chairman for many years of the British-Italian Society and a loyal Trust supporter.

During his distinguished diplomatic career he spent two long periods in Italy, first as counsellor in Rome and then as consul general in Milan. His profound understanding, knowledge and appreciation of the culture, politics and language of Italy made him a fascinating person to talk to about any aspect of the country he loved and championed. I well remember many interesting conversations in Liguria in 2009 when we both participated in a Trust Trail. As we made our way up overgrown forest slopes he recounted some of his intriguing experiences working with Silvio Berlusconi, the former prime minister, and what it was like being in meetings with him.

He was a great sport on that occasion and I have a wonderful photo of him throwing mattresses off a truck which we walkers were about to lay out on the floor of a bar high up in a village we had reached that evening. I felt very privileged to know him and always appreciated his wise, gentle, humorous manner. He will be much missed.

Letitia Blake

In memory of a 'strange alliance'

THE Tenna Valley Freedom Trail, organised by WW2 Escape Lines Memorial Society and cohosted with MSMT, has been an annual event since 2013, writes **Julia MacKenzie**.

This year's walking memorial (May 16th–21st) was based as usual in Servigliano and was attended (some for the first time) by relatives of PoWs imprisoned in the three camps in the southern Marche – Servigliano (PG59), Sforzacosta (PG53) and Monteurano (PG70). We were joined by others interested in the history of PoWs and escapers and, for the final two days, by students in their last year of school at San Benedetto del Tronto. They impressed us by their contributions to a lively discussion on the legacy of the Second World War held at the Casa della Memoria museum.



Laying wreaths in the village of Monte San Martino: Ian McCarthy, Julia MacKenzie, Mayor Valeriano Ghezzi and Roger Stanton

Blessed with good weather, we started each morning from the gates of the site of the former PG59 (now a peace park), and on successive days walked to Monte San Martino, Penna San Giovanni and Montelparo, villages where PoWs found shelter. Each day, the tireless Roger Stanton and his team not only provided excellent support in terms of leading the walk, guidance crossing the Tenna river, supplies of water and welcome picnics, but also arranged for a succession of wonderful elderly Italians to appear, when we took breaks at farmhouses, to tell us their childhood memories of the *prigionieri inglesi* helped by their families. Ian McCarthy did sterling work in translating these accounts for us and in relating other stories.

While many of those assisted by the *contadini* made it to freedom, we also remembered those who were not so fortunate: we laid a wreath at the memorial to Sidney Smith, killed by the Germans in March 1944, visited the site where Robert A. Newton and Martin Majeski, two American ex-PoWs, were shot, also in March 1944, and the cemetery in Comunanza where both PoWs and partisans were executed in May/June 1944.

The last day was spent looking round the sites of PG59 and PG70, going to the Brugnioni family farmhouse where Ken de Souza hid, and, in a change from the usual programme, visiting the 18th-century Palazzo Romani Adami in Fermo. Here we were graciously entertained by two members of the family who showed us why this house with many floors and exits provided a perfect hiding place for PoWs gathering to be taken off by boat from the nearby coast.

The warmth and courtesy of the Italians – the Millozzi family, the Barchetta family who gave us a splendid lunch on our way to Monte San Martino, the elderly helpers, the various mayors we met at wreath-laying ceremonies, and others who assist in raising awareness – underlined how much this moment of great humanity in the midst of war still means to the local people. And to us. It was a privilege to be there to help to keep alive the memory of this “strange alliance” from nearly seventy-five years ago.

MSMT members are warmly encouraged to join next year's walk, which runs from May 15th–20th.

- Anne Copley and Christine English of MSMT attended the annual ELMS reunion in York from April 27th–29th. Despite the sad loss of some of the ELMS family since the previous event, the meeting was the usual combination of happy reunions and poignant memories.

MSMT laid a wreath at the Helper Memorial during the service of commemoration at Eden Camp, the evocative museum covering British social and military history from 1914 onwards. The service was accompanied by a stirring pipe band and military brass band.

ELMS is focusing much of its efforts on education and, once again, the reunion was enhanced by the participation of young people from the Basque country and from Italy. Delightful students and their teachers from the Tenna Valley were welcomed, with their costs supported by ELMS and MSMT.

Trust members are warmly invited to attend next year's reunion or the annual ELMS Picnic at the National Arboretum on August 4th. Our thanks to Roger Stanton and the ELMS committee!

The annual lunch of the Monte San Martino Trust is always a “family” occasion but in 2017 the family had grown. A total of 153 supporters gathered at the Royal Overseas League in London on November 9th, much

the biggest turn-out yet recorded. Among the guests was just one veteran prisoner of war, Frank Unwin. But there were many children and grandchildren of escapers, as well as supporters without a family connection. Sadly, a moment’s silence was held to remember two PoWs who had died in the previous 12 months – Mike Lacey and Mick Wagner – as well as Alastair Gavin, a strong supporter and husband of trustee Caroline Gavin.

Nick Young, chairman, summarised the work of the Trust over the past year, including the digitising of MSMT’s archive by a team led by trustee Christine English. Christine has also long been the chief organiser of the annual lunch – and was duly thanked by Nick who described her as a “Legend in her own Lunchtime”.

He then paid a heartfelt tribute to Pasquale Terracciano, the outgoing Italian Ambassador, and his wife Karen, who were both present. During their four and a half years in London, Mr and Mrs Terracciano gave the Trust unfailing support, holding several functions at the embassy on its behalf.

In acknowledgement, the Ambassador made three remarks: “The first is that, if asked what has been the most extraordinary story from my time in London, I would say the Monte San Martino Trust – it has no parallel. Then, if asked for the most commendable initiative, I would say MSMT. When someone dies, the memories get lost but by creating the Trust you prevented this. Thirdly, what is the best example of Italian-British co-operation? The Trust! Your fathers fought for liberty and when the *contadini* had the choice, they did the right thing.”

Trustee Miles Skinner then introduced our guest speaker, Bill Mills, chairman of Highfield preparatory school at Liphook. In autumn 2017 Highfield hosted three pupils, aged 11 to 13, from a school in Fontanellato, where Bill’s father, Peter, had been a PoW. The Trust, whose own students must be over 18, helped facilitate the exchange, which was completed when Highfield pupils spent a week in Fontanellato in May 2018 (**see report below**).

Thanking Bill, Letitia Blake, Trust secretary, read out a message from Keith Killby, MSMT’s Founder: “I much regret I can’t be with you and hope you will be supporting the Trust for years to come.”

• **The Annual Lunch in 2018 is on Thursday November 8th. Invitations will be sent in September.**



From left: Bill Mills, Zaccheo Arduini, Phillip Evitt, Aurora Toro and Giacomo Depetro

went extremely well and both Bill Mills and Phillip Evitt, Highfield’s headmaster, are determined the scheme should continue. Fontanellato “is a beautiful place, filled with life and compassion, accompanied by magnificent buildings and a rich, deep history,” reported Patrick Corbett, one of the pupils.

To organise the exchange, Bill and colleagues had visited Fontanellato in 2016. At a restaurant, a man named Ubaldo Arduini announced that his own father had driven Bill’s father to safety in a taxi. Although there was more than one Mills interned in the camp, Bill likes to think this was Peter.

Peter and his companion Bob Williams were on the run for four months before being recaptured near Allied Lines. Peter suspected that ironically it was Italian hospitality, in the form of a large cheese given to him and Bob, that caused them to be recaptured and sent to Germany. “They were hiding in a barn when they were discovered by Germans who had a dog with them.”

ANNUAL LUNCH

‘Giving something back’

A fruitful pupil exchange has taken place between Highfield School, at Liphook in Hampshire, and a school in Fontanellato, near Parma. It sprang from the desire of Bill Mills, Highfield’s chairman, to “give something back” to the Italian people for the support given to his father, Peter, who was on the run after escaping from Fontanellato’s PG49 in 1943.

With the help of MSMT, Highfield – a co-educational school for children aged up to 13 founded by Bill’s grandfather – made contact with Fontanellato’s *Scuola Secondaria di Primo Grado*. The outcome was that three children aged 11 or 12, spent the first six weeks of the autumn term in 2017 at Highfield. Although boarding was a novel experience for the Italian children, they settled in well.

In return, a group of Highfield’s scholars and members of staff visited Fontanellato in May this year, staying in an AirBnB above a monastery and being looked after by nuns. The visit

Charles Crosthwaite Eyre relates how his family has rekindled a friendship with descendants of the courageous 'Aunt Matilde' who hid his father

Letters that tell a story of devotion

IT WAS the discovery of a cache of letters written by my father, John Crosthwaite Eyre (right), during the war that eventually prompted me to research his story.

Although my sister, Flops Lewis, came across the letters soon after Dad died at his home in Zimbabwe in 2000, I did not investigate them until more recently. The outcome was a heart-warming meeting last September with descendants of the courageous Italian woman who gave him sanctuary from September to December 1943. This was Matilde Franchi Moruzzi, whom Dad called Aunt Matilde, and of whom he wrote glowingly in the vivid letters he wrote to his own mother.

Dad was a mining engineer and a Captain with the Royal Engineers. In May 1941, he was recruited to the Special Operations Executive and, in January 1942, was landed on Algeria's Gulf of Hammamet by submarine to destroy a viaduct. The beach was fortified and the detachment were captured.

Transferred to Italy, Dad arrived at Camp PG49 in Fontanellato, near Parma, in June 1943. At the end of July, following Mussolini's fall and arrest, he wrote: *"The news of (Marshal) Badoglio's rise to power arrived like a thunderbolt from the blue sky this morning... It is all too wonderful; I shall wake up soon."*

Between September 8th, when he and 600 fellow officers marched out of Fontanellato a few days after the signing of the Armistice, and December 2nd, there were no more letters.

It was during this period on the run from the Germans and Fascists that he came across Aunt Matilde. Matilde lived 35 miles away from Fontanellato, in the hamlet of Case Scapini, in the mountains west of Compiano. She was born in August 1896 and died in June 1987. In 1927, she married Angelo Moruzzi, who had three children by a previous marriage. Together they had two daughters, Maria and Angelina, who is still alive and lives in Avignon. Angelina remembers Dad and the two other British soldiers sheltered by the family; one of them was a Major with a bad foot. Mathilde also hid an Italian who had escaped a firing squad.

On December 2nd, Dad wrote to say they were setting off for Switzerland. *"The Italians have treated us with wonderful kindness... Aunt Matilde has looked after us with amazing courage and devotion, and is now almost in tears because we are going. She has fought the rest of the village to keep us this last week, as others were afraid and want us to go; it would break my heart if Aunt Matilde got shot on our account which is another good reason for leaving."*

Unfortunately, Dad and his companions were recaptured near the Swiss border. He was imprisoned in Oflag 79 at Braunschweig. At the first opportunity after the war, Dad visited Case Scapini to introduce his wife Sue and express his gratitude to Matilde. Flops recalls him saying that it was a very emotional visit and that they were wined and dined by the whole village.

My own early attempts to rekindle the friendship with her family were unsuccessful but Paolo Flores, a family friend, contacted Ettore Rulli, a member of a Compiano Facebook community, who arranged a meeting. So, last September, I myself, my sister Flops, my wife Nicki and our daughter Gemma, met Mathilde's granddaughters Rita and Antonietta Milani and Gianina Sidoli (step granddaughter) in Casa Scapini, which was burnt by the Germans in 1945 and abandoned in the 1950s.

Matilde's home was a two-storey stone house. Standing on the stairs to the room where Dad slept was an extraordinary experience. Ettore arranged the same meal Mathilde made on the last night (rabbits) and each member of Matilde's family was presented with an album on his life. Paolo read Dad's letter to his mother in Italian, and everyone toasted an extraordinarily brave woman.

A real connection has been created between the families; two of Matilde's great granddaughters have been awarded MSMT bursaries this year.

There is one loose end. Seven imprisoned Majors at Fontanellato were recaptured, and two of them were in Oflag 79, which might suggest one of them was the Major with the bad foot. They were Major H.R. Haig (QOCH) and Major J. Tennant (RA). Any contact with these families would be welcome.



Charles and Flops on the steps below the room where their father slept.

Photo by Alessandra Bassoni

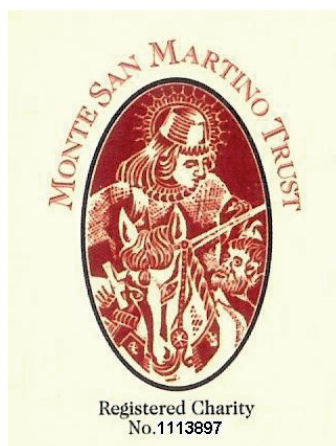
ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION AT FONTANELATO

MORE than 70 MSMT supporters are preparing for an exciting and eventful visit to Fontanellato, near Parma, to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Armistice with Italy and the escape of PoWs from Camp PG49. The Trust has been invited by the mayor of Fontanellato, Francesco Trivelloni, a former MSMT student, and the townspeople, who have always been supportive of the Trust and welcomed us so warmly in 2013, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary. This year, three Fontanellato students have accepted Trust bursaries. Among the MSMT party will be Nick Young, the chairman, and 98-year-old Frank Unwin, who was a PoW at Laterina, in Tuscany. The programme of events, which take place from September 7th to 9th, includes a walk following the route taken by the PoWs out of the town and, on Sunday, a ceremony at the Cardinal Ferrari medical centre, site of the former PG49.

THIS beautiful watercolour of **Monte San Martino** is the work of Chris Owens, who recently got to know the Trust along with friends who, like him, have homes in le Marche. Chris retired as head of the English department at Latymer Upper School in Hammersmith, London, at the age of 43 in 1987 and then turned his part-time passion for art into a full-time career. He painted Monte San Martino about a dozen years ago soon after buying his house in Force. The painting has been bought by his friend and neighbour, Gavin Graham, and Chris has generously donated the £400 proceeds to MSMT.



“What the Trust celebrates seems to me to be entirely positive,” says Chris. We are extremely grateful to both him and Gavin. The painting was on display in January this year at the Oxo Gallery on London’s South Bank where Chris held a retrospective exhibition of 120 watercolours and drawings in charcoal or pen and ink. Chris almost always paints in situ. He and his wife Liz have travelled widely: he has painted and sketched in Nigeria and Ghana, on a train trip from St. Petersburg to Beijing, and on a ship from Bergen to beyond the Arctic Circle. Even before establishing themselves in le Marche, they had lived in Rome from 1992-97 when Liz was head of the Primary School at St George’s English School. Chris has had many successful exhibitions in England and Italy. He was at his house in Force 30km from the epicentre of the earthquake that killed about 250 people and damaged so many houses, including his own, in August 2016. He donated the proceeds from an exhibition at Southwark Cathedral’s Refectory Gallery to a relief fund.



TRUSTEES

Cavaliere Ufficiale Sir Nicholas Young (chairman); Hon. Letitia Blake (secretary); Justin de Meo (treasurer); Anne Bewicke-Copley; Omar Bucchioni; Christine English; Caroline Gavin; Nicholas Gent; Ian Laing, CBE; Christopher Prentice, CMG; Miles Skinner; Cav. Uff. Vanni Treves, CBE.

OFFICERS

John Simkins (Administrator and newsletter/website editor); Antonio Millozzi, MBE, (Representative in Italy); Edward Gretton (UK student organiser).
www.msmttrust.org.uk. For enquiries, contact info@msmttrust.org.uk

Monte San Martino Trust Founder: Cav. Uff. Keith Killby, OBE.

Registered address: Fletcher & Partners, Crown Chambers, Bridge Street, Salisbury, SP1 2LZ. Company no: 05604293